



June 24, 2024

The 2021 Riverfront Revitalization Master Planning Process resulted in a Concept Plan to “create a dynamic 21st century riverfront integrated with New Milford’s Town Center to catalyze community development, resiliency, and revenue generation for the town while protecting the Housatonic River and its ecosystem.”

The planning process included stakeholder interviews, community visioning and public engagement exercises, consultation with relevant Town departments, and public design charrettes to develop appropriate options and recommendations. Based on that input, the plan presented four thematic goals to achieve the vision of a more connected town and riverfront:

- 1) Arts and Culture:** Grow and sustain a vibrant Town Center that prioritizes projects enhancing quality of life and attracting new residents, businesses, and entrepreneurial investment.
- 2) Recreation:** Expand year-round use of the Housatonic River and the riverfront as a recreational asset for people of all ages.
- 3) Walkable:** Address topographic and program barriers to create stronger pedestrian connections between the Town Center and the redesigned Housatonic River riverfront.
- 4) Sustainable:** Create a sustainable riverfront vision that remediates contaminated sites, addresses stormwater management and flooding, and protects and celebrates the river’s natural ecosystem.

As we continue to progress, a strong emphasis will be placed on public input. We firmly believe that engaging with the community is essential to foster consensus for the future design and development processes. Your feedback and insights are valuable to us, and we look forward to working together to create a shared vision that reflects the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders.

During the past year, New Milford’s Riverfront Revitalization Committee retained the services of SLR International Corporation (SLR) to provide assistance in refining the Concept Plan utilizing ARP funds allocated for Brownfield projects. That report is attached.

Working with our Committee, SLR provided a plan, based on the initial goals, incorporating many of the proposed elements of the initial concept plan, including a realignment of Young’s

Field Road, to improve safety and traffic issues at its intersection with Bridge Street. The realignment includes provisions for left turns exiting Young's Field Road, allowing trucks to exit onto Bridge Street at this intersection and avoiding traversing through the Patriot's Way parking area. This realignment also proposes to add an additional turning lane on Bridge Street/Route 202 for traffic to turn left onto Young's Field Road and a traffic signalization study for the intersection as a whole.

This plan accounts for FEMA mapping and site topography, additional parking, sustainability and flood control mitigation, and contemplates the undergrounding of electrical and utility lines.

Buildings originally proposed for Patriot's Way have been removed. Young's Field Park remains a green recreational area containing a playground and splash pad, synthetic ice skating rink, skateboard/ /sledding areas and ball courts, as well as an amphitheater and festival, concession stand and restroom areas. An expansion of the River Trail northward to Helen Marks Park is also recommended.

The recreational and infrastructure improvements are drawn to scale, but their locations and configurations are strictly conceptual and will, in all probability, change as the plan evolves from concept to design development.

This refined concept plan includes environmentally sensitive improvements to Native Meadows conservation land (improved access from Bridge Street, raised boardwalks and kayak access).

Parcels 4A, 4B, 4C, and 4D are depicted as shovel ready for potential future public/private redevelopment. These parcels (with the exception of privately owned 4B) are currently the subject of a Brownfield Assessment, paid for by a grant from the CT Department of Economic and Community Development.

Stay tuned for upcoming opportunities to participate and make your voice heard.

#### **New Milford Riverfront Revitalization Committee**

Liba Furhman, Chairman

Frank Wargo, Vice Chairman

Diane Klaif, Secretary

Brian Cossari

Chris Gardner

Rich Schipul

Lucy Wildrick

Diane Sibert, Alternate

McAdory Lipscomb, Alternate

John Rosa, Alternate



# New Milford Riverfront Revitalization

## Conceptual Design and Strategy Study

Prepared for:

**Town of New Milford**

Prepared by:

**SLR International Corporation**

99 Realty Drive, Cheshire, Connecticut, 06410

SLR Project No.: 11481.00080

June 11, 2024

## Project Introduction

SLR International Corporation (SLR) was engaged by the Town of New Milford (Town) to assist the Riverfront Revitalization Committee in refinement of the 2021 Riverfront Revitalization Concept Plan.

The scope of this study includes the evaluation of alternatives and preparation of a more comprehensive conceptual plan for renovation and enhancement of Young's Field Park (the "Park"), adjacent riverfront, and roadways and for infrastructure improvements. It also includes redevelopment within select Town-owned parcels (Public Works facilities) and one adjacent privately owned property. The area project also includes Helen Marx Park and Native Meadows.

This study shall guide the Town in the following:

- Preparing future Requests for Qualifications/Proposals for detailed design and engineering of the public improvements associated with the Riverfront Revitalization Plan
- Providing guidance for:
  - Future design and engineering services
  - Expected regulatory permitting required for improvements envisioned for the area
  - Steps required to update the Town's Zoning Regulations to allow for appropriate redevelopment
- Seeking public/private funding and investment for the project (planning, design/ engineering, and construction)

## Refining the Riverfront Revitalization Plan

Building upon the previous 2021 master planning effort, SLR, the Town of New Milford, and the Riverfront Revitalization Committee worked collaboratively to develop an approach for the Riverfront Revitalization Plan.

It is important to note that this Plan has been designed with the understanding that the Town will be constructing new athletic fields elsewhere in the town and relocating the Public Works facilities to a new location. This will allow for the re-imagining and redevelopment of the properties.

The approach focuses on a redevelopment option that would implement the Park and infrastructure improvements to create a more attractive option for private development and re-investment in this area and provides a guide to the establishment of where this redevelopment can occur.

This plan does allow for flexible uses on the current Department of Public Works (DPW) materials storage parcel until the time that parcel is ready for redevelopment.



**Improvements include the following:**

- Realignment of Young’s Field Road at the intersection with Bridge Street. This realignment has been considered by the Town for several years and should be included as a pivotal piece of the Riverfront Revitalization Plan.  
Why the realignment?
  - The current traffic exiting Young’s Field Road onto Bridge Street is only allowed to turn right and travel over the bridge. The intersection is posted with ‘No Left Turn’ signage due to the poor sight lines when looking west (right) over the bridge.
  - The lack of a legal eastbound (left) turn out of Young’s Field Road requires truck traffic traveling on Housatonic Avenue, Boardman Road, and Young’s Field Road from the north to utilize Patriots Way in order to turn left onto Bridge Street.
  - Patriots Way was not designed to be a local or collector roadway but rather a central parking area providing support to the downtown, train station, and the Park. Removing significant through traffic, including large trucks, will be a significant improvement for the intended and desired use of Patriots Way.
  - The Plan now incorporates a feasible intersection/roadway realignment for Young’s Field Road as part of the overall Riverfront Revitalization Plan.
    - This realignment will add an additional turning lane on Bridge Street/Route 202 for traffic travelling east off Veteran’s Bridge to turn left onto Young’s Field Road. Currently, traffic backs up due to cars waiting to turn onto Young’s Field Road. In addition, the plan also includes a left-hand-turn lane going south on Young’s Field Road. This should improve traffic flow.
    - This road realignment increases the land between the road and the river for recreational use.
    - The need for signalization will be studied.
- Significant Park improvements, including universal accessibility upgrades, are proposed as part of the design. Highlights include the following:
  - Improved access to and from the Downtown and Patriots Way to the Park via an accessible walkway and new staircase along the hillside.
  - Paved and accessible loop walkways of various distances that provide ease of access to all Park amenities and serve as multi-generational exercise options for the community.
  - A new hillside amphitheater utilizing the existing slope and contours. Seating will consist of sloped lawn and several rows of short retaining walls toward the bottom of the hillside. The roofed stage will be elevated above ground level and will include necessary infrastructure to support performances of varied types.
  - Permanent restroom, concessions, and office building to provide a centralized gathering space and area of refuge within the Park.
  - The paved multiuse River Trail will be extended northwesterly along the east side of Young’s Field Road and Housatonic Avenue.
  - The reconfiguration of the Helen Marx Park for passive recreation will include access to the river and parking for the bike trail extension.
  - Area 1A park improvements are to include renovations, relocations, and new



amenities including but not limited to a splash pad, synthetic ice rink, skatepark, playgrounds, sport courts, lighting, walkways, parking, riverfront improvements, and stormwater quality/floodplain enhancements.

- Underground installation of power utilities and infrastructure as needed (electricity, water, sanitary and storm sewers, fiberoptic cable, etc.).
- Enhancements to Native Meadows are to include improved connections to the Park, universally accessible trails, signage and wayfinding, invasive species mitigation, elevated boardwalks, and deck overlooks along the river.

The Town may choose to bring Parcels 4A, 4B, 4C, and 4D to shovel readiness for public/private redevelopment.

## Environmental Review and Strategic Recommendations

Based on historic uses of some properties, environmental evaluations may be required to fully characterize any existing soil/groundwater contamination, potential risks to parcel reuse, risk mitigation strategies, and/or any required remediation. While it is understood that prior environmental assessments and evaluations may have been conducted in the past on several parcels, the following is a general guide of what should be expected along with a range of potential fees.

1. Initial Evaluations, including Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessments (ESA). Estimated cost \$10,000 to \$15,000.
  - Review existing environmental studies for all parcels with focus on parcels 4A and 4B.
  - Determine outstanding issues and data gaps.
  - Conduct additional historical research regarding site uses and potential sources of soil or groundwater contamination.
  - Evaluate proposed land uses relative to known or suspected impacts.
2. Subsequent Investigations, including Phase 2 ESAs. Estimated cost \$50,000 to \$100,000.
  - Conduct additional investigations based upon research and proposed land uses.
  - Evaluate new data relative to planned reuse.
3. Remedial Action Plan, including Phase 3 ESAs. Estimated cost \$15,000 to \$20,000.
  - Develop remedial action plans to mitigate or eliminate potential impacts.
4. Remedial Action. Estimated cost \$TBD and defined upon completion of Tasks 1 to 3.
  - Implement corrective actions.



Regulatory review, permitting, and oversight will be dependent upon the following:

- The presence or absence of contamination
- The degree, type, and extent of contamination
- Risk assessments
- Possible routes of exposure (including vapor intrusion)
- The potential receptors to the contamination (i.e., nearby water supply wells, wetlands, or sensitive land uses)
- The selected remedial approach:
  - Engineered control
  - Land use restrictions/activity restrictions
- Possible entry into state regulatory programs such as:
  - Voluntary Remediation Program (VRP)
  - Abandoned Brownfield Cleanup Program (ABC)
  - Brownfield Remediation and Redevelopment Program (BRRP)
- Possible funding sources:
  - Town funding
  - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfield funding
  - State Brownfield funding
  - State grant programs
  - Private funding

The CT Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) has awarded the Corporation for New Milford Economic Development a \$200,000 Brownfield Municipal Grant. The award supports the Riverfront Revitalization Committee's efforts to remediate and redevelop brownfield properties. The Corporation, in conjunction with the Riverfront Revitalization Committee, will engage a consultant to conduct evaluations as detailed above (Tasks 1 and 2).

Once that step is completed, the Town can explore potential funding sources for remedial needs.

## **Planning & Zoning Review and Strategic Recommendations**

A review of the Town's Zoning Map and Regulations and the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) shows the following:

- The Regulations and POCD are current.
- The Regulations include various planned districts, including a mixed-used Village Center District.
- The POCD prioritizes revitalization of the Riverfront.
- The proposed Riverfront Redevelopment areas are zoned B-1 (Restricted Business) and R-40 (Residential 40, a low-density, single-family district). Portions of the area are also located within the Government Service District (GSD), an overlay zone.
- While the floating Housatonic Riverfront Zone (HRFZ) encourages redevelopment and adaptive reuse of properties located on the banks of the Housatonic River, the regulation may not provide for the conceptual Riverfront plan.



The following represents a general scope of work to develop a new zone and design/architectural standards. Estimated cost: \$35,000 to \$60,000.

- Present an overview of the Riverfront Revitalization Project to Land Use Commissions
- Research and review of existing regulations and site visit(s)
- Meetings with Town staff
- Community input meeting(s)
- Preparation of Draft Zoning Regulations
- Workshop meeting with Planning & Zoning Commissions
- Preparation of Proposed Regulation
- Submission of Regulation
  - Planning Commission (for statutory referral)
  - Zoning Commission
- Development and design of architectural standards/guidelines

## Regulatory Review and Administrative Process

Based upon the impacts proposed with the current conceptual master plan, it should be expected that the following regulatory and administrative processes would be required in order to begin implementation of the project as shown. These include the following but may not be limited to:

- Local regulatory permitting
  - Zoning, Inland Wetlands, Department of Public Works (DPW), Sewer, ADA, Building Department, Fire Marshal, Traffic Authority
- Local referrals/approvals
  - Planning, Economic Development, Park & Recreation
- Town Council approvals
  - To sell/purchase property, budgets, allocation of funding, and the authorization and acceptance of grants
- Town meeting approvals
  - To sell/purchase property, approve bonding issues, or to allocate use of funds exceeding Town Charter threshold

### Project Assumptions:

- Construction activities and mitigation will be required within the 100-year floodplain.
- Structures will be elevated above the floodplain, floodproofed, or not impede floodwaters, (includes parking facilities and structures such as pavilions, stages, bandshells, restrooms, and concessions).
- New amenities and improvements to existing ones (canoe and kayak ramps, expanded floating docks, and overlook platforms along the river).





Expected State and Federal Permitting:

- The CT Department of Transportation (CTDOT) and its Office of the State Traffic Administration (OSTA)
- USACE (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) Pre-Construction Notification GP No. 17
  - Application review timeline of 9 to 12 months (assumes project impact is greater than 5,000 SF of temporary and/or permanent disturbance to wetlands or watercourses or greater than 60 linear feet of bank disturbance).
- CTDEEP (Environmental Protection) Flood Management Certificate
  - Application review timeline of 6 months (assumes no hydraulic modelling required). This process is triggered by the use of any state funding for projects.
- CTDEEP (Environmental Protection) 401 Water Quality Certificate Pre-Construction Notification
  - Application review timeline is 6 to 9 months (automatically triggered by the USACE PCN above).
- CTDEEP (Environmental Protection) General Stormwater Permit for Construction
  - Application review timeline is 2 months (if project disturbs more than 5 acres).
- If any federal permits are triggered (USACE), SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office) will likely require Phase IA and IB surveys.
  - Application review timeline adds an additional 2 to 4 months.
- NDDDB (Natural Diversity Data Base) coordination and bivalve and flora studies may be required due to in-water work or vegetation clearing.
  - Additional review timeline is 1 to 2 months.
- USFWS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) Tree clearing and proposed lighting may trigger NLE (northern long-eared) bat hibernacula impacts evaluation and mitigation coordination.
  - Additional review timeline is 1 to 2 months.

If the project(s) stays under the USACE triggers mentioned above but has some limited activities in federally regulated wetlands and watercourses (<5,000 SF and <60 linear feet [LF] bank disturbance), the project may qualify for a Self-Verification Notification Form (SVNF) GP No. 17 and eliminate the need for a CTDEP 401 WQC PCN. However, this lesser permit (SVNF) will still require the fulfillment of SHPO, NDDDB, and USFWS reviews.

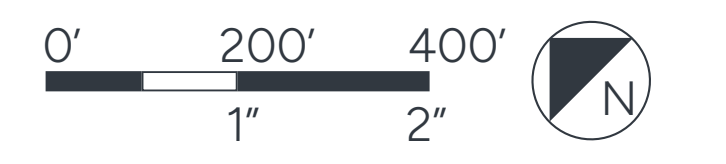
Note: Many of the regulatory applications will be reviewed on a simultaneous basis. Estimate approval time is 1 year.



- KEY:**
- 1A YOUNG'S FIELD RECREATIONAL AREA
  - 1B HELEN MARX PARK
  - 2 PATRIOTS WAY PARKING
  - 3A CONNECTION TO NATIVE MEADOWS PRESERVE
  - 3B NATIVE MEADOWS PRESERVE
  - 4A NEW MILFORD PUBLIC WORKS
  - 4B ABANDONED GAS PUMPS
  - 4C PUBLIC WORKS STORAGE YARD
  - 4D PUBLIC WORKS PIPE YARD



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# NEW MILFORD, CT - MASTER PLAN

