

Economic Development provides retail and other services to the public, creates jobs, establishes a property tax base to support town services, and offers an opportunity for investment. Physical factors influencing the future economic development of the town include providing suitable land area for development, adequate roadway capacity to accommodate traffic generated, sensitive site planning and design criteria, an adequate water supply, non-polluting sewage disposal and well-designed drainage facilities. Ample housing opportunities for the labor force are also a factor in economic development.

As the “downtown” to communities throughout the region, Old Saybrook – reflected by the scope of its products and services, as well as investment in its jobs and tax base – acknowledges its role as a commercial hub on the shoreline. Although Old Saybrook remains as an important economic center due to the concentration of businesses on Route 1 and Main Street, the Town must consider how to encourage appropriate development and growth yet prevent an overburdened infrastructure.

In recent years, public testimony received through the land use hearings and periodic updates to this Plan of Conservation and Development (the “Plan”), including a 1998 town-wide questionnaire (Appendix XX), reflect popular sentiment to advocate growth that bolsters those characteristics that give Old Saybrook its “small town” image and identity.

Serious concern for the future pattern of non-residential development in Old Saybrook came in 1995 when the Town received a development application for a 133,000 square foot retail store. At the time, the application was a major departure from the type of retail shopping that had characterized the town in the past. This proposed development followed closely on the heels of the approval and construction of the nearby Westbrook Factory Stores and Clinton Crossings regional malls. Residents of Old Saybrook realized that existing land use regulations were not sufficient to control the type of development that could result. Fortunately, the Town’s land use commissions exercised appropriate use of existing regulations. Since that time, the Town has accelerated the already begun process of updating its regulations to promote development consistent with Old Saybrook’s small town character and in harmony with its unique place at the confluence of the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound. To these ends, new controls including zoning regulations governing parking, minimum landscape requirements, more stringent application procedures governing Site Plan and Special Permit applications and an ordinance establishing an Architectural Review Board have been enacted since the adoption of the 1990 Plan. These initiatives resulted from the Program Recommendations of that Plan. The Goals, Policies and Program Recommendations of the new Plan will continue to provide town boards, commissions and agencies with the guidance to direct the growth of future development consistent with the desire of its residents.