



Town of Vernon

Plan of Conservation and Development

Draft for Review:
October 28, 2021

Town of Vernon
Planning and Zoning Commission



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Downtown Rockville

1. Introduction

What is a Plan of Conservation and Development?

A Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD, the “Plan”) is the official statement from a municipality setting forth the future land use, development, and conservation priorities of the community. Typically, these plans include information about current housing stock, utilities, roads, parks and recreational facilities, and natural resources as well as strategies for how those features should be improved or maintained in future years. Chapter 126, Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) requires that a town’s Planning and Zoning Commission “prepare, adopt and amend a plan of conservation and development for the municipality.” The recommendations of such a plan are drawn from data, independent analysis, and the knowledge and goals of the community and government. Together, they convey broad ideas about future development, conservation efforts, and the improvement of the Town over the next decade and beyond.

The Plan is intended to direct both public and private development, embodying not only a long-term community vision but also acting as a guide to short-term decision making. Maintaining a current and relevant plan allows land use and development decisions made in a municipality to be consistent with its POCD.

Issues such as water quality, transportation, and economic development cross town boundaries, and it is crucial that a local POCD is compatible with the goals and strategies of neighboring communities as well as larger regional and state entities. Consistency with state and regional plans is summarized in Chapter 8. The POCD identifies action items that can be implemented by the Town of Vernon to achieve larger regional goals.

Plan Development Process

The planning process involves assessing current conditions and trends in order to develop reasonable goals and strategies while engaging the community in a dialogue on its future. The planning process began in Spring 2020 with a kickoff meeting with the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC). Questionnaires were distributed to Town staff as well as boards and commissions in order to garner feedback on needs, opportunities, and community priorities. Four focus groups were held to have more detailed discussions with key project stakeholders. The PZC met regularly throughout the planning process to review data, identify priorities, and establish the overall vision and direction for the Plan.

To engage and draw upon the knowledge and priorities of residents, the planning team conducted a community-wide survey from September 30 to November 1, 2020. The survey received 1,057 responses from a wide cross section of residents. While the survey recorded a variety of concerns, needs, and ideas, it also showed that 74% of respondents rated the overall quality of life in town as good or excellent.

In addition to the survey, two community workshops were held during the winter and spring of 2021. The workshops allowed the community to learn about the planning process and contribute to the overall vision, goals, and objectives of the POCD. The first community workshop identified and verified collective community values, priority areas of focus, and the community's vision for the future. The second community workshop was a platform for the community to share and gather feedback on the future land use plan, as well as the overarching goals and objectives outlined in this Plan.

Previous planning efforts form the foundation of this Plan. The latest Plan of Conservation and Development was adopted in 2012. The Town has also conducted special studies and plans, notably the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan and Open Space Plan, which have also been influential to this Plan. While Vernon has grown and changed since the previous POCD, its overall values and priorities remain the same: maintaining Rockville as the community's institutional and cultural center, providing a high quality of life and town services, providing diverse housing choices, growing the tax base, and protecting its open spaces and natural resources.

Plan Structure

The goals and subsequent objectives and strategies presented in this Plan are not presented in order of importance, but rather grouped together into three themes based on common characteristics. The goals in this Plan are presented in Chapter 4 through 6 of the Plan and are grouped into the following themes:

Development Theme

Chapter 4 presents the Development Theme, which is focused on future development priorities in Vernon, including Downtown Rockville and mixed-use commercial corridors as well as general goals and policies that support economic development and business growth.

- **Goal 1:** Position Historic Downtown Rockville as the economic, civic, social, and cultural center of Tolland County.
- **Goal 2:** Create thriving, attractive, connected, and diverse business districts and mixed-use corridors.
- **Goal 3:** Promote economic growth and business expansion.

Quality of Life Theme

Chapter 5 presents the Quality of Life theme focusing on the assets that make Vernon a great place to live, including its diverse housing stock, public facilities, and Town services. This chapter also contains strategies that help bolster quality of life for the larger region.

- **Goal 4:** Maintain a diverse housing stock that supports people of all ages, income levels, life stages, and backgrounds.
- **Goal 5:** Maintain high-quality, sustainable, and equitable public facilities and services.
- **Goal 6:** Cooperate with local and regional organizations to promote the health and well-being of the region.

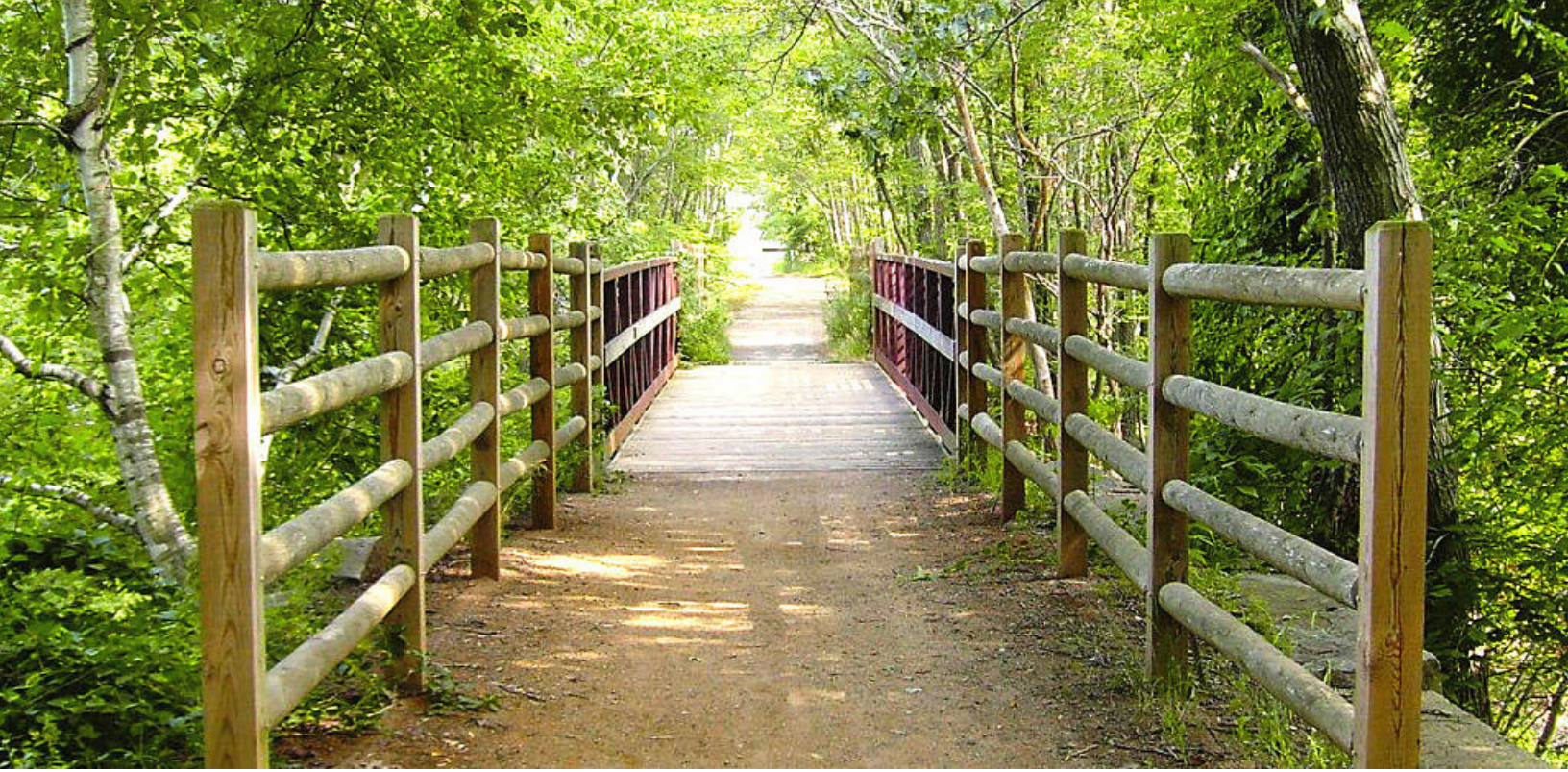
Conservation Theme

Chapter 6 presents the Conservation theme focusing on the historic and natural resource assets that contribute to community character, provide clean drinking water, and recreational opportunities for residents. This chapter contains goals pertaining to open space, natural resource conservation, historic preservation, and sustainability.

- **Goal 7:** Build a livable, healthy, resilient, and sustainable Vernon.
- **Goal 8:** Protect, connect, and promote Vernon's natural and historic resources.

How to Use the Plan

This Plan is not intended to be a static blueprint, but rather a set of comprehensive and general guidelines for future development decisions that can be dynamically applied to specific proposals and initiatives. Since the Plan is comprehensive, a literal interpretation of one section of the Plan may reveal an inconsistency with other objectives. Thoughtful compromise is necessary; to determine conformance with the Plan, a user is required to balance competing planning goals and consider the realities and precise location of a specific proposal. Each specific proposal must be evaluated within the context of its immediate surroundings to adequately determine conformance. Proposals should be evaluated for conformance by assessing how well the initiative or proposal fits within, or detracts from, the framework of goals, objectives, and strategies presented by the Action Agenda as well as how well the proposal is located relative to the Future Land Use Map.



2. Vernon Today

Introduction

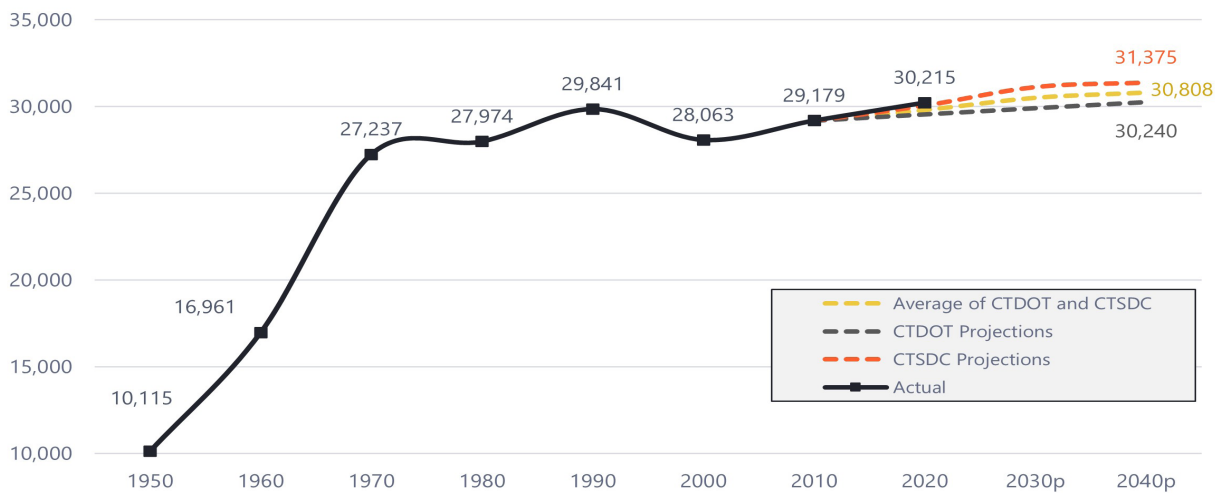
As part of the POCD process, it is important to review and analyze data in order to establish a baseline of where the community is today and how it has changed over the last decade. It represents a point-in-time analysis that provides context for the goals, objectives, and strategies of the Plan. The data can also be used as a benchmark to assess progress over the next decade. The following chapter presents a summary of the key trends shaping the community. The full Data Analysis presentation can be found in Appendix A.

Demographics

Vernon's population trends are closely intertwined with its history. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Vernon experienced its first wave of population growth, as industry in Rockville drew in people from the surrounding countryside as well as immigrants from abroad. During this time, the population was largely concentrated in Rockville, with residents living within walking distance of their manufacturing jobs. Outside of Rockville, Vernon retained a largely agricultural focus. Vernon experienced a second wave of population growth between 1950 and 1970, growing from just over 10,000 residents in 1950 to over 27,000 residents in 1970. Growth during this period was fueled by the construction of Interstate 84 (I-84) and rapid suburbanization within Hartford County. Farmlands in southern and western Vernon were replaced by single-family homes and auto-oriented commercial corridors developed in the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors, near the highway. Since 1970, the population has grown slowly, in large part due to the lack of vacant land for new housing.

While Vernon’s overall population is largely stable, demographic trends have changed noticeably over the last decade. Vernon’s population is aging, with a growing share of residents aged 65 years old and over. At the same time, Vernon has seen an influx of young adults, with the 25 to 34-year-old population increasing most rapidly between 2010 and 2018. Vernon’s reasonable cost of living, diverse housing stock, and proximity to both Hartford and Mansfield make it an attractive location for young adults. The population of Vernon is also racially diversifying. The Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and Black/African American populations have all grown between 2010 and 2018. The non-white population also has a lower median age than the town-wide median. Finally, household sizes in Vernon are shrinking and are lower when compared to Tolland County. In 2018, the average household size was 2.2, down from 2.26 in 2000. Shrinking household sizes will continue to drive demand for smaller housing units.

Historical and Projected Population in Vernon: 1950 to 2040



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census, 1950-2010. Projected Population by CTDOT and CTSDC.

Housing

While Vernon’s population has been relatively stable, shifting demographics and shrinking household sizes have resulted in demand for new housing units. In recent years, the number of new home construction permits has grown, especially for multifamily units. Between 2016 and 2020, the Town averaged 140 new housing units per year. Vernon’s housing growth rate since 2010 exceeds both Tolland County and the state. About 32% of community survey respondents indicated that they are likely to downsize to a smaller housing unit over the next 10 years, indicating continued demand for multifamily housing.

Single-family housing permits have not grown at the same rate as multifamily, due to the lack of market demand and available land. While the new construction market for single-family homes is slow, the resale market is strong. The number of single-family sales has increased from 144 in 2011 to 262 in 2020. The median sale price has also increased in recent years, but was 15% below the pre-recession peak in 2019. However, in 2020, prices rose significantly and was only 6% below the pre-recession peak. The turnover in the existing housing stock indicates the arrival of new families.

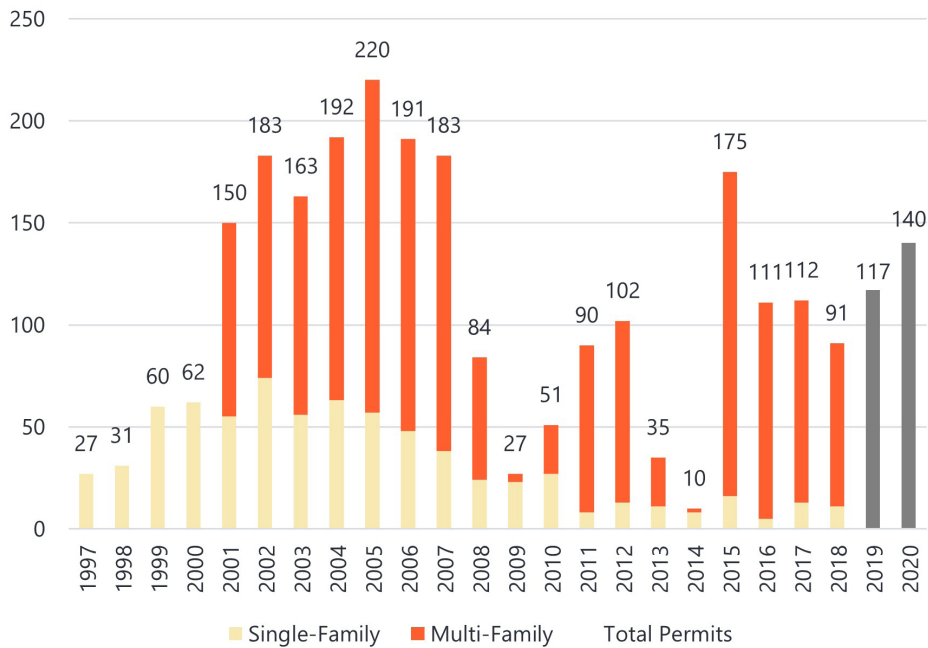
Vernon has a diverse housing stock. About 50% of all housing units are single-family (mostly detached), 20% are 2 to 4 family units, and 27% are in buildings with 5 or more units. Housing in Vernon also occupies a variety of price points, providing opportunities for people at different life stages and with different incomes. About 16% of homes are valued at less than \$200,000, under 40% are between \$200,000 and \$300,000, and under 10% are between \$300,000 and \$500,000. About 44% of housing units in Vernon are occupied by renters, which is a much higher portion than in Tolland County or in Connecticut. The median rent in Vernon is also lower than the county and the state at \$1,088.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommends that no more than 30% of household income be spent on housing. This includes mortgage or rent, property taxes, HOA fees, insurance, and utilities. Households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording other necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care. About 46% of renters are cost burdened while 28% of owners are cost burdened.

The State of Connecticut defines affordable housing as units that are deed restricted, governmentally assisted, receive tenant rental assistance, or have CHFA/USDA mortgages. The number of affordable housing units in Vernon in 2020 was 2,368 units, or 17% of total housing units. There has been a gain of 311 affordable units since 2009. There was a loss of 170 governmentally assisted units, but a gain of 461 tenant rental assistance units. There is a large number of “naturally occurring” affordable units that are not deed restricted, but nevertheless serve the needs of lower-income households.

The Vernon Housing Authority owns and operates 323 units throughout town for elderly and disabled residents and families. All of its units are leased. There are over 510 applicants on the public housing wait list and 4,400 applicants on the Housing Choice Voucher Program waitlist. The demand for affordable housing is great and continues to grow, reflecting both local and regional needs.

Vernon Annual Housing Permits: 1997 to 2020



Economy

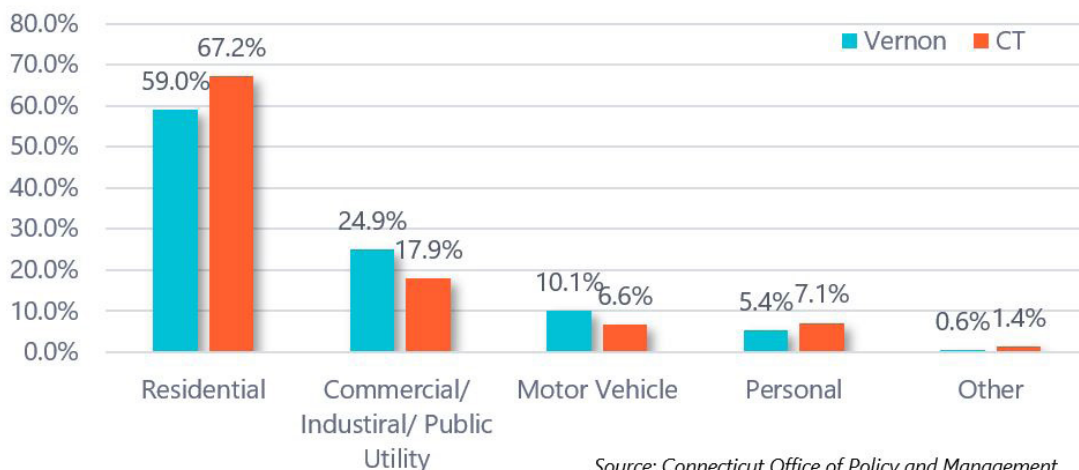
Vernon’s economic profile is typical of a suburban community with many residents commuting outside of Vernon for work. About 10% of employed Vernon residents work in Vernon. Residents most frequently commute to Hartford (13%), followed by Manchester (9%) and East Hartford (6%). Similarly, over 80% of Vernon’s workforce commutes into town, underscoring the importance of the transportation network in connecting workers to their jobs.

Within Vernon, the largest employment sectors are in healthcare, retail, and food services sectors. These employment sectors are largely driven by the needs and demands of the local population. Eastern Connecticut Health Network (ECHN) is the largest private employer in Vernon. Since 2008, Vernon lost over 1,100 jobs (12%). The largest losses were in construction and manufacturing. While Vernon has an abundance of historic mill sites, these properties are not suitable for modern manufacturers, who typically seek single-floor structures with good access to the highway system. The limited availability of vacant or suitable industrial land in Vernon has limited local growth in the manufacturing sector. Leveraging the vacant land near Interchange 66 and Interchange 67 could help Vernon better support the manufacturing sector.

Vernon has a strong commercial tax base, driven by retail establishments in the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors. Businesses continue to respond to changing market conditions. Over the last decade, there has been a shift toward single-occupant, small-format buildings. Larger-format spaces provide an opportunity for adaptive reuse or redevelopment over the next decade. Beyond serving the shopping needs of residents, Vernon’s commercial retail base is also among the largest employers and a significant contributor to the Town’s tax base.

The revitalization of Downtown Rockville remains a community priority, as it was in the 2012 Plan of Conservation and Development. Over half of survey respondents rated Rockville as the Town’s top economic development priority. Rockville needs to grow to “critical mass” by leveraging its employment base, growing the residential population, and focusing on attracting unique or niche uses that are less reliant on automobile traffic. The unique historic character of Rockville provides opportunities for adaptive reuse and appropriate infill development.

Comparison of Grand List Components as Percentages of the Total Grand List, 2017



Source: Connecticut Office of Policy and Management

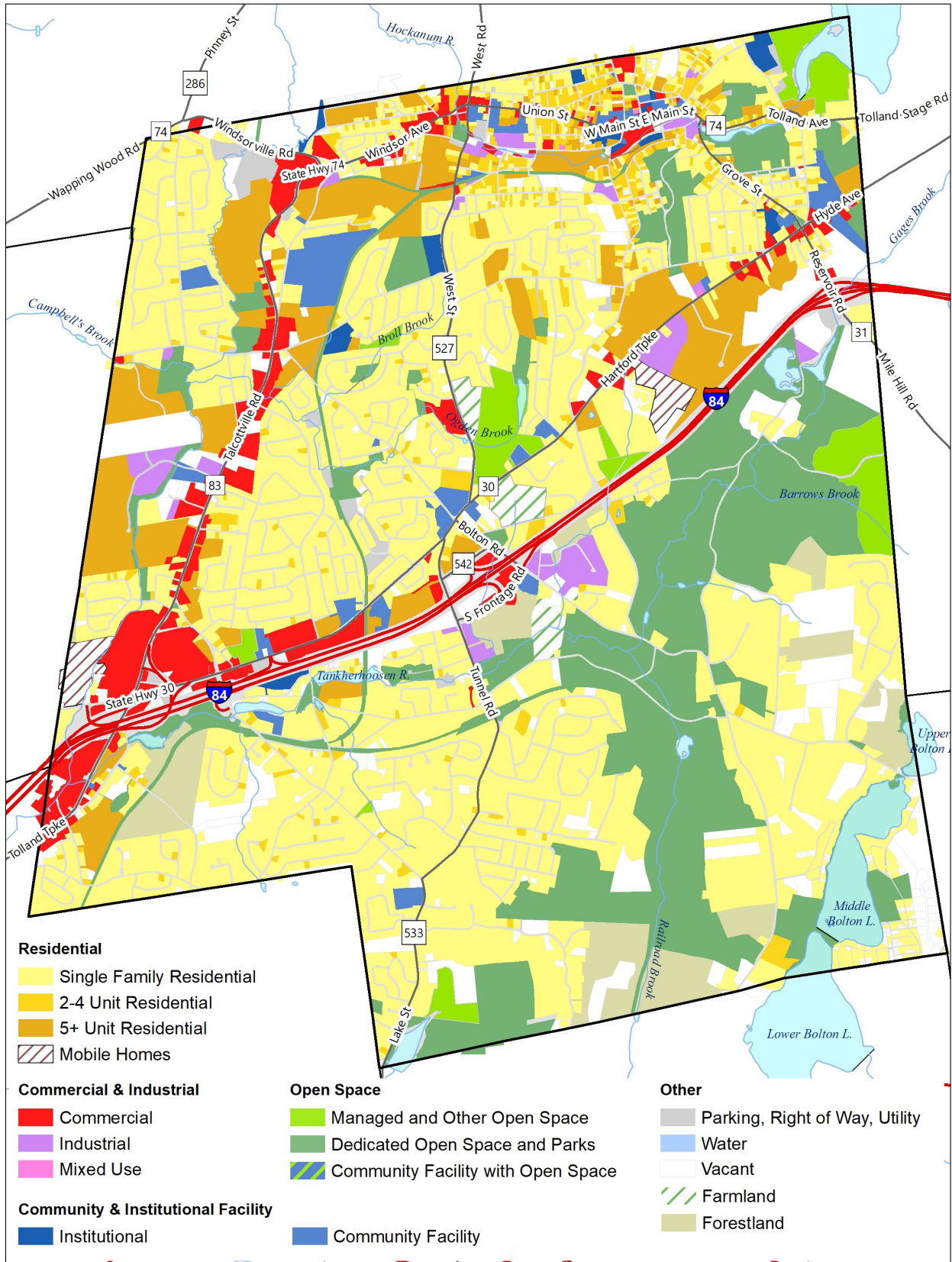
Land Use and Zoning

Residential uses constitute over 50% of Vernon's total land area, most of which consists of single-family residential uses with densities ranging from half acre (R-22) to one acre (R-40). While there is a strong market for multifamily housing, there is limited vacant land that is zoned for multifamily residential uses.

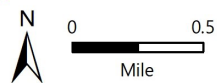
Only 6% of the land area is commercial or industrial uses. The majority of commercial zones are located along Route 83 and Route 30. Just under 10% of land is vacant. Most of the vacant parcels are in residential zones, and many of these sites are encumbered by natural resource constraints such as wetlands, floodplains, and steep slopes. The vacant land surrounding the Interchange 66 and Interchange 67 area provides the greatest opportunity for commercial and industrial expansion. These areas also contain sensitive natural resources. The current Interchange 67 overlay zone strives to balance these competing economic development and natural resource objectives.

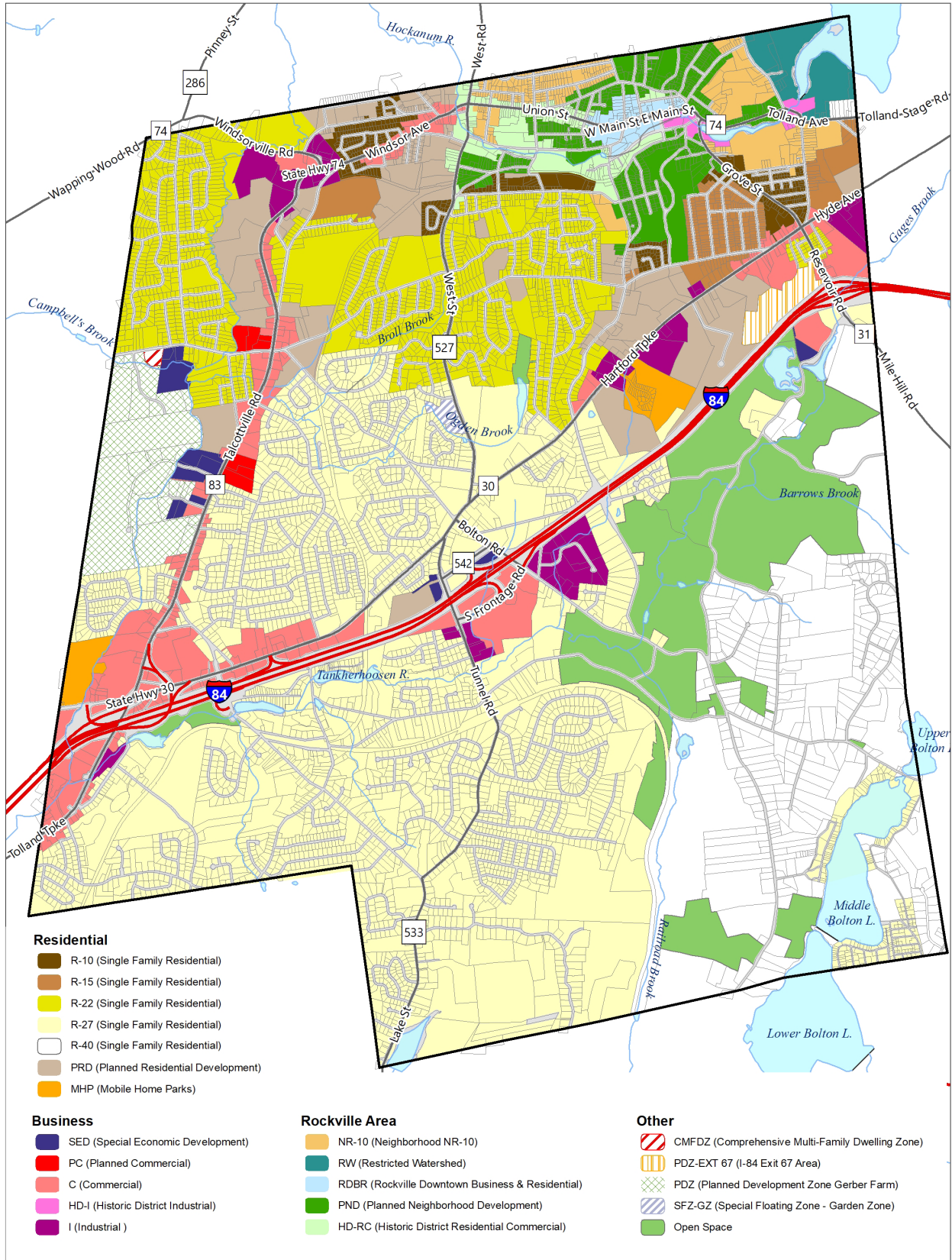
Rockville contains the most diverse and intense land uses in Vernon, including a mix of residential, commercial, civic, and light industrial uses. Development in Rockville continues to be focused on infill and the redevelopment of mill sites. Since 2012, there have been several changes to the zoning in Rockville. A Village Overlay was adopted that ensures future development aligns with traditional development patterns and enhances neighborhood character. In addition, Adaptive Reuse regulations were adopted to provide greater flexibility for redevelopment.

Land Use	Parcels	Land Area Acres	
		Acres	% of Total
Residential	6,948	5,621.9	54.4%
2-4 Unit Residential	708	314.3	3.0%
5+ Unit Residential	167	874.1	8.5%
Mobile Homes	2	67.0	0.6%
Single Family Residential	6,071	4,366.3	42.3%
Commercial & Industrial	329	622.5	6.0%
Commercial	282	471.6	4.6%
Mixed Use	8	2.4	0.0%
Industrial	39	148.5	1.4%
Institutional & Community	78	358.1	3.5%
Institutional	14	64.7	0.6%
Community Facility	62	282.8	2.7%
Community Facility with Open Space	1	10.6	0.1%
Roads & Utilities	65	94.8	0.9%
Parking	4	10.7	0.1%
Parking, Right of Way, Utility	1	1.9	0.0%
Right of Way	25	11.2	0.1%
Utility	35	71.1	0.7%
Open Space & Agriculture	131	2,653.1	25.7%
Dedicated Open Space and Parks	97	1,830.6	17.7%
Farmland	5	78.0	0.8%
Forestland	18	385.5	3.7%
Managed and Other Open Space	8	200.3	1.9%
Water	3	158.7	1.5%
Vacant	448	980.6	9.5%
Total	8,001	10,330.9	100.0%

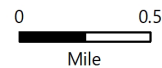


Existing Land Use





Zoning



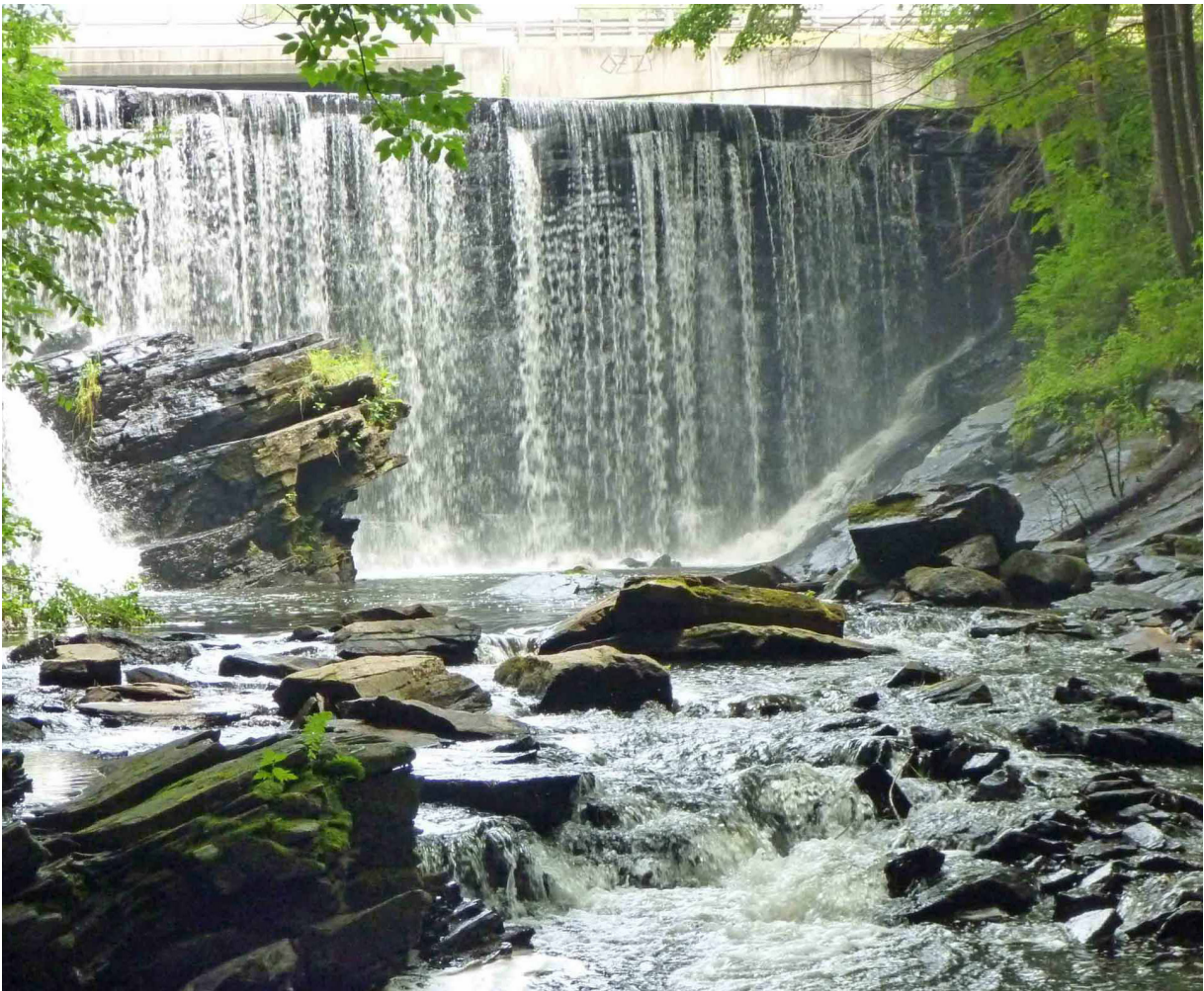
Natural Resources

Vernon's natural resources are one of its greatest assets. Vernon is characterized by its steep terrain and river valleys of the Hockanum River, Tankerhoosen River, and Railroad Brook. The town has an extensive open space network concentrated along these three waterbodies. About 22% of town is protected open space, just over half of which is owned by the State of Connecticut. Since the 2012 Plan, Vernon has expanded its open space network through the acquisition of the Stickney Hill Preserve in Rockville, the construction of Gene Pitney Memorial Park, and the protection of Strong Family Farm.

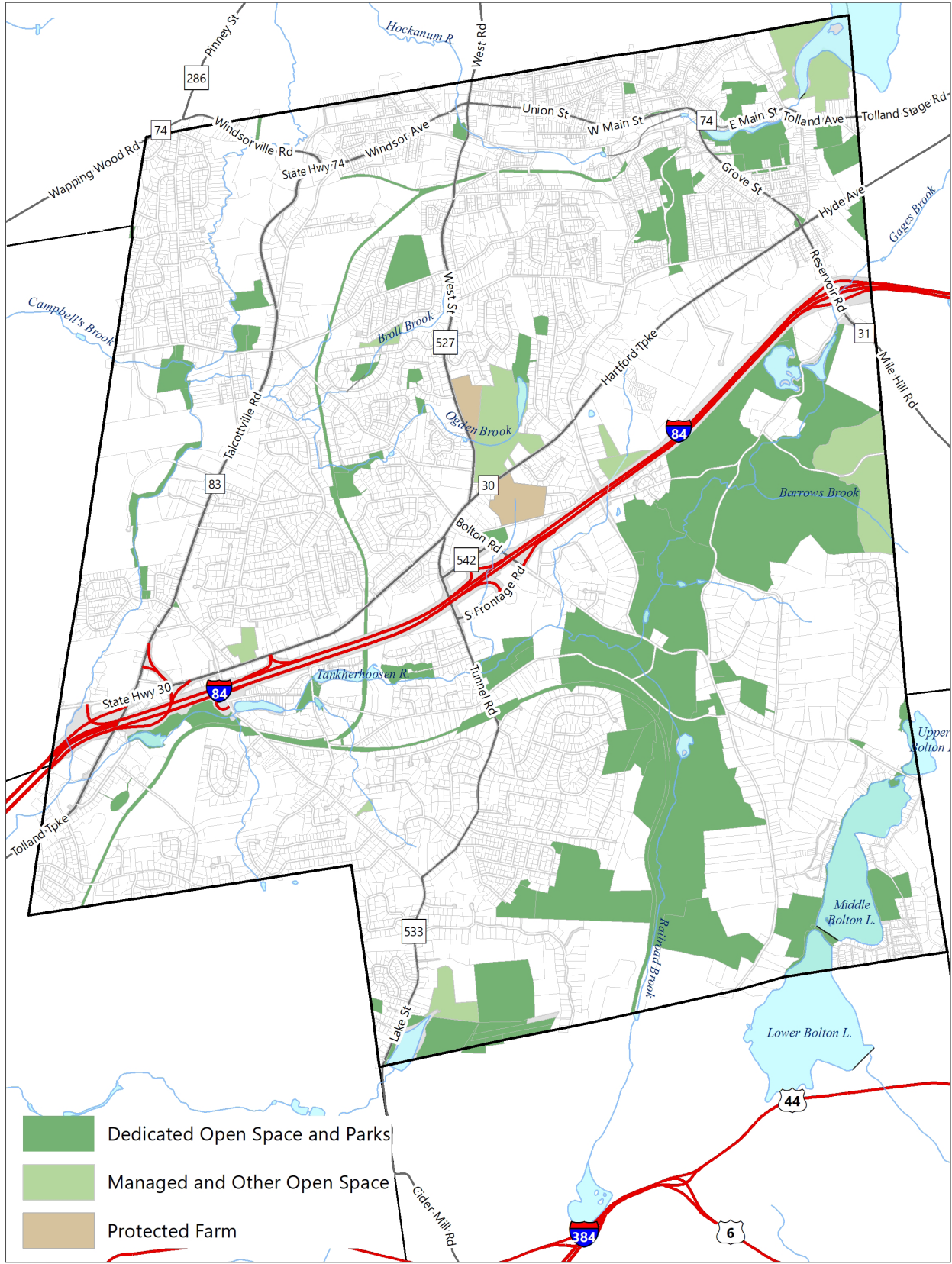
Since the last POCD, there has been a continued focus on water quality protection and pollution reduction through the implementation of the Town's stormwater management plan and watershed management plans developed for the Hockanum and Tankerhoosen Rivers. The upper reaches of the Tankerhoosen River are noted for its water quality and the wildlife habitat it supports.




The impacts of climate change are likely to impact Vernon over the next decade as flooding, hurricanes, and winter storms become more common. Properties along the Hockanum and Tankerhoosen Rivers are particularly susceptible to flooding. The 2019 Hazard Mitigation Plan has identified hazard risks and actions the Town can take to make itself more resilient.

Vernon is a state leader in enacting sustainable policies. Vernon joined Sustainable Connecticut in 2018 and has made significant progress, achieving Silver Certification in 2019.



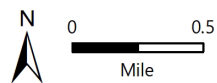
Tankerhoosen River Photo credit: tankerhoosen.info

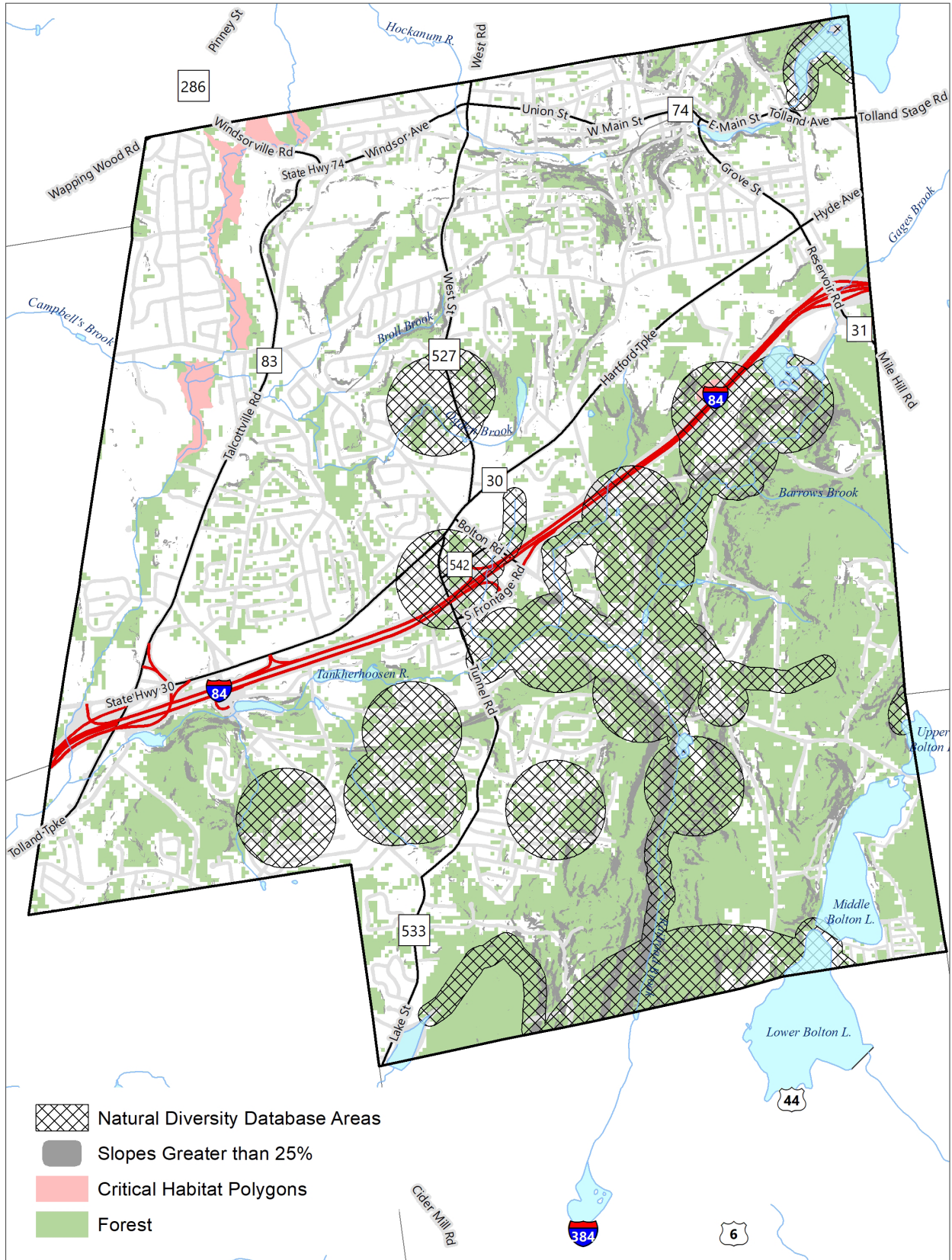


-  Dedicated Open Space and Parks
-  Managed and Other Open Space
-  Protected Farm

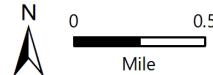


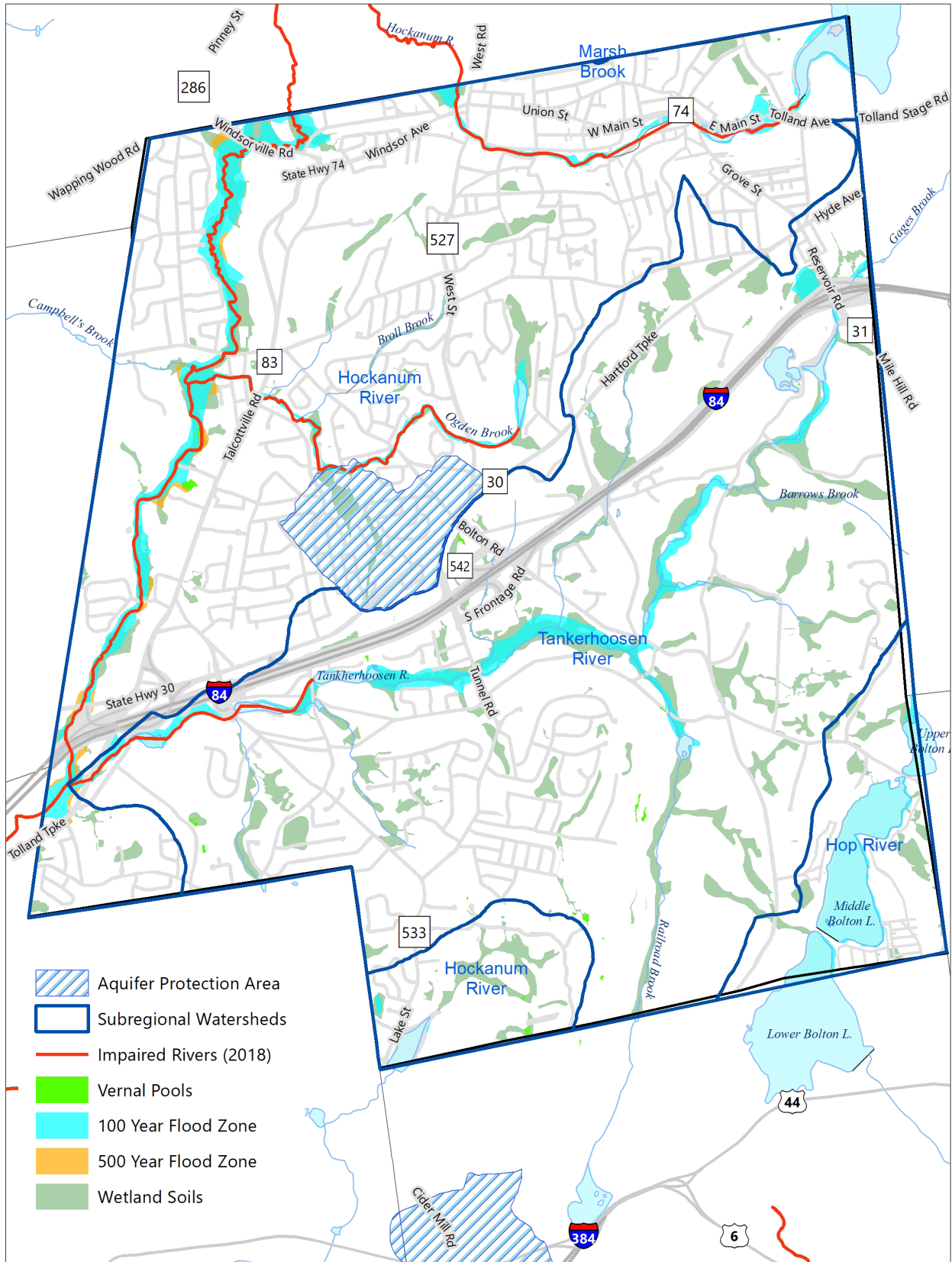
Existing Open Space



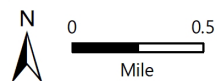


Natural Resources





Water Resources



Historic Resources

The Town of Vernon has nine designated local historic properties or districts overseen by the Local Historic Properties Commission. In addition, there are several national historic districts and sites within town, including the Talcottville National Historic District and Rockville National Historic District.

The Town has seen several successful historic preservation and adaptive reuse projects over the last five years, including the Old Talcott Mill, Roosevelt Mills (now Loom City Lofts), and the renovation of the Citizens Block.

Districts ^a	National	State	Local
Talcottville Historic District	✓	✓	✓
Rockville Historic District	✓	✓	
Valley Falls Historic District		✓	

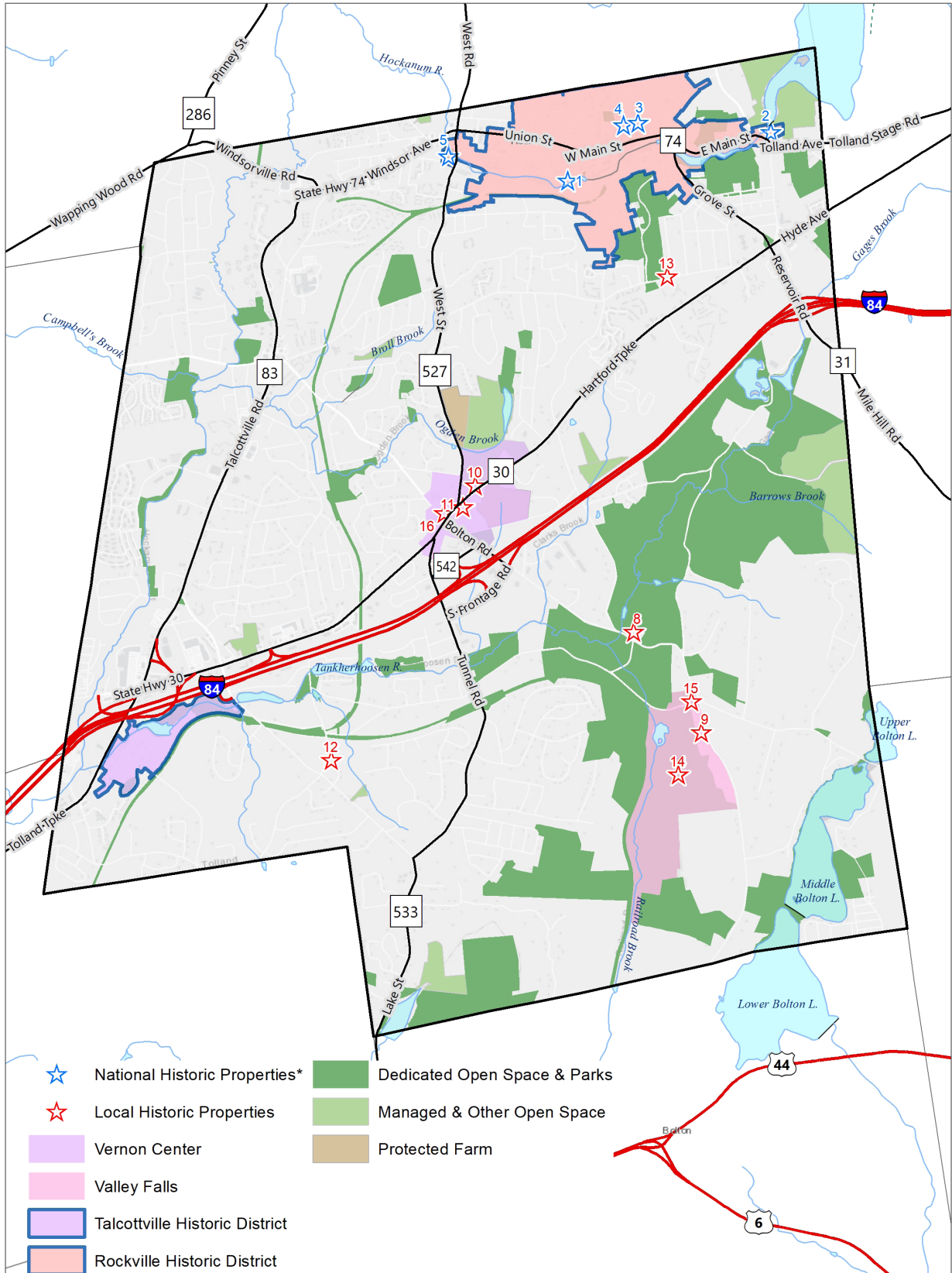
Places ^b	National	State	Local
1. Florence Mill	✓	✓	
2. Minterburn Mill	✓	✓	
3. Old East School	✓	✓	
4. Old Rockville High School	✓	✓	
5. Saxony Mill ^c	✓	✓	
6. Sharpe's Trout Hatchery ^d	✓	✓	
7. Valley Falls Cotton Mill site ^d	✓	✓	
8. Thrall Farm		✓	✓
9. Dr. Charles C. Beach House		✓	✓
10. Skinner – Hammond House		✓	✓
11. Vernon Grange No. 52		✓	✓
12. Jonas Sparks House		✓	✓
13. Leonard Rogers House		✓	✓
14. Valley Falls Farm A		✓	✓
15. Valley Falls Farm B		✓	✓
16. County Home School Property		✓	✓

a. There are other important historic areas which have not received official historic designation. Vernon Center is one such area.

b. This list does not include each of the many historic buildings located within each district, such as the Hockanum Mill.

c. Burned down.

d. Not mapped – address restricted.



- ★ National Historic Properties*
- ★ Local Historic Properties
- Vernon Center
- Valley Falls
- Talcottville Historic District
- Rockville Historic District
- Dedicated Open Space & Parks
- Managed & Other Open Space
- Protected Farm



Historic & Cultural Resources



0 0.25 0.5 Miles

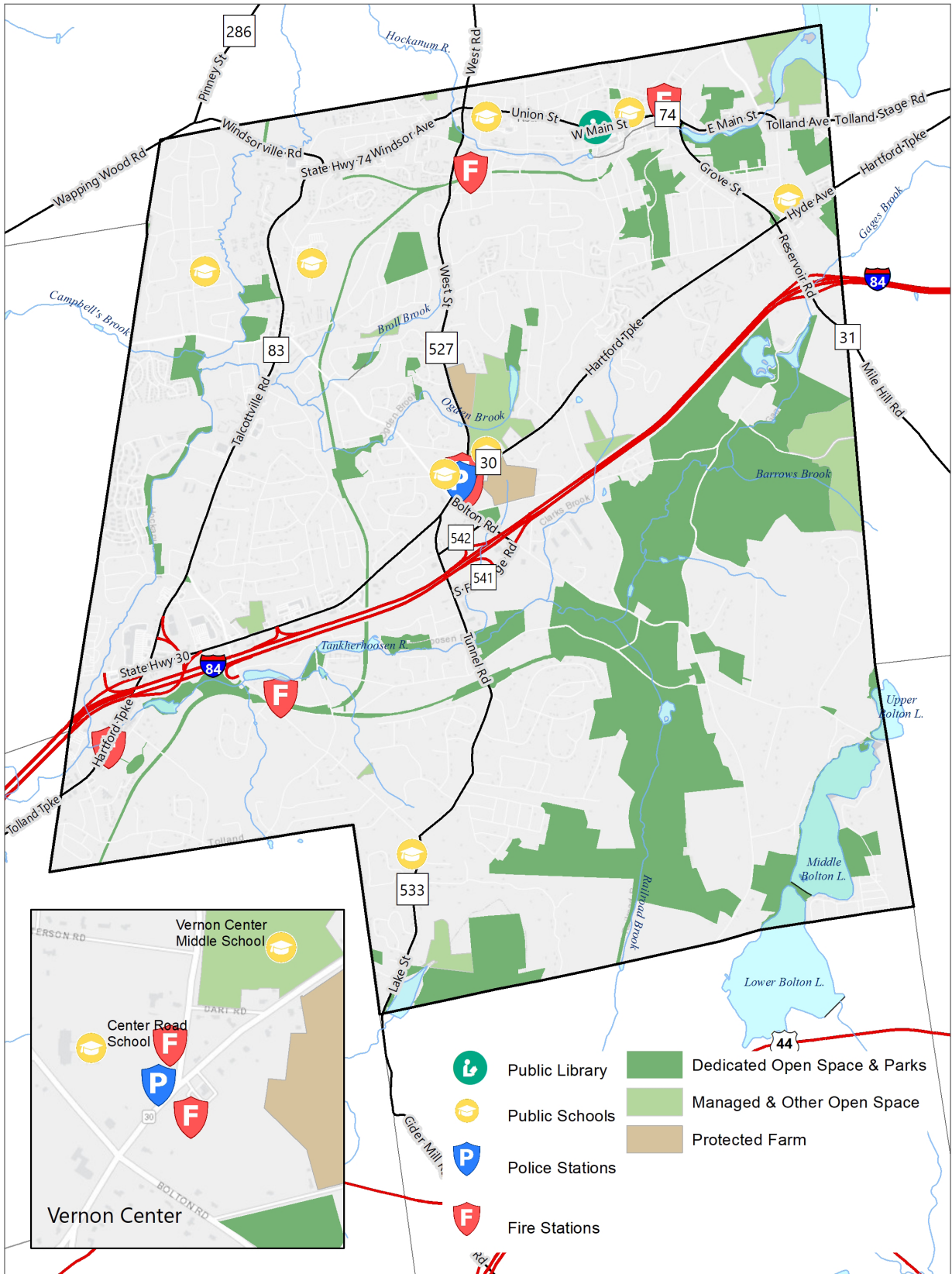


Community Facilities and Infrastructure

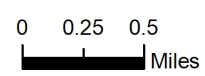
Vernon has made significant upgrades to public infrastructure. The Water Pollution Control Facility is undergoing upgrades that will meet environmental standards and lessen environmental impacts. There is ample sewer capacity to support future development within the sewer service area, including identified expansion areas near Interchanges 66 and 67. Other recent and on-going projects include the construction of Gene Pitney Memorial Park and renovations to the Citizens Block in Downtown Rockville.

Vernon’s infrastructure is aging, and efforts are focused on asset protection and maintenance. There are continued improvements made to Vernon’s schools and park facilities to keep them in a state of good repair. Over the last 6 years, 88% of roads have been resurfaced and several bridges and culverts have been replaced. Future efforts will continue to ensure that town assets remain in a state of good repair and meet the needs of residents.

<u>Town Services</u>	Building/Engineering/Planning	55 West Main Street	General Government Offices
	Library	52 Union Street	Public Library
	Town Hall	14 Park Place	General Government Offices
	Town Hall Annex	8 Park Place	General Government Offices
	Salvation Army Building	166 Union Street	DPW Annex
	Senior Center	135 Bolton Road	Senior Activity Center
	Youth Services Department	9 Elm Street	Youth Service Department
<u>BOE</u>	BOE Administration	30 Park Street	BOE Admin. Offices
	BOE Annex	38 Park Street	BOE Admin. Offices
	Rockville High School	70 Loveland Hill Road	High School
	Vernon Center Middle School	777 Hartford Tpke	Middle School
	Center Road School	20 Center Road	Elementary School
	Lake Street School	201 Lake Street	Elementary School
	Maple Street School	20 Maple Street	Elementary School
	Northeast School	69 East Street	Elementary School
	Skinner Road School	90 Skinner Road	Elementary School
<u>Public Safety</u>	FD Station 141	724 Hartford Tpke	Vernon Center Firehouse
	FD Station 241	59 Birch Road	Dobsonville Firehouse
	FD Station 341	100 Hartford Tpke	Talcottville Firehouse
	FD Station 441	15 Nye Street	Nye Street Firehouse
	FD Station 541	5 Prospect Street	Rockvill Firehouse
	FD Station 641 - EMS	280 West Street	EMS HQ
	Police Department	725 Hartford Tpke	Police HQ & Arts Center East



Community Resources

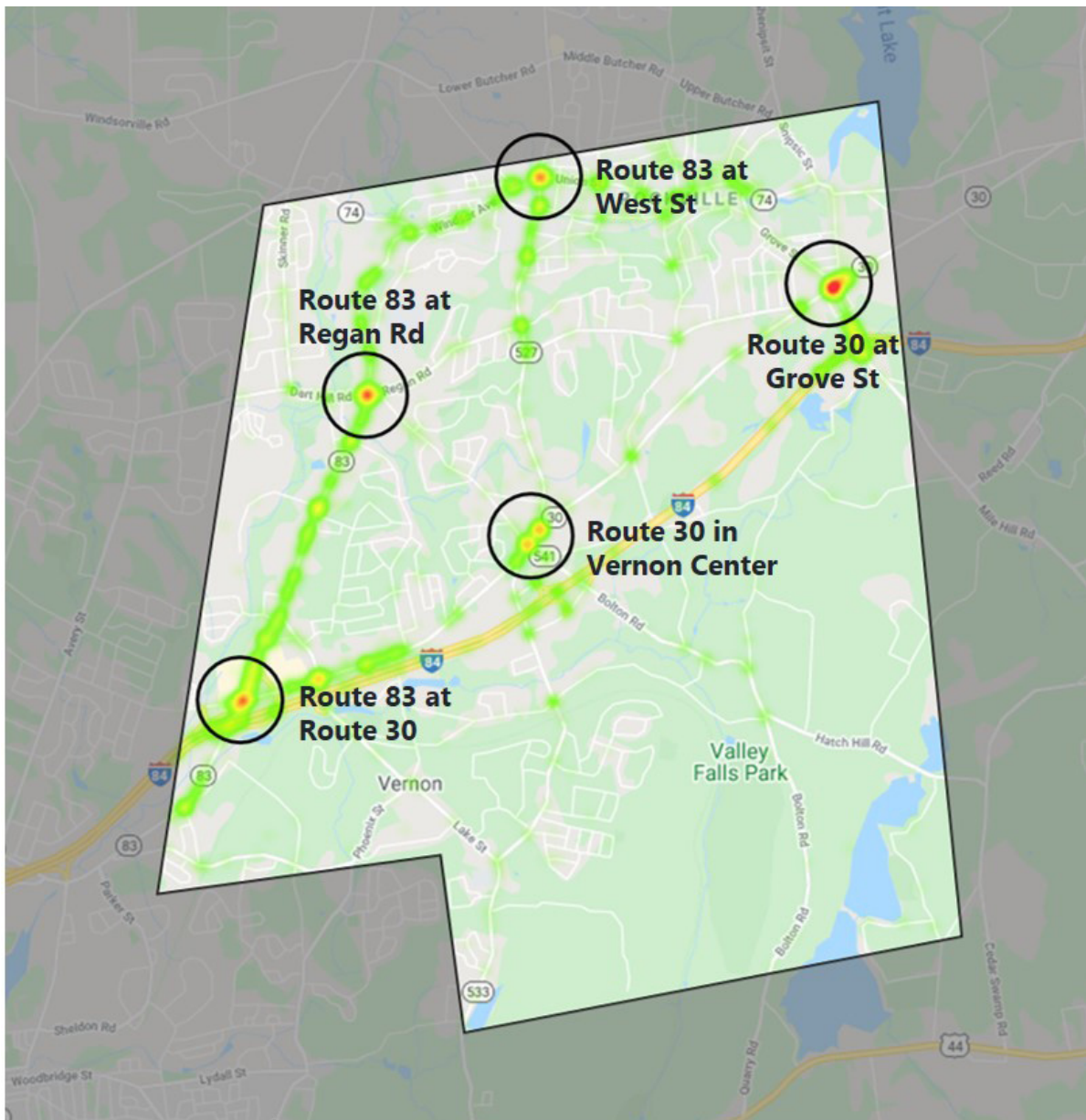


Transportation

Vernon is well connected to the surrounding region via I-84 and Routes 83 and 30. Driving is the predominant mode of travel. The highest traffic volumes are in the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors, making these corridors most conducive to retail development. Over time, crash “hot spots” have developed at several signalized intersections along these corridors.

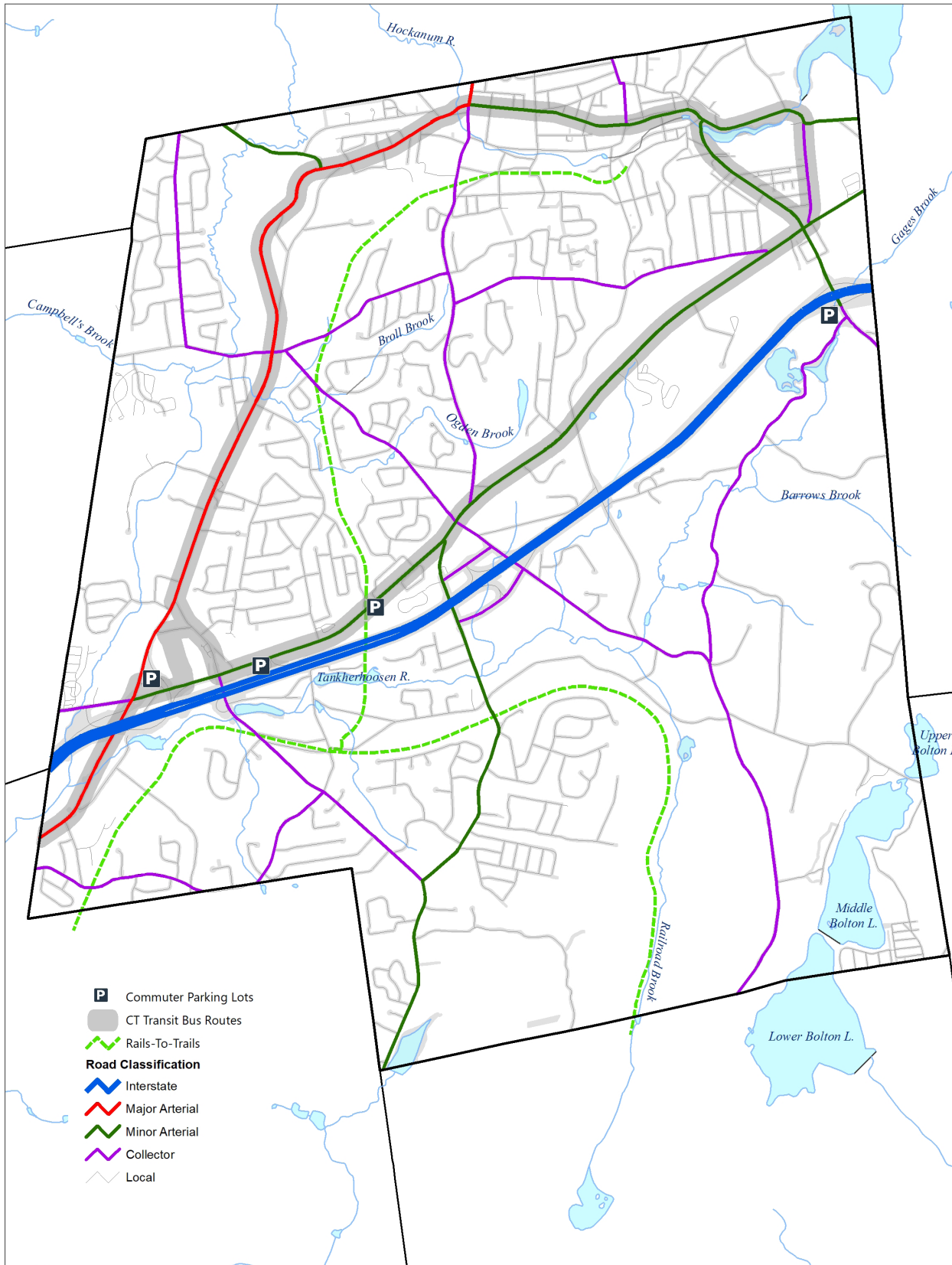
The town is also connected to the Hartford-metro area with bus transit. Busses serve both commuters to Hartford and residents in Rockville and the Route 83 corridor.

Vernon boasts an excellent multiuse trail system, including Vernon Rails to Trails, the Hockanum River Trail, and the Hop River State Park Trail. However, the trail system lacks connections to commercial corridors and Downtown Rockville. Within the commercial corridors (Route 83, Route 30, and Route 31), there are some sidewalks to serve pedestrians, but they tend to be disconnected depending on when the property was developed.

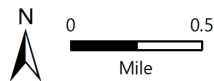


Crashes in Vernon 2015 to 2020

Connecticut Crash Data Repository



Transportation Facilities





Gene Pitney Memorial Park

3. Vision for the Future

Vision Statement

As a regional destination to live, work, and play in Tolland County, Vernon offers a sustainable, high quality of life centered around a vibrant downtown Rockville, diverse employment opportunities, a broad mix of housing types, and accessible natural and recreational resources.

Vernon's diverse range of housing options invite a mix of households, including young adults, families with children, and senior citizens, supported by continued investment in existing Town infrastructure.

Residential neighborhoods connect to commercial and open space areas through a well-maintained network of roads, sidewalks, bicycle routes, greenways, trails, and public transportation.

Economic activity provides employment opportunities for local and regional residents of varying skills and educational levels. Thriving commercial corridors provide residents with convenient access to goods and services, while generating municipal revenue.

Vernon's historic resources, farmlands, and environmentally sensitive areas are preserved for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

Future Land Use Plan

The Future Land Use Map reflects the POCD's vision and goals for desirable future development across the Town of Vernon over the next decade. The map depicts policy areas that share similar use and intensity characteristics, ranging from low intensity uses to priority development areas such as Downtown Rockville or the Route 83 corridor. The Future Land Use Plan is informed by existing uses and zoning designations; availability of infrastructure; the vision expressed in POCD outreach efforts; and the goals and strategies enshrined in this Plan. The Future Land Use Plan graphically represents the desired outcomes of many of the Plan's recommendations and illustrates how those strategies may interact with the Town's existing land uses. Due to its generalized nature, there may be inconsistencies between the uses shown on this map and the actual use of individual properties. In addition, properties located in the transition areas may be consistent with one or more adjacent policy areas. The Future Land Use Plan describes these desired land use outcomes in the following categories:

Downtown Rockville

Historic Downtown Rockville serves as the civic, business, arts, and cultural center of Vernon and Tolland County. It contains a broad mix of residential densities and the greatest diversity of land uses in Vernon, including retail, services, office, government, residential, and cultural uses. A robust sidewalk network and public transit service connect Downtown Rockville to surrounding residential neighborhoods. The focus over the next 10 years is on redevelopment and infill development that is consistent with Rockville's historic development patterns and complements its architectural character. Increasing the residential population through mill redevelopment and mixed-use development will directly support growing Rockville's commercial base, fostering a true local and regional hub of activity. Residential densities of 10 units per acre can coexist with the existing single-family, duplex, and other diverse multifamily housing options based on scale, context, architecture, and other characteristics.

Sewer Service: Existing Sewer Service Area

Residential Density Expectations: 4 to 10+ units per acre



Downtown Rockville contains the highest intensity uses in Vernon, including a mix of residential, commercial, and civic uses



Rockville also contains a diverse array of housing types ranging from single-family homes, to duplexes, to apartment buildings.

Mixed-Use Corridor

This area encompasses the Route 83 corridor south of Windsorville Avenue and the Route 30 corridor west of Hillside Avenue. Availability of water and sewer infrastructure, high traffic volumes, and proximity to I-84 make this area conducive to high-intensity commercial and mixed-use development. These are Vernon’s primary retail and business corridors. While commercial and retail uses should predominate on the properties fronting Route 83 and Route 30, residential uses are appropriate on rear lots, areas set back from the roadways, or as a part of mixed-use projects. While predominantly auto-oriented today, this area would benefit from improved bicycle and pedestrian accommodation, and better connections to the residential neighborhoods and Rails-to-Trail to the east. Improved access management, intersection safety improvements, and enhanced architectural, site design, and landscaping standards can ensure that this corridor develops in a cohesive manner that aligns with the mixed-use vision for the area. Due to the mixed-use nature of the corridor, transitions between land uses are likely to occur over the next 10 years. Business expansion along the corridor should be balanced by good mitigation efforts and buffering where adjacent to residential uses. Transitions should be incremental and orderly and should consider the context of the area.

Sewer Service: Existing Sewer Service Area

Residential Density: 4 to 10+ units per acre

Rockville Gateway West

The Rockville Gateway West district comprises the area between Downtown Rockville and the Route 83 corridor. Union Street and West Main Street form the entry points into Rockville and contain a mix of residential, commercial, and light industrial uses. While this area represents a step down in density from Downtown Rockville, it shares many similarities: development is generally on smaller lots, buildings are situated closer to the roadway, and there is a robust sidewalk system. Future development should ensure consistent architectural, site design, and landscaping standards to improve aesthetics and ensure consistency with adjacent policy areas.

Sewer Service: Existing Sewer Service Area

Residential Density: 4 to 8 units per acre



Enhanced architectural, landscaping, and site design standards can ensure that new development is attractive and cohesive across uses and development sites.



Multi-family residential development, such as Trail Run Apartments, are appropriate in mixed-use settings, or on the rear portions of sites within mixed-use corridors.



The Rockville Gateway West is home to several mill sites that could be redeveloped into new residential or mixed-use developments.

Rockville Gateway East

The Rockville Gateway East district comprises the area along Grove Street between Downtown Rockville and Route 30. Today, this area consists primarily of moderate density residential development, interspersed with a handful of commercial and institutional uses. While this area represents a step down in density from Downtown Rockville, it shares many similarities: development is generally on smaller lots, buildings are situated closer to the roadway, and there is a robust sidewalk system. Residential densities ranging from 4 to 8 units per acre are appropriate. While this area will continue to be primarily residential, mixed-used development and adaptive reuse (commercial uses in a formerly residential structure) are also appropriate. Located between Downtown Rockville and Interchange 67, commercial development pressure is expected. Future development should ensure consistent architectural, site design, and landscaping standards to improve aesthetics.

Sewer Service: Existing Sewer Service Area

Residential Density: 4 to 8 units per acre

Route 30 – East

The Route 30 corridor extends from the Tolland border to South Street and is centered on the neighborhood retail node at the intersection of Route 30 and Route 31. This area contains a mix of commercial, residential, and light industrial uses, a diverse mix that is encouraged. Given its access to sewer and water infrastructure and proximity to the highway and transit service, residential densities ranging from 4 to 8 units per acre are appropriate. This area serves as the eastern gateway into Rockville. Future development should include consistent site design and landscaping standards to ensure consistency amongst the mix of uses. In addition, sidewalk infrastructure should be prioritized to better connect commercial and residential areas together.

Sewer Service: Existing Sewer Service Area

Residential Density: 4 to 8 units per acre



Today, the Rockville Gateway East is predominantly residential, but could commercial or mixed-use development through infill or adaptive reuse.



Route 30 - East is centered on the Route 30 and Route 31 intersection. This commercial node would benefit from stronger connections to the village density residential neighborhoods to the north and west.

Route 30 – Center

This area represents a step down in intensity from the eastern portion of the Route 30 corridor and comprises the land within and immediately surrounding Vernon Center. Land uses consist primarily of single-family residences at densities ranging from 2 to 4 units per acre. This area also serves as a secondary institutional hub of the community and is home to several school buildings, religious institutions, the police department, and historical society. This area contains numerous historic structures as well as the protected Strong Family Farm. Future development in this area should be at a scale and style that is compatible with historic development patterns, primarily residential and institutional.

Sewer Service: Existing Sewer Service Area

Residential Density: 2 to 4 units per acre

Interchange 66 Node

This area encompasses the lands adjacent to I-84 Interchange 66. This area contains industrial, commercial uses and vacant land. Currently, sites are served by on-site septic systems, which limits density. Extension of sewer service could help facilitate additional development. Given the limited availability of industrial land in Vernon, this area should be favored for light industrial development. Adequate buffers, quality site planning, and high quality, sustainable design (LEED, LID, etc.) should be maintained to minimize impacts to adjacent residential neighborhoods and nearby environmental resources.

Sewer Service: Potential Sewer Expansion Area

Residential Density: Not applicable



The center section of the Route 30 corridor is made up primarily of single-family homes, farmlands, and civic uses



The Exit 66 node contains many industrial uses, although business expansions are limited by the lack of sewer service

Interchange 67 Node

The Interchange 67 node encompasses the land around the I-84 Interchange 67 interchange. There are several large vacant properties surrounding the interchange along with a park-and-ride lot with bus service to Downtown Hartford and Mansfield. Extension of sewer service to this area could help facilitate future development. The Plan encourages a mix of higher density residential, commercial, or industrial development, comprehensively planned, at Vernon's primary greenfield development opportunity. Robust landscape buffers, quality site planning, and resource-sensitive sustainable design should be prioritized in an effort to strike a balance between economic development initiatives and environmental resource protection.

Sewer Service: Potential Sewer Expansion Area

Residential Density: 10+ units per acre

Residential – Village Density

These neighborhoods are located on the periphery of Downtown Rockville and provide the greatest opportunities for housing diversity at densities ranging from 4 to 8 units per acre. A range of housing types are appropriate for this area, including single-family homes on small lots, duplexes, triplexes, and multifamily developments. This area is served by public water and sanitary sewer infrastructure, is near bus transit lines, and is within walking distance to shopping, services, and employment in Downtown Rockville, the Route 83 corridor, and the Route 30 corridor. Higher intensity infill development may be appropriate in transition areas (where two planning areas abut) and on arterial or collector roadways. This type of development should have strong site design, landscaping, and architectural standards that complement adjacent residential properties.

Sewer Service: Existing Sewer Service Area

Residential Density: 4 to 8 units per acre



Vacant land on the south side of Interstate 84 near Exit 67 provides some of the best opportunities for economic development over the next decade



Village density residential areas contain a mix of housing types, including apartments with strong architectural and site design standards



Many village density neighborhoods contain single-family homes on small lots, providing a population density that can support adjacent mixed-use and commercial corridors

Residential – Medium Density

Most of Vernon’s residential neighborhoods are in the medium density category and are comprised primarily of single-family homes at densities ranging from 2 to 4 units per acre. This area contains pockets with higher intensity development including duplexes, townhomes, and multifamily developments. These neighborhoods have access to sanitary sewer service and most are served by public water service. Medium density planning areas should continue to consist of predominantly single-family homes on small lots. Higher intensity infill development may be appropriate in transition areas (where two planning areas abut) and on arterial or collector roadways. This type of development should have strong site design, landscaping, and architectural standards that complement adjacent residential properties.

Sewer Service: Existing Sewer Service Area

Residential Density: 2 to 4 units per acre



Medium density residential neighborhoods are predominantly made up of single-family homes with lot sizes ranging from one quarter acre to one half acre

Residential – Low Density

These neighborhoods encompass the rural areas in eastern Vernon south of I-84. This area is predominantly in the R-40 zone and contains single-family homes at densities less than 1 unit per acre, undeveloped lands, and forests. All properties are served by well water and on-site septic systems. This area contains most of Vernon’s open space lands, which are concentrated along the Tankerhoosen River and Railroad Brook. Due to the lack of infrastructure and presence of sensitive natural resources, large scale development should be discouraged.

Sewer Service: Sewer is not anticipated for this Planning Area.

Residential Density: 1 or fewer units per acre



Low density neighborhoods are served by on-site septic systems, limiting densities that can be supported. Farmlands and forested lands are also common in this area

Conservation Overlays

Existing Protected Open Space – Existing protected open space is depicted on the Future Land Use Plan. Refer to the Town of Vernon Open Space Plan for future open space acquisition priorities.

Rail-to-Trail – Vernon’s Rail-to-Trail provides connections between residential neighborhoods and numerous open space and recreational resources.

Future Trail Connections – Better connections between the Rail-to-Trail and commercial and mixed-use districts could enhance bicycle and pedestrian connections throughout the town.

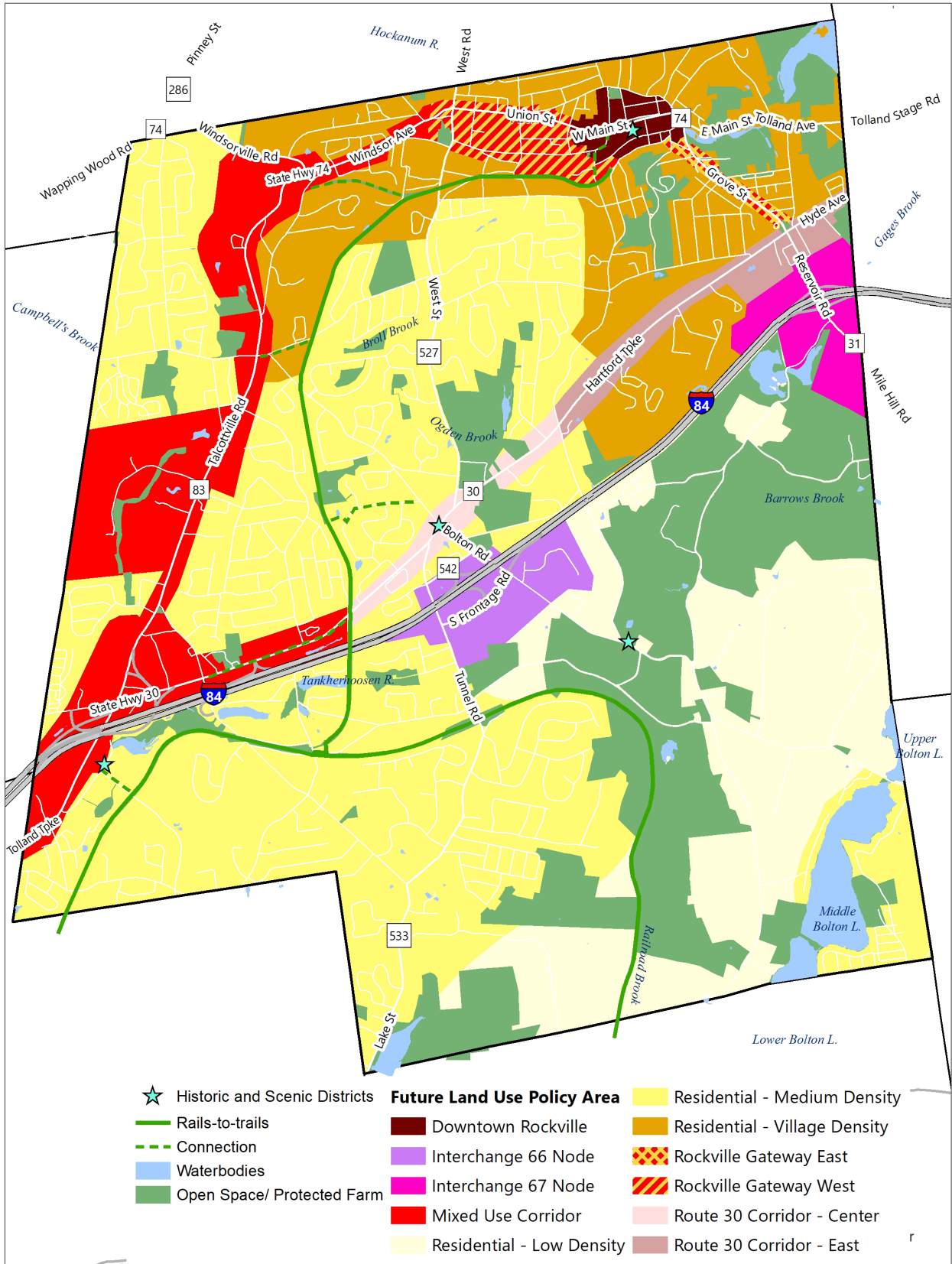
Historic and Scenic Districts – These areas include local, state, and national historic districts and areas with high concentrations of historic structures. The following areas are depicted on the Future Land Use Plan:

- Downtown Rockville
- Vernon Center
- Talcottville
- Valley Falls/Tankerhoosen Valley

Sewer Plan

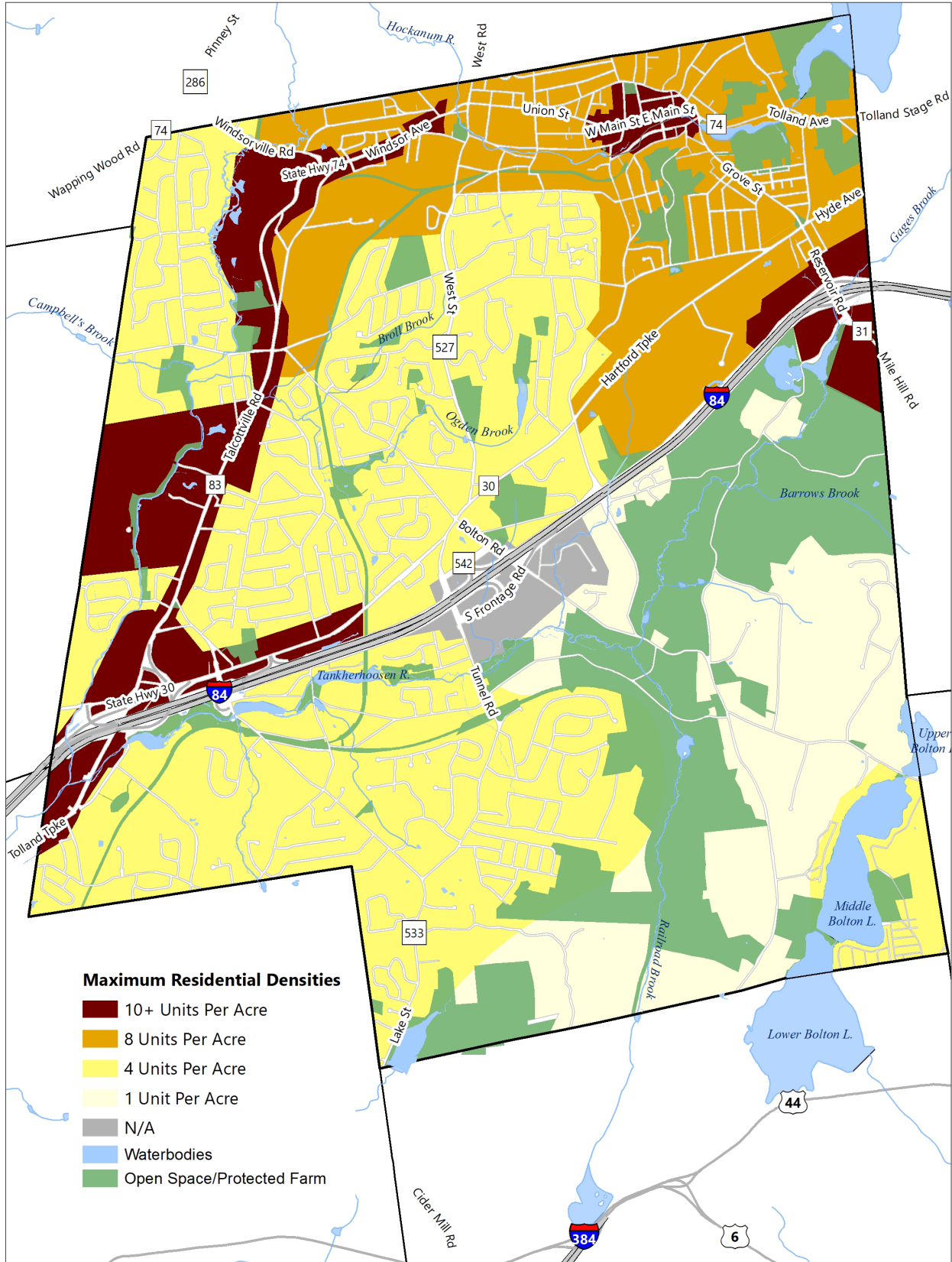
As per CGS Section 8-23, municipal POCDs adopted after July 1, 2015, must identify the general location and extent of areas served by the existing sewerage system, areas where sewer systems are planned, and areas where sewers are to be avoided. Vernon is served by the Vernon Water Pollution Control Facility (VWPFC), which also serves portions of Ellington, Tolland, South Windsor, and Manchester. Sewer service is concentrated in the northern and eastern sections of Vernon. Recent extensions to the system include Scranton Line and Jen Drive. The VWPFC system has ample capacity to support future development as well as an expanded sewer service area. Currently, the VWPFC system is being upgraded; the upgrades are expected to be completed in 2023. There is also a small sewer service area around Bolton Lakes.

The Sewer Plan Map aligns with the underlying Future Land Use Plan categories. It is recommended that the Town continue to use its remaining sewer capacity to support new development within existing high-intensity areas rather than extending sewer service into low-density areas on the periphery. The Plan priorities extending sewer service from Interchange 66 to Interchange 67 to support new development. Due to the limited excess sewer capacity, the Town does not wish to extend service into lower-density areas.

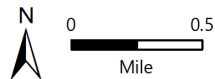


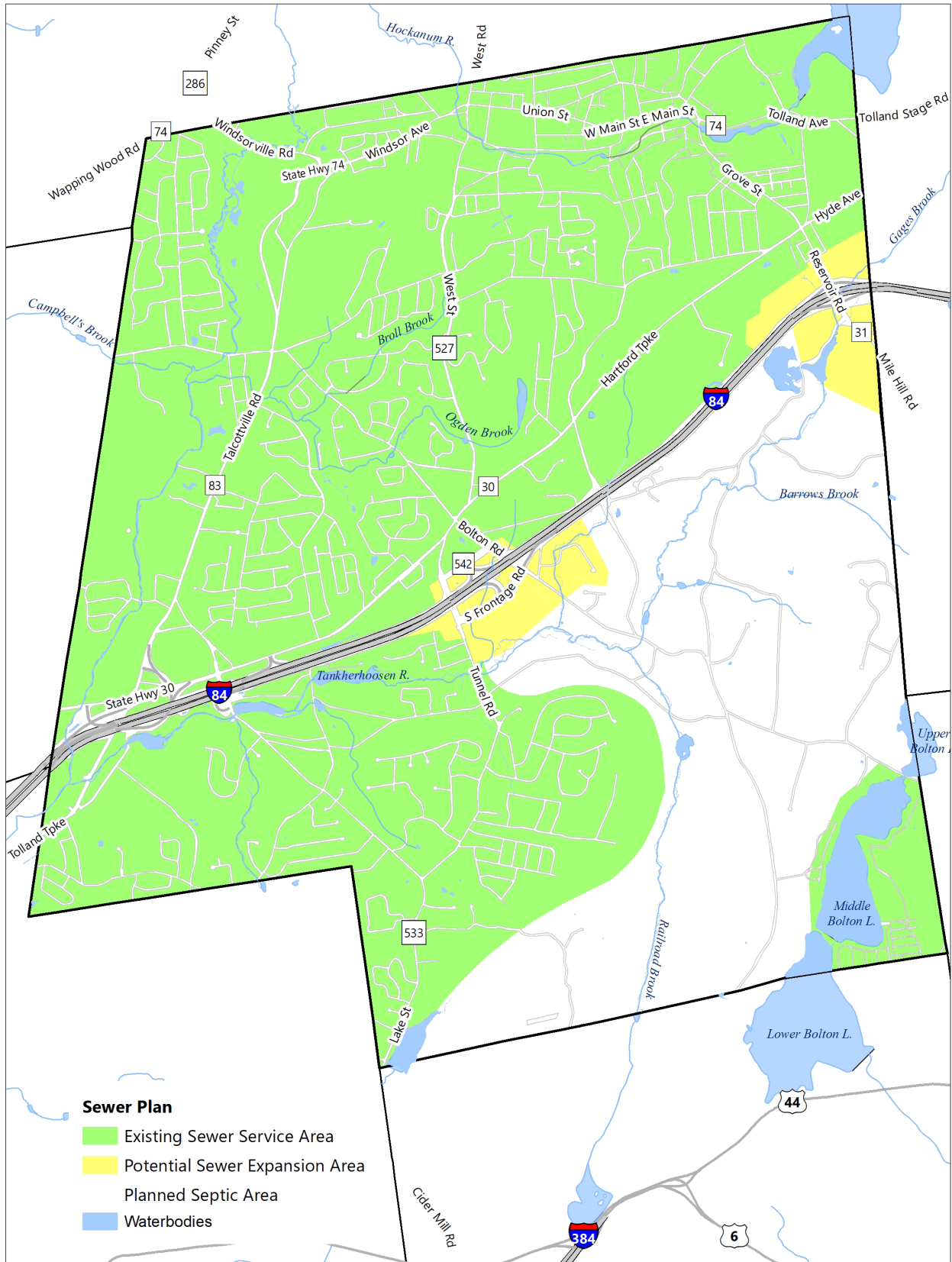
Future Land Use Plan



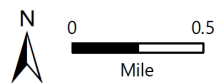


Residential Densities Plan





Sewer Plan





Minterburn Mills Photo credit: Loom City Lofts

4. Development Theme

Goal 1: Position Historic Downtown Rockville as the economic, civic, social, and cultural center of Tolland County.

What We Know

The Rockville section of Vernon has significant historic, cultural, civic, and institutional assets that can be leveraged as part of its revitalization.

- Rockville has a rich industrial history and is listed as a State and National Historic District. National Register of Historic places listings in Rockville include the Florence Mill, Minterburn Mill, and Old Rockville High School.
- The Town has adopted a special zoning district and Village District Overlay for Downtown Rockville focused on promoting development that is compatible with historic development pattern and design.
- Rockville is home to numerous cultural institutions including the Rockville Public Library, the New England Civil War Museum, and the New England Motorcycle Museum, which draw a regional audience.
- Rockville is Tolland County's institutional and civic center and is home to Rockville General Hospital, the Rockville Superior Court, and Town offices. These institutions are also among the largest employers in Vernon.

- The water resources in Rockville including the Hockanum River, Snipsic Lake, and Papermill Pond have the potential to be promoted and enhanced as recreational assets and be leveraged in the development of the neighborhood.
- The Rockville Downtown Association (RDA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving, promoting, and enhancing Downtown Rockville. RDA is a member of the Connecticut Main Street Center, a statewide group dedicated to the revitalization of downtown business districts.
- As part of the public outreach process, participants noted a strong desire for community spaces, arts and cultural amenities, and historic preservation in Downtown Rockville.

Today, Rockville has transitioned to a neighborhood retail center largely serving the surrounding residential population. As part of its revitalization strategy, attracting patrons from elsewhere in Vernon, as well as the surrounding region, is a priority.

- Survey respondents identified Rockville as the Town's top economic development priority over the next 10 years.
- Historically, Rockville was a regional retail center. Since the completion of I-84, most regional retailers have moved to more heavily trafficked sites in the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors.
- Attracting unique or niche businesses such as specialty retail, entertainment, breweries, or restaurants, in tandem with its arts and cultural amenities, can help Rockville become more of a regional draw.



Redeveloping the town-owned Amerbelle Mill site in Rockville is one of the Town's top economic development priorities over the next decade

- Rockville has a robust sidewalk network and access to transit. Improved connections to other neighborhoods in Vernon can make businesses in Rockville more accessible to a larger population.

Growing Rockville’s residential population can strengthen the Downtown commercial base by providing a larger customer base for businesses.

- Rockville contains the highest density and most diverse housing in Vernon, at densities greater than 10 units per acre. While higher density housing is common, Rockville is home to a range of housing types, including 3- and 4- family homes, duplexes, and single-family homes.
- Former industrial mill sites in Rockville have been converted into housing, including Springville Mill, Florence Mill, and Minterburn Mill (Loom City Lofts).
- Rockville has limited available vacant land. Future housing growth will be driven by small infill projects, redevelopment of underutilized properties, or the adaptive reuse of mill sites or commercial buildings.
- Housing demand in Vernon appears strong, particularly for multifamily options, evidenced by public input during the POCD process.



With limited vacant land, development efforts in Rockville will focus on the redevelopment of lower density or obsolete uses, such as Courthouse Plaza

Goal 1: Position Historic Downtown Rockville as the economic, civic, social, and cultural center of Tolland County.	
Objective	Strategies
1.1 Grow Rockville's residential population through infill development and adaptive reuse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage, through partnership, adaptive reuse of mill sites into residential or mixed-use development with a residential component.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate property owners on available financial tools that can be used for housing development such as historic preservation tax credits, Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) assistance, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, or Tax-Increment Financing.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amend regulations to permit smaller multifamily development as a matter of right, with site plan approval.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the use of zoning incentives that allow an increase in permitted residential density in Rockville for projects that meet other Town policy objectives. Potential objectives include those pertaining to historic preservation, sustainability, and provision of public space.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the use of shared parking arrangements for new residential developments in Rockville.
1.2 Promote arts, culture, and civic activities and events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue collaboration between the Arts Commission, Rockville Public Library, Rockville Downtown Association, Parks and Recreation Department, and the Economic Development Department and Commission to create engaging public events and market these events to the community.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen partnerships with regional arts and cultural organizations such as the Greater Hartford Arts Council and University of Connecticut (UConn).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand and enhance public infrastructure such as street trees, benches, lighting, plantings, and public art in Rockville.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider establishing a Municipal Cultural District in Rockville pursuant to Public Act 19-143.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the Municipal Cultural District, work with state and regional organizations to market and advocate Rockville's cultural resources and tourism opportunities.

Goal 1: Position Historic Downtown Rockville as the economic, civic, social, and cultural center of Tolland County.

Objective	Strategies
<p>1.3 Enhance Rockville's commercial base.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and amend zoning in Downtown Rockville to allow for more innovative and experimental uses to attract visitors. Potential uses include breweries, experimental retail, entertainment uses, and artisan manufacturing (small-scale production and sale of goods within the same premises).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modify the Downtown Rockville Zoning Regulations to allow professional or business offices to occupy the ground floor of buildings.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current special permit uses within the Downtown Rockville Zoning Regulations and consider permitting additional uses with site plan approval, if appropriate.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish zoning incentives to encourage consolidation of parking lots across properties to create a park-once-and-walk environment.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to market Rockville businesses both locally and regionally, in partnership with the Rockville Downtown Association and Chamber of Commerce.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize the redevelopment, expansion, and redesign of the Courthouse Plaza area defined by Main Street, Court Street, and Brooklyn Street, through incentive, partnership, or other creative means.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve signage in Rockville, including directional signage from I-84 and signage for public parking facilities.
<p>1.4 Support the redevelopment of Mill Sites.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the redevelopment of the Amerbelle Mill site.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to pursue grants to remediate remaining brownfield sites.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate property owners and prospective developers on financial incentives available to support adaptive reuse and historic preservation.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current adaptive reuse zoning requirements and consider more flexible site design requirements for mill sites that incorporate the riverfront into the design, and create greenspace along the river, with attention to natural resource protection and regulation requirements.

Goal 1: Position Historic Downtown Rockville as the economic, civic, social, and cultural center of Tolland County.	
Objective	Strategies
1.5 Protect Rockville's historic resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the renovation and re-tenanting of the Citizens Block.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider developing a visual design guideline for Rockville to better communicate desired architectural design, signage, lighting, materials, and site design features to prospective developers and the community at-large.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider establishing a façade improvement program or local property tax abatement program to encourage the rehabilitation of historic properties in Rockville.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate owners of historic properties on other funding opportunities such as state and federal rehabilitation tax credits.
1.6 Enhance Rockville's connections to the town trail and open space networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend the Rails-to-Trail east of Vernon Avenue, or identify an alternative trail routing connecting to the trail in Rockville.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance bicycle and pedestrian connections between Rails-to-Trail and Rockville along Vernon Avenue, Spring Street, Morrison Street, and West Street.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install bicycle and pedestrian signage on the Rails-to-Trail directing users to key destinations in Rockville.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install bicycle parking and racks in Downtown Rockville, on sidewalks, or places such as at Town Hall or the Rockville Public Library.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate the Hockanum River into Rockville's identity, in accordance with the Hockanum River Linear Park Master Plan. Strategies may include modifying the Zoning Regulations to require or incentivize public improvements and strengthen LID requirements along the Hockanum River, securing public access easements, and studying the feasibility of daylighting portions of the river, reducing the number of outfalls into the river, and creating protective greenspace along the river as part of future redevelopment efforts.

Goal 2: Create thriving, attractive, connected, and diverse business districts and mixed-use corridors.

What We Know

The Route 83 and Route 30 corridors have the highest traffic volumes in Vernon, making the area conducive to local and regional retailers. However, transportation infrastructure can be improved.

- Traffic volumes exceed 20,000 vehicles per day in the Route 83 corridor and over 17,000 vehicles per day in the Route 30 corridor, making the area conducive to retail development.
- Traffic volumes in the Route 83 corridor are highest near I-84 and decrease as you move north toward Rockville.
- The Route 83 and Route 30 corridors are anchored by regional retailers such as grocery stores and big-box retail, supported by numerous national chain and local retailers, restaurants, and services.
- Crash hot spots are concentrated in the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors at signalized intersections.
- The sidewalk network in the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors is disjointed, with numerous gaps. While sidewalks are required for new developments, many developments in the corridor predate the Town's sidewalk requirements.



The Vernon Circle area near the intersection of Route 83 and Route 30 has the highest traffic volumes in Vernon and has emerged as the Town's retail center



Sidewalks are required for all new development within commercial corridors, but was not required historically. This results in a disjointed sidewalk system

Development continues to evolve to meet market demands and consumer preferences.

- There is a decent amount of vacant land within commercial and mixed-use corridors. Future development will also be driven by infill projects and redevelopment of obsolete land uses.
- There are numerous existing commercial sites with little or no landscaping.
- There is a shift toward small format, standalone commercial development in the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors. New commercial developments over the last 10 years include Aldi, Starbucks, Taco Bell, Cumberland Farms, Dollar General, and Economy Express.
- There are several vacant large-format retail spaces in the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors that provide opportunities for adaptive reuse or redevelopment.
- The Route 83 corridor has transitioned to a mixed-use district with the completion of major housing developments such as the Trail Run Apartments, with over 300 units, and the Mansions at Hockanum Crossing, with over 700 units.



Over the last ten years, new development in the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors have been predominantly small, standalone commercial buildings (left), reflecting a national shift away from large format retail. Vacant large format spaces, such as the KMart Plaza (right), may provide an opportunity for adaptive reuse or redevelopment over the next decade.

Goal 2: Create thriving, attractive, connected, and diverse business districts, and mixed-use corridors.

Objective	Strategies
<p>2.1 Enhance architecture, site design, and landscaping within existing mixed-use corridors and gateways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop landscaping and site design standards incorporated into the Zoning Regulations that are tied to the location of the site as opposed to the zone. For example, all properties fronting Route 83 should have the same landscaping and site design standards, regardless of their zoning designation, to ensure consistency across multiple uses. Single-family homes should be exempt from these standards.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen screening and setback requirements for outdoor storage areas and trash enclosures within the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a landscaping design matching grant fund that matches property owner landscaping investments. These funds could be used to focus on pre-existing sites with minimal or zero plantings in the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a Landscaping and Site Design Visual Guide for mixed-use corridors that can accompany the Design Review Visual Guide.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a corridor-based Design Review Visual Guide with specific information on recommended materials and architectural details (roof type, windows, colors, signage, etc.) for each business district.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance welcome signage, directional signage, landscaping, and public realm improvements at gateways, prioritizing locations near highway ramps.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen property maintenance and code enforcement resources in town with a focus on commercial corridors.
<p>2.2 Optimize traffic flow and enhance safety in commercial corridors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) and the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), complete a Corridor Study of the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors focusing on traffic flow, safety, access management, transit infrastructure, and pedestrian accessibility.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with CTDOT and CTtransit to evaluate the potential for bus pull-offs in the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors to increase safety and improve traffic flow. This should be evaluated as part of the larger corridor study.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider adding pedestrian lighting requirements to the landscaping and site design standards within commercial and mixed-use zones.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop zoning incentives (such as a reduction in parking minimums) to encourage property owners to enter into shared parking agreements.

Goal 2: Create thriving, attractive, connected, and diverse business districts and mixed-use corridors.	
Objective	Strategies
<p>2.3 Enhance pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require sidewalk connections between a building’s primary entrance and the sidewalk system within all commercial and mixed-use zones. • Establishing a sidewalk matching grant fund that matches property owner sidewalk investments. These funds could be used to fill in gaps in the existing sidewalk network on Route 83 and Route 30. • Work with CTDOT to incorporate safe pedestrian crossings at all signalized intersections. Elements that should be considered include dedicated pedestrian signals, marked crosswalks, and installation of proper signage. • Establish a zoning incentive (such as a parking reduction) for new developments that incorporates bus stop amenities such as seating areas, shelters, and lighting. • Enhance bicycle and pedestrian connections between Vernon’s Rail-to-Trail system and the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors, prioritizing connections on Center Road, Regan Road, and Hartford Turnpike. • Incorporate Hockanum River Linear Park trail connections into landscape design plans within the Route 83 corridor.
<p>2.4 Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized or obsolete land uses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create separate dimensional standards for small lots under 2 acres in the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors to provide more flexibility to property owners. • Consider modifying the Zoning Regulations in the Commercial Zone to allow purely residential developments, so long as they are in structures that are set back at least 200 feet from the roadway, reserving the frontage for commercial uses. • Consider modifying the Zoning Regulations in the Commercial Zone to allow for certain light industrial uses, subject to special permit approval. These uses should have the same landscape and design standards as commercial uses and should be appropriately buffered from adjacent residential areas. • Evaluate minimum parking requirements in commercial zones and consider lowering parking requirements, where appropriate, to support adaptive reuse.

Goal 3: Promote economic growth and business expansion.

What we know

Vernon is served by quality water and sewer infrastructure.

- Most neighborhoods in northern and western Vernon are within the Vernon Sewer Service Area, served by VWPFC.
- The 2017 Wastewater Facilities Plan for Vernon notes that there is ample sewer capacity to support future development, mill conversions, and expansions to the sewer service area.
- VWPFC is currently undergoing a major upgrade to comply with state and federal environmental standards. The project should be completed by 2023.
- The Bolton Lakes neighborhood in southeastern Vernon is served by the Bolton Lakes Regional Water Pollution Control Authority (BLRWPCA).
- Connecticut Water Company (CWV) provides water service to most neighborhoods in northern and western Vernon.



Benefits of the Facility Improvements include:

- Meets or exceeds all environmental standards
- Protects the quality of the Hockanum River and Long Island Sound
- Assures reliable, cost-effective service
- Reduces nitrogen and phosphorous, major pollutants affecting fish habitats

The Town of Vernon Water Pollution Control Facility is undergoing a major upgrade slated to be completed in 2023

The land around Interchanges 66 and 67 provide opportunities for business expansion.

- There are about 200 acres of undeveloped land in the vicinity of Interchange 66 and Interchange 67. While some of this land is encumbered by natural resource constraints, there is significant development potential in this area.
- The area is currently underutilized due to the lack of sewer and water infrastructure. There is ample capacity at the VWPCF to support sewer extensions in this area.
- Interchange 67 contains a mix of land zoned for commercial, industrial, and residential uses.
- The Town adopted a Planned Development Zone for the Interchange 67 area that enables flexible development standards so long as natural resource impacts and residential buffer considerations are addressed.
- The Interchange 66 area is primarily zoned for industrial and commercial uses.
- 75% of survey respondents agreed that the Town should attract new businesses that can grow the tax base.

Vernon’s employment profile is consistent with a suburban community.

- 71% of jobs in Vernon are in one of four sectors: Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services, and Local Government. These sectors largely serve the needs of local residents.
- Overall, Vernon lost 1,127 jobs (12% contraction) between 2008 and 2019. The largest losses were in Construction and Manufacturing sectors.
- The limited availability of industrially zoned land to support the manufacturing and construction sectors may have influenced growth in these sectors.

Vernon has a strong commercial and multifamily residential tax base.

- Commercial and Industrial uses only make up 6% of the Town’s total acreage.
- Nearly 25% of Vernon’s Grand List is comprised of commercial, industrial, or public utility properties. This is about 7 percentage points higher than the state average.
- Vernon’s top ten taxpayers consist of multifamily residential developments, utility companies, and commercial property owners.

Goal 3: Promote economic growth and business expansion.	
Objective	Strategies
3.1 Provide a skilled workforce that supports business needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support investment in Vernon’s school system and the Rockville High School Career Center.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the promotion of the dual enrollment programs between Rockville High School (RHS) and Manchester Community College, Goodwin College, and the UConn Early College Experience program. Students who participate in the college dual enrollment programs can earn credit from RHS and college simultaneously, thus completing college faster and with more flexibility.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to meet with businesses to understand local workforce needs and skills gaps.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to find ways to work with Capital Workforce Partners, the regional workforce development board, to leverage public and private resources to produce skilled workers and close the skills gap between local employers and residents.
3.2 Pursue utility improvements that support economic development and land use goals, including the extension of water, sewer, communication, and transportation, infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete upgrades to the Vernon Water Pollution Control Facility.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain sewer infrastructure in a state of good repair.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend sewer and water service to Interchanges 66 and 67. Evaluate the feasibility of using Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to fund utility extensions and other public improvements needed to spur economic development.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage expansion of high-speed internet service, prioritizing low-income and underserved neighborhoods.

Goal 3: Promote economic growth and business expansion.	
Objective	Strategies
3.3 Provide opportunities for industrial development and expansion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the Interchange 67 Planned Development Zone to encompass all parcels within the Interchange 67 Node Future Land Use category.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a similar Planned Development Zone for properties in the Interchange 66 node.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a balanced approach to economic development near the Interchange 66 and Interchange 67 corridors. New development should contribute to the economic development and fiscal health of the community while avoiding negative impacts to natural resources within the Tankerhoosen River watershed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a list of vacant land and available industrial land and buildings. Actively market the sites to prospective businesses in partnership with regional and statewide organizations such as the Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC).
3.4 Provide an attractive and supportive business environment, including an efficient regulatory process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate zoning comprehensively to improve clarity and reduce inconsistency. Look for ways to reduce the use of special permits in exchange for higher performance standards related to architecture, site design, and landscape buffer. Consider a comprehensive update of the Town Zoning Regulations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek to improve related online department webpages. Maintain an e-permit system to allow prospective businesses to fill out permits online to create a more streamlined approval process.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide regular education and training opportunities for board and commission members with a goal of 100% annual participation.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Connecticut Small Business Development Center to coach new and existing businesses in Vernon.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce a business incubator to Rockville, utilizing part of the Citizens Block or other building in Downtown and providing low-cost rent to local start-up businesses.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop land use process explainers and other tools to make the development process more transparent.



Mansions at Hockanum Crossing Photo credit: apartments.com

5. Quality of Life Theme

Goal 4: Maintain a diverse housing stock that supports people of all ages, income levels, life stages, and backgrounds.

What We Know

Vernon has a diverse housing stock with a range of styles, sizes, price points, and densities, providing many residents the opportunity to remain in Vernon as they transition to different homes throughout their life.

- Vernon provides a range of housing types and densities. About 45% of units are detached-single-family homes, 20% are 2 to 4 family units, and 27% are in buildings with 5 or more units.
- About 52% of housing units are owner-occupied and 48% are renter occupied. Vernon has a much higher share of renter-occupied housing compared to Tolland County as a whole.

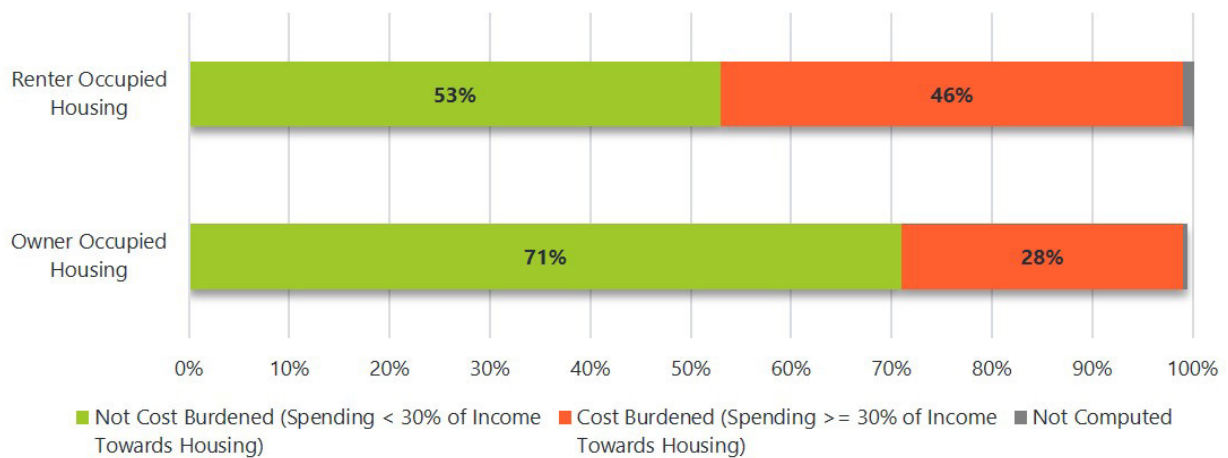
Demographic changes have resulted in evolving housing needs.

- Household sizes in Vernon are shrinking. More than half of households in Vernon consist of one or two people.
- Shrinking household sizes have led to a greater demand for smaller housing units and multifamily housing.
- In the community survey, 19% of respondents are looking to “up-size” to a larger home, while 32% are likely to “down-size” to smaller accommodations in the next 10 years.

Vernon has a strong housing market and has seen significant development over the last 10 years.

- From 2016 to 2020, the town has averaged 140 new housing permits per year, the majority of which are multifamily.
- New residential developments since 2015 include Loom City Lofts, Grand Lofts, Old Talcott Mill, and Trail Run. These projects are a mix of mill redevelopment and greenfield development within mixed-use corridors.
- There has been little new construction of single-family homes in Vernon since the mid-2000s, driven by the lack of available land and shifting consumer preferences.
- Since 2018, single-family home sales have exceeded 275 annually, their highest levels since the mid-2000s. This suggests many new families are being drawn into the community and its diverse and reasonably priced single-family housing stock.
- Housing development is crucial to supporting the Town’s economic development goals, as a growing population results in a larger customer base and workforce for local businesses.
- While Vernon’s housing costs are lower than many communities in Connecticut, affordable housing remains a challenge for many residents. About 46% of renters and 28% of homeowners in Vernon are cost-burdened and spend greater than 30% of their income on housing.

Affordability of Housing by Tenure



Source: Partnership for Strong Communities Housing Profile for Vernon 2020

Goal 4: Maintain a diverse housing stock that supports people of all ages, income levels, life stages, and backgrounds.

Objective	Strategies
<p>4.1 Provide a diversity of housing and housing types for all ages and income levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and expand Vernon’s Housing Profile, produced by Partnership for Strong Communities (SCT 11.2.2).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an Affordable Housing Plan.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update zoning requirements to permit accessory dwelling units to provide more flexibility.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update zoning to encourage mixed-use development in appropriate areas identified in the Future Land Use Plan.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate zoning approaches to promote mixed-income development. Approaches include requiring a percentage of affordable units or providing incentives for developers meeting mixed-income provisions.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the Elderly and Disabled Tax Relief program to encourage current residents to remain in Vernon.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain existing Vernon Housing Authority (VHA) units in a state of good repair. Maintain or increase the number of affordable units in VHA properties if they are redeveloped.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the use of Connecticut Housing Finance Authority mortgage programs to expand homeownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents.
<p>4.2 Promote a range of residential densities and housing types.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support a range of residential densities and housing types by scale, height, and architectural style, in accordance with the Future Land Use Plan and Residential Densities Plan.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify the Town’s Zoning Regulations to allow for a range of residential densities for multifamily dwellings for different zones, in accordance with the Residential Densities Plan. Consider setting density guideposts using units per acre.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage housing diversity of unit type within mixed-use settings within the following Future Land Use Policy Areas: Downtown Rockville, the Rockville Gateways, the Mixed-Use Corridor, the 67 Node, and the Route 30 Corridor – East.

Goal 4: Maintain a diverse housing stock that supports people of all ages, income levels, life stages, and backgrounds.	
Objective	Strategies
4.3 Grow sustainable, efficient, and accessible housing choices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider adding universal design provisions to the Zoning Regulations, requiring or incentivizing new development to provide units that are accessible to anyone regardless of age or disability status.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate sustainable design requirements or incentives into the zoning code. For example: increased permitted density when measures like lid stormwater management, energy generation, or active transportation amenities are included in the site plan application.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote energy efficiency in new housing as a means of reducing overall housing utility costs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate property owners on available funding sources for sustainability and energy efficiency upgrades, such as the Connecticut Green Bank and Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) programs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop residential design and performance standards for infill residential developments.

Goal 5: Maintain high quality, sustainable, and equitable public facilities and services.

What we know

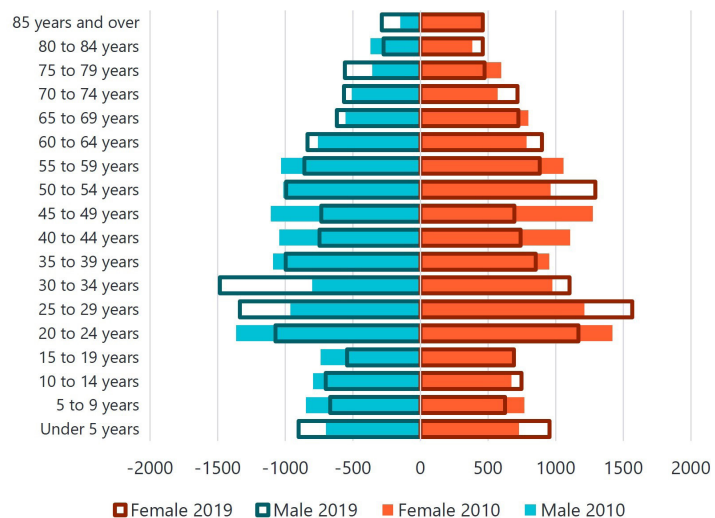
Vernon continues to make investments in its public facilities, infrastructure, and services.

- 74% of community survey respondents rated Vernon’s quality of life as good or excellent.
- Survey respondents generally rated Vernon’s town facilities and services as excellent or adequate. Facilities and services that were identified as in most need of improvement were sidewalk conditions (38%), arts and cultural opportunities (29%), and local road maintenance (26%).
- Several major capital projects have been recently completed, are planned, or are ongoing, including the opening of a new senior center in 2018, ongoing renovations to the Citizens Block, ongoing upgrades to the Water Pollution Control Facility, replacement of the Town fueling stations, and repairs to Fox Hill Tower.
- The Town of Vernon Department of Public Works (DPW) maintains over 113 miles of roadways. About 88% of roads have been resurfaced under the Town’s last 6-year road bond.
- Major transportation projects listed in the CIP include the reconstruction of bridges on Dart Hill Road, Talcottville Main Street, and Pleasantview Drive, as well as the reconstruction of South Street.

Demographic shifts may lead to greater demand for certain Town services serving seniors and young adults.

- The population of those 65 and older has increased between 2010 and 2019.
- As of 2017, Vernon’s median age was 39 years old, up from 37.7 in 2000.
- From 2010 to 2019, there was a large increase in the adult population in the 25 to 34 age range.

Population by Age and Sex



Source: U.S. Census 2010, American Community Survey 2019

Goal 5: Maintain high quality, sustainable, and equitable public facilities and services.	
Objective	Strategies
5.1 Continue to invest in high quality town facilities, infrastructure, and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the ongoing and planned upgrades to town facilities.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor conditions and space needs at town facilities and make improvements through the Capital Improvement Plan, as needed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the local road resurfacing and sidewalk construction programs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a conditions assessment of the existing sidewalk system to prioritize repairs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the 2020 Census upon release to measure potential impacts of changing demographics.
5.2 Improve bicycle, pedestrian, and transit connections to town facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan for the Town (SCT 6.5.4).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve bicycle and pedestrian connections between the Rail-to-Trail and town facilities and schools in Vernon Center.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize trail and sidewalk connections to schools and green spaces.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt a Complete Streets Policy (SCT 6.1.3).
5.3 Enhance access to open space and recreational opportunities in Rockville.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify properties that can be used as pocket parks, playgrounds, or community gardens within Rockville.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve public awareness of and access to Stickney Hill Preserve, as well as other popular park sites (Henry Park & Fox Hill Tower, Snipsic Lake, Papermill Pond; market as a destination point for rails-to-trails users, including the regional travelers on the East Coast Greenway.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance bicycle and sidewalk connections between Rockville and Henry Park.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend the Hockanum River Linear Park Trail from Papermill Pond to Snipsic Lake trails.

Goal 6: Cooperate with local and regional organizations to promote the health and wellbeing of the region.

What We Know

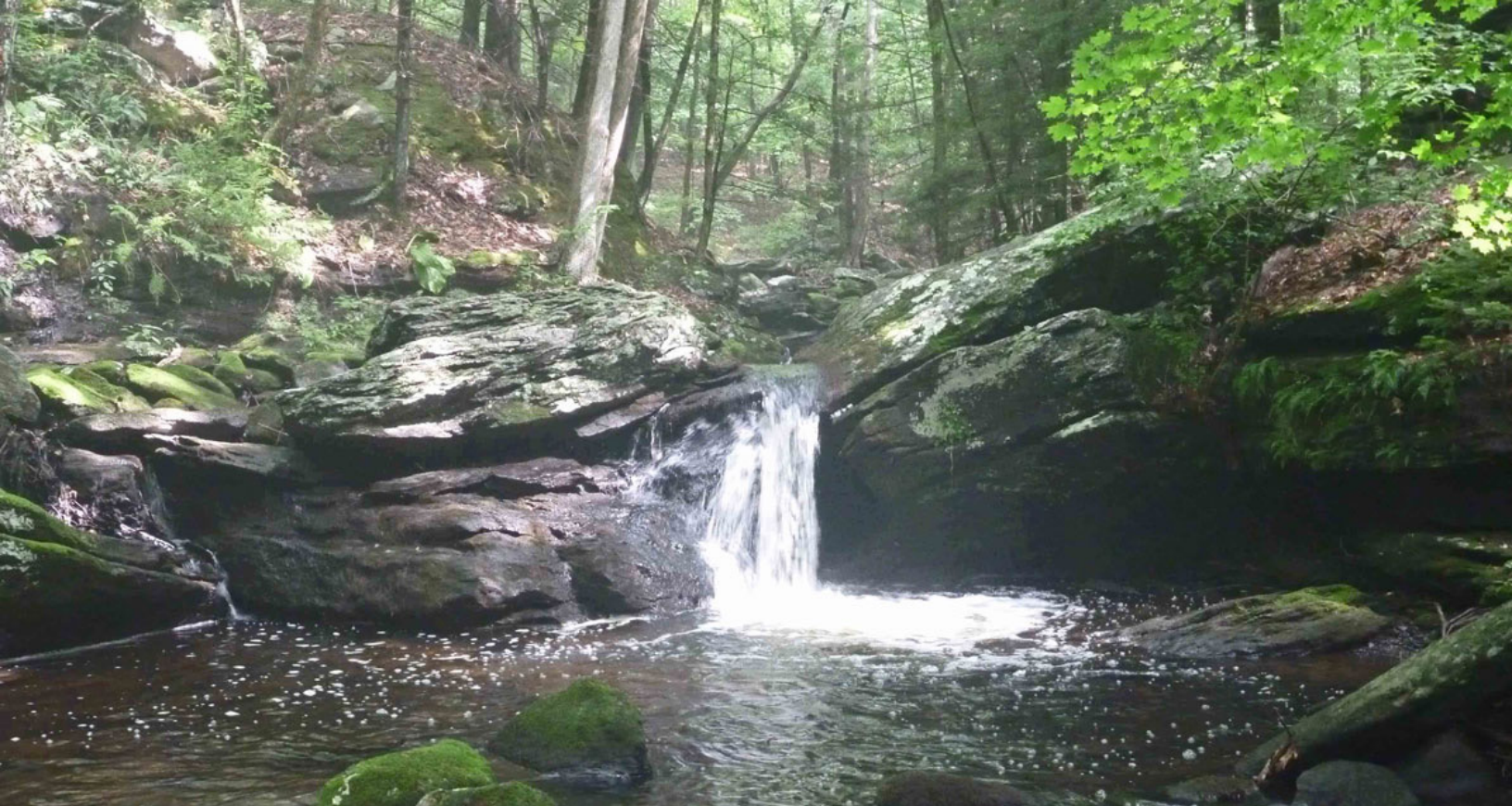
Vernon is a part of the Greater Hartford Metropolitan Area and its residents rely on the regional transportation network to access employment opportunities in the larger region.

- Just 9.6% of employed Vernon residents work in Vernon. A majority commute to jobs elsewhere in the Greater Hartford Area.
- Vernon is served by CTtransit express and local bus service. Local bus service is provided in Rockville and the Route 83 corridor. Express bus service connects park & ride locations at Interchange 65, 66, and 67 to Downtown Hartford.
- I-84 provides connections to the Greater Hartford region to the west and Massachusetts to the east. Traffic volumes on I-84 in Vernon range from 75,000 to 100,000 vehicles per day.

Vernon participates in numerous regional organizations to encourage collaboration.

- As a part of the Capital Region Council of Governments, Vernon participates in regional land use, transportation, and economic development planning.
- Vernon's Water Pollution Control Facility is a regional facility that also serves parts of Manchester, South Windsor, Ellington, and Tolland.
- Vernon is a member of the North Central District Health Department, covering eight municipalities in north central Connecticut.

Goal 6: Cooperate with local and regional organizations to promote the health and wellbeing of the region.	
Objective	Strategies
6.1 Continue to participate in regional land use, economic development, and transportation initiatives through CRCOG.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with neighboring municipalities to implement the recommendations from the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to participate in regional land use planning and transportation initiatives through CRCOG.
6.2 Support enhancements to the regional roadway and transit systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the extension of CTfastrak service east of the Connecticut River, including connections between Vernon and the UConn campus in Mansfield.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for enhanced bus stop amenities at park & ride locations such as larger seating areas, improved lighting, and pre-pay ticket kiosks.
6.3 Work with neighboring towns on land conservation, Rails-to-Trails, waste management, and other conservation issues that cross town boundaries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with regional groups in the areas of land conservation and recreation, including Hockanum River Park committees in other towns, the Northern Connecticut Land Trust, the Hockanum River Watershed Association, Manchester Land Trust, Friends of Bolton Lakes, Bolton Land Trust, Bolton Walk-Hike, and the Ellington Trails Committee.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support regional efforts to complete the East Coast Greenway in Greater Hartford.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to participate in statewide product stewardship initiatives such as the PaintCare and mattress recycling programs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue membership in the Bolton Lakes Watershed Conservation Alliance in efforts to protect the watershed and water quality of Bolton Lake.



Mason Falls Photo credit: tankerhoosen.info

6. Conservation Theme

Goal 7: Build a livable, healthy, resilient, and sustainable Vernon.

What we know

Vernon is a state leader in sustainability and public health.

- In November 2018, Vernon registered as member of Sustainable CT, a voluntary certification program that provides recognition, technical assistance, and funding in support of a range of sustainability programs.
- In October 2019, Vernon reached a “Silver” certification level through Sustainable CT, the highest level available.
- Over the past 6 years, the Town of Vernon has implemented a program to update the Town’s vehicle fleet, resulting in improved fuel efficiency and reduced emissions.
- Solar panels are being installed at the Police Station, Center Road School, Lake Street School, and Northeast School.
- Vernon has been nationally recognized for its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Town of Vernon has an ongoing campaign to vaccinate the community against COVID-19. This effort includes ongoing vaccination clinics at the Vernon Senior Center and Mobile Vaccination Clinics conducted throughout the region.

The effects of climate change are impacting Connecticut, which has seen increasing frequency of heavy rainfalls, floods, and extreme weather events. The town is continuing to improve its capacity to respond to these events.

- In partnership with CRCOG, Vernon completed an update to its Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (NHMP) in 2019.
- The NHMP identified flooding, hurricane winds, and winter storms are the top hazards of concern for Vernon. The Hockanum River and Tankerhoosen River are the primary sources of flood problems.
- A flood map modernization effort by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is currently underway for Tolland County, but its full extent, and how much of Vernon it will cover, is unknown.
- The Town has undertaken several resiliency improvements over the last 5 years, including building redundancy into its IT systems, implementing dam removal and bank stabilization projects as part of mill redevelopments, and purchasing equipment for tree maintenance and debris cleanup.



Solar panel installation at the Vernon Police Department Headquarters



The Hockanum River, which runs through Rockville and along the Route 83 corridor, is one of the primary sources of flooding during heavy rainfall events. Photo credit: CT Main Street Center

Goal 7: Build a livable, healthy, resilient, and sustainable Vernon.	
Objective	Strategies
7.1 Continue to implement sustainable policies and actions using the Sustainable CT framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain Silver Level certification or higher through Sustainable CT.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate, identify, and implement Sustainable CT Sustainability Concepts (SCT 5.1.1B) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Land Use Patterns ○ Municipal Programs and Operations ○ Community Character and Livability ○ Economic Vitality and Resilience ○ Resilient Infrastructure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate sustainable development best practices around green energy, energy efficiency, and low-impact development into the Town zoning code.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer an annual sustainability training course for Board and Commission members, in partnership with Sustainable CT.
7.2 Support municipal energy efficiency, green energy, and waste reduction programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement new measures that improve fuel efficiency and reduce emissions for the Town fleet.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to evaluate opportunities to install renewable energy projects, such as solar panels, at Town properties.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to convert Town buildings to natural gas.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the creation of "green," local, and/or energy efficiency standards in the Town's procurement policy for materials.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore options to create of a food scrap/ composting program at the Transfer Station or partner with a private business to provide this service.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install electric vehicle charging stations at municipal properties and pursue funding through the Connecticut Green Bank and the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection.

Goal 7: Build a livable, healthy, resilient, and sustainable Vernon.	
Objective	Strategies
7.3 Strengthen resiliency, disaster preparedness capabilities, and hazard mitigation planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the recommendations of the Capitol Region Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (NHMP) and prioritize Hazard Mitigation Goals through the Sustainable CT program via these actions: (SCT 5.1.1b) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Update and map natural hazard areas. ○ Encourage land protection within natural hazard areas; discourage development or redevelopment in natural hazard areas. ○ Limit access (roads, transportation networks) to natural hazard areas. ○ Prioritize the protection of critical facilities and cultural resources that are located in vulnerable areas.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a study of drainage problems identified in the NHMP, including Franklin Road, the Manchester Flats area, and Frederick Road.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the costs and benefits of joining FEMA’s Community Rating System.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support periodic tree limb inspection and maintenance programs to minimize potential for downed power lines.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a phased approach to replacing aboveground utility lines with underground utility lines, taking advantage of opportunities such as streetscaping projects.
7.4 Support programs that promote public health and wellbeing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue public health education, programs, and services, in partnership with the North Central District Health Department.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify sites that can support community gardens in Vernon, in partnership with regional farmers and the UConn Tolland County Extension Center.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide education and outreach to residents impacted by crumbling foundations on available funding sources and state programs.

Goal 8: Protect, connect, and promote Vernon's natural and historic resources.

What we know

Vernon's open space and natural resources are integral to residents' quality of life.

- Vernon is fortunate to have numerous boards, commissions, and volunteer organizations that protect, maintain, and steward Vernon's open space and natural resources. These groups include but are not limited to the Open Space Task Force, Conservation Commission, Inland Wetland Commission, Hockanum River Linear Park Committee, the Parks & Recreation Department, Friends of Valley Falls, Friends of Bolton Lakes, Bolton Lakes Watershed Conservation Alliance, Vernon Greenways Volunteers, Manchester Land Trust, Northern CT Land Trust, Tolland Agricultural Center, Vernon Garden Club, and Strong Family Farm.
- According to the 2021 Town of Vernon Open Space Inventory, Vernon contained 2,685.8 acres of Managed Open Space (23.3% of total land area), 2,519.9 acres (21.8%) of which are Protected Open Space.
- About 50% of Vernon's Protected Open Space is owned by the State of Connecticut, and 31% is owned by the Town of Vernon. The remaining 19% is owned by water companies, land trusts, nonprofit organizations, or is privately held.
- Recent Open Space preservation accomplishments include the preservation of Strong Family Farm, Stickney Hill Preserve, and the construction of Gene Pitney Memorial Park.
- Forty miles of trails on Vernon's open space properties provide abundant recreational opportunity to area residents. The popular Rail Trail has the 4th highest number of users, from census data of 25 active trails in the state.
- Vernon has one Level A Aquifer surrounding the Connecticut Water Company wellfields near Vernon Center. The Town has adopted Aquifer Protection Regulations to protect this important drinking water supply.



Since the 2012 Plan, the Manchester Land Trust has purchased the Stickney Hill Preserve in Rockville as open space



Strong Family Farm was protected from development since the 2012 Plan and continues to be used as active farmland

- Both the Tankerhoosen and Hockanum River greenways are Officially Designated Greenways of the State of Connecticut.
- The Tankerhoosen Greenway is comprised of approximately 1,500 acres of preserved, connected land along the Tankerhoosen River and Railroad Brook.
- The Tankerhoosen River is classified as a cold water stream. It provides the unique conditions needed to sustain certain wildlife species, including wild trout populations. The upper reaches of the river are designated as a Wild Trout Management Area by the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection.
- There are twenty-nine officially certified vernal pools in Vernon; vernal pools provide habitat for numerous rare plants and animals.

Vernon has significant historic and scenic resources ranging from rural structures to village centers to mills and war memorials.

- Vernon is home to two National Historic Districts, three State Historic Districts, and one Local Historic District. In addition, Vernon has numerous historic structures individually listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places.
- Vernon has adopted a Village District Overlay Zone for Downtown Rockville. This zone ensures that new development is consistent with the historic scale and design of structures in the Downtown.
- The Town of Vernon has a Local Historic Properties Commission (LHPC) that oversees the Talcottville Historic District as well individually listed historic properties. In 2010, the LHPC published Design Guidelines for owners of historic properties.
- Vernon has four locally designated Scenic Roads: Valley Falls Road, Reservoir Road, Bamforth Road, and Baker Roads. The Valley Falls Farm and Valley Falls Park area is viewed as the most scenic corner in Vernon.



The historic Kellogg Lawn house in Rockville is now part of Rockville General Hospital.



Valley Falls Barn (pictured above) contributes to the scenic character of Valley Falls Road in southern Vernon

Goal 8: Protect, connect, and promote Vernon’s natural and historic resources.	
Objective	Strategies
8.1 Foster open space and trail connectivity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update the Open Space Plan as appropriate. Maintain, update, and Open Space inventory, identifying properties with high conservation or scenic value for potential future protection (SCT 3.4.1 and 3.4.3) that do not have permanent protections; review deeds and work with owners to permanently preserve those parcels.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to maintain contact with owners of desired properties in the Open Space Plan. Continue collaboration with area land trusts in the acquisition of desired parcels. Pursue funding through the State’s Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program or Farmland Preservation Program and other grant sources.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize open space acquisition in the Tankerhoosen River watershed, in accordance with the Open Space Plan.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an Urban Open Space Plan focused on small parks, natural areas, recreation, and community gardens within the built environment. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to require quality, useable open space in all development projects. (SCT 3.4.3)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to acquire land or secure public access or conservation easements along the Hockanum River in accordance with the Hockanum River Linear Park Master Plan.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish policy, zoning incentives, or requirements to enhance public access along the Hockanum River as part of future development proposals.

Goal 8: Protect, connect, and promote Vernon’s natural and historic resources.	
Objective	Strategies
<p>8.2 Protect water quality and reduce non-point-source pollution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain commitment to the Tankerhoosen Watershed Management Plan; identify specific implementation measures from the plan to prioritize.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add zoning incentives/requirements to further the use of Low Impact Design (LID), especially for properties near the Tankerhoosen and Hockanum Rivers. (SCT 3.8.2.b). Strengthen LID regulations; review situations that might require LID use rather than having it as an option (i.e. “shall” in lieu of “may”).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to update and implement the Town’s Stormwater Management Plan in compliance with state Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) requirements.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the MS4 plan, educate residents on best practices to reduce stormwater runoff to improve water quality. Direct them toward additional educational resources from organizations such as the Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate landowners on water quality issues and techniques for protecting water quality. Focus should include measures to eliminate the invasive species threats to the Bolton Lakes system; maintenance or creation of vegetated buffer strips along lakes and streams; use of non-chemical fertilizers and pesticides; and septic design and maintenance. Provide requirements or incentives in the zoning code to reduce impervious surfaces and/or treat water before discharge or infiltration.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor water quality in the Tankerhoosen River and Bolton Lakes; in partnership with local conservation organizations, organize a repeat of the 2006 comprehensive chemical water quality studies to evaluate long term changes; continue to participate in the annual DEEP volunteer water quality monitoring program within the watershed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement recommendations outlined in the Tankerhoosen Watershed Management Plan and expand management planning in the Bolton Lakes Watershed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor groundwater levels near Bolton Lakes to ensure that the diversion of water out of the watershed does not impact groundwater levels; continue to annually monitor aquatic invasive species as well as toxic and non-toxic algae in the lakes.

Goal 8: Protect, connect, and promote Vernon’s natural and historic resources.	
Objective	Strategies
8.3 Improve stewardship and awareness of existing open spaces and recreational opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish an open space map on the Town website noting where parking areas and public access points are located.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish partnerships between local conservation organizations and Vernon Public Schools to better market open space and recreational opportunities to youth.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand opportunities for canoe and kayak access.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility to recreation and open space areas.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a habitat-based management plan for Valley Falls Park.
8.4 Protect Vernon’s historical and scenic resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update and maintain a historic and scenic resources inventory.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain Town-owned historic properties in a state of good repair.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve Clark Farm as a Heritage Farm.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the Town’s commitment to active, working local farms and implement measures designed to protect the right to farm (SCT 5.3.1).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider creating historic preservation zoning incentives; for example, excluding historic structures up to a certain size from lot coverage calculations or creating more flexible use or site design standards for adaptive reuse.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate owners of historic properties on other funding opportunities such as state and federal rehabilitation tax credits.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence efforts to evaluate the relationship of suburban design and development to Historic Preservation.

Goal 8: Protect, connect, and promote Vernon’s natural and historic resources.	
Objective	Strategies
8.5 Promote Vernon’s natural and historic resources as part of larger marketing and branding efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and maintain a natural resource and wildlife inventory (NRW) (SCT 3.5.2).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market historical, cultural, and natural resource elements in partnership with state and regional organizations. The creation of a Municipal Cultural District can help leverage state resources for marketing and promotion.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide directional signage on main roads and the trail to points of interest.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and publish walking or cycling routes that highlight Vernon’s natural and historic resources. Potential locations include Talcottville (Talcottville Historic District and Tankerhoosen Ravine), Valley Falls, and Rockville (Rockville Historic District and Hockanum River).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to update and maintain the natural resources inventory.
8.6 Discourage land development within natural hazard areas while encouraging land protection within natural hazard areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly identify up-to-date natural hazard areas and map them on the future land use map.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt use restrictions, buffer and setback regulations, LID measures, and other tools to mitigate impacts on natural hazard areas.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harden/protect existing critical facilities and cultural resources located in vulnerable areas.



7. Consistency with State and Regional Plans

Chapter 126, Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that local POCDs take into account the State Conservation and Development Policies Plan and note any inconsistencies. While a draft update to the state Plan was completed in 2018, it has not yet been adopted by the Connecticut General Assembly. Therefore, the 2013-2018 State Plan was reviewed. Generally, the Town of Vernon's plan is consistent with the state's six growth management principles.

State statutes require that regional Councils of Government (COGs) review local POCDs for consistency with their Regional Plan of Conservation and Development. The most recent Regional Plan of Conservation and Development for the CRCOG was completed in 2014.

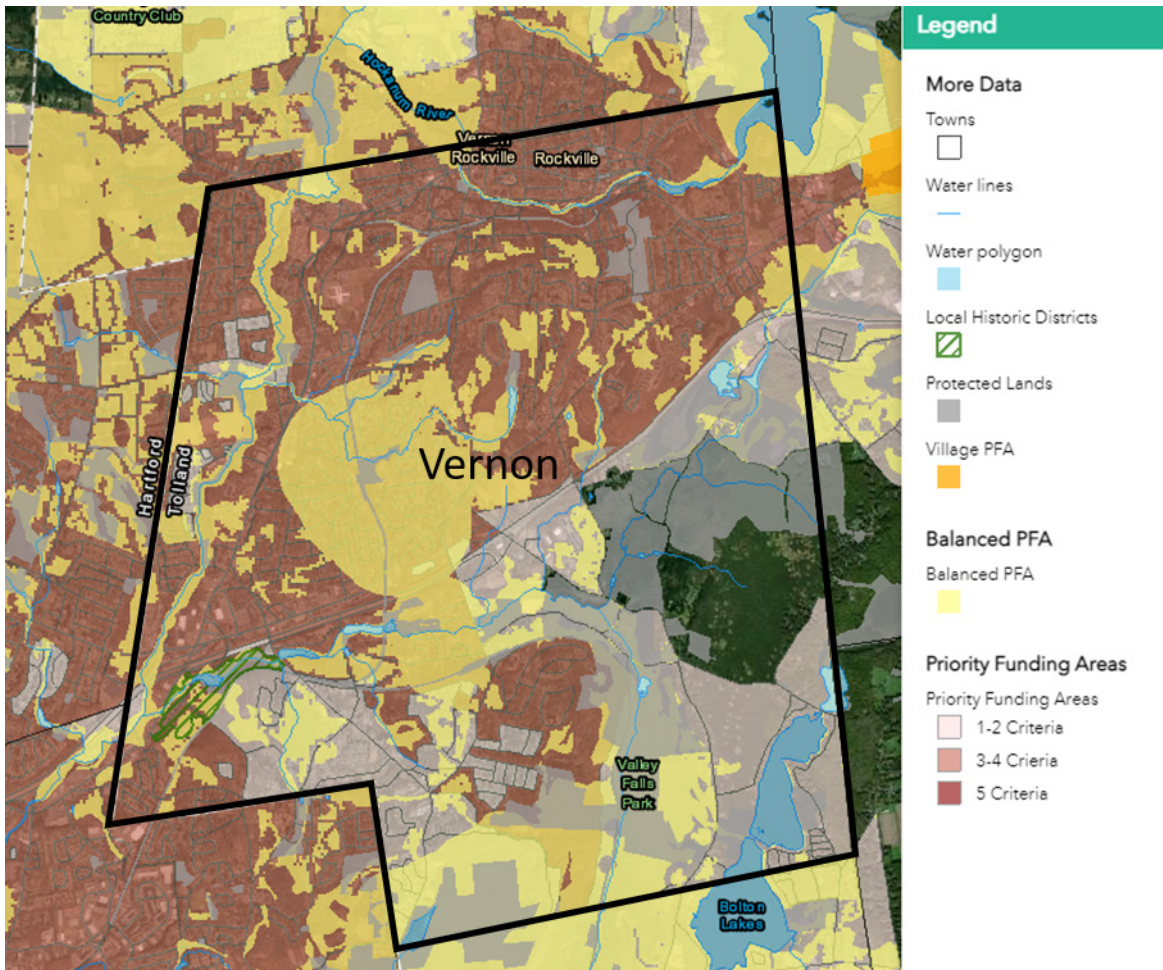
The regional POCD has similar goals to the state Plan and prioritizes development near existing centers that are well-served by public infrastructure. The Plan classifies Rockville, its gateways, and the village residential areas as "Higher intensity Development Areas" that have the potential for shops and major commercial establishments sometimes mixed with townhouses, apartments, and offices. This category includes downtowns, major business corridors, urbanized neighborhoods, village centers, and mixed-use development with multifamily housing and retail. It also encourages the preservation of existing higher intensity areas that already exhibit these characteristics.

State of Connecticut Growth Management Principals	Town of Vernon POCD Consistency Analysis
<p>Redevelop and Revitalize Regional Centers and Areas with Existing or Currently Planned Physical Infrastructure.</p>	<p>The Plan prioritizes infill development and redevelopment in areas with existing sewer and water infrastructure, particularly Rockville and the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors.</p>
<p>Expand Housing Opportunities and Design Choices to Accommodate a Variety of Household Types and Needs.</p>	<p>The Plan contains several action items pertaining to the diversification of the Town’s housing stock, including incorporation of universal design standards, expansion of affordable housing units and mixed-income housing, and the development of a range of housing types from apartments to single-family homes on large lots in appropriate areas throughout town.</p>
<p>Concentrate Development Around Transportation Nodes and Along Major Transportation Corridors to Support the Viability of Transportation Options.</p>	<p>The Plan prioritizes development in areas that are served by mass transit infrastructure. Priority development areas including Rockville and its major transportation corridors are served by CTtransit bus service. The Plan also recommends expanding bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, particularly in Rockville.</p>
<p>Conserve and Restore the Natural Environment, Cultural and Historical Resources, and Traditional Rural Lands.</p>	<p>Conservation is a priority in this Plan, especially in rural residential neighborhoods found in southern Vernon. The Plan also contains recommendations on how to preserve Vernon’s unique historic resources, including continued maintenance of buildings and landmarks.</p>
<p>Protect and Ensure the Integrity of Environmental Assets Critical to Public Health and Safety.</p>	<p>The Plan contains specific recommendations on a range of environmental topics, including reduction of stormwater runoff and nonpoint source pollution, the connection to open space corridors, and increasing the Town’s capacity to respond to extreme weather events.</p>
<p>Promote Integrated Planning across all Levels of Government to Address Issues on a Statewide, Regional, and Local Basis.</p>	<p>One of the goals of the Plan is to participate in cooperative efforts to promote the health and wellbeing of the region. There are specific recommendations pertaining to issues that cross town boundaries, including transportation, environmental management, shared services, and economic development.</p>

State Plan Locational Guide Map

The State Plan classifies land into priority funding areas, protected lands, conservation areas, and balanced priority-funding areas. These land use categories are shown on the following “Locational Guide Map.” Overall, the Locational Guide Map aligns well with the Future Land Use Plan in this POCD. The state-identified priority funding areas generally align with the Plan’s development priorities. Rockville and much of northern Vernon are listed as satisfying the highest number of “priority funding area” criteria. Southern Vernon is listed as a Priority Conservation Area and generally aligns with the conservation priority area identified the Plan. There are minor inconsistencies between the Future Land Use Plan and Locational Guide Map – the State Plan is built on Census Tract data and thus shows larger and more generalized policy areas. This may overestimate the development capacity for transitional neighborhoods that are partially but not fully served by infrastructure. The Future Land Use Plan provides more localized and specific information than the State Plan.

Connecticut Conservation and Development Policies Plan Locational Guide Map



8. Implementation Plan

The following tables are a summary of the goals, objectives, and strategies of this Plan. The Implementation Plan is meant only as a guide for the various boards and commissions responsible for implementation. The Implementation Plan lists the lead and support entities responsible for executing each particular action item. In addition, it notes the timeframe for completion of each action item. In the Implementation Plan:






- **Short-term actions** are marked with an "S." Short-term actions are those that should be implemented within the first year and include those that are less complex, or higher-priority items that need to be completed prior to other actions.
- **Medium-term actions** are marked with an "M." Medium-term actions are likely to be completed within 1 to 5 years.
- **Long-term actions** are marked with an "L." Long-term actions are those that are likely to be completed in the last 5 years of the POCD horizon.
- Ongoing efforts are marked with an "O."



Sustainable initiatives are noted in the final column of the Implementation Plan Sustainability is defined as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Sustainable initiatives span numerous topical areas of the Plan and align with the overall goals and objectives of the Sustainable CT program. They include strategies that protect the natural environment; reduce energy consumption and waste generation; encourage bicycling, walking, and transit use; and provide equitable public services and housing choices for residents. Some of the actions in the Plan align directly with Sustainable CT actions, while others can more broadly help the Town achieve its sustainability goals.


Implementing Agency Key


Agency	Key
Planning and Development Dept.	PDD
Economic Development Dept.	EDD
Water Pollution Control Dept.	WPC
Public Works Dept.	DPW
Engineering Dept.	ENG
Parks and Recreation Dept.	P&R
Town Administrator	TA
Vernon Public Schools	VPS
Rockville Downtown Association	RDA
Rockville Public Library	RPL
Vernon Housing Authority	VHA
North Central District Health Dept.	NCDHD


Agency	Key
Planning and Zoning Commission	PZC
Town Council	TC
Design Review Commission	DRC
Economic Development Commission	EDC
Inland Wetlands Commission	IWC
Open Space Task Force	OSTF
Water Pollution Control Authority	WPCA
Board of Education	BOE
Arts Commission	AC
Conservation Commission	CC
Local Historic Properties Commission	LHPC
Energy Improvement District Board	EID



Goal 1: Position Historic Downtown Rockville as the economic, civic, social, and cultural center of Tolland County					
Objective	Strategies	Responsible Entities	Support Entity	Timeline	Sustainable Initiative
1.1 Grow Rockville's residential population through infill development and adaptive reuse.	Encourage, through partnership, adaptive reuse of mill sites into residential or mixed-use development with a residential component.	PZC, PDD	EDC, EDD	O	
	Educate property owners on available financial tools that can be used for housing development such as historic preservation tax credits, Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) assistance, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, or Tax-Increment Financing.	EDD	EDC	S	
	Amend regulations to permit smaller multifamily development as a matter of right, with site plan approval.	PZC	PDD	M	
	Consider the use of zoning incentives that allow an increase in permitted residential density in Rockville for projects that meet other Town policy objectives. Potential objectives include those pertaining to historic preservation, sustainability, and provision of public space.	PZC	PDD	M	
	Encourage the use of shared parking arrangements for new residential developments in Rockville.	PZC	PDD	M	
1.2 Promote arts, culture, and civic activities and events.	Continue collaboration between the Arts Commission, Rockville Public Library, Rockville Downtown Association, Parks and Recreation Department, and the Economic Development Department and Commission to create engaging public events and market these events to the community.	RDA	AC, RPL, RDA, P&R, EDD, EDC	O	
	Strengthen partnerships with regional arts and cultural organizations such as the Greater Hartford Arts Council and University of Connecticut (UConn).	EDD	AC, EDC	S	
	Expand and enhance public infrastructure such as street trees, benches, lighting, plantings, and public art in Rockville.	ENG	DPW, AC	M	
	Consider establishing a Municipal Cultural District in Rockville pursuant to Public Act 19-143.	TC	TA	M	
	Through the Municipal Cultural District, work with state and regional organizations to market and advocate Rockville's cultural resources and tourism opportunities.	RDA	TC, EDD, EDC	L	

Goal 1: Position Historic Downtown Rockville as the economic, civic, social, and cultural center of Tolland County					
Objective	Strategies	Responsible Entities	Support Entity	Timeline	Sustainable Initiative
1.3 Enhance Rockville's commercial base.	Review and amend zoning in Downtown Rockville to allow for more innovative and experimental uses to attract visitors. Potential uses include breweries, experimental retail, entertainment uses, and artisan manufacturing (small-scale production and sale of goods within the same premises).	PZC	PDD	M	
	Modify the Downtown Rockville Zoning Regulations to allow professional or business offices to occupy the ground floor of buildings.	PZC	PDD	S	
	Review current special permit uses within the Downtown Rockville Zoning Regulations and consider permitting additional uses with site plan approval, if appropriate.	PZC	PDD	S	
	Establish zoning incentives to encourage consolidation of parking lots across properties to create a park-once-and-walk environment.	PZC	PDD	L	
	Continue to market Rockville businesses both locally and regionally, in partnership with the Rockville Downtown Association and Chamber of Commerce.	EDD	EDC, RDA	O	
	Prioritize the redevelopment, expansion, and redesign of the Courthouse Plaza area defined by Main Street, Court Street, and Brooklyn Street, through incentive, partnership, or other creative means.	PDD, EDD	TC, PZC, EDC	L	
	Improve signage in Rockville, including directional signage from I-84 and signage for public parking facilities.	RDA		M	
1.4 Support the Redevelopment of Mill Sites	Complete the redevelopment of Amerbelle Mill site	EDD	TC, EDC	S	
	Continue to pursue grants to remediate remaining brownfield sites.	EDD	EDC, RDA	O	
	Educate property owners and prospective developers on financial incentives available to support adaptive reuse and historic preservation.	EDD	PDD	S	
	Review current adaptive reuse zoning requirements and consider more flexible site design requirements for mill sites that incorporate the riverfront into the design, and create greenspace along the river, with attention to natural resource protection and regulation requirements.	PZC	PDD	M	

Goal 1: Position Historic Downtown Rockville as the economic, civic, social, and cultural center of Tolland County					
Objective	Strategies	Responsible Entities	Support Entity	Timeline	Sustainable Initiative
1.5 Protect Rockville's historic resources.	Complete the renovation and re-tenanting of the Citizens Block.	TC	TA	S	
	Consider developing a visual design guideline for Rockville to better communicate desired architectural design, signage, lighting, materials, and site design features to prospective developers and the community at-large.	DRC	PZC	M	
	Consider establishing a façade improvement program or local property tax abatement program to encourage the rehabilitation of historic properties in Rockville.	TC	EDD	M	
	Educate owners of historic properties on other funding opportunities such as state and federal rehabilitation tax credits.	EDD	PDD	O	
1.6 Enhance Rockville's connections to the town trail and open space networks.	Extend the Rails-to-Trail east of Vernon Avenue, or identify an alternative trail routing connecting to the trail in Rockville.	ENG	DPW	M	
	Enhance bicycle and pedestrian connections between Rails-to-Trail and Rockville along Vernon Avenue, Spring Street, Morrison Street, and West Street.	ENG	DPW	L	
	Install bicycle and pedestrian signage on the Rails-to-Trail directing users to key destinations in Rockville.	ENG	DPW	S	
	Install bicycle parking and racks in Downtown Rockville, on sidewalks, or places such as at Town Hall or the Rockville Public Library.	DPW	RDA	M	
	Integrate the Hockanum River into Rockville's identity, in accordance with the Hockanum River Linear Park Master Plan. Strategies may include modifying the Zoning Regulations to require or incentivize public improvements and strengthen LID requirements along the Hockanum River, securing public access easements, and studying the feasibility of daylighting portions of the river, reducing the number of outfalls into the river, and creating protective greenspace along the river as part of future redevelopment efforts.	PZC, EDC	PDD, EDD, ENG	L	



Goal 2: Create thriving, attractive, connected, and diverse business districts and mixed-use corridors					
Objective	Strategies	Responsible Entities	Support Entity	Timeline	Sustainable Initiative
2.1 Enhance architecture, site design, and landscaping within existing mixed-use corridors and gateways	Develop landscaping and site design standards incorporated into the Zoning Regulations that are tied to the location of the site as opposed to the zone. For example, all properties fronting Route 83 should have the same landscaping and site design standards, regardless of their zoning designation, to ensure consistency across multiple uses. Single-family homes should be exempt from these standards.	PZC	PDD	S	
	Strengthen screening and setback requirements for outdoor storage areas and trash enclosures within the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors.	PZC	PDD	S	
	Establishing a landscaping design matching grant fund that matches property owner landscaping investments. These funds could be used to focus on pre-existing sites with minimal or zero plantings in the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors.	TC	PZC, EDC	L	
	Create a Landscaping and Site Design Visual Guide for mixed-use corridors that can accompany the Design Review Visual Guide.	DRC	PZC, PDD	M	
	Create a corridor-based Design Review Visual Guide with specific information on recommended materials and architectural details (roof type, windows, colors, signage, etc.) for each business district.	DRC	PZC, PDD	M	
	Enhance welcome signage, directional signage, landscaping, and public realm improvements at gateways, prioritizing locations near highway ramps.	DPW	EDD	M	
	Strengthen property maintenance and code enforcement resources in town with a focus on commercial corridors.	TC	PDD	L	
2.2 Optimize traffic flow and enhance safety in commercial corridors	In partnership with the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) and the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), complete a Corridor Study of the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors focusing on traffic flow, safety, access management, transit infrastructure, and pedestrian accessibility.	ENG	PDD, EDD, CRCOG, CTDOT	M	
	Work with CTDOT and CTtransit to evaluate the potential for bus pull-offs in the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors to increase safety and improve traffic flow. This should be evaluated as part of the larger corridor study.	ENG	PDD, EDD, CRCOG, CTDOT	M	
	Consider adding pedestrian lighting requirements to the landscaping and site design standards within commercial and mixed-use zones.	PZC	PDD	S	
	Develop zoning incentives (such as a reduction in parking minimums) to encourage property owners to enter into shared parking agreements.	PZC	PDD	S	

Goal 2: Create thriving, attractive, connected, and diverse business districts and mixed-use corridors					
Objective	Strategies	Responsible Entities	Support Entity	Timeline	Sustainable Initiative
2.3 Enhance pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections	Require sidewalk connections between a building's primary entrance and the sidewalk system within all commercial and mixed-use zones.	PZC	PDD	S	
	Establishing a sidewalk matching grant fund that matches property owner sidewalk investments. These funds could be used to fill in gaps in the existing sidewalk network on Route 83 and Route 30.	TC	PDD	L	
	Work with CTDOT to incorporate safe pedestrian crossings at all signalized intersections. Elements that should be considered include dedicated pedestrian signals, marked crosswalks, and installation of proper signage.	ENG	CTDOT	M	
	Establish a zoning incentive (such as a parking reduction) for new developments that incorporates bus stop amenities such as seating areas, shelters, and lighting.	PZC	PDD	M	
	Enhance bicycle and pedestrian connections between Vernon's Rail-to-Trail system and the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors, prioritizing connections on Center Road, Regan Road, and Hartford Turnpike.	ENG	DPW	L	
	Incorporate Hockanum River Linear Park trail connections into landscape design plans within the Route 83 corridor.	ENG	DPW	L	
2.4 Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized or obsolete land uses	Create separate dimensional standards for small lots under 2 acres in the Route 83 and Route 30 corridors to provide more flexibility to property owners.	PZC	PDD	M	
	Consider modifying the Zoning Regulations in the Commercial Zone to allow purely residential developments, so long as they are in structures that are set back at least 200 feet from the roadway, reserving the frontage for commercial uses.	PZC	PDD	M	
	Consider modifying the Zoning Regulations in the Commercial Zone to allow for certain light industrial uses, subject to special permit approval. These uses should have the same landscape and design standards as commercial uses and should be appropriately buffered from adjacent residential areas.	PZC	PDD	M	
	Evaluate minimum parking requirements in commercial zones and consider lowering parking requirements, where appropriate, to support adaptive reuse.	PZC	PDD	L	

Goal 3: Promote economic growth and business expansion					
Objective	Strategies	Responsible Entities	Support Entity	Timeline	Sustainable Initiative
3.1 Provide a skilled workforce that supports business needs	Continue to support investment in Vernon's school system and the Rockville High School Career Center.	BOE, TC	VPS, TA	O	
	Continue the promotion of the dual enrollment programs between Rockville High School (RHS) and Manchester Community College, Goodwin College, and the UConn Early College Experience program. Students who participate in the college dual enrollment programs can earn credit from RHS and college simultaneously, thus completing college faster and with more flexibility.	BOE	VPS	O	
	Continue to meet with businesses to understand local workforce needs and skills gaps.	EDD	EDC	O	
	Continue to find ways to work with Capital Workforce Partners, the regional workforce development board, to leverage public and private resources to produce skilled workers and close the skills gap between local employers and residents.	EDD	EDC	O	
3.2 Pursue utility improvements that support economic development and land use goals	Complete upgrades to the Vernon Water Pollution Control Facility.	WPCF	TC, TA	S	
	Maintain sewer infrastructure in a state of good repair.	DPW	ENG, WPCF	O	
	Extend sewer and water service to Interchanges 66 and 67. Evaluate the feasibility of using Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to fund utility extensions and other public improvements needed to spur economic development.	ENG	DPW, WPCF	M	
	Encourage expansion of high-speed internet service, prioritizing low-income and underserved neighborhoods.	EDC	EDD	M	





Goal 3: Promote economic growth and business expansion					
Objective	Strategies	Responsible Entities	Support Entity	Timeline	Sustainable Initiative
3.3 Provide opportunities for industrial development and expansion.	Expand the Interchange 67 Planned Development Zone to encompass all parcels within the Interchange 67 Node Future Land Use category.	PZC	PDD	L	
	Create a similar Planned Development Zone for properties in the Interchange 66 node.	PZC	PDD	L	
	Maintain a balanced approach to economic development near the Interchange 66 and Interchange 67 corridors. New development should contribute to the economic development and fiscal health of the community while avoiding negative impacts to natural resources within the Tankerhoosen River watershed.	PZC, CC, IWC	PDD, EDD	L	
	Maintain a list of vacant land and available industrial land and buildings. Actively market the sites to prospective businesses in partnership with regional and statewide organizations such as CERC.	EDD	EDC	O	
3.4 Provide an attractive and supportive business environment, including an efficient regulatory process.	Evaluate zoning comprehensively to improve clarity and reduce inconsistency. Look for ways to reduce the use of special permits in exchange for higher performance standards related to architecture, site design, and landscape buffer. Consider a comprehensive update of the Town Zoning Regulations	PZC	PDD	S	
	Seek to improve related on-line department web pages. Maintain an e-permit system to allow prospective businesses to fill out permits online to create a more streamlined approval process.	TA	All departments	S	
	Provide regular education and training opportunities for board and commission members with a goal of 100% annual participation.	TA	All Boards & Commissions	S	
	Work with the Connecticut Small Business Development Center to coach new and existing businesses in Vernon.	EDD	EDC	S	
	Introduce a business incubator to Rockville, utilizing part of the Citizens Block, or other building in Downtown, providing low-cost rent to local start-up businesses.	EDD	EDC, RDA	L	
	Develop Land Use process explainers and other tools to make the development process more transparent.	PDD, EDD		M	









Goal 4: Maintain a diverse housing stock that supports people of all ages, income levels, life stages, and backgrounds



Objective	Strategies	Responsible Entities	Support Entity	Timeline	Sustainable Initiative
4.1 Provide a diversity of housing and housing types for all ages and income levels.	Maintain and expand Vernon's Housing Profile, produced by Partnership for Strong Communities (SCT 11.2.2).	PDD			
	Create an Affordable Housing Plan.	PZC	PDD	S	
	Review and update zoning requirements to permit accessory dwelling units to provide more flexibility.	PZC	PDD	M	
	Review and update zoning to encourage mixed-use development in appropriate areas identified in the Future Land Use Plan.	PZC	PDD	M	
	Evaluate zoning approaches to promote mixed-income development. Approaches include requiring a percentage of affordable units or providing incentives for developers meeting mixed-income provisions.	PZC	PDD	L	
	Promote the Elderly and Disabled Tax Relief program to encourage current residents to remain in Vernon.	Assessor		O	
	Maintain existing Vernon Housing Authority (VHA) units in a state of good repair. Maintain or increase the number of affordable units in VHA properties if they are redeveloped.	VHA		O	
	Support the use of Connecticut Housing Finance Authority mortgage programs to expand homeownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents.	VHA		M	
4.2 Promote a range of residential densities and housing types.	Support a range of residential densities and housing types by scale, height, and architectural style, in accordance with the Future Land Use Plan and Residential Densities Plan.	PZC	PDD	O	
	Modify the Town's Zoning Regulations to allow for a range of residential densities for multifamily dwellings for different zones, in accordance with the Residential Densities Plan. Consider setting density guideposts using units per acre.	PZC	PDD	M	
	Encourage housing diversity of unit type within mixed-use settings within the following Future Land Use Policy Areas: Downtown Rockville, the Rockville Gateways, the Mixed-Use Corridor, the 67 Node, and the Route 30 Corridor – East.	PZC	PDD	O	













Goal 4: Maintain a diverse housing stock that supports people of all ages, income levels, life stages, and backgrounds








Objective	Strategies	Responsible Entities	Support Entity	Timeline	Sustainable Initiative
4.3 Grow sustainable, efficient, and accessible housing choices.	Consider adding universal design provisions to the Zoning Regulations, requiring or incentivizing new development to provide units that are accessible to anyone regardless of age or disability status.	PZC	PDD	L	
	Incorporate sustainable design requirements or incentives into the zoning code. For example: increased permitted density when measures like lid stormwater management, energy generation, or active transportation amenities are included in the site plan application.	PZC	PDD	L	
	Promote energy efficiency in new housing as a means of reducing overall housing utility costs.	PZC	PDD	M	
	Educate property owners on available funding sources for sustainability and energy efficiency upgrades, such as the Connecticut Green Bank and Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) programs.	EDD	EID	O	
	Develop residential design and performance standards for infill residential developments.	PZC	PDD	L	












Goal 5: Maintain high quality, sustainable, and equitable public facilities, and services					
Objective	Strategies	Responsible Entities	Support Entity	Timeline	Sustainable Initiative
5.1 Continue to invest in high quality town facilities, infrastructure, and services	Complete the ongoing and planned upgrades to town facilities.	TA	TC	O	
	Monitor conditions and space needs at town facilities and make improvements through the Capital Improvement Plan, as needed.	TA	All departments	L	
	Continue the local road resurfacing and sidewalk construction programs.	DPW	ENG	O	
	Conduct a conditions assessment of the existing sidewalk system to prioritize repairs.	ENG	DPW	M	
	Evaluate the 2020 Census upon release to measure potential impacts of changing demographics.	TA	All departments	S	
5.2 Improve bicycle, pedestrian, and transit connections to town facilities	Create a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan for the Town (SCT 6.5.4).	ENG	DPW	S	
	Improve bicycle and pedestrian connections between the Rail-to-Trail and town facilities and schools in Vernon Center.	ENG	DPW	L	
	Prioritize trail and sidewalk connections to schools and green spaces.	ENG	DPW	L	
	Adopt a Complete Streets Policy (SCT 6.1.3).	TC	ENG, PDD	M	
5.3 Enhance access to open space and recreational opportunities in Rockville.	Improve public awareness of and access to Stickney Hill Preserve, as well as other popular park sites (Henry Park & Fox Hill Tower, Snipsic Lake, Papermill Pond; market as a destination point for rails-to-trails users, including the regional travelers on the East Coast Greenway.	P&R	OSTF	S	
	Enhance bicycle and sidewalk connections between Rockville and Henry Park.	P&R	OSTF	S	
	Improve public awareness of and access to Stickney Hill Preserve, as well as other popular park sites (Henry Park & Fox Hill Tower, Snipsic Lake, Papermill Pond; market as a destination point for rails-to-trails users, including the regional travelers on the East Coast Greenway.	ENG	P&R, DPW	L	
	Extend the Hockanum River Linear Park Trail from Papermill Pond to Snipsic Lake trails.	ENG	P&R, DPW	L	










Goal 6: Cooperate with local and regional organizations to promote the health and wellbeing of the region					
Objective	Strategies	Responsible Entities	Support Entity	Timeline	Sustainable Initiative
6.1 Continue to participate in regional land use, economic development, and transportation initiatives through CRCOG	Continue to work with neighboring municipalities to implement the recommendations from the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).	EDD	EDC, CRCOG	O	
	Continue to participate in regional land use planning and transportation initiatives through CRCOG.	TA	PDD, ENG	O	
6.2 Support enhancements to the regional roadway and transit systems	Support the extension of CTfastrak service east of the Connecticut river, including connections between Vernon and the UConn campus in Mansfield.	TC	TA, EDD	M	
	Advocate for enhanced bus stop amenities at park & ride locations such as larger seating areas, improved lighting, and pre-pay ticket kiosks.	TC	TA, EDD, PDD	L	
6.3 Work with neighboring towns on land conservation, rails-to-trails, waste management, and other conservation issues that cross-town boundaries	Continue to work with regional groups in the areas of land conservation and recreation, including Hockanum River Park committees in other towns, the Northern Connecticut Land Trust, the Hockanum River Watershed Association, Manchester Land Trust, Friends of Bolton Lakes, Bolton Land Trust, Bolton Walk-Hike, and the Ellington Trails Committee.	OSTF, CC	Regional conservation organizations	O	
	Support regional efforts to complete the East Coast Greenway in Greater Hartford.	OSTF, CC	Regional conservation organizations	L	
	Continue to participate in statewide product stewardship initiatives such as the PaintCare and mattress recycling programs.	DPW		O	
	Continue membership in the Bolton Lakes Watershed Conservation Alliance in efforts to protect the watershed and water quality of Bolton Lake.	CC	OSTF	O	






Goal 7: Build a livable, healthy, resilient, and sustainable Vernon					
Objective	Strategies	Responsible Entities	Support Entity	Timeline	Sustainable Initiative
7.1 Continue to implement sustainable policies and actions using the Sustainable CT framework.	Maintain Silver Level certification or higher through Sustainable CT.	TA	EDD	O	
	Incorporate, Identify, and Implement Sustainable CT Sustainability Concepts (SCT 5.1.1B) - Land Use Patterns - Municipal Programs and Operations - Community Character & Livability - Economic vitality & resilience - Resilient infrastructure	TA	EDD	S	
	Incorporate sustainable development best practices around green energy, energy efficiency, and low-impact development into the Town zoning code.	PZC	PDD	M	
	Offer an annual sustainability training course for Board and Commission members, in partnership with Sustainable CT.	TA	All boards and commissions	M	
7.2 Support municipal energy efficiency, green energy, and waste reduction programs.	Implement new measures that improve fuel efficiency and reduce emissions for the Town fleet.	DPW	TA	M	
	Continue to evaluate opportunities to install renewable energy projects, such as solar panels, at Town properties.	TC		M	
	Continue to convert Town buildings to natural gas.	TC, BOE	TA, VPS	S	
	Complete the creation of "green," local, and/or energy efficiency standards in the Town's procurement policy for materials.	TC	TA	L	
	Explore options to create of a food scrap/ composting program at the Transfer Station or partner with a private business to provide this service.	DPW		L	
	Install electric vehicle charging stations at municipal properties and pursue funding through the Connecticut Green Bank and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.	TC	TA, EID	M	

Goal 7: Build a livable, healthy, resilient, and sustainable Vernon

Objective	Strategies	Responsible Entities	Support Entity	Timeline	Sustainable Initiative
7.3 Strengthen resiliency, disaster preparedness capabilities, and hazard mitigation planning.	Implement the recommendations of the Capitol Region Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (NHMP) and prioritize Hazard Mitigation Goals through the Sustainable CT program via these actions: (SCT 5.1.1b) - Update and Map Natural Hazard Areas - Encourage land protection within natural hazard areas; discourage development or redevelopment in natural hazard areas - Limit access (roads, transportation networks) to natural hazard areas - Prioritize the protection of critical facilities and cultural resources that are located in vulnerable areas	PZC, ENG	OSTF, CC, TC	L	
	Conduct a study of drainage problems identified in the NHMP, including Franklin Road, the Manchester Flats area, and Frederick Road.	ENG		L	
	Evaluate the costs and benefits of joining FEMA's Community Rating System.	TA	TC	S	
	Support periodic tree limb inspection and maintenance programs to minimize potential for downed power lines.	DPW		O	
	Develop a phased approach to replacing aboveground utility lines with underground utility lines, taking advantage of opportunities such as streetscaping projects.	ENG	DPW	L	
7.4 Support programs that promote public health and wellbeing	Continue public health education, programs, and services, in partnership with the North Central District Health Department.	NCDHD		O	
	Identify sites that can support community gardens in Vernon, in partnership with regional farmers and the UConn Tolland County Extension Center.	OSTF, RDA	CC	M	
	Continue to provide education and outreach to residents impacted by crumbling foundations on available funding sources and state programs.	TA	TC	O	

Goal 8: Protect, connect, and promote Vernon's natural and historic resources					
Objective	Strategies	Responsible Entities	Support Entity	Timeline	Sustainable Initiative
8.1 Foster open space and trail connectivity	Review and update the Open Space Plan as appropriate. Maintain, update, and Open Space inventory, identifying properties with high conservation or scenic value for potential future protection (SCT 3.4.1 and 3.4.3) that do not have permanent protections; review deeds and work with owners to permanently preserve those parcels.	OSTF	CC	S	
	Continue to maintain contact with owners of desired properties in the Open Space Plan. Continue collaboration with area land trusts in the acquisition of desired parcels. Pursue funding through the State's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program or Farmland Preservation Program and other grant sources.	OSTF	P&R, TA, TC	L	
	Prioritize open space acquisition in the Tankerhoosen River watershed, in accordance with the Open Space Plan.	OSTF	P&R	O	
	Develop an Urban Open Space Plan focused on small parks, natural areas, recreation, and community gardens within the built environment. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to require quality, useable open space in all development projects.	OSTF, PZC	PDD, P&R	L	
	Continue to acquire land or secure public access or conservation easements along the Hockanum River in accordance with the Hockanum River Linear Park Master Plan.	P&R	TA, TC	O	
	Establish policy, zoning incentives, or requirements to enhance public access along the Hockanum River as part of future development proposals.	PZC	PDD, P&R	L	
	Maintain commitment to the Tankerhoosen Watershed Management Plan: identify specific implementation measures from the plan to prioritize.	CC, IWC	P&R, PDD		
	Add zoning incentives/requirements to further the use of Low Impact Design (LID), especially for properties near the Tankerhoosen and Hockanum Rivers. (SCT 3.8.2.b). Strengthen LID regulations; review situations that might require LID use rather than having it as an option (i.e. "shall" in lieu of "may".)	PZC	IWC	S	
	Continue to update and implement the Town's Stormwater Management Plan in compliance with state MS4 requirements.	ENG, DPW	IWC	O	
	As part of the MS4 plan, educate residents on best practices to reduce stormwater runoff to improve water quality. Direct them towards additional educational resources from organizations such as the Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR).	ENG, DPW	IWC	O	
	Educate landowners on water quality issues and techniques for protecting water quality. Focus should include measures to eliminate the invasive species threats to the Bolton Lakes system; maintenance or creation of vegetated buffer strips along lakes and streams; use of non-chemical fertilizers and pesticides; septic design and maintenance. Provide requirements or incentives in the zoning code to reduce impervious surfaces and/or treat water before discharge or infiltration.	IWC	CC	M	

Goal 8: Protect, connect, and promote Vernon's natural and historic resources					
Objective		Responsible Entities	Support Entity	Timeline	Sustainable Initiative
	Continue to monitor water quality in the Tankerhoosen River and Bolton Lakes; in partnership with local conservation organizations, organize a repeat of the 2006 comprehensive chemical water quality studies to evaluate long term changes; continue to participate in the annual DEEP volunteer water quality monitoring program within the watershed.	Conservation Groups	OSTF, CC	S	
	Implement recommendations outlined in the Tankerhoosen Watershed Management Plan and expand management planning in the Bolton Lakes Watershed.	Conservation Groups	OSTF, CC	S	
	Monitor groundwater levels near Bolton Lakes to ensure that the diversion of water out of the watershed does not impact groundwater levels; continue to annually monitor aquatic invasive species as well as toxic and non-toxic algae in the lakes.	Conservation Groups	OSTF, CC	O	
8.3 Improve stewardship and awareness of existing open spaces and recreational opportunities	Publish an Open Space map on the Town website noting where parking areas and public access points are located.	P&R		S	
	Establish partnerships between local conservation organizations and Vernon Public Schools to better market open space and recreational opportunities to youth.	P&R, VPS	Conservation Groups	M	
	Expand opportunities for canoe and kayak access.	P&R, CC	Conservation Groups	L	
	Improve ADA accessibility to recreation and open space areas.	P&R	DPW	M	
	Develop a habitat-based management plan for Valley Falls Park.	P&R	CC	M	
8.4 Protect Vernon's historical and scenic resources	Update and maintain a historic and scenic resources inventory.	LHPC		O	
	Maintain Town-owned historic properties in a state of good repair.	LHPC	TC, TA	O	
	Preserve Clark Farm as a Heritage Farm.	LHPC		L	
	Acknowledge the Town's commitment to active, working local farms and implement measures designed to protect the right to farm	OSTF, CC	PZC	L	
	Consider creating historic preservation zoning incentives, for example, excluding historic structures up to a certain size from lot coverage calculations or creating more flexible use or site design standards for adaptive reuse.	PZC	DRC, LHPC	M	
	Educate owners of historic properties on other funding opportunities such as state and federal rehabilitation tax credits.	LHPC	EDD	M	
	Commence efforts to evaluate the relationship of suburban design and development to Historic Preservation	LHPC	PZC, DRC	L	

Goal 8: Protect, connect, and promote Vernon's natural and historic resources					
Objective	Strategies	Responsible Entities	Support Entity	Timeline	Sustainable Initiative
8.5 Promote Vernon's natural and historic resources as part of larger marketing and branding efforts	Develop and maintain a natural resource and wildlife inventory (NRW) (SCT 3.5.2)	P&R	OSTF, CC	S	
	Market historical, cultural, and natural resource elements in partnership with state and regional organizations. The creation of a Municipal Cultural District can help leverage state resources for marketing and promotion.	EDC	EDD,	M	
	Provide directional signage on main roads and the trail to points of interest.	DPW	P&R	L	
	Develop and publish walking or cycling routes that highlight Vernon's natural and historic resources. Potential locations include Talcottville (Talcottville Historic District and Tankerhoosen Ravine), Valley Falls, and Rockville (Rockville Historic District and Hockanum River).	EDC	EDD, P&R, LHPC	L	
8.6 Discourage land development within natural hazard areas while encouraging land protection within natural hazard areas	Clearly identify up-to-date natural hazard areas and map them on the future land use map	PZC	PDD	S	
	Adopt use restrictions, buffer and setback regulations, LID measures, and other tools to mitigate impacts on natural hazard areas	PZC	PDD	L	
	Harden/protect existing critical facilities and cultural resources located in vulnerable areas.	TA	DPW	M	