



POCD COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Overview

As part of updating the 2017 Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), a public workshop meeting was held in the cafeteria at Henry James Memorial School in January 2023 to learn about issues that Simsbury residents felt were important to consider in the POCD update. While about 70 people participated in the planning points exercise, a headcount indicated that over 100 Simsbury attended the meeting. This booklet summarizes the workshop results.

People were informed about the meeting through press releases, social media posts, message signs, Simsbury Community TV screensaver, posters placed around Simsbury, word-of-mouth, and other means.

People Attending

People attending the meeting were asked to place a “blue dot” on a map of Simsbury to illustrate where they live.

The distribution of dots indicated that residents came from different parts of Simsbury and the distribution of attendees was reasonably similar to the overall distribution of Simsbury residents. As a result, there did not seem to be a “geographic bias” which might have skewed the results of the meeting.

While no data was collected, the age composition of the participants was observed to be older than the median age of Simsbury’s population (about 43 years old).

Map of Where Attendees Lived



“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”

Margaret Wheatley
Writer

Tabulation of Prouds

From a POCD perspective, “prouds” were categorized as follows:

Community Facilities	81
Open Space	37
Community Character	29
Simsbury Center	20
Pedestrian / Bike / Transit	11
Business / Econ. Development	4
Natural Resources	5
Housing Afford. / Needs	3
Sustainability	1
Utility Infrastructure	1
Vehicular Transportation	1
Villages	1

What People Are Proud Of

An exercise conducted at the meeting involved asking residents to think of things about Simsbury they were proud of. Residents were asked to list these on a card (and submit the card at the meeting) and place a “green dot” on a map to represent it.

This exercise is intended to learn about ***the types of things that people appreciate in Simsbury and/or might want to encourage more of in the future.***

The exercise can also reveal the types of things that attract people to Simsbury and contribute to the overall quality of life for residents.

This exercise seemed to indicate that participants were proud of:

- Town facilities and services which meet community needs.
- Things that contribute to their quality of life.
- Things that enhance the physical character of the community.
- Things that make them feel they are part of a community.
- Things that contribute to their sense of well-being.

Detail of Top Prouds

Community Facilities	81	Simsbury Farms	24
		Simsbury Meadows / Performing Arts Center	19
		Schools	18
		Library	13
		Other / Various	7
Open Space	37	Open Space – General / Specific	24
		OS Trails	7
		Simsbury Land Trust	6
Community Character	29	Flower Bridge	13
		Scenic Areas / Resources	5
		Quality Of Life	3
		Other / Various	8
Simsbury Center	20	Simsbury Center - General / Specific	20
Pedestrian / Bike / Transit	11	Sidewalks / Bike Lanes / Multi-Use Trails	11

Map of Prouds



Tabulation of Sorrys

From a POCD perspective, “sorrys” were categorized as follows:

Community Character	79
Business / Econ. Development	16
Community Facilities	12
Housing Afford. / Needs	9
Sustainability	9
Villages	5
Vehicular Transportation	5
Pedestrian / Bike / Transit	4
Simsbury Center	3
Open Space	2
Natural Resources	2
Utility Infrastructure	1

What People Are Sorry About

Residents were also asked to identify things in Simsbury they were sorry about. These were listed on the same card and identified by placing a “red dot” on a map to represent it.

This exercise is intended to learn about ***the types of things that people do not feel favorably about and/or might want to discourage in the future.*** The exercise can also reveal the types of things in Simsbury that might irritate people or detract from the overall quality of life for residents.

This exercise seemed to indicate that participants were sorry about:

- Things that negatively affect their perception of the physical character of Simsbury (such as perceived blight or perceived over-densification).
- Things they wish the community had or had more of and/or were performing better at (business / economic development).
- Things that irritate them and/or detract from their perception of their quality of life.
- Things they feel reflect poorly on the community.
- Things that detract from their sense of well-being.

Detail of Top Sorrys

Community Character	79	Over-Densification / Apartments / Density	44
		Blight / Wagner Ford Property	20
		State Police Firing Range	5
		Other / Various	10
Business / Econ. Development	16	Loss Of Businesses	9
		Taxes / Spending	4
		Other / Various	3
Community Facilities	12	Government In General	5
		Senior Center / Community Center	3
		Other / Various	4
Housing Afford. / Needs	9	Lack Of Affordable Housing	3
		Lack of Senior Housing	3
		Other / Various	3
Sustainability	9	Solar Farm (Power Not For Simsbury, Etc.)	7
		Lack Of Diversity / Sustainability	2

Map of Sorrys



Description of Exercise

People attending the meeting were given five vouchers representing “planning points” (one @ 20 points, two @ 10 points each, and two @ 5 points each) to allocate among twelve boxes representing topics being considered for Simsbury’s POCD.

Residents were asked to allocate the planning points in the boxes to reflect what they felt was important to them and/or for the community to address as part of the planning process.

Issues / Priorities

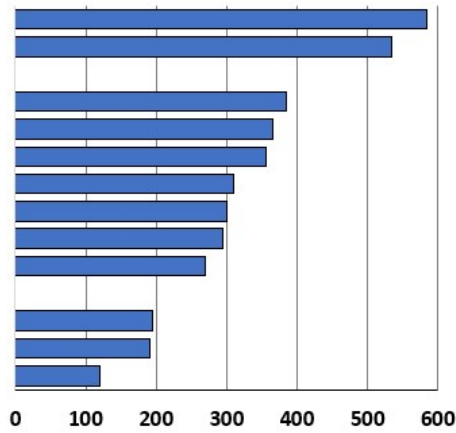
Participants at the meeting were then asked to use “planning points” to express their feeling about topics typically considered as part of a POCD. The sidebar describes the exercise and the results are presented below (top four topics for each column in red):

Tabulation of Planning Points

	# of 20 points	# of 10 points	# of 5 points	Total Points
Conservation Issues				
Open Space	19	13	15	585
Community Character	4	19	17	355
Natural Resources	5	16	7	295
Sustainability Issues				
Sustainability / Resiliency	8	17	11	385
Development Issues				
Business /Economic Development	12	20	19	535
Housing Affordability / Needs	10	8	17	365
Simsbury Center	6	12	12	300
Simsbury Villages	4	8	6	190
Infrastructure Issues				
Community Facilities	5	16	10	310
Walking / Biking / Bus	4	11	16	270
Water / Sewer / Utilities	1	10	15	195
Traffic and Circulation	1	6	8	120

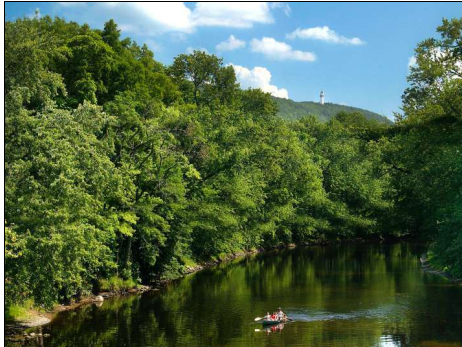
When ranked in the order of points received, the topics identified as being ***most important*** to participants at the meeting included (grouped into three categories based on number of planning points received):

1. Open Space (585 points)
2. Business / Econ. Dev. (535 points)
3. Sustainability (385 points)
4. Housing Afford. / Needs. (365 points)
5. Community Character (355 points)
6. Community Facilities (310 points)
7. Simsbury Center (300 points)
8. Natural Resources (295 points)
9. Walking / Biking / Bus (270 points)
10. Water / Sewer / Utilities (195 pts)
11. Simsbury Villages (190 pts)
12. Traffic / Circulation (120 points)



These results of the planning points exercise were presented at the meeting and the remainder of the meeting was devoted to discussing the topics that got the most points.

Open Space



Business / Economic Development



Sustainability



Housing Affordability / Needs



Topical Discussion

Open Space (585 points)

1. Open space is an important part of Simsbury's attractiveness. Open space helps define different areas and some spaces are iconic and memorable.
2. Simsbury's history is in agriculture, so maybe open space feels familiar.
3. Simsbury needs to be vigilant about open space. When land is developed, it is no longer perceived as open space and is gone for good.
4. Simsbury should continue to work with partners such as the Land Trust.
5. In addition to funds for acquisition, Simsbury also needs to have adequate resources (funds, people, etc.) for stewardship, maintenance, etc.
6. It is estimated that 35% of Simsbury's land area is open space.
 - a. Many people would like to preserve more open space.
 - b. The POCD should identify important tracts of land to preserve as open space.
7. Should Simsbury look at disposing of small parcels, which do not contribute to an open space system?

Business / Economic Development (535 points)

1. When asked about the main reason participants wanted business / economic development (jobs, goods and services, net tax revenue to support services), net tax revenue was the predominant reason.
2. *(Many residents got their reassessment notices the day of the meeting)*
3. Simsbury should look for new opportunities for economic development.
4. Simsbury should attract businesses who are attracted by our amenities and location and quality of life.
5. Simsbury's character is a way to attract firms with intellectual businesses given that locational determinants have changed.
6. Should not attract businesses (such as CBD outfits) just for tax revenue
7. Simsbury should offer incentives for keeping existing businesses here and not just focus on attracting new businesses.
8. Simsbury should offer stronger support for small businesses.
9. Simsbury needs to increase diversity/inclusion in town to promote our community as a place for business / economic development.

Sustainability (385 points)

2. There are multiple elements to sustainability:
 - a. ecologic sustainability.
 - b. economic sustainability.
 - c. social sustainability.
3. Simsbury needs to be aware of the overall climate, crisis and act in ways, which are more efficient, enhance building performance, include vehicles/transportation, and renewables.
4. Does population growth factor into our sense of sustainability? More people equals more shoppers? More students?
5. What population growth do we want? How fast do we want to grow?
6. Sustainability needs to be a part of everything in the POCD.
7. Local food/local farms are important.

Housing Affordability / Needs (365 points)

1. Affordability has become a critical issue in Simsbury:
 - a. For overall diversity now and in the future.
 - b. Also for people who already live here.
2. Overall, affordability is an issue everywhere, not just in Simsbury.
3. Aging in place is also becoming more of a challenge given housing price inflation and overall cost of living.
4. How can Simsbury be more inclusive? How can we broaden our vision?
5. What can / should Simsbury do?
 - a. Could we find locations to provide for affordable housing? Such as converting small open space areas at the end of cul-de-sacs?
 - b. Years ago, there was a housing partnership that created the Eno farms development.
 - c. Are accessory dwelling units, a good way for Simsbury to proceed.
6. People unclear what is meant by “affordable “
7. People have misconceptions about what affordable housing is.
8. Also, have to consider state regulations such as CGS 8–30 G.
9. How much naturally occurring affordable housing is there in Simsbury?

Community Character (355 points)

1. Character is more than just physical appearance.
2. Inclusivity is something that also contributes to Simsbury's character.
3. It is also the sense of community and the types of events here that contributes to the character of Simsbury and makes it charming.
4. The concept of character should not be used to prevent the change that Simsbury needs. We must promote character as part of change not as a reason not to change.
5. The concept of character ties into other topics in the POCD.

Community Facilities (310 points)

1. Park and recreation facilities are important to Simsbury.
2. The town needs to maintain Simsbury Farms, the Golf Course, Simsbury Meadows, etc.
3. Simsbury needs to improve the accessibility of Town Hall, the senior center/social services.
4. The Senior Center is not meeting needs of the growing population of seniors.
5. The Senior Center shares space with social services and this doesn't work out well for either one.
6. Electric vehicle charging chargers need to become more available.

Community Character



Community Facilities



Simsbury Center (300 pts)

1. In Simsbury Center, it would be nice to see more space used for stores and activities and less for parking.
2. It would be nice for Simsbury center to be more walkable.
3. Simsbury Center is a special place and has a feeling that defines Simsbury!
4. We need to do more to help people navigate to where things are, either online, through signs/maps, or other ways.
5. The flower bridge does promotional tie-ins to restaurants and other activities.

Open Discussion

1. Natural resources are important.
2. This includes the Farmington River, better access to it. How could we do that?
3. Water and water quality are important.
4. Simsbury needs more gathering spaces.
5. The “charette” process was a good exercise for Simsbury Center.
6. Maybe we should repeat this process in other areas.
7. Walkability and bikeability also ties to overall character, community health, and sustainability.
8. Why don't we have artificial turf fields for sports and recreation?
9. Other communities like Simsbury do.
10. How can we make the POCD more of a living document?
11. Perhaps Simsbury should consider a different feel for the POCD's layout?
12. Some parts of the bike path seem in poor condition, such as the fences at Hazel Meadow.
13. Simsbury should participate in regional thinking for services in facilities.
14. Simsbury should explore some creative public-private partnerships in order to accomplish community goals.

