

10 Years of C.A.R.E.ing about Canton

2000: ► Canton residents are growing concerned about the way the town is developing. The Canton Golf Course has recently been rezoned for commercial development, and it is uncertain how it will be developed. Meanwhile, Konover Development Co. floats the possibility of building a Stop & Shop at Lawton Road and Rt. 44.

► About a dozen residents form C.A.R.E., and membership quickly soars. Canton Life reports that C.A.R.E. intends to be multi-issue and long-term.

2001: ► Konover asks to rezone 9-plus acres in a residential neighborhood in order to build a big-box store at Lawton and 44. The Hartford Courant's Denis Horgan praises C.A.R.E.'s "vigorous effort to stop the town of Canton's odd rush to turn itself into a total dump."

► Meanwhile, C.A.R.E. works with the golf course's developer in an effort to steer it toward a unique mixed-use project.

► C.A.R.E. begins its series of public forums, bringing "Sprawl-Buster" Al Norman to Canton to speak on the economic impacts of big box stores. Other speakers over the years, to name but a few, include: MetroHartford Alliance CEO Oz Griebel; former Capitol Region Council of Governments Executive Director Richard Porth; planner Toni Gold, and nationally renowned land use expert Myron Orfield.

2002: ► The Zoning Commission denies Konover's zone change request.

► C.A.R.E. begins an educational effort to publicize the many values of preserving open space.

► C.A.R.E. produces the first issue of its e-newsletter, C.A.R.E.-About Town.

2003: ► A disappointment for Canton, born out of a 1990s zone change: rather than building the first-proposed athletic training facility or the later-promised mixed-use project, the golf course's developer builds a shopping center with two big-box anchors.

► C.A.R.E. leads the successful effort to prevent the construction of 85 houses on Sweetheart Mountain, part of a 4,100-acre tract of uninterrupted forest with the highest biodiversity rating.

2004: ► C.A.R.E. leads the (temporarily) successful effort to defeat the golf course developer's request to add a third big box store. However, zoning commissioners reverse this vote two months later.

► C.A.R.E. President Jane Latus organizes educational community forums in 25 Greater Hartford municipalities, focusing on how Connecticut's over-reliance on local property taxes results in types of growth that are harming all the state's communities.

► C.A.R.E. focuses attention on the need to get moving on restoring The Collins factory, taking advantage of the town's most important economic and historical asset before it's too late.

2005: ► The Planning Commission makes the disappointing decision to settle with the Sweetheart Mountain developer in court negotiations, allowing construction of 36 houses over the mountain's ridge.

▶ After C.A.R.E. points out that some town boards are not following Freedom of Information laws regarding public notices of executive sessions, the FOI Commission conducts an FOI law workshop for town officials.

▶ The CT Chapter of the American Planning Association presents C.A.R.E. with its Citizen Planner Award.

2006: ▶ Using a map that shows how Canton will look when fully developed under current regulations, C.A.R.E. urges residents to speak up in favor of open space funding and to support the Canton Land Conservation Trust.

▶ C.A.R.E. founds the Collinsville Farmers Market, which grows to become a boon to both farmers and Collinsville business owners – plus a fun way to shop for locally-grown food every summer Sunday.

▶ Canton residents approve the creation of a Design Review Commission – an idea initiated by a C.A.R.E. request to the Board of Selectmen. This prompts the CT Chapter of the American Institute of Architects to honor C.A.R.E. with its annual Public Service Award.

2007: ▶ C.A.R.E. continues to stress the urgency of restoring the ax factory and holds a public forum featuring Steven Soler, developer of the award-winning Georgetown, CT mill redevelopment proposal.

▶ We continue to testify at the Capitol on behalf of property tax reform and other Smart Growth legislation.

2008: ▶ C.A.R.E. supports and the Zoning Commission approves Konover's application to build a 48,000 sq. ft. building in the existing commercial zone at Lawton and 44.

▶ The Zoning Commission approves a 147,000 sq. ft. Lowe's Home Center that will require 60-ft-high retaining walls and the excavation of a large amount of earth – extremes that C.A.R.E. argued contradict town regulations and the Plan of Conservation and Development. Lowe's later announces it will not build in Canton after all, yet the disturbing precedent set by this approval remains.

2009: ▶ C.A.R.E. initiates a town-wide dialogue on the potential values of conducting a community-wide planning workshop known as a charrette.

▶ C.A.R.E. receives a Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation grant to study the feasibility of restoring the barn at Werner Woods for the community's use.

▶ We join 1,000-plus Canton petition signers in urging the Zoning Commission to deny a car wash application for Dyer Cemetery Road – an application that commissioners approve in a split decision.

2010: ▶ C.A.R.E. is continuing to generate broad support for conducting a charrette.

▶ We have asked Attorney General Richard Blumenthal to require the Department of Environmental Protection to fulfill the terms of the late Flora Werner's financial gift, which she stipulated that the DEP use to maintain the Werner Woods property.

▶ And finally, a wonderful thing to contemplate now that spring has arrived: we will open the 5th season of the Collinsville Farmers Market on June 13!