

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

## Final Specific Site Report

### Elmwood Station – West Hartford, CT

#### 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

Perpendicular to New Park Avenue, across from the Elmwood *CTfastrak* Station, is a collection of 5 parcels in West Hartford that are being considered for TOD planning. These parcels were selected for their adjacency to the *CTfastrak* station, their existing land uses, and strength of the market in the area. Figure 1 provides an overview of the parcels, while full parcel details are summarized in Table 1.



Figure 1 – Elmwood Station TOD Sites

Table 1 - Elmwood Station TOD Site Summary

	Address	Zoning District	Acreage	Square Feet
1	635 NEW PARK AVENUE	IG/TND	6.4	278,784
2	631 NEW PARK AVENUE	IG/TND	1.51	65,776
3	635A NEW PARK AVENUE	IG/TND	0.91	39,640
4	637 NEW PARK AVENUE	IG/TND	0.79	34,412
5	641 NEW PARK AVENUE	IG/TND	0.34	14,810
		<b>TOTAL</b>	9.95	433,422

These parcels were selected given their proximity to the station and their relative lack of development when considering the highest and best use of land adjacent to a rapid transit station. The current success of the Gastropark commercial business at 637 New Park Avenue and the flat pads of the other nearby businesses also make this an ideal spot for TOD. The assemblage also abuts Trout Brook and the associated trail and is a nearby neighbor to the Elmwood Community Center just across the trees that line the western side of Parcel 1 to the west. Collectively, these factors make the assemblage an attractive site for TOD. While the parcels are zoned for Industrial General or Traditional Neighborhood Design District, these parcels also fall within a quarter mile of the *CTfastrak* station, and thus are subject to West Hartford’s Transit-Oriented Development regulations. For these reasons, the five parcels were selected for the TOD exercise.

## Zoning

The prevailing zoning for the assemblage of parcels are zones as General Industrial District (IG) and Traditional Neighborhood Design District. However, the parcels all are subject to the Transit-Oriented Development regulations set forth in the code as they are within ¼ mile of a CTfastrak station and front or are accessed from New Park Avenue. As such, this section will discuss the TOD zoning regulations as they prevail over the underlying zoning where there is conflict.

For development within the TOD zone, buildings must be oriented toward the street, be setback no further than 15 feet from an established building line, and must occupy at least 60% of the frontage of a lot. Building heights of five stories or 55 feet are permitted. Fifth floors must be setback a minimum of 10 feet from the front building wall and apply to all sides of the structure that abut a public street. Building may reach 65 feet in height if the ground floor contains retail, restaurant, or other active commercial spaces. All buildings must have a primary entrance to the building facing the street and detailed, though secondary or rear entrances are permitted so long as there is a primary entry. Site access must be limited to one curb cut to a public street for each 500 feet of street frontage, and service areas must be located to the back of a building or the side of a building.

The TOD regulations also include Development Bonus Standards, which are provided to applicants who meet the objectives pertaining to access management, affordable housing, infill development, public space, and sustainability to further encourage development in a predictable, contextual, design-focused manner within walking distance of the CTfastrak stations and to foster the creation of complete neighborhoods. If applicants satisfy the requirements, the standards can be converted to points which are worth development bonuses in the form of increased FAR, additional buildings coverage, and reductions in parking requirements.

**The zoning across all five parcels of the assemblage supports transit-oriented development.** The TOD test-fit exercise assumes that the parcels in questions would be West Hartford TOD Ordinance (177-43 Transit-Oriented Development)<sup>1</sup>.

---

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

### Test-Fit for TOD Development Potential

For the test-fit exercise, the West Hartford TOD Ordinance was followed. Programmatically, the TOD Test Fit builds off the success of the existing Gastropark businesses and complements them with additional commercial spaces of a similar building type. In addition, mixed-use residential buildings frame a Central Street that culminates in a community square. These buildings range from 5 to 6 stories with the largest building tucked into the back of the assemblage. The test fit revolves around the community green mode as a gathering space and is surrounded by ground floor retail on all sides. Parking is accommodated both in surface lots nearest the commercial node and garages tucked into buildings A, B, and E. The TOD is porous facing Trout Brook to allow for direct access to the brook and associated trail. The building set back are prescribed in the zoning code and maintain a common design language to portray a unified language. Lastly, the TOD is principally designed with Elmwood Station in mind; the perpendicular relationship with the station area acts as a funnel to both direct people to the station from within the TOD and to invite riders into the active and vibrant development.



Figure 2 – An Evening look at Gastropark, located on the site. Its success influenced the commercial approach to parcels 3-5. Source: <https://www.innovationhartford.com/food-entrepreneur-brings-experiential-dining-to-west-hartford/>

Figure 3 shows the TOD test-fit design for the Elmwood Station assemblage. In total, the TOD proposes 9 buildings across the site that adhere to the TOD ordinance’s principles for active ground floors, concentrated density near transit, and includes a new public square and expands access to the Trout Brook Trail. Table 2 provides a summary total of the potential development square footage and required parking for the Elmwood Station TOD. Figure 4 presents the ground floor and aerial plan view of the TOD test fit.

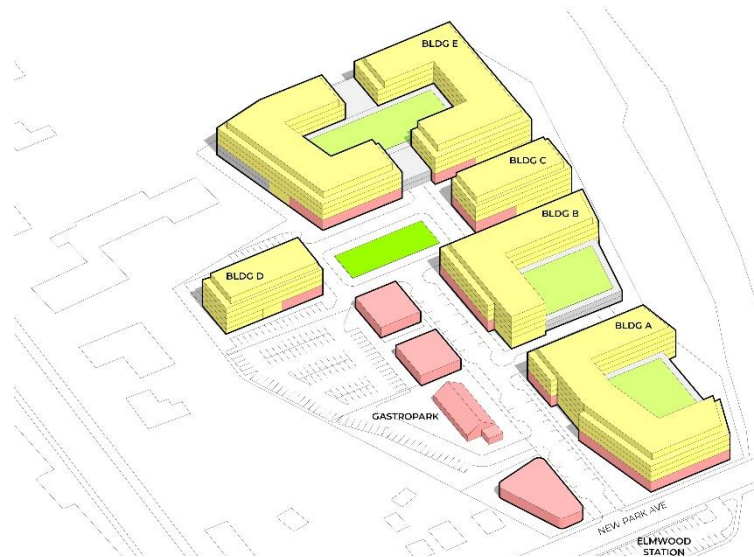


Figure 3 – Elmwood Station TOD Test-Fit Massing

Table 2 - Elmwood Station TOD Development Summary

Use	SF	Units	Parking
Commercial	62,700	N/A	188
Residential	308,135	512	512
<b>Total</b>	<b>312,035</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>700*</b>

\*721 parking spaces are physically able to be accommodated in the test-fit as designed.



Figure 4 – Elmwood Station TOD Test-Fit Ground Floor and Aerial Plans

## Pro Forma Analysis

### West Hartford: Example Building Program

The sample design for West Hartford includes seven buildings, featuring retail and parking on the ground floor with apartments above, plus two dedicated retail buildings. A completed TOD-style development would be something like the following:

Building Program	Building A	Building B	Building C	Building D	Building E	Building F	Building G
Construction Type	4-6 Story Lumber on Podium	4-6 Story Lumber on Podium	4-6 Story Lumber on Podium	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	Apartment or Condo	Retail Store(s)	Retail Store(s)
Primary Gross SF	130,100	103,300	43,200	43,200	222,300	10,000	7,000
Primary Units	123	103	34	34	218	0	0
Secondary Building Use	Retail Store(s)	Retail Store(s)	Retail Store(s)	Retail Store(s)	Retail Store(s)	None	None
Secondary Gross SF	18,000	8,000	4,250	4,250	11,200	0	0
Parking Type 1	Aboveground Garage	Aboveground Garage	None	Surface	Aboveground Garage	Surface	Surface
Parking Spaces Type 1	142	113	0	28	302	111	25
Parking Type 2	None	None	None	None	None	None	None
Parking Spaces Type 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Parcel Acreage	1.51	1.60	0.64	0.64	3.52	0.91	0.34
Assessor's Property Value	\$ 641,900	\$ 815,950	\$ 326,380	\$ 326,380	\$ 1,795,090	\$ 394,600	\$ 247,300
Developer's Return	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%	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 512 residential units and 721 parking spaces, totaling 604,800 total square feet, would cost approximately \$206.8 million to build, as described below:

Example Building Program	Building A	Building B	Building C	Building D	Building E	Building F	Building G	TOTAL
Typical Project Size (Units)	123	103	34	34	218			512
Dwelling Units per Acre	81	64	53	53	62			56
Gross Square Footage	148,100	111,300	47,450	47,450	233,500	10,000	7,000	604,800
Total Parking Spaces	142	113	0	28	302	111	25	721
<b>Building Construction Costs</b>	<b>\$ 51,626,428</b>	<b>\$ 38,197,766</b>	<b>\$ 14,691,464</b>	<b>\$ 14,739,546</b>	<b>\$ 80,855,510</b>	<b>\$ 4,001,663</b>	<b>\$ 2,714,857</b>	<b>\$ 206,827,234</b>
Construction (Hard Costs)	\$ 28,278,000	\$ 20,754,000	\$ 8,923,500	\$ 8,923,500	\$ 43,038,000	\$ 2,200,000	\$ 1,540,000	\$ 113,657,000
Parking (Hard Costs)	\$ 3,550,000	\$ 2,825,000	\$ 0	\$ 42,000	\$ 7,550,000	\$ 166,500	\$ 37,500	\$ 14,171,000
Entitlement, Services, Commissions (Soft Costs)	\$ 8,200,620	\$ 6,018,660	\$ 2,587,815	\$ 2,587,815	\$ 12,481,020	\$ 660,000	\$ 462,000	\$ 32,997,930
Site Preparation (Demo, Grading, Infrastructure)	\$ 2,546,240	\$ 1,886,320	\$ 713,880	\$ 717,240	\$ 4,047,040	\$ 70,995	\$ 47,325	\$ 10,029,040
Operating and Maintenance Costs (10 yrs)	\$ 6,129,317	\$ 4,551,649	\$ 1,634,677	\$ 1,634,677	\$ 9,162,723	\$ 677,658	\$ 474,361	\$ 24,265,062
Developer profit margin	\$ 2,922,251	\$ 2,162,138	\$ 831,592	\$ 834,314	\$ 4,576,727	\$ 226,509	\$ 153,671	\$ 11,707,202

## Example Building Profit & Loss Model

At current market prices, the example building portfolio would cost approximately \$206.8 million to build. A similar building portfolio would sell for approximately \$292.2 million in the current real estate market, as noted below:

Building Program	Building A	Building B	Building C	Building D	Building E	Building F	Building G	TOTAL
Dwelling Units	123	103	34	34	218	0	0	512
Dwelling Units per Acre	81	64	53	53	62	0	0	56
Gross Square Footage	148,100	111,300	47,450	47,450	233,500	10,000	7,000	604,800
Total Parking Spaces	142	113	0	28	302	111	25	721
Building Sale Value	\$ 76,920,748	\$ 54,496,251	\$ 20,245,292	\$ 20,245,292	\$ 107,304,878	\$ 7,640,145	\$ 5,348,102	\$ 292,200,709
Building Cost Total	\$ 51,626,428	\$ 38,197,766	\$ 14,691,464	\$ 14,739,546	\$ 80,855,510	\$ 4,001,663	\$ 2,714,857	\$ 206,827,234
Building Sale Value per Square Foot	\$ 519	\$ 490	\$ 427	\$ 427	\$ 460	\$ 764	\$ 764	\$ 483
Building Cost per Square Foot	\$ 349	\$ 343	\$ 310	\$ 311	\$ 346	\$ 400	\$ 388	\$ 342
Residential Section Sale Value per Unit	\$ 420,191	\$ 420,191	\$ 420,191	\$ 420,191	\$ 420,191	N/A	N/A	\$ 445,559
Residential Section Construction Cost per Unit	\$ 332,977	\$ 316,428	\$ 353,838	\$ 355,172	\$ 327,788	N/A	N/A	\$ 342,673
Retail Section Sale Value per Square Foot	\$ 1,402	\$ 1,402	\$ 1,402	\$ 1,402	\$ 1,402	N/A	N/A	\$ 1,402
Retail Section Cost per Square Foot	\$ 456	\$ 456	\$ 456	\$ 456	\$ 456	N/A	N/A	\$ 456
Residual Value ("Land Value")	\$ 25,294,321	\$ 16,298,485	\$ 5,553,828	\$ 5,505,747	\$ 26,449,368	\$ 3,638,483	\$ 2,633,245	\$ 85,373,476
Residual Land Value per Acre	\$ 16,751,206	\$ 10,186,553	\$ 8,677,857	\$ 8,602,729	\$ 7,514,025	\$ 3,998,332	\$ 7,744,837	\$ 9,320,248
Land Acquisition Cost (Most Recent Valuation)	\$ 641,900	\$ 815,950	\$ 326,380	\$ 326,380	\$ 1,795,090	\$ 394,600	\$ 247,300	\$ 4,547,600
Land Acquisition Cost per Acre	\$ 425,099	\$ 509,969	\$ 509,969	\$ 509,969	\$ 509,969	\$ 433,626	\$ 727,353	\$ 496,463

## Example Building Financial Gap

With an estimated construction cost of \$206.8 million and land acquisition cost of \$4.5 million, compared to estimated sale value of \$292.2 million, WSP estimates a residual value of \$80.8 million (the "land value"). This residual value indicates that a market-rate developer would be willing to negotiate to pay more than the current assessed value of \$4.5 million -- about \$17,000 per unit) to build mixed-use, transit-oriented development in the current market, as displayed below:

Building Program	Building A	Building B	Building C	Building D	Building E	Building F	Building G	TOTAL
Financial Profit (Gap) for Project Total	\$ 24,652,421	\$ 15,482,535	\$ 5,227,448	\$ 5,179,367	\$ 24,654,278	\$ 3,243,883	\$ 2,385,945	\$ 80,825,876
Financial Profit (Gap) per Acre	\$ 16,326,106	\$ 9,676,584	\$ 8,167,888	\$ 8,092,760	\$ 7,004,056	\$ 3,564,706	\$ 7,017,484	\$ 8,823,786
Financial Profit (Gap) per Unit	\$ 132,733	\$ 93,947	\$ 240,232	\$ 238,022	\$ 32,129	N/A	N/A	\$ 17,234
Financial Profit (Gap) per Square Foot	\$ 166	\$ 139	\$ 110	\$ 109	\$ 106	\$ 324	\$ 341	\$ 134

## Roles & Responsibilities

### 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.

### Implementation Recommendations and Gap Analysis:

Although pricing is based on an approximate model, it clearly indicates that market-rate transit-oriented development in West Hartford is financially feasible.

Next steps: Begin discussions with landowners to get approval for greater density.