

Village District Concept for West Haven Center



West Haven Planning and Zoning Commission
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What is a Village District?

State law allows municipalities to establish village districts and local historic districts, and either approach can be used to promote **economic development** and **protect community character**. A municipality can simultaneously use both approaches, and at least one municipality is doing so. Both involve greater local control over the design and construction, or rehabilitation of buildings. But they operate **differently** and they vary with respect to the steps a municipality must follow to create them.

Plan of Conservation And Development

Adopted June 2017

D DOWNTOWN

Downtown West Haven, commonly referred to by Westies as “The Center,” has its origins in the 1700s, when farmers built a structure that served as a church and city hall on the “Commons.” This structure would eventually be replaced in the mid-1800s by the church that stands today in the center of West Haven Green. The West Haven Green Historic District, listed on the National Register, consists of the Green and the buildings surrounding three sides of the Green. Downtown evolved alongside the Green on Campbell Avenue, which was served by a trolley line. Downtown was a vibrant destination for shopping and other daily needs, but it began to decline in the 1970s, as did many traditional downtowns, as population growth transferred to newer suburban communities.



Plan of Conservation and Development



P-D4. Downtown has a variety of building types, architectural styles, ages, and conditions.

Plan of Conservation and Development

P-D1. Encourage Propertyowners and Businessowners to Undertake Façade and Sign Improvements.

Keeping facades, storefront windows, and signs neat and clean is critical for creating a pleasant downtown environment. The City should promote best facade design practices and encourage propertyowners and businessowners to undertake building and facade improvements that reveal instead of obscure architectural details; to procure signs that are of high-quality design and materials and scaled appropriately; and to refrain from cluttering storefront windows and doors with posters and signs.

Plan of Conservation and Development

P-D2. Consider a Village District to Protect Historic Features and Improve Design Outcomes.

While the current regulations for the CBD “Central Business District” zoning designation include design criteria to promote higher quality storefront design, significant improvements have yet to be made. Given the historic character of many of the buildings located within the CBD, the City could consider creating a local historic district in which the design for any new building permit requires review by a local Historic District Commission. However, this might be too restrictive an approach, especially for commercial uses. An alternative is provided by the Village Districts Act, which allows CT towns to designate “village districts” to protect sections of towns with distinctive character, landscape, and historic structures, while also promoting ap-

propriately scaled and designed redevelopment. Within these areas, zoning commissions can adopt regulations governing matters such as the design and placement of buildings and maintenance of public views. See [Chapter 5. Making it Work](#) for more detailed implementation guidance.

What Other Communities have Village Districts?

- Town of Branford
- Town of Clinton
- Town of Hamden (Spring Glen)
- City of Middletown
- City of Stamford (Glendale, Spring Glen)
- Town of Westport (Center District)

What Does it Mean for Property Owners?

- P&Z already regulates uses of property in this area.
- New Regulation would assure that visible changes would be subject to additional **architectural review by area professional architects.**
- Why? To **protect the character and guide new development** of West Haven Center.

This is NOT the Same as a Historic District

HISTORIC DISTRICT

- Requires a lengthy study process, an affirmative vote by the property owners, and approval by the town.
- Local Historic District reviews are usually conducted by the members of the district commission.
- Mechanism the commission uses to regulate development in the district is the certificate of appropriateness.

VILLAGE DISTRICT

- Can be adopted directly by a vote of the Planning and Zoning Commission.
- Reviews are conducted by a consultant or architectural review board who submits a report and recommendations to the Commission on the proposed Plan.
- Village District review more flexible than a Historic District review.

What would be Regulated?

Design Standards:

- **Building Placement and Orientation**
 - Entrances close to pedestrian traffic
- **Relationship to Existing Context**
 - Matches and enhances the look and feel of the neighborhood
- **Placement and Treatment of Entries**
 - Entrances welcome pedestrian traffic
- **Roof Parapet and Cornice Lines**
 - Matches existing lines of the neighborhood
- **Parking Placement**
 - Parking preferred at back of the buildings

What would NOT be Regulated under the Village District Concept?

- Interior Renovations
- Normal maintenance of Landscaping
- Exterior Painting and Paint color
- Existing lighting and signage
- Existing parking
- Existing buildings
- Anything that is there now.



Notice that these buildings are welcoming to pedestrian traffic with their building locations, and the treatment of their entries. The roof and cornices are aligned, and there is no pull-in parking lot in the front of the buildings.

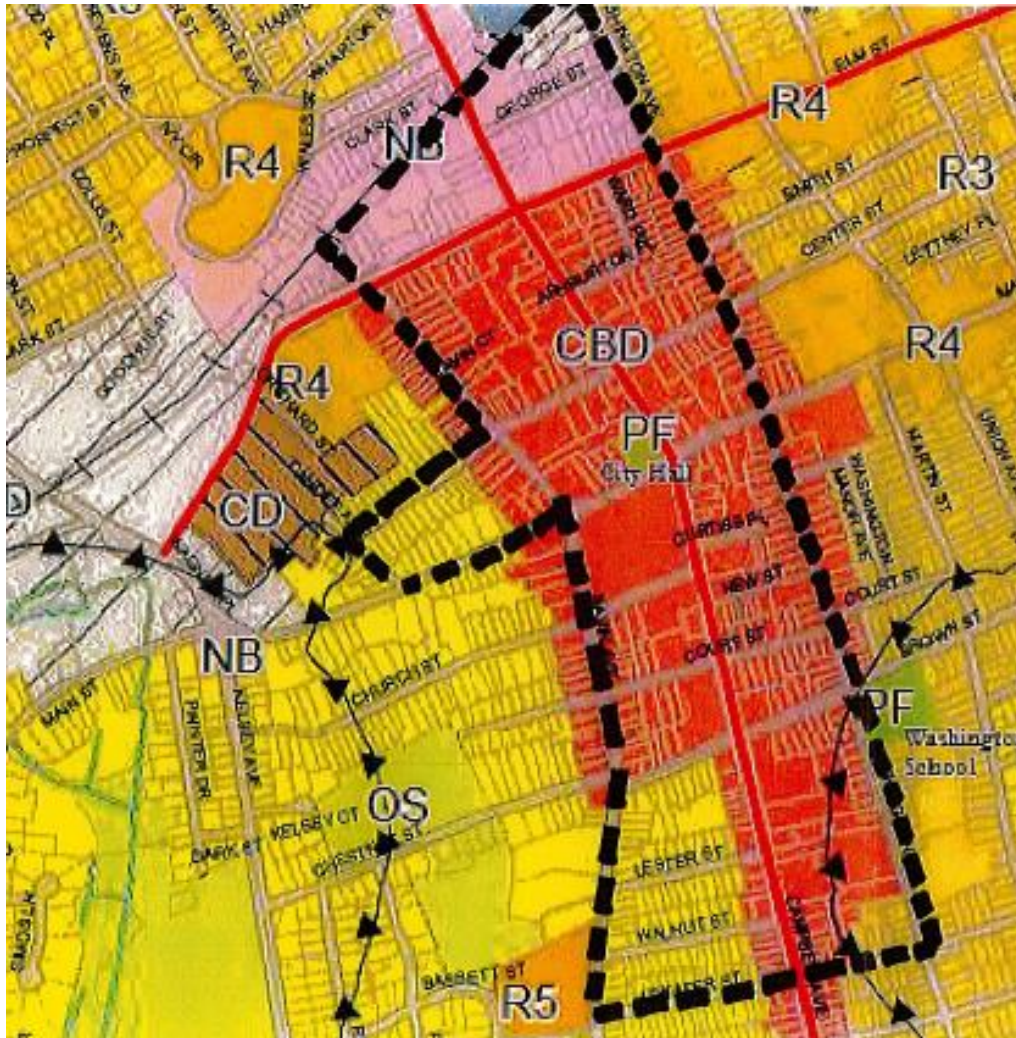


There are two apartment complexes next to one another and both have welcoming frontage and courtyards. This is an example of conforming to the essence of the neighborhood.

When Would Projects in the Village District Require Approval?

- New Buildings and Additions** of more than 1,000 square feet
- Changes to existing facades** affecting 30% or more of the façade
- Construction of **new driveways, parking areas, landscaping, etc.** greater than 2000 sf or 30% of site area.

What Area is being Considered?



The boundary would include properties on both sides of the street

CONTACT INFORMATION

Planning And Development
Office

(203) 937-3580

Questions?