

Bethel

2007 Plan of Conservation and Development



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Planning and Zoning Commission

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WELCOME



October 9, 2007

To the Reader:

This Plan provides goals and guidance for both **conservation** and **development** in the Town of Bethel over the next ten years. To assist you as you read this Plan and as a guide to its future implementation, we offer the following statement of beliefs and aspirations:

Bethel is a residential sanctuary. We must proactively preserve, protect, promote, and enhance its assets. Our thriving downtown Village is enviable in our area of Fairfield County; our outlying residential areas are semi-rural and underdeveloped. We wish to encourage preservation of the town's peaceful and spacious nature. Increasing Bethel's beautiful, protected open spaces is our highest priority. Commercial growth is important to Bethel's future and we will encourage opportunities for businesses while assuring that commercial development is in harmony with the town's residential character. We wish to reflect the positive qualities of Bethel's Village in future commercial development in the Route 6/Stony Hill area.

The Village - We wish to encourage preservation of these Village Values:

- A community of generations that welcomes residents of all ages.
- A friendly, casual, and safe community with picturesque and historic village buildings, walkways, shops and restaurants.
- A residential haven, dotted with greenspace that continues to provide well-designed and diverse housing, within walking distance of transportation and the Village's commercial offerings.

Beyond the Village – We wish to encourage the spacious and underdeveloped beauty of our outlying residential areas:

- Preservation and increase of Bethel's open spaces is our highest priority.
- Appropriate clustered housing will provide more opportunities for open spaces.
- Environmental sensitivity will continue to guide new residential development.

Commercial Growth – We wish to encourage businesses to locate in and remain in Bethel and participate in the life of our Town:

- Growth of the commercial offerings in the downtown area should be consistent with the charm and historic nature of the Village and its residential character.
- In all commercial development, whether in the Village, on Route 6 or in between, aesthetic appropriateness that is consistent with the charm of our town will be paramount.
- Environmental sensitivity and open space preservation will be critical as we encourage commercial growth in Bethel.

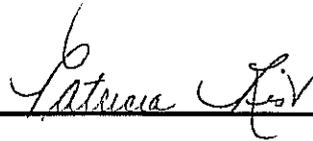
Planning and Zoning Commission, Town of Bethel

We, the undersigned members of the Bethel Planning and Zoning Commission, do hereby, this 9th day of October, in the year 2007, accept and adopt this Plan of Conservation and Development:

Peter S. Olson, Chairman



Patricia Rist, Vice-Chairman



Gabrielle Reynolds, Secretary



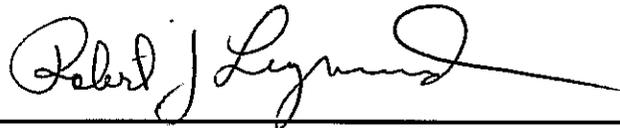
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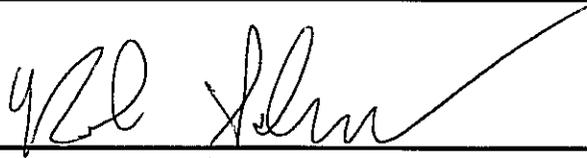
Robert Legnard



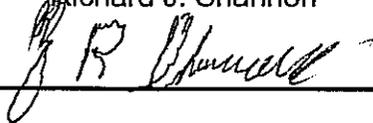
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Richard J. Shannon



INTRODUCTION



Vision and Mission of this Plan

Bethel is a blossoming community built on Village Values. The town is welcoming to all people, young and old. At its heart is a flourishing New England village center that is distinct in northwestern Fairfield County. We pride ourselves on our diverse housing opportunities, on our growing base of commercial development, and on our commitment to the protection of open spaces and other natural resources.

For the future, balancing the preservation of our village community and the natural beauty of our surroundings while embracing the inevitability of growth will be our greatest challenge. To achieve these two seemingly contrary objectives, we will:

- protect our village character through careful architectural review and community planning;
- encourage new housing opportunities that will enhance our diversity;
- work to strengthen our regional position as a complete community with cultural, recreational and educational offerings; and
- encourage commercial development that builds the town's economic base while remaining architecturally consistent with our values.

Most important, we will be responsible; we will take the greatest care to ensure that our development as a community is mindful of the need to conserve Bethel's precious environmental resources.

While there may be refinements to this Plan over time, it is anticipated that this overall philosophy will remain relevant during the next ten years.

About Plans of Conservation & Development

A Plan of Conservation and Development is a tool for guiding the future of a community. While this Plan is primarily a statement of recommendations addressing the conservation and development of Bethel (the physical layout), this Plan is also intended to address the social and economic development of the community.

The goals and recommendations of the Plan reflect an overall consensus of what is considered desirable for Bethel and its residents in the future.

Prior Bethel Plans

Bethel has a strong history of preparing and adopting Plans of Development. The town adopted its first Plan of Development in 1958. The Plan was updated in 1969 and again in 1984. The most recent plan was adopted in 1997 and was developed with the assistance of Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart and the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials.

Planning Process

The process of preparing this comprehensive Plan of Conservation and Development (the Plan) for Bethel has been overseen and coordinated by the Commission with the help of planning consultants from Planimetrics. During the process of preparing this Plan, community input was gathered through several public meetings and workshops with residents, boards and commission members, and Town Staff to discuss issues that they felt were important to them and the community. The combined results indicate that open space protection; improvements to community facilities; natural resource protection; preservation of community character and historic resources; and business development are the most important issues facing Bethel.

Public Input

Public meeting participants indicated that they were proudest of Bethel's public lands and natural resources; the Town's educational facilities and library; and the Village Center's historic character.

Transportation systems, including insufficient alternatives to auto travel and heavy truck traffic through residential neighborhoods; overly dense development in some areas; and insufficient recreational facilities throughout the Town, were noted as issues that residents of Bethel were most unhappy about. Other concerns included insufficient protection for open space parcels, insufficient protection for historic resources, and inadequate protection of natural resources.

Availability of Planning Documents

All background materials used in the preparation of this Plan are stored with the Land Use Department in Town Hall. In addition, copies of this Plan and prior plans are found in both the Land Use Office and the Library.