



**Town of Stonington
Economic Development Commission**

152 Elm Street
Stonington, Connecticut 06378

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Final Minutes

Special Virtual Meeting – Tourist Commercial (TC-80)

Monday, April 8, 2021, 9 a.m.

Call to order at 9:02 a.m. (recording of this meeting is available online).

The following EDC members were present: Kevin Bowdler, John Godin.

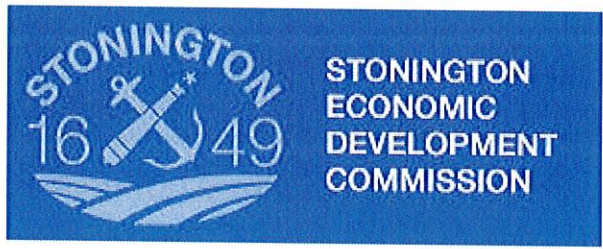
The following members of the public were present: Bill Middleton, Keith Brynes, Susan Cullen, Sheri Cote, Bruce Flax, Chris Regan.

Agreed revisions to the DRAFT Lifestyle Vision for Exit 90 (See attached).


Agreed survey questions for Visitors, Residents, and Business Owners to gather feedback on suggested improvements of TC-80 (see attached).

Adjournment at 10:02 a.m.

Kevin Bowdler
Economic Development Commission



*EDC Mission:
To assist in the establishment of new business in Stonington; finding business locations; State of Connecticut and local assistance and incentives; introductions to area officials and business leaders; and area statistics and information.*


David Hammond, Chairman
Approved May 11, 2021



DRAFT – Exit 90 Lifestyle Vision

The EDC believes that the Exit 90 area of Mystic presents an opportunity for a significant update over the next 25 years. This area is the gateway for most visitors arriving in Mystic. It is also an important hub for residents who frequently visit the shops, restaurants, and healthcare facilities. The area is already largely developed or paved over with little greenery. Paved surfaces create storm water run-off which causes environmental issues and poorer water quality. We should redevelop areas that have already been developed rather than destroying existing green spaces. The area is largely out of the flood zone and is connected to town sewer. Many of the buildings at Exit 90 are aging and are ripe for redevelopment. The EDC recommends that we articulate a BOLD vision that sets the development agenda for the next 25 years, creates a go-to destination for visitors and residents and provides a road map for development that has been syndicated with Stonington residents. Agreeing a vision increases the chance of Stonington fulfilling the vision rather than redevelopment happening on an ad-hoc basis with no strategic plan in place. **A fundamental goal of this vision is to increase the grand list and spread the tax burden across more taxpayers rather than the existing Stonington taxpayers.**

Our vision desires Exit 90 to be a welcoming gateway to visitors. A place where there is a sense of arrival once you get off I95. Visitors should have an 'ahh, we are here feeling' that makes them feel welcomed and pleased to arrive at this beautiful, relaxing New England town. It should not look like a strip mall or 'anywhere' USA. It should be attractive. reflect our New England quaintness and have a feeling that presents a slower and more relaxed way of life. We want to encourage visitors to Mystic while minimizing the impact on residents.

There are two natural resources close by and these present an opportunity to be leveraged by both visitors and residents. The Mystic river and various nature trails could be incorporated into the vision. These beautiful natural resources are not integrated or connected with the existing Exit 90 roads or properties. Our vision is to integrate these natural resources with the physical landscape and provide visitors and residents easy access from many of the Exit 90 properties.

We have a vision of Exit 90 being an attractive place to live, work and play. The area already has many services from restaurants, banks, Starbucks, McQuade's etc., but all the residents need to drive to this area. If people could live in this area, most services would be in walking distance, as would access to bike paths, walking trails, Mystic River, and downtown Mystic. Our vision is that Exit 90 should compliment downtown Mystic and not compete with it.



Pedestrian and bike mobility are an integral part of our vision. It would be wonderful for our visitors and residents to walk around this area easily and safely. To walk from home or hotel to a restaurant, a shop, a walking trail, or the Mystic River. The existing roadways were designed over 50 years ago and were focused on our car culture. Some of the roadways are so wide that they encourage speeding and discourages pedestrian activity. Large carparks are on view for everyone driving by which makes the area look unattractive.

Our vision outlined above can be consolidated into four areas. We can focus on each of these areas separately and over time our vision can be implemented.

To execute our vision, EDC recommends that we focus on the following four components of our vision.

Welcoming Gateway

This project will focus on the following:

- Welcome to Stonington signage and beautification at the bottom of the Exit 90 exits.
- Identify traffic calming solutions to make the area feel more pedestrian friendly.
- Streetscape improvements on Route 27, Coogan Boulevard, Clara Drive
- Beautification of I95 Underpass
- Pedestrian friendly street lighting with hanging flower baskets
- Underground the utilities.
- Co-ordinated wayfinding signage with Groton side of Mystic.
- Wayfinding to attractions, downtown Mystic, services, restaurants, and shops

Walking and Bike Trails

- Identify how to leverage Coogan Farm and Eversource owned properties.
- Integrate existing or new walking trails into multiple streets or properties near Exit 90.
- Identify if bike trails could be created on the same properties.
- Identify how to leverage existing footpaths or create new pedestrian paths to make the area more pedestrian friendly.

River Access and linkage to downtown Mystic

- Extend sidewalks on Coogan Boulevard and improve existing sidewalks.
- Identify public access to the Mystic River.
- Identify opportunities to link Exit 90 with downtown Mystic. E.g., water taxi, trolley, bus depot, safe pedestrian walkways.

Zoning changes to allow highest and best use of existing properties.

- Allow mixed use residential living.
- Increase height and density of permitted buildings which will make redevelopment economically more viable for developers.
- Encourage building designs and uses that allow residents to live, work and play in the Exit 90 area without being so dependent of cars.
- Mixed use to include office spaces and businesses that could add jobs and pay personal property taxes.



- Encourage designs that make the area more pedestrian friendly and hide the carparks from view. A high-density pedestrian friendly village atmosphere.

Exit 90 Survey Questions

Visitor Survey Questions

1. Why did you come to Mystic?

- a. Vacation
- b. Work
- c. Wedding
- d. Family event celebration
- e. Casino
- f. Serendipity!
- g. Other – Please describe

2. When you visit a town in New England, what are the key things you looking for and rate your Mystic experience? (check and rate all that apply)

- a) Family attractions ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
- b) Restaurants ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
- c) Nightlife ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
- d) Hiking/biking activities ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
- e) On the water activities ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
- f) Shops ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
- g) Historic neighborhoods ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
- h) Museums ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
- i) Cultural events ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

3. What improvements would you recommend?

4. How long was your stay?

5. Would you come back?

6. What would make you stay longer?

7. Would you recommend a visit to Mystic to family and friends (scale 1 to 10)

8. Why?

TC-80 Business and Property Owners Survey Questions



1. Why did you invest in this area?
2. Who are your customers?
 - a. Residents %
 - b. Visitors %
3. What improvements could be made by Stonington to improve your investment or business?
4. What additions or deletions to the EDC Vision for Exit 90 would you recommend?
5. Are you think of investing more in your business over the next 5 years?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
6. If yes, what type of investment?

Stonington Residents Survey Questions

1. Why do you go to Exit 90 area now?
 - a. Shop
 - b. Healthcare services
 - c. Restaurants
 - d. Coffee
 - e. Easiest way to go home.
 - f. Other (please describe)
2. What would you like to see more of in Exit 90?
3. What would you like to see less of in Exit 90?
4. Would you use walking and bike trails that connected the Exit 90 area with the Mystic River, Coogan farm and Eversource owned properties?
5. Do you think Stonington should invest in making Exit 90 more welcoming and more aesthetically attractive?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No