

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Roles, Visioning, Viability, and Tools Analysis

Final Specific Site Report

Flatbush Avenue Station – Hartford, CT

*(note: this report has been superseded by
subsequent analysis)*

Background

For each site, WSP utilized a step-by-step process to determine site fit out and feasibility. Site Selection was determined by extensive review of previous plans, site visits and consultation with the municipalities. The site fit out was done in the context of current and recommended zoning and physical feasibility and constraints of each site. The program was validated real estate market demand analysis and current construction and real estate cost data. Pro forma financial statements were developed to determine residual land value and perform gap analysis. Organization roles and responsibilities were analyzed, and recommendations developed for each municipality to advance TOD. All of the above analysis was distilled into recommendations for implementing TOD at the eight sites.

Site Selection

Across both Hartford and West Hartford, there are 8 parcels considered for TOD planning just east of the Flatbush Avenue Station. Three of the parcels in question are located within West Hartford, while the other five are located within Hartford. The parcels in questions are identified in the table below. Parcel 5 includes the totality of the commercial and surface parking lot of the Walmart Supercenter. The portion of Parcel 5 considered in our study is demarcated by the dashed line in Figure 1. Full details for these sites are listed in Table 1.



Figure 1 - Flatbush Ave Station TOD Sites

Table 1 - Flatbush Avenue TOD Site Summary

	Address	Zoning District	Acreage	Square Feet
1	569 FLATBUSH AVE	CX-2	0.7	30,280
2	285 NEWFIELD AVE	CX-2	0.29	12,555
3	281 NEWFIELD AVE	CX-2	0.32	13,974
4	261 NEWFIELD AVE	CX-2	0.3	13,201
5	Portion of 501 FLATBUSH AVE	MS-3	3.1	135,114
6	285 NEWFIELD AVE - West Hartford	IG	1.17	50,965
7	265 NEWFIELD AVE - West Hartford	IG	1.23	53,579
8	583 FLATBUSH AVE - West Hartford	IG	0.22	9,583
		TOTAL	7.33	319,250.71

These parcels were selected given their proximity to the station and their relative lack of development. They also fall within each town's TOD overlay zonings. Both Hartford and West Hartford were interested in seeing part of the Walmart parking lots converted to mixed-use development. Pentecostal Tabernacle Church to the south of the assemblage owns Parcel 7 (265 Newfield Ave) and have expressed their desire to develop the site with affordable housing. Additionally, CTDOT is interested in parking being accommodated through a structure. For these reasons, the eight parcels were selected for the TOD exercise.

The parcels were selected in discussion with the Town of West Hartford and the City of Hartford. The initial impulse was to expand on the previous Parkville TOD Planning studies and current market

conditions. However, the consensus was focus on the proposed West Hartford/Flatbush Ave. CT Rail site, since there was sufficient development activity already underway in Parkville and the Flatbush Ave. site(s) offered a relatively clean palate upon which to develop.

Zoning

The prevailing zoning for the assemblage of parcels at Flatbush Avenue is Hartford’s Commercial-Industrial Mix district (CX-2) mixed with Main Street and industrial designations. Parcels 1 through 4 are zoned Commercial Industrial Mix (CX-2) which permits “allow a highly flexible mix of larger scale, more intensive uses without proximity to residential uses” such as storage facilities, outdoor sales lots, bars, and nightclubs. Parcel 5 is zoned as Main Street (MS-3) which permits commercial uses, including a limited number of vehicle-oriented business types, while balancing the needs of pedestrians and vehicles by limiting driveways and orienting building entrances to the sidewalk. Parcels 6 through 8 are all located in West Hartford and share the same zoning designation of General Industrial District (IG) which are for primarily commercial and industrial uses though residential uses are not prohibited.

The zoning across all eight parcels of the assemblage does not support transit-oriented development. However, both Hartford and West Hartford have TOD Overlays in their zoning code. Thus, the TOD test-fit exercise assumes that the parcels in questions would be rezoned or have the respectively TOD Overlays applied to them. The use, bulk, and lot regulations set forth in the West Hartford TOD Ordinance (177-43 Transit-Oriented Development)¹ and the Hartford TOD Ordinance (5.3 - Transit Oriented Development Overlay)².

Hartford TOD Overlay

The intent of Hartford’s Transit Oriented Development Overlay is, “...to allow for greater flexibility and require greater density in the vicinity of fixed nodes of public transportation.” Development within the overlay requires applicants to file a zoning permit application and may be asked to submit a transportation management plan. The TOD Overlay requires a master plan submission that outlines new streets and whether they will be public or private, and that primary streets be identified where there is at least two blocks of frontage. Buildings within the overlay shall comport with the Downtown Storefront Building Types and Downtown general Building types as defined in the DT-3 zone. Additionally, Apartment Building types and Row Building types shall comport with the regulations of MX-2 district. Parcels contained in the TOD overlay zone over 4 acres, a mix of at least two building types is requires, included mixed-use with residential above a retail/commercial base as in a Storefront Building. The maximum height for buildings is 8 stories.

West Hartford TOD Ordinance

The purpose of the West Hartford TOD Ordinance is, “to encourage development in a predictable, contextual, design-focused manner within walking distance of the CTfastrak stations,” and, “...is intended to support transit-oriented development principles which foster the creation of complete neighborhoods...to promote consistent and pedestrian-oriented building and site design.” The bulk and

¹ 177-43 Transit Oriented Development, City of West Hartford, CT, Zoning Code. <https://ecode360.com/7295941>

² 5.3 – Transit Oriented Development Overlay, City of Hartford, CT, Zoning Code https://library.municode.com/ct/hartford/codes/zoning_regulations?nodeId=n5.0SPOV_5.3TRORDEOV

lot regulations that apply in the TOD Overlay are Downtown Storefront Buildings (DT-3 Districts) and have thus been utilized for the test fit.

Test-Fit for TOD Development Potential

For the test-fit exercise, the assumption was to apply the West Hartford TOD Ordinance to all parcels west of Newfield Avenue to promote cohesive and unified development and not to have discrepancies between building form and access to and from the station to potential future and nearby developments. The parcels treated with West Hartford’s TOD Overlay are Parcels 1- 4 and 6-8. Parcels 1-4 are within the City of Hartford but are treated with West Hartford’s TOD Overlay, for the sake of simplicity. Parcel 5, which is east of Newfield Avenue and within the City of Hartford, is treated with Hartford’s TOD Overlay. *Any actual development would need to comply with the respective jurisdictions.*

Figure 3: Proposed West Hartford Station Plan from EA/EIE

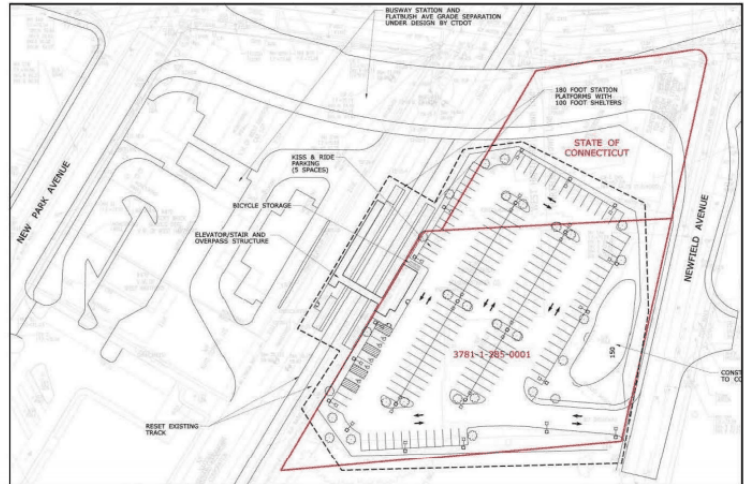


Figure 2 - Proposed West Hartford Station Plan, Hartford Rail Alternatives

The test-fit also factors in the latest design of the West Hartford Station Plan from EA/EIE Station for the Hartford Rail Alternatives Analysis. Figure 2 highlights the proposed station plan. The proposed station plan assumed the parcels west of Newfield Avenue would be converted to station surface parking with some buffering green space. The Test-fit exercise incorporates the plan for the station, including the platforms and CTfastrak bus loop, but it reduces the amount of station parking to accommodate development on the parcels rather than only parking.



Figure 3 - Flatbush Avenue TOD Test-Fit Massing

Figure 3 shows the TOD test-fit design for Flatbush Avenue. The TOD consists of 4 buildings that consist of retail ground floors and residential upper floors. Buildings A and B are the tallest buildings at 6 stories and abut the station. Both

include retail ground floor pads that face the station and front the newly created road that runs perpendicular to Newfield Avenue through the TOD. These retail pads are anticipated to serve both residents and station visitors with grab-and-go products and the like. Buildings C and D sit across Newfield Avenue and occupy the portion of the Walmart Supercenter Parking lot (Parcel 5) of the assemblage and rise to 3 stories high. These Buildings include large retail footprints on the ground floor than Buildings A and B to better align programmatically with the retail shopping center of which it would form part. Building C has two retail pads: the first faces the perpendicular street that stretches across the TOD while the other faces east toward the other commercial uses. Parking across the four buildings is accommodated through structured parking that is incorporated into Buildings B and D and surface parking that wraps around Building D. Table 2 provides a summary total of the potential development square footage and required parking for the Flatbush Ave TOD. Figure 4 presents the ground floor and aerial plan view of the TOD test fit.

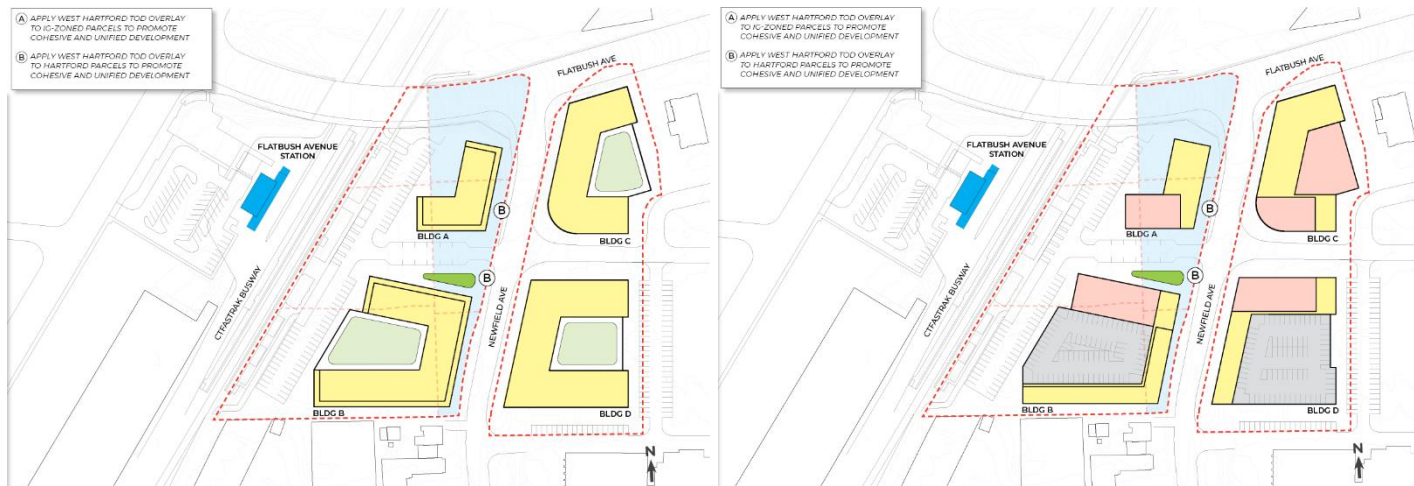


Figure 4 - Flatbush Avenue TOD Test-Fit Ground Floor and Aerial Plans

Table 2 - Flatbush Avenue TOD Development Potential Summary

Use	SF	Units	Parking
Commercial	40,200	N/A	121
Residential	316,620	316	316
Total	356,820	316	437

Pro Forma Analysis

Example Building Program

The sample design for Hartford includes four buildings, featuring retail and parking on the ground floor with apartments above. A completed TOD-style development at this site would be something like this size and configuration:

Building Program	Building A	Building B	Building C	Building D
Construction Type	4-6 Story Lumber on Podium	4-6 Story Lumber on Podium	1-3 Story Lumber	1-3 Story Lumber
Primary Building Use	Apartment or Condo	Apartment or Condo	Apartment or Condo	Apartment or Condo
Primary Gross SF	63,400	144,980	59,030	49,210
Primary Units	63	145	59	49
Secondary Building Use	Retail Store(s)	Retail Store(s)	Retail Store(s)	Retail Store(s)
Secondary Gross SF	5,840	9,700	16,070	8,590
Parking Type 1	Surface	Aboveground Garage	Aboveground Garage	Aboveground Garage
Parking Spaces Type 1	163	160	78	60
Parking Type 2	None	Surface	None	None
Parking Spaces Type 2	0	5	0	0
Parcel Acreage	1.79	2.44	1.39	1.39
Assessor's Property Value	\$ 597,560	\$ 762,200	\$ 808,808	\$ 808,808
Developer's Return	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%

Example Building Cost Analysis

Based on market prices at the time of analysis (3Q 2022), construction of 316 residential units and 466 parking spaces, totaling 356,820 total square feet, would cost approximately \$126.4 million to build.

Example Building Program	Building A	Building B	Building C	Building D	TOTAL
Typical Project Size (Units)	63	145	59	49	316
Dwelling Units per Acre	35	59	42	35	45
Gross Square Footage	69,240	154,680	75,100	57,800	356,820
Total Parking Spaces	163	165	78	60	466
Building Construction Costs	\$ 22,175,740	\$ 52,952,532	\$ 29,042,419	\$ 22,260,448	\$ 126,431,139
Construction (Hard Costs)	\$ 12,988,800	\$ 28,715,400	\$ 15,873,310	\$ 12,280,970	\$ 69,858,480
Parking (Hard Costs)	\$ 244,500	\$ 4,014,615	\$ 1,945,528	\$ 1,497,357	\$ 7,702,000
Entitlement, Services, Commissions (Soft Costs)	\$ 3,766,752	\$ 8,327,466	\$ 4,603,260	\$ 3,561,481	\$ 20,258,959
Site Preparation (Demo, Grading, Infrastructure)	\$ 1,058,664	\$ 2,618,401	\$ 1,425,507	\$ 1,102,266	\$ 6,204,838
Operating and Maintenance Costs (10 yrs)	\$ 2,861,793	\$ 6,279,338	\$ 3,550,903	\$ 2,558,347	\$ 15,250,382
Developer profit margin	\$ 1,255,231	\$ 2,997,313	\$ 1,643,911	\$ 1,260,025	\$ 7,156,480

Example Building Profit & Loss Model

At current market prices, the example building portfolio would cost approximately \$126.4 million to build. A similar building portfolio would sell for approximately \$129.4 million in the current real estate market.

Building Program	Building A	Building B	Building C	Building D	TOTAL
Dwelling Units	63	145	59	49	316
Dwelling Units per Acre	35	59	42	35	45
Gross Square Footage	69,240	154,680	75,100	57,800	356,820
Total Parking Spaces	163	165	78	60	466
Building Sale Value	\$ 24,597,391	\$ 54,544,320	\$ 28,897,325	\$ 21,369,509	\$ 129,408,546
Building Cost Total	\$ 22,175,740	\$ 52,952,532	\$ 29,042,419	\$ 22,260,448	\$ 126,431,139
Building Sale Value per Square Foot	\$ 355	\$ 353	\$ 385	\$ 370	\$ 363
Building Cost per Square Foot	\$ 320	\$ 342	\$ 387	\$ 385	\$ 354
Residential Section Sale Value per Unit	\$ 339,178	\$ 339,178	\$ 339,178	\$ 339,178	\$ 339,178
Residential Section Construction Cost per Unit	\$ 292,170	\$ 315,672	\$ 372,438	\$ 369,403	\$ 329,917
Retail Section Sale Value per Square Foot	\$ 553	\$ 553	\$ 553	\$ 553	\$ 553
Retail Section Construction Cost per Square Foot	\$ 456	\$ 457	\$ 358	\$ 358	\$ 396
Residual Value ("Land Value")	\$ 2,421,651	\$ 1,591,788	\$ (145,094)	\$ (890,938)	\$ 2,977,407
Residual Land Value per Acre	\$ 1,354,121	\$ 652,679	\$ (104,339)	\$ (640,687)	\$ 424,834
Land Acquisition Cost (Assessor's Most Recent Valuation)	\$ 597,560	\$ 762,200	\$ 808,808	\$ 808,808	\$ 2,977,376
Land Acquisition Cost per Acre	\$ 334,139	\$ 312,524	\$ 581,626	\$ 581,626	\$ 424,829

Example Building Financial Gap

With an estimated construction cost of \$126.4 million and land acquisition cost of \$3.0 million, compared to estimated sale value of \$129.4 million, WSP estimates a residual value of \$31 (the "land value"). This residual value indicates that a market-rate developer would just about break even by building mixed-use, transit-oriented development in the current market.

Although pricing is based on an approximate model, it clearly indicates that market-rate transit-oriented development in Hartford is financially feasible. This conclusion of feasibility is dependent on the location of project, which is assumed to have a sale price midway between current Hartford and West Hartford prices.

Building Program	Building A	Building B	Building C	Building D	TOTAL
Financial Profit (Gap) for Project Total	\$ 1,824,091	\$ 829,588	\$ (953,902)	\$ (1,699,746)	\$ 31
Financial Profit (Gap) per Acre	\$ 1,019,982	\$ 340,155	\$ (685,965)	\$ (1,222,312)	\$ 4
Financial Profit (Gap) per Unit	\$ 16,190	\$ 2,346	\$ (11,627)	\$ (24,945)	\$ 0
Financial Profit (Gap) per Square Foot	\$ 26	\$ 5	\$ (13)	\$ (29)	\$ 0

Roles & Responsibilities: West Hartford

Organizational Structure

The Town of West Hartford is governed by the Mayor and Council, a group of nine members elected by the public. The Town Planning & Zoning Committee (TPZC) consists of three members appointed by the Council and each serves a five-year term. Additionally, a Town Planner regularly meets with and advises the three primary members of the TPAC. Should a TPZC member become incapable of fulfilling their duties, an alternate is chosen from the Town Council Members. Members of the TPZC also act as the Inland Wetlands Agency (IWC). Despite the existence of the TPZC, the Town Council retains significant power pertaining to planning and zoning regulations. All proposed zoning maps must be approved by the Town Council. Additionally, special district rezoning applications and development projects that require alterations to the zoning code must be passed by a majority vote of the Town Council members.

The TPZC has developed a “Transit Oriented Development Planning and Zoning Initiative”. Aligning with the goals laid out in their 2020-2030 POCD, the TPZC has begun to develop a TOD zoning plan for a 0.25-mile area between the Elmwood and Flatbush Ave stations. The TPZC has developed a community survey to record attitudes toward this type of development in West Hartford. In accordance with the initiative, the PZC hosted community workshops and public forums in an attempt to educate the public about transit-oriented development. Many of the residents of West Hartford have a history of working against the development of multi-family housing within their municipality which could potentially cause problems with TOD planning efforts in the community. However, the current TPZC seems committed to following through with the promises of diversifying housing stock and developing TODs as laid out in their most recent POCD. As most of West Hartford is currently zoned for single-family residential housing, most TOD would require a special zoning application that would need to be endorsed by the Planning and Zoning Commission as well as passed by a majority vote of the Town Council.

Prior Successes and Next Steps

West Hartford has been successful in changing the community’s view of public transportation and TOD in the town. The Planning and Economic Development team, with some consultant support, conducted targeted outreach to educate the community on TOD. West Hartford also participated in some studies to allow more education on TOD and held parallel Town Council meetings. Initially, before the CTfastrak stations, there was general apathy and even displeasure at having stations in West Hartford. However, the station developments continued and after they were finished, the community looked at the stations as an investment and wanted to see that investment leveraged in a beneficial way. West Hartford then successfully applied and received a Complete Streets grant and that, along with residents moving back into the area created mixed-use developments and mixed incomes near the Fastrack stations creating full-fledged TOD zones. These efforts and results were well received by the community.

West Hartford has the market for TOD. Its next focus will be on creating interest in projects by developers. West Hartford does not have a history of political direct support for financing nor does the town have an incentive-based development approach. TOD in West Hartford has traditionally been a function of zoning which hasn’t been truly transit supportive historically. There is also a mixed assortment of permitted uses. All of these items have been viewed as a challenge by developers and have led to lack of interest by them. However, in 2021 West Hartford started a formal process to change the zoning to allow for more TOD which should help increase interest for projects by the development community.

Roles & Responsibilities: Hartford

Organizational Structure

The City of Hartford is governed by the Mayor of Hartford and the City Council. City Council members are elected to four-year terms. Council members sit on boards and subcommittees under the jurisdiction of the Council. The City of Hartford Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) supersedes all City Council subcommittees that deal with planning and zoning. The PZC consists of seven regular members and three alternates, all of whom are professionals in fields relating to law, planning, architecture, landscape architecture, or real estate law. The PZC hosts bi-monthly meetings in conjunction with the Inland Wetlands Commission. Most PZC meetings are open to the public with stakeholders present. Meetings that are generally not public include Section 8-24 reviews regarding municipal properties in which the government is the primary stakeholder.

All requests regarding planning, zoning, and alterations to the city structure must be approved by the PZC. The PZC is responsible for producing a POCD for the city every ten years. The PZC noted the importance of TOD in their 2020-2035 POCD, citing Hartford's large stock of vacant or abandoned mixed-use land as a potential to infill with transit-oriented developments. In their POCD, the PCZ lays out a plan to incorporate TOD in the "Parkville Arts & Innovation District" plan, which is located in the area surrounding Parkville CTFastrak Station. Transit-oriented developments could be constructed in areas of the city that are currently zoned as mixed-use development, many of which are within a 0.4-mile radius of a multi-modal transit hub. Any special use applications outside of the marked mixed-use zones would require zoning changes and would need to be approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Prior Successes and Next Steps

Hartford has had a number of successful TOD projects, notably those in Parkville and Dunkin Park, while adding 813 downtown residential units (primarily through conversions) between 2010 and 2020, increasing the downtown population by 53% according to census data. The city has recently updated its Plan of Conservation and Development. Now, when a developer is interested in submitting a project to the city, they must prove it's in line with the Plan. This makes the project selection process more transparent for developers and gives clearer guidelines and benchmarks to the Department of Development Services (DDS). The city has also updated its website significantly during covid that works to be interactive and transparent for developers looking to start projects. Developers can set-up a pre-application meeting on this website which is a good starting point for development in Hartford. Hartford also benefits from community participation through its Neighborhood Revitalization Zones (NRZs). Connecticut mandated Hartford to implement NRZs to improve communication between residents and people working in Hartford and the municipality. These can be very effective in obtaining community buy-in for projects.

The DDS is in transition after many staff changes and is working to increase staff to meet its needs. Hartford is also working on continual additions and updates to its planning and development website, including a new citizen portal which will allow developers to upload information on a potential project ahead of the pre-application meeting. In addition, there is still a lack of understanding of the benefits of TOD for the community. Having accessible, weekly bulletins of what is happening from the communications team would be helpful for the community. These bulletins could include updates on what is coming next in terms of projects and time and location of relevant town meetings.

