

COMMUNITY ISSUES



Overview

To begin updating the Plan of Conservation and Development for the community, the Tolland Planning and Zoning Commission sought to identify issues that should be considered as part of the planning process by holding a special workshop for Tolland residents and surveying local boards, commissions and department heads.

The Commission held additional meetings to obtain input from local officials and other boards and commissions prior to drafting strategies. Then, before creating a first draft of the Plan, the Center for Research and Public Policy conducted a telephone survey of 400 Tolland residents (see sidebar).

Overall, residents are very pleased with their quality of life in Tolland – 93% of residents stated that the quality of life in Tolland either meets or exceeds their expectations.

Things to Focus On

At a public workshop, residents were asked to identify their top issues of concern that might be addressed in a Plan of Conservation and Development. Conservation-related issues (protect what we have) received the most attention, while issues related to residential and business development and issues related to infrastructure (community facilities, transportation, utilities) were tied for second place.

The telephone survey also asked residents to provide their priorities for overall policy direction and on specific projects. Infrastructure and development issues seemed to have equal priority with conservation issues: 45% felt increasing business development should be a top priority, 43% selected managing traffic and 42% selected preserving open space.

Local boards, commissions and department heads provided input on issues and priorities. Overall, their input stressed the importance of protecting Tolland's character and its natural resources and building the tax base in order to be able to provide the services that residents desire.

Telephone Survey

When this Plan refers to a specific percentage of residents, it is referring to the telephone survey results. The survey results have a margin of error of +/- 5% with a 95% confidence level.

A number of themes emerged during this planning process:

- Residents want Tolland to remain a rural community.
- Tolland has been doing a good job protecting its natural resources, open space and character and should continue to do so. Protecting drinking water supplies is critical.
- The Town should increase the business portion of the tax base and it should occur in ways that respect the Town’s character. The look, form and location of business development warrant careful attention.
- Housing needs and demands may change as the population ages and finding ways to help address needs will be important, especially since Tolland’s housing stock predominantly consists of single family houses.
- Traffic issues on Route 195 should be addressed.
- There is a desire to be able to walk and bike to places in Tolland.
- Residents appreciate the level of services and amenities that the Town is able to provide. Continuing to do so will require a careful balance of the needs of many departments and the ability of the Town to afford upgrades and improvements.
- Town practices should become more sustainable.

Goals and Strategies

Based on the overall themes, the following goals and strategies set the framework for this Plan:

Goals	Strategies
Protect natural resources and character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Preserve and conserve important natural resources</i> • <i>Minimize environmental impacts from new development</i> • <i>Minimize environmental impacts from existing development</i> • <i>Incorporate sustainability into town practices</i> • <i>Preserve open space and greenways</i> • <i>Preserve Tolland’s character</i>
Grow in ways that preserve the quality of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Create a Town Center</i> • <i>Promote development patterns that create a “Sense of Place”</i> • <i>Maintain the overall low density residential pattern</i>
Meet the needs of the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Promote economic development</i> • <i>Address housing needs</i> • <i>Plan for and coordinate community facilities needs</i> • <i>Address roadway needs</i> • <i>Promote transit options</i> • <i>Promote walking and biking as viable modes of transportation</i> • <i>Limit sewer expansions</i> • <i>Address other utility needs</i>