



# Town of Montville, Connecticut

## Department of Land Use & Development

Planning & Zoning  
Inland Wetlands & Watercourses  
Economic & Community Development

### Opening Testimony by Dennis Goderre

January 27, 2026

Good Evening Chairman Pieniadz and Members of the Commission,

My name is Dennis Goderre, I am the Director of Land Use and Development for the Town of Montville. I am a certified planner holding the credential of AICP and a state of CT licensed Landscape Architect. I have been practicing for over 30 years and have served in various capacities as a consultant and planner for towns and cities in the State. During my career, I have had the opportunity to work with regulations from numerous municipalities. It is safe to say I have experienced and used a diverse number of zoning types of varying purpose and quality.

At the heart of zoning is to control land uses within a community; how buildings are situated, proximity of improvements to property lines, and at the basis of Euclidean zoning, to clearly separate incompatible uses. Providing consistent and predictable regulations is at the heart of zoning administration – it helps ensure equality between applications and protecting health, safety and welfare.

However, as designs that were once considered ‘cutting edge’ or ‘productive’ age, and changes in building code, zoning and use specific requirements evolve, the use of properties under current zoning can face hurdles if flexible controls are not offered. This difficulty in reuse can also be a result of environmental contamination, the cost to renovate older buildings and dynamics of local economic or market factors. At this point, a building’s life cycle has generally reached its limits of functionality and physical viability with zoning becoming a hinderance, rather than a public benefit. This can lead to building abandonment, decay, or blight.

To overcome this challenge Adaptive Reuse regulations has become a land use tool common throughout the US and CT. Adaptive reuse facilitates the repurposing of properties which are ‘challenged’ into contributing community assets. Meaning adaptive reuse can:

- Reduce or eliminate blight,
- Contribute to the community and neighborhood fabric,
- Preserve historic resources, and
- Contribute to the tax base.

I would like to read a quote from the article *How Adaptive Reuse Can Help Solve the Housing Crisis*, *Planning Magazine*, 2021 and provided as an Exhibit. The quote is from Attorney Sara Bronin, an architect and professor at Cornell school of Architecture, Art and Planning and former chair of Hartford's Planning and Zoning Commission.

*"Zoning is one of those things that I think will be reexamined in the post-COVID era to see whether it has unintentional consequences in terms of making it very difficult for us to adapt flexibly as society changes, as demographics change, and as things like pandemics come our way,"* Bronin says.

The article continues:

*"Rather than relying on one property owner to go to court for a variance, she suggests that municipalities create more flexible zoning in the first place."* (i.e. adaptive reuse.)

The article continues by highlighting several adaptive reuse projects which converted mills, schools and courthouses in Worcester, Detroit and San Francisco into viable housing. This flexibility is crucial in today's housing market where updated, attainable, modern and efficient housing is difficult to come by throughout our region, state and in the Town of Montville.

Furthermore, the article lists eight benefits of adaptive reuse:

#### 1. PRESERVE THE PAST

Extending the life of old buildings can provide a link between your community's past and future, all while accommodating its present needs.

#### 2. GROW SMARTER AND MORE SUSTAINABLY

Many properties ripe for reuse are in established growth areas with significant population densities. Giving them new life supports growth where there's infrastructure to support it.

#### 3. ENCOURAGE INVESTMENT

Adaptive reuse can yield potential tax generation, employment opportunities, and housing. One project might even inspire more investment, development, and revitalization in the surrounding areas, including through other adaptive reuse projects.

#### 4. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF INCENTIVES

Building owners may be eligible for federal tax credits for rehabilitation investments in older or historic buildings and other incentives.

## 5. SAVE TIME

When the building and infrastructure is already in place, municipal approval and permitting can often occur more quickly and less expensively than new construction.

## 6. (SAVES) AND MONEY, TOO

Reuse saves on demolition costs, promotes recycling, and preserves unique architectural details and features that would otherwise be costly to recreate. The materials and quality of construction of existing buildings are often not economically possible to reproduce today.

## 7. BOOST MARKET VALUES

Preserving the integrity of the materials and design characteristic of older buildings can increase the new project's property value.

## 8. IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH

Remediation of contaminants associated with some older building materials and uses can provide both environmental and health benefits.

An example of a property in Montville which can benefit from an adaptive reuse regulation is the town owned Bridge Street parcel. This older mill, while not listed on the historic register, is likely eligible. It has clearly reached its age limit and is challenged with environmental issues and structural needs. However, the building is an integral part of the Palmertown fabric. Its demolition would have an impact on the texture and sense of place that defines Palmertown and the mill history of the Oxoboxo corridor.

The adaptive reuse regulation before you this evening began as a means to make the Bridge Street a viable and successful development parcel. The regulation is also intended to facilitate other parcels along the RT 163 and 32 corridors. While this regulatory tool can be applied to a limited number of parcels at the moment, additional parcels can become eligible within the matter of 2-3 years, which we will discuss in a moment.

However, before I provide a detailed review of the proposed new Section 16.13 Adaptive Reuse Regulation, I believe it is important to call your attention of Connecticut municipalities which have adopted adaptive reuse regulations.

They include:

#### Waterford (Model for Montville)

- Its genesis was an abandoned nursing home
- Is a type of Use in a zoning district;
- Based upon eligibility criteria, similar to proposed
- Must meet specific design standards

#### City of Groton

- Genesis redevelopment of Groton Heights School and former state police building on Thames Street
- Specific reuse criteria, must be municipal, state or institutional
- Must meet specific design criteria

#### Old Saybrook

- Is a new zoning district (as a Planned Development District)
- Minimum lot size 8 acres
- Has ‘appropriateness’ clause

#### Milford

- Adopted 2024
- Large underperforming commercial office properties only
- Located in a specific zone.

#### Beacon Falls

- “Considerable size”
- Creates a new district
- Must meet location eligibility criteria

I would like to state for the record that we issued referrals to CT DEEP, SECOG and neighboring towns. No replays from adjacent towns has been received. We received a reply from SECOG, whom has found no likely intermunicipal conflict.

CT DEEP stated the amendment is consistent with stated policies. DEEP did suggest to “*disallow high density residential uses from FEMA-designated flood hazard areas and/or that such sites be serviced by dry egress for evacuation of residents and access by first responders*”. Under Section 15.2 Special Flood Hazard Area Requirements require “all new construction and substantial improvements of residential structures shall have the lowest floor (including basement) elevated to or above the base flood level.”

Staff recommends CT DEEP’s suggested revision be applied to future zoning amendments and not apply solely to the Adaptive Reuse amendment. It may be better served to be incorporated into section 15.2 and apply to all residential uses. But, to that end, the Adaptive Reuse is structured as a Special Permit and such requirement can be mandated during the review process.