

East Hartford Planning & Zoning Commission
SPECIAL MEETING
Hybrid-Teleconference Meeting
March 13, 2024

A Regular Meeting of the **EAST HARTFORD PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING** and was held via Microsoft “Teams” at Community Cultural Center 50 Chapman PL Auditorium, East Hartford CT – March 13, 2024.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ryan called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

Present:

John Ryan, Chair
Peter Marra
Antonio Matta
Henry Pawlowski
Stephen Roczynski
Sidney Soderholm
Wesaneit Tsegai
Jase Roman Olavarria, Alternate

Also Present

Carlene Shaw, Town Planner –
Steve Hnatuk, Deputy Director of Planning Development

2. MISCELLANEOUS

A. 2024 PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (POCD): Review Draft Chapter

3. Land Use and Zoning

Susan Favate of BFJ Planning gave a quick status update on where we are with the POCD. Each chapter will have a set of goals.

Project status:

- Finalized Founders Plaza targeted stakeholder meetings scheduled
- Finalized revised vision, goals, and objectives
- Draft POCD chapters:
 - Introduction and Regional Context – draft complete
 - Demographics – draft complete
 - Land Use and Zoning – draft complete
 - Historic and Cultural Resources – draft complete
 - Parks and Open Space – draft complete
 - Housing – in progress
 - Transportation and Mobility – in progress

- Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability – in progress
- Economic Development – in progress
- Community Facilities and Infrastructure – in progress

Draft Land Use & Zoning Chapter: Outline

- Goals
- Overview of East Hartford land use patterns
- Summary of existing zoning
- Issues and opportunities

Draft Land Use & Zoning Chapter: Goals Previous (2014) goals:

- Promote balanced use of land to enhance fiscal benefit and protect quality of life.
- Ensure that zoning regulations support the desired use of land and appropriately control development while allowing for creativity and flexibility to achieve planning objectives. 2024 goals:
- Promote a diverse mix of uses that meet the needs of the community and support a strong tax base

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There are four (4) bucket lists for land use and zoning.

Draft Land Use & Zoning Chapter: Issues and Opportunities

1. Strongly encourage mixed uses throughout East Hartford

- Consider adding mixed-use buildings as permitted uses in the B-1 zone (i.e., lower Main Street, portions of Burnside Avenue, Hillside Street, Roberts Street, Connecticut Boulevard)
- Review and implement 2018 Silver Lane Revitalization Plan zoning recommendations
- Review area/dimensional requirements for multifamily uses to remove barriers, and consider permitting multifamily housing by site plan review, rather than special permit
- Review area/dimensional requirements for residential zones (e.g., potential conflicts on size of accessory buildings and ADUs).
- Consider updates to shared parking provisions
- Explore allowing, by special permit, small-scale retail, personal service, and artisan manufacturing as accessory uses in single-family neighborhoods.

Spoke on mixed use sites. This recommendation looking at Zone B1 in particular.

Discussion:

Com. Matta –multifamily uses to remove barriers, why not a special permit? What are you recommending? Answer- recommends in a typical zoning district where we currently allow for special permit, just allow it.

Deputy Development Director Steve Hnatuk –A number of use space provisions, in this case we have specific use provisions that are prohibitive to new development for multi development. Further stabilize development in those areas and further improve confidence in those developers.

Com. Matta so this will help to stabilize and further development in those areas.

Chair Ryan comments on likes the last bullet, a good way to service our neighborhood, would help the population that don't get out that often. Resident's owns business in their homes.

Further comments by Com. Soderholm on discussions held previously on businesses in front of their homes, a little open market for their neighborhood. Any guidance on proposal of doing a little bit of building.

Susan Favate – interesting balance –very progressive-option to allow any accessory building.

Com. Ramon Olavarria – good idea, like a bodega –something we should look at.

2. Broaden permitted uses in business and industrial zones and ensure flexibility

- Uses to expressly permit: recreational fitness studios, tutoring/educational services, food halls, co-working, retail/personal service/food in combination with classes, indoor agricultural (beyond cannabis), art galleries/museums, pop-up shops, urgent care, pet grooming, auto-detailing, for-profit trade schools.
- Consider code revisions to remove barriers for desired uses:
- Easing area/bulk and parking provisions for day-care
- Creating adaptive reuse provisions for old mill buildings, churches, schools, etc.
- Specifying rooftop solar as permitted use in residential, commercial, industrial zones
- Developing special permit provisions for ground-mounted solar arrays as principal uses and as accessory uses within parking lots

Any comments or questions?

Com. Matta comments likes the adaptive provisions for old buildings to once again become productive but different. Likes all the bullets.

Com. Soderholm is anybody being modern or informally in changing the paradigm? Instead of listing in bullet form, come talk to us? Categories? Example teaching parents and kids to repair their own bicycles. That's a very usually thing.

Steve Hnatuk- we have a couple ways that would fit in our current regulations that would fit. One being in general services, the other personal service. We have two different categories in the personal use category. Adaptive use regulation also would fit.

Com. Soderholm - Someway we can highlight this so we can encourage people to talk to us and not be discouraged by reading this long list and go somewhere else. Thinking this of more a marketing thing. Susan has not seen an open ended allowances. Flexibility and creativity can be worked into the regulations.

Com. Tsegai – with a new Mayor and new idea with plans, seems from your suggestions to change culture for residents. I agree it's a marketing thing but the residents need a pipeline.

Com. Pawlowski- the line of rooftop solar. Curious as to the reason why it is in there. S Hnatuk it is not listed.

Com. Ramon asks about the accessibility of the POCD and this presentation to the Spanish speaking public. Susan Favate- not is our scope to do this, will speak to staff.

S. Hnatuk -excellent point, should be included in the Economic Development Department, something the town is working on actively in multiple languages.

3. Enhance buffers and other performance standards for industrial uses

- Refine zoning definitions to distinguish between traditional distribution and large-scale fulfillment centers (e.g., Amazon), and permit large-scale facilities in I-3 only.
- Add standards for industrial buffers abutting residential lots, including screening, fencing, other measures to mitigate impacts.

4. Review and clarify incentive zones

- Review options to reduce the area zoned DDD-1 and re-assess the remaining area (i.e., consider developing sub-districts like DDD-3 district).
- Retain the DDD-2 district.

- Eliminate the CDR and IDZ zones.
- Explore a floating zone for housing (e.g., cluster single-family, cottage cluster, townhomes, multifamily housing).
- Consider new flexible zoning for Founders Plaza and gateway areas (Pitkin Avenue, lower Main Street).
- Rezone nonconforming commercial properties on Silver Lane from R-2 to B-1 or gateway zone. Site plan review, removes that barrier for developers by site plan rather than special permit.

Chair Ryan asks Staff for a definition of cottages. S. Hnatuk- no we don't have a definition; envisions it as a small cluster of single homes; ie. Phillips Farm, outside the subdivisions. Build in flexibility on these properties.

Com. Ramon likes the idea of floating zones; affordability for residents.

No further comments.

Susan Favate-if you think of anything we missed send the comments to Steve. We will continue to review and revise these chapters.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 7:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sana Hart, Clerk