

7. Infrastructure

7.1 Water

The Town has recently connected Route 12 in Ledyard with the Groton municipal water supply. This makes businesses along Route 12 more viable. *The Tri-Committee recommends town funded extension of water service to the former Soneco property line.*

7.1.1 Water Tower at Mount Decatur

Residents alerted the Tri-Committee to plan for a water tower on Mount Decatur with its base elevation 225 feet and the top of tower at 325 feet. This elevation corresponds to that of the Groton water tower at Bailey Hill and is the technically appropriate elevation for proper water system operation. Several residents expressed concern that the water tower would be visible above the tree line. After reviewing the letter from the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) that answered questions posed by the Town Council, the *Tri-Committee believes the following are points that should be considered:*

- a) *The benefit of the water tower to citizens and development along Route 12 may necessitate the construction of the tower. A good water supply in and near Route 12 will be critical for development and could be useful in retaining Dow Chemical Company as a Ledyard asset.*
- b) *The view of the water tower from Route 12 should be considered and be at or below the tree line if possible. A water tower above the tree line would detract from the aesthetics of the area and could be a distraction to positive development along Route 12. Other sites, less obvious to view, should also be considered.*

7.2 Sewer

Municipal sewer would also aid in the development along Route 12. A connection to sewer lines in Groton at the Submarine Base (Ohio Drive, Navy housing) may be possible. *The Tri-Committee recommends consideration of sewer service along Route 12.*

7.3 Telecommunications

Mr. Glenn Wilson, General Manager-Telecommunications of Groton Utilities, (telephone number (860) 446-4047) described Groton's plans to create a 35 mile fiber optics infrastructure for the purpose of providing messenger type 144 strand internet service for high speed data transmission to business and home users. Ledyard can potentially connect to the system five miles along Route 12 into

Gales Ferry commercial center and seven miles into Ledyard along Route 117. The lack of high speed technology in this region was discussed; e.g., SNET will do DSL (distance limited capability) only in New London; a T-line can be provided by SNET but at a high cost (\$1000-2000/mile); even adequate overseas long-distance phone capability is lacking. For Groton to expand their system into Ledyard, potential demand and financial feasibility need to be ascertained. At a Tri-Committee meeting, Peter Bono suggested polling current businesses, potential users, and would-be entrepreneurs. These would include Ed Lorenz, Ledyard Center Fairway Drive, Soneco property, former Norwich State Hospital, Mohegan Sun etc. If Ledyard compiles a list of services needed, Mr. Wilson agreed to supply a cost estimate. Mr. Wilson said an Advisory Council has been formed to study telecommunication needs. Planner Shaikh volunteered to represent Ledyard on the Advisory Council.

Discussions with Mr. Wilson reveal that Groton will use their position as a municipally owned public utility to supply Groton with high speed internet connection, including connections from telephone poles to schools, municipal buildings, businesses and residences. As an adjacent town, Ledyard may be able to collaborate with this development. Groton is also investigating telecommunication infrastructure improvements that may be supported by Connecticut Public Acts 00-178 and 00-187. Public Act 00-178 deals with Internet business districts and the high-technology infrastructure fund. Public Act 00-187 pertains to educational aid and includes Internet connections to schools. Manchester CT has apparently used the public allocation on telephone poles to interconnect its school and municipal buildings. Owning the high-speed telecommunication infrastructure would allow Ledyard to provide these services sooner and at less cost than if a regular provider like SNET were to undertake the improvement. In addition to benefiting from Groton's development in this area, high-speed telecommunication services might also be useful to the resort area and computer-based businesses that the town may wish to attract. *To further pursue options, and position Ledyard to take advantage of new technology, the Tri-Committee recommends creating a Technology Infrastructure Plan.* The plan could also be the basis for discussions with current telephone (SNET) and cable providers. *If this plan confirms the economic viability of a Ledyard telecommunications infrastructure, the Tri-Committee further recommends initial installation of the service be provided to the former Soneco site.*

7.3.1 Outline of the Telecommunications Plan

The plan should assess foreseeable needs in Ledyard; the legal aspects associated with developing the infrastructure, leasing the infrastructure, and maintaining the infrastructure; the cost to construct the infrastructure; the cost of maintaining the

infrastructure; and identifying grants that may apply, including Connecticut Public Acts 00-178 and 00-187. Wireless connection technology may, however, minimize the need for some of the telecommunication infrastructure needs.

The plan should include:

- a) Based upon the computer-based businesses in the Town, and the type of markets that would logically be associated with the resort area, defense and the pharmaceutical industry, identify the high-speed telecommunication and internet services that Ledyard will need now and within the next five years. Estimate the infrastructure that would be required to support these services.
- b) Identify the legal possibilities available to the Town of Ledyard. Identify legal aspects related to:
 - installing and owning the communication infrastructure,
 - collaborating with another Town that provides the services,
 - leasing the infrastructure to a provider, and/or
 - the Town providing commercial telecommunications services to residents and local businesses.
- c) Describe a functional design for the high-speed telecommunication / Internet services including fiber optic cable, hubs and servers. Propose a logical sequence for connecting areas within Town.
- d) Determine local providers' intentions regarding Ledyard.
- e) Estimate the cost per mile for installation and the time for installations.
- f) Estimate the costs to operate and maintain the infrastructure.
- g) Estimate the feasibility and cost of providing high-speed access directly to residents' homes.
- h) Identify grants that may apply to the development of high-speed telecommunication / Internet services. Describe how Connecticut Public Acts 00-178 and 00-187 might apply.

8. Historical and Recreational Areas

The Tri-Committee notes three and possibly four areas near and along Route 12 that have potential recreational benefit or that could become a historic attraction. The Erickson property along the Thames River offers a prime recreational site and when the bicycle path is completed to Gales Ferry Village, it should be an attractive asset to Route 12 development. The Yale/Harvard Regatta is a local event that has historical significance and originates in the Gales Ferry Village. In past decades, the regatta drew many people to the areas with viewing from boats and from the shore. Other towns and cities with similar events leverage them as community events that showcase the community and attract people to retail shops in the area. As a one time yearly event, the regatta in itself should not be considered as anchor to retail development but could be an event that creates interest in Ledyard. While viewing the race at the village is limited by the lack of public viewing space, the Erickson property does offer a vantage point to view the races. Coupling this viewing area with the planned bicycle path between the Erickson property and Gales Ferry Village, a small public park at the Gales Ferry School site, a walkway to retail shops east of Route 12, and the retail farm activities at Alice Acres can create a desirable event that involves the community, benefits retail shops, and encourages the type of retail that would benefit and complement the area. Two other local events, Our Lady of Lourdes Fair in early June and the craft show at the Lester House in September can also create the same type of community event.

Fort Decatur overlooks the Thames River just north of Gales Ferry Village. This War of 1812 historic site resides on private property, and because of the topography is difficult to visit. However, the site (Figure 44) offers a commanding view of Gales Ferry, and the Thames River. If public access could be negotiated with Dow Chemical, Fort Decatur could become a tourist destination in conjunction with the Yale/Harvard Regatta, Historic Gales Ferry Village, the Lester House, Up and Down sawmill, and the proposed Historical Theatre in Ledyard Center.

Stoddard Hill State Park potentially offers the town a prime recreational site. The picnic area bluff as well as the higher elevations of the rock cliff and Stoddard Hill offer good views of the Thames River. The park also contains the historic Stoddard Cemetery. Unfortunately, the boat launch capability at this park is limited to only the smallest of canoes or kayaks due to a shallow boulder strewn channel at low tide, and two foot overhead clearance at high tide beneath the railroad bridge. (Figures 45 and 46). The park is also unfortunately known as a site for undesirable activities and therefore not regularly frequented by families. It is becoming overrun by Oriental Bittersweet (Figure 47). *The Tri-Committee agrees with Mr. Tim Epperson's letter dated October 25, 2000 to the Tri-Committee that the Town and its state representatives should request additional.*

state assistance in policing the site, clearing invasive plants and maintaining it at least as well as it was in the 1970's. The Tri-Committee also agrees with Professor Alexopoulos in his assessment of the Poquetanuck Cove area and the viewpoint that its bordering forests and waters should be protected not only because its beauty defines the northern gateway to the Town, but also because of its environmental resources (See discussion and recommendations for the Poquetanuck Cove in Section 6.4).



Figure 44. View From Near Fort Decatur



Figure 45. Boat Launch and View



Figure 46. Picnic Area at Stoddard Hill Park



Figure 47. Trees Threatened by Oriental Bittersweet at Stoddards Hill State Park

Scenic Road designation is used in Connecticut to recognize and preserve the natural beauty and New England character of both town roads and state Highways. Roads that are typically eligible for such designation are bordered by colonial stone walls, forest or farms, homes or structures on the national historic register, beautiful vistas, brooks, water views, or curving gracious roads paved or unpaved. Scenic designation does not restrict the owner's use of bordering property, and does not affect town zoning authority. Scenic designation may also be revoked by the Town.

Scenic designation of state highways is not uncommon, with three existing in this area: Route 169 north of Norwich; Route 164 from Preston City to Griswold; and Route 234 from Old Mystic to Pawcatuck. The method of obtaining designation is by petition to Connecticut DOT, initiated by the Mayor and with Town Council approval. Approval is accompanied by a state developed protection plan, with continued adequate maintenance, and the roads scenic status marked on state maps.

Scenic designation for a town road such as Military Highway may be accomplished in accordance with Ordinance 29 (An Ordinance Concerning the Designation of Scenic Roads). This ordinance requires approval by the owners of more than 50% of property frontage. *Scenic road designation for both Route 214 and Military Highway should be considered in conjunction with development plans for Route 12.*

9. Methods to Implement the Recommendations

9.1 Architectural Advisory Group

Citizens as well as the University of Connecticut Study suggested an Architectural Advisory Group to help control development. The group can be advisory or regulatory.

9.2 Ledyard Center Design District Type Regulation

The objectives of the Ledyard Center Design District (LCDD) (see Section 4.0 of the Ledyard Zoning Regulations) include:

- a) compatibility with existing development,
- b) safe access and movement of pedestrian and vehicles,
- c) promoting aesthetic qualities associated with rural villages,
- d) enhancing the historic legacy of the district, and
- e) promoting a balance of commercial, civic and residential use

The LCDD regulations allow philanthropic, governmental, educational or religious uses; single, two-family, or apartment/condominium residential use; and offices, personal services, retail stores, indoor recreational facilities, hotels/motels, repair shops, and undertaking establishments. Mixed use of the above are allowed.

Other features include:

- a) Minimum lot size 40,000 sq. ft., minimum lot width 100 ft.
- b) Maximum building height 30 ft.
- c) Lot coverage <80%
- d) Buildings < 30%
- e) Setback and density restrictions may be waived
- f) Off street parking encouraged
- g) Front landscaping and some buffer strips required, retain existing vegetation and unique site feature like stonewalls Architecture, materials, lighting, signs and walkways should be associated with New England architecture.

These regulations can apply to development along Route 12, especially near the Gales Ferry Village but may be more appropriate to undeveloped land. However along Route 12, several building not particularly in the New England character exist. For these areas, conforming to the LCDD regulations may be difficult for developers. The New England theme may not be necessary and counter-productive to development at the former Sonoco property or near Dow Chemical. *Where appropriate, encouraging New England design themes and buffering between the site and Route 12 and residential areas will be desirable. If applied to Route 12, LCDD-type regulations should be modified to acknowledge existing development along the highway and sites such as Dow Chemical and the former Sonoco property.*

9.3 Blighted Building Ordinance

Incorporation of a Blighted Building Ordinance, similar to the Middletown ordinance contained in Appendix E, will provide Ledyard with some ability to deal with buildings that are not maintained, are becoming dilapidated, attract illegal activity, are a fire hazard, are seriously depreciating property values in a neighborhood, or are interfering with reasonable nearby activity. The ordinance would allow the town to fine the owner after a reasonable time had transpired to fix the property and then, with town funds and by specific vote of the Town Council, purchase the property. Such an ordinance at least notifies owners of blighted buildings and neighbors that the town can take measures to ensure that a neighborhood does not decay due to the inattention of one owner.

9.4 Tax Abatements/ Tax Incentives

Tax abatements and/or incentives can be negotiated between the town and a developer or property owner based upon linkage or reciprocal investment in the community. Tax abatement financing is attractive since it is virtually the only finance tool available at the sole discretion of local government. Tax abatements are given to businesses to offset property, sale, or inventory taxes. Abatements can reduce a developer/owner's tax bill, freeze the assessed value of a building and the land it will occupy, or freeze the total amount of taxes the owner must pay on its real property at the pre-development level. A tax incentive or abatement could be an approach to fund sewer and water connections to properties along Route 12 that are not currently serviced.

Tax increment financing (TIF) is a technique used to disperse the cost of development to those government agencies that will benefit from the increased tax base that a TIF project will generate. A TIF area needs to be defined by the TIF authority (TIF authority to be chartered and approved by the Town Council). The assessed property valuation of this area is frozen for a specific period of time and the TIF authority can be involved in the buying, selling and improving land, including bonding for acquisition or improvements. Revenue generated beyond the frozen base is used to finance the improvements, acquisition or bonds.

Another local financing strategy involves creating a local revolving loan fund or capital bank by forming a strong partnership with commercial banks, in Town, private corporations and foundations, and using public grants. The passage and subsequent utilization of the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) requires banks to be players in community development within the communities in which they are located.

Appendix B contains proposed guidelines for tax incentives or abatement.

9.5 Grants

In addition to applying for posted development grants, Ledyard's unique situation should be used as justification for grant consideration with the State of Connecticut. This unique situation can be described as:

- a) host town of the resort casino
- b) located near major development at the former Norwich hospital
- c) receiving little revenue from the casino
- d) receiving little of the substantial revenue that the State of Connecticut derives from the operation of the casino, and
- e) having very little resources to acquire the needed infrastructure for area development.

Appendix C "State of Connecticut Development Grant for the Route 12 Corridor in Ledyard Connecticut Proposal" identifies needs along with justification for Route 12 development. To pursue his grant the following strategy is recommended:

- a) Chart the Town's grand list from the past fifteen years to support the contention that Ledyard is unable to keep pace with needs.
- b) Chart state aid and how it has also been insufficient to respond to the Town's needs.
- c) Propose needs that would place Ledyard in a position to better support itself.
- d) Develop a profile that would position Ledyard to attract the type of development it desires.
- e) Generate interest and support from local business community.
- f) Portray consequences if nothing is done;
- g) Market plan with area development groups.
- h) Target available infrastructure development and sustaining funds.

Appendix E of An Economic Develop Strategies Plan for Ledyard Connecticut (reference a) also lists possible economic development grant opportunities.

Recent announcements about allocation of "new slot machine revenues" should be pursued.

10. Summary of Recommendations

The following summarizes the major recommendations of this report.

- a) Initially constrain development to existing commercial nodes; see Section 3.
- b) Encourage development with limited access onto Route 12 (i.e. limit curb cuts). Retain green buffers wherever possible, land near the Long Cove intersection with Route 12 can be developed; see Sections 3 and 6.3 and 6.4.
- c) The former Soneco property is ideally suited for light industrial, commercial and retail development. Infrastructure (water, sewer, gas and telecommunications) should be supported at the site, see Sections 6.1 and 7.
- d) Improve the closed and blighted buildings along Route 12. Consider tax relief and Blighted Building Ordinance; see Sections 6.1, 6.4 and 9.3.
- e) Consider mixed use, retail and municipal for Gales Ferry School site. Determine financial arrangement. (Sale, lease, or town owned/managed) before marketing; see Section 6.3.1. The Tri-Committee strongly recommends that the Town of Ledyard retain ownership of the Gales Ferry School site until a vision and plan for its site is determined.
- f) Conduct an architectural study of the Gales Ferry School with several proposed architectural renderings of school depicting new uses; see Section 6.3.1 and 6.3.2.
- g) Consider New England Village Theme for development in Gales Ferry Village Center. Connect the village to the Erickson Property Town Park. Development should consider leveraging local events like the Yale/Harvard Regatta. Connect the Gales Ferry Village Center with the farmer's market. Work with Ocean State Job Lot to develop the Job Lot Plaza. See Section 6.3 and 6.3.2.
- h) Retain at least part of the Gales Ferry School site as a park considering a pedestrian walkway along Hurlbutt Road and linking retail shop in the Gales Ferry Village Center. Consider existing memorial trees at the Gales Ferry School site. Consider traffic access management design to route local business traffic from Route 12. See Section 6.3.1 and 6.3.2.

- i) Consider funding a professional highway access management plan for Route 12 for the greater Gales Ferry Village extending from Barry Drive to Whalehead Road.
- j) Consider scenic road petitions for Military Highway and Route 214. Consider a greenway along Route 12. Consider a scenic overlook at the west side of Route 12 at the intersection with Route 214. See Sections 6.3.2, 6.4 and 8.
- k) When considering a water tower at Mount Decatur, consider the view of the water tower from Route 12. Other sites less obvious from view should be considered. See Section 7.
- l) Connect water to the former Soneco property. See Section 7.
- m) Consider developing sewer and telecommunications infrastructure along Route 12. See Section 7.
- n) The town should request state policing and maintenance of Stoddards Hill State Park. See Section 8.
- o) Maintain Poquetanuck Cove and the surrounding area in its current state. See Sections 6.4 and 8.
- p) Consider Ledyard Center Design District (LCDD) type regulations with modifications or exclusions for existing sites and commercial/industrial sites like the former Soneco Property and Dow Chemical. See Sections 9.1 and 9.2.
- q) Consider tax incentive to aid development. See Sections 6.4 and 9.4.
- r) Petition the State of Connecticut for a development grant. See Section 9.5.