

## What does Halls Road have going for it that other towns' strip malls don't?

1. The Halls Road commercial district is Old Lyme's main commercial area. There are other pockets of commerce near Rogers Lake and along the beach areas, but none as concentrated and central as Halls Road.
2. The state owned right-of-way (RoW) is very broad compared to other places along the Boston Post Road.
  - a. This condition means the public improvements of sidewalks, bike lanes, lighting, and landscaping have ample room to exist before any new buildings are developed.
  - b. Also the fact that all the buildings are another 60' back from the RoW means new buildings could be built without interrupting existing commerce. Once they are built, existing tenants can relocate into new, energy efficient buildings rather than face lengthy renovations to older properties.
3. An opportunity for an iconic pedestrian bridge.
  - a. The beautiful Lieutenant River is mostly overlooked where it is crossed by Halls Road. By making a pedestrian bridge at the old 1920s bridge abutment citizens can access the views north along the river toward the Florence Griswold Museum and RTP Estuary Center.
  - b. The connection, geared to the pace of walking and biking, also joins to historic Lyme Street where the original mixed-use town center once flourished.
  - c. The future Halls Road district is no longer a strip center that can only be reached by car. People live in the district, shop and work there and can connect for their morning walk to the rest of the town and its cultural center.
4. As a finite stretch of land, 7/10ths of a mile, Halls Road has a beginning and end to it. This small geographic area helps to create the feel of a village center.
  - a. Lyme Street to the east, connects to Old Lyme's historic center and its growing cultural district. This represents somewhere to go to beyond the commercial center on Halls Road.
  - b. Neck Road /Rte. 156 to the west, this connects to the Baldwin Bridge/I-95 and the access to the beaches in one direction and to the rural town of Lyme in the other.
5. Other towns have less defined strip centers
  - a. Example 1: Guilford's Rte. 1 is a continuous sprawl of strip malls that have drawn commerce away from its beautiful town green. There would be no reason to try to convert these strip centers into an alternate town center. There are too many of them spread over too great a distance. Besides, the Guilford Green is the place to rejuvenate and refocus their commercial center.
  - b. Example 2: East Lyme also has a continuous sprawl of shopping centers. One area looking much like the other, there is no geographic focus to these. Although East Lyme has recently added the Costco 'center' to the north, the town has successfully refurbished its original core: Niantic Village.
    - i. With an early development of a master plan they have successfully followed its' guidelines with eased parking restrictions, new multi-family housing beyond the

- existing commercial streetscape, and gotten grants to introduce pedestrian level lighting, new sidewalks, bike lanes, and crosswalks.
  - ii. Without the comprehensive planning process this street could have become another strip center, lost its existing character and never approached the success it has today.
- 6. Most towns develop organically
  - a. Example 1: East Haddam has been attempting to bring more commerce to its center but until recently no actual planning seems to have been done.
    - i. We see on the west side of the CT River the beginnings of an unplanned sprawl of chain stores, gas stations, and small retail services.
    - ii. On the east side of the CT River, the historic opera house and many other beautiful buildings are the original core of East Haddam. Proposals have been made recently to redevelop this section with multifamily housing, a green and some commercial buildings. While these plans are very broad they seem to only relate to the areas being developed and not connect to the original fabric of the town. Perhaps with a Master Plan for the whole area a more complete center could be considered.
  - b. Example 2: Chester Village was a thriving town in its early mill days that stood mostly forgotten in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
    - i. Several town leaders saw the opportunity to do something with these fairly rundown buildings that were built right up against the street. Today we all know Chester Village as one of the best locations for good restaurants and shop-able browsing.
    - ii. The mill stream that originally served the town's industry needed to be completely reengineered to protect all the recent investments in the village. This was done over the course of a year or more but still, the thriving village center carried on as folks walked over temporary walk ways to get to their favorite restaurants.
- 7. The town of Old Lyme has invested in planning for the future along Halls Road. It is aiming to ensure the town's main commercial area can thrive in changing 21<sup>st</sup> century conditions. To get there, both public improvements and new zoning options are needed. If we do not work towards the plan as set out, the district will be facing 21<sup>st</sup> century conditions using plans geared to the 1950s.