

AGENDA  
MANSFIELD PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
Regular Meeting, Monday, May 16, 2011, 7:00 p.m.  
Council Chambers, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building

Minutes

5/2/11

Scheduled Business

Zoning Agent's Report

- A. Monthly Activity Report
- B. Enforcement Update
- C. Other

7:15 p.m. Public Hearing

Special Permit Application, Proposed Veterinary Hospital, 266 Stafford Rd, W. Ernst-applicant/ Y. Desiato-owner, PZC File #1300

Reports from Director of Planning, Assistant Town Engineer, Fire Marshal, EHHD, Advisory Committee on Persons with Disabilities

7:30 p.m. Public Hearing

4/14/11 Draft revisions to the Zoning Regulations Re: Agricultural Uses, PZC File #907-36

Reports from Director of Planning, WINCOG, Town Attorney

8:00 p.m. Public Hearing

3/30/11 Draft revisions to numerous sections of the Zoning Regulations, PZC File #907-35

Reports from Director of Planning, WINCOG, Town Attorney

Old Business

1. Site/Building Modification Request, Proposed gym/fitness center at 1768 Storrs Road  
Memo from Zoning Agent
2. Approval Request: Revised Plans for exhibit building Paideia Greek Theater Project, 28 Dog Lane, File #1049-7  
(to be tabled-awaiting information from applicant)
3. Request to stop collecting bond escrow funds for Freedom Green Phase 4C  
(to be tabled-awaiting information from applicant)
4. Request to review and revise Plan of Conservation and Development regarding Hunting Lodge Road area  
(to be tabled - referred to Regulatory Review Committee)
5. 4-Lot Subdivision Application, (3 New Lots) Wormwood Hill & Gurleyville Roads, S. Plimpton o/a, PZC File #1298  
(to be tabled pending 6/6/11 Continued Public Hearing)
6. Application to amend the Zoning Regulation to add Place of Assembly-Banquet Hall as a permitted use in the Neighborhood Business 2 Zone, M. Healy, applicant, PZC File #1301  
(to be tabled pending 6/6/11 Public Hearing)
7. Other

## New Business

### 1. Gravel Permit Renewals

- A. Banis property on Pleasant Valley Road File #1164
- B. Hall property on Old Mansfield Hollow Road File #910-2
- C. Green Property, 1090 Stafford Road PZC File #1258

Memo from Zoning Agent

### 2. Other

## Reports from Officers and Committees

1. Chairman's Report
2. Regional Planning Commission
3. Regulatory Review Committee (Next meeting scheduled May 25, 2011 at 1:15 pm in Room B)
4. Other

## Communications and Bills

1. Spring 2011 Planning Commissioner's Journal
2. 5/6/11 letter from PZC Chairman to Director of Planning Re: Storrs Center Parking Garage/Intermodal Center
3. Notice of 5/14/11 dedication of 18 acres of land on Warrentonville Road from J. Lof to Joshua's Trust
4. 5/9/11 Notice from CT Siting Council re: Antenna Swap at Clover Mill Road Verizon Tower
5. Other

**DRAFT MINUTES**  
MANSFIELD PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
Regular Meeting  
Monday, May 2, 2011  
Council Chamber, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building

Members present: R. Favretti (Chairman), M. Beal, J. Goodwin, R. Hall, K. Holt, G. Lewis, P. Plante, B. Pociask, B. Ryan  
Alternates present: K. Rawn  
Alternates absent: F. Loxsom, V. Ward  
Staff Present: Gregory J. Padick, Director of Planning, Curt Hirsch, Zoning Agent

Chairman Favretti called the meeting to order at 8:22 p.m.

**Minutes:**

04-19-11- Hall MOVED, Holt seconded, to approve the 4/19/11 minutes as written. MOTION PASSED with all in favor except Goodwin and Plante who disqualified themselves.

**Public Hearing:**

**4-Lot Subdivision Application, (3 New Lots) Wormwood Hill & Gurleyville Roads, S. Plimpton o/a, PZC File #1298**

Chairman Favretti opened the Public Hearing at 8:24 p.m. Members present were Favretti, Beal, Goodwin, Hall, Holt, Lewis, Plante, Pociask, Ryan and alternate Rawn. Padick read the legal notice as it appeared in the Chronicle on April 19 and April 27, 2011, and noted the following communications received and distributed to the Commission: a 3/31/11 Report from the Director of Planning; a 3/30/11 report from the Assistant Town Engineer; a 3/30/11 report from the Fire Marshal; 3/24/11 report from EHHD; 3/30/11 comments from the Conservation Commission; and 3/15/11 comments from the Open Space Preservation Committee. In addition to the above-listed communications, a 3/28/11 email with attachments was received from Cliff and Karen Gottmann. It was agreed that testimony from the related Inland Wetlands Public Hearing be entered into the public record of the Planning and Zoning Commission Public Hearing.

Douglas Bonoff, Land Surveyor; Paul Biscutti, Engineer; and Kim Bradley, Ecologist, were present representing the applicant.

Favretti questioned Bonoff about the stone walls on Lots 2 and 3. Bonoff responded that they are not significant walls and the stones will be used to enhance the walls elsewhere on the site.

Cliff Gottman, 580 Gurleyville Road, expressed concern for the runoff washing out his driveway and that no new drainage pipe is planned for Gurleyville Road.

Allison Hilding, expressed concern for traffic safety, erosion along the edge of the driveway and roadway, and potential freezing water on Wormwood Hill Road because of it.

Pociask expressed concern about the steep (12%) grade of the driveway on Lot 4 and for related potential problems: water over-shooting the drainage basin, icing, and gutter line erosion along its length. He asked if a gutter-flow analysis had been done, and the applicant's response was that it would be done if the Commission needed it.

Bonoff related that Mr. Plimpton will be willing to give an extension if the Public Hearing is continued past June 6th.

Hall MOVED, Plante seconded, to continue the Public Hearing until June 6<sup>th</sup>. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY at 8:48 p.m.

**Zoning Agent's Report:** The Zoning Agent's monthly activity report and enforcement updates were noted.

- **Wildwood Road Noise Issue**

Hirsch noted that he spoke to Mrs. Williams and she has agreed to discuss this further upon her return from Europe.

- **Four Corners Clothing Drop Off Containers**

Hirsch contacted the property owner. She has asked the owners of the boxes to promptly remove them.

- **Proposed Shed at 14 Adeline Place**

Holt MOVED, Hall seconded, that the PZC authorize the placement of a 8 by 12-foot storage shed at 14 Adeline Place as described in 4/14/11 letter from D. & J. Higham and depicted on the submitted 4/14/11 plan, as provided for under Article VIII, section B.1.d of the regulations.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Old Business:**

1. **3-Lot Subdivision Application, (2 New Lots) 64 Puddin Lane, R. Hellstrom-applicant/Sterling Trust Company, owner, PZC File #1299**

Goodwin disqualified herself, Rawn was appointed to act for her. Hall MOVED, Holt seconded, to approve with conditions the three lot (2 new lots) subdivision owned by Sterling Trust Company, located on Puddin Lane in an R-20 zone, as submitted to the Commission and shown on plans dated 2/14/11 and as described in other application submissions. This approval is granted because the application as hereby approved is considered to be in compliance with the Mansfield Zoning and Subdivision Regulations.

Approval is granted with the following modifications or conditions:

1. Final plans shall be signed and sealed by the responsible surveyor and engineer.
2. Pursuant to subdivision regulations, particularly Sections 7.5 and 7.6, this action specifically approves the depicted Building Area and Development Area Envelopes. Unless the Commission specifically authorizes revisions, the approved envelopes shall serve as the setback lines for all future structures and site improvements, pursuant to Article VIII of the Zoning Regulations. This condition shall be specifically noticed on the Land Records and the deeds for the subject lots.
3. No Zoning Permit shall be issued on Lot 2 until a protection barrier acceptable to the Zoning Agent has been placed around the designated 36 inch maple tree. In conjunction with the filing of the final maps, notice of this condition shall be filed on the Land Records and referenced on the Lot 2 deed.
4. The final plans shall clearly label the Building Area Envelope for Lot 3 and revise the Sheet 1 map note to specify that there are no wetlands within 150 feet.
5. The Commission, for good cause, shall have the right to declare this approval null and void if the following deadlines are not met (unless a ninety [90] or one hundred and eighty [180]-day filing extension has been granted):
  - A. All final maps, including submittal in digital format, a right-of-way deed along Puddin Lane, a utility easement for Lot 1 across Lot 2 and a Notice on the Land Records to address conditions 2 and 3, for recording on the Land Records (with any associated mortgage releases) shall be submitted to the Planning Office no later than fifteen days after the appeal period provided for in Sec. 8-8 of the State Statutes or, in the case of an appeal, no later than fifteen days of any judgment in favor of the applicant;
  - B. All monumentation with Surveyor's Certificate shall be completed or bonded pursuant to the Commission's approval action and Section 14 of the Subdivision Regulations no later than fifteen days after the appeal period provided for in Section 8-8 of the State Statutes or, in the case of an appeal, no later than fifteen days of any judgment in favor of the applicant.

MOTION PASSED with all in favor except Goodwin who disqualified herself.

2. **Zoning Permit Application for Storrs Center Parking Garage/Intermodal Center**  
A 4/27/11 letter from Chairman Rudy Favretti was noted and discussion was held. By consensus of the Commission, Chairman Favretti was authorized to submit a letter on the Commission's behalf regarding traffic safety concerns at the proposed intersection south of the intermodal center.
3. **Approval Request: Revised Plans for exhibit building Paideia Greek Theater Project, 28 Dog Lane, File #1049-7**  
Item was tabled-awaiting information from applicant.
4. **Request to stop collecting bond escrow funds for Freedom Green Phase 4C**  
Item was tabled-awaiting information from applicant.
5. **Special Permit Application, Proposed Veterinary Hospital, 266 Stafford Rd, W. Ernst-applicant/ Y. Desiato-owner, PZC File #1300**  
Tabled pending 5/16/11 Public Hearing.
6. **3/30/11 Draft revisions to numerous sections of the Zoning Regulations, PZC File #907-35**  
Tabled pending 5/16/11 Public Hearing.
7. **4/14/11 Draft revisions to the Zoning Regulations Re: Agricultural Uses, PZC File #907-36**  
Tabled pending 5/16/11 Public Hearing.
8. **Request to review and revise Plan of Conservation and Development regarding Hunting Lodge Road area**  
Tabled-referred to Regulatory Review Committee.
9. **Application to amend the Zoning Regulation to add Place of Assembly-Banquet Hall as a permitted use in the Neighborhood Business 2 Zone, M. Healy, applicant, PZC File #1301**  
Tabled pending 6/6/11 Public Hearing.

**New Business:**

1. **8-24 Referral, 2011-12 Proposed Capital Improvement Budget**  
Holt MOVED, Hall seconded, that the PZC approve, subject to the condition below, the proposed 2011-12 Capital Improvement Program.  
  
Several items are land use-regulated and may require PZC and/or IWA approvals before implementation. The PZC respectfully requests that the departments involved with land use projects coordinate plans with the Director of Planning and Inland Wetlands Agent, and that the Commission/Agency be given adequate time to thoroughly review and act upon final plans for all projects that require PZC or IWA approval.  
MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.
2. **New Site/Building Modification Request, Proposed gym/fitness center at 1768 Storrs Road**  
Holt MOVED, Plante seconded, the PZC receive the Request For Site/Building Modifications submitted by Brooke Magouirk for a CrossFit gym at 1768 Storrs Road and refer it to staff for review and comment.  
MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Reports from Officers and Committees:**

Beal, as chairman of the Regulatory Review Committee, noted the next meeting is scheduled for 5/25/11 at 1:15 p.m. in Conference Room B.

**Communications:**

Communications listed on the agenda were noted.

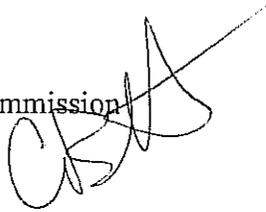
**Adjournment:**

Chairman Favretti declared the meeting adjourned at 9:13 p.m.  
Respectfully submitted,

Katherine Holt, Secretary

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To: Town Council/Planning & Zoning Commission  
 From: Curt Hirsch, Zoning Agent  
 Date: May 11, 2011



Re: **Monthly Report of Zoning Enforcement Activity**  
*For the month of April, 2011*

Activity	This month	Last month	Same month last year	This fiscal year to date	Last fiscal year to date
Zoning Permits issued	7	4	12	78	104
Certificates of Compliance issued	2	1	3	82	87
Site inspections	25	14	38	330	418
Complaints received from the Public	5	1	4	39	33
Complaints requiring inspection	5	1	2	31	25
Potential/Actual violations found	2	2	2	25	44
Enforcement letters	9	4	8	93	108
Notices to issue ZBA forms	1	1	0	2	7
Notices of Zoning Violations issued	1	0	3	13	34
Zoning Citations issued	0	0	1	39	47

Zoning permits issued this month for single family homes = 0, 2-fm = 0, multi-fm = 0  
 2010/2011 fiscal year total: s-fm = 3, 2-fm = 1, multi-fm = 8

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**TOWN OF MANSFIELD  
OFFICE OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

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GREGORY J. PADICK, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING

Memo to: Planning and Zoning Commission  
From: Gregory Padick, Director of Planning  
Date: 5/6/11  
Re: Special permit application, Proposed Veterinary Hospital,  
266 Stafford Road, W. Ernst, applicant, File #1300



**General**

My review comments are based on the submissions of the applicant (including a detailed Statement of Use; a 3 page set of plans dated March 17, 2011, prepared by Datum Engineering and Surveying, LLC and J. Alexapolous, Landscape Architect; an elevation plan dated 4/9/11 as prepared by Pelletier Builders Inc; and an undated floor plan) and a review of applicable zoning regulations. The PZC also must consider other referral reports and Public Hearing testimony before rendering a decision on this application. A decision must be made within 65 days of the close of the Public Hearing.

The subject application seeks special permit approval for a veterinary hospital at 266 Stafford Road (east side of Route 32 about 500 feet south of Stearns Road). The subject property, which is zoned Planned Business-5, is 8.95 acres in size and contains an existing 877 square foot two bedroom residence. The proposal seeks to renovate the existing structure and build an 841 square foot addition off of the eastern side of the existing building. Proposed site improvements include: a new septic system, driveway modifications, six (6) new gravel parking spaces and one (1) new paved accessible space, an accessible access ramp to the building entry and new landscaping. The applicant submissions include details of the proposed use and planned site and building improvements.

The subject property is not within a flood hazard zone or the Windham Reservoir drainage basin. It is within a Plan of Conservation and Development designated stratified drift aquifer area. There are no inland wetland areas within one hundred and fifty (150) feet of proposed construction and accordingly, no Inland Wetland License is required. The site is relatively flat and has well drained soils. Neighboring properties are a mix of commercial and residential uses. The applicant has informed the Planning Office that Special Permit notifications have been met. Compliance with this requirement will be verified prior to the May 16<sup>th</sup> Public Hearing.

This memo was written prior to receipt of other staff reports. As appropriate, my comments will be updated on May 16, 2011.

**Sanitary**

- See 4/18/11 approval memo from Eastern Highlands Health District.
- The proposal includes a new septic system and continued use of an existing well.
- No sanitary problems are anticipated.

### **Traffic/Driveway/Parking**

- This memo was prepared prior to receipt of a report from the Assistant Town Engineer.
- The proposed driveway revisions have been approved by the State Department of Transportation. See attached 5/2/11 letter.
- The revised driveway will be twenty-four (24) feet wide at its intersection with Stafford Road. The plan indicates that there will be over seven hundred (700) feet of sightline in each direction. Subject to the Assistant Town Engineer's report, no traffic safety problems are anticipated.
- The proposal includes seven (7) parking spaces adjacent to the subject building. Except for an accessible space which will be located on an existing paved area, the new spaces will have a gravel surface with concrete wheel stops. The plan also depicts four (4) additional gravel parking spaces that are labeled "future". Based on the applicant's Statement of Use, the proposed seven (7) parking spaces are considered acceptable subject to an approval condition that requires additional spaces to be constructed as needed. Article X, Section D of the Zoning Regulations does not mandate a specific number of spaces for veterinary hospitals and accordingly, the required number is "as determined by the Commission".
- There are no sidewalks in the vicinity of the site and current regulations do not mandate pedestrian improvements.
- The attached 5/5/11 report from the Fire Marshal does not identify any issues for the Commission's consideration.

### **Environmental/Drainage**

- Subject to the report of the Assistant Town Engineer no drainage problems are anticipated.
- The submittal includes a basic erosion and sediment control plan which is considered adequate for the subject site.
- A site development bond can be required but is not considered necessary as completion of site work will be tied to the issuance of occupancy permits.
- The site is within a stratified drift aquifer area. Based on the provisions of Article VI, Section B.4.m.6., the applicant must submit a landscape management plan that addressed the use of fertilizers, pesticides, etc. This can be added in any approval motion.
- The proposal includes a delivery area and a 10 foot by 10 foot dumpster pad at the southern end of the gravel parking area. The dumpster pad is partially screened by two (2) segments of four (4) foot high PVC fencing. The proposed delivery and refuse locations are acceptable, but the size of the refuse area has been referred to the Town's Recycling Agent and consideration should be given to increasing the height of the fence to six (6) feet.

### **Architectural Plan, Signage, Landscaping, Lighting**

- The applicant's elevation plans provide information about the proposed building construction. The building will be surfaced with light gray vinyl siding with white trim and a black asphalt shingled roof.
- The applicant has requested more time to submit signage and lighting details. This can be addressed as a condition of approval.
- The submitted landscape plan, which has been prepared by a landscape architect, includes five (5) new trees (3 species), thirty-two (32) shrubs (3 species) and forty-five (45) perennial plants (3 species). The plan also indicates existing wooded areas that would be retained. The landscape plan is considered acceptable with respect to regulatory provisions.

## Neighborhood Impact

- The applicant must submit return receipts to demonstrate that notification requirements have been met.
- The proposal would change an existing residential use to a conforming commercial use. The PZC must determine that the neighborhood impact criteria of Section A.5.g., A.5.j., Section B.5.c., and B.5.d. have been suitably addressed. Public Hearing testimony may provide more information on this issue. A number of nearby residents have submitted emails in support of the application. As deemed appropriate the PZC can incorporate additional conditions and safeguards to help reduce potential impacts (see Article V, Section B.6).
- The greatest potential for neighborhood impact would be from animals located in a planned outdoor area east of the building. The applicant's Statement of Use indicates sensitivity to this issue. It is noted that the submitted landscape plan does not include any new plantings adjacent to the outdoor keeping area. This issue should be reviewed with the applicant and can be addressed in any approval motion.

## Other

- The plans propose the use of an existing overhead utility connection. Underground utilities can be required but are not considered necessary.
- No waivers of site plans submission materials have been requested.
- Final plans must be signed and sealed by all responsible professionals, as per Article V, Section A.3.d.2.

## Summary/Recommendation

Within this report, I have identified a few issues and potential conditions of approval that should be discussed with the applicant. Subject to the findings of the Assistant Town Engineer and any other new information, I have not identified any significant land use issues. In addition to confirming that notification requirements have been met, the following issues or recommended approval conditions have been identified:

1. Determination that the proposed number of parking spaces is acceptable.
2. A need to submit a landscape management plan pursuant to Article VI, Section B.4.m.6.
3. Determination that the dumpster pad is adequately sized and screened.
4. A need to submit signage and lighting details.
5. Determination that potential noise and other neighborhood impacts have been addressed.

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Memorandum:

May 12, 2011

To: Planning & Zoning Commission  
From: Grant Meitzler, Assistant Town Engineer  
Re: W. Ernst - Veterinary Clinic - 266 Stafford Rd

plan reference: dated March 17, 2011

This application proposes conversion of an existing small house at 266 Stafford Rd to a Veterinary Clinic. The building will be renovated and an addition added to the rear of the existing house. Removal of an existing garage building and total redesign of the driveway and interior parking is indicated.

There are no wetlands within 150 feet of the proposed work.

Sight distances are very good on Stafford Rd - noted as 700 feet in each direction on the plan.

The existing driveway is unsuitable for a commercial drive and is being replaced with a new 24' wide drive. The driveway is at a 6 percent slope and is paved 20' in from Stafford Rd.

The proposed parking and drive area has a central island encouraging circular traffic flow. A 24 foot driveway is provided on three sides of this island. The exit lane at the west side of the central island is shown as 12 feet wide. It may be appropriate to sign this with a "one way - do not enter" sign for traffic heading for the building. I would place this on the east side of the one lane part of the drive at the center of the island facing incoming traffic.

I expect this site to be a very light traffic generator.

Initial parking is proposed as 6 spaces with one handicapped space near the building entrance. The parking and drive areas are to be gravel surfaced, with the exception of the use of existing driveway paving for the handicapped space location. A future addition of 4 spaces is indicated on the plan. The site is 8.9 acres total area. A large part of this area is suitable for future expansions. The plan indicates a defined loading area. The parking should be adequate for the initial 3 employees indicated.

I recommend adding a tracking pad at the new driveway entrance to protect against material moving onto Stafford Rd.

**Mansfield Advisory Committee on  
Persons with Disabilities**

May 9, 2011

TO: Greg Padick  
Mansfield Town Planner

FROM: John T. DeWolf, Member  
Mansfield Advisory Committee on Persons with Disabilities

SUBJECT: Application for Veterinary Hospital

On behalf of the Committee, I have reviewed the proposal for the conversion of a house to a veterinary hospital, located on Stafford Road.

From what I can determine, the plan shows a total of 11 parking spaces, with 4 planned as future spaces. There is one handicapped space which should meet the current building code. Since there are plans to increase the number of staff, I would recommend provision for an additional handicapped parking space for staff use. This would allow hiring a person with a disability.

While I do not have dimensions, the handicapped parking space appears to be adequate in size. There should be curb cuts with gradual changes in elevation adjacent to the handicapped space. A wheel chair should be able to get from the handicapped parking space into the building, without any curbs or sudden changes in elevation.

I am unable to judge whether the interior, including bathrooms, meets provisions for handicapped accessibility. Accessibility should be provided for both customers and employees.

All entrances and exits should be accessible by one in a wheel chair or one using a walker, i.e. there should be no curbs or sudden elevation changes.

The Committee appreciates the efforts made thus far to make veterinary hospital accessible. I am available for continued consultation and review.

Thanks for bringing this to our attention.



Town of Mansfield  
Mansfield Fire Department  
Office of the Fire Marshal



**To:** Planning and Zoning Commission

**From:** John Jackman, Deputy Chief/Fire Marshal

**Date:** Thursday, May 05, 2011

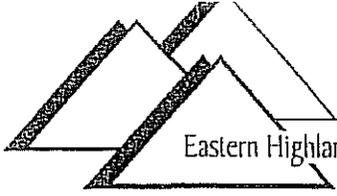
**Re:** W. Ernst – 266 Stafford Road

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After reviewing the revised site plan and file for a special permit application for a Veterinary Hospital located 266 Stafford Road, submitted by W. Ernst, I have the following comments:

- The site plans appear to be in compliance with the Town of Mansfield Fire Lane Ordinance.
- This application appears to seek authorization to change the use of single family dwelling to a Group B (Business) use. The applicant is required apply to both Building Department and Office of the Fire Marshal for authorization to change the use of the structure to Group B.

It should be noted that plans and specifications, documenting compliance with the Connecticut Building Code and Connecticut Fire Safety Code for the change of use are required.



Eastern Highlands Health District

4 South Eagleville Road • Mansfield CT 06268 • Tel: (860) 429-3325 • Fax: (860) 429-3321

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## PLAN APPROVAL MEMO

April 18, 2011

Edward Pelletier  
Datum Engineering & Surveying, LLC  
132 Conantville Rd  
Mansfield Center, CT 06250

Re: **Subsurface Sewage Disposal System Plan** for: Veterinarian's office with overnight facilities  
**Address:** 266 Stafford Rd Mansfield Center CT  
**Plan Designed by:** Datum/Gerald Hardisty  
**Plan Date:** 3/17/2011, **Latest Revision Date:**

Dear Edward Pelletier:

The above referenced plan has been reviewed for compliance with the Connecticut Public Health Code and Technical Standards. **The plan is approved with the following conditions:**

- 1) Leaching system elevations show the top few inches of the proposed galleries to be installed in the topsoil as shown by TP 4. In this case, the topsoil must be stripped and replaced alongside the galleries with select septic fill as in a filled system, including 5 feet from the gallery trench. Lowering the elevation of the gallery to avoid topsoil would avoid this requirement. This could be directed in the "Staking Verification Memo" next referenced.
- 2) Prior to any system construction, the system must be field staked by a licensed surveyor under the supervision of the engineer. Upon completion of field staking and prior to septic permit approval, the supervising engineer must submit a completed and signed "Staking Verification Memo" (EHHD form) to the health district.
- 3) There is no guaranteed or implied perpetual approval for this plan. This subsurface sewage disposal system design and well location plan is approved based on the conditions depicted on the plan and the requirements of the Public Health Code and Technical Standards in effect at the time of our review. Plan revisions may be necessary if there are changes in Code requirements or the Technical Standards prior to permit approval or changes to site conditions prior to system construction.

Please note that this plan approval is not an approval to construct the sewage disposal system.

If not already done, a completed application and fee for the Permit to Construct the Sewage Disposal System must be submitted to the health district for review and approval. The permit will be approved when all above noted conditions of approval have been met.

If you have any questions, please call the health district office at 860-429-3325.

Sincerely,



Geoffrey W. Havens



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DISTRICT II

171 Salem Turnpike

Norwich, Connecticut 06360

Phone:

(860) 823-3211



P2C #1300

May 2, 2011

Mr. Edward Pelletier, L.S.  
Datum Engineering & Surveying, LLC  
132 Conantville Road  
Mansfield Center, CT 06250

Dear Mr. Pelletier:

Subject: Proposed Veterinary Hospital  
266 Stafford Road (Route 32)  
Town of Mansfield

We have approved your plans for the above-noted subject dated March 17, 2011, and entitled "SITE PLAN – PREPARED FOR APPLICANT: WENDY ERNST – OWNER: YOLANDA DESIATO – 266 STAFFORD ROAD – MANSFIELD CENTER, CONNECTICUT."

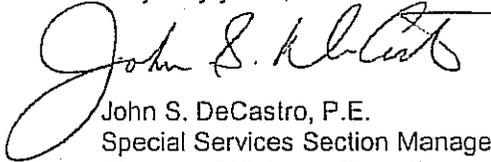
NOTE: This approval supersedes all previous approvals for this project.

An encroachment permit will be issued upon receipt of the following:

- 1) A completed application.
- 2) A Bond on State form CLA-5, in the amount of \$10,000 in the contractor's name.
- 3) A Certificate of Insurance, on State form CON-32, requiring Bodily Injury Liability of \$1,000,000, and Aggregate of \$2,000,000.
- 4) A check or money order in the amount of \$100 made payable to "Treasurer-State of Connecticut."
- 5) Proof of Town approval.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Peter Palazzi at 860- 823-3224

Very truly yours,



John S. DeCastro, P.E.  
Special Services Section Manager  
Bureau of Highway Operations

cc: Mansfield Planning and Zoning

Received 5/4/11

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**Jessie L. Shea**

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**From:** Doreen [dgpalmer@charter.net]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 25, 2011 12:33 PM  
**To:** PlanZoneDept  
**Subject:** Veterinary Hospital @ 266 Stafford Road

I support the Special Permit Application for a Veterinary Hospital at 266 Stafford Rd.

Doreen Palmer  
32 Higgins Highway  
Mansfield Ctr. CT 06237  
860-228-0771

Gary & Doreen Palmer  
Columbia, CT  
& Chesapeake  
CT UCDX Eastern Waters' Sea "Zephyr" \*VCD3\* (UD, AX, AXJ, TDX), RE, NF, WD CGC  
pointed  
Eastern Waters' "Makai" Wind, puppy in training

and Dixie SRC, (Southern rebel cat)  
always in our hearts:  
Coast Guard Alligator Schuh, "Gator"  
Bayou Breeze El Lobo Grande, "Lobo"  
Eastern Waters Dulcinea ROM, "Dulcie"  
UCDX CH Chesachobee's Taku Winds, VCD3, UDTDX, MX, MXJ, CAN CD "Taku"  
UCDX Eastern Waters Hornpipe VCD3 UDTDX, MX, AXJ "Piper"

**Jessie L. Shea**

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**From:** Kathy McKinney [pugpink@live.com]

**Sent:** Thursday, April 28, 2011 7:42 AM

**To:** PlanZoneDept

**Subject:** New Proposed Veterinary Clinic

**To Whom It May Concern:**

**I live at 22 Higgins Hwy and just found out yesterday that a new veterinary clinic is going in across the street and as a pet owner, I am very excited. The property at 266 Stafford Road can only be improved upon and my husband and I support the Special Permit Application for a Veterinary Hospital at 266 Stafford Rd. Feel free to call me if you have any questions.**

**Thank you!**

**Kathy and Tad McKinney  
22 Higgins Hwy  
Mansfield, CT 06250**

**860.933.4326**

**Jessie L. Shea**

---

**From:** Roger D Whitmore [arwhitmore@att.net]

**Sent:** Monday, May 02, 2011 12:45 PM

**To:** PlanZoneDept

**Subject:** Vet Hospital

We support the Special Permit Application for a Veterinary Hospital at 266 Stafford Road.

Annette & Roger Whitmore

37 Higgins Highway

Mansfield Center, CT 06250

**Jessie L. Shea**

---

**From:** Joy Mercure [joyjmm58@hotmail.com]

**Sent:** Tuesday, May 10, 2011 1:54 PM

**To:** PlanZoneDept

**Subject:** Veterinary Hospital at 266 Stafford Rd

I am writing to say that I support the Special Permit Application of Wendy Ernst for a Veterinary Hospital at 266 Stafford Rd. Mansfield, CT.

Joy Mercure  
124 Meadowbrook Lane  
Mansfield, CT 06250



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**TOWN OF MANSFIELD**  
**OFFICE OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

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GREGORY J. PADICK, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING

Memo to: Planning & Zoning Commission  
From: Gregory J. Padick, Director of Planning  
Date: May 5, 2011  
Re: 5/16/11 Public Hearing on PZC-proposed revisions to the Zoning Regulations  
A. 3/30/11 Draft Revisions to various sections of the regulations, File #907-35  
B. 4/14/11 Draft Revisions to the regulations regarding agricultural uses, File #907-36



**General**

Please find attached a copy of the legal notice for the May 16, 2011 Public Hearing. This notice provides a summary of the proposed revisions. At the 5/16/11 hearing, I intend to make a brief presentation outlining the proposed revisions and rationale for considering the proposed revisions. I also will address any questions from Commission members and the public. After receiving public comments, the PZC will have to determine whether to close or continue the Public Hearing process. Once the Hearing is closed, only technical assistance from staff may be received by the Commission. Current state statutes authorize the PZC to modify the proposed revisions prior to adoption, but to minimize any potential procedural issues, an independent Hearing should be considered for any significant alterations.

Pursuant to statutory requirements, the proposed revisions have been referred to the Town Clerks of neighboring Towns and to the WINCOG Regional Planning Commission and they have been filed with the Mansfield Town Clerk. The proposed revisions also have been posted on the Town's web site and communicated to all individuals who have signed up for the Town's Registry which was established pursuant to state statutes. Referrals also have been sent to the Town Attorney, Town Council, Zoning Board of Appeals, Eastern Highlands Health District, Open Space Preservation Committee, Conservation Commission, Agriculture Committee, Design Review Panel, Four Corners Sewer and Water Advisory Committee and staff members. All comments received prior to May 12<sup>th</sup> will be included in the agenda packet. Any additional communications received prior to 4:30 p.m. on Monday, May 16<sup>th</sup> will be copied and distributed to PZC members.

As with any Zoning Regulation amendment, the PZC must weight anticipated public and private benefits versus anticipated public and private costs. All municipal land use regulations should be designed to serve a community need while protecting the public's health, safety, convenience and property values. The Commission has the legislative discretion to determine what is best for the Town as a whole, and zoning districts and land use regulations can and should be modified to meet changing circumstances or address a recognized public need. Sections 8-2 of the CT General Statutes and Articles I and XIII of Mansfield's Zoning Regulations provide information on the legislative basis, procedure and criteria for considering regulation revisions. Collective reasons for PZC legislative actions should be clearly documented, and Section 8-3.a of the State Statutes requires the Commission to make a public finding regarding the consistency of the proposed revisions with respect to the Municipal Plan of Conservation and Development.

**Review Considerations**

In reviewing the proposed regulation revisions, which were drafted by staff and the PZC Regulatory Review Committee, a number of factors must be considered. These factors include policies, objectives and recommendations contained in Mansfield's Plan of Conservation and Development and state and regional land use plans and legal appropriateness. Article XIII, Section D includes or references additional information regarding approval considerations. The proposed 3/30/11 Draft Zoning Regulation revisions include:

- Incorporation of a new intent section and new Design Criteria for the Planned Business-3 zone (Four Corners Area).

- Incorporation of revised application and approval criteria designed to protect historic resources and new zoning permit, site plan and special permit approval criteria that would apply to exterior construction in Plan of Conservation and Development designated historic village areas.
- Incorporation of new reference revisions to existing Architectural and Design Standards and specific revisions and additions to these standards.
- Incorporation of new setback provisions for outdoor recreational facilities.
- Incorporation of revised site plan and special permit submission and approval criteria for lighting improvements.
- Incorporation of revised provisions for sidewalk, bikeway, trail and other pedestrian and bicycle improvements and construction details for recreational improvements.
- Incorporation of revised notification provisions.
- Incorporation of revised standards for refuse areas.

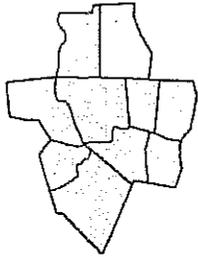
The proposed 4/4/11 draft Zoning Regulation revisions regarding agricultural uses include a number of significant revisions from a 2009 draft that was presented at public hearing but not adopted. Since 2009, the staff and Regulatory Review Committee have altered the proposed revisions and have included a number of recommendations from the Agriculture Committee. Significant changes from the 2009 draft include:

- A refined Statement of Purpose and numerous provisions have been clarified or modified with additional detail.
- Seasonal farm stands with structures less than 300 square feet in size are authorized by right, subject to meeting certain conditions. The 2009 draft required Zoning Permit approval.
- Provisions for the Keeping of Animals have been clarified and refined. Square footage requirements no longer exclude a 40,000 square foot area for residential use.
- Provisions for 4H, FFA and other student projects involving the Keeping of Animals no longer requires Zoning Permit approval or compliance with animal unit provisions. These projects require an animal management plan.
- New Special Permit provisions allow property owners on smaller lots (less than 5 acres exclusive of non-farmable wetlands) to exceed accessory/secondary use animal unit requirements. The 2009 draft did not include any opportunity to demonstrate that a greater number of animals could be appropriately raised on a particular lot.
- New agricultural signage provisions authorize identity signage, product identification signage and directional signage. The 2009 draft did not change existing provisions which do not include separate site identity and product identity signs and allow 3 rather than 4 directional signs.

In general, all of these revisions are designed to promote land use goals articulated in local, regional and state plans and promote and protect the public health, welfare and safety. The explanatory notes provided for each of these proposed revisions summarize the rationale for the draft amendments. This memo was written prior to the receipt of comments from the Town Attorney, the Windham Regional Planning Commission, the Agricultural Committee and other groups or individuals who received referrals. As appropriate, I will update this report on May 16<sup>th</sup>.

### **Summary/Recommendation**

The proposed regulation revisions present policy issues for the Commission's legislative discretion. The PZC must determine that the proposed revisions are legally appropriate, promote goals, objectives and recommendations contained in municipal, regional and state land use plans and in general promote the public's health, safety and welfare. The statutory provisions of Sections 8-2 and the regulatory provisions of Article XIII, Section D of Mansfield's Zoning Regulations provide a legal basis and procedural guidance for making this determination. Pursuant to Section 8-3 (a) of the State Statutes, any approved revisions must include a finding with respect to compatibility with the Mansfield Plan of Conservation and Development. The PZC must consider all communications received during the Public Hearing process, but once the Hearing has been closed, no additional input shall be received except for technical assistance from staff. The PZC has the right to modify the proposed revisions prior to adoption, but any significant alterations should be presented through an additional Public Hearing review process. As deemed appropriate by the PZC, the Public Hearing process can be extended to a future meeting.



# WINDHAM REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Chaplin Columbia Coventry Hampton Lebanon Mansfield Scotland Willington Windham

## REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Date: May 4, 2011

Referral #: 11-04-12-MD

Report on: **Zoning**

**MANSFIELD**

**Various**

To: Town of Mansfield Planning and Zoning Commission

C/o: Gregory Padick, Director of Planning

Commissioners;

This referral involves: A proposal to modify the regulations concerning the Planned Business-3 Area at Four Corners, Historic Village Areas, Architectural and Design Standards, Setbacks for outdoor recreation facilities, lighting requirements, recreational and pedestrian improvements, and other minor changes.

Receipt is hereby acknowledged of the above referral. Notice of this proposal was transmitted to the Windham Region Council of Governments under the provisions of Section 8-3b of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended.

**Comments for Inclusion in the Public Record:** The Regional Planning Commission reviewed the proposed amendments to the zoning regulations. The commission offers recommendations on how proposals can better meet the goals and vision of the Windham Region Land Use Plan, WINCOG's regional guide for conservation and development. The recommendations of the Regional Planning Commission are purely advisory.

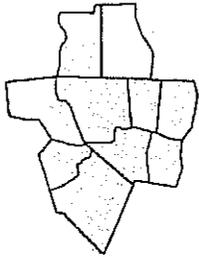
- The Regional Planning Commission strongly supports the Mansfield Planning and Zoning Commission's continued efforts to inform developers of community design preferences through the use of the Four Corners and Historic Village Area Design Criteria. This is consistent with the Windham Region Land Use Plan 2010 which recommends zoning regulations that focus on excellence in site design, landscaping, and architecture, rather than relying on "cookie-cutter" dimensional and use standards. All proposed changes included in this referral are consistent with the Windham Region Land Use Plan 2010.
- The proposal is not anticipated to create negative intermunicipal impacts.

Questions concerning this referral should be directed to Jana Butts at the Windham Region Council of Governments.

Sincerely,

Ted Melinosky, Vice Chair  
WINCOG RPC

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# WINDHAM REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Chaplin Columbia Coventry Hampton Lebanon Mansfield Scotland Willington Windham

## REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Date: May 4, 2011  
Referral #: 11-04-26-MD  
Report on: **Zoning**

**MANSFIELD**

**Agriculture Regulations**

To: Town of Mansfield Planning and Zoning Commission  
C/o: Gregory Padick, Director of Planning

Commissioners;

This referral involves: A proposal to modify the regulations concerning agricultural uses.

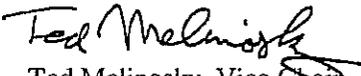
Receipt is hereby acknowledged of the above referral. Notice of this proposal was transmitted to the Windham Region Council of Governments under the provisions of Section 8-3b of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended.

**Comments for Inclusion in the Public Record:** The Regional Planning Commission reviewed the proposed amendments to the zoning regulations. The commission offers recommendations on how proposals can better meet the goals and vision of the Windham Region Land Use Plan, WINCOG's regional guide for conservation and development. The recommendations of the Regional Planning Commission are purely advisory.

- The Windham Region Land Use Plan strongly encourages agriculture as: 1) a form of economic development, 2) a way to preserve the rural landscape and 3) to make New England more self-sufficient in its food supply. These regulations will help clarify and modernize the regulations concerning agriculture. In particular, they strive to balance the complex concerns of agricultural businesses, animal wellness, environmental impact and neighborhood compatibility. The proposed changes to the agricultural regulations are consistent with the Windham Region Land Use Plan 2010.
- The proposal is not anticipated to create negative intermunicipal impacts.

Questions concerning this referral should be directed to Jana Butts at the Windham Region Council of Governments.

Sincerely,

  
Ted Melinosky, Vice Chair  
WINCOG RPC

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**Jessie L. Shea**

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**From:** Careen Jennings [careenjennings@sbcglobal.net]

**Sent:** Tuesday, May 10, 2011 9:34 PM

**To:** PlanZoneDept

**Subject:** Restrictions on small scale farming

To the Planning and Zoning Commission:

The regulations that put serious restrictions on small Mansfield farms are not in the best interest of the town or of the small scale farmers.

A small flock of chickens can be rotated much nearer the property line than 100 feet. As the former owner of a small flock of chickens (when I lived in another town) I can vouch for their benefits to the soil with their fertilizer and their amazing and wonderful ability to find and eat ticks. Pound for pound, they make less demand on the environment than dogs. Even urban dwellers are beginning to raise backyard chickens; I know personally of two, and their next door neighbors are undisturbed.

With rising population and prices, it is important that we move to locally produced food as much as possible. Mansfield farmers ask little and give much. Don't make their lives more difficult.

Careen Jennings  
5 D Sycamore Dr.  
Storrs CT 06268

careenjennings@sbcglobal.net

**Jessie L. Shea**

---

**From:** skhathaway21@gmail.com on behalf of S Hathaway [skhathaway@charter.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 10, 2011 11:22 AM  
**To:** PlanZoneDept  
**Subject:** Planning & Zoning Concerns

Hello,

I am emailing in lieu of attending next week's Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, as I have another meeting to attend. I'm writing to express my concern with the current and proposed regulations that impact the survivability of small farms in town. Restricting animals on farms less than five acres presents many challenges for small farms, making it difficult for them to be financially sustainable. Similarly, restricting animal keeping areas to 100 feet from the property lines means that most properties will not be able to keep animals. Again, this is threatening the survivability of small farms.

I request that the Planning and Zoning Commission revisit the regulations and make them less restrictive to small farmers. We live in a rural community that is attractive to small scale farming. One reason I choose to live here is that Mansfield values land preservation, community sustainability, and recycling, among other things. Encouraging small-scale farming in Mansfield is important to me. I suggest that farming problems be dealt with if and when they arise, rather than restricting all small farms and thereby threaten their ability to operate.

Thank you for your consideration.

Suzanne Hathaway  
117 Birch Road, Storrs CT 06268

**Jessie L. Shea**

---

**From:** casey.barbara@gmail.com on behalf of Barbara Casey [barbara@caseylight.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 10, 2011 11:37 AM  
**To:** PlanZoneDept  
**Cc:** Robert Casey  
**Subject:** RE: small scale farming proposed regulations

*Dear Planning and Zoning Board:*

*I am concerned that in the current and proposed regulations the animal restrictions make it difficult for farms less than 5 acres to be financially sustainable. For example, restricting the number of chickens to 16 per acre makes it unprofitable for a small farm to raise meat birds or laying hens.*

*In addition, the restriction not allowing animal keeping areas to be within 100 feet of the property line excludes most properties in town from keeping any animals, and for those that can, substantially limits the amount of land available.*

*I request that Planning and Zoning Commission revisit the regulations making them less restrictive. Encouraging small-scale farming in Mansfield is important to me. I propose we deal with farming problems if and when they arise, instead of restricting all small farms to a degree that they cannot operate.*

*Thank you for listening to my concerns, and I appreciate your service to the Town of Mansfield.*

*Barbara and Bob Casey  
70 Davis Road  
Storrs CT 06268*

--

Barbara Casey  
Marketing Consultant & Encore!Hartford Fellow 2011  
860-604-2382  
[barbara@caseylight.com](mailto:barbara@caseylight.com)  
<http://www.caseylight.com>

Contact Me  [LinkedIn](#)  [Twitter](#)

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TOWN OF MANSFIELD  
AUDREY P. BECK BUILDING  
FOUR SOUTH EAGLEVILLE ROAD  
STORRS, CONNECTICUT 06268



CURT B. HIRSCH  
ZONING AGENT  
(860) 429-3341

Memo to: Planning and Zoning Commission  
From: Curt Hirsch, Zoning Agent  
Date: 5/11/11  
Re: Request for Building Modification,  
CrossFit Storrs, 1768 Storrs Rd., PZC file # 864-3

On 5/2/11 the PZC received the Request for Site/Building Modifications from Brooke Magouirk, to open CrossFit Storrs at 1768 Storrs Road. According to Ms. Magouirk's application, CrossFit is a gym-type use oriented toward individual, personal training as opposed to an open fitness club such as Cardio Express or Planet Fitness, uses that we have in and around Mansfield. This application is being reviewed under the provisions of Article IX, Sec. D.7 of the zoning regulations for modifications of non-conforming uses.

#### General

The subject site is 3.8 acres in size and is located in Professional Office-1, Flood Hazard and RAR-90 zones. The site is readily visible from Storrs Road but significantly distant from structures on neighboring lots. The subject application seeks a modification of the 9/15/08 special permit approval in order to permit a 'personal training use' within a portion of the space approved for the 240-seat, St. Paul's Collegiate Church. While the church still occupies a portion of the building as a 2500 square-foot, 120-seat chapel approved by PZC in 2006, it has abandoned its plans for any expansion. The remainder of the 13,400 square-foot building is currently unoccupied. A 5,645 sq. ft. office use recently moved its offices out of town. This office area however could be occupied by a new office use without any further PZC action. In 2005 the PZC authorized a dance studio in a 2000 sq. ft. area of the building, which never established occupancy on the site. If the CrossFit use is approved there would still be approximately 2000 sq. ft. of unoccupied space within the building. The site has 50 existing parking spaces with expansion approved for ten additional spaces if parking needs warrant the additional spaces. Two existing spaces are designated as handicap accessible spaces but a third accessible space will be required if the 60-space lot is constructed. Eighteen of the existing parking spaces are a paved, asphalt surface including the two accessible spaces. The remaining spaces are a gravel surface. I walked the site and all of the constructed parking is in good condition. Ms. Magouirk's Statement of Use provides a detailed description of her proposed use. Her stated class size of 10 to 20 people is significantly less than the 40 to 50 people on site at a time for the PZC-approved dance studio in 2005. CrossFit will not be open on Sundays, which is the one day of the week when St. Paul's has a significant use of the site. Even with a new occupant in the vacant office space, the existing 50 parking spaces on site appear to be satisfactory. Any new use or change in use of the site would require a further review and approval of the Commission. Under the provisions of Article IX, Sec. D.7, Ms. Magouirk is required to notify the abutting property owners about her pending application. She has told me that she has received return receipts from each of those owners and will submit them at the 5/16/11 PZC meeting.

### Other

- The approved plans indicate that the dumpster area will be screened. The screening does not currently exist and needs to be reinstalled. This should be addressed in any approval motion.
- No neighborhood impacts are anticipated from this use. The proposed use appears to have less of an impact on the site and to surrounding properties than the previously authorized site uses of a 240-seat church and a dance studio.
- The Eastern Highlands Health District has given a written approval for the CrossFit use.
- Any Building and Fire Code requirements pertinent to the proposed use can be address at the time of submittal to those respective departments.
- Any approval should require additional PZC authorization for any changes to the existing office use or additional uses of the site.

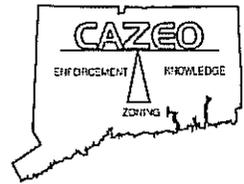
### Summary

The primary issues to be determined by the Commission in my opinion are the adequacy of the existing, approved parking spaces and the impacts if any, of the proposed use on the neighborhood. Subject to confirmation that abutting properties have been properly notified and any questions PZC members may have or other issues that may arise, I recommend that **the Planning & Zoning Commission authorize the PZC Chairman and the Zoning Agent to approve with conditions, the 4/27/11 Request for Site/Building Modifications submitted by Brooke Magouirk and as described in the applicant's Statement of Use and other submissions. This conditional approval does not anticipate any significant changes to the site or impacts on the neighborhood. The conditions are:**

- 1. Screening shall be re-established around the dumpster pad;**
- 2. Any changes to the remaining existing uses or new additional uses of the site shall require further PZC review and approval;**
- 3. All conditions of the PZC's 2/21/06 approval for the 120-seat chapel use of the site shall remain in effect.**



# Town of Mansfield



CURT B. HIRSCH  
ZONING AGENT  
HIRSCHCB@MANSFIELDCT.ORG

AUDREY P. BECK BUILDING  
4 SOUTH EAGLEVILLE ROAD  
MANSFIELD, CT 06268-2599  
(860) 429-3341

To: Planning & Zoning Commission  
From: Curt Hirsch, Zoning Agent  
Date: May 12, 2011

Re: Gravel Permit Renewals

There are three "active" gravel permits, which are due to expire on July 1, 2010. I have sent the permittees a standard form letter asking if they are seeking renewal of their special permits. All three have responded that they are requesting a renewal of their permits. The three are:

Steven Banis, Pleasant Valley Rd., file 1164  
Edward Hall, Old Mansfield Hollow Rd. file 910-2  
Karen Green, 1090 Stafford Rd., file 1258

Mr. Hall has indicated verbally that his renewal will include a request to modify the authorized area of excavation. To date no information has been submitted.

Mrs. Green's excavation activity has not started yet but she wants to keep the permit in effect.

In order to get the required legal notices into the newspaper in a timely manner, I recommend **that the Commission set a public hearing for June 20, 2011, for the purpose of hearing special permit, gravel renewal requests.** These sites should also be placed on a field trip agenda at a date prior to such public hearing.

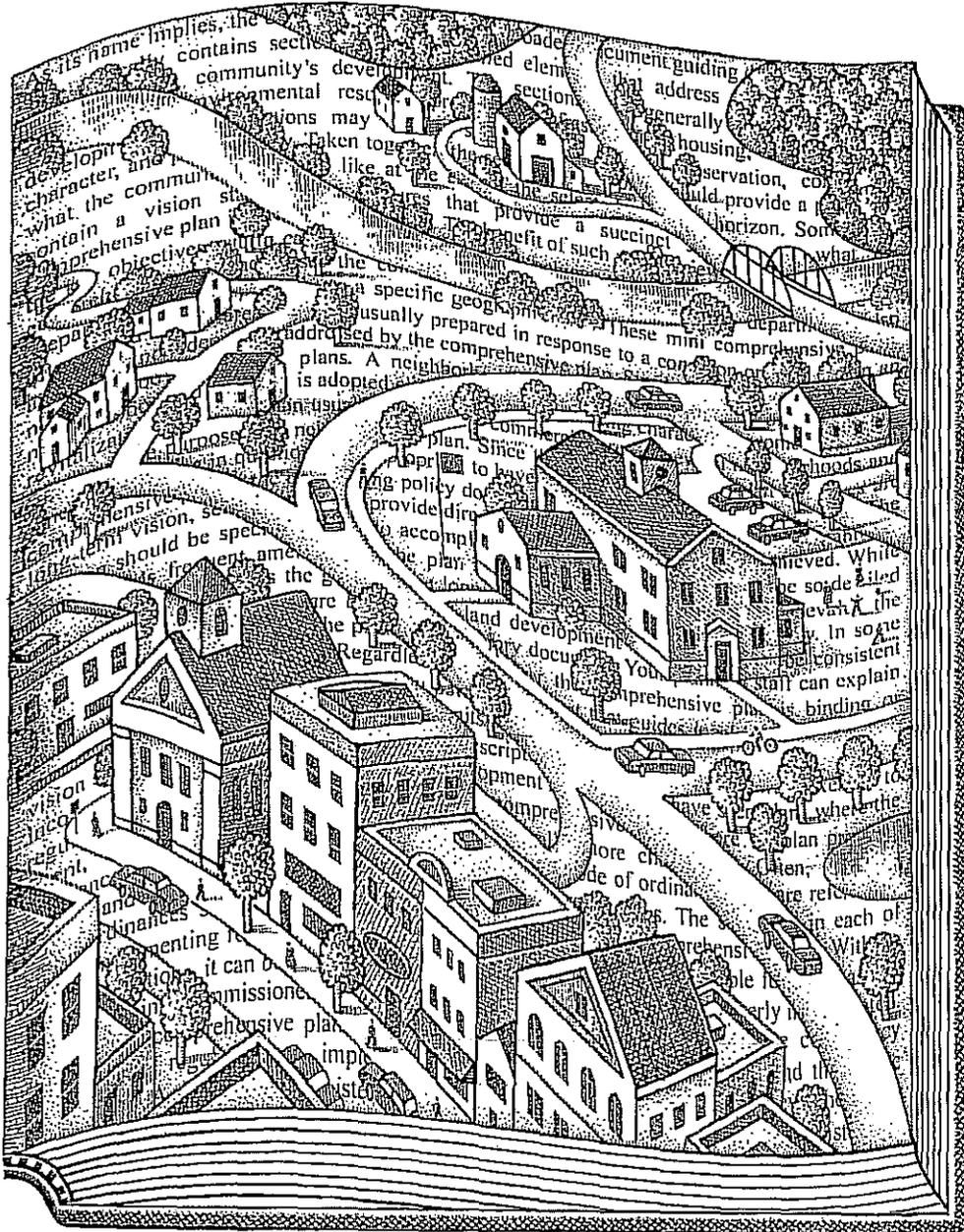
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PLANNING  
COMMISSIONERS

# Journal

NEWS & INFORMATION FOR CITIZEN PLANNERS

## Putting Words into Action



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## Connect With Us

At the *PCJ* we've been increasingly using our PlannersWeb blog and our LinkedIn group page to supplement material you'll find in the *PCJ* – and to better connect with our readers.

One recent example shows how this works. You might recall that our last issue included a provocative article by Ed McMahon, "Billboards: The Case for Control." Shortly after the article was published, we received a reply from the Outdoor Advertising Association of America (OAAA) taking exception to several points in McMahon's article. We promptly made available the OAAA's reply on our Planners Web site, while providing access to McMahon's article. You'll also find

## PlannersWeb

City & Regional Planning Resources

www.plannersweb.com

nonprofit concerned about billboards.

But that's not all – and here's how LinkedIn comes in. On our LinkedIn group page we opened a discussion on the pros and cons of regulating billboards. This discussion – which is still active as we go to press – has included a broad spectrum of comments.



If you're not yet familiar with LinkedIn, I hope you'll give it a try. Of all the social network sites, LinkedIn seems the most conducive to having informative, helpful discussions – free of rancor and personal invective.

After you sign up for LinkedIn (www.Linkedin.com – there's no charge), make sure you join our *Planning Commissioners Journal* group. Our group page is at: www.Linkedin.com/groups?gid=2463680. You can also find a link to the group from our PlannersWeb home page.

If you ever want to comment on anything published in the *PCJ*, just start a discussion on our LinkedIn group page, or join an ongoing discussion. It's not hard to do – and you'll



likely generate some interesting conversation. Look forward to seeing you there! ♦

*Wayne M. Senville*

Wayne M. Senville,  
Editor

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# Journal

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# Welcome to the Tightrope Act

by Della Rucker, AICP, CECd

*Editor's Note: We're pleased that planner and economic development consultant Della Rucker will be joining us as a contributing writer. For more about Rucker and what she'll be covering, see our interview – posted on the PlannersWeb.<sup>1</sup>*

## FIND YOUR BALANCING POLE

"You planning commissioners should stop getting in the way of business."

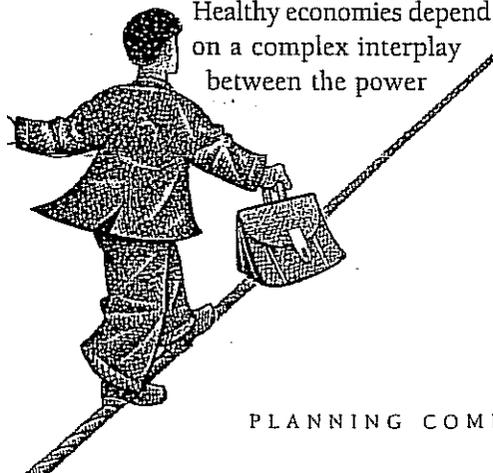
"You know, you people on the planning commission can't really make anything happen anyways. You all just react."

If you're reading this journal, I bet you have heard one or both of these lines before – probably after a decision someone didn't like. My 8-year old, with his exhaustive knowledge of "How to Spot a Bully in the Making," would understand what's going on here. When the economy isn't where we all want it to be, hitting the planning commission's ability, or lack of ability, to foster economic improvement is a bit of a sucker punch. And it reflects the oversimplified assumptions that many people have about how local economies (and planning commissions) work.

Anyone saying either of those lines has it wrong. What you do as a planning commissioner has a huge impact on your local economy, and your community needs you to make those tough decisions.

Your impact is critical because you are the ones who are thinking about the future, not just about today's demands.

Healthy economies depend on a complex interplay between the power



of the market and the often quiet, sometimes vocal, needs of the community. It's not a linear equation. It's a dynamic, constantly-changing interplay between market forces and community needs. And as a planning commissioner, you are standing in center ring. So go find your balancing pole – the tightrope isn't getting any thicker.

## PLANNING & LOCAL ECONOMIES

There is a reason it's vital that we bring an economic perspective to planning, and vice-versa. As our local economies become increasingly unable to depend on financial support from state and federal agencies, and as we continue to deal with the unintended consequences of past planning decisions, it becomes more and more important for us to proactively safeguard our communities' local and regional economic health.

More than ever, we need to have planning decision-making that builds economic robustness and fiscal sustainability, and we need to make economic decisions that create growth and improve quality of life for the community as a whole. Places and their economies are not separate islands – one is entirely dependent on the other. We know that today more than ever before.

As a result, it's critical that planning decisions anticipate and address the community's long-term economic needs. I think that decisions made explicitly to protect a community's economic health are also becoming more justifiable than ever because of the erosion of financial assistance from the federal and state governments.

This is why planning commissioners and their staff are so critical. You are where planning and economic development come together. Your role is tougher

than either planning or economic development alone. You are responsible for making decisions that bolster the long-term health, vitality, and resilience of the community to which you give your time and effort.

## ON THE HIGH WIRE

Planning commissions don't always have the ideal tools to work with. The planning documents that you are required to base your decisions on are too often disconnected from the economic realities that you know in your lives. How much of the new commercial development shown on the future land use map does your community actually need? How much can it support?

Similarly, economic development can too easily fall into the penny wise-pound foolish category. If you permit that development, how much is it going to cost to provide water, police, snowplowing, etc.? Is it going to generate enough income to cover those costs, or are we creating future budget shortfalls?

For many communities, the planning commission is the last line of defense against bad ideas, no matter where they come from. It is your diligence, and sometimes your willingness to go out on the high wire without a net, that sets the stage for your community's future.

What you do is about more than setbacks and landscaping. Your unique role is to connect the dots between the physical and functional environment we create today, and the economy that you and your neighbors will face tomorrow. ♦

*Della Rucker is the Principal of the Wise Economy Workshop, a consulting firm that assists local governments and nonprofit organizations with the information and processes for making wise planning and economic development decisions.*



<sup>1</sup> The interview is available at: [http://pcj.typepad.com/planning\\_commissioners\\_jo/2011/04/rucker.html](http://pcj.typepad.com/planning_commissioners_jo/2011/04/rucker.html).

# The Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations:

PUTTING WORDS INTO ACTION

by Wendy Grey, AICP

In this article, we'll explore the relationship between the comprehensive plan and its implementing regulations and some strategies for improving how these documents work together. We'll also discuss the local planning process as a "feedback loop" – that is, the need for the plan and regulations to be refined and improved on a regular basis as a result of practical experience and ongoing evaluation.

## THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### 1. Sections of the Plan

As its name implies, the comprehensive plan is the broadest document guiding development. The plan typically contains sections (sometimes called "elements") that address the major subjects influencing the community's development. The sections will generally include land use, transportation, environmental resource protection, infrastructure, housing, and economic development. Other sections may include sustainability, historic preservation, community character, and public safety (e.g., disaster preparedness).

Taken together, the sections of the plan should provide a picture of what the community will look like at the end of the selected planning horizon.<sup>1</sup>

Some plans contain a vision statement or pictures that provide a succinct summary of what the comprehensive plan is intended to accomplish. The benefit of such an overview is that it shows how the key objectives within each section fit together to achieve the community vision.

### 2. "Mini" Comprehensive Plans

While the comprehensive plan



addresses the community as a whole, some planning departments also prepare plans that apply only to a specific geographic area. These "mini" comprehensive plans (often called "special area" plans) are usually prepared in response to a condition or need within an area that is not adequately addressed by the comprehensive plan.

Consider a city that has recently annexed a large amount of vacant land under single ownership. The city wants to encourage the use of innovative planning techniques such as transit-oriented development, but there are policies throughout the comprehensive plan that impede this. The city does not want to make wholesale changes to the plan since current policies work well for the rest of the city, which is largely built out. In this situation, a more focused mini plan that applies only to the newly annexed area would likely be a good solution.

Similar to special area plans are neighborhood and district plans. A neighbor-

hood plan addresses the needs of a particular neighborhood and typically is adopted either to protect its existing character or promote sensitive revitalization. A district plan usually addresses a commercial area or several neighborhoods and has the same purpose as a neighborhood plan. Since the conditions that the plan addresses are unique to the area in question, it is appropriate to have a set of policies that apply only to it.

### 3. Providing a Vision for the Community's Future

The comprehensive plan is the overarching policy document for the community. It should establish a long-term vision, set priorities, and provide direction for how the vision will be achieved. While the plan should be specific enough to accomplish these objectives, it should not be so detailed that it needs frequent amending. If the plan is constantly being revised, it can devalue the perception of the plan as the guide to the community's long-term development.

Let's take some examples. A city has a long-term goal of promoting residential development while preserving the historic character of its downtown. There are several ways this goal can be expressed in the comprehensive plan. One approach is to be very prescriptive – that is, for the plan to mandate development standards. The plan might have language such as this:

Goal 1: The City shall promote redevelopment within the Downtown Future Land Use District.

Objective 1.1: Ensure the creation of new residential development.

– Policy 1.1.1: All new development in excess of 5,000 square feet must include at least one residential dwelling unit.

Objective 2.1: Development and redevelopment in the Downtown Future Land Use District shall comply with the following standards:

<sup>1</sup> The planning horizon used in comprehensive plans can range anywhere from 10 to 50 years.

- Policy 1.2.1: No development may exceed 30 feet in height.

- Policy 1.2.1: No on-site parking is allowed in the Downtown Future Land Use Category.

- Policy 1.2.3: At least 70 percent of ground floor building facades must be windows.

Alternatively, the plan can state the city's intent and provide guidance for implementation. In this case, the plan includes an explanation of what the city is trying to achieve and why. This intent language forms the basis for the scope and standards to be included in the implementing regulations.

This approach also provides for some flexibility in the regulations to allow for unique or unanticipated circumstances. For example, the code may limit building heights in general, but allow for taller structures under specific circumstances (e.g., as part of an incentive program, or at gateways into the downtown). Using this approach, the plan may have language somewhat like the following:

**Goal 1:** The City shall increase the economic vitality of the Downtown Future Land Use District.

**Objective 1.1:** Support local businesses by creating a 24-hour downtown.

- Policy 1.1.1: The City shall adopt land development regulations that provide incentives for the development of housing in the Downtown Future Land Use District. These incentives may include, but are not limited to, height bonuses and fee waivers.

**Objective 1.2:** Enhance Downtown's role as a popular tourist destination.

- Policy 1.2.1: The City shall adopt design standards to maintain vernacular architecture. These standards shall address, but are not limited to: building height, building setbacks, ground floor fenestration, parking standards and the location of parking, balconies, overhangs and awnings, and building material.

- Policy 1.2.2: The City shall provide incentives for maintaining and rehabilitating historic structures. These incentives may include, but are not limited to, expedited permitting and reduced parking standards.

- Policy 1.2.3: Through the capital budget process, the City shall fund streetscape improvements in the Downtown to improve pedestrian safety and comfort.

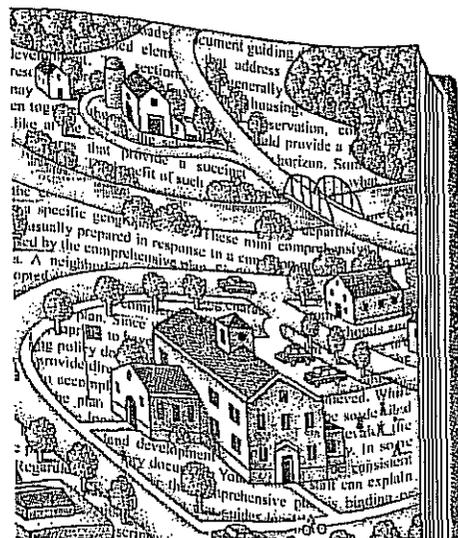
This second example provides more flexibility for the standards in the land development regulations. Sometimes, a value is so strong that the community wants a clear mandate in the plan: "No buildings in the Downtown shall be taller than the Capitol building." So, a

plan can provide flexibility in some cases while being prescriptive in others. The main point here is these should be conscious policy decisions.

## TRANSLATING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN INTO IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS

### 1. The Plan as a Policy Document

In some states, comprehensive plans are binding and land development regulations *must* be consistent with the plan.



In other states, the plan is an advisory document. Your planning staff can explain the legal status of your plan.

Regardless of whether the comprehensive plan is binding or advisory, it should be considered the key policy document that guides: local land development regulations; the approval of development permits/orders; and the municipal budget to achieve the vision set forth in the plan. *The Capital Plan.*

Where the plan is prescriptive, it is a fairly straightforward exercise to incorporate the plan policies into land development regulations. I have seen plans where the regulations are virtually a "copy and paste" of the comprehensive plan. Where the plan provides intent, the development of the regulations is generally more challenging.

Regardless of the degree of specificity in the plan, implementation occurs through a variety of local ordinances:

- Zoning codes address uses, building setbacks and heights, density and intensity, parking standards, and loading zone



## The Capital Plan

Planning commissions do not always review the capital budget or capital plan. It should be remembered, however, that the capital plan and budget can and should be important tools for implementing the comprehensive plan.

For example, if the comprehensive plan emphasizes walking and biking as alternatives to the car, the capital budget should reflect this by providing adequate funds for sidewalk and bike lane improvements. The capital plan (usually a five year plan) should also reflect the need for infrastructure to meet the needs of the current and future population.

requirements. Some other standards, such as site planning, historic preservation, or signage, may be included in the zoning code or in separate ordinances.

- Subdivision ordinances regulate the subdivision of land.

- Landscaping and/or environmental ordinances address protection of natural resources, mitigation for impacted resources, and landscaping requirements.

- Adequate public facility ordinances ensure the availability of facilities needed to accommodate new development. These may include roads, potable water, sewer, schools, libraries, and emergency services.

Often, all these ordinances are located in one section of the community's code of ordinances and are referred to as the land development code or the land development regulations.

The standards in each of these ordinances should reflect the direction established in the comprehensive plan. With so many implementing regulations, and with a variety of departments responsible for some aspect of the regulations, it can be very difficult to ensure that the plan's vision is properly incorporated. Section 3 below describes some ways to achieve this integration. First, however, let's discuss the relationship between the plan

*continued on next page*

## The Comprehensive Plan...

*continued from previous page*

and the implementing regulations in a bit more detail.

### 2. Consistency Between the Plan and Its Implementing Regulations

The term for the evaluation of the relationship between the plan and its implementing regulations is usually referred to as a “finding of consistency.” In other words, is the proposed land development regulation consistent with the comprehensive plan? The following criteria provide guidance for making such a finding:

- *Do the land development regulations address all the relevant policies in the plan?* All policies requiring implementation through the land development regulations should be included.

- *Are there any conflicts between the comprehensive plan and the land development regulations?* For example, if the comprehensive plan establishes a low-density residential future land use category with a maximum density of three units per acre, the zoning districts that implement that category should not allow densities higher than three units per acre.

- *Do the land development regulations further the implementation of the comprehensive plan?* This criterion has a more qualitative aspect. It is an evaluation of how well the regulations will help realize the plan's goals.

Let's say the plan requires that new development be compatible with adjoining existing residential development and the regulations include standards for assessing compatibility. To determine whether the regulations further the intent of the plan, one would assess whether the standards can be expected to result in compatibility. To make this assessment, one would consider what aspects of development have been included in the compatibility standards (height, density, buffering) and whether the standards are sufficient (e.g., will the



size of the buffer adequately mitigate visual impact.)

### 3. Going Beyond the Planning Department

A key strategy for promoting consistency is for planning staff to work with staff from all departments responsible for the implementing regulations (as I earlier noted, comprehensive plans typically call for a variety of implementation measures, not just zoning or subdivision regulations). For example, if public works, engineering, housing, or environmental staff are involved in the development (or evaluation) of the comprehensive plan itself, they can provide input into how plan policies can best be implemented by their departments.

This is beneficial for a number of reasons. First, the plan may call for a substantially new pattern of development. (Consider, for example, the special area plan for the newly annexed area discussed earlier.) This means that staff needs to develop new regulations, work through the implementation of these regulations, and educate the development community. This kind of change is usually difficult and can meet resistance. However, if the staff responsible for the new standards is involved in policy development, there is likely to be less resistance.<sup>2</sup>

Another reason to have broad staff involvement is that by working collaboratively under the general guidance of the comprehensive plan, staff can identify and attempt to minimize the

inconsistencies that sometimes appear in the comprehensive plan and development regulations.

Take, for example, a comprehensive plan that calls for more pedestrian and transit-oriented development. Planners may want to limit on-site parking for new development, especially in more mixed-use areas, seeing it as an impediment to pedestrian-friendly design. But staff from the public works or transportation department may have concerns that limiting on-site parking will increase the likelihood of illegal parking on city streets. By working together, planners and engineers can try to come up with regulations or other solutions that meet the intent of the comprehensive plan and are workable.

### 4. Keeping the Plan's Overall Objectives in Mind

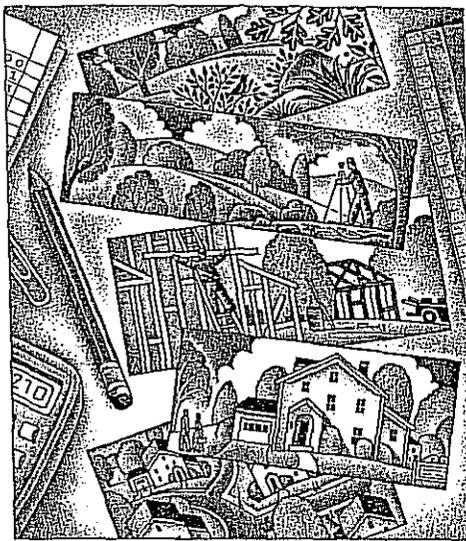
As a planning commissioner, you have a major responsibility to reinforce the consistency between the comprehensive plan and its implementing regulations. Once staff have drafted regulations to implement the plan, the commission will review them for consistency. A finding of “consistency” is not always straightforward. Some inconsistencies between the plan and land development regulations may remain unresolved.

Often at a public hearing you will hear opponents and proponents of a regulation citing individual plan policies to support their point of view. Here is when you will need to rely on your knowledge of the plan. Going back to the definition of consistency presented earlier, remember that it is helpful to keep in mind the overall objectives of the plan and not just one or two specific policies.

#### THE FEEDBACK LOOP

At the beginning of this article, I described the relationship between the comprehensive plan and land development regulations as a “feedback loop.” We've looked at the importance of making sure that the intent of the plan informs the development of the regulations and the value of having the people who are responsible for implementing the regulations involved in developing

<sup>2</sup> This observation holds true for the public. Having key stakeholders meaningfully involved in developing and implementing policy lays the groundwork for success.



policy. Another key piece of the feedback loop is evaluating the effectiveness of the plan and land development regulations on a scheduled basis.

### 1. What Does the Data Show?

It is important to measure the success your community is having in achieving its goals and to understand the reasons for success (or lack thereof). With this information, your community can have a discussion about what needs to be improved.

If the plan, for example, promotes the use of transit as a form of mobility, data should be collected that shows the trend of transit use. If transit ridership is not going up, the next question is "Why not?"

If the comprehensive plan's policies or the implementing regulations are found to be contributing to the problem, the next question is "What needs to change in the comprehensive plan and land development regulations?" Should the plan be amended to include a new higher density mixed-use land use category along transit lines? Should the regulations incorporate more pedestrian-friendly standards for development along these routes?

### 2. Evaluating Approved Projects

Another source of information is a review of site plans and subdivisions that have been approved under the current plan and regulations.

- How well is development matching the community's long-term goals?

- Is the landscaping adequate to provide a comfortable and attractive environment?

- Are there too many curb cuts and driveways serving commercial development, creating congestion and unsafe conditions?

If you see these trends, the best solution is to change your regulations or policies, rather than try to fix the problem through negotiations on a case-by-case basis.

### 3. Looking at Your Development Review Process

A third area of evaluation is how well the development review process is working to further community goals.

- Are items on the planning commission agenda frequently delayed? If so, is it because of inter-agency conflicts regarding rules?

- Is the public works staff at odds with the environmental review staff over how to apply the regulations? If so, explore what changes need to be made to reduce internal inconsistency or conflict.

Once you have identified areas for improvement, forward your recommendations on how to improve the plan or regulations to the elected officials.

### SUMMING UP:

Having a clear understanding of the relationship between your comprehensive plan and land development regulations will give you a good framework for improving the effectiveness of these documents. Remember that neither the plan nor the regulations are static. They need to be evaluated independently and in relation to each other to be good tools for guiding community development. ♦

Wendy Grey, AICP, is the Managing Member of Wendy Grey Land Use Planning LLC which works with public, private, and non-profit clients on planning and land use issues. Prior to establishing the firm, Grey spent 20 years

in the public sector in Florida, including 10 years as Planning Director for Tallahassee and Leon County.



## Taking a Closer Look: Ethics

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS  
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# Planning Sees "CW" Turned On Its Head

by Dave Stauffer

## SAFETY IN DANGER

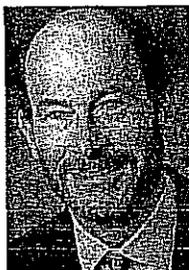
The clear implication: build roads that seem dangerous; they're safer. West Palm Beach, Florida, yanked traffic signals and turn lanes from some major intersections, narrowed roadbeds, and brought people and cars into much closer contact. The result: slower traffic, fewer accidents, shorter trip times. Traffic slowed so much that people felt it was safe to walk there. The increase in pedestrian traffic attracted new shops and apartment buildings. Property values along one of the town's principal streets more than doubled since it was reconfigured.

For decades, the CW concerning street width has been simple: make them wider and thereby safer. But a 1997 study found that narrow streets were safer than wide ones. The study looked at 13 variables; the only one that was a significant predictor of injuries was street width. A 24-foot-wide street was more than four times safer than a 36-foot-wide one.<sup>5</sup>

### Question CW

The examples above only scratch the surface of instances in which recent research has challenged some of the most important and longest-held beliefs that we planning commissioners rely on in making informed decisions. Do they collectively imply that we can rely on none of our foundational beliefs? I don't think so. But they do imply that we would be wise to abide by a well-worn, though inelegant question: "Says who?" ♦

Dave Stauffer is a freelance writer and director of "Linx," The Yellowstone Regional Transportation Cooperative. He is a former planner, planning commissioner, and council member in Red Lodge, Montana. Stauffer regularly writes for the PCJ.



It's always risky to unquestioningly accept conventional wisdom, or CW. But it seems to me that no subject or field of study exceeds planning in seeing its CW overturned over the past 20 or so years.

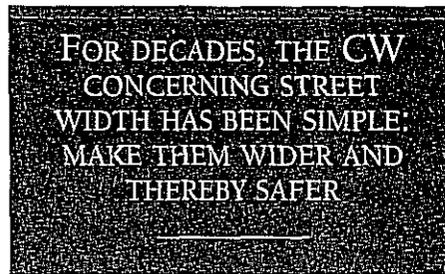
Consider, for example, that CW until recently held that the principal way to boost your local economy was to lure relocating companies, which required profligate financial incentives. Recent studies of economic development strategies show that today's world is less a place where competition is for businesses, which attract workers, and more of one where places compete for people, who attract businesses.

A case study of this new world examined Fort Collins, Colorado, which has steered clear of costly financial incentives to lure new companies. Instead, it has spent money on the infrastructure that business needs to grow and the amenities that make the city an attractive place to come, stay, and invest. A city official observed, "It's the people who want to live here who drive the economy."<sup>1</sup>

### NATURE AS INFRASTRUCTURE

Until recently, CW ascribed no value to natural infrastructure, nor even regarded anything natural as infrastructure. But recent research indicates that

open vegetated areas and even street trees can save billions of dollars by providing free ecological services, such as flood control and storm-water management, improving water quality and cleaning our air.



A study documenting the loss of trees in the Puget Sound region found that tree loss resulted in an increase of peak storm water flows by 35 percent.<sup>2</sup> On the other side of the country, New York City found it would cost \$1.5 billion to purchase watershed lands to protect upstate drinking water supply but \$6 to \$8 billion to build a filtration plant if those lands were developed.<sup>3</sup>

Nature in general, and trees in particular, also blow away the long-held CW regarding the proximity of trees to streets; engineers preferred no trees within a tree's length of roadways. Until a researcher who examined crash statistics found that tree-lined streets experience fewer accidents than do those that have been kept free of large, inflexible objects.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps no one has recently challenged the CW regarding streets as much as Dutch traffic engineer Hans Monderman. He's laden street right-of-ways not only with trees, but also with fountains and other features, while eliminating conventional safety devices such as traffic lights, speed-limit signs, and pavement markings. The effect of these vehicular heresies is to make drivers slow down and become alert, dramatically reducing accidents and injuries.

1 Robert Gavin, "The Rockies emerge as a pocket of prosperity in slowing economy," *The Wall Street Journal* (June 6, 2001).

2 *Regional Ecosystem Analysis: Puget Sound Metropolitan Area* (American Forests, 1998).

3 As reported by John Tibbets in, *Open Space Conservation: Investing in Your Community's Economic Health* (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 1998).

4 Eric Dunbaugh, "Safe Streets, Livable Streets," *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 71:3 (Summer 2005).

5 Peter Swift, P. E., Dan Painter, AICP, Matthew Goldstein, *Residential Street Typology and Injury Accident Frequency* (1997, updated 2006); available at: <http://massengale.typepad.com/venustas/files/SwiftSafetyStudy.pdf>

# Charting an Economic Course

by Gwendolyn Hallsmith

*Editor's Note: this is the last of five related articles prepared by Gwendolyn Hallsmith for the Planning Commissioners Journal. We'd be pleased to email PCJ subscribers a complimentary pdf of the complete series. Just email us at: [pcjoffice@gmail.com](mailto:pcjoffice@gmail.com) and put "Hallsmith series" in the Subject line.*

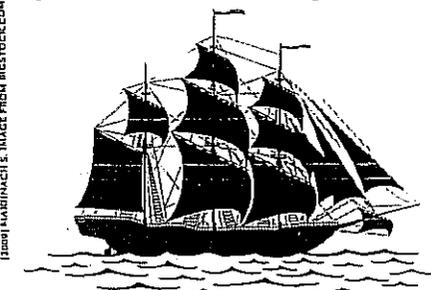
We've been examining all the ways that planning commissioners can lay the groundwork for sustainable economic development. Past articles have described how to identify and recruit stakeholders for an economic planning process, take an inventory of the assets you have in the community, and find new ways that these assets can be put to use to improve the quality of life – all important elements of an economic renewal strategy. This column will close the series with ideas about how to bring the strategies you select into alignment with the global trends that will shape the economy over the next twenty years.

If your local economy were a ship and you were preparing for a journey, you'd want to:

- have a good crew (the stakeholders),
- know all the parts of the ship were in good working order,
- have enough food, medical supplies, fuel, and water for the trip (the assets),
- chart a course that suited the type of ship you had (the ways the assets could be put to use), and
- know if storms are expected, where the shoals are located, and that your destination is a good place to go.

The vision of a sustainable economy with a safe and vibrant community; a healthy environment; lots of good job opportunities; and people who are engaged in governance, can be an effective driver of a planning and implementation process. It's the destination.

It is important, however, that we clearly articulate goals related to developing a sustainable economy at the outset, so there is broad agreement on the overall direction the community is heading. This means, for example, reaching



agreement on the value of growing local entrepreneurs and supporting local businesses. As we've discussed in previous columns, part of the foundation of a sustainable local economy lies in drawing on existing local assets to build real wealth in the community.

The weather report, compass, and maps are also critical elements of the enterprise. As we begin the 21st Century, the economic forecast predicts some serious storms:

- Fossil fuels will be increasingly in demand (yet in shorter supply) as China and India catch up with the industrialization of the West. This will lead to higher costs for food, transportation, and other necessities.
- Climate changes will lead to higher infrastructure repair costs in many parts of the country as snow storms, flooding rains, and hurricanes increase in intensity. We can also expect mounting insurance costs for coastal areas that will be facing the effects of more severe weather and the rise in sea levels. As pressure to mitigate the impact of climate change increases, low carbon solutions for heating, electricity, food, and transportation will be a profitable investment for companies and communities.
- Changing demographics will also

impact our prosperity. As Baby Boomers age, health care costs will consume an increasing share of GNP. The ratio of people over age 80 will grow, outnumbering the younger generation that will be asked to care for them. Finding new ways to care for elders, while keeping them engaged in community life, will be a critical issue.

All of these trends mean that the two growing sectors of the national economy – the Creative Economy and the LOHAS market – will continue to be investments that can help local economies grow.

LOHAS stands for Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability. Analysis by the National Marketing Institute shows that products and services in this market represent over \$200 billion in annual sales in the United States, with almost 20 percent of the adult population as the customers. Creative Economy products – film, video, books, arts and crafts, design, media, etc. – have continued to grow even through the global recession, so they represent a strong sector for economic renewal and recovery.

The old paradigm of natural resource intensive industrial production is in many places being supplanted by a new era of creativity, renewable resources, and sustainable products and services. While Earth is finite, our human ingenuity and compassion are not. Planning commissioners can help chart a new course for their communities with a commitment to vision, good information, and sound planning. ♦

*Gwendolyn Hallsmith is Director of Planning & Community Development for the City of Montpelier, Vt. Previously, she founded Global Community Initiatives, a non-profit that supports municipal sustainable development initiatives.*



# Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper



by the Staff of the  
Project for Public Spaces

As cities everywhere struggle to do more with less, and as people cry out for places of meaning and beauty, we have to find efficient, creative, and profitable ways to capitalize on local ingenuity and turn our cities' liabilities into assets.

PPS thinks that there is a great opportunity to address these issues by rethinking the way that we do development, using an approach called "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper."

## LQC for Local Government Leaders

"Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper" (LQC) is a phrase coined by Eric Reynolds, Founding Director of Urban Space Management (USM), a London and New York based development organization. Through a combination of creativity and local talent, USM has transformed a variety of different types of underused spaces into profitable, multi-use commercial destinations.

USM embraces what they call the "coral reef" concept. They start by putting down some "old tires," that is to say, cheap infrastructure that hosts the vibrant life that animates the "reef" the space given life by vendors, local artisans, and others (the "fish").

We think a LQC approach provides a unique opportunity for local government by creating settings which encourage incremental, public space interventions. It taps into local talents (e.g. citizens, entrepreneurs,

developers, and city staff) to jump-start the creation of enduring destinations in cities.

LQC also allows ideas to be efficiently implemented, assessed, then tweaked and customized to keep momentum going. These smaller-scale projects are being implemented in a variety of environments, including on streets, squares, waterfronts, and even parking lots.

When we work with communities, we often ask local leaders to think about ways to temporarily relax restrictions -- like those that might prevent businesses from putting cafe seating out on the sidewalk.

This allows the community time to test out the effects of the changes and decide whether they work. Regulations can then be modified to allow long-term changes. This is also an attractive strategy for investigating possible changes to the configuration of a community's main street.

## How to Make LQC Work in Your Town

There is a direct connection between using an LQC approach and the principles that PPS uses in all of its public space work:

1. *The community is the "expert."* Time and again we have learned that the people who use a space have the best understanding of how well it works and how it could be improved. The opportunity lies in local government becoming facilitators empowering people to use their creativity and commitment to take the initiative in improving public spaces.

2. *Experiment or "start with the petunias."* Experiments encourage people to do small things that give immediate visibility to their ideas and encourage them

to stay involved. Incremental changes can often jump-start a project.

3. *Money is not the issue.* LQC changes require less investment initially. After early, visible results are seen, it's easier to increase the investment to expand on what's been put in place.

4. *You are never finished.* When short-term, low-cost changes are made, residents and local businesses feel a greater sense of ownership of the space. They will stay involved because they care. All too often, people in neighborhoods are fighting a project because they don't see a role for themselves or were not involved in the concept initially.

With the above in mind, we want to briefly describe three places where an LQC approach has paid off.

## Granville Island

Granville Island in Vancouver, British Columbia, provides a lesson in the way low-cost, incremental changes that capitalize on local assets can help produce a great place.

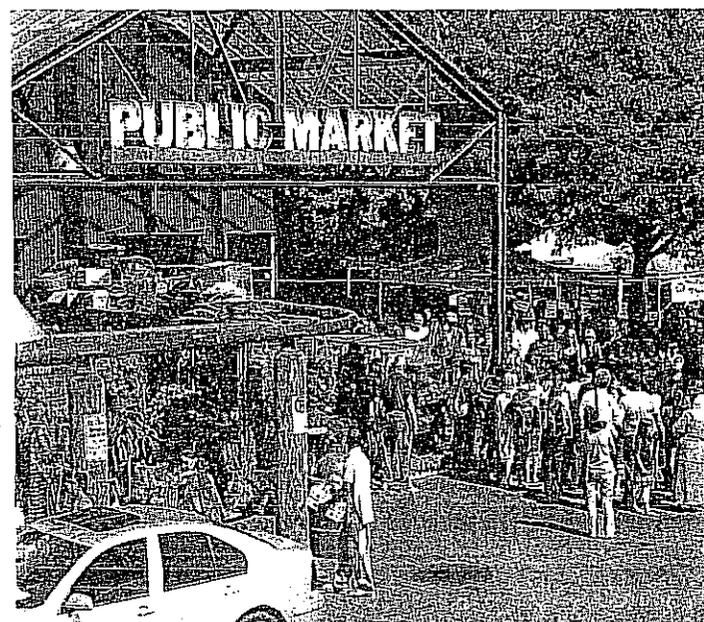
Granville Island got its start in the '70s when the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) decided to develop a 35 acre island across from downtown Vancouver.

Granville Island was home to a variety of marine-related uses, a concrete plant, and many dilapidated corrugated metal sheds.

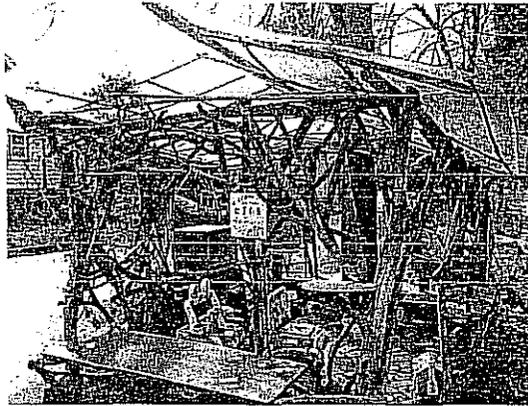
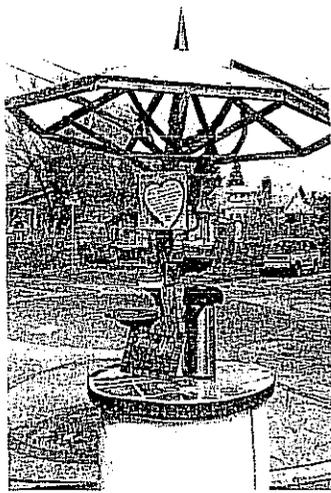
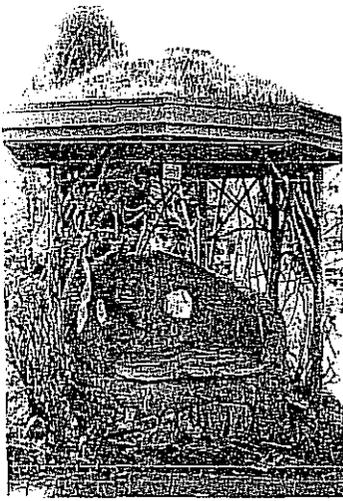
The vision was to create a place that would provide social and recreational services for the Vancouver community, highlight its arts and cultural resources, and bring in other related services and uses that together would make the island economically self sustainable.

The Canadian Federal Government provided a one-time-only \$25M grant to facilitate CMHC's work. Even at that time, this was not a lot of money given the scale of the development. CMHC had to be creative. Instead of using the money to redevelop the island all at once, it decided to undertake an "incremental redevelopment."

Dilapidated buildings were stabilized, painted, and linked



A public market has also been an important addition to the Islands mix of uses.



*Residents of Portland, Oregon's Sellwood neighborhood took control of this intersection, painting it, while adding features such as a tea stand, shaded bench, and "Kids Klubhouse."*



together with colorful pipes, awnings, and signage. Some buildings were added to create a feeling of an industrial area that had come back to life with many things for people to do.

Granville Island continues to grow as a multi-use destination for tourists and locals. The marine-related uses have been preserved, and a variety of arts and culture related uses exist alongside them.

### Traffic Circles

For many cities, the greatest opportunity to transform the way a community perceives and uses its public spaces is often on its streets and sidewalks.

LQC provides an approach for city government and neighborhoods to work together without having to spend a lot of money. In Portland's Sellwood neighborhood, a prominent intersection now serves as a central plaza

with a community bulletin board, "Kids Klubhouse," and even a tea stand. Known as "Share-It Square" (a play on Sherrett Street), the intersection was improved by neighborhood residents with assistance from a local nonprofit called the City Repair Project.

A new city ordinance provides that this kind of project can go forward if 80 percent of the people within a two-block radius of an intersection consent. People may choose to do an "intersection repair" because they want to slow traffic, or simply because they want a place for community interaction and seasonal celebrations. The only costs are paint and materials, financed by the community.

The results can be dramatic. After installation of Share-It Square, a survey revealed that more than 85 percent of residents felt that traffic had slowed, crime decreased, and communication between neighbors improved.

### On Broadway

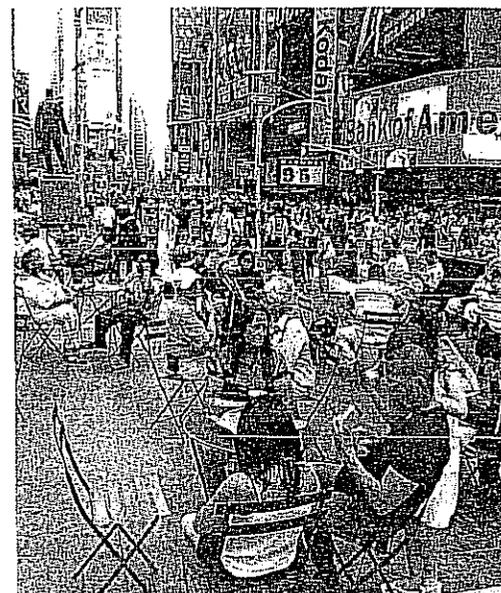
New York City might be the last place you would expect to be paired with the phrase "lighter, quicker, cheaper," yet projects in the Big Apple are justifying those words.

In 2005, the Streets Renaissance Campaign was initiated (by PPS, in partnership with Transportation Alternatives) to help bring about changes to New York City's streets and sidewalks. The goal: a better balance between motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, and transit.

Working with the Times Square Alliance (the local business improvement district), PPS evaluated existing pedestrian and vehicle movement patterns, surveyed pedestrians, and researched relevant benchmarks from around the world.

This led to a temporary experiment conducted by NYCDOT in partnership with the Times Square Alliance: closing some of the vehicle lanes on Broadway at Times Square to traffic and converting the space for pedestrian use, with places for people to sit, wait, and meet each other. It proved popular with the public and much of the business community.

As a result, the New York City DOT has expanded on the concept as part of its "Broadway Boulevard" program, extending the new strategies from Broadway and 31st Street up to Columbus Circle (Broadway and 59th Street).



*Seating has replaced traffic in New York's Times Square.*

Vehicle lanes have been removed, streets closed, and the roadway painted as a relatively low-cost way to slow traffic and change the way users experience the street. Inviting areas for pedestrians and cyclists have been installed, even including movable chairs and tables! ♦

# The End of the Strip?

by Edward T. McMahon

For more than 50 years retailers have favored the commercial strip: a linear pattern of retail businesses strung along major roadways, characterized by massive parking lots, a plethora of big signs, box-like buildings, and a total dependence on automobiles for access and circulation.

For years urban planners and public officials have tried to contain, control, and improve the strip. Now they are getting some help from an unexpected quarter: consumers and the marketplace. Today the era of strip development is coming to an end. Evolving consumer behavior, changing demographics, high priced gasoline, internet shopping, the economy, and other factors are all combining to create a new paradigm for commercial development.

Commercial strips are not going to disappear overnight, but it is becoming increasingly clear that strip retail is retail for the last century. The future belongs to town centers, main streets, and mixed-use development. Among the reasons for this transformation:

## 1. We're Overbuilt on the Strip

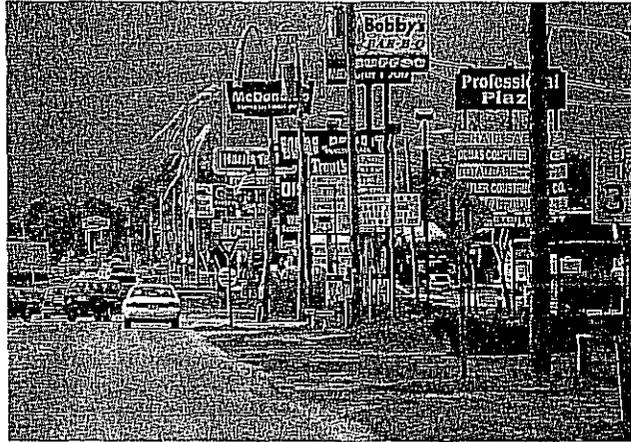
From 1960 to 2000 there was an

1 Kennedy Smith, "Why Downtowns (Should) Matter to Planning Commissioners," *PCJ* #57 (Winter 2005).

2 "In the first quarter of 2010, Colliers International reported an overall retail shopping center vacancy rate of 11 percent across markets that it tracks. While vacancy has indeed increased for every retail shopping center type in virtually every U.S. market, occupancy losses for big box retail has been especially pronounced. According to CoStar the U.S. had a total retail inventory of just over 11.6 billion square feet at the end of the first quarter of 2010." From "The Big Box Dilemma," Colliers International White Paper (Summer 2010). Note that 11 percent (the retail vacancy rate) of 11.6 billion square feet (total retail space) equals approximately 1.2 billion square feet of vacant retail.

almost ten-fold increase in U.S. retail space, from 4 to 38 square feet per person.<sup>1</sup> For many years retail space was growing 5 to 6 times faster than retail sales. Most of this space came in the form of discount superstores on the suburban strip.

The recession made clear that we have too much retail. Strip centers are



*The distinguishing characteristics of many strips are ugliness and congestion.*

now littered with vacant stores. By some estimates, there is currently over one billion square feet of vacant retail space.<sup>2</sup> Much of this space is going to have to be re-purposed or demolished. In fact, one retail analyst estimates that we need to demolish 300 million square feet of retail space.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the only places left with more spending power than stores to spend it in are our cities

## 2. Retail is Rediscovering the City

In 2010, Target announced plans to remodel the century-old Carson Pirie Scott department store in Chicago. This landmark building designed by architect Louis Sullivan will be just one of a num-

3 "How Consumer Behavior, Demographics and the Economy Will Shape Shopping Centers," by Alexander Babbage (for Developers Diversified, May 2010).

4 "Wal-Mart open to adapting formats, sets sights on four DC Locations," *The Washington Post* (November 21, 2010).

ber of new, so-called big box retailers planned for urban neighborhoods.

Similarly, in late 2010, Wal-Mart announced plans to open its first ever stores in Washington, D.C.<sup>4</sup> To make the four new stores fit an urban environment, the company has agreed to consider an array of layouts, designs, and parking arrangements, a reflection of the chain's willingness to adapt its prototype to enter lucrative urban markets.

The D.C. store planned for New Jersey Avenue illustrates Wal-Mart's new approach to store design. The company plans a store of 75,000 to 80,000 square feet (much smaller than usual) on the ground floor of a five story mixed-use building featuring 315 apartments, underground parking, and space for smaller retail stores. Home Depot already has a new urban store in Toronto with 90 units of housing on top.

While Wal-Mart, Target, and other big box store chains are planning dozens of new urban stores in cities all over America, as many as 400 former Wal-Mart stores and other big boxes sit vacant on commercial strips across the country.<sup>5</sup> Most analysts agree that cities and urban neighborhoods are the new land of opportunity for retail.

## 3. The Suburbs are Being Redesigned

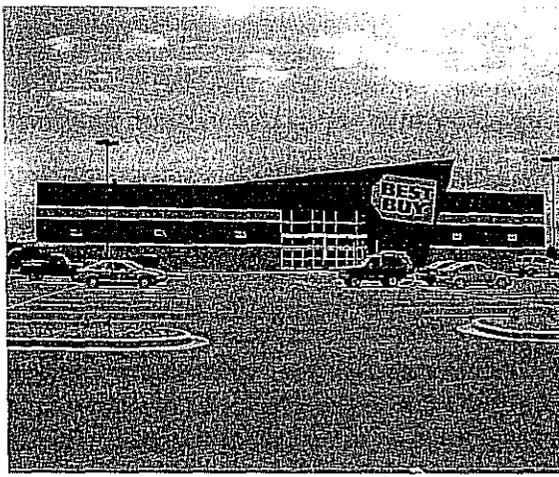
At the same time that retail is rediscovering the city, the suburbs are being redesigned and urbanized. Real estate expert Chris Leinberger recently declared that "the largest redevelopment trend of the next generation will be the conversion of dead or dying strip commercial centers in the suburbs into

5 "Wal-Mart Plans Small Urban Stores," *Wall Street Journal* (October 14, 2010).

6 Christopher Leinberger, "Walkable Urbanism," *Urban Land Magazine* (September 1, 2010).

walkable urban places.”<sup>6</sup>

The conversion of car-dependent suburban development is already underway in many metropolitan areas like Washington, Los Angeles, and Atlanta, and can be expected to increase in the years to come. Perhaps the nation's most dramatic transformation has already occurred in Arlington County, Virginia, where Wilson Boulevard, once a miles-long low density strip, lined with used car



The old paradigm: single use, only accessible by car. The new paradigm: mixed uses also accessible by transit or on foot.

lots and fast-food joints, has been transformed into a walkable, high density, urban district. According to Leinberger, “Arlington County now gets 60 percent of its tax revenue from 10 percent of its land mass.”

#### 4. Traffic Congestion, Fuel Prices, and Poor Design are Hurting the Strip

Americans value convenience, but the perceived convenience of the strip has disappeared as traffic congestion has worsened in recent years. Add to this rising fuel prices and an overall physical environment designed for cars, instead of people, and it's understandable why fewer people want to shop the strip and almost no one wants to linger.

Enhancement of the physical environment heightens the anticipation and enjoyment of life's daily activities, especially shopping and eating out. In the new world of retailing, this means shoppers want an environment that provides a memorable and enjoyable experience.

Town centers and main streets provide a “place-making dividend” that the homogenous blur of the strip can't match. They also provide a “park once” environment that will grow in importance as fuel prices rise. Just imagine

what will happen to strip development if gas prices ever hit \$5.00 a gallon or more, as some analysts predict.<sup>7</sup>

#### 5. The Economy is Restructuring the Retail Landscape

The recession saw the collapse of numerous big box chains, like Circuit City, Linen's 'n Things, Mervyn's, and Gottschalks. This helped send vacancy rates soaring in most U.S. markets. After three years on the brink, the retail real estate sector is set to recover in 2011, predicts Elaine Misonzhnik, an analyst for *Retail Traffic Magazine*.<sup>8</sup>

After hitting record lows during the recession, consumer confidence has improved but we can expect a new normal when it comes to retail spending. Why? Because, unemployment remains high, the days of unlimited credit are over, and many analysts predict a “new consumer frugality” that will be the norm for years to come.<sup>9</sup>

What's more, many people believe that retail recovery will be tied to housing recovery, which, for many markets, is still in the future. Finally, strip centers without anchors (like grocery stores) and Class B malls are virtually unfinanceable according to many real estate experts.<sup>10</sup> None of this bodes well for commercial strip development.

10 See footnote 8.

11 Joel Groover, “The Next 10 Years: In the Next Decade, Retail Centers Will Morph into Hybrids Unlike Any Format Seen Before,” *Commercial Real Estate Law & Business* (December 2010).

Consumer trends and shopping patterns are evolving at a rapid pace. This means, among other things, that the shopping center of tomorrow will not look like the shopping center of today.

According to Joel Groover of *Commercial Real Estate News*, “distinct property types and homogenous tenant lineups made for tidy divisions within the shopping center industry. But thanks to a host of economic and consumer trends, the bold lines of yesteryear are fading fast.”<sup>11</sup>

We used to have three standardized formats: the strip, the enclosed mall, the power center. Now all three are coming together in one place, in a hybrid format. This means we are going to see a far greater mix of tenants than in the past. No longer will there be a mall on one side of the street and a Wal-Mart on the other. In the future, Wal-Mart will be in the same mall as Nordstrom's and Macy's and more often than not, the mall will be turned inside out to more closely resemble an old fashioned main street. Already 7 of the 13 regional malls in the Denver metropolitan area have been turned into walkable, mixed-use town centers.

#### 6. Consumers Favor Walkability and Places With Character

Walking for pleasure is, by far, America's number one form of outdoor recreation. If you combine that with shopping, another one of America's favorite pastimes, you have a winning combination.

*continued on next page*

7 “Ex-Shell President Predicts \$5.00 gas in 2012,” *CNN/Money* (December 27, 2010). “John Hofmeister, the former president of Shell Oil, says Americans could be paying \$5 a gallon for gasoline by 2012.”

8 Elaine Misonzhnik, “Back to Normal” *Retail Traffic Magazine* (November/December 2011).

9 *Retail Trends and Opportunities / USA / 2010* (Colliers International Commercial Real Estate Services).

## ... The End of the Strip

continued from previous page

Time-constrained lifestyles and boredom with the dull sameness of most malls and strip centers has meant a slow, but steady decline in the number and length of stays at these retail venues. People go to get what they want and they leave.

A hip atmosphere is particularly important to the GenY generation.<sup>12</sup> A mixed-use town center with lots of street life, outdoor dining, and places to hang-out and window shop is much more likely to attract the affection and the dollars of young shoppers than an auto-dependent strip. Consumers stay longer, come back more often, and spend more money in places that attract their affection.

### 7. E-Commerce and New Technologies Mean Fewer and Smaller Stores

Coming out of the recession, the nation's "healthiest" retailer is not Walmart or Costco or Best Buy. It is Amazon.<sup>13</sup> Amazon has exploited the increasing availability of broadband internet and mobile technology to build a fast growing retail superpower. Likewise Staples, which pioneered the office superstore concept, has become the second largest online retailer (after Amazon). One of the biggest reasons why the strip is coming to an end is because bricks-and-mortar stores are becoming a smaller part of the retail landscape.

Retail is being hit by wave after wave of game changing technologies. First, it was catalog shopping; now it is e-commerce, social media, and mobile phones. According to one study, about one-third

of American consumers are already using their mobile phones for shopping.<sup>14</sup>

All this means that retailers will seek smaller footprints as merchandise categories move to on-line channels. For example, the rise of Netflix and streaming video means the closing of many bricks-and-mortar video stores, a mainstay of strip malls all over the country. Kindles and other e-readers portend the end or at least the downsizing of bookstores. Ditto for music stores, greeting card stores, and other merchandise categories.

A recent article in *The Wall Street Journal* by Miguel Bustillo notes that Staples is rapidly shifting to smaller "mini stores."<sup>15</sup> Bustillo reports that similar changes are being implemented by Walmart, Best Buy, and other superstore retailers. As Leon Nicholas of the consulting firm Kantar Retail told Bustillo, "you have a massive rush throughout retail to get small."

These trends, together with rising energy prices, economic restructuring, changing consumer habits, and the other factors outlined above, almost guarantee a curtailment of the commercial strip.

### Where Do We Go From Here?

None of this is meant to suggest that we won't still have neighbor centers with grocery stores and drugstores and cleaners and coffee shops; we will. But the

endless expansion of the commercial strip – that homogenous blob of ugly sign clutter and asphalt that leads out from every town – has reached the end of its useful life.

A new paradigm is being shaped not just by regulation and design but by consumers and the marketplace. In his new book, *The Great Reset: How New Ways of Living and Working Will Drive Post-Crash Prosperity*, Richard Florida says every epoch of history has its own spatial fix. In the agrarian era it was "40 acres and a mule." In the consumer era, it was "sprawl." According to Florida the spatial fix for the technology era will be the city, the town, and the neighborhood.<sup>16</sup>

Commercial strips with no beginning and no end, with no center, and with no way to get around except by car, are becoming obsolete in an era of shrinking stores, rising gas prices, discerning consumers, and online shopping. But since most communities already have a commercial strip, what can planning commissions do to help reshape the strip? Here are some recommendations culled from leading experts:

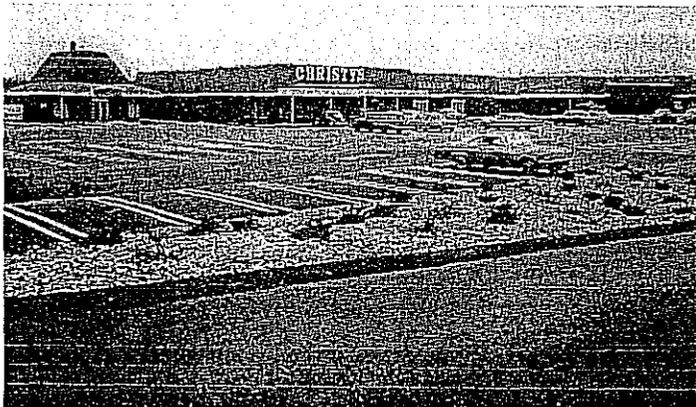
1. *Prune Back Retail-Zoned Land.* By pruning back the amount of land zoned for retail, communities can stimulate retail growth, encourage revitalization, and improve the quality of existing strips. Instead of a longer strip, focus new commercial expansion in concentrated, more walkable nodes. It is simply

12 Bruce Horowitz, "Malls are like, totally uncool, say hip teens," *USA Today* (April 21, 2002).

13 Marianne Wilson, "Ten Healthiest Retailers: Amazon, Aeropostale and Urban Outfitters tops in financial benchmarks," *Chain Store Age* (August/September 2010).

14 "Mobilizing for the Future," *Chain Store Age* (August/September 2010), p. 3A.

15 Miguel Bustillo, "As Big Boxes Shrink, They Also Rethink," *The Wall Street Journal* (March 3, 2011).



The old Mashpee Commons Shopping Center, in Mashpee, Massachusetts.



Mashpee Commons after being transformed into a mixed-use town center.



Big boxes are moving into urban neighborhoods, like this Target in Stamford, Connecticut.

counter-productive for every parcel, along every arterial to be zoned for commercial or retail use. Retail over-zoning encourages leapfrog development which is harder and more expensive to service.

**2. Limit Curb Cuts and Consolidate Entrances.** This helps reduce accidents, relieves traffic back-ups, and lessens the need for expensive road widening, especially when combined with internal service streets and driveway connections between stores.

**3. Build a Street Frontage.** By filling in the front of large parking lots with small, closely-spaced storefronts, communities can create better streetscapes and nodes of development. It also helps to require planting strips and continuous street trees which visually unifies the streetscape.

**4. Build Sidewalks and Crosswalks Throughout Commercial Areas.** This encourages shared parking and walking between stores and to nearby residential areas. It is now almost impossible to walk anywhere on the typical strip.

16 Richard Florida, *The Great Reset: How New Ways of Living and Working Drive Post Crash Prosperity* (Harpers, 2010).

17 Robert Steuteville, "800 million parking spaces can be wrong," *New Urban News*' New Urban Network (January 13, 2011).

**5. Reduce Parking Requirements.** There are at least 800 million parking spaces in the U.S., consuming over 3.67 million acres of land.<sup>17</sup> Most shopping centers have far too many parking spaces. One big advantage of mixed-use development is the concept of "shared parking." For example, people go to movie theatres at night and on weekends, but people go to offices during the day and not on weekends. One parking lot can serve both in a downtown or a mixed-use development, but not on the strip, where development is segregated and spread out.

**6. Eradicate the Ugliness.** By controlling signs, planting street trees, undergrounding utility wires, landscaping parking lots, and improving the design of new buildings, communities can make existing strips more competitive. Virtually all chain stores and franchises have Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C. What gets built depends almost entirely on the members of the local planning commission and how much they stress the importance of place-responsive design.

### SUMMING UP

Whether you call it sprawl repair, retrofitting the suburbs, or changing the retail mix, the era of the strip is ending. Planning commissioners can play an important role in furthering this trend. ♦

Edward T. McMahon is a Senior Resident Fellow at the Urban Land Institute and a frequent contributor to the PCJ. His most recent article, "Billboards: The Case for Control" appeared in PCJ #81, Winter 2011.



### Resources:



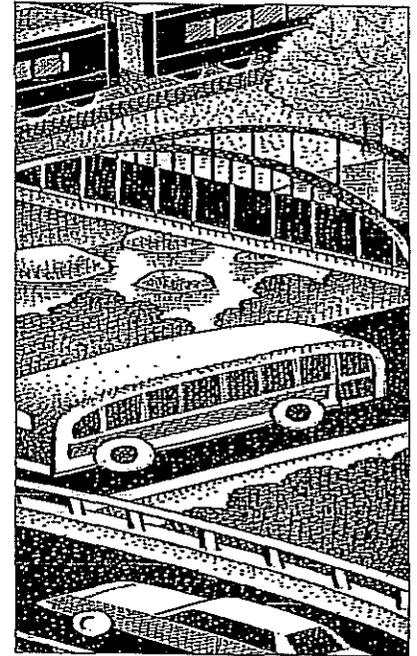
• "Controlling Strip Development" by Ross A. Moldoff, *PCJ* #53 (Winter 2004); [www.plannersweb.com/wfiles/w333.html](http://www.plannersweb.com/wfiles/w333.html)

• *Ten Principles for Reinventing America's Suburban Strips* (Urban Land Institute, 2001)

• *Retrofitting Suburbia*, by Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson (John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2009)

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# The Value of Debriefing

by Jim Segedy, Ph.D., FAICP, and Lisa Hollingsworth-Segedy, AICP

Many years ago, Lisa was on the planning staff of a regional planning agency. The morning after the initial public meeting for a joint county-municipal comprehensive plan, the planning director called an impromptu staff meeting. "What worked well?" was her first question. She made notes of our responses on a flip chart using a fat blue marker. After five minutes, she moved to, "What didn't work well?" In another five minutes, she asked, "What would you like us to do differently for the next public meeting?"

In 15 minutes, we had a list that summarized our experiences and gave us direction. This simple debriefing process was a valuable technique that empowered Lisa and her fellow staff members to recognize success, recount their frustrations, and agree on new approaches for future work.

Jim's experience with debriefing was somewhat different. When he was on the local planning commission, near the end of each meeting, everyone would look at their watch. One person would move to adjourn, there would be a second, and before the gavel hit the desk we were all outta there. Woe be to anyone who got between the members and the door. At the next meeting it was the same, and nothing ever got any better.

The process of planning commission decision-making requires as much attention as do the decisions themselves. Following up on the meetings and the issues raised is critical – and in the long-run makes for more efficient and effective meetings. Who knows, with enough debriefing and adjusting, those meetings may even finish early!

Debriefing is a technique of "reflective learning" that can be applied one-on-one or in a group setting. It is frequently used in military, medical, and emergency response situations, where

participants use role-playing and simulations of potential events to prepare for circumstances in which decisions affecting life and death must be made quickly.<sup>1</sup> Debriefing enables participants to emotionally process the event and analyze the decisions they made (and their outcomes). This facilitates learning, improving how people respond to future situations.

PERIODICALLY DEBRIEFING  
MEETINGS WILL LIKELY  
HELP YOUR PLANNING  
COMMISSION FIND WAYS  
TO MAKE THEM MORE  
EFFECTIVE.

Debriefing is not critique. An important distinction between the two is the flow of information. In a debriefing, all parties are allowed equal time to give and receive information. This differs from a critique, which is generally a one-way flow of information (as when an instructor provides an evaluation of a student's project).

Another important distinction of debriefing is that it is not just a "gripe session." Debriefing relies on a specific structure of: (1) recounting events – the what's and the why's, (2) dealing with emotions and feelings, (3) analyzing decisions and outcomes, and (4) thoughtfully reflecting and focusing on future situations or practices.<sup>2</sup>

Debriefing, either formally or informally, can be a valuable tool for planning commissions to use. The debriefing process also helps develop and nurture

the leadership role of senior members of the planning commission, allowing them to share their experience with newer members.

In the following paragraphs, we describe seven different situations in which we think debriefing can benefit planning commissions.

1. *Debriefing through role-playing.* In planning commissioner training workshops, role-playing for various scenarios is often used. Generally, role-plays work best when divided into several parts, with pauses in the action so everyone can identify and discuss procedural, ethical, and legal issues. Both of us have used this process for training planning commissioners. We have also participated in this type of debriefing in AICP ethics training courses.

2. *Preparing for controversial hearings.* Almost all planning commissioners will, at some point, face a very controversial, hotly disputed issue at a public hearing. You may be able to deal better with heated hearings when they arise if you've previously role-played how to deal with this situation.

In setting up your role playing scenarios, don't use the facts or issues from any project currently before you or in the permitting pipeline. That could well raise ethical concerns. If your staff is not familiar with role playing, find someone in the community who is and see if they can help you develop scenarios and work with you on the role playing exercise. Finally, we would suggest trying out role playing in an informal setting (such as during a separate work session or as part of a retreat) where you're not under time pressure because of other business.<sup>3</sup>

1 Other debriefing techniques you may be more familiar with include crime scene reconstruction, course evaluations, and the self-evaluation phase of an annual employment review.

2 There are numerous debriefing models. However, common to all are the reflective learning elements of recounting events, emotional processing, analyzing results, and determining alternate courses of action for future situations.

3. *Decompress, process, and learn after a "hot" meeting.* Okay, you've just had that heated public meeting. After a long night of controversy, probably the last thing you want to do is stay longer and debrief the meeting. However, this is the best opportunity for debriefing.

According to the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress, the most effective debriefing occurs as soon after the event as possible. While "traumatized" might be an overstatement of how you feel after a hot meeting, taking 10 extra minutes to "wind down" as a group can help you get past the feeling of being "beaten up" and allow you to gain perspective. Decompressing after a hot meeting might also be a good opportunity for the more informal kind of debriefing mentioned later (see #5 below).

4. *Short, routine debriefings.* Consider conducting a basic five-minute debriefing at the end of every meeting, not just the controversial ones. This debriefing provides wrap-up and feedback (both positive and negative) that can improve how future meetings are run. Even if you choose not to debrief every meeting, periodically debriefing them will likely help your planning commission find ways to streamline meetings and make them more effective.

5. *Informal debriefings.* Go out for coffee or a beer after the meeting. We talked about this in an earlier column.<sup>3</sup>

However, if your intention is debriefing, and not simply building community among the planning commission members, someone will need to be responsible for taking notes and following a bona fide structure for debriefing. If you plan on having this kind of informal post-meeting get together, double-check first with your municipal attorney to make sure you don't run afoul of Sunshine or Open Meeting legal requirements.

6. *Develop a more fluid working relationship between the staff and planning commission.* If your planning commission has staff, chances are (unless you're

chair) you only see those folks at your regular or committee meetings. Yet your interaction with them is critical for maximum effectiveness. Their responsibilities and perspectives differ from yours, but you are all a team. A routine debrief between the planning commission and staff (including legal counsel) will help to promote a congenial and effective working relationship. For informal debriefings, also invite them to join you.

7. *Evaluate past decisions.* In a previous column ("How Do We Get There?" PCJ #74, Spring 2009), we suggested an annual review in which the planning commission revisits some of its past decisions to evaluate the effectiveness of its recommendations. Did the decision give the community what you were expecting? Have there been unanticipated outcomes or unintended consequences? How do the results compare to the goals of your comprehensive plan? An annual evaluation and debriefing will help you fine-tune your plan, improve your procedures, and sharpen your focus as a planning commission.

Let's admit it. You debrief after every meeting. It may be by talking to yourself on the way home, but think of how much more effective – and fun – it would be if you did it with your fellow commissioners. ♦

*Jim Segedy is the Director of Community Planning for the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and a co-author of The Small Town Planning Handbook. He is also a member of the Edgewood Borough Planning Commission and the Swissvale Business Development Advisory Committee.*



*Lisa Hollingsworth-Segedy is Associate Director for River Restoration for American Rivers' Western Pennsylvania Field Office, and a former Planning Director for a Regional Planning Commission near Atlanta.*



*For a list of the Segedys' previous articles published in the Planning Commissioners Journal, go to: [www.plannersweb.com/segedys.html](http://www.plannersweb.com/segedys.html).*

<sup>4</sup> See "Smoothing the Rocky Road," PCJ #79 (Summer 2010); [www.plannersweb.com/wfiles/w401.html](http://www.plannersweb.com/wfiles/w401.html).

<sup>3</sup> For more on planning commission retreats and their value, see Elaine Cogan, "Retreat, Advance!" in PCJ #26 (Spring 1997); [www.plannersweb.com/wfiles/w259.html](http://www.plannersweb.com/wfiles/w259.html).

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# A Question of Scale

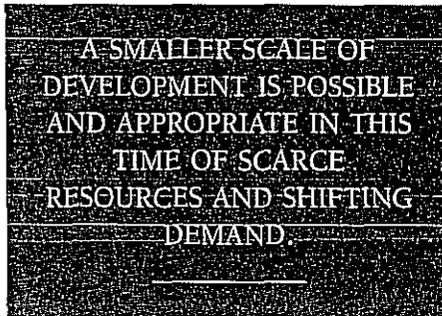
by Beth Humstone

Years of sprawl produced communities where land was consumed at a much higher rate than the growth in population.<sup>1</sup> Rather than expand up, out back, or to the side, developers often abandoned urban areas for greenfields where they could start from scratch. Commerce transitioned from multi-story buildings on Main Street to one-story stores and offices surrounded by large fields of parking. Spacious industrial parks cropped up with sites for widely separated buildings, each consuming only a small portion of the lot.

Families migrated farther and farther afield looking for more land and cheaper land on which to have a home. Between 1970 and 2007 the median size of a new single-family home grew by 64 percent (from 1,385 square feet to 2,277 square feet) even while household size declined.<sup>2</sup>



This cul-de-sac serving a small subdivision is wider than the state highway it connects to.



Streets followed the trend and soon many new subdivisions had roads wide enough for two fire engines to pass each other between two lanes of parking.

These patterns are not just the result of consumer preferences or business templates. Zoning and subdivision regulations often mandated large lots, generous setbacks, wide residential streets, and plenty of parking.

After decades of wide streets, big homes, large yards, and acres of surface parking and big box stores, development may finally be trimming down. The rate of growth in developed land moderated to just a few percentages more than the rate of growth in population between 2002 and 2007.<sup>3</sup> The median size of a new single-family home declined by 6 percent from its peak in 2007 to 2,135 square feet in 2009.<sup>4</sup> And according to the American Housing Survey, yards are getting smaller too. The median size lot for a single-family home is down in 2009 to .26 acres from .36 acres in 2007.<sup>5</sup>

Many communities have reduced their street width requirements. The State of Oregon has even developed guidelines for “skinny streets.”<sup>6</sup>

Some big box retailers are also rethinking their standard formats and looking into smaller, more neighborhood-oriented stores.

Why are a growing number of families, communities, and businesses now examining smaller options? One reason is that demographics have shifted. Today

a little over 20 percent of all households consist of two parents with children under 18. As our population ages and households diversify, people are demanding alternatives to single-family homes on large lots out in the countryside – and more are looking at urban neighborhoods, transit-oriented development, or new village-scale projects. Communities are increasingly responding to this demand.

How does a planner determine what scale meets the growing interest in more cohesive, walkable neighborhoods and commercial districts? The answer will vary from place to place. But to begin, look at what seems to work. Where in your community (or in nearby communities) can one see people in residential or commercial areas walking along the streets, stopping to talk, or playing together? What are the characteristics of these places? Look at the distance between buildings, setbacks from roads, building heights and number of stories, building square footage, and street widths.

In St. Albans, Vermont, two neighborhoods located side-by-side reflect two very different patterns of residential development. In one neighborhood (lower left photo on next page), the street is relatively narrow (22 feet wide) and bordered by sidewalks and tree belts. In the other neighborhood the street is

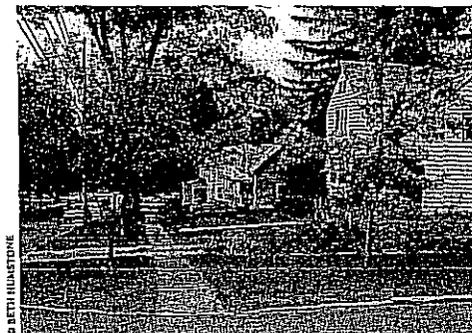
1 Between 1982 and 2002, population in the United States grew by 24.5 percent [U.S. Census Bureau] while developed land increased by 46.6 percent, almost double the rate of population growth. U.S. Department of Agriculture, *2007 National Resources Inventory*.

2 U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Construction Reports, C-25 (1998) and Characteristics of New Single-Family Homes Completed (2009)*. Current data available at: [www.census.gov/const/www/charindex.html](http://www.census.gov/const/www/charindex.html).

3 Population growth from U.S. Census of Population. Growth in developed land from U.S. Department of Agriculture, *2007 National Resources Inventory*.



Aerial photo above shows two adjoining neighborhoods in St. Albans Town, Vermont (seen in the lower half of photo) and St. Albans City (seen above the newer subdivision). Below, narrower setbacks in the older neighborhood, much wider ones in the newer neighborhood.



wider (32 feet) and there are no sidewalks or tree belts. Houses in this development are also set further back from the street, and have lots two to three times larger than the first neighborhood. While these differences may not seem dramatic, one can see from this illustration how a change in scale can produce two very different places.

As big box and other large-format stores look for sites in older commercial areas, planners must determine if and how they will fit. First, an appropriate size for these buildings measured by floor area, height, and footprint must be determined. Among the factors to consider will be the existing building pattern and the availability of vacant or underutilized space. A two-story, 150,000 square foot department store with an adjacent multi-level parking garage was located in downtown Burlington, Vermont. A one-story flat building would have been inappropriate in this compact, diverse retailing center. The parking garage was scaled down due to the accessibility of the store by bus and foot.

For years determining appropriate street widths has been a concern of emer-

gency service personnel, transportation engineers, town planners, and residents. After much dialogue with stakeholders, an Oregon coalition came up with three potential scenarios for street widths – (1) 28-foot wide with parking on both sides of the street, (2) 24-foot wide with parking on one side only, and (3) 20-foot wide with no on-street parking.<sup>7</sup> The Oregon guidelines illustrate that narrower streets can help to slow traffic and create a more hospitable public space, while meeting safety and access requirements and saving money.

Many communities, builders, homeowners, and developers are showing that a smaller scale of development is possible and appropriate in this time of scarce resources and shifting demand. ♦

Beth Humstone is a contributing writer for the *Planning Commissioners Journal*. Over the past 35 years, she has worked as a planning consultant on a wide range of projects in rural communities and small towns. Humstone is the author, with Julie Campoli and Alex MacLean, of *Above and Beyond, Visualizing Change in Small Towns and Rural Areas* (APA Planners Press, 2002).



## Human Scale vs. Automobile Scale

Planners often consider two predominant types of scales of development: (1) human scale, and (2) automobile scale.

To understand the difference, think of how a person perceives and interacts with the places around him as a pedestrian and as a driver of a car. As a pedestrian a person is able to perceive many different events, features, or images – both horizontally and vertically – within a short distance. Because passage through space is more rapid in a car, to a driver details are less legible and the view is predominantly horizontal. Thus, large-scale, low, flat, and unadorned buildings with big signs are common in auto-oriented developments. However, such places would be unappealing and even alienating in a pedestrian environment.

4 See footnote 2.

5 U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, *American Housing Survey: 2009 and 2007*.

6 Oregon's *Neighborhood Street Design Guidelines: An Oregon Guide for Reducing Street Widths* (November 2000) was signed by Oregon Department of Transportation, Fire Chiefs Association, Chiefs of Police Association and the state chapter of the American Planning Association among others. Available online at: [www.oregon.gov/LCD/docs/publications/neighborhoodstreet.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/LCD/docs/publications/neighborhoodstreet.pdf).

7 *Ibid.*

# Don't Take It Personally

by Ric Stephens

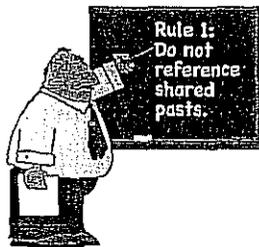
Nothing is more important to the credibility of a planning commission than providing an objective forum for decision-making. Nothing. And yet this is so easily jeopardized by the mere appearance of partiality, implied bias, and casual informality. In this column I'll discuss four rules I try to follow to ensure that all citizens know they will receive a fair and impartial hearing.

Consider the following two scenarios:

**Scenario #1:** A group of planning commissioners say things like: "Well, Bob [a local developer], what have you got for us today?" "This is just like Carol's project." "Ted, Alice, and I discussed this, and we think that ...."

**Scenario #2:** A group of planning commissioners say things like: "Please state your name and address for the record." "Please excuse me for mispronouncing your name." "Mr. Smith, please restrict your testimony to three minutes, and keep it relevant to the specific item we are considering."

There is nothing disrespectful or rude with either group, and some may argue that informal dialogue is not only appropriate, but desirable – especially for small communities in which everyone knows everyone. This would be true if – and only if – everyone attending the hearing was known to everyone else. Otherwise, anyone not part of the community (or not an "insider") may well believe that the planning commission's decision is influenced more by relationships than by facts and findings.



1 Some entrepreneurial cities may have zones custom-tailored to allow or prohibit specific corporations or organizations, but this is a level of "social engineering" not within the scope of this article.

## Way Back When

Although decision-making is an evolutionary process, individual hearing items should be evaluated based on their individual merits. In the first scenario there are references to previous associations, communication, and situations. To many attending the hearing (especially those not familiar with the commissioners or the local planning process) the perception will be that insiders have a leg up in getting what they want.

Whether that's actually true, that's what the perception will likely be. How can anyone view the decision-making as impartial if it has been implied that there is a personal history associated with the participants and/or projects?

Yes, it is natural that as a commissioner you will be more familiar with certain individuals in your community than with others (and may have dealt with them on past projects), but it is important that your comments be made in a neutral context that recognizes the individual nature of the current application.



## Brand Names & Generics

Planning commissions often approve or deny specific land use and development applications that will have immediate impacts on the applicant's business. But land use decisions almost always need to be based on uses, not users. Yes, the applicant may represent a very compelling, personal proposal, but the decision must consider any number of potential future property owners, tenants, and/or customers.

As a planning commissioner, you may feel pressure to approve or deny an application because of the specific business or organization involved. But it's

important (though hard at times) to remember that your decision must reflect the appropriateness of the application under your zoning or land development criteria, not your like or dislike of the proposal's current proponents (or opponents).

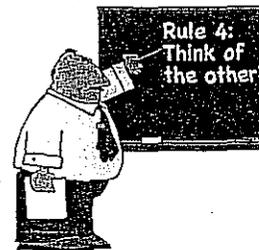


For example, an application is for an institutional use permit, not for the *Church of Reflexology*; for a drive-through restaurant site plan, not for a *Creamy Crisp & Coffee Cafe*; for a rezoning to a heavy commercial zone, not for a *Cost-Mart*.<sup>1</sup> Remember, once a permit is granted, the current owner can turn around – the very next day – and sell their business to someone else.

## Personal Best

Perhaps the best way of all to "depersonalize" the hearing is to, in a way, actually make it feel more personal to you. For example, imagine yourself as the person on the other side of the dais. If you were this person, how would you think and feel about the hearing and the process? Would you feel you were being fairly and impartially treated by the members of the commission.

Clayton Record, one of the most influential community leaders I have ever known, had a very small, framed piece of paper on the wall of his office. In plain letters it had four simple words: "think of the other." ♦



Ric Stephens is a Senior Project Manager at Cogan Owens Cogan in Portland, Oregon. He is also currently Vice-Chair of the Beaverton Planning Commission.



PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
TOWN OF MANSFIELD

AUDREY P. BECK BUILDING  
FOUR SOUTH EAGLEVILLE ROAD  
MANSFIELD, CONNECTICUT 06268  
(860) 429-3330

Mr. Gregory J. Padick  
Director of Planning  
Town of Mansfield  
Storrs, Connecticut 06268

6 May 2011

Dear Greg,

The Mansfield Planning and Zoning Commission has authorized me to pass on our concerns about the plan that we recently reviewed entitled "STORRS CENTER GR-1, PARKING GARAGE," and dated April 19, 2011. Our comments pertain to the circulation node south of the Intermodal Center where two segments of the Village Street join with the road east of the parking garage. We feel that the proposed design would create an extremely congested and unsafe situation of conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles of all types including bicycles, in other words a potentially unsafe situation.

It is our belief that as years go by conditions at this highly congested node will worsen as the downtown is completed. It will be a situation that will be difficult and costly to correct after build-up. It should be addressed in detail now.

The list of possible unsafe conflicts is long and I am sure that you and the planners can identify what they are so I will mention just a few here. Crosswalks are shown on the referenced plan but they do not align or encompass the funnel shaped sidewalk that directs pedestrians crossing the south Village Street.

Another major point of conflict is where the angle-parked cars on the south Village Street will actually be backing onto a crosswalk at a point where cars will be entering this street from two directions, an extremely dangerous situation for both vehicles and pedestrians. Furthermore, the angle of the parking along the Village Street should be less sharp for quicker and easier maneuverability, and parking along the south Village Street should not begin so close to this congested node.

Also, the design has the bus parking areas extremely close to the proposed crosswalks and on a curve where three roads meet, another point of conflict. It is unfortunate that these pick-up/drop-off areas can not be on the east side of the parking garage, or at least placed in a safer location.

The list is long and we have highlighted only a few of the major issues. We hope that those involved in approving this plan will study this problem further and correct these points of conflict so that the town will not be woefully sorry when tragic accidents occur in years to come.

Sincerely,

Rudy J. Favretti, Chairman  
Mansfield Planning and Zoning Commission

CC: Mansfield Downtown Partnership, Inc.  
Mansfield Traffic Authority  
Mansfield Town Council

PAGE  
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# Joshua's Tract

## Conservation and Historic Trust, Inc.

P.O. Box 4, Mansfield Center, Connecticut 06250-0004

April 25 2011

Dear Town Manager Matt Hart,

Please join us to celebrate the generosity of John Lof who has donated an 18 acre property in your neighborhood to Joshua's Trust. Town and Trust officials will participate in the dedication, walks will be offered and refreshments served starting at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 14<sup>th</sup>.

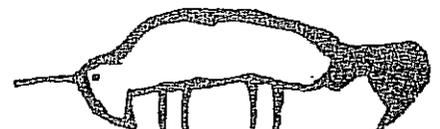
Located on Route 320, near 74 Willington Hill Road, the property is mostly level and provides excellent walking through stands of sugar maples, birches, hickories and beech. Majestic oaks, some with diameters more than 20 inches, testify to the absence of lumbering for the past 100 years. Professor Lof and his late wife, Ruth, carefully tended the land and prevented the growth of invasives. During the 1980s Ruth banded and recorded some 40,000 birds. Her journals remain in the Lof home.

If you would like to attend, please respond by calling the Trust office at 860 429-9023 leaving a name and phone number or email the information to [joshuastrust@snet.net](mailto:joshuastrust@snet.net)

Cordially,

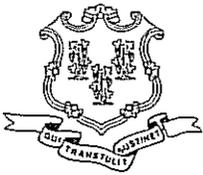


Allison Burchell-Robinson  
President



JOSHUA'S MARK

PAGE  
BREAK



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL

Ten Franklin Square, New Britain, CT 06051

Phone: (860) 827-2935 Fax: (860) 827-2950

E-Mail: [siting.council@ct.gov](mailto:siting.council@ct.gov)

[www.ct.gov/csc](http://www.ct.gov/csc)

May 9, 2011

The Honorable Elizabeth Patterson  
Mayor  
Town of Mansfield  
4 South Eagleville Road  
Mansfield, CT 06268

RE: **EM-VER-078-110429** - Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless notice of intent to modify an existing telecommunications facility located at 230 Clover Mill Road, Mansfield, Connecticut.

Dear Mayor Patterson:

The Connecticut Siting Council (Council) received this request to modify an existing telecommunications facility, pursuant to Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies Section 16-50j-72.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this proposal, please call me or inform the Council by May 23, 2011.

Thank you for your cooperation and consideration.

Very truly yours,

Linda Roberts  
Executive Director

LR/jbw

Enclosure: Notice of Intent

c: Matthew W. Hart, Town Manager, Town of Mansfield  
Gregory Padick, Town Planner, Town of Mansfield

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BREAK

EM-VER-078-110429

280 Trumbull Street  
Hartford, CT 06103-3597  
Main (860) 275-8200  
Fax (860) 275-8299  
kbaldwin@rc.com  
Direct (860) 275-8345

April 27, 2011

*Via Hand Delivery*

**RECEIVED**  
APR 29 2011  
CONNECTICUT  
SITING COUNCIL

Linda Roberts  
Executive Director  
Connecticut Siting Council  
10 Franklin Square  
New Britain, CT 06051

Re: **Notice of Exempt Modification – Antenna Swap  
230 Clover Mill Road, Mansfield, Connecticut**

Dear Ms. Roberts:

Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless (“Cellco”) currently maintains twelve (12) wireless telecommunications antennas at the 178-foot level on the existing 180-foot tower at the above-referenced address. The tower is owned by Global Tower Services, LLC. The Connecticut Siting Council (“Council”) approved Cellco’s use of this tower in 2004. Cellco intends to remove all of its existing antennas and replace them with twelve (12) new antennas (six (6) model LPA-80080/4CF cellular antennas; three (3) model BXA-185090/8CF PCS antennas; and three (3) model BXA 70063/6CF LTE antennas). All new antennas will be installed at the same 178-foot level on the tower. Cellco will also install six (6) coax cable diplexers on its existing antenna platform. Attached behind Tab 1 of this filing are the specifications for each of the proposed replacement antennas and cable diplexers.



*Law Offices*

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PROVIDENCE

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NEW YORK CITY

ALBANY

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*www.rc.com*

Please accept this letter as notification pursuant to R.C.S.A. § 16-50j-73, for construction that constitutes an exempt modification pursuant to R.C.S.A. § 16-50j-72(b)(2). In accordance with R.C.S.A. § 16-50j-73, a copy of this letter is being sent to Matthew Hart, Town Manager for the Town of Mansfield. The Town of Mansfield is the owner of the property on which the tower is located.

The planned modifications to the facility fall squarely within those activities explicitly provided for in R.C.S.A. § 16-50j-72(b)(2).

1. The proposed modifications will not result in any increase in the overall height of the existing tower. Cellco’s replacement antennas and diplexers will be located at the 178-foot level on the 180-foot tower.

Linda Roberts  
April 27, 2011  
Page 2

2. The proposed modifications will not involve any modifications to ground-mounted equipment and, therefore, will not require the extension of the site boundaries.

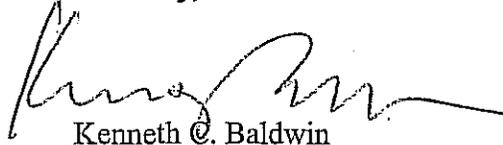
3. The proposed modifications will not increase noise levels at the facility by six decibels or more.

4. The operation of the replacement antennas will not increase radio frequency (RF) power density levels at the facility to a level at or above the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted safety standard. A cumulative General Power Density table for the modified facility is included behind Tab 2.

Also attached is a Structural Analysis Report confirming that the tower and foundation can support Celco's proposed modifications. (See Tab 3).

For the foregoing reasons, Celco respectfully submits that the proposed modifications to the above-referenced telecommunications facility constitutes an exempt modification under R.C.S.A. § 16-50j-72(b)(2).

Sincerely,



Kenneth C. Baldwin

Enclosures

Copy to:

Matthew Hart, Mansfield Town Manager  
Sandy M. Carter

