

Special Area Study

TOLLAND GATEWAY / SOUTH GREEN AREA



August 31, 2007

TOWN OF TOLLAND



Acknowledgements

The Residents, Property Owners, and Business Owners Who Participated in the Public Meetings

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This report is based upon the work done by the UConn Program of Landscape Architecture in their "Summary Report – Tolland Gateway Vision Plan" (March 2007).

Overview

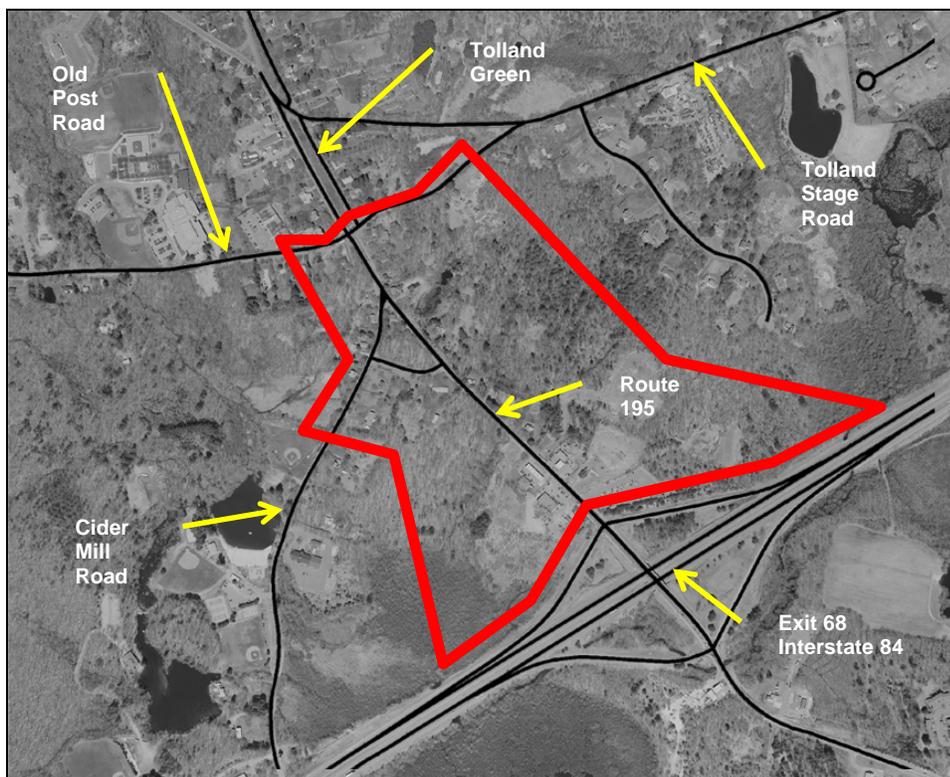


This study of the Tolland Gateway / South Green area was undertaken by the Town of Tolland in order to evaluate and define the best land uses and development patterns for this area while evaluating ways to:

- Respect the integrity of the residential and historic areas
- Provide for commercial development which optimizes the developability and marketability of the area
- Provide safe transportation for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles
- Incorporate public park-like spaces and/or greenways into commercial development areas
- Enhance the gateway to the National Historic Register Tolland Green
- Obtain broad public support
- Protect important natural resources, especially surface and ground water

Preparation of the study was facilitated and assisted by students and staff from the Landscape Architecture Program at the University of Connecticut.

Study Area





Process

The main steps used in the planning process included:

1. **Public meeting** - Obtain overall opinions and objectives
2. Conduct an inventory of natural conditions and other information
 - a. Synthesize opinions and objectives with existing conditions
3. **Public meeting**:- Present planning synthesis
 - a. Seek to confirm consistencies and resolve conflicts
 - b. Develop possible planning concepts
4. Based on community input, refine planning concepts for discussion
5. **Public meeting** – Develop planning concepts :
 - a. Present refined planning concepts
 - b. Revise concepts and articulate details
 - c. Acknowledge consensus
6. Review and finalize planning concepts
7. Prepare final study plan and conclusions

Workshop Session



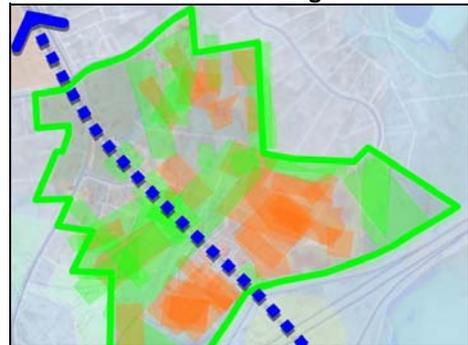
Identifying Program Areas



Presenting Possible Strategy



Mosaic of Strategies



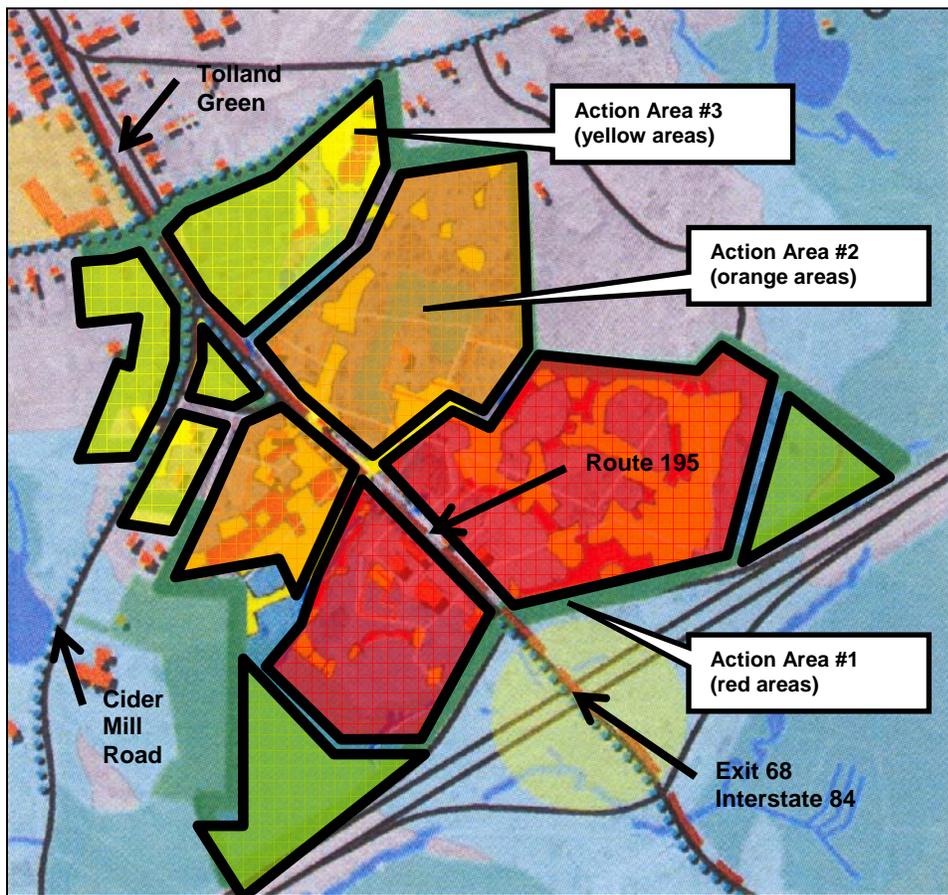
Overall Vision



Based on input from residents at the workshop meetings and from other research and analysis, the overall vision for the Tolland Gateway / South Green area includes the following principles:

- Preserve the character in areas near the Historic District
- Plan for more intense development in the “gateway area” adjacent to Interstate 84
- Provide for transitional use and density between these areas
- Establish and maintain buffers to adjacent residential development
- Protect important natural resources
- Provide guidelines so that development is consistent with New England village architecture

In essence, this vision can be depicted geographically as shown below.





General Program

Overall strategies for each of these areas include the following:

Action Area #1

- Consider adopting a new zoning district to require higher density development near Interstate 84.
- Consider encouraging or requiring mixed-use development (business uses on the first floor with office and/or residential uses on upper floors).
- Consider adopting standards for *maximum* setbacks, *minimum* height, and *minimum* floor area in order to promote development in a higher intensity and more pedestrian oriented configuration.
- Share access and parking and provide one curb-cut on each side of Route 195.
- Orient uses to new streets rather than Route 195.
- Allow for lodging in a multi-story building (possibly up to 4 stories).
- Only allow retail / restaurant / service uses *only* when:
 - in a mixed-use multi-story building.
 - in a pedestrian oriented setting.
 - at least half of the floor area in the building is used for office and/or residential.
- Work with CTDOT to relocate commuter lot from prime location and enhance commuter service (to Hartford and to UConn).
- Encourage assemblage of properties into larger configurations.
- Allow structured parking.

Action Area #2

- Adopt a new zoning district to allow for office and/or multi-family uses as a transitional use between Interstate 84 and Tolland Green
- Allow moderately-high intensities to support evolution of Action Area #1.
- Require that the residential character and intensity be maintained within view of Route 195.
- Share access and parking and provide one curb-cut on each side of Route 195.
- Orient uses to new side streets rather than Route 195.

Action Area #3

- Maintain residential zoning and historic character in these areas
- As appropriate, consider allowing institutional / civic uses on Old Post Road

Transition Areas

- Use wetlands, vegetation, and topography to separate action areas
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Use Strategies



It is possible that the *design* of what is developed in the Gateway / South Green area may actually be more important than the *usages* that occur within individual buildings. While land use regulations have been “use-based” for many years, Tolland may join a number of other communities that are moving more in the direction of “form-based” regulation (regulations that guide the design of buildings and sites more than the uses that end up in them). This concept will be evaluated as this Special Area Study is implemented.

In the meantime, the following table outlines which types of land uses and intensities might be considered for each of the action areas.

Possible Uses By Action Area

	Action Area 1	Action Area 2	Action Area 3
High Intensity Business Uses:			
• Large-Scale Business Offices			
• Hotel / Lodging Uses			
• Personal Service / Health Club			
• Retail / Restaurant / Hospitality Uses			
• Structured Parking			
Low Intensity Business Uses:			
• Professional Offices			
• Medical Offices			
• Professional / Design Firm			
• Small-Scale Business Offices			
Residential:			
• Mixed Use (Apartment)			
• Congregate Living			
• Multi- Family Units (Condo)			
• Single Family Homes			
Civic:			
• Municipal / Community Uses			



Design Strategies— Action Area #1

Action Area #1 is the area closest to Interstate 84 and the area which is considered best able to support the greatest amount of development.

Buildings will be allowed to be taller (up to about 4 stories or 55 feet in height) and will be allowed (or required) closer to the street than has historically been allowed in order to create a sense of enclosure and activity. The primary orientation of buildings will be to internal circulation roads rather than to Route 195 or Interstate 84. Development areas will be served by one major access point off Route 195 with coordinated access between parcels.

Portions of buildings closest to the road will be shorter. For facades facing the internal circulation roads, the setbacks could be minimal provided that the buildings maintain an overall ratio of 1:1 (height to distance) from the road centerline. For facades facing Route 195 or Interstate 84, the buildings would maintain an overall ratio of 1:1.5 (height to distance) from the street property line. Structured parking (to support the higher intensity uses) would be permitted provided it was screened from Route 195 or Interstate 84. Building architecture would be appropriate for New England.

Site design would be oriented to pedestrians and travelers, not to parking areas located between buildings and the street. Parking areas would be located to the side and rear of buildings with the specific intent of making them less visible.



Design Strategies— Action Area #2

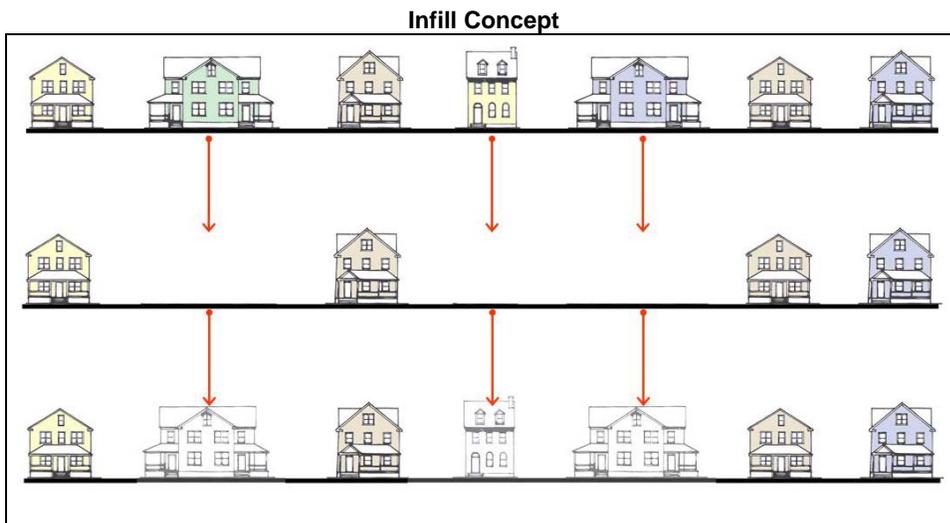


Action Area #2 is the transition area between the more intensive uses near I-84 and the historic and residential areas around and near Tolland Green.

The overall design intent in this area is to maintain the historic and residential character and scale that people recognize and desire. This will be accomplished through regulations which establish a maximum building footprint, maximum building height, and similar provisions which encourage a residential scale and flavor. Setbacks will be similar to what is presently permitted in residential zones. Higher coverage will be considered in order to provide for the transitional nature of this area.

While the buildings may be used for transitional uses (such as multi-family residential or small-scale office uses), the overall appearance and character will look and feel residential. Parking areas will be located to the side and rear of buildings so that they will not be visible from traveled ways.

The adaptive re-use of existing buildings is possible and “infill” of new structures between existing structures would be one way to enhance the character of this area.





Design Strategies— Action Area #3

Action Area #3 is the historic and residential areas around and near Tolland Green.

As with Action Area #2, the overall design intent in this area is to maintain the historic and residential character and scale of the Tolland Green area. It is envisioned that the existing zoning regulations and provisions will remain intact and that there will be no change of the residential zoning in this area. Home occupations will continue to be allowed in this area to the same extent as they are permitted elsewhere in Tolland.

It is the specific intent that the historic and residential character of this area be protected and preserved.



Circulation Strategies



In terms of circulation, the overall intent is as follows:

Vehicular Circulation

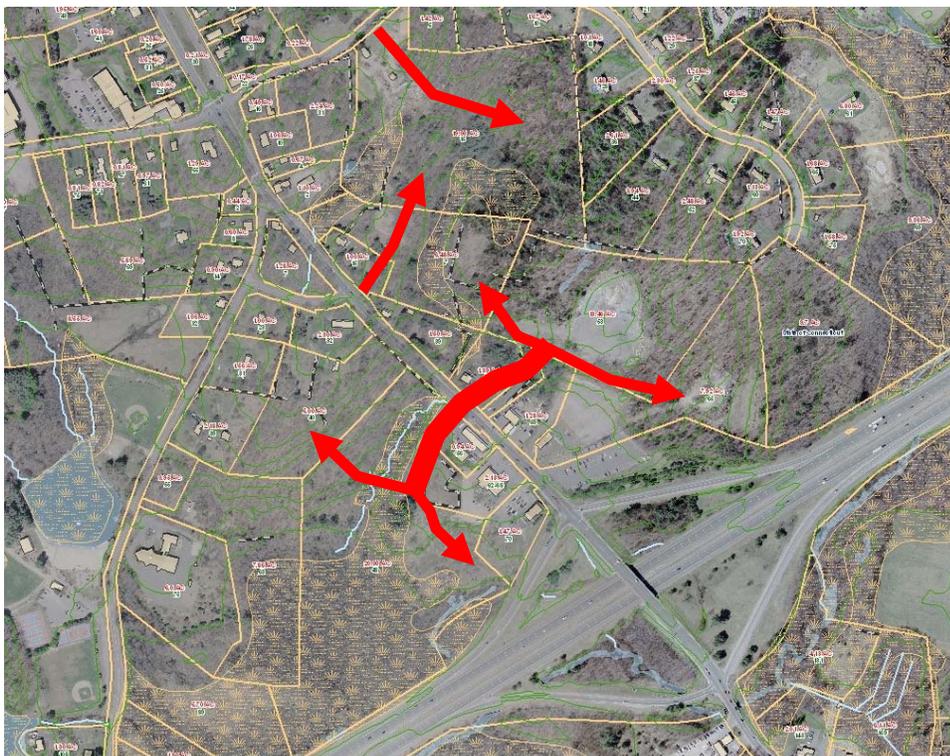
- Limit the number of intersections and curb cuts on Route 195.
- Locate intersections in the best places.
- Interconnect sites internally.

Pedestrian Circulation

- Provide sidewalks along Route 195 and within business areas.
- Provide pathways in other areas for pedestrian travel.

Bicycle Circulation

- Provide bicycle travel lanes and facilities (racks).





Circulation Strategies (cont.)

These circulation strategies can be summarized by Action Area as follows:

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|-----------------------|---|
| Action Area #1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan and provide for one intersection located approximately 500 to 625 feet west of the current I-84 westbound on-ramp• Require cross access easements from all developments to allow all properties to eventually use this location and close any other driveways• Orient all traffic flow to this intersection from internal drives• Provide for sidewalks along Rt. 195 and throughout this area• Provide for bicycle travel lanes and facilities (racks). |
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|-----------------------|---|
| Action Area #2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan and provide for one intersection located approximately 1,000 feet west of the current I-84 westbound on-ramp• Require cross access easements from all developments to allow all properties to eventually use this location and close any other driveways• Orient all traffic flow to this intersection and internal drives• Provide for bicycle lanes and sidewalks along Rt. 195• Provide for sidewalks and trails throughout this area and a pedestrian linkage to Cider Mill Road and Crandall's Park |
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- | | |
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| Action Area #3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access properties by individual driveways• Provide for bicycle lanes and sidewalks along Rt. 195• Provide for sidewalks and trails throughout this area |
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Parking Strategies



Parking is an important consideration in each of the Action Areas because of the importance of parking to support different land uses and because of the visual impact of parking areas. Different strategies are appropriate in each area because of their different character.

Action Area #1

- Provide adequate off-street parking
- Consider allowing “on-street” parking on internal drives when it will enhance the overall character of the development
- Allow for structured parking as part of a development plan
- Require interconnection of parking areas with driveways and cross easements
- Locate parking areas to side and rear of buildings (away from public streets) to minimize visibility
- Allow for “shared use” reduction of parking for uses with peaks at different times of day
- Strive to relocate the commuter parking lot and integrate it with the overall development program for this area (perhaps through municipal ownership or management of the commuter parking)

Action Area #2

- Provide adequate off-street surface parking
- Encourage interconnection of parking areas with driveways and cross easements
- Locate parking areas to side and rear of buildings (away from public streets) to minimize visibility

Action Area #3

- Provide adequate off-street surface parking for each use on its own property
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Utility Strategies

Adequate utilities are available to service the Action Areas.

Water Service

All three Action Areas are served by public water. This helps support the level of development desired in each area and helps protect public health and safety by ensuring an adequate supply of water.

Sewer Service

All three Action Areas are served by public sewer. This helps support the level of development desired in each area and helps protect public health and safety by ensuring adequate disposal of sewage.

Storm Drainage

In terms of storm drainage, it is envisioned that storm drainage will be collected on each site, managed so that there is no increase in the peak rate of runoff from each site (each site will have or share on-site detention of storm runoff), transported through existing drainage systems, and eventually discharged to the wetland area in the southwest corner of the study area.

It is also envisioned that the storm drainage system will include provisions to protect water quality through particle separation and bio-remediation using low impact development techniques. Best management practices for stormwater control can be found in the publication entitled 2004 Connecticut Stormwater Quality Manual available from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (and available on-line at www.ct.gov/dep and search for "stormwater manual").

Electrical Service

Adequate electrical service is available to service the development in each of the Action Areas.

Communications Services

Adequate wired communication services (telephone, cable, internet) and wireless communications services (cellular, PCS) are available to service the development in each of the Action Areas. In addition, wireless technology and services (commonly called "wi-fi") should be encouraged or required in these areas.

Implementation



Due to the multiple property owners in these areas, implementation efforts will need to be carefully coordinated. This is especially true in Action Area #1 and Action Area #2.

Action Area #1

- Consider establishing a process which would permit the type of development envisioned based on a two-step approach:
 - Initial approval of an overall concept plan (showing site layout and building location / design) through a Zone Change process or a Special Permit process (a legislative-type process)
 - Subsequent approval of detailed plans through Site Plan approval (an administrative process)
- Alternatively, consider establishing a one-step process (such as a “planned development district”) which might permit detailed site plans to be reviewed and approved through a zone change type process
- Ensure that any development provides cross easements and access for future developments
- Consider obtaining and/or establishing access at the recommended driveway location
- Evaluate ways to relocate the commuter parking lot

Action Area #2

- Consider establishing a new zoning district to allow for transitional uses in these areas
- Ensure that any development provides cross easements and access for future developments
- Consider obtaining and/or establishing access at the recommended driveway location

Action Area #3

- Leave existing zoning districts in place
 - Maintain the historic and architectural integrity of these areas
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