

# DOWNTOWN



**City of New Haven**  
John DeStefano, Jr., Mayor

## Downtown

### INTRODUCTION

Downtown New Haven is considered to be the cultural capital of Connecticut and among the more lively downtowns in the Northeast. Downtown stands apart largely due to the wide variety of uses, institutions, residential opportunities, its distinct retail and historic architecture.

As a premier academic institution with a large residential component and ancillary retail activities, Yale University is central to the atmosphere Downtown.



**Figure 6.1: Downtown New Haven**

Unlike any other neighborhood, Downtown serves a number of diverse, interrelated functions. The neighborhood is a core component to the regional economy, a thriving residential neighborhood, the home of signature public spaces and is the traditional home of the institutional / government sector. These functions, coupled with the physical structure of the neighborhood and its circulation / communications systems, form the basis of long-term planning for Downtown.

## Downtown

This section is based on a core geography of the central business district, generally bounded by State Street, Trumbull Street, York Street and the Oak Street Connector (see Figure 6.2). In addition, this section notes the relationship between the central business district and its abutting neighborhoods. For example, the neighborhood is influenced by the Yale New Haven Hospital / Yale Medical School area to the south and by residential developments to the east, west and north.

The recommendations herein are designed to retain a critical mass of sustainable activities: sizing Downtown in a manner that grows the economy and supports an even larger residential population. In doing so, recommendations for Downtown serve the comprehensive interests of the city, particularly environmental interests. In advancing Downtown as a residential neighborhood, the city is a more metropolitan and cosmopolitan place, providing more walk-to-work and walk-to-shop opportunities and a home for the arts and entertainment.

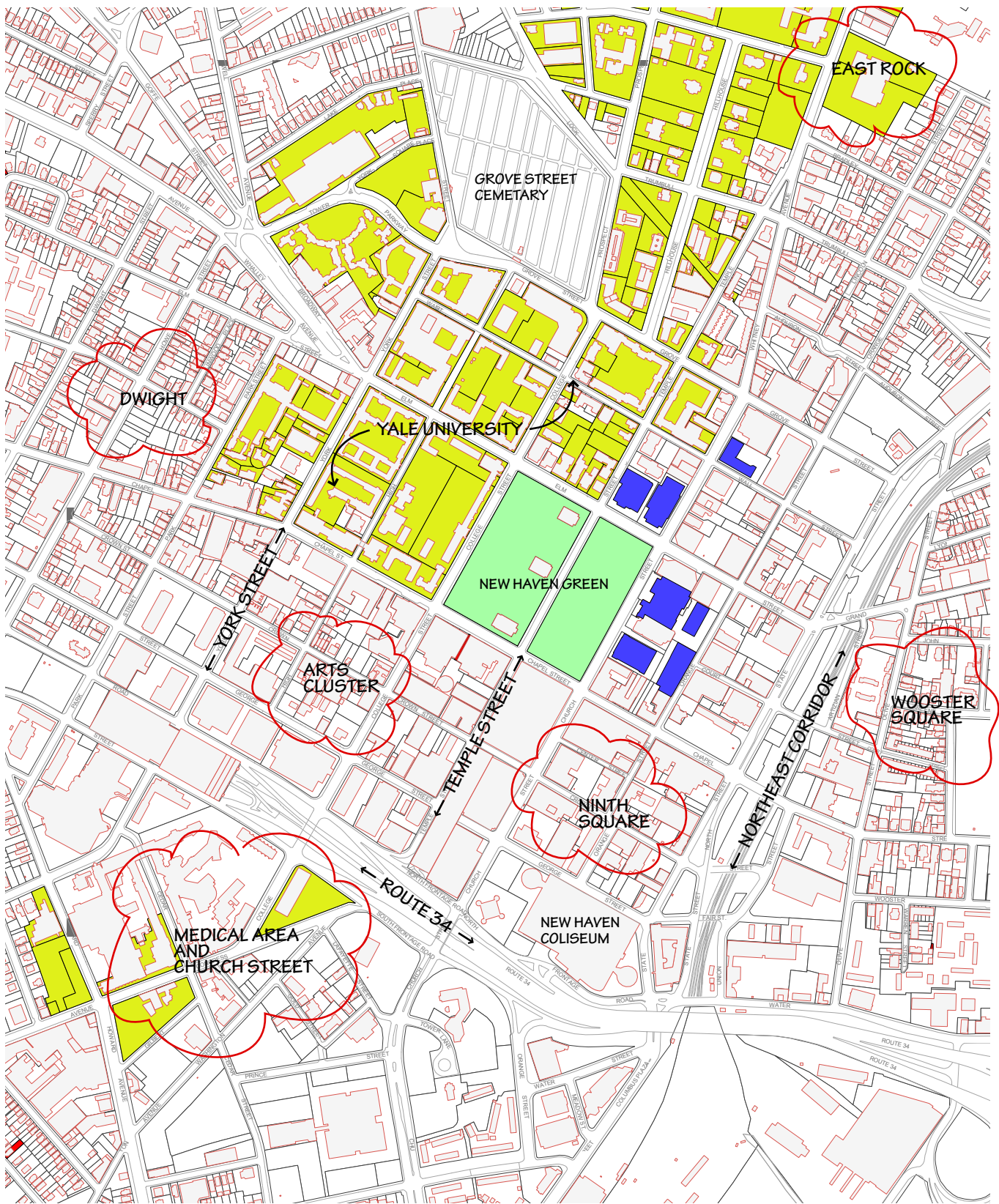
### EXISTING CONDITIONS

As part of this project, the Commission reviewed a number of reports and proposals for Downtown, as well as the most recent US Census and land use information, and a street-by-street ground survey of the entire neighborhood.

The results of this background work reveal a number of positive trends and a generally positive outlook. Of note, traditional multi-use Downtown environments are found in the Ninth Square, Audubon and Broadway areas. They are among the city's best examples of urbane neighborhoods with both organic physical forms and functional mixed use. As Downtown grows residentially, these are good models to integrate contextual design with existing buildings and modern functions.

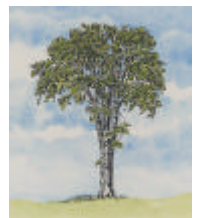
#### *Population*

With nearly 7,000 residents, Downtown New Haven is the most populous downtown in Connecticut and is among the most populous downtowns in the nation. A recent Fannie Mae report indicates that New Haven's downtown population exceeds that of larger cities, such as Denver, Detroit, Phoenix and Charlotte. By population density, New Haven (14,761 per square mile), places third among leading downtowns – ahead of well-known residential downtowns in Seattle, Chicago and Baltimore.



## Downtown New Haven

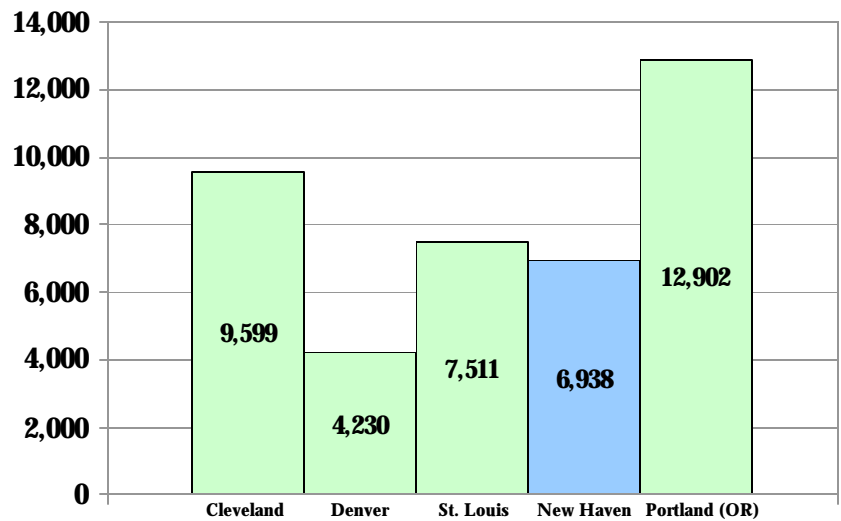
- Yale University Campus
- Government Buildings
- New Haven Green



## Downtown

A deeper statistical look at Downtown reveals the neighborhood is less diverse than the city as a whole but considerably more diverse than the state in general. The neighborhood population is 58.8% White, non-Hispanic, 11.6% Black, non-Hispanic and 8.2% Hispanic, of any race. This compares with more balanced numbers across the city: 35.6% White, 37.4% Black and 21.4% Hispanic. The disparity can be attributed in part to the student population at Yale University, which is over 70% White, White / Hispanic or other.

**Figure 6.3: Downtown Population of Select Cities**



### *Land Use*

Land use in Downtown consists mainly of institutional and commercial uses, with a substantial number of mixed use structures and public spaces. The Downtown neighborhood consists of 216 acres, which is approximately 2.2% of all land in the City. There are 505 parcels in the neighborhood, 102 of which are considered mixed use developments. Mixed uses mainly the first floor retail – upper floor residential building found in the Ninth Square and along College, Crown and Orange Streets. In particular, the Ninth Square is home to a variety of residential service

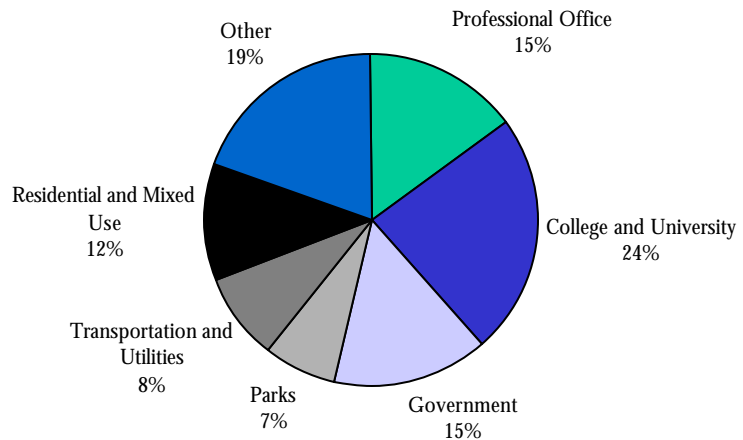
## Downtown

retail shops, boutiques, small office / studios and commercial office. Upper floor uses are largely residential rentals as opposed to condominiums.

Of the 216 acres, approximately 50 acres (23%) are dedicated to college and university uses, 33 acres (15.4%) are used for government offices and facilities and 32 acres (15%) are used for professional office buildings.

The recent success of Downtown, largely based on the resurgence of the retail, office and residential sectors, is often attributed to the lively and organic mixed use nature of central business district. This is illustrated in the Ninth Square and Audubon Street districts, both of which build on core aspects of Downtown historic preservation, multi-story developments with first floor commercial space and market-rate residential development.

**Figure 6.4: Land Use in Downtown New Haven**



### *Vacant Land*

There is a very limited amount of vacant land Downtown. Vacant commercial parcels are generally used for off-street parking. The largest vacant unused parcel is a 1.7-acre municipally-owned block that was the former Malley's Department Store. The largest vacant site used for off-street parking – at 3.3 acres - is the SBC/SNET lot between Orange Street, Audubon Street and State Street.

## Downtown

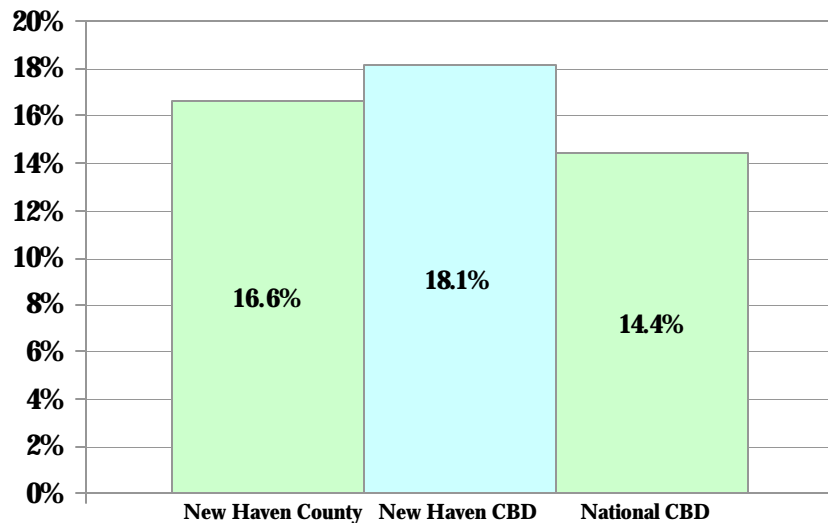
The main thoroughfares of Church, Chapel and Elm Streets have many scattered lots which break up the street wall. The lots are often used for pocket parking and give a much less urban feeling to certain streets (e.g. Crown and George Street areas and Orange Street, north of Elm Street).

### *Vacant Building Space*

The Downtown office market is characterized by a mix of Class A, Class B and Class C office spaces with varying occupancy rates. Insignia / ESG, Inc. tracks an inventory of 12.3 million s.f. across New Haven County. Approximately 5.0 million s.f. of this space is located in the central business district. In its report for mid-year 2002, Insignia reported an overall vacancy rate for the county of 16.6% and 18.1% for the central business district. By comparison, Traub & Co. (Q3-02) reports nationwide central business district office vacancy rates of 14.4%.

Aside from the available vacant spaces, there are dormant spaces in the Downtown marketplace. The most prominent of these is 80 Temple Street, the former headquarters of United Illuminating. The 90,000 s.f. building is a landmark brick colonial revival structure in a prime location near the Temple Street Garage and the soon to-be-renovated Chapel Square Mall.

**Figure 6.5: Office Vacancy Rate Comparison**



### *Residential Sector*

There are approximately 1,300 housing units in Downtown New Haven and several thousand more along its perimeter. While not counted in the unit total, Yale's residential dormitories in and along Downtown add approximately 3,000 students residing in the neighborhood. By sector, the residential market consists primarily of rental apartments found either in mixed use buildings (35% of all units) or in large apartment buildings (42%). There are just a handful of single-, two and three-family homes in the neighborhood, comprising less than 2% of the total residential inventory. Figure 6.6 notes residential unit locations in downtown.

The market projections prepared for the City in 1999 estimated a build-out of approximately 2,000 additional units in the Downtown inventory. On the rental side, there is considerable movement toward the buildout figure with three proposed developments: 900 Chapel Street (44 units), 227 Chapel Street (145 units) and Ninth Square Phase II (221 units in separate developments). In addition to these developments, the lease-up of 76 Olive Street (124 units) just east of Downtown, further suggests robust interest in market-rate housing in and around Downtown.

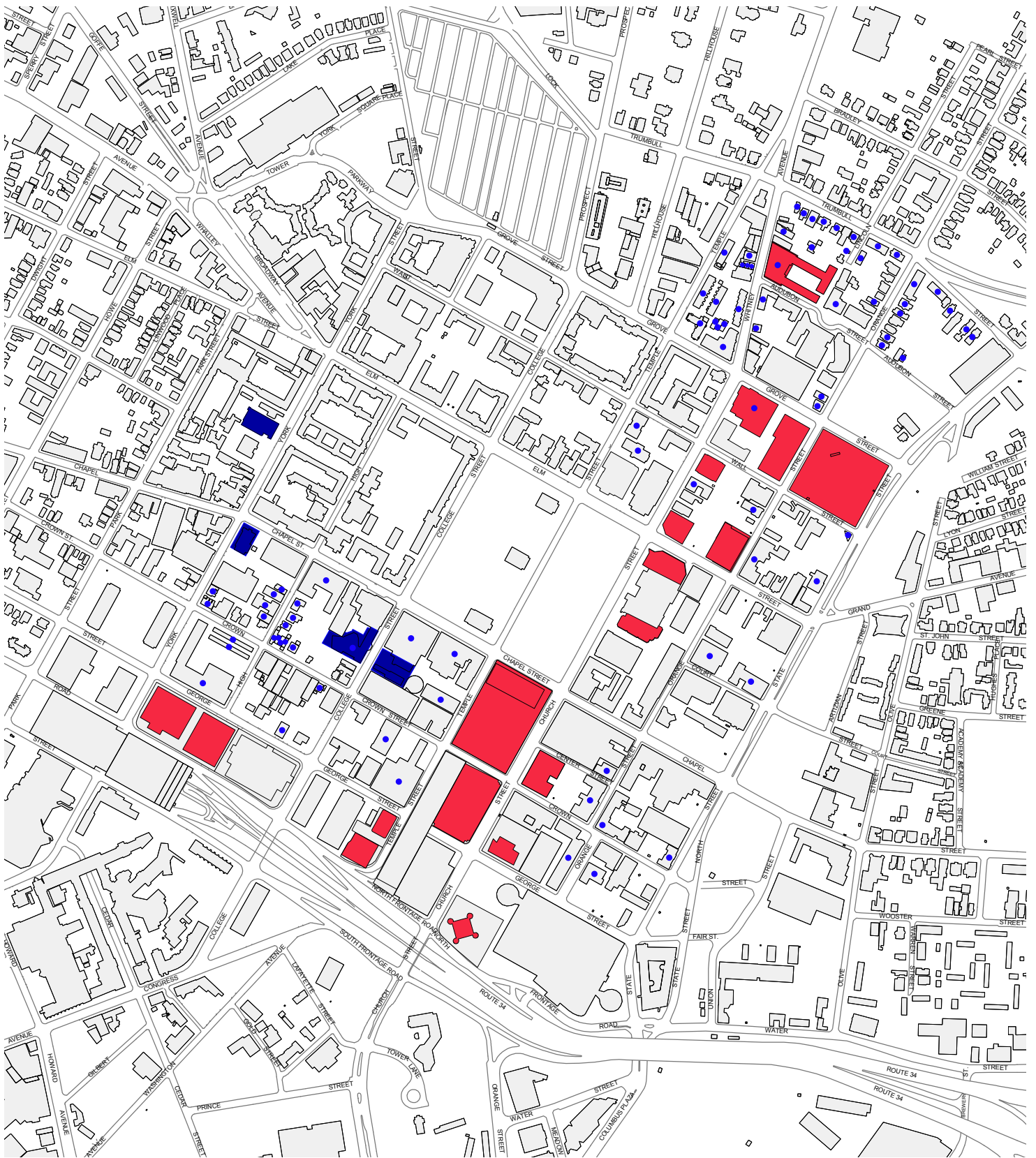
On the ownership side, there are no proposed new developments. Current ownership opportunities are extremely limited. There are just 120 condominium units (9% of all units) in the neighborhood in three developments: Audubon Court, Whitney Grove and Traders Block. The small number of condominiums or for-sale apartments / lofts runs counter to the market projections, which estimate a need for 440 for-sale apartments and 350 for sale townhouses or live/work spaces.

### *Historic Resources*

As the historic and colonial center of New Haven, Downtown is home to large number of historic assets. These assets illustrate over four centuries of English settlement and urban development. The New Haven Green, which is generally considered the center of the city, is a National Historic Landmark. The so-called Nine Square Plan is an early example of the American grid city and is honored as a National Planning Landmark.

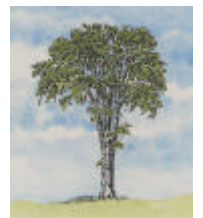
There are four National Register Historic Districts located entirely or partially in Downtown and several individually listed properties. The districts: Ninth Square, Orange Street, New Haven Green and Chapel Street, comprise over 200 parcels and one million s.f. of building space. Actions that may affect the historic character of district, individually listed





## Downtown New Haven

- Structures with Residences
- Major Commercial Structures (over 50,000 sqf)
- Theatres



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and surveyed properties are subject to review and approval when federal funds are used in support of the project. In addition, demolitions of contributing surveyed structures are subject to the city's 90-day delay of demolition regulations and, potentially, review by the state Historical Commission.

While these efforts generally maintain the historic integrity of the neighborhood, there are noteworthy risks in the absence of local historic districts. For example, several recent improvements to the New Haven Green have not been reviewed from an historic preservation perspective. In the Ninth Square and along Orange Street, some of the new signage is out-of-context and scale with the area's architecture. Similarly, ground-mounted or "pole" signs are increasingly common in and around historic structures. These signs – often associated with parking areas – affect the overall view and treatment of an historic place. There are no ordinance controls regulating changes to architecturally distinctive facades hence the use of tube aluminum doors and storefronts, the enclosing of windows with brick and other inappropriate treatments.

In spite of these risk factors, there appears to be very limited interest in additional preservation-based controls. A proposed Elm Street District was rejected by property owners in the 1980s and there have been no recent attempts at establishing a local district.

## NEAR-TERM INITIATIVES

Several recent proposals and near-term initiatives will have a significant impact on the future land use and development Downtown. Some of the major initiatives are summarized below:

### *Ninth Square*

The revitalization of Ninth Square is among the most successful urban revitalization projects in the city's recent history. Ninth Square, which is bounded by Chapel Street, Church Street, George Street and State Street, is among the city's oldest commercial districts. The square is characterized by multi-story, densely packed commercial structures – originally used for a variety of retail and commercial applications. More recently, the revitalization has focused on adaptive reuse of these structures for ground floor retail / commercial and upper floor residential uses.

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The revitalization of the district began in the 1990s with Ninth Square Phase I, a public-private mixed use redevelopment consisting of 335 new rental units (mixed income), 50,000 s.f. of commercial space and 600 parking spaces. The success of this project has encouraged additional private investment in the square consisting of new residential units, several new restaurants and an emerging retail cluster. CHFA and federal UDAG participation have ensured that over ½ of the units will remain affordable.

In addition, the planned Ninth Square Phase II is a second wave of publicly assisted investment. Phase II includes a number of buildings facing Chapel Street and Church Street as well as new construction in and around the Orange / Crown / State block. Phase II will result in an additional 221 rental residential units, a 138-space parking facility and rehabilitation of 25,000 s.f. of commercial space.



**Figure 6.7: Conceptual Rendering of Ninth Square at Chapel and Church Streets.**

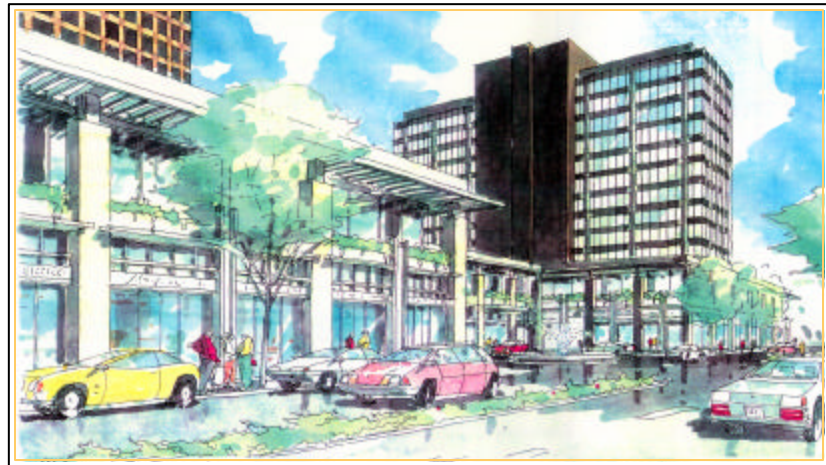
### *Mid-Block Garage*

Mid-Block Garage is a planned 900-space parking facility to be located in the Elm / Church / Orange Street block, with a public face along Elm Street. The garage is intended to ease a particularly severe parking crunch

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in the commercial business district north of the New Haven Green. Market research revealed a 91% utilization rate in the surrounding area with several surface lots operating well above 100% utilization. The New Haven Parking Authority and the City of New Haven worked with state officials to secure public financing for the project. The level of interest in new parking in this area has led to private sector proposals as well, which is rare for structured parking projects. As a public garage, however, public access and availability will contribute to the city's broader development objectives for Downtown.

### *Chapel Square Mall*



**Figure 6.8: Conceptual rendering of the Chapel Square Mall with “outward” storefronts.**

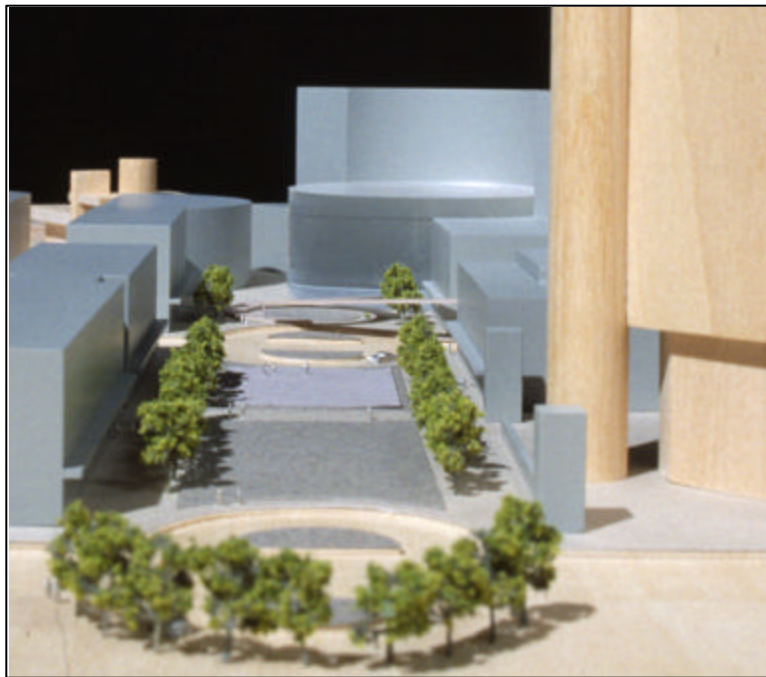
The Chapel Square Mall, a multi-use development consisting of the office tower at 900 Chapel Street and a two-level retail mall, on the block bounded by Chapel / Temple / Crown / Church Streets, was recently acquired by the Williams Jackson Ewing Company. The development has been troubled by a lack of investment and by weak tenancy. Moreover, the insular nature and period superbblock design and dated materials are largely out-of-context with the more organic revitalization of the Downtown environment. The company is planning to reorient the first floor retail spaces to open out to the street and to renovate the tower with several floors (44 units) designated for residential use. In addition, the company acquired the airwalk connecting the second floor of the mall with the Temple Street Garage.

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### *Gateway Plan*

Gateway Community College is seeking to consolidate its Long Wharf and North Haven campuses at a new site in Downtown. The preferred site is the Macy's / Malley's Block, which is bounded by Frontage Road, Church Street, Crown Street and the Temple Street Garage.

The proposal uses the 3.5 acres of land and a new air rights platform over George Street. Redevelopment of the Coliseum block with a new 400-room hotel and conference center, relocation and expansion of Long Wharf Theater, 280 apartment units and ancillary commercial and parking space complement the proposal. The community college forms the western border of a new public open space that runs parallel to George Street and is surrounded and defined by the Long Wharf Theater, hotel and residential structure



**Figure 6.9: Proposed open space and Gateway Plan.**

Figure 6.10: Proposed Gateway Plan

## Gateway Plan

### Ground Level Concept

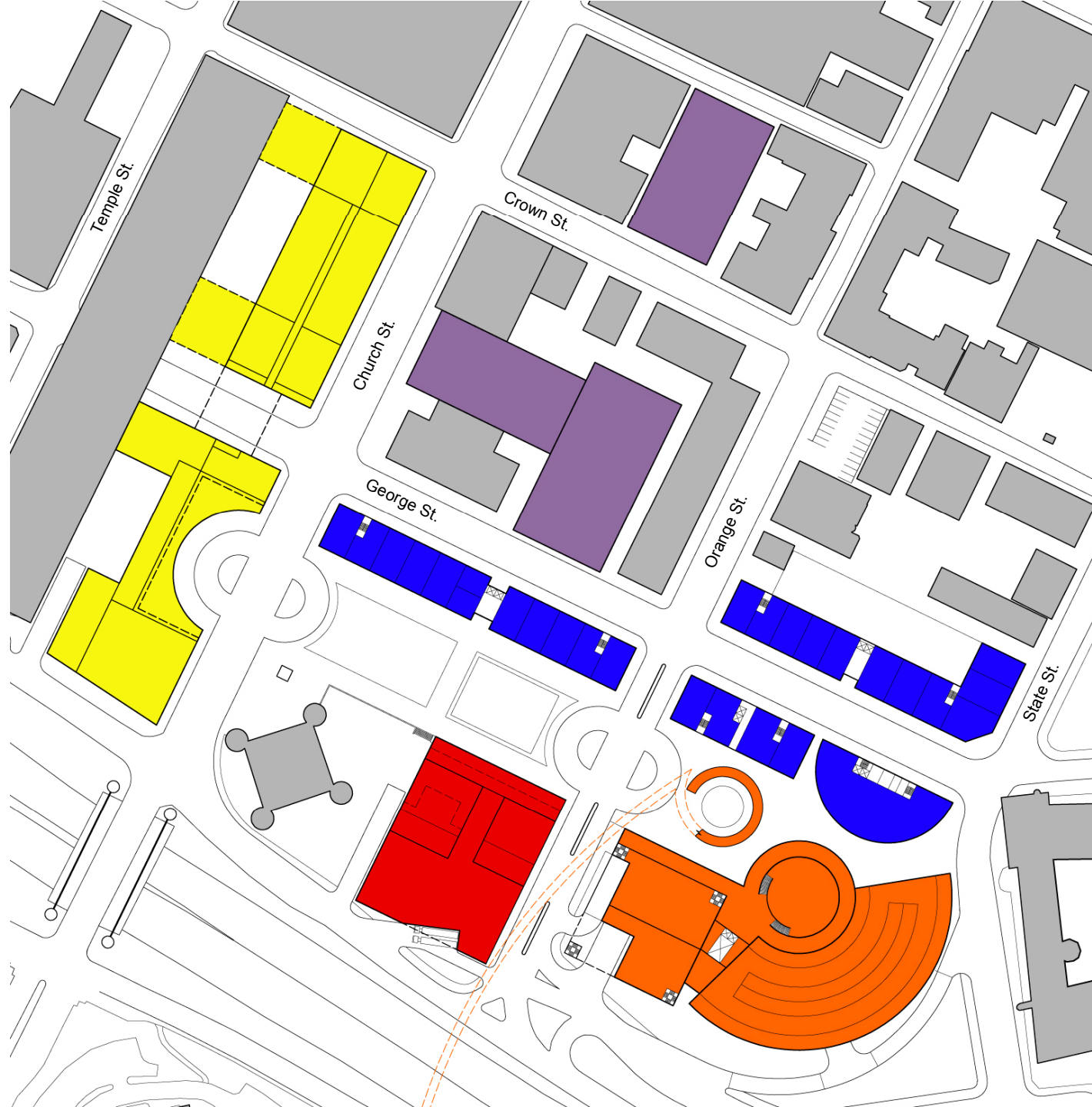
 **Parking Garage**

 **Theatre**

 **Commercial/  
Residential**

 **Gateway Comm.  
College**

 **Hotel/  
Conference**



## Downtown

### *Yale University Programs*

Yale University, through its capital improvement program, has invested in the renovation / new construction of numerous central campus facilities in and around Downtown. Of note, Vanderbilt Hall, Berkeley, Calhoun, Branford, Saybrook, Timothy Dwight and Pierson College have undergone substantial renovations. The School of Architecture is planning a major addition by architect Richard Meier. The addition will house the Art History Department. The School of Art is housed in the former Jewish Community Center building. In addition to campus improvements, Yale has acquired off-site properties for both complementary retail and for commercial use. Of note, the office tower at 2 Whitney Avenue (Whitney Grove Square) and located within the Whitney Grove PDD, was recently acquired, as was the office building at 55 Whitney Avenue. Yale also owns the retail component of this PDD.

### *Farmington Canal Line*

The Farmington Canal Line project is a city initiative to complete its portion of the multi-state Farmington Canal and East Coast Greenways. In Downtown, much of the historic right-of-way is depressed. Of the approximately 2,600 linear feet Downtown, approximately 26% is owned by Yale University and the balance is owned by the City or others. New development of the FBI Building encroaches over the right-of-way as it approaches State Street. The first phase of the project was completed in the Dixwell neighborhood. The Downtown section requires substantial participation from Yale (incorporated into university building plans) and from the city's Engineering and Traffic and Parking Departments – associated with Hillhouse Avenue and Prospect Street bridge reconstruction efforts as well as on-street segments.

### *227 Church Street*

The former Southern New England Telephone Company headquarters, located at 227 Church Street, was vacated in association with SBC's acquisition of the company. It is among the taller office towers in Downtown, distinguished by its art deco design and commanding presence along Church Street. The Board of Zoning Appeals recently approved plans to convert the tower to 145 residential apartments. The project is the first sizeable residential development in the traditional office environment in and around the Church / Elm Street area.

## ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS



Figure 6.11: Various existing conditions in Downtown New Haven.

Background research and field studies prepared by the City Plan Department indicate a wide range of property / market conditions in Downtown. Streetscape conditions are notably varied and often correlated with the degree of pedestrian activity. Given that New Haven's Downtown is relatively small (just under a  $\frac{1}{2}$  square mile), the level of synergy from complementary environments is extremely important. Architect Patrick Pinnell explains the need for a comfortable environment as an integral component to a successful urbane Downtown:

*The form of the city, its daily workings, and its economic and psychological success as a genuine community, cannot be separated. Good aesthetics do not guarantee good community health, but at the same time, good economic numbers do not guarantee a place with which people can identify, much less love. Good physical form, rich varieties of use and efficacy of movement...must be seamlessly integrated to make a whole place, satisfying the shared center of the New Haven community.*

With this in mind, the assessment looks at physical form, efficiencies of movement and land use in relation to both public and private spaces in the neighborhood.



### *Physical Form / Public Realm*

Although protected open space Downtown is limited to the New Haven Green and certain smaller parcels, there is a sense that Downtown as a whole functions as a public space. This is seen first in the foreground of defined spaces, such as public sidewalks, the Green, the Knights of Columbus Plaza and Temple Plaza.

- New Haven Green. The New Haven Green, which totals 14.5 acres on two large parcels, is a nationally-recognized symbol of community open space. The Green is improved with three churches and several landmarks, including a war memorial and commemorative fountain (under construction) at the center of the east green parcel. The Proprietors of the Green review and propose improvements on the Green. However, there is no formal, public review of structural changes or consistency with historic preservation criteria. While the Proprietors have a small endowment which they use for improvements, most maintenance and capital costs are covered by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Trees.

- Temple Plaza. Temple Plaza, which is located between Temple Street and the rear property lines of parcels fronting College Street and Chapel Street, was completed in the late-1990s. The plaza (.25 acres) is improved with a decorative walkway, landscaping and public art. The pleasing atmosphere supports residential units at the Liberty Building (148 Temple Street) and also enhances through traffic between the Omni Hotel and the Shubert Theater area. With leased space to an adjacent restaurant, Temple Plaza is an example of the blending of public and private space for a more seamless Downtown. This is accomplished through a cooperative agreement and use easement to ensure quality design and public access.

The condition of public spaces, largely due to the diligence of the Parks Department and the Town Green Special Services District, is vastly improved. The Town Green Special Services District, a betterment assessment district for the area is actively involved in marketing and promotions, ambassador programs, “clean teams” and physical improvements.

Figure 6.13 marks key sections in need of physical improvement, including both vacant / underutilized spaces and street amenities. There are few areas of intensive concern largely due to the decorative trash receptacles, lighting, benches, flower box planters and new orientation signage, which all contribute to a more pleasing public environment. These efforts would

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be enhanced with greater attention to certain aspects of the public realm, including –

- Sidewalks. Downtown streets universally are improved with sidewalks, including certain decorative sidewalks on Chapel Street and in the Ninth Square. While much of Downtown’s sidewalks are in good condition, Figure 6.13 also illustrates areas in need of repair. A Sidewalk Task Force regularly reviews the conditions and plans for improvements citywide.

In Downtown, sidewalk and streetscape furniture improvements generally have been public sector complements to private investment. Stamped concrete has been used in several locations, however the high cost of sidewalk improvements, limits program effectiveness. Block face improvements – on par with the high quality effort at Temple Plaza – would run approximately \$500,000 per location and \$30 million to improve a substantial portion of Downtown. More reasonably priced stamping programs have proved more efficient and cover a wider area.

- Media Boxes. The haphazard placement of printed media boxes is a noteworthy deficiency in existing street improvements. Newspaper boxes are often found chained to meter posts or left loose and subject to tipover in windy weather. Multi-unit newspaper bins are a simple way to eliminate street clutter and still provide adequate vending space.



**Figure 6.12: Media box placements.**

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- **Public Signage.** The new orientation Gateway sign program, which started in the mid-1990s provides consistency for directional signs to key destinations and, on separate stanchions, to the hotels. The sign program is mixed in with a more haphazard signage system for Downtown. In some instances, there is a visible clutter and a lack of maintenance along the streetscape as the new orientation signs compete with older, single-destination signs that remain on many lamp posts. The city has no program to modify standard road signs to create a more distinctive appearance.

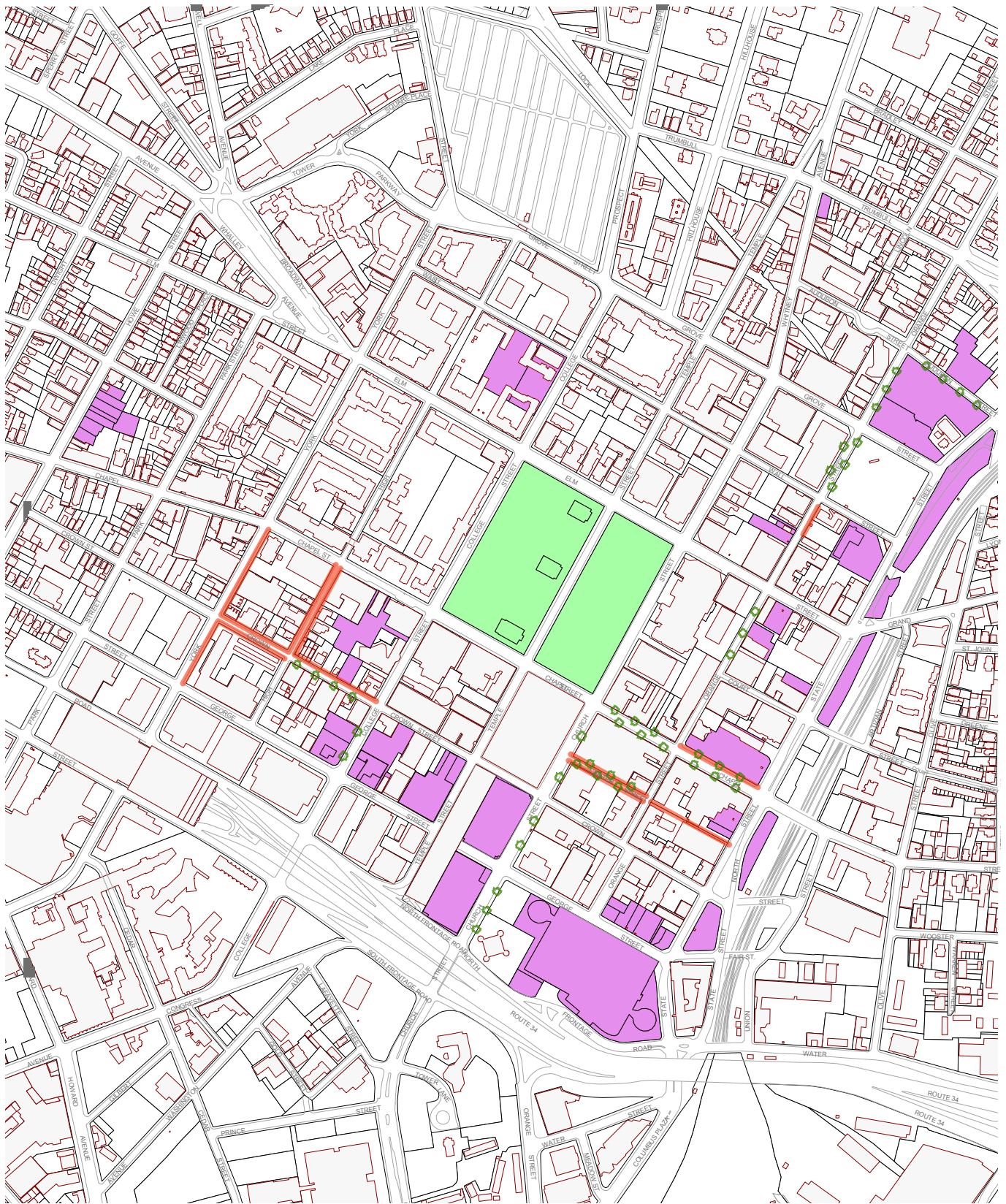
### *Physical Form / Private Realm*

Although largely associated with historic preservation and high density, Downtown New Haven has a surprisingly varied mix of densities in its sub-areas. The density and use of properties in the Church / Elm Street area is dramatically oriented toward large office development with minimal streetscape activity. The Frontage Road / George Street area is automotive-oriented and lacks the necessary amenities to support comfortable pedestrian environments. The mix of uses on Crown Street is weighted toward evening entertainment and is less active during the day.

- **Undeveloped Surface Lots.** Undeveloped surface lots are almost entirely used for parking. These lots, both privately and publicly operated, have a prominent position in Downtown but with minimal attention to quality physical form. The proliferation of signage – particularly signage without clear pricing information - is seen along State Street and in the George / Crown area. A number of parking facilities have little to no landscaping, poor surface conditions and drainage, and a lack of buffer or separation between the public way and the off-street parking area.

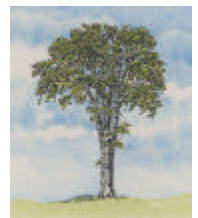


**Figure 6.13.** Underused parcels, generally for surface parking.



## Downtown New Haven

- Vacant / Underused Properties  
(including certain parking facilities)
- Certain Infrastructure Needs
  - Street Trees
  - Sidewalk Repairs



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- Building Forms. The physical form of private space is largely determined by the look and occupancy of structures. After several iterations of single-use construction – ranging from the office-based Gold Building to the retail box Walgreen’s – there is increasing attention about design and function of new and renovated spaces. The ultimate objective of these discussions – as noted at comprehensive plan community meetings and in some ICIC cluster discussions – is to ensure maximum synergy and communal integrity of Downtown as a shared neighborhood.



**Figure 6.15. Incompatible building forms or street facings.**

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The challenge is finding the right use mix that complements the neighborhood and, in turn, does not overwhelm the area. At Ninth Square and at Audubon Street, this challenge manifests itself in the retail sector where there are numerous vacant or non-service oriented storefronts. Future projects still must incorporate mixed use but with more analysis of the market and placement of storefronts and ground floor uses. The current regulatory environment, however, does not mandate complementary development but does allow for most forms of single-use development. Similarly, there are no design reviews and new by-right development may be a national template design rather than a unique, contextual fit for Downtown.

- Private Signage. There is little variation in sign regulations Downtown as compared to the rest of the city. This is noteworthy given the wealth of historic and multi-story buildings with decorative façades and details. Without more structured signage regulations, these details are often hidden behind larger out-of-context signage. Many of these facades have been restored through the façade improvement program; however, there is no parallel initiative for the placement of new signs on buildings not part of the program. Consideration should be paid to the signage and treatment of the more transient clubs and entertainment facilities. A good example is the current Risk Club at 216 Crown Street. At this location, temporary banners adversely affect the quality of the architecturally-distinctive building.

### *Movement of People*

Downtown is accessible for vehicles and by public transit, however the ease of movement is affected system capacity, capital needs and by operational deficiencies. The neighborhood is centrally-located near the intersection of Interstates 91 and Interstate 95. The primary interstate access is via Route 34 (31,000 vehicles per day) and the Trumbull Street exit of Interstate 91. Local roads are equally important to overall access – with Whalley Avenue providing access from Westville and the westerly suburbs and Whitney Avenue / State Street providing access from the north. Whalley is particularly important as there are few viable alternatives (George Street being much further to the south) and carries nearly 20,000 vehicles. These access points, outside of Whitney Avenue, are well known for vehicular congestion. Route 34 realizes peak hour delays in both directions in and around the Air Rights Garage, while significant delays are found at various points along Whalley.

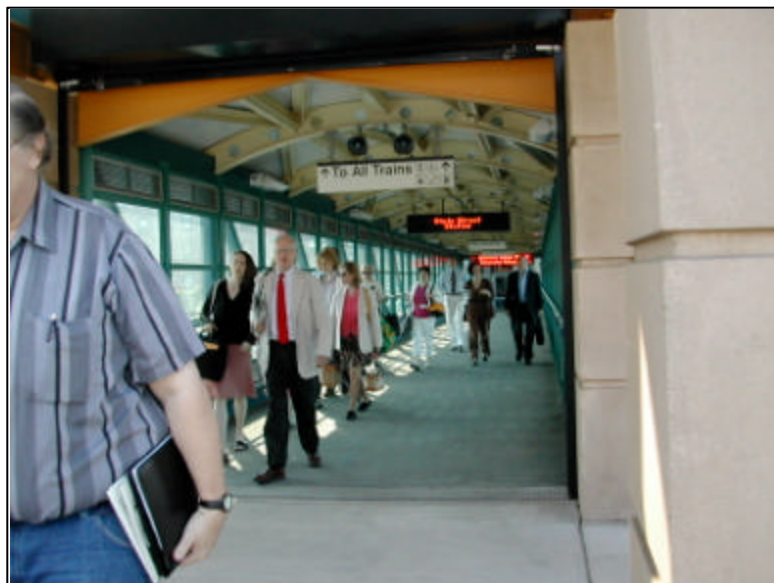
In-neighborhood movements are based on high volume one-way pairs: Church Street and Temple Street function as a north / south pair; Elm

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Street, George Street and Grove Street function east / west. The one-way systems provide much-needed capacity and off-street parking, but impair transit and traffic calming efforts.

On the transit side, Downtown is the central focus of the New Haven Division of the public bus system. The 23 service routes radiate from Downtown to points in all directions with the highest ridership on the D-Dixwell Avenue (3,481 weekday riders), B-Whalley Avneue (3,206) and B-West Haven (3,206). Although population density in and around Downtown support 10-minute transit headways, public bus service reductions have lowered the headways on many peak hour routes. In recent months, bus ridership is down 5%.

Connecticut DOT supports commuter rail access to central New Haven via two carriers: Amtrak/Shoreline East and Metro-North/New Haven Line. Shoreline East trains now stop at the new State Street Station and ridership, which stagnated for several years, is now increasing. More dramatic increases are expected as construction progresses on new shoreline town stations and parking facilities, as well as enhanced headways. Metro-North service (Union Station) is primarily geared toward New York- and Fairfield County-bound commuters with limited reverse commute activity.



**Figure 6.16 Commuters at the new State Street Station.**

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While pedestrian movements in and around Downtown are generally free-flowing, bicycle movements are extremely difficult. There are no signed bicycle routes nor designated bike lanes in Downtown. The Farmington Canal Line is planned as the first dedicated bicycle facility, however, on-street enhancements will be necessary to for a viable system. Bicycle commuting (to Downtown and elsewhere) is highest in East Rock (228 daily commuters).

### *Parking*

There are approximately 10,100 publicly-available off-street parking spaces in and around Downtown New Haven, including 5,300 spaces operated by the New Haven Parking Authority and the balance owned and / or operated by private concerns. Recent utilization studies indicate an emerging parking crunch in the neighborhood, with significant demand in the Elm Street / Orange Street area and south of Chapel Street. On street parking augments the supply and provides transient spaces for hourly users.

In the Elm Street area, market research in support of the proposed “Mid Block” garage, revealed a 91% utilization rate in the surrounding area. Several surface lots are operating well above 100% utilization. The parking crunch impairs full use of several buildings, notably the former SNET headquarters at 227 Church Street. Adaptive reuse of the building for upscale residential use is tied to the development of a new parking garage.

South of the New Haven Green, the closing of the New Haven Coliseum complicates an already tight parking situation. The Coliseum (1,400 spaces) accommodated a number of large users (eg. UI, New Haven Savings Bank) as well as overflow Union Station parking. Short-term needs are largely met by the spacious and recently-renovated Temple Street Garage. Temple Street has 1,247 spaces and capacity to cover growing Ninth Square demands as well the initial build-out of the Chapel Square Mall and office tower. Long-term, the planned relocation of Gateway Community College and a renovation of the former UI headquarters at 80 Temple Street and other projects will require approximately 4,000 new parking spaces south of Chapel Street.

### *Varieties of Use*

Downtown’s energy is derived from the rich mixture of uses and the liveliness of the urban environment. In doing so, Downtown hosts almost every market need and economic sector. This section relates both to infill



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and redevelopment sites and to the opportunities for complementary development in the neighborhood.

First among these opportunities is the need to narrow the widening gap between residential rental and ownership units in the neighborhood. The maximum number of ownership units is just 10% of the neighborhood housing stock and will slip to 8% following completion of three rental projects (410 units) mentioned earlier in this report. The widening gap runs counter to the Zimmerman / Volk report, which estimated a 61% rental and 39% owner split for new residential development. Moreover, the lack of supply is constricting the addition of new, long-term residential stakeholders in the neighborhoods. Residential mixed-use infill opportunities include mid-Block on Crown, the State Street / Audubon Street area and Ninth Square / Gateway.

Likewise, the interest in Downtown as a residential neighborhood suggests the need for broader choices for groceries, pharmacies and general stores. The neighborhood already is the size of a small town and small towns universally have small box grocers and similar establishments. Current conditions certainly suggest diffusion of neighborhood spending power to Whalley Avenue, East Haven and Hamden. One option would be to pursue a medium sized specialty grocer to serve the neighborhood. The Chapel Square Mall is among the more viable opportunities to meet this need.

While the office market is strong and not saturated, considerable attention should be paid to right-sizing the market. As shown by the dramatically high office vacancy rates in Downtown Hartford, office space absorption is long-term and incremental – a process exacerbated by the lack of growth management in the suburbs and the lack of super-large employers (SBC/SNET, etc.). The current climate provides an opportunity to review zoning regulations, encouraging rehabilitation of vacant and Class C spaces and to modify building heights.

There is a limited amount of mixed use activity in the government and professional office spaces. This is particularly the case along Church Street, where there are a limited number of commercial storefronts relative to the amount of commercial office space. Between Chapel Street and Elm Street, there are over 1.2 million s.f. of commercial offices and approximately five storefronts.

Among the more promising office space / mixed use opportunities are the former UI Headquarters at 80 Temple Street and the Shartenberg Site at the

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corner of Chapel Street and State Street. The block of College Street between Crown and George is a similarly attractive area for more intense infill, particularly given the area's proximity to the medical center and Route 34 interchange.

The arts and entertainment cluster inherently right-sizes itself and often leads to transiency in the marketplace. Current conditions are robust and Downtown is widely viewed as a leading destination.

### SITE BASED OPPORTUNITIES

#### *Coliseum / Macy's / Malley's*

Super-block design and high vacancy characterize the southeastern section of Downtown – ironically at the edge of a vibrant Ninth Square. With the closing of the Coliseum and the long-term dormancy of the Macy's Building, this is one of the most challenging, yet exciting development opportunities in the neighborhood. A key anchor – the Knights of Columbus tower – is home to approximately 400 employees. This provides an excellent base to promote residential and ancillary retail development.

These sites are heavily impacted by the highway system with principal connections to Route 34 and heavily used arterials: Church Street, George Street and Frontage Road. The City's concept for the site is the Gateway Plan (as described on page VI.12-13).

Gateway accomplishes two desirable objectives – it extends the Ninth Square development pattern by breaking up the super-block and adding new, complementary uses to the neighborhood. As the plan evolves, these principles should be at the forefront of design development. Moreover, pedestrian – street level - linkages to complementary uses must be emphasized.

#### *80 Temple Street*

The former United Illuminating Company headquarters at 80 Temple Street is uniquely positioned to support the arts and entertainment district and residential development. The building is located in the Chapel Street National Register District and is worthy of preservation. Downtown would be well-served by a single-user (even back-office function) or residential development at this location. Although pedestrian comfort is now limited

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due to the imposing Temple Street Garage and Temple Medical Building, street level commercial services and retail development at 80 Temple would help create a more lively environment.

### *335-367 Orange Street*

This site is used by SBC / SNET as an employee parking lot and is among the most underused developable sites in all of Downtown. The property is 3.3 acres and shares the Orange / Audubon / Grove block only with St. Boniface Church. It is ideally situated as an extension of the residential neighborhood located west of Orange Street and, through residential courtyards, Downtown would benefit from an extension of this urbane development pattern. A parking garage, supporting new mixed use development, the church and surrounding office buildings, would be best placed closer to the State / Grove intersection.

On the east side of State Street – in the Wooster Square neighborhood – surface parking is a similar underuse of central locations. The narrow parcels abut the Northeast Corridor to the rear and make traditional commercial development unlikely. However, there is ample space for a townhouse style residential development. The rear yards and parking could be screened with sound barriers. The frontage, however, would require substantial landscaping and environmental amenities given the traffic volume and width of State Street.

### *George Street / Crown Street / College Street*

Several properties in this block are used as surface parking or are developed at a scale more suited to low-density environments. The area is somewhat of a transitional space between the Oak Street Connector redevelopment effort and the more historic pattern of downtown as seen north of the site along Crown Street. The site, which includes 6 parcels, has a combined acreage of 2 acres, but under 14,000 s.f. of building space. At 7,000 s.f. / acre of land, these sites are well below a Downtown average of 60,000 s.f. / acre. Similarly, total assessed value is approximately \$1.1 million / acre as compared to a Downtown average of \$4.6 million / acre.

Given its location between the new biomedical office building / medical center and Downtown, the area is ideally situated for more intense development. The site could accommodate a much needed parking garage and mixed use development oriented toward Crown Street.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The lively atmosphere and variety of uses make Downtown New Haven a premier destination. The neighborhood is a core component to the regional economy, a thriving residential neighborhood, the home of signature public spaces and is the traditional home of the institutional / government sector. These functions, coupled with the physical structure of the neighborhood and its circulation / communications systems, form the basis of long-term planning for Downtown.

Plan recommendations – organized around Physical Form, Land Use and the Movement of People – are designed to retain a critical mass of sustainable activities: sizing Downtown in a manner that grows the economy and supports an even larger residential population. Future development efforts must be focused on complementary activities that play off the core strengths of the neighborhood.

**Physical Form.** Downtown is a mixed use environment – to a greater extent in the Ninth Square and Audubon Street, but to a lesser extent along Church Street and the George Street area. Both new development and redevelopment activities must be more attentive to mixed use and quality site planning. This is accomplished as follows:

*Historic Preservation and Contextual Infill Development.* In the neighborhood's National Register Historic Districts, preservation is the guiding principle for new development. While not practical or financially viable in every instance, adherence to a preservation-based philosophy will ensure high quality efforts across a broad spectrum of uses. The Commission recommends thoughtful consideration to converting the existing national districts (Chapel Street, Ninth Square, Orange Street and the Green) to local districts.

*Site Plan and Design Review.* For both significant development and minor alterations, site plan review and a much needed design review process are recommended. The approach would be a Zoning Ordinance revision to account for the elevated review of Downtown projects and the development of appropriate design standards. This review is intended to maximize mixed use, contextual design and synergy with surrounding uses. Close attention should be paid to the scale of new development, location of parking, pedestrian level comfort, storefront retail, provisions for transit and cyclists, etc.

*Streetscape Details.* Pedestrian comfort can be vastly improved through attention to public and private signage as well as better organization of street furniture. Signage standards – including a prohibition on pole signs – is recommended.

*New Haven Green.* The New Haven Green remains the focal point of Downtown and a signature region-wide asset. That said, the Green is remarkably under-protected from a regulatory perspective. A formal process can be accomplished through designation of the Green as a Local Historic District, under the regulatory purview of the New Haven Historical Commission.

**Land Use.** While Downtown will always be home to a wide and diverse set of land uses, there is a continuing concern about the nature of new development and stand-alone development which is incompatible with the prevailing fabric of the neighborhood. Of particular concern are stand-alone big box retail, drive-up service windows, free-standing signs and surface parking areas.

*Residential Land Use.* The most immediate and pressing need Downtown is an increase in ownership housing – either condominiums or cooperative apartment developments. While the increase in rentals is beneficial to the Downtown economy, long-term sustainability will be driven by stakeholders with an equity interest in the neighborhood. Infill development between East Rock and the northern tier of Downtown is a priority opportunity (Audubon Street extension). Likewise, the George / Crown Street area is underserved.

*Commercial Land Use.* The office market withstood a blistering recession and has emerged as a leading destination in Connecticut. Although there is limited opportunity for substantial new development, the plan emphasizes infill opportunities at 80 Temple Street, 900 Chapel Street and renovations to Class B and Class C properties along Church Street. Likewise, the Commission encourages complementary retail in storefronts. Stand-alone retail is discouraged, unless accompanied by an upper floor mixed use environment. The retail environment should cater to residents as well as the business and visitor communities. With that in mind, the Commission encourages development of a specialty format grocer, pharmacy and dry goods/general store.

*Institutional Land Use.* The proposed Gateway Community College and the renovations / new developments at Yale University are central to the long-term viability of the neighborhood. The Commission emphasizes that the nature and location of proposed development should be mindful of (a) protection of the grand list and taxable property; (b) design which encourages an outward presence and free flow of people; (c) appropriate placement and adequacy of parking / transportation systems; and (d) concentration of facilities and efficient use of current lands.

**Movement of People.** Access, mobility and parking are among the most perplexing issues for the neighborhood. The recommendations herein provide a broad policy outline to coincide with capital improvement programming.

*Street System.* While considerable attention and study has been paid to the complexities of the one-way system, the need for on-street parking and the considerable volume of traffic on arterial roads leaves few opportunities to modify the system. Two-way systems may be possible (subject to more detailed study) on York Street and College Street.

*Parking.* The need for parking, in advance and support of new development, has been demonstrated. Focus and attention is directed toward development of the Mid-Block Garage and a multi-facility strategy south of Chapel Street. Although not located in the neighborhood, the lack of parking at the medical facilities and at Union Station will continue to have a deleterious effect on supply and must be seen as a Downtown-related issue. The plan discourages surface parking and, if approved, parking should be time restricted. The time restriction will provide for an annual review of the marketplace and development potential. A licensing program, including development and signage standards – both for new and existing facilities – is encouraged.

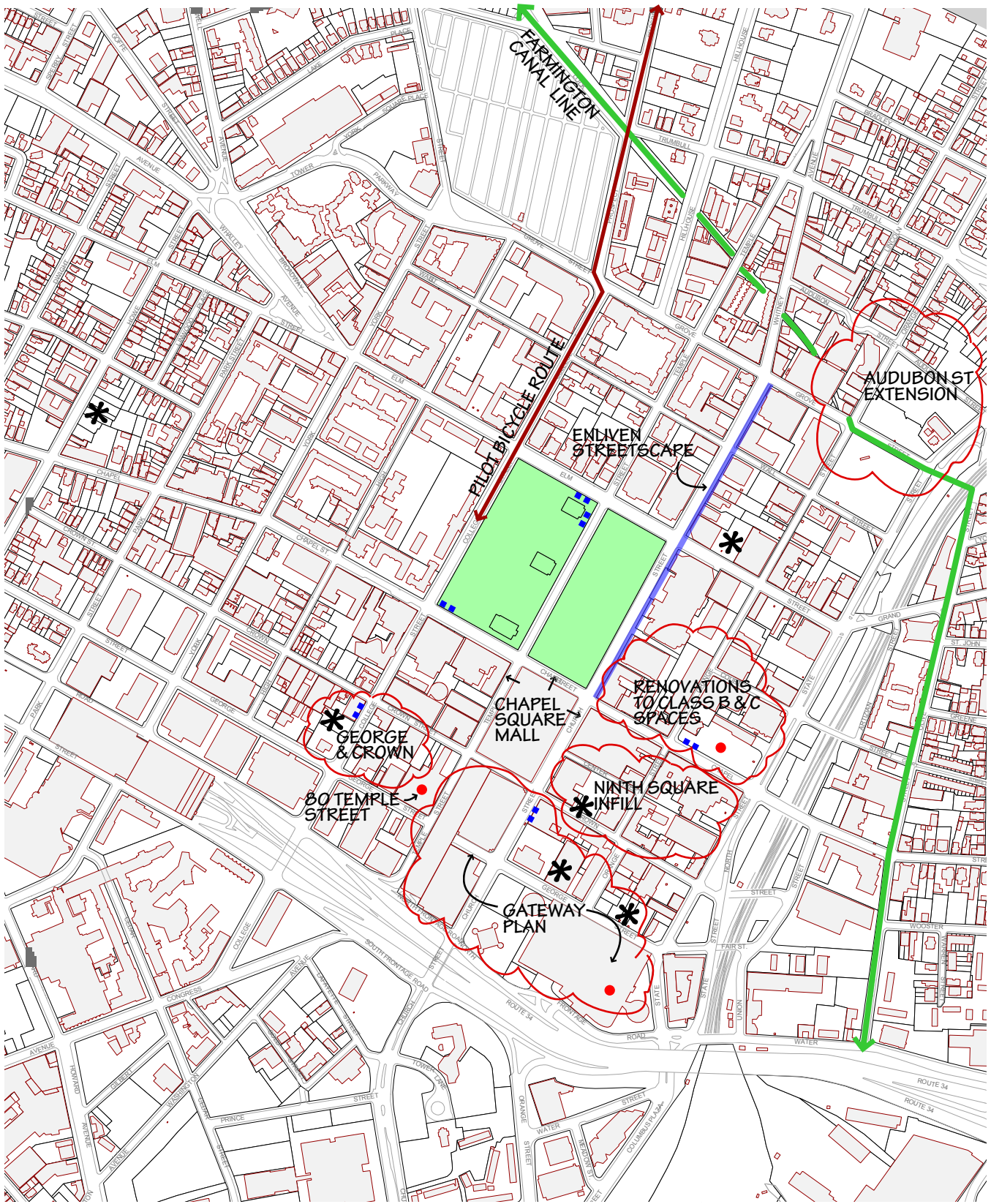
*Transit.* Continuing reductions in the public bus system are not sustainable and must be reversed. The density in the neighborhood, and in many of the surrounding environs, supports 10-minute headways, especially at peak times. Improvements and better marketing of the system to discretionary riders will ultimately benefit the neighborhood. Concurrently, improved facilities for transit users – shelters, waiting areas, etc. – are encouraged.

*Non Motorized Transportation.* As a top priority, the City of New Haven and Yale must complete the Farmington Canal Greenway. Likewise, the need to share the roadways with bicyclists is clear and beneficial for the

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neighborhood. Abutting residential areas – Wooster Square, Dwight, Dixwell and East Rock – are located close enough to encourage a bike-to-work environment. As part of the regular roadway maintenance program, designated bike lanes and shared lane signage is encouraged.

*Highway System.* Improvements to Route 34 and the congestion in and around Downtown ramps impede the growth and development of the neighborhood. The area is well-suited to be an urban boulevard with more pedestrian-friendly connections across the highway.



## Downtown New Haven Opportunities

- \* Parking Opportunities
- Transit-Oriented Development
- Transit Improvements

