

Building a Creative Habitat

Action Team 3 • Progress Report 1 • June 2, 2010

The Charge

To make downtown Stamford and our neighborhood centers:

- Markets of ideas and exchange, rich in social networks
- Dense and closely connected, with a diverse mix of people and uses
- Transit-accessible, walk-able and bike-able
- Climate positive in water and energy use

50 Improvements in 500 Days

Team 3 is focusing initially on a series of small steps aimed at improving the pedestrian experience and at developing a sense of ownership of the street, with the goal of making 50 improvements in 500 days.

Building on the work that co-convener David Kooris has done for the DSSD and the URC for their Downtown Re-Visioning Project, as well as the Mill River Park and Greenway, these pedestrian improvements will include “road diets” (reclaiming a portion of existing roadways for larger sidewalks, pedestrian islands and bike lanes), street trees and the urban forest, way-finding, and blank wall treatment. The 50 improvements will focus on the pedestrian experience at the transit nodes in downtown and the neighborhood centers.

Many of the improvements can be implemented immediately with a bucket of paint and some simple street furniture, as was done recently in Times Square in NYC. The team is focused on strengthening the public realm so that it is more inviting and more conducive to casual interaction, and on making Stamford a city for walking and biking, bringing balance to the automobile dependency of the city.

The team plans to conduct walking tours of downtown and the neighborhood centers to collect input on, and support for, its proposed improvements.

Public Education

The team believes there needs to be a Downtown Development Center that provides the public visually compelling exhibits on projects and improvements planned or in-process, possibly located at Old Town Hall.

The best benchmark city for Stamford in the U.S. is Portland, Oregon, which has transformed itself over the past four decades through a combination of regional-scale land use controls, light rail and street car networks, aggressive parking demand management, high quality mixed-income infill residential development, and fine-grained development of the public realm. Team 3 is initiating a knowledge exchange between Portland and Stamford, where we learn from their place-making success and they learn from our successes in economic reinvention. This will leverage the contacts of Team 3 co-convener Hank Ashforth, who splits his time between Portland and Stamford.

Improving Transit

A subgroup of Team 3 is working with Connecticut Transit to revise scheduling to increase frequency, moving away from the pulsing concept that times all buses with train arrivals.

Longer term, Team 3 will serve as a source of grass roots support for the creation of a world class transit system in Stamford, including the creation of a streetcar network running north and south from Kosciuszko Park to Bull’s Head along Atlantic and Bedford/Summer, and east and west from Greenwich to Darien along Route 1.

Workforce Housing

A new subgroup of Action Team 3 will focus on ways to foster the development of green, infill workforce housing in downtown, the Southend, the Westside the Eastside, and the Glenbrook and Springdale Transit Villages. The goal is to be ready with the right financial tools and organizational capacity as soon as the credit markets thaw. There are 3,000 infill housing units in downtown approved for development, but not yet built, and 6,000 in the Southend. Team 3 estimates that there are other infill sites in downtown, the Westside, the Eastside and the Glenbrook and Springdale Transit Villages where an additional 7,000 units could be approved and built.

