

Benedict Avenue District Plan

City of Norwalk
2022

December 13th, 2022 - DRAFT

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the steering committee members who invested their time and expertise in the creation of this plan for the future of the City of Norwalk.

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01

PROJECT OVERVIEW

ABOUT THE PLAN

This planning process was initiated by the Norwalk Economic Development Corporation in conjunction with the Fisher-Titus hospital and the City of Norwalk. Collectively these entities came together to create a blueprint for the future of the Benedict Avenue Corridor at the edge of the city.

This corridor/district is significant to both the City of Norwalk and the region. It is home to Fisher-Titus hospital, Norwalk schools, County facilities, and a collection of local businesses. Within the district are also larger areas of undeveloped land that have the potential to shape the future of the district and the City.

At the heart of the planning process was a desire to achieve two objectives. The first was to create a coordinated development and land use strategy to guide future growth and development. The second was a desire to create something special with a unique sense of place. This involved looking at elements such as gateways, the streetscape, branding, etc. to build a distinct image, and gateway into the city.

PROJECT APPROACH

The approach to creating this corridor plan was to be both technically and intuitively informed, and mirror the comprehensive plan content and planning process. The planning process was guided by a project steering committee made up of the consultant team, local economic development organization, city staff, elected officials, and community stakeholders.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

GUIDE ...

... the community in evaluating proposed public and private investments.

INFORM ...

... current and prospective property owners and developers on desirable growth patterns.

MEASURE ...

... progress and effectiveness of projects in the city and surrounding area to ensure they strengthen the corridor and achieve the desired vision.

PLAN GOALS + OBJECTIVES

- Establish a uniform vision for the Benedict Avenue study area
- Create a future land use plan and strategy that informs future zoning decisions
- Create a plan that will guide, attract, and inform future economic development projects

Creating the corridor plan involved many inputs, including technical research, community inputs, and best practices in planning and development. These inputs are outlined in chapter 2.

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

This study is meant to guide public and private land use and community development decisions. Both the public and private sector have a role in managing and advancing the goals and objectives of the plan.

Public Entities. Individual city departments and administrators should be cognizant of the contents of the plan when preparing annual work programs, budgets, capital improvement plans, and economic incentives. When deciding on administrative and legislative approvals for development proposals, this study should be used as a tool to communicate with property owners and the development community on the desired character and form of development in the study area.

Private Entities. The private sector should consider the goals and strategies of the plan as they make land use and investment decisions. The private development community should follow the vision of the study and ensure development proposals meet the intent of the future land use map and character, and planned infrastructure improvements as outlined herein.

The Community. The community as a whole should consider the plan as new capital improvements are planned development proposals are made. It is the role of the community to respect the purpose and recommendations of the plan, and support and guide decisions that are aligned with the future land use map, and discourage development decisions that conflict with the recommendations of the plan.

Existing cross section of Benedict Avenue



02

PLAN INPUTS

OVERVIEW

The process in which this plan was created required many inputs and took months of analysis, engagement, and discussion.

This section of the plan includes an outline of the key existing conditions that shape the study area. The purpose of this analysis and the findings within this section are to create a baseline understanding of the current physical, social, and economic conditions within the study area. The key findings from this analysis informed the creation of the land use framework and recommendations outlined in the next chapter.

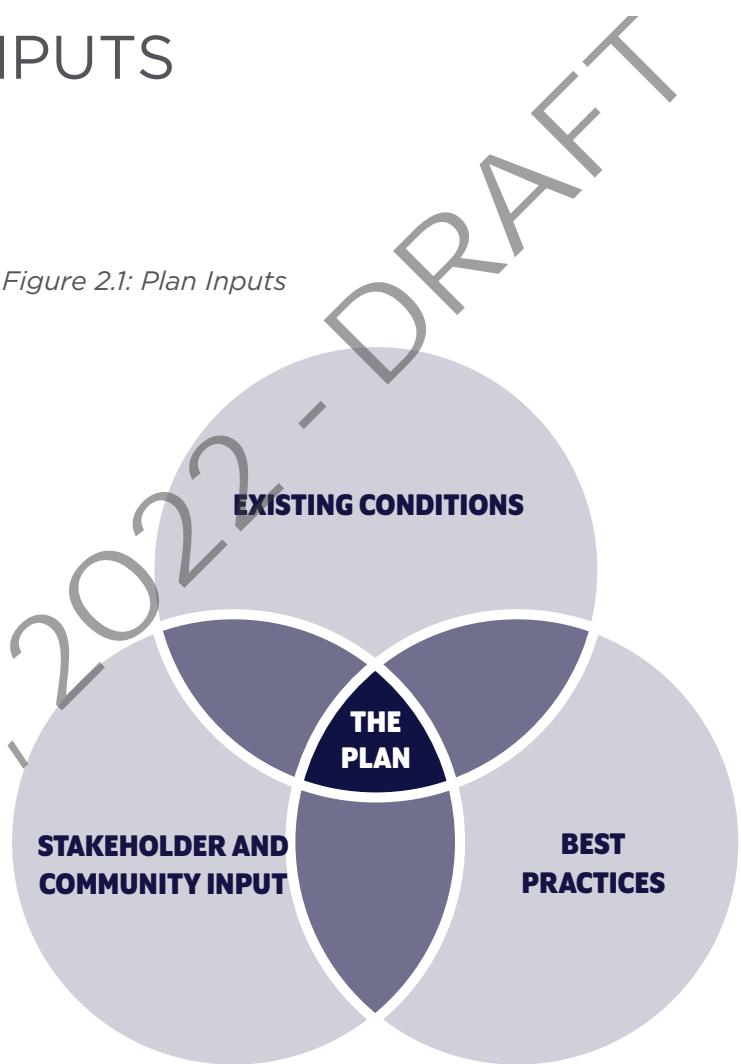
Within this chapter, the project study area is introduced. Additional items reviewed include existing zoning, land use, and property ownership. These documents served as an important baseline from which the plan for the study was created. All these data points helped inform the creation of the future land use plan for the area, as well as the development character and proposed infrastructure improvements.

In addition to the technical research key findings from the visioning of the steering committee is included. The visioning played a key role in the formulation of the future land use framework and priority projects.

STUDY AREA

The study area is Benedict Avenue corridor from U.S. 20 on the south, to Executive Drive as the northern boundary. The area is approximately 290 acres and is considered the southern gateway into the city. The area includes a number of signature uses in the Norwalk community such as the Fisher

Figure 2.1: Plan Inputs

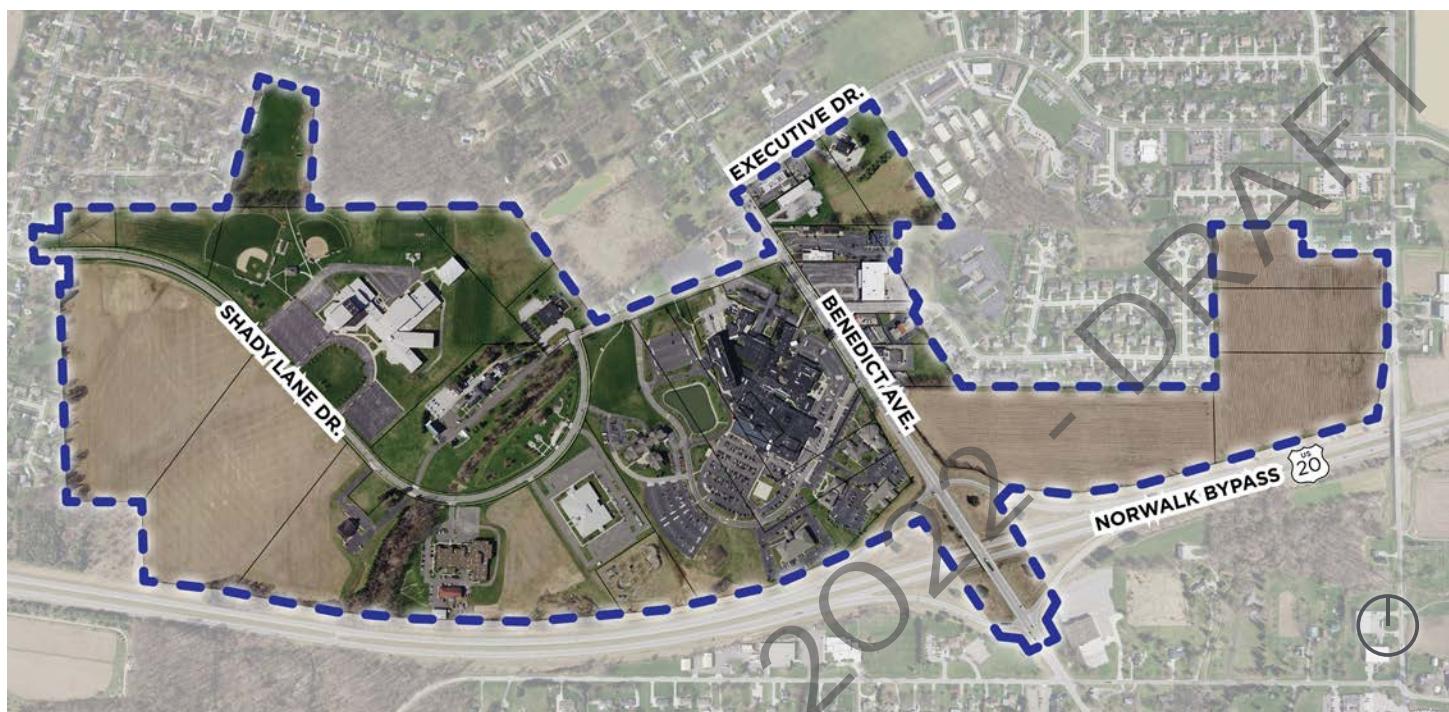


Titus Hospital, Norwalk Schools, county facilities (including the office of the county commissioners), a nursing home, and a child care center. In addition to these uses there are large areas of undeveloped land that present an opportunity for future growth and development.

Some notable physical attributes of the study area include an existing sidewalk network, an aging streetscape, and pedestrian crossings.



Figure 2.2: Project Study Area



View of the study area looking north from the U.S. 20 interchange.

AREA ANALYSIS

The following section summarizes the existing conditions analysis. The key findings from this analysis informed the development of the plan and key recommendations outlined in chapter three.

Zoning

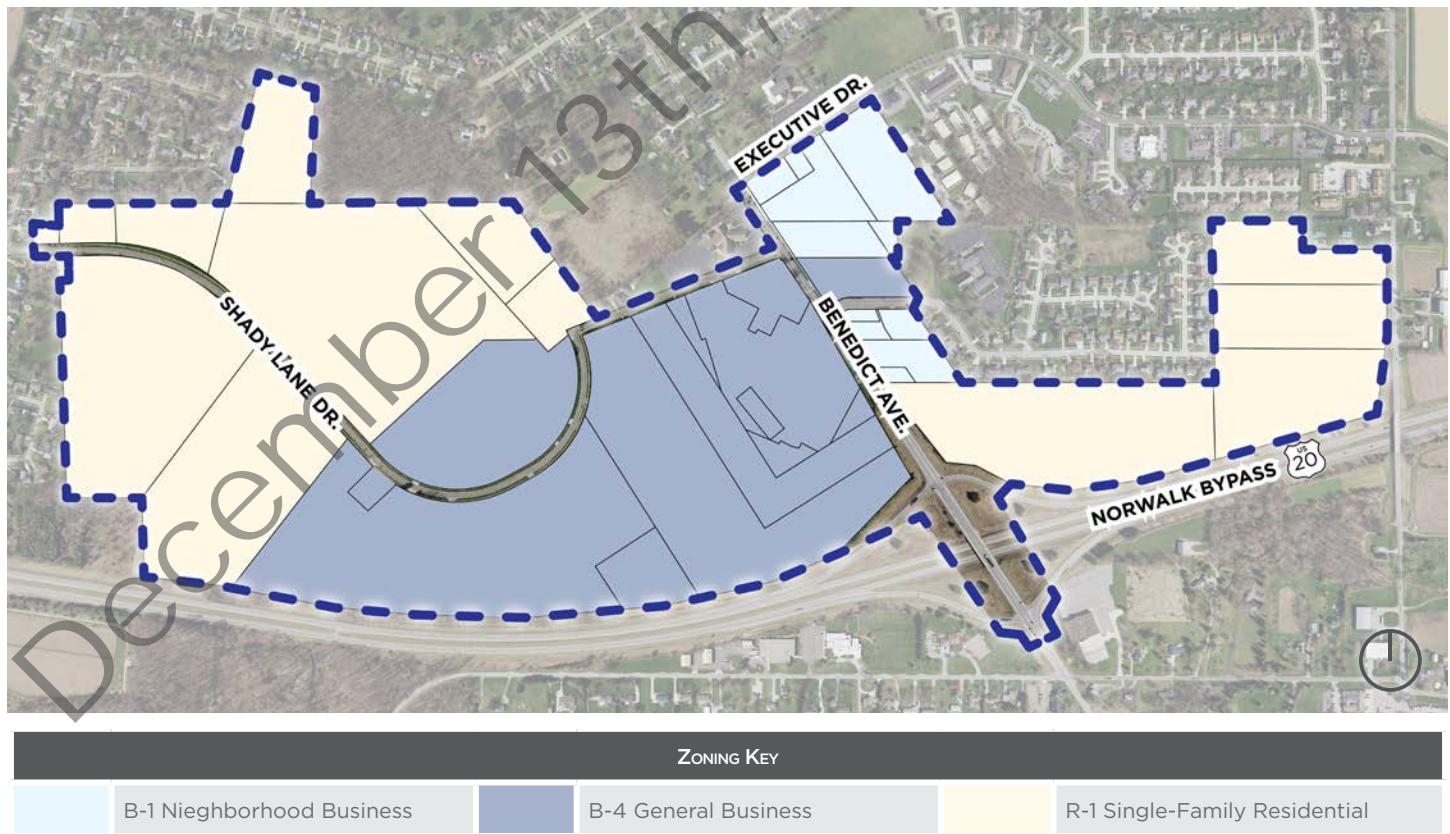
The project study area is made up of three different zoning districts. These zones are B-1 neighborhood business, B-4 general business, and R-1 Single-family residential.

The B-1 designation allows uses of convenience businesses which tend to meet the daily or weekly needs of the residents of an immediate neighborhood. Currently, the businesses that occupy the parcels zoned for B-1 are as follows: McDonald's, Subway, an accounting office, an automobile insurance office, an inn, and a Burger King.

The B-4 designation is intended to accommodate a variety of commercial businesses. Some of the uses found in this district include the Fisher-Titus Medical Center, a nursing home, medical practices, a gym, and county government offices.

The R-1 designation permits the development of single-family residences with a maximum density of six dwelling units per acre. This designation has conditional uses to allow public and private schools. Uses observed in this district are either currently vacant or hold the Norwalk High School and the Norwalk Child Care Center.

Figure 3.1: Zoning Map



Current Land Use

While relatively small in overall acreage, the study contains a variety of existing land uses. Land use is different from zoning, it is simply how the land is currently being used, not how it is zoned. There are multiple land uses currently in the project area including agriculture, government, commercial, institutions, and parks.

The commercial land uses are located on the east side of project area and includes fast food chains, professional offices, a gym, and an inn. This portion of the project area lacks a consistent image or character as there is no consistent design standards.

The agricultural area, or vacant areas, are larger areas of land that are currently undeveloped, are used for agricultural purposes, or have been in the past. Agricultural land uses are mainly due to vacancy of development.

The governmental land uses are all occupied by Huron County, while the institutional include medical uses as well as the Norwalk Schools which encompasses over 46 acres of the land illustrated in light blue.

The park land designation encompasses the veteran memorial located in front of the county offices.

The vacant land use designation is located in the western most portion of the project area. These two parcels are currently undeveloped.

Figure 3.2: Existing land uses



Existing Pedestrian Infrastructure

The existing pedestrian infrastructure is currently limited to sidewalks. Although the district does not have dedicated bike lanes or a shared use path, the existing sidewalks are an important component to the existing pedestrian network.

Starting at the intersection of the entrance of the Fisher-Titus Medical Center and Benedict Avenue, the sidewalk continues along both sides of the avenue, eventually terminating at a pedestrian-signalized crosswalk on Benedict Avenue.

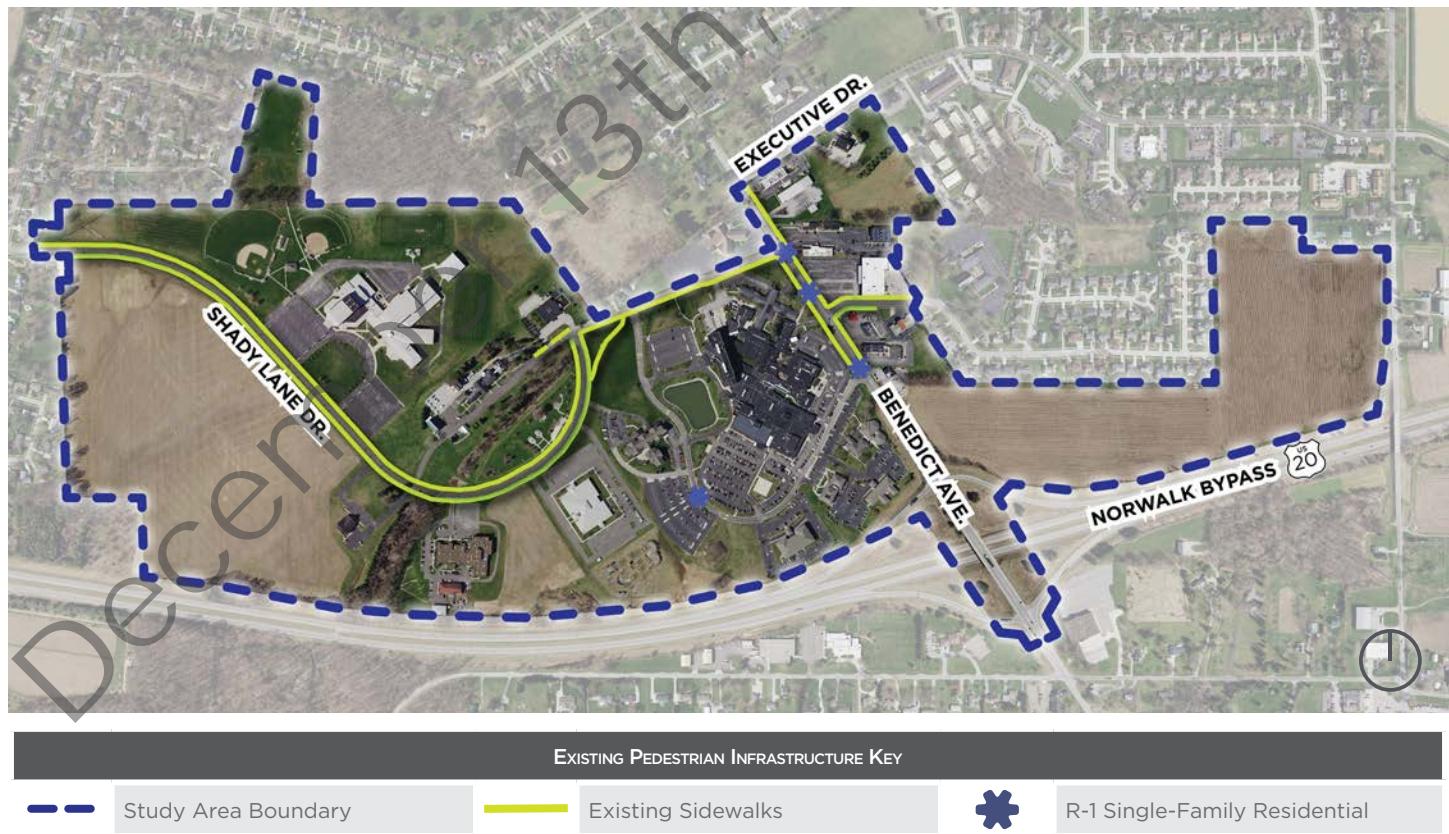
The existing path then continues north to the end of the district and also heads west towards the county government buildings and the Norwalk High School (see Figure 3.3). These connections present an opportunity for high school students to and through the project area.

Streetscape

A streetscape is the visual elements of a street, including the road, adjoining buildings, sidewalks, street furniture, trees and open spaces, etc, that combine to form the street's character. The existing streetscape in the project area is an important component of the success of the district. It sets the tone, visual cue, as well as safety and comfort for residents and visitors.

The existing streetscape has some nice elements, but can be elevated to improve the look, feel and function of district. The existing streetscape is shown on in the images on the page to the right. Sidewalks are present in most areas and there are multiple points for pedestrian crossing. The streetscape lacks street trees in many areas, and consistent lighting and signage. There are also no significant gateway features to define the district and City of Norwalk entry point.

Figure 3.3: Existing Pedestrian Infrastructure Map





Typical existing streetscape section in the project area

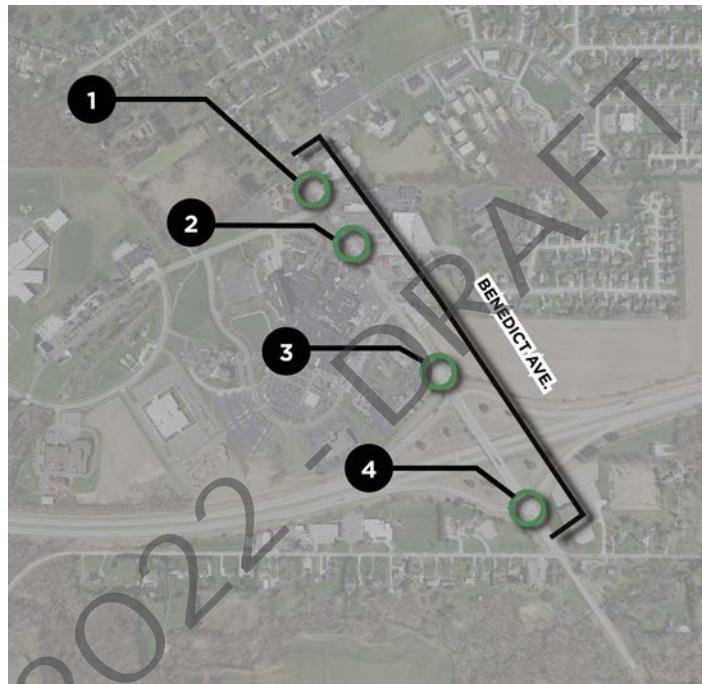


Diagram that indicates the sections shown in the below images



Benedict Avenue north of Shady Lane Drive



Pedestrian crosswalk south of Shady Lane Drive



Area north of U.S. 20 interchange



Existing U.S 20 interchange

VISIONING

Visioning is a critical element of completing a planning study. For this project visioning was conducted with the project steering committee. The steering committee was made up of eight stakeholders including representatives from Fisher-Titus Medical Center, the County, the City of Norwalk, Mickey Mart Stores, Norwalk City Schools, and the Norwalk Economic Development Corporation.

Three meetings were held with the steering committee. The first meeting was where most of the visioning was conducted. At this meeting the consultant team led the committee through a visioning exercise. The committee was asked to identify the issues and opportunities in the project area, and share a big idea that would help advance or transform the area in the future. The ideas gathered as part of this exercise were then prioritized. The top projects were agreed upon by the committee as priority projects that should be focused on as part of the planning framework and implementation strategy.

The following is a summary of the priority projects identified by the committee:

- Creating a unique brand and gateway feature
- Improvement to the streetscape
- Evaluating infrastructure capacity
- Developing the open acreage in the east of the district
- Connectivity plan
- South side traffic management plan
- Redevelopment of the old county complex
- Shady Lane alignment

The projects were then translated into four distinct priority projects. The projects listed below are illustrated in Chapter 3 and help support the overall land use strategy and framework in the project area:

1. Brand and gateways
2. Enhanced Streetscape
3. East Sub-district Development
4. Non-motorized connectivity

EXISTING CONDITION AND VISIONING KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Benedict Ave provides the City of Norwalk with great potential to create an inviting entrance into the community
- Zoning in the district seems to be an issue in the district, especially in the future development site in the east of the district.
- Current land uses need to be adjusted to match the desire for the developmental future outlined by the steering committee.
- Limited pedestrian infrastructure and interchange restrictions suggest important implications to streetscape developments
- The steering committee articulated a clear vision for the district to be a destination for residents and visitors and for the district to act as a distinct gateway into the City of Norwalk.



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03

PLAN FRAMEWORK

OVERVIEW

This section outlines the vision, future land use plan, and priority projects for the project area. The vision, land use plan, and priority projects were created from the technical analysis, previous plans and studies, and input from the city and community stakeholders. This vision and land use plan are meant to guide the pattern and character of future growth in the study area.

This document should be added to the existing comprehensive plan as an amendment. Once amended, the comprehensive plan should guide and inform future growth and development in the Benedict Avenue Corridor.

PLAN FRAMEWORK

This plan framework is made up of two fundamental components, the future land use plan/map and priority projects. The **future land use plan** sets the direction for how land should be used or developed in the future.



Street view of Benedict Avenue at the northern part of the district looking south

The **priority projects** are projects that help advance the future land use plan, and elevate the quality of life and economic competitiveness in the project area. The graphic below outlines the relationship between the future land use plan and the priority projects, and each priority project is also identified. Both are explained in more detail within this chapter.



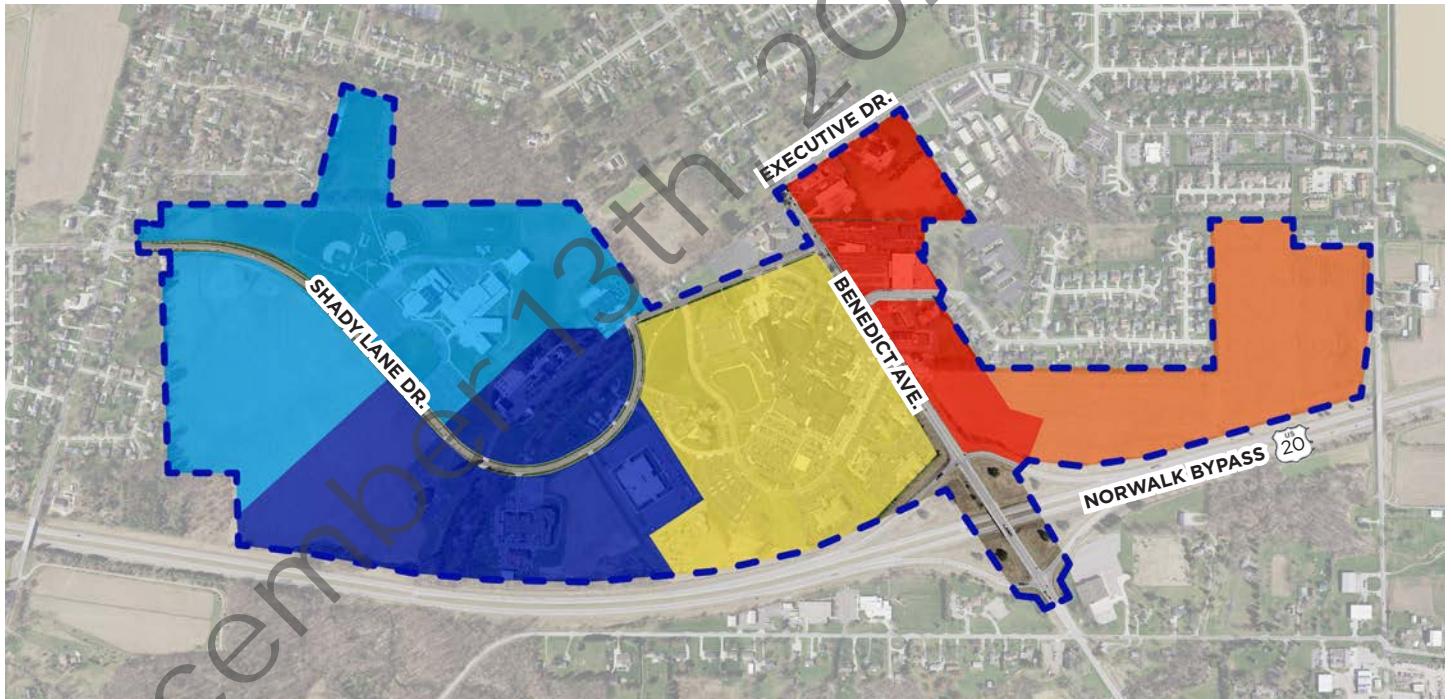
FUTURE LAND USE

OVERVIEW

The future land use map illustrates how land should be used in the future. As development occurs, future zoning and policy decisions should align with the map and the districts therein. Each district is a unique land use typology and has a prescribed set of characteristics. Further in this section, each land use is described in more detail.

It is important to note the future land use plan does not indicate a zoning change or change in land use. As future zoning requests are made, the future land use map should be consulted.

Future Land Use Map



LAND USE KEY

Government	Commercial	Institutional
Medium Density Residential	Hospital	

GOVERNMENT

DESCRIPTION

The government land use district is meant to designate a portion of the Benedict Avenue District to public related uses. Currently a large swath of this area is used by the County. Future development in this area should include public and semi-public uses. Emphasis should be placed on quality access for all modes of transportation, and integrated public spaces that complement government functions. Architectural styles and elements should be of quality traditional and natural materials and timeless in style.

Government District



Character images



COMMERCIAL

DESCRIPTION

The commercial district is intended for small to medium commercial uses that serve the local and regional community. Average development density should be between 10,000 to 15,000 s.f. acre.

Future development in this area should be connected and oriented to the streetscape with parking to the side or rear. Architecture should include traditional and natural materials. Signage should include a consistent theme and brand aesthetic.

Commercial District



Character images



INSTITUTIONAL

DESCRIPTION

The institutional land use district is intended for semi-public uses. Currently this district includes Norwalk Schools as the primary user. Future development in this area should complement the existing school facility and use.

Institutional District



Character images



MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

DESCRIPTION

Medium density residential is intended for the development to address the lack of housing currently available in the district. Although the character of the development will ultimately be decided by the developer of the available parcels, the design elements should fit with the intended look of the rest of the district and allow for varied building heights two to four stories in height.

This development density should be higher than the rest of the district, as the residential area is more concentrated than the surrounding developments. It should contain - at a minimum - an estimated twenty units per acre. Open space should be another element considered thoughtfully here, with the implementation of sufficient lawn and green space for residents to enjoy the outdoors.



Character images



HOSPITAL

DESCRIPTION

The hospital district is intended to house the area's medical facilities, providing services including psychiatry, senior care, and traditional health care. This is already a well-established part of the district.

It is recommended that the design character of the district be kept in line with the existing hospital building to create a cohesive campus that is easy to identify and navigate.

Intensity of development in this area should not be extensively altered. It is recommended that Fisher-Titus Medical Center should maintain their current level of development, which includes several current opportunities to expand their medical services.

Open space should not be a priority but could be thoughtfully implemented throughout the district to give patients and employees the opportunity to enjoy green spaces.



Character images



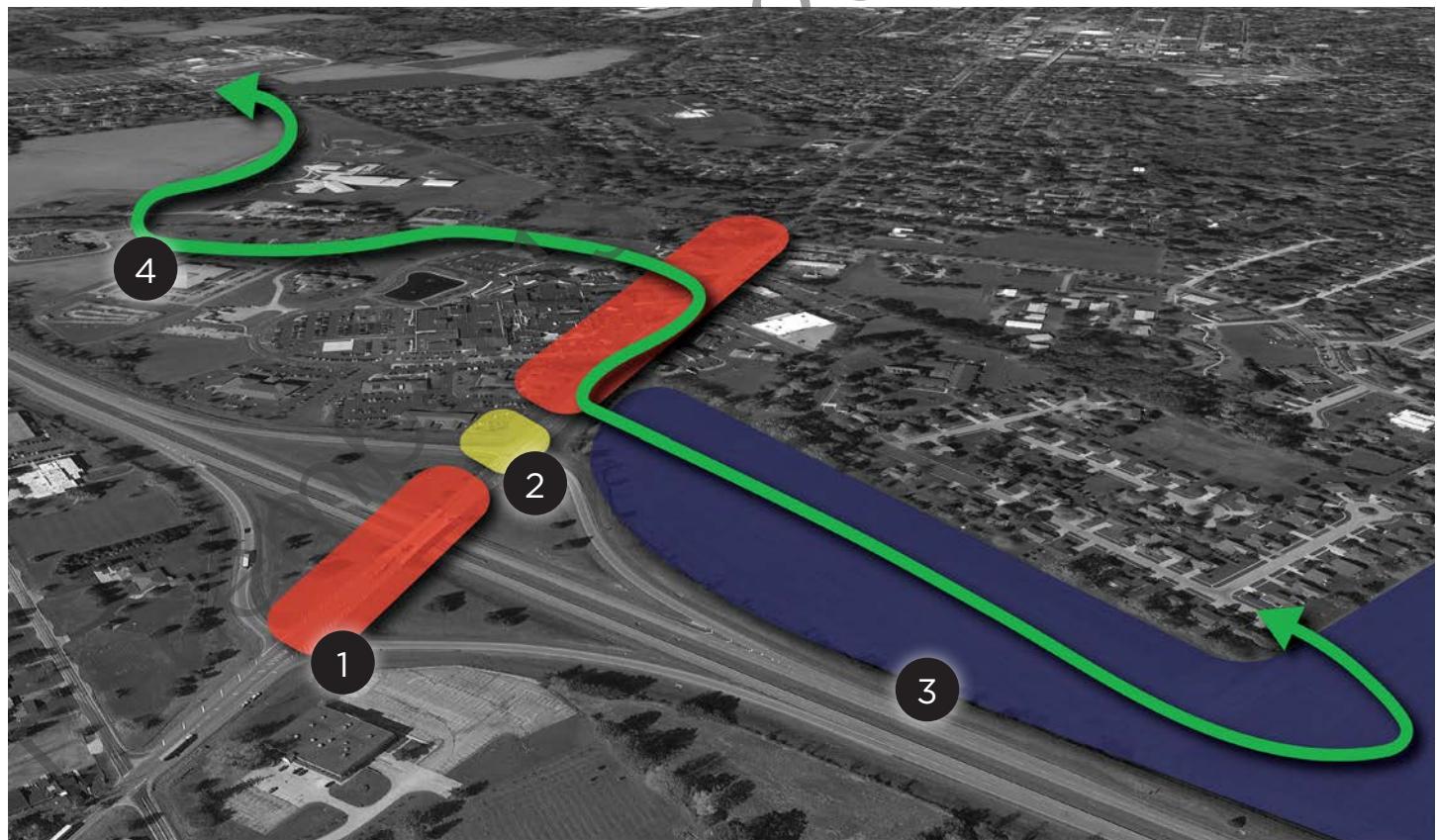
PRIORITY PROJECTS

OVERVIEW

This section outlines recommendations for capital construction projects. These items are classified as priority projects, specifically chosen, and discussed through the insight of the steering committee. The concept of these projects is simple: by investing in the district strategically, residents and visitors will find their way to the area and are more likely to invest their dollars into the City of Norwalk.

The vision for a gateway is a key driver in the concept development of these projects. The following statements further outline the intent:

- Projects were created with feasibility in mind
- Concepts are developmental guides and will ultimately be driven by the private market
- Although these projects will be driven by the private market, the concepts in this document are intended to serve as a method to persuade developers to act
- Creating a more cohesive district was a main focus



1. Streetscape
2. Gateway & Signage
3. E. Sub-district
4. Non-Motorized Connectivity

PROJECT LIST

The following is a brief, essential description of each project. As previously referenced, these design concepts were created with the oversight of the steering committee working to keep relevant stakeholder needs in mind.

1. Streetscape

Elements of this design concept include sidewalk screening to create more of a corridor feel and draw attention away from parking lots; a street median with maple trees to help beautify the corridor and provide a welcoming appeal for visitors; signage and wayfinding elements to give visitors direction to the various districts and points of interest; and shared use paths that further promote walkability.

2. Gateway and Signage

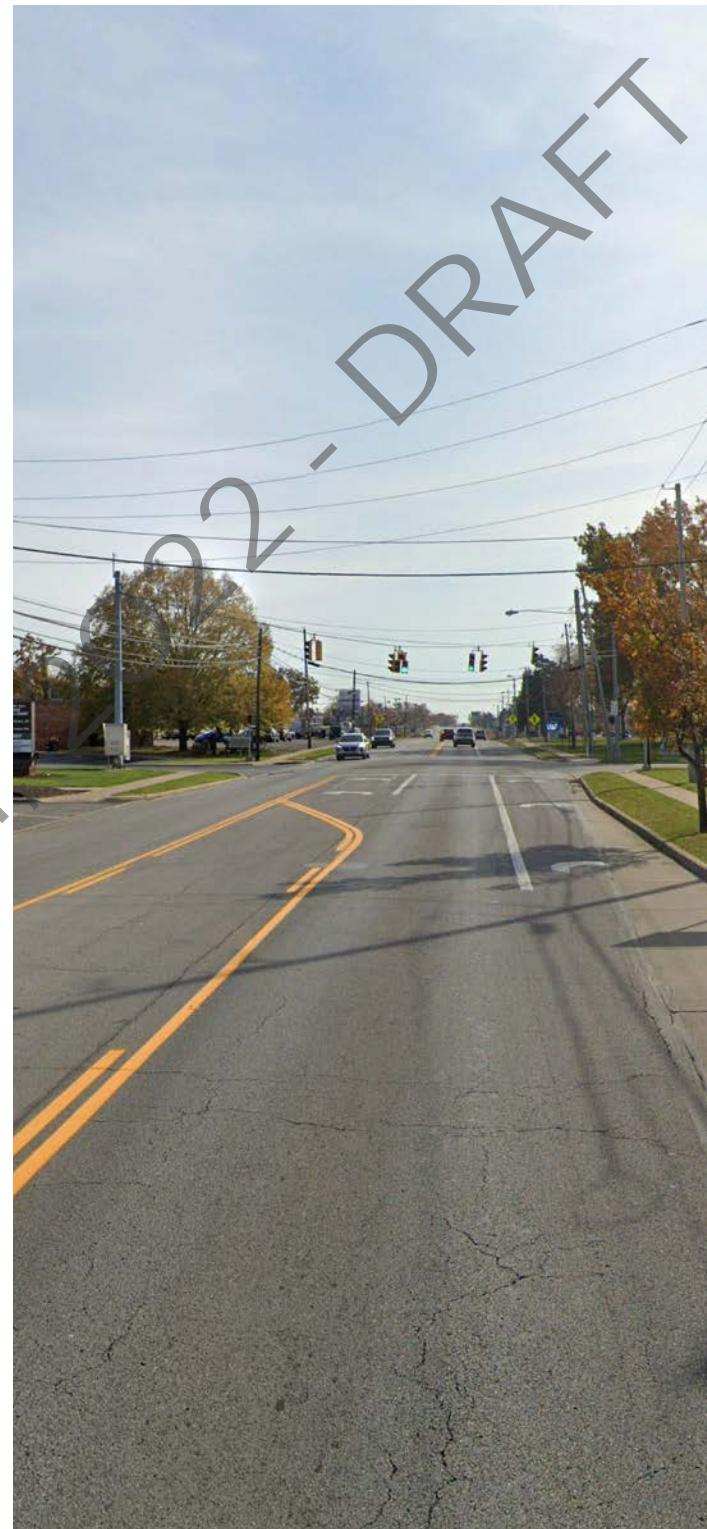
Together with the streetscape design concepts, gateway and signage provide the Benedict Avenue corridor with more features to give visitors and residents a sense of place. These elements encourage use of the space for more than just a conduit to get to downtown. Highlights include a large gateway sign on the interchange, a sign at the start of the street median, and a hierarchy system for signage and wayfinding to provide a consistent feel throughout the district.

3. East Sub-district

With improvements to the district, demand for housing will likely increase. To meet these needs, the east sub-district is envisioned primarily as a medium density residential area with some small parcels closest to the avenue providing space for commercial development. Attractive, modern, and in character with the area, the development is designed to be a natural extension to link pedestrians and bicyclists with the opportunity to be more directly connected to the reservoir.

4. Non-Motorized Connectivity

This design concept aims to provide students and medical center staff safe routes to bike and walk through the district with the implementation of shared use paths.



Benedict Avenue is a wide avenue that is a safe haven for cars and dangerous for pedestrians.

1

STREETSCAPE

Overview

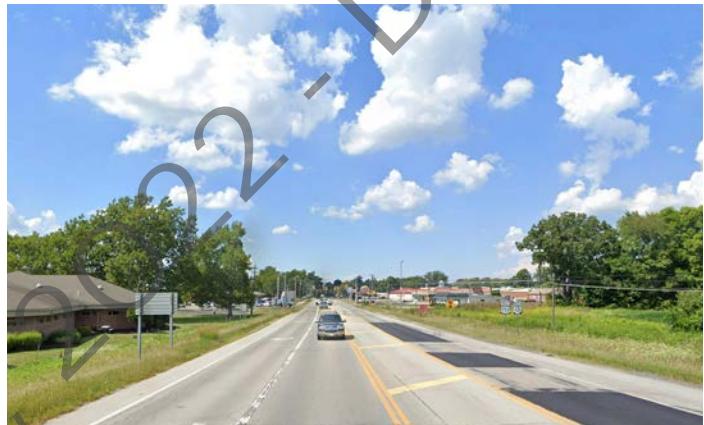
First impressions matter. As many visitors may use the Benedict Avenue exit from US-20 to arrive in Norwalk, the Benedict Avenue streetscape is of utmost importance to the city's image. Currently the street is wide with few obstructions on both sides of the right-of-way, which can encourage drivers to travel at high speed, creating an environment that is solely used as a route to get some other place.

The City of Norwalk can capitalize on the opportunity to welcome visitors by utilizing elements that encourage them to slow down and even spend time in the district. With institutions including the local school and hospital, this area of the city should be a priority for improvement to enhance the quality of life for residents and create points of interest for visitors.

Applying elements described in the following design concepts, the city can create a gateway district to serve the needs and encourage use by residents as well as visitors. These concepts include adding street trees, creating a median, providing the district with proper signage, widening sidewalks, erecting sidewalk screening – all giving the district a welcoming and cohesive feel.

In this section of priority projects, streetscape concepts are divided into three different sub-districts: the North District, the Hospital District, and the Interchange District. This is done to ensure proper attention was given to the nuances presented by each area surrounding this length of Benedict Avenue. Every section of the street contains unique issues and opportunities. For example, as the primary gateway, the Interchange District's design elements are focused on the concept of "welcoming", including a proposed street median with a gateway sign sharing space with maple trees. The North District prioritizes the comfort of pedestrians with a wide shared use path and sidewalk screening options. Although each district has different needs, it is important to note that cohesion and consistency were principal drivers across the streetscape design project.

The primary goal is to create an identity for the entire Benedict Avenue District, a feeling for visitors and residents that they have arrived in a vibrant, progressive City of Norwalk.



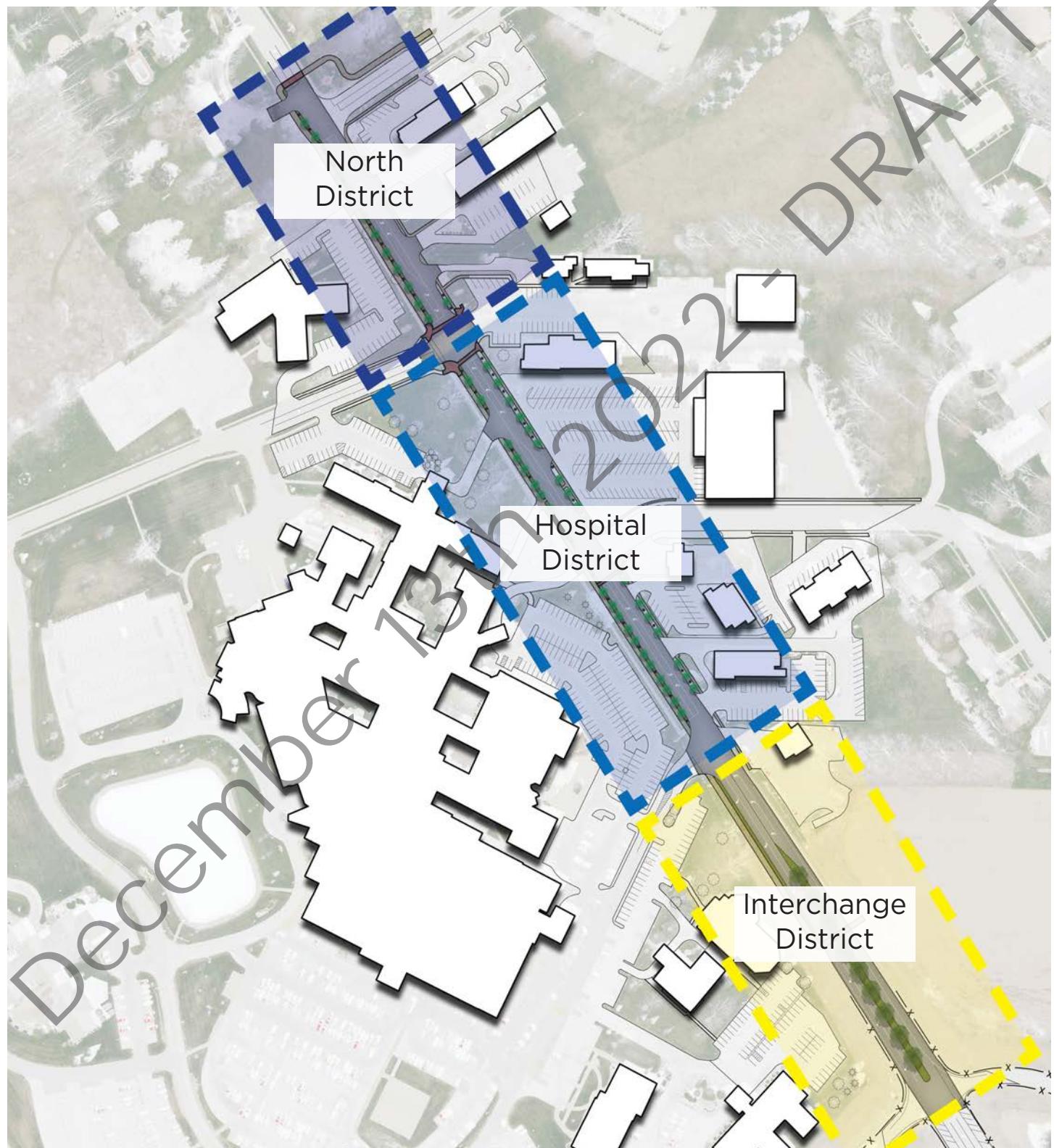
Street view of Benedict Avenue

Next Steps

- City to approve/adopt the area plan
- Conduct design and final engineering documents
- Obtain ODOT approval where necessary
- Integrate project into the City's CIP Plan
- Investigate opportunities to combine infrastructure projects. (i.e. burying utilities underground)
- Identify and secure sources of funding, both private and public



STREETSCAPE SECTION MAP



Interchange District

As previously noted, the primary streetscape goal for the Interchange District is to welcome residents and visitors to the district as well as the City of Norwalk. This is accomplished through the implementation of a variety of elements that encourage a slower driving speed than the current condition enables.

A median with street trees is recommended to narrow the field of vision for drivers, forcing them to be more attentive and focused behind the wheel.

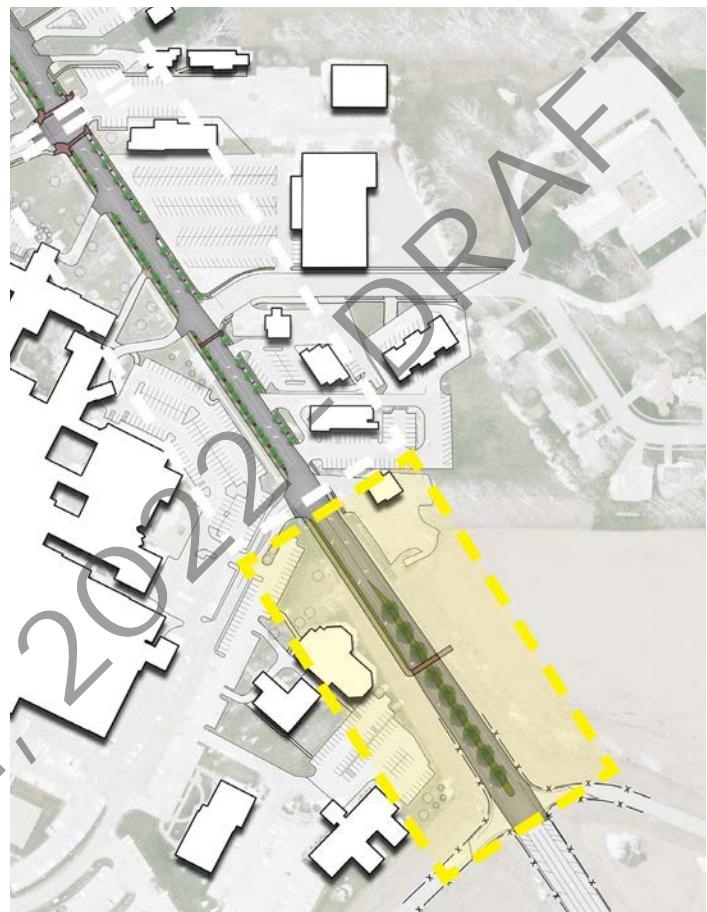
Brick pavers for the pedestrian crosswalk are another element encouraging drivers to slow down, further promoting the walkability of the district and improving overall safety. The difference in color and texture between the brick pavers and road surface assists drivers in recognizing the pedestrian crossing areas.

The addition of the gateway sign pulls all elements together to better emphasize the arrival experience for visitors and residents as they exit the US-20 interchange.

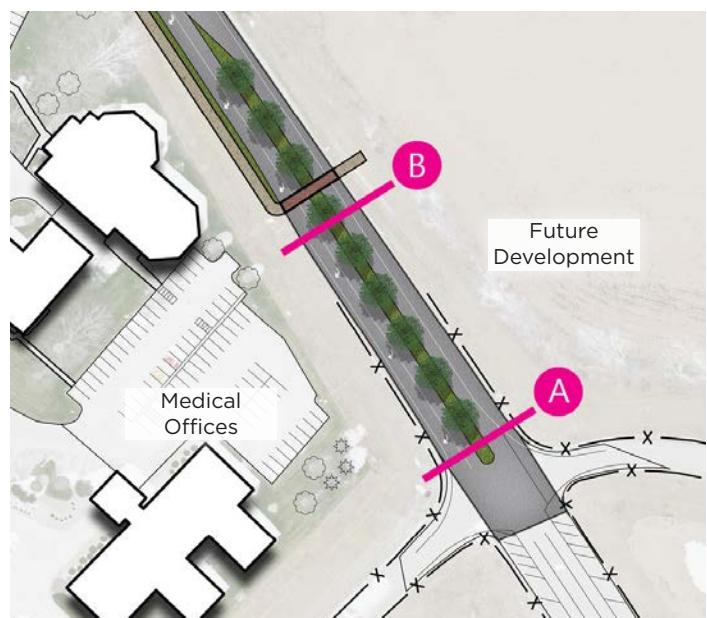
Design Characteristics

- Median landscaped with maple trees
- Potential mid-block multi-use trail crossing
- Primary signage in median with wayfinding along multi-use trail

Interchange District



Section locations (see right page)



South section of Interchange District



North section of Interchange District



Hospital District

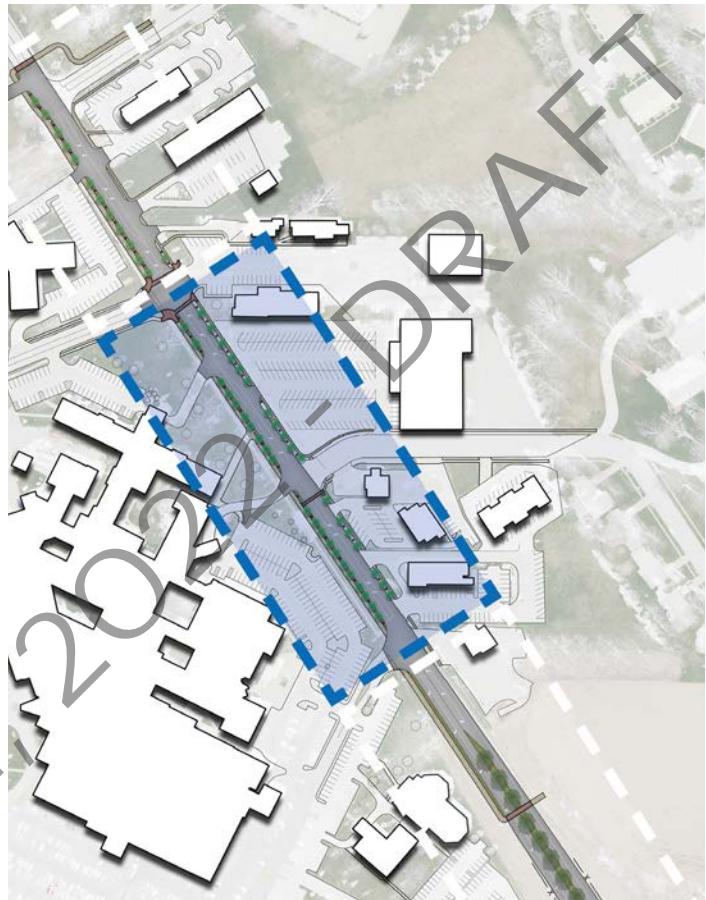
The Hospital District addresses the street that runs along the front of Fisher-Titus Medical Center. Primary concepts for these designs were intended to give area residents and hospital employees, visitors, and patients the ability to use the pedestrian infrastructure safely and comfortably.

This design also recognizes the importance of ingress and egress for emergency vehicles, the primary reason the median does not continue through the hospital district.

Street trees are recommended along the amenity zones next to the proposed shared use paths and sidewalks to create continuity with the treed street median. They also serve to constrict the field of vision for drivers, encouraging them to slow down. This improves biking and pedestrian safety and allows drivers to look around and find reasons to stop in the district.

Streetlamps with city branding are also suggested along the right-of-way. Decorative lighting creates character throughout the district and complements the design standards currently in place in downtown Norwalk.

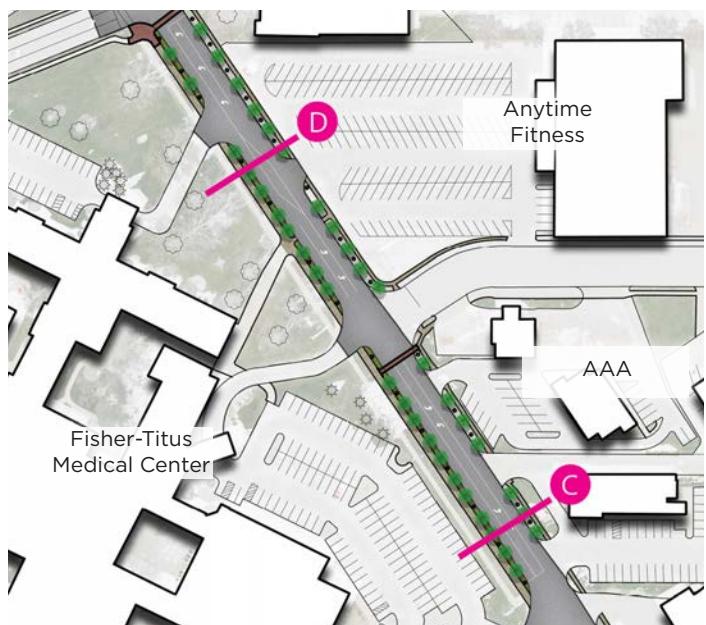
Hospital District



Design Characteristics

- Ornamental trees and decorative lamp posts on either side of Benedict Ave
- Multi-use trail along western side of Benedict Ave
- Decorative screening along trail to mask parking areas

Section locations (see right page)



North section of Hospital District



South section of Hospital District



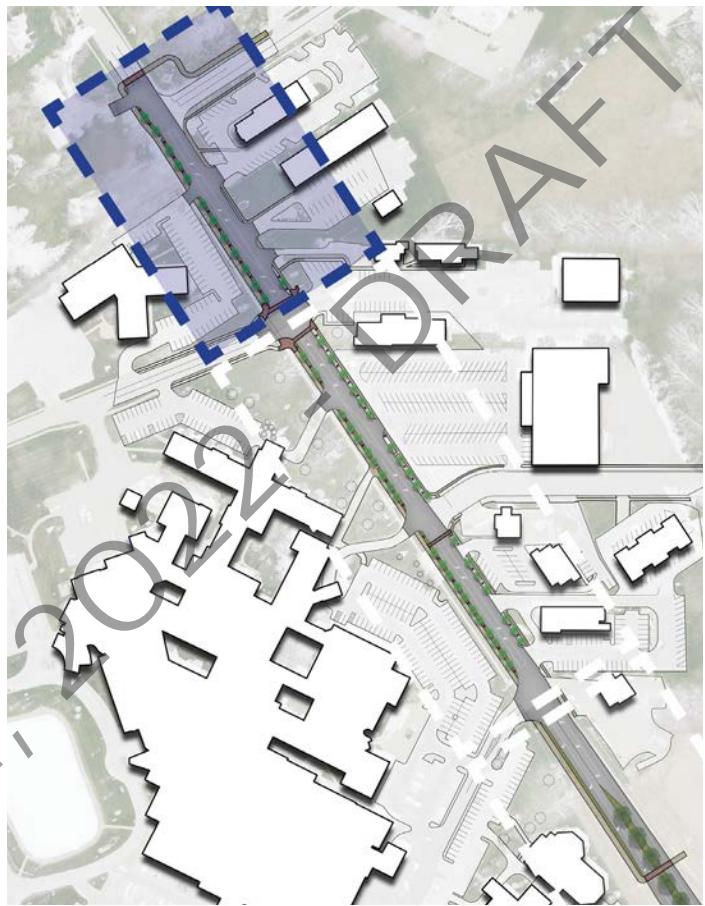
North District

The third and final section in the streetscape is the North District. This portion of the Benedict Avenue streetscape is particularly important for implications to the residential zones that follow the northern boundary of the district.

Elements included in these design concepts aim to calm traffic in this area, provide safe pedestrian access, and to continue the branding of the Benedict Avenue District.

Street trees, lamps, and banners all carry on the consistent feel of the district while providing more visual elements for drivers along the corridor increasing the likelihood to slow down.

North District



Section locations (see right page)

Design Characteristics

- Multi-use trail along western side of Benedict Ave
- Multi-use trail connections to Shady Lane Dr and Executive Dr
- Secondary signage on west side of Benedict Ave with wayfinding along multi-use trail

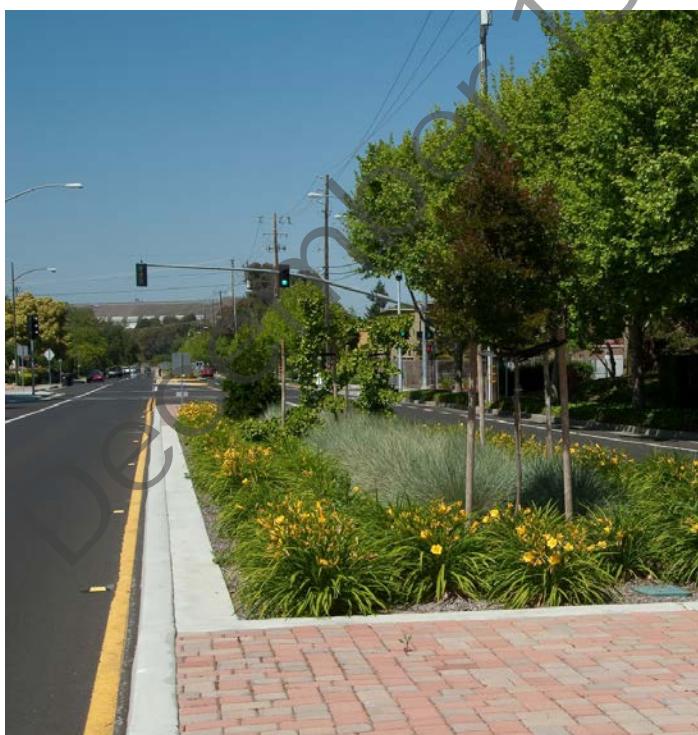




Section of North District



Character Images



2

SIGNAGE AND GATEWAY

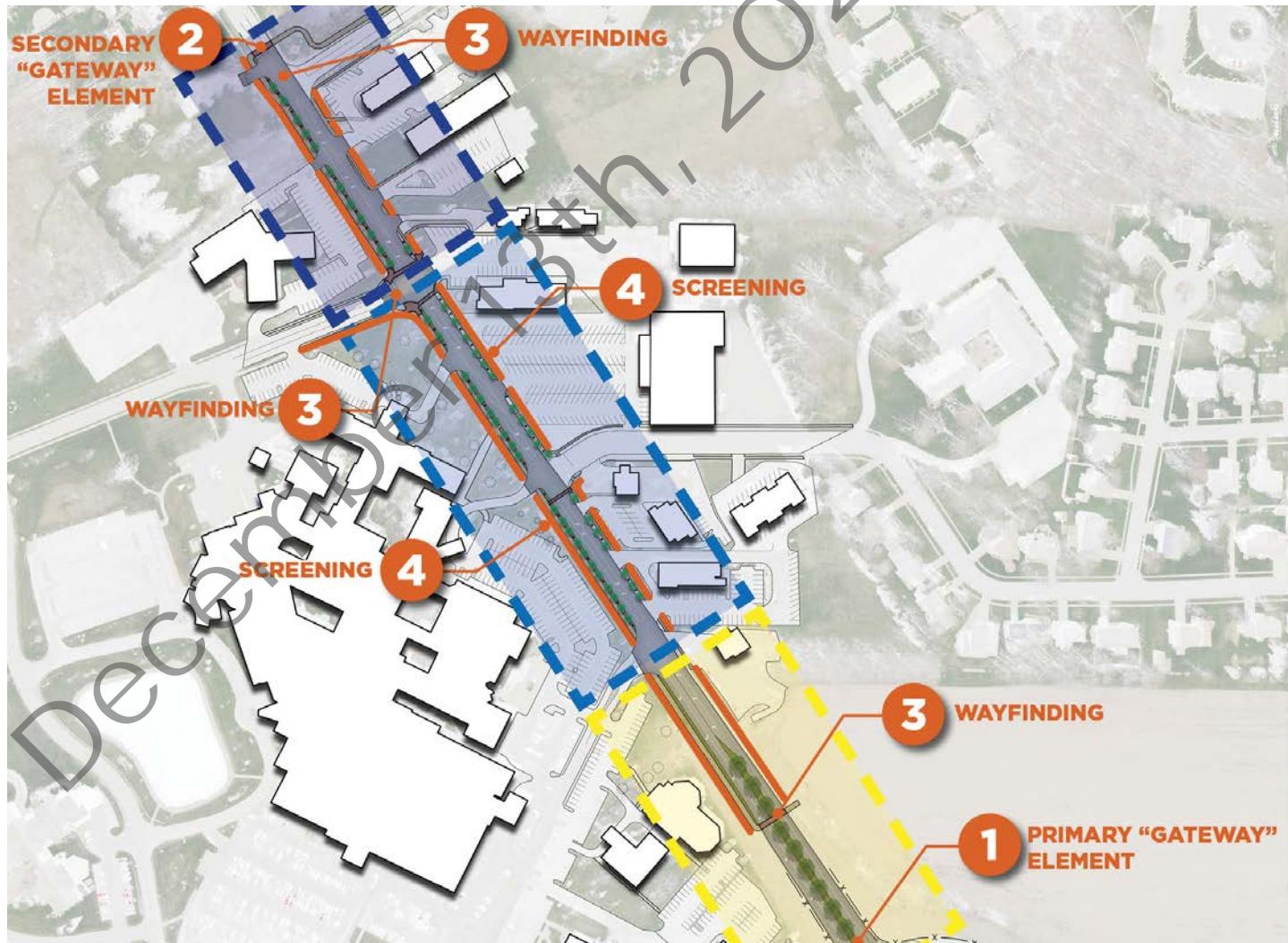
Overview

Signage and wayfinding is an important element in streetscape design and adds a sense of place and arrival that enhances the experience for residents and visitors. This priority project utilizes primary and secondary gateway features, wayfinding elements, screening placed along the sidewalks and proposed shared use path, and interchange gateway concepts.

Next Steps

- City to approve/adopt the area plan
- Conduct detail design of gateway signs
- Identify fundings sources public and private, and bid signs for construction

Signage and Gateway Location Map





Four different signage designs were produced to create an identity for the district with a distinct system of hierarchy. Upon arrival in the district, the first interaction occurs with the primary and secondary gateway elements. These signs are intended to welcome residents and visitors. The brick and metal materials used in the design were taken from other elements in the City of Norwalk - particularly downtown - as Benedict Avenue is a main thoroughfare to the heart of the city.

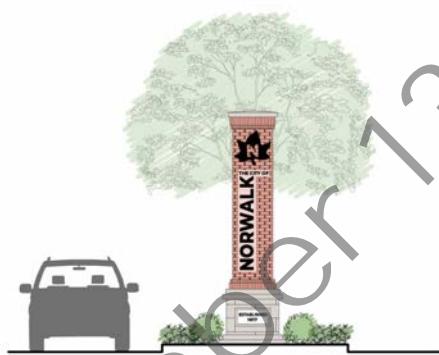
After passing the main gateway features, residents and visitors continue to encounter signage elements that further instill the identity of the district. Well-designed wayfinding signs strategically placed at intersections along Benedict Avenue give visitors a better understanding of where they are within the district as well as the city.

The wayfinding signs - designed to include the city emblem - utilize arrows to indicate the direction of key destinations or amenities throughout the area.

The last signage feature included in the hierarchy is a screening element that runs along the length of most of Benedict Avenue in the district. Designed to create a more consistent and attractive appearance while drawing attention away from surface lots, the screening is made of vertical rods with the city logo centered between two brick columns. To provide more diversity in visuals, areas of foliage are interspersed along the continuous run of screening elements.

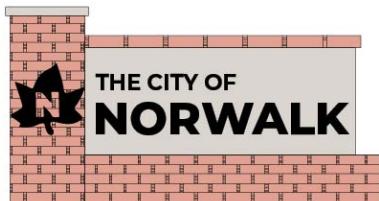
1

Primary “Gateway” Element



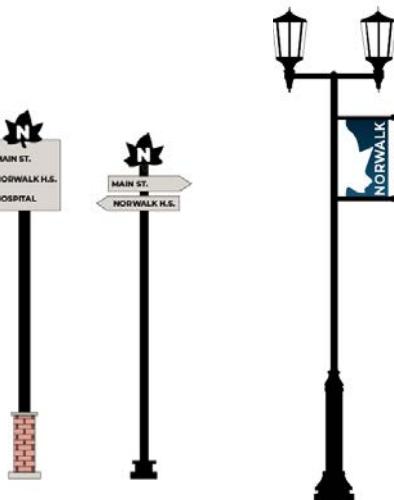
2

Secondary “Gateway” Element



3

Wayfinding & Lighting



4

Screening



Interchange Gateways

One of the most important elements in the design of the Benedict Avenue District is changes proposed at the interchange. Travelers on US-20, also known as the Norwalk Bypass, currently see an ordinary highway interchange. No unique elements indicate the City of Norwalk might be worthy of a stay.

In this design concept, planting enhancements were used to create a more intentional gateway into the community. With well-landscaped planting options, the Benedict Avenue interchange could transform into a perennial attractive element for the city.

The placement of appealing red maples along the exits and entrances of the interchange leans into Norwalk's alternative moniker, the Maple City. In the fall these trees turn a beautiful red hue, creating a memorable gateway feature.



Showy Wildflower Mix



Maple Leaf Viburnum

The maple leaf viburnum and low-mow lawn create a more natural scene that enhances the picturesque feeling that the red maples attempt to invoke.

The low-mow lawn also provides the city a small savings on time and labor with less cutting-time maintenance required. In addition, the selection of a wildflower mix to fill natural spaces between the shrubs and trees gives the interchange a fuller feel, plus adds elements of beautification that enhance the overall gateway experience.

A large gateway signage element will also compliment the interchange planting recommendations. This concept is discussed in further detail in the next portion.



'October Glory' Red Maple



Low-Mow Lawn



Proposed Interchange Concept



Interchange Gateway Signage

The final element of the signage design concept is the largest gateway feature included in this priority project. As shown to the right, two concepts were produced.

One design incorporates more metal, proposing that the main signage feature be made entirely of metal. This would create a large contrast to the natural planting elements around it, ensuring visitors' eyes be drawn to the gateway signage.

The second design is made entirely of brick, giving this concept a more classical feel. Incorporating a similar design and materials as the on-street gateway element on Benedict Avenue, this concept encourages the idea of design cohesion and consistency across the district.

Both design options serve as good options for the City of Norwalk and the district as well. As previously noted, these gateway features are critical to ensure that visitors and residents understand the significance of the district.

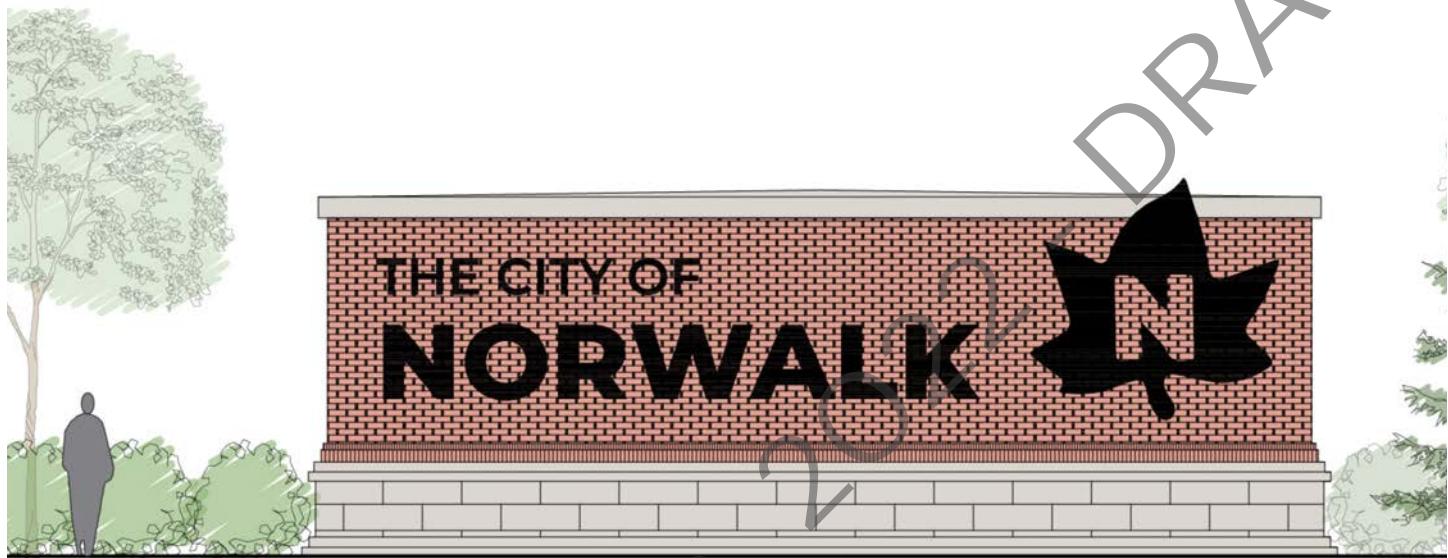
Below are character images that showcase similar intent and designs sought after for the Benedict Avenue District gateway concepts. The sign near Norwalk welcoming visitors to Lake Erie was a particular inspiration voiced by the members of the steering committee.

Character Images

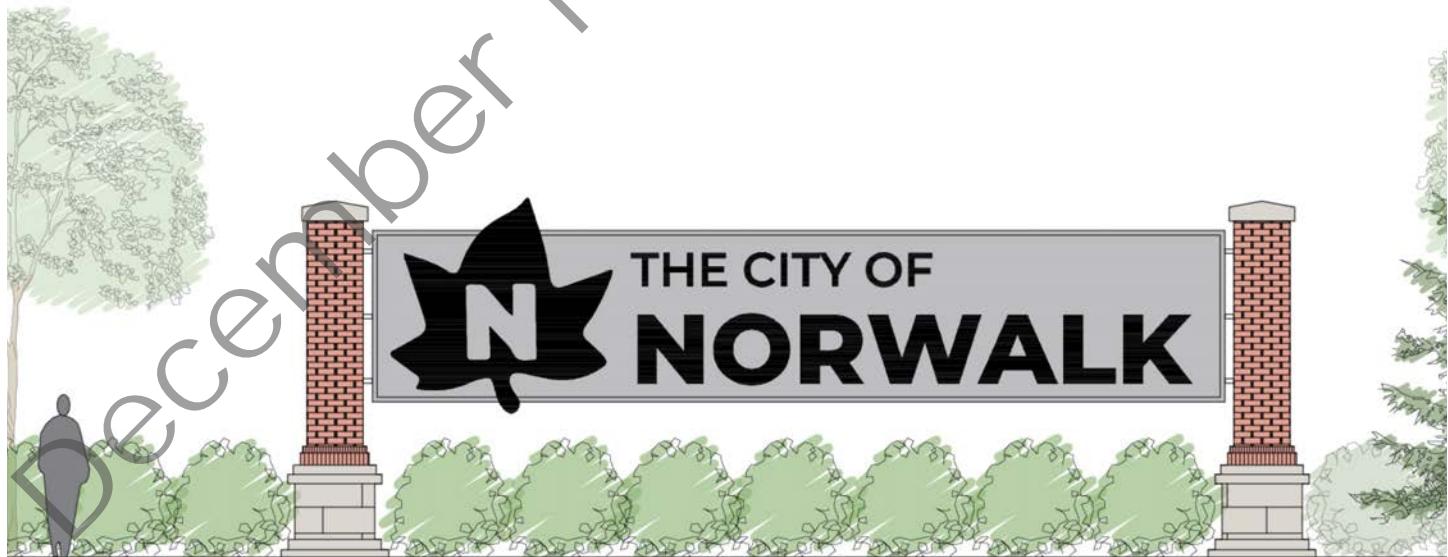




Option 1



Option 2



3

EAST SUB-DISTRICT

Overview

The third priority project is the East Sub-District development. This design concept is not intended to be exact instruction for developers currently holding possession of the land to the east of Benedict Avenue, rather it is meant to give private developers ideas for the City of Norwalk's objectives for this open land.

Through the assistance of the steering committee and OHM Advisors team of expert urban planners and designers, a concept was created that aims to meet the demand for this area.

Mixed Residential

The graphic to the right shows parcels imagined for the first phase of development in the East Sub-District. This design recommends implementation of medium-density residential development, allowing for an increase in diverse housing stock for people to live in the district and in Norwalk. Additionally, this orientation of residential development is intended to attract a different, younger, demographic to live within the city.

By providing commercial outparcels that line the edge of Benedict Avenue, this concept ensures that the area has consistent commercial land use along the east side of the avenue. Uses for these outparcels can range from a marketplace, dentist office, or any other commercial land use fitting the character of the district and aligning with the newest land use map. To keep the design concept as attainable as possible, the sub district is only designed for phase one. There are three additional parcels east of the proposed development site. The recommendation for these parcels is to provide city infrastructure (roads, sewer, etc.) to prime the area for future development while deferring design concepts to avoid overwhelming developers at this time.

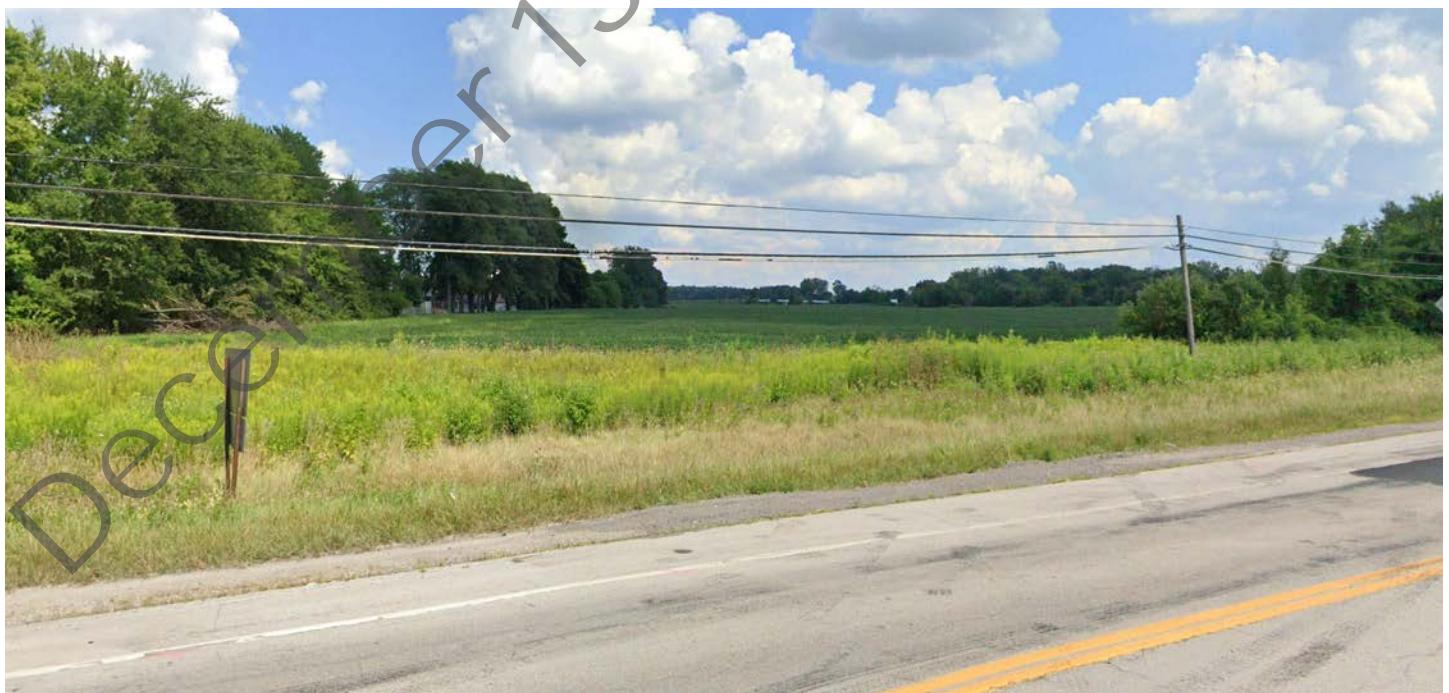
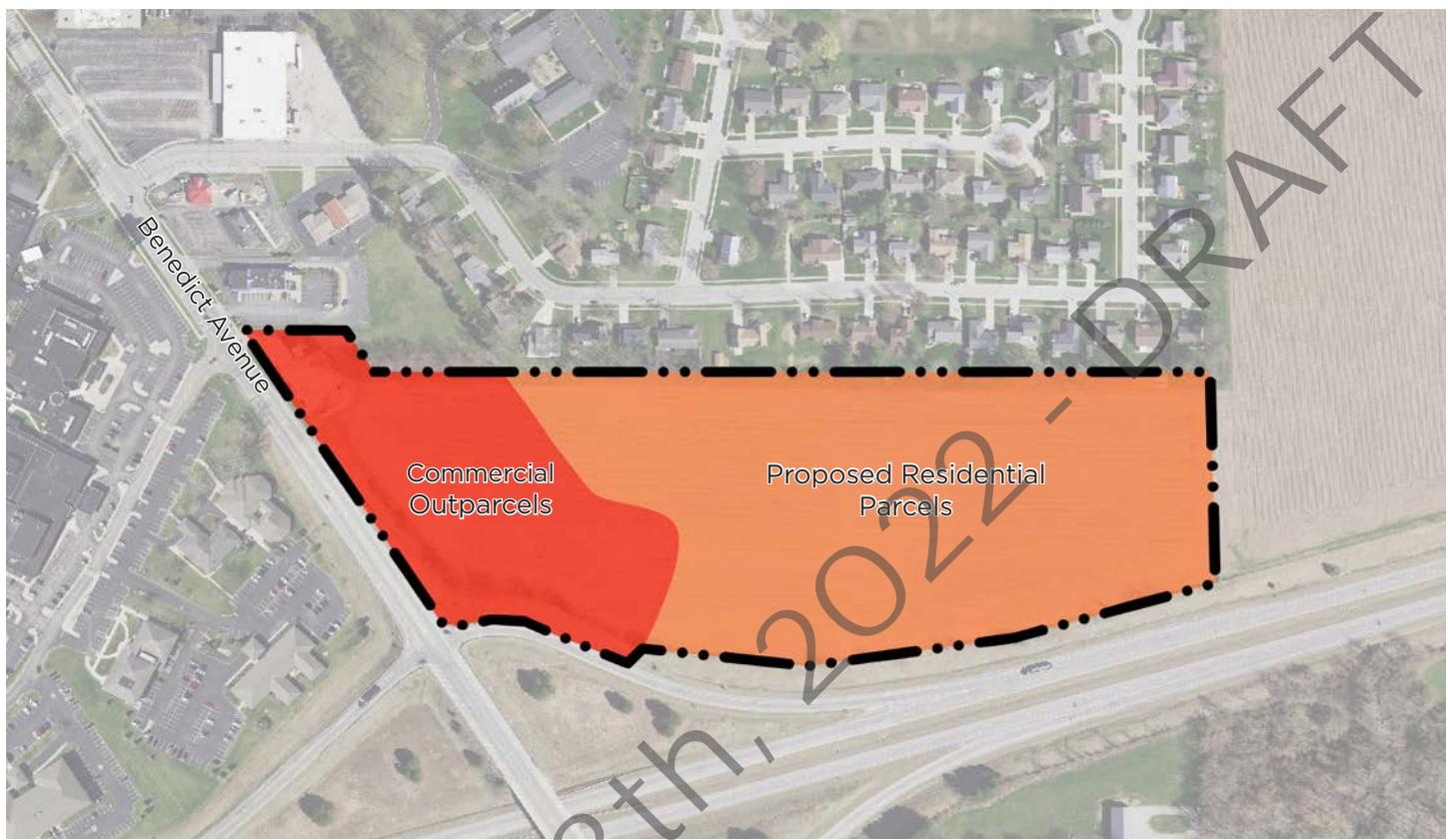
Constructing newly built streets through the remaining three parcels in the sub district provides connectivity to the reservoir to the northeast for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The primary aim of the East Sub-District concept is to provide the Benedict Avenue District with more residential space and an opportunity to develop open land. Utilizing a combination of good design with foresight, this project can help ensure the development at the gateway of the Norwalk community is desired, attractive, and practical.

Next Steps

- City to approve/adopt the area plan
- Currently Zoned as R-1 or Single family residential, the proposed development is unallowed by the zoning
- The City of Norwalk should go forward with the land use plan so that they can create an entirely new zoning district for the Benedict Avenue District. This would allow for uses that are outlined for the East Sub-District

East Sub-District



Street view of the sub-district on Benedict Avenue

4

NON-MOTORIZED CONNECTIVITY

Overview

In its current condition, the Benedict Avenue District has a great opportunity to provide better pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure. Wide streets, narrow sidewalks, and fast-moving traffic all contribute to this uninviting environment for non-motorized traffic.

This section aims to explain how the improvement of non-motorized connectivity in the district will enhance quality of life and create benefits to the economy. In addition, an increase in convenient routes to walk and bike could reduce the level of vehicular traffic in the district, especially for students who have the choice to walk or bike to school.

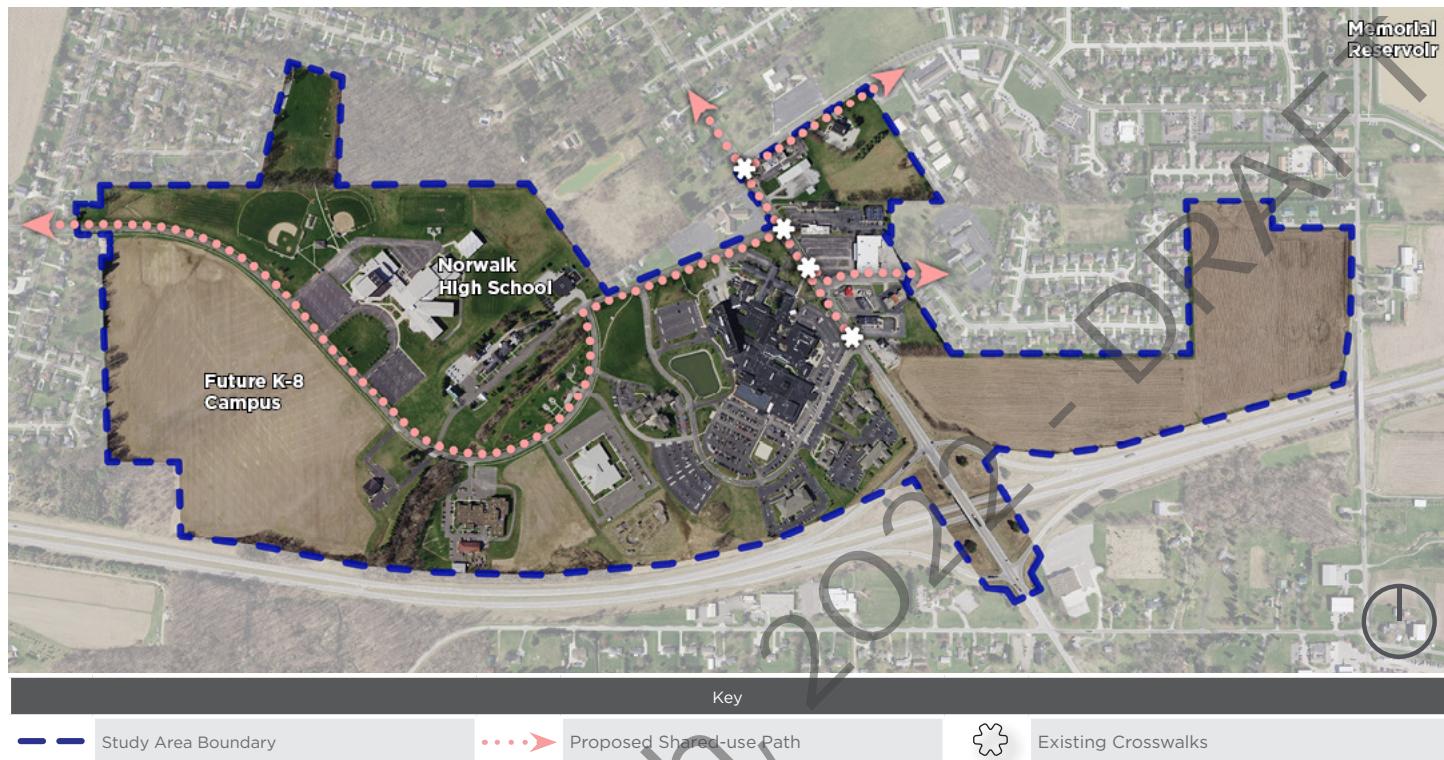
Next Steps

- City to approve/adopt the area plan
- Conduct preliminary engineering on multi-use paths and prepare cost estimates
- Identify funding sources and integrate project into the City's CIP Plan



Existing sidewalks on Shady Lane Avenue

Proposed sidewalk to shared-use path conversion



Existing Facilities and Shared-use Path Conversion

Sidewalks are present throughout the district as shown on the map above. The existing infrastructure is centered around the hospital property and travels outward through the district.

The current four feet wide sidewalks are unable to hold more than two pedestrians traveling side by side and therefore can be restrictive to bicyclists. Additionally, with no measures in place to adequately protect those riding on the street, the district could be deemed as not a safe for biking. There are currently four main crosswalks in the district, all of which span Benedict Avenue. Three of these are located at traffic signals, and one is a pedestrian activated crosswalk placed at the frontage of the hospital.

The proposed development in the East-Sub District also would supplement and encourage the district to improve the overall non-motorized network. With an anticipated increase in residential development in the area, the demand for a walkable and bikeable environment will increase.

It is recommended that the existing sidewalks be converted to share-use paths in order to accommodate the anticipated increase in demand while also expanding the existing network. The following page of this section identifies those recommended new paths to be constructed.

Proposed Shared-Use Path

Since the district has limited on-street capacity for vehicular traffic and the proposed streetscape design, the best option for improved non-motorized connectivity is to widen existing sidewalks and created shared-use paths.

The green lines shown on the map to the right indicate future shared-use paths to be constructed by the city and school system. It is recommended that a shared-use path be created through the East Sub-District development. This new path would allow for intentional non-motorized connectivity to the memorial reservoir for recreational purposes.

An additional new path identified by the steering committee would be located behind and to the north of the high school. This route would provide better non-motorized access to students walking or biking to school from neighborhoods around Christie Avenue and Norwood Avenue.

The proposed shared-use path shown in blue on the map indicates construction to be completed by entities other than the city or school district.



Shared use path in Portland, OR



Shared use path in Ridgeland, MS



Shared use path in South Lake Tahoe, CA



Shared use path in Skokie, IL

Proposed shared-use path construction by the city



Proposed shared-use path construction by other property owners



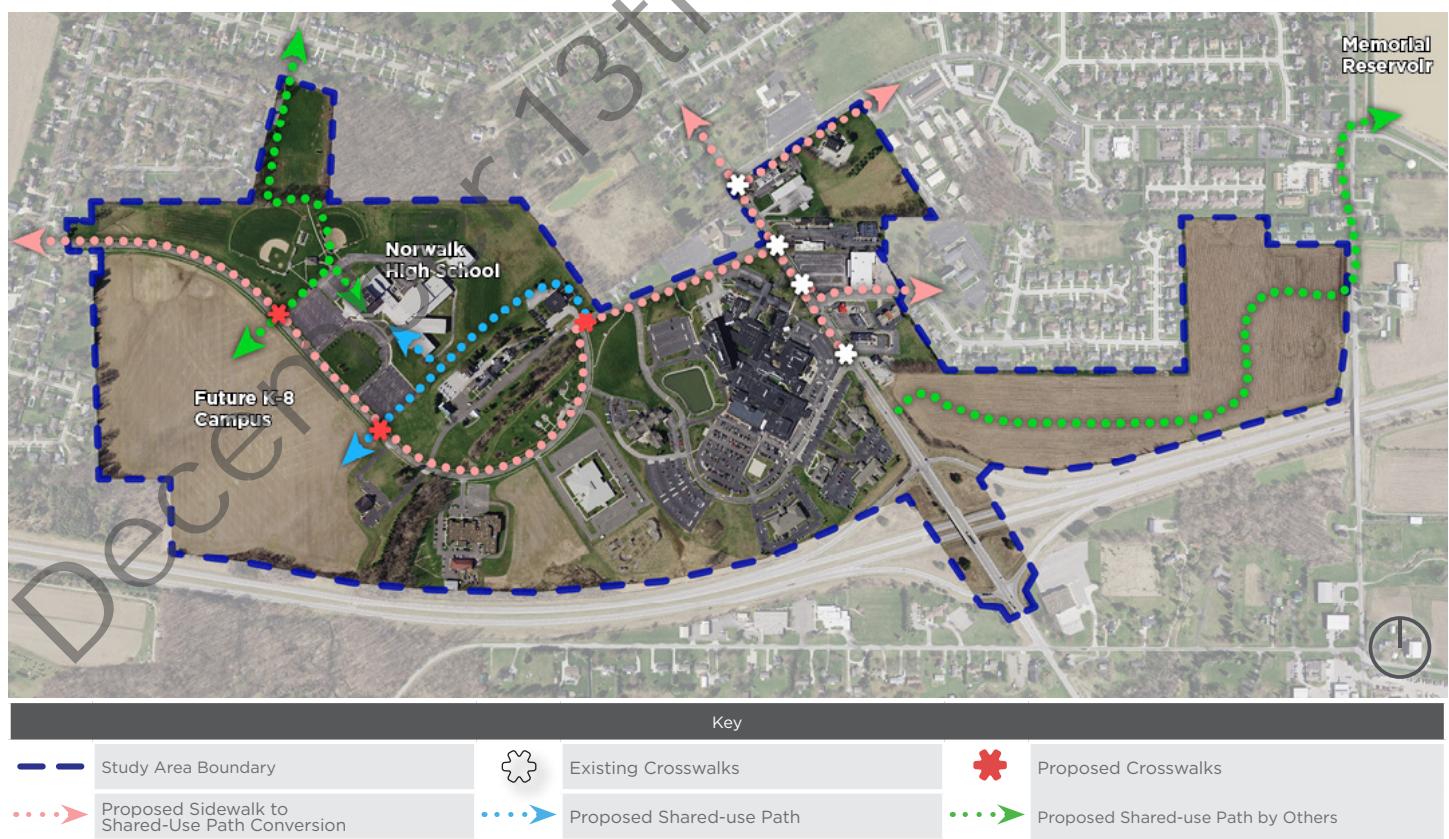
Improved Connectivity

The Benedict Avenue District can benefit greatly from improved non-motorized shared-use connectivity. The map below identifies current and proposed connectivity throughout the district and highlights the ease of which pedestrians and bicyclists could travel.

A study conducted in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has shown that investing in shared-use paths does not only add to the attractiveness of the area, but also increases the overall economy within the district.

The proposed residential development east of Benedict Avenue, and plans for a future middle school campus across from the current high school will only increase the demand for accessible shared-use paths for walking and biking within the district.

Non-motorized connectivity plan



This project will bring the future to the present, to advance Norwalk and create a blueprint for change!

December 13, 2022 DRAFT

December 13th, 2022 - DRAFT

Benedict Avenue District Plan

City of Norwalk

2022