

PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Draft dated December 13, 2005

GOALS & POLICIES

1. CITY WIDE

Goal

Promote the balanced growth of Norwalk to maintain the economic vitality of the city and retain the character of its neighborhoods.

Policies

Improve Norwalk's economic base by seeking private investment within the community; encourage diversity in commerce and industry; coordinate capital budget expenditures with commercial and industrial development.

-Promote safe, affordable, quality housing for all segments of the community; ensure that temporary shelters serve as emergency or transitional housing for citizens of Norwalk.

-Protect the city's environment and natural resources for current and future generations.

-Utilize the Plan of Development for Norwalk to establish municipal priorities and undertake long-term financial planning.

-Provide an efficient and effective system of transportation; improve traffic flow and safety; improve rail and bus services.

-Improve recreational facilities; provide programs to serve the varied segments of our population.

-Improve the appearance of Norwalk and the image of the entire city by emphasizing quality design of all public and private facilities.

-Maintain all public facilities at a high standard; implement systematic programs for their repair and maintenance.

-Improve the management of all public facilities to maximize their efficiency and effectiveness and to minimize the need for capital expansion.

-Continue to actively seek and listen to public participation in the preparation of future plans for the city or any part thereof; hold at least one public meeting per year to solicit public input.

Goal

Maintain efficient and responsive city government.

Policy

-Implement a continuing program to evaluate city activities and programs to be assured that the city benefits from an efficient government operation; ensure appropriate competition for contracted services.

-Implement a continuing capital budget management program, including a plan of debt reduction.

Goal

Modify specific area plans to conform with the Plan of Development.

Policy

-Upon the adoption of the Plan of Development, review and modify as necessary, specific area plans to agree with the goals and policies of the Plan of Development.

Goal

Protect public health, safety and welfare by encouraging education, enforcement, rehabilitation and other available means to eliminate the sale and use of illegal drugs in Norwalk which threatens the structure of our society.

Policy

-Support efforts to prepare, adopt and implement a comprehensive program to combat alcohol, tobacco and substance abuse.

2. LAND USE AND ZONING

OVERALL

- Create new Village Districts where appropriate.
- Allow for the future needs of Norwalk to be met as identified in this Plan (i.e. housing, economic growth, community facilities, etc.).
- Allow new development which does not exceed the capacity of infrastructure systems (i.e. roads, sewers, water, etc.); require new development to expand infrastructure capacity where needed; limit new development where this cannot be done; conduct an assessment of infrastructure.
- Preserve and enhance the character of Norwalk.
- Protect the environment.
- Preserve property values.
- Provide stability in land use and zoning.
- Preserve historically and architecturally significant buildings, where economically feasible.
- Establish design guidelines that improve the appearance of residential, commercial and industrial areas.
- Encourage the use of mass transit.
- Provide a guide to the Zoning Commission in their review of the zoning regulations and map.
- Use streets, the railroad, natural features or property lines as boundaries between different land uses.
- Minimize the number of nonconforming uses.
- Establish and maintain an effective program of zoning enforcement; support the adoption of state legislation to strengthen the enforcement powers of zoning officers.
- Minimize variance requests to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

RESIDENTIAL

- Modify zoning regulations to reduce height and bulk of single family residences (height, setbacks, coverage).
- Encourage “New Urbanism” design by reducing front setbacks and providing bonuses for front porches and other architectural features.
- Encourage appropriate home occupations as a means to reduce commuter traffic.

-Minimize social programs and businesses allowed in residential zones.

-Preserve the character of residential neighborhoods by:

-preventing encroachment from incompatible land uses

-minimizing traffic impacts from surrounding uses

-Maintain protection of residential uses which abut commercial or industrial uses by strengthening requirements for landscaped buffers so as to minimize adverse effects from light, noise, visibility, etc.

-Provide for additional housing opportunities to meet the needs of Norwalk's changing population and to balance economic growth.

COMMERCIAL

-Minimize impact of businesses on adjoining residence zones through a light ordinance.

-Maintain requirements for landscaped buffers where commercial uses abut residential uses so as to minimize adverse effects from light, noise, visibility, etc.

-Retain the portion of East Avenue zoned East Avenue Village District and maintain it primarily for small-scale professional offices.

-Strengthen the revitalization of the West Avenue and Reed Putnam areas by encouraging mixed-use development (i.e. offices, stores, services, restaurants and theaters together with housing, parks and cultural facilities).

-Restrict large-scale development to the West Avenue and Reed Putnam areas and to the vicinity of Main Avenue, immediately north of the Merritt Parkway; exclude large-scale commercial development elsewhere.

INDUSTRIAL

- Implement recommendations of the Industrial Zones Committee report.

MISCELLANEOUS

-Parking garages are encouraged in urban centers.

-Encourage water-dependent uses in appropriate locations along the waterfront.

3. ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

INLAND AND TIDAL WETLANDS

Goal

Protect and restore inland and tidal wetlands.

Policies

- Utilize conservation developments as a means to preserve natural resources and protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- Create a natural resource inventory including an update to the inland and tidal wetland maps.
- Continue a policy of no net loss of wetlands and enact mitigation measures for the disturbance of wetlands.
- Encourage conservation developments which minimize the disturbance of wetland areas.
- Update the mapping and evaluations of inland and tidal wetlands by the Conservation Commission and the Department of Environmental Protection as soon as possible and provide Capital Budget funding.
- Encourage the increase of local and state penalties for wetland violators to discourage illegal activities.

COASTAL AREA

Norwalk Harbor/Waterfront

Goal

Implement the goals and policies of the Coastal Management Act and the Coastal Area Management Plan for Norwalk.

Policies

- Increase public access to the waterfront by the following methods:
 - encourage public walkways as part of developments along the Norwalk and Five Mile Rivers and their harbors
 - provide capital budget funding to fill in "gaps" in the Riveredge Park and Bikeway along the Norwalk River
 - preserve and enhance public views of coastal waters
 - improve street ends for public access to the waterfront and provide Capital Budget funding
- Continue upgrading the sewage treatment plant; provide a cost/benefit analysis of sewer separation of combined sanitary and storm sewers before continuing to separate; limit extension of the sanitary sewer system solely to areas where septic systems are not viable.

-Require sanitary pump out facilities at marinas or implement alternatives including expanding boater's education to increase usage of pump out facilities and promoting the proper use of holding tanks and pump out facilities; enforce state regulations for the disposal of waste on boats.

-Continue monitoring the water quality of Norwalk Harbor and perform a study of water quality at storm outlets to assess the environmental impact of this pollution source.

-Support regulations for waterfront property owners to maintain and clean up shorelines to prevent materials and debris from entering the harbor, including monitoring the condition of seawalls.

-Evaluate and protect coastal and other fragile natural resources by securing conservation easements as part of development of a property.

Islands

Goal

Preserve the Norwalk Islands in their natural state and protect them from incompatible development.

Policies

-Support the objectives of the national wildlife refuge designation.

Shellfish

Goal

Improve the quality of coastal waters and encourage water-dependent uses along the waterfront so as to enable a continuation of shellfishing.

Policies

-Support a commercial fishermen's wharf in Norwalk Harbor south of the Stroffolino Bridge.

FLOOD HAZARDS

Goal

Prevent loss of life and minimize property damage during periods of flooding.

Policies

-Maintain Federal Flood Insurance

-Maintain the Federal Flood Insurance Program to provide insurance for property owners in flood hazard areas.

-Continue to support the Federal Emergency Management Agency's policy of restricting development within floodways.

AQUIFERS

Goal

Protect the quality of the groundwater system that supports the public water supply and private wells.

Policies

-Implement a local aquifer protection program which will result in:

-support continued remedial action by the United State Environmental Protection Agency for the Kellogg-Deering Wellfield Superfund Site to protect the wellfield from further contamination, provide qualified staff member to the Conservation Commission

-protection of the Betts Pond Brook, Five Mile River, and other aquifers to guarantee quality groundwater for future generations

-Encourage DEP to provide a detailed map of aquifer recharge areas by 2007

-evaluation of potential groundwater systems to determine the feasibility of implementing protection standards which will insure the quality of future water supplies

-zoning regulations for mapped recharge areas with a concentration on the existing wellfield's recharge area. The regulations will limit land uses in such areas to those compatible with aquifer protection standards.

-Encourage conservation measures to insure our public water usage does not exceed safe yield standards.

POLLUTANTS

Air Quality

Goal

Achieve the Clean Air Act ambient air quality standards.

Policies

-Support construction of new Route 7 from Norwalk to Danbury to reduce air pollution caused by traffic congestion.

-Encourage a citywide tree planting and maintenance program.

-Support the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's implementation plans to achieve ambient air quality standards.

Noise/Light

Goal

Improve the standards for noise and light pollution to maintain the health and quality of life our residents enjoy.

Policies

-Encourage screening of street lights.

-Modify city specifications to require that street lights have a residential character.

-Create design guidelines for all street lights.

-Evaluate all city-owned sites to mitigate adverse impact from light.

Solid Waste

Goal

Implement a citywide solid waste management program that achieves a minimum of 25 percent reduction in the solid waste stream by 2015.

Policies

- Increase the number of household hazardous waste disposal days.

- Encourage energy-efficient “Green Buildings”.

- Evaluate the feasibility of using rail or barge for the shipping of solid waste to resource recovery or other appropriate points.

- Encourage the use of recycled materials for construction, paving and other high volume uses, where technically and economically feasible.

Hazardous Materials

Goal

Protect public health and the environment by the proper handling and disposal of hazardous materials.

Policies

- Encourage the implementation of remedial measures at sites contaminated with hazardous wastes as identified in the state's January, 2000 inventory.

4. ECONOMIC BASE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal

Maintain a diverse local economy to ensure that the opportunities, benefits, and responsibilities of the economic system are shared fully by all Norwalk citizens.

Policies

- Work with our State Representatives toward property tax reforms.

- Maintain a skilled labor force to meet the needs of local employers by creating a partnership among local industry, public and not-for-profit agencies, educational institutions and the Redevelopment Agency. This includes college level, high school, and other specialized job training programs, including those for the unemployed.

- Provide and maintain essential infrastructure to retain and attract desirable businesses.

- Promote access to job opportunities for all citizens by encouraging improved public transportation, before and after school programs, child care facilities, and job placement services.

- Support programs that will promote tourism in Norwalk; support legislation that will provide sufficient funding for the Coastal Fairfield County Convention and Visitor Bureau.

- Provide zoning that allows a wide range of housing opportunities to ensure that the housing needs of all segments of the labor force are met.

- Encourage diverse job opportunities for various employment sectors within Norwalk.

- Support tax incentives, grants and state and federal programs, such as the Connecticut Enterprise Zone Act, which encourage investment in Norwalk.

- Encourage business community sponsorship of activities and underwriting improvements that enrich Norwalk and the lives of its residents (i.e. concerts, historical buildings, "Clean and Green", educational support, Norwalk Health Care and other social service and cultural organizations, etc.).

OFFICE

Goal

-Encourage office development and adapt the capacity of infrastructure systems, to expand employment opportunities.

Policies

-Restrict large-scale office development to the West Avenue and Reed Putnam areas and to the vicinity of Main Avenue, immediately north of the Merritt Parkway.

RETAIL/SERVICE

Goal

Expand economic growth in the retail and service sectors to capture a larger share of the regional market and to maximize employment opportunities.

Policies

- Preserve the character of neighborhood businesses.

- Encourage the location of a neighborhood market in South Norwalk and a new supermarket on Westport Avenue.

- Expand the parking supply in Norwalk's downtowns.

- Strengthen retail activity in the West Avenue/Wall Street and Reed Putnam areas and place emphasis on people-oriented uses.

- Direct retail and service sector growth along Routes 1 and 7 where the infrastructure system can adequately support development.

INDUSTRIAL

Goal

Implement the recommendations in the Industrial Zones Committee report.

Policies

- Implement the recommendations in the Industrial Zones Committee report.

5. HOUSING

Goal

Maintain a diverse housing stock and rehabilitate Norwalk's existing inventory of public, private non-profit housing.

Policies

- Assist elderly residents in remaining in their homes by promoting the use of accessory apartments, property tax relief and other available programs.
- Protect residential neighborhoods from incompatible development.
- Improve enforcement of zoning, building and health codes to protect the public from unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions.
- Encourage private housing rehabilitation through the use of the Phased Increased Assessment Program, low interest loans, grants and other municipal programs targeted to older neighborhoods.

Goal

Provide quality rental housing, elderly housing, and low and moderate income ownership housing, according to the projected needs of Norwalk residents.

Policies

- Encourage deed restrictions on accessory apartments to provide affordable housing.
- Direct the South Western Regional Planning Agency to elicit greater regional cooperation in solving the housing crisis with every town accepting a share of this responsibility, as soon as possible.
- Continue to provide capital budget funds to the Housing Sites Development Agency for the acquisition and improvement of sites for affordable rental and ownership housing.
- Maintain existing residential densities and mixed-use development incentives in the downtown areas and along commercial corridors to encourage a balance between new jobs and housing opportunities.
- Urge the continued support of Norwalk's local, state and congressional representatives in securing state and federal housing funds and/or excess properties for public and nonprofit housing projects.
- Support state and local programs that increase opportunities for first time homebuyers, including the CT. Housing Finance Authority's (CHFA) Home Mortgage Program, Norwalk's Moderate Income Housing Regulation and the State Department of Economic and Community Development's Down Payment Assistance Program.
- Encourage the construction of a diversity of housing types and sizes to meet the varied needs of the marketplace.

-Encourage a minimum of ten percent (10%) affordable units in all developments over 12 units.

-Continue to provide capital budget funds to redevelop the West Avenue and Reed Putnam areas with new housing and mixed-use developments. Encourage at least 20 percent of such housing to be affordable to families with incomes at or below the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority's (CHFA) income limits.

-Provide affordable housing in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the “Affordable Housing Strategy Options for the City of Norwalk, Connecticut.

Goal

Encourage housing for people with special needs, including the homeless, the mentally ill and physically and developmentally handicapped persons.

Policies

-Continue to support public and private efforts to provide emergency shelter to Norwalk's homeless families and individuals.

6. INFRASTRUCTURE

SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM

Goal

Provide a sewer system that protects the public health and environment.

Policies

- Extend sanitary sewers only where it can be demonstrated that septic systems are not viable.
- Require that all properties with sewers available connect to those sewers.
- Increase enforcement and fines for illegal discharges into sewer lines.
- Provide capital funding to accomplish the following needed improvements:
 - continue the Department of Public Work's programs to rehabilitate the existing sanitary sewer network including trunk lines, interceptors, force mains and pump stations
 - limit the extension of the sanitary sewer system solely to areas where existing sanitary facilities are not viable

STORM SEWER SYSTEM

Goal

To prevent flooding and the threat to health welfare and property.

Policies

- Continue to provide Capital Budget funds for drainage projects to solve small, localized drainage problems.
- Adopt a systematic maintenance program for catch basins to prevent the transport of silt, sediments and road pollutants into the aquatic environment.
- Minimize storm water runoff from new development by ensuring compliance with the Department of Public Works Storm Drainage Manual.
- Prevent industrial wastes and effluent generated from septic and sanitary systems from going into the city's storm drainage system.
- Use natural drainage areas in lieu of structures wherever possible; maintain natural drainage systems and wetlands to the greatest extent possible.
- Require use of dry wells and slotted pipes for all new construction as a means of ground-water recharge.

ROAD SYSTEM

Goal

Maintain a system of streets and bridges to facilitate safe and efficient vehicular movement through Norwalk.

Policies

- The Department of Public Works should provide a plan for the evaluation and repair of roads including capital budget funds.
- Identify streets for traffic calming and provide capital budget funds.
- Investigate the creation of a one-way street system in some neighborhoods and identify methods other than speed humps to slow traffic.
- Restrict through trucks in residential areas.
- Create a City plan for bikeways linking residential areas with downtown and provide capital budget funds. (or Transportation section)
- Create a plan for construction of sidewalks and provide capital budget funds.
- Continue to implement the Road Evaluation and Pavement Management program by providing Capital Budget and Operating Budget funds for the 4R Paving Program (rehabilitation, recycling, repaving, and reconstruction).
- Improve traffic flow and safety at intersections with high accident experience.
- Support the completion of new Route 7 to the Route 33 intersection by 2015 and to Danbury by 2015 and complete construction of Route 7 in its entirety by 2015.
- Adopt a local bridge inspection and rehabilitation/ replacement program; support Capital Budget requests for local bridge (maintenance) program and the use of the State and Federal "Local Bridge Revolving Funds" minimize impact upon neighborhoods and develop designs that are sensitive to the community when replacing bridges.
- Encourage the Connecticut Department of Transportation to reconstruct Route 1 from Exit 14 to Westport to a four lane arterial with left turn lanes at major intersections; begin with Cross Street and North Avenue to Westport Avenue.
- Participate in the formulation of regional transportation policies. Support traffic management measures and improvements to mass transit as a first priority.
- Support the Transportation Improvement Program projects
- Encourage the Connecticut Department of Transportation to improve maintenance of state-owned roads and bridges within Norwalk.
- Adopt a workable repair and maintenance program for sidewalks and footpaths.
- DPW and DOT should coordinate road construction throughout Norwalk to minimize traffic disruption from occurring, including evaluation of traffic calming measures, accommodations for walkers and bikers with due consideration for safety and property values.

UTILITIES (*water, gas, electric, telephone, cable*)

Goal

Require public utilities to meet the present and future demands of the business and residential community.

Policies

- Plan for proper location of sites for cell towers

- Provide needed electricity by a system of underground power lines

- Encourage underground electric, cable television and telephone lines to minimize service disruptions due to inclement weather and to improve the appearance of Norwalk.

- Support the adequate provision of natural gas and the expansion of natural gas transmission lines as needed, to meet projected demand within Norwalk only.

- Continue to demand an adequate supply of electricity to meet projected needs.

- Encourage the use of energy efficient fixtures and appliances; adopt educational programs which will promote resource conservation and discourage waste, including encouraging development of “Green” buildings as recommended by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program of the Connecticut Green Building Council.

- Encourage native forms of vegetation in landscaping to minimize water requirements; discourage invasive species.

- Support the Long Range Water Supply Plans of the First and Second Water Districts, to meet the future water supply needs of Norwalk.

PARKING

Goal

Provide and maintain municipal off-street parking facilities to minimize street congestion and other detrimental effects on adjoining land uses.

Policies

- Survey the parking provided for existing buildings and uses to evaluate the adequacy of existing parking standards.

- Build municipal parking garages when needed at: Main and High Streets, Isaac's Street (mixed-use), Webster Street, and Washington Street; require designs that blend in with the surrounding area.

- Encourage centralized parking in the Norwalk and South Norwalk downtowns which allows shared parking by uses with complementary demands in both daytime and evenings.

- Support continued use of fee-in-lieu of parking in the Wall Street area and in South Norwalk.

7. TRANSPORTATION

RAIL

Goal

Support convenient and reliable rail service to satisfy the needs of commuters and to encourage greater rail ridership.

Policies

- Encourage Metro-North to continue to review and adjust train schedules to meet the needs of residents and the businesses they serve.

- Support increased train service and improved facilities on the Danbury Line, as recommended in a November 2004 Feasibility Study on Danbury Line Electrification by the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

- Anticipate the need for two new stations on the Danbury Line as per the Reed-Putnam Urban Renewal Plan (north of the Maritime Aquarium) and on Wall Street at Commerce Street.

- Provide adequate parking at train stations.

BUS AND DISPATCH-A-RIDE

Goal

Support convenient, reliable, and efficient bus,shuttle,Dispatch-A-Ride and other door-to-door transportation services.

Policies

- Evaluate and adjust as necessary the Wheels bus service,Dispatch-A-Ride,shuttles and interregional services, such as the Coastal Link to Milford and the Route 7 Link to Danbury, to reflect changes in population and land use and to maximize efficiency.

- Expand the hours of operation of Wheels bus service to later in the evening and on Sundays, encourage additional State and Federal funding to support such expanded service

- Continue design and construction of a new Wheels pulse point on Burnell Boulevard as part of the redevelopment of Norwalk Center

- Redevelop the east side of the South Norwalk Train Station into an efficient mini Pulse Point and multi modal center for trains and buses serving South Norwalk; coordinate Wheels bus service with train arrivals and departures, including provision of reverse commute rail shuttles.

TRAFFIC

Goal

Provide a safe and efficient vehicular transportation system to serve the city and minimize delays.

Policies

- Encourage major employers to prepare and implement a traffic management plan (i.e. flextime, vanpools, etc.).

- Support Police Department efforts to improve traffic safety by increasing enforcement measures to curtail traffic infractions (i.e. speeding, running stop signs, driving while intoxicated, etc.).
- Expand computerized traffic signal coordination to expedite traffic flow.
- Continue to implement the traffic safety and accident reduction program in all areas. Make priority improvements at high accident locations.

MISCELLANEOUS

Policies

- Create a plan for bikeways linking residential areas with downtown and provide capital budget funds in Parks and Recreation budget.
- Explore the need for a wharf or dock open to the public for passenger boats.
- Provide capital budget funding to complete a network of bicycle routes.
- Encourage walking by providing a pedestrian circulation system of sidewalks, footpaths and crosswalks, especially in high traffic areas and encouraging participation in the “Become a NorWALKER” program of the Norwalk Healthy Partnership’s Healthy Lifestyles Cardiovascular Project.
- Encourage the retention of a bus/limousine terminal that serves New York metropolitan airports.

8. COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL FACILITIES

SCHOOLS

Goal

Provide sufficient school facilities which afford all citizens the opportunity to obtain a quality education.

Policies

-The Board of Education in consultation with the Facilities Construction Committee should provide a five-year Capital Improvement Plan for the school system and provide Capital Budget funds.

-Continue to maintain and improve existing public schools through modernization and additions, as needed to accommodate projected school enrollments. Continue to monitor and project school enrollments in order to make the most efficient use of all school facilities.

-Expand the use of schools to better serve the community. Recreation facilities, auditoriums and classrooms should serve adult education, before and after school programs, pre-kindergarten programs and other structured uses when not in use by the school system.

-Continue to support, by legislative action and other means, quality academic, technical, and vocational training in Norwalk with emphasis on satisfying local labor needs and employment opportunities. Post high school and other public and non-profit educational programs are encouraged.

-Assure the safety of our children, and others by preparing an inventory of pedestrian routes and, where needed, install new sidewalks or footpaths. Maintain all in good condition.

HOSPITAL AND HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

Goal

Continue to provide high quality health care facilities in the community and access to these facilities by all citizens.

Policies

-Encourage the continued upgrading and modernization of Norwalk Hospital to meet the needs of the greater Norwalk area.

-Expand and maintain residential/health care facilities including extended stay facilities for the elderly by encouraging the development of a life care facility within the southwestern region of Connecticut, including at Strawberry Hill.

- Encourage complete cardiac care at Norwalk Hospital

PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Goal

Provide Norwalk citizens with efficient, well-kept buildings and reuse or dispose of public buildings that no longer serve the community.

Policies

- Inventory and evaluate surplus land and buildings for possible disposal.
- Initiate an inspection program to evaluate the condition of city-owned buildings and implement a maintenance program to protect the city's investment.

COMMUNITY CENTERS

Goal

Provide and maintain non-profit community centers which offer services to a wide segment of Norwalk residents.

Policies

- Encourage the creation of neighborhood community centers.

EMERGENCY SERVICES AND CIVIL PREPAREDNESS

Goal

Protect the public's health, safety, and property by providing police and fire stations in strategic locations throughout Norwalk.

Policies

- Study and recommend a new fire station in the northern section of Norwalk adjacent to Rte 7.
- Encourage the Police Department to work with and maintain a balanced approach to provide services to all sections of the City.

HUMAN CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Goal

Provide human care and social service facilities and programs as needed for all citizens.

Policies

- Continue to encourage the provision of housing and transitional residential care for special population groups such as the elderly, the mentally ill, and physically or developmentally handicapped persons.
- Continue to encourage the establishment of infant and toddler day-care facilities, as needed.
- Encourage the Board of Ed and Health Department to promote education programs to warn of the hazards of drug abuse; promote education and rehabilitation programs for drug abusers; continue to support strong penalties for the use or sale of illegal drugs, smoking and alcohol.

CULTURAL FACILITIES

Goal

Provide cultural attractions through a network of public and private facilities that contribute to education, tourism and the high quality of life in Norwalk.

Policies

- Encourage development within the Reed-Putnam Design District and at the South Norwalk Intermodal Pulse Point to complement the Maritime Aquarium and the Washington Street Historic District.

-Support the Maritime Aquarium and city museums as educational facilities and tourist attractions.

-Continue to support public access to Sheffield Island Lighthouse.

-Create the voluntary position of Officer of Cultural Affairs, appointed by the Mayor, to promote the arts including the Norwalk Concert Hall and to plan for a facility for working studios and artists in residence.

-Support programs that will promote tourism in Norwalk; support legislation that will provide sufficient funding for the Coastal Fairfield County Convention and Visitor Bureau.

HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND PRESERVATION

Goal

Protect the historic character of Norwalk through the designation and preservation of historic landmarks, structures and districts.

Policies

-Encourage the preservation of historic buildings.

-When a building is added to the National Register of Historic places, the notice should be added to the Norwalk Land Records by the applicant.

-Use historic preservation as a tool for economic revitalization and to promote tourism.

-Establish local historic districts in South Norwalk Washington Street area, in the area surrounding the Norwalk Green and in the Silvermine area; consider additional district designation based upon historical and architectural significance.

-Encourage private preservation efforts to encourage the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic structures; encourage the dedication of facade easements as a means to preserve the exterior facades of privately owned historic structures.

-Increase fines for violations of the city's demolition ordinance and require approval of final site plans prior to the demolition of an historic structure.

-Continue to provide funding in the Historic Commission's capital budget to maintain and rehabilitate public historic structures.

-Continue to promote public awareness of historic properties by posting plaques upon historically significant structures.

-Evaluate the zoning regulations to encourage the retention and reuse of historically significant buildings that are listed in the local or state register of historic places, if economically feasible.

9. PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

PARKS

Goal

Provide and maintain an attractive park system that gives people of all ages the opportunity to pursue leisure time interests.

Policies

- Maintain and support the State Heritage Park including Oyster Shell Park north of the Maritime Aquarium.
- Support the construction of a new Route 7 Linear Park within the Route 7 right-of-way.
- Support the creation of new bikeways in Norwalk and complete the implementation of the Riveredge Park and Bikeway along the Norwalk River. (see Environment Norwalk Harbor)
- Support additional water-dependent uses in Veterans Memorial Park.
- Set a high standard for the maintenance and security of all parks.
- Encourage Parks & Recreation to prepare a new Cranbury Park Master Plan to maximize open space and implement and conduct a resource inventory.
- Maintain a standard of twelve acres of parkland per one thousand people as a guideline for acquiring parkland.
- Encourage spaces for public use within the Norwalk and South Norwalk downtowns.
- Use park and recreation impact fees to assist with the acquisition and improvement of parks and recreation facilities and public spaces.
- Continue to provide equipment and facilities, which encourage better utilization of neighborhood parks.

RECREATION

Goal

Provide and maintain a greater diversity of recreation facilities and programs to meet the needs of user groups.

Policies

- Encourage the building of an ice skating rink.
- Where feasible, increase public access to the waterfront, including the Norwalk, Silvermine and Five Mile Rivers (except for single family houses).
- Expand user fees to partially defray the expense of providing recreational facilities and programs. The funds collected should be designated for improvement of these facilities.
- Encourage the building of a municipal golf driving range.

OPEN SPACE

Goal

Acquire and maintain open space as natural areas which preserve neighborhood character and ecologically valuable land.

Policies

- Encourage creative financing tools for additional funding for identification and purchase of open space.

- Maintain an Open Space Fund.

- Support the Conservation Commission's plan for open space preservation and selection.

- Continue to use conservation easements, acquisition by a non-profit land trust or other means to preserve open space with valuable natural resources, such as Peach Island, Betts Pond Brook, etc.

- Designate open space parcels, per State Statute 12-107e, to encourage open space preservation via tax incentives.

- Encourage the amendment of State Statute 12-107e to provide municipalities the right of first refusal for parcels designated as open space by the city, and where the property owner has applied for and obtained an open space classification for tax purposes, to require that designated open space be maintained for a minimum period of time, and to require the payment of abated taxes if the property is developed.

- Require that a ninety day right of first refusal be given to the city before a parcel designated as open space by the city and classified as open space for tax purposes can be sold for development.

10. URBAN DESIGN

COMMUNITY CHARACTER & ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Goal

Strengthen the character of Norwalk's neighborhoods and commercial areas and improve the quality of architectural design.

Policies

- Create Village Districts where appropriate.
- Encourage the Chamber of Commerce to continue their annual awards program for the best architectural design of the year which will increase public recognition of quality building design.
- Maintain requirements for landscaping to improve appearance from the street and provide for effective maintenance.
- Create an ordinance to require the demolition or rehabilitation of abandoned or burned-out structures within a certain period of time after fire or code inspections have been completed.
- Continue to review and improve sign regulations.
- Maintain & expand village districts to preserve the character of the districts, to improve the design of buildings and their relationship to the streetscape, and to protect resources of historical and architectural significance.

PUBLIC PLAZAS & STREETS

Goal

Improve the appearance of public plazas, streets and right-of-ways.

Policies

- Implement a program to clean-up city streets and reduce trash and garbage.
- Continue to encourage the designation of scenic roads.
- Create a citywide street tree planting and maintenance plan and provide capital budget funds.
- Improve the design of city street signs and public signs.
- Provide funding for a street tree planting program to replace diseased trees, plant new trees and improve street tree maintenance.
- Adopt a tree preservation ordinance to encourage the preservation of trees on private property
- Improve the appearance of public plazas and streets by continuing to support capital budget funding for street improvements; particularly the West Avenue/Wall Street and Reed Putnam areas.
- Consider a percent-for-art ordinance to promote the display of works of art in public places and as amenities in large commercial projects.

-Continue to promote volunteer beautification efforts, such as Clean & Green's Programs, neighborhood clean-ups and tree plantings and d continue to support these efforts with an annual awards program.

-Enact an ordinance to require the visible display of street.

IMPLEMENTATION
****COMPLETE AT A LATER DATE****

SHORT-TERM (1 - 2 years)

-Provide U.S. Congressional Representatives with a list of legislative changes and funding requests recommended by the Plan. The legislative changes recommended in the Plan include:

- explore the feasibility of adopting a National Enterprise Zone Act beneficial to Norwalk
- secure funding to implement the Facilities Plan for the Norwalk Sewage Treatment Plant
- encourage private funding for the construction of low and moderate income housing for Norwalk residents
- encourage the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to acquire Peach Island as part of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge

-Provide Norwalk's State Representatives with a list of legislative changes and funding requests recommended by the Plan. The legislative changes recommended in the Plan include:

- allow the collection of impact fees
- encourage the use of biodegradable and recyclable materials and packaging
- strengthen zoning enforcement powers of zoning officers
- provide funding for:
 - Heritage Park
 - Route 7 Linear Park
 - reconstruction of the entire length of Route 1 in Norwalk
 - new Department of Motor Vehicles office on Main Ave.
 - mapping of tidal wetlands
 - completion of U.S. Route 7 to Route 33 in Wilton
- modify the criteria to provide sufficient funding for the **Coastal Fairfield County Convention and Visitor Bureau**
- amend Section 12-107e (re open space) to require that cities have the right of first refusal for designated open space land and land classified as open space for tax purposes

-Work with the Mayor and the Common Council to amend the City Code to implement those portions of the Plan that need local legislative approval. Included in the local action are:

- create a Mayor's Task Force on Economic Development

- create the voluntary position of Officer of Cultural Affairs appointed by the Mayor
- consider a percent-for-art ordinance
- adopt and implement a Facilities Plan for the improvement of the Norwalk Sewage Treatment Plant
- improve enforcement and increase fines for violating ordinances including demolition permits and sewer discharge regulations
- implement a citywide hazardous waste disposal and a recycling program, including bulky waste pickup twice a year.
- encourage the use of biodegradable and recyclable materials for packaging
- provide tax incentives for preserving historic structures
- adopt an ordinance requiring the demolition or rehabilitation of abandoned and burned out buildings
- expand user fees for recreation and park uses, except for use of city beaches by Norwalk residents
- designate open spaces as per 12-107e of the Connecticut General Statutes
- dispose of excess school sites as per the Master Plan of Excess Schools, August 14, 1987
- Notify affected city agencies of the changes recommended by the Plan. Work with these agencies through the capital budget, plan review and ordinance process to implement the policies of the Plan, including
 - approve a five year Capital Budget Program that includes projects on a priority basis recommended in the Plan
 - amend Subdivision, Zoning and other land use regulations to implement the land use and zoning policies recommended in the Plan

MID TERM (3 - 5 years)

- Local ordinances are adopted in conjunction with state enabling legislation as suggested in the Plan.
- An Architectural Review Board to prepare advisory guidelines is created.
- A new fire station in north Norwalk is constructed.
- Implementation of the ten-year plan to upgrade the sewage treatment plant is commenced.
- Capital Budget is modified as necessary and plans for the next five years have commenced

- Zoning Regulations limiting uses in aquifer recharge areas are adopted.
- Ryan and North Water Street Parks and the Mast Plan for Cranbury Park are completed.

LONG TERM (6 - 10 years)

- The Capital Budget Program is completed.
- Norwalk Riveredge Park and Bikeway are completed.
- Heritage Park is completed. (90%)
- Public Works garage is constructed.
- Ice-Skating Rink is constructed.
- Indoor pistol range is constructed.
- Cranbury Park Plan is implemented.
- Golf driving range is constructed.
- New Route 7 to Danbury is completed.

COST ANALYSIS

The following cost estimates have been developed based upon the recommendations contained in this Plan. These order of magnitude estimates are a guide which will allow the proposed improvements to be scheduled and implemented on a financially sound basis. The time periods shown correspond to the following fiscal years: Short term - two years (FY91-93); Mid term - three years (FY 93-96; and Long term - five years (FY 96-2001).