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## Litchfield Hills Regional Plan of Conservation and Development





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# LITCHFIELD HILLS REGIONAL PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

A Framework for Responsible Growth

Endorsed by the Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials on October 9, 2009

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*Cover photos by Martin J. Connor, AICP*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Litchfield Hills Region encompasses eleven municipalities, and 402 square miles of land in northwestern Connecticut. The Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials is the state recognized regional planning organization for the Litchfield Hills Region and consists of the mayors and first selectmen from the eleven member towns.

The LHCEO is responsible under state law for preparing a regional plan of development. Specifically, Section 8-35a of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that, "Each regional planning agency shall make a plan of development for its area of operation, showing its recommendations for the general use of the area including land use...and shall be designed to promote with the greatest efficiency and economy the coordinated development of its area."

Provisions are made in the statutes for the preparation of a regional plan of development because the growth of a town influences, and is influenced by, the surrounding regional area. No town is an isolated entity. In addition, certain environmental, economic, sewerage, and transportation systems are regional in nature and communities can benefit from a regional perspective on these matters.

Many communities in the regional area have recently updated, or are in the process of updating, municipal plans of development. There is increasing recognition that developing a vision of the future of the community through the municipal planning process can establish a foundation upon which a reasonable system of land use controls can be based. In this way, land use planning can be used positively and benefit the community in channeling growth to the most appropriate locations.

The purpose of the regional plan of development is to supplement, not supplant, this municipal plan process. The regional plan is an advisory document that evaluates conditions, trends and issues of regional significance; recommends policies that will address regional issues; and provides a framework to guide residents and local

officials in considering conservation and development activities in the region.

Specific uses of the Regional Plan in addition to serving as a framework for regional growth include functioning as a guide to LHCEO staff in reviewing proposed zoning changes or subdivisions near municipal borders, commenting on proposed local and state plans of conservation and development, and assessing proposals for federal or state funding.

The following Regional Plan was prepared based on consideration of municipal plans of development in the region, local zoning and land development patterns, sewer and water systems, development limitations imposed by the region's natural environment, discussions with local officials, the State Conservation and Development Policies Plan, and previously adopted LHCEO policy and technical documents.

This Plan basically identifies recommended intensities of development in the Region. The goal is to conserve land with important resources and delineate the best places for population and employment growth to occur.

The major objectives of the Plan are to conserve and strengthen existing urban and village centers, promote compatible development forms adjacent to these areas, provide sufficient land and infrastructure for vigorous economic development, avoid intensive development on environmentally sensitive areas, promote the protection of important open space and agricultural land, and preserve the unique rural character of the Region.

The Plan should be viewed as a dynamic document which can serve as a useful tool to guide growth in the near term but be flexible enough to change as appropriate in the future. The Plan is an attempt to integrate local land use planning into a regional perspective and define how infrastructure investments, housing opportunities, economic development, and environmental concerns can best be coordinated for the public good.

## II. POPULATION AND LAND USE

### A. Population Growth Trends

Colonists first journeyed to the Litchfield Hills area to live in the mid 1600's. They came primarily from the previously developed central valley area of Connecticut and established small farming communities atop the Region's broadest hilltops. Litchfield, in 1719, was the first town to incorporate in the Region. By 1779 all of the other towns in the Region had incorporated with the exception of Morris, which was part of Litchfield until 1859.

By 1800, Litchfield was the most populous community in the Region with a population of 4,285 persons. Torrington and the other towns in the Region had resident populations varying from 1,000 to 2,000 persons at this time. This development pattern persisted through 1850 with no dramatic shifts in the population base of any community. By 1900, however, the population of Winchester and Torrington had soared (to 7,763 and 12,453 persons, respectively); Harwinton and New Hartford increased slightly, and the communities of Barkhamsted, Colebrook, Hartland, Goshen, Litchfield, and Norfolk had declined in population.

Typical of much of Connecticut, the period of 1850 to 1900 was marked by an exodus from the family farm to either the more productive farmlands of the Midwest or the growing employment bases being established in the industrializing communities of the area. These new growth communities were primarily located along major rivers where waterpower could be tapped to support new industry (e.g. the Naugatuck River in Torrington and Mad River in Winchester).

The rapid growth of Winchester and Torrington over the more rural communities in the Region persisted through 1950. By this time the Region had evolved into the pattern we know today where Torrington functions as the regional center, Winchester as a sub-regional area, and the other

towns are characterized by a low-density rural or suburban development pattern.

Since 1950, yet another shift in the pattern of land use in the Region has developed. With the improvement of transportation corridors and the widespread availability of the automobile, people began moving back to the country. This trend has raised a wide variety of "growth management" issues at both the local and regional level.

The LHCEO routinely prepares and updates a "Profile of the Litchfield Hills Region" which presents statistical information on population growth, housing, and economic growth. Following are selected highlights from the 2006 version of the report (note: updated data is presented if available).

- *Between 1950 and 2007, the Litchfield Hills Region has experienced a steady rate of growth, with an average annual increase of 502 persons. The Region is projected to continue with this steady rate of growth through the year 2030, with an average annual increase of 553 persons.*
- *The rural nature of the Litchfield Hills Region is reflected in the population density of the area which is about one-third of the statewide average. Nevertheless, since 1960 the population density of the Region has increased by 36% to 205 persons per square mile.*
- *Consistent with statewide trends, the number of elderly residents in the Region is increasing as a percentage of total population. In 1980, 13.8% of the residents in the Region were age 65 and over. By 2000, this percentage has increased to 15.3% and is projected to grow to 35% by the year 2030 as the baby boomer generation ages.*
- *Public school enrollment in the regional area has increased from 10,226 students in 1990 to 12,324 students in 2007. The Region*

*experienced a dramatic increase in the percentage of persons age 25 and over with high school degrees (66% to 83%) and college degrees (15% to 24%) between 1980 and 2000. This increase in educational attainment is consistent with statewide trends.*

- *The Region's minority population more than tripled between 1980 and 2000 and now equals 3,791 persons or 4.8% of the Region's population.*
- *The Region had 5.4% of the population, or 4,272 persons, living below the poverty level in 2000. Statewide, 7.6% of the population was living below the poverty level in 2000.*
- *Average per capita income in the regional area is \$25,423 according to the 2000 Census, which is below the statewide average of \$28,766.*

## **B. Land Use Characteristics**

The Region's landscape consists of rural, suburban and urban areas with population densities ranging from 885 persons per square mile in Torrington to 37 persons per square mile in Norfolk. The Region is a classic "strong center" Region with Torrington, the area's urban center, located in the center of the Region surrounded by more rural or suburban communities. The Town of Winchester serves as a sub-regional urban center for communities in the northern portion of the Region. Slightly over 10 percent of the Region consists of State forest and parkland. An additional 16 percent of the Region consists of privately owned open space reserves, the bulk of which is owned by utilities. Approximately 4 percent of the Region consists of water bodies. Roughly 60% of the Region's landscape is predominantly undeveloped, with much of this land presenting severe limitations for development due to wetlands and steep slopes.

The Region's diverse landscape was caused by great glaciers, which covered the land approximately 10,000 years ago. The glaciers left the Litchfield Hills Region with a tremendously varied landscape consisting of plateaus, narrow

valleys, rolling and rugged hills and local areas of mountain-like terrain. The glaciers were also responsible for the surficial geologic materials (glacial till, stratified drift, and layers of soil) which blanket the Region today, and the abundant number of naturally occurring lakes, ponds, wetlands, rivers, and streams in the area.

The northernmost communities in the Region (i.e. Colebrook, Hartland, and Norfolk) are characterized by a rugged and forested landscape with mountain-like terrain, plateaus of comparatively high elevations, and patches of wetlands. Typical tree species include sugar maple, beech, yellow birch, white pine, and hemlock. The seasonal snowfall accumulation in this area is the highest in the State. Major water bodies include the Barkhamsted Reservoir in Hartland and Barkhamsted, and the Colebrook River Reservoir and Goodwin Reservoir in Colebrook.

The communities of Barkhamsted, New Hartford, Torrington, Winchester, Goshen, and northwestern Litchfield are also characterized by a heavily forested and hilly landscape of comparatively high elevation. Major tree species include those found in the northernmost communities in the Region along with red oak, white ash, and black birch. Intermixed with these forested lands are numerous streams, wetlands, roads, and developed properties. Major waterbodies include the Barkhamsted Reservoir in Barkhamsted and Hartland, the Farmington River in Barkhamsted and New Hartford, Highland Lake and Lake Winchester in Winchester, Nepaug Reservoir in New Hartford, and Woodridge Lake in Goshen.

The Southern portion of Litchfield and the towns of Morris and Harwinton are characterized by a moderately hilly and forested landscape of intermediate elevation, with local areas of steep and rugged topography. Characteristic tree species include red oak, white oak, hickory, white pine and hemlock. Bantam Lake, the largest natural lake in Connecticut, is located astride the Litchfield and Morris town line.

The percentage of developed land within the Region varies from a low of 5.2% in Norfolk to a

high of 22.6% in Torrington. Over 74.8% of the region consists of forest land.

Between 1985 and 2002, an additional 2,325 acres of land were developed in the regional area. A graphic depiction of current land cover is

presented in Figure A. As would be expected, much of the concentrated developed land is located in areas served by sewers (see Figure B).

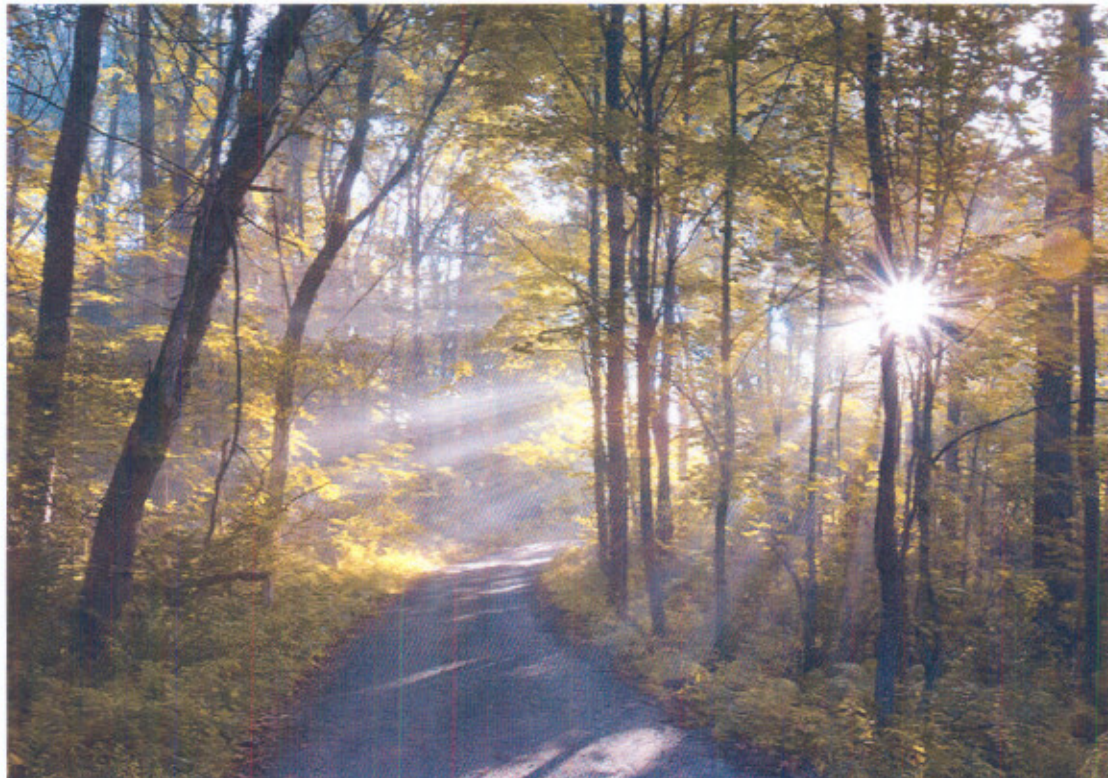
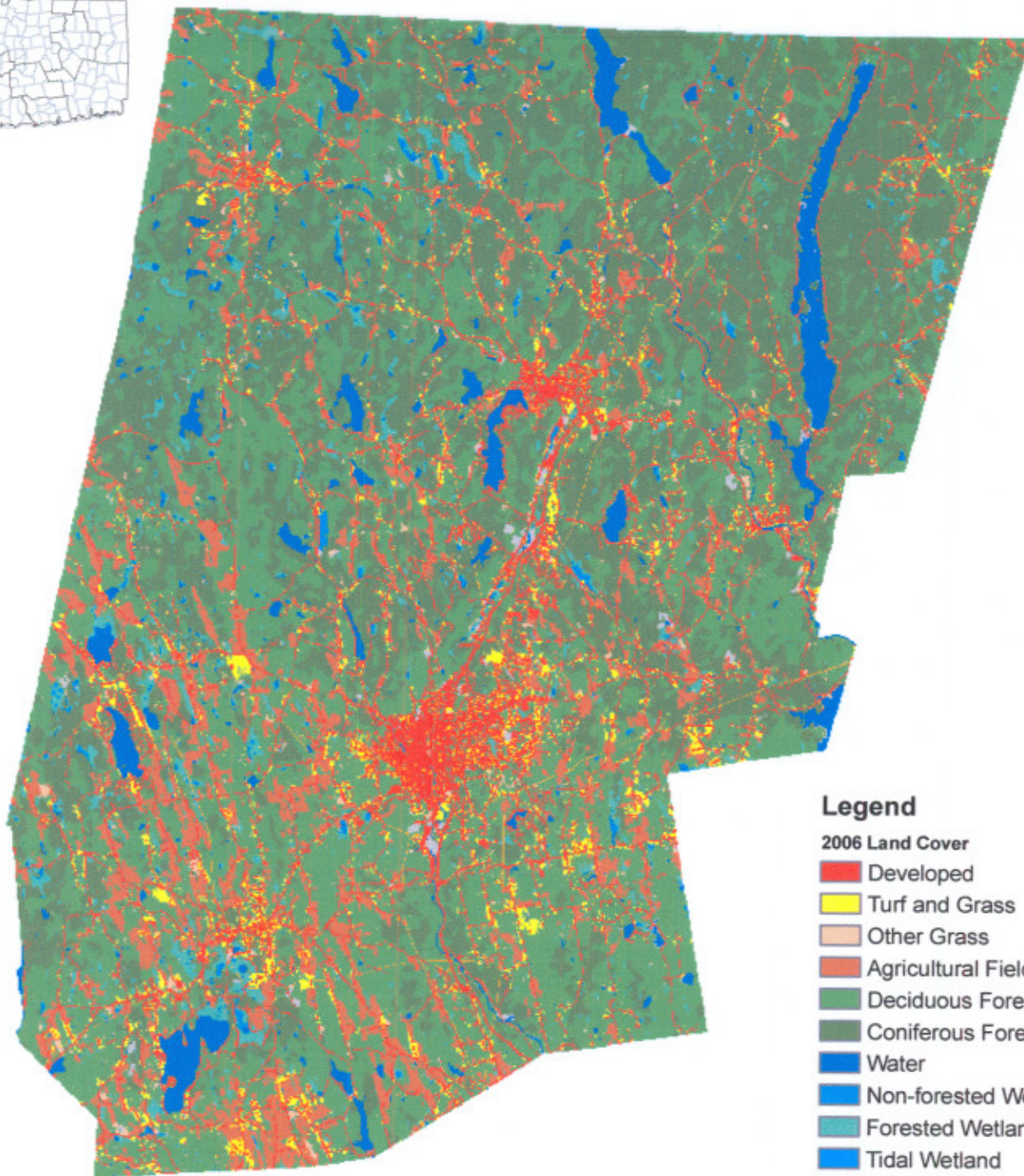


Photo by Lou Belloisy

Figure A. Regional Land Cover Map



**Legend**

**2006 Land Cover**

- Developed
- Turf and Grass
- Other Grass
- Agricultural Field
- Deciduous Forest
- Coniferous Forest
- Water
- Non-forested Wetland
- Forested Wetland
- Tidal Wetland
- Barren
- Utility (Forest)

**Litchfield RPO Land Cover Statistics**

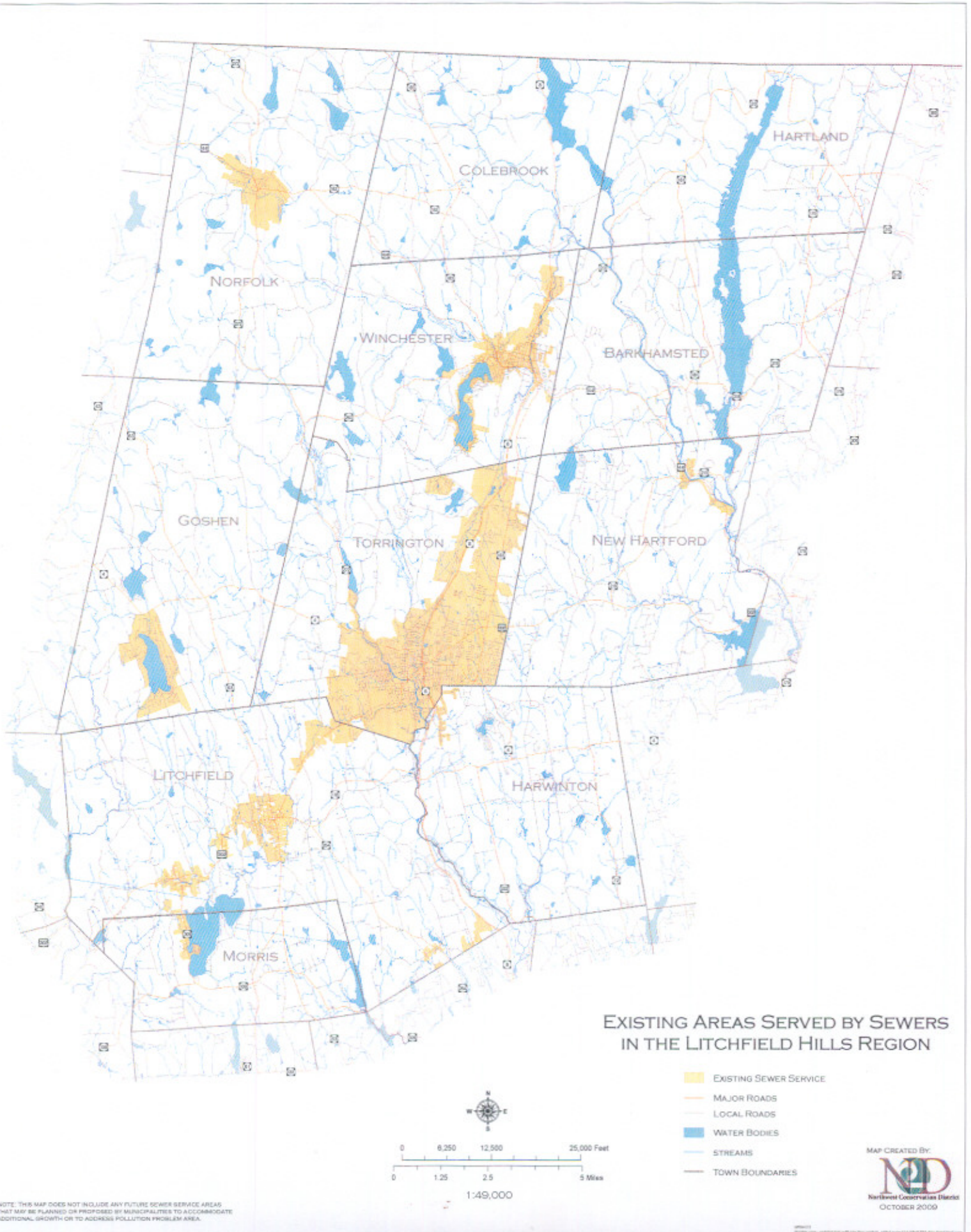
	Area (acres)				
	1985	1990	1995	2002	2006
Developed	21595	23202	23498	24086	24519
Turf & Grass	6886	7352	7786	8101	9026
Other Grasses	1768	1788	1991	1954	2240
Agriculture	20095	19640	19504	19139	19013
Deciduous Forest	109472	108353	108043	107700	106591
Coniferous Forest	83566	83074	82858	82624	82130
Water	11242	11357	10961	10669	10982
Non-forested Wetland	1296	1353	1365	1438	1452
Forested Wetland	9533	9199	9142	9187	9149
Tidal Wetland	0	0	0	0	0
Barren Land	796	938	1111	1364	1163
Utility ROWs	707	698	696	692	689

This map is a product of the the University of Connecticut Center for Landuse Education and Research. for more information, visit <http://clear.uconn.edu/projects/landscape>.

This map is intended for planning and educational purposes only. It is based on the interpretation and classification of remotely sensed satellite images, and the accuracy as any given location cannot be guaranteed. See the CLEAR website for more information <http://clear.uconn.edu>.



Figure B.



### III. WATERSHED AND NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

#### A. Overview

The Litchfield Hills is blessed with a number of significant natural resources including major water bodies like Bantam Lake, Highland Lake, West Hill Pond, and Burr Pond; attractive river corridors such as the Farmington River and Naugatuck River; clean air and water; rugged topography offering scenic vistas; areas of prime farmland; extensive forestland; aquifers providing high quality water; and diverse wildlife habitats for a variety of plants and animals. Conservation of these resources is an important element of this Regional Plan and is crucial to preserving the character and high quality of life in the region.

The following map (Figure C) identifies conservation focus areas in the Litchfield Hills Region. These include drinking water watersheds, sizeable areas of contiguous forest habitat, farm parcels, watercourses and waterbodies, and other environmentally sensitive areas.

Of particular significance is the amount of public water supply watershed land in the region. Nearly 75% of the regional area consists of existing or potential public water supply watershed. A major statewide role of the Litchfield Hills Region is providing a source of high quality potable water for other regional areas including the Hartford area, Bristol area, and Waterbury area. The protection of this resource is a critical stewardship responsibility of statewide significance.

Municipal land use regulations, including zoning, subdivision, and inland wetland regulations, provide a fundamental basis for controlling land use so that it does not degrade the region's natural resources. Basically, land use intensities should be matched to the natural capabilities of the land where public sewer and water systems are not available. Areas with more severe constraints should be developed at lower intensities. Additional development without regard to the carrying capacity of the land poses a significant threat to the region's natural resource base.

Soil types, slopes, and water resources in particular should be considered in determining lot sizes. Research by DEP has concluded that in order to adequately protect water quality, lot sizes in areas served by private septic systems should be at least 2 acres in size, exclusive of wetlands, in public water supply watersheds and other areas with severe development constraints. Even in the best of soils, DEP recommends a minimum lot size of 1 acre if the lot is to be served by an on-site well and septic system.

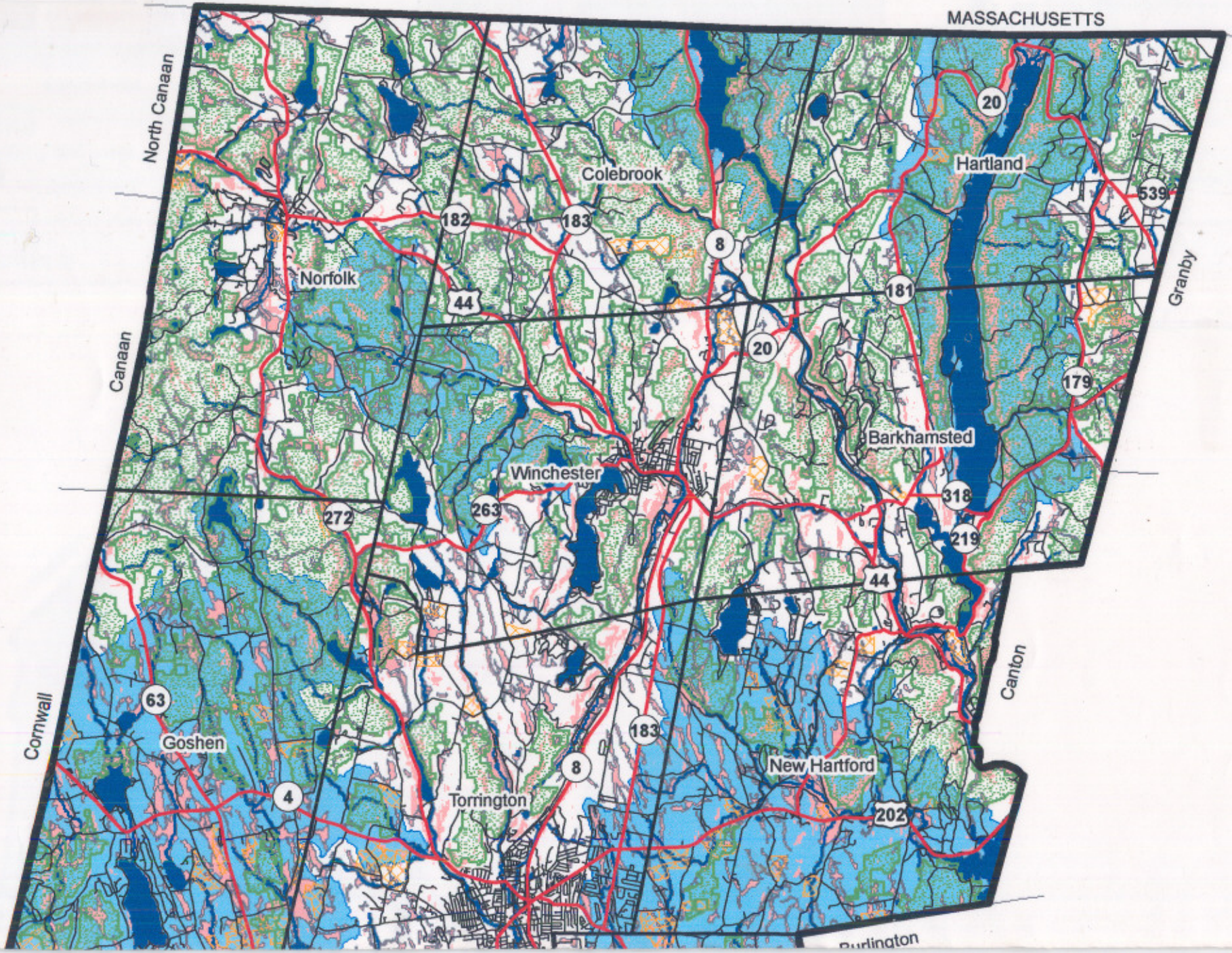
The preservation of farmland, and working farms, is also important to preserve the region's cultural heritage in agriculture as well as to provide local produce and other farm products. The products produced on the region's farms also help to diversify our economy and increase our food security so that we are less dependent on outside sources. Farm parcels in the region are depicted in Figure C.

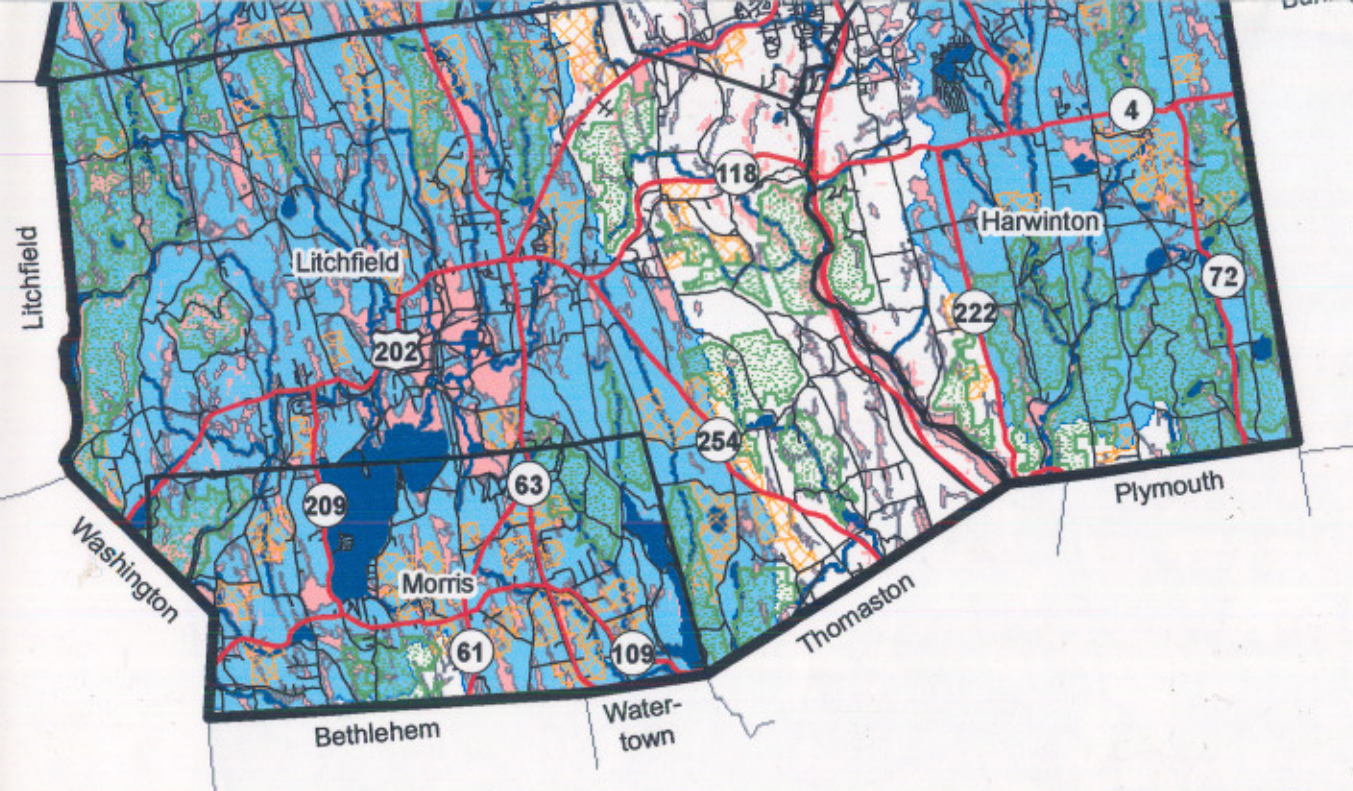
Another conservation focus area is contiguous forest habitat. The "Conservation Focus Areas" Map depicts relatively intact forest systems greater than 200 acres in size. According to the Litchfield Hills Greenprint program, "large forest habitats are essential for many species of plants and animals such as bobcat, bear, fisher and a number of neotropical migrants that nest in forest interiors. These forest habitats are in multiple ownerships and are vulnerable to poorly sited residential development and associated infrastructure which can break them up into smaller, more fragmented areas that no longer support their full compliment of wildlife. The new forest edge areas which such development creates often encourages the spread of invasive plant material and provides access to the interior forest to brood parasites that evict the eggs from the nests of warblers and other species and replace them with their own."

One of the major ways of conserving natural resources is through the protection of open space. In addition to protecting important natural resources, preservation of open space enhances









# LITCHFIELD HILLS CONSERVATION FOCUS AREAS

Figure C.





### Legend

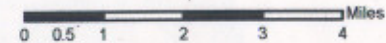
-  LHCEO Town Boundaries
-  Major Roads
-  Local Roads
-  Contiguous Forest Habitat
-  Farm Parcels
-  Drinking Water Watershed
-  Watercourses and Waterbodies
-  Other Environmentally Sensitive Areas

### NOTES ON DATALAYERS

"Contiguous Forest Habitats" were determined by the Litchfield Hills Greenprint, using the Center for Land-use Education And Research land cover from satellite imagery. Contiguous forest and wetland habitat blocks  $\geq 200$  acres and  $\geq 300$  feet removed from developed areas were selected.

"Farm Parcels" were determined by the Litchfield Hills Greenprint, based on farm fields derived from aerial photos, USDA soils of prime or statewide importance for farmland, and parcels  $\geq 50$  acres obtained from town tax maps. Parcels that contained at least 10% of farm fields and 25% of USDA designated farmland soils were selected. Boundaries of Hartland farms based on land cover instead of parcels.

"Other Environmentally Sensitive Areas" includes floodplains obtained from FEMA; regionally significant aquifers and wetlands designated by OPM; slope gradients  $\geq 25\%$  obtained from USGS; and riparian corridors within 100 feet of watercourses and waterbodies modeled from DEP data.



### DATA SOURCES

- Connecticut DEP:
  - Base Data
- Center for Land Use Education and Research
  - Land cover
- Litchfield Hills Greenprint
  - Contiguous Forest Habitat, Farm Parcels
- Housatonic Valley Association
  - Other Environmentally Sensitive Areas

This map is for informational purposes only and is subject to change.



Map prepared on 5/11/09 by  
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Housatonic Valley Association

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regional character and quality of life, provides active and passive recreational opportunities, and renders economic benefits.

## **B. Policies and Strategies**

1. Regulate land use to avoid contamination, minimize impervious areas, and maximize water recharge.
2. Establish generous buffers and setbacks for high priority resources such as river corridors and water bodies, and continue to implement inland wetland and floodplain protection measures.
3. Continue the LHCEO's Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day Program, including educational efforts to use less toxic materials.
4. Support the efforts of water protection organizations such as the Farmington River Coordinating Committee, Farmington River Watershed Association, Shepaug Bantam River Commission, Housatonic Valley Association, Northwest Conservation District, State Departments of Environmental Protection and Health Services, and Water Companies as they seek to improve or maintain water quality in the Region.
5. Encourage communities to strengthen land use regulations, as recommended in LHCEO's Watershed Protection Studies and other sources, to better protect water quality and address non-point source pollution. In particular, require developers to prepare environmental assessments of the land proposed for development including an "Existing Resources and Site Analysis Map" similar to what Torrington requires for Conservation Subdivisions.
6. Preserve and protect existing reservoirs and other water supply sources so that an adequate, high quality water supply is available to serve the region and other service areas in Connecticut.
7. Strongly encourage developers to use best management practices in both the design and actual construction of new development projects. In particular, utilize the recommendations in Connecticut's 2002 Erosion and Sedimentation Control Manual, 2004 Stormwater Quality Manual, General Stormwater Permit Program, and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.
8. Encourage routine consideration by municipal land use agencies of DEP's Natural Diversity Data Base in reviewing and acting on development applications so that any potential adverse impacts can be identified and mitigated.
9. Encourage expansion of Connecticut's farmland preservation program for the protection of more farms, and encourage the continued growth of local farmers markets in the region.
10. Support land protection by local land trusts, and encourage their efforts to educate private landowners about land preservation options.
11. Encourage activities to identify and preserve important open space areas before they are threatened by development. In particular, seek to create a meaningful regional open space system with the establishment of greenways, open space connections, water-based recreational sites, public access trails, and the preservation of visible features of the landscape (e.g. ridgelines, scenic vistas, wooded hillsides, farmland).
12. Promote the establishment of small public greens or pocket parks in town and city centers.
13. Encourage the creation of multi-purpose recreational trails for pedestrians and bicyclists, particularly when they can help to link residential, retail, and employment areas. In particular, pursue the creation of the trail network recommended for the Naugatuck River Greenway in Torrington, Litchfield, and Harwinton.

14. Since so much of the region consists of public water supply watershed, work with local communities, the state and the water companies, as necessary, to preserve watershed lands as open space.
15. Encourage communities to aggressively seek open space acquisition funds, and to use land use techniques that promote open space protection such as open space set asides in residential subdivisions, conservation-type subdivisions, fee-in-lieu-of open space subdivision requirements, streambelt buffers, and ridgeline protection regulations.
16. Support consideration of low impact development strategies as recommended by the Litchfield Hills Greenprint project for large forest habitats, which include:
  - Avoid or minimize habitat fragmentation by roads, driveways, utility infrastructure and new residential development with in the forest interior.
  - New development should be located within the 300' buffer between existing

roads and the forest interior where possible.

- Driveways that cross extensive slopes within these forest areas should be designed with more culverts than usual to address impacts to the natural flow of runoff.
- Driveways should maintain a closed tree canopy where possible to minimize forest fragmentation.
- Driveway width and adjacent clearing should be as narrow as possible while still providing safe access.
- Forest cutting plans within the forest interior should take into account the extent of the contiguous habitat beyond the affected property and reflect the composition and structure of the larger forest within their management objectives. Plans should also address early detection and rapid response of new occurrences of invasive species in areas under forest management.



Photo by Lou Belloisy

## IV. TRANSPORTATION

### A. Characteristic and Trends

Figure D shows the State highway network in the Litchfield Hills Region. The major travel corridors in the area are Routes 4, 8, 44, and 202. Route 8 bisects the region and is the area's only limited access expressway. The major roadway convergences in the Region are found in Torrington (Route 8, 202, and 4) and Winchester (Routes 8 and 44).

In addition to the 252 miles of state highway shown in Figure B, there is an additional 770 miles of roadway that are maintained by the towns.

The region has one railroad, the Torrington-Waterbury branch line, which is a Class 2 railroad owned by ConnDOT and operated by the Railroad Museum of New England and its subsidiary Naugatuck Railroad Company. The railroad is only marginally active. There are no freight runs being made on the line, but tourist passenger service has been offered recently on a seasonal basis.

In March of 2008, the LHCEO adopted a "Litchfield Hills Regional Transportation Plan". The plan provides an overview of the existing transportation system in the Litchfield Hills area, identifies major transportation issues of concern, and defines regional priorities and improvement policies. According to the Plan, the Region is well served with highways that connect to points both within and beyond its borders. Major capacity expansion road projects are not envisioned for the Litchfield Hills Region since the basic road network for the area has already been established. Instead, the focus of this Plan is on realistic and achievable spot improvements which will enhance the safety and efficiency of the existing transportation system within the Region. A fundamental challenge will be to accommodate future travel demands in a cost effective and environmentally sound manner. According to the Plan, this will require

coordinating land use and transportation, enhancing transportation system capacity, and encouraging an appropriate balance of uses among various transportation modes.

The Action Agenda presented in the Regional Transportation Plan identifies the following as the highest transportation improvement priorities bases on regional considerations:

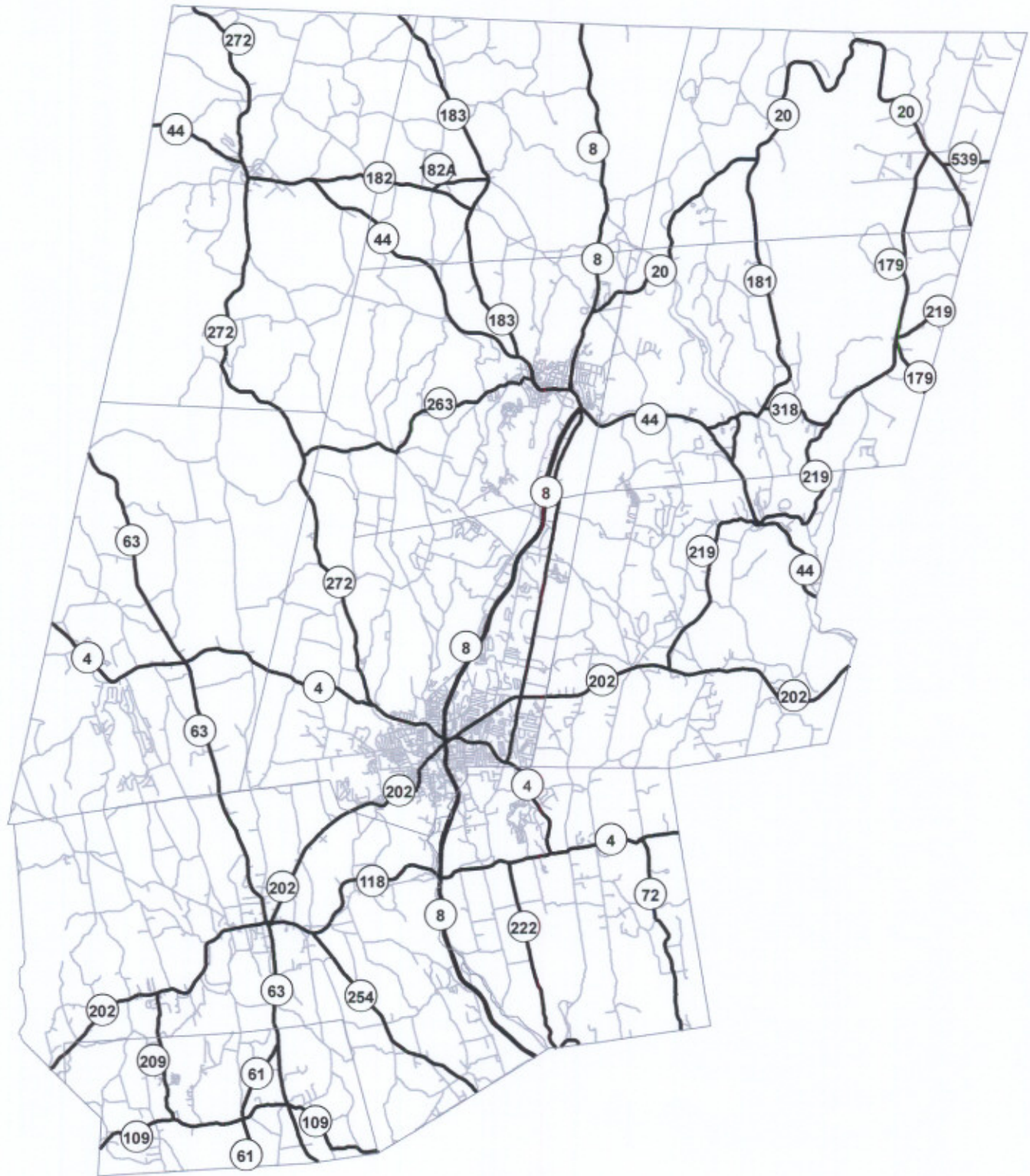
1. Provide adequate funding to maintain local roadways.
2. Improve key sections of the Region's arterial and collector road network. (Over fifty specific improvements are identified, with fourteen projects deemed of highest priority).
3. Provide more equitable and stable funding for bus system operation.
4. Construct a Centralized Transportation Facility for the Northwestern CT Transit District.
5. Expand and enhance available transit services.
6. Promote ridesharing and increased transit use.
7. Improve the integration of land use and transportation planning.
8. Pursue construction of walkways, bikeways, and greenways at appropriate locations.
9. Encourage continued cooperation and coordination of municipal public works departments through the Litchfield Hills Road Supervisor Association.

### B. Goals and Strategies

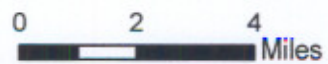
#### Highway System

1. Provide a safe, convenient, environmentally sound, and integrated transportation system which provides access to all parts of the Region.
2. Promote a transportation system which will protect existing land use, enhance desirable qualities of life, and guide future land use in accord with regional and local plans of development.

Figure D - State Highway Network in the Litchfield Hills Region



GIS Mapping by LHCEO, 11/08





3. Encourage a transportation system that emphasizes the full use of existing traffic networks instead of creating new networks.
4. Reduce the upward trend in vehicle miles traveled by better coordinating land use and transportation planning. Discourage major highway construction or large traffic generators in remote, low density, and open space areas of the Region.
5. Maintain a balanced network of local, collector, and arterial roads which efficiently accommodate present and future traffic flow in the Region. Encourage the preparation of access management plans to consolidate existing and minimize new curb cuts on arterial roads.
6. Provide adequate off-street parking facilities in village and urban centers and areas of high traffic generation. Avoid transportation improvements that adversely impact the historic character of the region's rural and urban town centers. Seek to preserve the rural nature of the gateways to village centers by carefully controlling roadside development adjacent to these centers.
7. Encourage improved levels of state and federal funding for local road maintenance and other priority highway and sidewalk improvement measures.
8. Reduce excessive traffic demand by promoting ridesharing and carpooling programs and maintaining adequate commuter parking facilities in the Region.
9. Improve traffic flow in the Region through the use of modernized and additional traffic control devices where needed.
10. Provide a transportation system which integrates the various modes of travel including adequate facilities for pedestrians and bicycle travel.
11. Promote improved landscaping along the streetscapes of rural and urban town centers.

12. Monitor speed on local roadways and cooperate with law enforcement officials in implementing appropriate control measures. Consider additional traffic calming design measures in rural town centers and neighborhoods in order to reduce traffic speed and thus enhance safety and sense of place.
13. Provide a forum through the LHCEO for continuous regional transportation planning activities.



Photo by LHCEO staff

#### Public Transit System

1. Maintain, improve, and where feasible expand bus service to major existing and proposed employment sites, commercial centers and residential areas.
2. To lessen dependency on the automobile and encourage energy efficient patterns of development, promote economic growth within or near established urban and village centers in order to create compact urban and village centers conducive to public transit service.
3. Improve public knowledge of the local transit system through implementation of a comprehensive marketing and public information program. Encourage and enhance transportation options through the construction of bus shelters and bike racks at selected locations.
4. Develop and maintain public transportation service responsive to the needs of those with

special transportation problems, including the elderly, disabled, and transit dependent.

5. Promote the coordination of transportation services provided by social service agencies and municipalities through the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District.
6. Pursue development of a centralized transit facility for the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District for vehicle maintenance, vehicle storage, centralized dispatching, and administrative functions.
7. Maintain the Torrington-Waterbury rail branch line for tourist passenger use and

promote increased utilization of rail services by local industries. Encourage the development of bus service from the regional area to Metro-North's Upper Harlem Line for commuting by train to New York City and White Plains.

8. Encourage, where feasible, the development of abandoned rail right-of-ways for public re-use as a transportation or recreational facility. Encourage additional trail development within Greenway corridors such as the Naugatuck River Greenway in Torrington, Harwinton, and Litchfield.



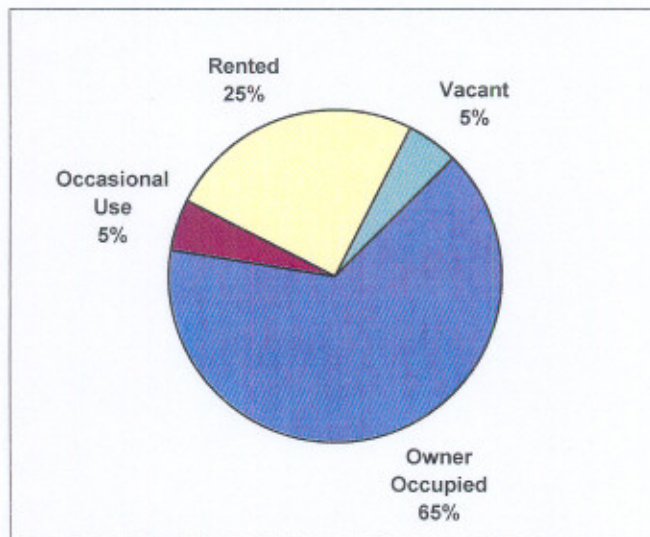
Photo by LHCEO staff

## V. HOUSING

### A. Overview

As stated above, the LHCEO routinely prepares and updates a "Profile of the Litchfield Hills" which includes statistical data on housing. Following are a few highlights from the LHCEO's most recent report (note: updated data is presented if available).

- *The Litchfield Hills Region has had an average annual increase of 344 new housing units constructed in the area since 1960. Torrington had the greatest number of new housing units authorized for construction between 1960 and 2007 with an average annual increase of 143 units.*
- *The Region's housing stock has increased at a greater rate (67%) than the population of the Region as a whole (31%) between 1960 and 2000. This condition reflects a nationwide trend toward smaller sized households. The average household size in the Region has fallen from 3.08 persons in 1970 to 2.56 persons in 2000.*
- *Of the total housing units in the Region in 2007, 72% are single family units, 27% are multifamily units, and 1% are mobile homes, trailers or other. Torrington has by far the greatest number of multi-family units in the regional area with 6,764 units, 40% of all housing units in the City in 2007. Winchester with 1,863 multi-family units, or 37% of the total housing units in the town, ranks second.*
- *According to the 2000 Census, 65.2% of the housing units in the Region are owner occupied, 24.7% are occupied by renters, 4.6% are vacant, and 5.5% are held for occasional use. The Region has a higher percentage of owner occupied units, and units held for occasional use, than the State as a whole.*



Regional Housing Stock

- *The median sales price for single family housing increased dramatically between 2000 and 2005, with the percentage change varying from 13% to nearly 70% in the regions towns. Since then, housing prices have declined somewhat in response to the economic downturn.*

### B. Goals and Policies

The availability of safe, sanitary and affordable housing is a basic human need and essential to the economic and community well-being of the Litchfield Hills Region. Considerable concern has been expressed in recent years by local officials and residents about the lack of affordable housing in the region. As documented by the HomeCT program ([www.homeconnecticut.org](http://www.homeconnecticut.org)), the gap between resident wages and housing costs has increased dramatically in recent years. A number of factors are contributing to this affordability challenge, including: 1) economic shifts which have replaced high-wage manufacturing jobs with lower-paying service industry jobs; 2) population trends with greater housing growth outside the urban centers of Torrington and Winsted; 3) limited infrastructure,

especially public sewer and water systems, which inhibit the development of higher density housing; and 4) limited building sites which are physically suitable for development. Based upon these trends and other considerations, the following housing goals and policies have been established by the LHCEO.

GOAL: To achieve a satisfactory pattern of housing which retains community character and preserves environmentally sensitive areas while meeting the housing needs of those who live and work in the region.

#### Policies and Strategies

1. Encourage flexibility in municipal land use regulations to allow for cost-saving residential development concepts.
2. Promote the zoning of a reasonable amount of land in each municipality for multi-family housing based upon municipal employment characteristics and trends.
3. Encourage higher density development patterns close to town centers and designated regional growth areas.
4. Discourage residential development on wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, and other areas, which for environmental reasons are unsuitable for housing.
5. Promote the provision of open space and recreational areas with future residential development.
6. Discourage residential development in industrial areas and in areas suitable and needed for industrial development.
7. Support housing development that accommodates natural environmental limitations, values, and considerations, including natural resource protection and maintenance of water quality.
8. Encourage action which promotes a diversity of housing choice and living environments in appropriate locations that will serve the needs

of all the Region's income and age groups. Housing densities should range from more than four acres per family in selected rural areas to one-fourth acre per family or less in the urban centers.

9. Promote mixed use and mixed income development in town centers (e.g. first floor retail use in business zones with apartments on the second and third floors).

GOAL: To provide more workforce housing.

#### Policies and Strategies

1. Encourage utilization of the full range of State and Federal housing programs to improve the quality, diversity, and mix of housing in the Region.
2. Discourage unnecessarily restrictive municipal land regulations.
3. Encourage municipal land use regulations which facilitate the development of affordable housing. In particular, consider designation of Incentive Housing Overlay zones in appropriate areas as recently enabled by State Statute.
4. Promote the establishment of municipal housing authorities, partnerships, or non-profit housing corporations to identify, acquire and coordinate the development of sites appropriate for affordable housing. Support municipal efforts to include local residency or employment as a criteria in selecting candidates for such housing.
5. Support efforts to increase rental subsidies, affordable home ownership opportunities and construction of new apartments and townhouses where appropriate. Encourage innovative methods for integrating rental and ownership units within the communities of the Region.
6. Encourage increased housing units in existing buildings, including large homes and unused schools where appropriate. Support expanded

use of accessory apartments as a means of providing more affordable housing.

7. Encourage preservation of the existing stock of affordable rental housing, which is particularly important to accommodate the needs of the young and elderly.

GOAL: To promote and maintain a suitable living environment for all residents.

#### Policies and Strategies

1. Promote adaptive re-use of historic buildings for housing.
2. Encourage quality and innovative housing design and site planning.
3. Further efforts to prevent and alleviate homelessness and meet the housing needs of other special needs populations such as the elderly, mentally ill, and economically disadvantaged.
4. Promote consideration of energy efficiency through the use of solar, geothermal, and wind energy techniques and other measures where feasible in residential construction and rehabilitation.
5. Encourage the maintenance, rehabilitation, and preservation of the existing housing stock in the region.

GOAL: To promote a regional balance of jobs and dwellings.

#### Policies and Strategies

1. Direct housing funds primarily to municipalities with greater employment opportunities, which can best provide necessary community services, which are growing most rapidly and to the more affluent municipalities in order to increase social and economic integration in the Region.
2. Foster the interrelated goals of energy conservation, reducing air pollution and promoting a healthy business climate by

encouraging linkages between the needs of the locally employed labor force and local housing policies.

3. Encourage expanding the housing supply primarily to meet the needs of the workers that are part of the economic base that expands as vacant commercial and industrial lands are developed.
4. Promote the fair distribution of housing among the municipalities in the Region based on a balanced relationship between jobs and dwellings.

GOAL: To have the LHCEO function as a regional coordinating body to facilitate the implementation of housing policies and strategies.

#### Policies and Strategies

1. Act as a forum for the discussion of housing issues and provide a mechanism for developing cooperation and the sharing of information among public officials in the Region. Encourage capacity building and training to assist both small and large towns in proactively addressing their housing issues and needs.
2. Develop a "Regional Housing Market Assessment" to include a statistical database for the assessment of housing problems and needs, an estimate of affordable housing need by municipality, and housing development options.
3. Annually monitor trends in the Region's housing stock. Serve as a clearinghouse for information regarding the Region's housing market and for details on available housing programs.
4. Advocate needed legislation and funding levels to assist in the provision of housing, particularly for first-time home buyers and senior resident households. Such legislation should be carefully crafted, however, to avoid the problems created by efforts such as Section 8-30g, Connecticut's affordable

housing land use appeals statute. This statute serves to over-ride local zoning, induce sprawl, and undermine municipal planning for

workforce housing and has long been opposed by the LHCEO.



Photo by LHCEO staff

## VI. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

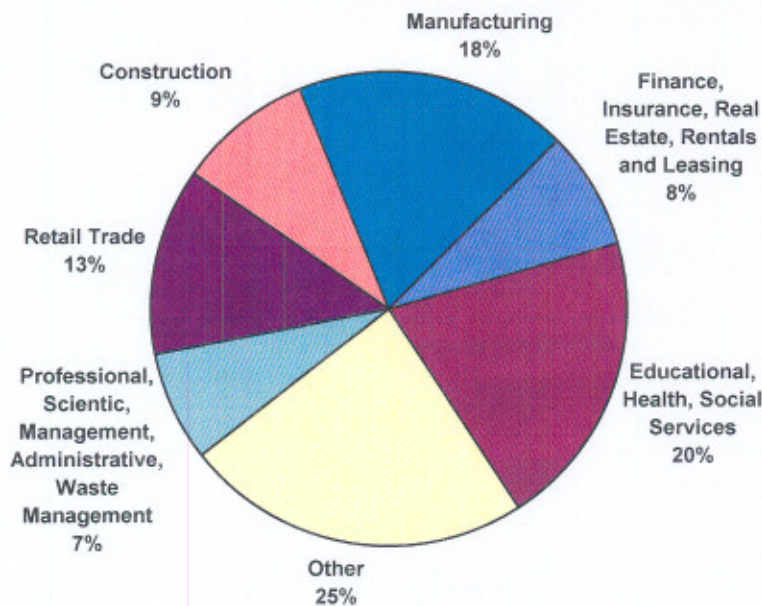
### A. Overview

Following are excerpts from the LHCEO's "Profile of the Litchfield Hills Region, 2006" pertaining to economic characteristics and trends (note: updated data is presented if available).

- *Between 1970 and 2008 the Litchfield Hills Region had an average annual increase in employment of 135 jobs. The communities with the greatest employment growth since 1970 are Torrington (2,227 jobs) and Litchfield (1,218 jobs). Employment has declined since 1990, however, from 28,660 jobs to 27,483 jobs in 2008. Torrington has 59% of the employment in the region.*
- *As with national and state trends, manufacturing has declined as a percent of total employment. This is illustrated by*

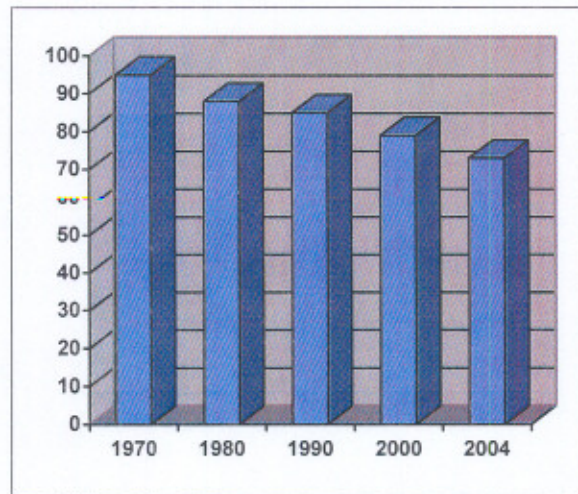
*Torrington where manufacturing as a percent of total employment dropped from 44% in 1970 to 14% in 2008. In Winchester, manufacturing made up 45% of the total employment in 1970, but had fallen to 25% in 2008. Nevertheless, manufacturing remains a major sector of the regional economy.*

- *The major industries providing employment for the Region's residents according to the 2000 census are educational, health and social services (20.5%), manufacturing (18.5%), retail trade (12.6%), construction (9.4%), and finance, insurance, real estate, rentals and leasing (8%).*



Major Industries, 2000

- *More than one third of the Region's employed persons work in a managerial or professional occupation according to the 2000 Census. Other major occupations of regional residents include a) sales and office (24.7%), b) services (14.0%), c) production transportation, and material moving (15.5%), and d) construction, extraction, and maintenance (11.1%).*
- *Total retail sales in the regional area have grown dramatically between 1980 and 2006 from \$202 million to \$2.4 billion.*
- *The Region's labor force grew by 9,174 persons between 1980 and 1990, an increase of 26%. Between 1990 and 2000, however, the labor force decreased by 1,898 persons (4.3%) to 42,580 persons. Since 2000, the labor force has increased modestly to 45,568 persons in 2008.*
- *The number of Litchfield Hills residents with jobs in 2008 (43,003) is far greater than the number of jobs located in the Litchfield Hills (27,483). A significant and increasing proportion of residents commute to jobs outside the region. This indicates that the Region is increasingly serving as a bedroom community for other labor market areas.*
- *A rule of thumb for a healthy regional area is that the number of jobs will approximately equal the number of dwelling units. A jobs and housing balance can serve to reduce traffic congestion, enhance environmental quality, shorten commuting distances, and enhance a sense of community. It is significant to note that the Region is increasingly moving away from this balance. In 1970, there were 95 jobs in the Region for every 100 dwelling units. In 2008, there were only 73 jobs in the regional area per every 100 dwelling units.*



Jobs Per 100 Dwelling Units in the Region

- *Employment in the Region is projected by the State to increase steadily over the next twenty-five years, reaching 33,430 jobs by the year 2025. The annual average increase in job growth is projected to be somewhat less than was experienced during the preceding twenty-five years however (i.e. 212 jobs per year compared to 276 jobs).*
- *Only a small percentage of the workers in the Region carpool or use public transportation to get to work, even though the mean travel time to work exceeds 22 minutes in all regional towns according to 2000 Census data.*

The LHCEO prepared a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, or CEDS, in 2004 with the assistance of a Connecticut based consultant. Preparation of this CEDS was guided by a broad based Partnership consisting of public and private sector representatives from the regional area.

The CEDS provides an overview of the Litchfield Hills economy (including statistical data on current conditions and trends), establishes regional goals and strategies, and presents an action agenda with priority projects for improved economic development. The CEDS was approved by the LHCEO and the federal Economic Development Administration. Implementation of the priority projects identified in the CEDS is being pursued through municipal efforts, and the



NWC Economic Development Corporation which operates in partnership with the NWC Chamber of Commerce, Northwestern CT Council of Governments, and Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials.

Among the major concerns identified in the CEDS are 1) the area has very limited staffing resources to support economic development activities, 2) our regional economy is struggling with the continued erosion of the manufacturing base, and 3) we have a significant outmigration of the area's employed labor force, where 40% travel beyond the Region's borders to find employment.

The CEDS report recommends that the regional area pursue a long-term coordinated effort with municipal officials, the business community, and area institutions to achieve the CEDS vision of creating a more diversified economy that strengthens the economic well-being and quality of life for all of its residents. There are over 60 projects and activities recommended in the CEDS to address identified needs and build on the Region's strengths and resources. The top four priorities identified in the CEDS are 1) develop a regional program for the re-use of targeted vacant industrial building and facilities, 2) establish a regional program for brownfield renewal, 3) create a regional web site supporting economic development, and 4) strengthen the linkage between the region's job needs and the excess regional labor force.

The region has the greatest concentration of employment in construction, retail trade, manufacturing and services. Based on a location quotient analysis, there are two major industry clusters in the regional area: manufacturing and tourism. These are the economic engines of growth in the Litchfield Hills Region according to the CEDS. The service sector is the region's largest employer, providing 35% of the region's jobs, and the service sector has been the primary source of job growth in recent years. It is important to note, however, that the Region is still manufacturing dependent, with manufacturing providing 27% of the region's jobs. Nearly 2/3 of these jobs are located in Torrington, the economic heart of the Litchfield Hills Region.

While the CEDS raises some significant concerns by projecting that we can expect slow economic growth at best, continued erosion of our manufacturing base, and the ongoing outmigration of our labor force, it is important to note that since the CEDS was prepared the Region has made some significant progress in achieving our economic development objectives. These include: 1) implementation of the Litchfield Hills Façade Improvement Program that has benefited over 200 businesses in recent year, 2) designation of an enterprise corridor zone in Torrington and Winchester which provides significant incentives for business relocation, 3) town center enhancements in Norfolk, Morris, Winchester, Goshen, and Riverton, 4) progress in creating a new transit center in downtown Torrington with a transit oriented development focus, 5) site selection for a new Litchfield County courthouse in Torrington, 6) Naugatuck River greenway designations to enhance the quality of life in the region, 7) improved organization of cultural, arts and entertainment resources through the NWCT Arts Council, and 8) continued coordination of regional economic development activities through the NWC Economic Development Corporation.



Photo by Lou Belloisy

One of the major reasons the CEDS was prepared in the Litchfield Hills was to enhance the competitive position of the region in applying for funding from the federal Economic Development Administration. According to EDA officials, funding opportunities are constrained in Connecticut because the State does not authorize Economic Development Districts. In preparing the Statewide Economic Strategy, the LHCEO is urging the DECD to consider the potential advantages of enabling the formation of Economic Development Districts in Connecticut. In order to improve the institutional capacity for economic

development in the Litchfield Hills and to implement the priority projects recommended in the CEDS, increased state and federal funding assistance is essential.

## **B. Recommendations**

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1. Pursue implementation of the LHCEO's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the region. One of the priority recommendations in the CEDS, for example, is to identify and create redevelopment plans for prioritized brownfield sites in the region.
2. Coordinate LHCEO activities with other economic development partners. Funding in support of the NWC Economic Development Corporation is particularly needed in order to effectively and efficiently pursue the recommendations in the CEDS.
3. Advocate for the revitalization and re-use of existing structures in the region's urban and village centers, including compact, energy-efficient, transit accessible and pedestrian oriented mixed use development.
4. Encourage the improvement of the aging and strained infrastructure of the region's urban centers.
5. Channel growth to locations where infrastructure is available or expandable and where open space and environmental quality will be protected as illustrated on the following Regional Plan Map.
6. Seek to diversify the Region's energy supply options where practicable with renewable energy sources such as solar, hydro, wood, water, and wind. Also encourage energy-efficient patterns of development and energy conservation.
7. Support local efforts to maintain the character of rural areas through farming, recreation, tourism, and forest management.
8. Cooperate with the NWC Economic Development Corporation in updating the 2004 CEDS to include the 20-town LHCEO/NWCCOG service area. Encourage state designation of this 20-town area as an Economic Development District to facilitate access to funding from the Economic Development Administration.
9. Promote technological improvements to enhance economic viability of home-based businesses.



Photo by Lou Belloisy

## VII. GROWTH POLICY MAP

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The Growth Policy Map is the heart of this Regional Plan and classifies the Region into three basic divisions, A) central areas to be served with public water and sewer utilities, B) outlying areas that should generally develop without public water sewer utilities, and C) areas without development. Each of these three basic divisions is discussed in more detail below. In addition, watershed land and other sensitive resource areas are shown on the Map as an overlay to the other classifications. These sensitive resource areas have additional policies for conservation which are presented below.

**A. Central Areas To Be Served With Public Water and Sewer Utilities.** Includes Regional Center, Village Centers and Developed Neighborhoods, and Primary Growth Areas.

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### *A-1: Regional Center:*

Downtown Torrington serves as the regional center or hub of the Litchfield Hills Region. This central and compact area contains traditional commercial, industrial, and housing uses, along with institutional services and facilities of regional significance. The Center serves a multi-town area, was established before extensive use of the automobile, and has a convergence of transportation routes and systems. Since this area is provided with high capacity water, sewer, electric, and street systems, development densities can be the highest in the Region. Improving the quality and fabric of the Regional Center, and the Region's smaller Village Centers, is key to achieving an environmentally sound and sustainable development pattern.

It should be noted that Downtown Torrington has also been designated as a regional center in the State Plan of Conservation and Development, and the city is considered a micropolitan area by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Priorities and Policies for the Regional Center Include:

1. While densities can be the highest in the Region, the goal is an appealing scale and distinctive sense of place in an active but not congested atmosphere.
2. Promote the Regional Center as the top regional priority for the placement of new public institutions, public transit services, and traffic capacity improvements. Also promote this area as the priority area for the use of public funds for housing rehabilitation and renewal, and the cleanup of brownfields. Adaptive economic reuse of existing buildings or replacement with new construction supportive of the regional center function is encouraged.
3. Encourage building façade, landscaping, enhanced sidewalks, and automobile parking improvements designed to maintain and enhance the historic character and function of the core area.
4. Pursue a pedestrian friendly environment and promote transit oriented development where appropriate.
5. Assure the conservation and restoration of significant cultural and historical resources.
6. Utilize greenways to link together neighborhoods, schools, community centers, and recreation areas.

### *A-2: Village Centers and Established Neighborhoods:*

These land areas are already largely built up and have a centralized, energy efficient location. Village centers and developed neighborhoods are found at the periphery of the regional center category, at the core of a traditional town or village center, or as a separate but conveniently located area with a distinctive social or economic base. These areas are usually provided with water, sewer and utility systems. The areas may have small amounts of land remaining available for growth, and may have aging buildings or sites

where infill construction or rehabilitation or creative reuse would make the best use of an energy efficient location. In addition, these areas may have some locations where infrastructure investment coupled with expanded public transportation and housing choice will enhance the existing neighborhood and reduce inefficient sprawl development. As shown on the Growth Policy Map, the town centers of Winchester, Norfolk, New Hartford, Litchfield and Bantam are classified as village centers and established neighborhood areas, along with various sections of Torrington.

Priorities and Policies for Village Centers and Established Neighborhoods Include:

1. Maintain the character of existing town and village centers and preserve sound existing neighborhoods.
2. Promote investment in these areas including expanded public water and sewer services and public transportation, instead of in outlying areas.
3. Limit intensity of use to achieve an appealing scale and distinctive sense of place, and protect the capacity to accommodate the automobile on existing streets and on-site without detriment to neighborhood character.
4. In some cases the physical aging of buildings or outmoded use will require rehabilitation and creative reuse which local zoning should evolve to accommodate with supportive techniques.
5. Seek to preserve the rural nature of the gateways to the village centers by carefully controlling roadside commercial development adjacent to the village centers.
6. Encourage sidewalk improvements to enhance pedestrian use and enjoyment.
7. Promote housing at 3 or more units per acre, and multiple use where appropriate, where land remains available for growth.

#### ***A-3: Primary Growth Areas:***

Usually adjacent to or extensions of the regional center or village centers and developed neighborhood areas, but slightly less centralized. These areas have significant vacant land for development, are capable of being served by public water and sewer systems, and have potential for energy efficient transportation system extensions. Primary growth areas within the Litchfield Hills Region are found in Winchester, Torrington, New Hartford, Litchfield, Colebrook, and Barkhamsted.

Priorities and Policies for Primary Growth Areas Include:

1. The way in which the primary growth areas develop will have a dominant influence on the shape of the region and the region's ability to accept growth, for these areas contain the potential for using available water and sewer service to the best resolution of sometimes conflicting economic, energy, housing, environmental and transportation related goals.
2. National and State energy, air and environmental policies will increasingly favor these near-central locations for new jobs and dwellings.
3. Providing for more intensive growth in these areas will balance the less intensive land use policies appropriate in outlying low density neighborhood and rural areas.
4. Sewer and water service capacity of central systems should be designed with capability to serve the extent of primary growth areas.
5. Areas reserved and developed for residential purposes should usually provide for three or more dwelling units per acre in order to make energy efficient use of these growth area locations, and provide a fuller range of housing price levels and unit types in the region. Mixed uses should be encouraged where appropriate, along with pedestrian friendly development design.

6. Development in primary growth areas can include new development at traditional New England village densities.
7. Land use policy and water and sewer services for lands along highways should encourage development nodes along major highway corridors as an alternative to strip development. Highway corridors should limit the number of driveways and encourage well planned groups of compatible uses in a landscaped setting.
8. Cultural and historical resources should be conserved and restored.

**B. Outlying Areas That Should Generally Develop Without Public Water and Sewer Utilities.** Includes Rural Community Centers, Low Density Residential Areas, and Rural Areas.

The overall goal is to maintain the small town and rural character of these areas by avoiding extension of growth-inducing water and sewer infrastructure.

***B-1: Rural Community Centers:***

These areas contain a cluster of residential, economic and institutional facilities, often having an historic past, within a rural setting. Small community centers are served by on-site well and sewage disposal systems or community well and septic systems. Small community centers within the Litchfield Hills Region include the town centers of Barkhamsted (Pleasant Valley and Riverton), Colebrook, Goshen, Hartland (East Hartland and West Hartland), Harwinton, and Morris.

Priorities and Policies for Small Community Centers Include:

1. Small community centers may exist from previous development or may be created in support of clustering in low density neighborhood and rural areas.
2. Such centers reflect convenience of community services and communication, in

contrast to scattered highway-oriented strip development.

3. Patterns of use and development are to complement the center function and avoid peripheral projects beyond the support of center users.
4. Improved walkways and bikeways are encouraged.
5. Future growth may include low intensity mixed use and multi-family residential development.

***B-2: Low Density Neighborhood Areas:***

These low density and outlying areas are generally not served by public water and sewer systems. The areas have the potential to absorb some growth, but only at intensities that can be permanently served by on-lot or near-lot well and septic systems. Low density neighborhood areas typically occur on lands having the scenic features of the New England countryside, where the manner of land planning and design can address and conserve such features. The capacity of existing transportation systems are largely capable of serving such areas, with some safety improvements expected. As shown on the Growth Policy map, low density neighborhood areas are found in all but the most rural towns in the Litchfield Hills Region.

Priorities and Policies for Low Density Neighborhood Areas Include:

1. Development intensity in low density neighborhood areas will typically include an overall density of between one and two acres for each dwelling unit. Community facilities, business services and economic development will be of local scope.
2. Designs are promoted which group development into neighborhood settings that avoid complete dispersal of population across the landscape. Small scale commercial uses to reduce vehicular trips and enhance neighborhood convenience should be encouraged.

3. The general policy is no new sewers in this category. Public sewer service to solve existing pollution problems, where necessary, should be sized for pollution abatement only and should be coupled with land use policies that avoid growth inducement and density intensification based on sewer availability.
4. Some existing neighborhoods in this category may have sewers serving one acre residential lots, a low density for sewer service. These neighborhoods are better classified here as low density neighborhood areas than as village centers and established neighborhoods since the intent of this category is to avoid new development at sewer densities and these areas are already largely developed with limited potential for more growth.
5. Conservation subdivisions for enhancement of aesthetics and protection of natural resources is encouraged and might be mandated by the municipality in certain circumstances.
6. Wherever cluster design results in multi-family or other concentrated housing patterns, overall densities must be limited to assure on-site septic system discharges will meet established standards for it is presumed that central sewer systems will never be extended into these areas.
7. Development of or extension of public water supply systems for lower density neighborhood areas is not precluded and could be done to secure potable supply and fire protection when not subtracting from the capacity needed for the regional center, town centers and developed neighborhoods, and primary growth areas.
8. Conflicts with agricultural land uses may occur and can be mitigated with creative open space design options, or farmland preservation programs.

***B-3: Rural Areas:***

These are outlying areas where densities even less than the minimums needed to sustain on-site sewage disposal and well systems are reasonable in order to resist growth pressures that are better

channeled to more cost-effective and less remote locations. Rural areas are characterized by a high percentage of undeveloped forest and / or agricultural land, and sprawl pressures have not arrived to give a suburban appearance. These areas are generally distant from the regional center and primary growth areas. Each of the towns in the Litchfield Hills Region have remote areas within their borders which are classified as rural, as shown on the Growth Policy Map. Creative residential development to protect agricultural and open space values is the goal in these areas.

**Priorities and Policies for Rural Areas Include:**

1. Outlying areas are not responsible for stimulating the region's economic growth and should not be obligated to accommodate the population pressure resulting from such economic growth.
2. Land use policies should promote the basic function of rural areas, and hence assure that reasonable economic uses of property remain available to owners.
3. Conservation subdivision options for development may be desirable to assure reasonable economic use of land, protect important natural and cultural features, and to reduce road access costs.
4. Rural areas are not needed for housing to balance regional economic development objectives. Major institutional and other intensive nonresidential uses are generally discouraged in these areas.
5. Farmland and forest land preservation should be encouraged by programs to reduce development pressures and to enhance the economic viability of farming and farm-family independence.
6. Introduction of new arterial highways and public water and sewer systems is inconsistent with the function of these areas and should not be pursued.

**C. Areas Without Development.** Includes Preservation Areas and Existing Preserved Open Space:

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**C-1: Preservation Areas:**

These are land and water areas of critical environmental concern which require stringent restrictions on use. Preservation areas include:

- Inland wetlands that have a permanent or seasonal high water table including swamps, marshes and bogs.
- All rivers, streams, and water bodies (with minimum 75' riparian buffer for undeveloped areas).
- Selected public water supply watershed lands located immediately adjacent to reservoirs and tributary streams (known as Class I and Class II watershed land – too detailed to be shown on policy map).
- The FEMA mapped floodway portion of special flood hazard areas (too small to be shown on Growth Policy Map).
- Agricultural lands for which development rights are owned by federal, state or municipal government, private foundations, or land trusts.
- Land reserved for flood control purposes.
- Well head protection areas of State mandated stratified drift aquifer protection areas.

Priorities and Policies for Preservation Areas Include:

1. The fundamental policy is that preservation areas are not to be developed.
2. Portions of public water supply wellhead protection areas may be acceptable for development or already be developed, and infill development may occur, but any new development or land uses on wellhead protection areas should be carefully controlled

to preclude the potential for degrading water quality.

**C-2: Existing Preserved Open Space:**

These are lands known or judged to be permanently preserved as open space, including recreation areas, and where any development is only in support of one or more open space functions. Included are:

- Federal, state, and municipally owned parks, forests, and other open spaces and reserves.
- Major lands preserved or used for open space purposes by community land trusts.
- Public water supply lands in state, municipal or water utility ownership.

**D. Watershed Land and Other Sensitive Resource Areas.**

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This classification is an overlay to the preceding classifications and includes the following irreplaceable environmental and historic resource areas:

- Existing and proposed public water supply watersheds.
- Municipal historic districts, buildings and sites. Also historic sites listed and mapped in the state archaeologist's inventory, and sites from the National Register of Historic Places (too detailed to be shown on policy map).
- Rare plant and animal habitat areas as identified in the DEP's Natural Diversity Data base (not shown on Policy Map).
- FEMA mapped special flood hazard areas. (not shown on Policy Map)
- State mandated aquifer protection areas and other stratified drift aquifers that are protected as existing or future resources by local zoning regulations.
- Steep slopes (25% or greater; not shown on Policy Map).

- Scenic vistas (not shown on Policy Map).
- Agricultural land with prime farmland soils (not shown on Policy Map).

It is significant to note that over half of the Litchfield Hills Region consists of existing or proposed public water supply watershed land.

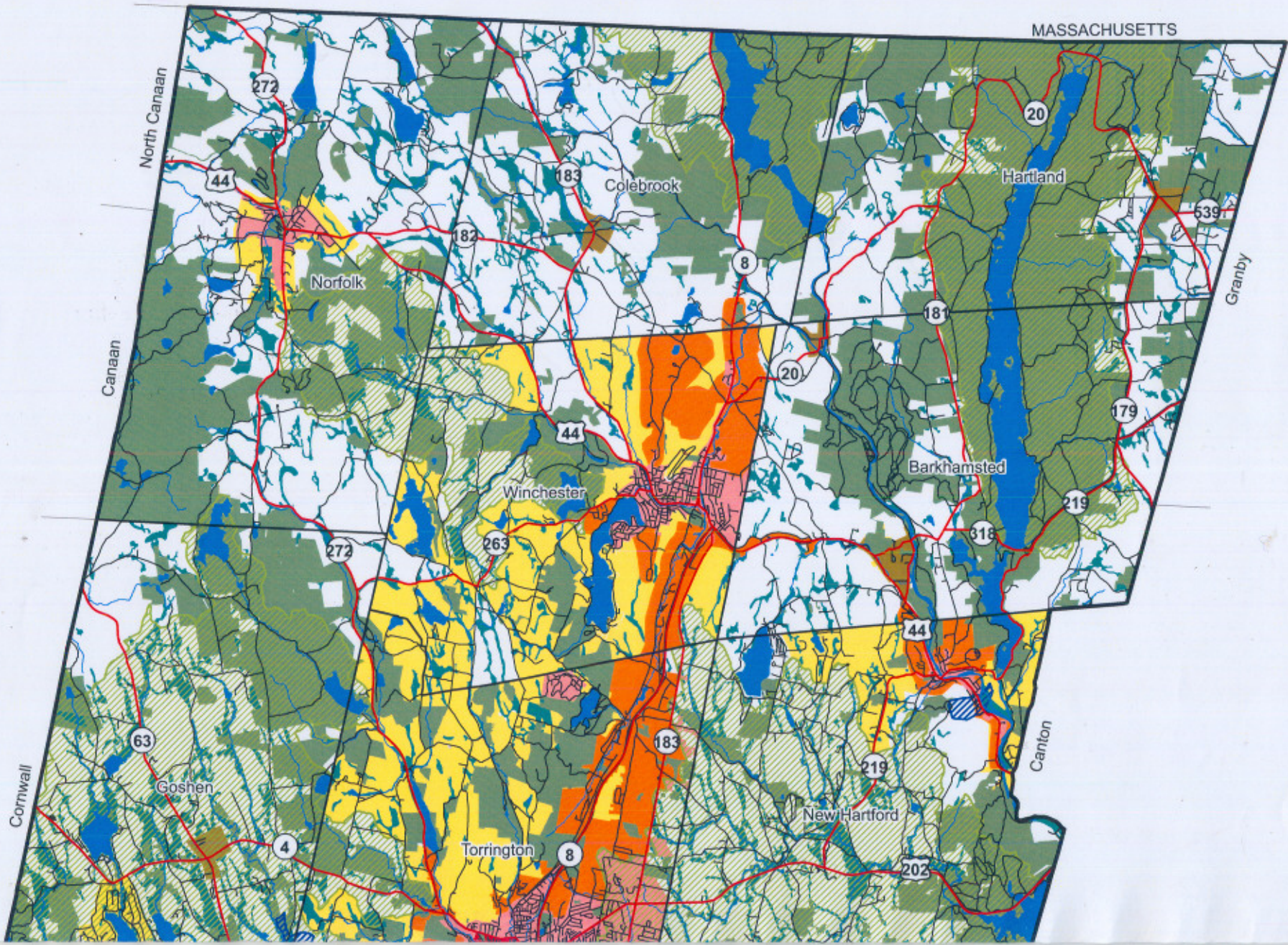
Priorities and Policies for Sensitive Resource Areas Include:

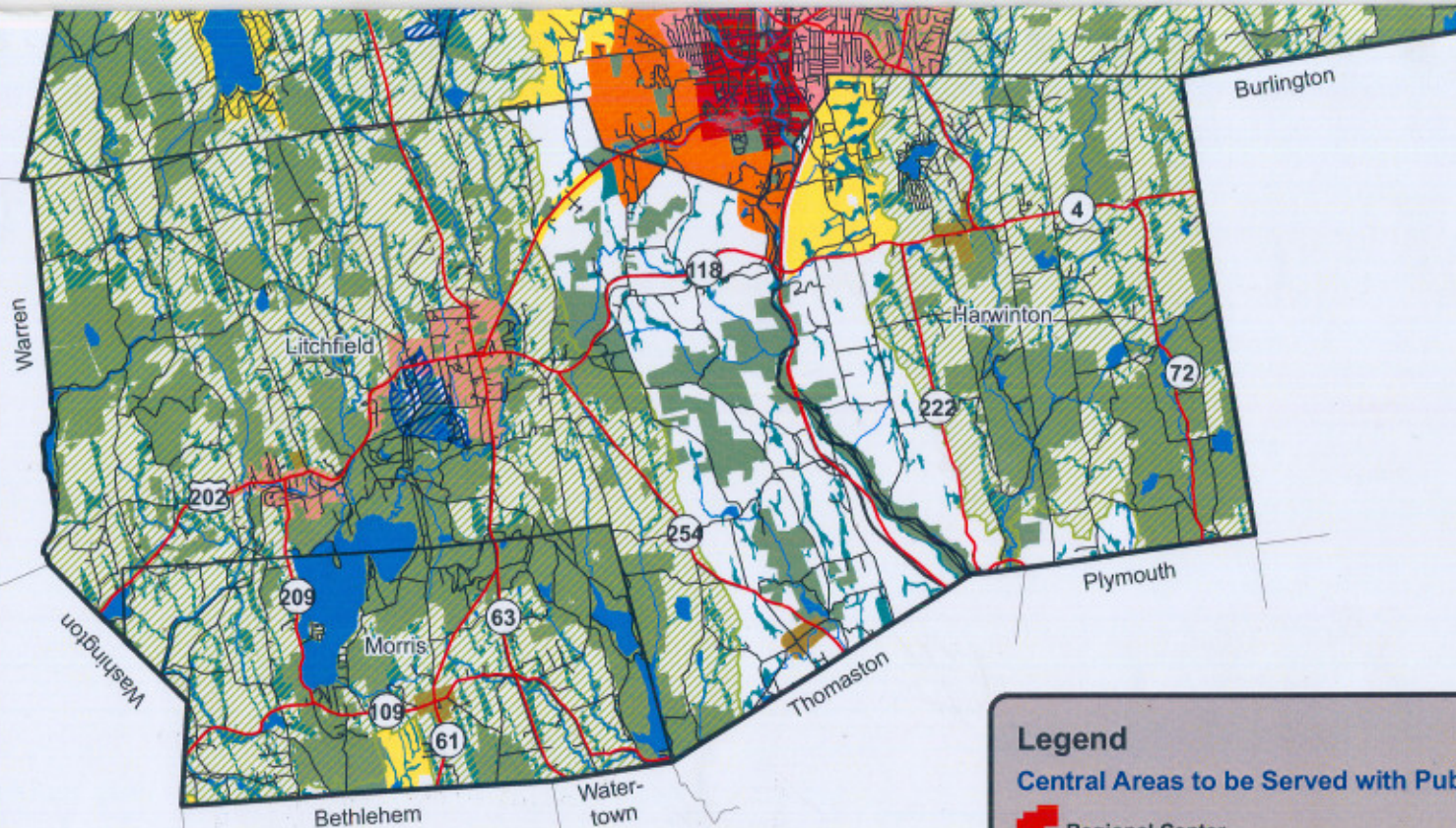
1. It is the responsibility of the present generation to serve as trustee of these sensitive resource areas in order to help protect the quality of life for future generations.
2. Major sections of this land will likely continue to be in private ownership and be used for private purposes. Intensity and type of use should be consistent with conservation of natural resources or historic sites. The density of development should not exceed one housing unit per two acres of land, exclusive of wetlands, in water supply watersheds and major aquifer recharge areas in order to protect water quality.
3. Ample and suitable locations are identified for intensive development and regional growth without the need to degrade or damage sensitive resource areas or accept the health and safety risk of intensive development in such areas. When a classification such as a primary growth area allowing sewer and water utility expansion overlaps with these sensitive resource areas, strict limitations should be placed upon development to insure that environmental quality is strictly maintained.
4. Encourage municipal adoption of community design guidelines to enhance community appearance, such as the Downtown Torrington Design Guidelines. This may include consideration of the additional design controls available under Connecticut's Village District Act.
5. Promote watershed protection and the protection of scenic ridgelines.
6. Promote consideration of DEP's Natural Diversity Data base in local review of development applications. This may include requiring applicants to identify NDDDB sites on their applications and to consult with the DEP if proposing development on lands identified as an area of concern in the NDDDB. Commissions may also request DEP review of development projects and consider incorporating DEP's comments as a condition of approval.
7. Encourage preservation of historic buildings, sites and districts. Also encourage adaptive re-use of historic structures that preserves the character and integrity of the resource.
8. Encourage the protection of potential and registered archeological sites until qualified professionals have completed an evaluation and appropriate measures are defined to mitigate any adverse impacts.
9. Encourage open space protection in these sensitive resource areas, and promote passive recreational use where feasible.
10. Promote the protection of prime farmland soils and encourage locally grown and consumed produce and other agricultural production activity.
11. Low impact development strategies should be considered for large forest habitat areas, when such lands cannot be permanently protected as open space. (See Section III B.16 of report).



Figure E.

# LITCHFIELD HILLS REGIONAL GROWTH POLICY MAP





**Legend**

**Central Areas to be Served with Public Sewer & Water Utilities**

- Regional Center
- Primary Growth Area
- Village Centers and Developed Neighborhoods

**Outlying Areas That Should Generally Develop Without Public Sewer or Water Utilities**

- Small Community Centers
- Low Density Neighborhood Areas\*
- Rural Areas\*\*

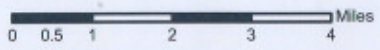
**Areas Without Development**

- Existing Preserved Open Space
- Preservation Areas
- Aquifer Protection Areas
- Public Water Supply Watershed\*\*\*

\* Minimum lot size < 80,000 square feet per dwelling unit.  
 \*\* Minimum lot size >= 80,000 square feet per dwelling unit.  
 \*\*\* Both existing and proposed.

**Legend**

- LHCEO Town Boundaries
- Major Roads
- Local Roads
- Water



**DATA SOURCES**  
 Connecticut DEP: Base Data  
 Connecticut OPM: Areas and Centers, Open Space  
 Housatonic Valley Association: Enhanced Open Space

This map is for informational purposes only and is subject to change.

Map prepared on 11/6/08 by  
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## VIII. PLAN CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL AND STATE PLANS

One of the goals of a Regional Plan of Conservation and Development is to provide a bridge between local and state plans, and to promote consistency among these three levels of planning by providing a regional perspective.

As mentioned above, the LHCEO's Regional Plan was largely built from the recommendations presented in the Municipal Plans of Conservation and Development in the regional area. Thus the Plan is highly consistent with the goals and objectives of the various municipal plans, and can assist LHCEO municipalities in providing input to the State for consideration in future updates of the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

A key feature of LHCEO's Growth Policy Map is the classification of the mapping units into categories that can be easily compared with those in the "Conservation and Development Policy Plan for Connecticut". The current version of the state plan is for the period of 2005 – 2010, and can be viewed on line a [www.ct.gov/opm](http://www.ct.gov/opm).

LHCEO's Growth Policy Map categories are generally comparable in their titles and detailed policies to the state map categories as shown in the chart below.

According to state statute, LHCEO and the other regional planning organizations are required to note any inconsistencies of their regional plans with the following management principles:

- *Redevelopment and revitalization of regional centers and areas of mixed uses with existing or planned infrastructure.*
- *Expansion of housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs.*
- *Concentration of development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options and land reuse.*
- *Conservation and restoration of the natural environment, cultural and historical resources, and traditional rural lands.*
- *Protection of environmental assets critical to public health and safety.*
- *Integration of planning across all levels of government to address issues on a local, regional, and state-wide basis.*

It is the finding of the LHCEO that this Plan is consistent with the above growth management principles.

As required by statute, the LHCEO referred this Plan to the CT Office of Policy and Management for comments and recommendations. In a letter to the LHCEO dated September 17, 2009, OPM stated that the proposed regional plan of development "is not inconsistent with the Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut, 2005-2010". OPM's letter also stated that "the Plan effectively outlines regional goals, policies, and recommended actions for implementing a responsible growth vision for land use within the LHCEO region".

<b>LHCEO Map Categories</b>	<b>State Map Categories</b>
Regional Center	Regional Center
Village Centers and Established Neighborhoods	Neighborhood Conservation
Primary Growth Areas	Growth Area
Small Community Centers	Rural Community Centers
Low Density Neighborhood and Rural Areas	Rural Lands
Preservation Areas and Existing Preserved Open Space	Preservation Area
Watershed Land and Other Sensitive Resource Areas	Conservation Area

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