

Chapter 1 Introduction



Introduction

Avon is a picturesque New England Town that grew up along the wooded banks and meadows of the Farmington River. Avon is located in Hartford County in Central Connecticut, approximately 10 miles west of Hartford and is adjoined by the towns of Bloomfield and West Hartford to the east, Simsbury and Canton to the north, Burlington to the west, and Farmington to the south. The major transportation routes through Avon include Route 44 east and west and Routes 10/202 north and south.

The topography of Avon is varied. The highlands are in the easternmost portion of the Town. Talcott Mountain on the West Hartford border

is the most prominent feature with a peak elevation of 950 feet above sea level. The Town's western border with Burlington is delineated by the Farmington River. This part of Town also includes an area of higher elevation known as Huckleberry Hill. An area of lowlands located in the eastern third of the Town are part of the Central Farmington River Valley with the Farmington River flowing north through them.

The Town covers about 22.6 square miles. It has an average rainfall of 53" a year. The average daily maximum temperature is 63° F and the average daily minimum is 42°F.



View of Riverdale Farms along the Farmington River

Chapter 1 Introduction



Avon is part of the Capitol Region which is comprised of 29 towns in the Hartford area. Changes and growth trends within the City of Hartford have had an impact on growth and development in Avon. This will continue to be the case as we move into the future, although probably not as much as in the past. As suburban communities have taken on a more dominant role, Avon and the entire Farmington Valley area, consisting of the Towns of Avon, Canton, Farmington, Granby, and Simsbury, has become an employment center, shifting jobs from the core of Hartford to suburban areas. With the increase of local jobs as well as the influence of the computer, enabling people to work at least partly from home, employment and commuting patterns have also changed.



Figure 1.1 Shows Towns that are part of Capitol Region

Avon is a community of well-maintained residences, with a vibrant retail economy, 2 planned office and light industrial parks, ample recreational opportunities, including significant areas of permanently protected open space, and a highly-ranked educational system.

Over 85% of Avon is currently developed for housing, commercial, industrial, institutional, recreation and open space uses. The current population is 17,000. There are approximately 7,000 housing units. The community presently has a very desirable set of characteristics. Much of this character is derived from an adherence to, and the successful implementation of, land use policies contained in earlier Plans of Conservation and Development. The Town's first Plan of Conservation and Development was adopted in 1956. Subsequent plans were adopted in 1968, 1979, and most recently 1991.

This Plan does not recommend any major changes which would significantly alter the course, which has been set by earlier plans. There are however, opportunities to enhance and further improve the quality of life in Avon. Specific recommendations contained in this Plan will help strengthen subdivision and zoning regulations in the area of environmental protection; create regulations to protect aquifer resources; construct needed roadways; enhance Town Parks; add to the Town's open space

Chapter 1 Introduction



assets, and make various enhancements to Avon Center.

This Plan is intended to be a working document to guide the Planning and Zoning Commission and the citizens of Avon in making decisions regarding land use, transportation, public services, recreation, open space, natural resources, and housing, over the next decade.

State Requirements

A Plan of Conservation and Development is required by State Statute (Section 8-23) to be updated every ten years. In accordance with this Statute, the Plan shall:

(A) be a statement of policies, goals, and standards, for the physical and economic development of the municipality, (B) 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, (C) recommend the most desirable use of land within the municipality for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial, conservation and other purposes, (D) recommend the most desirable density of population in the several parts of the municipality, (E) note any inconsistencies it may have with the state plan of conservation and development adopted pursuant to chapter 297, (F) make provision for the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multifamily dwellings, consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity, for all residents of the municipality and the planning region in which the municipality is located, as

designated by the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management under section 16a-4a, (G) promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low and moderate income households, and encourage the development of housing which will meet the housing needs identified in the housing plan prepared pursuant to section 8-37t and in the housing component and the other components of the state plan of conservation and development prepared pursuant to chapter 297.

Such plan may show the commission's and any special committee's recommendation for (1) conservation and preservation of trap rock and other ridgelines, (2) a system of principal thoroughfares, parkways, bridges, streets and other public ways, (3) airports, parks, playgrounds, and other public grounds, (4) the general location, relocation and improvement of public buildings, (5) the general location and extent of public utilities and terminals, whether publicly or privately owned, for water, sewerage, light, power, transit and other purposes, (6) the extent and location of public housing projects, (7) 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, and (E) plans for open space acquisition and greenways protection and development, and (8) any other recommendations as well in the commission's or any special committee's judgment, be beneficial to the municipality. The Plan may include any necessary and related maps, explanatory material, photographs, charts or other pertinent data and information relative to the past, present, and future trends of the municipality.

Chapter 1 Introduction



The Planning Process

This Plan is the outcome of the work of the Planning and Zoning Commission, many other Town boards and commissions, Town Staff, consultants, and the citizens of Avon. In preparing this Plan, previous comprehensive plans as well as special studies contained within these plans were reviewed. In order to gauge public opinion, 2 telephone surveys were conducted by the Center for Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut. The first was a survey of residents conducted in February of 2004. This survey consisted of 35 questions which were presented to 400 randomly selected residents. Survey methodology was selected to ensure a statistically high degree of accuracy. Questions were asked about policies relating to housing, open space, conservation, economic development, recreation, retail development, and proposed enhancements to Avon Center.

A second survey was conducted of 250 randomly selected businesses using a similar methodology. This survey was jointly prepared and funded by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Avon Chamber of Commerce. Interviews were conducted with senior company officials. For this survey, 62 questions were asked. Respondents were asked what they thought were the town's greatest assets and greatest detriments in order to

successfully operate a business in Avon. Questions were also asked about the labor pool, available support services, and the importance of affordable housing. In addition, questions were asked about Avon's tax policies as well as whether business would favor land use policies aimed at encouraging more commercial and industrial development. A copy of the survey questions and results of these 2 surveys are available on the Town's website at www.town.avon.ct.us. The results were of great value and were carefully considered by the Commission in formulating this Plan.

The Avon Center Study

In March of 2005, the Planning and Zoning Commission adopted a long-range plan for Avon Center. This plan was preceded by a series of public meetings to discuss this plan between March and May of 2004 and December 2004 through March 2005. This plan contains a series of recommendations aimed at making the Center a more economically viable and pedestrian friendly place while preserving and enhancing historic structures. This plan is formally incorporated as part of this Plan of Conservation and Development as Appendix A.

Chapter 1 Introduction



Avon Center Study

Other Special Studies

The Planning and Zoning Commission has conducted special studies over the past 25 years for specific areas of the Town which warrant special review. These studies are formally incorporated as part of this Plan. They are as follows:

- Land Use Study for Nod Road and Montevideo Road, 1992
- Huckleberry Hill Land Use Study, 1989
- Land Use Study, 1986
- Land Use and Circulation Study for Avon Park North, 1980

State and Regional Plans of Development

Other plans were also considered in developing this Plan. The State of Connecticut Plan of Conservation and Development revised through 2004, and the Capitol Region Plan of Conservation and Development revised through

2004 were both reviewed for consistency with this Plan.

This Plan contains four recommendations regarding future land use which differ from the State Plan of Conservation and Development. They are as follows:

- A small area of land located south of Oak Bluff is shown on the Avon Future Land Use Plan as Low Density Residential, while the State Future Land Use Plan designates this area as Rural. The Commission believes this area would be best suited for Low Density Residential development. This area is within the future sewer service area adopted by the Avon Water Pollution Control Authority. However, it is the Commission's recommendation that permitted residential density still remain low.
- An area located north and south of Thompson Road is shown on the Avon Future Land Use Plan as Proposed Open Space, while the State Future Land Use Plan shows this area of land as Growth Area. The Commission has designated this area as a high priority for land acquisition and preservation as open space. However, should the Town not be able to purchase this property, the

Chapter 1 Introduction



Commission would support the State's designation as a Growth Area. This area has access to public water and sewer and is proximate to two State highways.

- Several parcels of land located south of the Found Land and northeast of the Huckleberry Hill Open Space are shown on the Avon Future Land Use Plan as Low Density Residential, while the State's Future Land Use Plan shows this area as Rural. Some of this land has been recommended for open space acquisition by the Commission. However, the majority of this property will be developed for single-family homes. This area has been designated by the Avon Water Pollution Control Authority to be serviced with public sewer. However, it is the Commission's belief that this area should be developed at a low density.
- Area of land located south of the Buckingham Subdivision and north of the Farmington River is shown on the Avon Future Land Use Plan as Low Density Residential, while the State's Future Land Use Plan shows this area as a Conservation Area. The Commission believes this area would be best suited for Low Density Residential development. This area is currently serviced by public sewers.

The Commission requests that the State make the necessary revisions to the State Plan to better match this Town Plan in these areas.

Public Participation

Informational meetings and a public hearing were held to disseminate information regarding the plan as well as to gain public input into the creation of the plan. A draft copy of the plan was posted on the town's website for public review prior to the public hearing.

Input from other Agencies

Comments were solicited from all other boards, commissions, and administrative departments within the Town's government.

How this Plan is Organized

This Plan is organized into 11 chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Presents information on what a Plan of Conservation and Development is. Reviews the process of how this Plan was developed.

Chapter 2: Demographics

Presents information on population growth, population forecasts, work force data, income data, and household characteristics.

Chapter 3: Land Use

Chapter 1 Introduction



Presents data of existing land use. A historical comparison of land use changes by decade, and an analysis of vacant land still available for potential development.

Chapter 4: Natural Resources

Presents information on natural features including, floodplains, wetlands, and aquifers. Discusses challenges to protect these resources and regulatory options including, storm water control, aquifer protection, and ridge top protection.

Chapter 5: Open Space and Recreation

Presents an inventory of existing open space assets and recommendations for future preservation/acquisition. Also contains recommendations concerning future recreational trail development along with an assessment of the adequacy of existing active recreation areas.

Chapter 6: Historic Resources

Summarizes two previous studies which inventoried historic resources. The first was a Town-wide survey. The second was a survey specific to Avon Center.

Chapter 7: Housing

Displays information on Avon's housing stock, housing growth by decade since 1960, and presents an analysis of vacant land capacity for

additional housing units leading to build out. This chapter also includes a projection for maximum population.

Chapter 8: Public Facilities and Utilities

Presents information and recommendations regarding the Town's public water supply and sanitary sewer system.

Chapter 9: Business and Industry

Presents data on land currently used for business and industry, an analysis of vacant land currently zoned for business use with recommendations for these parcels.

Chapter 10: Transportation

Presents a series of recommendations to improve the town's road network. High priority areas are identified for roads needing improvements, new road construction, as well as the extension of temporary cul-de-sacs which are needed to complete the Town's road circulation system. This chapter also includes a discussion about the challenges associated with Route 44 (Main Street).

Chapter 11: Neighborhood Goals and Policies

Presents Future Land Use recommendations by neighborhood. The Town has historically been divided into 16 individual neighborhoods.

Chapter 1 Introduction



Chapters 2 through 11 contain a set of recommended Goals and Policies at the conclusion of each chapter. The goals and policies of a Plan of Conservation and Development provide the framework for the Land use Plan. They are the written general philosophy, intentions, desires and the specific actions various boards and commissions may take to implement the Plan of Conservation and Development. **Map 13, Future Land Use Plan**, (contained in the back pocket of this Plan), graphically depicts many of these objectives in map form. Goals and Policies and the Future Land Use Plan are recommendations that should be used by the Planning and Zoning Commission in making decisions concerning future land uses, zone changes, transportation improvements, open space, recreation facilities, public facility needs and locations, utility locations, as well as places that merit special consideration because of their historic significance. For purposes of this report, the terms Goals and Policies are defined as follows:

Goals: are overall philosophy statements of a very broad and inclusive nature that reflect the spirit of the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Policies: are more specific statements following each goal that can be used as a basis for decision making, goals, policies, and objectives.

It should be noted that although this plan is divided into individual chapters, there are linkages between each. For example decisions regarding land use have impacts relating to transportation, the environment, and population growth. Decisions regarding housing have impacts regarding capitol needs such as schools. This plan is intended to be viewed as a cohesive document which recognizes that many recommendations have consequences which extend into other areas.