



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

2800 BERLIN TURNPIKE, P.O. BOX 317546
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06131-7546



Transmittal:

From: Mark McMillan
Date: May 9, 2018
Through: Kimberly Lesay, Transportation Planning Assistant Director
To: Cathy Labadia, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Project: State No.: 17-187
Project Title: Major Intersection Improvements
Route 72 and Route 69
Town: Bristol

Subject: SHPO Consultation Documentation

Project Description

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) proposes to install improvements to the intersection of Route 69 (West Street) and Route 72 in Bristol. Because the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is providing financial assistance, the undertaking falls under the purview of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. In conducting the Section 106 review of this project, CTDOT's Office of Environmental Planning noted a number of 19th and 20th century buildings, as well as a high potential for archaeological resources within the project's Area of Potential Effect (APE).

Given the range of potential historic property impacts posed by this project, a Phase 1 Archaeological Assessment and Reconnaissance Survey (hereafter "Survey") was conducted as part of the Section 106 review. It investigated the presence and extent of historically significant archaeological resources and evaluated the National Register eligibility of the structures within the APE. Concurrent with this survey, the CTDOT's cultural resources staff initiated consultation with the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the federally-recognized tribes (coordinated through FHWA) regarding the undertaking. The staff also identified and initiated consultation with the City of Bristol, the Bristol Historical Society, the West End Association, local residents and business owners.

The information attained through archival research, the recommendations of the Survey, and input from interested parties form the basis of a recommended determination of effect under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Technical Review of Project

At the center of this undertaking is the five-way intersection of Route 69 (West Street) and Route 72 (School Street to the east, Park and Divinity streets to the west). The project limits follow the alignments of these five streets and terminates at the following locations, as measured from the center of the intersection:

- North: 100 feet of Route 69 to Bridge #01073; this includes a 600 foot-long segment of the Pequabuck River banks/retaining walls
- South: 360 feet of Route 69 (West Street)
- East: 700 feet of School Street
- West: 900 feet of Park Street and 700 feet of Divinity; including the triangular-shaped block between these two diverging streets and portions of Pratt and Landry streets

The resulting irregularly shaped footprint forms an APE that encompasses almost 6 acres of land and includes 15 parcels (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Aerial view of project limits

Under this work, vehicular and pedestrian safety will be improved by realigning Route 72 to the north to create a more conventional four-way intersection. Alternatives are being refined as the Section 106 review proceeds. The improvement tasks consist of the following:

- Installing dedicated left-turn lanes on the north and southbound approaches of Route 72 allowing movement onto Route 69.
- Removing the 250 foot long segment of Divinity Street between Landry Street and Route 69.
- Extending Pratt Street north to create a new “T”-type intersection with Route 72. The intersection will be stop-sign controlled and feature a dedicated lane on Pratt Street for vehicles turning left onto Route 72.
- Installing sidewalk and crosswalk enhancements to improve pedestrian connectivity and safety throughout the project limits.
- Reconfiguring street drainage systems to accommodate the new alignment. This will require relocation of both underground and overhead utility lines.

The project anticipates requiring permanent acquisitions and right of way impacts to privately owned properties. The neighborhood within the APE is characterized by medium to high density development consisting of multi-family residential units, retail shops, and commercial uses. The subject intersection has been identified as the social hub of the West End neighborhood. Route 72 has an Average Daily Traffic (ADT) count of 14,300 vehicles. Route 69 has an ADT of 7,600. In addition to the high volumes of vehicle traffic, the neighborhood has a considerable amount of pedestrian traffic.

The project had its inception with “A Plan for the West End Neighborhood”, which was a study commissioned by the City of Bristol in 2008. The study’s purpose was to stabilize and improve this section of Bristol. Its recommendations were ultimately incorporated into the City’s Plan for Conservation and Development (2000). Addressing vehicular operations, pedestrian safety and overall mobility within and through this area underpin the West End Neighborhood Plan and the purpose and need of this project.

Findings of Survey

Prior to the initiation of the Phase 1 survey, FHWA contacted the federally recognized tribes to inform them of the subject project and request consultation.¹ Of the five tribes contacted, only the Mohegan Tribe responded, stating they had no information about historic properties that would be impacted by this undertaking (“No Historic Properties”).²

Archaeology

The Archaeological Assessment and Reconnaissance survey was conducted by Louis Berger, Inc. between December 2016 and February 2017. It included background research on the properties, review of the existing information regarding the historical development of Bristol, a pedestrian “walkover” survey, and subsurface testing of the soils within the APE. Of particular interest in the APE were two areas that exhibited markers for high archaeological sensitivity. These included their proximity to the Pequabuck River, the appearance of intact sediments, and the known previous presence of 19th century structures.

The subsoil investigation included four (4) 50cm x 50cm square shovel test pits (stps) in the rear yards of 12 and 26 Park Street. The stps were spaced at 10 and 15 meter intervals relative to each other, as space allowed within the parcel. Unless an impenetrable obstruction was encountered, each excavation proceeded to 1 meter in depth. The strata of sediments were recorded before being screened for artifacts.

While subsurface investigations recovered a small number of artifacts that could date to the 19th century, the majority of the tests excavated 20th century fills and yard deposits. No pre-contact resources were discovered in these stps, nor were any known pre-contact archaeological sites identified within the project APE. At the conclusion of the shovel testing, no evidence to indicate significant archaeological properties was discovered.

¹ The five tribes invited to consult on this undertaking were The Delaware Nation, The Delaware Tribe of Indians, the Narragansett Indian Tribe, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal National and the Mohegan Tribe.

² James Quinn (Mohegan Tribal Historic Preservation Officer) letter to Christopher Hansen (FHWA), regarding State Project No. 17-187, dated August 9, 2016.

The second site of interest is currently a parking lot that is bounded by West Street, School Street and the Pequabuck River. A series of 7 test borings were extracted to determine whether intact archaeological deposits were present beneath the parking lot. The soils and sediments examined varied from core to core, but no consistent pattern of intact, undisturbed soils was discovered. Only 2 of the 7 cores recovered cultural material (brick fragments and a single piece of shell). The consultant archaeologist concluded this was the result of fill soils introduced to the site. Based on the research and results of subsurface testing, the consultant found “no discrete, intact archaeological deposits of historic value”. They recommended that no additional archaeological investigation was warranted, and CTDOT concurred.

Architecture

The survey examined the 12 properties within the APE. This work included a review of the deeds of ownership of the properties, examination of historic maps, photographic documentation of the exteriors of the buildings, investigation of construction and alteration, and ultimately, a determination of eligibility of these properties for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

At the time of the survey, 1 of the 12 properties – 45 Park Street – had been demolished. Louis Berger included this property in its examination and documented its demolition by the owner. In considering the eligibility of the properties within the APE, they found that none of the 12 properties had sufficient historic significance or integrity to be considered individually eligible for the National Register. However, they recommended that the buildings’ concentration of construction dates between 1890 and 1920 and common use as mixed residential and commercial structures may constitute an historic district under Criterion A (Pattern of Historical Events) and Criterion C (Architecture).

The preliminary Survey report was reviewed by the architectural history staff at CTDOT as well as the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). CTDOT staff acknowledged the common age of the buildings, but commented that the recommendation of a district lacked sufficient context or unifying character to constitute a cohesive district. This context would be necessary in order to determine what would constitute an adverse effect to the propert(ies) within a potential district. These comments were provided to the consultant along with a discussion of whether additional work to develop this context, should it exist, be advanced.

Concurrent with CTDOT’s review, the preliminary report was shared with the stakeholders, who provided CTDOT with their comments. Neither the Bristol Historic Society nor the West End Association supported the idea of these properties had historic value. In a letter to CTDOT, the Bristol Historic Society stated they “did not feel this area qualifies to be deemed of any ‘historical value’.”³ Similarly, the West End Association submitted a letter to CTDOT in which they stated that, “None of the buildings in this study contain any of the criteria to be deemed historic.”⁴

³ Mike Saman, (Bristol Historical Society) letter to Commissioner Redeker, CTDOT, dated March 1, 2018.

⁴ David Hamelin (West End Association) letter to CTDOT (March, 2018).

SHPO Consultation

On March 20, 2018, staff from Connecticut’s State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) visited the project area and examined the potential eligibility of a West End National Register Historic District. After viewing the subject project site as well as the areas adjacent to it, they concluded that the area did not have sufficient cohesiveness or integrity to constitute a “West End” historic district.⁵



Figure 2: Boundaries of potential NRHP-eligible West End Commercial District.

The SHPO did note a collection of buildings within the APE that they concluded could constitute an NRHP-eligible commercial district (Figure 2). These buildings exhibit identifiable qualities of mixed use (commercial properties on the ground floor and residential properties on the upper floors), mid-20th century masonry construction, and setting that included a slight set back from the street with clearly defined relationships to the sidewalks and neighborhood. Within the boundaries of this potential district are six properties that are geographically and thematically grouped that would be eligible under Criteria A and C:

Address	Description
177 West Street	3-story mixed use brick building (1912)
2 Divinity Street*	2-story mixed use brick clad building (1900). Includes 1-story, 1 bay infill addition at 173 West Street (c1916)
1-5 Divinity Street	3-story brick commercial building (1910), Italianate detailing, wood cornice
9 Divinity Street	2-story brick commercial building originally West End Athletic Club (1945)
13 Divinity Street	2-story mixed use stucco-clad building (c1905)
19 Divinity Street	3-story “six-pack” brick apartment building (c1905); Italianate detailing

* 2 Divinity Street is geographically within the boundaries of the NRHP-eligible district, but is considered a non-contributing element, due to the numerous additions and alterations of the original structure that have compromised its historic integrity.

After reviewing the information gathered from the *Survey*; consulting with SHPO and the stakeholders in Bristol; and conducting their own architectural investigations, CTDOT’s cultural resource staff concluded that there was not sufficient cohesion or integrity to consider a larger NRHP-eligible “West End” Historic District. They did concur with SHPO’s identification of the smaller, “West End Commercial District” as described, and that said district would be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.⁶

⁵ Catherine Labadia (SHPO) letter to Scott Speal (CTDOT) regarding Bristol [West End] National Register Historic District, dated March 21, 2018.

⁶ Note: the term “West End Commercial District” is used in this report as a matter of convenience and does not represent an actual title of a district.

Following this, they met with the project design team to develop strategies to avoid or minimize impacts to element of the West End Commercial District. The design team was able to adjust the proposed realignment of the western segment of Route 72 to avoid and minimize impacts to the properties that were identified as contributing elements to an eligible historic district (Image 1). Impacts to the building at 177 West Street, which had been slated for acquisition and removal in previous alternatives, were avoided (Image 2).

The revised realignment will still create rights of way impacts. Under the current project scope, the following properties will be fully acquired and the buildings on them removed:

2 Divinity Street will be subject to a full acquisition. The existing building is a non-contributing element of the NRHP-eligible West End Commercial District. The attached one-story addition identified as **173 West Street** will be also removed (Image 3). In its place, the vacant parcel will be landscaped or otherwise developed to enhance this location as a walkable, social hub of the neighborhood.

2-8 Park Street is a 0.18 acre parcel one which are two residential structures (Image 4). Although both of these buildings are over 50 years old, neither of them exhibits design characteristics or associations with historic persons or events to be considered eligible for the NRHP.

50 Divinity Street is a 0.14-acre parcel located opposite Pratt Street (Image 5). This parcel abuts 45 Park Street, which is a vacant property owned by the Town of Bristol. These two parcels will become the Pratt Street extension to Park Street.

Two properties will be subject to partial acquisition, though this action does not anticipate impacting the buildings on the parcel:

46 Divinity Street features a 2 story wood frame single family residence that was built in 1900. The construction of the Pratt Street extension will require a partial “sliver” of this property to accommodate the new road right of way. A variance may be required from the City of Bristol because this acquisition will reduce the overall area of the property to a non-conforming lot size.

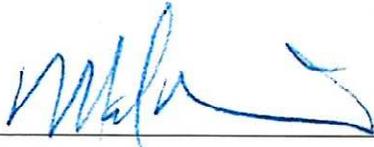
60 Divinity Street will also be subject to a sliver acquisition to accommodate the Pratt Street extension. There is no impact to the 2-story multi-family residence anticipated. The parcel will remain conforming size after the acquisition.

Finally, there are potential impacts to **12 Park Street** and **18 Park Street**. The amount of land acquisition and/or the need to remove the structures on these parcels is still being considered as the project design advances. Neither of these properties is eligible – either individually or as elements of a district or thematic resource – for the National Register.

Recommendation

CTDOT recommends that the Area of Potential Effect for State Project #17-187 contains six properties that collectively would be eligible for the National Register as an historic district. Through a process of archaeological investigation and consultation with SHPO, the federally-recognized tribes, and stakeholders within Bristol, OEP recommends that there are no intact, NRHP-eligible archaeological resources within the APE that will be impacted by this undertaking.

Based on the information provided for the current alternative being developed, CTDOT recommends that State Project #17-187 will have No Adverse Effect to Historic Properties under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.



Mark McMillan
National Register Specialist
Office of Environmental Planning
Connecticut Department of Transportation

SHPO Use Only

Based on the information provided to the State Historic Preservation Office, we:

Concur Do Not Concur (*additional comments attached*)

with CTDOT's Office of Environmental Planning's opinion that
State Project #17-187 in Bristol will cause:

No Adverse Effect to Historic Properties


Catherine Labadia
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

8/1/18
Date



Department of Economic and
Community Development

Connecticut
still revolutionary



Image 1: Proposed realignment of Routes 69 and 72 in Bristol. The green areas represent locations that will be cleared and landscaped. Orange shows new sidewalks and red will be additional hardscape (paving). Under this alternative, four properties (#50 Divinity Street, #2-8 Park Street, 2 Divinity Street) will be fully acquired and the buildings on them removed. Potentially #12 and #18 Park Street will also be fully acquired, as the partial acquisition of property will create a non-conforming parcel.