

## DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES BRIEFING BOOKLET

### Overview

This “briefing booklet” has been prepared as part of the process of preparing an update to the 2010 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) for Ridgefield.

This booklet is intended to familiarize members of the Planning and Zoning Commission and others with existing and potential future strategies related to:

- Ridgefield Center,
- Branchville,
- Economic development,
- Business development, and
- Housing and residential development.

*Sustainable  
development is  
the pathway to  
the future we  
want for all.”*

Ban Ki-Moon  
UN Secretary General

Ridgefield Center



Branchville



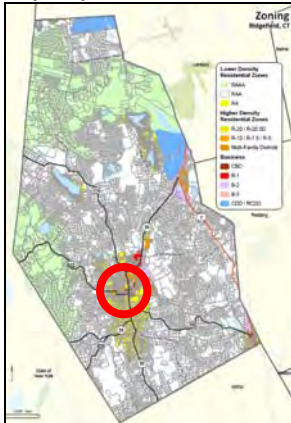
Business / Economic Development



Housing / Residential Development



Key Map



## Maintain And Enhance Ridgefield Center

### POSSIBLE NEW GOAL STATEMENT

*Maintain and enhance the vitality of Ridgefield Center.*

Ridgefield Center is the “heart and soul” of the community in many respects. When people are asked to describe Ridgefield, the Center is central in people’s description and is often the first thing mentioned.

It is informative to reflect on the changes in Ridgefield Center over the last few decades. The Center was once an integral part of people’s daily lives and they would visit frequently to visit shops, buy groceries, buy clothing, catch up on the news of the day and other things. Now, a number of those types of stores are no longer in the Center and people have become more inclined to frequent stores located elsewhere or buy things over the Internet.

A key issue for the POCD is to keep Ridgefield Center vibrant and attractive and relevant to the needs of the community. Ridgefield Center should continue to be the major community focal point and the business, civic, institutional, and cultural center of the Town.

As noted in the 2009 Ridgefield Center Study and the 2010 POCD, issues related to Ridgefield Center include:

1. **Maintaining Character** – Maintaining building architecture and streetscapes (the overall appearance and ambience) is important since this contributes so much to Ridgefield’s character.
2. **Curating Uses** - Concerns have been expressed about how to promote a vibrant mixed-use / pedestrian-friendly environment and how to encourage or require “active uses” (such as shops and restaurants) at street level.
3. **Addressing Parking** –Parking is often perceived to be an issue since people want to park within sight of their destination and employees and workers can occupy the spaces most attractive to customers.
4. **Prioritizing Pedestrians** – With an aging population (and for people with mobility impairments), improving the accessibility of buildings, parking areas, sidewalks, and crosswalks is an important consideration.
5. **Addressing Traffic**– Traffic congestion can be an issue at times since “all roads lead to the Center” and there is an intricate inter-relationship between regional traffic patterns, traffic volumes, signalized intersections, pedestrian activity, on-street parking, and curb cuts.

## 2009 Ridgefield Center Study - Overview

A 2009 Ridgefield Center Study, prepared for the Planning and Zoning Commission with the assistance of Milone & MacBroom, examined the Central Business District in downtown Ridgefield. The study assessed current conditions and provided recommendations for improvements.

The study focused on:

- parking,
- traffic circulation,
- pedestrian circulation, and
- directional signage for public services and amenities.

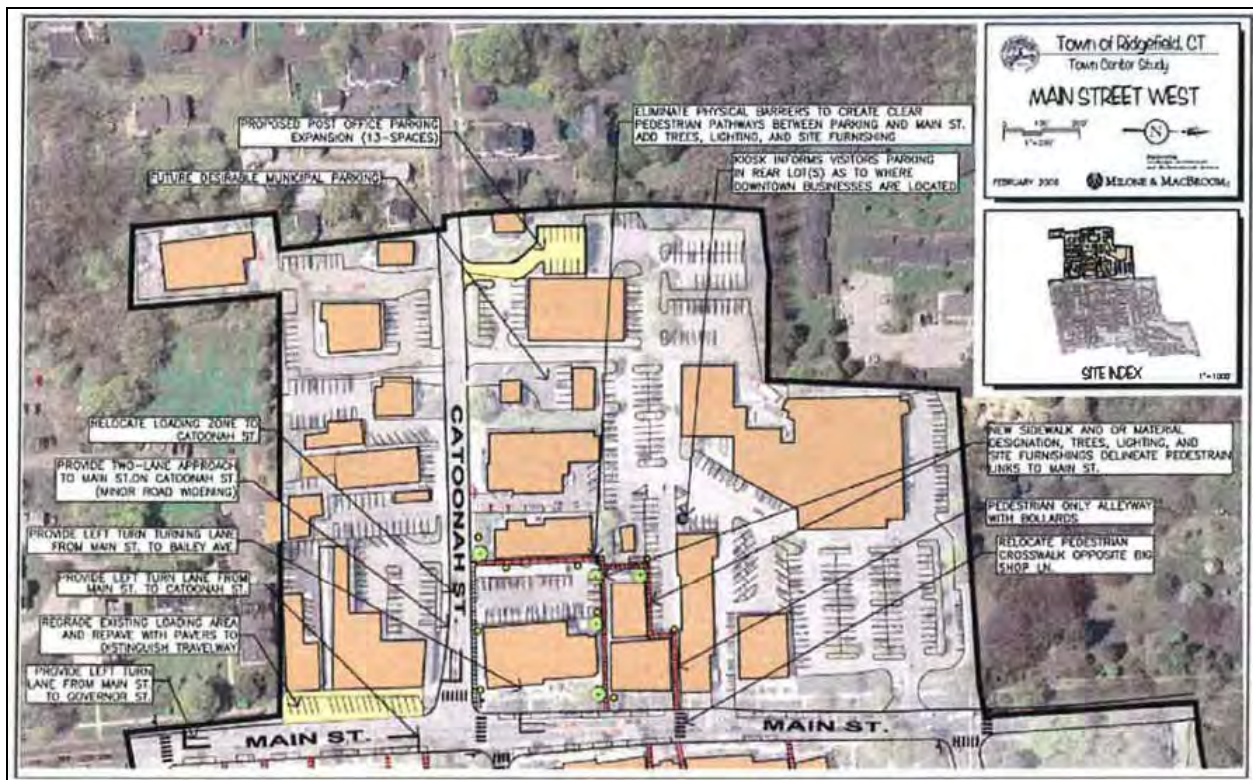
The main graphics summarizing the recommendation are shown on pages 3-4 and a summary of recommendations is presented on page 5.

The 2009 Ridgefield Center Study is incorporated as a part of this POCD.

## On-Going Activities

The Town is working with the Connecticut Department of Transportation to improve traffic operations on Main Street (Route 35), particularly the intersection with Prospect Street.

The Town is in the process of creating a 60-car parking lot on Governor Street to provide for parking for downtown employees and visitors.

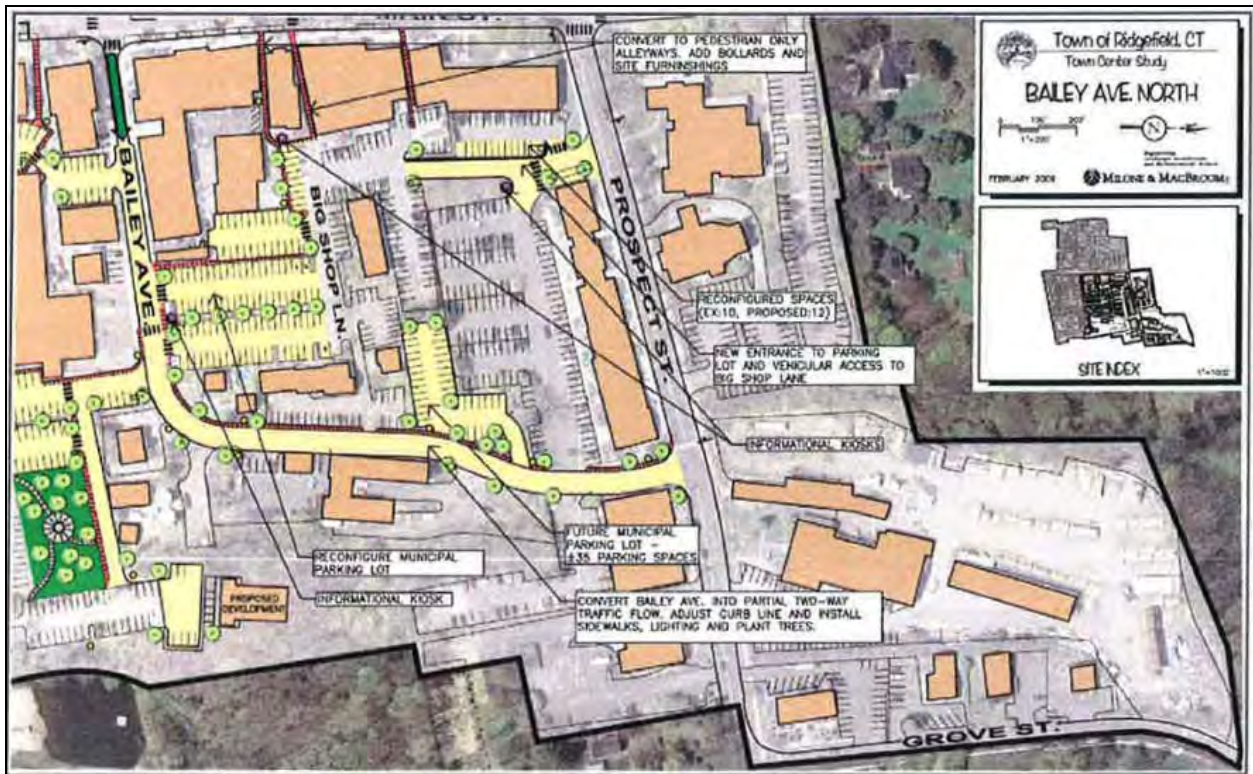


Milone & MacBroom





Milone & MacBroom



Milone & MacBroom

## Center Study – Summary of Recommendations

### Traffic and Circulation

1. Continue to work with Connecticut Department of Transportation to plan and implement improvements to Route 35 (ADT = 15,000 vehicles per day)
2. Convert Bailey Avenue to two-way traffic from the Town Hall parking lot to Prospect Street including road, sidewalk, and streetscape improvements
3. Close alleyways on Main Street to vehicular traffic to direct movement to the signalized intersections
4. Improve vehicular connection/circulation between:
  - a. Governor Street and Bailey Avenue
  - b. Bailey Avenue and Prospect Street

### Parking

1. Install directional signs to direct traffic to municipal parking areas
2. Reconfigure / expand parking and improve connections:
  - a. between Bailey Avenue and Big Shop Lane and Prospect Street
  - b. between Governor Street and Bailey Avenue
  - c. Expand the Post Office parking lot
3. Upgrade the municipal parking lot(s) with site lighting

### Pedestrian Facilities

1. Enhance pedestrian pathways (trees, lighting, and site furnishings) and eliminate physical barriers
2. Provide and improve pedestrian crosswalks (such as realigning the pedestrian crosswalk on Main Street to align with Big Shop Lane)
3. Convert alleyways off Main Street to exclusively pedestrian uses and add lighting and amenities to enrich the pedestrian experience
4. Install kiosks/ wayfinding signage at strategic locations to inform visitors of business locations and Town Center pathways

### Management Options for Town Center

1. Create a unified design palette for streetscape improvements (lights, benches, etc.) and signage
2. Consider participating in the Connecticut Main Street Program
3. Consider creation of a "special services district" (CGS Section 7-339m) to provide for and manage common services desired by Ridgefield Center businesses

### Parking Adequacy

While some people remark that they can "never" find parking in Ridgefield Center, available information indicates adequate parking is available.

The 2009 Ridgefield Center Study reported there were 1,501 parking spaces in Ridgefield Center at that time. The Study reported that this number of parking spaces is greater than what the Zoning Regulations (due in part to a shared parking factor used in the CBD zone).

With 456,296 square feet of floor area in the CBD study area, the 1,501 parking spaces works out to an overall parking ratio of about 3.3 spaces per 1,000 SF of floor area. Studies of mixed-use downtown / village areas have found that parking availability of 3.0 spaces per 1,000 SF of floor area is generally adequate to meet needs.

So, while Ridgefield may have enough parking spaces overall, the parking available may not be in the location where people want it when they want it. For example, if all the most convenient spaces for shoppers are occupied by employees, visitors will feel they can "never" find parking.

Assigning parking areas by use / function / location may be one way to help address this situation.



## Legend

On this page (and similar pages in the POCD, the bold text (with a letter designation) identifies a potential POCD “strategy” intended to provide overall direction.

The black text in the tables are “policies” which provide general guidance for local actions. Policies are generally on-going and may never be considered “implemented.

The red text in the tables are “action steps” which outline specific tasks which can be taken to implement POCD strategies.

**Do these policies and action steps make sense for Ridgefield?**

**Are there any policies or action steps you feel should be added?**

## Possible Strategies For 2020 POCD

### A. Maintain And Enhance Vibrancy

1. Maintain and enhance the vibrancy and vitality of Ridgefield Center.
2. Seek to maintain Ridgefield Center as the community focal point and as a destination within the region and beyond.

### B. Maintain And Enhance Character

1. Maintain Ridgefield Center as a “village district” so that exterior building alterations and other development will enhance the Center’s overall character.

### C. Carefully Curate Uses

1. Strive to maintain a vibrant mixture of business, civic and residential uses in Ridgefield Center.
2. Encourage or require “active” street level uses in key areas in order to maintain an active, vibrant, and inviting pedestrian experience.
3. Discourage or prevent the introduction of “passive uses” (such as office uses) at street level if that would detract from the overall pedestrian experience.
4. Continue to allow mixed use buildings (with residential units) provided the residential units are not at street level or below (as provided in ZR Section 5.1.D.6).
5. Seek to attract a hotel or other lodging facility in Ridgefield Center.

### D. Address Parking Issues

1. Seek an appropriate balance between short-term (shoppers and visitors) and long-term (employees) parking which meets the needs of all users.
2. Retain a parking consultant to conduct a parking analysis for Ridgefield Center to optimize the configuration of existing parking in Ridgefield Center.
3. Investigate pavement marking, signage, and way-finding to direct employees and visitors to parking spaces specifically configured to meeting their needs.
4. Undertake improvements to better interconnect existing parking areas to create a more efficient parking layout and circulation scheme.
5. Investigate licensing arrangements or other approaches that would result in Town-managed parking areas and development flexibility for property owners.

## E. Improve The Pedestrian Experience

1.	Maintain sidewalks and pedestrian pathways, enhance them with trees, lighting, and site furnishings, and eliminate physical barriers.
2.	Install kiosks/ wayfinding signage at strategic locations to inform visitors of business locations and Town Center sidewalks and pathways.
3.	Increase and enhance pedestrian crosswalks (such as installing “bump-outs to shorten the pedestrian crossing distance and realign the pedestrian crosswalk on Main Street to align with Big Shop Lane).
4.	Convert alleyways off Main Street to exclusively pedestrian uses and add lighting and amenities to enrich the pedestrian experience.
5.	Improve mobility and accessibility for mobility impaired people.

## F. Address Traffic Issues

1.	Continue to work with Connecticut Department of Transportation to plan and implement improvements to Route 35.
2.	Investigate converting Bailey Avenue to two-way traffic from the Town Hall parking lot to Prospect Street including road, sidewalk, and streetscape improvements.
3.	Seek to close alleyways on Main Street to vehicular traffic to direct movement to the signalized intersections.
4.	Improve vehicular connection/circulation between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Governor Street and Bailey Avenue</li><li>b. Bailey Avenue and Prospect Street</li></ul>

## G. Address Other Issues / Opportunities

1.	Consider undertaking a “visioning charrette” for Ridgefield Center.
2.	Establish a unified design palette for streetscape improvements (lights, benches, etc.) and signage.
3.	Consider participating in the Connecticut Main Street Program (including the possible establishment of a Main Street manager).
4.	Consider creation of a "special services district" (CGS Section 7-339m) to provide for and manage common services desired by Ridgefield Center businesses

### CT Main Street Program

The Connecticut Main Street Center (CMSC) is part of a nationwide program to promote and support downtown revitalization.

CMSC uses a four point approach helping communities with the following elements:

- Organization
- Promotion
- Design
- Restructuring

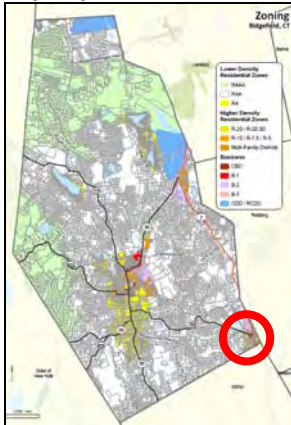
[ctmainstreet.org](http://ctmainstreet.org)

### Special Services Districts

A special services district allows property owners within a defined area to establish an entity for providing common services.

The management of the district is overseen by the property owners. Upon request by the property owners, the Town can utilize its staff and resources to collect the fees and dues.

Key Map



## Strengthen Branchville As A Focal Point

**POSSIBLE  
NEW GOAL  
STATEMENT**

***Strengthen Branchville as a pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented village area.***

Branchville is a unique area located in the southeast corner of Ridgefield at the intersection of Routes 7 and 102. Branchville was once the place where a “branch” railroad line connected from the Danbury – Norwalk main line to Ridgefield Center. The railroad station is still active although the branch line is now a pedestrian trail. Over 20,000 vehicles travel through Branchville on Route 7 every day.

Several studies of Branchville have been conducted over the last two decades and they are summarized below.

### 2002 Branchville Village Plan

Following the 1999 POCD and in anticipation of possible plans to reconfigure the intersection of Route 7 and Route 102, a Branchville Village Plan was prepared suggesting ways to identify, maintain and enhance village characteristics of this area. This Plan was referred to in the 2010 POCD.

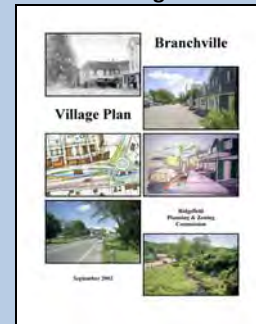
The Plan outlined:

- the issues and choices facing Branchville at that time,
- important principles of villages, and
- recommendations for putting it all together.

The main recommendations included:

- encouraging / requiring village-style development,
- encouraging re-establishment of the Branchville Village Association,
- promoting “context sensitive design” for any road improvements,
- establishing a new Branchville Village zone and designating it as a “village district”,
- enhancing transit linkages, and
- providing appropriate infrastructure to support development.

2002 Village Plan





## 2017 Transit-Oriented Development Plan

The 2017 Transit-Oriented Development Plan was prepared to look at ways to encourage pedestrian-friendly (and transit-friendly) development in the Branchville area. The process involved considerable public input through surveys and design workshops (called charrettes).

The main village improvement strategies included:

- Provide pedestrian enhancements and improve key intersections
- Develop greenway and provide riverfront enhancements
- Encourage infill development oriented around a new “Main Street”
- Provide wastewater infrastructure

The main mobility enhancement strategies included:

- Roadway improvements such as realigning the Route 102/Route 7 intersection and other improvements
- Pedestrian improvements such as a sidewalk network, a greenway along and bridges across the Norwalk River and a pathway connection
- Bus stops and shelters

Development scenarios were evaluated and the preferred option is presented below. Sample zoning changes to enable the development program are contained in that report.

The main challenge is the availability of sewage capacity (public sewer, community septic, individual septic) to support the development program.

Preferred Development Concept



### Development Program

If fully built out, the preferred development plan showed the potential in Ridgefield for:

- 38,000 SF of commercial space,
- 189 apartment units, and
- 192 townhouse units.

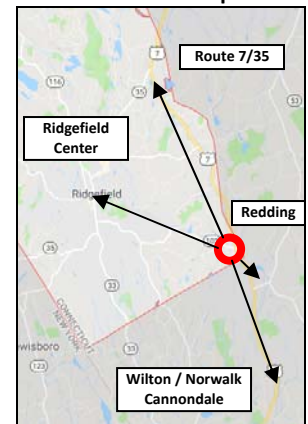
Additional development potential was shown for Redding and/or Wilton.

### Fiscal Impact

If fully built out, the estimated market value of property in the study area might increase from about \$21 million to about \$193 million.

In Ridgefield, the increased development could produce approximately \$2.2 million in annual property tax revenue at full buildout.

### Sewer Connection Options?



**Do these policies and action steps make sense for Ridgefield?**

**Are there any policies or action steps you feel should be added?**

#### Tax Increment Financing

Tax Increment Finance (TIF) is a strategy whereby anticipated future tax increases are allocated to paying for public improvements that encourage new development. The public improvements could include a sewer extension to serve the Branchville area.

For example, the fiscal impact analysis suggests that an additional \$2.2 million of annual tax revenue could be generated in the station area at full buildout. If the TIF were structured to set aside 50% of new tax revenue, as much as \$1.1 million of annual revenue could be reinvested in the station area with the Town of Ridgefield still receiving \$1.1 million in new tax revenue.

## Possible Strategies For 2020 POCD

### A. Strengthen Branchville as a Focal Point

1. Continue efforts to strengthen Branchville as a distinct community focal point.
2. Incorporate the 2017 Transit-Oriented Development Plan as an element of this POCD.
3. Replace the existing zoning with a new Branchville zone.
4. As part of any new Branchville zone, consider designating it as a “village district” as authorized by CGS Section 8-2j in order to help maintain the distinct character of the village area and enhance it as new development occurs.
5. Consider requiring a housing affordability component in any new residential development in Branchville.
6. Work with the Connecticut Department of Transportation to make transportation and mobility improvements that are appropriate for Branchville.
7. Continue to pursue a diversity of funding sources to assist in planning and infrastructure enhancements.
8. Solicit state funding (and identify town funds) for the design and construction of transportation enhancements in the station area.
9. Expand wastewater and drinking water infrastructure.
10. Seek ways to provide for wastewater infrastructure in Branchville:
  - a. Option A: Connect to existing facilities
    - Ridgefield Center or Route 7/35
    - The Georgetown facility in Redding (currently 100% allocated)
    - The Wilton - Norwalk system in Cannondale
  - b. Option B: Dispose of wastewater locally via a community system
11. Seek ways to expand drinking water infrastructure to the east side of the Norwalk River.
12. Consider establishing a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district that corresponds with the new Branchville Zone (when created).

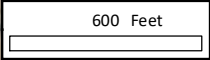


# Branchville

Ridgefield, CT

Redding

Wilton





## Grand List Goal

The Town should continue to pursue a strong tax base and net tax revenue to support the Town's ability to provide quality services.

The 1999 POCD promoted a goal of maintaining the non-residential tax base between 15 to 25 percent of the Grand List. However, this goal became challenging since residential development and housing values accelerated faster than business development. As a result, the non-residential component of the Grand List decreased (from 16% in 1999 to 13% in 2010 to about 11% in 2018).

During the same period though, there were some residential-type developments which enhanced the overall tax base and provided more in tax revenue than they required in municipal services. As the age composition of the community changes, there is also a realization that "empty nesters" and senior citizens also provide more in tax revenue than they require in municipal service costs.

## Encourage Economic Development

**POSSIBLE  
NEW GOAL  
STATEMENT**

***Encourage economic development appropriate for Ridgefield.***

For the POCD, economic development is considered to include uses and activities that:

- Provide jobs for residents of Ridgefield and the region,
- Provide goods and services for residents, businesses and visitors,
- Enhance the tax base, and/or
- Provide net tax revenue to support local services.

While business development (stores, offices, manufacturing, research and development, etc.) was historically considered to be the main focus of economic development efforts, the focus has grown in recent years to include other uses (including residential uses) which provide one or more of the above attributes. For example, assisted living facilities and age-restricted housing can provide more in tax revenue than they require in municipal services and can be considered a form of economic development.

**Business Development**



**Office Development**



**"Empty Nester Housing"**



**Assisted Living**

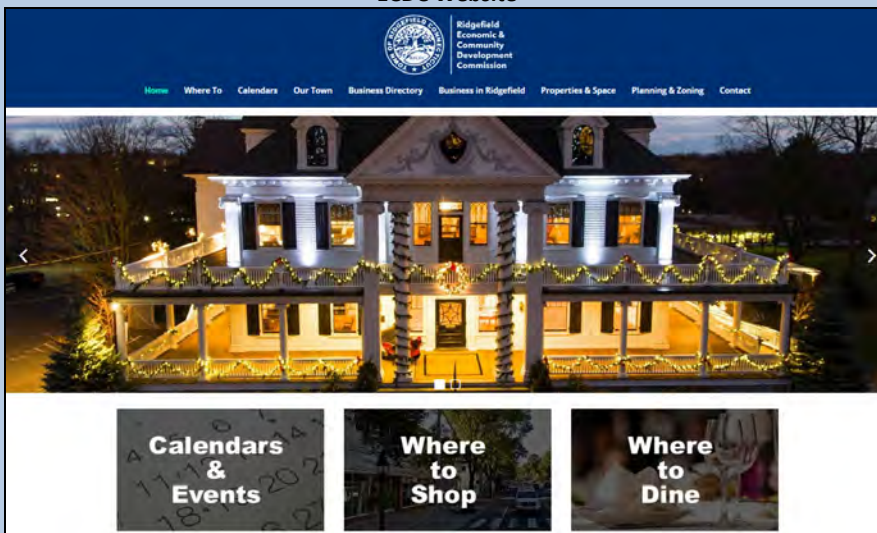


Ridgefield has an Economic and Community Development Commission (ECDC) which is active in promoting the community and encouraging appropriate economic development. The ECDC has a five-point plan for promoting economic development in Ridgefield (paraphrased below).

## **ECDC Five Point Plan**

- 1. Preserve Ridgefield's Image and Personality**
  - a. Safeguard Ridgefield's unique "Norman Rockwell" persona.
  - b. Promote Ridgefield as a leading Cultural and Arts destination.
- 2. Strive for Sustainable Economic Growth**
  - a. Identify best practices that can support all existing businesses.
  - b. Secure new tenants that would significantly increase foot traffic and contribute meaningful tax revenue.
  - c. Identify short and long term parking solutions.
- 3. Geographic Focus**
  - a. Focus initially on Ridgefield Center.
  - b. Promote and support potential Branchville TOD development.
  - c. Support implementation of an approved Schlumberger Plan.
- 4. Innovation & Branding**
  - a. Develop active marketing supported by the ECDC website.
- 5. Improved Coordination & Communication**

### **ECDC Website**



### **Economic Studies / Plans**

The following economic development studies / reports have been prepared in the last 10 years:

- Economic Development Action Plan (Garnet Consulting, 2010)
- Retail Leakage Report (Bartram and Cochran, 2013)
- Economic Development Strategic Plan (Kevin Dwarka,, 2014)
- Main Street Retail Development (SCRE Advisors, 2016)
- Opportunities For Economic Development (Camoin Associates, 2019)

As part of the POCD process, Camoin Associates was asked to evaluate conditions and trends affecting economic development in Ridgefield and provide additional insight to economic development circumstances and opportunities in Ridgefield.



**Build Ridgefield's Brand Around Arts and Tourism**



**Connect and Grow Downtown Assets & Amenities**



**Continue Improving Access to Downtown**



**Invest in Branchville**





## Possible Strategies For 2020 POCD

### A. Promote Economic Development

- |  |
|--|
| 1. Promote appropriate economic development in Ridgefield in order to:<br>a. Provide jobs for residents of Ridgefield and the region,<br>b. Provide goods and services for residents, businesses and visitors,<br>c. Enhance the tax base, and/or<br>d. Provide net tax revenue to support local services. |
| 2. Strategically coordinate town marketing.  |
| 3. Hire/assign staff to assist in economic development efforts.  |
| 4. Help the ECDC with their goal to create economic growth with new strategic retailers to enhance the business community.   |
| 5. Build awareness of the ECDC website ( <a href="http://ridgefeldddevelopment.com">ridgefeldddevelopment.com</a> ) through coordinated digital marketing.   |
| 6. Drive entrepreneurs and businesses to lease Ridgefield's commercial office space.   |
| 7. Facilitate a "Make Ridgefield Business Friendly" strategy.  |
| 8. Partner with the Arts Council, Downtown Ridgefield, Chamber and other civic organizations to coordinate and schedule Town events and coordinate marketing with broader reach within Fairfield and Westchester counties.   |
| 9. Participate in the Western Connecticut Economic Development District.   |
| 10. Support State enabling legislation for "municipal cultural districts" and then participate for the benefit of Ridgefield businesses and organizations.   |

Ridgefield Playhouse



Aldrich Museum



## Guide Business Development

2010 POCD GOAL STATEMENT	<i>Guide business development in appropriate areas.</i>
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The overall goal of this part of the POCD is to guide business development and activities to:

- encourage business development within existing business zones,
- minimizing the conversion of business land to residential uses,
- provide for adequate transitions to adjacent residential uses, and
- promote coordinated development (more efficient parking, access management, fewer curb cuts and more cross-connections between sites).

Through its historic development practices (and zoning regulations), Ridgefield has mostly been able to avoid negative “strip” or “sprawl” development in its commercial areas. Since Ridgefield Center and Branchville are discussed separately, this section of the POCD focuses on:

- the Copps Hill area on Route 35,
- the intersection of Routes 7 and 35,
- the other parts of the Route 7 corridor, and
- large office and research parks.

Due to the configuration of the roadway system and the availability of utility infrastructure, these locations (along with Ridgefield Center and Branchville) are logical business locations within the overall community fabric and should be maintained.

**Copps Hill Area (Route 35)**



**Gateway Area (Route 7 @ 35)**



# Business Zones

Ridgefield, CT

Bethel

Danbury

Redding

Weston

Wilton

State of  
New York



5,000 Feet

**Business Zones**

- Central Business District
- Business-1
- Business-2
- Business-3
- Neighborhood Business
- Corporate Development
- CDD Area Preserved as Open Space

George Washington Hwy

Ridgebury Rd

Limestone Rd

Barrack Hill Rd

Farmingville Rd

Florida Hill Rd

Peaceable St

Whipstick Rd

Silver Spring Rd

Nod Rd

116

822

35

7

35

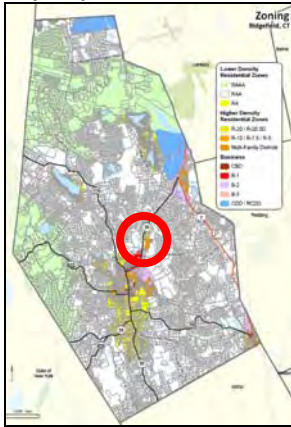
835

33

102



**Key Map**



### **Copps Hill Area (Route 35)**

The commercial development in the Copps Hill area functions primarily as a place where goods and services are available to Ridgefield residents.

General planning principles for this area include:

- Promote development with “village” characteristics
- Minimize or avoid parking areas between the building and street
- Enhance the streetscape appearance along Route 35
- Encourage attractive signs
- Expand and enhance sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities
- Promote rear access roads to help minimize traffic impacts
- Encourage access management along the roadway
- Limiting the roadway to a 2-lane configuration (with turning lanes) to the extent feasible

It may make sense to review the business zoning along Route 35 and the location / configuration of the B-1 / B-2 / B-3 zones to see if it is reasonably configured for the uses already there.

**Copps Hill Area**



### **Gateway Area (Route 7 @ Route 35)**

The gateway area at Routes 7 / 35 has evolved over the years from a historically manufacturing focus (the Benrus Plant) to a mixed use area. Development is constrained by topography and surrounding development patterns. Traffic volumes in this area range from 15,600 average daily traffic (ADT) on Route 35 to 18,200 ADT on Route 7 south of Route 35 and 31,800 ADT on Route 7 north of Route 35.

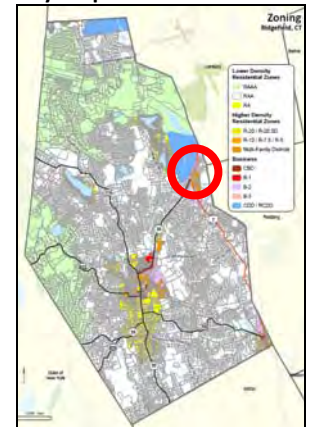
General planning principles for this area include:

- Seek to minimize “strip” development patterns
- Seek to minimize or avoid parking areas between the building and street
- Enhance the streetscape along Route 7 and Route 35
- Encourage attractive signs
- Expand and enhance sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities
- Encourage access management along the roadway

As part of an effort to provide for additional business uses in this area (to try and capture business from the roadway travelers and to capture some of the “retail leakage” in Ridgefield), the Neighborhood Business Zone was established.



### **Key Map**



During the term of this POCD, it may make sense to review the overall zoning in this area to ensure it is reasonably configured for community needs.

- Driveway modifications (reconfiguration, closing, etc.),
- Creating or improving interconnections between properties (shared driveways)

- the Town's desire to avoid strip-style commercial development and large retail developments in this corridor,
- the desire to maintain the rural character of the corridor in Ridgefield.

- examine the amount of vacant land and development potential;
- look at ownership of parcels in the corridor;
- determine the types of business and other non-residential uses that might be appropriate; and
- consider zoning revisions that will promote appropriate use of properties while controlling the scale and size of developments consistent with the limitations of transportation services and infrastructure.

The Town should continue promoting corporate park development and attracting and maintaining office, research, and development facilities. Efforts by local officials, including the Economic and community Development Commission, will play a critical role.

Ridgefield has adaptive reuse provisions (ZR Section 3.2.C.6) for the Route 7 corridor and a small portion of Main Street near the intersection with Route 116 which allows for the utilization of existing buildings (typically historic residential structures or significant residential “streetscapes”) for low intensity non-residential uses provided that the residential character of the area is maintained. The Town should continue to allow adaptive reuse and consider expanding its applicability to other major corridors in Ridgefield.

Ridgefield has provisions for home based businesses (ZR Section 3.3) where the type of approval required depends on the nature / intensity of the business activity. Since there are many occasions when people may work out of their homes, such regulations are important. Some home-based business activities require a Special Permit and the regulatory controls in place with this regulatory approach seem to be appropriate. Ridgefield should continue this approach in the future (but modify it, if needed).



## Possible Strategies For 2020 POCD

### A. Guide Business Development

1. Promote business development in areas already zoned for business use.
2. Continue to encourage enhancements to the appearance of business properties gateways.
3. Seek to avoid the conversion of business-zoned land to residential uses.
4. Continue to encourage / require adequate transitions to adjacent residential uses.
5. Continue to promote coordinated development (more efficient parking, access management, fewer curb cuts and more cross-connections between sites),
6. Seek to implement the general planning principles for the Coppins Hill area.
7. Review the business zoning in the Coppins Hill area and the location / configuration of the B-1 / B-2 / B-3 zones to see if it is reasonably configured.
8. Seek to implement the general planning principles for the Gateway area (Route 7 @ Route 35).
9. Review the business zoning in the Gateway area (Route 7 @ Route 35) to ensure it is reasonably configured for community needs.
10. Consider undertaking a zoning study of the Route 7 corridor to determine whether business or other non-residential uses might be appropriate while controlling the scale and size of developments.
11. Continue to promote the full utilization corporate parks.
12. Continue allowing adaptive reuse of historic structures and residences in significant streetscapes along major roadways.
13. Consider expanding adaptive reuse of historic structures and residences in significant streetscapes along other major roadways.
14. Maintain provisions for home based businesses.
15. Review provisions for home based businesses, if needed, to adapt to changing times.

Do these policies and action steps make sense for Ridgefield?

Are there any policies or action steps you feel should be added?

## Residential Pattern

The intended residential pattern for Ridgefield going forward will continue to be:

- predominantly single family development,
- higher densities in and near villages (Ridgefield Center and possibly Branchville), and
- a reduction of density as the distance from the villages increases.

This residential approach generally reflects the development potential based on terrain, soil types, the natural carrying capacity of the land, infrastructure availability, and historic patterns of development.

## Guide Residential Development

<b>2010 POCD GOAL STATEMENT</b>	<b><i>Promote a variety of housing types while retaining the overall character of Ridgefield.</i></b>
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While Ridgefield has focused mainly on single-family residential development for the last seven decades or so, the age composition of the community is changing and there is a growing realization that Ridgefield can, and should, diversify its housing portfolio to provide for a variety of housing types. This section focuses on and addressing changing housing needs while retaining the predominantly (but not exclusively) single-family residential character of Ridgefield.

With about 90% of Ridgefield zoned for residential uses and more than 25 percent of the land area preserved as open space, the rural and residential character of Ridgefield will be maintained.

### Single-Family Residential Development

The zoning regulations seem to working effectively at managing uses and activities on existing single-family residential parcels. Ridgefield has adopted lot coverage and floor area limitations and these provisions, in addition to other standards, appear to be working well.

Non-residential uses in residential zones should be carefully managed to help protect residential neighborhoods and residential character. While activities operated by non-profit organizations (churches, golf clubs, etc.) have generally operated in ways compatible with their settings, profit-making ventures may have a higher threshold to meet in terms of neighborhood compatibility.

The Commission should undertake a review of the following Zoning Regulations as they pertain to residential districts:

- non-residential uses allowed by Special Permit,
- accessory uses (including commercial vehicles), and/or
- accessory structures.

Although the pace of subdivision development has slowed considerably, there are still likely to be land subdivisions in the future. Existing regulations appear well-equipped to address this development when it occurs. The Commission should consider revising the Planned Residential Development (PRD) provisions in Section 4.1 of the Zoning Regulations to promote a more flexible development approach which can protect important resources and preserve as much meaningful open space as possible.

## **Multi-Family Residential Development**

Multi-family development is well configured to meet the housing needs of a younger population (who may not be in a position to purchase a Ridgefield home just yet) and an older population (who may want to live in Ridgefield and not be encumbered by home maintenance responsibilities). Other living situations can also benefit from multi-family housing. Most people have lived in a multi-family development at some point in their life.

Over the past decade or so, Ridgefield has updated its regulations to expand housing opportunities. These updates include allowing accessory apartments, creating zones for multi-family development and age-restricted housing, and for affordable housing. In addition, zoning allows for mixed uses in Ridgefield Center (i.e., residential units in a building above a business in a “top-of-the-shop” configuration). These provisions should continue to be updated as needed.

Ridgefield intends to continue to seek ways to assimilate multi-family development in the community to help diversify its housing portfolio. Multi-family development can be consistent with the intent to locate higher density development in and near villages (Ridgefield Center and possibly Branchville).

When higher density or multi-family development is proposed to help meet housing needs, the appropriate location should be guided by principles outlined below. These principles are intended to address the need for housing diversity while preserving Ridgefield’s character and environment, and considering the ability of infrastructure to handle growth.

### **Higher Density / Multi-Family Guidelines**

1. Multi-family developments should be served by water supply systems and municipal sewerage treatment facilities that meet all applicable requirements.
2. The most appropriate types of multi-family development for Ridgefield should continue to be moderate density townhouses and garden apartments proximate to shopping and community facilities. Larger developments not so located may be considered when meeting an identified and overriding Town need.
3. Roadways (and walkways) serving the site and the surrounding area should be capable of safely and conveniently handling traffic generated by the development as well as providing easy and direct access to major thoroughfares serving Ridgefield.
4. Multi-family developments should be located and designed to be compatible with the surrounding area with appropriate transitions (topographic, vegetative, or other) to provide a buffer or gradual transition in density or type of development.
5. The site should be of adequate size and suitable terrain to establish an attractive and functional layout of buildings and site improvements and permit reasonable screening to and from adjacent properties and streets.



### **Housing That Is Affordable**

State statutes consider housing to be affordable if a household spends less than 30 percent of its income on housing and related costs. For households that earn less than the median income, housing can still be unaffordable due to the other expenses they incur.

### **“Affordable Housing”**

The term “affordable housing” refers to the definition under CGS Section 8-30g. According to State data, Ridgefield has the following inventory of “affordable housing:

Governmentally assisted	179 units
Tenant rental assistance	5 units
CHFA / USDA Mortgage	28 units
Deed restricted	64 units

As a result, Ridgefield is credited with having 276 “affordable housing” and this is about 2.93% of the housing stock in the community.

### **AH Appeals Procedure**

Since less than 10 percent of its housing stock is considered “affordable housing” as defined above, Ridgefield is subject to the Affordable Housing Appeals procedure (CGS Section 8-30g) whereby a development containing affordable housing may not need to demonstrate strict compliance with local zoning requirements.

In 2014, Ridgefield got a four-year moratorium based on the progress it had made in terms of the number of units.

### **Housing That Is Affordable**

Housing in Ridgefield can be expensive and housing affordability is a difficult issue to resolve. Sales prices are established by the housing market and what people are prepared to spend. Ridgefield is affected by multi-state housing markets that reflect State tax policies and other factors that influence where people choose to live.

However, over the past decade or so, Ridgefield has seen quite an increase in the number of affordable housing units in the community. Since 2007, Ridgefield has received credit for 36 additional governmentally assisted units, 18 additional affordable mortgages, and 64 additional deed-restricted units. In fact, Ridgefield was able to obtain a four-year moratorium (2014-2018) from the Affordable Housing Appeals procedure (see sidebar) based on the number of units created in the community, mostly by private developers.

Over this period, residents have slowly become less concerned about affordable housing developments since the developments which have occurred have generally:

- been located in areas where they can fit in,
- been designed to fit into the character of their location, and
- not created issues in the neighborhood or the community.

Ridgefield will continue to encourage the provision of a diversity of housing types, opportunities, and choice at prices consistent with community conditions and constraints. The Residential Zones map in the POCD identifies areas which could be “potential housing opportunity focus areas.”

The issues going forward for Ridgefield include the following:

- extending the affordability period for a CGS 8-30g development beyond the minimum statutory time period of 40 years (such as requiring the automatic renewal of affordability for an additional 10 years unless released by the Commission for good cause shown),
- Adopting a model “housing affordability plan” that would establish common practices to be used by developers, owners, landlords, and administrators in the future (as opposed to custom provisions on each application, some of which not in compliance with State law),
- Designating an “affordable housing administrator” to qualify potential purchasers / tenants based on income and ensuring sale prices and rental rates comply with State law,
- Establishing an inclusionary zoning requirement (as authorized by CGS 8-2i) which could require affordable housing as part of any residential development or payment of a fee-in-lieu-of-affordable housing (or even a fee attached to any zoning permit) which goes into an “affordable housing fund”

# Residential Zones

## Ridgefield, CT

Bethel

Danbury

Redding

Weston

### Low Density Zones

RAAA

RAA

### Medium Density Zones

RA

R20 / R-20 SD

### Higher Density Zones

R-10 / R-7.5 / R-5

MFDD / MSDD / HOD / ARHD

### Non-Residential Zones

CBD / B-1 / B-2 / B-3 / NB / CDD

Potential Housing Opportunity Focus Area

State of New York

Wilton



5,000 Feet

**DRAFT – For PZC  
Review and Discussion**

### Ridgefield Housing Authority

The Ridgefield Housing Authority (RHA) operates 152 units of housing – 132 for elderly and disabled persons and 20 units for families. While most of the units are income-based, there are some market rate units.

As an indication of the strong demand for affordable housing, the waiting list for RHA units can be 3-5 years long. Since people are living longer (and may outlive their assets), additional RHA units are needed.

### Affordable Housing Committee

Ridgefield has had an Affordable Housing Committee (AHC) for many years and the Committee has recently been reconstituted and reinvigorated. The AHC is well equipped to assist in addressing housing affordability.

Activities which have been suggested by the AHC include:

- Identifying and quantifying the need for and availability of housing and track Ridgefield's progress.
- Helping develop and maintain the town's official Affordable Housing Plan, as required under PA 17-170 (codified as CGS Section 8-30j), **with compliance required by July 24, 2022**).
- Serving as the town's clearing house for information on affordable housing, and as a resource to town bodies, organizations and individuals.
- Advocating for policies that would promote housing diversity in Ridgefield.
- Pursuing, in conjunction with other town bodies and outside organizations, the development of additional affordable housing in Ridgefield.
- Undertaking other initiatives that would promote housing diversity and opportunity in Ridgefield.
- Converting the Committee to a Commission (possibly called the Ridgefield Housing Opportunity Commission (HOC).



## Possible Strategies For 2020 POCD

### A. Guide Residential Development

1. Diversify Ridgefield’s housing portfolio to provide for a variety of housing types to meet housing needs while retaining the predominantly single-family residential character of the Town and respecting important resources.
2. Continue to update local regulations as needed to address local housing needs and provide appropriate housing options.
3. Carefully review non-residential uses allowed in residential zones in order to help protect residential neighborhoods and residential character.
4. Undertake a review of accessory uses and accessory structures in residential zones.
5. Review the PRD provisions (ZR Section 4.1) and update to ensure it maximizes POCD objectives for any new subdivisions.
6. Use the “potential housing opportunity focus areas” mapped in the POCD and the Higher Density / Multi-Family Guidelines in the POCD to guide proposed higher densities and multi-family uses.
7. Continue efforts to obtain another four-year moratorium from the Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure (CGS Section 8-30g).
8. Prepare and adopt a model “housing affordability plan” that would:
  - a. establish common practices to be used in the future, and
  - b. seek to extend the affordability period for an affordable housing development (CGS Section 8-30g or otherwise).
9. Designate an “affordable housing administrator” to qualify potential purchasers / tenants and ensure sale prices / rental rates comply with State law.
10. Consider adopting an inclusionary zoning requirement (as authorized by CGS 8-2i).
11. Support the Ridgefield Housing Authority in their efforts to create more housing units for elderly, disabled, and family households.
12. Support the Affordable Housing Committee in their efforts to create more affordable housing units in Ridgefield.
13. Prepare an official Affordable Housing Plan, as required under PA 17-170 (codified as CGS Section 8-30j), with compliance required by July 24, 2022).

**Do these policies and action steps make sense for Ridgefield?**

**Are there any policies or action steps you feel should be added?**

This image shows a full page of blank handwriting practice paper. It features multiple sets of horizontal lines. Each set typically consists of three lines: two outer lines and a middle line, creating uniform rows for letter height. The lines are evenly spaced across the entire page, providing a guide for consistent letter formation. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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70 County Road, Simsbury, CT 06070      860-913-4080