
Old Wethersfield Master Plan

Wethersfield, Connecticut

Prepared for the
Town of Wethersfield

Prepared by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

July 2008

Old Wethersfield Master Plan

CHAPTER 1: PROJECT OVERVIEW.....	3
Background and Purpose.....	3
Past Plans and Studies.....	5
Goals and Objectives.....	9
CHAPTER 2: HISTORIC CONTEXT.....	12
CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY CHARACTER.....	31
Wethersfield Today.....	31
Historic Attributes.....	32
Circulation and Wayfinding.....	36
Historic and Cultural Attractions.....	39
Agricultural Resources.....	47
Parks and Open Space.....	48
CHAPTER 4: THE LOCAL ECONOMY – BUSINESSES AND VISITORS.....	51
Introduction.....	51
Retail Market Analysis.....	52
Visitor Experience.....	71
Promoting Old Wethersfield.....	76
Marketing: Key Findings of Existing Conditions.....	84
CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY CASE STUDIES.....	86
Introduction.....	86
Essex, Connecticut.....	86
Madison, Indiana.....	92
New Castle, Delaware.....	96
CHAPTER 6 – FROM VISION TO REALITY, IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN.....	103
Recommendations.....	103
1. Enhancing the Streetscape.....	104
2. Creating a Viable Village Center.....	131
3. Preserving Community Character.....	136
4. Interpreting Our History.....	138
5. Organizing Our Leaders.....	147
6. Attracting Visitors and Marketing Assets.....	149
Implementation Matrix.....	153
Funding Sources.....	158
WORKS CITED.....	163

FIGURES

Figure 1 – Retail Market Trade Areas	Page 53
Figure 2 – Existing Land Uses	Page 60
Figure 3 – Proposed Wayfinding Signage	Page 105
Figure 4 – Alternative Intersection Improvements, Main, Church, and Marsh Streets	Page 112
Figure 5 – Alternative Intersection Improvements, Main Street and Hartford Avenue	Page 115
Figure 6 – Alternative Intersection Improvements, Main and State Streets	Page 117
Figure 7 – Alternative Intersection Improvements, Hartford Avenue and State Street	Page 120
Figure 8 – Existing Zoning Designations	Page 136
Figure 9 – Interpretive Signage	Page 145

TABLES

Table 1 – Annual Household Expenditures	Page 62
Table 2 – Household Expenditures in Square Footage	Page 64
Table 3 – Existing Capture Rate and Retail Potentials	Page 66
Table 4 – Total Supportable Square Footage, 2006	Page 67
Table 5 – Total Supportable Square Footage, 2011	Page 70

CHAPTER 1: PROJECT OVERVIEW

Background and Purpose

In 2005 the Town of Wethersfield was named a Preserve America community and the following year Town officials, in collaboration with local stakeholders from within the Old Wethersfield Historic District, applied for and received a grant from the National Park Service to complete a Master Plan. In applying for the grant, the Town made a clear statement that they recognized the importance of the historic integrity, cultural significance, and character of the community. The planning process seeks to form a bridge between the past and the future; the end result will be a Master Plan that meets the needs and goals of business owners, property owners, residents, and historic sites.

The Preserve America program is a federal initiative that encourages and supports community efforts to preserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of unique communities across the country. One component of the program is the designation of Preserve America communities, of which Wethersfield is one. This program recognizes communities that celebrate their heritage, use their historic assets to achieve economic development goals, and encourage people to appreciate their historic resources.

There are benefits to being designated as a Preserve America community. As a Preserve America community Wethersfield is eligible for Preserve America grants; can receive a Preserve America road sign; is authorized to use the Preserve America logo; and is listed in a web-based Preserve America directory. Preserve America grants are the most significant benefit of being designated a Preserve America community. Grants are available two times a year to fund efforts aimed at sustaining historic and cultural sites within Preserve America communities and developing economic and educational opportunities associated with heritage tourism. The program funds the development of management strategies and other planning tools aimed at identifying best practices for the continued preservation of heritage assets.



*View of Old Wethersfield
Main Street with historic
buildings*

The purpose of the Old Wethersfield Master Plan is three-fold: 1) protect the existing quality of life for district residents and preserve the character of the community, 2) identify opportunities to increase usage and viability of existing historic sites and museums and encourage heritage tourism, and 3) identify opportunities for creating a successful business atmosphere which are based on the economic realities of the local market. The desired end result is a comprehensive plan that looks at both physical and economic aspects of the community.

The preservation of community character and heritage is an increasingly important topic to consider as suburbanization, uncontrolled growth, and widespread development continues to creep into historically significant communities and neighborhoods. While preservation has historically been viewed as simply a means to restore an old building, it should be viewed as one component of a broader economic development strategy.

The Master Plan looks at existing conditions to provide a “snapshot” in time of who and what the Old Wethersfield Historic District is today. The existing conditions lay the framework for identifying the opportunities and potentials for the historic district, ultimately contributing to the development of a series of recommendations, and most importantly, a strategy for implementing the recommendations.

Local organizations, including the Wethersfield Historical Society, the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, the Historic District Commission, the Village Improvement Association, the Old Wethersfield Shopkeepers Association, and the Tourism Commission, have joined with residents to assist in defining the vision and direction for the Master Plan. Community outreach was a critical component of the planning process and ensured that all interested stakeholders and residents had the opportunity to identify their specific goals and issues associated with the master planning process. The community outreach program included steering committee meetings, one-on-one meetings with identified project stakeholders, three focus group sessions, and four community workshops that were open to all interested parties.

The master planning project began on January 10th 2007 with a meeting of the Steering Committee for the project. Interested members of the public attended the meeting as well and provided their input. At the meeting, JMA received background information from the Steering Committee on issues and interests of residents, attractions, and businesses within the Historic District.

Over the early spring, JMA reviewed background materials related to the project provided by the Town and the various partners within the Historic District. JMA also undertook field work, reviewing and photographing existing conditions on a range of issues to be addressed by the master plan. On March 21st and 22nd, a series of three focus group meetings were held with (1) residents from the Cove Park area, (2) representatives from historic sites and attractions, and (3) business owners. A public meeting was held on March 21st to present the project to residents and receive input on issues of concern to them.

Because of limited attendance at the first public meeting, a second public meeting was held on May 4th. At the second public meeting, JMA reintroduced the project and planning process and reviewed the work that had been completed to date. Attendees voiced their interests and concerns over a wide range of issues related to the Historic District.

In early June, JMA submitted initial chapters of the master plan to the Steering Committee, including primarily an overview of the historical development of Old Wethersfield. On June 20th and 21st, JMA met with the Steering Committee to present the team’s findings with respect to existing conditions and issues and to discuss initial ideas for approach and recommendations. Information on the three comparable communities was presented based upon research that was conducted in the spring. A

third public meeting was held at which the same information was presented, initial recommendations were reviewed, and input received. The Steering Committee provided JMA with comments on the historical overview.

Over the summer, JMA prepared existing condition chapters of the master plan. These chapters included a market study of the Historic District and were presented to the Steering Committee on September 19th along with a powerpoint presentation on JMA's recommendations for the master plan, further developing the initial recommendations that had been discussed with the Steering Committee and public in June. On November 1st, JMA received comments on the existing conditions chapters and recommendations from the Steering Committee. In November, JMA revised the existing conditions chapters, and in December, JMA prepared a draft of the recommendations chapter of the plan. A draft of the master plan was presented to the Town in January, 2008.

Past Plans and Studies

The development of the Old Wethersfield Master Plan is not the first planning document to look at the Town, and specifically at the Old Wethersfield Historic District. Over the past eighty years, numerous documents have been prepared for the Town and the district that looked at land use, economic development, tourism, marketing, and other physical and economic elements associated with the community.

This master plan is intended to be the culmination of previous efforts into a comprehensive document that provides a clear and realistic vision for the Old Wethersfield community which will allow it to flourish and adapt in a manner that residents, business owners, historic property owners, and officials are comfortable with. Previous planning efforts provide a sound framework from which to begin considering how the Old Wethersfield Historic District can successfully evolve from today forward.

The following section summarizes some of the relevant planning documents that have previously been completed for the Town and Old Wethersfield. These documents were reviewed and considered during the development of recommendations and strategies associated with this master plan. Each document is briefly described with any significant recommendations pertinent to this study identified.

In addition to the documents listed below, other past planning studies were reviewed for additional insights regarding specific topics of importance to residents, business owners, and historic sites in the district. These include market studies for various historic sites, business surveys, parking studies, long-term plans, and historical maps and images.

Plan of a Residence Suburb (1928)

In 1928 Herbert Swan developed a plan for Wethersfield which speculated the Town would grow from its 7,000 residents in 1927 to 24,000 in 1950. The plan is divided into the following sections: Thoroughfares; Parkways; Land Subdivisions; Parks; Schools and Playgrounds; and the Amenities of a Residence Suburb. The focus of the final section stresses the importance of Wethersfield's architecture and historic building stock, as well as landscaping and how the treatment of the site should be considered in addition to looking at just the buildings themselves.

Master Plan Report (1946)

In 1946 the Town of Wethersfield commissioned a study to estimate the probable growth of the Town through 1960 and to suggest possible scenarios associated with the potential increase in residents. The Master Plan Report focused on the Town as a whole, with no specific concentration on Old Wethersfield. The plan looked at the physical characteristics of the Town, the people of Wethersfield, economic aspects, social institutions, and government. The master plan proposal does consider Old Wethersfield for a new town centre, but ultimately proposes an alternative location. Various aspects of the plan have remained true, such as Wethersfield remaining a primary residential suburb of Hartford.

Report on Planning (1960)

The 1960 Plan was prepared to consider the best plan for future development of the Town, considering objectives, as opposed to detailed construction projects. Key elements of the plan included a review and analysis of Wethersfield Meadows, Business, Industry, Residential Neighborhoods, Schools, and Parks. Two of the key elements are directly related to Old Wethersfield – the State Prison Property and Historic Zoning. The plan identified the prison site as the possible new site of the Motor Vehicles Department, which it did become. With respect to Historic Zoning, this plan recommends a detailed study to conserve the character of Old Wethersfield (or “Old Town” as it was referred) with an emphasis on the relationships and compatibility of buildings.

Historic District Commission – Chapter 10 Article XVIII Town Code (1962)

The Historic District and Historic District Commission were established through the adoption of Chapter 10, Article XVIII within the Town Code. The intent of this Article was to promote the educational, cultural, economic, and general welfare of the Town through preservation and protection of buildings, places, and districts of historic interest within the Town; and to preserve and protect the many architectural phases associated with the community. The Article defines the boundaries of the Historic District and describes the role of the Historic District Commission.

Plan of Preservation and Protection for the Historic District (1978)

The 1978 plan was developed by a team of architects that worked in tandem with members of the Historic District Commission to assist property owners and lay-out information about the Commission and the District in a manner that was easy to understand for residents. The document discusses the role and scope of the Commission; a rating system for buildings and spaces; design guideline for rehabilitation, new construction, and restoration broken into several sub-categories with images; definitions; and closes with an overarching approach to the philosophy of the district.

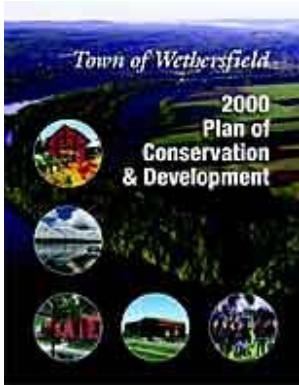
Recommendations within the plan for capital improvements are similar to those being considered today, almost thirty years later – a comprehensive signage program to replace the diverse signage which is present; a pedestrian network in a material such as brick; new street lighting that is compatible within the district; and off-street parking.

Parking Study of Old Wethersfield (1988)

During a seven month period between 1987 and 1988 a study took place which included an inventory and assessment of parking in the Village center of Old Wethersfield. The study was undertaken in response to requests by local shopkeepers and business owners. The study identified that the perceived parking shortage was not actually occurring; visitors and business users just needed to be willing to walk a few hundred feet to get to their destination, as opposed to only being willing to park at the front door of their destination.

Plan of Conservation and Development (2000)

The Plan for Conservation and Development is the official planning document in the Town; it establishes the Town’s official set of recommendations, policies, and goals for the use of land and preservation of the Town’s natural, historic, and other resources. Officially adopted by the Town in 2000, it contains two policies that relate to the promotion of heritage tourism in the community. The first policy states “The Town should prepare a master plan for the Old Wethersfield Historic District to preserve and enhance the historic assets within the largest Historic District in the State of Connecticut”. The second policy states that the Town should “Develop a Tourism Plan for Old Wethersfield”. Both policies are being supported and furthered by the current planning effort associated with the development of this master plan.



The 2000 Plan of Conservation and Development for the Town of Wethersfield

Historic District Commission Handbook (2003)

The Handbook is the official compliance manual used by the Historic District Commission of the Town of Wethersfield. The document was prepared in 2003 through a joint effort between the Commission and the Town of Wethersfield’s Building Department. Part I of the document identifies application procedures and defines what activities are regulated by the Commission. The second part of the document includes design guidelines that address historic context, character, and various exterior architectural elements.

The Silas Deane: A Vision for Reinvestment (2006)

The Town has completed a planning process to redevelop and enhance the Silas Deane Highway. Currently an uninviting mix of strip malls, chain restaurants, and various business and governmental uses, the highway is in need of various aesthetic improvements. The planning process is being undertaken through a partnership with the

Town of Rocky Hill as a joint effort to enhance the Silas Deane Highway. Together, the Towns received state funds to develop the master plan and begin improvements to the highway.

As part of the planning process, the Town has recommended a wayfinding signage program be implemented for the highway. In response to this recommendation, a wayfinding component has been included in this Old Wethersfield Master Plan. The implementation of wayfinding signage directly impacts the historic district, as the majority of people entering the historic district do so from the Silas Deane and rely on attractive, well-placed, informative signage to assist them in locating the amenities they are looking for. The signage proposed along the Silas Deane Highway should be consistent with signage to be implemented within Old Wethersfield as well as throughout the entire Town. In addition to signage, the vision for the Silas Deane Highway addresses land use, transportation, streetscape amenities, architectural guidelines, and reinvestment sites along the highway.

Wethersfield Destination Signage

This report was prepared by the Greater Hartford Arts Council for the Wethersfield Tourism Commission. The report is an inventory of the various types and styles of signage currently located throughout Wethersfield. Types of signage identified in the report include State DOT signs, gateway signs, directional signs, and destination signs. The report concluded that the existing signage in the Town is inadequate, particularly in the context of promoting the Town as a tourist destination. One of the primary recommendations of the report is that a uniform, consistent design for signage, Town-wide, should be developed. The tasks associated with recommended enhancements to the existing sign system were broken down into three distinct phases to occur over a specified period.

Marketing Communications Plan (2007)

In February 2007 Keiler & Company presented a draft *Marketing and Communications Plan* to the Town of Wethersfield. The plan is intended to assist the Town in marketing and promoting Wethersfield at a Town-wide level. There are a number of recommendations and proposals that are specific to the Old Wethersfield Historic District, as well as broad recommendations that have the potential to impact the historic district. The plan was developed to address the Town's two marketing goals. The first is to enhance economic development activities by attracting new businesses and expanding existing businesses. The second goal is to increase tourism which is an important potential source of revenue to the Town.

The *Marketing and Communications Plan* includes recommendations on a number of topics directly associated with marketing the Town to visitors, businesses, and developers. Specific topics covered in the document include economic development, branding, public relations and advertising, tourism and promotional opportunities, and includes a budget that relates to the specific recommendations.

Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives for the Historic Wethersfield Master Plan are intended to serve as the vision for the planning process. Future sections of the plan identify specific policies and recommendations to implement the goals and objectives which were developed with input from Town officials, the Master Plan Steering Committee, participants in community focus group sessions, and members of the general public who attended and provided comments at the Community Workshops.

While the overarching goal of the Historic Wethersfield Master Plan is to preserve and protect the distinctive character of the community through thoughtful and sensitive planning, there are specific goals and objectives for other specialized segments of the Old Wethersfield historic district, including historic sites, business development, streetscape improvements, and programming.

The goals and objectives, as defined below, guided the planning process which resulted in the development of the Master Plan.

Goal 1:

Preserve and protect the historic character of the community.

Objectives:

- A. To maintain the character of existing residential neighborhoods
- B. To ensure that new development is in harmony with existing building stock and land uses
- C. To involve all interested stakeholders and residents in the planning process to ensure their ideas and concerns are incorporated into this plan, and in future decision-making processes

Goal 2:

Attract and retain appropriate small business within the Village Center that can be supported by both residents and visitors.

Objectives:

- A. To define an appropriate business mix that could be feasibly supported within the district and identify incentives and other strategies to help create the desired business mix
- B. To identify appropriate locations for business growth and development that does not detract or negatively impact the existing character of surrounding neighborhoods
- C. To identify a niche market that is appealing to both local residents and visitors

Goal 3:

Ensure that the existing historic sites and resources remain viable links to the Town's past.

Objectives:

- A. To identify a marketing program to assist existing organizations in attracting a wider visitor base, both locally and regionally
- B. To foster cooperation and collaboration among existing historic sites to pool available resources for the betterment of each entity
- C. To identify potential joint initiatives between historic sites and local businesses
- D. To identify an interpretive signage program to help tell the story of Historic Wethersfield and its historical significance

Goal 4:

Implement streetscape and roadway enhancements which improve the safety and physical appearance of the historic district for pedestrians.

Objectives:

- A. To identify an appropriate scale for new development within the district that is compatible within the existing historic context
- B. To identify improvements to major intersections and other practical traffic calming measures
- C. To identify safety improvements at key intersections and recommend modifications to existing conditions which improve pedestrian safety
- D. To recommend improvements to gateways leading into the historic district that showcase the district as an attractive and desirable destination
- E. To identify pedestrian amenities that are cohesive and consistent throughout the district and represent the character of the community
- F. To develop a signage program that includes a level of signage that can be implemented in stages throughout the district, including welcome signs, wayfinding signage, directional signage, interpretive exhibits, and historical markers
- G. To assess traffic patterns and parking in the Village Center and identify practical solutions for improving safety, accessibility, and availability of parking

Goal 5:

Identify opportunities for programming and special events that help to market the historic district as a destination to districts residents, town residents, and regional visitors.

Objectives:

- A. To provide recommendations for improving existing marketing efforts and to identify new opportunities for marketing the district's resources
- B. To identify opportunities for programming and special events that build on the unique sites, resources, and history of the town
- C. To develop partnerships between historic sites to develop programs that build on the strengths of each resource
- D. To generate awareness of Historic Wethersfield and its attractions, businesses, and offerings to historic district residents, Town residents, regional visitors, and tourists

CHAPTER 2: HISTORIC CONTEXT

Introduction

Wethersfield was the first permanent English settlement in Connecticut and was one of the first three towns to be developed along the Connecticut River. With landscape and built resources representing the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries, it forms an important continuum of architectural, socioeconomic, and cultural history. Today, it is home to Connecticut's largest historic district, and its history is communicated to visitors and residents through a variety of means, including the preservation of historic buildings and landscapes; the continued maintenance and use of historic public buildings, businesses, churches, and houses; multiple historic house properties; strong town traditions; heritage tourism; and over a century of conscious community efforts to preserve and beautify its village center (McDonough 1987:5; WVIA 2001; Wieder 1986:xi).

Before Wethersfield

In 1631, Indian tribes along the Connecticut River were decimated by disease. Fearing that this made them more vulnerable to attacks from the Pequot tribe to the southeast, they took the step of asking English colonists who had settled in Massachusetts to come settle along the Connecticut River as a protective measure. The Massachusetts colonists declined the invitation initially, but within a few years, as more settlers arrived, a Connecticut colony seemed more feasible. The Plymouth colony explored the territory in 1632 and established a trading post at what is now Windsor, at the mouth of the Farmington River, in 1633. The Dutch established a trading post at Hartford the same year. In the fall of 1633, John Oldham of Watertown, Massachusetts came to explore along the Connecticut. Members of the Wongunk Indian tribe inhabited the Wethersfield area and called the land "Pyquag," meaning "cleared land" (Howard 1997:14; McDonough 1987:5; Wieder 1986:11-12). The river formed an oxbow curve just north of the town, and the Wongunks cultivated a variety of crops in the broad meadows. Oldham noted the excellent natural harbor and fertile, cleared fields, and the Wongunk chief indicated that the English were welcome there. Oldham returned to Watertown and petitioned the Massachusetts court for permission to settle at Pyquag. While the court debated during the winter of 1634-1635, Oldham and nine other men from Watertown camped in the vicinity of the Cove to establish claim to the site. The court finally granted permission on May 5, 1635 for residents of Watertown to settle on the Connecticut, and six members of the Watertown church were "dismissed" around the same time to form a new church "in the River of Connecticut." The first group of families arrived to join the Ten Adventurers at Pyquag during the summer of 1635. This settlement, initially called Watertown after the Massachusetts town left behind, was the first permanent English settlement on the Connecticut River. Within a year, residents of Cambridge and Dorchester, Massachusetts, had received permission to settle Windsor and Hartford, and a committee composed of settlers from the three new towns was appointed to govern them (Wieder 1986:11-12). Although the trading posts at Windsor and Hartford were established slightly earlier, Wethersfield began as a permanent settlement and thus is regarded as Connecticut's first town (Howard 1997:14).

The Early Settlement

During the early Puritan settlement of New England, towns were generally founded for the purpose of seating a new church and congregation, and the meetinghouse formed the physical, spiritual, and social core of the settlement. There was no separation of church and state within the Massachusetts Bay colony, and little tolerance of those who did not conform to Puritan beliefs. As existing towns grew and the best lands within them were claimed, newer arrivals and ministers sought to form new towns elsewhere. Theological differences and the influences of different ministers also caused groups to splinter off (or be banished) from established towns. Typically each group seeking to form a town had a minister named as its leader. Wethersfield, interestingly, did not have any one minister named as the spiritual leader of the group, although at least four ministers were known to have moved there sometime before 1640. Oldham's determination to begin the new settlement, against the wishes of government and church officials in Watertown, resulted in the town's formation without a church in place. However, it appears from records of the governing committee that the members of the Watertown church fulfilled their covenant to found a new church in Connecticut sometime in the first year of the settlement. Due to the loss of records from before 1640, is not known when or where this group first convened. Problems of theology and land distribution among the congregation eventually led three of the four ministers and many of the original settlers to leave Wethersfield by 1640 to found Milford and Stamford, and the fourth, the Rev. Henry Smith, became the first settled minister of the Wethersfield church in 1641 (Wieder 1986:6-7, 12-13, 16).

Wethersfield was formally organized and assumed its current name in 1636. At this time, the first land survey took place and the town was laid out. As was typical practice, settlers received grants of a town lot, averaging two to three acres, plus outlying tracts for agriculture, woodlands, and pastures. The surveyor, Nathaniel Foote, set aside land for a meetinghouse and three large town "commons" or communal properties where residents could graze their livestock. One common was at the harbor (now Cove Park), another on Broad Street (now the Broad Street Green) and the third was near the meetinghouse lot, near the intersection of Main and Marsh Streets. All were considerably larger in their original form than they are today (Howard 1997:16; Wieder 1986:15). The town of Wethersfield originally encompassed 54 square miles on both sides of the Connecticut River, but settlement was concentrated on the west side of the river at the harbor and to the south of the river (Howard 1997:33; Kuckro 2007).

The original settlers faced the arduous tasks of constructing shelters, clearing land, planting and harvesting crops, and preparing for their first winter in Connecticut. The land on which they settled had been purchased for cash from the Wongunks, but the English concept of permanent land ownership was not consistent with the Wongunk's cultural practices, and created conflict when Wongunk hunters periodically returned to traditional hunting grounds. Although the Wongunks left the immediate area as the town was established and had peaceful relations with the colonists, the colonists were still fearful of raids by the Indians in general, given the language and cultural barriers between the groups. The colonists' worst fears were realized in the spring of 1637, when marauding Pequots came up the river in the early morning hours and ambushed the settlers when they left their homes in the village to work in the fields. Nine people and 20 cows were killed, and two young girls were briefly taken captive. This traumatic event prompted Wethersfield and the other river towns to band together and

wage war on the Pequots. The success of this campaign convinced the three Connecticut River towns that they were strong enough to form a government independent of Massachusetts, and the resultant adoption of the Fundamental Orders in 1639 effectively separated Connecticut into its own colony (Wieder 1986:14-15). The Fundamental Orders, composed by Connecticut River colonists nearly 150 years before the U.S. declared its independence from England, are regarded as the first written constitution in what would eventually become the United States of America and served as a model for the U.S. Constitution (WVIA 2001).

The first permanent dwellings in Wethersfield were situated along Broad and Main Streets, and around the Broad Street Green (Howard 1997:177; Wieder 1986:19). The early houses were sited around the Green on the east side of Broad Street abutting the Little Plain, which the Indians had already cleared for farming. The Green itself was used for military drills and to pasture livestock. The first houses the colonists built were log-framed one-room cottages with earth floors, chimneys made of sticks plastered with clay, and thatch or wood-shingled roofs. These dwellings were short-lived and eventually replaced by small permanent structures with post-and-beam construction. This second phase of house construction was prevalent until the end of the seventeenth century, and was characterized by a two-to-four-room dwelling with puncheon (split-log) floors and brick chimneys. Most early dwellings did not survive, but the oldest extant dwelling in Wethersfield is 481 Main Street, believed to have been built for George Hubbard c. 1637 (Howard 1997:175-177; Wieder 1986:35-36).

A hillside cemetery was part of the Wethersfield town landscape from its earliest days, although the date of its establishment is not known. It occupies a site which had already been used as a burying ground by Native Americans. It is believed that the nine victims of the 1637 Pequot Massacre were interred in the Ancient Burying Ground in deliberately unmarked graves. At least two of the original settlers may lie in this cemetery as well. Nathaniel Foote's grave is unmarked but believed to lie within the cemetery. The grave of Leonard Chester, who died in 1648, is marked by a headstone carved c. 1670s-1680s. This stone is the oldest example of a Puritan grave monument in Wethersfield and among the oldest recorded gravestones in New England (McDonough 1987:5, 15; Wieder 1987:19). The proper maintenance of the Ancient Burying Ground was clearly the responsibility of the town by 1680, when Wethersfield appointed Emanuel (Enoch) Buck as its gravedigger (McDonough 1987:6). Within the greater boundaries of the original town of Wethersfield, at least four additional burying grounds were established, but these were eventually incorporated into newer towns, leaving the Ancient Burying Ground as the primary cemetery in town (McDonough 1987:37).

In 1645, the town began construction on its first meetinghouse, which took two years to complete. Little is known about what this looked like, but it was likely a square one-story edifice of solid wood or log construction and stood at the intersection of Main and Marsh Streets, a central location within the town plan. It was built and owned by the town, and all inhabitants were taxed for its construction and upkeep. The Wethersfield meetinghouse was a multipurpose space and was not consecrated for religious use. It was intended not only for worship, but as a place for town meetings, public gatherings, and refuge from Indian raids (Wieder 1986:19-20). A second meetinghouse, 50 feet square with dormer windows in its hipped roof, was constructed in 1686 and was used for the following 75 years. This frame building was probably similar to the Old Ship Meetinghouse in Hingham, Massachusetts (Howard 1997:17-1; Wieder 1986:28-29).

A Maritime Community – “Shipbuilding and Trade”

Shipbuilding and maritime trade were key economic factors in the early history of Wethersfield. Access to navigable waterways was critical for trade, and Wethersfield had a good natural harbor on the Connecticut River. At this time, the river was too shallow above Wethersfield for larger vessels to continue north to Hartford, so Wethersfield’s harbor became the primary transfer point in the shipment of goods to and from upper Connecticut River settlers. Inbound ships were unloaded at Wethersfield and goods were transferred to flatboats or wagons. Pipestaves, or barrel staves, were perhaps the most important early export from Wethersfield. Wood, salted meat and fish, grains, flax, and cornmeal were among other products shipped to the West Indies in exchange for molasses, sugar, rum, and salt. European goods were procured in Boston.



The Cove and Old Wethersfield waterfront began to develop in the seventeenth century

During the seventeenth century, the river’s primary course flowed through the area that is now the Cove, and the harbor waterfront in this area was developed with at least one shipyard and six warehouses. Thomas Deming, a ship carpenter, received a piece of land by the “landing-place” for a shipyard in 1648 and used it to build the *Tryall*, which is believed to have been the first ship built in Connecticut, in 1649 (Adams 1977:8; Wieder 1987:37). In 1661, the town granted Samuel Wells land to build a warehouse, and by 1691, five additional warehouses, a wharf, and a blacksmith shop formed a busy commercial nucleus at the harbor. Ice and fish houses and a ropewalk were located at the harbor as well. The last warehouse, built by Nicholas Moorcock c. 1690, is the only survivor of severe floods in 1692 that washed away the other buildings and changed the river channel drastically. (Adams 1977:8-10; Howard 1997:30-31).

The flooding redirected the river to the east and formed the current Cove, which now was separated from the primary channel and no longer useful as a landing place and harbor. These topographic changes also made the river navigable above Wethersfield, and the town’s importance as a transfer point for Hartford’s trade declined. After 1692, Wethersfield’s shipbuilding, trade, and shipping operations moved south to a riverfront landing place and shipyard that had been set aside by the town in 1672, and a new complex of warehouses and buildings arose there. This area, known as both Stepney and Rocky Hill in its early years, is now part of the Town of Rocky Hill and first began to develop in the 1670s. The Cove area remained in limited use for shipbuilding, but was more useful as a place for fishing and ice harvesting (Adams 1977:9-12; Howard 1997:31-35; Wieder 1986:77).

Despite the wilderness and its scarce, poor roads, settlement spread rapidly into Wethersfield's outer reaches, including the area east of the river by 1649. A sawmill was built on this side in 1667, and the expanding population petitioned the Town of Wethersfield to establish its own church in 1689. The General Court of Connecticut granted permission in 1690 for this area to become a township as soon as it had procured a permanent minister. In 1692, the Rev. Timothy Stevens arrived, and in 1693, construction of a meetinghouse began and the town of Glastonbury was formally incorporated. This 1693 split was the first of several transactions over a 150-year period in which approximately 18 square miles of Wethersfield's original 54-square-mile tract were split off to form neighboring towns (Howard 1997:33; Kuckro 2007).

The Griswoldville section of Wethersfield, lying southwest of the main settlement, became an early milling center when Leonard Chester began operating a grist mill on the brook there in 1636-1637. In 1680, Jacob Griswold settled on a 16-acre property that he had received from his father. Griswold's early settlement later evolved into Griswoldville, a discrete town within Wethersfield best known for its historic concentration of mills and in the 19th century, industry (Howard 1997:35).

The village of Wethersfield had evolved into a densely settled linear village by the end of the 1600s, with dwellings, farms, and a few businesses lining Main Street and Broad Street south from the Cove to the road leading west to Leonard Chester's mill, as well as Sandy Lane and Watering Lane. At least 250 property owners have been identified within the village core and on Wright's Island nearby prior to 1700 (Willard and Birmingham 1951).

Shipbuilding and maritime trade continued as a dominant industry in Wethersfield during the eighteenth century. A new shipyard began at Stepney in 1750 and another was added in 1797. Small ships based in Wethersfield and owned by Wethersfield citizens sailed back and forth to Boston and the West Indies, and were well suited for navigating both the river and the small harbors at Wethersfield and in the West Indies. Some ships built in Wethersfield were sold overseas. Due to the loss of most maritime records during the Revolutionary War, exact numbers of vessels built and operated in Wethersfield are not known, but it is clear that grains, pipestaves, livestock, salt fish, and onions were traded abroad for shipments of increasingly sophisticated goods and luxury items. Food products like salt, sugar, molasses, rum, liquors, wine, tea, spices, and limes were imported from abroad, along with fabrics, lace, china, glassware, books, and tools from Europe. Imported wares were sold by approximately 15 local merchants in Wethersfield by the 1770s, indicating a thriving maritime trade. Along with carpenters, sailmakers, cordwainers, and crew members who worked in shipyards or aboard ships, Wethersfield's economic base now included many specialized tradespeople, such as blacksmiths, cobblers, tanners, weavers, joiners, and millers. Taverns were also established to cater to the many visitors who passed through the town by road or water (Wieder 1986:42-43).

An Agrarian Community – “The Red Onion”

Agriculture was a universal occupation for Wethersfield residents from the beginning, with nearly everyone raising subsistence crops on their acreage and relying upon family labor to plant, tend, harvest, and process the yield. Wealthier families had more land than others, but also needed more hands to keep it in cultivation. Excess crops were sold for export or for barter with local merchants (Wieder 1986:44).

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, one particular crop earned Wethersfield renown throughout the world: the Wethersfield red onion. Raised in Wethersfield's fertile fields, the onions were often tended and harvested by women and girls, and were Wethersfield's most important export during the seventeenth and early eighteenth century (Wieder 1986:43). Beginning in the 1730s, as many as 500 local residents a year worked cultivating onions, and Wethersfield red onions were prized cash crops that were sold and shipped all over the world, including coastal North America, England, the Mediterranean, and the West Indies. They were typically bundled into five-pound "ropes" or packed in barrels for shipment. The "immense fields of onions" surrounding Wethersfield and the unique local custom of women and girls working in the onion patches were impressive enough to be remarked upon repeatedly by visitors to Wethersfield during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century (Howard 1997:84-85).

Wethersfield's growth and economic prosperity were such that its housing stock improved considerably in size and quality during the 18th century (Wieder 1986:44). Settlers throughout New England adapted traditional English building forms to the harsher New England climate and the materials available, creating the first generation of substantial permanent dwellings that have survived into modern times. This period saw the widespread construction of a two-story timber-framed dwelling with two rooms on each floor divided by a central masonry chimney, with a winding staircase placed against the chimney in a small front entrance passage. Expansions to the rear added additional rooms and gave rise to what was eventually called a New England saltbox.

Houses within the Connecticut colonies were constructed in this manner beginning during the mid seventeenth century, and the type became more prevalent after 1700 (Roth 1979:13-18). The restored Buttolph-Williams house, constructed c. 1715 for Benjamin Belden, is among the earlier examples of this dwelling type extant in Wethersfield today (Historic Wethersfield 2003). As the century went on and citizens achieved greater economic prosperity, Wethersfield houses became more refined in style and larger, more elaborate dwellings were constructed with large sash windows, four or more rooms per floor and multiple chimneys. Gambrel roofs and Georgian or Federal details were used on the more elaborate examples. Dozens of houses built during this period still stand. The Joseph Webb (1752), Ezekiel Williams (1759), Silas Deane (c. 1770), Solomon Welles (1774), and Isaac Stevens (c. 1789) houses exemplify the increasingly fine dwellings of prosperous Wethersfield citizens during the eighteenth century.

18th Century Growth and Development

Wethersfield's meetinghouse, the First Church of Christ, is the third meetinghouse constructed by the local congregation, and was built in 1761-1764 to accommodate the growing community. As with Wethersfield's residential buildings, this meetinghouse was a larger and more refined building than its predecessors. As the population grew during the eighteenth century, the 1686 meetinghouse was rapidly becoming crowded and inadequate. As early as 1753, there was discussion of replacing it, and in 1760, the town took action to raise funds for a new building. A dwelling lot adjoining the 1686 meetinghouse was acquired as a building site. Despite an economic downturn, an ambitious fundraising effort was undertaken by the town. Special taxes, paid in part with parishioners' onions which were then sold, raised over \$23,000 in funds, and the

cornerstone was laid in May 1761. The new, stately red brick building was completed in 1764. It was constructed using a basic and widely-used plan of a gabled two-story building with the pulpit centered on one long wall, an interior gallery upstairs, and a projecting “porch” at one end which contained stairs inside and a steeple on top. However, the huge size of the building and the use of brick as a construction material set the Wethersfield church far above its frame counterparts in most towns. The steeple was modeled after those adorning two Episcopal churches: the frame Trinity Church (1725) in Newport, and the brick Old North Church (1723) in Boston. Both reflect the influence of Sir Christopher Wren of England, whose architectural design work was



*Steeple of the First
Church of Christ*

published in British pattern books.

The presence of such expensive and sophisticated architecture in Wethersfield suggests that members of the parish were literate, aware of English fashions, and had considerable familiarity with church architecture in New England’s largest cities. The church is the only extant brick eighteenth-century meetinghouse in Connecticut, as well as one of the finest surviving churches of its period. It was called both “the finest Meeting House outside of Boston” and “the church that onions built.” The new meetinghouse, combined with the solidly built houses and farms, shops, thriving harbor and shipyards, and lush fields of onions and other crops, made Wethersfield an attractive town to passing travelers (Howard 1997:85-86; Wieder 1986:45, 62-65).

Other buildings in the developing town included at least two wood-frame public schoolhouses in the village proper. At an unknown date before 1770, both were replaced by brick buildings, and known as the Broad Street School on Broad Street and the Northbrick School at Hartford Avenue, State, and Nott Streets. Other early schoolhouses in Wethersfield included frame buildings on Main Street, South Hill, and West Hill. The West Hill schoolhouse was replaced with a brick building in 1795. These little schools gave local children a primary-school education, and the town by and large was a literate population that valued at least a basic education (Wieder 1976:47-48).

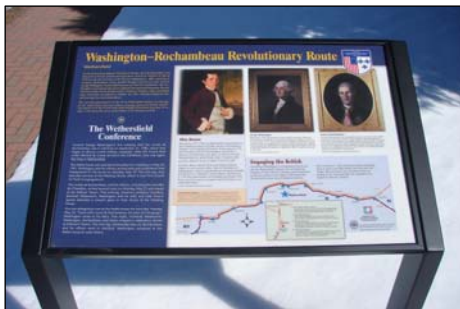
The growth in population also translated into a greater number of people dying within the Town. On March 8, 1736, the Ancient Burying Ground was expanded for the first time through Nathaniel Burnham’s donation of land to the south and west. A caretaker, whose responsibilities included keeping cattle out of the cemetery and tolling the meetinghouse bell to announce deaths and funerals, was appointed in 1757. Along with a small salary, he was permitted to harvest the grass and the apples growing on

trees within the cemetery. In 1790, the Ancient Burying Ground was extended a third time with land given by James Marsh, and now reached up to the location of the new meetinghouse (McDonough 1987:6).

As the town population grew, the boundaries of Wethersfield shrank as two more outlying areas formed their own parishes. The distance, poor roads, and topography made travel to attend Sunday services at the Wethersfield meetinghouse difficult for the increasing numbers of residents who settled in outlying parts of the town. Settlement had begun in 1668 in the westernmost area of Wethersfield, but the travel route over Cedar Mountain was challenging and in 1710, residents of that area were permitted to worship amongst themselves during the winter months. Three years later, 31 men from the “West Division” petitioned to form their own parish and were granted a charter, but a permanent minister was not installed until 1720. In 1721, this parish area became known as Newington, or the Second Society of Wethersfield.

Meanwhile, the growing settlement at Stepney/Rocky Hill petitioned for its own parish in 1720. Wethersfield permitted the separation in 1721, and the Connecticut General Court officially made it a parish in 1722. It assumed the name Stepney in 1723, and was also known as the Third Society of Wethersfield. Each of the three parishes, or “societies,” had to maintain its own schools, meetinghouse, and burying grounds until Rocky Hill incorporated as a separate town in 1843 and Newington followed suit in 1871. At this point, Wethersfield assumed its current boundaries (Wieder 1986:47).

Wethersfield retained the Griswoldville settlement within its boundaries permanently, and formed the First Society in 1722 to ensure that only residents of Wethersfield who remained within the original parish had control of the town. The First Society owned and maintained the meetinghouse, schools, commons, and burying ground. The First School Society, a descendant of this early governing body, presently owns and maintains the Ancient Burying Ground (Howard 1997:33-36; Wieder 1986:46-47).



An interpretive wayside on Main Street discusses the role of Wethersfield in the American Revolution

As with many harbor towns, Wethersfield was caught up in the events leading to the American Revolution, and its merchants and seafarers were impacted greatly by England’s repeated attempts to control trade and taxes in the Colonies. Many town residents enlisted to fight the British, and Wethersfield citizen Silas Deane, a member of the Continental Congress in 1774 and 1775, was selected to travel to France to negotiate for supplies. Deane is regarded as America’s first diplomat, and hosted George Washington at his home in Wethersfield during Washington’s first visit to town in 1775. Washington visited two times more, dining at the Newington home of Captain Charles Churchill in 1780, and lodging for five days at the Joseph Webb house in 1781. At the Webb House, he met with Count de Rochambeau of France, and their strategic planning for battle at this meeting ultimately led to the Battle of Yorktown and the

successful end of the war. The inland position of the town spared it from British raids during the war, but the British blockade cut off trade and financial crises challenged even wealthy residents of the town.

Wartime did bring some new economic opportunities. At least two businesses, including a saltpeter mill and a hatmaking operation, were begun in town to supply the Continental troops. The town saw a number of temporary residents as well. Fearing raids in New Haven, Yale College moved its students to inland communities, and its senior class took up residence in Wethersfield with their tutor in 1777. Since the town was regarded as safe territory, it was also used to quarter British prisoners and Loyalists, who lived in private homes or taverns. With normal trade disrupted by the war, many sea captains in Wethersfield turned to privateering, or using their armed private vessels to seize British ships and property for the benefit of the Continental forces. At least 17 Wethersfield vessels were registered as privateers, and were most active between 1777 and 1780, but the practice was generally not as profitable as normal trade. Trade resumed after 1780 when the theater of war moved further south and the British blockade of the Connecticut coastline was relaxed. Privateering was discouraged at this point because the men were needed to meet militia quotas. Even after the war ended, trade did not return to its previous levels, and increasing shares of Wethersfield's former business now went to Hartford instead (Howard 1997:61; Reynolds 1976:22-26; WVIA [2006]; Wieder 1986:48-55).

Continued Agricultural Development – “The Seed Industry”

The nineteenth century saw agriculture assuming dominance in Wethersfield's economy as maritime occupations and trade began to decline rapidly. Following the Revolutionary War, American traders were no longer welcome in British ports, and this cut sharply into profits. Embargoes during the War of 1812 further exacerbated the losses, and trade from Wethersfield ceased for the most part by 1825. Meanwhile, Hartford's rise to prominence took away much of the commerce that had flourished at Wethersfield, and shipbuilding at the Stepney landing continued only into the 1820s. The loss of this lucrative business took a heavy toll on the town, and Yale's president, a visitor in 1814, remarked that the overall appearance and maintenance of the houses had declined considerably since the 1770s and that Wethersfield, a town that once outshone most others, had failed to keep pace with its neighbors (Wieder 1986:54-56).

Water transportation did remain important to a degree, and the Latimer Wharf at the end of River Road was built in 1819. This wharf served as a landing place for large shipments of coal and other supplies. Commercial net fishing and fish preservation for shipment also occurred in Wethersfield throughout the nineteenth century. Fishing had occurred from the beginnings of settlement, but the transportation advances of the nineteenth century allowed commercial fisheries to continue. From fish houses on the Cove, members of the Buck and Hanmer families continued to fish the Cove and the river for alewives, which were salted and shipped in barrels (Wieder 1986:74-77).

An innovative new seed industry began in Wethersfield by the early 1800s, and some believe the town was “the cradle of American seed companies” (Howard 1997:103). Due to its rich soil and access to water and later railroad transportation, Wethersfield was a fertile location for the propagation and export of seed crops. An 1811 advertisement in a Hartford newspaper indicated that Joseph Belden had a business in Wethersfield selling garden seeds. Less than a decade later, in 1820, James Belden

began an extensive seed business, called Wethersfield Seed Company, which he operated from his property on Main Street. His property contained gardens, several seed houses, and seven or eight barns, and his wares included at least 60 different types of vegetable and herb seeds.

A disastrous 1834 fire destroyed much of the Belden buildings, and the business was sold in 1838 to Franklin G. Comstock and his son William. At this time, the property contained 19 acres and a barn. The Comstocks joined with other partners, eventually including Henry Ferre, to produce seeds, and in 1845 Comstock, Ferre & Co. was established as the new business name. Comstock, Ferre's seed gardens soon occupied land throughout the town, and their products were distributed by traveling salesmen across the country. Contact with a Shaker community in Enfield brought the highly successful strategy of selling the seeds in paper packets. The company added roots, fertilizers, and tools to its offerings before it formally incorporated in 1853, and has continued in business to this day on the same site, using its early buildings.



Image of Comstock, Ferre & Co. site in 2007

Under the leadership of multiple generations of the Willard family, Comstock Ferre expanded into wholesaling and today is both a seed company and a garden center, still occupying its nineteenth century building complex in town. Until the mid-1900s, Comstock Ferre raised seeds in fields west of Main Street, between Main and Broad Streets south of Garden Street, and in Griswoldville. The seeds were harvested, dried on muslin sheets outside the Main Street offices, and then milled, tested, and bagged for distribution. Numerous other seed companies developed as well, some more successful than others. The Johnson, Robbins & Co. seed company (1855) eventually became a strong force in the southern seed market, and the Charles C. Hart Seed Company (1897) on Main Street, a descendant of Johnson, Robbins and other earlier wholesale seed businesses, has continued to the present day in its historic location. The widespread distribution of the seed companies' products meant that Wethersfield seeds have been sown in gardens and fields nationwide over the past century and a half (Comstock, Ferre and Co. [2007]; Howard 1997:101-103; Wieder 1986:75).

As the seed industry was taking off, Wethersfield's onion cultivation began to decline. Harsh weather, worm infestations, and increasing competition from farmers in Rhode Island during the 1818-1838 period spelled the end of the red onion's dominance. Some farmers continued to raise red onions into the late 1800s, but production was considerably less than before (Howard 1997:86). Other crops, including grains, fruits, and vegetables, were eventually shipped to Hartford markets. Agriculture became somewhat challenging due to soil depletion, and nationwide innovations of the mid-1800s in fertilizer and soil conditioning were probably welcomed. Dairy farming began in 1859, when Silas Robbins brought the first Jersey cows to Wethersfield.

Other local farmers followed suit with different cattle breeds, and over 20 dairy farms were operating in Wethersfield by 1900 (Wieder 1986:75).

19th Century Advancements and Social Change

Wethersfield was host to some industry during the nineteenth century, particularly in the Griswoldville section. The old Adams gristmill at Griswoldville was augmented in 1820 by a new sawmill. A ropewalk was established there in 1800, a short-lived woodworking factory opened in 1837, and a mattress factory started in 1844. A nearby complex of cloth mills owned by Griswold family members manufactured stockings and satinet. The Griswolds introduced the power loom at this facility in 1831, and began to use steam power. Their operation was reorganized as the Griswoldville Manufacturing Company in 1834. During the Civil War, the company employed 300-500 people to make clothing for the Union Army, but the presence of a boardinghouse on the property suggests that some of these employees came from other towns. Lack of employees and an inadequate water supply after the war forced the Griswoldville Manufacturing Company to close, but the Bailey & Wolcott Company used part of the site to manufacture axes and hammers for some time afterward.

Within the village center of Wethersfield, Dr. Erastus Cooke operated a chemical factory making dyes, saltpeter, and medicines on Chemical Lane. Overall, the industries that formed in Wethersfield did not include large plants or worker housing complexes, and since most were relatively short-lived and disappeared before 1900, there is little visible evidence of the town's industrial history today. Only the Adams Mill at Griswoldville survived into the twentieth century. The town's appearance in the 1800s was that of a rural farming village, and not a mill town (Howard 1997:89-91; Wieder 1986:76-77).

Transportation advances occurring nationwide gave Wethersfield increased access to the rest of the world. Steamships were operating on the Connecticut River by the 1820s, and regular stagecoach routes from Hartford to New Haven passed through the town, bringing mail and travelers. The Hartford and New Haven Railroad's Newington station was built in 1839. Another railroad line, the Hartford and Connecticut Valley line, passed directly through Wethersfield. In 1871, the Wethersfield Station was built in the village and Church Street was opened up to provide access. A second station, South Wethersfield, was added in 1872. In 1863, a horse-drawn streetcar route opened from the State House in Hartford to the Hills Hotel in Wethersfield. This line was replaced with trolley cars in 1894 and the route was extended south to the Broad Street Green (Wieder 1986:81).

In 1818, Connecticut's state constitution enacted provisions for the separation of church and state, and parish and town boundaries were now different things. Concurrent with this act, the town became less closely bound to the First Church and other religious denominations began to arrive. Baptists and Methodists had arrived in Wethersfield and begun worship during the late eighteenth century, but did not have their own buildings or ministers. The Baptists met at the Northbrick School until they built their first church in 1816, and the Methodists had itinerant preachers between 1790 and 1821, when they united with nearby parishes to hire a shared minister. The first Methodist church was built on Main Street in 1824. Several Newington residents founded a short-lived Episcopal church in 1797 which endured only until 1810, and the next Episcopal church in Wethersfield was Trinity Church, founded in the 1860s. The

First Church built a Gothic-style brick chapel next to the old church in 1872 for use as a Sunday school, and a Carpenter Gothic frame chapel was built the same year at Griswoldville. Griswoldville's chapel was used by both First Church members and other nearby residents who had formed the Griswoldville Union Sunday School in 1860 because of their distance from the main church (Howard 1997:35; Wieder 1986:47, 69-71, 99-100).

In the early years of the century, new publicly owned buildings arose in Wethersfield in response to growing societal needs. The Academy was built in 1804 as a school and public assembly building. Its two large downstairs rooms were intended for male and female instruction, while the single upstairs room was a meeting hall. Though owned by the town, the academies that used it were tuition-based private schools, none of which lasted long. Among the best known of these was the Female Seminary operated by the Rev. Joseph Emerson and his wife from 1830 to 1833. The town attempted repeatedly to establish a public high school, beginning in 1839, and finally started a high school program in the Academy. This lasted from 1868 until 1893, when a new high school, the Governor Thomas Welles School, was built. The Academy was subsequently used as a town hall and public library (Wieder 1986:79).

The small public schoolhouses of the previous century endured, though some were rebuilt in brick, including the Broad Street School after a fire in 1866, and the West Hill School in 1869. The South Hill School was built c. 1850s on Maple Street, and the High Street School in 1862. Griswoldville built a frame school in 1837 and replaced it with a brick building in 1852 (Wieder 1986:79).

The town opened its first almshouse, or workhouse, in 1811. In 1838, it purchased a 34-acre farm on what was then called Pratt's Ferry Road and converted an existing dwelling on the property for use as an almshouse. Residents of the institution received clothing and medical care and worked at cultivating subsistence crops to feed and support themselves. Some poor residents did not live at the almshouse, but were boarded with local families or in neighboring towns at the expense of the town of Wethersfield. The almshouse was replaced with a new brick building in 1850, and an addition was made in 1862 (Howard 1997:99).

The Connecticut State Prison was established near the Cove in 1827, replacing an older facility in Granby, and operated at that site until 1963. Its initial population included 127 prisoners, and it was the first state-owned building in Wethersfield (Howard 1997:53; Wieder 1986:77).

Fire was an ever-present fear of town residents, particularly in the village core. The first volunteer fire company was organized in 1803, making it the oldest in the United States. Despite its existence, two disastrous fires in town occurred during the early 1830s, causing significant changes to the streetscape. The first fire began in the John Williams barn north of the meetinghouse on the east side of Main Street in 1831, and resulted in the destruction of several barns and six homes, one of which didn't burn but was pulled down by volunteers to halt the fire from spreading further. The second fire, which occurred in August 1834 on the west side of Main Street, destroyed James Belden's barn and seed houses, three other houses and barns, and a cobbler's shop. Recovery from the fires was slow. Between 1836 and 1850, the use of fireproof brick or stone construction was introduced. Replacement buildings were erected in place of burned structures, including a stately, "Southern-style" brick dwelling built by John

Williams next to the meetinghouse. This house was perhaps the first example of a Greek Revival house in town. Construction of this house between 1832 and 1836 also introduced building setbacks in the central village streetscape. Wethersfield's fire company was incorporated in 1834, but fire protection did not improve substantially until it bought its first pumper engine from Hartford in 1858 (Howard 19997:87-90; Wieder 1986:78-79).

Wethersfield continued to enjoy the introduction of new domestic architecture styles as seen in popular pattern books and on buildings in larger cities. As farm properties were handed down from generation to generation, younger family members added new houses or remodeled old ones to suit modern tastes toward the increasingly picturesque revival styles sweeping the young United States. The austere eighteenth-century Georgian and Federal sea captains' houses soon had more exuberant neighbors built in the Greek Revival, Italianate, and Carpenter Gothic styles during the nineteenth century, forming a continuum of Wethersfield residents' architectural taste along the old streets (WVIA 2001).

By 1881, the town was again outgrowing the Ancient Burying Ground. In that year, the heirs of Dr. John Marsh donated a large tract to the First School Society to expand the cemetery. This parcel has since been referred to as the Village Cemetery, while the three older sections are collectively called the Ancient Burying Ground. The First School Society retains ownership of all of the sections and shares responsibility for upkeep with the Wethersfield Cemetery Association (McDonough 1987:6).

Toward the end of the century, residents of Wethersfield banded together to form a few philanthropic organizations. One of these, the Village Improvement Society, was established in 1883 and raised funds to install sidewalks and oil streetlamps on the major streets. Electric street lighting was installed in 1898. Wethersfield's farmers also began one of the first Grange societies in Connecticut in 1890 to promote agricultural education and social opportunities among its membership. This group erected a Grange Hall on Main Street in 1898 (Howard 1997:120-121; WVIA [2006]; Wieder 1986:83).



*Grange Hall on Main Street
in Old Wethersfield*

Despite the fire losses and infill buildings, the advent of railroads and trolleys, plus additional new dwellings and businesses added during the nineteenth century, Wethersfield's appearance and density at the end of the nineteenth century had changed little from 100 years earlier. It was still an agricultural village surrounded by farms and fields, with dense concentrations of homes only within the village core as well as in certain discontinuous areas like Griswoldville, Jordan Lane, and Maple Street.

Even in these more developed areas, properties were semi-rural in appearance and typically included a house and auxiliary outbuildings, such as a barn, carriage house, chicken coop, woodshed, and privy. There was often considerable open space between and behind houses because of the generous two- to three-acre lot sizes established generations earlier. Most town properties had enough space for vegetable and flower gardens, fruit trees, a grape arbor, and a well. As was common in an agricultural community, residents typically raised much of their own food and kept some farm animals, even if farming was not their primary livelihood. As in the beginning, many village homeowners still had outlots where they farmed and cut wood. The roads in most directions were lined with farms and orchards, and the overall atmosphere of the area was clearly rural (Howard 1997:150; Wieder 1986:114). The Broad Street Green, the primary surviving remnant of the original town commons, was a vacant grass field with a stream. The Cove was now primarily a place for fishing, ice harvesting, and a winter recreation mecca for skaters and sleigh riders, but the town had no designated public parks or gardens (Howard 1997:144-146).

Creation of a Suburban Community

Beginning around 1915, suburban development, spurred by the growth of Hartford, began to alter the face of Wethersfield. The presence of transportation infrastructure in the form of railroad and trolley lines, coupled with the short distance involved, made Wethersfield an appealing prospect for builders of suburban housing, who were now finding land scarce in Hartford. People could now easily commute from suburbs into Hartford for work. The first areas to develop into suburban housing were situated close to the village railroad and trolley stops, as well as along the newer Franklin Avenue trolley line, which ran between Hartford and Middletown via Wolcott Hill, Griswoldville and Rocky Hill by 1909. The advent of the automobile by 1920 rapidly made additional areas of Wethersfield prime territory to be developed. Initial development was mostly single-family dwellings, although the town's first apartments were erected above storefronts in 1916 at Main and Church Streets (Howard 1997:150; Wieder 1986:115, 118-119).



Street sign representing the boundaries of Hubbard-designed neighborhoods

Among the first and best-known suburban developers was Albert G. Hubbard, who moved to Wethersfield as a young man in 1907. Two years later, while employed as a carpenter in Hartford, he embarked on his first development by purchasing four lots on Wolcott Hill Road in Wethersfield. He quit his job, constructed and sold his first houses in the Wolcott Hill area, and continued to build throughout the old part of the town while raising a family. His high-quality houses, designed in popular revival styles of the period, featured the modern conveniences, room arrangement, and details prized by middle-class early-twentieth-century homeowners. The house lots were large enough for a lawn and backyard garden, but on a suburban scale that was denser than the existing appearance of Wethersfield. Hubbard and his wife endeavored to know the

buyers of their homes personally, even as the numbers of homes he built increased into the hundreds.

By 1933, Hubbard had constructed over 240 new houses and also worked to renovate and restore older ones. The many houses he built in the historic village area can be found on Hartford Avenue, Center Street, Garden Street, Church Street, Willard Street, Belmont Street, Lincoln/Deerfield/Dorchester Roads, Woodland Street, Rosedale Street, Hubbard Place, and others. Many of the smaller streets are side streets off historic roadways, and were laid out and subdivided by Hubbard from larger town lot properties and farms he purchased. The numerous Hubbard houses form a strong concentration of early development in the village center (Howard 1997:132-133; Wieder 1986:115-116).

Harrison A. Bosworth, another pioneering developer, also constructed high-quality houses in the village, but was not as prolific as Hubbard. In 1925, Bosworth bought land on Hartford Avenue, relocated two existing houses on the property, and began developing Wilcox Street, Harmund Place, and Avalon Place. Like Hubbard, he built single-family homes in traditional, tasteful revival styles, but examples of his work are not as concentrated into a single neighborhood. He too was involved in restoration and remodeling of older houses, making him and Hubbard part of an early historic preservation movement in Wethersfield (Wieder 1986:115-116).

The 1920s was a time of fast-moving development and optimism in Wethersfield, as new houses went up and more people moved in. In 1927, the State of Connecticut wanted to create an improved highway between Hartford and Middletown, and proposed placing the Wethersfield sector of the road across the center of the historic Broad Street Green. Horrified townspeople came together to oppose this proposal and the selectmen hired Herbert Swan, a New York architect, to prepare an alternative plan that would spare the Green. In 1928, the Town Plan Commission issued its "Plan of a Residence Suburb," indicating that further development into a thriving suburb was desired, but that key historic resources, such as the Green, should be preserved. The plan created a modern north-south road that would eventually be known as the Silas Deane Highway, which effectively routed the proposed state road to the west of the village and the Green and preserved the village core. With the Green successfully spared from road development, the town selectmen moved to make it a more functional and park-like community space by filling in wetlands, cutting the grass, and caring for the trees, including the towering Great Elm. With a renewed appearance and newfound appreciation of its history, the Green became once again a center of Wethersfield's community events and celebrations, as well as providing recreational space for residents (WVIA 2001).

Other improvements during the 1920s included the town's first real firehouse in 1923, first bank and first sewer system in 1928, and first town engineer and park board in 1929. By this time, several philanthropic, fraternal, and civic organizations had been formed in town, including the Businessmen's and Civic Association, the Wethersfield Women's Association, the Wethersfield Garden Club, and a Masonic lodge. Approximately 80 businesses were operating in town in 1928, including a handful of old-time services like blacksmiths, farriers, dairies, and a coal company (Wieder 1986:118-121).

The Wethersfield public school system expanded dramatically as suburbanization continued during the 1920s and early 1930s, and larger student populations, the diminishing need for students to work on family farms, and higher standards in public education combined to make the old one-room schoolhouses obsolete. Larger, multi-classroom school buildings became the new norm in Wethersfield, as in many other developing suburbs. In 1917, the new Charles Wright School was built for elementary students, and was followed by a new four-room Griswoldville School in 1922 and the Francis Stillman School on Hartford Avenue in 1924. A new Georgian Colonial Revival junior and senior high school opened in 1929 to serve the growing population of students. In 1930, the old 1893 high school became the Governor Thomas Welles elementary school, a new Ridge Road elementary school was constructed, and the relatively new Griswoldville and Charles Wright elementary schools were expanded. The town's old one-room schoolhouses, including Northbrick and Broad Street Schools, were mostly torn down or converted to private residences by this point (Howard 1997:152-159; Wieder 1986:118-119).

Despite the onset of the Great Depression in the fall of 1929, the town opened the Silas Deane Highway in 1930. With great fanfare, it celebrated George Washington's 200th birthday in 1932 and its own tercentenary in 1934. Monuments and memorial tablets in honor of the past were placed by different organizations around the village, including the site of the first meetinghouse. As part of the celebration the Broad Street Green was marked with plaques identifying the first home lots established by the early colonists there. In 1932, the Wethersfield Historical Society was founded to preserve mementos of the past in an organized fashion and collect historical information into a single repository (Howard 1997:152-159; WVIA 2001). During the 1930s, the town also began to form recreation programs for residents, which in subsequent decades would give rise to the establishment of parks and recreation facilities for town residents (Wieder 1986:123). Wethersfield was inundated by a severe flood in 1936, which covered three-quarters of the village with water. At least 30 buildings were pushed off their foundations, and over 250 houses were damaged by the floodwaters, which mixed with mud from the river and oil from riverfront storage tanks (Howard 1997:156-159). Further damage occurred two years later during the 1938 Hurricane, which caused unprecedented destruction throughout New England, but the town rebounded as it had before (Wieder 1986:122).

Wethersfield, A Residential Community

World War II brought hard times across the nation, as thousands of citizens went off to war or joined the defense industry, gasoline and supplies were rationed, and the "home front" mobilized to support the American effort. Wethersfield endured these challenges as did countless other American towns. Wartime brought new defense jobs to Hartford, and new public housing for these workers was constructed in Wethersfield in 1943. This housing complex, called Westfield Heights, was the town's first public housing project and returning veterans were given priority status for its units when peacetime returned. A second complex, called Highview, was constructed in 1947 to house additional returning veterans. Both developments were funded by the Federal Public Housing Authority (Wieder 1986:122-123).

The end of World War II and the many rapid changes in the national landscape since 1900 inspired the town of Wethersfield to commission a Master Plan Report from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Completed in 1946, the Master Plan Report

provided guidance on managing growth and infrastructure as the process of suburbanization continued. The plan reaffirmed the town's desire to remain residential, predicted its population would grow, and expressed the need to retain Wethersfield's unique historic character. The planners recommended a number of key goals, including: management of growth on Silas Deane Highway, creation of a new Town Center building to bring all the town offices under one roof, improvements to the town's well-regarded school system, and obtain additional parkland. Wethersfield complied with these recommendations as it experienced intense years of continued growth (Howard 1997:169-173).

Following World War II, suburban development both nationwide and in Wethersfield became almost exclusively centered on the automobile, with the result that considerable new construction was concentrated on Silas Deane Highway. Beginning in the 1940s, the road was developed from north to south with both residential and commercial areas. By the 1950s, upon recommendation of the 1946 Master Plan Report, most key town services left the old town center and were consolidated into a newly constructed facility on the east side of Wolcott Hill, overlooking Silas Deane Highway, the old village, and Glastonbury Hills. The new Town Hall and Library opened there in 1958. The town's only bank moved to the highway in 1952, and the Wethersfield post office moved there in 1962. The first shopping center on the highway opened in 1960. Gas stations, small shopping centers, and other businesses rapidly made Silas Deane Highway the primary commercial corridor in town, with Berlin Turnpike forming a secondary commercial strip. In the same period, the town was again confronted with the state's need for a better highway system, and the MIT planners recommended that Wethersfield support construction of the interstate to prevent traffic pressure on Silas Deane Highway.

Interstate 91 was constructed east of the village between 1958 and 1963. The mid-to-late twentieth century also saw construction of much of the town's denser apartment and townhouse dwellings along these arteries or in areas on the edges of town. Beginning in the 1970s, Wethersfield apartment developments included multiple complexes of low- and moderate-income housing for senior citizens, as well as accessible apartments for the disabled built in 1984 (Howard 1997:169-173; Wieder 1986:118-128).

The amount of parkland in town increased from the 1940s onward, with the town purchasing land in 1944 to create Mill Woods Park. The town controlled 50 acres of parkland in 1946, which multiplied to 550 acres by 1984. Recreational facilities such as picnic areas, sports fields, swimming facilities, and a nature center were developed within the growing park system. The Cove, used as a largely unregulated venue for townspeople to swim, boat, and skate at the turn of the century, was among the areas that became public parkland (Wieder 1986:123).

The postwar period brought an unprecedented increase in population, which was seen in Wethersfield and suburbs nationwide as World War II and Korean War veterans returned to peacetime occupations, purchased suburban homes, and started families. Between 1950 and 1960, Wethersfield experienced a 64% jump in its population. Its school system, library, and other municipal services were forced to expand to accommodate the population growth, although the post-baby boom era led to some school closures in the 1970s-1980s. A number of modern-style schools were constructed in the 1960s, resulting in demolition of some older school buildings, such as the former 1929 high school, and adaptive reuse of others (Wieder 1986:124-126).

In 1963, the State of Connecticut closed the state prison near the Cove and tore the facility down. A new Department of Motor Vehicles was constructed at the same location, and the adjacent historic Solomon Welles House, which had served most recently as the prison warden's house, was given to the town as a venue for special events and meetings. A few years earlier, the state had constructed two other facilities in Wethersfield, including the state Department of Transportation office in 1959 and the state Labor Department office in 1960 (Wieder 1986:128).

Early Preservation Activity

In the early twentieth century, a number of citizens worked hard to make Wethersfield attractive and honor its history. John Willard and the Wethersfield Village Improvement Society turned the group's attention to historic preservation as a valued tool for making Wethersfield a pleasant place to live. Jared Standish, an avid researcher and an accomplished printer and engraver, and his wife Martha worked with the Wethersfield Village Improvement Society as well. They were instrumental in urging the town to acquire open land for park space. A talented artist and historian, Jared Standish also created the 1928 town seal using the old Cove warehouse as the central icon, researched and wrote history articles, created maps of early landholdings and schematic sketches of long-vanished buildings, researched and marked 80 historic houses and buildings in the village, and planned Wethersfield's 1934 Tercentenary celebration.

After over a century of existence, the Wethersfield Village Improvement Association still contributes to the town's overall appearance and appeal. Since the 1950s, the group has planted and cared for shade trees, restored street signs, and spearheaded landscaping plans for community benefit (Howard 1997:134-135 ; WVIA [2006]).

Historic preservation efforts in Wethersfield have been a prevailing theme in the town since the early twentieth century. The Joseph Webb House on Main Street became an early preservation effort of a group of local citizens, who feared it would be turned into apartments and wished to create a library and historical site. The group sold the property to Wallace Nutting, a prolific photographer, collector, and promoter of "colonial" Americana, who acquired and restored a number of historic New England houses and used them as sets for his popular nostalgic photography. Nutting purchased the house in early 1916 and hired architect Henry Charles Dana to help him restore it to his idea of the eighteenth century. It was opened for tours later in the year, making it Wethersfield's first museum house, and was also a backdrop for his hand-colored photographs of staged domestic scenes.



Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum is a preservation success story in the Old Wethersfield Historic District

Nutting's work was very much intertwined with the nationwide popularity of the Colonial Revival in architecture, furnishings, literature, and decorative arts. World War I caused a sharp decline in visitors and Nutting closed the house in November 1918. A year later, he sold it to the National Society of Colonial Dames of America in Connecticut, which reopened it as the Webb-Washington House Museum and installed a tearoom inside. In 1924, they performed their own restoration, reversing or removing much of what Nutting had done. The Colonial Dames later purchased the Isaac Stevens House in 1958 and inherited the Silas Deane House in 1959, giving it a row of three contiguous eighteenth-century properties. The Webb House is now the centerpiece of the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum (Howard 1997:147-149).

Meanwhile, the Connecticut Antiquarian and Landmarks Society (Connecticut Landmarks) obtained the Buttolph-Williams House in 1947 and restored it to its early appearance. This house was used as the setting for Elizabeth George Speare's award-winning young adult novel, *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, a fictional portrait of the harsh realities and witchcraft hysteria of seventeenth-century Puritan life in Wethersfield.

During this time, Wethersfield Historical Society also assumed stewardship of a number of Town-owned and privately-owned historic buildings. Beginning with the Old Academy (1804) in 1959, by 1986 the society was responsible for the preservation of six historic buildings, including the Cove Warehouse, Deming-Standish House (1787), Keeney Memorial Cultural Center (former Governor Thomas Welles School, 1893), as well as the Captain James Francis House (1793) and Hurlburt-Dunham House, bequeathed to the society in 1969 and 1970 respectively. The society led restoration projects for each of these buildings, resulting in the opening of the Francis and Hurlbut-Dunham Houses as historic museums; the adaptive re-use of the Deming-Standish House as a public restaurant/tavern; the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center as the Town's Visitor Center and Cultural Center; and the Old Academy as a museum and later as the society's research library and offices.

The historic First Church also embarked upon a \$1.1 million project to restore the old meetinghouse to its 1764 appearance. This work, which occurred between 1970 and 1973, included razing the deteriorating 1872 Chapel and removing some of the main building's nineteenth-century alterations, such as stained glass windows, that were felt to be out of character (Howard 1997:147-149, 173; Wieder 1986:155-160).

A key development in historic preservation was the establishment of the Wethersfield Historic District in 1962, which has carefully protected the evidence of over three centuries of town history. The district was Connecticut's first, and remains its largest, with over 110 buildings constructed before 1840. In 1968, the Great Meadows Trust was established to protect the remains of the Meadows and serve as a buffer for the historic district. The town celebrated its 350th anniversary in 1984 and has made great strides in recent years to promote heritage tourism (Howard 1997:173-174).

CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Wethersfield Today

The Old Wethersfield Historic District does not sit in isolation; its chance for success as a residential community, business district, and heritage tourism destination are based largely on its location and context within the greater region.

Old Wethersfield is an authentic community with an eclectic mix of housing and commercial structures representing four centuries of Town development and historic sites and museums where history comes alive for the visitor. The buildings, landscapes, and other site features are all visible remnants of the community's heritage and represent the historical significance of Old Wethersfield. These physical characteristics, the ones that can be seen and experienced, together with the people, help to define and create a distinctive community character that is recognizable immediately upon arriving in the historic district.

Chapter 3 looks at the existing physical conditions within the historic district and summarizes the key resources, circulation attributes, and land use patterns that have defined the community, both today and in the past. Understanding what exists today provides a basic framework for recognizing areas that might be in need of change or improvement. The existing conditions defined below serve as the basis for the recommendations and options presented in subsequent sections of this report.

Regional Context

The Town of Wethersfield is located in central Connecticut, approximately five miles south of the state capital of Hartford in Hartford County. Wethersfield is easily accessed by a number of major roadways including I-91, Route 99, Route 3, and Routes 5/15. Interstate 84 is only minutes away by car. The total land area of the town is 12.39 square miles.

Wethersfield is under a two-hour drive from major northeast cities including Boston, Massachusetts, Providence, Rhode Island, and New York, New York. Montreal, Quebec, Canada is the closet major Canadian city, located approximately 270 miles from Wethersfield. The closest major airport, Bradley International Airport, is sixteen miles away.

The Old Wethersfield Historic District is central to a number of regional historic sites and attractions, creating opportunities for regional marketing and promotion. Each of the following attractions is under two hours from Wethersfield:

- Goodspeed Opera House (30 minutes)
- Ivoryton Playhouse (35 minutes)
- Old Sturbridge Village (45 minutes)
- Historic Deerfield (50 minutes)
- Mystic Seaport (50 minutes)
- Pittsfield Hancock Shaker Village (70 minutes)
- Newport Preservation Society (90 minutes)
- Plimouth Plantation (90 minutes)

- Salem Essex Peabody Museum (110 minutes)

The People of Wethersfield

According to 2000 Census data, the population of Wethersfield is approximately 26,271 persons – only slightly higher than the 1980 population of 26,008 persons. The median age of the population is 44.1, with over sixty percent of residents over the age of 35. Females outnumber males in the Town by 1,887 persons. Ninety three percent of Wethersfield residents are white, two percent are African American, and the remaining five percent are other races, such as Asian or Pacific Islander. The average household size is 2.31 persons and the average family size is 2.89 persons. More than half of the population (58%) is currently married.

In 2000, there were 11,214 occupied housing units within the Town, of which 77.9%, Or 8,733 units, were owner occupied. The remaining housing units were renter occupied. Only 240 housing units were identified as vacant. More than half of the units (6,115) were constructed between 1940 and 1969. Almost 2,000 homes date to pre-1936. The median value of owner occupied housing units in the Town is \$159,300. Of those members of the population over age 25, 33% have a bachelors degree or higher and 39% have an associates degree or higher. Approximately 16% of the population over age 25 has not received a high school diploma.

The Historic District

The Old Wethersfield Historic District is Connecticut's oldest and largest historic district, covering over two square miles and including over 1200 buildings. The buildings represent each of the primary building styles from each period of architectural significance from the past four centuries. Within the district are hundreds of historic residences, museums and historic sites, and a small commercial core consisting of retail establishments, restaurants, and service and office uses. The community is devoted to preserving its authentic heritage.

Historic Attributes

Every resident of the historic district seems to live there for a reason – the charm, the ambiance, and the small-town feel that make it an attractive and warm community to live in. While the residents and people within the district certainly contribute to the appeal, there are specific physical traits of the community that contribute to its overall character, such as the residential neighborhoods, the village center, roadways, and natural resources and open space.

Residential Neighborhoods

Like the Town as a whole, the historic district is primarily a residential community. The residential neighborhoods in the Old Wethersfield Historic District includes four centuries of architectural evolution within the Town, resulting in an architectural aesthetic that can best be described as a balanced diversity. While the building stock spans more than 300 years and includes dozens of architectural styles and trends, there is a consistency among the buildings that results in a feeling of harmony. The entire Town takes great pride in its architectural heritage, and rightfully so.

The expansion of the local mercantile industry resulted in the development of a substantial number of new houses in Old Wethersfield in the eighteenth century. Extant residential homes dating to this period reflect the overarching design principles of the time with a focus on simplicity, balance, and proportion. Remnants of nineteenth century farms are still visible along the Broad Street Green, with two active farms still in their historic locations. Residential construction in this century resulted in a more diverse architectural vocabulary than is visible from the eighteenth century. A greater number of architectural details and adornments were common and are still visible on the extant houses that remain from this period, many of which flank the Green. Balconies, dormer windows, intricate porches, and towers are examples of the architectural details which adorn many residential buildings from this period.



Residential homes in Old Wethersfield include over 300 years of architectural development

Twentieth century residential development in the Town and historic district can be categorized by the suburban expansion of Hartford. The most notable developments occurring within the historic district during this century are attributable to Albert Hubbard who constructed homes in the historic district beginning in 1916. Hubbard is recognized for creating one of the first suburban housing developments in the country.

Hubbard developed residences within Old Wethersfield in three distinct phases which reflected the needs and desires of residents. His earliest homes were on long, narrow lots reminiscent of an urban style setting that was similar to development in Hartford. Bungalow styled homes on streets with no street trees followed. His final developments responded to residents' desire for a more traditional suburban setting. These homes were constructed on larger lots, had greater setbacks, and were located on wider streets. Albert Hubbard ultimately constructed 240 homes on 14 streets within the historic district. Today, these streets are identified by special street identification signage which includes a profile of the prototype Hubbard house. Hubbard created and placed these signs in the Town around 1926 in order to create a neighborhood identity; missing signs were replaced and remaining signs were restored in the 1990s by the Wethersfield Village Improvement Association.

The Village Center

In a broad sense, the historic Village Center of Old Wethersfield and current Village Center are one in the same. In the seventeenth century, Meetinghouse Square was on the site of the extant First Church, with the Old Town Flagpole in the center of the square. The square was the focus of most town events. While the square no longer exists, the Church tower is still a highly visible focal point and is at the center of the more dispersed two-block center that defines Old Wethersfield today. The two-blocks

of the Village Center includes buildings, structures, and plaques from a number of significant periods in the Town's development.

The small, pedestrian scale of the community has been retained in the Village Center, with no buildings exceeding three stories in height, noting the First Church as an exception. The commercial and office-related uses which now comprise the majority of the village center are housed in historically significant structures, many of which were once single-family residences. Some twentieth century commercial buildings with multiple storefronts are incorporated into the historic streetscape. Mature trees along Main Street and throughout the Historic District create a lush canopy that contributes to the community's strong appeal.



*View of Main Street south
from the intersection of
Church and Main*

Roadways

The location and character of the district's historic roadways have been largely preserved and have been additive over time, with each period of the district's development adding new elements. Although roads are now paved that were once unpaved, the expansive width of main roadways, such as Main Street (historically High Street) remain intact, as do the historic street patterns and building setbacks. Roads such as Hartford, High, and Broad Street date to the seventeenth century and were the earliest roads used to connect local farmers with markets beyond Wethersfield's boundaries.



*Main Street is a wide, heavily traveled
roadway in the Historic District*

The intersection of Main Street and Marsh Street has always served as an important location in the center of the village, appearing on maps dating to the seventeenth century. Once a three-way intersection, modifications to the historic condition were altered with the construction of Church Street to the west in 1871, when the railroad depot was opened. Other significant roadways, such as Broad Street, have also been largely unaltered. Hartford Way (now Hartford Avenue) was the primary roadway linking Wethersfield to the City of Hartford. While still an important link, a substantial

amount of traffic was re-routed from Hartford Avenue when the Silas Deane Highway was constructed in the 1930s.

State Street, historically known first as Fort Street and then as Prison Street due to the location of the State Prison from 1827-1963, is still an important connector between Main Street and Hartford Avenue. Although the prison is no longer standing the site remains owned and used by the state, today serving as the Department of Motor Vehicles. Archaeological remnants of the historic prison and outlying service buildings still exist on the site.

It is fortunate that all of the older streets in the district have made efforts to retain their street trees, providing a picture frame effect as one travels down the roadways, and providing shade for yards and pedestrians. American Elms and Sugar Maples are a common historically appropriate tree species found throughout the historic district. In Swann's 1928 Plan he proposed that all major streets, including Hartford Avenue and Main Street should have a width of 100 feet, with secondary thoroughfares, such as State Street, having a width of 86 feet. Swann goes on to state that no credible street is without planting strips on either side with a minimum width of 8 feet to allow for street trees and other required utilities. Although Swann's plan was not fully implemented to his specifications, his desire for a canopied streetscape is visible throughout the district.



Images of residential streets within the Historic District

Natural Resources and Open Space

As a community whose origins can be traced to its natural resources it is important to remember the character and significance of the natural features within Old Wethersfield. In its earliest period, the sustainability and success of the growing Wethersfield community was based on the water bodies that border the historic district. The water provided a means for trade and opened up markets that were far beyond Wethersfield's borders. Much of this originated at the Cove, where trade and associated industries, such as shipbuilding, thrived in the late seventeenth century. Today, the Cove remains an important link to Wethersfield's past and is a natural resource, historic attraction, and recreational amenity for the community.

Similarly, the Broad Street Green has historical, natural, and recreational significance. In colonial times, settlers used the Green to graze livestock and as a militia training area. The Green remains an important natural amenity as home to dozens of specimen trees, some of which date to the 1800s. Broad Street Green officially became a Town park in 1932.

Circulation and Wayfinding

Circulation in and around the historic district has evolved in response to changing needs of residents and advancements in transportation. Even though modernization and improvements have occurred and cars have replaced horses and buggies, the general character of the roadways and circulation patterns have remained largely unaltered. Circulation attributes in Old Wethersfield are not limited to how pedestrians and vehicles move, but also includes the signage that help them to find the way, the gateways that welcome them to the neighborhood, and the parking that allows them to get out of their cars and explore once they have arrived.

The circulation and wayfinding section of the Plan has been divided by the following categories: pedestrian circulation, vehicular circulation, public transportation, signage and wayfinding, parking, and gateways.

Pedestrian Circulation

Pedestrian activity is a character-defining attribute of the historic district and helps to create the welcoming, friendly atmosphere that is needed to draw residents and visitors onto the streets. In the village center brick sidewalks offer a glimpse of history and give character to the streetscape, letting users know they are some place special. Designated pedestrian crossings within the Village Center offer safe places to cross an expansive Main Street. The landscaping and street trees along Main Street provide shade and enhance the visual aesthetic of the village center making it a desirable area for walking. However, issues associated with safety concerns at intersections and with the speed of traffic along Main Street must be addressed.



Stone sidewalks define historic residential neighborhoods

The residential streets throughout Old Wethersfield are also conducive to pedestrians and further contribute to feeling that the district is a “walkable” community. Almost all residential neighborhoods have sidewalks with mature landscaping. Walking paths connect residential neighborhoods with the parks, open spaces, and natural resources in nearby areas. The paths are currently made of different materials and have different designs depending on where they are located.

Vehicular Circulation

Wide roadways are a defining attribute in the residential and commercial areas of the district, with a variety of short and long blocks which are controlled throughout the district by frequently placed speed limit signs. Intersections are controlled by two and four-way stop signs. During the times of day associated with the beginning or end of

the school day, crossing guards are situated at key intersections to ensure safe traffic and pedestrian movement.

The most problematic intersection is at Main and Church Streets. Limited visibility and sight-lines, a large expanse of paving, an unconventional configuration, the lack of a four-way stop, and the speed of traffic contribute to making this intersection confusing for drivers. Input at meetings and in private conversations demonstrated public concern regarding the safety of the intersection, yet there did not seem to be widespread support for dramatic changes .



The intersection of Church and Main Streets is dominated by asphalt

Vehicular circulation has increased dramatically over the last two decades partly due to increases in membership at the First Church and the number of visitors to the State Motor Vehicles Department on State Street. As a result, pedestrian safety and the relationship between cars and pedestrians have become of concern for many residents and local officials. The speed of traffic and enforcement of local speed limits throughout the historic district are issues that is in need of additional consideration. Potentials for speed limit reductions, traffic calming measures, and intersection improvements are discussed in subsequent portions of this study.

While residents have voiced concern about the speed of traffic along Main Street in the Old Wethersfield Village Center, speed surveys conducted by the Town of Wethersfield Department of Public Safety in May 2007 did not verify that such a problem exists. Northbound and southbound traffic along Main Street in the vicinity of the Keeney Memorial Center identified average travel speeds between 22 and 25 miles per hour. Using the data provided by the speed study, the Department of Public Safety is also able to determine appropriate speed limits for roadways. According to data obtained during the May 2007 survey, an appropriate speed limit for Main Street in the Village core is 28 to 30 miles per hour, therefore the existing posted 30 mile per hour speed limit is appropriate.

Public Transportation

In addition to personal modes of transportation, a trolley-bus was unveiled in July 2006 to provide an alternative, “mass transit” means of transportation to and around the historic district. The trolley-bus is a small bus that has been wrapped in a historic façade to give the appearance of an old time trolley with a uniquely Wethersfield character. Within the Historic District, there are several bus stops along Main Street and on State Street. The trolley-bus is intended to transport visitors on tours and during special

events. The 25-passenger bus is available for rent by local attractions for group tours or by tourists. The Town hopes that the design of the bus will help to further promote and enhance tourism in Old Wethersfield. CT Transit also provides a public bus route between Wethersfield and surrounding communities, including Hartford. There is one designated stop in the Historic District located at the Department of Motor Vehicles site.

Signage and Wayfinding

The Town, as well as the Historic District, suffer from a disjointed signage program. There is no distinct theme or character to existing signs which are typically different in size, color, and design because there are no guidelines in place for signage design. Different agencies are responsible for the installation of signage and they have typically used their own designs, without input from others. There has been no formal attempt to develop or adhere to a consistent template.

Old Wethersfield is hard to find; signage on major roads adjacent to the historic district is inadequate. Within the historic district there are several different sign styles used by the State DOT, the Town, and individual sites. The signage lacks a sense of organization, hierarchy, and consistency. Wayfinding is a serious issue in Old Wethersfield. Historical markers and signs are also inconsistent throughout the district.



Examples of different types of signage found throughout the Town and Historic District

Parking

Parking in the public-oriented areas of Old Wethersfield, primarily in the village center along Main Street, is provided by angled-spaces along Main Street and in designated parking lots. Lot spaces are available for business owners and visitors adjacent to Village Pizza, at the Visitor Center, behind the Old Academy, and at Fire Company #1. With the exception of the parking adjacent to Village Pizza which is private, the other identified lots are available for public use. The Keeney Memorial Cultural Center has the largest amount of available parking, with approximately 100 spaces.

Parking studies have been undertaken numerous times over the course of the last ten years at the request of various business owners and site managers who have had difficulty parking or who have had customer complaints about parking. Given the current demand for spaces, there appears to be adequate parking available to service the

needs of the village center and its businesses. However, identifying the locations of parking and making it user-friendly have not been adequately addressed.

Gateways

There are numerous locations where visitors can enter the Old Wethersfield Historic District, though none of the entry points, or gateways, is particularly defined or notable. None of the existing gateways gives the impression that you entering someplace special.

Old Wethersfield is accessible from an interchange off of I-91. A brown attractions sign identifies the Old Wethersfield Historic District as one approaches the exit. At the base of the exit ramp, a sign points the way into the historic district. The landscape around this exit ramp is undistinguished. There are significant opportunities for improving this gateway into the district with a new guard rail, landscaping, and signage.

There are multiple entry points into the historic district from the Silas Deane Highway, though one may not realize this when traveling along the Silas Deane today. A consistent “look” to these strategic entryways could be developed and identified through a cohesive signage and streetscape program. The gateways that intersect with Silas Deane Highway are at the intersections of Hartford, Jordan, Nott, Church, Wells, and Maple.

Historic and Cultural Attractions

The historical attractions in Old Wethersfield provide a strong link to the history and heritage of the Town, and offer opportunities for education, interpretation, and increased visitation by both local residents and visitors from outside Wethersfield. The historic and cultural resources in Old Wethersfield are diverse and include house museums, history exhibits, historic buildings, an ancient burying ground, various markers and monuments, and a visitors’ center. The historic and cultural attractions which represent various stages of the Town’s development are summarized below.

Historical Attractions and Resources

ANCIENT BURYING GROUND

The picturesque Ancient Burying Ground lies behind the First Church of Christ Congregational and includes tombstones of Wethersfield residents that date back to the 17th century. Over a dozen different Connecticut Valley stone carvers are represented in the burial ground, with the earliest stone dating from 1648. On the headstones which still remain legible, and the stories the district’s residents could be interpreted. The peaceful and enchanting burying ground is open to visitors from sunrise to sunset every day.



Winter image of the Ancient Burying Ground at First Church of Christ

BUTTOLPH-WILLIAMS HOUSE

The Buttolph-Williams House is a National Historic Landmark. Built for Benjamin Belden about 1714, it is an outstanding example of late 17th and early 18th century New England architecture and a showplace of period furnishings and cooking equipment. The oldest house museum in Old Wethersfield, it is the setting for the award-winning novel, *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*. Located on the corner of Broad and Marsh Streets, it is owned by Connecticut Landmarks and managed by the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, which offers tours from May through October.



The Buttolph-Williams House

CHESTER BULKLEY HOUSE

The Chester Bulkley House (circa 1830) is the district's first bed and breakfast establishment. The bed and breakfast, located at 184 Main Street, is privately owned and operated. The Greek Revival historic home now houses 5 guest rooms and is decorated with period furniture. Three gardens round out the landscape of this property.

COVE WAREHOUSE

The Historic Cove Warehouse is the last standing reminder of Wethersfield's vibrant maritime history. Within the warehouse is an exhibit that celebrates Wethersfield's role in trading during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Operated by the Wethersfield Historical Society, the Cove Warehouse is open for tours on weekends from mid-May to mid-October. The warehouse is located on the waterfront, at the northernmost end of Main Street.



*The historic Cove Warehouse
located in Cove Park*

DEMING-STANDISH HOUSE

The Deming-Standish House, located at 222 Main Street, was built as a home in 1787. The Standish family used it as an Inn and Tavern until the mid 19th Century. The house is owned by the Town and maintained by the Wethersfield Historical Society. The house has served as a fine dining restaurant for numerous years, most recently functioning as the Village Tavern until June 2007. The house is now being leased to J. Michaels Tavern, a family friendly American style restaurant.



*The Deming-Standish House is
now J. Michael's Tavern*

FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST

The First Church of Christ was constructed in 1761-1764; it was the largest brick Meeting House built in Connecticut before the Revolution. It was visited by notable historical figures, including John Adams and George Washington. The United Church of Christ has the largest membership in New England. Located at 250 Main Street, the church is a very visible focal point in the village center of the historic district and sits on the site of the Town's original village center, Meetinghouse Square.



*First Church of Christ at the
corner of Main and Marsh Streets*

HURLBUT-DUNHAM HOUSE

The Hurlbut-Dunham House is an elegant brick Georgian style home which is owned and operated by the Wethersfield Historical Society. The home of Howard and Jane Dunham, a prominent Wethersfield and Hartford area couple, has exceptional examples of early 20th century features, including Rococo Revival wall paper, painted ceilings and cornices, and furnishings and accessories. The house was featured in a 1996 issue of Colonial Homes Magazine. Tours of the home are available to the public on weekends from mid-May to mid-October. The House is located at 212 Main Street in Old Wethersfield. In 2002, the Hurlbut-Dunham House was rated as the Hartford region's 34th largest tourist attraction, according to the Greater Hartford Tourism District.



The Hurlbut-Dunham House

ISAAC STEVENS HOUSE

The Isaac Stevens House is part of the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, which is open every day except Tuesday from May until October, and on weekends in April, November and December. This center-hall Georgian home was built between 1788 and 1790 for leatherworker Isaac Stevens, his wife Sarah, and their children. It remained in the family until 1959, when the Connecticut Society of Colonial Dames of America added it to the Museum; it has been open to the public since 1963. The Museum's interpretation of the Stevens house utilizes many original Stevens family possessions to depict the life of this middle class family during the 1820s and 1830s. The second floor includes a display of 19th century children's toys. The Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum has been accredited by the American Association of museums since 1974.



The Isaac Stevens House

JOSEPH WEBB HOUSE

The Joseph Webb House is a National Historic Landmark. It is part of the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, which is open every day except Tuesday from May until October, and on weekends in April, November and December. Built in 1752, this imposing gambrel-roofed Georgian dwelling was the home of merchant Joseph Webb,

his wife Mehitable, and their seven children. During the American Revolution, the house served as General George Washington's headquarters from May 19 to 23, 1781, when he and the French Commander, the Comte de Rochambeau, planned the joint military campaign that won the War. Colonial Revival antiquarian and entrepreneur Wallace Nutting began the restoration of the interior in 1916. The Connecticut Society of Colonial Dames of America have operated the house as a museum since 1919.



The Joseph Webb House

KEENEY MEMORIAL CULTURAL AND VISITOR CENTER

The Keeney Memorial Cultural and Visitor Center is located at 200 Main Street. The Center provides information on local museums, historic sites, shops, restaurants, lodging, and special events. The Visitor's Center is open seven days a week. The center also houses the Wethersfield Museum which is operated by the Wethersfield Historical Society. The museum includes a permanent exhibit, "Legendary People, Ordinary Lives", which highlights the history of Wethersfield. The exhibit includes artifacts from the Society's collections, interactive exhibit for visitors, and information on local historic sites and places of interest. In addition, there are changing exhibits which feature works of local craft guilds, artisans, and other members of the community. A museum shop, with historic maps, books, and other souvenirs related to Wethersfield and its history, is also located in the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center.



Keeney Memorial Cultural and Visitor Center

OLD ACADEMY / RESEARCH LIBRARY

The Old Academy Building (1804) is home to the Wethersfield Historical Society's Research Library and Offices. The library collection includes over 1000 books, secondary source materials, local and regional histories, rare books, manuscripts, journals newspaper articles, maps, charts, and hundreds of photographs.



*The Old Academy and
Research Library*

SILAS DEANE HOUSE

The Silas Deane House is a National Historic Landmark. It is part of the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, which is open every day except Tuesday from May until October, and on weekends in April, November and December. When it was built around 1770, this asymmetrical gable-roofed house had a front porch or piazza. The handsome interior includes a large stair hall and a musicians' gallery and a ballroom on the second floor. Beginning in 1767, Silas Deane represented Wethersfield in the General Assembly, where he served as the Secretary for the Committee of Correspondence and the Committee of Safety. During the American Revolution he helped plan and finance the capture of Fort Ticonderoga, was a delegate to the Continental Congress and our country's first Diplomat to France, where he obtained military supplies and signed the Treaties of Alliance and Commerce in 1778. The Connecticut society of Colonial Dames of America inherited the house and added it to the Museum in 1959; it has been restored to depict the lifestyle of an affluent and patriotic lawyer, politician and diplomat during the American Revolution.



The Silas Deane House

SILAS W. ROBBINS HOUSE

The Silas W. Robbins house at 285 Broad Street is a superior example of the French Second Empire style. It was built in 1872 for Silas W. Robbins, the senior partner of the Johnson & Robbins Seed Company, established in 1855. Following a fire in 1997, the house remained vacant and open to the elements until John and Shereen Afforismo purchased it in 2001. They have restored and furnished the house with period antiques and now operate it as a luxurious bed and breakfast.

SOLOMON WELLES HOUSE AND GROUNDS

Owned by the Town and operated by the Parks and Recreation Department, the Solomon Welles House, constructed in 1774, is located on Hartford Avenue. The historic building is leased by the Town for meetings and small parties.

TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Trinity Episcopal Church at 300 Main Street was designed by architect Edward Tuckermann Potter, who also designed the Church of the Good Shepherd and the Mark Twain House in Hartford, Connecticut. Constructed between 1871 and 1874, its design evokes the country churches of England. It has rough-cut brownstone walls and a polychrome tile roof. Its nave was extended and the Parish Hall added in 1961.



Trinity Episcopal Church

WEBB BARN

The Webb Barn is located at the rear of the property occupied by the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, behind the Colonial Revival Garden. The barn is used today for education classes, lectures, meetings and museum special events. It is also available for rent for weddings and corporate gatherings. There is little known of the history of Webb Barn as there is no record of it until 1821. The current barn is a reconstruction of the original barn and dates to 1840. The existing barn has been moved and a series of additions and renovations have been completed through the years by the Colonial Dames.

Historic Markers and Monuments

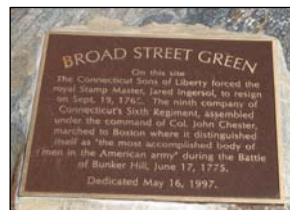
At various times throughout history different individuals and organizations have installed monuments and markers throughout the historic district to identify the location of significant buildings, people, and events. The monuments and markers come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and styles as determined by the group responsible for their installation. There are stone monuments, boulders with brass plaques, iron posts with iron markers, freestanding wooden signs, a few brass plaques applied to buildings, and over 30 wooden plaques applied to houses.

Stone Monuments include:

- The Foote Family Monjument at the south end of Broad Street Green; and
- The War Memorial on the Hartford Avenue/Nott Street island.

Boulders with brass plaques include:

- The [missing] Wethersfield Elm plaque on the east side of Broad Street;
- The Adventurers plaque at the north end of Broad Street Green;
- The Stamp Master's Resignation plaque on the east side of Broad Street Green;



- Revolutionary War plaque on the west side of Broad Street Green;
- The Ferryman's plaque on the Broad/Marsh Street island;
- The [missing] dinosaur print plaque on the bench in Standish Park;
- The Father of Engineers plaque near 400 Hartford Avenue;
- The Meadow Gate plaque at the north end of Hartford Avenue;
- The National Historic Landmark designation for the Deane House at 203 Main Street;
- The National Historic Landmark designation for the Webb House at 211 Main Street;
- The Society of the Cincinnati marker at the Webb House
- The First Meeting House plaque at the Main/Marsh Street island;
- Stillman Tavern plaque at 320 Main Street; and
- The Governor Thomas Welles plaque at 75 State Street.

Iron posts with iron markers include:

- Small iron markers identifying the home sites along the east side of Broad Street;
- Hanging signs about Wethersfield's settlement at the south end of Main Street;
- Small iron marker for the Constitution Oak in front of the Keeney Center;
- Hanging sign in front of Deane House; Hanging sign in front of Webb House;
- [missing] small iron marker for Oldham's cornfield at 399 Main Street; and
- Hubbard Street signs.

Free-standing wooden signs (non-commercial) include:

- Park signs at Broad Street Green, Cove Park, River Road Green, Standish Park;
- Church Signs at First Church, Trinity Church, Sacred Heart Church;
- Museum signs at Keeney Center, Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, Hurlbut-Dunham House, James Francis House;
- Solomon Welles House; and
- Motor Vehicle Department.

Signs attached to buildings (non-commercial) include:

- Emerson's Female Seminary marker at 133 Main Street;
- Concert for George Washington at 250 Main Street; and
- Over 30 wooden plaques with name of original owner and date of construction.



Agricultural Resources

In the nineteenth century the Town's economy was reliant on agriculture, and Old Wethersfield developed into an agricultural village center. Remnants of this agricultural heritage have been almost entirely lost town-wide; the agricultural character of the community has been replaced with suburban development and there is little open space and farmland left throughout the Hartford region today. In the historic district, only two farms and two nationally recognized seed companies remain as viable industries representing this significant period of the Township's history.

Farms

There are two farms remaining in the historic district from the 1800's.

ANDERSON FARMS

James Anderson was the founder of Anderson Farms in the late nineteenth century. His farm was one of many that originated along Broad Street. The house and farm, built in 1878 and located at 165 Broad Street, are one of only two historic farms along Broad Street which are still used for farming today. Anderson Farm was passed down from James Anderson to his son and later to his grandson, who still owns and operates the farm today. In season, a farm stand is located on the Broad Street Green for local residents and visitors to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables.



Retail stand associated with Anderson Farms

MORRIS FARMS

Located at 188 Broad Street, William Morris developed Morris Farms in approximately 1890. After his passing, the business was maintained by his son and is currently owned and operated by his grandson. Morris Farm is only one of two remaining farms from Wethersfield's agricultural roots which still exist on Broad Street.



Antique sign identifying Morris Farms

Retailers and Seeds

The Historic District is known for its association with national seed companies that have existed in the Town since the 1800s.

COMSTOCK, FERRE, & CO.

Comstock, Ferre is the oldest continually operating seed company in the country, originally established in 1820 as the Wethersfield Seed Company. In conjunction with Wethersfield's rich agricultural heritage, the Town also became an early seed producing area. Originally a wholesale seed distributor, the company began its retail seed business and opened its garden center in 1958. Today the business is located in a cluster of original antique buildings on Main Street, which are adorned with the original tin signs from the earliest days of the company. Customers from throughout the northeast visit the retail plant and garden center for each wide variety of seeds, plants, and specialty garden items.



*Historic building on the
Comstock, Ferre & Co. property*

HART SEED COMPANY

The Hart Seed Company was founded in Wethersfield in 1892 by Charles Hart. At the time, it was the sixth seed company in the Town. In 1894 Mr. Hart entered into a partnership with Frank Wells and they located their business on Marsh Street and later moved to the warehouses of the former Johnson & Robbins Company on Main Street. In 1913 they began a mail order department and in 1916 Mr. Well's portion of the business was purchased by the Hart family. Hart's Seeds continued to grow and acquired several other seed businesses through the years. The wood frame building which housed the business burnt in 1943 and was replaced with the existing brick office warehouse complex at the same location in the Old Wethersfield Historic District. Today the Hart family still oversees the production and distribution of packet seeds, vegetable seeds, flower seed, lawn seed, fertilizers and other landscape products throughout the Northeastern United States.

Parks and Open Space

The Cove and Broad Street Green are open space amenities in the Historic District that have local historical significance. Other open space amenities within the Historic District include parklands and recreational facilities which are owned and managed by the Town of Wethersfield Parks and Recreation Department. The active and passive recreational resources found within the historic district are available for use and enjoyment by local residents and visitors and contribute to the overall character of the community and quality-of-life of residents.

BEAVERBROOK LINEAR PARK

Beaverbrook Linear Park is located in the southwest corner of the Old Wethersfield Historic District along Spring Street. The park encompasses 14.3 acres including a small pond and ample green space.

BROAD STREET GREEN

Broad Street Green, also known as Wethersfield Green, includes a total area of 13.4 acres and is approximately 1 mile around the perimeter. Primarily open space, there is also a baseball field in the green. Sidewalks provide opportunities for walking and bicycling and the green is landscaped with a large variety of trees, many of which are historically significant. In addition to providing a recreation opportunity to residents and visitors, Broad Street Green also has historical significance. Broad Street itself was a farming community from the beginning of its inhabitation. Many houses associated with Wethersfield’s early farming families, such as the Bulkleys, still line the green today. In colonial times the green served as a training location for militia and was the gathering place of troops during the Revolutionary War. The green was also used for the grazing of cattle and sheep. In 1927 the State of Connecticut proposed a road down the center of the green but local opposition, and the hiring of Herbert Swan to prepare the 1928 Town Plan, resulted in the redirection of traffic to Silas Deane, essentially saving the green. Efforts to make it more park-like and user-friendly ensued and swampy areas were filled, the grass was tended to, and additional trees were planted. Today, the Broad Street Green retains its park-like appearance and is frequently visited by residents and visitors.



Broad Street Green

COVE PARK AND BOAT LAUNCH

Cove Park consists of 110 acres including the Cove, which extends from the foot of Main Street past the Department of Motor Vehicles property along State Street. Access to the parking lots which service the park is available along Main Street and State Street. The park includes a boat launch at the foot of Main Street, open space, T-ball fields, picnic areas, and a soccer field. The Cove Warehouse is also located within the park boundaries.



Existing trail in Cove Park

FIREHOUSE #1

Community garden plots are located on a 2.1 acre parcel at the rear of Firehouse #1. The Firehouse is located on Main Street in the Old Wethersfield Historic District.



Firehouse #1

HANMER PARK (RIVER ROAD GREEN)

Hanmer Park consists of a mini basketball court on less than one acre on a parcel off Main Street at River Road.

HERITAGE WAY BIKEWAY / PEDESTRIAN TRAIL

The Heritage Way Trail is a multi-phase project that will ultimately extend into Old Wethersfield. The trail currently is 2.1 miles long, beginning at the Pitkin Community Center and ending at Mill Woods Park. Once completed, the trail will extend across Silas Deane Highway along Nott Street, extending through Cove Park, south along Main Street and continuing through the Meadows.

KEENEY MEMORIAL CULTURAL CENTER

The Keeney Memorial Cultural Center is a historic school adapted for use as a community facility, housing a Visitors Center and the Wethersfield Museum. Owned by the Town and operated by Wethersfield the Historical Society, the Keeney Center is located on one acre of land on Main Street in the center of the Village and has landscaped grounds, a fountain, and a basketball court for recreational use.

STANDISH PARK

Standish Park is located on 10.6 acres on Hartford Avenue. The park includes a baseball field, a basketball court, soccer field, football field, tennis courts, and a playground. A wheelchair friendly community playground, called Mikey's Place, features accessible playscapes for children in wheelchairs.

CHAPTER 4: THE LOCAL ECONOMY – BUSINESSES AND VISITORS

Introduction

The economic health of the businesses and attractions in Old Wethersfield are important to maintaining the character and vitality of the historic district. A plan for the future of local businesses and attractions must be realistic and based on existing markets and market-place trends. The historic district does have an advantage for attracting and retaining businesses and supporting its local attractions because of the historic character and ambiance of the surrounding neighborhoods. People yearn for a historic and authentic experience and Old Wethersfield provides that, without even trying.

There are two notable markets which the historic district must serve in order to thrive and be truly successful. The first is the local market. The local market includes residents of the historic district, residents of the Town, and also includes residents from surrounding municipalities. The key to the local market is that people are visiting and purchasing items that support their daily needs. The second market is the transient market which caters to tourists and out-of-town visitors. The businesses and attractions will remain most attractive to this market if they are first responding to the local market. Local, authentic businesses provide “curb appeal” to tourists and visitors to a far greater extent than any contrived tourist amenity.

Given the size constraints of the historic district, and the limited square footage available to retail uses, the business district, including both stores and attractions, should not expect to sustain themselves from visitors alone. For business owners or site managers to focus on tourist activity and potentials would be a huge mistake that is not responsive to current market realities. The greatest success will likely come with a considerate balance of both the local and visitor markets.

Chapter 4 includes an overview of the current economic conditions in Old Wethersfield, from the perspective of the local business atmosphere, and from a tourism angle. The retail market analysis defines what the current retail potentials are for the district and what trends might be able to be capitalized upon. An overview of tourism potentials looks at opportunities for attracting the “second” market – the visitor market - to the area. Finally, existing promotional efforts, organizations, and marketing strategies are summarized to help define what has, or has not worked with regard to promoting Old Wethersfield.

Key components of this chapter include:

- Retail Market Analysis
- The Visitor Experience
- Promoting Old Wethersfield

Retail Market Analysis

The existing economic conditions within Old Wethersfield directly relate to and have an impact on the viability and success of local businesses as well as historic sites and attractions. Understanding the local economic conditions helps to create a general understanding of the market realities within the Town and what opportunities and limitations exist with regard to tourism development and business attraction and retention.

This market analysis is intended to help the Town, community members, and potential businesses determine what uses are most viable and have the greatest potential for success. The market analysis is based largely on census data and figures and is divided into the following sections:

- Methodology
- Definition of the Study Area
- Local Demographics and Economy
- Local Market Potentials

Methodology

This retail market analysis is based on information collected from a number of sources that provide information on demographics and consumer spending patterns. The information used to identify the current demographic conditions and retail market potentials was based on data provided by Claritas, a company that compiles direct marketing information.

Demographic information from Claritas includes 2000 Census data that has been made consistent with current year estimates and five year projected base counts. Claritas derives their economic and retail data from the Consumer Buying Power (CBP) database which utilizes information from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey.

The Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers 2002, a document published by the Urban Land Institute, was referenced to identify typical rent and sales per square foot of gross leasable area figures. This information allows for the conversion of economic figures into actual square footage numbers to determine what goods and services would realistically be supported in a given study area.

The Study Area

Claritas demographic and retail data was provided for three geographic areas which are referred to as trade areas. The trade areas are those geographic areas from which sales to the historic district could realistically be drawn.

The Primary Trade Area includes all land that falls within a 0.5-mile ring drawn from a central focus point. The focus point selected was the intersection of Main and Church Streets because it serves as the historic and modern day center of the historic district.

Demographic Overview

Understanding the demographics of the community and trade areas provides valuable insights as to what types of business and tourism development efforts might be most successful. In order to get a broad understanding of the local market and economic conditions, it is important to understand the existing demographics, employment characteristics, business sectors, major employers, and earning and income characteristics of the community.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The current average age for residents within the Primary Trade Area is 43.6 years and is expected to increase to 47.4 years by 2011. The age of residents can have a significant impact on the types of businesses which are successful in a given area, from the perspective of local utilization. A business that appeals to someone in their twenties may differ from one which appeals to someone in their forties which will differ from someone in their seventies. Within both Secondary Trade Areas the average age of the population is in the upper thirties.

According to 2007 population estimates, approximately 20% of historic district residents are under age 17, 6% are between 18 and 24, 8% are between the ages of 25 and 34, 15% are between the ages of 35 and 44, 8% are between the ages of 45 and 54, and 43% are aged 55 or older. While the population of the Primary Trade Area has decreased modestly over the past five years, the populations of the Secondary Trade Areas have experienced an average increase of approximately 1%. The 2006 population within the 3-mile trade area was 72,522 and 224,043 within the 5-mile trade area. In all trade areas, there are a greater number of women than men and almost half of families in the historic district (47%) include children.

EMPLOYMENT AND OCCUPATION CHARACTERISTICS

Approximately 60% of the population over the age of 16 is currently active in the labor force. The majority of workers (44%) are in management and professional occupations, sales and office occupations (29%), and service occupations (13%). Education, health, and social service industry occupations, as well as finance, insurance, and real estate occupations are the most common types of jobs. Almost 80% of historic district residents that work are employed in “white collar” type occupations.

BUSINESS SECTORS

Based on data compiled in 1997, the service sector was the leading business sector in the Town with 487 firms doing business under that category. This was followed by trade (266 businesses), construction (242 businesses), and financial/insurance/real estate (108 businesses). The service and trade sectors also have the greatest number of employees, 2,549 and 3,322, respectively. Although the government is the third largest employment category when looking at number of employees (909), only 15 firms fall under the government business sector category, the smallest firm representation in the Town. As with the Town as a whole, the majority of businesses in the historic district fall under the service sector umbrella, which includes retail, salons, and restaurants.

MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Major employers in the Town include the State of Connecticut, Town of Wethersfield, Northeast Utilities, Mediplex, and Nortel Communications. Of these, only the state’s Department of Motor Vehicles is located within the boundaries of the historic district.

Businesses within the historic district are typically small in order to fit in with the character and scale of the district itself, as well as the available building stock.

INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

The average household income in 2000 for historic district residents (Primary Trade Area) was \$81,331, significantly higher than the average income for the two Secondary Trade Areas of \$58,278 and \$60,007. While the average household income for the historic district is significantly higher than the national average of \$66,670, both Secondary Trade Areas fall below the national average. The average income is expected to continue to rise in the next five years for all trade areas, and the nation, by approximately 9-10%.

The average household income for Old Wethersfield residents implies that households within the Primary Trade Area have more buying power than the average family in the United States. That buying power could be used within the Town to support local businesses and attractions, as opposed to being used in neighboring commercial areas, such as Glastonbury.

Local Market Potentials

The potential for business from the local market is important to identify because it is the foundation upon which a successful Village business community can develop. Based on community feedback and the realities of the existing community, businesses in the Old Wethersfield Historic District should seek first address the interests of and attract the local population. Once this occurs, additional visitors who can further benefit and sustain the local economy can be attracted. It is not a realistic to think that the businesses of Old Wethersfield can support themselves based solely upon either local residents or outside visitors. They need both.

INFLUENTIAL TRENDS

The demographic and economic data outlined for Old Wethersfield has some influence over how to best interpret the findings of the retail market analysis. The key demographic findings to be considered in association with understanding and interpreting the retail market analysis include:

- Population statistics and retail demand findings do not include numbers associated with transient visitors. Any retail potentials generated from these groups would be above and beyond the findings indicated below.
- The population within the Primary Trade Area has decreased 8.6% between 2000 and 2006 and is expected to decline 3.6% over the next five years. However, modest population increases are expected in both Secondary Trade Areas. There do not appear to be any vacant houses within the district which implies that any population decrease is a result of older children moving out of their parent's home, and out of the district.
- The average household income is significantly higher in Old Wethersfield than throughout surrounding areas, or the nation, resulting in an immediate population with higher "buying power".
- The demographic of an older, well-educated, professional, and affluent population – as demonstrated to exist within the Old Wethersfield Historic District – is identical to the demographic characteristics typically associated with a heritage traveler. It is logical that residents within the district would seek to support local, heritage-based businesses.

EXISTING BUSINESS MIX

The Old Wethersfield business district faces a unique challenge in that it must successfully serve two markets - one that addresses the day-to-day needs of residents and one that attracts and accommodates visitors. The business district is centered at the corner of Main and Church/Marsh Streets and extends north and south along Main to Hart and Garden. The commercial core includes dining establishments, retail stores, services, historic sites, bed & breakfasts, and professional business and office space.

Although there is not a significant amount of building vacancy, there are some vacant storefronts as well as commercial spaces that are being underutilized. The privately owned shops and business are typically open Monday through Saturday during daytime hours. Few retailers are open on Sundays or in the evenings, at times when many residents and visitors are interested and able to do their shopping.

The square footage of retail establishments in Old Wethersfield ranges from 170 to 2500 square feet. There is a retail building with 6500 square feet of floor area, but this is significantly larger than the average business in Old Wethersfield. Although some businesses are located within buildings that were intentionally built for commercial uses, others are housed in adaptively reused historic buildings, such as residences, to accommodate their retail or office needs.



*View of business frontages
along Main Street*

Business retention and attraction is not a new concern for the Town and its historic district property and business owners. Between 1993 and 2006 thirteen business surveys have been completed to try and gain a better understanding about the business climate in the Old Wethersfield Historic District. During that same period the business district has lost a number of businesses, most recently, the Village Tavern in the Deming-Standish House at the corner of Marsh and Main Streets. However, a new anchor restaurant tenant, J. Michaels Tavern, has moved into the building and re-established this visible corner with a prominent restaurant establishment.



*Village Pizza is a popular
restaurant in Old Wethersfield*

The following businesses, organized by business type, currently occupy space along Main Street, based on a field assessment conducted in Spring 2007:

RESTAURANTS AND EATERIES

- Main Street Creamery & Cafe (Ice Cream)
- Mainly Tea (Tea and Light Fare)
- Patty Cakes (Coffee and Bakery)
- Spicy Green Bean (Breakfast, Deli)
- Old Town Café Bar & Grill (American)
- The Red Onion Restaurant (American) – Currently Vacant
- Village Pizza (Pizza)
- J Michael’s Tavern (American)

RETAIL USES

- Antiques on Main (Antiques)
- Comstock, Ferre, and Company (Garden)
- Harper Invitations (Paper, Cards, and Invitations)
- Heart of the Country (Gifts)
- House of Images (Custom Framing/Art Gallery)
- Judy & Penny K's Ceramics (Ceramic Supplies/Classes/Gifts)
- Neill Walsh Goldsmiths (Jewelry)
- Sit N Knit Too (Knitting Supplies)



Antiques on Main is a retail establishment in Old Wethersfield

SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Annie's Nails (Salon)
- Bijoux Rose (Salon)
- Blades (Salon)
- Bruce Daly Plumbing & Heating (Plumbing and Heating)
- David Photography (Photography Studio)
- Nighttime Hair Design (Salon)
- Plaza VII Hair Design (Salon)
- Sandra Wakeen Gallery (Portrait Studio)
- Wethersfield Travel (Travel Agency)



Bijoux Rose Salon at Main & Hartford

HISTORIC SITES

- First Church
- Hurlbut-Dunham House
- Old Academy Museum
- Visitors Center at the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center
- Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum
- Wethersfield Museum at the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center

ACCOMMODATIONS

- Chester Bulkley House (Bed & Breakfast)
- Silas Robbins House (Bed & Breakfast – on Broad Street)



*Wethersfield Investment Center is on the right,
Heart of the County is on the left*

OFFICE / MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

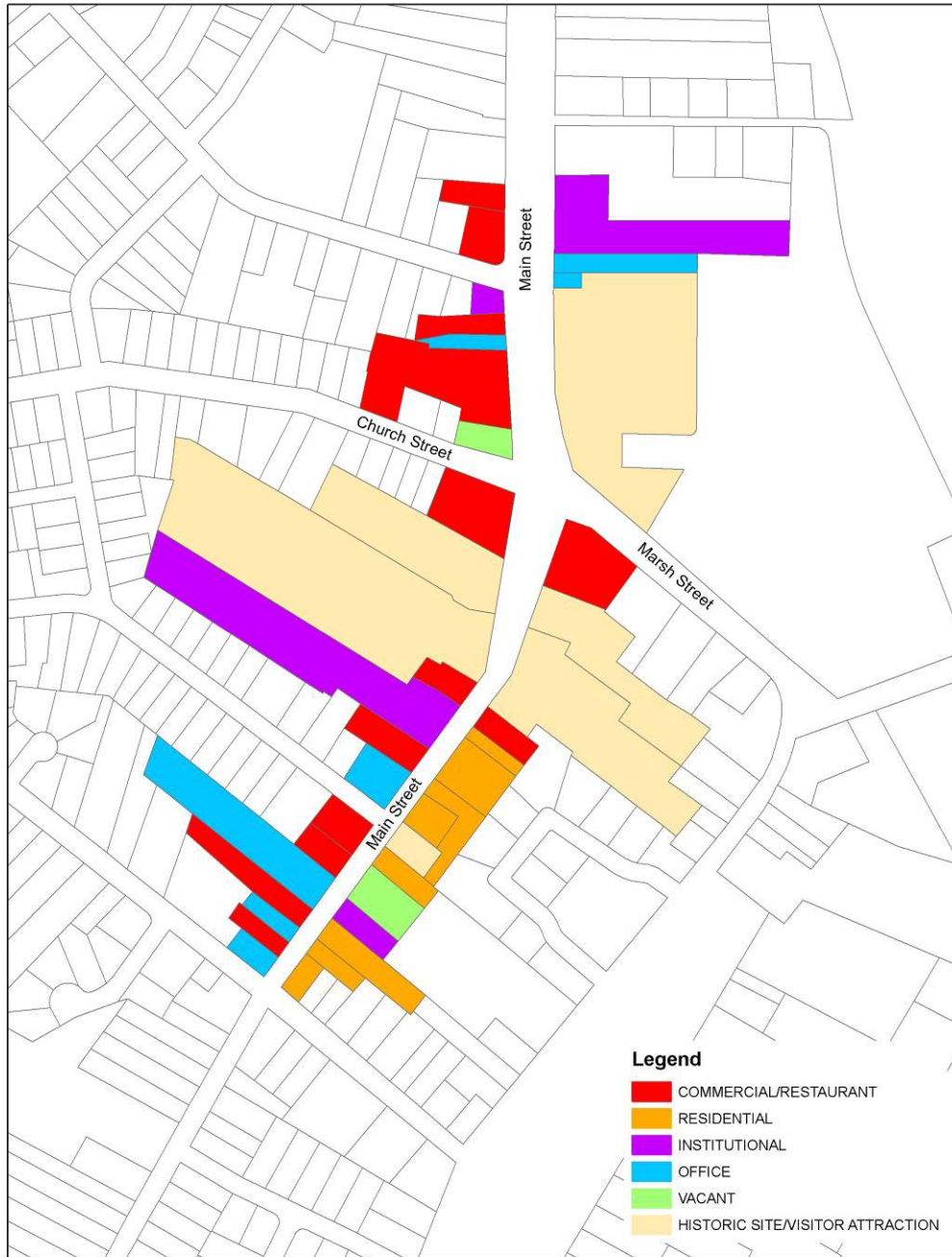
- Allstate Insurance
- D’Esopo Resource Center (Grief Counseling)
- General Office in Historic Barn – Vacant
- Gourmet Gatherings by Ascot (Catering)
- Hart Seed Co. (Seed Company)
- Rainbow Center Psychological Services
- Stephen Theaker - Attorney
- Stranko Family Chiropractic
- Wethersfield Investment Center
- Willard Restoration



D'Esopo-Pratt Resource Center at 109 Main Street

The map of the Village Center shows that there is no single concentration of a specific type of use. Retail space, office uses, and other uses, such as historic attractions, are interspersed along the length of the commercial core of Main Street.

FIGURE 2 – EXISTING LAND USES
Village Center, Old Wethersfield Historic District



Retail Demand

Understanding what the demand for certain retail goods and services is can help to identify what holes exist in the current marketplace. Retail market data is available for over fifty retail categories which range from different grocery food products to boat sales.

Categories included as part of the market analysis for the Old Wethersfield Historic District have been selected based on their reasonable appropriateness to being located within the Old Wethersfield Historic District. For instance, a women's clothing store is a use that could reasonably be accommodated in the historic district, a used car dealership is not. The categories selected for further analysis include:

- Apparel
 - Women's
 - Men's
 - Infant's
 - Footwear

- Entertainment
 - Reading Materials (books, magazines)
 - Photographic Equipment (film, cameras, etc.)

- Food at Home
 - Grocery, All Foods
 - Meats
 - Bakery Products
 - Fruits and Vegetables

- Health Care
 - Prescription Drugs

- Household Equipment
 - Household Textiles (bed linens, towels, etc.)
 - Furniture (chairs, dining tables, couches, etc.)
 - Small Appliances / Housewares (kitchen appliances, vacuums, etc.)

- Miscellaneous Items
 - Personal Care Products (shampoo, make-up, spa, nail salon, etc.)
 - Housekeeping Supplies (cleaning supplies, etc.)

- Food Away from Home
 - Breakfast and Brunch
 - Lunch
 - Dinner
 - Snacks (ice cream, coffee shop, etc.)

- Alcoholic Beverages
 - At Home (liquor store, wine store)
 - Away from Home (bar, wine tasting)

The chart below identifies the total demand for the specified goods and services within the three designated trade areas, as previously identified. Retail demand has been provided in “dollars” for 2006, along with estimates for 2011. The five year estimates will help gauge retail sectors that have the potential to either expand or diminish in the near future, allowing for the identification of retail categories that are have greater potential for long-term success.

TABLE 1 - ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURES
 Primary and Secondary Trade Areas

Retail Category	ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURES (Aggregate – in 000’s)					
	0.5-Mile Radius		3-Mile Radius		5-Mile Radius	
	2006	2011	2006	2011	2006	2011
All Apparel						
Women’s Apparel	777	839	32,130	36,286	104,138	116,126
Men’s Apparel	555	596	24,042	26,862	76,243	83,947
Infant’s Apparel	59	61	2,928	3,239	9,216	10,026
Footwear	274	296	12,834	14,457	40,902	45,306
Entertainment						
Reading Materials	436	440	15,431	16,034	46,681	48,186
Photographic Equipment	89	88	3203	3281	10,042	10,215
Food at Home						
Grocery – All Foods	3498	3729	170,370	189,040	513,009	561,162
Meats	698	717	37,442	40,552	114,060	121,424
Bakery Products	371	388	17,365	18,841	51,782	55,469
Fruits and Vegetables	421	465	20,627	23,778	61,925	70,436
Health Care						
Prescription Drugs	1246	1911	53,638	84,517	150,897	172,348
Household Equipment						
Household Textiles	410	485	14,416	17,589	45,030	54,614
Furniture	532	621	20,163	24,213	62,647	74,666
Small Appliance / Houseware	452	507	15,862	18,470	49,197	56,974
Miscellaneous Items						
Personal Care Products	618	735	27,430	33,917	84,839	103,495
Housekeeping Supplies	225	267	9997	12,293	29,749	36,164
Food Away from Home						
Breakfast and Brunch	241	305	11,047	14,525	33,463	43,382
Lunch	840	1022	36,936	46,484	114,203	142,002
Dinner	884	891	35,249	35,445	108,030	110,774
Snacks	341	443	14,846	20,018	45,914	61,121
Alcoholic Beverages						
At Home	583	637	25,409	29,062	77,825	87,735
Away from Home	296	332	10,901	12,504	33,191	37,816

Source: Claritas, Inc.

KEY FINDINGS

- With the exception of photographic equipment sales, all retail categories are expected to see an increase in expenditures through 2011. The decrease in photographic equipment expenditures is nominal.
- The 5-mile Secondary Trade Area has a sizeable population, and thus expenditure increase, compared to the Primary Trade Area and 3-mile Secondary Trade Area.
- Infants Apparel has the lowest amount of annual expenditures in each Trade Area, while Grocery – All Foods has the greatest amount of annual expenditures.

The total expenditures identified in the preceding table are able to be translated into square footage using standardized calculations provided by The Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers. The table below identifies the total expenditures translated into retail square footages (numbers have been rounded):

TABLE 2 - HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURES IN SQUARE FOOTAGE
 Primary and Secondary Trade Areas

Retail Category	HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURES TRANSLATED TO SQUARE FOOTAGE					
	0.5-Mile Radius		3-Mile Radius		5-Mile Radius	
	2006	2011	2006	2011	2006	2011
All Apparel						
Women's Apparel	2,105	2,273	87,073	98,336	282,217	314,705
Men's Apparel	1,504	1,615	65,154	72,796	206,621	227,499
Infant's Apparel	239	247	11,902	13,166	37,312	40,591
Footwear	1,096	1,184	51,336	57,828	160,368	181,224
Entertainment						
Reading Materials	1,453	1,466	51,437	53,447	155,603	160,620
Photographic Equipment	296	293	10,677	10,936	33,473	34,050
Food at Home						
Grocery – All Foods	11,897	12,683	579,490	642,993	1,744,929	1,908,714
Meats	2,052	2,108	110,124	119,271	335,471	357,129
Bakery Products	1,091	1,141	51,073	55,414	152,300	163,144
Fruits and Vegetables	1,238	1,367	60,667	69,935	182,132	207,165
Health Care						
Prescription Drugs	5,191	7,962	223,491	352,154	628,738	718,116
Household Equipment						
Household Textiles	1,863	2,204	65,527	79,950	204,682	248,245
Furniture	2,756	3,218	104,472	125,456	324,596	386,870
Small Appliance / Houseware	2,342	2,627	82,187	95,699	254,907	295,202
Miscellaneous Items						
Personal Care Products	2,575	3,062	114,292	141,320	353,496	431,229
Housekeeping Supplies	671	797	29,842	36,396	88,803	107,952
Food Away from Home						
Breakfast and Brunch	902	1,142	41,375	54,401	125,330	162,479
Lunch	3,146	3,828	138,337	174,097	427,727	531,843
Dinner	3,310	3,337	132,019	132,753	404,606	414,884
Snacks	1,277	1,659	55,603	74,973	171,963	228,918
Alcoholic Beverages						
At Home	2,097	2,291	91,399	104,540	279,946	315,594
Away from Home	1,065	1,194	39,212	44,978	119,392	136,029

Source: Claritas, Inc. & Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers

KEY FINDINGS

- Square footage translations have the same overarching results as the expenditures data shows.
- Infant's apparel, photographic equipment, housekeeping supplies, and breakfast away from home have the smallest amount of square footage potential. This implies a limited amount of retail space is needed to meet current demand for these retail categories.
- Grocery, prescription drugs, dinner, and lunch have the highest amount of square footage potential, which equates to most significant demand for retail space.
- When considering the square footage potential for prescription drugs it should be noted that this calculation does not take into consideration the growing trend for many people to purchase prescriptions by mail or through Internet orders. The actual square footage potential is likely to be much smaller than identified in the table.

RETAIL POTENTIALS (UNMET DEMAND)

The information contained in this section is intended to illustrate the potential "capture rate" for specific goods and retail establishments within the Primary and Secondary Trade Areas based on the Annual Household Expenditures data presented above. Determining what the potential "capture rate" is for the Old Wethersfield Historic District will help to understand what the unmet retail demand is, and what retail opportunities can possibly be filled in the Old Wethersfield Village Center.

Capture rate is defined as the total dollar amount that a community, or defined area, can expect residents within its boundaries to spend locally on a good or service. For instance, the capture rate for Women's Apparel in the Primary Trade Area is the percentage of the total dollar amount that residents within the historic district can be expected to spend on woman's apparel within the trade area boundaries.

The national standard capture rate for retail goods and services is 20% within the Primary Trade Area, and 2% within Secondary Trade Areas. Translated into dollars, it is expected that the Primary Trade Area can "capture" twenty cents of every dollar that residents of the trade area spend on goods and services. Secondary Trade Area figures are more conservative and as a standard can capture just 2% of the retail potentials within a study area, or two cents on every dollar.

The table below illustrates the retail opportunities that theoretically exist within the Old Wethersfield Historic District, as converted to actual square footages. The difference between existing retail square footages and total supportable square footages results in the determination of what realistic new retail and service opportunities are in Old Wethersfield. The calculations are based on the Annual Household Expenditures data, with figures multiplied by the designated "capture rate".

TABLE 3 - EXISTING CAPTURE RATE AND RETAIL POTENTIALS
Primary and Secondary Trade Areas, 2006 and 2011

Retail Category	CAPTURE RATE / RETAIL POTENTIALS TRANSLATED TO SQUARE FOOTAGE					
	0.5-Mile Radius (20%)		3-Mile Radius (2%)		5-Mile Radius (2%)	
	2006	2011	2006	2011	2006	2011
All Apparel						
Women's Apparel	421	455	1,741	1,967	5,644	6,294
Men's Apparel	301	323	1,303	1,456	4,132	4,550
Infant's Apparel	48	49	238	263	746	812
Footwear	219	237	1,027	1,157	3,208	3,624
Entertainment						
Reading Materials	291	293	1,029	1,069	3,112	3,212
Photographic Equipment	59	58.6	214	219	669	681
Food at Home						
Grocery – All Foods	2,379	2,537	11,590	12,860	34,899	38,174
Meats	410	422	2,202	2,385	6,709	7,143
Bakery Products	218	228	1,021	1,108	3,046	3,263
Fruits and Vegetables	248	273	1,213	1,399	3,643	4,143
Health Care						
Prescription Drugs	1,038	1,592	4,470	7,043	12,575	14,362
Household Equipment						
Household Textiles	373	441	1,311	1,599	4,094	4,965
Furniture	551	644	2,089	2,509	6,492	7,737
Small Appliance / Houseware	468	525	1,644	1,914	5,098	5,904
Miscellaneous Items						
Personal Care Products	515	612	2,286	2,826	7,070	8,625
Housekeeping Supplies	134	159	597	728	1,776	2,159
Food Away from Home						
Breakfast and Brunch	180	228	828	1,088	2,507	3,250
Lunch	629	766	2,767	3,482	8,555	10,637
Dinner	662	667	2,640	2,655	8,092	8,298
Snacks	255	332	1,112	1,499	3,439	4,578
Alcoholic Beverages						
At Home	419	458	1,826	2,091	5,599	6,312
Away from Home	213	239	784	900	2,388	2,721

Source: Claritas, Inc. and Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers

KEY FINDINGS

- There is not enough supportable square footage from historic district residents alone for any retail category. Therefore, the Trade Area for Old Wethersfield must include, at a minimum, the 3-mile Secondary Trade Area.

The table below identifies the total current (2006) supportable square footage for the Historic District by retail category. The final column identifies the cumulative supportable square footage for the Primary and 3-mile Secondary Trade Areas. The 5-mile Trade Area has been excluded from the final column because it is not reasonable to assume that residents within this ring would regularly shop in the Historic District given the amount of regional competition.

**TABLE 4 - TOTAL SUPPORTABLE SQUARE FOOTAGE
Primary and Secondary Trade Areas, 2006**

Retail Category	0.5-Mile Radius (20%)	3-Mile Radius (2%)	5-Mile Radius (2%)	TOTAL S/F 0.5-Mile and 3-Mile Trade Areas
All Apparel				
Women’s Apparel	421	1,741	5,644	2,162
Men’s Apparel	301	1,303	4,132	1,604
Infant’s Apparel	48	238	746	286
Footwear	219	1,027	3,208	1,246
Entertainment				
Reading Materials	291	1,029	3,112	1,320
Photographic Equipment	59	214	669	273
Food at Home				
Grocery – All Foods	2,379	11,590	34,899	13,969
Meats	410	2,202	6,709	2,612
Bakery Products	218	1,021	3,046	1,239
Fruits and Vegetables	248	1,213	3,643	1,461
Health Care				
Prescription Drugs	1,038	4,470	12,575	5,508
Household Equipment				
Household Textiles	373	1,311	4,094	1,684
Furniture	551	2,089	6,492	2,640
Small Appliance / Houseware	468	1,644	5,098	2,112
Miscellaneous Items				
Personal Care Products	515	2,286	7,070	2,801
Housekeeping Supplies	134	597	1,776	731
Food Away From Home				
Breakfast and Brunch	180	828	2,507	1,008
Lunch	629	2,767	8,555	3,396
Dinner	662	2,640	8,092	3,302
Snacks	255	1,112	3,439	1,367
Alcoholic Beverages				
At Home	419	1,826	5,599	2,245
Away from Home	213	784	2,388	997
TOTAL				53,963 S/F

Source: Claritas, Inc. and Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers

KEY FINDINGS

- There is currently 31,670 square feet of occupied retail (21,960 SF) and restaurant (9,710 SF) space in Old Wethersfield. An additional 7,986 square feet of retail space is proposed within the Comstock Redevelopment Plan, which would bring the total existing retail and restaurant square footage to 39,656 square feet.
- Based on the retail categories provided in the market analysis, there is currently 53,963 square feet of retail space that could be supported in the Old Wethersfield Village Center. This figure includes dining establishments, but does not include office space.
- When the current and proposed occupied retail and restaurant space (39,656 SF) is subtracted from the total supportable square footage (53,963 SF), the resulting number is the amount of NEW retail space that could be supported within the Village Center. This equates to 14,307 square feet of new retail that could realistically be supported in the Village Center.
- New retail and restaurant uses do not mean new development is necessary within the Village Center. A number of vacancies, including the Red Onion Restaurant, and other underutilized sites, such as the Masonic Hall, could be adaptively reused resulting in fewer vacancies on the Main Street strip with little, if any, impacts to the historic fabric of the Main Street community.
- Total supportable square footage includes only the Primary and 3-mile Secondary Trade Area. Based on the amount of retail and commercial competition within the 5-mile Trade Area, it is not realistic that the Historic District could support and attract those users.
- An average small boutique shop can range from 800 to 3,000 square feet. This square footage is appropriate in Old Wethersfield given the available building stock.
- Based on average small-scale business sizes and the information included in the table, the following businesses could theoretically be supported in Old Wethersfield:
 - Women's Apparel (1-2 shops)
 - Men's Apparel (1 shop)
 - Footwear (1 shop)
 - Bookstore (1 shop)
 - Butcher (1 shop)
 - Bakery (1 shop)
 - Fruit and Vegetable market (1 shop)
 - Household Textiles (1 shop)
 - Furniture (1 shop)
 - Housewares (1 shop)
 - Personal Care (2-3 shops)
 - Snacks (1-2 shops)
 - Liquor or Wine store (1-2 shops)
 - Bar, not part of a restaurant (1 shop)

- It is assumed that each of the preceding businesses would be “specialty” stores given size constraints. For example, the bookstore may be a used bookstore and the furniture store might specialize in only baby furniture.
- All the supportable square footage for Grocery-All Food and Prescription Drugs would seem to indicate these uses could be supported in Old Wethersfield. However, neither use would have a significant chance for success given market realities and competition from large chain stores and Internet opportunities. Further, the existing building stock would not be able to support the larger square footages required for these business categories.
- The number of supportable square footage for restaurants should take into account the 5-mile Secondary Trade Area. Restaurants have a greater probability of attracting people from a larger area, particularly if they are unique and offer a special ambiance or dining option that is not found at other local eating establishments. Therefore, supportable square footages for restaurant uses within the Village Center should theoretically be considered to be:
 - Breakfast – 3,515 SF
 - Lunch – 11,951 SF
 - Dinner – 11,394 SF
- Restaurants also tend to thrive when they are part of a larger mass of eating establishments. Having multiple restaurants within the district, representing various food specialties and scales, would help the restaurants to do well. Existing building stock may present an issue for attracting additional restaurants beyond those that already exist due to the amount of space they require and the size of available historic buildings.
- To determine what new stores could be supported and attracted to the Village Center, the list of opportunities needs to be compared to the list of existing retail establishments. When removing supportable businesses that already exist within the Historic District, retail categories of potential businesses that should be pursued include:
 - Women’s and/or Men’s Apparel
 - Women’s Footwear
 - Used Bookstore
 - Butcher and/or Fruit and Vegetable market
 - Kitchen Boutique
 - Children’s Furniture
 - Specialty Skin Care / Lotion Boutique
 - Day Spa
 - Restaurants
 - Liquor Store
 - Wine Bar and Store
- There is statistically not enough demand to support an infant’s apparel store or a retail establishment with only housekeeping supplies. However, the demand

for these retail categories could be combined. For instance, a woman’s apparel store may be a maternity boutique that also sells infant apparel.

The table below identifies the total future supportable square footage for the Historic District by retail category. The final column identifies the cumulative supportable square footage for the Primary and 3-mile Secondary Trade Areas only.

**TABLE 5 - TOTAL SUPPORTABLE SQUARE FOOTAGE
Primary and Secondary Trade Areas, 2011**

Retail Category	0.5-Mile Radius (20%)	3-Mile Radius (2%)	5-Mile Radius (2%)	TOTAL S/F 0.5-Mile and 3-Mile Trade Areas
All Apparel				
Women’s Apparel	455	1,967	6,294	2,422
Men’s Apparel	323	1,456	4,550	1,779
Infant’s Apparel	49	263	812	312
Footwear	237	1,157	3,624	1,394
Entertainment				
Reading Materials	293	1,069	3,212	1,362
Photographic Equipment	59	219	681	278
Food at Home				
Grocery – All Foods	2,537	12,860	38,174	15,397
Meats	422	2,385	7,143	2,807
Bakery Products	228	1,108	3,263	1,336
Fruits and Vegetables	273	1,399	4,143	1,672
Health Care				
Prescription Drugs	1,592	7,043	14,362	8,635
Household Equipment				
Household Textiles	441	1,599	4,965	2,040
Furniture	644	2,509	7,737	3,153
Small Appliance / Houseware	525	1,914	5,904	2,439
Miscellaneous Items				
Personal Care Products	612	2,826	8,625	3,438
Housekeeping Supplies	159	728	2,159	887
Food Away From Home				
Breakfast and Brunch	180	1,088	3,250	1,268
Lunch	629	3,482	10,637	4,111
Dinner	662	2,655	8,298	3,317
Snacks	255	1,499	4,578	1,754
Alcoholic Beverages				
At Home	419	2,091	6,312	2,510
Away from Home	213	900	2,721	1,113
TOTAL				63,424 S/F

Source: Claritas, Inc. and Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers

KEY FINDINGS

- Based on the same retail categories, there is theoretically the potential for an additional 9,461 SF of retail space that could be supported in the Village Center by 2011. Personal care products, lunch, dinner, and furniture are growing retail categories.

Visitor Experience

Creating an exciting, enjoyable, and educational visitor experience is critical to attracting new and repeat visitors to the Old Wethersfield Historic District. The businesses and attractions within Old Wethersfield help to define the historic district and losing them would be a substantial blow to the very character that has attracted new residents and kept existing residents in the area for decades. The businesses and attractions cannot be fully supported by district residents alone however. Residents from throughout the Town, surrounding towns, and the region must be aware that a jewel exists tucked behind the Silas Deane Highway.

Due to the historical significance of the district, as well as the individual sites and attractions within the district, developing a heritage tourism program is likely to be one of the community's keys to success. There are other aspects of the district's heritage, such as its natural resources and agricultural roots, which could also be capitalized on to attract new visitors. This section focuses on how to better define and establish a visitor experience that is, first and foremost, considerate of the residents who make Old Wethersfield their home. The overarching principles or guidelines that should be followed in order to ensure that Old Wethersfield can successfully transition into a small-scale heritage destination are outlined to provide a framework to direct future implementation efforts.

The Heritage Traveler

The concept of heritage tourism is not new to the Town of Wethersfield. The Town has been considering the benefits and potentials associated with attracting heritage travelers for years. In association with attractions and business owners, the Town has been interested in fulfilling the potential for heritage tourism within the Old Wethersfield Historic District.

To fully understand the potentials within the Town to capitalize on this growing tourism trend, it is important to understand what heritage tourism is. As defined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, "heritage tourism is traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historic, and natural resources".

Historic places are a draw for heritage travelers who seek authentic sightseeing experiences that go beyond a one-stop destination. Special programs, walking tours, specific historic sites, and small businesses in historic buildings are all attributes that are generally linked to a heritage tourism destination. Old Wethersfield can offer visitors all of these. Visitors want to experience history, not just learn about it through displays and images, and Old Wethersfield is a place where they truly can. It is a community that exudes New England character and charm, where a visitor can truly

relax and enjoy the simple pleasures. The architecture found within the historic district is itself a form of a living museum which exemplifies the authentic quality and character of the area. Coupled with the historic attractions and natural and open space resources, the historic district has many opportunities to draw heritage travelers into the area.

Though the district has a variety of resources and opportunities, it should also be recognized that the number and extent of available business resources is limited. Old Wethersfield is not Colonial Williamsburg, nor does it seek to be. Old Wethersfield is first and foremost a residential community, with the historic attractions and local businesses playing a supporting role that enhance and improve the quality-of-life and character of the district neighborhoods.

Tourism Today

Attracting visitors to the sites and attractions within Old Wethersfield has been a long-standing goal of the community that has been difficult to achieve to the extent desired. Based on 2001 data provided by the Wethersfield Historical Society and Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, approximately 13,889 people visited cultural attractions in Old Wethersfield in 2000. Of this total, 6,446 visited with educational or school groups, 5,232 came for special events occurring at a cultural site, and 2,211 came as actual “visitors”. That averages to approximately 7 “visitors” per day in 2000. These numbers indicate that the Historic District and the historic sites and businesses within Old Wethersfield are not attracting people in the capacity that they could, and should.

Making improvements to the way the District is marketed, the audience that is being reached, and the amenities that are provided to visitors will be key to increasing the visitation numbers within the Historic District and at individual sites and attractions. The first step in this process is to identify and inventory what the District has to offer and then to develop an ideal visitor experience based on that inventory. The following sections, Principles for the Visitor Experience and Goals for the Visitor Experience, will provide the Town and individual businesses and organizations with some overarching objectives that should be integrated into any future marketing and organizational development that is undertaken.

Principles to Guide the Visitor Experience

In order to make the historic district a destination that is viewed positively by residents and visitors from both near and far, the following five principles should be embraced by the community. They will help guide the community in capitalizing on the opportunities that exist within Old Wethersfield as they relate to heritage development and community enhancement. These guiding principles have been developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to assist historic villages such as Old Wethersfield in achieving their heritage goals. The principles lay the framework for specific recommendations associated with interpretation, heritage development, marketing, and administration identified in Chapter 6 of this Master Plan.

COLLABORATION

Working together accomplishes more than working alone. Creative partnerships and collaboration will accomplish more in Old Wethersfield than each organization or business could accomplish independently. Pooled financial resources for marketing and

promotion, sharing facilities, and identifying shared stories are all possible areas for collaboration. While collaboration among historic attractions is obvious, the partnerships between historic attractions, business owners, and the local residential community are key and should be the basis of a successful, community-wide initiative.

FIND THE FIT

Determining an appropriate level of visitors that the community and local attractions are comfortable with is critical. Visitor programs that are most successful have widespread local acceptance and meet local needs; they are realistic because they are based on local history, resources, and amenities. A visitor program for Old Wethersfield must be built around the level of visitors that:

- residents are comfortable with,
- has positive impacts on local attractions and businesses, and
- has minimal impacts on local infrastructure – such as roads and parking.

MAKE SITES (AND BUSINESSES) COME ALIVE

Attractions and sites need to reach out to people and grab – and keep - their attention. Making sites come alive is possible through the development of an interpretive program that not only educates, but entertains. Engaging visitors is important to their overall memory of a place. Developing an interpretive program that is desirable for residents and visitors will create opportunities for telling the story of Old Wethersfield in a meaningful way. Identifying businesses that also engage and entertain visitors as they walk the streets, through displays or the sale of one-of-a-kind goods, also contributes to the feeling of Old Wethersfield as a vibrant community.

FOCUS ON AUTHENTICITY

Old Wethersfield is most notable for being an authentic community which has retained its character and ambiance because of the residents that have lived there for decades, and the new families that seek to lay their roots there. These very characteristics – the real stories of the community – are the ones that visitors find most interesting and appealing. Old Wethersfield's history is Old Wethersfield's history, and that has significant value and appeal because it sets the community apart from other places. That uniqueness is what makes Old Wethersfield a desirable location.

PRESERVE AND PROTECT

The foundation for attracting visitors to Old Wethersfield is rooted in the history and culture associated with the Historic District. For that reason it is essential that existing resources are preserved and protected for the long-term. Quick fix solutions aren't appropriate for Old Wethersfield if they result in changes to the historic fabric, character, and ambiance of the Historic District. While change is often necessary, recognizing that the buildings and landscapes of the district tell the story of the people who lived and worked there is equally important. The community needs to define what it considers an acceptable balance between change and preservation. By protecting the resources that contribute to the district's attraction to visitors, the future of Old Wethersfield is will be preserved for later generations.

Goals for the Visitor Experience

The experience that visitors have when visiting a historic community like Old Wethersfield is shaped, in large part, by what they learn and how they learn it. The

goals for shaping the experience of visitors that come to Old Wethersfield are to create positive memories, reinforce historical significance and themes, and to encourage return visits. The following goals will help to guide the Town and its community, business, and tourism partners as they develop a strategy for community enhancement and heritage development:

WAYFINDING

Visitors to Old Wethersfield should be provided with clear directions and guides that lead them to attractions, resources, activities, and special events occurring within the historic district. The guide should be available both within, and outside of, the historic district. Visitors should not have access to it only when they are already in the district, but it should serve as another means to attract more people to the historic sites and businesses.

INTERPRETATION

An interpretive program for Old Wethersfield will help place the historic district into a geographical and historical context. The history of the Town needs to be relayed to visitors in a manner that acknowledges different learning styles, interests, and ages. Visitors should be encouraged to learn more about Old Wethersfield and locations for interpretation must be easy to access and visitor friendly. Interpretation should focus on the history of Old Wethersfield and should build on the stories that are already being told at historic sites, such as the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum and Wethersfield Historical Society exhibits. The interpretive program should support the broad-based quality-of-life interests of residents that enhance the character and significance of the Wethersfield community.

QUALITY

Visitors expect, and should receive, high quality sites, attractions, and amenities, including a high quality selection of business and restaurant options. Historic sites, businesses, community organizations, and the Town should continue to work together to maintain the existing quality-of-life characteristics associated with Old Wethersfield.

VARIETY

Visitors should be encouraged to enjoy the historic district's varied attractions and resources – including the historic building stock, natural resources, parks and open spaces, historic sites and museums, local businesses, and restaurants. Unique shops, delicious food, and historic attractions will all play a role in fostering and developing a positive experience that will lead to the continued support of the community through repeat visits, word of mouth referrals, and an interest in the preservation of historic communities throughout Connecticut.

Other Tourism Opportunities

Although the focus of tourism discussion as it relates to Old Wethersfield has been on heritage and cultural tourism, there are other sectors of tourism that may also have potential for further exploration and consideration. Two of these sectors that may be appropriate in Wethersfield include eco-tourism and agri-tourism. The term tourism often conjures images of large groups of people which may discourage communities and small business owners from considering tourism as an option for enhancing their natural and agricultural resources. However, eco-tourism and agri-tourism are typically

small-scale, low-impact, and, often education-based, all characteristics which appeal to a residentially-oriented community such as Old Wethersfield.

ECO-TOURISM

Eco-tourism is related to travel to natural areas that helps conserve local environments as well as improves the well-being of local people. The idea of conserving our world, regional, and local environments are becoming recognized for its importance for not only plant and animal species, but for human enjoyment as well. Eco-tourism destinations typically have a number of the following attributes: natural resources that can be used and enjoyed by visitors and are not harmed by visitor use; a low density of development; small community businesses; outdoor recreation amenities; local festivals and events that demonstrate a community's pride in its natural environment; accessible public facilities in proximity to natural features and destinations; and opportunities for interaction between visitors and local residents.

Old Wethersfield meets the typical standards of an eco-tourism destination. Natural resources and outdoor recreation amenities within the Town include the Cove and its associated park, Broad Street Green, neighborhood parks, recreation trails, and wide streetscapes. It has already been stated that the local business community could be further strengthened and enhanced through the addition of small shops that appeal to both residents and visitors and fit into the historical character of the Village Center. Local festivals and events sponsored by the Town, local organizations, and local business owners already portray a powerful sense of pride among residents about the heritage of the community and its environment. Identifying public facilities, such as those that exist at the Visitors Center, could enhance the visitor experience.

The Cove and Cove Park offer a variety of opportunities for visitors to enjoy the natural surroundings and participate in recreational activities. Boating, picnicking, walking, and fishing are some of the opportunities that are available. Improving the water quality through the Metropolitan District Commission's clean water project will help conserve the ecology as well as increase the interest in various types of boating, such as kayaking and canoeing and fishing. There is also the potential for boaters coming down the river, from other towns, to pull into the Cove to enjoy the day in Wethersfield. The trail that leads from the boat launching area up to the sports field provides a scenic walk through a wooded area lined with benches and picnic tables. Ecotourism is a sustainable way to increase the quality of living and natural environment for visitors, as well as local residents.

AGRI-TOURISM

Agri-tourism focuses on attracting visitors to a place that is, or has historically been, used for agricultural purposes. The agricultural heritage of the Wethersfield community is one that is not regularly showcased today but there are tangible reminders of that part of the community's history still intact. In addition to the Broad Street Green, there are two historic farms adjacent to the Green that are still active today. Comstock Ferre is also an important, and extant, component of the community's agricultural history.

Festivals and events could be developed that build on and showcase this component of the community's heritage. Events, such as the annual Corn Festival held on the Broad Street Green, could attract a greater number of visitors if local farmers, arts and crafts vendors, entertainment, and food vendors worked collectively to illustrate the agricultural heritage of the once strong farming community. Similarly, the Green

would be an ideal and appropriate location for a community market with vendors selling fresh produce on the Green on a designated day and time throughout the spring, summer, and fall months.

Promoting Old Wethersfield

There are events, organizations, and marketing opportunities which exist to aid in the promotion and maintenance of a viable business district and tourism industry within the Historic District. Identifying what is, and also what is not, being done helps to determine what steps need to be made in the future in order to ensure the long-term success of the Historic District, both as a residential community and as an historic commercial village.

A variety of marketing mechanisms are utilized to attract visitors to the Old Wethersfield Historic District. The AAA guide is successfully used along with other guidebooks, State of Connecticut Welcome Centers are utilized for brochure distribution, newspaper press release advertise special events and programs, and the internet is becoming an increasingly popular means of disseminating and sharing information.

This section outlines past and current programs and special events held within the district, available accommodations for overnight visitors, local organizations who focus on business and tourism development, and current marketing efforts. This information provides an understanding of what is being done today with respect to attracting new users to the district and thus ensuring the viability of the existing businesses and attractions in the short- and long-term.

Special Events and Programs

A number of the local business organizations and sites within the Historic District host annual events and develop special programming opportunities in an effort to attract additional visitors to the area and generate interest in the attractions that are available. Special events and programs that have taken place in the Historic District are summarized below. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list of programs and events, but does provide an overview of the variety and types of programs currently available for the enjoyment of residents and visitors.

ANTIQUÉ SHOW

The Wethersfield Historical Society hosts an annual Antiques Show, which was most recently held at the Pitkin Community Center. The show showcases over 40 local antiques dealers with proceeds from the event benefitting the society's educational and cultural programming.

CRAFT SHOW

Every Fall the Wethersfield Historical Society hosts a Craft Fair at Cove Park. The Fair typically boasts over 80 crafters, food, and family activities. Wine tasting, pony rides, and live music round out the event. Proceeds benefit the programs offered by the Wethersfield Historical Society.

CORNFEST

The Cornfest is an annual fall festival in Wethersfield that is held on the Broad Street Green and is hosted by the Chamber of Commerce. The event attracts between 15,000 and 20,000 people each year who participate in the one-day event that includes a craft fair, Business Expo, food stands, games, and hayrides.

GROUP TOURS

Group tours are currently available through the Wethersfield Historical Society. Programming options for the tours include a step-on bus tour, walking tours, and house tours. The tours can be tailored and modified to meet the needs of any specific group. The tours are able to be conducted in conjunction with the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum and Buttolph-Williams House.

HOLIDAY HOUSE TOURS

The Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum and Wethersfield Historical Society join together to offer a holiday tour of distinguished homes within the Historic District, representing various periods and themes associated with the holidays. The Holiday House Tours are open throughout the month of December,

KEENEY KIDS

The Wethersfield Historical Society also offers a variety of special programs for children that occur throughout the year, including summer and over school breaks. The Keeney Kids programs include crafts, hands-on activities, and field trips to historic sites throughout the Town.

SCARECROWS ALONG MAIN STREET

Sponsored by the Old Wethersfield Shopkeepers Association, Scarecrows along Main Street is an annual event which takes place along Main Street in Old Wethersfield. Business and property owners design scarecrows from everyday materials for residents and visitors to enjoy. The scarecrows remain an entertaining part of the streetscape for approximately three weeks in the fall and generate a significant amount of additional foot traffic along Main Street.

WEEKEND FESTIVAL

The Wethersfield Weekend Festival originated in 1997 to highlight Wethersfield's maritime and agricultural history and its role in the Revolutionary War. The Weekend Festival became an annual event featuring historic re-enactments, historic carriage rides, and lantern guided tours of the Ancient Burying Ground. The festival proved to be a unique, interactive way to tell the unique story of the Town. The festival has not been held since 2002 due to budgetary constraints. The festival was made possible through seed money from the Town which was used to acquire other funding from outside sources. Two years after the Tourism Commission was established, it was determined that the funding for the Weekend Festival would be better utilized by the Commission to support the on-going marketing efforts for Historic Wethersfield, so that the festival is no longer held.

Local Community Organizations

There are a number of commissions, organizations, and agencies that are charged with protecting and promoting the Historic District. The various layers of organization do not always work together, though all of the organizations strive to achieve the same goal – to preserve the community character of the Historic District and to ensure the economic vitality of new and existing businesses and attractions. A summary of the existing commissions, organizations, and agencies which are currently in place and consider the historic district in their decision making are summarized below:

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Wethersfield Chamber of Commerce seeks to retain the business base and maintain the quality of services within the Town. Members have the opportunity to have a voice in decisions that impact their business on both the local and state level. The Chamber works with the EDIC and Tourism Commission to resolve issues associated with the business community. Membership in the Chamber is voluntary and requires annual dues payments.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT COMMISSION (EDIC)

The EDIC is the Town’s designated development agency which was established to promote the Town as an attractive location for business, whether new or existing. The Commission is responsible for coordinating the activities of all other local government boards interested in promoting the local economy of the Town. The EDIC has three sub-committees including Marketing and Communication, Finance, and Development. The Commission includes representatives from the local business community, the Chamber of Commerce, the community at large, and various other Town boards and commissions with a total of 11 members and 4 alternates appointed by the Town Manager.

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

The Historic District Commission was established in 1962, with Wethersfield notable as the first Town in Connecticut to establish a local Historic District and Commission. The ordinance which established the Commission states that it is created for the purpose of “promoting the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the preservation and protection of buildings, places, and districts of historic interest within the Town”. Since 1962, the Commission has reviewed over 3,300 applications for certificates of appropriateness. The Commission remains the primary historic preservation organization within the Town and consists of 5 members and 3 alternates appointed by Town Council.

OLD WETHERSFIELD SHOPKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

The Old Wethersfield Shopkeeper’s Association is comprised of a group of existing business owners from within the historic district. The Shopkeepers Association meets on a regular basis to discuss opportunities for enhancing the business climate within the historic district and to develop marketing strategies for promoting existing businesses. In addition, the Shopkeeper’s Association hosts annual events aimed at attracting new users to the Village Center, including the annual and increasingly popular “Scarecrows Along Main Street” event.

TOURISM COMMISSION

The Tourism Commission was established in 2001 in an effort to help coordinate the experience of visitors coming to Wethersfield. The Commission belongs to the Greater Hartford Visitor and Convention Bureau and participates in marketing opportunities through the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism. The Commission is comprised of nine volunteer members who are appointed by Town Council. One member from each of the following organizations is included on the Commission: Wethersfield Historical Society; Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum; Old Wethersfield Shopkeepers Association; Chamber of Commerce; Connecticut Heritage Tourism District; Economic Development and Improvement Commission; Berlin Turnpike Business Community; Silas Deane Highway Business Community, and a resident at large.

The responsibility of the Commission is to promote and encourage tourism in the Town; increase awareness of Wethersfield's historic sites and attractions; coordinate annual events and promotions; and assist in marketing any product promoting Historic Wethersfield. The Tourism Commission is provided an annual budget by the Town. The Commission historically has requested approximately \$40,000 annually and typically receives an amount less than that. In 2007 the Tourism Commission was given approximately \$38,000 for its annual budget. While the Tourism Commission has tried a number of strategies and markets Old Wethersfield in a variety of formats (magazines, hotel guides, etc.) at the regional and state levels, there has not been a substantial increase in visitor traffic to the community since the organization's inception in 2000, though there have been modest increases to visitation at the various historic sites.

Overall, efforts undertaken by the Commission are impressive – even if they have not resulted in large numbers of new visitors, to date. In addition to distributing the “Historic Wethersfield” brochure in town, and along Interstate 91 and 95, the Commission also maintains a website with a seasonal calendar and tourism information; distributes promotional kits to travel agents, tour operators; and conference centers; maintains a list of attractions; maintains a list of local organizations; assists with grant applications; creates and distributes a Visitor Survey; participates in business expositions; and develops walking and driving tours, in addition to other initiatives. The Commission has recently been involved in discussions with the Hartford Convention Center to determine new opportunities for marketing and collaboration.

WETHERSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Wethersfield Historical Society is a membership organization that plays a key role in the development and vitality of heritage tourism in Old Wethersfield. The Society owns and operates two historic houses in Old Wethersfield, the Hurlbut-Dunham House and the Francis House. In addition, the Society manages four other properties which are owned by the Town. These include the Keeney Memorial Center, the Cove Warehouse, the Old Academy building, and the Standish House. The Society, in addition to the operation of the historic buildings, is engaged in an active education program which includes lectures, walking tours, on-site and in-school programs for children, and special events.

The Society has over 1,000 members who financially support the efforts of the Society through dues and annual fund contributions. Many members also provide non-financial assistance by volunteering their time and expertise in support of Society activities. In addition to members, the Society seeks grant money for special projects from a variety

of public and private foundations. Additional funds are acquired through fundraising events which occur throughout the year. Recent fundraising activities have included a concert series, antiques show, craft shows, and wine tasting. In 2004 the Society undertook a long range planning effort in an effort to define a path to successfully achieve their mission of: “preserving Wethersfield’s history and culture to inspire people today and tomorrow”.

WETHERSFIELD VILLAGE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

The Wethersfield Village Improvement Association was founded in 1883 by a group of Wethersfield residents with the goal of installing sidewalks and street lamps in the older sections of the Town. Over the last one hundred twenty years, the Association has continued to undertake projects to improve Wethersfield’s buildings and property. Today the Association is dedicated to improvement projects that benefit not only the historic district, but the entire town of Wethersfield. Within the historic district, the Wethersfield Village Improvement Association is responsible for projects such as the developing the Broad Street Green Map and restoring and replacing the Hubbard House street signs which originally date to 1926.

Past and Current Marketing Efforts

Letting people know what Old Wethersfield has to offer is critical to its future success. If people don’t know about the specialty shops, historic attractions, special events, significant architecture, and authentic charm associated with Old Wethersfield, there is little that can be done to ensure the long-term vitality of local businesses and attractions. Identifying marketing efforts that are results-oriented is key to promoting and shaping the district into the entity that residents, business owners, and site managers want it to be.

Current marketing for Wethersfield is provided through the websites of local agencies and organizations, as well as through the distribution of brochures and handouts that highlight events and attractions within the historic district. Locally, these handouts and brochures are available at strategic locations throughout the Town, including the Visitors Center on Main Street in Old Wethersfield. The Town has also partnered with outside organizations and agencies to market on a larger regional and state-wide level through inclusion in various visitors guides. A summary of current marketing efforts is included below:

BROCHURES AND HANDOUTS

A range of brochures is available which promote Old Wethersfield and its businesses and tourism products and services. Brochures on accommodations, special events, attractions, historic sites, and general visitor information can all be obtained at the visitor’s center located within the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center. The following brochures and handouts were acquired throughout the course of the planning process and were readily available upon visiting the Town, the Visitors Center, and local establishments.

2007 Town Calendar & Guide

Published by the Wethersfield Chamber of Commerce and the Town, this booklet contains a map of the Town, calendar of special events, and contact information for businesses and attractions Town-wide.

Broad Street Green

This is a Touring Map which provides a history of the Green in the context of Old Wethersfield and details about the various landscape species which exist on the Green.

Great Streets of the Capital Region

This brochure was developed by the Greater Hartford Arts Council and includes a summary of the district as well as a map which identifies historic sites, recreational uses, dining and lodging venues, and local businesses.

Historic Wethersfield

Developed by the Wethersfield Historical Society, this two-sided brochure summarizes the attractions and sites operated by the Society, including address, hours of operation, and contact information.

Historic Wethersfield Living With History Since 1634

This brochure provides a map of the village center of Old Wethersfield and includes amenity descriptions, directions, contact information, and an overview of Old Wethersfield.

Shopkeepers Guide to the Historic Village of Old Wethersfield

The guide provides a small map of the village center with a list of retailers, services, tourist attractions, and dining establishments, including contact information.

Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum brochure

The museum brochure describes the museum, provides directions, and includes general information.

Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum tour handout

The handout outlines the museums group tour packages including six potential themed tours for visitors with varying interests.

Wethersfield Historical Society Education Programs

The brochure summarizes the Society's sites and attractions and also outlines educational opportunities hosted by the Society and available through the Society.

REGIONAL MARKETING

In addition to local advertising which is presented to a visitor once they have arrived within the Historic District, there have been efforts made to promote Old Wethersfield beyond the Town's borders. This is an important component of marketing if the Town wants to capture an audience that goes beyond the local community.

Visitors Guides

Old Wethersfield is highlighted in a number of regional and state-wide visitor guides, including books printed by the American Automobile Association (AAA). Every year, Historic Wethersfield's Gardens are highlighted in the Connecticut's Heritage River Valley Garden Tours brochure which is produced by the Central Regional Tourism District, Inc.

Magazine Advertisements

A series of advertisements identifying Wethersfield as Connecticut's largest historic district was included in Connecticut Magazine. In the Summer 2005 issues of Group Tour magazine, an article was included describing the Historic Kitchens Tour and Dinner offered by the Wethersfield Historical Society. The tour included stops at four

historic homes in Old Wethersfield and ended with dinner at the Village Tavern Restaurant.

WEB-BASED MARKETING

The internet is a fantastic resource that has the potential to reach a wide and diverse audience, though it often requires someone to search for a specific attraction or organization before related sites can be found. The majority of local agencies and organizations associated with the historic district and its offerings do have websites. Many of the websites have direct links to other associated websites; this is a prime example of how cooperation can, and does, improve the visibility of the entire district.

The following is a list of current websites for the various agencies and organizations who are responsible for promoting and advertising the Old Wethersfield Historic District:

Town of Wethersfield - <http://wethersfieldct.com/>

The Town of Wethersfield website is informative and could be viewed and utilized by a range of audiences, including residents, business owners, and potential visitors. The website is broken into five main areas – government, citizens, history, business, and education. The history section provides links to recognized history oriented sites, including the Wethersfield Historical Society, Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, and the Wethersfield Tourism Commission. A walking tour of Revolutionary, Maritime, and Agricultural sites within the historic district is also provided on this site.

Wethersfield Chamber of Commerce - <http://www.wethersfieldchamber.com>

The Chamber of Commerce has a direct link labeled historical links which summarizes and provides website links to the Tourism Commission and Wethersfield Historical Society web pages. Although this site has information that residents and visitors may find interesting, it is largely targeted for a specific audience – existing and potential members of the Chamber of Commerce. The site is attractive and organized in a simple manner that makes it easy to navigate.

Wethersfield Tourism Commission - <http://www.historicwethersfield.org/>

The Tourism Commission website begins with an overview of the Town and provides links that would be desirable for potential visitors, such as accommodations, attractions, event calendar, directions, restaurants, and shopping, in addition to others, such as how to request additional information. Suggested itineraries for a variety of different themed visits of various durations are also included on the website and can be easily printed by a website user. The “related sites” section provides direct website links to approximately 15 websites with state, regional and local significance. Direct links to the Town, Wethersfield Historical Society, Shopkeepers Association, Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, and Village Improvement Association are all included. The design of the site is simple and is easy to use. Contact information for the Commission is listed clearly at the bottom of the home page.

Wethersfield Historical Society - <http://www.wethhist.org/>

The Wethersfield Historical Society website presents a wide range of information tailored to local residents as well as visitors. A sidebar on the website allows for easy access to a wide variety of links organized by topic. Topics included on the site are the Society newsletter, history, exhibits, historic sites, education programs, and calendar of

events, in addition to others. There did not appear to be any direct website links to other historic or business related Town sites.

Old Wethersfield Shopkeepers Association -<http://www.oldwethersfield.com/Links.html>

The Shopkeepers Association website highlights some of the attractions in Old Wethersfield – both businesses and historic sites, including the Wethersfield Historical Society. Businesses and historic attractions with websites have links that allow users to visit those websites, as well. A map with resources is included as a link. Contact information is not clear, and the specific name of the Shopkeepers Association is not mentioned.

*Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum – <http://www.webb-deane-stevens.org/>
<http://www.silasdeaneonline.org>*

The Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum site includes visitor information regarding planning a visit to the museum and the history of the museum, as well as a calendar of events and other on-going projects associated with the museum. A link labeled to other historic attractions directs web users to the Tourism Commission website, which then provides links and information to other area attractions, businesses, and sites. The site provides visitors with any information they would be interested in knowing before visiting the museum. The website is clear and easy to navigate.

Wethersfield Village Improvement Association - <http://www.wviact.org/index.html>

The Village Improvement Association website is likely used by Town residents and property owners as it relays information that relates to the maintenance and enhancement of the Town. The website is clearly organized and provides information on past, present, and future improvement projects, as well as links to other Town-wide websites, both historic and non-historic.

2007 Marketing and Communications Plan

In 2007 a professional marketing firm, Keiler & Company, was tasked with preparing a Marketing and Communications Plan for the Town of Wethersfield. The goals of the marketing plan were two-fold: to boost tourism and to increase economic development activity on a Town-wide level. As indicated within the Marketing Plan, Wethersfield's marketing to date has been abundant but are disjointed with individual groups marketing themselves with a lack of a comprehensive marketing strategy for the entire Town, including the Historic District. There is no unified effort to strategically promote and advertise the activities, attractions, and amenities within the Town. The Marketing Plan provided the Town with specific marketing initiatives that should be undertaken as well as recommendations to support the Town's goals related to tourism and economic development.

While the Marketing Plan was developed from the perspective of the entire Town, there are specific elements within the document that are specific to the Historic District and recommendations that could be applied to marketing efforts within the Historic District. The Marketing Plan is divided into four Recommendation sections followed by an Opportunities component.

Under the Organizational Recommendations category, Keiler recommends that the Town designate a team to manage the Town's centralized marketing efforts, including the development of a marketing master plan, implementation schedule, and unified calendar of events.

Under the Economic Development Recommendations category Keiler recommends the establishment of a close working relationship between the Town and its business community. The Plan suggests that the most important relationships in the Town should be with existing businesses. It is also recommended that the Town reach out to developers to let them know about the opportunities which exist in Wethersfield. They suggest the establishment of a Silas Deane Corridor Association.

Branding and Marketing Communications Recommendations focus on establishing a strong brand for the Town which would serve as Wethersfield's most important promotional asset by providing an identity and projecting the desired image of the community. Four potential taglines were developed. The Plan recommends next steps after a tagline is selected. The next steps include advertising in small space ads, media advertising, town web site advertising, developing tourism partnerships, and e-marketing. Sample small space ads were included in the Marketing Plan.

Public Relations Recommendations are provided to help build awareness of the Town. Keiler suggested the Town undertake the following efforts: identify relevant topics for press releases, disseminate local news and information on a regular basis, pitch story ideas for media consideration, identify target opportunities in print media, and arrange media interviews. Keiler provided examples of logical print media sources, TV sources, and radio sources. Press materials and potential topics to be covered in new press releases were also outlined. Sample story ideas were provided for consideration.

The Tourism and Promotional Opportunities section of the Marketing Plan outlined strategic state-wide tourism partnerships, regional partnerships (such as the Connecticut Convention Center), and other ideas for promoting the Town through special tourism packages, school contests, themed weekend getaways, and sample day trip itineraries.

Potential costs associated with various aspects of the Plan were identified in the final Budget component of the Plan. A Media Database and "How-to" Kit with sample press releases and guidance on marketing were also provided as part of the Marketing Plan effort.

Marketing: Key Findings of Existing Conditions

The following are key findings associated with attracting visitors and marketing in the Town of Wethersfield and in the Old Wethersfield Historic District:

- In 2000, the Wethersfield Historical Society and Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum together spent approximately \$4,000 on advertising. This is a nominal advertising budget.
- There are a limited number of large-scale special events that have been established in order to draw additional visitors to the Old Wethersfield Historic District, though some special events have been unable to continue because of a lack of funding. It would appear that there may be untapped potentials for additional themed special events that could draw visitors for a limited time and create a marketing opportunity for local businesses and attractions.

- A number of community organizations exist which promote the Town and Old Wethersfield with the goal of helping businesses and attractions to thrive and prosper, while still protecting and maintaining the quaint, residential historic character of the historic district. Opportunities for collaboration among the various groups should be more fully coordinated and defined, especially when goals and objectives are shared.
- The Town has a distribution contract with CTM Brochures to distribute 20,000 brochures annually through hotels, restaurants, and other sites throughout the state. A wide variety of other marketing materials are also available at the visitors' center. It is possible that this additional information on the historic district could be made available to visitors before they arrive in Town.
- The quality of brochures ranges from glossy professionally produced brochures to color copies of word formatted documents. There is not a consistent level of quality across the board as it relates to brochures, likely a result of minimal marketing budgets and the limited resources of some local groups and organizations. The high quality brochures do have an attractive and graphically pleasing design and lay-out. Information included in all brochures, whether prepared with a small or large budget, is informative and educational. The range of brochures could be more fully coordinated and distributed to the target audience outside of the district.
- In today's day and age, it is increasingly important to have a presence on the internet. A number of the organizations, attractions, and businesses within Old Wethersfield do have websites, some of which provide links to other local websites. It is unclear how accessible the websites are unless someone is doing an extremely targeted search for Old Wethersfield.
- Marketing materials of any variety, whether magazine advertisements, brochures, or websites, do not have a consistent graphic identity.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY CASE STUDIES

Introduction

Community case studies allow for the identification and assessment of tourism and economic development strategies in communities which have characteristics similar to Old Wethersfield. The case studies provide insights about what strategies work and what strategies are not as successful as they relate to attracting tourists to existing attractions, establishing a viable business district, and maintaining a safe and desirable community character. The case studies look at specific aspects of economic development including marketing, types of resources, and management and administration.

After consideration of a dozen communities located throughout the mid-west and eastern United States and southern Canada, three communities were chosen as case studies based on the similarities and parallels they share with Old Wethersfield. The selected communities expanded upon below include Essex, Connecticut; Madison, Indiana; and New Castle, Delaware.

In order to obtain information that was relevant on each of the communities, on-line research was conducted and when possible, site visits were completed. In order to fill in gaps in the research and background information, phone calls and email correspondence were placed to local tourism agencies, community planning departments, chambers of commerce, historic sites, and historical societies.

Essex, Connecticut

Essex, Connecticut, proclaimed the Best Small Town in America by the author of *The 100 Best Small Towns in America*, is located approximately thirty miles southeast of Wethersfield. Essex, like Wethersfield, is situated along the Connecticut River and shares a strong heritage associated its maritime traditions and agricultural roots. Essex has retained much of its historic character, bringing today's visitors back to the eighteenth century through its buildings, quaint character, and remaining historic resources.

The waterfront at Essex has played, and continues to play, a major role in its development and likely contributes significantly to its ability to draw and retain visitors. Old Wethersfield does not have that draw on the same scale. The marinas and waterfront amenities and recreation opportunities create a special draw to Essex – with the commercial center being an additional amenity provided to people once they have arrived. Although Essex is larger than Old Wethersfield and has a more distinct ability to attract visitors because of its waterfront, its character, location, and heritage provide parallels to the Old Wethersfield Historic District and what can be accomplished, albeit on a smaller, neighborhood scale.

Like Old Wethersfield, Essex is accessible from major transportation routes – Route 9, Route 154, and I-91. The population of the town, according to 2000 census data, was 6,505 people.

Attractions and Visitors

Similar to Old Wethersfield, the concentration of public attractions and amenities in Essex are focused around Main Street which stretches from the Connecticut River north to Essex Square. A walking tour of the historic district, available on-site or on-line, identifies thirty-nine historic sites and community attractions, as well as the location of visitor amenities such as parking, telephones, and public restrooms. The types of resources included on the walking tour include a waterfront warehouse, architecturally and historically significant residences from the seventeenth through twentieth centuries, an inn, churches, a cemeteries, museums, and an historical society – many of the same types of resources found in Old Wethersfield.

Essex has two primary destinations which are viewed as the anchors to attracting tourists and visitors to the community. The Essex Steam Train is a rail and water tour of the Connecticut River Valley that strives to take passengers back to the 1920s. The Steam Train remains one of the state's top ten destinations and from the perspective of being a visitor draw, is more significant than any of the amenities or attractions currently being offered in Old Wethersfield.

The Connecticut River Museum is a similar resource to those found in Old Wethersfield; it is particularly comparable to the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum and Keeney Cultural Center. The Connecticut River Museum interprets the history of the Connecticut River Valley through exhibits and special programs. Open year round, the museum receives approximately 20,000 visitors annually.

Both attractions find that their busiest seasons are in the summer and fall and they are most commonly visited by day trippers and families visiting for a short, weekend getaway. In addition to the two anchors, shopping, special events, and the Ivoryton Playhouse's festivals are attractions sought by visitors.

Business District

The economic success of the local businesses is based on attracting both local residents and visitors. The variety of businesses is geared towards visitors but also attracts patrons from the local community and surrounding neighborhoods. Most are specialty stores, however, not necessarily oriented to everyday needs. The following businesses are representative of the type of establishment found in Essex:

- Adult and Children Clothing Boutiques
- Antiques
- Art Galleries
- Bookstores
- Coffee and Tea Shops
- Jewelers
- Restaurants, Ice Cream Shops, Deli
- Spa
- Specialty Stores (Christmas, Gifts, Local Themes, Toys)
- Tavern
- Wines and Spirits

There are over seventy-five businesses within Historic Essex, including some nationally recognized retailers, such as Talbots. In addition to retailers, there are a significant number of office related uses such as real estate brokers, banks, insurance companies, attorneys, and sales. When visiting Main Street, the office and service related uses actually appear to be more plentiful than retail establishments.

Businesses and retail establishments are housed in a variety of historic buildings – including former residences that have been adaptively reused.



Essex enjoys a mix of national and local retailers housed in the Town's historic building stock

There are office and service oriented uses as well as churches and public open spaces along the Main Street intermixed with privately owned residences. Residential areas are located off of side streets that occur frequently along Main Street.

Overnight accommodations are limited to five locations in the town; this has not proven to be a significant issue. The existing accommodations are thought to be adequate and include chain hotels, such as Comfort Inn and Days Inn, a bed and breakfast, and a historic inn, thereby satisfying the preference of a wide variety of visitors. The need for additional accommodations is not pressing, likely related to the fact that a sizeable percentage of the visitors to Essex are coming as day trippers.

Streetscape Characteristics

The streetscape of Essex is, of course, charming. It truly does take visitors back in time with the variety of historic buildings, open spaces, and historic style amenities. The streetscape enjoys an abundance of vegetation and tree canopies provide shade for pedestrians along the majority of Main Street.

Almost the entire length of Main Street has on-street parking available on both sides of the street, with no time limitations or parking meters. Approximately 200 parking spaces are available to the public, which includes on-street and off-street public parking. A trolley, sponsored by the local Board of Trade also provides transportation to and around the Village Center.

Business signage along Main Street extends perpendicular from the building, as well as on the front street façade, so businesses are easily identifiable by pedestrians and vehicles along the entire length of Main Street. Many businesses have awnings which helps to create continuous cover for pedestrians along the street. Awnings tend to convey a pedestrian friendly environment.

Streetscape amenities, such as street lights, have been selected in a style that is appropriate for the community. These amenities sometimes serve a double purpose, providing light and also serving as a post for signage.



Essex has a diverse array of gateway, interpretive, wayfinding, and business signage throughout the community

Signage throughout the community and historic commercial district includes a wide variety of styles, colors, and design. There does not appear to be a cohesive signage palette for the community. A monument sign welcoming visitors to the community also includes a simple map diagram to direct people to the area in which they wish to visit.

Although there is not a full blown traffic circle at the origins of Main Street at Essex Square, a decorative light and sign element creates the same impact, from a traffic perspective, without the aesthetic impacts of a circle.

In addition to the “traffic circle”, Essex has employed other urban design strategies in an attempt to slow and direct traffic at strategic locations. A change in paving material along the roadway is employed at one location, as is a landscaped median.



Landscaped medians and material changes at crosswalks help to visually slow traffic

Special Events

Special events play a pivotal role in increasing the number of visitors to Essex. The anticipated result is that visitors will be so struck by their experience that they will come again, at a time when there is no special event, to enjoy the everyday offerings that the community provides. The largest special event, the Eagle Festival, is held in February and brings in 20,000 people annually.

In conjunction with a tourism development process undertaken by various organizations in the town, festivals were focused on as a means to bring more visitors into the town. Currently, there is some type of special event planned for almost every month throughout the year, including parades, historical themed events, clambake, music festivals, and special tours of highlighted sites.

Administration and Marketing

Essex has two community-wide agencies that have held a major role in the promotion and marketing of the town as a whole. The Local Trade Association and Economic Development Commission are interested in the success and sustainability of the local attractions and businesses. Both organizations provide a minimal amount of general marketing.

The Economic Development Commission has a nominal budget of under \$10,000 annually to be used for tourism development. Six volunteers comprise the Commission with the purpose of applying for grant funds and working to revitalize the business district. They regularly collaborate and interface with other local commissions, such as the Planning and Zoning Commission.

The Essex Board of Trade has taken on a larger role in promoting the town in recent years. The Board recently developed a new theme, “Experience Essex”, which is the centerpiece of a television and print campaign. The Board of Trade has an annual budget of \$17,000.

The focus of marketing efforts undertaken by local organizations to promote Essex is done on a regional level, however the town does some national advertising via the AAA (Automobile Association of America) and some state-wide advertising through the Connecticut Tourism Booklet and internet sites. The majority of local, regional, state, and national marketing is undertaken by the individual sites and businesses.

Successes in Essex

The following section summarizes some of the successes that have been experienced in Essex:

Attractions and Visitors:

- Two anchor attractions, plus the natural amenity afforded by the Connecticut River, provide ample spin-off opportunities for local businesses and services.

Business Community:

- Business district viability has been recognized by responding to the market and providing goods and services the market desires. The Essex market includes visitors to local attractions, attendees at the Ivoryton Play House, and transient boaters.

Streetscape Characteristics:

- The adaptive reuse of buildings, business signage, and pedestrian friendly amenities, such as awnings, create a welcoming and attractive streetscape.
- Retaining primarily public buildings and open spaces along Main Street creates more opportunities for visitors – they do not have to walk past a line of privately owned buildings and residences that they cannot enter before enjoying another business or restaurant. The streetscape is fluid and keeps visitors entertained and engaged.

Special Events:

- An annual event that draws thousands of people helps spread the word about the community and creates spin-off visitors.

Administration and Marketing:

- Independent marketing by individual sites has been successful. The business community has largely been able to rely on the marketing of the waterfront and cultural attractions to sustain businesses.

Lessons from Essex

The following lessons can be pulled from Essex and applied to other communities, such as Old Wethersfield.

Attractions and Visitors:

- Day-trippers can be a lucrative and attractive market. To become a successful tourism destination, you do not necessarily need to have people visiting for extended periods of time.

Business Community:

- Although the Old Wethersfield Village Center must be enhanced as a local attraction not as a visitor-oriented one, knowing your market and responding to it, as Essex has, has proved to be a successful strategy. Old Wethersfield's market is discussed in Chapter 4 of this plan.
- Creating a welcoming, safe, and pedestrian oriented active streetscape enhances the attractiveness and desirability of the Village Center.
- Concentration of businesses and public buildings and spaces on Main Street is important.

Streetscape Characteristics:

- There are a variety of aesthetically pleasing ways to slow traffic – changes in pavement materials, landscaped medians, and traffic circle alternatives.
- The number of parking spaces is less critical than the availability, location, and identification of parking spaces.
- Business signage that can be seen down the street, as well as along the façade of a building, increases and improves visibility.
- Signs that include maps, relaying to people where they are and where they want to go, makes an area comfortable to visit.

Special Events:

- Special events that can draw a large number of locals and visitors to an area, even for just a few hours, must be viewed as a marketing opportunity.

Administration and Marketing:

- Extravagant budgets and marketing campaigns are not necessary. Marketing can be done on a small budget as long as an effective approach is developed.

Madison, Indiana

Madison was a city that boomed in the mid-1800's as the center of the thriving Ohio River Valley. Situated on the border of Kentucky, halfway between Louisville and Cincinnati, Madison was once a thriving Ohio River port. However, like many waterfront communities, Madison began to fade in the mid-twentieth century.

In 1977 Madison became one of three communities chosen as part of the pilot locations for the national Main Street program. The program is focused on helping historic communities preserve their character-defining traits through historic preservation. Madison has remained a Main Street community for three decades. Madison's active involvement in the program has restored the downtown to include many viable businesses and services, created jobs, and resulted in Madison's recognition as a heritage tourism destination. What makes Madison unique is they have managed to balance their success as a tourist destination with maintaining and enhancing the quality of life for the 12,000 residents who live there. The historic downtown core includes bed and breakfasts, unique restaurants, and specialty shops that appeal to both locals and visitors.

In 2001 a prestigious honor was bestowed upon the community when Madison was recognized as one of twelve distinctive destinations by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Today, all 133 blocks of downtown Madison are listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the town continues to be a place where the past and present sit side by side in harmony.

Attractions and Visitors

There are a myriad of historic resources and attractions in Madison that contribute to the town's success in attracting new and repeat visitors. There are over 1,520 19th century structures, including three National Historic Landmarks. In addition, there are a number of small historic sites and several special events and festivals that draw people into the picturesque community.

The town is a living museum of historical architecture that is unlike any other community in southern Indiana. The town includes a mix of Georgian, Federal, Gothic, Classical, and Italianate buildings which all date to before the Civil War. The eight house museums within the town represent a range of architectural styles and histories and help to promote the town as a destination for those interested in architecture and history. The Madison Railroad Station is an octagonal building from the 1840's. The Sullivan House features a restored Federal serving kitchen; the only known one in the country.

The historic downtown is an attraction in and of itself and welcomes residents and visitors with a wide variety of shops and restaurants, brick walkways, benches, and other pedestrian amenities. Madison, Indiana has grown significantly over the past decade and currently attracts 350,000 – 400,000 visitors annually. The key to Madison's success lies in the fact that it is estimated that almost 70% of visitors are repeat tourists who have visited before and wanted to re-live their experience. Other notable visitor groups include persons between the ages of 35-55, young couples, and history enthusiasts.

Business Community

The Madison business community is geared to address and meet the needs of local residents; however, businesses do better because of the tourists. There are a limited number of shops that focus on gifts and souvenirs intended to cater primarily to visitors. The local business mix includes:

- Candles and Gifts
- Fitness Center
- Flowers
- Galleries
- Insurance
- Jewelry
- Offices
- Pet Boutique
- Real Estate
- Restaurants
- Services (plumbing, auto repair, etc.)

Madison has adequate accommodations available to support its local tourism and visitor industry with over twenty options, including national chains (Best Western, Holiday Inn), bed and breakfasts, small inns, cottages, and campgrounds.

Streetscape Characteristics

Unlike Essex and New Castle, it was not possible to undertake a firsthand visit to Madison to get a better understanding of how the community is organized and what the streetscape characteristics of the Village are. However, based on images viewed on the internet, the Village Center appears to be well-preserved and has the historic flavor and charm of a 19th Century Main Street. The pedestrian amenities, to the extent they are visible, appear to be appropriately selected and help to contribute to an overall attractive downtown aesthetic.

Special Events

Special events are a key component to the marketing strategy for Madison. Madison has benefited from the longevity and popularity of some special events, such as the Hydroplane Race (over 50 years) and the September Art Show which draws upwards of 60,000 people over a weekend period. Other special events include a garden tour, folk festival, blues festival, and a tour of historic homes.

Administration and Marketing

Prior to 1993 the Madison Chamber of Commerce was responsible for marketing and promoting tourism in the town. In 1993 a Visitor's Bureau was developed and responsibilities for tourism development and marketing were handed to the Bureau. Both organizations work closely with the City administration and economic development department to implement and identify projects. The annual budget of the Visitor's Bureau is just over \$300,000, with approximately \$95,000 dedicated to marketing. Today, the Visitor's Bureau has primary responsibility for marketing and tourism but the Chamber of Commerce continues to play a small role. Due to the

relatively small budget of the Bureau, the majority of marketing remains the responsibility of each individual site and business.

In 1993 the Visitor's Bureau began a marketing initiative to enhance the town as a destination. The focus of this effort was on improving the appearance of existing 19th century buildings, marketing, and increasing the number of tourists that visit the community. The marketing strategy focused on identifying special events and creating themed getaways to make the community attractive to certain demographics. One such example is the "Girlfriend's Getaway" for women which highlighted woman-oriented activities and promoted local women owned businesses. A highlighted project, such as the "Girlfriends Getaway", is developed every year using new project partners within the community and surrounding communities.

The Visitor's Bureau and Chamber rely on websites, pamphlets, and booklets for marketing purposes, with a majority of the costs covered by tourists, through entrance fees and generated revenues. The local historical society has no formal relationship with the town with regards to marketing; in Madison, the society's role is strictly to preserve historic structures. The one exception is that the society hosts the annual Garden Show which is widely marketed and attended by many local and regional guests. In addition to the Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Bureau, there are six local organizations that are dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of Madison and protecting the historic character of the community. These include:

- A Main Street organization which focuses on beautification projects;
- Madison Industrial Development which focuses on business development, attraction, and retention;
- Historical Board which considers applications for changes in the historic district;
- Historic Madison, Inc. is a local preservation group;
- Cornerstone is another local preservation group; and
- Madison Business Professional Association focuses on promoting downtown businesses.

The number and variety of organizations with many parallel goals and objectives in Madison is similar to the existing organization framework in Old Wethersfield and the Town of Wethersfield.

Successes in Madison

The following successes have been achieved in Madison:

Attractions and Visitors:

- The overall attraction of Madison is really the whole, made possible because of the parts. It is not a single attraction that draws people to the area, rather a combination of the architecture, historical ambiance, shopping, dining, and amenities offered to visitors.

Business Community:

- The business community has been shaped by the local community and responds to the needs and desires of the local community, first and foremost.

Streetscape Characteristics:

- The Main Street Program has provided for opportunities for beautification of the downtown.

Special Events:

- A range of special events draw local, regional, and long distance people to the area, including one event that typically results in over 60,000 people visiting over a two-day period. That is a substantial number of visitors being brought into the community.

Administration and Marketing:

- The range of groups tasked with promoting and enhancing the community is impressive. The Visitors Bureau and Chamber have sizeable marketing budgets for spreading word about the appeal and opportunities available to visitors within the community.

Lessons from Madison

The following lessons can be applied to Old Wethersfield:

Attractions and Visitors:

- All of the “little” amenities and attractions in a community can be more marketable when packaged as a whole, as opposed to individually.

Business Community:

- The business community has thrived because it meets the needs of local residents, which has “curb appeal” to visitors as well. The types of businesses that appeal to residents, also appeal to the type of visitors that are interested in the historic community.

Streetscape Characteristics:

- An aesthetically pleasing streetscape is important to the success of a community. Main Street streetscapes can serve as good models.

Special Events:

- Special events that bring tens of thousands of new people into the community can bring great rewards with regards to attracting new visitors. The community must build on the opportunity of having so many fresh faces in the area and focus on ways to make them want to come back and experience more when there is no special event.

Administration and Marketing:

- A large number of individual groups working separately, but with the same goal, can successfully exist together.
- A number of small organizations that value preservation, beautification, and enhancement can make a community a successful attraction.
- A strong Visitor’s Bureau with a standard and substantial marketing budget that is supported by the community has more opportunities for marketing the community on a large scale.

New Castle, Delaware

Like Old Wethersfield, New Castle is an authentic community that balances its residential community with a downtown center. It is a real town where people live and work and does not have the feeling of false historicism that so many historic communities and sites have adopted. The entire downtown has been designated a National Landmark Historic Area and thus, all restoration and renovation work on existing buildings is carefully planned and supervised.

New Castle was founded in 1651 and was a volatile community in its early years due to its strategic location along the river; ownership of the lands of New Castle changed hands many times. The flags of the Netherlands, Sweden, and Great Britain all flew over New Castle at various times in its early years. As a result of its riverfront location, New Castle thrived in the 1700's and early 1800's.

One of the most notable differences between Old New Castle and Old Wethersfield is the overarching character of the community. While both are primarily residential, Old New Castle has a much more urban feel than Old Wethersfield. The lush green lawns and setbacks which define many of the single family residential streets in Old Wethersfield do not exist within Old New Castle. On the contrary, there are minimal setbacks on most streets and in many cases, multi-family housing in the form of townhouses and attached dwellings. This difference is apparent immediately upon entering either of the communities.

Attractions and Resources

The historical sites are the primary draw to New Castle but the appeal of the historic village atmosphere cannot be overlooked. Many visitors come to walk the streets, window shop, and eat at one of the restaurants. Churches, museums, parks, cobblestone streets, and antique shops all greet visitors and make them feel like they are stepping back into the 18th century.



Historic buildings, museums, and sites attract a large number of visitors to Old New Castle

Courthouse Museum has an annual visitation of approximately 8,000 people. Like the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum in Old Wethersfield, a significant percentage of annual visitors are children in school groups. Adult couples and families make up about half of the museums annual visitation.

Other key historic destinations within Old New Castle include the Dutch House, the Amstel House, and the Old Library. These three house museums are all operated by the New Castle Historical Society. The society provides guided tours of the houses and is also involved in educating the public about New Castle's history through exhibits,

special programs, lectures, and publications. Within the Old Library Museum are changing exhibits about the history and architecture of Old New Castle. This is very similar to the Historical Society's role and efforts in Old Wethersfield.

The George Read II House and Garden, the State Museum, and the ticket office for the Old Frenchtown Railroad are also within a short walk of the other historic attractions and within close proximity to Delaware Street. The State Historical Society maintains these sites.

In addition to the museums and historic sites, the residential and commercial structures within the village are also attractions, serving as exemplary examples of colonial, Dutch, and Federal styles of architecture. Delaware Street, the historic road that leads into Old New Castle, is a destination in and of itself. The picturesque street has brick sidewalks, ample landscaping, taverns, and superior examples of Colonial architecture.

Business Community

The quaint shops within the historic village are intended to serve local residents but are also visited and enjoyed by tourists. The scale of the historic village is not very different from Old Wethersfield as it includes approximately 10 retail options, restaurants, offices, and museums which have their own individual gift shops. When visiting New Castle you never get the feeling that you have entered a thriving commercial business district – even though there are a number of small shops and restaurants scattered throughout Old New Castle. The commercial style buildings found along Delaware, as well as some other secondary streets do have some vacancies.



Vacant storefronts detract from the streetscape presence in the historic downtown core

The businesses are interspersed among residences and historic attractions, as opposed to concentrated in one area. Although businesses may be successful, the community does not read as one that is business oriented – it would appear that businesses are successful because of the visitors that come for the historic sites, for the community ambiance, the park, and/or the restaurants.

The types of retail establishments found within Old New Castle include:

- Antiques and collectibles (multiple)
- Art
- Books
- Candles
- Furniture
- Jewelry
- Knitting supplies

In addition, there are a variety of dining options including upscale restaurants, a vegetarian restaurant, a brew pub, and tea room, to satisfy the various needs and desires of residents and visitors. A number of taverns exist within the community.



A view of the New Castle streetscape exemplifies the character of the downtown

Similar to Old Wethersfield, there are a few options for overnight accommodations within the New Castle historic area, and larger motels on the outskirts of the historic village. Lodging within Old New Castle is limited to a restored guest house, a townhouse available for rent, and a bed & breakfast.

Streetscape Characteristics

The streetscape of Old New Castle is largely defined by brick – brick sidewalks and brick buildings. The community exudes a historical character because of the combination of architecture and pedestrian features, such as the brick sidewalks and cobblestone roads which exist in some areas.



Historic paving materials contribute to the streetscape aesthetic

Delaware Street is the primary roadway leading into Old New Castle. On-street, angled in parking is provided along the roadway, near public sites and attractions. Parallel parking is also provided on secondary streets. There are no parking meters or signs posting any parking limitations.

Pedestrian amenities, such as trash receptacles, lighting, planters, and benches are located along Delaware Street, particularly in the vicinity of a park, municipal building, and some businesses. There does not appear to be a particular design theme for the amenities, as a variety of plastic trash cans were observed, as well as a number of different style of benches and planters. Street lighting was appropriately selected to fit in with the character of Old New Castle. One unique amenity present in Old New Castle is a planter and water fountain combination which has an appropriate historic design. A public water fountain is a welcome amenity on a public streetscape for hot summer days.

Like the Hubbard street signs in Old Wethersfield, Old New Castle utilizes street signs that are unique to the community, though the origins of the design of the signs are unknown.



Business signage along Delaware Street

Business signage along Delaware Street is subdued, with some businesses having signage that extends perpendicular from their buildings to make their business more identifiable from down the roadway. There are also free standing perpendicular signs in front of some businesses that are located in the sidewalk, adjacent to the building.

Signage throughout Old New Castle varies. Businesses have individual signage, historic sites have different styled signage, monument signs welcoming visitors to Old New Castle are in another style, etc. No cohesive signage palette appears to exist for the community.

Special Events

Old New Castle is host to a variety of special events including a Separation Day in June that typically draws between 8,000 and 10,000 people for the one day event. The event is a birthday celebration of Delaware's separation from England and the governance of the Penn Family in 1776, and includes history-based activities such as re-enactments.

Other special events are also based on promoting the historic character of the community, including tours of historic homes and gardens, an antique show, ghost tours, and an old time Christmas festival.

Administration and Marketing

A targeted effort to promote tourism was undertaken with specific tasks identified including the revitalization of museums, enhanced marketing and advertising efforts, preservation and rehabilitation of historic structures. More recent marketing efforts have been primarily handled and directed by the individual museums and businesses. The tendency is to not only market themselves, but the area as a whole.

As part of the tourism promotion effort, a cohesive identity was established for the entire historic village which included signage, pedestrian amenities, and landscaping.

The City worked with small organizations, such as the garden club, as well as individual businesses to identify suitable materials and designs to create a consistent palette. Sidewalks, lamp posts, and road islands, for instance, all conform to the designated palette. Additional wayfinding signage is needed throughout the village center.

The New Castle Historical Society maintains the Old Library, Dutch House, and Amstel House museums. A Board of Directors oversees the management of the museums which also has an executive director, curator, and administrative assistant on staff; these staff members were not added until 2001, though the Society was established in 1934. The Historical Society relies heavily on volunteers to fulfill its mission, with nearly 200 volunteers working on various assignments. The Board of Directors adopted a Strategic Plan for the organization in 2000, which they follow closely and revise as needed. While the overall budget of the Historical Society is \$150,000, only \$3,000 is designated for marketing purposes. Marketing efforts which exceed this budget are made possible through grants that are applied for through the Delaware Tourism Office.

A couple years ago a marketing plan was implemented that resulted in a flood of visitors to historic New Castle, prompting the Town to create New Castle Tourism Commission in 2005. The volunteer-based organization includes site managers from local historic sites and representatives of the New Castle County Visitors Bureau. The Commission does not receive any funding from the state or receive any assistance for marketing. All efforts by the Commission are funded by tourists. The Commission focuses on local and regional marketing including a website and simple brochure. On a state and national level, the community is recognized and highlighted on the Delaware tourism website and in materials produced and distributed by the AAA (American Automobile Association).

Marketing and administration is a collaborative effort in New Castle, although each historic site and business also does some level of individual marketing. Early tourism development was, and remains, a joint effort between the town's planning department, the historical societies, individual sites, the Visitor's Bureau, and the Tourism Commission.

Requests for information from the Visitor's Bureau for information include the State Travel Guide for Delaware, but also include a welcome letter from the Mayor of New Castle with his original signature and an invitation to contact him for more information. Also included in addition to the general tourism booklet is a brochure which includes a map of the historic downtown and highlights noteworthy destinations. A seasonal calendar of events insert within the brochure identifies when special festivals and annual events are occurring.

Successes in Old New Castle

Successful efforts in Old New Castle include:

Attractions and Visitors:

- The community has successfully built attractions, anchored on their historic residential character. A variety of historic sites, in addition to community attributes and an attractive waterfront location with a passive recreation park, make the community particularly attractive to visitors.

Business Community:

- Old New Castle has not relied on a local business community to attract visitors.

Streetscape Characteristics:

- The streetscape is welcoming and attractive. The brick sidewalks are torn apart by tree roots in some locations, adding to the historical appeal and authenticity of the community. Large shade trees provide cover for pedestrians.
- Large open spaces create gaps in the streetscape, breaking up the heavy urban character of Delaware Street.

Special Events:

- An annual event that draws thousands of people helps spread the word about the community and creates spin-off visitors.

Administration and Marketing:

- Independent marketing by individual sites has been successful, particularly when the sites work in cooperation.
- A Tourism Commission was formed in 2005 and includes volunteers and directors from local historic sites and attractions. The Commission works with the County Visitors Bureau and individual sites to effectively define areas for marketing and implementing some marketing initiatives on behalf of the community.

Lessons from Old New Castle

Lessons that have been learned by the Old New Castle community include:

Attractions and Visitors:

- Having attractions that primarily appeal to day-trippers can sustain historic sites and businesses within a community.
- Creating an authentic visitor experience is more important than re-creating a false one.

Business Community:

- Although there are only a small number of businesses in Old New Castle, there are an ample number of unique restaurants and eateries to ensure visitors have a place to sit back, relax, and eat while visiting Old New Castle. Having a variety of eating options for various tastes and discretions is important for appealing to a diverse audience. The restaurants are spread out and exist along Delaware Street, as well as side streets.

Streetscape Characteristics:

- Business signage that can be seen down the street, as well as along the façade of a building, increases and improves visibility.
- Adequate parking contributes to a positive experience for visitors.
- Unique pedestrian amenities, such as the water fountain, help to create a pedestrian friendly streetscape.

Special Events:

- Special events that can draw a large number of locals and visitors to an area can help to sell the special attributes of a community.

Administration and Marketing:

- Targeting tourists in the area for other vacation purposes, such as the beaches or the Brandywine Valley, exemplifies how day trippers can largely sustain the local tourist economy.

CHAPTER 6 – FROM VISION TO REALITY, IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Recommendations

The Old Wethersfield Master Plan is intended to provide guidance to the Town and its stakeholders in future decision-making regarding opportunities, issues, and projects within the Old Wethersfield Historic District. The goal of the Plan is to develop recommendations that will further the economic sustainability of the Historic District through business retention and heritage tourism while protecting and preserving the unique resources within the community. The recommendations within the Plan seek to balance growth with the preservation of the community character that residents and visitors have grown to love and appreciate.

Recommendations in the Old Wethersfield Master Plan have been divided into the following primary categories:

1. Enhancing the Streetscape
2. Creating a Viable Village Center
3. Preserving Community Character
4. Interpreting Community History
5. Organizing Leaders
6. Attracting Visitors and Marketing Assets

1. Enhancing the Streetscape



The following recommendations are provided to guide the Town and local organizations and business owners in their efforts to enhance the public realm within the Old Wethersfield Historic District.

1.1 Develop and install a hierarchy of wayfinding signs to, and within, the historic district.

The Old Wethersfield Historic District is the primary visitor destination within the Town of Wethersfield, yet it is difficult for visitors to find. Existing signage is oriented primarily to visitors approaching Old Wethersfield from Interstate 91 and is based upon an early twentieth century Colonial Revival design concept. While appropriate to the general character and significance of Old Wethersfield, existing signage is inconsistent and incomplete. A number of the signs are deteriorating and in need of repair or replacement. There is minimal signage located along the Silas Deane Highway which is aging and is largely inadequate for directing visitors. A coordinated wayfinding system should be implemented in Old Wethersfield that is consistent with a Town-wide program. Five levels of wayfinding signage are proposed, including:

A. Town Entrance Signs:

Defines key gateways into the Town of Wethersfield.

B. Old Wethersfield Entry Signs:

Defines primary and secondary gateways into the Old Wethersfield Historic District.

C. Old Wethersfield Wayfinding Signs:

Identifies directions to the Old Wethersfield Historic District.

D. Destination Wayfinding Signs:

Identifies directions for getting to specific sites within the historic district, both from within the Town and from within the district.

E. Parking Signs:

Identifies directions to, and the location of, public parking areas within the Village Center.

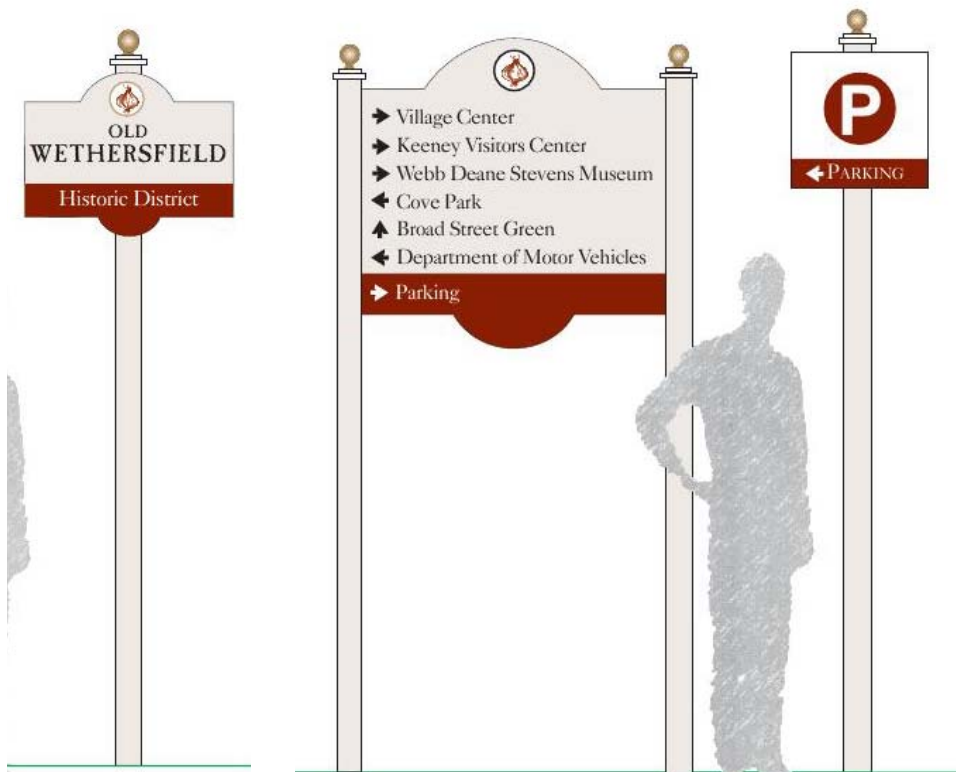
The proposed design concept preferred by the Steering Committee for Old Wethersfield's wayfinding signage is presented on the following page. Building upon the historic character of the Town, the Town logo, the red onion, is incorporated into the signage design as are the Town's colors of burgundy and beige. The overall design scheme is simple and classic with minimal elaborate detailing.

Signs developed using the proposed model below would typically be painted wood or metal. Further consideration and detailed design will need to be undertaken before production and installation of the signs can occur.

FIGURE 3 –PROPOSED WAYFINDNG SIGNAGE
Old Wethersfield Historic District



Town Entrance Sign



Old Wethersfield Entry Sign

Destination Wayfinding Sign

Parking Sign

The following sign locations are recommended for further consideration:

Town Entrance Signs

Sign 1: North entrance to the Town of Wethersfield along Silas Deane Highway

Text: *Welcome to Historic Wethersfield*

Sign 2: South entrance to the Town of Wethersfield along Silas Deane Highway

Text: *Welcome to Historic Wethersfield*

Sign 3: West entrance to Old Wethersfield from Interstate 91 (location of existing sign)

Text: *Welcome to Old Wethersfield*

Old Wethersfield Entry Signs

Sign 4: North entrance, Hartford Avenue

Text: *Old Wethersfield Historic District*

Sign 5: West entrance, Jordan Street

Text: *Old Wethersfield Historic District*

Sign 6: West entrance, Nott Street

Text: *Old Wethersfield Historic District*

Sign 7: West entrance, Church Street

Text: *Old Wethersfield Historic District*

Sign 8: West entrance, Wells Street & Main Street

Text: *Old Wethersfield Historic District*

Sign 9: South entrance, Middletown Street & Broad Street

Text: *Old Wethersfield Historic District*

Sign 10: East entrance, Marsh Street

Text: *Old Wethersfield Historic District*

Old Wethersfield Wayfinding Signs

Sign 11: Silas Deane Highway, north approach to Church Street

Text: *Old Wethersfield Historic District*

With directional arrow; signs to be similar to Destination Wayfinding Signs but text to be larger

Sign 12: Silas Deane Highway, south approach to Church Street

Text: *Old Wethersfield Historic District*

With directional arrow; signs to be similar to Destination Wayfinding Signs but text to be larger

Sign 13: Silas Deane Highway, north approach to Wells Street & Main Street

Text: *Old Wethersfield Historic District*

With directional arrow; signs to be similar to Destination Wayfinding Signs but text to be larger

Sign 14: Silas Deane Highway, south approach to Wells Street & Main Street

Text: *Old Wethersfield Historic District*

With directional arrow; signs to be similar to Destination Wayfinding Signs but text to be larger

Sign 15: Silas Deane Highway, south approach to Middletown Street & Broad Street

Text: *Old Wethersfield Historic District*

With directional arrow; signs to be similar to Destination Wayfinding Signs but text to be larger

Destination Wayfinding Signs

Sign 16: Silas Deane Highway, north approach to Nott Street

Text: *Department of Motor Vehicles*

With directional arrow

Sign 17: Silas Deane Highway, South approach to Nott Street

Text: *Department of Motor Vehicles*

With directional arrow

Sign 18: West end, Church Street

Text: *Village Center*

Kenney Visitors Center

Webb Deane Stevens Museum

Cove Park

Broad Street Green

With directional arrows

Sign 19: East end, Church Street

Text: *Village Center*

Kenney Visitors Center

Webb Deane Stevens Museum

Cove Park

Broad Street Green

Department of Motor Vehicles

Parking

With directional arrows

Sign 20: South end, Main Street

Text: *Village Center*

Kenney Visitors Center

Webb Deane Stevens Museum

Cove Park

Broad Street Green

With directional arrows

Sign 21: Main Street at Garden Street

Text: *Broad Street Green*

With directional arrow

Sign 22: Main Street at Marsh Street

Text: *Cove Park*
With directional arrow

Sign 23: South end, Broad Street

Text: *Village Center*
Kenney Visitors Center
Webb Deane Stevens Museum
Cove Park
Broad Street Green
With directional arrows

Sign 24: North end, Broad Street

Text: *Village Center*
Kenney Visitors Center
Webb Deane Stevens Museum
Cove Park
With directional arrows

Sign 25: West end, Church Street

Text: *Village Center*
Kenney Visitors Center
Webb Deane Stevens Museum
Cove Park
Broad Street Green
With directional arrows

Sign 26: West end, Church Street

Text: *Village Center*
Kenney Visitors Center
Webb Deane Stevens Museum
Cove Park
Parking
With directional arrows

Sign 27: Main Street at State Street

Text: *Cove Park*
Department of Motor Vehicles
With directional arrows

Sign 28: Hartford Street at Northbrick Street

Text: *Village Center*
Cove Park
Department of Motor Vehicles
With directional arrows

Sign 29: State Street at Main Street

Text: *Village Center*
Kenney Visitors Center

Webb Deane Stevens Museum
Cove Park
With directional arrows

Parking Signs

Sign 30: Main Street, northbound approaching Kenney Center

Text: *Parking*
With directional arrow

Sign 31: Main Street, southbound approaching Keeney Center

Text: *Parking*
With directional arrow

Sign 30: Main Street, southbound, south of Hartford Avenue

Text: *Parking*
With directional arrow



1.2 Implement improvements at key intersections to improve traffic flow and vehicular and pedestrian safety.

Creating an environment that is welcoming and safe for pedestrians and vehicles contributes to the overall character and friendliness of the Old Wethersfield Historic District. The Town should be proactive in taking necessary steps to ensure the safety and well-being of its residents and visitors where issues of safety exist. The implementation of improvements to strategic intersections within the Historic District that are confusing to motorists and may be unsafe should be considered and should be a short-term priority.

In reviewing potential options for the improvement of intersections within the Historic District at public meetings and in private discussions during the course of the master plan project, there was strong sentiment from residents that the overall character of the intersections not be dramatically altered. Specifically, the odd configuration of the several of the intersections is considered part of the appealing historic character of Old Wethersfield. Improvements to the intersections need not sacrifice their overall character; in fact this character might be enhanced, particularly with additional landscaping. Clearly delineated crosswalks, removal of excessive paving, and enlarged landscape areas will better define the intersections, help control traffic, and improve the functionality of intersections by reducing confusion without negative impact upon their character.

The recommendations included within this Master Plan are conceptual and are presented for community input. Selected design alternatives for intersections will require additional detailed study by the Town's traffic planners and engineers in order to ensure they comply with local, state, and federal requirements regarding traffic safety and flow. The recommendations may also be influenced by associated implementation costs and may be phased in accordance with available capital improvement funding in future budget years. It is not likely all intersection projects will be immediately implementable given budget considerations. Cost estimates for the proposed improvements at each intersection should be prepared by the Town or designated traffic planner or engineer.

Alternatives and recommendations for the four primary intersections that have been identified as potential problems are outlined below. These alternatives and recommendations are presented for further review and discussion by the community; no decisions have been made. The alternatives were reviewed and preferred alternatives selected by the Steering Committee for the master plan with the additional involvement of the Town's engineering staff and representatives from the police force. The intersection drawings were prepared by the Town's engineering staff.

Main, Church and Marsh Streets

The intersection of Main, Church, and Marsh Streets is regarded by local residents as one of the most dangerous intersections within the historic district. It is also among the most historically significant. Currently the intersection requires traffic traveling along Church and Marsh Streets to stop at Main Street. There are no traffic controls for vehicles traveling along Main Street. The intersection is problematic because of (a) limited sight lines; (b) on-street parking which backs into the travel lanes; (c) an excessive amount of paving without lane and boundary delineation; (d) the location of the stop signs, set far back from the intersection hindering visibility; and (e) the locations of pedestrian crossings. For drivers it is also unclear that cars traveling down Main Street are not required to stop. Many drivers along Main Street slow down because they are unsure of the situation. Others speed through oblivious to the movements of surrounding cars and pedestrians. Consequently, reactions to the intersection seem unpredictable and make the intersection feel unsafe to drivers.

Four alternatives were considered. The existing intersection and Alternatives B and C are depicted below.

Alternative A proposed retaining the existing intersection but reducing the amount of paving by increasing the landscape areas at the four corners of the intersection. The crosswalk locations would be reconfigured similar to that shown in the other alternatives. Two on-street parking spaces would be lost in front of the Village Pizza.

Alternative B proposed removing the existing island in front of the First Church at Marsh Street. In this way, Marsh Street would be more directly aligned with Church Street. A significant area of landscaping, including the existing flag pole and rock, would be added in front of the church. Additional landscape area would be added to the other three corners as in Alternative A, reducing excess paving and narrowing and better defining the travel lanes. The pedestrian crossings would be realigned. In Alternative B, additional parking spaces could be added on the west side of Main Street north of Church Street.

Alternative C proposed creating a traffic circle to replace the existing intersection. The proposal for creating a traffic circle did not receive a positive reaction when reviewed at public meetings. While a technically viable solution, the Steering Committee and JMA felt that it destroyed the historic character of the intersection.

Alternative D No change.

The Steering Committee selected Alternative B as the preferred alternative. Realigning Marsh Street would greatly improve sight lines, simplify the intersection, and allow stopped cars to more clearly see other stopped cars and pedestrian crossings. The large landscape area that would be added in front of the church was considered a positive feature, providing the church with additional yard and buffer area. The Steering Committee would prefer that the intersection become a four-way stop, however, existing state traffic control guidelines appear not to permit that option. Residents of Old Wethersfield should review the alternatives outlined above and express their preferences to the Steering Committee and the Town. The Steering Committee felt that the intersection at Main and Church should be the first intersection to be improved.

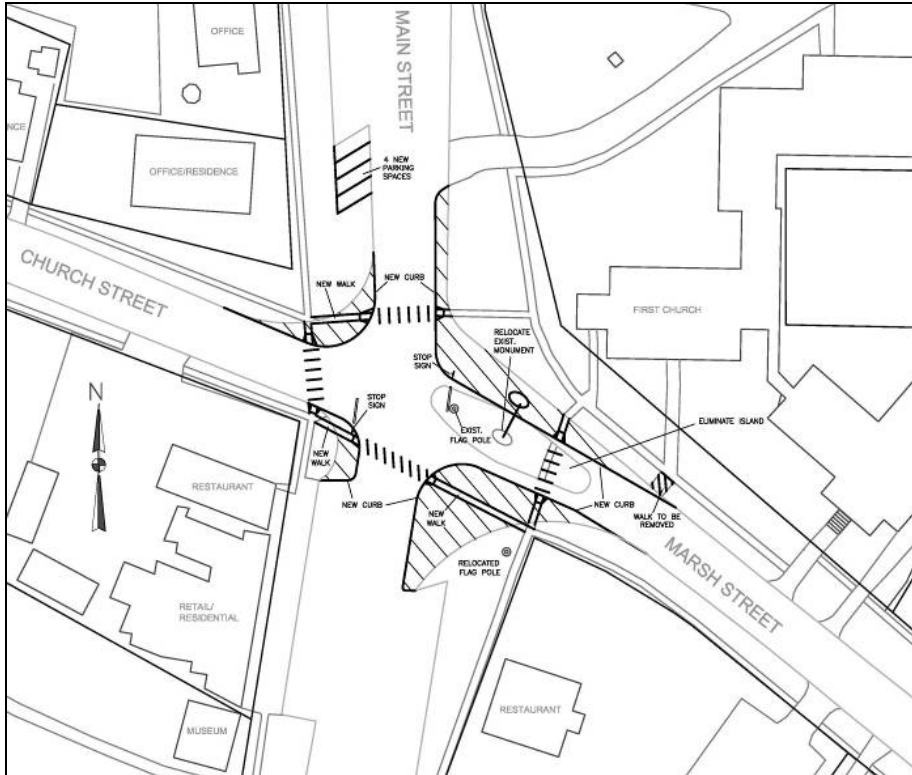
FIGURE 4- ALTERNATIVE INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS
Main, Church and Marsh Streets



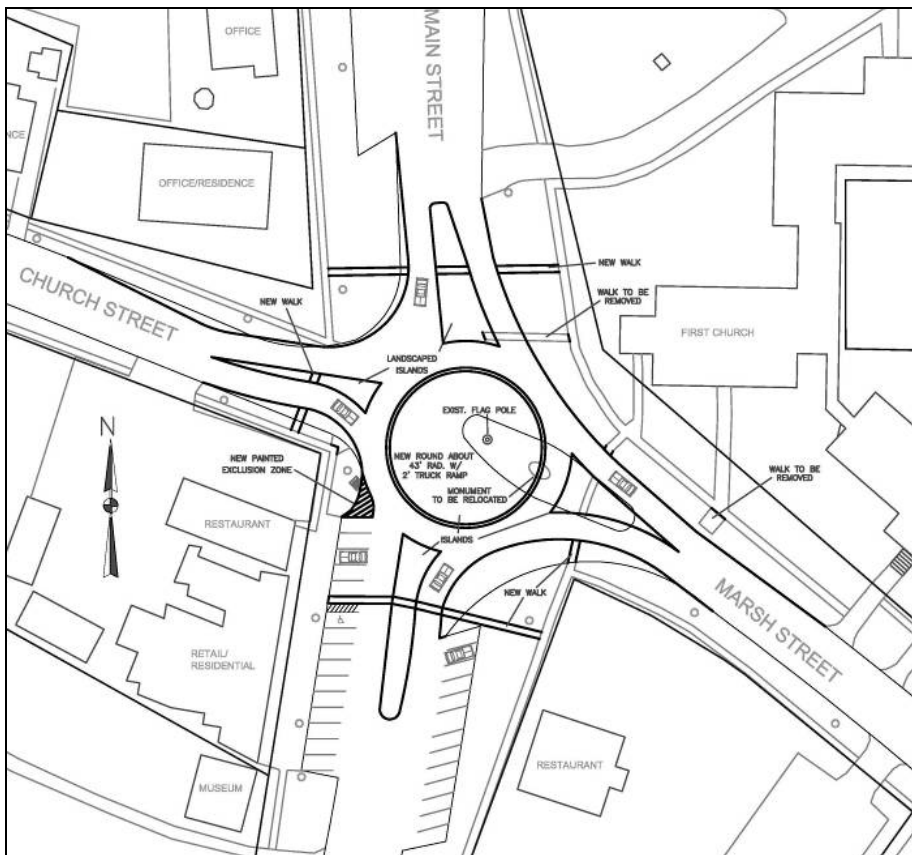
Existing Conditions, Main, Church and Marsh Streets



Alternative A, Main, Church and Marsh Streets



Alternative B, Main, Church and Marsh Streets



Alternative C, Main, Church and Marsh Streets

Main Street and Hartford Avenue

The intersection of Main Street and Hartford Avenue is also felt to be unsafe for both pedestrians and vehicles, primarily because of the location of the crosswalk and the excess amount of paving. The crosswalk is currently not aligned with the sidewalks at the intersection and is ignored by pedestrians.

Two Alternatives were considered for this intersection.

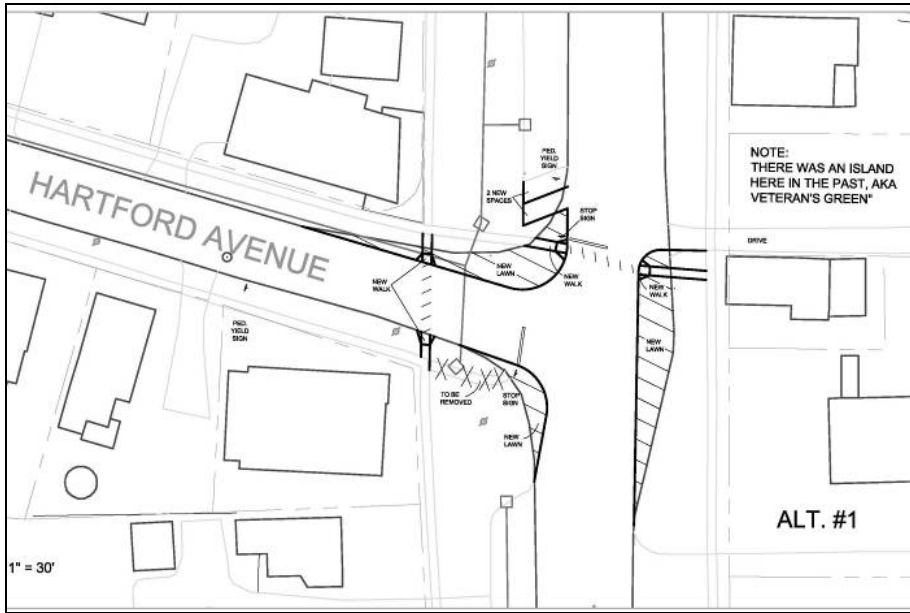
Alternative A proposes to add landscape area to both the north and south corners at the intersection as well as along the east side of Main Street. The landscape areas at the corners will reduce the radius of the corners and make the roadway of Hartford Avenue narrower. On the east side of Main Street, parallel parking will be specifically defined, and where parking is not located, the street width will be narrowed. The crosswalk across Hartford Street will be relocated to align with the existing sidewalk. A pedestrian cross walk should be added across Main Street as an extension of the sidewalk on the south side of Hartford Avenue.

Alternative B No change.

FIGURE 5 - ALTERNATIVE INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS
Main Street and Hartford Avenue



Existing Conditions, Main Street and Hartford Avenue



Alternative A, Main Street and Hartford Avenue

Main and State Streets

The intersection of Main and State Streets is heavily utilized by traffic going to and from the Department of Motor Vehicles. Only minor improvements are recommended at this intersection to improve traffic flow and safety for pedestrians and vehicles.

Three alternatives were considered:

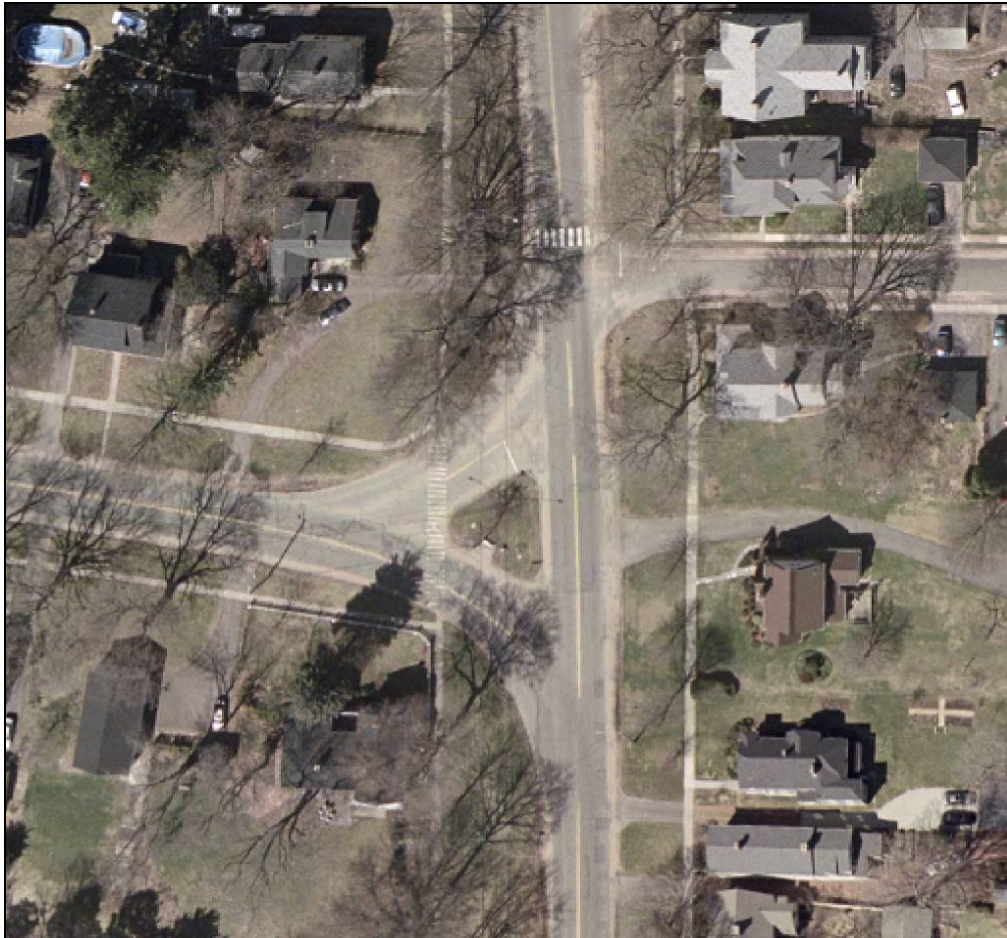
Alternative A proposed increasing the size of the existing island to better define the travel lanes of the roadway and reduce excess paved area. When confined to a narrow travel lane, drivers tend to slow down. Landscape area would also be added to the northern corner. Additional landscaping will make the intersection more attractive without altering its character.

Alternative B proposed removing the island and creating a conventional T-intersection.

Alternative C No change.

The Steering Committee selected Alternative A as the preferred option.

**FIGURE 6 - ALTERNATIVE INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS
Main and State Streets**



Existing Conditions, Main and State Streets



Alternative A, Main and State Streets



Alternative B, Main and State Streets

Hartford Avenue and State Street

The intersection of Hartford Avenue and State Street is particularly problematic due to the number and configuration of streets intersecting, the confusing flow of cars, and a lack of safe pedestrian crossings. The location of stop signs at some parts of the intersection and not others also causes confusion. The two most dangerous situations observed appear to be: (1) cars turning onto Hartford and State from the north end of Garden Street and (2) cars traveling east and north on State Street missing the intersection with Nott Street and then turning south onto Hartford Avenue around the existing island.

Four alternative were considered:

Alternative A eliminates the existing island and establishes Hartford Avenue as a through street. Garden Street is eliminated. Nott Street is re-aligned and extended to form a T intersection with State Street. Most of the War Memorial Island becomes part of Standish Park.

Alternative B eliminates the existing island and connects north Hartford Avenue and State Street to create a through street. Nott Street and the southern portion of Hartford Avenue are reconfigured and combined to create a T-intersection with the new through street. Garden Street is closed as in Alternative A.

Alternate C retains but enlarges the existing island between State and Hartford Streets to better define the roadways. Nott Street would remain intact, but Garden Street would be closed (not depicted) except to residents whose driveways connect to it.

Alternative D No change.

Alternate A was selected as the preferred alternative by the Steering Committee. JMA preferred Alternative C, which has less impact upon the intersection's historic character. Residents should review the alternatives and convey their observations and recommendations to the Steering Committee and the Town.

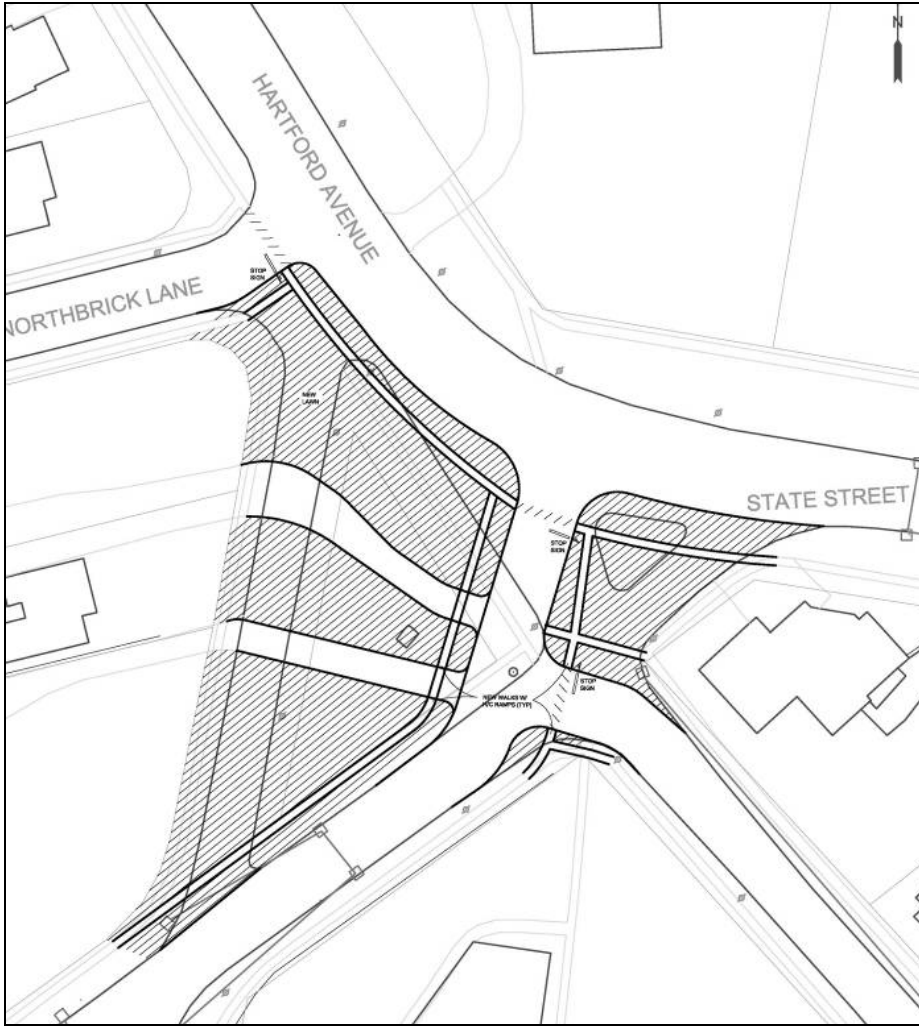
FIGURE 7 - ALTERNATIVE INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS
Hartford Avenue and State Streets



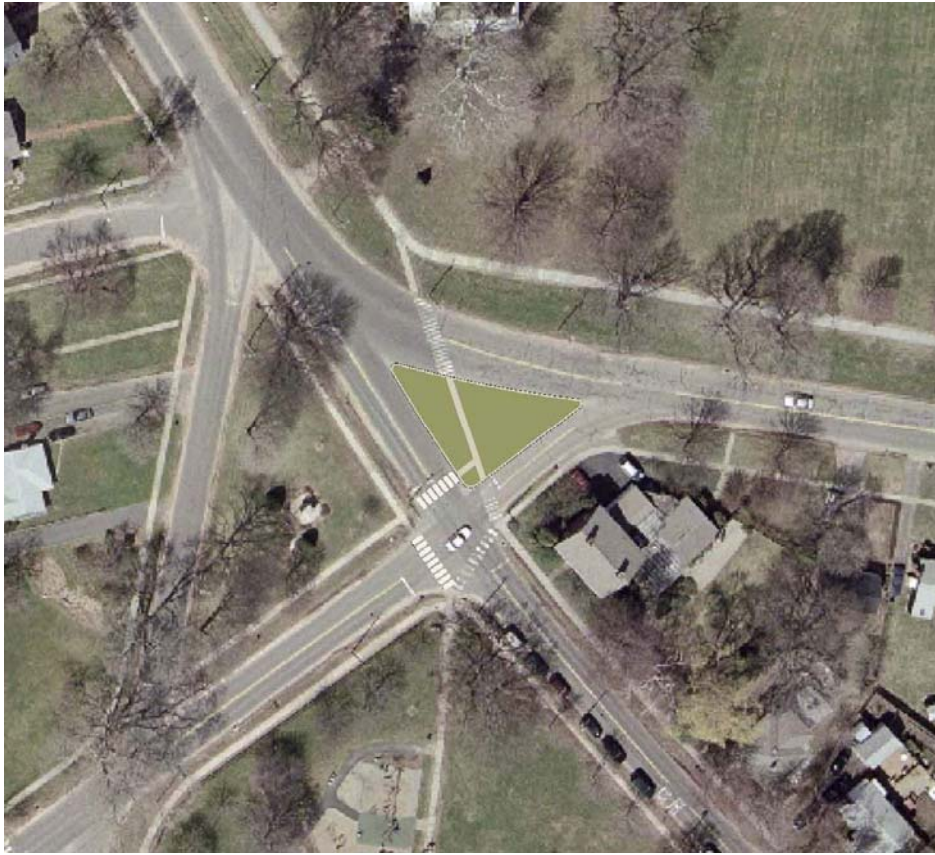
Existing Conditions, Hartford Avenue and State Street



Alternative A, Hartford Avenue and State Street



Alternative B, Hartford Avenue and State Street



Alternative C, Hartford Avenue and State Street

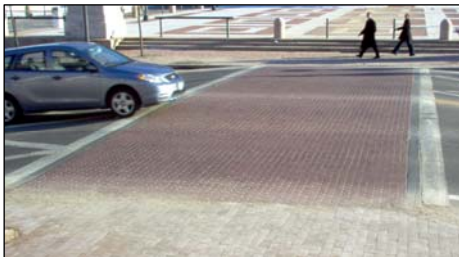
1.3 Create a cohesive pedestrian network throughout the Historic District.

Although most streets and neighborhoods within the Historic District have a strong sidewalk network, there are notable areas that currently lack sidewalks. The installation of additional sidewalks at these locations would help improve pedestrian connectivity, enhance safety for pedestrians, and extend the existing pedestrian network. At some locations, such as at the Broad Street Green and along Hanmer Street, residents have expressed concern about adding new sidewalks that might negatively impact yard and landscape areas. With this qualification, it is recommended that sidewalks be considered at the following locations:

- Cove Park – Add stone dust to the path from the north end of Main Street to the Warehouse and ont to Hanmer Road (see page 12?);
- Cove Park – Connect the sidewalk on the south side of Hanmer Road with the stone path in the park;
- Cove Park – Connect the stone path along the brow of the hill near the water to the parking lot of the Solomon Welles House;
- Standish Park – Complete the sidewalk along the east side of Garden Street;
- Align the crosswalk with the sidewalk at Hartford Avenue and Main Street;
- Ancient Burying Ground – Extend the sidewalk along the north side of Marsh Street to Broad Street; and
- Broad Street Green – create a walking/jogging/stroller/bicycle lane around the perimeter of the Green using a painted line, color or differentiated paving.

1.4 Install visual signals along Main Street to slow traffic at locations perceived to be experiencing high speed traffic.

Drivers respond well to visual cues along the roadway that tell them to slow down, stop, and be careful. Often times these visual cues are signs that relay specific information to a driver. However, the advent of traffic calming techniques as an important component of urban planning allows for planners and designers to incorporate alternative modifications to avoid cluttering the street with additional signage. Traffic calming measures recognize that the cars along Main Street are not going to disappear, and that design of the streetscape has more of an impact on how cars and pedestrians use a road, than enforcement or any other means.



Example of pedestrian crosswalk utilizing concrete strip and brick pavers, scale and width is greater than that recommended for Old Wethersfield

One of the easiest and least obtrusive ways to slow traffic along Main Street would be to change the texture of the roadway at strategic locations. The change in texture is a visual and instinctive signal to drivers that pedestrians use the roadway and it is necessary to slow down in order to accommodate them. This change in texture could be accommodated in Old Wethersfield by installing pedestrian crosswalks using concrete and brick pavers at key locations along Main Street, as well as to define pedestrian crosswalks at the intersection of Church and Main Streets.

It is recommended that brick paver crosswalks be added at the following Main Street locations:

- The intersection with Hartford Avenue;
- The intersection with Church and Marsh Streets;
- The pedestrian crossing between the Keeney Center entrance and the Deane-House driveway;
- The intersection with Center Street; and
- The intersection with Garden Street.

1.5 Ensure the safety of pedestrians through the continued and on-going enforcement of traffic controls.

Traffic speeds are consistently identified as a significant concern by residents of the Old Wethersfield Historic District. The speed limit through most of the Village Center is 30 MPH. Although targeted enforcement and monitoring by the Town Police Department has not identified a problem with speeding through the Village Center, the Town should ensure that the residents of the historic district and visitors feel comfortable when walking the streets and visiting the various businesses, sites, and attractions. To ensure speeding and traffic violations do not become a real and serious issue within the Village Center, especially at times of high volumes of people, the Town Police Department should continue to monitor and enforce speed limits, parking regulations, and traffic regulations on a consistent and identifiable basis.

1.6 Enhance gateways into the historic district and Town so they are welcoming and visually attractive and communicate to people that they have arrived somewhere special. A hierarchy of gateways should be developed to target gateway treatments.

The arrival to someplace is something that stays with a person long after they have left. An entryway should be well-defined and should say to a person that they have arrived somewhere special. The Town and the Historic District do not currently have gateways that communicate to people entering the Town that there is anything special about the place. In an effort to create that impression, locations for primary and secondary gateways have been identified and should be improved with signage and site enhancements to visually cue visitors that they have arrived in the Town and Historic District. The following gateway recommendations should be further considered and developed with community input.

Three levels of gateways are recommended with have varying levels of signage and related site improvements. Gateway classifications include Primary Town Gateways, Primary Historic District Gateways, and Secondary Historic District Gateways.

Primary Town gateways, located at the north and south ends of the Silas Deane Highway and at the entrance from Interstate 91 into the Town and Historic District should be considered as the key entryways into the entire Town. The primary town gateways should have signage that welcomes people into the Town of Wethersfield. Landscaping and minor site enhancements around the gateway signs should be completed using high quality materials and a thoughtful design.

The primary town gateway located off of Interstate 91 would also benefit from site improvements to make it a more visually appealing entrance into the Town. The Town

should add landscaping in the form of low level groundcover in order to not interfere with visibility and sight lines on both sides of Great Meadow Road. Hart Street should be narrowed; it is currently a one-way road but is as wide as a typical two-lane road. For northbound traffic coming off of Route 91 a continuous series of small signs should be installed from the actual exit until one reaches the location where the primary gateway sign and enhancements would actually be installed.

Two primary Historic District gateways should be developed at Church Street and Silas Deane as well as at Welles Road and Silas Deane. The primary historic district gateways have been identified for entryways into the Historic District that most people currently utilize. They also provide the most direct route for new visitors to get to the sites and attractions in the Village Center.



View of Church Street from Silas Deane Highway could be improved as a gateway with new signage, landscaping, and possibly a median

The primary Historic District gateways should effectively relay the character of the Historic District upon entering. Visual signals that this is a residential area, that traffic should slow, and that there is significance associated with the Historic District should be evident immediately upon entering these gateways. The Town should study the possibility of installing landscape medians from the railroad tracks east towards the Village Center for a limited length at both gateways. Landscape medians are effective in both visually identifying that you have transitioned to a new neighborhood and in slowing vehicular traffic. Landscaping and small entry signs should be installed within the medians. People should be aware that the district they have entered is very different in character than where they have come from, which is in most instances the Silas Deane Highway. The specific design, such as width, length, and appropriate landscape materials for the median would require further study by the Town to determine what is feasible given existing conditions at each proposed location.



Example of a landscaped median with associated pedestrian crosswalk signage



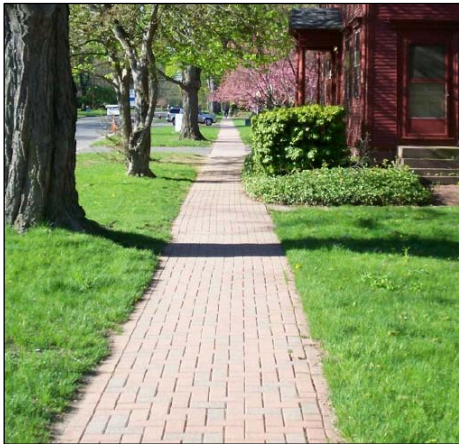
Secondary Historic District gateways should be established as clear entries into the historic district but would incorporate only the installation of an appropriate sign and minimal landscaping in the direct vicinity of the sign. Secondary Historic District gateways are recommended for the following roadways off of the Silas Deane: Nott Street, Jordan Street, and Hartford Street. The entrance into the Historic District from Maple to Middletown should also be enhanced as a secondary gateway.

- 1.7 Develop a standard pedestrian amenity palette to ensure future streetscape projects are consistent and contribute to an overall design theme.**

The preferred design palette for the historic district should reflect the character of Old Wethersfield, without creating a sense of false historicism.

Brick Pavers

Brick pavers have been installed as the sidewalk material at various locations throughout the historic district. While historically, brick pavers may not have been used in Old Wethersfield, they do contribute to the historic village ambiance of the Village Center. The sidewalks along the full length of the commercial district of Main Street in the Village Center should have brick pavers installed to re-enforce a consistent and cohesive Village core streetscape, enhancing the desired character of Old Wethersfield.



Existing brick pavers within the Old Wethersfield Historic District

Benches

In recent years, benches have been installed, through gifts of generous donations, throughout the Village Center. The benches share a consistent design, but range in color. The design of the benches is appropriate for the historic district though it is recommended that one standard color be selected for the benches for the purpose of creating a cohesive design palette within the historic district. Black or dark green are appropriate colors that could also be applied to other pedestrian amenities, such as lighting, bicycle racks, and trash cans. Because the benches have recently been installed, new pedestrian amenities should build on the design vocabulary of the benches to create the preferred design guidelines for future amenities. Existing benches that outdate the new benches should be removed and replaced with the updated benches. Existing benches that do not follow the preferred color scheme should be repainted for consistency. The Town should develop a plan identifying the preferred location for existing and future benches along streets and in the parks, so future donors will understand which options are available.



Existing benches are appropriate to the Historic District and should be used consistently

Planters

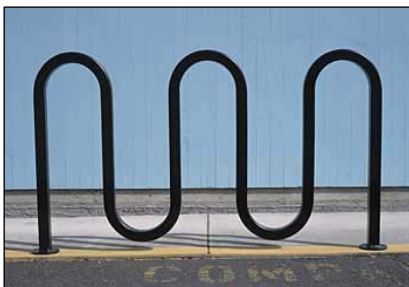
New planters have recently been installed throughout the Village Center and will likely not be removed and replaced in the immediate future. The design of the planters is not consistent with the other pedestrian amenities within the Village Center, but they serve a useful purpose as they have replaced planters that were in various states of disrepair. At some time in the future, should the existing planters no longer remain in good condition and require replacement, new replacement planters should be selected that are consistent in design, character, and color with the other pedestrian amenities selected and installed throughout the historic district. The planter pictured at the right, below, is most similar in design to the existing benches and recommended trash cans, such as those located in the Broad Street Green.



Examples of commercial planters that would be appropriate for the Historic District

Bike racks

In order to promote pedestrian and bicycle activity within the Historic District, and from areas outside of the District, the Town should install bike racks at strategic locations along Main Street where sidewalk widths can accommodate them. Bike racks should be simple and unobtrusive and should be in a design that is sensitive to and in coordination with the streamlined design of the existing benches. The bike racks should match the preferred color palette, whether black or dark green. Bike racks are typically fairly standard in design, though for additional costs they could be custom ordered per the direction of the Town.



A standard commercial bike rack can be used if the color is consistent with other pedestrian amenities—special order bike racks are also available.

Trash cans

There is currently a need to replace all trash cans in public areas of the historic district. Trash cans are currently in a wide variety of styles and are all in various states of disrepair, with some suffering from what appears to be vandalism. All trash cans should be replaced with receptacles that are consistent with the overarching design theme as soon as possible. Replacement trash receptacles should be identical to the existing trash cans in the Broad Street Green.



The existing trash cans used in the Broad Street Green are appropriate to use throughout the Village Center and Historic District when well-maintained

Lighting

Any new lighting proposed to be installed along the Main Street streetscape should be consistent with the approved design vocabulary established for the Historic District. The existing light poles along Main Street are black and are elaborately detailed. While not necessarily inappropriate for the historic district, a simpler design would have been preferred. Should changes be anticipated in the future, or should the lighting be extended up or down Main Street, a simpler pole and fixture should be considered as the standard for the Historic District. Lighting should be scaled to pedestrian users versus automobile traffic.



The existing light poles are historically detailed and are not currently in need of replacement

1.8 Develop guidelines for the design and redevelopment of parks and public spaces.

The Town should develop a comprehensive series of guidelines for the design and redevelopment of park and public spaces within the Old Wethersfield Historic District and throughout the Town. The implementation of the design guidelines will ensure that parks are developed in a cohesive manner that unifies the park system throughout the

Town. Recommended design guidelines for parks and public spaces within the Town of Wethersfield should include general guidelines that apply town-wide as well as park-specific guidelines. Recommendations for improvements and enhancements related to the Historic District are included below:

General

- All multi-use paths should be a minimum of 6' wide in order to accommodate a variety of users and allow for easier maintenance.

Broad Street Green

- No paths should be added within Broad Street Green as they would detract from the historic character of the open space.
- Conditions around the Green should be improved and enhanced to be safer and more pedestrian friendly. This could be achieved without negatively impacting the character of the Green either through the addition of a bike lane stripe around the perimeter or a change in pavement materials around the perimeter, such as the addition of a stamped concrete edge designated for walkers, joggers, and other users.



Existing transition from the Green to Town roadway provides no safe area for pedestrians or bicyclists

Cove Park

- Paths should be gravel, contributing to the natural character of the park.
- Additional paths should be added to the park to connect the existing path network to sidewalks in adjacent and surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- Paths should be designed with interpretation and additional visitor amenities such as information kiosks and benches.

Standish Park

- Paths should be concrete to facilitate use by a wide variety of users.
- Paths should connect to existing sidewalk network in surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- Drainage issues in the park should be studied further by an engineer specializing in site drainage.

2. Creating a Viable Village Center



The viability of the Village Center is contingent upon the success of the local historic attractions, sites, and businesses. Identifying opportunities to enhance these aspects of the community are summarized below.

2.1 Encourage a sufficient concentration of retail uses on Main Street to make it viable and to adequately serve both residents and visitors.

For businesses that are small and do not offer the range of goods and services provided by today's big box retailers, it is difficult to sustain a business that stands alone. With so many shopping options available to consumers today, and so many constraints on peoples' time, it is important for consumers to have the ability to visit a number of retail shops and services on a single shopping trip. In order for the retail business in the Village Center to be successful and sustainable, there needs to be a sufficient concentration of retail uses that, together, create a "destination" shopping experience. Town officials should identify potential incentive programs for attracting the types of small scale businesses that have a reasonable potential for success in the Village Center. The Town should work with EDIC to determine types of economic incentives that may be possible. Incentives might include a comprehensive cooperative marketing program or a grant program for appropriate building improvements.

The Tourism Commission, Economic Development and Improvement Commission, Old Wethersfield Shopkeeper's Association, and the other town agencies and organizations focused on business attraction and retention should work proactively with property and building owners within the Village Center to find the most advantageous tenants for specific buildings and properties. Types of businesses appropriate to the Village Center and its market are discussed in Chapter 4. Specific matches of businesses to locations must consider the character and potential of specific buildings in terms of square footage, accessibility, and appropriate character.

Although office uses are appropriate for the Village Center, retail and restaurant uses are preferred and should be actively pursued to the greatest extent possible until a sufficient concentration of these types of uses is established. Until a viable commercial center is established, stores and restaurants should remain a priority over attracting new office tenants in ground floor space. Office space is always an appropriate option for space above the ground floor.

2.2 Focus on attracting specialty stores and retail uses that have a reasonable potential for success. Create incentives to attract desirable new retail uses.

In order to be successful, the shops in the Village Center need to be supported primarily by residents of the Town and immediately surrounding areas, with visitors and tourist driven sales considered as “icing on the cake”. The retail market analysis, found in Chapter 4, was completed taking into consideration potential consumers within a 3-mile radius of the Village Center. The retail market analysis identified the types of retail uses that would be most sustainable in the Village Center based on local consumer spending patterns and the demand of local consumers for specific types of goods.

Based on the findings of the market analysis, the commercial uses with the greatest chance for success in the Village Center, based on selected study categories, include:

- Women’s apparel
- Men’s apparel
- Women’s footwear
- Used bookstore
- Butcher
- Fruit and Vegetable market
- Children’s furniture
- Specialty skin care
- Day spa
- Liquor store
- Wine bar / store

This list is only intended to provide an example of the types of stores that could be supported based on existing data. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of retail stores appropriate for the Historic District, but is intended to provide a framework to identify the types of stores that have reasonable potential for success given the current market supply and demand within the designated study area. Other types of stores that fit in with the character of the Village Center may also be successful even if they were not considered as part of this study.

All of the retail categories identified above, as well as those not identified on the list, would have the greatest chance for success if they were small-scale and focused on specialty items that could not be found in your typical corner store or big box retailer. Other specialty stores may also be viable in the Historic District even though they were not identified as a retail category as part of the Market Analysis. Examples of other potential specialty stores that would be appropriate in the Historic District include antique stores, art stores and galleries, and any small-scale food oriented establishment, such as a café or specialty food store, such as a cheese shop.

Due to the size constraints and space limitations of available retail space in the Village Center, the majority of retailers would need to be 1500 square feet or smaller in size. This size is consistent with the supportable square footages determined as part of the retail market analysis.

2.3 Encourage existing retail uses to implement changes that will make them more appealing to local users, as well as visitors.

Retailers in the Village Center need to be responsive to the needs of their customers in order to attract, and maintain, a greater volume of sales. Retail businesses cannot limit their hours from 9 AM until 5 PM from Monday to Friday when most local customers are at their jobs and unable to shop. Retailers in the Village Center should agree to remain open through the evening at least one night per week in order to allow local residents the opportunity to do shopping. If all retailers remained open the same night, as suggested, residents would have a destination and reason to shop in the Village Center. Many small downtown areas throughout the country, such as West Chester, PA, implement evening hours on a regular basis in order to cater to their working customers. Many times these evenings are themed nights, such as “Thursday Night Out in Old Wethersfield”. The theme also creates a logical marketing slogan that can be used in advertisements in stores and in publications in the local and regional community.

Businesses should also consider the benefits of remaining open on Saturday and/or Sunday in an effort to attract both local residents and to take advantage of the influx of visitors, who are most likely visiting local sites and attractions and participating in special events on the weekend. In an effort to create a visually appealing, user friendly, and cohesive streetscape presence, business owners and Town officials should implement a business signage program to install new signage throughout the Village Center. In many town centers business signage is installed not only on the façade of the building, but also on a small sign which extends perpendicular from the façade at the first floor ceiling level. These types of signs allow pedestrians and vehicles traveling along the roadway to read the business names before they are in front of the business.



Example of perpendicular building signage that would be appropriate in the Old Wethersfield Village Center.

2.4 Attract small-scale, family friendly restaurant uses to the Village Center.

Restaurants are an important aspect of a successful destination. A concentration of restaurants offering a variety of dining options would improve the amount of local visitation to the Village Center, creating spin-off opportunities for other area businesses and attractions. Family-oriented restaurants are a high demand type of commercial use and would add economic value to the Historic District.

2.5 Identify appropriate uses for vacant and/or underutilized properties on Main Street.

Masonic Hall

The Masonic Hall is located at a highly prominent location in the Village Center at the corner of Main and Church Streets. The interior of the Masonic Hall has been gutted and vandalism has resulted in the additional degradation of the interior. Estimates to rehabilitate the building are close to one million dollars. The exterior of the building

does not lend itself to a retail use as there is limited window frontage on the street. However, the property location would make it a desirable place for additional retail uses within the Village Center. The Masonic Hall may reasonably be re-developed as a residential property. Additional residences in the Village Center would increase pedestrian activity and help to support local businesses and restaurants. The federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program which provides a 20% tax break for construction and property acquisition costs would be a possible way to offset rehabilitation costs.



Existing conditions of the Masonic Hall

Department of Motor Vehicles

The Department of Motor Vehicles is currently a fully utilized site adjacent to Cove Park. However, there have been discussions in the past regarding the potential that the State could vacate the building and re-locate the DMV use and other existing office space to a location outside of the Historic District. Although this is not currently an active proposal, the Town should consider the highest and best use for the site in the event, at some future time, the property does become available.

Because the site is bounded by residential neighborhood uses on three sides, any future use of the site should be considerate of traffic generation, and impact on surrounding neighborhoods should be minimized. Any future proposal for redevelopment should be carefully studied with any potential impacts and mitigation strategies explicitly studied and identified.

Ideally, future use of the site should be publicly-oriented in order to take advantage of its proximity to the waterfront and Cove Park. However, the desire for a publicly-oriented use needs to be weighed against the financial realities of redeveloping the site. A private use that incorporates some public amenities may be an alternative to achieve an appropriate balance between public sector good and private sector profit.

Public discussions indicate there is community opposition to a private commercial use such as a hotel or a conference center on the site that would impact the residential character of the area and generate increased traffic. If the existing building were to remain on-site, it would appear to be conducive to an educational use, such as a community college or similar type use. In the event the existing building is to be demolished, an expansion of Cove Park, complete with interpretation of the former jail building and site, would be recommended.

Cove Park

The Town recently completed a Master Plan for Cove Park which is recommended to be implemented. Improving access and parking within the park, improving

accessibility to and enhancing water-based facilities, enhancing the trail system including linkages to surrounding historic buildings and neighborhoods, mitigating traffic to the park on adjacent residential streets, and creating an interpretive experience are primary objectives that should be carried out within Cove Park.

2.6 Designate a portion of on-street parking along Main Street, from Church Street to Garden Street, with a 2-hour limit effective Monday thru Friday, 9 AM – 5 PM.

On-street parking is an important part of the Old Wethersfield Village Center streetscape. In addition to providing necessary parking for area businesses, it also serves as a buffer between pedestrians on the sidewalk and traffic along Main Street. On-street parking has proven an effective means to slow traffic as drivers tend to watch for children, pets, and car doors when they are passing cars directly on the street.

However, parking is most effective on the street when it is for short-term purposes, allowing customers to reach the specific merchants and services that they have come to the Village Center to use. On-street parking is less effective when it is utilized by business owners and employees who take up the space for an entire business day, essentially eliminating it as available for customer use. As this has been an on-going problem within Old Wethersfield, a formal restriction might be implemented to ensure that on-street parking within the core of the Village Center remains available for transient users of the Village Center.

In order to achieve this, without the installation of parking meters, the Town should install small parking signs in the vicinity of on-street parking spaces that identify time limitations for parking in designated on-street areas, specifically on Main Street from Church Street south to Garden Street. Such a recommendation could be phased-in according to need, beginning with a portion of the street (say, one side) and adding or decreasing over time as appropriate. The Town should request that the Police Department spot check the parking spaces to ensure that the time limits are being followed; if not, warnings or tickets could be issued. Business owners and employees should utilize parking lots that are located within close proximity to business and office uses within the Village Center.

2.7 Clearly sign and identify locations for public parking.

A lack of available public parking is perceived to be a problem within the Village Center. While this may be true on some days during the year when a large-scale special event is occurring, there is ample parking available on a day to day basis. The issue is not whether there is enough parking, but the location of the parking and the knowledge that the public parking is readily available for all people utilizing the Village Center, for work or as a visitor.

In order to better inform people of the availability of public parking, beyond the parking that is visible along the street, clear signage needs to be installed at the locations of public parking lots and at other locations in the district that direct people to the appropriate location. The wayfinding signage program and addition of an informational kiosk in the Village Center in front of Main Street businesses will help in disseminating that type of public information.

3. Preserving Community Character

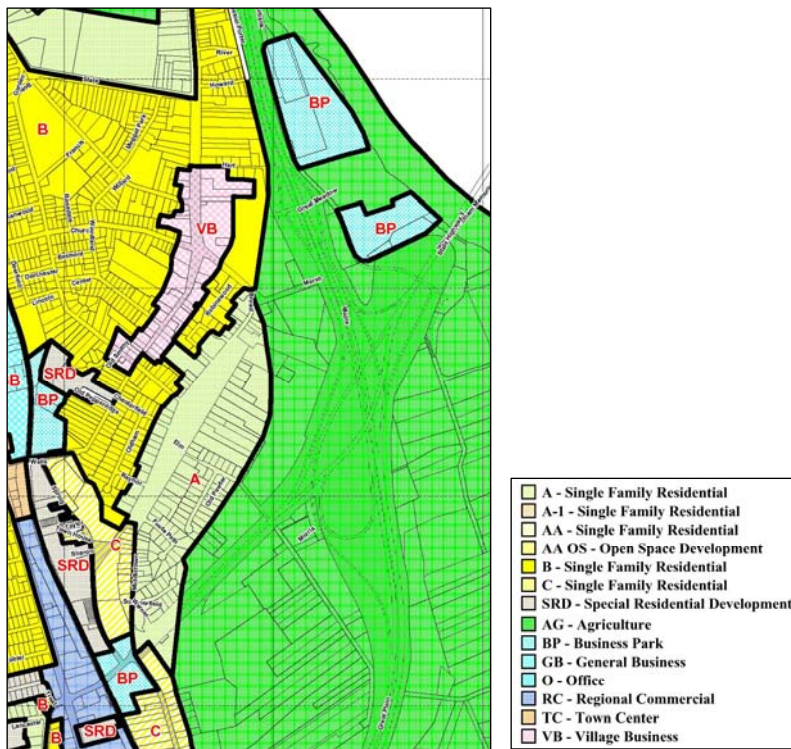


Preserving the character and ambiance of the Old Wethersfield community is the overarching goal of the master planning effort. In order to achieve that goal, the following recommendations are proposed:

3.1 Maintain existing zoning designations within the Village Center to ensure commercial uses do not overflow into residential neighborhoods.

Old Wethersfield is, above all, a residential community with strong neighborhoods. The community prides itself on its residential character and wants to maintain that character where it currently exists. The Town should maintain the existing zoning designations within Old Wethersfield to ensure there are no conflicts between residential and non-residential uses, and to maintain the quality of life for residents that moved to Old Wethersfield because of its desirable residential neighborhoods. Any new retail, service, office, or restaurant uses should be located within the area already zoned and designated as VB – Village Business on the Town’s zoning map.

FIGURE 8 – EXISTING ZONING DESIGNATIONS
Old Wethersfield Historic District



3.2 Ensure adaptive reuse and new construction projects are compatible with the historic character of the district.

Through enforcement of the HDC guidelines for Old Wethersfield, the Town can help ensure that adaptive reuse and new construction projects are designed to fit in with the existing fabric and character of the Old Wethersfield community. The guidelines should be implemented uniformly and consistently for all proposed projects. The existing guidelines provide the necessary direction to users to assist property owners and developers, as well as the Historic District Commission to make appropriate decisions regarding reuse and new construction projects. The guidelines should lay the framework for decision making, with project specific considerations also impacting the final decision making.

3.3 Establish a formal public outreach process that involves residents in the early stages of project proposal and development.

Resident involvement is an important component of a strong community. Old Wethersfield benefits from a highly engaged and interested public that truly cares and is interested in protecting the character and quality-of-life offered by Old Wethersfield. A formal public outreach process should be established to ensure that residents are informed and have the opportunity to actively participate in projects that have the potential to impact their community. The public outreach process established should be utilized Town-wide, whether the reviewing agency is the Historic District Commission, Planning and Zoning Board, Town Board, or other advisory or decision-making body within the Town.

Public outreach could begin with further enhancement of the Town's website. The Town's existing website is excellent and provides a wide range of information for residents, including background information on the boards and commissions, meeting dates, minutes from previous meetings, and other information. Additional enhancement might include anticipated meeting agendas, a list of projects currently under review, background information on these projects, and project status with respect to the various review processes.

With respect to the Historic District, it is recommended that an email distribution list be created to include the members of the various organizations within Old Wethersfield, including advocacy groups. Information and updates can be quickly distributed throughout the community by using this email distribution list. The list could be managed by the recommended Old Wethersfield Heritage Commission discussed later in this chapter.

The Town of Wethersfield has a well-developed system of governmental boards and meeting processes. It may be desirable to review these processes and consider additional public outreach measures through input from the public. In general, the public outreach process should include public informational meetings at the onset of a project or when a proposal is received, opportunities for public input to discuss alternatives at various stages of plan development, and a final presentation to formally present the project. Public input opportunities may be part of regularly scheduled meetings, or may be held in addition to regular board and commission meetings, depending on the complexity of a given project. For complex projects that have

significant impact and warrant significant comment, public forums held by the planners or property owners or developers should also be included in the process.

4. Interpreting Our History



The history of Old Wethersfield is what makes it special. Promoting the history, sharing past experiences with a broad audience, and educating both residents and visitors about the significance of the Town will foster local pride, promote awareness, and draw a wider audience to the Historic District.

4.1 Develop a comprehensive history of the Town.

Surprisingly, considering the historical significance of the Town, Wethersfield does not have a comprehensive published history. Existing histories of the Town are in pamphlet or booklet form and tend to focus on specific, narrow subjects. It is recommended that the Historical Commission take the lead in developing a comprehensive history for Wethersfield. The history should be a hard cover full-sized book (approximately 9 ½ inches x 11 ¼ inches) with authoritative text and ample photographs and illustrations. The Maryland Historical Trust has a series of regional histories that would be an appropriate model. The project could be funded through cooperative matching grants from foundations.

The proposed history should be Town-wide. It should especially focus upon the early history of the Town and its role in the founding of Connecticut. The early settlement period, Colonial maritime period, Revolutionary War, and post-war changes will be of particular interest. The history should bring the reader up to the early- and mid-twentieth century. The book will provide the foundation for interpretation of Old Wethersfield.

4.2 Develop a district-wide interpretive strategy that builds on key themes associated with Old Wethersfield.

Community interpretation is a time honored tradition in Old Wethersfield. A number of small, community interpretive signs and exhibits have been installed by community organizations and residents over many years, ranging from plaques on boulders, to small cast iron signs, to name and date signs on individual residences. These exhibits should be considered historically significant in and of themselves as commemorative features and should be preserved. Despite these significant exhibits, however, Old Wethersfield is not well interpreted. Existing interpretation tends to concentrate upon detailed bits of information that, while interesting, are presented without context, leaving readers without a broad understanding of why this place is so significant. Tours

and public events sponsored by the Wethersfield Historical Society and others help to fill this gap, but additional measures could be taken to assist those interested in self-guided tours of the village.

Discrete community interpretive exhibits are recommended for Old Wethersfield. The exhibits should be installed on public property linking sites throughout the village. The exhibits are intended for residents as well as for friends and visitors. They would be coordinated with walking tours, for which brochures should be created, and with the village's interpretive attractions. Sign carriers for the exhibits should be coordinated with the graphic identity of the Old Wethersfield interpretive signage. The exhibits should be well designed, conservative in scale and appearance, and of high quality, reflecting the quality, authenticity, and significance of Old Wethersfield.

Interpretive themes are the central concepts or ideas that are important about an interpretive subject and give it significance. They are the big ideas that communicate the meaning of an event, story, or resource. Community interpretation in Old Wethersfield should convey the town's primary interpretive themes using subjects and stories related to the actual places where things happened. Residents and visitors who experience interpretive exhibits within the community should come away with an understanding of the concepts presented in the themes. Upon seeing the exhibits, when asked what it was all about, they should be able to relate the primary themes of the exhibits they have seen.

Interpretation in Old Wethersfield is particularly engaging for three reasons. First, the subject matter is extremely interesting. Second, it is historically significant; the historical significance of Old Wethersfield does not come across in some of the town's current interpretation. Third, it is authentic. This is the place and these are the buildings where interesting things happened.

Community interpretation is intended to be limited in extent and in content. It should whet the appetite and stick to the big ideas. For a more in-depth interpretative experience, visitors should be directed to the Kenney Center and Webb Deane Stevens Museum. Additional interpretive information should be available in books, brochures, and on the Historical Society and Webb Deane Stevens websites.

The goal of interpretation is meaning, not information. Community exhibits should go beyond the mere statement of facts. Interpretation is only successful when it uses information to reveal meanings and relationships. Good interpretation should stir visitors' emotions and provoke reconsideration of the facts. It should be engaging rather than didactic, dynamic rather than passive.

Interpretation for Wethersfield should be concentrated upon four primary subjects:

- The founding of Connecticut;
- The prosperity and prominence of the colonial town;
- Transformation into a nineteenth century agricultural village following the loss of the town's maritime industries; and
- The twentieth century village.

The following primary interpretive themes are suggested for consideration in Old Wethersfield.

FIRST TOWN: THE FOUNDING OF CONNECTICUT

By the 1630s, the Puritan colony in Massachusetts was well established and individuals from various portions of the colony were interested in extending settlement into the Connecticut River Valley. Wethersfield was the first permanent settlement in Connecticut and is recognized as Connecticut's first town.

A Bend in the River

The Connecticut River is the largest river in New England and extends north from Long Island Sound to the Canadian border. The river was a focus for human occupation, first Native Americans and later European settlers, providing a natural route for travel to the interior. Wethersfield was located at a dramatic oxbow curve in the river.

First Americans

Native Americans occupied the Connecticut River Valley for thousands of years before Europeans settled in North America. Nomadic tribal groups moved with the seasons, hunting in fall and winter, fishing in spring, and planting crops in the rich floodplains along the river in summer. The broad, rich meadows along the bend in the river in what is now Wethersfield were a prominent location for cultivation. By the early seventeenth century, the Wonguck Indian tribe occupied the meadows and called them "Pyquag," meaning "cleared land."

First Settlement

Wethersfield was the first permanent settlement in what would soon become Connecticut. John Oldham of Watertown, Massachusetts, explored the Connecticut River Valley in 1633 and was attracted by the fertile meadows of the Wethersfield area. Decimated by disease and fearful of the Pequot tribe to the southeast, the Wonguck Indians welcomed white settlement of the area as a buffer. Oldham petitioned the Massachusetts court for permission to settle the area in 1634 and moved there joined by nine other men to establish his claim. The first group of families from Watertown joined the Ten Adventurers in the spring of 1635; the Massachusetts Bay Colony Court granted permission to the Watertown contingent, after the fact, on May 6, 1635. The Court granted permission to the Dorchester group on June 3, 1635. On September 13, 1635, Winthrop recorded that "About sixty men, women and children traveled overland towards Connecticut," and settled Windsor (Adams. I:21). Thomas Hooker led a group from Newtown (present-day Cambridge) to settle Hartford in 1636.

Inland Port

The bend in the river at Wethersfield created a natural harbor and was the farthest point upriver accessible to ships. Wethersfield became a transfer point for goods shipped in and out of the colony, establishing the town as a prominent inland port. Warehouses and shipbuilding facilities were established along the river and were instrumental in the town's early prosperity. A second harbor was created along the river in what is now Rocky Hill in the 1670s. In 1692, severe floods caused a redirection of the river to the east, isolating the oxbow curve and making it no longer useful as a harbor. Harbor activities were refocused to the Rocky Hill area, but Wethersfield remained the town's center.

Church and State

Life in the early Massachusetts Bay colony was dominated by the church; there was no separation of church and state. Towns were founded for the purpose of seating a new church and congregation, and the meetinghouse served as the physical, spiritual, political, and social center of the settlement. There was little tolerance for those who did not conform to Puritan beliefs. Because of Oldham's determination, Wethersfield was initially established as a settlement without having a church in place. However, the Watertown church fulfilled its covenant to found a church in Connecticut sometime during the first year of settlement. Wethersfield's first meetinghouse was constructed in 1645.

First Constitution

Connecticut was established as a separate colony, independent of Massachusetts, in 1639 by the three towns of Wethersfield, Windsor, and Hartford. The Fundamental Orders effectively establishing the colony and composed by the Connecticut River colonists are regarded as the first constitution in what would eventually become the United States of America and served as a model for the U.S. Constitution.

Early Settlement of Connecticut

Establishment of the three towns opened the way for an influx of settlers into the Connecticut region. The town of Wethersfield originally encompassed 54 square miles including land on both sides of the Connecticut River (Adams I:51). Initial settlement concentrated in the meadows and harbor at the oxbow curve, which became the center of the town. But settlement spread rapidly to other locations as well, favoring prime agricultural lands.

New Towns

Because of distance and the difficulty of reaching the church in the village center of Wethersfield, the expanding populations in the outer areas of the town eventually began petitioning the General Court of Connecticut for permission to establishing their own towns and churches. Glastonbury became a separate town in 1693, Rocky Hill, known then as Stepney, was separated in 1843, and Newington was separated in 1871.

A MARITIME VILLAGE

The completion of the First Church of Christ in 1764 symbolized the prosperity, culture, and influence of Wethersfield by the mid-eighteenth century. The First Church is among the largest and most notable churches in Colonial America. Wethersfield, Connecticut's First Town, likewise held a prominent position among New England's early commercial and social centers. Wethersfield prosperity as a port with commercial relationships from Boston to the West Indies led to its early prominence.

The Meeting House

The design of the brick Meeting House, completed in 1764, reflected the sophistication of Wethersfield's governing class. Its steeple was modeled on the steeples of two Episcopalian churches, the 1723 Christ Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the 1725 Trinity Church in Newport Rhode Island. Both of these examples were inspired by the work of British architect Sir Christopher Wren. It is the only brick Meeting House built in Connecticut during the 18th century.

Merchants and Sea Captains

Wethersfield's growing prosperity derived from its coastal and West Indies trade. During the 18th century, shipbuilding and loading and unloading of goods moved down river to Middletown and eventually to New London and Groton on the Connecticut shore, but Wethersfield residents continued to profit from the maritime trade by investing in the ships and their cargo.

The Red Onion

Many Wethersfield families were able to participate in trade by growing a special type of red onion unique to Wethersfield. This labor-intensive crop, which was tended by women and children and which sea captains sold on commission, offered the highest monetary yield per acre. Sold in coastal towns and in the West Indies, red onions were Wethersfield's most important export during the 18th and early 19th centuries.

An Evolving Colonial Village

The center of Wethersfield evolved into a densely settled linear village, with dwellings, farms, and businesses lining main Street and Broad Street south from the Cove. At least 250 property owners have been identified within the village core and on Wright's island nearby prior to 1700. The village developed through three distinct periods, from the subsistence cottages of early settlement, through the construction of the first generation of permanent dwellings in the mid-to-late 1600s, to the highly prosperous and sophisticated residences of the mid-eighteenth century.

Revolutionary Wethersfield

Because of its investment in maritime trade, Wethersfield strongly objected to the 1765 Stamp Act and other British taxes which precipitated the American Revolution. Wethersfield's Silas Deane was a delegate to the Continental Congress and the country's first diplomat. He obtained military aid and signed the Treaty of Alliance with France, which was the first country to recognize the United States as an independent nation. As Connecticut's Commissioner of Prisons, Wethersfield's Sheriff Ezekiel Williams was responsible for housing British prisoners. Wethersfield sea captains became privateers. George Washington visited Wethersfield three times during the War, most notably in May of 1781, when he and the French Commander, the Comte de Rochambeau, met to plan the military campaign that culminated in the defeat of the British at Yorktown, Virginia in October of that year.

End of the Maritime Trade

In the decades following the Revolution, Wethersfield's maritime trade declined as increasing shares of the town's former business went to Hartford and New England's coastal ports. The advantages that first created the inland port and later sustained its prosperity were no longer sufficient in competition with the larger and more accessible coastal ports. By 1825, trade from Wethersfield had all but ceased. With the decline of the maritime trade came a decline in prosperity and prominence.

AN AGRICULTURAL VILLAGE

Despite its proximity to the city of Hartford and the opening of the first trolley line to the State House in 1863, Wethersfield remained an agricultural community. After a blight on the red onions in the late 1830s, the town turned to garden seeds as

a basis for its economy. Borrowing the concept from the Shakers in Enfield, Connecticut, entrepreneur William Comstock began putting small amounts of each type of garden seed into paper packets, which were then arranged in boxes and carried by traveling salesmen to general stores throughout the South and Midwest.

A New Prominence: Providing Seeds to the Nation

The innovative new seed industry began in Wethersfield in the early 1800s resulted in Wethersfield becoming known as the cradle of American seed companies. Due to its rich soil and access to water and later railroad transportation, Wethersfield was a fertile location for the propagation and export of seed crops. By mid-century, seed gardens occupied land throughout the town, and seed products were distributed by traveling salesmen across the country. The widespread distribution of the town's seed companies' products meant that Wethersfield seeds have been sown in gardens and fields nationwide over the past century and a half.

SUBURBAN COMMUNITY

In the early twentieth century, Wethersfield was still a rural agricultural village. Its location near the expanding state capital, however, led to construction of trolley lines to the village and to development opportunities. By the 1920s, innovative, high quality new suburban development began to change the face of Wethersfield's historic village. Led by Albert Hubbard, the large town lots and farms surrounding the village center were transformed into suburban middleclass neighborhoods featuring well-built residences in popular revival styles.

Preservation Leader

Wethersfield has been a national leader in historic preservation since the early twentieth century. Beginning with efforts to save the Joseph Webb House about 1915, the town has faced a series of preservation challenges and opportunities the responses to which have led to a broad public awareness and commitment to preservation of the village's unique historic resources. From the relocation of the proposed Silas Deane Highway in the late 1920's, to tercentenary celebrations and memorials of 1934, to the preservation of a number of significant homes as house museums, to the creation of Connecticut's first and largest Register historic district in 1962, Wethersfield residents have developed a strong preservation ethic.

- 4.3 Create an interpretive signage program that builds on the signage guidelines developed for the wayfinding program.**

The following interpretive presentation is suggested for public spaces within Old Wethersfield. The implementation of interpretive exhibits may be phased and limited to the level deemed most appropriate by residents. A program for the installation of interpretive exhibits will require additional study and community review before being implemented.

ORIENTATION EXHIBITS

Orientation exhibits should consist of two vertical format exhibit panels, each with orientation and interpretive content on both sides. The exhibits should be located in an appropriate setting within a small brick-paved area with benches and landscaping. Each orientation exhibits should include:

- An overview and interpretive context, with introduction of its three primary themes;
- A plan of the village with significant features, attractions, and self-guided walking tours and possible driving tours shown;
- Information on visitor attractions, including the Keeney Center, Webb Deane Stevens Museum, Village Center, Cove Park, Standish Park, and Broad Street Green;
- Additional interpretation of key themes associated with its vicinity.

Locations and Interpretive Focus:

Keeney Center Yard

- First Town: The Founding of Connecticut
- First Church: Prosperity and Influence in Colonial America

Cove Park

- A Bend in the River
- Inland Port

Broad Street Green

- First Settlement
- An Evolving Colonial Village
- An Agricultural Village

WAYSIDE CLUSTER

Wayside exhibits should be organized in clusters in appropriate public locations within the village. Wayside signs should be discretely located in ones and twos, with visible walking distance of other waysides within its cluster. Interpretive content should be coordinated within each cluster, building on themes appropriate to its location. Waysides may be experienced in any order.

Locations and Interpretive Focus:

Village Center Cluster: Wayside exhibits located on the public walk in front of the village shops; in the plaza of the Webb Deane Stevens Museum; in the yard in front of the First Church.

- First Town: The Founding of Connecticut
- First Church: Prosperity and Influence in Colonial America
- Church and State
- Revolutionary Wethersfield
- Preservation Leader
- A New Prominence: Providing Seeds to the Nation (at Comstock and Hart)

North Main Street Cluster: Wayside exhibits at appropriate locations in the open lawn on the west side of Main Street between Church and State Street, as well as in the public park at River Street.

- Interpretation of individuals who lived in Wethersfield and who can exemplify key themes

Cove Park Cluster: Wayside exhibits along the trail as well as other locations within Cove Park.

- A Bend in the River
- Inland Port
- Merchants and Sea Captains
- Red Onion
- End of Maritime Trade

Standish Park Cluster: Wayside exhibits around the edges of Standish Park.

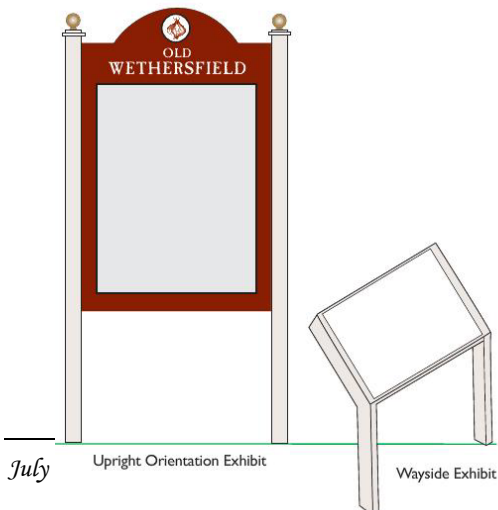
- First Americans
- First Constitution
- Early Settlement of Connecticut
- New Towns
- Suburban Enclave

Broad Street Cluster: Wayside exhibits at appropriate location on the Broad Street Green.

- First Settlement
- An Evolving Colonial Village
- An Agricultural Village
- Red Onion
- A New Prominence: Providing Seeds to the Nation

Examples of interpretive displays that are consistent in design with the wayfinding signage program are shown below:

FIGURE 9 – INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE
Old Wethersfield Historic District



4.4 Expand the number of rotating and permanent exhibits at the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center.

The building entrance to the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center should be softened to be more welcoming to visitors. The raised entry, though attractive in design, can be intimidating, particularly for first time visitors that are not familiar with the building and its function as a public destination and welcome center. The front lawn of the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center should be informal and highly visible as a destination within the Historic District. Clear signage identifying the building as the Visitors Center is needed. Small banners, advertising changing exhibits and special events, are a removable and reversible means to share information to visitors and residents. The front yard of the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center should serve as a preview of what is inside. It should entice visitors into the interior with small and tastefully designed interpretive displays and wayfinding signage.



Existing main entrance to Keeney Memorial Cultural Center

Exhibits within the Keeney Center should be expanded and the existing space should be more fully utilized. The simplest way to achieve this would be to allow exhibits to “spill” out into the hallway to create continual exhibits throughout the first floor, not just in designated rooms. This would contribute to creating a more friendly, interactive interior that allows the visitor to experience more than blank walls in the entryway. The entry desk, as well as the gift shop, should be moved adjacent to the main door.

4.5 Ensure archeological impacts are taken into consideration with regards to any future projects occurring within the Historic District.

It is important to recognize that each of the historic sites and attractions within the Old Wethersfield Historic District may contain remnants of their historic landscape settings as well as archeological resources relating to the property. Unless there has been substantial land alteration carried out at a historic site, the landscape may have undergone little or no change through the property’s history; if so, most historic domestic sites will contain undisturbed archeological deposits such as remains of outbuildings or wells, as well as remnants in the interior of the building.

If a property is a contributing element to Wethersfield’s National Register District , or otherwise listed or eligible to the National Register of Historic Places, the archeological deposits and historic landscape elements may have characteristics that contribute to the property’s eligibility or listing. If land-altering activity is planned for any historic properties in the Old Wethersfield Historic District it would be appropriate to contact the Connecticut Historical Commission in Hartford or the Office of State Archeology, University of Connecticut in Storrs for advice and guidance.

Conditions and requirements for development of archeologically sensitive sites should include provisions for appropriate levels of archeological assessment and investigation. Well-established procedures for addressing potential archeological issues have been developed at the state and federal levels. Through consultation with the Connecticut Historical Commission, these procedures should be applied to future projects within the Historic District where significant ground disturbance is to be undertaken. These procedures and criteria for when they would be applicable should be included within the Historic District Commission regulations and guidelines.

5. Organizing Our Leaders



The assets and resources within the Historic District are plentiful and through cooperation, joint efforts, and collaboration the success of the Historic District as a visitor attraction and source of pride to the local community can be enhanced.

5.1 Create the Wethersfield Heritage Commission to strengthen the local visitor experience, promote business development in Old Wethersfield, enhance tourism opportunities, and enhance interpretive aspects of the community.

The Historic District and the Town as a whole would benefit from the creation of a Commission that focuses on more than just attracting tourists, but also considers the preservation of existing attributes, the enhancement of resources, and the implementation of projects that help to attract people into the community in the first place. The vision of this organization would be broader than that of the existing Tourism Commission as they would focus not only on attracting tourists, but working with local sites and businesses to identify grants, to implement an interpretive signage program, to promote and market Historic District resources, and to participate in exploring options for sharing the Historic District with the community at large.

It is recommended that the existing Tourism Commission be restructured and expanded to take on this role. The organization should be re-named to more accurately represent the role of the commission – the Wethersfield Heritage Commission would be an appropriate name given the proposed tasks and responsibilities of this advisory and decision-making organization.

The management entities for national and state heritage areas provide a model for the Wethersfield Heritage Commission. The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, and Shenandoah Valley National Historic District are three of a number of similar organizations with management structures composed of partnering organizations undertaking projects on a cooperative basis similar to those envisioned for Wethersfield. The Main Street program developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation is also a successful potential model.

The Wethersfield Heritage Commission should be a decision-making body; therefore representatives on the Commission should be in a position to make decisions on behalf of the organization which they represent. Representation should be expanded beyond the current membership of the Tourism Commission to include the following:

- Executive Director of Historical Society
- Director of Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum
- Member of Shopkeepers Association
- Member of Chamber of Commerce
- Representative from CT Tourism District
- Member of Economic Development and Improvement Commission
- Representative from Silas Deane Business Community
- Resident of the Old Wethersfield Historic District
- Representative of the Historic District Commission
- Representative of retailers in Old Wethersfield
- Representative of non-retail businesses in Old Wethersfield
- Representative of restaurant owners in Old Wethersfield
- Representative of First Church
- Representative of Town Parks and Recreation Department

5.2 Hire a part- or full-time staff person with responsibility for overseeing the Wethersfield Heritage Commission.

In order to give the Wethersfield Heritage Commission a visible role in the community and to give weight to its vision, it is recommended that the Town hire a part- or full-time staff member whose primary responsibility is to oversee and carry out the goals and tasks identified by the Commission. The staff member would be responsible for identifying budget costs, preparing grant applications, and overseeing Commission-related projects, such as the design, installation, and upkeep of the Historic District interpretive program. The staff member would also be responsible for implementing marketing strategies to attract visitors, working with local business members to expand their businesses and meet their independent goals, and working with historic sites to meet their vision and coordinate cooperative efforts between various attractions.

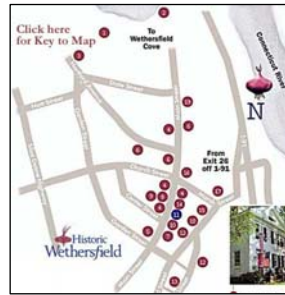
5.3 Develop strategic partnerships with regional and state organizations.

Partnerships are critical on the local level but regional and state-wide partnerships also have the potential to assist businesses and attractions within the Historic District from a visibility and marketing perspective. These relationships are critical to “getting the word out” about the district and what it has to offer. The Town, and specifically the Wethersfield Heritage Commission, should take the lead in establishing relationships with regional and state-wide tourism and preservation organizations. Organizations that should be considered for future collaboration include, but are not limited to:

- Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism
(Tourism Division, Historic Preservation & Museum Division, and Film Division)
- Central Regional Tourism District, Inc.
- Connecticut Convention Center
- Connecticut Historical Society

- Discover New England
- Greater Hartford Visitors and Convention Bureau
- Greater Hartford Arts Council
- New England Museum Association
- New England Tourism Center

6. Attracting Visitors and Marketing Assets



One of the goals of this planning effort, and a key focus of the stakeholders who own businesses and manage sites within Old Wethersfield, is to attract a greater number of visitors to the District and their specific business. Attracting visitors, whether local or regional, and marketing the assets of the community can be done in a manner that does not jeopardize the residential character and quality-of-life for residents living within the Historic District.

6.1 Install an orientation sign that identifies businesses, attractions, and visitor services within the Village Center.

An orientation sign / kiosk should be located in front of the businesses near the intersection of Main and Church Streets, across from the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center. The kiosk should include a map of the Village Center including all points of interest, businesses, and restaurants. The kiosk should also include brochures that visitors can take along with them that identifies the various business and attractions and includes key information such as hours of operation and the location of public parking and restroom facilities. The design of the orientation sign / kiosk should be coordinated with the preferred signage design for the wayfinding and interpretive signage programs in order to maintain a cohesive identity throughout the Historic District, and ultimately, the Town.



*Sample orientation kiosk
in Rochester, NY*

6.2 Define opportunities for joint programming among existing organizations that could be marketed to attract new visitors to existing sites and businesses. Pool resources and funding to create more opportunities for marketing of individual and joint programs.

One of the realities within the Historic District is that the businesses, attractions, and organizations that make it such a special place have limited resources and funding to implement their visions. Existing historic attractions, businesses, and other district-oriented sites and organizations should work together to pool their limited resources in order to maximize marketing budgets, visibility to the public, and funding opportunities.

6.3 Implement recommendations from the 2007 Marketing Communications Plan by Keiler & Company.

While the 2007 Marketing and Communications Plan by Keiler & Company provides the Town with a framework for future marketing efforts, it lacks specific short-term recommendations and does not focus on the Historic District in any detail. However, the overall goals of the plan, to further tourism and economic development, are in sync with the goals for the Historic District. There are specific elements within the document that are directly associated with the Historic District and recommendations within the Plan could be elaborated on and then applied to marketing efforts within the Historic District.

The Keiler & Company plan recommends that the Town create a centralized team to organize marketing efforts. This recommendation should be implemented as soon as possible and ties in directly to the establishment of the Wethersfield Heritage Commission defined in the Organizing Our Leaders section of the Master Plan recommendations. A team, as well as a staff member, should be designated with developing a strategic plan for marketing (tourism, interpretation, and business), implementing the strategic plan, organizing the variety of organizations involved in marketing, and creating a cohesive identity for marketing in the Town and the Historic District.

The Economic Development recommendations can also relate to business development within the Historic District specifically. Local business organizations need to re-establish ties with the Town in order to sustain themselves. Partnerships between Historic District businesses and businesses on the Silas Deane should be fostered and promoted for the good of both. The Plan also recommends reaching out to prospective developers. In the Historic District this recommendation is important to attracting the types of businesses that will make the District more sustainable in the short- and long-term, specifically retail and restaurant enterprises.

The Marketing Plan would be more useful if it included specific strategies for attracting specified business sectors into a designated area. The Historic District would benefit from additional input from a marketing consultant on how to best achieve their desired business mix by marketing to desirable businesses.

A strong brand for the Town is important and the recommended taglines, although not intentionally, draw attention to the Historic District. The suggested tagline, "Historic Wethersfield. Its New England. From the beginning" is preferred for future branding.

The design is simple and the text starts to tell the story of Old Wethersfield. The tagline creates interest and makes you want to find out the rest of the story that has yet to be told. The Town, through the Wethersfield heritage Commission, should request that this simple tagline be incorporated into Town and independently produced marketing materials to begin to establish a cohesive identity for the Town and the Historic District.

Both small space ads presented within the Plan also create interest though the first small space ad is more universal in telling the whole story of what Old Wethersfield has to offer as it implies both the historic character and attractions and the availability of shopping opportunities. The preferred small space ad reads “Antiques. Boutiques. And Museums. *Oh my*”.

Recommendations in the Marketing Plan regarding Search Engine Optimization are important given the prominence of the internet. The Town should follow through with the recommendations provided by Keiler associated with investing in a paid Google search and hiring a professional e-marketing group to ensure that Wethersfield is easily and prominently located within the internet.

Public Relations recommendations within the Marketing Plan should be implemented as time and budgets allow. Almost all of the recommendations would be undertaken by the Wethersfield Heritage Commission and its designated Town staff member.

The Tourism and Promotional Opportunities section provides the Town and Historic District organizations with a variety of interesting ideas for themed trips to Wethersfield which would support local businesses and further foster partnerships with regional organizations. The Wethersfield Heritage Commission should be responsible for refining the proposed tourism packages, working with interested attractions and sites, and marketing the packages following the procedures and processes outlined in the Marketing Plan.

6.4 The Town should work with attractions and businesses to develop a series of special events that appeal to local residents and regional visitors.

As exemplified in Chapter 5: Case Study Communities of this Plan, special events are a great way to bring a significant influx of people into a community. When the events are done right, they showcase the community as a great destination and spur repeat trips at other times for people to further explore the businesses, restaurants, and attractions within the area.

This should also be the case for the Old Wethersfield Historic District. Ensuring people are aware of what resources exist within the Historic District is the first obstacle that must be overcome if the community wishes to expand its annual number of visitors. In order to better market the Historic District as a great place to visit, the Town, Wethersfield Heritage Commission, and local stakeholders should develop and identify a series of special events that could showcase the assets of the community and draw visitors in from a regional level.

This could be accomplished by establishing new events such as A Vintage Wethersfield Day, a Day at the Cove, or an event that capitalizes on an important aspect of the community, such as its agricultural heritage would be appropriate themes that would appeal to a broad audience. These could also be events that build on existing

programming already offered by the Town, the Wethersfield Historical Society, Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, or other local organization.

Implementation Matrix

Recommendations within the Old Wethersfield Master Plan are not all immediately implementable. The Town and its local partners will need to prioritize projects in order to secure funding and determine what projects are feasible given existing time and budget opportunities and constraints. Some projects, such as safety improvements to intersections, should be considered a priority while others that require additional studies and outside funding (such as a grant application), may take longer to fully realize.

The following Implementation Matrix lists each of the recommendations discussed above, suggests a timeframe in which it might be completed, notes a responsible party for implementing the recommendations, and outlines a cost when possible. All of the recommendations of the master plan require community input as they are further developed and implemented. Some recommendations may never be implemented. Recommendations requiring various phases, such as further study and analysis, grant writing, or detailed design, have been divided in the Implementation Matrix with specific information provided for each potential phase.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX
Old Wethersfield Master Plan recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	ESTIMATED COSTS
1. ENHANCING THE STREETScape			
1.1 Install hierarchy of wayfinding signs			
Phase 1: Detailed Design	0-1 year	Town, consultant	\$16,500 in consultant fees
Phase 2: Grant Writing	0-1 year	Town	No direct costs
Phase 3: Fabrication and Installation	1-3 years	Town, sign consultant	\$107,700 fabrication and installation
1.2 Intersection improvements			
<i>Church and Main Streets</i>			
Phase 1: Detailed Study and Design	0-1 year	Town, consultant	\$12,000 in consultant fees
Phase 2: Implementation of Improvements	1-3 years	Town	\$20,000 - \$150000, based on complexity of improvements
<i>Main and State Streets</i>			
Phase 1: Detailed Study and Design	1-3 years	Town, consultant	\$4,000 in consultant fees
Phase 2: Implementation of Improvements	1-3 years	Town	\$15,000, based on complexity of improvements
<i>Main and Hartford Streets</i>			
Phase 1: Detailed Study and Design	1-3 years	Town, consultant	\$4,000 in consultant fees
Phase 2: Implementation of Improvements	1-3 years	Town	\$15,000, based on complexity of improvements
<i>Hartford and State Streets</i>			
Phase 1: Detailed Study and Design	1-3 years	Town, consultant	\$12,000 in consultant fees
Phase 2: Implementation of Improvements	3-5 years	Town	\$25,000 - \$220,000, based on complexity of improvements
1.3 Create a cohesive pedestrian network			
Phase 1: Prioritize Sidewalk & Pathways; Coordinate with Existing Project Schedules	0-1 years	Town	No direct cost
Phase 2: Phased implementation	1-3 years	Town	\$13 per sy for gravel walks; \$10 per sf for

			concrete walks; \$25 per sf for brick or stone walks; 12% escalation per year
1.4 Install visual signals to slow traffic			
Phase 1: Detailed Design	0-1 year	Town, sign consultant	\$10,000 in consultant fees
Phase 2: Secure funding	1-3 years	Town	No direct cost
Phase 3: Implementation of improvements	1-3 years	Town	\$6500 per location
1.5 Enforce traffic controls	On-going	Town	No direct cost
1.6 Enhance primary / secondary gateways			
Phase 1: Detailed Design	1-3 years	Town, consultant	\$8,000 per gateway
Phase 2: Grant writing / secure funding	1-3 years	Town	No direct cost
Phase 3: Landscape Installation	3-5 years	Town	\$36,000 per gateway
Phase 4: Other improvements	3-5 years	Town	Varies based on desired improvements
1.7 Develop standard amenity palette			
Phase 1: Create local committee	0-1 year	Town	No direct cost
Phase 2: Prepare standard guidelines	1-2 years	Town, committee	\$1,000 for document production
1.8. Create guidelines for parks / open spaces			
Phase 1: Create local committee	0-1 year	Town	No direct cost
Phase 2: Prepare standard guidelines	1-2 years	Town, committee	\$1,000 for document production
2. CREATING A VIABLE VILLAGE CENTER			
2.1 Encourage concentration of retail uses	1 year, on-going	Town, OWSA, WHC, EDIC	No direct cost Marketing costs TBD, incurred by Town
2.2 Attract retail specialty stores			
Phase 1: Develop strategic plan	0-1 year	Town, consultant	\$3,000 - \$5,000
Phase 2: Implement strategic plan	1-3 years	Town, WSKA, WHC, EDIC	TBD based on marketing recommendations within strategic plan
2.3 Encourage changes by retail owners			
Phase 1: Retail owners meeting	Immediate	Town, Shopkeepers	No direct cost
Phase 2: Implement desired changes	Immediate	Town, Shopkeepers	No direct cost
2.4 Attract variety of restaurant uses	1-3 years	Town, WHC, EDIC	No direct cost

2.5 Identify appropriate uses for vacancies and underutilized sites			
Phase 1: Select consultant for market study	0-1 year	Town	No direct cost
Phase 2: Identify preferred vision	1-3 years	Town, consultant, property owners	\$3,000 - \$10,000 per site
Phase 3: Implement recommendations	3-5 years	Town, property owners	Varies based on market studies and preferred alternatives
2.6 Restrict availability of on-street parking			
Phase 1: Identify locations and design signs	0-1 year	Town	\$1,000
Phase 2: Sign production and installation	0-1 year	Town	\$500 per sign
2.7 Identify and sign public parking locations			
Phase 1: Identify locations and design signs	0-1 year	Town	\$1,000
Phase 2: Sign production and installation	1-2 years	Town	\$500 per sign
3. PRESERVING COMMUNITY CHARACTER			
3.1 Maintain existing zoning designations	On-going	Town	No direct costs
3.2 Ensure compatibility with new design	On-going	HDC, Town, developers	No direct costs
3.3 Establish formal public outreach process	1-3 years	Town with HDC	No direct costs
4. INTERPRETING OUR HISTORY			
4.1 Develop a Town-wide history			
Phase 1: Identify writer / s	0-1 year	Town, residents	No direct cost
Phase 2: Book production	2-5 years	Town, residents	Cost of production TBD
4.2 Develop interpretive strategy for District			
Phase 1: Finalize interpretive themes	0-1 year	Town, WHC	No direct cost
Phase 2: Identify program	1-3 years	Town, WHC	No direct cost
Phase 3: Identify implementation strategy	2-3 years	Town, WHC	No direct cost
4.3 Develop an interpretive signage program			
Phase 1: Define types and number of signs	1-3 years	Town, WHC	\$3,5000 in consultant cost
Phase 2: Secure funding	1-3 years	Town, WHC	No direct cost
Phase 3: Detailed design	2-4 years	Town, WHC, consultant	\$16,500 in consultant cost
Phase 4: Sign production and installation	3-5 years	Town, WHC	\$107,000

4.4 Expand exhibits at Keeney Center			
Phase 1: Create long-term exhibit plan	1-3 years	WHS, WHC, consultant	\$40,000 in consultant cost
Phase 2: Implement recommendations	3-5 years	WHS, WHC	\$250 per sf
4.5 Consider archeological impacts	On-going	Town, HDC, Property owners	No direct cost
5. ORGANIZING LEADERS			
5.1 Restructure Tourism Commission	0-2 years	Town	No direct costs
5.2 Hire staff member to assist WHC	1-2 years	Town	\$18,000-\$50,000 annually depending on qualifications and full- or part-time status
5.3 Develop strategic partnerships	On-going	All OWHD organizations	No direct costs
6. ATTRACTING VISITORS AND MARKETING ASSETS			
6.1 Install a Village Center orientation sign			
Phase 1: Secure funding	Immediate	Town	No direct cost
Phase 2: Hire consultant to design sign	0-1 year	Town, consultant	\$1,000 - \$2,000 for design
Phase 3: Sign production	1-2 years	Town, consultant	\$3,000 - \$10,000 per sign
Phase 4: Sign installation	2-3 years	Town	\$500
6.2 Participate in joint programming efforts	On-going	All OWHD Organizations	No direct costs
6.3 Implement marketing recommendations	1-5 years	Town, WHC	Varies based on recommendation
6.4 Develop a series of special events	3-5 years	Town, WHC, WHS, WDS	WHC staffs

Funding Sources

Introduction

There are a number of funding implications associated with the implementation of the Old Wethersfield Master Plan. These range from administrative costs associated with the local management and implementation of projects to capital costs. In the long-term maintenance costs associated with additional landscaping, open spaces, and public amenities also need to be considered.

Some recommendations and projects identified in the Plan may be eligible to be funded in the Town's Capital Improvement Program. Others will require financial support from sources other than general Town revenues. Often times, when seeking to obtain monies from an outside source, a local match is required that may range from 10-60% of the total project cost. The local match can typically take the form of actual monetary funds or can be the donation of materials and labor from the Town.

There are a number of financial resources available for the acquisition of properties, Main Street projects, façade improvement programs, economic development, traffic enhancements, streetscape improvements and job creation. Federal, state, local, and private funding sources should be considered, and combined, for maximum benefit in implementing the recommended projects and actions.

Potential Funding Sources

The following public funding sources are available to the Town of Wethersfield through a variety of federal, state, and county programs. The list should not be considered comprehensive as new funding sources are regularly becoming available to individual organizations and local municipalities. The list should be considered a sample of funding alternatives that could be pursued by the Town or an organization within the Town. Specific organizations, such as the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum or Wethersfield Historical Society, may have access to grants specific to their programming and type of use.

Each identified source includes a description, eligibility requirements, a maximum award amount and any required match, and contact information. Contact should be made with each funding source in order to obtain additional information about the current status of the funding program.

AMERICA'S HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS PLANNING GRANTS

America's Historical and Cultural Organizations grants support traveling or long-term museum exhibitions, library-based projects, interpretation of historic places or areas, interpretive Web sites, or other project formats that creatively engage audiences in exploring humanities ideas and questions. Planning grants can be used to plan, refine, and develop the content and interpretive approach of a project.

Eligibility: City or township governments
Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education

Awards: Maximum of \$75,000, no match required

Contact: Division of Public Programs
National Endowment for the Humanities
Room 426
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20506
202-606-8269
publicpgms@neh.gov

INTERPRETING AMERICA'S HISTORIC PLACES IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS

As part of the NEH's We the People program, Interpreting America's Historic Places grants support public humanities projects that exploit the evocative power of historic places to address themes and issues central to American history and culture, including those that advance knowledge of how the founding principles of the United States have shaped American history and culture for more than two hundred years. Interpreting America's Historic Places projects may interpret a single historic site or house, a series of sites, an entire neighborhood, a town or community, or a larger geographical region. The place taken as a whole must be significant to American history, and the project must convey its historic importance to visitors. The audience for Interpreting America's Historic Places projects is the general public. (For other public humanities projects that may not focus so closely on historic places, refer to the implementation grant guidelines for America's Historical and Cultural Organizations.) The goals of Interpreting America's Historic Places are to: enhance lifelong learning in American history by connecting nationally significant events, people, ideas, stories, and traditions with specific places; foster the development of interpretive programs for the public that

address central events, themes, and issues in American history; and encourage consultation with humanities scholars and history organizations in the development of heritage tourism destinations.

Eligibility: City or township governments
Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education

Awards: Maximum of \$1,000,000, no match required

Contact: Division of Public Programs
National Endowment for the Humanities
Room 426
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20506
202-606-8269
publicpgms@neh.gov

SECTION 108 LOAN GUARANTEE PROGRAM

Section 108 is the loan guarantee provision of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Section 108 provides communities with a source of financing for economic development, housing rehabilitation, public facilities, and large-scale physical development projects. This makes it one of the most potent and important public investment tools that HUD offers to local governments. It allows them to transform a small portion of their CDBG funds into federally guaranteed loans large enough to pursue physical and economic revitalization projects that can renew entire neighborhoods. Activities eligible for Section 108 financing include: economic development activities eligible under CDBG; acquisition of real property; rehabilitation of publicly owned real property; housing rehabilitation eligible under CDBG; construction, reconstruction, or installation of public facilities (including street, sidewalk, and other site improvements); related relocation, clearance, and site improvements; payment of interest on the guaranteed loan and issuance costs of public offerings.

Eligibility: Cities with a population less than 50,000 and non-entitlement cities

Awards: This is a loan program. Maximum repayment period is 20 years.

Contact: Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program
Office of Community Planning and Development
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street, SW Room 7206
Washington, D.C. 20410

SMALL CITIES COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

The Community Development Block Grant Program provides municipalities with the opportunity to compete for funds to improve local housing conditions, streets, utilities, and public facilities. The types of projects funded include, acquisition of property for public purposes; construction or reconstruction of streets, water and sewer facilities, neighborhood centers, recreation facilities, and other public works; demolition; rehabilitation of public and private buildings; public services; planning activities; assistance to nonprofit entities for community development activities; and assistance to private, for profit entities to carry out economic development activities (including assistance to micro-enterprises). In Connecticut grant applications and awards are

administered through the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development.

Eligibility: Cities with a population less than 50,000 and non-entitlement cities
Awards: Vary
Contact: State of Connecticut
Department of Economic and Community Development
505 Hudson Street
Hartford, CT 06106-7106

PRESERVE AMERICA

The Preserve America matching-grant program provides funding to designated Preserve America Communities to support preservation efforts through heritage tourism, education, and historic preservation planning. Eligible projects include those related to research and documentation, interpretation and education, planning, marketing, and training.

Eligibility: Preserve America communities
Awards: \$20,000 - \$150,000 of federal funds, require 50% match
Contact: State of Connecticut
Department of Economic and Community Development
505 Hudson Street
Hartford, CT 06106-7106

PRESERVATION SERVICES FUND

Preservation Services Fund grants are administered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to encourage preservation at the local level. Eligible activities under this grant opportunity include planning (design guidelines for a historic district, strategic planning for an organization, fund raising consultant services, historic structures report, etc) and education and outreach (hosting workshops, obtaining a keynote speaker, curriculum for school children, media relations consultant, etc.). Building and construction activities, historic resource surveys, and property acquisition are not eligible projects.

Eligibility: Nonprofit incorporated organizations
Nonprofit public agencies
Awards: Maximum of \$5,000, dollar-for-dollar match required
Contact: NTFHP Regional Office
Northeast Office
7 Faneuil Hall Marketplace, 4th Floor
Boston, MA 02109-1649
(617) 523-0885
nero@nthp.org

TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

Transportation Enhancements (TE) activities are federally funded, community-based projects that expand travel choices and enhance the transportation experience by improving the cultural, historic, aesthetic and environmental aspects of our transportation infrastructure. TE projects must be one of 12 eligible activities and must relate to surface transportation. Eligible activities include pedestrian and bicycle facilities, historic preservation, control and removal of outdoor advertising,

rehabilitation of historic transportation structures, pedestrian safety activities, archeological planning and research, acquisition of scenic and historic easements, scenic or historic highway programs such as visitor centers, landscaping and beautification, conversion of railways to trails, and environmental mitigation.

Eligibility: States
Local governments
Non-governmental agencies

Awards: Up to 80% reimbursement of project cost, requires minimum of 20% match

Contact: Eloise Powell, TE Program Contact
FHWA
CT Division
628-2 Hebron Avenue
Suite 303
Glastonbury, CT 06033
Tel: 860-659-6703 x 3010 Fax: 860-659-6724
eloise.powell@dot.gov

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