

City of Meriden
Plan of Conservation and Development

Date: March 26, 2019

Project Name: Meriden Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)
Subject: POCD Steering Committee Meeting #2

Meeting Location: Meriden City Council Chambers
Meeting Date: March 20, 2019
Meeting Time: 6:00 PM

Participants: **Planning Commission**

Enrico Buccilli, Chair
Lenny Rich
Laura Uhrig
David Cooley
Steven Iovanna
Kevin Curry

Special Committee

David Lowell, City Council, EDHZ
Sonya Jelks, City Council, EDHZ
Dan Brunet, City Council, EDHZ

City Staff and Other Guests

Tim Coon, City Manager
Renata Bertotti, Director, Development and Enforcement
Paul Dickson, Development and Enforcement
Monica Holloway, Development and Enforcement
Matt Sarcione, Community Development
Miguel Castro, City Council
Kevin Scarpati, Mayor
Lori Canney, Clerk of the Council

Consultant Team

Noah Levine, Senior Associate, BFJ Planning
Ariana Branchini, Planner, BFJ Planning

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss with the POCD Steering Committee initial demographic and socioeconomic findings and work completed in planning and development since the 2009 POCD. The committee discussed the first public workshop, and the public engagement plan, including future outreach to stakeholders for focus groups. Slides from the presentation are attached to these meeting notes.

Chairman Buccilli called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Introduction - Noah Levine, BFJ Planning – discussed the agenda, objectives of the meeting.

- Website is live
- Discussion of update of work to date – preliminary existing conditions report

City of Meriden
Plan of Conservation and Development

- Public workshop will be April 11
- Action agenda discussion

Schedule – This is the second POCD Steering Committee meeting. Consultants completed the website (task item 1.5), and a preliminary review of demographic and socioeconomic data. Information presented represents preliminary work to be completed. The April 11 public workshop flyer was distributed, and the committee discussed outreach to be done in conjunction with the city (press release, flyers, e-blast, social media, etc.)

POCD Website – Developed for the plan in conjunction with the City. It is live and available via a link on the city’s website. The website provides an overview of what the POCD is and how it can be utilized by the public and the City. Documents such as public meeting updates, news, and deliverables will be uploaded regularly. There is a section for the public to contact the City with comments.

Workshop – The first public workshop will be a town hall style with an interactive element at the end. We will have boards which will include the goals of the 2009 plan as a way to gauge the audience’s preference and priorities so that the update can reflect the public’s reaction to those and informally involve the audience.

Meeting Objectives - Discussion will focus on projects related to the TOD area, housing, and economic development. Future meetings will look into the next chapters. This meeting will be focused on projects completed since 2009 and significant downtown mixed-use housing development projects.

Population and Socioeconomic Findings – Ariana Branchini, BFJ Planning, presented preliminary findings of demographics/socioeconomic trends. It was explained that this is a first step, a snapshot of the city today. More information, including additional analysis and regional comparisons, will be forthcoming.

Recent Planning and Development Context – Noah Levine, BFJ Planning discussed what has been completed since 2009. The list of these projects is provided in the presentation slides.

Discussion of Demographics and Planning/Development Since 2009

- Planning commission discussing opportunity to look at East/West Main and Broad Street corridors and how to provide more opportunity for commercial development on those roads.
- Some sites could be redeveloped. One constraint is that Meriden’s lots are very shallow when compared to other areas, such as Route 5 in Wallingford. We need to think about what we can do with to improve these lots. The committee discussed not wanting to make existing lots nonconforming. An overlay district may be a good option compared to rezoning.
- The use of an overlay at a specific number of feet (200 or 300 feet) would make it cleaner and easier to show on a map.
- Concern about allowing commercial uses on roads that have residential across the street (i.e., Dollar general – looking at Hall Avenue). Where do you draw the line?
 - o There can be contextual solutions based on each street. Overlay zones can have transitional areas; we will look at the context of each of the blocks.
- Is there anything that hasn’t progressed since the last POCD?
 - o The city has looked at the action agenda, and many things are ongoing. There are some goals that the committee should weigh in on as to whether they are still relevant.

City of Meriden
Plan of Conservation and Development

- Mr. Levine informed the Committee that at the end of the meeting the 2009 action agenda would be distributed. The action agenda has been annotated by the City with what has been done to date.
- Employment and age statistics are relevant. For example, it is noteworthy that there is a large percentage of very small businesses. The committee discussed the possible need to provide additional efforts to help small businesses.
- Environmental concerns – there are quite a few parks in the City; this should be something that is focused on as an asset in the Plan. What do we need to do to ensure that those assets and other natural areas are continuing to be protected? There is a lot of feedback from Giuffrida Park area near the quarry. There is some concern about work that is being done close to residential areas, and whether there is contamination based on the zoning for types of businesses that can be located there.
 - BFJ will have a whole chapter on parks and open space as well as natural resources. Sustainability will be an important part of the plan.
- The committee discussed having the POCD address state/city ownership such as what we can do on State vs. City streets and parcels? Also, will the Plan consider development based on ownership? The State police facility is abandoned – can the City inquire into acquiring this property from the State?
- The Plan should look at tax-exempt properties to understand how many there are and why they are tax exempt.
 - BFJ is currently looking at Tax Assessor’s data and investigating land use types based on tax exempt status. There are over 600 of these; there is some analysis needed to get a sense of what is going on at those properties.
 - The future land use plan will get into the opportunities, soft sites, areas where development could happen and provide an inventory of those. Could be publically or privately owned but underutilized and in need of reinvestment.
- The city should consider leveraging investments made in the Schools. Meriden has made a significant investment in education, including two brand new high schools. These facilities could be used for something else as well in off-school hours.
 - The Plan will look at the school facilities in the Community facilities and infrastructure chapter and enrollment in the population and demographics chapter.
- Look at the number of residents working in Meriden – how does that compare to other communities?
- Issues of non-taxable property – how does the percentage of this land in Meriden compare to other parts of Connecticut? The City has looked at buying properties, some with flood control opportunities. The city wants to get properties back on the tax rolls.
- There are major transportation/infrastructure changes coming which should be considered in the Plan. The state is surveying the East Main Street and I-91 “cloverleaf” intersection. Also potential changes at Preston Ave and Chamberlain Highway.
 - BFJ will discuss upcoming plans with CTDOT and will reflect that in the Draft Update POCD.
- There are some trends shown – an aging population, family households decreasing, what are the physical ways to address that? Are these positive trends? Housing and services and single family

households could have different infrastructure needs. This should be something to think about as we go through this process.

Discussion of focus groups and action agenda

- Proposed letter to boards/commissions/committees – support for the proposed letter which asks these groups for formal comments for the POCD.
- BFJ will be working with the city to schedule and conduct focus group meetings, organized around chapters of the plan. The groups would be targeted to come to discuss issues relevant to their organization. This will help BFJ understand from the experts in the City. This will happen before the summer, following the first public workshop.
 - o Add Quinnipiac River group volunteer organization. Specific name to be provided.
 - o Members of the committee are welcome to add to the list – email Renata to add/change the list. Renata will provide deadlines for these assignments.
- Homework for the Committee –
 - o In the next week, send Renata preliminary focus group list, send comments.
 - o Action Items – in two weeks provide comments on the spreadsheet to Renata for the city and BFJ's review.
- Action Agenda- organized by chapter and goal. The City has done a first pass. Comments are welcome from members of the committee.
- The committee should be thinking about whether the 2009 goals are still relevant, and whether some of the action items can be removed/edited. Also, creating a priority listing could be a helpful way of evaluating this list for the city to have for implementation later on.
- 2009 plan and goals – are there other goals that we foresee to add?
 - o A lot has been done in the city, in particular in the TOD area. The Choice Neighborhoods Plan, for example, had additional recommendations that could be included.
 - o When staff reviewed the goals, there were areas where it may be appropriate to shift existing goals.
- How are we promoting the workshop on April 11?
 - o Record Journal will publish a press release; there will be flyers handed around through the schools, library, senior center. Signage could be around – open to ideas. Renata will print flyers for committee members to deliver.
 - o Advertising online via social media could have an impact.
- When people come in will there be an outline for people to follow?
 - o BFJ will present and organize the meeting to educate the public on the POCD and then to solicit input on issues and opportunities.

Next Steps

- Next POCD steering committee meeting date: Thursday, May 9 at 6 pm in City Council chambers.
- Public Workshop on April 11.

Councilman Lowell's **motion to adjourn** the meeting was seconded by Councilwoman Jelks and was unanimously approved.