

City of Meriden Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) Public Workshop #2 Summary

September 26, 2019, 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Board of Education Meeting Room



Overview

On Thursday, September 26, 2019, BFJ Planning facilitated the second Public Workshop for the Meriden Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). The workshop was attended by members of the POCD Steering Committee, City staff, and approximately 30 members of the public.

The public workshop began with an introduction from Renata Bertotti, Planning Director, who provided a short overview of the planning process. Following the introduction, Frank Fish, Principal of BFJ Planning, presented about the importance of POCD's, overview of the planning process schedule, and conclusions of the public outreach survey. Noah Levine, Associate Principal at BFJ Planning, continued the conversation with a discussion on the main takeaways and goals of each chapter of the draft POCD report. A copy of the presentation is attached to this meeting summary.

After the presentation the consultants invited the members of the public to browse through a series of open house stations and share their comments, on the following themes:

- (1) Housing and Population
- (2) Transportation and Circulation,
- (3) Economic Development,
- (4) Parks, Recreation and Open Space,
- (5) Environment and Sustainability,
- (6) Community Facilities, and
- (7) Future Land Use.

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Each station provided the topic's goal along with a sample of the recommendations. Members of the consultant team and City Staff were available to answer questions and clarify any questions. The members of the public were encouraged to write down their ideas and concerns.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the members of the public were invited to participate in a Town Hall style meeting where participants were invited to voice ideas about the goals and recommendations.

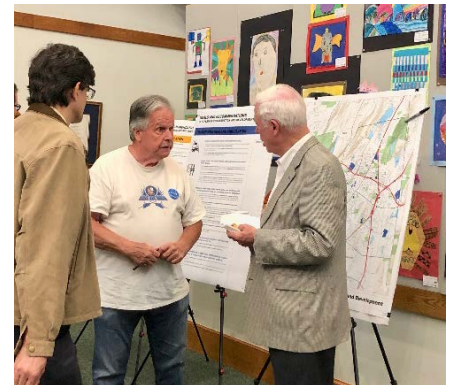
Open House: Comments on Goals and Recommendations for POCD

Following the presentation, members of the public were invited to comment on goals and recommendations for each chapter of the plan, which were summarized on ten large scale boards. Each open house station had a representative from the City or the consultant team (BFJ Planning) to discuss the topics and to answer any questions. Markers and post-its notes were provided for attendees write additional comments. The comments heard or written are summarized below:



Housing

- Help home owners and home investors (i.e. in 2-4 family homes)
- No housing on the Meriden Green itself
- Residents are looking for more clear information in what they are allowed to do with their properties. They want to know if they can have things like beehives. They look in other towns and find things such as Wallingford's new beehive information and regulations.



Transportation

- POCD should call for a specific study of the bus system
- Provide parking signage in downtown for garages and lots
- Need dotted lines at Colony and Main
- People in the inner city and older neighborhoods struggle with navigating streets due to double loaded parking and narrow roads. People choose to park on the streets instead of their driveways. Some areas may need to be one way.
- Traveling along west Main Street in the area south of Hubbard Park as a pedestrian or cyclist is a dangerous. The city should look at way of connecting Hubbard Park to downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

Economic Development

- Create a clearinghouse that lists/markets smaller vacant buildings for small business owners
- Start community programs to promote creative economy. E.g. Community mural at Community Art Center. Once a month programs on painting, fine arts, tech, etc.
- Poetry slam nights or open mic at a local coffee place
- Smart art house cinema to celebrate CT artists would be great
- We need to get people to come to city to view the many commercial properties available
- What is happening with former NRG site?
- If you want to bring people 40 years old and younger, develop an independent 100 Gb internet program.
- Make sure a store, or other commercial use fits in an existing building. Don't just put it there because you can.
- People are looking for things to do close to home that they could reach by modes other than cars. We need to be more flexible with our neighborhoods.

Parks, Recreation and Open Space

- We need to make sure all neighborhoods have access to a park within walking distance. Is this the case near North Colony?
- We need a natural resource inventory, which lists open space, passive recreation sites, with parking possibilities. Trails and boundaries clearly established and promoted
- Provide benches at each park for families while children play
- Regular maintenance to playgrounds
- Signage
- Consider holding events at different parks to promote them and surrounding areas
- Linear trail crossing at Broad Street, provide a parking lot for citizens to use trail.

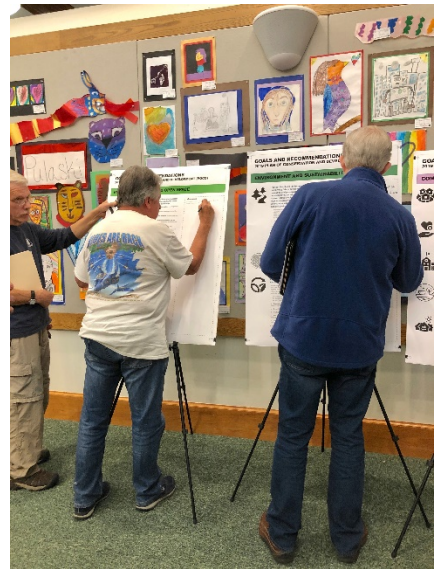


Environment and Sustainability

- Walkway/crosswalk to connect across Broad Street from Twiss Ave/Westfield Area to Brookside Park
- Why does the word “trees” appear only once in the plan? Meriden’s urban trees contribute immensely to the quality of life. We need to develop a least a statistically significant inventory of tree condition to adequately plan for tree maintenance and planting.

Community Facilities

- North End Association (Budget cuts, Bring back NI units)
- Choices program at Senior Center
- Community Center/Arts Center with rental space for events
- Museum?



Future Land Use

- Allow for more mixed uses,
- Create flexible zoning regulations
- Plazas not attractive
- Incentivize development of mixed uses (including residential) along commercial corridors
- Move the Courthouse out of Downtown
- Provide incentives for higher quality developments
- Don’t allow housing in the main section of Meriden Green
- Maintain residential character of Twiss Avenue area along Harbor Brook
- Not enough water for large housing development
- We can’t concentrate all our time and resources on Downtown.
- Statistically significant inventory of trees
- Our zoning needs to be clearer to encourage what type of demographics we are trying to draw to an area. User groups such and artists and tech workers are not the same and may conflict in the spaces they wish to occupy.



Town Hall Discussion:

The final exercise of the public workshop was a Town Hall style meeting. This provided all participants with the opportunity to share their opinions about the goals and recommendations included in the POCD. Public comments are summarized and grouped into topic areas below:



City of Meriden POCD

- Will there be an action agenda with a timeline for completion?
Yes, an action agenda will be provided to give the City guidance on actionable items. This will be a living document
- Consider creating a yearly progress report or meeting to fill the public in on the plan's progress.
Good idea

Vision

- Will the Vision Statement, Demographics, and Housing information be included?
Yes

Housing

- If the train takes off, do we have housing to support the new residents in the Downtown area?
- Instead of allowing the tear down of buildings, the City should encourage properties to be retrofitted and rehabilitated.

Transportation

- Address the traffic in the Downtown area.
Plan includes numerous improvements identified for downtown area, City will continue to make improvements and update Action Plan
- Promote and market the new train station.
- Consider adding meters to on-street parking to discourage use of on-street spaces by residents.
There is no parking downtown.

Economic Development

- Suggestion to consider duty-free establishments in the Downtown area to incentivize different types of retail development.
- Develop and densify the Downtown area.
- Make sure all forms of public transit are appearing on Google Maps.
- Invest in groups that are already investing in the Downtown area (i.e. Artist groups creating art murals).
- Funding opportunities available at the state level for the arts.

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- Create a more attractive Downtown area to attract new residents and provide for existing residents such as the addition of restaurants and breweries.

City is currently working on a zoning amendment to allow more of these uses.

Parks, Recreation and Open Space

- Leave the Meriden Green as is with no future developments surrounding it as it defines us as a New England city.
- Promote development along the greenway.
- Create an inventory of trees that may be used by Parks and Recreations for budgeting purposes.