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# Capitol Region Council of Governments 2024 Plan of Conservation and Development

**DRAFT** for Review by Regional Planning Commission and Technical Advisory Committee

## CONNECT CAPITOL REGION



March 20, 2024



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# Chapter 1: Introduction

Connecticut's Capitol Region consists of 38 member municipalities in and around the Capital City of Hartford. Our communities are varied, offering urban, suburban, and rural lifestyles, cultural and entertainment destinations, and natural escapes. Our Region is rich in history, human capital, and natural resources. Our most notable natural feature is the winding Connecticut River that runs the length of our Region and shaped our cities, our growth, our infrastructure, and much of our agricultural landscape.

Residents and employers appreciate and cherish the quality of life offered in the Capitol Region. As shown in Chapter 2, the majority of the Region's residents are satisfied with where they live, trust their neighbors, and feel this is a good place to raise kids. Chapter 3 discusses public input into this plan. People from our smallest towns to our cities told us how much they love living in their community. Our more rural communities offer a small and quiet country setting with vast farms and forests and village centers. Our suburban communities provide easy access to services and amenities, with desirable neighborhoods. Our cities provide downtown living with easy access to jobs and cultural amenities. As a whole, our Region offers an array of neighborhood types and settings in which to live.

We do face challenges – some are new challenges that have emerged in the last 10 years, while others are longer term issues we continue to work to overcome. Many of the Region's residents are cost burdened and our supply of affordable housing cannot

## A Regional POCD

### State Requirements

Connecticut State Statutes (CGS 8-35a) requires Council of Governments to prepare a regional plan at least once every ten years. Among other requirements, the plan shall:

- Be based on studies of physical, social, economic, and governmental conditions and trends. Make recommendations for land use.
- Be designed to promote with the greatest efficiency and economy the coordinated development of the region and the general welfare and prosperity of the region's people.
- Promote development patterns in accordance with State growth principles (see Chapter 11 for a review of consistency).

State statutes also set forth the process for approving a plan, including the requirement for a public hearing.

### How We Use the POCD

CRCOG uses the Regional POCD to:

- Guide land use referrals (per state statutes).
- Write letters of supports for grant applications by municipalities or others.
- To support our own applications for grants.
- To guide CRCOG's workplan.

match demand. Our municipalities try to balance sustainable property tax rates with the provision of services to maintain a high quality of life. Population and job growth have been essentially flat over the last ten years. New environmental mandates – with good intentions – require funding and staff capacity to implement. Most

of our Region’s neighborhoods require car ownership to access jobs, services, schools, and amenities.

But we are presented with an opportunity to address these challenges by working together as a region. We have many attributes to be proud of - engaged residents with pride and deep connections to their community, excellent education systems, a commitment to social inclusiveness and pluralism, and an ever-increasing commitment to walkable, human-scaled places. And no matter the location in the Region, one is never far from regional attractions and natural escapes. We have many regional partners actively working to preserve our natural environment, provide affordable housing, and improve alternative transportation options.

This Plan openly discusses these and other challenges, celebrates progress, and provides strategies and actions to build a stronger Region. The Capitol Region Plan of Conservation and Development promotes a “Connected Region” and a more equitable Region. The plan focuses on creating a Region of choice, belonging, and opportunity. We are optimistic that we all can succeed and thrive.

## **What Has Changed Since the Last Plan**

Much has happened in the last decade. In this section, we believe it is important to highlight some of the momentous changes and the implications they have or will have for the Region today and its future.

### **CRCOG Welcomed New Communities**

In 2014, our Region was comprised of 29 cities and towns. Almost immediately after our last Plan was adopted, a reorganization of planning regions across the State was completed and as a result

of a series of boundary realignments and council of governments (COG) consolidation, CRCOG welcomed nine new communities: Plainville, New Britain, Southington, Berlin, Columbia, Coventry, Mansfield, Willington, and Stafford. These nine additions further enriched CRCOG’s diversity of member municipalities, with the full spectrum of urban, suburban, and rural represented.

### **State Fiscal Challenge**

Connecticut’s sluggish recovery from the Great Recession (2007 to 2009) left the State’s finances in precarious shape. The State’s increasing fixed costs (35 percent of the General Fund in fiscal year (FY) 2000 to 50 percent in FY 2019) threatened to squeeze out discretionary expenditures and necessary investments. One of the primary drivers was the contributions to Connecticut’s State Employee Retirement System (SERS) and Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS), as the State recognized the importance of fulfilling previous commitments to teachers and public sector workers. To begin addressing fiscal issues, the State deployed fiscal guardrails - a series of measures to ensure budgetary discipline. The State used surplus funds to pay down debt and address retirement liabilities, among other obligations, while the State has received credit rating upgrades from all four rating agencies in the last two years, all of which credited the fiscal guardrails in part. The State’s budget process has become more even keeled compared to just a decade ago. We believe this creates a more positive fiscal outlook for the next 10 years.

### **Demographics – More Boomers Retire, While Millennials Move into Middle Age**

Baby Boomers and Millennials are the largest generational cohorts in the Region, making age-related demographic shifts significant. Like the nation, the Region is aging, and that trend is expected to continue. The number of older adults aged 65 and over in the U.S.



could nearly double to about 90 million by 2050. The impacts from this demographic shift include the “Silver Tsunami,” as workers in their 60’s retire. This shift could create longer-term labor shortages, compounding labor shortages faced in the aftermath of the pandemic.[1] Locally, many workers opted to leave State service to take advantage of favorable retirement incentive packages intended to reduce Connecticut’s fiscal constraints over time. The first half of 2022 saw a retirement rate nearly 2.25 times higher than a typical year, with many of the jobs in hard-to-fill professions such as engineers, information technology specialists, and licensed frontline staff providing health care, and mental health services. These employees also represent the loss of valuable institutional knowledge with an average of nearly 40 years working in the labor force.

The aging of our population also presents challenges for our infrastructure - not all communities have the physical and social infrastructure to support aging in place, so there is an urgent need to proactively create aging-supportive communities and to improve mobility and access to vital services. Accommodating residents with more limited mobility options will be a critical task for communities across the Nation, State, and Region.

Over the past decade, most of the Millennial generation moved solidly into middle age. After delaying significant life milestones due in part to the Great Recession, Millennials are now in their peak household and family formation years.

### **COVID-19 Pandemic**

In 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic shut down daily life for most people and for many businesses. The swift and devastating impact was felt everywhere across the globe. To date, more than 1.1 million people in the United States have died due to COVID-19 including more than 2,500 people within the CRCOG Region

according to CT Department of Public Health (as of June 2022) [2]. The pandemic accelerated many ongoing trends, such as the decline of traditional brick-and-mortar retail, supply line fragility, older workers leaving the workforce, and uncertainty over globalization. It also highlighted longstanding inequities such as the lack of affordable housing, unequal access to healthcare, the lack of affordable childcare, and the poor working conditions of many service workers.

The pandemic necessitated new approaches to working, making remote work and virtual meetings commonplace and now a mainstay. This shift has significant implications for the commercial office market, as many companies realized they could downsize their real estate footprint. Many older office buildings will no longer be commercially viable, presenting opportunities to re-adapt for other uses. The State mandated flexible and responsive zoning regulations to help businesses stay viable. The importance of access to outdoor recreation was made readily apparent as indoor gathering places were closed and people felt isolated.

### **Debates About Equity and Political Polarization**

The preceding decade saw a widespread reexamination of existing social structures and various forms of prejudice, not only in the US, but globally. Issues of race, gender, and class were frequently topics of intense debate. On the positive side, there is an increased interest in acknowledging previous unfair policies and practices and a desire to correct the mistakes of the past, including bringing traditionally underrepresented and underserved communities into the decision-making process.

Society can feel more polarized as these changes are debated and navigated. The trauma of the pandemic, coupled with rapid technological and communication changes, widening wealth

inequality, and increased social isolation and mental health impacts contribute to a difficult environment. The World Economic Forum cites the “erosion of social cohesion” as one of the biggest global risks. Local governments are not immune - the growth of conspiracy theories, increasing threats of violence against public officials, heated exchanges during public meetings, and a measurable increase in lack of trust in all forms of government and other institutions are not to be taken lightly. This Plan provided us with opportunities to meaningfully engage with residents in safe and comfortable settings – whether on-line, at a community event, or at a small-scale meeting among friends or colleagues.

### **Housing Affordability**

A decade ago, housing affordability was a significant challenge, and that challenge remains. The aftermath of the Great Recession saw housing production plummet, with many developers leaving the industry due to lack of demand. However, the overall population grew while the average household size declined – 29 percent of households in the Region are single person. These factors, combined with the Millennial generation aging into their peak household formation years and Baby Boomers not yet ready to sell their existing homes, created a massive gap in necessary housing supply. Other factors in 2020 and 2021 further increased demand, including increased wages, low unemployment, federal fiscal stimulus payments, and a pause in student loan payments, all of which helped grow savings for deposits or down payments. These factors seem to have enabled the release of years of pent-up demand for new households [3].

The record demand for new homes, limited inventory, and post-pandemic high interest rates have reduced housing mobility and led to more people living in multigenerational households or with other roommates. In fact, young adults today are much more

likely to be living in a multigenerational household than 50 years ago. There is simply not enough attainably priced housing at all segments of the market, particularly for those with the lowest incomes. Soaring development costs and rising interest rates impact needed housing production. With a current national housing deficit of nearly four million units, the situation is expected to continue for the near term without proactive policy interventions.

### **Climate change**

For many people, the past decade is when climate change became undeniably real and tangible, where their lived experience finally caught up with the data. The 2021 International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report is unequivocal that climate change impacts due to greenhouse gas emissions are already occurring. The years 2010 to 2019 were the hottest decade since record keeping began 140 years ago, fueling an unprecedented number of natural disasters and fatal consequences [4]. In the last three years, the U.S. experienced an average of 20 disasters per year costing over a billion dollars annually, up from roughly 12 disasters per year in the 2010s and six per year in the 2000s.

The new climate reality means more frequent and extreme outcomes. Frequent major flooding events, previously rare, are now a regular occurrence. Already overburdened communities like the north end of Hartford are disproportionately suffering from long-standing flood issues and the Region’s farms suffered great financial harm from storms.

There are reasons for cautious optimism. The International Energy Agency (IEA) projected the world’s emissions trajectory to put us on a course for a six-degree Celsius warming by the end of the century, which would be catastrophic. But new projections based on current policies estimate a warming rate much lower than that

(2.9-3.4 degrees). This data suggests a brighter future, albeit higher than the maximum two degrees of warming that is recommended we stay below to avoid the worst of climate impacts [5]. Other positive trends include the growth of the renewable energy sector. The climate change provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act (roughly \$369 billion) included provisions to accelerate the transition from fossil fuels to a green economy. The act promotes electric vehicle (EV) production, battery technology, solar and wind power, and investments in green and natural infrastructure, agriculture resilience, and habitat restoration. The 2023 IPCC Sixth Assessment Report provided some welcome news, noting that ongoing mitigation efforts are both slowing the rate of increase of greenhouse gas emissions and are becoming more viable within the global energy sector. And lastly, communities are taking local measures, as support for tackling climate change grows.

### **CROCG Strategic Playbook**

Lastly, CRCOG adopted a Strategic Playbook in 2023. The Playbook was the culmination of stakeholder interviews, surveys, a staff retreat, and visioning workshop with CRCOG's Policy Board. It identifies policy areas where CRCOG can play a leadership role to improve quality of life across the region by:

- Using sound planning practice and data-based solutions to incorporate best practices.
- Embrace diversity and promote equity, inclusion, and belonging.
- Apply a lens of sustainability – environmental, economic, and equity.
- Work together, recognizing that the success of individual municipalities depends on the success of our Region.

# The Importance of Thoughtful Land Use Policy

At its core, municipal and regional plans of conservation and development are about land use – how land is preserved, developed, or otherwise utilized for public and private benefit. Policymakers with purview over land use and zoning share a significant responsibility, as it touches upon many aspects of our lives – where we live, go to school, or work, our access to essential services, and countless other issues. Below are several areas this Plan covers:

- **Housing** – Land use regulations dictate where and what type of housing is permitted, such as the number and type of units allowed, the minimum or maximum acreage of a building site, and the square footage of the structure. Research finds a strong relationship between restrictive land use and zoning regulations and higher housing prices, particularly in high-demand areas. In Connecticut, 60 towns require a minimum of one acre to build a single-family house, while 25 towns prohibit multifamily housing entirely. These regulations restrict housing supply.
- **Transportation** – Land use and transportation are inextricably linked. Zoning can create dispersed development patterns which by default require the use of an automobile to access services. Zoning can also support compact development which allows the options of walking, biking, or public transportation. Parking requirements are widely recognized as a significant contributor to excessive development costs and making communities less hospitable to walking, creating swathes of unused parking lots rather than more productive uses.
- **Emissions and Climate Change** – Car-dependent land use patterns are catastrophic for the climate, as transportation is

the single largest sector responsible for greenhouse gas emissions. Research shows neighborhoods and cities with more compact development patterns produce fewer per capita carbon emissions than sprawling, dispersed communities due to factors such as building design, transportation mode choice and distribution of various land uses. Policy makers addressing climate change should ensure that land use is a key priority.

- **Segregation** – The racial and socioeconomic segregation in our State and region is no accident. It is an outcome of policy, as many communities zoned to exclude non-affluent and non-white residents by only allowing large, single-family homes. Over time, this led to renters and the non-wealthy being concentrated in the few communities with more housing options. Whether intentional or not, segregation via land use and zoning regulations reduces access to strong school systems and employment opportunities.
- **Economic Stability** – There is a direct relationship between land use and the cost of government services and tax revenue generated. More dispersed development patterns entail higher per capita infrastructure costs. The cost of police, fire, and ambulance calls are typically minimized if new development is located within existing service areas. Mixed-used development generates more tax dollars per acre than sprawling, dispersed development patterns. Prioritizing infill and mixed-use development are fiscally prudent policies over the long-term.

Land use touches upon nearly every aspect of our lives. It requires that we collectively think about both short-term and long-term impacts over multiple competing areas of policy. This Plan attempts to integrate these various perspectives to help our communities consider the ramifications of this critical municipal responsibility.



## CRCOG Typologies

CRCOG's 2014 POCD divided the region's communities into the standard categories of urban, suburban, and rural. To better capture the diverse array of land use and development patterns within our region and add nuance to the traditional classification scheme CRCOG has begun to develop "Community Typologies."

Initial feedback from local planners indicated there is more work to do so we strongly consider this as a work in progress. CRCOG will continue to work with its communities to develop these typologies and apply them to the region. We envision these more refined typologies will be useful for plans and studies for data analysis and for framing policy recommendations around typologies.

The typology system is a balance between data-driven insights and subjective judgment. To the extent possible, we used objective quantitative data to establish the broad parameters and then further refine those using our professional judgement and lived on-the-ground experience. As such, the typology system is a mix of art and science. Some parameters include density, zoning, sewer infrastructure, street networks, and age of housing stock.

The typologies will not replace the Policy Map in Chapter 10. The typologies do not depict a future aspiration or goal - they represent current land use patterns and characteristics. A community could evolve from one typology to another over time.

### Urban Core



The beating heart of the region, Downtown Hartford, and sister city New Britain are home to an array of businesses and institutions that significantly contribute to the region's economy and cultural vitality. Over 90% of land in the Urban Core is considered developed.

### Urban



These areas have high-density residential and commercial development. These areas typically feature grid-oriented infrastructure and development patterns, frequent public transit service, and mixed-use zoning. Roughly 70-90% of land in Urban communities is developed. Over 15% of the land is zoned for mixed-use. (e.g., West Hartford center)

### Urban (Specialized)



As a flagship university campus, UConn features a unique, urbanized development pattern compared to the surrounding communities. Due to its significance as an economic driver and magnet for commuters, it receives its own typology, as it requires different planning and development considerations.

### Mature Suburban



These areas maintain development densities akin to the urban typology with the same proximity to urban cores as the suburban typology. Often featuring downtowns, these areas have matured over longer periods of time and offer more walkability than suburban areas. Like urban areas, roughly 70-90% of land in the Mature Suburban typology is considered developed. (e.g., downtown Manchester)

## A Missing Suburban Category?

CRCOG initially developed two types of suburban typologies: suburban and suburban edge (see below for suburban edge).

The original intent of “Suburban” was: Primarily adjacent to the Urban typology, the Suburban typology is characterized by a balance of comparatively lower-density residential patterns with access to urban amenities, although access is primarily through automobiles rather than walking. Suburban areas generally maintain medium to high commercial densities, with larger lot sizes and a more automobile-centric design. Roughly 50-70% of land in Suburban communities is developed.

However, this categorization places some of the region’s dense, older, and walkable neighborhoods (such as Enfield’s Thompsonville and Manchester’s downtown) into the same category as almost all of South Windsor. The solution might be providing more nuance between the two suburban categories or the addition of another typology. Discussions with our communities and additional analysis are warranted before using these typologies in our work.

### Suburban



These areas have comparatively lower-density residential patterns. They have access to urban amenities, though primarily by driving. Suburban areas generally maintain medium to high commercial densities, larger lot sizes, and a more automobile-centric design. Roughly 50-70% of land in Suburban communities is developed. (e.g., Wethersfield)

### Suburban Edge



Suburban Edges are on the spatial fringe of suburban and rural areas, often exhibiting a mixture of both. These areas feature lower residential and commercial density than Suburban and may not always be served by a sewer system. Most fall outside the service area of the Metropolitan District Commission. (e.g., Simsbury)

### Diversified Rural



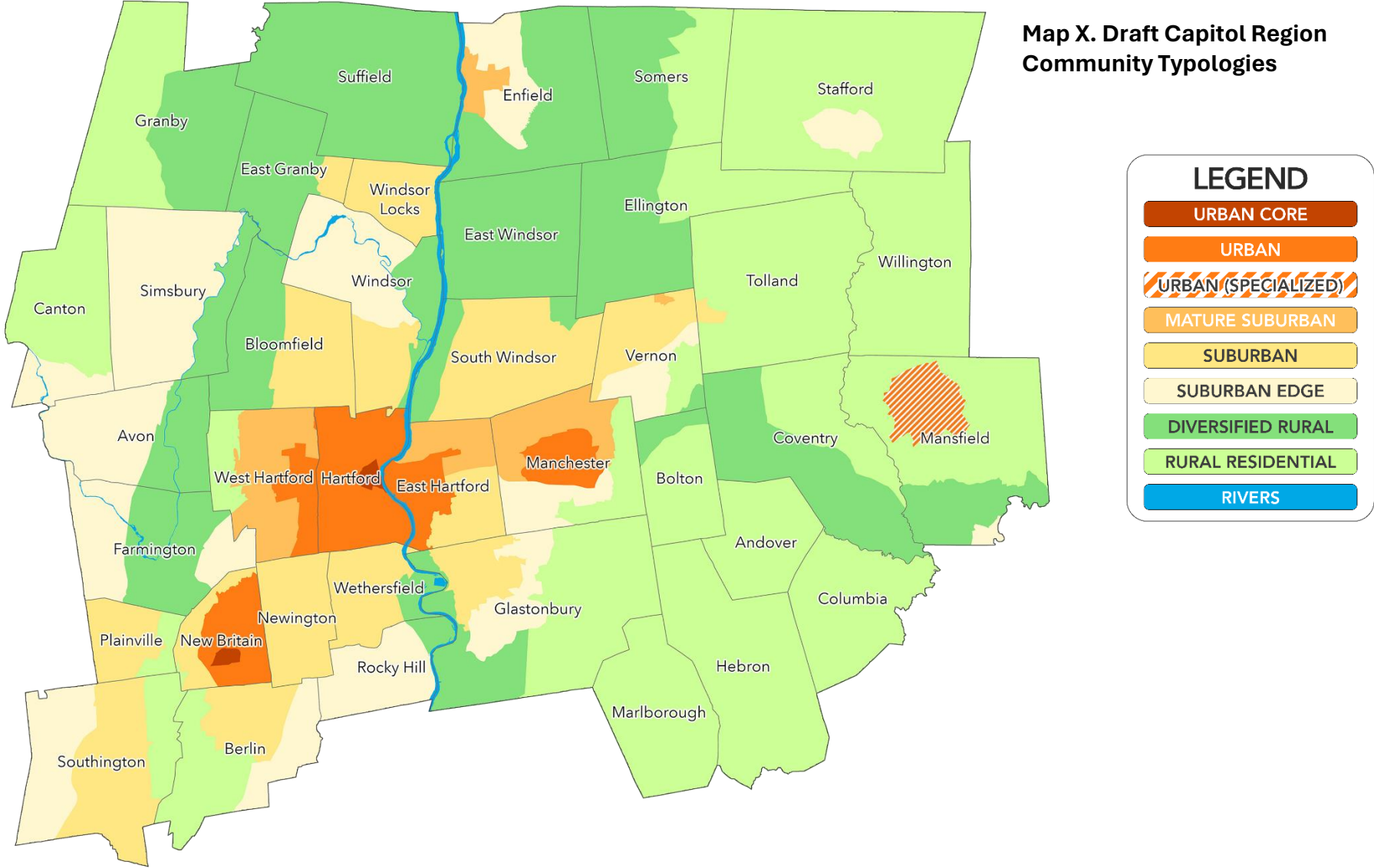
These areas are home to farm and non-farm uses and many are regional agricultural hubs. They have low residential and commercial densities, but in some cases may consist of enough development to warrant connection to a municipal sewer system. Roughly 15-25% of land in Diversified Rural communities is developed. (e.g., Suffield).

### Rural Residential

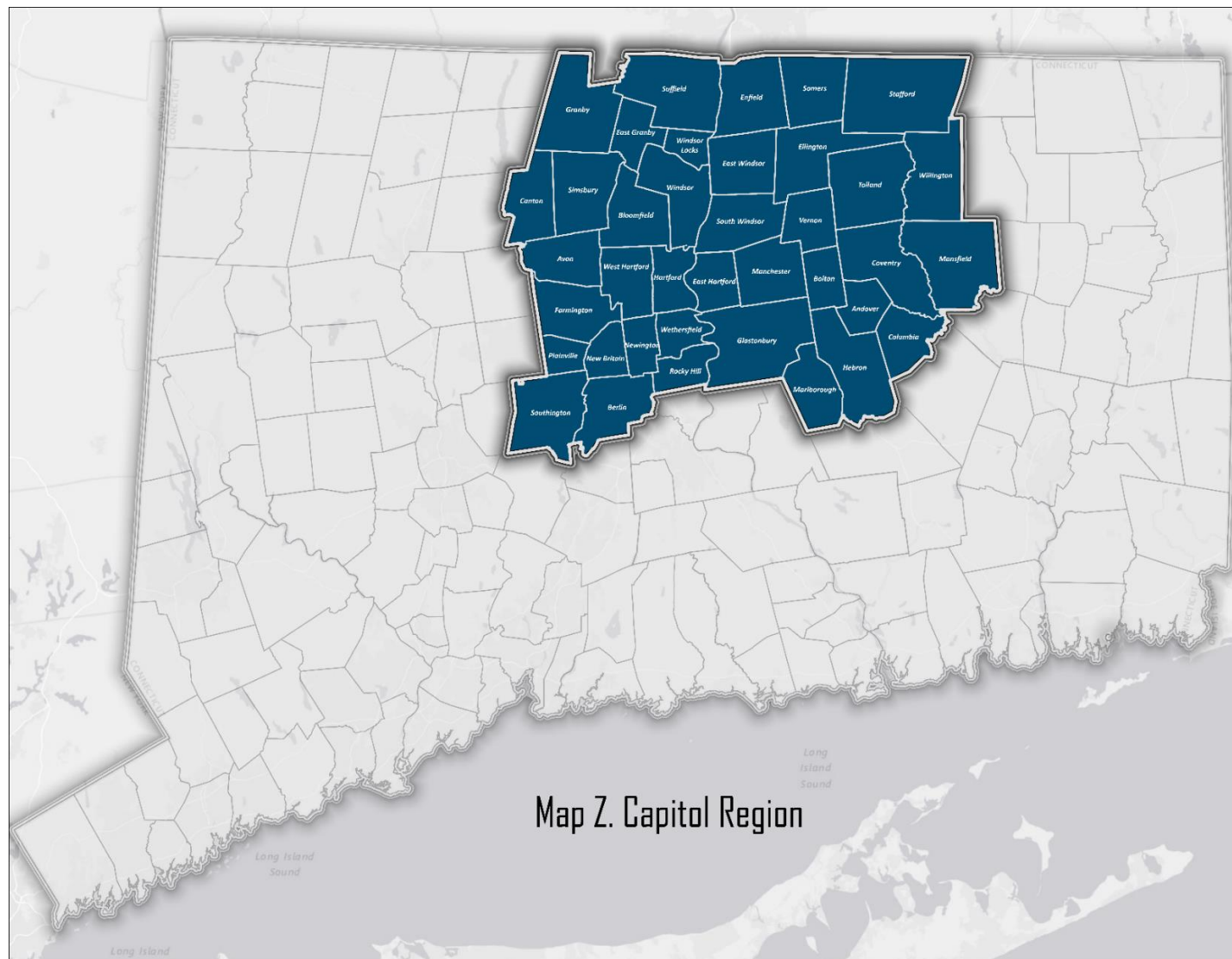


These areas consist of very low residential densities and large swaths of protected conservation areas. They primarily offer housing opportunities for rural lifestyles but may contain some farmland and smaller-scale business areas. Most land is not connected to a public sewer system. Less than 15% of land in Rural Residential communities is developed. (e.g., Andover)

**Map X. Draft Capitol Region  
Community Typologies**



NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: CRCOG is comprised of 38 cities and towns in north central Connecticut.*



## Chapter Endnotes

1. Dennison, Kara. The Silver Tsunami is on the Way: How Companies can Prepare. Forbes. October 11, 2023. CT Department of Public Health. COVID-19 Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths (By County) Accessed 1/13/2024.
2. McCue, Daniel. Joint Center for Housing Studies. The Surge in Household Growth and What it Suggests About the Future of Housing Demand. January 17, 2023.
3. Borunda, Alejandra. National Geographic. Past Decade was the Hottest on Record. January 15, 2020.
4. Levin, Kelly. World Resources Institute. 6 Ways the Climate Changed Over the Past Decade. December 20, 2019.

# Chapter 2: Conditions and Trends

We analyze demographic, housing, economic and fiscal data to understand who we are as a Region and how we are changing. The analysis helps to anticipate needs, issues, and opportunities surrounding demographics, the economy, land use, and our overall wellbeing.

Since the 2014 POCD, more and more data is readily available. We rely on the recently released 2020 U.S. Decennial Census, the American Community Survey (ACS), and data and analysis prepared by the State and other organizations that monitor and analyze demographic, housing, economic trends.

This section is not intended to review all key data points, but to highlight data points and trends that may have implications for the topics addressed in this plan.

## Population growth is stagnant.

In 2020, 976,248 people lived in the Region, with the highest densities of population in the two most urban areas – Hartford and New Britain.

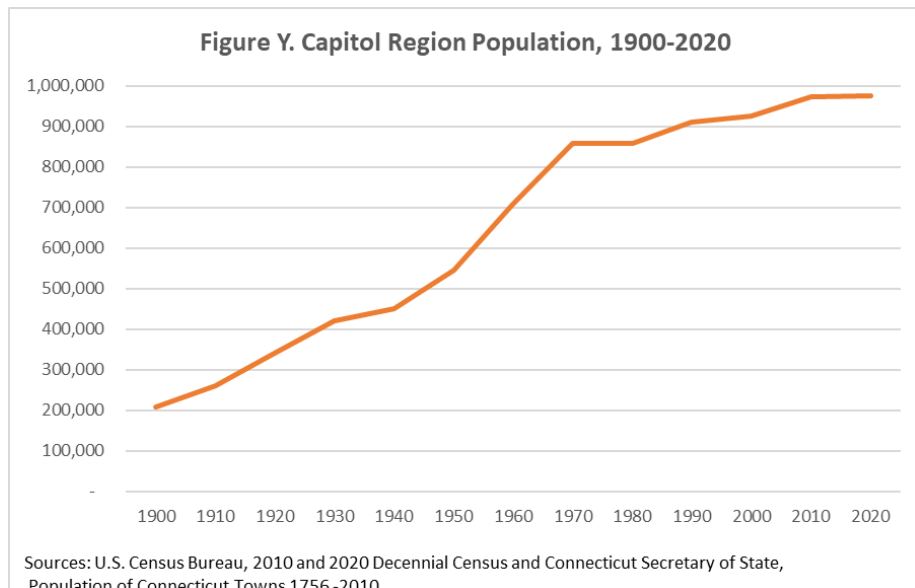
Both the Region and the State saw little population growth from 2010 to 2020 - the Region's population grew by just 0.2 percent (or 19,783 people) while the State's population grew by 0.9 percent. By comparison, the overall U.S. population grew by 7.4 percent during this same time frame.

Our municipalities were almost evenly divided between those that gained population and those that lost population. The largest

rates of decrease were seen in rural communities such as Willington, Hebron, and Stafford. The largest percentage increases were seen in the suburbs, with Rocky Hill and Farmington experiencing the greatest growth rates. Our largest city – Hartford – shrunk by three percent while the second largest city – New Britain – grew by just over one percent. Manchester saw the largest numeric gain, with an increase of 1,472 people. Somers and Enfield host state correctional facilities -- Somers's population loss almost matches the decrease in prison population, and it appears half of Enfield's population loss is also related to a decline in prisoners.

The slow growth from 2010 to 2020 is not an anomaly. The Region grew steadily during the first part of the 1900s and then experienced rapid development of suburbs post-World War II with the creation of the Federal Highway System and Federal homebuying assistance programs. Since 1970, population growth has slowed, with only modest increases each decade.

Projections and forecasts indicate either continued slow growth or possibly a decline. Projections contained in the Region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) forecast the Region's population on a declining trajectory over the short term (decrease of 0.5 percent over the next five years). Longer term, the recently adopted Metropolitan Transportation Plan forecasts a slow growth rate of approximately 0.3 percent over the next 25 years.



*Caption: The rate of population growth has been stagnating since the 1970s.*

## The region lost jobs.

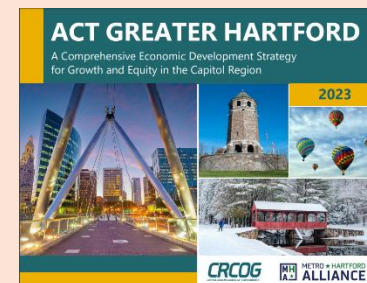
The Region has seen a decline in the number of jobs and the short-term outlook anticipates a continued loss. Fewer jobs can impact the local property tax base, the State's income tax base, reduce household income, and cause job seekers who can leave, to leave the Region.

In 2022, there were 577,510 jobs in Hartford and Tolland counties, which represents a 3.3 percent decrease of almost 20,000 jobs in the last five years. By comparison, Connecticut experienced a 3.5 percent decrease in jobs while the United States saw an increase of 1.8 percent. Looking ahead 5 years, projections anticipate continued losses in the Region, even as the State is expected to rebound with a 4.3 percent growth in jobs.

While many factors impact job creation and job losses, having a skilled workforce is one key factor. As we see continued

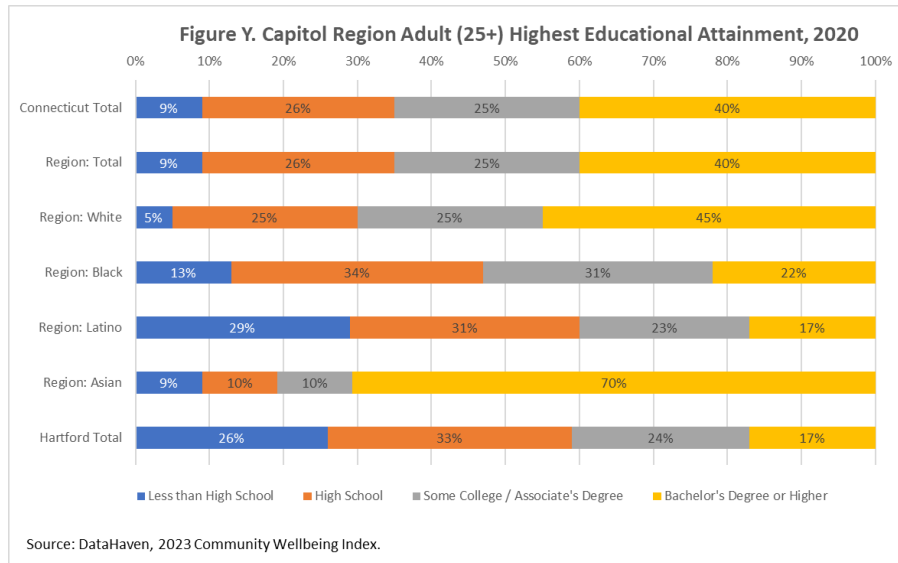
## 2023 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDs)

The 2023 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) provided a detailed analysis of the Region's economy. Please note that the CEDs analysis used county level data which includes four municipalities outside of the CRCOG Region.



retirement of our large over-55 population, employers will need to fill those positions. The Region needs to be able to attract and retain younger workers to fill entry-level jobs and gain the training and skills to fill jobs vacated by retirees. Otherwise, the Region's economic health is at risk. Like the State, we have a well-educated adult population, with 65 percent of adults aged 25 or over having at least some college education. Disparities in educational attainment are evident, particularly when looking at high school graduation. The percentage of Latino residents without a high school diploma is three times that of the white population, while Black residents are more than twice as likely to lack a high school diploma. This disparity may make it more difficult for Latino and Black workers to find well-paying jobs.

The CEDs also finds that although average earnings in the Region have increased, they are lower than the State average.



*Caption: White and Asian adults are more likely to attain higher educational levels than Black and Latino adults in the region.*

## The proportion of our population over age 55 continues to increase.

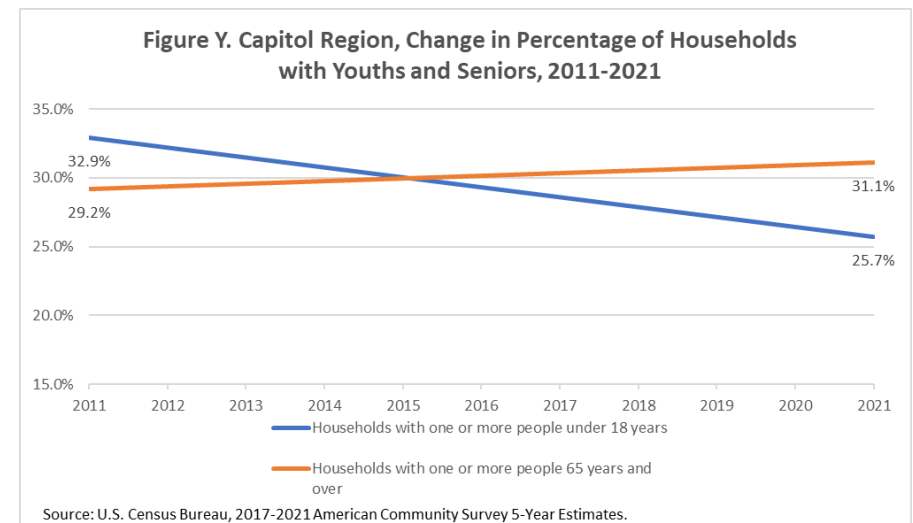
The Region's age composition has implications for every theme in this Plan. Needs for housing, transportation options, jobs, and other factors may differ based on a person's life stage. Understanding and anticipating trends in each age group can guide policies that provide choices for all age groups.

The data show that we continue to get older. The percentage of the Region's population that is age 55 or older increased from 26 percent of the region in 2010 to 31 percent in 2020. This increase heightens the importance of providing transportation options, access to healthcare, opportunities to downsize or programs to

adapt homes to allow for aging-in-place. Since we all age, making the Region better suited for older residents will serve all of us at some point in the future.

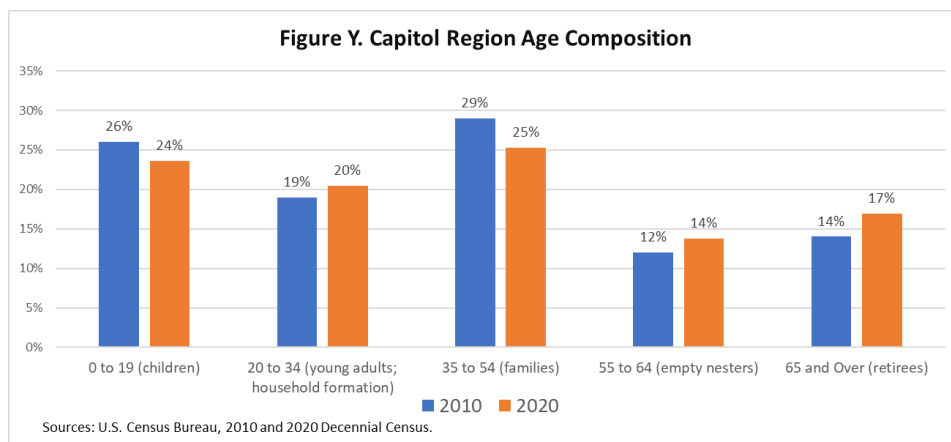
Meanwhile, the population that typically form families with children in the household (ages 35 to 54) is shrinking. This reduction is reflected in student enrollment data. In Hartford and Tolland Counties both public and private school enrollment decreased between 2010 and 2019[1].

There was a slight increase in young adults (ages 20 to 34) -- the age group that typically looks to smaller housing units and rental units as they form a household for the first time. The Region's younger residents could find themselves competing with the much larger over-55 population for such housing, further squeezing an already-tight housing market. The younger age group may have a difficult time finding housing since the over-55 population has likely accumulated more wealth through decades of employment and the benefits of prior homeownership.



*Caption: The percentage of households with seniors is rising, while the percentage of households with youths is declining in the Region.*





*Caption: Our 55 and older population is increasing, while our middle-aged adults (35 – 54 years old) and children (0-19 years old) populations are shrinking.*

This analysis does not indicate whether certain age groups are leaving the Region or moving into the Region (i.e., we did not conduct a migration or cohort retention analysis). For example, imagine there were 1,000 people aged 45 and 800 people age 55 in 2010. In 10 years, if there were no in- or out-migration and everyone survived, you would now have 1000 people aged 55. While the number of people aged 55 would have increased by 200 people over the decade (from 800 in 2010 to 1000 in 2020), there was not an actual gain; the same 1,000 people are simply older.

## **The region is becoming increasingly diverse, but segregation and disparities persist.**

### **Race and Ethnicity**

The Region is becoming more diverse with greater proportions of non-white, Hispanic / Latino, and foreign-born people. However,

most of the Region's communities remain predominantly non-Hispanic and white.

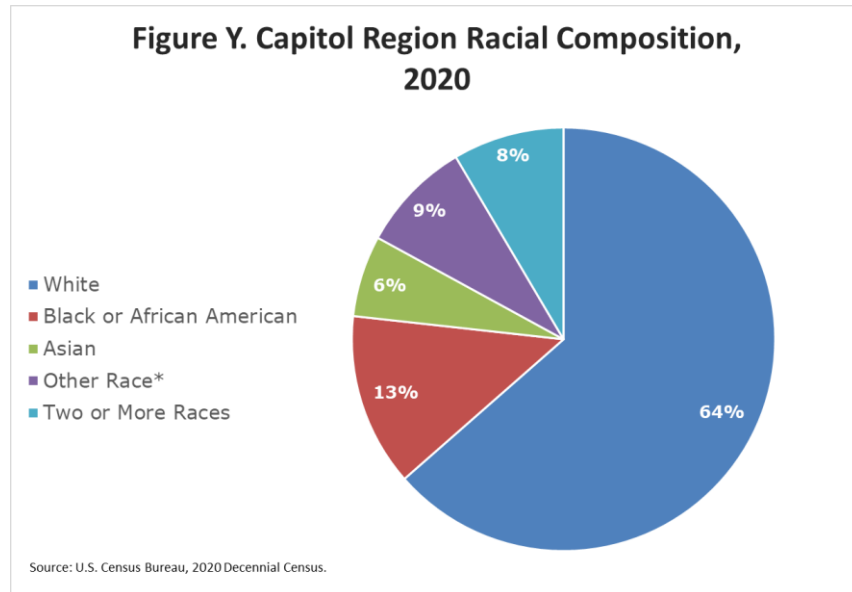
Two-thirds of the Region's population (64%) identified as white only (one race, white) in the 2020 U.S. Census -- a 14 percent decrease from 2010. Black residents comprise the second largest racial category, but the greatest rate of increase was for those who are Asian, another race, or identify as two or more races.

Over half (55.8%) of the Region's non-white residents live in just four municipalities: Hartford, New Britain, East Hartford, and Manchester. Many of the Region's rural and suburban communities did see increases in diversity, although overall percentages of minority residents remain low.

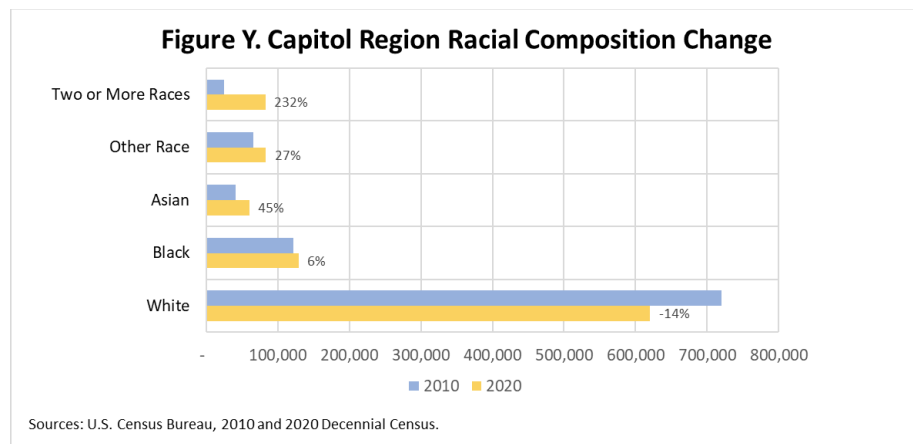
In terms of ethnicity, the region's Hispanic or Latino population increased 21 percent from 2010 to 2020 and represented 17percent of the region's population in 2020. This percentage closely matches the State (17.3%). The largest percentages of Hispanic or Latino populations are found in Hartford and New Britain (both 44%), and East Hartford (33.5%). Meanwhile the largest percentage increases over the decade were in two of the Region's rural towns -- Andover and Granby saw 128 percent and 116 percent increases respectively.

According to DataHaven's Greater Hartford 2023 Community Wellbeing Index, the Region saw an increase in the percentage of residents who were foreign-born from 2000 to 2020 (from 11% to 15%). Historically, the Region's immigrant population had European roots. Today, most immigrants arrive from Asia, the Caribbean, and South America. Additionally, DataHaven analyzed "linguistic isolation" by race in the Region in its 2023 Equity Profile for the region. The data indicate that roughly a quarter of the Region's Asian and Latino population is considered to be

linguistically isolated, meaning they speak English less than “very well.”



*Caption: Our Region’s population is predominantly white.*



*Caption: The percentage White has declined since 2010, while percentage of non-white has increased, with biracial/multiracial and Asian populations increasing by the largest percentage.*

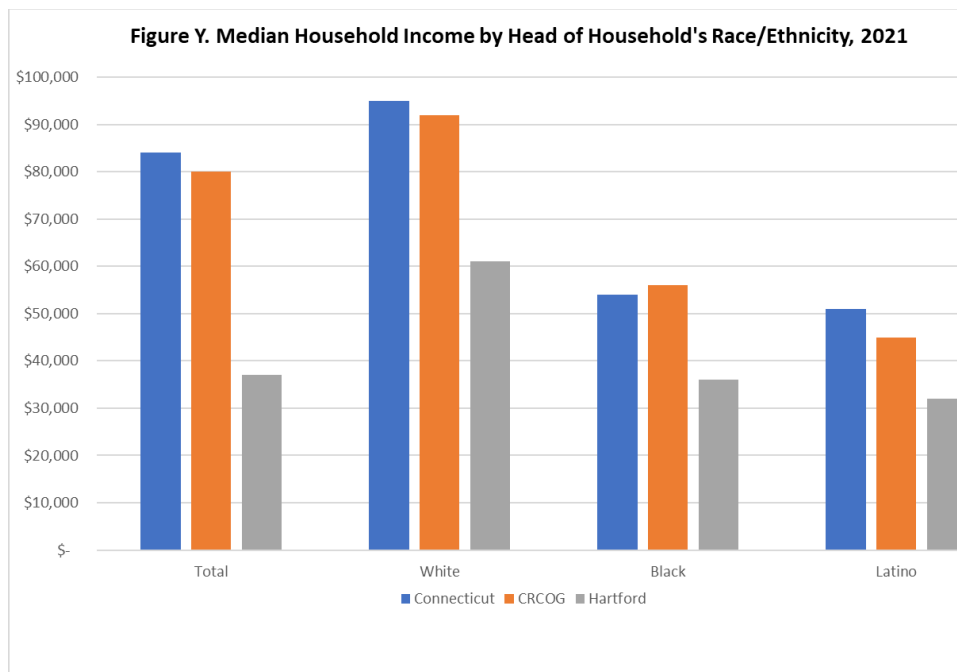
A recent report indicates that “the state of Connecticut and the Hartford metropolitan area have extremely high levels of racial and ethnic segregation in housing and public schools relative to other metropolitan areas in the United States,” for the nation’s 100 large metropolitan areas the Hartford Labor Market Area is the ninth worst in integration between Latino and white population and 34th worst between the Black population and white population [2].

## Poverty and Income

Areas of poverty and wealth tend to correspond with race and ethnicity in Connecticut. The State overall has some of the highest concentrations of both poverty and wealth and has one of the highest costs of living. A 2023 analysis by WalletHub ranked Connecticut as having the eighth greatest wealth gap in the United States [3]. The median household incomes for Black and Latino households are substantially lower than that of the Region’s white households. However, compared to the State, the Region’s Black households fared better while Latino households fared worse.

## Wellbeing

According to 2020 American Community Survey data, 12 percent of the Region’s population reported having a disability. Datahaven’s 2023 equity report reports that the average life expectancy in the Region is 79.9 years, which is slightly less than that of the State (80.3). While data was not available for a few parts of the Region, the lowest life expectancies are found in the urban census tracts in Hartford, New Britain, Vernon, and a portion of Stafford.



*Caption: White Connecticut and Capitol Region residents earn almost twice the Median Household Income as Black and Latino residents. Median Household Income is lower across the board for Hartford residents.*

## Little growth in housing paired with a continued decrease in household size creates greater demand.

Smaller household sizes means that we need more housing units per person than at any time in the past, creating greater demand for new housing even with very slow population growth.

Household sizes continue to shrink, as family size decreases and more people live alone.

From 2010 to 2020, the number of housing units in the Region increased by 3.5 percent; while this is a low rate of growth, it outpaced population growth. The average household size in the

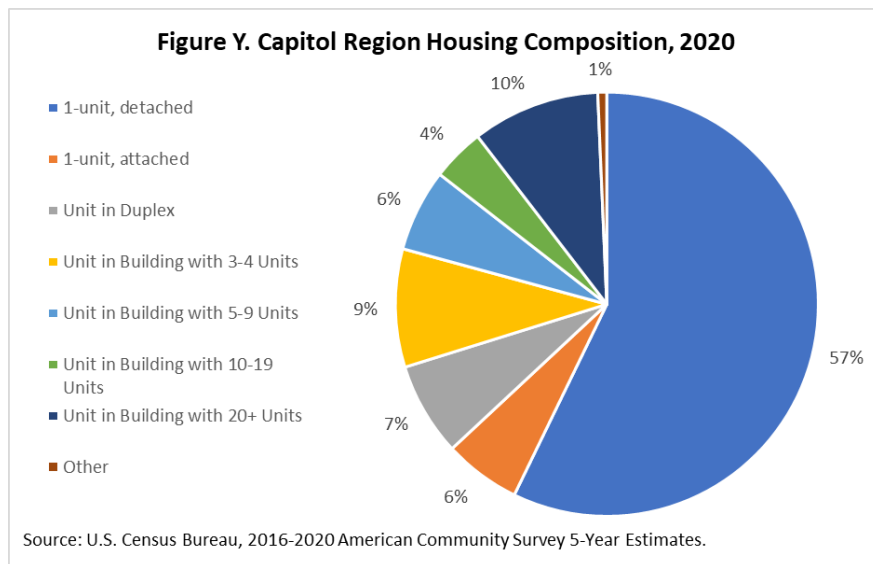
Region decreased by 2.1 percent, from 2.52 in 2010 to 2.47. The level of change varied by municipality, with Willington seeing its average household size decrease by nine percent, while Manchester, Wethersfield, and Rocky Hill saw one percent increases.

Population growth and smaller household sizes are not the only drivers of demand for new units. The Region's housing stock is old, with more than half of all units (58%) built prior to 1970. This creates a need for rehabilitation and upgrades to keep the housing stock viable; otherwise, prospective homebuyers will look to build new housing. Older units are also less energy efficient. The Region's urban areas have the highest proportion of older units, with communities on the rural and suburban edges having the newest housing stock.

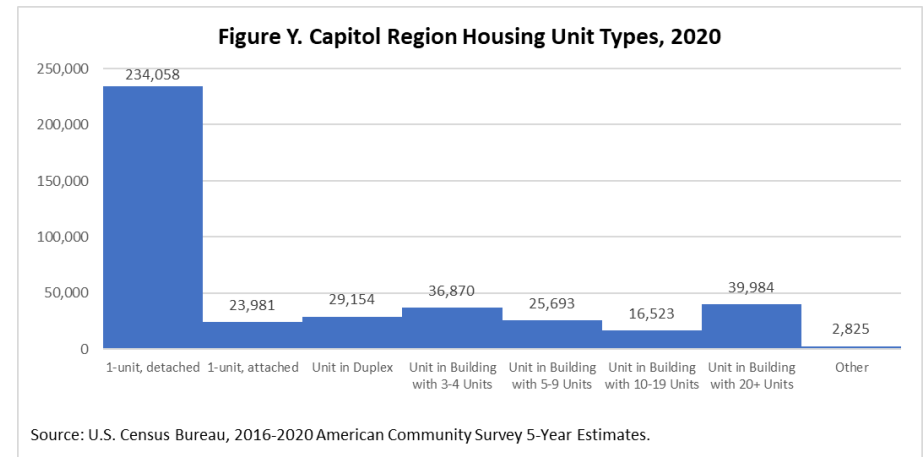
The percentage of vacant housing units remained consistent from 2010 to 2020 at 6.2 percent, compared to the overall rates for the State of 7.9 percent and 7.3 percent respectively. This lower rate for the Region might indicate a tighter housing market. More recent analysis by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) indicates that rates further decreased in 2022 due to the pandemic [4]. Lower vacancy rates make it a greater challenge to find rental units or purchase a house in the region.

## The region's multifamily housing is concentrated in just three communities, but there is progress in diversifying the housing stock in the suburbs.

The Region offers limited housing choices, with more than half of the housing stock comprised of single-family houses. In some parts of the Region more than nine out of 10 homes are single-family detached units (Bolton, Coventry, Marlborough, Somers, and Tolland). Most of the multifamily housing (three or more units in a structure) is concentrated in a handful of cities and towns, with just over half (51%) in Hartford, New Britain, and Manchester. Conversely, 17 of the Region's communities contain less than one percent of our multifamily housing stock.



*Caption: One-unit, detached housing dominates the Capitol Region housing makeup.*



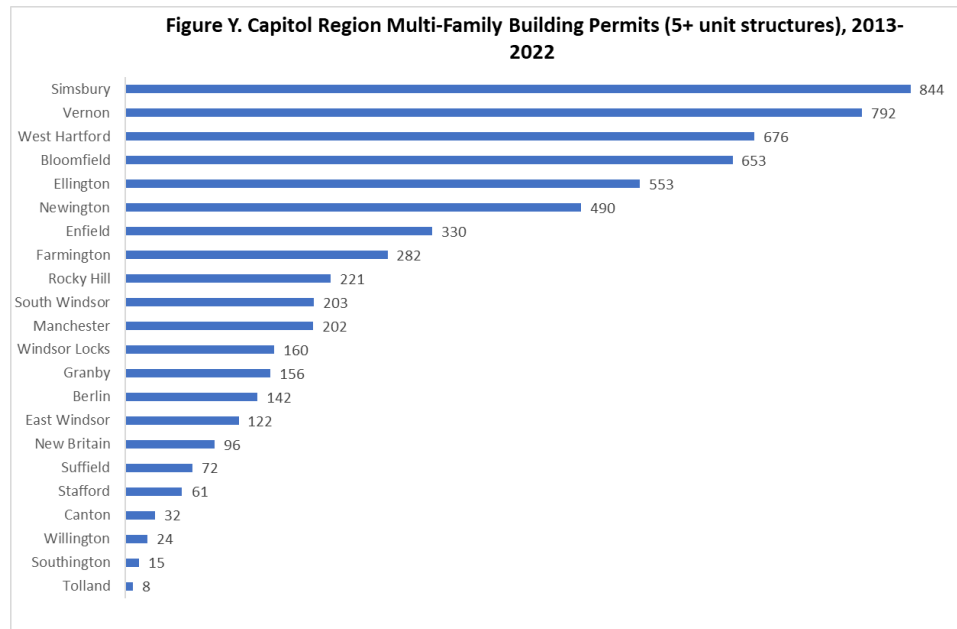
*Caption: One-unit, detached housing is abundant throughout the region, while other multi-family housing types are limited.*

Chapter 9, which addresses housing, will outline how past practices, some deliberate and some with unintended consequences, provided opportunities for white residents to purchase homes in the suburbs, while limiting people of color to multifamily rentals or subsidized apartments in cities. Once these housing patterns were established, they were maintained, resulting in the housing segregation evident today. Providing more units and more choices can help overcome these disparities.

The lack of diverse housing options also creates challenges for people at different stages of their life and career. While many desire single-family homes, other types of housing provide opportunities to meet diverse resident needs - young couples saving up to purchase a home, single people who do not need a large home, or retirees wishing to downsize and minimize maintenance. Renters, particularly those with lower household incomes, also have few options for housing in both type and cost.

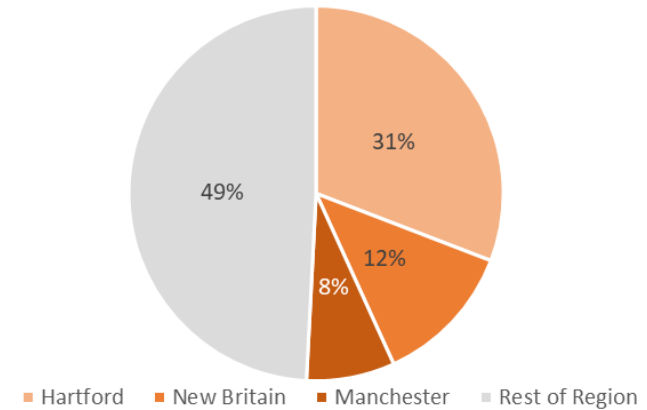
We are seeing an increase in multifamily construction in suburban communities in the last 10 years. From 2013 to 2022, more multifamily units were constructed than single-family housing

units. Simsbury, Vernon, West Hartford, and Bloomfield accounted for almost half of these new multifamily units. However, with much of the Region’s land generally restricted to single-family units through zoning, providing housing choices remains a challenge.



*Caption: Rural and suburban municipalities with predominantly single-family residential housing stock issued the largest number of multifamily building permits.*

**Figure Y. Capitol Region Share of Region's Multi-Family Units (3 or more units in a structure), 2020**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

*Caption: Over half of all multifamily housing units in the region are located in Hartford, New Britain, or Manchester.*

## One-third of the region’s households spend too much on housing costs.

Connecticut is a very expensive state to live in, with high prices for housing, utilities, and taxes. This burden is felt heavily on the region’s population, particularly on Black and Latino households. One third of the Region’s households are cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened. “Cost-burdened” means that a household spends 30 percent or more of its income on housing costs. “Severely cost-burdened” means that a household spends 50 percent or more. Paying more than this percentage means a household has less money for other bills and for emergency expenses, and little for discretionary spending.



The 30 percent rule is a useful gauge, but not perfect since 30 percent has a different impact on a household earning under \$50,000 versus one earning over \$300,000. Some households may choose to buy a more expensive house and earn high enough incomes that there is no “burden.” Others may pay less than 30 percent for direct housing-related costs, but perhaps live further from areas of employment and must spend a large percentage of their income on transportation.

The United Way has developed a nuanced measure of housing cost burdens called the Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed, or “ALICE.” This analysis includes households that earn more than the Federal poverty level but not enough to afford basic expenses. Housing costs are adjusted to reflect the higher cost of living in states like Connecticut. This analysis indicates that in 2021 38 percent of the Region’s households are cost-burdened, with larger percentages in six communities (Hartford, New Britain, Mansfield, East Hartford, Vernon, and Plainville).

While not all households aspire to homeownership, owning one’s home can provide stability and a way to build wealth. Roughly 64 percent of the Region’s housing units are owner-occupied; this rate is similar to the State overall. Homeownership rates are highest in the Region’s rural and suburban towns. The urban communities have lower homeownership rates, with fewer than half of all households owning their units in Hartford and New Britain. Black and Latino households drastically lag in homeownership rates in the Region, especially during the typical age for raising a family (ages 35 to 64).

Even after attaining the “American Dream” of homeownership, unexpected costs or the loss of income can devastate that dream. Hartford and Tolland counties saw spikes in foreclosures in 2010, 2014, and 2017. The trendline flattened after a sharp decrease, due to a federal moratorium on foreclosures in March 2022, as

part of the CARES Act. Unfortunately, this trend has reversed, with a statewide 51.5 percent increase in foreclosures from 2022 to 2023 [5].

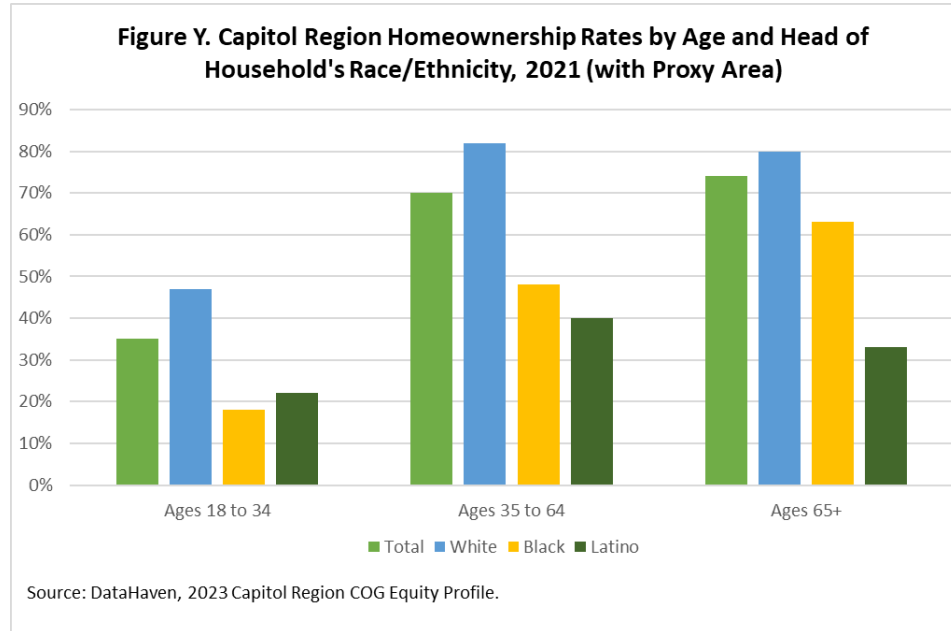
According to Zillow, there is great variation in housing values within the region, with 2019 values ranging from \$389,367 in Glastonbury to \$156,497 in Hartford. Eleven of the Region’s cities and towns had housing values greater than the State’s value of \$315,745 (note that data was not available for Stafford or Vernon). Data from the Warren Group, published by CHFA, shows the median residential sales price in the Region greatly increased from \$200,000 in January 2020 to \$285,000 in January 2024 [6].

Median monthly rents in 2020 in the region ranged from under \$1,000 in the more rural communities (Andover, Columbia, East Granby, and Stafford) to just over \$1,500 in Farmington and South Windsor. The State’s median monthly rent was \$1,201. The pandemic has likely affected rents with costs now higher than these figures. A more detailed analysis of rental prices is warranted.

In 2021, CRCOG compared the income of renters to the minimum income need to afford a two-bedroom apartment [7]. Working a full-time, 40 hours per week job, year-round, a renter would need to earn \$23.65 per hour, or an annual wage of \$54,956. But the median household incomes for renters in both Tolland County (\$41,000) and Hartford County (\$38,000) were below this wage. This gap might be surmountable for young adults that share costs with a roommate or a married couple but makes it difficult for a single-parent or single-income household to find affordable rental units in the Region.

Our most vulnerable people are those without a place to call home. Data on unhoused populations is available only at the state level and for cities including Hartford and New Britain, so it is

difficult to paint a thorough picture of where unhoused persons are located and where they originated from. Recent data from the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness showed a decrease in the number of homeless in the State and both cities from 2016 to 2021. But recent reporting suggests the decrease may have been due to an undercount and numbers are larger and increasing. Regardless, providing shelter and housing solutions to those currently without a home remains a challenge in the Region.



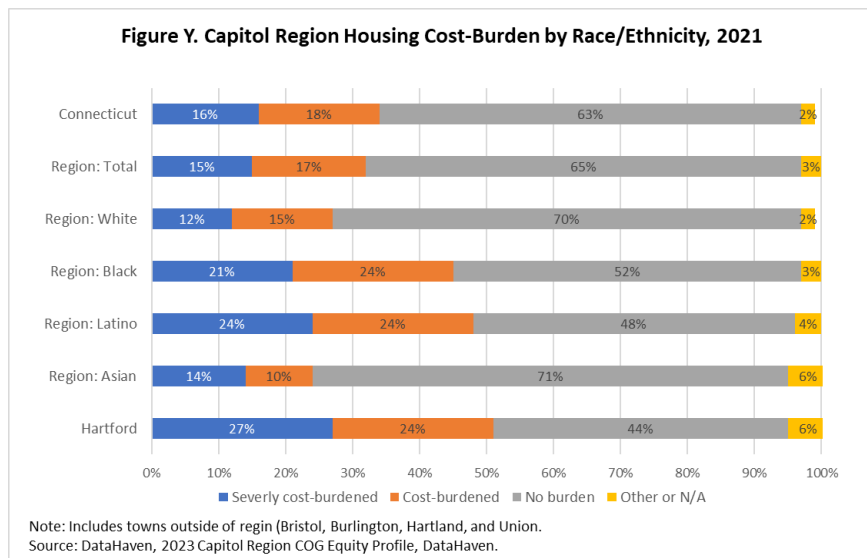
*Caption: Black and Latino homeownership rates are lower than White homeownership rates across all age groups. Young adults (ages 18-34) are much less likely to be homeowners.*

	2010	2020	Change in % Points
Marlborough	91.8%	92.5%	0.7%
Columbia	89.6%	91.3%	1.7%
Tolland	92.9%	90.5%	-2.3%
Hebron	90.5%	89.6%	-0.9%
Granby	90.2%	89.3%	-0.9%
Andover	88.7%	87.8%	-0.9%

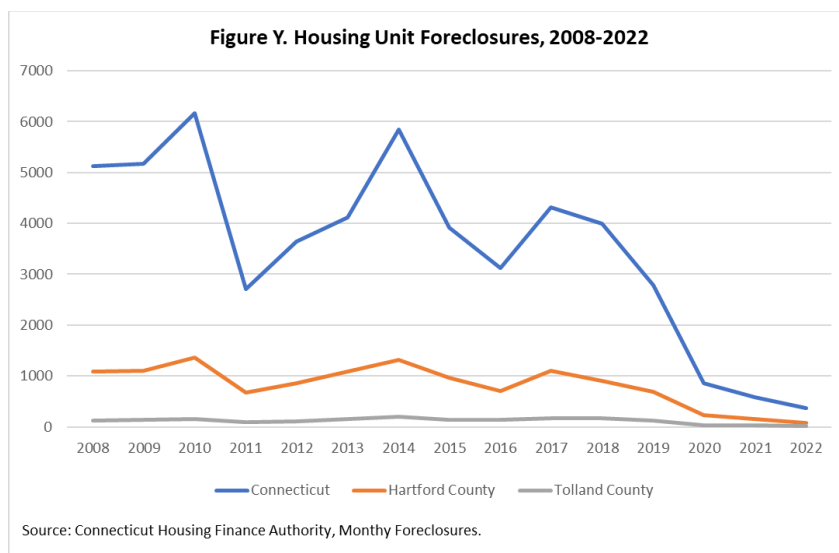
	2010	2020	Change in % Points
Bolton	86.7%	86.7%	0.0%
Coventry	87.5%	86.7%	-0.8%
Somers	87.7%	86.3%	-1.5%
East Granby	84.4%	83.7%	-0.7%
Avon	85.0%	83.3%	-1.7%
Suffield	85.2%	82.4%	-2.8%
South Windsor	87.6%	82.0%	-5.6%
Berlin	84.4%	81.9%	-2.5%
Southington	82.4%	81.3%	-1.1%
Canton	81.8%	81.2%	-0.6%
Windsor	82.1%	79.4%	-2.7%
Glastonbury	83.6%	79.2%	-4.4%
Simsbury	84.5%	77.4%	-7.0%
Newington	81.3%	77.3%	-4.0%
Wethersfield	78.9%	76.4%	-2.5%
Windsor Locks	78.8%	74.1%	-4.7%
Stafford	76.8%	74.0%	-2.8%
Enfield	75.7%	73.1%	-2.6%
Farmington	76.2%	72.1%	-4.1%
Bloomfield	74.0%	69.6%	-4.4%
Plainville	71.6%	68.5%	-3.1%
West Hartford	71.7%	68.4%	-3.3%
Willington	69.1%	67.8%	-1.3%
Ellington	71.3%	67.3%	-3.9%
East Windsor	67.4%	65.4%	-2.0%
<b>Connecticut</b>	<b>67.5%</b>	<b>64.2%</b>	<b>-3.3%</b>
Rocky Hill	69.1%	63.8%	-5.2%
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>66.7%</b>	<b>63.5%</b>	<b>-3.2%</b>
East Hartford	58.5%	56.7%	-1.8%
Mansfield	64.0%	56.1%	-7.9%
Manchester	56.7%	53.1%	-3.6%
Vernon	58.0%	51.4%	-6.6%
New Britain	42.9%	39.2%	-3.7%
Hartford	24.4%	22.5%	-1.9%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census.

*Caption: Although most housing units throughout the region are owner-occupied, the percentage of owner-occupied units declined in almost all municipalities over the last decade.*



**Caption:** Black and Latino residents are more housing-cost burdened than White and Asian residents in the Region. Compared to CRCOG and Connecticut, Hartford residents are disproportionately housing cost burdened.



**Caption:** Hartford County foreclosure patterns matches Connecticut's statewide foreclosure patterns. Tolland County foreclosure patterns are low and relatively flat.

**Table X. Capitol Region Home Values, 2019**

Glastonbury	\$389,367	Andover	\$296,256
Avon	\$375,785	South Windsor	\$294,478
Simsbury	\$370,436	Columbia	\$291,376
Suffield	\$360,158	Rocky Hill	\$285,682
Somers	\$344,254	Coventry	\$284,488
Marlborough	\$336,777	Mansfield	\$280,283
Berlin	\$325,692	Willington	\$272,750
Hebron	\$324,912	Windsor	\$264,094
Farmington	\$324,231	Newington	\$262,961
Granby	\$323,862	Bloomfield	\$250,789
Canton	\$317,232	Plainville	\$240,730
<b>Connecticut</b>	<b>\$315,745</b>	Enfield	\$236,815
East Granby	\$313,731	Windsor Locks	\$234,400
Ellington	\$312,789	East Windsor	\$229,172
Bolton	\$312,375	Manchester	\$211,352
Tolland	\$312,114	East Hartford	\$206,976
West Hartford	\$307,771	New Britain	\$197,373
Southington	\$304,991	Hartford	\$156,497
Wethersfield	\$301,441		

Notes: Includes single-family houses and condominiums; data not available for Stafford and Vernon.

Source: Partnership for Strong, Communities Housing Profiles, 2021 Zillow Home Value Index.

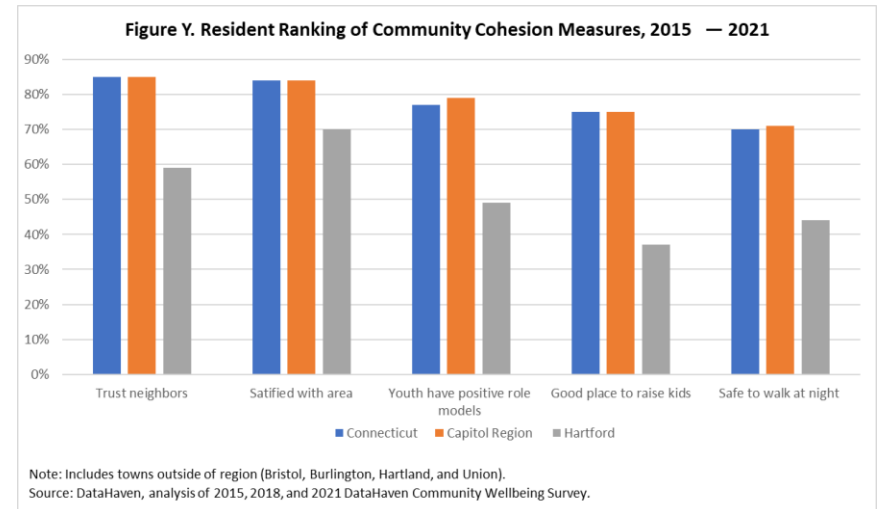
**Caption:** Home values in roughly two-thirds of Capitol Region municipalities are slightly lower than average Connecticut home values.

The State’s affordable housing appeals law (Connecticut General Statutes 8-30g) recognized housing challenges faced by the low and moderate-income households. Unless at least 10 percent of a municipality’s housing units are “affordable”, per specific definitions in the statute, developers can override local zoning if they propose to build affordable units. Just under 10 percent (9.13%) of the housing units in the Region are preserved as affordable pursuant to this provision. Nine CRCOG communities have surpassed the 10 percent threshold, with the remaining 29 communities subject to the State’s affordable housing appeals provisions. This provision helps to create affordable homeownership opportunities and rental units.

## The region’s residents are satisfied with where they live, but only half are happy with local government.

DataHaven collects data to measure community-related sentiments that have not been traditionally analyzed. The data indicate that the majority of those living in the Region are satisfied with where they live, trust their neighbors, and feel this is a good place to raise kids. Hartford was an outlier on some of these measures, but still rated high for overall satisfaction.

Despite liking where they live, only half of the residents feel that local government is responsive. Interestingly 68 percent of the Region’s residents feel they have some influence over local government, but only 31percent of registered voters turn out to vote for local elections.



*Caption: Capitol Region residents rank community cohesion measures (trust in neighbors, area satisfaction, positive youth role models, etc.) as high as Connecticut overall. Yet, Hartford residents rank each community cohesion measure much lower.*

**Table X. Perceptions of Local Government, Adult Residents, 2015-2021**

	Local Government is Responsive	Have Some Influence Over Local Government
<b>Region</b>	53%	68%
<b>Hartford</b>	30%	67%
<b>Connecticut</b>	53%	67%

Note: Includes towns outside of Region (Bristol, Burlington, Hartland, and Union).

Source: Datahaven. 2021 Community Wellbeing Survey.

*Caption: Just over half of Connecticut and Capitol Region residents feel their local government is responsive, yet less than one third of Hartford residents feel the same. Most residents in CT, CRCOG Region, and Hartford feel they have some influence within local government.*

**Table X. Registered Voter Turnout, 2020–2022**

	<b>Presidential Election</b>	<b>Municipal Elections</b>	<b>State Elections</b>
<b>CRCOG</b>	79%	31%	56%
<b>Hartford</b>	50%	5%	26%
<b>Connecticut</b>	80%	32%	58%

Note: Includes towns outside of Region (Bristol, Burlington, Hartland, and Union).

Source: Datahaven. 2021 Community Wellbeing Survey.

*Caption: Capitol Region voter turnout percentage for all elections was comparable to Connecticut statewide voter turnout. Hartford voter turnout was much lower across all elections.*

## The Region is built for and zoned for car-dependent single-family housing.

Growth and land use patterns in the CRCOG Region could best be described as sprawl – a pattern of development characterized by low-density suburban housing and a dependency on automobiles. Similar to other regions across the U.S, this development pattern exploded post World War II and was viewed as a form of freedom and success, and the new and improved ‘American way.’ Today, the negative effects of sprawling development pattern are evident, with traffic congestion, personal vehicle dependence, limited transportation options and housing choice, and high costs to maintain infrastructure.

Table X indicates that just over half of the land in the Region is dedicated to residential uses, with single-family residential comprising 42 percent of the land. Meanwhile, business uses comprise only eight percent. This is a generalized snapshot of land use, with limitations due to inconsistency in parcel-based data among cities and towns. For example, the open space percentage

is low because some municipal open space is coded Institutional.” The amount of Agricultural land may also be underrepresented, since not all towns have a complete inventory of agricultural uses. As noted in Chapter 5, better parcel data is needed to refine land use calculations.

This land use represents a “snapshot” in time of how the land is currently being used and may or may not align with a town’s zoning map, which may indicate a future land use desire.

**Table X. Capitol Region, Generalized Land Use**

	<b>% of Region</b>
Residential Single Family	42%
Residential Multifamily	4%
Residential Condo	9%
Mixed Use	1%
Commercial	4%
Industrial	4%
Institutional ( <i>may include municipal open space</i> )	12%
ROW	2%
Open Space / Resource / Recreation	12%
Agriculture	3%
Undeveloped (includes unmapped ROW)	7%
Other / Unknown	0%

Sources: CRCOG 2020 Land Use Layer, CT Parcel Data.

*Caption: Most of the region is comprised of single-family residential land uses.*

Almost all of the Region’s land (81%) is zoned for residential use, with just 12 percent slated for business use (mixed use, commercial or industrial). The zoning table and map use very generalized categories since types of zones varies greatly from community to community. Note that overlay or floating zones are not captured in this analysis.

**Table X. Capitol Region, Generalized Zoning**

	% of Region
Residential	81%
Mixed Use	1%
Commercial	5%
Industrial	6%
Resource, Recreation, Public Use	6%
Water	1%
Right-of-Way	0.5%

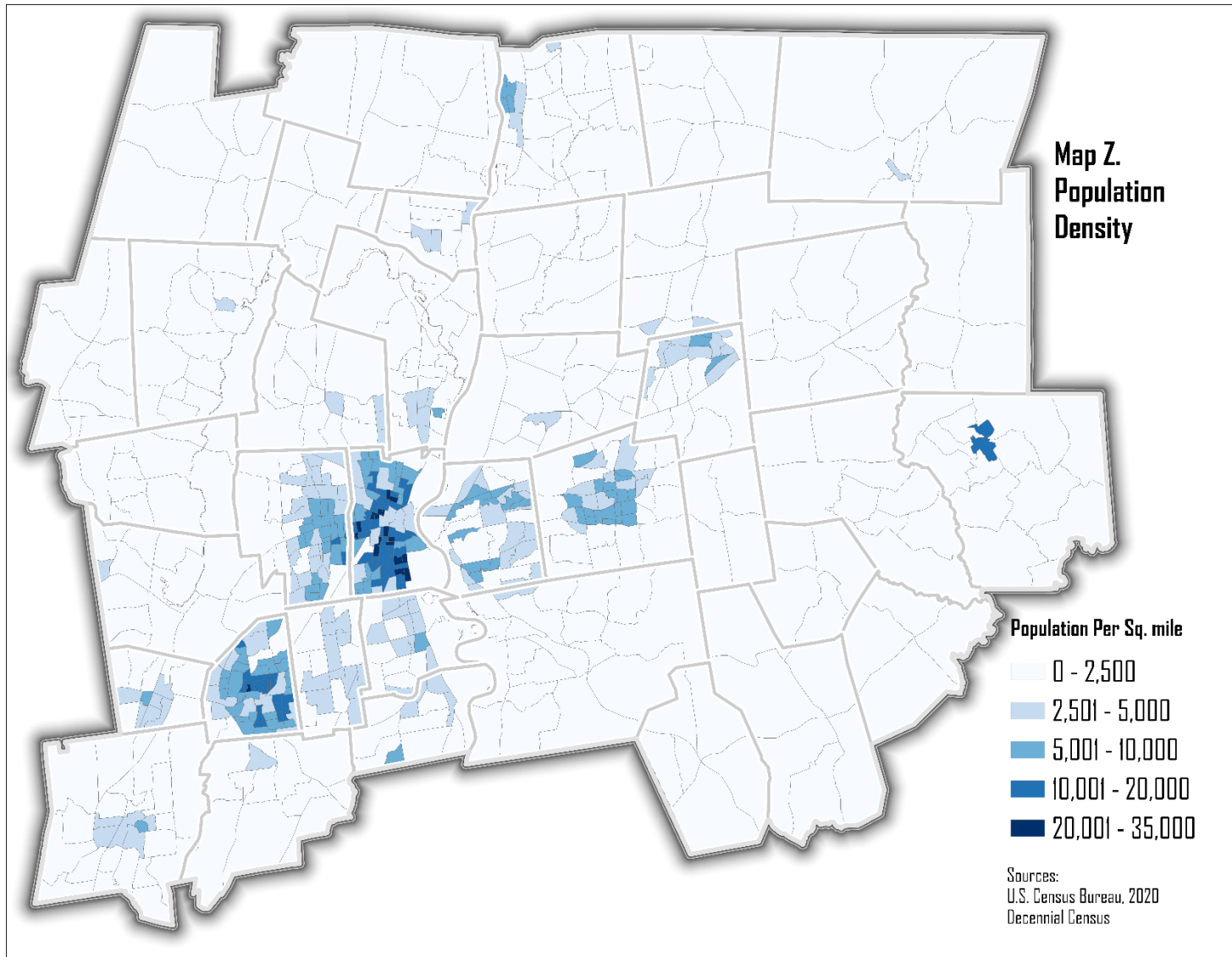
Sources: CRCOG 2020 Land Use Layer, CT Parcel Data.

*Caption: Most of the Region’s land is zoned for residential use.*

“Social spaces should be built into every neighborhood. Zoning has made a huge gap between residential areas and areas where people shop and socialize. It’s not natural, though it’s far too common in American cities and towns. So, in order to be social, you have to literally drive across town to join in activities. You shouldn’t have to commute just to see another human being outside of your home. And streets outside your home are generally too dangerous to walk on because they’re entirely devoted to cars.” – Survey Respondent

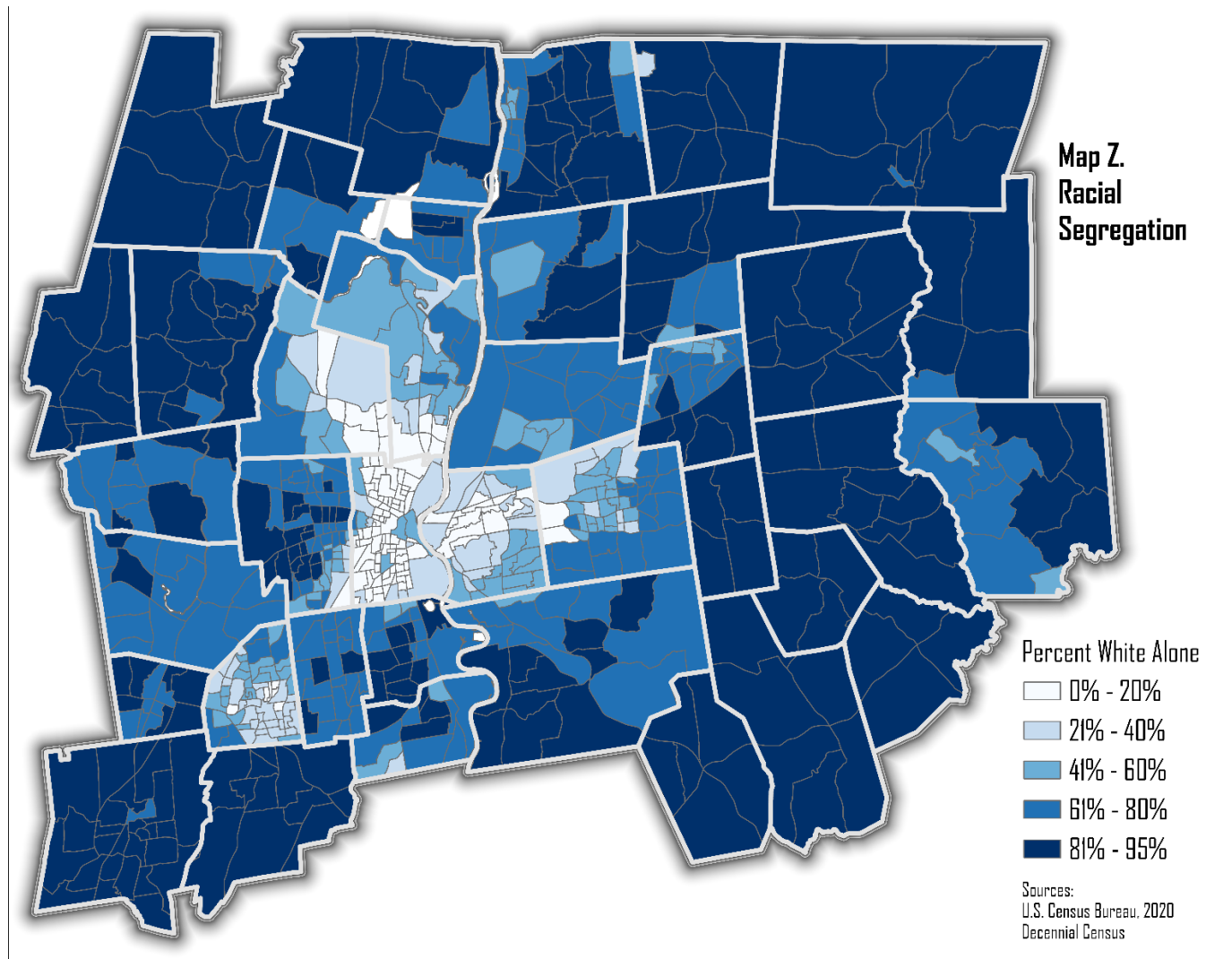


NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



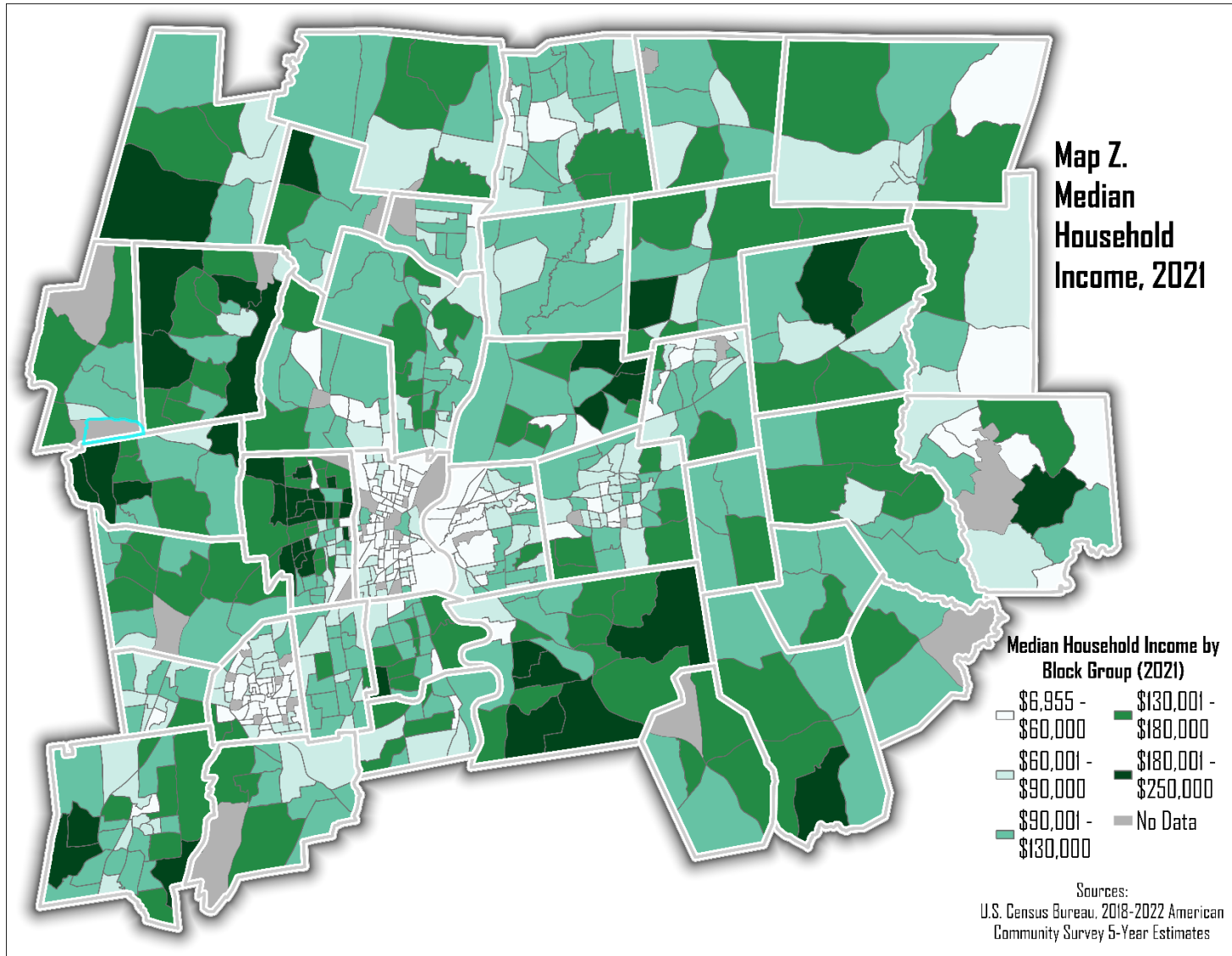
*Caption: Population density is highest in Hartford, New Britain, and other urban areas.*

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



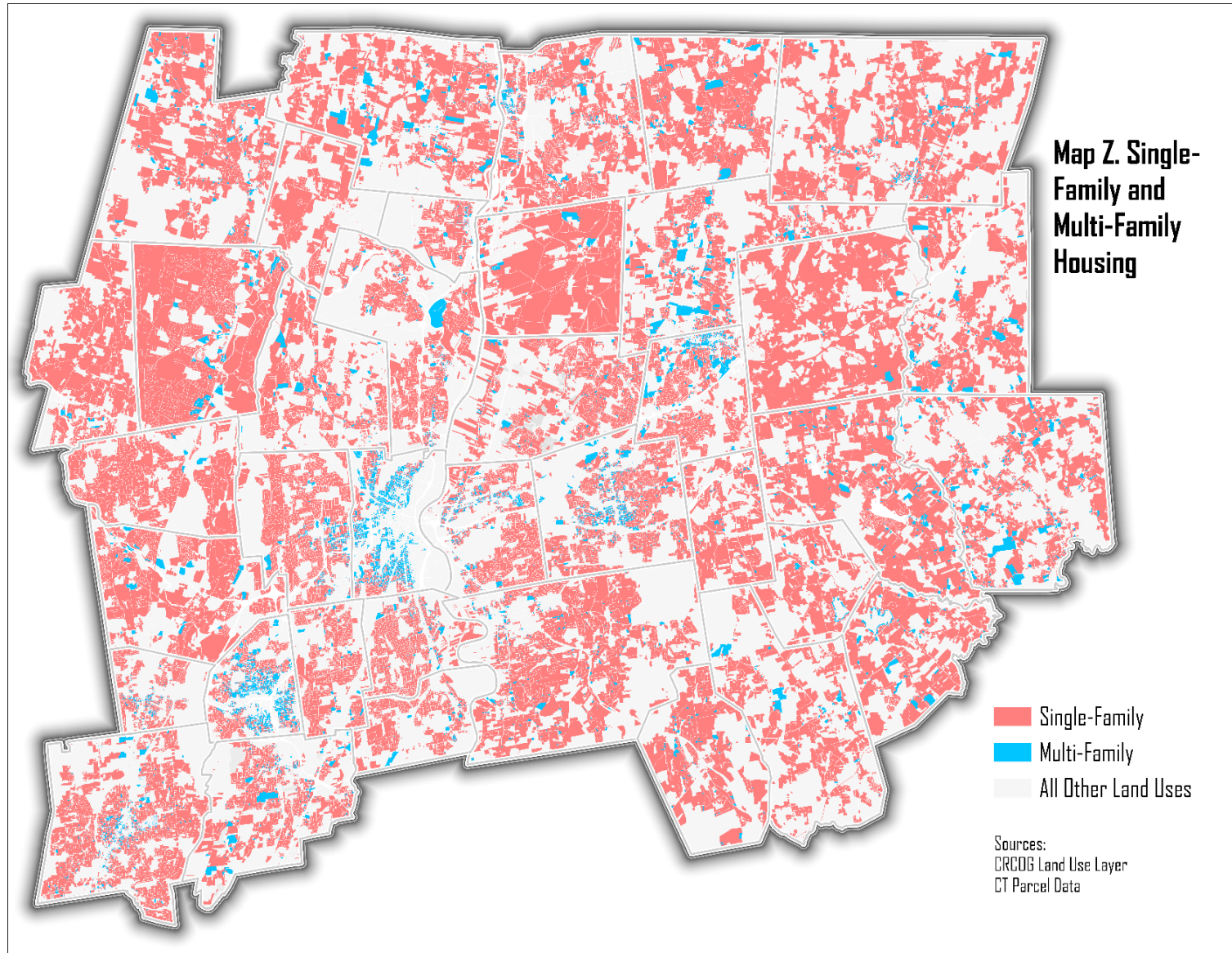
*Caption: This map shows segregation patterns within predominantly white rural and suburban areas.*

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



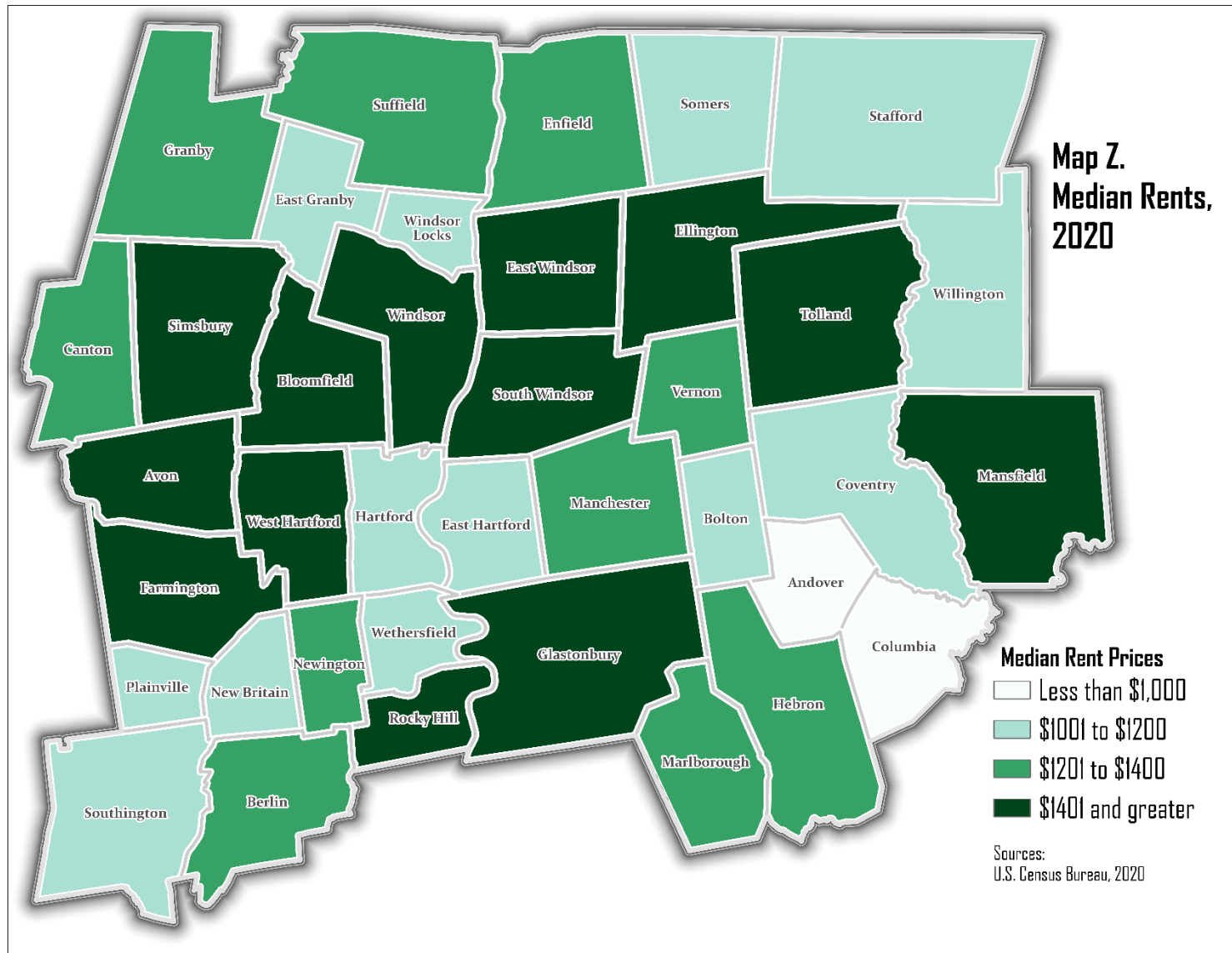
*Caption: Significant disparities in median household income persist between urban and suburban/rural areas within the region.*

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: Single family residential land use is prevalent throughout most of the region, while multifamily residential land use is concentrated in or near urban areas.*

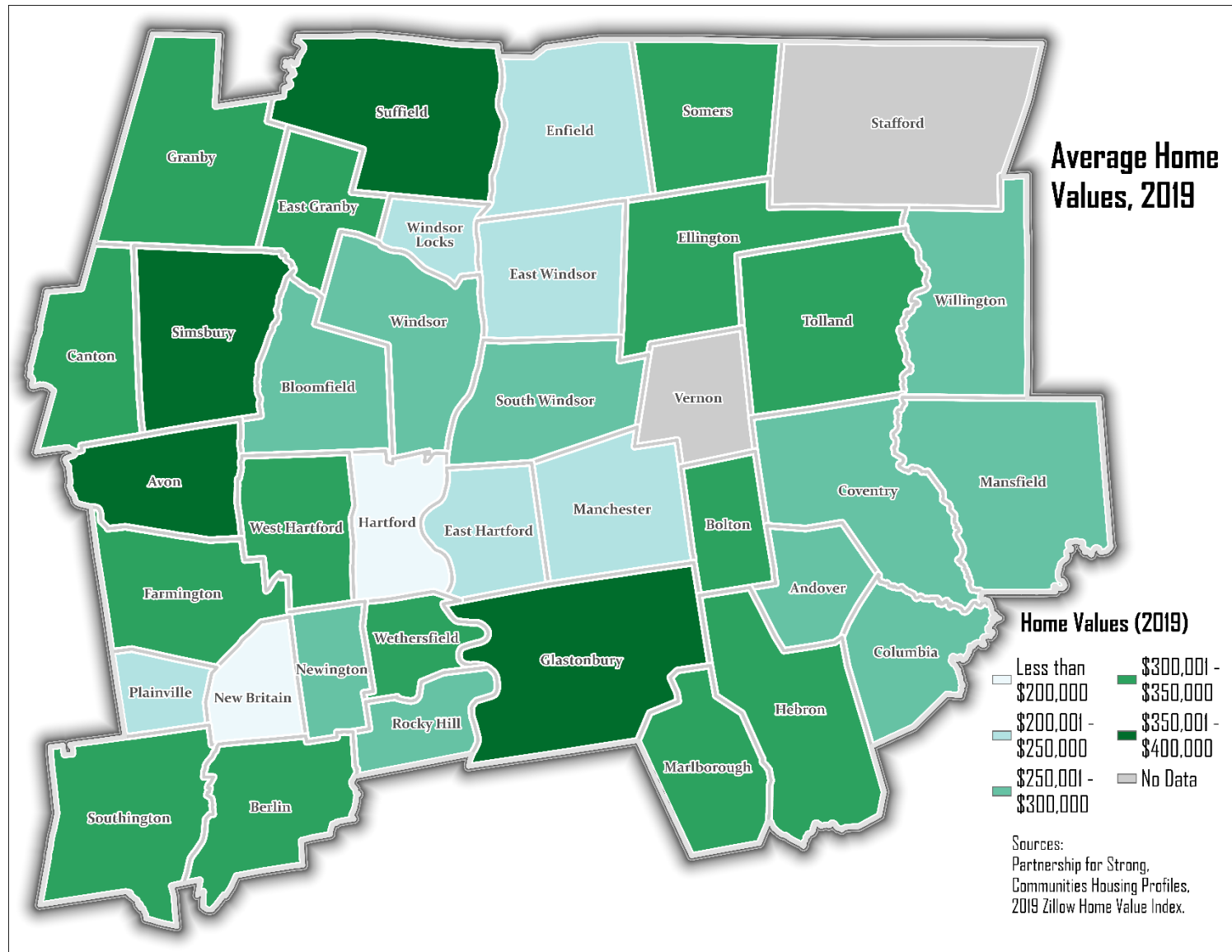
NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: The highest median rents are in suburbs near Hartford.*



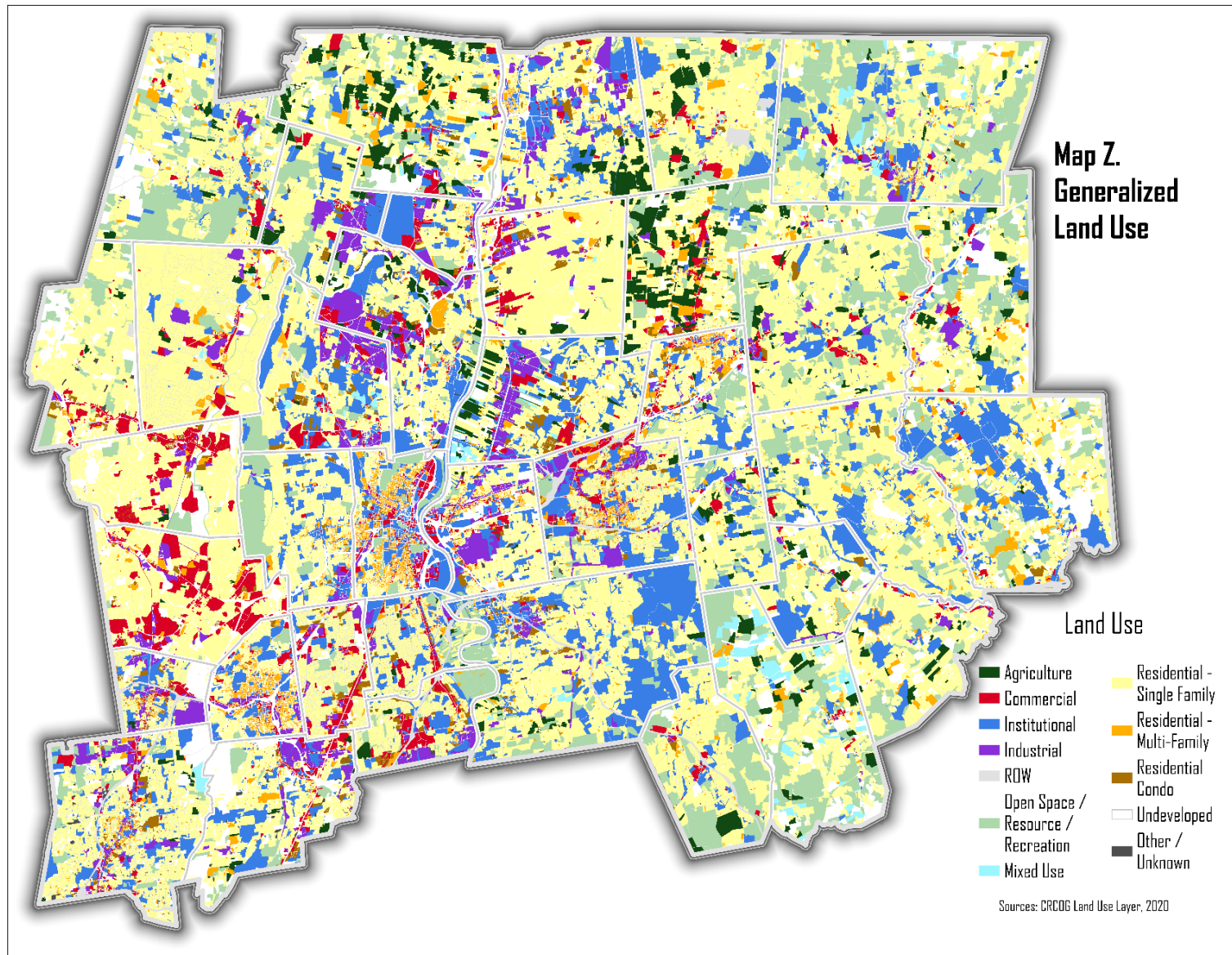
NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: Home values are generally higher in municipalities within the Northwest section of the region.*

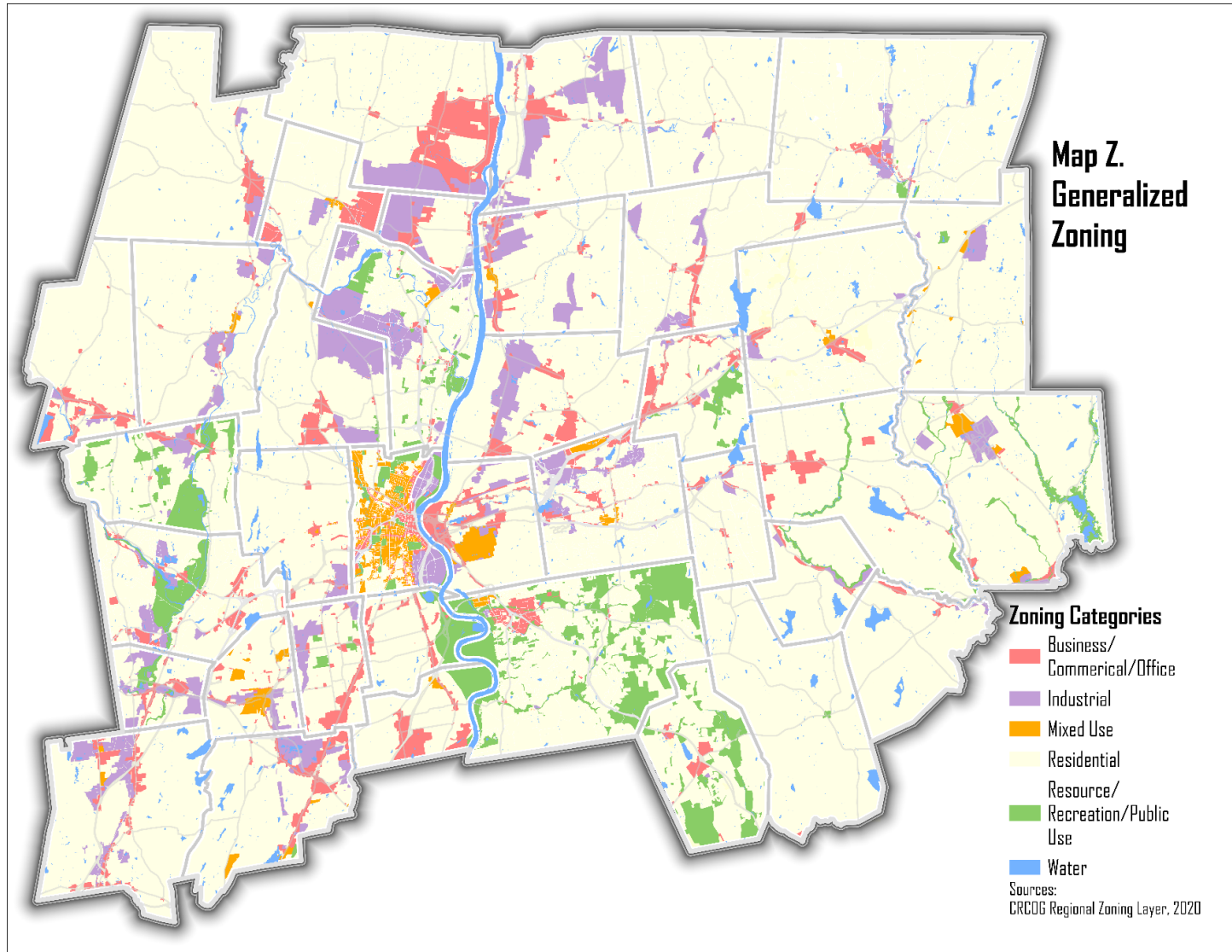


NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: Just over half of the region's land (55%) is dedicated for residential use.*

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: 81% of the region is zoned for residential use.*

## Chapter Endnotes:

1. Connecticut Data Collaborative. Public vs Private Enrollment by County, from U.S. Census. Data. Accessed January 2024.
2. Eaton, Susan. A Steady Habit of Segregation.
3. WalletHub. Accessed January 2023.  
<https://wallethub.com/edu/states-with-the-highest-and-lowest-financial-gaps-by-race/9842>
4. Connecticut Housing Finance Authority. The Intersect: A CHFA Blog. September 9, 2022. <https://www.chfa.org/the-intersect/chfa-quarterly-housing-market-rundown-q3-2022/>
5. Larson, Andrew. Foreclosures in CT increase more than 50% in 3Q. The Hartford Business Journal. October 12, 2023.
6. CHFA. Data Dashboards. 2024.
7. Partnership for Strong Communities. Housing Data Profiles. 2021.

# Chapter 3: Plan Engagement

Public feedback drove the formation of the themes, goals, and strategies in this plan. It was important to understand issues and challenges faced by our municipalities and residents, identify opportunities, and remind ourselves of many of the Region’s positive attributes.

CRCOG’s initial public engagement campaign began in spring of 2023 and concluded that fall. This included an on-line survey, attendance at local events, and the creation of a “Table Talk” toolkit to allow for small group discussions. CRCOG strived to achieve accessible, meaningful, and equitable public engagement strategies:

- **Accessible:** CRCOG understood that while a survey is a great tool for collecting ideas, online-only outreach does not reach those lacking internet access. Attendance at community events and “Table Talk” addressed this concern.
- **Meaningful:** CRCOG deliberately decided to design the survey and other engagement methods to get more meaningful data. The survey had several open-ended questions meant to allow the respondents to answer as they saw fit. In-person conversations allowed us to better understand residents’ experiences. “Table Talk” allowed for in-depth conversations, with hosts providing CRCOG with detailed notes on those discussions.
- **Equitable:** CRCOG put additional resources into outreach in the region’s urban centers to address systemic disenfranchisement urban cores have faced. We strived to focused on areas where Black and Hispanic communities

## Engagement Summary

### Public Engagement

- On-line survey – 338 responses analyzed
- Pop-up events – 12 events with regional draw, estimated reach of over 1,000
- “Table Talk” – 6 resident-driven focus groups

### Expert Focus Groups

- Environment
- Governance
- Housing

### Technical Advisory Committee

- 3 meetings
- Content reviews

### Regional Planning Commission

- Content reviews
- Public Hearing

### CRCOG Policy Board

- Plan Adoption

would most likely be able to participate and be heard. A majority of the respondents to the on-line survey identified as white and non-Hispanic (81%) and had incomes above \$100,000 (51%), making additional and targeted outreach critical.



CRCOG convened three focus groups of experts to discuss challenges and opportunities.

CRCOG established a Technical Advisory Committee, comprised of 17 municipal planners from the region, to provide guidance and feedback to staff. Staff kept the Regional Planning Commission apprised of progress. Staff provided the draft plan to the Commission and Advisory Committee in Spring, 2024. The Regional Planning Commission held a public hearing on September 19, 2024 [will add final approvals].

### Top Ten Findings from Public Engagement

The following key findings influenced the themes, goals, and strategies in this Plan. For detailed results of public engagement, see Appendix X.

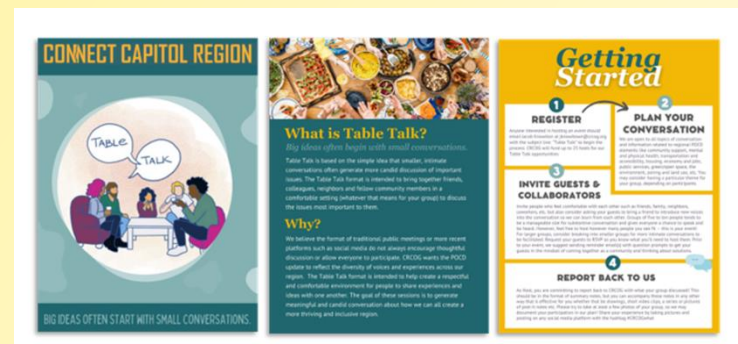
1. **Governance improvements could strengthen our region.** When asked how the Region can support local communities, respondents marked governance advancements as a top priority consistently and offered governance-related ideas to improve life in the Region. Event participants offered ideas for improved public engagement, reducing property tax reliance, and regional services.
2. **Community is a regional strength.** One quarter of event participants identified the Region's friendly people, diversity, and local traditions/events as a strength. Survey results reinforced how many respondents see community in their everyday lives through local groups and events. Some respondents (42) acknowledged how community people and groups can be strengthened.

## Table Talk

Table Talk was a new public outreach initiative to reach communities that may have still been left out by other participatory methods.

Inspired by Manchester's "On the Table" and an initiative by iQuilt, Table Talk offered the opportunity for anyone in the Region to host a salon-style event anywhere, anytime, and with anyone. The hosts reported to CRCOG key takeaways from their conversations.

CRCOG provided hosts with conversation starters and topic ideas, but the groups were free to explore any area of interest. This program provided an opportunity for communities to participate in the updating process of the POCD while coming together as a community and socialize in a safe and welcoming space. Creating these safe social spaces grows ever more important following the isolation felt from a recent pandemic. Hosts were compensated for their time and efforts.



3. **People value social places, yet few social spaces exist.**

Survey respondents reported that they see community in local gathering places (89) most often in their everyday lives, yet conveniently located social spaces are limited.

About half of respondents find it somewhat difficult to

“I get a better sense of community when I attend public and private events in my town and throughout the region. I see it in schools and local events such as farmer’s market, fairs, community-focused concerts, etc. Community can also be found with our local businesses.” – Survey Respondent.

socialize in their city/town due to the lack of nearby social places. Many respondents found that they rely on having children in the local school systems to make connections but would find it difficult if they didn’t have kids relating them to others and providing events to meet other parents.

4. **Residents seek more**

**entertainment/things to do in their neighborhoods.** A large number of survey respondents (95) want more entertainment and social experiences in their towns and cities. Things to do and amenities were identified as community needs by many respondents, including younger respondents, with many noting that events and activities make it easier to socialize in their community.

5. **Most are satisfied with their local amenities and want to live in places near amenities.**

Just under half of survey respondents (47.6%) reported that they have access to most of the amenities they need in their daily lives and one quarter said they have access to all. Roughly 70 percent claimed they would like to live close to urban amenities or in a town center in the next five to 10 years.

6. **Public transportation progress has been made, but car reliance remains high.**

Community engagement highlights how public transportation in key downtown areas is a regional strength. However, most survey respondents

(67.5%) and some community event participants (33%) indicated they are unable to travel to everyday places without a car. Some survey respondents (157 of 290) noted they would use public transit if driving was not an option and sufficient infrastructure existed, while community event participants stressed the need to expand public transit.

7. **Many residents want walkable, bicycle-friendly neighborhoods.**

Development of walkable places is a quality respondents frequently reported they would like to see in their town/city, while town centers and walkable spaces are central amenities to most popular places visited in the Region. Over half (56.2%) of survey reported a preference to walk or travel via bicycle/scooter if driving was not an option and sufficient infrastructure existed. Limited bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure were identified as both regional weaknesses and threats during community engagement events.

8. **Sustainability innovations are top-of-mind.**

When asked where our focus should be for regional improvements, environmental/sustainability and open space initiatives were the top two priorities for survey respondents. Respondents provided many “game-changing” sustainability ideas and shared sustainability-related input when prompted to name topics of importance not addressed in our survey. Community engagement identified environmental threats alongside sustainability solutions.



**9. People are divided over whether we need more types of housing yet acknowledge a lack of affordable housing.**

Opinions as to whether our Region has too many, the right amount, or too few units by housing type were mixed, with

“[There is a need for] housing that enables aging in place (going to leave Hartford for this elsewhere).” – Event Attendee.

roughly half of respondents believing the housing distribution is “just right” for each housing type. Yet, housing affordability, lack of rental upkeep, and homelessness were often reported as regional weaknesses by community event participants (11%).

**10. People want to maintain the Region’s high quality of life.**

Community event participants emphasized quality of life as a regional strength, as well as a potential threat.

Participants noted that safety, community appearance, and local nuisances threaten quality of life. Some survey respondents (24) noted how quality of life (safety, ambiance, appearance) can be strengthened in communities throughout the Region.

It is also important to recognize that while there were common themes, some respondents expressed frustration or disagreement with ideas generated through public engagement – perhaps most evident in discussions about housing. Participants expressed concerns over environmental impacts from specific proposed developments and potential changes to the communities they live in.

# Chapter 4: Building Communities of Choice, Opportunity, and Belonging

## Vision

By 2034, everyone in the Capitol Region will have the opportunity to live healthy and fulfilling lives, with equitable access to education, healthy food, and health care, and reasonable choices in housing, employment, and transportation. The Region's natural environment will provide enjoyment and physical and mental health benefits and support a thriving ecosystem. Local, regional, and state government will equitably, effectively, and efficiently deliver the services that make the Region a great place to live in. Achieving the goals in this plan will enable current and future generations to thrive and create places and spaces where everyone can participate and feel like they belong.

As a Region, we will be able to engage with one another and have necessary conversations about critical issues. We will hear and value one another's perspectives and work together to find solutions, so everyone has reasonable choices.

CRCOG will help communities anticipate and navigate the inevitable changes we will face as a Region -- adapting and adjusting our approaches so that we can achieve our goals. We all

will work together to **build communities of choice, opportunity, and belonging.**

## Themes

The goals to achieve our vision are grouped within the following overall themes:

- Cultivate a Green and Resilient Future
- Develop a Competitive and Inclusive Regional Economy
- Reform Outdated “Steady Habits” in Our Institutions and Governance
- Invest in Transportation Options for Every Journey
- Expand and Diversify the Region's Housing Stock

*Graphic Designer to add a one-page graphic depiction of themes*

## Themes and Goals Summary

Connecticut and the Capitol Region have long worn the mantle of “the land of steady habits”, with a mixture of pride and resignation. Our State has many admirable qualities, but holding on to outdated habits is not one of them. We now have decades of evidence that our current system does not always meet the needs of our fellow residents. This Plan offers an updated vision for our region.

The goals, policies, and strategies outlined in this document are created to guide CRCOG and our member communities so that we may all work together to create communities of choice, opportunity, and belonging.

We recognize that these themes are interrelated. To the extent possible, we attempted to focus on big-picture policies within the purview of CRCOG, local municipalities and state government, often in coordination with each other. The Plan is organized along the following overarching themes:

**Cultivate a Green and Resilient Future** - This theme addresses maintaining the beautiful natural resources we have and protecting them for future generations. It addresses climate change, our waste management challenges, and opportunities to develop a pathway for a more sustainable environment.

### Goals:

1. Protect our Region’s natural resources and landscapes and minimize impacts from development and human activity.
2. Cultivate spaces that connect people to nature and their community.
3. Reduce regional gas emissions and adapt to climate change.
4. Improve the resiliency of the Region.
5. Support a sustainable and equitable regional food system.

**Develop a Competitive and Inclusive Regional Economy** – Historically, cities were engines of economic growth, but today urban areas in our State and Region are not competitive with other metropolitan areas. This plan links the prosperity of the Region to the vitality of our Capital City of Hartford, which will allow the Region to reach greater potential and allow the benefits of economic growth to benefit all of our residents. The Plan provides strategies to help our suburban and rural communities realize their economic development goals through placemaking initiatives, redevelopment, and other measures.

### Goals:

1. Build regional economic development capacity and support.
2. Create a 24/7 Capital City.
3. Reimagine underutilized commercial districts as vibrant destinations.
4. Invest in the power of “fun,” placemaking, and third places.
5. Support economic development in the Region’s rural communities.
6. Ensure growth occurs in areas with adequate utilities.
7. Ensure that our archeological and historic resources are preserved and celebrated.

### **Reform Outdated “Steady Habits” In Our Governance and Institutions**

– This theme examines the structures that govern us on a daily basis and asks if they are currently meeting our needs. Municipal government, the role of regional partnerships, state-level capacity and the impact of property taxes are analyzed. Most of our local governments were established many eras ago and practices are in need of modernization. This Plan suggests we have the responsibility to establish more effective institutions to meet new challenges.

#### **Goals:**

1. Improve public service delivery through robust shared services and partnerships.
2. Create fiscally sustainable and equitable systems for funding public services.
3. Enhance the operational efficiency and effectiveness of local government operations.
4. Increase equitable community participation in local decision-making

**Invest In Transportation Options for Every Journey** – Cars will continue to be a fact of life in this Region for the foreseeable future. However, we can proactively develop viable options for people who do not have access to a car – the young, the elderly, the poor, the disabled, or those who simply prefer to walk, bike, or take public transportation. The Plan addresses the growing crisis of traffic safety and trends that will impact regional mobility.

#### **Goals:**

1. Align transportation investments with land use, housing, and other development and place-making goals.
2. Expand transportation options for all users and purposes.
3. Address the burdens and costs of transportation.

**Expand and Diversify the Region’s Housing Stock** – Housing is a foundational human need, and the lack of attainably-priced housing is a national crisis. The Plan looks at practical changes we can make to begin addressing the need to add more types of housing throughout the Region.

#### **Goals:**

1. Preserve the Region’s housing stock.
2. Diversify the Region’s housing stock.
3. Increase affordable housing in the Region.
4. Build housing adjacent to transit.
5. Provide the Region’s vulnerable populations with a safe place to live.

As a Region comprised of a mix of rural, suburban, and urban areas, this Plan’s strategies are not intended to be “one-size-fits-all”. This plan outlines an array of actions to build communities of choice, opportunity, and belonging. The best way to achieve this vision will look different in each community. This Plan promotes the notion that our communities can work together to achieve a shared vision while still retaining the positive attributes that make them great places to live in.

## Chapter 5: Cultivate a Green and Resilient Future

Throughout the last decade, climate change has exacerbated regional environmental issues and exposed vulnerabilities of our built infrastructure. Climate change impacts are linked to increased flooding, higher incidence of invasive species, extended periods of excessive heat, and inconsistent water supply in the Region. Flooding from heavy rainfall resulted in a loss of nearly \$21 million in agricultural sales due to damaged crops in 2023. Invasive species jeopardize forest health and native species abundance. Excessive heat contributes to heat-island effects in urban areas, increasing climate-related health risks in vulnerable communities.

Connecticut government and residents tend towards more progressive sentiments on climate change – to our environment, societal, and economic benefit. Residents seem more receptive to addressing climate change, while State and Federal governments are demonstrating commitment with funding. Connecticut joins other states as a role model in financing solutions. For example, Connecticut created the first green banks in 2011; since then, green banks across the country have invested more than \$3.6 billion in clean energy projects. Local leaders are developing climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, but regional coordination is necessary to scale up and right-size solutions, especially to challenges that are not contained within municipal boundaries.

Water quality is threatened by impervious surfaces and flooding in combined sewage and stormwater drainage systems. The State of Connecticut has developed MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) Stormwater requirements and reduced the amount of phosphorus and nitrogen allowed in wastewater discharge to address water quality issues. Yet, more funding and local expertise is needed for implementation.

As the availability of land most suitable for development is scarce and communities face a constant tension to increase their grand lists, development is pushed towards environmentally sensitive areas. Development contributed to a 6.5 percent net loss in Connecticut's forest cover between 1985 and 2010. Open spaces serve the dual purpose of protecting natural resources and providing residents with physical and mental health benefits through recreation. Emphasis on more, small spaces in urban areas coupled with capitalizing on and expanding existing open space assets in our suburban and rural communities can help improve access to such spaces.

Some progress has been made towards identifying environmental justice issues and pursuing corrective action, yet work remains. We recognize that marginalized communities have historically been left out of discussions about environmental protection. We now strive to include marginalized communities during each phase of environmental planning. More work is needed to ensure equitable distribution of environmental goods (parks, open spaces, green infrastructure, community gardens). Equitable siting and management of environmental externalities (polluting facilities, hazardous waste sites, interstate highway infrastructure) is also necessary to address historic and current environmental injustices.

The Connecticut River helped establish not just our industrial heritage but also our agricultural one. While farms are just one

aspect of our Region's food system, they can contribute to an equitable and more sustainable food system. A sustainable food system ensures equal access to healthy food. Food security remains a significant environmental justice issue in the Region. Connecticut Foodshare data suggests that Black and Hispanic communities experience much higher rates of food insecurity than White, non-Hispanic populations in Hartford and Tolland County. Most food deserts are in urban neighborhoods where grocery stores and locally grown food options can only be accessed by driving. Substantial work is required to implement a sustainable regional food system that produces minimal environmental impact while providing healthy, culturally relevant, and affordable food options for all people, regardless of income and location.

This plan offers strategies to address these issues on a regional level. Green infrastructure and low impact development (LID) can improve regional water quality issues. We can continue to work together to protect valuable and fragile resources, and ensure development has minimal, if any, impact on our natural environment. We strive to ensure that everyone in the Region has access to open spaces that connect people to nature and their community. As we implement the regional climate plan, we can reduce our impact on climate change and better adapt to the impacts of it on us. Climate change, natural disasters, and the pandemic have elevated the concept of "resiliency," and we recognize that we must learn from these events and change or transform our approaches. Lastly, we can actively plan for a more sustainable and equitable regional food system.



*Placeholder for full page infographic for theme*

Ideas for infographics for chapter:

1. Forest loss, impervious coverage change
2. Source of green house emissions chart
3. Farm count and acreage chart
4. [less important] economic value of farming (table)
5. Food insecurity

## NATURAL HIGHLIGHTS IN THE CAPITOL REGION

**Connecticut River** – *The vast Connecticut River provided the foundation for development of our central City of Hartford and our Region. But much earlier, it provided invaluable resources to indigenous inhabitants as “the first inhabitants of the Connecticut River Valley used the river for navigation, extending trading routes, and the fertile hunting and farming lands it provided.” (ConnecticutHistory.org). The river flows 410 miles from Quebec, Canada to Long Island Sound.*

*Our relationship with the River has changed over time. Rivers were seen as convenient dumping grounds from the industrial revolution through the 1970s. Then we shifted from viewing rivers as waste receptacles to being valued resources. Federal and State laws and the dedication of people who cherish the River have helped clean up our rivers.*

*The River was designated as an American Heritage River in 1998; one of just 14 designations in the Country. This federal designation is intended to protect outstanding and historic rivers. In 2012, the River was designated as the first National Blueway. According to the U.S. Department of the Interior, a National Blueway includes the entire river from “source to sea” and the River’s watershed. The designation is intended to recognize and support existing local and regional conservation, recreation, and restoration efforts, and does not establish any new protective status or regulations.*

**Farmington River and Salmon Brook** – *In 1994, Congress recognized 14 miles of the Farmington River as part of the “Wild and Scenic River Systems.” Since then, additional segments of both the Farmington River and Salmon Brook have also been designated. The designation provides strong protection against federal actions and other projects with harmful environmental impacts. It also enhances federal funding opportunities.*

**Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge** – *The entire Connecticut River watershed, which spans four states, is a federally-designated wildlife refuge named after Silvio O. Conte. At the time of designation in 1991, legislators recognized that a healthy river is dependent upon actions that occur within the larger watershed. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with partners to protect and enhance natural and cultural assets and undertake projects to support a healthy Connecticut River.*

**Atlantic White Cedar Swamps** – *These cedar forest swamps are rare and DEEP, in its 2016-2020 Green Plan, deems them critical habitat that is of high importance for protection. One large swamp spans four towns - Bolton, Coventry, Tolland and Vernon - and another large one is on the border of Ellington and Stafford.*

**Trap Rock Ridges** – *These highly visible rock formations have a step-like appearance on weathered rock faces. “[Trap rock ridges] are home to a number of rare plants and animals that are found nowhere else in Connecticut” and the Metacomet Ridge forms “a nearly continuous greenbelt bordering the Central Valley of Connecticut from Massachusetts to Long Island Sound.” [1]*

## Goals, Strategies and Actions

### **Goal: Protect our Region's natural resources and landscapes and minimize impacts from development and human activity.**

- Strategy 1: Increase the Region's capacity to protect natural resources.
- Strategy 2: Improve water quality of the Connecticut River, and the Region's other rivers, streams, waterbodies, and groundwater.
- Strategy 3: Protect and enhance terrestrial habitats.
- Strategy 4: Balance water supply with ecosystem considerations.

### **Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:**

- Percentage of land that is impervious.
- Percentage of tree canopy cover.
- Percentage of forested land to development.

The Region's landscape is characterized by the low-lying Connecticut River valley winding through the center of the Region, with the eastern and western uplands forming natural boundaries. Many of the landscapes are instantly recognizable and give the Region a distinct identity. These natural resources also provide for our sustenance, protect our health, and contribute to the Region's economy.

The following is a brief summary of types of natural resources and their core functions.

**Floodplain (100 year):** These areas, mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), have a one percent

chance of flooding annually. Floodplains store water during rain events, protecting adjacent and downstream land from flooding. Development in floodplains is generally prohibited or must abide by strict standards to preserve the integrity and functionality of the floodplains. Preserving the capacity of floodplains by avoiding development is more critical as we see larger and more intense flooding. While this Plan maps the 100 year floodplain, there are other moderate to high risk zones, including the 500 year flood plain, and floodways.

**Wetlands and Waterbodies** – As mapping indicates, rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands are spread throughout the Region.

The State defines wetlands based on soil type. Wetlands act as a sponge and store water during storm events, filter pollutants out of stormwater, and provide habitat. Wetlands also capture and hold (sequester) greenhouse gases, helping to mitigate climate change. The State has recognized the importance of protecting wetlands by requiring permits when proposed activities might impact a wetland. Proposed activities in or within a set distance ("upland review area") to a wetland or waterbody requires local review and possibly a permit.

The Connecticut River forms the Region's spine, with 11 of the Region's municipalities located along the river and most of the land in the Region drains to the River. As noted, the river has received national recognition for its historic and ecological value. and within the Region we recognize the River's aesthetic, ecological, economic and recreational values. Local plans of conservation and development for adjacent communities call for more access to the river, further protection of water quality, and additional trails and greenways along the river corridor.

The Region is home to many other notable rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds that provide habitat, scenic value and recreational opportunities. They also provide a source of local food, as fishing is a common activity throughout the Region. Some the Region's surface waters also provide drinking water.

Groundwater and Aquifers – The Region is heavily dependent upon ground water for drinking water, which is very vulnerable to pollution. CT DEEP required cities and towns to map Aquifer Protection Areas for public water supply aquifers and adopt regulations to carefully manage activities within that protection area. Approximately five percent of the Region is a designated Aquifer Protection Area (see the Map).

Steep slopes and trap rock ridges -- Slopes steeper than 15 percent are generally considered unsuitable for development. Both the eastern and western highlands are characterized by steep slopes. The western uplands are home to unique and highly recognizable trap rock ridges. These easily identifiable ridges create some of our Region's most notable vistas and destinations, such as Heublein Tower and trails located in Simsbury, Bloomfield, Avon, and Berlin, among other communities.

The State authorizes a small group of municipalities to adopt zoning regulations to protect trap rock ridges. The State also has updated its Erosion and Sedimentation Guidelines, introducing more effective techniques to minimize unintentional soil loss on development sites, including slopes. It can be expensive to prepare and stabilize the site and be challenging to design a septic system. Ridgeline development is highly visible and depletes the scenic value of the Region's hillsides and destroys wildlife habitat. The overall stability of a hillside and potential erosion is also of concern during and after construction. In some instances (particularly when the geologic materials are of value), landowners may choose to blast or quarry "challenging"

landscapes. The loss of these areas permanently changes the Region's landscape and should be avoided.

Soil Constraints – Shallow and rocky soils, excessively drained soils, clay soils, and hardpan soils (soils with rock-hard layer of material near surface) can be challenging to build upon because they are not supportive for septic systems and may pose other issues.

Forest, Wooded Areas, and Tree Canopy – Connecticut and the Region are characterized by predominantly forested landscapes. After mass-clearing for agriculture in the 1700 and 1800s, much of the Region reverted to forest. Based on 2015 data, 52 percent of the Region's land is forest [2]. The Region's forest types include coniferous and deciduous forest, mixed forest and forested wetlands. Not all forests are vast acres of protected land. Wooded "vacant" lots and yards with tree cover are also considered forest in the land cover database. Tree Cover – large scale (forests) and smaller scale (such as street vegetation) – helps mitigate flooding, alleviates erosion, and provides cooling.

We are losing tree cover. Connecticut overall lost 6.5 percent (121,600 acres) of its forest land from 1985 to 2010 [3]. The most direct cause is development. But we also are seeing tree die-offs due to age, changes to climate, damage, disease, invasive insects, and competition from invasive species. Preserving and expanding tree cover has become a priority in many of the Region's cities and towns due to the benefits and the overall quality-of-life improvements that greenery produces.

Habitat – Many of the natural resources discussed in this chapter provide habitat for terrestrial wildlife. Previously-unseen or rarely seen species like Black Bears and Bald Eagles are now visible throughout the Region, because the Region's natural resources provide suitable habitat. Some of the Region's more unique

landscapes, like the trap rock ridges and Atlantic White Cedar swamps form critical habitat, per CT DEEP. Critical habitats are areas that host several rare species. CT DEEP also identifies “Natural Diversity Data Base” areas, which are approximate locations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species along with important natural communities. While much attention is focused on forests, open lands such as meadows are important habitats. In fact, DEEP has classified the land at Bradley International Airport as critical grassland habitat. Threats to the Region’s habitat include invasive species, human disturbance, pollution, and the impacts of climate change.

**Strategy 1: Increase the Region’s capacity to protect natural resources.**

The Region’s natural resources pose limitations to development. Some resources are so fragile or unique that any disturbance diminishes their functions or value. Others can withstand some development, provided protection measures are in place. Overall, policies should guide development away from resource-sensitive areas and towards areas more supportive of development.

- *ACTION: Guide development to areas best suited for development.* Some natural resource areas cannot be developed either due to regulations (e.g., wetlands, waterbodies, floodplains) or because the constraints are too difficult to overcome (e.g., steep slopes and certain soils). The Policy Map in Chapter 10 summarizes areas most and least suitable for development. Through open space acquisition, conservation easements, wetland and floodplain regulations, and the continued use of conservation zoning techniques (e.g., cluster development), municipalities should avoid development in the most sensitive areas.

- *ACTION: Encourage the Region’s cities and towns to adopt best practices to minimize impacts when development occurs.* The updated CT Erosion and Sedimentation Guidelines provide effective techniques to minimize unintentional soil loss on development sites, including slopes. Other techniques include reducing impervious surfaces, clustering development to avoid development near resources, posting wetland boundary markers, and adopting biophilic approaches.
- *ACTION: Monitor environmental-related laws and regulations, understand challenges and gaps in staff and volunteer expertise at the local level, and seek regional approaches to addressing gaps.* Environmental protection requires funding and expertise. Incorporating best practices and meeting mandates can surpass local expertise, particularly in municipalities that lack ample or dedicated engineering and enforcement staff. Regional approaches might be viable where it creates economies of scale and expertise can be pooled, yielding better services and results.
- *ACTION: Work with other COGs and conservation advocates to understand if existing tools might need to be updated to effectively protect the Region’s natural resources.* While local control of wetlands regulation is desirable, such a system creates a patchwork of protection for the Region’s wetlands and water bodies, such the size of upland review areas. An examination of the State’s model wetland regulations might be warranted to see if additional measures are needed to address current and future issues with wetlands protection. In addition, as noted earlier and discussed further below, the State’s septic system requirements should be examined. CRCOG should continue to promote best practices to protect groundwater resources and aquifer protection areas.

- ***ACTION:** Convene, or help convene, regional meetings for municipal conservation commissions so they can exchange ideas and experiences.* Many of the Region's conservation-related municipal boards or commissions are working on similar projects or facing similar challenges. Yet they rarely have the opportunity to share ideas and learn from one another. Organizations like CT Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions convenes an annual event, but there are no smaller, regular meetings between local commissions. CRCOG should explore convening regular meetings.

**Strategy 2: Improve water quality of the Connecticut River, and the Region's other rivers, streams, waterbodies, and groundwater.**

In the last ten years, the State has undertaken a number of initiatives aimed at improving water quality. The State adopted the 2019 Water Plan which focuses on balancing water needs while preserving high water quality for human health and identifies threats to water supplies from climate change, wastewater discharge, and stormwater. In addition to the updated Soil and Sediment Control Guidelines, the State updated Connecticut's Stormwater Quality Manual. The updates take climate change into consideration, continue to promote Low Impact Development techniques for managing stormwater, and employ additional stormwater management tools and erosion control techniques to improve water quality.

The State updated its Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) stormwater general permit (all but four CRCOG communities are subject to the permit). The permit requires municipalities to reduce the amount of and impacts from stormwater runoff.

For almost 20 years, the Metropolitan District (MDC) has been undertaking improvements to address water quality impacts from its drainage and sewer systems, pursuant to a federal consent decree and CT DEEP consent order. Some areas in the Capitol Region still have pipes that carry both sewage and stormwater. When rain and flash floods occur, the stormwater system is overloaded, and sewage enters the drainage system and ultimately our waterbodies. The MDC's proposed updates have evolved over time with current plans including a storage system to minimize overflows in Hartford, separating stormwater from wastewater, replacing pipes and system components, and addressing maintenance and rehabilitation. The storage system is expected to be completed by 2029, while the other projects are ongoing or will be implemented over a 40-year period.

However, like many environmental issues, this challenge extends *and* relies on solutions within communities outside of our State. Communities immediately upstream of our Region (in the Springfield, MA area) are also subject to a federal consent decree to address water quality issues impacting the Connecticut River. Progress has been made in decreasing overflow discharges, but like our Region, work remains to be done and finding funding is a challenge.

Since the last POCD, the State set new limitations on the amount of phosphorous and nitrogen allowed in wastewater that is discharged by wastewater treatment plants. Several treatment plants are being upgraded to meet these requirements and others are in the planning stages. The State has provided some funding, but not enough to cover all costs. Without state or federal funding, the cost falls on local taxpayers and/or those who are connected to the sewers. If sewer fees become too expensive, it can deter new development in locations served by sewers (a key State and regional strategy is to locate development in areas already served by sewer infrastructure).



As noted, groundwater is vulnerable, and we depend on it for drinking water. There is a widespread reliance on septic systems in the Region. Their failure can impair water quality. In Connecticut, residential septic systems are not designed to remove or mitigate nitrogen, which is a prime water pollutant. We also do not fully understand the possible impacts climate change may have on septic systems. For example, a recent report on climate change impacts on septic systems notes that Connecticut does not account for future water tables in its septic system regulations [4]. If increased precipitation causes higher ground water tables, existing systems might fail, impairing ground and surface waters. Pollutants from pesticides, failing septic systems, and recently discovered PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) also can impact groundwater. In addition, droughts and excessive water use can deplete groundwater supplies, causing wells to run dry.

- *ACTION: Protect buffers along rivers, streams, and waterbodies where feasible.* Vegetated and undisturbed buffers protect the quality of rivers and streams – most notably they reduce nitrogen levels. Past guidance by DEEP recommended protecting 100-foot buffers along perennial streams and 50-foot buffers along intermittent streams [5]. While the State has authorized local Inland Wetlands and Watercourse Commissions to determine the metric for the upland review area (which generally range from 50 to 200 feet) this does not mean that clearing and other disturbances cannot occur within this area. Municipalities should review their upland review areas and CRCOG should help identify and develop additional tools to protect buffers.
- *ACTION: Reduce impervious surfaces and associated impacts through green infrastructure and other techniques.* These measures protect all waterbodies including rivers, lakes, and

groundwater. The concept of “green infrastructure” or low impact development is more mainstream than ten years ago, and we are seeing it used throughout the Region. The 2019 federal “Water Infrastructure Improvement Act”, defines green infrastructure as “the range of measures that use plant or soil systems, permeable pavement or other permeable surfaces or substrates, stormwater harvest and reuse, or landscaping to store, infiltrate, or evapotranspire stormwater and reduce flows to sewer systems or to surface waters.” Greater impervious coverage (areas that prevent water from infiltrating into the soil) within a watershed leads to a decline in water quality. Past studies by CT DEEP identified 12 percent coverage as a tipping point [6]. Map x indicates that much of the Region is at or past that point. Strategies to reduce the amount of impervious surface for new development and to retrofit already-developed areas can help improve water quality. These strategies are part of the MS4 requirements.

- *ACTION: Identify cross-boundary or watershed-level issues and opportunities for collaboration, studies, and projects.* A number of watershed plans have been prepared for watersheds within the CRCOG Region, including the 2010 Broad Brook Watershed Based Plan, the 2009 Tankerhoosen Watershed Based Plan, and the 2010 North Branch Park River Watershed Based Plan, among others. These detailed plans contain actionable projects to improve water quality. CRCOG should review the plans to identify regionally significant projects and work with municipalities to advance those projects.
- *ACTION: Work with other partners to advocate for innovative septic systems in Connecticut.* The technology exists to remove nitrogen from the wastewater between the septic tank and the drain field, but Connecticut does not allow this

technology to be used for single-family houses. The neighboring states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island allow for some innovation by permitting alternative systems and requiring or incentivizing advanced treatment. It is understood that these systems are more expensive. DEEP is looking more closely at the impact of septic systems on nitrogen levels, focusing on Long Island Sound. CRCOG should participate in discussions between state agencies and advocates regarding new approaches to septic system design.

- *ACTION: Help municipalities implement stormwater (MS4) requirements.* CRCOG should advocate for nature-based and low impact development (LID) solutions over structural solutions where feasible and appropriate (e.g., tree filters, rain gardens, vegetated swales) for local and state projects. CRCOG can also assist municipalities with the regulatory reviews needed to establish the required legal authority (i.e., updating land use regulations to meet MS4 requirements) and consider a regional approach for assistance. CRCOG can encourage the disconnection of municipal properties from drainage systems by providing successful case studies and identifying potential funding sources. CRCOG should explore regional or cooperative approaches to creating Storm Water Authorities and for housekeeping measures like street sweeping and catch basin cleaning.
- *ACTION: Actively support and urge progress on regional projects aimed at improving water quality.* CRCOG should stay apprised of and provide input these regional projects appropriate and timely. CRCOG should monitor progress on EPA-mandated stormwater improvements for both the Hartford and Springfield regions and engage in public comment periods as appropriate. CRCOG should also support funding approaches for upgrades to wastewater

treatment plants and stormwater systems that do not unreasonably increase user fees, thereby making it cost-prohibitive to build in targeted growth areas.

### **Strategy 3: Protect and enhance terrestrial habitats.**

Threats to natural lands and terrestrial features in the Region are primarily from development practices and climate change. As noted in Strategy 1, guiding development away from the most sensitive areas is the most effective protection measure. It is inevitable that some development will occur however and best practices, including those mentioned below, can help mitigate impacts.

- *ACTION: Avoid irreversible impacts to unique habitats and landscapes in the Region, such as traprock ridges and the Atlantic White Cedar Forest.* Municipalities should ensure that zoning and wetland regulations provide maximum protections for these areas and carefully review proposed development in adjacent areas.
- *ACTION: Minimize fragmentation of larger intact forest and overall loss of tree cover.* This action applies to privately and publicly owned land. Municipalities have limited ability to preserve trees on privately-owned land. The City of Hartford does regulate removal of “significant trees. Zoning and subdivision regulations can require the identification of significant trees and vegetation on site plans and promote minimal tree clearing. Most regulations require post-construction landscaping plans for commercial and larger residential projects. For public lands, some communities work with foresters to actively manage forest lands, such as pruning and selective forestry, to retain the trees’ health, integrity, and functionality. Few communities have a city or town Forester on staff. We should explore more tools for

preserving tree coverage.

- *ACTION: Increase small-scale neighborhood level greenery and habitat including in the Region’s denser neighborhoods.* We are seeing more interest in the role that micro-habitat within the built environment can play in supporting wildlife. Microhabitat includes backyards, green roofs, pollinator gardens, and the incorporation of “biophilic design”. Initiatives in Hartford can serve as a model. As an “Urban Bird Treaty City” (a national network of cities looking to improve bird habitat), Hartford *incorporated bird habitat in parks and other spaces.* Hartford also adopted a “Tree Canopy Action Plan” in 2020, with a goal to increase the City’s tree canopy cover from 25 percent to 35 percent over the next 50 years.

“Lack of tree coverage makes sidewalks too hot.” – Event Attendee.

- *ACTION: Support the creation or remediation of habitat including urban wooded areas and wetlands, and meadows throughout the Region.* Habitat creation and remediation is essential for the conservation of biodiversity and provides additional opportunities for humans to enjoy nature. Restoring wetlands – which store floodwaters – helps alleviate flooding.

#### **Strategy 4: Balance water supply with ecosystem considerations.**

In 2014, the State established three Water Utility Coordinating Committees (called WUCCs), which are charged with facilitating regional water supply planning. CRCOG is a member of the Central and Eastern WUCCs. The WUCCs completed the process of designating “exclusive service areas” in which public water is supplied by one system. Assessments and plans were prepared for the Central and Eastern WUCCs and in 2019, the State

adopted a Water Plan. The assessments identified water quality concerns from numerous sources including septic systems, runoff, historic agriculture, and spills. While there have been efforts for wellhead and watershed protection, more regional collaboration is needed to address multi-jurisdictional water sources. Water system resiliency also was identified as a concern, especially during power outages. Several water systems have identified future projects, including finding new water sources, pursuing interconnections, and upgrading storage and distribution systems.

- *ACTION: Encourage multi-jurisdictional planning for source protection, interconnections, and the identification of future water supplies.* Through participation the Central and Eastern WUCCs, CRCOG should advocate for regional approaches.
- *ACTION: Help municipalities integrate water supply planning considerations into POCDs.* The assessment report noted that in some cases planners “have limited understanding of the long-term planning goals of water utilities and vice-versa.” CRCOG should provide support and assistance as needed.
- *ACTION: Ensure that the development and expansion of sources and interconnections have minimal environmental impact.* The 2019 Water Plan contains a wealth of data to help with water supply planning. It is important to continue collecting and analyzing data, especially to the extent it will inform us of real and potential impacts from climate change. The Plan also notes that interbasin transfers are a contentious issue (when water is transferred from one subregional drainage basin to another). Benefits and impacts should be fully analyzed and weighed when transfers are proposed. Lastly, conservation efforts that reduce per capita water use can help reduce or slow the need to develop new sources.

## **Goal: Cultivate spaces that connect people to nature and their community.**

### **Strategies to achieve the goal:**

- Strategy 1: Promote open space as a community, cultural, economic, and health asset, in addition to its common use for protecting natural resources.
- Strategy 2: Connect the Region's open space through a regional greenway system.
- Strategy 3: Integrate natural features (biophilic concepts) into development.

### **Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:**

- Percentage of land preserved as open space.
- Percentage of the Region's preserved open space within environmental justice communities.
- Percentage of households that can access preserved open space within a five-minute walk or 15-minute drive/transit ride.

For planning purposes, we typically define open space as undeveloped land that is permanently protected from future development, either by outright ownership by an entity that intends to preserve it or through restrictions placed in the land records. Open space preservation is an effective tool to protect natural areas and/or to provide opportunities for enjoyment.

There are vast undeveloped tracts of land throughout the Region that look and feel like open space but are not protected from future development. These include privately-owned land like campgrounds, fish and game clubs, and farms.

According to CT DataHaven, the majority of the Region's residents (81%) reported that they had "good parks" in 2021. This level of

satisfaction is greater than for the State overall (78%). However, there is a marked disparity for Hartford residents, with less than half (47%) reporting they have good parks.

The CT DEEP has established a goal of preserving 21 percent of the land in the State as open space. Its targets for preservation are natural waters and drinking water resources, significant coastal areas, natural heritage resources, natural resource-based outdoor recreation, and non-preserved lands owned by DEEP [7].

While neither the State nor CRCOG has a complete dataset of land permanently protected as open space, a rough analysis indicated that 19 percent of the Region is preserved. This includes some areas that might not be permanently protected (e.g., water company lands, vacant municipal land) and may be missing other areas that are protected (e.g., easements). The way in which open space is categorized and mapped varies by municipality and not all preserved open space has been mapped (such as some conservation easements). The State recognizes the need for improved mapping and identifies that as an administrative priority in the 2016-2020 Green Plan.

### **Strategy 1: Promote open space as a community, cultural, economic, and health asset, in addition to its common use for protecting natural resources.**

The role of open space in our Region has evolved. Past emphasis focused on resource protection and passive recreation (e.g., hiking). During the public outreach process for this Plan, people valued the sense of community

"We need open space for water recharge and capture. Open space for hiking/mountain biking. Open space for carbon capture and agricultural opportunities. Open space, to reduce water runoff and point source pollution." – Survey Respondent.

provided by the Region's parks, trails, and open lands. The pandemic may have furthered this perception as safety protocols moved opportunities for in-person social connections outdoors for over a year. Communities see that all open spaces, from small, landscaped lots to large forest tracts allow us to connect with one another and they provide us with mental and physical health benefits.

- *ACTION: Permanently protect natural features and resources that are important to the Region and State and that help achieve resiliency goals.* As discussed in the previous section, some natural resources are so sensitive to development that permanent protection is warranted. These include wetlands, waterbodies and their buffers, and flood plains which in addition to ecological benefits, protect human safety by storing floodwater during a storm. Other features, such as traprock ridges are so unique that they, along with surrounding lands, should be preserved. The only method that affords permanent protection are permanent deed restrictions.

Finding funding to purchase land or easements remains a challenge. DEEP provides millions of dollars annually to preserve land through a very competitive process. Land Trusts and environmental non-profits are able to preserve land but may need additional and creative approaches to finance purchases such as carving out a small number of housing lots (possible for affordable housing), which could help finance the purchase. However, the current structure of the DEEP grant programs makes this challenging since any such lots would have to be carved out before the acquisition. Creative ways to fund acquisitions should be identified.

- *ACTION: Provide smaller-scale pocket parks and gardens.* The concept of open space should not be limited to large, forested tracks of land. Smaller lots and underutilized alleys can

provide open space opportunities that can also help increase food access (e.g., community gardens) and support the food system (e.g., pollinator gardens), provide outdoor community spaces in town centers and downtowns, and draw visitors who might patronize nearby businesses.

- *ACTION: Showcase and connect to the Region's open spaces.* We can do a better job of promoting the Region's parks and open spaces. Collective advertising could highlight the

## Connecticut Countryside

Four CRCOG communities – Bolton, Coventry, Mansfield, and Tolland – are collectively promoting their towns as a desirable destination for outdoor recreation, agri-tourism, and cultural activities. The towns understood that outdoor activities such as hiking, boating, and visiting farm stands not only provide opportunities for fun but also support the local economy.

The towns engaged a consultant to create a workplan, undertake a branding effort, and develop a marketing plan to draw visitors and promote the towns' assets. A branding guide, with a logo, tagline, and color scheme, will help ensure a unified and consistent marketing approach. The plan identifies the target market as day visitors and UConn students and their families and provides for a detailed marketing campaign.



Region’s special natural places and promote open space as an opportunity for community connections - inclusive places for gathering and holding events, and for recreation. When more people visit and enjoy open space and parks, we see economic benefits. We can look to recent efforts of the four-town “Connecticut Countryside” campaign for this approach. CRCOG also can assist cities and towns with entering their trails into on-line trail maps. Towns should also consider how businesses in the vicinity of open spaces, especially areas with trails, can create a symbiotic relationship between trail users and economic benefits by establishing trail-side amenity connections.

- *ACTION: Ensure that everyone in the Region can access parks and open space.* The most recent Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2017-2022) recognizes that some may face barriers visiting parks and open space if they do not have access to a car. The plan includes a strategy to “identify, increase, and promote the availability of public transportation to and from outdoor recreation facilities.” [8] The Plan is currently being updated. One ongoing state effort is the Park ConneCT program which implemented additional weekend transit connections to state parks, often with free fares. Currently, none of the state parks in the Park ConneCT program are within the Capitol Region.
- *ACTION: Support municipalities with open space stewardship.* Preserved open space requires active management and stewardship to preserve the integrity of the ecosystem, protect human safety, and address wear and tear. Not all communities have the resources – time, funding, expertise – to manage municipally-owned open space. CRCOG could connect local Conservation Commissions with tools and resources to manage the land, with attention toward tree

health, forest management, and invasive species. CRCOG could also Explore and promote creative partnerships to help fund open space property management, including public-private partnerships, grant funding, volunteer stewardship programs, etc.

## **Strategy 2: Connect the Region’s open space through a regional greenway system.**

A greenway is a linear corridor of open space. In some instances, there may be trails or pathways, but other times it is an undisturbed natural area. Greenways can connect open spaces, provide for wildlife corridors, preserve river buffers, and provide walking and bicycling connection.

- *ACTION: Promote the Connecticut River and its tributaries as the Region’s greenway “spine”.* Through their Plans of Conservation and Development almost all of the communities along the River identify a desire for better connections to the river through parks, trails and additional boat launches. Promoting the River corridor as the Region’s greenway spine reminds us of the important role the River plays in the Region and beyond. Many other communities have taken advantage of their rivers – Austin, Detroit, Cleveland – and are thriving or dramatically improving in part because they have re-established waterfront access for their residents, businesses, and visitors. Riverfront Recapture provides a model for connecting our communities with the Connecticut River. For over 40 years the non-profit organization has worked to create parks and trails along the River and entice visitors through activities and celebrations. The effort is an example of

“River access would enhance our living experience and business / restaurant success.” – Event Attendee.



businesses and government working together and *making* visible progress. Their efforts should be expanded on both shores of the River.

- *ACTION: Implement linear bikeways and pathways that connect open space.* We should provide for connections between downtown Hartford and open space throughout the Region. Both the Greater Hartford Mobility Study (see Chapter 8) and the iQuilt Harford 400 plans identify connection opportunities. Other connections may be identified as CRCOG continues its bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts. One emerging issue as we make progress on building bikeways and pathways is local maintenance responsibilities; regional approaches should be examined.
- *ACTION: Identify key natural or wildlife corridors that connect the Region's natural areas and encourage preservation as open space.* As noted, not all greenways are intended for human use. We should identify cross-boundary natural corridors that support wildlife and protect critical natural resources. Related, we should promote resources or best practices that ensure development does not unintentionally or unnecessarily create barriers for wildlife, i.e. wildlife-friendly fences that allow wildlife to jump over or crawl under without risk of injury but otherwise define property lines or contain livestock.

### **Strategy 3: Integrate natural features (biophilic concepts) into development.**

Not all neighborhoods have vacant land that can be preserved as a park or as open space. However, there are opportunities to “green” the built environment in ways that provide many of the benefits of open space through a visible and accessible natural

system. These concepts apply to both private property and public land, including roads and public buildings.

Biophilic concepts include urban forestry and street greenery, green roofs and walls, stream daylighting or restoration, and nature-based stormwater management – practices that also improve water quality goals.

- *ACTION: Assist our communities in integrating biophilic concepts in local plans and policies and provide model zoning regulations.* Cities and towns might incorporate requirements or incentives in their zoning, subdivision, and stormwater regulations. CRCOG could develop guidance and model ordinances on various approaches.
- *ACTION: Integrate nature-based designs into transportation and complete streets projects.* CRCOG can provide best practices to communities when they undertake roadway projects and encourage CT DOT to do so for state-sponsored transportation projects.

**Goal: Reduce regional gas emissions and adapt to climate change.**

**Strategies to achieve the goal:**

- Strategy 1: Actively implement greenhouse gas reducing projects identified in the Regional Comprehensive Climate Action Plan.
- Strategy 2: Connect communities with tools and resources to address climate change.
- Strategy 3: Develop a more sustainable waste management system for the Region.
- Strategy 4: Ensure the Region's approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation provides for all aspects of equity.

**Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:**

- Greenbank financed solar projects in Region (number and amount).
- Tonnage of waste created/transported.
- Tonnage of organic waste diverted.
- Number of EV stations.

Climate change, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), “refers to changes in global or regional climate patterns attributed largely to human-caused increased levels of atmospheric greenhouse gases.” [9] Some changes affect us directly and immediately (e.g., rising temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns, and extreme weather events). Other impacts are occurring but might not affect our Region for some time such as melting glaciers, ocean temperatures and acidity, and changes to the Jetstream.

In Connecticut, temperatures have risen almost 3.5 degrees Fahrenheit since 1900 and annual precipitation has generally been above average since the 1970s [10]. By 2050, average temperatures are expected to increase roughly five degrees and average precipitation is expected to increase four inches per year [11]. Indices of hot weather, summer drought, and extreme precipitation are expected to increase. [12]

Climate change will impact Connecticut's natural resources. Tree species will move north and/or uphill, changing our forest composition. This change could result in major species shifts as well – birds and other wildlife typically found in certain areas may not be present as the climate changes. Changes will likely make forests more vulnerable to disease and we may see more invasive species. Rising water temperature is also a concern to the fishing industry – especially those which depend upon cold-water fish.

CIRCA (CT Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation) has mapped vulnerability to flooding and extreme heat. Areas vulnerable to flooding in the Region follow the Region's rivers and streams, with a concentration of vulnerability in Hartford and East Hartford. Areas especially vulnerable to extreme heat include urban areas – Hartford, New Britain – and areas with less tree cover (see maps).

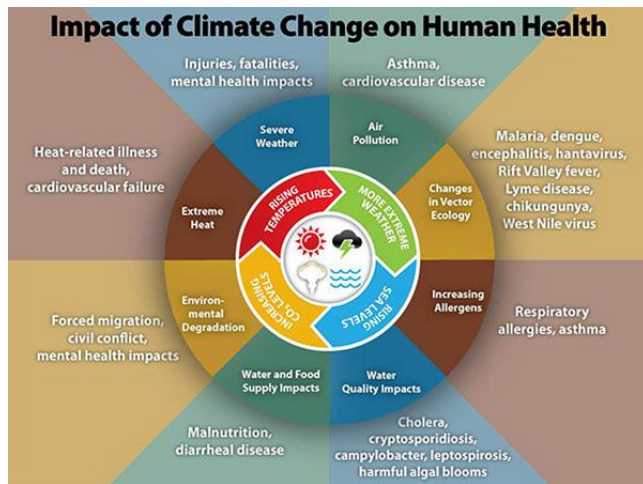


Image Source: National Center for Environmental Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

*Caption: Climate change impacts exacerbate many health issues, including asthma, mental health, and cardiovascular failure.*

Both mitigation and adaptation (see sidebar) require short term actions we can take today and longer-term commitments that will have a lasting impact. In tackling mitigation and adaptation, we must be deliberate about applying an equity lens in developing and implementing strategies and priorities. We need to understand who is vulnerable and where they live. It means that we ensure that the benefits are equally distributed and that costs are not a burden on those vulnerable populations. It means we actively include vulnerable communities in all stages. And finally, it means providing accountability for actions taken and funding spent.

## Mitigation versus Adaptation

Responding to climate change falls into two action categories:

**Mitigation** – These are steps to reduce the causes of climate change, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions in order to stabilize or reduce temperature changes.

**Adaptation** – These are actions to lessen the impact of climate change, such as reducing impervious surfaces to lessen the risk of flash flooding. Adaptation does not necessarily do anything to reduce warming trends, but rather helps us better withstand the impacts.

The combination of mitigation and adaptation creates a system that is less vulnerable to climate impacts.

### Strategy 1: Actively implement greenhouse gas reducing projects identified in the Regional Comprehensive Climate Action Plan.

CRCOG is currently working on grant-funded plans to identify “local and regional decarbonization and pollutant reduction efforts” – i.e., projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Many of these projects are directly within the purview of local municipalities. The regional Comprehensive Climate Action Plan will identify specific projects to implement and may include things such as alternative energy sources, reducing emissions from waste, and retrofitting buildings.

- **ACTION:** Work with the municipalities to identify priorities and seek funding to implement them. We anticipate communities will undertake local efforts to reduce greenhouse gas production. CRCOG is poised to help implement scalable, multi-community collaboration and projects of regional

significance. As progress is made, the plan should be updated.

- *ACTION: Actively showcase successfully implemented projects to educate and motivate CRCOG communities to take on similar initiatives.* Some communities are not ready to go first – they want to know that a particular project or initiative has been successful elsewhere first. This may also be driven by limited staff capacity; taking advantage of lessons learned from others is often more efficient than forging new paths on our own. CRCOG can help identify demonstration projects – ideally within the Region or State – so that communities can learn directly from their peers.

## **Strategy 2: Connect communities with tools and resources to address climate change.**

The Governor’s Council of Climate Change (GC3) established working groups of experts to identify mitigation and adaptation measures for each of the various emission sectors. The resources compiled by the working groups can serve as valuable starting points for each sector. Examples of their recommendations from draft final reports include:

- Lessen the heat island effect (where built-up areas, such as cities, experience higher temperatures) in part by nature-based solutions (urban tree planting and new parks and greenspaces).
- Develop regional food security plans to increase regional food production and strengthen food distribution.
- Pursue the best available science for updating engineering standards and guidelines for transportation infrastructure.
- Respond to elevated tree mortality by sharing information, monitoring stands, and managing forest lands.

CRCOG can help communities undertake additional measures to reduce emissions and identify actions to help them adapt to climate change. Adaptation measures are intended to reduce damage by preparing for and adjusting to the current and future impacts of climate change. Like mitigation strategies, adaptation requires short term measures to address current impacts and longer-term solutions based on projected future conditions.

- *ACTION: Reduce transportation emissions.* In Connecticut, transportation is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, contributing 40 percent of emissions. Chapter 8 includes detailed actions on reducing the impacts of the Regions’ transportation system.
- *ACTION: Encourage municipalities to consider the connections between land use and emissions.* One of the main drivers of emissions is surprisingly left out of many discussions on climate change – land use. Research by Brookings states “After decades of sprawl, the U.S. has the dubious honor of being the world leader in both building-related energy consumption and vehicle miles traveled per capita.” [13] Without building more energy efficient buildings in places where driving is an option rather than a requirement, our ability to mitigate climate change may be diminished.” Much of our sprawl pattern of land use and development has happened – it is out of the gate, so to speak, and local governments today are now charged with balancing the demand for new development in their towns with the pressures of climate change. However, the State simply will not reach its emission reduction goals without addressing land use reforms that encourage less dispersed development patterns. While nationally there has been a push for single, detached homes on larger more private lots in years past, this too may be changing slightly with newer and older generations alike. The

State and CROCOG should support municipalities working to create less car-dependent communities and/or less-car dependent areas within communities that are otherwise already built-out in ways that preclude other options.

- *ACTION: Provide guidance to municipalities on state mandates that require the accommodation of new energy sources and climate-friendly infrastructure such as electric vehicle charging stations.* CROCOG should provide municipalities with information and model regulations on emerging renewable energy and decarbonization technologies, such as solar, geothermal, heat pumps and battery storage.
- *ACTION: Work with partners to help CROCOG municipalities address climate change in local POCDs.* CROCOG should assist municipalities with incorporating climate change mitigation and adaption into local POCDs.
- *ACTION: Help find funding to implement projects.* Adaptation measures cost money: although they may save us money in the long run, it can be difficult to find funds in the short term to implement. In addition to potential future federal and state grants, municipalities have a new tool to fund projects. In 2019, the state legislature passed Public Act 19-77, An Act Authorizing Municipal Climate Change and Coastal Resiliency Reserve Funds. Municipalities can create Climate Change and Coastal Resiliency Reserve Fund (CCCRRF), which can be used to pay for municipal property losses, and for capital projects and studies related to mitigating hazards and vulnerabilities of climate change, including land acquisition. CROCOG can develop case studies of such programs.

### **Strategy 3: Develop a more sustainable waste management system for the Region.**

Connecticut is in a widely recognized waste management crisis, with landfills and incinerators in the State running out of capacity to handle an ever-increasing amount of waste. The need for a sustainable system for waste management is urgent. CROCOG's 2022 Solid Waste Facility Inventory and Assessment outlined the challenges member communities are currently facing, including a critical need for disposal capacity. Current waste management is responsible for six percent of the State's greenhouse gas emissions. What we cannot dispose of in-state makes a costly trip to other states – 860,000 tons per year right now is currently being trucked to other states like New York and Ohio. The State has set a goal of diverting 60 percent of waste by 2024; CROCOG's assessment estimates that only 23 percent of waste in the Region is being diverted.

“Can we manage our waste in a way that does not have a negative impact on other communities?” – Table Talk Report.

The assessment identified opportunities including:

- CROCOG can more than double the volume of waste diverted from landfill and waste to energy through increasing recycling, composting and anaerobic digestion, thereby reducing the volume of waste to be disposed and aligning with the CT DEEP 60 percent waste diversion goal.
- Opportunities also are available to increase the volume of recyclables collected through enhancing outreach, education, and regional partnerships, including technical assistance, to single-family homes, multifamily homes, and businesses.

The concept of a “circular economy” may help frame the broader issue and impacts from waste management practices. According to the U.S. EPA, a circular economy “keeps materials and products in circulation for as long as possible.” [14] Ultimately the amount of material used to create products is reduced and what waste is generated is re-used. It accounts for the entire lifecycle of a product.

- *ACTION: Support State waste management efforts, including the Connecticut Coalition for Sustainable Materials Management (CCSMM).* CT DEEP and over 90 municipalities are actionable pathways to reduce waste, including improve reuse, recycling, organics collection, and support Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation.
- *ACTION: Aid local efforts at waste reduction.* Some CROG communities are undertaking local efforts to reduce waste. For example, in 2023 Canton started accepting food waste at its transfer station to reduce the amount of waste going to landfills. CROG can compile information on current local efforts so that member municipalities can share their success and pitfalls.
- *ACTION: Identify cross-boundary and regional waste reduction programs.* Some potential programs may work best at the regional level due to size, cost, and the level of innovation necessary. This particularly applies to processing facilities, such as composting or anaerobic digestion facilities. CROG, through the Central CT Solid Waste Authority should work with CT DEEP and local municipalities to find appropriate sites in our Region.
- *ACTION: Ingrain the concept of a Circular Economy into aspects of CROG’s work including work on solid waste.* While

many components of the full cycle of waste are outside of our purview, framing discussions about waste in this manner helps us better understand the full cycle of waste and its impacts. We can start to identify current initiatives in our communities, other states, and in other countries and share best practices and emerging trends. The Capitol Region Purchasing Council is one potential vehicle to explore, using collective procurement to support sustainable purchasing.

#### **Strategy 4: Ensure the Region’s approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation provides for all aspects of equity.**

Climate change disproportionately impacts vulnerable and marginalized communities, worsening existing inequalities in low-income neighborhoods. As the Region and communities identify and implement mitigation and adaptation measures, a proactive and holistic approach is needed to ensure meaningful engagement and equitable distribution of costs and benefits.

- *ACTION: Work with existing environmental justice groups at the State and local level.* The State has many existing groups dedicated to addressing environmental justice disparities. CROG can work to develop stronger working relationships with these groups to better understand on the ground impacts of proposed policies.
- *ACTION: Incorporate distributive, procedural, contextual, and corrective equity into regional climate efforts (see box).* CROG should ensure that all aspects are incorporated into regional plans and provide guidance and training to communities on how to incorporate it into their current plans. As discussed in the resilience goal, building relationships and trust with the Region’s vulnerable and marginalized communities is a key first step.



- *ACTION: Develop metrics to measure progress.* CRCOG should work with partners to determine what “success” looks like and identify data points that can help measure progress toward success.

## Equity and Climate Change

Adaptation and mitigation measures in the region must provide for distributive, procedural, contextual, and corrective equity. Connecticut’s 2021 “Taking Action on Climate Change and Building a More Resilient Connecticut for All” report elaborates on types of equity:

- **Distributive Equity:** Accounts for the distribution of environmental and climate-related burdens and places those most vulnerable at the forefront of benefits.
- **Procedural Equity:** Low-income communities and communities of color participate at every level of decision-making, with a focus at the local level.
- **Contextual Equity:** Context recognizing that low-income communities, BIPOC communities and people with disabilities are often more vulnerable to climate change.
- **Corrective Equity:** Clear processes to hold the State accountable.

## Goal: Improve the resiliency of the Region.

### Strategies to achieve the goal:

- Strategy 1: Incorporate the concept of resiliency into everyday planning and government operations.
- Strategy 2: Improve the resilience of the built environment and infrastructure.
- Strategy 3: Improve the resiliency of our social networks.

### Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:

- Decrease in number of property flood claims.
- Number of microgrids.
- Allocation of post-disruption funding.

Resiliency means that we anticipate, understand, and manage change so that we can prepare for disruptions, withstand disruptions, recover, and adapt. It is not a process that ends once we have recovered – it is a continuous cycle.

We often use this term when addressing hazard mitigation, climate change, and sustainability. Principles of resiliency can also apply to our systems of governance, the built environment, social systems, and our economy. We should anticipate short- and long-term stressors and create systems and practices that allow the Region to be truly resilient.

Refer to Chapter 6 for strategies for economic resilience.

## Resilient Systems

Post-pandemic research on resilience has identified the following key components of resilient systems [15]:

- **Diversity** – Diversity provides the ability to respond in multiple ways. It also minimizes overall impacts by reducing over-reliance.
- **Redundancy** – Redundancy allows for critical functions to operate during a disruption.
- **Connectivity** – Connectivity helps to pool resources, make for more efficient coordination by responses, and improve the ability to obtain resources.
- **Inclusivity and equity** – Having an inclusive and equitable system builds trust and preparedness which facilitates collective action when a disruption occurs.
- **Adaptive learning** – Adaptive learning allows us to learn from the past, better detect changes that might signal future disruptions, and make changes and adapt.

## Strategy 1: Incorporate the concept of resiliency into everyday planning and government operations.

Incorporating the components of a resilient system into governance can help ensure continuous operations (through redundancy), improve responses to disruptions through increased connectivity locally and regionally, and improve relationships with marginalized communities. It also allows for a mindset that embraces the unknown and encourages creative solutions.

- *ACTION. Use data to enhance resiliency.* Collecting and analyzing relevant data can help us better detect changes, assess risk, and allow us to measure progress towards resiliency. A first step would be to understand what types of data have been crucial during disruptions. Data also should measure and evaluate if post-disruption dollars are equitably allocated.
- *ACTION: Use scenario planning to explore and understand future unknowns.* When preparing plans, we typically review what has happened in the past and identify threats based on what we know or can reasonably assume. We should also engage in discussions of the “unknowns” and challenge our assumptions about the future. Scenario planning can help identify connections and test options.
- *ACTION: Share staff regionally to avoid gaps in service provisions.* Several municipalities either maintain single-person departments or have reduced staffing levels as part of budget-cutting measures. If staff leaves or is out for an extended period, entire functions can be shut down (e.g., health or building inspections, animal control). Sharing staff with other communities or having a regional pool can provide redundancy for continued operations.

## Strategy 2: Improve the resilience of the built environment and infrastructure.

More frequent and intense storms have resulted in prolonged community shutdowns in the last twenty years because infrastructure could not withstand the impacts. The age and locations of critical infrastructure contribute to reliability issues.

“An overarching theme throughout our discussion centered around whether our community’s infrastructure is prepared for severe weather events that will continue to worsen given the impacts of climate change.” – Table Talk

- *ACTION: Support diversification of the Region’s energy sources and increase redundancy.* A diverse portfolio of energy sources, with an emphasis on renewable sources, will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve the Region’s ability to withstand disruptions to any one energy source. Improved redundancy ensures that alternative energy sources are available in an outage. One example is Hartford’s Parkville microgrid, created in 2017. It provides power to a school, library branch, senior center, and health center and can power other uses during an outage.
- *ACTION: Ensure that future development and infrastructure are located away from vulnerable, flood prone areas and built in ways to withstand hazards.* CRCOG is updating its Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan, which more closely examines issues and provides detailed recommendations. CRCOG should encourage municipalities to seek funding to implement projects contained in that Plan.
- *ACTION: Increase awareness and use of more comprehensive lifecycle cost analysis which accounts for disruptions due to*

*hazards.* Conducting a comprehensive cost analysis becomes especially crucial when contemplating infrastructure investments in susceptible regions. A project initially perceived as prohibitively expensive may, in fact, yield long-term cost savings.

- *ACTION: Promote the creation of resilience hubs.* Resilience hubs are spaces hosted by trusted organizations that provide support before, during, and after a disruption. They might be used as cooling centers during heat events, places to re-charge phones during a power outage, and as shelters.
- *ACTION: Support additional research and educational efforts on impacts to private infrastructure, such as septic systems and private wells.* Most focus is on public utilities – water, sewer, electrical grids. We need to better understand long-term impacts of climate change on private wells and septic systems, especially given the Region’s reliance on them. To ensure these neighborhoods remain viable and attractive to future residents we should explore innovative approaches.

### **Strategy 3: Improve the resiliency of our social networks.**

Having strong social connections and support networks enables mutual assistance and resource-sharing during a disruption. Social resiliency is especially critical in ensuring that vulnerable and marginalized populations are not left behind and are not disproportionately impacted.

- *ACTION: Identify key partners that are connected to and trusted by the Region’s marginalized and vulnerable residents.* Community-based groups should be involved in resiliency planning to identify existing networks and gaps in the network. These partnerships can help us understand how specific vulnerable populations are impacted by various types of

disruptions and tools and resources to improve social resiliency.

- *ACTION: Support investment in and cooperation among regional entities that are most critical during a disruption.* The Region’s hospitals, public health entities, emergency responders and public safety personnel work together to develop coordinated approaches and training for emergencies. These groups are well-poised to connect with local communities.

**Goal: Support a sustainable and equitable regional food system.**

**Strategies to achieve the goal:**

- Strategy 1: Support the preservation of farmland.
- Strategy 2: Support working farms.
- Strategy 3: Expand farming opportunities and innovation, including for urban and suburban agricultural producers.
- Strategy 4: Ensure access to healthy and locally grown foods and eliminate persistent food deserts.
- Strategy 5: Reduce the environmental impact of the Region's food system.

**Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:**

- Number of farms in the Region.
- Acres of protected farmland.
- Acres of Prime Agricultural Soil zoned exclusively for agricultural use.
- Race and ethnicity of producers in the Region.
- Number of households located in a food desert.

A “food system” is the chain of activities connecting food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management. A sustainable regional food system would provide for all components of the system within the Region or nearby, thereby making us less vulnerable to nationwide disruptions, reducing greenhouse gas emissions due to shorter transportation journeys, and boosting our Region's economy. It should also have minimal impact on the environment. Lastly the food system should provide healthy, culturally relevant, and affordable food options to all, regardless of income and location.

The Region is home to an array of farms and food producers, from larger traditional farms to small-scale or “micro” operations. According to 2017 data, there are just over 5,500 farms in Hartford and Tolland counties, and they sell almost \$150,000,000 of products annually.

**Table X. Snapshot of Farming, 2017**

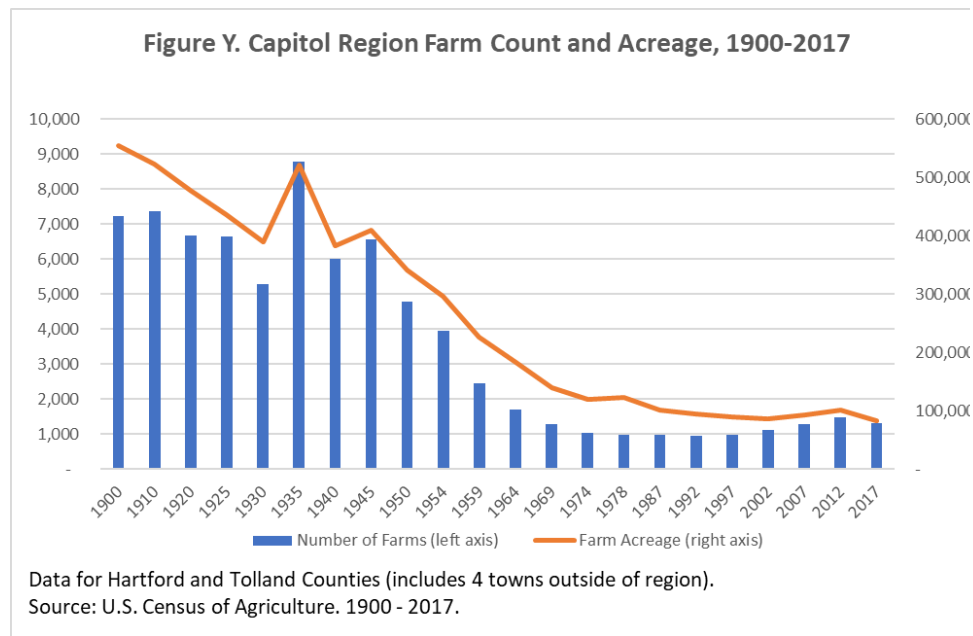
	<b>Hartford &amp; Tolland Counties</b>	<b>Connecticut</b>	<b>Region as % of State Total</b>
<b>Number of Farms</b>	1,306	5,521	24%
<b>Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold</b>			
Crops including nursery & greenhouse crops	\$122,549,000	\$420,043,000	29%
Livestock, poultry & their products	\$24,780,000	\$160,071,000	15%

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture. County Summary Highlights. 2017.

*Caption: One quarter of farms in the State are located in Hartford and Tolland counties, with an annual market value of almost \$150 million.*

## Strategy 1: Support the preservation of farmland.

Data from 1900 through 2017 shows the drastic loss of farms and farmland in Hartford and Tolland counties – a loss of 82 percent of farms and 84 percent of farmland.



*Caption: The number of farms and acreage of land farmed in the Region has greatly declined since 1945.*

There are many areas in the Region that might not currently be farmed but contain Prime Farmland Soils -- soils that are productive for growing. Where feasible, these areas should be preserved for future farming. Preserving lands currently used for agriculture along with areas characterized by Prime Farmland soil can ensure we retain the ability to grow within the Region.

- ACTION: Promote tools and programs to permanently preserve farmland for agricultural use.** The Connecticut and U.S. Departments of Agriculture fund programs to preserve farmland through conservation easements. The easements require that the land is used for agriculture and remains in private ownership. These programs have protected several farms in the Region. Some towns in the Region have acquired farms and then leased the land to farmers. The Town of Columbia preserved 133 acres of the Szegda Farm with a 50 percent matching grant through the State's Open Space Grant Program. The farm includes community gardens, agricultural use (leased to farmers), and walking trails. This is just one of many examples of municipal efforts to preserve farms in our Region.
- ACTION: Support programs that keep farmland in agricultural use.** When farmers retire and no longer wish to farm their land, there is the risk they will sell the land to a developer. To keep farmland in agricultural use, new farmers are needed to pass along farming operations when a farmer retires. The data appears promising, in that ten percent of producers in Hartford and Tolland counties are "Young Producers", age 35 years or younger and 28 percent are "new and beginning producers" (meaning they have been operating for ten years or less).[16] Programs to support new and young farmers are critical along with programs that connect them to available farms.
- ACTION: Discourage the conversion of land with prime agricultural soils to non-farm uses.** Not all areas with Prime Farmland soil are currently used for agriculture. While it is not feasible to prevent the development of all Prime Farmland in the Region, there are large clusters that, if preserved, could contribute to the Region's food system in the future. Outside of outright acquisition, these areas could be reserved for future



farming use through zoning. A few CROG communities have adopted Agriculture zones that limit permitted uses to agriculture-related uses. Rocky Hill zoned farmland along the Connecticut River as “Agricultural” and only allows agricultural uses, wildlife sanctuaries, and recreational uses. Other communities in the Region also have adopted agricultural zones, but still allow other uses such as residential uses.

### **Strategy 2: Support working farms.**

We can minimize the continued loss of farmland by keeping existing farms active and economically viable by increasing the customer base, expanding the ways farms can earn income, and avoiding local regulations that make farming more challenging. Cities and towns should avoid making it harder to farm and update zoning regulations to allow for more innovative ways to grow.

- *ACTION: Encourage the expansion of allowable uses on farms.* Some expansions might be directly related to the products grown on site – e.g., direct sales to customers or equipment for processing. Other additional uses might include agritourism, also known as agritainment – drawing visitors to the farm for an experience.
- *ACTION: Encourage farm-friendly zoning regulations.* Municipalities should simplify the approval process for farm use, where appropriate. For example, requiring a special permit/exception lengthens the approval process and is more expensive for the applicant. Partner organizations provide resources that can help municipalities understand regulatory barriers to farmers.

- *ACTION: Understand the unique barriers faced by generational family farms.* While we need additional farming opportunities (see next strategy), many farms in Connecticut are family farms and are passed down from one generation to another. To continue supporting these working farms, the community needs to understand the challenge of “urban migration.” Newer generations of historic farm families are more often leaving the farm for more urban areas, leaving the parents and older generation to keep farming. This urban migration represents a global crisis: the average age of farmers keeps rising and without enough young people to continue the work, the very notion of a family farm becomes endangered.

### **Strategy 3: Expand farming opportunities and innovations, including for urban and suburban agricultural producers.**

We can expand the Region’s food system by encouraging innovative methods and growing in non-traditional locations in the suburbs and cities.

- *ACTION: Encourage municipalities to allow vacant lots to be used for agricultural uses and agricultural-education uses.* Farming does not always require hundreds of acres of land. Allowing and encouraging small-scale operations, including community gardens on vacant lots, in developed areas can connect residents to growing practices and provide education.
- *ACTION: Encourage municipalities to amend zoning regulations to allow for emerging approaches to growing in built areas.* Innovations include vertical farming, aquaponics, and indoor cultivation. Municipalities, with assistance from CROG or entities like the Connecticut Farm Bureau, should review regulations to determine if innovations are permitted.

- **ACTION: Improve the viability of urban farming.** Groups such as KNOX, Inc and New Britain ROOTs are bringing small-scale cultivation to the Region’s cities. Other cities and towns can look to their success and to overcome soil challenges in urban areas. Improved access to compost soil, soil rehabilitation, cleaning mushrooms, and soil testing are possible approaches.
- **ACTION: Support programs that enhance opportunities for minority farmers.** Producers in Hartford and Tolland counties are predominantly white (98%), with one percent Asian and less than one percent other races. Only one percent of producers are Hispanic or Latino. Refer to data in appendix.
- **ACTION: Support the creation and expansion of places for innovation such as regional shared kitchen, shared production spaces, and incubator farms.**

#### **Strategy 4: Ensure access to healthy and locally grown foods and eliminate persistent food deserts.**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food security as “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life” [17]. The USDA has identified areas where food access is a challenge [see Map x], generally described as “food deserts”. Factors used to identify food deserts include income, poverty level, access to a car, and distance to a grocery store. For a full description see the USDA documentation [18].

Food deserts in the Region are generally located in the Region’s urban neighborhoods – Hartford, New Britain, and parts of East Hartford, Bloomfield, Windsor, Vernon, Manchester, and Enfield. Two outliers include Stafford and Mansfield. Mansfield is likely

identified as a food desert due to low car ownership and lower income of UConn students.

Connecticut Foodshare collects data on food insecurity. Roughly 10 to 11 percent of the population in Hartford and Tolland counties face food insecurity. Rates are even greater for Black and Hispanic persons.

**Table X. Food Insecurity, 2021**

	<b>Hartford County</b>	<b>Tolland County</b>
Overall Food Insecurity Rate	11%	10%
Rate for Black population	20%	23%
Rate for Hispanic population	23%	21%
Rate for White, non-Hispanic population	6%	7%
Rate for children	13%	7%

Sources: Data provided by Connecticut Foodshare. Sources of data include U.S. Census American Community Survey and Dataset that combines Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap 2023: An Analysis of County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2021, The State of Senior Hunger in 2021, and Hunger Among Older Adult's Age 50-59 in 2021.

*Caption: Black and Hispanic communities in Hartford and Tolland counties experience three times greater food insecurity than White, non-Hispanic communities.*

- **ACTION: Connect low and moderate-income households to locally grown food.** Financial incentives to support a grocery store, co-op, or alternative solutions like mobile vendors should be explored. We should increase the supply of locally grown food to non-profits who provide food assistance and overcome any transportation or storage issues. We can also incorporate herbs, vegetables, and

“[We need] more edible plants in public space.” – Event Attendee.

street fruit and nut trees into neighborhoods, available to anyone to harvest.

- *ACTION: Work with non-profits and agricultural producers to explore a regional “food hub” concept. A food hub could include year-round vendor distribution space, cooperative operations to reduce costs, and other shared facets.*

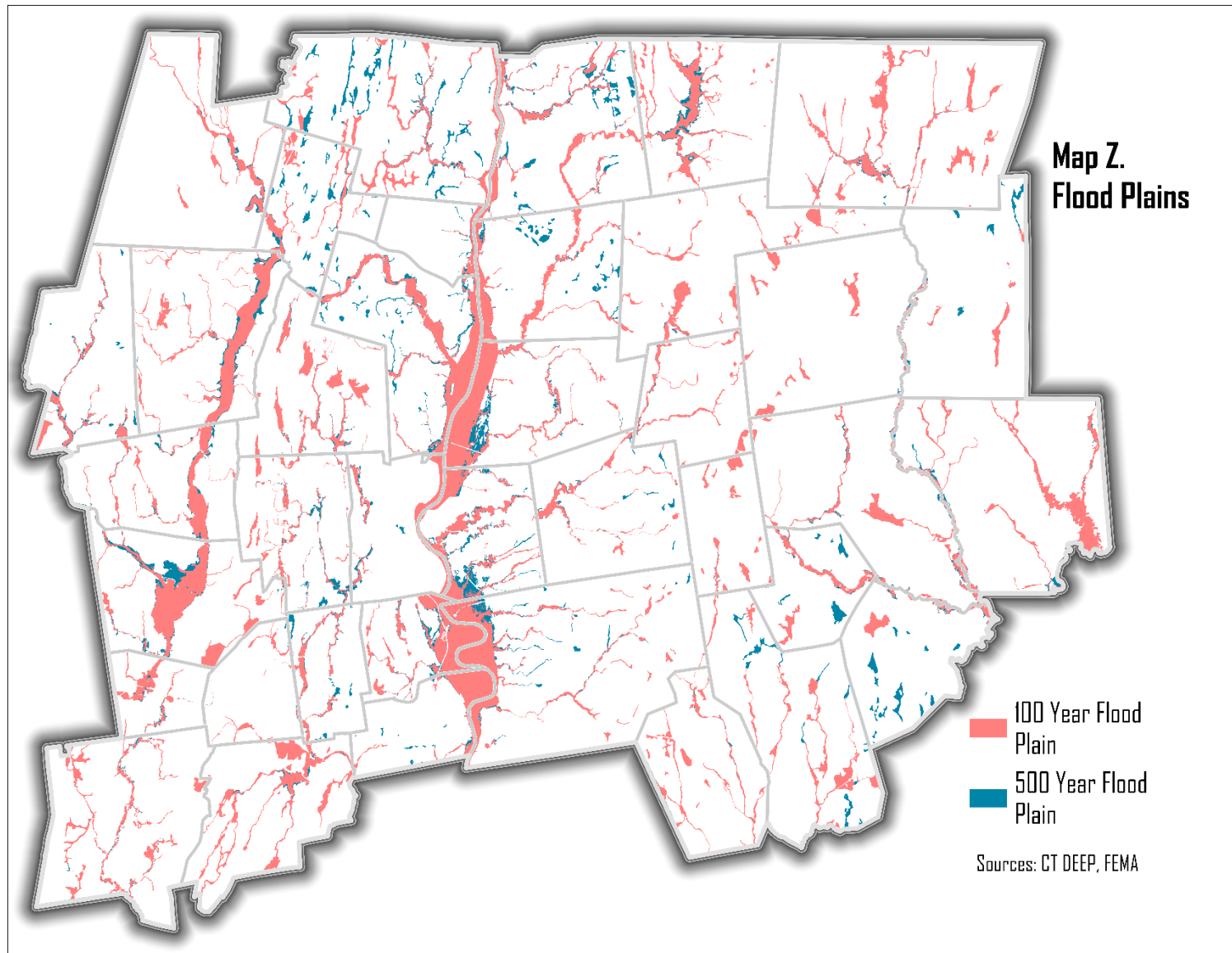
### **Strategy 5: Reduce the environmental impact of the Region’s food systems.**

Aspects of agriculture can impact our environment. Well-managed operations minimize fertilizer and pesticides reaching water resources, ensure that soil health is preserved, and properly store and dispose of waste. Emissions from agricultural equipment also contribute to climate change and food waste contributes to emissions when it ends up in landfills.

- *ACTION: Support efforts to reduce the environmental impacts of farming operations.* There are many State and non-profit programs aimed at reducing impacts to land, water, and climate through education and funding. For example, the State has programs to address the pollution emitted from farm equipment and to increase the use of renewable energy on farms. While siting solar, or other forms of alternative energy, should be avoided on Prime Farmland soils, alternative energy infrastructure can be incorporated into farming operations. Lowering energy costs can help farms remain financially viable. Other actions require innovation and may need regional support to create economies of scale. This is true for newer waste technologies such as anaerobic digesters.
- *ACTION: Work with municipalities on reducing the amount of food in the waste stream.* CRCOG can identify a range of

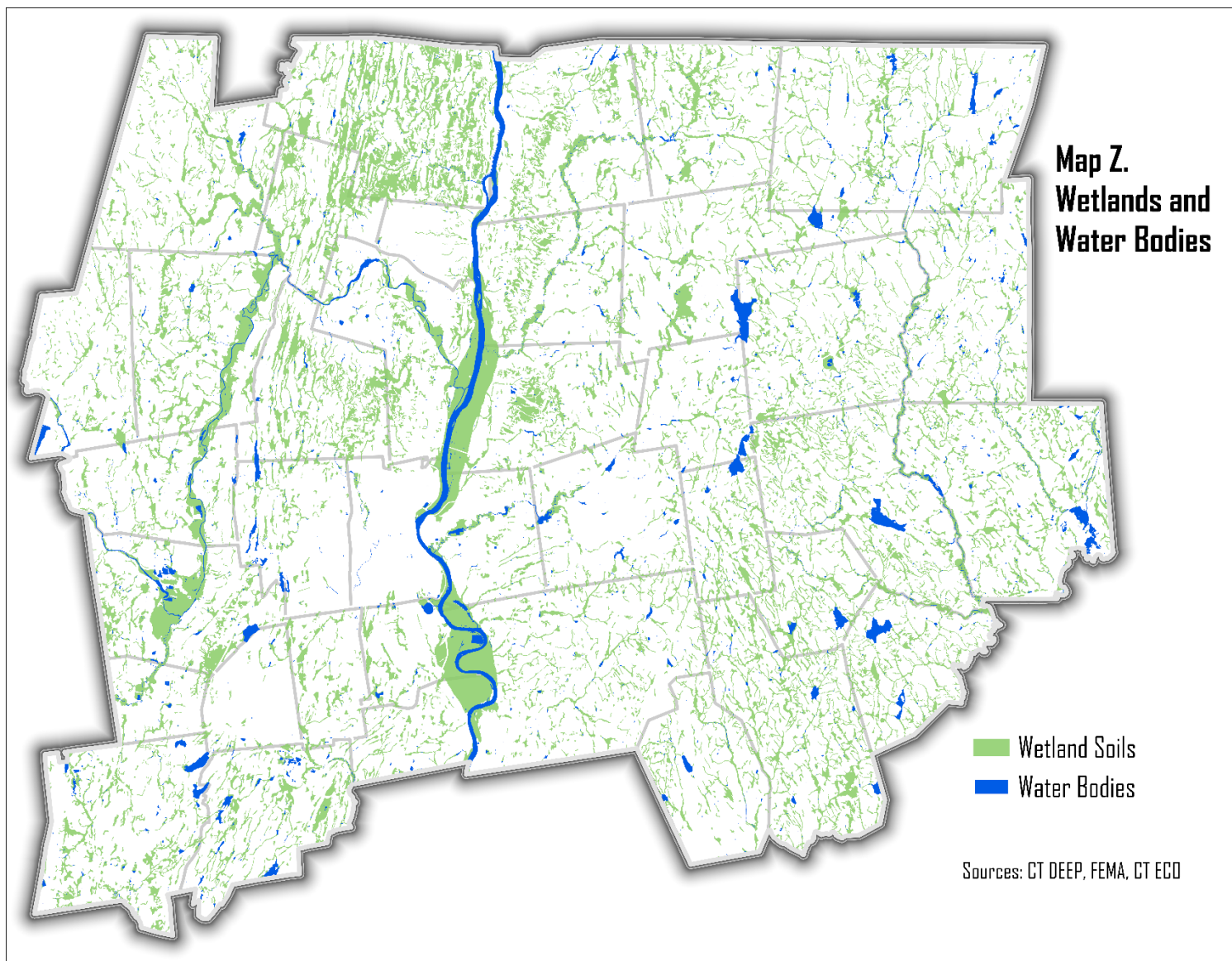
options to divert food waste from landfills and assist with piloting programs. Consumer education on reducing food waste and how to repurpose remaining waste (composting, collection, etc.) should play a critical role.

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



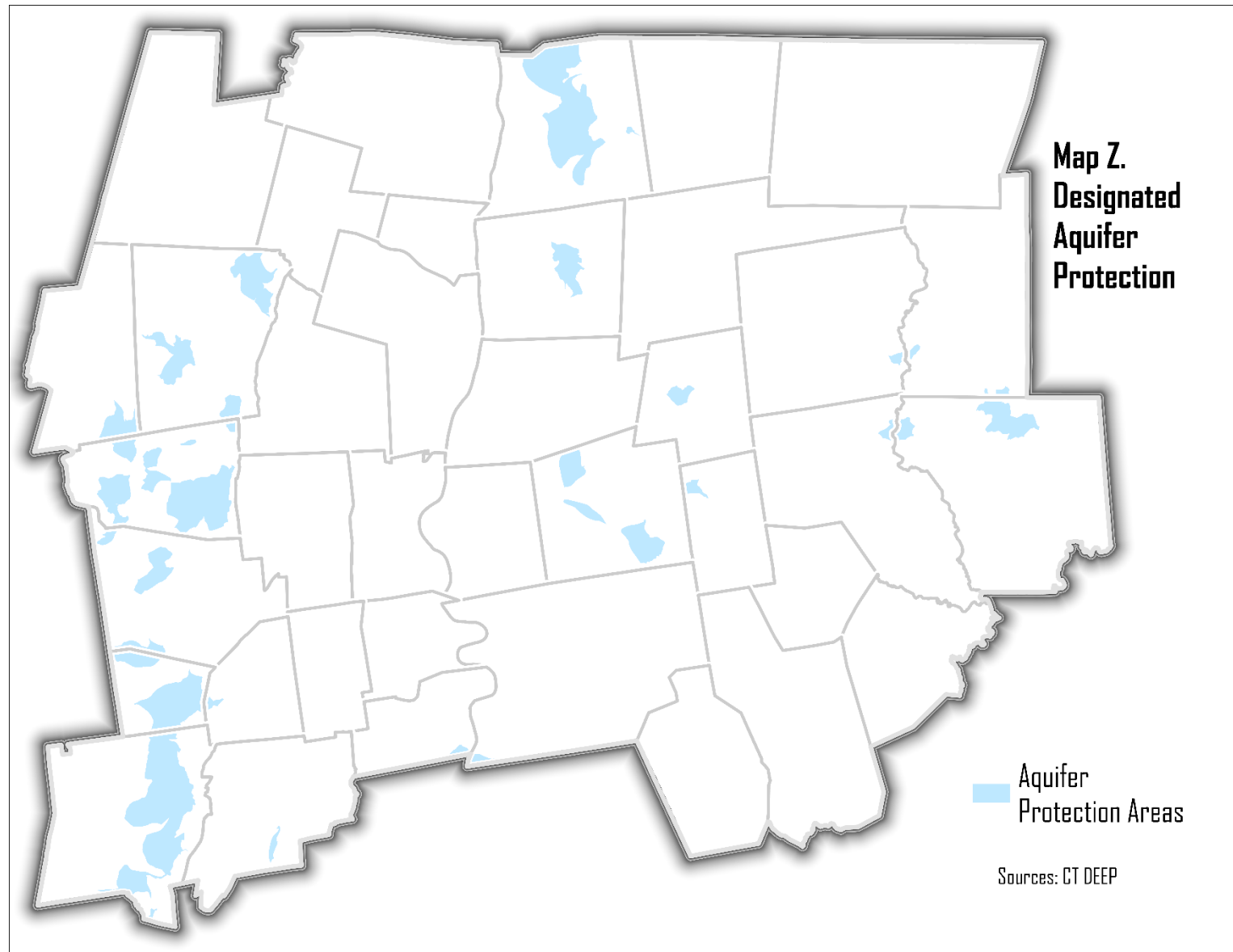
*Caption: The largest expanses of 100- and 500-year floodplain are located along the Connecticut and Farmington rivers.*

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: Wetlands are dispersed throughout the region, with heavy concentrations along the Region's waterways, including the Connecticut River.*

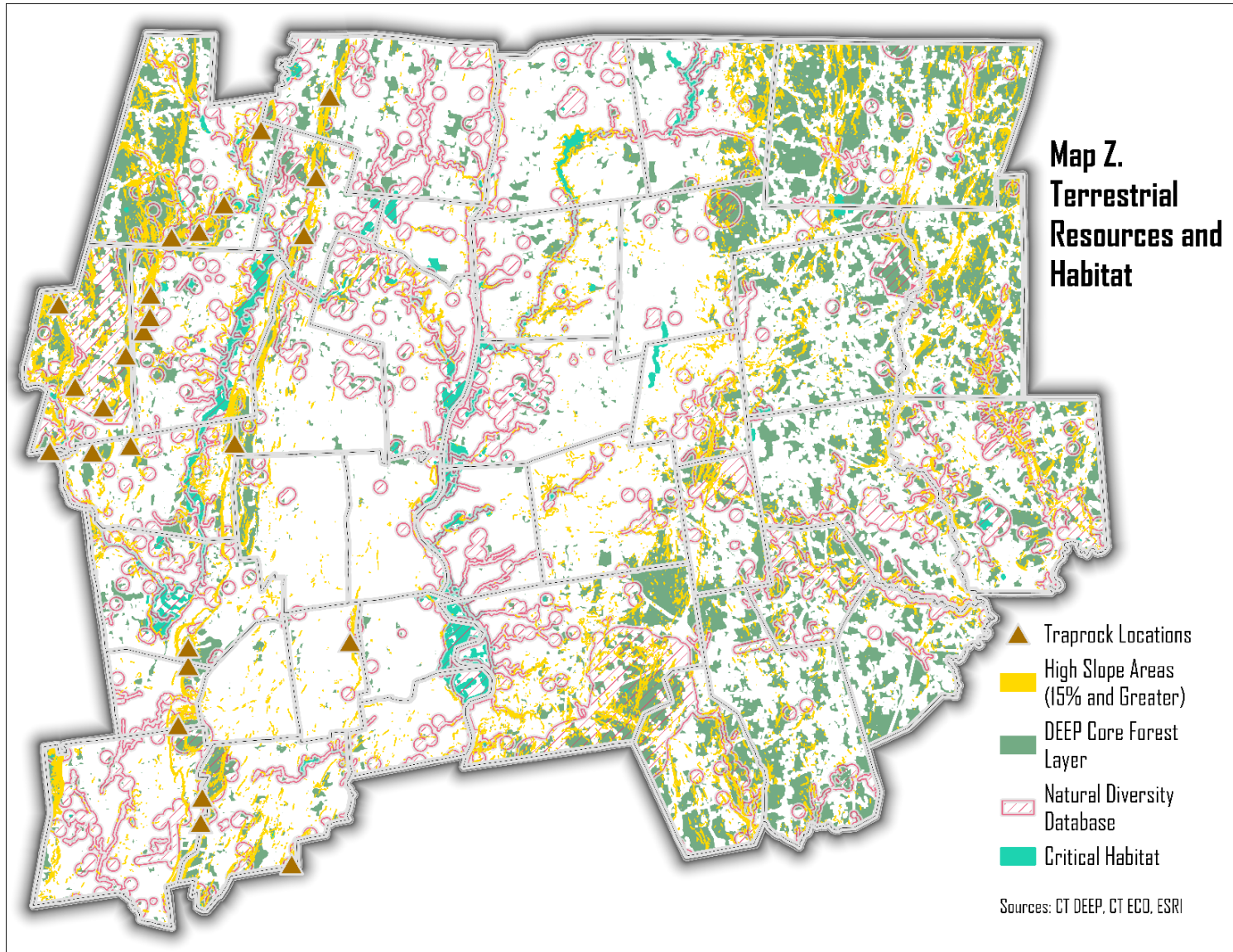
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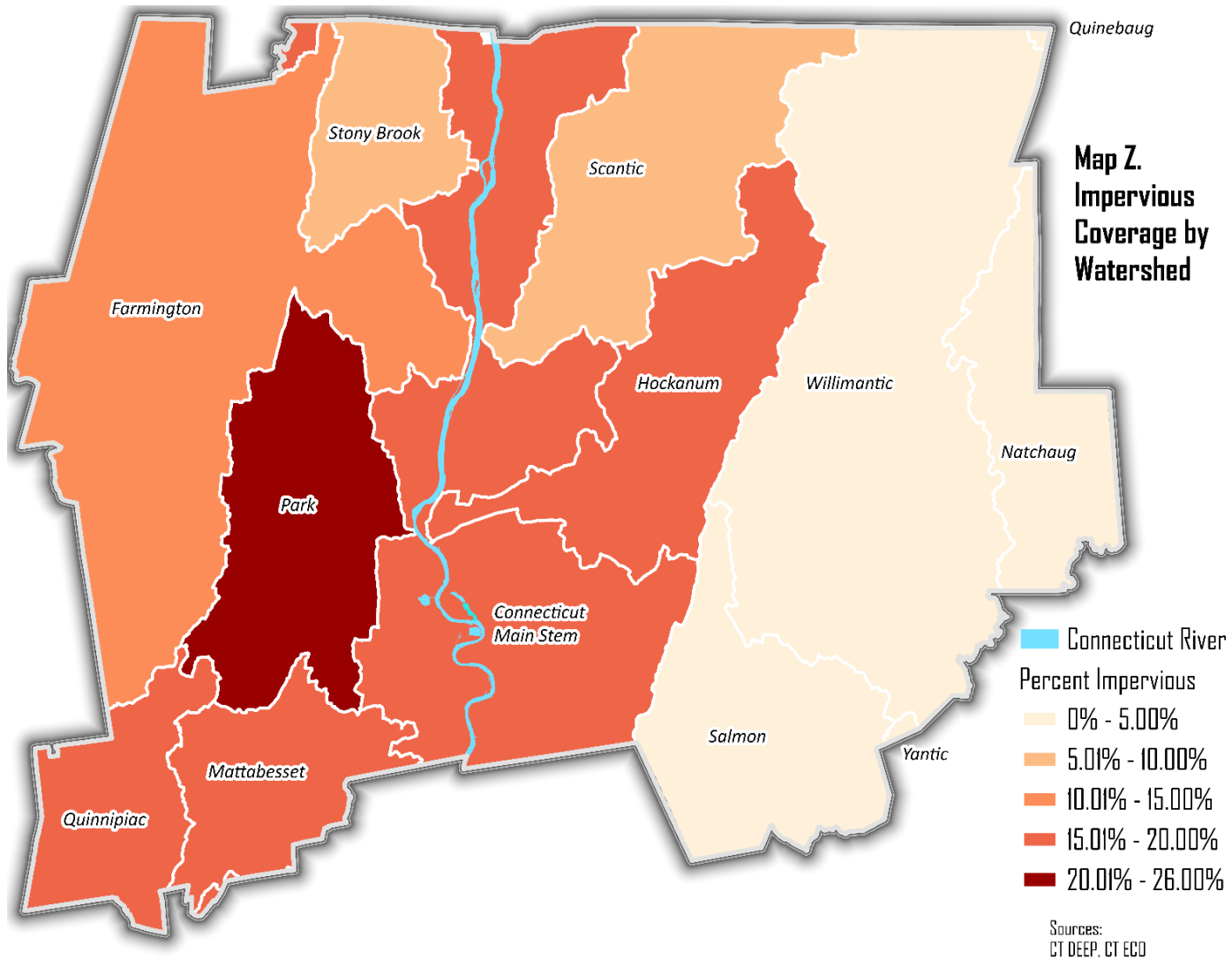
*Caption: Approximately five percent of the Region is a designated Aquifer Protection Area.*



NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.

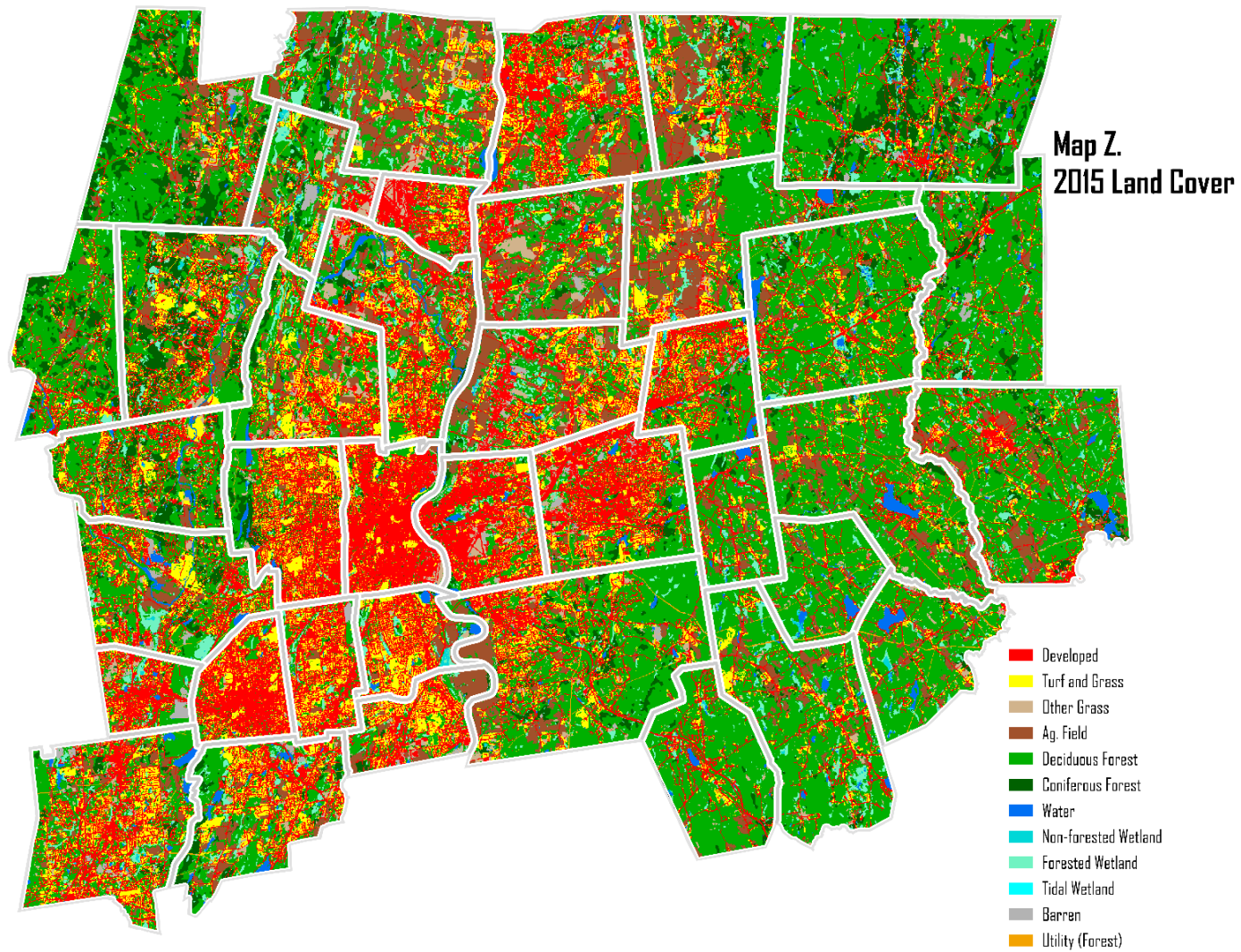


*Caption: Most steep slope areas are on the Eastern and Western edges of the region, while Traprock Ridges are along the Metacomet Ridge. Many critical habitat areas lie adjacent to the Connecticut and Farmington rivers.*



*Caption: Only the easternmost watersheds in the region are well-below the tipping point for impervious coverage.*

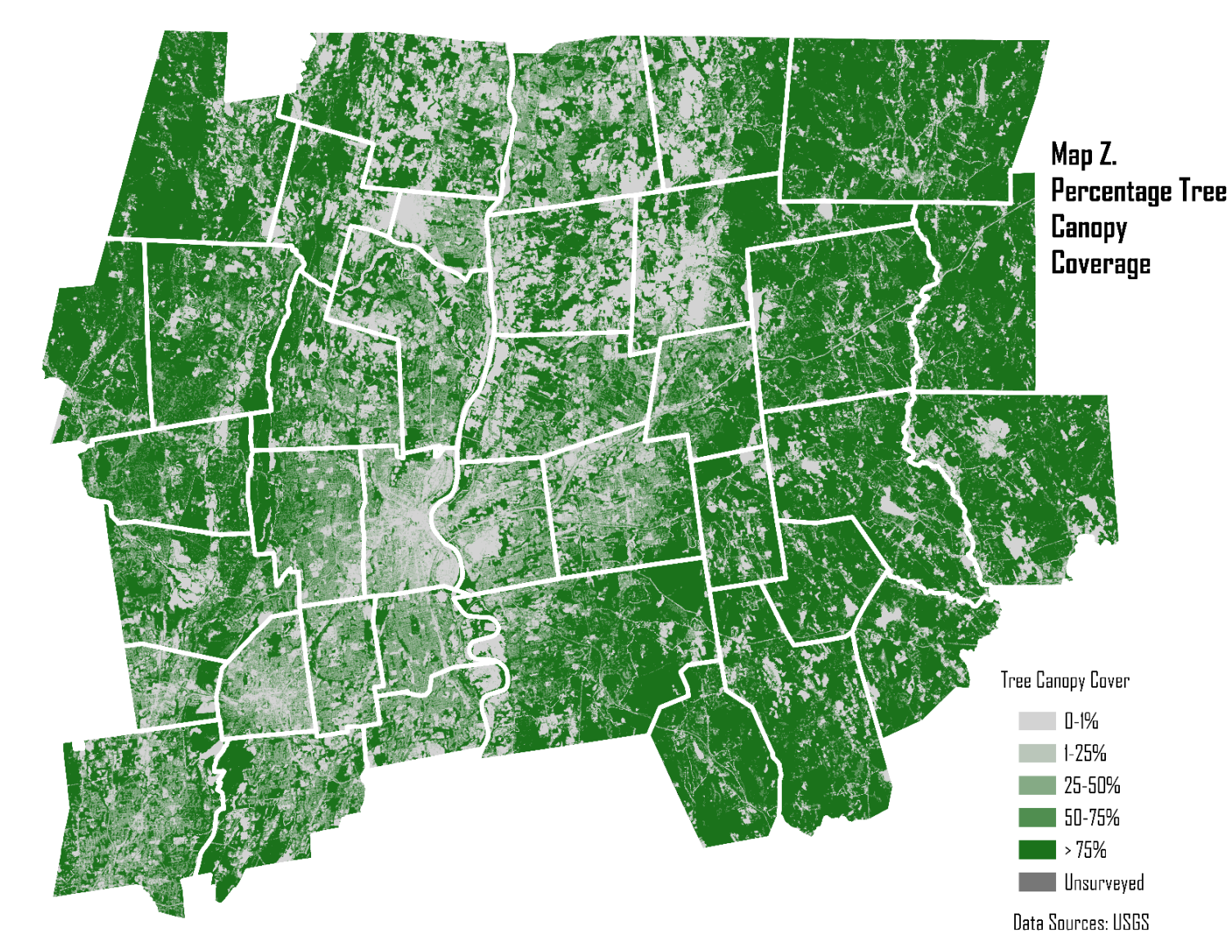
NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: Most land in Hartford, New Britain, and adjacent towns is developed, while the eastern and northwest parts of the Region are characterized by deciduous forest cover.*

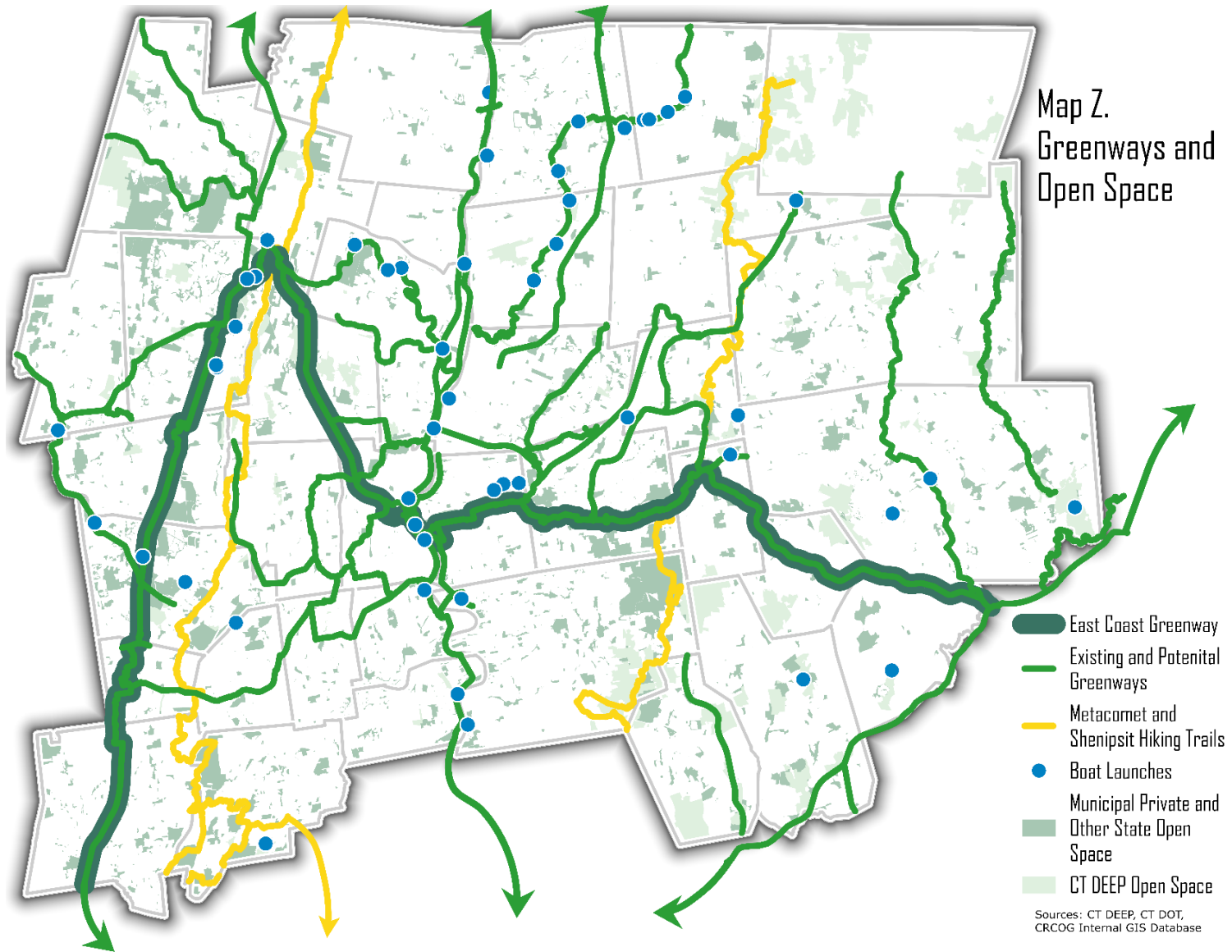


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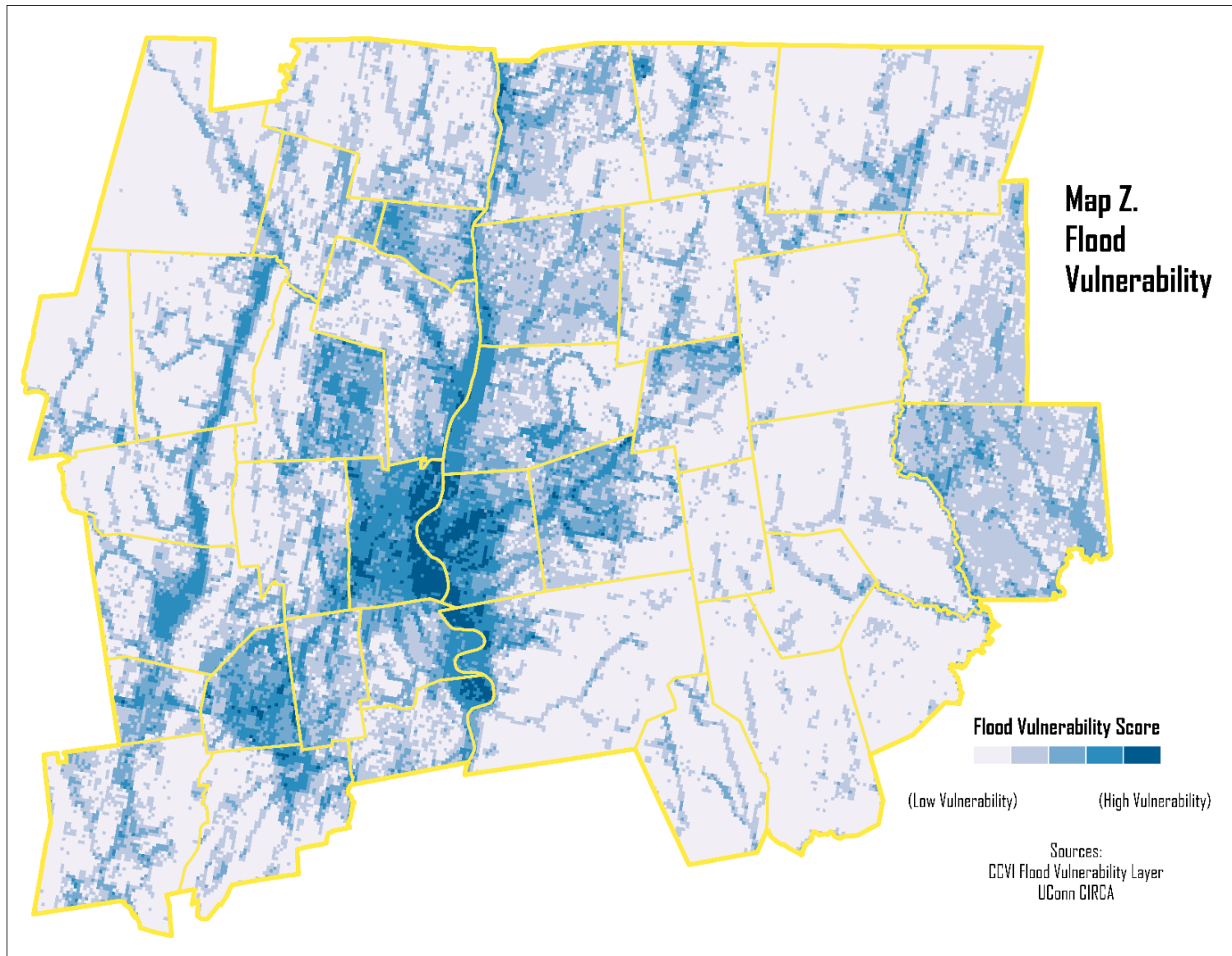
*Caption: Most cities in the region have less canopy cover than rural areas. Small patches of land with low canopy cover in rural areas may be associated with farmland.*

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: Between East Coast Greenway and hiking trails, a framework for a connected greenway and open space system is in place.*

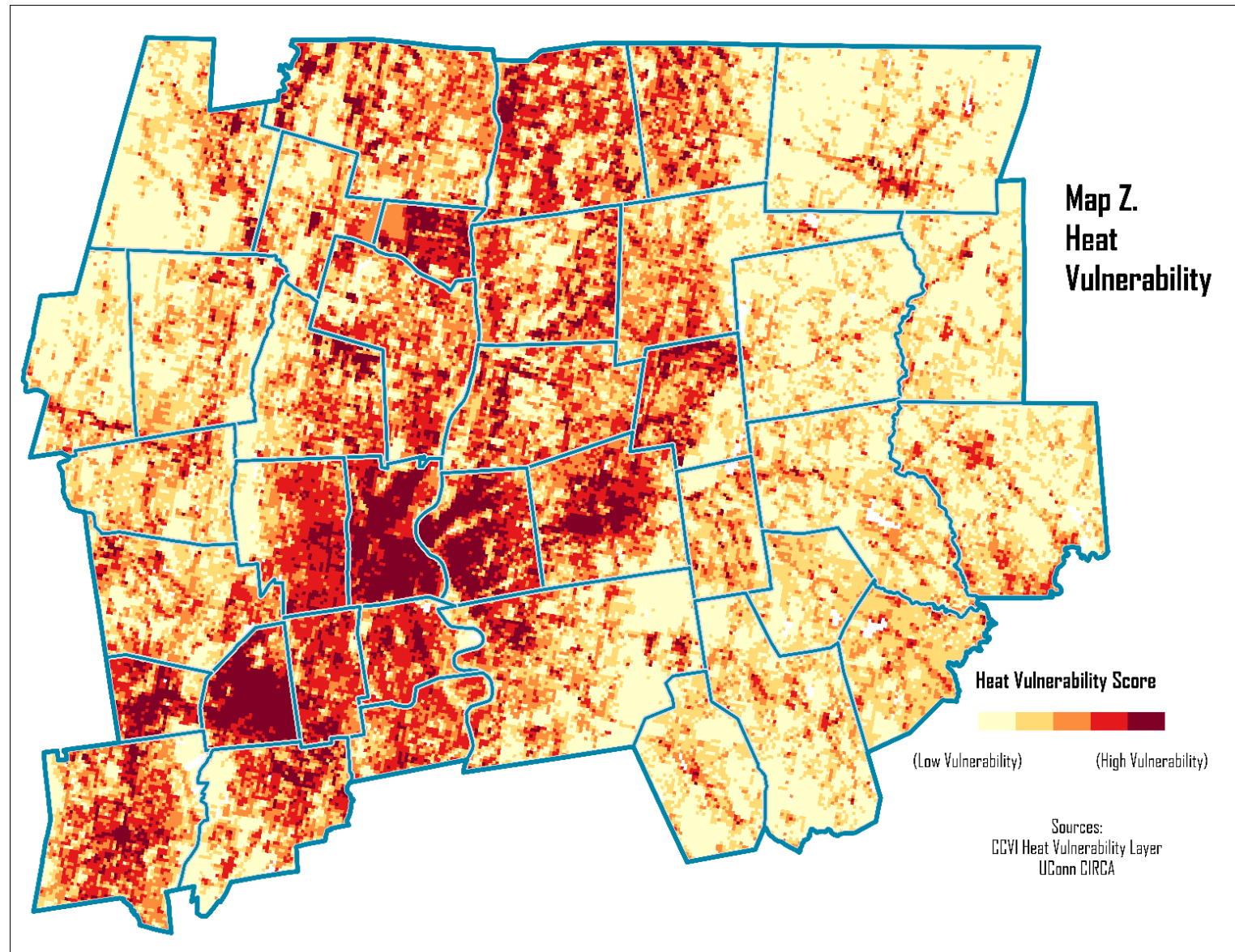
NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: Flood vulnerability is highest in areas adjacent to the Connecticut River and other major rivers in the Region.*

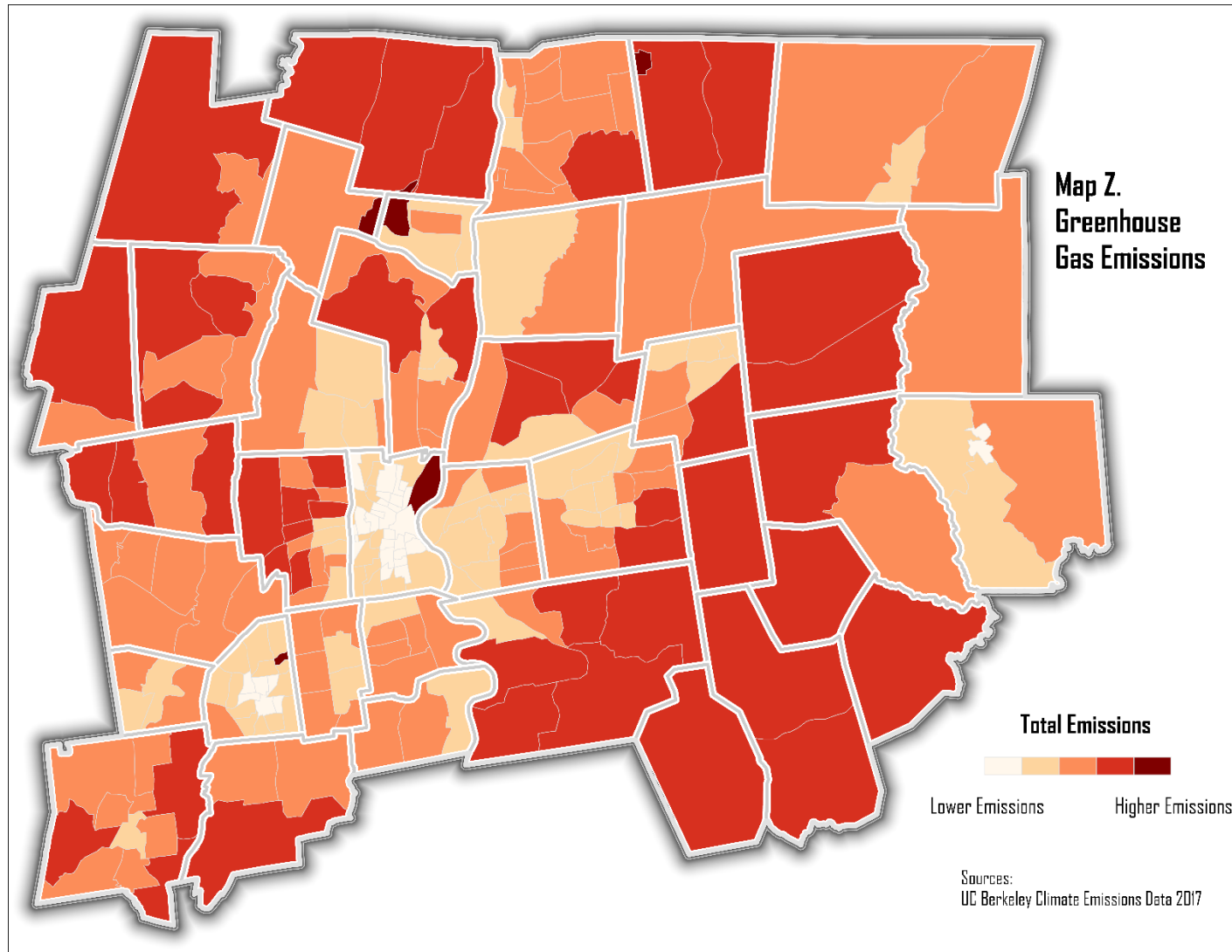


NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



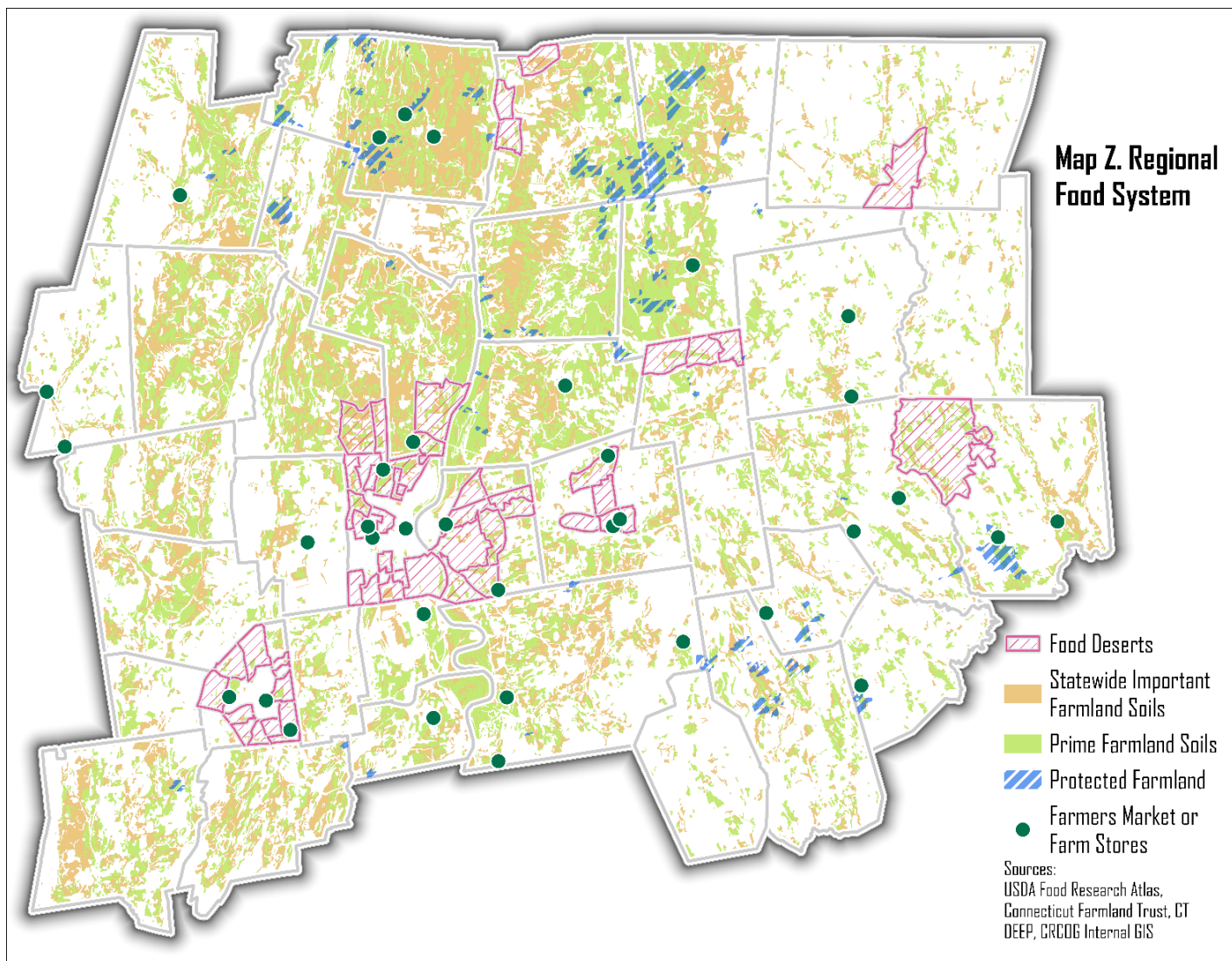
*Caption: Heat vulnerability is highest in and near urban areas and areas with vast farmland.*

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: Suburban and rural areas tend to produce higher greenhouse gas emissions due to car-dependent land use patterns. High emission areas include the landfill in Hartford and Bradley International Airport.*

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: Food deserts are found in the region's more urban areas, with some exceptions.*

<b>SUMMARY OF ACTIONS (sample action table – will be updated to match actions in text and identify if CRCOG is lead, partner or supporter)</b>		
<b>GOAL: Protect our Region’s natural resources and landscapes and minimize impacts from development and human activity.</b>		
Strategy 1: Increase the Region’s capacity to protect natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Guide development to areas best suited for development.</li> <li>• ACTION: Encourage the Region’s cities and towns to adopt best practices to minimize impacts when development occurs.</li> <li>• ACTION: Monitor environmental-related laws and regulations, understand challenges and gaps in staff and volunteer expertise at the local level, and seek regional approaches to addressing gaps.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Work with other COGs and conservation advocates to understand if existing tools might need to be updated to effectively protect the Region’s natural resources.</li> <li>• ACTION: Convene, or help convene, regional meetings for municipal conservation commissions so they can exchange ideas and experiences.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Improve water quality of the Connecticut River, and the Region’s other rivers, streams, waterbodies, and groundwater.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Protect buffers along rivers, streams, and waterbodies where feasible.</li> <li>• ACTION: Reduce impervious surfaces and associated impacts through green infrastructure and other techniques.</li> <li>• ACTION: Identify cross-boundary or watershed-level issues and opportunities for collaboration, studies, and projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Work with other partners to advocate for innovative septic systems in Connecticut.</li> <li>• ACTION: Help municipalities implement stormwater (MS4) requirements.</li> <li>• ACTION: Actively support and urge progress on regional projects aimed at improving water quality.</li> </ul>
Strategy 3: Protect and enhance terrestrial habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Avoid irreversible impacts to unique habitats and landscapes in the Region, such as traprock ridges and the Atlantic White Cedar Forest.</li> <li>• ACTION: Minimize fragmentation of larger intact forest and overall loss of tree cover.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Increase small-scale neighborhood level greenery and habitat including in the Region’s denser neighborhoods.</li> <li>• ACTION: Support the creation or remediation of habitat including urban wooded areas and wetlands, and meadows throughout the Region.</li> </ul>
Strategy 4: Balance water supply with ecosystem considerations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Encourage multi-jurisdictional planning for source protection, interconnections, and the identification of future water supplies.</li> <li>• ACTION: Help municipalities integrate water supply planning considerations into POCDs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Ensure that the development and expansion of sources and interconnections have minimal environmental impact.</li> </ul>
<b>GOAL: Cultivate spaces that connect people to nature and their community.</b>		
Strategy 1: Promote open space as a community, cultural, economic, and health asset, in addition to its common use for protecting natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Permanently protect natural features and resources that are important to the Region and State and that help achieve resiliency goals.</li> <li>• ACTION: Provide smaller-scale pocket parks and gardens.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Showcase the Region’s open spaces.</li> <li>• ACTION: Ensure that everyone in the Region can access parks and open space.</li> <li>• ACTION: Support municipalities with open space stewardship.</li> </ul>



Strategy 2: Connect the Region's open space through a regional greenway system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Promote the Connecticut River and its tributaries as the Region's greenway "spine".</li> <li>• ACTION: Implement linear bikeways and pathways that connect open space.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Identify key natural or wildlife corridors that connect the Region's natural areas and encourage preservation as open space.</li> </ul>
Strategy 3: Integrate natural features (biophilic concepts) into development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Assist our communities in integrating biophilic concepts in local plans and policies and provide model zoning regulations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Integrate nature-based designs into transportation and complete streets projects.</li> </ul>
<b>GOAL: Reduce regional gas emissions and adapt to climate change.</b>		
Strategy 1: Actively implement greenhouse gas reducing projects identified in the Regional Comprehensive Climate Action Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Work with the municipalities to identify priorities and seek funding to implement them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Actively showcase successfully implemented projects to educate and motivate CRCOG communities to take on similar initiatives.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Connect communities with tools and resources to address climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Reduce transportation emissions.</li> <li>• ACTION: Encourage municipalities to consider the connections between land use and emissions.</li> <li>• ACTION: Provide guidance to municipalities on state mandates that require the accommodation of new energy sources and climate-friendly infrastructure such as electric vehicle charging stations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Work with partners to help CRCOG municipalities address climate change in local POCDs.</li> <li>• ACTION: Help find funding to implement projects.</li> </ul>
Strategy 3: Develop a more sustainable waste management system for the Region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support State waste management efforts, including the Connecticut Coalition for Sustainable Materials Management (CCSMM).</li> <li>• ACTION: Aid local efforts at waste reduction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Identify cross-boundary and regional waste reduction programs.</li> <li>• ACTION: Ingrain the concept of a Circular Economy into aspects of CRCOG's work including work on solid waste.</li> </ul>
Strategy 4: Ensure the Region's approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation provides for all aspects of equity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Work with existing environmental justice groups at the State and local level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Incorporate distributive, procedural, contextual, and corrective equity into regional climate efforts.</li> <li>• ACTION: Develop metrics to measure progress.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal: Improve the resiliency of the Region.</b>		
Strategy 1: Incorporate the concept of resiliency into everyday planning and government operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Use data to enhance resiliency.</li> <li>• ACTION: Use scenario planning to explore and understand future unknowns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Share staff regionally to avoid gaps in service provisions.</li> </ul>

Strategy 2: Improve the resilience of the built environment and infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support diversification of the Region's energy sources and increase redundancy.</li> <li>• ACTION: Ensure that future development and infrastructure are located away from vulnerable, flood prone areas and built in ways to withstand hazards.</li> <li>• ACTION: Increase awareness and use of more comprehensive lifecycle cost analysis which accounts for disruptions due to hazards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Promote the creation of resilience hubs.</li> <li>• ACTION: Support additional research and educational efforts on impacts to private infrastructure, such as septic systems and private wells</li> </ul>
Strategy 3: Improve the resiliency of our social networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Identify key partners that are connected to and trusted by the Region's marginalized and vulnerable residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support investment in and cooperation among regional entities that are most critical during a disruption.</li> </ul>
<b>GOAL: Support a sustainable and equitable regional food system.</b>		
Strategy 1: Support the preservation of farmland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Promote tools and programs to permanently preserve farmland for agricultural use.</li> <li>• ACTION: Support programs that keep farmland in agricultural use.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Discourage the conversion of land with prime agricultural soils to non-farm uses.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Support working farms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Encourage the expansion of allowable uses on farms.</li> <li>• ACTION: Encourage farm-friendly zoning regulations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Understand the unique barriers faced by generational family farms</li> </ul>
Strategy 3: Expand farming opportunities and innovations, including for urban and suburban agricultural producers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Encourage municipalities to allow vacant lots to be used for agricultural uses and agricultural-education uses.</li> <li>• ACTION: Encourage municipalities to amend zoning regulations to allow for emerging approaches to growing in built areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Improve the viability of urban farming.</li> <li>• ACTION: Support programs that enhance opportunities for minority farmers.</li> <li>• ACTION: Support the creation and expansion of places for innovation such as regional shared kitchen, shared production spaces, and incubator farms.</li> </ul>
Strategy 4: Ensure access to healthy and locally grown foods and eliminate persistent food deserts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Connect low and moderate-income households to locally grown food.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Work with non-profits and agricultural producers to explore a regional "food hub" concept.</li> </ul>
Strategy 5: Reduce the environmental impact of the Region's food system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support efforts to reduce the environmental impacts of farming operations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Work with municipalities on reducing the amount of food in the waste stream.</li> </ul>



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# Chapter 6: Develop a Competitive and Inclusive Regional Economy

The Region is home to 577,510 jobs and approximately 44,600 employers, ranging from global or national corporations like Aetna (in Hartford) and Jackson Laboratory (in Farmington) to small, locally owned businesses. The Region is also home to the State's international airport, which is a significant economic engine.

The flagship campus of the University of Connecticut (UConn) is in our Region, along with a new UConn downtown branch and a number of other higher education establishments. These institutions contribute significantly to the Region's economy. CRCOG previously partnered with our counterpart over the state border – the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission – to leverage its knowledge-based economic assets. The result was a 2014 plan titled “One Region, One Future” that outlined collaborative economic development initiatives. Many of its recommendations are incorporated throughout this Plan.

In addition to jobs, economic development provides residents with goods and services, opportunities to have fun, and helps to fund the delivery of local services through property tax contributions. A high quality of life has enabled us to attract the skilled workforce necessary for a strong economy.

When the last POCD was adopted, Connecticut's economy was improving – we were experiencing a modest recovery from the 2009 recession, unemployment was declining, and our State government was beginning to address the long term underfunding

of retirement systems for public sector employees. In 2020, the pandemic slammed the brakes on the tepid but real recovery our Region was experiencing. The Connecticut Business and Industry Association reported that more than one-third of the State's small businesses closed. Unemployment soared as businesses furloughed and laid off employees. Black and Latina/o residents and women of all races were disproportionately impacted by business closings and layoffs. Businesses of all sizes scrambled to figure out how to keep operating and keep workers safe.

As businesses were trying to operate in the face of a global pandemic, Connecticut experienced the start of the “Silver Tsunami” as Baby Boomers reached retirement age. This national demographic shift presents a massive loss of institutional knowledge and expertise in the public and private sectors and is still underway. The Region's employers cite gaps in workforce readiness, including a disconnect between the skills employers are looking for and the skills held by new graduates.

It is worth considering the long-term economic trends for our Region and State. While the pandemic had an obvious negative impact on economic activity worldwide and was particularly severe in Hartford, economic growth in Connecticut and the Region has been stagnant for many years, predating both the pandemic and Great Recession. Statewide payroll employment in 2023 is only 20,000 above the February 1989 figure, while 22,000 below the March 2008 figure [1].

The State's recovery from the Great Recession has been slow. Consider the following statewide economic trends since the Great Recession [2]:

- Nonfarm employment growth through June 2023 was 14.4 percentage points lower than the U.S. growth rate, leaving

a deficit of roughly 246,000 jobs if Connecticut's nonfarm employment growth had mirrored the national rate.

- For the same period, Connecticut's personal income growth was 30.2 percentage points lower than the U.S. If personal income growth in the State tracked the U.S. rate, the State's budget potentially could have seen at least several hundreds of millions of dollars in additional revenue.
- Lastly, Connecticut's nominal gross domestic product (GDP) growth through the fourth quarter of 2022 was 37.9 percentage points lower than the growth rate for the U.S. If Connecticut's GDP growth had mirrored the U.S. rate, the State's GDP would be nearly \$89 billion larger, which would provide billions of dollars in additional revenue.

more competitive, and supporting economic development efforts in rural parts of the Region.

This Plan, coupled with the CEDS, provides an opportunity to work together to reverse these trends. The Region has a solid foundation to address challenges. Educational attainment is high across the Region and State, as are median household incomes compared to national figures. Among many measures of prosperity, the Capitol Region scores on par or slightly higher than the national average for metrics such as school poverty.

Fortunately, there is a broad degree of consensus among policymakers regarding necessary actions and reforms. Implementing fundamental reform is never easy, but outlining a path forward is an essential foundation. To that end, both CRCOG and the State's Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) have identified policies to help set our economy on a more prosperous path, in part through the CEDS and DECD's Economic Action Plan.

This Plan emphasizes the importance of place as a foundation for a successful economy, starting with the critical need to make Hartford a vibrant center city, making our suburban communities

# Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Every five years, a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, or CEDS, is required to be prepared and updated, making it one CRCOG's core planning documents. When CRCOG's last CEDS plan was published in 2019, projections anticipated a period of growth, with a strong insurance and financial sector, resurgent advanced manufacturing, emerging biotech, and other strengths. The pandemic upended the global economy in unexpected ways, forcing both governments and businesses to shift their focus to reconfigure ways for businesses operate and recruit workers, households to adjust to sudden job losses (and gains) and adapt to a new normal.

In June 2022, CRCOG began working with partner organizations to update the CEDS for 2024-2029. The resulting plan "*ACT Greater Hartford – A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Growth and Equity in the Capitol Region*" emphasized specific actions and committed partners necessary to fully recovery from the economic fallout from the pandemic.

The CEDS update involved researching and analyzing economic and demographic data and engaged stakeholders. Key findings from that process informed the development of the CEDS strategies, which are summarized below and reflected in POCD goals:

- Racial equity is improving in the Region. There are areas for improvement though including median wages, unemployment, poverty, educational attainment, disconnected youth, school poverty, and rent burden.
- The Capitol Region is struggling with resilience relating to the economy, infrastructure, housing, community capital,

and institutions. Also notable, from an industry perspective, the Capitol Region's top five industry sectors – health care and social assistance, government, manufacturing, retail trade, and finance and insurance, which altogether account for 57 percent of all jobs — showed signs of weakening resilience over the past five years.

- As older workers retire in large numbers, attracting and retaining young people will be critical to the health of the Region's workforce.
- The office space sector is declining rapidly, and housing costs remain a challenge.

The CEDS update committee recognized that **diversity** is needed for a not only for better representation, but also for fresh ideas and innovation; the need for **equity** stems from an understanding that not everyone starts from the same place or has access to the same opportunities in life and that everyone should have access to the resources, support and opportunities they need to succeed; and **inclusion** is needed to ensure everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and that inclusive regions tend to be more innovative, productive, and better able to serve diverse needs.

Much like this POCD, the core principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) were integrated into strategic planning efforts, recommendations, and implementation actions. The 2023 CEDS builds on the inclusive themes of other city, regional, and statewide economic and workforce planning initiatives, celebrating progress and bringing attention to five priority areas.

## CEDS GOALS

### GOAL 1: Adapt the physical environment to meet current and future needs of businesses and residents

- Focus on adaptive reuse of buildings in urban and suburban core areas
- Reshape the regional housing market
- Advance regional connectivity

**Game Changer Initiative:** *Develop a 360-degree regional future housing strategy that addresses supply, affordability, and availability to advance equitable, environmentally friendly, and healthy residential development.*

### GOAL 2: Break down barriers for entrepreneurs and small businesses

- Take the pulse of the entrepreneurial ecosystem
- Grow youth entrepreneurship opportunities
- Create a front door to the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem
- Expand access to capital for entrepreneurs and small businesses

**Game Changer Initiative:** *Establish a networked navigation system for entrepreneurs and small businesses so that they can more easily access information and resources by location/distance, specific needs, target populations, business type (innovation-led, main street, second stage), growth stage, peer advisors, investment partners, and more.*

### GOAL 3: Hyperfocus on existing businesses

- Significantly expand business retention and expansion efforts

- Prioritize investment into training and retaining the future workforce
- Support industry-led workforce development efforts for business-driven outcomes
- Establish consistent messaging that is regionally shared
- Launch a ‘smart’ data-driven talent attraction campaign
- Focus business attraction on emerging opportunities

**Game Changer Initiative:** *Conduct a national talent attraction campaign for hard-to-fill positions within target industries and provide workforce development programming for young adults as a key part of a business retention and expansion program.*

### GOAL 4: Create equitable economic opportunity

- Embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) regionally
- Take a collaborative, place-based, neighborhood-scale approach to development
- Fix the broken rung to advance women and underrepresented employees into more senior roles

**Game Changer Initiative:** *Conduct a 360-degree career pathways analysis and strategy for the Region’s economy. Identify barriers to entry and advancement along the career pathways for underrepresented and under supported communities and develop a framework to break down these barriers.*

### GOAL 5: Restructure the CEDS implementation framework

- Restructure the CEDS Implementation Committee
- Procure multi-year funding to hire an experienced executive

**Game Changer Initiative:** *Focus on getting things done by hiring an independent, highly skilled executive whose mission is to advance the goals and objectives of the CEDS and assist with the implementation of transformational initiative.*

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## Goals, Strategies and Actions

### **Goal: Build regional economic development capacity and support.**

#### **Strategies to achieve the goal:**

- Strategy 1: Implement the CEDS and support existing State economic development efforts.
- Strategy 2: Establish CROG's role as an Economic Development District.
- Strategy 3: Improve the resiliency of our economy.
- Strategy 4: Develop a cooperative framework for municipal tax incentives.

#### **Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:**

- Amount of EDA funds secured for region.
- Additional datapoints contained in the CEDs.
- Gross regional product.

At the local level, a common theme across multiple departments and disciplines is a lack of capacity. Only a few municipalities in our Region have dedicated economic development staff. In many cases, such a role is assumed by planning directors, which can create occasional tension between the regulatory function of land use and zoning regulation with the recruitment and retention aspects of economic development. Cities and towns with dedicated economic development staff are more likely to have the capacity to focus on business and recruitment efforts and critical tasks like grant writing, business assistance, or developing financial incentive programs.

As a result, economic development capacity varies greatly between communities. In a state where property taxes are the main source of revenue for towns, attracting new businesses helps grow the grand list to reduce the tax burden on residents. Not only does that system set up competition between towns but towns with dedicated economic development staff are more likely to fare better overall.

In such a competitive framework, it is difficult for towns to envision economic development at a regional scale. However, labor and consumer markets (and thus most businesses) function at regional scales. We have the opportunity to conduct at least some portions of economic development at a regional or inter-municipal scale, such as research and analysis of labor and market trends, marketing efforts, or developing cooperative agreements on municipal tax abatement policies.

Some towns are already working together on economic development initiatives. For example, the Bradley Development League is a consortium of officials from East Granby, Suffield, Windsor, Windsor Locks, and the Connecticut Airport Authority. Their mission is to collectively market land near the airport for economic development purposes.

A regional approach can help the Region better compete with larger metropolitan areas. Connecticut and the Hartford area are often touted for our proximity to New York City and Boston rather than for our own opportunities and assets – rather than preemptively assigning our State the status of a mere bedroom community, we can proactively and enthusiastically develop our own strong identity as a more lasting strategy.

## Strategy 1: Implement the CEDS and support existing State economic development efforts.

We have broad consensus of economic development strategies to address the challenges we face. Both the CEDS and DECD's Economic Action Plan include an emphasis on place-based community investments, workforce development, retaining/attracting younger workers, and adapting to the rise in remote/hybrid work and the resulting vacant commercial office space. Fully implementing and executing existing plans and programs will help achieve our goals.

- *ACTION: Restructure the CEDS Implementation Committee.* We should identify committed partners to implement the strategies identified in the CEDS. We can then drill down into the CEDS' strategies and tasks required for implementation. The process should establish regular check-ins to measure progress.
- *ACTION: Develop and incorporate measurable outcomes to assess the impact of implementation.* Establishing metrics of success will allow policymakers to evaluate progress, course correct as necessary, and celebrate achievements. This effort can be part of a larger initiative to develop a progress-focused data dashboard for the POCD.
- *ACTION: Support the State's economic planning efforts, capitalizing on synergies where regional approaches would be beneficial for our towns.* Not only is this a beneficial approach, likely supported by funding, but town staff often are limited by day-to-day administration tasks and may not be fully attuned to opportunities at the State. We can assist towns to identify when their local efforts align with the State and when multiple

## Access to U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) Funds

Two programs offered through the EDA can potentially benefit our region, with CRCOG's EDD potentially spearheading. One such program is the Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) program is a flexible program. This program can assist state and local entities through Implementation Grants to support the execution of activities identified in a CEDS (or equivalent), such as infrastructure improvements, including site acquisition, site preparation, construction, rehabilitation, and equipping of facilities.

EDA's Public Works program helps distressed communities revitalize, expand, and upgrade their physical infrastructure. This program enables communities to attract new industry, encourage business expansion, diversify local economies, generate local investment, and create or retain long-term jobs through land acquisition, development, and infrastructure improvement projects that establish or expand industrial or commercial enterprises.

Eligible public infrastructure could include technology-based facilities such as smart rooms/ buildings; installing fiber optic cable in business and industrial parks; and building telecommunications and development facilities. It also supports traditional public works projects, including water and sewer systems improvements, industrial parks, business incubator facilities, expansion of port and harbor facilities, skill-training facilities, and brownfields redevelopment.

towns can work together to capitalize on the benefits.

- *ACTION: Reactivate the Sustainable Knowledge Corridor collaboration.* With 10 years since the last initiative, it may be

time to partner again with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to undertake additional economic development initiatives.

## **Strategy 2: Establish CRCOG's role as an Economic Development District.**

The US Economic Development Administration (EDA) has designated CRCOG as an Economic Development District (EDD) - a multi-jurisdictional planning and economic development agency. This designation adds value to the Region and will provide additional resources to help implement the goals of our CEDS. CRCOG's EDD status will increase access to regional economic development funds and infrastructure funds for individual municipalities. It opens funding opportunities for municipalities along with administrative and technical assistance and data and technology resources. Notably, EDA investments are three times higher in EDD areas (per capita) than in non-EDD areas. Between 2010 and 2019, over 78 percent of EDA grants went to areas covered by an EDD [4]. CRCOG looks to work with its partners and communities to capitalize on this new opportunity.

- *ACTION: Fully utilize our status as an officially designated Economic Development District (EDD).* CRCOG will work with the EDA to identify appropriate funding opportunities for member municipalities and partners to implement economic development projects.
- *ACTION: Create a dedicated position at CRCOG to coordinate economic development activities.* A dedicated position will build CRCOG's capacity to help our communities undertake economic development, staff the CEDS Implementation Committee and the EDD governing board, educate and market EDA opportunities to local communities, and foster

relationships with local staff, organizations and non-profits involved in similar work, and the State.

## **Strategy 3: Improve the resiliency of our economy.**

A resilient regional economy means that economic downturns and disruptions do not bring the Region to a standstill. There are some impacts from disruptions we can anticipate and plan for (e.g., zoning relief) and other impacts we might anticipate, but cannot control (e.g., supply chain disruptions).

- *ACTION: Promote diversity in land uses as a means of enhancing resilience.* A varied economic base mitigates the repercussions of disruptions in any specific sector. Communities should allow for a range of uses in their zoning regulations. Policymakers should exercise caution not to overly concentrate on any single industry, recognizing the importance of a well-rounded and adaptable economy. Local communities need to weigh the pros and cons for certain uses but should be open to considering changes to zoning and land use regulations that allow for uses that add value to the grand list. These uses will change over time based on what we demand as a society.
- *ACTION: Encourage flexibility in land use regulations so that businesses can quickly respond and adjust when a disruption occurs.* Providing flexibility in zoning during the pandemic allowed businesses to quickly adapt and adjust operations. Examples include allowing a streamlined process for outdoor dining, allowing businesses to shift to manufacturing masks, and reducing restrictions on childcare facilities.

#### **Strategy 4: Develop a cooperative framework for municipal tax incentives.**

Businesses and municipalities often make decisions at entirely different scales. Businesses make decisions in part based on regional labor and consumer markets, while local governments by their nature are concerned with activities within their borders and within their purview. As property taxes are the only significant source of local revenue, many municipalities compete to expand their tax bases, while businesses can take advantage of this dynamic to negotiate favorably tax incentive deals and/or zoning amendments.

Encouraging economic development through tax incentives can be worthwhile, as property taxes can be a considerable expense for many businesses. However, there is little available information on its broader efficacy across a region. A business may have chosen to relocate to the Region regardless of an individual municipality's tax incentives and just happened to locate to an adjacent community simply for the tax break. That is a perfectly acceptable policy outcome for the lucky community, but regional leaders should be asking broader questions about the overall local tax structure that makes arbitraging tax deals among competing municipalities possible in the first place.

- *ACTION: Conduct a study on municipal tax incentive programs in the Region.* CRCOG, acting through the EDD, can assist member municipalities with collecting and comparatively analyzing various municipal tax abatement agreements. This would provide municipal decision-makers with a stronger negotiating position when approached with requests for incentives.

## Goal: Create a 24/7 Capital City

### Strategies to achieve the goal:

- Strategy 1: Reverse Hartford's population decline and attract market-rate residential development in the City.
- Strategy 2: Support Hartford's strategy to advance Downtown's Role as the Region's Center for Commerce, Culture, and City Living.
- Strategy 3: Connect our Region's two Cities.

### Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:

- City of Hartford population.
- Number of visitors to Hartford's attractions.
- Number of new downtown housing units.

Connecticut and the Capitol Region losing ground to the Boston and New York City regions is no accident. Those cities are destinations for businesses and residents alike, bringing together financial and human capital and driving economic prosperity. A strong Capitol Region requires a strong and vibrant central core, utilizing the proximity of additional amenities and living options in adjacent communities to our advantage and inextricably linking the prosperity of our suburban and rural communities to the Capital City.

However, the built environment of the City's downtown and indeed, the highways that were constructed through the City carving it in half and cutting it off from the CT River, have prioritized the commuter population for decades. While the commuting population plays an important role in Hartford as a center of commerce and its history title as Insurance Capital of

the World, it is incredibly important to balance the needs of those who commute to the City for work or play and those of the residents living here. Hartford's population has declined over thirty percent since its peak in the 1950s, creating immense challenges for both the municipal tax base and necessary population density for a thriving urban core. Attracting people, businesses and events to Hartford will have a positive ripple effect throughout the Region. The City continues to prioritize adding residential population throughout its neighborhoods including successful focus on adding residential population to the Downtown, creating a more balanced, vibrant downtown core.

The city [Hartford] gets built for commuters but the residents are getting priced out of our homes." – Event Attendee.

Hartford was once one of the wealthiest cities in the nation in the late 1800s, and became a major manufacturing center, producing firearms, typewriters, bicycles, and even automobiles. The City hosted a strong economy and quality of life. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, immigrants from Italy, Poland and Ireland moved to the Hartford Region, many to pick up work in trades or to start small businesses.

Like many urban cores across New England, Hartford's population peaked in the 1950s (177,397 in 1950). Primarily white residents from Hartford began migrating to the suburbs, as plentiful post-war housing was being built and suburban downtowns were expanding with shops, restaurants, and social activities. These "edge-cities" would draw many economic drivers away from regional cores like Hartford.

Downtown Hartford is a major business hub in the Region, but for many years has functioned as a "9 to 5" city, where major activity

dramatically declines as the workforce departs to their suburban and rural homes. The adoption of remote and hybrid work has accelerated this long-standing trend. Remote work has a cascading impact on the City – with fewer workers downtown, retail and restaurant businesses struggle. This challenge is by no means unique to Hartford – urban cores across the nation are facing similar issues. The primary difference is many other cities had relatively robust post-5pm nightlife prior to the pandemic, whereas activity in Hartford was limited. The overreliance on the office/commercial sector highlights the economic fragility stemming from overly homogenous land-use patterns.

Hartford’s most recent POCD includes the strategy to “Advance Downtown’s Role as the Region’s Center for Commerce, Culture and City Living.”

### **Strategy 1: Reverse Hartford’s population decline and attract market-rate residential development in the City.**

One of the key ingredients Hartford’s Downtown needs is more residents. City leaders have long recognized the relationship between residential density and economic activity, generally identifying a need to add 5,000 more units to the City to achieve a 10 percent population increase. The City has been successfully doing this and should continue these efforts. Converting commercial spaces and underutilized lots to residential units has added over 3,000 units to Downtown Hartford over the last ten years with over 2,400 more units underway or well into the planning phase [5, 6]. The pandemic reversed some of the

economic momentum, shuttering some businesses that had recently emerged, but more people living in Hartford will drive more economic activity.

“Mixed-use residential on the Connecticut River would make Hartford competitive with surrounding cities.” – Table Talk Report.

Policymakers across the State and Region must fully support efforts to make the City an attractive place to live and play.

- *ACTION: Complete a study to identify and prioritize office buildings in the Downtown that are best suited for conversion to residential uses.* In coordination with the City and the MetroHartford Alliance, support such a study to understand which buildings are well-suited and which are not suited for residential conversions. This exercise will help focus city RFP and marketing efforts with a targeted approach for redevelopment.
- *ACTION: Support the creation of a grocery store in the Downtown.* To facilitate the continued residential growth of the Downtown and to retain existing residents, a convenient grocery store is a necessary service. Currently residents must take a bus or get in a car to get to the nearest full-service grocery store, making the trip either less convenient or negating the simplicity of living in a walkable city. CRCOG could potentially leverage its new EDD designation to assist with these longstanding efforts.
- *ACTION: Build on prior CRCOG anchor institution studies to assist the City with its goal to convert anchor institution employees to residents.* Anchor institutions are large, place-based organizations such as universities and hospitals that have the capacity to invest in their communities as a way of doing business. CRCOG completed “Building Corridors of Opportunity: Best Practices for Engaging Anchor Institutions and Neighborhoods” and “Next Steps in Engaging Anchor Institutions and Neighborhoods in Transit-Oriented Development” in recognition of the roles that anchor institutions have played in other cities and the potential they possess to transform the City of Hartford. CRCOG and the City



continue to view these institutions as major stakeholders with a transformative ability to locate operations *and* residents within the transit corridors.

## **Strategy 2: Support Hartford’s strategy to advance Downtown’s Role as the Region’s Center for Commerce, Culture, and City Living.**

- *ACTION: Expand CTfastrak hours to allow easier access to evening events.* Expanding public transportation service operating hours, particularly along the CTfastrak corridor, will provide safe, dependable after-hours options support active and safe nightlife for both event goers as well as third-shift workers.
- *ACTION: Support and expand the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) efforts for entertainment and sports facilities.* CRDA has successfully facilitated necessary development for various entertainment facilities and should strongly consider smaller-bore but still critical attractions such as groceries, nightclubs, dance halls, social clubs, coffee shops, diners, etc. These are not necessarily headline grabbing projects, but are essential for a well-functioning city. CRDA’s initial support is essential for getting these projects off the ground until they are self-sustaining.
- *ACTION: Invest in the power of “fun,” placemaking, and the importance of third places to retain young adults and fuel social and economic prosperity.* See the goal “Invest in the power of “fun,” placemaking, and the importance of third places to retain young adults and

“There’s no place for young people to meet...we don’t have any night life activities or community events that get people to socialize” – Survey Respondent.

fuel social and economic prosperity” for additional information. Relevant actions of this goal are key to making the Capitol City a vibrant, 24/7 location.

- *ACTION: Make Hartford’s commercial property tax rate more competitive.* Hartford commercial mill rate is the highest in the State and among the highest in the country. With an effective commercial property tax rate of over 5 percent, commercial property owners in Hartford pay higher rates than in cities such as Chicago, Boston, and New York. There are multiple stories of Hartford-based businesses relocating a few miles away to surrounding towns and immediately saving thousands of dollars per year in property taxes. The vast majority of development in the City has been supported by State subsidies or municipal tax abatements. State policymakers simply must find a more sustainable fiscal framework that does not disproportionately burden urban areas, as similar challenges face both Bridgeport and New Haven.
- *ACTION: Continue efforts to re-establish and expand waterfront access.* Cities around the country have rediscovered their waterfronts as they remove physical barriers such as highways. Hartford (and East Hartford) is fortunate to have a head-start through the efforts of Riverfront Recapture and completion of the East Coast Greenway (see Chapter 5). Having an active and attractive waterfront will draw residents and businesses.

## **Strategy 3: Connect our Region’s two Cities.**

Of CRCOG’s 38 member municipalities, just two – Hartford and New Britain- are “urban.” While each has its own distinct history, personality, and challenges, both strive to be more vibrant and inclusive cities. Their connection via CTfastrak is a significant

asset and can form the foundation of a regional approach to improve and promote urban vibrancy. Development focused at stations between the cities (Transit Oriented Development – “TOD”) can help foster this connection. Chapters 8 and 9 discuss TOD further.

- *ACTION: Adopt a regional brand.* Towns benefit from a regional brand by identifying their individual niche that supports the broader brand. By defining a regional brand, each town will be better able to find the right scale of development in its town core. This builds directly from the recommendation for a regional brand from the CRCOG TOD Roles, Vision, and Viability Study. This effort can and should be expanded to include the CTfastrak corridor communities and Hartford Line communities, however the proximity between New Britain and Hartford and similar urban energies may cater to a special branding framework between those two cities.
- *ACTION: Program “sister city” events.* Work with the communities, the State, and organizations to program activities that foster the connection between and involve both cities and emphasize the ease of CTfastrak.

## Goal: Reimagine underutilized commercial districts as vibrant destinations

### Strategies to achieve the goal:

- Strategy 1: Convert excess or obsolete office space to residential or other uses that support residential living.
- Strategy 2: Adaptively reuse vacant or underutilized commercial spaces.

### Potential metrics to measure progress towards

- Population in commercial districts.
- Number of malls or commercial plazas redeveloped.

At first glance, the decline in the commercial office market poses a challenge, with potential impacts to municipal grand lists. However, it also presents an opportunity to re-envision and repurpose these spaces. Converting excess obsolete office space to residential units can fulfill two critical goals – supplying desperately needed housing and adding a critical mass of population (i.e. – customers) to commercial districts.

Virtually all of our communities have vacant commercial space – in retail strip plazas, malls, high-rise office buildings, and in office parks, to name a few. Suburban and rural communities may need to proactively consider alternative uses from such spaces and explore programs to improve the appearance of buildings. Some communities have tackled this issue by updating zoning regulations to encourage new uses. Other communities have programs to address the appearance of buildings. For example,

Wethersfield manages a successful Facade Improvement Program which provides loans for commercial facade updates. There are many approaches to creating more vibrant commercial areas.

### Strategy 1: Convert excess or obsolete office space to residential or other uses that support residential living.

While not every office building can or should be converted to other uses (future demand for office may ebb and flow), some buildings are more suitable and easier to convert based on factors such as location or building characteristics. Communities in the region will need a strategic approach to find the appropriate balance between conversion or other strategies, as the entire sector works through this market correction.

- *ACTION: Support office to residential conversions where viable.* Municipalities should strongly encourage property owners with viable office-to-residential projects and ensure zoning regulations permit the conversion, ideally through a streamlined approval process.
- *ACTION: Support office conversions that combine work and living space needs.* The adoption of remote and hybrid work offers a prime opportunity for flexible office space, such as co-working or meetings spaces, or on-site childcare.

### Strategy 2: Adaptively reuse vacant or underutilized commercial spaces.

Additional options for vacant office buildings might include health care, education, light logistics, and data centers. These uses can be integrated into the existing built environment without taxing the transportation network any more than the prior office use. For small shopping centers, along with allowing new uses, it will be

important to upgrade facades and streetscapes to create a vibrant destination. The re-use of larger malls requires additional imagination as we rethink how these large parcels can best serve our communities and the larger region. Fortunately, there are models around the country that we can draw inspiration from.

- *ACTION: Proactively identify, regulate, and solicit alternative uses for underutilized office space.* CRCOG should work with our local planning and economic development departments to assess and amend existing zoning codes, streamline planning procedures, and provide tax abatements and other incentives to facilitate conversions.
- *ACTION: Prepare malls and legacy commercial corridors for the changing retail landscape.* The creation of flexible overlay districts, “form based codes” that focus more on building and streetscape design than uses, reducing or eliminating parking requirements, and allowing for a greater mix of uses can help these properties adapt to changing market realities. Enfield recently completed a traffic impact study that examined possible re-use and zoning changes for the Enfield mall and surrounding properties.
- *ACTION: Support programs to help small retail / restaurant / service businesses to locate in the adapted space.* Many businesses will require programmatic support to navigate the process of adapting and relocating to converted spaces. Economic development organizations should develop programming and tools to help municipalities and businesses complete these conversions, from concept to execution.

## Goal: Invest in the power of “fun,” placemaking, and third places.

### Strategies to achieve the goal:

- Strategy 1: Address the disconnect between local vibrancy and land use regulations.
- Strategy 2: Capitalize on placemaking.
- Strategy 3: Invest in Third Places.

### Potential metrics to measure

- Number of young adults over time (ages 20-34).
- Number of entertainment-based and “third place” establishments established annually.

The State and the Region have experienced relatively flat population growth over the last decade. Part of our issue is our ability to retain young adults and simultaneously our lack of ability to attract new residents. For example, many college-educated workers choose to leave Connecticut after graduating, often citing the amenities provided in larger urban areas.

Rather than bemoaning the fact that we are not Boston or New York, we should develop similar amenities to those cities. Fortunately, we have a strong foundation to start from – many of our towns and cities developed centers prior to the automobile, providing excellent “bones” for walkable, urban-like amenities across many pockets of the Capitol Region. This walkable environment is conducive to the imperative that the Region needs to inject “fun” into our communities. To attract the future workforce we need to integrate fun – utilizing strategies like placemaking and increasing the amount of third places available

within our communities – into our economic strategy, potentially as a number one priority.

### Strategy 1: Address the disconnect between vibrancy and land use regulations.

There is a disconnect between what young people want and what land uses are permitted in each community. To retain and attract young adults, policymakers must recognize the connection between local vibrancy and youth retention and marketing strategies should be specifically tailored to resonate with younger generations as well.

“Social spaces should be built into every neighborhood. Zoning has made a huge gap between residential areas and areas where people shop and socialize.” – Survey Respondent.

Other aspects of our built environment may also “disconnect” us from one another and from places meant to be enjoyed, such as parks, the riverfront, and formal and informal gathering spaces. Hostile architecture, also known as defensive architecture, exclusionary or defensive design or anti-homeless architecture is a design tactic to restrict behavior that is seen as undesirable and often targeting marginalized or disadvantaged communities. To ensure our Region is equitable and built to make resident feel as if they belong, while enjoying a strong sense of place and a community-oriented experience, it is important to limit exclusionary design tactics and instead strive to make spaces barrier-free and convenient to use by all.

- *ACTION: Assess and amend zoning regulations that facilitate youth attraction and retention.* Communities that want vibrant, multigenerational centers should ensure they allow uses that appeal to younger people such as gaming venues, dance clubs, bars, and other gathering spaces. The rise of breweries

nationwide and across our Region is a prime example – a fun, social space will be successful. But first it must be allowed by zoning regulations.

- *ACTION: Learn from zoning regulations from recognized successful, thriving locations.* We can obtain a better understanding of types of uses that create fun places, including third-place and “after 5pm” uses. We should also examine transition zones adjacent to entertainment districts.
- *Action: Work with municipalities to incorporate inclusive design into place making initiatives, while limiting hostile, exclusionary or defensive design within the Region as a whole.* CRCOG can provide guidance and help communities identify real and potential barriers.

## **Strategy 2: Capitalize on placemaking.**

The value of place must be a key element of economic development efforts. According to the Project for Public Spaces, placemaking capitalizes on a community’s assets, inspiration, and potential, and creates quality public spaces that contribute to people’s health, happiness, and well-being. Importantly, placemaking needs to be rooted in public participation to be of most value.

The data show that highly educated young people are moving to regions with vibrant communities. This includes living in or near a central city or in a dynamic neighborhood in a small town. They want places that are attractive, safe, walkable, offer access to transit, rich in amenities, and has diverse professional and social networks.

Why does this matter? To be competitive, we need to attract the future workforce – our youth. Fortunately, young talent is mobile.

Economic development policies should focus on creating the kinds of places where highly-educated young people want to live and work. This strategy benefits everyone in the region.

- *ACTION: Develop a regional placemaking-based youth and young adult retention strategy.* A regional strategy focused on place would help communities provide offerings for all ages that enhance quality of life and sense of belonging.
- *ACTION: Develop and cultivate relationships with entertainment-focused entrepreneurs and businesses looking to locate or expand within the Region.* Identifying businesses that have successfully integrated into the community and are recognized as an asset and good neighbor will help overcome concerns that communities and residents may have – valid concerns like traffic, noise, and safety need to be addressed or they can become potential roadblocks.
- *ACTION: Support cultural and artist community spaces.* Artists and creatives have long been the pioneers of community revitalization, often seeing the potential of a place long before others and investing sweat equity into improving their community. As major urban areas in the rest of the country have priced artists out, the Hartford Region has a comparative advantage in affordability. We should leverage this opportunity and support creatively minded entrepreneurs and professionals looking to relocate to our Region.



### Strategy 3: Invest in Third Places.

Originally coined by sociologist Ray Oldenburg, “Third Places” are places where people spend time between home (‘first’ place) and

“[My town] is a small town and does not have many ‘third spaces’. I’m not sure how I would make friends in [town] if I wanted to.” – Survey Respondent.

work (‘second’ place). Oldenburg considered third places as informal public gathering spaces, such as beer gardens, main streets, pubs, cafés, coffeehouses, and even post offices. Third places should be accessible to everyone and foster a sense of belonging.

- **ACTION: Develop a regional strategy for creating more third places.** CRCOG could assess the Region for existing third places (libraries, covered outdoor spaces with seating, pocket parks, empty spaces along trails, etc.) where people can gather without having to spend money. We can identify and review underutilized spaces that could become casual third places with appropriate investment and programmatic support.
- **ACTION: Fund third-place development.** CRCOG could work with philanthropic and economic development organizations to identify funding for social enterprise entrepreneurs focusing on third-place businesses. Recent efforts such as Semilla and reSet in Hartford are examples of successful third-places with economic development benefits. Places identified in a regional third-place strategy could be targeted for grant funding. For example, pocket-parks or parklets are third places also help meet our open space goals (see Chapter 5). Pocket parks can be cultural, economic, and health assets. These “outdoor rooms,” create a unique surprise whether on a

## What Makes a Great Third Place?

The rise of remote and hybrid work and increase in self-reported feelings of loneliness and mental health challenges make the community-building aspect of third places critical, both socially and economically.

There is a clear need and desire for more third places – communities that successfully plan and invest in these places reap social benefits and become more economically competitive. They attract both residents and business investment.

An ideal third place is:

**Neutral ground.** You don’t need an invitation - anyone can enter.

**Unstructured.** You can come and go as you please.

**Not expensive.**

**A place to talk.** Conversation is the main activity, though playing games like chess, darts, billiards, etc. is common.

**Conveniently close.** Near your home or workplace so that ideally, you can walk to your third place.

**Open to all.** Has “regulars” but welcomes strangers.

**Casual.** Chatter, joking, and teasing are an integral part of a third place.

Third places are vibrant spaces where identity can be explored and expressed openly. The casual and neutral ground third places offer often creates safe spaces for the LGBTQIA+ community as these places allow for identity to be displayed openly across communities, often fostering a sense of belonging through shared interests and experiences.

*Adapted from “Third places, true citizen spaces” Ray Oldenburg and Karen Christensen, The UNESCO Courier, March 2023.*

vacant parcel, a plaza, or an alley between buildings.

- *ACTION: Form partnerships focused on third-place development.* As Connecticut's population ages, developing third-places for seniors will be equally important as youth retention efforts. Communities should work with multigenerational communities, senior housing developments, and non-elderly housing development to create third spaces that are accessible to seniors.

## **Goal: Support economic development in the Region's rural communities.**

### **Strategies to achieve the goal:**

- Strategy 1: Pursue economic development that both leverages and preserves rural assets.
- Strategy 2: Overcome challenges to rural economic development.

### **Potential metrics to measure**

- Number of business establishments in rural communities.
- Number of visitors to outdoor recreation assets.
- Number of agritainment / agritourism uses.

Economic development is important in our rural communities also. Rural communities desire appropriately scaled economic development to provide amenities to residents, provide jobs and entrepreneur opportunities, and to lessen the tax burden on residential taxpayers.

Our rural communities play a unique role in the economy of our region. Chapter 5 focuses on the vital role that agriculture plays in our region, particularly rural communities and provides actions to preserve and expand farming in the Region. Farming provides economic value (jobs, income, sales), scenic value, and a connection to our heritage. This section focuses on other economic challenges and opportunities within our rural communities. The bucolic settings within these communities

create unique opportunities for quiet homes in wooded settings and a “small-town” feel that resonates with residents and businesses alike, all with nature just seconds away. Rural towns have the unique challenge of needing to protect those same features from development that make them desirable places to live.

### **Strategy 1: Pursue economic development that both leverages and preserves rural assets.**

- *ACTION: Support development in existing rural village centers.* Many of our rural communities have historic village centers that developed before the automobile age. These areas are not necessarily appropriate for urban-style development efforts, but focusing appropriately scaled commercial and mixed-use development can meet economic development needs with little to no encroachment on natural areas or open space.
- *ACTION: Assist municipalities in updating land use regulations for village centers.* Some of the Region's municipalities have prepared village area studies that provide recommendations to enhance and promote these areas. For example, a Willington study recommended promoting South Willington as a mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly area in a village-setting. CRCOG can review this and other studies and best practices for zoning regulations and policies that preserve the ambiance of the Region's village centers, improve streetscapes, and enable appropriate development. Tools might include form-based codes which allow for increased residential density and / or flexibility in commercial uses if desired but do so while preserving the very aesthetics of the existing built environment that is often what makes rural village centers so special.

- *ACTION: Strategically embrace the power of outdoor recreation as an economic engine.* Economic development does not have to mean “development” in the most literal sense – constructing or building physical objects. The natural beauty of the outdoor spaces in our rural communities is a significant attraction, drawing recreational hikers, cyclists and other outdoor enthusiasts to all corners of our Region. These visitors often frequent locally-based businesses before or after engaging in outdoor recreation activities. Thoughtfully located appropriate uses in rural areas can take advantage of this existing consumer base, generating economic activity and tax revenue while still maintaining a rural community character.
- *Refer to Chapter 5 for Actions regarding farming, farmland preservation, and agritainment.*

## **Strategy 2: Overcome challenges to rural economic development.**

- *ACTION: Identify infrastructure barriers in rural communities.* The lack of sufficient water infrastructure is commonly cited as a significant barrier to development by many rural communities, particularly in the eastern portion of the Capitol Region. A comprehensive study, working with State agencies, local officials and the relevant utilities is necessary to better understand the economic development challenges stemming from a lack of water and sewer infrastructure. Balancing economic considerations with responsible environmental practices should be a focus of such a study.
- *ACTION: Actively coordinate with DOT and the Region’s rural communities to overcome potential barriers to commercial development on state routes.* While most areas of rural communities are not targets for development, existing

transportation corridors should be leveraged where appropriate. Targeting commercial development along appropriate nodes and corridors along major transportation routes should be considered.

## **Goal: Ensure growth occurs in areas with adequate utilities.**

### **Strategies to achieve the goal:**

- Strategy 1: Use existing water and sewer infrastructure to guide future growth.

### **Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:**

- Development within service areas compared to development outside of service areas.
- Number of communities with allocation systems.
- Pipeline capacity of water treatment plants.
- Linear feet of sewer and water lines extended.

### **Strategy 1: Use existing water and sewer infrastructure to guide future growth**

Great investments have been made in building the Region's water and sewer systems. The presence of these utilities generally allows for growth since excess land is not needed to accommodate septic systems and private wells.

- *ACTION: Work with local officials and utility providers to encourage the development of an infrastructure system that meets desired local and regional growth patterns.* CRCOG should support upgrades and expansions that promote development consistent with this plan and local plans.
- *ACTION: Encourage communication between town departments to ensure that planning efforts align with both pipeline and plant capacity.* Some communities carefully manage sewer allocations to ensure desired growth can be accommodated. Others do not have an allocation system. CRCOG can inventory current approaches and provide

guidance to communities that are not sure how to approach allocations.

- *ACTION: Discourage the joint extension of sewer and water service into unserved rural areas, except for extensions scaled to serve areas planned for significant commercial or industrial development.* The presence of public water and sewer systems provides a way of controlling development density and intensity.
- *ACTION: Work with developers and town officials to consider smaller, on-site wastewater treatment systems that would allow for cluster or village residential development at selected locations not served by public utilities.* There may be situations where appropriately-scaled development cannot be supported by traditional septic systems. In those cases, alternative, small-scale treatment systems might be warranted.

**Goal: Ensure that our archeological and historic resources are preserved and celebrated.**

**Strategies to achieve the goal:**

- Strategy 1: Protect the Region's archeological and historic resources.
- Strategy 2: Collectively promote the Region's historical assets through storytelling and placemaking.

**Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:**

- Grant funding awarded to member municipalities for preserving or restoring historic resources.
- Number of local, state, and federal designations in the Region.
- Number of zoning and subdivision regulations that require archaeological reviews.
- Number of new initiatives to collectively promote the Region's historical assets.

Knowing the history of the Region's people and places can help us understand today's development patterns, provide a sense of connection, and foster community pride. Culture-related tourism also is an economic driver, bringing money into the Region when tourists visit museums, historic parks, and our historic villages and districts.

The Region's colonial history is well documented and visible throughout the Region. We see it in our Capital City in historic districts like the Asylum Hill neighborhood, in centuries-old churches, like First Church of Christ in Simsbury, and in the grand

homes from wealthy families, like the Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington. Many historic buildings and places have been designated as local, state, or Federal Historic Places or Districts. Some towns showcase their historic districts and main streets online or in printed guides. For example, the Suffield Historical Society developed "A Tour on Main Street", which provides an easy-to-follow walking guide for in its historic district. The Town provides this, and other historic resource guides, on its website.

Less visible is the history of our Region's indigenous populations. Indigenous people inhabited this Region for thousands of years. Many places are named for our Region's indigenous people and archaeological findings help reveal a fuller story of our Region's history. When we promote historic preservation, we must ensure we do not solely focus on colonial history and industrial heritage. While this history is visible as we travel the Region, our indigenous legacy is not. Often it is not until construction in an area that we unearth archaeological artifacts.

**Strategy 1: Protect the Region's archeological and historic resources.**

Once an archeological resource or historic site is demolished, that resource is gone forever. Fortunately, the Region takes great pride in our resources and has successfully protected and restored many of our historic assets.

- *ACTION: Adaptively reuse historic structure and sites.* Using historic resources offers the strongest protection. Active use might entail turning a historic site into a museum or re-using it for residential, business or other use. Maintenance of the properties can be funded through user fees, rents, or through grant programs. Historic sites and structures that are not in



active use are at risk of being lost due to neglect or by demolition.

- *ACTION: Prevent the loss and destruction of historic resources.* Promote the active use of historic buildings and sites so there is a vested interest in their preservation. Unintentional destruction should also be avoided, either through neglect or due to storm events. Including historic resources in hazard mitigation and climate adaptation plans is a start. Providing funding for maintenance can help keep historic sites operational and functional.
- *ACTION: Promote context sensitive zoning for infill development in historic areas.* Infill development within a historic area can detract from the overall nature of the area. While many communities have adopted local historic districts which regulate the design of new structures, zoning regulations do not always advance those same goals (e.g., setbacks, building heights, etc.). Zoning regulations for these areas, and undesignated areas rich with historic resources, can help align preservation goals.
- *ACTION: Encourage cities and towns to require archaeological reviews in land use regulations.* Such reviews do not halt proposed development, but rather seek expertise to determine if artifacts are likely to be present and if so, how to protect and preserve them.

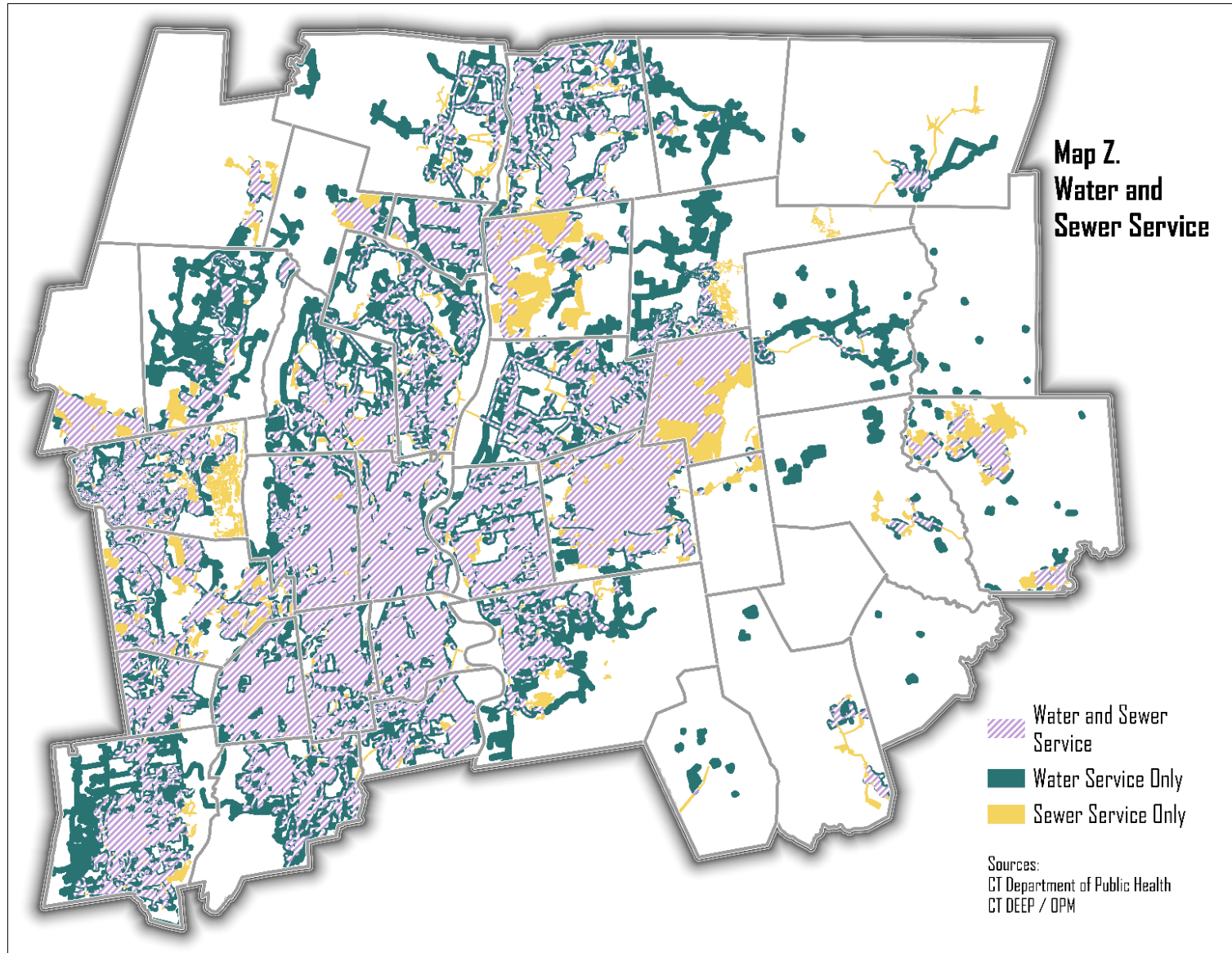
## **Strategy 2: Collectively promote the Region's historical assets through storytelling and placemaking.**

We should better promote the connectedness of our historic sites. For example, tiny markers show the path Rochambeau and his troops followed during the Revolutionary War are found in the Region east of the Connecticut River. They spread throughout the

Region and provide no larger context. It would be beneficial to expand the signage and include boards with information about that time, to provide context and understanding of the incredible historic events that took place in our State. Tying together individual sites throughout the Region can tell a more connected story of our past. These efforts help support place-making and third place goals in Chapter 6.

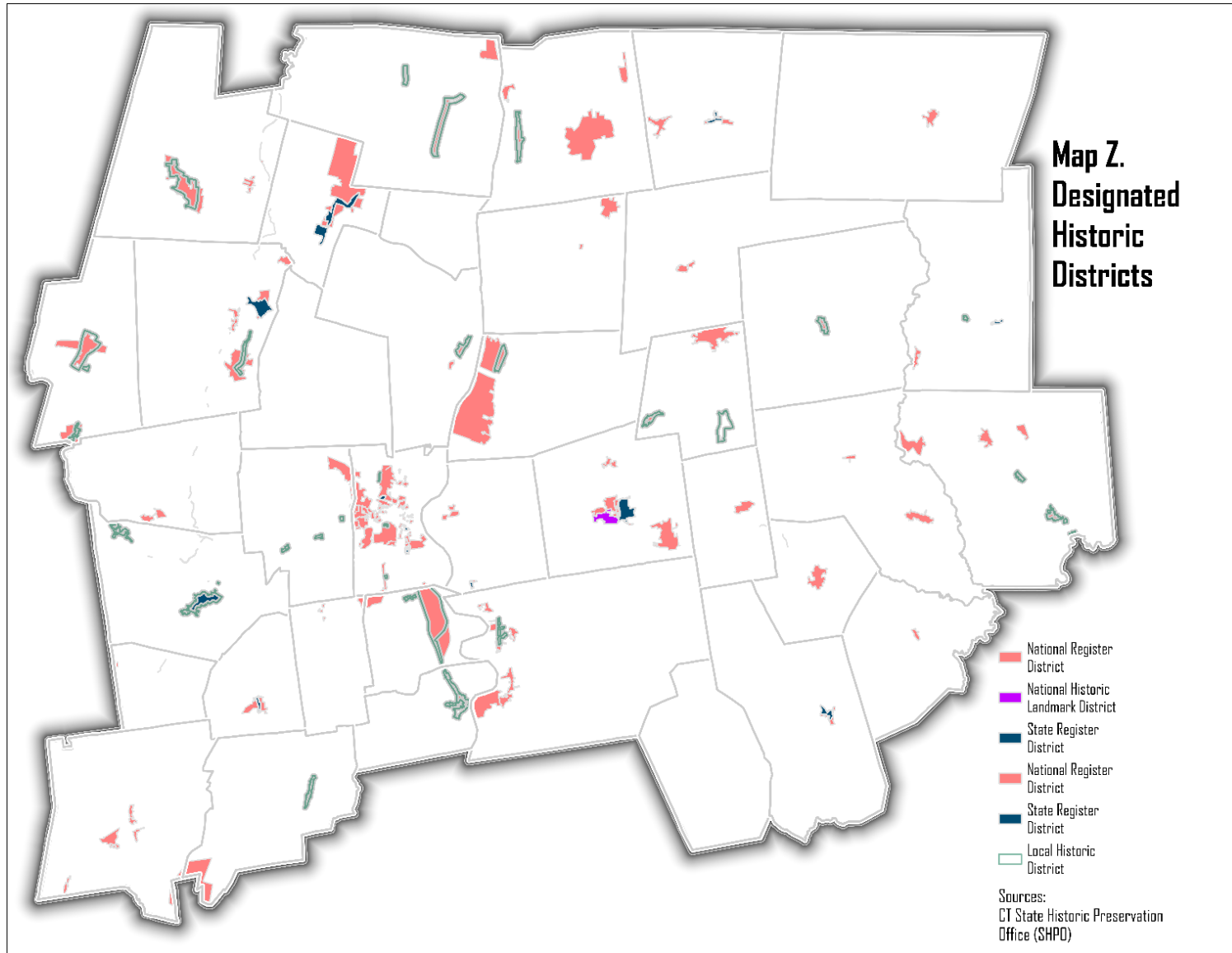
- *ACTION: Promote the Region's historical resources.* All but four of the Region's municipalities are part of the Central Regional Tourism District (Coventry, Columbia, Mansfield, and Willington are part of the Eastern District). The regional districts seem like the best entity for this type of initiative; however, the Central District no longer appears active. CRCOG should encourage the re-activation of collective tourism promotion.
- *ACTION: Identify examples of comprehensive, collective historical storytelling at a regional scale.* CRCOG and its historic preservation and tourism partners can look to successful interpretation programs in other regions.

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: Rural communities are less likely to have both water and sewer services than urban and suburban communities.*

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: The Region is home to a number of designated historic sites and districts.*

<b>SUMMARY OF ACTIONS (sample action table – will be updated to match actions in text and identify if CRCOG is lead, partner or supporter)</b>		
<b>GOAL: Build regional economic development capacity and support.</b>		
Strategy 1: Implement the CEDS and support existing State economic development efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Restructure the CEDS Implementation Committee.</li> <li>• ACTION: Develop and incorporate measurable outcomes to assess the impact of implementation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support the State’s economic planning efforts, capitalizing on synergies where regional approaches would be beneficial for our towns.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Establish CRCOG’s role as an Economic Development District.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: CRCOG will work to fully utilize its status as an officially designated Economic Development District (EDD).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Create dedicated position at CRCOG to coordinate economic development activities.</li> </ul>
Strategy 3: Improve the resiliency of our economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Promote diversity in land uses as a means of enhancing resilience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Encourage flexibility in land use regulations so that businesses can quickly respond and adjust when a disruption occurs.</li> </ul>
Strategy 4: Develop a cooperative framework for municipal tax incentives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Conduct a study on municipal tax incentive deals in the Region.</li> </ul>	
<b>GOAL: Create a 24/7 Capital City</b>		
Strategy 1: Reverse Hartford’s population decline and attract market-rate residential development in the City.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Complete a study to identify and prioritize office buildings in the Downtown that are best suited for conversion to residential uses.</li> <li>• ACTION: Support the creation of a grocery store in the Downtown.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Build on prior CRCOG anchor institution work to assist the City with their goal to convert anchor institution commuting works to residents.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Support Hartford’s strategy to advance Downtown’s Role as the Region’s Center for Commerce, Culture and City Living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Expand CTfastrak hours to allow easier access to evening events.</li> <li>• ACTION: Support and expand the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) efforts for entertainment and sports facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Invest in the power of “fun,” placemaking, and the importance of third places to retain young adults and fuel social and economic prosperity.</li> <li>• ACTION: Make Hartford’s commercial property tax rate more competitive.</li> <li>• ACTION: Continue efforts to re-establish and expand waterfront access.</li> </ul>
Strategy 3: Connect our two cities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Adopt a regional brand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Program “sister city” events.</li> </ul>

<b>GOAL: Reimagine underutilized commercial districts as vibrant destinations.</b>		
Strategy 1: Convert excess or obsolete office space to residential or other uses that support residential living.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support office to residential conversions where viable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support office conversions that combine work and living space needs.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Adaptively reuse vacant or underutilized commercial spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Proactively identify, regulate, and solicit alternative uses for underutilized office space.</li> <li>• ACTION: Prepare malls and legacy commercial corridors for the changing retail landscape.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support programs to help small retail / restaurant / service businesses to locate in the adapted space.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal: Invest in the power of “fun,” placemaking, and third places.</b>		
Strategy 1: Address the disconnect between vibrancy and land use regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Assess and amend zoning regulations that facilitate youth attraction and retention.</li> <li>• ACTION: Learn from zoning regulations from recognized successful, thriving locations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action: Work with municipalities to incorporate inclusive design into place making initiatives, while limiting hostile, exclusionary or defensive design within the Region as a whole.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Capitalize on placemaking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Develop a regional placemaking-based youth and young adult retention strategy.</li> <li>• ACTION: Develop and cultivate relationships with entertainment-focused entrepreneurs and businesses looking to locate or expand within the Region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support cultural and artist community spaces.</li> </ul>
Strategy 3: Invest in Third Places.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Develop a regional strategy for creating more third places.</li> <li>• ACTION: Fund third-place development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Form partnerships focused on third-place development.</li> </ul>
<b>GOAL: Support economic development in the Region’s rural communities.</b>		
Strategy 1: Pursue economic development that both leverages and preserves rural assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support development in existing rural village centers.</li> <li>• ACTION: Assist municipalities in updating land use regulations for village centers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Strategically embrace the power of outdoor recreation as an economic engine.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Overcome challenges to rural economic development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Identify infrastructure barriers in rural communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Actively coordinate with DOT and the Region’s rural communities to overcome potential barriers to commercial development on state routes.</li> </ul>

<b>GOAL: Ensure growth occurs in areas with adequate utilities.</b>		
Strategy 1: Use Existing Water and Sewer Infrastructure to Guide Future Growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Work with local officials and utility providers to encourage the development of an infrastructure system that meets desired local and regional growth patterns.</li> <li>• ACTION: Encourage communication between town departments to ensure that planning efforts align with both pipeline and plant capacity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Discourage the joint extension of sewer and water service into unserved rural areas, except for extensions scaled to serve areas planned for significant commercial or industrial development.</li> <li>• ACTION: Work with developers and town officials to consider smaller, on-site wastewater treatment systems that would allow for cluster or village residential development at selected locations not served by public utilities.</li> </ul>
<b>GOAL: Ensure that our archeological and historic resources are preserved and celebrated.</b>		
Strategy 1: Protect the Region's archeological and historic resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Adaptively reuse historic structure and sites.</li> <li>• ACTION: Prevent the loss and destruction of historic resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Promote context sensitive zoning for infill development in historic areas.</li> <li>• ACTION: Encourage cities and towns to require archaeological reviews in land use regulations.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Collectively promote the Region's historical assets through storytelling and placemaking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Promote the Region's historical resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Identify examples of comprehensive, collective historical storytelling at a regional scale.</li> </ul>

## Chapter End Notes:

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# Chapter 7: Reform Outdated “Steady Habits” in Our Institutions and Governance

Connecticut is commonly known as the “Land of Steady Habits”, referencing a culture and temperament that is slow to evolve. This characterization can be fairly applied to the Capitol Region. Connecticut has 169 towns, each with their own set of rules, regulations, governing bodies, infrastructure, and stakeholders. Many of our communities were established hundreds of years ago and operate under the same fundamental organization and governance models. Some aspects of our traditional government have served and still serve us well. But it also presents challenges.

The entire CRCOG Region with 38 municipalities and population of nearly one million is smaller in terms of population than Philadelphia, Dallas, or San Diego. What would be neighborhoods in other cities are separate municipalities in Connecticut. Many of these communities have wildly varying abilities to address emerging challenges or state mandates. Some rely almost solely on volunteers for decision-making and policy-setting, while others hire trained staff to advise local officials. As a result, institutions may lack the time, resources, and capacity to address pressing challenges.

Varying obstacles, such as state statutes or simple inertia can prevent local officials from trying creative solutions. The State’s culture of home rule makes it that much more difficult for towns to

work together collaboratively, share services, achieve economies of scale, and innovate. Despite the tradition of home rule, municipalities are still limited in their powers by state enabling statutes. Implementing even incremental changes or working together on shared problems with other municipalities can feel like an uphill battle.

A lack of trust in government and real or perceived lack of transparency came up repeatedly during public engagement at the start of this planning process. While the pandemic allowed wider access to meetings by those with a stable internet connection, our public processes can do more to include the wider community, including those not traditionally invited to the decision-making table.

“Local governments don’t know how to reach their constituents.” – Event Attendee

We have an opportunity to rethink our “steady habits” so that we do not remain stuck in the tendency to revise, amend, and update what we do rather than rethink, innovate, and transform. Steady habits hinder resiliency, making it harder for the Region to bounce back and thrive after a disruption.

Steady habits should not lead to stagnation. We can develop new and more sustainable habits. Our local institutions and governance structures can be reimaged and reevaluated so our Region can reach its full potential. We recognize it takes leadership and deliberate actions to break this cycle.

In 2022, the United States Census Bureau approved a request from the State to adopt Connecticut’s nine planning regions as county-equivalent geographic units to collect, tabulate, and disseminate census data. Prior to this designation, Census data was collected and aggregated at the county level, which in Connecticut had no political or organizational status. By aligning

Census data with the State's planning regions/COG boundaries, policymakers across all levels of government will be able to make more informed decisions, while also allowing more entities in Connecticut to apply for competitive federal grants.

CRCOG has taken a leadership role in expanding municipal shared services to streamline administration and save money. We can expand and build from that framework to push for more fiscally sustainable and equitable approaches to funding public services.

New tools and demonstration programs can help communities that feel disconnected from their government to engage and have a role in the decision-making process.

*Placeholder for full page infographic for theme*

## IDEAS

- Comparison of Public Service Answering Points – CT (106 PSAPs) vs Harris County Texas (1 PSAP). Geographic comparison of CT & Harris County – 2 maps show CT almost fitting entirely within Harris County for sense of scale

## FRAGMENTATION OF GOVERNANCE IN CONNECTICUT

The lack of county or regional government in Connecticut means nearly all major decisions on public service delivery are made by either State or local governments. Many state functions are delivered through regions – virtually none of which match COG boundaries and there is little if any consistency in these regional boundaries.

A 2020 report by the CT Advisory Committee on Intergovernmental Relations states that “most [of the state delivery regions] have been in place for so long that the rationale for their structure (geography) is no longer known or relevant.” [1]

These numbers are estimates and may have changed since the initial report.

### **Governance**

169 Towns  
8 Counties (on paper)  
77 State Agencies  
35 State Boards, Councils, Commissions

### **Transportation**

8 Metropolitan Planning Organizations  
4 Transportation Management Areas  
15 Regional Transit Districts

### **Education**

6 Regional Education Service Areas  
43 Elementary School Districts  
156 Elementary School Districts  
17 Regional School Districts

### **Health & Public Safety**

5 Homeland Security Regions  
11 State Police Districts  
95 Municipal Police Departments  
282 Fire Districts  
104 911-Locations  
5 Regional Mental Health Boards  
73 Health Departments

### **Justice & Courts**

13 Judicial Districts  
22 Judicial Branch Areas  
12 Juvenile Courts  
54 Probate Court Districts

### **Economy**

5 Workforce Development Boards  
9 Labor Markets  
8 Service Delivery Areas for Job Training  
8 Worker Compensation Districts

## Goals, Strategies and Actions

**Goal: Improve public service delivery through robust shared services and partnerships.**

### **Strategies to achieve the goal:**

- Strategy 1: Increase the Region's capacity to share services.
- Strategy 2: Advocate state-level reform to service sharing and consolidation.
- Strategy 3: Seek regional or multi-town approaches to state-mandated governmental functions.

### **Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:**

- Number of contractual shared service agreements.
- Money saved through regional service sharing and regional purchasing programs.

Most local policymakers recognize our current system of 169 separate local governments is not particularly efficient or logical, but there is understandable inertia when it comes to reforms – it typically takes emergencies, such as severe budget shortfalls or pandemic – to implement long-needed changes. The historic emphasis on localism and local government reliance on property taxes discourages collaboration, as municipal officials are often hesitant to collaborate if the proposed benefits are either unclear or incommensurate with their contribution i.e. “Our town will not benefit.”

For issues of primarily local concern, this system is appropriate – many decisions are adequately addressed at a local level, where policymakers have a direct connection to residents. However, not all policy challenges can or should be handled by local governments. Transportation, labor markets, economic development, and the environment are regional by nature – on a practical basis alone, individual municipalities simply cannot adequately address the full scale of these challenges. This does not imply devolving all local functions to a higher level of government, rather a reminder to not consider localism as inherently better per se – the appropriate purview must be considered on the merits.

Town boundaries and institutions of governance in Connecticut evolved over time. The fundamental question is whether municipal administrative boundaries across the State and Capitol Region are the ideal form or, whether we can collectively imagine a more effective framework. This Plan argues the latter - human beings designed an imperfectly cobbled together system together over many decades and we now have the responsibility to improve this system for future generations.

A 2013 study from the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston concluded regional collaboration and streamlining could reduce government costs, particularly among capital-, technology-, and expertise-intensive services [2]. One example studied was the consolidation of Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), which could potentially yield over 50 percent cost reduction in Connecticut. However, costs are not the only consideration. In many cases, shared services offer an opportunity to improve the *quality* of services. The strategies below are intended to address both – identifying ways to deliver public services at a reasonable cost, while also ensuring a high standard.

## Strategy 1: Increase the Region's capacity to share services.

CRCOG currently manages six shared service programs, covering critical activities such as purchasing and bidding, IT services, and waste management, among others. These programs save member municipalities both money and staff time. CRCOG and its member communities are exploring ways to further shared services in animal control, assessment, and building inspection to address temporary or long-term gaps in local capacity.

- **ACTION:** *Conduct a comprehensive review of existing formal and informal examples of shared services.* Many communities already share services in some capacity. For example, in communities like Mansfield, Plainville and West Hartford, the municipal government shares certain functions with their respective school districts, such as Finance, IT, Facilities or Grounds. Conducting an inventory of existing similar programs within the Region and elsewhere in Connecticut can help determine which additional programs might be supported and feasible in the Region. Identify potential pathways to formalize via State statute or inter-municipal agreements.
- **ACTION:** *Identify and apply for additional Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP) grants.* Consider if we can retain on-call services funded by RPIP for commonly required professional services, such as third-party reviews, energy audits, financial analysis and other tasks. Identify barriers to regional on-call services and increase convenience and accessibility of on-call expertise available to member municipalities.

## CRCOG Shared Services

**Capitol Region Purchasing Council (CRPC)** - CRPC serves over 100 municipalities, Boards of Education and other government entities throughout Connecticut. It functions as a supplemental procurement office for its member municipalities and a central clearinghouse for the collection and distribution of purchasing-related information and expertise. In fiscal year 22-23 alone, 81 municipalities realized total bid savings of over \$11 million.

**eziQC Construction** - The eziQC® program is a competitively-bid, on-call service for construction projects. On-call, no-obligation price proposals and scope reviews are available to all CRPC members. The program allows municipalities to avoid procurement complications, issue purchase orders quickly, and satisfy local bidding requirements.

**Crumbling Foundations** – The Crumbling Foundations program was established with \$2 million in HUD funding to help families with low and moderate incomes with crumbling foundations with costs not covered by the Connecticut Foundation Solutions Indemnity Company, Inc. remediation program.

**IT Services Cooperative** - The IT Shared Services Program is a municipal purchasing program making technology services and related products more accessible, efficient, and affordable to municipalities. By piggybacking on state-approved, competitively priced contracts, municipalities and public organizations can procure expanded offerings, often resulting in significant cost savings.

**Waste Management & Recycling** – CRCOG, under direction of its Policy Board, actively pursues collaborative waste management and diversion program and service activities to provide cost-effective strategies and solutions for its members. CRCOG authorized the creation of the Central CT Solid Waste Authority (CCSWA).

## Strategy 2: Advocate state-level reform to service sharing and consolidation.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Introduction, local governments and COGs derive their authority from the State. Cities, towns and COGs cannot undertake programs unless state statutes grant them power to do so. Issues such as employee collective bargaining agreements can be a barrier to sharing certain staff between municipalities, as can local charters or ordinances. Organizations such as the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities have identified reforms to address these barriers, which would support greater inter-local cooperation and maintain collective bargaining protections for employees and the vast majority of municipal ordinances not related to service sharing.

- *ACTION: Review and advocate for the reform of state statutes impeding regional cooperation.* CRCOG should continue working with partners to identify specific legislative roadblocks to expanded service sharing and possible consolidations.
- *ACTION: Supplement and support State efforts on service sharing and consolidation.* CRCOG and other organizations can supplement and support the work of the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. Additional analysis and reports on potential benefits (e.g., cost savings and improved services) from shared service or consolidation initiatives can better inform policymakers. The New England Public Policy Center at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston conducted a significant study on regional shared services over a decade ago. Newer research is merited. CRCOG and other Councils of Government can partner with universities and other academic researchers to develop actionable research on shared services.

## Shared Services in the Region

There are many examples in the Region of sharing services – within municipalities (e.g., between the town and the Board of Education) and between municipalities.

### Town / School District Shared Services

- Mansfield – Share Finance, Information Technology, Facilities Management, and Grounds Maintenance.
- Plainville – Share Human Resource and Information Technology.
- West Hartford – Share Information Technology, Facilities Management, and Ground Maintenance.

### Intermunicipal Shared Services

- South Windsor, Tolland, Ellington, and Vernon provide fire marshal mutual aid.

[add more examples]

- *ACTION: Support the provision of robust incentives for service sharing and consolidation.* In some cases, consider making discretionary state funding contingent on consolidation of certain functions (such as non-instructional education spending) or at minimum an acceptable shared-services plan. The State could incentivize the formation of regional service districts through financial incentives, similar to the per capita grant it currently provides to regional health districts.



**Strategy 3: Seek regional or multi-town approaches to state-mandated governmental functions.**

State statutes mandate that every municipality provide certain functions and those functions then are typically carried out by staff trained or certified in that subject area (e.g., town/city clerk, assessor, fire marshal, etc.). There can be inefficiencies in each municipality hiring its own staff and, in recent years, many cities and towns have struggled to fill positions.

- *ACTION: Explore filling state-required local functions at the inter-municipal or regional level.* Many mandated functions of local government require staff with specialized training or certifications such as town clerks, finance directors, and assessors. These highly specialized roles and other administrative/back-office functions could be performed at a high standard at a regional or inter-municipal scale. This could lower overall costs and address recent challenges in filling staff shortages. CRCOG should determine potential roadblocks and gauge municipal interest.

**Goal: Create fiscally sustainable and equitable systems for funding public services.**

**Strategies to achieve the goal:**

- Strategy 1: Reduce reliance on local property taxes.
- Strategy 2: Address local fiscal disparities.
- Strategy 3: Alleviate the most regressive impacts of the property tax.

**Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:**

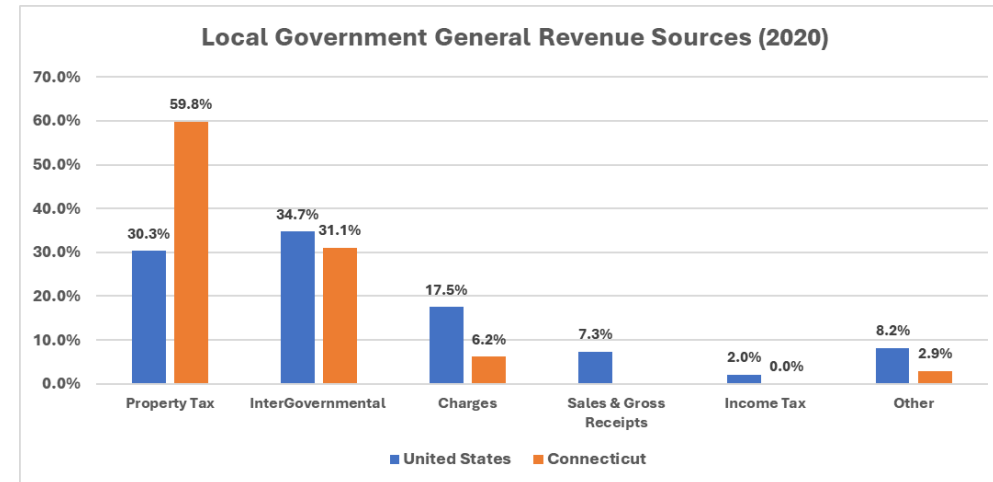
- Percentage of school budgets from state funds.
- Percentage of PILOT funded per statutory guidelines.
- Percentage of total revenue from property taxes.
- Effective Tax Rate across region

Property taxes are the primary method for funding local government across the United States and is the largest source of revenue under the control of state or local government. Property taxes make local government autonomy possible and pay for the services that most residents rely on daily, such as schools, roads, and public safety. Compared to other revenue sources such as the sales tax, the property tax is generally progressive – higher-valued properties (typically owned by higher-income households) pay more in taxes. In comparison with sales or income tax receipts, which can be volatile depending on the economy, property taxes provide a stable tax base.

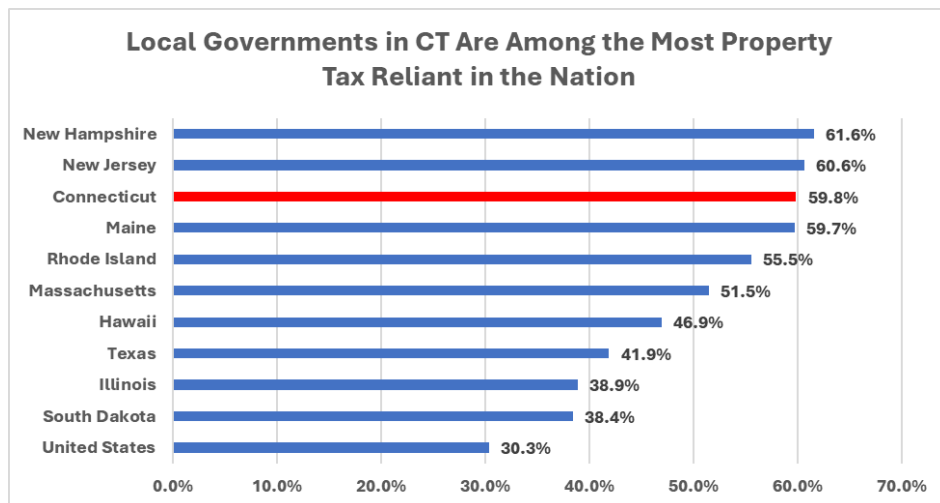
The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy calculated that if all property tax revenue were to be replaced by higher general sales tax revenue (with the same sales tax base) state sales tax rates would

have to more than double from roughly seven to 16 percent on average to raise the same revenue [3]. The same would be true for state and federal business income taxes. Either proposal would worsen income inequality and likely have unforeseen negative economic consequences.

Connecticut is heavily reliant on property taxes as a form of revenue, compared to the nation. On average, local governments across the nation generate about thirty percent of their revenue from local property taxes, while in Connecticut (and much of the northeast) the average is close to sixty percent [4]. Connecticut has consistently ranked among the states most reliant on property tax.



*Caption: Local governments in Connecticut rely on property taxes for over half of all revenue compared to less than one third nation-wide.*



*Caption: Connecticut cities and towns more heavily rely on property taxes than all but two states.*

Given that eliminating property taxes is neither realistic or desirable compared to the alternatives, the State and Region should instead focus efforts on two fundamental issues – structuring public service delivery as efficiently as possible while making the property tax system more equitable and favorable to economic growth. Our current systems fosters the fragmentation of services and forces our towns and cities to compete with one another rather than thinking regionally and developing a more sustainable models of governance. Rather than making land-use decision based on potential tax revenue, a better-designed system could encourage better outcomes for open space preservation, housing development and a number of other critical priorities. We can do better.

### **Strategy 1: Reduce reliance on local property taxes.**

State and local governments in Connecticut rely on the property tax for a greater share of state and local revenue than do all but two other states. In 2020, the median real estate taxes paid for

owner-occupied homes in Connecticut ranked second highest among all states [5].

State-level data shows more dramatic reliance of property tax revenue. On average, local governments in Connecticut realize at least seventy percent of their revenue from local property taxes. Within the Capitol Region, 11 towns receive at least 80 percent of their revenue from local property taxes.

**Table X. Percentage of Total Revenue from Property Taxes**

Avon	84.7%
Glastonbury	84.6%
Farmington	84.2%
Bloomfield	82.3%
Rocky Hill	82.2%
Berlin	82.0%
Simsbury	81.5%
West Hartford	81.0%
Marlborough	80.8%
South Windsor	80.0%

Source: OPM.

*Caption: Many municipalities within the Capitol Region overly rely on property taxes, with 80% or more of their total revenue from property taxes.*

For individual taxpayers, the property tax is often a considerable expense. The median property tax bill in both Hartford and Tolland Counties are among the highest in the nation (\$5,945 and \$5,873, respectively) [6].

While property taxes tend to be a relatively predictable and stable form of revenue, there are considerable drawbacks when relied on to such a significant degree as in Connecticut. These drawbacks include: regressivity, unproductive competition between

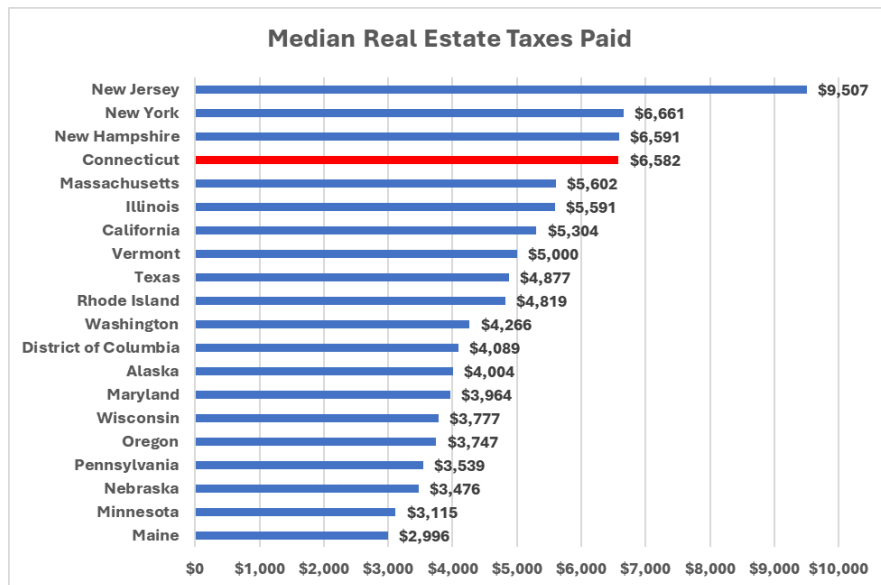
municipalities, structurally disadvantaging urban communities with tax-exempt properties. Communities end up prioritizing expansion of the grand list over thoughtful planning for the overall well-being of the community.

- *ACTION: Consider allowing municipalities to diversify local revenue sources.* We recognize that this has been a controversial topic in Connecticut, but that does not mean we cannot continue conversations about possibilities. We should explore local options to raise revenue beyond the property tax. The idea of passing enabling legislation to allow regional ballot initiatives to fund targeted projects such as transportation, parks and trails, or cultural amenities should also be explored.
- *ACTION: Advocate for the State shouldering a larger portion of K-12 special education funding.* This could be funded through a Statewide property tax with a concurrent (and commensurate) reduction in local property tax.

## Alternative Sources of Local Revenue

Local governments in Connecticut are overly reliant on the property tax and State transfers. Developing alternative sources to diversify local revenue will enable municipalities to keep local property taxes at sustainable levels. [Public Act 21-58](#) is one example of a potential approach. The law established a five-cent surcharge on the sale of spirit or liquor beverage containers of 50mL or less (commonly referred to as “nips”) and required wholesalers to remit the surcharges to the municipalities in which the containers were sold. Municipalities must then use the funds for environmental measures that reduce solid waste or reduce litter. Many communities have used these funds to hire recycling coordinators or to expand or create recycling programs.

*“Municipalities are increasingly under pressure to do more with less and need more diversified revenue sources to provide funding,” Carroccia said. “The funds from the nips program are helping municipalities fund environmental initiatives that they may not otherwise have had the funding to support. It demonstrates the positive impacts diverse revenue streams can offer Connecticut’s towns and cities.” [7]*



Caption: Connecticut residents pay the fourth highest median real estate taxes in the country.

## Strategy 2: Address local fiscal disparities.

Cities and towns hosting government facilities, colleges and universities, hospitals, and nonprofit organizations face structural revenue shortfalls since these property-owners are tax-exempt. As the State Capital, half of the City's properties are tax-exempt, which combined with long-term poverty among many residents, creates challenges for providing necessary levels of public services. Other cities in our Region face similar challenges. New Britain's Plan of Conservation and Development cites the lack of available vacant land for development and the large number of tax-exempt properties as major challenges. That Plan calls for other Connecticut cities to collaboratively advocate for statewide reforms to the treatment of Payments in-lieu of taxes (PILOT) and tax-exempt uses.

Our current system of property taxation inhibits reinvestment in our Region's urban cores. Excessively high and inequal property taxes incentivizes businesses to relocate to lower property tax suburbs, where the more disbursed additional infrastructure (schools, roads, utilities, etc.) inevitably leads to higher lifecycles costs for construction, maintenance, and replacement. Current tax policies encourage jobs to move away from cities, which were historically the location of nearly all innovation [8].

Table X. Tax Exempt Property as Percentage of Grand List	
<b>Mansfield</b>	58.3%
<b>Hartford</b>	50.9%
<b>Windsor Locks</b>	44.2%
<b>New Britain</b>	31.3%
<b>Farmington</b>	27.3%
<b>Suffield</b>	24.0%
<b>East Granby</b>	22.0%
<b>Somers</b>	16.0%
<b>CRCOG Average</b>	13.5%

Source: OPM.

Caption: Eight municipalities in the Region have higher than average percentages of tax exempt properties on their grand list.

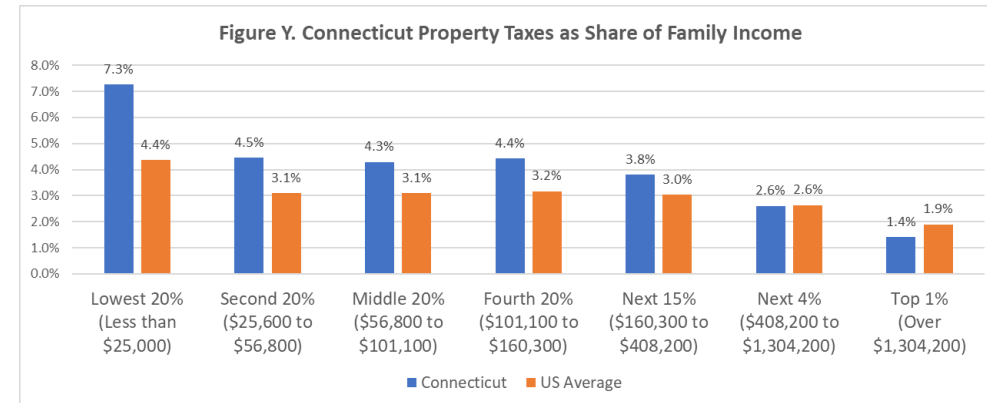
- **ACTION:** Formalize the consideration of a municipal "needs-capacity gap." A needs-capacity gap measures the difference between the cost of providing non-school public services and the underlying economic resources available to municipalities to fund those services. The State legislature previously considered a bill that would have required the Office of Policy and Management to determine the distribution of funding to municipalities by calculating a fiscal capacity gap metric. This proposal should be reconsidered.

- **ACTION: Reform the State's Payment In-Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) system.** The State must act to help our urban areas develop a stronger, more sustainable fiscal foundation. Specific reforms have suggested requiring property owners of properties subject to state PILOT reimbursement to pay the difference between the State's statutory PILOT rate and the amount towns receive, up to 20 percent of the mill rate.
- **ACTION: Require entities exempt from the property tax to pay for specific municipal services such as utilities and other non-education related services.**

### Strategy 3: Alleviate the most regressive impacts of the property tax.

While property taxes are generally progressive in comparison with the alternative revenue mechanisms such as sales taxes, the regressive impact among certain households is important to note. Connecticut households in the bottom 60 percent pay more in property taxes as a share of their family income when compared to other neighboring states. By contrast, the top one percent of Connecticut (families with income over \$1.3 million) pay less in property taxes than in either Massachusetts or New York [9].

- **ACTION: Explore refundable property tax credits or expand existing tax relief programs to make the overall tax burden more progressive.**



**Caption:** Lower income households in Connecticut spend a higher percentage of income on property taxes compared to the Country overall.

## Hartford – Property Taxes

At only roughly 18 square miles, Hartford is geographically one of the smallest municipalities in the Capitol Region. Only eight other communities are smaller in terms of square miles. Half of Hartford’s properties are tax-exempt, the third highest in the State. The small geographic footprint and large number of tax exempt properties create a severe structural disadvantage for the Capital City to generate sufficient revenue to fund public services.

Despite being the most populous municipality in the Region with 121,054 residents, Hartford’s grand list is barely larger than suburban communities such as Southington (population 43,501) or Glastonbury (population 35,159).

**Table X. 2021 Grand List Assessment**

<b>West Hartford</b>	\$7,227,699,858
<b>Manchester</b>	\$5,025,469,112
<b>Hartford</b>	\$4,792,852,090
<b>Southington</b>	\$4,714,469,583
<b>Glastonbury</b>	\$4,487,022,326

Source: OPM.

*Caption: Despite being the Region’s most populous municipality, Hartford’s grand list is smaller than some suburban communities.*

These structural issues came to a head in 2017, when the City began preparing for a Chapter 9 bankruptcy filing, in an effort to rebuild its finances from the ground up. The State passed bipartisan legislation to create the Municipal Accountability Review Board (MARB), authorized to pair financial support for distressed municipalities with oversight and transparency requirements. The following year, the City entered into a contract

assistance agreement, under which the State assumed responsibility for the City’s existing general obligation debt.

In addition to State assistance, the City found significant cost savings through renegotiated labor agreements, as well as obtaining a fifty million dollar commitment over five years from major city employers such as The Hartford, Aetna (now CVS Health), and Travelers. The City has since relied on several key principles for long-term fiscal stability – “no new long-term borrowing; no reliance on one-time revenue sources to balance the budget; adopting a pay-as-you-go capital investment program, funding capital investments with general fund appropriations, surplus allocations, and grant funding; fully funding its actuarially determined pension obligations; and protecting education funding, with consistent increases in per-pupil spending due to decreasing enrollment, driven by the Sheff v. O’Neill settlement.” [10]

Hartford was fortunate to avoid bankruptcy due to timely State assistance and local leadership and gradually rebuilt necessary fiscal guardrails.

However, the structural challenges remain – State and regional leaders must contend with the fact that more foundational reforms are necessary for the Capitol City – and other urban areas - to fully realize their potential.



**Goal: Enhance the operational efficiency and effectiveness of local government operations.**

**Strategies to achieve the goal:**

- Strategy 1: Assist local governments in building their capacity.
- Strategy 2: Look to interlocal or region-wide solutions for state-mandated boards and commissions.
- Strategy 3: Create shared data standards across municipalities.

**Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:**

- Number of intermunicipal commissions.
- Number of intermunicipal staff positions.

Many municipalities across the Region cite significant challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified professional staff. A one- or two-person department is not an uncommon situation. For departments with responsibilities to staff boards and commission, the demands of public meeting notice requirements, agenda and packet development and holding the meetings themselves can feel like a never-ending treadmill. Factor in State and federal mandates and increased demands from elected leaders and residents, municipal services can be challenging. Even among towns with relatively healthy staffing levels, there is a pervasive sense that additional capacity is needed in critical areas and the respective local legislative bodies are often hesitant to add new positions to their budgets.

**Strategy 1: Assist local governments in building their capacity.**

- *ACTION: Provide support and undertake studies in capacity-building.* Continue exploring avenues to help member communities fill critical gaps in local staffing, particularly in comprehensive planning, energy and climate, and data analysis. The study should include a comparative regional governance study to identify capacity building opportunities and roadblocks.
- *ACTION: Help municipalities with operational best practices including succession planning.* Administrative and operational practices among municipalities can differ dramatically. Some are cutting-edge and streamlined, while others are stuck with inefficient or outdated practices. CRCOG, CCM and the UConn School of Public Policy can convene municipalities to learn from each other to streamline internal processes, develop effective succession planning, and share best practices for administrative and procedural efficiency. CRCOG, working with OPM can help municipalities, better understand implementation of new state laws so individual staff are not forced to navigate changes unassisted.
- *ACTION: Continue to advocate for collective municipal interests at the State level through CRCOG's Legislative Committee/Policy Board.*

**"Waste less resources, save costs, and promote community collaboration and connection." – Survey Respondent.**

## **Strategy 2: Look to interlocal or region-wide solutions for state-mandated boards and commissions.**

Nearly all local boards and commissions are volunteer-based, with residents giving up time with their families and other obligations to serve their community. However, due to the necessary sacrifices to serve in this capacity, many boards and commission struggle to find volunteers. The lack of seated members makes obtaining a simple meeting quorum a challenge all too often. A simple solution is enabling adjacent communities to voluntarily create inter-municipal commissions to broaden both the pool of potential volunteers and perspectives.

- *ACTION: Encourage the creation of inter-municipal boards and commissions.* Entities such as ethics and fair rent commissions may be more appropriately conducted on a regional scale to promote objectivity. Even wetland or planning and zoning commissions in smaller, adjacent communities could be combined to allow sufficient number of volunteers to meet quorums.

## **Strategy 3: Create shared data standards across municipalities.**

Local governments collect and report a great deal of similar data, but there are largely no required shared standards for descriptions, naming conventions and other data collection best practices. This creates unnecessary inefficiencies in aggregating data across communities and analyzing wider trends.

- *ACTION: The State should mandate and implement a robust standardization effort to assist policymakers charged with making critical decisions.* Municipalities should be provided technical support to facilitate this transition.

- *ACTION: CRCOG should continue to build out its GIS and data capabilities.*

## Goal: Increase equitable community participation in local decision-making.

### Strategies to achieve the goal:

- Strategy 1: Promote participatory budgeting practices.
- Strategy 2: Build stronger relationships between municipal government and the local community.
- Strategy 3: Diversify local boards and commissions.

### Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:

- Number of municipalities using participatory budgeting.
- Total dollars in Region allocated by participatory budgeting.
- Number municipalities that conduct a gender, race, ethnicity audits of their boards and commissions.
- Satisfaction with local government (CT DataHaven survey).

Incorporating equitable processes into local decision-making requires a commitment and leadership. As more communities commit to this goal, there are more resources and experiences to learn from. Region-wide conversations about progress, challenges, and approaches can help foster a collective understanding of the importance of equity in shaping policies and initiatives.

### Strategy 1: Promote participatory budgeting practices.

Participatory budgeting allows community members to directly and democratically decide how to spend part of a public budget. These projects are often visible and tangible local improvements, such as creating community gardens, renovating sections of a park, installing new playground equipment and other small capital

improvements. This helps build a better, more transparent relationship between residents and their local governments. It also can allow participation by those who are otherwise left out of the local government process.

Hartford was the first city in Connecticut to use participatory budgeting in 2016 -- “Hartford Decide\$”. Thus far, thousands of Hartford residents collectively determined how to spend nearly \$1.3 million from Hartford’s capital budget. They allocated the funding to improve parks, create community gardens, plant trees at several schools, paint public murals, purchase laptops for libraries, improve senior centers, and support several other projects. All project ideas came from residents.

- *ACTION: Provide resources to municipalities on how to conduct participatory budgeting.* CRCOG could prepare a toolkit showcasing efforts within the Region and elsewhere and compile lessons learned from municipalities.

### Strategy 2: Build stronger relationships between municipal government and the local community.

Traditional town hall meetings can be exclusionary and uncomfortable for many residents, leading to unrepresentative voices making critical decisions. Government meetings are usually held during evening hours out of convenience for traditional nine-to-five office workers. It is important to understand formal and informal communication networks in the Region and how to use build a network of trust.

- *ACTION: Proactively help build stronger relationships between municipal government and community members.* Meaningful facilitation, engagement, and

“Improve stakeholder buy-in efforts” - Event Participant

communication can help to better connect with community members. CROCOG should identify innovative methods and best practices to inclusively engage local communities.

### **Strategy 3: Diversify local boards and commissions.**

Volunteer board and commission members perform invaluable work for their communities and should be applauded for their civic spirit. However, we should recognize that these positions can be time consuming, and not every resident can afford to devote uncompensated time to evening meetings. This can lead to unrepresentative community leadership in critical decision-making roles. Proactive recruitment of traditionally underrepresented residents and providing appropriate compensation should be a priority among municipalities to promote more democratic decision making.

- *ACTION: Encourage municipalities to proactively recruit a diverse range of residents for board and commission vacancies.* CROCOG should look at initiatives within the Region and elsewhere that have resulted in successful recruitment of new volunteers. Guidance on appropriate compensation and the rationale for it should be included.

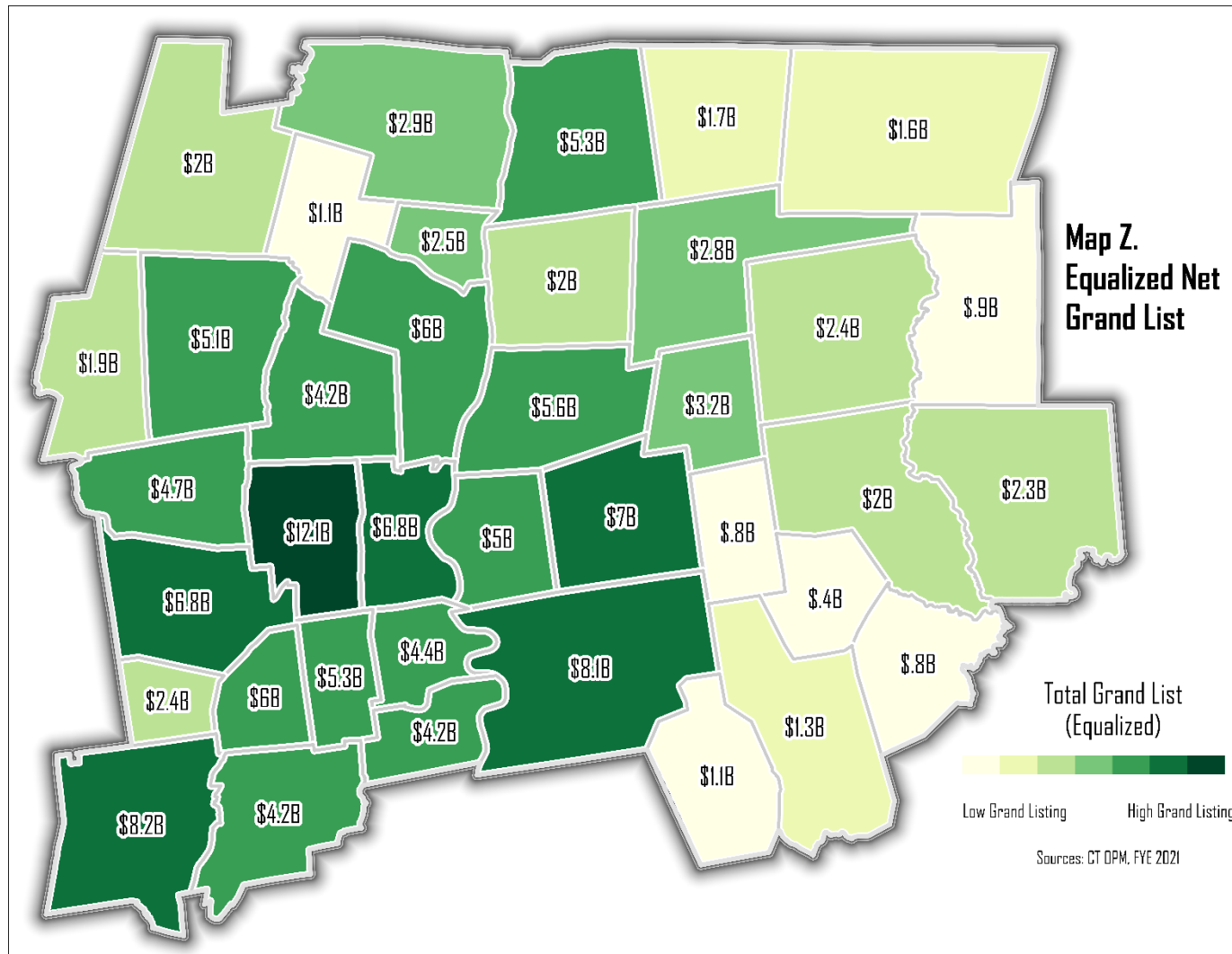
The State recently analyzed the diversity of state boards and commissions and found over-representation of white and males and under-representation of all race and ethnicity except for “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander”. [11] While this report only looked at state boards, it may serve as a starting point for municipalities.

As part of its 50/50 campaign, the YWCA Hartford Region has been working with East Hartford to promote gender equity and racial diversity on key boards and commissions.

One additional aspect to explore is whether requiring interested residents to be affiliated with a political party is hindering diversity – and perhaps has led to the lack of diversity. Optional models for recruiting volunteers should be examined.

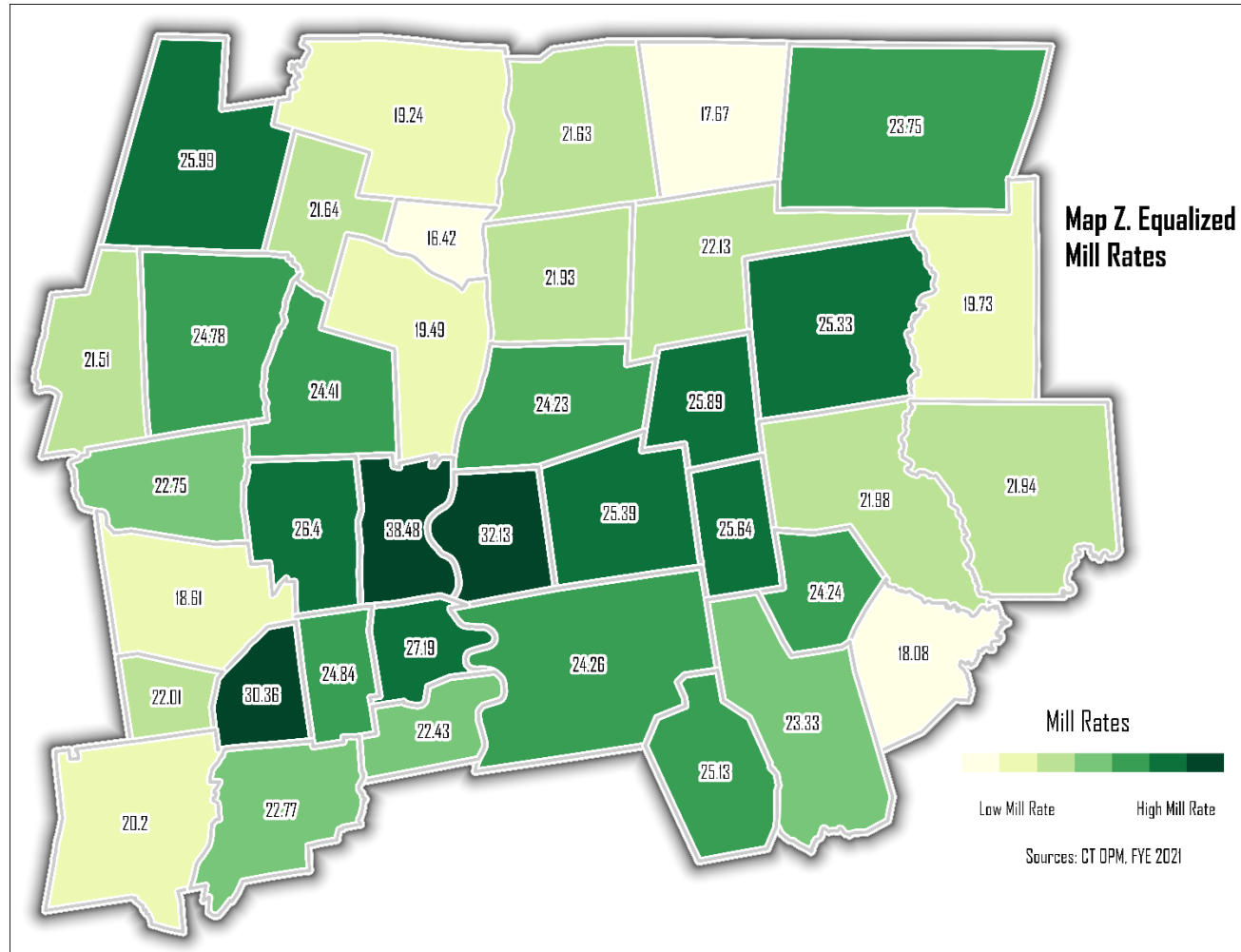
Finally, vacancies on boards and commission are not usually well-advertised. Most municipalities post a notice on their website – which requires that potential candidates know where to look and actively seek such opportunities. Some post them on social media, but this only reaches followers or subscribers. Cities and towns can try alternative approaches and target announcements to groups that are underrepresented.

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: Despite being the Region's most populous municipality, Hartford's grand list is smaller than some suburban communities.*

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: Hartford's mill rate is twice that of many CROG communities.*

<b>SUMMARY OF ACTIONS (sample action table – will be updated to match actions in text and identify if CRCOG is lead, partner or supporter)</b>		
<b>GOAL: Improve public service delivery through robust shared services and partnerships.</b>		
Strategy 1: Increase the Region’s capacity to share services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Conduct a comprehensive review of existing formal and informal examples of shared services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Identify and apply for additional Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP) grants.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Advocate state-level reform to service sharing and consolidation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Review and advocate for the reform of state statutes impeding regional cooperation.</li> <li>• ACTION: Supplement and support State efforts around service sharing and consolidation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support the provision of robust incentives for service sharing and consolidation.</li> </ul>
Strategy 3: Seek regional or multi-town approaches to state-mandated governmental functions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Explore filling state-required local functions at the inter-municipal or regional level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>GOAL: Create fiscally sustainable and equitable systems for funding public services.</b>		
Strategy 1: Reduce reliance on local property taxes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Consider allowing municipalities to diversify local revenue sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Advocate for the State shouldering a larger portion of K-12 special education funding.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Address local fiscal disparities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Formalize the consideration of a municipal “needs-capacity gap.”</li> <li>• ACTION: Reform the State’s Payment In-Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Require entities exempt from the property tax to pay for specific municipal services such as utilities and other non-education related services.</li> </ul>
Strategy 3: Alleviate the most regressive impacts of the property tax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Explore refundable property tax credits or expand existing tax relief programs to make the overall tax burden more progressive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>GOAL: Enhance the operational efficiency and effectiveness of local government operations.</b>		
Strategy 1: Assist local governments in building their capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Provide support and undertake studies in capacity-building.</li> <li>• ACTION: Help municipalities with operational best practices including succession planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Continue to advocate for collective municipal interests at the State level through CRCOG’s Legislative Committee/Policy Board.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Look to interlocal or region-wide solutions for state-mandated boards and commissions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Encourage the creation of inter-municipal boards and commissions</li> </ul>	



Strategy 3: Create shared data standards across municipalities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: The State should mandate and implement a robust standardization effort to assist policymakers charged with making critical decisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: CRCOG should continue to build out its GIS and data capabilities.</li> </ul>
<b>GOAL: Increase equitable community participation in local decision-making.</b>		
Strategy 1: Promote participatory budgeting practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Provide resources to municipalities on how to conduct participatory budgeting.</li> </ul>	
Strategy 2: Build stronger relationships between municipal government and the local community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Proactively help build stronger relationships between municipal government and community members.</li> </ul>	
Strategy 3: Diversify local boards and commissions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Encourage municipalities to proactively recruit a diverse range of residents for board and commission vacancies.</li> </ul>	

## Chapter Endnotes:

1. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations Work Group. Report of the Task Force to Promote Municipal Shared Services. February 2020.
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# Chapter 8: Invest in Transportation Options for Every Journey

The Capitol Region's transportation network indispensably connects us and simultaneously burdens us. Transportation systems built for people can create vibrant, accessible, and sustainable communities. However, our transportation systems over the last several decades have been built with the goal of getting cars from point A to point B most efficiently and as such are failing to meet our current needs. And not to be understated, Connecticut still faces the impacts of historically discriminatory transportation investments that left gaps in service and infrastructure.

Current challenges we face include gaps that limit some residents' access to food, healthcare, and social and economic opportunities. We are primarily a car-dependent Region, which financially burdens households - transportation costs are the second largest household expense after housing. The Federal Highway Administration's National Performance Management Research Data Set found that in 2019, almost 15,000 hours of congestion delay occurred on CRCOG's interstates and freeways within the four peak hours of an average weekday. A national transportation research group, TRIP, estimated congestion costs each Connecticut motorist \$1,000 yearly in time and fuel. Different users and groups of people are also more likely to face an increased burden of time cost through longer travel times to

## CRCOG Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

In April 2023 CRCOG adopted the 2023-2050 long range transportation plan. The plan "promotes sustainable development by encouraging the creation of a sustainable transportation system that integrates land use, economic development, the preservation of the natural environment in the decision-making process to help shape a region with first class mobility."

The MTP addresses all modes of transportation – the highway system, transit and rail, the region's airports, and freight. The primary goals of the MTP are:

- Mobility and access
- Performance-based planning
- Innovative funding
- Fiscally constrained priorities
- Safety
- Equity

Many of the key actions in the plan are highlighted in this Chapter under the relevant strategy.



destinations or having less time to accomplish necessary tasks, which can be referred to as “time poverty.”

Safety is an incredibly huge concern. Nationwide there has been a trend of rising crashes and fatalities on our roadways, across all modes, and the State of Connecticut and the CROG Region are no exception. Fatalities in the United States have been increasing since 2014 after a downward trend since the 1970s. Nearly 43,000 people died on US roadways in 2021. In Connecticut, in just the last three years, fatalities have increased from 222 fatalities in 2019 to an estimated 387 in 2022, a 77 percent increase. In many places, our car-centric infrastructure poses additional safety risks for our vulnerable users – our pedestrians and bicyclists. For pedestrians alone, there were 55 fatalities in 2021, and in 2022 that number increased by 42 percent to 78.

For all these crashes, contributing factors include infrastructure that does not accommodate all transportation modes; an increase in speeding; increasing disparity in vehicle sizes; increasing vehicle heights that impede near-side sight lines and raise impact points with pedestrians and cyclists; and others.

And all communities struggle to maintain existing infrastructure – roads, bridges, drainage systems, and sidewalks. Recent federal funding helps address some of the backlog, but it is not enough.

The climate crisis is also forcing us to acknowledge the environmental burden of single-occupancy vehicles, with 40 percent of Connecticut’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions generated by transportation. These burdens are not distributed equally, with low-income communities and people of color facing greater impacts.

As we were writing our 2014 POCD, a new and exciting transit system was on the verge of opening after 15 years of planning and

three years of construction. Launched in 2015, CTfastrak is a dedicated bus rapid transit system on a 9.4-mile bus-only roadway with 10 stops running through the CROG communities of New Britain, Newington, West Hartford, and Hartford. CTfastrak routes are integrated with the larger CTtransit bus system, making it easy to connect to other routes and many major employment, retail, and healthcare destinations as well as the New Haven and CTrail Hartford Line rail connections. With this framework, we have an opportunity to invest in a transportation system that gives us true mobility choice while simultaneously reducing the environmental, health, safety, and economic costs and their disproportionate distributions. Investing in safe and convenient alternative transportation modes and deliberately connecting these investments to other land use, housing, and other community-based investments will improve quality of life in the Capitol Region for all residents.

Hold for full page infographic for theme

**Figure: Region Roadways by Road Type, 2022**

Roadway Class	% of Mileage	% of Traffic Volume Carried
Collectors & Local Road	83	21
Arterials	14	30
Freeways	3	49

Sources: FHWA National Statistics, 2022; MTP.

Income	Transportation Insecure	Limited Car Access
<\$30k	32%	29%
\$30k-\$100k	11%	8%
\$100k+	3%	2%
Race		
White	8%	5%
Black	20%	21%
Latino	26%	19%

Source: Datahaven GH Wellbeing 2023 (2021 Data)



People of color, particularly Native and Black Americans, are more likely to die while walking than any other race or ethnic group

Pedestrian deaths per 100,000 by race & ethnicity (2016-2020)

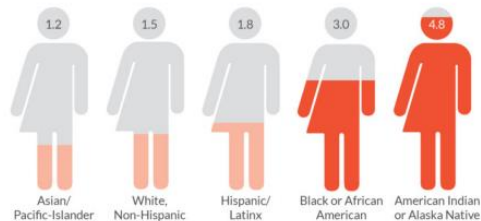


Figure 04.2 — People of color are disproportionately killed while walking. Image source: Smart Growth America, "Dangerous by Design."

## Goals, Strategies and Actions

**Goal: Align transportation investments with land use, housing, and other development and place-making goals.**

### **Strategies to achieve the goal:**

- Strategy 1: Leverage transportation to establish a stronger sense of place and identity.
- Strategy 2: Promote development along major rail and bus hubs and corridors.
- Strategy 3: Reconnect communities through transformative transportation projects.

### **Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:**

- Miles of Complete Streets.
- Funding awarded to create Complete Streets.
- Development within TOD corridors (e.g., units, square footage, funds invested).
- Ridership numbers in TOD corridors.

The Region's transportation system should align with the types of communities we want, with all users taken into account. Car-centric infrastructure consumes large amounts of land that can be used for community spaces and more economically productive, space-efficient uses. During the highway-building era of the 1950s and 1960s, many neighborhoods in the Region were destroyed to make space for cars; "place" was destroyed for convenience of conveying some but not all segments of the population.

More recently, trends in e-commerce have spurred local conversations about balancing everyday convenience of quick deliveries with economic development and impacts from trucking.

We have an opportunity to reverse course and rebuild communities that are supported by, rather than dominated by our roadway network.

### **Strategy 1: Leverage transportation to establish a stronger sense of place and identity.**

Targeted transportation investment can support goals for land use, housing, and economic and community wellbeing.

We can begin to reduce sprawl, continue efforts to conserve open space, and keep locating services close to populations with existing density. Street retrofit projects can reclaim space for community use, active transportation, and for development. Investments in transportation (and approvals of land use proposals) should acknowledge walkability as a vital community element and we can offer tools and resources to cultivate vibrant downtowns and town centers, emphasizing pedestrian-friendly environments while curbing car-centric development.

- *ACTION: Prioritize transportation investments that support land use goals.* CRCOG should continue to conduct comprehensive transportation studies that integrate land use visions and goals. Corridor-wide and transit hub projects should consider how proposed investments will support and advance land use goals.
- *ACTION: Maintain and Implement CRCOG's Complete Streets Policy and Plan.* The policy and plan provide a hierarchy that prioritizes walking, transit, and biking in the Region's urban areas, town centers, and village centers. CRCOG should continue to encourage and support (through technical assistance and/or testimony) municipalities to adopt local Complete Streets plans and policies.

## **Strategy 2: Promote development along major rail and bus hubs and corridors.**

Prioritizing investment in our current transit hubs and corridors establishes a robust foundation for expanding regional transit connections and directs resources towards existing transit riders who depend on the system for their daily transportation needs. While Hartford is the hub for bus and rail transit in the Capitol Region, the CTfastrak and Hartford Line corridors provide opportunities to connect land use with transit.

CRCOG recently concluded a study of development potential at transit stops in eight communities. In addition, CRCOG's Metro Hartford Comprehensive Transit Service Analysis identified six priority corridors along Albany Avenue, Farmington Avenue, Franklin Avenue, Main Street, and Park Street in Hartford and Burnside Avenue in East Hartford. The subsequent CRCOG's Metro Hartford Rapid Routes Transit Priority Corridors Study provided actions for implementation. These completed studies provide a starting point for focused transportation investment but also highlighted that without public investment many projects will not be financially viable. See Chapter 9 for additional TOD strategies.

- ***ACTION: Track development in TOD corridors to assess growth and return on investment.*** The CTfastrak project cost \$567 million (\$112 million in State funds) and continues to this day to face challenges about the merits of its existence. Development did not happen overnight but has emerged and gained momentum over time. Not only does tracking TOD successes along the transit corridors support the case for transit mode but it serves as a model for success for communities along the CTfastrak and CTrail corridors.

- ***ACTION: Discourage non-transit dependent/supported uses in TOD areas.*** Municipalities should update zoning regulations to avoid losing valuable land in TOD areas for incompatible, car-oriented uses.
- ***ACTION: Continue conducting studies on the freight transportation system to maintain and improve efficient, sustainable, and equitable movement of goods, including for e-commerce and last mile deliveries.*** The I-84/I-91 interchange is the main truck traffic bottleneck in the Region and, as of 2023, is listed as the 21st most congested site in the American Transportation Research Institute's Top 100 Truck Bottleneck List. The growth of e-commerce has also led to an increase in last-mile distribution centers, fulfillment centers, and warehouses. Based on zoning referrals received by CRCOG, the demand for warehousing and logistics centers in the Capitol Region has increased over the last several years. This growth causes concerns about increased truck traffic in neighborhoods and the associated increased congestion, pollution, noise, and curbside management issues. CRCOG will be initiating a study to better understand the impacts on our communities and help them better understand and plan for a changing future.
- ***ACTION: Preserve freight adjacent land for freight dependent uses.*** A 2005 study, Freight Movement in the Hartford Metropolitan Region, conducted by Global Insight, estimated about 12 percent of freight could be shifted from truck-to-rail which is a more sustainable and efficient mode of freight. The Hartford Line between New Haven and Springfield serves as the main avenues rail freight through the Region. While the Region's rail facilities have constraints that limit expansion, preserving adjacent lands that are zoned appropriately for freight-dependent uses keep the opportunity open for shifting



more freight movement to rail. CRCOG's upcoming regional warehouse study may revisit freight rail capacity.

Additional Key Actions from MTP:

- Support TOD and first-mile/last-mile connections along all transit lines, including traditional bus corridors, through coordinated action by CRCOG, the State, and affected municipalities. (MTP)
- Work with municipal officials and developers to integrate TOD into their plans and development projects through use of such tools as the Mixed-Use/ Transit-Oriented Development Model Zoning Regulation and the findings of CRCOG's TOD Roles, Visioning, Viability, and Tools Analysis. (MTP)

**Strategy 3: Reconnect communities through transformative transportation projects.**

Today it is widely accepted that the creation of the massive highways, particularly their placement through minority and lower income communities, had disastrous effects on our cities in addition to the disproportionate impact on the people who lived in razed neighborhoods. Highways cut through communities and cut off major amenities from neighborhoods. Interstate 91 and 84 cut the river off from downtown Hartford and the rest of the City's neighborhoods at the expense of busy, productive working class neighborhoods. Combined with the rise of auto-centric outer ring suburbs, and other car-centric land use patterns, the impact of these historic transportation projects still impacts the Region today.

Through unprecedented amounts of federal funding, changing mindset at the local level, and the recent release of the Greater Hartford Mobility Study, the Region can transform our transportation system. We have the opportunity to reimagine a

system that provides choices, reconnects communities and people to destinations and opportunities, and reduces emissions.

- *ACTION: Support and advocate for the actions contained within the Greater Hartford Mobility Study (GHMS).* This 2023 study is "aimed at redefining the entire landscape of Greater Hartford's transportation infrastructure." The study acknowledges the impacts the current system had on the Region's minority, low-income and other disadvantaged groups. The study provides recommendations to address infrastructure deficiencies, provide more travel choices, enhance quality of life, and creating a more equitable system. As of the writing of this Plan, CRCOG has not yet taken a position on specific aspects of the GHMS but anticipates endorsement and actively pursuing such a transformation.
- *ACTION: Transform car-centric commercial corridors.* Wide, multi-lane roads with numerous curb cuts can be frustrating to users – drivers turning into or out of driveways, pedestrians attempting to cross the street, and transit users who must walk long distances to reach their destination. These roads impact quality of life and create conflicts between through traffic and local uses. Many – like the Silas Deane Highway and the Berlin Turnpike – span multiple communities, making interlocal coordination critical. CRCOG should work with the communities to re-imagine these and other similar roads and identify opportunities to fund improvements.

Additional Key Actions from MTP:

- Support the removal of barriers created by highways (such as I-84 and I-91 in Harford) and advocate for appropriate planning and policies that will encourage opportunities for equitable and sustainable development surrounding these projects. (MTP)

**Goal: Expand transportation options for all users and purposes.**

Strategies to achieve the goal:

- Strategy 1: Make transit a convenient, attractive, and viable transportation choice.
- Strategy 2: Provide safe, appealing, and accessible walking and bicycling infrastructure.
- Strategy 3: Enhance and expand regional and long-distance transportation services for longer journeys.
- Strategy 4: Capitalize on transportation innovations that make it easier to move around the Region.

**Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:**

- Commute mode share.
- Miles of bike infrastructure.
- Feet of sidewalks.

Transportation systems should optimize mobility choice to provide safe, convenient, and enjoyable journeys to any destination. A transportation “system” should anticipate needs and provide options for all our Region’s communities and individuals.

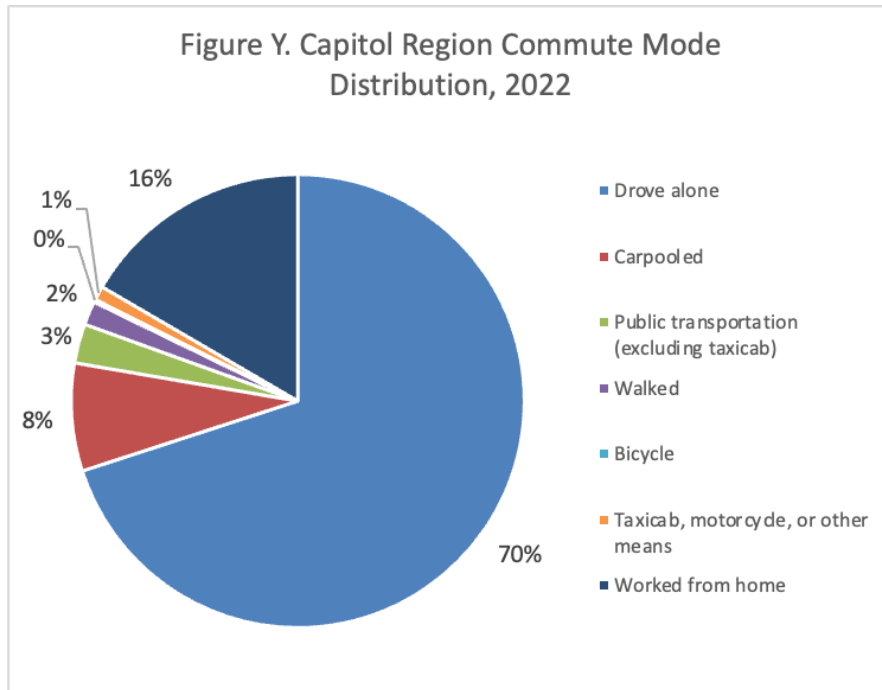
The 2022 1-Year ACS data shows that driving alone continues to make up the bulk of commuting trips in the Region. Capitol Region residents who use alternative travel modes continue to make up less than 14 percent of commuters. This data might indicate a necessity rather than a choice. In CRCOG’s POCD survey, 67 percent of respondents said that they are not able to get to their everyday destinations without a car. When asked what their preferred option would be if a car was not an option (and infrastructure was in place), biking, walking, and transit were

almost equally favorable. CRCOG’s MTP survey asked residents what the top priority for transportation funding should be and the top three responses were Safety, Alternatives to Driving, and Community Development with 35 percent, 24 percent, and 15 percent of responses respectively.

About 10 percent of Capitol Region households lack access to a personal vehicle [1]. Lower income and Black and Latino communities make up a disproportionate share of households that do not have access to a personal vehicle. Access to reliable public transportation and safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities are vital to the economic and social well-being of those who rely on these modes for virtually all their transportation needs. Attention should also be paid to residents in more rural parts of the Region with limited car access and few, if any, transit options.

Most of our trips are short; in Connecticut over the past five years (2019-2023), half of all person trips made by any mode were less than three miles and a quarter of all trips were less than one mile [2]. Additionally, shorter trips make up a greater share compared to five years ago. This presents an opportunity to shift such short trips to non-driving modes, including “shared micromobility.”

**Figure: Region Commute Mode Share (2022)**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

Caption: Most Capitol Region commuters drove alone to work, followed by working from home and carpooling.

### Strategy 1: Make transit a convenient, attractive, and viable transportation choice.

The current systems make it less convenient to take transit than drive. For those with a car, the financial cost of using transit coupled with free parking at destinations makes it more economical to drive. Transit also has a strong time cost associated with it. The ACS estimates that in the Capitol Region in 2022, those who drove alone to work had an average commute of

## Shared Micromobility

Micromobility can be broadly defined as any small, low-speed, human- or electric-powered transportation device, including bicycles, scooters, electric-assist bicycles (e-bikes), electric scooters (e-scooters), and other small, lightweight, wheeled conveyances. They can be privately owned by individuals or part of a shared micromobility system. Shared micromobility has grown in the US and in 2021 ridership had nearly rebounded to pre-pandemic levels with 112 million trips [3].

CRCOG helped launch the e-scooter service operated by Superpedestrian in the City of Hartford. Unfortunately, the service ended late 2023 when Superpedestrian went out of business but the Hartford market was a remarkable success. Their Link scooters provided over 460,000 rides and even operated during winter months. The scooters provided a fun recreation opportunity for visitors but, more importantly, a transportation utility and convenient alternative for many residents in the city. Notably, approximately 800 users had signed up for the system's Link Up discount program, which provided a 70 percent discount off rides for anyone who qualified by demonstrating local, state, or federal assistance.

CRCOG continues to recognize the merits and value of micromobility and aims to pursue a future system.

24.6 minutes while transit users had an average commute of 41.3 minutes. One common theme we heard during initial public engagement was the Region's transit system service area and hours of operation also need improvement.

Despite these challenges, local ridership numbers are improving. Local bus system ridership in the Region has recovered much faster from the pandemic, even surpassing pre-pandemic

ridership levels. Yet ridership on longer routes (Express routes, CTfastrak, and the Hartford Line) has not fully recovered. This suggests that transit-dependent riders must rely on local service for their daily needs while commuter-only riders have choices to work remotely or drive to work. It should be noted that this local ridership growth was also in part due to the State’s temporary fare-free policy, which ended in March 2023.

**Figure X: Annual Passenger Trips on Capitol Region Transit Systems, 2022**

<b>Transit Agency</b>	<b>Passenger Trips</b>
CTTransit Hartford	9 million
CTFastrak	1 million
Greater Hartford Paratransit	400,000
Hartford Line	200,000
Windham Region Transit District (WRTD)	140,000
Rocky Hill-Glastonbury Ferry	27,000*

Note: Ferry numbers from 2019.

Sources: Federal Transit Administration, NTD Agency Profiles 2022 and CT Department of Transportation, 2020 Transportation Fast Facts.

Caption: The Region saw over 10 million transit passenger trips in 2022.

## Providing High Quality Bus Service

CRCOG conducted two Comprehensive Service Analysis (CSA) studies in 2017 and 2018 for CTtransit's Hartford Division and New Britain-Bristol Division, respectively, to provide recommendations to improve local bus service, complement enhanced transit investments, and operate efficiently. The Transit Priority Corridors Study completed in 2022 provided an implementation plan with more detailed recommendations on six major transit corridors in Hartford, also called the Metro Hartford RapidRoutes. These six corridors are served by half of CTtransit's 68 Hartford Division bus routes and are used by 68% of all Hartford area bus riders.

These studies provide recommendations for a frequent, fast, reliable, and comfortable transit system:

- Enhance service and provide capital improvements for existing priority transit corridors, including upgrading stops with improved benches and shelters and using technology for live traveler information and transit signal priority.
- Approximately five stops per mile is recommended to balance both access to stops and speed of buses.
- All stops should include benches, be fully accessible, and feature a consistent design character with amenities based on boarding volumes. Amenities include shelters, key system information like real-time updates, lighting, trash receptacles, and bicycle racks.
- Raise curb heights at stops to provide accessibility and faster service.
- Increase service hours on weekends and evenings.
- Maintain peak service frequencies of 10 minutes to less.

- Restructure routes to create radial and crosstown connections to transit hubs, key destinations in low density areas, and first mile/last mile multimodal connections.
- Provide more convenient and accessible options for low density residential areas with stronger first-mile/last-mile services and subsidized demand-response options, or microtransit.
- Add local bus service that connects to town centers and support existing local transit services.
- 12.5 miles of bus lanes are proposed along sections of the priority corridors where they would improve bus speeds and reliability and where traffic conditions permit.
- Coordinate ADA paratransit coverage areas with local bus service to provide more mobility options for seniors and persons with disabilities.
- Transit signal priority is proposed for all signalized intersections in the priority corridors to reduce delays at signalized intersections and improve service speed.



Regarding future transit needs, Generation Z (roughly born between 1997 and 2012) seems to be moving away from car-dependent areas and towards cities with transit options. They place a higher importance on sustainability in their decision making. Both Gen Z and Millennials (roughly born between 1981 and 1996) are waiting longer to obtain a driver's license compared to prior generations [4]. And our increasing senior population may also need reasonable options if and when they can no longer drive. Transit must play a greater role in our Region's transportation system if we are to equitably serve users who need it, attract and retain future workers, and enable aging populations to age in place.

**Table x. United States Drivers as a Percentage of Age Group**

Age	2001	2011	2021
16	34.3	27.5	25.3
19	74.8	69.3	68.3
20-24	85.6	79.7	81
35-39	89.9	90.2	91.1

Source: U.S. Federal Highway Administration, Highway Statistics 2021 – Policy.

*Caption: Fewer young people in the U.S. are receiving their driver's license than in previous decades.*

- **ACTION:** Invest in frequent, fast, and accessible transit options. Significant investment is necessary to provide convenient transportation options. More than \$1.5 billion has been invested in the Region's transit and passenger rail systems over the last decade. CRCOG has facilitated and supported plans and projects that call for additional investment in our transit. CRCOG's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) identified innovative financing strategies that could be further explored for funding Capitol

## Promising Ridership East-of-River

Towns east of the Connecticut River have expressed interest in CTfastrak-like service to connect to Hartford. In 2017, the 913 Hartford-Buckland-Storrs Express bus launched. It runs seven days of the week until midnight on weekdays and Saturdays. This service connects Hartford to the major transit hub and commercial center in Buckland Hills and the UConn campus in Storrs. In just the first four months of service, the express line served over 32,000 passengers, over half of which utilized the State's U-Pass CT program which provides free service for students at Connecticut State Colleges and Universities. The success of this route demonstrates the desire for frequent, late night, and service east of the river.

Source: UConn Today. Expanded Bus Service Receives Robust Response.



Region projects, including state legislation enabling regional transportation sales tax referenda, district value capture strategies (e.g., tax increment financing and joint development), and other suggestions. CRCOG should advocate for these and other options to provide a robust and accessible transit system. Prior action to track growth and development in TOD corridor locations will further support and otherwise inform these requests at the state level.

- *ACTION: Support and advocate for transit stops that demonstrate a commitment to investing in transit infrastructure.* Bus stops are the first impression for a rider utilizing transit. Unfortunately, many of our Region's bus stops lack basic amenities like a bus pad or overhead shelter from the elements. Investing in our transit means also investing in our riders and it starts with the first impression.
- *ACTION: Develop more comprehensive service for transit that serves critical resources such as grocery stores, medical centers, and employment hubs.* Increased frequency and hours of service can better connect residents to important destinations.
- *ACTION: Proactively plan for transit dependent older populations and transit supportive younger populations by providing resources and services for these populations.* Way To Go CT compiles detailed town-by-town transportation options on its website, making it easy to find alternatives to driving. Information ranges from Dial-a-Ride to non-emergency medical transportation to livery services. CRCOG should support efforts by others to keep this information updated and promote its use.

- *ACTION: Pursue multimodal and first-last mile connections from major transit hubs and corridors.* First-mile/last-mile connection is the start or end of a transit trip – how does a transit rider get to the station and from the station to their ultimate destination. Micromobility systems – whether bike share or scooter share – or personally owned vehicles electric bikes and scooters help address first-mile/last-mile trips to transit. Investment in this type of micromobility may also increase ridership, as some stops are currently car-dependent. Additional improvements might include bicycle parking and storage, timed transit transfers for buses and trains, regional micromobility services, and Complete Streets infrastructure.

#### Additional Key Actions from MTP:

- Support continued advancements in and maintenance of transit information systems such as Next Bus traveler information systems, transit signal priority, and comprehensive electronic fare collection. (MTP)
- Implement capital improvements along high-frequency transit corridors, including transit signal priority, stop consolidation, and enhanced passenger amenities. (MTP)
- Identify flexible service models to serve low density areas in the Capitol Region and create first-mile/last-mile connections(MTP)
- Continue to support local transit systems such as the dash service in downtown Hartford and Enfield's Magic Carpet Service. (MTP)



## Strategy 2: Provide safe, appealing, and accessible walking and bicycling infrastructure.

Walkable places promote physical and social health, create vibrant community spaces, and support local economic investment. Direct access to public spaces where other people are reliably present is essential for developing social bonds.

Spaces that are truly walkable also improve safety. Walkable areas tend to have lower speed limits (both posted and functionally) and streetscape design capable of slowing drivers down. And areas busy with activity also create a sense of personal safety. These desirable attributes lead to economic benefits as

local businesses are supported by foot traffic and tourism. Walkability also encourages investment and a rise in land values [5].

Walkable places also have positive impacts for social and physical well-being. The forced isolation of the pandemic reminded us of how important walkable neighborhoods are for social well-being. A survey conducted in early 2020 and again in mid-2020 by the National Association of Realtors found the percent of people who ranked “sidewalks and places to take walks” as a “very important” factor in deciding where to live increased after the onset of the pandemic, particularly for respondents ages 35 through 49. They found that the pandemic also increased positive attitudes towards riding a bicycle for Gen Xers and older [6].

Opportunities to walk and bike can also play a larger role as a mode of transportation. As noted above, most everyday journeys are short distances (less than three miles) to run errands, visit parks, attend social events, and commute to work and school. With a quarter of all trips being less than one mile, walking,

bicycling, and using other forms of micromobility can be a feasible, cost-effective option for many people. Yet, driving remains the primary mode of transportation by a significant margin. Our current car-centric transportation infrastructure, which can create an unsafe environment for pedestrians and bicyclists, may contribute to a reluctance to walk and bike for more journeys.

The idea of complete streets in the U.S. originated in the early 2000’s as a term to encompass new policy initiatives to counteract decades of car-centric planning. Complete streets emphasize safe access for all users of streets – pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. CRCOG also emphasized complete streets and creating walkable, pedestrian scale places in our last plan. However, notable milestones for CRCOG in the last ten years include our adoption of a regional Complete Streets Plan (and regional network) and Policy. We use these documents to help guide and prioritize funding towards projects that accomplish the goals of complete streets.

- *ACTION: Identify opportunities for active transportation infrastructure to connect with/create destinations for recreational, social, and placemaking purposes alongside utility destinations.*
- *ACTION: Identify key regional locations with car centric infrastructure where bike and pedestrian improvements can be planned and implemented such as commercial arterials, strip malls and turnpikes.*

“The students all agreed that it was hard to find community in their hometowns because of the lack of walkability and the necessity of cars” – Table Talk Report.

“Let me get around without having to pay for a car.” – Event Attendee.

- *ACTION: Identify funding sources and programming to create protected bicycle lanes through physical barriers such as raised curb-buffers, street parking, and channelized islands at intersections.*

#### Additional Key Actions from MTP:

- Implement the Regional Complete Streets Network and complete a regional network of Level of Traffic Stress 1 bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, including the East Coast Greenway. (MTP)
- Continue to assess opportunities where CROCOG's Regional Complete Streets Policy can be improved and respond to new best practices (MTP)
- Continue to assist municipalities with creating their own complete streets policies through development of best practices guidance and technical support. (MTP)
- Support educational initiatives that encourage safe bicycle and pedestrian transportation (MTP)

### **Strategy 3: Enhance and expand regional and long-distance transportation services for longer journeys.**

Although shorter trips make up a large percent of trips taken, longer trips are responsible for majority of annual mileage traveled in the State. Providing alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles for these longer trips or reducing the need for these trips altogether is critical for reducing car dependency and GHG Emissions. Investment in regional transit and rail can provide long distance travel options that reduce GHG emissions and bring economic growth to the Region.

The 2016 CTfastrak Expansion Study recommended expanding service east of Hartford. The expansion would greatly improve regional connectivity and could spur local service improvements

along new CTfastrak hubs. The 2021 Metro Hartford-Springfield Rail Improvements Economic Impact Study found that restoring passenger rail service from Hartford to Boston via Springfield would provide a nine- to ten-times return on the investment.

The Region's transit system should also facilitate connections to other systems and modes in the State and in neighboring states, including Bradley International Airport.

- *ACTION: Expand and improve rail service.* Investments in our rail systems should include reinstating full double-track alignment, removing barriers to height and weight restrictions, supporting transit-oriented development around stations, and executing on the vision developed with other New England states to provide high-speed connections with Springfield, Boston, and Montreal.
- *ACTION: Better connect Bradley International Airport to transit.* The airport is an important regional resource for long-distance travel. Bradley invested \$210 million into a new Ground Transportation Center which opened in 2022 to strengthen passenger connections with the Region. The Center includes dedicated space for the two bus routes, Route 30 (Bradley Flyer) and Route 24, that directly connect to Hartford's Union Station and to the Windsor Locks Railroad Station, respectively. These multimodal connections help provide sustainable and equitable access to the economic and leisure activities that air travel supports. However, it needs to be recognized that air travel is a high producer of GHG emissions and providing alternative travel modes when possible should be a priority. But providing alternative, sustainable options to reach the airport can help.

#### Additional Key Actions from MTP:

- ACTION: Build upon the vision for the New England High-Speed and Intercity Rail Network collectively developed with other New England states by working to support connections between Springfield and Boston and to Montreal. (MTP)
- ACTION: Upgrade the CTrail Hartford Line with infrastructure improvements and new stations from Windsor to Springfield (MTP)
- ACTION: Advance the second phase of CTfastrak expansion east of Hartford (MTP)
- ACTION: Support establishments of regional transit hubs, such as the Buckland Hills Park and Ride. (MTP)
- ACTION: Develop a long-range strategy for the Region that encourages both transit and transit supportive land use and make station area and TOD planning a core element in the planning process for any rapid transit line. (MTP)

#### **Strategy 4: Capitalize on transportation innovations that make it easier to move around the Region.**

Advances in technology and innovations in the last decade are making it easier to get around in the Region without owning a car.

Technology enables many new micromobility options. The personal electric bike and scooter market is on the rise--in 2022 the global electric bike market was valued at \$37.4 billion, increased to \$43.3 billion in 2023 and is expected to grow to \$119.7 billion by 2030 [7]. The rise of this technology, a demand at least in part spurred by the pandemic and aversion to crowded public transit, enables quickly rechargeable batteries, lightweight motors, provides an excellent option for users with limited mobility. Technology also drives the shared micromobility market,

especially scooters, with real-time GPS location of available vehicles, on-vehicle and/or phone app payment options, and the ability to use a technology called geofencing to control the vehicle itself i.e. low speeds at specific locations, enforce no parking zones, etc.

Shared mobility and mobility as a service (MaaS) is a move from commodity-based consumption of transportation (owning a car, bike, etc.) to a service-based model (consuming a trip on a shared service). Shared mobility/MaaS includes car and ride share (like Uber and Lyft), bikeshare, and on-demand shuttle services. MaaS allows users to customize trips based on cost, time, and convenience. These services are becoming increasingly popular, particularly with younger populations who embrace the conveniences of technology. Growth in global membership in carsharing services was only temporarily slowed during the pandemic and has since recovered [8]. Part of this growth is due to reduced car supply from the pandemic that resulted in car prices that were 75 percent higher than pre-pandemic levels. The resulting high cost and lack of new and rental car availability pushed travelers to use alternatives to owned or rented vehicles, such as carsharing. Subsidized carsharing has been used as an option to serve less dense communities as an alternative to fixed route transit and some areas have implemented curb management strategies to better integrate and regulate these newer mobility options.

Microtransit is being hailed as a new innovative service to provide a flexible public transit option in addition to existing fixed route services (i.e. CTtransit). Microtransit is a form of transit typically utilizing minibuses that offers a highly flexible routing and/or highly flexible scheduling of vehicles shared with other passengers. “Services can include variations of the following two models: 1) fixed route, fixed schedule (can be similar to the operations of public transit) and 2) flexible route with on-demand

scheduling (this more closely mirrors ridesplitting and paratransit services).” [9] Microtransit has potential to provide value in lower density areas or as a way of feeding riders into the broader, fixed route system, but is also utilized simply for point-to-point service. The idea of microtransit or flex service has been around for some time but is newer to emerge in CT. In 2023, Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) awarded funding to nine transit districts and municipalities in Connecticut to develop and pilot an on-demand microtransit service. These services are not yet active and these pilot programs will be helpful in determining the benefits and challenges of such a service.

CTDOT will be implementing a Microtransit Pilot Program to assess how well different approaches to microtransit work in communities throughout the state. CROCOG will monitor these selected projects during the duration of the pilot program.

- *ACTION: Seek pilot projects to test innovative approaches.* CROCOG should stay up-to-date and monitor emerging technology in micromobility, mobility-on-demand, and mobility as a service.

**Table x. Global Carsharing Memberships**

Year	Memberships
2017	23,800,000
2022	123,000,000
2027 Estimated	269,000,000

Source: Berg Insight. The Carsharing Telematics Market, 6th Edition.  
 Caption: Global carsharing memberships are growing and expected to continue expanding throughout the decade.

- *ACTION: Continue to explore a regional micromobility system.* Building on the success of the scooter share program in the City of Hartford, CROCOG will continue to work with the City and other interested communities to relaunch and expand shared micromobility at a regional scale.
- *ACTION: Monitor the CTDOT pilot program.* There are multiple operational models that can and will be piloted across the State. Understanding best practices and lessons learned with this new program will be helpful to determine which models are best suited for our region, which locations are best suited for microtransit, and overall impacts on public transit ridership (i.e. net gains in ridership or shift in ridership mode). In 2023,

## **Goal: Address the burdens and costs of transportation.**

### **Strategies to achieve the goal:**

- Strategy 1: Create a greener and sustainable transportation network.
- Strategy 2: Eliminate deaths and serious injuries on our roads.
- Strategy 3: Reduce health, social, and financial transportation inequities.
- Strategy 4: Develop more efficient transportation funding practices.

### **Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:**

- Transportation emissions from transportation.
- Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT).
- Number of crashes resulting in serious injuries or deaths.
- CROG transportation funding allocated to disadvantaged communities.

### **Strategy 1: Create a greener and sustainable transportation network.**

Transportation is the largest contributor to GHG emissions in the State. CT DEEP's Connecticut Greenhouse Gas Inventory reports that 39 percent of CT's GHG emissions were from the transportation sector in 2019, with 77 percent of emissions from gasoline.

Climate change is also taking a toll on our transportation systems. The increase in extreme weather events such as flooding and heat waves is challenging the ability of our transportation systems to

withstand or recover from such events. This concept is referred to as transportation resiliency. Resilient transportation systems maintain access to critical infrastructure during extreme weather events and avoid the need for costly repairs and maintenance. The costs of natural disasters like this cannot be fully avoided, but resilient systems can help reduce the damages and keep emergency services in operation.

Reducing transportation emissions and creating more sustainable infrastructure is critical to mitigating climate change, reducing health impacts from emissions, and ensuring transportation infrastructure can withstand extreme events.

But there is no singular solution to creating a greener system. For example, innovations such as electric vehicles help reduce the emissions from vehicle trips, but still have impacts such as wear and tear of roadways, requiring paved areas for parking, and reinforcing car-centric development. Even if there is a mass shift to electric vehicles, without concurrent investments in TDM, personal electric vehicles will still increase VMT which will increase congestion, take up valuable community space for roads and parking, and limit access to mobility for those without easy access to these costly vehicles. Additionally, increased EV adoption could put a substantial strain on the electrical grid, and therefore effective coordination and planning with electricity producers and transmitters will be critical to ensure continued grid adequacy.

**Table X: 2019 Total Methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and Nitrous Oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O)  
Emissions from Mobile Sources**

Vehicle Type	Million Metric Tons of Methane & Nitrous Oxide	%
Passenger Cars	57,149	34.2%
Heavy-Duty Vehicles	31,501	18.9%
Light-Duty Trucks	25,271	15.1%
Construction Equipment	8,346	5.0%
Aircraft	8,184	4.9%
Heavy-Duty Buses	2,824	1.7%
Boats	2,397	1.4%
Farm Equipment	1,097	0.7%
Locomotives	557	0.3%
Alternative Fuel Vehicles	370	0.2%
Buses	353	0.2%
Motorcycles	128	0.1%
Other	28,727	17.2%
TOTAL	166,905	100.0%

Source: CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

Caption: Passenger cars account for the largest percentage of Methane and Nitrous Oxide emissions.

- **ACTION: Reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips.** By providing options for single-occupancy vehicle users to use other, more sustainable, forms of transportation, direct emissions from vehicles and emissions from congestion can be significantly reduced. If significant changes are not made, car dependency will only cause continuous growth in VMT. In addition to making it more convenient and viable to walk, bike and take transit, other programs can help reduce single-occupancy trips. Travel Demand Management (TDM) strategies such as work from home policies, four-day work weeks, incentives to carpool or take transit, and elimination of free workplace

parking can help influence driver behavior.

- **ACTION: Reduce air pollution by reducing congestion and idling.** Additional TDM strategies can also reduce congestion, thereby reducing idling and localized emissions. Measure such as staggered work hours to spread peak demand. Replacing signalized intersections with roundabouts can reduce idling. Certain land uses promote idling and can create air quality hotspots, such as schools and restaurant drive-throughs. Measures to reduce or eliminate idling should be implemented.
- **ACTION: Reduce vehicle emissions.** Conversion to personal electric vehicles and electric buses will reduce local vehicle emissions. In addition to providing typical EV charging infrastructure, the public sector will likely need to play a role in ensuring larger scale electrical infrastructure is sufficient. This includes ensuring large vehicle charging technology is readily available as freight trucks and buses commonly require overhead charging at transit stations, overhead catenary systems, or static charging at maintenance facilities.
- **ACTION: Green our transportation infrastructure.** As noted in other sections of this plan, we should identify sustainable land use opportunities on transportation land such as green space, pollinator corridors, parkways, green buffers, permeable surfaces, and alternative energy generation.

Additional Key Actions from MTP:

- Equitably invest in fleet and vehicle electrification, such as by supporting initiatives like the Connecticut Electric Bus Initiative (MTP)

- Implement resilient transportation systems with an emphasis on nature-based and green infrastructure elements alongside partners such as the MDC and DEEP (MTP)
- Incorporate a publicly transparent performance-based and data-driven process for selecting and implementing investments (MTP)
- Explore policy options for incentivizing travel behavior such as congestion or cordon pricing (excluding residents), vehicle mile traveled pricing, or fees for zero occupancy trips and discounts for higher-occupancy shared trips. (MTP)



## Sustainable Transportation Hierarchy

The Sustainable Transportation hierarchy ranks modes based on affordability, inclusivity, and resource-efficiency.

**Walking and Rolling** are modes with low barriers of entry, minimal infrastructure costs, produce zero emissions, and have health and social benefits for those who use them.

**Electric Micromobility** can allow for longer trips at faster speeds than walking and rolling while still maintaining affordability, sustainability, and accessibility.

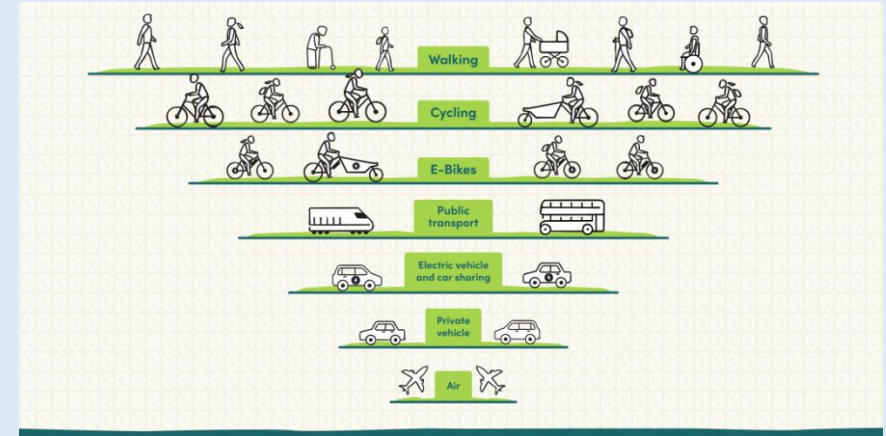
**Public Transit** is also cost-effective with a low barrier of entry. Low or no emission fuel types and mass movement of people means it is more sustainable than other vehicle types. Public transit is also safer and more space efficient than personal vehicles.

**Electric Vehicles and Car Sharing** provide flexible transportation options that are more environmentally friendly than gas or diesel fueled vehicles. However EVs are still expensive and inaccessible and even with efforts to reduce these barriers they still rely on inefficient and burdensome car centric infrastructure.

**Personal Vehicles** are the only reliable option for many people in the Region to make their daily journeys. However, providing reliable options for modes higher in the Sustainable Transportation Hierarchy will lead to longer term sustainability and reduce the burdens of car dependency.

**Air** provides an option for our longest-distance trips and connects us globally. It is also the mode with the highest carbon footprint. Limiting our need for flight and investing in alternative

transportation options where possible is important to a sustainable future.



Source of Image: ActionNetZero.org.

Strategy 2: Eliminate deaths and serious injuries on our roads.

Our roads are becoming less safe. We are seeing a nationwide trend of rising crashes and fatalities, across all modes, and the State and the CROG Region are no exception. Fatalities in the United States have been increasing since 2014 after a downward trend since the 1970s. Preliminary data estimates 322 fatalities in the State in 2023, which represents a slight decrease from the prior year, but is the second worst year for fatalities in the last decade [10]. We have much more work to do to reduce fatalities. Our transportation infrastructure is contributing to these high numbers of fatalities. Improving infrastructure to better accommodate all transportation modes and is designed to minimize speeding can help make everyone safer.

Table X. Capitol Region Roadway Fatalities

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Fatalities	69	81	103	104	76
Pedestrian Fatalities	12	19	22	23	24
Motorcyclist Fatalities	14	22	20	22	15
Bicyclist Fatalities	0	1	0	2	0

Source: Connecticut Crash Data Repository.  
Caption: Total fatalities peaked during the pandemic.

In response to safety concerns, the Federal and state government are now emphasizing a Vision Zero approach. Vision Zero’s premise is that deaths on our roadways are preventable and we should strive to achieve zero fatalities through education, enforcement, engineering, and equity-focused solutions. The State established the Vision Zero Council in 2021 and proposed a

Components of Safety

Safer Roads – 2020 national data shows that three out of five people killed by cars were on multi-lane, higher speed arterials. Our roadway infrastructure prioritizes moving vehicles as efficiently as possible and keeping drivers comfortable with wide, straight lanes and vast space beside the roadway to accommodate mistakes. Redesigning these spaces to accommodate all users is essential for the well-being and safety of the Region.

Safer Speeds -- Higher speeds drastically increase the probability of a crash resulting in a serious injury or a fatality. From 2020 to 2022, the percentage of Connecticut drivers traveling more than 85 mph has approximately doubled. Context-appropriate roadway design can reduce speeds making safer streets for all. Education, outreach, and enforcement are also important.

Safer People - The most frequent behaviors that contribute to fatal crashes according to USDOT are people in motor vehicles not wearing seatbelts, driving while impaired from alcohol, and speeding. Young men, who have the highest rates of risk-taking behaviors, are the most at risk to being involved in fatal and serious injury crashes. Finding ways to meaningfully engage with populations prone to risk taking behavior and addressing the root causes of this behavior without relying on unequal enforcement is important.

Safer Vehicles - Advances in vehicle safety technologies helps protect vehicle occupants from crashes, however increasing disparities in vehicle sizes and height impede sight lines and raise impact points with pedestrians and cyclists. SUVs and Pickup truck sales continue to make up most U.S. passenger vehicle sales. Growing vehicles sizes make roads more inhospitable to non-motorists.

Post-Crash Care - Emergency response time is vital to survival. Traffic incident management (TIM) programs support EMS and the clearing of roadway hazards to return conditions to normal after a crash. CROG established the Greater Hartford TIM Coalition (GHTC) in 2018 that provides guidance to and promotes partnerships for TIM programs.

number of measures which were included in ‘An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Vision Zero Council.’

This legislation implements policies and authorizes the use of strategies and tools that have been proven to reduce crashes and injuries when implemented in other states. It empowers municipalities to deploy automated traffic enforcement with significant oversight from CTDOT (who just released their Automated Traffic Enforcement Safety Guidance for Municipalities), requires more robust driver safety education, requires the State to consider recommendations from equity stakeholders in the development of the CTDOT annual capital plan, and requires continued efforts to raise public awareness about the dangers of impaired driving, and more.

- *ACTION: Prioritize the inclusion of safety improvements, particularly for vulnerable roadway users, into transportation projects, plans, and studies.* Pedestrian and bicycle safety disproportionately affects minority, low-income, and transit-dependent households living in more urbanized communities. Data from the UConn Crash Repository shows that nearly half of the pedestrian crashes in the Capitol Region from 2019-2021 occurred in either Hartford or New Britain. Within each of these cities, approximately 8.5 percent of all crashes involved a bicycle or pedestrian. This rate is higher than the regional average of 5.5 percent. Pedestrian fatalities disproportionately impact low-income and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) communities. Plans, studies and projects must address these safety concerns and provide for meaningful measures to reduce these disparities.
- *ACTION: Promote transportation engineering practices that place people first.* CRCOG supports the Safe System Approach as a route to achieving Vision Zero --the goal of

having zero fatalities or serious injuries on our roadways. There are five elements of a safe system: Safer People, Safer Roads, Safer Vehicles, Safer Speeds, Post Crash Care (see sidebar). All five elements must be addressed to reach Vision Zero. Measures range from traffic calming to slow drivers, to pedestrian improvements such as Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPI). Complete Streets initiatives must prioritize infrastructure improvements that are inclusive of all modes and all users of all abilities.

- *ACTION: Work alongside communities when identifying transportation barriers and opportunities to ensure community buy-in and comfort.* When roads are unsafe people feel less comfortable walking or biking. Unprotected crossings and high traffic speeds all contribute to unsafe, undesirable, and inaccessible streets. But sometimes improvements lead to fears of gentrification. Involving communities at the earliest stages of projects can address questions and allow for adjusting strategies to make sure local needs are addressed.

#### Additional Key Actions from MTP:

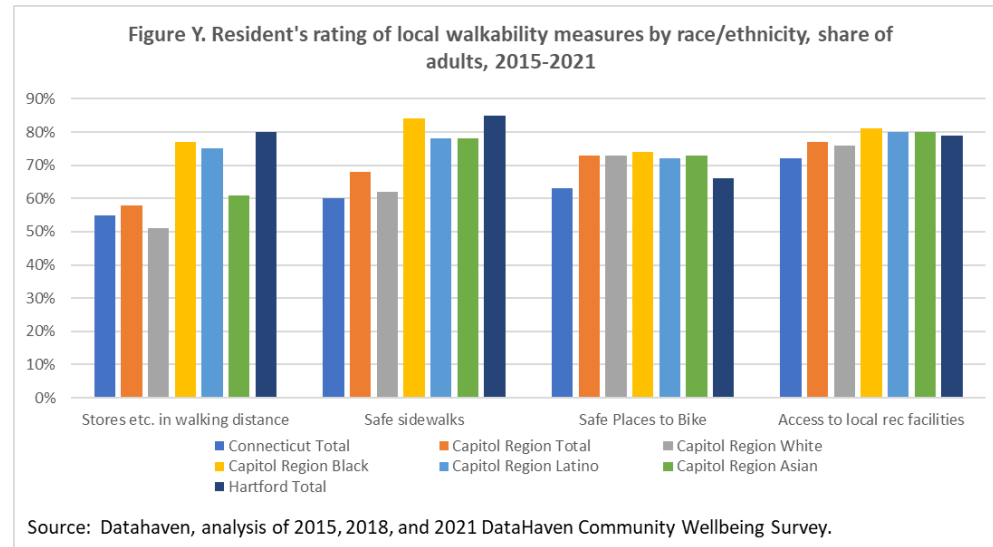
- Support local and regional transportation safety initiatives, programs, and plans such as Vision Zero initiatives, CT Safety Circuit Rider Program, and the CT Strategic Highway Safety Plan. (MTP)
- Continue to monitor regional safety conditions and identify emerging trends. (MTP)

### Strategy 3: Reduce health, social, and financial transportation inequities.

A history of car-centric and discriminatory transportation investments has led to disproportionate distribution of transportation burdens – these include health, safety, and financial burdens. Many of the actions above have elements to address past inequities.

The 2020 Hartford Segregation Report describes how highway construction, funded with state and federal funds, primarily benefited suburban commuters using private automobiles rather than Hartford residents [11]. Transportation burdens are placed excessively on already historically disadvantaged groups such as low-income residents, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Limited mobility options reduce access to critical destinations such as health centers, grocery stores, and places of employment and expensive transportation costs limit class mobility. A 2023 national study found that among respondents with an income of \$25,000 to \$49,999, non-Hispanic Black respondents spent an average of 81.9 minutes more per trip than non-Hispanic White respondents when travelling to health care facilities, despite a similar distance traveled [12].

As noted earlier, safety is another area where we see disparities. Only 44 percent of Hartford residents feel safe to walk at night compared with 71 percent of all Capitol Region residents according to DataHaven's 2023 COG Equity Report.



Many metropolitan areas of the nation, including the Capitol Region, have serious air pollution problems that are largely contributed to by automobile emissions and congestion. Air pollution can have short-term and long-term health impacts, which result in increased health care costs, lost economic productivity, and decreased quality of life. PM2.5 (particulate matter less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter) is the largest environmental cause of human mortality and disproportionately affects people of color. Light-duty gasoline vehicles and heavy-duty diesel vehicles are two of the four PM2.5 emissions sectors that most disproportionately impacts people of color [13]. Efforts that target the restoration of communities destroyed by highways and create a cleaner transportation system can work to combat air pollution and create a safer and healthier environment for everyone.

Our transportation system also places a greater financial burden on vulnerable communities. In 2022, the Bureau of Transportation Statistics found households are spending on average 15 percent of their income on transportation, the second largest expense

after housing. This percentage jumps to 30 percent for lower income households.

**Table X. Annual Cost of Owning a New Car**

Year	Cost (\$)	% Increase
2019	9282	--
2020	9561	3%
2021	9666	1%
2022	10728	11%
2023	12182	14%

Source: AAA. Your Driving Costs.

Race is also associated with differences in time spent travelling regardless of mode according to a 2022 study, with Black and White travelers having the highest discrepancy in time spent traveling. Black commuters have on average 12 percent longer drive commutes, 15 percent longer bus commutes, and 21 percent longer trips to shopping destinations when compared to White travelers using the same mode [14].

Parents (particularly women) and lower income hourly workers are often impacted more by time costs of transportation as lost time directly reduces time that can be used to earn income or for childcare/household responsibilities. The presence of employment opportunities close to home can be an important factor in increasing career opportunities for women and reduce the gender pay gap, particularly for women of color [15].

- **ACTION:** *Distribute transportation resources equitably across the Region to remedy the disproportionate effects of persistent infrastructural injustices.* As noted above, all transportation plans, studies, and projects must incorporate the needs of the Region's most vulnerable users. They should also directly address past inequities and identify measures to reduce inequities through a reduction in burdens and increase in

## Equitable E-bike Program

The Connecticut Hydrogen and Electric Automobile Purchase Rebate (CHEAPR) program launched their eBike Incentive Program on June 28, 2023, expecting to distribute \$500,000 in e-bike vouchers to state residents annually over three years. Ten days into the program, they received 6,394 applications with 5,051 from residents who reside in an environmental justice community, qualify for state aid such as Medicaid or SNAP, or have an income at 300 percent or less of the federal poverty level (called Voucher+). With this overwhelming response, CT DEEP increased the first-year funding amount to \$750,000 and issued \$1,500 vouchers to the first 500 Voucher+ applicants. These rebates can spur early adoption of newer mobility options such as eBikes and EVs, with the strong response to this program demonstrating the need and support for eBikes in Connecticut.



benefits. One example, is the recent e-bike program (see sidebar) CRCOG should develop metrics to gauge progress.

- **ACTION:** *Continue offering transportation programs and policies for transportation improvements in disadvantaged*

*communities.* An analysis of CRCOG’s Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) shows a high level of investment in the Region’s disadvantaged communities. Project selection criteria also provide extra points for projects the benefit disadvantaged communities. CRCOG should continue to measure the equitable distribution of transportation funding.

#### **Strategy 4: Develop more efficient transportation funding practices.**

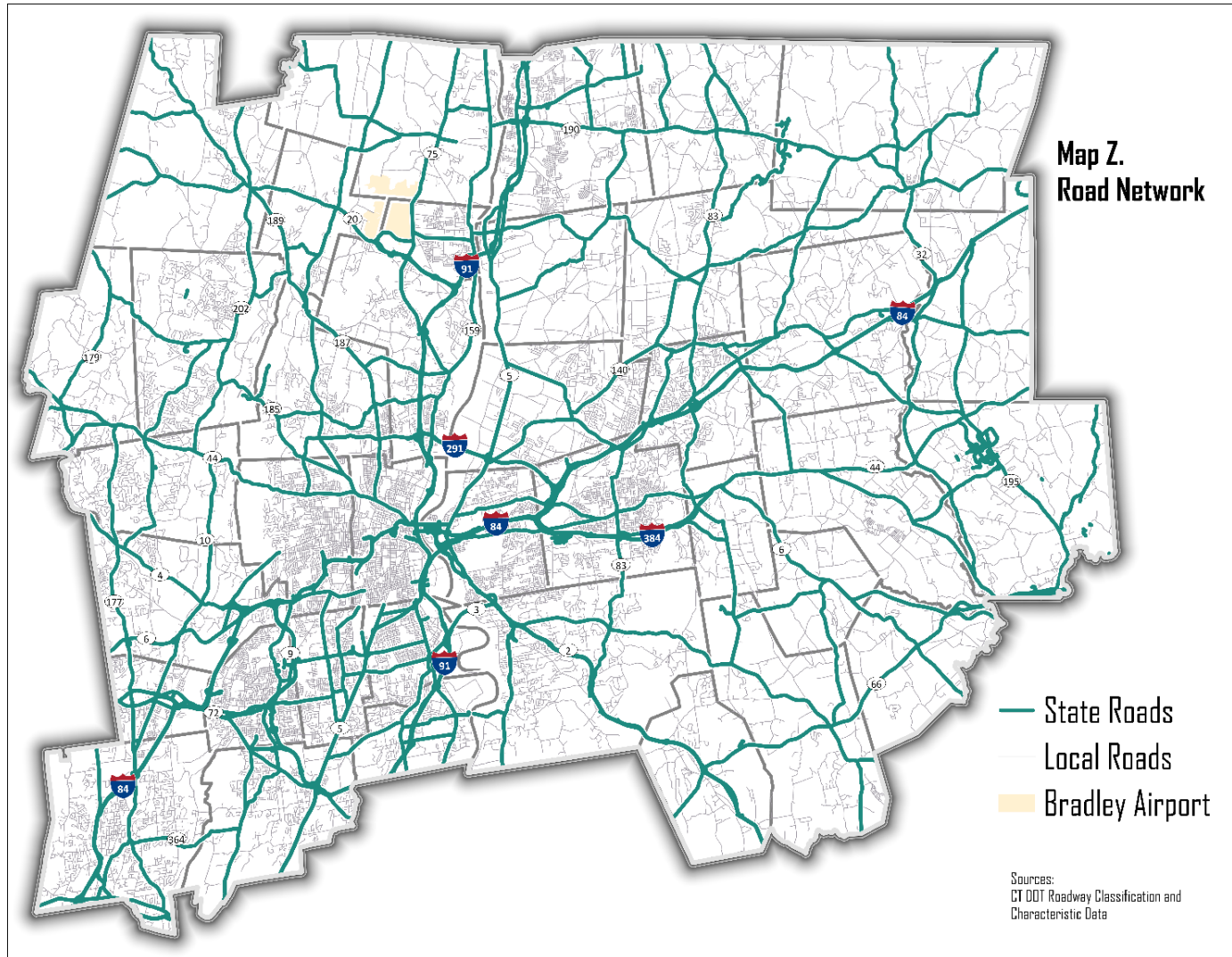
The cost to maintain our current transportation infrastructure is enormous. Poor road conditions cost Connecticut \$1.9 billion a year (\$728 per driver) in 2022 in the form of additional repairs, accelerated vehicle depreciation, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear according to TRIP. Pavement and bridge conditions in Capitol Region are showing age, with “good” conditions slowly shifting to “fair” conditions, although “poor” condition infrastructure has remained steady. Proactive maintenance is important to keep our road infrastructure costs down. However, this is a continuing challenge as labor and materials costs continue to rise while the fuel tax is becoming a weaker funding source due to improved fuel efficiency and the continued adoption of cleaner vehicles. Vehicles also continue to get larger and heavier, causing more damage to roads.

With such a great need for maintenance of roads and car-dependency, allocating funds to improve and expand transit and for walking and biking infrastructure is challenging. Innovative financing tools, regional efficiencies, and a commitment to investment are all critical.

- *ACTION: Seek creative options for financing transit.* Refer back to previous strategy.
- *ACTION: Promote adequate funding for infrastructure maintenance and repair.* All communities struggle to meet recommended maintenance and repair schedules for local roads. LOCIP (Local Capital Improvement Program) provides annual funds to every city and town for transportation or public building projects. But his funding does not fully cover needs, meaning cities and towns must seek competitive funds to carry out transportation projects. Many of the Region’s more rural communities face additional challenges in competing for funds – they often lack eligibility and lack in-house expertise to seek funding and develop project concepts. In response, CRCOG reserves a percentage of LOTCIP funds for rural communities and offers engineering assistance. CRCOG should continue to advocate for funding and ensure that all communities have access to funds. CRCOG should also look for opportunities for coordination for maintenance of regional transportation infrastructure such as the East Coast Greenway.



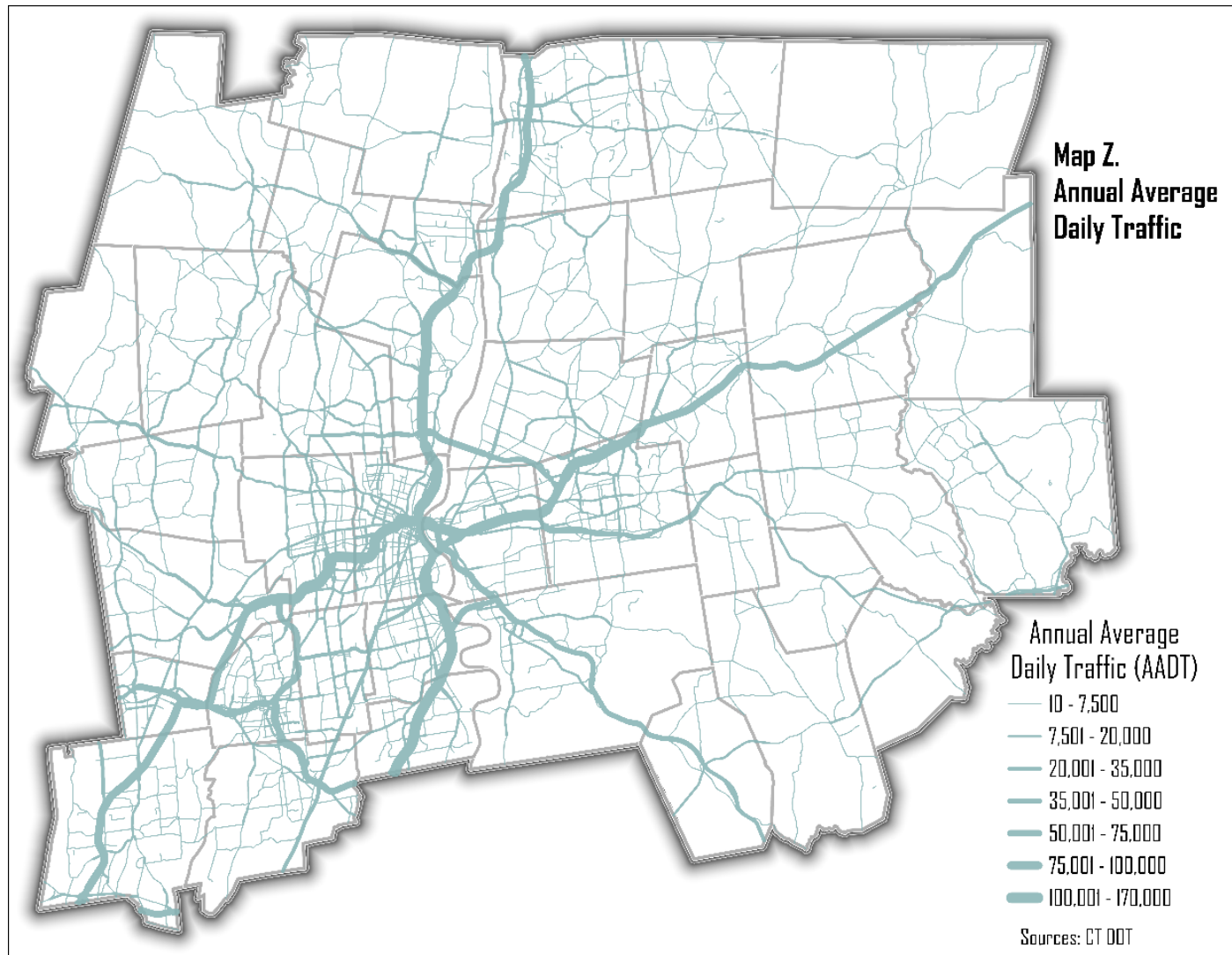
NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: The Region has a vast roadway network, with a strong reliance on state roads to move about the Region.*

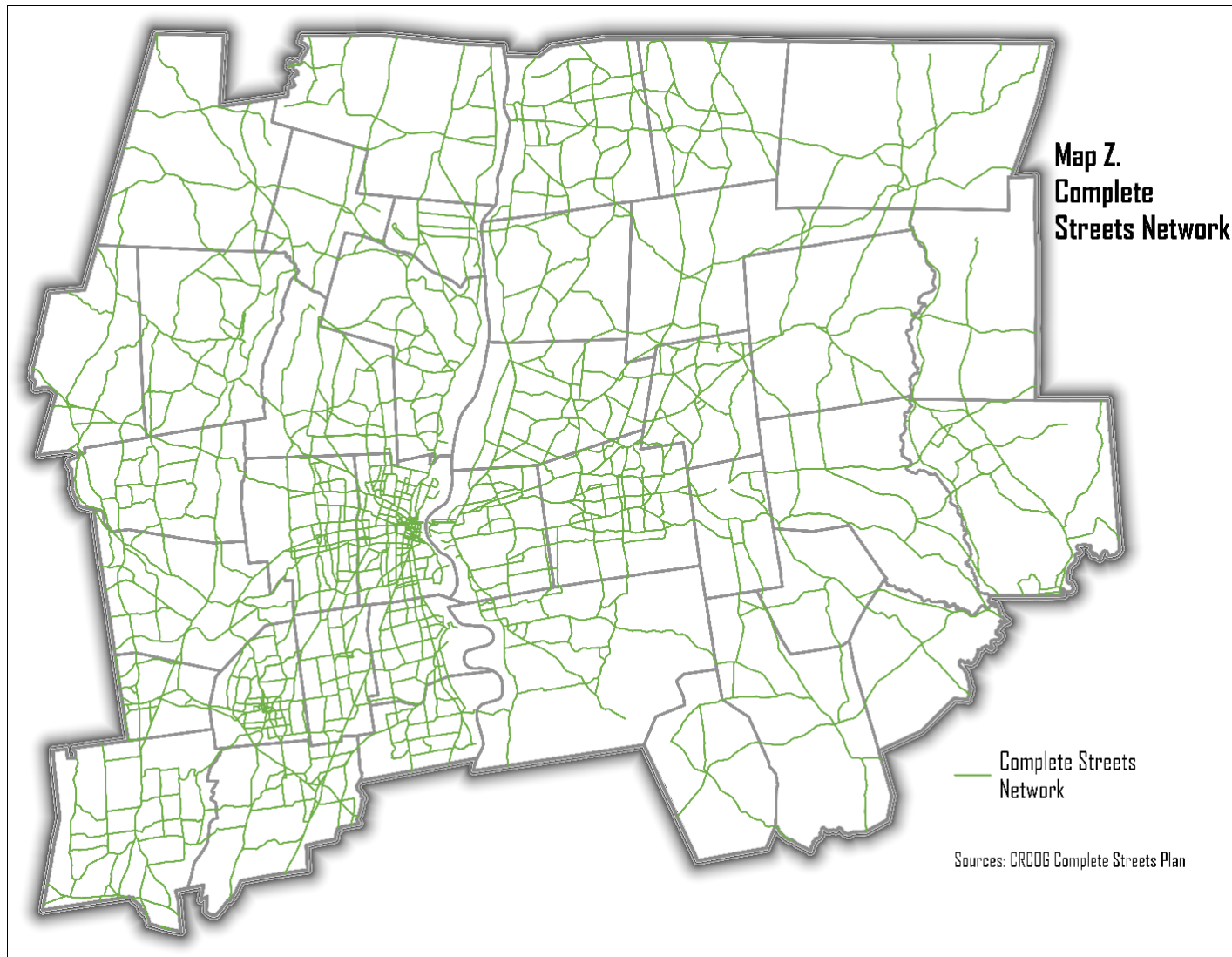


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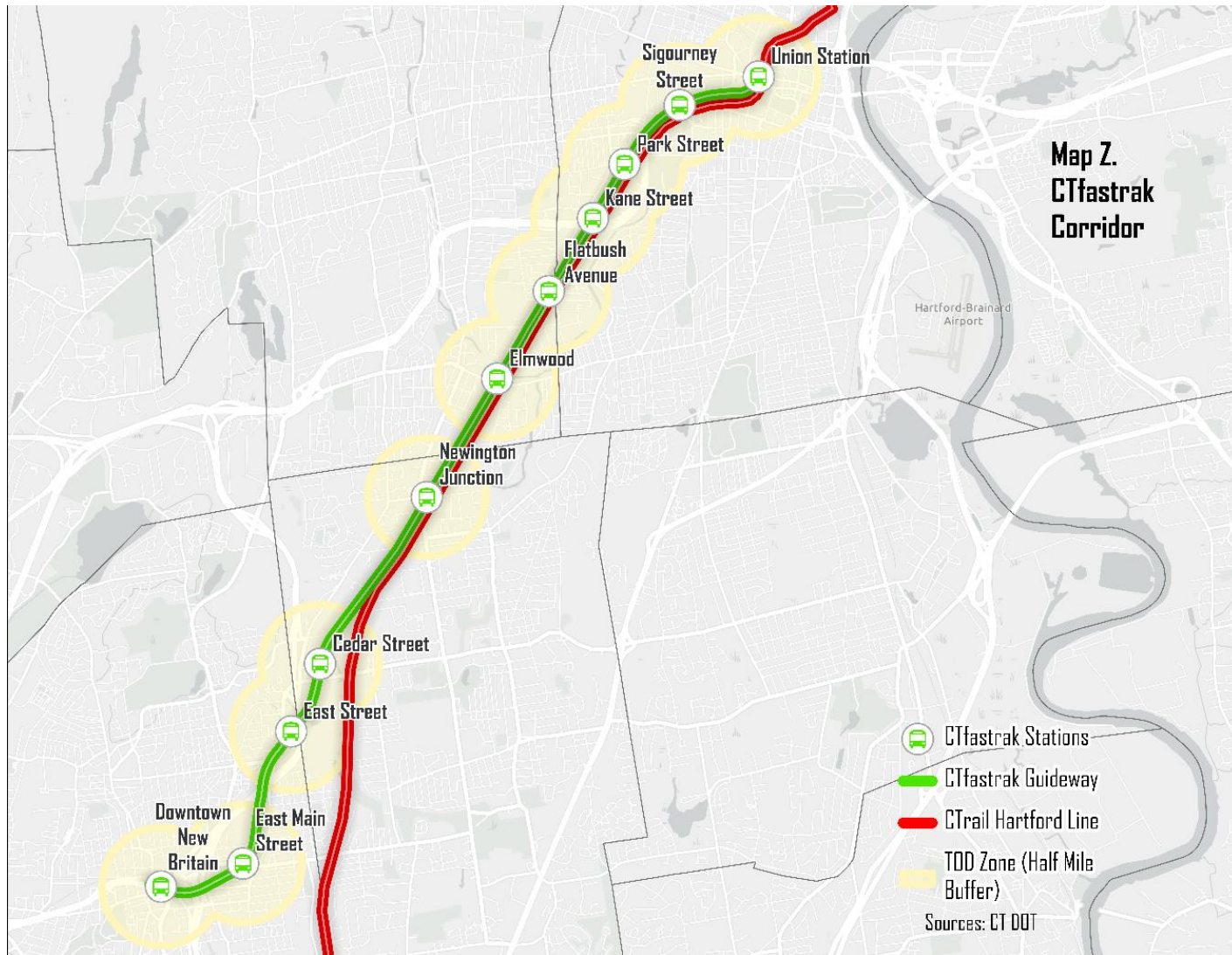
*Caption: Interstates 84 and 91 carry the most traffic in the region.*

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



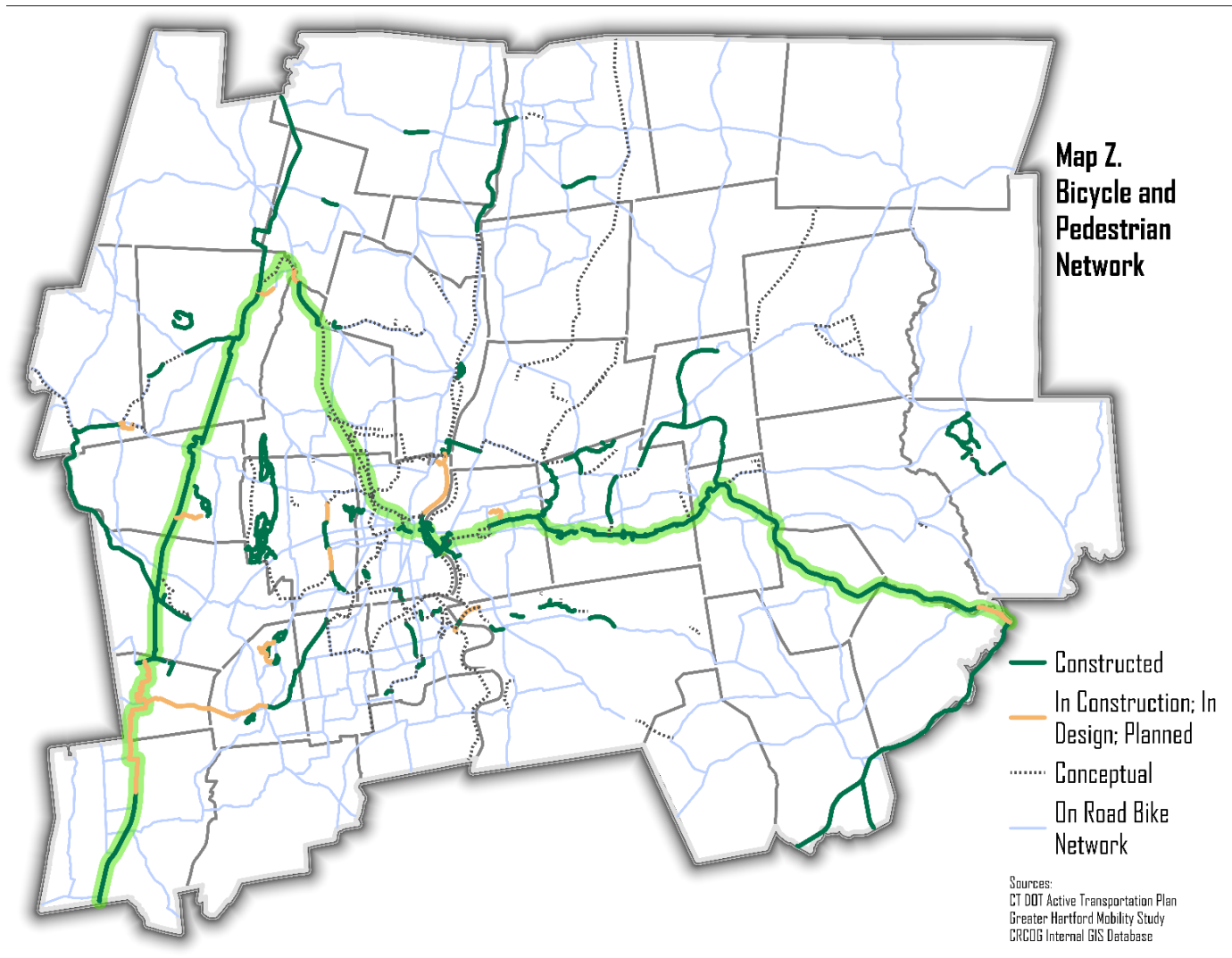
*Caption: CRCOG's Complete Streets Plan identified a network for which improvements to accommodate all users is a priority.*

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



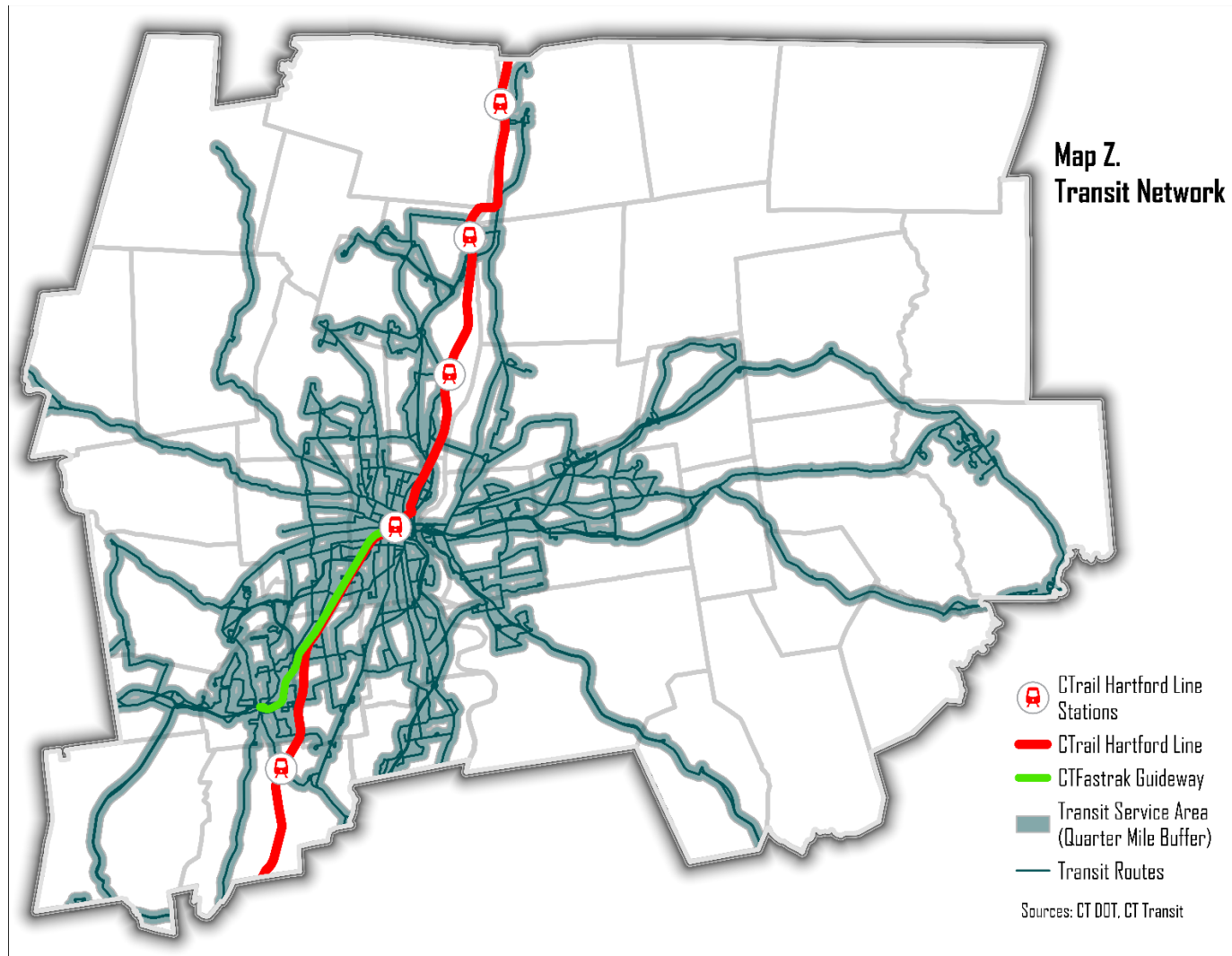
*Caption: CTfastrak connects Hartford and New Britain, with stations in Newington and West Hartford.*

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: The East Coast Greenway forms the spine of the Region's bike network.*

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: Urban and suburban areas have higher public transit connectivity than rural areas in the region.*



<b>SUMMARY OF ACTIONS (sample action table – will be updated to match actions in text and identify if CRCOG is lead, partner or supporter)</b>		
<b>GOAL: Align transportation investments with land use, housing, and other development and place-making goals.</b>		
Strategy 1: Leverage transportation to establish a strong sense of place and identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Prioritize transportation investments that support land use goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Maintain and Implement CRCOG’s Complete Streets Policy and Plan.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Promote development along major transit hubs and corridors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Track development in TOD corridors to assess growth and return on investment.</li> <li>• ACTION: Discourage non-transit dependent/supported uses in TOD areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Continue conducting studies on the freight transportation system to maintain and improve efficient, sustainable, and equitable movement of goods, including for e-commerce and last mile deliveries.</li> <li>• ACTION: Preserve freight adjacent land for freight dependent uses.</li> </ul>
Strategy 3: Reconnect communities through transformative transportation projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support and advocate for the actions contained within the Greater Hartford Mobility Study.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Transform car-centric commercial corridors.</li> </ul>
<b>GOAL: Expand transportation options for all users and purposes.</b>		
Strategy 1: Make transit a convenient and viable transportation choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Invest in frequent, fast, and accessible transit options.</li> <li>• ACTION: Support and advocate for transit stops that demonstrate a commitment to investing in transit infrastructure.</li> <li>• ACTION: Develop more comprehensive service areas and service times for transit that serve critical resources such as grocery stores, medical centers, and employment hubs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Proactively plan for transit dependent older populations and transit supportive younger populations by providing resources and services for these populations.</li> <li>• ACTION: Pursue multimodal and first-last mile connections from major transit hubs and corridors.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Provide safe, appealing, and accessible walking and bicycling infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Identify opportunities for active transportation infrastructure to connect with/create destinations for recreational, social, and placemaking purposes alongside utility destinations.</li> <li>• ACTION: Identify key regional locations with car centric infrastructure where bike and pedestrian improvements can be planned and implemented such as commercial arterials, strip malls and turnpikes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Identify funding sources and programming to create protected bicycle lanes through physical barriers such as raised curb-buffers, street parking, and channelized islands at intersections.</li> </ul>

Strategy 3: Enhance and expand regional and long-distance transportation services for longer journeys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Expand and improve rail service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Better connect Bradley International Airport to transit.</li> </ul>
Strategy 4: Capitalize on transportation innovations that make it easier to move around the Region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Continue to explore a regional micromobility system.</li> <li>• ACTION: Monitor the CTDOT pilot program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Seek pilot projects to test innovative approaches.</li> </ul>
<b>GOAL: Address the burdens and costs of transportation.</b>		
Strategy 1: Create a greener and sustainable transportation network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips.</li> <li>• ACTION: Reduce air pollution by reducing congestion and idling.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Reduce vehicle emissions.</li> <li>• ACTION: Green our transportation infrastructure.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Eliminate serious injuries and deaths on our road.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Prioritize the inclusion of safety improvements, particularly for vulnerable roadway users, into transportation projects, plans, and studies.</li> <li>• ACTION: Promote transportation engineering practices that place people first.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Work alongside communities when identifying transportation barriers and opportunities to ensure community buy-in and comfort.</li> </ul>
Strategy 3: Reduce the inequities in our transportation system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Continue offering transportation programs and policies for transportation improvements in disadvantaged communities.</li> </ul>	
Strategy 4: Develop more efficient and equitable transportation funding practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Seek creative options for financing transit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Promote adequate funding for infrastructure maintenance and repair.</li> </ul>



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## Chapter 9: Expand and Diversify the Region's Housing Stock

Connecticut (and the Region) lags in housing production, ranking 49th in new residential construction permits per capita in 2021 [1]. Connecticut remains an expensive state to live in, with almost a third of the Region's households cost-burdened by housing. The pandemic worsened the housing crisis, driving up sales prices and rents due to low vacancy rates and high demand. The Region is overly reliant on single-family housing and many zoning regulations make it more cumbersome to build other housing types even when permitted by zoning.

The legacy of exclusionary zoning paired with housing and investment practices that historically limited homeownership opportunities for people of color created homeownership disparities that persist in the Region. Black and Latino homeownership rates substantially lag that of the white population. Even practices today, i.e. home value assessments, are shown to disproportionately impact non-White sellers.

Yet safe and adequate housing is a foundational human need and its provision impacts all aspects of our lives. It affects our ability to find employment, raise a family, access opportunities, contribute to our community, form connections in our neighborhoods, and it can impact our physical and mental wellbeing. Having a permanent place to live enables stable employment and improves personal finances. Housing also helps businesses, as their recruitment and retention efforts depend upon employees having an affordable place to live.

We can provide ownership and rental options for all life stages and price points. We must preserve our older, existing housing supply through rehabilitation and we must build new units. We must continue to increase the number of affordable homes and address the needs of vulnerable populations.

We can accomplish our housing goals while recognizing there are locations that are better suited for accommodating new growth and areas where development should be avoided or minimized. Areas with infrastructure – particularly downtowns and in proximity to transit stops — provide opportunities to build housing in a sustainable manner.

We recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. Our Region is fortunate to be home to large and small communities, downtowns and town centers, and sparsely populated rural areas. Each of these typologies offers something unique that renters and homeowners may be looking for. Housing markets vary from one side of the river to the other. Offering a menu of strategies can help ensure that the needs and housing challenges of all community types are reflected.

CRCOG and its member communities are not alone in solving this issue – a number of partners are dedicated to finding solutions to the Region's and State's housing crisis. Continued and expanded partnerships are critical to our work going forward. Policymakers recognize the crisis and as such, several notable pieces of legislation have been passed by the Connecticut General Assembly since our last plan but there is still a long way to go until housing is attainable for all.

CRCOG expects to initiate a Regional Housing Strategy upon adoption of this POCD, which will further explore many of the trends, challenges, and goals contained here.

*Hold for full page infographic for theme*

Ideas:

1. Age of housing stock (see chapter 2)
2. Diversity of housing stock (type of structure unit is in) (see chapter 2)
3. CHFA gap analysis results for Hartford & Tolland Counties
4. Expiring units

## Housing Legacy

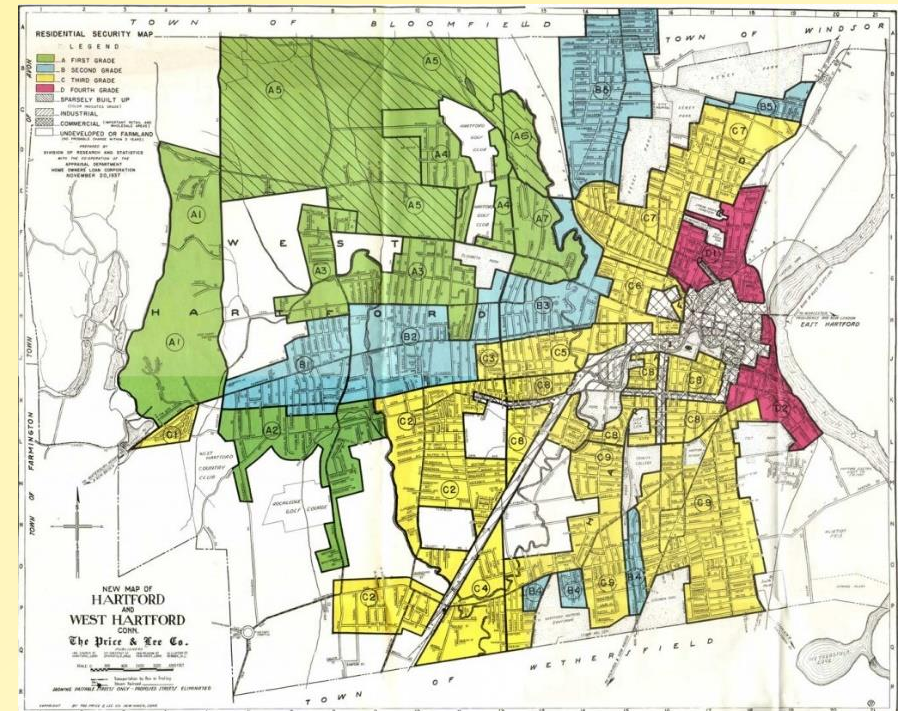
Over the course of 50 plus years, land use, homebuying, and development programs discriminated against people of color leading to housing segregation and the disinvestment, and even destruction, of neighborhoods of color in the Region.

One hundred years ago the State enacted the 1923 Standard Zoning Enabling Act to allow communities to adopt zoning. The resulting regulations intended to preserve single-family development and exclude other types of housing [2].

From the 1930s to the late 1960s homebuying programs and practices discriminated against people of color while providing homebuying incentives and funding for white families. The programs concentrated poor people and people of color in areas with little opportunity and then steered investment away from these neighborhoods. Then “urban renewal” and highway building displaced entire neighborhoods, predominantly poor and of color. Displaced families often did not receive adequate replacement housing and were limited in where they could move to. Those in the neighborhood who were not displaced would find their community fragmented and disadvantaged by the built infrastructure. With few to no opportunities to participate in the Region’s homeownership boon, there was little wealth to pass down, leaving homeownership and housing stability out-of-reach for many.

Looking forward, it is imperative that government initiatives and policies do not have direct or disparate impacts on minority populations and that they help reduce the role that housing (or lack of) plays in the wealth gap. Direct disparities in lending, housing sales, and assessments/valuations still occur, but these practices are being gradually (if belatedly) exposed and addressed.

However, the legacy zoning framework that enabled segregation remains. “Zoning is an important determinant of where public, subsidized, and affordable housing is built and thus (a) how racially and economically segregated a Region becomes and (b) whether that segregation is maintained [emphasis added].”[3]



[FIGURE X: The Home Owner's Loan Corporation's (HOLC) effectively directed capital investment away from “redlined” neighborhoods. Neighborhoods redlined in the 1930s are now the areas of lowest opportunity in Hartford.] [4]

## Goals, Strategies and Actions

### Goal: Preserve the Region's housing stock.

#### Strategies to achieve the goal:

- Strategy 1: Preserve older housing units through repair, rehabilitation, and enforcement.
- Strategy 2: Support reinvestment in neighborhoods.
- Strategy 3: Ensure renters are not unfairly priced out of their homes.

#### Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:

- Funding allocated for housing rehabilitation.
- Number of condemned housing units.
- Rental prices.
- Cost burdened renters.

Addressing our Region's housing issue requires a holistic approach that ensures the existing housing stock provides safe homes that can meet modern needs. It also means established neighborhoods are livable and safe so that people are comfortable in their community and are not at risk of being priced-out.

#### Strategy 1: Preserve older housing units through repair, rehabilitation, and enforcement.

As noted in Chapter 2, our housing stock is old with most of the Region's older housing stock located in our urban areas. Lack of

maintenance in older units can generate health issues such as infestations, mold, sewage backflows, and lack of heat. The condition of housing units has direct health impacts including higher rates of asthma, and lead and carbon monoxide poisoning.

Older units also can be obsolete, requiring upgrades to accommodate modern appliances or for accessibility. Funding programs and diligent enforcement of codes, can keep older units safe and habitable. (The year 1970 is commonly used as a benchmark when analyzing the age of the housing stock).

- *ACTION: Support the efforts of nonprofit and for-profit developers to rehabilitate and preserve distressed rental properties and to provide for mixed-income developments.* Larger public housing projects were typically built in the 1960s and 1970s and now require substantial rehabilitation. In some cases, entire developments have been razed and then rebuilt. Rehabilitation and re-development of affordable rental housing is critical to meeting the Region's rental needs. Any household displaced during this process should be provided with a viable home.
- *ACTION: Support increased funding to update, upgrade, and modernize older housing units and apartment buildings.* Low or no-interest loans and grants can help homeowners and landlords upgrade units and make repairs and upgrade to renewable energy sources. Many of the Region's cities and towns use their HUD funding (directly from HUD or through Small Cities) for such programs. We should ensure these funds are not reduced and support additional funds.

## Strategy 2: Support reinvestment in neighborhoods.

Further investment in the Region's older, urban neighborhoods can help address past disparities and the historic lack of investment. Improved streetscapes, neighborhood beautification efforts, blight removal, and upgrading infrastructure like drainage and sidewalks, make neighborhoods more attractive and livable.

Reinvestment can lead to gentrification – where higher income households move into an area, driving up rents and housing prices. While attracting higher income households can help revitalize an area and support business growth, deliberate efforts are needed to prevent displacement of low- and moderate-income households.

- *ACTION: Champion reinvestment programs and projects that improve livability of the Region's urban neighborhoods.* Local Plans of Conservation and Development have identified neighborhoods for reinvestment. A few examples include Corbin and Farmington Avenues in New Britain and other moderate to high density neighborhoods with older homes. Hartford has identified Albany Avenue as a “transformative project”. Efforts to fund and implement these and similar initiatives should be supported.
- *ACTION: Identify best practices for minimizing displacement during neighborhood reinvestment programs.* Programs such as housing land trusts (discussed below) or existing programs that help low and moderate income households afford rent can help reduce displacement. In areas at high risk of displacement, policies (including zoning) need to balance encouraging re-investment but not trigger whole-scale teardowns.

## Strategy 3: Ensure renters are not unfairly priced out of their homes.

Lower income households are heavily dependent on available and affordable rental units. They may be one rent increase away from being priced out of their home – which can be a life-altering event.

As noted above, gentrification can lead to displacement as rents increase. Another recent national trend is forcing lower to moderate income households out of rental units – corporations purchasing apartment buildings and drastically increasing rents. It is unclear how (or if) this practice is impacting the Region, but we can anticipate and prepare for potential consequences.

- *ACTION: Monitor trends in corporations purchasing apartment buildings in the Region and any resulting rent increases.* We can collect data and start to monitor this trend in the Region and look to other Regions where this is occurring (such as the Boston area), to understand effective countermeasures.
- *ACTION: Support the work by others to provide support to cost-burdened renters.* Local social service departments and a number of non-profit entities connect cost-burdened renters with resources. Their efforts should be supported.
- *ACTION: Explore and potentially advise on the effectiveness of rent control/stabilization and other measures to prevent displacement.* The concept of “rent control” is a hot-button issue that brings to head the rights of landlords to determine price points and the very real consequences of no longer being able to afford a home. But disagreement on the issue should not prevent an exploration of options and tools.



## **Goal: Diversify the Region's housing stock.**

### **Strategies to achieve the goal:**

- Strategy 1: Increase density compatible with neighborhood context.
- Strategy 2: Encourage innovative housing models.
- Strategy 3: Explore innovative housing production.
- Strategy 4: Remove roadblocks to housing production.

### **Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:**

- Total number of housing units.
- Number of permits by housing type.

We must change our mindset and respond to market demands for housing choice, new ways of thinking about housing production, and new tools to achieve our housing goals. Household size continues to decline, couples are marrying and having children later in life or no children at all, and we generally live longer. Many seniors will look to downsize, perhaps to an apartment or accessory dwelling unit (ADU) while others may wish to age-in-place and therefore need to update their units to accommodate aging.

After declining in earlier decades, multigenerational living has grown steadily. From 1971 to 2021, percentage of the U.S. population living in multigenerational homes has more than doubled, from seven percent in 1971 to 18 percent in 2021 [5]. When multiple generations live under one household, there is opportunity for cost-savings.

Rental opportunities remain critical in attracting new workers, providing “starter” homes for young adults, and offering opportunities for seniors to downsize. Rental opportunities at all price points, even higher end, are necessary; higher income households have greater resources and can outcompete lower income brackets when buying or renting a home.

We are seeing more frequent discussions in communities about the importance of housing choice, partly resulting from the creation of newly required Affordable Housing Plans. Many communities more deeply explored what types of housing are needed, where it can be located, and identified tools to achieve the goals. These discussions, and parallel goals between communities, present a timely opportunity for CRCOG to work at a regional level to help its member municipalities implement these plans.

Obtaining local support and approval to build new housing remains challenging. More work remains in removing or reducing zoning impediments, determining appropriate densities, and capitalizing on innovations to build quicker and cheaper.

The Development and Conservation Policy Maps (Chapter 10) generally identify areas most suitable for meeting housing needs include:

- Existing water and sewer infrastructure
- Near transit to reduce a dependency on driving
- In downtowns and town centers, where residents are near services and amenities and can walk to such places
- Infill in existing neighborhoods



## Strategy 1: Increase density compatible with neighborhood context.

The Region needs to increase its housing inventory while at the same time protecting critical and sensitive natural areas and resources. To achieve both goals, housing density must increase. We recognize that appropriate densities will vary within the Region based on existence (or lack of) and capacity of infrastructure and neighborhood context.

Four categories of density can address these variations: high density, moderate density, light touch density, and hidden density.

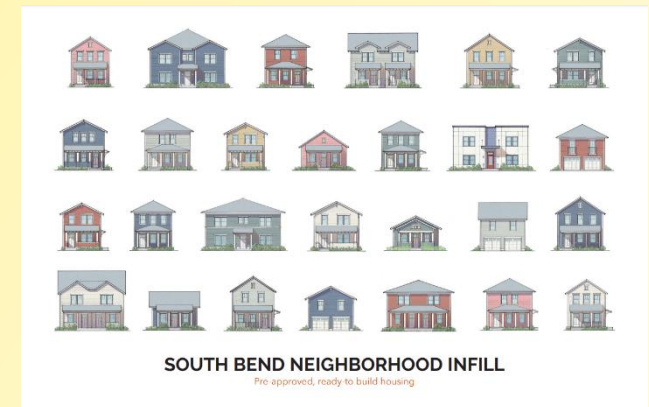
- *ACTION: Support efforts to increase the critical mass of housing density in the Region's downtowns.* Both Hartford and New Britain have welcomed the construction of new apartment buildings in their downtowns, while Hartford has also seen the conversion of hotel and office space to apartments. We should continue to support efforts to increase residential populations in these downtowns, which can support such density.
- *ACTION: Support moderate density in areas with infrastructure, proximate to transit options, and near or within town centers.* New developments containing dozens to hundreds of units have recently been built in the Region's more suburban communities. While some are transit-oriented, such as apartments located next to CTfastrak stations in West Hartford, in other cases it is located adjacent to town centers (e.g., Bloomfield). Additional construction of apartments at

## Light Density Pre-Approved Plans

The communities of South Bend, Indiana and Spokane, Washington are working to increase light density housing while recognizing that public acceptance of added density will depend upon attractive new housing that fits in with the existing neighborhoods.

South Bend's calls its project "South Bend Neighborhood Infill, Pre-approved, ready-to-build housing." The city developed five pre-approved building types, from single-family houses to apartment buildings with up to six housing units. All types come with pre-approved architectural plans. While some developments are allowed by right, some still do require a special exception. However, because the building plans have been pre-approved, obtaining building permits is streamlined and the developer saves on the costs of designing plans.

The city of Spokane, Washington declared a housing emergency in 2022 and is rolling out a pilot program like that in South Bend. The "Building Opportunity for Housing" initiative provides a housing catalog of pre-approved plans that only require site plan review and engineering review. While the project is still in development, thus far the city provides design standards for duplexes, townhomes, and buildings with three to four housing units.



medium to high densities should be encouraged in locations identified in local plans.

- **ACTION:** *Encourage light touch density (aka “missing middle”) in areas with supporting infrastructure.* New multifamily housing can be smaller scale. Light touch density can be described as “housing including detached single-family houses with accessory dwelling units (ADUs), small-lot single-family houses, attached single-family houses, and duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes.” [6] These building forms can blend in well with the fabric of a community as either new development or as redevelopment of vacant or under-utilized buildings. For our purposes, we include the lightest of density (ADUs through two families) in the next action.

The best way to encourage light touch density housing is to allow it by right, but it is recognized not all communities are agreeable to that approach. Programs elsewhere in the United States encourage light touch density by pre-determining acceptable styles and forms and then make it easier to build that style and form (see side bar). This variation of “Form Based Codes” (where zoning focuses on the design of buildings more than the use) might help gain support for light touch density in our Region.

- **ACTION:** *Encourage “hidden” density, where units are added in ways that are not necessarily detectable.* Municipalities should continue to make it easier to build accessory dwelling units by right and consider allowing two-family units by right also. At a minimum, possible impediments such as lot size and setbacks should be examined.

## **Strategy 2: Encourage innovative housing models.**

Traditional housing designs may no longer effectively cater to the diverse needs of contemporary households, such as multi-generational families, co-living arrangements, and single-person households. As demographics change and cultural expectations evolve, housing must adapt to offer flexible, sustainable, and inclusive solutions. Innovative housing models can address these changing demands. In addition, most communities define “family” in zoning regulations in ways that restrict the number of non-related persons that can live in a housing unit. We may need to update the way we view “family” considering current and future housing needs and trends.

Examples include co-housing (excluded in most communities due to the definition of family) – private rooms but shared spaces and may also share tools, vehicles, etc. For example, New View Cohousing in Acton, MA is a community of 24 households. There has been a movement for elder cohousing over the last two decades, which can be an option for seniors who no longer wish to (or can) maintain their home, but do not wish to live in a traditional elderly or assisted living development.

The State recently revised the building code to relax some standards for tiny homes (units 400 square feet or less), recognizing that these can provide an affordable option. While we often think of tiny homes as an accessory dwelling unit placed in the backyard of a single-family property, tiny home communities have been built in other parts of the country.

Housing communities meant to suit multi-generational households feature certain characteristics. A multi-generational community will provide an array of housing types and amenities

and features for all age groups, from children to the elderly. spaces that are easily adaptable as generations move in and out.

These alternative housing concepts may make housing more affordable due to efficiencies of shared living spaces, even if they are not deemed “affordable.”

- *ACTION: Provide guidance to municipalities on needs and options for alternative housing communities.* Monitor alternative housing needs and provide guidance on models that might address those needs. Provide model zoning regulations, including rethinking “family” restrictions.

### **Strategy 3: Explore innovative housing production.**

We need to be creative and open-minded when approaching housing production technologies and be mindful that our future housing solutions may be unrecognizable to us if we only focus on past housing practices. Increasing housing production in the Region may require us to think differently about all aspects of production, including how houses are built.

- *ACTION: Stay apprised of emerging trends in housing construction including tiny homes and prefabricated apartment units and houses.* We continue to construct most houses from stick, the same method used one hundred years ago. Both builders and the government are looking for ways to build attractive housing quicker and ultimately cheaper. Examples include prefabrication factories located near areas where housing demand is high and the promotion of modular homes. “3D” printed homes are also a new technology being explored. It is recognized that there has been some resistance to modular apartment buildings proposed in in the Region - a

better understanding of why they were acceptable in some communities but not in others should be examined.

### **Strategy 4: Remove roadblocks to housing production.**

Those who actively finance, design, and build housing in the Region have the best insight into roadblocks to housing production.

- *ACTION: Bring together stakeholders, including non-traditional stakeholders, on a regular basis to review progress, identify emerging needs and trends, and adjust strategies.* Traditionally housing advocates convene to share progress and challenges and learn from one another. As the concept of “sustainability” became more inclusive to include housing, groups previously perceived as “anti-development” are starting to participate in discussions. Continued discussions with all stakeholders can help us identify roadblocks and plan to overcome them.
- *ACTION: Learn from and engage with homebuilders, small-scale developers and large -scale developers.* It is understood that the needs of homebuilders (who typically build single-family houses), small-scale developers (typically local developers who build smaller scale multifamily housing) and large-scale developers (often larger corporations, sometimes with a national portfolio) vary. Their financing needs vary as does their ability to manage rentals post-development. Larger corporations may be more experienced with managing affordability programs, while small-scale developers might lack the in-house expertise and be hesitant to wade into such programs. To build light density in the Region, small-scale developers must play a role.

## Goal: Increase affordable housing in the Region.

### Strategies to achieve the goal:

- Strategy 1: Provide support to member municipalities to increase affordable units and administer affordable housing programs.
- Strategy 2: Seek regional approaches to producing affordable units.
- Strategy 3: Actively work to preserve affordability of units with expiring deed restrictions.
- Strategy 4: Encourage preservation of naturally occurring affordable units.
- Strategy 5: Promote and support programs that make homeownership achievable for low- and moderate-income households.

### Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:

- Number of affordable units.
- Percentage of affordable units.
- Number of expiring units preserved.
- Change in GINI Index (or similar measure of inequality)

Even with increased housing production, the market alone will not solve affordability challenges faced by the Region's low and moderate-income households. Statewide analysis by CHFA indicates that although there is an adequate supply of homes affordable for purchase to those earning 51 to 80 percent of the area median income, 75 percent of those homes are occupied by higher income-earners, making few units available to lower

## “Affordable Housing”

Connecticut General Statutes 8-30g sets a target for ten percent of each municipality's housing stock to be “affordable”. An affordable unit is intended for low- or moderate-income households and must be one of the following:

- “Assisted housing” funded by a government program for either construction of new units or as rental assistance, or
- “Set-aside development” where units are deed-restricted to be affordable to low- or moderate-income households for at least 40 years.

If a municipality has not reached the ten percent target, a developer can bypass zoning requirements if at least 15 percent of the units will be affordable.

Based on data provided by the Connecticut Department of Housing, in 2022, 55,728 units in the region meet this definition (almost 14 percent of the region's housing stock). Of these units, 39 percent are in Hartford.

income households. The analysis calculated that Hartford County has a gap of 19,810 units and Tolland County has a gap of 2,905 units for this income bracket [7].

We need to make more progress in providing affordable housing options, including addressing the racial gaps in cost burdens and homeownership. As we often discuss, many of the workers we rely on everyday often earn wages that are too low to afford housing. These include firefighters, teachers, and service workers. A lack of affordable housing can also impact veterans and their families; having an affordable place to live reduces the risk of veterans becoming homeless.

In the last ten years, three new state laws addressing affordable housing are of note:

- Public Act 21-29 made Connecticut the first state to require cities and towns to “affirmatively further fair housing” and requires zoning regulations to promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing for both low and moderate income households. One of the ways in which it does this was to require towns to allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) by-right in all lots accompanying single-family homes and requires a reduction of required parking minimums. Both provisions contain an option for municipalities to opt out.
- Municipalities are required to adopt affordable housing plans and amend or update the plans every five years. The deadline for the initial plans was June 2022. As of December 2023, all but four of the Region’s 38 communities have adopted a plan.
- In 2023, the state legislature passed a law requiring the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to calculate affordable housing needs on a regional level and then allocate a “fair share” for the municipalities with each region.

This goal mainly focuses on increasing the number of “affordable units” per state statutes (see sidebar).

**Strategy 1: Provide support to member municipalities to increase affordable units and administer affordable housing programs.**

Municipal staff expressed a need for assistance with financial aspects of affordable housing at the planning stage, during project review, and with administration post-approval.

- *ACTION: Develop guidance on inclusionary zoning percentages that address market variations in the Region.* There are model zoning regulations that communities can reference when developing inclusionary zoning ordinances (in which a certain percentage of units must be affordable). However, local staff generally does not have the expertise to determine what that percentage should be. In addition, communities with stronger housing demand might be able to set a higher percentage than communities in weaker housing markets. We expect that the “right” percentage will vary within the Region. Engaging with real estate finance experts could help communities, along with a review of successes within the Region.

“Housing prices are too high[such] that my kids can’t afford to live in the same town they grew up in.” – POCD Event Attendee.

- *ACTION: Encourage municipalities to remove or reduce regulatory barriers to creating affordable housing.* Some municipalities have adopted inclusionary zoning or incentives to provide affordable housing units but are not seeing units get built. A review of the regulations might identify unintentional disincentives or well-meaning provisions that are restrictive.
- *ACTION: Work with municipalities to identify gaps in local resources, expertise and staffing when it comes to creating and administering housing programs and determine where*

*regional assistance might be reasonable and feasible.* State statutes require that a Housing Affordability Plan is prepared for affordable housing developments. Some municipalities rely on the developer to provide while others have crafted model plans. CRCOG can help communities prepare a model, which can help to streamline the review process and take some burden off local staff. Post approval, communities have expressed challenges in local administration of income and sales/rent verifications for affordable units and confirmation that affordability goals are being accomplished through existing programs.

- *ACTION: Take a leadership role in supporting municipalities with their fair-share allotments, after OPM has completed its allocations.* As of the writing of this plan, OPM has not completed the fair share allocations. CRCOG expects to be engaged with the process and with helping member municipalities find ways to meet any resulting requirements. As with any new program, CRCOG expects adjustments or amendments may be needed and will be ready to work with municipalities and OPM to recommend updates to the program.

## **Strategy 2: Seek regional approaches to producing affordable units.**

Outside of housing forums and workshops, our communities generally are not working together on housing initiatives even when pursuing identical or comparable goals. Legislative barriers, such as limitations on the jurisdiction of housing authorities, present challenges to regional cooperation. But there may be opportunities to work together on raising awareness of and the

## **Publicly-Developed Housing – Montgomery County, Maryland**

Montgomery County, Maryland has long been a leader in affordable housing and is the most prominent example of a modern social housing model in the U.S. In 2021, the Montgomery County Council created a \$100 million Housing Production Fund for the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC). Private equity, which is often the most significant component of a development's financing, typically requires a higher rent in order to generate the expected rate of return for investors. The fund allows the H.O.C. to replace private equity in the capital stack with public financing, which has a five percent return expectation, saving millions of dollars off the project's effective cost.

The Laureate, the first building financed with the fund, sets aside 30 percent of its 268 units for affordable housing. While for-profit developers constructed the building, the H.O.C.'s 70 percent stake enabled it to require the Laureate to set 30 units aside. The H.O.C essentially traded higher profits for lower rents.





importance of producing more housing. Options for multi-town or regional affordable housing programs could also be explored.

States and cities across the country are increasingly recognizing the need for proactively providing public affordable housing. California, Colorado, Hawaii, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island have either passed or introduced legislation largely based on a “social housing” model – where public entities take a direct role in developing and supplying affordable, mixed-income housing. Local leaders across the country are exploring their own models, with cities such as Atlanta, Boston, Kansas City, and Seattle introducing their own proposals. The interest in the social housing model reflects a recognition that sole reliance on private sector incentives is insufficient to the scale of the challenge. The public sector must be more creative and take a more active role in producing desperately needed housing supply.

- *ACTION: Develop a Regional Housing Strategy to conduct a deeper analysis of housing trends, needs and gaps in the Region and to create tailored solutions and programs to help municipalities.* CRCOG expects to complete such an initiative shortly after adoption of this POCD. The initiative could provide municipalities with educational tools and resources to respond to local questions and resistance to new housing projects. The initiative likely will explore regional approaches to housing production, including regional land banks and a regional housing production fund to facilitate development.

## Regional Land Trust

The Champlain Housing Trust is one example of a regional approach to affordable housing. The trust serves three counties in northwest Vermont and is overseen by a Board of Directors that is comprised of local government, residents of the trust’s housing units, and the wider community. The Trust was created in 2006 when two entities – the Burlington Community Land Trust and Lake Champlain Housing Development Corporation – merged.

The community land trust tackles all aspects of affordable housing including:

- Owning and managing group homes, apartments, and cooperative housing.
- Renting lots for manufactured housing.
- Providing home ownership counseling and education in multiple languages.
- Providing down payment assistance.
- Providing low or no interest loans for housing repairs and improvements, including for landlords.
- Providing loans for farm worker housing.
- Managing pod shelters and a motel to house homeless persons.

The trust receives its funding through state programs, grants from state entities and national non-profits, donations from individuals and a local credit unit, and rental income. See <https://www.getahome.org> for more information about their programs and their impact.



- *ACTION: Explore the feasibility of regional publicly developed affordable housing.* CRCOG should further examine regional examples elsewhere in the country and potential roadblocks to such an approach here.
- *ACTION: Leverage the business community in promoting the importance of having a robust, diverse, and affordable housing stock.* CRCOG and regional leaders should engage with large employers in the region, including businesses, hospitals, and colleges/universities to identify housing-related recruitment challenges and potential solutions.

### Strategy 3: Actively work to preserve affordability of units with expiring deed restrictions.

Assisted units and set-aside development units can “expire” meaning that on a given date, the owner of the unit is no longer obligated to offer the units at an affordable rent or sales price.

Not all expiring units will lose their affordability restrictions. Many of the unit owners are organizations with a mission to provide affordable housing and will likely seek funding to keep the units affordable. But it should also be noted that even those units preserved “in perpetuity” or for “99 years” could lose their affordability in certain circumstances, such as an owner paying back any benefit received along with possible penalties.

See Table x in Appendix B for detailed data.

- *ACTION: Provide data to municipalities on the anticipated expiration of affordable units.* Key highlights from an analysis of expiring units in the Region include:

By 2030:

- 63 deed restricted units will expire, with top losses in New Britain (28 units), Canton (14 units), and Vernon (12 units)
- 4,092 assisted units across 83 housing developments will expire

From 2031 to 2040:

- 99 deed restricted units will expire
- 7,745 assisted units across 98 housing developments will expire

- *ACTION: Identify those units at highest risk of converting to market rate units.* According to the National Housing Preservation Database, those units most at risk of being converted to market rate units are those that were constructed prior to 1975 and those with a for-profit owner, among other factors.
- *ACTION: Work with municipalities and stakeholders to identify tools for preserving those units that will be expiring and are at highest risk for conversion to market rate units.*



#### **Strategy 4: Encourage preservation of naturally occurring affordable units.**

Some housing units are considered to be “Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing.” These include smaller homes typically built after World War II, older homes and apartments, and mobile homes. But unlike deed-restricted affordable units, their selling prices are market based so there is no guarantee they will remain affordable (i.e., they are “unsubsidized affordable units”). Nevertheless, they play an important role in providing opportunities for starter-homes and for downsizing. The Region’s communities could explore mechanisms to maintain their affordability.

- *ACTION: Explore mechanisms to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing units.* Mechanism might include the right of first refusal for mission-based organizations to purchase, voluntary deed restriction programs, and funding for rehabilitation of units.

#### **Strategy 5: Promote and support programs that make homeownership achievable for low- and moderate-income households.**

Home ownership provides stability and the opportunity to build wealth. Increasing homeownership opportunities for low and moderate-income households and communities of color that were excluded from the post WW II homeownership boom.

- *ACTION: Support the work of the State and non-profits.* The State and Federal governments provide homebuying assistance programs, including downpayment and closing cost assistance, along with educational programs for first time homebuyers.

## **Goal: Build housing adjacent to transit.**

### **Strategies to achieve the goal:**

- Strategy 1: Encourage investment in Transit Oriented Development (TOD).
- Strategy 2: Encourage the expansion of transit services to better meet the needs of households in TOD areas.

### **Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:**

- Number of housing units located within a quarter mile of a CTrail or CTfastrak stop/station.

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) refers to relatively compact and mixed-use development located in areas with easy access to transit. TOD is considered a sustainable approach to development because it coordinates land use with transportation in a way that reduces vehicle-dependency and increases transit ridership. Refer to additional TOD actions in the Transportation Chapter (Chapter 8).

### **Strategy 1: Encourage investment in Transit Oriented Development (TOD).**

The opening of CTfastrak, with stations between New Britain and downtown Hartford, and improvements to the Hartford Line make the Region ripe for addition TOD. Although initial state-wide discussions to require communities to zone for increased density

at transit stations was met with opposition, a number of communities in the Region have allowed for new multifamily developments adjacent to or within walking distance to the busway and railroad stations. Communities have worked to capitalize on the \$570 million investment undertaking planning studies and amending zoning regulations to permit and encourage higher-density housing and other appropriate, walkable development and land use in proximity to the station areas.

Since CTfastrak launched, investors have built or begun construction on more than a half-dozen developments along the route, representing over 600 new apartments, many marketed to retired seniors and young professionals. In particular, New Britain committed early to championing transit-oriented development and the success is undeniable; more than 400 units have been or will be completed Downtown when all four of their projects are completed.

- ***ACTION:** Encourage communities to support and plan for housing near major transit facilities.* CRCOG is committed to using transit as a tool to shape urban form and encourage land use planning that can support additional transit investments in the Region's transit corridors. In 2023, CRCOG completed Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Roles, Visioning, Viability, and Tools Analysis, which built on the recommendations from the Hartford Line TOD Action Plan (2019) and CTfastrak TOD Study (2017). CRCOG worked with eight municipalities along major transit corridors to determine site specific TOD opportunities and their financial viability. The 2023 study revealed challenges facing communities including brownfields remediation, historic lack of local support for TOD, and the need for financial incentives. CRCOG should continue to work with interested municipalities to address

these challenges by building a knowledge-sharing toolkit, adopting a regional “brand,” and reimagining the regional organizations.

- *ACTION: Support state investments in TOD areas.* More assistance in building housing near transit stations might be available in the near term, as the State funds the new Connecticut Municipal Development Authority (MRDA). The MRDA is an incentive program that opens funding to municipalities that zone for housing near transit.

**Strategy 2: Encourage the expansion of transit services to better meet the needs of households in TOD areas.**

To encourage reduced (or no) car use in TOD areas, transit service must meet the transportation needs of its residents and workers. Connections to destinations, short wait times, and affordable fares reduce or eliminate the need for access to an automobile. See Chapter 8 for detailed transit recommendations.

“Affordable housing near transportation, shopping, and services is crucial for ensuring accessibility and convenience for residents. It helps create a more inclusive community where individuals from various income levels can afford to live comfortably and access necessary amenities.” – POCD Survey Respondent.

**Goal: Provide the Region's vulnerable populations with a safe place to live.**

**Strategies to achieve the goal:**

- Strategy 1: Support strategies to assist individuals and families to move from homelessness to stable housing situations and to address the root causes of houselessness.
- Strategy 2: Address the lack of supportive housing in parts of the Region.
- Strategy 3: Increase the number of accessible units available to the elderly and those with disabilities.

**Potential metrics to measure progress towards the goal:**

- Number of houseless individuals.
- Number of supportive housing units.

**Strategy 1: Support strategies to assist individuals and families to move from homelessness to stable housing situations and to address the root causes of houselessness.**

As noted in Chapter 2, after a decrease in the number of counted houseless persons in the State, numbers unfortunately are rebounding. Public policies may moderate the effects of both structural and personal factors to help prevent houselessness.

- *ACTION: Examine models used in other states and regions to provide immediate, interim housing.* "Housing First" initiatives prioritize getting people into a permanent home first, and then addressing issues the root causes of their situation. Options

used elsewhere include motel conversions and the use of small, modular units (such as pods).

**Strategy 2: Address the lack of supportive housing in parts of the Region.**

Supportive Housing provides both housing and voluntary support services to help houseless people, families and those with disabilities stay housed. A 2020 Research Report by the Urban Institute found that there is no supportive housing in Tolland County.

- *ACTION: Support the work of non-profits to provide supportive housing in all parts of the Region.* CRCOG should work with partners to gain a better understanding of the gap in supportive housing and demand. We need to include supportive housing in discussions about affordable housing at the community level.

**Strategy 3: Increase the number of accessible units available to the elderly and those with disabilities.**

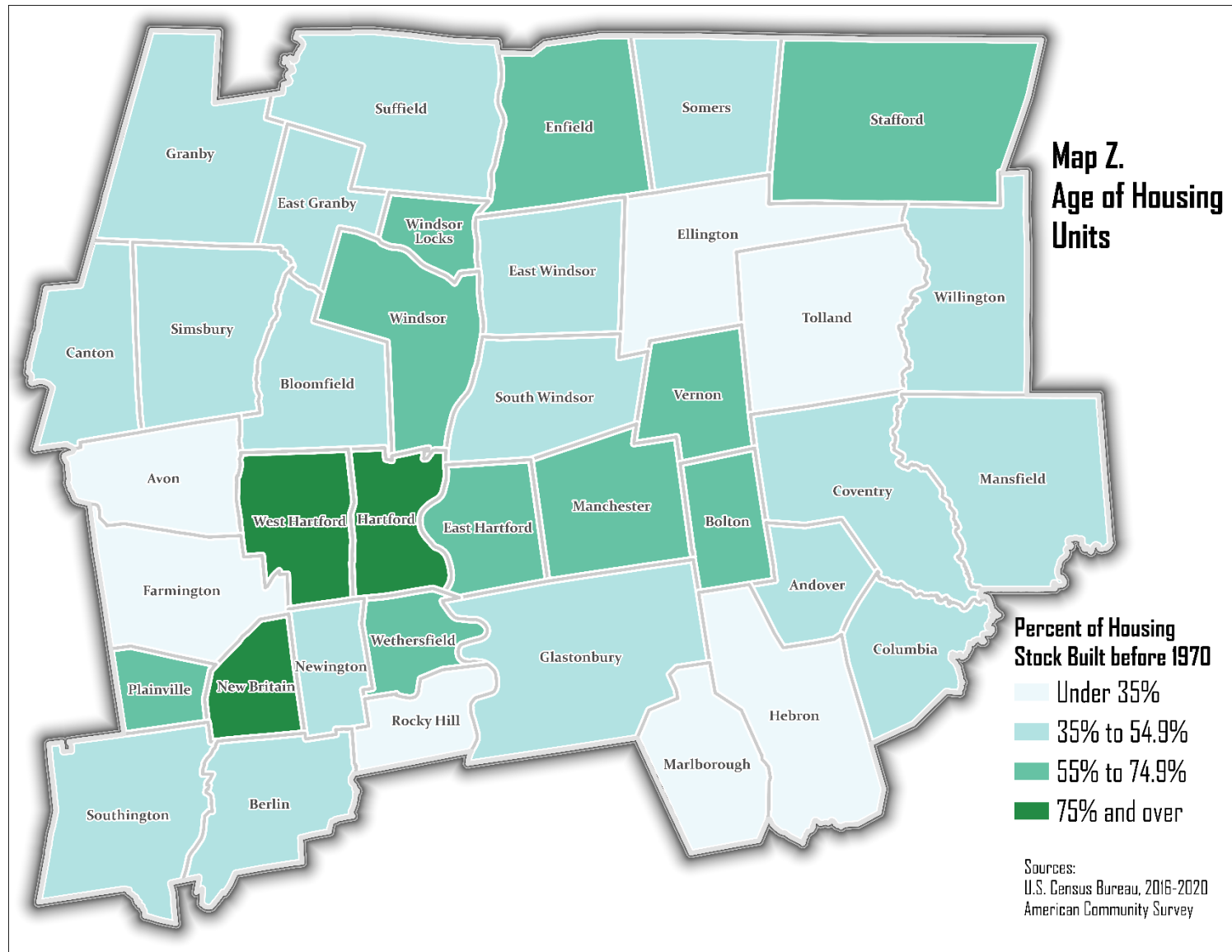
With a growing senior population, demand for handicap-accessible housing will grow. Some may wish to move into an accessible unit while others may wish to remain in their home and undertake retrofits.

- *ACTION: Encourage municipalities to provide accessible and affordable housing options, particularly in areas with higher percentages of low income elderly and elderly with disabilities.* Demographic analyses and discussions with local social service staff can pinpoint local needs. There are many models for seniors and those with disabilities including accessory

dwelling units, co-housing and others discussed previously.

- *ACTION: Support funding programs for accessibility modifications.* Many of the Region's communities provide loans to homeowners to make accessibility improvements. Granby, for example, uses its "Small Cities" funds from the State for housing upgrades by income-qualified homeowners.

NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: Most of the housing stock in Hartford, New Britain, and West Hartford was built before 1970.*



<b>SUMMARY OF ACTIONS (sample action table – will be updated to match actions in text)</b>		
<b>GOAL: Preserve the Region’s housing stock.</b>		
Strategy 1: Preserve older housing units through repair, rehabilitation, and enforcement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support the efforts of nonprofit and for-profit developers to rehabilitate and preserve distressed rental properties and to provide for mixed-income developments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support increased funding to update, upgrade, and modernize older housing units and apartment buildings.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Support reinvestment in neighborhoods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Champion reinvestment programs and projects that improve livability of the Region’s urban neighborhoods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Identify best practices for minimizing displacement during neighborhood reinvestment programs.</li> </ul>
Strategy 3: Ensure renters are not unfairly priced out of their homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Monitor trends in corporations purchasing apartment buildings in the Region and any resulting rent increases.</li> <li>• ACTION: Support the work by others to provide support to cost-burdened renters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Explore and potentially advise on the effectiveness of rent control/stabilization and other measures to prevent displacement.</li> </ul>
<b>GOAL: Diversity the Region’s housing stock.</b>		
Strategy 1: Increase density compatible with neighborhood context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support efforts to increase the critical mass of housing density in the Region’s downtowns.</li> <li>• ACTION: Support moderate density in areas with infrastructure, proximate to transit options, and near or within town centers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Encourage light touch density in areas with supporting infrastructure.</li> <li>• ACTION: Encourage “hidden” density, where units are added in ways that are not necessarily detectable.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Encourage innovative housing models.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Provide guidance to municipalities on needs and options for alternative housing communities.</li> </ul>	
Strategy 3: Explore innovative housing production.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Stay apprised of emerging trends in housing construction including tiny homes and prefabricated apartment units and houses.</li> </ul>	
Strategy 4: Remove roadblocks to housing production.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Bring together stakeholders, including non-traditional stakeholders, on a regular basis to review progress, identify emerging needs and trends, and adjust strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Learn from and engage with homebuilders, small-scale developers and large -scale developers.</li> </ul>

<b>GOAL: Increase affordable housing in the Region.</b>		
Strategy 1: Provide support to member municipalities to increase affordable units and administer affordable housing programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Develop guidance on inclusionary zoning percentages that address market variations in the Region.</li> <li>• ACTION: Encourage municipalities to remove or reduce regulatory barriers to creating affordable housing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Work with municipalities to identify gaps in local resources, expertise and staffing when it comes to creating and administering housing programs and determine where regional assistance might be reasonable and feasible.</li> <li>• ACTION: Take a leadership role in supporting municipalities with their fair-share allotments, after OPM has completed its allocations.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Seek regional approaches to producing affordable units.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Develop a Regional Housing Strategy to conduct a deeper analysis of housing trends, needs and gaps in the Region and to create tailored solutions and programs to help municipalities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Explore the feasibility of regional publicly developed affordable housing.</li> <li>• ACTION: Leverage the business community in promoting the importance of having a robust, diverse, and affordable housing stock.</li> </ul>
Strategy 3: Actively work to preserve affordability of units with expiring deed restrictions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Identify those units at highest risk of converting to market rate units.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Work with municipalities and stakeholders to identify tools for preserving those units that will be expiring and are at highest risk for conversion to market rate units.</li> </ul>
Strategy 4: Encourage preservation of naturally occurring affordable units.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Explore mechanisms to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing units.</li> </ul>	
Strategy 5: Promote and support programs that make homeownership achievable for low- and moderate-income households.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support the work by the State and non-profits.</li> </ul>	
<b>GOAL: Build housing adjacent to transit.</b>		
Strategy 1: Encourage investment in Transit Oriented Development (TOD).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Encourage communities to support and plan for housing near major transit facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support state investments in TOD areas.</li> </ul>
Strategy 2: Encourage the expansion of transit services to better meet the needs of households in TOD areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to Chapter 8 for Actions.</li> </ul>	

<b>GOAL: Provide the Region's vulnerable populations with a safe place to live.</b>		
Strategy 1: Support strategies to assist individuals and families to move from homelessness to stable housing situations and to address the root causes of homelessness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Examine models used in other states and Regions to provide immediate, interim housing.</li> </ul>	
Strategy 2: Address the lack of supportive housing in parts of the Region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support the work by non-profits to provide supportive housing in all parts of the Region.</li> </ul>	
Strategy 3: Increase the number of accessible units available to the elderly and those with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Encourage municipalities to provide accessible and affordable housing options, particularly in areas with higher percentages of low income elderly and elderly with disabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION: Support funding programs for accessibility modifications.</li> </ul>

## Chapter Endnotes:

1. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1240622/new-residential-construction-per-capita-usa/>. 2021.
2. Connecticut Department of Housing, State of Connecticut Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice. April 2023.
3. Eaton, Susan. A Steady Habit of Segregation: The Origins and Continuing Harm of Separate and Unequal Housing and Public Schools in Metropolitan Hartford, Connecticut.
4. McGann, Shaun. "The Effects of Redlining on the Hartford Metropolitan Region" ConnecticutHistory.org
5. Pew Research Center. "The demographics of multigenerational households" March 24, 2022
6. Pinto, Edward; Peter, Tobias; and Hamilton, Emily. Light Touch Density. American Enterprise Institute. January 2022. <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Light-Touch-Density-Compiled-FINAL-1.12.2022.pdf?x91208#:~:text=We%20define%20light%2Dtouch%20density,duplexes%2C%20triplexes%2C%20and%20fourplexes.>
7. Connecticut Housing Finance Authority. Housing Needs Assessment. 2023.

# Chapter 10: Land Use Policy Map

The Land Use Policy Map illustrates the vision for the Region's future by identifying areas most suitable for growth and development and areas that warrant conservation or preservation.

The areas that can best support development are relatively free of environmental constraints, are usually supported by existing infrastructure, and may be currently developed. Areas that are characterized by sensitive natural features warrant preservation or measures to conserve resources.

This map, along with the text of the Plan, is intended to provide **general** guidance to CROCOG, municipalities, and state agencies. The map can be used to support, encourage, and guide further investment in areas most suitable for development. Specifically, CROCOG will use this map to:

- Support proposals consistent with the conservation or preservation of important natural features.
- Support plans and proposals consistent with regional development policies.

This map should not be the singular determinant for suitable growth areas. It should be used in concert with the goals and strategies contained in this plan. For example, while the Region's urban areas are identified as areas suitable for development on this map, this plan includes strategies to increase open space, parks, and farming in those communities. Conversely, we

recognize that development might be proposed in areas depicted as green on these maps. In those circumstances, proposed development is encouraged to avoid, reduce, or mitigate impacts to natural resources.

## Land Use Policy Map

### Suitable Development Areas

- Areas of regional significance
- Areas served by water and / or sewer with a quarter mile buffer (darker areas have both)
- Transit stops with a half-mile buffer
- Hartford Line & CTfastrak with a half-mile buffer

### Priority Conservation Areas

#### *High*

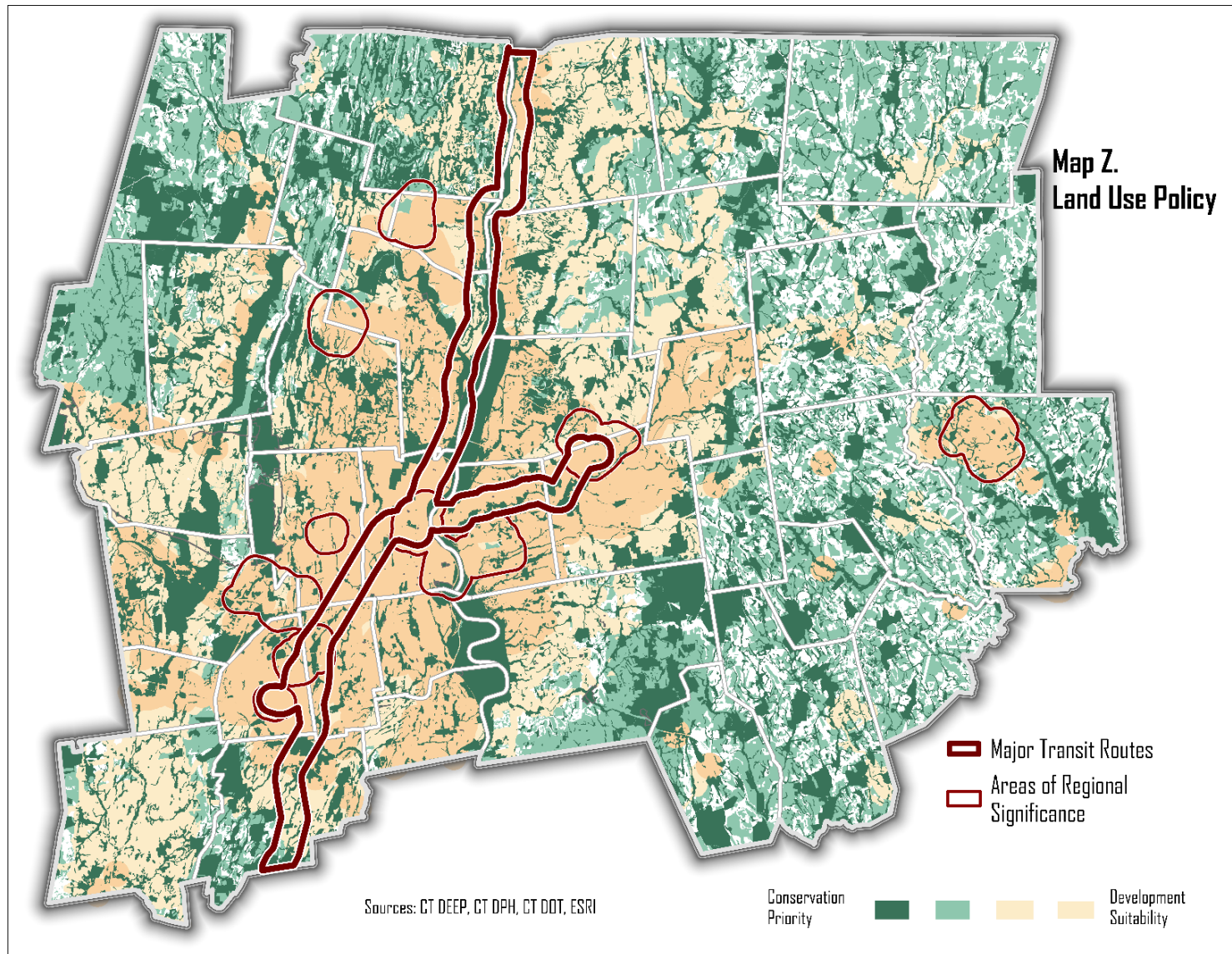
- 100 year floodplain
- Wetlands and water bodies
- Preserved open space

#### *Medium*

- Steep slopes (greater than 15 percent)
- Habitat (NDDDB and Critical Habitat)
- Aquifer Protection Areas
- Prime Farmland Soil
- DEEP Core Forest

This map does not supersede local Plans of Conservation and Development. Appendix B includes summaries of targeted growth areas from each municipal POCD.

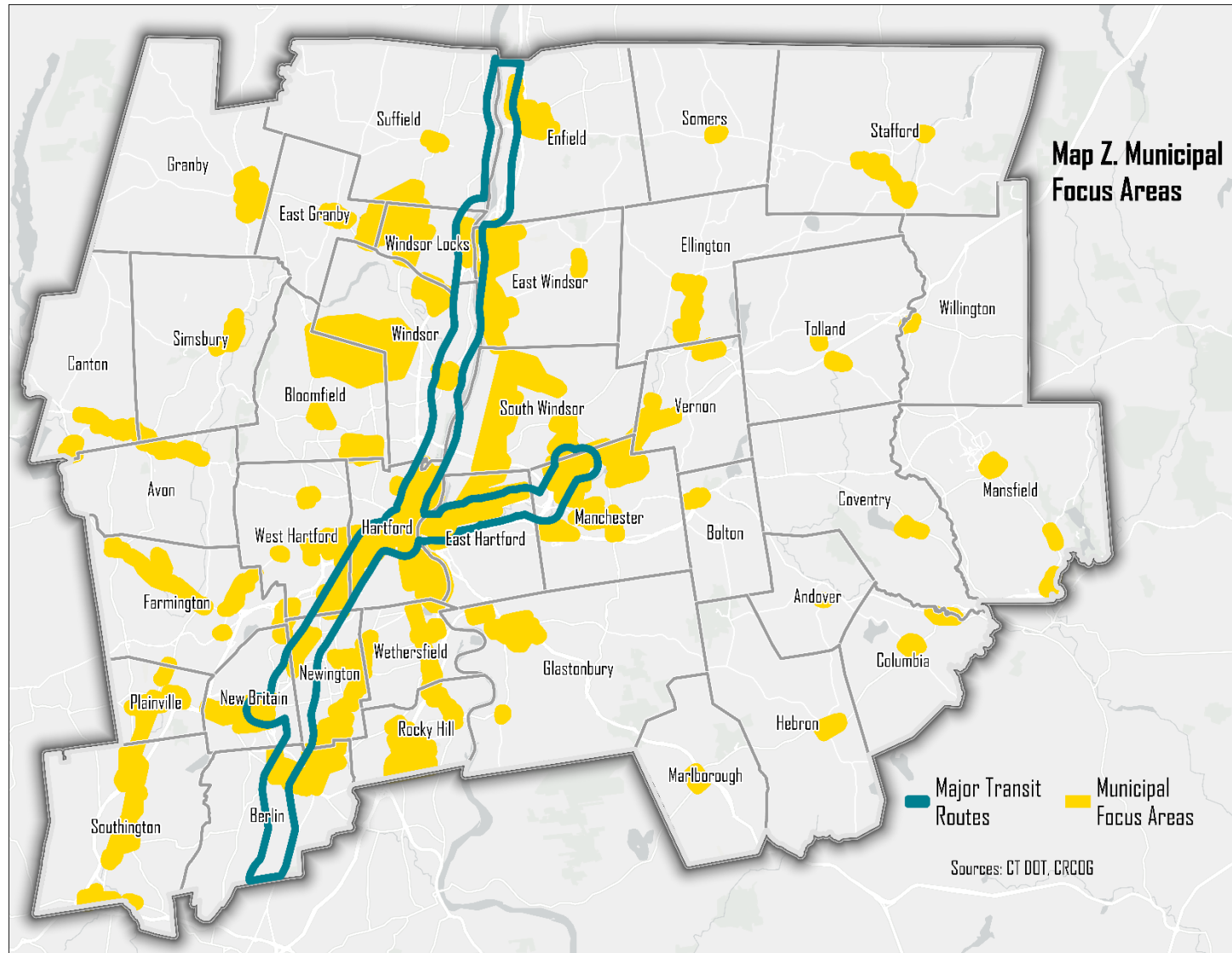
NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: The Conservation and Development Policy Map illustrates the vision for the Region's future by identifying areas most suitable for growth and development and areas that warrant preservation*



NOTE: Maps will be redesigned and integrated within the Chapter. Town names will be added along with additional key features.



*Caption: Municipal Focus Areas are areas generally identified by the municipality as key development areas.*



# Chapter 11: Consistency with State POCD

State statutes require that regional POCDs promote such certain development patterns and note inconsistencies with six growth management principles. We have not identified any inconsistencies summarize how CRCOG’s 2024 POCD supports the principles.

## **CT Growth Management Principle 1: Redevelopment and revitalization of regional centers and areas of mixed land uses with existing or planned physical infrastructure.**

A key tenet of this plan is to “create a 24/7 Capital City” through continued investment and revitalization of our Region’s urban core. The POCD advocates for transit-oriented development near transit stops and re-investment in underutilized commercial districts. The Policy map guides growth to areas served by water and sewer and in regional centers.

## **CT Growth Management Principle 2: Expansion of housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs.**

Two key goals of the POCD are to diversify and expand the Region’s stock and increase affordable housing. The plan recognizes that housing needs and household types are changing and that the current housing stock does not provide adequate choices.

## **CT Growth Management Principle 3: Concentration of development around transportation nodes and along major**

**transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options and land reuse.**

The POCD supports TOD to encourage development patterns that are less car-dependent and to increase transit ridership. Transit routes were a factor in developing the Policy Map.

## **CT Growth Management Principle 4: Conservation and restoration of the natural environment, cultural and historical resources and traditional rural lands.**

The POCD provides goals and strategies to protect natural resources, preserve open space, and protect and promote cultural and historic resources. The protection of rural lands – including forests, open space, and farms – is addressed along with opportunities to connect with nature in urban areas.

## **CT Growth Management Principle 5: Protection of environmental assets critical to public health and safety.**

The POCD identifies threats and vulnerabilities facing our water supplies, air quality, and other natural resources and identifies strategies to restore and protect such resources. Strategies address water quality, greenhouse gas emissions, air quality, and resilience to help protect public health and safety.

## **CT Growth Management Principle 6: Integration of planning across all levels of government to address issues on a local, regional and state-wide basis.**

The plan repeatedly highlights that the cooperation of municipalities, CRCOG and state agencies is necessary to accomplish the goals. The Plan identifies cross-boundary challenges and opportunities and actions to work together to tackle the challenges. The Plan also calls out where state action is needed to achieve our goals.

# Appendices

## A. Detailed Public Engagement

### On-Line Survey

An on-line survey was available April 26 to October 5, 2023. Of 407 responses, 338 were deemed usable (responses were not analyzed if they were clearly spam or if responses were not about the Region). The survey was available in English, Spanish, and Polish. It was posted on CRCOG's website and social media accounts, distributed to municipal staff, distributed at all community pop-up events attended, and posted/handed out as a flyer in key locations. Participants had the opportunity to win a gift card as an incentive to take the survey.

To analyze the responses to open-ended questions, general categories were developed and each response was placed in a category. Categories varied between questions.

Note: All questions were optional, so percentages are based on those who answered the question – not out of total survey-takers.

### Topical Questions

What other places in the Region (or State) do you visit to shop/play/socialize? What about those places makes you want to visit and spend time there?

Top Mentions Within Region		
	# of Mentions	Examples of Reasons
West Hartford	64	Restaurants, shops, town center / Blue Black, walkable
Hartford	36	Cultural venues, restaurants, museums
Simsbury	30	Restaurants, biking, kayaking, town center
Glastonbury	27	Restaurants, shops, walking paths, town center, farm stands
Avon	24	Restaurants, shops, playgrounds,
Manchester	22	Main Street, shopping
Farmington	19	Restaurants, kayaking,

Are there specific things in the places you routinely visit that you would like to see in your own town/city?

Category	# of Responses
Entertainment (cultural, restaurants, events, active recreation, etc.)	95
Patters of development (downtown, town center, walkable, etc.)	54
Parks & outdoor passive recreation	54
Conveniences & service (shopping, medical, etc.)	39
Other transportation-related	32
Bike infrastructure	28
Other	26
People, community	14
Scenic or historic places	6

Where do you see community in your everyday life?

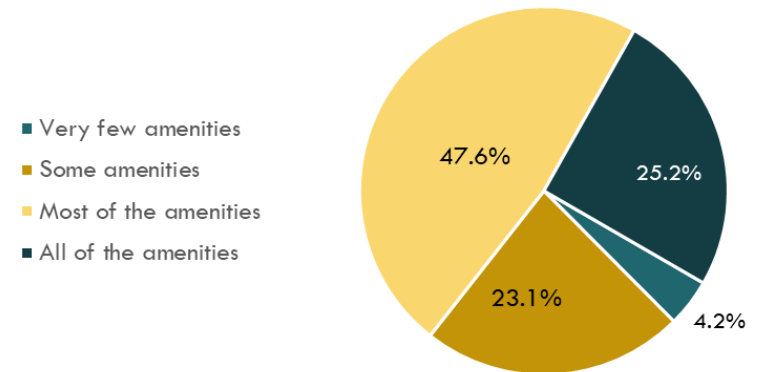
Category	# of Responses
Places (for gathering – parks, religious places, community centers, theaters, etc.)	89
Specific Groups (schools, scouts, teams, family, etc.)	69
Other	49
Events	46
Neighbors / Immediate Neighborhood	38
Wider Community	22
Governance	13

What are ways your community can be supported/strengthened?

Category	# of Responses
Governance, taxes	60
Things to do, amenities	57
People, groups	42
Transportation	42
Other	30
Economic development	25
Quality of life (safety, ambiance, appearance)	24
Housing	20
Environment, sustainability	16
Parks, open space	15
Grants, funding	15
Stop or limit development	12

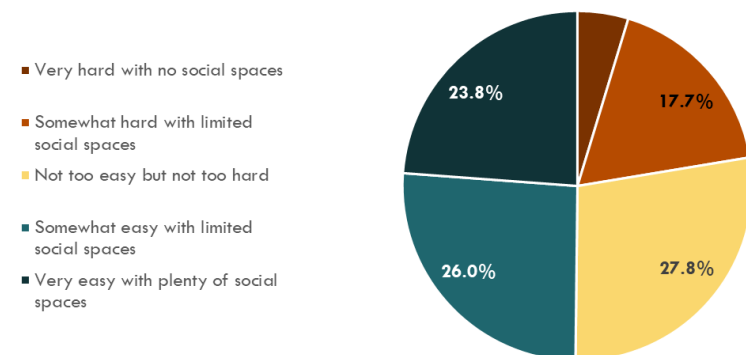
Does your town/city have the amenities you need for your daily life?

**Does your town/city have the amenities you need for your daily life? (286 responses)**



How easy is it to socialize, meet new people and make friends in your town? Optional: Please elaborate.

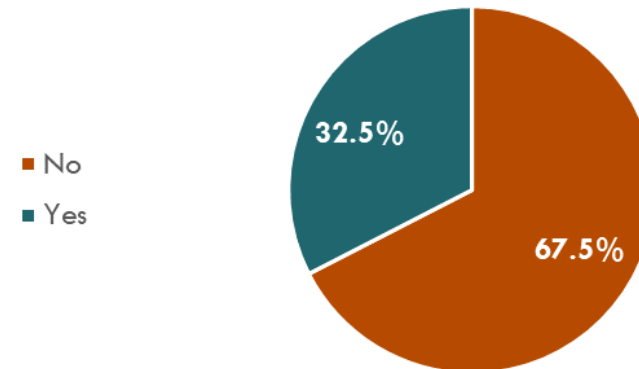
**How easy is it to socialize, meet new people and make friends in your town? (277 responses)**



	# of Responses
<b>Things that make it easy:</b>	
Events & activities	26
Places to go	25
People-related	15
Type of development (e.g., walkable area)	6
Other	6
<b>Things that make it hard:</b>	
Place-related barriers (no places, not convenient, etc.)	61
People-related (issues with others)	26
Lack of events or activities	16
Resource constraints (lack of time, money, no car)	13
Other	13
Personal issue	12

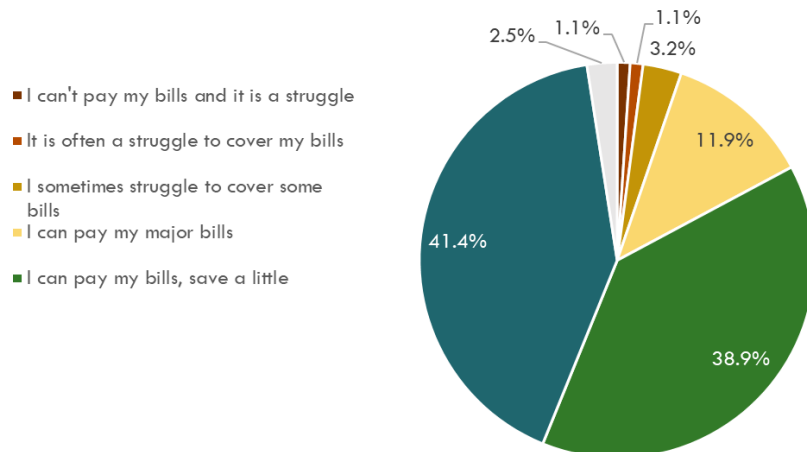
Are you able to get to your everyday destinations without a car?

**Are you able to get to your everyday destinations without a car? (338 responses)**



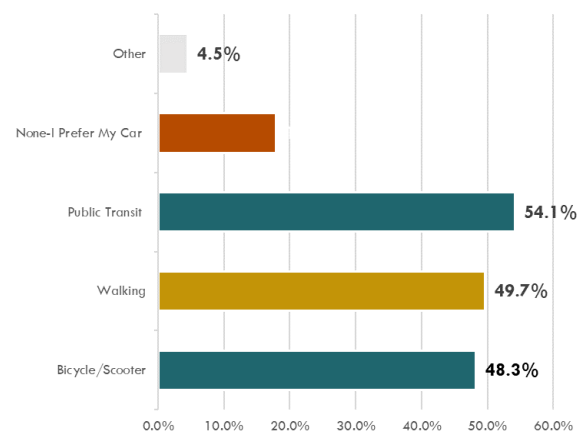
How does your current wage allow you to participate in your community?

**How does your current wage allow you to participate in your community? (285 responses)**



Imagine you had all the infrastructure you needed; Which mode of transportation would you be likely to use if a car was not an option?

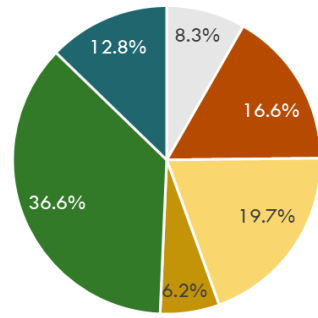
Imagine you had all the infrastructure you needed; Which mode of transportation would you be likely to use if a car was not an option? (290 respondents; allowed to select multiple responses so %>100)



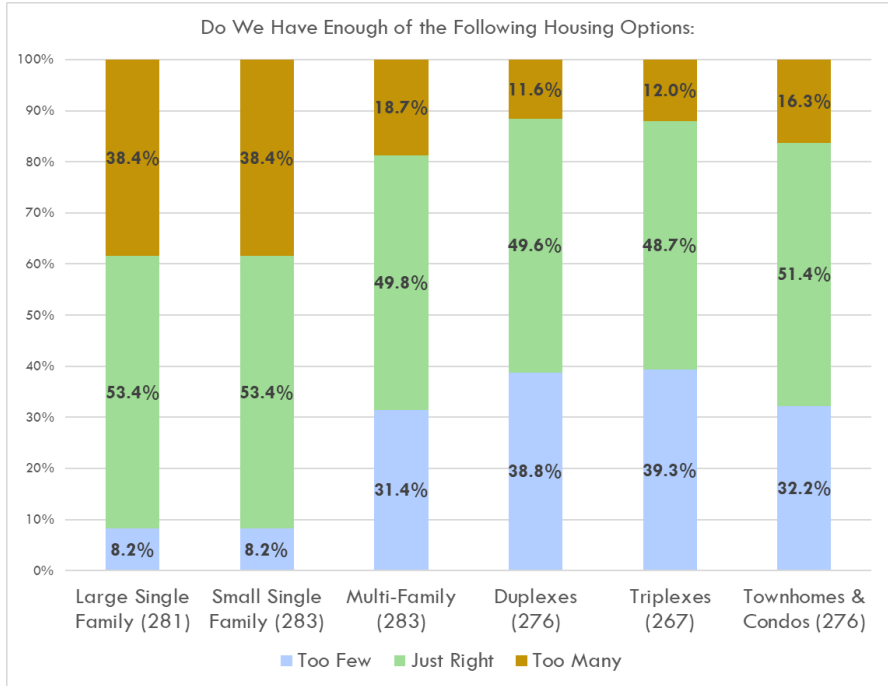
Where would you like to live in the next 5-10 years?

Where would you like to live in the next 5-10 years? (290 responses)

- Other
- Rural/Country Side
- Village/Town Center
- Suburbs Further From Urban Amenities
- Suburbs Close To Urban Amenities
- Urban Core

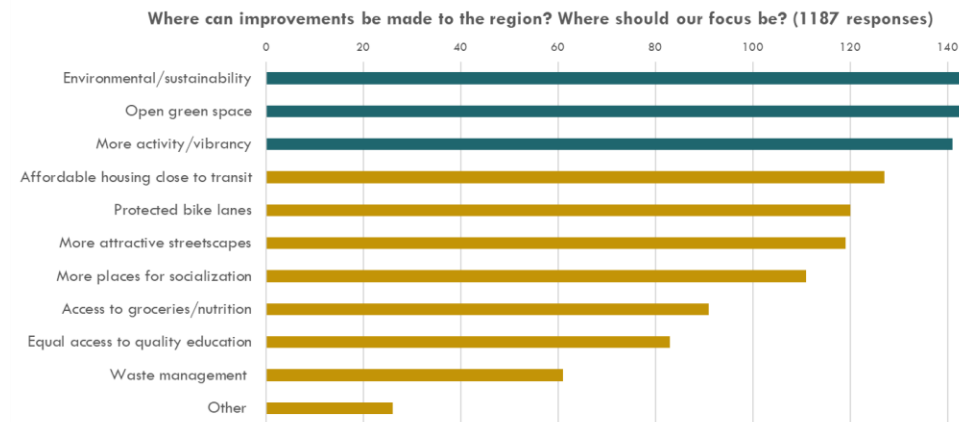


Does the Region have too many, about the right amount or too few of the following housing types?



If you could design your ideal neighborhood, what would it look like?

Where can improvements be made to the Region? Where should our focus be? Elaborate.



Is there anything else that is important to you about your community that was not addressed in this survey?

- Most of these responses related to development or sustainability.

What are some big “game-changing” ideas that would improve life in the Region?

Category	# of Responses
Governance	44
Environment & sustainability	36
Transit	36
Economic development	33
Other transportation-related	27
Bicycle & Pedestrian infrastructure	25
Housing	22
Things to do, events	22
Other	21
Patterns of development (downtown, town center, walkable)	17
Parks & outdoors (passive recreation)	14
Food systems	6

## Demographic Questions

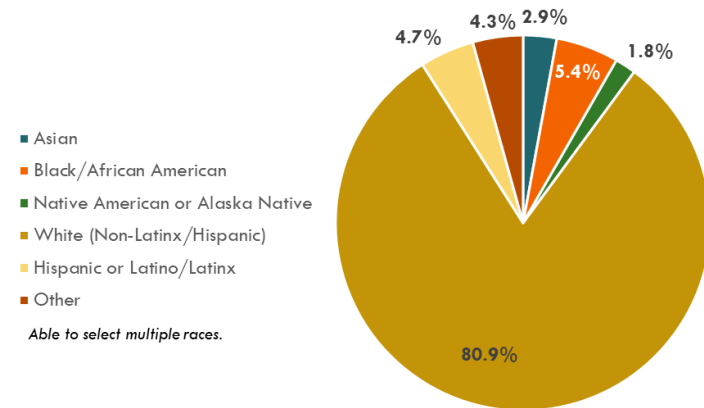
What city/town do you live in?

City/Town	# of Responses	% of Responses
Andover	3	1%
Avon	2	1%
Berlin	1	0%
Bloomfield	2	1%
Bolton	1	0%
Canton	55	16%
East Hartford	3	1%
East Windsor	3	1%
Enfield	2	1%
Farmington	24	7%
Glastonbury	5	1%
Granby	2	1%
Hartford	20	6%
Hebron	2	1%
Manchester	7	2%
Mansfield	5	1%
Marlborough	2	1%
New Britain	9	3%
Newington	9	3%
Plainville	1	0%
Rocky Hill	2	1%
Simsbury	5	1%
South Windsor	8	2%
Southington	1	0%
Stafford	1	0%

City/Town	# of Responses	% of Responses
Suffield	4	1%
Tolland	8	2%
Vernon	1	0%
West Hartford	30	9%
Wethersfield	9	3%
Windsor	4	1%
Windsor Locks	2	1%
Elsewhere in CT	17	5%
Outside of CT	29	9%
Uncertain or Blank	59	17%
Total	338	100%

What is your ethnicity?

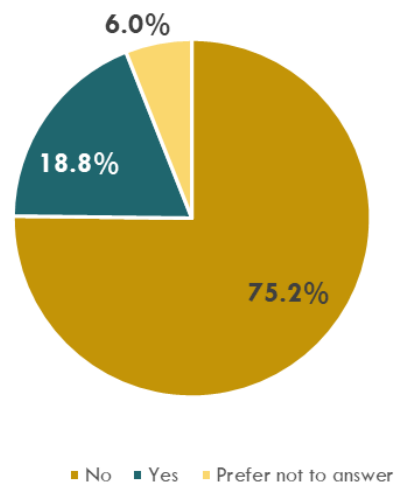
**Race & Ethnicity of Participants (263 responses)**





Would you consider yourself part of the LGBTQIAP+ community?

Participants Part of the LGBTQIAP+ Community  
(266 responses)

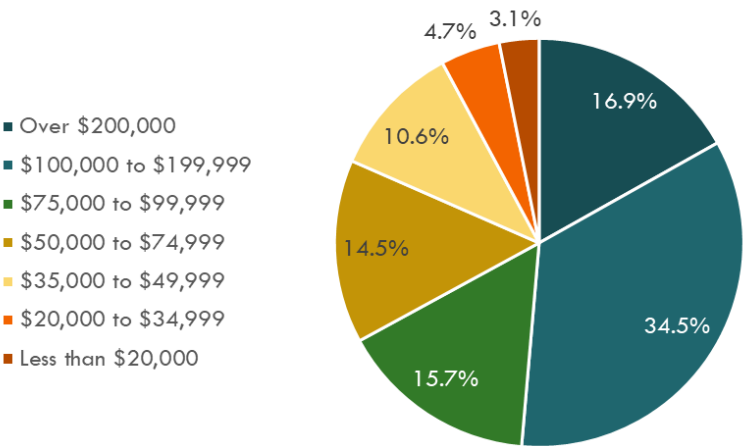


What gender do you identify as?

Female	45%
Male	54%
Non-binary	1%
Total responses: 236	

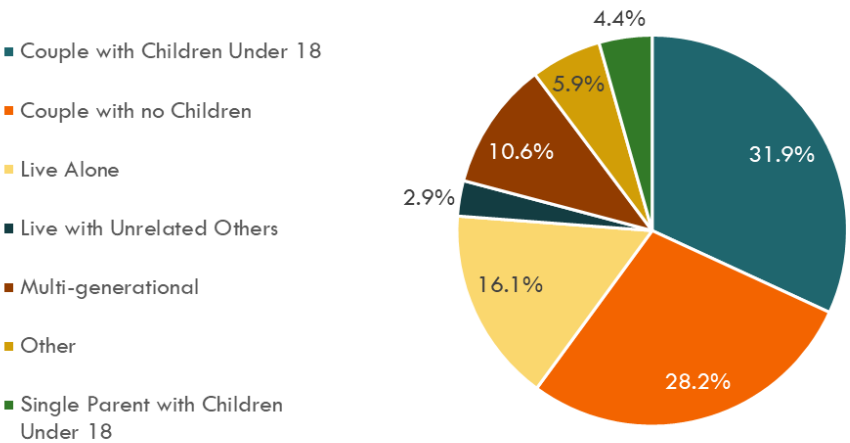
What is your household income?

Annual Household Income (255 responses)

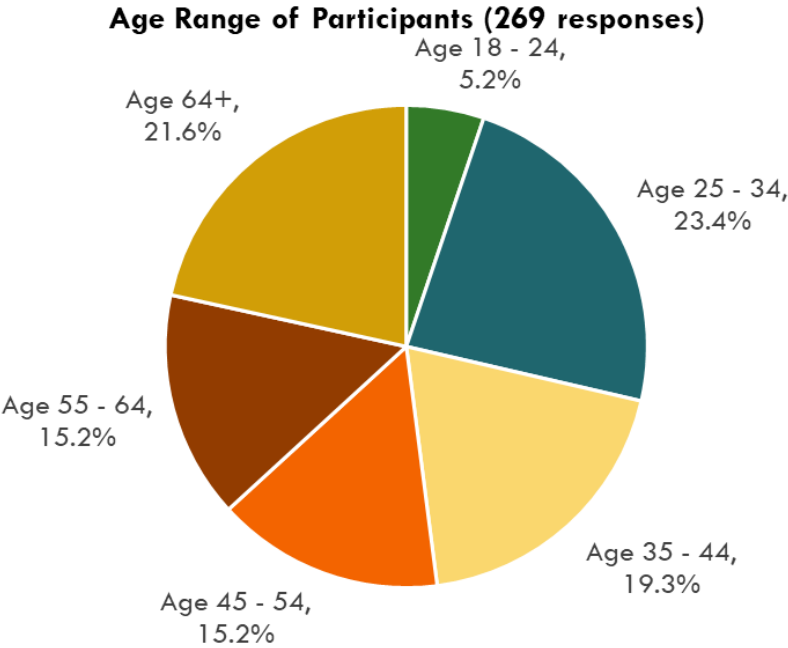


What is your household makeup?

Household Composition (273 responses)



What is your age range?



## In Person Engagement / SWOT

CRCOG staff attended 12 community events. The goal of this strategy was to reach the public where they would already be, instead of requesting they attend a separate event hosted by CRCOG, thereby reaching individuals who would otherwise not be able to participate in this process. We asked participants their favorite and least favorite aspects of the Capitol Region using a SWOT analysis board labeled *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats* and collected 1,113 responses.

Event	Estimated "Reach"	Date (2023)
Hartford Taste, Hartford	200	June 9-10
DominGO, Hartford	80	June 25
First Night, Hartford	100	July 8
Walk and Roll, New Britain	40	July 26
Main Street Market, New Britain	30	August 16
Center Streets, West Hartford	75	August 27
Farmers Market, Canton	35	September 3
Hebron Harvest Fair, Hebron	300	September 7-10
Farmers Market, Wethersfield	45	September 14
DominGO, Hartford	60	September 17
Main Street Market, New Britain	25	September 27
Celebrate Mansfield, Mansfield	75	September 30

**Capitol Region, Strengths**

General Category	Celebrate Mansfield	Center Streets West Hartford	DominGO (9/17)	DominGO Hartford (6/25)	Hartford First Night	Hartford Taste	Hebron Fair	New Britain Main St Market	New Britain Walk & Roll	Wethersfield Farmers Market	Total	%
Arts, Culture, Activities	1	1	2		3	3					10	7%
Community	1	4	9	8	7	2	2	3	1	1	38	25%
Economic Development		2	1		4	1		1			9	6%
Governance			1			3					4	3%
Health			2								2	1%
Land Use	1	2			1		3	1			8	5%
Open Space & Greenways	1					2					3	2%
Other						1					1	1%
Quality of Life	2	9	2	3	1	1	2	1	3	3	27	18%
Sustainability	1	2			1	3	5		1		13	8%
Transportation		4	1	4		11	5	7	1	5	38	25%
											153	100%

Transportation – Ctfastrak, trails, walkability in key downtown areas

Quality of life – Geographic location, cleanliness, four seasons, education system

Community – Friendly people, diversity, traditions and events

**Capitol Region Weaknesses**

<b>General Category</b>	<b>Canton Farmer's Market</b>	<b>Celebrate Mansfield</b>	<b>Center Streets West Hartford</b>	<b>DominGO (9/17)</b>	<b>DominGO Hartford (6/25)</b>	<b>Hartford First Night</b>	<b>Hartford Taste</b>	<b>Hebron Fair</b>	<b>New Britain Main St Market</b>	<b>New Britain Walk &amp; Roll</b>	<b>Wethers-field Farmers Market</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Arts, Culture, Activities			1	8			9			3		21	8%
Community		2	1	1		2			3	1		10	4%
Economic Development							3	1	2			6	2%
Environment			2		2			3		1		8	3%
Equity		3		8	1		1	3		2		18	7%
Food Systems					1		1			1		3	1%
Governance		2	5	5	2	1	1	5			4	25	9%
Health				1								1	0%
Housing				9		2	11	2	5			29	11%
Land Use		7		3					5			15	6%
N/A								1				1	0%
Open Space & Greenways							3	2	4		2	11	4%
Quality of Life		2	1	3	2	1	11		3	2		25	9%
Sustainability		1		1	2		2	1				7	3%
Transportation	2	9	16	1	10	7	11	10	6	4	14	90	33%
												270	100%

Transportation – Reliance of cars with lack of transportation options, lack of protected bicycle facilities, last mile connections, not walkable enough, and public transit is slow, not frequent, with gaps in service

Housing – Rent is expensive, lack of upkeep by landlords, lack of options to age in place, homelessness, lack of affordable housing near transit

**Capitol Region Threats**

General Category	Canton Farmer's Market	Celebrate Mansfield	Center Streets West Hartford	DominGO (9/17)	DominGO Hartford (6/25)	Hartford First Night	Hartford Taste	Hebron Fair	New Britain Main St Market	New Britain Walk & Roll	Wethers-field Farmers Market	Total	%
Art, Culture, and Activities					1				1			2	1%
Community						2						2	1%
Economic Development						6			1	1		8	5%
Equity				1	2		2	1				6	3%
Food Systems					4	2			2			8	5%
Governance					1		2	5				8	5%
Health			1					10	2			13	7%
Housing		5		1	3	4			6		1	20	11%
Land Use								2	1		2	5	3%
Quality of Life	1			7	1	8	5	4	1	1		28	16%
Sustainability		2	1	5	4		2	3		4	2	23	13%
Transportation		6	7	1	6	7		12	10	2	1	52	30%
												175	100%

Transportation – Too much spending on car infrastructure, lack of protected facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, reliance on cars, lack of sidewalk connectivity and last mile connections

Quality of Life – Safety, community appearance, nuisances

Sustainability – Climate change, flooding, extreme heat, waste management

Capitol Region, Opportunities

General Category	Canton Farmer's Market	Celebrate Mansfield	Center Streets West Hartford	DominGO (9/17)	DominGO Hartford (6/25)	Hartford First Night	Hartford Taste	Hebron Fair	New Britain Main St Market	New Britain Walk & Roll	Wethers-field Farmers Market	Total	%
Arts, Culture, Activities			3	2	2			2	3	1		13	3%
Community				1			1	1	2			5	1%
Economic Development			5	3		5	5	5	6		1	30	6%
Equity			1	1		1		2	1	4		10	2%
Food Systems				3	2	4	5	5	12			31	6%
Governance		7	2	1	8	2	3	12	10	4	2	51	10%
Housing		1	2	9		1	4	2	4		2	25	5%
Land Use		5	8	3	3		1	7	3		1	31	6%
Open Space & Greenways				5			2	6	8		3	24	5%
Quality of Life	1	1	5	3	2	5	13	5	3		2	40	8%
Sustainability		11	2	3	5		6	10	4	2	2	45	9%
Transportation	2	19	43	14	23	18	9	17	20	11	15	191	38%
Utilities							3	1				4	1%

500 100%

Transportation – More express buses to and from suburbs, expand CTfastrak east of Connecticut River, electrify rail line, use high-occupancy vehicle lanes for train or bus services, improve options and frequency, better bicycling and walking facilities.

Governance – Lower taxes and transition away from property tax reliance, more planning by CRCOG to help with limited local capacity, improve stakeholder buy-in through meaningful, equitable, and robust public outreach, more building-not just planning, regional and shared service approaches

Sustainability – More nature-based solutions, address climate change, more shade to create comfortable environments, green roofs, community gardens and urban farming, and solar and renewable energy expansion



## Table Talk

Seven hosts organized Table Talk discussions (Please note that they participated independently of their workplace / volunteer / student affiliations):

- Fernando Ricardo Valenzuela – UConn Master of Social Work graduate student and intern at the Institute for Community Research.
- Audrey Dellert – affiliated with UConn Health.
- Dylan Steer and Katie Mercado – Students at UConn and members of EcoHusky.
- Andre Santiago – Vice President and Chief Program Officer at Leadership Greater Hartford.
- Matt Mocarsky – Works at Travelers, serves as board member of KNOX, and executive committee of Hartford Young Professionals & Entrepreneurs.
- Herb Virgo – Member of the Keney Park Sustainability Project.
- Paige Berschet – Project Manager at the Hartford Chamber of Commerce.

From initial analysis it seems that transportation and housing played a major part in most of the Table Talk discussions. Affordable housing support and bike/pedestrian infrastructure prioritization seem to contribute to a level of consensus across all the groups. Transit expansion, protected bike-lanes and sidewalk connectivity were cited not only as solutions for mobility but as solutions to creating a more cohesive community. Landlord accountability, rent control and housing diversity were cited often as solutions to communities housing needs. Additionally, food was a major theme of all the groups. One group mentioned food services to create more social spaces and attract more young professionals. All other groups, when discussing food, mentioned the need to increase access through supporting Urban Farms and

community gardens, as well as actively working to fight food deserts by providing local groceries or grocery stores. One group mentioned that planning is also needed to fight “food swamps,” a phenomenon of a reliance on a single grocery store/food supplier with food still inaccessible due to prices. All but a single group mentioned a lack of 3rd places, especially for young professionals. There was clear support for increasing the number of social spaces available to the public. One group pointed to bettering nightlife in the area as well as activating spaces like Park Street through cultural support; staff believes a similar outreach model to that of Arch Street in New Britain could be applied to garner a healthy relationship between community and infrastructural enhancements on Park Street. One group highlighted where they currently see social community, how social spaces can and should be supported, as well as why social spaces are important for the public, specifically for mental health. This group noted it is important to provide social spaces with a diversity of activities to allow communities to develop and create a sense of belonging for all types of people.

## Focus Groups

CRCOG staff hosted three technical meetings: Environmental, Governance and Housing. These meetings provided insight into what issues should be addressed in the plan and solutions to tackle them.

### Environmental and Sustainability Technical Focus Group

Fifteen environment and sustainability experts from the Region met with CRCOG staff on June 8, 2023. Participating entities were:

- Connecticut Institute for Resilience & Climate Change (CIRCA)

- Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)
- Connecticut Department of Public Health
- Metropolitan District (MDC)
- North Central Conservation District
- City of Hartford
- Town of Manchester
- Sustainable CT
- Farmington River Watershed Association
- Connecticut Resource Conservation & Development

Key points of discussion included:

- Scale and level of detail varies from state to regional to local level.
- Lack of capacity in smaller and rural communities, including for wastewater issues, tree management.
- Political considerations when planning at the state level.
- Challenge with upgrading water and sewer infrastructure while keeping rates affordable to users.
- Limitations in wetlands regulations actually protecting wetlands and waterbodies and lack of staffing at the state level.
- Local land use commissions – lack of training, often play multiple and sometimes-conflicting roles (resource protection and economic development).
- Issues of flooding in North Hartford.
- Climate change – discussion of State goals and progress, siting of renewable energy infrastructure, additional improvements in power transmission, link to vehicle miles travelled, equity lens.
- Cities and towns are starting to see a link between climate change and cost of recovering from storm damage.

- Further discussion on siting solar arrays, role of infill development, climate-smart activities on farms.
- Developing policies incorporating environmental best practices in urban and suburban environments should be a strong consideration.
- Priority areas are core forest, wildlife corridors, drinking water watersheds; dam inundation areas; flood vulnerability; floodplains, tree cover; prime farmland soils.

### Governance

Governance experts from the Region met with CROCOG staff on July 18, 2023. Retire Coventry Town Manager John Elsesser facilitated the discussion. Participating entities were:

- Connecticut Office of Policy and Management
- Connecticut Association of Boards of Education
- Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM)
- Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST)
- Town of Andover
- Town of Canton
- Town of Manchester
- Town of Plainville
- Town of Vernon
- Town of West Hartford
- Town of Wethersfield
- Town of Windsor
- School + State Finance Project

Key points of discussion included:

- For public service delivery, initiatives, and opportunities to increase economies of scale and to improve services.

- Initial efforts for shared services should focus on low-hanging fruit, such as:
  - State functions specifically delegated to municipalities.
  - Technically oriented functions with limited discretion and clear statutory requirements – Assessment, town clerk, code enforcement, other administrative/back-office functions.
- What are we already doing? Create/update an inventory of current shared service arrangements.
- Local Property Taxes - their impact on municipal operations and equity considerations.
  - Currently limited appetite for broader structural reform of local property taxes; POCD could focus on larger issue of how local government is funded and discuss broader impact of property taxes.
  - Education funding (and associated impacts on municipal finances and property taxes) may be more appropriate and timelier.
- Multi-jurisdictional coordination – alignment of state and local priorities.
  - There appears to be interest in allowing towns to create inter-municipal commissions, fair rent and ethics most immediately viable. Other options could potentially include wetlands, planning & zoning.
- What transformational policies should the Regional POCD incorporate, both implementable in the short-term and more long-term aspirational goals?
- The POCD should ideally outline a vision that gets people excited about alternate paths for the Region.
- However, also include necessary implementation pathways.
- Innovation could be a focus.

- Health districts are a good model for shared/intermunicipal services.

## Housing

CRCOG convened a panel of housing experts from the public and private sectors on September 26, 2023. Roughly 50 invited guests attended the panel discussion.

- Panel 1: Public Sector Challenges and Opportunities
  - Moderator: John Guskowski, Government Relations Chair, CT Chapter American Planning Association
  - Arunan Arulampalam, Chief Executive Officer, Hartford Land Bank
  - Rebecca Augur, Policy Development Coordinator, Office of Policy & Management
  - Nandini Natarajan, Chief Executive Officer, Connecticut Housing Finance Authority
  - Tobias Peter, Co-Director, Housing Center, American Enterprise Institute
  - Elizabeth Vinick, Town of Canton Planning & Zoning Commissioner
- Panel 2: Market Challenges and Opportunities
  - Moderator: Mayor Luke Bronin, City of Hartford
  - Charlie Adams, Regional Vice President, Pennrose Development
  - Mike Freimuth, Executive Director, Capitol Region Development Authority
  - Mike Goman, Principal, Goman & York
  - Jim Horan, Executive Director, LISC
  - Dara Kovel, Chief Executive Officer, Beacon Communities
  - Jim Perras, Chief Executive Officer, CT Home Builders Association

Key points of discussion included:

- Land banking as a tool. In Hartford it is used to take vacant and blighted properties and return them to productive use. The program also trains small-scale, local developers.
- Local misperception about affordable housing including proposed densities that are actually similar to existing density but perceived as too dense. There was discussion about residents who attend meetings and are vocal and those who are missing from the room.
- Housing crisis is a supply issue. As recently as the 1940s, building other units besides single-family homes was common, until local zoning regulations began prohibiting them. The gap in supply is a failure of government regulation rather than a market failure and they should be broadly legalized again in more places. Removing complexity from the permitting process is necessary to reverse the trend; this is particularly helpful for the smaller-scale developers who have less capacity of dealing with more complex development/funding programs.
- Role of State government. When asked if some form of State reform would be necessary to allow something like “Light Touch density” panelists noted it can come from the State or municipal level, citing examples such as Montana, Utah, Indianapolis, and Minneapolis and others. Home prices in Hartford are likely not high enough to facilitate redevelopment along a Light Touch density model but land values in suburban communities across the Greater Hartford Region might benefit. Ultimately implementing reform requires leadership across political levels - ideally a broad coalition at the state level with allies like faith-based organizations.
- Making projects financially viable. Below market rate tools for pre-development, acquisition, and bridge funding can help. Non-profit developers also play a role; LISC routinely works with them.
- Role of rehabilitation and preservation. Pennrose created a company (Contour Partner) to focus on existing properties, with an emphasis on acquisition and preservation of affordability. Many properties need new investment and tax abatements, and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits can help.
- Private development challenges. Light Touch density is a challenge due to code requirements. Under the International Building Code, triple-deckers are considered commercial structures and subject to more stringent requirements versus the Residential code. This drives up the cost. North Carolina passed legislation to allow 3- and 4-unit structures to be considered residential, rather than commercial under the code. Septic systems can hinder development in rural areas. New York and Rhode Island have more flexible requirements allowing the installation of smaller septic systems, which can allow the construction of more units. Other septic-related cost drivers include per-bedroom flow requirements, setbacks, and reserve area requirements.
- Role of local government. The financial gap in many projects is significant, whether market-rate or affordable. Municipalities have a role in helping to close that gap. Property taxes can consume roughly 3-4 months of rent revenue per year, so towns should consider abatements to incentivize more production. Building permit fees are another significant cost that could be waived. Municipalities can create a simple and streamlined permitting process that is “swift, simple, and certain.” Towns should replace subjective concerns about “character” with objective, predictable standards. There is often a lack of understanding among residents about what

a potential development may ultimately look like. Municipalities and developers should offer tours of developments to experience real-world examples of similar projects. It is also important for developers to meet with residents prior to applying.

- Workforce housing. CHFA is attempting to incentivize rental housing for middle income renters at 60 to 120 percent of Area Median Income. Build for CT has two years of funding set aside for this initiative. While there are already programs for low to moderate income renters, there was a gap for middle income households. CHFA has had discussions with lenders and developers interested in projects beyond the concept stage. Stakeholders are interested in using these funds to build more affordability into their projects, up to 20 percent of the total units.
- Construction costs and the building code. The cost of construction in Connecticut is a challenge with average costs of about \$175 per square foot in Connecticut compared to about \$140 in North Carolina. Creating naturally affordable housing through such policies as Light Touch density can supply mid-level priced units and introduce more fluidity in the market. Panelists cited municipal zoning and building regulations as a driver of cost increases (estimated to add \$18,000 for a new house). There are workforce challenges, with construction workers being of an older age. It was also noted that the single-family market today is more complex than in prior years, with more complicated structures than Cape Cod or ranch style homes.

## B. Additional Data

	Population		Population Change 2010 to 2020	
Location	2010	2020	#	%
Rocky Hill	19,709	20,845	1,136	5.8%
Farmington	25,340	26,712	1,372	5.4%
Ellington	15,602	16,426	824	5.3%
Bloomfield	20,486	21,535	1,049	5.1%
South Windsor	25,709	26,918	1,209	4.7%
Avon	18,098	18,932	834	4.6%
Simsbury	23,511	24,517	1,006	4.3%
Vernon	29,179	30,215	1,036	3.6%
Manchester	58,241	59,713	1,472	2.5%
Wethersfield	26,668	27,298	630	2.4%
Glastonbury	34,427	35,159	732	2.1%
Berlin	19,866	20,175	309	1.6%
Windsor	29,044	29,492	448	1.5%
West Hartford	63,268	64,083	815	1.3%
East Granby	5,148	5,214	66	1.3%
New Britain	73,206	74,135	929	1.3%
Southington	43,069	43,501	432	1.0%
Windsor Locks	12,498	12,613	115	0.9%
<b>Connecticut</b>	<b>3,574,097</b>	<b>3,605,944</b>	<b>31,847</b>	<b>0.9%</b>
East Windsor	11,162	11,190	28	0.3%
<b>Region</b>	<b>973,959</b>	<b>976,248</b>	<b>2,289</b>	<b>0.2%</b>
Suffield	15,735	15,752	17	0.1%
Newington	30,562	30,536	-26	-0.1%
East Hartford	51,252	51,045	-207	-0.4%

	Population		Population Change 2010 to 2020	
Location	2010	2020	#	%
Plainville	17,716	17,525	-191	-1.1%
Coventry	12,435	12,235	-200	-1.6%
Canton	10,292	10,124	-168	-1.6%
Bolton	4,980	4,858	-122	-2.4%
Mansfield	26,543	25,892	-651	-2.5%
Hartford	124,775	121,054	-3,721	-3.0%
Tolland	15,052	14,563	-489	-3.2%
Granby	11,282	10,903	-379	-3.4%
Columbia	5,485	5,272	-213	-3.9%
Marlborough	6,404	6,133	-271	-4.2%
Andover	3,303	3,151	-152	-4.6%
Stafford	12,087	11,472	-615	-5.1%
Enfield	44,654	42,141	-2,513	-5.6%
Hebron	9,686	9,098	-588	-6.1%
Willington	6,041	5,566	-475	-7.9%
Somers	11,444	10,255	-1,189	-10.4%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census.

Table x. Capitol Region, Expiring Assisted Units				
Expires 2030 or Earlier			Expire 2031 to 2040	
	# of Units			# of Units
Hartford	2,156		Hartford	2714
New Britain	370		New Britain	783
West Hartford	225		East Hartford	439
Manchester	186		Manchester	439
Canton	171		Berlin	438
Newington	128		Wethersfield	424
Berlin	120		Vernon	387
Farmington	117		East Windsor	360
Vernon	112		Bloomfield	306
Avon	99		Farmington	214
Plainville	90		South Windsor	190
Simsbury	81		Southington	151
South Windsor	72		Avon	142
East Hartford	50		Glastonbury	111
Wethersfield	45		West Hartford	109
Glastonbury	31		Mansfield	100
Windsor Locks	21		Somers	86
Granby	12		Coventry	80
Coventry	6	Enfield	75	
Total	4,092	Granby	49	
		Canton	40	
		Suffield	40	
		Willington	32	
		Andover	24	
		Stafford	12	
		Total	7745	

Source: National Housing Preservation Database, 2023

Table x. Race/Ethnicity of Producers, 2017				
	Hartford County	Tolland County	Region Total	% of Producers in Region
White	1375	863	2238	98%
Black	8	0	8	0%
Asian	15	0	15	1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	2	2	0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	5	5	0%
More than one race	1	10	11	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1399</b>	<b>880</b>	<b>2279</b>	<b>100%</b>
Hispanic	26	7	33	1%

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture. Volume 1, Chapter 2: County Level Data. 2017.



## C. Municipal Focus Areas

The Municipal Focus Areas have been identified by local planners and include existing or potential conservation greenways, open space connections, sustainable development efforts, commercial retail or mixed use centers or corridor improvement, traditional neighborhood developments, village greens, village or neighborhood centers, historic areas, transit oriented developments, technology or business centers and brownfield or underutilized property redevelopments. These Municipal Focus Areas represent existing conservation and development efforts that are in keeping with the goals and policies of the CROG Regional Plan.

CROG will use this information along with the Regional Plan's goals and policies and site-specific information to support proposals consistent with the goals and policies identified by municipalities for these important focus areas.

### Andover

Andover focuses on improvement of the Town Center by increasing its visibility along Route 6 and fostering a sense of place in this area. In the Town Center, the Town aims at preserving historical heritage, encouraging economic development on key parcels, and ensuring appropriate residential development. According to the Andover Plan of Conservation and Development, a sense of place is crucial to future economic development efforts and helps to foster a sense of pride for the community and its residents.

A second focus area, complementary to the first, consists of the strategic preservation of Post Farm. The Plan of Conservation and Development states that the Post Farm is quintessential "Andover." Its visibility along Route 6 defines Andover as an

attractive rural community. Those areas of the farm currently zoned business are being rezoned to residential to help alleviate development pressure. The Town promotes the purchase of development rights at the State and Federal level to preserve this important piece of farmland.

### Avon

Avon completed and adopted its most recent Plan of Conservation and Development in 2016. This POCD was a significant, in-depth look at all areas of both conservation and development in Avon. While the 2016 POCD covered the entire Town, areas of focus were the Route 44 commercial area, as well as the open space and trail connections throughout Town. In addition, significant work and analysis was spent on certain overdue road improvements as well as important recreational connections in many areas of Town. One large area of focus in this plan is the 97 acres of property abutting the town office complex where the new Village Center development has begun to be constructed. The Village Center overlay zone was created in order to allow the development to be created and constructed in this central area. Importantly the plan for this area also includes the development of 300 -500 residential units in this area as well in order to create a balanced development.

Avon also continues to focus on alternative means of transportation such as biking, and pedestrian access to a wide variety of locations throughout town via existing and proposed and enhanced trails and greenways. Significant trails which have been completed since 2006 include: Found Land to Huckleberry Hill Open Space; Fisher Farm Trail; and Hazen Park to Heublein Tower. Collectively these trails represent significant connections between and through existing natural areas and parks. They too will be added to in the future as funding or development

regulations permit. Many of these areas also provide parking at one location or another along the network.

Recent completion of a portion of a long-planned road and bridge improvement to Old Farms Road has allowed the next phases of this project to be planned with more sure construction dates. The ultimate completion of the improved roads connecting Old Farms, Thompson and Scoville Roads will also provide a parallel bike and pedestrian trail in this area as well. This roadway, when completed, will provide enhanced access to a significant amount of land currently owned by the AOF school. It is likely that the eventual use of these open lands will be the subject of discussions between the owner and many open space interests in Avon.

The 2016 POCD lists 21 properties which are open space priorities. At least one of these properties has already been acquired by the Town for open space purposes. The open space priority list is monitored frequently when development projects arise.

An important land use which has gained significant attention in the past few years is that of affordable or attainable housing. Regulations have been created and adopted which allow for the development of flexible standards to be used in the creation of context sensitive residential or even mixed use developments which contain affordable and attainable housing in Avon. Thus far these regulations have allowed for the approval of over 400 units of housing which includes over 120 units of affordable housing in Avon.

Going forward, development of any type in Avon will have considerations focused on improved economic development, open space considerations, alternative transportation possibilities and sustainability to the extent possible for the

benefit of all residents in Avon. Additionally, all planning and development projects will continue to consider how to best connect all portions of the Town so that residents are able to access whatever benefit exists in any area of the Town.

## **Berlin**

Berlin's 2023 POCD is organized around six goals:

- Protect environmental resources, expand protection of open space, and conduct necessary measures to improve water quality in the Town's water bodies and courses.
- Allow for a wide selection of housing choice that enables residents to live in Berlin through various stages of life and attracts new residents to the community.
- Foster a vibrant economy that provides residents with access to goods, services, and employment opportunities while expanding and diversifying the Town's property tax base.
- Improve and expand transportation options to ensure greater connectivity within Town and to the Region; maintain and improve infrastructure in an environmentally and fiscally responsible manner.
- Provide high quality facilities and a high level of service to residents, property owners, business owners, and visitors in a fiscally responsible manner.
- Protect, promote, fund, and continue to act as a steward for Berlin's cultural resources with a special focus on the Town's historic properties and farms.

Among other uses, the Future Land Use Plan designates areas as Village Center, Mixed Use, Commercial, Corporate Office and Industrial.

The Plan prioritizes two key development areas:

Berlin Train Station / Kensington Village: This area, which has a new train station and commuter rail service, presents opportunities for transit oriented development. The POCD supports continued investment in Kensington Village along with the redevelopment of properties and the development of mixed-use commercial and residential projects. Design standards, pedestrian connections, and other public investments are recommended here.

Farmington Avenue and Berlin Turnpike: The Plan includes a strategy to focus economic development efforts on these two corridors and recommends creating corridor studies or area plans to support future growth and redevelopment.

The Plan identifies 13 “Targeted Economic Development Sites” (TED Sites), some of which are a part of the above-mentioned priority areas. Notable development since the previous POCD includes:

- TEDS 4 – Norwest corner of Deming Road and Berlin Turnpike: This area is undergoing redevelopment, with mixed use and commercial projects.
- TEDS 5 – Southwest intersection of Deming Road and Berlin Turnpike: This is also a mixed use area with mixed-income rental units and commercial uses planned.
- TEDS 6 – Northeast Utilities Area: Residential uses are currently being constructed here.
- TEDS 13 – Webster Square area: Stick Village commercial development was recently built; tenants have been added to existing shopping centers and other businesses were renovated or expanded here.

## **Bloomfield**

Bloomfield Town Center is a major area of focus in Bloomfield. Numerous new apartment buildings have been constructed in the town center area, giving a critical mass of residents, however commercial and entertainment development has not developed as quickly. There are several planning initiatives underway which would seek to revitalize the center area through zoning amendments, financial incentives, and planning studies. The Town would like to see a walkable, economically vibrant town center which is a draw for residents of Bloomfield and neighboring communities. The Town Center has also been designated as a Tax Increment Financing District, along with two other areas.

The Town of Bloomfield is also focusing on the two other TIF districts in Town, which are the Tobey Road and Granby Street areas near the Hartford border, and the Blue Hills Avenue area (State Highway 187). The Town is seeking to revitalize these two areas in different ways. Tobey Road and Granby Street are primarily aging industrial areas that need some assistance in bringing up to modern levels of development. Blue Hills Avenue is a mix of residential and commercial. While some residences and commercial businesses on Blue Hills are in excellent condition, some of the residences in the area need upkeep and modernization, and some of the businesses could use assistance with their operations. The Town is working to start two grant/loan programs, one for businesses and one for residences, which would provide assistance in this area. Additionally, the Town would like to see a revised intersection of Blue Hills Avenue and Cottage Grove Road (State Highway 218), which sees a large number of traffic accidents and significant congestion.

## **Bolton**

Bolton has placed an emphasis on developing a vision for the Route 44 Corridor which is one of its highlighted focus areas. The vision includes developing a unique character for this corridor defined by compact, pedestrian friendly, mixed residential and business districts that do not disrupt the scenic views of undeveloped open spaces, forests, parks, historic sites and working farms which are preserved as part of Bolton's heritage. The corridor will also provide for safe car travel as well as other modes of transportation such as bikes and foot travel. The vision for developing this corridor also includes modifying the I-384 interchange to encourage slower speeds and provide a gateway to town from this major route. The Town is looking at opportunities to bring public water to serve the Route 44 business district from the Manchester Town line to Route I-384 and beyond in hopes of getting it to the Coventry Town line.

The Route 6 Corridor is also a focus for the Town of Bolton. The Bolton Plan of Conservation and Development states the need to reduce accidents and improve safety on this major roadway. Along with safety improvements, the Town also wishes to encourage mixed-use development on this corridor.

The Bolton Board of Selectmen has adopted the "Bolton Center Study, Town of Bolton, Connecticut" which created a unified vision for Bolton Center focusing on its historic, municipal and recreational assets and potential linkages among key Town Center assets. Considerations included preservation of historic buildings such as the Stagecoach Tavern, conservation of open space and farmland, opening hilltop view sheds, and development of a unified signage program. The Bolton Center Plan identifies the town hall to remain in its current location, however, renovation and/or a new town hall is becoming a priority which may require

town hall to be in a different location. The Study is included in the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development.

## **Canton**

Collinsville - Collinsville is a quintessential example of an intact working New England mill village (or "a Company Town") with employment, workforce housing, retail services and transportation services laid out in close proximity. Set alongside the Farmington River, its 19th Century scale, architecture, and road network remain predominantly intact. With most of the Village being developed prior to the adoption of Zoning Regulations in 1957, a Village District (under CGS 8-2j) was created by measuring the character and pattern of development. The resultant zoning is intended to maintain and enhance the area's compact urban historic character and pattern of development. Within this area, adaptive reuse is promoted and mixed uses are permitted.

The Farmington River in Collinsville functions as a substantial natural, recreational, and economic resource for the Community. The Collinsville Axe Factory is a historic mill property that was built and run by the Collins Manufacturing Company from 1826 to 1966 on over 15 acres adjacent to the Farmington River and is the reason for the existing village. Specific zoning has been put in place over the Factory property, pre-approving it for mixed use development. This, along with the adoption of a preliminary Tax Increment Financing Master Plan for the Factory, demonstrates the Town is looking to facilitate positive redevelopment of the Factory in keeping with the character of the historic mill village. Unfortunately, the property has been in a state of decline and some of the buildings have recently been demolished for safety reasons. At the same time, the Town has completed a Phase III Environmental Investigation inclusive of a Remedial Action Plan and is looking to work with owners and potential developers

seeking to stabilize and revitalize this important historic and economic asset.

The Factory Dam built along the Farmington River has created additional recreational and economic benefits, making it a regional destination for its scenic beauty, flat water section and river access. Hydro-power generation has also been recently re-established.

Canton Village - Canton Village, inclusive of the Canton Green, is an area known for historic Greek Revival and Victorian structures. Canton Village is an important economic center of the Town. This area is currently dominated by the four lane US 202/State Route 44 Corridor, in addition to being served by State Route 565. However, Canton Village has a developed scale significantly different than the rest of the Corridor and is one of the few areas in which there is good access to utility and multi-modal infrastructure. As such, it is currently zoned as a CGS 8-2j Village District intended to facilitate infill and redevelopment with village scale characteristics balancing preservation and enhancement of this important economic center for the Town. Canton Village also includes the Farmington River Rail Trail, a state greenway, transit service, and much of the Town's shopping and affordable housing inventory.

Route 44 Corridor - The East Gateway and Hart's Corner make up two other areas of focus along the Route 44 Corridor. Both are established as two separate Village Districts, discussed below.

East Gateway - The East Gateway contains the highest volumes of motor vehicle traffic. While also zoned for mixed use, the East Gateway is currently dominated by more national franchise style development and motor vehicle dealerships. It also contains the Shops at Farmington Valley, a regional shopping center. Approximately 50 percent of the Town's non-residential tax

revenue comes from this area. Economic growth in this area is expected to offset costs of services and needs throughout the community. The area is currently being studied for a possible extension of the Farmington River Rail Trail from Canton Village into this district and connecting with other nearby communities. Enhancement of the multi-modal environment as part of the districts mixed-use future is also being pursued.

This area also contains a state defined Aquifer Protection Area and groundwater contamination associated with the Swift State Superfund site.

Hart's Corner/West Gateway - Hart's Corner Village District and West Gateway is the area of Route 44 east of East Hill Road. This area is dominated by Route 44 and includes the intersection of Route 44, US 202, and Route 179. At Hart's Corner heading west, Route 44 converts from four lanes to two. This area contains significant portions of the Farmington River that are much less developed than the Collinsville area, focusing its benefit as an important natural resource. This area also includes the confluence of the Farmington River and the Cherry Brook, a primary cold-water feeder. In the summertime this area attracts day tourists seeking recreational enjoyment from river between Hart's Corner and Satan's Kingdom. The recreational draw has increased in popularity substantially over the years, along with which comes negative effects such as litter, refuse, parking, and traffic management, among other things. Harts Corner also includes much of the Town's affordable housing inventory, more than a dozen retail and care facilities, and much of the Town's (fully built out) industrial area.

## **Columbia**

Columbia updated its Plan of Conservation and Development in 2016 and outlines the following philosophy and goals:

- Protect what Columbia residents value while the Town continues to grow.
- Encourage development that is compatible with our rural character.
- Protect natural and cultural resources for future generations.

Among a number of goals and strategies related to agriculture, natural resources, open space, housing, economic development, recreation and infrastructure, the POCD provides recommendations for these specific areas:

Columbia Lake - A key component of the plan is to protect Columbia Lake by preserving parcels and mitigating impacts from development. The POCD identifies concerns related to water quality and invasive species that may threaten the health of the lake.

Route 6 Hop River Corridor – The POCD supports business development in this corridor and supports coordination with other towns along the corridor – Bolton, Coventry, and Andover. The POCD encourages the implementation of the Route 6 Hop River Corridor Master Plan, which included site-specific and transit-oriented development recommendations.

Town Center / Route 66 – The plan recommends exploring zoning revisions to allow mixed used development in the Town Center at the Route 66/87 intersection to make existing buildings conforming and encourage additional business growth with residential uses. The plan recommends creating a master plan for the Town Hall Campus located in the Town Center, including the consideration of sidewalks and walkways and streetscape improvements.

Residential-Agriculture Development Area – Most of the Town is zoned Residential-Agriculture. The POCD anticipates future housing and agriculture development would be limited to that zone. The Town’s 2022 Affordable Housing Plan is also supportive of zoning adjustments that would broaden the housing opportunity in Columbia, particularly for young families, empty nesters, and retirees looking to remain in Town.

The POCD also encourages implementation of a master plan for the Town’s Recreation Park and working toward inter-connecting its trail system. It calls for providing safe and accessible pedestrian and bicycle pathways and the need for transit service.

## **Coventry**

Special Planning Areas for Growth and Infill - Depending on the nature of proposed development, the following areas will be subject to the application of the Commercial Development Design Guidelines.

Between 2016 and 2018, the Towns of Bolton, Coventry, Mansfield, and Tolland have been involved with the Eastern Gateways Transportation Study, which has focused on the Route 44 and Route 195 corridors between member towns. The study is exploring multi-modal transportation options and strategies to address traffic safety and traffic volume issues that have resulted from recent development at UCONN as well as future development in the respective towns.

Rte. 44/ Bolton Gateway - Commercial, Professional Office and adjacent Commercial Agricultural zones. The area presently contains several commercial/retail establishments on the south side of Route 44. Opportunities exist for new development, infill, and re-use, particularly with the potential of the new sewer service entering from the Bolton town line. There are two houses of

historic value on Cedar Swamp Extension, and there is a significant vista to the south. There is good access to route I-384. Improvements to Route 44 in Bolton, and future plans in collaboration with Bolton present new opportunities.

- Recognize that this area is the gateway to Coventry and creates a first impression of the Town.
- Consider changing zoning regulations (i.e. a floating or overlay zone) to create flexibility, mixed use development and encourage rational growth.
- Apply access management strategies to minimize curb cuts and consider shared and interconnected parking.
- The area includes a commercial/agriculture zone and uses should target the economic vitality of farms.

Rte. 44/ Bread & Milk Street - Commercial zone. The area currently contains several retail and service establishments on the north side of Route 44 and a public golf course on Bread & Milk Street. Opportunities exist for new development along the east side of Bread & Milk Street where there is a large vacant parcel that has had prior commercial interest. The Eastern Gateways Transportation Study may offer new potential for this area. There is a historic house on the northwest corner of Route 44 and Bread & Milk Street. Public sewers do not exist. A public water supply exists in the adjacent Pilgrim Hills subdivision. Cumberland Farms has built a full-service gas station and convenience store on the northeast corner replacing an antique shop whose owners have retired.

- Consider a community sewer treatment system.
- Work closely with the State DOT on planned intersection changes (primarily with
- Swamp Road) to improve traffic flow and safety.

- Minimize curb cuts particularly adjacent to the intersection.
- Utilize the commercial development design guidelines.
- Target businesses compatible with the residential neighborhood.
- The site includes a commercial/agriculture zone and uses should target the economic vitality of farms.

North Coventry Village (Route 44/Route 31/Grant Hill Road) - Commercial zone. One of the most active retail sites in Town, this area includes Meadowbrook Plaza which, in 2009, received a significant exterior upgrade. The North Coventry Fire Station and the Coventry Grammar School are adjacent to the east. Several historic homes exist on Stage Road and north of Route 44 to the west. The Walgreens and the CVS/Bank sites have further potential development adjacent to them. No sewers exist, but there are public water supply infrastructures on site. Develop an overall strategic plan for the area that includes:

- The potential for a community septic system to serve the area.
- Careful attention to traffic patterns at and near the intersection, particularly on Route 44 near the entrances to Meadowbrook Plaza.
- A rear traffic access from Route 44 to Main Street (southwest side)
- Respect the historic homes, the rural character, and the adjacent farms.
- Utilize the commercial development design guidelines.
- Target new development on the site east of Walgreens, northeast of Dunkin Donuts, across Main Street from Dunkin Donuts, the area adjacent to Meadowbrook Plaza, a site north of Route 44 west of the old Pomeroy Tavern, and a site north of Stage Road.



- Consider shared and interconnected parking where possible.
- Consider a zoning map change to restrict commercial access to Grant Hill Road.
- Respect Coventry and Olson Brooks as natural resources.
- Maintain or expand the Town green, landscaped areas adjacent to the intersection.
- The site includes a commercial/agriculture zone and uses should target the economic vitality of farms.
- Utilize the Eastern Gateways Transportation study and its recommendations that may include bikeways, bus lines and pedestrian connectivity.

Rte. 31 North (Bread & Milk Street) - Rural Development zone. The area contains small commercial and manufacturing establishments with potential to expand. The nature of the soils (high water table) present challenges to expansion. I-84 is in close proximity northward. Business, light manufacturing, technical/construction trades and service facilities are deemed suitable for this zone which is separated from neighborhoods. Several historic houses exist on the west side of the road as well as some active farms. Public water and sewer do not exist.

- Commercial development should be designed to limit their potential negative visual impact on the neighborhood.

Utilize the commercial development design guidelines.

Daly Road/Main Street - Neighborhood Commercial zone. Commercial enterprises exist on both sides of Daly Road. The parcel on the east side has a large older building suitable for redevelopment with a lake view. Sewers are available. Adequate parking exists. Development is restricted to retail and services due to the proximity to neighborhoods.

- Target businesses that can benefit from good traffic count and accessibility, sewers, and proximity to the lake.
- Consider access management changes in line with future development.
- Utilize the commercial development design guidelines.

The Towns of Andover, Bolton, Columbia, and Coventry created the Route 6 Regional Economic Development Council to guide the creation of a land use strategic plan and a transportation plan for the Route 6 corridor. The Council's work was completed when the plan preparation was concluded.

Rte. 6 Corridor - Commercial zone. This 100+ acre parcel is undeveloped. It has had interest in the past for large scale development including a holistic conference center, a residential condominium and retail outlet stores. The two challenges are: access to the parcel requires crossing the Hop River, and the topography is very challenging. The site is about two miles from I-384 and has no public water or sewer.

- Large scale, mixed-use development is the likely candidate for this site.
- Coordination with adjacent towns (Bolton, Andover, and Columbia) through land use exercises and plans by the respective land use staffs, will serve to provide guidance for future development is recommended.
- Consider specific, corridor based, zoning regulations to accommodate the envisioned multifaceted development.
- Consider alternate access via Bolton's South Road.

Route 195 - Neighborhood - Commercial zone. There is no commercial activity on this site which borders Route 195. The parcel is about ten acres and suitable for re-use, infill or new development. It is close to the Willimantic River Greenway and open space in Coventry and Tolland with walking trails.

- On-site sewer and water supply needs to be provided.
- Consider the proximity to Willington, Tolland, and Mansfield's commercial nodes.

South Coventry Village- Village zones. The area has fairly dense residential and commercial development with public water and sewers. Future development includes mill re-use, some in fill, and mixed residential/commercial uses. Strict design guidelines exist. The area is a designated historic zone and retains significant characteristics of a nineteenth century mill village. The success of the Kenyon Falls and Bidwell Village condominium project points to the fact that mill reuse can be successful in the Village and provides more of a residential base.

- Utilize the existing Village Design Guidelines.
- Consider maintaining involvement with the Connecticut Main Street Program
- Utilize the Route 31 curve realignment project with safer pedestrian and vehicular traffic to facilitate destination oriented and service businesses.
- At the Main Street/Stonehouse Road intersection, potential exists for new and infill development north of the gas station and east of Coventry Corners.
- On Mason Street potential exists for significant adaptive reuse of the old mill buildings along the Mill Brook.
- Some infill opportunities exist on Main Street particularly at the old antiques shop just south of Stonehouse Road, and a parcel across from 1159 Main Street. Studies are ongoing for potential sites for new high-density housing.
- A site on Woodland Road was approved for a small office complex which did not proceed, and the auction house building on Lake Street has potential for re-development.

- The recently rehabilitated Tracy Mill building, and Mill Brook Park offer potential for community based activities and social interaction.
- The building on Main Street south of the Paden Road intersection has potential for adaptive re-use.

Depot Road/Main Street - Neighborhood Commercial and Commercial Agricultural zones. This area, similar to the Daly Road/Main Street zone, has a few small service businesses. There are historic homes along Depot Road, and the Mill Brook and an old mill pond intersect the site. It is a short distance west of the Miller-Richardson sports field, the recycling center and the old town landfill. Infill and re-use opportunities exist for small scale commercial development consistent with the neighborhood and the well-traveled Main Street. Public sewers exist on Main Street.

- Consider small service-related businesses.
- Respect the neighborhood and the proximity to the Mill brook and wetlands.
- Consider access management issues.

Depot Road at the Willimantic River - River Aquifer zone. An old railroad station and an auto repair garage exist on the site. There are several historic houses on Depot Road. A rail bed for a spur exists.

- Consider potential long-term expansion of rail service (New London to Montreal) that may occur along the existing line, and the opportunities presented here.
- Respect the residential neighborhood and the River Aquifer Zone.
- Consider adaptive reuse of the former railroad station.
- Consider uses that benefit from the proximity to the Willimantic River and associated open space amenities.

**Route 31 South** - Rural Development zone. There is no commercial development on this site bordering both sides of Main Street. An office park was approved several years ago but was not built. Light manufacturing or service businesses are likely candidates. No public water supply or sewer exists, but it is in close proximity to the sewer treatment plant.

- Development should occur in a manner removed from proximity to Main Street with a single curb cut and respect for the local neighborhood.
- Public sewer could be considered for this site.
- Consider the proximity to the Miller-Richardson sports fields and the town recycling center and old landfill.
- Consider the proximity to the Willimantic River Greenway

### **East Granby**

East Granby's Town Center has been a primary focus area. In 2023 the Town hired a consultant to perform a Village Center Study to obtain feedback from residents and businesses owners as to what they may desire for the Village Center. The project was completed in May 2023 and the Town is moving forward with suggested Zoning changes to the area to facilitate a more walkable vibrant center. The Town is also focused on diversifying their housing stock within the Town Center and our Multifamily Development District. Development of the Route 20 Corridor will be a focus for the Town over the next few years. Development, particularly commercial development, has been stagnant and the goal to create a Downtown/Main Street Village area will not work without increased housing and commercial development. The Town is committed to looking at ways to develop these areas while keeping the small-town charm that makes East Granby a desired location.

### **East Hartford**

East Hartford's neighborhood development agenda concentrates on nine commercial nodes located along Main Street, Burnside Avenue, and Silver Lane with emphasis on infill projects and the redevelopment/reinvestment of existing properties. These commercial nodes highlight several key intersections and segments of commercial activity where use intensification, physical improvement and change is encouraged. The Town is currently in the process of updating their 10-year Plan of Conservation and Development which includes a major emphasis on the economic vitality and attractiveness of East Hartford's Main Street.

Rentschler Field and Silver Lane have been a major focus area where the Town has supported a new technology and logistics center development. Earlier this year, the Town's Planning and Zoning Commission approved development of a 300-acre property adjacent to Rentschler Field which includes two logistic centers totaling 2.7 million square feet and two technology manufacturing and office buildings totally 200,000 square feet. Construction of the logistics centers is currently underway, and once completed, the complex is expected to create 2,000 jobs. The logistic centers will complement the 40,000 capacity University of Connecticut football stadium and the existing Pratt & Whitney/United Technologies Research Center (UTRC) complex. Pratt & Whitney/UTRC is currently the Town's technology/business employment center and an area of regional economic development significance. Going forward, the East Hartford Development Department strives to improve connections from the Rentschler Field Complex to the proposed Manchester East Busway and the East Coast Greenway through targeted investment and recommendations outlined in the updated Silver Lane Revitalization and Silver Lane Redevelopment Plans. The Town has taken significant steps forward in the Redevelopment of

the Silver Lane Corridor with the Town’s recent acquisition of Silver Lane Plaza and the Town’s sale and approved construction of 350 market rate apartments at the former Showcase Cinemas Site. The Town targets future infill development and redevelopment of the Silver Lane corridor including the Silver Lane Plaza and future zoning changes in the corridor.

East Hartford’s Riverfront Corridor supports mixed-use areas located around the bridges (Founders Bridge, Bulkeley Bridge, Charter Oak Bridge, and railroad bridge) between East Hartford and Hartford. These nodes incorporate a variety of uses including residential, institutional, educational, office, and recreational/open space. The development nodes along the river could contain intensified development with the support and collaboration of the Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Capital Region Development Authority, the town and private investment. As part of the Town’s 2024 Plan of Conservation and Development update, the Town of East Hartford is undertaking a Founder’s Plaza planning and market feasibility study which focuses on transforming the existing office park into a supported mixed-use commercial center.

East Hartford has a designated Local Historic District, the Naubuc District, the preservation of which involves a great deal of participation by the community. This local district, along with the National Historic Districts in town, is an area that East Hartford would like to preserve as a link to the Town’s cultural heritage and character.

The Town will also focus on maintaining and preserving the existing single-family detached residential characteristics of the traditional neighborhood developments in the northeast and southeast areas of East Hartford. Additionally, the Town is supportive of diversifying its housing stock, by encouraging investment in accessory dwelling units, multifamily housing, and

cluster single-family or condominium units to ensure housing opportunities for all incomes and concentrating on opportunities to maintain the existing housing stock.

## **East Windsor**

Currently the Plan of Conservation and Development for East Windsor has a focus on preserving and enhancing village centers. The plan encourages adopting a village district designation or other zoning amendments to protect and enhance the historically mixed-use centers at Warehouse Point and Broad Brook.

Warehouse Point has the characteristics of a residential village with a mix of uses and cultural resources. Broad Brook features a mixed-use “Main Street” and is the center of town government. Village district regulations for both areas may address design and placement of buildings, maintenance of public views, paving materials and placement of roads along with other elements. East Windsor sees the potential to build upon the developments occurring in Windsor Locks associated with the Hartford Line by encouraging similarly appropriate developments within Warehouse Point. Near I-91, the Town has a strong focus on the redevelopment of several large parcels directly adjacent to the highway in a manner that encourages thoughtful development and leverages the proximity to the interstate, as well as to Bradley Airport. East Windsor’s Planning & Zoning Commission has taken several steps to facilitate these projects including the adoption of a Planned Commercial Development District.

Other focuses for East Windsor are existing businesses corridors and industrial areas. The western part of town is the location of the main business corridor along Route 5 and Route 140. The current town plan identifies distinct areas along the corridor and establishes a coordinated system of goals for the future zoning and design of these areas. These areas include a northern and

central business corridor, each of which will have an emphasis on developing a mix of retail, office, hospitality, and restaurants. Another of these areas is a large industrial section to the north where the plan encourages reclaiming land that may be unsuitable for industrial development and enhancing the potential of remaining developable land for future offices and research facilities. At the industrial area in the southern part of town, the focus is on encouraging rail line dependent businesses such as potential biodiesel and green technologies businesses.

Finally, East Windsor continues to focus on creating an interconnected system of open space corridors and promoting the continued support and preservation of farms and agricultural soils. Though East Windsor has some of the most fertile soil in New England, in recent years the Town has seen more than 1,000 acres converted to grid-scale solar projects, a significant portion of which has been sited on prime farmland soils. Open space corridors running along the Connecticut and Scantic Rivers would provide substantial greenways, with connections running through other open space areas and villages. East Windsor's plan recognizes that there are already several regional greenway efforts underway to connect corridors along the rivers and that support for the American Heritage River Commission should be maintained.

## **Ellington**

The Town of Ellington has identified several areas of municipal focus. To preserve the important role agricultural character plays in the Town's physical, economic, cultural, and social identity, the Town has developed a farmland preservation program for the purchase of development rights and adopted an abatement option for capital investment projects for agricultural-related businesses. Use of these tools will be primarily targeted to the Western Farm Belt.

Ellington Town Center is a focus area where infill development, adaptive re-use, and historic preservation are encouraged along with a high degree of architectural and site design control. The eastern portion of Town Center provides an opportunity for higher density, village style, mixed-use development with integrated, meaningful, and well-designed public spaces.

Route 83 is the most significant economic development area in Ellington and focus will be on developing the area as a "gateway corridor" through revitalization, mixed-use development of green fields and underutilized sites, access management, and circulation improvements. A high degree of architectural standards and site design controls will also be used here. Funding has been secured to increase walkability along Route 83 connecting the "gateway corridor" to Ellington Town Center.

Ellington Airport is a unique amenity and concentration area for potential increased general aviation activities and industrial development. Use of architectural standards, site design and potential mixed-use development are also being considered for the airport site.

The Shenipsit State Forest is a municipal open space and conservation focus area. Substantial state holdings in the Shenipsit State Forest are located here and provide an open space linkage system for trails and wildlife movement. The Eastern Panhandle and Forest Highlands provide another open space linkage for trails and wildlife.

## **Enfield**

Enfield's areas of municipal focus include the Thompsonville Village area, particularly the riverfront and neighborhoods in the area around the potential multimodal transit center that is planned at a proposed stop of the New Haven-Hartford-

Springfield Commuter Rail Line. This area is a prime candidate for traditional neighborhood design and mixed-use, transit-oriented development. The Thompsonville neighborhood is a prime candidate for redevelopment that focuses on building upon a solid historical foundation. Similarly, the Hazardville Village Center has been the subject of design overlay zoning which helps protect the unique attributes of this village area.

Our town green known as Higgins Park is located next to the town hall, in the center of Thompsonville. Recent improvements include a walking path, basketball court, playscape for children, and a new bandshell. This is the site of many events throughout the year including craft fairs, farmers markets, 4th of July celebrations and concerts. Community attendance has grown as the park expands.

Just outside Thompsonville Village is a solid regional commercial core that has developed just east of the I-91 corridor. This area takes advantage of its location to provide a wide range of retail as well as service-oriented businesses.

Enfield adopted a new Plan of Conservation and Development in 2023 with a focus on growing its economy within the challenges posed by its natural resource areas. The Metro-North industrial area along the southernmost portion of Route 5 (King Street) is an area of focus that has the potential to be an example of development that respects these challenges by providing superior design and coordination among all necessary stakeholders. In addition, as corporate needs and uses change, some of the larger industrial and commercial office parks have been identified as targeted investment areas and will be the focus of strategies for investment and implementation of adaptive reuse plans.

Finally, the Town of Enfield has designated the area along and around the Scantic River in the southeastern portion of town as a

conservation area with the potential for linked bikeways, walkways, open space, and recreational opportunities.

## **Farmington**

Farmington's areas of focus include facilitating continued economic growth, improving traffic, enhancing our pedestrian trail system, increasing outdoor recreational offerings, and implementing strategies to increase affordable housing units.

The Town of Farmington will promote continued growth while protecting its quality of life and its natural and historic resources. We encourage new development to be sustainable, environmentally friendly, and accessible to all. In the UConn Health Center neighborhood, a walkable and bikeable environment that allows higher density living with small highly efficient modern apartments is a priority, while in our town centers, promoting a compact mixed use and walkable type development is preferred. Since both Unionville and Farmington Center have a variety of art and cultural institutions, we're in the process of establishing both a Unionville and Farmington Cultural District. These Districts will strengthen the distinct character of each center, and attract new businesses, visitors, and residents to town. To further strengthen the Centers' sense of place, streetscapes are enhanced with decorative light poles, hanging plants, and banners.

Improving traffic is always a main concern in Farmington. For many years, to alleviate traffic in both Farmington and Unionville Center, the Town has studied the possibility of an additional bridge over the Farmington River. With continued growth over the past number of years, the need for a third bridge, along with the benefits that would be derived from it, has made this a priority. The bridge location is slated to be an extension of Monteith Drive over the Farmington River to New Britain Avenue. In September

2022, the Town Council accepted the CRCOG/SLR Consulting-Route 4 Connectivity Study which is the first major milestone in securing funds for the bridge. Once funding is secured, the design of the project will commence.

To improve pedestrian connectivity throughout the town, we require sidewalks for any new development or redevelopment. Enhancements such as wayfinder signage, benches, a bike rack, and an informational kiosk were added near a busy trail intersection in Unionville Center. This was done with the goal of enhancing the trail user's experience and guiding the users to amenities found in Unionville Center. To encourage more residents to use the trail system as a safe and enjoyable means of transportation, we're working on a plan to strategically connect sidewalks to the trail system as well as installing additional trail enhancements.

In 2022, with feedback from the community, we completed a renovation of the Tunxis Meade Skate Park, and we were awarded a STEAP grant to build a multigenerational recreation complex that will include a splash park and 4 pickleball courts. These additional community amenities will add popular recreational options for residents of all ages.

In 2021, Farmington updated their affordable housing plans. This plan showed that demand for the most affordable price points exceeded the current supply. The Planning and Zoning Commission is currently studying how to best address this demand. The Commission is currently engaged in work sessions to develop strategies to encourage additional affordable housing development to fill the increasing demand.

## **Glastonbury**

Glastonbury's geographical areas of municipal focus are Glastonbury Town Center and its South Glastonbury Village Center. Both areas incorporate at least one National Historic Register District and multiple National Register listed individual historic resources.

The Glastonbury Town Center aims to promote compact residential design and increased residential opportunities, including mixed-use development, pedestrian circulation improvements, streetscape improvements, revised parking standards and adaptive reuse. The focus area in South Glastonbury Center maintains a working mix of land uses within a core retail area and a variety of housing types and styles. Glastonbury's 2018 Plan of Conservation and Development calls for historic preservation and design guidelines, as well as pedestrian improvements to these areas. Glastonbury's Town-wide areas of municipal focus include transportation and circulation improvements, open space management, and the creation of affordable housing.

## **Granby**

Granby Town Center is the primary focus area for the Town of Granby. The Town Center contains the Town Green and serves as the primary gathering place for residents. It is a diverse area of commercial uses including office buildings, retail, and restaurants; public service uses including the town hall complex, high and middle schools and the post office; and residential uses including condominium developments, senior housing, and a 235-unit apartment development that is currently under construction. The Town Center also contains the Granby Historic District comprising over 85 acres and containing 35 properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. One of the few



places in town with public water and sewer service, Granby Town Center is the highest density area for commercial and residential development. Goals for Granby Town Center include enhance the streetscape with additional sidewalks, crosswalks, street and business lighting, improved landscaping, and harmonious and attractive signage; provide a greater mix of new housing units, particularly multifamily and rental units; increase the number and variety of businesses, particularly restaurants; and provide improved pedestrian access. The Town also wants to preserve the historic areas of the center while creating opportunities for increased residential and commercial growth. The development of a comprehensive, conceptual design plan can help achieve these goals and encourage future improvements in the Center.

An exceptional combination of factors makes the municipal focus area of Floydville Road a unique area planned for future growth within the Town of Granby. Floydville Road connects Route 10 in Granby with Route 189 in East Granby, and the area surrounding it touches the borders of Simsbury and East Granby. Abutting Floydville Road in Granby are properties with over 300 acres of undeveloped land, over 2,200 linear feet of frontage on Floydville Road and over 3,500 feet of frontage on Route 10 (Salmon Brook Street). A large part of the undeveloped portion of the focus area is currently used for the growing of container nursery stock. Topsoil has been excavated and removed from much of the area. Overall, soils here are a mix of course and fine sand. This area is adjacent to an 80,000 square foot retail plaza, 50,000 square feet of commercial space, 20,000 square feet of office space, a 70-unit active adult development, and a 34-unit apartment development. The area is traversed by the Farmington Valley Greenway, served by public water, public sewer and available natural gas and zoned for economic development, making it ripe for creative development. Goals for the Floydville Road area include studying the feasibility of creating a mixed-use zone that provides for creative housing opportunities, commercial development, and

recreational use together with linkages to the Farmington Valley Greenway.

Just to the north of the Floydville Road area, on the west side of Route 10, is the Neighborhood and Commercial Transition Zone (T1) area. Comprising thirteen properties and about 55 acres of land, this area has over 3,000 feet of frontage on Route 10 and has access to public water and sewers. Apart from an apartment development several years ago, since this zone was created in 2006, there has been little development in this area. Goals for this area include allowing greater opportunities for mixed use and multifamily developments and to consider regulation changes to respond to changes that have occurred within the general area and the real estate market.

## **Hartford**

Awaiting update from the City.

## **Hebron**

Hebron's Town Center is located at the confluence of its two most traveled thoroughfare; State Routes 66 and 85. Continued enhancement of the commercial, cultural, and civic activity in the districts that comprise the Town Center has been a primary focus of the Town of Hebron. The Hebron Green, a National Register Historic District, defines the character of the community and is where historic mixed-use development patterns are desired. The Main Street District along Route 66 has been the focus of infill development and investment in pedestrian-friendly interconnections. The Town's adoption of an overlay district encourages mixed-use to support community friendly commercial development and affordable housing choices at a modest scale.

Hebron's Village Square District consists of 140 acres of land located on the south side of Route 66 and east of Route 85. The large parcels that comprise this district are entirely within the Town's sewer service district and are served by public water. An ambitious but flexible Master Plan for the district projects future development including a combination of public amenities, mixed-use commercial and multifamily residential development to support active, multi-generational living.

Hebron also has an active Open Space Land Acquisition Committee and process that promotes greenway connections, prime farmland preservation, and surface and ground water protection. These planned Greenways build on an interconnected system of open space along the Raymond Brook, Jeremy River, Hope Valley Brook, Fawn Brook, Blackledge River and Judd Brook corridors.

## **Manchester**

Manchester has seven areas that focus on the development and revitalization of commercial and industrial nodes.

Over the past decade, Downtown has experienced increased vibrancy and major investments in place-based economic development. Millions of dollars in both public and private funds have been invested in the building stock and public places over that period. At the same time, the Town has been able to attract many new successful businesses, including coffee shops, a brewery and tap room, an art studio and café, and an ice cream shop. More recently, the Town secured state-level funds for a road redesign project to transform Main Street into an accessible and equitable Complete Street through coordinated public improvements, complemented by strategic private development. This work will make Main Street friendlier to users of all modes of

transportation, including, but not limited to, pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and transit riders.

The Buckland Hills focus area is an important retail destination in the Hartford Region. Flexible mixed-use zoning, an ideal regional location, the opportunity to maximize underutilized space, and expanded transit connections will ensure the long-term viability of the district.

With visibility and access from major highways I-84 and I-291, the Buckland Industrial Park focus area has great economic development presence and potential. The park was developed under a set of special deed restrictions which provide greater control over site and building design. The Town looks to provide incentives to encourage the development of vacant lots appropriately.

The Broad Street Corridor's central location, walkability, transit, and vehicular accessibility to established residential neighborhoods make this focus area a key commercial location in Manchester. Streetscape improvements and reconstruction coupled with General Business zoning will allow the area to benefit from retail, service, and health care facilities development.

The Spencer Street focus area has significant potential to exemplify suburban retrofit development. The area is currently dominated by strip mall-type development along Spencer Street where it intersects I-384, making it an important gateway into Town. There is a vast amount of existing parking lots to accommodate fast food chains like Wendy's, Starbucks, and Dunkin' Donuts, along with a ShopRite grocery store, tire shop, and discount store. With flexible General Business zoning, excellent highway access, proximity to Rentschler Field, and a connection to the proposed Manchester East Busway, this area

should provide the opportunity for adaptive reuse of current vacancies to provide an inviting mix of residential, commercial, and other uses.

The Depot Square focus area is located along a rail right-of-way that runs parallel to Hilliard Street and Woodbridge Street to the south, presenting an opportunity to connect a multitude of existing nearby parks and trails. The Cheney Rail Trail intersects this focus area, and Robertson Park can be found just north of North Main Street, which includes the existing cricket field, outdoor swimming pool, and tennis courts. There are a handful of historic industrial buildings on Hilliard, Chapel, and Woodland Streets, and Second Congregational Church sits on the corner of North and Main Streets. This part of the focus area concept seeks to bring vibrancy back to Depot Square through housing, retail, open space and recreational uses, trail connections, and maker spaces.

The Hop River Innovation Park focus area encompasses the existing Business Park on Sheldon Road, Utopia Road, and Parker Street. The Innovation Park concept imagines keeping and repurposing existing buildings and activates the open spaces adjacent to them, to encourage micromanufacturing and opportunities for local students to gain experience through co-op programs. This area of the plan capitalizes on the park's proximity to the Hop River Trail, encouraging social interaction and offering outdoor recreation opportunities.

## **Mansfield**

Mansfield's Plan of Conservation and Development strongly supports balanced economic development efforts with sensitivity to preserving the Town's unique blend of rural character and college town amenities to create an attractive location for businesses, workers, and residents. Residents of the Town desire

to maintain the low-density, rural landscape in the majority of the Town while accommodating growth in walkable mixed-use centers, compact residential, and institutional areas. To achieve this, the Town has designated both Smart Growth Areas and Rural Conservation Areas. These are clearly depicted on the Town's Future Land Use Map (Map 8.3 from the Mansfield Plan of Conservation and Development).

Smart Growth Development Areas - The Town has designated smart growth development areas where higher-density development is directed. These areas are in close proximity to existing employment and commercial centers with access to public transportation and have existing or planned water and sewer services needed to support higher-density development.

Mansfield's smart growth areas include:

- Mixed-Use Centers: Four Corners, Downtown Storrs, King Hill Road Area, and the Town's Southern Gateway (Route 195 / Route 6 vicinity)
- Institutional: UConn Campus and immediate vicinity
- Compact Residential: areas immediately north and south of the UConn Campus and in the vicinity of the Southern Gateway (Route 195 / Route 6 vicinity)

Rural Conservation Areas - Residents have expressed that the priority for the majority of land in Mansfield is to preserve its rural landscape, ensuring that new infill development is compatible within a rural historic and agricultural context. Future land use designations as shown on the Town's Future Land Use Map (Map 8.3) that are designed to achieve this goal include:

- Conservation / Recreation / Managed Resource Areas
- Flood Zone
- Rural Residential / Agricultural / Forestry

- Rural Residential Village
- Village Center
- Rural Commercial

Mansfield uses these designations as a mechanism to inform policy and land use decisions.

## **Marlborough**

Marlborough's 2020 POCD sets policies and goals to guide future development in the Town in a manner that preserves the small town character of the community through encouraging and implementing responsible smart and sustainable growth policies. The plan identifies longstanding community values:

- Small town rural character
- Environment and natural resources
- Sense of community and volunteerism
- Cultural life and recreation
- Quality education
- Economic strength

The plan calls for continued protection of vital assets such as hilltops, river and stream corridors, Lake Terramuggus, and other natural resources and calls for the development of trail systems.

Responsible economic development would utilize smart growth initiatives of clustering expansion areas around public infrastructure and existing transportation infrastructure. Key economic development focus areas include:

Town Center - Marlborough is implementing recommendations from its Village Land Use and Economic Enhancement Plan to create a vital Village Center as an area of municipal focus. New zoning districts establish greater flexibility in design within a

residential/ commercial mixed-use setting and a pedestrian friendly element.

Route 2, Exit 13 Interchange Area - A second focus area lies just north of the town center where Marlborough purchased seventy-six acres of land off Route 66 for the purpose of the development of a Business Park. A consultant team developed a draft set of zoning regulations, market analysis, and a conceptual master development plan for the area which will promote the expansion of the nonresidential tax base in the Town.

Route 2, Exit 12 Interchange Area - Marlborough is focusing on the North Main Street Exit 12 Gateway area in the vicinity of Route 2's Exit 12 for the expansion and retention of the existing commercial and industrial development and creation of new development non-residential opportunities. Zoning districts here allow for a greater flexibility in design and development within in this area of existing commercial/industrial development.

Additionally, the POCD calls for the Town to develop and implement resiliency and sustainability objectives for Town facilities and the promotion of alternative energy sources. The POCD calls for an examination of all existing Town facilities, roads, and major infrastructure, and recommends the development of a plan for the expansion and maintenance of the existing facilities and identification of land for future town facilities.

## **New Britain**

New Britain's three transit oriented development (TOD) areas are located around CTfastrak stations to facilitate development and redevelopment in close proximity to transit. The Downtown TOD area capitalizes on the existing urban, pedestrian-friendly fabric; cultural and historic assets; and complete streets infrastructure

investments. The Downtown is experiencing significant development through the replacement of underperforming properties and new construction. New developments located near the CTfastrak station help accommodate the surrounding mixed-income housing, in addition to creating a hub of food and entertainment uses. Several hundred housing units are scheduled to be constructed over the next few years contributing to significant growth in the Downtown residential population.

The East Street TOD zone was created to foster a mixed-use pedestrian-friendly corridor along East Street, connecting the Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) campus to the East Street CTfastrak station. The goal is to create a corridor for students, college employees, and neighborhood residents that is walkable both from the campus and adjacent neighborhoods to the station.

The East Main Street TOD zone was established to concentrate commercial and residential density around the East Main CTfastrak station. The City is finalizing the relocation of the Department of Public Works facility that will result in a 3 acre development site adjacent to the CTfastrak station. It will also clear the way for the realignment of the East Main Street/Newington Avenue intersection, which is a key safety improvement project in this area.

Myrtle Street is a mile-long corridor nestled between the core downtown area and Broad Street's Little Poland neighborhood. This area has a rich manufacturing history and is home to some large industrial and residential uses including Stanley Black and Decker, Rich Products Corporation, CW Resources, Avon Towers LLC, and the Mount Pleasant development owned by the New Britain Housing Authority. The City has developed a corridor master plan to help guide revitalization efforts as this area has experienced a recent increase in employment and housing

opportunities. The plan includes establishing new districts and zoning standards to facilitate growth and development, as well as implementing complete streets and streetscape enhancements.

## **Newington**

The Town of Newington has identified several opportunity areas as part of its 2020-2030 Plan of Conservation and Development. These areas present an opportunity where the community can investigate and discuss possible land use options to build on strengths, identify weaknesses, and seize opportunities.

The Newington Town Center, at the intersection of Main and Cedar Streets, is a significant historical and community-focused area where new development should respect its heritage and current functionality. Town Center East, between Newington Town Center and Cedar Mountain, has been identified as an area of opportunity adjacent to the existing Center.

Newington Junction, at the intersection of Willard Avenue and West Hill Road, has the opportunity to promote economic growth through transit-orientated development in the vicinity of the Newington Junction CTfastrak station due to the availability of the busway. The Newington Junction area has three historic districts, residential neighborhoods, and business/industrial uses.

The West Cedar Street and Cedar Street Station areas are in the vicinity of the Cedar Street CTfastrak Station, which opened in 2015. The Town Plan and Zoning Commission adopted a TOD Overlay District in 2016, which allows residential buildings and mixed-use buildings with business uses on the first floor and provides additional development opportunities for the area. The area, with its proximity to the existing rail line and to Central Connecticut State University, offers additional opportunities for Transit Orientated Development.

The Berlin Turnpike is an area of opportunity where, with the changing nature of retail, there may be opportunity for redevelopment and infill due to market considerations.

## **Plainville**

Plainville continues to focus heavily on two areas. First, revitalization of our downtown has long been a goal outlined in our Plan of Conservation and Development. That remains the same in the most recent (2019) iteration of the plan. Since 2016, we have been working with a downtown property owner to purchase and remediate a 15-acre parcel in the heart of our downtown. We are working with DECD and continue to hold bi-weekly meetings to ensure the project moves forward. Grants have been secured and a preferred developer is signed onto the project, which will move forward once hazardous building materials (Phase I) are removed from a primary structure slated for renovation and reuse as a multi-use facility including street facing retail and office with second floor residential units. The back of the building, formerly a maintenance facility for heavy highway equipment, will be repurposed as commercial condos. As of this writing (Aug. 2023), a hazardous building materials removal contract has been awarded. Phase II of the project will involve another 14,600 square feet of commercial space and 176 residential apartment units, 10 percent of which will be affordable. The Town is currently engaged with DECD for a topper grant to remediate soils to make way for Phase II Development.

In addition to Downtown revitalization, Plainville continues to work with DOT on the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail. It should be noted that we remain the single largest gap in the trail, which runs from New Haven, CT to North Hampton, MA. This is likely because our rail is still active and alternate alignments had to be considered and designed, resulting in many property impacts along the way. This greenway is seen as a quality-of-life amenity

and an economic development opportunity. The trail was broken into three phases due to its complexity. Phase I is designed and slated for Construction in 2024. Phase II is nearing design completion and construction is anticipated in 2025. The Phase III alignment was approved by the Town Council; however, the property impacts are great and a new alignment may be proposed by DOT. It is our goal to ensure that the trail runs into and through Plainville's downtown to further spur revitalization and investment in this area.

Plainville continues to concentrate on adaptive reuse of older underutilized buildings. We are actively encouraging thoughtful design through our relatively new Planned Development District zoning process.

More tangible economic development opportunities exist in what is termed the North Mountain region of Plainville. In 2013, Tomasso Brothers, Inc. developed a state-of-the-art medical office facility and the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Institute at the southern terminus of the area. This provides a strong anchor for the next phase of development that TBI refers to as the Plainville Preserve. Capable of supporting nearly two million square feet of new facilities, the area lies partially in a Bioscience zone that is being marketed on a worldwide basis. As the area around UCONN Medical Center starts to saturate, we hope that this area is the next logical step in our Region's standing as a premier medical and research zone. The area will also welcome support uses such as limited retail, restaurant, day care facilities, etc.

Finally, we continue, as does the State, to struggle with affordable housing. We encourage local developers to seek ways to effectively add more affordable housing units to our inventory and would welcome "friendly" 8-30g applications with thoughtful design and a long-term management plan. We have also

emphasized the flexibility that comes with the PDD process as a means of providing well planned affordable housing development.

## **Rocky Hill**

In Rocky Hill, the Silas Deane Highway, Route 99, is the focus of a streetscape development project. The Rocky Hill Plan of Conservation and Development states that residents feel it is important to enhance community character. The Silas Deane Highway is an area where residents feel there is the least amount of character. The Town hopes to continue the streetscape development north to the Wethersfield town line. The goal is to create a mixed use corridor with opportunities for affordable housing development while creating a sense of community and place. Housing affordability is an issue requiring a great deal of attention. Public education, as to what is affordable housing, and the need to further the Fair Housing Act is essential. The implementation of the Town's Affordable Housing Plan is a priority.

Connectivity to the Connecticut River physically; and enhancing the community's rich historical connection to the river is of importance to both Town Officials and community residents. The creation of means of access to the riverfront through sidewalk development, trails and bikeways will enhance the ties to the Town's history. Park creation and park improvement in the vicinity of the river will help draw both residents and non-residents alike to this valuable resource. The privately-owned land of the former Foundry along the riverbank still sits vacant. While the buildings have been razed the property remains undeveloped, yet approvals were given for a mixed use development and a Town Park.

Strategic planning for the Community's future is a must and needs to include a well thought out public participation process. Capital improvement planning must include an inventory of assets,

facilities, programs, etc., and a priority request survey distributed to all represented departments. The CIP must be tied to the Community's Comprehensive Plan with an appropriate Planning review prior to Legislative action.

## **Simsbury**

The Town of Simsbury has identified the special areas designated in its most recent Plan of Conservation and Development as municipal focus areas for the CRCOG Regional Plan. The first, Simsbury Center, is the historic, cultural, and economic hub of Simsbury. Encouraging village scale infill development between Hopmeadow Street and Iron Horse Boulevard is a priority for the community. The Town considers West Street where it connects with Hopmeadow Street to be an important edge of Simsbury Center with considerable redevelopment and mixed-use potential.

Weatogue Center is another focus area as it has the potential to grow and to become better defined. The Town's plan states that a neighborhood planning process would be appropriate for this area.

The Town views West Simsbury as a small, well-defined hamlet, in which growth is limited due to Simsbury Land Trust acquisitions. Infill here should be consistent with existing form.

Tariffville is Simsbury's best-defined historic village center. The Town recognizes that a comprehensive planning process in this portion of Town will best guide and enable its future growth. A neighborhood planning process is expected to begin in 2024.

The Northern Gateway at Historic Hoskins Crossing is an area of focus with over 100 acres of existing available undeveloped land.



Here, the Town anticipates land use changes with pressure to accommodate a mix of residential and commercial uses.

The northernmost area of focus for the Town of Simsbury is the Tri-Town Airport property. The preservation of this airport is a top priority because its expansion could foster industrial development and become an even greater asset to the Town.

In the Powder Forest area, the Town encourages industrial/office/non-residential development consistent with its 2023-2023 Plan of Conservation and Development.

The Southwest Corner of town is Simsbury's sole existing major retail center. The Town focuses on concentrating highest impact retail uses in this area.

Finally, the Town's Southern Gateway is a focus area where the plan is to expand and reinforce office uses and consider a mix of residential and non-residential uses at the former Hartford Insurance location.

## **Somers**

Somers Center and Somersville are the two areas of municipal focus in the Town of Somers. A reorganization of the Town of Somers regulations included creating Village Business Districts, encouraging housing in and near the villages, mixed-uses in business districts, providing multigenerational housing opportunities, and fostering walkability through sidewalk/crosswalk improvements. Somers limits commercial sprawl throughout the Town, so that commercial activity may be focused in the villages, adding to their vitality and helping to restore their importance in daily life. The Somersville Manufacturing Mill complex, a valuable part of the historic village, was found to be suited for a number of adaptive reuse strategies including

fostering the local tourism economy or as an incubator for small businesses. An unoccupied portion was destroyed by fire and the property acquired by the Town. Part of the land abutting land trust help properties, with frontage on the Scantic river, is preserved as open space, with the rest planned for future development. With most of the remediation and cleanup of the mill site, and the creation of a Planned Development District, the Town has laid the groundwork for future development of the site, for mixed use and/or affordable housing.

The Town of Somers Trails and Open Space Committee continues to improve several properties for passive use, including the recent addition of Camp Aya Po, a former YWCA camp, providing over 145 additional acres of conserved land, which includes recreation opportunities among its hiking trails and pond on.

## **South Windsor**

South Windsor has identified several focus areas. The Town is proud of its preservation efforts along its Historic Main Street and sees this area as an amenity and an area to focus more of its preservation efforts. The Town's only Historic District is found in the old Main Street area. Historic homes line the thoroughfare dating back to the mid-1700s. This portion of the Town was the home/staging area of the Bissell Ferry, one of the few means to cross the Connecticut River which operated from the mid 1600s until 1917. Additionally, scattered throughout other areas of the Town, are many other historic houses and structures. The Town enacted a demolition delay ordinance several years ago to review proposed demolition of older structures, both inside and outside of the district prior to their removal. This ordinance has resulted in the opportunity for older structures to be documented and in one instance an older home was ultimately bought and preserved rather than demolished.

The Town has also adopted a vision plan within its current Plan of Conservation and Development for a traditional town center area in the southeastern part of town at the intersection of Buckland and Oakland Streets. The Town developed zoning regulations to encourage the growth of the “South Windsor Center” district, to include mixed-use commercial/residential development with an emphasis on creating a more pedestrian friendly environment.

South Windsor has several corridor zones or overlay zones where performance standards require enhanced design standards for structures, and landscaping, as well as more stringent zoning requirements for setbacks, buffers, green space, and outdoor storage. Two specific areas identified include the Buckland Road Gateway as well as the I-291 Corridor in the vicinity of Ellington and Chapel Roads. South Windsor used an economic development grant to provide infrastructure improvements to the I-291/RT 5 interchange. This made the adjacent properties more attractive for development and the Town permitted three large distribution centers in this corridor area and another large climate controlled self-storage facility approved and soon to be construction.

South Windsor experienced accelerated growth in the 1980s and 90s in the residential sector that expanded the traditional neighborhood developments that had been established through the 50s and 60s. Residential subdivisions replaced established farmland on a large scale in short period of time. Several residential zones were established that accommodated the markets at the time for both modest and upscale house construction. More recently, higher density residential development has created new housing opportunities within the Town. These developments have been focused along our more developed corridors with greater access to services.

In efforts to balance our growth with preservation, South Windsor has made commitment to preserving open space through several methods. Through referendum, the Town has passed several bonds dedicated to the purchase of open space. Open space requirements for subdivision applications are extensive. Acquisition of properties that provide linkages to current or potential greenways is a high priority. Currently three trail systems have been constructed along major riparian corridors totaling approximately six miles. In addition, the Town has adopted a “Purchase of Development Rights” program. The primary goal is to acquire the development rights of existing farmland – particularly along the Connecticut River corridor.

Lastly, South Windsor has been working with a developer on redeveloping a brownfield site that has been designated as contaminated by industrial pollution. Mitigation plans are being developed which would allow the facility to be rehabilitated and once again viable as a commercial property.

### **Southington**

Southington is currently focused on the orderly development of its West Street Corridor- a considerable commercially zoned segment that runs north to south from the Bristol town line. Current zoning supports larger development that allows for the consolidation of parcels as an incentive to build mixed-use developments. Another focus area is the downtown/main street section that has former factory sites that are ripe for redevelopment and mixed-use infill. The Town has been successful in approving such uses here and seeks to continue the trend. Southington’s Plantsville section of town is in the midst of a renaissance inclusive of streetscape and building upgrades, again, we hope to continue this trend here.

## Stafford

The 2022 Plan of Conservation and Development has changed focus from previous plans to concentrating economic development plans on retaining and growing existing businesses. It is supportive of promoting businesses that complement existing ones such as the racetrack, the Palace Theatre, agriculture, and the campgrounds that make Stafford a destination town. This may include racing car businesses, agricultural businesses, arts and entertainment and the addition of a hotel.

The Main Street area of Stafford has continued to evolve beautifully with a new green space park next to the Haymarket common. The Arts on Main Street program along with a Blues Festival have proven to be successful in attracting visitors from other towns to enjoy the vibe and atmosphere. Currently, the Connecticut DOT is modernizing the roundabout at the East end of Main Street and sidewalk bump-outs are to be provided to enhance pedestrian safety. Adequate parking continues to be an issue for Main Street businesses. Plans include promoting, rehabbing, and reusing underutilized and blighted commercial structures; creating bicycle and walking paths that encourage the pedestrian use of the area and promote access to Hyde Park and the Middle River; promote pop-up uses and events in the parks on Main Street; creating a comprehensive signage plan indicating parking areas and sites of interest; expand the Central Business Zone up Furnace Avenue and restrict commercial uses in this zone to light retail, restaurants, art / antiques. The Town continues to promote renovating, rehabilitating, and reusing underutilized and blighted commercial structures. Stafford is fortunate to have an active Garden Club which maintains plantings throughout the Main Street area and beyond through private donations and Town funding.

Public water availability has been extended from the borough area of Stafford westward to Johnson Memorial Hospital and connected to the system extended easterly from Somers. The proposed expansion of the sanitary sewer and natural gas has not occurred. The Town faces capacity restrictions at the treatment facilities which may affect future industrial developments.

The Highway Business zone, located on both sides of Route 190 from the Borough line to Cooper Lane, has seen new businesses constructed including a veterinary hospital, Tractor Supply Store, Rehabilitative Clinic, and smaller retail stores. This area remains our main retail / commercial corridor with pad sites and raw land available for development. The availability of public water and sewers in this area is a major factor. Expansion of this zone has been proposed down Cooper Lane to Hopyard Road and down West Street to the Speedway. Additionally, existing buildings are being repurposed and renovated within this zone. Sidewalks are required for all new developments to aid in pedestrian safety and the Town is working to entice the CT DOT and abutters to landscape the State right of way and islands within it.

Like most of New England, Stafford's industrial past was anchored in manufacturing and river mills which fostered major industrial activities since the 1850s and early 1900s. Stafford was established as one of the largest industrial communities for cotton and wool, machinery, metal products, and others. Once most of these industries closed in the following years, they left behind abandoned and underutilized properties and the Town experienced significant economic hardship. Heeding recommendations from the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development and in deliberation with State agencies and Town Boards and Commissions, Stafford formally began the pursuit of Brownfields funding in 2018. The Town of Stafford received a \$300,000 FY19 EPA Brownfields Community-Wide Assessment Grant, which allowed the Town to develop a prioritized inventory of

brownfield properties, establish a brownfield steering committee, prioritize needs and sites, conduct community engagement activities, and identify and quantify contaminants that exist within specific brownfield sites. Through work completed under this Assessment funding, remediation and redevelopment of the Earl M Witt School was identified as top priority. In 2022, the Town received a \$650,000 FY19 EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant (with a cost-share of \$130,000) and is currently facilitating the grant. The goal of the project funded by this cooperative agreement is to complete remedial activities and facilitate the properties' redevelopment as a mixed-use, mixed-income property to encourage housing, recreation, and entrepreneurial opportunities. To continue revitalization projects and Brownfields initiatives, the Town continues to pursue additional state, local, and federal funding opportunities, and is actively soliciting private investment and prospective developers.

Stafford has over 10,000 acres of open space, comprising nearly 29 percent of the Town. This open space is preserved through the State Forest program, Norcross, Northern CT Land Trust, Forest Legacy program and Town owned property. Open Space requirements for subdivisions have also been increased from 10 percent to 20 percent. Efforts are currently focused on greenways, connectivity, and public access. Following the pandemic there has been a noticeable increase in public activity on available lands.

## **Suffield**

The Town Center remains an area of municipal focus in Suffield. This area is home to the largest concentration of commercial businesses in Suffield but is also in a mixed use zone allowing for residential and commercial uses on one property. With all utilities available, this area has great potential for increased density of development. Goals for the Town Center include increased

pedestrian connections, the construction of multi-use trails and sidewalks, redevelopment of the Fyler Place parcel, and implementing a façade improvement program.

A second area of municipal focus is the Route 75 Corridor, home to Suffield's light industrial zone. This corridor offers the highest potential for economic development in the Town. Public water and sewers were extended in the corridor in 2016 and efforts to extend these utilities further should be explored to make the area more conducive to development. The area is in close proximity to Bradley International Airport.

The Industrial Area in the Town's southeast is home to Suffield's only industrial zone which allows uses typically considered heavy industry businesses. This area continues to be a focus of economic development in terms of upgrading roads and marketing vacant land.

The 2022 Plan of Conservation & Development recognizes the desire to promote Open Space Corridors that connect blocks of prime and important farmland soils, wetlands, watercourses, and forested areas. The goal of creating these corridors is to protect wildlife habitat, provide recreational opportunities, and keep farmland available for future generations. Where possible, creation of these corridors should be accomplished through open space and farmland preservation grant opportunities as well as conservation focused development patterns.

## **Tolland**

Tolland Green is an important preservation focus area. Tolland Green is on the National Historic Register and to preserve the historic and architectural integrity of the Green, the Town guides physical improvements. Following reconstruction of the Green associated with roadway projects on Route 195 in 2019, the

community recently moved its Farmers Market back onto the Green and is working to enhance ADA-accessibility on the Green to further activate the space in its historic capacity as a gathering place for the community.

The Tolland Gateway/Tolland Village Area municipal focus area aims to preserve the character near the historic district while planning for more intense development in the gateway area near I-84. In 2021, Tolland worked to revise its Zoning Regulations to further entice developers to build in that key area and has recently granted approval for a 240 unit multifamily development which is currently under construction. With successful completion of that development, the Town hopes to see further commercial demand in the Gateway Design District.

The Town continues to focus on the Route 195 corridor as a key location for economic development, as the corridor is home to several large parcels that are served by water and sewer. The Town had initially envisioned this area as a future Technology Campus but has not seen additional development to that effect and is currently exploring options to further expand development opportunities along that corridor.

## **Vernon**

The Town of Vernon hosts the Talcottville & Rockville National Historic District, which continues to be an area of municipal focus. Rockville is home to numerous cultural institutions that include the Rockville Public Library, the New England Civil War Museum, and the New England Motorcycle Museum. Rockville also hosts the Superior Court and Hospital within Tolland County. We have several successful historic preservation and adaptive reuse projects in both historic districts that include the Old Talcott

Mill, Roosevelt Mills (now Loom City Lofts), and the renovation of Citizens Block, which will become the new home of several town hall departments in the future. The area offers a diversity of land uses that include retail, services, office, government, residential, and cultural uses. One of the goals of this area is to continue to focus on redevelopment that is consistent with Rockville's Historic Development patterns and complementing the architectural character of the districts. The Town is currently working on utilizing a Community Connectivity Grant to improve pedestrian connectivity, mobility, and safety in the Rockville Center area.

Vernon is proud of the natural resources it boasts in town along the Hockanum River, Tankerhoosen River and Railroad Brook. 22 percent of the town is protected open space. The Town hosts the Vernon Rails to Trails, the Hockanum River Trail, and the Hop River State Park trail. The Town is also utilizing the Community Connectivity Grant to work on potential connections between the Rails to Trails system and the Tolland Town line. The Town continues to improve and implement a stormwater and watershed management plan, while enhancing the trail systems.

The Town has created planned development zones for the Gerber Farm area and the Exit 66 & 67 development area to encourage retail, office, hotel, and multifamily residences while continuing to protect natural resources. This is a great opportunity for commercial and industrial expansion. The Town has also identified sewer expansion in these areas to support the future growth of the area.

Along Route 30, the Town has identified that a focus should be on supporting economic development while optimizing traffic flow, enhancing pedestrian, bicycle and transit connections that allow for improved safety in this area. This area includes fostering

mixed-use uses such as new residential developments like Trail Run to support the growing population and workforce.

## **West Hartford**

Awaiting from town.

## **Wethersfield**

Old Wethersfield is the historic center of town. The current Plan of Conservation and Development seeks to create a tourism plan and promote the historic village concept in Old Wethersfield which also includes maintenance and preservation of the historic Town Green and improvements to Main Street. In 2005, the Town completed the Historic Wethersfield Master Plan.

The Town views the 1860 Reservoir and surrounding open space in the southwest portion of town as an important natural resource and states in its Plan of Conservation and Development that this area should be maintained in its natural state and for passive recreational use. Another area that represents an important natural resource is Wethersfield Cove. The Town wishes to work toward better pedestrian access between Cove Park and the Connecticut River and toward updating the 1970 Master Plan for the Cove, which is also an historic area in town.

Wethersfield has been involved in a lengthy process to study and create a plan for the Silas Deane Highway Corridor where the focus has been on amending zoning regulations to promote mixed-use development and implement roadway, streetscape, pedestrian, transit, signage, and architectural improvements. The Silas Deane Corridor has also been an area where brownfield redevelopment has played a part in strategic economic development.

Another area of focus in Wethersfield is the Berlin Turnpike Corridor. This is an area where brownfield redevelopment will play a part in strategic economic development.

The Town formed a Redevelopment Agency for the purpose of facilitating the reuse of a number of underutilized properties through town. The former Northeast Utilities property on Cumberland Avenue is one of the areas of focus that has significant potential for redevelopment.

Another municipal focus area is the centrally located, 100-plus acre, Millwoods Park. This park provides the Town with both passive and organized recreation opportunities. The Town has prepared a detailed Master Plan that they are intending to implement over the next few years to preserve and enhance this critical resource.

As of October 2023, the Town expects to initiate an update of the POCD and create an Affordable Housing Plan, soon.

## **Willington**

Willington is a community that seeks to preserve its rural identity and protect its natural, historic, and agricultural resources. At the same time, the community recognizes the need to balance the conservation of these resources with residential and commercial development to meet the needs of residents and promote long-term fiscal stability. To achieve this vision and enhance the quality of life in the community, Willington continuously strives to preserve and protect the environment, create new social, educational, recreational, agricultural, economic, and housing opportunities, balance conservation and development; and encourage civic involvement and interaction at the local and regional level.

## **Windsor Locks**

The Town of Windsor Locks envisions transit-oriented development along the Main Street Historic Downtown area including: 1) improvement or preservation of a historic rail station and other historic sites; 2) creating a vibrant walkable mixed-use community; and 3) fostering both resident and regional activity. This section of Main Street will be serviced by the proposed New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Commuter Rail Line.

A second municipal focus area is along the southern portion of Ella Grasso Turnpike, a major Windsor Locks thoroughfare. In this area, the Town is encouraging improvements identified in the Bradley Area Transportation Study including better access, traffic calming, sidewalks, and aesthetics. In addition to working with the State of Connecticut, the Town is working with applicants through the subdivision and site plan process to implement these goals. The Town is problem solving and working with developers to implement an imaginative and promising mixed-use development on a parcel east of Route 75 and north of Route 20 where access to the approximately 13-acre property has been a concern.

Another municipal focus area is a 76-acre parcel on Old County Road that abuts Route 20. It's a convenient, high visibility parcel. Incoming inquiries tend to be industrial in nature which aligns with current market demand and regional uses as well as the airport, however there are residential properties abutting this parcel, as well as 200 acres of land directly to the north which includes "Water Works Brook Preservation Area." This is an incredible natural resource that the Town purchased and permanently preserved through an agreement with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the Connecticut Water Company. This is one of the Town's few, large, developable parcels. Growth, in a way that provides benefit to the Town and minimal negative impacts, is key.

This has been a challenge and requires creative and thoughtful planning.

The Town of Windsor Locks also identifies 255 Main Street as a key redevelopment area. It is located directly adjacent to where the new train platform is being constructed. It is possible, due to previous lumber yard and drycleaning uses that this property may need remediation as part of a successful mixed-use redevelopment in the near future as part of the downtown's transformation.

## **Windsor**

Windsor Center, the commercial, cultural, and social center of Windsor, has seen many successful planning efforts to protect and enhance character. Windsor hopes to continue its success in fostering transit-oriented development in conjunction with the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Commuter Rail Line, utilizing brownfield and other potential redevelopment sites.

The Windsor Town Green is the central focus of Windsor Center and the site of numerous cultural events throughout the year. The Green has been significantly enlarged and enhanced over the years to achieve its present size and many of the structures surrounding the Green are historic and included in a National Register Historic District.

The Windsor Historic District, located north of Windsor Center on CT Route 159, is the site of the first English Settlement in Connecticut. The Windsor Historic District contains a village green of its own, known as the Palisado Green, and is the main focus of historic preservation efforts here through various existing and proposed recognition, regulatory, and incentive programs.



Wilson is a distinct village in the southern end of Windsor and is a priority focus area for community/ neighborhood development. Wilson requires the potential for future commercial and industrial activity to be scaled back in many areas to protect its primary function as a residential neighborhood. Also central to the stabilization and enhancement of Wilson is traffic calming, a new village park, streetscape improvements, redevelopment of key parcels, and housing rehabilitation.

Poquonock is not the village center that it once was due to the loss of historic mills and a devastating tornado in 1979, but it retains a strong sense of identity among its residents. The focus of activity in Poquonock is to provide neighborhood commercial uses; retain and enhance the village character through a village district as well as pedestrian and streetscape improvements; and discourage speeding through-traffic by reinforcing the gateways into the village.

The Day Hill Corporate Area is comprised of approximately 2,500 acres of industrial and commercial zoned land stretching 3.5 miles from I-91 west to the Bloomfield town line and from Day Hill Road south to Bloomfield Avenue. To date, roughly 1,400 of these acres have been developed with over 7.4 million square feet of industrial and commercial floor area. Combined with additional commercial and industrial land in adjacent Bloomfield, the Day Hill Corporate Area is a major economic engine for the Region. With the potential for roughly four million additional square feet of corporate/industrial development, the Day Hill Corporate Area is the focus of numerous initiatives to reduce peak-hour traffic including: improved transit service tying back to the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Commuter Rail Line in Windsor Center; pedestrian enhancements; workforce housing located in mixed-use, transit-oriented and traditional neighborhood developments utilizing both green- and brownfield sites; and traffic demand management programs with area employers. As the main gateway

into the corporate area, planned improvements to I-91 Exit 38 are critical to the continued success of the area.

Located in both Windsor and East Granby, and taking advantage of proximity to both Bradley International Airport and CT Route 20, the New England Tradeport is a secondary, yet critical component of Windsor's economic base. The area houses over 2.7 million square feet of office/flex, light manufacturing, and warehouse space designed to be compatible with the nearby airport.

The Connecticut and Farmington Rivers are an integral part of Windsor's heritage and continue to be significant natural and scenic assets to the community. As such, they are the focus of Windsor's open space/greenway program, with identified greenways and trails planned or constructed along their banks, including the Connecticut River Trail in conjunction with Riverfront Recapture and the Windsor Center Trail on the Farmington River.