

## Moratorium on New Warehouses and Distribution Centers

### ***The South Windsor Plan of Conservation and Development (PCOD)*** **(effective August 19, 2013)**

In the introductory letter to the *Plan of Conservation and Development*, effective August 19, 2013, the Planning and Zoning Commission commits to

*... protect public health, well-being and our natural environment while providing economic opportunity. We believe this Plan provides a balanced approach and that its goals and strategies will uphold the high quality of life that our residents expect and enhance our business community.*

The Community Survey section of the plan highlights what matters most to residents of the town:

- Maintaining a BALANCE between growth and preservation
- Protecting our high QUALITY OF LIFE
- Preserving the “character” of the town

*... South Windsor has done a good job protecting what is important while planning for new development. A continued balanced approach will allow the Town to build upon its successful open space preservation efforts, increase farmland protection while welcoming new businesses to town to build the tax base. (p. 18)*

### **Problem Statement**

The issues of balance, quality of life, and preservation of the town’s character identified in the 2013 *Plan of Conservation and Development* have all been challenged with the introduction of new businesses to town – chief among them, warehouses and distribution centers. And while it is possible to quantify the economic benefits of new distribution centers, and understand the increasingly important role they play in our way of life, there appear to be no commensurate studies measuring the negative impact these new developments have on communities.

In the past 5 years, South Windsor’s Planning and Zoning Commission has approved 5 new warehouse/distribution centers totaling more than 1.2 million square feet of building space. Truck traffic attendant with these centers has caused a marked increase in roadway congestion as well as noise and diesel pollution. The quality of life enjoyed by many residents of the town has been negatively impacted. In addition, the location of these warehouse/distribution centers on industrially-zoned land in close proximity to established neighborhoods has prompted a public outcry.

Current zoning regulations limit the PZC’s ability to deny applications that may in fact threaten the very things that South Windsor residents value most about our town. Regulations guiding the Planning and Zoning Commission must be updated to better reflect the needs of the town and its residents. Residents look to the Commission to provide a longer-range vision addressing these issues of balance and quality of life – which ultimately define the character of South Windsor.

## **Recommendation: Adopt a Moratorium on New Warehouses and Distribution Centers**

An immediate moratorium on all applications for, and approval of, new warehouse/distribution centers is needed so that the Planning and Zoning Commission can pause to fairly assess and revise its regulations in keeping with commitments made in the town's *Plan for Conservation and Development*, and respond to the growing opposition to new warehouse/distribution centers expressed by town residents in public hearings.

Items to be reviewed include but are not limited to:

- Restrictions on the size of new buildings (acreage, square feet)
- Restrictions on "bundling" adjacent properties for development
- Enhanced buffers for residential areas abutting both commercial and industrial lands
- More stringent visual and sound barrier requirements for new developments
- A review of (and possible upgrade to) current traffic and noise standards (adopted through State statutes) and their application to trucks and trucking companies
- Clear definition of warehouses, distribution facilities and freight terminals; potential benefits of each to the town
- Quality, state-of-the-art traffic and noise studies provided by objective third parties
- Current best practices for noise abatement/reduction

The expiration date of this moratorium shall not exceed 12 months from the effective date of adoption unless extended by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

No application will be accepted or heard by the planning and Zoning Commission, and no approvals will be given by the Planning and Zoning Commission for new warehouse/distribution centers during this period.