

The Broad Street Redevelopment Project

The Challenge

After serving as a retail center for the town and surrounding region for several decades, Broad Street transitioned from a busy commercial shopping and service district to one suffering from significant vacancies and increasing numbers of blighted properties. While many businesses continued to thrive along the corridor, others, most notably the Broad Street Parkade, became vacant and blighted, contributing to a negative perception of the area.



Figure 1: For many years, the former Parkade site consisted of vacant, blighted buildings and created a negative perception of the community. (Photo Credit - Hartford Courant)

The Redevelopment Plan

There was great interest throughout the Manchester community in seeing the former Parkade site and other Broad Street properties redeveloped to catalyze the revitalization of the entire area. In 2008, the Manchester Board of Directors charged the Manchester Redevelopment Agency with producing a redevelopment plan for the Broad Street area to guide its future development. The primary goal of the redevelopment project was to replace blighted conditions with a quality development adding value to surrounding properties and creating a favorable investment climate throughout the redevelopment area.

The plan envisions Broad Street as a vibrant, functioning district attractive to visitors and with ample access to employment, shopping, services, public transit and recreation. A residential component is an important option that would provide customers for existing and future businesses and establish a sufficient level of pedestrian activity to create a lively environment.

Due to the size of the area, multiple property owners, the different degrees of occupancy and economic viability of various existing uses, the complicated nature of mixed-use development and dynamic market conditions, the redevelopment of Broad Street is a challenging project, which the Town and Redevelopment Agency expect to occur over an extended period. Below are some of the major milestones and accomplishments towards realizing the vision of the redevelopment plan.

Major Milestones



Figure 2: The Redevelopment Agency engaged property owners within the redevelopment area, various Town boards and commissions and the broader Manchester community to gather input on how to best revitalize the Broad Street area.

In September 2009, the Broad Street Redevelopment Plan was adopted, calling for a revitalized, vibrant, mixed-use district in the Broad Street redevelopment area. Broad Street is envisioned as a vibrant and attractive place with a mix of uses and activities where people of all ages will choose to live, work and play.

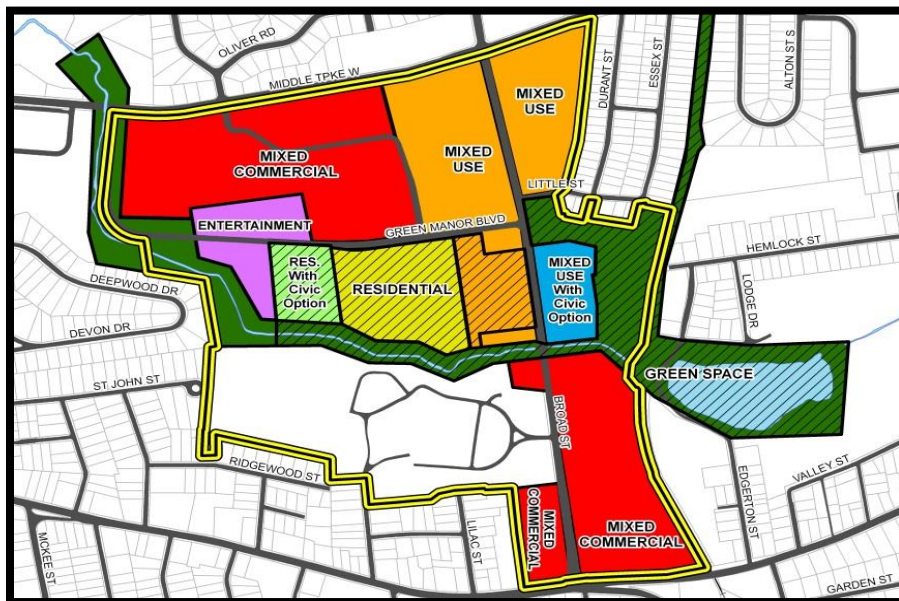


Figure 3: The Redevelopment Plan calls for transforming the Broad Street redevelopment area from an exclusively commercial district to a place with a mix of uses and activities

In November 2009, Manchester voters approved an \$8 million bond intended to redevelop and revitalize the Broad Street commercial area. The intended work included the extension of Center Springs Park to Broad Street, the construction of a greenway along Bigelow Brook, street, sidewalk and other infrastructure improvements, and the acquisition of property in the redevelopment area.

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Figure 4: Part of the vision calls for a sustainable, pedestrian-scale development as a desirable element for the future Broad Street area. (Source- *From Grey to Green: Sustainable Practices for Redeveloping a Vacant Shopping Center*, January 2010)

In 2010, the Town purchased the former Parkade site, gaining the necessary site control to enable future redevelopment by demolishing the blighted buildings and repackaging it for private development. The Town completed environmental investigations on both the Parkade site and vacant and blighted auto related businesses located across Broad Street.

The Town received a \$3 million grant from the State of Connecticut for the reconstruction of Broad Street. In 2011, final design was completed and the project was put out to bid.

In 2012, the blighted buildings of the former Parkade were demolished, while design concepts for a greenway along Bigelow Brook were developed.



Figure 5: 2012 saw the demolition of the blighted vacant buildings on the former Parkade site.

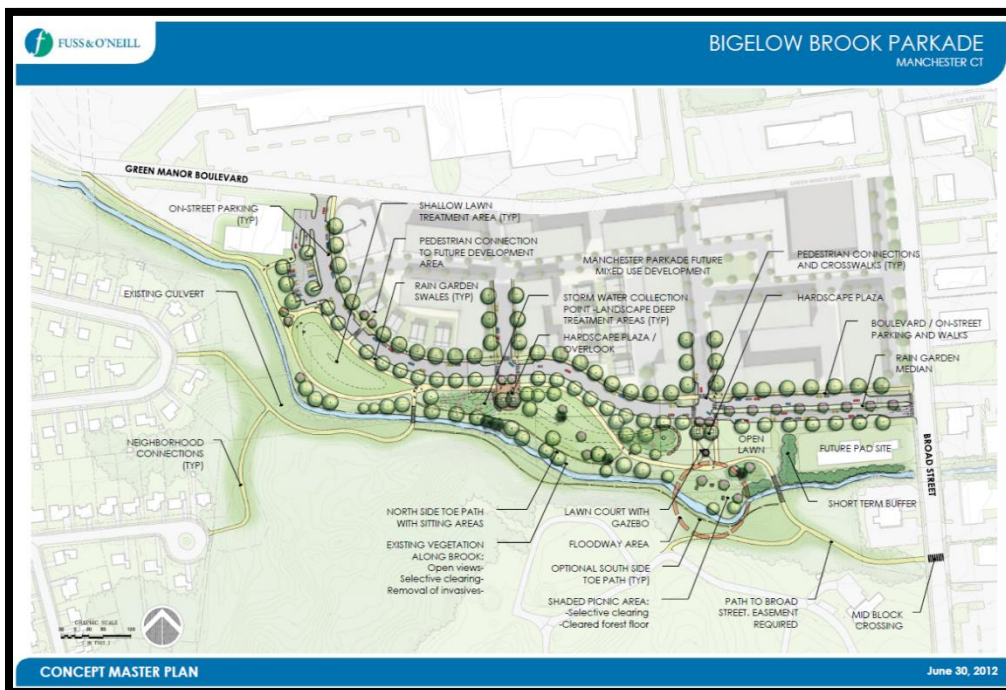


Figure 6: The development of a greenway to increase recreational opportunities is a primary element in the redevelopment plan

Also in 2012, new form-based zoning regulations for the redevelopment area were adopted by the Planning and Zoning Commission. The regulations encourage a mix of commercial, residential, entertainment, civic, and

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recreational uses within a pedestrian oriented development pattern, supported by attractive street designs and building forms.

In 2013, the Broad Street reconstruction was completed, including replacement of the water main and utility relocations, replacement of the Bigelow Brook culvert, new granite curbing and sidewalks on both sides of the street, new street pavement, new pedestrian lighting, landscaping and selected decorative pavement.



Figure 7: The Broad Street reconstruction work provided significant infrastructure upgrades to the area. Work included creating a uniform street width along the entire roadway, constructing uniform curbing and sidewalks on both sides of the street, eliminating unnecessary curb cuts to improve traffic flow, improving storm water management, milling and repaving the entire street and various landscape improvements.

In 2014, three vacant and blighted auto related businesses, which had been acquired by the Town, were demolished.

The Agency also engaged Montreal-based developer LiveWorkLearnPlay (LWLP) to conduct an economic and market analysis to identify viable redevelopment opportunities. LWLP recommended pursuing a health/medical institution as an anchor tenant, with some supporting residential uses and retail service uses.

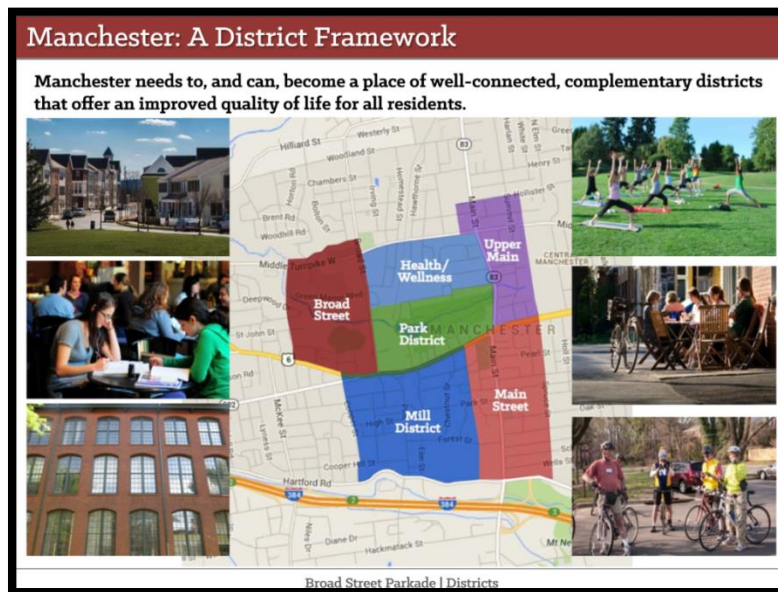


Figure 8: Live Work Learn Play encourages the Town and Redevelopment Agency to think in a district framework and leverage the Broad Street redevelopment process to strengthen adjacent areas in town.

In 2015, the LWLP team produced a conceptual development and business plan for the redevelopment project.

Construction on a new pedestrian bridge at the Cheney Rail Trail at the western edge of Center Springs Park was completed, furthering the plan to extend the park to Broad Street.



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In 2016, the Redevelopment Agency and Town entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with LiveWorkLearnPlay (LWLP). The agreement places LWLP in the position of master developer, assigning them exclusive development rights to the property for two years. The agreement allows LWLP to move on to predevelopment and planning functions at their own risk and cost. LWLP will pursue anchor and secondary tenants and development, property management and financial partners to deliver a high-quality project to Broad Street.

In 2017, the extension of Center Springs Park to Broad Street was officially completed, achieving a significant milestone in the Redevelopment Plan by connecting the park to the Broad Street corridor. Center Springs Park is now more visible and accessible, while the redevelopment area has gained a recreational amenity, adding value to the district.



Figure 9: Before and after images of the Center Springs Park Broad Street entrance. Top - Facing east into park; Bottom- Facing west towards Broad Street.

In April 2018, the Redevelopment Agency and Town resolved long-standing legal issues regarding an easement on the former Parkade site and adjacent properties, thus removing a significant barrier to redevelopment efforts. As part of the agreement to dissolve the issue, the Town acquired 296 Broad Street, adding an additional 3.8 acres to the buildable redevelopment site.

In May 2018, the federal government designated census tracts 5145 and 5147 as official Opportunity Zones. The Town's Opportunity Zones include the former Parkade site and the west side of Broad Street, along with much of the Downtown central business district. Opportunity Zones are designed to spur economic development by providing tax incentives for investors who invest new capital in businesses operating within their boundaries.

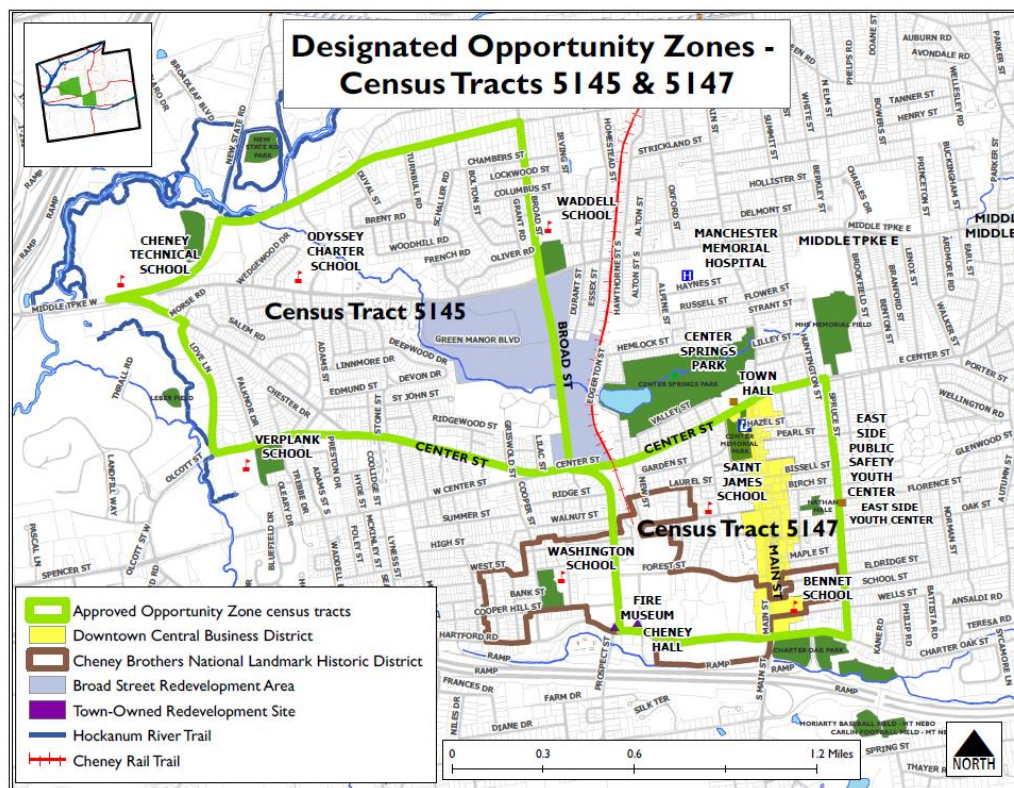


Figure 10: The Town's designated Opportunity Zones incorporate much of the Broad Street Redevelopment area and the entirety of the Downtown central business district.

Since 2019 the Redevelopment Agency has been working with the private sector to achieve redevelopment of the now long-vacant Broad Street Parkade.

In 2021 the Town was notified of \$3 million in State Bond funds for the implementation of a Master Plan for Center Springs Park. As part of that approval, the Town hopes to be able to better connect the park to the Parkade site through a mixed-use trail and direct connection Bigelow Brook Greenway, which would be constructed in large part by the Parkade private developer.

In May 2024 the Board of Directors authorized the Town Manager to sign a development agreement with Anthony Properties out of Dallas, TX for the development of the Broad Street Parkade property. Anthony was

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the successful respondent to a public procurement process directed by the Redevelopment Agency. The agreement calls for Anthony to develop the Parkade property into 300+ units of multifamily housing and associated amenities and commercial uses, construct the long-sought Greenway along Bigelow Brook, upgrade water sewer infrastructure on and around the site and reconstruct Green Manor Blvd. from Broad Street to the Parkade Cinemas property.