

## LAND USE DEPARTMENT

The Land Use Department conducts planning of the Town's land in corresponding strategies – the first being *long-range planning* via implementation of the municipal improvements, programs and standards recommended in the Town's Plan of Conservation & Development (“proactive” to municipal needs) and the second being *current planning* via regulation of property owners' site-specific initiatives (“reactive” to market forces).

The Department administers the business of the Town's land use agencies, including the Architectural Review Board, Conservation Commission, Historic District Commission, Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Zoning Commission. We are open to assist the public daily from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Carol Suits, Administrative Assistant, supports the day-to-day functions of the Department. Chris Costa, Enforcement Officer, maintains regular office hours daily from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Christine Nelson, Town Planner, is available by appointment Monday through Thursday. Kelly Volansky, Environmental Planner, is available for consultation on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings. And, our administrative clerks, Joanne Rynecki, Maura Farbotka, Kathy Noyes and Kim Barrows, can be found at the regularly-scheduled public meetings of these land use agencies throughout the evenings of each month.

In furtherance of the Town's continuing initiative to make more resources available through its website to at-home users, this year the Department posted as many maps and plans as were available for each land use agency and conducted a program to scan and post the Department's collection of archived zoning regulations. As a courtesy to property owners, we reworked the cartography of the *FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps* as a more readable wall guide to the official maps, which can be found in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor hallway of the Town Hall outside Land Use Department.

The majority of this fiscal year found the Land Use Department coordinating a multi-commission local initiative to consider the newly State-enabled Incentive Housing Zone, which allows the Zoning Commission to consider the location of overlay zones in eligible areas, and the right to permit a bonus in density to any development in which a portion of residential units are deed-restricted as affordable in rent or purchase. The Zoning Planning and Economic Development Commissions, as well as the Architectural Review Board, spent the fall, winter and spring analyzing “eligible areas” of town as those with existing infrastructure and development, walkability, public transportation, underutilized buildings or opportunity to revitalize in general. Further analysis defined developable land and appropriate types of housing based on compatibility with surrounding uses or Town plans for neighborhood enhancement. The Zoning Commission will consider this information in the coming fiscal year to create one or more zones that lay over the underlying districts.

In support of the Town's multiple approaches to better guide commercial development, as well as the potential for future development of workforce housing in specific areas, the Department worked exhaustively to update and reformat Article VI of the Zoning Regulations, Town-wide Design Standards. Revisions addressed neighborhood pattern, building design, performance, landscaping, screening, buffering, access, circulation, parking and loading.

Additionally, we enjoyed working as a team on special Town-initiated projects, including the Architectural Review Board's *Design Excellence Awards*, the Board of Selectmen's acquisition of the former DOT property at 45 *Ferry Road* and the administration of a *Housing for Economic Growth grant* to design a multi-purpose playing field and workforce housing development, the Founders Memorial Park Committee's *opening of the Park*, updates to the Conservation Commission's *Natural Heritage Tour* brochure to include notable trees, the Fire Department's *Firefighting Resources* map, update the Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission *Regulations* to correspond with the State Model, the Planning Commission's *subdivision files* indexed to coincide with the Town Clerk's maps filed by road name, as well as continued restructuring of the Zoning Regulations as more “user-friendly”. We look forward to carrying on with implementation of the many plans for improvement of Old Saybrook.

**Christine Nelson, AICP, Director**