

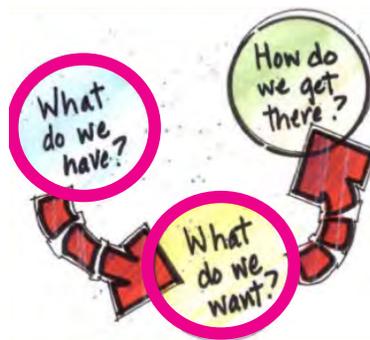
More than 70 residents came together at the First Congregational Church on the Green on June 23, 2016 to talk about West Haven and envision the future of City. The City Visioning Workshop represented the first major public engagement event for the City’s next **Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)**. The purpose of the event was to begin a conversation about West Haven—its key strengths and assets, areas that should be better and/or improved, and shared priorities for reinvesting in the City. The roundtable discussions were lively and spirited, and participants left with new connections and a sense of common ground with many of their neighbors.



below. They presented their own observations and perceptions of each of these nine areas/aspects of West Haven along with potential topics and themes to

## Intro Presentation

The facilitators, Neil Desai and Jonas Maciunas, city planners from The RBA Group, delivered a presentation titled **West Haven Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow** to introduce the POCD and the planning process and to set the stage for the roundtable discussions. They described what a POCD is, comparing it to a recipe with a mix of ingredients that will lead to a healthy and nutritious meal. For West Haven to be a healthy and nourishing city, the main “ingredients” might include at least nine areas or aspects of the City, which are listed on the slide



consider. At the close of the presentation, participants at each roundtable were asked to select one person to record the discussion by writing down responses on large sheets of paper and one person to report back to everyone on the outcomes of their respective roundtable discussions. The task at hand: three key questions that participants would spend the

next hour discussing with each other:

1. What are West Haven’s strengths or assets?
2. What areas of West Haven should be better or improved, and how?
3. What should be the City’s top two or three priorities?

**Today: A Framework for Discussion**

- » Gateways
- » Route 1
- » Getting Around Town
- » Station Area
- » Downtown
- » Institutions
- » Neighborhoods
- » The Beachfront
- » The Beach

MAP: STRUCTURE OF THE CITY  
West Haven, Connecticut  
City of West Haven, Connecticut

**Today: Observations Gateways**

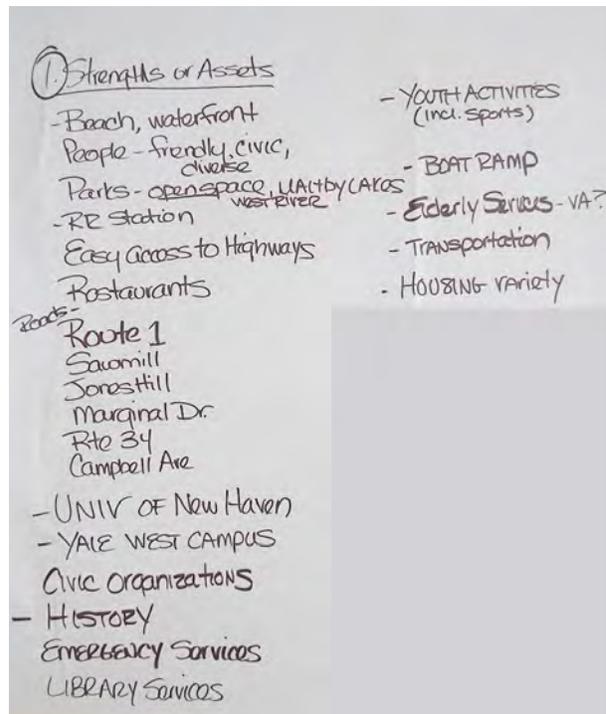
# 1 What are West Haven's greatest strengths or assets?

Across all of the roundtables, groups generally responded with similar lists of strengths/assets. The **beach** and its **outdoor recreation** offerings topped many lists, along with the presence of **University of New Haven** and **Yale University** at the Yale West campus. These institutions have attracted students from across the country and world and added employment and educational opportunities for local residents. Participants pointed to the **VA Hospital**, the largest in the state, as an important community institution and cited the community's **support for veterans**.

The groups identified I-95 and the new Metro North railroad station, as assets that make West Haven **easily accessible to the region** and to the major cities of New York and Boston. Participants viewed the City's **public transit** system as an asset, but also recognized several key opportunities to improve bus routing.

The groups also identified a range of strengths and assets that are less physical and more programmatic or social in nature. These included the strong local **athletic programs**, the cultural **diversity** of residents and businesses, the **multi-generational** character of residents and families, the **variety and styles of homes**, the City's **emergency services**, and excellent **restaurants**.

Participants felt that West Haven residents generally are **civic-minded** and **charitable** and proud to live in their City. "Westies" tend to support one another and rally around local causes and fellow residents who need help.



## 2 What areas of West Haven should be better or improved, and how?

*Keep in mind other towns, cities, places that you are familiar with.*

As the discussions shifted to the second question, many of the major strengths and assets of the City were also noted as areas that should be better or improved. Furthermore, **raising community standards** and **making West Haven a more beautiful city** were central themes that emerged from the discussions.

*We need to raise the bar!*

— Workshop participant

These themes apply to various aspects of the City, starting with the appearance of **gateway** points into the City down to the **properties along Captain Thomas Boulevard** and the **facilities and amenities at the beach**. Participants emphasized the need to **better enforce codes** related to **property maintenance, supporting and improving the existing housing stock**, and promoting **homeownership** instead of creating new housing.

**Route 1**, or Boston Post Road, and **Downtown** are two important commercial areas of the City that participants noted are not living up to their potential. Route 1 in West Haven is especially challenged in terms of its physical appearance. These areas relate to points some participants raised about **improving the tax base** and reducing the tax burden on residents.

Participants also discussed how transportation could be improved. **Roads and sidewalks** need to be refreshed in certain locations. The **bus system**, whose routes were based largely on an old streetcar lines,



needs to be adjusted to better connect the present day framework of institutions and destinations within West Haven, which includes the train station. Furthermore, **pedestrian and bicycle safety and amenities** need to be enhanced.

Participants referred to several other towns and cities in Connecticut and beyond, including Milford, Branford and Hampton Beach, NH.



◀ **Hampton Beach, NH** was mentioned as a place to look at for its vibrant, amenity-rich beachfront. The picture shows how the design of the beachfront street slows traffic and creates a more safe and pleasant environment for pedestrians. People can walk along the beachfront promenade and cross comfortably to reach the many shops and restaurants that line the other side of the street. West Haven could examine design ideas and principles from this New Hampshire town to improve its own beachfront.



## SO WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The City Visioning Workshop represents an important step in the process of engaging residents and stakeholders in a conversation about the future of the West Haven. The results of the workshop provide a foundation for considering goals, priorities, and strategies that could be incorporated into the POCD.

**But the conversation is not over! We want to continue to hear from as many West Haven residents and other stakeholders as we can!** Whether you participated in the workshop or not, we want your feedback on the results captured in this summary.

## Tell Us What You Think!

Please e-mail us at [contact@planwesthaven.com](mailto:contact@planwesthaven.com) with your reactions to this summary. Here are some questions to guide your response:

1. Were any important strengths/assets or areas for improvement missing from the workshop discussion?
2. Do you agree with the major City priorities that emerged from the roundtable discussions? If not, how would you arrange the priorities, or what priorities would you suggest and why?

## More Ways to Participate

We want to hear from as many West Haven residents and other stakeholders as we can!

- » **Survey.** Stay tuned for a “City Priorities Survey,” through which you can provide more input to guide the creation of goals, policies, strategies, and priorities of the City’s next Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)
- » **Visit and “Follow” the Website.** If you haven’t done so already, sign up to “Follow” the website at [www.planwesthaven.com](http://www.planwesthaven.com) to receive e-mails when the site is updated with new information.
- » **E-mail.** You can e-mail your opinions and ideas to us anytime at [contact@planwesthaven.com](mailto:contact@planwesthaven.com)



*These pages showcase the verbatim written comments/responses at each roundtable during the June 23 City Visioning Workshop.*

## **ROUNDTABLE 1**

### **Q1 What are West Haven's strength or assets?**

- Beach / Shore
- History – expand it
- The Green
- Train Station
- Post Road/Route 1
- Close to City of New Haven
- Yale
- UNH
- Multigenerational families
- Boat access to water
- Sports
- Diversity of the City in a positive aspect

### **Q2 What areas of West Haven should be better or improved and how?**

- Privatize the beaches for only West Haven residents
- Enforce the blight laws (i.e. Captains Gallery property, Debonair Hotel property)
- Allingtown Center – Gateway into West Haven
- Put up signs to pick-up trash
- Enhance Route 1. Bring developers in like in Orange
- Center of town – fix facade of businesses – bring in more shops
- Zoning laws concerning multi-family housing
- Train station development
- Marginal Dr. in Allingtown closed in late 70s. It was supposed to be a park road biking/fishing/walking
- Collaboration with New Haven – West River Park
- Cove River behind Painter Park
- Captain Thomas Blvd. shopping; Park is close walking distance from the west walk

### **Q3 What should be top priorities?**

- Start with big picture – what enhancements can be made who should pay for it?
- Clean up the blight
- Promote the history – what's happening with culture center?
- Improving overall image of West Haven stop the negative image
- Improve the center of town
- Continue partnership with UNH
- Transportation from downtown to train station

## **ROUNDTABLE 2**

### **Q1 What are West Haven's strength or assets?**

- VA Hospital - needs support from community
- Expand VA parking – knock down public housing
- UNH – Conference center hotels – run by students
- Theme – downtown arts / eateries / shops
- UNH – charitable – very giving
- Beach Front – portals into city – signs – beauty – develop around it, not on it.

### **Q2 What areas of West Haven should be better or improved and how?**

- New business
- Light manufacturing
- Doctors and research facility
- Arts recreation
- Historical preservation
- Chamber of commerce – re:business
- No more housing
- Independent over-55 community with long-term care
- Marina with restaurants

### **Q3 What should be top priorities?**

- Safety – crime has increased – more police, fire
- Renter population density - need more homeowners, who live in the home
- Helping to keep businesses in town (incentivize businesses to come into town)
- Center – route 1 – no going to New Haven

*These pages showcase the verbatim written comments/responses at each roundtable during the June 23 City Visioning Workshop.*

## **ROUNDTABLE 3**

### **Q1 What are West Haven's strength or assets?**

- Beach
- Restaurants
- Close proximity to New Haven / New York / Airport
- Sports programs / Athletics system
- Diverse community – languages
- Train station – underutilized
- VA Hospital – employment?
- UNH
- Route 1 + 95 – direct access to West Haven
- Yale west campus

- School system – Diverse school board
- School system – open the closed schools
- School system – build a new high tech high school
- Historic district - pursue grants
- Historic district – Better signage
- Roads / Sidewalks – budget for repairs
- Acorn area closed – could be a 5 star hotel across from reservoir

### **Q2 What areas of West Haven should be better or improved and how?**

- Beach
- Transportation
- Allingtown – lacks everything
- Arts / culture
- Live music venue / entertainment
- School system
- Historic districts / Homes
- Roads / sidewalks – aging
- Safety – non-motorized transportation
- Downtown – business types – physical appearances
- Barriers – highway I-95 – dist.4 (Birchwood Pl, Highland St, Harry Dr, Linda St)
- VA – parking - being neighborly
- Municipal code enforcement
- Gateways to city – best routes no being used
- Consolidate fire departments.
- Every city council person should know what's going on

### **Q3 What should be top priorities?**

- Beach – economic development
- Beach – Get road away from beach
- Beach – Re-design beach st to promote walkers / bikes / shoreline appropriate businesses
- Beach – Make old field creek – leave as passive area to preserve birds and plants
- Transportation – Improve bus routes from Allingtown to the rest of the city
- Allingtown – more lights – sidewalks – parks – shopping
- Arts / culture – create an Arts district
- Pursue arts companies
- Arts festivals – Shows
- Entertainment – Pursue live music promoters
- Entertainment – Need live music venues
- Entertainment – House of Blues – or similar
- School system – more money spent on kids

*These pages showcase the verbatim written comments/responses at each roundtable during the June 23 City Visioning Workshop.*

## **ROUNDTABLE 4**

### **Q1 What are West Haven's strength or assets?**

- Beach
- Train station
- Proximity to university
- Conference Center
- Adorability of property
- Sense of community
- History and knowledge of past
- Dan Shine history
- Veteran support
- Location – close to city + highway
- Sports and pride for sports
- Good educational system
- Police department – responsive
- Fire department
- Safety
- Accessibility in many places
- Saving Rock identity and history
- Boardwalk is great
- People and sense of community
- Diversity – age race etc.
- Senior center
- Neighborhoods
- Parks
- Wetlands/nature
- VA Hospital
- UNH

### **Q2 What areas of West Haven should be better or improved and how?**

- Senior center will provide activities for next generations
- State of art center – with parking and renovated
- Revitalize Armstrong – stop political infighting
- Preserve wetlands and no destroying that wetlands
- Zoning and enforcement – let too much go
- Own call back from town with problems - Return phone calls
- Blight – empty and foreclosure houses
- Hotline for residents to report – need committees – residents involved
- Up keep of occupied houses – zoning and enforcement
- Shopping and downtown stores – Themes in each area – downtown business association
- Entrances to the town – signs – planting and good new signs
- Apathy –
- Like Blueback square [in West Hartford] – engage youth – youth programs
- Center of town disgraceful.

- Need sidewalks in neighborhoods – state grants?
- Each area needs attention - keep up, clean, let be natural – have restrooms – good trash cans
- Transitional populations need to be engaged.
- Rental properties need to be monitored. – Fines for violations to landlord

### **Q3 What should be top priorities?**

- Serving aging population
- Get business into town
- Modernize but keep charm and respect history
- Blight and zoning enforcement or changing zoning rules – downtown neighborhood
- Raise revenue and grants for improvement of neighborhood
- Recruit businesses
- Armstrong project for superfund cleanup
- Support Route 1 small businesses

*These pages showcase the verbatim written comments/responses at each roundtable during the June 23 City Visioning Workshop.*

## **ROUNDTABLE 5**

### **Q1 What are West Haven's strength or assets?**

- Beaches
- Diversity of people / cultures
- Restaurants
- High population
- Location location location – proximity to Boston / NYC
- Public transportation?
- Uniqueness of people – civic mindedness
- People helping people

### **Q2 What areas of West Haven should be better or improved and how?**

- Clean the streets – develop a sense of civic pride
- Blight – absentee landlords! - enforcement!
- Public transit – connections / planned routes
- More people spending money in town
- Beautification
- High retail rents & vacancies
- HOW: Develop a sense of civic pride
- HOW: Beat it in to them!
- HOW: Reach out to more people – all areas of town all work places
- HOW: lead by example
- HOW: City council must inspire people in their districts
- HOW: Enforce noise ordinance along shoreline

### **Q3 What should be top priorities?**

- Clean up the city
- Shop locally – promote business
- Enforcement of all laws – blight, noise, speeding, parking

## **ROUNDTABLE 6**

### **Q1 What are West Haven's strength or assets?**

- Locations Yale
- Train
- People
- Beach
- Highway
- Buildings
- Districts
- Harbor / real estate
- Weather
- Inland wetlands
- Outdoor recreation
- Lakes
- University
- Football fields
- Notre Dame High School

### **Q2 What areas of West Haven should be better or improved and how?**

- Maintenance of public space – standards and grants
- Garbage cans – fine violators
- Bathrooms
- Amenities
- Bike safety and awareness
- Noise enforcement
- Downtown dining – zoning
- Boat launch
- Family events – raise the bar
- Less bars - zoning
- Recreational shopping
- No chains on Campbell
- Develop Chicks

### **Q3 What should be top priorities?**

- Beach development
- Access- shuttles
- Train station business development
- More business to fill in
- Credit rating + debt
- Schools
- Economic development
- Outside counsel
- Redo Captain Thomas Blvd/beach shopping
- Shopping on beach

*These pages showcase the verbatim written comments/responses at each roundtable during the June 23 City Visioning Workshop.*

## **ROUNDTABLE 7**

### **Q1 What are West Haven's strength or assets?**

- 3 miles of pen walkable beach
- UNH + Yale – easy access to NYC + New England – convenient location
- Potential for tourism – beaches, restaurants, parks, W.H green, Bradley Point
- Gateway o New Haven and the arts, restaurant etc. available there
- Walkable terrain that is under utilized
- Area by rail road station – access to NYC and possibility to utilize as technology corridor
- Scenic shore dive Ocean Ave.
- Athletic program

### **Q2 What areas of West Haven should be better or improved and how?**

- Savin Rock Conference building (privatize)
- Capt Thomas Plaza / Debonair, Capt Thomas, Chicks.
- Downtown center
- Poor image of city
- Questionable appearance of some may properties
- Perception that politics override the interest and needs of the citizens
- Boston Post Road
- Hold landlords / owner accountable (blight laws)
- Market and extol our assets
- Promote programs to beautify Wes Haven
- Encourage people friendly and attractive store fronts shops that encourage good traffic
- Improve curb appeal
- Change political culture
- Develop, make more attractive

### **Q3 What should be top priorities?**

- Railroad station / Armstrong development
- Downtown / Center – redo, revitalize
- Beach St / Lower Campbell Ace Captain Thomas Plaza
- Boston Post Road revitalization

## **ROUNDTABLE 8**

### **Q1 What are West Haven's strength or assets?**

- Beach, waterfront
- People – friendly, civic, diverse
- Parks – open space, Maltby Lakes, West River
- Railroad Station
- Easy access to Highways
- Restaurants
- Roads – Route 1, Saw Mill Rd, Jones Hill Rd, Marginal Dr, Route 34, Campbell Ave
- UNH
- Yale West Campus
- Civic organizations
- History
- Emergency services
- Library Services
- Youth activities (incl. Sports)
- Boat ramp
- Elderly services
- Transportation
- Housing variety

### **Q2 What areas of West Haven should be better or improved and how?**

- All the strengths + assets
- Tax burden on homeowners
- Expand economic base
- Aging infrastructure
- Town center – silvers
- Beautification – improve visual planning and maintenance
- Gateways – plant and landscape
- Bring districts together (3 fire depts)
- Need to see redevelopment opportunities
- Improve schools – will bring people into town and improve real estate value
- Railroad station – contract vendors for coffee etc.
- Bus stop at station
- Transportation – bus from Forest Rd goes to New Haven to get to West Haven center, need buses from train station to key locations in town
- Lower Campbell Ave and Captain Thomas Blvd development tied into beachfront and boardwalk

### **Q3 What should be top priorities?**

- Comprehensive plan for redevelopment
- Economic development
- Transportation
- Improve school system to improve real estate value
- Reduce cost of living for residents
- Look at Milford and Branford
- No new housing