

Ridgefield, CT

Ridgefield, CT

Southeast, NY

Danbury

North Salem, NY

Redding

Lewisboro, NY

Weston

Wilton

4,000

Feet

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION TO RIDGEFIELD

Ridgefield is located in Fairfield County, Connecticut on the western border of the State, 65 miles southwest of Hartford, the state capitol, and 60 miles northeast of New York City. Bordered to the north by the City of Danbury, Connecticut, to the east by the Town of Redding, Connecticut, to the south the Town of Wilton, Connecticut, and to the west by Westchester County, New York, Ridgefield has a land area of 35.1 square miles.

The year 2000 U.S. Census reported a population of 23,643. As this was being written the U.S. 2010 Census was underway.

HISTORY OF PLANNING IN RIDGEFIELD

Ridgefield has long recognized the importance of its rural character and the need to manage its growth. In 1946, when the population was only about 4,000, residents concerned about preserving the village center from inappropriate development petitioned the Town to establish the Ridgefield Zoning Commission. Zoning regulations were adopted effective on October 4, 1946; minimum lot sizes were established for single family homes and limited commercial districts in the town center and Branchville were created.

Continued growth and the increasing demand for single family homes led to the creation of the Ridgefield Planning Commission in 1958. Subdivision regulations were adopted on March 1, 1959, and the first Plan of Development was written in 1960. In 1968 the two commissions were combined, forming the Ridgefield Planning and Zoning Commission.

The 1969 Ridgefield Plan of Development coincided with significant changes in zoning laws, including larger minimum lot sizes in residential districts and more concise commercial regulations. The Ridgefield Inland Wetlands Board was created on June 5, 1974 and wetlands regulations were adopted effective on June 29th. A new "Comprehensive Town Plan" was adopted in 1980, and an updated

Additional Significant Studies

- 2000 Image and Character Study
- 2002 About Ridgefield
- 2002 Branchville Village Plan
- 2005 Route 35 Traffic Improvement Plan (HVCEO)
- 2009 Ridgefield Center Study

1999 Plan was titled the “Plan of Conservation and Development,” placing greater emphasis on the need to conserve natural resources while permitting reasonable growth.

This document, the 2010 Ridgefield Plan of Conservation and Development, is a strategic update of the 1999 Plan.

ABOUT PLANS OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD or Plan) is a tool for guiding land use decisions in Ridgefield. It establishes a vision for the physical development of the Town and recommends policies to attain that vision.

The POCD addresses conservation and development in Ridgefield (the physical layout) and social and economic aspects of the community, since these elements are often inter-related with conservation and development.

The Plan is an advisory document to the Planning and Zoning Commission, other boards and commissions, and residents. While the statutory responsibility to adopt the Plan rests with the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Commission shares responsibility for its implementation with other municipal agencies and with the residents of Ridgefield.

The POCD is effective after a public hearing and adoption by the Planning and Zoning Commission. A public hearing on adoption was held on June 29, 2010 and the Plan was adopted on July 13, 2010. The effective date of this Plan is August 16, 2010.

EXCERPTS FROM CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES (CGS) 8-23 – PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Commission may:

- Adopt such geographical, functional or other amendments to the plan or parts of the plan... as it deems necessary.
- Prepare, amend and adopt plans for the redevelopment and improvement of districts or neighborhoods which...contain special problems or opportunities ...

The Plan shall:

- Be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality...
- Provide for a system of principal thoroughfares...sidewalks, multipurpose trails...

- Be designed to promote...the coordinated development of the municipality...to have compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns and land reuse... recommend the most desirable use of land within the municipality for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial, conservation and other purposes and include a map showing such proposed land uses...
- Recommend the most desirable density of population in ... the municipality...
- Note any inconsistencies with the following growth management principles:
 - redevelopment and revitalization of commercial centers...
 - expansion of housing opportunities and design choices...
 - concentration of development around transportation nodes...
 - conservation and restoration of the natural environment, cultural and historical resources and existing farmlands...
 - protection of environmental assets critical to public health and safety...
 - integration of planning across all levels of government...
- Make provision for the development of housing opportunities...
- Promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing...
- Consider the following:
 - the community development action plan of the municipality...
 - the need for affordable housing...
 - the need for protection of existing and potential drinking water supplies...
 - the use of cluster development and other development ...
 - the state plan of conservation and development ...
 - the regional plan of development...
 - physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends...
 - the needs of the municipality ...
 - the objectives of energy-efficient patterns of development...
 - protection and preservation of agriculture.

The Plan may:

- Show the commission's recommendation for
 - conservation and preservation of traprock and other ridgelines...
 - airports, parks, playgrounds and other public grounds...
 - the general location, relocation and improvement of schools...
 - the general location and extent of public utilities...for water, sewerage, light, power, transit and other purposes...
 - the extent and location of public housing projects...
 - programs for the implementation of the plan...
 - proposed priority funding areas...

PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

While updating the Plan, the Planning and Zoning Commission solicited input from residents and from other local boards and commissions:

- March 31, 2009 Public Scoping Meeting, where residents identified issues that should be addressed in the Plan;
- June 2, 2009 Public Visioning Workshop, where residents expressed their desires for the future of Ridgefield;
- A written survey with responses from board and commission members and department heads to identify issues needing attention in the Plan;
- A June 30, 2009 meeting where boards and commissions discussed long term needs with the Planning and Zoning Commission;
- A March 4, 2010 public information meeting where residents provided input on the draft Plan; and,
- The public hearing to adopt the Plan, held on June 29, 2010.



Photo 1: March 31, 2009 Public Workshop.