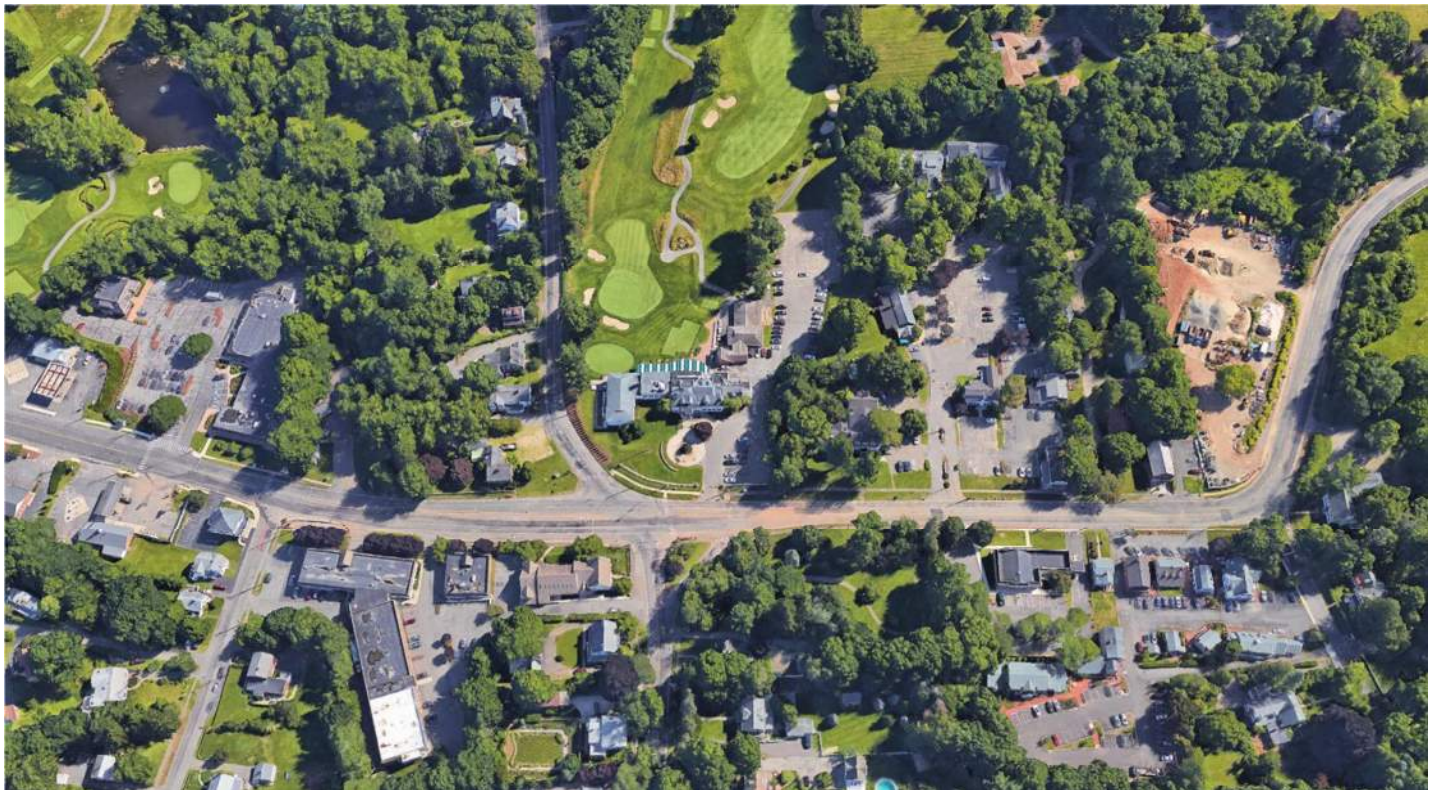


FINAL Master Plan Report

FOR THE FARMINGTON CENTER STUDY PROJECT

January 19, 2017



Employee owned. Client driven.



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INTRODUCTION

For decades, the Town of Farmington has been grappling with how best to balance the negative influence of commuter and through-traffic on CT Route 4 in the historic Farmington Center with the positive attributes of accessibility, visual interest and economic development. Because Route 4 is a State of CT highway, the Town does not have direct jurisdiction. It has taken years for the State Department of Transportation to develop and finalize an improvement plan, with improved traffic flow and safety and access benefits being the desired goal of their project.

Over the decades, as both the town and traffic have grown, the Center's human-scale and historic assets (many literally sitting at the back of the curb) have become masked by extremely high traffic counts. Alternative modes of mobility, mainly walking and bicycling, are a challenge at best. Some of Farmington Center's best assets—lovely period homes, the Historic District, and the Town Green go completely unrecognized. With the road improvements comes an opportunity to dramatically change and improve what is a significant gateway to Farmington.

Though a certain level of traffic is needed to attract private investment, the Town and its residents are intent on capturing market demand in a format and appearance that will reflect the true image of Farmington. While compatible economic development is a goal, it is by no means the only goal. In fact, a strategic approach to attracting business, providing pedestrian and bicycle linkages, improving the aesthetic appearance of the gateway, and protecting historic/cultural assets was born out of a three-day workshop in March 2015. It is during this workshop that hundreds of participants shared their ideas and vision of how to redefine this gateway.

The Town of Farmington retained the services of BL Companies to interpret the existing and proposed physical conditions, research and understand market and demographic forces, and artfully create a workable concept for the redevelopment of a key parcel in the gateway to Farmington Center. The former Parsons' Chevrolet site and the development concepts presented herein are an opportunity to establish the potential scale and visual theme of the gateway. Specific aspects of this theme can then be carried through the Farmington Center Study area and the gateway corridor.

The scope of this project was to conduct an environmental analysis, market analysis, and traffic analysis, and to develop a conceptual site development plan that effectively incorporates the DOT improvements already under construction, complete street and Universal Design principles, and developer/end user considerations, while protecting the distinctive characteristics, landmarks and places of architectural, cultural, historical and environmental significance that characterize the Farmington Center area. This enhancement of the village core can also serve to provide an opportunity to showcase the Town's commitment to authenticity, aesthetics and historic character, as well as accessibility, energy efficiency and sustainable site design measures.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Traffic Analysis

The redevelopment of a property located on the northwesterly side of Route 4 (Farmington Avenue) east of High Street in the Town of Farmington, Connecticut is being considered. Specifically, the plan will

redevelop a site formerly occupied by an automobile dealership. The proposal includes the construction of 9,600 square feet of commercial space, 62 residential units and 256 parking spaces.

This study investigated the traffic impacts associated with the proposed development during the weekday morning and afternoon peak traffic periods. For the purpose of this study, the proposed development is projected to generate about 42 and 77 new vehicular trips during the weekday morning and afternoon peak hours, respectively.

The proposed site reconfiguration will provide primary access to Route 4 (Farmington Avenue) via a new street, temporarily called Backage Road, at its signalized intersection opposite High Street, currently being constructed under State Project #51-260. The site will also have limited access about 400' to the west at the reconstructed driveway to Farmington Commons.

Capacity analyses were performed at the two key signalized intersections near the site to evaluate levels of service (LOS). The Levels of Service (LOS) for all traffic movements will remain essentially unchanged at the signalized Route 4 (Farmington Avenue) intersection with Route 10. State Project #51-260 will not make any significant capacity improvements at this intersection, which will continue to operate very poorly with long queues. The new Route 4 (Farmington Avenue) intersection with High Street and Backage Road is theoretically projected to operate well, at overall LOS C, but with relatively long delays for traffic exiting Backage Road and High Street (LOS "E"), as the cycle lengths need to accommodate the critical Route 4/Route 10 intersection.

Given the existing and background conditions along Route 4 (Farmington Avenue) and the relatively small change in traffic volume projected from the site, no significant changes in projected background traffic operations are anticipated. However, it should be noted that the projected good ("C") overall peak period levels of service for the High Street/Backage Road signalized intersection may be somewhat misleading and not actually be achievable in the field due to the interference of queue spillback from Route 10, which is difficult to accurately model. Consideration should be given to the installation of "Don't Block The Box" regulatory signing and pavement markings for the Backage Road/High Street intersection if queue blockage occurs.

Due to the provision of more than 200 parking spaces or 100,000 square feet of building area, the development will have to be submitted to the Office of State Traffic Administration (OSTA) for review as a major traffic generator. Subsequently, an encroachment permit from the CTDOT District 4 office will be required for any work in the State right of way.

Phase I Environmental Site Assessment

At the request of the Town of Farmington ("Client" or "User"), BL Companies, Inc. ("BL Companies") has completed a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) of the property located at 750 Farmington Avenue, Farmington, Hartford County, Connecticut ("Site").

This ESA was conducted in general accordance with the scope and limitations of ASTM E-1527-13 "Standard Practice for Environmental Site Assessments: Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Process", and in accordance with BL Companies' contract dated April 26, 2016.

The purpose of the assessment was to evaluate and identify conditions indicative of recognized environmental conditions (RECs) in connection with the Site. The assessment also included an evaluation of certain environmental conditions outside the scope of ASTM E-1527-13, referred to in this Report as "non-ASTM considerations".

The 3.18-acre Site is located at 750 Farmington Avenue, Farmington, Hartford County, Connecticut. The Site is currently vacant land undergoing redevelopment situated in an area of primarily commercial and residential land usage. See Figure 1 (Site Location Map) and Figure 2 (Site Plan) attached.

The Site appears to have historically operated as an auto dealership and service facility from approximately 1933 through approximately 2006. On-Site operations included auto body repair, a garage/cleanup shop, and a car wash. Based on previous reports, hazardous wastes generated from Site operations included paint and paint-related materials, petroleum distillates, waste oil, and waste antifreeze. The Site reportedly utilized eight 1,000-gallon USTs, three 3,000-gallon USTs, one 2,000-gallon UST, and two unidentified USTs for the storage of waste oil, motor oil, heating oil, and gasoline.

Based on the information presented in this Report, it is the opinion of BL Companies that no *significant* data gaps were encountered during completion of this assessment. Data gaps occur when, despite good faith efforts, the consultant is unable to identify information required to satisfy objectives of the assessment. Data gaps may result from incompleteness in any of the activities required by ASTM E-1527-13, or by limiting conditions encountered during completion of the work. A data gap is only considered *significant* when it impacts the ability of the consultant to identify RECs.

This assessment has revealed the following Historical Recognized Environmental Conditions (HRECs) in connection with the Site:

- Between June 24 and July 5, 2011, one 3,000-gallon gasoline UST, one 1,000-gallon heating oil UST, one 1,000-gallon waste oil UST, one 1,000-gallon motor oil UST, and one 1,000-gallon unregistered UST were removed from the Site. Prior to the UST and associated piping removals, the USTs and a 1,000-gallon oil-water separator (OWS) were pumped of liquids for off-Site disposal. Soil samples were collected from the sidewalls and bottoms of the 3,000-gallon gasoline UST and the 1,000-gallon heating oil UST. A total of fourteen samples were collected and submitted for analysis for ETPH, SVOCs, VOCs, and total lead. VOCs were not reported above the laboratory method detection limits in the samples analyzed. ETPH was detected below the RSR criteria in one sample collected from the bottom of the heating oil UST grave. Total lead was detected at concentrations below RSR criteria in all of the samples analyzed. No SVOCs were reported in the samples analyzed.

This assessment has revealed the following Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs) in connection with the Site:

- Based on historical Sanborn maps, aerial photographs, and previous environmental reports, the Site historically operated as an automobile dealership and service facility from approximately 1933 through 2006. Previous investigations at the Site have identified multiple PRAs, AOECs, and release areas associated with the former operations and reportedly, fourteen USTs have been removed from the Site. Based on the previous investigations, remedial activities are ongoing and the management and off-site disposal of impacted soil is being conducted during redevelopment activities. However, a full remediation of all identified releases does not appear to be completed.
- Based on an interview conducted, two USTs were encountered during recent redevelopment activities conducted on the Site. Reportedly, these USTs were removed and clean closure is pending confirmatory soil sampling results.

This assessment has revealed no evidence of Business Environmental Risks (BERs)/de minimis conditions in connection with the Site.

Compliance with the Connecticut Transfer Act (CTA) is required when ownership of a Hazardous Waste Establishment is transferred, according to Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) sections 22a-134 to 22a-134e. An Establishment is any real property at which or any business operation from which (a) on or after November 19, 1980, there was generated, except as the result of remediation of polluted soil, groundwater or sediment, more than 100 kilograms of hazardous waste in any one month, (b) hazardous waste generated at a different location was recycled, reclaimed, reused, stored, handled, treated, transported or disposed of, (c) the process of dry cleaning was conducted on or after May 1, 1967, (d) furniture stripping was conducted on or after May 1, 1967, or (e) a vehicle body repair facility was located on or after May 1, 1967.

Based upon the information reviewed as part of this assessment, the Site appears to meet the requirements set forth in the CTA to be considered an "Establishment" due to historic Site operations. The Site appears to have been transferred to ConnDOT in 2008 utilizing a CTA exemption and therefore, has not been entered into the Property Transfer Program.

Market Analysis (Realty Concepts, Inc.)

The subject property is located in a municipality recognized as an upscale community with good psychographics that is clearly demonstrated in the lifestyles which residents currently enjoy in Farmington. These lifestyles are in the mid to upper household income levels as well as having good rankings for net worth. Over 50% of Farmington's residents comprise the top two lifestyles. The preponderance of the residential lifestyle preference for Farmington is single-family homes while due to lifestyle change preferences, there are about 1,700 apartment units with high occupancy rates in Farmington. Farmington does provide a vibrant business district which is located along I-84 and CT RT 4. The subject study area is the gateway entry to Farmington from the east side of town (CT RT 4/I-84). Farmington is strategically located to employment nodes around the States of Connecticut and Massachusetts. It enjoys favorable highway access to Interstate 84 as well as a short distance to Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks, Connecticut. Public transportation in Farmington is provided by Connecticut Transit (bus route), which has a stop near the subject site.

The subject site is located near the geographic center of the Town of Farmington. Transportation linkages are predominantly vehicular via CT RT 4 (AKA Farmington Avenue) and CT RT 10 (AKA Main Street & Waterville Road). The subject property also fronts on Farmington Avenue along its southern property having high roadway visibility for the site. The entire study parcel consists of about 10.65 +/- acres.

As noted within the body of this report, the subject location does not meet the definition of a walkable or transit-oriented community, which is in great demand today by millennials (who will comprise about 30% of the population by the end of this decade) as well as active adults and empty nesters. This housing paradigm shift creates a challenge to rethink the design of residential properties, single family and multifamily. A potential developer will be concerned about time that it will take to gain municipal and state approvals and the supporting demographics and economics that will be driving property type, size, amenities and other pertinent factors. In essence, the plans submitted today for approval may not be the exact plans developed in the future, due to shifts in future demand and lifestyle.

Multifamily development falls into two categories; apartments and multifamily residential (condominiums, duplexes, zero lot line units). The trend is greater towards apartments. Apartment design nationwide is trending to smaller units with high-end finishes, appliances and good current communications. This criterion meets the demand of the millennials who interpret their lifestyle as mobile, to move where the jobs are, and not commit to a long-term residential obligation such as owning a home. Active adults and empty nesters are more "tech savvy" today than in the past and seek similar amenities. This lifestyle change has moved

the threshold age to purchase a home up to about 34 years of age for the millennials. They also seek walkable and transit-oriented communities. Therefore, most of the apartment development has been in major metropolitan areas. A reason for the significant amount of high end development is the increasing cost of construction which has forced the developers to target the luxury market.

It should be noted that suburban upscale apartments typically are devoid of any retail component and are typically a standalone complex. In the case of the subject property, it is a mixed-use gateway location that can service apartment demand and retail/office uses. The mixed development opportunity for the subject study area may afford the developer the ability to offset a lower apartment rent with market rate retail and office rents.

Therefore; based on the preceding data the subject study area would best be developed for mixed-use residential multifamily apartments and supporting retail and service office uses. The concentration of apartments lends itself to the character of Farmington as an upscale/middleclass community. By no means does this preclude the development of workforce housing component within the development. Nor does it preclude creative development structuring by the utilization of land leasing as a tool to mitigate high land prices. The retail component that is in demand is neighborhood-oriented retail. Card store, gifts, clothing, small food store, hardware store and full-service restaurants.

- 1) The current market conditions should not be viewed as a perpetual negative and reason for inaction, but as an opportunity to plan and structure the subject site's development to meet current and future demand. Creating a well thought out development and incentive plan prior to an improving market and bringing it to market as the market improves is a strong incentive in and of itself. Any developer would welcome a pre-established development plan that incorporates incentives, use and design standards that reduces the approval process time to a developer. To a developer this equates to reduced development soft costs.
- 2) Farmington is a middle class-to-upscale residential bedroom community benefiting from its proximity to major employment nodes and is within reasonable drive times to these employment nodes throughout the State. Farmington also has its own employment node.
- 3) The current Life Style Segmentations profiles of Farmington are mixed, resulting in a range of moderate to upper income levels and net worth. To retain residents and improve lifestyle, developing the subject site as mixed-use neighborhood residential/retail/service office complex, will meet current and future demand and stabilize and enhance real property values in the immediate area.
- 4) Any proposed development on the site should be an impressive gateway neighborhood design incorporating mixed-use development including apartments and supporting retail and service office to meet current and future demand.
- 5) Farmington does not meet the criteria for a walking community or transit-oriented community. Farmington is auto dependent community with limited public transit as is the subject site. Not meeting these demand factors does not preclude to incorporate within the design of the subject study area, walkable neighborhood/community elements and the creation of improved transportation linkages.
- 6) To meet current and future demand, unit size should meet the following criteria: apartments have dramatically reduced in size due to two reasons: 1) cost of construction and 2) the impact of Millennials and changing lifestyles. Studios are about 550 square feet, One Bedroom units about 775 square feet and Two Bedroom units about 900 to 1,000 square feet. These unit sizes will meet current and future demand. The high cost of construction forces apartment developers to target the luxury market. Higher apartment cost may be offset by mixed use development.

The Town of Farmington has a unique opportunity to take advantage of the time it will take for the economy to improve by developing a master plan, incentives, structuring and marketing plan for the subject sites. In adversity there is opportunity! The Town of Farmington has been handed this opportunity with the subject property. Of the towns in the Greater Hartford area, Farmington has fared well. While retail in Farmington has suffered declines or remained static at about a 10% vacancy, apartment vacancy in Town has remained about 3.0%. This is a sign that apartment demand is strong. Future demand may weaken for top-end luxury apartments typically located in urban areas, Farmington's' suburban demand should stabilize. Markets are created and value is created! The Town of Farmington has the unique opportunity to create both with the subject property.