



# Riverfront Revitalization Committee

Report to Mayor David Gronbach  
and the New Milford Town Council  
October 10, 2017





# A New Vision

- March 27, 2017

The Town Council unanimously votes to establish Riverfront Revitalization Committee proposed by Mayor Gronbach.

- May 8, 2017

Committee Members Appointed, Term of May 8 to November 1, 2017

- Julie Bailey
- Liba Furhman
- Chris Gardner
- Richard Rosiello
- Peter Schmitt
- Frank Wargo
- Lucy Wildrick
- Adrienne Aurichio, Alternate



# Committee Charge

**“To facilitate preparation of a comprehensive and detailed Downtown Housatonic Riverfront Revitalization Master Plan.”**

- **Make recommendations to the Town for how to plan and implement riverfront revitalization to:**
  - Strengthen the link between the Riverfront and the Village Center
  - Enhance quality of life for residents
  - Attract businesses and entrepreneurial investment
  - Generate property tax revenue
  - Create jobs
  - Increase recreational opportunities for residents and visitors
  - Offer amenities to attract new residents -- from millennials to retirees



# Committee Charge

- **Define Riverfront Revitalization area**

- “Thinking big and out of the box” leverage and transform the existing Housatonic River shoreline
  - *Mayor David Gronbach, May 14 RRC meeting*

- **Produce deliverables within five months**

- Interim report
- Identification of next steps
- RFQ to identify consultants to develop phased plan
  - Revitalization Vision
  - Residents, business and property owners, Town agencies and commissions and other key stakeholder engagement
  - Planning, engineering, remediation and traffic recommendations



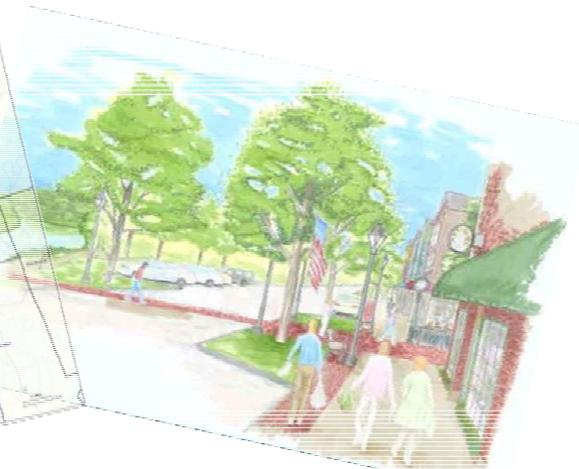
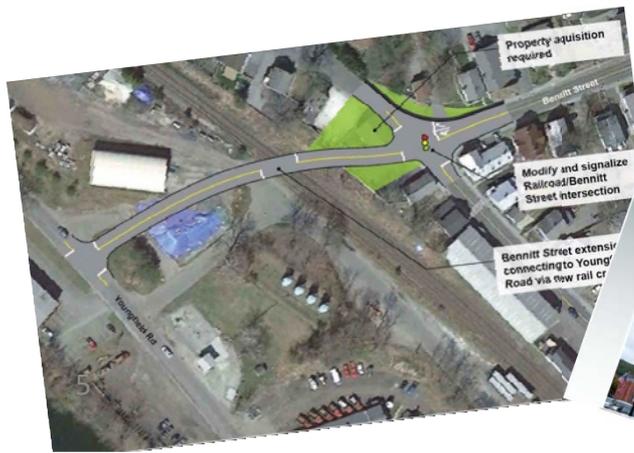
# Accessing Resources

- **Advisory committee**

- Regional professionals recruited for pro bono expertise
- Active participants in RRC's regular meeting discussions
- Sounding board for exploring approaches

- **Existing source materials reviewed included:**

- Past and current regional and municipal traffic studies and plans
- New Milford Plan of Conservation and Development, 2010
- Relevant land use regulations





# Presentations by:

- Real estate development experts, including Jean Solomon
- Dana Bezerra, Managing Senior Vice President Heron Foundation
- Gina Ford, ASLA, Principal, Martin Zogran, Principal, Susannah Ross, Landscape Architecture Coordinator, SASAKI, Boston, MA, riverfront revitalization architects/planners
- Vince McDermott. Senior Vice President, Milone & McBroom
- Joseph Samolis, Director of Planning, Conservation and Development, Middletown CT on Middletown's Riverfront Reconnection and Redevelopment.





# Presentations by:

- HVA Watershed Conservation Director Michael Jastremski
- New Milford Public Works Director Mike Zarba and Town Engineer Dan Stanton
- New Milford Park and Recreation Commission Chairman Tom Beecher
- New Milford Bike and Trail Committee Chairman Tom O'Brien and member Lisa Arasim
- RRC members on challenges of riverfront developments (Collinsville, Newburgh, Poughkeepsie, et al)





# Lessons Learned

- Involve the public early and often in the process.
- Recruit institutional anchors such as a satellite educational campus, museum or eco-center
  - Brings jobs
  - Student, faculty and staff housing
  - Commercial expenditures
  - Contributes to activity, offerings and vibrancy
  - Attractive for business looking to locate





# Lessons Learned

- Enhance our Downtown and riverfront “Live-Work-Play” environment for all ages.





## Trends in Riverfront Revitalization

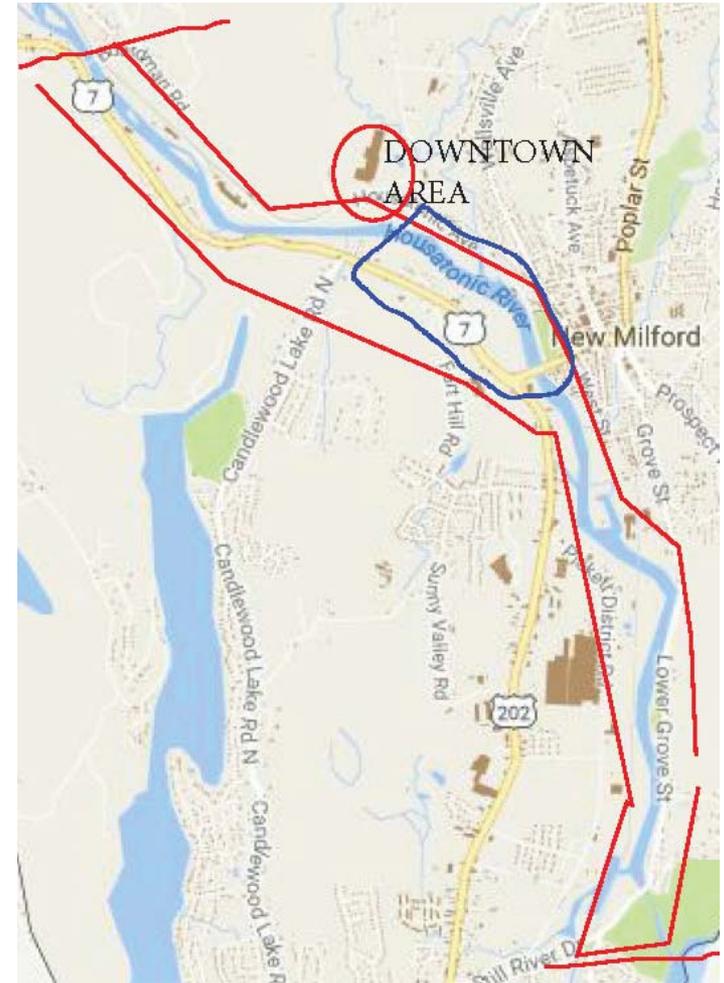
- Keep everything connected.
  - Downtown to the Riverfront
  - Bridge to Bridge
  - Young's Field to Segal Meadows
- Create vibrancy and excitement.
- Incorporate local ecology.
- Capture Economic Value.



# Define The District

## “Bridge to Bridge” from Boardman to Lover’s Leap East and West River Banks

- A comprehensive master plan that puts New Milford in control of its future development
- A tool for clarifying where and what type of development initiatives we want
- Puts New Milford in a more competitive position for attracting large-scale state and federal funders seeking truly transformative projects

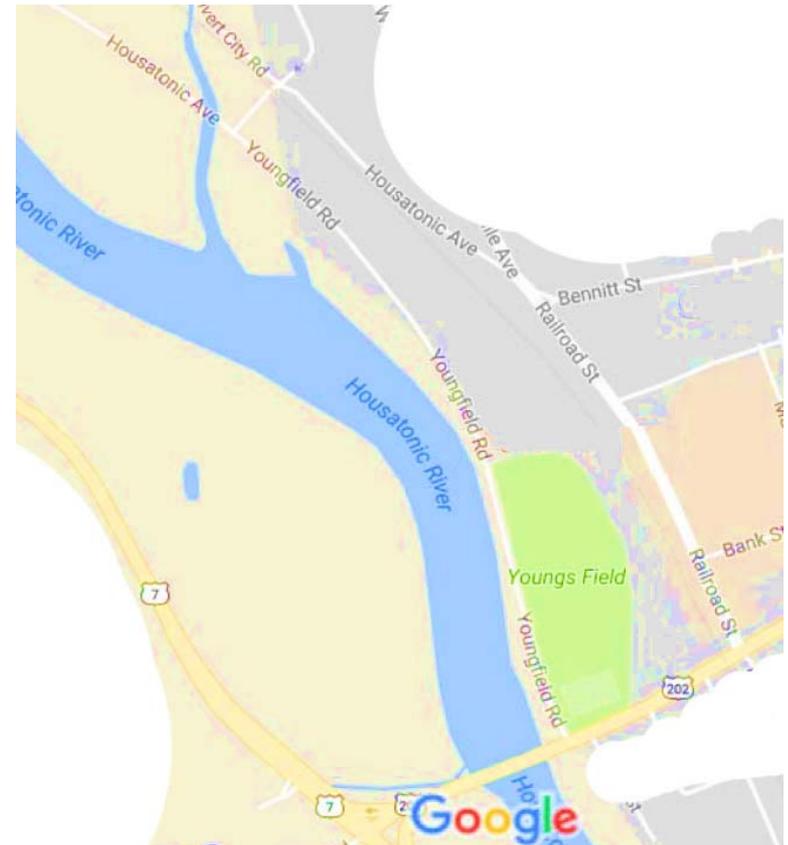




# Phasing the Plan

## Phase 1

- Young's Field Road from Bridge Street to the intersection of Housatonic/Boardman/Aspetuck Ridge Roads and Railroad Street and Downtown New Milford linkages.
- Route 7 from Native Meadows Preserve to the entrance to Downtown via Veterans Bridge.

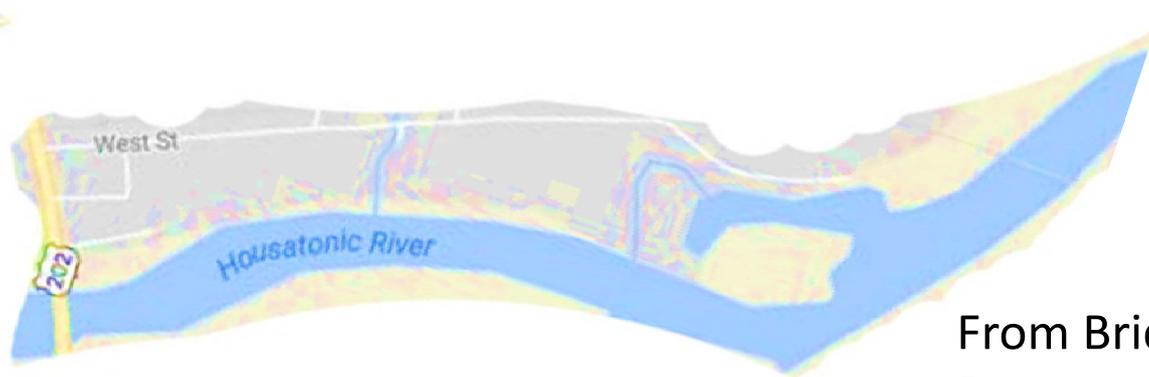




# Phasing the Plan

## Phase 2

The intersection of Housatonic/Boardman/  
Aspetuck Ridge Roads to the Boardman  
Bridge and Sega Meadows



From Bridge Street to the Bleachery  
Property along West Street



# Phasing the Plan

---

## Phase 3

- The Grove Street/Still River Road Corridor to Lover's Leap State Park and Harrybrooke Park
- The Pickett District Road Corridor
- US Route 7 from Boardman Bridge to Bridge Street



# Objectives

- Link the riverfront with the Village Center by overcoming multiple physical constraints.
- Attract entrepreneurs for whom quality of life is a priority.
- Expand in-town housing options for young professionals, active adults and seniors.
- Increase recreational and eco-tourism opportunities for residents and visitors.





# Objectives (cont'd)

- Enhance, revitalize and protect the river's natural ecosystem
- Rationalize traffic infrastructure without further dividing Village Center from riverfront.
- Increase access to riverfront and Village Center by enhancing parking options.
- Provide additional infrastructure needs:
  - Sidewalks
  - Lighting
  - Free Wi-Fi zones and hot spots
  - Public spaces and amenities





# Objectives (cont'd)

- Integrate existing Young's Field activities with other year-round recreational and cultural events to expand usage of the riverfront area.
- Plan for transportation hub proximal to riverfront and downtown for better regional access
  - Hart bus service
  - Potential passenger rail service
  - Taxi/Uber/Zip Car
  - Bike rentals
- Fulfill the promise of “Gateway to Litchfield County” and draw in regional tourism.





# Capitalize on Existing Assets

**New Milford has fewer and less challenging physical constraints than other area towns that have successfully undertaken river revitalization projects.**

- The Town owns the majority of the property in Phase 1 revitalization area.
- We have a vibrant and revitalized downtown thanks to major investments.





# Capitalize on Existing Assets

---

- When completed, the New Milford River Trail will be a main anchor and draw.
- Potential exists for mixed uses including housing, commercial, hospitality, retail, recreation, and public spaces.
- Use the recent designation in WestCOG Region's first Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy of the designation of New Milford's Riverfront Revitalization Plan as one of its 18 vital projects to our advantage.



# Capitalize on Existing Assets

- The Housatonic River is appropriate for recreational activities of kayaking, paddle boarding and fishing.





# Capitalize on Existing Assets

- New Milford's 2010 POCD lays the groundwork for the Riverfront Revitalization Plan.





# Capitalize on Existing Assets

- New Milford's 2010 POCD lays the groundwork for the Riverfront Revitalization Plan.





# Existing Physical Constraints

Though fewer and less challenging than other towns that have successfully revitalized their waterfronts, New Milford has these physical constraints:

- Steep embankment, parking lots, lack of pedestrian railroad track crossings
- Environmentally-sensitive and floodplain areas
- Seasonal variations in Housatonic River water levels
- New Milford Public Works facility and Mitchell and Superior properties





# Strategic Constraints

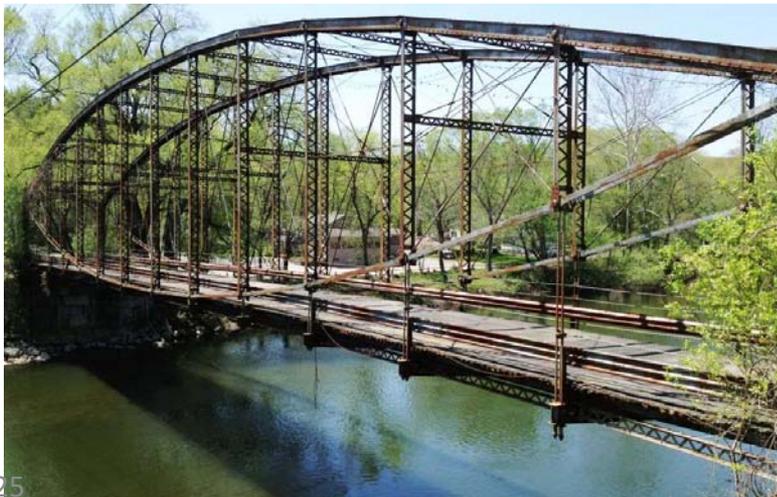
---

- Riverfront Revitalization District needs to be incorporated into POCD to enable New Milford to be more competitive for major state and federal government grants.
- Protect downtown from industrial access and traffic patterns that would further separate downtown from the river.
- Need for improved coordination and communication among Town agencies and committees working in Riverfront Revitalization area.
- Competition for short-term state and federal funding.



# Short-Term Recommendations

- Extend the term of the RRC and its members to continue its mission and execute the next steps.
- Town to approve “Bridge to Bridge” from Boardman to Lover’s Leap East and West River Banks as official Riverfront Revitalization District.





# Short-Term Recommendations

- Create a sense of real excitement, ownership of, and broad resident support for Riverfront Revitalization through a series of attractions at Young's Field.
  - Festivals, fireworks and events
  - Concerts and cultural performances
  - Temporary art and sculpture installations
  - Multi-media show based on New Milford's history
  - Historic military re-enactments
  - Races and cycling events for children and adults
  - Food trucks





# Short-Term Recommendations (cont'd)

- Demonstrate the viability of year-round activities at the riverfront by creating winter opportunities
  - ice-skating
  - cross-country skiing
  - sledding
- Encourage more eco-tourism entities to provide a broader range of offerings.





# Short-Term Recommendations (cont'd)

- Initiate rail transportation survey to determine feasibility of Hart/Metro North shuttle
- Enhance “playground” area
  - Adult components
  - Splash pad





# Short-Term Recommendations (cont'd)

- Complete short-term infrastructure enhancement projects to show progress, building support for the long-range vision.
  - Delineate one-mile walking path from downtown to Patriots Way to the River and back with signage and sharrows.
  - Install rivercams showing the Riverfront and activities to build public connections.
  - Revitalize, improve and maintain landscaping at high-profile entrance corridors to the Downtown and Riverfront areas.





# Short-Term Recommendations (cont'd)

- Support organized activities to attract residents to the riverfront.
- Endorse efforts to extend the northern section of New Milford's River Trail from Sega Meadows to the new Young's Field Road segment.





# Short-Term Recommendations (cont'd)

- Develop linkage to Native Meadows Preserve on the west side of the Housatonic River and Hidden Treasures to the south.
- Partner with Harrybrooke Park for access to Still River.
- Resurrect the Housatonic River Trail.





# Long-Term Recommendations

- Capitalize on designation in WestCOG's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy of New Milford's Riverfront Revitalization Plan as one of its 18 vital projects.
- Support efforts to complete the full 13-mile River Trail.
- Support the rehabilitation of Boardman Bridge.
- Adopt "Bridge to Bridge" Riverfront Revitalization District in New Milford's 2020 Plan of Conservation and Development.





# Next Steps

- Keep momentum going by extending RRC and its members' terms to November 2018.
- Finalize RFQ, including resident and stakeholder input, to solicit cutting-edge riverfront design firms to build consensus on the vision and create a development/implementation plan.
- Draft budget for consulting firm (public outreach, market analysis, technical and remediation expertise).
- Work closely with town agencies to identify funding sources (town funds, state and federal grants, and foundations).
- Select finalists, develop and distribute RFP. Identify the most qualified consultant, negotiate contract, and present to Mayor and Town Council for approval and funding.
- Seek authorization from Town to prepare grant applications as opportunities arise to assist in financing.



**Thank you**

