

# **Norwich's Vibrant Communities Initiative**

*Draft Report*



## **Consultant Team:**

The Cecil Group – Planning and community participation

FXM Associates – Market analysis

Durkee, Brown, Viveiros & Werenfels Architects – Design strategy

## Table of Contents

<b>Study Overview .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Background and Purpose .....</i>	3
<i>Process .....</i>	3
<i>Study Area .....</i>	4
<i>Historic Inventory .....</i>	5
<b>Market Potential .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Findings .....</i>	6
<i>Observations .....</i>	7
<b>Evaluation of Properties .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>Criteria and Weighting .....</i>	8
<i>Results .....</i>	9
<i>Focus Area .....</i>	10
<b>Pilot Project and Target Projects .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Pilot Project: Bulletin and Richards Building .....</i>	12
<i>Detailed Program of Uses.....</i>	15
<i>Conceptual Design .....</i>	17
<i>Financial Feasibility.....</i>	29
<b>Other Target Projects.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<i>Flat Iron Building.....</i>	32
<i>Main Street Cluster.....</i>	32
<i>Franklin Square.....</i>	36
<i>Financial Feasibility and Marketability.....</i>	38

<b>Implementation Strategy.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<i>Overview.....</i>	40
<i>Stewardship.....</i>	42
<i>Municipal Roles and Actions.....</i>	45
<i>Programs and Resources.....</i>	47



Sources: The Cecil Group

## Study Overview

### *Background and Purpose*

This planning initiative, Norwich's Vibrant Communities Initiative, has been undertaken to help revitalize downtown Norwich through the reuse and redevelopment of underutilized historic properties. Norwich has a rich collection of historic buildings that can play an important role in stimulating reinvestment in the downtown. This initiative examines these historic resources, identifies target projects for redevelopment and determines reuse scenarios for each. Strategies for advancing the redevelopment of a pilot project have been recommended, and conceptual designs have been prepared.

The Vibrant Communities Initiative is part of an ongoing process that the City of Norwich, Norwich Community Development Corporation (NCDC) and others have initiated to redefine the downtown. It complements the \$3.38 million downtown revitalization program launched in 2010 by identifying buildings that will be critical to the program's success. By targeting historic properties and understanding their potential for redevelopment, this initiative provides a pragmatic plan to continue transforming the downtown in a coordinated way. The result will be enhanced real estate values, increased activity and vibrancy in the downtown, and improved quality of life for community members.

NCDC has managed this initiative in partnership with the City of Norwich and Norwich Historical Society. Funding came from a grant from the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism that was awarded by the Connecticut Trust For Historic Preservation.

### *Process*

A consultant team led by The Cecil Group conducted a comprehensive planning process as part of this Vibrant Communities Initiative. This process included regular meetings of a Steering Committee with members Bill Champagne, President of the Norwich Historical Society; Gary Evans, Community Development Supervisor; Deb Hinchey, City Councilor; Bob Mills, Executive Director of NCDC; and Brad Schide, Connecticut Circuit Rider for the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation. The Steering Committee provided input, advice and guidance throughout the planning process.

Early in the process, the consultant team updated a 1981 historic inventory to understand the historic resources in the downtown. The team also analyzed market conditions in the region to assess potential demand for residential and retail space in downtown Norwich. Interviews with City officials, property owners and other stakeholders were conducted, and two public workshops were held to solicit broader input, including advice from development experts.

Working with NCDC, the consultant team conducted an in-depth process to evaluate historic properties and select four target projects. For each project, the team developed a reuse scenario and examined the financial feasibility of redevelopment. A pilot project was selected for further evaluation, and conceptual designs, a redevelopment cost estimate and implementation strategies were then prepared. All of the key information, findings and observations made throughout the planning process have been incorporated into this report.



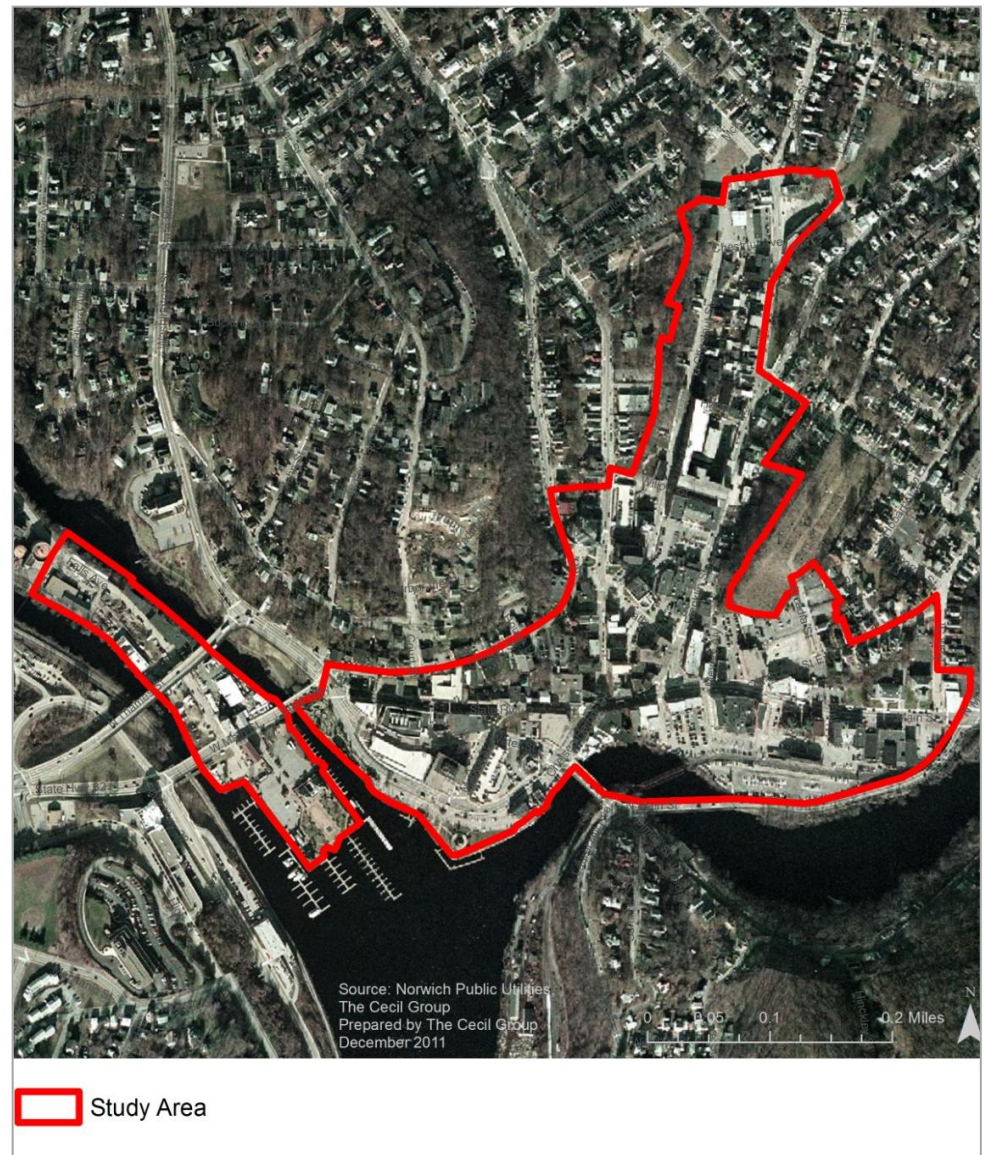
## Study Area

The study area, shown in the map to the right, is comprised of the Chelsea Central District in downtown Norwich and the southern portion of Hollyhock Island. It is bounded by the Shetucket River to the south and the Yantic River to the southwest. The northern portion extends north along Chestnut and Franklin streets to the intersection of McKinley Avenue and Grove Street.

Roughly 84 acres in size, the study area encompasses nearly 260 properties. These properties include a mix of uses, though the predominant uses are commercial, civic and institutional. City Hall, for example, is located near the center of the study area. Many social service agencies are located on Main Street and Broadway, and more than 150 housing units are scattered throughout the area; many of those residential units are part of the recently redeveloped Wauregan, a historic property.

Most of the streets in the study area are limited to one-way traffic. Combined with the meandering nature of the roads, they contribute to a restrictive, if not, unwelcoming circulation pattern. There is, however, a large amount of parking available in the study area. In addition, much of the downtown is very walkable. The pedestrian environment is aided by the area's high density character.

The overall downtown landscape – as well as its many historic resources – reflects the city's economic and cultural heritage. By targeting this study area for revitalization, a decades-long trend of decline can begin to be reversed, and Norwich's historic resources can once again contribute to the city's vibrancy, desirability and economic vitality.

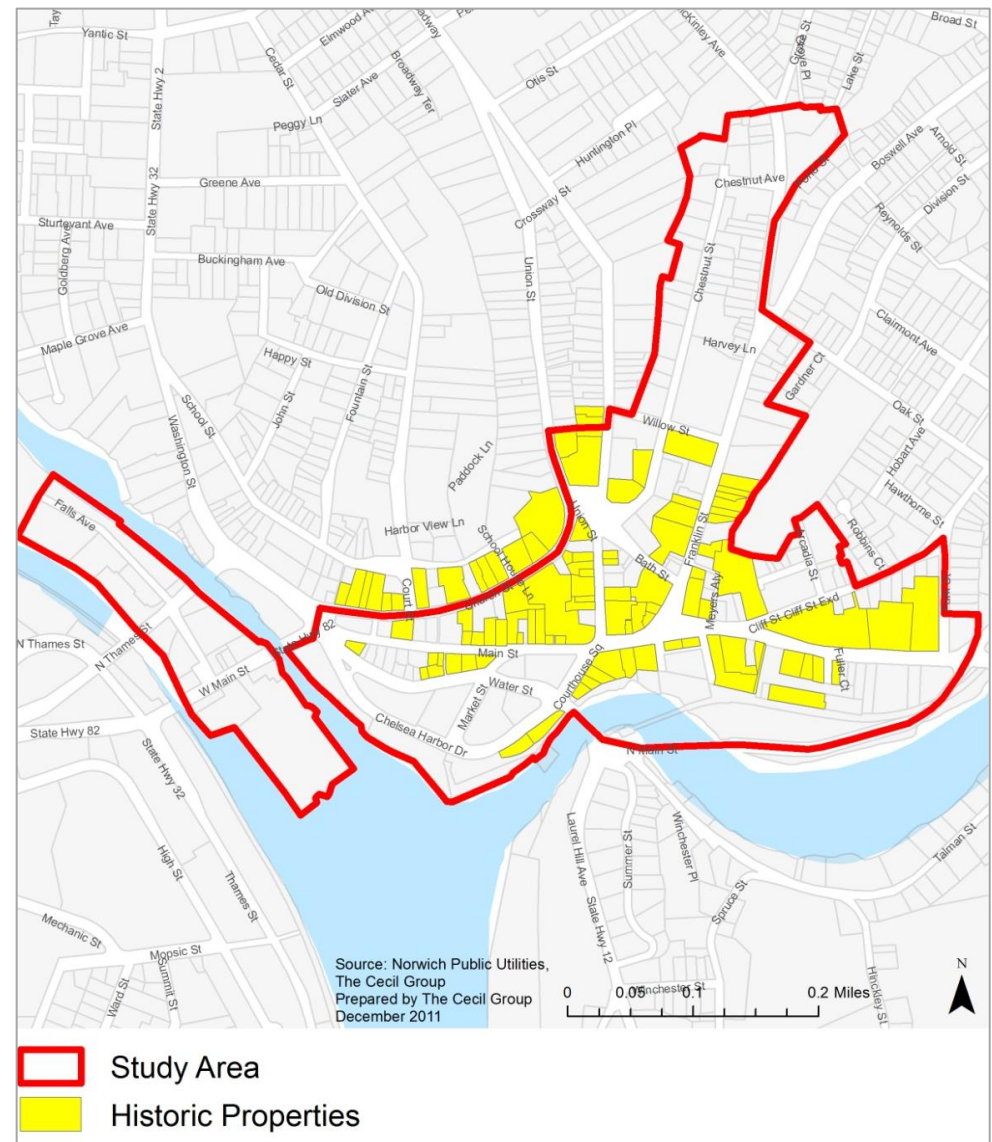


## Historic Inventory

Downtown Norwich boasts an expansive array of historic properties. These historic properties were initially identified by a 1981 Historical and Architectural Survey of Downtown Norwich by architectural historian Dale Plummer (currently the City Historian) and others. That inventory included more than 130 properties.

Research conducted by the consultant team with assistance from Dale Plummer revealed that roughly 30 historic buildings have been demolished since 1981. Some of the demolished buildings have been replaced by parking lots or garages, while others remain vacant lots. A few have been replaced by new buildings such as the 1983 State Courthouse on Courthouse Square and the class A office building the Mercantile Exchange on Main Street. Several historic buildings have been combined or consolidated, and many have been altered or renovated over the years.

Given all of these changes, less than 100 historic properties remain in and around the study area. These properties, shown in the map to the right, were included in an updated historic inventory that was prepared as part of this planning initiative. Today, downtown Norwich's remarkable historic building stock includes approximately 13 buildings from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, 55 from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and 30 from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These historic resources provide a unique opportunity to help revitalize the downtown through their reuse and redevelopment. Through their reuse, the city's past can be honored as Norwich looks to shape its future.





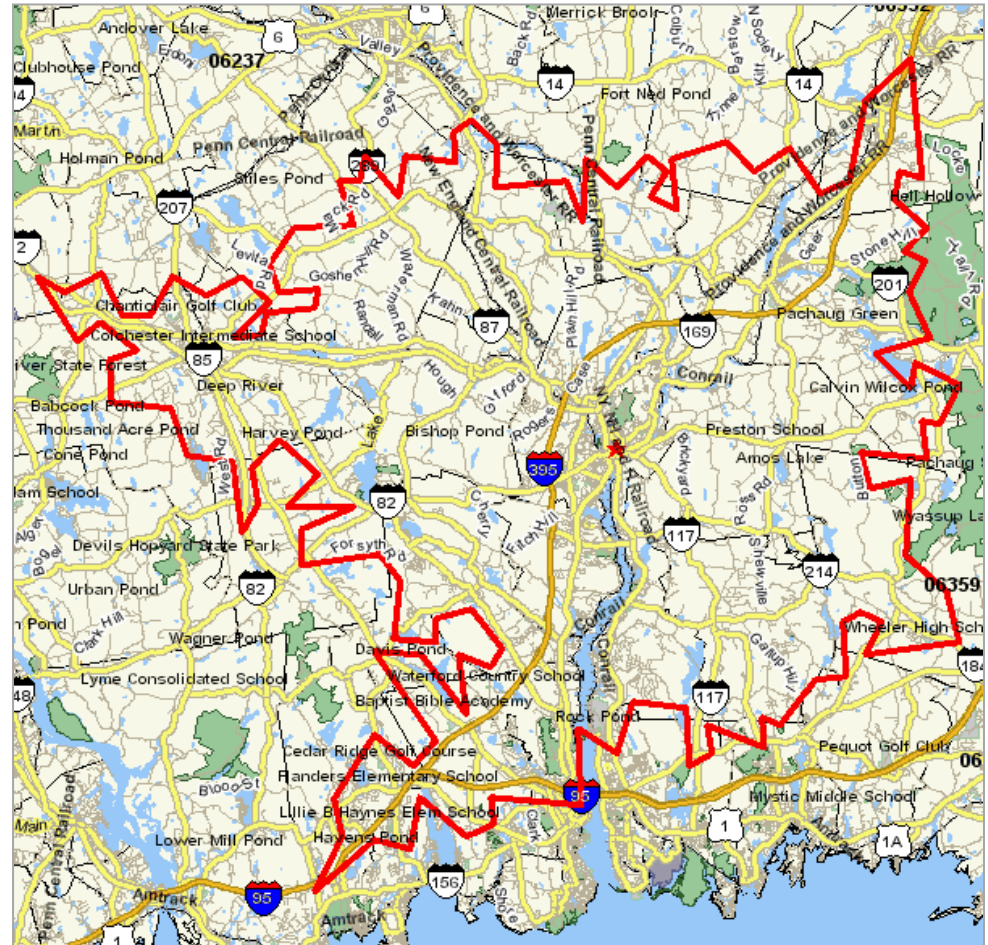
## Market Potential

FXM Associates analyzed demographic trends and market conditions to determine average annual demand for housing in downtown Norwich. FXM utilized its proprietary *Housing Demand Model* that considers local market data on projected growth in number of households by age and income, housing affordability, propensity to own or rent and annual mobility by age of householder, market area rental supply and rent levels, and potentially competing planned and proposed rental projects. The market area, shown to the right, was estimated to be a 20-minute drive time from downtown Norwich.

A retail opportunity/gap analysis was also conducted to estimate immediate opportunities for Downtown Norwich to capture additional retail uses based on consumer expenditures and actual store sales in 2011. FXM Associates examined potential gaps for 75 store types within 5-, 10- and 15-minute drive times of downtown Norwich and determined the potential type and number of retail stores that could be supported within those areas using average sales per SF and typical store sizes for the most promising store types, and then estimated a capture rate for the Downtown area.

### Findings

- **Residential Market** – There is potential demand for market-rate rental housing in downtown Norwich, particularly among households under the age of 35 and over the age of 55. The number of households in this target market is expected to increase through 2016, and the demand for apartments overall is projected to rise as more people choose to rent in the wake of the housing crisis.



Sources: FXM Associates

Downtown Norwich could potentially capture roughly 30 rental housing units per year at rents ranging from \$900 to \$1,300 per month depending on unit size and amenities. This assumes that Norwich would continue to capture its historical share of rental demand in the 20-minute drive-time market area, which is roughly 25 percent.

- Retail Market – Downtown Norwich could potentially support roughly 20 stores, with a total of approximately 66,500 square feet. The store types in demand, listed to the right, include furniture stores, electronics stores, clothing stores and jewelry stores. The list is not meant to exclude other store types; an especially well-managed and competitive business can succeed even where retail gaps are not apparent. While restaurants do not now show a gap in sales opportunities because of its unique environment and ambience relative to competing locations, Downtown Norwich could also capture additional restaurants provided they feature high quality food and customer service, varied menus, and competitive pricing that can attract the Downtown daily worker market as well as evening and weekend patrons from the broader market area.

### ***Observations***

- Residential Market – FXM Associates has found that two-bedroom units generally have broader market appeal than studios or one-bedroom units. Baby boomers, for example, like having two-bedroom units because they provide space for work, storage and room for friends and relatives to visit and stay. That does not mean, however, that there is no market for studios and one-bedroom units in downtown Norwich.

Whatever the unit size, the design of apartments in downtown Norwich should be distinguishable from existing units in the city and suburbs – with large windows, high ceilings and exposed brick for instance. The kinds of households that will be attracted to an urban, downtown setting will likely prefer a more uniquely-designed apartment.

- Retail Market – Norwich should try to recruit specific retailers and niche shops to its downtown. It is important to create an attractive environment with a handful of destination stores. Restaurants, for example, tend to draw people from broad areas and serve well as anchors.

Store Type	Potential Capture in SF	Potential # of Stores
Furniture Stores	4,800	1
Home Furnishing Stores	4,800	1
Radio, TV, Electronics Stores	5,600	2
Camera and Photographic Equipment Stores	1,500	1
Specialty Food Stores	2,000	1
Men's Clothing Stores	3,200	1
Women's Clothing Stores	4,100	1
Children's/Infant's Clothing Stores	4,000	1
Family Clothing Store	12,000	2
Jewelry Stores	2,400	2
Luggage and Leather Goods Stores	2,500	1
Sporting Goods Stores	6,000	1
Book Stores	4,400	1
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	9,200	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>66,500</b>	<b>20</b>

## Evaluation of Properties

The consultant team, working with NCDG, conducted an extensive process to select and evaluate historic properties in the study area. The goal was to determine which buildings or groups of buildings should be targeted for redevelopment.

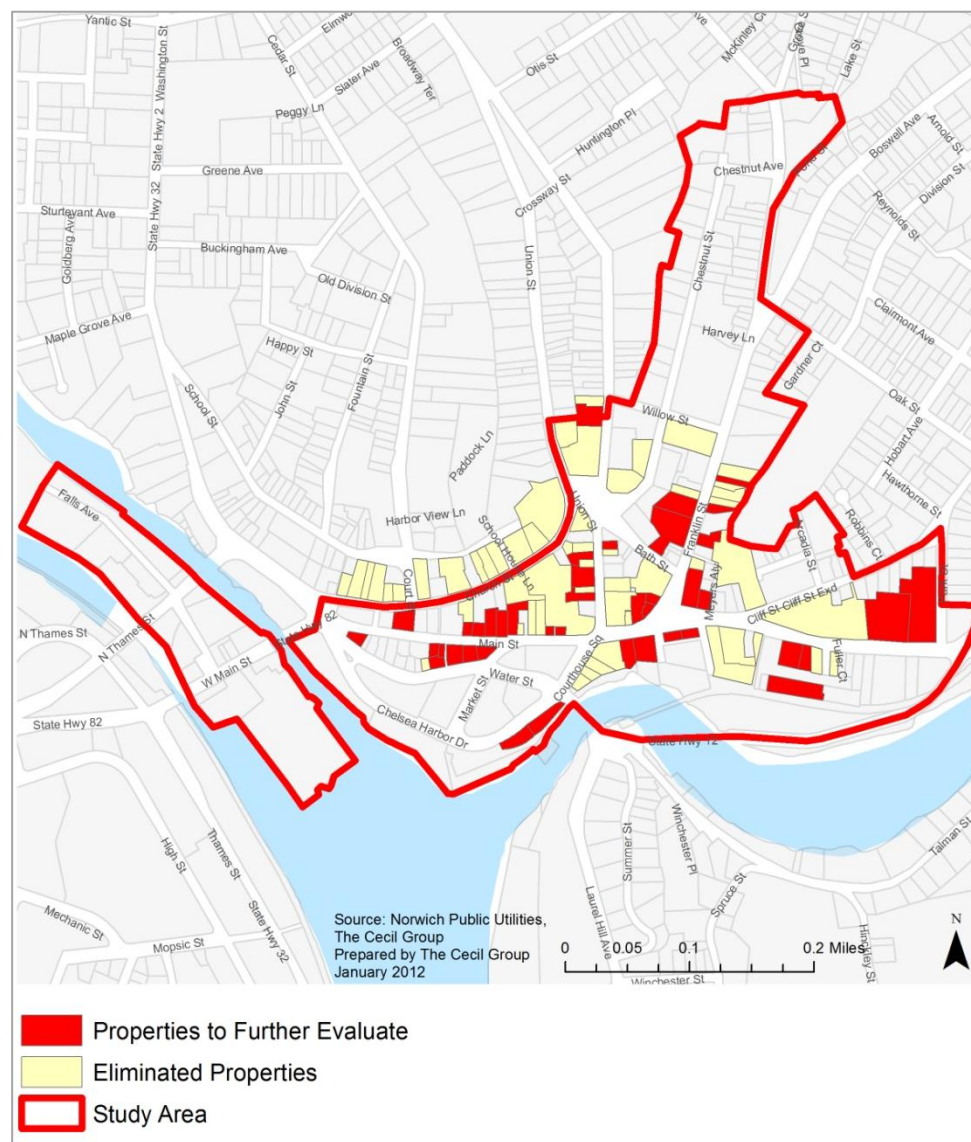
The evaluation process began with the updated historic inventory described earlier. From this inventory of properties, 39 were selected for further evaluation. This “first cut” was based on the current use and vacancy of the properties. For example, a vacant property made the first cut, but one that was fully occupied by a bank did not.

The map to the right shows how many of the properties selected for further evaluation are located along Main Street.

### Criteria and Weighting

The remaining properties were evaluated in two ways: an analytical process and a team charrette. The analytical process involved an evaluation matrix that used 13 criteria. The criteria were developed by the consultant team and Steering Committee and then refined based on input from participants of a public workshop.

Each criterion was given a weight that reflected its relative importance or priority in the context of this planning initiative. For example, the criterion “Catalytic Impact on Other Properties and Downtown” received the highest weight as the goal of this initiative is to spur the revitalization of downtown Norwich through the reuse and redevelopment of key historic properties.



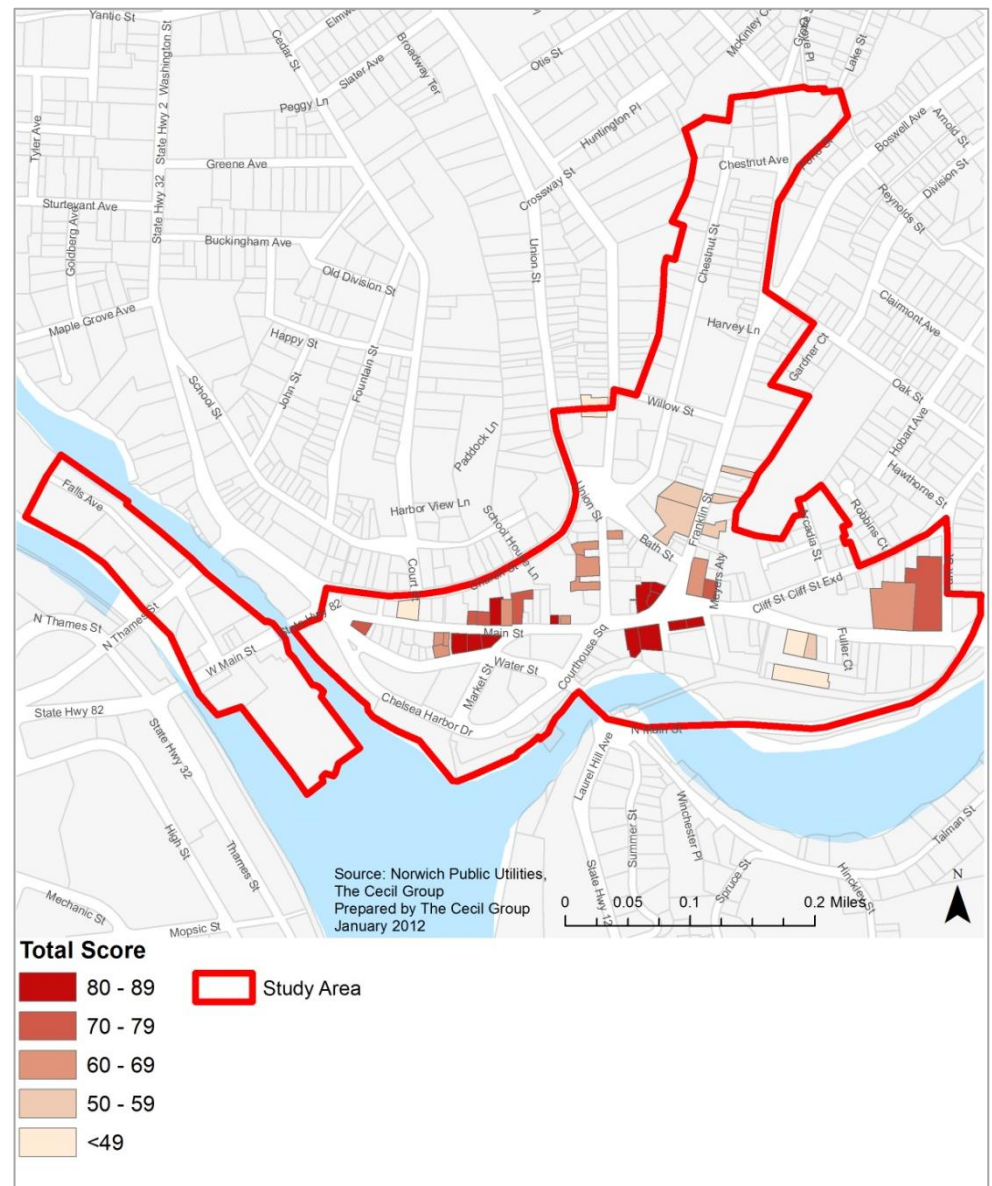


The criteria and their weights (in parentheses) are listed below from high to low priority. It should be noted that while the criterion “Historic Contribution” received the lowest weight (1), it is acknowledged that all of the 40 properties have historic significance – thus their inclusion in the historic inventory that served as the basis for this evaluation.

- Catalytic Impact on Other Properties and Downtown (6)
- Match with Market Potential (3)
- Short Term Feasibility (3)
- Contribution to the Pedestrian Environment (3)
- Location Advantages and Disadvantages (3)
- Ownership Circumstances (3)
- Property and Site Conditions (2)
- Demolition Impact if Not Preserved (2)
- Access to Parking (2)
- Repurposing Alignment with Downtown Goals (2)
- Long Term Feasibility (1)
- Financing (1)
- Historic Contribution (1)

## Results

As shown in the map to the right, the properties on Main Street and in Franklin Square received the highest scores. High scores revealed potential target projects. Participants in the team charrette – the consultant team and NCDC – also recommended focusing on properties along Main Street west of (and including) Franklin Square. This alignment of results informed the location of this initiative’s focus area, which is described on the following page.

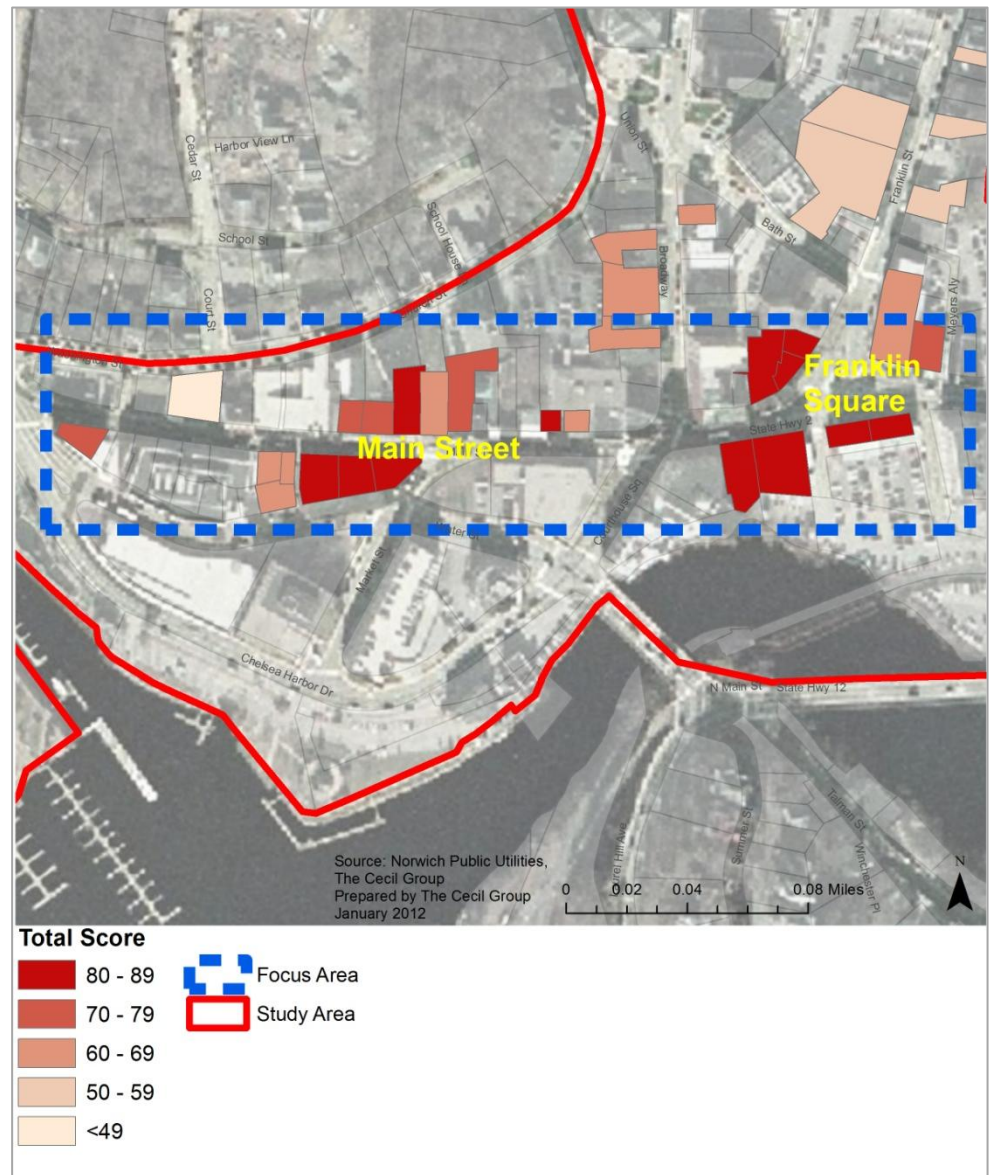


## Focus Area

The focus area for this initiative spans several blocks on Main Street. Shown in blue in the map to the right, the area stretches from the intersection of Main and Washington streets on the west to Franklin Square on the east.

This area includes a major gateway to the downtown on the west, the heart of downtown on the east, and a variety of buildings types and historic properties throughout. It is a walkable, densely-developed, highly visible area that boasts the new Mercantile Exchange as well as the redeveloped Wauregan Hotel at the corner of Main Street and Broadway. As mentioned earlier, the focus area also encompasses the highest scoring properties, according to the evaluation performed by the consultant team.

Given these and other factors, improving this focus area is considered critical to the revitalization of downtown Norwich. If improved, it will likely spark future reinvestment in and redevelopment of other properties in its vicinity such as buildings on Broadway. That is not to say that other properties should not be reused or redeveloped if the opportunity arises. Efforts to improve and reinvigorate the downtown, however, should be directed to this area. Available funding should similarly be targeted to this area to the extent possible.





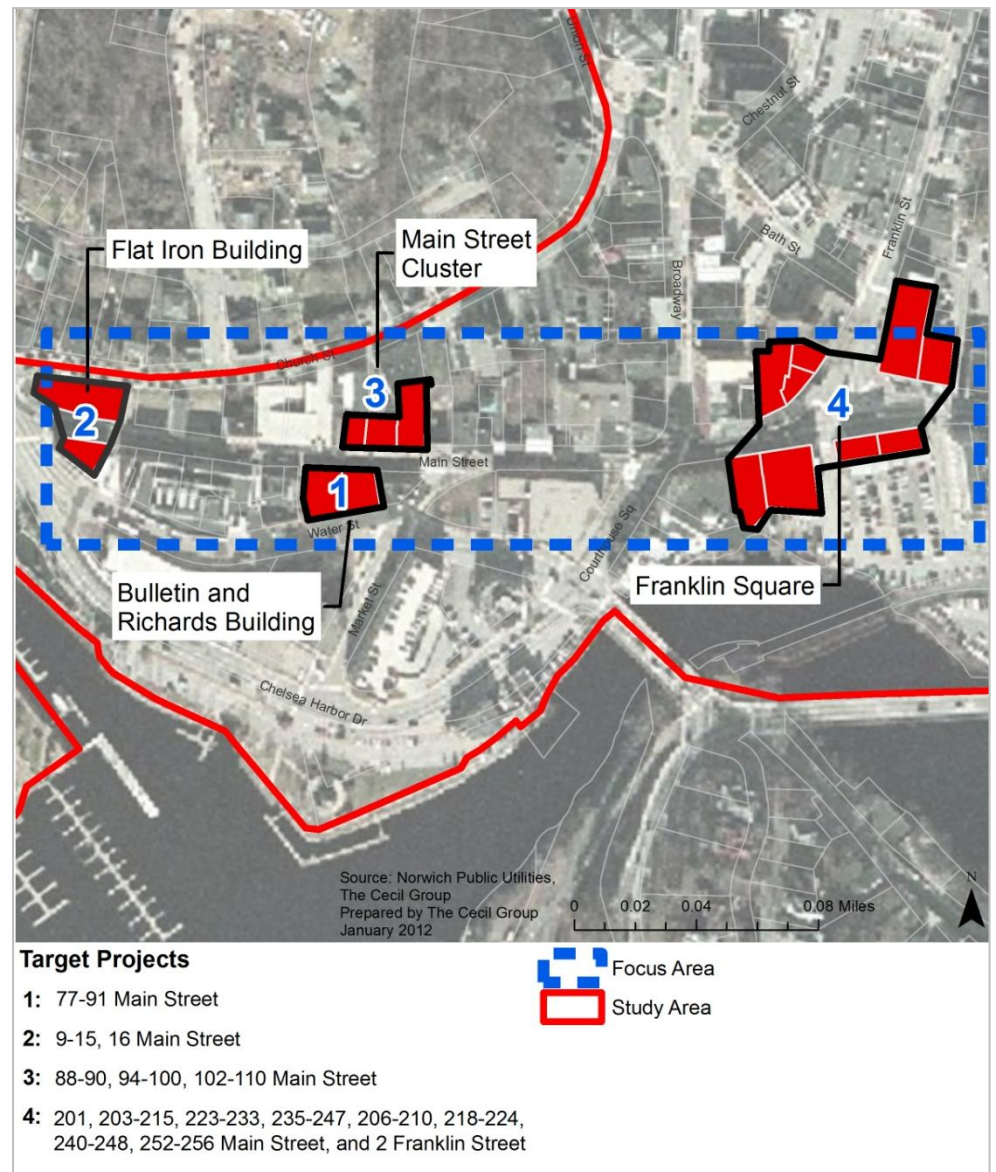
## Pilot Project and Target Projects

Based on the evaluation of properties discussed earlier, the consultant team selected four target projects on Main Street. Located in the focus area, the projects represent the full range of project types, building sizes and circumstances, and as such, they can serve as redevelopment examples for similar buildings or properties in downtown Norwich. Several of the target projects include multiple historic properties.

The target projects are listed below and shown in the map to the right. Detailed information about each property is included in the following pages of this report.

- Bulletin and Richards Building
- Flat Iron Building
- Main Street Cluster
- Franklin Square

Out of the four target projects, the consultant team, working with the Steering Committee, selected the Bulletin and Richards Building at 77-91 Main Street as the pilot project. An in-depth evaluation of the building's redevelopment potential – and pilot project planning – was therefore conducted. The results and plans are presented in this chapter.





### ***Pilot Project: Bulletin and Richards Building***

As mentioned earlier, the Bulletin and Richards Building at 77-91 Main Street was chosen as the pilot project for which preliminary planning work would be conducted. This building was selected for the following key reasons.

- The building is in fairly good condition.
- Given its large scale and prominent location on Main Street, the building has the potential to have a significant catalytic impact on properties in the area if redeveloped.
- A preliminary analysis showed that the redevelopment of the building was potentially financially feasible if subsidies were obtained.
- The marketability of the building – given the river views and access to parking – is excellent.
- Compared to the other target projects, the building is most likely to absorb projected uses in the near future, according to the market analysis conducted for this study.
- There does not appear to be any major visible structural problems with the building.
- The building is in foreclosure, which presents potential opportunities for redevelopment.

To evaluate the building's redevelopment potential, the team prepared conceptual design sketches, a detailed program of uses and sketch pro forma for the historic property. This planning work can help advance the building's potential redevelopment. Photos of the building's exterior are shown to the right. The top photo shows the building from Main Street, and the bottom photo shows it from Water Street. Additional information about the property and building is provided in the two following pages.



Sources: The Cecil Group and Durkee, Brown, Viveiros & Werenfels Architects

## ***Bulletin and Richards Building***

77 – 91 Main Street

### **Property Description**

This property is located on Main Street near the Market Street intersection and has significant frontage on both Main and Water streets. It consists of two consolidated historic buildings, the Bulletin Building and the Richards Building. The building is highly visible and mostly vacant, though there are some ground-floor uses such as Norwich Community Development Corporation and a salon.

### **Key Information**

**Owner:** DJ Norwich Enterprises LLC (in foreclosure)

**Total Building Size:** 46,142 gross SF\*

**Total Land Size:** 0.22 acres

**Total Assessed Value:** \$979,000

**Total Appraised Value:** \$1,399,000

**Stories:** 5

**Historic Uses:** Newspaper press, bank, retail stores, offices, dance school

**History:** The Norwich Bulletin was built at 77-85 Main Street in the mid-1860s. The Richards Building to the east was constructed in the late-1860s and housed First National Bank and a dry goods store.



Sources of Key Information: 1981 Historical and Architectural Survey of Downtown Norwich, Assessors Online Database for Norwich

\* Based on sketches prepared by The Cecil Group, which were based on floor plans provided by the City of Norwich

Sources of Photos and Map: The Cecil Group, MassGIS

### Reuse Scenario

- Water Street Ground Floor (Level 1): Retail and/or Office
- Mezzanine: Residential and Mechanical Space
- Main Street Ground Floor (Level 2): Retail and/or Office
- Upper Floors: Residential

### Observations on Feasibility

- This property includes two consolidated buildings, and there is a significant difference in the floor alignments.
- The building is currently in foreclosure.
- The building is in fairly good condition, which could potentially lower the cost of redevelopment.
- The Bulletin Building (western building) is a deep building, so getting light to the interior could be a challenge. The units would likely have to be larger due to the limited number of windows.
- The upper floors are vacant, so their redevelopment would not require displacing tenants.
- The upper floors provide river views, which could be attractive to potential tenants.
- The building is located across the street from a City-owned parking garage.

Project Program	Gross SF*	Net SF*	# Units
<b>Residential</b>	<b>28,594</b>	<b>19,228</b>	<b>20</b>
One-bed units			10
Two-bed units			10
<b>Retail/Office</b>	<b>17,548</b>	<b>13,306</b>	
<b>Parking</b>			
Demand			67
Available On Site			0
Available Off Site			111**

\*Approximate

\*\*Main Street Parking Garage spaces (excluding reserved spaces)



Sources: Bing Maps



***Detailed Program of Uses for Bulletin and Richards Building***

Level	Gross Area*	Total Net Area*	Net Leasable*	Unit Type
<b>Level 1</b> (Water Street Ground Level)				
Office or Retail			5,404	
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>5,404</b>	
Residential Circulation		894		
<b>Total Level 1</b>	<b>7,134</b>	<b>6,298</b>		
<b>Mezzanine</b>				
Unit 1			1,204	2 bed
Unit 2			1,089	2 bed
Unit 3			782	1 bed
Unit 4			853	1 bed
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>3,928</b>	
Residential Storage and Circulation		1,472		
Mechanical Space		2,395		
<b>Subtotal Mezzanine</b>	<b>9,752</b>	<b>7,795</b>		
<b>Level 2</b> (Main Street Ground Level)				
Office or Retail			7,902	
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>7,902</b>	
Residential Lobby and Circulation		839		
<b>Total Level 2</b>	<b>9,752</b>	<b>8,741</b>		

*Continued on Following Page*

Level	Gross Area*	Total Net Area*	Net Leasable*	Unit Type
<b>Level 3</b>				
Unit 5			1,229	2 bed
Unit 6			1,147	2 bed
Unit 7			1,207	2 bed
Unit 8			969	2 bed
Unit 9			745	1 bed
Unit 10			713	1 bed
Unit 11			784	1 bed
Unit 12			856	1 bed
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>7,650</b>	
Residential Circulation		1,369		
<b>Total Level 3</b>	<b>9,752</b>	<b>9,019</b>		
<b>Level 4</b>				
Unit 13			1,229	2 bed
Unit 14			1,147	2 bed
Unit 15			1,207	2 bed
Unit 16			969	2 bed
Unit 17			745	1 bed
Unit 18			713	1 bed
Unit 19			784	1 bed
Unit 20			856	1 bed
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>7,650</b>	
Residential Circulation		1,369		
<b>Total Level 4</b>	<b>9,752</b>	<b>9,019</b>		

#### Program Summary

Net Leasable Residential	<b>19,228</b>
Net Leasable Office/Retail	<b>13,306</b>
Total Leasable Floor Area	<b>32,534</b>
Total Gross Floor Area	<b>46,142</b>
Gross/Net Leasable Ratio	<b>0.71</b>

\*Approximate (based on sketches prepared by The Cecil Group, which were based on floor plans provided by the City of Norwich.)

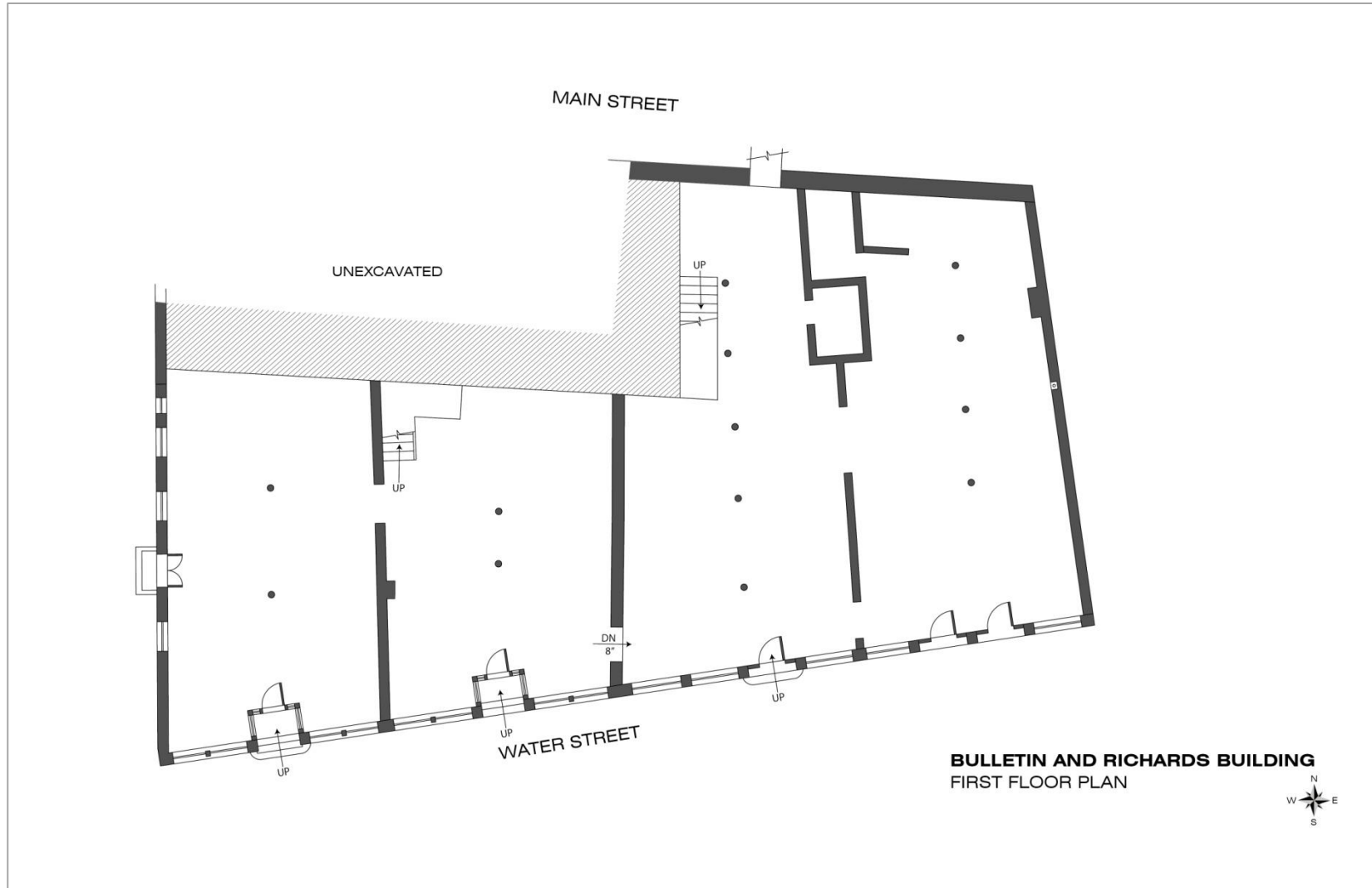
## ***Conceptual Design***

The consultant team prepared conceptual design sketches for the Bulletin and Richards Building to represent a strategy for redeveloping the building. The sketches illustrate the potential layout of different uses within the building if renovated or redeveloped. They show the layout of residential units and retail/office spaces, and they provide rough net square footages for each unit or space. Circulation – stairways, hallways and an elevator – and access to the building are all shown in the sketches. The sketches are based on floor plans provided by the City of Norwich, information from Norwich Assessors Online Database and the team’s observations from a tour of the building.

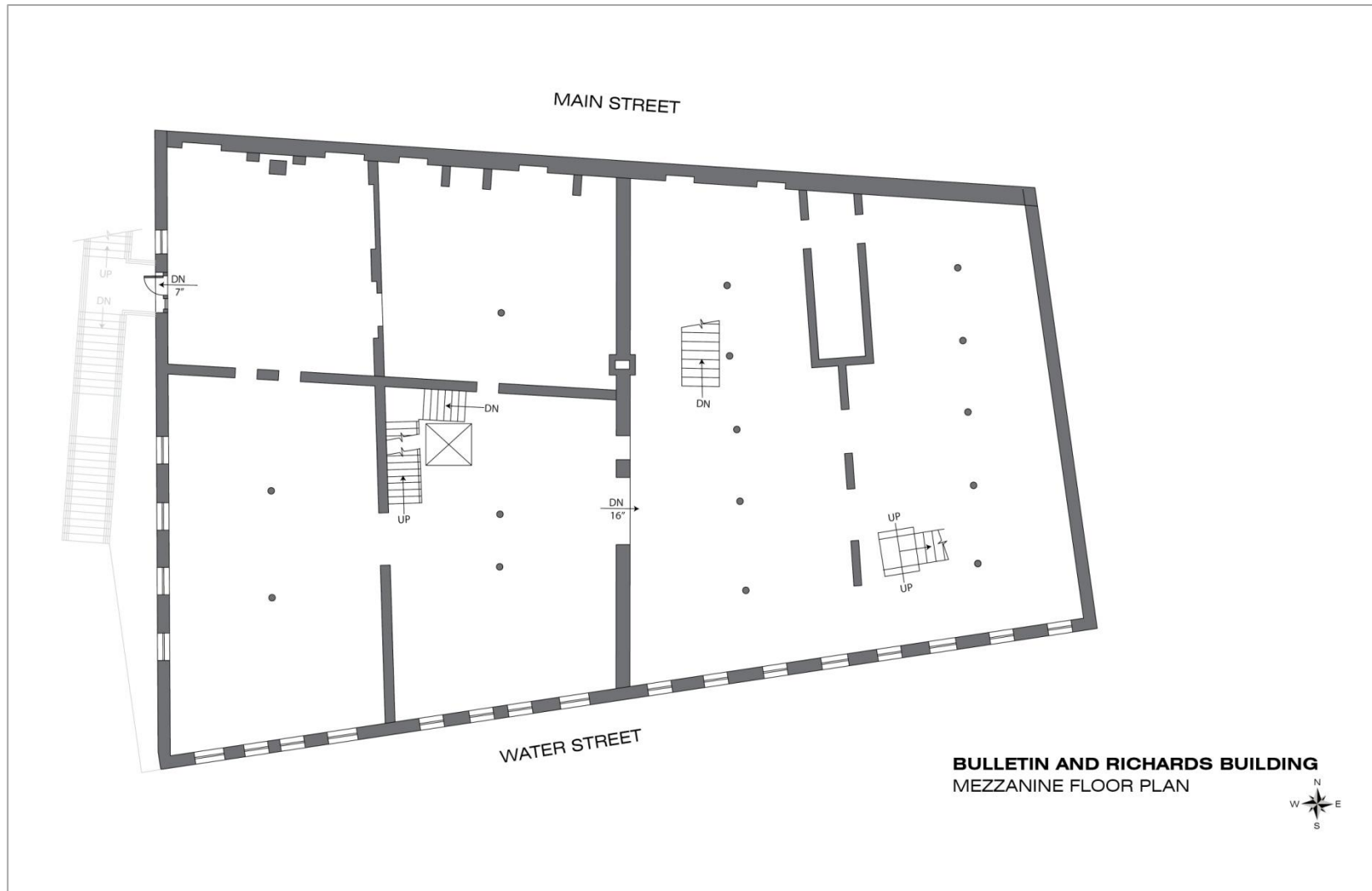
The consultant team has provided diagrams of the existing conditions of the Bulletin and Richards Buildings in the following pages. (These diagrams are based on floor plans provided by the City of Norwich.) The conceptual design sketches are then shown, followed by photos of the building’s interior.

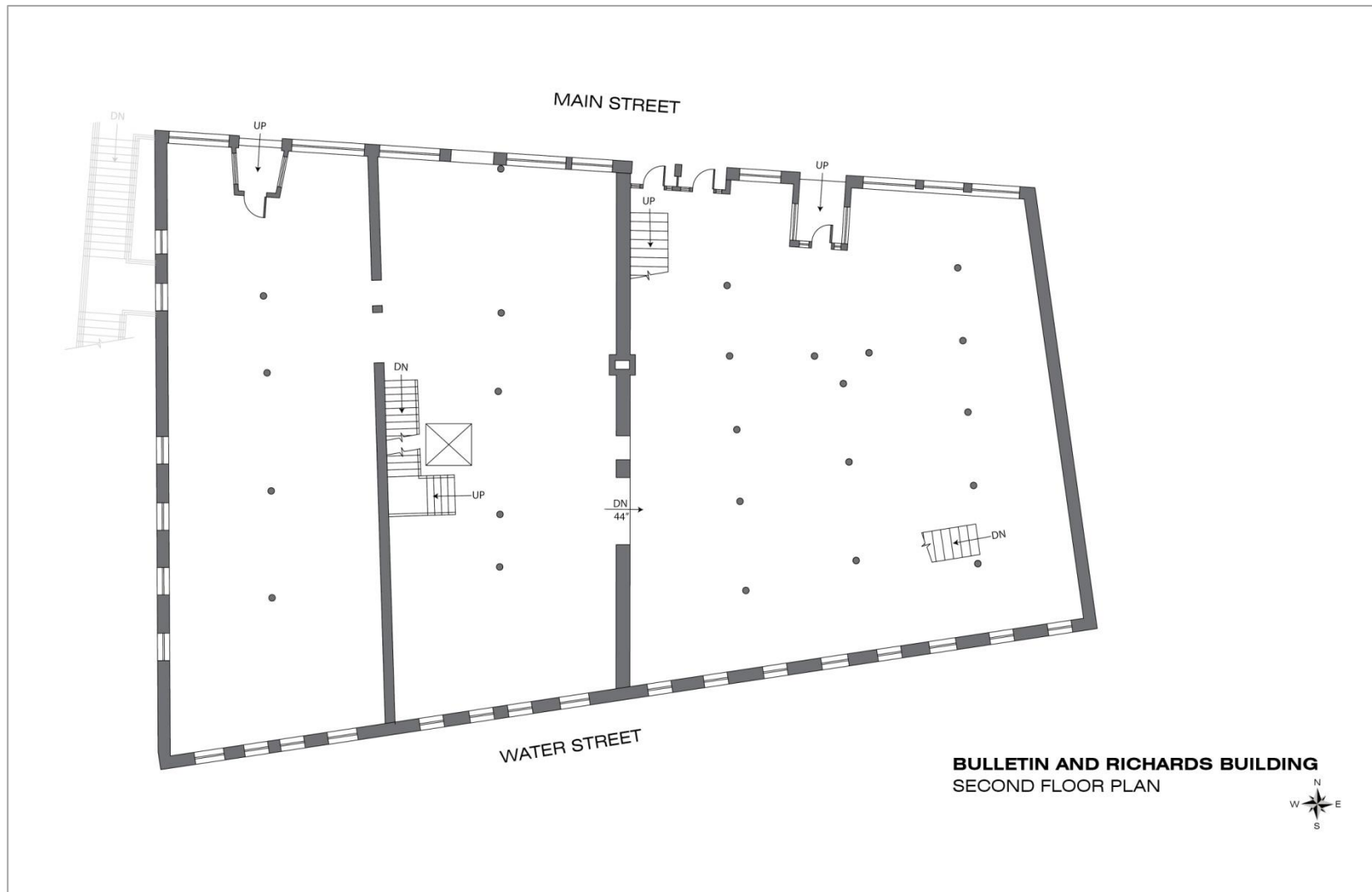


## Existing Conditions Diagrams

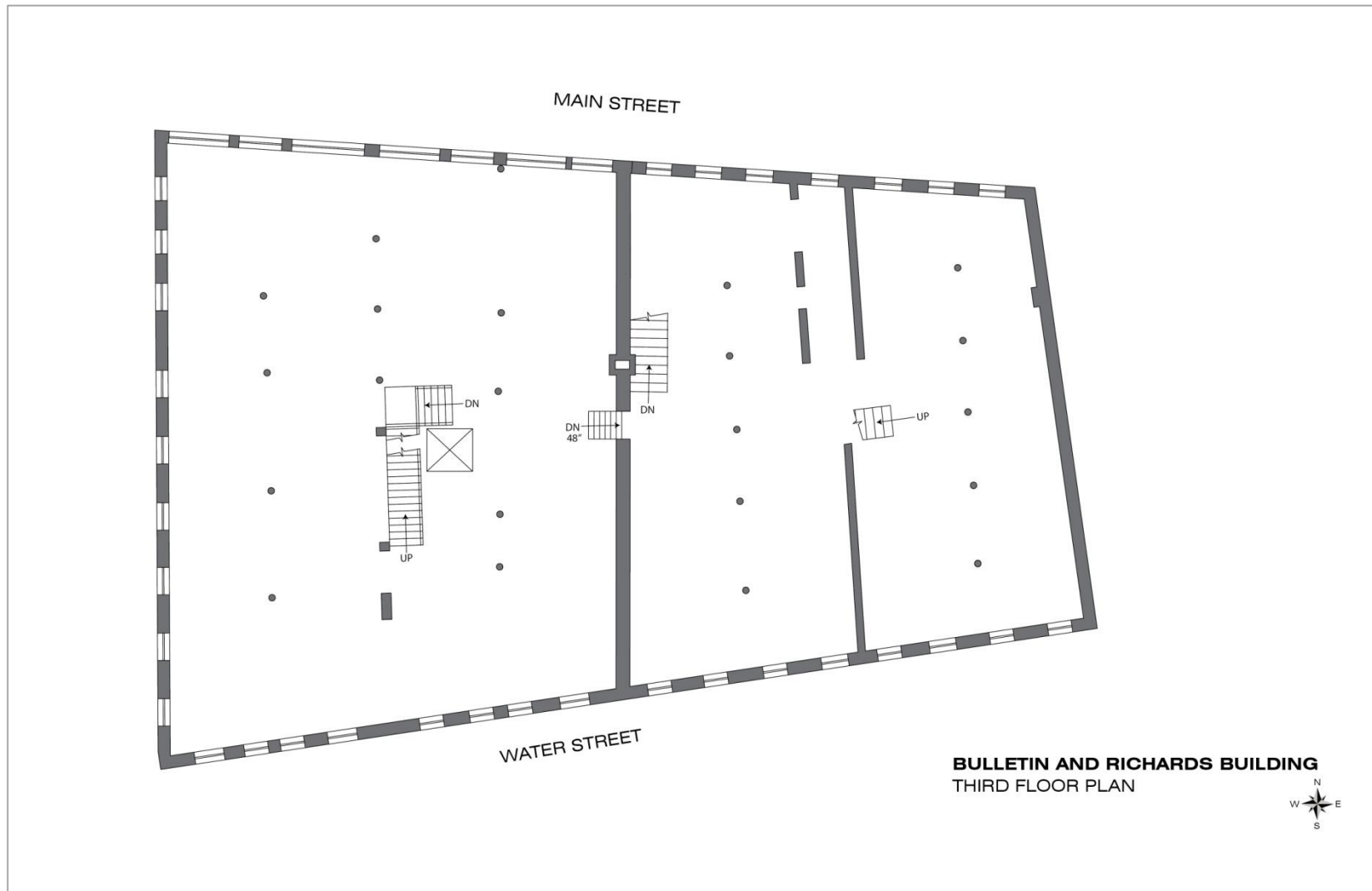


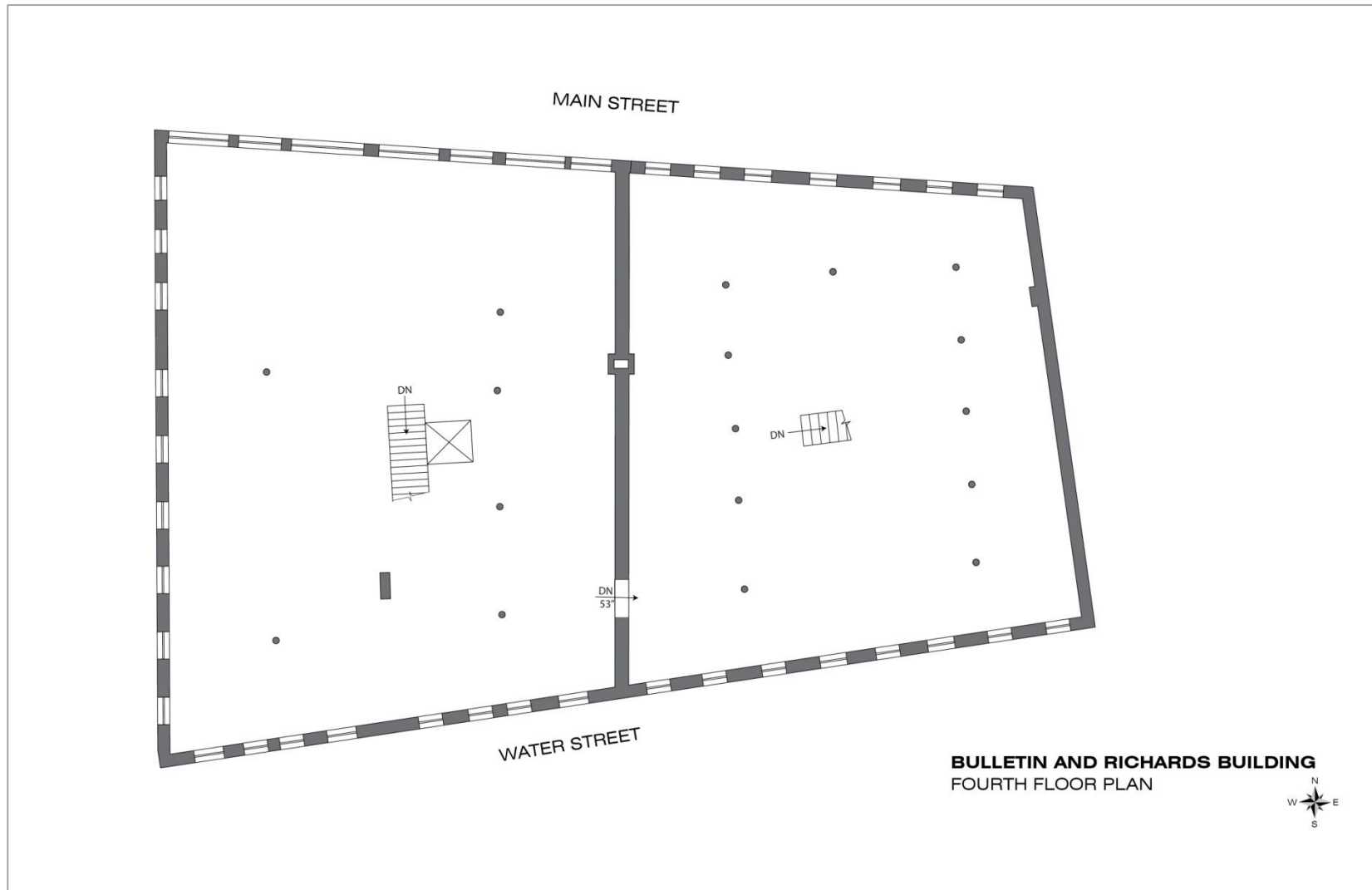
Prepared by The Cecil Group



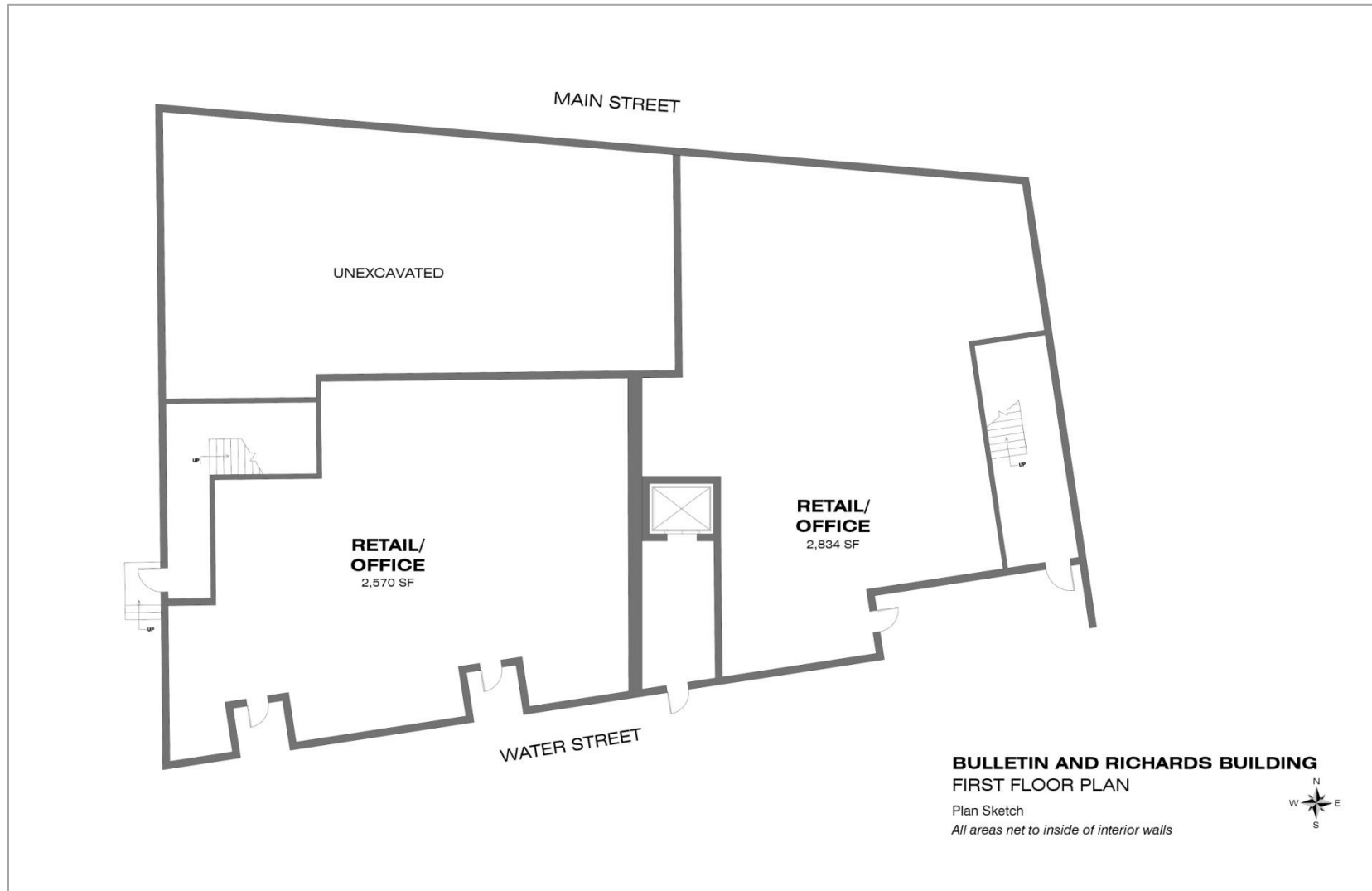




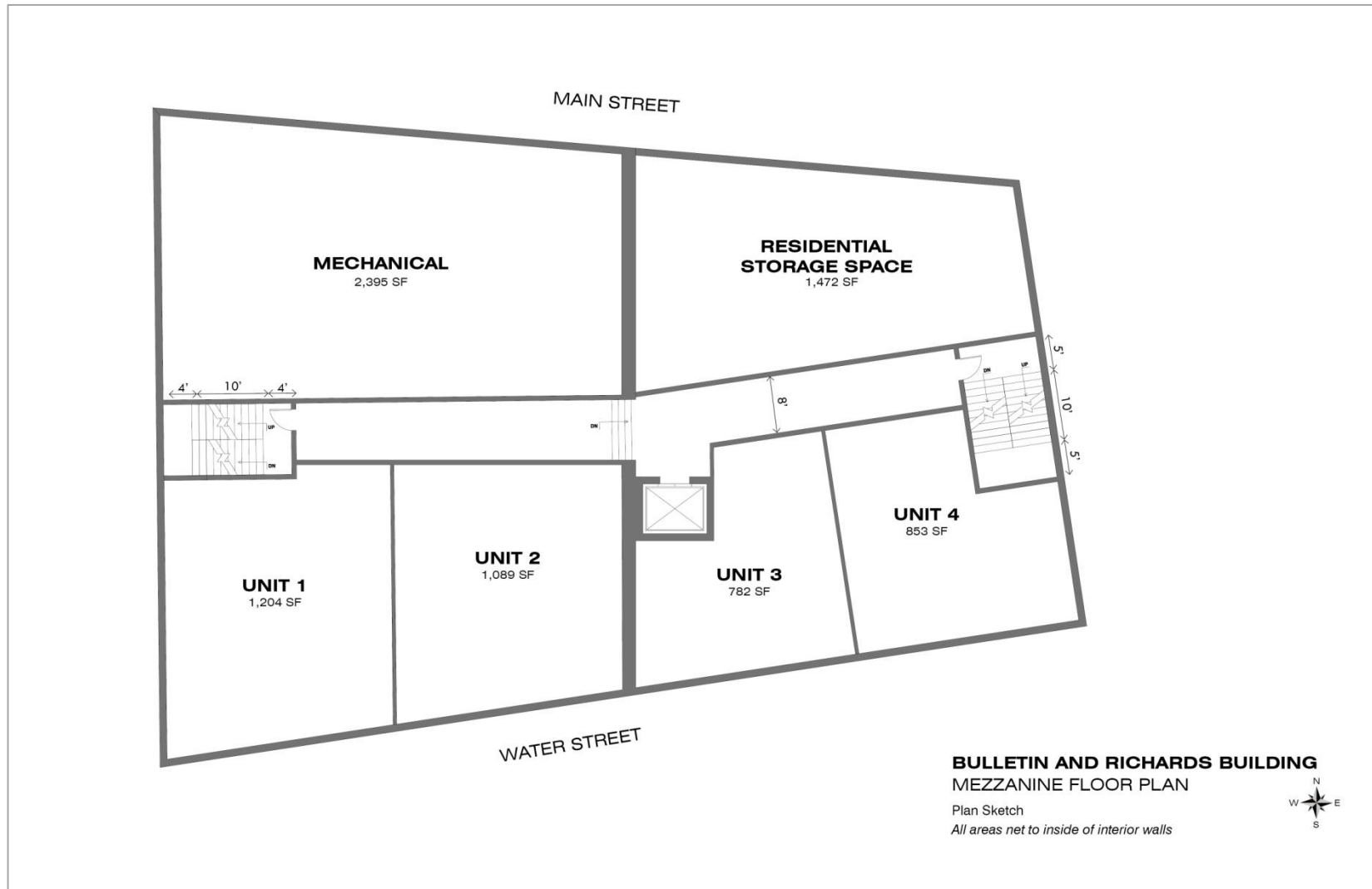




## Conceptual Design Sketches

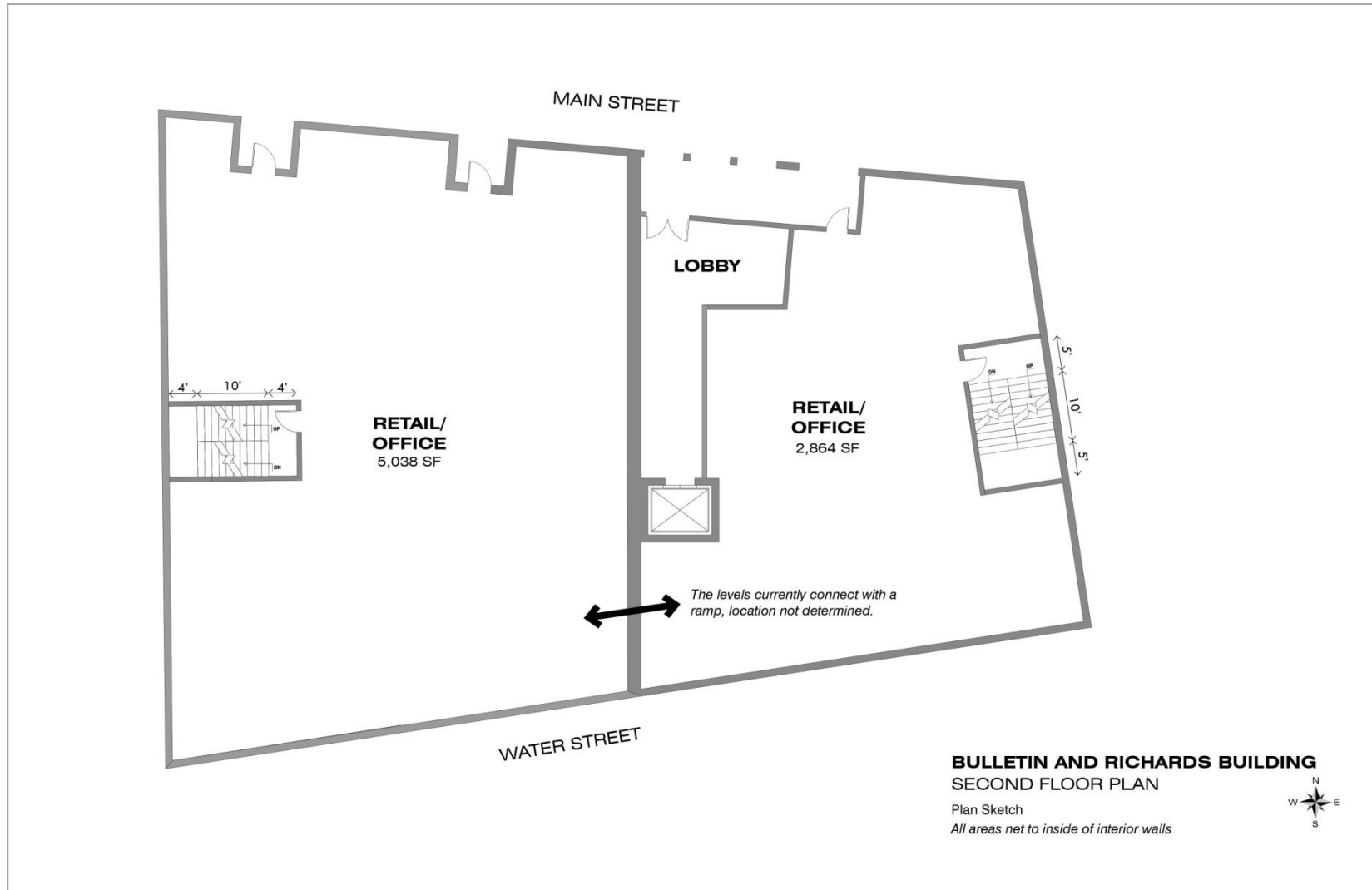


Prepared by The Cecil Group

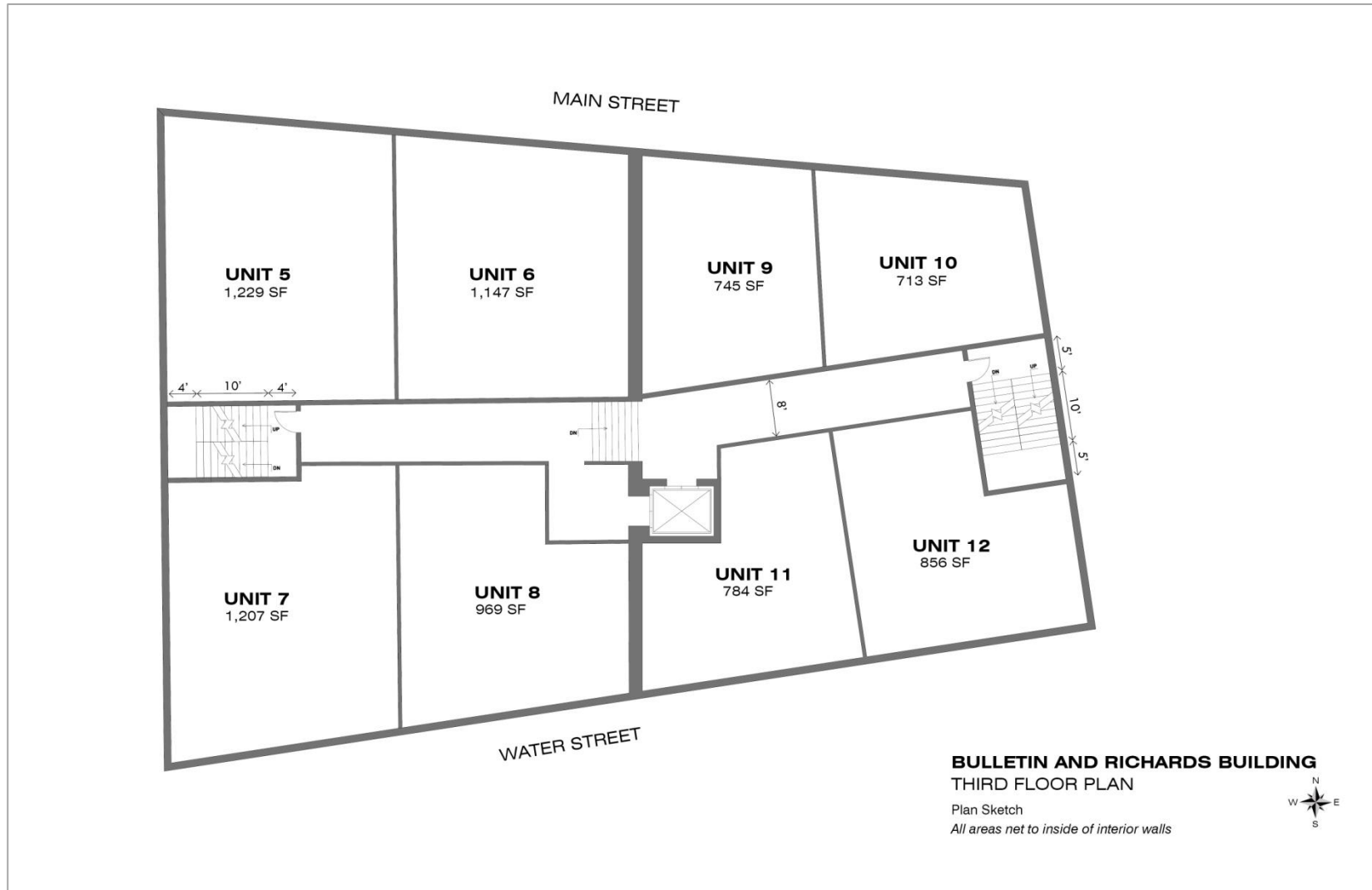


Prepared by The Cecil Group

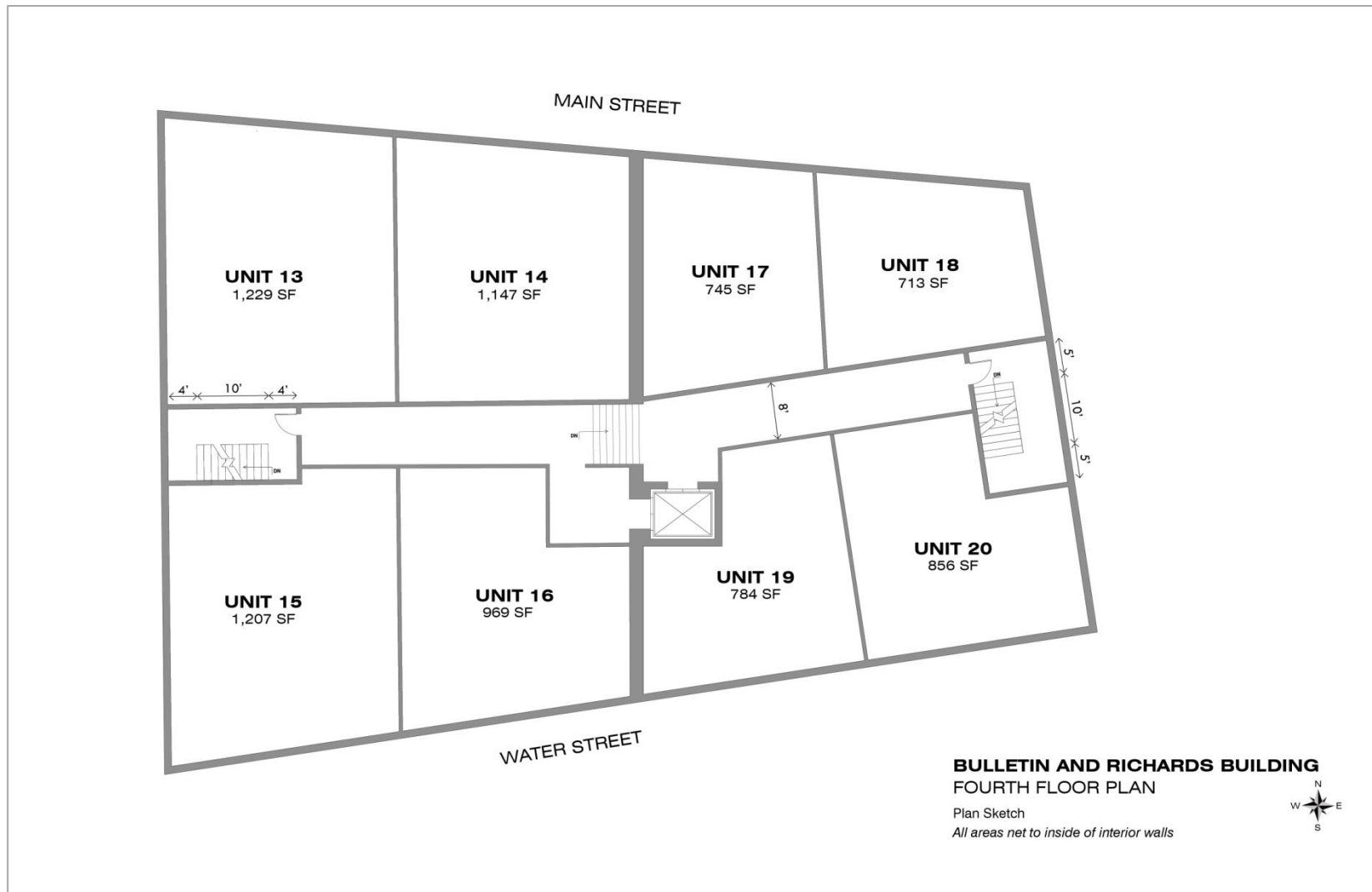




Prepared by The Cecil Group



Prepared by The Cecil Group



Prepared by The Cecil Group



Interior of the Ground Floor on Main Street



Difference in Floor Alignments between Two Consolidated Buildings



Existing Opening (Elevator Shaft)



Interior of an Upper Floor



Sources: The Cecil Group and Durkee, Brown, Viveiros & Werenfels Architects

## ***Financial Feasibility***

FXM Associates prepared a very preliminary, conceptual test pro forma evaluation for the pilot project. The chart on the following page shows the result of this evaluation. Not shown is a series of more detailed test pro forma that considered estimated development costs using a range of hypothetical costs per SF for residential and commercial rehabilitation as well as current “market” and “assessed” property values, current commercial property tax rates and methodology, historic tax credits, and foreseeable market demand for residential, retail and office space.

While rehabilitation costs are specific to an individual building’s current structural and other conditions as well as a specific design program for both residential and commercial space -- both of which are beyond the scope of this investigation -- data in the chart on the following page shows the results of a hypothetical construction cost scenario at \$125 per SF for residential and \$80 per SF for retail and office space, which represents a median range of actual rehabilitation costs drawn from other projects (source: The Cecil Group and DBVW Architects).

Comments on feasibility are noted in the chart and further highlighted as follows:

- Without subsidies, the property’s redevelopment is not financially feasible, particularly if property taxes are applied to full development costs at the current tax rate. If property taxes and acquisition costs are substantially reduced, the amount of subsidies required is significantly reduced.
- The pilot project will require historic tax credits to achieve pro forma feasibility. (Depending on the amount of tax credits actually received, other subsidies could be required. This could include housing subsidies or funds from NCDC’s Code Correction Assistance Program and Revolving Loan Fund.)
- Acquisition costs at \$2 per SF can only be supported if tax credits or other subsidies are obtained. The \$2 per SF cost was used arbitrarily to reflect an acquisition cost above \$0. (It is recognized that the properties are not likely to be given to a developer for free.)

Assumptions	Development Program	Bulletin & Richards Building
	<b>RESIDENTIAL</b>	
\$900/mo	Studio Units	
\$1,100/mo	1 BR Units	10
\$1,300/mo	2 BR Units	10
	Total Units	20
	Gross SF	28,594
	<b>RETAIL</b>	
	Gross SF	10,880
\$12/SF/yr (NNN)	Net Leasable SF	8,268
	<b>OFFICE</b>	
	Gross SF	6,668
\$16/SF/yr (NNN)	Net Leasable SF	5,038
\$2/SF*	<b>ACQUISITION COSTS</b>	\$ 87,704
10% Vacancies	<b>ANNUAL NET OPERATING INCOME</b> (Excluding Property Taxes)	\$ 554,242
7%, 30 yrs, 1.2 DCR	Supportable Debt	(\$5,731,339)
	Supportable Costs per SF (Construction + Acquisition)	\$124
10% Vacancies	<b>ANNUAL NET OPERATING INCOME</b> (Including Property Taxes)	\$ 431,195
7%, 30 yrs, 1.2 DCR	Supportable Debt	(\$4,458,930)
	Supportable Costs per SF (Construction + Acquisition)	\$97
	ASSUMED SUBSIDY (per CGI and NCDG)	\$ 2,058,413
<b>Comments on Financial Feasibility and Marketability</b>		
	Will require state and federal historic tax credits	yes
	Assumed acquisition cost (\$2 per SF) supportable (with tax credits and other subsidies)	yes
	Feasible at current property tax rate applied to 70% of total development costs	no**
	Ability to absorb projected uses within 12-18 months	most likely
	Proximity to parking	excellent
	Overall marketability (including views, environs, mix of uses)	excellent
	Single ownership	yes

\* \$2 per SF was used arbitrarily to reflect an acquisition cost above \$0. At current assessed values, acquisition costs would range from \$33 to \$52 per SF for the target projects.

\*\*Feasible if subsidies are obtained.

## **Other Target Projects**

As part of this planning initiative, the consultant team examined four target projects, including the pilot project. The other three target projects are the Flat Iron Building, Main Street Cluster and Franklin Square. The team did not investigate these properties to the same level of detail as the pilot project.

The consultant team did, however, develop reuse scenarios and possible programs for each of the target projects. The financial feasibility and marketability of the projects were also analyzed. All of this information is provided in the following pages.

It is recognized that the development of reuse scenarios for specific properties – and the analysis of specific project’s financial feasibility – could potentially contribute to speculation in downtown Norwich, but that is not the intention. The purpose is to demonstrate how different types of historic properties could possibly be redeveloped to advance the revitalization of downtown Norwich.



## Flat Iron Building

9 – 15 and 16 Main Street

### Property Description

The Flat Iron Building is located at the corner of Main and Water streets, which is a major gateway to downtown Norwich. Actually named the Carroll Building, this triangular building is highly visible, architecturally significant and currently vacant. The building across the street, the former Dunkin Donuts, is also vacant and has roughly 15 parking spaces. There is ample parking in a nearby parking garage.

### Key Information

**Owner:** Michael Yesenko

**Total Building Size:** 16,244 gross SF

**Total Land Size:** 0.26 acres

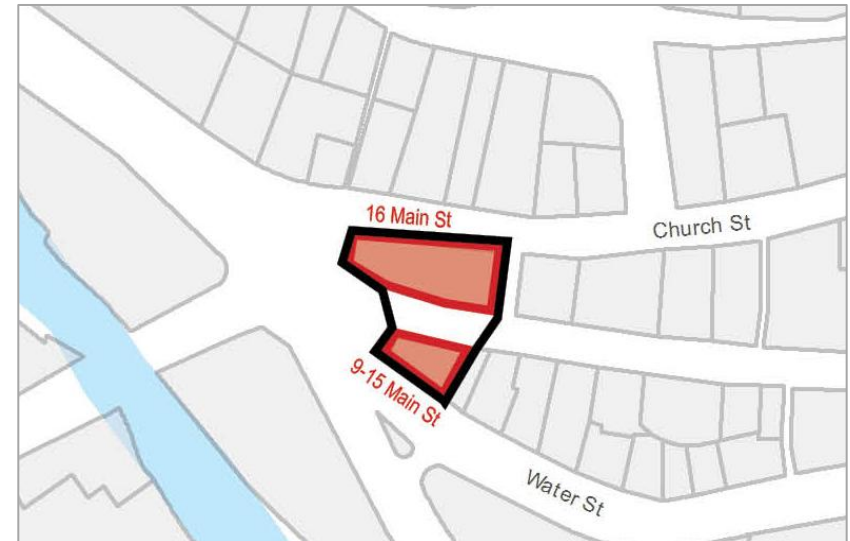
**Total Assessed Value:** \$474,000

**Total Appraised Value:** \$678,000

**Stories:** 5 (Flat Iron), 1 (Former Dunkin Donuts)

**Historic Uses:** Retail stores, offices, rental apartments

**History:** The Flat Iron Building was constructed in 1887 for a local merchant, Lucius Carroll. It was built as a real estate venture, with storefronts and offices leased to many businesses. The building across the street used to house a Dunkin Donuts store.



Sources of Key Information: 1981 Historical and Architectural Survey of Downtown Norwich, Assessors Online Database for Norwich

Sources of Photos and Map: The Cecil Group, MassGIS, <http://historicbuildingsct.com>

### Reuse Scenario

- Ground Floor of Flat Iron Building (Main and Water Street sides): Retail
- Upper Floors of Flat Iron Building: Residential
- Former Dunkin Donuts Building: Retail

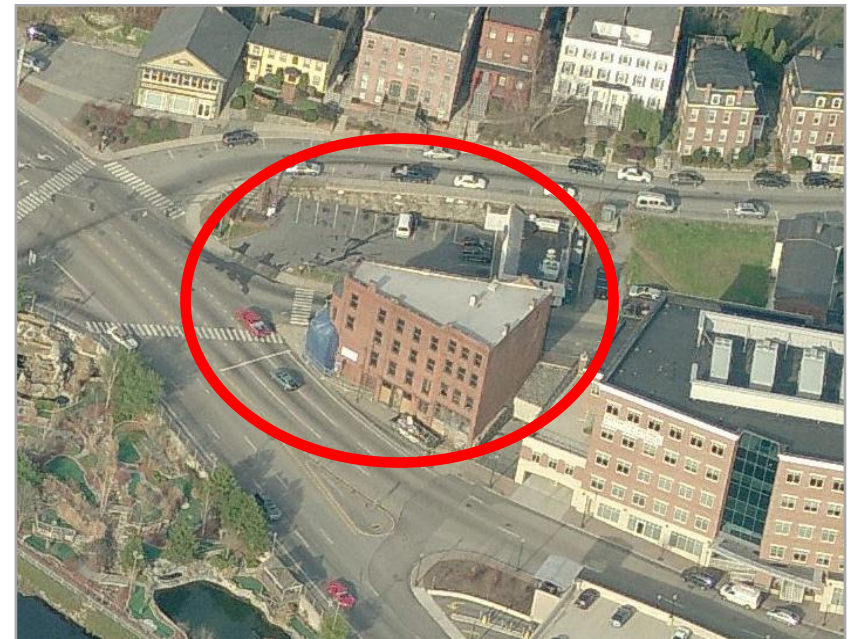
### Observations on Feasibility

- The architecture of the Flat Iron Building is striking, unique and significant.
- The owner of the Flat Iron Building has indicated that he would like to sell the property. He also owns the former Dunkin Donuts property across the street.
- The Flat Iron Building does not have a very efficient floor plan, but residential units, if created, would be unique.
- The east elevation of the Flat Iron Building does not have any windows.
- The Flat Iron Building has major structural issues at the roof framing and at some floor framing, and there may also be problems with the parapet, but that would have to be inspected from the roof.
- The Flat Iron Building boasts views of the river and marina to the south, which could attract potential renters.
- On-site parking is available at the former Dunkin Donuts property. There is also a parking garage nearby.

Project Program	Gross SF*	Net SF*	# Units
<b>Residential</b>	<b>5,928</b>	<b>4,150</b>	<b>4</b>
One-bed units			2
Two-bed units			2
<b>Retail</b>	<b>7,224</b>	<b>5,779</b>	
<b>Office</b>			
<b>Parking</b>			
Demand			26
Available On Site			15
Available Off Site			68**

\*Approximate

\*\* Waterfront garage spaces



Sources: Bing Maps

### **Main Street Cluster**

88-90, 94-100, 102-110 Main Street

#### **Property Description**

These three buildings are located on Main Street next to a City-owned parking garage. They are among a row of buildings of similar scale that form a continuous street wall on Main Street. They are mostly vacant except for a small grocery store and salon.

#### **Key Information**

**Owners:** Elizabeth Bessette, 100 Main Street Associates LLC, The Communitys Bank

**Total Buildings Size:** 29,449 gross SF

**Total Land Size:** 0.22 acres

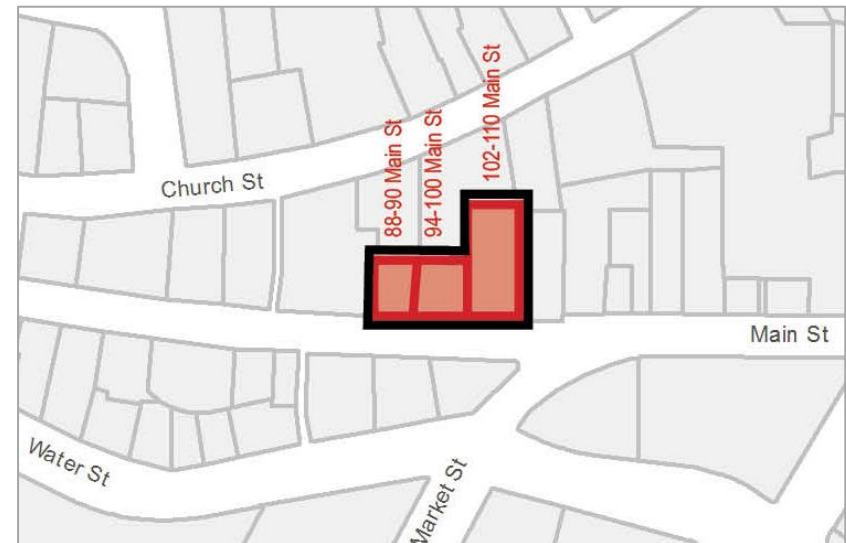
**Total Assessed Value:** \$649,000

**Total Appraised Value:** \$927,000

**Stories:** 3

**Historic Uses:** Homes, tenements, retail stores and an office

**History:** Two of the buildings (88-90 and 94-100 Main Street) were built as homes in the 1700s and rebuilt in the mid-1800s when they became commercial buildings. The third building (102-110 Main Street) was built by 1838 and housed tenements, stores and an office.



Sources of Key Information: 1981 Historical and Architectural Survey of Downtown Norwich, Assessors Online Database for Norwich

Sources of Photos and Map: Norwich, Assessors Online Database for Norwich, The Cecil Group, MassGIS



### Reuse Scenario

- Ground Floor of All Buildings: Retail
- Second Floor of 94-100 Main Street: Retail
- All Other Upper Floors: Residential

### Observations on Feasibility

- There are multiple property owners.
- The floors of the three buildings do not align.
- The buildings' small footprints would likely make their reuse more challenging and more costly per square foot.
- Egress from the upper floors would be challenging. Combined egress for the buildings could be considered, but the floor alignment issue would need to be accounted for.
- The buildings are largely vacant, so their redevelopment would not require the displacement of many tenants. The grocery store could remain and be an amenity.
- Parking is available near these buildings as there is a City-owned parking garage directly to the west.

Project Program	Gross SF*	Net SF*	# Units
<b>Residential</b>	<b>9,545</b>	<b>6,682</b>	<b>6</b>
One-bed units			3
Two-bed units			3
<b>Retail</b>	<b>10,994</b>	<b>8,795</b>	
<b>Office</b>			
<b>Parking</b>			
Demand			39
Available On Site			0
Available Off Site			111**

\*Approximate

\*\*Main Street Parking Garage spaces (excluding reserved spaces)



Sources: Bing Maps



## Franklin Square

Intersection of Main Street and Franklin Street

### Property Description

These nine properties lie in the heart of downtown Norwich along Main and Franklin streets. Given their location, the properties are highly visible and striking in appearance. They are critical to the streetscape as they create continuous street walls and corners, which together form Franklin Square. The ground floors of the properties are largely occupied by commercial uses, but the upper floors are mostly vacant.

### Key Information

**Owners:** Lord Family, City of Norwich, L+T Management LLC, JGM at Franklin + Main LLC, Paradise Bar Restaurant LLC

**Total Buildings Size:** 93,870 gross SF

**Total Land Size:** 1.28 acres

**Total Assessed Value:** \$2,178,000

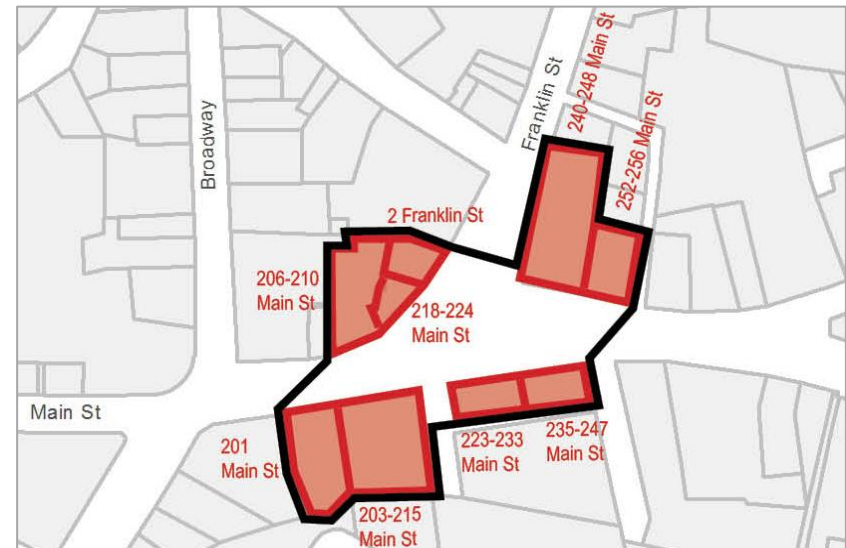
**Total Appraised Value:** \$3,111,000

**Stories:** 1 - 4

**Historic Uses:** Department store, retail stores, offices, dining room, arcade, restaurant, pool hall, grocery store, hotel, movie theater

**History:** These properties were built between the early 1800s and mid 1900s. They have housed a wide range of prominent uses that once drew people into the downtown. For example, Woolworth's at 240-248 Main Street was a popular gathering place in the 1900s, and the Stead Block at 206-210 Main Street once served as the Socialist Party headquarters.

Sources of Key Information: 1981 Historical and Architectural Survey of Downtown Norwich, Assessors Online Database for Norwich



Sources of Photos and Map: The Cecil Group, MassGIS

### Reuse Scenario

- Ground Floor of All Buildings: Retail
- Basement of 201 Main Street: Residential and Storage
- Upper Floors of 3 Buildings (203-215, 206-210 and 252-256 Main Street): Office
- Upper Floor of 1 Building (2 Franklin Street): Retail
- Upper Floors of 4 Buildings (201, 218-224, 223-233, 235-247 Main Street): Residential

### Observations on Feasibility

- There are multiple property owners and an expansive amount of vacant square footage in Franklin Square, which could make redevelopment and occupancy challenging. One property owner, the Lord family, however, owns four of the properties (nearly half of the total gross square footage in this project prototype) and wants to see them reused. The Lord family also owns two properties just outside of this project prototype, including a former railroad station.
- The entire square – or as many properties as possible – should be redeveloped as one project to have the greatest impact on the downtown.
- There are off-street parking spaces available just south of two of the Main Street buildings, as shown in the photo to the right. The parking lots are owned by the City of Norwich and the Lord family.
- The three buildings on the northwest corner of the square (206-210, 218-224 Main Street and 2 Franklin Square) have small footprints, which would likely make their reuse more challenging and more costly per square foot.
- Franklin Square itself is not very inviting, so low-cost improvements should be considered. These could include benches and plantings.

Project Program	Gross SF*	Net SF*	# Units
<b>Residential</b>	<b>32,683</b>	<b>22,878</b>	<b>32</b>
<i>Studio</i>			12
<i>One-bed units</i>			19
<i>Two-bed units</i>			1
<b>Retail</b>	<b>44,771</b>	<b>35,817</b>	
<b>Office</b>	<b>18,930</b>	<b>15,144</b>	
<b>Parking</b>			
<i>Demand</i>			225
<i>Available On Site</i>			0
<i>Available Off Site</i>			142

\*Approximate



Sources: Bing Maps

### ***Financial Feasibility and Marketability***

As mentioned earlier, FXM Associates prepared a very preliminary, conceptual test pro forma evaluation for each of the target properties. The chart on the following page shows the result of this evaluation.

The evaluation – and therefore the results – are based on the same hypothetical construction costs as the pilot project – \$125 per SF for residential and \$80 per SF for retail and office space. Comments on redevelopment feasibility are noted in the chart and further highlighted as follows:

- All potential projects will require historic tax credits to achieve pro forma feasibility.
- Acquisition costs at \$2 per SF can only be supported if tax credits or other subsidies are obtained. The \$2 per SF cost was used arbitrarily to reflect an acquisition cost above \$0. (It is recognized that the properties are not likely to be given to a developer for free.) Other subsidies could include NCDC's Code Compliance Assistance Program and Revolving Loan Fund.
- Without subsidies, none of the target properties' rehabilitation appears financially feasible if property taxes are applied to full development costs at the current tax rate.

These results are similar to the earlier Pilot Project findings. As such, they substantiate the observation that subsidies are likely required to redevelop historic properties in downtown Norwich.

Assumptions	Development Program	Flat Iron Building	Main Street Cluster	Franklin Square
	<b>RESIDENTIAL</b>			
\$900/mo	Studio Units			12
\$1,100/mo	1 BR Units	2	3	19
\$1,300/mo	2 BR Units	2	3	1
	Total Units	4	6	32
	Gross SF	5,928	9,545	31,900
	<b>RETAIL</b>			
	Gross SF	7,224	10,994	44,771
\$12/SF/yr (NNN)	Net Leasable SF	5,779	8,795	35,817
	<b>OFFICE</b>			
	Gross SF			18,930
\$16/SF/yr (NNN)	Net Leasable SF			15,144
\$2/SF	<b>ACQUISITION COSTS</b>	\$32,488	\$58,898	\$187,740
10% Vacancies	<b>ANNUAL NET OPERATING INCOME</b> (Excluding Property Taxes)	\$140,895	\$212,708	\$1,116,095
7%, 30 yrs, 1.2 DCR	Supportable Debt	(\$1,456,980)	(\$2,199,587)	(\$11,541,391)
	Supportable Costs per SF (Construction + Acquisition)	\$111	\$107	\$121
10% Vacancies	<b>ANNUAL NET OPERATING INCOME</b> (Including Property Taxes)	\$108,107	\$161,023	\$891,008
7%, 30 yrs, 1.2 DCR	Supportable Debt	(\$1,117,920)	(\$1,665,116)	(\$9,213,795)
	Supportable Costs per SF (Construction + Acquisition)	\$85	\$81	\$96
	ASSUMED SUBSIDY (per CGI and NCDG)	\$783,450	\$986,906	\$2,244,375
<b>Comments on Financial Feasibility and Marketability</b>				
	Will require state and federal historic tax credits	yes	yes	yes
	Assumed acquisition cost (\$2 per SF) supportable (with tax credits and other subsidies)	yes	yes	yes
	Feasible at current property tax rate applied to 70% of total development costs	no**	no**	no**
	Ability to absorb projected uses within 12-18 months	likely	likely	least likely
	Proximity to parking	good	excellent	good
	Overall marketability (including views, environs, mix of uses)	good	fair	fair
	Single ownership	yes	no	no

\* \$2 per SF was used arbitrarily to reflect an acquisition cost above \$0. At current assessed values, acquisition costs would range from \$33 to \$52 per SF for the target projects.

\*\*Feasible if subsidies are obtained.

## Implementation Strategy

### Overview

This segment of the report stresses the importance of a clear implementation strategy for downtown Norwich in order to accomplish both economic revitalization and historic preservation on a district-wide basis. Like many other cities, Norwich has undertaken many initiatives over several decades to bring new ideas and investments into the downtown, only to endure continuing decline in the quality, viability and value of the district. A large number of individual projects and initiatives have occurred, many of which will contribute to the long-term future. However, there has been a consistent lack of coordination among the initiatives within any long-term framework for shaping the downtown in the face of the dramatic changes in its economic role in the region.

### The Need for a Coherent Strategy

Unless a thoroughly coordinated effort is undertaken, the negative trends may not be fully reversible. The following observations underline the necessity of a focused, practical and coordinated approach.

- Overcoming the patchwork problem – Downtown Norwich has evolved as a patchwork pattern of uses and property conditions where negative conditions are scattered throughout the downtown, discouraging private sector reinvestment. Buildings that are empty and in poor condition are a major barrier to neighboring properties. In addition, economically marginal uses have taken advantage of the very low market rents or sales prices for some properties, but they do not contribute to a broad and vital mix of activities, patrons and incomes that are needed.
- Need to shift the use character, perceptions and market position of the downtown – In order to be successful over the long term, the downtown must become more attractive to market segments that can take advantage of its distinctive characteristics within the framework of regional economics. The market evaluations clearly indicate that downtown Norwich will not be restored by refilling it with its traditional uses, dominated by manufacturing, retail and commercial use. These uses have, for the most part, migrated to different locations and will not return. Downtown Norwich must be repurposed with a significant infusion of multi-family housing, destination retail, service and restaurant businesses, and the civic, cultural and entertainment functions for which it can be the regional center.
- Creating meaningful change (critical mass) – Within the patchwork pattern of conditions and uses today, individual improvement projects for buildings, sites or infrastructure can be positive but will not create enough change to overcome the nearby and persistent negatives of abandoned or vacant sites, deteriorated buildings, and discordant patterns of use. In order to reposition the downtown, enough change must occur in close proximity to substantially shift the sense of quality, safety, attractiveness and character.



- Limited market demand over the short-term but significant long-term opportunities – The total demand for additional uses in the downtown is limited in the short-term, with inadequate potential reinvestment to repopulate the entire district even under the most optimistic scenario. Over time, this can shift as the regional economy improves and the downtown becomes increasingly recognized as a high quality, distinctive place to live, work, shop and visit.
- Pragmatic targeting of redevelopment – Under these circumstances, the only practical direction for redevelopment is to target redevelopment as a series of clustered initiatives that incrementally change the character of sub-districts. The prioritization evaluations contained in this study provide a rational basis for choosing and directing reinvestment.
- Coordinating limited resources – As the evaluation of target projects demonstrates, market forces alone are inadequate to accomplish the shift in market position required to reset the future path for the downtown. If the available subsidy and public investment resources are spread thinly, scattered or distributed in an uncoordinated fashion, the underlying conditions will not be adequately changed. Coordination, in short, is vital.
- Providing consistent development stewardship – Other cities that have successfully repositioned their downtowns have benefited from a long-term shared commitment associated with consistent development stewardship. Norwich has an excellent organizational framework of entities and organizations that can serve to facilitate redevelopment, but the efforts must be fully coordinated through shared commitment and designated roles and responsibilities.
- Changing locations and patterns of use – The locations and patterns of use need to change to be mutually supportive and consistent with the vision of the downtown as an economically self-sustainable mixed-use district. The City and its stakeholders need to reconsider, for example, the most appropriate locations for social services, court-related activities and government functions so that the use patterns reinforce downtown goals as well as the needs of each institution or function.
- Attracting funding and financing – If the historic preservation and downtown revitalization initiatives are to succeed over the long term, additional funding and financing must be attracted in the short term to set the stage for private sector reinvestment. A coherent strategy and pragmatic plan for action are essential ingredients of Norwich's competitive ability to inspire and attract such resources.
- Altering the relationship between circulation, parking and redevelopment – As described in more detail below, the circulation and parking patterns are not consistent with long-term success for the district. Like many other downtowns, Norwich has suffered from a series of traffic, circulation and parking investments that – when considered in relation to their overall effect – are not aligned with the practical needs of a successful district today. Reorganizing these patterns is essential to success.

## Strategy Components

The strategy to simultaneously implement historic preservation and economic revitalization described in this report has several components.

- Stewardship – Public, civic and institutional stewardship of the downtown must be expanded and coordinated through a strategy that formally establishes shared policies, assigns roles and implements responsibilities.
- Municipal Roles and Actions – The City has several critically important roles to play, including actions that focus its own redevelopment activities, facilitates reinvestment, and reorganizes aspects of the infrastructure and public services.
- Programs and Resources – In addition to focusing and coordinating existing programs and resources, the strategy includes recommendations regarding additional tools that may be needed to unlock both historic preservation and the associated reinvestment.

## Stewardship

### Shared Strategy

The strategy for historic preservation and Downtown revitalization needs to be articulated and adopted by the organizations and institutions that are stakeholders in its success. This should be accomplished through several steps:

- Downtown Coordination Committee – A standing committee should be established among the many participants in this effort, continuing the excellent initiatives already underway. This committee should meet on a regular basis (perhaps quarterly). The committee members should be chosen to serve as direct liaisons with key stakeholder groups, including the City (Mayor's office, City Council, and City agencies including Community Development, Planning and Development, and Public Works), Norwich Community Development Corporation, Norwich Historical Society and historical advocates, and business and economic development non-profits such as the Chamber of Commerce.
- Articulated and approved policies and strategy - The relevant aspects of the shared directions and commitments should be formalized through approved, written statements and policy directives for the constituent participants, including participation in the strategic committee and related responsibilities and actions that each intends to accomplish. These statements should be shared among the participants and updated annually, based on the progress achieved.

## Plan and Program Alignment

There are a number of plans and regulatory frameworks that must align with various aspects of the implementation strategy. These should be reviewed and updated if necessary to enable anticipated actions by the City, non-profits and the public sector. The list includes, at a minimum:

- Plan of Conservation and Development – The City’s Plan of Conservation and Development must be reviewed relative to the concepts for prioritized and coordinated reinvestment, and updated if necessary to ensure that appropriate language is included.
- Municipal Plan of Development – The Plan of Development can provide important directions regarding the disposition of the publicly owned property, the prioritization of public expenditures, and the designation of the roles that are anticipated for the designated Development Agency (the NCDC), the Norwich Redevelopment Authority and others.
- Redevelopment Plan – The Redevelopment Plan provides an important planning framework for actions that the City may take through its Redevelopment Authority, including acquisitions, dispositions and agreements that may be needed among various participants in the process, including the NCDC.
- Zoning – If zoning proves to be misaligned with the practical requirements for feasible renovation and associated redevelopment, then refinements should be made, rather than relying on variance processes.

## Leadership and Coordination

A targeted redevelopment initiative such as that outlined in this report requires consistent leadership and coordination. This is best achieved through entities that have the flexibility to engage in a variety of market and development-related activities, in concert with municipal goals and roles. The Norwich Community Development Corporation (NCDC) appears to be most suited to fulfill this role. Through Connecticut enabling legislation, the City can designate the NCDC as its development corporation to administer a range of programs and powers. The NCDC can also provide appropriate services or administer certain activities through agreements and contracts. In addition, the NCDC can independently undertake a range of development and preservation-related activities as a nonprofit corporation for types of projects that the municipality could not, but which will be important and beneficial to district revitalization.

## Norwich Community Development Corporation

The NCDC should lead or coordinate activities to enable the targeted redevelopment initiatives for preservation and revitalization that are listed below, or others that emerge during the course of redevelopment:

- Property assembly and ownership – The NCDC can become directly involved in the redevelopment process by actively assembling land and buildings as a non-profit owner. In this role, the NCDC can acquire property or options for purchase to help assemble multiple parcels needed to accomplish the coordinated and prioritized redevelopment.

- Property acquisition and development fund – The NCDC should establish and manage dedicated funds for acquiring, managing, improving and disposing property in line with the redevelopment goals. This fund should be replenished, in part, by income derived from sales and lease activities over time.
- Interim property management – The NCDC should undertake interim property management as may be appropriate to reposition buildings and land for ultimate private sector redevelopment. This could include leases for space, providing and managing building or property improvements to make them more marketable, and gaining regulatory approvals (“entitlements”) that would facilitate timely and cost effective redevelopment and use by others.
- Marketing for sale or lease – The NCDC should undertake a leadership in the sale or lease of properties that it controls over time. In addition, the NCDC should undertake marketing efforts on behalf of existing owners of target properties, including establishing agreements associated with those activities that provide relevant conditions on the sale or compensation for its successful efforts.
- Disposition of property for redevelopment – The NCDC should undertake the packaging and disposition of properties for redevelopment through negotiated agreements, Requests for Proposals, or other means to transfer ownership and control of properties. The disposition agreements should include conditions, restrictions, covenants and compensation as may be needed and appropriate to accomplish the overall development goals.
- Development grant and loan programs – The NCDC should continue and expand its role in administering public grant and loan programs for which it is enabled, authorized and approved. In addition, the NCDC should expand its programs through agreements with other grant and loans sources, to provide for the coordination among relevant resources.
- Design standards – The NCDC should establish and administer appropriate historic and development design standards for projects that it provides funding, financing or other assistance, but which do not qualify or use state or federal historic tax credits.
- Coordination and communication – The NCDC should serve as the convener and chair the activities of the Downtown Coordination Committee.

## ***Municipal Roles and Actions***

The City has many responsibilities associated with both historic preservation and downtown revitalization. The following list highlights several essential tasks and roles:

### **Traffic, Parking and Circulation Plan**

The City should assemble funds and prepare a thorough and comprehensive Traffic, Parking and Circulation Plan for the downtown that is aligned with the City's revitalization and economic goals. This plan needs to take into account contemporary methods for providing a balanced district that supports more convenient and clear circulation patterns for vehicles with an enhanced environment for pedestrians. The master plan should be adequately funded to provide the level of analysis required and the preparation of technical studies and recommendations that can subsequently be translated into the budgeting, funding, preparation and implementation of a sequence of specific projects.

This recommendation recognizes that the criteria and practices associated with transportation engineering in the past were often poorly suited to downtown revitalization. The emphasis of professional practices and project design were often associated with optimizing through-traffic and traffic operations for vehicles, and providing local projects that matched state or federal funding availability. Successful downtowns balance traffic requirements with creating a convenient destination for those who wish to visit, live or work within the downtown, rather than passing through it. Contemporary practices also recognize the essential links between a safe, attractive and convenient pedestrian environment that is not compromised by traffic and parking needs.

This plan needs to address substantial problems and deficiencies in the current traffic and parking network, including:

- One-way streets – Like other downtowns, Norwich has acquired a network of one-way streets that make access and circulation confusing, indirect and probably unnecessary in some cases.
- Entrance and gateway sequences – The approaches to the downtown are vital, and the current approaches from nearly all directions are confusing and indirect, with signage indicating where access is prohibited, but no good signage, flows or intersection design to provide excellent entrances.
- Parking location, allocation and management – While the Downtown has substantial parking structures and a municipally-administered supply, the locations, pricing and policies are not yet fully coordinated to directly support the redevelopment goals. Planning can also help optimize the operations and revenues over the long term.
- Signage – There is a lack of clear or appropriate wayfinding and other signage systems to help visitors navigate to, through and from the Downtown.
- Signalization – The pattern and design of the signalization and signalized intersections needs to be reviewed and updated as may be appropriate to be fully integrated into the overall circulation strategy.



- Excess capacity – A review of streets and roadways may discover excess capacity that will not be needed in the future, if the overall network is improved. In similar circumstances, communities have redirected the use of rights-of-way to directly support development in some locations, and decrease the need for maintenance and operational expenditures.

The cost of specialized professional services associated with this Plan is approximately \$125,000, based on similar communities and Norwich's circumstances. Elements of the Scope of Services and the resulting Plan should include:

- Coordination with Stakeholders and the Downtown Revitalization Goals – A fundamental aspect of the plan must be the explicit inclusion of stakeholders as well as the general public, and to link the traffic, circulation and parking effort to the Downtown revitalization process.
- Traffic Network Analysis – The analysis should include current traffic counts and the establishment of a modeled network of all downtown streets and intersections including turning movements. The analysis should project future conditions with appropriate assumptions regarding background traffic.
- Coordination with ConnDOT – The study should be coordinated with ConnDOT and potential criteria and programs associated with state funding. However, the study should clearly define the City's interests and the link with municipal redevelopment goals.
- Modal Evaluations – The evaluations need to take into account the potential relationships among transit, bicycles, pedestrians and vehicles.

- Parking and Development Analysis – Evaluation of existing and potential future parking needs and patterns must consider supply, demand, pricing, costs, operational and maintenance management, and the relationship between parking and prospective private sector redevelopment locations and feasibility.
- Alternatives and Preferred Plan – The alternatives need to consider network-wide changes and provide evaluations of associated costs and benefits, leading to the designation and documentation of the preferred approach.
- Phasing – A phasing strategy must be prepared that describes short-term and long-term improvement requirements that will accomplish the overall plan's purposes. Each stage should be described with specific projects, funding resource requirements and potential resources, contingent approvals and relationship to pre-requisite projects or changes.

### Norwich Redevelopment Agency

The Norwich Redevelopment Agency could play several important roles in the historic preservation and downtown revitalization arena.

- Focus on Mill Renovation – The Redevelopment Agency may be best positioned to provide focused planning and implementation support for the historic mill buildings in the downtown. This study recommends that a long-term strategy be developed for these properties, recognizing that their scale, condition and location place them in a category outside of the prioritized redevelopment locations. Their stewardship includes inclusion of relevant properties in the current brownfields property assessment and study process.

- Agreements with the NCDC - The Redevelopment Authority may be able to undertake key contractual relationships with the NCDC as its implementing entity for certain Downtown actions, including those associated with owning, leasing or improving properties that the Redevelopment Authority could acquire over time.

### **Municipally-Owned Surplus Property**

The City obtains and owns property in the Downtown through several mechanisms. This report recommends that the City determine those properties that will not be required for municipal purpose and could contribute to redevelopment. The properties useful for redevelopment should then be transferred to either the Redevelopment Authority or the NCDC as its designated Development Corporation for inclusion in the prioritized program of property management, preparation and disposition for private sector redevelopment.

### **Tax Delinquency**

The City should explore methods to redirect real estate tax delinquency towards revitalization goals. In the event that property is acquired through tax delinquency and could contribute towards redevelopment, the property should be transferred to the NCDC or its Redevelopment Authority as noted above. The City should also consider placing conditions on tax delinquency forgiveness or deferrals to support the redevelopment goals.

## ***Programs and Resources***

Under current conditions, most historic renovation and adaptive reuse projects will require the assistance of supportive programs and financial resources, until the market position of the downtown substantially changes. In part, the efforts must combine the existing programs and resources to achieve feasibility, and several of the more prominent sources are listed here for reference. In addition to existing programs and resources on appropriate projects, several new approaches might also be pursued, as described below.

### **Potential New Programs and Resources**

#### **Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation Programs**

The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation has provided key grants to fund the preparation of this report and other strategies for Downtown Norwich. Direct reinvestment through loan or grant programs in properties and areas that have been listed for priority action could help complete the “gap” in financing sources for key projects.

#### **Property Acquisition and Improvement Fund**

The NCDC should establish and seek sources for a property acquisition and improvement fund that would allow it to obtain, hold, manage and improve groups of properties needed to help create the critical mass of changes in prioritized areas of the downtown.

## Marketing and Recruitment Initiative

In line with the repositioning of specific properties, the NCDC and its partners should prepare a marketing strategy to attract investors, developers, tenants and residents to the Downtown. A study of the marketing targets and contemporary marketing methods is needed so that the expenditures and activities can be appropriately targeted and be cost effective.

# Implementation Plan

DRAFT September 25, 2012

## Overview

The VCI report identifies an overall implementation strategy and makes 24 recommendations for the city to implement. These recommendations can be organized into five key focus areas:

<b>A</b>	<b>Establish a Downtown Coordinating Committee</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>Improve Property</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>Improve Circulation and Parking</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>Improve Wayfinding</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>Continue Mill and Brownfield Remediation</b>

There is a need to identify how these recommendations are going to be implemented, who is responsible for the implementation, and the overall priority. Without a clear direction for implementation, some of these recommendations may not be pursued.

There are 11 organizations that have been identified to be partners in the implementation process. These include the City Council, Redevelopment Authority, Parking Commission, Department of Planning and Neighborhood Services, Norwich Public Utilities, Local Traffic Authority, Norwich Community Development Corporation, Chamber of Commerce, Norwich Historical Society and the Department of Public Works. The report also recommends that a Downtown Coordinating Committee (DCC) be formed to coordinate and oversee the implementation effort.

The DCC team might include members from the various agencies that have a role in implementation. This team would meet a minimum of four times per year to remain advised of implementation progress and to identify and mitigate issues that are preventing the recommendations from being completed.

## Plan Format

### Priorities

The implementation plan includes 24 recommendations, which are organized into tables. Each recommendation includes elements that are either a policy or a task. It is important to understand the differences between these two elements:

<b>Policies</b>	<p>Ongoing activities that will never be completed. Because they are ongoing, a timeframe is not applicable. The priority level indicates how important it is that the city abides by this policy in order to achieve the goals of the project.</p> <p>A low priority does not necessarily mean that the policy is not important. It may reflect that other policies were more important or that the issue was not urgent.</p>
<b>Tasks</b>	<p>Activities that can be completed. These activities can be given a deadline, and can be readily tracked.</p>

The tables also identify an initial lead and partners for each action item. The initial lead is the board, commission, department, or organization that would most likely lead the implementation effort. Partners roles would be to provide assistance.

### Implementation Team Members - Downtown Coordinating Committee \*

City Council
Redevelopment Authority
Parking Commission
Planning and Neighborhood Services
Public Works
Local Traffic Authority
Norwich Community Development Corporation
Chamber of Commerce
Historical Society
Harbor Management Commission

\* To Be Assigned by the City Council

### Partner Acronyms

<b>CC</b>	City Council
<b>DCC</b>	Downtown Coordinating Committee
<b>DPW</b>	Public Works
<b>HMC</b>	Harbor Management Commission
<b>LTA</b>	Local Traffic Authority
<b>NCDC</b>	Norwich Community Development Corporation
<b>NHS</b>	Historical Society
<b>NPU</b>	Norwich Public Utilities
<b>PC</b>	Parking Commission
<b>PNS</b>	Planning and Neighborhood Services
<b>RDA</b>	Redevelopment Authority

### A. Establish a Downtown Coordinating Committee

Priority / Status		Description	Cost Estimate	Target Date	% Complete	Initial Lead	Partners
<b>1</b>	1	Form a Downtown Coordinating Committee		November 2012		<b>CC</b>	NCDC RDA NPU PNS PC
<b>A</b>	2	Meet regularly (minimum of four times per year)		ongoing		<b>DCC</b>	NCDC RDA NPU PNS PC
<b>2</b>	3	Develop an implementation plan to coordinate the use of resources		December 2012		<b>DCC</b>	NCDC RDA NPU PNS PC
<b>2</b>	4	Develop a stewardship strategy		June 2013		<b>DCC</b>	NCDC RDA NPU PNS PC
<b>C</b>	5	Monitor success and failures; Report annually		ongoing		<b>DCC</b>	NCDC RDA NPU PNS Pc

### B. Improve Property

Priority / Status		Description	Cost Estimate	Target Date	% Complete	Initial Lead	Partners
<b>1</b>	1	Develop a property management approach		January 2013		<b>NCDC</b>	CC NPU RDA DCC PNS
<b>B</b>	2	Acquire property		ongoing		<b>NCDC</b>	CC NPU RDA DCC PNS
<b>C</b>	3	Market property		ongoing		<b>NCDC</b>	CC NPU RDA DCC PNS
<b>D</b>	4	Sell property		ongoing		<b>NCDC</b>	CC NPU RDA DCC PNS
<b>2</b>	5	Create a property acquisition fund		January 2013		<b>CC</b>	NCDC RDA NPU DCC PNS
<b>3</b>	6	Create design standards		January 2014		<b>NCDC</b>	PNS HS DCC HMC
<b>2</b>	7	Evaluate city-owned property located in downtown		June 2013		<b>NCDC</b>	PNS RDA PC HMC HS
<b>D</b>	8	Monitor tax foreclosures		ongoing		<b>DCC</b>	NCDC RDA NPU PNS

### Priority Guide

Letter = Ongoing Program / Strategy

Number = Distinct Task / Action

- A / 1** Most Important
- B / 2** Very Important
- C / 3** Important
- D / 4** Needed



## C. Improve Circulation and Parking

Priority / Status		Description	Cost Estimate	Target Date	% Complete	Initial Lead	Partners				
<b>1</b>	1	Inventory existing conditions (e.g., one way streets, traffic, street width, gateways, parking, signals and signs)		January 2014		<b>NCDC</b>	PC	PNS	DPW	LTA	DCC
<b>2</b>	2	Hire a transportation engineering firm to assess conditions and develop strategies	\$150,000	August 2013		<b>DCC</b>	PC	PNS	DPW	LTA	NCDC
<b>1</b>	3	Coordinate parking location, allocation, and management across city agencies		January 2013		<b>PC</b>	PNS	DPW	LTA	DCC	NCDC
<b>B</b>	4	Implement recommendations		ongoing		<b>DPW</b>	PC	PNS	LTA	NCDC	DCC

## D. Improve Wayfinding

Priority / Status		Description	Cost Estimate	Target Date	% Complete	Initial Lead	Partners				
<b>2</b>	1	Inventory existing conditions (e.g., gateways and signs)		June 2014		<b>NCDC</b>	NPS	DPW	LTA	DCC	PC
<b>3</b>	2	Develop a wayfinding program		September 2014		<b>DCC</b>	NPS	DPW	LTA	NCDC	PC
<b>D</b>	3	Implement wayfinding recommendations		ongoing		<b>DPW</b>	NPS	LTA	NCDC	DCC	PC

## E. Continue Mill and Brownfield Remediation

Priority / Status		Description	Cost Estimate	Target Date	% Complete	Initial Lead	Partners				
<b>1</b>	1	Inventory existing sites		October 2012		<b>RDA</b>	DCC	NCDC	PNS	DPW	HMC
<b>2</b>	2	Develop long-term strategies and priorities		January 2013		<b>RDA</b>	DCC	NCDC	PNS	DPW	HMC
<b>C</b>	3	Identify funding sources		ongoing		<b>RDA</b>	DCC	NCDC	PNS	DPW	HMC
<b>D</b>	4	Identify development partners		ongoing		<b>RDA</b>	DCC	NCDC	PNS	DPW	HMC

### Partner Acronyms

<b>CC</b>	City Council
<b>DCC</b>	Downtown Coordinating Committee
<b>DPW</b>	Public Works
<b>HMC</b>	Harbor Management Commission
<b>LTA</b>	Local Traffic Authority
<b>NCDC</b>	Norwich Community Development Corporation
<b>NHS</b>	Historical Society
<b>NPU</b>	Norwich Public Utilities
<b>PC</b>	Parking Commission
<b>PNS</b>	Planning and Neighborhood Services
<b>RDA</b>	Redevelopment Authority

### Priority Guide

Letter = Ongoing Program / Strategy

Number = Distinct Task / Action

- A / 1** Most Important
- B / 2** Very Important
- C / 3** Important
- D / 4** Needed