Centre Square
The Heart of
DOWNTOWN BRISTOL
Centre Square

Contents

Executive Summary 7
Public Outreach 17
Opportunities And Constraints 23
Plan Development 27
Master Plan 29
Next Steps 53
Centre Square
Executive
SUMMARY

The Bristol Development Authority conducted a master planning and design process to redevelop Centre Square – the former Bristol Centre Mall site in downtown Bristol. The process sought to develop and implement a vision that was supported by both the community and reality. The Master Plan shows the general layout of buildings, public spaces, roadways, and parking areas, and is intended to be a flexible document that guides future development on the Centre Square site.
The Master Planning Process

The Master Planning process was shaped by three guiding principles: The Master Plan (1) must align with the unique characteristics of the site as well as economic realities; (2) must coordinate with ongoing projects and initiatives; and (3) is reflective of the community’s vision. A plan that did not meet all three guiding principles could not be implemented successfully.

The Centre Square planning and design team conducted a detailed assessment of existing conditions including market conditions, circulation and parking, infrastructure, land use, and zoning. This allowed the team to identify opportunities and devise strategies to overcome impediments to development. Two of the main challenges to redeveloping the Centre Square site were steep slopes and buried conduits and utilities. Since leveling the site and relocating utilities were determined to be cost prohibitive, the Master Plan designed the site around these elements. One area where this is evident is on the corner of North Main Street and Riverside Avenue. Buried conduits and utilities prevent
buildings from being placed on this area of the site. Instead, this area was preserved as a public plaza and green space, connecting Centre Square to neighboring Bracket Park.

Similarly, the Master Plan required close coordination with ongoing projects and initiatives. Soon after the Centre Square project began, Bristol Hospital announced plans to build a 60,000-square-foot Ambulatory Care Center on a 3.72-acre parcel on the corner of Main Street and Riverside Avenue. The project team coordinated with Bristol Hospital throughout the process in order to ensure that the Ambulatory Care Center aligned with the overall vision for the Centre Square site. The southeastern corner of the Centre Square Master Plan is reserved for the Bristol Hospital project.

Finally, the Master Plan is reflective of the community’s vision for the site. The site planning and design process was supplemented with an extensive public outreach effort. The project team conducted two “pop-up” public workshops at the Rockwell Park Summer Concert Series and the Rockwell Park Summer Festival where hundreds of residents shared their thoughts and ideas on site layouts, building design, public spaces, and infrastructure. Similarly, the project team implemented a visual preferences survey asking residents questions on demographics, future aspirations for downtown, and visual preferences. The community workshops and survey indicated a preference for medium-density two-story buildings, traditional building designs, street-facing buildings, public plaza space, street trees, outdoor dining, and angled on-street parking. These elements were incorporated into the Master Plan to the greatest extent possible.
The Master Plan

The Master Plan is the community’s road map that will guide future development on the Centre Square site. It shows the general layout of roadways, buildings, public spaces, and parking areas and identifies the steps that the city needs to take to spur development on the site. Recognizing that development will occur over a period of many years, the Master Plan highlights ways that the city can utilize the site as a vibrant community asset during the interim period while allowing for a phased development approach.

The three guiding principles were manifested in the final Master Plan. Public spaces and green spaces were strategically placed along steep slopes and utility easements; medium-scale buildings were placed along streets wherever possible; small interior parking areas were scattered throughout the site; and streetscapes enhancements were incorporated on roadways within and surrounding the site.

The Master Plan recommends that the city of Bristol make investments in public-realm infrastructure such as roadways, utilities, parking areas, and streetscapes that is needed to spur private investment. Many of these investments are already underway. A new central roadway will be built that connects Riverside Avenue to North Main Street and Laurel Street. The roadway will improve vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation and will also divide Centre Square up into smaller parcels that align with the current market conditions and private developer interest. Similarly, the city is making streetscape improvements on Riverside Avenue and North Main Street.
Both roadways are excessively wide and disconnect Centre Square from downtown Bristol. Streetscape improvements include new sidewalks, street trees, lighting, pedestrian curb extensions, and expanded on-street parking. These improvements will better connect Centre Square to existing businesses on Main Street and North Main Street and will create a unified, cohesive downtown.

The redevelopment of the Centre Square site is likely to occur over a period of time and will be comprised of several smaller developments as opposed to one large development. A key component of the plan is to ensure that the undeveloped parts of the site are used productively in the interim period as development occurs naturally. Portions of the site will be planted with grass and become a lawn space that can support a range of public events including concerts, movie nights, farmers' markets, seasonal events, and festivals. Other parts of the site will be turned into surface parking lots that are needed to support new development at Centre Square as well as existing businesses on Main Street and North Main Street. As development occurs, lawn spaces and surface parking lots can be converted into infill development sites. As infill development occurs on the site, a parking garage could be built to meet parking demand. A surface parking lot has been sized to accommodate a future parking garage when one is needed in the future.

The Master Plan is meant to guide future development of Centre Square and yet still be flexible. It is important to recognize that future development may not look exactly like what is depicted in the plan. Developers will need to conform to the city’s zoning and parking regulations. Similarly, the size and layout of buildings will be influenced by market forces as well as potential tenants. However, it is the intent of the plan that developers incorporate the underlying principles of the plan to the greatest extent possible.
What Is A Master Plan?

A Master Plan is a road map that will guide future development on the Centre Square site.
The Plan:

- Represents the community’s vision for future development on the Centre Square site
- Shows the general layout of roadways, buildings, public spaces, and parking areas
- Divides the site into smaller parcels that can be developed over time
- Identifies barriers to private development and recommends actions that the city can take to address those barriers
- Identifies infrastructure improvements that the city can make to support private development
- Is a marketing tool for prospective developers
Site Planning and Design
Ensure that the Master Plan aligns with the unique physical characteristics of the site as well as market realities.

Spring 2016
Existing Conditions Assessments Begin

Topics Evaluated
- Site Conditions
- Infrastructure
- Land Use + Zoning

- Market Conditions
- Transportation + Circulation
- Parking

Public Outreach
Ensure that the Master Plan reflects the community’s vision for Centre Square.

June 2016
Website Launched

Visioning

July 2016
Community Visioning Survey Released

July 2016
First Community Engagement Event

Project & City Coordination
Coordinate with related projects to ensure consistency and cohesion.

Spring 2016
Review Related Plans and Studies

Project Coordination
- Bristol Hospital
- Route 6 Corridor Study

- Downtown Streetscape Design
**Concept Design**

**August 2016**
Existing Conditions Assessments Completed

**Design Elements**
- Building Placement
- Building Size + Style
- Plazas + Green Spaces
- Roadway Layout
- Parking Areas
- Phasing + Implementation

**March 2017**
Draft Master Plan Released

**Design Refinement**

**August 2016**
Bond Community Engagement Event

**October 2016**
Visioning Survey Results Released

**March 2017**
Draft Master Plan Public Workshop

**Spring 2017**
Centre Square Master Plan

**Coordination**

**Summer + Fall 2016**
Project Updates to BDA Board and Downtown Committee

**City Coordination**
- Bristol Development Authority
- Mayors Office
- Department of Public Works
- Land Use Office
- Corporation Counsel
Centre Square

Public

OUTREACH
Project website and branding developed in spring 2016

- All project materials, including all presentations, can be found on the project website.

Thank you for your interest in the Redevelopment of Centre Square!

About the Project

The Bristol Development Authority is conducting a planning and design process to redevelop Centre Square – the former Bristol Centre Mall site. As we work to build a better Downtown Bristol, we seek to develop and implement a vision that is supported by the community and reality.

https://bristolcentresquare.com
Community Events

Two events held summer 2016

- July 19, 2016, at the Rockin’ Out at Rockwell Park Summer Festival
- August 20, 2016, at the Rockwell Park Summer Festival

Public participated in visual preferences exercises and provided feedback on conceptual site layouts.
Over 550 respondents (91% local residents) participated in an online visioning survey, answering a range of questions on demographics, future aspirations for downtown, and visual preferences.

Takeaways:

- Most people travel to downtown Bristol by car. Having adequate and conveniently located parking is crucial. People want to park once.

- People like the existing small businesses, historic buildings, and streetscaping.

- People would like to go shopping downtown – but need more variety first.

- Appearance and character, events, activities, and walkability strongly desired – can be addressed by city through infrastructure improvements and programming.

Discussion:

What’s The Right Density for Downtown Bristol?

![Image of different downtown density options]

- **A:** Main Street, Branford, CT
  - 1 to 3 story buildings
  - Surface parking at rear of buildings
  - Minimal space between buildings

- **B:** Blue Back Square, West Hartford CT
  - 4 and 5 story buildings
  - No surface parking
  - Minimal space between buildings

- **C:** Huntington Street, Shelton CT
  - 1 and 2 story buildings
  - Dedicated surface parking for each building
  - Large amounts of space in between buildings

**The Right Density: 73.4%**

**Too Dense: 54.9%**

**Not Dense Enough: 85.1%**

PREFERRED
**Visioning Survey**

**Favorite Public Space Designs**

- **Public Space** - Public plaza space is most desired; green space is second most desired. Active public spaces such as playgrounds and athletic facilities were the least desired.

- **Streetscapes** – Street trees, planters, and outdoor space for dining were preferred – physical and aesthetic improvements to the pedestrian environment.

- **Parking** – Angled on-street parking was preferred. Community was divided on off-street parking – slightly more respondents would park in a surface lot over a parking garage.

**Visual Preferences Takeaways:**

- **Buildings** – Medium-density street-facing buildings with parking areas behind were preferred. Traditional styles were preferred over contemporary styles.

**Visual preferences were incorporated into the Master Plan through a community-driven design process.**
Centre Square
OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS
Existing Conditions

Used to identify opportunities and constraints to development on the Centre Square site

- Site Conditions
- Infrastructure
- Land Use + Zoning
- Market Conditions
- Transportation + Circulation
- Parking
Constraints

- Gently sloping site rises 15 feet from North Main Street to the rail line, influencing building placement and orientation. Leveling the site is cost prohibitive.

- Buried conduits, steep slopes, and utility easements make it difficult to place buildings along the street in some locations.

- Site constraints make it challenging to satisfy zoning setback requirements in some areas.

- Challenging demographics and traffic volumes make it difficult to draw in regional or national-scale retailers.
Opportunities

• Development is likely to occur over a period of time; undeveloped portions of the site can become a community asset in the interim through events and programming.

• Excess road space on Riverside Avenue and North Main Street – could support additional on street parking and streetscape improvements to enhance the pedestrian experience.

• Internal roadway divides Centre Square into smaller development sites that are scaled appropriately to support local-scale businesses.

• Public plazas and green spaces are strategically located in constrained areas that cannot support buildings.

• Leverage ongoing downtown projects such as Bristol Hospital and recent call center (400 employees).
Centre Square
Plan
DEVELOPMENT
Plan Development Process

- Iterative process
- Began as conceptual "bubble" diagrams showing general layout of site
- Concepts became more detailed and refined based on public comments and existing conditions assessment.
Centre Square
Master
PLAN
Design Elements:

**Infrastructure**
- New central roadway and access drive divide site into smaller properties.
- Streetscape improvements on North Main Street, Riverside Avenue, and central roadway tie together Centre Square and the existing downtown.
- Excess road space on North Main Street and Riverside Avenue converted into additional on-street parking spaces.
- CT Transit and CTfastrak bus stop centrally located within site
- Several small interior parking areas scattered throughout the site
- Future parking garage can be accommodated on site if warranted.

**Buildings**
- Medium-density, two-story buildings similar to buildings in existing downtown
- Buildings placed along the street except in areas with steep terrain and utility easements

**Public Space**
- Public plaza on corner of North Main Street and Riverside Avenue - strategically placed on top of underground conduit and utility easements
- Pedestrian routes connect to many small open space areas scattered throughout the site.
- Temporary lawn area created in interim period - can be used for seasonal events, festivals, and other public events.
Cross-Sections

NORTH CREEK CONDUIT

TWO-STORY BUILDING AND EXTERIOR AMENITY SPACES

NORTH MAIN ST

ANGLED PARKING

PARALLEL PARKING

NORTH CREEK CONDUIT

TWO-STORY BUILDING AND EXTERIOR AMENITY SPACES
• Streetscape design currently underway for Main Street, Riverside Avenue, and North Main Street

• New sidewalks, street trees, and lighting

• Lane reconfigurations (road diet) on Riverside Avenue and North Main Street

• Curb extensions shorten pedestrian crossings

• Expanded on-street parking opportunities on Main Street (10 spaces), Riverside Avenue (46 spaces), and North Main Street (16 spaces) created from excess road space
Pedestrian Connections

- Open space areas along pedestrian routes provide gathering opportunities and encourage pedestrians to explore the entire site.
Pedestrian Connections

- Pedestrian Routes
- Open Space Areas
Phases do not necessarily need to be in consecutive order.
• Construct central roadway, bus stop, and associated amenities.
• Construct access drive, northern parking area, and associated amenities.

• Create central lawn open space along North Main Street that can be used for seasonal events, festivals, and other public events.
As development stages progress, open areas are converted to lawn public park space.

Winter events such as holiday light displays, Christmas tree sales, and recreational activities such as organized cross country skiing/snowshoeing lessons and a temporary ice skating rink encourage pedestrian use for all seasons.

Carnivals to climbing walls! - Vertical colorful event elements attract locals and visitors to the downtown as they drive by the site.

Autumn events such as pony rides, hay bale mazes, and pumpkin picking/mum sales in the open lawn spaces.

Options exist to reconfigure the six lanes of Riverside Avenue to increase parking and pedestrian amenities.

Farmers markets and swap meets bring color and active shopping experiences to the downtown.

Open lawn spaces and existing and new parking areas provide opportunities for movies in the lawn and even temporary drive-in theater experiences.

Food vendors bring multi-cultural eats to the downtown and provide a needed amenity when playing/relaxing in the open park.
- Two-story buildings (± 88,000 SF) placed along roadways
- Interior parking area, pedestrian plazas, landscaping, and amenities
As development occurs, open lawn spaces are converted into buildings, roadways, parking areas, and pedestrian amenities.
Phase II Area B1

- Two-story buildings (± 67,000 SF) placed along roadways
- Interior parking area, perimeter walkways, and associated amenities
• Infill development reduces size of Phase I parking area and develops sites along the rail line (± 37,000 SF).
Phase II Area B3

- Two-story building fronting Main Street (±16,000 SF) with parking area behind
• Municipality to jump start development

• Flexible development plan – building in stages as development warrants

• Potential for future parking garage
Potential View at Central Plaza
• Alternative site layout based on public comments

• Future parking garage relocated along railroad tracks - allows additional buildings fronting North Main Street across from Police Station.

• Access drive shifted closer to North Main Street interior parking areas

• Future pedestrian link to Main Street
Centre Square
NEXT STEPS

Ongoing Projects and Initiatives:
• Bristol Hospital Development
• Internal Roadway and Utility Design
• Riverside Avenue and North Main Street Streetscape Design

Recommended Future Actions:
• Downtown Bristol Parking Management Plan
• Site subdivision/property line revision
• Utility easement abandonment
• Grant applications for infrastructure improvements