

Plan of Conservation and Development

A Plan of Conservation and Development is a community responsibility conferred on the town's planning commission by the Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes. This provision requires the Madison Planning and Zoning Commission to update the Plan every ten years. The most important reason to prepare a plan, however, is to provide a tool for guiding the future of the community. A Plan defines a common vision for the future of the Town and then identifies specific tasks and determines policies that will help attain that vision. Ultimately, implementation is the real purpose of planning. While preparing a Plan of Conservation and Development may take a couple years, implementation may last for ten to twenty years.

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 conservation and development activities,
- Guide land use decisions and regulations,
- Program public projects, and
- Meet identified public needs.

It is important to note that the Plan of Conservation and Development is primarily an advisory document. It is intended to guide local residents and municipal boards, to provide a framework for consistent decision-making with regard to conservation and development activities in Madison over the next decade or so. While the statutory responsibility to adopt the Plan rests with the Planning Commission, implementation will only occur with the diligent efforts of the residents and officials of the Town of Madison. The Plan will only be effective if it is understood and supported by the people of Madison, and implemented by local boards and commissions.

Apart from making good sense, a Plan of Conservation and Development can have significant bearing on the Town's ability to carry out everyday planning and zoning activities, make public improvements, or secure grants. The Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) contain several provisions pertaining to plans of conservation and development that come into play on a regular basis:

- changes to zoning regulations or districts by the Planning Commission must be reviewed for consistency with the Plan; and
- public improvements and land transactions by the Town must also be referred to the Planning Commission for a finding of consistency with the Plan (CGS Section 8- 24).

From a funding standpoint, many grant programs, require eligible projects to conform to the local Plan of Conservation and Development.

Statutory Requirements for a Plan of Conservation and Development

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...
- be consistent with the municipal coastal program...
- be made with reasonable consideration for restoration and protection of the ecosystem and habitat of Long Island Sound...
- 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...