

# Plan of Conservation and Development 2014 Draft

## Article IV Introduction and Purpose

### A. WHAT IS A PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT?

The purpose of a Plan of Conservation and Development is to record the best thinking of the Town as to how Newtown should continue to evolve in the future and to give direction to both public and private elements of change. Chapter 126, Section 8-23, of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that a planning and zoning commission “**prepare, adopt and amend a plan of conservation and development for the municipality**” at least every ten years.

Newtown’s Plan of Conservation and Development is an advisory document that offers a Vision of the community and provides guidance for municipal decision making. The process of updating the POCD enables public participation in shaping the future of the Town and provides an opportunity to prioritize goals and implementation strategies and to set the course to achieve the Vision of Newtown.

While future oriented, Newtown’s Plan of Conservation and Development reflects the goals and objectives of a community at a certain point in time and provides guidance for municipal decisions affecting the Town’s conservation and development.

Newtown’s updated POCD responds to the 1995 amendments to the State’s General Statutes that increased the emphasis on conservation in municipal plans and to incorporate reference for greenway protection. In 2001, the Statute was further amended to include referral of updated and amended POCD’s to the local legislative body for review and comment prior to adoption by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

The Planning and Zoning Commission fulfilled one of the requirements of Section 8-23 in the fall of 2013 by referring the draft plan to the Newtown Legislative Council for their review and comment. The Legislative Council reported back to the Commission with recommendations that were incorporated into this final plan.

The requirement that the plan note any inconsistencies with the State Plan of Conservation was also accomplished. The Newtown Plan of Conservation and Development is generally consistent with the State plan and the “Locational Guide Map”. Most of the discrepancies noted in the 2004 Plan of Conservation and Development have been resolved. Newtown presented its changes, notably the mixed use corridor for the southern section of Route 25 and the potential growth area in Hawleyville along Routes 6 and 25.

### B. THE PROCESS OF UPDATING NEWTOWN’S PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

In early 2011, the Newtown Planning and Zoning Commission began the process of reviewing and updating the Town’s 2004 Plan of Development. During the past two years, the Newtown Planning and Zoning Commission has compiled and/or written this various sections of this 2014 Plan of Conservation and Development with input from the Town of Newtown Staff Members, Department Personnel and Commission and Board Members. Data was extracted from the 2010 U.S. Census for preparing many of the Tables and Charts. Assistance in obtaining more obscure data was provided by the State of Connecticut IT Staff.

As part of the process of updating the POCD, the Planning and Zoning Commission received input from Town Departments and Commissions. Each of the reports received were presented by the representative Commission members and discussed in Public Hearings held by the Planning and Zoning Commission during regularly scheduled and warned meetings of the Commission.

These reports are listed in the Appendix under Supporting Documents and can be obtained from the Land Use Agency.

The key components of the updated Plan of Conservation and Development include a description

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of past growth and change within Newtown as it relates to future trends, a Vision Statement of what is desired for Newtown in 10 years and a description of the actions required to achieve this Vision, with an assignment of responsibilities for implementation. Important community issues are discussed, goals are described and strategies to achieve the goals are recommended. An assessment is made of the resources required to achieve implementation and responsibilities for implementation activities are assigned.

Community goals and objectives are established as a means to present clear and concise direction to guide future conservation and development actions. These goals take into consideration the recommendations of previous Town plans, the information compiled from planning and existing condition analyses; reports and study elements presented during the Plan of Conservation and Development Update process; existing land use patterns; future projections and community input. The identified goals will serve to guide Newtown's conservation and development activities over the next ten years and beyond.

### C. Updating Newtown's POCD: What is Legally Required

As defined by Connecticut General Statutes, the POCD shall:

- Be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality;
- Show the (Planning and Zoning) Commission's recommendations for the most desirable use of land for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial, conservation and other purposes and for the most desirable density of population in the municipality;
- Promote coordinated development and the general welfare and prosperity of its people;
- Make provision for the development of housing opportunities, including multifamily dwellings, for all residents of the municipality and the planning region;
- Promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing and encourage the development of housing which will meet the housing needs identified in the regional housing plan and the State's Plan of Conservation and Development;
- Encourage open space conservation subdivisions versus the traditional large lot subdivision;
- Take into account the State's Plan of Conservation and Development and note any inconsistencies with said State Plan.

The Connecticut General Statutes require that the preparation of the POCD shall consider the following:

- The need for affordable housing;
- The need for protection of existing and potential public surface and ground drinking water supplies;
- The use of open space conservation subdivision development and other development patterns to the extent consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity of the municipality;
- The State and Regional Plans of Conservation and Development;
- Physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends;
- Energy efficient patterns of development, renewable energy and energy conservation;
- The needs of the municipality including: human resources, education, health, housing, recreation, social services, public utilities, public protection, transportation and circulation, and cultural and interpersonal communications.

### D. Geographical Information System (GIS) Mapping

The State of Connecticut has realized the benefits of performing aerial acquisitions. In 1939 it was one of the first states to perform flyovers using the revolutionary Fairchild Aerial Camera and it has not looked back since. The town of Newtown has amassed its own collection of aerial photography with sets of prints for the whole town in 1948, 1957, 1971, 1998, 2002, and 2007. In addition to these full sets, there are aeriels that were done in support of special projects like the sewer and water line improvements in the 1990's and for the Fairfield Hills Campus. Generally these aerial images have been used for assessment, public works,

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highway, and land use. Parcel mapping was one of the most widely used applications as

parcel lines were hand drawn on copies of the aerials from 1957 and 1971. All of these products were hard to use, maintain, and distribute freely and storage was difficult. After the town completed its sewer project in the late 1990s it was clear to the community that the whole town could benefit from a digital mapping solution.

After a failed attempt to get a mapping program going in 1998, the town successfully funded and entered into a contract with Golden Aerial Surveys in 2002. Black and white conventional film based aerial imagery was acquired for the entire town. In addition to the flyover, the commitment was made to orthorectify the imagery, derive planimetric and topographic datasets, and create a "start from scratch" parcel layer. The process of orthorectification takes a "flat digital image" and corrects that image for the curves of the earth's surface. The end result is a much more accurate representation of the hills and valleys in the resulting corrected digital photo. These photos can then be used in GIS and CAD packages and help answer questions for town staff and the public like "Is my shed on my neighbor's property? What zone is my property in? Has that property owner filled in the wetland?" .

The derivation of line and point based planimetric features (building footprints, road edges, parking areas, utility poles, etc) and topographic features (contours, spot elevations, etc.) creates the ability to answer questions with respect to spatial position. You could now ask how many residences are within a Special Flood Hazard Area and then generate a mailing list within minutes. Since we are all playing in the same geographic space, we can take federal and state data, overlay it with the town data, and create alternate universe where all levels of government can work together. Utilizing the geographic component enables the answering of questions that were previously seen as laborious and near impossible prior.

Since the 2002 flyover, the town has continued to add data and functionality to the GIS and to create tools to facilitate the dissemination of the data. Responding to the changes in the past 5 years, in 2007 the town did an aerial only acquisition in coordination with the revaluation. This was such a success that the spring of 2012 we again performed an aerial acquisition. This imagery supports just about every function of the town. More recently the town launched a web portal at [maps.newtown-ct.gov](http://maps.newtown-ct.gov) that allows the user to create custom maps and access assessor data through the internet. This portal allows for sales and abutters searches and feature identification. We continue to develop tools that will empower the end user to ask and answer questions.

In 2012 town staff performed a complete update of the zoning layer for the town. This project required the review of all zoning actions since the advent of zoning in 1957. The existing zoning maps were more akin to artistic renderings that became difficult to discern the intent of the original zoning map. This painstaking review resulted in the creation of a digital zoning map that can now be shared with all interested parties. This zoning map helps with the review process and the public to understand what they can build on their property.

One of the powers that GIS provides is enabling geographic components of flat tabular databases in use throughout the town. So, say you have a question like, "What is the most dangerous intersection in town?" The GIS can connect to the police department database, map out all of the traffic accident information, and create a map showing the areas with the most traffic accidents. One of the most used aspects of the GIS is the parcel layer joined with the assessor's database. This function unlocks one of the most valuable databases in use and allows for a myriad of analyses. This join also unlocks the ability to perform abutters' lists which supports many aspects of government. Prior to the implementation of the GIS, the creation lists were laborious and costly and now the process is as easy as a few clicks on our online portal from start to printed labels.

Newtown's Geographic Information System continues to grow in its uses and applications. In adopting technology solutions to government problems the Town is innovating a system to better serve its citizens' needs.