



Economic Development Strategy

Groton, CT

2019-2023



Playbook



www.camoinassociates.com

What is the Playbook?

Simply put, the Playbook was created to act as a reference to support Groton's economic development team plan and strategize tactics that will ultimately bring success. The following pages contain additional technical information on how to implement some of the projects and initiatives listed in the Implementation Matrix.

The following goals and initiatives are detailed in the Playbook:

Goal 1. Increase the percentage of people who both live and work in Groton.

A. Diversify, modernize, and grow the housing stock.

Goal 2. Shape Groton's pockets of economic activity into places where people connect.

B. Thames Street: Promenade Report

Goal 5. Grow and diversify existing and emerging opportunities.

A. Strengthen connections with existing business community.

B. Focus attraction efforts on targeted sectors.

Goal 1. Increase the percentage of people who both live and work in Groton.

The Town has made it a priority to attract a larger portion of workers to both live and work in Groton by creating healthy neighborhoods and mixed-use commercial nodes that have quality housing and access to amenities and recreational resources. The following provides step-by-step tactics for planning and implementing a strategy to achieve this goal.

A. Diversify, modernize, and grow the housing stock.

Housing creates community. It is the foundation of the built environment. To ensure the long-term wellbeing of the town, Groton must support a diverse, accessible housing stock that allows people, regardless of age, income, or life stage, the opportunity to live and work locally and take ownership of the community.

Current trends forecast increased demand for housing in Groton and the surrounding region, due in particular to ongoing hiring at Electric Boat. In addition, continued declines in average household size means demand for housing units will grow faster than the population. Dominated by single-family homes, Groton currently lacks appropriate housing to meet the specific demands anticipated based on emerging trends.

Young adult and senior demographic segments are expected to represent the majority of new demand for housing units, creating a distinct challenge. Young households tend to rent in their twenties but purchase in their thirties. Housing units that appeal to younger renters and buyers should be affordable, closer to work and have more amenities than in the past. Seniors who downsize are likely seeking a townhouse, condo, or other non-single-family home style. The following steps are intended to facilitate development of new housing options that are not currently in the market.

Task Area 1 - Collect and Document Housing Market Intelligence

Using the regional housing study as a baseline, determine what additional research needs to be conducted into Groton's specific housing market opportunities and emerging housing trends, including product types, price points, etc.

On a quarterly basis, check MLS and local providers of housing market trend data. Reach out to local realtors and property managers to collect anecdotal feedback about what prospective residents are looking for in the market.

Task Area 2 - Identify Key Multi-Family Development Areas

Create a list of properties that are candidates for multi-family development or re-development. Talk to property owners to understand their goals and objectives.

Identify neighborhoods and nodes that are candidates for multi-family housing development. Review the zoning in those areas to ensure they allow for different types of housing and development design; including accessory apartments and accessory buildings, pocket neighborhoods, multi-family, smaller units, efficiencies, etc.

Task Area 3 - Educate and Engage Local Stakeholders and the Development Community

Create marketing materials about housing to explain market opportunities to developers, property owners, realtors, and others. Inform with stories and housing market intelligence. Tell the story of Electric Boat growth. Inform realtors about initiatives underway to increase the housing stock.

Elevate housing expertise of local leadership and decision makers. Raise awareness about how housing is integral to workforce and workforce is integral to Economic Development. Show the fiscal benefit of multi-family housing and create a promotional infographic. Place someone with housing expertise on the economic development commission. Work more closely with Housing Authority. Share information between Town and City.

Host a Housing Forum to facilitate collaboration among major employers, financial institutions, and the development community. Invite regional partners to participate as appropriate.

Goal 2. Shape Groton's pockets of economic activity into places where people connect.

B. Thames Street

Promenade Report - Overview

Completed in 2019, The Thames Street Promenade Report is a redevelopment analysis of the Thames Street/ Bridge Street neighborhood in the City of Groton. This high level, policy- oriented document will continue to assist in guiding City staff and leadership to further redevelopment activities in the neighborhood. The report provides a plan of action including conceptual-level strategies for strengthening the sense of place and vitality of the area as well as an outline of real estate and physical improvement recommendations to serve as a guide for future investment.

Historically, Thames Street has served as the downtown for the City of Groton, offering a collection shops and small businesses. However, changing lifestyles, demographics, and a multitude of other dynamics have caused the City's historic core to suffer from disinvestment. Despite disinvestment, the Thames Street/ Bridge Street neighborhood has maintained strong foundational elements. City staff and leadership seek to reinvigorate the neighborhood through a focused effort of preserving and enhancing the neighborhoods potential through a series of targeted interventions.

To re-energize Thames Street as a vibrant, active coastal neighborhood City of Groton staff seek to:

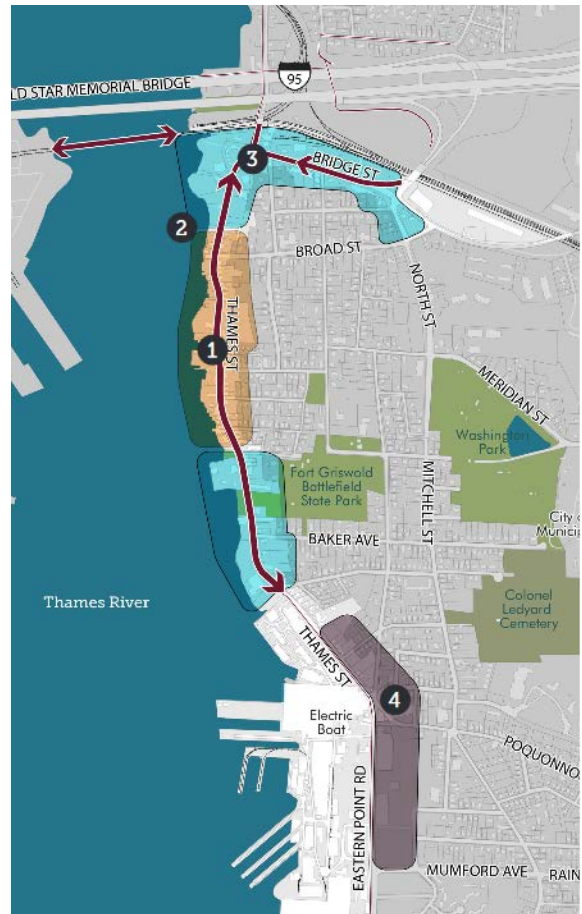
- ◆ Update approaches to development regulations specifically density and parking to encourage redevelopment.
 - Zoning change considerations:
 - Multi Family: Current zoning does not support mid-density apartment developments. Due to lower height restrictions (25'- 35') current zoning favors lower density, detached building, with fewer units per building. In addition, buildings cannot exceed 160 ft. long, nor a density of one unit per 4,000 sq. ft. per site area.
 - Parking Regulations: During the analysis the City's parking requirements were noted as an inhibitor to development. Specifically:
 - Minimum parking requirements are high.
 - Using a shared parking model requires a permanent deed restriction (see 7.1.C.2)
 - Design Considerations: Standards are broadly defined which creates some flexibility regarding how it is interpreted architecturally. However, it also creates a dynamic of uncertainty regarding community reaction to a design concept.
- ◆ Engage with local businesses and property owners about development tools and community activities.
- ◆ Actively pursue avenues to increase access to the Thames Street waterfront

Strategies

To strength, sense of place and vitality of the area include:

1. Leveraging Thames Center to maximize its value as a walkable historic coastal village

- ◆ Groton's Historic Downtown; Designation on the National Register of Historic Places (Groton Bank)
- ◆ Strategies:
 - Preserve the historic character and scale of the Center
 - Focus on activating the vacant properties and empty buildings by working with property owners on pop-up activates that can serve as a draw.
 - Experiment with parking options:
 - Allow shared parking arrangements
 - Create some on-street parking
 - Develop public parking on the edges of the Center.
 - Bury power line (Long term)
- ◆ Improvements:
 - Create additional public parking: There's potential for approximately 15 additional on-street parking spaces along Thames Street from Puffins Restaurant to Latham Street.
 - Thames Street re-stripping of on-street parking spaces, center lines, edge lines, and stop bars.
 - Improvements to enhance walkability and clam traffic include pedestrian crossing islands and curb extensions.



2. Enhancing the waterfront to become an amenity that can draw people to Thames Street.

- ◆ Groton's waterfront and historic core are the area's best assets from an amenity perspective. Enhanced access could serve as an important draw. Moreover, several waterfront businesses may benefit from the ability to leverage their location and should be encouraged to do so.
- ◆ Strategies:
 - Perform a more detailed analysis to determine feasibility of a "boardwalk" along the riverfront. The boardwalk may need to loop down to the water and return to the sidewalk from time to time.
 - Leverage planned build-out of Thames View Park for enhanced public access to the waterfront through creation of piers, floating docks, and other temporary structures to experiment.

- Encourage local businesses to activate their waterfronts using info sharing sessions and meetings to provide ideas and examples
- Acquire some additional water access/ parcels to build out more public access points through easements, incentives, and selected acquisitions.
- Consider creating public access requirements on new developments that are not single family. Offer development incentives for enhanced public access

3. Concentrating denser development at Upper Thames Street/ Bridge Street to take advantage of the topography, parcel sizes, and limited flood zone issues.

- ◆ Residential growth is vital. Given the demographics of the neighborhood, it should be a priority to create denser housing to support more households to sustain a vibrant street.
- ◆ Upper Thames and Bridge Street make the most sense for a variety of reasons:
 - Larger parcels and reduced flood risk make the area more amenable to development
 - Higher vacancy and underutilized parcels present opportunity for redevelopment
 - The topography is such that taller buildings can be built without obstructing view corridors.
- ◆ Strategies:
 - Rezone the area to support a mix of residential and commercial uses
 - Create a gateway to the area:
 - The intersection of Bridge Street and I-95 on/off ramps provides an opportune site for a gateway.
 - The creation of a gateway welcoming visitors to the area will enhance the sense of place.
 - Improve general walkability and bike ability in the area
 - Create a public plaza to create sense of place.

4. Creating a buffer area around Electric Boar to enhance security and create a potential expansion zone for suppliers and EB itself.

- ◆ EB is a critical component of the region's economy. Reducing potential conflicts and expansion options are an important planning consideration.
- ◆ A buffer strategy is a typical approach to reduce conflict between marine industrial uses and others.
- ◆ This approach also lessens security risk by providing some separation between the facility and non-EB related development.
- ◆ Strategies:
 - A zoning overlay that limits heights of buildings surrounding the EB facility to less than 50ft
 - A special permit requirement related to any new development within a set distance.
 - Examination of development capacity along Poquonnock Rd to see if additional density can be supported.

Recommendations

For real estate and physical improvements, include:

Near Term

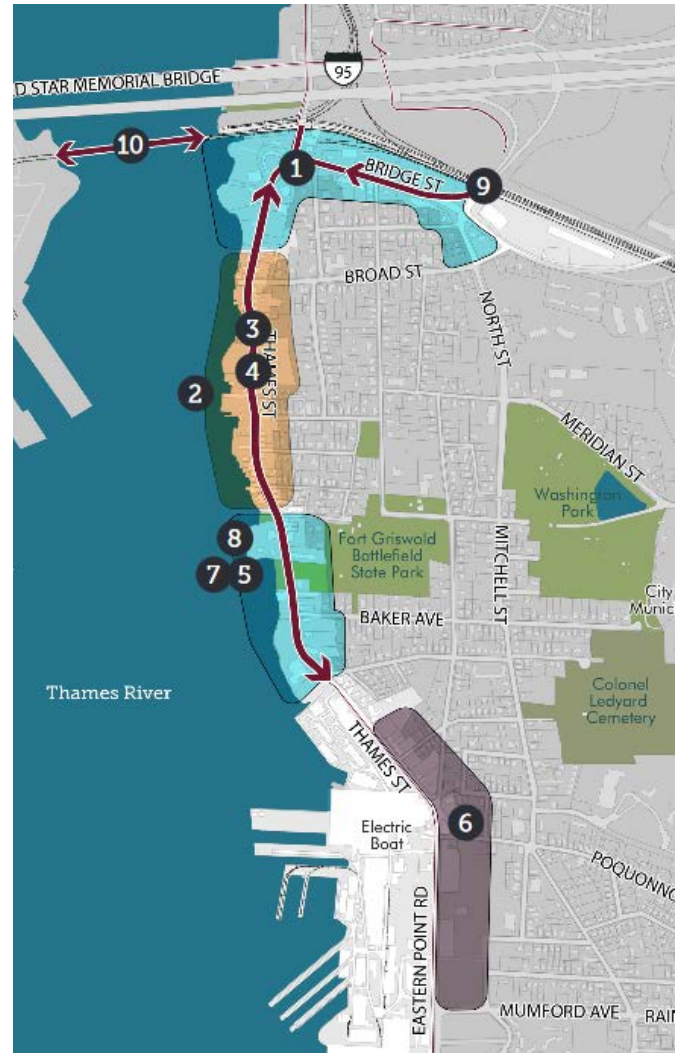
1. Best development opportunity based on parcel size, site control, flood zone (requires re-zoning)
2. Potential floating boardwalk or docks, will require coordination with DEEP
3. Area for historic preservation, storefronts, pedestrian-friendly attractions, select infill development, and water access
4. On-street parking option, paint cross walks
5. Create municipal parking lot as a transitional strategy.
6. Create buffer zone around EB through zoning mechanism

Long Term

1. City-own land could be opened up to stronger development opportunity if item 8 occurs
2. Relocate water treatment plant out of flood hazard and sea level rise zones
3. Improve gateway into district & bike access to Gold Start Bridge Path.
4. Create cantilevered bike path beside rail bridge

To read the full report please visit:

<http://cityofgroton.com/ped/trr/>



Goal 5. Grow and diversify existing and emerging opportunities.

A. Strengthen connections with existing business community.

Task Area 1 - Continue the Town and City's Business Visitation Programs and regularly share and assess findings

The following provides background and detailed tactics for continued implementation of a business visitation program. This aligns with and provides more detailed action plan to *Goal 5 - Grow and diversify existing and emerging opportunities* and more specifically 5A. *Strengthen connections with existing business community.*

The Town and City both have formal business visitation programs which are working well. They also are both working on coordinating efforts and sharing findings to learn more about the business environment in both the Town and City as well as coordinate follow-up responses and actions as appropriate.

City Business Visitation Program

Business retention and expansion goals include:

- ◆ Establishing strong relationships between City businesses, economic development staff and commission
- ◆ Better connections between City businesses, the community and economic development efforts
- ◆ Collect and analysis data to better understand current and projected needs
- ◆ Provide business and development friendly websites
- ◆ Support and host community events.

Business visitation goals include:

- ◆ Provide City businesses with a convenient and personalized opportunity to be introduced to tools that can assist in business growth.
- ◆ Discover areas of strength and weakness in our local economy.
- ◆ Educate on current or upcoming plans and projects.
- ◆ Stakeholder engagement and participation.

The City of Groton launched their Business Visitation Program in 2019 with an introductory letter through its Economic Development Commission. City businesses are visited by the City's newly established Economic Development Specialist, who serves as their point of contact at City Hall.

Town Business Visitation Program

History of the Groton Business Outreach Program

- ◆ 2016 - Two of the recommended priority initiatives per the Economic and Market Trends Analysis for the Town were a) Create a stand-alone economic development website for marketing Groton; and b) Start a formal business visitation program.
- ◆ 2017 - Town Economic Development Commission initiated business outreach visits to support the work of the Office of Planning and Development Services (OPDS)
- ◆ 2018 - OPDS launched its new website - www.exploremoregroton.com and new digital monthly newsletter - Groton Economic Development Update.
- ◆ 2019 - EDC began the Card-for-Card approach to streamline the process and accomplish a fourfold increase in the number of business outreach visits.

Purpose of the Business Outreach Program

"Business Outreach is about building relationships and conversations with our local businesses. It is the best mechanism for checking the pulse of the business community." Paige Bronk - Manager of Economic and Community Development, OPDS.

Tools for Business Outreach Card-for-Card Program

- ◆ POST CARD called 'EXPLORE MORE FOR YOUR BUSINESS'
- ◆ BUSINESS OUTREACH VISIT REPORT FORM (available in digital and printed format)
- ◆ NOTEBOOK to jot reminder notes of each visit for reference when completing the report form (optional)
- ◆ NOTECARD w/ Envelope to mail a personalized follow-up thank you to businesses (optional)

Card-For-Card Program Steps

- ◆ Select the businesses you want to visit from the available list by contacting Lauren Post of OPDS at lpost@groton-ct.gov or by phone 860.446.5960
- ◆ While presenting the Post Card, spend a few minutes at each business talking with the owner/manager/supervisor or other employee to explain about the Town's new website and value of joining the digital newsletter mailing list. If possible, have a two-way conversation to obtain information helpful to OPDS as outlined on the Business Outreach Visit Report Form. The key to success is to conduct each visit in a way which suits the business situation and your personal style.
- ◆ Obtain a Business Card from each business visited.
- ◆ Complete as much information as you can on a Business Outreach Visit Report Form. Submit it with their Business Card to Lauren Post.
- ◆ When you are ready for more supplies, contact Lauren Post.
- ◆ Need other help? Ask OPDS - Paige Bronk (pbronk@groton-ct.gov) or Sam Eisenbeiser (seisenbeiser@groton-ct.gov) and EDC - Catherine Young (cyoung@grotonctedc@gmail.com)

B. Focus attraction efforts on targeted sectors.

The following provides step by step tactics for planning and implementing a strategy to attract businesses to the Town and City of Groton. This aligns with and provides more detailed action plan to *Goal 5 - Grow and diversify existing and emerging opportunities* and more specifically *5A - Focus attraction efforts on targeted sectors*.

Task Area 1 - Focus Targeted Industries

Understand and prioritize targeted Industry sectors, sub-sectors, cross-sectors – This task area has already completed through past and recent market analyses for the Town of Groton and the Region.

From 2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for The Southeastern Connecticut Economic Development District - www.secter.org/cedds/

- ◆ Tourism Industry
- ◆ Healthcare Services Industry
- ◆ Defense Industry
- ◆ Energy and Environment Industry
- ◆ Bioscience Industry
- ◆ Agriculture, Fishing & Food Production
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- ◆ Creative Industry
- ◆ Advanced Manufacturing Industry
- ◆ Maritime Industry

From 2016 VHB/Camoin Economic & Market Trends Analysis, Town of Groton, CT

- ◆ Tourism-Based (accommodations, retail, food services, entertainment and recreation)
- ◆ Health Care
- ◆ Business and Professional Services (finance, insurance, real estate, and professional services)
- ◆ Manufacturing

Taken together and to insure alignment, those that best lend themselves to business attraction and are therefore the initial focus areas are:

- ◆ Advanced Manufacturing including Defense
- ◆ Energy and Environment
- ◆ Bioscience
- ◆ Agriculture, Fishing, & Food Production
- ◆ Maritime Industry

Industry trends change rapidly, and these should be tracked and reported on annually and adjusted as warranted.

Task Area 2 - Prepare Targeted Industry Profiles

Using data, information, analysis - summarize advantages and opportunities for each target group - make the case for why to invest in Groton. Focus on what sets you apart? Specific recommended marketing materials include the following (some of which are already in place).

Create web pages to provide overview and opportunities for business and economic development in Groton. This should provide clear, updated, and easily accessible information on:

- ◆ Overview of Town and City, key and districts
- ◆ Businesses and testimonials from existing businesses – why they like being there
- ◆ Available properties
- ◆ Amities, infrastructure, and utilities
- ◆ Comparative tax rates
- ◆ Support programs and incentives
- ◆ Regional and local labor market
- ◆ Maps and visuals
- ◆ How to contact

Provide updates on activities and opportunities on social media including Twitter and LinkedIn.

Produce a marketing packet with information cut sheets on each of the targeted industry sectors.

Keep site and property information updated on CERC SiteFinder.

Task Area 7 - Conduct Initial Intelligence and Competitiveness Campaign and Detailed Attraction Tactical Plan

Conduct Initial Intelligence and Competitiveness Campaign - Design and conduct digital survey and phone interviews with sample of site locators and businesses within potential targets to further understand and test market potential and asses competitiveness in the market.

Business Attraction Tactical Plan - Based on Initial Intelligence and Competitiveness Campaign create a tactical plan to:

- ◆ Refine and prioritize industry targets
- ◆ Prioritize geographic areas to attract from (states, regions, country)
- ◆ Specifies and prioritizes tactics to implement among:
 - Trade shows
 - Lead generation
 - Other marketing channels and tactics

If warranted by the Intelligence Campaign, Develop Qualified Business Leads (business information including contact information for businesses potentially interested in making a move such as relocation or expansion).

For each industry target group identify and prioritize geographic areas (country, state, region) of where you want to draw businesses from. This should be based on data regarding investment and employment trends and needs of targeted industry/subindustry/cross-section. It must be tied to the Groton business case.

For each industry target group identify and prioritize trade shows to attend and conduct meetings.

Develop list and database of "qualified" leads. Note would likely require services of lead generation firm and or partnership with state or regional attraction agency. It requires access to quality and updated industry databases as well as business intelligence gathered over time. As an output for this process this task provides contact info and business intelligence of companies seeking or likely to consider relocation, expansion, location.

Implement Attraction Campaign

- ◆ Conduct call campaign to connect to prioritized leads and set up meetings. Meeting can be phone, site visit, and meetings at trade sector events.
- ◆ Track all intelligence and communications in CRM database.
- ◆ Follow up with leads - occasional check in for status or additional information needed.
- ◆ Keep marketing materials and channels up to date with data, information, cases, stories: web site, cut sheets, etc.
- ◆ Note: best practices indicate these efforts are most successful when coordinated with state and regional partners.

Budget Range for Major Items

The following is a rough estimate of what such efforts would cost for a modest campaign.

- ◆ Task Area 1 - Targeted Industry Assessment – completed based on existing plans and studies
- ◆ Task Area 2 – Update and Prepare Marketing Material – staff time plus \$15-\$20K for initial costs plus \$6-\$10K annually after year one for updates and maintenance
- ◆ Task Area 3 - Conduct Initial Intelligence and Competitiveness Campaign and Task Area 4 – Business Attraction Tactical Plan –\$25-\$30K depending on number of geographies to draw from and industries; would need to be conducted annually for several years