



**TOWN OF NEW CANAAN**  
PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT  
TOWN HALL, 77 MAIN STREET  
NEW CANAAN, CT 06840

Zoning Regulation Comprehensive Update

Request for Proposals – March 10, 2025

**Introduction**

The Town of New Canaan (“Town”) is seeking the services of a qualified professional planning consulting firm to assist in the comprehensive review and update of the Town’s Zoning Regulations.

New Canaan is a residential community of 21,000 located approximately 5 miles inland from the Long Island Sound in Lower Fairfield County. It has a Metro-North branch line connecting it to major employment centers in Stamford, CT, New York City and the surrounding area. It is often lauded for amenities such as its small, quaint New England downtown, high achieving public schools, ample park and recreational facilities and architectural excellence. The Town has a long history of planning, with its first zoning regulations dating back to 1932, with influences from these regulations still seen in today’s regulations. Like other communities in the region, it is faced with the challenge of balancing the desire to preserve existing land use patterns with the pressure to evolve in a cohesive and desirable manner.

The Town’s Zoning Regulations were last comprehensively updated through a multi-year process that concluded in 2007. Despite this effort, some sections of the regulations have remained largely unchanged for decades. Various factors have prevented the P&Z Commission from keeping pace with evolving zoning practices, Connecticut statutes, and case law. As a result, inefficiencies in the P&Z Commission’s application processes persist and most large-scale developments are driven by private interest-led regulation amendments. This has resulted in regulations that are piecemealed and hamper desirable development.

To kick-off this desired update to the Zoning Regulations, the Planning & Zoning Commission in October of 2024 adopted a new Plan of Conservation & Development with a detailed implementation plan that identified many ways in which to update the zoning regulations.

**Project Objectives**

The goal of this project is to develop updated zoning regulations, with potential changes to the Town’s zoning map. In coordination with Town Staff, the Planning & Zoning Commission, and the public, the following broad objectives are driving the desire for a regulation update:

1. Remove or change existing zoning regulations that are inconsistent with the State of CT General Statutes or relevant case law.
2. Clarify inconsistencies, unclear language and outdated requirements contained in existing zoning regulations.
3. Review and update what triggers Commission approval (Site Plans, Special Permits, etc...) to lower the case load of the P&Z Commission.
4. Strengthen and change the current special permit criteria.
5. Evaluate all applicable action steps recommended in the 2024 POCD for potential incorporation into the new zoning regulations.
6. Evaluate whether residential setbacks, heights, and coverage are leading to desired development patterns.
7. Evaluate all aspects of the business zone regulations to ensure desired outcomes are achieved
8. Evaluate how the zoning regulations manage nonconforming lots, structures, and densities
9. Evaluate how the zoning regulations manage institutional uses, affordable housing, and the multifamily/apartment zones.
10. Update the Zoning Map where applicable.

## **Scope of Services**

### *Comprehensive Review of Existing Regulations*

The consultant, in coordination with Town staff, will review the existing zoning regulations and 2024 POCD. This review is essential for gaining a baseline understanding of what inconsistencies exist between the current zoning regulations and CT Law, Town Ordinances, & other applicable legal requirements. During this review it is also expected that the consultant will work with the P&Z Commission to understand what aspects of the current zoning regulations should be preserved. The consultant is expected to have recommendations following this review for strategies to best accomplish the regulation update and for strategies to improve the P&Z Commission application process.

### *Recommend & Explore Additional Zoning Strategies to Incorporate*

Starting with the exploration of items proposed in the 2024 POCD (link here [Welcome to New Canaan CT](#)), the consultant must propose updated zoning strategies to address key issues that were identified in current development trends within New Canaan. These topics may include but are not limited to:

- Identifying best practices for zoning within the Downtown Commercial Core to foster desirable mixed-use development by evaluating TOD principles, form-based code, and inclusionary zoning.
- Creation of various overlay zones to better manage institutional uses in Town.
- Refinement of existing inclusionary zoning regulations and creation of additional strategies to facilitate desirable affordable & workforce housing developments.

- Creation of Impervious Area coverage requirements for residential properties and the incorporation of other stormwater management best practices to include in the regulations.
- Evaluation of all uses and structures that require special permit approval.
- Review of property standards relating to setbacks, building coverage, landscaping, grading, lighting, etc... to ensure clarity and consistency among regulations

### *Potential Edits to Zoning Map*

The successful consultant will need to provide guidance to the Commission on potential edits to the existing zoning map, with particular emphasis on existing commercial and multi-family zones. The Town's GIS consultant, Tighe & Bond, is able to provide the necessary GIS technical assistance to update the existing zoning map. While the Town is open to hiring a consultant for this project that has the capabilities to provide GIS services to update the zoning map, it is not a requirement.

### *Public Engagement*

A robust public engagement process is desired to educate the public on zoning matters and to gather input as the regulations are updated. The consultant is expected to develop in coordination with staff, a public engagement plan that will include at least one public workshop, a final public hearing, and online engagement activities. The plan may need to be flexible with the ability to modify after the start of the update process to be in line with public interest.

### **Deliverables**

At the end of the project, the successful firm(s) will deliver

1. Complete set of zoning regulations in the following electronic formats – PDF & editable Microsoft Word Document
2. Digital file of all maps/graphics in the final regulations
3. Hardcopies TBD

### **Proposals**

Applicants should clearly identify their approach to performing the scope of services and providing the deliverables. Information in the proposal must include:

1. A description of the firm(s) history, expertise and experience.
2. Identification of key team members and qualifications.
3. A clear public engagement strategy that meets the objectives identified in the scope of services. The strategy should include in-person and virtual opportunities for public input.
4. An explanation of your approach to the project.
5. A work program and time schedule for each phase of the project.
6. A budget for the project, broken down by task. Budget should include separate figures for public engagement. Town staff will be responsible for publicizing workshops and milestones in the process.

7. A list and/or description of similar projects that have been completed, along with references.
8. A list of resources or assistance needed from the Town of New Canaan.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

1. Background and experience in providing services to municipalities similar in size and issues to New Canaan,
2. Prior work experience and its relevance to this engagement,
3. Documented ability to provide the services requested,
4. Review of references on past projects,
5. Credentials of staff,
6. Organizational stability,
7. Ability to complete the engagement in a timely manner, given present workload,
8. Extent of services offered, and the depth and extent of the resources that can be put to use
9. Fee for services rendered,
10. Expertise in mapping, interpreting and generating relevant data, facilitating public dialogue, building consensus and crafting well organized & user-friendly regulations,
11. Perspective on national and state level planning/zoning concepts, issues and solutions,
12. Knowledge of local planning history and challenges.
13. Applicant's ability to communicate publicly.

### **Logistics- Proposals, Project Timeline, & Management**

Proposals for the request should be submitted by *no later than Monday April 7<sup>th</sup> at 3pm*, and should be sent to Sarah Carey, Town Planner, at [sarah.carey@newcanaanct.gov](mailto:sarah.carey@newcanaanct.gov) Only electronic submittals in PDF format shall be accepted. Proposals submitted after the time specified above will not be accepted or reviewed by the Town. The budget for this project is \$100,000. It is expected the Town Planner will provide significant support to make this project manageable under the specified budget.

Following the submission deadline, Town Staff and the P&Z Commission's Zoning Regulation Update (ZRU) Subcommittee will review the proposals. Additional information or an interview with the ZRU Subcommittee may be requested. The Town will render a decision before May 15, 2025, and expect the consultant to begin within one (1) week of contract execution.

Final approval and adoption of the updated Zoning Regulations by the Planning and Zoning Commission is anticipated to take 1-2 years from the date of contract execution. The lead agency for this work will be the ZRU Subcommittee. The selected consultant will receive general direction and report to the Town Planner.

Please submit any questions to Sarah Carey either at 203-594-3043 or at [sarah.carey@newcanaanct.gov](mailto:sarah.carey@newcanaanct.gov).