

The Plan of Conservation and Development
Town of Willington, Connecticut

1.0 Introduction



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1.1 What is the Plan of Conservation and Development?

The Plan of Conservation and Development (PoCD or Plan) is a tool to guide growth, policy, land use, development, and conservation decisions in the Town of Willington. The Plan is an advisory document that identifies the community's goals and provides a framework of policies, needs, actions and priorities. It is intended as a guide to residents, municipal boards and commissions, developers, and interest groups. It is also intended to provide information to decision-makers to promote efficient and coordinated development in Willington.

The PoCD was prepared in accordance with the provisions of Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes which sets forth the minimum considerations of the Plan and requires that municipalities prepare, amend or adopt a Plan at least once every ten years.

The PoCD is a comprehensive document that has broad significance in:

- setting long term and short term growth and preservation policies and helping the town find a balance between growth and preservation;
- increasing the community's understanding of its development capabilities and limitations and helping officials anticipate changes that are likely to occur within the next ten years;
- helping officials evaluate specific development proposals to determine consistency with long term goals and visions of the community;
- helping to establish priorities for public works projects and other major capital investments (e.g. classroom construction and other town facilities).
- suggesting new tools to: identify and protect valuable natural, cultural and historic resources; help control growth; and, provide for appropriate levels of economic development.

What is the Plan of Conservation and Development (PoCD)?

- Identifies community goals and guides the town's physical development while enhancing its character, protecting the natural resources and maintaining the financial stability of the Town.
- Assesses and analyzes demographic trends, economic base, land use, housing, community facilities, traffic, transportation, economic development, natural resources, open space, utilities, etc.
- Provides framework for revising land use regulations and to manage growth.
- Provides a plan of future land uses.
- Provides an action plan to implement the community's vision.

Why must the PoCD be reviewed and updated?

- The predecessor plan to this PoCD was prepared in 1980.
- State of Connecticut requires update of the PoCD every 10 years.
- State bases consideration of funding proposals, in part, on updated PoCD.
- Increasing development pressures could challenge the Town's ability to offset potential impacts.

While principally advisory, certain state and local land use actions must be consistent with the PoCD including the siting of State facilities and local zone changes. Further, the State bases consideration of many funding proposals, in part, on whether the action being funded is consistent with the PoCD.

The Town of Willington, through the Plan of Conservation and Development Committee (a special committee appointed by the Planning and Zoning Commission), engaged a wide cross-section of the community in the PoCD planning process so that the PoCD reflects residents' concerns, needs and goals. The predecessor plan to this Plan of Conservation and Development was adopted in 1980 and was titled "Town of Willington, CT- Plan of Development. Since then conditions and development pressures in the town and region have changed substantially. This updated PoCD not only considers contemporary conditions, but also reflects the residents' current social, economic and aesthetic values and their vision for the future of the community.

The planning effort to prepare this PoCD was deliberate and sequential. There were four basic steps in the process, each step was structured to answer fundamental questions:

Step 1 - Fact Finding/ Define Major Issues:

"Where are we now?"

Step 2 – Develop a Comprehensive Vision:

"Where do we want to be?"

Step 3 – Future Land Use Plan/ Growth Management Strategies:

"How do we get there?"

Step 4 – Prepare Implementation & Action Plan:

"Time for action!"

The organization of this report parallels this process (although with different enumeration). For example, Chapter 1.0 provides an overview and summary of major findings and also describes the community involvement process that helped the PoCD Committee and its consultant understand current sentiments and define major issues. The fact-finding and inventory of existing land use and zoning (as represented in Chapter 3.0) and the gauging of public sentiment helped the PoCD answer the question of *"Where are we now?"*

The Vision Statement set forth in Chapter 2.0 was a direct outgrowth of the community participation process and answers the fundamental question of *"Where do we want to be?"* as a community.

Chapter 4.0 represents a comprehensive evaluation of the major elements that the Plan needs to consider including:

1. Population & Housing
2. Transportation, Traffic and Infrastructure
3. Recreation
4. Community and Educational Facilities
5. Natural Resources
6. Open Space
7. Historic and Cultural Resources
8. Economic Base/Commercial & Industrial Development

For each of these elements or resources, a discussion is provided generally in the areas of:

- a) current conditions (i.e. characteristics, trends and needs);
- b) the community's goals and objectives for the future; and,
- c) recommendations or planning actions to achieve the goals and objectives.

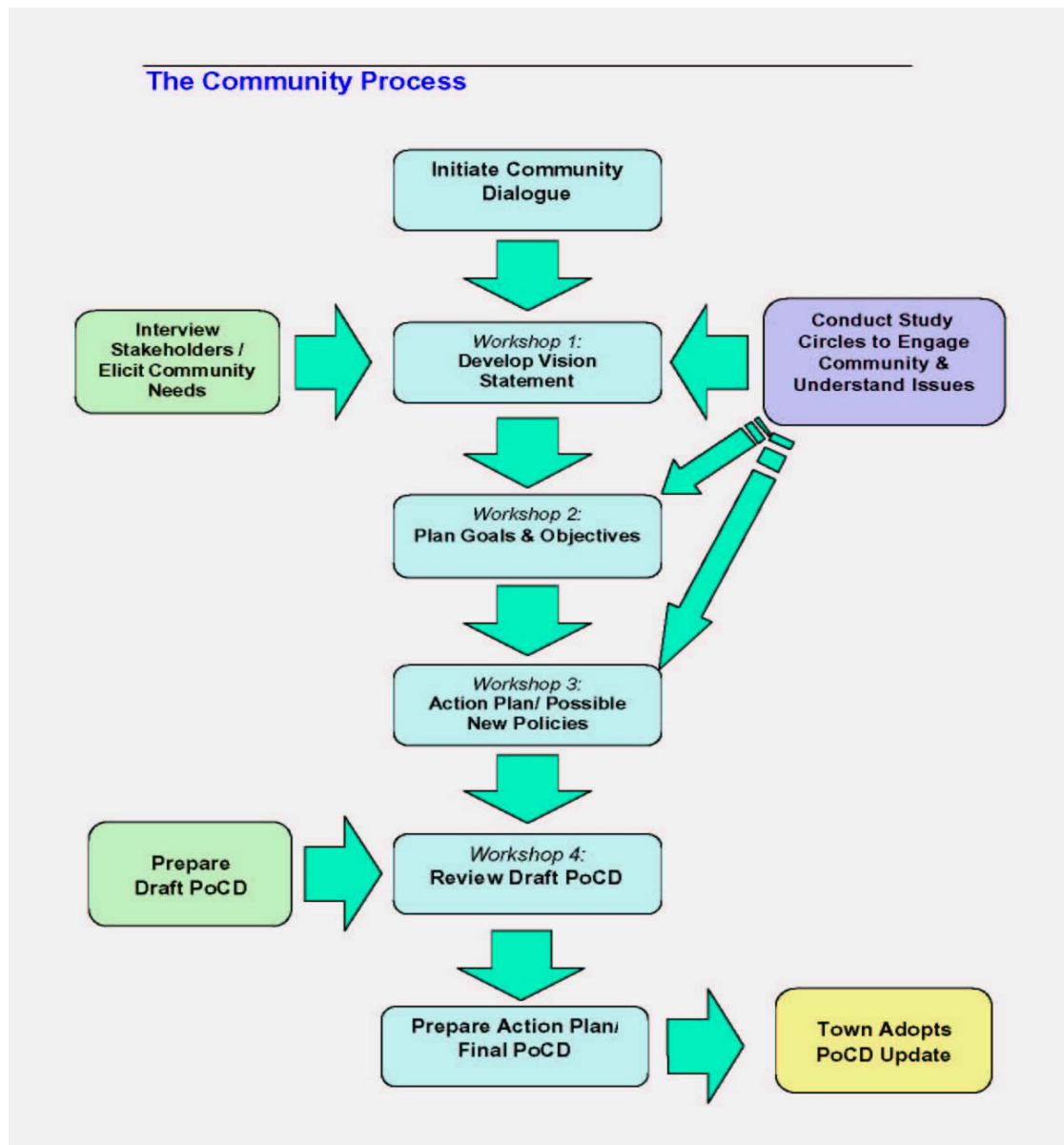
In addition, various maps depicting these elements or resources are provided throughout the report to better assess and understand their extent, value and influence as well as the interrelationships among the elements. The goals, recommendations and objectives represented in Chapter 4.0 form the basis of the Action Plan that is summarized and prioritized in Chapter 6.0.

A thoughtful, balanced and detailed evaluation of all the elements or resources was required to develop the Future Land Use Plan provided in Chapter 5.0. The Future Land Use Plan maps the amount, intensity, and character of land use proposed for residential, industrial, and business and identifies future traffic facilities, community facilities, and parks and recreation. It also identifies lands that are best suited for preservation for the agricultural, open space, and/or conservation needs of the community.

The Future Land Use Plan and growth management strategies presented in Chapter 5.0 combined with the Action Plan set forth in Chapter 6.0 effectively address the questions “How do we get there?” and “What can we do to get started?”

1.2 Community Involvement in the Plan

The Planning and Zoning Commission and other elected officials determined that community involvement in the preparation of the PoCD was critical not only to its development but also to ensure that the Plan would be supported and implemented by the people of Willington and its boards and commissions. They organized and executed a community involvement process that was a collaborative effort involving nearly every segment of the community. A summary of that process is as follows:



The Establishment of the PoCD Committee

This ad hoc Plan of Conservation and Development Committee, which was comprised of representatives of town boards and committees, as well as members of the public, served as advisors to the entire PoCD update process. It oversaw the PoCD planning activities and consultant, chaired and administered the community workshops, critiqued the technical presentations or reports presented at the workshops, and provided input to the plan.

Stakeholder Interviews

The Town's consultant, Clough, Harbour and Associates LLP (CHA), conducted one-on-one interviews with community stakeholders to obtain insight on issues that are critical to the growth, development and conservation of the Town. The individual stakeholders were identified by the PoCD Committee and represent interest groups or organizations that have special knowledge of town workings and/or are able to provide a unique perspective on matters that affect all residents. The results of the interviews were distilled and documented and served to inform the PoCD Committee as well as the participants of the "Study Circles". A summary of the Stakeholder Interviews is provided in Appendix 1.

Study Circles

The cornerstone of the community participation process was the "Study Circles" program. Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC)*, agreed to help the Town initiate an effective process to elicit community response. The SCRC trained residents to facilitate a series of small group "Study Circles" on conservation and development topics. The main objectives of the "Study Circles" were:

- 1) to address and identify specific problems and opportunities in Willington, especially as they may relate to matters of conservation and development;
- 2) to work together to establish a common vision and to solve problems common to the community; and,
- 3) to enhance community participation in Town affairs.

The Study Circles were highly successful. The findings of each Study Circle not only assisted the PoCD Committee in developing community consensus behind a Vision Statement that is the guiding principal of the PoCD but also became the basis of many of the goals, objectives and recommendations of the various elements of the PoCD. The final report of the Study Circles subcommittee is provided in Appendix 2.

* an independent, private, nonpartisan, nonprofit foundation whose mission is to advance deliberative democracy and improve the quality of life in the United States

Community Workshops

The PoCD Committee, with assistance and facilitation by CHA, conducted a series of community workshops throughout the development of the PoCD. The workshops presented reports on the progress of the Plan for discussion and comments by the public and by Town boards. The initial workshops provided participants with information to assist the Committee in formulating the goals, objectives and recommendations of the Plan. Subsequent workshops introduced alternate strategies for implementation of the goals and objectives. Public input at these workshops assisted the PoCD Committee in identifying the community's conservation and development priorities and in determining which growth management strategies would work best in Willington. Public input was also instrumental in fine-tuning the Plan to create the PoCD Committee's final draft Plan of Conservation and Development.

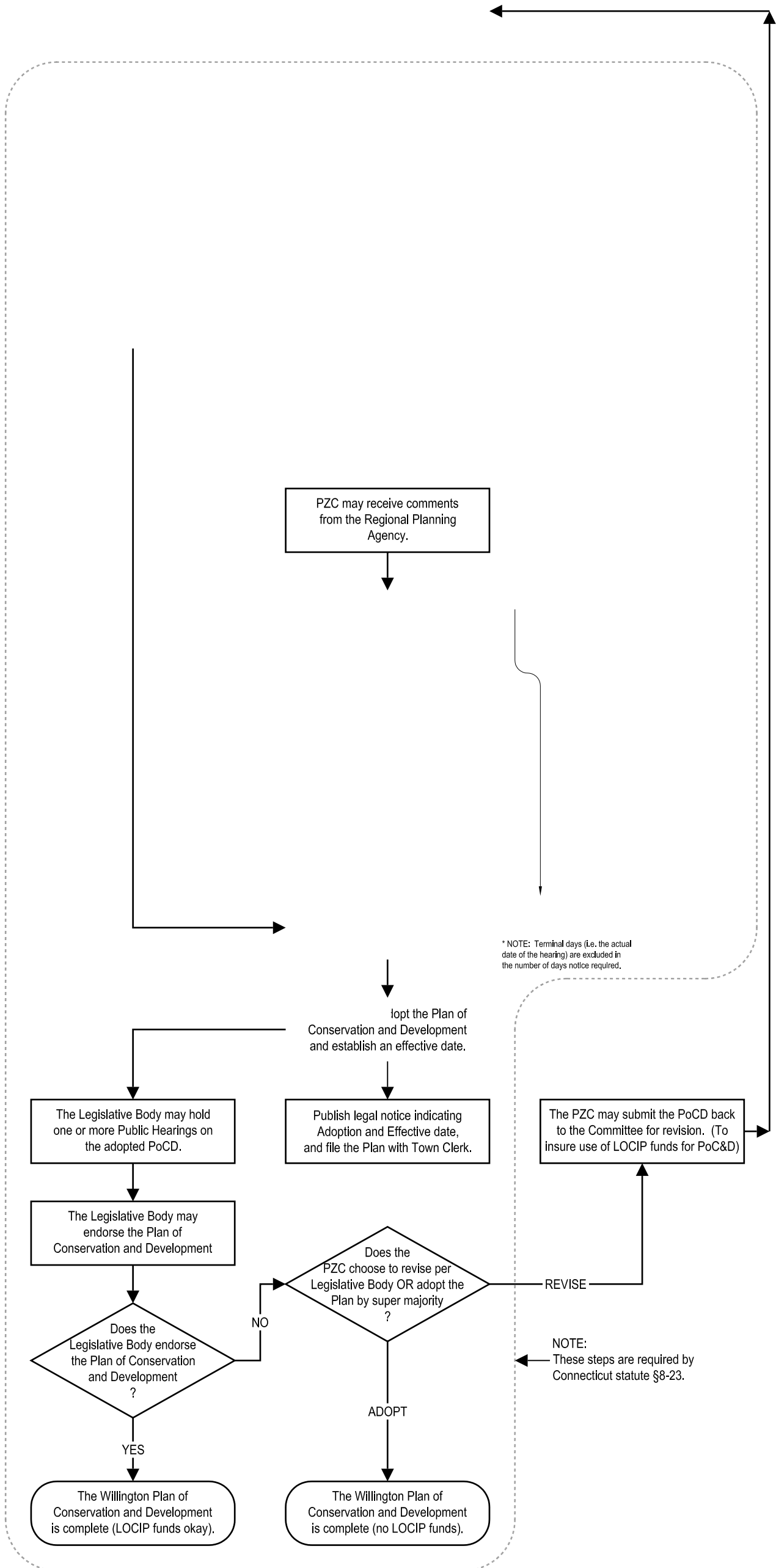
The topics of the workshops were:

- **Workshop No. 1 - Visioning**
- **Workshop No. 2 - Plan Goals and Objectives**
- **Workshop No. 3 - Action Plan/ Possible New Policies**
- **Workshop No. 4 - Draft Plan of Conservation & Development**

The press releases announcing the workshops as well as a summary of discussion are provided in Appendix 3.

Town Meeting and Public Hearing

Recent amendments to the State statute pertaining to the preparation and adoption of a Plan of Conservation and Development require Planning and Zoning Commissions to submit the PoCD to the Town's legislative body for review, comment and endorsement and to hold at least one town meeting prior to the formal adoption of the PoCD. This town meeting is in addition to the public hearing which must be held by the Planning and Zoning Commission. The specific process by which the PoCD becomes adopted by the Planning and Zoning Commission and endorsed by the town's legislative body, as well as the opportunities for public comment, are schematically depicted on the following chart.



PZC may receive comments from the Regional Planning Agency.

Adopt the Plan of Conservation and Development and establish an effective date.

Publish legal notice indicating Adoption and Effective date, and file the Plan with Town Clerk.

The Legislative Body may hold one or more Public Hearings on the adopted PoCD.

The Legislative Body may endorse the Plan of Conservation and Development

Does the Legislative Body endorse the Plan of Conservation and Development?

The Willington Plan of Conservation and Development is complete (LOCIP funds okay).

Does the PZC choose to revise per Legislative Body OR adopt the Plan by super majority?

ADOPT

The Willington Plan of Conservation and Development is complete (no LOCIP funds).

The PZC may submit the PoCD back to the Committee for revision. (To insure use of LOCIP funds for PoC&D)

NOTE: These steps are required by Connecticut statute §8-23.

* NOTE: Terminal days (i.e. the actual date of the hearing) are excluded in the number of days notice required.