**East Haddam Town Profile**

East Haddam is a rural town in central Connecticut that over the past five years has experienced significant residential development pressure. According to the CLEAR land cover data, East Haddam increased its developed lands by over 11% from 1985 to 2002. The town staff consists of one full-time land use administrator and a half-time zoning/wetlands compliance officer. Because of the work load on both the staff and the land use commissions, the town had not been able to update their comprehensive plan in over ten years and had a long list of needed changes to their regulations.

**NEMO’s Role**

It was in this climate that the town asked to participate in NEMO’s Municipal Initiative in 2003. East Haddam chose to address a broad range of planning issues, from a community resource inventory to updated regulations to an overhaul of the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). Over a three month period, the NEMO Team provided five educational workshops for multi-commission audiences. Topics included: *Roles and Responsibilities of Land Use Commissions, Writing Land Use Plans and Regulations, Reducing Runoff, Conducting a Natural Resource Inventory and Natural Resource-Base Planning for Watersheds*. A special workshop on subdivision design was also held, in collaboration with the Milone and MacBroom engineering firm. The NEMO Team then worked with the NEMO Task Force and various commission subcommittees to provide feedback on regulation changes initiated by the town.

**East Haddam’s Actions**

East Haddam’s immediate concern was a perceived inadequacy of its subdivision and zoning regulations. With recommendations from NEMO workshops, the Planning and Zoning Commission adopted new subdivision regulations using the “net buildable area” concept to better match the size of the lot to the capacity of the land to accept development. These regulations require an inventory of natural resources and a “yield plan” of the parcel in order to determine the number of lots allowed. In this way, both traditional and conservation subdivision designs better reflect the “carrying capacity” of the land.

The Planning and Zoning Commission also addressed the road standards and stormwater management sections of the regulations. Road width requirements for local roads were reduced from 32 to 18 feet,
and the use of curb-and-gutter drainage was discouraged. All proposed projects in town require a thorough stormwater management plan that addresses both water quantity and quality. The recommendations for dealing with stormwater mirror those found in the new Stormwater Quality Manual published by the CT DEP. East Haddam was the first town in Connecticut to refer to this manual as guidance for future development. In addition, the Inland Wetlands and Watercourse Commission increased the upland review area from 75 to 100 feet, providing further protection to the town’s water resources.

East Haddam is also implementing new parking regulations that allow for innovative stormwater management such as on-site bioretention and techniques to reduce overall parking requirements. These techniques include shared parking in commercial areas, and multi-functional landscaping that both renovates stormwater runoff and provides aesthetic benefits.

Creation of a Village District is being studied for the East Haddam village area. This designation will allow more flexibility than standard zoning practices, while protecting the unique historic character of the area. With its immediate concerns addressed, town land use commissions are now turning to longer term planning issues.

The Conservation Commission is conducting a resource inventory of the town using geospatial information available from a statewide database, as well as land cover data produced by NEMO’s parent organization, CLEAR. The Planning and Zoning Commission is working with NEMO partners to develop an interactive buildout analysis model using CommunityVIZ™ software (produced by The Orton Foundation). This model will determine the ability of a property to support housing units, using the recent regulation changes. From this information a watershed-based plan will be crafted, setting development goals for individual sub-regional watersheds in town.

Highlights

- Subdivision regulations changed to base density on “net buildable area” approach
- Road standards changed to reduce minimum road width and encourage curbless roads
- First town in state to link subdivision regulations to new state Stormwater Quality Manual
- Change in wetlands regulations to increase upland review zone to 100 feet
- New parking regulations being developed
- Creation of a Village District being considered
- New natural resource inventory being conducted
- Community buildout analysis completed, as part of watershed plan.

Contact NEMO

John Rozum, NEMO Program Director
Email: john.rozum@uconn.edu
Phone: 860-345-4511
Fax: 860-345-3357
Website: nemo.uconn.edu

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