

Respectfully submitted to the Planning Commission
May 30, 2007

Members of the Eastern Norwalk Neighborhood Association Board of Directors met prior to the May 30 public hearing to review Norwalk's April 2007 Draft Plan of Conservation and Development. We were impressed by the amount of work that went into this document and the inclusion of many items that our association and other neighborhood associations requested.

Based on future predictions and trends identified in the Planning Commission's draft document we identified specific concerns and priorities during our review of the document.

We connected the dots between some of the points made in the draft document, and expanded on items that we believe are important.

We also want to make sure that priority items become part of the implementation section so that these priorities are kept alive and become integrated into future planning.

ENNA Board of Directors (Laurel Lindstrom, president; Sarah Hunter; Diane Cece; Erik Nees; Gordon Tully; Maribeth Becker; and Advisory Board Members Marija Bryant; and Nick Overall) has identified the following priorities.

Our six priorities are:

1. Maintain the scale and character of the existing neighborhoods which are located in areas identified for denser development
 - Create overall plan for specific sections of neighborhoods that are ripe for infill and demolition-rebuild. Then make zoning changes that would support the overall plan
 - Provide for neighborhood parks and open space
 - Encourage the preservation of historic buildings. Creative reuse, in addition to design standards for infill development, is needed to maintain and enhance each neighborhood's character.
 - Recommend the establishment of Liberty Square as a Village District, in addition to the others already recommended
 - Work with ConnDOT on highway design improvements at select locations: widen sidewalks on Stroffolino Bridge; Redesign Rte. 136 around historic East Norwalk cemetery to enhance this village center; etc.
 - Additional traffic calming measures that focus on 'steady but slow' not on 'easing' traffic. Example would be narrowing streets.
 - Consider roundabouts at certain intersections
 - Beef-up noise ordinance
 - Decrease odor from WWTP
 - Continue bulky waste pick-ups regularly throughout city
 - Add 'electronics disposal day' annually

2. Decrease dependence on the automobile in conjunction with increasing the convenience of other modes of travel
 - Public transit oriented development
 - Focusing denser development on main commercial corridors such as Westport Avenue and Main Avenue. New development would be build-to line close to the street with retail on the first floor and residential on the second. Parking would be in the rear.
 - Infill and denser development should be encouraged at locations where there is easy access to public transportation to decrease dependence on the automobile. But developments on East Avenue, Strawberry Hill Avenue, Calf Pasture Beach Road and other secondary roads adjacent to residential neighborhoods need to be built to appropriate scale and in character with the surroundings.
 - Parking requirements should be decreased to encourage use of public transportation rather than reliance on automobiles. Exception would be at train stations.
 - Frequency of buses needs to be increased along major routes. Use smaller buses where large buses aren't needed.
 - Add sidewalks, footpaths and bikeways to make it safer and easier to use other means of transportation than the automobile
 - Add pedestrian bridge over Norwalk River
 - Safe Routes to School grant funds available – encourage DPW to apply for additional grant funds for areas other than Strawberry Hill Avenue where a grant has been awarded.
 - Create smooth connections between all the developments in the downtown corridor – including pedestrian connections. Add additional public transportation such as: trolleys; ferries; and additional Metro North train stations (one in the Wall Street area at Commerce).

3. Avert the decline of middle-income residents related to rising cost of housing, and prepare for an increase of working families with children
 - More needs to be done to increase the available housing stock for middle-income residents in addition to housing that is available to low and high income residents
 - Affordable units need to be dispersed throughout Norwalk and not isolated in specific locations or developments
 - Access to health care – add working mothers

4. Prepare for a population increase, increase in elderly and a changing diversity
 - Gentrification is a trend that could adversely affect our diversity (cultural, ethnic, income, etc.)
 - Our diverse population needs to be recognized and supported

5. Conduct ongoing assessment, and upgrade and maintain infrastructure
 - Prevention of neighborhood flooding and problems related to traffic congestion are of particular concern
 - Add infrastructure in areas of new development and do not allow development in areas where infrastructure can not be added and is unable to sustain new development
 - Add grinding before paving streets to lower street elevation to help decrease flooding
 - Use and encourage use of pervious surfacing to decrease flooding
 - Provide incentives for private recharge of storm water
 - LEED – emphasis on cost effectiveness
 - Improve technology at City Hall to allow for better access to data and intercommunication between departments. Net result would be cost effective.

6. Ensure public participation throughout the planning process for all public parks, right-of-ways, open space and other public land
 - Master Plans need to be created for all larger parks. Within the ENNA, in order of priority: Veterans Park; Taylor Farm; Andrews Field; and Calf Pasture & Shady Beach. Soil core samples need to be taken at Vets Park to assess for contamination.
 - Add beach sticker fees to increase revenue through usage fees. Residents 65 years of age and over would be exempt.
 - Encourage new development to pay for improvements to adjacent public land – including improvements to public parks
 - Recommendations from ENNA board
 - i. Complete continuous walkway along Norwalk River where environmentally feasible to do so
 - ii. Construct a linear park along Betts Brook
 - iii. Add kayak launching area on Norwalk River