

Executive Summary: Sigourney Station Area

What Do "Transit Oriented Development" (TOD) Districts Look Like?

Successful TOD districts have a blend of housing, retail, and/or office and a good measure of density, whether job density or housing density. Development is more compact and less dependent on parking and auto use. Infrastructure costs for streets, water, sewer, and utilities are reduced while property values are typically increased.

Other key elements include an attractive, safe and inviting pedestrian environment as well as public space integrated with the transit station and commercial space to create a "sense of place." Buildings are located near the street edge with several windows and doors on the ground floor. Public streets and walkways are organized in a grid pattern that creates comfortably sized blocks. The districts are usually within a ¼ to ½ mile radius around a station, or a comfortable five to ten minute walking distance.

Municipal Advisory Committee

Robert Painter, Committee Chairperson - City Council, City of Hartford

Gerry Maine - Planning Department, City of Hartford

Stephen Jewett - Commission on the City Plan, City of Hartford

Kevin Burnham - Public Works Department, City of Hartford

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Capitol Region Council of Governments

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Implementation

The implementation strategy focuses first on working with ConnDOT and Aetna to ensure that the station is developed with a plaza linking to Sigourney Street, and later, on working with Aetna as parking is consolidated in garages, to redevelop former surface parking lots for residential use. The following summarizes the phasing of the key development components:

Short-Term: 2004-2009

- Consider incorporating station area plan into Plan of Conservation and Development
- Consider adopting zoning overlay district as outlined in Appendix C
- The North Frog Hollow and Asylum Hill Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committees (NRZs) should consider amending their Strategic Plans to incorporate the Station Area Plan
- Aetna/City partnership begins planning for Hawthorn Street
- Initiate residential neighborhood renewal through targeting City programs to the station area
- Redesign Sigourney Street to improve pedestrian connections (including stairways) south to the North Frog Hollow neighborhood

Medium-Term and Long-Term: 2010-2025

- Develop RFPs for Hawthorn Street parcels
- Develop Hawthorn Street townhouses and related Hawthorn Street improvements
- Develop infill housing on the blocks bordered by Farmington Avenue to the north and Hawthorn Street to the south

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A new plaza connects the busway station to Sigourney Street. Streetscape improvements along Sigourney and Hawthorn Streets link the station to surrounding neighborhoods.

Station Area Planning Project

The Capitol Region Council of Governments, working with citizens and the City of Hartford, has developed plans for the areas near stations for the New Britain - Hartford busway.

Please examine the development plan shown here to learn how the Sigourney station area could change. The ideas presented here are designed to make the most out of the proposed transportation investment and are intended to stimulate discussion.

Planning around transit (bus or rail) stations is

known as Transit Oriented Development and it has been successful throughout the country. The Pittsburgh busway and the Washington D.C. Metro are examples where districts surrounding the rapid transit systems thrive, adding to the quality of life in these communities.

The New Britain-Hartford Busway Project is a new rapid transit facility being built by the Connecticut Department of Transportation. It is an exclusive 9.4-mile long busway, linking downtown New Britain with downtown Hartford's Union Station. The busway has

stops in New Britain, Newington, West Hartford and Hartford.

The goal of this Station Area Planning project is to coordinate transportation and land use planning for the areas around proposed stations in order to enhance economic benefits to Hartford while increasing ridership. Development concepts are focused on strategies to create vibrant walkable districts with easy access to regional transit.

This summary provides an overview of the plan for the Sigourney station area.

Why Sigourney Station?

Sigourney Station was selected because Aetna's plans to consolidate parking in garages creates a number of potential development sites along Hawthorn Street in close proximity to Sigourney Street Station. These development sites are on the edge of a dense neighborhood and are key to encouraging infill development beyond Hawthorn Street.

“The Bones” / Key Development Principles

The Plan shown here is conceptual. As individual projects evolve over time in response to market conditions, funding opportunities and parcel availability, it will be important that the project designs adhere to the following guiding principles - “the bones” - of the plan:

- Design the transit station as an open plaza, using steps and terracing to connect the busway platform level with Sigourney Street above.
- Consolidate Aetna parking and redevelop former surface lots for residential use.
- Enhance Hawthorn Street with residential development and streetscape improvements. Heavy landscaping should screen the new development from views of I-84 above.
- Housing density should be a minimum of 12 units/acre; research shows that starting at this density, the dependence on the automobile begins to decline.

Economic Benefits

Most of the economic benefits to be derived at the Sigourney Station are a result of the investment made by Aetna, in parking facilities. These parking facility investments are not a direct result of the busway system. In fact, it is hoped that the busway will reduce the reliance of the Aetna employees on the automobile.

The proposed housing along Hawthorn Street appears to be of a long-term nature likely following the initial five to 10 years of BRT operation and would be difficult to ascertain at this time. The actual construction of the housing would create economic benefits in terms of direct and indirect jobs and payroll. It is not possible at this time to determine the potential real property tax benefits which would be generated by the residential uses as it is not known the types of initial and/or long-term public sector incentives, including potential tax abatement, which may be required to effectuate the housing.



Linking Corporate Campus to Transit Oriented Development

The conceptual plan assumes that the transit station will be developed in conjunction with a new Aetna garage, and will include a plaza facing Sigourney Street and sloping down to the busway level. The Plan uses the transit station plaza, and streetscape/pedestrian improvements along Hawthorn and Sigourney Streets, to create a more attractive environment for residential development along Hawthorn Street.

Aetna is interested in consolidating much of their parking into new structured facilities close to their campus, thus freeing up land along Hawthorn Street currently being used for surface parking. The concept plan shows parking consolidated in three garages.

Residential development along Hawthorn Street, on land freed up by Aetna’s parking consolidation, will provide an attractive southern edge to these blocks, encouraging long-term infill development and rehabilitation of the existing buildings on the north/south streets.

The plan includes developing approximately 100 townhouses along the north and south sides of Hawthorn Street. Heavy landscaping will provide a noise and view buffer to shield townhouses on the south side from the railroad, busway and overhead highway.

The vacant parcel at the southeast corner of Forest and Hawthorn Streets has been discussed as a potential site for a number of different uses. It is important that any development on the site be a use that attracts or generates pedestrian activity and takes advantage of the transit facility. This site and the transit station can then bookend Hawthorn Street and enhance the urban character of the area

In addition to pedestrian improvements along Hawthorn Street, the plan includes significant pedestrian improvements along Sigourney Street, including widened sidewalks and pedestrian scale lighting; additional lighting is recommended for the underside of the I-84 bridge over the street and the sidewalks.



Aerial view of station area facing east. Red dot indicates station location.

Development Summary Table

Use	Total
Residential	182 units
New Destination (public or private)	86,000 sq sf