

F. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

These ideas will only be possible if a *significant* portion of the *Proposal* is in place: State parking relocated, more moderate size apartment rentals available, and funding for new street construction. As they affect private and municipal properties, the final decision about these ideas here would be made ultimately by those owners.

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1. *Bushnell-on-the-Park*

The Bushnell Towers and Bushnell-on-the-Park complex was built about years ago. Facing Bushnell Park, it includes an underground parking facility and some small shops facing an interior block parking lot. The block has a significantly different character than it had before redevelopment 35 years ago, when approximately 40 buildings occupied its 4.6 acres.

The block could play an important role in reconnecting South Downtown with the center of downtown (State House Square @ Main Street/Asylum). At issue is the quality of the pedestrian environment as the buildings meet the sidewalk: along three of the four sides of the block, there are blank walls to the street:

- east side: the street side of the small shops facing the interior parking lot
- south side: the Wells Street side of the Metropolitan District Commission building
- west side: facing the park, the outer wall of the parking garage where the air handling equipment is housed

Retrofit Possibility

The good news is that these conditions can be corrected. The small shops facing the parking lot should be turned around to face Main Street. Whether or not this can be done with the existing building will have to be determined. Consideration may be given to building a new structure in the location, a 6-8 story building, with retail on the ground floor, offices or residences above. (Ideally, the building would have similar massing and detailing to the Traveler's building base, across the street.)

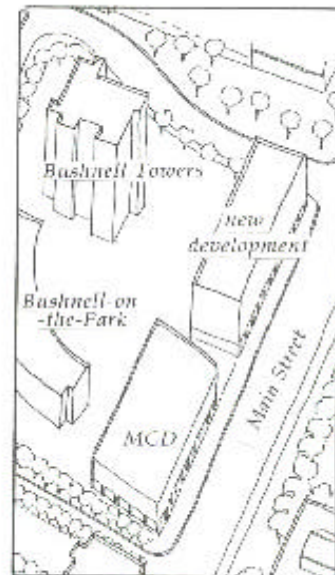
The south side of the MDC building is used for parking. The wall can be retrofitted with windows, preferably large windows on the ground floor. Considering the market, facing a nationally renowned art museum and park in the center of the downtown, new uses for at least the first floor, such as retail, should be considered. Last, a one- or two-story building should be constructed, on the west side of the complex. What an opportunity for a restaurant or reception space, facing the park! The addition would serve to screen the air handling machinery space from the street; it would not obstruct residential units' view of the park. Creating more activity on the edge of the park would make it safer for any walking around the park in the evening, and for those coming into the city for events, who park along the park.



Perhaps the most desirable commercial location in the city of Hartford: across from the Wadsworth Athenaeum



Model for new development at this site and along Main Street



Proposed

2. Infill in the Hudson/Elm/Main/Capitol area

The area north of Whitman Court, Capitol Avenue to Elm Street, is one of the most desirable places to live in the city. In fact, the apartments and condominiums in the Linden, 3-25 Capitol Avenue and 385-91 Main are usually near 100% residential occupancy. More people would like to live in this area were more residential units available.

One reason it is so appealing is because of the elegant rowhouses, another may be Whitman Court. The street was cited most often by residents as their favorite. While it has less than a handful of buildings on it, the scale of the street and the buildings give it a welcome, intimate feel. The street is also notable in the neighborhood, as one gets a rare glimpse into the communal backyard (*referred to as Whitman Close*) of the rowhouses on Capitol and Buckingham. Many express a desire to see more streets like this in the future development of the neighborhood.

Parking demands

In order to have retail succeed in the existing Main Street buildings (now vacant), there needs to be *some* parking for patrons. Second, The Linden and Main St. condominiums, as well as buildings on Elm (though mostly vacant at present), require parking for their residents. Central Baptist Church and nearby state offices need parking.

Street Quality

Before the Linden apartments and rowhouses were built (1880's), Linden Place was a little lane with small houses facing south. The street came down from Main, as today, then turned north to Elm Street. Sometime after 1920, Hudson Street was extended from Capitol Avenue to Elm Street. Rowhouses were subsequently built on Linden Place, and are part of The Linden complex that we see today.

Only three rowhouses face Linden Place today, and they face a *parking lot*. The street has no trees or landscaping to give it at least a visual buffer against the sizable parking lot behind church (350' x 225'). This street deserves some attention, as it looks more like a service road than a street in the heart of downtown.

Two Options for Future Redevelopment

Possibility 1 is to extend Whitman Court to Linden Place. Possibility 2 (*preferred*) would be to extend Whitman Court to Elm Street. Linden Place from the new Whitman Court to Hudson will become an alley.

In either scheme, a major building similar in size to 55 Elm can be constructed at the end of the Elm Street block at Hudson Street. The building can either have an archway over the street to permit access to Pulaski Circle (similar to Grand Central Station over Park Avenue) or end before Elm. Liner buildings would screen the parking lot from the street. New buildings would be similar in scale to those on Elm Street (3 stories) and The Linden rowhouses, with bay windows and beautiful brickwork.

One advantage is that the site (current parking behind the church) slopes 25 feet or more to Elm Street. This may make it possible to build a three story (or more) parking garage, and avail more spaces for neighboring uses. It could potentially consolidate many small lots in the area and free up that land for new development.



3. Wadsworth to Hudson

This housing complex (*Casa Verde*) was built about 20 years ago. It has about 33 units of low-income housing and a play area in the center. Around the 1900's the western half of the property was used for an elementary school; before the housing complex was built it was Chauncey Harris Park.

This complex takes the form of many housing projects that once existed across the US, but over the past decade, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development has realized that this type of housing has numerous shortcomings. By treating all land outside the living unit as common property, a resident has little control over who approaches his home: without a street, the house has no public side, and therefore, no formal approach; without backyards, the unit has no private outdoor space.

Secondly, this arrangement of buildings prohibits the units from ultimately making the transition to private ownership. While residents here pay rent potentially equivalent to a mortgage payment, they do not own their own unit, so they are denied one of the primary benefits of home ownership namely, *building equity*.

Creating a neighborhood center

Considering that this housing is not very old, it is likely that any discussion about changing this property would not be an option until the housing reaches the later stages of its life. Combined with the shortcomings described earlier, its long term role in the neighborhood must be carefully assessed.

This property sits at the physical center of the neighborhood. It seems logical that it was once a school with surrounding playground. It may make sense to return it to its former use as a park, and neighborhood center. This would fulfill two purposes: create a focal point for the neighborhood, and help link the northern end of the South Downtown (north of Buckingham) to Park Street.

This, of course, would not occur for 15-25 years, well after the neighborhood has stabilized and rebuilt itself. With the availability of moderate- and low-income units spread throughout the neighborhood, residents can relocate to other units in the neighborhood, and potentially own their own home.

