

Spring Update from the Norwich Planning Commission

Follow-up from February public meeting:

Thanks to all who participated in our February public meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to gather feedback on ideas for increasing the availability of affordable housing in Norwich by rezoning the Route 5 South/River Road areas. The comments were extremely helpful.

Based on this input, we understand more discussion and refinement of these ideas is needed. Accordingly, we've decided to take no formal steps at this time to advance any Route 5 South/River Road zoning proposal. Instead, we plan to conduct a series of small group discussions in the coming months to get further input on how best to respond to public feedback and address the affordable housing need in Norwich.

We'll send out more information on these small group sessions after we've addressed our current priority, which is reinstatement of the town plan.

Reinstatement of the Town Plan

The Norwich town plan was created from a multi-year process that culminated in 2011, and we feel it has served our town well. The plan has lapsed, and reinstatement is necessary for Norwich to apply for government grants and obtain tax credits associated with the village designation for the town center on Main Street.

We're proposing the town reinstate the current plan with only minimal updates necessary to respond to changes in state law and concerns raised by the regional planning commission. Broadly, these changes focus on:

- Identifying current and future sources and use of energy in the town
- Planning, financing and maintaining municipal facilities
- Increasing resiliency to floods and fluvial erosion
- Support for the "Village Center" designation for the historic village

We want to make clear that reinstatement of the town plan will NOT authorize a new zoning district for the Route 5 South/River Road areas. Instead, the reinstated plan will include language that if such a district were to be proposed in the future, it would require a formal amendment to the town plan. This amendment would need to be approved by the Select Board.

In terms of next steps, a final draft of the reinstated town plan is expected to be complete by the end of this month. Upon approval by the Planning Commission, there will be a public hearing with a 30-day warning period. The document will then move to the Select Board for its consideration.

The Planning Commission welcomes questions at its meetings or by letter.