



**SEYMOUR MASTER  
ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**FINAL REPORT**

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SEYMOUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

COMMISSION

AND

SEYMOUR MEDP STEERING COMMITTEE

JUNE 2007

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In recent years, Seymour's population has grown faster than the population in the state and county. The town's growth is attributable to a number of factors. Seymour is within easy commuting distance to large employment centers located in Fairfield County, yet its housing costs are significantly less than Fairfield County suburbs. More affordable housing combined with Seymour's strong school system, excellent library, active sports leagues, and scenic parks have made it a particularly attractive location in which to live and raise a family. Seymour's emerging identity as a "family friendly community" has been facilitated by the addition of roughly 700 new housing units built in the past decade. Over two-thirds of these units are detached, single-family dwellings.

With growth, however, has come pressure for change. New residents seek service and retail amenities the town currently lacks. As older, industrial buildings turn over, developers see potential for mixed use retail and housing complexes. Increases in population clog roadways and worsen traffic. These conditions put pressure on the town to upgrade roads, highways, and infrastructure. And, the town's heavy reliance on its residential tax base puts pressure on officials to find new ways to build and accommodate commercial uses in town. These and other issues create new challenges for Seymour and require a new plan for growth.

In the late fall of 2006, the town and its appointed Economic Development Commission embarked upon a process that led to this report of the Seymour Master Economic Development Plan. The plan's goal is to balance many of these competing forces and to guide the town's development over the next decade.

The town formed a Master Economic Development Plan (MEDP) Steering Committee to oversee and manage the MEDP process. The town also selected the consulting team of Mt. Auburn Associates, Inc. and Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates (PPSA) to guide and conduct research for the plan.

Over seven months, culminating in June 2007, the consulting team met with dozens of town officials and business leaders. It held forums with downtown merchants and residents. The team also analyzed data and assessed the competitive position of Seymour's economic assets and resources. For its part, the Steering Committee continued meeting with the consulting team throughout the seven months, reviewed and digested the findings, and prioritized and developed next steps for the plan.

All of these steps and activities are the basis for the final recommendations of the Master Economic Development Plan. The MEDP recommendations enable the Town of Seymour to seek economic growth that is sustainable and contributes to a balanced fiscal environment. They are prioritized so that the town can work to build professional capacity, leadership, and resources to support their implementation. They are also balanced to yield some quick results while also setting the stage for longer term priorities.

The first part of the recommendations, or the first phase, builds a foundation of leadership for town economic development. Recommendations include:

- creation of a transition team to maintain the momentum and leadership of the Master Economic Development Plan for the next four to six months;
- definition of a “go forward” structure to integrate varied town officials, commission members, and business leaders under a cohesive system of economic development leadership; and
- formation of economic development staff capacity to support the leadership.

In the second phase, the recommendations enable the town to identify and act on a few early-stage projects. These are high impact, highly visible economic development priorities that are critical to the town’s economic future, will build support for the plan, and can demonstrate early success. These early-stage options include:

- leading and directing the redevelopment of New Haven Copper by rezoning the site from GI-2 to commercial, investigating environmental remediation needs, identifying first uses, and issuing a developer’s Request for Proposal (RFP);
- creating a promotional package to recruit downtown tenants using market data from this study and recruiting a downtown restaurant as an anchor development; and/or
- designing an economic development training program for the town’s locally-elected officials and appointed members of boards and commissions to begin a customer-focused planning and development process.

The third phase recommendations turn the town’s attention to longer-term economic development priorities. These recommendations cover a number of critical areas identified by the Steering Committee, Economic Development Commission, town and business leaders, and residents. These recommendations include:

- developing downtown opportunities by improving circulation and design, by creating opportunities for more downtown retail square footage and public space, and by attracting new downtown stores and anchors to complement existing niches;
- renewing planning and development services by updating land use codes to fit the town’s new vision and by equipping town services and departments to better respond to development opportunities;
- increasing business recruitment and retention efforts by bolstering the prospects for build-out and full capacity at Silvermine Industrial Park and by growing micro and small business;
- encouraging development opportunities in the town’s high value corridors of Route 8, Route 67, and the “downtown orbit”; and
- expanding access to the rivers and supporting the goals of the Greenway Trails project.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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The Town of Seymour began a number of new economic development efforts in 2006. One of these efforts, under the direction of the town-appointed Economic Development Commission, was the start of an ambitious planning process to create a blueprint for economic development. This *Master Economic Development Plan* guides the town's development over the next decade.

The town and Economic Development Commission issued a Request for Proposal to several consulting organizations to help carry out the Master Economic Development Plan. These leaders selected the consulting team of Mt. Auburn Associates, Inc. and Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates (PPSA). The town also formed a Master Economic Development Plan (MEDP) Steering Committee to oversee and manage the process.

The planning and research for the Master Economic Development Plan began in November 2006. Over the course of seven months, through June 2007, the consulting team analyzed data, examined the town's economic resources, and held extensive meetings with residents and business leaders. The MEDP Steering Committee and consulting team continued to meet during this time. In all, they met five times with each meeting building from successive stages of findings and planned next steps. At the midpoint of the process, the Economic Development Commission and MEDP Steering Committee hosted a first of its kind town-wide economic forum. More than 100 people attended the event, which included a review of preliminary findings from the consultants and a reading of the results from the town-wide economic development questionnaire.

The following report of the Master Economic Development Plan is the culmination of the consultant involvement in the project. The report is divided into three major chapters: the economic and market profile; the town's economic development assets, challenges, and opportunities; and the final strategic recommendations to move forward with the MEDP.

The first chapter, the economic and market profile, is an assessment of the town's demographic trends and its relative concentration and strength in industry and business. The chapter also includes an analysis of Seymour's retail and commercial markets and an assessment of the town's major commercial corridors (downtown, the area surrounding downtown, Route 8, and Route 67).

The second chapter is a competitive review of the town's major economic development assets. Here, we detail the challenges and opportunities that go along with each asset. These assets include the town's civic leadership and professional development capacity, its geographic location, downtown and commercial corridors, river access, industrial parks, developable land, and land use and zoning policies.

The final chapter is the strategic recommendations to carry forth a Master Economic Development Plan. These recommendations are built on the research and planning process outlined above. This chapter includes phases of activity that the town can pursue to meet its short and long term goals for economic development.

## 2.0 ECONOMIC AND MARKET PROFILE

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The following chapter contains two sections. The first is the overview of the town's demographic and economic base. This is an examination of major trends in Seymour's population, labor force, and business and industrial base. The second section is a market overview of the town's retail and office space, and, more specifically, an analysis of demand and supply factors affecting the downtown and major retail and commercial corridors.

When available, the consulting team used the latest Seymour specific data for these analyses. At times, however, data sources for a relatively small town like Seymour are limited, or the data are based on samples that are projections or estimates. One example of these data limitations is the information publicly available for Seymour-based businesses. State and federal data collection regulations restrict most detailed business and employment data in order to protect the confidentiality and competitive position of businesses in the town. Another example is the demographic and occupational data covering Seymour residents. While often the best and most reliable source of demographic data is still the 2000 decennial census, much of these data are old. At times, when appropriate and when available, we turned to proprietary data sources to gather more up-to-date information on the town's population and labor trends. These data are often estimates and projections based on economic models.

Also, when appropriate, the demographic and economic profile benchmarks Seymour's relative demographic and economic position against four communities. These "benchmark" communities serve to place the town's relative performance into some context. The benchmark communities are Orange, Southbury, Shelton, and Westport. While instructive for baseline comparative purposes, the reader should not construe these benchmark communities as perfect or ideal matches. The four towns were selected under the direction of Seymour's Economic Development Commission.

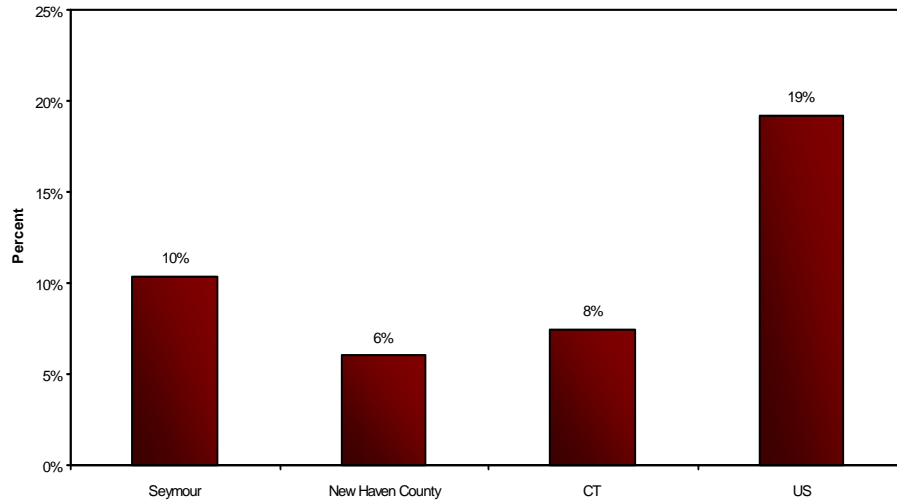
### DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC BASE OVERVIEW

#### Population and Labor Force

Seymour is a growing town. Its population has increased over the last 15 years and its supply of labor has also grown. In addition, a number of other data sources document a surge of newcomers to the town as well as its growing connection to the Fairfield County and greater metro New York markets. All of these trends point to an emerging consumer demand for retail and commercial services in the town.

Between 1990 and 2005, Seymour's population jumped 10 percent, from 14,228 in 1990 to the latest estimate of 15,764 in 2005. This rate of population growth is faster than the county and state but, much like the rest of the northeast, slower than the nation as a whole. (See Chart.)

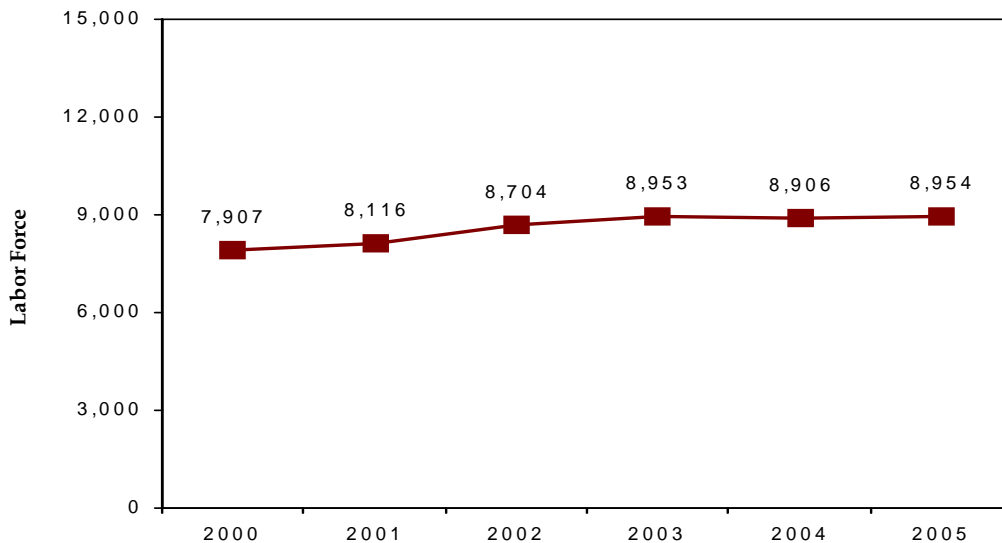
### Population Change 1990-2005



Source: U.S. Census, DPH

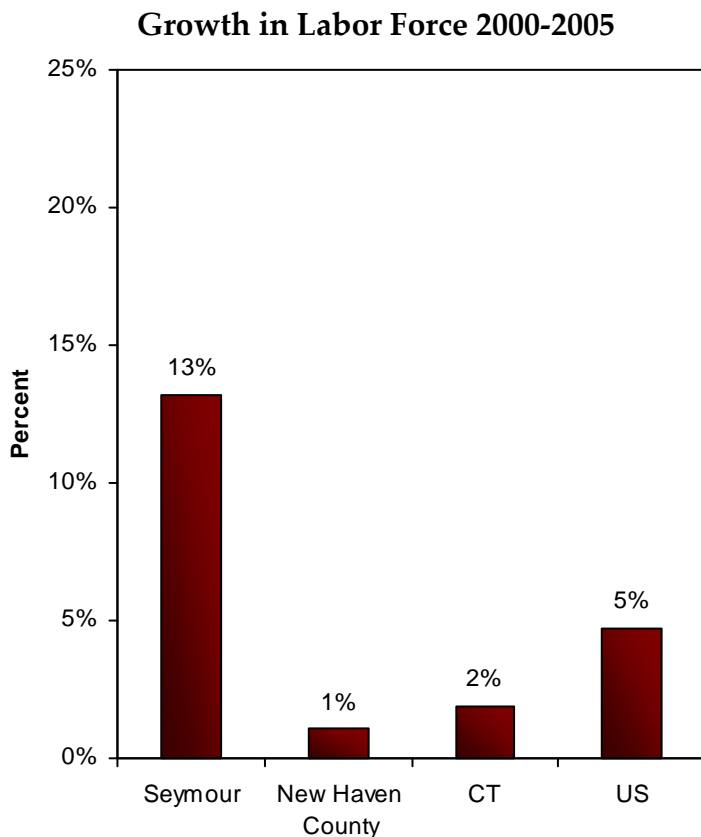
In addition to population growth, the Town of Seymour has also experienced an expansion of its labor force. Between 2000 and 2005, the number of residents working or seeking work increased from 7,907 to 8,954. This is good for business—more workers from which to hire—as well as an indication of a relatively healthy job market. Seymour’s 2006 annual unemployment rate was 4.3 percent. (See Chart.)

### Seymour Labor Force 2000-2005



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

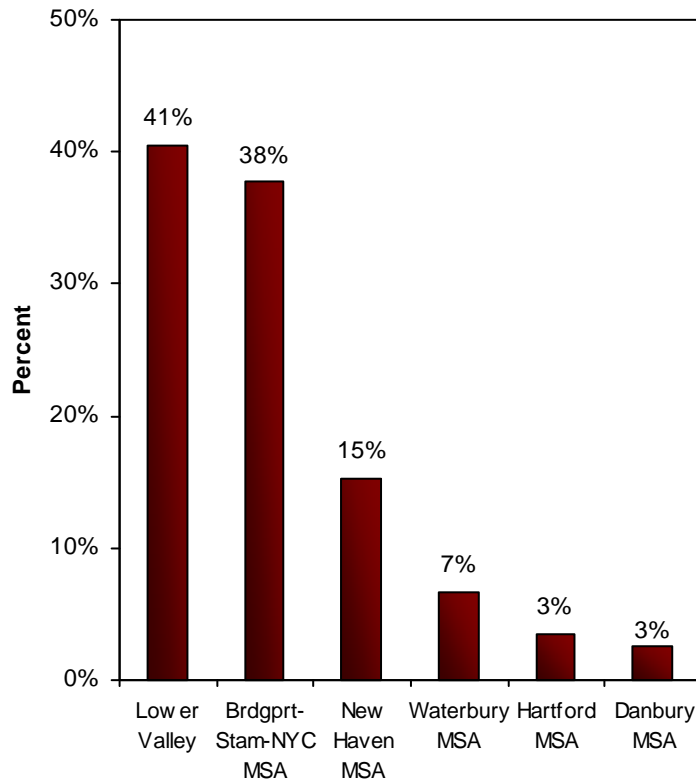
Another sign of Seymour’s relatively healthy demographics is the growth of its labor force. Seymour’s labor force grew by 1,000 people, or 13 percent, between 2000 and 2005. That is faster than the county, state, and U.S. The county’s labor force only grew by 1 percent during this same time, the state by 2 percent and the U.S. by 5 percent. (See Chart.)



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

One indication of the town’s increasing connection to the Fairfield County and greater New York markets is the commuting patterns of its residents. The vast majority of the town’s labor force commutes south, with more than 78 percent of town workers finding jobs in the Lower Valley or points south and southwest. About 40 percent of Seymour’s residents find work in the Lower Valley (Seymour, Ansonia, Derby, or Shelton). Almost as many residents in Seymour find work in the Bridgeport-Stamford metro areas and New York City.

## Destination of Seymour's Labor Force 2000



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Journey to Work Statistics

The migration patterns and growth pressures from the bursting “gold coast” of Fairfield County, reported in numerous studies on the region, also indicate a blurring of job and labor markets across the region. Many of the new workers living in Seymour are New York or Fairfield County transplants seeking a lower cost of living. They keep their jobs in the southwest corridor of Connecticut and greater New York metro while moving to Seymour and commuting longer distances.<sup>1</sup>

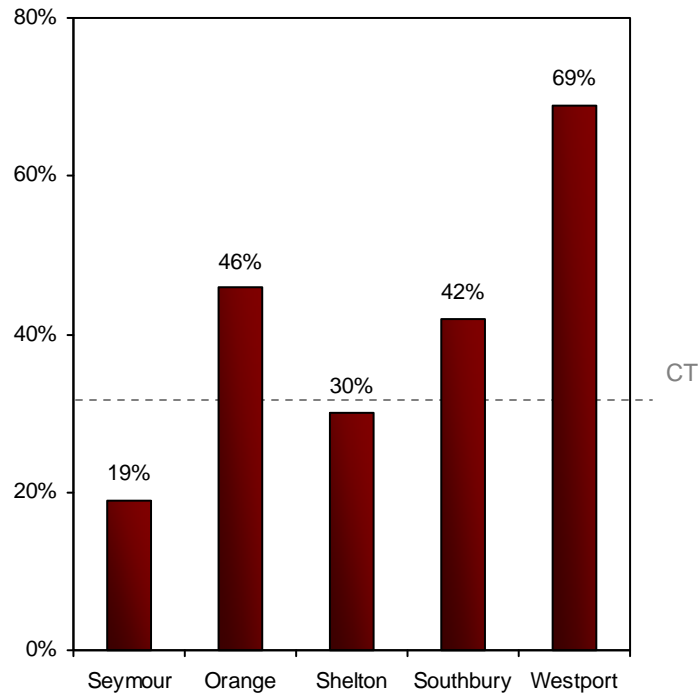
### Worker Skills and Educational Attainment

Workers with good skills are highly sought after in the knowledge-based economy. While the town has some catching up to do in the educational attainment of its resident base, some data point to areas of educational improvement and even occupational strength in the town's existing and emerging workforce.

<sup>1</sup> See *Housing the Workforce: An Assessment of Housing in the All American Valley*, Economic & Policy Resources, Inc., et. al, for the Lower Naugatuck Valley Regional Housing Coalition, February 2004. *Report on Progress: Valley Needs and Opportunities*, Mt. Auburn Associates, for the for the Community Foundation of Greater New Haven and the Valley Advisory Committee, 2004. *The MTA: CT's Link to MetroNY and Fairfield County's Competitive Edge*, Prepared for the Business Council of Fairfield County, 2003.

Data show that the town's resident base historically has not had a high level of formal education. Unfortunately, the most accurate data to show Seymour's relative position in this regard is the 2000 decennial census. Those data show that the percentage of the adult population with at least a bachelor's degree is low. In 2000, 19 percent of Seymour residents earned a four-year college degree or more.<sup>2</sup> The statewide average was 31 percent. (See Chart.)

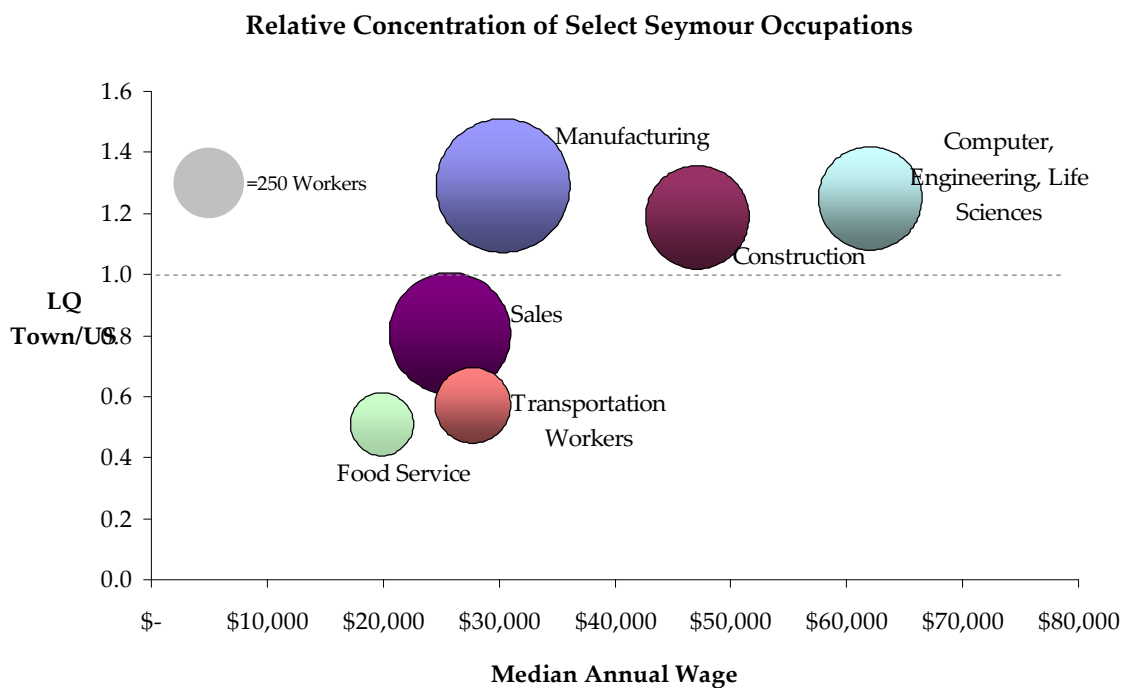
### Residents 25 years and older with Bachelor's Degree or More, 2000



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

<sup>2</sup> With the changing demographics in the town and a more concerted push in the schools for younger residents to pursue college, the town's relative position along this indicator may be improving but not captured in the 2000 data.

Even though this somewhat limited data show that town residents as a whole do not have high levels of formal education, residents do have particular occupational strengths and skills that match the growing demands of high-technology industries in the state and region. This location quotient chart,<sup>3</sup> a tool used in economic development to measure relative occupational strength, shows the town has a particular concentration of workers in the computer, engineering, and life sciences fields. These workers with high wages and high skills are key contributors to the regional economy's high-technology manufacturing base.<sup>4</sup> The town also has a relatively high concentration of manufacturing workers and construction workers. (See Chart.)

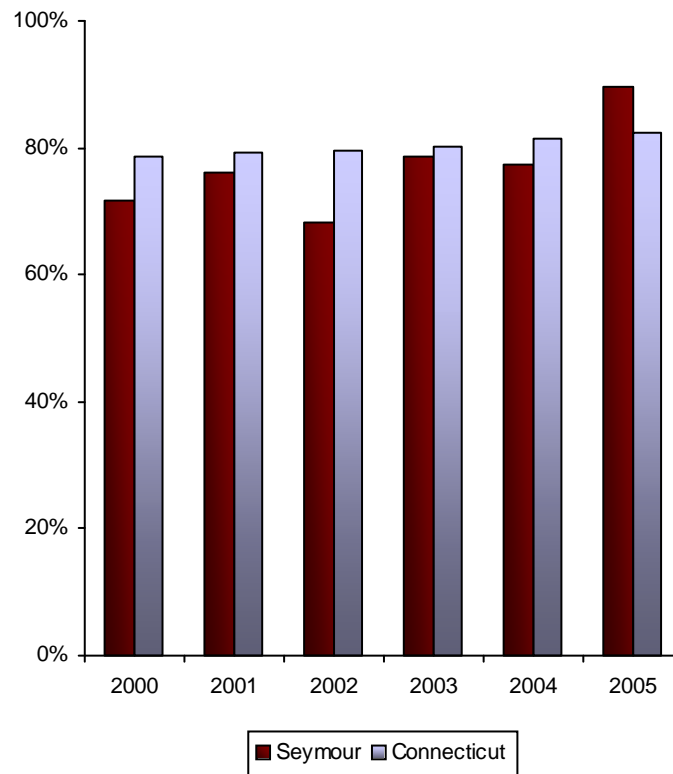


Source: CT DOL, Occupational Wage & Employment, 2005, US Census Bureau, 2000.  
Analysis and Chart by Mt. Auburn Associates.

<sup>3</sup> How to read the chart: Each bubble above the baseline of 1.0 along the Y-axis indicates occupational groups of relatively high concentration. The larger size of the bubble indicates the absolute number of residents in the occupational grouping and the scale along the X-axis identifies the median annual wage of the occupational grouping.  
<sup>4</sup> See our analysis of the business base later in this section, as well as the 2006 annual update of the Naugatuck Valley Corridor Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

There are more positive signs when looking at the town's emerging workforce. More of the town's graduating high school students are going on to higher education. Since 2000, the share of high school completers entering two- or four-year colleges and universities has risen from 72 percent to 90 percent. Moreover, with the graduating class of 2005, the percentage of completers going on to further their education has surpassed the statewide average for the first time. (See Chart.)

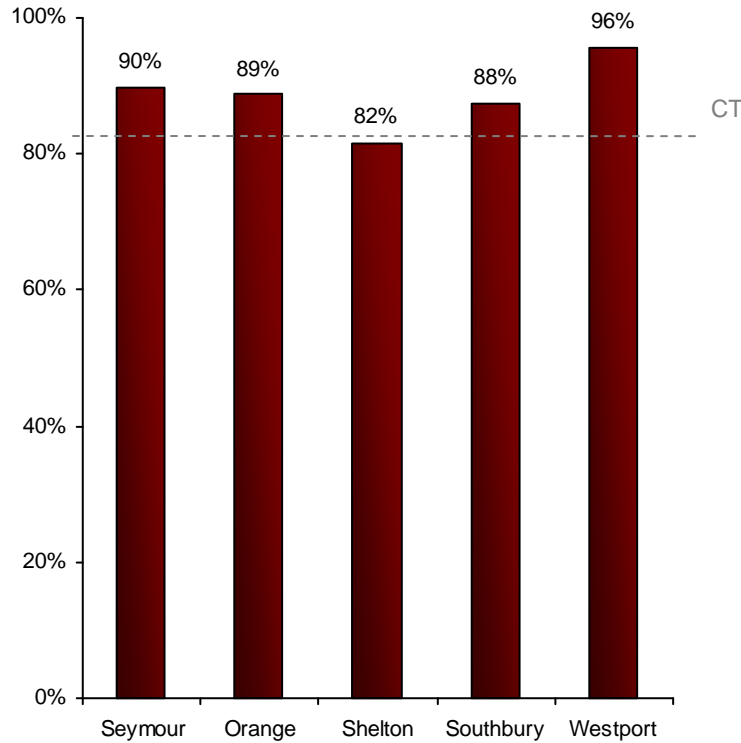
**Percentage of HS Completers Entering  
2- or 4-Year Colleges and Universities,  
Class 2000-2005**



Source: Connecticut Department of Education

Relative to the benchmark communities chosen for this study, the town's Class of 2005 completers also outperformed all but one of its peer groups. (See Chart.)

### Percentage of Class of 2005 HS Completers Entering 2 or 4-Year Colleges and Universities



Source: Connecticut Department of Education

## Business and Industrial Base

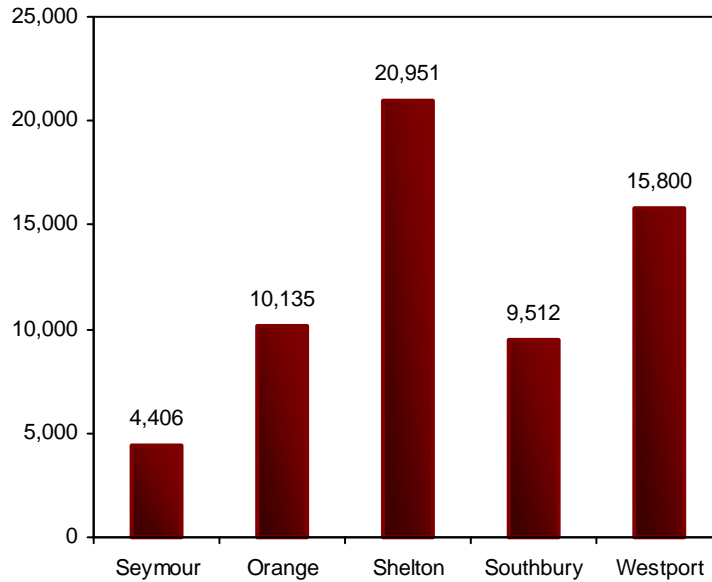
The town has a relatively small business and industrial base. That small base affects not only job opportunities in town, but also the town's taxable real estate, or grand list—a listing of all taxable real estate parcels and business personal property within the town limits.

In 2005, Seymour-based businesses generated 4,400 jobs. The biggest employer in town is the Kerite Company. It employs 180 workers today, down from a peak of 400 about 20 years ago. Other large employers in the town are Connecticut Basement Systems, Thule, Inc. of Sweden, Shady Knoll Health Care, RAF Electronic Hardware, Microboard Processing, and Super Stop & Shop.

The town's overall job base is relatively small. In comparison, the town of Orange has twice as many jobs as Seymour, even though it is roughly equivalent in size of its land

area and population. Moreover, the Town of Seymour has a smaller job base than all of the benchmark communities used in this report. (See Chart.)

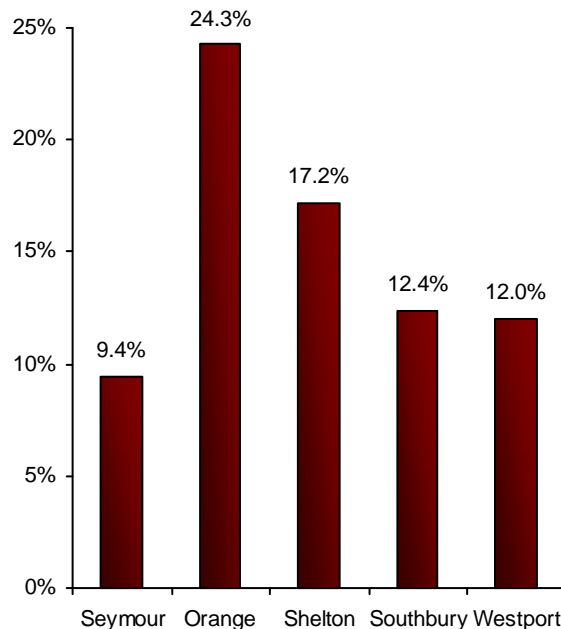
### Total Jobs by Town, 2005



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Covered Employment and Wages

The town also has the smallest proportion of its grand list generated from commercial and industrial land. Less than 10 percent of the town's grand list is commercial and industrial, a smaller share than Orange (24.3 percent), Shelton (17.2 percent), Southbury (12.4 percent), and Westport (12.0 percent). (See Chart.)

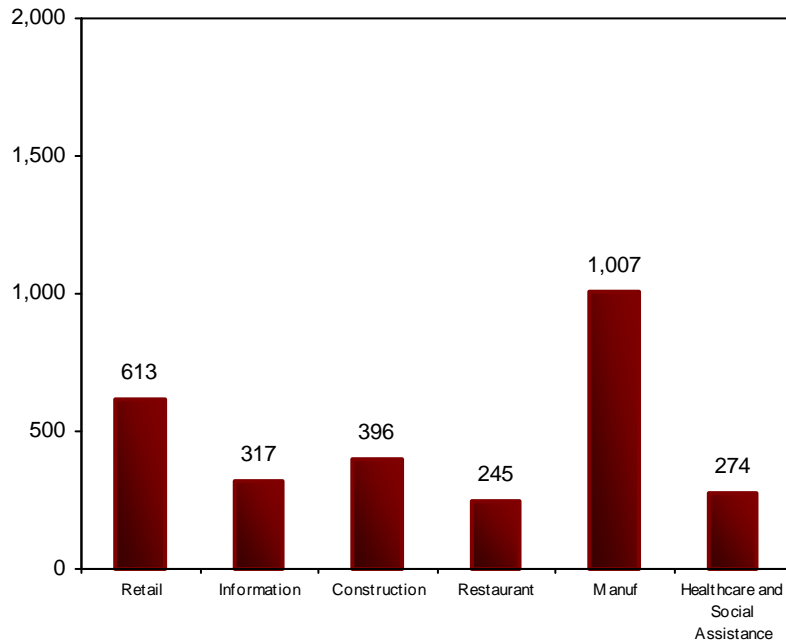
### Percentage of Grand List Commercial/Industrial, 2003



Source: Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, CERC Inc.

The make-up of the town's industrial base relies heavily on manufacturing. Roughly one out of every four jobs among the town's employers is from the manufacturing sector. The next largest sector is retail, and then construction. (See Chart.)

**Seymour Job Base by Key Sectors, 2005**



**Source:** Connecticut Department of Labor, Covered Employment and Wages

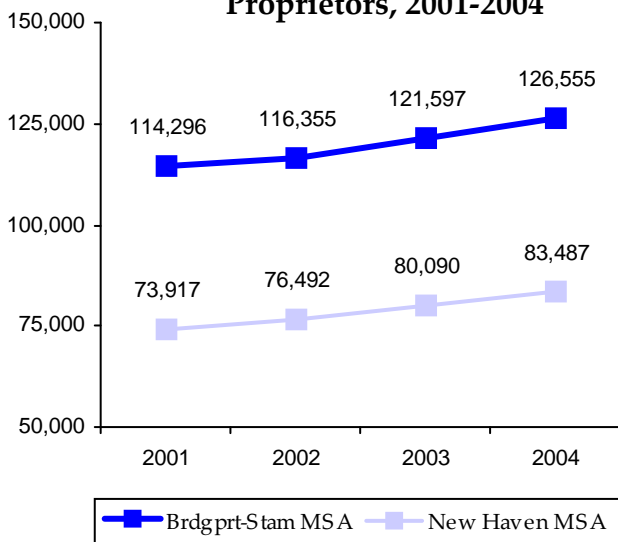
A deeper look at the companies in these sectors shows the town has a reasonably strong base of 20- to 150-person companies that are smaller regional production/distribution hubs or prototyping/job shops. The former type of company serves markets throughout the New York metro area and northeast through a mix of corporate office, production, and distribution functions. Companies such as Connecticut Basement Systems and Thule, Inc. of Sweden represent this part of the segment. The latter type of company provides wiring or electronic components to larger aerospace, metal manufacturing, and homeland security companies in the Bridgeport-Stamford-New York City corridor. These are companies like Microboard Processing and RAF Electronic Hardware. (See Table).

Electronic Component/Production/Distribution Companies*	
Company Name	Nature of Business
Caspari, Inc	Stationery & Related Prod Mfg
J V Precision Machine Co., Inc.	Machine Shops
Precision Aerospace, Inc.	Machine Shops
RAF Electronic Hardware	Precision Turned Prod Mfg
Slickbar Products Corp	Oil & Gas Field Machinery & Equip
Air-Vac Engineering Co.	Air & Gas Compressor Mfg
Kerite Co.	Insulated Wire and Cable
Porta Door Co.	Wood Kitchen Cabinet & Countertop Mfg
Thule, Inc.	Showcases, Partitions, Shelving, & Lockers
Emery Winslow Scale Co.	Other Commercial Equip Merchant Whols
Diversified Electric Svc.	Electric Equip & Wiring Merchant Whols
Microboard Processing, Inc.	Circuit boards

\*Partial list, representative only.

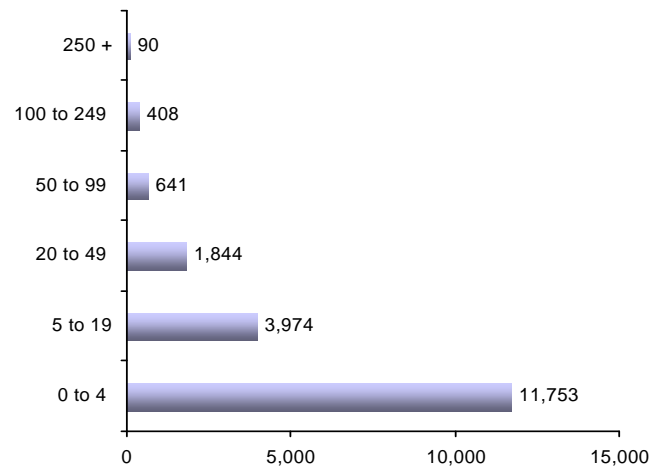
Lastly, the town's job and commercial base is also made up of a growing number of microbusinesses and single-person entrepreneurs. The average size of all businesses in the town is 11 employees. County-wide data, the smallest geographic unit available to get more detailed information on business establishment sizes, show that the vast majority of business establishments have one to four workers. Other data show the number of self-employed sole proprietors is growing. (See Charts.)

**Growth in Self-Employed Proprietors, 2001-2004**



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis

**Business Establishment Size in New Haven County, 2005**



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Covered Employment and Wages. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter

## MARKET OVERVIEW

The market overview analyzes the demand and supply factors for retail and office space in the town. Then, more specifically, the market overview examines the town's four major corridors for retail and commercial development, each with unique potential and challenges. These four corridors include parcels within or near the historic downtown, the downtown orbit (roughly a quarter-mile radius around the traditional downtown), Route 8, and Route 67.

### Retail

The demographic and social characteristics of Naugatuck Valley residents are changing and expected to do so for the next few decades. The population of Valley residents aged 55 and over is expected to increase by approximately 50 percent in the next 20 years, which creates demand for certain types of services and environments (meeting places, pedestrian-friendly shopping). There is also expected to be a continued influx of commuters seeking different residential options (rental housing and starter housing) and consumer choices due to the continued growth of the Fairfield County economy. Finally, there are growing opportunities to capture the spending of “footloose” workers, as entrepreneurship and microbusinesses begin to dominate the job and industrial landscape and self-employed sole proprietors continue to become a growing part of the regional economy. These types of workers often seek more urban amenities and closer proximity to clients and colleagues.

The Lower Valley is located between three major economic regions—Bridgeport, Waterbury, and New Haven. Seymour's place within these regions can be considered a positive because it has access to all three and a negative because of significant retail and commercial competition within close distance. In fact, the competition is substantial. Residents of the town and the valley are able to fulfill their arts and culture needs in New Haven, go to dinner in the Bridgeport area, and comparison shop around Waterbury and increasingly in Derby and Ansonia.

At present, Seymour has a modest retail base. It primarily serves its own residential population, as well as the population just beyond its borders in the neighboring towns. A more detailed retail analysis can be found below in the section that discusses downtown opportunities and challenges.

Most of Seymour's retail focuses on day-to-day shopping needs, such as groceries, drug stores, convenience foods, and other miscellaneous goods and services. Seymour is not currently a retail destination, and generally lacks for comparison goods shopping, such as apparel and sit-down restaurants. This is partly because Seymour is overshadowed by much larger and more varied retail offerings to the south and the growing retail inventory of Naugatuck/Waterbury just to the north.

Population, income, and household characteristics drive demand for retail spending. Seymour's total population (approximately 16,000) and median household income

(estimated at \$57,702 in 2005)<sup>5</sup> suggest that the local population is likely to create a modest amount of demand, mostly for basic services and value-oriented goods.

When surveyed directly, town residents expressed desire for more retail and commercial services. As part of the Economic Development Commission's 2006 survey of residents, 82 percent of respondents said they favor development along the town's commercial corridors as a way to increase shopping, arts, service, and restaurants in the town.<sup>6</sup>

Demand for specialty retail is likely to come from people in more affluent nearby towns, antiquers scouring Route 8 for finds, and, if the demographic trend continues, newcomers to Seymour with Fairfield County incomes. In the end, to capture spending, Seymour will have to offer something beyond convenience. The town requires strategies to create unique and specialized retail and cultural choices within the region.

## Office

The Lower Naugatuck Valley Region is a secondary office market with little Class A space and little corporate presence. Accordingly, the majority of demand is for small, quality space for professional offices and, more and more, light industrial flex space. There is very little Class A space in the regional office market. Rents are generally too low to justify speculative office construction, and the Lower Valley has very little office development at the present time.

Seymour does not offer much room to expand its office inventory. There are essentially two types of potential (non-industrial park) office sites: those in and close to the CBD district (downtown) and those along Route 8. The sites that offer the best combination of highway access, visibility, development potential, and zoning are located in and around the downtown, but the market does not seem to indicate that stand-alone office developments can be built, nor can they currently be considered the highest and best use for downtown area development sites (such as the New Haven Copper site). In the future, low-cost and historic buildings could bear fruit with professional office uses occupying upper floors of mixed-use structures.

Contemporary 21st century industrial operations are increasingly nontraditional and rely upon a mobile workforce and entrepreneurial class that call for the on-site amenities that are associated with higher-density areas, including retail, dining, and hospitality. In the longer-term, Seymour might want to prepare for and pursue a hybrid retail-industrial mixed-use format, in which retail and industrial uses are complementary. This would include today's industries that require proximity to clients, patrons, artisans, collaborators, designers, and so forth, more than availability of low-cost labor and an isolated area in which it can operate with little regard to its surroundings. This new retail-industrial model could include:

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<sup>5</sup> Estimates from Connecticut Economic Resource Center's Economic Development Data and Information (EDDI) system.

<sup>6</sup> The Economic Development Commission survey, administered in the fall of 2006, included a mailing of 7,400 surveys to residents of the town with 1,922 responses, a response rate of 26 percent.

- blends of sales and production (e.g., antiques, artist lofts, fashion designers, artisans, bakers, food production, flower districts, carpentry and woodworking, musical instrument production, etc.);
- blends of office and production (e.g., catering, film-making);
- niches that rely on constant contact with clients (e.g., model design, furniture design, custom metalworking, framing, etc.);
- blends of warehousing and retail (e.g., industries supplying homebuilding supplies like kitchen fixtures and cabinets, light fittings, floor and wall coverings, window treatments, etc.);
- blends of storage and retail (e.g., gallery storage); and
- blends of tourism and industry (e.g., glass blowers, etc.).

These types of uses would be especially appropriate for sites that are in close proximity to both downtown and the interstate highway.

Additional uses that could seek out a non-industrial park locale within Seymour will most likely fall into one of several categories:

- contractors and other industries interested in the possibility of outdoor or minimal shelter storage with no residential neighbors (sites adjoining the highway);
- distributors attracted to a highway location; and
- self-storage facilities, mindful of the potential visibility/accessibility to highway passersby traffic.

Contractors, distributors, and self-storage facilities are somewhat contradictory in that they want the visibility, but not the scrutiny that comes with prominent locations.

## **Downtown**

Our analysis shows that downtown Seymour's trade area includes approximately 60,000 residents with a total spending power of approximately \$1.1 billion. This area is roughly a five-mile radius in size and between a 10- and 15-minute drive for consumers. There is unmet demand in the downtown for niche retail and service categories such as full service restaurants, niche clothing stores, and stores that build off existing strengths in the area. In total, downtown Seymour could add an estimated 25,000 square feet of additional retail in appropriate categories. The following section contains a detailed analysis of demand and supply factors that affect the downtown market and an in-depth analysis of the downtown's trade area and supportable space.

### **Demand Factors**

Downtown is not yet viewed as a destination. It fails to offer the needed assemblages for auto-oriented formats. Options for "Big Box" are essentially foreclosed by development in Derby and especially by land limitations. Strip development along Route 67, the nearby Stop & Shop, and the Walgreens pharmacy foreclose most opportunity for

additional convenience shopping.<sup>7</sup> However, the changing demographics of the region (aging of the population, more home buying commuters, more people seeking pedestrian-friendly options), are creating opportunities for more specialized retailing in and around Seymour's traditional downtown. For example, new housing creates demand for home construction, furniture, and furnishings. Also, an aging population will put a premium on specific services: places to meet friends, informal eateries such as coffee shops, personal banking and hobby shops, and services that downtowns are generally better at providing than shopping malls.

For these reasons, downtown holds significant potential as a historic, civic place that is unique in the valley, the creation of which requires the development of unique specializations. A significant synergy exists between the potential of downtown as a pedestrian-oriented environment and niche retailers that will make it more of a destination for both residents and visitors. A *niche* is a specialization that allows a downtown to gain dominance in certain categories of the retail market. Niche strategies can help a downtown compete in a competitive retail environment, with successful communities often having two or three niches. These communities benefit from an expanded trade area as their specialization often draws customers from more distant communities (see trade area discussion below). Once a niche is established, other businesses are often attracted to the community as they are interested in selling to the same targeted consumer segments.

Some communities have developed a niche focusing on particular goods and services. Examples of niches based on categories of goods and services include:

- Home Furnishings. A cluster of related businesses may include home remodeling, furnishings, and decorative design. Specific businesses might include hardware, floor covering, furniture, lighting and paint stores.
- Antiques. Many small- and medium-sized communities have been successful in attracting numerous antique shops, often in a historic district. These businesses work well together in creating a historical, craft, and hospitality theme.
- Restaurants. Eating places can attract diners from trade area residents, tourists, and downtown employees. In many downtowns, restaurants have become the largest category of retail activity.
- Entertainment and the Arts. Large and small cities across the country have improved downtown retail activity and public image by promoting the arts and entertainment. Cinemas, theater, concerts, ballet, museums, art galleries, craft shops, and clubs all bring local and visitor spending downtown.
- Crafts. Some communities focus on craft-produced houseware items such as furniture, rugs, textiles, ceramics, and glassware.

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<sup>7</sup> Convenience = groceries, hardware, dry cleaning, etc. for which a premium is placed on convenience and proximity.  
Comparison = clothing, furniture, gifts, and other items that can significantly be differentiated by price and quality.

- **Children’s Products.** Some downtowns are successful in this niche by combining stores focusing on children’s clothing, furniture, toys, and family entertainment centers.
- **Food-for-the Home.** This includes specialty foods such as bagels, breads, wines, and cooking items. In some communities, it also includes large grocery stores that serve as an anchor for downtown commercial activity.
- **Jewelry.** While many large cities have a jewelry district, some small towns have their own niche composed of jewelry retailers and service businesses.

In many communities, niches already exist, but simply need to be organized. These niches can grow and become more visible through store expansion, recruitment of new businesses, and cooperative advertising and promotion. Trying to create a new niche can be more challenging than trying to capture an existing niche. While new niches can be very successful, their development often involves risk and large investments from both the public and private sectors. Sometimes, having one niche can be a base for developing another one, since the first already draws a certain type of customer. For example, a downtown with a restaurant niche may draw customers who might utilize entertainment or performing arts facilities.

## **Supply Factors**

While a detailed inventory of retail space in Seymour was not available for this report, the downtown currently has approximately 40,000 to 60,000 square feet of retail. Because of topography and the traditional downtown’s size and character, only selective expansion is possible. Realistically, it can probably grow to approximately 80,000 to 100,000 square feet of retail. (This is only an approximation of capacity, not the amount of unmet, additional retail that might be in demand.)

The downtown does have a charming historic character and fabric. However, the main retailing area suffers from the presence of surface parking lots and some less attractive storefronts and facades. Even still, the retailing area has many attractive buildings and is well-scaled for the pedestrian. Many structures are fine historic examples of mixed-use buildings that should be preserved and marketed for viable uses. The downtown’s small scale allows both visitors and downtown workers to potentially park once and conveniently walk anywhere they might need to go.

Because of the low crime rate, people should be seen on the sidewalks after dark going to such destinations as the Strand Theater, but there is a lack of after-dark destinations. There is no identified meeting place or “town center.” Gateways are diminished by the highway overpass, with the first view of the downtown off Route 8 often being unattractive and unwelcoming (e.g., pawn shop and concrete sidewall of the Walgreens Pharmacy). There is a perception of a parking problem, but that is mainly due to a lack of people parking once and then walking. The majority of shoppers downtown are still convenience shoppers and there is a lack of opportunity to “window shop” between underutilized lots near the river and Main Street. This makes the psychological distance between stores seem far. That is, parking is about more than parking spaces. It is also

about the walk from the space to the shop, restaurant, office building, apartment building, court, theater, etc.

In conclusion, there are many anchors (pharmacy, post office, theater, railroad, town hall, youth activity) but the sum of these anchors is not greater than the parts. Eclectic stores already set the tone for more activity and the concentration of antique stores is a semblance of a destination use. However, that potential niche is hampered by a lack of restaurants and other complementary uses, so it remains oriented to other businesses “in the trade” rather than to visitors and residents.

## **Trade Area and Spending Power**

Trade areas are the geographic area where a certain percentage of potential customers reside. Trade areas are a function of diverse factors, including: driving times, distances, and mode of travel (which are different for convenience and comparison goods), retail competition and offerings, and racial and income characteristics of potential shoppers. Because of its location and mix of convenience and comparison goods, Seymour has two trade areas:

- a Primary Trade Area made up entirely of Seymour residents who use the downtown for convenience shopping and as a civic center; and
- a Secondary Trade Area comprised of Seymour residents plus residents from a wider radius who use the downtown mainly for comparison goods but also for some convenience shopping.

The industry “rule of thumb” is that retail spending is approximately one-third of gross household income ( $1/3$  of Median Household Income x Number of Households = Estimated Spending Power). By this estimation, in 2005, Seymour residents generated approximately \$116.8 million in total consumer expenditures (meaning they spent that amount on all retail goods—including goods that would be inappropriate for downtown, like services at gas stations—both within downtown Seymour and outside).<sup>8</sup> Even if all Seymour residents spent every single retail dollar in downtown, which is not possible because downtown does not offer all the goods that its residents purchase, residents could support approximately 850,000 square feet of retail space (approximately the size of a large regional shopping mall). In comparison, the Brass Mill Center and Commons in Waterbury is 1.1 million square feet. With Seymour’s downtown totaling no more than 60,000 square feet, these figures indicate that a good portion of Seymour’s retail spending “leaks” outside the downtown and the town itself. The local worker population adds an insignificant amount of spending power to the downtown.

But what about the secondary trade area that is the key to downtown becoming more of a regional destination? How far does it realistically reach? If downtown is to achieve its potential, its current and future retail stores will obviously need to expand the amount of shoppers and spending that they currently attract. Working backwards, antique stores and

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<sup>8</sup>  $1/3 \times \$57,702$  (2005 estimate of median household income)  $\times 6,071$  (2005 estimated number of households) = \$116,800,000.

"early-stage" restaurants in historic, underutilized downtowns usually bring in approximately \$100 to \$150 per square foot in annual sales. For Seymour, \$125 per square foot in annual sales would be a reasonable estimate. At 80,000 to 100,000 square feet of retail space, downtown would need to gross approximately \$10 to \$15 million annually.<sup>9</sup> Specialty shopping districts usually achieve a 2 percent capture rate from their trade area.<sup>10</sup> The inference is that downtown Seymour must tap into a trade area equal to something approaching a five-mile radius in size and between a 10- and 15-minute drive.<sup>11</sup>

A five-mile radius from the train station stretches almost to the southern border of Naugatuck, to Route 63 close to New Haven on the east, to the Route 8/34 junction in the south, in Derby. The population of this trade area is approximately 60,000 residents with a total spending power of approximately \$1.1 billion. Competition includes Big Box stores (especially to the south), as well as competing, historic downtowns like the redeveloping downtowns of Ansonia and Shelton, and the yet to be built Renaissance project in Naugatuck.

### Supportable Space

A "gap analysis" measures the difference between the amount of money people spend on specific retail goods and the amount of money that is actually captured by a trade area's businesses. This type of analysis was used to gain a better understanding of how unmet demand for goods that are both appropriate to the study area (i.e., not gas stations or big box stores) and are not foreclosed by competition in close proximity (like supermarkets) translate into demand for space that could be captured by downtown. Overall, residents in the secondary trade area spend approximately 30 percent of their retail dollars outside that five-mile trade area, which translates into approximately 55,000 square feet of additional retail space.

### Secondary Trade Area (5-Mile Radius), 2006

Retail Stores	Demand (Consumer Expenditures)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Opportunity Gap/Surplus	% Demand Leaked	Avg. Sales per SF Estimate	Supportable SF	X Capture Rate (2%)
Total Retail Sales	1,156,335,319	814,439,528	341,895,791	29.6%	\$125	2,735,166	<b>54,703 SF</b>

Source: Claritas, Inc. 2006; Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates

<sup>9</sup> \$125 per square foot in annual sales X 80,000 square feet = \$10,000,000; \$150 per square foot in annual sales X 100,000 square feet = \$15,000,000.

<sup>10</sup> This capture rate is theoretical and conservative, but typical of a historic downtown like Seymour's. The downtown's actual capture rate may be a bit higher due to Seymour's loyal shoppers and a unique mix (antique district) not found in competing retail areas.

<sup>11</sup> 5-Mile Radius: 1/3 X \$63,287 median household income (2006 estimate for 5-mile radius) X 25,486 households (2006 estimated households for 5-mile radius) = \$532,000,000 X 2 percent capture rate = \$10,700,000.

However, this total includes stores and services that are inappropriate or can never be captured by downtown (e.g., motor vehicle and parts dealers; Internet/catalogue sales).

Within Seymour itself, in certain key retail categories, the local market is fully tapped. For example, modern supermarkets typically service a population of 10,000 to 15,000. With a modern supermarket (Stop & Shop) within walking distance of the traditional downtown, and with stores like the Big Y in Ansonia, there is little room for expansion in this category.

However, in other retail categories there is substantial untapped retail spending. For example, estimates indicate that full-service restaurants in the secondary trade area capture only 40 percent of the potential restaurant spending of residents. Restaurants are especially appropriate for the downtown, since they can locate comfortably in older storefronts, and can draw upon an ample supply of parking for dinner hours. Restaurants also tend to thrive in close proximity to other restaurants (hence, the prevalence of “restaurant rows”).

The chart on the next page shows retail stores and services within the secondary trade area that:

- showed enough unmet demand to support additional space (different stores require different amounts of space);
- are appropriate for downtown; and
- are not foreclosed by competition in close proximity. (See Chart).

**Gap/Supportable Space Analysis  
Downtown Appropriate Stores Secondary Trade Area, 2006**

Retail Stores	Demand (Consumer Expenditures)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Opportunity Gap/Surplus	% Demand Leaked	% of Total Demand Leaked (Total Gap)	Supportable SF (Gap x Avg Sales / SF)	x Capture Rate (2%)
Clothing Stores	40,466,692	3,949,184	36,517,508	90.2%	10.7%	292,140	5,843
Limited- Service Eating Places	47,484,555	18,641,439	28,843,116	60.7%	8.4%	230,745	4,615
Full-Service Restaurants	51,065,290	25,928,596	25,136,694	49.2%	7.4%	201,094	4,022
Appliance, TV, Electronics Stores	20,403,907	5,549,654	14,854,253	72.8%	4.3%	118,834	2,377
Furniture Stores	16,716,491	5,101,870	11,614,621	69.5%	3.4%	92,917	1,858
Office Supplies, Stationery, Gift Stores	12,410,790	3,041,181	9,369,609	75.5%	2.7%	74,957	1,499
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Inst Stores	14,252,012	5,650,084	8,601,928	60.4%	2.5%	68,815	1,376
Lawn, Garden Equipment, Supplies Stores	11,631,025	3,070,406	8,560,619	73.6%	2.5%	68,485	1,370
Jewelry, Luggage, Leather Goods Stores	8,850,042	1,002,197	7,847,845	88.7%	2.3%	62,783	1,256
Hardware Stores	8,754,419	1,198,773	7,555,646	86.3%	2.2%	60,445	1,209
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>232,035,223</b>	<b>73,133,384</b>	<b>158,901,839</b>	<b>68.48%</b>		<b>1,271,215</b>	<b>25,425</b>

Source: Claritas, Inc. 2006; Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates

The leakage within the trade area occurs in many retail categories that residents claim are underserved, primarily comparison goods such as restaurants and apparel. Based on unmet demand (based on current consumer spending patterns) in the five-mile trade area, downtown Seymour could add approximately **25,000 square feet of additional, appropriate retail**. That amount is on par with the “back of the envelope” idea that the town could increase its retail supply to approximately 80,000 to 100,000 square feet.

This is a good figure for the town to use as a benchmark. Of course, this does not mean that Seymour immediately has the room or capacity to build space for all unmet demand, nor does it mean that every type of store with unmet demand will work in any location that Seymour creates or makes available. The bottom line is that there is unmet demand

for the types of services that would help downtown become a regional destination for comparison shopping.

Additional uses with unmet demand but not appropriate to downtown (but potentially to other commercial corridors within Seymour) include:

- auto dealers;
- food and beverage stores;
- small pharmacy;
- department store; and
- warehouse club.

## **Downtown Orbit**

The area with a one-quarter-mile radius around the traditional downtown (an easy five- to ten-minute walk for most people) offers the opportunities to both create additional tax ratables (through residential development and through larger retail services) and to further support the traditional downtown's emergence as a regional and unique destination.

## **Demand Factors**

As noted earlier, there will be additional regional demand for residential and recreational uses, driven mostly by changing demographics such as more empty nesters and more commuters seeking residential options beyond single-family units. The historic image and views of houses on the hills both east along Humphrey Street and Washington Avenue overlooking Main Street and west on Church Street, overlooking the Naugatuck River, can and should be enhanced and leveraged by the design and purpose of any new developments. The industrial uses just outside of the historic downtown (e.g., companies like Kerite) are current day reminders of Seymour's industrial roots and are a fit with downtown's emergence as a mixed-use, hybrid industry/retail environment. The waterfront is an obvious amenity.

## **Supply Factors**

Ultimately, development opportunities within the downtown orbit are limited to small sites, mostly because of topography. This makes intelligent decisions about the physical design, the connections to the historic downtown, and the type of uses on specific opportunity sites (e.g., the Housatonic Wire site and the Haynes property beyond Stop & Shop) all the more essential. The lack of access to and views of the river and the waterfalls are a missed opportunity for attracting investment in and around downtown. It is also an issue of improved quality of life for current and future populations using services and residing within the downtown orbit.

## **Route 8**

Seymour is fortunate to straddle Route 8, a major north-south highway. This greatly enhances the town's value for all manner of site location decisions, including retailers that need easy access to a wide trade area, offices that need to be within a short commuting distance of a large labor force, distribution centers that need access to major markets, and businesses that need access to their network of suppliers.

## **Demand Factors**

Developable land adjacent to Route 8 is the town's opportunity to capture significantly increased commercial ratables. Route 8 is likely to continue to grow in importance as a north-south corridor, in part, because of the likely increase in development in the area north of Bridgeport and, in part, because of the increasing traffic paralysis and rising development costs along Interstate 95. Being located midway between Waterbury/Naugatuck area shopping malls and big box retail to the south, major sites along Route 8 (such as the former Ames site) enjoy high visibility but poor on/off access. This leads to high image uses but not convenience shopping. High use images could include nurseries, movie theaters, and construction-related businesses. All of these uses are complements, not competition, for downtown specialty businesses. Each year, highway access will be more valuable, so it is worth the recruitment of a developer and anchor tenant who understand the value of these properties.

## **Supply Factors**

Currently, Route 8 access and egress for northbound traffic (e.g., return commuters) is less than ideal. This makes the current sites along Route 8 more difficult to negotiate for convenience shopping. In addition to this challenge, it will be expensive to build on these sites due to the topography, in particular the proximity of the ridge. Sites along this corridor are relatively isolated from views and already disturbed with auto-related uses. Topography also limits potential lot depth.

## Route 67

### **Demand Factors**

Route 67 west of downtown has just completed a large amount of new development activity. Until the new space and existing shopping centers are bulging with cars and customers, and until commercial space is occupied, there will be little additional need to expand further along this corridor. New retail development along this corridor should be cautioned. Seymour residents generate only so much demand for retail, and further development could dilute the demand for retail spending downtown.

Other demand factors include the new connector road to Route 42 that is in the works. This could impact the relatively high level of commuter traffic during the morning and evening along Route 67. Future demand could include small-scale professional office development and housing for the town and region's aging population.

### **Supply Factors**

Further strip development along Route 67 has the potential to compete with existing shopping centers and/or with downtown. That is, once unleashed, strip development is hard to contain and, if not planned correctly, could take away from the town's vision for downtown or compete with existing development like Klarides Village. If water treatment issues, such as sewer, can be addressed, Route 67 west of downtown is suitable for housing for new populations. The corridor could be an attractive corridor to generate some supply for active, senior housing in the future.

### 3.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSETS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

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In the early stages of this project the consulting team conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis with members of the Steering Committee. This exercise provided a structured way to surface the town's strengths and weaknesses and identify opportunities and threats to economic growth and prosperity.

The SWOT analysis quickly revealed that Seymour is a town with strong economic and physical assets. Chief among these assets are the town's strategic location, available land and building sites, modern industrial parks, river access, and historic, pedestrian-friendly downtown. Given these assets, members of the Steering Committee agreed that tremendous opportunity for thoughtful development in Seymour exists. At the same time, there was strong agreement that Seymour is not currently leveraging its assets to its advantage. A key point of consensus was that Seymour lacks the professional economic development capacity required to convert identified assets into economic opportunity.

The following section of the report summarizes Seymour's key assets and discusses how Seymour can better build from those assets to promote economic development that benefits all of the town's residents and businesses.

#### CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPACITY

##### The Asset

Civic infrastructure is the aggregate of individuals and organizations who commit time and resources to the life of a community. These individuals and organizations are typically involved in the key decisions of a political, economic, social, educational, and cultural nature. When there is broad involvement and consensus around key issues, communities are productive and viable places to live, and Seymour has considerable assets in this regard. The level of commitment of volunteers in town government and on public boards and commissions is admirable. Several dozen individuals make up an informal group of leaders who sit on these boards and committees and are involved in all dimensions of community life. A new cohort of younger people, many of them newcomers to Seymour, has become active in local government and has brought new ideas and energy to the town. Add to that the town and Economic Development Commission's commitment to this Master Economic Development Plan, and the actions of these people and organizations constitute a solid civic infrastructure for Seymour.

##### Challenges and Opportunities

Despite this solid base, our interviews and comparative analysis of the town surfaced some concerns. First, while local businesses are actively engaged in many parts of the town (for example, through sponsorship of local sports and recreation activities, and other civic events), they are not as actively engaged in creating a healthy economic future for

the town. Second, the fractious political environment has soured many relationships in the town and made non-political issues more political than they have to be. That could interfere with creating and carrying out a vision of economic development that is shared by a wide constituency in the town. Finally, because of the town's historical strength of its manufacturing base and its relative insularity, the town has had little need or incentive to build economic development capacity. Businesses created wealth, the downtown was vibrant, and growth pressures were not as acute as they are today. These dynamics have changed, however, and in order for the town to transition to a 21st century economy, maintain the level of services it has enjoyed, and manage growth, it must strengthen its economic development leadership and capacity. It needs professional expertise, broader involvement of the business community, and less interference based on politics alone.

## STRATEGIC LOCATION

### The Asset

Seymour's strategic location at the junctions of Routes 8, 67, and 313 is a competitive asset providing transportation advantages to residents and employees alike. Seymour enjoys easy access to the regional interstate highway as well as Connecticut's major employment centers. The town is contiguous to Fairfield County and within 20 minutes' driving distance of New Haven, Waterbury, and Bridgeport—three of Connecticut's five largest cities. As such, the town is well situated for both incoming and outgoing commuters, as a location for distribution centers that need access to major markets, and for industrial businesses that need access to a wide network of suppliers. Another location-related advantage is that the expanded Metro North Commuter Rail Service. It passes through Seymour with passenger trains to Bridgeport, Stamford, and beyond, facilitating the commute to Fairfield County.

### Challenges and Opportunities

Seymour's strategic location is a key reason that the town has become a popular bedroom community. At the same time, increased traffic volume as a result of population increase has caused worsening traffic and congestion particularly on Route 67. Seymour is also heavily impacted by development in surrounding communities as vehicles use local roads to access Route 8. As the town's Plan of Conservation and Development notes, the combination of regional commuting traffic, local community traffic, and local business trips makes for a very congested section of roadway particularly at the intersection of Routes 8 and 67.

Strategic location advantages diminish with worsening traffic and roadway conditions impact both business productivity and quality of life. To leverage its strategic location as an economic development advantage, Seymour needs to invest in the town's transportation infrastructure and work to take advantage of state and federal resources that can support infrastructure improvements. Seymour has not realized opportunities to work with the Valley Council of Governments to designate Route 8 as a federal interstate and/or obtain federal funding for other key transportation improvements including Route

67 and upgrading the train station. Moving forward, Seymour needs to tap into these types of resources to enhance its strategic location.

## **DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT**

### **The Asset**

Seymour’s historic, pedestrian friendly downtown is important for a number of reasons. First, the downtown is the symbolic center of the community. Second, its condition sends a powerful message to outsiders about the overall health and attractiveness of the town. Third, with prime development sites in short supply town-wide the potential sites in and around the downtown area are even more important. Since they are downtown, they may be able to accommodate a more intense level of development than sites located elsewhere.

Downtown is a key asset with great potential for coordinated development. It has a number of anchors from which to build a unique civic space including the waterfront, the railroad station, town hall, and the theatre. In the last several years public and private funds have been spent to make downtown more attractive. For example, in the last year a local business person has invested to convert the former Eckhardt Furniture Company into 12 senior apartments and four retail stores. Seymour leaders have also recognized downtown revitalization as a high priority. Recently, downtown has enjoyed some success as a destination for “antiquing” with an array of eclectic, antique and retail outlets locating in the town center.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

While the downtown has many assets, it is also clear that revitalization of the downtown will not take place without more concerted leadership. The downtown faces many significant challenges. The core suffers from a lack of sufficient critical mass to make the downtown a destination. The gateways into the downtown are unappealing, and access from both the south and north can be confusing to outsiders. While good progress has been made in recent years, there is still considerable work to be done to convert downtown Seymour into a “destination” for shopping and pedestrian traffic.

A big complaint regarding downtown among residents is the lack of full-service restaurants and cafes. Residents note that it is unrealistic, for example, to expect people to spend the day antiquing downtown if there are not accompanying establishments for eating and drinking. Another challenge facing downtown is access off Route 8. Currently, travelers are greeted by a pawn shop offering a poor first impression of the town and its offerings. Finally, the decline of industry in the downtown has left behind issues of environmental contamination, not to mention diminished market support for downtown retail and services.

These challenges also provide the downtown with several excellent development opportunities. The New Haven Copper site, the area around the train station, the

potential of the post office relocation, the Strand Theater, and new “gateway” development parcels are all opportunities that can present a significant boost for downtown. These sites must be counted among the most potentially desirable sites in the Naugatuck Valley, not only because of their downtown location, but also because they are somewhat flat sites with excellent visibility and access from the highway. As Route 8 continues to grow in importance as a north-south corridor, the value of these sites will likewise increase. Also, as outlined in the market overview of this report, Seymour has the potential to become a houseware, antique, restaurant, and entertainment center for the Lower Valley.

However, the town will need to build capacity to develop downtown to take advantage of these opportunities. Critical issues to address include preparing for the redevelopment of New Haven Copper, accessing transportation funding to improve gateways and entry points to downtown, upgrading the train station, and improving streetscape and storefronts.

## COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

### The Asset

In addition to the downtown, Seymour has several viable commercial corridors. These include the areas and parcels along Route 8, Route 67, and the downtown orbit. These are all corridors that provide the town with significant tax ratable property. There has been a considerable uptick in interest in the last year among developers for new building proposals and deals along all of these corridors. A majority of town residents also desire development along these corridors. More than 80 percent of surveyed residents in the Economic Development Commission survey said the town should develop more along these corridors.

### Challenges and Opportunities

Retail failures, driven by factors outside the local market area (e.g. bankruptcy and liquidation of national chain; re-location of regional supermarket chain store to larger facility in immediately adjacent town), have resulted in some significant vacancies along Route 8. Yet, attention to traffic enhancements, improved signage, and access management can help set the stage for smart development of this corridor. For example, the market overview has underlined the opportunity for high image uses that complement downtown, such as nurseries, movie theaters, and construction-related businesses. Other uses would expand with better northbound access.

Route 67 most likely hosts the most traffic of any road in Seymour, and, hence, has high value for retailing. But again, the challenges for development along this corridor will be to encourage uses that do not compete with downtown. There are also efforts underway to connect Route 67 to Route 42 in Beacon Falls. This will impact traffic as well as open up property for conservation and development.

Key sites in the downtown orbit include the Housatonic Wire Company and the area adjacent and behind the current Stop & Shop. The latent demand for development in this area is exemplified by the proposal by Craig Dean, a developer from Norfolk, Virginia. His proposal is for a 23-story luxury tower with condominiums selling for roughly \$800,000 each.

Furthermore, the market analysis outlined earlier in the report shows a number of retail and commercial uses with unmet demand that may be appropriate along these corridors. The analysis identified significant unmet demand for auto dealers, food and beverage stores, a pharmacy, department store, and warehouse club.

Altogether, the town has limited professional staff capacity to be proactive and handle all of the development opportunities at once along these corridors.

## RIVER ACCESS

### The Asset

With the clean up of the region's rivers in recent years, towns in the Naugatuck Valley are once again viewing the waterways as an asset. Community efforts are underway throughout the Valley to protect rivers and natural resources and to provide recreational opportunities to residents. Seymour's location on the Housatonic and Naugatuck rivers provides tremendous opportunity for water accessibility, greenways, and recreation. Seymour residents and visitors have the potential for access and recreation along the Naugatuck, in close proximity to the historic downtown and to highway access.

The proposed Greenway Trail, a trail along the riverfront in Seymour that could be 2.4 miles, is a potential opportunity to enhance the town's quality of life as well as increase the land values in close proximity.

### Challenges and Opportunities

Currently, there are no parks along the Naugatuck River waterfront and very limited public access. Flooding potential may be more of a perception than reality. However, that perception still impacts development decisions. The piecing together of public access points will in itself be quite a challenging process.

Furthermore, relative to neighboring towns, Seymour's effort to develop its waterfront is in its infancy. Ansonia, Derby, and Shelton have all received millions of dollars of federal and local funds to support greenway and trail development. The Council of Governments estimates that \$10 million worth of funding has supported greenway and trail efforts in Lower Valley towns to date. Shelton, for example, has an extensive greenway system that links all parts of the city with open spaces, trails, and bike paths.

Seymour took an important step forward recently by commissioning a greenway design from the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA), a large conservation group in the Valley.

HVA has worked with both Derby and Ansonia on the development of their greenways. Unlike some of the other towns in the valley, private property and access pose challenges to river access in Seymour. The town will need to gain permission of land owners to pursue engineering plans. Furthermore, the town must engage in disciplined fundraising to finance the design and construction of a greenway design. As with other development areas, there are state and federal resources to tap to advance greenway plans.

## INDUSTRIAL BASE/INDUSTRIAL PARKS

### The Asset

Despite manufacturing declines in the U.S. and Connecticut as a whole, manufacturing continues to comprise a significant part of the Lower Naugatuck Valley’s economic and wage base. In the last five years, there has been a modest increase in jobs in manufacturing, employers are still in need of workers, and many manufacturers have successfully made the transition to leaner, more competitive forms of work organization.

In Seymour, the largest employer continues to be manufacturing comprising nearly 25 percent of jobs in the town. Seymour has a concentration of small 20- to 100-employee electronic component and production/distribution companies from which it can expand its employment base. In addition, the town has several industrial sites that can accommodate future employment. In particular, the Silvermine Industrial Park is an asset that can be better developed and marketed to attract high-skill, high-tech employers. Silvermine is an especially appealing industrial park with unusual views and landscaping and an excellent location en route to growing New Haven.

#### Seymour Industrial Parks

Park/Land	Acres	Sites Avail	Sewer	Water	Incentives
Silvermine/ Hubbell	200	Yes	Yes	Yes	ECZ/SMART
Kerite	72	No	Yes	Yes	ECZ/SMART
Haynes	100	Yes	Yes	Yes	ECZ/SMART

### Challenges and Opportunities

Industrial rents in Seymour are still too low to justify speculative construction. As a result, most new space is being developed by existing occupants. As older, industrial businesses consolidate and/or close operations, however, Seymour has an opportunity to re-brand its industrial parks as ideal sites for high value, niche manufacturers and high tech companies. A current challenge for Seymour with respect to business recruitment, retention, and expansion is that the town does not maintain a systematic baseline inventory of parcels, buildings, and available incentives. It is currently difficult to obtain

information on the town's industrial parks. For example, there is limited web presence or marketing materials regarding available sites.

In order to leverage the town's existing industrial base and industrial parks for economic growth, Seymour needs to develop professional capacity to track existing employers and market the town to prospective employers. A website, marketing materials, and strategic use of regional and state resources including the Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce and Connecticut Economic Resource Center's (CERC) site finder are resources to tap to build off this key town asset.

## **DEVELOPABLE LAND AND IN-FILL BUILDING SITES**

### **The Asset**

The reuse of certain properties, particularly the New Haven Copper site, will require the remediation of contaminated land. Cleanup is almost always expensive, and liability concerns often stall the process before an investigation into the extent of the contamination can even be conducted. Traditional lenders have historically been reluctant to lend money for brownfield development, and only in the hottest real estate market are private developers willing to assume the costs and risks. In short, public sector involvement and dollars are typically preconditions for effectively reusing these sites. Fortunately, brownfield redevelopment is a focus of both the state and federal governments, and resources are available to address the problem.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

Although Seymour was a founding member of the Brownfield Pilot Committee (now the Regional Brownfield Partnership of West Central Connecticut), the town has been less focused on reuse than surrounding towns in recent years. The town has not taken advantage of available regional and state resources to conduct analysis or develop an inventory of sites. It is often beneficial for towns to think about targeting previously developed land because infrastructure—including roads, sewer and water—is already in place which significantly reduces the public investment necessary to get the land development ready. There are very likely new (e.g., New Haven Copper) and existing brownfield sites in Seymour that can be redeveloped for productive use. Many towns throughout the valley are already building capacity and tapping expertise to address the brownfield challenge in their towns. Derby and Shelton have been particularly active in reuse activities helping to spur downtown revitalization and opening up prime development opportunities. As Seymour moves forward with implementation of the Master Economic Development Plan, reconnecting with the Council of Governments to determine a course of action with respect to brownfield development will be an important goal.

## Connecticut Brownfield Resources

Program	Services
<p>New State Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development (OBRD)</p> <p>A collaborative “one-stop” resource providing owners and developers with financial resources and technical assistance</p>	<p>Serves as single point of contact.</p> <p>Coordinates with state and federal regulatory entities.</p> <p>Provides direct case management to help clients navigate complexities of the redevelopment process.</p> <p>Assists with project support to reduce cost overruns.</p>
<p>Connecticut Brownfield Redevelopment Authority</p>	<p>Offers financing for Brownfield remediation to developers through parent organization.</p> <p>Provides grants up to \$10 million (developer, investor/owner, and municipality must be involved) if agreed upon tax revenue remitted to CBRA.</p> <p>Maintains eligible Brownfield site data base</p>
<p>Regional Brownfield Partnership of West Central Connecticut (with the Valley COG)</p>	<p>Provides brownfield management capacity and financial resources to municipal members.</p>

## LAND USE AND ZONING POLICIES

### The Asset

Updated town planning documents and the zoning ordinance are often the first things a developer acquires when looking at potential sites within a municipality. When the zoning ordinance is up-to-date, it sends a signal that the developer can expect an approval process that is fair and predictable. Moreover, updated town planning documents indicate that development conforming to a plan will not meet with public outcry since the plan has already gone through a public process.

The town began a significant step in 2002 with an updating of its Plan of Conservation and Development. The next step is to update the zoning ordinance to reflect the recommendations of that plan, the changing market conditions of the region, and possibly the more specific recommendations of this report.

### Challenges and Opportunities

Seymour has the potential for growth. The recommendations included in this report for codes, development sites, and market actions will help the town make policy decisions about development. If the town does not direct growth and demand, developers will step in and make those decisions, particularly in places like Seymour. This report helps the town choose where and how much it can grow.

## 4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Town of Seymour seeks economic growth that is sustainable and contributes to a balanced fiscal environment. The strategies and recommendations in this chapter further these goals. They promote growth that is compatible with the town character and its natural surroundings, encourages a built environment that both residents and businesses feel enhances their quality of life, and contributes to a balanced tax base that provides quality town services.

In prioritizing the recommendations of the Master Economic Development Plan, the town will need to consider issues of capacity, leadership, and resources. It will also need to balance recommendations that may yield quick returns with recommendations that may take years to implement, but have significant long-term impact. With this in mind, the consulting team has developed a phased approach to the recommendations.

In Phase I, we recommend the town take steps to build a foundation of leadership for economic development. Recommendations to do that include:

- create a transition team to maintain the momentum and leadership of the Master Economic Development Plan for the next four to six months;
- define a “go forward” structure to integrate varied town officials, commission members, and business leaders under a cohesive system of economic development leadership; and
- build professional capacity (e.g., staff) to support the leadership.

In Phase II, we recommend the town identify and act on a few early-stage projects. These are high impact, highly visible economic development priorities that are critical to the town’s economic future, will build support for the Plan, and can demonstrate early success. Town leadership should pursue one or more of these early-stage projects in conjunction with the activities of Phase I. That is, the town should not wait until it has made its leadership and capacity decisions in Phase I to begin implementing the Phase II recommendations. Options recommended for the Phase II early-stage projects are:

- lead and direct the redevelopment of New Haven Copper by rezoning the site from GI-2 to commercial, investigating environmental remediation needs, identifying first uses, and issuing a developer’s Request for Proposal (RFP);
- create a promotional package to recruit downtown tenants using market data from this study and recruit a downtown restaurant as an anchor development; and/or
- design an economic development training program for the town’s locally-elected officials and appointed members of boards and commissions to begin a customer-focused planning and development process.

In Phase III, we recommend the town begin to turn its attention to longer-term economic development priorities. These recommendations cover a number of critical areas

identified by the Steering Committee, Economic Development Commission, town and business leaders, and residents. A summary of the recommendations for this Phase include:

- develop downtown opportunities by improving circulation and design, by creating opportunities for more retail square footage and public space, and by attracting new stores and anchors to complement existing niches;
- refashion planning and development services by updating land use codes to fit the town's new vision and by equipping town services and departments to better respond to development opportunities;
- increase business recruitment and retention efforts by bolstering the prospects for build-out and full capacity at Silvermine Industrial Park and by growing micro and small business;
- encourage development opportunities in the town's high value corridors of Route 8, Route 67, and the downtown orbit; and
- expand access to the rivers and support the goals of the Greenway Trails project.

The rest of this chapter provides more detail on the phasing strategy and recommendations.

## PHASE I: BUILD AND SUPPORT TOWN LEADERSHIP FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Our first phase of recommendations aims to build and support town leadership for economic development. This leadership will be able to shape and carry out priorities that:

- improve the economic well being of residents and businesses of the town;
- enhance the town's quality of life and encourage development that is sustainable; and
- ensure a stable, balanced fiscal environment.

Following are two recommendations that will build future and support existing town civic leadership and capacity for economic development.

### Create a Transition Team

The first order of business is to carry forward the momentum, leadership, and progress of this Master Economic Development Plan. To do so, we recommend the formation of a transition team. This transition team should last four to six months and include members from the Master Economic Development Steering Committee. The town should take the following steps to create and task the transition team.

- Identify and appoint a committed group of leaders to head the transition team. The transition team should include members of the MEDP steering committee still willing to serve. As a way to expand the leadership pool and engage new leaders in the decisions moving forward, the transition team may also want to include two to three additional members from the business community (identified through interviews and forums in the MEDP process) as well as add expertise in certain areas typical of board leadership (such as a banker and/or attorney).
- Carry out a limited set of functions and sunset its role after a “go forward” structure is defined and in place, probably within four to six months. The transition team's functions should include:
  - review and recommend changes to the MEDP report;
  - recommend an economic development structure that would provide the leadership and the capacity to “go forward” (see recommendations below); and
  - prepare for and play a leadership role in the implementation of the “early-stage” development options in Phase II recommendations of this report.

## Define a “Go Forward” Structure

Once the town establishes the transition team, one of its most important tasks will be to research, define, and recommend a structure that brings together the town’s civic leadership and builds capacity for economic development. Some of the discussions and legwork to do this already began at the public meeting held by the MEDP steering committee on May 7, 2007. The agenda for that meeting revolved around leadership and economic development structures that make the most sense for Seymour. The agenda included a presentation from leaders of the town of Naugatuck’s Economic Development Corporation. They discussed how they structured their economic development functions and how this restructuring enabled the town to build and support a deeper level of leadership for economic development. The type of discussion and information shared at this meeting should continue and, ultimately, a decision for a “go forward” structure needs to be made. To do that, we recommend the following steps:

### Identify the best town leadership structure to move forward

The goal of this recommendation is to identify and research town leadership structures (new or existing) that will be the future economic development decision making body for the town. Included in this research should be an analysis of the role of the leadership structures for economic development relative to the first selectman, board of selectmen, and other boards and commissions. Options for the economic development leadership structure include:

- Stay with a strong, all volunteer-led and politically appointed Economic Development Commission. As discussed during the MEDP process, some of the benefits and challenges to such an approach include:
  - **Benefits:** Clear line of accountability—appointed by and reports directly to first selectman and board of selectmen; can be singularly focused on what the town political leadership wants.
  - **Challenges:** Appointees may be perceived as political; business community may feel economic development is under too much public/political control, lose faith and not want to partner.
- Create a separate Economic Development Corporation and define a complementary role with the existing Economic Development Commission. Some of the benefits and challenges of this approach include:
  - **Benefits:** Allows for broader leadership base to be involved (typically a strong public/private partnership); Economic Development Corporation can create firewall from politics.
  - **Challenges:** Defining complementary roles between Corporation and Commission may be difficult; Economic Development Corporation can get sidetracked with need to generate fees and stray from bigger picture and town vision.

- Identify some other structure that could include the Economic Development Commission or Economic Development Corporation with a series of subcommittees organized around development priorities (such as downtown, greenway, or Route 8 corridor committees).

### **Build professional development staff capacity**

The town also needs to build professional development staff capacity to manage and organize town development functions. These functions should include:

- Maintain an inventory of and carry out a marketing plan for commercial and industrial sites and developable land.
- Manage attraction, retention, and recruitment efforts, downtown revitalization, brownfield and greenway development, transportation planning, and other related development topics.
- Act as the town’s economic liaison and forge strategic partnerships with regional and state actors.
- Plan, schedule, and coordinate the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of town economic development programs and projects including initial planning, feasibility determination, proposal writing, and community involvement/acceptance.

In order to carry out these functions successfully, the town should consider the following options for bolstering its professional economic development capacity:

- Hire a full-time economic development director.
- Share a part-time position with another office in the town.
- Pilot an interim/staggered position to test and adjust the roles, funding level, and responsibilities of an economic development position within the town.
- Appropriate money to an outside entity, such as an economic development corporation, to hire its own staff to take on specified economic development functions for the town.

### **Come to consensus on best options for leadership and capacity**

We recommend the following steps to build information and a process that will lead to agreement on the best economic development leadership and capacity model for the town:

- Host a panel of practitioners to represent each leadership and capacity option. The transition team could invite and host a panel of Connecticut-based practitioners to explain and discuss more fully the different leadership and capacity options. The panel could help the transition team begin to identify how different boards, elected officials, and staff persons share and complement one another in the different options. Mt. Auburn Associates can provide the MEDP Steering Committee a list of potential practitioners for the panel. Some of these practitioners may include the current chair of the Southbury Economic Development Commission (a model similar to Seymour’s

existing set-up, but with professional planning staff to support it), the economic development directors of a nearby town like Cheshire or Derby, and/or the former director of the Oxford Economic Development Corporation or current director of Shelton Economic Development Corporation.

- Test the different options within and among different town constituencies. Once all the options are on the table, members of the steering committee should conduct one-on-one conversations with key leaders in the town to find out the pros and cons of each option. This will ensure that all variables and nuances are considered.
- Hold a joint summit with the full Economic Development Commission. The purpose of the summit would be to discuss and arrive at a “go forward” structure for town leadership and capacity for economic development. We suggest the transition team work with an outside facilitator to manage the meeting.
- Identify key and next generation leaders. Once the “go forward” structure is identified, the transition team should identify and propose a group of leaders to the board of selectmen who will serve the town in any new capacities.

## **PHASE II: ORGANIZE FOR DEVELOPMENT WITH FOCUS ON EARLY-STAGE PROJECTS**

In Phase II, we recommend town leaders choose one or two of the three options detailed below as early-stage projects. These projects take advantage of immediate development opportunities, build momentum for the transition team and town leaders, and, if accomplished, will demonstrate early success. The transition team and town leadership should implement these recommendations concurrent with Phase I. That is, the town should not wait until it has made its leadership and capacity decisions to begin implementation of its choices for Phase II. The choices for Phase II early-stage projects are detailed below.

### **Prepare for and direct the redevelopment of New Haven Copper**

The town's leadership and transition team should focus on a joint effort to direct the redevelopment of the New Haven Copper site. Steps could include:

- Rezone the site from GI-2 to commercial and possibly residential.
- Access technical assistance from the Regional Brownfield Partnership of West Central Connecticut. The Partnership (formerly the Naugatuck Valley Brownfield Pilot Committee) has staff available who can work with the town to investigate environmental remediation needs and, if necessary, the resources available to transfer the site to redevelopment. Environmental problems associated with copper, unless remediated, will likely foreclose housing development in today's market.
- Identify preferences for the use of the facility, such as:
  - relocation/recruitment of hardware/furnishings retail and showrooms;
  - restaurant.
- Identify other potential uses such as:
  - crafts and hybrid industry/retail, such as blends of sales and production (e.g., antiques, artist lofts, fashion designers, artisans, bakers, food production, flower districts, carpentry and woodworking, musical instrument production, etc.) or blends of tourism and industry (e.g., glass blowers, etc.);
  - art house cinema to provide an anchor for restaurants.
- Issue a developer's Request for Proposals (RFP) that incorporates design guidelines and preferred uses for the site. Included in the RFP should be the benefits of the Enterprise Corridor Zone.

### **Focus on a downtown anchor recruitment effort**

Separate of or in conjunction with the New Haven Copper redevelopment effort, the group could focus on an effort to market to and recruit a downtown anchor. Downtown is a symbolic center of the community and its condition sends a powerful message to outsiders about the overall health and attractiveness of the town. The recruitment of a

high profile anchor, such as a restaurant, would signal a new era for the downtown and fill a long desired void for more eating establishments.

The transition team could use the economic/market study detailed in this report to jumpstart the creation of a promotional package to distribute to prospective developers and retailers, highlighting market opportunities downtown. Steps could include:

- Utilize the market data in the report to create a promotional package. The data are the same as would be compiled by a developer or retailer. The transition team can use the package to attract larger retailers or smaller retailers who do not have the resources to compile such data. It can also use the package to promote signature sites and buildings.
- Invite restaurateurs, retailers, developers, and brokers to meet with town officials and land owners to make a pitch about available sites, downtown efforts, and preferred uses.

### **Design an economic development training program for town leadership**

To help the town's officials take on an informed role in building and enacting the vision of this Master Economic Development Plan, we recommend the transition team design a training program for its leaders. These leaders would include locally-elected officials, appointed members of boards and commissions, and key department officials. The town of Naugatuck held a similar session for approximately 50 board and commission members. The outcome of the training session was a much deeper appreciation, among the board and commission members, of how economic development is carried out, and a much higher level of public support for economic development activities.

The approach to the program should be applied and interactive. Case studies should be used. The program should also have opportunities for different constituencies in the town to work in teams and problem-solve together. The town should engage a trainer or organization to conduct the program. Mt. Auburn Associates can provide the transition team with some consultants, organizations, and trainers who would be appropriate in this role. The following three elements could be the beginning framework for such a program, but should be embellished and finalized by the transition team.

- *Understanding the Fundamentals of Economic Development.* This session would introduce officials to the key concepts used in economic development, some of the important definitions, and a framework for looking at an economy. It would focus briefly on such topics as economic development and growth, incentives, workforce development, analyzing an economy's performance and structure, challenges of the global economy, economic development financing, loan funds, benefits of retention versus attraction, etc. In effect, this session would provide an outline and a framework for what follows in the training program.
- *Organizing for Economic Development.* This session would examine the process as well as key players involved in economic development organizing. The session would look at the appropriate roles for the public and private sectors, including town officials, municipal economic development staff, economic development

organizations (i.e., chambers of commerce, business development organizations, local development corporations, regional economic development corporations, industrial development commissions, etc.), state government, and individual businesses. The session would also look at the timeframe a community should allow for carrying out specific economic development projects, and the pitfalls that might be encountered along the way.

- *Planning and Carrying Out Development Projects.* This session would look at the way that real estate and infrastructure projects are decided upon, financed, and viewed in the context of a community's or region's economic vision. Included would be a typology of different projects that are generally dealt with by communities—physical infrastructure, business parks, industrial parks, business expansions, spec buildings, recreation and tourism projects, etc. The session would look at how the cost-benefits of projects are determined, the role that a town or regional government should play, the role that businesses and developers can and should play, how a project can or should be financed and the sources and uses of those funds, how incentives should be used, and how the projects should be cast in light of a region's economic vision.

## PHASE III: IDENTIFY AND PREPARE FOR NEXT STAGE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Once the town has its “go forward” leadership structure and professional capacity in place, and has created some success with early-stage projects, the town leadership should turn its attention to a few mid- and longer-term development opportunities. In prioritizing action steps, the town will need to consider the scale of investment against the likely return. Implementation should also balance actions that yield quick returns with those that may take years to reach completion.

With that in mind, the town’s new leadership structure should prioritize the following areas of recommendations.

### Downtown

Because of its size, downtown does not generate significant tax ratables. Its most direct value lies in bolstering community identity, bringing people into Seymour from throughout the region, and possibly enhancing residential values and, thus, tax revenue. In the end, the revitalization of downtown will be less about the creation of a specific shopping center or office development, and more about the creation of a civic space, a central point that signals Seymour’s opportunity and vibrancy, and a unique environment that attracts residents and visitors from throughout the valley for Seymour events and dining.

In Phase II, we identified some early-stage projects that could help focus the town’s initial efforts following adoption of the Master Economic Development Plan. Two were focused on downtown. One was to prepare for and direct the redevelopment of the New Haven Copper site. The other was to organize a downtown anchor recruitment effort. If neither has been accomplished, these two projects should be added to the menu of downtown recommendations listed in Phase III. Town leaders should prioritize the following downtown recommendations as short- to long-term goals.

### Build capacity to develop downtown

- Develop a dedicated downtown website linked to the town site. The site should list all retail and restaurant establishments, inventory services, events, and downtown office sites for lease, and contain circulation and parking maps. It should also list the market data gathered for this study on the downtown retail trade area and consumer expenditure demand.
- Create a local entity capable of sustaining tenant recruitment and downtown improvements. This can be created as a subcommittee of the Economic Development Commission, housed within local government, or a larger town-wide economic development organization, or be a separate nonprofit organization consisting of local property and business owners. It can be funded through a mixture of grants and fundraising among local businesses.

- Consider new financing mechanisms to support events, activities, and the rehabilitation and improvement of properties downtown. For example, Waterbury’s Downtown Development Incentive Fund (DDIF) supports the rehabilitation and improvement of properties within downtown by providing a source of capital not readily available through conventional financing programs. And, a Special Services District (SSD), which is a type of Business Improvement District (BID), collects taxes dedicated to downtown safety, clean-up, and other improvements.

### **Create opportunities for more retail square footage and public space**

- Make a decision on the future of the Post Office Building. If a plan to move the post office is in the works, create a new space for the post office downtown with a bigger space and better accessibility, including handicap access. Possible locations downtown could be next door on Columbus and De Forest or along Wakeley Street in the current parking lots.
- Make sure prime land in the downtown is zoned for commercial uses and adjust zoning ordinances to not only allow, but also encourage, mixed-use development. Also, examine parking regulations in the zoning ordinance so that the new regulation is for at least one space per 250 square feet for new development.
- Continue to organize and expand events and promotions such as:
  - regular outdoor antique sales at the train station;
  - ongoing farmer’s market with local produce that is linked to a weekly gardening/beautification event; and
  - outdoor concert series sponsored by the Culture and Arts Commission.
- “Pre-certify” sites. This would include having the site work done and putting a virtual tour together on the downtown website. This sends a “green light” to the developer community. Regional organizations and local utilities are looking to pilot this throughout the state. They would likely provide seed money to get some sites certified and up on a website. Seymour would be a good candidate for a pilot program. To start, the town would need to get cooperation from some of the owners and some of the local engineers/surveyors/architects. This latter group could do some of the pre-site engineering work.
- Use transportation funding to kick start new opportunities along downtown gateway/entry points and the train station. For example, transportation funding could be used to assemble larger development parcels at downtown gateway/entry points. Transportation funding could also be used to hire a design specialist to look at making the train station area a new focal point for downtown and a more attractive space for public events. Shared parking should be built into the formula since commuters do not need weekend or evening parking.

### **Improve design and circulation**

- Continue to prioritize beautification efforts such as regular street sweeping and planting at downtown gateways and public spaces.

- Begin to lobby the state and work closely with the Valley Council of Governments and the 17-town Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy district for federal and state transportation funding.
- Adopt design guidelines for downtown signage, streetscapes, and gateways to make them more consistent in their appearance and amplify the historic feel of the retail core. Priority should be placed at these gateways and arrival points:
  - Wakeley Street and Route 8 (main entry point northbound);
  - Main Street and Route 67 (main entry point southbound);
  - Bank Street and Route 67;
  - Main Street/Route 115 and Broad Street; and
  - train station.
- Create incentives for shared parking, sidewalk connections, and streetscape improvements (lighting, street trees, and other plantings):
  - provide a significant real estate tax incentive that gives the marginal value of tax receipts generated by downtown relative to its civic value back to a beautification, streetscape, or improvement fund;
  - employ an Adopt-A-Spot program to encourage citizen participation in beautification and litter clean-ups of designated downtown areas; and
  - allow restaurants to usurp the parking space in front of their businesses to encourage outdoor dining.
- Create a façade improvement program that combines technical assistance from an architect who specializes in facades with a low-cost loan or grant program. The town may also explore ways to revive the Downtown Seymour Infrastructure Improvement Grant.

### **Continue to attract new stores and anchors that complement existing niches and have “cross-over” appeal**

- Continue to recruit restaurants and develop a restaurant row. While a single major restaurant can be a major draw for a downtown, so too can a general reputation as a restaurant row. The two can even work in tandem. Thus, restaurants should be actively encouraged in downtown Seymour, not only for their own sake, but also as a means also to promote the visitation and visibility of other stores, and to contribute to the sociability of downtown. Once a downtown anchor restaurant is established, the town could also consider cafes and homemade food stores offering “small luxuries” that appeal to a wide variety of income levels.
- Continue to build on the downtown’s home furnishings niche: more antique stores that carry a mix of expensive items and lower-cost, “funky” used items. Welcome, but do not actively focus on recruiting, upscale boutiques that may naturally come once revitalization is underway.
- Continue recruitment of appropriate stores, including:

- clothing stores (women's, family, shoe);
  - electronics and appliances;
  - hardware and nursery;
  - health and personal care (cosmetics/optical goods);
  - jewelry;
  - sporting goods, hobby, book, music;
  - stationery and gifts;
  - pet shop; and
  - wine store, perhaps with cheese shop.
- Expand downtown's non-retail anchors. That is, more non-retail draws are needed for the downtown. Some of these anchors could be "loss-leaders" to diversify downtown's appeal and set a new tone. But, the capacity to make some of these investments is likely contingent on a nonprofit stepping forward. Possible non-retail anchors could include:
    - upgrades to the downtown theater so it can attract premium performances;
    - relocation or development of a small museum that possibly deals with local industry, history, or heritage; and
    - pursuit of opportunities for a bed and breakfast or a small inn within an historic building.

## Planning and Development Services

In a town the size of Seymour, elected officials and volunteer members of boards and commissions are on the front-line of dealing with residents, businesses, and developers. The ability to function as a team and to adopt a coordinated approach impacts how the town grows and its economic future. The town needs to strike a balance through the tools of planning and building positive relationships with the business and development communities. The approach should reflect how the town wants to grow, build the tax base, and make good development opportunities easy to coordinate. The following recommendations further these objectives.

- Update land use codes to fit the new vision. Zoning regulations are a key tool in implementing a comprehensive plan for sound community development, as they set the framework for the type of development desired. These standards need to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis in order to ensure that they reinforce the town's planning objectives (to accommodate and encourage appropriate growth and to retain Seymour's special character). Otherwise, zoning can become a hurdle to attracting and encouraging new development. This report and past efforts, especially the 2002 Plan for Conservation and Development, offer recommendations for future development. The town can build consensus and formalize how it wants to grow by an inclusive planning process that reviews current land use policies and proposes new land use standards, guidelines, and procedures that recognize a more collective vision. The town should commission a full review of existing conditions from a parking, land

use, and zoning perspective (either for the entire town or specific opportunity areas) that also provides relevant data and mapping for future planning efforts.

- Pull together coordinated services and town departments to better respond to development opportunities. Developers require a clear process for presenting ideas and proposals and virtually all municipal services have an impact on development. The town should work to provide developers with direct links to all local government and business leaders, as well as to coordinate services between city and civic organizations. For this action step, the town should refashion how the different departments, boards, and commissions coordinate their approach to customer service.

## **Business Retention and Recruitment**

The purpose of this strategy area is to ensure that current Seymour companies grow and prosper, and that new companies find Seymour a good place to locate. The strategy is focused on two fronts—bolstering the prospects for build-out and full occupancy at Silvermine Industrial Park and aiding and growing micro and small businesses in the town.

### **Bolster the prospects for build-out and full occupancy at Silvermine Industrial Park**

- Host an Industrial Park Summit to identify space requirements, plans for growth, infrastructure issues, and other needs among current occupants and owners.
  - Invitees should include owners of land in the park and all current occupants. Information gathered from this meeting should be prioritized and a joint town-private sector effort defined to bolster the prospects for build-out and full occupancy at Silvermine Industrial Park.
  - Regular, follow-up meetings should be held to continue progress on the priorities identified in the summit. These meetings can build on the momentum of the May 7, 2007 public meeting hosted by the MEDP Steering Committee at Basement Systems, Inc. The meetings should also be an opportunity for town officials to learn more about employer operations, their production facilities, their products, and their markets, and, in general, to take a more active interest in the companies and the industrial park. Over time, these meetings should branch out to include other business interests and employer niches in the town and be held on a regular basis.
- Register all sites with Connecticut Economic Resource Center's (CERC) SiteFinder. The SiteFinder is a comprehensive listing of available commercial and industrial properties for sale or for lease in Connecticut. The list is available and used by brokers, developers, and business owners looking for space in Connecticut. Currently, there are no sites from Silvermine listed.
- Work with land owners to finance and create promotional marketing materials. The materials should prominently market the SMART and ECZ incentive packages. In addition to posting these promotional materials on the town's website, there should be a number of direct target markets for these promotional materials, including:

- **Institutional:** Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce, Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Connecticut Light & Power Economic and Community Development, Valley Council of Governments, Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development.
- **Real estate community:** local, regional, and bi-state brokers and developers.
- **Component manufacturing:** small- to mid-sized, 20- to 150-employee job shops that service primary manufacturers in Fairfield County, Metro New York, and New Haven; for example, they produce components and prototypes for the medical device and instruments and aerospace industries and are suppliers to larger automotive, homeland security, and construction firms.
- **Regional branches of light manufacturing:** small- to mid-sized, 20- to 150-employee regional office and distribution facilities that are part of larger manufacturing or construction trades-related businesses that need a mix of office, production, and distribution space for regional hub or parts distribution center.

### Aid and grow micro and small businesses

This “grow your own” strategy focuses on building an environment that fosters growth of the town’s many home-based, virtual, and micro and small businesses.

- Possibly relax the definition of business and home—reflecting the current trend in the marketplace. These changes would be reflected in more flexible zoning and building codes.
- Invite SCORE (Senior Corp of Retired Executives) and the Small Business Development Centers of Connecticut to host a series of micro- and small business workshops in town. These events could be held at the library covering such topics as Assessing Opportunities for Business Growth and Success, Mastering the Marketing Plan, Setting Up a Home-Based Business, and Designing a Business Plan.
- Reach out to the Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce to identify and bring other entrepreneurial resources to the town.
- Court small entrepreneurs seeking small office, production, or R&D space:
  - customize a list of downtown and related properties at the critical size of 2,000 to 10,000 square feet;
  - share the list with organizations that interface with entrepreneurs such as the Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce, Central Connecticut State University Institute of Technology and Business Development, Yale School of Management, and SCORE and the Small Business Development Center.
- Develop a quarterly e-blast aimed at small businesses and entrepreneurs. An e-blast is a cost-effective way of reaching a large audience of self-employed contractors, home-based businesses, and entrepreneurs. The e-blast could contain:
  - list of available relevant Seymour properties;
  - list of contacts for small business support services in the region;
  - business news from the entrepreneurial community.

## Corridor Development

In addition to the downtown, there are three corridors within the town that present significant development opportunities—Route 8, Route 67, and the downtown orbit.

### Route 8

Seymour is fortunate to straddle Route 8, a major north-south highway. This greatly enhances the town's value for a more varied set of site location decisions, including retailers who need easy access to a wide trade area, offices that need to be within a short commuting distance of a large labor force, distribution centers that need access to major markets, and businesses that need access to their network of suppliers. The following recommendations take advantage of development opportunities along Route 8.

- Provide incentives (e.g., reduced parking) for construction, entertainment, and other uses that complement downtown and do not have extreme parking demand or readily lend themselves to shared parking.
- Work with regional and state agencies to improve access and the internal circulation network. This should include lobbying the state to study the viability of a connector street between upper and lower Derby Avenue to create development opportunities.
- Adopt design guidelines that provide an atmosphere created for shopping comfort and make the walk from a car to the destination more appealing. For example, the sea of parking in the old Ames shopping center is particularly unfriendly to shoppers. The anchor stores might be developed closer to the highway access road. Meanwhile, landscaped buffers such as hedges could be required throughout large retail complexes.
- Join the Valley Council of Governments and Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley, along with regional business leaders, in the push to have Route 8 re-designated as an interstate highway. Seymour's leaders should lend their support and voices to this effort, as it will further enhance the town's ability to compete for site location decisions.

### Route 67

Route 67 contains existing tax ratables with Klarides Village and some newer development in close proximity. Further and existing development along this corridor has the potential to compete with the downtown unless it is planned with an eye on differentiation. The following recommendations are for future development opportunities along Route 67.

- Do not encourage additional strip development unless it has a complementary use with the downtown and existing shopping centers. Focus more on convenience than comparison shopping uses in these districts.

- Pursue senior housing as a tax ratable if sewer and water treatment can be addressed. Route 67 is suitable for active, senior housing. The population of Valley residents aged 55 and over is expected to significantly increase in the next 20 years.
- Allow only commercial uses that meet certain design and use parameters. These parameters should maintain the residential value of sites in close proximity and could include guidelines that require new structures to be built to look like houses, calling for parking in the rear, street trees, and setbacks.
- Upgrade the general appearance of the Klarides Village site to allow for more pedestrian access. In the future, anchor stores might be redeveloped and moved up to the street. Or, more practically, additional freestanding retail can be provided in the front. Landscaped buffers could be required at the sidewalk.

## **Downtown Orbit**

The area with a one-quarter-mile radius around the traditional downtown (an easy five- to ten-minute walk for most people) offers the opportunities to both create additional tax ratables and to further support the traditional downtown's emergence as a regional and unique destination. The following recommendations further the objectives for appropriate development of the downtown orbit.

- Improve the access, connections, and views to downtown through physical improvements and activities. Steps to be taken could include:
  - improve the appearance of the bridges connecting the downtown orbit with the historic downtown, with a focus on lighting and markers/statuary at entrances;
  - improve roadway signage to make it easier to navigate in and out of downtown; and
  - eliminate or improve the billboards on top of buildings meant for highway traffic.
- Move new residential development projects forward, but be careful of scale and design. New residential development will lead to increased spending for downtown. For example, 200 new residents in the downtown orbit could bring approximately \$1 million in potential spending downtown, based on the current median household income. New residential development in the downtown orbit should:
  - be careful of scale and design, and be mindful of the historic qualities of existing buildings; and
  - provide improved access and connections to the historic downtown.
- Promote residential historic image and restorations on Humphrey Street and Washington Street areas. The town should protect these areas with zoning guidelines. The town or civic groups could create and promote historic house tours. A future use along this corridor could be a bed and breakfast in one of the larger historic houses that overlooks the train station and downtown.
- Lobby developers to help create a full-service, centralized community center at the school site on River Road (senior services, recreation department, social services, and a youth services department) for both current and future residents.

- Maintain industrial/office mix in and around downtown. Each worker brings about \$2,000 in potential spending if the office is located within an easy and pleasant five-minute or less walk across the river or down from the hill.

## Greenway/Riverway Development

The Greenway Trail, a proposed 2.4-mile trail along the riverfront in Seymour, is a potential opportunity to enhance the town's quality of life as well as to increase land values in close proximity. The recommendations in this strategy area aim to expand access to the rivers in Seymour and support the goals of the Greenway Trails project.

- In the short-term, open up limited access to the waterfront without major landscaping and infrastructure improvements, such as picnic areas, fishing areas, and lookout areas.
- Identify additional access points along the rivers that go beyond the defined Greenway Trails project. Make sure these are included in the Greenway Trails plan or subsequent riverway plans.
- Support the feasibility and cost analysis being completed for the Greenway Trails project. The town has already pledged its support for the work being done by the Housatonic Valley Association on this project. The HVA is researching the costs, land, and grant sources for the project. That support should continue.
- Leverage and connect to funding to support the Greenway Trails and other river and greenway projects in the town. This may mean contracting with a grant writer to access regional and state funds available to pursue the goals of greenway development.