

Town of Stonington Zoning Update Sustainability, Resilience, and Environment Workshop Summary

11/28/23

Overview

FHI Studio conducted a workshop at 6:00 pm on November 28th, 2023, at the Board of Education Building in Stonington. The workshop was promoted on the Town website, via a press release, and through an email invitation sent to attendees of prior zoning meetings. Thirty-five members of the public attended the workshop.

The workshop consisted of a presentation by the FHI Studio team regarding the zoning update process and issues related to sustainability, resilience, and environmental resource protection. As part of the presentation, an interactive survey was conducted. The presentation and survey were followed by break-out sessions. Attendees were divided into five groups of six to eight people. Each group was tasked with an assignment to discuss sustainability and resilience in terms of what it means to them, to Stonington, and as applied to an example site in the Town. The break-out session lasted over an hour. Discussion was documented on flip charts and a map of the example sites were marked up. Each break-out group reported their findings to all groups at the end of each session.

Interactive Survey Summary

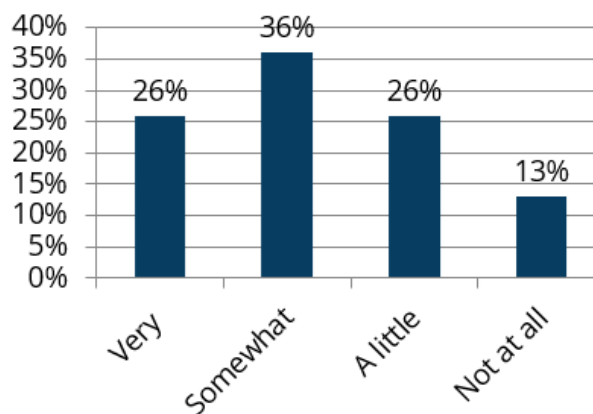
The interactive survey was comprised of thirteen questions. All attendees participated in the survey. Participants expressed an interest in the Town being more proactive in the protection of environmental resources, in restricting development along the coast and in flood hazard areas, and in encouraging more sustainable land use and development.



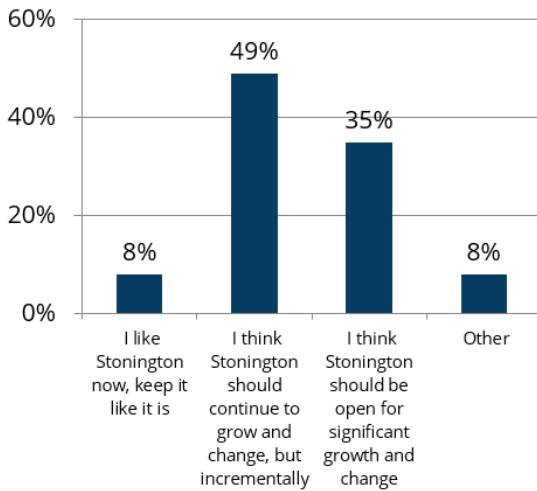
Workshop Agenda

- 6:00 • Introductory Presentation
 - Introduction to the team
 - Review of project purpose, approach, and schedule
 - Review of zoning's role in the protection of environmental resources
 - Review of sustainability and relevance to zoning
 - Review of resilience and relevance to zoning
- 6:25 • Interactive survey
- 6:40 • Break-out sessions
 - Session 1: Sustainability
 - Report back
 - Session 2: Resiliency
- 7:20 • Report back
- 8:00 • Closing

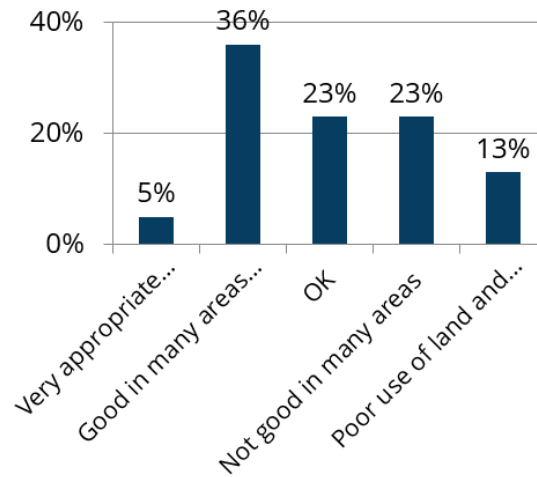
Q.1 How Familiar are you with the Town's Zoning Regulations?



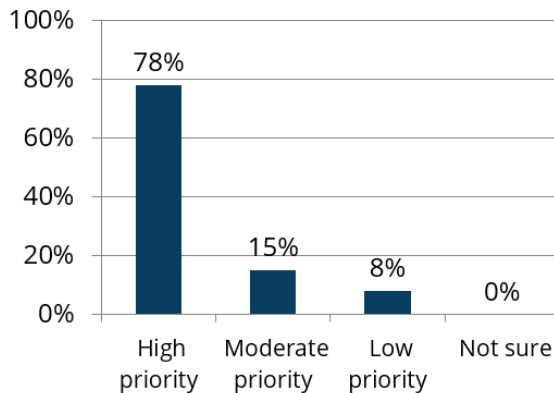
Q.2 Please select the statement that best represents your thoughts about Stonington.



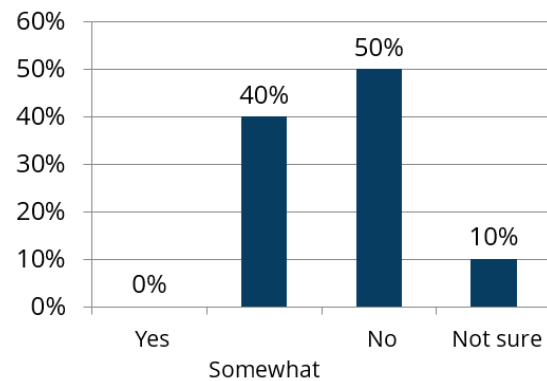
Q.3 What are your thoughts on land use and development in Stonington today?



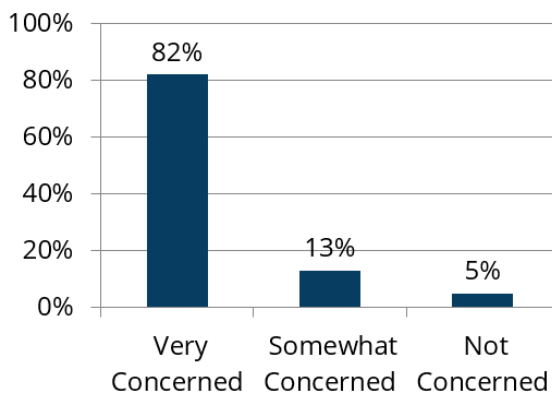
Q.4 How much of a priority is an update of the Town's zoning regulations to address issues surrounding environmental resources, sustainability, and resiliency?



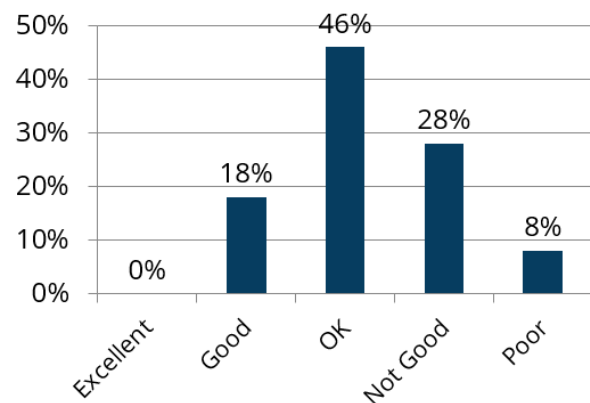
Q.5 Is land use and development in Stonington's coastal areas consistent with your vision of how that land should be used?



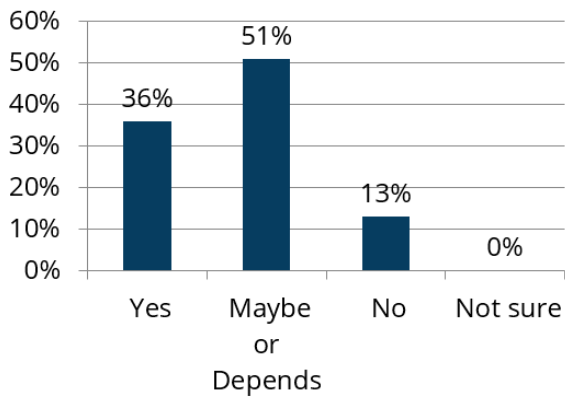
Q.6 How concerned are you about the impact of storm events and potential sea level rise on Stonington's coastal areas?



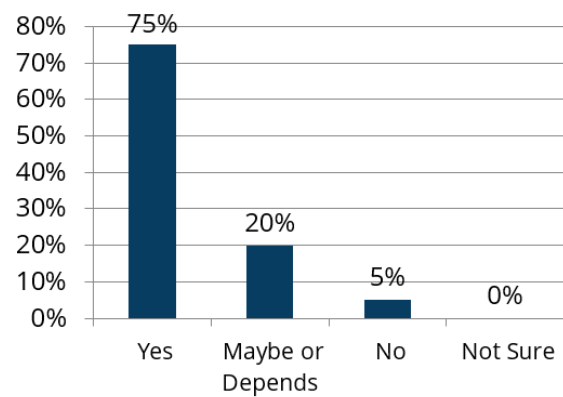
Q.7 How well does the Town, through its zoning regulations, protect environmental resources?



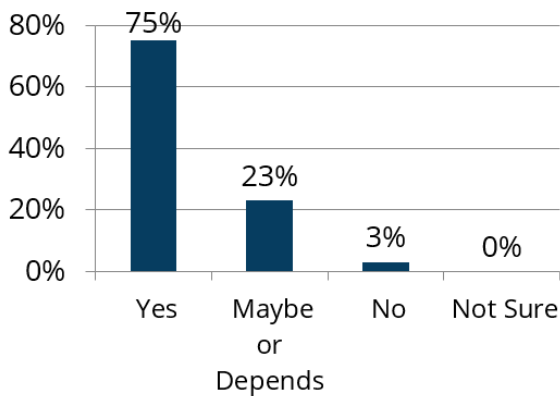
Q.8 Should the Town offer incentives for sustainable/resilient development?



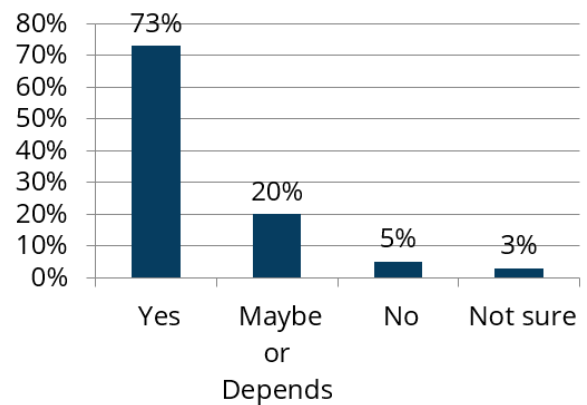
Q.9 Should the Town discourage development in Flood Hazard areas?



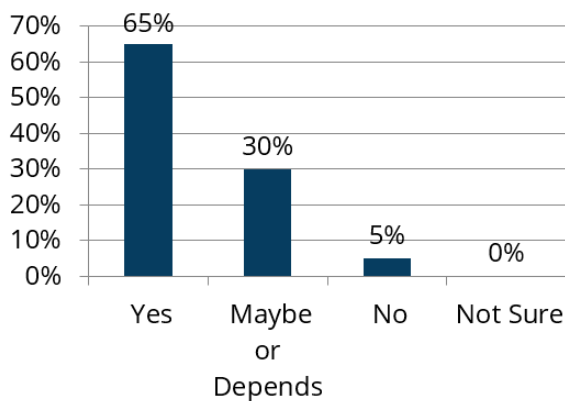
Q.10 Should the zoning regulations be stricter for development near water bodies (riparian zones)?



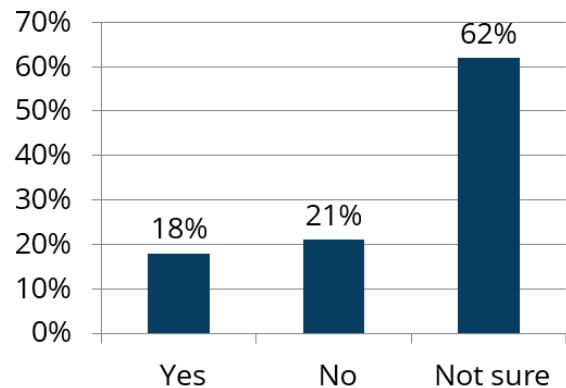
Q.11 Should the zoning regulations be more supportive of small-scale solar energy systems?



Q.12 Should the zoning regulations require the conservation of more open space?



Q.13 Do the zoning regulations adequately protect drinking water resources?



Breakout Session 1: Sustainability

During this session, which lasted 30 minutes, participants were asked two questions regarding sustainability. This discussion was followed by a tabletop exercise.

Question 1: What does sustainability mean to you?

The top responses for this question across all groups include the following:

- Preservation of resources
- Balanced growth
- Regeneration (put back what you take)
- Support future generations
- Systems that work well together
- Decarbonization

Question 2: How can development in Stonington be more sustainable?

The top responses for this question across all groups include the following:

- Density
- Protect water quality
- Incentives for restoration
- Incentives/points for green development
- Net zero buildings
- Designate more open space
- Mixed-use development
- Regenerative development
- Transfer of development rights
- Special zoning in hazard areas
- Incentives for LID

Table Top Exercise: Envision Sustainable Development for the Saint Michael School Site

The top ideas for this exercise across all groups include the following:

- Affordable Housing
- Town Hall/Community Space
- Solar Energy
- Rain Gardens
- Native Planting
- Trees
- Remove pavement
- Geothermal energy
- Regenerative Enhancements
- Community Garden

Saint Michael's School Site



Breakout Session 2: Resiliency

During this session, which lasted 30 minutes, participants were asked two questions regarding resiliency. This discussion was followed by a tabletop exercise.

Question 1: What does resiliency mean to you?

The top responses for this question across all groups include the following ideas:

- Adaptability to change
- Equitable
- Infrastructure
- Integrated decision making for holistic solutions
- Capacity to recover after change
- Ability to move existing areas to other places
- Rebuild what you have
- Risk-reduction
- All systems working together
- Sense of agency to drive change

Question 2: How can development in Stonington be more resilient?

The top responses for this question across all groups include the following ideas:

- Prohibit development in sensitive areas/floodplain
- Improve/relocate critical infrastructure
- Stronger building regulations in flood zones
- Require elevation of buildings
- Regulations for rebuilding if flooded
- Rebuild requires update to newer standards
- Raise height restrictions on rebuilding
- Strengthen the power grid
- Floodproofing
- Tree plantings for heat reduction

Table Top Exercise: Envision Resilient Development for the Williams Beach Park Site

The top ideas for this exercise across all groups include the following:

- Solar/green roof
- Maintain natural conditions/buffer seaward of LiMWA line
- Remove pavement
- Maintain recreational use

Wilson Beach Park Site

