# TOWN CENTER ZONE
## STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE WALKING

A Report on Ground Floor Uses and Parking Resources in Glastonbury Town Center from the Glastonbury Town Center Initiative.

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Glastonbury Town Center Initiative (GTCI) is a non-partisan group of Glastonbury, Connecticut citizens committed to promoting the business and residential community, the overall economic climate and an enhanced quality of life in Town Center.

Organized in 2002, it has been our mission to promote an identity, built-environment, and urban planning and aesthetic standards that foster a lively, walkable Town Center.

GLASTONBURY Town Center Initiative

# 1. Introduction

Glastonbury Town Center is in the midst of a zoning reconfiguration that will bring the area together under a single regulatory structure. This is a step that the Glastonbury Town Center Initiative fully supports. In order to offer informed opinions on the proposed language, we undertook a modest study of walkability concerns in the town center during the spring and summer of 2013.

Vibrant town centers promote social bonds in a community. Throughout American history, the town center is where we have come to buy and sell, meet people, exchange information, attend events, or simply to see and be seen. When downtowns, indeed our entire infrastructure, were reconfigured to meet the needs of the automobile, it often came with a social cost. Stores relocated from downtown to areas that could provide large parking lots and diverted activity from many main streets. Loss of downtown retail lead to the reuse of main street spaces and store fronts to uses less conducive to public gathering and interaction.

This trend is now in a phase of reversal. In the northeast, town centers are being revitalized, while in the growing south and western states, traditional town centers are being built from scratch in place of the malls that dominated the mid-twentieth century.

Glastonbury Town Center Initiative's (GTCI) mission is to help make to our town center a more vital social space. To this end, we host a number of public events, for children and adults, with the hope that people will come with family and friends to have fun, bump into folks they know, and perhaps make new friends. For an afternoon or evening, the social potential of Glastonbury Town Center becomes apparent.

GTCI also serves its mission by advocating for changes we believe will add life to the center. Over the past five years we have hosted public forums featuring urban planning experts; organized a 'mini-charrette;' published a series of articles in the Citizen, and conducted a study of pedestrian conditions in the town center.

## 1.1. Glastonbury 2020 Vision Plan

The Glastonbury Center 2020 Shared Vision Plan calls the town center "a vital part of Glastonbury's economic and social fabric," further making clear that, "increasing pedestrian comfort and encouraging people to walk to and between destinations is key to enhancing the town center." [1]

With the focus on walkability, the vision plan demonstrates numerous ways in which public streetscapes and private properties in the town center could be enhanced to encourage walkability. In our 2008 study Glastonbury Town Center Initiative focused on the public rights-of-way, in this study we chose to further examine the uses of private property since the new Town Center Zone will primarily effect the development potential of these sites. Two issues that stood out most in the in the report were the market potentials for new development and need to ensure that parking is not the limiting factor that prevents growth in the center.

The vision plan projected potential growth in the retail, housing, and office markets for Glastonbury Town Center between 2010 and 2020.

**Retail:** In the retail category the experts expect that the town center could see up to a 20% increase in demand. For a 20% increase to be seen there would need to be strong market conditions and the center would need to capture a larger

| MARKET POTENTIALS | 2010 – 2015 | | 2015 – 2020 | | TOTAL 2010 – 2020 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Low | High | Low | High | Low | High |
| Retail SF | 88,310 | 160,383 | 49,787 | 61,215 | 138,098 | 221,598 |
| Office SF | 21,000 | 31,000 | 22,000 | 33,000 | 43,000 | 64,000 |
| Residential SF | 16,275 | 174,375 | 32,550 | 306,250 | 48,825 | 480,625 |
| Residential Units | 11 | 116 | 22 | 204 | 33 | 320 |
| **Total** | **125,585** | **365,758** | **104,337** | **400,465** | **229,923** | **766,223** |

*Table 1: Market Potentials - BBP & Associates, LLC 2010*

share of demand from the region.

**Housing:** In the housing category, the experts expect the town center to capture between 7% and 50% of the new dwelling unit construction between 2010 and 2020. It was recommended that most town center residential be in multi-family buildings, as this is a fast growing market in the region (meets needs of smaller households comprised of older residents and young adults).

**Office:** In the office category, the experts expect the market to go in one of two ways - either there could be as much as a 20% decrease in demand for office space or up to a 20% increase in demand. [2]

Understanding that of the three, the market for retail space is most closely tied to walkability, we undertook an initial survey of ground floor uses in the town center as part of this study. Ground floor retail activity attracts pedestrians and vice versa. We look forward to the addition of housing and office space, but advocate that ground floor spaces in the core of the town center be reserved for retail and restaurants.

The Shared Vision Plan goes on to make a critical connection between walkability and parking – "addressing the way in which parking is provided and managed in the Town Center will be key to increasing walkability."[3] The Shared Vision Plan included two primary parking recommendations. First, that "access management techniques should be applied to connect adjacent parking areas and encourage people to 'park and walk.'" Second, that "the Town should consider municipal parking within the town center to accommodate employee parking and reduce parking pressure on commercial sites." [4] Further recommendations included upgrading the landscaping and pedestrian connections throughout the center's parking lots. With this contingency in mind – that walkability *depends* on parking – we collected data for a modest study of parking facilities focusing on whether or not they encourage a 'park once and walk' mentality.

## 1.2. Study Area

Our study area is a subset of the area marked as the Central Core in the 2020 Plan. Its grid of public streets and private drives, density and circumference, comprises the most walkable district in town. This area is roughly bounded by Main Street, Welles Street, New London Turnpike, and Rankin Road. It is approximately ¼ mile in radius -- the distance most planners agree people are willing to park and walk.

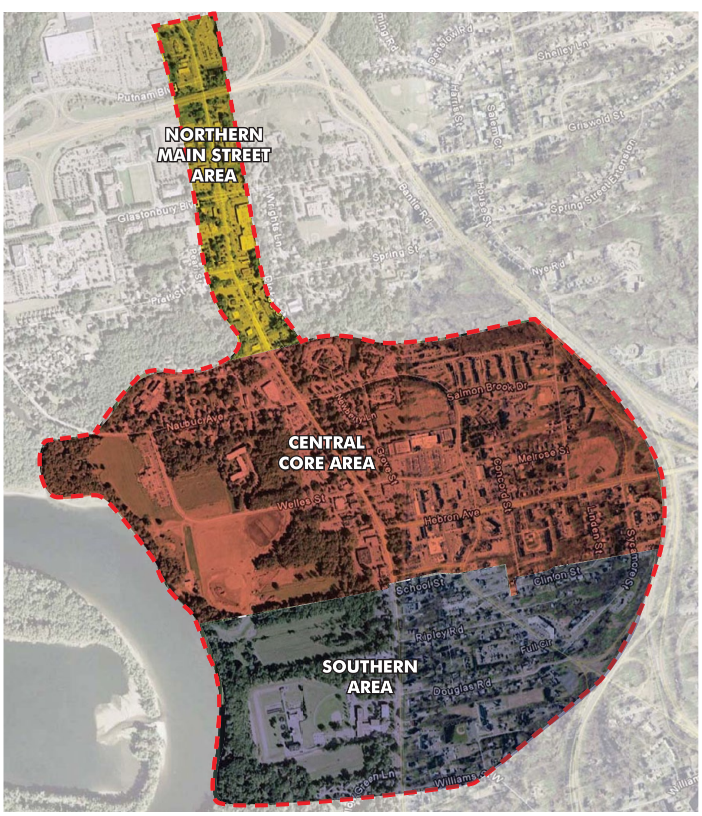


*Figure 1: (above) Study Area*

*Figure 2: (left) Limits of the 2020 Shared Vision Plan - Stantec, BFJ Planning*

# 2. Ground Floor Uses

In the first part of our study, we sought to better understand how ground floor spaces function in Glastonbury Town Center. We focused on ground floors because they generate most of the visible activity and visual interest for pedestrians.

Few people walk in the town center today. This was also evidenced in the 2008 GTCI pedestrian study, where an average 138 pedestrians/hour was observed during the midday rush (visitors to the town center were counted as pedestrians if they utilized the sidewalks). [5] There are a number of reasons why this average is low.

First, few arrive in the town center as pedestrians – 13% of community members and 2% of employees said in our 2008 survey that they usually walk to Glastonbury Town Center. [6] The lack of residential density near the center is a major contributor to these low rates of walking and is being addressed with mixed-use zoning and increased density allowances in the proposed Town Center Zone regulations.

Second, the town center has narrow sidewalks. Currently most sidewalks in the center are 5 ft wide. This the bare minimum set by the CT Department of Transportation. The 5 ft minimum comes from the Americans with Disabilities Act because this is the width required for two wheelchairs to pass each other and for one wheelchair to turn around. The town center sidewalks are functional but are too narrow to provide for social uses. This can be easily remedied in the new regulations.

| Business Category | Count |
|---|---|
| Automotive | 1 |
| Civic | 2 |
| Financial Services | 7 |
| Gym | 3 |
| Liquor Store | 2 |
| Medical | 7 |
| Office | 6 |
| Personal Services | 17 |
| Real Estate | 5 |
| Restaurant | 20 |
| Retail | 24 |
| Take-Out Food | 8 |
| **TOTAL** | **102** |

*Table 2: Businesses by category - GTCI 2013*

Third and most importantly, precedents around the region demonstrate a correlation between the amount of retail and the amount of pedestrian activity. Without the continuous appeal of shop windows, it seems easier to drive from one store to another, even when they are almost next door. We note the levels of activity in more robust centers, such as Middletown and West Hartford, as useful comparisons. While it's true they are bigger towns, we want to keep in mind that Glastonbury Town Center is undergoing significant growth and will continue to grow. Projections for 2010-20 range from 230,000 to 760,000 square feet of new retail, office and residential development. [7]

## 2.1. Methods and Data

During the winter and spring of 2013 we collected data on the (102) storefronts in the study area, surveying business categories, access, and hours - key attributes that we believe contribute to a lively and walkable town center.

While the data is essentially correct, we welcome improvements and corrections. All data is publicly available online in a Google spreadsheet and maps, which can be filtered to show the data in multiple views. This report can also be found on the GTCI website. A link to the dataset is available at the end of the report.

## 2.2. Business Categories & Access

Among the (102) businesses we counted, we found about one third (35) to be devoted to financial, medical, personal and professional services. As invaluable as these services are, they do not contribute to the vitality of the center as strongly as unique retail. Visitors who come to town on appointment are more likely conduct their business and leave. Retail businesses generate more activity on the street as well as potential customers for other businesses. Furthermore, retailers, especially small locally owned retailers, typically have more personalized storefronts that add to the vitality of a district.

National research corroborates that the relationship between retail and walkability is a two way street. In a study of suburban retail centers in southern California, researchers at the University of California Transportation Center found that "the number of businesses per acre is the single most robust indicator of whether people are likely to walk in their neighborhood." [8] To determine if there is in fact causality between retail density and walking rates, the team narrowed their study to a single 1 mile long corridor with a denser core and strip mall edges. They found that those living within ¼ mile of the midpoint "took five times as many daily walking trips and 30 percent fewer driving trips than others in the corridor." [9] In turn, the study also found that retail sales in the centers with the highest rates of local walking were three to four times what the local population could support, suggesting that they were attracting many customers from outside a walkable radius. The density of businesses supports local walking, and also attracts those who come from farther afield for the convenience of one-stop walkable shopping.

Recognizing this dynamic, some towns limit the use of ground floors in central business districts to retail, and transition professional offices upstairs or to the periphery of the district. West Hartford and Middletown are two local examples. Middletown includes this restriction in its code for the Central Business District. "The front fifty percent (50%) of the ground floor space of buildings fronting on Main Street shall be restricted to the following permitted uses: Eating and Drinking Places, Entertainment, Restaurants, Retail Business, Retail Sales, Retail Services, and Theaters." [10]

**In Middletown, the front 50% of ground floor spaces fronting Main Street are restricted to retail, dining, and entertainment uses**

The primary reason for shifting offices and services to the upper floors is that it reserves prime ground floor space for businesses that rely on direct access to the public. In our study, we categorized each establishment based on how people access the business – either 'by-appointment' or as a 'walk-in' customer.

> Establishments that operate **'by-appointment'** are those that you must make an appointment or have membership in order to conduct business there, i.e. banks, offices/medical offices, and some salons.
>
> Retail is the quintessential **'walk-in'** business but there are of course many others, i.e. restaurants, civic buildings, laundromats, etc.

We found that two thirds (68) of the ground floor businesses welcomed the public to walk in. The other ground floor businesses, approximately one third

| Business Category | By-Appointment Count | Walk-In Count |
|---|---|---|
| Automotive | - | 1 |
| Civic | - | 2 |
| Financial Services | 7 | - |
| Gym | 3 | - |
| Liquor Store | - | 2 |
| **Medical** | **7** | - |
| **Office** | **6** | - |
| Personal Services | 5 | 12 |
| **Real Estate** | **5** | - |
| Restaurant | 1 | 19 |
| Retail | - | 24 |
| Take-Out Food | - | 8 |
| **TOTAL** | **34** | **68** |

*Table 3: Businesses by category & access - GTCI 2013*

(34), require appointments or membership. The three highlighted business types in Table 3 are those that we believe could benefit most from moving to upper floors or to the periphery of the core zone – Medical, Office, and Real Estate.

Upper floor or peripheral locations could offer these businesses additional privacy and lower rents. In total there are 18 businesses in these categories currently operating from ground floor spaces in the study area. Glastonbury Town Center has few vacancies in any of the upper floor and ground floor spaces. However, as the economy improves and new development occurs, we think it is important that the town put in place incentives or mandates that encourage a greater density of walk-in businesses on the ground floors of town center buildings.

## 2.3. Hours

The hours during which the ground floor businesses are open are a second important indication of the level of vibrancy in the town center. Social activity in the United States generally occurs during the evening and on weekends. Businesses that operate during these hours can capture leisure and social shoppers and by attracting groups gathering for social purposes they help to establish the character of the center as an exciting place to be.

In our study, we found a strong correlation between


Figure 3: Map of businesses by access - GTCI 2013

the type of access a business provides and the hours they keep. Establishments that operate by-appointment generally keep normal business hours – Monday to Friday 9:00am - 5:00pm. In keeping with this expectation, we found that 65% of by-appointment businesses in the center maintained business hours only. By comparison, 93% of walk-in businesses keep extended evening/weekend hours.

Because expanded business hours bring people to the center at more times of the day and week, walk-in businesses contribute more to the visible liveliness of the center. This does not mean that a walk-in business necessarily brings more people than an equivalent by-appointment establishment. It simply means that their longer hours number add to the number of lights in the windows, cars in the parking lots, and most importantly the number of people on the sidewalks.

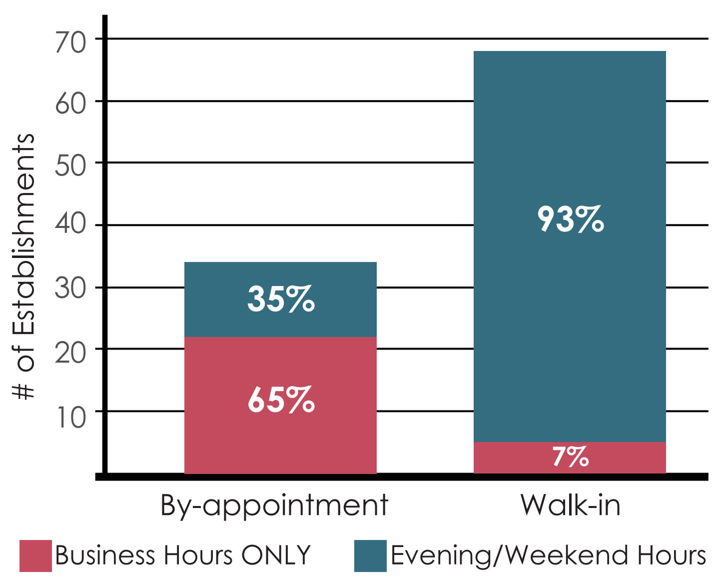


Figure 4: Map of businesses by access - GTCI 2013

Public and personal safety is also increased. A busy street is apt to be a safe street. The perception of safety along a bustling, people-filled street creates a more appealing pedestrian atmosphere, which in turn invites more activity. In contrast, a deserted street is perceived to be an unsafe street, one to be avoided.

## 2.4. Facades

While we did not analyze store facades, we were struck by a few dead zones consisting of semi-blank walls. The white brick facade on the south side of Welles St, when walking east from Main St, and the residential-style professional buildings at New London Tpke and Hebron Ave, stand out as examples. Middletown regulates facades for new construction to maximize interest for pedestrians. "No new building shall be erected, or constructed along Main Street, *except* where the amount of area taken up by windows and doors shall be greater than 60% of the first floor facade area." [11]


*Figure 5: This blank facade along Welles Street is off-putting to pedestrians*


*Figure 6: The facades of these Main St. shops are mostly glass; passersby can see through their displays to the interior*

Active facades also need to be maintained after they are built. We have already mentioned that walk-in business adds to the life of the street; however, if the blinds are always drawn or the windows are filled with static displays, their impact is significantly diminished. In contrast, a "by-appointment" space like an office lobby or salon adds considerably to the vibrancy of the town center as long as it has open windows with visible activity.

Just as important as being able to see into a store, is the ability to see the storefront from the street. Sweet Frog, Mathnasium, Scissor Kids, and other stores on the private drive west of 63 Hebron Avenue, are largely hidden from the view of drivers and pedestrians on Main St. The municipal parking lot opens toward the building but the view is blocked by the lower branches of mature trees at the back of the lot. Consideration should be given to "limbing up" the trees (removing lower branches) to increase visibility for these stores.

## 2.5. Further discussion

Glastonbury's current and proposed zoning for the town center do not limit the uses of ground floors. We firmly believe that the central core of the town center will become a continuous retail environment whether through coordinated action or market forces. We hope that the Town will support this growth by encouraging 'walk-in' establishments on the ground floor and by helping the town center to develop appropriate upper-level and peripheral spaces for 'by-appointment' businesses.

Beyond zoning changes, GTCI urges the Town as well as business and land owners in the town center to discuss the formation of a Downtown Business District as a way to engage these topics. A BID would have the added value of creating a stronger sense of shared purpose among property and business owners that zoning changes alone could not bring about. Middletown and West Hartford are actively shaped by state sanctioned Special Services Districts, aka Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), in which business owners act collectively to improve their centers. Both towns limit ground floors to retail and restaurant with regulations. Middletown's decision to form a BID in 2001 was instrumental in its transformation into the bustling place it is today.

# 3. Parking

The 2020 Shared Vision Plan pinpoints parking management as an essential step to improving the walkability of Glastonbury town center. We believe that Glastonbury Town Center has the potential to become a district where visitors park once and walk to many destinations. Our 2008 study revealed that rates of walking are very low, and that people almost always drive between destinations during each visit to the center. Driving between businesses adds to traffic congestion and to overall parking demand. In this initial study of parking in the town center we found that there is an abundance of off-street parking but that the pervasiveness of "customer only" parking signs throughout the study area limits the efficiency of our parking resources.

**Driving between businesses adds to traffic congestion and to overall parking demand**

## 3.1. Methods and Data

Building upon our ground floor retail data, we assessed whether each store had adjacent on-street, off-street, and reserved parking (yes or no in each category). A yes in the reserved parking category means that there are "reserved for customers of __" signs associated either with the particular ground floor business or for the larger complex.

## 3.2. On-Street Parking

Glastonbury Town Center has only a limited volume of on-street parking. Main Street is the only street with on-street parking and there are a total of 62 spaces within the Central Core. While not insignificant, it represents a very small percentage of the total volume. Approximately 1 in 5 town center storefronts are adjacent to on-street parking (13 walk-in and 6 by-appointment establishments).

On-street parking is widely known to benefit walk-in businesses because it is both highly visible and convenient for customers. As a result, on-street parking also typically has high rates of turnover. Furthermore on-street parking provides a buffer between pedestrians and moving vehicles making the sidewalk safer.

On-street parking is also publicly owned and is therefore available to all users, no matter their destination. Responses to our 2008 survey suggest that

*Figure 7: Public On-Street Parking on Main Street*

some employees of town center establishments also park in the on-street parking spaces. When we asked employees how far they walked from their car to their place of work, 42% of respondents said they walk 30 ft or less, suggesting that they are choosing the closest spaces to their workplace, which are also the prime short-term spaces for customers. [12] On Main Street these are the on-street parking spaces and any such long term uses of these spaces should be discouraged.

## 3.3. Off-Street Parking

Every building in the town center has off-street parking. The volume of parking provided on each property is dictated by the zoning code in place at the time of development. Glastonbury's current off-street parking standards are summarized in the table on the following page. The most important standards for the town center are those for retail, restaurants, offices, and medical offices. Retail and medical offices both require 1 parking space per 150 sq ft of gross floor area. General offices require a little less parking – 1 per 200 sq ft. Restaurants typically need more parking than other uses, and the current parking requirement is based on seating. One space is required for every 3 seats of table service and every 2 seats of counter service. [13]

As the town center grows and evolves, it is important that the center continues to offer adequate off-street parking but also that there is flexibility. The new Town Center Zone regulations call for increased density and a more vibrant mix of uses, but maintain current parking requirements. Parking could very well become the limiting factor in the center's future development

| Permitted Use | # Parking Spaces Required |
|---|---|
| Home Occupations | 1 per employee + 2 additional + dwelling requirements |
| Dwellings | 1 per dwelling unit |
| Assisted Living | 1 per every 2 beds |
| Hotel | 1 per room + requirements for restaurants or assembly spaces |
| Office, general | 1 per 200 sq ft |
| Office, medical | 1 per 150 sq ft |
| Hospital | 1 per bed |
| Day Care | 1 per 300 sq ft |
| School, Elementary | 2 per classroom + 1 per every 3 seats in a public assembly space |
| School, Middle | 3 per classroom + 1 per every 3 seats in a public assembly space |
| School, Secondary | 6 per classroom + 1 per every 3 seats in a public assembly space |
| University | 10 per classroom + 1 per every 3 seats in a public assembly space |
| Auto repair services | 5 + 2 per service stall + 2 per gas pump + 1 per 150 sq ft of retail space |
| Ambulance Service or Car Wash | 1 per service stall |
| Clubs, athletic clubs | 1 per 100 sq ft |
| Place of worship | 1 per every 4 seats |
| Retail trade | 1 per 150 sq ft |
| Retail, eating and drinking | 1 per every 3 seats of table seating + 1 per every 2 seats of counter service |
| Wholesale/Warehousing | 1 per 2500 sq ft of storage + 1 per 250 sq ft of office |
| Billiards, Golf, Archery, Bowling, etc. | 2 per unit of activity |
| Library, museum | 1 per 600 sq ft |
| Auditorium | 1 per every 3 seats |
| Agriculture & Miscellaneous | TPZ or Zoning Board of Appeals shall determine |

*Table 4: Summary of Off-Street Parking Standards - Glastonbury Building Zone Regulations §9.11 (2013)*

because there is a finite amount of space for additional parking on each property. Creative parking solutions must be developed in order to meet increased demand within the town center. GTCI has begun researching strategies to increase the center's parking flexibility, several of which are discussed below.

## 3.4. Reserved Parking

"Customer only" parking signs limit the flexibility of the parking supply in Glastonbury Town Center. They underscore the private ownership of each parking space, reminding drivers that their use of a space is tied to patronage of that property. While the "customer only parking" sign is understandable from a liability perspective, it is problematic for the health of the center as a whole because these signs typically end with the phrase "violators will be towed." The contentious tone that these signs convey makes new visitors to the center wary of where they park and make feuds between neighbors visible to the public. GTCI understands that parking shortages are a concern for many local businesses but we are confident that a more customer-friendly and neighborly solution can be found.


*Figure 8: Reserved Parking Sign in Glastonbury Town Center - GTCI 2013*

| Type of Establishment | Total | With Reserved Parking Signs | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | # | # | % |
| **By-appointment** | **34** | **9** | **26%** |
| Financial services | 7 | 2 | 29% |
| Gym | 3 | 0 | 0% |
| Medical | 7 | 3 | 43% |
| Office | 6 | 1 | 17% |
| Personal services | 5 | 2 | 40% |
| Real estate | 5 | 1 | 20% |
| Restaurant | 1 | 0 | 0% |
| **Walk-in** | **68** | **31** | **46%** |
| Automotive | 1 | 0 | 0% |
| Civic | 2 | 0 | 0% |
| Liquor store | 2 | 1 | 50% |
| Personal services | 12 | 5 | 42% |
| Restaurant | 19 | 13 | 68% |
| Retail | 24 | 7 | 29% |
| Take-out food | 8 | 5 | 63% |
| **Grand Total** | **102** | **40** | **39%** |

*Table 5: Reserved Parking Signs by Business Category & Access Type - GTCI 2013*

Reserved parking signs are located throughout the study area. We found that 39% of ground floor businesses have reserved parking signs. More than three times as many walk-in businesses have "customer only parking" signs as by-appointment establishments. This is likely because they are concerned about creating high turnover in parking spaces that are most convenient for their customers. By-appointment businesses have steadier rates of turnover and do not need to attract business from off the street like their neighbors.

Food service businesses have the highest rate of reserved parking sign use. Approximately two thirds of restaurants (68%) and take-out food establishments (63%) have "customer only parking signs." Food service businesses have a bigger fluctuation between their high and low parking demand periods than other establishments. Lunch and dinner rush in Glastonbury Town Center are the times when parking is tightest and traffic congestion is at its highest. Shared parking would spread parking demand further afield because restaurant patrons could then use office parking lots; furthermore, shared parking could significantly reduce traffic congestion as available parking would be easier to locate.

## 3.5. Flexible Parking Strategies

21st century parking needs will be dramatically different from those of the 20th century. Mary Smith, Senior Vice President of Walker Parking Consultants, discussed on-going trends in a recent Parking Today article, stating that "Parking spaces needed per unit for residential will go down, and development will be increasingly mixed-use and transit-oriented. That means more shared parking, which often results in a 20% or more reduction in parking spaces." [14] What this suggests for Glastonbury Town Center is that instituting a shared parking scheme would be approximately the equivalent of adding 20% more spaces.

**Instituting shared parking would be approximately the equivalent of adding 20% more spaces**

Shared parking schemes can take numerous forms. A 2006 EPA report entitled *Parking Spaces / Community Places* outlines numerous approaches to the dual problems of meeting parking demand while also reducing oversupply. These include setting context specific standards, setting maximum limits and creating transferable parking entitlements, developing shared parking or centralized parking facilities/management, and putting in-lieu parking fees in place.

Shared Parking, writes the EPA, is "based on the simple idea that different destinations attract customers, workers, and visitors during different times of day." [15] Shared parking offers numerous benefits including lower development costs, lower maintenance costs, and the "captive markets" that mixed use development provides for restaurants and retailers. It also allows for more efficient use of a parking lot or garage and centralized access points. An important benefit of this is that "a sidewalk with fewer driveway interruptions and more shop fronts is more comfortable and interesting for pedestrians and will encourage walking. Reducing driveways also results in more efficient traffic flow because there are fewer turning opportunities on main thoroughfares." [16]


*Figure 9: Off-Street Parking Availability in Glastonbury Town Center - GTCI 2013*

**Shared parking** requires shared lease agreements between all parties concerned whether between two adjacent land owners or an entire district. Estimating the overlap between different uses can be challenging. The Urban Land Institute report *Shared Parking* (2005) offers the industry standard analytic methodology for determining shared parking volumes.

**Centralized parking structures and/or management** are considered "a subset of shared parking." Whether operated by a public authority or a public/private partnership centralizing parking offers numerous benefits. The primary benefit of a centralized parking facility is that it "enables travelers to park once to visit several destinations, potentially reducing on-street congestion from short trips within an area." [17] One centralized facility may not be enough, depending on the size of the area. The EPA writes that "concerns can be addressed in part by building several 'centralized' facilities throughout a business district or mixed-use area. Centralized management can still ensure coordinated policies for their use, maintaining many of the advantages of centralized parking." [18]

**Parking Benefit Districts** are one form of management that utilizes paid parking strategies. Shared parking and centralized parking management can be operated with or without user fees. However, parking fees, even very small fees, play a management role. The EPA writes that "pricing strategies bring substantial environmental and congestion benefits, particularly since they tend to reduce peak-period vehicle trips the most." [19] A parking benefit district is a designated area in which parking fees are both collected and utilized. Any revenue beyond management costs are then funneled into neighborhood improvements such as "undergrounding of utility wires, regular street and sidewalk cleaning, installation of benches, nice lighting, or other amenities." [20]

## 3.6. Further Discussion

Glastonbury Town Center Initiative believes that there needs to be a broader discussion of parking strategies in the town center, particularly to ensure that the center's existing resources are utilized to the fullest extent possible. We look forward to meeting with town staff as they study parking in the area.

One topic for early consideration should be the public parking facilities. Many of Glastonbury's residents are unaware of the two town-owned parking facilities in town center. Increasing public knowledge of existing public parking amenities could be improved through the following: 1. Well- sited placement of "Public Parking" Signs at all such locations; 2. Posting easily located public parking information on the town website; and; 3. Depicting public parking locations on town maps.


*Figure 10: Setting time limits at high demand parking space close to retail is a preferable strategy compared to "customer only" parking because it encourages turnover rather than preventing use.*

*Figure 11: Automated parking meters, like the pay-by-space parking meters utilized in Waltham, MA shown above, have minimal visual impact, allow for graduated pricing rates, and accept credit cards.*

# 4. Recommendations

Based on this modest study of walkability concerns in Glastonbury Center, the Glastonbury Town Center Initiative offers the following recommendations as next steps, proceeding after the adoption of the proposed Town Center Zone regulations.

We are confident that the proposed language developed by the Planning and Zoning Commission and Town Staff will be a positive step for the town and we look forward to seeing what results it brings. One of the greatest benefits of the new text is that it provides more flexibility for residential projects close to the town center. However, it has been noted that the properties in the commercial core might benefit from slightly different requirements.

- It is with this understanding, that we first recommend that, after the Town Center Zone goes into effect, the Planning and Zoning Commission take up the idea of an overlay district.

- Secondly, we recommend that Town Staff and the Planning and Zoning Commission consider developing Design Guidelines for at least the overlay district if not the full zone.

- Finally, we recommend that the Town consider adopting a Complete Streets Policy.

Glastonbury Town Center is already very successful and we hope that through coordinated place-making strategies, like these recommendations, the center will continue its growth as a lively destination and gathering place for our community.

## 4.1. Create a Town Center Core Overlay District

An overlay zone is a zoning district applied over one or more existing zoning districts. It complies with the requirements of the underlying zone, while establishing additional standards and criteria for properties in the overlay district. Communities use overlay zones to protect features of the natural or built environment, or to enhance specific types of development.

The proposed Town Center Zone includes a number of neighborhoods or districts, which we think of as our town center. Among these distinct areas, only the commercial core, roughly bounded by Main St, Rankin Rd, New London Tpke, and Welles St, has sufficient density of streets and businesses to function as a walkable village district. An overlay district would provide a way to enhance this potential.

A Town Center Core overlay district might include a regulation requiring wider sidewalks to allow people to walk side by side. Facades might also be regulated differently to create the kinds of visual interest that encourage shoppers to walk from store to store.

The following table compares the proposed Town Center Zone requirements for lot size, set backs, maximum building height, size, and lot coverage, with those in comparable town centers. Glastonbury's minimum lot size of 40,000 sq ft stands out at double the minimum in Portland and Guilford, and eight times the 5000 sq ft minimum in Simsbury and Hamden. An overlay zone would create an opportunity to fine tune these parameters in the Town Center Core, while they continue to apply in the larger Town Center Zone.

**1. GUILFORD, Connecticut**
*Guilford Post Road Village 2 Zone District (PV2)*

> The PV2 District is a commercial zoning district designed to permit a variety of small- and medium-scale commercial uses. The district should establish a sense of entry into Guilford and promote buildings with high architectural standards, with consistent signage, landscaping, and design. It is intended to be an attractive, coherent environment that blends permitted uses.

**2. HAMDEN, Connecticut**
*Hamden Controlled Development District 41*

> The purpose of the Controlled Development District 4 (CDD-4) is to encourage a more viable Town Center by providing for a mixture of public and private uses stressing pedestrian circulation, public transportation and other public amenities. It is in the Town's best interest to create a vital center within which a variety of uses such as offices, retail, residential, services and governmental facilities would be permitted, subject to specific standards and strict controls so that the intensity and design of individual projects will be suitable for the District. The District has been divided into two areas for the purpose of promoting appropriate development while protecting abutting residential neighborhoods.

**3. PORTLAND, Connecticut**
*Portland Town Center Village District*

> It is the purpose of this zone to ensure that the unique character of this district is maintained for future generations in accordance with

# ZONING REGULATION SUMMARY
## FOR SELECTED TOWNS IN CONNECTICUT

| | GUILFORD | HAMDEN | PORTLAND | SIMSBURY | TORRINGTON | GLASTONBURY *Proposed* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **ZONE** | Post Road Village District (PV2) | Controlled Development District 4 (CDD-4) | Town Center Village District | Simsbury Center-3 (SC-3) | Local Business (LB) | Town Center Zone |
| **LOT SIZE:** | | | | | | |
| **Area (Min)** | 20,000 sf. | 5,000 sf. | 20,000 sf. | 5,000 sf. | 10,000 sf. | 40,000 sf. |
| **Width (Min)** | 100 ft. | 50 ft. | 100 ft. | 50 ft. | 80 ft. | None |
| **BUILDING SET BACKS:** | | | | | | |
| **Front Yard Setback** | 30 ft. | None with Commission Approval | P&Z shall determine. | Varies-See Regulating Plan | 10 ft. | 20 ft. |
| **Side Yard Setback** | 12 ft. | None with Commission Approval | N/A | 10 ft. | 25 ft. only if adjacent to a residential zone | 8 ft. |
| **Rear Yard Setback** | 12 ft. | None with Commission Approval | N/A | See Regulating Plan | 25 ft. only if adjacent to a residential zone | 20 ft. |
| **MAXIMUM HEIGHT:** | | | | | | |
| **Max. Height** | 40 ft. | 40 ft. in Area A 60 ft. in Area B | Varies | Varies-See Regulating Plan | 50 ft. | 38 ft. |
| **MAXIMUM BUILDING SIZE:** | | | | | | |
| **Max Lot Coverage** | 25% | 30% | N/A | See Regulating Plan | | 50% |

*Figure 12: Table of Zoning Requirements from different towns - compared to the Town Center Zone in Glastonbury*

Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-2j Village Districts. The provisions of this zone are intended to preserve and enhance the character of the Town Center Village District by encouraging the preservation of sites and buildings of unique historical and architectural value and assuring that new structures and uses will be in keeping with the established character of the area.

**4. SIMSBURY, Connecticut**
*Simsbury Center-3 (SC-3)*

The SC-3 Frontage is intended to accommodate a mix of uses, which may provide ground floor offices and retail with upper story residential or office uses. The frontage allows more intense development than SC-1. The character and style of the buildings may be more contemporary than existing buildings along the street.

**5. TORRINGTON, Connecticut**
*Torrington Local Business District (LB)*

The Downtown District zoning accommodates a mix of uses, including offices, retail, residential, services, governmental facilities and worshiping facilities.

We include two maps as visualizations of possible Town Center Core overlay zones. The first is tightly bound to the streets mentioned above. Its extent is roughly defined by a quarter mile radius, the distance planners have determined people are willing to walk in a park-and-walk district. The second map expands these boundaries to include adjacent travel corridors.

*Special Services Districts*
We would like to introduce the special services district concept. Special services districts are a subset of overlay districts, more specifically they are a form

*Figure 13: Proposed Overlay District #1 - Contiguous District*

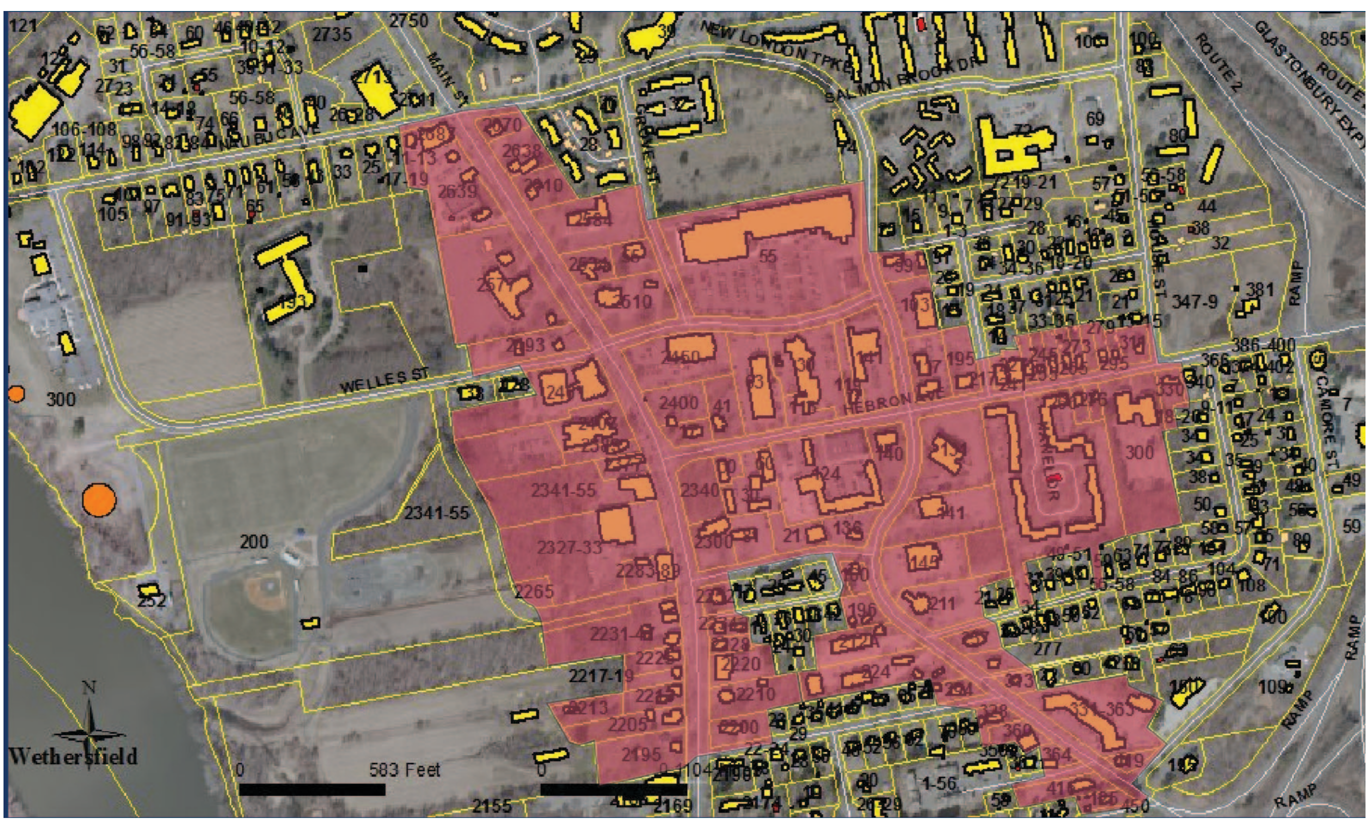

*Figure 14: Proposed Overlay District #2 - Commercial Corridors*

of public/private partnership in which the member business or property owners (those within the district boundaries) agree to pay a self-imposed tax or fee to cover centralized services and physical improvements to the district.

There are a few models of the special services district. The Business Improvement District (BID) is the most common model – in which businesses are the contributing members. There is also the Community Benefit District (CBD) model in which property owners are the contributors.

Understanding that this is an idea that would need to be agreed upon by all participants, it is a longer term discussion than the current zoning and possible overlay district. We find that there are some attractive aspects of the concept, notably that these districts have the ability to coordinate parking and maintenance of public spaces within the district. In addition to the physical improvements that a Special Services District could bring, it could also establish a forum for shared "soft services." District marketing campaigns, small business web presence, events at the Fountain Green, and promotions could all be coordinated by the Special Services District.

## 4.2. Develop Design Guidelines

Applying a specific set of design standards for a limited, designated area would enhance the creation of a more densely developed, pedestrian friendly downtown within the overall proposed Town Center Zone. This common use of an overlay zone is intended to provide flexibility for development and change while following planning and zoning regulations. The goal is to produce guidelines that promote creativity and quality design while encouraging a cooperative working relationship among developers, residents and the town. This design guideline overlay is practiced by our neighbor to the south in Portland, CT.

Portland commissioned the development of the Portland Village District Design Guidelines, which were subsequently adapted August 4, 2008 and can be found on the Town of Portland's web site. Overall sections include Review Process, Design Objectives, Design Principles, Site Planning, Signage, Site Elements and Architectural Elements.

Within each broad category above, individual elements are discussed in greater depth. For example, the Site Elements section include detailed design guidelines for parking areas, sidewalks and roadways, fences and walls, lighting, landscaping, utility structures, accessory structures, plazas and site furniture.

Recommendations are given within each section that provide flexibility in solving design and development issues. For example, in the Design Principles section, it is recommended that where setbacks differ significantly, or adjacent buildings are dissimilar in size, the rhythm, and size of buildings in the overall street should be considered in the proposed street development.

Portland Site Planning specifically consider the pedestrian first and the vehicle second, as should Glastonbury. Mixed-use development is encouraged because of its tendency to increase pedestrian activity and economic vitality.

## 4.3. Adopt Connecticut's Complete Streets Law

In conjunction with this evaluation of the Town Center Zone regulations, we advocate that Glastonbury implement as many elements of the Complete Street Law as feasible when redevelopment occurs in the town center. Enacted July 1, 2009, Connecticut became the 10th state to adopt the Complete Streets Law, which mandates that "accommodations for all users shall be a routine part of the planning, design, construction and operating activities" of all state highways.[21] A minimum of one percent of transportation funding in any fiscal year is dedicated to construction of complete streets elements.

The complete streets approach look at the street as the space from building edge to building edge, and seeks to enhance the experience for every user (pedestrian, cyclist, driver, and transit rider). Adopting a Complete Streets policy is in line with the walkable development pattern that Glastonbury is seeking to enhance in the town center. We advocate for the Town to adopt a similar policy for town roads, with an early emphasis on roads in the town center.

Elements of complete streets designs include bikeways, contrasting crosswalks with appropriate curb cuts, bulb-outs and ramps, pedestrian-scaled site amenities, street trees and plantings, rain gardens and green infrastructure to absorb stormwater, dedicated bus lanes, and road diets - narrowing of travel lanes on roadways in order to accommodate facilities for other users.

Adopting a Complete Streets policy means committing to use street design and construction to:

1. Promote community and economic development – reconfigure roadways to provide well managed access to private property along with transportation options for customers and employees

2. Enhance livability by providing safe pedestrian and bicycle connectivity in aesthetically pleasing street environments with landscaping, lighting, quality building materials, street furniture, and maintenance

3. Building context-sensitive streets that are designed to maintain a sense of place and to respect the community's distinctive character as well as its cultural and historical content, including its native plants

4. Reducing traffic incidents by limiting vehicular speeds in appropriate locations through traffic calming and access management.

Communities throughout the state are already implementing Complete Streets in their municipal policies and individual project often by creating steering committees to engage the community, establishing policy, and developing street design manuals. Examples include the New Haven Complete Streets Legislation and Design Manual, the South Windsor Walk and Wheel Ways Master Plan, and the CT DOT Road Diet Plan for Burnside Avenue in East Hartford. [22]

**One of the most important steps in implementing Complete Streets is to establish zoning regulations and design guidelines that will create human-scaled streets.**

One of the most important steps in implementing Complete Streets is to establish zoning regulations and design guidelines that will create human-scaled streets. This is the most important role that the Town Center Zone regulations can play. Forcing parking behind the building rather than in front, encouraging developers to collectively manage the amount of parking and the number of access points, and creating smaller lots with higher building densities are essential steps to transform a street from an auto-dominated throughway into a community-space that includes drivers and their vehicles.


*Figure 15: Complete Street Design, Hamburg, NY - Dan Burden, Walkable & Livable Communities Institute, 2009*

# 5. Endnotes


1. BFJ Planning, Stantec, BBP & Associates. "Glastonbury Center 2020 Shared Vision Plan." (2011), 17.

2. Ibid, 23.

3. Ibid, 55.

4. Ibid, 37.

5. Glastonbury Town Center Initiative and David Brewer Cox Architects. "Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Mass Transit Study." (2008).

6. Ibid.

7. BFJ Planning, Stantec, BBP & Associates, 24.

8. Boarnet, M, et. al. "Retrofitting the Suburbs to Increase Walking" in *Access* v.39. (2011), 6. http://www.uctc.net/access/39/access39.pdf

9. Ibid, 6.

10. City of Middletown, CT. Planning and Zoning Code §32, 32.05 - New Construction Requirements. http://www.middletownplanning.com/zoningcode/pzcode32.html

11. Ibid.

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13. Town of Glastonbury, CT. Building Zone Regulations §9.11 Off-street Parking Standards. (2013), 131. http://www.glasct.org/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=8145

14. Smith, Mary. "The Future of Parking." (2013) http://www.parkingtoday.com/articledetails.php?id=1462

15. U.S. EPA. "Parking Spaces/Community Places." (2006), 18. http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/pdf/EPAParkingSpaces06.pdf

16. Ibid, 18.

17. Ibid, 20.

18. Ibid, 20

19. Ibid, 29.

20. Ibid, 33.

21. State of Connecticut Public Act No. 09-154. (2009).

22. Tri-State Transportation Campaign. "CT Complete Streets - State and Local Initiatives as of September 2012." (2012) http://tstc.org/reports/ctcsbx/local_cs_policies_CT.pdf

23. Connecticut Main Street Center. Presentation: Municipal Special Services Districts. (2011). http://ctmainstreet.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Town-Green-SSD-presentation.pdf

24. Ibid.


**LINK TO DATA & MAPS**

https://www.google.com/fusiontables/DataSource?docid=1C1X3b5czBm-CCNTCisrAZtvOo3ql4xs7ANL6EYM