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# WEST HARTFORD PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT



West Hartford, Connecticut





**TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD**  
**PLAN OF CONSERVATION**  
**& DEVELOPMENT**  
**2009-2019**

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**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:**

**TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD PLAN AND ZONING COMMISSION**

Adopted by Town Plan and Zoning Commission on December 1, 2008.

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Received by Town Council on January 27, 2009.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Town Plan and Zoning Commission is granted authority under Chapter XIII of the West Hartford Charter to prepare and adopt a Town Plan of Development, subject to approval by the Town Council. Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes further requires the Commission to review this document, identified in state law as the Plan of Conservation and Development, at least once every ten years. The last Plan for the Town of West Hartford was adopted in 1997.

In May 2007, the Town Plan and Zoning Commission began the process of preparing the *2009-2019 West Hartford Plan of Conservation and Development*. Over the course of this period, the Commission held eighteen (18) subcommittee meetings and five (5) public forums. Approximately 100 individuals engaged in the process by speaking at the forums and meetings as well as submitting letters and emails.

The Commission reached out to 200 organizations that had a unique interest in land use inviting and encouraging their participation. The Bicycle Task Force, Clean Energy Task Force, Sustainable West Hartford, Conservation and Environment Commission, Historic District Commission, West Hartford Land Trust, Partnership for Strong Communities, West Hartford Early Childhood Partnership, League of Women Voters, West Hartford Housing Authority, Park River Watershed Revitalization Initiative and Wolcott School were represented at the public forums and some actively participated at the subcommittee level.

In addition to the targeted mailings, outreach to West Hartford residents has been extensive. Notices were posted on the Town's web site, press releases were sent to local newspapers, and block advertisements were placed in major newspapers inviting resident participation. The *2009-2019 West Hartford Plan of Conservation and Development* is a product of this community collaboration.



*In keeping with the conservation policies of this document, limited copies will be printed.  
The POCD can be viewed at [www.westhartford.org](http://www.westhartford.org)*



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**PLAN OF CONSERVATION**  
**& DEVELOPMENT**  
**2009-2019**

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**WEST HARTFORD** continues to strive to be an attractive and livable residential community where community members have equitable access to a variety of options for housing, transportation and other amenities in a manner that reflects responsible stewardship of the natural, social, and economic resources necessary for long-term quality of life for the Town's current and future residents.



# WEST HARTFORD: A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

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*“Two things are unlimited: the number of generations we should feel responsible for and our inventiveness. The first provides us with a challenge: to feed and provide for not only the present but all future generations from the Earth's finite flow of natural resources. The second, our inventiveness, may create ideas and policies that will contribute to meeting that challenge.”*  
- Jan Tinbergen, 1969 Nobel Laureate in Economics



Sustainable development is commonly defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”<sup>1</sup> A simpler definition of sustainability is long-term economic, social, and environmental quality of life. For the Town of West Hartford, this means that we, the current residents, are responsible for making sure that our children and our children’s

children are able live and enjoy life in West Hartford not just ten years from now, but twenty and fifty years in the future. An overarching principle of this West Hartford Plan of Conservation and Development is to move our community toward this common goal of sustainability.

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<sup>1</sup> based on the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, “Our Common Future.”

The residents of West Hartford currently enjoy a high quality of life including an



excellent school system, a wide range of housing options, outstanding cultural and recreation amenities, beautiful natural areas and open spaces, and a healthy economic base. This high quality of life is the result of the combined efforts of the Town residents, businesses, and the municipal government. These

efforts have been guided for the last ten years by the Town's 1997-2010 Plan of Conservation and Development.

However, as the first decade of the twenty-first century draws to a close, it is clear that the world in which we live now is very different from the way it was in 1997:

- Globalization of the economy is putting pressure on local businesses to provide goods and services at globally competitive prices, competing against areas with much lower costs of doing business.
- Rising prices – from necessities such as food, fuel and housing to amenities such as recreation and cultural events – are making it increasingly difficult for some Town residents to continue to afford to live here.
- Environmental challenges such as global warming, the depletion of natural resources, massive loss of habitat and species signal a need for new strategies to manage resources responsibly.

Taken together these are sustainable development challenges. West Hartford needs to be concerned with these matters, because of the very real threat they present to the economic, social and environmental health of our community over the long term. Fortunately, while many of these issues are global in nature, many of the solutions for creating a sustainable future can be found in local decisions. These local decisions relate to choices about:

- how and where land is developed
- how people and goods move about the community
- what type of energy is used and how efficiently in our buildings, appliances, vehicles, and equipment
- how quickly natural resources are consumed and what happens to the waste products that result
- how we educate our children to care for our environment
- how we work together to solve problems, both within Town and with neighboring communities in the region

In our role as stewards of the community, we need to ensure that the decisions we make today will enhance all of West Hartford's community capital-- natural, social, and built. West Hartford has already begun to implement significant policies and practices to develop in a more sustainable fashion. Establishing and implementing policies that will further the Town's efforts toward this goal are integral to this plan since the adoption of sustainable practices is crucial to the continued success and economic viability of the community as a desirable place to live, work, and enjoy leisure activity throughout one's lifetime.

The sections within this Plan address sustainable practices as they relate to each facet of municipal life, from land use to transportation to housing to economic development to open space. Policy recommendations which will integrate sustainable practices on many levels in Town are included at the end of each section. For instance:

- the Transportation section discusses the *complete street network* and alternative transportation options
- the Open Space/Conservation section provides *environmentally responsible* recommendations for natural resources in Town and recommends property owner education initiatives
- the Housing section recommends *Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)* consideration for renovations and new construction
- the Economic Development section recommends *mixed use development* in certain districts
- the Land Use section recommends policies that will continue to strengthen and apply *the principles of sustainability, smart growth and New Urbanism*

However, there are some critical aspects of sustainable community development that cannot be neatly categorized into just one of these sections. For example, energy is used in transportation, housing, and economic development. Land, buildings, and roads are used for economic activity, but also contribute to the social and cultural well-being of the community. As a result, some of these aspects are dealt with in more than one chapter in this Plan. To avoid unnecessary duplication however, an overview of these critical sustainability issues is offered here.

West Hartford's greatest sustainability asset is its human and social capital: the people who live, work, and play here and the organizations, businesses, community groups and municipal government that together make this a wonderful community. Every day, these people and organizations make decisions, both individually and collectively, that affect the long term sustainability of West Hartford. To ensure more sustainable development, policies are needed to provide sustainability education, outreach, and technical assistance to the residents, business community, and visitors so that all can be more responsible stewards of all our community capital.

The Town's next greatest sustainability asset the signature characteristic that sets it apart from neighboring municipalities is its physical layout: a street grid lined with sidewalks



and multiple, easily accessible commercial districts close to residential neighborhoods. This layout is the embodiment of the concept of smart growth, a critical component of sustainable community development. The adoption of policies which maintain and enhance this asset is important to maintaining a high quality of life for West Hartford residents and business owners. While our

community has made great strides in creating a sustainable community infrastructure, significant work remains. The following areas continue to be opportunities for our community to make progress on our sustainable goal:

- improved walkability of the community
- making the community more bicycle friendly
- support improved mass transit.

Another important sustainability asset is the Town's green infrastructure – our natural areas and open spaces in Town. These include larger areas such as parks and other open spaces that have been preserved, and wetlands and other natural areas lining the Town's waterways. Equally important, however, are the tree-lined sidewalks that provide a stately and attractive streetscape in some of the Town's residential developments.

In addition, the Town has made significant improvements recently in commercial centers and along arterial streets by planting trees. Trees not only enhance the streetscape and soften an otherwise concrete visual, but they also invite pedestrian travel by providing shade during the summer months. Trees absorb air pollution and slow the flow of rainwater, reducing the impact of severe storms. Trees also provide shade in the summer, reducing the need for air conditioning. Investing in trees and other natural landscaping should be encouraged throughout Town as a means to enhance neighborhoods, spurring reinvestment, reducing operating costs, and enhancing the sustainable quality of life. In addition, the Town needs to continue to protect its wetlands, air and water quality, and other natural areas.

The built environment in Town is another important asset that needs to be considered from a sustainability viewpoint. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, buildings account for:

- 36 percent of total energy use and 65 percent of electric consumption
- 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions
- 30 percent of raw materials use
- 30 percent of waste output (136 million tons annually)

- 12 percent of potable water consumption

This includes all types of buildings: houses, schools and other institutions, commercial buildings, and industrial buildings. The Town already has begun to address these issues. The Town Council established a Clean Energy Task Force to advise the Town on issues dealing with alternative energy sources and energy conservation. In 2006, the Town committed to “Smartpower 20%,” calling for 20% of our energy purchases to be from clean energy sources. Utilizing funding from the Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund, the Town has replaced or retrofitted lighting and motors throughout its buildings, saving 454,000 kilowatt hours per year of energy. These activities not only make the Town more environmentally sustainable, they contribute to the Town’s fiscal position since the annual estimated value of the energy saving is a minimum of \$60,000 per year in 2007 dollars. The Town has joined the EPA’s New England Community Energy Challenge to improve energy efficiency and benchmark our energy use in school and municipal buildings. West Hartford is also a signatory to the US Conference of Mayors’ Climate Protection Agreement and has committed to reducing emissions from energy consumption in Town to a level equal to 10% below 1990 emissions by 2020, and to 80% by 2050.

In order to meet this goal and to be in compliance with the Connecticut State Building Code, the Town and all its residents and businesses need to adopt green building standards for new buildings and renovated buildings; work to retrofit existing buildings to be more energy efficient; and continue working on energy conservation and other carbon reduction strategies.

Natural resources (material, water, and energy) are another important sustainability asset for West Hartford. The raw materials for most goods that are produced and consumed in Town come from distant sources. However, in an era of increasing scarcity of raw materials and rising fuel costs, it is important that the economic value of waste be recovered through the principle of ‘reduce, reuse, recycle.’ In this regard, the Town will encourage businesses to use more sustainable forms of production. Sustainable production is the creation of goods and services using processes and systems that are:

- Non-polluting
- Conserving of energy and natural resources
- Economically viable
- Safe and healthful for workers, communities, and consumers
- Socially and creatively rewarding for all working people

If production is sustainable, then the environment, employees, communities, and organizations—all benefit. In addition, these conditions lead, always in the long term, and often in the short term, to more economically viable and productive enterprises.<sup>2</sup> These enterprises, in turn, will yield a thriving economic foundation for the Town of West Hartford. In addition, the Town will encourage residents, businesses and visitors to practice environmentally responsible procurement, reduce generation of solid waste, expand recycling efforts and use renewable resources within their sustainable limits.

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<sup>2</sup> From the Lowell Center for Sustainable Production, [www.sustainableproduction.org](http://www.sustainableproduction.org)

Finally, because West Hartford prides itself as a forward thinking community and as a leader in greater Hartford, the Town will work to engage residents, institutions, businesses, and visitors to learn about and make choices that will lead to a more sustainable community. The Town will also work with neighboring communities and other partners to address regional sustainability issues related to energy, land use, transportation, education, and green infrastructure.

## **GOAL**

To promote the sustainability of West Hartford to preserve our community as a high quality community where its residents want to live, work, and enjoy leisure activities.

## **POLICIES**

- 1. Support initiatives that will advance West Hartford’s commitment to the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement.**
  - a. Develop and adopt a comprehensive energy plan for the community, one that affects municipal and school services, as well as embraces ways for individual citizens to participate in meeting the plan’s goals.
  - b. Support methods to measure and reduce the carbon footprint of municipal buildings, including the school buildings.
  - c. Support methods to educate private property owners about ways they can reduce the carbon footprint of privately owned structures.
  - d. Support methods to measure and reduce the carbon footprint of the Town’s transportation network.
  
- 2. Support initiatives that address the long-term economic viability of the Town.**
  - a. Support initiatives which improve West Hartford’s sustainable assets, most particularly its transportation network.
  - b. Support initiatives which improve the quantity and variety of businesses located in Town, including the skill level required to work successfully in each business.
  - c. Support “shop local” initiatives.
  
- 3. Support initiatives that promote long-term quality of life in the Town for its residents.**
  - a. Support initiatives that provide access for recent graduates to obtain housing and employment in Town.
  - b. Support initiatives that foster a sense of community, in particular community events and gathering spaces.
  - c. Support initiatives that encourage community participation.
  
- 4. Support initiatives that improve the long-term environmental quality of the Town.**
  - a. Support “reduce, re-use, recycle” initiatives.
  - b. Support environmentally sensitive treatment of Town natural resources.
  - c. Support energy efficiency programs and the use of renewable energy sources.





# DEMOGRAPHICS

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## INTRODUCTION

West Hartford has stable population due primarily to continued demand for the existing housing stock and the lack of available land for new housing construction. In the ten years since the last Plan, West Hartford experienced growth in three demographic categories: school age children, their parents (35-54 year olds), and the progression of the baby boomers into retirement. West Hartford's continued excellence in education, walkable neighborhoods, and the conveniences and amenities available in Town attracted new, young families. The age, race and ethnicity, and household composition of residents in West Hartford reflect recent demographic trends for many of Hartford's first-ring suburbs; primarily the aging of the baby boom population bubble and increasing diverse racial and ethnic composition. In contrast, West Hartford's educational attainment levels generally exceed those of all Capitol Region first-ring, fully developed communities. The influx of young families, the aging baby boomers, and increased racial and ethnic diversity must be considered when planning the services, programs, and infrastructure required for maintaining the quality of life to which West Hartford residents are accustomed.

## TOTAL POPULATION AND TRENDS

The total population for West Hartford has remained generally constant at approximately 61,000 residents since the 1980s. It is expected to remain level for the foreseeable future. This constancy reflects limited opportunity for new construction and continued desirability of existing residences and quality of life in town. After the City of Hartford, West Hartford is the most densely populated Town in the Capitol Region with 2,774.8 residents per square mile.

**Table 1**

<b>CAPITOL REGION POPULATION AND DENSITY BY TOWN 1980-2000</b>							
	<b>TOTAL POPULATION</b>			<b>POPULATION DENSITY PER SQUARE MILE</b>			<b>% CHANGE</b>
<b>TOWN</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>1980 - 2000</b>
Andover	2,144	2,540	3,036	138.3	163.9	195.8	41.6%
Avon	11,201	13,937	15,832	484.9	603.3	685.4	41.3%
Bloomfield	18,608	19,483	19,587	715.7	749.3	753.4	5.3%
Bolton	3,951	4,575	5,017	274.4	317.7	348.4	27.0%
Canton	7,635	8,268	8,840	310.4	336.1	359.4	15.8%
East Granby	4,102	4,302	4,745	234.4	245.8	271.1	15.7%
East Hartford	52,563	50,452	49,575	2920.2	2802.9	2754.2	-5.7%
East Windsor	8,925	10,081	9,818	339.4	383.3	373.4	10.0%
Ellington	9,711	11,197	12,921	284.8	328.4	378.9	33.1%
Enfield	42,695	45,532	41,859	1278.3	1363.2	1253.3	-2.0%
Farmington	16,407	20,608	23,641	583.9	733.4	841.3	44.1%
Glastonbury	24,327	27,901	31,876	473.3	542.8	620.2	31.0%
Granby	7,956	9,369	10,347	195.5	230.2	254.3	30.1%
Hartford	136,392	139,739	124,121	7883.9	8077.4	7174.6	-9.0%
Hebron	5,453	7,079	8,610	147.8	191.8	233.4	57.9%
Manchester	49,761	51,618	54,740	1822.7	1890.8	2005.1	10.0%
Marlborough	4,746	5,535	5,709	203.7	237.6	245	20.3%
Newington	28,841	29,208	29,306	2184.9	2212.7	2220.1	1.6%
Rocky Hill	14,559	16,554	17,966	1078.4	226.2	1330.8	23.4%
Simsbury	21,161	22,023	23,234	624.2	649.6	685.3	9.8%
Somers	8,473	9,108	8,126	299.4	321.8	287.1	-4.1%
South Windsor	17,198	22,090	24,412	614.2	788.9	871.8	41.9%
Suffield	9,294	11,427	12,024	220.2	270.8	284.9	29.4%
Tolland	9,694	11,001	13,146	244.2	277.1	331.2	35.6%
Vernon	27,974	29,841	28,063	1580.5	1685.9	1585.5	0.3%
<b>West Hartford</b>	<b>61,301</b>	<b>60,110</b>	<b>61,046</b>	<b>2786.4</b>	<b>2732.3</b>	<b>2774.8</b>	<b>-0.4%</b>
Wethersfield	26,013	25,651	26,271	2097.8	2068.6	2118.6	1.0%
Windsor	25,204	27,817	28,237	851.5	939.8	954	12.0%
Windsor Locks	12,190	12,358	12,043	1354.4	1373.1	1338.1	-1.2%
<b>CAPITOL REGION</b>	<b>668,479</b>	<b>709,404</b>	<b>714,148</b>	<b>894.4</b>	<b>949.2</b>	<b>955.5</b>	<b>6.8%</b>

= First Ring  
Suburb

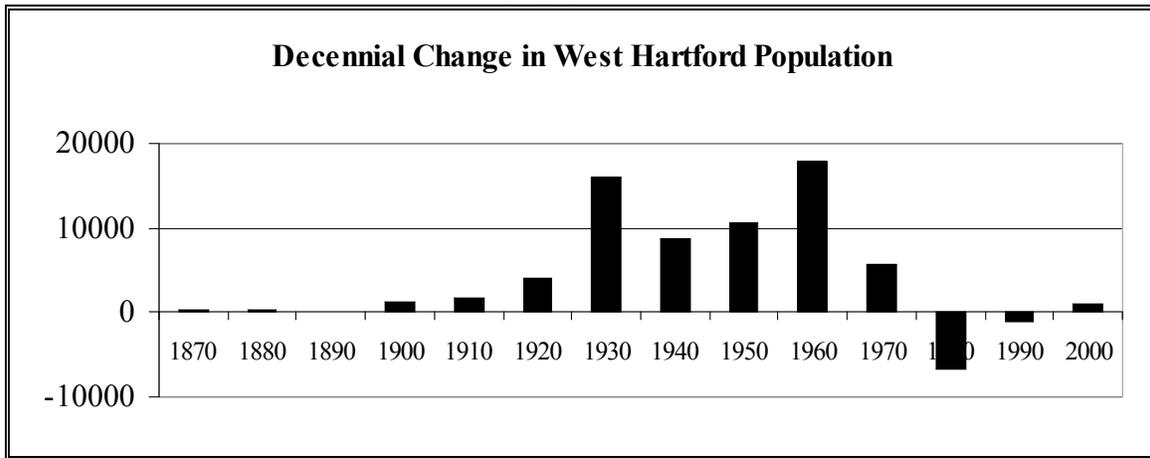
Source: 1980, 1990, and 2000 figures are from the Bureau of the Census. 2005-2030 projections for West Hartford are from the Connecticut State Data Center report published May 2007.

**Table 2**

<b>WEST HARTFORD POPULATION TRENDS 1860-2000</b>			
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>POPULATION</b>	<b>CHANGE IN # OF PERSONS</b>	<b>PERCENT CHANGE</b>
1860	1,296		
1870	1,533	237	18.3%
1880	1,828	295	19.2%
1890	1,930	102	5.6%
1900	3,186	1,256	65.1%
1910	4,808	1,622	50.9%
1920	8,854	4,046	84.2%
1930	24,941	16,087	181.7%
1940	33,776	8,835	35.4%
1950	44,402	10,626	31.5%
1960	62,382	17,980	40.5%
1970	68,031	5,649	9.1%
1980	61,301	(6,730)	-9.9%
1990	60,110	(1,191)	-1.9%
2000	61,046	936	1.6%

Source: All figures are from the Bureau of the Census.

**Chart 1**



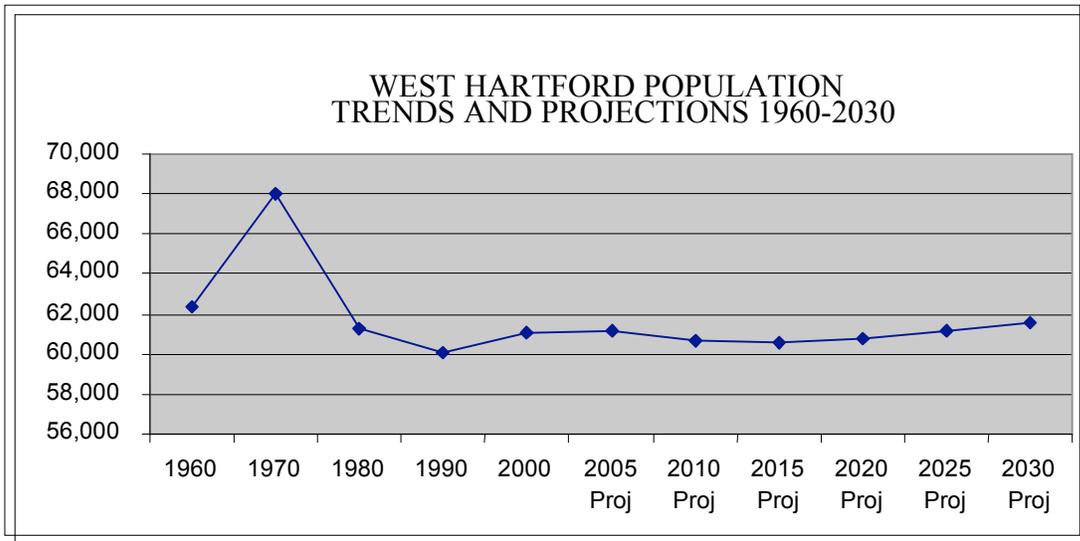
Source: Bureau of the Census

**Table 3**

<b>POPULATION TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS</b>		
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>WEST HARTFORD POPULATION</b>	<b>PERCENT CHANGE</b>
1960	62,382	40.5%
1970	68,031	9.1%
1980	61,301	-9.9%
1990	60,110	-1.9%
2000	61,046	1.6%
2005 Proj	61,160	0.2%
2010 Proj	60,715	-0.7%
2015 Proj	60,547	-0.3%
2020 Proj	60,742	0.3%
2025 Proj	61,182	0.7%
2030 Proj	61,560	0.6%

Source: Bureau of the Census, projections are by the Town of West Hartford

**Chart 2**



Source: Bureau of the Census

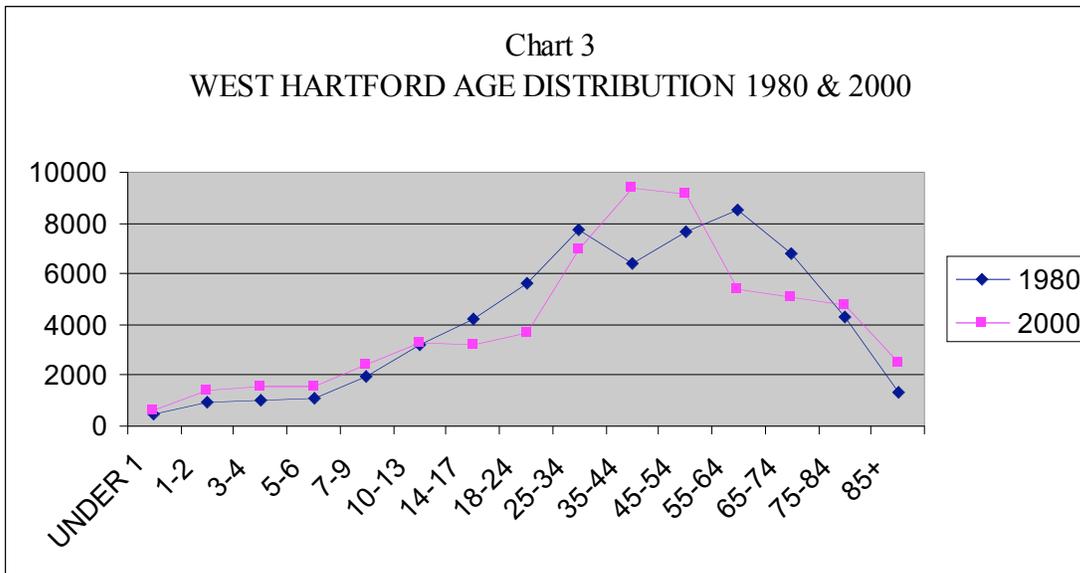
As is true for most communities nationwide, the 45-54 “baby boom” and 85+ age groups have experienced growth in West Hartford. The progression of the baby boom generation into retirement age and beyond requires attention to the services, housing, and travel accommodations (large print street signs, longer walk lights, shortened distances between corners, and lighting) needed by those residents. West Hartford has also experienced a growth in the Birth – 14 year old group since 1990, with almost 6% growth in the Birth – 4 age category. According to the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CROG) Census report prepared in January 2003, West Hartford’s cohort retention ratio for the 10-19 age group between 1990 and 2000 was well over 100 (meaning there has been an influx of families with children in this age group), which exemplifies West Hartford’s draw for adults with school-age children. Based on growth in the Birth – 4

year age group and the 100+ retention ratio for the 10 – 19 age group, West Hartford can continue to expect and as it has experienced over the last two decades increased public school enrollment (as is discussed in greater detail in the School Enrollment section below). During this same period there was a commensurate decline in the 20-34 and 55-84 age categories. Although there have been shifts within age groups, overall the Town’s median age has remained relatively unchanged, at approximately 40 years old.

**Table 4**

<b>AGE GROUP AS A PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION</b>			
<b>Age Group</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
0-4	3.93%	5.34%	5.93%
5-14	11.75%	10.69%	13.12%
15 - 24	14.50%	11.87%	11.14%
25 - 34	12.67%	13.50%	11.43%
35 - 44	10.50%	15.22%	15.36%
45 - 54	12.55%	10.50%	14.97%
55 - 64	13.89%	10.82%	8.88%
65 - 84	18.10%	18.84%	16.14%
85 +	2.12%	3.23%	4.14%

Source: 1980 and 1990 figures are from the Census Bureau. The 2000 data was corrected for an error in the count at the University of Hartford, by the Department of Community Services, Town of West Hartford.



Source: Bureau of the Census

By far the fastest growing age cohort over the last twenty years is the 85 and over group. The aging of the baby boom generation and the improvements in health care will create a

growing senior population. These will change the face of West Hartford and bring increasing demands for the needs of older residents.

**Table 5**

<b>ACTIVE SENIOR POPULATION</b>							
<b>Age</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2030</b>
65 to 69	2,348	2,295	2,788	3,427	3,671	4,170	4,271
70 to 74	2,535	2,261	2,226	2,712	3,347	3,601	4,120
75 to 79	2,430	2,302	2,064	2,052	2,512	3,122	3,380
80 to 84	1,934	2,155	2,052	1,859	1,881	2,322	2,919
85 and Over	1,744	1,856	2,080	1,996	1,831	1,896	2,362
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,991</b>	<b>10,869</b>	<b>11,210</b>	<b>12,046</b>	<b>13,242</b>	<b>15,111</b>	<b>17,052</b>

This forecast is based upon the urban periphery age cohort forecast developed by Connecticut State Data Center (CSDC) adjusted and applied to West Hartford. The forecast is for senior population not in group quarters.

Based on the projections from the Connecticut State Data Center, total population in Town is expected to remain constant at about 61,000 people through 2030 (the last year for which the report compiled projections). A large increase in the 65+ age group around 2025 is also projected, as the baby boomers begin to enter this age category. Long term planning for the needs of the school enrollment bubble and the aging baby boom generation will be required.

### **RACE AND ETHNICITY**

In addition to shifts in the age composition of residents, there have also been shifts in the racial and ethnic make up of the Town. In 2000, the Census Bureau permitted individuals, for the first time, to select more than one race identifier. This makes direct comparisons between 1990 data and 2000 data difficult, but a general trend toward more minority residents (as is true regionally and nationwide), is evident. In 1990, 6.02% of the total population in West Hartford identified themselves as non-White; in 2000 that figure grew to 14.05% non-White. Race and ethnicity identifications were as follows for the 2000 Census: 82.7% White non-Hispanic, 6.4% Hispanic, 4.9% Asian, 4.7% Black, and 2.8% "Other". West Hartford experienced a modest growth in Black residents, and larger increases among Hispanic and Asian residents. The percentage of people identifying themselves within one or more minority categories is expected to grow by an average of 5% annually from 2005 to 2020 (the last year of the projection).

Table 6

CAPITOL REGION RACE AND ETHNICITY BY TOWN 1990-2000						
TOWN	Total Population		Percent Minority		% CHANGE	Minority Growth Rate
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990 - 2000	1990 - 2000
Andover	2,540	3,036	1.7%	4.3%	2.6%	214.3%
Avon	13,937	15,832	3.4%	6.4%	3.0%	112.4%
Bloomfield	19,483	19,587	45.7%	61.2%	15.5%	34.7%
Bolton	4,575	5,017	3.1%	3.6%	0.5%	27.0%
Canton	8,268	8,840	2.5%	3.7%	1.2%	60.6%
East Granby	4,302	4,745	3.1%	5.2%	2.1%	85.1%
East Hartford	50,452	49,575	16.6%	40.4%	23.8%	139.2%
East Windsor	10,081	9,818	6.7%	9.6%	2.9%	39.1%
Ellington	11,197	12,921	2.7%	4.6%	1.9%	92.2%
Enfield	45,532	41,859	4.4%	6.5%	2.1%	40.9%
Farmington	20,608	23,641	4.7%	8.5%	3.8%	110.0%
Glastonbury	27,901	31,876	5.4%	8.3%	2.9%	75.7%
Granby	9,369	10,347	2.3%	3.4%	1.1%	62.9%
Hartford	139,739	124,121	69.5%	80.8%	11.3%	3.3%
Hebron	7,079	8,610	2.4%	3.1%	0.7%	53.8%
Manchester	51,618	54,740	8.0%	19.9%	11.9%	165.2%
Marlborough	5,535	5,709	2.7%	3.4%	0.7%	27.6%
Newington	29,208	29,306	5.0%	9.7%	4.7%	92.1%
Rocky Hill	16,554	17,966	6.2%	11.7%	5.5%	104.0%
Simsbury	22,023	23,234	3.7%	5.8%	2.1%	67.3%
Somers	9,108	8,126	3.4%	3.4%	0.0%	5.0%
South Windsor	22,090	24,412	6.6%	9.9%	3.3%	67.4%
Suffield	11,427	12,024	3.7%	4.3%	0.6%	23.8%
Tolland	11,001	13,146	2.8%	4.0%	1.2%	69.7%
Vernon	29,841	28,063	6.4%	11.9%	5.5%	76.1%
<b>West Hartford</b>	<b>60,110</b>	<b>61,046</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>17.2%</b>	<b>9.0%</b>	<b>113.2%</b>
Wethersfield	25,651	26,271	3.6%	8.8%	5.2%	148.3%
Windsor	27,817	28,237	22.8%	37.1%	14.3%	65.0%
Windsor Locks	12,358	12,043	4.6%	8.7%	4.1%	82.3%
<b>CAPITOL REGION</b>	<b>709,404</b>	<b>714,148</b>	<b>20.8%</b>	<b>27.5%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>34.3%</b>

= First Ring Suburb

Note: Due to new race categories introduced in the 2000 Census, race data from 1990 and 2000 is not directly comparable. Minority population in this table is anyone claiming non-white race as one or more of their race categories plus white persons claiming Hispanic ethnicity. Some of the minority population growth can likely be accounted for by the opportunity in 2000 to select more than one race rather than real growth. Hartford/West Hartford change data is adjusted for the estimated count error of 2,543. Source: Bureau of the Census

One effect of greater ethnic and racial diversity among residents is a greater percentage of residents who speak a language other than English in the home. According to Census data for residents age 5 and older, this is true for West Hartford as well.

**Table 7**

<b>WEST HARTFORD LANGUAGES SPOKEN IN THE HOME RESIDENTS AGE 5+</b>		
	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
% speak a language other than English	15.60%	21.60%
% speak Spanish	2.69%	6.40%
% speak Asian or Pacific Island language	2.09%	3.60%

Source: Bureau of the Census

In 2000, among people speaking Spanish in the home and among people speaking an Asian or Pacific Island language in the home, respectively 71.8% and 43.5% consider themselves people who can speak English “very well”. As of 2000, there were 64 languages spoken by children enrolled in West Hartford public schools. Of these, the largest language groups were Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese.

It is interesting to note that the median age among members of each race/ethnic category in West Hartford, based on the 2000 Census, ranges from the youngest of 27.9 years old among Blacks, to the oldest of 42.4 years old among White non-Hispanics, with Hispanics at 28.3 and Asians/“Other” at 32.1 years old respectively. (The median age figures were compiled by the CT State Data Center, which combined the Asian and “Other” categories.) Regardless of race/ethnicity, the majority of residents in Town continue to be families of adults with school age children.

**Table 8**

<b>WEST HARTFORD POPULATION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY</b>	
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number</b>
White	52,470
Asian	3,012
Black or African American	2,848
American Indian or Native Alaskan	75
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	33
Some Other Race	1,587
Two of More Races	1,021
Hispanic	3,883
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>61,046</b>

Source: Figures are from the Bureau of the Census and adjusted by the Town of West Hartford for a count correction.

## **HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS**

Following state and national trends toward smaller, “non-family” households, household composition in Town has also changed in recent years. The Census defines a household as all people living in a single housing unit, whether the people are related or not. A family household is defined as a householder plus one or more person(s) who are related to the householder either by marriage, birth or adoption; a non-family household is one where either the householder lives alone or with one or more person(s) who are not related to the householder by marriage, birth or adoption.

**Table 9**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>HOUSING UNITS</b>	<b>OWNER OCCUPIED</b>	<b>RENTER OCCUPIED</b>	<b>FAMILIES</b>	<b>HOUSEHOLDS</b>
1960	19,220	15,137	3,639	16,873	18,786
1970	22,164	16,477	5,420	18,280	22,073
1980	23,827	17,208	6,092	17,105	23,425
1990	25,021	17,621	6,295	16,084	23,916
2000	25,332	17,664	6,912	15,935	24,576

Source: Bureau of the Census

Although the total population in West Hartford since 1980 has remained relatively constant at 61,000, the total number of Census households in that same period grew. A higher rate of growth in the number of households versus growth in total population follows national and state trends of fewer people per household. A growth in the percentage of non-family households (single individuals living alone and individuals unrelated by marriage, birth, or adoption living together) has also occurred in West Hartford, as it has across the nation and state.

## **HOUSING**

In 2000 there were a total of 25,332 housing units in West Hartford. This represents a 1.24% increase over the 1990 total of 25,021. Between 2000 and 2005, there were 320 new housing permits issued in West Hartford, which is a 1.26% increase over the 2000 figure.

Home sales in West Hartford, following recent national and state trends, have been strong. In 1990, in the midst of a national housing recession, there were a total of 791 homes (including single family detached, condo, and other home types) sold in West Hartford. In 2000, during a nationally strong housing market, the total number of home sales climbed 34% to 1,190 and by 2005 that figure increased an additional 16% to 1,417. In 2005, West Hartford was second to Stamford (total population of 117,083 according to the 2000 Census) for the highest volume of single family home sales in the State of Connecticut.

## **INCOME**

According to the 2000 Census, West Hartford's median household income was \$64,765. For comparison, Hartford Region's median household income was \$53,305. West Hartford's median income in 2000 had increased 30% over the 1990 median household income of \$49,642, not adjusted for inflation. Consumer prices rose by 31.7% between 1990 and 2000, thus during the decade of the 1990's median income did not keep up with inflation.

## **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

West Hartford increasingly is a community of highly educated residents. Sixty-five percent of residents age 25 and above have completed a minimum of a bachelor's degree. During 1990 and 2000, the total population in this age group remained relatively constant at about 35,000 people, but the percentage of people completing a minimum of a bachelor's degree increased by 7%. The percentage of residents that did not complete high school dropped 4% (from 16% to 12%) and the percentage of residents that completed only high school dropped 3% (from 26% to 23%). The increase in the level of educational attainment in Town reflects the degree to which the residents value educational attainment for their children, and the commitment and excellence required of the Town's public schools.

**Table 10**

<b>WEST HARTFORD EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 1990 &amp; 2000</b>					
<b>Degree Completed</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>% Change</b>	<b>1990 % of Total</b>	<b>2000 % of Total</b>
No High School Diploma	5,510	4,219	-23.43%	16%	12%
High School Diploma Only	8,923	8,138	-8.80%	26%	23%
Completing Bachelors Degree or Higher	20,259	23,022	13.64%	58%	65%

Source: Data is from the CRCOG report prepared January 2003 and is based on the highest degree completed by West Hartford Residents Ages 25 and older.

## **PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT**

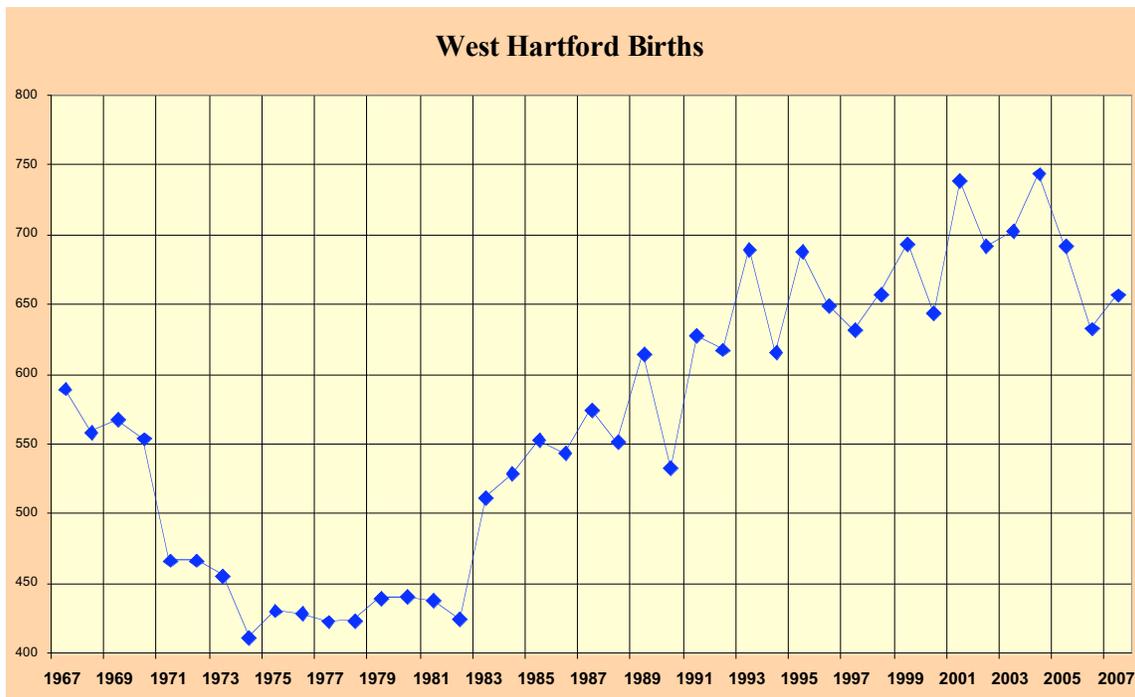
Public school enrollment has been steadily increasing in West Hartford since 1990. The increase in student population over that time was a remarkable 38%. This growth made strong demands on both general fund and capital fund appropriations. Approximately 300,000 square feet of new buildings has been added to the school system including 33 portable classrooms. Recent projections for enrollment predict that the growth should plateau at approximately 10,000 students over the coming years. In 2001 and 2004, there were respectively 739 and 744 births in West Hartford; these are the highest birth rates in the Town since the baby boom after WWII. Those totals represent a 5% increase over the next highest volume year, 2003, of 703, and a 13% increase over the average number of births per year between 1990 and 2000 of 641. Based on actual birth rates in Town through 2006, Kindergarten enrollment is projected to increase through at least the 2011-2012 school year.

**Table 11**

<b>WEST HARTFORD TOTAL BIRTHS 1980-2006</b>	
<b>Year</b>	<b>Births</b>
1980	441
1990	533
2000	644
2001	739
2002	692
2003	705
2004	744
2005	692
2006	633
2007	657

Source: West Hartford Department of Community Services; CT Department of Public Health

**Chart 4**



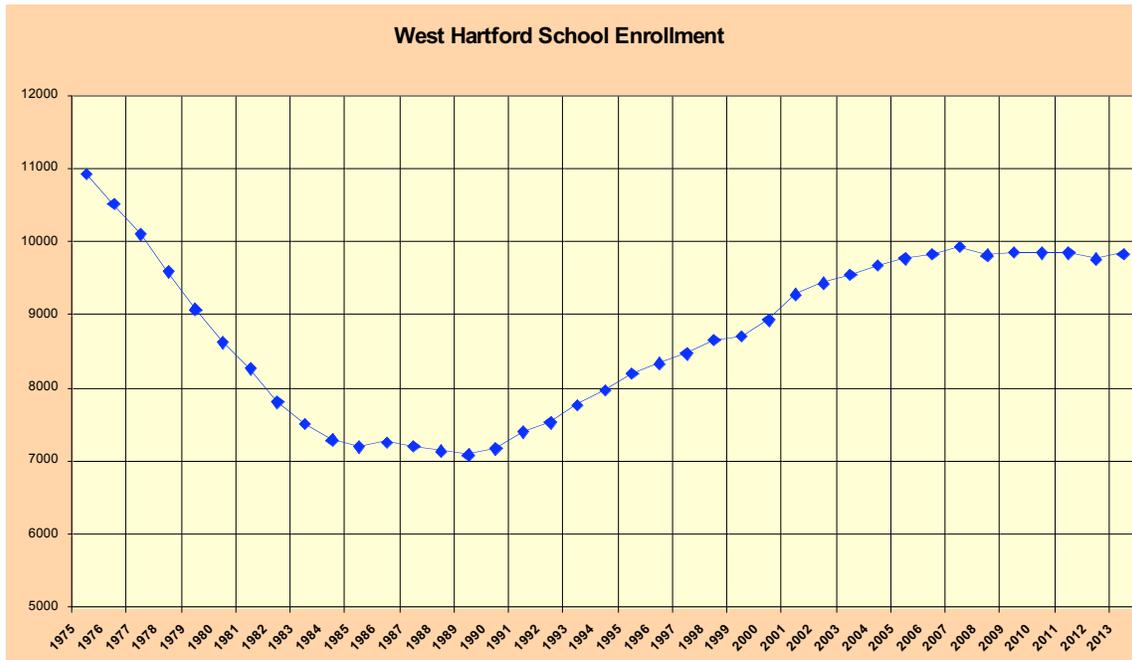
Source: West Hartford Department of Community Services; CT Department of Public Health

**Table 12**

<b>PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>% Change</b>
1988-89	7,094	-0.74%
1989-90	7,178	1.18%
1990-91	7,405	3.16%
1991-92	7,534	1.74%
1992-93	7,777	3.23%
1993-94	7,978	2.58%
1994-95	8,161	2.83%
1995-96	8,344	1.71%
1996-97	8,479	1.62%
1997-98	8,666	2.21%
1998-99	8,716	0.58%
1999-00	8,936	2.52%
2000-01	9,285	3.91%
2001-02	9,438	1.65%
2002-03	9,551	1.20%
2003-04	9,683	1.38%
2004-05	9,780	1.00%
2005-06	9,831	0.52%
2006-07	9,987	1.59%
2007-08	9,821	-1.66%
2008-09	9,861	0.41%
2009-10	9,855	-0.06%
2010-11	9,853	-0.02%
2011-12	9,774	-0.80%
2012-13	9,839	0.67%
2013-14	9,823	-0.16%
2014-15	9,780	-0.74%

Source: West Hartford Board of Education

**Chart 5**



**CONCLUSION**

West Hartford is a strong residential community primarily comprised of families with school age children, across all race and ethnic groups. The residents are highly educated and home sales have been strong. There are a large proportion of Birth-K age children in Town and school enrollment is expected to increase in the coming years. In addition, there has been an increase in the number of residents age 85+, and as the baby boom generation enters the 65+ age category the proportion of older residents is expected to increase. Overall, total population in West Hartford is expected to remain constant at 61,000. The growing diversity and the aging population that West Hartford will see over the coming decade should be considered when developing policies and goals for this Plan of Conservation and Development.





# HOUSING

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## INTRODUCTION

West Hartford remains a predominantly residential community. While approximately 69% of the 25,734 housing units in Town are owner occupied single family homes, as documented in the 2006 CT Department of Economic and Community Development



Annual Report and the West Hartford assessment records, there are also many other housing options available to residents. Alternatives include owner occupied multi-family condominiums, assisted living facilities and rental structures ranging from single family homes to apartment buildings.

Diversified housing options provide residents opportunity to remain in Town throughout a family's lifecycle, from childhood through young adult and retirement stages.

With almost 70% of the housing stock at or slightly over 50 years of age maintenance of these older residences is the major concern facing the vibrancy of the Town's housing stock. Maintaining this diversity and quality of housing in West Hartford is important to the vitality of the community as West Hartford's tradition of providing appealing neighborhoods and a high quality of life for residents.

Over the past ten years, the Town provided infrastructure improvements such as new curbs, sewers, road repaving, sidewalk repairs, and newly planted trees in many residential neighborhoods. Simultaneously, private reinvestment by property owners throughout Town provided exterior and interior renovations and additions, new roofs, windows, mechanicals, and landscaping. Each of these individual investments, particularly when

viewed collectively, improves the overall quality, streetscape, value and appeal of West Hartford’s neighborhoods and enhances pedestrian access and appeal.

Many of the original residential developments in Town from the 1920’s and 1930’s retain their tree-lined sidewalks which provide a stately, uniform and attractive streetscape. One significant improvement made recently by the Town in commercial centers and along arterial streets is the planting of trees. Trees not only enhance the streetscape and soften an otherwise concrete visual, but they also invite pedestrian travel by providing shade during the summer months. Many of the original residential developments in Town from the 1920s and 1930s retain their tree-lined sidewalks and provide a stately, uniform, and attractive streetscape. This simple, long-term, and environmentally sound improvement should be encouraged throughout Town as a means of enhancing the neighborhoods, spurring reinvestment, and enhancing the quality of life for residents.

**DEMOGRAPHICS OF HOUSING**

The overall density of housing has increased slightly since 1970 and currently stands at 1,170 dwelling units per square mile. Except for the capital city of Hartford at 2,816 units per square mile, West Hartford has the most dwelling units per square mile of any other local community. Newington is a close third at 936 units per square mile.

**Table 1**

<b>West Hartford Dwelling Units per Square Mile</b>						
	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b># Housing Units</b>	19,250	22,344	23,892	25,021	25,332	25,734
<b>Units per Sq Mile</b>	875	1,016	1,086	1,137	1,151	1,170

Source: Census Bureau

**Table 2**

<b>Local Comparison of Dwelling Units per Square Mile</b>					
<b>Town</b>	<b>Land Area</b>	<b>No. of Dwelling Units in 2000</b>	<b>Units per Sq Mile</b>	<b>No. of Dwelling Units in 2006</b>	<b>Units per Sq Mile</b>
Avon	23.1	6,612	286	7,094	307
Bloomfield	26.0	8,175	314	8,854	341
Farmington	28.1	9,852	351	10,523	374
Hartford	19.3	54,353	2,816	51,389	2,663
Newington	13.2	12,350	936	12,602	955
Simsbury	33.9	8,808	260	9,032	266
<b>West Hartford</b>	<b>22.0</b>	<b>25,332</b>	<b>1,151</b>	<b>25,734</b>	<b>1,170</b>

Source: CT Dept. of Economic and Community Development Annual Housing Report

Based on demographic projections of 61,000 residents as discussed in the Demographics section of this Plan of Conservation and Development, national trends toward fewer people per household, and the limited availability of developable land in Town, modest growth in housing stock is expected. For the period 1990 to 2006, there was an atypically large increase of 2.8% (713) in the number of housing units from 25,021 to 25,734, driven by several large projects that are unlikely to be duplicated in the coming decade due to the Town's status as fully developed.

**Table 3**

<b>Number of Housing Permits 2000-2006</b>							
<b>Year</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>No. of Permits</b>	58	86	52	45	100	21	136

Source: West Hartford Housing Authority

The majority of recent residential development has been multi-family condominium complexes located throughout Town, from Quaker Green in the southeast to Somerset in the north to The Reservoir in the west. Multi-family condominium structures have both the density and home ownership quality that are well suited to Towns such as West Hartford, and these structures are anticipated to be the preferred type of residential development in the coming years. Such developments, if properly designed can further West Hartford's trademark focus on streetscape housing and pedestrian access.

While a variety of housing options (both rental and ownership at a variety of cost levels) is vital for retaining residents throughout the lifecycle, owner-occupied homes are a cornerstone of a healthy, vital municipality. Home ownership protects individuals from rising rental costs, builds equity from which the individual can draw in times of need, and provides a stable environment for families with children. Ownership provides neighborhood stability in terms of low turn over, an incentive to reinvestment and provides community stability for school enrollment and other municipal purposes. According to census data, home ownership figures for West Hartford follow national trends.

Of the 25,021 housing units in West Hartford in 1990, 23,916 or 96% were occupied and 4% were vacant. Of the occupied units, 66% were occupied by owners and 26% were occupied by renters. By 2000 the number of housing units had increased to 25,332, of which 24,576, or 97%, were occupied and 3% were vacant. Of the occupied units, 65% were occupied by owners and 28% were occupied by renters. A 66% owner occupied and 34% renter occupied balance is typical for most communities nationwide (p. 70, Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) Plan of Conservation and Development).

**Table 4**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Units</b>	<b>Total Occupied</b>	<b>% Occupied</b>	<b>Owner Occupied</b>		<b>Renter Occupied</b>	
1990	25,021	23,916	96%	15,715	66%	6,302	26%
2000	25,332	24,576	97%	15,979	65%	6,916	28%

Source: US Census Bureau

A breakdown of the types and quantities of housing units, according to the 2006 West Hartford Assessment Records, is as follows:

**Table 5**

Type of Housing Structure				
Single Family	Two Family	Three Family	Condominium	Apartment (4 units or more)
69%	8%	4%	8%	11%

Source: West Hartford Assessment Records

Rental structures within West Hartford provide an important alternative for individuals who either choose not to or cannot afford to own but who wish to live in Town. Renters include college students, young members of the work force, young families, individuals and families relocating, and the elderly, among others. Among the approximate 6,900 rental units in West Hartford, the average rent per month for a unit is generally significantly higher than other Hartford area Towns. Average rents are illustrated below:

**Table 6**

Fair Market Rent Trends					
Unit Type	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Efficiency	\$ 465	\$ 510	\$ 519	\$ 593	\$ 635
1 Bdrm	\$ 579	\$ 636	\$ 647	\$ 710	\$ 940
2 Bdrm	\$ 741	\$ 813	\$ 827	\$ 873	\$ 1,175
3 Bdrm	\$ 930	\$ 1,020	\$ 1,037	\$ 1,053	\$ 1,300
4 Bdrm	\$ 1,128	\$ 1,238	\$ 1,259	\$ 1,214	n/a

Source: 2002 through 2005 figures are from the US Dept of Housing and Development and are for the Metropolitan Statistical Area of Hartford. 2006 figures are from the West Hartford Assessment Records. West Hartford's rents are significantly higher than the average fair market rent for the statistical area, p. III-28 of the town of West Hartford Consolidated Plan 2005-2009.

Maintaining the quality and availability of rental units in Town is an important component of meeting the needs of residents throughout the lifecycle. Another important component of meeting this need are the 1,831 (or 7.23%) occupied affordable housing units dispersed throughout West Hartford. These units include 1,293 subsidized (assisted living, Section 8, etc), 326 CHFA mortgage, and 212 deed-restricted properties. The issue of affordability and overall condition is vital for a community like West Hartford, with an aging housing stock and limited opportunity for new development.

### **HOUSING CONDITION**

As indicated by the chart below, fully 70+% of the dwellings in West Hartford are nearing or over 50 years of age. The majority of people living in these homes, based on the demographic data, are families with children and aging baby boomers.

**Table 7**

<b>Age of Housing Stock</b>		
<b>Year of Construction</b>	<b>No. of Dwellings</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
1999-2000	33	0.1%
1995-1998	139	0.5%
1990-1994	317	1.3%
1980-1989	1,253	4.9%
1970-1979	1,960	7.7%
1960-1969	3,513	13.9%
1940-1959	11,003	43.4%
1939 and earlier	7,114	28.1%
<b>TOTAL STOCK as of 2000</b>	<b>25,332</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: US Census Bureau

West Hartford's Housing Rehabilitation Program, which is funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), since 1974 and is a Town-wide means to address affordability and maintenance. The program provides assistance to owners of single family, two-family, and three-family structures. Assistance is based upon income guidelines and reflects grants as well as lifetime mortgage deeds. During the past 10 years a total of 272 housing units received direct assistance from this program. In 2006, a total of \$450,000 was spent assisting 31 households. Funds permit income-eligible home owners to complete projects ranging from structural repairs to handicap-accessibility modifications.

The Elderly Assistance Program (EAP) was created in October of 2002. The purpose of this program is to assist income qualified elderly homeowners (age 65 or older) whose homes have a failed system, e.g. heating system, roofing, or are in need of handicapped bathroom adaptations, a ramp, or stair-glide. This program is designed to address only one system, and may only be utilized once. Homeowners must meet income eligibility and age requirements. The goal of this program is to streamline the administrative paperwork in order to process the application (which usually is of urgent nature) as quickly as possible, and to address one system at an average cost of \$6,000. The average time from eligibility determination to project completion is approximately 6 weeks.

The Housing Rehabilitation Program and its elderly assistance component is perhaps the single most effective tool West Hartford has in maintaining the affordability and quality of homes within our community.

The West Hartford Housing Authority also addresses the needs of affordability in the community, and strives to provide housing opportunities for residents struggling to remain in Town. The WHHA owns and manages affordable rental units dispersed throughout Town and works with community and State agencies to provide affordable housing in compliance with State statutes. The WHHA is one example of a public-private partnership formed to address regional and local housing issues.

In addition, attention should be paid through the continued use of the Design Review Advisory Committee, to the design and overall integrity of new developments and additions to existing structures. In fully developed communities there often occurs redevelopment of a previously “vacant” lot that was recently subdivided from, or a “tear down” and rebuilding of, an existing structure within an established neighborhood. New developments and additions for existing structures should be sensitive to the overall impact the design will have on the streetscape of the neighborhood. The cumulative appearance of individual residences has a tremendous impact on the appeal of the neighborhood as a whole. Mature plantings and a diversity of trees, as well as other elements that enhance beauty and pedestrian appeal and ease of access should be encouraged.



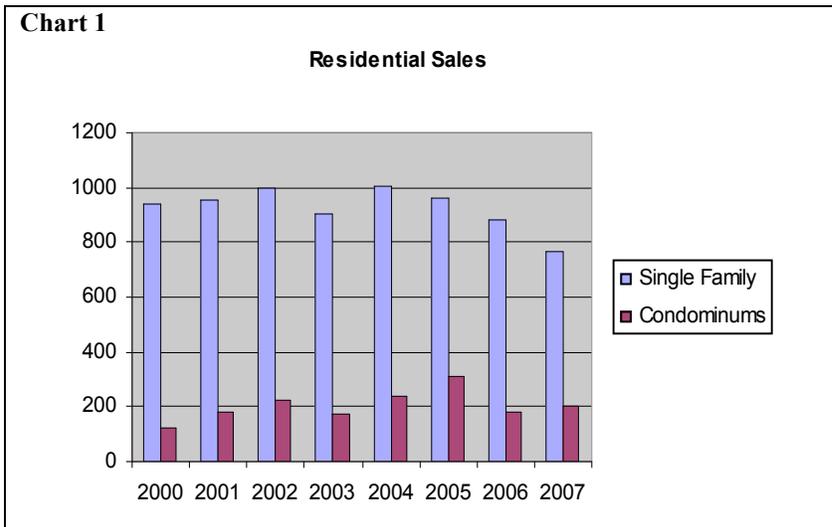
### **HOUSING OWNERSHIP**

The current appeal of West Hartford’s neighborhoods and the desirability of owning a home in Town continues to be strong, as evidenced by an average of over 1,100 (4.5%) closed purchase transactions annually between 2000 and 2006. The consistency in demand for homes in Town is evidenced by the chart below:

**Table 8**

<b>Number of Residential Sales</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Single Family</b>	<b>Condominium</b>	<b>Total</b>
2000	940	125	1,065
2001	954	182	1,136
2002	999	226	1,225
2003	901	172	1,073
2004	1,003	241	1,244
2005	960	312	1,272
2006	880	182	1,062
2007	767	206	973

Source: The Warren Group



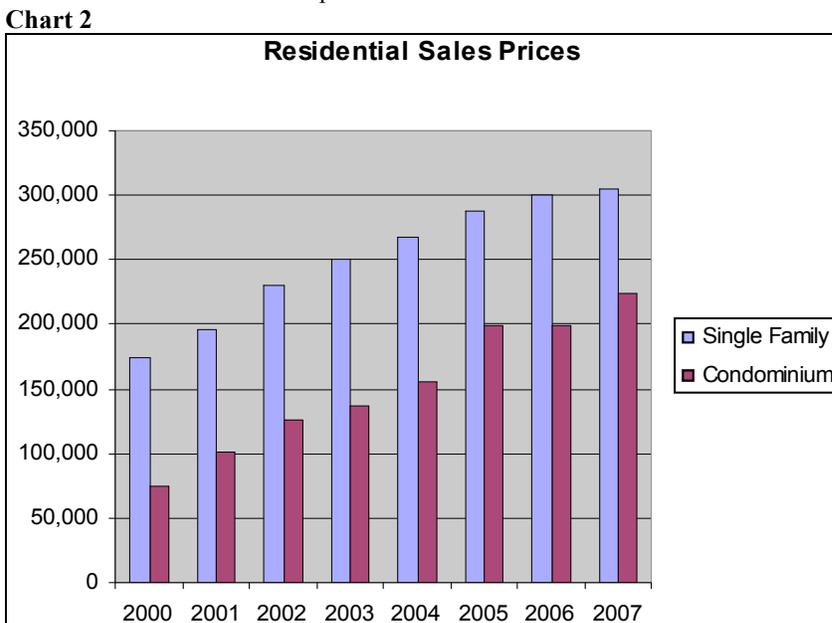
During the same time period, the average price per unit of closed sales continued to rise:

**Table 9**

**Residential Sales Prices**

Year	Single Family	Condominium
2000	175,000	75,000
2001	196,402	101,000
2002	230,000	126,750
2003	250,000	137,450
2004	268,000	155,000
2005	287,500	199,700
2006	300,000	199,375
2007	305,000	224,000

Source: The Warren Group



Home ownership in West Hartford has long been desirable due to the beauty of the neighborhoods, the quality public school system, and overall high quality of life. To maintain this desirability, public and private reinvestment in the neighborhoods is vital. Maintaining an appropriate balance of owner occupied and renter occupied homes contributes to the Town's stability and helps to provide appealing housing options for residents throughout the life cycle. The



Housing Rehabilitation Program is an excellent resource for residents who otherwise would have difficulty maintaining their home and is an effective means of addressing affordability issues in Town. Overall, the quality and appeal of West Hartford's neighborhoods and the individual homes within those neighborhoods, as well as the diversity of housing options, is a cornerstone of West Hartford's desirability and a key to its vitality.

## **GOAL**

Enhance and maintain West Hartford's existing housing stock and encourage diversity of housing types and costs. Enhance the beauty of our neighborhoods by encouraging streetscape improvements, including home preservation and the planting of mature and diverse trees.

## **POLICIES**

### **1. Promote the maintenance, rehabilitation and improvement of the Town's existing housing stock.**

- a. Encourage homeowners and landlords to maintain properties in sound condition through enforcement efforts and/or participation in the Housing Rehabilitation Program.
- b. Expand the Housing Rehabilitation Program and its Elderly Assistance Program to significantly improve the number of residents who can take advantage of improvements to preserve their homes.
- c. Communicate to residents how the enforcement process works, and how problem properties should be reported.
- d. Continue participation in the Community Development Block Grant programs and explore opportunities for increased resident participation.
- e. Identify additional resources which would support and possibly expand the Town's Housing Rehabilitation and Elderly Assistance Programs.

### **2. Encourage the availability of a range of housing types and affordability levels to meet the diverse needs of the community.**

- a. Consider the establishment of a Housing Trust Fund for the purpose of creating affordable housing stock.
- b. Consider revisions to the zoning regulations to permit a greater diversity of housing types and costs.
- c. Continue to support the efforts of nonprofit groups and for profit developers to expand housing choice options in the community.

### **3. Promote and reaffirm high quality development standards.**

- a. Insure private and public development proposals maintain quality design and material standards that reflect the character of the community through the effective use of the Design Review Advisory Committee (DRAC).
- b. Extend the focus of DRAC to streetscape improvements and making our community pedestrian friendly.
- c. Promote, through appropriate zoning ordinances, that all major developments to address plans for pedestrian and bicycle links and access.
- d. Continue to request developers to consider implementing good quality standards which reflect energy conservation. Where and when applicable request that developers consider implementation of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified building standards, even when not required by the State Building Code.





# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## INTRODUCTION

The Town of West Hartford has enjoyed an unprecedented level of redevelopment and reinvestment in industrial/commercial properties since the end of the real estate recession of the 1990s. Every commercial district in Town, from small neighborhood centers to regional shopping districts, has been revitalized and refurbished. West Hartford's strong focus on pedestrian amenities in its mixed use districts has emerged as a Town trademark and distinguishes West Hartford from other communities in the region. The pedestrian quality and popularity of the Town Center, in particular, re-affirms West Hartford's appeal as a pedestrian-oriented community. The unique pedestrian trademark coupled with the transportation improvements recommended in the

Transportation section of this Plan of Conservation and Development can be a powerful marketing tool to attract new businesses to Town. West Hartford continues to draw owners of all types of businesses, from medical, personal, and household services, to office, retail, wholesale, and dining establishments.

As early as the 1980s, West Hartford Plans of Conservation and Development began to call for economic growth within existing industrial/commercial areas, as opposed to growth from the expansion of commercial zones. Growth within existing boundaries protects residential areas from encroachment of incompatible uses and limits the opportunity for vacant buildings and/or brown fields to develop and sit under-utilized for extended periods of time. With most of the land in Town fully developed by that time, economic growth became and continues to be a balancing act between maintaining the

quality of residential life and strengthening the community's tax base with new developments and successful business ventures.

The volume and variety of businesses in Town is significant. The driving force for economic development is the creation and maintenance of a community in which people want to invest. The streetscape improvements for the commercial centers are a significant piece in creating this environment. The visual attractiveness and pedestrian friendliness of both residential and commercial neighborhoods are a signature component of West Hartford's continued economic success. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in the community over the past decade and the vast majority of investment occurred in the redevelopment of existing, but perhaps functionally obsolete, properties. Each of the commercial centers in Town has adopted its own personality, function, and appeal as they evolve into the centers envisioned in previous Plans of Conservation and Development.

Successful redevelopment often involves appropriate management of buffer zones, or those properties that border commercial and residential districts. Because of the complexity of attracting and controlling new development in tight commercial areas bordered by strong residential neighborhoods, West Hartford has utilized a Special Development District ("SDD") designation. This designation permits greater control by the Town over building design, use, and tenant mix. The Design Review Advisory Committee plays a large role in the overall appearance of the business, from signage and landscaping to parking and lighting. A strong focus on walkability wherever possible has emerged as a West Hartford trademark and a competitive advantage over other communities in the region. The intent of the SDD is to allow commercial development that is in harmony with the surrounding neighborhood. This type of redevelopment permits economic growth while protecting existing neighborhood boundaries.

It is important to note that West Hartford remains, despite our strong interest in building our industrial and commercial tax base, primarily a residential community. This fact is supported by the most recent grand list. As of October 2006 approximately 83% of the Town's grand list was comprised of residential value and the remaining 15% was comprised of commercial/industrial value. Given this, it is important to understand that while economic development is extremely important to the business community and the tax base, quality development is equally important to the residential community.

The residential community is served differently by each of the commercial districts. Districts vary in scale from neighborhood, Town-wide, and regional, and by the types of shops and services available in each. The ease of access to each center and lastly, each district's "personality" has an impact on how each center best serves residents and patrons from other communities. The fact that each of the centers is so different proves each is invaluable in creating a well-functioning business environment for the Town of West Hartford.

To understand the economic development potential of the community, it is extremely important to recognize and study each of the defined commercial centers within Town. These commercial centers all started as support for existing and growing residential neighborhoods. Over an extended time frame, due to changing vehicular traffic as well

as changing demographic characteristics, four of these original neighborhood centers evolved into having a larger, more regional impact.

The following is a brief summary of the commercial areas within the community. Also identified for each of these areas are the major changes which have occurred within the past few years.

### **BISHOP'S CORNER**

Bishop's Corner is located in the northwestern section of Town, at the crossroads of two principal arterial streets, North Main Street and Albany Avenue. This is both a regional and neighborhood shopping district, and businesses include supermarkets, gas stations, banks, dry cleaners, pharmacies, medical offices, and limited dining and other retail establishments. There is also a post office, library, and a senior center.

Existing buildings were constructed in the 1950s and 1960s and all have undergone facelifts within the last year. The library underwent a major renovation this past year with the construction of a new senior center. Property layouts include large surface parking lots prominently placed in front of the buildings on all four corners of the intersection. The layout requires patrons to drive from one shop to another, as the scale and distance between shops is exacerbated by large expanses of surface parking and intersections that are not pedestrian-friendly. Bishop's Corner presents an opportunity for the Town to improve its signature pedestrian friendly character, if the economic market and design components can be successfully integrated.

Beginning in 2004, the Town began installing significant streetscape improvements to Bishop's Corner. New pedestrian walks and signals were installed at the intersection, the sidewalks were bricked and lighted with antique-style lamp posts, trees were planted along the Main Street sidewalks, and new bus shelters were installed. The entrance onto eastbound Albany Avenue from the rear of the Macaroni Grill building was streamlined and planted with trees, and a middle turn lane was designated along Main Street south of Albany Avenue. While each of the improvements taken in isolation is small, together they have calmed traffic and made pedestrian travel still inherently difficult more inviting. Although Bishop's Corner remains an automobile-dominated neighborhood/regional center, these infrastructure improvements and façade improvements provided by private property owners have made Bishop's Corner more attractive. Efforts toward making Bishop's Corner more pedestrian-friendly will continue in the coming years. Bishops Corner has an active community group comprised of residents of surrounding neighborhoods.

#### **Recent Major Changes**

Romano's Macaroni Grill – full service restaurant – 1999 (closed 2008)  
Wild Oats Market – natural food grocery store – 2000 (Whole Foods – 2008)  
Hartford Hospital – primary care facility – 2005  
Panera Bread Company – retail bakery – 2006  
Library Branch/Senior Center renovation – 2006  
Walgreen's Pharmacy – full service/drive through pharmacy – 2007

## **CORBINS CORNER**

Corbins Corner is located in the southwestern section, along New Britain Avenue. This commercial district has evolved into a regional center, with national chain retailers the predominant tenants.

The original strip center was built in the 1960s and has expanded to include several chain retail stores and two full service free-standing restaurants. Directly opposite this center is Westfarms Mall. This interior mall opened in 1975 and was expanded in the late 1990s to over 1.6 million square feet. The southerly area of the Corbins Corner commercial district was rezoned in the 1990s to accommodate retail development.

The physical appearance of this regional center is dominated by surface parking lots, though the two recent out parcel developments, the Olive Garden and Red Robin restaurants, act as a visual buffer and improve the appearance of the district as a whole. Streetscape improvements in this district have been limited to the landscaping upgrades provided by the private property owners, including stone walls and planted gardens at the entrance to Westfarms.

### *Recent Major Changes*

Westfarms Mall – addition of Nordstrom – 1998

Babies “R” Us – free standing retail – 1999

Olive Garden – free standing family restaurant – 2005

Red Robin – free standing family restaurant – 2006

WestFarms Mall – P.F. Chang’s and Brio Tuscan Grille – 2008 approval

## **ELMWOOD CENTER**

Located east of Corbins Corner, Elmwood Center has long been a primary neighborhood center. The center of Elmwood is generally considered to extend from Mayflower Street in the west to New Park Avenue in the east, along both the north and south sides of New Britain Avenue.

Commercial structures in Elmwood date from the 1930s and 1950s. This neighborhood district has the charm typical of older, small scale centers established prior to the predominance of the automobile. The architectural details of the buildings provide the primary focus of the streetscape, with parking located in the rear or to the side. Pedestrian travel between buildings on the same side of the street is easy and inviting, though there are few



opportunities to cross New Britain Avenue. It is anticipated that the coming years will see an increased focus on streetscape and walkability.

Until recently, there had been little development activity in this section of the community. Much of the activity was stimulated by small property owners reinvesting in their buildings. The most notable and far-reaching stimulus was the approval and construction of the Quaker Green Condominium complex in the former Talcott Junior High School building and grounds. The positive repercussions of this transformation permeate the entire district, with façade improvements completed or in process for nearly every single building in the center. The streetscape improvements provided by the Town, including brick sidewalks and antique-style lamp posts, are a strong compliment to the extensive improvements made by the property owners.

Businesses located in this center include pharmacies, banks, full service restaurants and bakeries, and leisure establishments (including dance studios, and sporting equipment and art supplies stores). These business owners form the Elmwood Business Association, an active group that meets monthly and works toward gaining widespread support for Elmwood Center. The Elmwood Community Center and Faxon Library are also located in this district.

#### *Recent Major Changes*

Former Elm Theater/Walgreens – redevelopment to a pharmacy and bank – 2005

Former Talcott Junior High School/Quaker Green – 148 condominium units – 2007

D’Occhio property – renovated commercial building – 2007

Former Friendly Ice Cream Building/Gem Jewelry – converted to jewelry store – 2007

Elmwood Plaza – expansion and façade renovation - 2007-2008

Public/private partnership – Tree Planting “Re-Elming Elmwood” - 2008

#### **NEW PARK AVENUE**

Located on the eastern border of West Hartford, this commercial district extends from the Flatbush Avenue area in the north to New Britain Avenue in the south. Traditionally this area was dominated by industrial uses, however its most recent history suggests a trend toward retail establishments.

The most significant change in this area was the rezoning of the former Pratt & Whitney Machine and Tool site in the mid 1990s in the face of significant public opposition. The result of the action was the creation of West Hartford Place which today houses two retail establishments, Home Depot and BJs Warehouse. The redevelopment of this site and the presence of these large retailers spurred further economic growth in the district.

The predominant type of retailer attracted to New Park are those that require large spaces and that can afford to locate in a destination-based location, as opposed to a convenience-based one. As such, New Park has experienced an influx of shops and stores which are reflective of home design, home décor, and home remodeling. Many of these business owners are acquiring and renovating existing structures.

A new association, the “Home Design District” has been organized by these business owners to better serve the home remodeling customer. At this time the group consists of 21 shops and stores providing homeowners easy access to professional home renovating assistance.

*Recent Major Changes*

West Hartford Place – approval and construction of big box retail stores – 1995

Tile America – renovation and re-tenanting of older industrial structure – 2002

Viking Bakery Building – renovation and re-tenanting of formerly abandoned structure – 2004

Goldsmith & Lombardo - renovation and re-tenanting of older industrial structure – 2004

Home Design District – formation of local business group – 2006

**PARK ROAD**

The Park Road business area is located in the east central section of the community between South Quaker Lane to the west and Prospect Avenue to the east. The majority of the buildings along Park Road date to the 1930s, when the Hartford Trolley carried the residents to jobs in downtown Hartford. The streetscape is dominated by the architecture of the individual buildings, and pedestrians and al fresco diners are buffered from traffic by parallel street parking. This thriving business district emerged in the 1990s during and immediately following a major public works project involving the reconstruction of this section of the road, including the installation of brick sidewalks and antique-style lamp posts.

The personality of this commercial district is an eclectic mix of “mom and pop” grocers (traditional and ethnic), retail stores, a large number of health and beauty spas, and every type of restaurant imaginable, from organic burgers to traditional Indian, Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese, to the original AC Petersen’s Farms Restaurant. This commercial district is anchored in the East by the Prospect Café and in the West by Halls Market. Preserving and increasing the pedestrian and bicycle-friendly amenities on Park Road will enhance this neighborhood’s long-term economic development.

Park Road is supported by a strong neighborhood group, the Park Road Association, which hosts the annual Park Road Parade in October. Currently the Park Road Association is working collaboratively with their counter part in Hartford, the Parkville Association, to better highlight all of the business assets within the area. This collaboration will result in, among other things, a joint marketing effort for the area.

*Recent Major Changes*

Park Road Playhouse – Community Theater opened in former truck storage facility – 2001

AC Petersen’s Farms Restaurant – an original 1930s structure which serves as an icon on the street – reopened to former status – 2004

Park to Park – collaboration between Park Road Association and Parkville Association – 2007

## WEST HARTFORD CENTER



Located at the geographic center of the community, the intersection of Main Street and Farmington Avenue, the “Center” is reflective of a traditional town center. The original Center developed primarily to the west of Main Street, with most of the municipal property located to the east. The majority of the western buildings date to the 1930s and 1940s, and wide sidewalks, mature trees, and large seasonal planters dominate the streetscape. A consolidated parking system behind

the buildings and prevalent, well marked cross walks provide safe and inviting pedestrian travel throughout the entire district. The Center’s walkability and streetscape beauty have fueled its economic success and in some way forms the template for development of West Hartford’s other commercial centers. In 2006, there were over 140 specialty shops and restaurants, in addition to banks, professional offices, and salons in the western portion of the Center.

Active construction and redevelopment of the eastern portion of the Center began in recent years. This area was formerly dominated by two older, large automobile dealerships. The first phase of this redevelopment involved the removal of the existing structure and replacement with a modern, free-standing grocery store. The second phase of the redevelopment is currently underway and is referred to as Blue Back Square. This area includes more than 20 acres of land, 600,000 square feet of mixed residential, retail, and office improvements, 2 parking structures, and new supporting infrastructure.

The redevelopment of this area reflects the evolution of the Center into the uses Town officials and Plans of Development first contemplated over 20 years ago. The actual planning and redevelopment has and will occur over a period of approximately 5 years. The result of this large scale development will be the transformation of a former commercial use that was no longer appropriate or desirable for its location into a mixed use development that permits people to live, work, and shop in close proximity. The success of the redevelopment of the Center is premised on the designers respect for and accommodation of pedestrian traffic.



The accommodation of government, leisure, and work in the geographic heart of the Town encourages and fosters a sense of community. A key component of community building is the ability of pedestrians to mingle and interact. Community events in the

Center are organized by two active business groups, the Center Merchants Association and the Center Owners. Events include the annual Antique Auto Show, Dancing Under the Stars, Celebrate West Hartford, West Hartford Sale Days, fashion shows and the like on a monthly basis. In addition to organizing these events, the groups meet monthly and provide marketing and general business support to members.

Recent Major Changes

First area for outdoor dining – 1998

Whole Foods – 2005

Façade renovation of 900 block in existing center – 2005

Former Sage Allen department store- redeveloped into retail, restaurant and office – 1998

Blue Back Square – Town’s first mixed use redevelopment – opened 2007

**SOUTHEAST INDUSTRIAL AREA**

The area east of New Park Avenue and Newington Road south of New Britain Avenue is generally composed of an assortment of older industrial buildings. In many instances the uses located in these areas do not reflect the type of uses intended or planned for industrial zones. With exceptions, land uses in these areas are characterized more by general commercial services, auto related repair garages, small machine shops and storage yards.

There are other areas that do contain uses associated with the industrial zone. Most predominant of these is the area south of New Britain Avenue, east of Newington Road and adjacent to the railroad line. Uses include in this area include Abbott Ball, United Tool and Die, and Wiremold. The former Piper Brook Redevelopment area, just to the east of the above also contains uses more typical of industrial zoning.

There remains a large area of industrially zoned land east of New Park Avenue in the vicinity of Vanderbilt Avenue and Tolles and Dexter streets. This is an area of approximately 14 acres and contains a mixture of uses ranging from small commercial service establishments, small machine shops, storage yards some single family homes and some very small vacant lots. A portion of this area is zoned Industrial Park (IP) an overly restrictive zone classification, requiring very large minimum lot area and width requirements. Originally, the zone was established to encourage lot assemblage for larger scale development. To date this has not occurred. The Industrial Park (IP) Zone is an impediment to development and serves little purpose. Consideration should be given to rezoning this area. Rezoning to General Industrial (IG), which eliminates minimum lot area requirements, is recommended. It is noted that a report was authored in 1996 by the Southeast Citizens Advisory Committee which promoted the same recommendation.

Recent Major Changes

United Tool and Die – redevelopment and expansion to 40,000 s.f. building – 2005

Former Industrial Safety Supply – sold 2008/new retail plan

Cunningham Supply Showroom – Oakwood Avenue – 2003

HarConn Manufacturing – plan for a 25,000 s.f. addition

## **NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRICTS**

There are several smaller neighborhood districts located throughout the community. Included among these are South Main Street at Park, Sunset Triangle, the Boulevard Shops at Prospect, Farmington Avenue East, Flatbush/South Quaker Intersection, and South Main/New Britain Avenue Intersection.

Each of these areas has unique characteristics that tend to provide an identity to each area. Additionally, each of these areas provides a level of convenience not necessarily associated with larger shopping districts.

## **GOAL**

Strengthen the community's tax base by promoting growth and retention of existing businesses and new development while preserving and protecting the residential character of the surrounding neighborhoods. Integral to this goal is a renewed focus on pedestrian amenities wherever feasible.

## **POLICIES**

### **1. Encourage the growth and retention of existing businesses in Town.**

- a. Continue to maintain excellent lines of communication with the business community through the proactive efforts of the Business Development officer.
- b. Provide local support to business efforts in pursuing State assistance to stabilize and expand businesses.
- c. Continue public improvement investments necessary to stimulate and sustain private reinvestment.
- d. Work to strengthen cooperation and participation between business communities within the Capitol Region.
- e. Preserve, protect and increase the pedestrian traffic that fuels many of these enterprises.

### **2. Promote private investment and redevelopment of underutilized properties to achieve a higher level and quality land use, particularly in the southeast area of Town.**

- a. Identify reasonable and feasible public improvements to stimulate private redevelopment in the southeast area.
- b. Adopt land use regulations which will encourage and provide broader opportunities for private redevelopment in the southeast area.
- c. Encourage private property owners to work together as they reinvest in properties by providing shared parking and other shared infrastructure improvements.

### **3. Encourage the diversification of the community tax base.**

- a. Promote West Hartford's various commercial neighborhoods as unique in order to continue to attract a wide array of businesses.
- b. Work with State and regional agencies to promote the common interest of diversifying the tax base.

### **4. Promote and reaffirm high quality development standards.**

- a. Assure development proposals maintain quality design standards that reflect the character of the community, striving to achieve a more unified sense of place within neighborhoods. Use the Design Review Advisory Committee as the primary vehicle to carry out this function.

- b. Adopt appropriate standards that encourage and otherwise influence developers to implement high quality standards regarding energy conservation.
- c. Extending the focus and vision of the Design Review Advisory Committee to assist in preserving and enhancing residential streetscapes, including trees, throughout the community.
- d. Develop appropriate municipal mechanisms to promote and encourage developers to implement LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified building standards.
- e. Preserve and increase the quantity of trees in Town, as well as other design elements that will enhance streetscape beautification and pedestrian uses.





# TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION



## INTRODUCTION

In the decade since the last Plan, the Town has modified its earlier focus on facilitating traffic operations to also address pedestrian and bicycle safety and the negative impacts of unsafe driver behavior. While some trends have been difficult to solve, such as widespread cell phone use while driving and the funding of enforcement resources at a pace consistent with the increase in vehicle volume, the Town has been actively redesigning many of its primary and secondary streets to try to influence driver behavior and improve safety for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and mass transit patrons.

The Town also has come to embrace the concept of a "complete street network" – one where motor vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists can safely coexist. The Town also provided improvements in response to the changing demographics of residents (as discussed in the Demographics section). All of these changes, as detailed below, are part of preparing West Hartford to be a sustainable, livable community.



A high quality transportation system is a defining characteristic of a community in which people want to live and conduct business. Successful

traffic calming and integrated, "complete" streets are important components of an efficient and safe transportation system. Traffic calming is the first step in providing a safe environment for pedestrians and bicyclists and involves the physical modification of the road, such as narrow traffic lanes, chicanes, curb bump outs, speed humps, striped or raised pedestrian cross walks, and center island medians. Though traffic calming measures must be used judiciously, as diversion of traffic and the impact on emergency

vehicles must be considered, these modifications inhibit speeding and provide buffers for pedestrians, bicyclists, and mass transit patrons at transfer stations. Also noted in the Economic Development section, the ongoing effort to achieve "complete streets" wherever possible is vital to the continued economic success of the Town and represents an opportunity to improve a unique asset that sets West Hartford apart from neighboring towns.

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

The components of the Town’s current transportation system include the street grid, parking facilities, sidewalks, bikeways, multi-use paths, and mass transit. The table below details these components:

**TABLE 1**

<b>TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	
<b>Amenity</b>	<b>Quantity</b>
Streets (town-maintained, paved) in Miles	215 <sup>1</sup>
Sidewalks (concrete and brick) in Miles	245 <sup>2</sup>
Traffic Signals state jurisdiction	44 <sup>3</sup>
Traffic Signals town jurisdiction	61 <sup>3</sup>
Stop Signs	1105
Crosswalk town maintained	440 <sup>4</sup>
Crosswalk town maintained at state intersection	14 <sup>4</sup>
Crosswalk state maintained	43

- 1) Town maintained streets exclude State Routes (i.e. Route 44 and New Britain Avenue) and are maintained at a pace of roughly 7 miles per year, or on a 30 year cycle. Maintenance includes resurfacing and complete reconstruction. Reconstruction projects are generally timed with replacement of aging underground utility pipes (CNG and MDC); resurfacing projects are generally based on wear and tear. The standard measurement for a town street is 10’ per lane with no shoulder, versus the State standard of 12’ per lane with a 4’ shoulder. The effect of the Town’s standard is less pavement for cars and bicycles and more sidewalks for pedestrians, which helps protect the ideal of a road traveling past homes versus houses on a highway.
- 2) Sidewalks include concrete and brick pavers. Most sidewalks in commercial centers were replaced with brick to reduce the occurrence of trip/fall accidents particularly among elderly residents (brick shifts less than concrete in frost heaves and around tree roots). In the ten years since the Town began to replace concrete slabs with bricks the total damages paid by the Town to residents who suffered from trip/fall accidents was drastically reduced.
- 3) The Town received Federal Government grant funds to replace 32 traffic signals at the most heavily traveled intersections between 2008 – 2010. Updated traffic signals use a motion detector to trigger a signal change, as opposed to a traditional underground “loop” detector. The motion detector is better suited for bicyclists.
- 4) Most pedestrian crosswalks in commercial centers have been striped and/or raised, lighted, and bounded by ADA accessible curb bump outs to shorten the crossing distance between corners.

### The Street Grid

West Hartford's streets are laid in a grid and are classified in terms of traffic volume. The grid, as opposed to other street layouts, is the most easily adaptable to an integrated system, since a grid provides for the greatest number of path options depending on mode of transportation. Street classifications include Interstate, Principal Arterial, Minor Arterial, Collector, and Local. Each type of street serves a different function, and the street's attributes (its width, lighting, markings, etc.) facilitate its function.

TABLE 2

STREET CLASSIFICATION BY LENGTH 2006	
Street Classification	Miles
Interstate	3.3
Principal Arterial	10.7
Minor Arterial	31.0
Collector	24.4
Local	157.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>227.2</b>

### Interstate Highways

The Town is served primarily by Interstate 84 and vehicles may enter or exit I-84 at six locations in Town: Prospect Avenue, Park Road, Trout Brook Drive, South Main Street, New Britain Avenue, and Ridgewood Road. West Hartford's east-west arteries service diverted highway traffic during times of heavy volume; for this reason it is important for the Town to support the Hartford/New Britain busway (as discussed below) in order to minimize the impact of this congestion on local roads. The Park Road off-ramp was recently widened to reduce backups exiting Interstate 84 and there is a long range plan to create a full interchange at the I-84 Flatbush Avenue entrance and exit.

In general over the past several decades, east-west traffic volume has been relatively stable while north-south traffic volume has increased. Recent development in Bloomfield and Windsor and the widening of Route 218 has brought increased traffic volume on the main north-south arterial streets in West Hartford (Trout Brook Drive, Main Street, and Mountain Road). Alternatively, the completion of Route 9 has decreased traffic on parts of South Main Street and New Britain Avenue in the southwest corner of Town. North-south volume should be closely monitored, as solutions to growing congestion may be needed.

State highways function independently from pedestrians and bicyclists and are not part of an integrated network, unless parking facilities are located immediately adjacent to the on/off ramps. There are no plans at this time to integrate the highways into West Hartford's "complete street" network.

### Principal Arterial Streets

Principal arterial streets connect multiple municipalities and major traffic generators such as shopping centers, universities, and municipal facilities. Streets included in this classification service the longest trips and carry the highest volumes of traffic other than the interstate highways. Examples of principal arterials are Albany Avenue, Farmington

Avenue, New Britain Avenue and Main Street. These streets must prioritize the movement of vehicles over the needs of other modes of transportation and consequently are not the most appealing option for pedestrians and bicyclists.

According to the "2000 Census Journey" to Work data, roughly 25% of the West Hartford workforce is employed in Town, while the remaining 75% of workers commute to jobs outside of West Hartford. The Census also indicates that roughly the same number of people that commute out of West Hartford, commute into West Hartford for businesses located in Town. Due to traffic issues at the regional level must be recognized in the long term planning process.

### Minor Arterial Streets

Minor arterial streets carry significant traffic volumes but tend to service more "in-town" driving than "through-town" driving. Trips on these roads tend to be of shorter length and access to adjacent properties takes a higher priority than on principal arterials.

Examples include Trout Brook Drive and Asylum Avenue.

Several minor arterial streets have been improved with traffic calming modifications and can be utilized as part of a complete street network.

Several streets, such as Boulevard and Farmington Avenue, have been improved with traffic calming modifications and are conducive to pedestrian and bicycle users.



### Collector Streets

Collector streets collect and distribute traffic between arterials and local streets. They are typically located within one residential, commercial, or industrial area and examples include Quaker Lane, Webster Hill, and Ridgewood Road.

### Local Streets

The primary purpose of local streets is to provide direct access to the abutting property. Due to their quiet nature local streets are the most welcoming to pedestrian and bicycle users.

## **POTENTIAL TRAFFIC**

Projecting future traffic is an important exercise, but accuracy has been spotty in the past due to unforeseen social, economic, and demographic changes. As noted previously, east-west volumes have been generally stable due to the employment losses in Hartford mitigating the growth in vehicle ownership, and north-south volumes have increased due to road upgrades and development north of Town. These trends are expected to continue for the near future.

It is important for the Town to support modest traffic improvements to Interstate 84 to minimize the congestion that diverts highway traffic to local streets. Our community should be in the vanguard to help promote alternatives to widening of highways, such as increased bus transit, high occupancy lanes and light rail, these options are part of a comprehensive means to address persistent traffic concerns. Certain improvements might be effective in reducing traffic while representing more modest changes. These include appropriate surveillance for incident management, new or relocated ramps (particularly a full interchange at Flatbush Avenue in Hartford).

### **MASS TRANSIT**

The Town is well served by 12 fixed bus routes provided by Connecticut Transit. The route along Farmington Avenue has the highest rider volume in the Capitol Region and a high bus frequency throughout the day. Whereas public transit used to be considered a service primarily for the densest areas and for people who lacked automobiles, the emerging concern regarding sustainability may dictate changes in government funding of public transit and personal behavior.

#### **Hartford-New Britain Busway**

A busway between Hartford and New Britain is in the design stages. Two stops are planned in West Hartford along New Park Avenue, with feeder buses to serve nearby residents. The intent of the busway is to divert traffic from I-84 heading to and from Hartford and to facilitate access for Hartford and West Hartford residents traveling to New Britain to work or attend college.

#### **Dial-A-Ride**

There are various segments of the population who do not have access to the fixed route bus system due to location, age, or disability. The Town supports a Dial-a-Ride paratransit system which is heavily utilized, but there are currently several use restrictions including trip purpose and advance scheduling. In recognition of the Town's large and growing elderly population (as discussed in the Demographics chapter), which has travel desires beyond medical and shopping trips and to points beyond town lines, the Town is currently exploring the feasibility of expanding or redesigning paratransit options.

#### **Independent Transit**

The Town is currently studying additional mass transit options that would be provided by an independent operator. These options would serve as alternatives to the Dial-a-Ride and bus systems.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE AND SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS**

It has been a longstanding community goal to provide a street grid that exceeds the minimum function of funneling traffic from one location to another, by using street improvements to provide a safe and attractive streetscape. The majority of West Hartford's existing grid is easily adaptable for a network of pedestrian and bicycle paths between local streets and commercial and municipal destinations within and across neighborhoods, which will permit vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle travel to safely coexist.

### Pedestrian Considerations

All transportation, at some point or another, involves walking; whether to and from home, between a vehicle and a building, or between destinations. Safe pedestrian walkways can enhance the quality of life for residents and business owners alike, as they provide additional access without additional congestion. Sidewalk construction should be encouraged wherever possible, as should parking behind buildings as opposed to in front. The extensive planting of trees along most major streets, widened and in many cases bricked sidewalks, raised and lighted crosswalks, signal modernization, and the installation of medians, curb bump-outs and access ramps all enhance pedestrian safety throughout Town. The Town should also explore measures to encourage residential and commercial landowners to plant and preserve mature trees. In addition to these physical considerations, the Town's public schools and Police Department provide educational safety programs to students, in order to maximize their safety and encourage more walking as a means of independent transportation for children, particularly to and from school. The inviting nature of the Town's neighborhoods has fueled economic activity in these areas and is expected that an increased focus on pedestrian appeal in other neighborhoods will generate economic growth.

### Bicyclist Considerations

Bicyclists, based on findings of the Bicycle Task Force report they, do not feel safe riding along arterial roads due to poor driver behavior, a lack of dedicated bicycle lanes, traffic signals that do not respond to bicyclists, and a general lack of understanding between bicyclists and drivers of how to effectively communicate with one another. The Bicycle Task Force, in its Master Bike Plan provided to the Town Council in January 2008, makes several recommendations in order to provide a more inviting and safe transportation option for bicyclists. This Plan strongly endorses the Master Bike Plan and its findings and recommendations are sound.

The existing transportation infrastructure in Town can be adapted for bicycle use. The Bicycle Task Force recommends using portions of the existing street grid for a bike path connecting neighborhoods and commercial centers throughout Town which can be marked with paint and "share the road" signage. The specific streets and needed connectors are identified in the Bicycle Task Force's report. The Bicycle Task Force considers the current quality of the pavement sufficient to enable safe bicycle transit, although increased sweeping and attention to sewer grates, pot holes, and the like along the bike path will be necessary. The Bicycle Task Force recommends the continued conversion of vehicle-operated traffic signals which do not respond to bicyclists, to video-operated signals which can be triggered by the presence of a bicycle in the travel lane. Many of the Town-owned signals are already in the process of being converted, however the 44 State-owned traffic signals in West Hartford are the vehicle operated type and are not slated for conversion. The Bicycle Task Force recommends conversion of all of the traffic signals to video-operated technology.

The Task Force addressed the lack of secure bicycle parking around Town and recommended the inclusion of "inverted U" style bike racks at all major destinations, including shopping districts, municipal and recreation centers, schools, and places of employment. The inclusion of bike racks at the most frequented mass transit stops would also be appropriate. The Bicycle Task Force suggests establishing a "bike rack zoning requirement" along similar guidelines as existing vehicle parking regulations (i.e. a

certain number of bike racks per square foot) for all new landuse applications reviewed by the Town.

Beyond these infrastructure recommendations, the Bicycle Task Force calls for support programming that will allow for the effective use of the bike paths. Moreover, new bike paths including the greenway along Trout Brook should be explored and implemented. A



Town-wide safety education program addressing appropriate “share the road” behavior for drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists should be disseminated through the schools, parks, libraries, Town Hall, the Town’s website, and the Department of Leisure Services. Educating Town residents about how to appropriately navigate the "complete street" network (i.e.

which mode of transportation has the right of way, the importance of communicating one’s direction and how, etc) is an important component of its success. The Bicycle Task Force also recommends enforcement of laws vital for the safe coexistence of vehicle and non-vehicle traffic. In addition to education and enforcement programs, the Bicycle Task Force recommends Town sponsored programs to encourage residents to bicycle more often, like bike-to-school, bike-to-work, and family bike outings. Finally, measuring the success of these recommendations in terms of infrastructure improvements, increased cycling, and the safety of those cyclists, should be monitored and re-evaluated annually. This Plan incorporates by reference the Bicycle Task Force findings and recommendations.

### Mass Transit Considerations

A shuttle or other similar system should be considered among the three most congested neighborhood commercial districts: West Hartford Center, Elmwood Center, and Bishops Corner. These three districts are located within densely populated residential areas and are destinations for many short, in-town trips, particularly along the south-north arterials that are experiencing increased vehicle volume. Residents who live in one district would be able to drive, walk, or bike to the shuttle stop and ride to another district. Limiting shuttle service to only these three stops ensures "express service", so patrons will not become frustrated by multiple stops. This type of closed-circuit shuttle service is designed for high volume, short distance users like those on corporate and college campuses, and provides great freedom for people who either do not have access to a car or who otherwise prefer not to drive. In addition to permitting aging baby boomers to retain an independent lifestyle, an expanded paratransit system will help address the affordability of remaining in Town, since having access to a private automobile would not be required for daily activity. This type of quick-trip, closed circuit shuttle service can reduce congestion along the north-south arterials as well as within the commercial districts.

## **CONCLUSION**

The two largest and fastest growing segments of the population in West Hartford, families with school age children and aging baby boomers, are the two groups that would most benefit from a fully integrated "complete street" transportation system. A transportation system where vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle transit can safely coexist is a great benefit to residents, particularly to those who either do not have access to a car or prefer not to drive. Providing current and future residents with the ability to maintain their independence regardless of mode of transportation is a core factor in West Hartford's evolution into a sustainable, livable community and will set the Town apart from neighboring municipalities and will maintain West Hartford's appeal as a high quality community in which residents and business owners want to invest.

## **GOAL**

Promote an integrated and balanced "complete street" transportation system which provides the best possible service, mobility, convenience, and safety while reinforcing a positive social, economic, and environmental influence on West Hartford.

## **POLICIES**

- 1. Utilize the existing neighborhood street grid to establish dedicated walking and bicycle networks from neighborhoods to commercial and municipal destinations.**
  - a. This Plan incorporates by reference all findings and recommendations of the Bicycle Task Force.
  - b. Maintain pavement and sidewalk quality at a level safe for bicycle and pedestrian travel.
  - c. Establish and identify, with signage or other highly visible markings, "best routes" for bicyclists and pedestrians.
  - d. Work with employees and various Town departments to provide recommended bicycle parking at destinations.
  - e. Encourage construction and placement of paved sidewalks wherever possible.
  - f. Work with employers and landowners to encourage provision of high security bike racks in all bikeway planning.
  - g. Work to design and implement a safe bike commuter route to downtown Hartford.
  
- 2. Support transportation improvements that protect the character and safety of the residential neighborhoods through prudent use of traffic calming techniques and promoting a "complete street" network.**
  - a. Implement with input from affected residential neighborhoods traffic calming techniques to reduce speed, discourage commercial and cut-through traffic, and promote walking and bicycling in residential neighborhoods.
  - b. Monitor and modify traffic calming techniques for effectiveness and experiment with new techniques as appropriate.
  - c. Commit to high level of street maintenance and infrastructure including resurfacing, curb replacement, and improved pavement markings. Set as a standard, replacement/rebuild of each street on a 25-year cycle.
  - d. Encourage dedicated left-hand turning lanes on arterial roadways to improve capacity and safety at busy intersections, which also reduces cut-through traffic. The intersection of South Main Street at Sedgwick/Park Roads should be a high priority.
  - e. Continue program of upgrading traffic signals, including an ongoing evaluation of timing, phasing, and lane use.

- 3. Support traffic improvements that will take advantage of the regional roadway network.**
  - a. Support expediting construction of a full interchange on I-84 at Flatbush Avenue in Hartford to reduce traffic congestion and reduce accidents in the New Park Avenue – Flatbush Avenue area.
  - b. Continue to seek Federal/State funding for modification of the I-84 ramps at Park Road. Moving the ramps together and widening Park Road in that immediate area should significantly improve traffic flow.
  - c. Encourage the State and Connecticut Transit to study the frequency of bus routes and its effect on rider volume, particular on Park Road and Boulevard, to permit more timely travel on these routes.
  - d. Continue to participate in the State project to improve New Britain Avenue in Elmwood, including left turn lanes, and pedestrian and visual enhancements such as a median and landscaping.
  - e. Support evidence-based improvements to Route 44 over Avon Mountain to make the road safer and reduce the number of closures which divert traffic to West Hartford streets.
  
- 4. Support transportation improvements that enhance the economic strength of West Hartford, while protecting the residential neighborhoods.**
  - a. Encourage connections between, and consolidate access (entrances and egresses) to off-street parking facilities in commercial areas (i.e. Park Road, Farmington Avenue) to improve traffic flow and safety, and to reduce encroachment into adjacent residential areas.
  - b. Extend Oakwood Avenue to New Britain Avenue to improve accessibility of this underutilized area. This would reduce traffic at the intersection of New Britain and New Park Avenues.
  - c. Consider, in cooperation with the City of Hartford, signal interconnection and turning lanes along Prospect Avenue to maintain traffic circulation and minimize traffic diversion onto residential streets.
  
- 5. Support programs that provide and encourage alternate transportation modes on a Town-wide basis.**
  - a. Evaluate para-transit to support residents who cannot utilize the fixed route bus system and/or who wish to complete in-town trips without driving.
  - b. Provide safe walking routes for the general public and particularly to encourage more children to walk to school. Also, consider the feasibility of additional school busing to mitigate potentially unsafe congestion around Town schools and reduce individual auto use.
  - c. Encourage age-appropriate educational activities for the purpose of introducing our community to public transit. The entire community will be more comfortable using the public bus system if the first experience is a supervised, group experience.
  - d. Encourage age-appropriate walk and bike events for the purpose of encouraging walking and bike riding in the community.

- e. Complete the Trout Brook bike path and other bike paths using the existing street grid with the input of the Bicycle Task Force. Develop connections to existing and planned regional greenways and multi-use trails.

**6. Support programs that provide alternate transportation modes on a regional basis.**

- a. Identify and obtain funding for additional bus shelter locations at busy transit stops.
- b. Support completion of the New Britain-Hartford busway to reduce inter-town traffic on Town streets, and the effect of train crossings on the New Park-Flatbush Avenue intersection.
- c. Assist Connecticut Transit in adding or modifying bus routes, such as in the north-south corridor.
- d. Support upgrades to regional rail freight lines to reduce truck traffic.





# HISTORIC PRESERVATION



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## INTRODUCTION

West Hartford's long and distinguished history is amply illustrated by its irreplaceable historic and architectural heritage. From its colonial farmsteads, early roadways, and 20th century trolley line suburbs to its bustling Town Center, West Hartford has a wealth of historic and architecturally significant buildings, sites and streetscapes which contribute to its charm and character. The great majority of these continue to provide comfortable shelter for resident families and remain viable settings for conducting business, providing services, offering educational and recreational experiences as well as



cultural and spiritual fulfillment. They also comprise the many beautiful streetscapes for which the Town is known. These important resources have been recognized at the local, state and national levels and deserve our protection. Historic preservation recognizes the value of the works of our forebears and protects those works for the use, study and enjoyment of our children and grandchildren.

Objectives of Historic Preservation are:

- Foster pride in West Hartford as a dynamic and vital community which has respect for its past.
- Encourage the renovation and adaptive reuse of older buildings while maintaining their architectural integrity.
- Encourage development proposals that protect historical and archaeologically significant sites.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION TOOLS**

### *Historic Resources Inventory*

An important part of historic preservation is identifying and listing all structures and sites of architectural and historical significance. The resulting inventory of resources can be used by the Town Plan and Zoning and Historic District Commissions as a tool to set preservation priorities. A comprehensive survey and inventory of West Hartford resources was completed during 1979-1985; copies are available for reference at the Noah Webster House and West Hartford Historical Society and the West Hartford Public Library. Since the survey records the status of the Town's resources at the time of the original survey, it is important that it be updated to identify structures now qualifying for recognition as well as those damaged or destroyed since the original survey was done. It is also important that the survey be maintained on a regular basis as a planning tool for future decision-making Town bodies.

### *Preservation and Protection Strategies*

Among the many tools available for the preservation and protection of historic and architectural resources, the most effective and popular is listing on the State or National Register of Historic Places, or by designation as a local historic district or property. The level of protection varies with each designation. West Hartford currently has sites and structures listed or designated on all three. There are considerably more sites and structures eligible for such listings and therefore it is of utmost importance that a continuing effort be made to bring them under the umbrella of protection enjoyed by those resources currently listed.

### *National Register of Historic Places and Districts*

The National Register is the official listing of the nation's cultural resources worthy of preservation. A listing on the National Register is a prestigious recognition of the importance of the site, but does not affect the owner's rights to make use of the property as he wishes. Protection and preservation tools available include the following:

- provide for review of federally funded, licensed or sponsored projects which may affect listed historic properties.
- make owners of historic properties eligible to apply for federal grants-in-aid (when available) for preservation activities.
- encourage the rehabilitation, through tax incentives, of income-producing historic properties which meet preservation standards.
- provide protection from unreasonable destruction through use of the environmental protection provisions of the Connecticut General Statutes.

The West Hartford properties, sites and districts currently listed on the National Register are shown on the map entitled National Register of Historic Districts and Places.

### State Register of Historic Places

A listing on the State Register gives honorary recognition. The listing is also an adequate way to recognize the historic nature of a site or structure so that consideration is given to land use decisions which may impact upon these sites or structures. Special consideration is also available under the State Building Code for State Register-listed buildings. All of the sites on the National Register are also recognized on the State Register; currently there are no sites or structures in West Hartford listed separately on the State Register. However, because the listing process is generally quicker than that for the National Register, State Register listing can be used as an interim recognition for sites and structures while National Register recognition is being prepared or is pending.

### Local Historic Districts and Historic Properties

Of the three designations - National, State and Local - only the Local designation carries with it the strength of the law as it applies to the regulation of the exterior appearance of sites and structures (other than paint color) as viewed from public streets or places. The responsibility for regulation of Historic Districts and Historic Properties rests with the Historic District Commission. The West Hartford Historic District Commission (WHHDC) is the Town body that works to protect and preserve the architectural integrity and character of the three Town-designated districts including the Buena Vista Historic District, the Boulevard-Raymond Road Historic District, and the West Hill Historic District, as well as eight individual properties composed of eighteenth and early nineteenth century farmhouses. There are currently three historic districts and eight historic properties in West Hartford which are set forth on the map entitled Historic Districts and Properties.



The designation of a local historic district or property is intended to preserve and protect the distinctive characteristics of buildings, places of architectural and historical significance and streetscapes to a community. Nationwide, as well as statewide, experience demonstrates that the existence of a local historic district creates community pride, fosters neighborhood stabilization and enhances the appearance and authentic historic character of an area. Currently, over 7,100 buildings are protected in 69 towns in Connecticut.

## **GOAL**

Preserve, protect and enhance the architectural integrity and physical record of the history and growth of West Hartford, weaving it into the fabric of the Town's growth and development.

## **POLICIES**

### **1. Promote the preservation of West Hartford's historically and architecturally significant resources.**

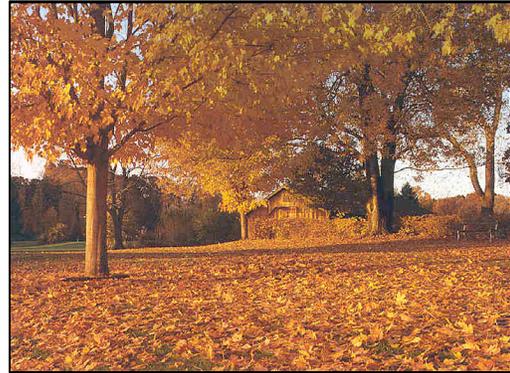
- a. Encourage and support protection for all historic resources by creating local historic districts and properties and/or listing on the State Register of Historic Places and/or the National Register of Historic Places.
- b. Promote public awareness and appreciation of local historic resources.
- c. Update the Historic Resources Inventory (1979-85) which identifies and locates historically and architecturally significant sites, structures and districts in West Hartford. Support the Historic District Commission in performing its duties to protect locally-designated historic districts and properties, and in all discretionary functions as permitted by the Connecticut General Statutes.
- d. Ensure publicly-owned properties (sites, artifacts, structures and buildings) of historical and architectural significance are protected.

### **2. Promote and enhance the viability of historic and architectural resources for their continuing use.**

- a. Encourage adaptive re-use of existing sites, buildings and structures.
- b. Adopt zoning ordinances that encourage adaptive re-use of former residential and industrial properties for new commercial, business or multiple uses, especially in transitional areas.
- c. Encourage development strategies and plans that are inclusive of historic buildings and sites.
- d. Encourage development strategies and plans that are sensitive to adjacent or nearby architectural and historic resources including those designated as local, state and national historic districts and properties and those identified in the Town wide historic and architectural resources survey.
- e. Encourage maintenance of the architectural integrity of historic and architecturally significant sites, buildings and structures when adapted for re-use for commercial, industrial or residential purposes.
- f. Pursue financial incentives for preservation, including state and federal grants, tax incentive programs, preservation or facade easements, assessment deferrals and transfer of development rights.
- g. Promote heritage tourism in West Hartford, showcasing the Town's house museums, art galleries, and parks. Encourage tourism through West Hartford's historic, architectural, recreational, and natural resources to support further economic development.
- h. Promote West Hartford's historic and architectural resources in cooperation with the West Hartford Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Hartford Tourism Bureau and the State Department of Economic Development.

- i. Promote the protection of streetscapes by ensuring new buildings, particularly on infill lots, will be of size and scale and quality similar to that of existing architecturally significant structures that possess the potential for historic designation on a street neighborhood.





# OPEN SPACE/ CONSERVATION

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## INTRODUCTION



Preservation of open space and conservation is one of the major principles promoted by the New Urbanism and Smart Growth movements. As discussed in the Land Use Element of this Plan of Conservation and Development, the overarching goal of the New Urbanism, Smart Growth and Sustainability movements is to create livable, healthy, safe and sustainable communities.

In furtherance of creating a sustainable community and promoting the Open Space/Conservation principle of Smart Growth, West Hartford will be guided by the following environmental principles:

- Encourage and support the preservation of open space
- Promote the conservation, protection and restoration of our environmental resources
- Ensure that West Hartford will be the steward of its natural, social and economic resources
- Reduce air, water, light, noise pollution
- Preserve the historic character of our community

## OPEN SPACE

Open space is defined as land that is either undeveloped or predominantly open in character. It may take many forms: public lands such as those within a municipality's public park and recreation system; reservoir/watershed property; private property, whether undeveloped by choice of the owner or due to legal commitments restricting use and property held by land trusts.

### Current Inventory

The Plan of Conservation and Development for the Capitol Region adopted by the Capitol Region Council of Governments indicates 27.7% of West Hartford is classified as open space. Among the twenty-nine (29) towns within the Capitol Region, West Hartford has the third largest proportion of its total land area classified as open space (after Farmington and Andover). West Hartford should continue to preserve its existing open space and as opportunities arise work towards acquiring additional open space.

Comprehensive and well managed open space and recreational facilities are important factors in achieving a sustainable community and enhancing the quality of life of West Hartford's residents. The benefits of open space and recreational facilities are multifaceted in that they help preserve natural features and environments, enhance community character and positively affect property values. Largely undeveloped open space, including parks also tend to help clean the air and water and mitigate noise and light pollution.

### Publicly-Owned Open Space

West Hartford has approximately 3,440 acres of publicly-owned open space, conservation and recreation areas in Town. These open space areas range from local neighborhood parks to natural areas. In addition, the school/park concept has historically been an integral element in the Town's overall network of public open space/recreation facilities. The school/park partnership concept provides use of fields for school use during school hours and public use thereafter. The remaining publicly owned open space is comprised either of watershed areas of the Metropolitan District Commission or state-controlled flood control districts.



Since adoption of the last Plan of Conservation and Development, approximately sixteen (16) acres of additional open space has been acquired. The 16 acres include the acquisition of land for the construction of Bristow Middle School and the property at the corner of Flatbush Avenue and South Quaker Lane for athletic fields. Additionally, as part of the Blue Back Square development, approximately 2 acres on Raymond Road is designated open space.

### Land Trusts

During that same time period, the West Hartford Land Trust and the Wintonbury Land Trust acquired approximately 11 acres of open space. Land Trusts are non-profit organizations engaged in the voluntary protection and preservation of open, undeveloped land. Land Trusts provide long term stewardship of important resources, whether environmental or historical, through the acquisition of full or partial interests in property. Creation of the West Hartford Land Trust has provided another mechanism by which land can be conserved forever. While independent from, the Town of West Hartford, the West Hartford Land Trust was formed with the unanimous support of the West Hartford Town Council. The Trust's mission is to enhance the quality of life in West Hartford through acquiring, conserving and preserving open space in the community. To date the West Hartford Land Trust has preserved nearly five (5) acres of open space in West Hartford. The parcels held by the Land Trust are located at 1148 and 1156R Farmington Avenue and 12 Clark Drive.

While the holdings of the West Hartford Land Trust are relatively small at the present time, they continue to grow through steady, selective acquisition of land donated by private property owners. We are encouraged by this progress and will continue to work with the West Hartford Land Trust to identify property which may be appropriate for conservation under the stewardship of this important volunteer organization.

The Wintonbury Land Trust was founded in 1984 to engage in and promote for the benefit of the general public the preservation, improvement, protection, and conservation of environmental resources including streams, water sources, wetlands, woodlands, farmland, and other open space. In 2000, the Wintonbury Land Trust acquired from the State of Connecticut an approximately 7 acre parcel known as 20 Still Road and located on the northwest corner of Still Road and North Main Street.

### Natural Areas and the Trail System

Five open space areas in Town are designated as natural areas. Those areas are Spicebush Swamp Preserve, Mooney's Woods, Morris/Bugbee Woods, Caya Mozart Preserve and Rochambeau Campsite. Some of these sites are predominantly wetland areas which serve a significant environmental role for flood control purposes. In the case of the Rochambeau Campsite, located on Avon Mountain, West Hartford enjoys a historical amenity unique to the area. West Hartford recognizes that these areas are important for their environmental and historical significance and should be preserved and where possible expanded as permanent open space /conservation areas.

The Town continues to work to develop a multi-use trail system to expand recreational opportunities along Trout Brook from the southeast section of Town at New Park Avenue to the University of Connecticut campus at Asylum Avenue. This greenway project provides recreational opportunities not currently available and promotes sustainability and energy conservation efforts by supporting alternative modes of transportation as discussed in the Transportation Element of this Plan.



Over the next decade, there may be instances where the Town of West Hartford has opportunity to add to our inventory of public open spaces and recreation areas. The Town should, whenever possible, seize these opportunities to expand the inventory of publicly owned open space. Since its last Plan of Conservation and Development, the Town has addressed the need for playing fields by improving existing facilities at the schools, acquisition of property at the corner of Flatbush Avenue and South Quaker Lane and leasing of land on Asylum Avenue from the University of Connecticut. While these opportunities should not be ignored, emphasis will also be placed on the maintenance of existing publicly-owned facilities and open space as well as the expansion of opportunities to use these spaces to their fullest.

The table below summarizes existing publicly owned and Land Trust held open space in the Town of West Hartford:

### Open Space Inventory

Category	Acreage
Town Parks	287
Town Golf Courses	213
Town School Property	335
Town Natural Areas	105
State of CT/MDC	2,500
Land Trusts	12
Private Golf Courses	380
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,832</b>

### Privately Owned Open Space

Privately-owned and undeveloped open space is located primarily within the Town's R-80 Zone, located along the west side of the Town. Since adoption of the last Plan of Conservation and Development, refinements to the zoning regulations applicable to open-space development within that zone have made possible the Old Stone Crossing development. As discussed in the Land Use section, this project demonstrates it is possible to create viable housing and preserve much needed open space. While we believe current ordinances encourage environmentally-sensitive clustered developments, opportunities to develop additional ordinances should be pursued where appropriate in order to expand the Town's ability to preserve property values and provide open space proactively.

### Conservation/Environmental Resources

In fully developed communities such as West Hartford, balancing growth with preservation and enhancement of important environmental resources is critical to achieving a sustainable community. Some of the environmental resources in West Hartford include watercourses, wetlands, floodplains and wildlife.

#### *Storm Water*

Polluted storm water runoff is the largest source of water quality problems in the nation today. Non point source pollution comes from rainfall that accumulates contaminants and sediments from such sources as driveways, parking areas, roofs, construction sites and fertilized lawns.

Historically, storm water management techniques in West Hartford emphasized the efficient collection and removal of storm water. This is typically achieved by employing a combination of curbs, catch basins and pipes to control runoff and discharge into a



Town storm sewer system or directly to the nearest stream. This practice of emphasizing the conveyance of storm water as quickly and efficiently as possible can contribute to non-point pollution.

In 2004, West Hartford was the first town to receive approval of its Storm Water Management Plan and was issued the first State permit for the discharge of municipal storm water. The Town of West Hartford is one of the 130 towns in Connecticut

regulated by the Phase Two Storm Water Permitting Program administered by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). This program's objective is to establish uniform methods that lead to improved water quality in the State's watercourses. In pursuit of this objective, the DEP has developed a "General Permit for the Discharge of Storm Water from Small Municipal Separate Water Systems".

The Town, conforming to conditions in the permit, has registered its Storm Sewer System Plan with the DEP. The Plan includes the following six control measures:

- Public education and outreach on storm water impacts
- Public involvement/public participation
- Illicit discharge detection and elimination
- Construction site storm water management runoff control
- Post construction storm water management in new development and redevelopment and
- Pollution prevention/good housekeeping for municipal operations

Each of the six control measures includes best management practices, designates a responsible party, an implementation timeline, and measurable goals.

A comprehensive storm water management plan that controls stormwater as well as improves water quality discharges should be provided as part of all land use development proposals. Stormwater management plans should implement innovative Best Management Practices (BMP) such as Low Impact Development (LID) designs that reduce the negative impacts of development on watershed areas and watercourses. The goal of LID is to limit runoff from development areas and preserve the natural or predevelopment hydrology of the site. Pervious pavement, rain gardens and other approaches that promote the infiltration of storm water into the soil are some of the innovative best management practices that should be evaluated and if possible employed to mitigate the potential adverse impacts of urban improvements.

Additionally, stormwater management plans submitted with land use development proposals should achieve the following:

- Reduce the overall volume and rate of storm water discharged directly to a Town system or water body;
- Minimize future flooding and associated damage to public and private infrastructure and environmental resources;
- Reduce the amount of sediment discharged into water bodies;
- Reduce the amount of fertilizers and pesticides discharged directly into watercourses or other bodies of water;
- Minimize alteration of aquatic habitats; and
- Limit development in watersheds that contribute public drinking water supplies.

Environmentally sound principles should also be employed in building design, construction and landscape plans. Development proposals should incorporate building design techniques that maximize energy efficiency and conservation. Building trades should incorporate, when possible, environmentally sustainable products such as recycled materials. Landscape plans should be designed to minimize the use of herbicides and pesticides. An integrated pest management (IPM) program should also be considered in the preparation of development proposals. IPM is an environmentally responsible and economically practical method of controlling pest populations. IPM incorporates multiple pest control techniques primarily relying on preventive measures and non-toxic controls.

### *Wetlands and Watercourses*

Wetlands and watercourses have been a regulated natural resource in the Town of West Hartford since 1974 with the adoption of the West Hartford Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations. The West Hartford Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency is authorized to regulate activities affecting wetlands and watercourses and is responsible for enforcing all provisions of the West Hartford Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations. The Town Plan and Zoning Commission also acts as the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency.

Wetland soils are defined by the Connecticut General Statutes as poorly drained, very poorly drained and floodplain soils. The protection of wetland soils and watercourses are important for a variety of reasons including:

- Wetlands provide habitat that is critical to a variety of plant and animal species, including threatened and endangered species;
- Wetlands often function like natural sponges, storing water (floodwater or surface water) and slowly releasing it to groundwater and surface waters, thereby reducing the likelihood of flooding and flood damage to personal property;
- Wetlands help improve water quality by interception of surface runoff and removing or retaining its nutrients, processing organic wastes and reducing sediment before it reaches open water;
- Wetlands provide outdoor recreational opportunities;
- Wetlands are essential to an adequate and safe supply of surface and groundwater and
- Wetlands provide resources for scientific study and education, serving as laboratories for research and as classrooms for teaching ecology and the role of wetland systems.

### *Preservation of the Natural Environment*

The State of Connecticut has identified specific areas that contain endangered or threatened species and species of special concern. This information is found in the State's Natural Diversity Database (NDDDB). It is the central repository for information on the biology, population, status and threats to the natural diversity in the State. Requiring review of the NDDDB as part of the land use application process will continue to ensure the preservation of these important environmental resources.

Tree planting efforts should enable a diversity of tree species to reduce the vulnerability of the urban forest as a whole to pests and diseases. Continued promotion of a town-wide tree planting effort, as discussed in the Housing section of this Plan, is an important environmental/conservation initiative. Not only do tree-lined sidewalks provide attractive streetscape, but from an environmental perspective, trees make a significant contribution to air quality and reduce air temperatures by providing shade to surrounding surfaces,

Ridgelines are important environmental resources for their geologic, environmental and aesthetic characteristics. West Hartford has long recognized the environmental and



aesthetic value of the ridgeline running north and south along the Avon town line. In 1990, West Hartford revised its subdivision regulations requiring that subdivisions be designed to reduce adverse impacts on identified environmental resources, such as ridgelines. The Town Plan and Zoning Commission may require the redesign of the subdivision to further reduce the adverse impact of any

development proposal on significant environmental resources. Further study to review existing regulations and determine the need for additional ridgeline protection measures is recommended.

### *Recycling and Waste Reduction*

Recycling turns material that would otherwise enter the waste stream into valuable resources. Some of the key benefits to recycling are:

- Reducing the need for landfilling and incineration;
- Saving energy and preventing pollution;
- Decreasing emissions of some forms of pollution;
- Conserving environmental resources such as timber and water and
- Helping to sustain the environment for future generations.

West Hartford recycles approximately 23% of its solid waste, making the Town a statewide leader in recycling. Although the recycling rates of West Hartford are three times that of major cities in the Connecticut Resource Recovery Authority region, efforts to make the program more user-friendly and convenient to residents is strongly urged as well as educational programs that continue to promote the awareness and benefits of recycling.

## **GOAL**

Assure the preservation and expansion of open space to maintain and increase the quality of life of West Hartford citizens, preserve and protect fragile natural systems, and implement practices to achieve a sustainable community.

## **POLICIES**

### **1. Continue to provide sufficient open space and ensure that the Town's existing networks of open space and recreation areas are preserved.**

- a. Encourage dedication or preservation of open space in the design of future residential and commercial development proposals.
- b. Dedicate Spicebush Swamp Preserve, Caya Mozart, Mooney's Woods, Morris/Bugbee School Woods and the Rochambeau Historical site as permanent conservation areas.

### **2. Preserve, enhance and maintain parks, open space and recreational facilities.**

- a. Sustain a commitment to a high level of maintenance for parks and open space.
- b. Enhance parks through regular maintenance and scheduled replacement of equipment and landscaping.
- c. Preserve, and where appropriate, develop parks and recreation opportunities, including bicycle paths and walkways.

### **3. Evaluate opportunities to purchase land and expand open space, conservation or recreation areas.**

- a. Support continued efforts by the West Hartford Land Trust to identify and acquire property appropriate for conservation.

### **4. Identify and protect ridge lines, wildlife corridors, wetland areas and significant geologic and natural features.**

- a. Utilize the Natural Diversity Data Base of the CT Department of Environmental Protection to identify and protect endangered species of plants and animals.
- b. Maintain existing open space areas throughout the Town, such as those along Albany Avenue West to preserve the natural, historical and aesthetic value of this area.
- c. Continue to protect wetlands, natural drainage systems, steep slopes and other environmentally sensitive areas by encouraging cluster development in the R-80 zone.
- d. Study and evaluate the development and implementation of additional ridgeline protection regulations.

**5. Reduce non-point source pollution.**

- a. Require developers to employ Best Management Practices and implement Low Impact Development designs such as rain gardens, bio-retention areas, swales and/or conservation areas.
- b. Educate homeowners about the importance of reducing their individual impact on water quality by using less toxic chemicals, environmentally friendly fertilizer, proactively maintaining septic systems, and properly disposing of cleaning products and automotive grease and oil.
- c. Review and evaluate existing ordinances to determine if requirements for impervious parking areas can be reduced.
- d. Continue to effectively manage and control stormwater runoff to minimize adverse impacts on property and the public as well as the natural environment.
- e. Evaluate additional measures, including the development of conservation zones, to address non-point source pollution in environmentally sensitive areas.

**6. Identify and protect the Town's inland wetlands and watercourses from development.**

- a. Expand opportunities for public paths and multi-use trails along open space corridors and along watercourses as a unique recreational amenity and educational opportunity for Town residents.
- b. Ensure stormwater management plans address water quality in addition to water quantity.
- c. Protect the fragile environmental resources of the Town through vigilant enforcement of the West Hartford Inland Wetland and Watercourse Regulations and the Erosion and Sedimentation Control Regulations contained in the Town's Zoning Ordinance.
- d. Periodically evaluate, in conjunction with the Conservation and Environment Commission, the Town's Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations to ensure adequate protection of the Town's environmental resources and propose necessary revisions.
- e. Continue to draw upon the expertise of the Conservation and Environment Commission.

**7. Promote awareness of environmental issues and encourage practices that sustain a healthful environment.**

- a. Promote integrated pest management (IPM) techniques that minimize the use of chemical pesticides.
- b. Encourage environmental educational efforts to promote sustainable practices such as recycling and application of IPM principles.
- c. Encourage improved utilization of the Town's website as an educational tool for environmental awareness.
- d. Encourage site planning, building designs and construction that promote energy conservation and environmental sensitivity.

- e. Preserve existing street trees and enhance the planting of new and diverse trees throughout Town.
- f. Require development proposals to maximize tree preservation, planting and replacement.
- g. Encourage the Department of Public Works and the Metropolitan District Commission to implement a more convenient, user-friendly recycling program.





## LAND USE

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### INTRODUCTION



Compact development was the dominant land use pattern throughout the country up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As communities grew during this time period, people lived, worked and socialized close together. Communities had central business areas where commercial and civic buildings were concentrated; there was a mix of land uses and buildings connected by a grid street network. However by the 1950's, with the availability of inexpensive automobiles, low density land use

policies that were responding to the post WWII demands and the abundance of new streets responding to the auto-dominated society, a new pattern of development emerged, known today as “sprawl”. This type of development pattern had certain benefits, but it created new problems such as automobile dependency and traffic congestion, inefficient energy and natural resource consumption, a reduction in pedestrian activity and a loss of community character.

In Connecticut and throughout the country, there is heightened concern over the economic, social and environmental impact of communities developed within the ideals of sprawl development, primarily in terms of the loss of open space and the energy, health, and economic costs associated with an auto-dominated society. In response to these concerns, the smart growth, New Urbanism and sustainability movements have evolved. The overarching goal of Smart Growth, New Urbanism and Sustainability

movements is to create livable, healthy, safe and sustainable communities. The major principles of these three movements are interrelated and similar in many respects, including the promotion of:

- compact walkable communities
- mixed land uses
- urban and town centers
- alternative means of transportation
- open space
- distinctive attractive communities with a strong sense of place and character
- streetscape and neighborhood beauty, including a focus on trees and plantings

One of West Hartford's strengths is the degree to which the Town's infrastructure and land use patterns mirror the smart growth/New Urbanism principles. The Town's infrastructure and land use patterns possess the fundamental assets necessary to implement land use policies consistent with the principles of smart growth/New Urbanism.

This represents a major competitive advantage of West Hartford over surrounding municipalities and the Town should work to maintain and increase this economic advantage over its neighbors. Many of the Town's current practices reflect this philosophy: streets are laid in a grid, most streets have sidewalks, there are several existing group and mass transit options for residents (with additional services in the planning stages, as well as a bicycle path), and there are several commercial locations in Town that were developed in a dense, mixed use manner (the Center, Farmington Avenue from Prospect to Main Street, Park Road from Prospect to South Quaker, and Elmwood) and others that are within walking distance of residential areas (Bishop's Corner, Sunset Triangle).

Going forward, the way we plan the physical layout of our community is fundamental to sustainability. Community sustainability requires land use practices that create and maintain efficient infrastructure, well planned neighborhoods, pedestrian appeal, and a sense of community and preservation of natural systems.

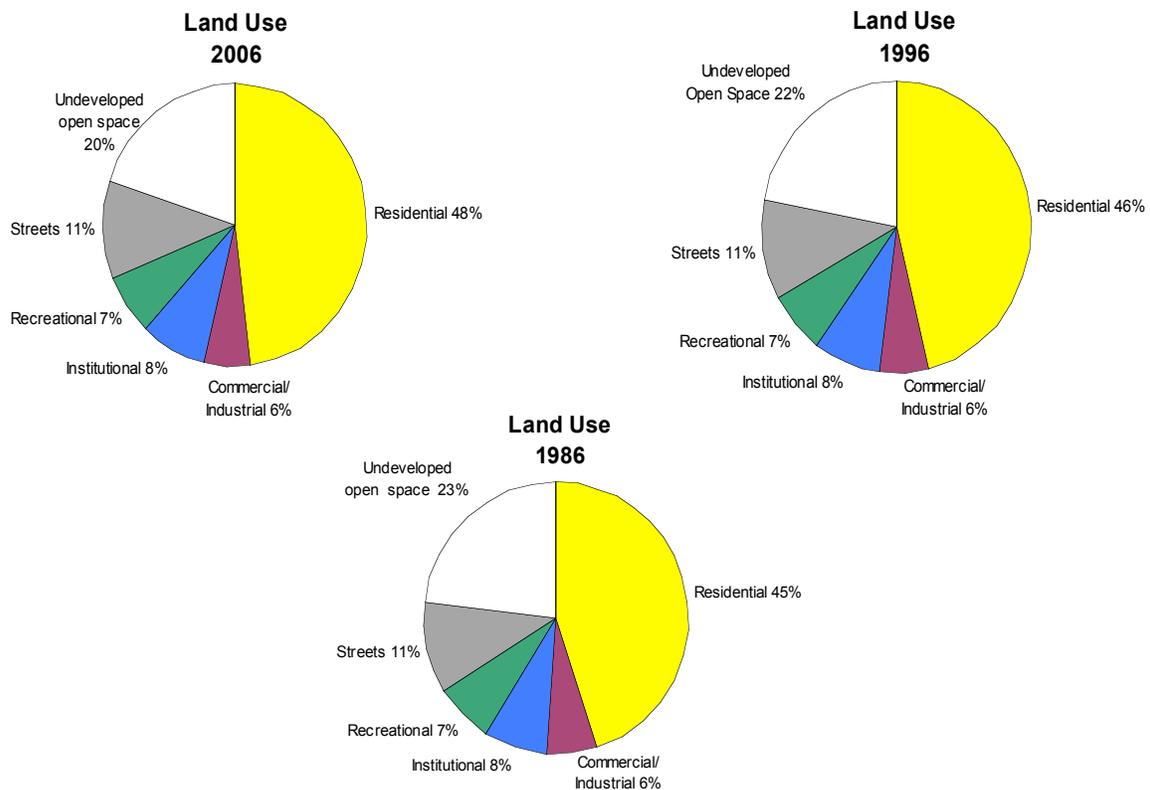
In mature, fully developed communities such as West Hartford, existing land uses become one of the most important considerations in determining future land use policy. Reviewing and evaluating the land use within a community is one of the most important tasks in determining its physical plan and ultimately its community character and quality of life. Land use options must be carefully analyzed to insure new uses support and complement the existing land use patterns throughout Town. The relationship between uses such as residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, educational and recreational, and the expanse and intensity of each use, directly impacts the Town's character and quality of life.

## **GENERAL LAND USE PATTERNS**

West Hartford is organized into thirty two (32) land use zoning districts defined in the zoning ordinance. The zoning ordinance is the legislative authority that classifies areas by land use type and is the principal tool for implementing land use policy.

As shown in Chart 1, nearly half (48%) of West Hartford's 21.8 square mile area is devoted to residential use; 11% is for the transportation network, 7% is for recreation, 8% is for institutional purposes, 6% is for commercial activities and 20% (2,800 acres) is undeveloped. The chart further demonstrates that the Town land use patterns have changed little in the last twenty years.

**Chart 1  
General Land Use  
1986-2008**



Almost 90%, approximately 2,500 acres of the undeveloped land is either watershed areas owned by the Metropolitan District Commission or flood control areas owned by the State of Connecticut. The remaining privately owned undeveloped land is located in residentially zoned areas of Town and therefore will be discussed further in this chapter under the subsection titled "Residential Land Use Patterns".

As discussed in the Housing section of this Plan of Conservation and Development, 69% of the residential units in West Hartford are single family detached dwellings located within traditional suburban-style neighborhoods. Maintaining the appeal of West Hartford's neighborhoods as residential enclaves that are entirely separate and set apart

from adjacent commercial districts is vital to future property values. Preserving the boundaries around these neighborhoods through prudent review of a potential zone change for a boundary location will reinforce the finite availability of land for each use and preserve the property values of land within each district. Future land development activities should recognize the physical predominance of residential uses.

Considering the limited availability of land and the desire to achieve sustainable community growth, future growth should be thought of in terms of appropriate density, mixed land uses, and redevelopment within existing commercial districts. Due to the importance of the Town's neighborhoods, the impact of any new development on the neighborhoods deserves diligent review. The quality and appeal of the neighborhoods are the Town's backbone, and their importance to the Town's future cannot be minimized.

Several established commercial districts in Town have the fundamental components of successful mixed use "complete neighborhoods" already in place. A "complete" neighborhood is one in which residents can live, work, shop for daily necessities, and enjoy leisure activities within close proximity and preferably without requiring the use of a car. Several existing commercial districts have compact walk-able configurations, the businesses required to meet the daily needs of residents (a market, a pharmacy, a bank, etc) and green space for leisure. Most also have the infrastructure for alternative modes of transportation, as discussed in the transportation chapter of this Plan of Development. The strengths of several existing commercial districts can easily be adapted for future smart growth/New Urbanism development.

This section of the Plan of Conservation and Development will discuss how existing land use practices have implemented smart growth and New Urbanism principles and how future land use practices will continue to consider policies to strengthen and apply the principles of sustainability and reduce the impact of sprawl.

In summary, future land use policy should give deference to the fact that much of West Hartford's distinct character lies in its historic diversity of land uses, neighborhood densities and its physical, economic and cultural strengths. Policies should continue to maintain and enhance the appealing character of West Hartford's diverse neighborhoods. When opportunities for positive new development or redevelopment emerge, the Town should encourage creative ideas and adaptive reuses and guide change to enhance the quality of the neighborhoods. Principles of sustainability and new urbanism should be encouraged.

## **RESIDENTIAL LAND USE PATTERNS**



As stated previously, West Hartford is primarily a residential community with almost 50% of its land area in residential use. By 1960, the Town had already been substantially developed and its residential land use was primarily characterized by single family development. It is interesting to note, compared to all municipalities in the State, West Hartford has one of the highest numbers of single family homes. However, more recently, as discussed in the Housing section of this Plan, the majority of new residential development has been multi-family condominium. Increase in condominium land use is further reflected in the increase in multi-family zoning districts during the last decade. Five out of the fourteen new Special Development Districts approved since 1996 requested multi-family zoning districts for condominium developments.

As noted previously, Chart 1 indicates approximately twenty percent (20%) of the total land area in Town, or 2,800 acres, is undeveloped, however only approximately 300 acres is privately-owned and may be considered for development. The majority of the privately-owned vacant parcels are located west of Mountain Road along Albany Avenue, along the west end of Simsbury Road and on Bloomfield Avenue at the Bloomfield/West Hartford town line. All parcels are located in residential zones.

The largest-privately owned parcel on Albany Avenue is approximately 30 acres and located on the south side at 2897 Albany Avenue. The next largest parcel is approximately 23 acres located on the north side at 3080 Albany Avenue. All vacant parcels in this area are located within the single family R-80 zoning district. This zone has been effective in preserving open space and requiring development to be sensitive to the environmental and natural land features of the area. The subdivision near completion in this area, known as Old Stone Crossing, demonstrates that it is possible to create a viable housing development while preserving open space. To that end, it is important to note that almost 60% of the total land area of this development is privately-owned open space. Future development in this area shall continue to comply with the R80 Open Space zoning district requirements.

All vacant land located on the north end of Town on Simsbury Road and Bloomfield Avenue is located in the single family R-13 zoning district. The largest parcel on Simsbury Road is owned by the CIGNA Company and is approximately 40 acres. The St. Thomas Seminary of Hartford also owns approximately 40 acres on Bloomfield Avenue on the Town line.

West Hartford’s residential neighborhoods vary in character and are the cornerstone of this community, in terms of its tax base and desirability for current and future residents. Neighborhood characteristics range from “suburban” style single family homes to “urban” neighborhoods with multi-story, multi-family buildings within more dense, active areas, to mixed-use



districts with commercial/professional office and residential activities under one roof. Each neighborhood has a defining style of architecture, and building materials, streetscape and amenities (i.e. proximity to a school, a recreation area, a shopping district, a bus line etc, that serve to distinguish and define the neighborhood. This diversity allows residents to choose from a wide range of lifestyles, price ranges, and neighborhood “personality” from urban to suburban, active to quiet.

For all the neighborhoods in West Hartford, there are certain standards that need to be promoted universally including quality of home maintenance, transportation-related safety programs, and tree planting efforts (particularly along sidewalks, as discussed in the housing section).

For West Hartford’s suburban-style single family neighborhoods the ideal of the quiet lifestyle should be protected. For dense, urban-style neighborhoods the smart growth/New Urbanism/sustainability ideals of compact or “complete neighborhoods,” those in which each neighborhood provides for the basic daily needs of residents within a comfortable walking distance, should be promoted. Future development that is aligned with the existing character of a neighborhood will further enhance and define the different lifestyles available to residents. The availability of different lifestyle options is unique to West Hartford and is a great asset, particularly in providing housing options for people during all stages of life, as discussed in the Demographics and Housing sections. However, certain goals are consistent across all West Hartford neighborhoods, such as a focus on streetscape appeal, including mature trees and plantings, as well as walkability.

## MIXED USE/COMMERCIAL LAND USE PATTERNS



Early zoning policies led to the separation of land uses into residential, commercial and industrial classes. However, as a result of policies recommended in prior Plans, West Hartford established zoning districts that permit and encourage mixed use development in certain transitional areas. In particular, two relatively new zoning districts are the Multi-Family Residence-Office

District (RMO) and the Residential Character Office District (RCO). Both zones require the residential character of existing structures to be preserved while allowing partial or total conversion to professional office uses. Both zoning classifications have been successfully applied as a transitional buffer into residential areas, primarily along certain areas of Farmington Avenue and North Main Street.

In the years since these zones were established , seventeen (17) of the thirty-eight (38) properties with the RCO and RMO zoning designation have been converted from residential to professional office or mixed professional office/residential use. The adoption and implementation of these two zones demonstrates the Town's recognition of the benefits of mixed-use development in appropriate locations and its commitment to the principles of Smart Growth. The RCO and RMO zoning districts provide transitional buffers into residential areas and affirm the physical boundaries around commercial areas. Further application of these zoning districts is recommended. The Design Review Advisory Committee routinely participates in the physical alteration of any conversion from residential to RMO or RCO use and other significant projects, and the Committee's insights consistently result in an improved product in terms of material and visual quality. These developments are consistently marked by continued attention to pedestrian access and streetscape appeal, including parking to the rear or to the side of the building.

The most significant mixed use development project in Town , Blue Back Square , opened in 2007. This project implemented the major components of smart growth and New Urbanism, specifically a compact, pedestrian-oriented streetscape and design, reinvestment in and connection to a unique town center, and the adaptive reuse of an existing but underutilized commercial area. The former automobile dealerships along Raymond Road provided the site for redevelopment and allowed for an integrated expansion of the existing and vibrant West Hartford Center. Blue Back Square augments West Hartford Center with its combination of residential, retail, office and mixed-use areas for private and public enjoyment. The development looks beyond the immediate area and embraces the character of the existing West Hartford Center with its wide treed sidewalks, varied shopping and eating establishments, professional office space and a de-

emphasis on large surface parking lots. The residential units and parking facilities address market demand for these components in the Center. Blue Back Square is designed as a strong, vibrant pedestrian-oriented development with a mix of uses and public space amenities. The development emphasizes large on street trees. This project embraces the primary principles of Smart Growth and continues to enhance West Hartford's special sense of place.

This development expanded the already successful Center commercial district with increased vertical density while preserving the boundaries of the adjacent residential neighborhoods. Considering the improvements and success of West Hartford Center, it is anticipated that the coming decade will continue to present challenging opportunities for its growth.

Generally, West Hartford's other major commercial districts had already been established by 1960. In addition to West Hartford Center, as discussed in the Economic Development section of this Plan, the primary retail shopping areas include: Bishop's Corner, Elmwood Center, Park Road and Corbin's Corner. These commercial districts should continue to complement the adjacent residential neighborhoods and focus on pedestrian access and appeal.



The General Business (BG) zone allows for a variety of retail, service and office uses. The commercial corridors of Park Road and New Britain Avenue (Elmwood Center) are zoned BG. Mixed/residential use is not permitted. The distinct separation of uses was the advent of Euclidian zoning nationally in the 1930's, which promoted greater separation of land uses which were viewed as incompatible. While the concept continues to have merit in many ways, the adverse environmental impacts of older industrial and commercial land uses which made their separation from residential areas so important in earlier eras have been reduced dramatically over time. Conversely, new concerns about sprawl, affordability and sustainability has encouraged the propagation of compact, mixed use, pedestrian oriented development touted by the smart growth, new urbanism movements. Consequently, selective mixing of certain commercial and residential land uses may now be just as beneficial to the development of a sustainable community as their separation once was.

Permitting residential uses in the upper floors of commercial buildings creates a sense of community and an "urban neighborhood" environment. This type of mixed-use leads to a desirable increase in pedestrian activity during and after business hours and on weekends, contributing to the vibrancy of the once solely commercial district. This vibrancy, in

turn, benefits the surrounding neighborhood. The market demand for this type of “urban housing” has been strong in recent years in West Hartford and follows national trends toward more urban living. At present, West Hartford Center and Farmington Avenue (from the Hartford line to just west of the Center) have benefited from the vibrancy created with residential use interspersed with commercial use along with the preservation and planting of trees in and along the street. Extending this concept to areas of Town such as Park Road and New Britain Avenue, which already have strong neighborhood appeal and is pedestrian friendly, compact streetscapes, may spur further reinvestment. This type of mixed use can be implemented by permitting residential uses in the BG zones. It is recognized that the economics for those mixed uses in new construction, particularly in lower density projects, can be daunting.

As we have noted previously, mixed uses is one of the major principles of Smart Growth. In addition to applying the RMO/RCO zones that can merge residential and commercial land uses in a way once considered to be the antithesis of zoning, West Hartford has also applied its unique zoning district, the Special Development District ordinance, to encourage developments that are consistent with Smart Growth and New Urbanism principles. Blue Back Square was approved under this designation and as noted previously exemplifies Smart Growth principles.

The Special Development District (SDD) ordinance has its origins in the Town’s first zoning ordinance in the 1920s and was originally incorporated in the Zoning Ordinance to provide flexible design control for large parcel development. The SDD ordinance is essentially an overlay design district which provides the Town greater regulatory authority over the site design and



functional aspects of the land use. The ordinance provides specific controls over the designated parcel, including the arrangement of buildings, landscaping, and architectural design. This increased control, as well as the flexibility permitted by the ordinance not only serves to protect the adjoining areas from possible adverse impacts, but also achieves more desirable development plans. The Special Development District ordinance continues to be a valuable and visionary land use tool. The eighty-four (84) Special Development Districts are indicated by land use type on the map entitled, Special Development Districts.

We have discussed the benefits of mixed-used smart growth development. However, not every commercial area maybe appropriate for this type of development pattern. This is not to say that pedestrians and transit should be ignored. On the contrary, auto-oriented shopping centers should be made more pedestrian-friendly with well-designed walkways, landscaping, trees, benches, lighting, transit shelters and buildings with architectural

detailing to add visual interest. Development proposals should incorporate these improvements.

## **INDUSTRIAL LAND USE PATTERNS**

Industrial land use is limited to the southeastern area of Town and covers approximately 700 acres. In general, the industrially zoned area does not reflect heavy industry, but rather commercial services, auto-related repair garages, small machine shops and storage yards. In the 1990's a significant retail development that includes two large retailers, Home Depot and BJ's Warehouse, each over 100,000 square feet, was completed. This retail use, known as West Hartford Place, is a redevelopment success story and, as noted in the Economic Development element of this Plan, has spurred economic growth along the New Park Avenue corridor. The recent economic growth has evolved into a Home Design District characterized as commercial/retail services that blend together a variety of small businesses providing goods and services to consumers who are reinvesting in their properties. Land use policies should continue to encourage this positive land use transformation.

There are, however, several areas of the industrial zone containing heavier industrial uses such as Abbott Ball Company, Colt, United Tool and Die and Wiremold, among others. The Piper Brook Redevelopment area, along the southeastern portion of the zone, also contains land uses typical of industrial zoning.

The remaining industrial zoned area is located east of New Park Avenue between Tolles Street, Vanderbilt Avenue, Dexter Avenue and the Town line. The area is approximately 14 acres and contains a mix of small commercial service establishments, small machine shops, storage yards, single family homes and small vacant parcels. This area is zoned Industrial Park (IP) which has proven to be an overly restrictive zone for potential redevelopment activity. The zone initially was established to encourage lot assembly for large scale development, and therefore requires a minimum lot area of 30,000 s.f., a standard that is virtually impossible to meet in this area. The anticipated industrial park type of development has not occurred through the years and is no longer as desirable as once was thought to be. The IP designation makes many of the pre-existing uses within this district non-conforming, and has prevented the expansion of businesses already located within this district that do not meet the 30,000 s.f. standard.

## **GOAL**

Sustain and preserve the Town of West Hartford as a complete community by maintaining neighborhood quality and promoting the principles of Smart Growth.

## **POLICIES**

- 1. Promote sustainable and smart growth development that preserves and enhances the distinct character and sense of place of West Hartford.**
  - a. Encourage higher economic use of commercial/industrial properties where the physical land characteristics, transportation conditions and infrastructure are conducive to increased intensity.
  - b. Opportunity for growth should be in terms of appropriate density increases, mixed land uses and redevelopment considering the limited availability of land and the desire to achieve sustainable and smart growth.
  - c. Foster commercial development patterns that are complementary to adjacent residential land uses.
  - d. Encourage development and redevelopment proposals to incorporate principles of smart growth, new urbanism, pedestrian appeal, trees, bicycle-friendly and energy efficient design techniques.
  - e. Principles of smart growth, sustainability and New Urbanism, including walkability should be considered during the land use decision making process.
  
- 2. Protect and enhance the quality of West Hartford's well-established residential neighborhoods.**
  - a. Continue to clearly delineate on land use maps the broad boundaries that illustrate the border of commercial and residential areas in key parts of Town.
  - b. Preserve the quality and integrity of residential areas through the diligent use of Zoning Regulations and Code Enforcement.
  - c. Enhance residential streetscapes by enhancing the role of the Town Plan and Zoning Commission and the Design Review and Advisory Committee
  - d. Encourage further application of the Multi-family Residence-Office (RMO) and Residential Character Office District (RCO) zones as transitional buffers around commercial districts to preserve and protect the surrounding residential neighborhoods.
  - e. Maintain and enhance the Town's residential character by protecting existing residential areas from encroachment by incompatible uses.
  - f. Preserve existing street trees and enhance the planting of new trees throughout the Town.

- 3. Maintain and promote an attractive, safe, sustainable community that encourages individuals, families and businesses to locate and remain in the community.**
  - a. Preserve and enhance the community character while encouraging smart growth development that adds to the community's desirability and attractiveness.
  - b. Require developments to be consistent with the existing quality of design and material standards of the community, particularly through the use of the Design Review Advisory Committee (DRAC) consultation.
  - c. Encourage the preservation of existing open space and the means to create new areas of open space either through independent Town efforts or in conjunction with existing groups such as the West Hartford Land Trust.
  - d. Encourage creative redevelopment through the use of required zoning standards and the application of recommendations of the West Hartford Design Review Advisory Committee.
  
- 4. Support zoning and land use decisions in accordance with the recommendations in the Economic Development, Housing and Sustainability sections of this Plan of Conservation and Development.**
  - a. Retain and enhance a diversity of commercial and industrial areas as desirable, safe and pleasant locations for economic activity.
  - b. Promote reinvestment in older commercial and industrial districts to meet architectural design standards as recommended by the Design Review Advisory Committee, and incorporate site improvements that are consistent with smart growth principles.
  - c. Promote the investment and private redevelopment of underutilized properties in the southeast area of Town by developing a new comprehensive long range plan, and through selected revision to zoning ordinances applicable to this area.
  - d. Initiate an amendment to the zoning regulations to eliminate the Industrial Park (IP) Zone and rezone to a more flexible zoning district.
  - e. Continue to support long-term maintenance and improvement of Town infrastructure and public amenities such as the commercial streetscape programs through adequate capital improvement budgeting.
  - f. Encourage the adaptive reuse of existing structures to protect the historic fabric of the community, and encourage reinvestment.



# PLAN IMPLEMENTATION



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The Plan of Conservation and Development is a policy document and therefore its recommendations are implemented not only by the Plan itself but by the appropriate planning tools to be discussed in this section.

The tools necessary to implement the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development are currently in place. The Town's Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations, and Capital Improvement Program are all essential elements to plan implementation. These tools for the most part are adequate to carry out many of the policies of this Plan, however it is necessary to revise and strengthen certain sections of these planning tools to achieve the overarching goal of this Plan - a more sustainable community.

## Zoning Ordinances

Zoning is the legislative authority which classifies land areas by permitted land uses and is the principal tool of land use planning. To achieve consistency with the Plan and to implement policies of this Plan of Conservation and Development, it is necessary to revise certain sections of the Zoning Ordinance. In particular the following actions are necessary:

**Action 1:**

Amend the General Business (BG) Zone and General Industrial (IG) Zone districts to permit residential uses through the Special Use Permit process.

**Action 2:**

Eliminate the Industrial Park (IP) Zone and rezone to a more flexible zoning district that will encourage reinvestment in the southeast area of Town.

**Action 3:**

Strengthen the landscape provisions of the zoning ordinance; in particular amend text to require maximum tree preservation, replacement and diversity of tree species.

**Action 4:**

Revise the zoning ordinance to address requirements and standards for the provision of pedestrian and bicycle-friendly amenities.

**Action 5:**

Conduct a comprehensive review of the parking requirement standards of the zoning ordinance, in particular as it relates to number of parking spaces required by use and size of parking stalls.

**Action 6:**

Amend the zoning ordinance to authorize the Town Planner to refer site plan applications and the Town Plan and Zoning Commission to refer Special Use Permit applications, at their discretion, to the Design Review Advisory Committee for review and recommendation.

**Action 7:**

Review zoning ordinance to determine if additional ridgeline protection measures are necessary.

**Action 8:**

Revise zoning ordinance to strengthen storm water management requirements and require the inclusion of Best Management Practices and Low Impact Development Design techniques in storm water management plans. Conduct a comprehensive review of the "Soil Erosion, Sediment Control and Storm Water Runoff " section of the zoning ordinance.

## Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision Regulations also provide specific criteria for land development associated with subdivisions. They were adopted by the Town in 1956 and completely revised in 1966 and amended again in 1990. The amendment in 1990 primarily strengthened the open space requirement and required development to be sensitive to the Town's environment and natural features.

To implement some of the recommendations of this Plan a review of the Subdivision Regulations is necessary, in particular the following actions are recommended:

**Action 1:**

Amend Subdivision Regulations to strengthen landscape requirements in particular, tree planting and preservation requirements.

**Action 2:**

Review Subdivision Regulations to determine if the street design standards effectively promote the “complete street network”.

**Action 3:**

Review regulations to determine if ridgelines and other natural resources are adequately protected.

## Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations

The Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations is the primary tool that preserves and protects the Town’s wetlands and watercourses. In 1974 the Town Plan and Zoning Commission was authorized, by ordinance, to act as the Inland Wetland and Watercourses Agency of the Town. The first Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations were adopted on June 19, 1974 and completely revised in 1990. The 1990 amendment primarily included the adoption of an upland review area and revisions to ensure consistency with the Connecticut General Statutes. Revisions to the Connecticut General Statutes required the adoption of minor amendments in 2001.

The following actions are required to ensure the Town’s Regulations is consistent with the policies of this Plan:

**Action 1:**

Review the regulations, in cooperation with the Conservation and Environment Commission, to determine if the current Regulations are adequate to continue to protect the Town’s natural resources and implement the policies of this Plan, in particular as outlined in the Open Space/Conservation section. Measures such as the possible adoption of conservation overlay zones should be evaluated.

**Action 2:**

Review the regulations to ensure consistency with the Connecticut General Statutes.

## Capital Improvement Program

The Town of West Hartford has had the benefit of more than three decades of effectively programming its capital improvements on a multi-year basis. Each year this program is revised and submitted to the Town Plan and Zoning Commission for review and recommendation. The Commission should strive to ensure that funding of capital projects

reflect the policies and recommendations of the Plan of Conservation and Development such as the promotion of a “complete street” transportation network.

The Town Council, as part of the annual budget, adopts the program with specific budget allocations to achieve capital items in the ensuing year. Through a multi-year planning program, it has been possible for the Town to realize a relatively strong financial condition with respect to financing future capital improvements. This condition is reflected in the Town’s AAA rating for bonding in the private sector of the economy.

## **Conclusion**

The Plan shall serve as guide in the land use decision process and therefore all such decisions should be measured and evaluated in terms of consistency with this Plan of Conservation and Development. Furthermore, if the Plan is be fully realized, it must also serve as a guide to all residents, businesses, developers, property owners, agencies and individuals interested in achieving a sustainable community.

## **Plan Consistency**

As required by Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes, this Plan of Conservation and Development has been evaluated for consistency with the State Plan of Conservation and Development, Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut, 2005-2010 and the Capitol Region Plan of Conservation and Development, Achieving the Balance: A Plan of Conservation and Development for the Capitol Region. The land use policies, zoning recommendations, and conservation priorities of this plan are consistent with State and Regional Plans.

In particular, this Plan is consistent with the following six Growth Management Principles of the State Plan of Conservation and Development:

1. Redevelop and revitalize regional centers and areas with existing or planned physical infrastructure.
2. Expand housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs.
3. Concentrate development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options and land reuse.
4. Conserve and restore the natural environment, cultural and historical resources, and traditional rural lands.
5. Protect environmental assets critical to public health and safety.
6. Integrate planning across all levels of government to address issues on a local, regional, and statewide basis.