

**PLAN OF
CONSERVATION
AND
DEVELOPMENT**

For Presentation at the
Planning and Zoning Commission

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Prepared by the POCD Committee

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Municipal Land Use Plan (2010)
Open Space Plan (2007)
Wildlands and Woodlands: A Vision for the New England Landscape (2010)

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Authority

In compliance with Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes (CSG), the Salem Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) periodically updates its local Plan of Conservation and Development (which we will refer to as "the PLAN").

The overall purpose of the PLAN is to recommend goals and objectives to guide the Town's decision making concerning the use of land and other matters affecting the safety, welfare and prosperity of its residents. While the PLAN is an advisory document only, it should, because of its comprehensive scope and the broad citizen input it reflects, provide valuable guidance to the decision making process of the various Town boards and commissions.

Background

The first PLAN was adopted in 1971, and updated in 1991 and 2002. In 2009, P&Z established a Plan of Conservation and Development Committee. The Committee initially included two members from P&Z, one member from the Economic Development Commission, two members from the Inland Wetlands and Conservation Commission, the Chair of the Recreation Commission, a long time resident and member of the Historical Society, a current member of the Board of Selectmen, and a former First Selectman as an 'ex officio' member. The Committee was chaired by a former member of P&Z.

Changes Since Adoption of the 2002 Plan

The economy has experienced a full cycle of boom and bust, with residential housing values falling 30% since the October 2008 financial crisis.

Notwithstanding these changes, in the past 10 years a great deal of activity has been focused on increasing and improving Salem's municipal property and quality of life.

The construction of a new Library was completed (2004).

The Town acquired the Gadbois property (2005).

The Recreation Commission constructed a Babe Ruth field (2004) and a full size soccer field (2005). Two tennis courts facilities and the town's first basketball court were completed (2009), with all courts lighted and on timers. Phase I of the Salem multi-purpose path was approved (2009), and construction was started (2010). The Recreation Commission developed a 10-year plan for the Forsyth Recreation Complex.

The town created an Open Space Committee and drafted an Open Space Plan that forms the basis for the acquisition, preservation and management of strategically located open space (2007).

The Eightmile River was nationally recognized as having six outstanding resource values (ORVs) and was officially designated as a "Wild and Scenic River" (2009).

P&Z created a Town Center Committee (TCC), which held an open forum and a "charrette" in 2007 to gather the townspeople's thoughts about what should be included in the Town Center and where it should be located. The TCC also drafted regulations for the Town Center zoning district, reflecting the types of uses and design features desired, and submitted these to P&Z (2008-09).

The town updated its Municipal Land Use Plan, including an inventory of all town-owned land and buildings (2010).

The town formed a Vision Committee and drafted a Vision Statement (2009-11), reflecting the values voiced by Salem residents in their responses to a town-wide survey.

Survey Results and Town Vision

In 2009, the town conducted a town-wide survey. The survey was a collaborative effort by representatives from the Plan of Conservation and Development Committee, the Vision Committee and the Economic Development Commission (EDC). The purpose of the survey was to obtain the thoughts of the townspeople for use in developing the Town Vision, updating the PLAN and updating the Economic Development Plan.

The 2009 survey had a sample size of 403 with a statistical accuracy of +/-5%, while the 1999 survey had a sample size of 429, also with a statistical accuracy (margin of error) of +/-5%. The 2009 survey results are summarized in **Appendix 1: Town-Wide Summary - Executive Summary**.

The values endorsed by Salem residents in the 2009 Survey include:

- Sense of community and volunteerism
- Quality of life (*educational, social and recreational*)
- Rural character
- Environment and natural resources
- Historic character
- Economic Strength
- Housing Options

The Salem Vision Statement, which incorporates these values, is included in Chapter 2.

Critical Issues and Opportunities

In 2002, revisions to the PLAN addressed the following critical issues and opportunities:

- Protection of the rural character and agricultural appearance of Salem
- Provision of adequate and affordable services
- Diversifying and balancing the property base
 - Making Salem attractive to businesses compatible with its rural character
 - Diversifying and balancing the sources of tax revenue
 - Improving the quality of life in Salem by providing municipal services necessary for the common good
- Assuring availability of housing that is supported by the land and that is suitable for all income levels

Many of the issues identified in the 2002 PLAN, such as preserving town character and appearance, providing affordable services, diversifying the tax base, and maintaining housing options, remain critical. Protecting water quality, adopting low impact development principles, encouraging energy conservation, and fulfilling Salem's commitment to the Eightmile River Watershed Management Plan have surfaced as additional areas demanding attention.

The revision of Salem's PLAN takes as its basic premises:

1. Salem residents wish to maintain the quality of life with which they are very satisfied, not only for themselves, but also for future generations.
2. This quality of life is dependent on preserving Salem's natural resources, rural character, and economic strength.
3. Each of the goals, objectives and recommendations set forth in this PLAN is designed to support those values.

Structure of the PLAN

The PLAN is structured into nine clearly distinct but interrelated topics:

1. Natural Resources
2. Agriculture & Forestry
3. Historic and Archaeological Resources
4. Economic Development
5. Municipal Facilities, Land and Services
6. Housing
7. Transportation
8. Village Center
9. Regionalism

The individual topics are structured as follows:

- Each topic includes one or more goals
- Each goal requires achievement of one or more objectives in order to meet the goal
- Each objective requires the execution of one or more recommendations in order for the objective to be achieved

Implementation of Recommendations

The overall purpose of the PLAN is to recommend goals and objectives to guide the Town's decision making concerning the use of land, and other matters affecting the safety, welfare and prosperity of its residents. While the PLAN is an advisory document only, its comprehensive scope and the broad citizen input it reflects should make it a valuable resource in the decision making process of the various Town boards and commissions.

Accountability

Each Recommendation of the PLAN indicates which part of Town government, or which private entity, has responsibility for that item. The task of evaluating how (and whether) the recommendation should be implemented, then developing and implementing detailed action plans, including obtaining the appropriate approvals where required, rests with the responsible entity. A complete checklist of recommendations distributed across the ten Town entities responsible for implementing them is included in **Appendix 2**.

Monitoring Progress

P&Z will conduct an annual review at its February planning meeting with responsible boards, commissions, and community groups to review the PLAN and determine the status of the recommendations.

Progress towards implementing the PLAN recommendations will also be included in the Town's Annual Report.

Chapter 2: VISION STATEMENT

Salem is a town poised for the future and shaped by the past. It has an excellent school system, proximity to employment centers, and residents with a strong sense of community spirit as demonstrated by their volunteerism and cooperation. Those qualities along with a charm inherited from its agricultural roots and history give Salem an engaging rural character and make it an inviting place to live.

The goal of the vision statement is to reflect the sentiments, desires, and priorities of Salem residents for Salem's leadership in order to inform them and to foster cooperation among the various Boards and Commissions.

The following is our vision for Salem.

The high quality of life will be maintained by:

- Continuing to engage dedicated people for staff and volunteer positions; people who foster cooperation among Salem's citizens and government groups to get things done.
- Working to expand the variety of educational, social, recreational and library programs available.
- Increasing opportunities for people to gather by promoting existing sites, and developing new public places.
- Building an extensive system of bikeable, walkable greenway trails to connect open spaces and neighborhoods.

Salem will work to reduce dependence on residential property taxes by encouraging economic development that:

- Is concentrated in appropriate areas
- Maintains or enhances the Town's character
- Promotes attractive building designs incorporating common traditional elements
- Provides conveniences for the community
- Attracts businesses that draw customers to Salem
- Balances the economic development with preserving our natural resources

