



Land use, economic development, and environmental planning
Facilitating consensus among diverse constituents
Creating sustainable communities

Memorandum

To: Land Use Committee
Copies: Planning and Zoning Commission
Board of Selectmen
From: Brian J. Miller, AICP, Town Planning Consultant
Subject: Preliminary Information for update of Plan of Conservation and Development
Date: February 24, 2010

1. Purpose of the Plan

Chapter 126 Section 8-23 (a)(1) of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that at least once every ten years, a planning and zoning commission prepare or amend and adopt a Plan of Conservation and Development. Although a State requirement, the most important function for a Plan is to help guide the future growth and development of the Town, through a series of coordinated goals, policies and strategies. The Plan should record the best thinking of the Town as to its future physical growth and development and to give direction to both public and private development.

The Plan should encompass a long term vision of the community, but while its objectives are long-range, the Plan should be capable of offering guidance for short-range land use decision upon adoption. Although it is often difficult to address immediate issues and problems with long-range concepts and principle, short term solution without respect to long-term purposes can dilute, even nullify the ultimate effectiveness and impact of the immediate solution.

The current Plan of Conservation and Development for the Town of Beacon Falls offers general findings, but does not provide specific recommendations that could be used by the Town boards and commissions to actually guide growth within the Town. This lack of strategic guidance has become especially significant as the Town has confronted recent decisions concerning land use and economic growth. The plan will result in a functional conservation and development strategy with specific recommendations.

Statutory Requirements

The statute states that all plans shall consider the following:

1. The community development action plan of the municipality, if any.
2. Need for affordable housing.
3. Need for protection of existing and potential public surface and ground drinking water supplies.
4. Use of cluster development and other development patterns to the extent consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity with the municipality.
5. State Plan of Conservation and Development.
6. Regional plan of development
7. Physical, social economic and governmental conditions and trends.
8. Human resource, education, health, housing, recreation, social services, public utilities, public protection, transportation, cultural and intercommunication needs.
9. Objective of energy efficient patterns of development; use of solar and other renewable forms of energy and energy conservation.
10. Protection and preservation of agriculture

The plans shall:

- A. Be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality.
- B. Provide for a system of principal thoroughfares, parkways, bridges, streets, sidewalks, multipurpose trails and other public ways.
- C. Promote, with the greatest efficiency and economy, the coordinated development of the municipality, and the general welfare and prosperity of its people, and identify areas where it is feasible to (i) have compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns, and (ii) to promote such development patterns and land reuse.
- D. Recommend the most desirable use of land within the municipality for residential, recreation, commercial, industrial, conservation and other purposes, and include a map showing such proposed land uses.
- E. Recommend the most desirable density of population.
- F. Note any inconsistency it may have with the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

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- G. Make provisions for the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multifamily dwellings consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity for all residents of municipality and region.
- H. Promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low and moderate income households.

The statute also states that the Plan may make recommendations for:

1. Conservation of trap rock and other ridgelines.
2. Airports, parks, playgrounds and other public grounds.
3. General location, relocation and improvement of public buildings.
4. General location of public utilities and terminals
5. Extent and location of public housing projects.
6. Programs for the implementation of the Plan, including schedule, budget, program for enactment and enforcement of zoning and subdivision regulations, implementation of public housing, plans for open space acquisition and greenways.

2. Proposed Scope of Services – Plan of Conservation and Development Update

This scope of services is cognizant of the fiscal limitations of the Town, and has been designed to draw upon work which has been done by the Town and Council of Governments. The work which shall be utilized includes the following:

- Geographic Information System which was created by the COGCNV.
- Residential Build-Out analysis within COGCNV Regional Plan
- Naugatuck River Corridor Home Connecticut Plan currently underway.
- Tomorrow's Downtown plan, which would be evaluated and updated in necessary as part of the process.

Public Participation

We will utilize a variety of public input methods.

Visioning / SWOT Sessions

We will have two or three “visioning” workshops in which members of the public are invited to discuss their vision of the future of Beacon Falls. These meetings would include a facilitated discussion that would result in a presentation of options for addressing land use, infrastructure, environmental and quality of life issues. The basic issue for discussion at the first workshop would be how everyone sees Beacon Falls in 5-10 years.

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Members of the community will be asked to express their vision of the future of the Town of Beacon Falls by updating or confirming the earlier Vision Plan. We will have a discussion of the Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats facing the community (SWOT Analysis). This information will be used by the Committee in the formulation of the goals, policies, and strategies of the Plan. Additional visioning workshops would focus on topics selected by the Committee, which may include open space, economic development, or the utilization of the Naugatuck River corridor.

Public Hearings and Meetings

In addition to the visioning sessions, there will be the following public meetings suggested during the planning process:

- Two public information meetings of the Committee, at the point of initial findings and at key points during this formulation of the Plan.
- Public information meeting when the Draft Plan is ready for public discussion.
- Public Hearing(s) of the Planning and Zoning Commission prior to adoption.
- Presentation of the Plan to the Planning and Zoning Commission.
- Presentation to the Board of Selectman

Internet Access

The internet has become a useful tool for the dissemination of information and the public debate of issues that is part of a Plan of Conservation and Development. We propose to provide all written information for posting on the Town website when it is up and running.

Phase 1 Inventory

- Review of 2002 POCD, and discussion with Committee
- Initial Visioning / SWOT analysis, and preparation of Vision Statement
- Use of COGCNV GIS mapping.
- Existing Land Use from COGCNV
- Use of COG Build-Out Analysis

Phase 2 Data Collection and Analysis

Demographic and Economic Trends

TMG will utilize data contained within the Regional Plan and information from State of Connecticut sources to analyze demographic and housing trends in Beacon Falls and compare them with the data and trends in surrounding communities.

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Transportation

TMG will identify traffic circulation and problem areas for vehicular and pedestrian circulation. The emphasis shall be on the State Highways, and major town collector roads. We will also analyze mass transit resources, and discuss the potential for bikeways and pedestrian facilities within the community

Housing and Residential Development

TMG will draw upon work done in the Incentive Housing Study. This work will include an assessment of housing stock in terms of affordability, diversity trends in building permits, and conformance with existing regulations. In accordance with State requirements, we will include information on housing affordability, and potential methods to address this issue from the Incentive Housing Study.

Economic Development

TMG will consider the demographic and economic trends in the region and the Town. An identification and analysis on the sustainability of the tax base is a key component of this subject area. Specifically we will identify the growth industries within the region, and the potential for their growth within Beacon Falls. This will be matched with an assessment of the commercial and industrial areas of the Town to assess their suitability for economic growth. We will also include an analysis of the Town's tax base, including a comparison of the share of the Grand List of residential uses.

This will identify the primary economic development opportunities which are realistic to the Town, and make strategic recommendations to promote the Town's economic growth.

Natural and Historical Resources and Open Space

The Consultant shall identify any resources that may have significant natural or historical value to the Town of Beacon Falls. The emphasis on this study will be on major undeveloped parcels within the Town, and their potential for inclusion within an open space system. This will include an analysis of water resources such as the Naugatuck River, landforms, historical features and other important components of the physical character of the community. This will include:

1. Map and analysis of natural resources.
2. Formulation of goals of open space preservation.
3. Geographic plan of Open Space Plan.
4. Recommendations of methods of open space and natural resource preservation.
5. The protection of natural resources, including natural environments, wildlife habitat, scenic vistas and water resources.

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Parks and Recreation

TMG will evaluate the Town's parks and recreational opportunities for all ages, including programs, facilities, and parkland. Consideration will be given to the range and accessibility of recreation facilities and the role of municipal, county and state facilities.

Infrastructure and Community Services

TMG will identify and map the location and capacity of the current public infrastructure including emergency services. The extent and capacity of the water and sewer systems will be evaluated, based upon existing data and interviews with appropriate staff.

Cultural Resources and Historic Preservation

TMG will consult with the Plan of Conservation and Development Committee to identify any resources that may have significant natural or historical values to the Town of Beacon Falls. We will work with the committee to inventory and analyze these resources and their importance to the community.

Phase 3 Formulation of Goals and Strategies

Land Use Review and Recommendations

TMG will utilize the existing land use map which has been completed, and the build-out potential analyzed by the COGCNV to formulate a land use plan. This will include:

- Analysis of land use factors impacting the town and areas within Beacon Falls.
- Recommendations of the Incentive Housing Zone adapted to this plan.
- Recommendations of Tomorrow's downtown adapted to this plan.
- Proposed future land use plan for Town.
- Formulation of goals, policies and strategies to implement the land use recommendations. This will include general recommendations for zoning changes.

Overall Recommendations

The sections concerning transportation, economic development, land use, environmental conservation and natural resources, open space, community facilities, environmental will be used to create a series of recommendations which include goals, policies and strategies. The goals will be overall statements which are intended to articulate the vision of the community on various issues. The policies would be more specific statements which state the intent of any proposed actions as to category or area of town. Strategies are intended to be specific action items which should be implemented by the Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Selectmen or other appropriate agencies of the Town or State.

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Public Information Meetings

Two public information meetings will be held during the process of formulation of goals and strategies.

Phase 4 Draft Plan and Public Hearing

TMG shall prepare a draft plan based upon input received from the public information meeting, and comments from the Plan of Conservation and Development Committee. We anticipate attending two public hearings.

Consistency with State and Regional Plan

The Draft Plan will include an analysis of consistency with the State and Regional Plans of Conservation of Development. If there are areas of the draft plan which are inconsistent with the State Plan, they will be identified.

Phase 5 Finalization of Plan

The Draft Plan will be amended in accordance with the direction of the Planning and Zoning Commission, as a result of input received at the public hearing(s) and will be presented to the Commission for their approval. It is anticipated that we will need to have at least one work session with the Planning and Zoning Commission in the finalization of the Plan.

Deliverables

- We will provide PDF's of all interim reports, suitable for email and posting on the Town website.
- PDF of overall recommendations, suitable for email and posting on Town website.
- PDF of draft plan, suitable for email and posting on Town website.
- We will provide a PDF of the final plan, suitable for email and posting on the town website.
- Ten copies of a printed report of the final plan.
- The PDF will be suitable for reproduction.
- Six meetings/work sessions with the Plan of Conservation and Development Committee and/or Planning and Zoning Commission
- One public information meeting
- One meeting with Board of Selectmen
- Two public hearings with Planning and Zoning Commission

Town Responsibilities

If the completion of the project, The Town of Beacon Falls shall be responsible for the following:

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- Selection of the PZC as the steering committee, or formulation of a Stakeholders committee.
- Electronic access to all maps within the Geographic Information System created by the Council of Governments of the Naugatuck Valley.
- Posting of notice of all meetings.
- Consultant access to all boards, commission and staff of the Town of Beacon Falls.
- Access to all other public information available within the Town Hall.

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