



GAR and GPOA POCD Workshop

Wednesday, May 2nd 8AM-9:30AM

Greenwich Water Club, 49 River Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807

Summary

Members of the Greenwich Association of REALTORS® and the Greenwich Property Owners Association co-hosted this workshop for their members both in an effort to help continue spreading awareness of the POCD process, as well as collect feedback for consideration. GAR EVP, Stacey Loh, introduced the Plan of Conservation and Development project and the purpose of the workshop. As residents, business owners and operators, property owners, and general real estate/development experts, members from both groups shared their concerns and potential improvements for the future of Greenwich. The following is a summary of what was discussed, and a video recording of the meeting is available as a full transcript.

Top Issues

Most of the workshop time was devoted to collecting feedback on the top issues Greenwich faces. The feedback was combined into 15 issues, of which participants were asked to select the three most important. The subjects that garnered the most votes and discussion are:

- High cost, low-efficiency, and unpredictable nature of the pre-construction process
- FAR- Eliminate the use as part of building height and bulk regulations
- Drainage Regulations- too onerous
- Lack of coordination and transparency between town departments- both internally, as well as to the public
- Traffic
- Parking and perceived parking

The individual issues (as raised by participants), organized by category, include:

- Land Use and Development
 - Timeframe for process of new construction for developers
 - Complicated building regulations
 - Cost of pre-construction
 - Eliminate the use of FAR as part of building height and bulk regulations
 - Drainage regulations too onerous
 - Discretionary zoning through special permit process
 - Zoning of backcountry land is resulting in decreased valuation- need more opportunities to produce income

- Overbuilding
- Regulations too restrictive
- Forced relationships among adjoining properties
- Transportation and Mobility
 - Traffic
 - Parking/Perceived Parking
 - Infrastructure planning- Bike paths, sidewalks
- Parks, Open Space, Environment
 - Exposed power lines
 - Misuse of waterfront
- Implementation
 - Discretionary zoning through special permit process
 - Need better proactive communication/collaboration between town and public
 - Proactive marketing of Greenwich to businesses and residents, and potential residents
 - Need to streamline regulations to maintain property values
 - Coordinate office hours of town departments
 - Overuse of text amendment zoning changes
- Housing
 - Discrimination of R-6 Zone and affordable housing
 - Decrease in property values
- Economic Development
 - Vacancies on Greenwich Avenue
 - Lack of small business opportunities
- Public Facilities
 - Outdated school facilities
 - Air conditioning in schools

Recommended Actions

When asked what specific actions should be taken to improve Greenwich, participants suggested ideas surrounding improvement of regulations, infrastructure, town facilities, and development.

- Sound barriers for the highway to address noise issues
- Update the parks and landscaping
- Create multi-generational, mixed-use facilities
- Build a parking facility in the downtown area- multi-level garage at Island Beach ferry lot
- Parking facility with green space on Lewis Street
- Continual maintenance of town-owned land
- Digitize planning and zoning regulations and make available online
- Appoint a person at town hall to facilitate the beginning of the building process
- Implement R-6 zone parking for seniors
- Draft simplified drainage and zoning regulations
- Review tax treatment of private schools

- Change in attitude at Town Hall to “How can we help?”
- Finished living area to be reported on listings
- Expansion of private schools
- Simplify requirements for building permits
- Implement notification process for obtaining a CO
- Update office hours of town departments
- Update town website- digital access to all applications and department processes
- Improve publication/communication of zoning changes
- Improve transparency throughout all town departments
- Make regulations predictable

Greenwich's Strengths

Participants agreed that the following are positive attributes/selling points of Greenwich:

- Quality of schools
- Quality of after school programs- sports, etc.
- Volunteerism/Philanthropy
- Tod's Point
- Libraries
- Low property taxes
- Proximity to Manhattan
- Metro-North
- Connections/Opportunities/Networking