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## **Brookfield is a wonderful place to call home - by Betsy Paynter**

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Betsy Paynter, Town of Brookfield

Brookfield, CT is a wonderful place to call home, for both residents and business owners. Located in Fairfield County in southwestern CT, a 20 square mile town, Brookfield is a quintessential New England town. Being strategically located between metropolitan areas of NYC, New Haven, Hartford and Boston, makes Brookfield an appealing location for industry to move their products with ease. Vehicular access exists along Interstate 84, running east-west from Pennsylvania through Brookfield to Hartford and onto Boston. U.S. Rtes. 7, 25 and 202 intersect I-84 within Brookfield. It's convenient proximity to interstate highways, air and rail transportation along with a highly skilled work force make Brookfield a great place to do business.

The town is boarded by two beautiful lakes; Candlewood Lake and Lake Lillinonah, along with miles of hiking trails with sprawling open space for residents to enjoy. Federal Rd. provides a commercial corridor of superior shopping plus industrial areas which together create a strong commercial tax base and allows for one of the lowest tax rates in the region.

The Brookfield town center, located in northern Brookfield along Rte. 202, is undergoing a "Renaissance." Recent zone changes have allowed for mixed use development in the town center, attracting investors now developing commercial space on the ground level with residential opportunities above. The town has supported this development with the recent installation of "Complete Streets" streetscape including sidewalks, crosswalks, granite curbing, pedestrian lighting, park benches, bicycle lane and additional amenities. Phase 1 of the streetscape is currently under construction with completion anticipated by the end of the year. Phase 2 will pick up in 2018, both phases are fully funded.

"Brookfield Village" is a mixed-use development, currently under construction within the Brookfield's Town Center. This development consists of four buildings with approximately 25,000 s/f of commercial space and 72 apartments with an affordable unit mix above. This new investment within the town center has encouraged other property owners to upgrade their properties with expansions and façade improvements.

A recent addition to the town center is The Still River Greenway Trail, a two mile, 10 ft. wide, paved

path for pedestrian and cyclists to enjoy. The greenway trail meanders through the economic hub of the town center into the neighboring woodlands up to the municipal campus home of the town hall, police station, senior center, fire station, U.S. post office and parks & recreation athletic fields. The greenway is a very popular location where neighbors and families to meet for walking, cycling and exercise.

Art and culture elements are available in town for residents to enjoy. Art and theater are an addition to the attractive quality of life in Brookfield. The Brookfield craft center is a gem within the region. It's recognized as one of the finest professional schools for creative study in America, dedicated to teaching traditional and contemporary craft skills, and fostering the appreciation of fine craftsmanship. Classes range from wood turning, blacksmith, jewelry making, pottery and more. Their website has information on the various classes, [www.brookfieldcraft.org](http://www.brookfieldcraft.org).

The Brookfield Theater for the Arts is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to providing quality community theater and educational opportunities in the Brookfield area. Their regular season consists of five shows, providing a meaningful and entertaining experience that will appeal to a wide ranging audience. Check out their website to learn more at [www.brookfieldtheatre.org](http://www.brookfieldtheatre.org).

Brookfield is looking to enhance the quality of life and business environment by examining the town's zoning regulations. Consultants, Milone & MacBroom, have been commissioned to help the town rewrite their zoning regulations. The current regulations haven't had an overhaul in 50+ years. This is an effort to clarify the regulations, make the regulations user friendly, help with economic development and move the town through the next 50 years of development.

There are multiple size parcels of vacant and/or under developed commercial land available for development within the town's borders. Brookfield offers opportunities for industrial, professional, retail and residential development. It's an exciting time in Brookfield.

Betsy Paynter is the Economic & Community Development manager for the Town of Brookfield, Conn.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540