



# Northwest (CT) NEXT

*Our Regional Plan of Conservation and Development*

2017-2027

**Northwest Hills Council of Governments**

Adopted October 2017

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*2017-2027 Regional Plan of Conservation and Development*



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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This Plan was prepared by Jocelyn Ayer, NHCOC’s Community & Economic Development Director. Thanks to all of the residents and land use commission members who provided their perspectives and input during the process of developing this Plan. Thanks to all our partners for their willingness to help us implement it!

Front Cover: View of Mudge Pond (Sharon, CT) photo by Joanna Wozniak-Brown



## Purpose & Partners

“How can we **attract and retain young people** and young families to our 21-town region?”

“How can we continue and further improve upon the **high quality of life** we offer to residents of all ages?”

“How do we balance our need to **conserve land, protect water quality**, and maintain the rural character of our region while also meeting our needs for **housing and jobs**?”

There are thousands of actions we could take to address these issues. The purpose of this Regional Plan of Conservation and Development is to lay out a **prioritized, strategic list of actions** that we can take **together as a region** to meet our land use goals over the next 10 years.

To reach our goals we will need to work together and we will need to use our resources strategically. To do this we will ask each of our key partners to endorse the goals and actions proposed in this plan and to commit to working together to implement the plan.

Our key partners include:

- 21 member municipalities**
- Housatonic Heritage**
- Housatonic Valley Association**
- NWCT Arts Council**
- NWCT Economic Development Corporation**
- NWCT Chamber**
- NWCT Transit District**
- Northwest Conservation District**
- Partners for Sustainable Healthy Communities**



## Input

Here is how we determined the land use goals this plan would focus on and prioritized actions to help us meet these goals:

### Analyzed Data and Trends

In October 2016 we released the **Northwest Hills Regional Profile** which provides demographic, housing, and economic conditions and trends for each of our 21 towns and for the region.

### Collected Input on Regional Goals

- We conducted a web-based resident input survey and collected 1,382 responses from residents in our 21-towns.
- We visited and surveyed each of our member towns' Planning & Zoning Commissions.
- We collected survey responses from 586 high school students.

### Conducted Focus Group Sessions on Action Steps

Six focus group sessions were held with regional partner agencies, experts in the field, and our town's land use commission members. The purpose of these sessions was to identify actions the COG could take or assist its member towns to take to address core issues.

## Implementation

How will we use this plan to meet our regional land use goals?

- 1) This plan will be used to guide the **NHCOG's workplan** and policy positions along with NHCOG's other regional plans including the Regional Transportation Plan.
- 2) We will hold an **annual forum** with our partners to check in on our progress, celebrate our successes, and update our priority actions for the coming year.
- 3) We will develop a **web-based tool kit** to assist our municipalities in implementing actions in the Plan, including case studies and example regulations.
- 4) We will create a **checklist for municipalities** to use when updating their local plan of conservation and development.

# Trends Shaping the Region

Here are some of the key trends shaping land use in the region. These are more fully detailed in the **Northwest Hills Regional Profile** available on our website.



## Population and demographic trends:

- Our region is losing population. Between 2010 and 2015 we saw a net loss of almost 3,500 residents (3% of our region's total population).
- In the next ten years, the region will see a larger percentage of its population hit retirement age (from 18.2% of the population in 2014 to 28.0% in 2025) and a smaller percentage will be school-aged children (from 20.1% to 17.5%).
- The seasonal or part-time population is estimated at 13% regionally but is as high as 50% in a few towns.

## Economic trends:

- There was a decrease in the size of the labor force in the region from 2010 to 2014. Torrington remains the region's employment center, just as it is the population center.
- The Health Care and Social Assistance industry is one of the cores of the region's employment, with over 18.0% of jobs. Government and Manufacturing are also important to the region's industry base.
- Over half the businesses in the region are very small (with 4 or fewer employees), and over 15% of the region's workforce is self-employed.
- Over 60% of residents commute to jobs outside the region.



## Housing trends:

- The region has a higher vacancy rate (17%) than the state (9%). Many of the vacant units are "vacant for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use", otherwise known as second homes.
- Household size has decreased slightly in the region from 2.5 people per household in 2000 to 2.4 people per household in 2014. Smaller household sizes means more housing units are needed to serve the same total number of residents in the region.
- Renters represented 33% of occupied units in the state but only 24% of occupied units in the region. With less rental properties available in the region, young workers may seek housing elsewhere.
- Over one-third of the region's households spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs (16,912 households). Spending more than 30% of your household income on housing costs is considered unaffordable.





# Goals & Strategies

The following conservation and development goals will guide the Northwest Hills Council of Government’s planning and policy work over the next ten years:

- 1. **Attract and retain young residents**
- 2. **Protect water quality and natural resources**
- 3. **Support farm businesses and protect farmland**
- 4. **Strengthen our town centers and Main Streets**
- 5. **Meet the needs of our older adult residents**
- 6. **Continue to foster regional collaboration and resource sharing**

### Surveyed Resident Perspectives

**72%** of respondents agreed that the region should place a priority on programs and services to **attract and retain young adults and young families.**

**2/3** of respondents would like to see their town and the region invest in **protecting water quality in our lakes, streams, and rivers.**

## GOAL 1: ATTRACT AND RETAIN YOUNG RESIDENTS

**Our region is losing population.** Between 2010 and 2015 we saw a net loss of almost 3,500 residents (3% of our region’s total population). When asked what should be our region’s highest priority goals, attracting and retaining young adults and young families received the most votes from respondents to the Regional Plan survey.

### POLICIES:

- Facilitate the creation of job, housing, and transportation options desired by young residents.
- Highlight the region’s outdoor recreation assets and amenities/ assistance for small business start-ups.
- Create opportunities for robust civic engagement of young residents.
- Develop an on-going program to communicate these opportunities and assets to young people using social media, town and regional websites, and other direct marketing tools.



	TASKS	PARTNERS
<b>JOBS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Facilitate the creation of links from municipal and regional websites to an updated list of job openings, internships and on the job training opportunities in the region. Promoted through social media channels and others focused on young adults.</li> <li>2) Assist local economic development commissions with their business retention, expansion and recruitment efforts to create new jobs.</li> <li>3) Update the region’s Comprehensive Development Strategy (CEDS) with a focus on creating/retaining jobs for young residents.</li> <li>4) Support NWCONNECT's efforts to connect homes and businesses in the region to high speed fiber optic broadband and enhance mobile coverage.</li> <li>5) Assist towns with encouraging and supporting small and home-based businesses through zoning and other efforts.</li> </ol>	NWCT Chamber of Commerce, Northwest Community College, Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board, NWCONNECT, municipal EDCs
<b>HOUSING</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Provide towns with “best practices” and toolkits on mixed use zoning regulations (housing above commercial) and infill development in town centers and downtowns.</li> <li>2) Continue to support the efforts of local affordable housing organizations to create housing options for young adults and young families in their towns through the Regional</li> </ol>	NWCT Regional Housing Council, municipal P&Zs
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Facilitate the creation of more pedestrian and bike friendly town centers and downtowns through the implementation of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). (The RTP includes undertaking a regional bike trail connectivity plan.)</li> <li>2) Better communicate public transit options to young adults</li> <li>3) Consider the feasibility of a ride sharing type program/service in NWCT (such as those provided through Uber and Lyft)</li> </ol>	Municipalities, NWCT Transit District

	TASKS	PARTNERS
<b>RECREATION</b>	1) Continue to develop and promote an interactive online map showing the public access hiking, walking, and multi-use trails in the NHCOG region. 2) Facilitate the creation of additional or promotion of existing organized “pick up” games for teens and young adults. Facilitate additional recreational opportunities for parents of young children such as “strollercise” in town center areas.	Municipalities
<b>CIVIC AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT</b>	1) Provide towns with “best practices” and tools for attracting young residents to town volunteer opportunities. 2) Promote arts, cultural, recreational, and retail activities that create a more vital and visible “nightlife” in our town centers. 3) Create more opportunities for the town’s seniors and young people to come together (Bingo for all!)	Municipalities
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	1) Facilitate the creation of better channels of communication designed to reach young people about the jobs, housing, transportation, recreation, civic and social engagement opportunities in our region.	Municipalities

### Surveyed High School Student Perspectives

Over

*1/3*

of respondents reported that they would like to **live in town centers or downtowns** where they could walk to shops, restaurants, library, café, etc.

*44%*

of respondents reported that they would be more likely to stay in the region if there were **more jobs** that they would be interested in.



## GOAL 2: PROTECT WATER QUALITY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

**Protecting our region's drinking water, wildlife habitats, prime farmland, lakes and rivers is critically important both to our current residents and to attracting new residents.** Sixty-two percent of Regional Plan survey respondents said they would like to see their town and the 21-town region invest in protecting water quality and deal with invasive species in our lakes, streams, and rivers.

Our region contains some of the most intact habitats in the State. As our region sees an increase in extreme weather events such as storms and flooding, we will assist our towns to identify vulnerabilities and address them.



### **POLICIES:**

- Protect water quality, recreational use, and wildlife habitat of our lakes, rivers, and streams and address issues caused by invasive species, cyanobacteria, and clear cutting of lakefronts/river banks.
- Protect intact forest systems, and public drinking water resource areas from inappropriate development.
- Support the efforts of water protection organizations such as the Farmington River Coordinating Committee, Farmington River Watershed Association, Housatonic River Commission, Housatonic Valley Association, Northwest Conservation District, Shepaug Bantam River Commission, Connecticut Federation of Lakes, Rivers Alliance of CT, State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), and water companies as they seek to improve or maintain water quality in the region.
- Support local non-profit preservation organizations such as Lake Waramaug Task Force, Bantam Lake Protective Association, Tyler Lake Protective, Friends of Westside Pond, Highland Lake Watershed Association, and others whose mission is the preservation of the environmental and recreational value of our lakes and their watersheds.
- Conserve our region's wildlife, biodiversity, and endangered/threatened species through protection of critical habitat areas.
- Support local land trusts in their efforts to protect sizeable areas of contiguous forest habitat, prime farmland, diverse wildlife habitats, and other environmentally sensitive areas.
- Assist the region's municipalities with identifying and addressing the potential impacts of increased temperatures, storm events, flooding and habitat degradation to increase local and regional resiliency.

	<b>TASKS</b>	<b>PARTNERS</b>
<b>WATER QUALITY</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Continue NHCOCG’s Household Hazardous Waste Collection Days, including educational efforts to use less toxic materials.</li> <li>2) Work with the region’s towns to implement Low Impact Development (LID) or other stormwater management regulations, prevent clear cutting of trees along lakefronts and riverbanks and maintain appropriate vegetated buffer areas.</li> <li>3) Work with the region’s towns, water protection organizations, and local lake/watershed preservation non-profits to a) better understand and control sources of nutrients (e.g., phosphorous) and other pollutants that negatively impact our lakes, rivers, and streams and b) to develop sources of funding and programs to support education, enforcement, and remediation programs designed to address the growing issues of invasive species and cyanobacteria.</li> </ol>	Northwest Conservation District, municipalities, local, regional, and state water protection organizations listed in policy section above.
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES AND CRITICAL HABITATS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Increase awareness of the mapping tools available to municipal land use commissions that can assist them in identifying and mitigating potential adverse impacts of proposed development in environmentally sensitive and critical habitat areas.</li> <li>2) Support the mapping of areas of highest conservation need locally in partnership with local land trusts and municipal land use commissions.</li> <li>3) Provide training opportunities to wetland commission members and work with municipalities to incentivize participation.</li> <li>4) Assist municipalities with access to education and resources for eradication of roadside invasives.</li> </ol>	UConn Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) –Environmental Conditions Online (ECO), Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative
<b>ENERGY</b> (efficiency, conservation, renewable)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Provide regional support to local energy task forces by sharing new information and resources, gathering baseline energy usage data, assisting with public information campaigns, and assisting communities with accessing funding for energy initiatives.</li> <li>2) Assist our municipalities with participating in SustainableCT, a voluntary, sustainable community certification program that includes a menu of voluntary actions to make communities healthy, safe, resilient, efficient, and livable.</li> <li>3) Consider establishing a regional, shared sustainability manager to assist in carrying out the tasks listed here.</li> <li>4) Provide example regulations that remove barriers to alternative energy and highlight relevant case studies.</li> <li>5) Direct mid and large scale commercial solar installations away from farm fields and core forests and toward brownfields and industrial sites.</li> </ol>	SustainableCT, Institute for Sustainable Energy (Eastern CT State Univ.), Clean Water Action Connecticut, CT Green Bank
<b>CLIMATE ADAPTATION</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Assist towns with conducting a town-wide vulnerability assessment to identify vulnerabilities and prioritize actions.</li> <li>2) Prepare a climate change adaptation plan including a web-based toolkit.</li> <li>3) Assist towns with incorporating climate change and resiliency strategies into their POCDs and Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans.</li> <li>4) Identify vulnerable populations for heat and extreme weather events; assist social and emergency services in creating a vulnerable populations network, and create a web-based map of cooling centers/emergency shelters.</li> <li>5) Coordinate through Road Supervisors, HVA, and CIRCA to make bridges and culverts ready for larger storm events.</li> <li>6) Coordinate with FEMA/USGS to update RISK Flood maps.</li> </ol>	Municipalities, CIRCA, HVA, FEMA

## GOAL 3: PROTECT FARMLAND & SUPPORT FARM BUSINESSES

### Northwest Connecticut has a rich agricultural heritage.

Our region’s landscape is defined by farm fields surrounding our historic town centers. There is growing interest from residents in eating locally grown food, farm-to-table restaurants, and farmers’ markets. There is a growing interest from farmers in bringing customers to the farm, on-farm processing and sales, smaller acreage farming, and cultivating year-round markets for farm products.

### POLICIES:

- The region should protect farmland, support farmers, connect farms to local markets, cultivate agri-tourism, and ensure access to locally grown food.
- Support agricultural innovation. Promote the region as a center for the development of new agricultural technologies and attract a new generation of farmers to the region.
- Protect the cultural, historic, scenic, and ecological values of farm fields and farmsteads.



	TASKS	PARTNERS
<b>PROTECT FARMLAND</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Support local efforts to identify and protect prime farmland. Support applications for funding to acquire or purchase development rights on priority farmlands.</li> <li>2) Collaborate with local land trusts and municipalities to provide access to land for new farmers and assist with succession planning for farmers who’d like to retire.</li> </ol>	Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative, Connecticut Farmland Trust, CT DEEP, CT Dept. of Agriculture
<b>SUPPORT FARM BUSINESSES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Provide and promote example “farm friendly” zoning regulations which better define agriculture, provide farmers flexibility for ancillary uses on farms, and allow on-farm sales, adequate signage to farms, and appropriate, small scaled meat processing.</li> <li>2) Support the Northwest Connecticut Food Hub project which supports farmers by connecting them with larger and more consistent wholesale and niche markets for their farm products.</li> <li>3) Provide information to towns on targeted tax relief mechanisms for farmers.</li> <li>4) Support local agricultural commissions in their efforts to assess the needs of local farmers, link new farmers to land, create “Know your farmer” brochures and events, consider pursuing zoning changes or right to farm ordinances. Consider forming a Regional Agricultural Commission.</li> </ol>	Partners for Sustainable Healthy Communities, Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, CT Northeast Organic Farming Association

## GOAL 4: STRENGTHEN OUR TOWN CENTERS & MAIN STREETS

Our village centers, downtowns, and “Main Streets” provide essential services to our residents and help create each town’s unique identity and sense of place. They are the heart of our communities. They also contain many small businesses and attract visitors which support other local businesses. Many visitors have loved our towns so much they have become residents. Retaining the vitality of our town centers is critical and requires sustained, coordinated efforts.

### POLICIES:

- Promote additional housing development in town centers to enhance the vitality of these centers including re-development of existing buildings, housing above commercial spaces, infill development, and new development on small lots.
- Support tourism marketing activities that draw visitors to our 21-town region.
- Foster and support ongoing activities on Main Streets that attract young visitors and residents to our downtowns and village center areas.
- Make town center areas more pedestrian friendly.
- Promote and enhance each town’s historic, cultural, arts, and recreational assets.
- Limit commercial development of areas outside of town centers (not including home-based businesses).
- Facilitate local place-making initiatives including coordinated, on-going activities on “Main Streets”, activating public spaces, increasing the town center’s attractiveness and uniqueness.
- Link our town centers with our outdoor recreational assets.



	TASKS	PARTNERS
<b>HOUSING</b>	1) Work with local zoning commissions to provide them with "zoning best practices" that promote compact mixed use (housing and commercial) village/town centers.	Municipal planning and zoning commissions
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	1) Complete the region’s Intermodal Transportation Center in downtown Torrington including exploration of transit oriented development (TOD), rail access, and complete streets improvements in the area. 2) Create clear pedestrian and/or bike connections between town centers and hike/bike trails so that people hiking can support local businesses by eating, shopping, or staying in town. 3) Develop a model sidewalk ordinance and “complete streets” demonstration project for village centers/Main Streets to support and encourage pedestrian friendly centers.	Municipalities, NWCT Transit District, Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area
<b>TOURISM, small businesses, and placemaking</b>	1) Support tourism marketing activities that draw visitors to our town centers and Main Streets. 2) Train local EDCs to conduct annual business visits to help retain/grow existing businesses. 3) Support on-going placemaking activities- regional facilitation to train Main Street programming volunteers (Work with local economic development commissions to coordinate and market Main Street/town center events- consider activities that attract all ages and create opportunities for social interactions.) 4) Signage to welcome people and direct people to shops, restaurants, historical sites, recreational opportunities.	Municipal EDCs, CT Main Street Center, Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, NWCT Arts Council

## GOAL 5: MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR OLDER RESIDENTS

**By the year 2025, it is predicted that 28% of our region’s population will be over 65 years old.** According to a recent AARP study, a majority of older residents want to “age in place”. We need to make sure our communities meet the unique housing, transportation, recreation, civic engagement, health and safety needs of these residents.

### POLICIES:

- Improve access to employment and volunteer opportunities for older adults.
- Promote housing that enables people to live safely, comfortably and independently for as long as possible. The vast majority of people 50-plus want to stay in their homes and communities for as long as possible.
- Improve transportation options for older adults to access medical appointment, shopping, and social and civic activities.
- Encourage town recreational events and activities that attract people of all ages- young, old, and in between.



	TASKS	PARTNERS
<b>JOBS</b>	1) Facilitate the creation of links from municipal and regional websites to an updated list of job openings in the region. Promoted through senior centers, town newsletters, social media and other channels used by older adults.	NWCT Chamber of Commerce
<b>HOUSING</b>	1) Provide towns with “best practices” and toolkits on accessory apartment regulations, shared housing options and zoning for smaller sized units. 2) Continue to support the efforts of local affordable housing organizations to create housing options for older adults in their towns through the Regional Housing Council including apartments in town centers. 3) Improve access to guides and resources to rehab homes for accessibility modifications and other livability improvements. 4) Encourage the development of 1 and 2 bedroom residences in or near “Main Streets” and village centers.	NWCT Regional Housing Council, municipal P&Z

	TASKS	PARTNERS
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	1) Improve and extend sidewalks in town centers and downtowns to enhance walkability. 2) Better communicate public transit options to older adults and increase access to town and regional vans/buses to access medical appointments, shopping, and group activities.	Municipalities, NW Transit District, Geer
<b>RECREATION</b>	1) Create/promote community exercise opportunities by encouraging age-friendly gyms and ADA accessible parks. 2) Design recreational activities for inter-generational participation.	Municipalities, local recreation commissions
<b>CIVIC AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT</b>	1) Provide towns with “best practices” and tools for matching older residents to town volunteer opportunities and recognizing their contributions. 2) Create and promote more opportunities for the town’s seniors and young people to come together (Bingo for all!)	Municipalities
<b>HEALTH &amp; SAFETY</b>	1) Support NWCONNECT's efforts to connect homes and businesses in the region to high speed fiber optic broadband and enhance mobile coverage. High speed internet will allow new tele-health and home security services. Increased cell phone coverage will assist in the efforts of emergency service providers and caretakers. 2) Increase access to healthy local food by improving access to farmers markets, food shares, and community gardens. 3) Support local volunteer emergency services by annually recognizing their importance to the community. Consider providing additional incentives.	NWCONNECT, local farmers’ markets

### Surveyed Resident Perspectives

*More than*

**1/3**

of respondents would like to use **sidewalks and pedestrian trails** within their town more than they can now.

**55%**

of respondents thought that their town needs **more housing options** that allow older adults to “**downsize**”.

## GOAL 6: CONTINUE TO FOSTER REGIONAL COLLABORATION, RESOURCE AND INFORMATION SHARING

**Eighty-five percent (85%) of regional plan survey respondents agreed that the region should foster collaboration** and coordination between and among its town leaders, town board and commissions, non-profit and community based organizations in order to meet regional goals. NHCOG works to do this every day. We are fortunate to have terrific partners in our member towns' chief elected officials, local board and commission members that value and actively participate in regional collaboration and resource sharing. Our region's non-profits and community based organizations, often faced with limited resources, have a similar history of partnering to share information and resources.



	TASKS	PARTNERS
COLLABORATION AND RESOURCE SHARING BETWEEN TOWNS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Hold monthly meetings of the region's Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) to discuss issues in municipal management, oversee existing COG programs, and explore new opportunities for regional cooperation.</li> <li>2) Coordinate the Public Works Equipment Cooperative, sharing 10 pieces of equipment between 21 towns.</li> <li>3) Facilitate the cost-effective purchase of treated road salt, plow blades, crack sealing services, and road regulatory and warning signs for member towns through the Northwest Hills Cooperative Purchase Program.</li> <li>4) Convene other regional meetings as needed such as the annual "Northwest Hills Legislative Forum" with Area Legislators.</li> <li>5) Coordinate with regional Transportation Providers to improve regional transportation coordination and offerings.</li> </ol>	Municipal CEO's, public works, legislators, NWCT Transit District, Geer, Education Connection

	TASKS	PARTNERS
<b>INFORMATION AND RESOURCE SHARING BETWEEN BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Facilitate quarterly “5th Thursdays” forums for land use commission members to get local input on the development of regional plans and provide a forum for the sharing of information between towns.</li> <li>2) Organize and host training workshops for land use board/commission members in the region and provide yearly updates on new legislation important to land use commissions.</li> <li>3) Facilitate an annual NWCT Economic Development Summit for local EDC members in the NHCOC region to meet each other, hear guest speakers on topics of common interest, and provide input on CEDS update and implementation.</li> <li>4) Create a checklist for towns updating their POCDs to make it easier to incorporate required plan components including consistency with regional and state POCDs.</li> <li>5) Provide a shared web-based toolbox of case studies and example regulations to make it easier for local board and commissions to consider and implement plan strategies.</li> <li>6) Collect updated demographic, economic, housing, and other land use related data for each of our member towns and make it easily accessible to them for use in decision making and grant writing.</li> </ol>	Municipal planning, zoning, conservation, wetlands, and economic development boards and commissions
<b>COLLABORATION BETWEEN NON-PROFIT PARTNERS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Provide technical assistance to the Housatonic River Commission and Western CT Water Utility Coordinating Committee.</li> <li>2) Host quarterly meetings of the NWCT Regional Housing Council.</li> <li>3) Continue active participation in the Northwest Connecticut Economic Development Corporation and implementation of the region’s CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy)</li> </ol>	NWCT EDC, Chamber NWCT, HVA and Litchfield Hills Greenprint, Northwest Conservation District, NWCT Arts Council, Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area





# Policy Maps

## Intended Use

The maps on the following pages are regional policy maps. They will be used to assist NHCOC in determining consistency of local or regional actions with the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development when such a determination is requested. As such the maps can be considered advisory in nature to municipalities when they update their municipal plans of conservation and development and/or consider local land use decisions.

## Conservation Policy Maps

The “**Water Resources**” map shows drinking water watersheds, riparian buffers (100ft buffers from banks of significant streams) and wetland soils. Actions that occur in these areas should consider any negative impacts of the action on water resources and reduce or eliminate that impact.






The “**Farms and Forests**” map includes “Core forest” which shows contiguous forest habitats greater than 200 acres in size. These large contiguous forests provide many regional benefits including providing wildlife habitat, carbon storage, nutrient cycling, and water and air purification. The “priority farm fields” shows farmland greater than 50 acres containing prime farmland soils. It is important to protect these areas from development so that the land remains available for agricultural use to ensure local availability of fresh farm products and help agriculture to remain an important part of the region’s economy. Actions that occur in these areas should consider any negative impacts of the action on core forests and prime farmland soils and reduce or eliminate that impact. Investments in conservation of these areas would be consistent with the Regional Plan.

### Regional Recreational Trail Map

This map is an appendix to the Plan and shows both current and proposed trails for hiking, walking, and biking in the region. This map can be used to pursue investments in recreational trails that have regional significance in strengthening our existing trail network.

## Sustainable Growth Policy Map

This map shows the areas in our region that are prioritized for actions and/or investments in development or growth related infrastructure. These are consistent with and adapted from the State’s Plan of Conservation & Development Locational Guide Map. Here are the criteria we used for each and the associated policy:

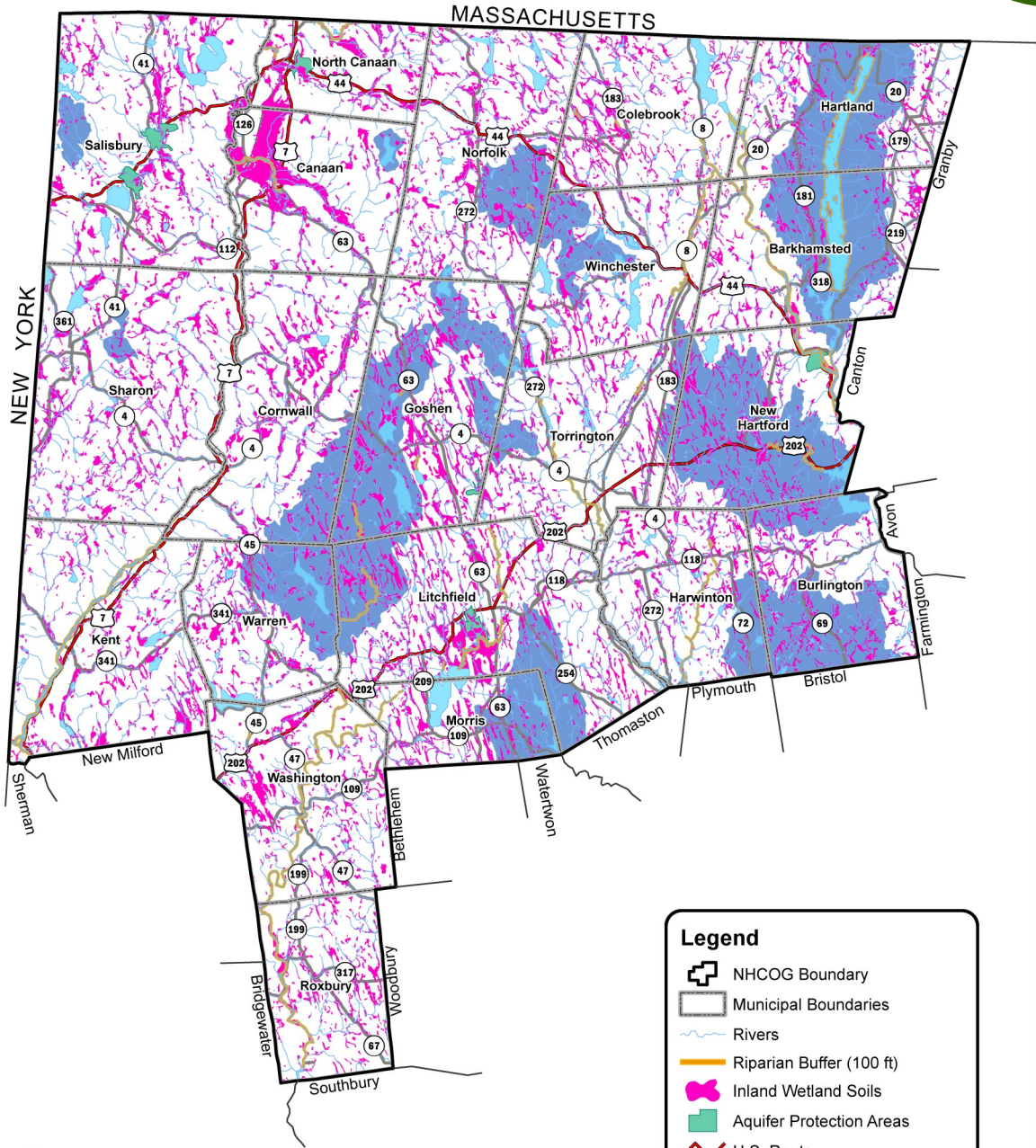
-  **Regional Center** Downtown Torrington: investments in transit, sidewalks, water and sewer infrastructure and downtown development would be consistent with the Regional Plan.
-  **Primary Growth Area** These areas have access to public water, sewer, and public transportation. Investments in supporting and/or expanding these services as needed would be consistent with the Regional Plan.
-  **Balanced Growth Area** These areas have access to public or community water and/or sewer and may also be located in areas that meet conservation related criteria. Therefore actions in these areas should consider the impact on both natural resources and growth related needs.
-  **Village Growth Areas** these areas were determined locally and represent the traditional village centers of our rural towns. In most cases they are not served by public water and/or sewer. Investments in these areas that would be consistent with the Regional Plan include infill housing, sidewalks, bikeways, and “Main Street” improvements. Any action or investment should take into consideration ways to strengthen or improve the traditional village character of these areas.
-  **Rural Areas** these areas are appropriate for low density residential use on parcels large enough to accommodate on-site wastewater treatment and wells. Many of these areas also contain water resources, core forests and/or priority farm fields which are conservation priorities.



# Conservation Policy Map Water Resources

Northwest Hills Council of Governments Region

Detailed maps  
available on  
NHCOC website



**Legend**

- NHCOC Boundary
- Municipal Boundaries
- Rivers
- Riparian Buffer (100 ft)
- Inland Wetland Soils
- Aquifer Protection Areas
- U.S. Route
- State Route
- Rail Lines
- Waterbodies
- Public Water Supply Watershed

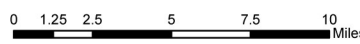


**Map Data Sources:**

Municipal Boundaries, Waterbodies, Rivers, Inland Wetland Soils, Public Water Supply Watersheds and Aquifer Protection Areas provided by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP CTECO)

The Riparian Buffer was developed by The Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) and is a 100 ft buffer from the banks of significant streams within the service area.

Rail lines, U.S. route, and state route datasets provided by the U.S. Census (TIGER Data)



Connecticut State Plane Projection on the North American Datum 1983 (2011)

Map prepared by  
Stacy Deming  
GIS Manager  
Housatonic Valley Association

Map Created: 9/28/2017



# Conservation Policy Map Farms and Forests

Northwest Hills Council of Governments Region

Detailed maps available on NHCOC website



Notes on Data Layers:  
"Core Forest" was determined by The Litchfield Hills Greenprint using the Center for Land-use Education and Research land cover data developed from satellite imagery. Contiguous forest  $\geq 200$  acres and  $\leq 300$  feet from developed areas were selected.

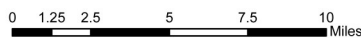
"Priority Farm Fields" were determined by The Litchfield Hills Greenprint, based on aerial imagery and USDA soils of prime or statewide importance for farmland and parcels  $\geq 50$  acres (From Town Assessor data) Parcels that contained at least 10% of farm fields and 25% of USDA designated farmland soils were selected to create the Priority Farm Fields dataset.



Map Data Sources:  
Protected Open Space data layer created by The Housatonic Valley Association in cooperation with The Litchfield Hills Greenprint.

Municipal Boundaries and Water Bodies provided by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

Rail lines, U.S. route, and state route datasets provided by the U.S. Census (TIGER Data).



Connecticut State Plane Projection on the North American Datum 1983 (2011)

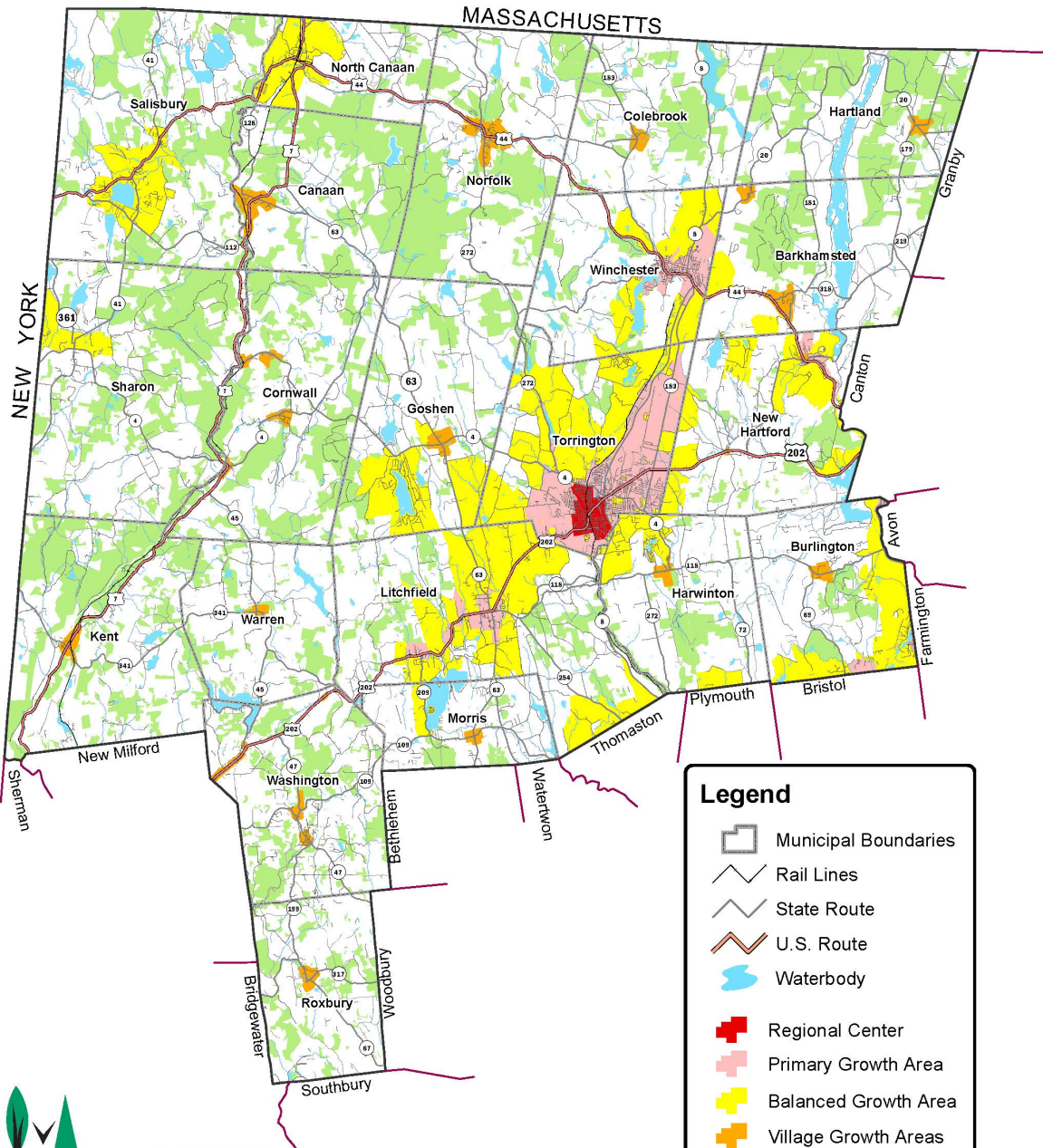
Map prepared by Stacy Deming GIS Manager Housatonic Valley Association  
Map Created: 9/28/2017



# Sustainable Growth Policy Map

## Northwest Hills Council of Governments Region

Detailed maps available on NHCOC website



### Legend

- Municipal Boundaries
- Rail Lines
- State Route
- U.S. Route
- Waterbody
- Regional Center
- Primary Growth Area
- Balanced Growth Area
- Village Growth Areas
- Protected Open Space
- Rural Areas



#### Map Data Sources

Protected Open Space data layer created by The Housatonic Valley Association in cooperation with The Litchfield Hills Greenprint.

Municipal boundaries and waterbodies provided by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. (DEEP CTECO)

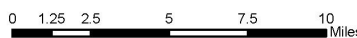
Rail lines, U.S. routes, and state routes layers provided by the U.S. Census. (TIGER Data)

Primary Growth Areas, Balanced Growth Areas, Village Growth Areas and Rural Areas adapted from Connecticut Office of Policy and Management's (CT OPM) Conservation and Development Policies Plan.

Regional Center provided by The City of Torrington.

#### Map Notes

When considering infrastructure investments, the conservation focus areas shown on the conservation policy maps should also be taken into consideration.



Connecticut State Plane Projection on the North American Datum 1983 (2011)

Map prepared by Stacy Deming GIS Manager Housatonic Valley Association

Map Created: 10/3/2017

# Consistency with other plans

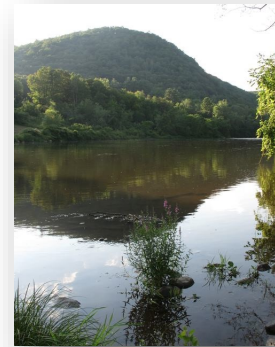
## State Plan of Conservation & Development

This plan is consistent with the six growth management principles in the State Plan:

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

## Local Plans of Conservation & Development

NHCOG reviewed each of its member municipality's plan of conservation and development (POCD) and met with each member town's planning and zoning commission during the development of this Plan. During the draft plan review process, each town was asked to review the draft Plan and comment on its consistency with the local POCD. This process has assured consistency of this Plan with local POCDs.



This plan is also consistent with and supports the following [regional plans](#):

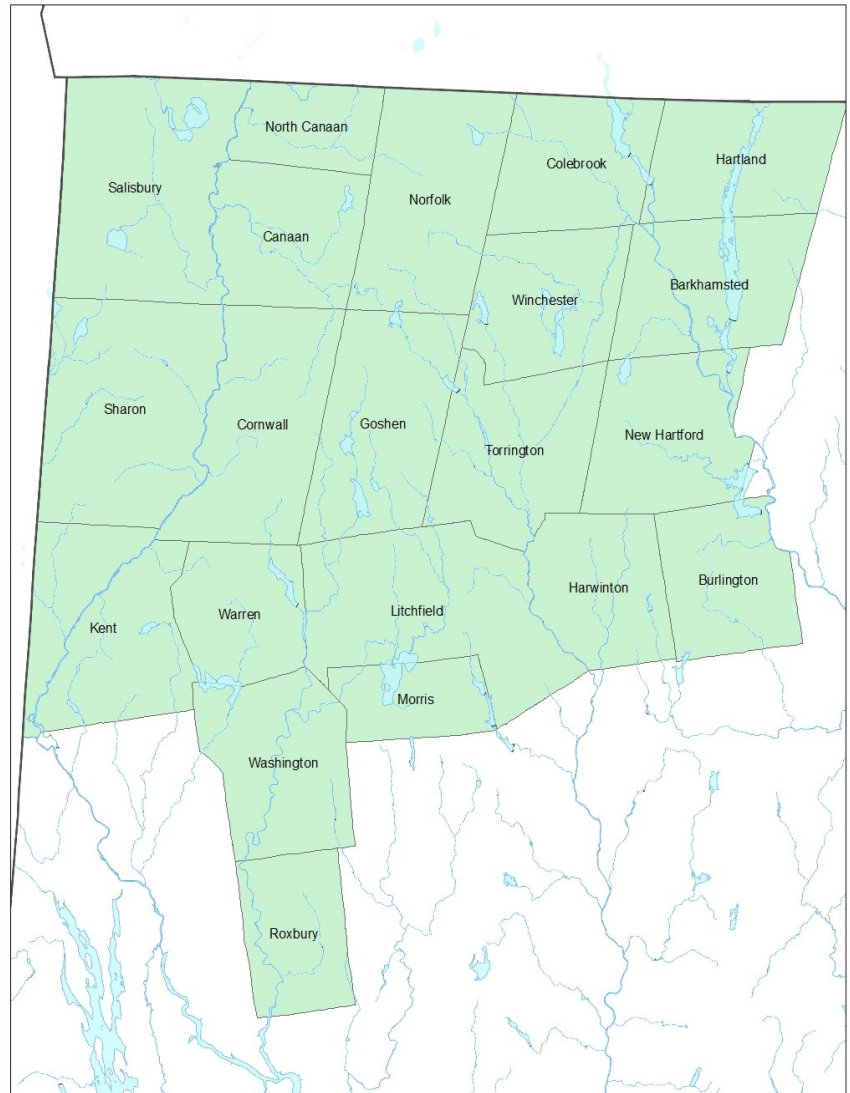
**Regional  
Transportation  
Plan**

**Regional Natural  
Hazard Mitigation  
Plans**

**Comprehensive  
Economic  
Development  
Strategy**

# Northwest Hills Council of Governments

Barkhamsted  
Burlington  
Canaan  
Colebrook  
Cornwall  
Goshen  
Hartland  
Harwinton  
Kent  
Litchfield  
Morris  
New Hartford  
Norfolk  
North Canaan  
Roxbury  
Salisbury  
Sharon  
Torrington  
Warren  
Washington  
Winchester



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