

13. Implementation and Evaluation

The Plan of Conservation and Development is only effective to the degree to which it is understood, accepted, and utilized by the residents, town officials, volunteers, and staff. The POCD is intended to be a living document. The Plan must be adaptable enough to respond to changes in its underlying assumptions, and to changes in the social, economic, and technological structure of the town and region. It should be reviewed from time to time to be sure those assumptions are still viable, and amended if necessary.

Although the Planning and Zoning Commission is required by statute to create a Plan of Conservation and Development for the town, it has no real legal power to ensure that the plan is implemented. The POCD is an advisory document. The adoption of the POCD is therefore the beginning of a continual process of implementation that is carried out by making changes to and enforcing the existing regulations and town ordinances; identifying necessary capital improvements; making changes to administrative and permitting procedures; and creating master plans. **Most importantly, the implementation of the Plan relies on the willingness of townspeople and elected officials to work diligently to realize the stated goals.**

Implementation of a Plan typically occurs in two main phases.

1. **High priority recommendations that are critical to the implementation of the POCD.**
2. **Recommendations to be implemented over time because they may require additional study, coordination with or implementation by others, or involve the commitment of significant financial resources.**

After the adoption of the POCD, the Planning and Zoning Commission will develop a separate *Action Plan* to accompany the Plan. This Action Plan will identify the high priority recommendations, long range actions, and ongoing actions; designate a responsible agency; and determine a time-frame for completion. The Planning and Zoning Commission will evaluate the progress of the Plan by holding an annual POCD review meeting to evaluate progress on tasks identified in the Action Plan. Other evaluation techniques may include submitting regular updates on the town's progress on the various websites and bulletin boards as well as submitting updates to the town-related newsletters.

In conclusion, the goal of North Stonington's 2013 POCD is to create a sustainable relationship between preservation and development. Short sightedness and inaction on the part of citizens, elected officials and other stake holders will be costly in the long term with respect to creating the kind of environment residents desire, preserving our quality of life, and ensuring the economic viability of North Stonington. North Stonington must be committed to progress and be willing to make strategic investments in projects or community infrastructure necessary to support this progress. North Stonington must also commit to good land use planning by being reactive when reviewing applications, proactive by engaging in more master planning and design control, and integrative when formulating plans and projects. The POCD provides a strong framework for this, thereby making its implementation and continual evaluation vital to a sustainable and livable North Stonington.

