
1. INTRODUCTION

Southington includes a diversity of land uses and densities within its six square mile area. Its development patterns reflect both the physical landscape on which it sits and a built environment that is the result of more than 300 years of living and working on the land. This rich history, from its agrarian roots and manufacturing heritage to its most recent commercial and residential additions, forms the place that is Southington.



The area continues to display many of its natural features, making it as good a place to live and work as it has been for so many previous generations. However, Southington has reached a critical crossroad. It is largely a built-out community, indicating that from a physical standpoint its growth options are becoming more limited. There is a growing sense of this in the community. In the period since preparation of the last Plan of Conservation and Development (1991) residents have become aware of things like increasing traffic volumes, loss of farmland and development on previously wooded hillsides. Residents have attributed these changes to the development that has occurred in the last 15 years. While development did continue at a higher than average rate for surrounding communities, analyses indicate that growth trends have actually slowed since the last Plan was prepared. The reality of what residents are observing is most likely the cumulative effects of development, exacerbated by the layout of the town's road network (the "all roads lead to Queen Street" factor), the spread of suburban residential development into more sensitive areas (hills, forested lands and ridgelines) and exponential increases in house size.

Accommodating continued growth and maintaining economic stability will be increasingly challenged by the limitations which come into play as a community matures: environmental sensitivity, infrastructure capacity, ability to provide services and the public's desire to maintain a high quality of life.

In preparing the 2006 Plan of Conservation and Development there is an opportunity to anticipate future trends and guide development patterns through a series of strategic planning activities that

- evaluate physical conditions and characteristics,
- problem solve around issues and concerns,
- discuss how to manage the positive and potentially negative impacts of development,
- identify strategies to achieve desired growth patterns, and
- provide for coordinated land use planning among the complex mixture of public and private stakeholders involved in community building and place-making.

The State requires that the Town's Planning and Zoning Commission prepare and maintain this Plan as a framework for development decision-making in terms of land use, densities and design standards, and as a guide to identifying public improvements, facilities and services.

Summary of Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-23 Plan of Conservation and Development

The Planning Commission

- shall prepare (or amend) and adopt a plan of conservation and development at least once every ten years
- shall regularly review and maintain the Plan
- may adopt amendments to the Plan or parts of the Plan as it deems necessary
- may prepare/amend plans for the redevelopment and improvement of districts or neighborhoods containing special problems or opportunities

The Plan Shall

- state policies, goals and standards for physical and economic development
- promote, with efficiency and economy, coordinated development and the general welfare and prosperity of the people
- recommend the most desirable densities of population and uses of the land
- promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing
- note inconsistencies with the state plan of conservation and development

The Plan May

- recommend locations for conservation and preservation of natural resources; road networks; extent of public utilities; and public buildings and grounds including parks and playgrounds
- recommend schedules, programs, projects and plans for implementation of the Plan include other recommendations which will benefit the municipality

Southington describes itself as a “progressive city with a small town atmosphere;” as a community that has achieved “harmony between business and quality of life.” This self-image, with emphasis on maintaining quality of life, was affirmed again and again by local commissions, residents and representatives of the business community during the year-long planning process that culminated in the preparation of this document. The Planning and Zoning Commission invited public input via two public forums, provided open-ended comment and issues identification forms, PZC workshops, public agency questionnaires and business stakeholder interviews. The Commission found that residents were primarily concerned with maintaining a balanced tax base, managing growth and development, and minimizing all aspects of the potential impacts of future development. These concerns and the following three critical factors impacted the direction of the Plan that emerged from the planning process: the limited amount of undeveloped land available, the extent of commercial/industrial stock in need of revitalization if not redevelopment, and the need to make wise use of the Town’s natural and man-made resources in order to maintain the Town’s quality of life.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The land use issues that emerged from the public planning process have been summarized in six core planning categories, which serve as the focus of the 2006 Plan of Conservation and Development. In each case a Guiding Principle has been developed to identify objectives and strategic approaches to addressing these issues in the future. Taken together these Guiding Principles essentially form a Mission Statement for the Planning and Zoning Commission for the next ten year planning period.

■ **Development Patterns**

Achieve a balance among residential growth, economic development and resource protection to maintain our quality of life.

■ **Development Consequences**

Consider direct and cumulative impacts to public health, energy consumption, environmental quality and town character when evaluating development proposals.

■ **Economic Development**

Nurture sustainable economic development that does not overburden town resources or infrastructure and gives back to our community.

■ **Physical Environment**

Encourage improvements to public and private properties that will contribute to an attractive and inviting image while enhancing function.

■ **Community Needs**

Anticipate the changing needs of our population when planning and funding public programs and community facilities.

■ **Resource Management**

Respect our natural resources to preserve the intricate link between our community and our air, land and water.

USING THE PLAN

The 2006 Plan of Conservation and Development focuses on fulfilling the public desire to absorb future growth into Southington's natural and built environments in a positive way. It is organized to focus on the future while giving a clear understanding of present and past conditions. The Land Use Plan and a set of actions recommended to achieve the diverse goals of the Plan embodied in the Guiding Principles are presented at the beginning of the document as the community's Tools For Change. The data and technical analyses that form the basis for the Guiding Principles and Land Use Plan are summarized in the following chapters, appendices and attachments.

As the Planning and Zoning Commission and its fellow commissioners complete individual actions outlined in the Plan, new and related actions as yet unidentified will be added so that the Plan will be maintained as a current and relevant tool for decision-making until the next major reexamination of its policy provisions.