Project Description:

Today’s demographic shift encompasses a live –work –play lifestyle and movement into walkable urban downtowns. Downtown Shelton is a perfect example of this trend. As interest and investment in mixed-use development increases in downtown Shelton, the community is beginning to benefit from a growing downtown economy and expanding housing opportunities that create a diverse retail and restaurant environment that, with increased public realm investments by the city, will capitalize on cultural and entertainment assets within the downtown.

The Special Area Study: Downtown Shelton encompassed a two-phased master planning process that is intended to guide the Shelton Downtown Subcommittee and Planning and Zoning Commission to promote the revitalization and transformation of downtown Shelton into an attractive, pedestrian-friendly, vibrant, and multifunctional center of activity.

While most downtown revitalization plans typically take many years to fully implement and take a significant amount of public/private financial resources, this illustrative masterplan, just two years from being publicized, has already begun to spark an enormous amount of interest and investments in the future of downtown Shelton.

The masterplan presents a vision for the defined project area that with the accompaniment of new mixed-use buildings includes new sidewalks and crosswalks, street trees, lighting and green spaces that intend to stimulate activity in the downtown. The composite of these elements work in accord to create a desirable, live-able community.
Shelton sits on the eastern edge of Fairfield County, one of the richest places in America – distanced from the gold coast of Greenwich and Darien where the median income is $350,000/ year.

Through the years, many of the historic building in the downtown burned down or were removed.
The design team met with stakeholders in the downtown to identify opportunities and constraints with potential redevelopment.

The study area (pink) lies within Howe Avenue, Center Street, Coram Avenue, Cornell Street, and Canal Street. The area includes a mix of abandoned parcels, vacant retail, commercial, and residential uses.
In working group sessions, three-dimensional massing models were created on identified redevelopment parcels. The models depict 4 - 5 story mixed-use buildings (pink) that improve the fabric of the downtown by filling in gaps within the street wall.
Phase-I concepts looked at relocating the existing fire station, integrating the post office and adding new mixed-use buildings (A) wrapping a multi-level parking garage (B). Concepts depict a new location for the City Hall (C) and opening Bridge Street (D) as a mid-block connection. Pedestrian plazas are interspersed among new sidewalks and tree plantings.
The masterplan consists of 231 residential units and 41,000 square feet of retail/restaurant space, new parking along Canal street, a new green mews within the Conti Building, a green corridor link between the farmers’ market and the downtown, and a new garage with mixed-use buildings and interior event space.
Before and after visioning perspectives (by the landscape architect) depict a new vibrant city center. Diverse mixed-use buildings conceal a multi-level parking garage, and new decorative crosswalks/sidewalks lead pedestrians up Coram Ave. to the new city hall.
“...Where you find the liveliest downtown (cities) you will find one with the basic activities to support two shifts of foot traffic. By night it is just as busy as it is by day.” - Jane Jacobs
Before and after visioning perspectives depict Phase-I buildings (right) and a new corner of mixed-use buildings (center) along Howe Ave. and Center St. Once these renderings hit the newspapers, the existing buildings were boarded up and put on the market.
"The enjoyment of scenery employs the mind without fatigue and yet exercises it; tranquilizes it and yet enlivens it."

– Frederick Law Olmsted
Looking north along Howe Avenue, new building walls create a sense of privacy and safety and new street trees shade the sidewalks for pedestrians entering new eateries and apartment lobbies.
The word is out! Downtown Shelton is trending! Get in on it while you can!

Development driving impressive growth in Shelton

"This is just the beginning," the mayor said, "as the community grows." The mayor was referring to the recent development of downtown Shelton, which has seen a significant increase in development over the past few years. The mayor said that the growth is due to a combination of factors, including the city's strategic planning and the support of local businesses.

"It's amazing to see how much Shelton has changed in just a few years," said one local business owner. "The downtown is really coming alive, and I'm excited to be a part of it."
Developers are taking advantage of the downtown market, submitting proposals for new mixed-use buildings, and, with approvals, beginning construction.
The new development proposals include affordable housing units and on-site concealed parking and amenities.
Development proposals are moving quickly into construction and the city couldn't be more excited with all of the investment taking place in the downtown - as new people from lower Fairfield County are identifying Shelton as a cost-effective alternative.
This study illustrates the transformational power of our profession - as a driver that can spur economic development while assisting to shape the aesthetic and form of an urban center into a healthy equitable place to live, work, and play, and eat . . . in downtown Shelton.