

APPENDIX B

ZONING ANALYSIS

Zoning is the most effective tool that communities have to guide and manage land development. While zoning has its limitations in the regulatory context, it is the best tool available for controlling the use, density, and intensity of land. Zoning can even provide incentives to encourage sustainable development practices such as those illustrated in the three site design concepts for the towns of Bloomfield, Manchester, and South Windsor.

This analysis examines the existing zoning regulations in each of these three Connecticut towns for consistency with the proposed site visions presented in Chapter III. The analysis considers the permitted use of land, the permitted density, bulk and area requirements, parking requirements, and standards for the design of sites and structures. Finally, options are provided to incorporate standards into the zoning regulations that promote sustainable development consistent with the design concepts proposed for each of the three sites. The options also suggest how to incorporate the design guidelines described in the *Smart Growth Guidelines for Sustainable Design and Development*, providing a mix of required standards and incentives for optimum green design.

SITE I – ROCKWELL NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER, BLOOMFIELD, CT

A. EXISTING ZONING

As of publication time, the town of Bloomfield's rewrite of its zoning ordinance is in the final draft stage. This analysis uses the draft updated ordinance. As indicated on the zoning map, the majority of the Rockwell Neighborhood Center site is zoned R-10 Residential. There is also a small portion of the site zoned GWD Blue Hills Gateway District, which encompasses the library and some proposed twin housing development.

1. Permitted Uses

The R-10 Residential zoning district permits single-family dwelling units, two-family dwelling units, and open space. Two-family dwelling units must have a minimum lot size of 15,000 square feet. Accessory apartments are allowed by special permit but must be occupied by elderly persons related to the primary resident and must be attached to the primary dwelling.

The ordinance does not specifically list recreation facilities or community centers as permitted or special permit uses in the R-10 district but does allow "municipal lands and facilities of the Town of Bloomfield." Presumably this type of use includes recreation facilities and the community center.

The GWD district, which encompasses the existing library and some of the proposed twin housing development, allows mostly small-scale commercial and office development by site plan approval. Multifamily dwelling units are permitted by special permit. The district does not specifically list single-family dwellings as a permitted or special permit use but does require residential densities to be no more than four dwelling units per acre, which is too low to accommodate the twin units proposed in the concept site design.

2. Bulk and Area Requirements

The R-10 district requires a minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet, a minimum lot width of 100 feet, and a maximum building coverage of 20 percent. Yard requirements are 25 feet in the front, 10 feet on the side, and 25 feet in the rear. These area and bulk requirements preclude development of the attached and semi-detached dwelling units proposed for this site. In addition, the maximum height is 35 feet with a two-story maximum, which prohibits development of the proposed three-story townhouses. The GWD district front and side yard requirements and maximum building coverage of 25 percent would prohibit the proposed residential development program as well.

3. Parking Requirements

The parking requirement for single-family dwellings is two spaces per unit. The proposed development program can be accommodated under this requirement. The zoning ordinance does not restrict the use of alleys for parking access for townhouses. There are no specific requirements for recreation facilities or community centers.

4. Design Standards

The updated ordinance includes design guidelines that apply to proposed development in any business or special zone and to principal uses allowed by special permit in any residential zone. The design guidelines include standards for building orientation, building massing, context with adjoining properties, scale, landscaping, parking design, architectural features, façade treatment, building materials, screening of mechanical equipment, signage, and lighting. In comparison with the Smart Growth Guidelines for Sustainable Design and Development, they are fairly general and do not address key features of sustainable design, such as transit and bicycle amenities, streetscaping, and building orientation for solar access.

B. Potential Zoning Changes to Promote Sustainable Design

Neither the current zoning ordinance nor the updated draft zoning ordinance for the town of Bloomfield include a residential district that allows residential densities of higher than around four units per acre by right. The R-10 zoning district is the highest density residential district in the town, and it requires a 10,000 square foot minimum lot size and a side yard requirement that precludes attached units.

A new overlay zone for the Rockwell neighborhood site could allow increased density and flexibility in design while applying additional design standards and incentives to promote sustainable development practices like the proposed Rockwell neighborhood design. Under the new overlay district, the following features could be permitted by site plan approval:

- Semi-detached and attached dwelling units;
- A minimum lot size of 2,000 to 3,000 square feet;
- Higher density residential development up to 10 units per acre, with an additional five units per acre permitted with green design features listed below;
- A maximum height of three stories;
- Detached accessory dwelling units; and

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- Recreation fields, courts, and community centers.

To receive site plan approval, the minimum required design features could be:

- Designed as a planned unit development with a minimum parcel size of three acres;
- Parking and loading areas on the side or at the rear of dwellings or accessed by rear alleys;
- Bicycle racks at recreation facilities and transit stops;
- Transit stops on transit corridors provided in appropriate locations where none exist;
- 8-foot minimum sidewalk width on both sides of the street;
- Crosswalks at all intersections;
- Street furniture (e.g., benches, street lamps);
- A minimum preserved tree canopy of 20 percent;
- A minimum contiguous open space requirement of 30 percent;
- New buildings and street blocks oriented along the east-west axis to take advantage of natural solar heating and cooling;
- Streets and sidewalks connected on the interior of the development and with the existing road network; and
- Buildings oriented toward the street and sidewalk with front facades and entrances facing the sidewalk or pedestrian space.

To promote sustainable green design, a density bonus of five units per acre could be allowed in exchange for provision of:

1. A combination of three of the following elements:

- 20 percent of the housing units affordable to residents earning 80 percent of the area median income or less;
- All new residential buildings designed as ENERGY STAR Qualified Dwelling Units and installed with water-efficient fixtures;
- Stormwater management best practices (bioswales, pervious pavement, rain gardens, integration of detention capacity with buffers and open space); or
- Green roofs on all new buildings.

Or

2. Installation of non-polluting, renewable energy generation technologies such as solar, wind, or geothermal capacity in all new buildings.

SITE 2 – MANCHESTER PARKADE SITE

A. Existing Zoning

The entire Manchester Parkade site is zoned GB General Business, which is described as a commercial trade area for general public shopping convenience. The Parkade site is also in the Design Overlay Zone, which establishes design standards for previously developed areas.

1. Permitted Uses

The GB zoning district allows retail, restaurants, taverns, office, hotel, municipal parking lots, theaters, and recreation facilities and clubs by right. Warehousing, light industrial, self storage, drive-through restaurants, automobile sales, gas stations, schools, and places of worship are permitted by special exception. Multifamily historic mill conversions are also permitted by special exception. All other residential uses are specifically prohibited from the GB district.

2. Bulk and Area Requirements

The GB district allows a maximum height of 40 feet and a maximum of three stories. Accessory structures have a maximum height of 18 feet. The minimum front yard is 25 feet, and there is an 8-foot buffer requirement from adjoining residential districts. Many aspects of the proposed design for the Manchester Parkade site would not comply with the height limitations and front yard requirement, although the Design Overlay Zone allows a waiver of the front yard requirement.

3. Parking Requirements

Parking requirements are specified for each use and do not consider shared parking, public parking, transit credits, or on-street parking. The parking requirements also do not address parking as part of an overall mixed-use plan, except that it does allow an overall requirement for shopping centers. In general, the parking requirements could be more flexible to accommodate the proposed Parkade site design.

4. Design Standards

The Manchester Parkade site is in the Design Overlay Zone, which establishes design standards in previously developed areas to ensure architectural and historical compatibility with the area's distinctive character. The design standards include the following elements:

- Standards for rehabilitated or altered structures;
- Building heights compatible with existing adjacent buildings;
- Relationship of building width to height compatible with adjacent buildings;
- Similar form and ornamental detail to adjacent buildings;
- Porches and other projections; and
- Exterior façade materials compatible with adjacent buildings.

In comparison with the Smart Growth Guidelines for Sustainable Design and Development, these standards are fairly general and do not address the key features of sustainable design, such as transit and bicycle amenities, streetscaping, and building orientation for solar access.

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B.Potential Zoning Changes to Promote Sustainable Design

The current zoning district generally does not allow the mix of uses and densities proposed for the Manchester Parkade site design. In addition, the Design Overlay District is limited to general architectural and façade treatments that do not capture the design features highlighted in the Smart Growth Guidelines for Sustainable Design and Development. To achieve the best site and building design and create incentives for green building techniques consistent with the proposed development program and sustainable design guidelines, an effective approach could be to create a new overlay zone. The new overlay zone would replace the existing Design Overlay Zone, since it does not make sense to add an overlay on top of an existing overlay. The new zone could allow the following features by site plan approval:

- Mixed residential and commercial uses with no limit on the number or type of residential units;
- Higher density residential development up to 20 units per acre, with additional five units per acre permitted with green design features
- Building heights up to four stories (50 feet), and an additional two stories permitted with incentives (up to 70 feet);
- Flexibility in setback requirements;
- Shared parking;
- Parking credits for on-street parking and transit; and
- Outdoor dining.

To receive site plan approval, the minimum required design features could be:

- Designed as a planned unit development with a minimum parcel size of 10 acres;
- A mix of residential and commercial uses to promote walkability;
- Parking and loading areas on the side or at the rear of buildings or between buildings and screened from public streets;
- Pedestrian and bicyclist amenities (e.g., bike racks, street lamps, water fountains, benches) near building entrances;
- Transit stops on transit corridors provided in appropriate locations where none exist;
- 8-foot minimum sidewalk width on both sides of the street;
- Street curb bulb-outs at crosswalks;
- Signalized crosswalks at all intersections;
- Street furniture (e.g., benches, street lamps);
- A minimum preserved tree canopy of 20 percent;
- A minimum contiguous open space requirement of 30 percent;
- New buildings and street blocks oriented along the east-west axis to take advantage of natural solar heating and cooling;
- Streets and sidewalks connected on the interior of the development and with the existing road network;
- Buildings oriented toward the street and sidewalk with front facades and entrances facing the sidewalk or pedestrian space, but not facing a parking lot; and

- Installation of litter receptacles at strategic locations in the development.

To promote sustainable green design, a density bonus of five units per acre and a height bonus of two stories (up to six stories and 70 feet) could be allowed in exchange for provision of:

1. A combination of three of the following elements:

- 20 percent of the housing units affordable to residents earning 80 percent of the area median income or less;
- All new residential buildings designed as Energy Star Qualified Dwelling Units and installed with water-efficient fixtures;
- All new non-residential buildings designed to comply with ANSI/ASHRAE/IESNA industry standards and installed with water-efficient fixtures;
- Stormwater management best practices (e.g., bioswales, pervious pavement, rain gardens, integration of detention capacity with buffers and open space); or
- Green roofs on all new buildings.

Or

2. Installation of non-polluting, renewable energy generation technologies such as solar, wind, or geothermal capacity in all new buildings.

SITE 3 – SOUTH WINDSOR TOWN CENTER

A. Existing Zoning

The entire South Windsor Town Center Site is currently zoned RC Restricted Commercial, which includes pedestrian-scaled neighborhood commercial uses mixed with a limited range of residential uses.

1. Permitted Uses

The RC district requires either a special exception or site plan approval for any development. The following uses are permitted by site plan approval:

- Single-family dwelling occupied by owner in conjunction with a permitted commercial use;
- Liquor store;
- Office;
- Retail;
- Personal service shops;
- Hotel;
- Public garage; and
- Riding stables.

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The following uses are permitted by special exception:

- Assisted living facilities;
- Senior residence;
- Municipal facilities; and
- Day care facilities.

Mobile food vendors are permitted by zoning permit approval.

All of the commercial and office zoning districts in South Windsor, including the RC district, allow mixed-use development by special exception. Dwelling units must be located above commercial uses, and only one level of dwelling units is allowed (each dwelling unit may have multiple stories, but a separate unit may not be located above another unit.) The RC allows a maximum of 25 dwelling units total. A mix of unit sizes is required; however, three-bedroom units are not permitted.

2. Bulk and Area Requirements

The RC district requires a minimum lot size of 30,000 square feet, minimum lot frontage of 150 feet, and a 65-foot minimum front yard. Side and rear yard requirements may be waived along common boundaries of consolidated lots. The maximum height is 45 feet and three stories, the maximum impervious coverage is 60 percent, and the maximum lot coverage is 25 percent. In general, the proposed town center development is consistent with the bulk and area requirements except for the maximum height restrictions and possibly the maximum building coverage requirement.

3. Parking Requirements

Parking requirements are generally prescribed for each individual use. Residential uses are required to have two spaces per unit, and assisted living facilities must have one space per two dwelling units. Shared parking is permitted by approval by the Planning Commission in mixed-use developments.

4. Design Standards

Mixed-use development in commercial/office zoning districts is subject to the following design criteria:

- Pedestrian circulation must be designed to encourage use by residents;
- Appropriate street furniture (e.g., benches, planters) should be provided; and
- Adequate lighting in pedestrian and parking areas is required.

All development in the RC zone is subject to review by the Architectural and Design Review Committee and must comply with the following design criteria:

- Setbacks and yards in excess of zoning restrictions are encouraged;
- Parking areas shall be treated with decorative elements, building wall extensions, and plantings to screen from public streets;
- Height and scale of building shall be compatible with adjoining buildings;
- New utilities shall be underground;
- Landscape transition to adjoining properties shall be provided;

- Harmonious massing and texture is required;
- Existing vegetation and topographic features shall be preserved;
- New plantings shall have uniform design;
- Materials shall be compatible with surroundings and durable;
- Mechanical equipment shall be screened;
- Monotony of design shall be avoided; and
- Signs shall have good scale and proportion and shall be designed as an integral architectural element of the building.

The architectural and design review process does have design standards that address site design in addition to building design, but they do not fully address the key neighborhood design features for sustainable development, such as building orientation for solar access, bicycle amenities, and transit access.

B.Potential Zoning Changes to Promote Green Design

The RC zoning district seems to generally allow the type of development proposed in the town center neighborhood design with a few exceptions. Primarily, the requirements do not allow much flexibility in residential density and building height. A modification to the existing RC district would create less confusion than creating a new overlay district. In order to encourage development such as the proposed town center, the RC district could be modified with a new “mixed-use incentive” section that increases flexibility in design in exchange for enhanced features such as those described in the Smart Growth Guidelines for Sustainable Design and Development. Under the mixed-use incentive standards, the following features could be permitted by site plan approval:

- Mixed residential and commercial uses with no limit on the number or type of residential units;
- Higher density residential development up to 15 units per acre, with an additional five units per acre permitted with green design;
- Building heights up to four stories (50 feet), with an additional two stories permitted with incentives (up to 70 feet);
- Flexibility in setback requirements;
- Shared parking;
- Parking credits for on-street parking and transit; and
- Outdoor dining.

To receive site plan approval, the minimum required design features could be:

- Designed as a planned unit development with a minimum parcel size of 10 acres;
- A required mix of residential and commercial uses to promote walkability;
- Parking and loading areas located to the side or rear of buildings or between buildings and screened from public streets;
- Amenities such as bike racks and walking amenities (water fountains, benches, street lamps, etc.) near

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building entrances;

- Transit stops on transit corridors provided in appropriate locations where none exist;
- 8 feet minimum sidewalk widths on both sides of the street;
- Provide street curb bulb-outs for pedestrians at crosswalks.
- Signalized crosswalks provided at all intersections;
- A minimum preserved tree canopy of 20 percent;
- A minimum contiguous open space requirement of 30 percent;
- New buildings and street blocks oriented along the east-west axis to take advantage of natural solar heating and cooling.
- Streets and sidewalks connected on the interior of the development and with the existing road network.
- Buildings oriented toward the street and sidewalk with front facades and entrances facing the sidewalk or pedestrian space, but not facing a parking lot;
- Installation of litter receptacles at strategic locations in the development.

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1. A combination of three of the following elements:

- 20 percent of the housing units affordable to residents earning 80 percent of the area median income or less;
- All new residential buildings designed as ENERGY STAR Qualified Dwelling Units and installed with water-efficient fixtures;
- All new non-residential buildings designed to comply with ANSI/ASHRAE/IESNA standards and installed with water-efficient fixtures;
- Stormwater management best practices (e.g., bioswales, pervious pavement, rain gardens, integration of detention capacity with buffers and open space); or
- Green roofs on all new buildings.

Or

2. Installation of non-polluting, renewable energy generation technologies such as solar, wind, or geothermal capacity in all new buildings.