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Activity underway and opportunities exist for development in the Windsor Locks Main St. area

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The Main St. area has fantastic highway access via I-91 and Rtes. 159 and 140. It has a major employer in Ahlstrom which has invested over \$100 million in its Windsor Locks plant over the last five years and produces a wide array of goods including bacteria-resistant fabrics that doctors wear while treating patients, to tea bags and the fabric that makes baby wipes. The Main St. area is an important small business and commercial district with approximately 70 establishments calling this area home. The area is a center of local government and services such as Town Hall, the Public Library, Windsor Locks Middle School, the Post Office, and the Senior Center. The area also boasts the Windsor Locks Canal Trail along the Connecticut River which extends 4.5 miles into neighboring Suffield and Pesci Park for residents to enjoy. There are hundreds of residents living in a wide range of housing types within walking distance of these businesses, government and community facilities and recreational venues. To top it all off Windsor Locks Main St. has historical assets such as the old Amtrak Station which the Windsor Locks Preservation Association is actively trying to restore, the Montgomery Mill complex which is the subject of a condominium development and Memorial Hall operated by the American Legion. A great deal of activity is currently underway in the Main St. area and opportunities exist for new business development.

The Town of Windsor Locks has selected a team of consultants to prepare a Main Street Area Master Planning Study. The team of Amadon & Associates, Ferrero Hixon Associates (www.ferrerohixon.com), and Fuss & O'Neill will address market forces affecting Windsor Locks Main St. and make recommendations related to physical improvements and business development opportunities. The purpose of the Main St. study is to investigate ways in which the community can tie all of the assets which are listed above together into a cohesive whole. A blog has been established to encourage public feedback related to the Main St. study. Please visit - www.wlmainstreet.blogspot.com and give you feedback and comments. The study is being funded through a \$5,000 grant through the Connecticut Main Street Center and Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism which will supplement \$40,000 in town funds.

A developer with tremendous experience in mill conversions is in the preliminary planning stages for the conversion of the Montgomery Mill Complex into residential condominiums which would add "feet on the street" for the Main St. area. A unique indoor family entertainment attraction, Monster Mini Golf, has opened in Dexter Plaza to great fanfare (www.monsterminigolf.com). Construction has begun on a new 14,000 s/f Walgreens Pharmacy which will add vitality to downtown.

The State of Connecticut Department of Transportation is studying a new commuter rail line running 64 miles from New Haven to Springfield. Windsor Locks will also have a connecting bus service to Bradley International Airport. The improvements slated for the Windsor Locks train station could provide opportunities to encourage transit oriented development. The commuter rail service would

run both ways between New Haven and Springfield every 30 minutes during peak demand periods and 60 minutes off-peak. State officials hope that the line would begin running sometime in 2011. The ConnDOT website has more information about this exciting project. We are pursuing one of the Main St. consulting team's initial recommendations to seek the relocation of the Amtrak site from its current location on the outskirts of downtown to the vicinity of the historic train station site.

One property that would benefit from a relocated train station site is the Windsor Locks Commons which is on the market by the Lombard Group for \$3 million. The Plaza is 32,000 s/f and was built in 1988. For more details visit their website at <http://www.lombardgroup.com>.

If you are interested in properties for sale or space for lease in the Main St. area or have other business needs then contact the Windsor Locks Economic and Industrial Development Commission at wleidc@sbcglobal.net. You can also view the new Windsor Locks website at www.windsorlocksct.org.

Steve Wawruck is first selectman for the Town of Windsor Locks.

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