

Looking Toward the Future

North Stonington, Connecticut

2003 Plan of Conservation and Development

October 2, 2003

Prepared for the Planning and Zoning Commission by a Steering Committee of Resident Volunteers

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OVERVIEW

North Stonington is a town with a strong sense of community. Many of the town's founding families still live here, giving us a living connection with our history and traditions. Our sense of place comes from our farms, our village and a countryside of great natural beauty. From the Grange, to the PTO, to the Volunteer Fire Company, North Stonington is, above all, a town where people pitch in to help make life a little better for each other. North Stonington is fortunate to have developed in a way that has preserved its traditions, its culture and its natural resources. Any plans for North Stonington must ensure that this precious legacy will be passed on to future generations.

The past decade brought significant changes to the region. The federal recognition of tribes, tribal claims, and land issues have become major issues for the first time. With the two largest casinos in the world opening nearby and the downsizing of the military, tourism has replaced the defense industry as the major impact on the local economy. The expansion of Pfizer in the area has affected residential development and provided employment opportunities.

Added to these major changes is the potential impact from a build-out of the town. North Stonington's current zoning regulations allow 8000 new homes or approximately 20,000 new people. This makes planning for North Stonington's future all the more critical.

The town has large tracts of land still in their natural state, potential for growth within its commercial zones, and current low population. These factors make it an excellent candidate to plan for orderly future growth that will maintain the rural atmosphere and encourage commercial development that enhances town goals.

The *2003 Plan of Conservation and Development* is the result of a collective effort by a volunteer Steering Committee consisting of a diverse group of North Stonington citizens appointed by the Planning and Zoning Commission. The Steering Committee was advised by a professional planner and utilized professional consultants to perform studies in their

areas of expertise. From a planning fair to a town survey the planning process began and ended with input from residents.

The major areas of focus that came up during this process stem from North Stonington's desire to remain a rural town, while attracting commercial businesses that enhance the town's tax base or provide residents with services they value.

The resulting recommendations are

- Encourage commercial growth and reduce sprawl by restructuring the eastern Industrial Zone to allow a traditional New England village neighborhood with a mix of residential and commercial uses. This could provide the residential density needed to attract supportive commercial development, while reducing potential density in more sensitive parts of town.
- Revitalize existing commercial areas by updating uses and developing and upgrading design standards.
- Create new development patterns that protect environmentally sensitive areas and scenic views by allowing Conservation Subdivisions.
- Support agricultural businesses with expanded uses and incentives.
- Maintain economic diversity by providing a wider range of housing choices.
- Preserve the landscape, water supply and ecosystem, and provide recreational opportunities by creating a meaningful network of environmentally sensitive areas that ties into regional conservation efforts.

The vision in this plan is ambitious; it will take time and effort to bring into being. Timely implementation of the *Plan of Conservation and Development* by the Planning and Zoning Commission is essential. It is critical that residents continue to contribute to shaping regulations and planning the town's future. Time devoted to planning will ensure that

zoning regulations reflect the vision of residents, making this Plan a living document.

“WHAT WE HAVE”

North Stonington, a rural town of approximately 56 square miles and 5,000 residents, is located in southeastern Connecticut, next to Rhode Island. Named for the stony character of the countryside, North Stonington was incorporated in 1807. In the 1800s farms, mills, tanneries, iron works, and cottage weaving contributed to a prosperous and renowned mercantile center. The "Village" area of North Stonington, located just off Route 2, remains a fine example of the early settlement pattern, with its houses and civic buildings clustered densely around a millstream.



North Stonington Village in 1907 – These same buildings now house Hescock Law Office, The Historical Society, The Village Hardware Store, and The Watermark.

Physical Characteristics and Land Use

North Stonington is generally rural, with undulating low wooded hills and shallow stream valleys. North Stonington boasts of having more cemeteries and more miles of stone walls than any other town in Connecticut. They are

evidence of an agricultural heritage that continues today. A system of narrow scenic roads that once connected distant villages now contains housing, as some farmland has converted to residential subdivision. Residential is the largest use in town, and makes up the majority of the town's tax-base. Businesses are located along Routes 2 and 184, and within North Stonington's historic Village.

North Stonington contains seven zoning districts. Land uses are either "permitted by right" or require a site plan review and/or a Special Permit. The Zoning Enforcement Officer alone may grant Zoning Permits for residential uses that are allowed "as-of-right."

There are constraints to development in North Stonington because of regulated wetlands, shallow-to-bedrock soils, rock outcrops, severe slopes, and flood plains. Areas most favorable to development are found in the southeastern part of town. Good agricultural soils occur throughout town, but are primarily concentrated in the south central and southeastern sections. These soils are attractive for development as well as agriculture because they are generally level, require little site development work, and allow water to percolate well.

Population and Demographics

North Stonington's population grew just 2.2 % from 1990 to 2000, as compared to the explosive growth of the 1950s and 1960s. Based on the 2000 Census, the town's population is primarily white, with the majority of its residents between 25 and 54 years old. The median age is 39.6 years. There are 1,883 households with the average size being 2.71 persons. Of North Stonington's housing units, 89 % are owner occupied and 11 % are renter occupied. In 2000, twenty-one percent of households contained at least one individual 65 years old or older.

Demographic projections indicate that North Stonington will continue to grow, albeit slowly. The State is projecting a 3 % growth rate between 2000 and 2010, and an 8.6 % growth rate between 2000 and 2020. The increase in the numbers of elderly and the trend to smaller and more diverse households will probably occur at a rate similar to that for the rest of the region, state, and country.

Housing

Residential use in North Stonington is predominantly single family, although there are duplex residences, multi-family “conversions,” and seasonal communities bordering the town’s six lakes. One-third of the town’s population lives in the high-density Kingswood-Meadow Wood and Cedar Ridge subdivisions, and the Village area. With the exception of one mobile home park, there are no multiple dwelling units or elderly housing communities in town.

Between 1990 and 2000, North Stonington grew by 142 dwellings, an increase of 11.1 % during a period of time when the population grew only by 2.2 %. This is reflective of New England’s sprawl problem, considered the worst in the country - interestingly not caused by a related population increase, according to the American Planning Association. The median value and the average value of sales have continued to increase. Both exceeded \$200,000 in 2002.

In a major study released in 2002, the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments reported that the region faces an acute housing shortage, particularly with respect to rental units, and recommends the creation of such units in the region. In the same report the Council recognized that North Stonington is not well suited for this purpose.

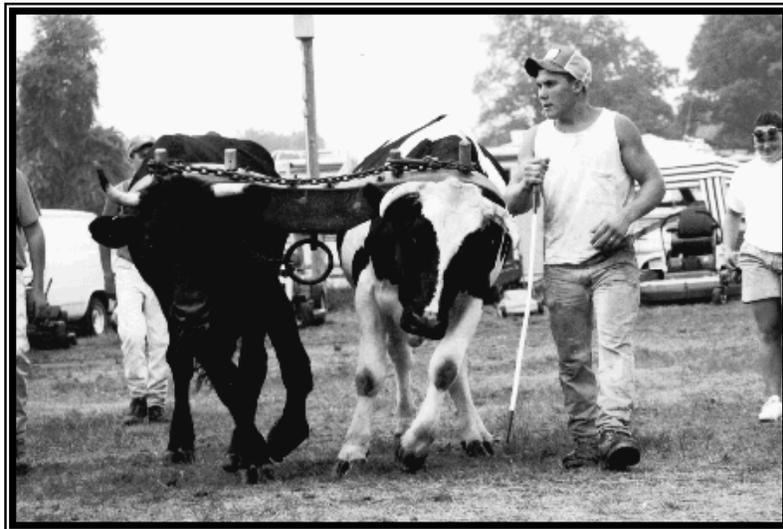
Agricultural Use

Fourteen percent of North Stonington is composed of prime farmland soils. Throughout the town, high-quality farmland is in great demand by the many dairy and horse farms. Most of this acreage still exists as cropland, pasture, and hay fields.

North Stonington currently has seven working dairy farms, averaging 428 acres each, for a total of 3,000 acres, making it the second highest of all Connecticut towns for milk production. Purchases of additional land by farmers attest to the viability of their farms. Other traditional farming continues, with turkey, sheep, and corn production.

In the last decade 'Specialty' farming has become a factor in North Stonington, with Christmas trees, honey, ostriches, llamas, and flowers being raised. Many horse farms and a winery also operate in town. The potential for commercial greenhouse enterprises has been identified.

As noted in a report entitled *Economic Development in North Stonington, Connecticut* (prepared by Abeles, Phillips, Preiss & Shapiro, Inc. January 15, 2002), "North Stonington's farms are central to the community's rural image and therefore to its residential property values."



The number and viability of agricultural operations notwithstanding, loss of agricultural land is a significant concern in North Stonington. Three farms have closed operation in the last ten years. Agricultural land is at risk because of its attractiveness to development.

Only 300 acres of farmland are permanently protected. Five of the town's farm properties (four farms in the Clarks Falls area and one farm in the northwest corner of town) are protected under the Connecticut Farmland Preservation Program. This is a "purchase-of-development-rights" program administered by the State of Connecticut Department of Agriculture. The establishment of a Transfer of Development Rights program and a Purchase

of Development Rights program were recommended in the *1990 Plan of Development*, but have not yet been pursued by the town.

Historic Preservation

Because of its early settlement pattern, North Stonington contains many potential archaeological sites, older buildings, and approximately 126 burial sites. In 1999, the Planning and Zoning Commission adopted cemetery preservation zoning regulations to aid in the protection of burial grounds, graveyards, and cemeteries.



The John Randall House of Randall's Ordinary, was part of the historic Underground Railroad.

Historic preservation has been an important part of the community, with particular focus on the Village area, which is also the center of the town's civic life. North Stonington Village is listed on the *National Register of Historic Places* - an inventory of buildings, structures, districts, sites, and objects that merit preservation because of their significance in American culture. Although registration does not prevent an owner from demolishing or altering a property, designation does assist preservation efforts in other

ways. These include ensuring the assessment of impact from federally sponsored projects, providing eligibility for federal tax credits, and, when available, federal grants-in-aid. The North Stonington Historical Society has suggested expanding the current National Register of Historic Places district.

A “Village Preservation Overlay Area” ensures that any new construction fronting on streets within the Village is consistent with the historic character of the Village. Permitted uses are limited to those listed under the R40 High-Density Residential District, but existing non-residential uses may be changed to other non-residential uses if they are considered by the Commission to be compatible with the historic neighborhood.

Economic Development

Although the town is primarily a residential community, it also contains commercial, office, and manufacturing establishments, and a growing number of tourism-related businesses. Route 2, the principal arterial road through town, is North Stonington's primary commercial corridor. This corridor shapes the town's image for both residents and visitors alike. Equally important is the town's rural character. As stated in the report *Economic Development in North Stonington*, “North Stonington's rural landscape, natural resources and historic character are central to its economic value.” Both the housing market and the tourist sector are driven by these attributes.

Economic development in North Stonington benefits from the following:

- The town is located midway between New York City and Boston, with two interchanges on the region's primary interstate highway, I-95.
- The town has ample amounts of undeveloped land in the vicinity of these two highway interchanges with large parcels in single ownership.
- The town is in a region that is undergoing a boom, due to the growth of regional tourism and the build-out of other parts of the Boston-New York corridor.

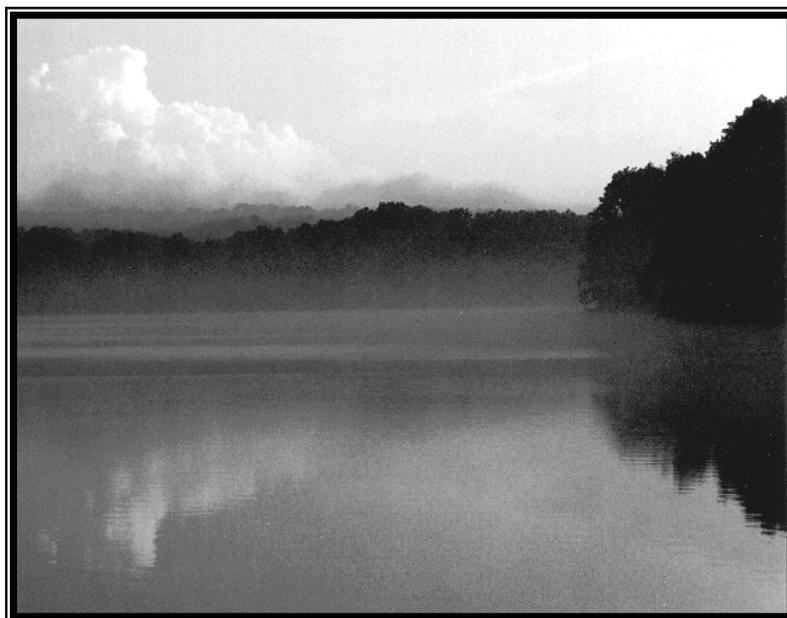
The town's largest shopping center, Holly Green, was constructed in 1990 as a Planned Business Development. This complex of New England-style buildings is home to the North Stonington Post Office, the Senior Center, professional offices, restaurants, retail establishments and the only bank in

town. Holly Green is located on Route 2 near the Village, but lacks a convenient pedestrian connection to it. Another smaller shopping area, located on Route 2 at the eastern end of Main Street, is more easily accessed from the Village but is not conducive to internal pedestrian traffic. Several office buildings and light manufacturing companies are located near the intersection of Routes 2 and 184 known as the "Rotary." These complexes are arranged in a campus-like setting.

Because of the numbers of tourists and commuters, some merchants have sought to take advantage of the Route 2 traffic. Raspberry Junction is one example that benefits by offering gift items well suited to area visitors as well as local residents. Raspberry Junction is located on the southern side of Route 2, which allows it to capture sales by Foxwoods patrons and workers as they head home. National and regional chain establishments like Bess Eaton Donuts and Dunkin' Donuts do well with locals and travelers alike. The donut shops are located on the northern side of the road, which allows them to capture sales by workers and patrons heading toward Foxwoods.

Instances of once thriving businesses, which have failed in recent years, can be seen on Route 2 and at Exit 93. Much of the difficulty experienced by the town has been in determining what type of businesses to attract to Route 2 that will benefit the town and succeed.

Several of the town's other commercial establishments such as McDonalds and the Tinaco Truck Plaza are located close to the intersection of Routes 216, 184, and I-95 at Exit 93. These are businesses that cater to I-95 travelers, hence the "Highway-Commercial" designation of the district.



Conservation and Recreation Land

As of this writing, approximately 1900 acres of land are in some form of permanent open space protection status, either under ownership of the town or a conservation organization. Local land conservation organizations active in town affairs include the North Stonington Citizens Land Alliance and Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc. The Connecticut Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, a national non-profit conservation organization, recently opened an office in North Stonington and is available to assist in the town's conservation planning.

Active recreation areas include the Rocky Hollow Recreation Area, the Fairgrounds and the schools. Wildlife management areas and Pachaug State Forest provide passive recreation opportunities for the public, with the Narragansett trail crossing through town.

Town Government and Municipal Facilities

The Town of North Stonington operates under a Board of Selectmen, Town Meeting form of government. All town board and commission meetings are open to the public. Most town facilities are located in or near the Village.

Resident State Troopers provide police protection with offices located in the Old Town Hall. Three troopers work day and evening shifts. Personnel from the Montville Barracks are called in on an as-needed basis to provide around-the-clock coverage.



The North Stonington Volunteer Fire Company, founded in 1945, operates one station in the Village and provides fire protection for the entire town. It responds to accidents that occur on I-95, receiving and contributing mutual aid to neighboring communities on an as-needed basis.

The North Stonington Ambulance Association provides emergency response throughout town. A core paid crew provides services 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. The association is supplemented by volunteers who work ambulance shifts on the first crew, work as first responders, and can form a second ambulance crew when needed.

The Town Garage is located on Wyassup Road. The Public Works department is responsible for maintaining the road system and for general maintenance of town facilities and public areas.

The Transfer Station located on Wintechog Hill Road provides solid waste disposal. Its Swap Shed, built as an Eagle Scout project, provides a 're-use' opportunity for residents. North Stonington's recycling program, begun before recycling was mandated, has reduced input into the landfill by an impressive 65 %.

The North Stonington Senior Center is located in the Holly Green complex. The building has a kitchen and large multipurpose room used by seniors during the day and for town functions in the evening. The center has approximately 150 members and provides activities for 40 to 50 on a regular basis, including Wednesday luncheons.

The Recreation Commission directs recreation services. The North Stonington Recreation Area is located on Rocky Hollow Road within walking distance of the schools. Facilities include lighted tennis and basketball courts, a baseball field, and a soccer field. There is a playground and a "Rec Shack" with rest rooms. A very popular and well-organized Little League program uses both the Recreation Area field and a baseball field located on property owned by the Grange.

Wheeler Library is owned by a private trust and is located near the schools, encouraging its use by students. Since 1990, the library has undergone renovations, which include the installation of an elevator, a meeting room, and new computer terminals. The library is actively supported by a volunteer group, Friends of Wheeler Library.

Schools

There are three public schools: North Stonington Elementary School, Wheeler Middle School, and Wheeler High School. They are located close to the Village in a campus setting. The campus is bisected by Route 2 with an underground pedestrian tunnel connecting the two sides. The North Stonington Christian Academy, a private school, is also located in town.

As of 2001, 862 students were enrolled in North Stonington's three public schools. This represented a 6.5 % drop in enrollment over the past five years. The Board of Education's projection for 2005 is for 355 elementary school students (K-5), 191 middle school students, and 237 high school students. Eighteen students will be enrolled in pre-K or other programs.

Improvements to the school facilities since 1990 include a major renovation of school buildings, construction of a combined gymnasium and auditorium, and construction of a new athletic field. The Permanent School Planning and Building Committee and Board of Education are currently conducting a *Needs Analysis* to determine future requirements.

Water Infrastructure

North Stonington is blessed with plentiful water resources, both surface and ground. Protecting the quality of ground water is one of the highest priorities for the Town of North Stonington, as it is with the State of Connecticut. The monitoring, management, and distribution of this resource involves private entities, local, state, and federal agencies, and non-profit organizations. In some instances, the supply and management of the system crosses town and state boundaries.

The vast majority of residential and commercial development is served by private wells. Public drinking water supply services in town are limited. Both the Town of Westerly Water Department and the Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority, which provide limited service in North Stonington, possess the capability to expand into and serve development along the Route 2 corridor. There is no public drinking water from a surface supply.

In March 2002, after due application to the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health, the town was declared an exclusive service provider of water systems. Working closely with the Department of Environmental Protection, the town is currently preparing North Stonington's *Exclusive Service Area Water Plan*. The intent is to identify properties with existing or

potential public water supply, ensure quality testing of the supply, and identify potential threats to the supply.

Five rivers and associated watersheds located partially or entirely within North Stonington have been identified to have the potential for potable water supply. Of particular note is North Stonington's distinction as being located in a watershed federally recognized as important. In 1988, the Pawcatuck groundwater hydrologic system in Connecticut and Rhode Island received federal designation as a Sole Source Aquifer. In 1990, the town revised its zoning regulations to impose restrictions on land use activities that could threaten its aquifers. The Aquifer Protection regulations apply to approximately 38 % of the town's land area.

Sewer Infrastructure

Sewer avoidance remains a goal of the town. Currently, no municipal sewer infrastructure exists and there is no inter-municipal agreement with any abutting municipality or entity. Disposal of sanitary wastes is by private septic system on all but a very few properties. Two properties near the border with the Town of Stonington tie into Stonington's wastewater treatment facility under private agreements. Discussions have taken place between the Towns of Stonington and North Stonington regarding a municipal sewer service agreement. To date there has been no such agreement.

The North Stonington Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) has established a sewer service district in the southern part of town. WPCA is exploring the feasibility of other sanitary waste disposal options for future commercial development. Recent technological advances have created sewage disposal options for developers. Package treatment plants like the one at the Hilltop Inn on Route 2 provide an alternative for development.

Transportation

According to the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments, transportation and congestion are major issues for the entire southeastern Connecticut region. Interstate 95 and the four state highways that traverse North Stonington provide connections to and between other towns in the region. I-95, the primary East Coast limited-access highway, has two interchanges (Exits 92 and 93) in North Stonington. Route 2, a State highway that bisects the town from east to west, is a principal access route to Rhode Island beaches, and is the state-advertised route from I-95 to

Foxwoods Resort and Casino. This results in a six-mile trip through North Stonington along its main thoroughfare. Exit 93, almost at the Rhode Island border, provides access to Routes 216 and 184, and to commercial establishments located at this end of the town. Route 184 from Exit 93 is also used as a "short cut" to Foxwoods.

Since 1992, Foxwoods has had a significant impact on traffic in the region. It contributes to an average of 19,000 vehicles per day on Route 2 in North Stonington. Route 2 has clearly borne the brunt of the increased traffic, but there is also a noticeable increase in volumes on local roads as people seek alternative routes.

Route 2 is constructed to arterial standards between Norwich and Cossaduck Hill Road (Route 201) in North Stonington. Access to Route 2 from abutting properties is of continuing concern. North Stonington has studied using access management to minimize traffic impedance on Route 2. Some of the study's recommendations have been implemented, resulting in improved traffic flow and safety.



South of the Stonington-North Stonington town line, Route 2 has been widened to four lanes. North Stonington residents point to this as the type of roadway "improvement" they do not want in their town.

Future development could heighten the desire of the Connecticut Department of Transportation to realign and widen its roads. Residents of the town are

acutely aware of the impacts this would have on their quality of life. The town is resolved to do what it can to keep Route 2 a two-lane road.

Justification and Compliance

The Plan of Conservation and Development is the document that guides a community's decision making, stating policies, goals, and standards for the physical and economic development and preservation of its natural resources. The State of Connecticut requires that each of its municipalities

review and update its Plan every ten years. North Stonington's *2003 Plan of Conservation and Development* (the "Plan") replaces the *1990 Plan of Development* that was amended in 1994 and 1996.

Data and information supporting this section are presented in the appendices of the Plan and in documents identified in its bibliography. Consistency of the Plan with the State of Connecticut's *Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut 1998-2003* and the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments' *Regional Conservation and Policy Guide for Southeastern Connecticut* are also addressed as required by the statute.

A critical step for any Plan of Conservation and Development is translating the development concepts in the plan into zoning. After review by the Planning and Zoning Commission and a public hearing, regulatory amendments to the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations and Zoning Map will be written to reflect the vision contained in this plan.

Note: For more detailed information on the topics discussed in this section, please see Background Material (Appendix A)

“WHAT WE WANT AND HOW TO GET THERE”

This plan was crafted by the people of North Stonington. Using the results of an intensive three day planning fair, knowledge gained from numerous professionals and workshops, input from town committees, and a town wide survey, a steering committee of resident volunteers wrote the following section.

From the beginning of the planning process it was clear what was important to the people of North Stonington. Two issues were on everyone’s mind: preserving the rural character of the town and lessening the burden of residential property taxes.

It has become clear to us that having desirable economic development and preserving the historic and natural resources that residents value so highly are complementary goals. North Stonington today is in a strong position to be able to plan ahead for ‘smart growth’. With thoughtful planning and the use of many of the tools described in this section, we can attract sustainable economic development, while carefully considering its impact on our quality of life.

We believe the ideas presented on the following pages will maintain North Stonington’s identity as a rural town, with the community character we all desire, and still attract business and residential development appropriate to our town.



Rural Character

Goal:

The preservation of North Stonington's rural and historic qualities and natural features is a top priority.

Throughout the current planning process North Stonington residents consistently expressed a strong desire to preserve the town's "rural character". Rural character is broadly defined to encompass farmsteads, farmlands and forests,

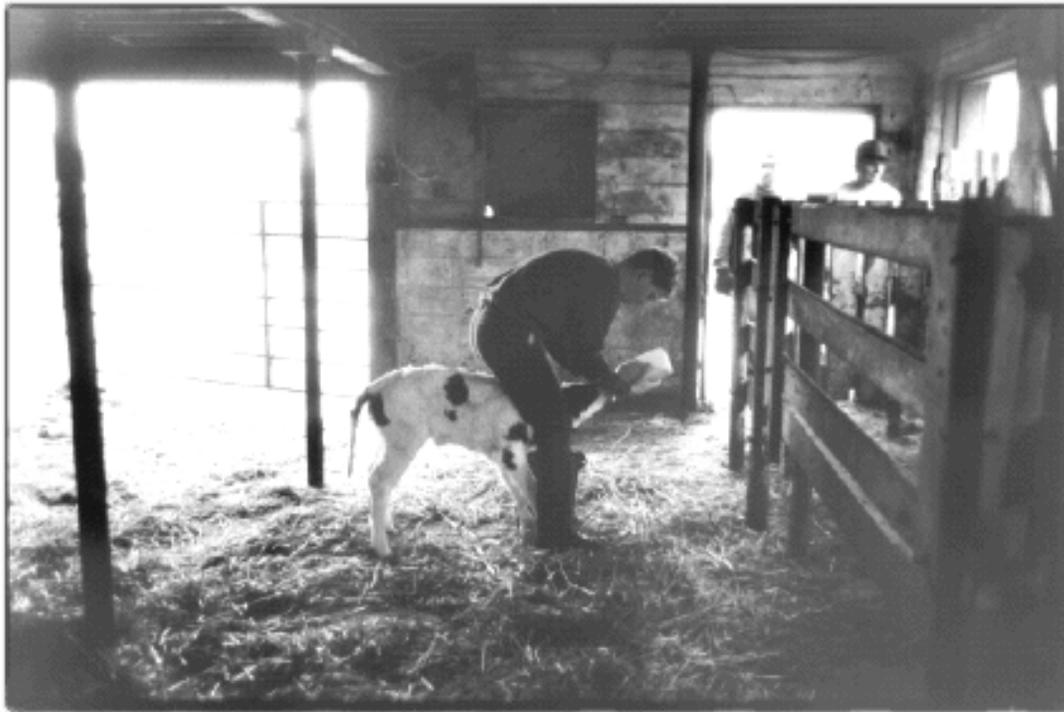
the rural road system with its roadside trees and stone walls, the traditional Village, historic homes, other early buildings, cemeteries and archaeological sites, and the many scenic views that exist throughout town.

According to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, "Connecticut is losing 9000 acres of farmland every year! The state's most fertile land is being converted to other uses at one of the fastest rates in the country." In North Stonington it is recognized that prime agricultural soils are attractive to developers as easy sites to build on. The continuing loss of traditional farming and the encroachment of new development on the landscape have generated concerns about increased traffic, environmental degradation (noise, diminished air and water quality), and light pollution of the night sky.

Action:

Emphasize the preservation of existing farms and encourage the development of new farming activity.

The Board of Selectmen is already reviewing a state law that would allow property tax abatements for dairy farmers. This initiative and possible participation in the Joint State-Town Farmland Preservation Program should be pursued as part of developing this policy.



The Beriah Lewis Farm produces 15 tons of milk per day.

A town farm policy should include funding ongoing research and marketing aimed at identifying agricultural trends and attracting new agricultural business to town. The responsibilities of the various town agencies (the

Seventy-eight percent of respondents to the planning survey 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that North Stonington should do more to attract new agricultural businesses such as vineyards, nurseries, greenhouses and specialty farms.

Selectmen, and the Planning and Zoning and Economic Development Commissions) in effecting this policy should be specified. The policy should identify any zoning changes needed to allow a variety of alternative agricultural operations that are consistent with the town's character. This policy may include new zoning regulations on farms and farm-related businesses to help keep farming economically viable (e.g. bed and breakfast and farm vacation lodgings, equestrian activities, roadside farm stands, and small-scale food processing).

Consideration should be given to allowing other small businesses on farms (non-farm related) that do not detract from the rural quality and that enhance the landowner's ability to make a living on the land, such as baking and catering or a limited number of rental apartments in existing buildings.

Regulations for accessory farm uses should include clear and measurable performance standards so that they do not disturb neighbors or the tranquility of the countryside or damage the environment.

Action:

Retain the historic character and charm of the Village, while allowing more flexibility of uses with strict design controls.

North Stonington retains its traditional small village, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The North Stonington Historical Society has indicated its willingness to pursue expanding the area encompassed in this historic district; this would offer further protections for Route 2, where it is part of the historic Village.

It is recommended that:

- The town should support and encourage the North Stonington Historical Society to pursue expanding the area included on the National Register.
- Zoning of the Village area should be reviewed. In the current Village Preservation Overlay Area non-residential uses can be permitted if they had a historic basis. The compilation of an actual list of historic uses would be a useful tool for the Planning and Zoning and Economic Development Commissions, so that such uses could be further encouraged. In addition, changes should be evaluated which would allow a more varied mix of uses that are in scale with the Village to encourage continued preservation and restoration of buildings and to maintain the Village's vitality.
- The opportunity to establish a 'Village District' pursuant to Connecticut General Statute 8-2j should be thoroughly explored for both the existing Village and any other areas in town that might be considered appropriate for mixed-use village development. The legislation is designed to give Planning and Zoning more control over design standards in areas with distinctive character (the criteria for Village Districting is discussed further in Appendix A.) This statute could enable the town to better control the appearance and design of buildings, (including alterations of existing buildings).

Residents of North Stonington describe town roads as winding two lane roads framed by trees, farm fields and stone walls. Seventy eight percent of respondents to the 2002 planning survey indicated that they ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that the town should have ordinances that protect stone walls, roadside trees, and country roads; 69 % supported regulations that require new town roads to look like country roads. In addition concerns about increased traffic and speeding were voiced throughout public participation in the planning process.



Action:

Improve the appearance of the Route 2 and 184 corridors, which are the Town’s main entryways.

As the key entry points to North Stonington, the look of the Route 2 and 184 corridors define the town’s image for both residents and visitors. Improvements in their appearance and safety should be a focus. This approach is discussed further under *Growth and Development* and *Municipal Infrastructure, Services and Government*.

Action:

Create a plan to preserve the rural character of Town roads.

- Any redesign of roads should focus on reducing speeding to avoid accidents; this is needed in both the Village and the countryside.
- Increased protection of roadside trees and stone walls should be considered.
- Improvements should be made to the current Scenic Road Ordinance to promote further designation of local scenic roads. Guidelines should be published as to what can and cannot be done with a scenic road.
- Road design regulations should reflect sensitivity to the environment, including limiting impervious surfaces based upon Best Management Practices for storm water management and reducing development impacts on habitat.
- The town should prohibit commercial buses on most town roads and limit truck traffic to local deliveries.
- Road regulations for new subdivisions need to reflect the same character as those for town roads.
- The identification of historic and scenic viewscapes should be undertaken, perhaps in partnership with one or more of the local non-profit organizations. This information should be readily available to the various town agencies as they consider policies and regulation changes.



Housing

Goal:

**North Stonington
should strive to
maintain an
economically diverse
population.**

Throughout its history as a working-class farm town, North Stonington residents of various income groups have lived, worked and played side by side. This has contributed to the strong sense of community that is so valuable to the Town. At the Planning Fair residents reaffirmed their commitment to embrace diversity.

In 2001 38% of homes sold in North Stonington went for under \$150,000, with the median price of all sales at \$163,500. Figures from 2002 show the median price of a home rising to over \$200,000. The market trend is currently towards large, high-income family homes. As housing values

escalate, it is important to ensure that there continue to be housing opportunities for the entire community.

Action:

Provide housing opportunities that are in keeping with the Town's character, dispersed throughout Town.

- Require smaller, lower priced subdivisions Conservation Growth and opportunity for this type of housing.
- Allow accessory apartments in homes, with appropriate controls to protect the quality and character of neighborhoods.
- Relax zoning restrictions on agricultural businesses to allow on-site housing for farm family members and a limited number of farm laborers.

Action:

Provide housing attractive to senior citizens and others, in areas that are convenient to transportation and services.

Planning survey results showed 68% of respondents wanting a wider range of housing choices for senior citizens. As the largest segment of the population - the 'baby boomer' generation - moves towards retirement, this need will increase. 'Down-sized' units can be economically attractive to a town because they require few town services, while providing housing for young workers and senior citizens.

- Allow Holly Green to include small residential units as part of a Mixed-use Village.
- Create housing opportunities in a high density, pedestrian-oriented, Mixed-Use Village in the eastern Industrial Zone.

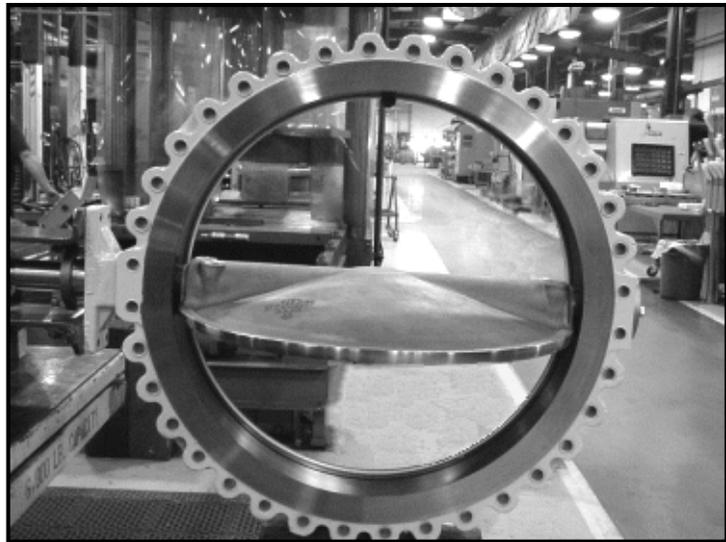
Growth and Development

Goal:

Growth should focus on residential development coupled with supportive commercial development that maintains the Town's rural attributes.

Currently, growth in North Stonington is directed toward residential development with limited areas set aside for commercial development. During the planning process, it became clear that North Stonington residents want the town to remain primarily residential.

At the same time, residents expressed the desire for commercial development that is aimed at reducing dependence on the residential tax base and that will provide products and services that meet their needs. These desires were generally expressed in the context that all new development should occur in the existing commercial zones and in a manner that would preserve the town's rural attributes.



From refining to power generation, the valves designed and manufactured at Fisher Controls are the industry standard.

Residential Growth

A common refrain is “Let’s keep North Stonington the way it is.” The question then becomes “Are the regulations in place to protect the qualities of North Stonington that residents value?”

Action:
Encourage residential growth that avoids suburban sprawl and high taxes.

The town is currently zoned primarily (81%) for two-acre residential development, although some areas are zoned for smaller lots (14 %).

A build-out of the town under current zoning indicates that more than 8000 new homes could be built, increasing the population five-fold.

This would have an enormous impact on North Stonington, suburbanizing vast areas of the town, including areas that are the most prized for their environmental and scenic characteristics.

In addition, because of its impact on educational costs, residential development in general is the primary contributor to high property taxes. **A build-out, without an accompanying increase in high-value, low-impact business development, would push the taxes on residential properties to ever-higher levels.**

Clearly, this is not what most residents view as their goal for the future. It is imperative then that zoning regulations be modified so as to encourage growth that maintains as much as possible of “the way it is,” and perhaps makes it better.

Three strategies for managing growth in ways that maintain rural character are to reduce potential build-out density of development, to use ‘smart growth’ techniques to minimize the impact of new development, and to redistribute development density from sensitive areas to areas where the environment and infrastructure can support it. All three of these strategies should be employed to achieve growth in a manner that protects the qualities that make North Stonington the place that it is. While adopting new approaches may introduce unknown risks, it is important to remember that maintaining the status quo (i.e. current zoning regulations) carries the known risk of the town’s current build-out scenario.

Action:

Reduce residential build-out potential.

While seeking to reduce the impact of residential build-out, it is important to strike a balance between the interests of the community and those of private property owners. Regulations should be designed to maximize the incentives for landowners to choose the plan of action

most beneficial to the Town, as well as to themselves. Thus, options need to be created that facilitate preservation while providing for economic opportunity.

Methods for reducing the overall density of residential development

- Use town funds to acquire key areas for preservation and/or recreation.
- Encourage landowners to donate land to the town for recreation or to a land trust for preservation.
- Require conservation or recreation set-asides, or payment in lieu, in new residential developments.
- Allow 'Residential Compound Zoning' on large parcels, where one principal home can be combined with two or three additional buildings for family, caretakers, or farming purposes. All of the buildings would be permitted on the same driveway in exchange for permanently protecting the remainder of the property as open space.
- Support and promote agriculture.
- Allow environmentally oriented non-residential uses, such as non-traditional agricultural businesses and outdoor recreation camps, with appropriate protections for the environment and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Increase the buildable square proportionally with the minimum lot size of the zone.
- Classify steep slopes, shallow-to-bedrock soils, and other areas with development limitations as unbuildable land.

Action:
Plan for
'smart growth'.

One method to minimize the impact of residential development within low-density zones would be to require new subdivisions over a certain size to be developed as Conservation Cluster Subdivisions. Such development is designed to allow new houses, while requiring that a significant portion of the parcel be set aside as undivided open space. The goal would be to protect meaningful pieces of land such as natural forests, meadows, wetlands, and farmland, and the scenic views they engender.

Figure 1 shows the kind of layout current North Stonington subdivision regulations require – a suburban sprawl development pattern (from NEMO Project Fact Sheet #9).

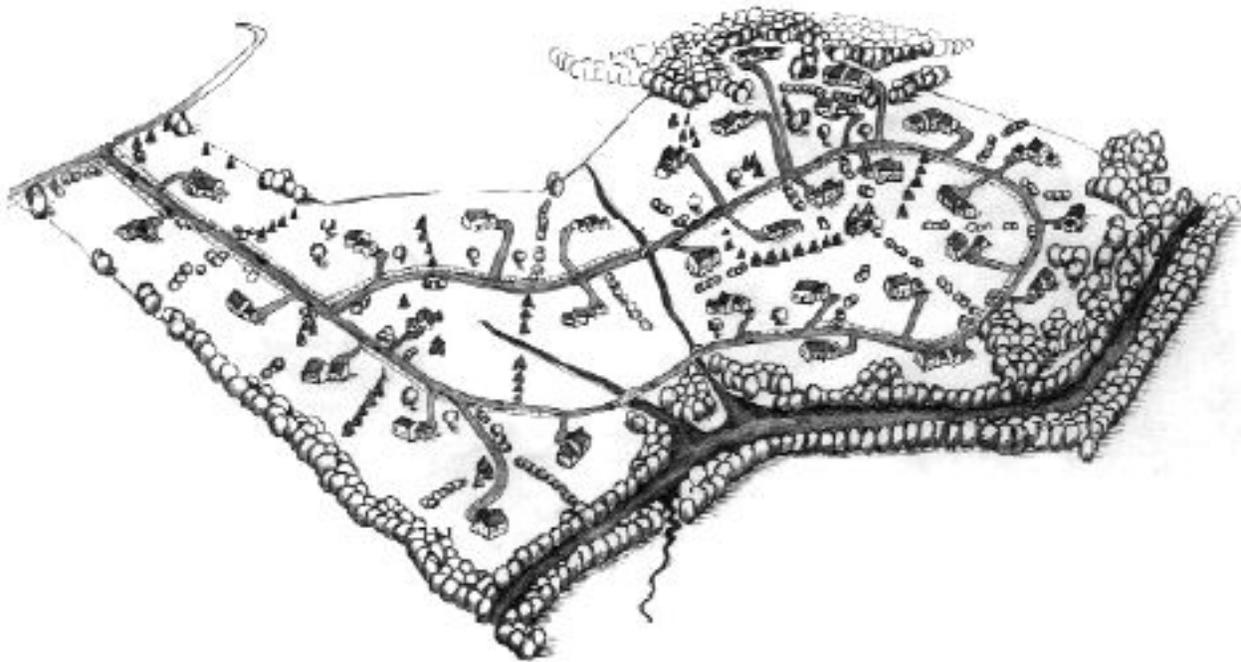


FIGURE 1. Traditional Subdivision Development

The next figure shows what is possible in the same development using a Conservation Subdivision.

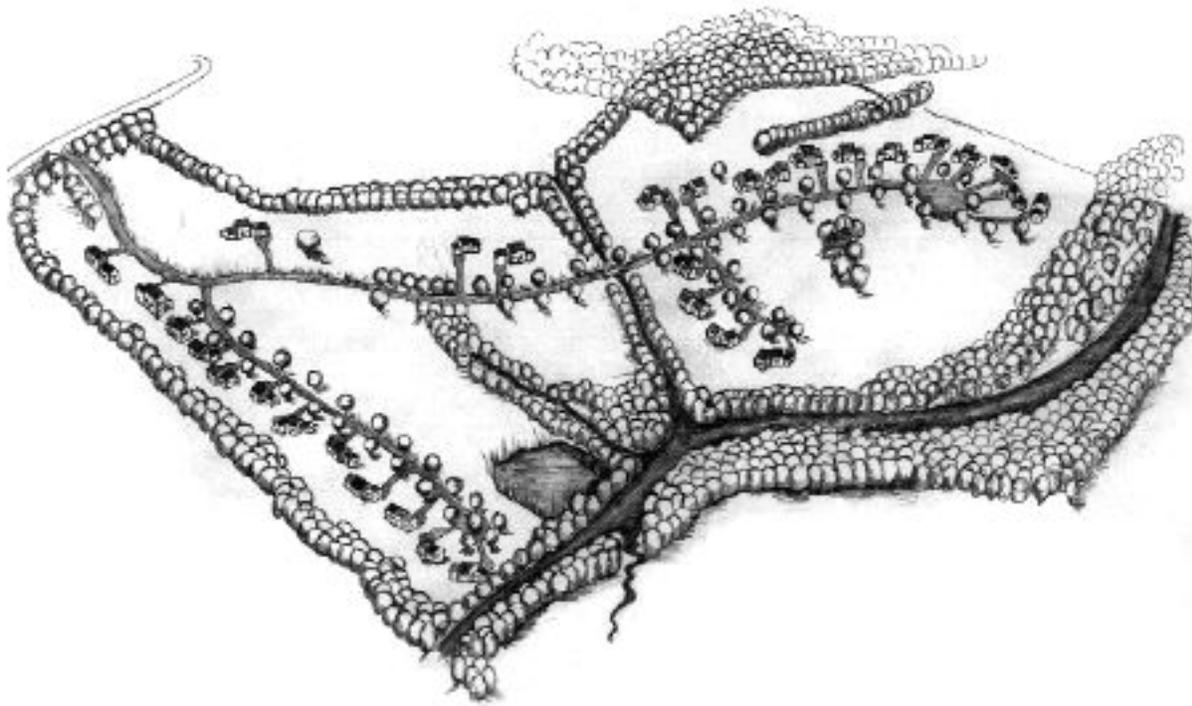


FIGURE 2. Conservation Subdivision

With this approach, significant natural areas are protected. Every house looks out over permanently protected land. The addition of walking paths through the open areas gives each homeowner access to much larger areas than they would have in the traditional approach.

Conservation Cluster Subdivisions would be developed in conjunction with a completed *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands*, helping to avoid the fragmentation of natural areas and allowing the maintenance of open land. Large parcels developed in this way tend to provide building lots that are more valuable and marketable while lowering the costs of infrastructure maintenance for the town. Cluster development, however, should still be considered a viable alternative to either traditional or conservation subdivision development.

Conservation Subdivisions differ from what has traditionally been called Cluster Zoning in that the approach emphasizes protecting important natural resource areas.

Commercial development

Action:

Encourage commercial development that supports residential growth and needs.

Commercial development should complement the primary goal of growing as a residential community while preserving the town's historic rural character. It should reduce reliance on residential properties to support town services, provide residents with desirable employment opportunities, and/or provide the types of retail offerings that residents desire. The focus should

be on revitalizing the existing commercial zones by utilizing smart growth techniques and design standards.

In the 2002 planning survey, 87% of respondents supported the idea that the "Town should more actively seek high-value, low-impact business development that will provide significant tax revenue while requiring few town services." Seventy-eight percent of survey respondents agreed that commercial development should "primarily serve residents." **Development should be encouraged that strengthens existing uses that already meet the goals described above and that generates new synergistic uses consistent with them.**



Ship Analytics International, a division of L-3 Communications, brings Connecticut's maritime expertise to the world.

Much has been said about the growing tourist industry in the region. However, only 20% of planning survey respondents supported the idea that “the town should encourage new businesses that will primarily serve tourists”. Nevertheless, there are currently small businesses in town that serve both townspeople and people passing through. Businesses such as these can be consistent with our values, provide jobs for residents, and share tax burdens necessary to support town services.



Jonathan Edwards Winery is part of Connecticut's Wine Trail.

Commercial development efforts should focus on revitalizing existing zones and supporting existing businesses. North Stonington's current commercial zones are well located to provide the infrastructure and highway access necessary for successful commercial development.

Action:

Allow development only in already existing commercial zones. Update uses in these zones to reflect town goals and market forces.

- Allow the commercial zone at the Holly Green area to become a true Mixed-Use Village area, with an interconnected street system and a mixture of uses including retail, individual residences, small apartments, and senior citizen housing (see checklist on page 36.)
- Allow commercial development on Route 2 only in the Holly Green area, the area around the Rotary, and at Exit 92. This Plan does not recommend new commercial zones on Route 2.
- Create a more flexible zoning strategy for the areas currently zoned Industrial and Office/Research, to enable a mix of uses that is more responsive to market forces.
- Encourage high value development near Exit 93 of 1-95, where it may eventually replace lower value uses in that location. The 1985 *Environmental Review Team Report* relating to the area should be used as a guide.
- Encourage renovation and use of existing buildings.
- Replace Highway Commercial zoning with Commercial.
- Revise the Industrial Zone at Lantern Hill to reflect actual uses and reclamation efforts. This zone should be distinguished from the eastern Industrial Zone.

Action:

Create standards that reflect high expectations with respect to the quality of commercial development.

- Establish design standards for all commercial development, retail and non-retail. Building design, landscape, parking, and signage should reflect the New England village aesthetic and scale. There should be a special emphasis on design standards in the area between the Route 184 Rotary and Exit 92, as it represents the primary entryway into the town.
- Encourage high-value, low-impact development that minimizes traffic impacts on Route 2.
- Revise Office/Research and Industrial Zone regulations to reflect the findings of the *1995 Environmental Review Team Report* on the area. As noted in the *1990 Plan of Development* “Zoning regulations should be revised to implement recommendations for maximum percentage of development on a lot, amount of disturbed land, storm water controls, and other factors relating to improvement in protection of water quality, appearance of the development, and traffic safety.”
- Encourage improvements to Exit 93 by ConnDOT. This area should be thought of as an important entrance to both the Town of North Stonington and the State of Connecticut.
- Require hotels to have an entrance through a central lobby and rooms accessible only through interior hallways. Provide standards for arrangement of buildings and parking on the lot.
- Add storm water regulations for all zones.

Mixed residential and commercial development

Action:

Redistribute density from sensitive areas to a Mixed-Use Village in the I-95 Industrial Zone

A method for encouraging commercial development while reducing sprawl is to allow high-density residential development in a Mixed-Use Village near I-95. It would be conducive to supportive commercial uses, which could result in an attractive village setting and scale. The area should be developed as a pedestrian oriented “town center” with interconnected streets, mass transit service, and good access to I-95.

Included in this district could be uses that meet the goals of reducing dependence on the residential tax base, along with providing employment opportunities and businesses that serve residents. Among the uses allowable might be office/research, light industrial, and retail, along with diverse types of housing.

The following checklist should be considered mandatory for allowing any mixed-use residential and commercial development in North Stonington:

- The development must be sensitive to the landscape and reflect the traditional New England village aesthetic.
- The development must provide a variety of housing opportunities, including units for lower or moderate-income residents.
- Higher residential density than the existing/underlying zone must only be allowed with the concurrent reduction of comparable residential density in another part of town.
- The development must be pedestrian oriented with plans that allow for present or future mass transit opportunities.
- The site must be able to support higher density from an environmental standpoint.

A Mixed-Use Village is not a minor undertaking and certainly would require a major commitment on the part of the town. The chances of success are greater, however, if the community “buys into” it through a cooperative planning process involving extensive public participation.

There are several ways a mixed-use village could be created, all of which should involve flexibility of use and stringent design requirements. Additional study will be necessary to determine what method is best suited to meet the goals of the *Plan of Conservation and Development*. It is essential that the Planning and Zoning Commission guide this process and that suitable consultants be hired to identify the attributes and pitfalls of each approach.

Three approaches to study are

- Creating a zone in which there is a great variety of allowed uses, with detailed performance standards and design guidelines. This option is relatively easy to implement but creates uncertainty on the part of both the townspeople and prospective developers.
- Creating a zone with a detailed “specific plan” that enumerates the uses allowed, shows street systems, specifies building types and possible locations, provides design standards, etc. The Town’s zoning regulations would give developers who agree to build according to this plan an expedited review and approval process. This requires a substantial up-front investment by the Town to devise a plan, but removes much of the uncertainty in the previous option. This option is well suited to application of the recent Village District legislation (Connecticut General Statute 8-2j).
- Creating an overlay that allows and depends upon developer creativity to propose a specific plan such as that described in the second option. The proposed plan would have to meet detailed performance standards and must include a development impact analysis. The Planned Development District which is part of the 1996 Amendment to the 1990 Plan of Development is an example of this type of approach. Enhancements to Planned Development District regulations might include the addition of a conceptual plan of the Mixed-use Village, as well as general design guidelines.

Without this or some other creative approach, much of what residents now enjoy may be lost forever. With innovative thinking, growth can occur in a manner that protects the rural character and environment of the town while attracting supportive non-residential development.

A **Transfer of Development Rights** program is an important tool with which North Stonington could maintain its rural areas while encouraging economic development in areas more suitable to high-density growth. Much of the town's most scenic, environmentally sensitive and farmable land is in residential zones. Some preservation of these areas is desirable. Conversely, the eastern Industrial Zone and the Holly Green Commercial Zone, for example, are underutilized and would benefit from high-density development, such as the mixed-use village described above.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a program that encourages landowners in sensitive environmental areas to sell their development rights at a fair market value to developers in areas more suited to intensive growth. The developer would then have the right to build at a higher density than otherwise allowed in his zone. The exchange rate would have been predetermined by the town as part of the TDR program.

The Town should consider a Transfer of Development Rights program and use professional consultants when designing and implementing one.

TDR advantages include:

- Encouraging resident-friendly commercial development by concentrating residential growth in high-density mixed-use areas
- Moving residential growth to areas with suitable infrastructure capability
- Creating dedicated open space adjacent to residences in targeted locations
- Protecting key scenic and environmentally sensitive areas from sprawl
- Protecting large areas without using public funding for acquisition or maintenance of conservation lands

TDR requires:

- The identification of sending zones (areas of particular need for preservation, either for environmental purposes or to maintain rural character)
- The identification of receiving zones (areas where increased residential density can be supported with infrastructure and will be compatible with town character)
- The creation of a development rights market (setting the value of development rights)
- The recording of conservation easements (by the town and conservation commission)

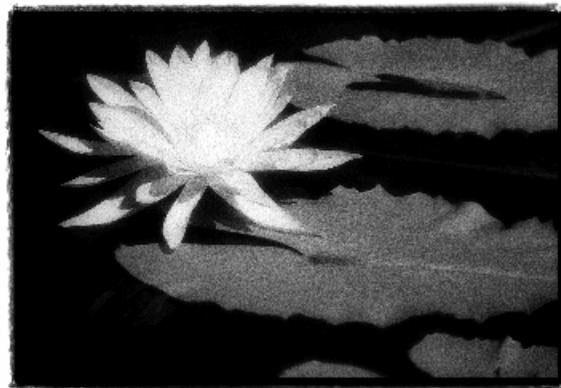
Natural Resources, Open Land, and the Environment

Goal:

The Town's natural resources and environmental qualities must be preserved and protected.

North Stonington's landscape, with its abundant fields, rolling hills, and numerous brooks and ponds, remains largely unspoiled today. For many years the town has had a great deal of interest and activity in the preservation of open land and the protection of the environment. The North Stonington Citizens Land Alliance, the Avalonia Land Conservancy, and, most recently, the Nature Conservancy have contributed to preservation efforts. Nevertheless, there are currently only 1,900 of the town's approximately 36,000 acres that are permanently protected from development. The State of Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection has significant holdings in North Stonington (3,808 acres), but these are only temporarily protected lands.

Results of the Community Planning Fair in May 2001 and the town-wide survey of 2002 showed strong support for land conservation and environmental protection. Clearly most residents recognize that maintaining open land enhances the quality of life and is beneficial to the town's overall tax position, since such property makes little or no demand on town services. However, prior to this current planning process, there was no coordinated plan for how to define, evaluate, prioritize, and protect open space and environmental resources.



The Conway School of Landscape Design was retained by the Steering Committee to begin work on an open space plan. The Draft *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands* that was produced includes the start of a natural resource inventory and many preliminary maps and references. When completed, the *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands* will provide a coherent framework and essential background information to support future planning decisions. It will allow the Town to apply for grant money, not otherwise available.

An important step is to complete the recreation portion of the *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands* with broad public participation. Town-owned land should be evaluated for recreational use and/or conservation. It may then be necessary to develop a multi-year capital budget for implementation of the recreation component of the plan; it may be possible to solicit grant funding and private contributions.

The following recreation goals have been identified:

Residents have expressed the need for safe pedestrian and bicycle pathways along busier roads in town and along much of Route 2: to connect Holly Green to the Village, the Rocky Hollow Recreation Center to the schools, and Kingswood-Meadow Wood to the schools and Village. Pedestrian walkways can provide a safe and convenient means of getting from place to place, while enhancing local businesses

Action:
Establish a group of community volunteers to complete *The Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands* in greater detail.

Action:
Establish a system of trails, paths, and walkways that provide recreational opportunities and connect developed areas with each other and with the countryside.

- Create a Natural Resource Inventory using techniques furnished by Non-point Source Management (NEMO) to serve as a guide for land use and development. Notable trees and wetlands should be identified.
- Conduct a more intensive study of the Town's biodiversity. Investigate organizing a biodiversity event.

- Encourage developers to reserve land shown as part of a trail or path alignment for possible public use.

Action:
Expand and enhance active and passive outdoor recreational opportunities.

maps are complete and accurate, using the Geographic Information System (GIS.)

s.

Town committees and local organizations have voiced the need for additional areas to accommodate organized sports.

The desire to consider establishing a Community Center that might include either an indoor/outdoor pool or a swimming beach has also been noted.

Natural Resource & Environmental Goals have been identified:

- Protect large, unfragmented forests, notable trees, and corridors for wildlife.
- Preserve farmland. Encourage other land uses in town that require large areas of open land (e.g. sustainable forestry, hunting and fishing clubs, summer camps).
- Identify and protect unique and sensitive habitat, rare species, vernal pools (including surrounding uplands), and geological formations.
- Protect lakes, watercourses, and ground water.
- Protect unique and significant natural features and view sheds such as Lantern Hill, Shunock Watershed, Chester Main and Wintechog Hill.
- Protect steep slopes from development.
- Establish and protect corridors/connections between protected open lands.

Maintain buffer areas

The following recommendations should be incorporated into the final draft of the *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands*.

- Add/connect to existing conserved parcels as identified by the *Natural Resource Inventory Map*.
- Create a Water Protection Mission Statement that clearly states the desire on the part of the town to protect its water resources from polluted runoff.
- Support the Nature Conservancy's Pawcatuck Borderlands Project.
- Create a Land Acquisition Fund (Section 7-131r of Connecticut General Statutes) and investigate the use of impact fees to fund open space protection.
- Coordinate land acquisition/stewardship with land trusts, the Town, and the State.

Recognizing the importance of these tasks, the Town should consider creating a Conservation Commission to focus on execution of the *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands*. This could evolve out of the volunteer committee that completes the Plan.

Municipal Infrastructure, Services, and Government

Goal:

North Stonington needs to expand services, infrastructure and facilities in a way that minimizes impacts on taxpayers while meeting the needs of citizens.

Currently most of North Stonington's government offices are conveniently located in the Village. The schools are in a unified campus and the main recreation area is close by. Town

buildings should continue to be centrally located, and should strive to stay in their existing buildings.

While there have been many homes built in the last ten years, the population has not increased dramatically. With the school population expected to decline in the coming years, the town's escalating education cost comes from unfunded mandates by the State of Connecticut.



Present infrastructure can serve the town well; the Selectmen have stated they don't see any need for major expansion in the

next ten years. The Selectmen and other town committees have raised the following issues. They need to be reviewed individually before being adopted.

Action:

Strive to keep facilities in existing buildings.

- Renovate and expand the Town Hall facilities at their present location.

- Expand the firehouse at its present location to accommodate upgraded equipment, and consider housing the fire emergency and ambulance services under one roof.
- Construct and open a bulky waste staging area at the Transfer Station.
- Pave and possibly expand the town garage storage and operating area.

While keeping municipal facilities in present locations is the 10-year goal of this plan, that does not mean that we should neglect planning for more-distant-future municipal land needs. Mixed-use village planning, for example, would seem to provide an obvious opportunity for long-term municipal facilities planning.

Action:

Periodically re-evaluate protection services. Actively promote volunteerism.

Demands on the town's emergency, fire, ambulance, and police services increase with regional development and increased traffic on the roads. The town should periodically re-evaluate the effectiveness of emergency medical services and the volunteer fire department and should consider creating a Public Safety Commission. Volunteerism should be promoted. Information about what is involved in joining the different companies and how to go about doing it needs to be easily accessible. The town

should periodically re-evaluate the cost-effectiveness of participating in the Resident State Trooper program.

Action:

Keep recreation facilities centralized.
Plan for future needs.

Recreation is an important part of life in North Stonington. Many families have different members of the family engaged in organized activities at the same time. The close proximity of the schools and the Rocky Hollow Recreation Area has been a huge advantage to residents. The Rocky Hollow Recreation Area should be upgraded and expanded as usage warrants and should be connected to the school campus via a pedestrian

walkway.

There is also a perceived need for additional playing facilities for the Little League and other active recreations. The town should assist in finding and securing facilities. Recreation needs should be carefully planned with a view to coordinating and centralizing various facilities. This issue is discussed further in the *Natural Resources, Open Lands, and the Environment* section and will be an important part of the *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands*.

The town's infrastructure policies should complement rural character and protect natural resources.

Action:

Create a Water Plan.
Protect the aquifer.

In 2002 the town of North Stonington was declared to be an exclusive service provider of water. The town should study the long-term water needs of the town, and the region as a whole, and plan for the best way of protecting and exploiting its water resource. Protection issues should include pollution and security risks. In addition to preparing a town

Water Plan in accordance with Connecticut Health Department guidelines and requirements, town water planners should consider protecting water resources and recharge areas in the context of the *Plan of Conservation and Recreation Lands*.

Action:

Create an Energy Conservation Plan.

The State of Connecticut realizes the importance of an energy policy and mandates that towns plan for the use of solar and other renewable forms of energy, energy conservation, and energy efficient patterns of development.



North Stonington's brooks once powered a thriving mill industry.

Action:

Maintain, protect, and build roads to be in harmony with the countryside.

Roads are an important part of a town's identity. Road standards should reflect this. The following steps should be taken:

- Update town road construction standards to allow that new roads are rural in appearance.
- Modify road standards to provide flexibility for site-specific environmental needs such as amphibian crossings, minimal destruction of habitat, and optimum storm-water management.
- Have the tree warden participate in the Tree Warden Workshop sponsored by the Connecticut Urban Forestry Council.
- Maintain the Rotary and restore its traditional flowering trees and plants.

- The Planning and Zoning Commission should consider incentives for developers who use passive solar energy techniques, as defined in subsection (b) of section 8-25 of the General Statutes, in planning a residential subdivision development.
- Municipal facilities should have an energy conservation plan which includes a requirement that new municipal buildings have a site design that maximizes solar energy potential. The town should consider getting their electricity from a renewable energy supplier when available.
- The town should consider an ordinance protecting the right to use solar energy.

Route 2 is the most traveled road in North Stonington and serves as the main entrance to the town from both east and west. Despite heavy traffic, it is still a scenic two-lane country road, canopied by old-growth trees. Widening Route 2 to four lanes would have a disastrous effect on the town.

The town should implement access management for Route 2 as recommended in the *1998 Wilbur Smith Route 2 Corridor Study*.

Action:

Do everything possible to keep Route 2 from being widened to four lanes; Protect and improve its scenic qualities.

Action:

Consider a policy allowing private and town-owned and operated "decentralized" sewage treatment plants.

With modern technology, sewers are not needed for certain types of development, as is witnessed by the package sewage treatment system at The Hilltop Inn on Route 2. Septic systems should continue to be the method of treatment for most residential use.

The Town should concentrate on developing a policy regarding decentralized treatment plants and

should consider other options which may become available in the future.

Action:

Give boards and commissions access to professional guidance and resources so they can better serve North Stonington.

As North Stonington grows, governing it becomes more complex. The town should consider restructuring overburdened boards and commissions, in order to better handle expanded responsibilities.

- Provide additional funding to the Economic Development Commission, for professional consultation, staff assistance, marketing, etc.
- Establish a Conservation Commission separate from the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission. The first task of this commission would be to implement the *Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands*.

Action:

Periodically upgrade and modernize zoning and building procedures in a way that reflects the needs of the Town.

Zoning requirements should reflect actual practices, and should make the job of the Zoning Enforcement Officer, the Building Inspector and other town officials easier.

The town should consider adopting the following regulations and procedures:

- Adopt "Plot Plan" specifications for residential dwellings.
- Require an "As-Built Plan" following construction.
- Update Site Plan specifications (806).
- Provide definitions in Appendix A of the *Zoning Regulations* for all uses listed in the Table of Uses.
- Update regulations to current Connecticut General Statutes requirements.
- Require AutoCAD-compatible CD-ROM of boundary surveys and assessor's maps in Subdivisions.
- Give the Planning and Zoning Commission the option of requiring that developers pay for the cost of consultants, monitoring, and inspection during construction.

Implementation

Goal:

The public should continue to be involved in town planning and the implementation process to ensure that town government is responsive to its citizens.

Completing the *Plan of Conservation and Development* is an important first step in shaping the future of North Stonington. However the real value of the Plan is in its implementation.

The process of creating the *Plan of Conservation and Development* has been a positive forum for residents, allowing them to be heard on town issues.

Citizen support and involvement will ensure that the Plan is carried out.

There are many ways to inform the public, and to encourage them to participate. The town should use all the means available to it to reach out to residents.



Action:

Encourage the use of existing avenues of communication to keep residents involved and informed.

- Require the Annual Report to include a progress report on the implementation of the *Plan of Conservation and Development*.
- Use local organization newsletters and flyers to pass along town information.
- Upgrade the town's web site to include municipal documents, plans, and schedules.
- Encourage utilities to provide the town with high speed Internet connection.
- Publish all town legal notices and advertisements in the same newspaper.
- Encourage the participation of young citizens in town government through school presentations and awareness programs.

Action:

Review the *Plan of Conservation and Development* annually.

Recommended by the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association, annual review of the *Plan of Conservation and Development* will keep the town focused on its goals and at the same time will satisfy the statutory requirement of updating the Plan every ten years. It keeps citizens involved, and provides a forum for addressing new conservation and development goals. The Planning and Zoning Commission should consider setting aside an annual 'planning month' for this purpose.

Action:

Move forward promptly with changes to land use regulations and other measures.

Enacting this Plan requires regulation changes and further study of important issues. It will take a real commitment from the Planning and Zoning Commission to get the job done. The first order of business of the Commission should be to appoint resident committees to complete planning and help with implementation.

The Planning and Zoning Commission should:

- Conduct quarterly Planning and Zoning meetings specifically to address planning functions and progress in implementing the Plan.
- Appoint a committee to complete the *Plan of Conservation and Recreation Lands*.
- Appoint a committee to study flexible mixed-use village zoning for the eastern Industrial and/or Office Research zones.
- Review and prioritize possible changes to the zoning and subdivision regulations and ordinances listed in the Plan, and establish a schedule for their revision.

Proposed Regulation Changes and Ordinances to Protect the Rural and Historic Character of North Stonington.

New Zoning Regulations

1. Update uses in the Village, allowing historical uses
2. Add 'Village Districting' per Connecticut General Statutes to North Stonington Village and other appropriate areas
3. Regulate fence design and placement
4. Add Driveway and curb cut standards
5. Implement Route 2 driveway access management plan
6. Regulate drive-through establishments
7. Allow specialized agricultural buildings

Existing Zoning Regulations

1. Update earth excavation and mining approval guidelines (709)
2. Update home occupation approval guidelines (704)
3. Update outdoor lighting fixtures (617)
4. Add building and parking standards to hotel/motel regulations (721)

New Subdivision Regulations

Require subdivision lot lines follow natural boundaries and stone walls, and that stone walls be preserved

New Ordinances

1. Regulate special events
2. Control noise pollution
3. Control outdoor illumination
4. Regulate abandoned structures regarding unsafe conditions

Existing Ordinances

Change road standards to protect stonewalls and roadside trees and to ensure that new roads look like country roads

Proposed Regulations and Ordinances Designed to Provide and Protect Natural Resources, Open Lands, and the Environment

New Zoning Regulations

1. Add Conservation Subdivision zoning (Completion of an open space plan is a prerequisite to this regulation)
2. Consider construction on steep slopes and shallow-to-bedrock soils

Existing Zoning Regulations

1. Add storm water management (to include the sub-watershed)
2. Update uses and hazardous substances requiring control in the Aquifer Protection Overlay Area **(406)**
3. Add landscape criteria to prohibit non-native, invasive plants **(615)**

New Subdivision Regulations

Require either open space set asides or a fee in lieu of open space

Existing Subdivision Regulations

Add subdivision road standards or cite new ordinance **(Section 6.2)**

New Ordinances

Establish a fund for the acquisition of land for conservation and recreation

Proposed Regulation Changes and Ordinances Designed to Manage Growth

New Zoning Regulations

- Provide standards for congregate care facilities in appropriate areas
- Establish a Mixed-use Village Overlay or Zone and create regulations for it
- Change Highway Commercial to Commercial

Existing Zoning Regulations

- Update all signage to be consistent with the town's rural character (905)
- Allow Bed & Breakfasts in unconnected buildings (719)
- Update the western Industrial Zone

Existing Zoning Regulations

- Review appropriateness of the way uses are allowed ("Permitted by Right" (P) or "Special Permit" (S)) with respect to the zone's definition and objectives
- Review appropriateness of zone's or overlay's **title** and **definition** with respect to its objectives
- Review appropriateness of zone's or overlay's **delineation** (size, shape, and location) with respect to its definition and objectives
- Review appropriateness of zone's **uses** or the overlay's **provisions** with respect to its definition and objectives

Proposed Regulations to Improve Municipal Infrastructure, Services, and Government

New Zoning Regulations

1. Require "Plot Plan" for residential dwellings
2. Define "Plot Plan" specifications
3. Require "As-built Plan" following construction
4. Require monetary fines for violations

Update Existing Zoning Regulations

1. Update Site Plan specifications **(806)**
2. Provide definitions in Appendix A for all uses listed in the Table of Uses
3. Perform general housekeeping and updating to current Connecticut General Statute requirements

New Subdivision Regulation

1. Specify off-site road improvement requirements

Existing Subdivision Regulations

1. Update Subdivision Plan specifications **(Section 5)**
2. Update to current Connecticut General Statute requirements

Existing Ordinances

Create separate 'Conservation' and 'Inland Wetlands and Watercourses' Commissions

RECOGNITION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Conway School of Landscape Design

Michele Albee Michael Cavanaugh Jason Long

Committee Assistance

Robert Boissevain, *Economic Development Commission*

Kevin Essington, *The Nature Conservancy, Inc.*

Madeline Jeffery, President, *North Stonington Citizens Land Alliance*

Arthur Jerbert, *Board of Education and PSPBC*

Charles Morgan, *Inland Wetlands and Watercourses, and Conservation Commission*

Anne Nalwalk, President, *Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc.*

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Planning Fair Facilitators

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Geoff Kaufman

Sheila Lyons

Heidi Samokar

Jenifer Herbst

Andrew Maynard

Mary Thacher

Eileen Jachym

Pam McDonald

Marsha Thompson

Community Planning Fair Assistance

- Vinny Joyce and Sodexo Marriott, Inc. for buffet supper, luncheon, and refreshments.
- Dunkin' Donuts of North Stonington for Saturday's refreshments.
- Bess Eaton Donuts for Sunday's refreshments.
- Lady Buggs Flowers & More for floral arrangements.
- The North Stonington Elementary School Band,
- The cast of "Lucky, Lucky, Hudson," and
- The First Grade "Earth Day Chorus" for lunch time entertainment.
- The staff of the North Stonington Schools for the facility.
- Susan Ames for Childcare.
- Mary Cooper, Pat Payne, Paula Pintauro, and Art Pintauro for greeting residents.

Community Planning Fair Exhibitors

- Gifted and Talented Program's *Aquatic Life* exhibit
- Kristi Williams' 6th Grade Science Classes' exhibits depicting life in North Stonington
- North Stonington Citizens Land Alliance
- North Stonington Garden Club
- North Stonington Grange
- Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc.
- Board of Finance
- Eastern Pequot Indians of Connecticut
- Economic Development Commission
- First Grade's *Study of Pond Life* exhibit
- North Stonington Historical Society
- North Stonington Little League
- North Stonington Parent Teacher Organization
- North Stonington Prayer Watch
- North Stonington Volunteer Fire Company
- Permanent School Planning and Building Committee
- Planning and Zoning Commission
- Representative Diana Urban
- Visiting Nurses Association of Southeastern CT
- Wheeler Library
- Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association
- Wyassup Lake Association
- 6th and 7th Grade's *Invention Convention* exhibit
- 6th, 7th, and 8th Grade's *Geography Bee* exhibit
- 4-H Butter and Beef

Participating Staff

Joyce Elias, Assessor
Dick Cooper, Planning Coordinator

Carol Caron, PZC Administrative Assistant
Cheryl Konsavitch, IWC Secretary

PHOTO CREDITS

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Appendices

Background Material

Appendix A

Plan for Conservation and Recreation Lands

Appendix B
(pending future adoption)

Town-Wide Survey Questionnaire

Appendix C

Bibliography and Reference Material