

Town of Fairfield

ONE TOWN ONE VISION

STRATEGIC PLAN

a blueprint for our future

November, 2020

Draft for Strategic Plan Committee Review



Draft
for Review

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fairfield is at a turning point. This Strategic Plan, Fairfield's first, allowed the Town as a whole to begin thinking about what Fairfield needs and what its future could look like. Our committee hopes this plan will provide a roadmap to achieve the priorities identified throughout this comprehensive planning process. Through this process, priorities were uncovered as the VISION for Fairfield began to take shape, including:

- A streamlined government structure to provide ease of access and produce high citizen satisfaction;
- Private/public partnerships to allow Fairfield to continue to be a leader in education and a national role model for curriculum innovation;
- A focus on life-phase centric housing;
- Culture preserving development that reduces traffic by eliminating the need for it;
- A stable and robust local economy;
- Utilization of current technologies while updating/embracing new technology to communicate with and energize all residents;
- A beach town with both vibrant beach and marine attractions, and sleepy, peaceful seclusion.

Areas to address were also uncovered. Fairfield has a dated form of government. It's very rare to see such highly distributed decision-making processes in towns of its size. Fairfield has an excellent public school system whose traditional form of funding will continue to be under pressure. Fairfield has some of the best real property assets whose value to the community is yet untapped. Connecticut's financial strains are not going away anytime soon. Seniors and Millennials are making similar lifestyle choices, yet they differ from our Town residents' traditional wants.

Despite these challenges, Fairfield was universally lauded as a wonderful Town. The VISION that arose through this planning process will ensure Fairfield has it all. The Strategic Planning Committee urges the town bodies to begin the planning process to implement the recommendations within immediately.

This Strategic Plan was built through extensive community feedback, consultation with numerous subject matter experts, other project analyses, and insights from our consulting partner Houseal Lavigne Associates. The written document contains significant details and implementation steps. The key elements of the plan are to:

1. Modify our Town Governance structure to a Town Council/Town Manager or Town Council/Town Manager/Mayor format to manage increasing complexities and risks. This will provide a more effective and efficient form of government, and will improve cross-department and Commission operations. It would simplify and consolidate control structures to align with this plan, simplify and clarify escalation and risk management, ultimately providing the towns' citizens better access to their government (one-stop shopping), and to improve overall citizen satisfaction.
2. Extend fiscal stewardship by capitalizing on all revenue opportunities, controlling spending, and practice sound budgeting processes, which are based on a set of metric-driven goals designed to achieve the level of taxes commensurate with the value those services deliver.
3. Expand Economic Development to support the Town's financial requirements. Accomplish this by leveraging available land and modernizing land-use regulations. Agree on a set of revenue targets for which departments will be responsible.
4. Continue to invest in Education innovation and set metric-driven goals to further advance and track student achievement beyond per-pupil expenditure. These metrics should recognize the need to reduce the tax burden by taking advantage of public/private partnerships and commercialization of curriculum

where possible. Improve how the Town approaches intra and inter Town collaboration (in Town operations and Education), where programs can be leveraged and spending controlled with shared services.

5. Continue steps to manage and protect the Town's coastal resources, be environmentally conscious, and plan for effective transportation alternatives.

The ultimate outcome defined in the VISION is to increase Fairfield's competitiveness as characterized by the three attributes the Town has defined for itself: Attractiveness, Affordability, and Safety. These attributes will manifest as a result of the projects the Town tackles; in other words, it's the projects we take on and move forward that will define us. Our committee recognizes that all projects come with trade-offs between services, service levels, tax levels, and town character. Trade-offs are unavoidable in any environment; in this financially constrained environment, trade-offs are a practical reality.

Several "BIG" ideas were identified through the process of gathering community input, stakeholder, and subject matter expert interviews covering a wide variety of topics such as economic development, land use regulations, and community design. A short description of each "BIG" idea is provided below, with supplemental details on the following page. Further work is needed to analyze and more fully develop these concepts.

- **Waterfront Development:** The Town's waterfront location is frequently mentioned as an incredible town asset. This real asset could provide more value to the Town if it is leveraged to a more extensive degree with thoughtful commercial development. Such development options could include commercial/retail/restaurant capability.
- **Comprehensive Downtown Community Development:** Create a comprehensive vision and plan for innovative community development in the downtown area. This plan would capitalize on both senior and millennial lifestyle choices, town assets, and economic development partnerships and opportunities. A write-up of the key aspects of this concept has been prepared.

- **'Walk-ability' Zones:** Sprinkle micro-economic centers throughout the Town's vast acreage as a means to grow economic activity, increase services available in underserved areas, and reduce cross-town traffic.

Fairfield's VISION is to create a dynamic and desirable community to provide an exceptional quality of life with a low-cost burden to its residents. The community will boast a transparent and responsible local government, competitive educational system, and effectively delivered essential services.

The Town achieves this through thoughtful community involved planning, leveraging all key assets, prudent and effective partnerships, and responsible business and financial management practices. Fairfield has vibrant, diverse, safe, and easy to navigate neighborhoods, desirable commercial corridors supporting a robust economy, and an engaged citizenry. Its multi-generational citizenry is a key demographic that is planned for and desired that stabilizes and enriches our community.

If Fairfield embraces, actively plans, implements, and provides the supports necessary to the identified focus areas and populations, Fairfield will differentiate itself and become the most desirable community in Fairfield County. Fairfield should plan to continually evolve to meet the new opportunities and challenges it will face over the coming years.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE “BIG” IDEAS:

The following paragraphs provide additional background and information on the “BIG” ideas introduced in the Executive Summary on the prior page. Further work is needed on each of these ideas to fully develop the opportunity, approach, participants, risks, etc.

Develop the Waterfront: The Town’s waterfront location is frequently mentioned as an incredible town asset. This area could provide more value if it was leveraged to a more extensive degree with thoughtful commercial development. The Marina area certainly has the ability to unlock greater value, as does the existing Town-owned land parcels next to it. Commercial development in this area could encompass commercial/retail/restaurant capability, along with aspects of a walking boardwalk running west from the marina area towards Penfield Pavilion. The ability to link the Marina area to Penfield in some manner (pathway, walking path, bicycle path, etc.) would also improve its usefulness. It would be an innovative way to capitalize on this area’s potential for overall Town benefit and improve Fairfield’s reputation on this key waterfront attribute.

Comprehensive Downtown Community Development:

Create a compelling vision for innovative community development downtown. To capitalize on both Senior and Millennial lifestyle choices, town assets, and economic development partnerships and opportunities downtown, it should incorporate and leverage the most significant Town controlled land parcels. The plan could be comprehensively developed to provide desirable living components while unlocking this area’s economic value. A key element of this is for the Town to partner and lead in the design of such an initiative, as its development would leverage key aspects of the Town’s infrastructure and its assets at Fairfield Center and/or Metro Center. A key design element needs to intentionally incorporate and take advantage of the similarities in senior and millennial lifestyle choices to create and brand the idea of multi-generational living. Such, Senior and Millennial Integrated Living Environment (SMILE) can be used in Fairfield’s overall branding initiatives. Due to the wide variety of considerations and options for this topic, a write-up of the key aspects of the SMILE concept has been documented.

‘Walk-ability’ Zones: This concept’s basic premise is to sprinkle micro-economic centers throughout the Town’s vast acreage versus having it all concentrated downtown. It was frequently mentioned in community outreach meetings as an idea that could meet the needs of residents in various areas. Projects of this nature that are sensitive to local neighborhood character can increase commercial activity and reduce cross-town traffic while reducing taxes and increase services to areas that have been largely ignored, like Greenfield Hill.

These Big Ideas require further work to best develop these opportunities. The following actions outline next steps.

- Assign resources to develop and outline of the approach, considerations, opportunities, challenges for each topic.
- Identify the steps needed for a structured analysis, and a report back within 45 days of the results of such work.
- Conduct a formal review with the First Selectwoman and BOS of each opportunity.
- Conduct reviews with other relevant Town Boards.
- Determine the implementation steps, partnerships, resources, etc., for each topic.



PROLOGUE

At the beginning of the project there were two major ‘undercurrents’ that drove the need to develop a Strategic Plan for the Town. Lifestyle changes due to technology and residential living preferences, and the financial condition of the State of Connecticut were key drivers. During the time that we were summarizing our work and reviewing with Town officials, several other major societal issues rose to prominence. Namely the COVID-19 pandemic and the country-wide focus on racial justice. At this time, neither the COVID nor racial equality issues have enough clarity or analysis surrounding them to incorporate them into this strategic plan. The Town is taking demonstrative steps to further address these topics and ensure that all safety protocols are addressed and provide forums for what can be done differently from what we do today.

As the Town leadership and departments take steps to deepen understanding on both of these topics, the process of civil discourse will be critically important. Sharing all viewpoints and concerns, and feeling safe doing so, has been part of our community fabric and needs to continue. As more is known on these topics, they can be worked into strategic execution activities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Strategic Plan Committee (SPC), would like to acknowledge and express our sincerest gratitude for the contributions of many as we worked on this Strategic Plan. Thoughts, ideas, and suggestions came in many forms from many individuals. Such input was gathered in surveys, public meetings, emails, workshops and verbal comments. The ideas expressed were all important and essential to build the foundation of community desires for our Town’s future. It was provided by elected officials, board and commission members, department heads, town employees and everyday residents - young and old. All of the input is highly valued.

The project was started and has continued under the oversight current and former members of the Board of Selectmen, and their commitment to embarking on this work to plan the Town’s future has been essential and greatly valued. During our work, we met with many of the Town Committees and received suggestions and guidance which has been extremely helpful. Town department managers provided their valuable time and input during the course of their interviews. Additionally, members of the Houseal Lavigne Associates team have been invaluable in providing the Town the benefit of their expertise, approaches and ideas.

Finally, thank you in advance to all who may be involved in making this plan come to life and produce great results for the Town and its residents as we plan for our future.



CALL TO ACTION

We all know that we have a great Town and community. Great in so many ways - Safe, Attractive, Affordable and so much more. This is widely recognized and appreciated all across Town.

Everyone wants to maintain and improve upon these characteristics. So, this tells us, both where we are, and where we want to go. There are challenges and steps needed ensure we are forcefully moving in the best direction possible, and manage relevant risks in that process. This Strategic Plan has many of the keys steps that are needed. As we execute and tackle the needed steps, we will learn more and can refine how we continue to evolve.

In the past, strategic plans may not have been as important as they are now. In today's fast changing and significantly evolving society, they are critical for thoughtful, and controlled evolution of our Town. It is time to structure and focus our efforts on implementation and action.

These are the issues and opportunities we have to address. There will be a need to think differently, and balance your opinion with those of others, so that as a community, we can thrive and excel.

We have a dated form of government with highly distributed responsibility for decision-making that exists in very few places, other than in New England, and is on the decline even there. We have an excellent public school system whose traditional form of funding is, has been, and will likely continue to be under pressure. We have some of the best real assets in the country in our location, yet have not sufficiently leveraged them for value to the community. We live in a State whose financial troubles are deep, broad, and are not going away anytime soon. Both Seniors and Millennials are making similar lifestyle choices, but differ from the traditional wants of Town residents.

Fairfield is at a turning point. We are fortunate in that we have started to think about our choices, yet we cannot wait too long to act. The Strategic Plan Committee sees a potential future of:

- private/public partnerships that allow Fairfield to continue to be a leader in education and a national role model for curriculum innovation;
- a focus on life-phase centric housing;
- culture preserving development that reduces traffic, by eliminating the need for it;
- a stable and robust local economy; and
- utilization of both current and legacy technologies to communicate with and energize all residents.

Yes it is all possible, but only if we begin working on the things we need to now, to achieve that vision.

PLAN ORGANIZATION



Chapter 1 - Introduction provides project background and the key takeaways from community outreach.



Chapter 2 - Community Context provides an overview of Fairfield demographic trends and market conditions.



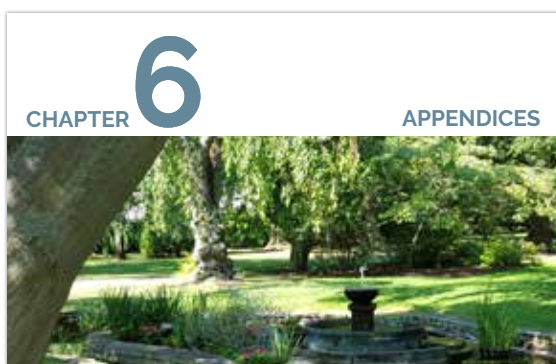
Chapter 3 - Community Driven Vision includes a vision statement that paints a picture of how Fairfield will change in the coming years due to the implementation of this Plan.



Chapter 4 - Critical Success Factors includes the key initiatives and objectives that the Town must accomplish to achieve the community driven vision.



Chapter 5 - Implementation provides detail on how the Town can accomplish the key initiatives and objectives including responsible parties, funding sources, and more.



Chapter 6 - Appendices include the full summaries of community outreach and feedback.

CHAPTER 1



INTRODUCTION





Fairfield finds itself navigating a critical crossroads where action today can propel the community into the next decade, stronger and more vibrant than ever, or where inaction will result in stagnation and eventual decline. Fairfield is a tight-knit town with deep roots. The community understands who they are and what they would like to become but was searching for a strategy on how best to position itself for success in the future.

One Town One Vision provides Fairfield with that strategy and is a call to action. It is not a coffee table book and is not meant to be filed away in case someone asks if the Town has one. The Plan provides the community with the resources to face the future with confidence, determination, and a common vision. Can One Town One Vision attempt to solve every problem facing the Town? No, but it does provide a framework for tackling Fairfield's greatest obstacles, positioning the community for progress and success.

Progress and success must be tangible and measurable. It is the responsibility of every Fairfield stakeholder to commit to the realization and implementation of the One Town One Vision Strategic Plan. The Town and its residents, business or property owners, and all of its stakeholders must hold each other accountable to ensure that the Town sets its sights on agreed upon goals, aligns its resources, and works together.

One Town One Vision sets its sights high, with big ideas and even bigger plans. But the circumstances in which the ideas were envisioned and the plans formulated may change and shift, meaning that not all recommendations and strategies may work as initially thought. This means that the Plan must be a living, breathing document that allows the Town to be nimble and fluid, pivoting when necessary, but always keeping focus on the community's vision for its future.



BACKGROUND AND STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS

In the spring of 2017, Fairfield embarked on the development of a Strategic Plan to direct the Town's efforts and resources toward a clearly defined vision for its future and to outline longer term planning goals and actions to structure the ongoing evolution of the community. To assist in the development of the Plan, the Town appointed a Strategic Plan Committee (SPC) and engaged the professional consulting firm Houseal Lavigne.

The One Town One Vision Strategic Plan process included comparative research and analysis and extensive community outreach to gather resident and stakeholder input to define issues and opportunities within the Town.

Initial stakeholder outreach began in the summer of 2018 and was comprised of interviews and meetings with Town staff, elected and appointed officials, business owners and other stakeholders. This outreach was followed by community-wide outreach through facilitated public workshops and meetings conducted throughout the Town by the consulting team and members of the SPC. Simultaneously, online questionnaires were utilized to gather additional insight on various topics.

Combined outreach results were significant, comprising approximately 2,000 participants. Applying the social media concept of influencers to the raw input means that 30 percent of the community provided guidance to this process. This work has been summarized in the Community Outreach Detailed Report included as Appendix 1 at the end of the Plan.

Feedback and information obtained through community input, along with professional analysis and observation, served to define five key topic areas that informed the Plan's direction. Subject matter experts (SMEs) in all five key topic areas were then involved to further evaluate potential issues and opportunities associated with each. The feedback received from the SME Working Sessions has been summarized and included as Appendix 2 at the end of the Plan.



FIVE KEY TAKE-AWAYS FROM COMMUNITY OUTREACH

GOVERNANCE

- Establish a common vision, mission, and goals for the Town.
- Open and modify the Town Charter.
- Identify outdated or unnecessary Town services.
- Explore opportunities for shared services and multi-community cooperation.
- Upgrade and integrate technology.
- Better leverage State representation.
- Consolidate related departments into divisions: i.e. Revenue, Zoning, etc.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

- Plan for the impact of lost tax revenue.
- Curb declining property values.
- Assess the cost of personnel and benefits.
- Develop metric (revenue, cost, mill rate impact, etc) driven goals for all Town Departments.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Expand the Office of Community and Economic Development.
- Identify sites for new commercial development.
- Eliminate barriers to development.
- Address local landmark blight.
- Develop community visions for the development of key areas such as the waterfront and metro.



EDUCATION

- Maintain and improve the quality of education and school facilities in Fairfield.
- Right-size rising costs with declining school enrollment.
- Diversify the school district.
- Explore opportunities for greater public / private partnerships with local businesses and Town universities.
- Explore sources of funding other than taxes.
- Develop metric driven goals for education innovation.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND RESILIENCY

- Develop and enforce standards for new and re-development.
- Support active transportation options.
- Encourage and promote sustainability best practices.
- Unify the community.
- Improve local public transportation.
- Maintain affordability and desirability for Seniors.
- Fortify and leverage the spirit of volunteerism in the community.

CHAPTER 2



COMMUNITY CONTEXT



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DEMOGRAPHIC & MARKET OVERVIEW

The Demographics and Market section identifies the present conditions in the Town of Fairfield as they relate to the statistical composition of its population and present economic indicators. It provides valuable insight into the Town through summaries of technical information related to demographic trends and a broad assessment of the retail, office, and industrial markets

POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLDS

Both the Town of Fairfield and Fairfield County have experienced a steady growth of population over the past two decades. This population increase is due to a number of factors including the desirability of the region and its proximity to New York City and other destinations along the eastern corridor. The compounded annual growth rate for the Town of Fairfield and Fairfield County show the Town of Fairfield has directly mirrored the steady population growth of the County at a 0.4 percent increase annually since 2000.

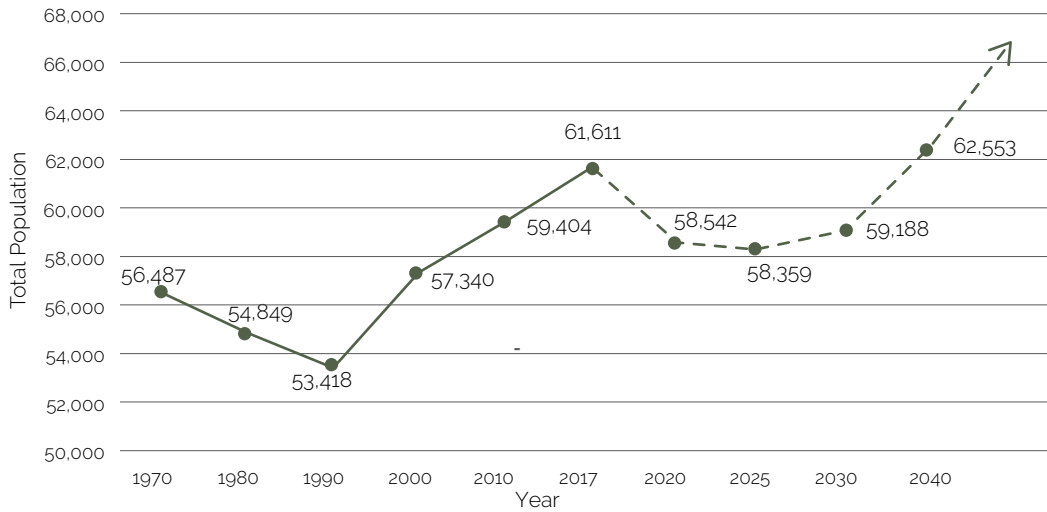
Population projections from the CT Data Collaborative were analyzed for both the Town and the County. While County projections are available to 2025, Town projections continue out to the year 2040. The Town of Fairfield’s population is projected to level off somewhat, but then continually increase growing to over 67,000 residents in twenty years. While long-term projections can change, this is a positive indication of stability in planning for the future.

Population Change (2000-2017)

Population	2000	2010	2017	Change (2000-2017)	CAGR (2000-2017)
Town of Fairfield	57,340	59,404	61,611	4,271	0.4%
Fairfield County	882,567	916,829	947,328	64,761	0.4%

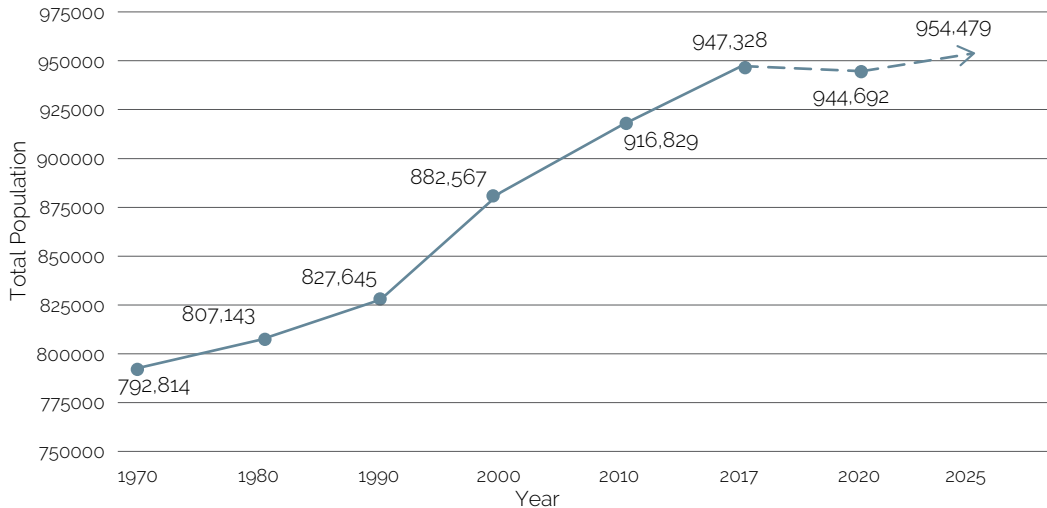
Source: U.S. Census; 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Town of Fairfield Total Population
(1970-2040)



Source: U.S. Census; CT Data Collaborative; Houseal Lavigne

Fairfield County Total Population
(1970-2025)

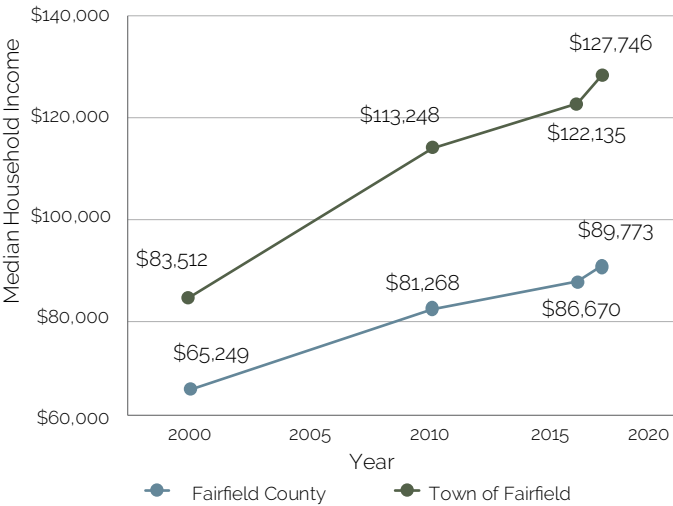


Source: U.S. Census; CT Data Collaborative; Houseal Lavigne

INCOME

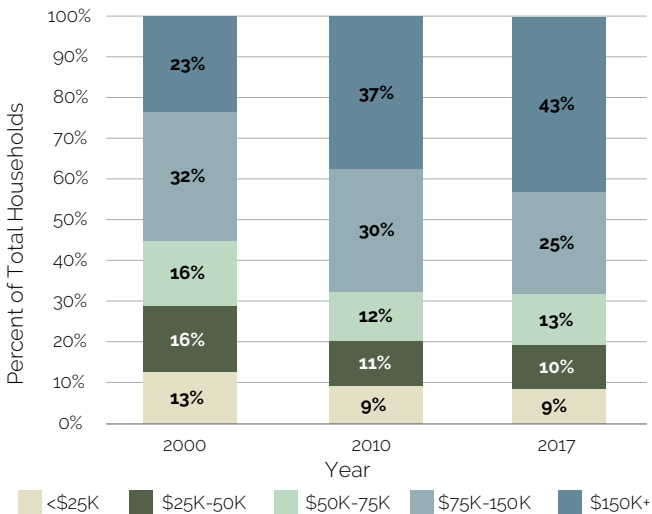
Fairfield has continued to experience growth in its highest earning households at the greatest rate of any income sector. This trend is similar at the County level only on a smaller scale. Fairfield’s median household income in 2017 (\$127,746) was considerably higher than the County’s (\$89,773). While, incomes in both the Town and the County have steadily increased over the past two decades the County has grown at a lower rate. In 2017, 68 percent of residents in Fairfield earned \$75,000 or more annually, up from 67 percent in 2010. Households with an income of \$150,000 or more have steadily grown by 20 percentage points since 2000.

Median Income



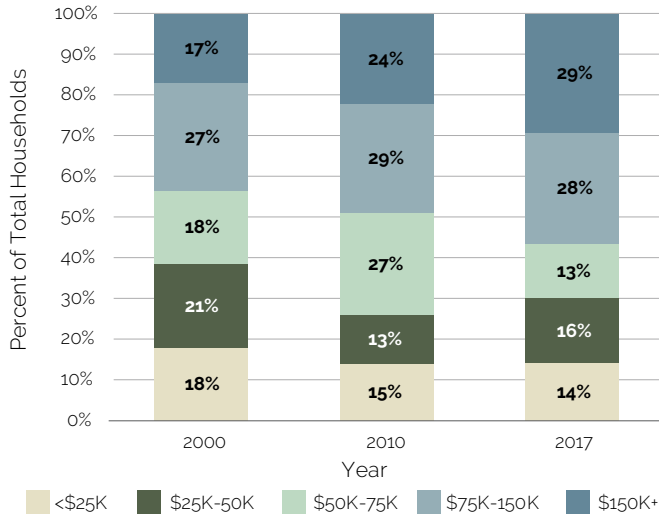
Source: U.S. Census, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Town of Fairfield
Households by Income



Source: U.S. Census, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Fairfield County
Households by Income



Source: U.S. Census, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Houseal Lavigne Associates

AGE

The Town’s median age of 41.2 has been increasing since 2000 mirroring the County trend, only at a slightly higher rate. Over the past two decades the Town has seen consistent growth in the 50-69 cohort. Despite the increase in this age cohort, the trend is not reflected in the 70+ cohort. The absence of discernible change in the 70+ cohort over the past 20 years indicates that the growing 50-69 cohort does not age in place. This decline in the 70+ cohort is also seen at the County level. This trend could be due to the lack of services and facilities available to senior residents in Fairfield as well as the high tax burden associated with living in Connecticut. The senior population has different needs than younger age groups, particularly as it relates to healthcare, emergency services, transportation infrastructure, and recreation which may also contribute to the exodus of some residents.

There has also been a declining trend in the 20-34 age cohort over the past two decades. This is largely reflective of the notion that it has been difficult to retain graduates from Sacred Heart University and Fairfield University as they leave the institutions after graduation looking for jobs and housing.

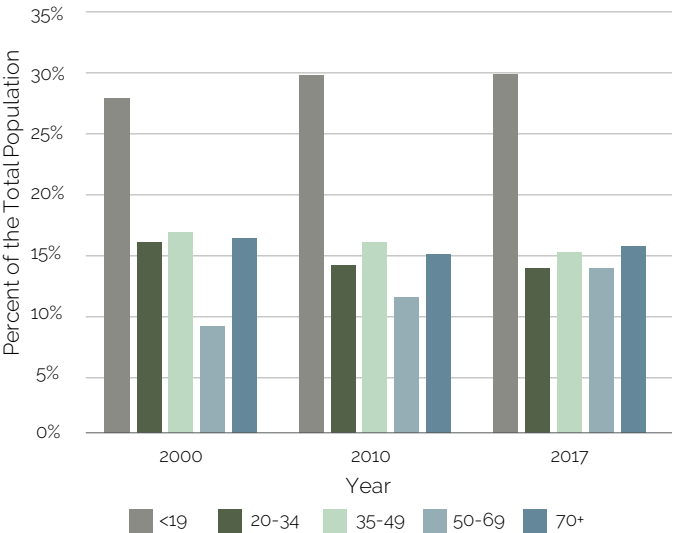
While the trends revealed by these data do confirm that Fairfield is a desirable community for families with children, there needs to be a concerted effort to retain these individuals later in life. When these individuals leave, there is not only a loss of a long-time member of the community, but also significant disposable income. The Town needs to implement a structured initiative to retain older residents by providing and/or helping to facilitate amenities centered around recreation, healthcare and well-being in addition to related services, businesses and housing. This includes both public and private uses.

Median Age

	2000	2010	2017	CAGR (2000-2017)
Town of Fairfield	38.5	40.0	41.2	0.40%
Fairfield County	37.3	39.5	40.2	0.44%

Source: U.S. Census; 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Houseal Lavigne

Town of Fairfield
Population by Age



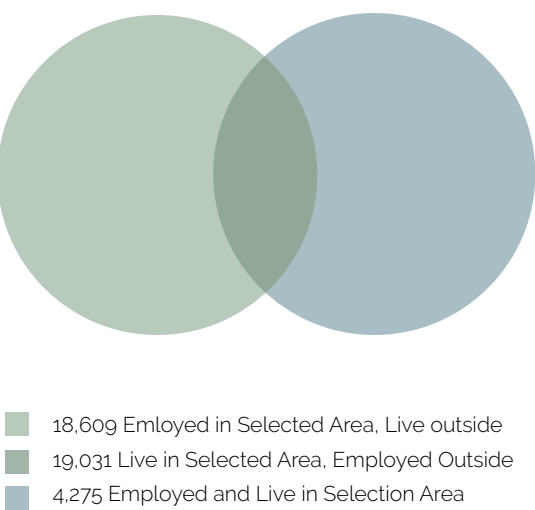
Source: U.S. Census; 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Houseal Lavigne Associates

INDUSTRY AND EMPLOYERS

The largest employment sector in the Town of Fairfield is education, due to the presence of two postsecondary institutions: Fairfield University and Sacred Heart University. Over 18,000 students are enrolled in undergraduate and masters programs. The majority of other employment sectors in the Town of Fairfield are similar to the County with the exception of professional, scientific and tech services and finance and insurance where the Town of Fairfield is roughly that of the County.

Approximately 19 percent of people that live in Fairfield remain in the Town for work. While an estimated 81 percent of residents work outside the Town, in large part due to proximity to the Metro North commuter rail line allows residents to easily travel to New York City for work. Conversely, there is an even amount of people both living in the Town and commuting out for work as there are people commuting in from another region to work in the Town as shown in the Inflow/Outflow graphic.

Inflow/Outflow Job Counts in 2017



Source: U.S. Census Bureau OnTheMap Application; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Employment by Industry

NAICS Codes	Town of Fairfield		Fairfield County	
	Number of Jobs	Percent of Total Employment	Number of Jobs	Percent of Total Employment
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	4	0.0%	315	0.1%
Mining	0	0.0%	33	0.0%
Utilities	8	0.0%	1,282	0.3%
Construction	597	2.6%	12,915	3.3%
Manufacturing	542	2.4%	32,540	8.3%
Wholesale Trade	703	3.1%	16,160	4.1%
Retail Trade	3,213	14.0%	43,803	11.1%
Transportation & Warehousing	365	1.6%	8,350	2.1%
Information	227	1.0%	14,151	3.6%
Finance & Insurance	933	4.1%	34,077	8.6%
Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	389	1.7%	5,257	1.3%
Professional, Scientific & Tech Services	1,298	5.7%	33,150	8.4%
Management of Companies & Enterprises	220	1.0%	12,338	3.1%
Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services	1,284	5.6%	23,969	6.1%
Educational Services	4,828	21.1%	36,725	9.3%
Health Care & Social Assistance	3,588	15.7%	58,045	14.7%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	654	2.9%	9,827	2.5%
Accommodation & Food Services	2,360	10.3%	26,492	6.7%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	1,264	5.5%	16,530	4.2%
Public Administration	407	1.8%	8,130	2.1%
Total	22,884	100.0%	394,089	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau OnTheMap Application; Houseal Lavigne Associates

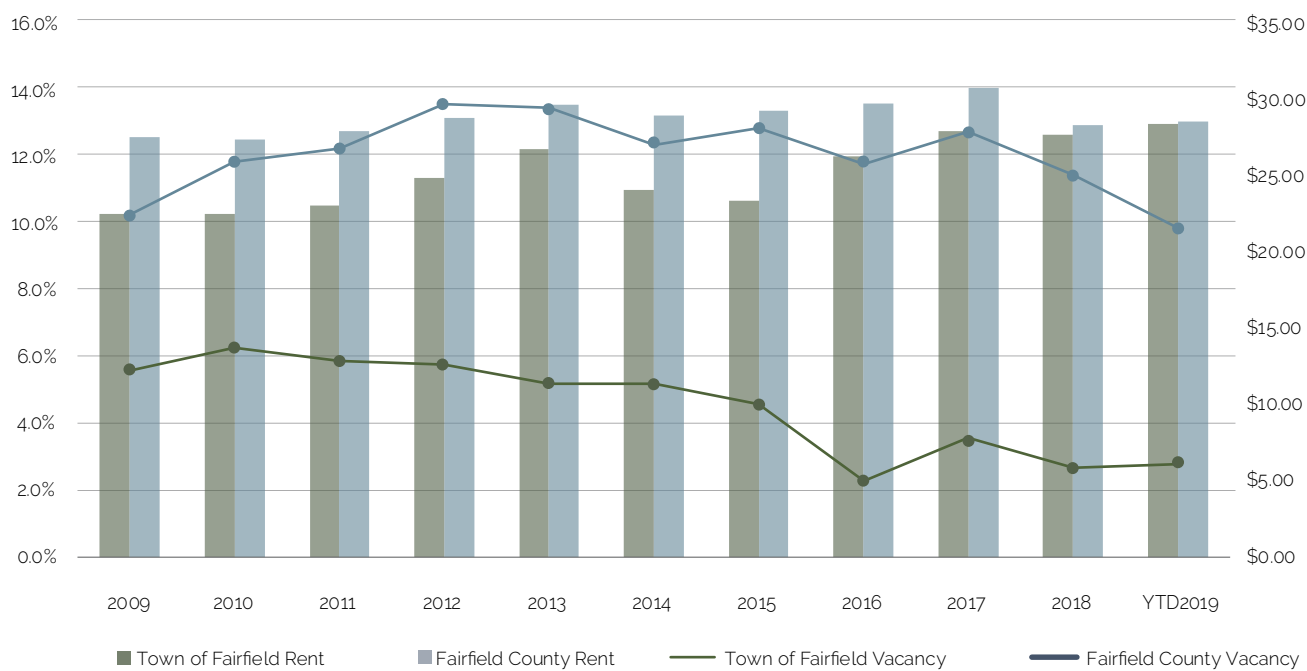
MARKET OVERVIEW

The office, industrial, and retail markets were assessed to better define Fairfield’s position within the context of the competitive market area. Data from CoStar and Esri Business Analyst were utilized for this analysis. The following highlights both current conditions and historical trends within these three markets. The housing market is analyzed separately.

OFFICE

Fairfield has experienced a steady decline in office vacancy since 2010 and has consistently had a considerably lower vacancy rate than the County. Little fluctuation in the market indicates a consistent demand for office over the past decade. As vacancy continues to decline office rental rates are predicted to increase. These trends suggest a strong office market for a town with minimal office space. The market fluctuation experienced in 2016 is likely due to the complete occupancy of GE’s former headquarters by Sacred Heart University and the demolition of a separate small office building.

Office Trends

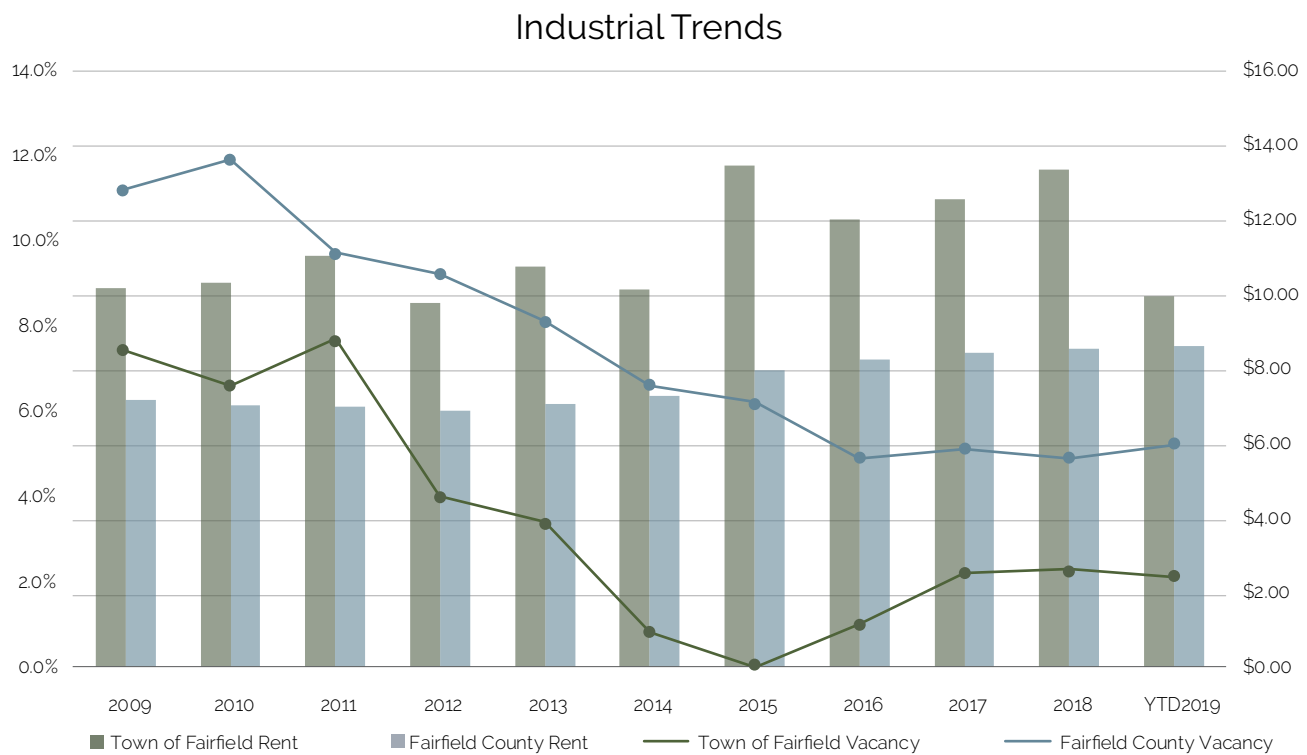


Source: CoStar, Houseal Lavigne Associates

INDUSTRIAL

The Town of Fairfield has had a consistent inventory of over 600,000 square feet of designated industrial facilities since 2009. The industrial market in Fairfield has seen a huge drop in vacancy hitting zero percent in 2015. Since 2015, vacancy has slowly crept up to hover around two percent with rents slightly lowering as well.

Generally, the Town of Fairfield has had lower rates of vacancy and higher rents than the County for the past two decades. Rents for the County have been consistent hovering between \$7-8 per square foot while rents in the Town of Fairfield have been consistently higher but show more fluctuation between \$10 and almost \$14 per square foot.

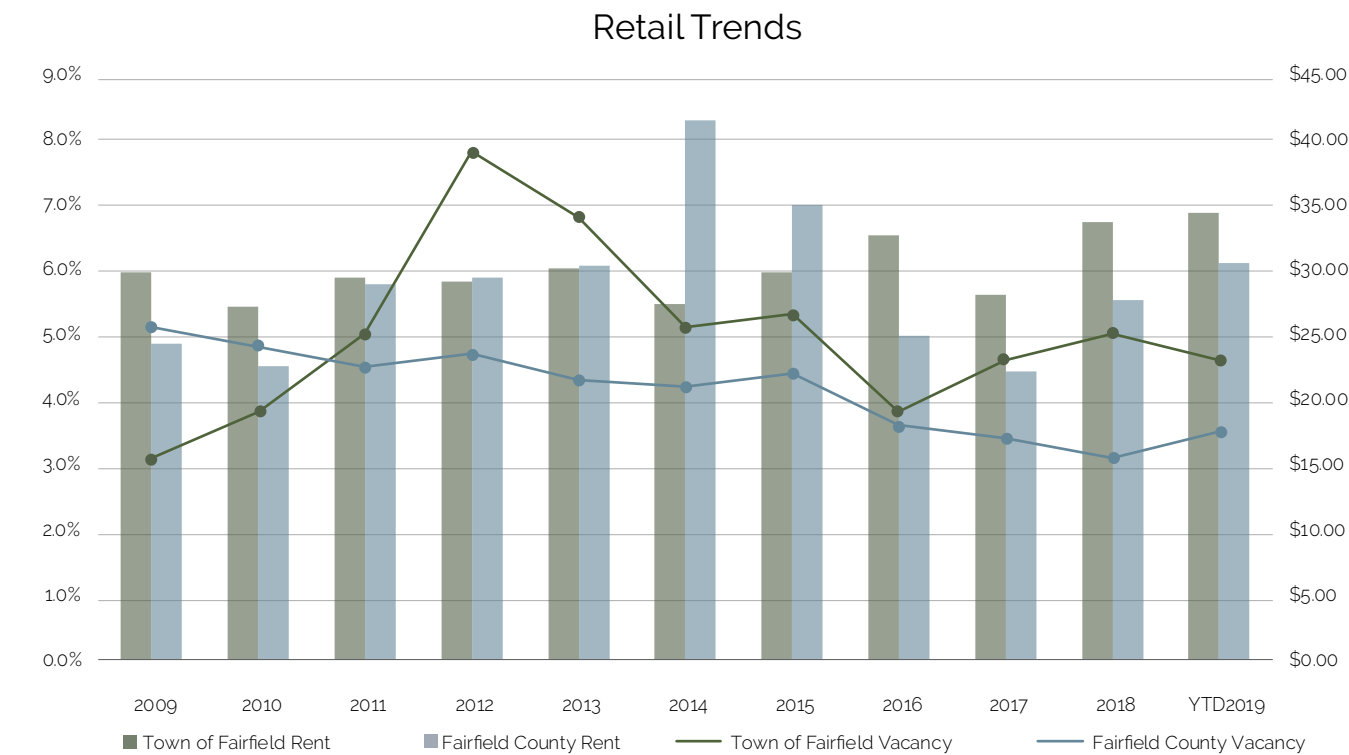


Source: CoStar, Houseal Lavigne Associates

RETAIL

The Town of Fairfield contains over 3.1 million square feet of retail space. Retail space vacancy has stayed relatively consistent over the past 10 years with the exception of a spike in vacancy in 2012. Overall, the Town of Fairfield has had relatively consistent retail rents in a range between \$27 and \$35. The County, by comparison, has experienced declining vacancy with greater fluctuation in rents ranging between \$22 to \$41.

Annual expenditures on food and drink by Fairfield residents amount to approximately \$163 million whereas businesses located in the Town account for just \$142 million in sales. This means that demand is exceeding supply by \$21 million. An indication that Fairfield residents are spending money for goods and services outside the Town.



Source: CoStar, Houseal Lavigne Associates

RESIDENTIAL

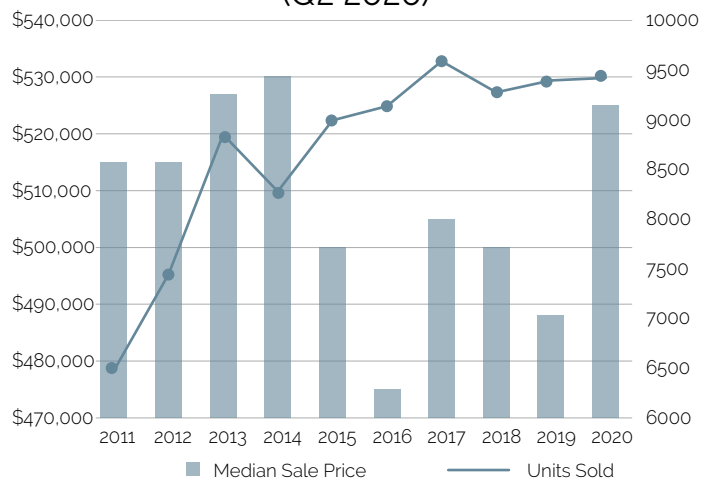
The single-family home market in Fairfield has been stable with the median sales price increasing by 13 percent in Q2 2020 over Q2 2019. According to a recent market report, Fairfield had the largest percentage increase in Fairfield County, exceeding the County median increase of 11 percent. The median sales price of a single-family home in the Town of Fairfield was \$653,000 during the second quarter of 2020 up from \$580,000 for the same period in 2019.

Following some market fluctuation and period of decline, The Fairfield County market overall has been very strong, highlighting the desirability of the area. The graphic below indicates average Q2 sales prices over a ten-year period.

The condominium and townhome market has had less fluctuation than the single-family market, but also has not experienced the same level of increase in the past twelve months.

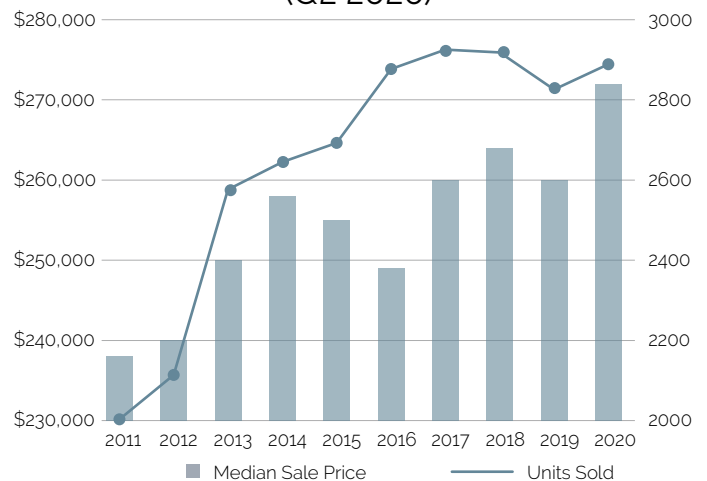
The rental market has reportedly been relatively stable both within the market area and Fairfield specifically. Costar, a nationally recognized provider of real estate market data, includes the Town of Fairfield in the larger Stamford market area for purposes of tracking the multi-family market. Average rents of \$2.47 per square foot with an annual increase of just over three percent, generally places Fairfield in the middle of the market.

Fairfield County Single-Family Market
(Q2 2020)



Source: Berkshire Hathaway Home Services; IDC Global; Datafloat; Multiple Listing Service (MLS)

Fairfield County Condo-Townhome Market
(Q2 2020)



Source: Berkshire Hathaway Home Services; IDC Global; Datafloat; Multiple Listing Service (MLS)

SUMMARY

There are several key takeaways from the demographic and market overview that Fairfield can apply to the Strategic Planning process. First and foremost, both the Town and County are very stable with growing populations and a high quality of life. All market sectors are relatively strong and continue to experience demand. There are, however, indications of trends that will influence the future of the Town. While the population is growing and the median age is increasing, two important segments of the population are leveling off. Both the senior and millennial populations are leaving and/or not locating to Fairfield. The interesting correlation of these two age cohorts is that they share many of the same interests and demands in relation to housing, shopping/entertainment options, and recreation. The differences are; whereas the younger population may be seeking good employment opportunities and transportation options, the older age group is looking for senior services/programming and quality healthcare.

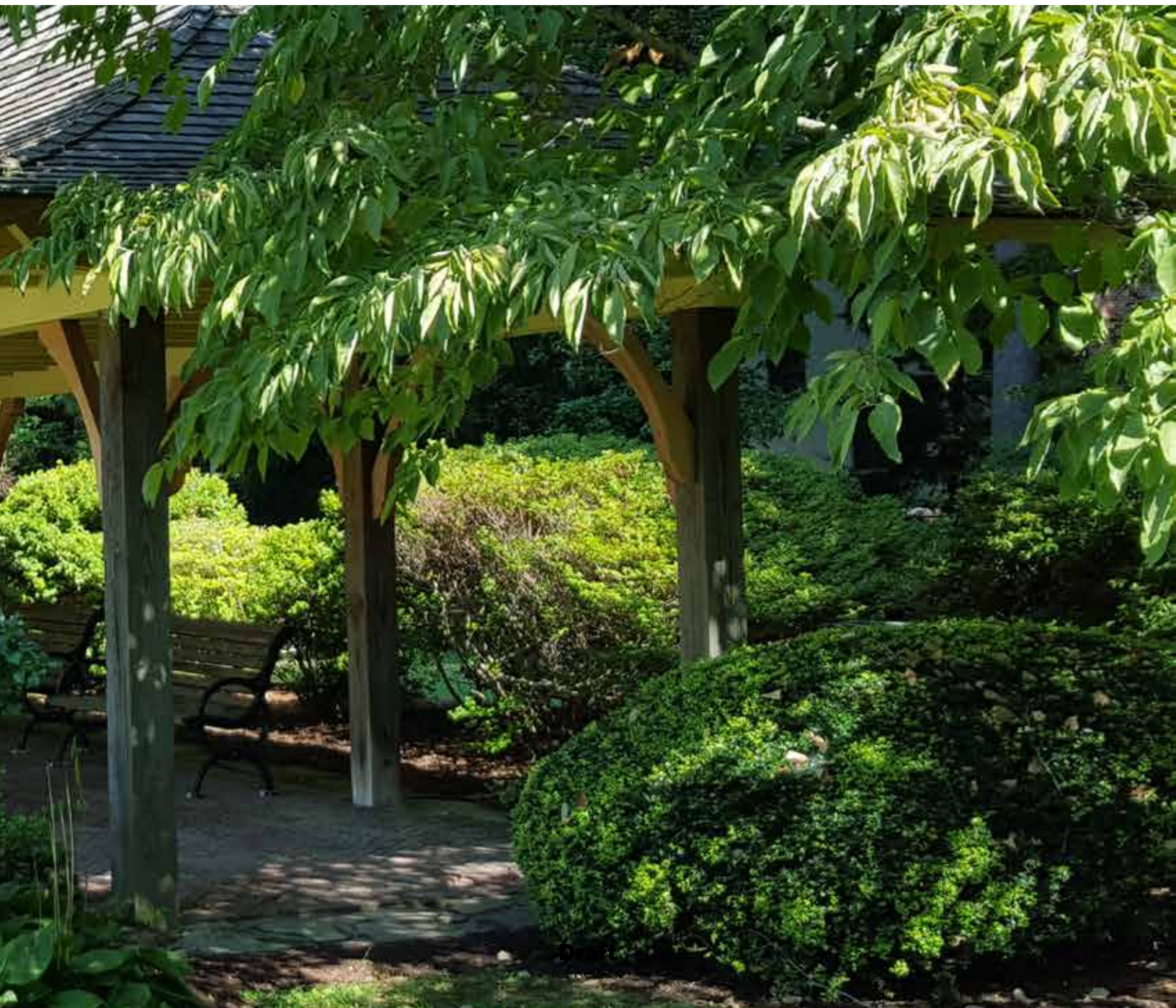
The characteristics that these two groups share, as well as their respective differences, have been highlighted in outreach throughout the Strategic Planning process and are essentially echoed in this demographic and market assessment. As the Town begins to implement the Strategic Plan it will be important to do so with an eye toward the continuing improvement of these issues while maintaining those things that cater to and attract a population of all ages.

Despite stability in Fairfield and Fairfield County, an inescapable challenge is the State of Connecticut's economic status. The State has not fully recovered from the great recession of 2008. There is insufficient job growth and economic expansion, and the State's spending and pension (and other) liabilities are outweighing its ability to readily fund such needs. The State has been losing tax paying residents and businesses, and the prospects for easy resolution of the economic environment has not been forthcoming. State funding to Towns and communities have become more constrained and State investments in key points of value for the Town (roads, rails, other infrastructure, other technology) have been underfunded for years and may not turn around soon. For example, the loss of the GE headquarters has negatively impacted the Town's tax base and jobs. All of these economic challenges are problematic to the economic prospects for the Town, and heighten the importance of sound fiscal, economic, and risk management practices locally.

CHAPTER 3



COMMUNITY DRIVEN VISION





The Community Driven Vision is a narrative that paints a picture of what the Town can achieve following the adoption of the Strategic Plan. The narrative is intended to be ambitious and inspirational, depicting the community's collective desires, and serving as the foundation for the Plan's critical success factors, key initiatives, and objectives. The portion of the Vision Statement most applicable to each critical success factor is repeated at the beginning of that respective section.

VISION STATEMENT

In 2035, Fairfield has successfully differentiated itself from neighboring communities by creating a sustainable advantage resulting in high quality of life with low cost burden on residents. The Town continues to be a dynamic and desirable community in the New York City Metropolitan Area, boasting a transparent and responsible local government, exceptional quality of life, comparatively low cost of living, regionally competitive public education system, attractive and desirable commercial corridors, diverse and vibrant neighborhoods, and safe and resilient infrastructure network.

Town government will transition to be more efficient, effective, and transparent. Fairfield residents will have a clearer understanding of how and why Town decisions are made and

will trust leadership to cooperatively work towards realizing the community's vision for its future. The Town's relationship with residents, business owners, and all community partners will improve through the integration of technology into all processes and communications. Permits will be able to be pulled remotely; residents, businesses/property owners, and developers will be able to access and understand Town ordinances; proposals and plans will be easily accessible, interactive and user-friendly; and citizen access to Town leadership will be improved, all from the Town's website.

Fairfield will be financially strong and all Town staff and elected and appointed officials will act as stewards of taxpayer dollars. Through the use of responsible business management practices, the Town will effectively manage its human and fiscal resources and leverage its assets to the maximum benefit of residents. Currently underutilized Town assets like the waterfront, marina, and other land parcels will be leveraged and thoughtfully developed to maximize their contribution to the Town for needed operations and services and to enhance community character. Through a thorough and inclusive assessment of all Town services, the Town will align the benefits and results of specific programs with costs. The Town will improve its budgeting process to be more transparent by providing easy access to relevant, accurate data in a timely manner and by incorporating third party expert testimonials to budget deliberations.



The Town will minimize the tax-burden of residents by effectively and inclusively planning for vacant and underutilized sites in the community. Through the creation of development visions, developers will be provided with a design framework that has been developed with community input and informed by the multigenerational trends the community is experiencing. To reinforce the importance of these community driven plans, Fairfield will update and revise its land development ordinances to align with the development visions. The updated ordinances will also be more user-friendly and accessible, integrating technology and eliminating redundancy, contradictions, and legalese.

Fairfield will improve its financial position by leveraging public-private partnerships, developing regional service agreements, establishing a set of metrics for grand list growth, and improving its working relationship with existing service providers. Fairfield will explore opportunities for cost-savings through the regionalization of shared services and responsibilities. The Town will also leverage partnerships with Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University, and other organizations to maximize their presence in the community and their contribution to the local economy. Fairfield will enhance collaboration with Fairfield Public Schools to ensure that the Town's contribution to public education is right-sized and reflective of the budgetary demands of both

organizations. Education resources will be supplemented by revenue sources outside of property taxes and metrics tracking education innovation will be utilized.

The Town will confidently face the future by making equitable investments in infrastructure that will minimize the community's vulnerability to climate change by fortifying the coastline, enhancing the multimodal transportation system, and encouraging low-impact development and resource conservation. The Town will lead by example by assessing all Town operations and identifying strategies and benchmarks to reduce their environmental impact. Fairfield residents, business owners, and community partners are also committed to combating the effects of our changing climate and will be encouraged to continually make thoughtful decisions by the Town's clear messaging and increased support of these goals.

CHAPTER 4



CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS



Draft
for Review



CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Critical Success Factors are the things that must occur for the Town to achieve its vision. One or more of these factors are tied to each key initiative and should be used regularly by Town staff and elected and appointed officials in staff reports, budget initiatives, and other decision and policy making processes.



EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE AND PROFESSIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Town decision making is transparent and aligned with the community's vision for its future. The Town clearly communicates, and boldly and professionally implements policies using sound leadership and relevant best practices.



SOUND FISCAL STEWARDSHIP

Fairfield's budget is made by prioritizing across all government services, considering needs, balanced with available resources, using fiscal policies based on industry best practices to ensure decisions reflect both current and long-term impacts.



THOUGHTFUL DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPEROUS ECONOMY

The Town proactively plans for the development of vacant and underutilized sites, prioritizing appropriateness of land use, leveraging existing economic assets, and growing the grand list.



COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS WITH REGIONAL PARTNERS

Fairfield actively seeks opportunities to leverage and improve partnerships to enhance service delivery and quality of life in the most fiscally sound and responsible manner.



RESILIENT AND CONNECTED COMMUNITY

The Town works to minimize the impacts of climate change on the community by making forward looking improvements to infrastructure that make our beaches, drainage systems, bridges, and roads more resilient and safe.



EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE AND PROFESSIONAL ADMINISTRATION

AN EXCERPT FROM THE VISION STATEMENT

Town government will transition to be more efficient, effective, and transparent. Fairfield residents will have a clearer understanding of how and why Town decisions are made and will trust leadership to cooperatively work towards realizing the community's vision for its future. The Town's relationship with residents, business owners, and all community partners will improve through the integration of technology into all processes and communications. Permits will be able to be pulled remotely; residents, businesses/property owners, and developers will be able to access and understand Town ordinances; and proposals and plans will be easily accessible, interactive and user-friendly, all from the Town's website.



KEY INITIATIVES

1. Transition the Town governance structure from the current Selectmen-Representative Town Meeting style of governance to an alternative form.
2. Evaluate, reorganize, and better align Town departments and leadership.
3. Use technology to ensure optimal utility and cost-effective service delivery.



EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE AND PROFESSIONAL ADMINISTRATION

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Transition the Town governance structure from the current Selectmen-Representative Town Meeting style of governance to an alternative form such as a Town Council / Mayor or Town Council / Manager form.**
 - 1A. Establish a Town Charter Revision Initiative.
 - 1B. Conduct an extensive community outreach and education campaign about alternative governance structures and their benefits / costs / implications.
 - 1C. Inventory and evaluate the role of existing advisory boards and commissions to identify opportunities to consolidate or sunset as appropriate and adopt consistent operating guidelines.
 - 1D. Identify the skill sets and experience needed for board and commission members to be successful in their roles and ensure new members meet the base criteria.
 - 1E. Develop a five-year governance structure transition plan.
 - 1F. Amend the Town Charter.
 - 1G. Require that all staff, elected, and appointed officials complete training on the amendments to the Town Charter.
- 2. Evaluate, reorganize, and better align Town departments and leadership.**
 - 2A. Clarify and align the leadership hierarchy of all Town Departments to group departments with co-dependent objectives and to provide clear paths for problem resolution or escalation.
 - 2B. Establish standing meetings with Department heads and the highest elected representative of the Town to streamline communication between departments and to improve coordination and cooperation amongst Town leadership.
 - 2C. Institute a monthly departmental report and share it with all Town staff and elected/appointed officials.
 - 2D. Establish an internal staff newsletter to foster interpersonal communication throughout Town departments.
 - 2E. Develop formal job descriptions for each Town staff person that clearly state the essential job requirements, duties, and responsibilities of the position as well as the skills required to perform the role. The descriptions should also cover how success is measured in the role to better inform performance evaluations.

- 2F. Perform a staffing needs assessment based on the formal job descriptions and the roles and responsibilities of each department.
- 2G. Develop an annual staff review process that ties salary increases to performance. Performance should be measured based on how success is measured for that role as established in the formal job description.
- 2H. Require that all elected and appointed officials complete training to improve understanding and expectations regarding the role of each department or commission in overall Town operations, establish performance expectations, and facilitate cross entity coordination.
- 2I. Each department should be able to show “how” their department plan supports the Strategic Plan and which activities do not support the Plan.

3. Use technology to ensure optimal utility and cost-effective service-delivery.

- 3A. Create an interactive and user-friendly online platform that hosts the Town’s Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map, and that allows people to easily understand the development potential of property, learn where they can locate their business, receive alerts for new projects, track ongoing development and comment on issues/concerns or leave positive feedback.
- 3B. Improve the Town website from a technology utility standpoint to allow for fully online permitting, payments, and licensing.



SOUND FISCAL STEWARDSHIP

AN EXCERPT FROM THE VISION STATEMENT

Fairfield will be financially strong and all Town staff, elected and appointed officials will act as stewards of taxpayer dollars. Through the use of responsible business management practices, the Town will effectively manage its human and fiscal resources and leverage its assets to the maximum benefit of residents. Currently underutilized resources including the waterfront, marina, and other land parcels will maximize their contribution to the Town for needed operations and services. Through a thorough assessment of all services, the Town will align the benefits and results of specific programs with cost. The Town will improve its budgeting process to be more transparent by providing easy access to relevant data and information in an accurate, timely manner. This may include but not be limited to incorporating third party expert testimonials in budget deliberations.



KEY INITIATIVES

1. Develop a multi-year, priority-based budget.
2. Establish intra-departmental business process improvement teams to determine cost-control measures and overcome process inefficiency.
3. Perform a comparative analysis of all revenue producing properties and programs to better align associated user costs and pricing with industry and market standards.
4. Evolve the internal and external communication procedures for budget processes, priorities, and fiscal challenges.



SOUND FISCAL STEWARDSHIP

OBJECTIVES

1. Develop a multi-year, priority-based budget.

- 1A. Host an annual leadership retreat with elected officials to identify Town priorities for a short-term, (three- to five-year) horizon.
- 1B. Develop and require the use of a budget request scoring matrix utilizing Town priorities identified as a part of the leadership retreat.
- 1C. Require each major fund to include a five-year financial forecast to assist in outlining the long-term impacts of budget/policy decisions.
- 1D. Develop key metrics for each department that support the overall Strategic Plan and require departments to demonstrate how budget requests work to meet those metrics.
- 1E. Continue to develop a five-year Capital Improvement Plan that identifies capital projects and equipment purchases, provides a planning schedule, and identifies options for financing.
- 1F. Require Town administration to bring in outside, third party experts to develop benchmarks to measure budget requests to provide decision makers with clarity on the variable and fixed costs of each department and major fund.
- 1G. Require a referendum for the approval of budgets that increase local property tax rates by more than a certain percent determined based on pension and / or social security increases.

2. Establish intra-departmental business process improvement teams to determine cost-control measures and overcome process inefficiency.

- 2A. Train Town staff and elected and appointed officials on how to apply Lean Six Sigma to all departmental operations and internal processes.
- 2B. Require Town departments to form business process improvement teams that are responsible for the development of five-year plans based on Town priorities established as a part of Sound Fiscal Stewardship Objective 1A. Plans should require the implementation of cost control measures and strategies to overcome process inefficiencies.
- 2C. Require the approval of Department Five-Year Plans by the Town's elected officials prior to the submission of annual budget or Capital Improvement Plan requests.
- 2D. Partner with MetroCOG and neighboring municipalities to perform an analysis of the feasibility and cost savings associated with regionalization of Town services such as tax assessment, human resources, health services, tax collection, accounting, and purchasing.
- 2E. Review all Town-side and education-side operations, services, and related costs. Validate the necessity of the service and undertake steps to modify service levels in order to reduce spending and future spending increases.

3. Perform a comparative analysis of all revenue producing properties and programs to better align associated user costs with industry and market standards.

- 3A. Prepare and communicate to all boards, committees, and commissions that have revenue generation ability the importance of optimizing their ability to support the Town's need for financial return.
- 3B. Charge each committee with the conduct of an objective comparative analysis of all revenue producing properties and programs in Fairfield.
- 3C. Develop a phased plan to better align the associated costs of the use of Town properties and participation in Town programming with industry standards and market realities identified in the comparative analysis.

4. Evolve the external communication procedures for budget processes, priorities, and fiscal challenges.

- 4A. Develop an infographic of proposed budget highlights and include it in all budget meeting notices and disseminate it online.
- 4B. Utilize an open data portal to enhance communications surrounding budget decisions and to clearly align fund items with Town priorities.
- 4C. Prepare the budget document for Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) budget award submittal to demonstrate commitment to financial transparency.



THOUGHTFUL DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPEROUS ECONOMY

AN EXCERPT FROM THE VISION STATEMENT

The Town will minimize the tax-burden of residents by effectively and inclusively planning for vacant and underutilized sites in the community. Through the creation of development visualizations, developers will be provided with a design framework that has been vetted by the community. To reinforce the importance of these community driven plans, Fairfield will update and revise its land development ordinances to align with the development visions. The updated ordinances will also be more user-friendly and accessible, integrating technology and eliminating redundancy, contradictions, and legalese.



KEY INITIATIVES

1. Approach economic development in a more formal and intensive manner to drive development.
2. Identify and plan for vacant and underutilized properties in Fairfield and incorporate proactive community vision for such areas.
3. Update and modernize land development regulations.
4. Undertake a redesign of the Town website to better market Fairfield and ensure optimal utility to end-users.



THOUGHTFUL DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPEROUS ECONOMY

OBJECTIVES

1. Approach economic development in a more formal and intensive manner to drive development.

- 1A. Perform a staffing needs assessment for the Office of Community and Economic Development to identify needed positions (i.e. Town Ombudsman) to expand the office to allow for the formal and intensive pursuit of economic development.
- 1B. Identify a strategic target for commercial grand list growth in order to focus development efforts and plan for financial implications.
- 1C. Develop a community competitiveness plan that identifies and highlights Fairfield's distinguishing attributes and establishes a marketing message for the Town.
- 1D. Hire a consultant to develop a new Plan of Conservation and Development that includes subarea planning for the downtown, waterfront, and Turner Reserve Center utilizing 3D visualizations to further articulate the vision for these key areas.

2. Identify and plan for vacant and underutilized properties in Fairfield and incorporate proactive community vision for such areas.

- 2A. Utilize scenario planning tools that assess the development potential of parcels by comparing existing development with what is permitted in the Town's land development regulations to identify vacant or underutilized properties in Fairfield such as the Turner Reserve Center, as well as locations in the Downtown and along the waterfront.
- 2B. Perform a market assessment and existing conditions analysis to better understand the development potential of prioritized sites.
- 2C. Engage Fairfield residents at key points throughout the process to help to articulate the vision for each prioritized site and to identify preferred development concepts and alternatives for each prioritized site.
- 2D. Refine design visions and prepare plans and recommendations for each prioritized site.
- 2E. Utilize illustrations and 3D renderings to provide the detail necessary to effectively communicate planning and development concepts and recommendation alternatives for each prioritized site.
- 2F. Adopt preferred alternatives and market the plans on a regional and national scale.

3. Update and modernize land development regulations.

- 3A. Update the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) to identify and establish policy direction for the Town.
- 3B. Engage Fairfield residents, business and property owners, developers, and all stakeholders to identify issues with existing regulations and the usability of the code.
- 3C. Perform a diagnostic of the existing zoning regulations to identify areas that are misaligned with the POCD, best practices, and state and federal legislation and judicial rulings.
- 3D. Incorporate the recommendations for zoning regulation revisions included in the Transit-Oriented Development Study completed in August 2019.
- 3E. Draft revised zoning regulations and work with the Plan and Zoning Commission at key intervals to refine the documents.
- 3F. Adopt the revised zoning regulations and create an online web-based smart code version with interactive site-specific zoning analysis capabilities.

4. Undertake a redesign of the Town website to better market Fairfield and ensure optimal utility to end-users.

- 4A. Establish a Town Website Redesign Committee to review potential vendors and site features.
- 4B. Engage Town staff, elected and appointed officials, and public users to better understand the current functionality of the website.
- 4C. Examine website analytics to identify how people are utilizing the site in order to improve access and ease of use.
- 4D. Select a vendor and implement the redesign.
- 4E. Increase the visibility of the redesigned website using search engine optimization tools.
- 4F. Determine roles and responsibilities for ongoing website maintenance.



COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS WITH REGIONAL PARTNERS

AN EXCERPT FROM THE VISION STATEMENT

Fairfield will improve its financial position by leveraging public-private partnerships, developing regional service agreements, and improving its working relationship with existing service providers. Fairfield will explore opportunities for cost-savings through the regionalization of shared services and responsibilities. The Town will also leverage partnerships with Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University, and other organizations to maximize their presence in the community and their contribution to the local economy. Fairfield will enhance collaboration with Fairfield Public Schools to ensure that the Town's contribution to public education is right-sized and reflective of the budgetary demands of both organizations.



KEY INITIATIVES

1. Enhance collaboration with Fairfield Public Schools to improve education innovation, achievement, planning, and budgeting.
2. Explore opportunities for cost savings through shared services and responsibilities.
3. Partner with Fairfield University and Sacred Heart University to maximize their presence in the community and their contribution to the local economy.



COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS WITH REGIONAL PARTNERS

OBJECTIVES

1. Enhance collaboration with Fairfield Public Schools to improve education innovation, achievement, planning, and budgeting.

- 1A. Hire an outside facilitator to host a series of workshops between Town leadership and School District leadership with the aim to improve communication and identify innovative opportunities for increased collaboration.
- 1B. Work with the district to develop a five-year capital improvement plan in order to receive funding over a defined amount for the maintenance of existing school facilities or construction of new school buildings.
- 1C. Coordinate with the school district to identify opportunities to enter into shared access agreements for school fields, parks, and facilities.
- 1D. Consider opportunities for shared administration and management between the school district and parks and recreation department for summer camps and after school programming.
- 1E. Coordinate with the school district in their exploration of cost savings measures such as sponsorships, grants, regional collaboration with high performing districts, and partnerships with universities, amongst others.

2. Explore opportunities for cost savings and innovation through shared services and responsibilities.

- 2A. Partner with MetroCOG and other member communities to conduct a study on the potential benefits of shared services and cooperative purchasing.
- 2B. Develop an inventory of existing shared service and/or cooperative purchasing agreements in Fairfield County and the state.
- 2C. Assess the effectiveness of identified shared service and/or cooperative purchasing agreements to understand the potential benefits, costs, and opportunities for innovation.
- 2D. Evaluate and prioritize opportunities for shared services and cooperative purchasing and enter into agreements for phased transition.

3. Partner with Fairfield University and Sacred Heart University to maximize their presence in the community and their contribution to the local economy.

- 3A. Assign a Town liaison who is responsible for managing the partnership with the universities.
- 3B. Coordinate with the universities in business attraction efforts to improve student retention after graduation.
- 3C. Involve university faculty, staff, and students in the creation of development visions for land adjacent to the universities if any is prioritized as a part of the identification and planning for vacant and underutilized sites in Fairfield key initiative (see Key Initiative 1 of Thoughtful Development Prosperous Economy).
- 3D. Work with the universities to better leverage Town resources in the development of curriculum and programs such as a business startup acceleration program to create a culture of entrepreneurialism in Fairfield.
- 3E. Host Town-university events to improve the relationship between students and full-time residents.



RESILIENT AND CONNECTED COMMUNITY

AN EXCERPT FROM THE VISION STATEMENT

The Town will confidently face the future by making equitable investments in infrastructure that will minimize the community's vulnerability to climate change by fortifying the coastline, enhancing the multimodal transportation system, and encouraging low-impact development and resource conservation. The Town will lead by example by assessing all Town operations and identifying strategies and benchmarks to reduce their environmental impact. Fairfield residents, business owners, and community partners are also committed to combating the effects of our changing climate and will be encouraged to continually make thoughtful decisions by the Town's clear messaging and increased support of these goals.



KEY INITIATIVES

1. Fortify the coastline.
2. Enhance the multimodal transportation system.
3. Encourage low impact design and resource conservation.
4. Reduce the environmental impact of Town operations.



RESILIENT AND CONNECTED COMMUNITY

OBJECTIVES

1. Fortify the coastline.

- 1A. Retain outside expertise to lead the outreach process and development of a Coastline Resiliency Plan, including an update to the Town's Shellfish Management Plan. The plan should be adopted as a policy framework for the Town to guide the development of five-year Capital Improvement Plans, as detailed in Sound Fiscal Stewardship key initiative one.
- 1B. Improve the Inland Wetlands Program webpage to include an interactive map to provide property specific information on the impacts of the Town's Inland Wetland and Watercourses Regulations to better connect the regulations and the Town's land development regulations and more clearly communicate development restrictions.
- 1C. Continue to support and expand the Salt Marsh Restoration Program.

2. Enhance the multimodal transportation system.

- 2A. Retain outside expertise to lead the outreach process and development of a Multimodal Transportation Plan, that builds off of the Fairfield Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and adopt it as a policy framework for the Town to guide the development of five-year Capital Improvement Plans as detailed in Sound Fiscal Stewardship key initiative one.
- 2B. Revise the Town's subdivision ordinance to establish a maximum block length and a minimum connectivity index requirement, as well as enhance street cross section requirements to include sidewalks, bike lanes, and a greater variety of roadway types.
- 2C. Coordinate with the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority as well as Fairfield University and Sacred Heart University to expand bus routes and bus frequency to better connect area residents to Fairfield's commercial corridors and employment centers.
- 2D. Revise the Town's parking regulations to require pedestrian walkways to be built and connected to public sidewalks when any parking lot is built.
- 2E. Revise the Town's parking regulations to incentivize the installation of electric vehicle charging stations and bicycle parking.
- 2F. Work with Trumbull, Monroe, Bridgeport, Stratford, MetroCOG and the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority to pursue a regional bikeshare system.

3. Encourage low impact design and resource conservation.

- 3A. Consider up-zoning residential properties north of Hulls Farm Road to allow for greater density in appropriate areas.
- 3B. Develop a residential pattern book of preferred residential housing types and architectural styles to guide infill development.
- 3C. Encourage the adaptive reuse of existing buildings by offering expedited development approval to applications that meet all of the Town's zoning regulations.
- 3D. Update the Town's landscape requirements to incentivize the use of native plants, bioretention facilities, infiltration basins, permeable pavers, and other green infrastructure options.
- 3E. Become an active Solarize Connecticut community to decrease the cost of installing solar panels for Fairfield residents and business owners.
- 3F. Incentivize developers to meet LEED or other green building certification standards.

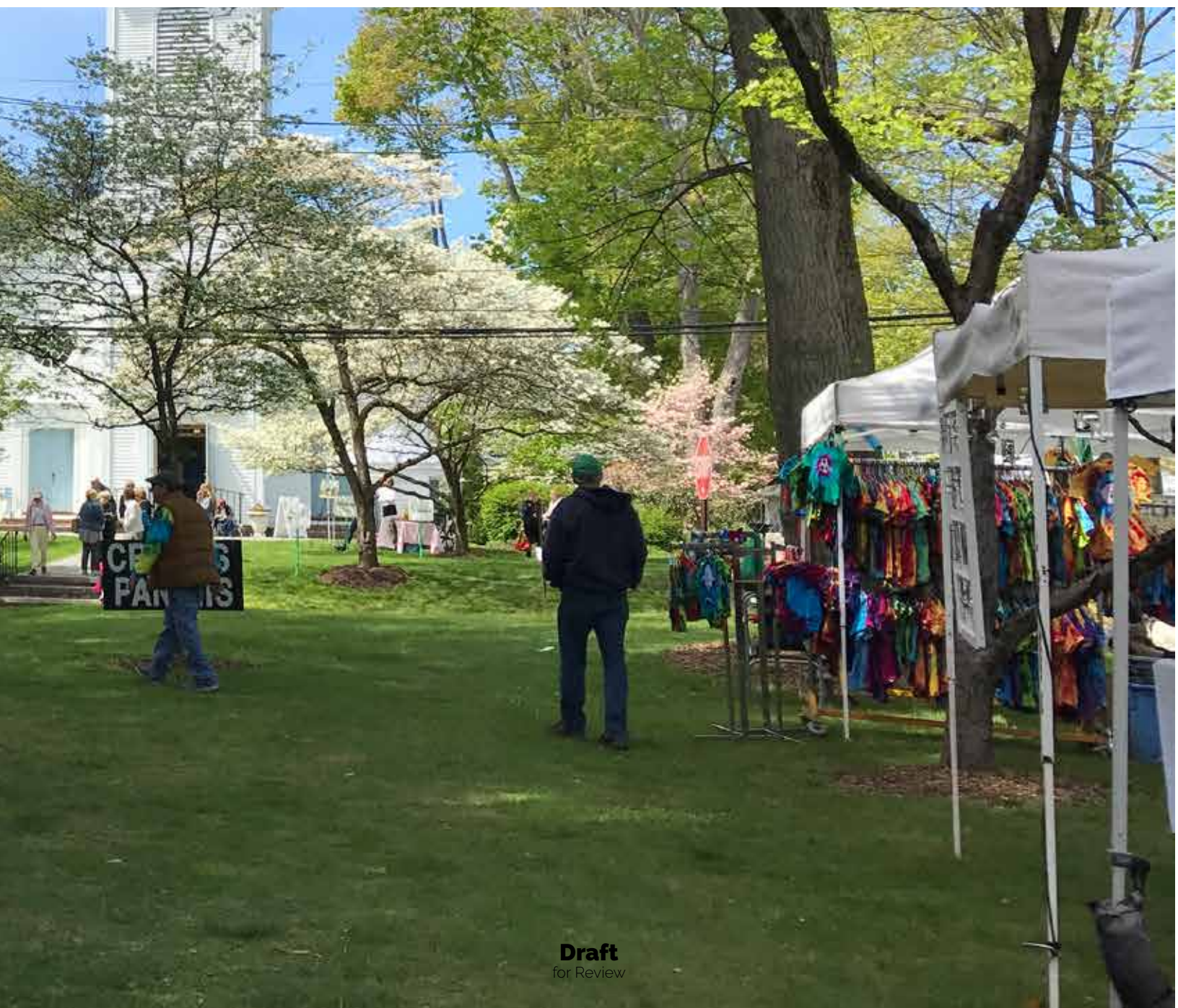
4. Reduce the environmental impact of Town operations.

- 4A. Hire or appoint a Town staff person to be responsible for the identification and implementation of sustainability and resiliency related initiatives throughout the Town and to provide staff support to the Sustainable Fairfield Task Force.
- 4B. Continue to review energy savings and composting initiatives to ensure that all potential benefits and savings are identified and acted upon.
- 4C. Coordinate with licensed solid waste and recycling haulers to improve route efficiency to save time and fuel.
- 4D. Strive to meet LEED or other green building certification standards in the construction of new Town facilities when feasible.

CHAPTER 5



IMPLEMENTATION





STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

To hold the community accountable and ensure that the Plan is implemented, the Strategic Plan Steering Committee should be transitioned into a formal Strategic Plan Implementation Task Force that is reconstituted as the first committee that is compliant with the new guidelines for committee roles, responsibilities, and skills. The Task Force should act as the ongoing leadership for One Town One Vision and include original Steering Committee members, Town staff, elected and appointed officials, and representatives from key partner organizations. It should be the central deliberative body to evaluate implementation and modify the course of action as necessary. The work of the Task Force will be high-level and policy-oriented, focused on setting and managing the rolling action agenda for the overall effort.

The Task Force should be broken down into Tactical Teams responsible for each critical success factor. Each Tactical Team should breakdown their action items into a series of sequential tasks to be assigned to responsible parties to coordinate and execute. Regular meetings with the Tactical Teams should be held to track progress.

The captain of each Tactical Team should meet semi-regularly to review their team's progress and act as a decision-making forum to course correct when necessary and discuss requests for input and resource needs.

The whole Task Force should meet quarterly and hold a semiannual review with Town leadership to determine which objectives can be marked as "completed" and retired from the Implementation Action Matrix. Further, this deliberative session will identify the new priorities for each Tactical Team for the next year's action agenda. The output from the reviews should be a report on the last year's results, an analysis of the effectiveness of the implementation strategies, and a revised Implementation Action Matrix. This output should be memorialized in a brief report made available to the public on the Town's website.



IMPLEMENTATION ACTION MATRIX

The One Town One Vision Strategic Plan contains a series of key initiatives and objectives that work towards the critical success factors:

- Effective Governance and Professional Administration
- Sound Fiscal Stewardship
- Thoughtful Development and Prosperous Economy
- Collaborative Solutions with Regional Partners
- Resilient and Connected Community

The following action items are the ten prioritized objectives that will launch Year One implementation. Some of these items are near term, tangible, and relatively straightforward to tackle. Others are first steps that launch larger strategies that will unfold over the coming years.

There is a balance and a mix of strategies, but they represent the most potentially impactful opportunities in Fairfield today. In a few cases, individual objectives are combined into a single action item because they are effectively implemented together. Many of these ten items can serve as critical catalysts and lead to compounding impacts and cascading results.

This Plan section acts as a reference manual to guide implementation, but it also provides a framework for the tracking, reporting, and evaluation of the Plan's success. This methodology also provides the framework for updating the Plan over time.

Rather than attempt to identify a logical sequence for every idea in the Plan and prioritize every objective years into the future, implementation begins with today's priorities. Following is the complete list of the Year One action items presented in an initial Implementation Action Matrix.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTION MATRIX

Plan Page	Critical Success Factor	Key Initiative	Objective	Implementation Time Frame	Priority	Potential Partners	Key Performance Indicator
28-29	Effective Governance and Professional Administration	Transition the Town governance structure from the current Selectman-Regular Town Meeting style of governance to an alternative form.	Establish a Town Charter Revision Initiative.	short	A	Dr. Gayle Alberda, Assistant Professor of Politics and Public Administration at Fairfield University	Within three years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the Town has determined its preferred governance structure and has entered into the first phase of the Governance Structure Transition Plan.
28-29			Conduct an extensive community outreach and education campaign about alternative governance structures and their benefits / costs / implications.	short, ongoing	A	First Selectwoman's Office	
28-29			Inventory and evaluate the role of existing advisory boards and commissions to identify opportunities to consolidate or sunset as appropriate and adopt consistent operating guidelines.	mid	B	First Selectwoman's Office	
28-29			Identify the skill sets and experience needed for board and commission members to be successful in their roles and ensure new members meet the base criteria.	mid	B	Associated Town Department	
28-29			Develop a five-year governance structure transition plan.	mid	A	First Selectwoman's Office	
28-29			Amend the Town Charter.	long	A	First Selectwoman's Office	

Plan Page	Critical Success Factor	Key Initiative	Objective	Implementation Time Frame	Priority	Potential Partners	Key Performance Indicator
28-29	Effective Governance and Professional Administration	Transition the Town governance structure from the current Selectman-Regular Town Meeting style of governance to an alternative form.	Require that all staff, elected, and appointed officials complete training on the amendments to the Town Charter.	long	A	First Selectwoman's Office	Within three years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the Town has determined its preferred governance structure and has entered into the first phase of the Governance Structure Transition Plan.
28-29		Evaluate, reorganize, and better align Town departments and leadership. .	Clarify and align the leadership hierarchy of all Town Departments to group departments with co-dependent objectives and to provide clear paths for problem resolution or escalation.	short	A	First Selectwoman's Office, Human Resources	
28-29			Establish standing meetings with Department heads and the highest elected representative of the Town to streamline communication between departments and to improve coordination and cooperation amongst Town leadership.	short, ongoing	A	First Selectwoman's Office, all Town Departments	
28-29			Institute a monthly departmental report and share it with all Town staff and elected/appointed officials.	short, ongoing	C	First Selectwoman's Office, all Town Departments	
28-29			Establish an internal staff newsletter to foster interpersonal communication throughout Town departments.	short, ongoing	C	First Selectwoman's Office, all Town Departments	
28-29			Develop formal job descriptions for each Town staff person that clearly state the essential job requirements, duties, and responsibilities of the position as well as the skills required to perform the role. The descriptions should also cover how success is measured in the role to better inform performance evaluations.	mid	A	Human Resources	

Plan Page	Critical Success Factor	Key Initiative	Objective	Implementation Time Frame	Priority	Potential Partners	Key Performance Indicator
28-29	Effective Governance and Professional Administration	Evaluate, reorganize, and better align Town departments and leadership.	Perform a staffing needs assessment based on the formal job descriptions and the roles and responsibilities of each department.	long	A	Human Resources	
28-29			Develop an annual staff review process that ties salary increases to performance. Performance should be measured based on how success is measured for that role as established in the formal job description.	long, ongoing	B	Human Resources	
28-29			Require that all elected and appointed officials complete training to improve understanding and expectations regarding the role of each department or commission in overall Town operations, establish performance expectations, and facilitate cross entity coordination.	mid	A	First Selectwoman's Office	
28-29		Use technology to ensure optimal utility and cost-effective service-delivery.	Create an interactive and user-friendly online platform that hosts the Town's Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map, and that allows people to easily understand the development potential of property, learn where they can locate their business, receive alerts for new projects, track ongoing development and comment on issues/concerns or leave positive feedback.	long	C	Information Technology, Plan and Zoning Department	Within five years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, 30 percent of Town zoning, permitting, and licensing is conducted online.
28-29			Improve the Town website from a technology utility standpoint to allow for fully online permitting, payments, and licensing.	long	B	Information Technology, Plan and Zoning Department	
32-33	Sound Fiscal Stewardship	Develop a multi-year, priority-based budget.	Host an annual leadership retreat with elected officials to identify Town priorities for a short-term, (three- to five-year) horizon.	short, ongoing	A	First Selectwoman's Office, Elected and Appointed Officials	Immediately after the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the residential grand list burden has remained stagnant or decreased.
32-33			Develop and require the use of a budget request scoring matrix utilizing Town priorities identified as a part of the leadership retreat.	short, ongoing	A	First Selectwoman's Office, Board of Finance	

Plan Page	Critical Success Factor	Key Initiative	Objective	Implementation Time Frame	Priority	Potential Partners	Key Performance Indicator
32-33	Sound Fiscal Stewardship	Develop a multi-year, priority-based budget.	Require each major fund to include a five-year financial forecast to assist in outlining the long-term impacts of budget/policy decisions.	short, ongoing	A	First Selectwoman's Office, Board of Finance	Immediately after the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the residential grand list burden has remained stagnant or decreased.
32-33			Continue to develop a five-year Capital Improvement Plan that identifies capital projects and equipment purchases, provides a planning schedule, and identifies options for financing.	short, ongoing	B	All Town Departments	
32-33			Require Town administration to bring in outside, third party experts to develop benchmarks to measure budget requests to provide decision makers with clarity on the variable and fixed costs of each department and major fund.	mid, ongoing	B	First Selectwoman's Office, Board of Finance	
32-33			Require a referendum for the approval of budgets that increase local property tax rates by more than a certain percent determined based on pension and / or social security increases.	mid, ongoing	A	First Selectwoman's Office, Board of Finance	
32-33		Establish intra-departmental business process improvement teams to determine cost-control measures and overcome process inefficiency.	Train Town staff and elected and appointed officials on how to apply Lean Six Sigma to all departmental operations and internal processes.	mid	A	All Town Departments, Sacred Heart University, Fairfield University	Within three years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, each Town department has maintained or lowered its annual operating costs.
32-33			Require Town departments to form business process improvement teams that are responsible for the development of five-year plans based on Town priorities established as a part of Sound Fiscal Stewardship Objective 1A. Plans should require the implementation of cost control measures and strategies to overcome process inefficiencies.	short, ongoing	A	All Town Departments	
32-33			Require the approval of Department Five-Year Plans by the Town's elected officials prior to the submission of annual budget or Capital Improvement Plan requests .	short, ongoing	A	First Selectwoman's Office, All Town Departments	

Plan Page	Critical Success Factor	Key Initiative	Objective	Implementation Time Frame	Priority	Potential Partners	Key Performance Indicator
32-33	Sound Fiscal Stewardship	Establish intra-departmental business process improvement teams to determine cost-control measures and overcome process inefficiency.	Partner with MetroCOG and neighboring municipalities to perform an analysis of the feasibility and cost savings associated with regionalization of Town services such as tax assessment, human resources, health services, tax collection, accounting, and purchasing.	mid	B	First Selectwoman's Office, MetroCOG, neighboring municipalities	Within three years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, each Town department has maintained or lowered its annual operating costs.
32-33		Perform a comparative analysis of all revenue producing properties and programs to better align associated user costs with industry and market standards.	Prepare and communicate to all boards, committees, and commissions that have revenue generation ability the importance of optimizing their ability to support the Town's need for financial return.	short, ongoing	A	First Selectwoman's Office, All Boards and Commissions	Within three years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, total revenue generated by the Town has increased by 10 percent.
32-33			Charge each committee with the conduct of an objective comparative analysis of all revenue producing properties and programs in Fairfield.	short	A	First Selectwoman's Office, All Boards and Commissions	
32-33			Develop a phased plan to better align the associated costs of the use of Town properties and participation in Town programming with industry standards and market realities identified in the comparative analysis.	mid	B	First Selectwoman's Office, All Boards and Commissions	
32-33			Evolve the external communication procedures for budget processes, priorities, and fiscal challenges.	mid, ongoing	C	First Selectwoman's Office	Within five years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the Town has received the GFOA Budget Award.
32-33				long	C	Information Technology	
32-33				long	C	First Selectwoman's Office, Board of Finance	

Plan Page	Critical Success Factor	Key Initiative	Objective	Implementation Time Frame	Priority	Potential Partners	Key Performance Indicator
36-37	Thoughtful Development and Prosperous Economy	Approach economic development in a more formal and intensive manner to drive development.	Perform a staffing needs assessment for the Office of Community and Economic Development to identify needed positions to expand the office to allow for the formal and intensive pursuit of economic development.	mid	A	Office of Community and Economic Development, Human Resources	Within five years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the Town has reached its target for commercial grand list growth.
36-37			Identify a strategic target for commercial grand list growth in order to focus development efforts and plan for financial implications.	short	A	Office of Community and Economic Development, Board of Finance	
36-37			Develop a community competitiveness plan that identifies and highlights Fairfield's distinguishing attributes and establishes a marketing message for the Town.	mid	A	Office of Community and Economic Development	
36-37			Hire a consultant to develop a new Plan of Conservation and Development that includes subarea planning for the downtown, waterfront, and Turner Reserve Center utilizing 3D visualizations to further articulate the vision for these key areas.	mid	A	Office of Community and Economic Development, Plan and Zoning Department	
36-37		Identify and plan for vacant and underutilized properties in Fairfield.	Utilize scenario planning tools that assess the development potential of parcels by comparing existing development with what is permitted in the Town's land development regulations to identify vacant or underutilized properties in Fairfield.	short	A	Office of Community and Economic Development, Plan and Zoning Department	Within five years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, at least one of the prioritized sites has been developed.
36-37			Perform a market assessment and existing conditions analysis to better understand the development potential of prioritized sites.	short	A	Office of Community and Economic Development, Plan and Zoning Department	
36-37			Refine design visions and prepare plans and recommendations for each prioritized site.	mid	A	Office of Community and Economic Development, Plan and Zoning Department	

Plan Page	Critical Success Factor	Key Initiative	Objective	Implementation Time Frame	Priority	Potential Partners	Key Performance Indicator
36-37	Thoughtful Development and Prosperous Economy	Identify and plan for vacant and underutilized properties in Fairfield.	Utilize illustrations and 3D renderings to provide the detail necessary to effectively communicate planning and development concepts and recommendation alternatives for each prioritized site.	mid	A	Office of Community and Economic Development, Plan and Zoning Department	Within five years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, at least one of the prioritized sites has been developed.
36-37			Engage Fairfield residents at key points throughout the process to help to articulate the vision for each prioritized site and to identify preferred development concepts and alternatives for each prioritized site.	mid	A	Office of Community and Economic Development, Plan and Zoning Department	
36-37			Adopt preferred alternatives and market the plans on a regional and national scale.	mid	A	Office of Community and Economic Development, Plan and Zoning Department	
36-37		Update and modernize land development regulations.	Update the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) to identify and establish policy direction for the Town.	short	A	Plan and Zoning Department, Plan and Zoning Commission	Within three years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the Town has adopted updated and modernized land development regulations.
36-37			Engage Fairfield residents, business and property owners, developers, and all stakeholders to identify issues with existing regulations and the usability of the code.	short	A	Plan and Zoning Department, Plan and Zoning Commission	
36-37			Perform a diagnostic of the existing zoning regulations to identify areas that are misaligned with the POCD, best practices, and state and federal legislation and judicial rulings.	short	A	Plan and Zoning Department, Plan and Zoning Commission	
36-37			Incorporate the recommendations for zoning regulation revisions included in the Transit-Oriented Development Study completed in August 2019.	short	A	Plan and Zoning Department, Plan and Zoning Commission	
36-37			Draft revised zoning regulations and work with the Plan and Zoning Commission at key intervals to refine the documents.	mid	A	Plan and Zoning Department, Plan and Zoning Commission	

Plan Page	Critical Success Factor	Key Initiative	Objective	Implementation Time Frame	Priority	Potential Partners	Key Performance Indicator
36-37	Thoughtful Development and Prosperous Economy	Update and modernize land development regulations.	Adopt the revised zoning regulations and create an online web-based smart code version with interactive site-specific zoning analysis capabilities.	mid	A	Plan and Zoning Department, Plan and Zoning Commission	Within three years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the Town has adopted updated and modernized land development regulations.
36-37		Undertake a redesign of the Town website to better market Fairfield and ensure optimal utility to end-users.	Establish a Town Website Redesign Committee to review potential vendors and site features.	short	C	Office of Community and Economic Development	Within three years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, website traffic has increased by 10 percent.
36-37			Engage Town staff, elected and appointed officials, and public users to better understand the current functionality of the website.	short	C	Office of Community and Economic Development	
36-37			Examine website analytics to identify how people are utilizing the site in order to improve access and ease of use.	short	C	Office of Community and Economic Development	
36-37			Select a vendor and implement the redesign.	mid	C	Office of Community and Economic Development	
36-37			Increase the visibility of the redesigned website using search engine optimization tools.	mid	C	Office of Community and Economic Development	
36-37			Determine roles and responsibilities for ongoing website maintenance.	mid, ongoing	C	Office of Community and Economic Development	
40-41	Collaborative Solutions with Regional Partners	Enhance collaboration with Fairfield Public Schools to improve planning, budgeting, and spending management.	Hire an outside facilitator to host a series of workshops between Town leadership and School District leadership with the aim to improve communication and identify innovative opportunities for increased collaboration.	short	A	First Selectwoman's Office, Fairfield Public Schools	Within three years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the Town's budget allocation to Fairfield Public Schools has not exceeded the amount defined in the District's five-year capital improvement plan.

Plan Page	Critical Success Factor	Key Initiative	Objective	Implementation Time Frame	Priority	Potential Partners	Key Performance Indicator
40-41	Collaborative Solutions with Regional Partners	Enhance collaboration with Fairfield Public Schools to improve planning, budgeting, and spending management.	Work with the district to develop a five-year capital improvement plan in order to receive funding over a defined amount for the maintenance of existing school facilities or construction of new school buildings.	short, ongoing	A	First Selectwoman's Office, Fairfield Public Schools	Within three years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the Town's budget allocation to Fairfield Public Schools has not exceeded the amount defined in the District's five-year capital improvement plan.
40-41			Coordinate with the school district to identify opportunities to enter into shared access agreements for school fields, parks, and facilities.	short	B	First Selectwoman's Office, Fairfield Public Schools	
40-41			Consider opportunities for shared administration and management between the school district and parks and recreation department for summer camps and after school programming.	short, ongoing	B	First Selectwoman's Office, Fairfield Public Schools	
40-41		Explore opportunities for cost savings and innovation through shared services and responsibilities.	Partner with MetroCOG and other member communities to conduct a study on the potential benefits of shared services and cooperative purchasing.	short	A	First Selectwoman's Office, MetroCOG, neighboring municipalities	Within five years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the Town has entered into a minimum of one shared services agreement.
40-41			Develop an inventory of existing shared service and/or cooperative purchasing agreements in Fairfield County and the state.	short	A	First Selectwoman's Office, MetroCOG, neighboring municipalities	
40-41			Assess the effectiveness of identified shared service and/or cooperative purchasing agreements to understand the potential benefits, costs, and opportunities for innovation.	short	A	First Selectwoman's Office, MetroCOG, neighboring municipalities	
40-41			Evaluate and prioritize opportunities for shared services and cooperative purchasing and enter into agreements for phased transition.	mid	A	First Selectwoman's Office, MetroCOG, neighboring municipalities	

Plan Page	Critical Success Factor	Key Initiative	Objective	Implementation Time Frame	Priority	Potential Partners	Key Performance Indicator
40-41	Collaborative Solutions with Regional Partners	Partner with Fairfield University and Sacred Heart University to maximize their presence in the community and their contribution to the local economy.	Assign a Town liaison who is responsible for managing the partnership with the universities.	short	B	First Selectwoman's Office, Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University	Within five years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, Town retention of university graduates has increased by five percent.
40-41			Coordinate with the universities in business attraction efforts to improve student retention after graduation.	mid, ongoing	B	Office of Community and Economic Development, Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University	
40-41			Involve university faculty, staff, and students in the creation of development visions for land adjacent to the universities if any is prioritized as a part of the identification and planning for vacant and underutilized sites in Fairfield key initiative (see Key Initiative 1 of Thoughtful Development Prosperous Economy).	mid, ongoing	B	Plan and Zoning Department, Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University	
40-41			Work with the universities to better leverage Town resources in the development of curriculum and programs such as a business startup acceleration program to create a culture of entrepreneurialism in Fairfield.	mid, ongoing	B	First Selectwoman's Office, Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University	
40-41			Host Town-university events to improve the relationship between students and full-time residents.	short, ongoing	C	First Selectwoman's Office, Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University	

Plan Page	Critical Success Factor	Key Initiative	Objective	Implementation Time Frame	Priority	Potential Partners	Key Performance Indicator
44-45	Resilient and Connected Community	Fortify the coastline.	Retain outside expertise to lead the outreach process and development of a Coastline Resiliency Plan, including an update to the Town's Shellfish Management Plan. The plan should be adopted as a policy framework for the Town to guide the development of five-year Capital Improvement Plans, as detailed in Sound Fiscal Stewardship key initiative one.	short	B	Conservation Department	Within five years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the Town has adopted and begun to implement the Coastline Resiliency Plan.
44-45			Improve the Inland Wetlands Program webpage to include an interactive map to provide property specific information on the impacts of the Town's Inland Wetland and Watercourses Regulations to better connect the regulations and the Town's land development regulations and more clearly communicate development restrictions.	mid	C	Conservation Department	
44-45			Continue to support and expand the Salt Marsh Restoration Program.	ongoing	B	Conservation Department	
44-45		Enhance the multimodal transportation system.	Retain outside expertise to lead the outreach process and development of a Multimodal Transportation Plan, that builds off of the Fairfield Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and adopt it as a policy framework for the Town to guide the development of five-year Capital Improvement Plans as detailed in Sound Fiscal Stewardship key initiative one.	mid	B	Plan and Zoning Department, Public Works Department	Within five years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the Town's bikescore has increased by 10 points to 65.
44-45			Revise the Town's subdivision ordinance to establish a maximum block length and a minimum connectivity index requirement, as well as enhance street cross section requirements to include sidewalks, bike lanes, and a greater variety of roadway types.	short	A	Plan and Zoning Department	

Plan Page	Critical Success Factor	Key Initiative	Objective	Implementation Time Frame	Priority	Potential Partners	Key Performance Indicator
44-45	Resilient and Connected Community	Enhance the multimodal transportation system.	Coordinate with the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority as well as Fairfield University and Sacred Heart University to expand bus routes and bus frequency to better connect area residents to Fairfield's commercial corridors and employment centers.	long	C	Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority, Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University	Within five years of the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the Town's bikescore has increased by 10 points to 65.
44-45			Revise the Town's parking regulations to require pedestrian walkways to be built and connected to public sidewalks when any parking lot is built.	short	A	Plan and Zoning Department	
44-45			Revise the Town's parking regulations to incentivize the installation of electric vehicle charging stations and bicycle parking.	short	A	Plan and Zoning Department	
44-45			Work with Trumbull, Monroe, Bridgeport, Stratford, MetroCOG and the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority to pursue a regional bikeshare system.	mid	C	Parks and Recreation Department, MetroCOG, neighboring municipalities	
44-45		Encourage low impact design and resource conservation.	Consider up-zoning residential properties north of Hulls Farm Road to allow for greater density in appropriate areas.	short	A	Plan and Zoning Department	Five years after the adoption of the Strategic Plan, Town greenhouse gas emissions per capita have decreased by 10 percent.
44-45			Develop a residential pattern book of preferred residential housing types and architectural styles to guide infill development.	short	A	Plan and Zoning Department	
44-45			Encourage the adaptive reuse of existing buildings by offering expedited development approval to applications that meet all of the Town's zoning regulations.	short, ongoing	B	Plan and Zoning Department, Building Department	
44-45			Update the Town's landscape requirements to incentivize the use of native plants, bioretention facilities, infiltration basins, permeable pavers, and other green infrastructure options.	short	A	Plan and Zoning Department	

Plan Page	Critical Success Factor	Key Initiative	Objective	Implementation Time Frame	Priority	Potential Partners	Key Performance Indicator
44-45	Resilient and Connected Community	Encourage low impact design and resource conservation.	Become an active Solarize Connecticut community to decrease the cost of installing solar panels for Fairfield residents and business owners.	short	C	Plan and Zoning Department	Five years after the adoption of the Strategic Plan, Town greenhouse gas emissions per capita have decreased by 10 percent.
44-45			Incentivize developers to meet LEED or other green building certification standards.	short, ongoing	B	Plan and Zoning Department, Building Department	
44-45		Reduce the environmental impact of Town operations.	Hire or appoint a Town staff person to be responsible for the identification and implementation of sustainability and resiliency related initiatives throughout the Town and to provide staff support to the Sustainable Fairfield Task Force.	mid, ongoing	B	First Selectwoman's Office	Five years after the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the percentage of Town facilities incorporating resource efficient upgrades have increased by 10 percent.
44-45			Retain outside expertise to conduct an energy audit of all Town facilities and identify cost-effective energy saving measures to pursue.	mid	C	First Selectwoman's Office	
44-45			Explore the feasibility of expanding the Fairfield Waste and Recycling Transfer Station to offer compost collection and processing.	long	C	Solid Waste and Recycling Department	
44-45			Coordinate with licensed solid waste and recycling haulers to improve route efficiency to save time and fuel.	mid	B	Solid Waste and Recycling Department	
44-45			Strive to meet LEED or other green building certification standards in the construction of new Town facilities when feasible.	mid, ongoing	B	First Selectwoman's Office, Town Facilities Commission	

BIG IDEAS NEXT STEPS

The Big Ideas detailed in the Executive Summary including developing the waterfront, comprehensive Downtown community development, and ‘walk-ability’ zones, require further work to be developed. The following actions outline next steps.

- Assign resources to develop and outline of the approach, considerations, opportunities, challenges for each topic.
- Identify the steps needed for a structured analysis, and a report back within 45 days of the results of such work.
- Conduct a formal review with the First Selectwoman and BOS of each opportunity.
- Conduct reviews with other relevant Town Boards.
- Determine the implementation steps, partnerships, resources, etc., for each topic.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

The following is a description of some of the potential funding mechanisms and sources currently available to the Town and its partners for Plan implementation. As the funding sources and streams are subject to change over time, it is important to continue to research and monitor grants, funding agencies, and programs to identify new opportunities as they become available.

Name	Summary	Provider
Brownfield Area-Wide Revitalization (BAR) Planning Grant	This funding is intended to help eligible applicants develop a comprehensive implementation plan for the remediation and redevelopment of neighborhoods, districts, corridors, downtowns, waterfront zones or other areas burdened with multiple brownfields. Funding provides up to \$200,000 and requires a 10% match.	Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD)
Brownfield Municipal Grant Program	This grant is designed to assist with brownfield redevelopment projects in municipalities that will make a significant economic impact. Up to \$4 million in grant funding is available.	DECD
Round 12 Brownfield Funding	This fund can be use for brownfield assessment, remediation and redevelopment activities, including abatement, demolition, site investigation and assessment, groundwater monitoring, installation of institutional controls, and professional service fees associated with redevelopment including attorney's fees, and planning, design and consulting fees. Up to \$4 million available for assessment and remediation and \$1 million reserved for exclusively assessment.	DECD
Targeted Brownfield Development Loan Program	This program provides low-interest loans, with flexible/deferred interest and principal payment schedules; maximum term of 20 years. Up t \$4 million available.	DECD
The Small Town Economic Assistance Program	Provides funds for economic development, community conservation and quality-of-life capital projects in communities in Connecticut.	State Office of Policy and Management
Transit-Oriented Development Fund	This fund offers pre-development and acquisition financing to eligible projects and developers municipalities and regional councils of government for transit-oriented development (TOD) projects and/or projects that demonstrate responsible growth. Up to \$3 million is available.	DECD

Name	Summary	Provider
State Trade Expansion Program (STEP)	This grant is designed to help Connecticut's small business community thrive in the global marketplace by increasing the value of small business exports, increasing the number of businesses that export and increasing the number of businesses exploring significant new trade opportunities	DECD
Pre-Seed Financing	This program provides matching 50% funding to help early-stage companies grow. The fund also includes mentoring, resources and introductions to powerful connections that can help you turn your idea into a commercially viable business	Connecticut Innovations
The Historic Preservation Enhancement Grants (HPEG)	This grant provides federal funds to help municipal historic district commissions enhance their administrative capabilities, strengthen local preservation programs, and produce public education materials and activities.	State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
Historic Restoration Fund Grants (HRF)	This fund offers matching, reimbursement Historic Restoration Fund (HRF) grants of up to \$100,000 to Connecticut municipalities and 501(c)3 and 501(c)13 nonprofits for capital projects or archaeological site preservation, protection, and stabilization at historic properties listed on the State or National Registers of Historic Places.	SHPO
Survey and Planning Grants	This funding source offers Survey and Planning Grants for a variety of historic preservation planning purposes. These grants are part of a state commitment to provide increased funding for open space, farmland preservation, historic preservation and affordable housing.	SHPO
Bioscience Innovation Fund	This fund seeks to speed commercialization of bioscience breakthroughs by providing focused financial assistance for start-ups and early stage businesses. Up to 500,000 is available	Connecticut Innovations
C-PACE (Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy)	This program makes green energy upgrades accessible and affordable, offering 100% financing for a wide range of energy improvements to commercial, industrial, residential, institutional and infrastructure properties. C-PACE has targeted assistance	DECD
Manufacturing Assistance Act	This program funds direct loans to growing, eligible economic-based businesses	DECD
Manufacturing Innovation Fund	This fund can be utilized to support the growth, innovation and progress of Connecticut's advanced manufacturing sector. \$75 million is available is State funds.	DECD
Technology Talent Fund	This funds can be used for resource for both workers and employers to ensure Connecticut has the workforce talent needed to fuel growth in its tech sectors. Up to \$10 million is available.	Connecticut Technology Talent Advisory Committee

Name	Summary	Provider
The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act	The purpose of this Act was to provide funding for the restoration, rehabilitation, and improvement of wildlife habitat, wildlife management research, and the distribution of information produced by the projects.	Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)
National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program	Program to acquire, restore, and enhance wetlands in coastal areas through competitive matching grants to eligible State. The primary goal of the NCWCG Program is the long term conservation of coastal wetland ecosystems. Up to \$1,000,000 in funds are available.	Department of Interiors Federal Wildlife Service (DOI-FWS)
Coastal	The Coastal Program is a voluntary, community-based program that provides technical and financial assistance through cooperative agreements to coastal communities, conservation partners, and landowners to restore and protect fish and wildlife habitat on public and private lands. Coastal Program staff coordinates with project partners, stakeholders and other Service programs to identify geographic focus areas and develop habitat conservation priorities within these focus areas. Geographic focus areas are where the Coastal Program directs resources to conserve habitat for Federal trust species. Regional staff develop five-year strategic work plans based on the conservation priorities and the geographic focus areas that guides the work of the program. Up to \$500,000 in funds are available.	DOI-FWS
Sustainable Materials Management Grants	Sustainable materials management (SMM) is a systemic approach to using and reusing materials more productively over their entire life cycles. It represents a change in how our society thinks about the use of natural resources and environmental protection. By looking at a product's entire life cycle, we can find new opportunities to reduce environmental impacts, conserve resources and reduce costs. Developing markets for reused and/or recycled materials also falls under this domain. These funds will support training, demonstrations, and public education projects for the development of programs that support the sustainable management of organic waste and/or construction and demolition debris.	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Environmental Literacy Grants: Supporting the education of K-12 students and the public for community resilience	The goal of this funding opportunity is to build environmental literacy of K-12 students and the public so they are knowledgeable of the ways in which their community can become more resilient to extreme weather and/or other environmental hazards, and become involved in achieving that resilience.	Department of Commerce
Program Support Grants	Grant is awarded to non profits for specific programs and services that contribute to closing opportunity gaps for members of the community. The Community Foundation prioritizes requests from organizations that are results oriented and have capacity to measure/evaluate the impact of their work. Performance measures for program support requests focus on the impact of that program on the clients/customers served by the program.	Fairfield County's Community Foundation
Capacity Building Support Grants	Grant is awarded to non profits for specific programs and services that contribute to closing opportunity gaps for members of the community targeted at building capacity.	Fairfield County's Community Foundation
General Operating Support Grants	Grant is awarded to non profits for specific programs and services that contribute to closing opportunity gaps for members of the community in utilized in support of these operations.	Fairfield County's Community Foundation

Name	Summary	Provider
The Fund for Women and Girls Small Grants	Grant is awarded to non profits for specific programs and services that contribute to closing opportunity gaps for women and girls in the community.	Fairfield County's Community Foundation
Our Town	Our Town is the National Endowment for the Arts' creative placemaking grants program. Successful Our Town projects ultimately lay the groundwork for systemic changes that sustain the integration of arts, culture, and design into local strategies for strengthening communities. These projects require a partnership between a local government entity and nonprofit organization, one of which must be a cultural organization; and should engage in partnership with other sectors (such as agriculture and food, economic development, education and youth, environment and energy, health, housing, public safety, transportation, and workforce development). Grants between \$25,000 and \$200,000 are available.	National Endowment for the Arts
Highway Design-Local Roads-Transportation Alternatives, Multi-Use Trail Program, Trail Maintenance	The federal FAST Act provides funding for TA projects under a set-aside from the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program. Funds can be used for projects encompassing a variety of smaller-scale transportation projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, safe routes to schools projects, community improvements such as historic preservation and vegetation management, and environmental mitigation related to stormwater and habitat connectivity.	Connecticut Department of Transportation on behalf of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Bikes Belong	The goal is putting more people on bikes more often. They seek to assist local organizations, agencies, and citizens in developing bicycle facilities projects that will be funded by Federal Highway Administration Enhancement Grants. Up to \$10,000 in funding is available.	FHWA
CT Recreational Trails Program	Funds can be used for construction of new trails, maintenance and restoration of existing trails, purchase or lease of equipment, acquisition of trail easements, and developing trail access for people with disabilities.	DEEP, CT Greenways Council
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)	Connecticut Statewide LISC promotes neighborhood revitalization and affordable housing production by providing financial and technical assistance to local, community-based organizations, working to build strong and sustainable communities. Up to \$500,000 in funding is available.	National Equity Fund (NEF)
Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)	Funding for recreation land planning, acquisition, renovation and development. Up to \$100,000 in funding is available.	LWCF
Impact Fairfield County	Grants are awarded to non-profits for significant projects or programs that reach under-served populations and highlight unmet needs in the County.	Impact Fairfield County

Source: Connecticut's Official State Website, ct.gov, grants.gov, Fairfield County Community Funds

CHAPTER 6



APPENDIX 1

OUTREACH DETAILED REPORT

BACKGROUND

Gathering community wide input on Fairfield's current and future issues and opportunities has been the foundation of the development of the Fairfield One Town One Vision Strategic Plan. Outreach activities started at the beginning of the planning process and included key stakeholder interviews, workshops, and online tools.

Over 2,000 residents, youths, business owners/managers, property owners, developers, community leaders, Town staff, and members of commissions and boards attended these activities. Applying the social media concept of influencer's to the raw input means that 30% of the community has provided guidance to this process. Guided by the Strategic Plan Committee as well as professional analysis and observation, community outreach will inform all aspects of the Strategic Plan.

PARTICIPATION

The willingness to participate in community outreach activities is evidenced through the high rates of participation throughout online and in person efforts. This included the following meetings and workshops:

- **Stakeholder Interviews.** Throughout the summer and fall of 2018, the consultant conducted in-person and phone interviews and focus group discussions with more than 65 individuals. These confidential conversations provided the opportunity for participants to convey specific and nuanced information concerning the Town.
- **Community Workshop I.** On the evening of November 7, 2018, the Town hosted a community workshop at the Penfield Pavilion. This event was open to everyone in Fairfield and was meant to gather input on issues and opportunities in the Town.
- **Community Workshop II.** On the morning of November 8, 2018, the Town hosted a second community workshop at the Board of Education offices off of Kings Highway.
- **Business Workshop.** On the morning of November 8, 2018, the Town hosted a business workshop at the Penfield Pavilion. Anyone was welcomed to attend, but the meeting was geared toward the business community. Participants engaged in discussion related to the current business climate in the Town and how it can be enhanced or improved.
- **Joint Boards and Commissions Workshop.** On the morning of November 9, 2018, the Town hosted a Joint Boards and Commissions Workshop at the Penfield Pavilion. Various boards and commissions, and Town Department Heads were invited to attend.
- **Student Workshops.** On November 8 and 9, 2018, the Town hosted four separate student workshops with Warde High School, Ludlowe High School, Fairfield University, and Sacred Heart University. Additionally, during the course of work, sessions were held in various elementary and middle schools, facilitated by SPC members.

- **Customized DIY Workshops.** Between November 2018 and January 2019, the SPC conducted 37 workshops across Fairfield in every demographic, from 8yrs old to 80+, from the Beach to Greenfield Hill and from Southport to Stratfield. DIY workshops were facilitated by community members using a standard script and materials that replicated the exercise conducted in the community workshops. These workshops helped to gather more widespread outreach and engagement. The Consultant facilitated and customized DIY workshops achieved widespread participation approximating 350+ participants,
- **Online Questionnaires.** Four separate online questionnaires were made available on the project website for residents, business owners, youths, and university students with detailed and specific questions about the issues, opportunities, weaknesses, and strengths of Fairfield. As of January 25, 2018, nearly 1,000 questionnaire responses have been received.

COMMUNITY IDENTIFIED ISSUES AND ASPIRATIONS

The biggest component of the outreach effort is focused on identifying key common themes prioritized through workshop exercises and participant discussion. The intent is to define the primary topics and significant areas in which to focus further analysis and discussion.

While more than 300 unique issues/topics were identified, they can generally be categorized into the following five key topic areas. Note: the topic areas are not presented in order of importance or magnitude.

- Governance Financial Stability
- Economic Development Education
- Community Character and Resiliency

The key topic areas are broad categories that umbrella the majority of issues that emerged as top concerns amongst outreach participants. Although the top concerns have been grouped into the key topic areas, many are interrelated and impact each other. None of the key topic areas can operate in a vacuum and must be taken in aggregate and addressed in the Fairfield One Town One Vision Strategic Plan.

GOVERNANCE

Town government structure was an oft cited topic discussed throughout in-person and online outreach. Although participants largely believe that the Town is well functioning, several key areas were commonly mentioned as needing improvement including:

- **Establish common vision, mission, and goals.** Outreach participants expressed a desire for the Town to articulate a clear vision, mission, and goals to unify staff, elected and appointed officials, and residents. Key to this ability was to more effectively communicate with Town residents on everything from Town business to Town events. Many participants discussed circumstances when boards and commissions were not on the same page resulting in confusion and prolonged discussion. Several participants mentioned the mission statements developed by certain departments and discussed how those had helped to guide employees and elected officials in decision making and streamline processes. The same participants went on to discuss how the Town as a whole needs a similar, unifying vision statement, mission statement, and goals, to best outline the challenges and community wide actions needed. This was further expressed by some as a need for better Branding of Fairfield. To better communicate concisely, 'what is Fairfield'.

- **Reexamine the Town Charter.** Fairfield's status as a Town and its implications on government efficiencies was widely discussed throughout in-person outreach events. Many participants lamented the fact that Fairfield, despite having a population of more than 60,000, continues to be run as a town instead of a city. Participants mentioned several inefficiencies resulting from Fairfield's status as a town. Of all the government bodies the RTM was specifically highlighted as bloated, inefficient and not effectively representing the people in their district. There was also concern about the excessive number of boards and commissions.
- **Outdated or unnecessary Town services.** Many participants discussed the plethora of services provided by the Town and their associated costs, some expressing frustration and others praising their quality. Participants that discussed the high quality of the services did not necessarily feel as if their quality outweighed the need for increasing tax dollars.
- Although no consensus was reached on the types of services that should be consolidated or eliminated, participants felt that a deeper analysis was needed to better understand the cost benefits of privatizing select Town services.
- **Opportunities for shared services and multi-community cooperation.** Opportunities to both reduce duplicate functions within the town and work collaboratively with other select communities to reduce costs and increase efficiencies was a key topic that emerged throughout outreach efforts. Participants discussed the positive impacts that shared services could have on the Town by freeing up financial resources, optimizing services, and introducing opportunities for innovation. A three tier structure of cross community, cross town, and cross department structure to evaluate Shared Services began to take shape.
- Suggestions for multi-community collaboration could include, but not be limited to: transportation specifically dial a ride services for seniors, tax collection, public safety dispatch, apparatus maintenance, and animal control.
- **Upgrade and integrate technology.** The lack of technology at the Town Hall was an issue widely discussed among participants, specifically Town employees and members of boards and commissions. These conversations revolved around the need to bring Town Hall into the 21st century by integrating technology into the day to day functions of government.
- Ideas discussed included, updating the Town website to be more user friendly, allowing online payment and completion of fees and forms, increasing transparency in the development process by making proposals and plans more readily accessible, and dispelling confusion associated with zoning by making the codes easier to navigate.
- **Better leverage State representation.** A final issue related to governance that emerged throughout outreach efforts revolved around the need for the Town to better leverage State representation to proactively advocate for the interests of the Town. Participants discussed how this type of advocacy should be outside of typical political alignments and work towards avoiding costs to the Town and better investments in State programs of importance to the Town such as road and rail infrastructure or better cost controls to close budget gaps.. A frequently raised topic was the need for adequate road and rail infrastructure maintenance and investment. These are key elements of the Town's attractiveness, yet are beyond the ability of the Town to address, therefore requiring action through State representation.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

Financial stability of the Town was a direct aspect, as well as an undercurrent of most conversations throughout outreach events. While there is broad recognition of Fairfield's ability to maintain a AAA rating in the midst of significant financial turmoil, residents, business owners, elected and appointed officials, as well as staff expressed concern about the impact of the state's finances on the Town including a \$4 to \$5 billion budget deficit. Three topics emerged as key themes including,

- **Impact of loss of tax revenue.** One of the more widely discussed topics throughout in-person outreach was the impact of nontax paying institutions/organizations. Concern was expressed over the loss of GE and the purchase of the property by Sacred Heart University. While this concern was expressed, it is important to note that both Sacred Heart and Fairfield University were cited as positive contributors to the economic vitality and image of the community. Additionally, participants asserted the importance of attracting and retaining new business in order to offset this loss of business and revenue.
- **Declining property values.** There was regular expression of concern regarding declining property values and related impact on Town revenues, Town budgets, and resulting taxes and service fee requirements, impairing fiscal stability. There was a desire expressed for lower budget increases as well as managing Town spending more effectively, including the major cost components of the Town budget. There was also concern regarding the impact on the Town's financial stability and taxes of currently unknown further State cuts or costs pushed to Town.
- **Cost of personnel and benefits.** Participants throughout outreach events, particularly Town officials, discussed the rising and ongoing cost of personnel and benefits including funding long-term pensions. Of particular concern was the inability to eliminate or drastically change the structure. The impact on the ability to continue to provide quality Town services under these constraints was highlighted as a particular concern.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development and the need to grow the grand list were major issues brought up at every workshop and stakeholder interview. Although participants varied on their approaches to the subject, nearly everyone agreed that in order to keep property taxes at a reasonable rate while maintaining the high level of service the Town currently provides, it's necessary to attract and retain commercial retail, office, restaurant, and entertainment uses. Several topics emerged as key themes including:

- **Expand the Office of Community and Economic Development.** A common theme throughout outreach events was the need to proactively recruit and attract new business to locate in Fairfield. Participants thought highly of the work currently being done by the Office of Community and Economic Development but expressed concern that it was mainly focused on retaining existing business, especially business in the Downtown. However, even within this definition existing businesses, some of which are strategic to the town and are trying to expand, expressed frustration that their requirements were not viewed any differently than minor garage additions or selection of shrubbery. Although participants did not reach a consensus on the desired approach to resolve this issue, many participants discussed the need to expand the Office of Community and Economic Development. Ideas for new positions included a Town Ombudsman who would be responsible for guiding potential investors through the development and permitting process, or a Business Attraction Program Manager who would be responsible for networking with potential investors to encourage them to locate in Fairfield.

- **Identify sites for new commercial development.** Discussion throughout outreach events revolved around the need to maintain Fairfield as a predominately residential community, while also encouraging new commercial development in order to grow the Grand List.
- Participants talked about the need to identify key nodes to create new opportunities for desirable development as well as the need to maintain and enhance the character, appearance, and function of existing commercial areas. Potential areas for new commercial development include, the area surrounding the Fairfield Metro Station, the former Exide Battery Factory site, the Turner Reserve Center, the beach, Commerce Drive, the Knights of Columbus property, and Black Rock Turnpike. Several comments were made regarding methods to provide economic incentives to encourage development and business' locating here, as well as the suggestion to look for both smaller quick opportunities as well as a handful of larger "high impact" situations.
- **Eliminate barriers to development.** Several key stakeholders who took part in the interview process voiced concern over a number of barriers they have faced in developing or redeveloping property in Fairfield. These barriers include inconsistencies between various Town permitting offices and lack of communication with businesses and developers/investors, lack of prioritization of key projects in permit approval processes, and lack of a clear vision and plan for future commercial development and resulting reactant decision making.
- **Local landmark blight.** There was frequent and sometimes emotional discussion around several properties in Landmark locations that have been allowed to languish and decay for years. The properties in particular that were mentioned the most were the Stratified Market and The Community Theater. By design, there was not much dialogue on solutions but the overwhelming sentiment was that this was a failure of the Town government to effectively find a way to manage strategic landlords.

EDUCATION

More than any other topic, Fairfield's public education system was cited as one of the community's greatest strengths. Participants expressed that schools are an essential community asset and are a primary reason why many residents choose to move to Fairfield. Despite an overwhelming consensus on the need to maintain the high standards of the school system, debate arose over the level of funding the Town dedicates to this cause. Several issues emerged throughout the outreach process including,

- **Quality of Education.** In many sessions while participants acknowledged the funding challenges facing the school district they also wrestled with the quality of education offered. Participants concerns ranged across a number of issues but centered mostly on: increasing class size, teacher skills and curriculum turnover. Participants acknowledged the professionalism and dedication of their Teachers and there wasn't discussion to differential between level of experience Vs competence. Curriculum turnover was a contributor to the skills issue since some participants comments indicated everyone was learning new curriculum at the same time.

- **Quality of school facilities.** Participants throughout in-person outreach events expressed concern over the quality of school facilities, specifically the lack of air conditioning in some schools, and necessary safety renovations. In contrast to the discussion surrounding the need to update school facilities, participants also discussed the room for growth within existing buildings due to a recent decline in school attendance. Opinions were divided over the need to close select school facilities due to this decline or whether projected long-term enrollment growth justifies keeping them open.
- **Declining school attendance and rising costs.** In 2017 Fairfield Public Schools published enrollment projections through 2027-28. Current enrollment is approximately 9,800 students. The projections are supported by demographic, housing, and economic data and show an anticipated decline in school enrollment of approximately 4% through 2027-28. The view was expressed that realistic adjustments are needed in light of current trends and circumstances. Participants throughout outreach events were familiar with these projections and discussed the dichotomy between the projections and the budget increases requested by the school system and approved by the Town. Although participants did not express a desire to cut the amount of funding given to the school system, they did express a desire for it to remain stable, and for the need to better manage and economize on non-classroom related cost structure.
- **Lack of diversity throughout the district.** Income, racial, and ethnic diversity at Fairfield Schools were discussed as concerns throughout outreach events. Participants noted that McKinley Elementary School in the southeast portion of the Town, is by far the most diverse school in the system. Parents of McKinley students discussed how the school's diversity benefits their children's education and they are wary of efforts to redistribute students to increase diversity throughout the system. In contrast, students at Warde High School discussed the perceived inequities between their school and Ludlowe High School across Town. The students and other participants felt as though redistricting would help to solve this issue. However, in other parts of Town redistricting was seen more as a Band-Aid rather than a solution, which participants felt ultimately was greater diversity that is native to each community driven by more granular housing stock.
- **Opportunities for greater partnerships with Town Universities.** Both Fairfield University and Sacred Heart University were cited as strengths of the Town throughout outreach events. However, many participants discussed the untapped potential of Fairfield Schools partnering with these universities. Ideas for partnership included developing a volunteer mentorship program between university and elementary and middle school students, inviting guest speakers to discuss career paths, and offering teachers and residents continuing education opportunities. In addition to greater partnerships between Fairfield Schools and the Town's universities, participants discussed the potential of proactive partnerships with the universities and the Town for cost sharing and programming.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND RESILIENCY

The historic fabric and unique character of Fairfield was widely cited as a strength of the community. Participants throughout outreach events expressed a strong desire to maintain and enhance these attributes especially in the face of increased flooding and sea level rise. In addition to the built environment, participants defined the community's character as friendly, welcoming, and multigenerational. Several issues regarding community character and resiliency arose throughout outreach events including:

- **Develop and enforce standards for new and redevelopment.** Throughout outreach events, participants discussed how they love the Town's many distinct neighborhoods and commercial corridors. However, many participants expressed concern over new development or substantial redevelopment of properties that are not in keeping with the current character of these areas. Participants proposed that the Town develop and enforce design standards for key areas of the community to eliminate the threat of new and redevelopment transforming the aesthetic appeal of these treasured areas.
- **Support active transportation options.** The infrastructure that supports walking and biking was mentioned during all outreach events. Participants felt as though the existing infrastructure does not encourage residents to walk or bike to destinations throughout Fairfield, especially the beaches and Downtown. Participants expressed a desire to complete the sidewalk network and develop bicycle lanes to not only support healthy transportation alternatives, but to also reduce the demand for parking.
- **Encourage and promote sustainability best practices.** The impacts of climate change including the threat of increased flooding and sea level rise were discussed throughout outreach events. Many participants expressed that they feel as though the Town could do more to encourage and promote sustainability best practices such as the use of solar panels, restriction of pesticide use, and preservation of open space and conservation properties.
- **Unify the community.** Perceived divisions in the community was a key theme that emerged during outreach. Residents and high school students discussed the division between the 06824 and 06825 -zip codes while university students expressed that they do not feel welcome or integrated into the larger Fairfield community. Participants developed many ideas to solve this issue including, equally investing in all commercial areas throughout the Town and hosting community events that bring residents and university students together.
- **Better local public transportation.** Both University students and seniors expressed an interest in better cross-town transportation options. Each constituent had slightly different justifications but similar to concerns raised with pedestrian and bicycle access, both groups had the same observation and concerns about the difficulty of cross-town transportation.
- **Maintaining affordability and desirability for Seniors.** The community recognizes that a key strength of the community is its multi-generational construct. Seniors are recognized as a vital and contributing component of the community. The ability to maintain the conditions that make the Town a desirable place for seniors to remain is essential and was widely discussed across many sessions. Viewpoints were shared that continued focus is needed to maintain affordability and desirability here for seniors. Discussion points included a) programs for seniors, b) housing options to accommodate the seniors wishing to downsize and remain in Town, and c) a recognition that seniors contribute to the economic stability of the Town as property tax payers without drawing upon the significant education spending requirements.

- **The community views itself as an engaged and welcoming community, and supports steps to encourage this, communicate this, leverage this, and deepen this.** The Town and its residents are responsive to the needs of the community for financial support programs, health & welfare, and social support networks. This view was furthered to indicate a desire for supporting Bridgeport for both social and mutual advancement needs. Beyond social initiatives, the community is cognizant of the obligation to be a sustainable and environmentally conscious entity, in planning and execution.

APPENDIX 2

SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT WORKING SESSION SUMMARIES

PREFACE

The Strategic Plan Committee encourages everyone to read this short Preface before diving into the detail of the Subject Matter Expert (SME) Working Session Summaries, to establish an understanding of the purpose and goals of the Town's first Strategic Plan.

First a word about the purpose of this document. What follows are the summaries of the discussions of the Subject Matter expert sessions, as facilitated and summarized by Houseal Lavigne Associates (HLA). The goal of the summaries is to capture the nature of the conversations and are not an exact transcript of the conversations word for word. When, in the natural course of discussion, there were examples and potential options discussed they were captured and are documented here. However, these examples and potential options are not the formal recommendations of either HLA or the SPC, nor can it even be construed that these are the formal opinions of the SMEs. The role of the SMEs was to 'inform' HLA on the fit of various options for Fairfield.

The next step is for HLA to document their DRAFT recommendations, which will be shared with the public and Town officials. During this step, we will gather community feedback before presenting the formal recommendation to the Board of Selectman. The process to communicate the plan, and gather input, is being developed, and will be consistent with the prior approaches for this initiative.

INTRODUCTION

A Strategic Plan is a complex undertaking, especially the first time. It is essentially comprised of first assessing where we are as a community, second deciding where we want to go, and lastly identifying what we need to do in order to get there. The first two steps are often easier. It is that last step of setting a roadmap where it can get tricky.

A very simple example we came across during the SPC's work was from a group of 5th graders, whose feedback was gathered during our Community Outreach work. When the 5th graders were asked to envision their best selves 15 to 20 years from now, they all came up with the typical response: doctors, musicians, actors, police officers, fire fighters, and of course, teachers. When asked: how they intended to achieve those strategic visions, each and every one of them said: 'Study'! They needed to get good grades to achieve their dreams.

Not a one thought they could achieve their dreams without studying. They also realized that achieving that longer term vision would require tradeoffs. In their case, it was recognized that there would be times where instead of going out to play, they may need to take a different step, like studying.

The goal of a Strategic Plan is to offer us a roadmap to achieve our shared vision for the Town. Ultimately success from this Plan comes down to prioritizing the things that can help us achieve

our vision over the things that will not. This Plan should clearly indicate that Fairfield should stop doing the things that are counter strategic, and start making strategic, goal-oriented choices, despite sometimes conflicting options.

One of those conflicting options that the Town is facing revolves around maintaining the current level of services that the Town offers, and curbing tax increases. If we want to maintain the level of services, but don't want the current trend in taxes to continue, we need to decide which services and service levels are strategic and which are not. If all services are strategic at the current level, then to keep taxes low, money needs to come from somewhere else (aka economic development). If economic development is the answer then changes need to be made in both density of development and use of available parcels. The Town must come together to combat instances of NIMBYism, where small groups of people attempt to prevent development in direct opposition to the Town's strategic vision.

If it is agreed that the overall result we strive for is different from the status quo, then how we manage and govern the Town is a key aspect of what needs to change. Evidence shows us that a change to the structure of our local government is potentially where we should start.

The summaries that follow are the discussions of the Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who were chosen to dig into the issues raised by Town residents, business owners, students, and other stakeholders. Please read all these summaries carefully. Do not cherry pick a topic in isolation from the whole, for it is an overall vision we are deciding on, not just one part. Now that we have analyzed aspects of where the Town is now positioned, gathered community input on where we want to go, and leveraged subject matter experts' insights, we will work as fast as possible to develop a draft Strategic Plan, which will tell us how to get there. Once the draft Plan is documented, we will report back to, and gather feedback from the community. This will help to ensure that it captures the shared vision of our Town.

In the end, however, just like the 5th graders, the Town's ability to achieve future success is dependent on the people's willingness to be open minded to a different way of doing things, including compromises on items that are not in line with the shared strategic vision.

Thank you for your interest, and continued support of this important initiative to move Fairfield forward.

- Town of Fairfield Strategic Plan Committee

BACKGROUND

In the spring of 2017, the Town of Fairfield embarked on the development of a Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is intended to help the Town direct its efforts and resources toward a clearly defined vision for the future. To assist in the development of the Plan, the Town appointed a Strategic Plan Committee (SPC) and engaged the professional consulting firm Houseal Lavigne.

The Fairfield One Town One Vision Strategic Plan process included comparative research and analysis and extensive community outreach to gather resident and stakeholder input to define issues and opportunities within the Town. Initial stakeholder outreach began in the summer of 2018 and was comprised of interviews and meetings with town staff, elected and appointed officials, business owners and other stakeholders. This outreach was followed by community-wide outreach through facilitated public workshops and meetings conducted throughout the Town by the consulting team and members of the SPC. Simultaneously, online questionnaires were utilized to gather additional insight on various topics.

Combined outreach results were significant, comprising approximately 2,000 participants. Applying the social media concept of influencer's to the raw input means that 30% of the community has provided guidance to this process. This work has been summarized in the Community Outreach Detailed Report as of 3-29-2019, and has been described and reviewed with Town management and related Boards (e.g. Board of Selectmen; Board of Finance; RTM) and numerous Town department heads.

Input and information obtained through community input, along with professional analysis and observation, served to define five key topic areas that will form the basis of Strategic Plan recommendations. Subject matter experts (SMEs) in all five key topic areas have been involved to further evaluate potential issues and opportunities associated with each.

KEY TOPIC AREAS

Throughout outreach efforts, over 500 unique issues/topics were identified. For project analysis, they have been grouped into the five key topic areas detailed below. Within each key topic area there are several underlying components, many of which are interrelated. The key topic areas are as follows (not presented in order of importance or magnitude):

- Governance
 - Governance Structure and Processes
 - Town Vision, Goals, and Branding
- Financial Stability
- Economic Development
- Education
- Community Character and Resiliency
 - Town Zoning, Design, and Infrastructure
 - Community Programs and Facilities

In order to gain additional insights on these topics, two-hour Subject Matter Expert (SME) working group sessions were then conducted for each key topic area. These sessions were conducted the week of August 5 and September 30, 2019 and were attended by the SMEs identified by the SPC for their experience and expertise with one or more of the key topic areas. All of the sessions also included SPC representatives and the HLA consulting team. The meetings were noticed, with members of the public observing various sessions.

The following is a summary of each of the SME working group sessions. The summaries are a selection of what was discussed and is not intended to be a complete transcript of what was said, nor a recommendation for particular actions.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND PROCESSES

Two Governance Structure and Processes SME working sessions were held. The first took place on Monday, August 5, at 3:45 p.m. Two SMEs, Dr. Gayle Alberda, Assistant Professor of Politics and Public Administration at Fairfield University, and Stanton Lesser, Fairfield Town Attorney, took part in the session. RTM party leaders were to be included in the session discussion but had conflicts.

The second session was held on Wednesday October 2 at 7:00 p.m. and was attended by RTM members Pamela Iacono and Karen Wackerman.

Prior to the first session, research had been conducted on emerging trends regarding changes to municipal government across the country and specifically in Connecticut. It was observed that there is a significant trend in adopting town management structures (e.g. Town Council/Town Manager (or Mayor). At the SME working session, the initial research findings were described. Dr. Alberda presented her research and recommendations then the consultant team facilitated a conversation between Dr. Alberda and Town Attorney Lesser.

There were several factors influencing communities to make this change, all of which had the net effect to increase citizen satisfaction, improved management, and better risk management. The specific factors mentioned from research and SME discussions were: efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, responsiveness (access), and equitability. It was also noted that, typically, there is a desire to ensure that elected representation (through the Town Mayor/Council) is not lost.

The research identified recent changes of this type for comparable coastal communities in Connecticut, as well as directly comparable communities (e.g. West Hartford, CT.) having made this governance change. Data was shared that showed the Selectman/RTM form is vastly predominant in very small towns. Fairfield is currently one of the last towns of our size to use this form of government.

Key reasons communities have enacted such changes is that greater management expertise and attention is needed to achieve efficiencies, address complexity in management issues, and limit risks. With the Town manager type structures, there is greater focus on management and execution, without potential distractions of political considerations, or activities.

The process to undertake this change as well as resources to help the Town evaluate the required steps and considerations were identified. SME participants described previous initiatives to update the Town Charter and associated complications and proposed that instead of changing the existing structure of Fairfield's government, the strategic plan should instead identify opportunities within the existing structure to improve efficiency and transparency. Resources include information from Municipal management associations focused on this topic, IBM studies on municipal management, articles, etc.

To supplement the initial research, Dr. Alberda researched different types of government structures. As noted above, the Selectman/RTM structure is primarily used by smaller communities. This included research on how each impacts efficiency, accountability and voter turnout. In addition, Dr. Alberda assessed the process for changing the Town Charter. The report she produced is attached to this document as an appendix. Based on her research, Dr. Alberda recommended that the Town of Fairfield move from a Selectman-RTM governance structure to an adaptive political system. Adaptive political municipalities have government structures that resemble mayor-council municipalities, but have adopted various reforms that include structural characteristics of council-manager municipalities.

The recommended adaptive political system could include the following:

- Appoint a commission to re-design Fairfield's government. This commission must have people with the skills to ensure any new design incorporates the aspects of good government as outlined by the International City Managers Association (ICMA), other comparable communities, or established authoritative sources.
- Conduct an extensive community education and outreach process before changing the Town Charter, to allow the benefits and implications of this change to be understood.
- The redesigned government should be consistent with the following, but can be refined based on the design research and outreach:
 - Replace the First Selectman, Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and RTM with an elected Town Mayor/Town Council (of approximately 9 members - TBD). An alternative, Town Council/Manager as identified in the research, would be to hire a full time, professional and experienced Town Manager, working at the direction of the Town Council.
 - Hire a chief administrative officer (with the requisite skills), if Town Mayor structure is utilized.
 - Ensure there are well defined responsibilities for all Town Officials, and a specific delineation of responsibilities for Mayor and Chief Administrative Officer.
 - Structure the Town Council to streamline town representation to (possibly) 1 member per member-district, supplemented by a limited number of At-Large members. This would reduce the number of Town Representatives from all town bodies which currently exceeds 85 people for the major elected officials plus, appointed officials for 28+ boards and commissions exceeding approximately 175 additional town representatives. Although many boards may remain with a change to a Town Mayor/Town Council structure, the goal is to seek opportunities to streamline and improve operational effectiveness.
 - Utilize partisan elections which are proven to increase voter turnout.

The conclusion of the SME session was that changing the governance structure of the Town is an issue that needs further work to educate the community, validate the will of the community to institute this significant change, and better define the specifics of the structure. As both the initial and SME research showed, the initial step would be the formation of a Charter Revision Committee to better define the specifics of revised Governance that would best benefit the Town residents.

However, in the meantime, there are some initiatives within just the town administration that should be considered. This includes aligning some town departments into related groupings that have co-dependent objectives (e.g. economic development, park & rec and TPZ). This has the potential effect to align the departments to shared goals like revenue and to allow for commissions to align their work to the strategic plan of the town. It can further provide escalation or problem resolution paths for employees and senior management creating a 'best-management' practice to ensure mission conflicts are visible and get the attention they warrant. It also has the benefit of streamlining communications across aligned groupings and ensuring departments do not work at cross purposes. Other initiatives should be undertaken within the current structure such as improving IT infrastructure, clearly outlining the roles and responsibilities of all elected and appointed officials and staff, improving communication and coordination, and initiating training for elected and appointed officials. Training would serve to improve understanding and expectations regarding the role of each department or commission in overall Town operations, performance expectations, cross entity coordination, approaches to identify/resolve conflicts, etc.

The second SME session built on the discussions of the August meeting. The RTM participants were provided the research findings explored during the initial session so that a full understanding of the research insights and considerations would be achieved. There was also a focus on the steps associated with changing the Town Charter. There was an acknowledged need to shift the governing structure, with an understanding that change will not be easy, but the timing is good and may be well received by the residents.

Discussion regarding the type of structure generally concluded that the Mayor/Council form of government would be most readily accepted by Fairfield. This was largely due to the fact that it more closely resembled the current structure where the Mayor essentially mirrors the role of First Selectman. While this was said to be a possible preferred option over the Council/Manager form of government, it was also felt that a chief administrative official was needed to operate day to day Town operations. Using the Mayoral form with the Chief administrative officer can be a more costly alternative, depending on the role and compensation structure for the Mayor plus Chief administrative officer.

The alternative of a Town Council/Town Manager should not be eliminated, at this time. During the community education and governance revision steps, resources can be leveraged to best define the comparisons, benefits, and implications between the Mayor/Council and Town Council/Town Manager structures. There are ways to incorporate aspects of the Mayoral into this form, if that is desirable.

In addition, it was stated that the committee structure needs to be revised in accordance with the change. This would include changing to commissions that were advisory/recommending bodies.

A major difference and benefit cited by participants in transitioning to the Town Council was that the number of representatives would be far less than combined RTM, Board of Selectmen, and Board of Finance. As part of the discussion it was agreed that fewer decision-making representatives actually increases a citizen's access to government which goes against what one would expect. The current form of government and the distributed method of decision-making, makes Town government a maze of un-coordinated departments instead of a strength of greater democracy. A Mayor/Town Council with tighter more efficient command and control support, essentially provides citizens with one stop shopping to decision-making authorities and quicker clearer resolution to issues/concerns. Another benefit to Mayor/Town Council was that both caucuses often struggle to fill government positions. With a smaller Council it was felt that it would be easier to find skilled individuals interested in running for the position.

Public education of Town residents was identified as being critical to a successful transition. It was stated that when the Town reduced the RTM from 50 to 40 members there was resistance, in large part due to tradition. People are generally resistant to changing a system that has been in place for as long as the current structure. Many residents do not truly understand the existing structure or the need for change. One of the participants mentioned that prior to becoming a member she did not understand how the RTM operated. While in theory the large number of representatives is thought to be more inclusive, in actuality it has the opposite impact. Presenting the benefits, efficiencies, access and economies of scale are among the key points to emphasize.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the participants emphasized their support for moving forward with implementing the process of changing the Town Charter and reiterated that now is a very good time to do so.

TOWN VISION, MISSION, AND BRANDING

The Town Vision, Mission, and Branding Focus Group took place on Tuesday, August 6, at 9:00 a.m. Three SMEs took part in the session including, Mark Barnhart, the Director of the Office of Community and Economic Development, Don Irion, a volunteer with the Office of Community and Economic Development (Mr. Irion is a retired corporate marketing executive), and Nancy Carberry, the Chief of Staff to the First Selectman.

A focus of the first half of the conversation was centered on issues related to the Town's website including: the general view that it is outdated, difficult to navigate, and an ineffective tool for attracting new businesses and residents. To begin to resolve these issues, the Office of Community and Economic Development created www.choosefairfieldct.com to better market the Town to new businesses, and www.experiencefairfieldct.org (with Chamber of Commerce participation) to promote tourism; however participants discussed how those websites are not widely utilized largely due to the fact that they are not easily accessible via the Town's website given the issues previously mentioned. Participants expressed a desire for redesigning the Town's website to be a priority of the strategic plan, to try and achieve improved effectiveness, as well as potential cost savings.

The second half of the session was spent discussing the internal Town mission. This included a lengthy discussion on Town departments being fragmented, without strong information sharing, under the existing structure, with opportunities to improve how the Office of the First Selectman interacts and directs the regular execution of Town Departments. Since all communications start at the top any re-alignment needs to go all the way to the Office of The First Selectman. Every member of town government is essentially a sales representative for the town. As such every town employee's job role and performance needs to be tied to their role in enabling the Town's strategic plan.

Participants discussed how improved management of the strategic direction of the Town would be fostered by a common roadmap, for all Town departments, that is directly established and enforced by the active participation of the First Selectman. This would include an articulation of the critical challenges being faced by the Town, and how all Town entities (Departments, Boards, Commissions, etc.) need to understand such challenges and how their role and actions can support the Town's needed execution.

ZONING, DESIGN, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Zoning, Design, and Infrastructure Focus Group took place on Tuesday, August 6, at 1:00 p.m. Three SMEs took part in the session including, Emmeline Harrigan, the Assistant Director of the Planning and Zoning Department, Meghan Sloan, the Planning Director of the Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments (MetroCOG), and Devin Clark, the Transportation Planner for MetroCOG.

The session began with a conversation about the existing zoning code and how it serves the Town. A SME participant expressed concern that the code is not user friendly, does not include tables or graphics, and does not address modern uses or contemporary development standards. A SME participant spoke about how dimensional standards of residential districts are not in line with existing development patterns, leading to excessive requests for variances.

The conversation then shifted to commercial development. Participants discussed the need to emphasize new commercial areas to grow the grand list including, transit-oriented districts (Metro North), around Sacred Heart University, and along the Fairfield exits to the Merritt Parkway. Participants also discussed infrastructure barriers to commercial development including the need to improve the pedestrian experience to Metro North which entails improving the I-95 underpass and converting the Brentwood Avenue tunnel for pedestrians only. Improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure was discussed as necessary for Black Rock Turnpike, Kings Highway, and Merritt Parkway areas; the Black Rock Turnpike (BRT) project has been approved and will begin within the next year. The BRT initiative will take up to 10 years to complete all aspects.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Economic Development SME session took place on Wednesday, August 7, at 9:00 a.m. Six SME's took part in the session including Jim Wendt, the Director of the Planning and Zoning Department, Emmeline Harrigan, the Assistant Director of the Planning and Zoning Department, Matt Wagner the Chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission, Patrick Carolton of MetroCOG, Joe McGee, the Vice President of the Business Council of Fairfield County, and Mark Barnhart, the Director of the Office of Community and Economic Development.

The session began with a conversation about the process a developer would currently go through when beginning the initial phases of investing in Fairfield. Mark Barnhart expressed that it is his role to lead people through the development process, but a lack of clear understanding of this process by other Town staff has led to confusion in the past. Participants discussed the need for a system in which every Town staff member (with public interaction responsibilities) would have the knowledge necessary to direct developers, business owners, or other people interested in doing business in Fairfield, to the correct resources. Participants then discussed similar concerns and difficulties for residents when they need to engage with the Town for permitting purposes.

Participants then spoke about how current P&Z department capacity limits the hours that the permitting counter is open, which can make it difficult for residents to obtain permits. They expressed a desire for an online permitting portal that would allow residents to learn about necessary permits, and then have the ability to apply, pay, and receive them, without having to go to Town Hall. One example of an online permitting portal is City Base, more information about the digital platform can be found here: <https://thecitybase.com/>.

Additional discussion was held on the potential need and benefit of an “ombudsman” that could help expedite and streamline the movement of significant commercial and residential development through the various development stages and related interaction with Town agencies.

The conversation then shifted to opportunities for new commercial development and the need to grow the grand list. Participants discussed the need to establish the overall property tax generation result to better illustrate to the public the need for new commercial development and to justify economic development efforts. This would be the development and use of a key metric (e.g. Mill rate) for use in evaluating potential projects and their implications, so the community can see the potential ramifications of new initiatives. There was also discussion of the benefit of creating and communicating an analysis of the pending changes to the mill rate as a result of the various items that impact it (Town spending changes, education spending changes, grand list (commercial/residential) updates, potential for grand list changes from pending revaluation). This type of analysis would improve the awareness of Town residents on the true economics of managing Town spending and taxes.

A SME participant spoke about the need for a plan for Town owned property and Patrick Carolton discussed a similar initiative that MetroCOG completed for another community. In addition to Town owned property, participants expressed the need for an inventory of privately owned vacant commercial space as well as utilizing a specific resource charged with attracting new businesses to fill those spaces. This would be beneficial as the effort to accomplish this extends beyond current staffing and resources.

Perhaps one of the most transformative ideas the group discussed was for the town to create a development vision for areas of the town in advance of development. To date the process is reactive, in that a developer sends the town a proposal the town may or may not want. The suggestion was to look at various areas, say the waterfront, and for the town to come up with a

design blueprint that developers can respond to. Each individual proposal would still have to go through standard approvals. This transformative approach also maps to the input received during the community outreach process on the topic of a community blueprint. Better defining how the Town might leverage Public/Private partnerships as part of overall development needs is also needed.

Part of the discussion related to having a growth strategy for a suburban community. As a primarily residential community, there is a stock of single family homes. The point was made that, to keep growing, there may be a need for a different form of residential development – one that has aspects for both younger and older residents. Lacking such could lead to being unable to react to emerging economic and demographic changes.

Additionally as part of that, the developers should be strongly encouraged to integrate community awareness and ideas into their plans, to help quell the surprise and “NIMBY” issues when projects are proposed without community input. This has worked favorably for some recent initiatives. Related to this point, there was a discussion where it was viewed as beneficial to describe topics in such a manner as to “meet the needs of residents” vs. “economic development”. This was viewed as important because “words and messages matter” and can help stem opposition to needed actions.

The conversation then shifted to the organization of Town departments and the need for greater accountability and efficiency between and within departments. Participants discussed the need for the Town to create formalized job descriptions for both staff and elected/appointed officials. They discussed how roles need to be further refined to ensure increased accountability and efficiency and that the Town should incentivize the realization of staff goals and objectives through salary increases. Town staff discussed the need for weekly meetings of Town department heads and the First Selectman to facilitate cross structure communication and to have a greater liaison among facets of government/management.

EDUCATION

The Education SME session took place on Thursday, August 8, at 9:00 a.m. Six SMEs took part in the session including Michael Cummings, the incoming Superintendent of Fairfield Public Schools; Dr. Stephen Tracy, the interim Superintendent of Fairfield Public Schools; Jennifer Leeper, Board of Education Finance Committee Chair; Jenn Jacobsen, Board of Education Policy Committee member; Christine Vitale, the Chair of the Board of Education, and Alison Hildebrand, Fairfield University Office of Admissions.

The focus group began with a presentation by Ms. Hildebrand on college admissions and how Fairfield schools and students compare to other school districts in the region and across the country. Her presentation highlighted the following:

- Warde and Ludlowe schools are ranked among the top five percent of high schools in the United States
- Fairfield Schools have more advanced placement classes than any other schools in Fairfield County
- Fairfield Schools have among the highest number of students going to college
- Fairfield students are among the most highly sought after by colleges

She also spoke about how Fairfield University is an untapped resource for Fairfield Schools. Opportunities exist for dual enrollment to help expand opportunities for advanced placement classes for students and limit the number and funding for those classes in the high schools.

The bulk of the working session was spent discussing approaches or actions that can be taken to both innovate the schools and moderate spending increases. Finance committee members explained that year to year budget increases before the great recession ranged between 5 to 9.5 percent per year and have now been reduced to 2 to 4 percent. 2019-2020 proposed increase was in the 4% range with 2021 expected to be the same.

A comment from the SPC Chair and Vice Chair who participated in the SME sessions:

It is important to note that discussions about educational objectives, achievements, and spending frequently lead to wide ranging viewpoints and in-depth discussions. Fairfield is not unique in this. On one hand we are talking about the educational aspirations for the children of Fairfield. On the other hand, our education funding approximates 65% of the Town's annual budget, and draws significant attention. The attention is both to satisfy ourselves that first, our educational aspirations are being met, and then also accomplished in the most cost effective manner possible. Our community would not benefit from under serving education, yet all residents have a right to be confident that their taxes are being well spent, and with some lens of affordability. Our research has shown that these points of educational aspirations and affordability are on the minds of all of our residents, and all viewpoints merit consideration.

The structure of the session did not allow the SMEs to fully explore the topic of educational achievement. Measuring educational outcomes is not a simple task, and rating agencies have very complex formulas for measuring educational results. What we heard from the Fairfield University admissions SME is that Fairfield Schools are viewed as being in the top 5% nationally. This is a significant accomplishment and is due to the hard and admirable work of our teachers, programs, and administration. What we don't know is what it will take to stay there from a curriculum innovation or financial perspective. Ultimately, it is the education aspirations we have for the children of Fairfield that will drive costs, and financial realities that drive affordability. So a matter for a follow-up discussion is to ask what is the affordable education aspiration that will define Fairfield.

The following discussion notes are grouped into Financial and Educational categories.

FINANCIAL DISCUSSIONS DURING EDUCATION SME SESSION:

SME participants expressed that they feel as though there is a chasm between the perception of the school district budget and the reality of their financial stewardship. They felt that better communication with Town residents is needed so that everyone understands the efforts the district has been making to reduce costs, realize savings and continue to meet the education needs of the community. Views expressed indicated that in the short term, significant cost savings are not expected, and specifically in regards to facility consolidation, reducing costs is not likely, largely because there is not an interest in moving away from the "neighborhood school model" as well as it was broadly believed that savings from facilities consolidation would not be reinvested in curriculum but rather used to reduce the budget. Other changes (racial imbalance steps, redistricting, etc.) will also be challenging undertakings, if they move forward. There is significant volatility in the budget range above. If not already being done, the BOE should look to include future budget projections for long term planning to determine the educational impact of recent budgets on ongoing programs and facilities.

Furthermore, the observation has come up that a Town wide referendum may be sought to obtain funding necessary to provide air conditioning in all schools. Referendums are being considered to allow all town residents to have input on such major town spending programs and since budget increases through the current process are not expected to be adequate to provide such facility improvements. Recently, the State has disallowed a/c on some recent building renovation projects. However, as buildings age their maintenance increases and with 17 aging schools the BOE should look into future maintenance projections for longer term planning and determine a useful life for the current facilities.

Participants then discussed the difference between projected enrollment numbers and actual enrollment numbers. They stated that the 2018-2019 high school enrollment was 85 students higher than projected due to an increase in the number of students enrolled in the public school system rather than a private school as anticipated. They also stated that new, higher density residential developments have been impacting enrollment numbers in some schools more than others. They indicated that they would like the Planning and Zoning Commission to be more communicative with the Board of Education about where new housing is built so that they can better prepare for increased enrollment numbers, although discussions with the P&Z department indicate that multi-unit developments do not draw significant levels of increased student populations (as per most recent TOD studies and other reviews).

The discussion then led to State mandates and their impacts on the School District. First, State mandated curriculum changes were mentioned. Participants said that although the mandated curriculum changes have been positive and progressive, they do not come with the additional funding necessary to revise curriculums, resulting in further unfunded State mandates.

This was followed by a discussion regarding State mandated diversity across the district. Participants spoke about how, due to the diversity attributes on one school, the district has been required to create a plan to address this potential imbalance, and is working with the State BOE to explore options to bring schools into better alignment. The State's Open Choice Program which provides high performing school districts additional funds to enroll students from low performing, neighboring school districts was mentioned. These students are often racial or ethnic minorities which helps to resolve issues of diversity. Although Open Choice Program students are filling seats that would otherwise be left vacant and that the School District must pay for regardless of if they are filled, the program is not popular amongst Fairfield residents. Fairfield residents believe that the School District does not receive sufficient compensation per Open Choice Program student and that they overburden the school system. Participants expressed a need to better communicate the benefits of the Open Choice Program to the public. Next, redistricting was discussed as another strategy for resolving diversity issues in schools. Participants expressed that this is not a desirable option, but one that the Board of Education is exploring as many options as possible before making a redistricting decision.

During the discussion of enrollment projections, the most recent projections, which show a decline in overall enrollment through 2028, was explored. Overall enrollment trends sometime mask aspects of enrollment variations across the various components of the grades (i.e. ECC; K-5; 6-8; 9-12; etc). New enrollment projections are in the process of being prepared and should be available in the Fall. It was discussed how the assumptions being utilized in the projections should be scrutinized to ensure they reflect the most updated actual information (especially births) since such information have significant impact on the projections.

A further key risk was discussed, related to the Town's planning regarding school construction projects. The Town receives approximately 20-25% reimbursement for such building projects. However, such reimbursement is jeopardized if the Town overbuilds to how the State measures the enrollment. Precise analysis and validation of Fairfield status has not yet been performed and should be accomplished to avoid potential funding issues.

As part of the objective to better inform the community, the participants agreed that an analysis of anticipated spending over the next 2 years should be performed and included as part of the overall community update.

EDUCATIONAL DISCUSSIONS DURING EDUCATION SME SESSION:

There was also discussion around utilizing FU & SHU dual enrollment options to both reduce facilities cost in the high schools and enhance college preparedness. There was discussion about potential sources of revenue such as increasing sponsorships, parent charitable funds and after hour use services, like Town Concerts. However, there was an equally interesting discussion prompted by Dr. Tracy on the merits of commercializing curriculum. While there may be some revenue benefit, the more valuable contribution of commercializing curriculum would be to provide students the ability to learn real world skills in marketing, communications, accounting etc while they learn about car repair, culinary skills, and so on. This could also lead to public/private partnerships.

Participants also discussed how educational outcomes in addition to potential cost savings could be realized through earlier intervention of high cost programs such as special education. Not only would increased early intervention help to lower the cost structure, by helping kids exit special education sooner, but it would also improve student achievement through accelerating the pace of learning.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES

The Community Programs and Facilities SME session took place on Thursday, August 8, at 1:00 p.m. Four SMEs took part in the session including Julie DeMarco, the Director of Fairfield Human Services and the Senior Center, Scott Walker, the Chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission, Urb Leimkuhler, a representative of Fairfield Senior Advocates (FSA), and Mary Hogue, a member of the Sustainable Fairfield Task Force.

The beginning of the session was spent discussing parks and recreation opportunities in town. First, Commissioner Walker spoke about how the Parks and Recreation Commission is exploring refurbishing the marina. The marina currently has approximately 600 slips. The low cost for users in comparison to adjacent communities has led to an 11-year waiting list for larger slips. Although the marina is popular and widely used, it is not built to contemporary standards, with slips that are too narrow, gangways that are too steep, and a slip layout which is not fully ADA compliant. The topic of Parks and Recreation programs being self supportive was discussed, including the topic of leveraging these key recreational assets to provide greater returns to support overall town financial requirements.

SPC representatives then told Commissioner Walker about the numerous residents who mentioned a beach front restaurant as something that is missing in Fairfield. The Commissioner agreed that this would be a desirable, economic development opportunity for the Town, and that the Parks and Recreation Commission had heard similar sentiments from residents as well. The Commissioner discussed how the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is nearing the end of its planning period and that an update to the document is needed in order to capture new ideas and initiatives from residents, including new programming in the northern portion of the Town since the majority of options are currently focused near the beach. After completion of the SME session, Commissioner Walker and the SPC participants and HLA consultants discussed aspects of commercial development in the marina area that could encompass commercial/retail capability, along with aspects of a walking boardwalk running west from the marina area towards Penfield Pavilion.

The conversation then shifted to the facilities and programming targeted to senior residents of Fairfield. Fairfield Senior Advocates has also been doing work to better understand the specifics of the senior community, their desires for programs, population trends, and attributes of housing stock modifications that would be of interest to members of the senior community. A significant trend in Town (and the State) is to recognize the importance of seniors to the overall economics impacting all of us. The State recognized this in steps to lessen tax impact of seniors remaining in Connecticut. Here in Town, there has been wide discussion in many FSA meetings on the importance of having

programs that will encourage seniors to remain in Fairfield, and the recognition that seniors actually support the economics of the Town by paying taxes, while not adding to the financial cost of additional educational funding. In the current environment, the loss of too many senior households, would have serious cost implications to the Town and State. Further needs recognized relate to the need for senior friendly housing options to allow a natural transition of seniors from existing residences to housing that is more accommodative to senior needs. Many national trends provide examples of approaches to consider, but progress needs an overall plan.

Participants discussed how the Center needs significant upgrades to accommodate expanded programming targeted to active seniors. One idea for additional senior programming that was mentioned by participants was the development of a card, similar to the Stag card used by Fairfield University students, that offers discounts at local stores. Participants then discussed the lack of independent living and multigenerational housing opportunities. Participants then discussed the ideas related to a center of excellence for senior and millennial living. This would be a community initiative that, in addition to basic public services, provides excellent programs and amenities that address the specific needs and interests of older residents, particularly those related to their health, housing, transportation, engagement, communication, recreation and safety. Fairfield Senior Advocates has been keeping apprised about, and participating in, discussions related to the design of an initiative that is multi-faceted aimed at serving the needs of the increasing senior population, as well as providing aspects of economic development that would benefit all Town residents, as well as post-college potential residents seeking to live in this area in jobs related to their chosen profession. A key element of this is to partner with the Town in the design of such of an initiative, as it will leverage key aspects of Town infrastructure and assets at Fairfield Center and/or Metro Center. There was discussion of the importance of working with key partners capable of providing needed expertise and capability such as Yale Center for Aging, or other reputable providers. A high-level summary of this concept will be prepared. Initial branding of the idea could present the multi-generational aspect of it with the initial naming, such as Senior & Millennial Integrated Living Environment (SMILE) or variations of these key attributes.

Discussion then centered on the lack of knowledge about existing programs that the Town offers. Participants expressed that many residents are not familiar with parks and recreation or senior programming unless they are already involved in similar programs in Town. Participants discussed the need for a dedicated position in the First Selectman's office who would be responsible for communications and to help foster cross advertisement and coordination between various Town departments, businesses, and not for profit organizations such as Fairfield University and Sacred Heart University or Senior Advocates.

Finally, a SME participant expressed the need to codify life cycle costs and sustainability as a primary consideration for all new development or redevelopment in the Town. This would help to support and propel the community's interest in taking prudent steps to maintain and improve the Town's ability to be considered a sustainable community.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

The Financial Stability SME Session took place on Friday, October 4, at 11:00 a.m. Three SMEs took part in the session: Tom Flynn, the Chair of the Board of Finance, Bob Mayer, the Chief Fiscal Officer of the Town of Fairfield, and Emmet Hibson, the Town of Fairfield Director of Human Resources.

The session began with a brief statement by Bob Mayer regarding the differences between strategic planning and financial planning. He expressed the need to ensure that the discussion focused on strategic questions and issues, and evaluate topics with a frame of reference relating to what residents desired the community to be, what changes we desired, how to make changes to what we do in striving for such objectives.

Following introductions and an overview of the process and topic, the conversation shifted to opportunities for cost savings related to Town services. All aspects of the Town spending were discussed, including Town Operations, Board of Education, labor, technology, and various functions. Additional discussion related to how quickly changes could be made and potential investments or spending needed to accomplish changes to current ways of providing town services and conducting town operations.

The SMEs discussed opportunities for regionalization (with neighboring towns) of specific Town services such as tax assessment, human resources, tax collection, accounting, or purchasing, as areas where cost savings could be realized. Additionally, SMEs discussed the need to determine which Town services were considered vital to residents and those that residents would support eliminating, modifying, or charging differently for. The feeling was that essential town services include: Public Safety (Fire & Police), Infrastructure and Education. To some degree everything beyond that is optional. Even essential services like Fire & Police might benefit from evaluating the optimal deployment structure that could maintain response times but at less cost. Concern was expressed over the minimal cost savings that could be realized by modifying town operations related services due to the fact that they make up a smaller percentage of the Town's budget. SMEs stated that there is no reasonable way for the Town to achieve significant financial savings without structural change including privatization, regionalization, and enhanced economic development initiatives to grow the commercial grand list.

Additionally, the SMEs expressed that there needs to be an evaluation of all of the services the town provides for the purposes of prioritizing the value of those services to the citizens of the Town and identifying candidates to eliminate. Without changes to or reductions of services the Town provides, spending will not be able to be significantly decreased, resulting in continued tax increases. Economic development, if effective, will take time to occur. In the interim, the spending increases will drive tax increases, and will be compounded by the likely impact of the revaluation in 2020.

The SMEs then discussed how the majority of the Town budget consists of fixed costs associated with contractual obligations for staff salaries and pensions. This transitioned to the broader topic of issues that are impacting other towns as well and changes that need to be implemented at a State level (e.g. Labor arbitration approaches, 830 (g), etc.).

The SME's expressed a need for increasing the percentage of departments that manage with a project based costing mindset which helps to align the benefits and results of specific programs with the costs of providing the service. Parks and Recreation was brought up as an example of a department that does this currently. Discussion regarding the Parks and Recreation Department led to an assessment of the need to increase the fees associated with their programming to the market rate, especially at the Marina. Additionally, the SMEs discussed the need to better leverage Fairfield resources, such as waterfront property and other Town assets, to maximize the overall contribution of financial resources to the Town for needed operations. In other words things like waterfront development are not only an economic development opportunity but assets that deserve better fiscal stewardship to maximize the return on the asset.

Finally, the SMEs discussed ideas regarding a strategic target which could help focus efforts around commercial grand list growth. For example, to grow the commercial grand list from 10% to 20% over an x year period. There was no agreement as to what the strategic financial targets should be, but establishing target metrics is imperative to bring focus and discipline to all the operational objectives. In other words, if we were to commit ourselves to grow the commercial grand list to 20% over 5 years, how could that happen? How much new real estate of what type would need to be added? These would be financial targets that would then be passed onto the appropriate departments to implement.

There is also a need for an evaluation of the types of services and service levels provided by the town as the realization of cost savings would not be possible in the short term. Economic development will take time beyond the next several years and realignment of spending may help to close the gap more quickly. It would require all stakeholders to support necessary measures such as establishing a cap on the annual increase of the Town's contribution to all aspects of Town spending, including the Fairfield School budget. To that end, the SMEs proposed that the Town bring in objective third-party experts during the budgeting process to better inform Fairfield decision makers about the variable and fixed costs of each department. Without spending reduction, service level adjustments, or other savings, tax increases will be unavoidable. There potentially will be a significant tax increase on median value homeowners if spending is not moderated and the revaluation results are similar to other neighboring communities.

There was one other topic that was discussed that goes more to the culture of the town, but has a bearing on Town costs. The topic was Average Citizen Residency. The discussion was about the largely anecdotal observation that the Town of Fairfield used to be a cradle to grave community, but is no longer. Residents were born here, lived their lives here and died here all in the same property, sometimes passing the property along to their heirs. That may no longer be the case. If in fact, as some people believe, Fairfield has become a transient community where young families move in and then move out or downsize as their kids age out of public school, it drastically changes long term modeling on many levels, including investments in senior only facilities. It essentially means, costs will increase, but at a rate much greater than they have in the past since the senior population will not be replenished as people age in. Instead of aging 'in', they will move out or at best reduce their contribution to property taxes. Much more discussion and data are required to study this, but ignoring this possible trend would not be advisable. There will need to be either a senior retention, importation plan or a better life-stage approach to development that appeals to young families as well and/or all the above.

CONCLUSION

By now you may be asking what this all means. It means there are lots of opinions, all of which are important, including your own. These are the issues the Town faces, these are the issues and opportunities we have to address. There will be a need to think differently, and balance your opinion with those of others, so that as a community, we can thrive and excel.

We have a dated form of government with highly distributed responsibility for decision-making that exists in very few places, other than in New England, and is on the decline even here. We have an excellent public school system whose traditional form of funding is, has been, and will likely continue to be under pressure. We have some of the best real assets in the country in our location, yet have not sufficiently leveraged them for value to the community. We live in a State whose financial troubles are deep, broad and are not going away anytime soon. Both Seniors and Millennials are making similar lifestyle choices, but differ from the traditional wants of Town residents.

Fairfield is at a turning point. We are fortunate in that we have started to think about our choices, yet we cannot wait too long to act. The Strategic Plan Committee sees a potential future of:

- private/public partnerships that allow Fairfield to continue to be a leader in education and a national role model for curriculum innovation;
- a focus on life-phase centric housing;
- culture preserving development that reduces traffic, by eliminating the need for it;
- a stable and robust local economy; and
- utilization of both current and legacy technologies to communicate with and energize all residents.

Yes it is all possible, but only if we begin working on the things we need to now, to achieve that vision.

Note: An approach to gather feedback from residents and stakeholders on the draft plan will be developed. Additionally, the SPC will engage Town Boards to provide updates and gather feedback, consistent with our prior work on this initiative.

