

Town of Tolland, Connecticut

Plan of Conservation & Development – Zoning Implementation

POCD Recommendation Review:

Tolland Village Area Zone



November 16, 2020

Prepared by:
Donald J. Poland, PhD, AICP
Managing Director, Urban Planning & Strategy
1137 Main Street
East Hartford, CT 06108
Phone: 860-655-6897
E-mail: dpoland@gomanyork.com
www.gomanyork.com



DONALD J. POLAND, PhD, AICP

MANAGING DIRECTOR & SVP, URBAN PLANNING

PHONE: 860.655.6897 – E-MAIL: dpoland@gomanyork.com

November 10, 2020

Andrew Powell, Chair
Planning & Zoning Commission
21 Tolland Green
Tolland, CT 06084

Re: Technology Campus Zone

Dear Chairman Powell:

As you are aware, the POCD recommended changes to the Tolland Village Area (TVA) Zone. In summary, the Commission determined that the TVA has not performed as it was intended, nor has it resulted the in the development and uses it was designed to facilitate and accommodate. Therefore, the consensus opinion of the Commission was that the TVA district should be re-evaluated and amended to better facilitate and accommodate mixed-use (commercial and residential) development. This document presents the Commission material to allow us to discuss the TVA and how to best proceed moving forward with the re-evaluation of the TVA. The aim of this meeting will be to develop a general outline of workplan and schedule to guide our work. This will include a review of POCD planning process for the TVA, the POCD recommendations, and primary issues and concerns that the Commission may have.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald J. Poland".

Donald J. Poland, PhD, AICP
Planning Consultant



Plan of Conservation and Development

The Plan of C & D recognized the significance of the of the Route 195 corridor and the Tolland Village Area (TVA) in the context of overall economic development opportunities. For example, the Plan states “the largest, most predominant, and most visible area is the Route 195 corridor from the Tolland Village Area to Baxter Street. This corridor includes the TVA which is adjacent to Exit 68 and has good development potential, even though the area has floundered under the TVA zoning designation. With the development potential of the TVA comes community concerns of the area being proximity to the Tolland Green area, neighboring residences, and additional concerns as to the scale and intensity of development. Recognizing those concerns that need to be considered and mitigated, it also must be recognized that the TVA is already commercial in character and is logical area for further commercial, mixed-use, and higher density residential—this is based on the proximity to Exit 68, moderate level traffic counts, and the availability public water and public sewer to support such development.

The Plan of Conservation and Development specifically explains the following about the TVA:

The Commission recognizes that the TVA regulations, as currently written, are not resulting in the development initially envisioned. And with the current regulations and current and foreseeable economy, that is not likely to change. Consideration should be given to reverting this area to its previous zoning designation (Gateway Design District) or a similar designation, while keeping open the opportunity for a mixture of residential and business uses in the form of a revised / simplified version of the TVA allowing a hotel, residential, and mixed uses. In today’s development market, most of what is being developed is multi-family residential with smaller scale mixed-use restaurant and retail.

The TVA area is well-suited for a mix of small-scale retail/restaurant along the frontage and hotel, community scale office, and residential on the interior of the sites. The Planning and Zoning Commission should consider the Gateway Design District (GDD) along with TVA in the form a flexible Master Plan floating zone. This means property owners could develop under the GDD rules or choose to “land” the floating Master Plan zone onto their property, opening up greater opportunities but with higher development standards.

These remarks and recommendations from the Plan of Conservation and Development are still applicable today. During the Plan of Conservation and Development planning process, the Commission (and staff and the consultant) hosted two public work-sessions focused on the TVA zone and the consultant hosted a meeting with property and business owners within the TVA zone. The decision to recommend changes to the TVA results from market research on the economic and financial feasibility of TVA compliant development, public input and polarizing perspectives on the TVA, and existing regulation falling short of achieving its original aim (including the fact that TVA has placed existing property owners in development limbo—unable to design viable development options that are compliant with the requirements of the TVA regulation.



The recommendation that the “Planning and Zoning Commission should consider the Gateway Design District (GDD) along with TVA in the form a flexible Master Plan floating zone” still resonates as sound advice today. The Plan continues, this “means property owners could develop under the GDD rules or choose to “land” the floating Master Plan zone onto their property, opening up greater opportunities but with higher development standards.” As you may notice, the recommendation for the floating Master Plan zone is similar, if not the same, as the approach we are utilizing in the TCZ district. As I have stated previously, the Master Plan zone for the TCZ was drafted with an eye towards its potential utilization in the TVA district also. I believe this is a viable option.

Framing the TVA Issues

The following are a series of questions for the Commission to review and consider—to be prepared to discuss at the meeting—regarding the TVA and the need to make changes.

Questions:

- Is what we (Tolland) are doing now (in the TVA district) getting us what we want? What is working? What is not working?
- What problem(s) are we trying to solve with making changes to the TVA district?
- What are the desired outcomes we seek to achieve by instituting such changes to the TVA district?
- What are changes (strategies) we can employ to achieve our desired outcomes—to get us (Tolland) what we want?
- Are you (the PZC) comfortable with repealing the TVA and reverting to the GDD zone as the primary zoning for the area and then allowing for the MPOZ regulation to be applied to this area? If so, some adjustments or additions will need to be made to the MPOZ district for the TVA location.

Workplan and Schedule

I recommend the following workplan and schedule:

- December 2020 – Advertised Public Work Session. I will present where we were with the TVA, the POCD recommendations for the TVA, and the changes related to the GDD and MPOZ for the TVA location. This would be followed by PZC member Q&A and public Q&A.
- January 2021 – Advertised Public Work Session. I will present the draft zoning amendments for the TVA/GDD change and the MPOZ for the TVA/GDD area.



DONALD J. POLAND, PhD, AICP

MANAGING DIRECTOR & SVP, URBAN PLANNING

PHONE: 860.655.6897 – E-MAIL: dpoland@gomanyork.com

- February 2021 – All the text amendments formally presented to the PZC. This will included the Commercial Use Amendments, Site Plan and Special Permit Amendments, and the TCZ/TVA MPOZ Amendments. The PZC will schedule public hearings.
- Public Hearings.