

8.0 Recommendations

In order to achieve the goals outlined in this Study, it is necessary to have a plan of action. This plan offers two methods of doing that. First, there are the following overall goals and policies, followed by more specific recommendations. Secondly, there is the graphic plan, which depicts those recommendations on a map enhanced with written recommendations. Together, these tools can be a resource to the Planning and Zoning Commission in setting land-use policy and in decision making.

General Goals

- Promote a sense of place and community in Avon Center that brings meaning, enjoyment, and pride.
- Develop a pedestrian-friendly and aesthetically pleasing environment.
- Integrate commercial, residential, institutional, and open space uses, creating a dynamic atmosphere that will bring more people to the Center.

Policies

- Ensure that Center land uses are appropriate for each location, giving extra consideration to abutting residential areas.
- Provide a mix of residential, commercial, institutional, and open space uses that encourages interaction among people.
- Define and enhance the “gateways” to Avon Center.
- Avoid a sterile “theme” type of development. Rather, consider how all uses and buildings will blend with architecturally significant structures.
- Carefully consider the mass and scaling of buildings including height, spacing between structures, setbacks from the street, proportions, architectural style, lighting, materials, finishes, and overall landscaping.
- Encourage outdoor areas of interest, such as public art, sculptures, farmer's markets, family-oriented recreational games such as oversize chess, or other interest-generating activities.

Specific Recommendations

The following recommendations are reflected in the accompanying sketches.

1. Thematic Lighting - **See Sketch 1 and Avon Center Map 5** - Install lights which will recall Avon's historic past and provide a unifying element to the area.
2. Sidewalks/Bicycle Routes - **See Sketches 2, 5 & Avon Center Map 5** - Strengthen the present network of walks by completing sidewalks which presently dead-end; extend the walk system to existing homes in the area; and renovate walks which are underdesigned or in need of repair.

Provide parking racks for bicycles in strategic locations throughout the Center.

Provide convenient connections to the Farmington Valley Greenway, wherever possible, for both pedestrians and cyclists. Consideration should be given to constructing a dedicated bicycle path along Darling Drive and Security Drive connecting with the existing Farmington Valley Greenway. This trail could be constructed within the existing right-of-way owned by the Town of Avon. Consideration should be given, also, to extending the dedicated greenway south of the Public Works garage utilizing the existing abandoned railroad bridge to the northerly property line of 60 Security Drive, then proceeding westerly to join with

Security Drive along an easement owned by the Town of Avon.

In cooperation with the Avon Chamber of Commerce, provide a map of Avon Center indicating businesses, institutional uses, walkways, historic sites, and bicycle paths.

3. Secondary Road System - **See Avon Center Map 6** - Connect interior road and parking lots. This will create beneficial economic and safety conditions for the businesses and offices in the Center area.
4. Landscaping - **See Sketches 1-6** - Begin an infill of shade tree clusters along main streets in the Center and replace existing fruit trees (which have a short lifespan) where they now exist.
5. Farmington Valley Trail Greenway - **See Avon Center Maps 5 & 6** - Extend the trail system into the Center so the users can easily access the shops and support the Center's retail and cultural functions.
6. Towpath School Site - **See Sketches 7 & 8** - Create mixed uses in close proximity to Simsbury Road; provide for a service road through the interior of the site.

Should the Town Council decide to sell this property, or retain it and use it for another purpose, four development possibilities are presented:

Scenario A contemplates use of the Towpath School site for public uses, particularly a performing arts center; a community center; a recreational center; or other place of public assembly that generates pedestrian traffic. This use could be operated and or owned by a public or private entity. The existing buildings could be reused or removed and the site redeveloped. This scenario also contemplates that the area along Simsbury Road could be used for a combination of retail uses with residential uses on the upper floors. A portion of the northerly area of the site should be used for additional parking for Sperry Park.

Scenario B contemplates the reuse of the existing Towpath School Building as a place of public assembly, such as a community theater; art cinema; art school in association with a local arts group; a recreation center; or a

combination of two or more of these uses. Each of these uses, or combination of uses, will generate activity in the Center which will complement other businesses. The remainder of the site along Simsbury Road should be developed with commercial uses on the first floor and residential uses on the upper floors. These buildings must be small in scale and meet the design objectives discussed elsewhere in this report. A portion of the northerly area of the site should be used for additional parking for Sperry Park.

Scenario C contemplates 2 or 3 new buildings along Simsbury Road and adds a new building on the corner of Simsbury Road and Enford Street. It also retains the Towpath School building and suggests a conversion to housing or an institutional use, such as a community center or art college. A portion of the northerly area of the site should be used for additional parking for Sperry Park.

Scenario D contemplates 2 or 3 new buildings along Simsbury Road with commercial uses on the first floor and residential uses on the second and third floors; razes the Towpath School; and suggests a number of smaller structures as part of a multifamily housing development. A portion of the northerly area of the site should be used for additional parking for Sperry Park.

7. Crosswalks - **See Avon Center Map 5** - At key areas throughout the Center, provide walks across the main thoroughfares for the safety of pedestrians and to diminish the speed of traffic movement.
8. Seating - **See Sketch 5** - Provide seating areas throughout the Center which fit within the setting of trees and buildings that will offer an inviting presence to visitors or employees.
9. Signage - **See Sketch 1** - Encourage a sign system which has a common theme of color, lettering style, and/or form which begins to identify the Center and visually unify it.
10. Enford Street Grounds - **See Avon Center Map 6** - Continue this area as a park; add flower gardens and possibly a decorative fountain; provide additional parking for the Center area; and increase screening for residents east of the park.
11. Zoning - **See Map 4** - Create an Avon Center Overlay Zone as a tool to implement many of the recommendations of this plan. The zone must provide incentives to developers in the form of increased coverage, decreased front yard and side yard setbacks, relaxation of the parking requirements, and flexibility of design and layout of projects. In exchange for this bonus, developers will be required to provide exceptional design and off-site as well as on-site public improvements beyond what is typically required under present regulations.
12. Parking - **See Sketches 1, 6, 7, and 8** - Encourage shared parking arrangements among businesses and institutional uses. Permit on-street parking in certain locations in order to increase the parking supply. Look at the possibility of creating additional parking on Town-owned property, such as the Towpath School site and the Enford Street property.
13. Retain Institutional Uses - **See Map 2** - Retain critical institutional uses in Avon Center. These would include the Post Office, Town Hall, Board of Education, and the Farmington Valley Arts Center. Encourage the location of other appropriate institutional uses in Avon Center that will add to pedestrian use.

14. Bus Stops - Consider adding bus stops in the Town Center on both the north and south sides of Route 44.

15. Housing – There are several parcels within Avon Center that are suitable for cluster or multifamily housing. These include:

- Two parcels, one containing 12 acres and the other containing 20 acres, south of Old Avon Village and east of Old Farms Road (see **Maps 5 & 6**).
- A parcel containing 2 acres located off of Garden Street could be a combination of commercial/office uses and residential uses.
- Two parcels in Avon Park North - one parcel contains 30 acres and is west of Ensign Drive and north of Bickford Drive; the second parcel contains 16 acres and is located east of Ensign Drive and south of Fisher Drive (see **Maps 5 & 6**).
- Two adjacent parcels totaling 12 acres located on the west side of Simsbury Road, across from Riverdale Farms (see **Maps 5 & 6**).

16. Building Architecture

- Encourage the use of two-story buildings; three-story buildings that are gabled may be appropriate in some areas.
- Require large, storefront windows to create interest and pedestrian activity.
- Require a high standard of materials and finishes that reflect and respect the area’s architectural heritage, such as stone, wood, or brick.
- Avoid sterile, stereotypical, or “trademark” architecture facades.
- Multitenant buildings should have the appearance of several individual stores and be able to function independently. Each shop should have its own entrance from the street.
- Avoid long, large, and unarticulated structures.
- Build elements such as canopies, stairs, columns, wall or roof projections, and recesses to human scale at sidewalk level to encourage pedestrian use.
- Create public gathering, recreational, or play spaces within larger developments.
- Emphasis plantings and amenities to the rear of buildings.
- Signs should complement the architecture.
- Minimize the number of building and directional signs to avoid repetition and clutter. Conceal garage doors and loading areas from view of the street.
- Encourage the use of both front and rear entrances to buildings.

17. Utilities – To enhance the aesthetics of the Center, it would be beneficial to bury all utilities under ground.
18. Possible Alignment of Enford Street – Consideration should be given to realigning Enford Street northerly of where it presently intersects with Simsbury Road to align with Woodford Avenue, resulting in a 4-way intersection. If this were done, it would segregate a small portion of the Towpath School property from the remainder of the site. However, if Enford Street were abandoned at its current location, it could be added to the Towpath School property. If this road is realigned, this new intersection should be signalized. Even in the instance where the roadway is not realigned, consideration still should be given to signalizing the intersection of Enford Street and Simsbury Road as well as Woodford Avenue and Simsbury Road.



Intersection of Route 44 and Simsbury Road



Old Avon Village



Avon Center