

Stamford 2035 Comprehensive Plan

Public Comment Summary Report

Comments Received July 15-September 16, 2025

Overall Sentiment

- Future land use, especially surrounding the R2 category, was by far the most heavily commented on section of the plan. Approximately 75% of all comments received concerned future land use.
- Even amid overwhelming criticism on future land use (in part, due to misconception that future land use = rezoning), there is a consistent thread of general praise for the depth, formatting, and professionalism of the plan.
 - Ginny Johnson:
"This plan is incredibly comprehensive, thoughtful and reflective of SO many of the values I hold for myself and my family. I am so proud to live in such an innovative and progressive place! Thank you for all that you do – it is very appreciated!"
 - Zachary Oberholtzer:
"I'm very impressed with the 2035 Comp Plan Draft. If this is implemented in close to the form outlined in the draft I think it would be a huge step forward for the city and greatly improve quality of life for all residents. Thank you so much for you and the team's hard work."
 - Kevin Maguire (young family):
"Overall, it appears a lot of thought and consideration have gone into this plan for the next ten years. I've got a young family here in Stamford, and I'm here for the long haul! So I'm excited to see what the future holds."
 - Robin Stein (former planning director):
"Very complete, comprehensive, formatted and well done!! ... Again, thanks for your effort and work you have accomplished."
 - Lila Croen):
"I was very impressed by the Comprehensive Plan and hope that Stamford will be able to achieve most of the goals and plans described in this thoughtful document."
 - Matthew Keenan:
"The Connected City (mobility) portion of the plan is tremendous... Great work overall, the extensive community outreach is appreciated, I feel as if the community is really being heard."
 - Elizabeth Middleton (Belltown, supporting density map):
"I support this section of the plan, in particular the controversial map... I am very much in favor of improvements in pedestrian and cycling infrastructure... Please do not take a vocal minority to be representative of the majority."
 - Ksenia King (explicit defense of "missing middle"):
"Excellent work on the Stamford 2035 draft plan. I strongly support the clear commitment to fostering 'missing middle' housing and expanding diverse, affordable housing options across the city... Many residents are quietly cheering for these exact policies."

- Alicia B (Springdale homeowner):
“Thank you for such a comprehensive, detailed, and well-laid out plan.”
- Melanie Hollas (Parks Commission):
“Thank you for a well done comprehensive plan.”

Introduction & Engagement Process

Themes:

- **Schools omitted from Plan (5–7 comments logged):**
Several parents, including Jane Taylor, criticized the draft for *completely ignoring Stamford Public Schools* (SPS). They argued school quality is central to family retention and city reputation. Magnet lotteries and charter waitlists show unmet demand; omission was called a “huge miss.”
 - **Editor’s Note: As a land use plan, this plan does not focus on school performance or quality.**
- **Transparency & Outreach concerns (15–20 comments):**
Strong frustration that engagement was not meaningful. Complaints included:
 - Reliance on “25,000 impressions” inflated by student participation
 - “Sticky-note” exercises viewed as symbolic, not substantive
 - No mailed notices to property owners despite major zoning impacts
 - Calls for processes mirroring UPS “rezoning notices” or tax bill inserts
- **Reliability of data & language (≈20+ comments, esp. multiple by Katherine Grenier):**
 - Traffic decrease statistic (–16% 2018–23) roundly doubted due to COVID skew
 - Water/electric projections dismissed as implausible; **Editor’s Note: This statistic was updated in plan refinements.**
 - Student population drop of 500 “buried” without explanation
 - Overuse of jargon (“hardscape,” “mobility assets”) → requests for plain language
- **General skepticism of growth focus (≈10+ comments):**

“If more is better, why is it never enough?”
Residents questioned why plan presumes perpetual expansion instead of stabilizing and improving quality of life.

Future Land Use

This section generated the single largest volume of submissions.

Major Themes

- **Perceived “Rezoning” of Single Family Neighborhoods (≈75+ objections logged):**
Strong opposition citywide (Cove, Belltown, Glenbrook, Springdale, East Side). Main arguments:
 - Loss of neighborhood identity/character
 - Traffic, parking, and emergency access risks
 - Flooding vulnerability (esp. Cove)
 - Perception that rezoning favors developers at residents’ expense
 - Opposition to ACUs (garage-to-commercial conversions) as dangerous precedents
 - **Hubbard Heights (Historic District: ≈35–38 unique objections):**
Most unified bloc of feedback citywide.
 - Historic preservation: neighborhood is on the National Register (dating to 1695) and “Doctor’s Row.” Upzoning contradicted stated preservation goals.
 - Fear of commercial intrusion (“We don’t want Hubbard Ave to become another Summer or Bedford”).
 - Equity/property value: belief homes in R2 zones will lose value while R1 zones appreciate — a “safe haven divide.”
 - Process trust: repeated references to betrayal, secrecy, and broken promises.
 - **Net message:** *Hubbard Heights must remain R1.*
 - **Equity Concerns (10+ objections across East Side, Cove, etc.):**
Accusations that plan disproportionately upzones already dense, ethnically diverse neighborhoods while leaving enclaves like Shippan and North Stamford untouched.
Quote: *“Single-family houses for the rich only.”*
 - **Support for Missing Middle Housing (≈8–10 supportive comments):**
Younger professionals, families, and affordability advocates supported adding duplexes/townhomes as entry-level ownership. Voices like Kevin Maguire, Elizabeth Middleton, and Ksenia King praised “missing middle” as a compromise between towers and exclusivity.
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City of Opportunity

Themes:

- **Attracting Jobs & Industry (5+ comments):**
Calls to recruit tech/AI firms (ASML in Wilton, NYC commuter tech talent).
 - **Historic preservation split:**
 - Some want stronger preservation mandates.
 - At least one argued historic districts “keep newcomers out and rents high.”
 - **Design Quality Downtown (≈6 submissions):**
Calls for **better building design guidelines**, setbacks from roads, human-scale street retail, and less homogeneity in towers.
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Healthy City

Themes:

- **Senior Needs (≈20 consistent supportive submissions):**
 - Senior Center currently serves ~1,000 residents, at capacity
 - Programs vital for social connection, nutrition, and aging in place
 - Multiple voices (Laurie Pensiero, Donna Wolff, Sherry Sears, Maureen Constantinides) urged accelerated investment — timeline of 4–6 years seen as inadequate
 - Proposals to rename as “**Senior Center of Excellence**”
 - **This is the most unified *positive* theme in the record.**
 - **Conservation / Open Space (≈10–12 comments):**
 - Support for OS2 designation (but frustration that OS2 mapped far from high-density areas).
 - Calls for ecologists on staff to manage habitats, wetlands, riparian buffers.
 - **Divergence on Roads & Traffic:**
 - Group resists “traffic calming,” instead demanding widened roads, longer turn lanes, and more parking.
 - Environmental and safety advocates supported *more sidewalks, bike lanes, Vision Zero principles, and Blue-Green corridors.*
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Connected City (Mobility)

Themes:

- **Transit Underserve (≈10+ comments):**
 - North Stamford lacks library, transit, and basic city services.
 - Residents want a neighborhood center (coffee shop, gym, civic space) and improved connections to train stations.
 - Bus Route 336 cited multiple times: hourly service, no nights/weekends — contradicts Plan claim of oversupply.
 - **Traffic Stats Rejected (≈15+ comments):**
 - Strong consensus: "Everyone knows traffic is worse."
 - Dismissal of plan's cited decrease in vehicle trips (2018–23) as false and COVID-skewed.
 - **Positive Responses (≈12+ comments):**
 - Broad support for better EV charging, separated/protected bike lanes, and expanded pedestrian safety.
 - Calls to pedestrianize downtown corridors (e.g. Bedford Street).
 - Support for Vision Zero as a framework for family safety/walkability.
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Affordable City

Themes:

- **Skepticism of Housing Affordability Promises (≈20+ objections):**
 - Evidence that thousands of new luxury rental units have been built without improving affordability.
 - Concern developers exploit **fee-in-lieu** loopholes with no accountability; demands for transparency on dollars collected & outcomes.
 - Strong requests to raise required inclusionary percentages to 15–25%.
- **Support for Middle Housing (≈10 supportive comments):**

- Younger families want duplexes, townhouses, and opportunities for ownership — not only high-rise rentals.
 - Frustration at lack of affordable single-family homes.
 - **General Split:**
Roughly **2/3 opposing changes to single-family zoning; 1/3 supportive (mostly younger cohort) advocating for more options.**
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Prosperous City

Themes:

- **Pro-Growth Voices (~10 comments):**
Suggested cultivating AI/tech hub, expanding UConn campus on office park land, encouraging Costco/BJs, creating design/arts districts, subsidizing live-work for artists.
- **Anti-Growth Voices (~10–12 comments):**
Warned overbuilding luxury rentals strains infrastructure, traffic, and erodes tax stability. Repeat critique: *"If more is better, why is it never enough?"*