

City of Stamford

Land Use Bureau

FY 2020-21 Fiscal Committee Budget Presentation





Introduction

Program (s)	Services Provided
Land Use Administration (critical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Administrative support for the City's Land Use Boards – Zoning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Board, Environmental Protection Board, and Historic Preservation Advisory Commission
Planning and Zoning (critical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review applications for Zoning Text and Map changes, Special Permits, Site Plan Review, and otherReview subdivision and Master Plan amendment applicationsPrepare City's Capital BudgetReview and update Zoning RegulationsPrepare neighborhood, parks and other plansProvide information on population and development trends
Zoning Enforcement (critical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Issue Zoning Permits, as part of the building permit processInvestigate zoning violations and enforce Zoning Regulations
Environmental Protection (critical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Regulate inland wetlands and coastal areasReview building and other permit applications for consistency with wetlands regulationsFlood and erosion controlCommunity Rating System – reduced Flood Insurance Premiums for Stamford residents (<i>Optional</i>)
GIS (critical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide geographic information for city infrastructure and provision of City services, e.g., emergency dispatch, sewers, light poles, placing of 5G antennas, private and unaccepted roads, electronic application review





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

- Introduce paperless applications
- Digitize historic records
- Housing Code

EPB

- Introduce paperless applications
- Digitize historic records
- MS4 requirements will increase workload

Planning and Zoning

- Proposed study will protect Stamford better from natural disasters and sea level rise
- Parking and Housing studies

GIS

- City infrastructure mapping (citywide)
- Update schedule for City data (citywide)
- Electronic application review (citywide)



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
Environmental Analyst	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New MS4 requirements and increased number of applications for EPB require additional staff resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Maintain high standard of application review

Capital Budget

Title	Description	Ask
RESILIENCY 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 them. The Land Use Bureau, therefore, proposes a study of Stamford's Coastal Flood Hazard Areas that will identify flood risks, vulnerabilities and opportunities to enhance climate resiliency. In addition, the study will develop preliminary design and cost estimates to establish a prioritized list of resiliency projects. This study could further reduce flood insurance premiums for Stamford homeowners through the CRS and is a prerequisite for applying for federal and State grants for hazard mitigation, such as FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program and others for which only "shovel ready" projects are eligible.</p>	\$150,000 (\$50k "new" money)

Land Use Bureau Metrics

Board Applications hold steady but Zoning Enforcement and EPB workload increased

	FY 2014-15	FY 2015-16	FY 2016-17	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19
Zoning Board					
Applications completed	88	71	65	65	62
Applications Approved	80	66	65	61*	59
Planning Board					
Master Plan Changes filed			0	3	4
Master Plan Changes approved			0	3	3**
Subdivision Applications received	6	7	2	1	3
Subdivision Applications approved	6	5	2	1	3
ZBA					
Variance and other Applications	82	92	92	82	93
Approved Applications	75	82	86	74	87
Zoning Enforcement					
Information Requests	16,053	17,539	20,113	17,898	20,474
Zoning Permits Issued	1,459	1,596	1,567	1,507	1,579
Complaints received			†	374	265
Complaints resolved	336	349	339	336	223
Complaints resolved (%)				90%	84%
Environmental Protection Board					
Customer Service (walk-ins, building & septic permits)	6,294	6,452	5,923	5,464	5838
Referrals from other Depts	246	258	231	244	266
Enforcement (inspections & complaints)	343	419	442	586	370

* 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.

** MP applications 432 and 433 were approved by the Planning Board but are subject to ongoing litigation

† Prior to introduction of FixIt Stamford, data for complaints received is unreliable

Land Use Bureau Revenue

Total Land Use Bureau Revenue increased by 26% to \$1.1 million

LUB Sept.	FY 2016-17	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19	Change to previous FY
Planning Board	\$ 6,112	\$ 6,985	\$ 17,615	152%
Zoning Board	\$ 81,378	\$ 142,090	\$ 117,385	-17%
Zoning Board of Appeals	\$ 20,207	\$ 29,701	\$ 40,155	35%
Zoning Enforcement	\$ 416,351	\$ 687,255	\$ 929,533	35%
Zoning Citations	n/a	n/a	\$ 1,500	n/a
EPB	\$ 39,196	\$ 40,567	\$ 35,445	-13%
Total LUB Revenue	\$ 563,244	\$ 906,598*	\$ 1,141,633	26%

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