

The Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) as it pertains to the Halls Road Overlay

Issues cited in the 2020 POCD: [POCD page numbers in square brackets]

Buildable land is scarce, especially greenfield sites. [13]

Retail is under pressure, particularly from online commerce. [15]

We want businesses that serve the town, not the highway. [23, and all older POCDs]

Most of our housing (92%) is a single-family house on its own lot. The demand for alternatives is sky-high. The scarcity of alternatives means older neighbors move out, and young adults (the backbone of our volunteer services) don't move in. We need alternatives. [19-20, 23]

Any new development should "look like Old Lyme." [22] We need better mechanisms to ensure that. [23]

There is room for more development along Halls Road. [23]

Bike and pedestrian access to commercial areas should be improved and expanded. [25]

The Halls Road Overlay District (the Overlay) is a central part of the Halls Road Master Plan. It creates a totally optional alternative zoning available to qualifying projects in the town's main shopping area along Halls Road. It is called an "overlay" because its boundaries are the same as those of the existing C-30S (commercial-only) district. It does not replace the C-30S zoning, nor affect in any way those who operate now, or wish to operate in future, under its regulations. It simply provides an optional alternative.

In essence, the Overlay makes a business proposition to developers: If you build first-floor-front retail along your Halls Road frontage, you can build multi-family residential above and/or behind that retail space. The on-street first-floor retail space is the "Qualifying Project." The demand for smaller-scale housing (apartments, town houses, etc.) is so great in Old Lyme that we believe this will motivate developers to invest here, and help us change Halls Road, over time, into a living, mixed-use town center.

The Overlay addresses all of the issues cited above from the POCD, and more.

The Overlay is good for business, because it helps create a walkable, bikeable shopping street in a mixed-use neighborhood – the very best environment for town-serving businesses.

The Overlay allows investors to build new smaller-scale housing options. New housing on Halls Road saves greenfield sites elsewhere, and costs the town far less to service than the same number of units scattered around town.

The Overlay creates a more profitable use of property than the highway services that now totally dominate investor interest in Halls Road. We cannot forbid highway services in C-30S, but the Overlay gives property owners more profitable alternative uses, and ones that serve the town, not the highway.

Without the Overlay, where will expensive new sidewalks lead? To empty parking lots and truck stops?

The Overlay creates a formal Design Review Committee (DRC) to work with prospective developers to help them create successful projects that do "look like Old Lyme." This helps developers and Zoning.

The Overlay allows the creation of a walkable, bikeable retail shopping street in a living, mixed-use neighborhood. It is meant to attract visitors and residents alike, and become the kind of Main Street meeting place we lost when we (effectively) banned business from Lyme Street.