

Madison Center

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Overview

Madison Center is considered by many people to be the heart and soul of the community. Many of the uses, activities and events located there are treasured by residents of the community and recognized regionally. Residents have clearly indicated they appreciate, and want to preserve, the character of Madison Center.

Responses from the telephone survey indicated that residents are receptive to the idea of making improvements in Madison Center:

- 56 percent of respondents agreed that the Town should look at ways to encourage more development in Madison Center.
- 65 percent of respondents agreed that the Town should figure out how to provide for more restaurants and other similar businesses in Madison Center.
- 65 percent of respondents agreed that the Town should figure out how to provide for public restrooms in Madison Center.
- 58 percent of respondents agreed that the Town should consider providing for shared septic systems or other wastewater systems to allow for additional development in Madison Center.

Comments from public meetings and responses from the telephone survey indicated that residents would like to see the following addressed in Madison Center:

- More convenient parking,
- Public restrooms,
- Additional businesses / restaurants / diverse uses / interesting tenants / street front uses / building facades,
- Better pedestrian accommodations (crosswalks, wider sidewalks, benches, awnings, etc.),
- Attractive landscaping / vegetation / underground utility lines,
- More activities/events.

Madison Center is the business, cultural, and institutional center of the community ...

Bradley Road Vision Study

The Bradley Road Vision Study (2005), which was incorporated into the prior Plan of Conservation and Development in 2009, is hereby declared to be part of this Plan of Conservation and Development.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2003, the Planning and Zoning Commission adopted a Downtown Village District zoning designation for most of Madison Center.

As authorized by CGS 8-2j, this zoning designation gives the Commission the ability to more fully consider and manage design issues in the Madison Center area.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since 2001, the Madison Center Project Committee has been working to:

- Beautify and strengthen the Madison Center area,
- Implement the Madison Center Project Plan adopted by the Board of Selectman,
- Seek contributions and grants to help in implementation of the Plan.

To date, over \$2 million has been invested in various improvements within Madison Center.

Work efforts are focused on:

- Relocation of overhead utilities,
- Sidewalk, crosswalk, median, and curbing work,
- Drainage and utilities construction,
- Planting of street trees, and
- Installation of decorative street lighting and streetscape appurtenances.

Maintain The Character of Madison Center

Madison residents want to maintain and enhance the character of Madison Center. In the telephone survey, 90 percent of participants agreed that the design of buildings in Madison Center is an important consideration in any new development.

Fortunately, Madison has good tools in place to help maintain and enhance that character. The Advisory Committee on Community Appearance (ACCA) reviews applications in Madison Center and advises applicants and the Planning and Zoning Commission on design issues. This attention and assistance should continue.

In 2003, the Planning and Zoning Commission established a “village district” in the Madison Center area. A “village district” is a special type of zoning district authorized in Connecticut (CGS 8-2j) which allows specific review of aesthetic considerations within designated areas as part of a planning and zoning approval. This is codified in Section 30 of the Madison Zoning Regulations as the Downtown Village District (DVD). The establishment of this district allows the Commission to have much greater control over the design of the development proposals in the DVD area.

These programs should be continued.

Continue These Policies:
A. Continue to manage and guide the design of buildings and sites in Madison Center.
B. Maintain a “village district” zoning designation in Madison Center.
C. Enforce approved building and site designs in Madison Center.
D. Maintain the “treescape” in Madison Center, especially on Wall Street.

Complete These Tasks:
1. Establish a façade improvement program for Madison Center where grants and loans would be made available to help fund improvements.
2. Complete the Madison Center Project.
3. Seek ways to open up Tuxis Pond as an amenity for Madison Center.

Madison Center Project



Wall Street



Patricia Anderson

Madison Center



Bing.com

Walkway to Meigs Avenue



Patricia Anderson

Memorial Town Hall



Patricia Anderson

Enhance The Overall Experience

Establish Restrooms for Public Use

The lack of public restrooms in Madison Center has been an issue for many years. As a result, the ability of residents and visitors to enjoy their time in Madison Center can be negatively affected.

Essex Connecticut is a community similar to Madison. Like Madison, Essex has a very active downtown area with a lot of visitor / tourist activity and community events. Similarly, Essex has some septic limitations. What Essex did was to install a “composting” toilet system in a public park along Main Street. The facility is opened at 7:00 AM and closed at 8:00 PM by Town building maintenance personnel on their way to and from other facilities. Wastewater from restrooms sinks goes to a small septic field but all other waste products go to a mulching collection system. This type of system could help Madison provide for public restrooms in a simple and fairly cost-effective way.

There are numerous examples around the country and around the world about how to provide for public restrooms. Madison should investigate providing for public restrooms in Madison Center.

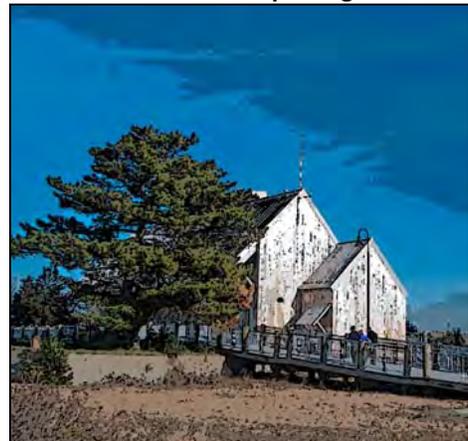
Continue These Policies:
A. Strive to provide for public restrooms in Madison Center.

Complete These Tasks:
1. Establish public restrooms in Madison Center.

Essex CT Composting Toilet



Hammonasset Composting Toilet



Patricia Anderson

Address Parking

Several studies have found that there is adequate parking in Madison Center for the mix of uses located there. However, people still perceive that parking is an issue. It is not clear whether this deters people from coming to Madison Center but it may affect the quality of the experience.

The perception that parking is a hassle in village-type areas can occur because people want to park in the most convenient spaces (often the spaces on-street) and these are typically the first to be occupied. If on-street parking spaces can be freed up more often and secondary parking areas made visible and accessible, people are more likely to feel that parking is not a problem. To address this issue, Madison could consider the following strategies:

- Enforce the time limit for on-street parking in order to promote parking turnover for and availability for customers,
- Provide better signage to indicate where public parking is available, and
- Interconnect parking areas.

These strategies will help to ensure that “turnover” of the most visible spaces occurs regularly (increasing the opportunity for people to get an on-street space when they seek one) and that tenants and employees do not occupy the prime spaces for extended periods.

If parking signage is improved and parking lots are interconnected, people will find it easier to locate off-street parking areas. The Bradley Road Vision Study prepared by the Economic Development Commission suggested some ways that parking areas could be interconnected to enhance the overall Madison Center experience.

Since it is not always possible to make on-street parking available, another important strategy is to make the walk from the parking areas to the destinations as interesting and visually entertaining as possible (storefronts, community art, landscaping, outdoor cafes, etc.).

While the Zoning Regulations contain provisions which allow parking requirements to be modified in Madison Center, it may make sense to adopt a lower parking standard appropriate to a mixed use village area. Alternatively, it may make sense to allow the parking ratio to be reduced when a property owner interconnects their parking with adjacent properties or agrees to a shared parking easement or other arrangement with adjacent properties.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Bradley Road Vision Study (2005) looked at parking supply and demand in Madison Center.

That study discussed how parking could be made more efficient if parking spaces were connected and shared among multiple uses. The study indicated that parking spaces could support a greater amount of building development if the parking spaces were connected and shared.

The recommendations of the Bradley Road Vision Study should be used to guide the establishment and inter-connection of parking areas in Madison Center.

Continue These Policies:

- A. Maintain availability of on-street parking in the Center.
- B. Interconnect off-street parking areas in the Center.
- C. Encourage or require shared parking arrangements, where possible.

Complete These Tasks:

1. Provide better signage to indicate where public parking is available.
2. Enforce time limits for occupancy of on-street parking areas.
3. Evaluate reducing parking standards and interconnecting parking areas in Madison Center in order to promote economic development.

Maintain Active Uses And Activities

Residents have observed that some of the street-level uses in Madison Center are not as pedestrian-friendly as others or do not contribute as much to an active streetscape. Since promoting an active and inviting streetscape is important to Madison Center, strategies to ensure an active streetscape are important.

Studies of downtown areas find that buildings which do not have an inviting façade can have a negative impact on the street. Further investigation has found that the amount of window glass on a façade is a good way to determine whether a building façade is inviting or not. Some communities have established a requirement that up to 70 percent of a buildings street-level façade must be glass and open to the interior. This creates an opportunity for window shopping and interest for pedestrians. Madison should consider a similar requirement.

Some uses (such as offices, realtors, and banks) may adversely affect the streetscape and vibrancy if they have too big an influence on the street-level frontage in a downtown area. To help make Madison Center as vibrant and as interesting as possible, the following strategies might be considered:

- Define the area at street level and within 40 feet of the street line as a “active streetscape priority area”.
- Within this “active streetscape priority area”, limit the street façade length of certain uses to 20 feet or 50 percent of the building width, whichever is the more restrictive requirement, unless the Planning and Zoning Commission grants a Special Permit.
- Place no restrictions on uses which are located on the upper floors of buildings or that are located on the street level but more than 40 feet from the street.

Continue These Policies:
A. Promote an active and inviting streetscape in Madison Center with active street level uses.
B. Promote programs such as “Love Your Local” as a way to support local businesses.

Complete These Tasks:
1. Consider requiring that most of the street-level façade of a building be glass and be open to the interior unless an exception is made.
2. Consider limiting the street façade length of uses that do not enhance the pedestrian-friendly nature of the street.
3. Consider ways of providing “wi-fi” services throughout Madison Center.

Friendly Street-Front Use



Unfriendly Street-Front Use



Enhance The Sidewalk Network

Sidewalks are a key part of the character of Madison Center. Sidewalks of ample width which connect activity areas and provide opportunities for window shopping, outdoor dining, and impromptu meetings are important to the health and vitality of the Center.

In addition to ensuring that adequate sidewalks are provided and maintained in the Center, sidewalks should be extended to areas outside the Center.

Continue These Policies:	Complete These Tasks:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Maintain and expand the sidewalk network in Madison Center.B. Provide adequate crosswalks in Madison Center.C. Extend sidewalks to areas outside the Center.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop informational signage to help people navigate to all parts of Madison Center (map, signs, walking distance to destinations, etc.).

For Shopping



For Dining



For Recreation



Connectivity



Crosswalks



Other Destinations



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Bradley Road Vision Study (2005) suggested that Madison Center could support significant additional development but that septic limitations were an impediment to some development and to providing for public restrooms.

Since the completion of that study, the Economic Development Commission has, with the assistance of Town Staff and various consultants, looked at some of the options for a wastewater system.

Address Septic Limitations in the Center

The lack of septic system capacity may be a limitation on development of Madison Center. The lack of wastewater disposal capacity has the following impacts:

- No public restroom facilities in Madison Center,
- Reluctance on the part of some business owners to let the public use their restrooms,
- Potential increased costs to property owners for septic maintenance (pumping of septic tanks, for example) and septic replacements when needed,
- Capacity limitations (based on lot sizes, soil types, or other factors) which limit the size and type of business expansion,
- Difficulty adding restaurants or other uses which might enhance the overall Madison Center experience,
- Limitations on special events that might draw crowds,
- In some areas, conflicts between the land area needed for septic systems and land needed for parking.

If Madison Center is to be a location for growing the tax base and doing it in an appropriate way, improved wastewater disposal should be a key part of that strategy.

A logical next step is for the Town to undertake a study of Madison Center septic issues and opportunities and suggest alternative solutions. Rather than just look at solving existing problems, the study should look at how to capitalize on some of the opportunities that exist in Madison Center in terms of desired business uses (restaurants, office uses, employers, etc. that could add to the vitality of the area) and the potential for additional residential uses. The study should utilize a steering committee made up of representatives from the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Economic Development Commission, the Water Pollution Control Authority, property owners, business owners, and others. While such a study could be done as part of a town-wide wastewater management plan (see page 52 for more information), it might be desirable to undertake a special study just for Madison Center.

Continue These Policies:
A. Improve wastewater disposal capacity and treatment in Madison Center.
B. Monitor water quality and septic functions in Madison Center.

Complete These Tasks:
1. Undertake a wastewater management study of Madison Center using a diverse steering committee.
2. Consider establishing a wastewater management district for Madison Center.
3. Undertake further testing of wastewater disposal sites in and near Madison Center as discussed in the Bradley Road Vision Study.
4. Consider ways to encourage shared wastewater disposal arrangements.

Encourage Additional Development

Madison Center is an economic development “opportunity area” within Madison.

As discussed in this Plan, Madison residents want uses to provide tax revenue to support local services. Madison Center is a logical area for such development provided development can be done in a way that preserves and enhances the character of the area. Development in and near Madison Center with access to a rail station and a bus service provides a significant opportunity that many other communities simply do not have.

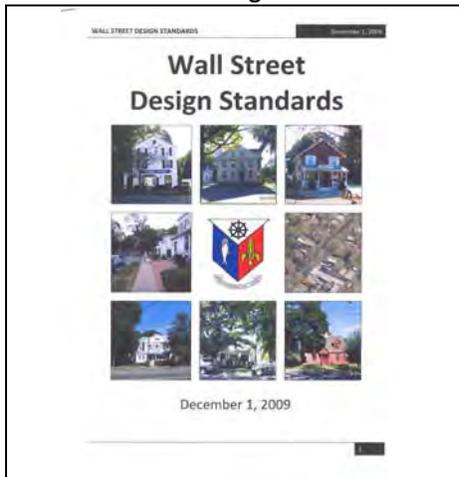
Such development can occur through careful redevelopment of parcels and reducing or eliminating some impediments to expansion (parking ratios, septic capacity, etc.). The Bradley Road Vision Study (2005) made recommendations on how some of these issues could be addressed. Additional evaluation of Madison Center may suggest other ways that additional development can be accommodated in ways that will enhance the area.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

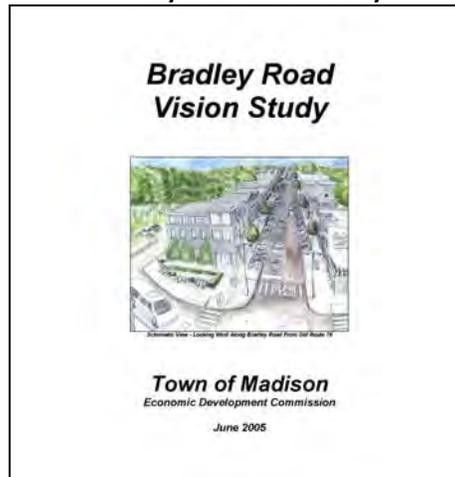
The Bradley Road Vision Study recommended a number of key strategies to guide the future development of Madison Center.

The recommendations of the Bradley Road Vision Study should be used, in conjunction with the recommendations in the POCD, to guide future development in Madison Center.

Wall Street Design Guidelines



Bradley Road Vision Study



Boston Post Road



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Wall Street



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Madison Center and surrounding areas could support additional housing development and this could help to meet the overall housing needs in the community. Townhouses, apartments above retail stores, and condominiums near the train station can contribute to a healthy and vibrant Madison Center and help meet the housing needs of a diverse community.

Residential uses can be a good fit in and Madison Center because:

- the residents contribute to the activity level and to local businesses,
- the residents can provide employees for local businesses,
- the units require fewer spaces per square foot of floor area than retail or office uses and the parking needs typically occur at different times of the day,
- it could appeal to people in a variety of age groups.

Within Madison Center, the Plan initially suggests that housing units be allowed (or required) on the upper floors of buildings. The ground floor levels should continue to be reserved for business and other uses that generate pedestrian traffic and activity. Sites outside of the core area, but within the transitional area, present an opportunity to provide townhouses and/or multi-family housing units at appropriate densities to help meet the housing needs in the community and support the Center.

Continue These Policies:
A. Encourage additional development in Madison Center taking the recommendations of the Bradley Road Vision Study into consideration.
B. Encourage the creation of additional housing opportunities in Madison Center.

Complete These Tasks:
1. Seek ways to implement elements of the Bradley Road Vision Study (2005) in conjunction with the strategies and recommendations of the POCD.
2. Determine the appropriate mix of residential units in Madison Center.
3. Review provisions in the Zoning Regulations which restrict the number of bedrooms and/or housing units permitted on properties in Madison Center.