

Vernon 2012

Plan of Conservation and Development



Vernon Planning and Zoning Commission

Adopted: November 17, 2011

Effective: January 30, 2012



IMPLEMENTATION ELEMENT

The **Implementation Element** is separate document that is intended to be regularly updated. The Implementation Element is a detailed compilation of strategies contained in this Plan. That element suggests an initial lead entity for each strategy, the anticipated timeframe for completion, and priority level. As tasks and programs are implemented and results are evaluated, it is envisioned that the Implementation Element will be updated by the Planning and Zoning Commission to acknowledge completed tasks, to add new tasks, and to update priorities.



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November, 2011

To the Residents of Vernon and Rockville,

We are pleased to present to you the 2012 Vernon Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). It establishes a common vision for our community's evolution over the next 10 years or so. The test of the Plan is in the reading and whether you see some of your values, hopes and expectations in it. The value is in the implementation and our willingness to implement balanced land-use solutions which are:

- Environmentally sustainable with emphasis on the protection of water quality;
- Financially responsible for individuals and the community as a whole; yet,
- Maintain Vernon/Rockville's character, i.e., how the Town looks and how we feel about it.

The plan of Conservation and Development will serve the needs of the residents of Vernon/Rockville well during the next decade and would not have been possible without the assistance of volunteers who contributed much time and talent to the creation of the plan. On behalf of Planning and Zoning Commission, we extend thanks to all who helped make this plan viable, including members of the PZC POCD sub-committee, elected officials, town staff, residents who attended the workshops and Town Boards and Commissions who provided input.

Sincerely,

Chester W. Morgan

Chester W. Morgan, Chairman

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www.ct-vernon.gov

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In this Chapter:

About Vernon

Why Plan?

About This Plan

About Vernon

Vernon is home to roughly 29,200 residents and is located 12 miles east of downtown Hartford. Vernon is predominantly an outgrowth of its 19th century settlements: Rockville, with its textile mills, mercantile center and village cluster; Vernon Center – a community crossroads; and Talcottville, a mill, associated “company” housing, church, and school. This blend of urban/suburban/rural patterns along with open space, historic resources, and community spirit, contributes to Vernon’s overall character. The variety of its historic and contemporary forms of development together with its easy access to Hartford, other regional centers, New York and Boston attract residents and businesses to Vernon.

Why Plan?

Baseball legend Yogi Berra stated, “If you don’t know where you are going, you’ll wind up somewhere else.” Communities often find themselves in reactive positions – responding to plans put forth by others and issues and problems that crop up. A long term plan allows a community to take a proactive approach to its future development patterns.

A Plan of Conservation and Development is a tool for guiding the future of a community – it establishes a vision for a community’s future and outlines policies and strategies to attain that vision. The Plan of Conservation and Development is primarily an advisory document which can be used to:

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

A Plan of Conservation and Development becomes an official document after a public hearing and adoption by the Planning and Zoning Commission. Connecticut General Statutes (8-23) outline what a Plan shall and may include (see box on next page).

Rockville (when formerly incorporated as a city) adopted its first plan in 1961. Subsequent plans were prepared by the Town in 1981, 1991, and 2001 (with updates in 1995 and 2003). This Plan of Conservation and Development is a continuation Vernon’s tradition of planning.

Summary of Sec. 8-23. Preparation, amendment or adoption of plan of conservation and development.

In preparing such plan, the commission ... **shall** consider the following:

- The community development action plan of the municipality, if any,
- the need for affordable housing,
- the need for protection of existing and potential public surface and ground drinking water supplies,
- the use of cluster development and other development patterns to the extent consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity within the municipality,
- the state and regional plans of conservation and development,
- physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends,
- the needs of the municipality including, but not limited to, human resources, education, health, housing, recreation, social services, public utilities, public protection, transportation and circulation and cultural and interpersonal communications,
- the objectives of energy-efficient patterns of development, the use of solar and other renewable forms of energy and energy conservation, and
- protection and preservation of agriculture.

Such plan of conservation and development **shall**:

- be a statement of policies, goals and standards for physical and economic development
- provide for a system of principal thoroughfares, parkways, bridges, streets, sidewalks, multipurpose trails and other public ways as appropriate,
- be designed to 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 and prudent (i) to have compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns and land reuse, and (ii) to promote such development patterns and land reuse,
- recommend the most desirable use of land 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,
- note inconsistencies with the following growth management principles: (i) Redevelopment and revitalization; (ii) expansion of housing opportunities and design choices; (iii) concentration of development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors; (iv) conservation and restoration of the natural environment, cultural and historical resources and existing farmlands; (v) protection of environmental assets; and (vi) integration of planning across all levels of government,
- provide for housing opportunities for all residents of the municipality and the planning region
- promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing

The plan **may** show recommendations for (1) conservation and preservation of ridgelines, (2) airports, parks, playgrounds and other public grounds, (3) the general location, relocation and improvement of schools and other public buildings, (4) the general location and extent of public utilities and terminals (5) the extent and location of public housing projects, (6) programs for the implementation of the plan, including (A) a schedule, (B) a budget for public capital projects, (C) a program for enactment and enforcement of zoning and subdivision controls, building and housing codes and safety regulations, (D) plans for implementation of affordable housing, (E) plans for open space acquisition and greenways protection and development, and (F) plans for corridor management areas along limited access highways or rail lines, designated under section 16a-27, (7) proposed priority funding areas, and (8) any other recommendations .

About This Plan

The Planning and Zoning Commission appointed a subcommittee (plus one town resident) to work with a consultant to create a draft Plan. The full Planning and Zoning Commission participated in public workshops, reviewed and discussed interim work products and reviewed and edited drafts of the Plan. This process occurred over roughly 18 months.

Residents, other boards and commissions, and local officials provided input at various stages of the process. See Chapter 4 for details.

This 2012 Vernon Plan of Conservation and Development:

- identifies key land use and planning issues and opportunities in Vernon, and
- outlines a vision for each issue area and strategies to achieve the vision.

The Plan is intended to be a strategic / action-oriented document that is easy to use. To achieve this, clarity and conciseness were important. Detailed data and inventories, educational information, and ancillary information is not included in this Plan.

Instead, Plan supplements are available on the Town's website (www.vernon-ct.gov). Supplements include data collected during preparation of the Plan; a listing of other plans, studies, and documents that contain more detailed information on various subjects; full results of the community survey; and other useful documents. In addition, during the preparation of this plan, seven "discussion booklets" were prepared. Those booklets provided additional data, analysis and discussion. The booklets were used to frame initial discussions with the subcommittee and Commission, so the recommendations in those booklets are "out-of-date". However, the booklets contain background information and analyses that could be useful to the community.

Where possible, the POCD includes web hyperlinks for supplemental documents.

This Plan is intended to be reviewed every three years.

Chapter 2: Plan Summary

In this Chapter:

Summary of Goals

Preserving Our Roots

Natural Resources

- protect our natural resources
- continue to restore and improve our lakes and rivers
- protect drinking water
- minimize threats to water quality
- reduce storm water runoff
- protect habitat and minimize the clearing of vegetation

Open Space and Greenways

- promote and manage existing open space
- preserve open space and greenways

Historic Resources

- preserve and promote our historic resources

Community Character

- preserve scenic features
- maintain an undeveloped ambiance in rural parts of Vernon
- preserve heritage farms
- promote community spirit throughout Vernon
- maintain our overall community structure
- enhance gateways

Pathway to Prosperity

Rockville

- maintain and enhance the village nature of Rockville
- encourage the revitalization of Rockville

Vernon Center and Talcottville

- maintain and enhance Vernon Center
- maintain and enhance Talcottville

Residential Patterns and Housing Needs

- protect residential neighborhoods
- maintain overall residential density patterns (with some updates)
- ensure multi-family development occurs in appropriate areas and contributes to community structure
- increase homeownership opportunities

Business Development

- update commercial zones
- maintain Vernon Circle as a regional destination
- encourage appropriate business development at Exits 66 and 67
- redevelop and retain vacant buildings
- retain businesses and promote business development
- continue to improve business-friendly protocols

Community Facilities

- maintain community structure when planning for new facilities
- address community facility / service needs
- anticipate and plan for future needs

Transportation

- maintain overall circulation and minimize congestion
- continue to require and encourage access management
- calm traffic
- continue road maintenance
- improve public transit service
- enhance pedestrian and bicycle travel
- address parking

Utilities

- coordinate land use goals with sewer service
- ensure utilities meet current and future needs
- meet energy needs