

## Plan of Conservation &amp; Development

1. Presentation by Catherine Johnson (facilitator), member of the P&Z commission about the current Plan of Conservation, Farming, Open space.
2. Discussion with the public about their ideas about the Plan of Conservation follows.

**PRESENTATION (PowerPoint)****Interesting Facts**

- Middletown has nothing zoned agricultural: farming permitted in all commercial and residential zones (CT Right to Farm legislation)
- 60% of CT is forested, 9% is farmland

**Assuring land is useful to critters**

- Areas that are contiguous are most valuable to foster habitats
- Image of a forest patch: even though we have forested area, only area in black is significant enough to support a habitat at a certain area.
- Definition "forested" based on how close together, how many trees touch

**Some techniques to conserve land** (with illustrations)

- Down-zoning (eg: require more land to build a house)
- Purchasing development rights: we already do this (farms, open space)
- Clustering: development of same # of units for parcel, same density for the whole parcel, but a portion of land remains natural
- Problem with clustering for nature: when land is split into smaller pieces, it compromises the habitat for animals; no critical mass where a range of wildlife can make a go of it.
- Problem of clustering for humans: still sprawl, just rearranged; does not support transit
- Transfer-of-development rights

**Illustration of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)**

- Sending zones: places where we want to keep natural or as agriculture
- Receiving zones: places where we want to put more people and dev't)

**Illustration/example of how a TDR Program could work in Middletown**

- We could focus more development in and around downtown: within 1 mile
- We could reinforce existing neighborhoods (build at edges).
- We can retrofit the areas of sprawl along major arteries (Washington St) with mixed-use development that can support transit

**What happens in a greenbelt?**

Can have farming, agriculture, forest, anything that happens in the natural landscape. But does not mean you cannot live there.

**Question: Could we define "town" by defining a greenbelt?**

Our topography, geology, hydrology suggest fingers of green radiating out from downtown rather than a greenbelt.

In Middletown we have a natural divider, a change in geology that divides Maromas from downtown and South Farms. This division could possibly be a guide for us to treat areas differently, if we that's what we want to do.

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife refuge (water shed initiative): an attempt to preserve CT River Valley from Canada to Long Island.

#### **NOTE**

**The final configuration of conservation land will take in Middletown** will depends on, frankly, who dies when and what they or their family wants to do with their land. This can take years to work out, even with a clear idea from the property owner.

We need to include city streets in the Plan of Conservation (linear parks). We need to keep up with our name "Forest City".

## **2. Discussion with the public**

Conservation Commission proposes creating corridors. Due to how our city is laid out next to the CT River, we cannot have rings but we can do corridors and possibly infilling.

If we want to use state \$ for open space purchases, the parcel wishing to be purchased must be on the conservation plan (Plan is labeled "Land Eligible for Open Space Purchase.") Many people come to us to sell us land, but if they are not on the map, no can do.

Sheila

Best area to have open space is where lots of farms are still left, areas without water and sewers (requires septic systems).

Fireman

Greenbelts come out of downtown, along brooks and rivers  
Wouldn't it be nice to make greenways out of those systems?

Ellie

We should look at places that are already developed and include some land in the greenways

Pinch

There really isn't open space downtown, must infill. What do you do about arteries like Washington Street?

Fireman

When the new pharmacy was developed (former Old Mill Wayside, on Washington St), we saw a potential greenway there. We need to connect to Veterans Park.

Comment

How land can be used is confusing

Catherine

We need to define what "farming" means, and what can happen where.

Buck

Retention basins need maintenance. Build their maintenance into regulations so things that need to be looked at down the road are addressed. Tax players end up paying for things that the city is not responsible for.

We already have a great deal of parks, enough so that Park & Rec cannot close all the gates at sundown.

Catherine

On some of this open space we are collectively preserving, I agree we don't need more places that need to be mowed (grass lawns).

Sheila

Example of leasing land for haying (Guida's Farm). Farmer plants corn on some of the land, he does the haying, there are walking paths in the woods.

Another parcel (Daniel Schwartzkopf, off Milbrook Rd): wooded area, gorgeous, all the maintenance needed is people walking in the paths.

Buck

CA fires demonstrated that leaving things natural is not enough. Millions of dollars in homes were lost because the forest was not maintained

Property is bought but no provisions is made to maintain the land  
Must be taken care of.

Sheila

Conservation Commission has been trying to get a steward program started where volunteers maintain it.

As for the farms, we really do not want to purchase farms; we want to purchase development rights. If we have the development rights to a farm, that person does not have to pay full price to farm. Sometimes it works, sometimes not.

Barrie

Forest is agricultural land, can be harvested. It's not a sin to cut down a tree. Forestry is less stressful on the environment than agriculture. Farming is more stressful.

Catherine

These lands can change as needed. Wadsworth State Park was a bare meadow 100 years ago. Today it is a forest.

Robert

- Transferring development rights has been tried in Maryland and CA
- I understand why that can be beneficial.
- How does that go against the grain of our culture where large yards are wanted? Are people interested in buying homes in these areas where things are closer together?

Catherine

- All types of people seek all types of places to live. At present, nationwide, we actually have significant unmet housing needs. Over the last 40 years, only one type of housing units was built: the single-family house, ignoring other housing types. But families make up only a certain % of all household types. We need 3-family houses, accessory apartments, high-end apts, tiny apts.
- If we offered the rest of the menu, all those 3 bedroom houses can be freed up and sold to those who can use all that space (growing families).

Tom

- Tom is on the Harbor Improvement Agency
- We have a harbor improvement plan. We've been ignored in communications with the planning department.

- Former Peterson Oil property and cove: need to develop that
- We want to put in boat launch.
- Come to our meeting: last Monday of the month at Water & Sewer Dept

Ron

- Obsolete satellite dish (10' high) needs to be removed but Harbor Park Restaurant does not own it. No one knows who owns it.

Beth Emery

- Riverfront is downtown's open space, but so underutilized. A boat launch should include non-powered vehicle access, not just a ramp for power motorboats.
- The Plan of Development needs to propose a way for city commissions work together, rather than leaving the Plan to be realized by accident (surprised there is not interaction between groups)
- Commissions' goals must not conflict with one another.
- Regarding how to use open space throughout the city: her proposal is
  - 50% of land for recreation
  - 50% of land for green space

Linda

- Inconsistency between chapters about development and open space: needs to be cleared up

Sheila

- The Conservation Commission would love to have ONE document (Plan of Conservation & Development) instead of several plans referring to one another

Dick

- Has a vision of a powered-down Middletown with land, energy, available.