

The SILVER LANE CORRIDOR STUDY



The Silver Lane Corridor Study extends along Silver Lane for nearly two miles, from the Route 15 on- and off-ramps to the west to Forbes Street to the East. The above image looks at the study area at the intersection of Silver Lane and Roberts Street (looking north).

So much has happened since our last newsletter! We're excited to feature the progress made on Silver Lane since last year on a variety of project fronts - market research and land use studies, traffic analysis of current conditions and future development potential, town investment, state-funded projects, and now, our alternative roadway design concepts for the corridor. These alternative roadway concepts bring complete streets to Silver Lane, which means slower vehicle speeds,

safer pedestrian environments, bicycle facilities including an East Coast Greenway Trail connection, and a "road diet" that would reduce the number of travel lanes along the entire corridor but would still maintain current and future traffic demand.

Keep reading to learn more about Silver Lane progress over the last year, and we look forward to hearing your feedback on our roadway alternatives!

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Consultant Completes Land Use and Market Analysis Study for Silver Lane



The Silver Lane Revitalization Plan, also called the BAR Study as it was funded by a Brownfield Area Revitalization (BAR) Grant from the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), was completed by Milone & MacBroom in July of 2018. The purpose of the study was to comprehensively plan for revitalization of the Silver Lane Corridor.

The project team conducted extensive existing conditions analysis within the Silver Lane corridor including an inventory of existing land uses, buildings, and businesses; assessment of the Town's zoning regulations; and a review of physical impediments to development including wetlands, flood zones, and availability of infrastructure. In addition to the analysis of current physical and environmental conditions, the study also evaluated market conditions in the corridor, established a guiding vision

and master plan, identified development opportunities, and recommended actions the Town can implement to realize the aspirations for transformative redevelopment expressed during the planning process.

As a result of the study, the Master Planning process establishes a new future land use vision to identify “highest and best” uses along the corridor and serves as a basis for zoning recommendations and floodplain maps were successfully revised to reduce the extent of environmental constraints on several potential redevelopment sites as a result of updated wetland mapping.

A crucial part of the planning process was to understand market opportunities in the corridor. A commercial and residential market assessment analyzed the potential for additional retail and commercial space, as well as residential units in the corridor.

Key takeaways from the market assessment were as follows:

- Oversupply of big-box space and demand for smaller, single-occupant buildings
- Unique, niche use or cluster of niche uses needed to stimulate the traditional commercial core of Silver Lane
- More local spending power needed to support neighborhood retail in the corridor – new housing development is key
- Strong regional market for multi-family housing
- Mixed-use redevelopment that capitalizes on Pratt & Whitney employees, recreational amenities, and CTfastrak may offer greatest potential for revitalization.

The Silver Lane Advisory Committee adopted a vision statement for the future of the corridor, with the goal to help guide decision making in the short- and long-term:

“Silver Lane is East Hartford’s premiere live, work, learn, play neighborhood. The corridor offers a diversity of well-paying jobs and housing opportunities; a robust network of transit and recreational opportunities; easy connections to Downtown Hartford; and serves as a regional shopping, sports and entertainment destination.”

The existing conditions and market analyses identified opportunity sites in the corridor that were best positioned for development or redevelopment. Development feasibility plans were prepared for six selected sites throughout the corridor (land assembly typically required).

The combined residential and commercial yield of the six sites has the potential to result in approximately 350 new residential units and over 100,000 square feet of new commercial space. This analysis enabled the town

to identify the Showcase Cinema site as a clear short-term priority for redevelopment (see page 4 for more information on this opportunity!).

In addition, the following recommendations were suggested to realize the goals set forth by the community to achieve the vision for the corridor:

- 1. **Rezone the corridor** - align land uses to the locations where they are most likely to be successful.
- 2. **Invest in the corridor** - the Town must commit to investing in catalytic redevelopment as well as existing residents, business, and infrastructure.
- 3. **Strengthen and Support Existing Residents** - work with public and private partners to improve educational and employment outcomes.
- 4. **Strengthen partnerships with existing employers and institutions** - establish and strengthen these partnerships and explore employer-assisted housing programs.

Opposite Left: Rendering of Route 15 Overpass with improved bike and pedestrian amenities, and gateway improvements. Bottom: Conceptual plan of key redevelopment opportunity sites in the corridor. Images courtesy Milone & MacBroom.



The Town of East Hartford Purchases Blighted Showcase Theater Property for \$3.3 Million

In January 2019, Council members of East Hartford unanimously approved the purchase of the blighted former cineplex and its adjoining parcels for \$3.3 million. The decision to purchase the combined parcel area of 25+ acres was in large part made as a result from the findings of the Milone & MacBroom land use study, which identified the site as a key redevelopment parcel.

While this site does not have any visibility from Silver Lane, it has excellent visibility from the highway. The M&M land use studied analyzed the site and found the potential for 260 multi-family residential units in a mixture of apartments and townhomes with associated communal amenities. Access to the site would be through existing easements as well as

Applegate Lane, which the town is currently pursuing bringing up to town standards for it to become a public road.

The Town has not only acquired the parcel but has also worked with the Capital Region Development

Authority (CRDA) to release an RFQ for development of the site and are planning to release an RFP for demolition shortly. The town anticipates demolition will be completed this August.



Conceptual rendering of potential redevelopment at Showcase Cinemas site. Image courtesy of Milone & MacBroom.



Image courtesy of Katherine Eastman / Journal Inquirer.

The Q's:

Q1. Do you live in the Silver Lane (SL) study area?

Q2. If you have children that attend school in the SL area, how do they get to school?

Q3. Do you work on SL?

Q4. How frequently do you use SL?

Q5. Why do you travel on SL?

Q6. How do you travel on SL?

Q7. Do you sometimes use SL instead of Interstate 84?

Q8. Do you think that traffic congestion is a problem on SL?

Q9. Who do you think this section of SL should primarily serve?

Q10. How ambitious should the Project Team be in the planning and design process?

Q11. What types of improvements would you like to see on SL?

Q12. Do you think safety is an issue on SL?

Open-Ended Questions:

Q13. If you think there is a safety issue on SL, where is it and what is the issue?

Q14. What would you do to improve SL?

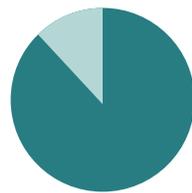
Q15. Would you plan on attending Public Workshops to provide further input?

Silver Lane Survey Results!

To solicit feedback and information from Silver Lane users and residents, an online survey was made available. Most of the 82 respondents took the survey between March and April 2018. Check out some of our findings!

77%
safety is an issue

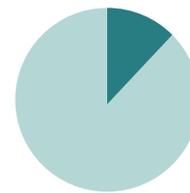
How do you travel on Silver Lane? Check ALL that apply:



88%
car/auto



38%
bike



12%
walk



12%
bus

Improvements people want to see:

< congestion 29%

Safety enhancements 62%

Pedestrian accomodations 67%

Bicycle accomodations 72%

Public transporation 40%

Other 17%

update / vibrant businesses
more mixed use
eliminate blight
proper lane + shoulder widths



76%
use Silver Lane to
conduct daily business

More **lighting** at night.

The exit ramp next to Silver Lane School is **absurd**.

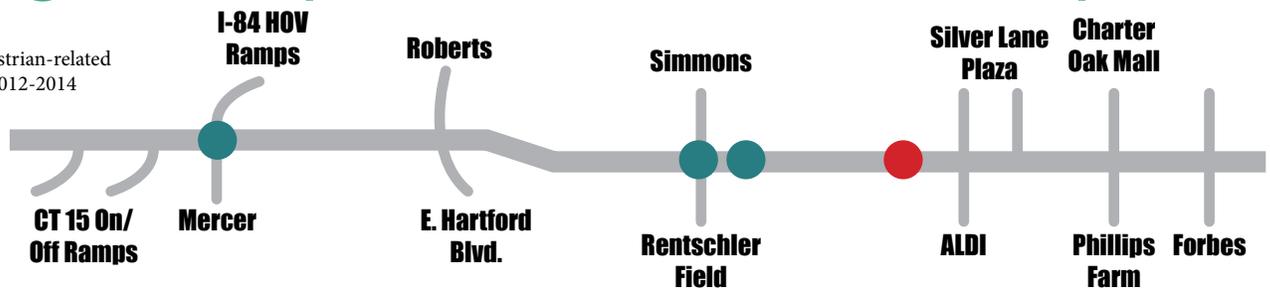
Occasional **congestion** is okay.

The sidewalks are **TERRIBLE** for our kids who walk to school.

Speed limit is 35 mph, average is **50 mph**.

Existing Roadway and Traffic Conditions Analysis

Depiction of pedestrian-related crashes between 2012-2014



In 2018, with the completion of the land use and market analysis to guide the next steps of the process, the Capitol Region Council and Governments (CRCOG) and their consultant TranSystems began to assess the existing roadway design and traffic volumes, current land use and development impacts as well as pedestrian, bicyclist, and vulnerable users, and transit/commuter systems of the Silver Lane Corridor. Similar to the land use study, the nearly two-mile long study area extends from the Route 15 on and off ramps to the west, east along Silver Lane to Forbes Street. The purpose of the existing conditions assessment was to identify deficiencies in order to establish a baseline against which future conditions and improvement recommendations could be evaluated.

As reported in the previous newsletter, the analysis found

that current traffic levels can be accommodated, nor are there any significant delays at intersections for drivers. Some additional findings included:

- narrower than recommended travel lanes in spots
- roadway shoulders that are nonexistent in places
- intersection sight distance at Gold Street is restricted turning out onto Silver Lane
- intersections in the study area operate at a “level of service” (LOS) D or greater during peak hours (LOS D is an acceptable degree of congestion for the street type of Silver Lane)

Crash data for Silver Lane was also analyzed. Data was obtained from the University of Connecticut (UConn) Crash Data Repository from 2012-2014. A total of 206 crashes were recorded; 30% resulting in an injury. The single fatality was one of four total

- Pedestrian Injury
- Pedestrian Fatality

pedestrian-involved crashes in the study area. Crash trends for the corridor included:

- nearly 1/3 of crashes were rear-ends
- approximately 30% of crashes involved turning movements
- approximately 20% of crashes involved sideswipes
- 120 of the crashes occurred at intersections
- pedestrian-involved crashes all occurred under dark-lighted conditions

Additional results of the analysis can be found in the existing conditions report, available online at http://crocog.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Silver-Lane-Existing-Conditions-Report_2018-02-15.pdf.

Outlets are Out. What's in Store?

Unfortunately, outlets are out - at least for now. In 2018, the 282,000 square foot retail outlet shops planned for Silver Lane fell through. While the outlets might not be moving forward, the timing

was fortuitous for determining which future no-build and build development scenarios should be evaluated. Due to the uncertainty surrounding future development of the Rentschler Field site, two

different forecasts were able to be evaluated - the original retail development as well as a 550,000 square foot industrial/light manufacturing development. See page 8 for more information.

What We Heard... Gold Street

Some survey responses as well as feedback received by the Town of East Hartford was in regards to Gold Street. Residents expressed concern about sight lines for drivers attempting to exit Gold Street onto Silver Lane. While no incidents were recorded in the crash data, field visits did confirm that a combination of factors negatively effect sight lines, namely a tree line and a house situated on the curve of Silver Lane. A potential solution in this situation is to restrict traffic flow out of Gold Street. This allows residents to turn into Gold Street but requires drivers to take Clement Street or Simmons Road to exit the neighborhood.

Additionally, prior to making a final decision, a “demonstration” project could be implemented using lower-cost, temporary materials to give residents a

chance to live with a restricted traffic pattern for a short period of time before deciding if it is an improvement they want to see installed permanently.



Depiction of a restricted traffic pattern on Gold Street that eliminates traffic entering onto Silver Lane.

\$1 Million for Pedestrian Improvements from the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA)

Amid many other initiatives current making Silver Lane an exciting place to be, CRDA has earmarked \$1 million for corridor improvements. Complementing the work that consultants have done in analyzing the existing conditions of the corridor, the CRDA funds are anticipated to be spent fixing poor sidewalk conditions and adding sidewalks in areas where they currently don't exist. One such location is the stretch of Silver Lane along the Rentschler Field frontage. Pedestrians currently must cross

the street to walk on a sidewalk although “desire lines” trampled into the grass demonstrate that most take their chances beside the road. Of particular concern is where Willow Brook runs underneath Silver Lane and the guardrail forces pedestrians into the street. If wetlands approvals can be secured, a pre-fabricated footbridge is a possible solution for getting pedestrians over Willow Brook and on a sidewalk set back from the road.



A guardrail keeps vehicles out of Willow Brook as it runs under Silver Lane. This area is delineated as wetlands and will require approvals for any work proposed through it.

2040 Traffic Forecasts for Silver Lane

As part of the planning process, a future ‘no-build’ scenario is considered to establish a baseline to evaluate the success ‘build’ alternatives have in meeting the project’s stated purpose and goals. The build scenario is considered to determine how much traffic growth is possible in the corridor.

The no-build is defined as including all currently planned or programmed transportation improvements. Also included are any reasonable and foreseeable developments that would be completed under the Town’s current course of action regarding pursuit and encouragement of new development or re-development of parcels. Due to the uncertainty surrounding future development of the Rentschler Field site, the two different no-build forecasts developed were:

- **Rentschler Field Option 1:** 15,000 sf of food/beverage and

267,000 sf of retail at the Outlet Shoppes at Rentschler Field.

- **Rentschler Field Option 2:** A development of eleven (11) industrial / light manufacturing buildings with +/- 50,000 square feet each. It is anticipated that these would be occupied by part suppliers for UTC / Pratt & Whitney. For each building a total of +/- 150 parking spaces is proposed. Totals for the development would be 550,000 square feet of industrial buildings and 1,650 parking spaces.

In addition to the options above, proposed developments as outlined in the 2018 land use and market analysis were considered in the build condition. At some intersections, levels of service decreased slightly, but in most cases still well within acceptable and appropriate levels for a roadway like Silver Lane. Essentially, even

with a road diet that reduces the overall number of travel lanes to one in each direction and includes a two-way left turn lane, current and future traffic levels can be accommodated. One notable area that will need improvement in the future in the case of either scenario is the Route 15 Off-Ramp onto Silver Lane. Future analysis shows that without intervention, traffic will likely back up on the ramp all the way to the highway. A roundabout could be an ideal solution at this location due to current traffic patterns and the impact the existing bridge would have on the visibility of a traffic signal

In formulating the necessary assumptions to analyze future traffic, and in selecting the building scenarios, the team consulted with town staff, the land use study team, and corridor stakeholders.

Public Meeting!

Join us
April 30th
 for our
3rd Public Meeting!

WHEN

Tuesday, April 30, 2019
 6pm - 8pm

WHERE

East Hartford Town Hall
 740 Main Street
 Room 241
 East Hartford, CT 06108

For more information, visit www.crcog.org/silverlanestudy.

Email cpalmer@crcog.org to join our mailing list.