

Chapter 9 Business and Industry



Business and Industry

Avon is fortunate to have a well balanced diverse mix of business and industrial uses. For a Town with a population of 17,000 people and area of 22.5 square miles, the Town also has a substantial amount of retail, office, and industrial development. In Connecticut, the only source of local tax revenue is through the Town's Grand List. The commercial development in Avon provides a major contribution to the Town's total tax levy needed to fund services.



Rotoondo Precast Plant, Old Farms Road



Legere Woodworking, Darling Drive

At the beginning of the process to update this Plan, the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Avon Chamber of Commerce hired the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut to conduct a survey of businesses in Avon. Two hundred and fifty businesses were randomly selected. They were comprised of companies which are both small and large and those that are involved in retail, office, and manufacturing. This was done in an effort to solicit opinions from this group such that where possible, land use policies could also adequately reflect the needs of the business community.

Over 90% of the respondents rated Avon either good or excellent as a place to do business. Approximately 70% of the respondents rated the Town government as either somewhat accommodating or very accommodating in meeting their needs. When asked to indicate the best thing about owning or managing a business in Avon, the most common response from 45% of the respondents was location, accessibility, and convenience. A small percentage, or 18%, indicated they had some difficulty in finding lower skilled, lower wage or entry level employees for their business. The vast majority of businesses surveyed, or 86%, indicated that over the next 5-year period they would maintain a presence in Avon. Of the 14% who indicated

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that it is likely they would not maintain a presence in Avon, 37% indicated that Town taxes and the high cost of doing business in Avon was an important consideration. Interestingly, the business owners who were surveyed had roughly the same opinions regarding policies which would promote expansion opportunities for businesses in the Town as compared to a similar survey of residents. For example, when asked, 75% of respondents indicated that Avon had enough existing retail space. A slight majority, or 53%, would be in favor of rezoning vacant land to accommodate additional retail development; 40% to accommodate additional office development; and 39% to accommodate additional industrial development. Respondents were asked if the Town should consider rezoning some existing undeveloped areas that are currently zoned residential into commercial and industrial areas to encourage business. **Table 9.1** presents these results along with a comparison to the residential survey which was also commissioned by the Commission.

Table 9.1 Rezoning for Business Development Poll		
Survey Result	Avon Business Survey	Avon Residents Survey
Strongly Agree	17%	8%
Somewhat Agree	19%	17%
Somewhat Disagree	16%	22%
Strongly Disagree	39%	49%
Don't Know	10%	4%
Refused	0%	0%
Count	251%	N/A

Source: Avon Business Survey April-May 2005 & Avon Resident Survey March 2004

Respondents were also asked if there was going to be increased commercial development in Avon, what type of development they would most favor given the choices of retail, office, and manufacturing. **Table 9.2** presents those results. A complete copy of the entire survey along with the results is available at the Town's website at www.town.avon.ct.us.

Table 9.2 Land Use Preference for Commercial Development Poll		
Survey Result	Avon Business Survey	Avon Residents Survey
Retail Development	20%	25%
Office Development	47%	53%
Manufacturing Development	14%	7%
Combination	8%	7%
Don't Want Any Development	3%	7%
Don't Know	10%	3%
Refused	1%	0%
Count	251%	N/A

Source: Avon Business Survey April-May 2005 & Avon Resident Survey March 2004

Commercial/Retail Development CR Zone – Route 44

- One significant undeveloped parcel remains between Nod Brook Mall and the Walmart Plaza. If possible, this should be developed with a driveway connection to these two adjoining developments. A bridge or culvert crossing Nod Brook is required. See Chapter 10 for a more detailed discussion.
- There are still opportunities for the development of several smaller parcels. There are also opportunities for the consolidation, demolition, and reconstruction of several properties. Existing driveways to Route 44 should be closed wherever possible in favor of access at signalized intersections.

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- The construction of a raised landscape median is a top priority in accordance with the 2001 Route 44 Corridor Study (see Chapter 10).



Retail on Route 44

CS Zone – Avon Center

- All recommendations of the 2005 Avon Center Study are incorporated as a part of this Plan and are a high priority. They are aimed at enhancing the economic viability and historic significance of Avon Center.



Shop at Old Avon Village

NB Zone – Avon Center

- The creation of this zone and designation of 2 areas in the late 1960's was an innovative planning concept aimed at providing a range of "convenience" goods and services to

residences living close to these areas. It appears that these 2 areas, Country Club Road and West Avon Road, and Avonwood Road and Waterville Road are sufficiently sized to accommodate this stated purpose.

Avon Park North and South

- There is one remaining undeveloped parcel in Avon Park South 3900055 which is 17 acres in area. This should be developed for a permitted or special permitted use in accordance with the zone.
- There are 7 undeveloped parcels in Avon Park North totaling 74 acres. These should be developed in accordance with the IP and CPA zoning regulations. However, there may be an opportunity for a unique development consistent with the recommendations of the Avon Center Study. If developed for office use there is potential for approximately 400,000 square feet of additional office space.



Reflexite Office in Industrial Park

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OP Zone

- Land zoned OP at the intersection of Waterville Road and Avonwood Road should be developed as an office use given the limited supply of OP property remaining.



Aerial Photo of Legere Woodworking

Goals and Policies

Goal:

Provide areas for commercial services which are convenient, varied, safe, and attractive which will serve the needs of the residents of Avon. Provide opportunities for new industries to find attractive, well serviced lots with good access to the region and to provide a positive environment for local industries to prosper and expand in Town.

Policies:

1. Maintain an adequate buffer between commercial and residential areas.
2. Continue to encourage the use of common driveways and interconnections of com-

mercial parking lots in order to minimize the number of curb cuts on public roads within commercial areas.

3. Implement improvements to Route 44 as outlined in the Route 44 corridor study.
4. Continue to encourage significant landscaping of commercial sites.
5. Develop an informative design guidelines booklet which details town policies regarding design, layout, access, signage and architectural treatment for commercial development.
6. Implement the recommendations of the Avon Center Study with regard to enhancing the business climate of Avon Center and re-use of the Towpath School property. The Town Council has recently decided to demolish the 1948 Towpath School building. The use of this site for an expanded parking area to Sperry Park and expanded playing field area as an interim land use is certainly appropriate.
7. Create an overlay zone for Avon Center. Encourage certain neo-traditional design elements, preservation of historic structures, and quality design in exchange for bonuses concerning lot coverage and flexibility in parking requirements.

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8. Create a positive economic climate in order to foster new businesses, retain existing businesses, and support their growth.
9. Limit Commercial Zones (CR, CS, CPA and CPB) to their present boundaries.
10. Identify certain uses now permitted by right in commercial and industrial zones that are higher traffic generators and require special permit review.
11. Continue to guide the development of Avon Park North and South, the Town's premier office and industrial area developed in the 1970's, so that it will continue to attract new businesses and retain existing businesses while at the same time be a good neighbor to the adjoining residential areas.
12. Design controls enacted by both Ensign-Bickford Realty and the Town of Avon, with the creation of Avon Parks North and South in the 1970's, should be continued in Avon Park North and South including lot coverage requirements.
13. There may be one or more undeveloped parcels in Avon Park North that would be appropriate for mixed use development, which would act as a transitional zone between the commercial zone and the

residential zone. The CPA zone allows traditional uses in the Industrial Park zone. These might include uses such as banquet facilities, health care facilities or sports training facilities.

14. One undeveloped parcel (Parcel 1300075) remains on the west side of Climax Road. This parcel would be appropriately used as a continuation of the multi-family residential uses in the area.
15. The remaining parcel, Parcel # 3900055, in the Avon Park South should be developed as an industrial or office use. Subdivision of this parcel into smaller lots may be possible.
16. Rezone the small area on Simsbury Road (Route 10), which is presently occupied by Northington Builders, Parcel # 3970071, which is within Avon Center. This parcel would be most appropriate for a higher density residential use.



Proposed Business Development in Avon