



Chester P&Z Workshops (Source: UD 2007)

Workshop Results

Two workshops were held on consecutive Saturday mornings, February 3 and February 10, 2007, in the Chester Meeting House to discuss the Plan of Conservation and Development. These workshops were facilitated by Planning and Zoning Commission members. The meetings were well attended, with a strong representation from residents, non-resident workers and merchants.

The first workshop focused on the unique aspects of the town and its general character, asking participants to identify key issues that should be addressed in the Plan. The second discussion went more deeply into the hopes and fears that residents have for their town and how external development pressures might affect Chester in the future. Participants joined in open discussion as well as providing written comments in workbooks distributed for that purpose.

Discussion and written comments at the workshops showed a deep appreciation for the natural and cultural resources of Chester. The town's scenic character and small town sense of community were given as the principal reason that many people moved to or stayed in Chester. There was a fear that changes in the type of development within the town would diminish the quality of life found here. Participants were also concerned about the increasing costs of living in town, particularly with increased property taxes. Some participants expressed the fear that they might have to move out of town due to high costs, and that Chester's children could not afford to locate here in the future.

Most who expressed an opinion urged the Commission to create a Plan that restricted future development to that which was compatible with the small town character. In one exercise, entitled "beauty contest", participants rated a series of pictures as favorable or unfavorable on a ten point scale. The best-liked slide in the exercise was one showing four views of Chester Center.



(B)

"Urban Forestry" is the name given to managing street trees and other trees on public land. Some towns maintain an inventory of such trees and develop a regular program to maintain tree health. Proper care can often prevent the loss of valuable trees that contribute significantly to the character of a town. A regular replanting program can assure that the streetscape does not become denuded. Timely pruning can help trees endure windstorms and can minimize damage from fallen limbs. Landscaping of public improvements and new development can help such activities blend into the existing small town context.

Today, Chester manages its trees only on an ad hoc basis, when a problem arises and damage may have already occurred. Appropriate standards for landscape management need to be incorporated into the town's capital improvements planning. The Planning and Zoning Commission needs to review and update its landscape requirements for new or expanded development.



Figure 2-15 – damaged Hemlock trees
(Source: CRERPA-MB- 2007)

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING URBAN FORESTRY:

- 43. Require that new tree plantings include a variety of species to avoid monoculture stands which are susceptible to disease and insects.
- 44. Establish a town-wide urban forestry program to monitor, maintain, and replant street trees, and other trees on town property.
- 45. Develop a specific management plan for debris removal from wind-damaged trees and a replanting program following a catastrophic event.

Chester Hills

As noted previously, the wooded ridgelines and steep hillsides of Chester are an important part of its visual character. As stated in the Plan for the Conservation of Open Space in Chester, "All recognize the importance of preserving the current wealth of scenic vistas... clearly we must be attentive to retain and enhance these views which give Chester so much of its character." Development on the ridge tops and hills should be located to retain as much of the wooded appearance of the hills as is feasible. Preservation of the scenic character of ridges and hillsides is one purpose of the standards adopted for the Gateway

Conservation District along the Connecticut River. Additional attention to protecting the appearance of the Chester Hills should be considered for other areas of town as part of subdivision and site plan review. Additional guidelines for tree-cutting, landscaping, and protecting natural views and vistas should be formulated and incorporated into the town's land use regulations.



positive social relationships. There has been very little research on how to quantify these costs, many of which are intangible. However, an understanding that these costs are real is necessary to assure that development will not negatively affect the community for the sake of development. The full costs to the community as a whole should be considered.

Understanding the concept of sustainability as it applies to Chester is not difficult. Minimally, it implies that our natural and cultural environment presents certain limitations on how much infrastructure we construct, how many houses we build, how many fields we lose, and how many human beings live here, such that if we grow beyond that point, we will incur costs greater than any benefits we might hope to achieve through further growth. Sustainability also implies that we become mindful of the non-visible, negative consequences that economic activity in Chester may have, and that we become economically capable of reducing those negative impacts. It calls for a community-invested decision on how much and what kind of growth is acceptable. Finally, the concept of sustainability requires recognition that Chester is part of a global economy. That requires a simultaneous effort to maximize emerging environmentally responsible technology and innovation to promote new ways of "keeping it local," while also participating in a global marketplace. Generally, moving in the direction of sustainability means reducing our impact on the environment by producing less waste, using less toxic substances, consuming less and developing wholesome relationships with nature while also providing economic capacity for employment, innovation, and progress.

There are various descriptions for achieving sustainability which all share a common approach. According to The Rocky Mountain Institute, achieving sustainable development requires the following actions:

- ◆ Redefining prosperity, weighing community values, quality of life and the environment alongside traditional economic considerations;
- ◆ Seeking true development in the sense of getting better, instead of expansion, which is merely growing bigger;
- ◆ Advocating the long term stewardship of community resources, ensuring that present actions do not erode the basis for future prosperity;
- ◆ Pursuing self-reliance and a more democratic approach to decision-making, representing community wide interests over individual interests; and
- ◆ Stressing diversity, resilience, and a conviction that many small efforts can work better than a single one-size-fits-all solution.

Actions in Support of Sustainable Goals

There is a growing international urgency to look at growth and development with a new frame of reference. This has been greatly hastened by looming challenges in the areas of energy consumption and cost, the effects of climate change, and evolving globalism. While these problems have been identified for several years, it is only recently that this awareness has penetrated the public



consciousness in a major way. Numerous localities throughout the world have created sustainability strategies. Information on local efforts is available through web sites. For example, one particularly helpful website (www.town.wolfville.ns.ca) is that of the town of Wolfville, Nova Scotia. After creating a Sustainable Community Planning Task Force, Wolfville summarized its intentions in the form of four broad objectives as follows:

- ◆ Reduce and eliminate our dependence upon fossil fuels, extracted underground metals and minerals.
- ◆ Reduce and eliminate our dependence upon chemicals and unnatural substances that can accumulate in nature.
- ◆ Reduce and eliminate dependence on activities that harm life-sustaining ecosystems and encroach on nature.
- ◆ Meet the hierarchy of human needs fairly and efficiently..

These objectives are a solid basis for sustainable development. How these objectives are met is the challenge for each community. One strategy for accomplishing the objectives of sustainable development is economic re-localization. Economic re-localization is a way to develop a local economy by strengthening its resilience and self-sufficiency, as opposed to only increasing its income. The concept is best reflected in a discussion of locally-grown food and locally produced electrical energy.

Sustainability Projects for Chester

The list of actions to support sustainability grows larger as discussion of the subject expands. Many actions have long been advocated by conservationists and environmental activists. Others are just now being made possible by new technologies. The focus of these actions is to reuse, recycle, substitute, use less, and be aware of long term and far-reaching consequences.

Sustainability can be implemented by changes in approaches to physical development in town, minimizing impacts on the environment from local public and private activities, developing new approaches to maintaining and improving the local environment, employing sound land use practices, encouraging a pedestrian-, bicycle- and transit-friendly community, and promoting and furthering sustainability through a wide-ranging education and outreach program. What follows is a listing of some potential activities, tasks and goals for enhancing sustainability in our community.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING SUSTAINABILITY:

Physical Development

1. Encourage the use of recycled, renewable and local materials for construction projects.
2. Encourage re-use and retrofitting of older buildings where possible, conserving both building materials and cultural resources.
3. Encourage adaptable, extendable buildings and public spaces, useable for many functions.



4. Evaluate opportunities for alternative energy generation from local resources.
5. Conduct an energy audit of town buildings and implement recommendations as part of the Town's Capital Improvement Program. Offer information and possible financial assistance for energy audits of private buildings.
6. Recommend adoption of the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) or equivalent energy-efficient building standards and certification for public buildings and subdivision regulations.
7. Encourage the use of solar power, low head hydropower and other alternative energy sources by removing unnecessary zoning barriers to their use.
8. Develop and provide guidelines through the Town's land use offices and commissions on green principles as a Chester preference.
9. Develop guidelines and encourage land use practices that promote appropriate design for density which supports sustainable objectives and transit- and pedestrian-oriented development.
10. Put the town's natural resources inventory online so it is readily accessible to the public.
11. Monitor discharge to watercourses and water bodies from town and state owned storm water systems to insure no or minimal damage to receiving waters. Recommend and monitor corrective actions where needed.
12. Educate and encourage the use of native plants for landscaping on private and municipal properties.
13. Promote and support local and regional infrastructure investments which advance intermodal transit opportunities and methods which lower "Vehicle Miles Traveled" (VMT).
14. Support and encourage the use of alternative and clean-fuel technologies by public fleets.
15. Partner on regional projects for marketing and promotion of commuting alternatives.
16. Promote installation of new and emerging telecommunication technology for telecommuting and business operations.

Reducing Waste

17. Work toward a Town "paperless office" by making use of electronic files and correspondence. Incorporate sustainability in town purchasing programs.
18. Develop an anti-idling policy for town vehicles that exceeds the state requirements.
19. Support a study of a town-wide composting program.
20. Continue support for regional recycling and regionally-based disposal of household hazardous waste and electronics equipment, consider "single-stream" recycling, and expand local collection options for recycling.
21. Reduce light and noise pollution through careful review of proposed development projects.
Control outdoor lighting.



(D)

Subject: Main Street Project Committee
From: Albert Bisacky <ABisacky@kleinfelder.com>
Date: 09/18/2014 11:56 AM
To: Michael Joplin <mjoplin@aol.com>, Steven Trezzi
<sttrezza@trezziconsultation.com>, Charles Mueller
<cmueller@centerbrook.coak>, John Schroeder
<jrschroeder@jrsara.com>, Lyane for John
<lyanejacques@chesterct.org>, Leslie Strauss
<lstrauss@century21.com>, Charlene Janacek
<sanibel@ams@aol.com>, Virgil Lloyd <VLloyd@fanda.com>,
Edmund Meenan <emeenan@chesterct.org>
CC: judy brown <judvbrown545@comcast.net>, Al Bisacky
<abisacky@sboglobal.net>

I am disappointed to see that there are virtually no water quality provisions being considered for this project, and there is an effort to remove even the minimal secondary measures on a large section of the system. There was a definite sentiment expressed in the opinion survey done at the beginning of this project, and at numerous public meetings (and for many other public projects) that Chester citizens care about water quality and the health of our environment. The landscape architect who in the tented interview presentation and question responses routed their environmental awareness, and context sensitive and green design philosophy.

Yet the current designs contain barely a nod to those concerns and the impacts on the town and abutters to the project will be significant. Why? Are all the ideas and design philosophies presented at the interview no longer valid? Or is there an inability to actually implement green and context sensitive designs?

There are certainly many opportunities to incorporate green design into a project like this, and generally at a little or reduced cost to the project. And the basic goals of improving infrastructure without unduly impacting citizens (or our pocketbooks) while not changing the character of the town can certainly be achieved, but not with this design.

Al Bisacky, P.E., LEED AP
Kleinfelder
300 Enterprise Drive, Suite 400
Rocky Hill, CT 06867
tel 860-258-7133
tel 860-535-0425