

America Downtown®

New London

**Downtown
Action Agenda
Update
2011**

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A technical assistance program offered by
The National League of Cities
& HyettPalma

America Downtown®

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Washington, DC 20004

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November 22, 2010

The Honorable Rob Pero, Mayor
New London City Council Members
City of New London
181 State Street
New London, Connecticut 06320

RE: ***New London Downtown Action Agenda Update 2011***

HyettPalma and the National League of Cities (NLC) is pleased to present to you the following report titled ***New London Downtown Action Agenda Update 2011***.

This document is the result of a process undertaken by HyettPalma and NLC to revisit, refocus, and recharge New London's Downtown enhancement effort by updating the ***New London Downtown Action Agenda 2001***. New London's 2011 ***Downtown Action Agenda*** was completed as part of the ***America Downtown®*** technical assistance program offered by NLC, in conjunction with HyettPalma.

We thank you for the opportunity to work once again with the New London community and to be a part of your continuing efforts to further strengthen Downtown New London. We hope you will keep us informed of your success and know that – as always – HyettPalma and NLC stand ready to assist in any way as you proceed with New London's Downtown enhancement effort.

Sincerely,

National League of Cities

HyettPalma

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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

In 1992, as America's largest membership organization representing the elected officials of this nation, the National League of Cities (NLC) decided to assume a more aggressive role in the areas of Downtown enhancement and local economic development. That role would involve offering technical assistance to local elected officials concerned about the economic success of their Downtowns.

To fill this role, the National League of Cities approached HyettPalma. Together, NLC and HyettPalma designed an advanced new pilot program. The new pilot would offer on-site, technical assistance to a limited number of communities.

The new Downtown pilot was presented under the banner of *ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE: THE REBIRTH OF AMERICA'S DOWNTOWNS*. It was structured to guide local governing bodies – working in partnership with local business owners, property owners and concerned citizens – in rethinking ways to rebuild our nation's Downtowns.

Availability of the Downtown pilot was limited to eleven cities over a period of two-years. In addition, the pilot required the local governing body in each participating community to be the agency that contracted with NLC for services. This was done to ensure the involvement of the governing body from the very start of the local Downtown enhancement effort.

Once the pilot was completed, NLC and HyettPalma evaluated its effectiveness and whether or not to continue offering Downtown technical assistance. Based on the evaluation, and specifically on the advice and needs expressed by the pilot's local officials, a new comprehensive technical assistance program was developed and offered in 1992 titled **America Downtown®**.

America Downtown® brings together the local government insight of the National League of Cities and the Downtown expertise of HyettPalma. Together, they offer individualized assistance and a combination of strengths not available anywhere else. **America Downtown®** was structured to provide the help local officials need to create a brighter future for their Downtowns.

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America Downtown® provides direct, hands-on help to city and town officials and community leaders who want to start, refocus, or energize their Downtown enhancement efforts. The program's strengths are built on the following convictions.

- The assistance provided is implementation-oriented – not another Downtown plan or study but an aggressive course of action that local officials and community leaders can start to implement immediately.
- The recommendations made for each Downtown are pragmatic – tailored to local resources so that they can be realistically implemented.
- The solutions offered are success-oriented – designed to improve each Downtown's economy so that the results are long-lasting.
- The on-site assistance is inclusive – providing a forum that brings public and private sector constituents together to identify Downtown issues, define a Downtown vision, and take needed actions in partnership.

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***Project
Overview***

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

In 2001, the City of New London joined NLC's *America Downtown®* technical assistance program, through which the *New London Downtown Action Agenda 2001* was completed by HyettPalma, Inc. In 2010, after nine-years of actively and diligently implementing the 2001 *Downtown Action Agenda*, the City of New London contracted with NLC to have its Downtown initiative updated by HyettPalma.

A map showing the boundaries of the Downtown project area is presented on the next page.

The purpose of updating the City's 2001 *Downtown Action Agenda* was to:

- Review progress and identify gaps that have occurred as the *Downtown Action Agenda* was implemented over the last nine-years;
- Re-gauge local opinion about the Downtown enhancement effort to date, as well as to revisit the community's concerns and aspirations for Downtown's future;
- Refocus, as necessary, the actions that need to be taken over the next five-years to further enhance Downtown New London;
- Recharge the Downtown enhancement effort and those involved in that effort; and
- Recommend specific actions that should be taken over the next five-years to move Downtown New London forward in attaining the community's defined vision for Downtown and capturing the economic potentials facing Downtown.

The *New London Downtown Action Agenda Update 2011*, contained in these pages, presents the findings and recommendations that resulted from revisiting Downtown New London and the *New London Downtown Action Agenda 2001*.

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***Downtown
Overview***

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DOWNTOWN OVERVIEW

To complete this *New London Downtown Action Agenda Update 2011*, HyettPalma moderated a series of sessions with various Downtown constituent groups. During those sessions, participants were asked to cite:

- The greatest accomplishments they think have been made in Downtown over the last nine-years; and
- The major concerns or issues facing Downtown New London, which should be addressed over the next five-years.

Downtown Accomplishments

Following are the Downtown accomplishments most often cited by community members, when asked to consider key Downtown improvements made since completion of the *New London Downtown Action Agenda 2001*:

- Redesign of the Parade and complete renovation of the public plaza;
- Three historic sites amazingly revitalized, including the Shaw Mansion, Customs House Museum, and Nathan Hale School House;
- Renovation of many Downtown buildings and businesses;
- Construction of the Waterfront Park;
- Continued enhancement of Captain's Walk (State Street) and opening to traffic;
- New galleries and a greater business mix;
- Nightlife has picked-up;
- More collaboration among groups working to enhance Downtown;
- Callings by first cruise ships in 2002;
- Placement and maintenance of flower baskets and planters;
- Increased energy and enthusiasm among New London residents, businesses, and outsiders in the Downtown enhancement effort;
- Progress in bringing commuter rail;
- Hygienic Art Park development and operation;
- City governance and management has dramatically changed for the better;
- Approximately 100 new housing units constructed and over 100 housing units renovated in Downtown;

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- Connecticut College has tried to engage students in Downtown events and to get them into businesses;
- Connecticut College interns working for organizations and City;
- Had first Opsail;
- Bacon and Crocker buildings renovated;
- City created rent subsidy program and continued all incentives for Downtown enhancement;
- Good Downtown studies have been done and people are on the same page regarding Downtown's enhancement;
- Improved signs and wayfinding system;
- Stronger, more positive police presence in Downtown;
- Unprecedented participation by City with local arts activities;
- New London Main Street's growth, success, and impact over the past 10 years;
- Continued operation and enhancement of the Garde;
- Successfully kept Navy base in region;
- So much to do now in Downtown, culturally;
- Downtown daytime is dramatically different – now see people on the streets; and
- \$6 million bond issue to further enhance Downtown's waterfront and marine facilities and \$10 million bond issue to improve sidewalks and infrastructure in Downtown and throughout New London approved by City Council.

Downtown Concerns/Issues

Following are the subjects most often raised by community members when asked to consider the concerns and issues facing Downtown, which should be addressed over the next five-years.

- More commuter rail stops and full service/full schedule needed;
- Examine Downtown's traffic patterns and re-evaluate one-way streets;
- Make Downtown more pedestrian-friendly;
- Further connect Downtown to the waterfront;
- Work to ensure more diversity of participants in enhancement effort;
- Further diversify balance of Downtown housing units for all income levels;
- Make Downtown more comfortable for bikes and pedestrians;
- Greater use of Downtown's waterfront;

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- Allocate more funds for Downtown events – from varied sources;
- Do more to promote Downtown’s architecture and history;
- Connect Fort Tumbull to Downtown;
- More involvement of City Center District in implementation of Action Agenda;
- Get additional organizations and people involved in the implementation of the Action Agenda;
- Enhance alleys with views of the waterfront;
- Clean-up State Street – trash, sidewalks, potholes, buildings – and fill all buildings;
- Further enhance Downtown’s surface parking lots;
- Stop Downtown residents from using Downtown’s sidewalk trash containers;
- Consider conversion of some retail space (rears of buildings) to housing, while maintaining Downtown’s business streetwall;
- Greater cooperation among Downtown’s restaurants and bars – overall operations, hours of operation, appropriate limits on pours, and noise levels.
- Enforce the City’s temporary window sign regulations;
- Increase Downtown business hours to meet demand of locals and visitors;
- Further enhance Downtown’s overall aesthetic appeal – buildings, businesses, public spaces;
- Consider a strict blight ordinance to ensure that Downtown’s buildings are attractive and safe;
- Install pedestrian-scale lighting;
- Define clear lines of authority and responsibility in implementing Downtown improvements;
- City should adopt and use recommendations of the Action Agenda;
- Enhance the City’s Web site as a marketing tool;
- Tie Downtown’s economic enhancement to the rest of the community;
- Better coordination of Downtown social service agencies locations and operations;
- Keep library open more hours;
- Complete Downtown retail market analysis – NLMS working with Mitchell College;
- Increase use of SBDC for Downtown’s businesses; and
- Recruit more retail businesses and offices.

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***Downtown
New London
Tomorrow***

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DOWNTOWN NEW LONDON TOMORROW

Much as was done to define the *New London Downtown Action Agenda 2001*, a variety of sessions were held by HyettPalma to define the community's preferred vision for Downtown New London – as it would exist in the year 2016. A compilation of the thoughts and preferences most often expressed during those sessions is shown below.

By the year 2016, Downtown New London would be even more successful and bustling than it is today. Downtown would not only be lively, but it would look lively with:

- More people in Downtown;
- More pedestrians on Downtown's sidewalks;
- More storefronts filled; and
- More retail shops, restaurants, and arts on Bank and State Streets.

Downtown would be filled with shops, destinations, and attractions that are appealing and welcoming to residents, college students, US Coast Guard Academy cadets, ferry-users, boaters, cruisers, and visitors alike.

“Our very rich maritime history” would be protected and reflected in any changes and improvements made in Downtown. This would mean not replicating Mystic – or any place else – but “keeping our own history vivid.”

Downtown would offer more activities on the waterfront, more life on the river, and the opportunity for people to “come experience the water feeling” of New London.

Downtown would have businesses and activities that attract boaters, appeal to students, draw cruisers, entice ferry-users, attract area visitors, and satisfy the needs and desires of area residents. This would make Downtown even more of a thriving destination than it is today.

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In further enhancing Downtown, emphasis would be placed on:

- Fixing-up Downtown's buildings so they can be filled with businesses;
- Filling the upper floors of Downtown's buildings with additional residents;
- Making greater use of Waterfront Park;
- Restoring and reusing the Old Capital Theater on Bank Street – possibly for “off-beat, Sundance-type films”;
- Making Downtown more pedestrian-friendly;
- Getting more people involved in Downtown's enhancement by “expanding the core group”;
- Taking greater action to move Downtown toward the community's vision for Downtown; and
- Promoting Downtown as being a safe, comfortable, and fun destination.

And, those elements of Downtown that are valued by the community today would be recognized, promoted, continued, and increased, such as Downtown's:

- Being a port of entry and a transportation hub;
- Water views and water-related sounds;
- Maritime history;
- Historic architecture;
- Cultural events and venues;
- Variety of restaurants;
- Food co-op and wholistic services;
- Independently owned businesses – and absence of “big boxes”;

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- Nightlife;
- On-street, friendly police presence;
- “Nooks and crannies” that can be easily accessed by foot and bicycle;
- Hanging flower baskets;
- “Die hard” customers and supporters;
- Young population;
- Attitude of welcoming diversity; and
- Small town flavor and friendliness.

Downtown’s aesthetics would be further improved. This would include:

- Preserving Downtown’s historic buildings;
- Improving rear building façades that face parking lots;
- Improving and reusing the upper floors of buildings;
- Adding a degree of greenery to the Parade and Waterfront Park;
- Ensuring that sidewalks are in good repair;
- Improving walks on Bank Street, as was done on State Street; and
- More pedestrian-scale, “intimate” street lights.

Downtown’s feeling of safety and accessible would be further enhanced with:

- Adequate lighting levels that make Downtown feel comfortable for pedestrians, both day and night;
- Highly visible crosswalks;

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- Additional convenient ways for people to access Downtown, possibly such as bike lanes, a free shuttle, and additional sidewalks; and
- Making Downtown's traffic patterns more convenient, such as by returning Bank Street to two-way traffic.

Downtown would be actively marketed to a variety of customer groups by:

- Developing a comprehensive marketing plan;
- Having a marketing budget; and
- The City and the Downtown business community cooperatively marketing Downtown.

By attaining the community's vision, Downtown New London would have the following image by the year 2016.

A vibrant, quaint, charming, and historic waterfront Downtown that is filled with New England charm.

A prosperous, thriving, and lively Downtown that is fun, day and night.

A Downtown that is both historic and forward-looking, filled with great shops, great restaurants, and a burgeoning arts scene.

A Downtown that is friendly, clean, and safe, as well as pedestrian-oriented and bicycle-friendly.

A creative, innovative, welcoming, and inclusive Downtown that embodies and honors diversity.

A working port that is also artsy, filled with unique events and offerings that can't be found anywhere else in the region.

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*A great place to visit, and an even better place to live
that offers a balance between city amenities and a
small, New England town feel.*

*A colorful, progressive Downtown that is
the cultural center of New London County
and Southeastern Connecticut –
A Downtown that is “uniquely New London”.*

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***Course of
Action***

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COURSE OF ACTION

Following is a strategic course of action designed to guide the further enhancement of Downtown New London during the next five-years.

Development Framework

The *New London Downtown Action Agenda Update 2011* should be implemented using the following Development Framework.

Focus Area

The Downtown enhancement effort should continue to be focused in Downtown's Historic Waterfront District, shown on the District's Map presented on the next page of this document.

Connectivity

A special effort should be placed on connecting Downtown with:

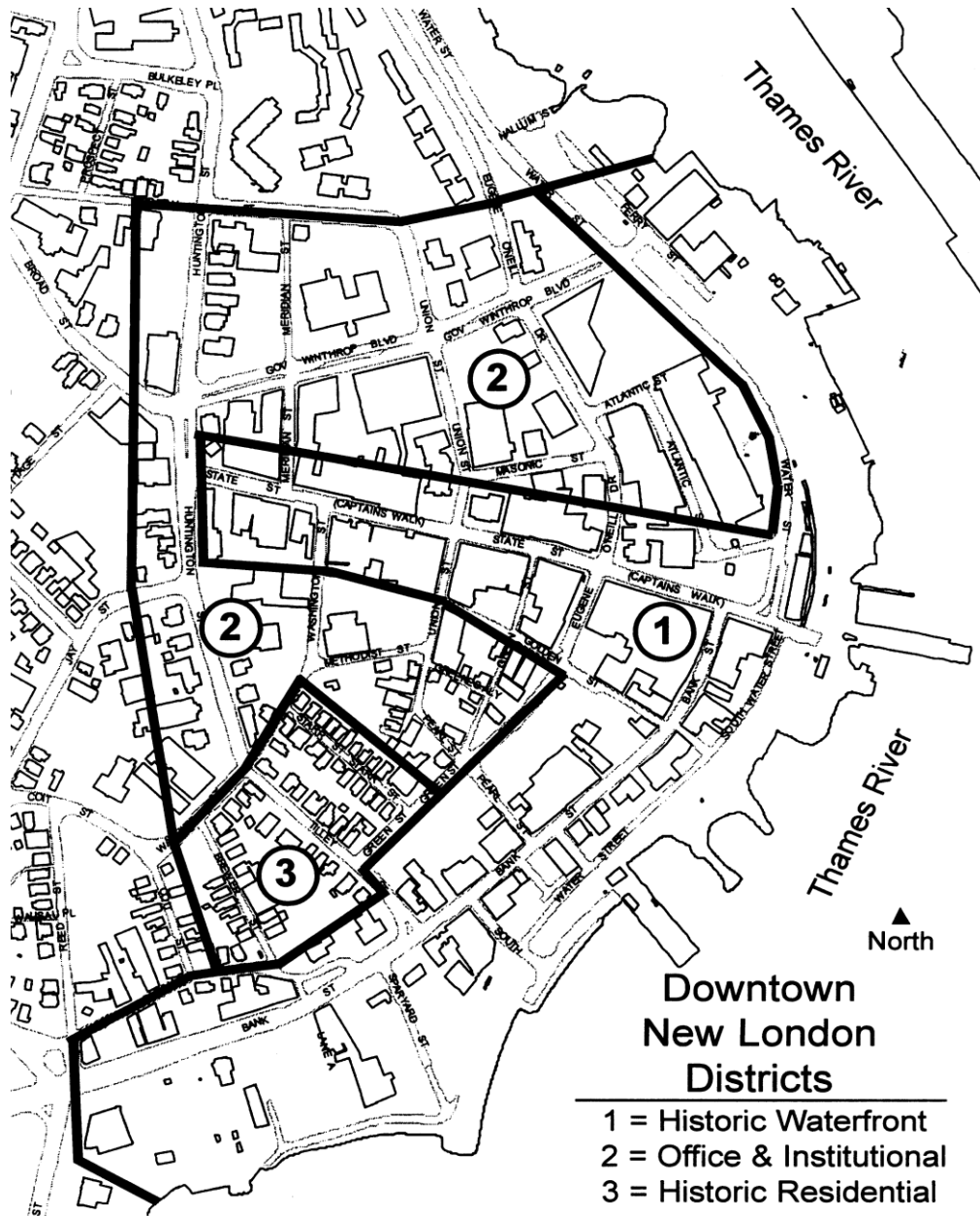
- The waterfront;
- Fort Trumbull;
- Connecticut College, Mitchell College, and the US Coast Guard Academy;
- Ocean Beach;
- The residential neighborhoods of New London; and
- Other activity generators within New London.

To do so, the feasibility of creating sidewalks, walk/bike paths, bike lanes, and shuttle service that connect Downtown to the above areas should be considered as the Downtown enhancement effort is implemented.

Downtown Boundaries

Great strides have been made in the enhancement of Downtown New London over the last nine years. However, the issues addressed in this document still exist and must be addressed in order to attain the community's vision for Downtown. Therefore, it is suggested that Downtown's boundaries remain as currently defined – rather than be expanded – until those issues have been successfully addressed and resolved.

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Planning

It should be noted that the City has adopted a plan, which addresses planning issues citywide. That is the ***New London Plan of Conservation and Development***, prepared by the New London Office of Development and Planning and adopted by City Council in 2007. The ***New London Downtown Action Agenda Update 2011*** should be implemented in concert with that plan.

Public Improvements

The following public improvements should be completed consistent with the implementation of the ***New London Downtown Action Agenda Update 2011***.

Emphasis

In order to reinforce the image and brand being created for Downtown's Historic Waterfront District, all public improvements made in that district should reflect, embody, and stress the following:

- History;
- Art and culture;
- Downtown's connection to the water;
- Small town pride; and
- Quality.

Waterfront Improvements

The City should implement plans for the improvement of Downtown's pier and the installation of transient moorings at the earliest possible date.

Waterfront Park

As is planned, steps should be taken to:

- Add greenery and landscaping to the Waterfront Park; and
- Place a sign at the park that identifies it as being the Downtown Waterfront Park.

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Wayfinding

A highly attractive wayfinding sign system has been created in Downtown, to assist both motorists and pedestrians in navigating Downtown. Now, that sign system should be augmented in the following manner.

- The sign system should be completed to include the replacement, removal, or addition of public signs – as needed – throughout the Historic Waterfront District, as is being planned by the City and New London Main Street.
- The wayfinding sign system should be re-assessed to ensure that all signs meant to assist motorists in finding their way within Downtown are of a font that is large enough to be easily read by motorists.
- Future signs erected at the gateways of the Historic Waterfront District should include the words “Welcome to”, making it clear that one is entering the district.
- As the recommendations of the **Regional Inter-Modal Transportation Master Plan** are implemented, care should be taken to ensure that all of Downtown’s wayfinding signs are of a coordinated design.

Sidewalks

Plans should be made to repair or replace, as needed, the sidewalks on Bank Street and throughout the Historic Waterfront District.

Lighting

In any Downtown, ensuring and maintaining adequate lighting levels is a public safety issue and a public comfort concern. Therefore, in Downtown New London, sidewalk lighting levels should be assessed in coordination with the Police Department. And, the following elements should be incorporated into all lighting improvements:

- Street light standards that are pedestrian in scale and that are compatible with Downtown’s historic architecture should be used;
- Street light standards should be selected that direct light down to the sidewalk and, thereby, do not cause light pollution (that obstructs the sky) and do not shine light into upper floor residential units; and

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- The owners of first floor businesses should be urged to keep their display window lights on at night – until at least midnight -- in order to brighten Downtown's sidewalks.

Flowers

It is understood that the hanging flower baskets placed on Downtown's streetlight poles are now watered manually. To avoid this need – and lessen the cost of flower maintenance and likely enhance the vibrancy of the flowers – the feasibility of installing an automatic irrigation system should be examined. And, if sidewalks are replaced in areas of Downtown containing the flower baskets, that would be the time to install the irrigation system.

Maintenance Plan

Public spaces in Downtown are now being cleaned and maintained by both the City of New London and by the City Center District. To ensure that Downtown is maintained as effectively and efficiently as possible, these two entities should jointly define a Downtown maintenance plan. At a minimum, that plan should address:

- Sidewalk and street cleaning;
- Trash receptacle placement and emptying;
- Litter removal; and
- Snow removal.

And, the joint Downtown maintenance plan should identify:

- Roles and responsibilities regarding its implementation; and
- A time schedule for implementing each noted action.

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Trash Receptacles

The City should prohibit the placement of business trash and residential trash in on-street pedestrian trash receptacles located in Downtown. And, the City should enforce such legislation with a fine system.

Bike Access

To encourage and increase access for bicyclists throughout Downtown, the City should consider:

- Creating bike lanes, where possible;
- Placing a bike icon on streets, where appropriate, to encourage motorized vehicles to share the road with bikes; and
- Placing bike racks in appropriate Downtown locations.

Pedestrian Access

To increase pedestrian access and comfort in Downtown, the City should:

- Implement the recommendations of the ***Regional Inter-Modal Transportation Master Plan***, which pertain to pedestrianization;
- Ensure that all Downtown crosswalks are clearly marked; and
- Determine if additional Downtown crosswalks warrant being marked with in-street lights.

“Works of Art”

To reinforce the image of Downtown’s Historic Waterfront District – as an artful and historic area – the following “works of art” should continue to be placed Downtown:

- Additional pieces of public art that exemplify Downtown’s history and values;
- Murals; and
- Customized banners on street light poles.

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In addition, when placed Downtown, the following elements should act as works of art in addition to fulfilling their utilitarian functions:

- Art racks, instead of bike racks; and
- Creative benches, rather than standard metal or wooden benches.

Traffic & Parking

The following traffic and parking improvements should be undertaken to further enhance Downtown New London.

Traffic Flow

There appears to be considerable local concern regarding Downtown's one-way street system and its tendency to draw traffic away from – rather than toward – Downtown's businesses. This concern, coupled with the national trend of returning two-way street patterns to Downtowns as a traffic calming measure, warrant the following action:

A traffic engineer, well-versed in contemporary traffic flow practices, should be retained to assess the feasibility of returning as many of Downtown's one-way streets as possible to two-way traffic.

And, as was recommended in the ***New London Downtown Action Agenda 2001***, on-street parking should not be sacrificed in a return to two-way traffic flow, if at all possible.

Parking Garage

The City has made, and is continuing to make, significant improvements to Downtown's parking garage on Water Street. Therefore, a concerted effort should be made to:

- Make the buying public aware of those changes; and
- Promote the fact that Downtown's parking garage is clean and safe and convenient.

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Downtown Parking Supply and Management

A Downtown parking study was completed in 2010 by Concord Square Planning & Development, Inc. The study was intended as an update of a previous Downtown parking study completed in 2003. The 2010 study focused, primarily, on an analysis of supply and demand.

The following additional parking concerns/issues should be addressed in the near future to accommodate both the provision and management of Downtown parking.

- Residential Parking: The best way to accommodate the parking needs of those living in Downtown's Historic Waterfront District should be determined.
- Muni-Meters: The feasibility of installing muni-meters in the parking lots located at Green, Tilley, and Pearl Streets should be explored. The purpose of installing muni-meters at these locations would be to provide longer-term parking to Downtown's customers and clients. If installing muni-meters is determined to be feasible, a portion of the revenue generated from those meters should be used to beautify the lots and to implement the ***New London Downtown Action Agenda Update 2011*** recommendations.
- Future Parking Needs: The 2010 parking study noted a build-out deficiency of 349 parking spaces in Downtown at build-out. Ways to accommodate those future parking needs should be determined.

Economic Development

The following actions should be taken to further strengthen Downtown's economy and take advantage of Downtown's many economic opportunities.

Economic Orientation

As recommended in the ***New London Downtown Action Agenda 2001***, the economic orientation for Downtown New London should continue to be:

- Historic Waterfront Downtown;
- The hub of Southeastern Connecticut;

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- A destination for restaurants, art, entertainment, and specialty retail;
- A great place to live and visit; and
- Office, service, government.

Business Development

Business development actions undertaken for Downtown should focus on both business retention and business recruitment.

- Business Retention: To help retain and strengthen Downtown's existing businesses, business owners should be provided assistance via:
 - One-on-one, private business consultation sessions;
 - Referral to local SCORE chapters; and
 - Referral to a Small Business Development Center or those who provide assistance with business planning, management, and marketing issues.
- Business Recruitment: As was recommended in the ***New London Downtown Action Agenda 2001***, an aggressive effort should be made to recruit additional businesses to Downtown. The business recruitment effort should:
 - Be focused on recruiting businesses for first floor spaces located within Downtown's Historic Waterfront District;
 - Target business prospects that fit with and reinforce Downtown's niche as a food, art, entertainment, and specialty retail destination;
 - Target highly specialized and independently owned businesses – rather than national chains;
 - Target businesses that market to, appeal to, and have the ability to draw residents of the city, residents of the region, and visitor markets; and

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- Be conducted using the findings and recommendations of the updated Downtown retail market analysis, now being conducted by New London Main Street with assistance from Mitchell College.

NOTE: *New demographic and socio-economic data, concerning the characteristics of the New London Primary Retail Trade Area, were prepared in association with this Action Agenda update. The information was prepared to assist with and supplement the findings of the new retail market analysis being prepared by New London Main Street. The new data is presented in the Appendix of this document. As has been discussed locally, it is assumed that New London Main Street will be primarily responsible for the recruitment of new businesses for Downtown New London in the future.*

Farmers Market

Downtown's current farmers market should be developed into a strong destination, attraction, and activity generator by taking the following steps:

- A Market Master should be retained to plan, manage, and promote the market;
- The number of growers should be increased, in order to grow the number of customers attracted to the market;
- Vendors selling prepared food, art, and crafts should be added to the market;
- Entertainment should be added to the market's mix;
- Consideration should be given to moving the market to a more visible location within Downtown's Historic Waterfront District; and
- The market should be – and be promoted as – a family destination and community gathering place.

Outdoor Dining

Many food establishments now offer outdoor seating on decks that face the water, providing highly appealing and popular venues. Now, outdoor dining should also be encouraged throughout Downtown's Historic Waterfront District,

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where sidewalks are wide enough – such as along State Street. Doing so would add animation to Downtown’s streets.

In addition, there is discussion of creating a “cooperative café” on the Parade, where tables and chairs would be shared by nearby food establishments. If this concept is implemented, guidelines and standards should be established that address table/chair design and overall cleanliness.

Social Service Agencies

The number of social service agencies located in Downtown New London was raised as an issue by the public in the course of creating the ***New London Downtown Action Agenda 2001***. In 2010, the issue surfaced repeatedly, in sessions held to define the ***New London Downtown Action Agenda Update 2011***.

As in 2001, HyettPalma believes that:

- Every Downtown should strive to accommodate its “fair share” of social service agencies;
- Social service providers located within a Downtown should strive to be good Downtown neighbors; and
- A community should strive to strike a balance within its Downtown – by making it possible for Downtown’s social service agencies to best serve their clients, while ensuring that Downtown’s economy is not adversely impacted by the presence/operation of those agencies.

To accomplish this within Downtown New London, it is suggested that:

- The City work with Downtown’s current social service providers to discuss and facilitate the clustering of those agencies in a location that is convenient for their clients and that does not have a negative impact on Downtown’s economy;
- The City fill the position of Social Service Coordinator – for which interviewing has begun – at the earliest possible date; and

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- The opening of additional social service agencies within Downtown New London should not be allowed.

Bar Clientele

During sessions held to define this ***New London Downtown Action Agenda Update 2011***, considerable public concern was expressed regarding “noise”, “trash”, and “behavior” associated with Downtown’s bar clientele.

It should be noted that the New London Police Department is making a concerted effort to address and eliminate public safety concerns related to this issue. And, the City of New London has also taken steps to require soundproofing in newly constructed Downtown buildings.

Therefore:

- The word should be spread that the City will continue to be aggressive in its efforts to address the community’s concerns regarding Downtown bar clientele; and
- Establishments refusing to comply with the City’s efforts will run the risk of losing their right to operate in Downtown New London.

Restrooms for Public Use

There is some desire locally for the creation of public restrooms within Downtown. This is completely understandable, since the community’s vision is for Downtown to become – in part – a destination for tourists and families.

It must be noted that public restrooms tend to be extremely costly to keep clean and safe. Therefore, a good deal of thought, planning, and cost analysis should be conducted prior to determining whether public restrooms are a feasible option for Downtown New London.

Whether or not public restrooms are created in Downtown, it is strongly recommended that all Downtown business owners should cheerfully allow their customers to use the restrooms located within their businesses.

Temporary Window Signs

By City ordinance, up to one-third of a storefront’s window space can be covered with temporary signs. This ordinance should be enforced.

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Consideration should also be given to reducing the allowed area of coverage to 20%, rather than one-third, in order to further reduce the unsightly appearance some of these signs are creating.

Shoreline East Trains

Endeavors underway to obtain a full schedule of Shoreline East train service for New London should be aggressively continued.

Library

Downtown New London is fortunate to have a public library in place – and one that is centrally located and housed in a magnificent piece of historic architecture. Throughout the nation, Downtown libraries are serving as strong destinations, attractions, activity generators, and gathering places. And, it appears that the library's board and staff are striving to make this the case in Downtown New London as well. This is an important and appropriate goal that should be supported by New London's public and private sectors, since it is in the best interest of Downtown and the community as a whole.

City Hall

City offices are now located in several Downtown buildings. And, it is understood that consideration is being given to consolidating City offices into one building. If that occurs, the new, consolidated "City Hall" should be located within Downtown New London.

Community Engagement

There is a community desire to ensure that Downtown welcomes, accommodates, and reflects the diverse population of New London. To do so, the community engagement process – undertaken to define this ***New London Downtown Action Agenda Update 2011*** – should be continued. The goal of the continued community engagement effort should be to broaden the diversity of Downtown and the Downtown enhancement effort, in terms of participation, leadership, business and property ownership, and users (customers, clients, event-goers, etc.).

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Building Improvements

The following actions should be taken to further enhance Downtown New London's building stock.

Incentives

A variety of incentives, aimed at stimulating investment, are now available in Downtown. In addition, there has been mention of creating a financial incentive program to assist owners in bringing their Downtown buildings up to code – as has been proposed in Norwich.

These are all excellent incentives, the availability of which should be actively promoted to the investment communities of Southeastern Connecticut and beyond.

Design Guidelines

Guidelines addressing the appropriate treatment of existing buildings – and the design of new structures – have been created and adopted by the City of New London. These guidelines should be promoted as a form of technical assistance and their use should be tied to the receipt of available financial incentives.

Long-Time Vacant Structures

Though many of Downtown's long-vacant structures have been rehabilitated and put to new use over the last decade, some remain today. During sessions held to define this ***New London Downtown Action Agenda Update 2011***, the public made it clear that this situation is not acceptable. Therefore, to address this issue – and urge the owners of such structures to “be a part of the solution” in Downtown – the following steps should be taken.

- First, the owners of Downtown's long-vacant structures should be contacted and offered all available incentives and assistance pertaining to building rehabilitation and reuse.
- Second, owners not interested in making the investment needed to rehab and tenant their structures should be urged to make those structures available for purchase by productive owners.
- Third, if needed, assistance should be offered to help current owners market their properties for sale.

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- Fourth, if the above efforts fail to achieve the desired results, the City should aggressively enforce all applicable code and zoning regulations.
- Finally, and if all else fails, the City should consider taking the involved properties in order to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community – and should market the properties to new owners who will appropriately rehab and tenant them.

First Floor Residences

There is some discussion locally of allowing residential units to be created in the first floors of Downtown commercial buildings. The concept would be in addition to live/work units allowed by the City's Zoning Ordinance. If this concept is pursued, it should be required that dwelling units be placed in the rears of first floor commercial spaces – and required that the portion of the space facing the sidewalk be used for businesses. This will ensure that first floor spaces of Downtown commercial buildings do not become “blank walls” or “dead spaces” that deter pedestrian movement along Downtown's sidewalks.

Marketing

The following actions should be taken to market Downtown and its vast assortment of businesses, events, and opportunities.

Marketing Campaign

Over the last nine years, a great deal of progress has been made in moving Downtown toward the preferred vision articulated by the community in 2001:

A lively Downtown where residents and visitors alike can enjoy restaurants, art, entertainment, culture, and retail shops – a colorful, thriving, historic waterfront Downtown that is uniquely New London.

And, a great deal of progress has been made in marketing Downtown to the buying public and to the investment community. This marketing has included events produced by a variety of entities, New London Main Street's Downtown brochure and web site, and more.

Because of the strides that have been made in making the community's Downtown vision a reality and in marketing Downtown, the time has come to move the Downtown marketing effort on to a new plateau:

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A marketing professional or a marketing firm should be retained to craft a comprehensive, overall marketing campaign for Downtown New London.

Markets

The Downtown marketing campaign should be designed to enable Downtown to communicate with and attract the following market segments:

- Residents of New London;
- Residents of New London County;
- Residents of Southeastern Connecticut;
- Waterfront-users – boaters, ferry riders, cruise ship passengers;
- Transportation-users – Amtrak, Shoreline East, etc.; and
- Visitors – day-trippers, area-wide lodging facility guests, etc.

Focus

The campaign should be focused on marketing the Historic Waterfront District – since this is the portion of Downtown that makes it a destination having the capacity to attract the above market groups.

Elements

At a minimum, the marketing campaign should include the following elements.

- Events – A schedule of annual Downtown events should be developed to include the following:
 - “Series events” – such as the Gallery Walk now being considered – that occur one day a month throughout the summer season or throughout the year;
 - One or more “signature events” – such as Sailfest – which draw huge numbers of attendees;

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- “Holiday-oriented events” – such as Celebration of Lights and Song Around the World – that establish Downtown as the community’s gathering place; and
- “Niche-building events” – such as the Main Street’s Food Strolls and Hygienic’s I Am Music Festival – that strengthen and reinforce Downtown’s niche as a historic, waterfront destination for food, art, entertainment, culture, and specialty retail.

It is understood that the many events currently being held in Downtown New London are produced by a variety of entities. And, it is understood that events, which fall into the above four categories, are already being produced in Downtown.

HyettPalma believes there is an opportunity to coordinate and grow Downtown’s existing events – and possibly add events to the roster – in a way that strengthens the events as well as Downtown’s image and draw. Therefore, it is suggested that Downtown’s event producers be brought together by the retained marketing professional to:

- Create a planned, annual schedule of events that cover the four bases listed above – series events, signature events, holiday-oriented events, and niche-building events;
 - Identify ways that event producers can coordinate their efforts so that resources (funding, volunteers, etc.) can be leveraged and maximized;
 - Determine the best ways to market each event; and
 - Define methods for measuring the success of each event in attracting and appealing to its intended audience.
- Story Placement – The Downtown marketing campaign should include a strategy for getting stories about Downtown placed with:
 - Print and electronic media throughout Southeastern Connecticut;
 - Print and electronic media from New York City to Boston; and

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- Specialty publications that deal with topics of interest to the market segments being targeted by Downtown – those interested in preservation, food, art and culture, entertainment, boating, etc.
- Electronic Media – Downtown should have a presence on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. And, this should be in addition to the Downtown Web site now maintained by New London Main Street.
- Print Pieces – The retained marketing professional should recommend what, if any, types of print pieces are needed to better market Downtown. This should be in addition to the Downtown brochure now produced and distributed by New London Main Street.

Schools

New London is the home of Connecticut College, Mitchell College, and the US Coast Guard Academy. As part of its orientation program, Connecticut College offers “New London 101”, which introduces freshmen and transfer students to Downtown New London via walking tours, free lunches, and live music. This is an excellent program in which Mitchell College and US Coast Guard Academy should be encouraged to participate.

Management

As was noted in the *New London Downtown Action Agenda 2001*, there are many organizations and entities actively involved in Downtown’s enhancement. Those most directly involved in the effort on a regular basis include:

- The City government of New London;
- The Downtown New London Association;
- The City Center District; and
- New London Main Street.

Downtown Partnership

As part of the *New London Downtown Action Agenda 2001*, HyettPalma recommended that a Downtown Partnership be formed. The Partnership was intended to be an umbrella group that brought together Downtown’s major

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players on a quarterly basis, to cooperatively implement – and monitor implementation of – the ***New London Downtown Action Agenda 2001***.

Shortly after the 2001 ***Downtown Action Agenda*** was completed, that Downtown Partnership was formed. It met and functioned for several years, after which time it “ran out of steam” and disbanded.

All of the needs that made a New London Downtown Partnership essential in 2001 are still in place today:

- Strong leadership to garner continued support for the enhancement effort;
- A unified voice and advocate to propel Downtown forward;
- Increased communication, collaboration, and cooperation among the entities involved in Downtown;
- The establishment of clear roles and responsibilities among those entities;
- Stimulating further investor confidence and private sector investment in Downtown; and
- Taking action and ensuring implementation of the ***Downtown Action Agenda***.

Therefore, it is recommended that a Downtown Partnership once again be formed in New London. This can be done in one of the following two ways.

- Informal Partnership – The Downtown Partnership, formed in 2001, can be reconvened. This was an informal group in that it was not incorporated. Instead, it acted as an umbrella group, that pulled together the major entities involved in Downtown’s enhancement.

If this route is taken again, the Downtown Partnership’s members should understand it to be a long-term commitment. And, one of the Partnership’s member entities should take responsibility for its administration – including scheduling meetings, developing meeting agendas, taking minutes, etc.

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- Formal Partnership – If it is felt locally that a more formal arrangement is necessary to keep the Downtown Partnership in place, then consideration should be given to creating a new, incorporated New London Downtown Partnership. This Partnership should be structured as a consortium that brings together the City Center District, Downtown New London Association, and New London Main Street with City Hall and Downtown business interests.

Under this scenario, the Boards of those entities – City Center District, Downtown New London Association, and New London Main Street – would stay in place. And, a “super board” would be created to act as the unified voice and advocate for Downtown and to provide the strong, long-term leadership needed for Downtown’s on-going enhancement.

At a minimum, the Partnership’s Board should be comprised of:

- The Board Chairs of the City Center District, Downtown New London Association, and New London Main Street;
- The Mayor of New London;
- A New London City Council Member;
- The New London chief administrative official;
- A representative of the Chamber of Commerce of Southeastern Connecticut – ideally in the form of a Chamber Board Member or Committee Chair; and
- Representatives of Downtown’s business sector – a business owner, a property owner, a developer, and a bank CEO.

Other entities actively involved in Downtown – such as the Garde, the Hygienic, New London Landmarks – should, of course, be represented on the Boards of New London Main Street, City Center District, and/or Downtown New London Association. In addition, these groups might also be asked to have representation on the Partnership’s Board.

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If it is felt that the Partnership's leadership and advocacy role can be strengthened by broadening its representation beyond Downtown, then consideration should also be given to adding the following to the Board:

- A high ranking official from Connecticut College, Mitchell College, and the US Coast Guard Academy;
- Corporate/community leaders, such as the hospital CEO, the Publisher of *The Day*, etc.

A formal, incorporated New London Downtown Partnership would require the expertise and leadership of an experienced Executive Director, in addition to the staff positions and volunteers now in place with City Center District, Downtown New London Association, and New London Main Street.

If this formal Downtown Partnership is created, then no other private sector, public sector, or non-profit entities should hire staff dedicated to working on Downtown's enhancement. Instead, the Partnership should become the central focal point for such staff.

Funding for the Downtown Partnership should come from the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors. The Partnership's Board should be responsible for garnering sufficient funds to ensure the organization's financial capacity. To do so, the Partnership's Board – along with the Boards of City Center District, Downtown New London Association, and New London Main Street – should jointly determine annual budgetary needs. And, the Partnership's Board should create and implement a master development campaign to ensure financial success.

Adoption

Whether formed to be a formal or informal entity, the New London Downtown Partnership should adopt the ***New London Downtown Action Agenda 2011*** as its official guide for Downtown's enhancement. And, it is hoped that the New London City Council will see fit to do the same.

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Appendix

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Demographic and Income Profile

Downtown New London Primary Retail Trade Area
Area: 205.10 Square miles

Summary	2000		2010		2015	
Population	128,222		130,566		130,366	
Households	50,328		52,246		52,373	
Families	32,794		33,630		33,390	
Average Household Size	2.41		2.37		2.36	
Owner Occupied Housing Units	31,370		32,528		32,630	
Renter Occupied Housing Units	18,958		19,719		19,743	
Median Age	36.3		38.6		38.6	
Trends: 2010 - 2015 Annual Rate	Area		State		National	
Population	-0.03%		0.19%		0.76%	
Households	0.05%		0.20%		0.78%	
Families	-0.14%		0.03%		0.64%	
Owner HHs	0.06%		0.22%		0.82%	
Median Household Income	2.02%		2.79%		2.36%	
Households by Income	2000		2010		2015	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<\$15,000	5,292	10.5%	3,878	7.4%	3,413	6.5%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	5,592	11.1%	3,652	7.0%	3,098	5.9%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	6,249	12.4%	4,333	8.3%	3,487	6.7%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	8,584	17.1%	7,348	14.1%	6,174	11.8%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	11,135	22.1%	13,155	25.2%	11,957	22.8%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	6,182	12.3%	9,889	18.9%	9,330	17.8%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	4,938	9.8%	5,539	10.6%	9,063	17.3%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	1,198	2.4%	2,647	5.1%	3,355	6.4%
\$200,000+	1,138	2.3%	1,822	3.5%	2,494	4.8%
Median Household Income	\$48,875		\$62,627		\$89,215	
Average Household Income	\$62,001		\$75,508		\$85,509	
Per Capita Income	\$24,857		\$30,927		\$35,163	
Population by Age	2000		2010		2015	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0 - 4	8,345	6.5%	8,353	6.4%	8,210	6.3%
5 - 9	8,913	7.0%	7,885	6.0%	7,880	6.0%
10 - 14	8,727	6.8%	7,741	5.9%	7,743	5.9%
15 - 19	8,630	6.7%	9,630	7.4%	8,855	6.8%
20 - 24	9,153	7.1%	10,434	8.0%	10,381	7.9%
25 - 34	17,636	13.8%	15,606	12.0%	17,098	13.1%
35 - 44	20,995	16.4%	16,556	12.7%	14,518	11.1%
45 - 54	17,053	13.3%	19,584	15.0%	17,851	13.7%
55 - 64	11,383	8.9%	15,620	12.0%	16,959	13.0%
65 - 74	8,877	6.9%	9,522	7.3%	11,556	8.9%
75 - 84	6,334	4.9%	6,586	5.0%	6,285	4.8%
85+	2,177	1.7%	3,046	2.3%	3,069	2.4%
Race and Ethnicity	2000		2010		2015	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White Alone	107,440	83.8%	102,444	78.5%	99,186	76.1%
Black Alone	8,732	6.8%	10,181	7.8%	10,655	8.2%
American Indian Alone	1,260	1.0%	1,217	0.9%	1,180	0.9%
Asian Alone	3,284	2.6%	6,881	5.3%	8,373	6.4%
Pacific Islander Alone	110	0.1%	178	0.1%	192	0.1%
Some Other Race Alone	3,455	2.7%	4,701	3.6%	5,324	4.1%
Two or More Races	3,942	3.1%	4,964	3.8%	5,457	4.2%
Hispanic Origin (Any Race)	8,483	6.6%	11,920	9.1%	13,703	10.5%

Data Note: Income is expressed in current dollars
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 Census of Population and Housing. Esri forecasts for 2010 and 2015.

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Site Map

Downtown New London Primary ...
Area: 205.10 Square miles
Custom Polygon

