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To:	Jon Curtis, Torrance Downes, Sam Gold	**Project:**	RiverCOG POCD Public Workshops (P1413)
From:	Laurel Stegina	**Date:**	August 18, 2017
Subject:	Regional Plan of Conservation & Development August 17, 2017 Workshop Summary		

A public workshop for the Lower Connecticut River Valley Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (LCRV RPOCD) was conducted at the Westbrook Town Hall on the evening of Thursday, August 17, 2017. Fifty residents from throughout the seventeen member-municipality region attended this workshop to provide their input and ideas regarding the future vision and issues of the region. In support of this workshop, flyers were posted throughout the region's towns. There were notices in local newspapers, and a link about the LCRV RPOCD and workshop was posted on town websites as well as LCRV COG's website. An online survey was launched to engage the public and inform people about the workshop. Pop-up events at various community events were also conducted throughout the region, and business cards publicizing the workshop were handed out region-wide.

OPEN HOUSE
The first half-hour was an open house to welcome attendees. Attendees were asked to sign an attendance list (see attached sign-in sheets) and then participate in a "welcome exercise." They were asked to place three push pins on a regional map, displayed on a foam board (see Photo Attachment). They were asked to place a red pin where they live, a blue pin where they work, and a white pin for their favorite place in the Region. Favorite places were recorded on a clip board. Below is a list of the "favorite places" collected:

- Essex Boat Club
- Kayaking Great Island
- Westbrook beaches
- Connecticut River
- Lavender Farm in Killingworth
- Old Lyme beaches
- Griswold Point
- West Beach, Westbrook
- Old Saybrook
- The whole Region
- Griswold Point
- Westbrook Town Beach
- Connecticut River
- Essex
- Fox Hopyard
- Connecticut River
- Connecticut River

- Long Island Sound

PRESENTATION

Torrance Downes and Jon Curtis delivered a formal presentation describing the LCRV Region, the purpose of the public workshop, the purpose of the RPOCD and why it's important, what the RPOCD is (and isn't), and defined resilience and its role in the RPOCD process. They also provided an existing conditions overview (see attached for the presentation slides).

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

Laurel Stegina described the small group activity, the goals of the activity, and reviewed some basic ground rules. Attendees were broken-out into facilitated small groups.

Initial List of Challenges

In small groups, each person was asked to name one challenge the region faces or something it can do better. Regional POCD topics were displayed at the front of the room for reference. Small group facilitators reported-out the challenges to the large group. These were recorded on a slide (in MS Powerpoint) in the front of the room. Here is a summary of the input provided:

- Land Use
  - Housing inequality
  - High value, affordable, mixed use
- Transportation
  - Car-centric
- Preserving open space
  - Housing – cluster subdivisions
- Sea-level rise & flooding
- Keeping younger generation
  - Outmigration of young & old
- Taxes/regulation & job growth
- Infrastructure to support population of the area
- Housing affordability
- Sustainable economic development
- Innovative industries to attract young people
- Downsizing housing
- Land/water conservation & access
- Agriculture
- Aging population
- Transportation
- Lack of employment opportunities

- Open space
- Regional identity
- Climate change - rising sea level
- Taxes
- Infrastructure – sewers, lack roads
- Look beyond 10 years
- Retain abundance of vertical mixed-use development
- Housing costs
- Waste water needs
- Diversity of towns
- Affordable housing
- Aging demographics
- Jobs
- Utility burden
- Live, work, play
- Outdated business regulations
- Lack of sewer & septic capacity
- Barriers for youth
- Cohesive wildlife habitat
- Marketing ourselves
- Workforce
- Attracting younger people
- Affordability
- Traffic flow
- Transportation
- More organizational coordination
- Aging population
- State mandates
- Housing cost
- Public health
- How to safely navigate between towns – transportation
- Retention – attracting youth to the region
- Affordability of housing
- Jobs
- Continued protection of the environment
- Farms & agriculture – need to be friendlier & accommodating of it
- Local transportation
- Aging population

- Property taxes
- Volunteerism
- Business & industry – need to encourage and promote marine industry
- Land prices
- Younger generation can't afford to live here
- Adequate social services
- Coordination of efforts and partnership between towns
  - North & South of Region
- Commuting distances to jobs
- I-95 an access to airports
- Road construction & infrastructure issues
- Diversity

Challenges with Potential Solutions

Within small groups, participants were asked to agree on three of the challenges from the master list (from the MS Powerpoint slide in the front of the room) for which they wanted to suggest possible solutions. Next, small group facilitators asked each person to suggest ideas for how to address each of the three challenges. Here is the input provided:

Jon Curtis' Small Group

- Challenge #1: Economic Affordability
  - Solutions:
    - Diverse housing options
    - Year-round attractions
    - Promoting the Region
    - Improving business environment
    - Increasing recreational opportunities
- Challenge #2: Transportation
  - Solutions:
    - Increase bus, train, routes
    - Moving to electric UEH
    - More secure transportation funding
    - Bike paths
- Challenge #3: Environmental Issues
  - Solutions:
    - Promoting regional resources
    - Enforcing regulations
    - Improving waste disposal

Janice Ehlemeyer's Small Group

- Challenge #1: Retaining young people
    - Solutions:
        - Jobs
        - Housing
            - Lower rents
            - More affordable to buy
        - Concentration of activities in town centers (include housing)
        - Regionalizing education, government
- Challenge #2: Planning for Climate Change
    - Solutions:
        - Compensate for losses
        - Protect shoreline – resilient corridors, water sewer, roads
- Challenge #3: Regional Character/Identity
    - Solutions:
        - Maintain our differences and work together
        - Each community doesn't have to offer everything; communities can complement each other
        - Cluster town centers

Rory Fitzgerald's Small Group

- Challenge #1: Transportation
    - Solutions:
        - Expand and improve 9-Town Transit
        - Expand local bus services (like Old Saybrook Bus thru Estuary)
        - Make towns more walkable
            - Complete Streets
            - Bike paths
        - Uber
- Challenge #2: Attracting & Retaining Younger People
    - Solutions:
        - Find industry that attracts younger people, start-ups, innovation, technology-based
        - More business-friendly regulations
        - Create funding sources to aid in innovation
        - Education for jobs in the Region
        - Easier access to education
        - Focus on recreation in the Region

- Marketing the Region to younger people
- Challenge #3: Agriculture
  - Solutions:
    - Guidelines for state mandates on agriculture
    - Promote farmers' markets
    - Honor PA 490
    - More innovative ways for farmers to sell produce
    - Regional standard definition of what a farm is, what agriculture is
      - State General Statute 1-1Q – Definition of Agriculture
    - Agriculture fits in with what this region is all about
    - Jobs
    - Buy local!
- Challenge #4: Regional Vision
  - Solutions:
    - Blue zone, create one in this Region
      - Drivers:
        - Activity
        - Agriculture
        - Attracting youth
    - Find ways to connect youth with older populations
    - Dispel misconceptions about different age groups
    - Intergenerational integration

Christine Nelson's Small Group
- Challenge #1: Transit Options
  - Solutions:
    - More public transit options
    - Increased frequency
    - More routes
- Challenge #2: Housing
  - Solutions:
    - Smaller, manufactured homes
    - Innovative housing regulations
    - AT septic systems
- Challenge #3: Marketing/Imaging
  - Solutions:
    - Promote small town character
    - Promote natural resources & beauty
    - Promote cultural festivals/fairs and theaters
    - More outside region promotion

- More millennial activities (experiential)

Torrance Downe's Small Group

- Challenge #1: Regional identity
    - CT River Valley undeveloped river
    - History
    - Small town character
    - Town meetings, "crustiness"
    - Sense of community
    - Recreational areas like contiguous greenways
    - Preservation of natural areas not necessarily for "use"
- Solutions:
    - Take a regional approach to problem solving
        - Regional identity involving arts and culture, wine trail, farms & farmers markets

Margot Burns' Small Group

- Challenge #1: Jobs
    - No choices
    - IT Infrastructure
    - I-95/trade jobs
- Challenge #2: Housing
    - Taxes
    - Zoning (allowing mixed use)
- Challenge #3: Not losing what we love about the region (i.e., character) to gain the other two (i.e., types of commercial development

Solutions
- Efficiency [in bout?]
- Lower taxes

Wrap-up

Small Group Facilitators posted their flip chart sheets on the walls around the room. Laurel Stegina summarized predominant themes including:

- Desire to retain young people and maintain community character/regional identity by:
    - Offering wider range of employment opportunities
    - Providing more affordable, and greater mix of housing, particularly in regional centers

- Doing a better job of promoting cultural offerings, such as arts, farmers markets, natural resources
- Expanding transit services, walking and biking options
- Protecting the shoreline, a regional asset, from sea-level rise

Closing

Torrance and Jon announced the upcoming Saturday, September 16th Public Workshop in Middletown, and the timeline for future meetings, and plan development and adoption over the next year. They also shared the URL for the online survey and RPOCD website, and thanked people for their participation.