

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: **ORDINANCE AMENDMENT** amending Section 27-110 of the Code of Ordinances and establishing a Complete Streets Policy for New Haven (City Engineer).
REPORT: 1440-18
ADVICE: Approval with added language

BACKGROUND

The City of New Haven and the Board of Aldermen are deeply committed to reaching the goals and objectives identified by the New Haven Safe Streets Coalition; and to pursuing the development of design criteria and tools that raise the quality, civility and safety of our shared public spaces; as well as supporting neighborhood economic development. Increasing the transportation modal split to favor walking, cycling and transit modes; and building a safe, efficient and equitable transportation system in the city will improve the public health and residents' quality of life. The proposed amendment to Section 27-110 of the Code of General Ordinances establishes a Complete Streets policy for the City and a new *Complete Streets Design Manual* to guide the City's investments in streets with a set of progressive design standards.

On September 22, 2008, the New Haven Board of Aldermen adopted a landmark Order (the order) which established a Complete Streets Steering committee (the committee) to draft a Complete Streets policy for New Haven, and to propose an ordinance amendment, in order to implement a sustainable Complete Streets program. The steering committee, headed by the City Engineer, was first convened on May 12, 2009 and met regularly to draft the policy and the implementation manual, pursuant to the order. The committee was comprised of aldermen, city staff and community residents and supported by a consultant team from Fitzgerald and Halliday. The *Complete Streets Design Manual* is the product of many months of work by the Committee.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

New Haven streets are community spaces, used heavily by pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders. These streets are in fact public spaces, which impact public health, play a major role in defining the image and identity of our city, delimit its individual neighborhoods, and provide the framework for current and future development.

Currently, the City of New Haven encompasses an area of a little more than 18 square miles with approximately 232 miles of public streets, which occupy 11% of the land area. The city also has approximately 340 miles of sidewalk, accessing 68 million square feet of buildings. Since it is an older city with a street system mostly laid out prior to the advent of the automobile, it is in many ways ideal for walking and cycling. The terrain is also not too hilly, and most of the city's streets are laid out in a fan-like grid pattern with reasonably short blocks and relatively narrow roadways compared with surrounding communities.

The current population of New Haven is 126,000 (2007 American Community Survey estimate). Of the ten largest cities in New England, New Haven has the highest percentage of residents who walk to work (13.6%) and the highest percentage of persons who use non-motorized means to journey to work (15.5%). While in some cases this is by choice, in most others it is due to the high poverty rate within the city (approaching 25%). Daily ridership on commuter rail is equally impressive, with 1,100 people arriving to New Haven on Shoreline East, 2000 arriving via Metro North Railroad, and 23,000 using CT Transit bus lines daily.

The Complete Streets ordinance and *Design Manual* are part of the City's response to community alarm over the number and severity of traffic accidents within the city, which build on the Pace Car and Safe Streets campaigns launched a few years ago. The *Complete Streets Design Manual* establishes a Complete Streets policy requiring the accommodation of the safety and convenience of all users of the transportation system according to a hierarchy, which supports and encourages non-motorized transportation and prioritizes the needs of the most vulnerable users: children, the elderly and persons with disabilities. It incorporates progressive design guidelines for the construction of complete streets; a process for public initiation of complete streets projects; a system to measure progress over time; and outlines a funding strategy.

The National Complete Streets Coalition has identified the following specific benefits of Complete Streets:

- Complete Streets improve safety: A Federal Highways Administration safety review found that streets designed with sidewalks, raised medians, better bus stop placement, traffic-calming measures, and treatments for disabled travelers improve pedestrian safety, and many other design elements improve safety for all users.
- Complete Streets encourage walking and bicycling for health: The National Institute of Medicine recommends fighting childhood obesity by establishing ordinances to encourage construction of sidewalks, bikeways, and other places for physical activity. One study found that 43% of people with safe places to walk within 10 minutes of home met recommended activity levels; among individuals without safe place to walk, just 27% were active enough.
- Complete Streets address climate change and oil dependence: The 2001 National Household Transportation Survey found 50% of all trips in metropolitan areas are three miles or less and 28% of all metropolitan trips are one mile or less distance, which are easy to walk, bike, or hop a bus or train. Yet 65% of the shortest trips are now made by automobile, in part because of incomplete streets that make it dangerous or unpleasant for other modes of travel.
- Complete Streets foster strong communities: Complete Streets play an important role in livable communities, where all people (regardless of age, ability or mode of transportation) feel safe and welcome on the roadways.

Senate Bill 735, the Complete Streets bill, which passed the Connecticut General Assembly in 2009 also mandates that “accommodations for all users shall be a routine part of the planning, design, construction and operating activities” of all State highways. Beginning October 2010, 1% of transportation funding will also be dedicated to construction of complete streets elements on State highways.

The City’s Comprehensive Plan, Sustainable Transportation Framework, and the State’s Long Range Transportation Plan provide the foundation for long-term investments in City and State rights-of-way. The Board of Aldermen is responsible for policy oversight and City staff and is responsible for reviewing these more specific plans to ensure consistency with the Complete Streets mission.

Section 27-110 of the Code of Ordinances is proposed to be amended to read as follows:

“Sec. 27-110. Adoption of rules, regulations governing construction:

The City Engineer is authorized and empowered to adopt, from time to time, such reasonable rules, regulations and specifications for the conduct of the work relating to sidewalks and curbs as he/she may deem appropriate and in the best interests of the city. **Rules and regulations are to be made consistent with the City’s Complete Streets Policy and the Complete Streets Design Manual of March, 2010.**”

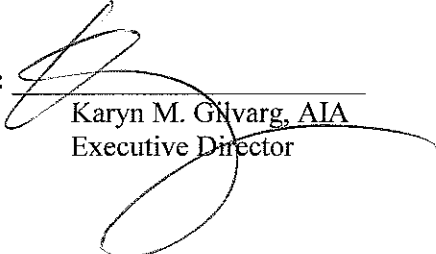
The above amendment shall take immediate effect upon passage, subject to the requirements of Section 41 of the Charter of the City of New Haven.”

ADVICE

Approval.

The Commission suggests that the Sec 27-110 language be modified to add the following after the March 2010 date: *as amended from time to time.*

ADOPTED: June 16, 2010
Edward Mattison
Chair

ATTEST: 
Karyn M. Givarg, AIA
Executive Director