

CITY OF NORWALK CITYWIDE PLAN - PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT 2019-2029



**PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING**
January 15, 2019



- | MIXED-USE
ACTIVITY CENTERS | ROBUST
CONNECTIONS | NEW HOUSING
& ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITIES | OPPORTUNITIES |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--|--------------------|
| Regional downtown | Potential bike route | Corridor revitalization | Climate resilience |
| Activity center | Greenway/trail | Future regional road | Future open space |
| Urban village | Blouway | | |



Creating the plan with the public

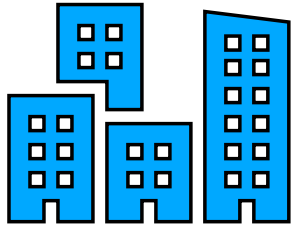
- Oversight Committee
- Interviews and focus groups
- Citywide Visioning Forum, November 17, 2017
- Nine neighborhood district workshops, July – September 2017
- Four topic-based workshops, May 2017
- Youth and Latino outreach workshops, May-June 2017
- Opportunities for digital participation
- Public review of the draft plan



State master plan requirements

- ✓ Physical, social, economic and governmental conditions, needs, and trends
- ✓ Affordable housing and economic diversity
- ✓ Drinking water supply protections
- ✓ Energy efficient development patterns
- ✓ Renewable energy
- ✓ Sea level rise scenarios
- ✓ Land use and density
- ✓ State and regional *Plans of Conservation & Development*
- ✓ Consistency with the *municipal coastal program* to restore, protect, and reduce pollution in Long Island Sound

How is this plan different from the last plan?



Focus on...

- Developing a culture of planning for the entire city
- Establishing systems and system plans to support data-driven and coordinated decision-making
- Stronger design standards and guidelines for development
- More organized communication and information-sharing with residents, business, and others to enhance transparency and community involvement



An ambitious vision guides the plan

- By 2029, the City of Norwalk has become a national example of a small city that boasts **a thriving and dynamic economy**; varied **housing choices for all income levels**; many **safe and convenient ways to get around the city**, including walking and biking; connected, **accessible and beautiful open spaces**; and an **active and resilient coastline**. Norwalk is the **center of art, culture, and entertainment** for our region. We combine the character of a **historic New England community on the coast of Long Island Sound with a thriving city in the country's largest metropolitan area**.



An ambitious vision guides the plan

- Diversified economy
- Center of culture and entertainment
- Community of racial and ethnic diversity
- Housing choice
- Transportation choice
- Green and blue network of open spaces
- Protection and enhancement of the environment
- Norwalk Harbor as a center of water-based activities on the Sound
- Community of life-long learning
- Energy- and resource-efficiency
- Climate change adaptation
- Well-maintained, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure and public services
- Cost-effective city government

THE BIG PICTURE



Livability
Prosperity
Equity
Sustainability
Resilience



THE BIG PICTURE: Trends

- **Generational transition** from Baby Boomers to Millennials and Generation Z
- **Modest population growth**, approximately 0.5% over 10 years
- **Most households contain one or two people**
- **Increased diversity since 2000** – growth in Latino and Asian population
- **Some 41% of employed residents work outside the city** in Stamford, New York City, and smaller communities
- **Income and education disparities** within the population
- **Commercial/industrial share of the Grand List** approximately 20.5% in recent years

THE BIG PICTURE: Strengths

- **Proximity to New York City** and booming metro economy
- **Waterfront/coastal location** and identity
- **Educated and higher income** population
- **Higher-paying economic sectors**
- **Active private development** investment and recent growth
- **Public school improvements**
- **Historic character and intact walkable urban areas**
- **Strengths in diversity:**
 - economy
 - racial and ethnic
 - housing and neighborhoods
 - landscape

THE BIG PICTURE: Weaknesses

- **Traffic congestion** and **limited multimodal transportation**
- Relatively **high real estate and land costs** for business
- **Empty storefronts** in Norwalk Center
- **Affordable housing** needs
- **Fragmentation:**
 - **Four activity centers** – Merritt 7, Norwalk Center, SONO, SONO Collection Mall
 - **Multiple identities:** taxing districts and neighborhoods
 - Municipal **government silos**
 - **Lack of system plans**

THE BIG PICTURE: Threats

- Traffic **congestion** and limited state transportation funding
- **Walk Bridge project impacts** to local businesses and the harbor
- Enhanced **neighbor town centers now compete with Norwalk** restaurant and other attractions
- **Changing markets for office space**
- **Desire by some to restrict residential development in the urban core**

THE BIG PICTURE: Opportunities

- **Mixed use and TOD** in South Norwalk and East Norwalk
- **Stronger connections** among activity centers
- More robust **tourism economy**
- More **waterfront activity**
- Attract **tech and creative economy start-ups** and **niche industrial users**
- Develop **more workforce housing**
- **More regional collaboration** (“Fairfield Five”)



Top priorities for the ten-year plan

- **Rewrite and modernize the zoning code** to achieve the plan's goals.
- Establish **an economic development office and implement an effective economic development strategy.**
- **Make the City website more “customer-friendly”**— up to date, organized, efficient, and transparent.
- Implement the **School Facilities Master Plan.**



Top priorities for the ten-year plan

Prepare and begin implementing the following studies and plans:

- ✓ **Industrial zones and activities**
- ✓ **Housing Policy Plan and Strategy**, including both market-rate and affordable housing
- ✓ **Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan** to include critical infrastructure like the Wastewater Treatment Plant
- ✓ **Land use/transportation corridor plans**, including a market analysis, for the Main Street/Main Avenue Corridor first, then Connecticut and Westport Avenues
- ✓ **Parks, Open Space, Trails, and Recreation System Plan**
- ✓ **Historic Preservation Plan**



Strategic priorities

Mixed-use activity centers:

- regional
- employment
- entertainment centers

Robust connections:

- multimodal facilities
- greenway and blueway routes


New housing and economic opportunities on corridors

- Route 1
- Main Street/Avenue

Coastal and environmental focus

- protected open space
- water quality
- sea level rise
- access





**ACHIEVING THE VISION:
TEN PRIORITY CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES
FOR QUALITY OF LIFE, ECONOMIC
PROSPERITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY**



Proactive economic development to grow jobs and the Grand List

- Strong, experienced, economic development leadership; municipal and regional coordination
- Market Norwalk as a business location
- Business retention and attraction program
- Small business and entrepreneurial initiative
- Strategy for light and niche industry
- Tourism strategy





Enhanced transportation choice and connectivity.

- Multimodal Level of Service standard and Complete Streets Policy
- Land use decisions that support transit, walking, biking
- Innovative transit options
- Access management in major corridors
- “Right-sized” parking
- Advocate for regional solutions





Norwalk Public Schools as the best city school system in the state.

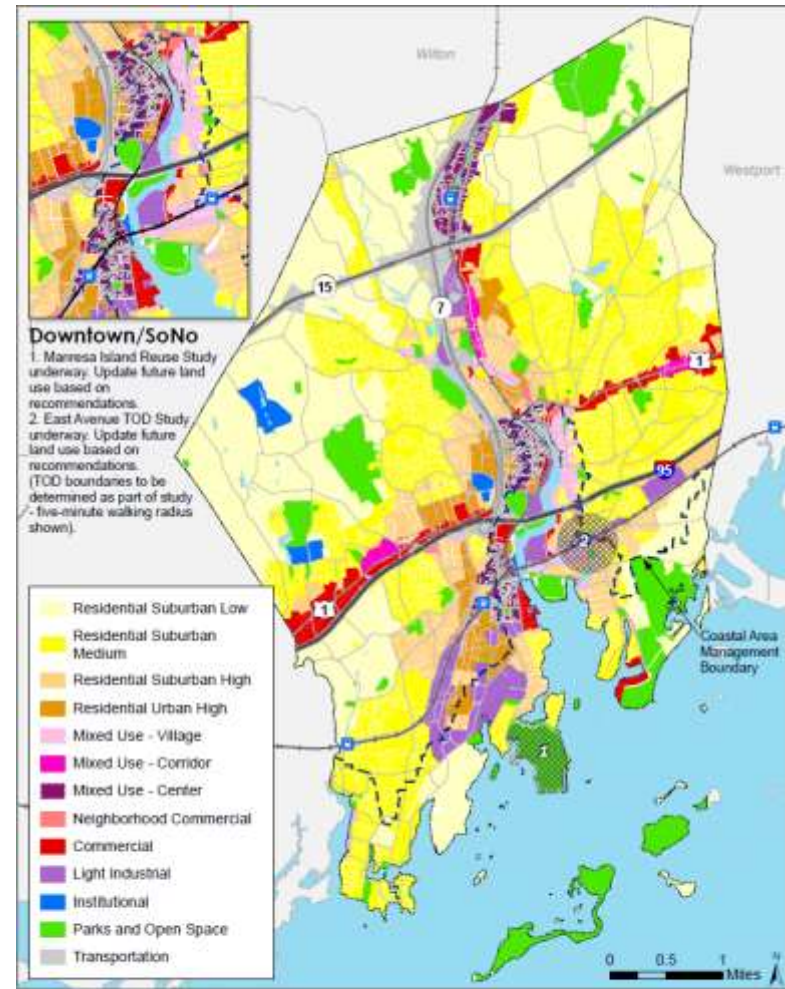


- Facilities upgrades and improvements
- Continue NPS strategic planning
- Continue performance improvements
- Publicize NPS performance, improvements and benefits to multiple audiences



Modernized and user-friendly land use regulations

- Adopt general land use principles consistent with the vision to guide land use decision making
- Modernize and rewrite the zoning ordinance using best practices and user-friendly organization and layout
- Design standards and guidelines for mixed-use and non-residential development – major corridors, major centers, village districts





The Norwalk parks and recreation system as the best city system in the state.

- Develop an integrated Parks, Open Space, Trails and Recreation System Plan.
- Give priority to completing the Norwalk River Valley Trail





Enhanced protection of environmental resources.

- Water quality improvement and flood mitigation through green infrastructure and low-impact development
- Tree canopy improvements
- Balance environmental protection, water-dependent uses, public access, and recreation in the coastal management area





Housing policy and affordable housing solutions.

- Housing Plan including data analysis, policy framework, affordable housing strategy,
- Diverse housing types for urban core, transit locations, mixed-use clusters on corridors, village districts





Leadership in sustainability and resilience

- Climate Action Plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan





Enhanced preservation of historic resources



South view of the Borough of Norwalk.

- Historic Preservation Plan
- One or more Local Historic Districts
- Heritage tourism initiative



A higher education activity for Norwalk Center

Actively recruit a higher education presence for Norwalk Center, such as....

- NCC downtown education center
- Business training
- Arts program
- Start up incubator
- Multi-institution collaborative



Lewiston ME



Performance: putting the plan to work

- Annual public review of implementation progress
- Incorporate the plan into city government operational and capital budgets, departmental work plans, etc.
- Enhance transparency and customer service in city government: online services and data
- Measure and communicate government performance



CITY OF NORWALK