

City of Stamford

Land Use Bureau

FY 2019-20

Fiscal Committee

Budget Presentation





Introduction

Program (s)	Services Provided
Land Use Administration (critical)	Administrative support for the City's four Land Use Boards – Zoning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Board, and Environmental Protection Board
Planning and Zoning (critical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Review applications for Zoning Text and Zoning Map changes, Special Exceptions, Site Plan Review, and other- Review subdivision application- Prepare City's Capital Budget- Prepare and amend, if necessary, the Master Plan- Review and update Zoning Regulations- Prepare neighborhood, parks and other plans- Provide information on population and development trends, including Census preparation
Zoning Enforcement (critical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Issue Zoning Permits, as part of the building permit process- Investigate zoning violations and enforce Zoning Regulations
Environmental Protection (critical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Regulate inland wetlands and coastal areas- Review building and other permit applications for consistency with wetlands regulations- Flood and erosion control- Community Rating System – reduced Flood Insurance Premiums for Stamford residents (<i>Optional</i>)



Department Management

Key Program/Department Challenges

- Department cost is mainly driven by staffing – the Land Use Bureau has a primarily regulatory role; staffing needs depend on number of permit and other applications and citywide planning needs
- Productivity is negatively impacted by lack of staff resources, inefficient processes and insufficient technology

Budget Scenarios

- As the bulk of the cost incurred by the Land Use Bureau is staff related, cost is mostly fixed.
- If additional resources became available limits on daily walk-ins could be lifted, permit processed faster and processes improved (e.g., by digitizing departmental records), and department would be less dependent on consultant services. Land Use problems (e.g., parking, affordable housing) could be addressed faster
- Budget reductions would lead to longer wait time for residents applying for permits and less effective enforcement of Zoning violations; work of the Land Use Boards would be impeded and important land use policies such as affordable housing or parking would remain unaddressed; less permitting and enforcement could lead to drop in revenue



This is what is coming

Major changes planned for the department

Zoning Enforcement

- Department will lift limit on daily walk-ins
- Citations process will be fully implemented
- Housing Code Enforcement Coordinator would improve enforcement actions across different departments

EPB

- P/t Land Use Clerk will allow EPB staff to focus on application review rather than administrative work;
- digitizing of records will improve productivity

Planning and Zoning

- GIS Analyst will provide Dept. and City with better data for decision making
- Urban Planner / Designer will provide additional resources for application review, reduce dependence on consultants and allow for better relationship between City and neighborhood organizations
- P/t Census Coordinator will help improve count in Stamford which will improve political representation and lead to more federal and State funds.
- Proposed studies will protect Stamford better from natural disasters and sea level rise and add to the city's parks and open space



Background Information

Program Expansions

POSITION	NEED	BENEFIT
Housing Code Enforcement Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Enforcement (overcrowding, illegal units) is divided between different Departments: Health, Zoning, Fire Marshall, Buildings and guided by different regulations Delays in enforcing housing issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better compliance with Health, Fire, Housing, Zoning and other Codes Reduced liability for the City Increased quality of Life for residents
GIS Analyst	<p>Analysis of Census and City Data for data driven Planning, such as What kind of affordable housing do we need and where? How fast is the school age children / senior citizen population growing? Are our fees too high / too low?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better planning decisions Allocate / prioritize resources where they are most needed Better informed public and businesses, including Boards
Census 2020 Coordinator (part time position, from Jul.1, 2019-June 1, 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure that residents of Stamford are counted as completely as possible Coordinate with Community Based Organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political representation Federal and State funding is often based on population numbers – 1 uncounted person = \$ 3,000 less in Federal Allocations per year
Neighborhood Planner / Urban Designer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited Resources for review of Land Use Applications No resources for smaller Bureau sponsored initiatives, for example West Side rezoning Limit resources for engagement with neighborhood associations and residents Limited resources for Urban Design Review Limited resources for City Zoning initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate development Eliminate uncertainty in business decisions Better built environment Quality of life Better coordination between neighborhood groups and Land Use Bureau Less dependence on (and less cost for) consultants
Land Use Clerk (p/t)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No dedicated admin. staff person for EPB delays review and requires analysts to do many administrative tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better use of existing staff resources Better customer service and faster review
Intern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several boards (e.g., HPAC) have no dedicated staff to support their work Increased responsibility as part of proposed Zoning changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves function of boards and strengthens historic preservation

Capital Budget (1)

Title	Description	Ask
RESILIENCE AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION IMPLEMENTATION	<p>Superstorm Sandy and other weather events have demonstrated the vulnerability in particular of coastal communities like Stamford. Effects from climate change, such as rising sea levels and potentially more severe weather events only increase these vulnerabilities. Stamford’s Master Plan (Policy 7P) and the 2016 Hazard Mitigation Plan outline strategies and projects that can successfully reduce vulnerabilities, however, little has been done to implement these Plans. As initial steps for implementation the following tasks are proposed: Task 1: Mapping [\$150,000] The goal of this task is to identify areas and where repetitive loss of property has occurred and map public infrastructure vulnerable to hazards. Task 2: Greenway Infrastructure Analysis [\$50,000] Fallen trees are a major hazard in itself, disrupt power sully and delay the deployment of emergency personnel. A tree inventory would facilitate preventative tree maintenance thus greatly reducing the impact of fallen trees and the resulting cost. For instance, for just one storm, Hurricane Irene, 479 public trees were lost and hit power lines - at a cost of \$272,000. Both tasks can leverage additional funds in the future, such as FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grants.</p>	\$200,000
PARKS MASTER PLAN UPDATE	<p>Task 1 [\$100,000]: The administration has requested that a master plan be created for the Edward Hunt Complex (“Courtland Park”). We have a preliminary figure for the cost, which is \$52,338. Additional funds should remain available for surveying and plans to support projects in Mianus River Park (ongoing riverbank restoration), Cummings Park (pond restoration study), and Cove Island Park (artificial dune design to accommodate channel dredging requirements). Task 2 [\$100,000]: Master Plan and Zoning Map Amendments. Currently there are six parks that are not in Master Plan Category 14 OPEN SPACE---Parks, and 22 parks that are not zoned P Park District, which leaves these parks potentially vulnerable to development or city selling off as excess properties. If approved, the money would be used to cover the significant cost of public legal postings.</p>	\$100,000

Capital Budget (2)

Title	Description	Ask
OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION/FLOOD CONTROL	In order to implement Master Plan Policy 7L.2-a: Acquisition of vulnerable parcels for open space, flood prone vulnerable parcels, and sensitive lands, the City needs to replenish the fund to acquire parcels. Funds would be used to acquire priority parcels and easements for Mill River Greenbelt and parcels in coastal and wetland areas that are ecologically valuable and or vulnerable to flooding and other hazards. In addition to the acquisition of land, the fund would also cover costs for appraisals, environmental assessment, purchase, demolition and site stabilization.	\$500,000
CITY CENTER TRANSPORTATION STUDY	Downtown and South End uses have changed from predominantly commercial office to mixed use, and the different uses create travel demand at different times (office – day/ weekday parking - residential night/ weekend parking. Over the last few years, the City has undertaken a Bus/Shuttle study, bicycle/pedestrian master plan, the Stamford Transportation Center Plan, Route 1 Study, as well as traffic analyses for individual projects as they were proposed to be built. The purpose of this study is to: The goals of this project are as follows to: 1. Assess the traffic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats 2. Assess existing regulations regarding parking, sidewalks, etc. 3. Improve attractiveness and competitiveness of Downtown Stamford and South End neighborhoods	\$250,000

Land Use Bureau Metrics

	FY 2013-14	FY 2014-15	FY 2015-16	FY 2016-17	FY 2017-18
Zoning Board					
Applications completed	69	88	71	65	65
Applications Approved	62	80	66	65	61*
Planning Board					
Master Plan Changes filed				0	3
Master Plan Changes approved				0	3
Subdivision Applications received	8	6	7	2	1
Subdivision Applications approved	7	6	5	2	1
ZBA					
Variance and other Applications	73	82	92	92	82
Approved Applications	68	75	82	86	74
Zoning Enforcement					
Information Requests	17,186	16,053	17,539	20,113	17,898
Zoning Permits Issued	1,541	1,459	1,596	1,567	1,507
Complaints resolved	177	336	349	339	336
Environmental Protection Board					
Customer Service (walk-ins & septic permits)	6,405	6,294	6,452	5,923	5,464
Permitting & Technical Review (applications)	214	246	258	231	244
Enforcement (inspections & complaints)	166	343	419	442	586

* The application for High Ridge Office Park (217-01) was approved by the Zoning Board but rejected by the Board of Representatives. Litigation is ongoing.

Land Use Bureau Revenue

	FY 2016-17	FY 2017-18	Change
Planning Board	\$6,112.00	\$6,985.00	14%
Zoning Board	\$81,378.00	\$142,090.00	75%
Zoning Board of Appeals	\$20,207.00	\$29,701.00	47%
Zoning Enforcement	\$416,351.00	\$687,255.00	65%
EPB	\$39,196.00	\$40,567.00	3%
Total LUB Revenue	\$563,244.00	\$906,598.00*	61%

* New fee structure went into effect on 1/1/2018.