

Public Design Charrette

March 8, 2025 | 9AM-12:15PM

Town Hall, 200 Garfield Street

FACILITATORS

- Kimberly Baptiste, CED
- Bridget Snover, CED
- Tom Dworetsky, Camoin
- Paul Dickson, Town of Newington, Town Planner (Project Lead)
- Jonathan Altshul, Town of Newington, Town Manager
- Erik Hinckley, Town of Newington, Assistant Town Planner
- Lauren Rhines, Town of Newington, Director of Administrative Services
- Jaime Trevethan, Town of Newington, Senior Center Director
- Jon Trister, Town of Council, Mayor
- Tim Manke, Town of Council, Minority Leader
- Deanna Reney, Economic Development Commission, Chairperson
- Jim Wiltshire, Chamber of Commerce, Executive Vice-President
- Stanley Sobieski, Town Planning and Zoning Commission, Chairperson

ATTENDEES

Approximately 60 community members attended the design charrette.

FORMAT

The session opened with a 30-minute presentation covering the project overview, summary of community engagement and feedback to date, and a design primer that prepared attendees for the interactive workshop. Following this, participants engaged in a 90-minute design charrette where they were divided into small groups to complete design exercises focusing on three distinct subareas. The meeting concluded with a 30-minute segment where each group shared their key takeaways with all attendees.

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

Welcome and Introductions

Kimberly Baptiste opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking them for attending the charrette. She then introduced the consultant team and identified the Steering Committee members in attendance.

Project Overview

Kimberly reviewed the purpose of the Town Center Master Plan, project objectives, the study area, and project scope.

What We've Learned: Informing the Process

Kimberly reviewed the public engagement activities to date and key takeaways from the public engagement. Tom Dworetsky (Camoin) provided an overview of the primary market opportunities in the study area.

Design Primer: What Makes a Great Place?

Kimberly walked through a design primer intended to get the charrette participants thinking about physical characteristics that make communities great.

DESIGN CHARRETTE

The study area was divided into three focus areas for the charrette: 1) Town Center, 2) Lowrey Place and Northwood Plaza, and 3) Hartford Healthcare Site. A series of maps and interactive rollouts were provided to each group to provide feedback on the prompts. The group responses are summarized below:

Constitution Square

1. Identify the top three streetscape amenities you would most like to see in Constitution Square and along surrounding streetscapes.
 - **Shade Trees (28)**
 - **Public Art (27)**
 - **Pedestrian Level Lighting (26)**
 - **Planters and Landscaping (24)**
 - **Benches (23)**
 - **Art as Amenity (22)**
 - Waste/Recycling Receptacles (10)
 - Water Bottle Filler (12)
 - *Added in the "What's Missing" box*
 - *Reconfigure parking*
 - *Make dumpsters less visible*
 - *More attractive seating for public events*
 - *Move public events from the middle of the parking lot*
 - *Underground utilities*
 - *Lack of amenities at Northern boundary*
 - *Centralized trash collection and storage*
 - *Play area*
 - *ADA street accessibility*
 - *Secure bike parking*
 - *Pedestrian friendly access from Cedar and Main*
 - *Parking hub*
 - *Shuttle from parking areas for people who can't handle the walking*
2. Identify the top three multi-modal features you would most like to see in Constitution Square and along surrounding streetscapes.
 - **Wayfinding/Directional Signage (42)**
 - **Enhanced Crosswalks (41)**
 - **Widened Sidewalks (39)**
 - **Bike Lanes (22)**
 - Bike Racks (10)
 - Bike Shelter (7)
 - Electric Vehicle Charging (7)
 - Bike Repair Station (5)
 - *Added in the "What's Missing" box*
 - *Multi-use sidewalks*
 - *Multi-modal connections to and from areas*
 - *Polymer crosswalk material*

- *Multi-use trail (walk/bike)*
- *Parking lot repair*
- *Cohesive signage (more attractive and visible)*
- *Better safety and separation of pedestrians and cyclists from traffic*

3. Key Themes from the Interactive Design Exercise

- The greenspace in Constitution Square should be expanded and maybe moved
- There is an excess number of vehicular access points to Constitution Square
- Streetscape improvements desired along Market Square and Constance Leigh Drive
- Provide space for a farmers market
- Outdoor eating space in Constitution Square
- Use the intersection of Constance Leigh Drive and E Cedar Street as a grand entrance
- Parking should be reconfigured
- Area should be more pedestrian friendly with pathways and amenities

Lowrey Place and Northwood Commons

1. Should the road width at Lowrey Place be reduced?
 - **Yes – Reclaim Some of the Road Width (37)**
 - No – Keep the Current Width (11)
2. Identify the top three streetscape treatments you would most like to see on Lowrey Place.
 - **Sidewalks on Both Sides of the Street (39)**
 - **Planted Buffer Strips (28)**
 - **Curb Extensions (22)**
 - **Protected Bike Lane (22)**
 - On-street Parking (8)
 - *Added in the “What’s Missing” box*
 - *Tree maintenance*
 - *Green infrastructure (rain gardens, etc.)*
 - *Keep open but close to market square traffic*
 - *Make Lowrey Place a pedestrian street / Add new road on south side of district*
 - *Planted islands*
 - *2-level underground parking*
3. Which setback distance is most appropriate for future development at Northwood Commons?
 - 0-5 ft (7)
 - **10-15 ft (40)**
 - 200 ft Existing Condition (1)
4. Which maximum building height do you feel is most appropriate at Northwood Commons?
 - 1-2 Stories (6)
 - **3 Stories (22)**
 - **4 Stories (18)**
 - 5+ Stories (8)

5. What types of uses would you like to see on the site in the future?

- **Mixed-Use (35)***
- Townhouses (6)
- Commercial (5)
- Multi-Family Housing (1)
- **Owner-occupied was written in under mixed-use*

6. What are some preferred uses for the Keeney building?

Recreation

- Dance studio
- Playground
- Gym
- Indoor recreation

Retail/Commercial

- Commercial
- Retail
- Co-working space
- Small businesses
- Bar
- Brewery
- Food vendors (food court)
- Restaurants
- Small market/grocery
- Mall concept with sidewalks
- Parkville Market type place

Mixed-Use

- Multi-use
- Knock it down and replace with mixed-use apartments and retail

Destination

- Convention center
- Community theater or arts center
- Outdoor event space
- Grand entrance to Main and Cedar
- Public restrooms

7. What are some preferred uses for the empty parcel on Lowrey Place?

- **Trees and greenspace – pocket park (x4)**
- Community recreation space (x2)
- Multi-level parking (x2)
- Gathering space – gazebo (x2)
- Art installations (x2)
- Venue
- Underground parking
- Mixed-use apartments with retail

8. What are some preferred uses for Northwood Commons?

Housing

- Senior housing
- Integrate apartment building, Cedar Mountain Commons, and Jefferson House

Mixed-Use

- Mixed-Use: grocery store under small offices, traditional and senior housing
- New retail and mixed-use along Lowrey, keeping the existing buildings (x2)
- New retail and mixed-use along Lowrey, removing the existing buildings
- High density mixed-use zone, with hidden parking and public amenities

Retail/Commercial

- Keep the businesses but redevelop
- Space for food trucks or a brewery
- Medical office
- Pharmacy
- Restaurants
- Grocery store

Parking

- Parking lot repair
- Add “green islands” and seating

9. Key Themes from the Interactive Design Exercise

- Provide a central pedestrian connection from Lowrey Place to Market Square
- Incorporate streetscape improvements along Lowrey Place
- There is a desire for more green space
- There is a desire for more parking (potentially a parking garage)
- Concentrate mixed-use development on Lowrey Place

Hartford Healthcare Complex

1. Identify the top three site amenities you would most like to see integrated into the future redevelopment at the Hartford Healthcare Site.
 - **Walking Trails (38)**
 - **Keep Naturalized (30)**
 - **Open Space (26)**
 - **Playground (20)**
 - Sports Courts (12)
 - Bike Trails (11)
 - Enhanced Dog Park (8)
 - Disc Golf (1)
 - *Added in the "What's Missing" box:*
 - *Multi-use walking and biking trails*
 - *Pickleball and tennis courts*
 - *Outdoor concert venue/amphitheater/bandshell*
 - *Integrate a trailhead to Cedar Mountain Recreation*
 - *Housing – condos/townhomes*
 - *Hiking trails*
 - *Reflection pool/fountains*
 - *Ice skating rink*
 - *Town transfer station that accepts building material*
2. Key Themes from the Interactive Design Exercise
 - Concentrate commercial and mixed-use development closer to Constance Leigh Drive
 - Provide senior housing and services nearby to serve the seniors
 - Incorporate outdoor recreation (walking/biking trails and sports courts) and maintaining the natural environment
 - Maintain three stories or less for all new housing or commercial uses
 - Connect to Cedar Mountain Trailhead
 - Two to three story townhomes were desired nearby commercial or retail uses

Group Summary of Key-Themes and Ideas

Constitution Square

Vehicular Circulation

- Change traffic patterns
- Slow down traffic perhaps redirecting Cedar Street
- Alter entryways into the Square (delete or widen)
- Make Center Court one-way
- Make connections to Market Square one-way

Bicycle/Pedestrian Circulation

- Add bike/pedestrian connections on Cedar Street
- Add more crosswalks to Cedar Street
- Move pedestrian access to Constitution Square closer to Market Square

Amenities

- Add a play area
- Outdoor dining
- Need more benches
- Amenities and usability
- Improve lighting through pedestrian areas
- Add pedestrian amenities along Cedar Street
- Make comfortable gathering spaces
- Space for music and entertainment in Constitution Square
- Make better use of the open space in the back lot

Greenspace

- Enhance and shade the center gathering area for events
- Add more green – especially behind the buildings
- Remove the center green space
- More green community space

Wayfinding and Signage

- Improve business direction signage
- Make a grand entrance with signage and access
- Make user friendly, attractive, and safe for pedestrians

Buildings and Businesses

- Remove barriers to adjacent businesses
- New multi-use buildings along Cedar Street
- Add character and design
- Improve buildings to make them more visible especially on the Market Square side
- Add a parking garage to allow more space for other uses
- More restaurants
- Integrate senior housing
- Move the location of the dumpsters

Lowrey Place and Northwood Commons

Vehicular Circulation

- Total redevelopment – tear down and start over
- Move Lowrey Place south
- Close Market Square to vehicular traffic
- Restore the Trolley in the area

Parking

- Underground parking with green space on top
- Improve parking at post office
- Shared parking to reduce overall paved areas

Pedestrian Connections

- Cut pedestrian paths through the Keeney lot
- Increase walkability with a pathway connecting Constitution Square
- ADA compliance throughout
- Make it feel more connected to Downtown

Businesses or Uses

- Venue
- Small market/grocery
- Brewery
- Community garden
- Public restrooms
- Mixed-use along Lowrey and Main
- Residential / mixed-use at Northwood Commons
- Increase mixed-use space by knocking down the warehouse space

Facades

- Highlight the Keeney building's art deco façade or industrial design
- Cohesive storefronts with landscaping

Outdoor Spaces

- Outdoor space for events
- Outdoor seating, trees

Hartford Healthcare Site

Housing

- Senior housing with cafes and restaurants
- Townhouses especially for seniors
- Higher end condos and retail
- Senior housing
- Increase housing with single family and mixed-use
- Integration with current senior housing

Outdoor Recreation and Greenspace

- Recreation and greenspace sites
- Trail to Cedar Mountain
- Walking trails, biking trails, open space, naturalization of old parking lots
- Outdoor activity space
- Ice skating
- Preserve large green open spaces
- Community garden space

Interpreting History

- Maintain the history of the site and integrate into the new design (naming, façade, museum)
- Dedication or monument to the old Children's hospital

Vehicular Circulation and Parking

- New road connecting Patricia Genova and John Stewart Drive
- Make it the main route to Market Square
- Structural parking

Preferred Uses

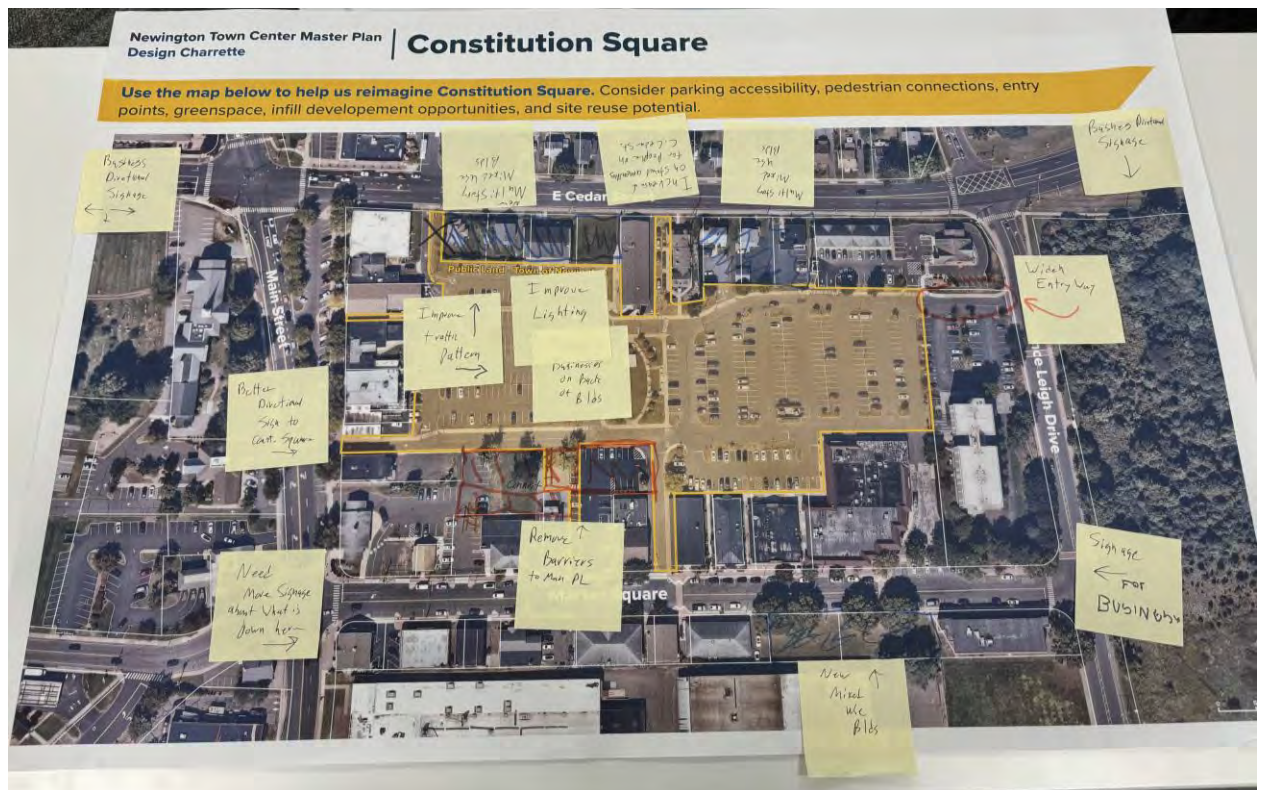
- Medical/urgent care
- Development along Constance Leigh
- Grocery store
- Add a transfer station
- Amphitheatre
- Venues

Appendix: Charrette Group Feedback Maps

Constitution Square

Use the map to reimagine Constitution Square. Consider parking accessibility, pedestrian connections, entry points, greenspace, infill development opportunities, and site reuse potential.

*green indicates enhanced community green spaces, brown indicates enhanced pedestrian connections, blue identifies any properties to see reused, improved, or built upon, red identifies important gateways, and black is for general comments.







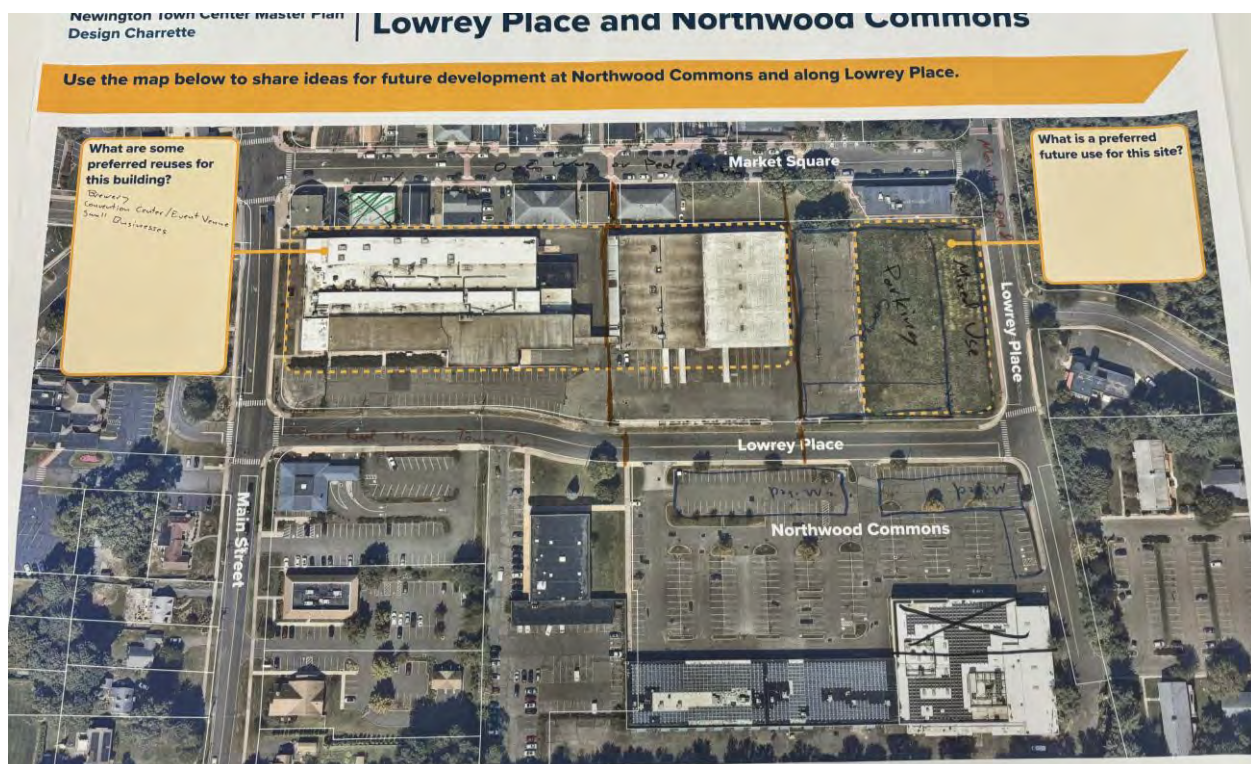






Lowrey Place and Northwood Commons

Use the map to share ideas for future development at Northwood Commons and along Lowrey Place.













Hartford Healthcare Complex

Use the stickers provided to identify which density and land use options you most prefer on the site?





