

## **CLEAN ENERGY COMMISSION**

March 27, 2023

7:00 PM, Room 217, Town Hall

### **MEETING MINTUES**

1. Opening / Call to order – 7:05 PM
  - a. Roll call – *Commissioners: Catherine Diviney, Steven Sack, Joseph Campanella, Bernard Pelletier; Staff: Todd Dumais, Town Planner, Duane Martin – Director Community Development, Katherine Bruns – Recycling Coordinator; Public: Emilee Scott, Jim Fishman, Aimee Petras, Larry Levesque, Suzanne Sawyers, Christine Feely, Ted Newton, Kim Hughes, Charles Lovejoy (Eversource); Student Reps: Dawson Bondi, Nathaniel Goldschmidt*
  - b. Approval of minutes – February, *deferred due to clerical error, not posted on Town website.*
2. New Business
  - a. Guest Speaker – Todd Dumais, Town Planner  
*Presentation attached.*
    - *Productive discussion including additional understanding about what the Town has regulatory authority over.*
      - *When looking at sustainability in West Hartford the Plan of Conservation and Development is the guiding document used to accept or decline a project.*
      - *It was noted that in West Hartford the Town Council is the final Zoning Authority. In many other towns, this is not the case.*
      - *The Town Council cannot exceed applicable building codes in its decisions (e.g., it cannot impose a net zero requirement.) Also, even if something is in the POCD, Town is constrained by building codes and state granted powers.*
      - *On municipal projects, Town can exercise some control at the beginning as architects, consultants, and builders are chosen. For example, by asking for experience with Net Zero buildings or LEED certifications.*
    - *There were questions about where screens for energy efficiency, impervious, surface, landscape, recycling could be embedded in the process? and suggestions for employing other tools that Town has at its disposal to encourage development projects to be more sustainable (e.g., permit fees, tax breaks, discounts, incentives, a “check the box” requirement for at least having a conversation with Eversource’s new construction program, etc.).*
    - *There was discussion about whether LEED and energy efficient HVAC equipment really add cost to a project.*

- *A representative from Eversource was at the meeting and indicated they have incentives to offset any incremental costs and would love to be involved and support the Town's efforts with developers*
- *Several immediate ideas surfaced as ways for the Commission to get involved:*
  - *The Design Review Advisory Committee is currently looking at expanding their criteria to include a sustainability lens. Members of the Commission might be invited to join that process*
  - *While it might be too late to influence the development going in at the West Hartford Children's Museum site. It is NOT too late to influence the former UConn site development. Their wetland permit came in, but no formal zoning application yet. Their development plans would require zoning changes. Steve Sack recommended that we remind the Town Council that the public input that was collected on the site (whether the Town owns it or not) asked for preserving open space, not parking lots. This may require the Commission to raise its voice and/or going to Town Council meetings.*
  - *Todd asked the Commission to do 'homework' and review the Implementation Summary section of the POCD (pg. 79) and provide a list of priority actions. Catherine will send out.*

### 3. Old Business:

#### a. Working Group Updates

- i. *Earth Day – Kim Hughes and Bernie updated group that we are joining with WHPS Foundation Earth Day event on Sat 4/22 at Town hall parking lot. The Commission (and several other partners) are providing earth-day related kids activities and information for parents at various tables. We will have about 5-8 tables, with activities around pollinator garden/planting, composting, waste/recycling, solar, invasive species, , Westmoor Park, seed sharing nature journal, etc. We will need volunteers to staff event 11-1 pm. Parent information includes: How to go solar, how to avoid the plastic trap, how to run a healthy home and habitat in WH.*
- i. *Gardens – Kim Hughes gave update on this group's activities. They are calling themselves like to be called "Sustainable Land Care" They have several outside groups participating and a bunch of ideas including:*
  - 1. *Baseline measure and map green areas in West Hartford to develop a comprehensive inventory of areas in town to hopefully convert to a more natural (less mowed) state*
  - 2. *Compiling examples of gardens and plantings that are more natural.*
  - 3. *Developing maps (both printed and digital)*

*There was a discussion that a budget for change could be developed – including using the tree canopy American Rescue Funds. They would like to go back to Dir of Leisure Services Helen Rubino-Turco for more*

*information about the \$140K. Ideas from other Commission members included: Sustainable CT community match funds and designing a sample 20x20 plot that could service as a basis cost estimating and replication throughout town.*

- ii. Waste – Katherine Bruns gave update that she recently had a great meeting with Community Team, planning outreach for countdown to start of food scrap pilot in Morley neighborhood on 5/1. Two outreach sessions planned at school. Meeting 3/28 with key influencers – Mayor, Renee (PR), Ronnie Newton, We-Ha.com, etc. Other suggestions included: partnering with Hall HS enviro club (Watson/coral reef project, worms) and using Morley PTO. Bernie mentioned that he met Stonington’s recycling lead recently. Someone mentioned that Stonington and Glastonbury? already have functioning PAYT systems.*

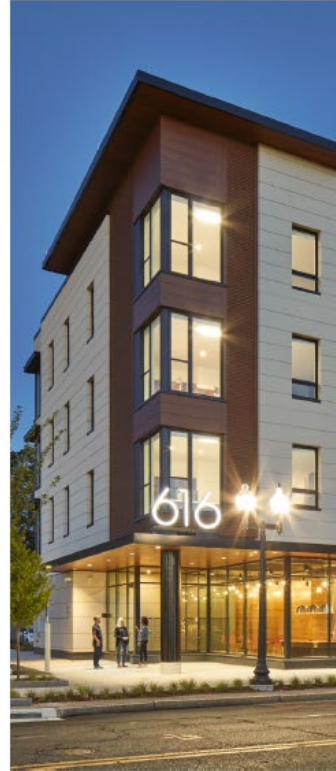
*b. Sustainable West Hartford Commission – ordinance update  
Catherine gave update that the ordinance is scheduled to be on the May 5 agenda of the Public Works, Facilities, and Sustainability Committee and from there move on to Town Council approval process. The ordinance has been revised and some of more detailed wording has been removed. It should be ready for their review before next Commission meeting. Emily Scott thought that was ok b/c ordinance was broad and details could be added to Commission bylaws. There was a question of timing for the dissolving of the existing Commissions and starting of the new one. Commissions would like to continue to meet in an official capacity without pausing for several months. Catherine will provide feedback to Corporation Counsel.*

- 4. Staff Report – deferred or already covered.*
- 5. Public Comment (limit 3 min each). Chris Feely voice support for Sustainable Land Care Working Group initiatives and wanting more information from Helen Rubino-Turco about the \$140K and concern that it was all going to tree project. She also reiterated the need for Town look at ground-mount solar regulations and solar canopies on parking lots and mentioned Bernie’s solar canopy presentation. Bernie said he is having additional discussions with Google Project Sunroof.*
- 6. Agenda for Next Meeting –*
  - No speaker*
  - Ordinance draft, hopefully*
  - Review of working groups progress*
  - Review of “Todd’s homework”*
  - Engaging with DRAC about sustainability screening – via Todd*
  - Review of zoning for ground mounted solar*
  - Working with the town on the former UCONN site, including possible reminder about former public input & potential of the environmental intervention statute Connecticut General Statutes ("C.G.S.") § 22a-19*

7. Adjournment – 9:06 PM

Anyone requiring auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or modification of policies or procedures to participate in a meeting, service, program or activity of the Town of West Hartford, should contact Suzanne Oslander, ADA Coordinator, at [suzanneo@westhartfordct.gov](mailto:suzanneo@westhartfordct.gov) or (860) 561-7580, as soon as possible, preferably seven days beforehand.

# Town of West Hartford



## Plan of Conservation and Development 2020 – 2030

Presentation by  
***Todd Dumais, Town Planner***

Clean Energy Commission

March 27, 2023

Planning & Zoning Division

*Guest Attendance*

# Planning & Zoning Division

A division within the **Community Development Department** which is broadly responsible for supporting the Town's efforts around land use planning, permitting and regulatory activities.

The Division (P&Z) has two elements, **Planning** and **Zoning Enforcement**.

# Planning & Zoning Division, cont.

**Planning** (currently two staff: *Town Planner and Associate Planner*) supports various town boards and commissions, chiefly, the Town Council, the Town Plan and Zoning Commission, the Inlands Wetlands and Watercourse Agency and the Design Review Advisory Committee. Planning staff frequently:

- Conducts current or long range planning projects, including land use studies to analyze changes in trends in land use, the preparation of summary reports on social, physical, and populations data, checks data against maps, zoning regulations, and variances.
- Evaluates current development projects by detailed review of plans for architectural, zoning and general plan requirements and coordinated this review with builders, developers, architects, and other interested parties.
- Prepares statistical data and mapping related to planning programs and land use.
- Interprets and enforcement the inlands wetlands and watercourse and special flood hazard area

**Zoning Enforcement** (currently two staff: *Zoning Enforcement Officer and Assistant Zoning Enforcement Officer*) supports the Zoning Board of Appeals is responsible for the interpretation, equitable enforcement and application of the Zoning Ordinance.

# Authority

Most of the Planning and Zoning Division's ability to work is a function of enabling legislation (Conn. Gen Statutes; Town Charter or Town Code).

## Conn. General Statutes:

- Chapter 124, Section 8 – **Zoning**
- Chapter 126, Section 8 – **Municipal Planning Commissions**
- Chapter 440, Section 22a – **Wetlands and Watercourses**

## Town Charter:

- Chapter III, Section 5 – **Ordinances**
- Chapter XII – **Zoning**
- Chapter XIII - **Planning**

## Town Code

- Chapter 177 – **Zoning**
- Chapter A184 - **Subdivision**



# Why Plan? *It is Required*

Communities are mandated (via their planning commissions C.G.G. Sec. 8-23) to rewrite or update their plans of conservation and development (POCD) at least every ten years to remain eligible for discretionary state funding. *[the stick, but no carrot]*

- Zoning (or at least new changes of zone, must be consistent with the POCD)
- Municipal improvements (CIP) must be consistent with the POCD (via C.G.S. Sec 8-24)

The Planning Commission:

- Shall regularly review and maintain the Plan
- May adopt amendments to the Plan or parts of the Plan as it deems necessary
- May prepare/amend plans for the redevelopment and improvement of districts or neighborhoods containing special problems or opportunities

# Why Plan? *It is Required*

The Plan Shall:

- Be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the **physical and economic development** of the municipality,
- Provide for a **transportation system** comprised 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,
- 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,
- Identify areas where it is feasible and prudent to have compact, transit accessible, **pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns** and land reuse, and to promote such development patterns and land reuse,
- Recommend the most **desirable density of population** in the several parts of the municipality,

# Why Plan?

The Plan Shall:

- **Promote housing choice** and economic diversity in housing and encourage the development of housing which will meet the housing needs
- Consider **focusing development and revitalization** in areas with existing or planned physical infrastructure.
- Consider the following:
  - The need for **affordable housing**
  - The need for **protection of existing and potential drinking water supplies**
  - The use of **cluster 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**
  - The objectives of **energy-efficient patterns of development**

# Why Plan? *Its Required and an Opportunity*

Beyond meeting the state mandate, the planning process affords communities an opportunity to:

- Measure progress that a Town has made towards the goals of the prior plan
- Identify any trends or areas of concern
- Establish a dialogue with residents and stakeholders
- Effectively communicate the strategic work and careful investments that a Town has made over the last ten years
- Provide a foundation for new initiatives

# About the Plan: *West Hartford's POCD*

## The Plan:

- Documents the state of the Town and provides a guide for its future over the next ten years.
- Provides a future vision that is based in the realities of the resources and constraints that are present in West Hartford today.
- Establishes a vision for West Hartford's physical form, economic and social health and quality of life. That vision provides a foundation for policy and funding decisions and informs the Town's zoning regulations, which protect the health, safety and welfare of the people of West Hartford
- Provides specific strategies and actions necessary to realize the vision.

# About the Plan: *Organization*

- Early on in the Plan development process, four key principles were identified for the Town's current and future success.
- These principles are described as the “**guiding lenses**” and serve as the filter for the creation of the vision, goals, strategies and actions of the Plan.
- The Plan identifies a broad **Vision** and is organized by sections, major thematic areas that form the foundation of the Town and directly influence quality of life.
- This **Vision** is supported by seven **goals**, each specific to its corresponding section.
- **Strategies** then provide guidance on how to achieve the goals.
- **Actions** were then identified and are the step by step methods of implementing **strategies** and achieving **goals**.

## Guiding Lenses

Guiding lenses are the analytical filters meant to inform the creation of the vision, goals, strategies and actions of this Plan.

## Vision

The vision describes what the people of West Hartford value and what the Town will strive toward over the next 10 years. The vision is an expression of the desires and aspirations of the community in a statement that is meant to guide municipal leaders and organize the goals and strategies of this Plan.

## Goals

Goals are commitments towards achieving the vision. They are consistent with the guiding principles and establish a desired impact.

## Strategies

Strategies are the methods by which the goals will be achieved. They describe the interim outcomes that can lead to achieving the impact described in a particular goal.

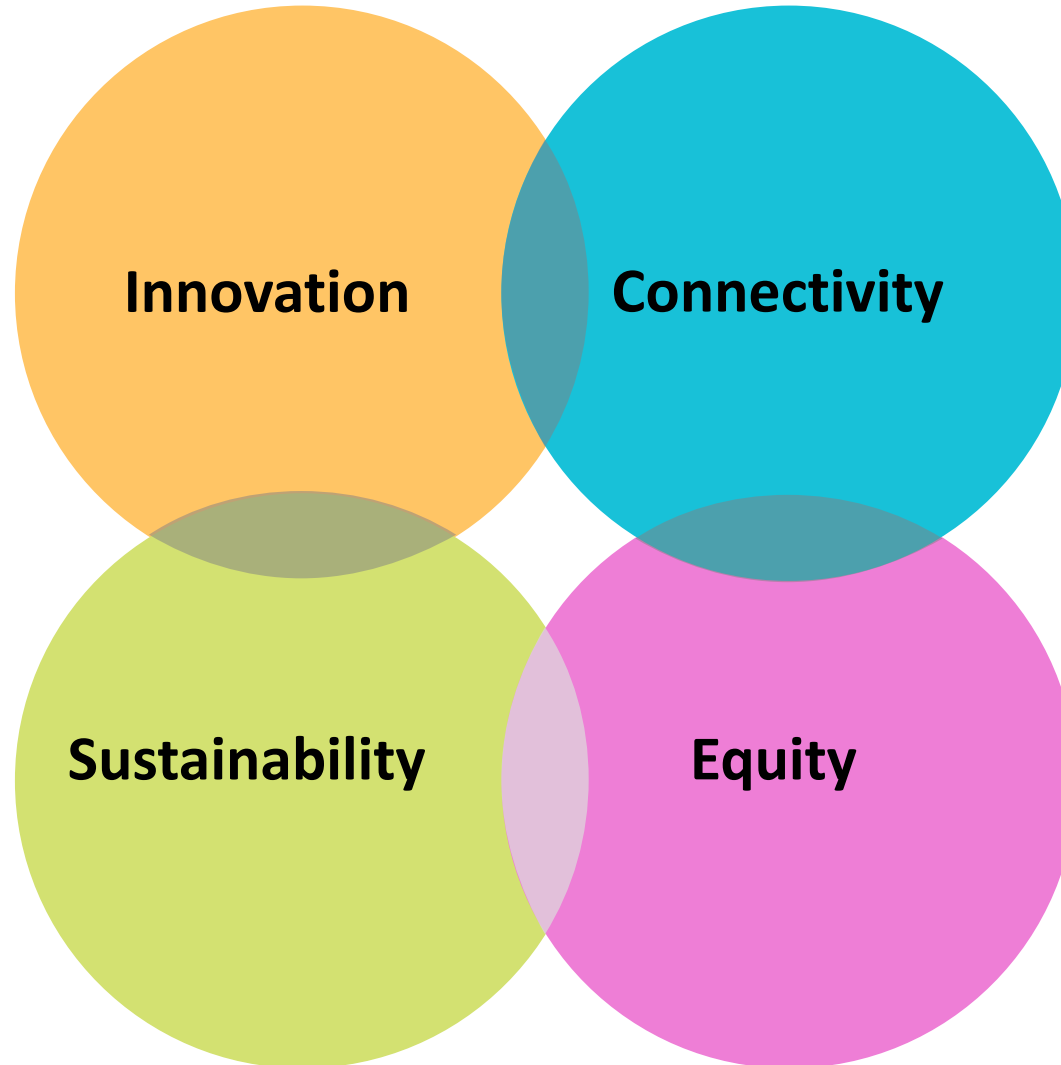
## Actions

Actions are specific steps that can be taken to accomplish strategies. They are the first steps to be taken toward achieving the Plan's vision.

# About the Plan: *Guiding Lenses*

West Hartford will continue to embrace creative and innovative thinking to promote the Town's continued successful evolution.

West Hartford will continue to manage resources to promote welfare and equity for current and future generations by encouraging interconnected green space, a multi-modal transportation system, efficient mixed-use development, and protecting environmental resources.



West Hartford will continue to connect the community both physically and socially by strengthening the linkages Between infrastructure, community groups, neighborhoods, business and public institutions.

West Hartford will continue to respect the inherent value of each member of its community and each area in Town by eliminating structural and institutional inequities that impede any sector of our community from reaching its full potential.

# About the Plan: *Vision*

West Hartford strives to be a welcoming, **innovative**, livable and prosperous community with a unique diversity across economic, religious, social, and cultural spectrums. We seek to maintain and promote our thriving community by providing **equitable** access to a variety of options for housing, employment, **transportation**, education and other amenities in a manner that reflects **responsible stewardship** of the environmental, sociocultural, and economic resources necessary for a vibrant quality of life for the Town's current and future residents.



# About the Plan: *Goals*

## Facilities and Infrastructure Goal

Promote practices that will maintain and modernize Town facilities and infrastructure in order to meet the evolving needs of the community in sustainable ways and recognize the need to provide services harmoniously with West Hartford's place in the greater Hartford Region and State at large.

## Neighborhoods and Housing Goal

Enhance and maintain West Hartford's existing neighborhoods and encourage diversity of housing types and costs to provide access and availability of housing options to current and future residents.

## Economic Development Goal

Promote growth and retention of existing businesses and development of new business opportunities to strengthen the community's tax base in an innovative manner, while preserving and protecting the residential character of the surrounding neighborhoods.

## Transportation Goal

Promote an integrated and balanced transportation system, including "complete streets," to improve traffic flow; enhance parking opportunities; promote public transportation and car-pooling; enhance traffic calming efforts, pedestrian mobility and bicycle access; and meet the needs of the next generation of transportation technologies and infrastructure.

## Cultural and Historic Resources Goal

Preserve, protect, enhance and promote, the cultural and historic resources of West Hartford.

## Open Space and Environment Goal

Preserve, protect, enhance and promote our open space and our fragile natural systems in concert with managing responsible growth and development.

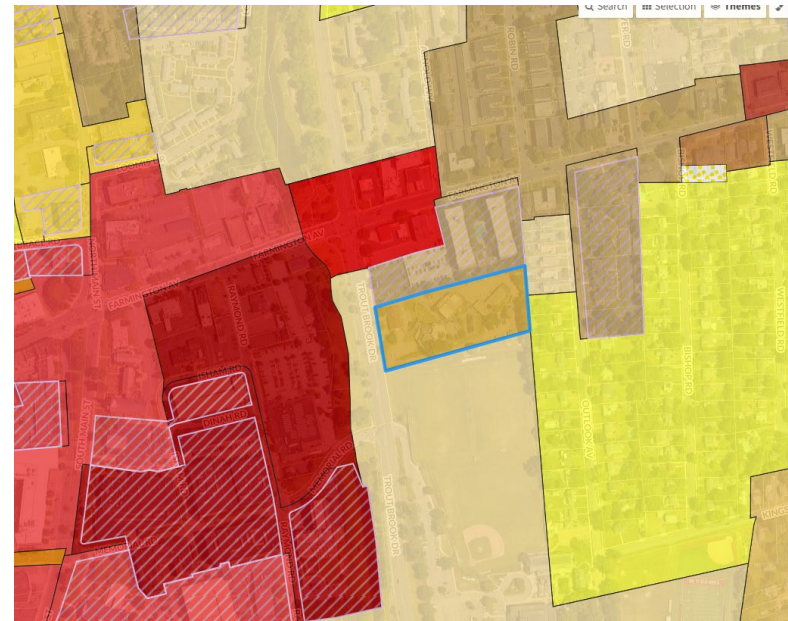
## Land Use Goal

Sustain and preserve the Town of West Hartford as a balanced community, maintaining and promoting neighborhood quality and open space in conjunction with the principles of Smart Growth.

# Plan Impacts on Future Development:

Zoning (or at least new changes of zone map and ordinance, must be consistent with the POCD)

Municipal improvements (CIP) must be consistent with the POCD (via C.G.S. Sec 8-24)



# Plan Implementation

Perhaps the most critical section of the Plan. The implementation section organizes this Plan's goals, strategies, and actions in a format that makes these items easy to reference to ensure the Plan is used as a living and working document.

Neighborhoods & Housing Goal: Enhance and maintain West Hartford's existing neighborhoods and encourage diversity of housing types and costs to provide access and availability of housing options to current and future residents				
	Strategies & Actions <i>Note: The Strategies and Actions listed below are not ranked in order of importance or priority.</i>	Complete	Underway	Incomplete
1	Protect and enhance the quality and safety of West Hartford's residential neighborhoods by investing in infrastructure, continuing and strengthening code compliance, and other measures necessary to support those neighborhoods.			
1a	Continue to invest in neighborhood infrastructure including sidewalks, streets, street trees, stormwater and other streetscape enhancements. Improvements that enhance connectivity and sustainability should be prioritized and all improvements should be consistent with the Town's Complete Street Policy.			
1b	Explore innovative approaches and techniques to strengthen code compliance.			
1c	Continue to work collaboratively with neighborhood organizations and groups to address quality of life concerns.			
1d	Create more effective educational tools for residents, real estate professionals and other stakeholders that provide guidance on the building permit process and the enforcement process.			
2	Support mixed-use development within commercial areas and adjacent to transit facilities.			
2a	Review the commercial zoning districts and associated zoning ordinance standards and identify potential areas for targeted modification that better facilitate mixed-use development.			
	Encourage appropriate development and redevelopment within transitional zones between current commercial and residential			



# Plan Implementation

## Neighborhoods & Housing Section ✓ Action Item 4c:

*Review the single-family zoning ordinances and identify potential areas for targeted modification and innovative opportunities, such as **accessory dwelling units**, that increase the availability of range of housing types and affordability levels.*

**New ADU Ordinance Adopted by  
Town Council January 2021**

## The **ABCs** of **ADUs**

A guide to  
**Accessory Dwelling Units**  
and how they expand housing options  
for people of all ages



BASEMENT ADU



DETACHED ADU



# Plan Implementation

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Town of West Hartford is conducting a transit-oriented development (TOD) planning initiative to review the zoning ordinances around its two CTfastrak stations. This effort is a continuation of past planning studies and seeks to further many of the goals and strategies outlined in the recently adopted Plan of Conservation and Development.

Specifically, this initiative seeks to better understand the opportunities and constraints for implementing a possible transit-oriented development supportive zoning ordinance and will focus on areas within one-quarter (0.25) mile of the Elmwood and Flatbush Avenue stations.

Prior to considering potential changes to the zoning ordinances within the two CTfastrak station areas, the Town of West Hartford Town Council seeks to understand the current usage patterns, perceptions of the existing quality of the built environment, and desires of residents, property owners, and businesses. This report summarizes the community engagement process.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The Town of West Hartford staff, with assistance from SLR, conducted a community engagement process between April and June of 2021. Due to restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, all community engagement was conducted virtually. Feedback was solicited through an online visual preferences surveys, a focus group with local businesses and property owners, and an online community forum.



## Transportation Section:

### Action 3d:

*Consistent with the recommendations in the New Park Avenue Transit Area Complete Streets Study, review the zoning ordinances and consider the creation of a new **transit-oriented district zoning**.* ✓

**TOD Zoning Study Initiated**

**TOD Ordinance adopted June 2022** *(12 month process)*

# Plan Implementation

## Open Space & Environment Section ✓ Action Item 3b:

*Review and evaluate the development of **Low Impact Development (LID)** standards within the zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations and inland wetlands and watercourse regulations.*

## LID Focused Community Engagement Initiated December

2021 (TPZ & Staff lead, 12 month process)

## Low Impact Development (LID) Site Planning and Design

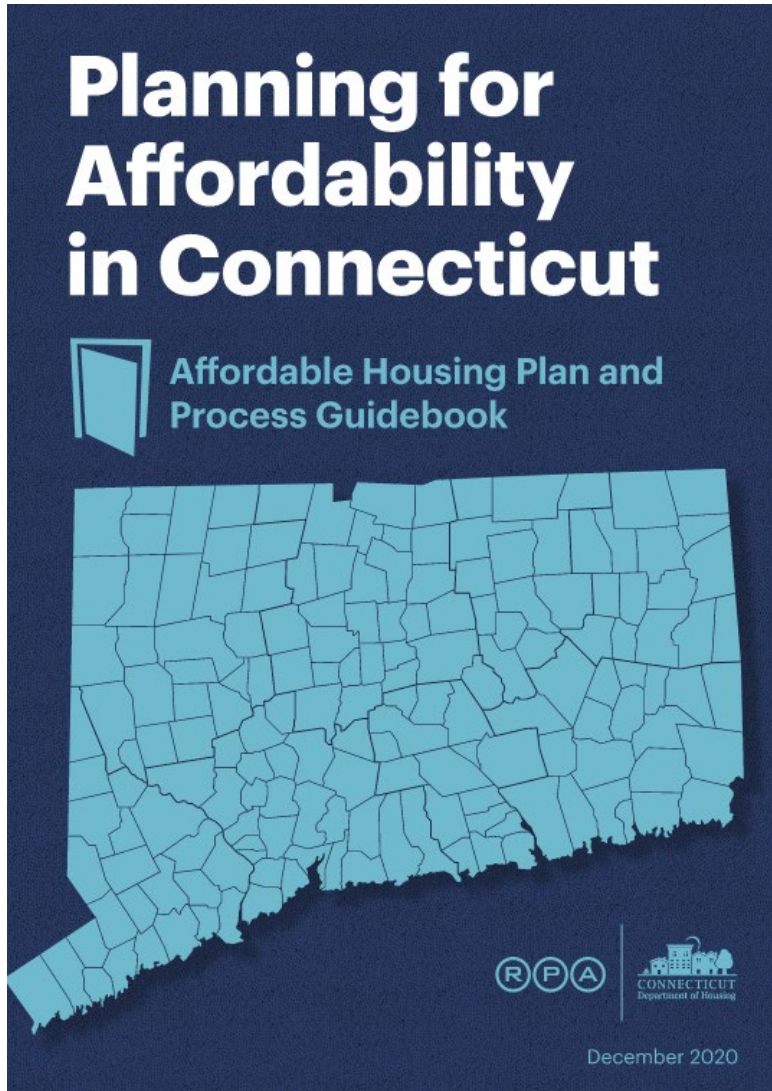
### The Goal: To preserve pre-development hydrology

- **Runoff volume and rate**
- **Groundwater recharge**
- **Stream baseflow**
- **Runoff water quality**





# Plan Implementation



## Neighborhoods & Housing Section Goal:

*Enhance and maintain West Hartford's existing neighborhoods and encourage diversity of housing types and costs to provide access and availability of housing options to current and future residents.*

Affordable Housing Advisory Group  
Formed July 2021.

Working towards the preparation and  
adoption of an Affordable Housing Plan  
by Spring 2023.

# Plan Implementation

## Economic Development Section: Strategy 2.

*Encourage public infrastructure improvements that support and stimulate private investment and redevelopment in the Town.*

**Action 2d.** *Conduct a Town-wide wayfinding study to encourage connectivity within and to the Town's distinctive commercial districts.*

**West Hartford Wayfinding Signage Project**  
**December 2022 project kick-off**  
*(Staff managing outside consultants, anticipated 6-9 month process)*



# Plan Implementation

## Economic Development Section: Strategy 2.

*Encourage public infrastructure improvements that support and stimulate private investment and redevelopment in the Town.*

*2a. Strengthen the connections of the pedestrian and bicycle facilities routes, including the Trout Brook Trail, to commercial districts as a means of boosting bicycle and pedestrian access.*

*2b. Continue to invest in and support infrastructure improvements that improve the quality and safety of the pedestrian and bicycle facilities in commercial districts.*

*2c. Conduct a Town-wide commercial district usable-open space study to identify opportunities for the creation of new pocket parks, parkletes and other innovative usable open spaces and to identify improvements to existing usable open space areas.*

## West Hartford Center Infrastructure Master Plan July 22 – present

*(Staff managing outside consultants, anticipated 12 month process)*





# Plan Implementation Interest ?

## Homework

Each individual Commissioner identify up to 5 POCD Action items, that personally interest you and you think would be a good fit for the CEC to work over the next 1-2 years.

Email your top 5 to Catherine Diviney. Planning staff will work with Catherine to determine a “consensus” top 3 action items and evaluate options of implementation.

Open Space & Environment Goal: Preserve, protect, enhance and promote our open space and our fragile natural systems in concert with managing responsible growth and development.			
Strategies & Actions	Note: The Strategies and Actions listed below are not ranked in order of importance or priority.		
	Complete	Underway	Incomplete
<b>3 Review the zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations and inland wetlands and watercourses regulations, and revise as necessary, to support responsible growth and development while preserving and protecting the Town's environmental resources.</b>			
3a Review and evaluate the development of ridgeline protection standards within the zoning ordinances.			
3b Review and evaluate the development of Low Impact Development (LID) standards within the zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations and inland wetlands and watercourse regulations.			
3c Review and evaluate the development of additional environmentally sensitive land protection measures within the zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations, such as the exclusion of steep slopes, wetlands, and flood plains from lot area calculations.			
3d Review and evaluate the current Open Space Development zoning ordinances with a focus on modernizing and expanding the applicability of this zoning tool.			
3e Review and evaluate the current Screening and Landscaping zoning ordinances to provide for more innovative approaches and techniques requirements for use of native species.			
3f Review and evaluate the current Drainage water zoning ordinances to ensure consistency with the State of Connecticut Stormwater Quality Control Manual.			
3g Comprehensively review and update the inland wetlands and watercourses regulations to ensure consistency with the model State regulations and current best management practices.			
3h Review the zoning ordinances and identify potential areas for targeted modifications that support sustainable development practices.			
<b>4 Continue to promote sustainable stormwater management and floodplain management to be resilient and adaptable to a changing climate.</b>			
4a Fully conduct and implement the best management practices of the Town's SMP.			
4b Review and evaluate the current Special Flood Hazard Area zoning ordinances to ensure consistency with the CT DEEP and FEMA recommended model ordinances.			
4c Continue to participate in the FEMA Community Rating System (CRS) program and work towards increasing the Town's rating to a Class 7.			
4d Continue to invest in stormwater infrastructure improvements throughout Town. Emphasis on sustainable, green infrastructure improvements should be prioritized.			
4e Review current floodplain management procedures and identify opportunities that enhance sustainable practices and improve community resiliency.			
4f Implement the recommendations and continue to participate in updates to the CRCOG Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan.			

# Town or City Planning [verb]

1. *The act of shaping and guiding the physical growth of a town or city, while somehow maintaining positive relationships with all stakeholders involved.*
2. *Also known as impossible.*

Thank you ...