3.0 RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS/ACTION PLAN

3.1 Traffic and Circulation

- Continue to work with Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) to relocate existing truck loading zone on Main Street.

- Continue to work with ConnDOT to plan and implement the following improvements to Route 35:

1. Left turn lane from southbound Main Street onto Bailey Avenue
2. Left turn lane from northbound Main Street onto Catoonah Street (offsetting southbound one and operating simultaneously)
3. Realign existing left turn lane from southbound Main Street to Governor Street for "back to back" configuration with above lane
4. Provide a longer two-lane approach to Main Street on Catoonah Street. This will require minor road widening.
5. Provide a longer two-lane approach from Governor Street to Main Street, including minor road widening

- Maintain one-way traffic movement on Bailey Avenue from Main Street to Town Hall parking lot

- Bailey Avenue to become two way from the Town Hall parking lot to Prospect Street in conjunction with road improvements for safety. The northbound section after the bend will require minor realignment and widening to accommodate two-way operations. This project includes extension of sidewalks from present termini to Prospect Street and streetscape improvements throughout.
- Convert alleyways from Main Street parking lots to pedestrian walkways and enhance with street furniture and lighting to direct vehicular movement to the signalized intersections while enhancing pedestrian movement and allowing for emergency access

- Provide vehicular connection between bank parking lot and large lower commercial lot off Governor Street

- Provide new access drive between Governor Street municipal parking lot and reconfigured parking area between Governor Street and Bailey Avenue

- Install directional signs to direct traffic to municipal parking areas

3.2 Parking

- Regrade the existing loading area on Main Street and install pavers to distinguish the travelway from adjacent angled parking spaces

- Expand the Post Office parking lot to create an additional 13 spaces

- Reconfigure the parking area between Governor Street and Bailey Avenue and add a new parking lot with 24 spaces – enhance the connections between these parking lots and reduce the curb cuts on Governor Street

- Upgrade the municipal parking lot off Governor Street with site lighting – expand the lot to serve the proposed arts building on the site and connect the accessway to Bailey Avenue (direct employees in the Town Center to use this lot)

- Reconfigure the municipal lot between Bailey Avenue and Big Shop Lane

- Create a new municipal lot of approximately 35 spaces to be accessed from the northern end of Bailey Avenue if property becomes available

- Redesign a new entrance from Prospect Street and a two-way access drive between the lower and upper parking lots (remove current concrete barriers)
3.3 **Pedestrian Facilities**

- Provide a new pedestrian crosswalk on Main Street at the south side of Catoonah Street in connection with traffic improvements.
- Convert existing alleyways off Main Street to exclusively pedestrian uses and add lighting bollards, site furnishings, and pole lighting to enrich the pedestrian experience.
- Develop a pocket park on the lawn area adjacent to the Governor Street municipal lot to enhance the appearance of the area and encourage increased pedestrian use.
- Eliminate physical barriers to clear pedestrian pathways (see graphic on page 2-16) – enhance these pathways with trees, lighting, and site furnishings.
- Relocate the pedestrian crosswalk on Main Street to align with Big Shop Lane.
- Install kiosks at strategic locations in parking lots to inform visitors of business locations and Town Center pathways.
- Supplement the information kiosks with wayfinding signage located along the pedestrian pathways.

![Pedestrian Facilities Diagram](image-url)
3.4 Signage and Wayfinding

The three types of signage identified in this study are directional, wayfinding, and regulatory (traffic control) signage.

Directional signage is located along roads on the periphery of the designated Town Center study area. The intended placement notifies all incoming traffic and visitors as to the location of municipal parking areas. Establishing directional signage in these locations limits the amount of time it takes for visitors to find parking close to their destination.

Wayfinding and informational signage in the form of small kiosks and signposts is located in parking areas and is intended to educate visitors as to:
- Where they are
- What there is to see and do
- How they get to the location to see and do it

Wayfinding and informational kiosks should include a detailed map of the Town Center study area with the names and locations of Town Center businesses. Wayfinding kiosks in parking areas reduce the time it takes pedestrians to find their destination and determine the most direct path to that destination. Informational signage can be used as an important advertising tool for local businesses. As added security in the Town Center study area, a blue light system could also be added to the kiosks with direct access to the local police department in case of emergencies.

Regulatory or traffic control signage instructs vehicles and pedestrians as to local and state traffic laws. The town and state highway departments determine locations for regulatory signage, but it is included in this section as a means to illustrate the need to include the structural support (poles) for regulatory signs into the design vocabulary.

A unified design palate among the three types of Town Center study area signage can be created by choosing decorative, matching elements in materials (steel), styles (Victorian), and colors (black) and matching these design forms to site furnishings.

Site furnishings include benches, bollards, planters, trash receptacles, and lighting. Lighting fixtures should be in compliance with Zoning Regulations, with standards to promote safety while reducing unnecessary glare and light pollution. Site furnishings for the Town Center study area should match in material, style, and color. Steel or aluminum should be the material of choice for all Town Center site furnishings. Materials such as fiberglass, concrete, and wood should be avoided. Use of colonial and Victorian design forms is encouraged. Modern and or residential garden styles should not be introduced into the Town Center setting. Colors such as black, dark green, or maroon should be used in the site furnishings as they do not stand out and detract from local establishments.
3.6  Management Options for Town Center

3.6.1  Management of Mutual Services

The implementation of a plan for districtwide improvements is a complex and time-consuming enterprise. The Planning and Zoning Commission has the ability to facilitate the implementation of portions of the plan as individual applications for development and renovation are presented for review, but coordination of effort by property owners and individual businesses can yield more timely results for the benefit of the entire district.

The State of Connecticut provides enabling legislation for the creation of a "special services district" under Chapter 105a, Section 7-339m to 7-339t. These districts have been established by business communities and downtown districts in many areas of the state. Special services districts are managed, funded, and supported by those who benefit from the services and have successfully functioned as the focal point for business district programs in many Connecticut municipalities as well as across the nation. In this manner, those most directly affected by the services are the ones who supply the impetus to carry out programs that benefit the district as a whole.

The successful formation of a special services district requires multiple interests to be blended together to determine the practicality, scope of services, and physical improvements that will produce benefits for both property owners and individual businesses as well as the community at large. Since neither the local government nor the private sector holds all of the keys to success, collaboration and coordination of efforts are essential to overall area improvement. It is important to fine tune the zoning regulations to encourage private investment in specific types of development, but it is also important to upgrade and maintain the appearance of private and public property in the business district. Measured improvement on many fronts within a reasonable and achievable time frame is fundamental to upgrading the district as a whole. A center study that recommends and plans for these future improvements can serve as a guide for
the special services district. The district, in turn, can use the study to support applications for public funds and to justify the continued support and involvement of the district's membership.

Ridgefield Town Center is fortunate to begin its efforts from a position of strength with few vacant storefronts, properties that are primarily in good condition, and parking management structures in place. The creation of a dedicated management and operations entity (a special services district) can provide a cohesive, organizing structure to channel current efforts in parking management, parking lot improvements and maintenance, district promotions, housekeeping, and special events. Provided there is sufficient cooperation and support from property owners and the business community, the establishment of a municipal special services district may be the best vehicle to implement the center study program.

In its simplest form, a special services district is a legal mechanism where property owners within a defined geographical boundary can levy a special tax assessment on themselves, including all taxable property within the defined area, to generate revenue for certain predetermined purposes. This concept provides for certain specialized services and improvements in only one part of a municipal jurisdiction and the local government taxes the benefiting property owners for the services and improvements. (Sewer and water districts operate in much the same way.) A referendum of the affected property owners is mandated by the statute; therefore, the property owners effectively impose an additional tax upon themselves in order to gain services or improvements that they feel are important to the viability and business health of their district. A district cannot be formed without a majority of the property owners within the district voting for its formation, and the combined assessed value of the supporting property owners must represent a majority of the assessed value within the district.

In Connecticut, a special services district is directly governed by the property owners within the district. This important feature provides owners and businesses a direct role in shaping development in their jurisdictional area by creating and assigning funding to projects and programs they feel are beneficial to the district. This reduces some of the pressure to compete for funds within the municipal budgeting process and eliminates problems with unreliable
voluntary contributions. A program and budget is assembled annually to address those district issues felt to be most important, and a tax levy is recommended to the local legislative body for adoption. In addition, a municipality can contract with a district to provide certain municipal services, and it can make an annual grant to the district for providing such services. Special services districts typically engage in beautification projects, litter control, parking management and maintenance, and sponsorship of events and promotions. They act as a clearinghouse for district activities.

The special services district offers benefits that reinforce efforts to stimulate investments in the Town Center. The district can function as the vehicle to carry out some of the programs and service improvements identified by the Ridgefield Center Study. It can act as the vehicle to centralize functions now scattered among several organizations. It can be the applicant and the recipient of funding from state and federal sources for public improvements. Most importantly, it can be the self-help vehicle through which the Town Center community can become more actively involved in the day-to-day activities that sustain the vitality of the area. The self-governing feature of the special assessment district should be particularly attractive to Town Center stakeholders who have made substantial investments in the district or who hope to improve their properties in the future.

The recommended boundaries of the special services district are shown on the accompanying map and coincide with the study area. An organizational focus for the Town Center is crucial to promoting long-term momentum for improvements. A Coordinating Committee, consisting of property owners and businesses within the proposed district area, can be created immediately to take the responsibility for organizing and promoting the creation of the special services district.

3.6.2 Activity Programming

From an activity programming perspective, the "Main Street Approach to Downtown Revitalization" is another model to consider. The program was developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and this national model is in use by over 1,800 communities in the
country. In Connecticut, the Connecticut Main Street Center supports the organization and efforts of local communities to initiate and utilize the program. Currently, many Connecticut communities are using the Main Street model in their downtowns. Appendix C contains information on the organization and structure of the Main Street program in Connecticut.