



# PLANNING PRIMER

## Overview

This booklet has been prepared for the Vernon Planning and Zoning Commission, residents and others interested in the formulation of the 2011 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) for Vernon, Connecticut. This booklet provides general background information and an overview of planning and the planning process, Plans of Conservation and Development, and planning for the Town of Vernon.

## Introduction To Planning

### What Is Planning?

Webster's Dictionary defines 'planning' as:

- to draw up a plan of,
- to have in mind, or
- to formulate a way to achieve or do.

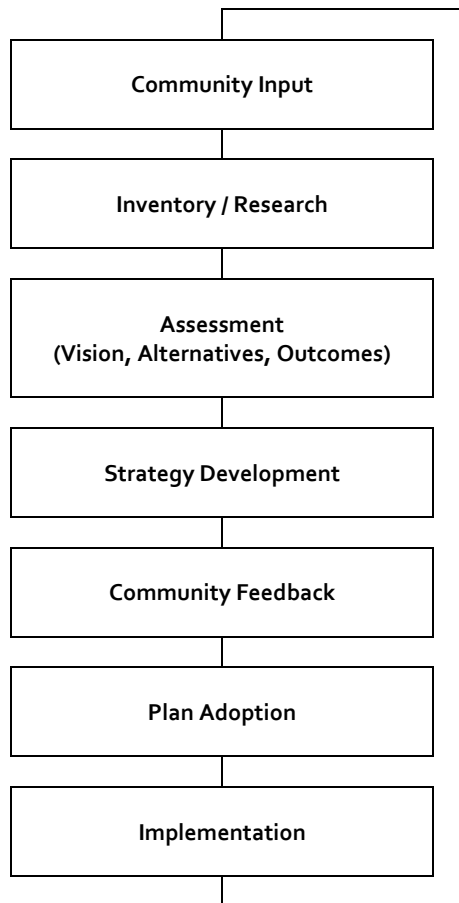
'Planning' is a continuous, iterative process to keep a community appropriately matched to its conditions and trends. Planning is a process for making informed decisions about the future.

### How Will We Plan?

The planning process to be used in Vernon is expected to proceed generally as illustrated in the adjacent flowchart.

Of course, implementation is the real purpose of planning. While preparing a Plan of Conservation & Development will take just under two years, implementation may last for ten to twenty years. Implementation is the reason for planning.

Overall Planning Process



A Plan of Conservation and Development is being prepared for the Town of Vernon.

The Plan will identify strategies to:

- Preserve important resources,
- Guide future development,
- Enhance community character, and
- Promote quality of life for residents.

## On Plans and Planning

"If you don't know where you are going, you'll wind up somewhere else."

**Yogi Berra,**  
Baseball Legend  
Renowned Punster

"Plans are of little importance, but planning is essential."

**Winston Churchill**

"Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other route to success."

**Pablo Picasso**  
Artist

"Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it."

**George Orwell**  
Author

## Why and When Should We Plan?

Planning is something that people perform regularly in their everyday lives. They plan their routes to work, shopping needs, social gatherings, financial needs, and a variety of other things. In fact, they often make plans without thinking about it.

In an increasingly hectic world, planning provides the opportunity to:

- focus on the 'bigger picture' and identify significant goals,
- promote overall values and achieve important purposes,
- coordinate efforts and produce consistent results, and
- achieve efficiency and economy in implementation.

Planning can help people (and communities) make informed decisions and produce desired results. There is no better time to plan than the present. Waiting to start planning in the future runs the risk that opportunities will be missed.

## About Plans of Conservation & Development

A Plan of Conservation and Development is a tool for guiding the future of a community. Its purpose is to establish a common vision for the future of a community and then determine policies that will help attain that vision. The goals and recommendations of the Plan are intended to reflect an overall consensus of what Vernon residents feel is desirable for the community in the future.

Over the years, the Town has undertaken a number of planning initiatives. The most recent were the 2001 Plan of Conservation and Development and the Rockville Supplement in 2003. Plans were also created in 1961, 1981 and 1991 (with an update in 1995).

A Plan of Conservation and Development becomes an official document after a public hearing and adoption by the Planning and Zoning Commission. Once adopted, the Plan is used to:

- coordinate community activities,
- guide land use decisions and regulations, and
- program public projects.

However, the Plan of Conservation and Development is primarily an advisory document. It is intended to guide local residents and to provide a framework for consistent decision-making with regard to conservation and development activities in the Town of Vernon over the next decade or so.

## EXCERPTS FROM CGS 8-23 – PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

### The Commission shall:

- prepare, adopt and amend a plan of conservation and development ...
- review the plan of conservation and development at least once every ten years ...

### The Commission may:

- adopt such geographical, functional or other amendments to the plan or parts of the plan... as it deems necessary.
- prepare, amend and adopt plans for the redevelopment and improvement of districts or neighborhoods which... contain special problems or opportunities ...

### The Plan shall:

- be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality...
- provide for a system of principal thoroughfares...sidewalks, multipurpose trails...
- be designed to promote...the coordinated development of the municipality...to have compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns and land reuse... recommend the most desirable use of land within the municipality for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial, conservation and other purposes and include a map showing such proposed land uses...
- recommend the most desirable density of population in ... the municipality...
- note any inconsistencies with the following growth management principles:
  - redevelopment and revitalization of commercial centers...
  - expansion of housing opportunities and design choices...
  - concentration of development around transportation nodes...
  - conservation and restoration of the natural environment, cultural and historical resources and existing farmlands...
  - protection of environmental assets critical to public health and safety...
  - integration of planning across all levels of government...
- make provision for the development of housing opportunities...
- promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing...
- consider the following:
  - the community development action plan of the municipality...
  - the need for affordable housing...
  - the need for protection of existing and potential drinking water supplies...
  - the use of cluster development and other development ...
  - the state plan of conservation and development ...
  - the regional plan of development...
  - physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends...
  - the needs of the municipality including ...
  - the objectives of energy-efficient patterns of development...
  - protection and preservation of agriculture.

### The Plan may:

- show the commission's recommendation for
  - conservation and preservation of traprock and other ridgelines...
  - airports, parks, playgrounds and other public grounds...
  - the general location, relocation and improvement of schools...
  - the general location and extent of public utilities...for water, sewerage, light, power, transit and other purposes...
  - the extent and location of public housing projects...
  - programs for the implementation of the plan...
  - proposed priority funding areas...

## On Plans & Planning

"We must disabuse the public mind of the idea that a . . . plan means a fixed record upon paper of a desire by some group of individuals prescribing, out of their wisdom and authority, where and how the more important changes and improvements in the physical layout of the (community) are to be made - a plan to be completed and put on file and followed more or less faithfully and mechanically, much as a contractor follows the architect's drawing for a house.

We must cultivate in our own minds and in the mind of the people the conception of the . . . plan as a device or piece of administrative machinery for preparing, and keeping constantly up to date, a unified forecast and definition of important changes, additions, and extensions of the physical equipment and arrangement of the (community) which a sound judgment holds likely to become desirable and practicable in the course of time, so as to avoid so far as possible both ignorantly wasteful action and ignorantly wasteful inaction in the control of the (community's) physical growth.

It is a means by which those who become at any time responsible for decisions affecting the (community's) plan may be prevented from acting in ignorance of what their predecessors and their colleagues in other departments of (community) life have believed to be the reasonable contingencies."

**Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.  
Distinguished Planner (1911)**

## Community Involvement

"Land use is perhaps the most complex and pervasive environmental issue of all. Pollution levels, agricultural productivity, housing patterns, and recreation are a few of the manifestations of how we use our land. But unlike many of the other environmental issues, there is no common scale upon which to measure progress towards good land use.

Planners can suggest some better ways to design and locate development; economists can tell us which patterns are most efficient from the point of view of land consumption, energy use, industrial location, etc.; and lawyers can advise on what is legal and constitutional in the way of land use regulations.

Yet it is really the community itself (whether at a local, regional, or state-wide level) which must try to pull all these considerations together into coherent land use planning and regulatory policies in order to preserve those things that the community values and to foster the growth and change that the community wants."

**Russell W. Peterson**  
Former Executive Director  
Environmental Protection  
Agency

## Planning For Vernon

### How Will The Plan Be Formulated?

Creating the Plan of Conservation and Development for the Town of Vernon will involve an intensive process. The Planning and Zoning Commission has designated a subcommittee to work with the consultant, Town officials, staff, and interested citizens to review, discuss, and refine the data and recommendations that will comprise the Plan. Meetings with the full Planning and Zoning Commission will take place at key milestones and decision-points during the process.

The process will emphasize public input and involvement, with:

- public meetings to solicit input, generate discussion, and present recommendations,
- interviews with different Town agencies, department heads, and individuals, and
- a random sample telephone survey of residents will be conducted.

Interested persons also may attend working meetings to listen to discussions.

Involving the public can help to ensure that the Plan represents a consensus by Town residents about the future of their community.

### How Can the Public Participate?

Town residents can participate in many ways. Residents are encouraged to attend public workshops, to review draft discussion booklets prepared by the consultant, and to submit thoughts and comments to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Discussion booklets will be placed in binders at the Town Hall and at the Library for review by interested persons. As with any iterative process, the booklets and other materials being used in the planning process are intended to generate discussion of different ideas and do not necessarily represent policy recommendations to or by the Town of Vernon. When a draft of the proposed Plan is developed, it will be made available for public review and a public information workshop will be held to collect feedback.

The consultant has established a project page on Facebook – become a "fan" of "Vernon CT Town Plan" to stay up-to-date on progress, participate in discussion boards, and learn about events. Also look for notices on the Town's website and in local newspapers and cable access television.

### Where Can Residents Get Related Information?

Copies of past Plans of Conservation and Development and information on previous planning activities in the community are available at the Town Hall in the Planning and Zoning Office.

