

 BRIEFING BOOKLET  
Introduction

# COMMUNITY INPUT

# 3

NEWINGTON  
2020 POCD

## Overview

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As part of updating the 2010 Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), the Town Plan and Zoning Commission requested a public workshop meeting to learn about issues that Newington residents felt were important to consider in the POCD update. Over 70 Newington residents participated in a meeting in the High School cafeteria and this booklet summarizes the workshop results.

People were informed about the meeting through a “save the date” notice in the tax bill mailed to every taxpayer, press releases, social media posts, Newington Community TV screensaver, posters placed around Newington, word-of-mouth, message signs, and other means.

*“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”*

Margaret Wheatley  
Writer

## People Attending

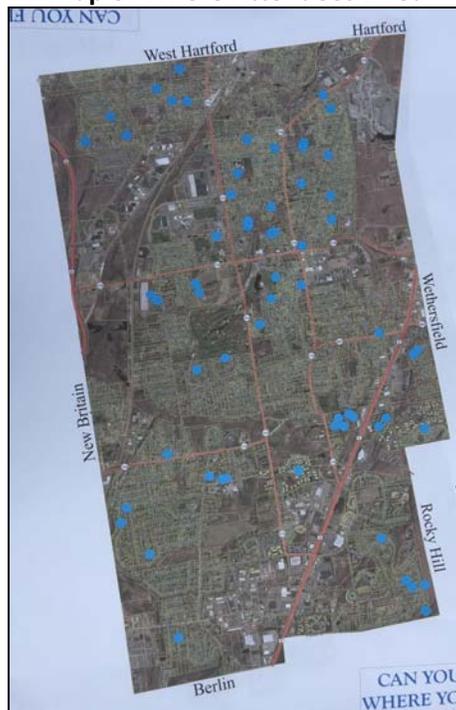
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People attending the meeting were asked to place a “blue dot” on a map of Newington to illustrate where they live.

The distribution of dots indicated that residents came from different parts of Newington and the distribution of attendees was reasonably similar to the overall distribution of Newington residents. As a result, there did not seem to be a “geographic bias” which might have skewed the results of the meeting.

While no data was collected, the age composition of the participants was observed to be older than the median age of Newington’s population (about 43 years old).

Map of Where Attendees Lived



**Tabulation of Prouds**

From a POCD perspective, “prouds” were categorized as follows:

Community Facilities	100
Community Character	60
Open Space	38
Town Center	11
Business Development	10
Pedestrian / Bike / Transit	6
Residential Development	4
Transit Nodes	2
Natural Resources	0
Sustainability	0
Utility Infrastructure	0
Vehicular Transportation	0
Other	13

**What People Are Proud Of**

An exercise conducted at the meeting involved asking residents to think of things about Newington they were proud of. Residents were asked to list these on a card (and submit the card at the meeting) and place a “green dot” on a map to represent it.

This exercise is intended to learn about ***the types of things that people might want to encourage in Newington.*** The exercise can also reveal the types of things that attract people to Newington and contribute to the overall quality of life for residents.

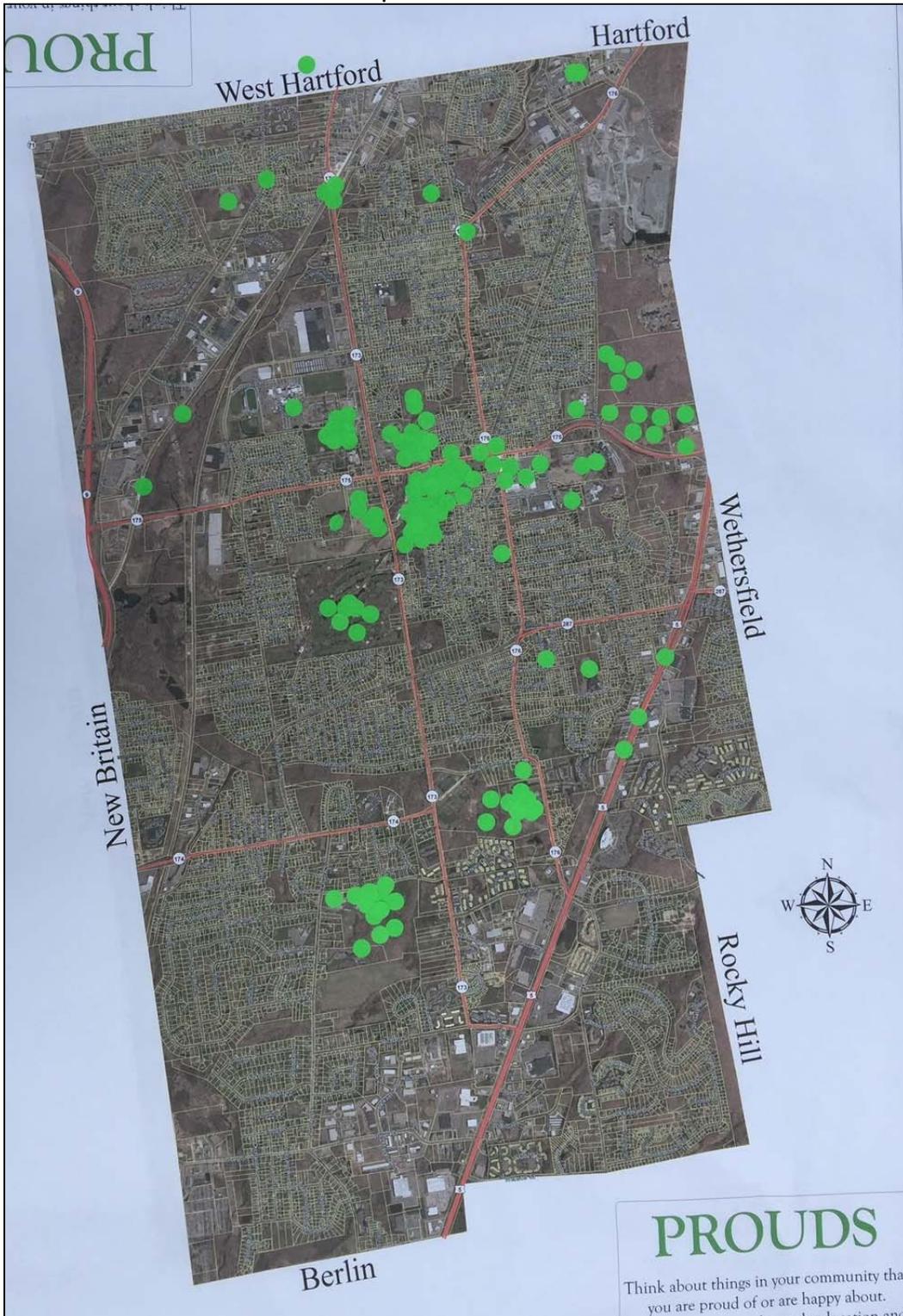
This exercise seemed to indicate that participants were proud of:

- Town facilities and services which meet community needs.
- Things that contribute to their quality of life.
- Things that enhance the physical character of the community.
- Things that make them feel they are part of a community.
- Things that contribute to their sense of well-being.

**Detail of Top Prouds**

<b>Community Facilities</b>	<b>100</b>	Library	35
		Schools	28
		Town Facilities/ Services / Staff / Town Hall	16
		Senior Center	9
		Park / Recreation Facilities and programs	7
		Police / Fire / EMT	5
<b>Community Character</b>	<b>60</b>	Eddy Farm / Young Farm / Farms	22
		Cedar Mountain	16
		Indian hill Country Club	9
		Other	13
<b>Open Space</b>	<b>38</b>	Parks (Mill Pond, Churchill, etc.)	28
		Parks (general)	8
		Other parks / open space	2
<b>Town Center</b>	<b>11</b>	Town Center / Market Square / Main Street	11
<b>Business Development</b>	<b>10</b>	Shopping / Berlin Turnpike Businesses	10

Map of Prouds



**Tabulation of Sorrys**

From a POCD perspective, “sorrys” were categorized as follows:

Vehicular Transportation	42
Community Character	31
Business Development	29
Pedestrian / Bike / Transit	26
Community Facilities	22
Town Center	8
Open Space	5
Residential Development	5
Natural Resources	4
Transit Nodes	3
Utility Infrastructure	3
Sustainability	0
Other	15

**What People Are Sorry About**

Residents were also asked to identify things in Newington they were sorry about. These were listed on the same card and identified by placing a “red dot” on a map to represent it.

This exercise is intended to learn about ***the types of things that people might want to discourage in Newington.*** The exercise can also reveal the types of things in Newington that might irritate people or detract from the overall quality of life for residents.

This exercise seemed to indicate that participants were sorry about:

- Things (like traffic) that irritate them and/or detract from their perception of their quality of life.
- Things that negatively affect their perception of the physical character of the community.
- Things they feel reflect poorly on the community (negative comments/behavior, vacant spaces, business closings, etc.).
- Things that detract from their sense of well-being.
- Things they wish the community had or had more of.

**Detail of Top Sorrys**

<b>Vehicular Transportation</b>	<b>42</b>	Traffic (general)	14
		Traffic (Cedar Street)	12
		Traffic (Berlin Turnpike)	4
		Road condition / maintenance	3
		Other (generally site specific)	9
<b>Community Character</b>	<b>31</b>	Rancor / Politics / Social Media / Civility	10
		Quarry	4
		Other (generally site specific)	17
<b>Business Development</b>	<b>29</b>	Empty business locations / lack of new business	11
		Lack of Progress at National Welding	3
		Other (generally site specific)	15
<b>Pedestrian / Bicycle / Transit</b>	<b>26</b>	Transit (Busway parking, service, etc.)	14
		Pedestrian / Bike (lack of facilities)	12
<b>Community Facilities</b>	<b>22</b>	Town Hall Renovation	10
		Schools	3
		Other	9
<b>Other</b>	<b>40</b>	Taxes / controlling costs	12
		Town Center languishing	8
		Lack of more open spaces	5
		Lack of housing options to meet their needs	5
		Garage spill	4
		Proposed train station	3
		Lack of high speed internet / gas service	3

Map of Sorrys



**Description of Exercise**

People attending the meeting were given five vouchers representing “planning points” (one @ 20 points, two @ 10 points each, and two @ 5 points each) to allocate among twelve boxes representing topics being considered for Newington’s POCD.

Residents were asked to allocate the planning points in the boxes to reflect what they felt was important to them and/or for the community to address as part of the planning process.

**Issues / Priorities**

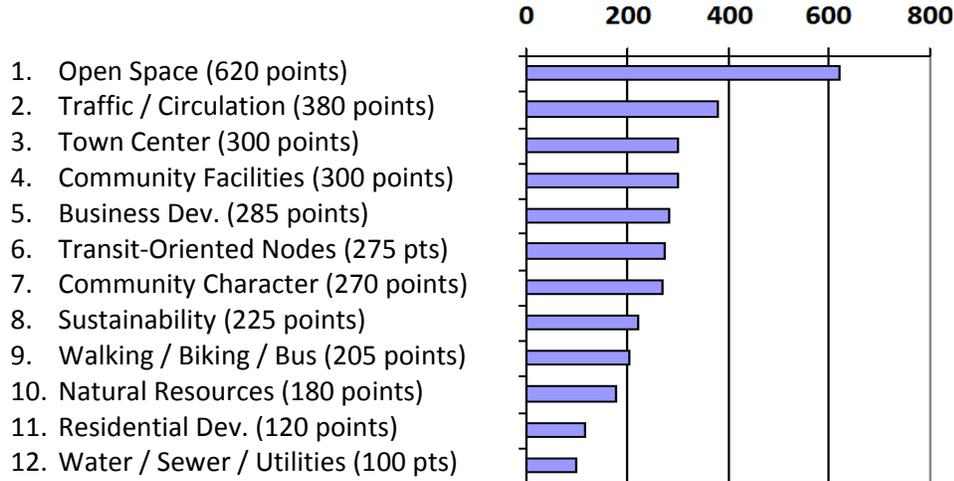
Participants at the meeting were then asked to use “planning points” to express their feeling about topics typically considered as part of a POCD. The sidebar describes the exercise and the results are presented below:

**Tabulation of Planning Points**

	<b>20 points</b>	<b>10 points</b>	<b>5 points</b>	<b>Total Points</b>
<b>Conservation Issues</b>				
<b>Open Space</b>	360	190	70	<b>620</b>
<b>Community Character</b>	100	110	60	<b>270</b>
<b>Natural Resources</b>	40	90	50	<b>180</b>
<b>Sustainability Issues</b>				
<b>Sustainability / Resiliency</b>	140	30	55	<b>225</b>
<b>Development Issues</b>				
<b>Town Center</b>	140	90	70	<b>300</b>
<b>Business Development</b>	100	130	55	<b>285</b>
<b>Transit-Oriented Nodes</b>	120	100	55	<b>275</b>
<b>Residential Development</b>	20	90	10	<b>120</b>
<b>Infrastructure Issues</b>				
<b>Traffic and Circulation</b>	180	140	60	<b>380</b>
<b>Community Facilities</b>	100	150	50	<b>300</b>
<b>Walking / Biking / Bus</b>	20	120	65	<b>205</b>
<b>Water / Sewer / Utilities</b>	0	50	50	<b>100</b>

**DRAFT – For TPZ Review / Discussion**

When ranked in the order of points received, the topics identified as being ***most important*** to participants at the meeting included:



These results of the planning points exercise were presented at the meeting and the remainder of the meeting was devoted to discussing the topics that got the most points.

**Open Space**



**Traffic / Circulation**



**Town Center**



**Community Facilities**



**Open Space (620 points)**

- People put planning points in this box because Newington doesn't have much open space left
- People want more open space preserved
- Question is how to define open space:
  - Is it simply undeveloped land?
  - Is it improved parkland?
  - Is it land that is preserved in some way?
  - Is wetlands open space?
- What is the use or purpose of open space land?
  - Active recreation?
  - Passive recreation?
  - Public access?
  - Just to look at?
- Open space is probably not a reason why people move here
- Newington does not have a land trust
- Could we benefit from an organization to help preserve open space?
- Open space helps "green infrastructure"

**Traffic / Circulation (380 points)**

- People put planning points in this box because it can be a real problem at times, especially Cedar Street
- Why is Cedar Street a "super-highway" only in Newington?
- Could we change Cedar Street to a three lane cross section with a center turn lane?
- Hope that Robbins Avenue doesn't become like Cedar Street.
- Some local streets are being used as shortcuts (such as Hawley and Ellsworth) to bypass problem intersections on Cedar Street
- Traffic calming on side streets should be included in the POCD
- There are some poorly configured intersections that should be fixed
  - Main at Robbins.
  - Cedar at Maple Hill.
- Lights could be signalized and synchronized better.
- There may be more traffic in Newington during the I-84 reconstruction.
- People develop habits and so, with the reconstruction of I-84, people may explore alternatives and this may include Fastrak. That would be a new habit which could help Newington.
- The Berlin Turnpike has congestion from commuters.
- Have traffic volumes changed over time? Have we been unfairly burdened?

**Town Center (300 points)**

- People put planning points in this box because they feel the Town Center can and should be improved
- A big chunk of land is not developed. This is prime real estate, and should be developed!
- Southington addressed their downtown and now it has restaurants, walkable streets, nice sidewalks.
- How do we unleash the potential in Newington's town center?
- How can we make it more walkable like other town centers?
  - Activities and events?
  - Outdoor dining?
- Perhaps we could build up. Add parking structure?
- How do we protect Local Market and other small businesses?
- Can we preserve local businesses? Even banks are closing in the center.
- Will the transit village affect the center?
- How much impact is related to E commerce?
- What will our children want in their center?
- At one time Newington Center was a destination due to the unique retailers there. How do we encourage this?
- Traffic flows turn the town center into a different entity. How can we tie it all together? And not impede traffic?

**Community Facilities (300 points)**

- People put planning points in this box because they want the Town to maintain the facilities we have
- The library is liked a lot. It needs to be expanded.
- Overall, facilities are pretty good.
- There is concern over the Town Hall project.
- The senior center has very innovative leadership and is seen as a real leader in Connecticut and in the country.
- What happened with the park master plan? Is it still relevant?
- Schools are a great system. We need to continue to invest.

**Business Development (285 points)**

- People put planning points in this box because they want a strong tax base and strong businesses
- Business development will help the tax base. .
- It will also provide more jobs for the area although maybe not for Newington residents.
- We need to fill the empty spaces in existing buildings.

**Transit-Oriented Nodes (275 pts)**

- People put planning points in this box because they feel this is the biggest opportunity and the biggest challenge for Newington.
- Having housing for people (especially young people) with transit access to jobs would be a real asset.
- Can also provide housing for older residents / aging population.
- Affordable housing is not necessarily low income housing.
- If we can make Newington “sticky”, people will come as renters then buy here and stay here.
- Although transit doesn’t always take people to their job location, it is a real asset that other places may not have
- Newington does have a central location. We should take advantage of this.
- The Fastrak stations are terrific but there’s not enough parking
- Focusing on a “kiss and ride” design actually doubles the traffic flow as opposed to providing enough parking.
- People are not using feeder buses to get to the Fastrak station. It seems that if they have to take two buses then they just may drive into Hartford.

**Newington Junction**



**Cedar Street**



**Community Character (270 points)**

- People put planning points in this box because they want to preserve and enhance the things they like about Newington.
- Newington appears and feels like a small community.
- How can Newington project enhance its identity?
- How do we keep the character of Newington? How do we make it more appealing? How do we share what we have?
- [How do we celebrate our diversity?]
- [Some people feel “urbanization” of Newington is inevitable but others feel it can be stopped if we plan and develop appropriately.]
- [Newington is a safe and desirable place, the challenge is to maintain it that way.]

**Sustainability (225 points)**

- People put planning points in this box because they want to become a more sustainable community.
  - Economic sustainability
  - Environmental sustainability
- Can we become more sustainable by using community facility rooftops for solar collectors?

**Open Discussion (225 points)**

- There is a lack of sidewalks on Cedar Street. Why do the sidewalks end?
- What is the status at the National Welding site? It is in a holding pattern because of a private developer and DOT trying to coordinate.
- Would it be possible to have POCD meetings at different times of day?
- How much on the 2010 plan was implemented?
  - Policies
  - Action steps.
- How can we try to make sure this POCD is implemented?
  - People would like to see an annual state of the plan meeting.
  - This would be a measuring tool to report progress in the past year and objectives for the coming year.
  - It would be best if a specific date was picked and publicized now.
- While we are between Hartford and New Britain, the busway helped those communities more then it helped Newington.
- [Lives in an affordable unit and when taxes go up, her housing value goes down. Stop raising taxes.]

## NOTES & COMMENTS

A series of 20 horizontal dashed lines for writing notes and comments.