LITCHFIELD
PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Town of Litchfield, Connecticut

Adopted by the Litchfield Planning and Zoning Commission on June 4, 2007, Revised January 1, 2010

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Introduction

The Plan of Conservation and Development's primary purpose is to guide the work of the Planning and Zoning Commission in tailoring its zoning regulations to the needs of the town. The Plan of Conservation and Development is also an advisory document that provides a rational framework to review all local policies and regulations, and to recommend necessary revisions. State statutes require that the Plan be reviewed and amended every ten years.

Our last plan, The Vision Plan, was adopted in 1994, so this plan is late. The extra time it took is due in part to the fact that we chose to create a "home grown" plan, without hiring outside consultants. Much of the work was done by local volunteers.

It was initiated by Katherine Davis and Vicki Claman, members of the Planning and Zoning Commission, with guidance and encouragement from Jim Gibbons, the UConn Cooperative Extension Educator who gives workshops and classes on planning to towns all over the state. Maps were created with ArcView on computers. Tremendous effort was spent on creating a base parcel map with volunteers, Katherine Davis, David Thomas and Mark Brown, saving the town tens of thousands of dollars, and enabling us to keep maps updated easily in the future. Work groups, comprised of people familiar with different aspects of the town, wrote each of the chapters, which were then reviewed and compiled by Tom McGowan, our Town Planner. The draft has been read and reviewed by Jim Gibbons, Rick Lynn of the Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials, and members of commissions, groups and private citizens, many of whose valuable feedback is incorporated in the final draft. Final maps were drawn up by Shane Kramer of the Northwest Conservation District.

This plan is consistent with the "Regional Growth Policy Map" adopted by the LHCEO and the "Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut, 2005-2010" and consistent with the six growth management principles contained in the State Plan.

Growth Management Principles:

1. Redevelop and Revitalize Regional Centers and Areas with Existing or Currently Planned Physical Infrastructure
2. Expand Housing Opportunities and Design Choices To Accommodate a Variety of Household Types and Needs
3. Concentrate Development Around Transportation Nodes and Along Major Transportation Corridors to Support the Viability of Transportation Options
4. Conserve and Restore the Natural Environment, Cultural and Historical Resources, and Traditional Rural Lands
5. Protect and Ensure the Integrity of Environmental Assets Critical to Public Health and Safety
6. Promote Integrated Planning Across All Levels of Government to Address Issues on a Statewide, Regional and Local Basis

The process of researching and inventorying the needs of the town offers an opportunity for the many commissions and groups who are involved in shaping the town's future to communicate their points of view. To have all this work compiled in one document gives all of us the opportunity to better understand our town's regulations, land, and resources as well as its citizens' goals and needs.

1. HOUSING

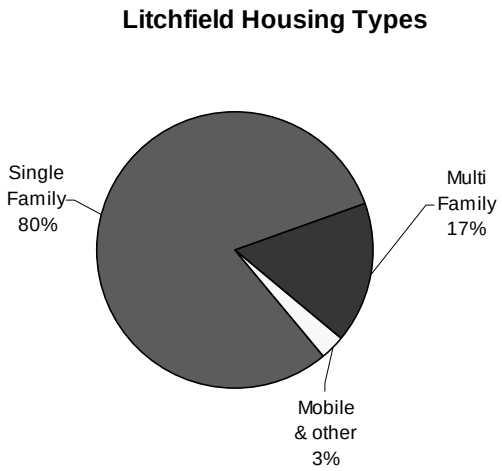
Litchfield traditionally has had a diverse mix of housing, income groups, and workers who live in the town as well as outside of the town. However, several factors threaten this historic diversity that has been an important factor in shaping the town's character and one of its greatest strengths.

- Affordable and moderately-priced housing is in short supply relative to demand. This especially affects young and elderly people with lower incomes.
- Litchfield's attractions—beautiful environment, good schools and relatively reasonable taxes—draw new residents seeking larger lots, larger homes, and retirement homes.
- The rise in Litchfield's housing prices diminishes the pool of emergency service volunteers.

Litchfield's housing mix is a good balance of single and multi family units.

Single/Multi Family Units: 2000[1]

	number	% total
Single family	2922	80%
Multi family	606	17%
Mobile home/other	101	3%
Total	3629	

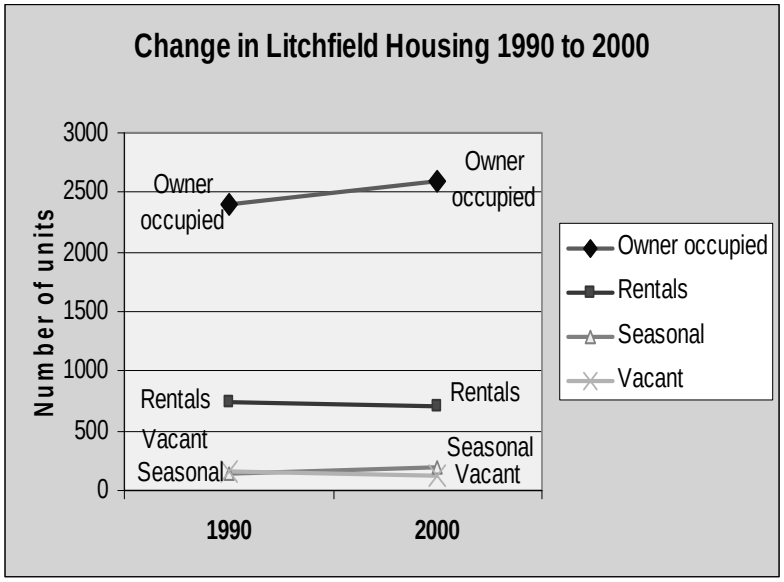


Ownership/Rentals Change 1990-2000: [2]

	1990	% total	2000	%total	% change
Owner occupied	2401	70%	2598	70%	+8%
Rentals	739	22%	712	20%	-4%
Seasonal	133	4%	201	6%	+51%
Vacant	157	5%	118	3%	-24%
Total	3430		3629		+5.8%

We have seen an increase in owner-occupied and weekend and summer homes, while both the number and percentage of rental units has declined.

[1] Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials



Other types of specialized housing in Litchfield:

Multi-family housing

Multifamily housing is appropriate for affordable housing. Our regulations for multifamily housing are decades old and need to be updated. The last parcel zoned for multifamily housing has been given a permit. No undeveloped sites for this use exist on our zoning map.

Active adult housing

Active adult housing is currently allowed in industrial zones. One project, at Indian Knolls just outside of the Borough of Bantam, is currently under construction. Active adult housing does not add children in the school system.

Rental housing

Our current duplex regulations are inconsistent with and much less restrictive than our accessory apartment regulations. In duplexes, both units can be rentals, while units with accessory apartments must be owner-occupied.

Lifecare facilities

The zoning regulations allow lifecare facilities. The current nursing facilities are filled to capacity, and there appears to be a need for such a use. The regulations are for a “floating zone,” so there is no separate lifecare facility designation on our zoning map.

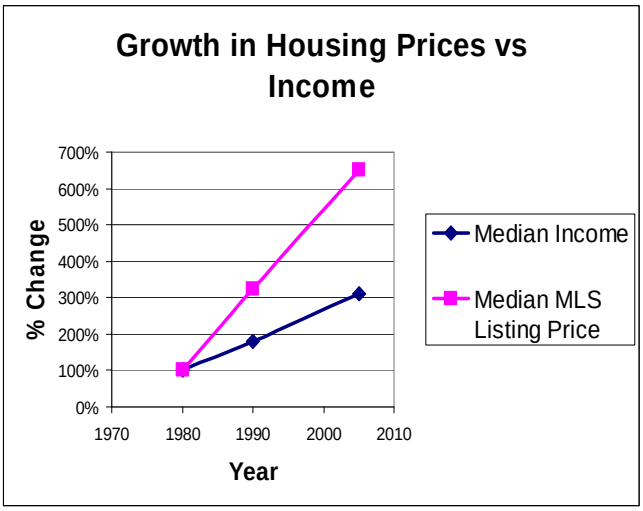
Congregate Housing

Forman School, the Junior Republic, Touchstones, McAuliffe Manor, and Sarah Pierce all provide group residences. All operate as special exception educational uses except Sarah Piece, which has a permit as a nursing home, and McAuliffe Manor which was a preexisting non conforming jail at the time zoning was adopted.

Affordability of Litchfield's housing is declining

ISSUE: Our housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable:

- Both the percentage of rental units and the vacancy rate are dropping. Housing appropriate for young people starting out is becoming increasingly scarce.
- The town depends on its volunteers for fire and ambulance service, and needs to have housing that is affordable for them.
- People who grew up here and would like to stay in town can't afford to do so.
- Litchfield's economic diversity is being compromised by the current trends in housing prices.
- The cost of land in Litchfield limits the Litchfield Housing Trust's ability to create housing for those with incomes under $30,000 income without subsidies.



Both the loss of rental units and the rising cost of housing is cause for concern. Our property values have outpaced those of the region. Since 1987, median sales prices of Litchfield's housing have risen by more than nine percent, while Torrington's have declined almost 22 percent.[2] However, the town's average income has not kept pace.

As a result, people who have grown up here often purchase a house in Torrington they can afford while keeping social and family ties to Litchfield. The loss of these young families weakens our community in the long run.

Until the 1980's, Litchfield had been a community affordable to a diverse income population and had a good representation of individuals and families of all age ranges. This is no longer the case

Since the 1980's, a family with a median income has not been able to afford the median-priced house in Litchfield.

- Recent HUD data shows that Litchfield's median household income for a family of four is $67,700.
- MLS records as of June 25, 2003 show the median single family home available for sale in the Town of Litchfield for the period is approximately $555,000.

Today even a *minimum*-priced house is not affordable to a median-income family, much less to families with incomes at or below 80 percent of the median Litchfield household income. Using standard mortgage qualification rules there are *no* single-family homes for sale for that income bracket. As a result, half the families now living in Litchfield could not afford to buy a house in town in today's market.

[2] Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials

Some slowdown in housing prices in the future may make housing again available to families with a median income, but there is almost no likelihood of housing becoming available for families with incomes below 80 percent of median. These families have been shut out of the Litchfield housing market.

Inventory of affordable housing in Litchfield

Litchfield is fortunate, however, to have a number of projects that address the need for affordable housing. The State of Connecticut annually reports on the number of housing units in each community that have received financial assistance under any governmental program. Communities that have more than ten percent of their housing units classified as "assisted" are exempt from Section 8-30g of the Connecticut State Statutes. This statute gives special rights to developers who are planning affordable housing construction.

The report for 2003 shows Litchfield has 192 assisted-housing units out of a total of 3,629 housing units. The resulting ratio of 5.29 percent is similar to Watertown's at 5.45 percent and significantly higher than any other community in the county except Torrington, which exceeds the ten percent exemption level.

LITCHFIELD'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Bantam Village—48 Units of Elderly Housing for Independent Living

- Bantam Village is a private for-profit venture with partial funding from the Department of Agriculture's Rural Economic and Community Development Administration (formerly Farmers' Home Administration).
- Residents must be at least 62 years old or disabled. Their incomes must not exceed the Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition of low income. Rent is calculated to not exceed 30% of residents' adjusted gross income.
- Bantam Village is administered locally with a part-time manager.
- Bantam Village recently has completed a major upgrade including elevators and a generator. Funding was provided by a Small Cities Grant to the Town of Litchfield for this specific activity. Bantam Village maintains waiting list that is currently is considered short. No immediate expansions or enhancements are planned.

Litchfield Housing Authority—66 Units of Elderly Housing for Independent Living

- The Litchfield Housing Authority, an agency authorized by state statute, is responsible for Wells Run with 30 units and Bantam Falls with 36 units. Bantam Falls, the newer of the two projects, has some facilities to provide "assisted living" should that more intense level of support be required.
- The State of Connecticut provided the funding for both facilities.
- The eligibility requirements are largely the same as those for Bantam Village, as noted above. Both facilities have waiting lists. Although it is difficult to predict waiting times, the Wells Run wait is estimated at about one year while Bantam Falls wait is longer than two years. Long-term plans call for converting smaller efficiency units at Wells Run into larger one-bedroom units.
- The Litchfield Housing Authority has subcontracted day-to-day operations to a real estate management company.

Litchfield Housing Trust, Inc.—41 Units of Permanently Affordable Housing

- The Litchfield Housing Trust, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Its membership is open to all Litchfield residents who elect the Board of Directors. All directors are Litchfield residents.
- The mission of the Litchfield Housing Trust is to provide an opportunity for families at or below 80 percent of the median income to afford to live in Litchfield and its boroughs. The trust provides qualified families with rental or ownership programs using contributions, grants, and state and federal governmental funds. To date, the trust has developed 41 housing units.

- Thirty-nine units are owner occupied under arrangements that assure that when the owner sells the house most of any appreciation is passed on to the new owner as a price reduction, keeping the property permanently affordable. Two units are permanently affordable rental apartments.
- The addition of homes to the Litchfield Housing Trust's program currently is limited by the availability of funding and reasonably priced land. The trust completed one new home in 2005 and has five additional units in the planning stage.

Other—37 Units

- The balance of 37 units classified by the State as assisted most probably are individual houses funded by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority.[3]

Goal: Increase the amount of affordable housing to 10% in a way that will help our volunteers obtain and keep housing.

P&Z should:

- Revise zoning and subdivision requirements for affordable housing to allow building housing for families of moderate income in areas without public water and sewer.
- Review and revise the regulations for accessory apartments and duplexes in order to increase the number of affordable living units.
- Investigate and adopt mixed use zoning regulations that will encourage home-based businesses and affordable housing.

The selectmen and Finance Board should:

- Support housing grant applications for state and federal funds.
- Revise assessment methods so that affordable housing is appraised at a value no greater than the price at which the housing can be sold.

Our population is changing

ISSUE: Increasing housing costs are changing our demographics and squeezing out the young families who are our pool of potential emergency service volunteers.

Rising housing prices exacerbate some of the divisions in our town.

- With the trend in housing prices going steadily upward, the newcomers tend to be wealthier. Many of them are older in age, which increases the town's average age.
- The growing number of seasonal residents increases the need for some services—fire, ambulance, road maintenance—without enlarging the pool of citizen volunteers.
- The taxes on houses continue to rise; residents on fixed incomes are feeling a financial pinch.
- Fewer potential emergency services volunteers can afford to live in Litchfield.

Goal: Support and encourage stability in our population.

Strategies:

The selectmen and Finance Board should:

[3] Sources: Bantam Village, Ms. Linda Bongiolotti
Litchfield Housing Authority, Mr. Don Hill, Corsini-Hill Management Co; Mr. Robert Miller
Litchfield Housing Trust, Mr. F. Robert Petricone

- Consider adopting tax abatement or postponement programs for citizens on fixed incomes who can not afford the taxes on their homes

Goal: Maintain a mix of housing in different price ranges.

P&Z should:

- Review and update the regulations for active adult and lifecare facilities, and seek appropriate sites for them on our zoning map.
- Update the multifamily housing regulations and locate appropriate sites on our zoning map.
- Consider adopting regulations requiring multifamily housing projects to include a modest number of affordable units

Home-based businesses are changing

ISSUE: Home businesses are growing. Assessor's data shows more than 900 home-based businesses in town. They are beneficial in that they:

- Reduce overall community traffic. Allowing our residents to work from their homes matches a trend toward telecommuting.
- Home businesses foster small business in our local economy.
- Keep our volunteers in town, available for emergencies.
- Sustain families by providing income.
- Add to the vitality of neighborhoods because more people are home during the day.
- Increase stability in the community.

Goal: Support and encourage the establishment and maintenance of home-based businesses in town.

Strategies:

P&Z should:

- Consider updating home occupation regulations to allow one for each adult family member, while preserving the residential character of neighborhoods.
- Investigate and adopt mixed use zoning regulations, which will encourage home-based businesses and affordable housing.

Litchfield is threatened with sprawl

ISSUE: The current zoning regulations encourage single family housing subdivisions along road frontage. This tends to erode the open spaces, viewscapes, and rural character of the town.

Goal: Prevent the loss in rural character resulting from new housing sited along the length of scenic roads.

STRATEGIES

P&Z should:

- Adopt conservation subdivision regulations to save open space and scenic roads.
- Consider increasing setback requirements along scenic roads
- Focus reserved open space in new projects in greenbelts along scenic roads

2. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Volunteer Fire and Ambulance Services

Litchfield is currently served by four volunteer fire companies, located in Bantam, the center of Litchfield, Northfield and East Litchfield. Litchfield Volunteer Ambulance Corps owns two vehicles that are garaged in the center of town. A review of our facilities done in 1997[4] found that the facilities and their location were adequate for the demands placed on them.

There are more than 175 volunteers associated with the four volunteer fire departments and about 40 volunteers in the Litchfield Volunteer Ambulance Corps.

ISSUES:

1. The number of emergency service volunteers is not keeping up with the growing demands for these critical volunteer services in Litchfield. At the same time the average age of emergency volunteers is increasing. The volunteer fire departments need a combined total of four to five new recruits per year. Factoring in the projected number of retirements, this could increase in the not too distant future to ten new recruits per year. If these trends continue, Litchfield will need to fund, at least in part, a paid emergency service staff.

2. Recruiting new emergency volunteers is becoming more difficult because:

- There are fewer jobs locally. Accordingly, there is a smaller pool of volunteers, especially during day shift hours. The closing of PT Aerospace dealt a severe blow to the pool of available volunteers. Not only did Aerospace have many employees, but the firm also allowed employees to respond to emergency service calls while at work.
- The volunteer services require much more time for training and qualification than in the past. In many households both parents work, and they do not have sufficient time to devote to the increased demands of volunteer emergency service training.
- The majority of emergency volunteers are drawn from moderate-income families. A major issue that emerged from discussions with emergency service leaders is that the absence of housing in the moderate-income price range has greatly reduced the available pool of potential volunteers. (Note: Currently, Litchfield median family income is $67,600 per year.)

GOAL: To insure that there are enough qualified volunteer emergency service personnel to meet appropriate response times for both fire and other emergency services.

STRATEGIES:

The selectmen and the community as a whole should:

- Provide greater local support for creation of additional moderate cost housing by supporting the housing creation programs of the Litchfield Housing Trust and other private and non-profit affordable and moderate cost housing developments.

The selectmen and finance board should:

- Sustain and consider improving the pension program for emergency volunteers.

[4] Eckman Associates, PO Box 718, LaPlata,.MD 20646, (301)934-4874, Emergency Services Feasibility Study and Vision Plan, Town of Litchfield CT April 10,1997

- Consider a tax abatement program (perhaps as an option for a pension), which, after a minimum period of years of service, would provide limited property tax abatement to emergency service volunteers.

The Selectmen should:

- Establish a town newsletter, monthly newspaper column or other avenues through which the town can recognize the valuable contributions made to the town by its emergency service volunteers and encourage new recruits.
- Continue to monitor and report on the status of maintaining the requisite number of emergency service volunteers for both fire and ambulance. This information needs to be brought to the public's attention periodically, both to encourage additional volunteers to serve and to keep taxpayers aware of the growing likelihood that a much higher portion of emergency services expenses may need to be funded by local taxes.

The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Modify zoning regulations to permit broader opportunity for home-based businesses and mixed-use zones that would allow more workers to live and work in Litchfield and increase the affordability of housing.
- Modify zoning regulations to permit broader opportunities for "caretaker" apartments and "add-on" apartments."

Goal: To increase fire safety in town

STRATEGIES:
The Emergency Services Commission should:
Complete the 911 numbering system.

The Town should:
Amend its driveway ordinance to require all long driveways to have pull-offs, which allow vehicles to pass each other, and a water supply

Town Offices

Town offices currently are in two places located three miles apart: Town Hall in Litchfield center and the Bantam Town Hall Annex in Bantam. Most town offices and staff have a regular need to share information to do their jobs. Unfortunately, the several town offices with the greatest need to interact are in different locations. Not only is this arrangement inefficient, it is also inconvenient for the citizen seeking local services.

Currently considerable space in both the Town Hall and Annex is devoted to storage of files. The town is in the process of committing much of this information to computer storage. This will free up space for offices and other productive uses.

ISSUES:
All town offices relate to one another daily in many ways. except for the Resident Trooper, Litchfield Police, the Probate Court in Town Hall, and the Park and Recreation Department in Bantam Annex.

It has long been recognized that it is inefficient to house offices for Planning and Zoning, Inland Wetlands and Board of Appeals outside of the Town Hall. Examples of this inefficient arrangement are:

1. The Building Official and Land Use Offices are located in Bantam, yet they regularly need access to the Assessor's records and to the office of the Town Clerk in the Town Hall.
2. The Fire Marshal, located at the Bantam Annex, needs access to the Assessor's office and would benefit in a location closer to the volunteer emergency services networks in Litchfield as well as Bantam.
3. The First Selectman, who must communicate with all town offices and staff, must travel or send department heads between these facilities to maintain necessary contact.
4. The town social worker, located in Bantam, needs access to town records and the First Selectman's office in Litchfield.

The existing Town Hall in Litchfield center is too small to provide for the space needs of these interacting departments. This is especially true for the land use departments, which need both offices and public meeting space.

Currently the State is considering consolidating area Probate Courts. However, even if the local Probate Court vacated its space in the Town Hall, this would not provide sufficient space to permit consolidation of the interacting departments.

The relocation of the court facilities from the former Bantam School building might present an opportunity for office consolidation, but the relocation may not be completed for eight to ten years. The problems posed by the split town halls should not await this relocation.

Internet access between town offices is clearly a great aid in communication. However, there simply is no substitute for personal interaction among staff from different departments and the opportunity for convenient meetings between department heads on matters of common interest.

GOAL: To improve the convenience, delivery and efficient operation of local services by consolidating in one location the town offices and departments that interact on a regular basis.

STRATEGIES:
The selectmen should:

- Take the lead in initiating a plan for building an addition onto the Litchfield Town Hall so that services can be consolidated. (A study and preliminary plans for a Town Hall addition are available.)
- Develop a plan to consolidate town offices at the Town Hall in Litchfield center.
- Continue to use the Bantam school gymnasium and other space at the former Bantam school building for Park and Recreation services.

Social Services

Litchfield provides a part-time social worker (currently 20 hours a week). The social worker coordinates the Chore Service, which provides low cost home helpers, and locates and manages delivery of services to citizens in crisis, including vulnerable working poor families and low-

income elderly and disabled persons.

More than five percent of Litchfield's residents have incomes at or below the federal poverty level, according to the 2000 census (about $10,000 for a single person, $15,600 for a family of three). A much larger group consists of low-wage earners who work full time, but whose income is insufficient to provide for all the needs of their families. Such families have few financial resources, and a crisis such as a job loss or illness can be catastrophic. Threatened eviction, termination of essential services, and disruption of children's school progress are among the problems these families can face if immediate help is not available.

There is a wide and ever changing variety of services and assistance programs available in Litchfield. Some are governmental and managed through Torrington or Waterbury. Some are offered by foundations, or private or charitable organizations. Some are offered on a state- or county-wide basis while others are purely local. Most have their own criteria and requirements for accessing their services. Often one program alone cannot meet all the needs of a family or senior in crisis, and a variety of services need to be blended.

Only a local social worker with up-to-date information about the available assistance programs and the differing requirements and procedures necessary to obtain these services can help sort out what is needed by a particular person or family, and manage the delivery of a variety of services in a timely fashion.

ISSUE:
With cutbacks in governmental services and financial supports because of budget deficits in the foreseeable future, it is increasingly important to have both a source of knowledge about a variety of local and charitable services and resources and the expertise to match them to client needs.

GOAL: To employ a town social worker with sufficient time tokeep updated on available services, respond immediately to client and referral source calls, and be available to clients at the times they require, including evening as well as daytime hours.

STRATEGIES:
The selectmen should:

- Examine all options to meet the increased needs for social services at times of predictable peak demand, e.g., in the fall when complicated applications are made for winter fuel assistance.
- Ensure that social services are available during a variety of hours, including evening hours, to meet client needs.
- Consider increasing social services to meet local needs in the future, as governmental supports shrink and a local blend of assistance becomes even more vital.

Libraries

There are two libraries in Litchfield, the Gilbert Library, on Main Street in Northfield, and the Oliver Wolcott Library, on South Street in Litchfield. The Gilbert Library receives almost all of its funding from the town. The Oliver Wolcott Library serves as the town's principal public

library. It offers patrons the ability to borrow books, tapes, CDs and videos, as well as to access Internet information, all without charge. It is attractive, beautifully maintained, and widely recognized as a major town asset.

The community's use of the Oliver Wolcott library is constantly growing. Within the short space of a year, from 2004 to 2005, the annual attendance jumped from 42,531 to 59,637, a 40 percent increase. Over the past four years, annual attendance increased by 108 percent. The popularity of audio books and music is demonstrated by a circulation increase of 17 percent during the 2006. Overall circulation increased by 12 percent during 2005 and 32 percent over the 2001-2005.

The programs and services the library provides expand to meet varied community needs. The library serves the needs of all ages by offering baby bags to new parents and preschool literacy programs, enhancing the sixth grade curriculum, responding with expert reference services to inquiries from people at every educational level, and providing audiovisual materials as well as programs designed especially for older adults. Monthly art exhibits, book discussion groups, cultural programs and special events enhance the cultural life of the town. Computer classes have been introduced and the varieties of children's programs have been expanded.

The library needs to keep up to date with rapidly changing computer technology and Internet access. On average, 250 patrons a month use the computers at no cost to either the patron or the library. The library's website is accessed by more than 1,000 patrons a month. The library also serves as the town's free wireless (WiFi) computer access point. Growing public computer use at the library has resulted in a need for furniture that can accommodate computer work stations. However, budgetary constraints have precluded any purchase.

The use of the library by elementary school children, high school students, working families with young children, working adults and senior citizens necessitates a variety of hours, including evenings and weekends. However to stay within its budget, the library has had to reduce weekend hours and is unable to expand its hours to meet the growing demand for service.

- ISSUE: Limited funding reduces the Oliver Wolcott Library's ability to serve a growing community.

GOAL: To maintain and enhance the ability of the Oliver Wolcott Library to meet the increasing needs of the community, maintain the excellence of its staff, maintain the quality and volume of its collection, maintain up-to-date computer and Internet access, and provide library hours commensurate with the requirements of its patrons.

STRATEGIES:
The selectmen should:

- Increase the proportion of town funding of the library's budget.

The town's Board of Finance through the Capital Committee should:

- Consider the library's need for improvement of space and furnishings to update its services.

Parks and Recreation

The Town of Litchfield, through its Parks and Recreation Department maintains:

Community Field with a track, three baseball fields, a playscape, two tennis courts, a basketball court, a youth hoop for children, a shed and a pavilion.
Town Hall Skating Rink with benches and fire pit.
Offices and Recreation Room (commonly known as Bantam Gym) located at 80 Doyle Road in Bantam.
Town Beach with ramp and docks on Bantam Lake.
Northfield ball field, **pavilion and basketball court** in Northfield.

Future Recreational Needs

Litchfield Parks and Recreation Department envisions long term needs for more playing fields for baseball, football, softball, soccer, rugby, etc. as well asl protecting our valuable environmental assets critical to public health and safety.

Indoor recreational needs include an athletic field house with multi-purpose courts, locker rooms, and office space for Park and Recreation.
A regional indoor pool is needed for use by all schools and citizens of the area.
All of these future parks or facilities will be easily accessed by the public by town, state or federally maintained roadways.

Goal: To provide adequate public recreation facilities for the town

STRATEGY:
The Park and Recreation Commission should

- Work with both private funding sources and the capital projects committee of the board of finance to provide funding for future facilities
- Locate appropriate areas where such facilities could be built, while preserving our natural environment, cultural and historic resources and traditional rural lands.
- Seek support and feedback from the town, region and state about recreational needs and the benefits of providing those facilities.

Other Public Recreation

The Town of Litchfield, through its Public Works department, maintains the fields around Litchfield High School while working along with the Board of Education.

The Plumb Hill Playing Fields Inc. maintains a 400 meter, 8-lane, all-weather running track, and soccer, field hockey, and softball fields on Plumb Hill at town expense.

The Litchfield Soccer Club maintains the two soccer fields located along Route 63 South of town.

The Bantam Civic Association maintains the Bantam Community Field and Pavilion.

White Memorial Foundation and Conservation Center is a not for profit wildlife sanctuary which offers 4000 acres of fields, water, woodlands, campgrounds, boating facilities, 35 miles of

wooded trails for running, hiking, cross-country skiing or horseback riding as well as a museum located on Whitehall Road in Litchfield. It attracts users from all over the region.

The Forman School, located along Norfolk Road, offers their facilities through the Litchfield Parks and Recreation office for various programs, when the facilities are not being used by Forman School athletic teams, clubs or activities.

Sandy Beach

This beach, on Litchfield/Morris line on White Memorial Property on Bantam Lake is maintained by the Sandy Beach Commission, which includes citizens of Litchfield and Morris, and is funded jointly by the two towns. It is an important resource for the Town's citizens for summer recreation and swimming instruction.

The Village Greens

The Litchfield Town Green is maintained by the Borough of Litchfield.
The Northfield Green is owned by the Congregational church, and maintained by members of the Northfield Village Improvement Society.
The Milton Green is owned and maintained by the Milton Congregational Church.

These parks are an important focus for activities and the image of each of the villages.

3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The share of total tax revenue paid by commercial properties in Litchfield has decreased in recent years, while the tax burden on resident property owners has increased. The town should explore ways to ease the taxes paid by residents by encouraging and promoting commercial growth while preserving the qualities of village and rural life so valued by all.

Tax Revenue from Commercial and Industrial Uses

ISSUE: The percentage of property tax received from commercial and industrial enterprises in commercial and industrial zones needs to be increased to relieve the tax burden on residential property taxpayers.

The property tax burden on residential property is continuing to expand while the percentage of total tax revenue paid by commercially taxable properties is decreasing. Increasing revenue from commercial enterprises requires either adding new commercial zones or permitting additional opportunities for commercial expansion in the existing commercial zones. Prior Litchfield town plans have favored containing our commercial zones within the existing commercial zone boundary lines and protecting against "strip" commercial development.

This policy should be continued. Accordingly, the zoning regulations need to be examined and revised to permit expansion of commercial uses where this can be accomplished in a manner that protects water quality, retains Litchfield's commercial design standards, and does not create excessive additional traffic.

GOAL: To increase development opportunities (and sources of tax revenue) in the existing commercial and industrial zones without changing the rural nature of the community.

STRATEGIES:
The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Examine parking, green space, building height and floor area limit requirements in commercial zones to identify opportunities to revise these or other commercial zone standards to permit expansion of commercial floor area on commercially zoned properties, provided such revisions continue to protect water quality, retain Litchfield's commercial design standards and protect against excessive traffic generation.
- Meet annually with the Economic Development Commission, to review the town's program of economic development and to consider opportunities and obstacles to improving the town's tax base in a manner that is consistent with the goals of the Town Plan.
- Modify industrial zone requirements to permit retail sales of goods produced on the premises, as an accessory use, subject to limitations defined in the zoning regulations. It is recommended that some maximum floor area or not more than 10 percent of the floor area of a building be used for retail sales purposes.
- Continue to permit and encourage apartment use on upper floors in commercial zones.
- Establish a more specific list of uses allowed in an industrial zone under the zoning regulation general use categories, such as "Manufacturing/Processing or Assembly of Goods." A more detailed list of uses will provide more specific guidance to both the Planning and Zoning Commission and prospective applicants.

- Allow some uses now permitted only in industrial zones in the commercial zones, where appropriate. For example, a light assembly use (such as for craftsmen), and similar uses now allowed only in an industrial zone, should be allowed in either a commercial zone or an industrial zone. This will broaden use opportunities in commercial zones without compromising the purpose of these zones.

The Economic Development Commission should:
Encourage and support the types of uses that are consistent with the rural, historic and artistic assets of the Town of Litchfield such as recommended in the Historic and Cultural Preservation section of the Town Plan.

The industrial zone on old Route 8

ISSUE: This area is constrained from growth by the lack of public water and sewer service.

Goal: To provide water and sewer service to allow growth in this area without creating a negative impact on the Naugatuck River.
STRATEGY: The Economic Development Commission in cooperation with the Litchfield selectmen and the City of Torrington should Seek a grant from the State of Connecticut to upgrade this area.

Toll Gate Hill

ISSUES:
Persistence of nonconforming uses
Preexisting nonconforming uses on properties on Toll Gate Hill form a commercial area which has persisted for decades. The intent of the regulations, that such uses should be allowed to expire and the area be returned to the residential use for which it is zoned, has not been fulfilled.
Traffic
The traffic moves quickly on this section of road, and there are numerous, wide curb cuts which make entry and departure from the properties hazardous.
Changing the zone to commercial would invite new larger businesses, add more traffic and exacerbate the problem.
Preexisting nonconforming uses may expand up to 25 percent of their size at the adoption of zoning regulations in 1970.
Appearance
This stretch of Route 202 is one of our “Gateway Highways,” and an attractive rural appearance is important.
Loss of opportunity
Expansion of businesses is limited both by the regulations on preexisting nonconforming uses and by limited sewer and public water service in this area.
Infrastructure
There is no public water service to the Toll Gate Hill area. Sewer service from Torrington ends here.

GOALS:

To resolve safety and traffic issues.

To assure an attractive gateway to the town

STRATEGY: The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Employ the recommendation of the Treescape Plan and the Rt 202 Corridor Management study to address these concerns and provide guidance to businesses seeking to expand within the permitted limit.

490 Properties

ISSUE: The state requires that towns give a tax reduction to properties which are being actively farmed or managed as forestland, but the tax break Litchfield gives for Open Space is optional. The purpose of this tax reduction is to ease pressure on landowners who might otherwise feel forced to sell their land to developers. There are some properties that receive this tax reduction whose excess land cannot be developed, either because the acreage is too small, it is physically unsuitable or it doesn't meet the subdivision regulation requirements. In these cases, the tax break does nothing to preserve the land from development.

GOAL: To collect the appropriate level of taxes on land which cannot be developed
STRATEGY: The Planning and Zoning Commission should review the policies stated in the Zoning Regulations concerning the definition of land that qualifies as Open Space under P.A. 490.

Farming and other land-based businesses.

ISSUE: Farm and farm-related uses, including horticulture and silviculture uses, are consistent with Litchfield's rural character. These types of uses should be expanded and promoted as valued part of Litchfield's future economic base.

Farming has long been an important part of Litchfield's economy and historic rural character. Dairy farming, once the dominant farm use in Litchfield, has been declining since the 1970's. Fortunately, several dairy farms remain, and new farm uses are developing. Farm and farm-related uses, including horticulture and silviculture and the businesses that supply their needs, are consistent with Litchfield's rural character. These types of uses should be protected and allowed to expand as a valued part of Litchfield's future economic base.

GOAL: To promote farming, land-based businesses and related activities in order to both strengthen the local economy and retain its rural character.
STRATEGIES:
The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Revise the Planning and Zoning Regulations to allow profitable use of undeveloped land for land-based businesses and related uses in environmentally responsible ways.

The Economic Development Commission should:

- Promote Litchfield as an important center of businesses and activities based on the town's wealth of natural resources and broad range of facilities suited for agriculture, farming, farm stands, gardening, outdoor recreation, animal raising and breeding, nurseries, and similar uses.
- Work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service and Northwest Conservation District to accomplish this.

New enterprises

ISSUE: Litchfield would benefit from having more areas available for new enterprises that bring high taxable income with a corresponding low municipal cost.

Prior Litchfield town plans have recommended that Litchfield focus on attracting uses that generate high taxes and require low municipal expenses. This continues to be a sensible policy. This goal should be advanced by identifying these uses and sites that accommodate their needs.

GOAL: To identify appropriate areas for enterprises such as life-care facilities, technology centers, corporate offices, business incubator facilities, professional offices, and similar establishments and ensure that the planning and zoning regulations allow such uses.

STRATEGIES:
The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Identify the site needs for the various uses in this category and appropriate areas for such uses in Litchfield.
- Amend the Plan of Conservation and Development and the Zoning regulations to allow such uses.
- Work cooperatively with the Economic Development Commission and Litchfield Area Business Association toward this goal.

Non-profit organizations

Payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT)
ISSUE: Litchfield has numerous non-profit, tax-exempt organizations, some of which own large properties, that use town services but pay no taxes to the town. Only a few of Litchfield's non-profit organizations donate a fee in lieu of taxes to the town or permit town use of their facilities.

GOAL: To increase the amount of PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) contributions and tipping fees made to the Town of Litchfield by the tax-exempt organizations in town.

Tipping Fees:
ISSUE: Non profits do not contribute to the tipping fees the town pays for trash removal. Many of them generate a lot of trash, so assessing a fee reflecting this use would help town finances.

STRATEGIES:
The Selectmen should:

- Ask the municipal service providers in town to estimate the total cost of services provided to the tax-exempt organizations.
- Send a letter to the tax-exempt organizations describing the cost of services provided to their property, informing them of what their taxes would be if they were not tax exempt, and asking for contributions.
- Assess and collect tipping fees from organizations that do not pay property taxes.

4. TRANSPORTATION

Litchfield's 56.8-square-mile land area makes it by far the largest town in the Litchfield Hills. The mileage of our town's extensive road system is second in the County only to Torrington's. Traffic volume is increasing steadily, especially on the main state roads and in the center of Litchfield. The management of the town's road system is a critical factor in future growth and development. Improved public transportation would provide a service needed by many residents. The creation of recreational trails would greatly increase Litchfield's popularity as a recreational destination.

The subcommittee addressed three areas: local roads and state highways, a recreational trail system, and mass transit.

Local Roads and State Highways

Threat of future state road widening

ISSUE: Litchfield has a total of 149 miles of roads: 119 miles of locally maintained roadway and 30 miles of state-maintained highways. Of the 119 miles of local road, 96 are paved roadway and 23 are gravel (dirt) roads.

Due to Litchfield's extensive road mileage, the care and maintenance of town highways is the largest part of the Litchfield selectmen's budget. The town's widespread road system is also a critical factor influencing the growth and development of Litchfield and an important part of the Town Plan.

The volume of traffic on Litchfield's main state highways continues to grow steadily. This is a great concern to its citizens. The constantly growing traffic volume, especially on Route 202 through the town center, threatens both vehicular and pedestrian safety and mars the town's rural quality.

Traffic in the town center area has grown steadily since 1980. On Route 202 between the Litchfield green and the Constitution Way/Milton Road intersection, the average daily vehicle traffic flow increased from 12,000 in 1980 to more than 16,300 in 1998. According to the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the average daily vehicle miles of travel in the Litchfield Hills region will increase by nearly 30 percent between 2000 and 2020.

The Regional Transportation Plan projects a high rate of growth in vehicle trips in Litchfield through 2020, similar to Torrington's, and much higher than other communities in the region. It projects that Route 202 will be near its capacity, resulting in higher levels of traffic delay and congestion.

The greatest traffic volume buildup will be on the Route 202 commercial zone at Harris Plains and from Constitution Way to the town green. As traffic volumes approach capacity, traffic accidents will inevitably become more frequent, and state traffic engineers will begin to examine alternatives, including widening roads to expand traffic carrying capacity.

Goal: Institute a concerted action program to improve the safety of travel in the Route 202 highway corridor, both to improve travel and pedestrian safety and to forestall the need to widen and expand Route 202 through Litchfield.

STRATEGIES:

The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Review relevant documents[5] published by the Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials (LHCEO) and update them with a focus on Route 202 improvements.
- In conjunction with the town engineer, propose improvements to Route 202 in a supplement to the Litchfield Town Plan and submit it to the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) plan;
- Have ConnDOT make improvements in a timely manner to avoid a major widening of the Rt. 202 roadway.

Goal: To implement the Route 202 Corridor Management Plan recommendations

STRATEGIES:

The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Adopt zoning regulations to manage future driveway access designs to Route 202.

The town should work with DOT to:

- Widen road shoulders between Wamogo Road and North Shore Road to provide bypass capacity.
- Re-design the intersection of Brush Hill Road.
- Provide turning lanes on Constitution Way and Milton Road at intersection of Route 202.
- Implement a package of improvements in the vicinity of the Litchfield Green (as described in the Corridor Plan) to enhance safety and mobility without disturbing the existing area of the Green.

The town should:

- Create a one-way out-only "interconnect" access road from Village Green shopping area to Constitution Way.

Parking in Litchfield Center

ISSUE:

The need for additional public parking in the center area, long a concern of business owners, has been addressed with completion of the expanded and improved public parking area south of West Street. However at peak periods there is still a demand for additional parking.

Goal: To increase parking in Litchfield center

STRATEGY:

The selecment should

[5] *Three documents published by the LHCEO identify the improvements needed to Route 202 between Bantam Borough and Litchfield Green:*

- *Bulletin #22 – Route 202 Corridor Management Study Recommendations, 9/01;*
- *Bulletin #24 – Litchfield Hills Regional Transportation Plan, 10/01; and*
- *Route 202 Access Management Study Recommendations.*

Collectively, these documents are excellent blueprints for future planning and should be used as a guide to improvements to the local road and highway system by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Town.

take advantage of any opportunity to increase parking in the center where it will fit in terms of scale and the historic character of the center.

"Strip" commercial development

ISSUE: Litchfield's plan for commercial development on Route 202 has been designed to avoid "strip" commercial development by providing commercially zoned land on deep lots, especially near the town center. This policy concentrates commercial traffic, especially in the area between the Litchfield Borough boundary and Constitution Way/Milton Road. The safety of traffic flow in this segment of Route 202 has been improved with the addition of a traffic light at the North Lake Street intersection. The modest road bump-out, driveway intersection alignment, and new traffic light at the CVS/Litchfield Bancorp and Litchfield Commons were a major improvement.

Planning for and completing "back alley interconnections" between deep lot shopping lots on Route 202 will help alleviate traffic congestion on Route 202 and the need for highway road widening. The Planning and Zoning Commission has for years supported implementation of a plan to create a "back alley" interconnection between the shopping areas on Route 202 from Litchfield Village and Stop and Shop. This plan was designed to permit traffic to move safely between stores and shops without reentering Route 202. Interconnections have been completed to link the Village Green, Litchfield Commons and Stop and Shop. Recently a right of way was reserved to permit the completion of this interconnect as a one-way out-exit to Constitution Way from Stop and Shop. As traffic volumes continue to build on Route 202 it will be important to have the option to complete this interconnect Constitution Way. It will greatly reduce the number of dangerous left hand turning movements from the Stop and Shop exit driveway to 202. The Route 202 Corridor Management Plan proposes similar "interconnects" between other adjacent commercial uses on Route 202 for the same reasons.

The Route 202 Corridor Management Plan proposes additional traffic and modest road improvement on Route 202, designed to improve traffic flow and avoid a major road widening. The Route 202 Corridor Management Plan recommends additional zoning regulation amendments designed to improve traffic flow and safety. A highway overlay zone would help permit the implementation of these recommendations.

Both the Route 202 Corridor and Access Management Studies involved extensive public participation. Future transportation plans should follow this model.

Goal: To avoid "strip" commercial development
STRATEGIES:
Planning and Zoning should .

- Continue to support traffic control improvements on Route 202 and maintain the Route 202 "deep lot" commercial development policy to permit commercial expansion while avoiding the congested, unsafe and unsightly "strip" commercial development pattern that plague so many other communities.
- require commercial zone "interconnections" in new projects where appropriate
- change the zoning regulations to allow for shared parking between businesses, and to make commercial areas more walkable, reducing the need to drive from one business to another
- address Route 202 Corridor Management Plan recommendations for "interconnects" between other adjacent commercial uses on Route 202 and communicate with ConnDOT to implement them.

- should consider creation of a Route 202 Highway Corridor Overlay Zone on Route 202 between Litchfield center and Bantam. The terms of this zone would permit better commission review and encouragement of traffic-related site plan changes such as those recommended in the Corridor Management Plan.
- retain the changes it has already adopted to discourage the location of high turnover uses on Route 202, such as fast food establishments.
- consider amendments designed to prevent establishing major traffic "magnet" uses such as "big box" superstores on state highways in Litchfield.

The selectmen should

- increase public awareness of the long-term benefits of proposed roadway and access changes along the Rt. 202 Corridor. Knowledge of the problems and alternative solutions are critical to gaining public support.

The recommendations of the Regional Transportation Plan

The *Regional Transportation Plan* recommends these improvements:

- Improvements in Litchfield center and Bantam center as discussed in the Corridor Management Report, including improvement of the vertical geometry on Route 118 to the east of Fern Avenue intersection, so that stopping sight lines on 118 are improved and flooding of the Town Green is corrected.
- Provision of a bypass lane at Wamogo High School Drive and North Shore Road.
- Improvement of the sight line at the intersection of Route 202 and Old Mount Tom Road.
- Sight line and horizontal geometry improvements at the intersection of Route 118 and old Route 8, which is one of the regionally significant high frequency crash locations cited in the Regional Transportation Plan.

Local highway improvements recommended in the *Regional Transportation Plan* should be adopted:

- Construction of sidewalks on the west side Milton Road, to provide a safe, off-road pedestrian corridor for school children, walkers and bikers who are at risk using Milton Road between Route 202 and entrances to the Westleigh and Litchfield Pond condominium developments.
- Realignment and reconstruction of Milton Road between Floren Pond Drive and Goodhouse Road.

Goal: To implement the recommendations of the Regional Transportation Plan
STRATEGIES:
The Selectmen should work with DOT to implement these recommendations.

Recreational Trail System

ISSUE: All across the country communities are planning and constructing bikeways and greenways to expand public access to open spaces and opportunities for the quiet enjoyment of a walk or bike ride in a safe and attractive natural environment. Litchfield is fortunate to have many opportune locations for the creation of outstanding trails.

Recreational trails and greenways are recommended in the state plan, the Litchfield Hills Transportation Plan and most local town plans. In recent years, considerable financial support has been available from the U.S. Department of Transportation for planning and construction of these corridors that provide an alternative to vehicular transportation reducing traffic and highway congestion.

The American Planning Association notes that "trails and greenways encourage overall planning benefits such as preservation of open spaces, encouraging physical fitness, creating non-motorized transportation opportunities, and preserving cultural and historic resources." The Litchfield Hills *Regional Transportation Plan* also endorses development of recreational trails throughout the region.

GOAL: To improve the opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian paths.
STRATEGIES:
The Planning and Zoning Commission should charge the transportation work group to continue its work to:

- Encourage ConnDOT to make the existing roadway network more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly, providing a shoulder at least four feet wide on all state highways.
- Request ConnDOT and the town Public Works Department to enhance safety and give priority for sand sweeping and pothole patching to those local and state roadways designated as bikeways.
- Encourage the Economic Development Commission to promote bicycling as a tourism amenity in the Litchfield Hills Region, as recommended in the Strategic Economic Development Plan for the region.
- Encourage the financing and construction of additional bike paths that are locally proposed and supported.
- Urge the warden and burgesses of the Borough of Litchfield to enhance opportunities for safe pedestrian travel through the provision and maintenance of sidewalks, especially in Litchfield Borough.
- Encourage the attractive landscaping of walkways and streetscapes to encourage pedestrian travel.
- Make Litchfield's existing and new commercial areas more pedestrian friendly.

GOAL: To plan an interconnected system of recreational trails, designed to link the various geographic, political and social features that comprise the fabric of our town, and developed and funded by private donations and grants.

STRATEGIES:
Develop a town trail system.
The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Encourage the development of a town trail system in two phases. The first phase would create a trail between Litchfield and Bantam centers with connectors to the Litchfield and Wamogo school campuses and the Litchfield Community Center. A second phase would link this trail system to Litchfield center and Northfield.

<u>Litchfield–Bantam Main Trail:</u>

This main recreation trail would follow the old railway corridor wherever possible. It should also utilize either White Memorial Foundation trails (where permitted by the Foundation) or existing local roads where necessary. Where it is advantageous for segments of the trail system to cross private land, the permission of the property owner(s) must be granted.

Small markers would denote trail routes. Clearly designated lanes and appropriate signage would be placed where roadways are used.

Off-road portions of the trail would consist of a rolled, all-weather permeable surface that is environmentally friendly and capable of supporting walkers, bicycles, roller blades and occasional vehicle traffic (for maintenance and emergency response equipment only). Small parking areas would be needed at the eastern (Litchfield) and western (Bantam) trailheads and at other locations as necessary. Bicycle lockers and/or racks would be placed at trail heads and near town centers, schools and commercial centers to encourage bicycle and pedestrian use by school age children and adults.

Link village centers with trails

- The priority phase of trail development should focus on creating links to other village centers and existing trail systems. Trail connections should be planned and developed from the main trail to Milton center and East Litchfield Center.
- Trail link possibilities to other existing trail/greenways:
  - to the Bantam-Steep Rock Recommended Greenway (between Bantam Lake and Steep Rock Park in Washington, CT),
  - to the Sue Grossman Still Water Greenway (between Winsted and Torrington),
  - to the Naugatuck River Greenway (along Rt. 8 between the Thomaston Dam and Rt. 118), and
  - to Morris.

Coordinate with the Naugatuck River Greenway.

Recently completed plans for the Naugatuck River greenway and bikeway provide a blueprint for the creation of Litchfield's trail plan. The Litchfield portion of the Naugatuck River trail is proposed to begin at the Route 8 and 118 intersections and to follow the river between Route 8 and the Naugatuck River bank.

This plan could be the model for the design and development of Litchfield's system of recreational trails. Prepared by the Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials, the "Naugatuck River Greenway" plan shows how these trails can be planned to provide maximum recreational benefits, open space preservation, and historic preservation with substantial social and economic benefits.

Use private funding and grants

It is recommended that funding for development and maintenance of the trail system come solely from private sources and grants. In addition to avoiding further burden on taxpayers, this approach encourages community involvement and permits local control. For Litchfield, the trail system presents a unique opportunity to link the community geographically, politically and socially.

Mass Transit

ISSUES: Public transit access

Litchfield's rural landscape is a restricting factor on public transit initiatives, availability and accessibility. Increased usage of bus and rail systems will be the key to new or expanded transit services.

As the population of Litchfield ages, service adjustments (particularly to bus routes and trip frequency) will be required from time to time to meet the needs of the elderly, the disabled and the transit-dependent. Use of the Senior Van can also be expected to increase.

Metro-North's Waterbury branch line provides direct but limited rail service to points in the Naugatuck Valley, as well as connecting service on the New Haven line from Bridgeport to New York City and Boston. A joint Metro-North–ConnDOT study is underway to determine the need for service changes on the Waterbury branch.

GOAL: To encourage and promote improvements to the local and regional public transit van, bus and rail systems, especially to meet the needs of the elderly, disabled and transit-dependent.

STRATEGIES:

- Solicit state and federal funding and private contributions to increase public awareness of the bus and rail systems serving Litchfield, through a combination of community education, printed schedules and improved signage, and
- Periodically examine the frequency and routing of bus service, both within Litchfield and to adjacent towns, and inform providers of recommended adjustments to reflect the changing needs of the community.

5. EDUCATION

Projections of the local student population for the next 10 years foresee no dramatic increase in overall public school enrollment. However, it should be noted that this projection relies in large measure on continuation of the modest level of residential subdivision growth experienced in Litchfield over the past 10 years. While there is no near term reason to question this projection, Litchfield is a desirable community with a large reservoir of undeveloped land and school enrollment projections must be re-evaluated annually.

Currently a major school building improvement and expansion construction project is in progress. Based upon current projections of school enrollments, this construction will provide adequate capacity for the next 10 years.

On this basis, this education section of the Town Plan offers recommendations that address other important issues, including the need to improve the relationship between the schools and the community, recreational facilities, the role of technology, emergency planning and student driving and parking. A special focus is to encourage mutually beneficial school–town projects and programs.

Education facilities as community facilities

ISSUE: School facilities are underutilized. There are opportunities to use the school facilities for community purposes.

GOAL: To provide increased recreational, educational and cultural opportunities within the town by opening up school facilities to greater community use.

STRATEGIES:
The Board of Education should:

- Adopt appropriate policies, procedures and fee structures for use of school facilities (including meeting rooms, athletic fields, gym, media centers, music and art spaces, cafeterias/kitchens, computer labs and the auditorium) by various groups based on the following or similar categories:
  - School related activities,
  - Town government activities,
  - Local non-profit organizations,
  - Park and Recreation Department activities,
  - For-profit organizations.
- Actively encourage the use of school facilities by adult education, community and other groups
- Maximize the use of athletic and other school facilities through extended hours and creative scheduling.
- Open the Media Center at Litchfield High School after school hours and on the weekends and make resources available online for use by individuals in the community.

Oliver Wolcott Library, Gilbert Library (Northfield), Litchfield Historical Society and the School District should:

- Coordinate collections, resources and schedules among the school district and the Oliver Wolcott Library, Gilbert Library (Northfield), Litchfield Historical Society and other local educational facilities, such as the Education Connection.

The Board of Education and the Board of Selectmen jointly should:

- address the possible construction of a new auditorium at some point in the future at Litchfield High School to address both educational and community needs.

Other athletic and recreational opportunities

ISSUE: The town is very fortunate to have new athletic fields and track improvements on the town's Plumb Hill property donated by Plumb Hill Playing Fields, Inc. These recently completed improvements provide first class facilities for many school outdoor athletic and recreational programs. However, there are other desirable athletic and recreational facilities, such as a pool and an ice skating rink, which would benefit the students and the town.

GOAL: Provide additional desirable athletic facilities for use by students and community members.

STRATEGIES:

The Board of Education in cooperation with the Park and Recreation Commission and the Selectmen should:

- Identify the type of facilities that would most benefit the town and its students.
- Consider funding and building any new facilities on a regional basis (e.g. in cooperation with the towns comprising Region 6 and/or other towns) and/or through public/private partnerships.
- Ensure community support for any new facilities by providing for significant community use.

Current and future technology needs

ISSUE: Technology impacts all facets of education and the way we live.

GOAL: Provide a town-wide, integrated approach to current and future technology needs of the schools and community.

STRATEGIES:

The Board of Education should:

- Provide the schools with state of the art technology for student needs.
- Provide after-hours computer access at the schools to community members, based on policies and requirements agreeable to the Board of Education.

The Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education should:

- Broadcast meetings to the public via cable television using school technology.
- Develop a plan for allowing community use of school technology
- Consider offering townwide WiFi to help businesses and schools to have Internet access.

Emergency Preparedness

ISSUE: Acts of God, terrorist threats and other disasters require communities to plan for and provide emergency services.

GOAL: Locate emergency shelters in the schools as part of the schools' emergency operations plan.

STRATEGIES:
The selectmen should:

- Install a generator in each school facility so that those buildings may be used as emergency shelters.

Student driving and parking safety

ISSUES:

- More high school students are driving to school, and there are not enough parking spaces for the students who wish to drive to school. Consequently some students are parking off campus.
- Lack of a "late bus" requires students participating in after-school activities to find alternative means of transportation and encourages students to drive to school.
- Student drop-off and pick-up continue to be issues of safety concern at Center School and Litchfield Intermediate School.
- At the high school, student drop-off and pick-up, along with simultaneous parking by staff and students, create a safety hazard to both drivers and walkers.

GOAL: Reduce the number of students who need to drive to school; reduce the number of students who are driven to school by parents; and eliminate the need to park off campus.

STRATEGIES:
The Board of Education should:

- Provide incentives for students from all three schools to ride the bus each day.
- Consider the use of an "after school" bus (contracted service) so that students participating in after school activities have an alternative means of transportation.
- Plan for sufficient parking at Litchfield High School as part of the renovation/expansion project.
- Provide for safe access to the school buildings through the renovations/additions project.

6. CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

Litchfield is recognized nationally and internationally as one of the country's outstanding historic and architectural gems. Unlike the artificial reproductions of early American towns at Williamsburg and Sturbridge Village, Litchfield is an authentic contemporary "living historic" community. Remarkably, the historic borough has been able to grow and change while preserving its historic integrity.

The noted architectural and landscape heritage of the town is matched and complemented by unusually broad and deep archival resources on the community's history held by the town and various cultural organizations. This combined resource makes Litchfield's history the subject of numerous scholarly and popular publications.

For the past 200 years Litchfield residents have nourished and protected its valuable historic and cultural resources. In 1958, in an unprecedented act, the state legislature recognized the historic value of Litchfield to the state by establishing Litchfield Borough as Connecticut's first historic district. Creation of the Litchfield historic district became the basis for legislation that now enables communities in Connecticut to establish local historic districts. Landowners in Milton center used this opportunity to create the Milton Historic District.

Acting under well-established guidelines, the Litchfield and Milton Historic District Commissions review and approve all exterior building development proposals and other improvements seen from public places. Their goal is to ensure that these improvements are consistent with the historic scale, design and materials of the District and surrounding structures and improvements. For 48 years the Litchfield Historic District Commission has overseen growth and change in Litchfield Borough, demonstrating that a community center can be both a vibrant and successful residential and commercial center and retain and, indeed, improve its historic quality.

Overall Issue:

The historic value of Litchfield does not stop at the boundaries of the Borough and Milton historic districts. Much more needs to be done town-wide to preserve Litchfield's historic architectural and cultural assets. The greatest challenges are yet to come.

Growth and the forces of change over the next decade will erode Litchfield's historic quality unless its citizens, local boards and commissions, and non-profit historic organizations cooperate to preserve Litchfield's rich and varied cultural resources.

Much of Litchfield's success in historic preservation can be credited to the respect, concern and care of Litchfield's residents, who have viewed themselves as guardians of the town's cultural heritage for future generations. Continuing and strengthening this tradition of historical respect must be an essential part of Litchfield's historic preservation program.

Litchfield's preeminent historic quality has greatly benefited businesses and economic development in Litchfield. Economic development plans and programs need to recognize and more fully develop the economic and tax base advantages of Litchfield's historic and cultural resources and related businesses.

OVERALL GOALS:

Promote, protect and enhance the historical, architectural and landscape heritage of Litchfield as a fundamental part of this community's sense of its identity, tradition, quality of life and economic prosperity.

Increase public awareness of the economic impact of Litchfield's arts and cultural community and promote Litchfield's artistic and cultural resources.

OVERALL STRATEGIES:

The Planning and Zoning Commission and the Economic Development Commission should:

- Incorporate the goal of protection and enhancement of Litchfield's historic and cultural resources in Town economic and land use planning.
- Encourage creative adaptation and reuse of historic structures and landscapes.
- Provide information to residents who wish to work to establish historic districts for Bantam and Northfield.

The Litchfield Historical Society and the Litchfield Preservation Trust and/or a group to be specified by the Planning and Zoning Commission should

- Initiate and get the necessary support to:
- Complete the architectural and historic resource surveys of Litchfield.
- Create a survey of Litchfield's notable modern architecture.
- Identify structures for nomination to state and national historic registers.
- Combine and digitize historic and architectural information from various sources and make it accessible to planning, zoning and historic commissions on the town GIS system.
- Establish projects to identify, inventory, document and map Litchfield's historic landscape architecture, cemeteries, historic stone walls, re-establish the 1985 project to inventory, and document Litchfield's "notable trees."

The Economic Development Commission should:

- Support federal, state and area funding to increase arts and cultural tourism.
- Support the promotion of Litchfield as a location for artists, crafts people and creative professionals to live, establish businesses and work.
- Support the promotion of local arts and cultural activities in education for all ages.
- Support the promotion of Litchfield as an antiques shopping destination.

The Social Service Director should:

- Increase senior citizen participation in arts and cultural activities.

The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Adopt a 90 day demolition delay regulation for historic structures

Archaeological resources

ISSUE: The Connecticut Office of State Archaeology assists local municipalities in developing preservation policies, identifying, documenting and preserving archaeological sites. The office

maintains the Connecticut State Register of Historic Places, which includes an inventory of prehistoric and historic period archaeological sites.

By state law, a local development application on property identified in the State Register[6] must be accompanied by a report from the State. If archaeological remains are discovered, work must stop, the State Archaeologist must be notified, and a survey must be done before proceeding with work. But in Litchfield, many archaeological sites are not on the State Register.

GOAL: To compile a more complete inventory of known archaeological sites in Litchfield and to have them surveyed by the State Archaeologist and recorded in the State historic register at the University of Connecticut.

STRATEGIES:

The Litchfield Historical Society, the Litchfield Preservation Trust and/or a group to be specified by the Planning and Zoning Commission:

- Should create a complete list of these sites. The work group should obtain permission from property owners to inspect these known or highly probable sites.
- Should develop a map overlay on the town GIS system that locates all known and highly probable archaeological sites as a resource for the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Historic architecture

ISSUE: The historic architecture of Litchfield is central to the image the town holds in the minds of both residents and visitors. These resources include rural properties, twentieth-century architecture and former industrial sites as well as the stately homes on North and South Streets. Planning policies that include preservation of architectural resources help to enhance the uniqueness of each village center within the town.

There is a need to create a complete and accessible record of Litchfield¹s historic architectural resources.

GOALS:

To make the protection of historic architectural resources an integral component in all of Litchfield's planning and zoning policies and decisions.

To create an organized and accessible database of information on the structures that compose Litchfield's architectural heritage.

To strengthen and enhance the individual identities of the town's four village centers: Litchfield, Bantam, Milton and Northfield.

[6] http://www.cttrust.org/index.cgi/1028

STRATEGIES:
The Litchfield Historical Society, the Litchfield Preservation Trust and/or a group to be specified by the Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Secure funding from grants and the town to conduct Historical and Architectural Surveys for East Litchfield and the northeastern section of the town (to add to those for Litchfield, Bantam, Milton and Northfield) to complete the record of the town's architectural resources.
- Compile the completed survey in an easily accessible, central, digitized data base on the town GIS system, bringing together information on structures from the Survey with data from other sources.
- Provide information to elected and appointed town officials on the benefits of architectural preservation planning.
- Encourage the town officials to play an active role in raising public awareness and developing a consensus on historic preservation action.
- Provide information that assists the Historic District Commissions and the Planning and Zoning Commission with decisions on historic preservation.
- Recommend planning and zoning regulations that support adaptive uses of historic structures.
- Identify areas in need of special historic protection and propose adoption of a historic overlay zone in such areas.

The economic impact of the arts, humanities and cultural resources

ISSUE: Litchfield's vibrant and growing arts and humanities community is generally under valued and under appreciated. Also, there is a lack of communication and coordination among the town's formal cultural institutions and organizations, local residents in the artistic professions, and the town's boards and commissions. The arts and humanities community must organize and work together toward common goals.

The growing non-profit arts and cultural sector of the state's economy has an annual economic value exceeding $1.5 billion. Litchfield is one of the most popular visitor attractions in the state and visitor generated income has become a pillar of the local economy. The Litchfield Historical Society alone averages 5,000 visitors a season, exerting an important impact on the local economy.

A study of the economic impact of visitors to the Litchfield Law School and Tapping Reeve House revealed the average visiting party of three had a total local economic impact of $800—half in spending for lodging, meals, shopping and entertainment and half in indirect sales impact.

Cultural tourism is:

- The fastest growing economic market in Northwest Connecticut.
- The leading tourist attraction in Litchfield.
- Changing the business landscape in Litchfield as evidenced by the fact that antique and art galleries now make up a major component of Litchfield's business community. (There are now 20 antiques dealers and eight art galleries and numerous successful crafts businesses in Litchfield.)

- Attracting more residents to Litchfield who are professionally involved in the arts and humanities.

GOALS:

To promote Litchfield as an attractive community in which to live for those involved in the arts and humanities.

To encourage the development of arts, crafts and cultural businesses.

To encourage, recognize, promote and award arts and cultural efforts.

To identify, assist and promote Litchfield's numerous cultural resources as a central and vital part of its planning for future economic development.

STRATEGIES:
The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Enact planning and zoning regulations that expand opportunities for artists and craftspeople in home occupations, and sales of arts and crafts products at the same site where they were made.

The Economic Development Commission and the Litchfield Area Business Association should:

- Collaborate in developing a single, central website calendar of arts and cultural events.
- Support Litchfield-based participation in regional and state arts and cultural organizations.

The Litchfield Economic Development Commission and the Litchfield Area Business Association and the Cultural Resources Work Group should form a special committee to focus on cultural resource related business development. This committee could:

- Encourage partnering to attract funding for activities and functions that relate to this segment of the business community.
- Develop public relations and marketing STRATEGIES: focused on local cultural resources and its economic advantages to the community.
- Encourage the local arts and humanities community to participate in programs in the schools, for adults and senior citizens, and at local events and exhibitions.
- Develop regional arts and humanities tourism promotions similar to the "Connecticut Impressionist Art Trail" and "Black History Trail."

Landscape preservation

ISSUE: Cultural landscapes represent the interaction between man and the environment throughout the history of a community. Litchfield's cultural landscape resources include the town's greens, farmlands, cemeteries, roads, stone walls, trees and gardens. Litchfield's landscape is a major factor in defining its image, its rural character, and its quality of life.

GOALS:

To preserve agricultural landscapes and open spaces, landscape vistas and important ridgelines, the town¹s various Greens and other parks.

To create additional "Scenic Road" designations.

To identify, protect and preserve the town's historic stone walls.

To identify and protect of notable and historic trees throughout the town.

To identify and document Litchfield's notable gardens.

STRATEGIES:

The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Enact regulations that preserve open space.
- Enact regulations that preserve stone walls, major trees and historical features.
- Request further Scenic Road designations along state highways from the state DOT.

The Conservation Commission should:

- Develop, support and encourage the adoption of:
  - A local scenic road ordinance,
  - A stone wall protection ordinance, and
  - A notable tree protection ordinance.
- Identify and document Litchfield's notable gardens.

Other organizations:

- The strategies for landscape preservation are largely the work of other town plan committees including the Open Space Work Group and the Transportation Work Group as well as organizations such as the Borough of Litchfield, Litchfield Land Trust and the Litchfield Garden Club.

7. OPEN SPACE, FARMS, FOREST and NATURAL RESOURCES

Litchfield's rural character is in large measure defined by its scenic landscapes of uninterrupted areas of forest and field. These open spaces also provide a wide diversity of wildlife habitat and protect water quality.

Farms

ISSUES: For most of the last century the dominant agricultural activity in Litchfield was dairy farming. However over the past 30 years dairy farming has declined dramatically throughout the state and in the county. There are still a few working dairy farms in Litchfield, and many former dairy farms are still used for other farm activities. These farms and their productive farm soils are a resource worthy of preservation not only to retain the town's rural character but also to provide the land base needed for future food production.

Each year Connecticut loses 7,000 to 9,000 acres of farmland to development. This is a loss of a valuable and irreplaceable natural resource that provides not only fresh local food but also important environmental and economic benefits to the state. Currently there are only 370,000 acres of farmland left in Connecticut, covering less than 12 percent of the state's land base.

In the early 1980's the State of Connecticut established the "Purchase of Development Rights Farmland Preservation Program" with the goal to preserve 130,000 acres, including 85,000 acres of cropland. The main objective of this program is to secure a food- and fiber-producing land resource base, consisting primarily of prime and important farmland soils.

Protection of this farmland base will enable Connecticut to produce at least 50 percent of its needs for fluid milk and 70 percent of its in-season fresh fruits and vegetables needs. This level of in-state production will ensure some degree of local availability of fresh farm products. It will also help ensure that agriculture remains an important part of the state's economy.

As of 2005 the State of Connecticut's Farmland Preservation Program has purchased and preserved 30,157 acres on 214 farms, including Litchfield's Litwin Farm and Bunnell Farm. More than half of these acres are classified as prime and important farmland soils. However after almost 25 years of effort, the state has protected only 22 percent of its 130,000 acre goal. If Connecticut is to reach its farmland preservation goal, much more needs to be done. As the rate of farmland loss continues to escalate in the urban and suburbanized areas of Connecticut, it is critical to save the remaining intact farmland areas of the state such as those in the Litchfield and Goshen farm corridor. The state program will continue to help protect Litchfield's farmland, but much more needs to be done locally to reach this goal.

GOALS:

To support the state's farmland preservation and food production goal.

To retain the town's rural character and natural resources.

To support and sustain the local agricultural and forestland economy.

To place a priority on protection of farmland in critical scenic and conservation areas, such as along the gateway roads.

STRATEGIES:

Identify and protect priority farmland areas

The Planning and Zoning Commission, Conservation Commission, and the Litchfield Land Trust should:

- place a high priority on the protection of large parcels of active farmland:
  - in proximity to other farmlands or protected lands, and
  - located on the scenic gateway road corridors leading to Litchfield Center.

  Key areas include farmland blocks on Town Farm Road, Beach Street, Maple Street, Litwin Road, the Cathole Road area, Chestnut Hill, East Chestnut Hill and Route 254.

  The State of Connecticut has recognized the significance and the value of protecting the 753-acre Litchfield Farm along Town Farm Road. It contains large areas of wetlands, prime agricultural soils, and diverse forests. It hosts a known state-listed endangered species and contains several vernal pools. Highlands Conservation Act funds have been requested to protect this extraordinary property which is the largest block of family owned land in Litchfield. Unfortunately, this program is not currently funded adequately.

  Litchfield Farms is part of the Connecticut Highlands and lies within both the Bantam and the Naugatuck watersheds. All the waterways on the property, which drain into the Bantam River, are the highest-level water quality (AA). Elevations on the property reach up to 1,300 feet making it one of the highest points in the town of Litchfield. Preservation of this property would provide ridgeline and scenic vista protection for both the towns of Torrington and Litchfield.

Help farms stay economically viable

The Planning and Zoning Commission and the Economic Development Commission should:

- Work to facilitate the location and operation of local farm markets and farm stands which sell products grown in the Town of Litchfield.
- Consider changing zoning regulations to promote and protect land base businesses such as forestry, agriculture, nurseries and greenhouses.
- Consider renaming the large lot zones "Agricultural/Residential" to protect areas of prime farmland and working farms from inappropriate development

The Conservation Commission should:

- Inform farm and forest land owners of programs for preserving farmland and the 490 programs which reduce taxes on farm and forest land, in order to encourage landowners to maintain their land in farm uses.

The Economic Development Commission should:

- Help create outlets for goods produced in Litchfield

Open space

ISSUE: Litchfield is fortunate to have a great deal of protected open space; more than 15 percent of its acreage is either fully protected or has conservation easements on it.[7] However, this is far exceeded by the undeveloped and unprotected land in the town, much of which is held in large parcels. Litchfield, along with the other towns in the southern tier of Litchfield County, will experience accelerated development pressure over the next 10 years. Now is the time to define the town's priority open spaces and implement a plan to preserve its rural character and vital natural resources.

GOALS:

To identify and protect productive farm and forest lands, wildlife corridors, water bodies and ridgelines.

To establish an overall goal for the amount of land to be permanently protected in the town.

To protect and define the village scale of the town's village centers (Litchfield, Bantam, Northfield, East Litchfield and Milton) by maintaining a clear "edge" between the village center boundary and the surrounding rural residential districts and creating a "necklace of green" open spaces around the center areas.

To discourage sprawl

STRATEGIES:

Open space planning

The Conservation Commission should:

- Take the lead in educating the community concerning the benefits of preserving our open space.
- Prepare an Open Space and Natural Resources Protection Plan that identifies and designates areas of open space protection including:
  - Farms and forestlands, which provide wildlife habitat and protect water resources
  - Wildlife corridors—unfragmented contiguous properties that are in their natural state.
  - Protected waterways along riparian corridors (streams and rivers) and around fragile ponds and lakes, showing easements and other protected land.
  - Ridgelines—along watershed boundary lines and view sheds as seen from State highways and major town roads.

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[7] *From a memo from David Thomas:*

Total Litchfield Land Trust legal acres: 3674 (Best estimate including excess acres where there is only easement)
Total farm preservation acres: GIS 237
Total from Selected Protected Parcels, includes State Parks and DEP land: GIS 2556

Total	*6467*
Acres in Litchfield	*36,672*
% Protected	*17.6%*

These numbers are approximate and subject to change. If I only counted the actual easement areas I get 13.6%.

The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Adopt regulations to protect the open space and natural resources of the town.

Inventory Litchfield's special places

An open space plan should place a high priority on the protection of special places identified by residents of Litchfield. These are the places people speak about when asked what places they feel are most important to be protected or preserved. The following is a preliminary list developed with citizen input by the Conservation Commission.

Important Places to preserve in Litchfield

Water quality/water features

The boardwalk around Little Pond
Bantam Lake
Mount Tom Pond
Blue Swamp
Watershed lands for reservoir – West side
Watershed lands for reservoir – Northfield
Perkins Road/Spruce Brook, waterfalls
Bantam River, east and west branches
Ripley Swamp
Naugatuck River
Marshpaug River
Tannery Brook and the Hamill Wellfield
Waterbury Water Company lands

Gateways

Undeveloped woods and fields along Route 118. (Limited access, no telephone poles)
Open fields and ridges visible from Rt. 254
Open fields and ridges visible from Route 63 north (Junior Republic, Education Connection)
Mount Tom Pond area along Route 202
Fields, farms and woods along Route 63 south. (View of steeple from the Morris town line)
Toll Gate Hill approach from Torrington, Route 202
Undeveloped areas between Toll Gate Hill and the Litchfield green

Farms and Farmland

Litwin Road, fields and ridges
Town Farm Road farm land
Wigwam Road
Bunnell Farm/Floren Pond/Golf Course
Farmlands on East Chestnut Hill Road
Farmlands on Maple Street and Beach Street
Wigwam Road open farmland, view of Chestnut Hill
Farms along Route 254
Hassig Farmland

Cultural/Historical Features

Milton Green and Historic District
Northfield Green and Village area
East Litchfield Village
Litchfield Historic District
Wisdom House Labyrinth
Litchfield Hills Road Race course
Morosani's daffodils
Campville/Fluteville

Wildlife habitat/contiguous large parcels

Land between east and west branches of the Bantam River
Education Connection Land
Litchfield Garden Club's "Ring of Green"
Bunnell Farm/Golf Course/Duck Pond Road/Floren Pond area
Waterbury water company lands and large parcels on west side of town, Prospect Mountain.
Marshpaug Forest and East Litchfield large parcels
Large parcels on the west side of Old Forge Hollow Road

Scenic Roads (partial listing)

Headquarters Road (dirt section)
Perkins Road
Litwin Road
Wigwam Road

Duck Pond Road
Town Farm Road
Alain White Road
Richards Road Extension

Ridges
Old Mount Tom
Chestnut Hill
East Chestnut Hill
Route 8 corridor
Wigwam Road
Route 254
Maple Street

Active Recreation:
Plumb Hill Playing Fields
Northfield community field
Bantam community field
Litchfield community field
White Memorial soccer fields
Stonybrook Golf Course
Litchfield Country Club
Lee's Riding Stable
Hoopdance Hollow Riding Stable
Thunder Ridge Riding Stable
White Memorial camping

Passive Recreation
White Memorial trails
Topsmead State Park
Naugatuck River trails in Campville
Mattatuck Trail
Nancy Danaher Trail off Clark Road
Prospect Mountain
Graham Thompson Preserve
Audubon Boyd's Wood
Hauser Land Preserve
Former Haight Land on Chestnut Hill and Bantam River

Water based recreation:
Litchfield boat launch and picnic area
Sandy Beach
Mount Tom

Institutions with open space lands
Lourdes Shrine
Wisdom House
Connecticut Junior Republic

Local fund dedicated to land preservation
Litchfield established an Open Space and Land Acquisition Fund in January of 2005 as permitted under the Connecticut General Statutes, which allow a community to establish by town ordinance a local fund for the protection land for farming, open space and recreation. Donations and fees in lieu of open space received by the town for land preservation can be placed in this special fund and held until an acquisition opportunity arises. This special fund allows monies received to be retained from year to year, and not revert to the General Fund.

The Board of Finance, through its capital committee, should:

- Provide significant funding of the Open Space and Land Acquisition Fund, and earmark a portion of such funds to be used to acquire development rights or to purchase farm land in priority locations.

Conservation Commission to act as the local land preservation authority
The Open Space and Land Acquisition Fund authorizes the Litchfield Conservation Commission to assist the town in acquiring agricultural, recreational or open space land or easements for land preservation purposes.

The Conservation Commission should:

- Take the lead in recommending priorities for land preservation consistent with the Town Plan.

- Take the lead in making grant applications for land preservation funds.
- Convene a meeting annually with the Litchfield Land Trust, White Memorial Foundation and other local land preservation organizations to review progress on land preservation and cooperation toward common goals.

Establish criteria for collection of fees in lieu of open space

All "fee in lieu of open space" funds collected must be deposited in the Open Space and Land Acquisition Fund and used for the purposes allowed in the Statutes.

The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Establish in its regulations criteria to determine in what circumstances such a "fee in lieu" will be permitted. A good example of the criteria for administration of the requirement for a fee in lieu of open space is the policy adopted by the Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission.

Open space in subdivisions

The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Revise the section of the subdivision regulations on open space standards and requirements to:
  - provide more detailed criteria to require "useable" open space,
  - define the purposes the open space shall serve,
  - list the options for meeting the permanent preservation requirements and
  - offer options permitting the reduction of open space requirements.
- Adopt conservation subdivision regulations in order to conserve significant forest, farm and riparian areas as open space.
- Use the recommendations in the Town Plan and in any open space plan prepared by the Conservation Commission to develop this regulation and as a reference in determining the type and location open space in subdivisions.
- Change the zoning regulations to exclude steep slopes (over 20 percent), wetlands and floodplains from developable area in the two-acre minimum lot size zones and when subdividing in farm, forest and riparian areas.

Town-owned non-maintained roads

The Conservation Commission should:

- Conduct a systematic review of the town's unimproved and/or non-maintained roads, and identify those that should be reserved for future improvement and those that should be permanently discontinued or abandoned in order to protect greenways, wildlife corridors, and productive farm and forest areas.

The Town of Litchfield should:

- Identify town-owned road rights-of-way that are not suitable for development and bring a list of these to the town meeting to be officially discontinued or abandoned.

Protect and define the town's village center

The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- adopt regulations limiting strip development along roads in favor of deep lot development
- limit sewer service boundaries to prevent strip development and focus new development in village centers
- consider changes to zoning regulations which permit more development in village centers instead of new development in areas which are currently open space.

Ridgeline Protection

ISSUE: Communities are acting because they recognize that a prominent ridgeline cleared and developed for housing will be much more visible than in other locations and have a disproportionately significant negative impact on the scenic quality and rural character of the community.

Connecticut's planning statutes provide that the Town Plan "may show the Planning and Zoning Commission's recommendation for conservation and preservation of trap rock and other ridgelines." Communities throughout the State are developing innovative regulations designed to preserve ridgelines, especially in sensitive locations, such as areas with extensive steep slopes or ledge and in water supply watersheds.

GOAL: To protect the prominent ridgelines which give Litchfield its scenic quality.

STRATEGIES:
The Planning and Zoning Commission in cooperation with the Conservation Commission should:

- Consider and adopt changes to the town's land use regulations which protect ridge lines, including:
  - Any proposal to change the requirement for calculating minimum lot size, such as a "net buildable area" lot calculation that allows no inland wetland, watercourse or steep slope to be counted in the calculation of minimum required lot size.
  - Modifications to the driveway slope limits in the subdivision regulations or town ordinance.
  - Limits set in the zoning regulations (such as in Cornwall) where there is a limit on the area of steep slopes that can be developed or disturbed.

Gateway Highways

ISSUE: The entryway corridors to Litchfield Center on Routes 118, 63 and 254 are all exceptionally scenic roads. These state highways are the gateways to Litchfield, and preservation of the views, vistas, and historic sites along these scenic corridors is a vital element in the protection of Litchfield's rural and historic character.

Stone walls are a significant man-made feature important to the character scenic roads and the community.

GOAL: To preserve the scenic quality of the main "gateway" roads entering Litchfield center.

STRATEGIES:
Gateway overlay districts
The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Establish a "Gateway Corridor Overlay District" along the entry segments of these state highways to the town center.

  These "Gateway Corridor Overlay Districts" would not change the list of uses allowed in the underlying zone but could establish standards for building setback, street frontage and building and driveway siting consistent with the goal of protecting the visual quality of the gateway entrances to the center.

Building setbacks for new buildings can vary according to location and surrounding buildings. In some cases wide setbacks should be required; in others the setback should be consistent with the setback of adjacent principal buildings. Accessory buildings should be sited behind principal buildings. Common driveway entrances to the highway should be preferred where feasible, and site plans for new development should encourage retaining major trees, stone walls and historic features and view vantage points.

Preserving stone walls along roads

The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Amend the subdivision regulations to require that where there is land fronting on a town public road or state highway, the subdivision shall be designed to preserve stone walls to the maximum extent possible.

The Town of Litchfield should:

- Consider adopting a stone wall protection ordinance similar to Harwinton's.

Wildlife and biodiversity

ISSUE: The preservation of wildlife diversity is integral to the preservation of the town's rural character. However, wildlife habitat does not stop at the Town line. Regional efforts are required to maintain meaningful areas of habitat.

Goal: To maintain wildlife habitat and biodiversity in Litchfield.

STRATEGIES:

The Conservation Commission should:

- Coordinate with neighboring towns to identify and protect greenways and wildlife corridors regionally.
- Support and coordinate with the biodiversity studies such as that of the Shepaug River watershed proposed by Dr. Michael Klemens.

8. PUBLIC SURFACE AND GROUNDWATER SUPPLY PROTECTION AND SEWER AVOIDANCE

INTRODUCTION

The State Plan of Conservation and Development states that: *"A primary objective must be to protect high quality water for drinking supply purposes. . . . Therefore source protection and pollution prevention must be a priority for the overall protection of drinking water supply sources. Approximately 16.5 percent of the state's land area is required to supply its drinking water needs from surface sources. Of the 169 municipalities, 128 have public water supply watersheds within their borders. Water quality correlates with the density and type of land use activity within the watershed or aquifer recharge area."*

Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-2 requires that the Planning and Zoning Commission in its Town Plan and zoning regulations provide for "reasonable consideration for the protection of existing and potential public surface and ground drinking water supplies."

There are two types of drinking water protection areas in Litchfield:

- The well field protection area for Litchfield's Hamill well fields water supply in the center of town, and
- Three public water supply watershed areas—two that serve the City of Waterbury's water needs and one designated as a potential public water supply for Danbury and communities in Connecticut south of Danbury.

Hamill Well Field and Aquifer Protection Zone

ISSUE:

The Hamill Well Field is located near Litchfield center on land owned by the White Memorial Foundation. This well provides an important auxiliary water supply to Litchfield residents and businesses served by the Aquarion Water Company. The principal wells serving Litchfield are located in Goshen and water is piped from the Goshen fields to Litchfield. Aquarion also purchases several hundred thousand gallons per day from the Torrington Water Company.

Litchfield was one of the first towns in Connecticut to adopt a well field protection zone in its zoning regulations. This special zone was created to protect the town's drinking water supply wells at the Hamill well field, which is owned by the Aquarian Water Company

The Town has designated the Planning and Zoning Commission as the aquifer protection agency, responsible for administering the new aquifer protection regulations established by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. The Planning and Zoning Commission has adopted the new map, with an expanded aquifer protection zone boundary and is reviewing the new regulations. When this review is complete, these regulations must be submitted for review and approval by Town Meeting under deadlines set by the state-mandated aquifer protection program.

GOALS:

To insure the continued protection of the Town of Litchfield's drinking water supply.

To adopt a land use regulation and well field inspection program that protects against uses and activities that could threaten the Hamill Well Field 's water quality.

To enact an on-going groundwater protection educational program.

STRATEGY:

Aquifer Protection Agency

The Planning and Zoning Commission, acting as the Aquifer Protection Agency will be required to:

- Propose new Aquifer Protection regulations consistent with the State's model Aquifer Protection Regulations,
- Carry out the inspection of properties within the aquifer protection zone to identify potential sources of ground or surface water contamination and to pursue measures necessary to correct any such conditions, and
- Prepare and recommend to the town the budget and staff needed to implement this State mandated program.

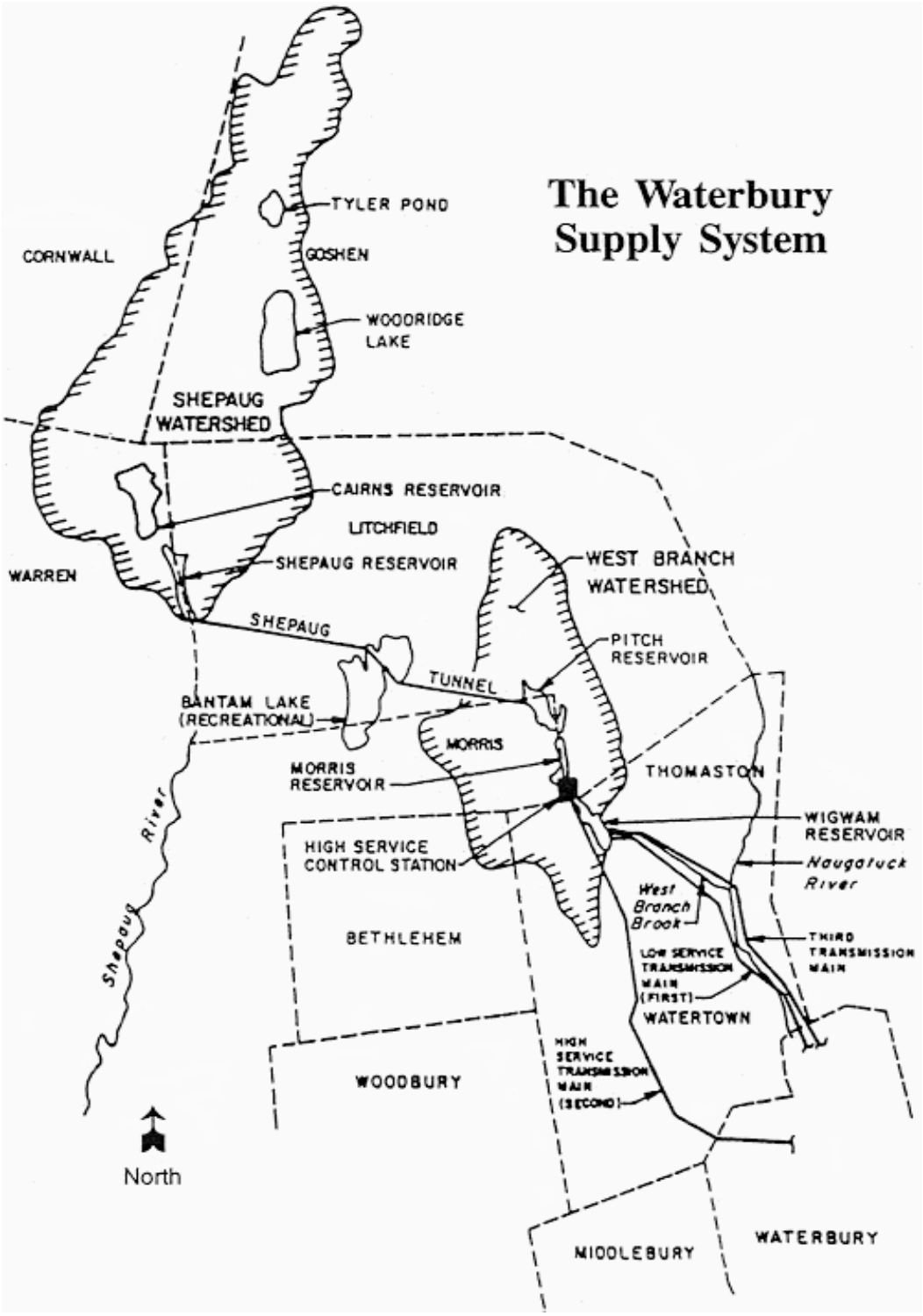
Public water supply watersheds

ISSUE: Potential public water supply watersheds, rated AA by the DEP, cover approximately two-thirds of Litchfield's land area. The eastern third of the town, in the Naugatuck River watershed, because it is classified A by the state ~~as~~ is also a potential water supply watershed. The Connecticut General Statutes require the Planning and Zoning Commission to enact regulations that will protect these public water supply sources. In addition, the center of town depends on water provided by the Aquarion Water Company, which operates the Hamill well field, uses the Goshen well field, and, because these supplies are not equal to the current demand for water, purchases water from Torrington. The City of Waterbury takes water from two reservoirs located within the town boundaries.

The three water supply watersheds in Litchfield are:

1. The western Litchfield segment of the Shepaug and Bantam Rivers watershed, which protects the drinking water supplies in the City of Waterbury's Shepaug and Cairns Reservoirs.
2. The central Litchfield segment of the Shepaug and Bantam River watersheds, designated as a potential public water supply to be tapped from the Shepaug River in Roxbury.
3. The West Branch Brook watershed portion of the Naugatuck River watershed, serving the City of Waterbury's Pitch Reservoir located in Litchfield and Morris.

The Shepaug and Bantam Rivers watershed has a total of 150 square miles covering land in many towns, including Roxbury, Washington, Litchfield, Warren and Goshen. This watershed has two segments. One serves an existing public water supply for the City of Waterbury. The other, larger, segment is a potential public water supply, which could be tapped to provide drinking water to Danbury and communities to the south.



Western Litchfield—Shepaug Reservoir Watershed. This segment covers the watersheds that supply the Shepaug Reservoir and Cairns Reservoirs of the Waterbury water supply system (see map). It covers 38 square miles in Litchfield, Warren and Goshen. The Litchfield portion is found along the western border of the town and includes the Shepaug River and Marshepaug River watersheds.

The water from these reservoirs is diverted through an incredible underground water tunnel running across the Town of Litchfield and under Bantam Lake from the Shepaug Reservoir on the Warren–Litchfield town line to the Pitch Reservoir in the northeastern corner of Morris.

West Brook Branch and Pitch Reservoir Watershed. The Pitch Reservoir and adjacent Morris Reservoir are located in the West Branch Brook watershed, which is a part of the Naugatuck River watershed system and includes land in Litchfield, Morris, Bethlehem and Watertown. The Pitch Reservoir watershed covers parts of the Northfield area and south central Litchfield.

State policy continues to protect both the watershed area of the existing Shepaug Reservoir and Pitch Reservoir watersheds as well as the 112 square miles in the potential Shepaug and Bantam River public water supply watershed segment.

Central Litchfield Segment of Shepaug and Bantam Rivers Watershed. The State Plan of Conservation and Development and the Housatonic Regional Plan recommends protection of the Shepaug and Bantam Rivers watersheds as a potential future water supply sources.

When the first State Conservation and Development Policies Plan was issued in 1973, it advanced a plan to build a large dam and reservoir on the Shepaug River in Roxbury. This concept was subsequently revised in favor of a pumped withdrawal from the River, with no dam or reservoir. This “diversion” plan would provide less water yield, but it would also be far less costly and disruptive to implement. Under this plan, water from the Shepaug would be diverted to areas of need in both the Housatonic Valley and coastal cities such as Stamford. While there is no indication that this diversion will be employed in the foreseeable future this remains a protected watershed on the State and Regional Plans.

The Shepaug River is currently classified as a Class B watercourse because it receives wastewater discharges which make it unsuitable for use as a drinking water supply source under current law. The treated waste effluent discharged into the Bantam River from the Litchfield Sewage treatment plant is the primary source of wastewater into the Shepaug and Bantam River watershed.

This is important to Litchfield because as long as the Shepaug is designated a potential public water supply watershed, it is unlikely the state will agree to expansion of the Litchfield sewage treatment plant. For the same reason, the Town Plan needs to insure containment of the existing sewage service district and recommend that the existing excess capacity of the Litchfield sewage treatment plant be carefully monitored and utilized.

The Housatonic Regional Plan[8] notes that if the Litchfield treatment plant discharge, along with other smaller ones, were removed, or possibly diverted to the Naugatuck River, the southern Shepaug could theoretically be reclassified as fully suitable for public drinking water supply.

[8] http://www.swrpa.org/pdf_files/regplan/RegionalPlanText1995.pdf

Goal: To protect water quality in the Public Supply Watersheds.

STRATEGIES:
General:
The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Create a "reservoir protection overlay zone" for both the Shepaug and Pitch Reservoirs watersheds.
- Review and update the section of the zoning regulations on ground water protection requirements and apply these requirements to all development in the reservoir protection overlay zones.
- Enact buffer areas limiting construction within 200 feet of wetlands in existing and potential public water supply watersheds.
- Require a perpetual sewage system maintenance agreement if two or more dwelling units share a common sewage treatment system.

The Inland Wetlands Commission should:

- Increase inland wetland buffer requirements to 200 feet in existing and potential public water supply watersheds.

Shepaug Reservoir Watershed:
The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Place a high conservation priority on the entire watershed. This continues and extends the priority established for the northwestern section of the town in the 1984 and 1994 Town Plans.
- Consider increasing the 160,000 square foot minimum lot size boundary in the Milton area to include all land in this reservoir watershed.

The Conservation Commission should:

- Rank land in this watershed, especially large undeveloped parcels and the two large parcels owned by the City of Waterbury, high on the list of parcels recommended for preservation.

Pitch Reservoir Watershed:
The Conservation Commission should:

- Rank land in this watershed, especially large undeveloped parcels and the one large parcel in Litchfield bordering Pitch Reservoir and the Morris town line owned by the City of Waterbury high on the list of parcels recommended for preservation.

The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Consider increasing the existing minimum lot area requirement:
  - Amend the zoning and subdivision regulations to require that no inland wetlands, watercourses or slope over 25 percent be included in the calculation of minimum lot size.
  - Amend the zoning and subdivision Regulations to require a 200-foot square with no inland wetlands or watercourses or slopes over 25 percent.

Central Litchfield – Shepaug – Bantam River Watershed:
The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Create a "Central Litchfield Water Supply Protection Overlay Zone" for both the Shepaug and Bantam River watershed areas of Litchfield with the same requirements as the Reservoir Overlay Zones.
- Consider revising the minimum lot area requirement in this overlay zone to require that no inland wetland, watercourse or slope in excess of 25 percent be counted in the calculation of minimum lot area and that a 200-foot square with no inland wetlands, watercourses or slopes over 25 percent be required.

Inland wetlands regulations and water quality

ISSUE: Protecting water quality begins with regulations that protect inland wetlands and water body resources.

Goal: To protect water quality in the town.

STRATEGIES:
The Inland Wetlands Commission should:

- Continue to define and refine town mapping of regulated inland wetlands and watercourses, regulated areas, vernal pools and upland review areas.
- Consider increasing the regulated buffer areas around wetlands, water courses, vernal pools, ponds, and lakes, to 200 feet, and limiting the amount of disturbance allowed in areas around vernal pools in public water supply watersheds.

Bantam Lake Water Quality

ISSUE: Bantam Lake is the largest natural lake in surface water area in the State of Connecticut and a major recreational resource for Litchfield, Morris and the state. In recent years several invasive plants have become established in Bantam Lake and the Bantam River, threatening the recreation values and the balance of the lake's ecosystem.

Recently Bantam Lake has been designated a "Heritage Lake" by the state legislature in recognition of the immense natural and recreational resources values of this water body to the State of Connecticut.

Goal: To preserve the recreational value and ecosystem balance of Bantam Lake.

STRATEGIES:
The Conservation Commission and the selectmen should:

- Encourage and support the voluntary measures promoted and taken by the Bantam Lake Association aimed at monitoring and protecting the lake.

The Selectmen should:

- Continue to support a joint town program with Morris to eradicate and control the spread of invasive weeds in Bantam Lake.
- Work with the Bantam Lake Association to post the requirement under a new state law that Bantam Lake boat ramp users clean their boats of all weed material before entering and when leaving the lake. Whenever possible these boat launch sites should be staffed to inform and educate boaters on this requirement.

Sewer avoidance and sewer expansion limits.

ISSUE: Sewers allow for increased density of development. If not carefully coordinated with planning and zoning policies, sewer line extensions can promote strip development along sewer lines. It is important to establish firm boundaries for the sewer service area in Litchfield and Bantam. Areas where there is a risk of septic failure that are outside the sewer service boundaries need to be closely monitored to avoid the need for sewer line extensions.

Under an agreement with the City of Torrington the Town of Litchfield has the right to allocate up to 150,000 gallons of sewage flow per day from Litchfield to the Torrington sewage treatment plant. As of 1997 only 27,633 gallons of per day were being delivered to the Torrington treatment plan via gravity sewer lines along Route 202 in the Torrington-Litchfield town line area. Since that time additional volume has been committed to the large multi-family development project in Litchfield off Route 202 and Clark Road. Flows as of 2009 are in the neighborhood of 30,000 gallons per day, leaving an unused reserve of 120,000 gallons per day.

The availability of this sewer treatment capacity is very important to Litchfield. It provides the opportunity to address septic failures and sewer needs in the Route 202 corridor near the Torrington town line. It is also essential to realize the full potential for future development of the commercial and industrial zoned land in Litchfield off Old Route 8 and Thomaston Road.

Goals:
To prevent strip development between Litchfield and Bantam and along 202 to Torrington, and preserve the capacity of the water pollution control facility by limiting sewer service boundaries.
To avoid private septic system failures outside these boundaries.
To reserve sufficient capacity at the Torrington sewage treatment plant to serve Old Route 8/Thomaston Road and the sewage needs on Route 202 near the Torrington line.

STRATEGIES:
The Litchfield Water Pollution Authority, in cooperation with the Torrington Area Health District should make a plan to:

- Conduct regular inspections of homes and businesses in areas of potential septic failures.
- Require early remedial action to avoid advanced septic failure in such areas.
- Develop alternatives to sewer line extensions in areas with pending septic failures outside of the sewer service boundaries
- Support education programs on proper septic maintenance in such areas, and consider instituting a requirement that septic systems, especially in areas susceptible to failure, be pumped out a minimum of once every three years.

The Planning and Zoning Commission, in cooperation with the Economic Development Commission should:

- Support measures that encourage the commercial and industrial development of the Old Route 8/Thomaston Road area that has the potential to be served by the Torrington sewer system.

The 2005 –10 state Plan of Conservation and Development has an outdated boundary for the Litchfield and Bantam sewer service areas. The Litchfield Water Pollution Control Authority's map of December 2008 is the proper and accurate depiction of areas currently served, as well as areas eligible for future sewer service. The LWPCA's map is incorporated into this plan as the Sewer Service Area Limits Map. Expansion of this sewer service is permitted only after both the town Plan and the state Plan of Conservation and Development have been amended.

Maps

To be adopted separately

1 Water resources:

- Hamill Well field protection zone
- Public water supply watersheds
- Sewer treatment plant
- Sewer lines
- Water lines
- Dry hydrants

2 Open space:

- Protected open space: land with easements, state parks
- Limited access parcels along Route 118
- Lands owned by existing non-profit organizations
- Water company lands
- Privately-held, unprotected large parcels
- Historic district boundaries
- State-designated scenic roads

3 Housing

- Single family parcels with buildings on them
- Parcels developed since 1994 (or so) shown in different color
- (Buildings with accessory apartments—this could be hard to get)
- Multifamily projects
- Public housing town-owned projects
- Affordable housing

4 Current Zoning

5 Proposed Land Use

- Boundaries of sewer service area
- Business zones
- Industrial zones
- High density residential (in sewer service areas)
- Low density residential (where septics are required)
- Forest Conservation areas (where conservation subdivisions are recommended)
- Farmland Conservation areas (where conservation subdivisions are recommended)
- Aquifer protection for well field
- Existing and Proposed hiking trails
- Proposed roads

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http://www.litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org

The Litchfield Town Hall houses:

Town Clerk's Office

Vital Records, Maps, Land Records, Cemetery Records and Grand Lists

Probate Court

All Probate Records, including inventories.

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