

COMMUNITY ISSUES

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Overview

Public input is an important and necessary component of any Plan of Conservation and Development. Through broad public involvement, the Planning and Zoning Commission gains an understanding of the issues and concerns that are important to residents and ensures that the overall vision, and the strategies designed to achieve that vision, reflect the consensus of the community. By involving residents and building consensus during the planning process, the Planning and Zoning Commission can inspire residents to become advocates for the Plan who could ultimately push for the implementation of strategies that are important to them.

To ensure representative community involvement in the development of this Plan, the Planning and Zoning Commission employed a two-pronged approach: a communitywide survey and a series of public meetings, culminating in a public hearing on adoption. An ad-hoc committee formed by the Town Council created and administered the survey, which was mailed to every household in East Hampton in 2002. For a town of over 4,000 households, the response rate was good with 1,785 households or 43% of all households responding (Resource page R-3). The results of these efforts were used to:

- identify and prioritize important community issues,
- develop strategies to address them, and
- refine strategies prior to adoption.

The survey results were also used throughout this Plan to illustrate community consensus on various planning issues and the strategies to address them.



Lake Pocotopaug



Residential Growth

“If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it.”

Abraham Lincoln

Things to Encourage

Through the survey, Planning and Zoning Commission meetings and other public input, a number of guiding principles, activities, and community elements were identified as important to residents and should be encouraged through this Plan.

When asked during a scoping workshop, what are the most important issues to address in the Plan of Conservation and Development, the Planning and Zoning Commission responded with the following:

- retain and enhance community character;
- protect significant water resources such as Lake Pocotopaug, the Salmon River and potential drinking water aquifers;
- develop rational controls on retail growth to manage the amount and scale of development; and
- meet statutory requirements for planning and zoning.

In the townwide survey, residents were asked to rate the importance of various community issues and amenities. A majority of respondents rated the following issues as very important, mirroring the Commission's primary concerns in many cases:

- mall rural town,
- tax rate,
- Lake Pocotopaug,
- open space,
- beauty of the Town,
- the library, and
- road improvements.

Residents were also asked in the survey what they liked best about East Hampton. The top responses in rank order were as follows:

- small-town atmosphere,
- Lake Pocotopaug,
- people/community,
- the environment,
- location, and
- the schools.

The survey allowed residents to submit additional comments, resulting in still more activities that should be encouraged:

- develop industrial/business base,
- promote shops/businesses,
- attract better restaurants,
- attract a larger grocery store,
- develop outlet/variety/specialty/gift/antique shops,
- create a public water system and expand public sewers, and
- fix and enhance sidewalk network.

By encouraging the these issues, policies and ideas, the Town will enhance the safety, sustainability, environmental health, fiscal stability, ambiance and overall community welfare as we go forward into a challenging future.



**Cobalt Post Office
on Route 66 and Route 151**



**East Hampton Post Office
on Main Street**



**Middle Haddam Post Office
on Route 151**

Things to Discourage

Public input was also used to identify activities and elements that detract from the community and should therefore be discouraged.

In the townwide survey, residents were asked what the worst thing about East Hampton was. Some of the top responses were as follows:

- rapid development,
- blighted properties,
- distance from services,
- taxes,
- lack of an economic base or water system to support it,
- abuse of the Lake and environment,
- the condition of roads and sidewalks,
- RT 66 / traffic, and
- planning and zoning.

The open-ended survey comments, resulted in additional activities and elements that residents feel should also be discouraged, reduced, or eliminated:

- rapid residential development,
- RT 66 traffic and speeding in general,
- speeding around Lake Pocotopaug, side streets,
- village center blight (junk/junk cars/derelict buildings/roadside trash),
- damaged roads and sidewalks,
- motor boats on Lake Pocotopaug, and
- additional pizzerias/fast food restaurants.

These are clearly detracting elements that are undermining the quality of life of residents and wherever applicable, the Plan should take steps to discourage or eliminate them.



Strip Commercial Development along Route 66

Overall Plan Direction

Guiding Vision

The Planning and Zoning Commission and East Hampton residents developed the following guiding philosophy for the development of this Plan.

Preservation of East Hampton’s small town character with abundant open spaces and natural resources is essential for maintaining a vibrant community that fulfills the core societal needs of its citizenry, whereas providing a strong and multi-tiered economic base is vital to ensuring that the people enjoy the quality of life they have come to expect in our proud and independent community.

Like many of the community desires expressed on the preceding pages, the goals of preserving small-town character and providing a strong economic base to pay for desired community facilities and services can be at odds with one another. In order for this Plan to be successful in the face of such competing goals, compromises are necessary to strike a reasonable balance and ensure a better chance of success for all of the community’s goals. Achieving balance is a recurring principle throughout this Plan and is an important theme in the following overall vision for the Plan.

Balance preservation of important resources with appropriate, diversified economic and residential development that meets community needs in order to protect East Hampton’s rural small-town character and enhance the quality of life for its residents.

To achieve this vision, the Plan has been organized under the following themes:

| Themes | Components |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Protect Important Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect water and other natural resources• Preserve more open space• Protect historic and scenic resources |
| Guide Appropriate Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain rural small-town character• Provide better control of residential development• Guide appropriate, diversified, and quality business development |
| Address Community Needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain and enhance quality community facilities and services• Ensure adequate infrastructure to support desired development.• Ensure a safe and efficient transportation system |

