

DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

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Overview

Development issues addressed in the Plan of Conservation & Development include:

- Community Structure
- Housing & Residential Areas
- Business & Economic Development
- Community Facilities

Development Goals

Reinforce Community Structure. .

Revitalize housing Areas. . .

Foster Economic Development. . .

Improve Community Services. . .

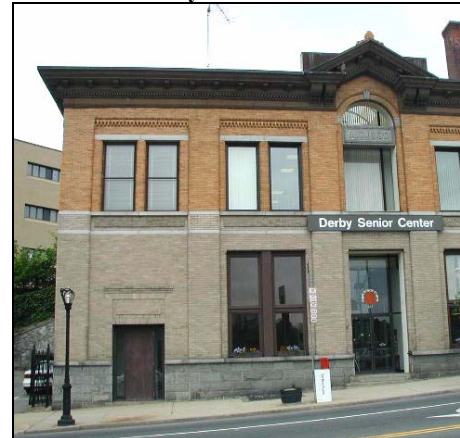
Atwater Avenue



LifeTouch



Derby Senior Center



Community Structure

Community structure addresses the overall organization of Derby. Structure is an important consideration in the Plan since it addresses how people, both residents and visitors, perceive and understand the community. Structure is also an important guide for land use regulations and decisions. Regulations can be designed and implemented to reinforce the community structure and enhance community character.

Derby's community structure consists of:

- Downtown Derby, the major community focal point,
- Secondary historic focal points in the historic Birmingham Green and Derby Green areas,
- Dense multi family housing north and west of downtown,
- State owned open space and more rural development patterns west of Coon Hollow Road,
- Generally suburban development patterns east of CT Route 115, with modern complexes, and
- Fairly undeveloped areas to the far east and west sections of the City.

Derby is almost fully developed and the residential character of the community has clearly been established. Derby's zoning scheme was changed in the last several years to discourage increased density in highly developed areas by limiting conversions of single family residences. In addition, institutional and similar uses are allowed only on a Special Permit basis. The Zoning Regulations continue to recognize the prevailing development pattern of:

- higher densities and diverse housing types in and near the City Center where water and sewer are available,
- predominantly single-family development in outlying areas, and
- a reduction of density as the distance from the City Center increases.

The most significant land use change in the Zoning Regulations was the industrial-park type (campus) zoning created at the far western and eastern sections of City, which are currently undeveloped. Access roads, which would enhance the utility of this property to developers, have yet to be created. Preservation of slope and wetland areas within these industrially zoned areas will ensure that the planned business parks desired incorporate a sizable amount of undeveloped land and do not approach the density of commercial development prevalent in other parts of the City.

Enhance Housing & Residential Areas

Housing and residential areas are important topics in the plan since most of Derby is zoned for residential purposes. In addition, identified housing needs must be considered.

Over the past two decades, housing growth has been slower in Derby than surrounding areas due to the limited amount of available land. In terms of housing density, Derby's small land area and higher proportion of multi-family units results in it being one of the most densely populated communities in Connecticut. The tables in the side bar illustrate that Derby's housing density is exceeded only by Ansonia when compared to neighboring towns. The percentage of single family units is also low when compared to neighboring towns and the state average.

While Derby's housing stock was well suited for local needs when Derby was a manufacturing community, residential preferences have changed over the past few decades. With economic and transportation improvements, people have sought more spacious suburban development.

With a lack of land area, especially undeveloped land, Derby has had a hard time competing with current residential market trends. In Derby, some housing that was built several decades ago is perceived as having inadequate parking and yard area. As a result, some existing neighborhoods have fallen into disrepair and show evidence of lack of investment and lack of maintenance.

Caroline Street



East Ninth Street



Fairview Terrace



Housing Density

	Units Per Acre
Ansonia	2.00
Derby	1.74
Naugatuck	0.84
Shelton	0.73
Seymour	0.67
Connecticut	0.43
Orange	0.43
Prospect	0.33

2000 US Census

Housing Types In Derby

	Number	%
Total Units	5,420	100
1-Unit	2,600	49
2-Units	1,170	22
3-4 Units	724	14
5+ Units	812	15

DECD 1998 Estimate

Percentage SF Units

Ansonia	47%
Derby	49%
Naugatuck	59%
Connecticut	67%
Seymour	68%
Shelton	78%
Prospect	92%
Orange	96%

1998 DECD Estimate

Derby is addressing these issues incrementally. Derby has changed some regulations to curb the development of multi-family units through new construction or through conversion of existing units. In addition, regulatory changes have been adopted to require larger lot sizes, greater setbacks, and less coverage in order to avoid intensification of existing neighborhoods.

Derby residents and City officials consider the elimination of “blighted” housing a top priority in the City. Derby has had a Blight Ordinance since 1998 and, as a result of the ordinance, about 80% of the properties cited have complied with required repairs. Other cited properties have been given to the City and foreclosure will be pursued with regard to many of the properties that do not comply. These properties may provide opportunities for establishment of pocket parks.

With planned redevelopment of some residential neighborhoods in Derby, the new standards will also move Derby more in the direction of the current market preferences. For example, a preferred developer has been selected and has begun the process to redevelop blocks north of West 4th Street, between Olivia and Cemetery Avenue. This area contains much of the sub-standard housing in Derby, and lack of parking and density of development makes rehabilitation not a desirable option. Plans call for existing residences to be demolished and replaced with clustered single family units and congregate housing for the elderly.

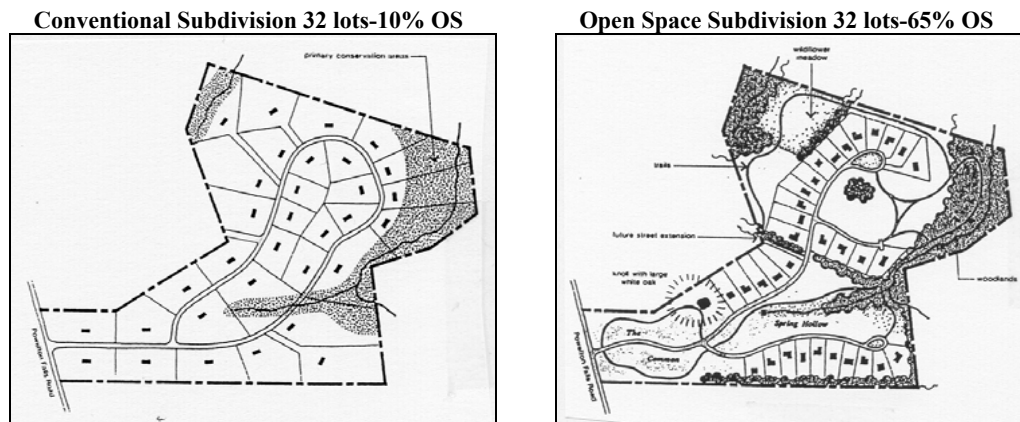
Large redevelopment projects of this scale require a significant amount of time and planning to implement, but may be necessary to create a more “livable” urban environment for residents. It is considered “smart growth” to redevelop existing neighborhoods, with existing public infrastructure and transportation services, rather than to continue the pattern of subdividing outlying vacant land. The Derby is embarking on a large scale project that will change the prevailing pattern of providing new housing in the City from single family subdivisions to well designed clustered housing. Derby redevelopment plan will, at the same time, meet identified housing needs for the elderly and enhance community character by improving housing condition.

New Single Family Subdivisions

Each new subdivision makes residents feel that the little undeveloped land left in the City is being taken from them. Although a community cannot prohibit development, it can strive to change the pattern of development of new subdivisions to preserve more open space and preserve it in *visible* locations.

Conventional subdivision and zoning regulations generally result in preserved open space, or with undeveloped lands a “cookie cutter” approach to land use regulations that is determined by dimensional standards than by the natural capabilities of the site to be developed. Each zoning district in Derby requires a minimum lot size and strict adherence to minimum lot dimensions and yard set-back requirements. While these regulations are designed to ensure building lots are big enough to prevent encroachment on neighboring properties and maintain septic systems in less developed areas of the City, they also result in a mechanical approach to subdivision design.

This plan recommends that that Derby consider modifying local regulations to encourage open space development patterns in lower density housing areas. A program that encourages open space development patterns includes a definition of buildable land and a density regulation, which together are used to determine the *yield* (the number of lots allowed on the parcel). A specific amount of open space is then required to be provided as part of the subdivision and the developer is then asked to design the best plan for subdividing the land taking into account the natural constraints of the parcel and the desire to provide more open space. This open space can be located on the parcel to conserve natural resources, buffer adjacent uses, protect scenic views, and contribute to (rather than detract) from the character of the community. The difference in this concept of subdivision and conventional subdivisions is illustrated by the sketches below:



Source: Conservation Design For subdivisions: A Practical Guide of Creating Open Space Networks, Randell G. Arendt

Housing Affordability

	Average Housing Value -
Connecticut	\$220,858
Shelton	213,107
Orange	213,013
Prospect	161,088
Seymour	135,044
Ansonia	122,999
Derby	114,378
<u>Naugatuck</u>	<u>110,745</u>

CT DECD 1999

Housing Needs

Derby's housing stock would be considered affordable in comparison with the average price of housing in Connecticut and in the Valley Region. Based on the lower than average cost of single family housing in Derby, providing affordable housing does not seem to be a priority for the City. HALO Redevelopment Plans call for mostly market rate housing to be built. Subsidized housing units for persons age 55+ are the only affordable housing planned in the redevelopment area.

Public Act 108, concerning affordable housing establishes special provisions to promote the construction of affordable housing in communities which do not have 10% of their housing units designated as affordable. Derby in 1999 was considered to have 7% or 386 affordable housing units. Although Derby does not meet the state's target of 10%, the definition of affordable housing set by the State is very limiting and much of Derby's housing is actually within the "affordable" range. Derby has a fair share of affordable housing and efforts should be continued to increase market rate housing as part of redevelopment efforts.

Senior Citizen Housing

The large anticipated growth in the number of persons age 55 and over the next twenty years makes provision of special housing for the elderly a priority for housing construction. In addition to subsidized rental units, congregate housing and accessory apartments are needed to ensure residents are able to remain as part of the community. Redevelopment efforts recognize this need and emphasize provision of special housing for the elderly.

Cicia Manor



Styger Terrace



Lakeview Apartments



Promote Business & Economic Development

This section of the Plan looks at the location and type of retail, office, and industrial development and other activities in Derby. While there may be many reasons why a community would pursue economic development, the primary reasons for Derby to invest in an economic development program appear to be:

- growing the tax base to improve community services without significant tax increases,
- creating higher paying jobs in Derby so as to attract more middle income residents back to the city, and
- preparing residents for jobs.

Key Economic Development Program Elements

Through a review of past plans and meetings with municipal officials in Derby the following have emerged as major themes related to the City's economic development future:

- *Prepare Sites For Business* - The primary factor impeding business growth in Derby is a lack of physical space. If Derby is to continue to grow its tax base and expand employment in the City then locations must be prepared for development. The city has moved in this direction by zoning large amounts of vacant land in the far east and west sides for industrial campus types of use. This is a step in the right direction but has had limited impact because of the lack of development ready sites. If Derby wants to attract higher quality business park type uses than it must consider spending funds on roads and utilities to make City sites competitive with other locations.
- *Foster Adaptive reuse* - Effective adaptive reuse of older industrial buildings and mixed use-buildings, along with site clean-up activities should be targeted for older facilities the City wants to save. Efforts must be made to create a flexible approach to fire and safety issues with the assistance of state officials, who can help modify codes on a case-by-case basis. The City should provide assistance in locating the many sources of federal and state funding to facilitate adaptive reuse, as well as provide local tax incentives. Continuation of the Brownfield Pilot Program that assists with the identification and clean-up of environmental contamination at older industrial sites is an important part of facilitating reuse.

Education

Education is the key to the “new” economy and essential in creating better job opportunities and attracting higher quality businesses to Derby.

The quality of Derby’s school system can best be improved through creation of magnet schools serving the Greater Valley Region.

This would allow for a new approach to improve basic education. Special “academy” schools can be established, with input from the business community, to provide training in special areas such as the arts, finance, technology and health care areas to name a few. This would augment regional economic development plans calling for improved linkages between business and education.

Downtown Business District

The economic health and appearance of downtown continues to be a major concern for Derby residents. Not only is it a quality of life issue having a negative impact on community character and spirit, it is also related to the city’s competitiveness with other business locations in the State.

- Prospective Companies may feel that the current character of the downtown is an indicator of the future prospects for the community as a whole.
- Establishing a Main Street Program as envisioned by the National Historic Preservation Trust (or least the adoption of their methods of building a strong public/private partnership) in redeveloping and marketing is essential to successful community building.
- The downtown redevelopment plan should emphasize the quality of development and design standards should be adhered to ensuring whatever is built enhances the character of Derby.
- A stronger linkage should be made between the need for historic preservation and downtown redesign. Derby has an illustrious history and it should not be lost to redevelopment efforts. Some buildings in the downtown do not appear to enhance the beauty and character of this area.
- Creating visible and well marked parking is essential to creating a successful business area in downtown.
- Zoning regulations should promote retail uses only on first floor space in the downtown. Too many offices and other uses discourages the kind of pedestrian traffic that is needed to create successful retail shopping.
- Plans for redevelopment to the west of Route 34 should consider how this area will tie to the rest of downtown.

Other Economic Development Elements

- *Improving primary “gateways”* into Derby would benefit the community (an example of a gateway is along Route 34 the Route 8 interchange). The nature of the improvement varies by location, including such things as visual quality of buildings, sidewalk condition, signage, traffic congestion, or providing for desired retail or service opportunities. Major access routes provide the first impression of the City for many visitors and the importance of these gateway areas cannot be overlooked in making Derby a desirable place to do business.
- *Better utilizing waterfront areas* is an important goal for Derby to adopt. Riverfront areas continue to be an underutilized resource. Brownfield remediation, improved access, and a change to uses more consistent with a modern economy and community interests are important considerations in revitalizing these areas.
- *Marketing the City* as a location for service and trade related businesses is essential. Regional economic development plans indicate that these are growth areas for the Naugatuck Valley Region. Continued regional coordination with regional organizations such as the Valley Economic Alliance can assist the City in marketing efforts.

Development Map

Address Community Facilities

Community services and facilities include such governmental functions as education, public works, public safety, and recreational services. Such services contribute significantly to the character of a community and its quality of life. The Plan of Conservation & Development reviews the physical aspects of such services and facilities to ensure they are appropriately located and sized to meet community needs during the planning period and beyond. The Plan is not intended to address the management, operations, or programs of individual departments or facilities.

There are a number of issues related to community facilities that can be directly related to the growth of the community. It is reasonable to expect that community growth will increase the need for community facilities and the challenge will be to prioritize and phase these improvements over time.

City Hall - The Derby City Hall built in the 1960s no longer has room to house all City functions and has no adjacent parking facilities. The building department has been relocated to rented offices in downtown and the City Engineer, Planner and Corporation Counsel, who are contract employees, have no office space in City Hall. A newer bank building on Elizabeth Street is planned as the future home for a new City Hall.

Staffing - With a move to a new City Hall, a study should be undertaken to determine what professional staffing a community the size of Derby should have. Similar size communities often have full-time Planners, Parks and Recreation Directors, and Engineers. Hiring staff rather than paying on a contractual basis for these services may allow the City to use professional staff more effectively for more diverse activities, and improve the overall functioning of the city.

Community Center - The lower level of the existing City Hall houses an indoor pool and fitness facility that is now open to residents of Derby. The recently renovated facility is in the downtown and provides recreation space for the densely developed residential area north of downtown. It's utility is somewhat hampered by a lack of dedicated parking facilities.

Derby Senior Center - Is located in a restored historic bank building on Main Street and provides a daily luncheon program. Dial-a-ride transportation services are provided regionally by Valley Regional Transit District. Services are adequate currently, but the increase in number of persons age 65+ expected over the next 20 years, necessitates planning for the future.

Public Safety - The Police Station is located conveniently near the intersection of Routes 8 and 34 on Water Street and is a modern facility. Four volunteer fire companies (East End Hose Company, Hotchkiss Hose Company #1, Paugasset Hook and Ladder Company #4, and Storm Engine Company #2) provide fire suppression and are also responsible for emergency medical response. These facilities are expected to be adequate for the planning period.

Public Works - The Public Works Department is responsible for maintenance of city roads and storm drainage systems, maintenance of public works vehicles and some fire equipment, maintenance of city parks and recreation, and solid waste management. The public works complex, located on Coon Hollow Road, was built in 1975 and also has a 6,000 square foot adjoining storage building. Funds are being put aside by the City to build a sand and salt storage facility within the next two years.

Library - Derby has two public libraries – the Derby Public Library in a restored historic building at the intersection of Water and Elizabeth Street and the Derby Neck Library on Hawthorne Avenue. The libraries have adequate facilities and are not expected to need expansion within the planning period.

Education Facilities - The Derby public school system consists of Bradley School (grades K-6) on David Humphrey's Road, Irving School (grades K-6) on Garden Place, and Derby High School (grades 7-12) on Nutmeg Avenue. A public referendum to build a new high school in Derby, and continue use of the existing high school facility as a middle school only, was recently defeated. The larger number of students in this age category expected over the next decade will make planning for additional capacity for grades 7-12 essential. Options such as high school renovation, portable classrooms will have to be explored for the near term. Promoting regional magnet schools should be considered a priority for future action.

Housing Authority - The Derby Housing Authority operates three senior citizen housing complexes with a total of 105 units (Cicia Manor, Stygar Terrace, and Guardiano Terrace). There is often a waiting list exceeding 100 seniors, because there is little turnover in occupancy. The housing authority also operates a Section 8 Voucher Program for the City. There is a need for expanded assisted housing and for a variety of housing types for the elderly. Current redevelopment plans in the central part of the city call for the construction of affordable rental units and an assisted living facility for the elderly.

Recreation Facilities - Derby residents have identified recreation facility condition and shortages as a priority issue. The following tables summarize the existing outdoor recreation facilities in Derby by active facilities for organized or team sports and passive facilities for unorganized or individual activities.

Recreation Facility Inventory

Location	Type	Facilities
Coon Hollow Park, Ryan Field	Active	Baseball, Football, Softball, Soccer, Track, Little League, Tennis, Basketball, Picnic Area
Bradley Complex	Active	Playground, Softball, Babe Ruth Baseball, Soccer
Veterans Community Center	Active	Indoor Swimming, Gym, Exercise Facilities, Stage
Derby Recreation Camp	Active	Swimming, boating
Irving & Bradley Schools	Active	Playground, Gym
Derby High School	Active	Gym
Osbornedale State Park	Passive	Hiking trails, Picnic Area, Kellogg Environmental Center, ice-skating, Cross-country skiing
Witek Park	Passive	Hiking Trails, Fishing
East Derby Green	Passive	Park
Town Green	Passive	Park
Derby Dam	Passive	Fishing
O'Sullivan's Island	Passive	Potential Open Space
Pink House Cove	Passive	Fishing

A 1999 report prepared for the Parks & Recreation Commission by Milone and MacBroom found several outdoor recreation deficiencies that should be addressed. Overall, the report summarized the state of outdoor recreation in Derby by stating “as the number of participants grows for each athletic program, field shortages, scheduling conflicts, and overuse continue to increase. Derby will have to either create new fields, make improvements on existing facilities, or continue to creatively schedule all athletic events to occur safely in the currently maximized field system, with the possibility of having to curtail some.”

The Milone & MacBroom Report summarizes three alternatives all including cost estimates for improving existing recreational facilities, in addition to establishing new facilities at Witek Park. There has also been speculation that the State of Connecticut may allow recreational fields to be placed at Osbornedale State Park and this is another option that is worth exploring.

As indicated in the following chart, whether in relation to national standards or identified local needs, additional outdoor recreational facilities are needed or desired in the future for a variety of activities. Derby schools have limited recreational facilities so general City facilities must also serve school program needs.

Active Recreation Facility Needs Assessment

Type of Activity	Existing Facilities	Additional Needs Per National Standard	Additional Needs Per Recreation. Dept	Notes On Existing Facilities
Baseball				
Baseball Fields	1	1	1	Interferes with track use
Softball Fields	2	1	1	Facilities need repair
Little League Fields	2	1	2	No irrigation, needs repairs
Court Activities				
Tennis Courts	4	2	0	Recently resurfaced
Basketball Courts	2	1	1	Not enough gym space
Volleyball	0	1	0	
Field Activities				
Football Field	1	0	0	Overlaps baseball diamond
Soccer Fields	1	2	2	Not proper size, no irrigation
Running Track	1	0	0	Not suitable for competitions
Water Activities*				
Pools, Beaches	2	0		Community Center & Beach
Boat/Fishing	3	n/a		Several locations
Miscellaneous				
Senior Citizens Center	Yes	n/a		Recently remodeled
Youth Center	No	n/a		Should be considered
Summer Camp	Yes	n/a		Derby Recreation Camp
Golf course	0	-1		Not a priority

Recreation Standards

The National Parks and Recreation Association establishes standards for recreational facilities.

These standards, however, have to be adjusted in each community based on the local popularity of various sports and activities.

This assessment includes adjustments to meet needs determined by the Derby Parks and Recreation Commission.

Currently there is much debate about placing recreational fields in Witek Park. Witek Park is comprised of excess water company land purchased several years ago by the City as open space. Witek Park is zoned OS (Open Space) and only passive recreational uses are allowed in this zone. The referendum that created Witek Park, however, did allow for 25% of the park to be used for recreational uses. Based on the comparison of City facilities with national standards there is a need for more recreational fields in Derby. There are four issues that need to be considered relative to recreational facilities:

- Should sport fields be allowed in open space? This kind of debate can be minimized in the future by planning for both open space and recreational needs. An open space plan (suggested in the open space section of this plan) would define open space and outline desired open space in all sections of the City including smaller “pocket parks”, which can help limit the feeling of density. If an Open Space Plan is done, with input from residents, there would be agreement on the amount and location of desired open space in Derby. In addition, as the population ages after the year 2010, passive recreation uses will become more important. Plans should be made now for trails and other “passive” recreational uses usually associated with open space areas.
- If fields are not desired by the public in Witek Park, there will be a land cost to locating them elsewhere. There are few alternative sites in Derby, since most of the vacant land in the City is currently zoned for industrial park or residential use. A comparison of the cost of locating fields in other sites in the city and Witek Park should be done. In this analysis the potential loss of tax revenue created by rezoning and/or change of use of proposed sites should be considered, not just the cost of acquiring land and building fields. The public should be offered alternatives along with the cost/ benefit of all possible options. If residents do not want to provide funding for additional outdoor recreation sport fields then the resulting limitation in activities should be made known.
- A ten-year capital plan should also be done which takes into account the needed renovations to existing facilities and maintenance, lighting, and watering of existing recreational fields. The need to maintain, and not overuse, existing facilities is related to the need for new facilities, but tying these issues together may not give necessary attention to the condition of existing facilities. It is important to enhance community character in Derby by providing recreation areas that are well cared for and give a good impression of the city. Ongoing maintenance, dedication of fields to particular uses, rotation of fields and the construction of new fields are all necessary for Derby to have adequate recreation areas.
- There is not enough gym space for sports and other activities that require this kind of space. Possible alternatives include an addition to the high school, which includes a gym, or resolving parking issues at Veterans Community Center, allowing more activities to be scheduled where space is available.

Development Strategies For Discussion

Community Structure

1. Reinforce the defining elements of Derby's overall structure with :
 - Downtown remaining the major focal point,
 - Secondary focal points at historic greens,
 - Greenbelt areas that open up the rivers, and
 - Continued lower density development in outlying areas.

Housing & Residential Areas

1. Continue zoning efforts in older neighborhoods that limit density and require any redevelopment to meet modern parking and set-back requirements.
2. Develop plans for a variety of housing types to be needed by the increasing number of elderly residents.
3. Ensure any affordable housing built in Derby is lower density and meets identified needs.
4. Continue efforts to improve the appearance of housing in Derby through enforcement of the City's Blight Ordinance and implementation of redevelopment plans, where necessary.
5. Require visible open space be a part of any new development or redevelopment plans in the City to lessen the appearance of congestion.

Business & Economic Development

1. Develop guidelines to assist the City in considering whether to fund infrastructure improvements in the Industrial Campus Districts.
2. Seek State aid in determining the development potential for Derby's section of the Fountain Lake Industrial Area.
3. Continue brownfield mitigation programs to encourage reuse of existing business sites.
4. Assist with building code issues and consider local tax incentives to encourage adaptive reuse of older buildings.
5. Identify primary gateway areas to the city and plan for changes that will enhance the first impression of the city.
6. Continue downtown revitalization efforts with careful attention given to the quality of development and historic character of Derby residents want to maintain.
7. Work with regional economic development agencies to market Derby as a location for service and trade related businesses.

Community Facilities

Address Current Needs

1. Consolidate all City Hall activities in a single facility with available parking. Study professional staffing patterns of other similar size communities in the state to determine the appropriate staffing levels for municipal functions.
2. Work with education officials to develop alternatives to provide additional space needed at the Middle/High School.
3. Develop locations and costs associated with building needed recreational fields.
4. Consider additional need for gym space if school renovations are planned and/or provide for parking solutions to allow more extensive use of Veterans Community Center Gym.
5. Provide the remainder of funding need to build a salt and sand shed for the Department of Public Works.
6. Provide alternative housing for the elderly, considering assisted living and congregate housing options, as part of redevelopment plans.

Prepare For Future Needs

1. Prepare a ten-year capital plan, which identifies the repair needs of existing City facilities and establishes priorities for remodeling or new construction needs.
2. During the planning period, investigate the need for additional affordable and/or age-restricted housing for elderly residents.
3. Develop an overall land acquisition strategy based on projections for future facility needs.
4. Identify areas where “passive” recreation activities, such as walking and bike trails, are desirable to meet the needs of an aging population.
5. Continue to investigate the feasibility of providing a regional cultural facility and/or magnet school at the Sterling Opera House.

Aim For Efficiency & Economy

1. Address the need to improve education facilities in Derby by working through regional organizations and the State of Connecticut to explore the establishment of regional magnet schools.
2. Consider how City facilities such as the senior center, libraries and schools, will be effectively used over the planning period to provide services and activities for an aging population.
3. Consolidate all vehicle repairs and building maintenance activities with the Public Works Department.
4. Consider the consolidation of fire department and emergency medical activities, if lack of volunteer staffing becomes a problem. Programs such as local tax incentives and pension programs should be explored to encourage continued volunteer participation.