

Bethel

2007 Plan of Conservation and Development



Adopted: October 9, 2007
Effective Date: October 15, 2007



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The residents of Bethel

The Planning and Zoning Commission

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WELCOME



October 9, 2007

To the Reader:

This Plan provides goals and guidance for both **conservation** and **development** in the Town of Bethel over the next ten years. To assist you as you read this Plan and as a guide to its future implementation, we offer the following statement of beliefs and aspirations:

Bethel is a residential sanctuary. We must proactively preserve, protect, promote, and enhance its assets. Our thriving downtown Village is enviable in our area of Fairfield County; our outlying residential areas are semi-rural and underdeveloped. We wish to encourage preservation of the town's peaceful and spacious nature. Increasing Bethel's beautiful, protected open spaces is our highest priority. Commercial growth is important to Bethel's future and we will encourage opportunities for businesses while assuring that commercial development is in harmony with the town's residential character. We wish to reflect the positive qualities of Bethel's Village in future commercial development in the Route 6/Stony Hill area.

The Village - We wish to encourage preservation of these Village Values:

- A community of generations that welcomes residents of all ages.
- A friendly, casual, and safe community with picturesque and historic village buildings, walkways, shops and restaurants.
- A residential haven, dotted with greenspace that continues to provide well-designed and diverse housing, within walking distance of transportation and the Village's commercial offerings.

Beyond the Village – We wish to encourage the spacious and underdeveloped beauty of our outlying residential areas:

- Preservation and increase of Bethel's open spaces is our highest priority.
- Appropriate clustered housing will provide more opportunities for open spaces.
- Environmental sensitivity will continue to guide new residential development.

Commercial Growth – We wish to encourage businesses to locate in and remain in Bethel and participate in the life of our Town:

- Growth of the commercial offerings in the downtown area should be consistent with the charm and historic nature of the Village and its residential character.
- In all commercial development, whether in the Village, on Route 6 or in between, aesthetic appropriateness that is consistent with the charm of our town will be paramount.
- Environmental sensitivity and open space preservation will be critical as we encourage commercial growth in Bethel.

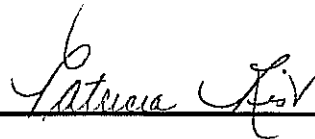
Planning and Zoning Commission, Town of Bethel

We, the undersigned members of the Bethel Planning and Zoning Commission, do hereby, this 9th day of October, in the year 2007, accept and adopt this Plan of Conservation and Development:

Peter S. Olson, Chairman



Patricia Rist, Vice-Chairman



Gabrielle Reynolds, Secretary



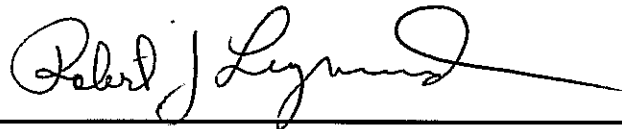
Christopher Bresloff



Kitty Grant



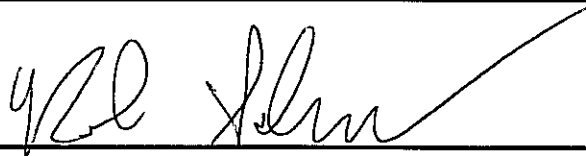
Robert Legnard



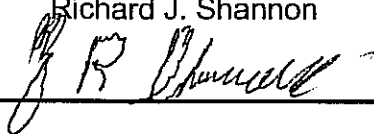
John Lennon



Rob Schweitzer



Richard J. Shannon



INTRODUCTION



Vision and Mission of this Plan

Bethel is a blossoming community built on Village Values. The town is welcoming to all people, young and old. At its heart is a flourishing New England village center that is distinct in northwestern Fairfield County. We pride ourselves on our diverse housing opportunities, on our growing base of commercial development, and on our commitment to the protection of open spaces and other natural resources.

For the future, balancing the preservation of our village community and the natural beauty of our surroundings while embracing the inevitability of growth will be our greatest challenge. To achieve these two seemingly contrary objectives, we will:

- protect our village character through careful architectural review and community planning;
- encourage new housing opportunities that will enhance our diversity;
- work to strengthen our regional position as a complete community with cultural, recreational and educational offerings; and
- encourage commercial development that builds the town's economic base while remaining architecturally consistent with our values.

Most important, we will be responsible; we will take the greatest care to ensure that our development as a community is mindful of the need to conserve Bethel's precious environmental resources.

While there may be refinements to this Plan over time, it is anticipated that this overall philosophy will remain relevant during the next ten years.

About Plans of Conservation & Development

A Plan of Conservation and Development is a tool for guiding the future of a community. While this Plan is primarily a statement of recommendations addressing the conservation and development of Bethel (the physical layout), this Plan is also intended to address the social and economic development of the community.

The goals and recommendations of the Plan reflect an overall consensus of what is considered desirable for Bethel and its residents in the future.

Prior Bethel Plans

Bethel has a strong history of preparing and adopting Plans of Development. The town adopted its first Plan of Development in 1958. The Plan was updated in 1969 and again in 1984. The most recent plan was adopted in 1997 and was developed with the assistance of Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart and the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials.

Planning Process

The process of preparing this comprehensive Plan of Conservation and Development (the Plan) for Bethel has been overseen and coordinated by the Commission with the help of planning consultants from Planimetrics. During the process of preparing this Plan, community input was gathered through several public meetings and workshops with residents, boards and commission members, and Town Staff to discuss issues that they felt were important to them and the community. The combined results indicate that open space protection; improvements to community facilities; natural resource protection; preservation of community character and historic resources; and business development are the most important issues facing Bethel.

Public Input

Public meeting participants indicated that they were proudest of Bethel's public lands and natural resources; the Town's educational facilities and library; and the Village Center's historic character.

Transportation systems, including insufficient alternatives to auto travel and heavy truck traffic through residential neighborhoods; overly dense development in some areas; and insufficient recreational facilities throughout the Town, were noted as issues that residents of Bethel were most unhappy about. Other concerns included insufficient protection for open space parcels, insufficient protection for historic resources, and inadequate protection of natural resources.

Availability of Planning Documents

All background materials used in the preparation of this Plan are stored with the Land Use Department in Town Hall. In addition, copies of this Plan and prior plans are found in both the Land Use Office and the Library.

CONDITIONS & TRENDS

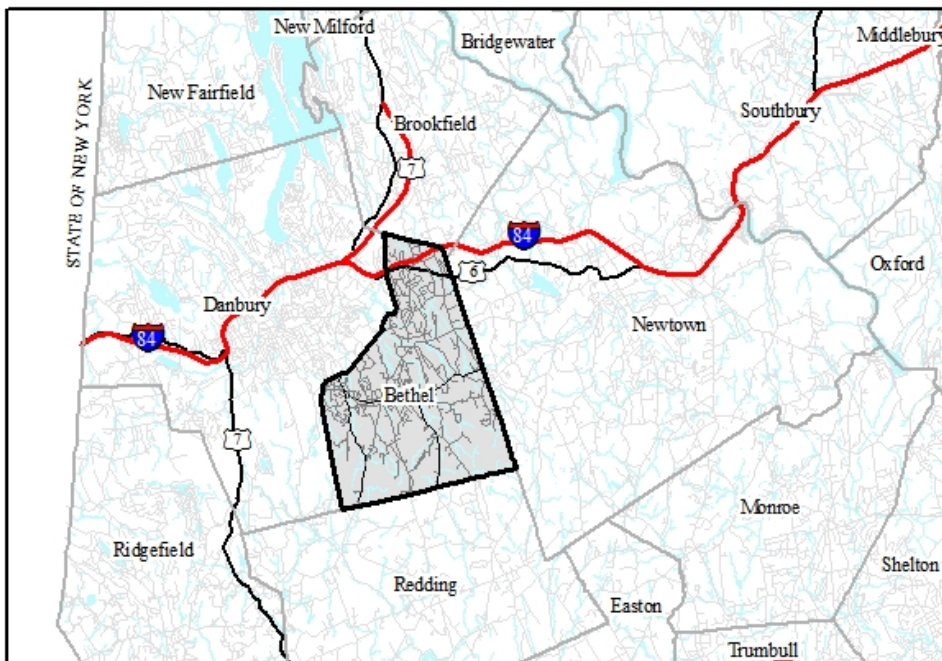


Overview

Bethel is located in northeastern Fairfield County east of Danbury, and mostly south of Route 84. An old community, even by Connecticut standards, it is a beautiful Town with a lively mixed use village center, rural and suburban areas of wooded residential and modern technical commercial parks. The town is approximately seventeen square miles. According to the U.S. Census, there were more than 18,000 people living in Bethel in 2000.

Bethel is a rural/suburban community, approximately 17 square miles in size, located near Danbury in southwestern Connecticut. The town is bounded on the west by Danbury, on the north by Brookfield, on the east by Newtown and on the south by Redding. According to the 2000 Census, Bethel had a population of about 18,000 people.

This chapter outlines conditions and trends affecting the Town of Bethel as the Plan of Conservation and Development was being prepared.



Regional Location Map

Historic Context

The land area that became Bethel was originally part of the eastern quarter of Danbury. From the time of the first settlement in the late 1600s to the mid 1700s, settlers of this area had to travel to Danbury for church services and town meetings. Then, in 1759, permission was granted to establish a separate Congregational parish. In 1855, permission was granted to establish a separate Municipality to be known as Bethel (“a hallowed place”).

Early industry in Bethel included agriculture, hat factories, shoe-making, and comb-making from local cow horns. Agriculture and forests were the primary land uses outside of the Village, and artisan producers of hats, shoes, and combs shaped the Village Center. Bethel’s largest neighbor, Danbury, was promoted as the “Hat City of the World,” but at times there were more hat factories in Bethel than Danbury.

Regional Context

Bethel is located in the Housatonic Valley and is a member of the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials (HVCEO), an association of ten municipalities surrounding Danbury. Within this region, Bethel plays several roles.

Bethel is a major jobs center. The Department of Labor reported that there were about 6,000 jobs in Bethel in the year 2000; more recent data from the Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) indicates that there are about 7,500 jobs in the community. This is a robust level of employment and an indication of strength in the local economy. Bethel businesses provide employment opportunities to residents of the region.

Since Bethel residents comprise a work force of about 10,750 workers, Bethel “exports” workers to the region as a whole. Bethel workers support businesses in other communities in the region.

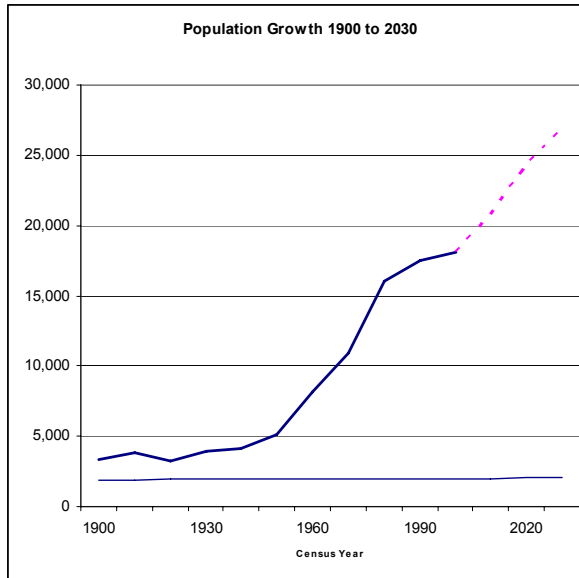
Finally, as will be shown later in this report, Bethel has a diverse housing stock. As a result, Bethel provides housing opportunities ranging from apartments and “starter homes” up to “mini-estate” homes on several acres of land.

Bethel is an integral part of the region. According to “journey to work” data from the 2000 Census, Bethel residents commute far and wide for employment, predominantly to job locations which are south and west of Bethel. Most of the workers that commute to jobs in Bethel come from Bethel, Danbury, and communities to the north and east.

People of Bethel

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Bethel had a population of 18,067 in the year 2000. This represents an increase of about three percent (526 people) from the 1990 Census. While Bethel grew faster than many surrounding towns and the state as a whole from 1940 until 1990, population growth slowed in the 1990s.

According to the University of Connecticut's State Data Center, (UCONN SDC) released in May of 2007, population growth will continue in Bethel for decades to come at a slow but steady rate. By 2010, UCONN SDC estimates the population in Bethel will be 20,749 and by 2030 UCONN SDC estimates that nearly 27,000 people may live in Bethel.



Population History

Year	Population
1900	3,327
1910	3,792
1920	3,201
1930	3,886
1940	4,105
1950	5,104
1960	8,200
1970	10,945
1980	16,004
1990	17,541
2000	18,067

1900 - 2000 Census.

Population Projections

Year	Population
2010	20,749
2020	24,338
2030	26,876

UCONN State Data Center: 5/2007

Percent Population Change 1970 to 2000

	1970s	1980s	1990s	1970 - 2000
Bethel	46%	10%	3%	65%
Brookfield	33%	10%	11%	62%
Newtown	13%	9%	20%	48%
Redding	30%	9%	4%	48%
Danbury	19%	8%	14%	47%
Region	25%	10%	13%	56%
State	3%	6%	4%	12%

U.S. Census

Components of Population Change

Population change results from natural change (births minus deaths) and net migration (move in minus move out). Through the 1970s, much of Bethel's growth was fueled by in-migration. In the 1990s, there was net out-migration from Bethel. These changes reflect an aging population and smaller household size, a trend seen throughout the country.

Components of Population Change

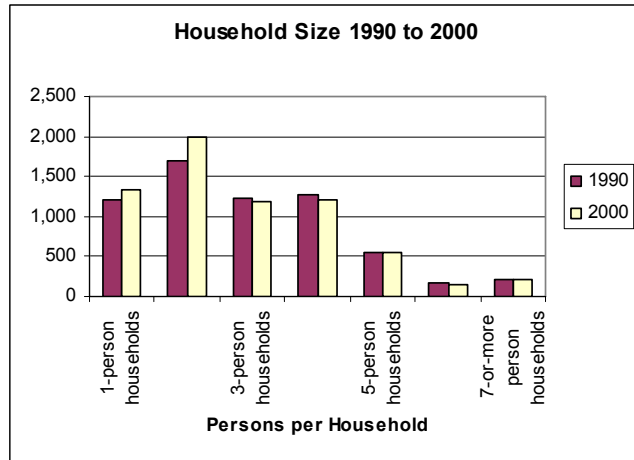
	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
Total Change	3,096	2,745	5,059	1,537	526
Births	1,464	1,796	2,040	2,418	2,466
Deaths	690	805	942	981	1,061
Natural Change	774	991	1,098	1,437	1,405
Net Migration	2,322	1,754	3,961	100	(879)

Connecticut State Department of Health

Persons per Household / Household Size

The average household size in Bethel according to the 2000 Census was 2.76 persons, down from 2.84 in 1990. This is slightly lower than in the neighboring towns of Newtown, Brookfield, and Redding and slightly higher than in Danbury.

As can be seen from the chart *Household Size 1990 to 2000*, almost all of the change in housing unit size during the 1990s was the result of growth in the number of one-person and two-person households.

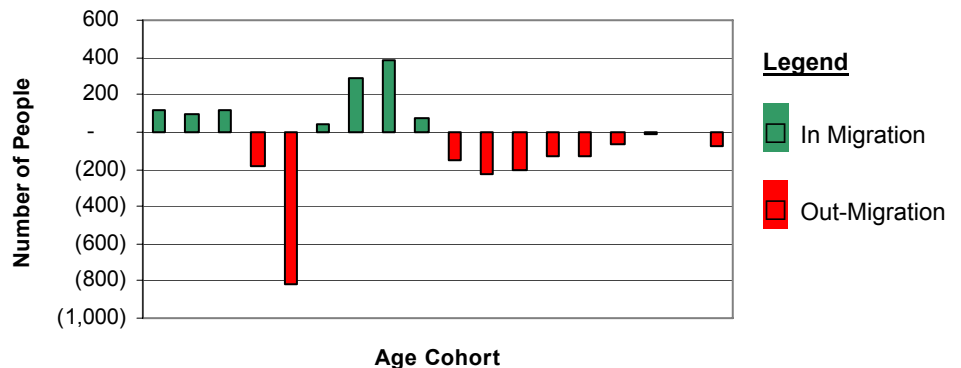


Age-Specific Migration

It can also be informative to look at estimated migration by specific age groups. Overall, Bethel has exhibited a fairly consistent trend during the two decades of the 1980s and 1990s. The following chart, which examines the net migration in the 1990s shows:

- net in-migration of young adults aged 30 to 45 with children aged 0 to 15;
- net out-migration of young adults aged 15 to 30; and
- net out-migration of adults over the age of about 45.

**Net Migration by Age Cohort
1990 to 2000**



Age Composition

While overall population growth is important, projected changes in age composition may be even more significant. The age composition of a community can be evaluated in terms of the projected lifestyle needs of the different age groups and the types of services and amenities different age groups may desire or require. The following table identifies lifestyle needs of the various age cohorts and indicates the anticipated change in the percentage of these age cohorts between 1980 and 2020.

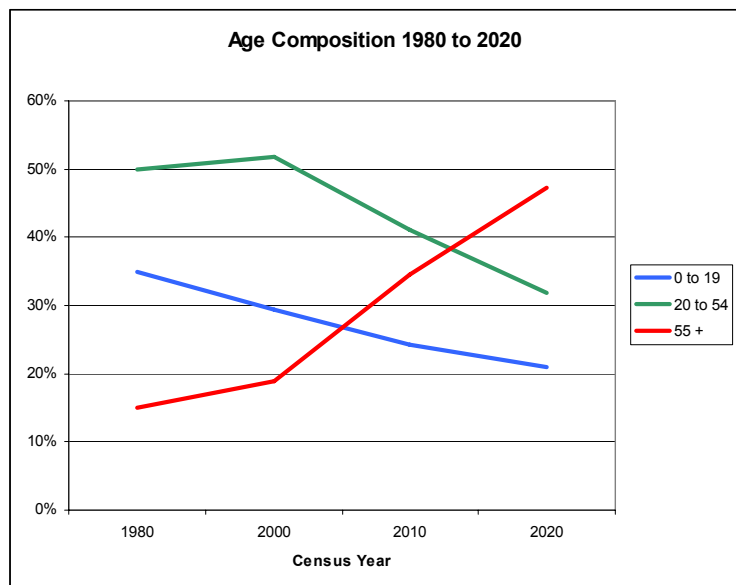
Lifestyle Needs

Description	Age Range	Needs / Wants	1980 Share	2000 Share	2020 Projected Share
Infants	0 to 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child care Pre-school programs 	7%	7%	5% ↓
School Age	5 to 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School facilities Recreation programs and facilities 	28%	22%	16% ↓↓
Young Adults	20 to 34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental housing Starter homes Social destinations 	25%	17%	17% ↓↓
Middle Age	35 to 54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trade-up homes Family programs Services for infants / school children 	25%	35%	14% ↓↓
Mature Adults	55 to 64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller homes Second homes Recreation programs and facilities 	7%	9%	14% ↑
Retirement Age	65 +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low maintenance homes Assisted housing / elderly housing Elderly programs / tax relief 	8%	10%	33% ↑↑↑

1970 - 2000 Census, Projections by Connecticut Census Data Center (1995)

From 1980 to 2020, it is anticipated that Bethel will move from a community where more than half the population was under the age of 54, and less than 20 percent were over 54, to a community where almost half the population will be 55 or older.

This may lead to a reconsideration of the mix of municipal services provided in Bethel and may result in a situation where there may be more demand for different services in the future. For example, instead of desiring schools and ball fields, by 2020 Bethel residents may be asking for more trails and structured recreational services. Similar changes may be in store for social, medical, transportation, and housing programs.



Housing Types As Defined by the US Census

1 unit-detached: A single-family structure, which may be attached to a garage or shed, and with open space on all four sides.

1 unit-attached: A single-family unit with one or more walls extending from roof to the ground separating it from adjoining structures. Row houses and townhouses are counted in this category. Each unit has its own heating element.

2-4 family dwellings: These are structures containing between 2 and 4 housing units sharing attics, cellars, furnaces, and/or boilers.

Multi-family and Other: This category includes all other housing units including multi-family units with five or more units in the structure as well as mobile homes, boats, RVs, vans, and campers.

Housing In Bethel

Housing Types

Bethel contains a diversity of housing types. Approximately one-third of the housing stock is a housing type other than single-family housing, a more diverse housing stock than any surrounding community except for Danbury.

Housing Structure Types (2000)

	Single-Family Housing		Other than Single-Family Housing		
	One-family detached	One-family attached	2-4 dwellings	Family	Multi-family and Other
Danbury	46%	6%	24%		23%
Bethel	67%	9%	16%		9%
Brookfield	82%	6%	5%		7%
Newtown	93%	2%	4%		1%
Redding	95%	2%	2%		0%
Region	69%	5%	13%		13%
State	59%	5%	18%		18%

U.S. Census Bureau 2000

As of the 2000 Census, almost one-quarter of the housing units in Bethel (23%) were renter-occupied, again a higher percentage than the surrounding communities with the exception of the City of Danbury.

Housing Tenure Types (2000)

	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Percent Vacant
Danbury	53%	42%	5%
Bethel	75%	23%	2%
Brookfield	85%	11%	4%
Redding	85%	10%	5%
Newtown	89%	8%	3%
Region	72%	23%	5%
State	63%	31%	6%

U.S. Census Bureau 2000

Housing Growth

Bethel added a significant number of housing units in the 1970s and 1980s. Growth slowed substantially in the 1990s, perhaps due to the lower availability of developable land and economic factors early in the decade.

Bethel Housing Growth

	Units at Start	Change in Decade	Percent Change
1960s	2,692	741	28%
1970s	3,433	1,970	57%
1980s	5,403	996	18%
1990s	6,399	254	4%
2000	6,653		

U.S. Census Bureau

Regional Housing Growth 1990 – 2000

Newtown	20%
Danbury	10%
Brookfield	8%
Bethel	4%
Redding	3%
Region	9%
State	5%

U.S. Census Bureau 2000

During the 1990s, Bethel had very slow housing growth in comparison with the surrounding communities. Its rate was slightly lower than the State.

Since 2000, there has been increased activity in Bethel according to building permit data. While there were 376 building permits issued for single-family housing units in the 1990s (a ten-year period), there were 307 permits issued for single-family housing units in Bethel from 2000 to mid-2006 (a six year period).

Housing Value

In terms of estimated housing values, Bethel has some of the least expensive housing among nearby communities, with the exception of the City of Danbury. Rental rates are also relatively affordable compared to other communities. A more detailed discussion of this issue is in the Residential Development Chapter.

Housing Value (2000)

	Median Housing Value	Median Contract Rent	Affordable Housing Units	% Affordable per DECD
Ridgefield	\$435,300	\$1,044	160	1.80%
Redding	\$398,000	\$1,375	0	0.00%
Bridgewater	\$296,700	\$683	1	0.13%
Sherman	\$268,900	\$846	1	0.06%
Newtown	\$262,100	\$735	164	1.91%
Brookfield	\$242,000	\$946	85	1.47%
New Fairfield	\$228,100	\$898	27	0.52%
Bethel	\$216,400	\$877	324	4.87%
New Milford	\$180,500	\$679	249	2.32%
Danbury	\$174,600	\$818	2,879	10.09%
Region	\$265,100	\$722	3,890	4.87%
State	\$160,600	\$681	146,066	10.54%

U.S. Census Bureau 2000 / CT DECD 2006

Where Bethel Residents Go to Work

According to a HVCEO analysis of commuting data, as the employed population has grown, the percentage of Bethel residents working in Bethel has declined from 28% in 1970 to 22% in 2000.

According to the 2000 Census, more work trips were made from Bethel to Danbury (26% of all work trips) than to any other destination.

The 1980-2000 trend is for Bethelites to be increasingly less dependent upon Danbury than in the past (38% commuted to Danbury in 1980) in favor of locations such as New York City, Westchester, Stamford, Ridgefield, Brookfield, and other locations.

Comparison of Income Levels

According to a HVCEO analysis of Census Data for the Region, Bethel's Median Household Income is rising above the State average at a modest pace, indicating a gradual gentrification of the community. In 1970, Bethel's MHI was 112% of the State MHI; in 2000 it was 128% of the State MHI.

Bethel's Economy

For Bethel Residents

In 2000, Bethel residents were employed in a range of industries. Overall, this employment composition was very similar to that for the State as a whole.

Jobs Held By Residents (2000)

Industry	Bethel	State
Educational, health and social services	20%	22%
Retail / wholesale trade	17%	14%
Manufacturing	16%	15%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative service	12%	10%
Other (including construction, finance, transportation, public administration, and other services)	35%	39%

U.S. Census 2000

Since 1990, the biggest shifts for Bethel residents relative to employment sectors have been:

- a significant decrease in percentage of workers in manufacturing jobs;
- an increase of percentage of workers in professional and management jobs; and
- an increase of percentage of workers in educational, health and social service jobs.

Jobs Held By Bethel Residents (1990 – 2000)

Industry	1990	2000
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining	1%	> 1%
Construction	7%	8%
Manufacturing	25%	16%
Retail / wholesale trade	21%	17%
Transportation, warehousing, communication and utilities	6%	7%
Finance, insurance, real estate and rental and leasing	7%	8%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative service	7%	12%
Educational, health and social services	13%	20%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, food services	1%	5%
Other services (except public administration)	8%	5%
Public administration	3%	2%
Total Number of Jobs Held by Bethel Residents	9,601	10,318

U.S. Census

According to the 2000 Census, Median Household Incomes (MHI) were lower in Bethel than in most surrounding communities except Danbury.

According to a HVCEO analysis of Census Data for the Region, Bethel's (MHI) is rising above the State average at a modest pace, indicating a gradual gentrification of the community. In 1970, Bethel's MHI was 112% of the State MHI; in 2000 it was 128% of the State MHI.

Median Household Income (1999)

	Income
Redding	\$104,137
Newtown	\$90,193
Brookfield	\$82,706
Bethel	\$68,891
Danbury	\$53,664
State	\$53,935

U.S. Census Bureau

For Bethel Businesses

Although Bethel contains a significant number of jobs it is still a “net jobs exporter” which means that there are more workers from Bethel than there are jobs in Bethel.

Compared to surrounding communities, Bethel has a heavy concentration of manufacturing-type jobs. While this may make Bethel vulnerable to future manufacturing shifts from global economic competition, it may also be a source of strength for the local economy if manufacturing continues.

Types of Jobs (2005)

Sector	Bethel	Brookfield	Danbury	Newtown	Redding
Agriculture	2%	1%	1%	3%	7%
Construction / Mining	10%	8%	6%	8%	17%
Manufacturing	25%	12%	20%	13%	5%
Transportation/ Utilities	9%	6%	4%	5%	4%
Trade	19%	36%	27%	19%	16%
Financial / Insurance / Real Estate	4%	4%	4%	6%	6%
Services	30%	30%	36%	41%	40%
Government	1%	3%	3%	6%	5%
Total Jobs	7,515	8,861	39,404	8,604	1,979

CERC, November 2005

Major Employers

Among the major employers and top Grand List contributors, employment opportunities range from management and executive to administrative and manual labor.

Major Employers	Top Grand List Contributors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duracell • Eaton Corporation • Consolidated Controls • Bethel Food Market • Cannondale Corporation • Town Municipal Offices • Bethel Board of Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecticut Light and Power • Duracell • Steiner, Inc. • Bethel Associates, LP • Target • Tony's Restaurant, Inc. • CE Bethel, LLC • Shepards • C & P Real Estate • Eaton Aerospace LLC

CERC 2005

Bethel Assessor's Office 2007

Definitions

Committed Land is land that is used for a particular economic or social purpose, such as open space, residential, or retail.

Developed Land is a form of committed land that has buildings, structures, or improvements such as residential or institutional.

Vacant Land is land that is not committed and is not developed. In this analysis residentially zoned lands, in excess of the amount required to meet the requirements for minimum lot size, are considered vacant if additional development is possible.

Land Use

Bethel contains approximately 10,844 acres, which is approximately 17 square miles.

The land use survey found that nearly 80 percent (8,654 acres) of the Town's land is either developed for a specific use such as residential, business, industrial, or committed to a specific use such as recreation lands, roads, or open space. 45% of the Town's land is committed to residential use.

Open space, such as the portion of the Huntington State Park that lies on the Town's southeastern corner, in combination with Town ball fields and lands managed by the Bethel Land Trust, occupy about 17% of all land within the Town.

One-fifth (20%) of the land in Bethel is either vacant or undeveloped. This land may be developed at some time in the future or it may be committed to another use (such as preserved open space).

The combination of vacant land, uncommitted municipal lands, parks and open space give the impression that there is more open space in Bethel than is actually committed to that use.

Use	Acreage	Percent of Total Land
Residential	4,891	45%
Single-Family	4,225	
Two-multi Family	350	
Multi-Family	316	
Business	686	6%
Retail/Services	185	
Office	93	
Industrial	357	
Mixed Use	52	
Open Space / Agriculture	2,019	19%
Open Space	1,847	
Agriculture	173	
Community Facilities	259	2%
Municipal Facilities	210	
Institutional Facilities	49	
Infrastructure / Roads	779	7%
Developed / Committed	8,654	80%
Vacant / Uncommitted	2,190	20%
Total Land Area	10,844	100%

Land use information supplied by the Town of Bethel with field updates by Planimetrics. Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

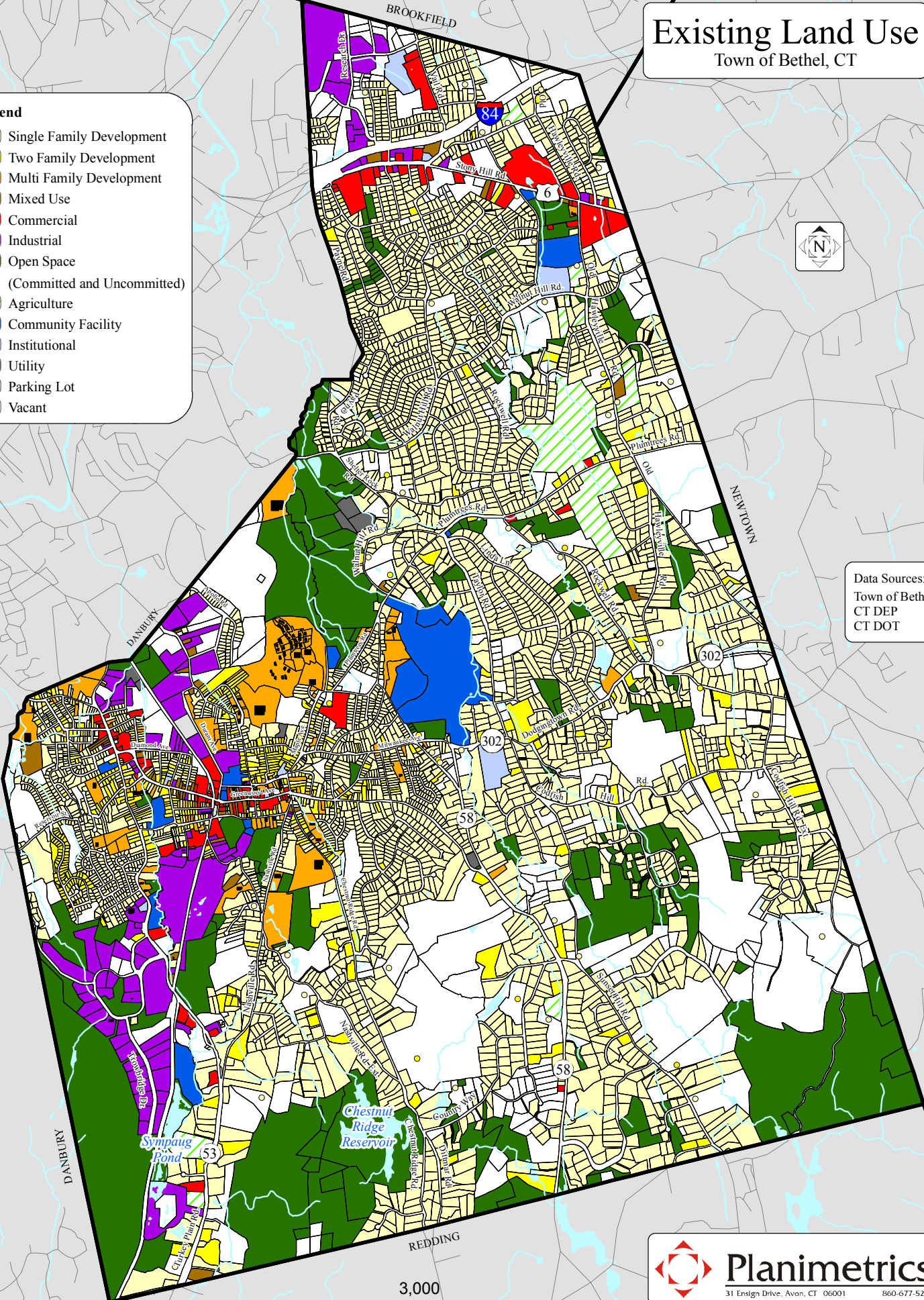
Existing Land Use

Town of Bethel, CT

- Legend**
- Single Family Development
 - Two Family Development
 - Multi Family Development
 - Mixed Use
 - Commercial
 - Industrial
 - Open Space
(Committed and Uncommitted)
 - Agriculture
 - Community Facility
 - Institutional
 - Utility
 - Parking Lot
 - Vacant



Data Sources:
Town of Bethel
CT DEP
CT DOT



3,000 Feet

Planimetrics
31 Ensign Drive, Avon, CT 06001 860-677-5267

Zoning Districts

Residential Zones

	Acres	
R-80	4,606	42%
R-40	2,358	22%
R-30	230	2%
R-20	1,076	10%
R-10	841	8%
RR-10	291	3%
RM-O	72	1%
PRD	128	1%
DCD	8	>1%
Sub total	9,610	89%

Business Zones

CI	210	2%
C	97	1%
I	314	3%
IP	476	4%
Sub total	1,097	10%

Other

Educational Park	134	1%
Sub total	134	1%
Total	10,844	100%

All numbers are subject to change due to updated mapping information in progress.

Zoning

Bethel first adopted Zoning Regulations in 1959. At the present time, Bethel employs a “use-based” zoning system with residential, commercial, and industrial zoning districts, as well as several special districts. The Zoning Map on the following page illustrates the location of the Zoning Districts.

Residential

The vast majority (89 percent) of Bethel’s land is zoned residential. There are five single-family residential districts with the minimum lot size requirement ranging from 10,000 square feet (R-10 zone) to almost two-acres (R-80 zone).

There are four additional residential zones. The RR-10 District allows for two-family units on 10,000 square foot lots. The RM-O zone allows a mix of uses (such as residential uses, professional office buildings, and apartment buildings). The Planned Residential Development District (PRD) allows for age-restricted housing on sites meeting certain criteria. The Commission recently adopted a Designed Conservation District (DCD), which is intended to promote more creative land development in the R-10 and RR-10 districts. The district is an overlay district intended to help conserve natural, scenic, and historic areas.

Business Districts

Bethel has four business zones, comprising a total of ten percent of Bethel’s land area. There are two business zones and two industrial zones which allow for commercial and industrial uses at a variety of intensities and building sizes.

Other Districts

An Educational Park with its own Zoning Designation contains all of Bethel’s public schools in one location, centrally located at one of the highest points in Town.















Zoning Structure

Bethel has a strong zoning structure with the highest density zones located in and near the historic center of Bethel and lower density zones in outlying areas. The only exception is a secondary level of intensity in the north of Bethel near Route 6 and Interstate 84.

Zoning Map

Town of Bethel, CT


Legend

-  Residential 80,000 sq. ft.
-  Residential 40,000 sq. ft.
-  Residential 30,000 sq. ft.
-  Residential 20,000 sq. ft.
-  Residential 10,000 sq. ft.
-  Residential Multi-Family
-  Planned Residential District
-  DCD
-  Commercial
-  Professional Office
-  Commercial/Industrial
-  Industrial
-  Industrial Park
-  Educational Park

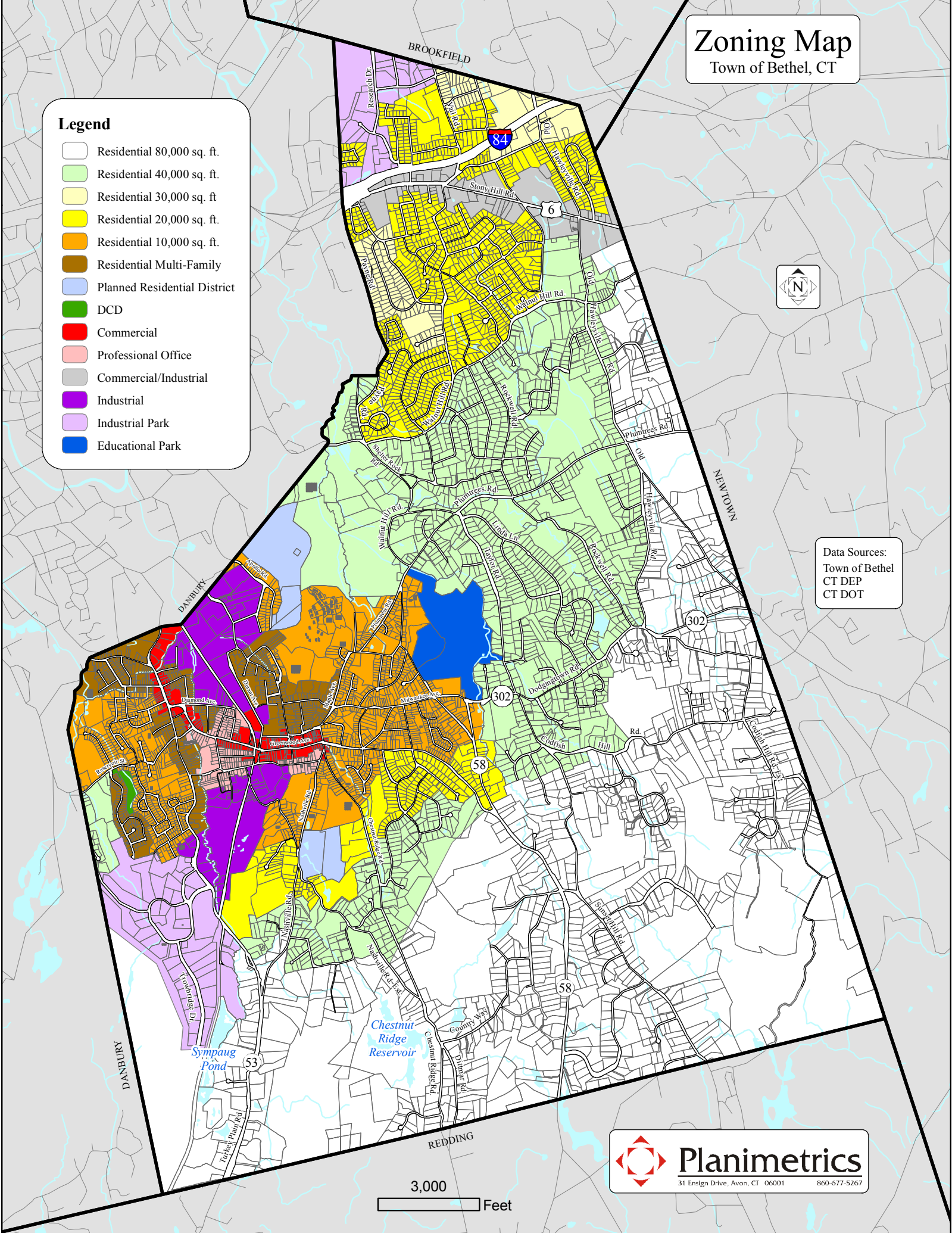


Data Sources:
Town of Bethel
CT DEP
CT DOT

3,000 Feet




Planimetrics
31 Ensign Drive, Avon, CT 06001 860-677-5267



**Potentially Developable
Lands**

	<u>Acres</u>
Vacant	2,260
Oversized Residential	576
Agricultural	150
Total	2,986

Development Potential

For the purposes of determining how many additional housing units and residents could be supported in Bethel in the future, Planimetrics analyzed the Town’s development potential.

The land use survey identified approximately 3,000 acres of privately owned land that may be capable of supporting additional development in the future. For the purposes of this analysis, the following lands were included: vacant lands; residential lands with additional development potential, also called “oversized residential”; and agricultural lands.

Minimum lot size, minimum frontage, and required setback dimensions were applied to the parcels based on the current Zoning Regulations. Wetlands, watercourses, floodplains, and steep slopes greater than 25 percent were excluded from the developable land calculation. The current Zoning Regulations only exclude steep slopes greater than 25 percent, as measured in ten-foot contours and consisting of contiguous areas totaling 3,000 square feet of area or greater. However, this build-out analysis, which is based on a 100-foot grid, may underestimate the amount of steep slopes and overestimate build-out on some sites.

Based on this analysis, Planimetrics estimated that the available developable land in Bethel may support as many as 1,300 new single-family housing units in the residentially zoned districts and as many as several hundred multi-family units in the multi-family districts.

Using the household size identified in the 2000 Census for Bethel of 2.7 persons per household, Bethel could, under this potential build-out scenario, add approximately 4,000 additional people as a result of new development. Thus, with an existing population of approximately 19,000, it is estimated that Bethel could eventually be a community of as many as 23,000 residents.

This analysis did not identify potential development in commercial and industrially zoned areas. To do so would require a parcel by parcel analysis and a determination of fiscal and market factors beyond the scope of this document.

This analysis also did not calculate development on the approximately 950 acres of municipally owned land, some of which is currently used for managed open space and some of which has no current use. If these lands were included in this analysis, the build-out analysis could be higher.

The potential build out discussed in this section would not occur all at once and there are many factors that could influence the exact number of additional housing units and residents in the future. However, these projections can help a community shape future growth.

Potential Buildout Scenario

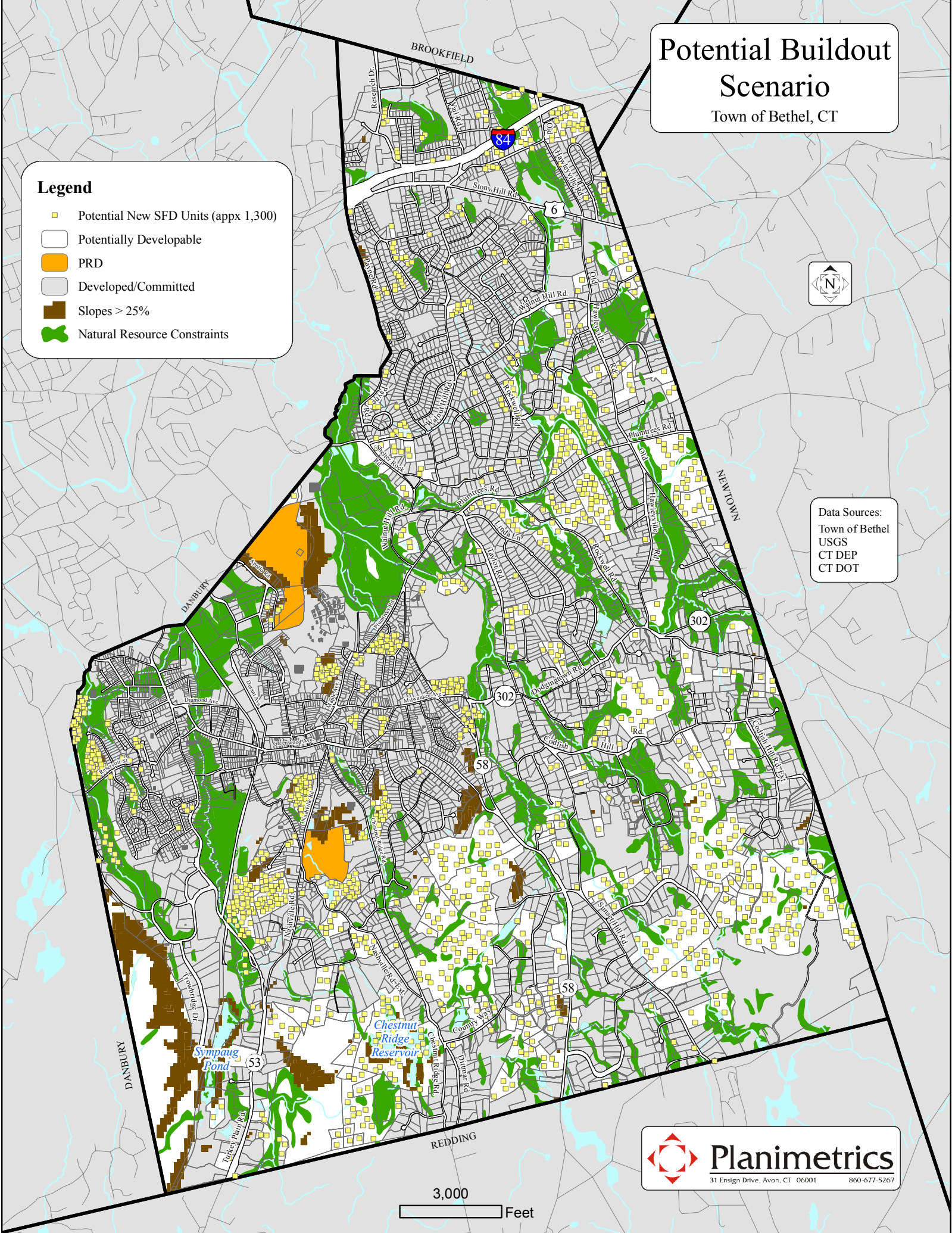
Town of Bethel, CT

Legend

- Potential New SFD Units (appx 1,300)
- Potentially Developable
- PRD
- Developed/Committed
- Slopes > 25%
- Natural Resource Constraints



Data Sources:
Town of Bethel
USGS
CT DEP
CT DOT



**2001 Per Capita
Grand Lists**

Redding	\$231,783
Newtown	\$154,586
Brookfield	\$152,436
Bethel	\$139,799
State	\$114,514
Danbury	\$112,710

CPEC 2002-2003

**Business Tax Base
2001 Grand List**

State Average	68%
Danbury	40%
Bethel	25%
Brookfield	20%
Newtown	13%
Redding	6%

CPEC 2002-2003

**Per Capita Property
Taxes: Amount and
Percent of Total
Revenue**

Redding	\$3,282	90%
Brookfield	\$2,241	90%
Newtown	\$2,386	80%
Bethel	\$1,935	77%
Danbury	\$1,507	78%

CPEC 2002-2003

Fiscal Overview

The following fiscal data comes from the Connecticut Policy and Economic Council (CPEC), a source of municipal financial data that is consistent statewide.

In 2002, Bethel spent more than \$46 million providing municipal services. As is the case in most Connecticut municipalities, education was the major expense category. Overall, Bethel spends less than the state average on a per capita basis.

2002 – 2003 Per Capita Expenditures

	Bethel		Connecticut	
Education	\$1,553	63%	\$1,521	58%
Debt Service	\$185	1%	\$291	2%
Other	\$764	36%	\$820	40%
Total	\$2,502	100%	\$2,632	100%

Connecticut Policy & Economic Council

Most of Bethel's revenue is generated from the collection of property taxes from residential and commercial businesses. Bethel is more reliant on property taxes than many other communities since Bethel receives less state aid than the state average. "Other" revenue includes reimbursements, payments in lieu of taxes, grants, and other miscellaneous sources.

2002 – 2003 Per Capita Revenues

	Bethel		Connecticut	
Property Taxes	\$1,936	77%	\$1,792	68%
State Aid	\$507	20%	\$641	24%
Surplus	\$0	0%	\$26	1%
Other	\$59	2%	\$173	7%
Total	\$2,502	100%	\$2,632	100%

Connecticut Policy & Economic Council

The Bethel 2001 Grand List of Taxable Property was almost \$1.5 billion or \$139,799 per capita. As the table in the sidebar illustrates, this is higher than the state average of \$114,514 per capita. While Bethel's tax base is primarily dependent on residential property values, nearly 25 percent of the Town's revenues come from business property. The state average is approximately 20 percent from business property.

Overall, due to the strong business component of the tax base, Bethel residents actually pay lower property taxes per person than any surrounding community except for Danbury.

CONSERVATION THEMES



Overview of Conservation Themes

Bethel's character is largely the result of its unique combination of land and water, as well as historic and scenic resources. As these resources are mutually dependent upon one another, negative impacts to one can negatively impact others. Properly protected, these important resources will continue to have positive impacts upon the Town's quality of life, for generations to come.

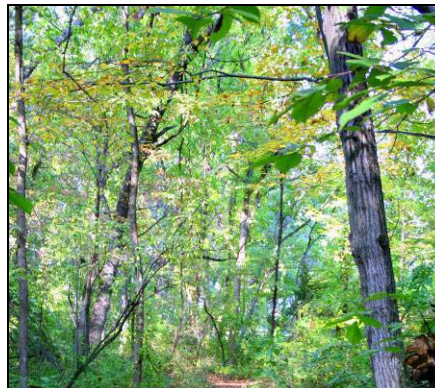
These issues are addressed early in the planning process since it is necessary to identify those resources that the community wishes to preserve and protect before making decisions about where to locate development and what types of development to encourage.

Although Open Space preservation was identified as the most important issue in community workshops, this section leads with a discussion of natural resources, which are also a very important consideration and can have a tremendous impact on the qualities of individual pieces of open space.

Protecting important resources is a critical element in maintaining community character and ensures quality of life for current and future generations.



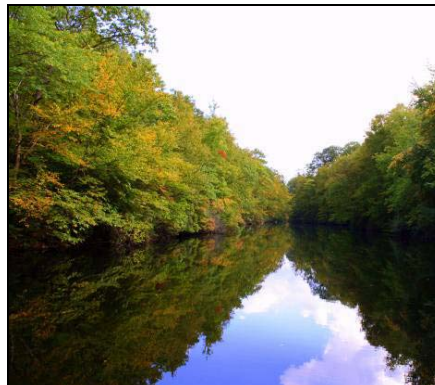
Open Space



Land Resources



Historic Resources



Water Resources



NATURAL RESOURCES

Overview

“The nation behaves well if it treats natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value.”

Theodore Roosevelt

Preserving and conserving natural resources protects environmental functions, maintains biodiversity, and prevents environmental damage.



Tree Canopy



Water Resource

Protect Land Based Natural Resources

Bethel is fortunate to have so many acres of forest land, meadowlands, and other undeveloped natural lands. While some of these areas are protected, many acres with valuable natural resources are vulnerable. There are a number of strategies that both our Commission and other Town entities can pursue to protect these resources for future generations.

The Town's land use regulations include provisions which address soil and erosion standards, road standards prohibiting grades in excess of 12 percent; and requirements to consider preservation of natural features. There are additional tools that can be used to provide protection for natural resources. Some of these issues are addressed below; others are discussed in greater detail in the development section of this Plan.

Address Steep Slope Development

One of the most fundamental issues to consider for new development is the ground upon which the proposed development will be built. Unfortunately, no soil category in this area of Connecticut is entirely problem free. For example, excessively drained soil may seem to solve hydraulic problems, but these soils are particularly subject to groundwater contamination. And once the percentage of slope starts to rise, especially above 15 percent slope, there is an increase in the potential for slope instability, erosion, and various structural concerns.

The Town's Zoning Regulations currently consider "steep slopes" to only apply to slopes greater than 25 percent (25 feet of rise for 100 feet of horizontal distance), as measured in ten-foot contours and consisting of contiguous areas totaling 3,000 square feet of area or more. As the Zoning Regulations are amended the Commission should ensure that slopes be considered steep if they are in excess of 25 percent slope, no matter how small the area of land affected.

A major concern is the practice of blasting hillsides and steep slopes in order to accommodate development in inappropriate locations. In addition, the Commission has concerns about drainage, erosion, and sedimentation issues. Commercial development is already subject to regulations that address these issues, but under the existing Zoning Regulations, residential development is exempt from requirements to address these consequences of development on hillsides and steep slopes. The Commission will consider requiring a Special Permit for residential development on steep slopes to ensure that there is adequate review of the inherent engineering challenges of hillside development.

Since the majority of future development is likely to be proposed on lands with environmental constraints, including steep slopes, the Commission believes it is critical to obtain accurate topographic data for the entire Town. The Commission requests that the Board of Selectmen authorize topographic mapping at two-foot contours for all lands within Bethel. Until that mapping has been obtained, the Commission should adopt a practice of requiring two-foot contours for any development proposed on slopes in excess of 25 percent.

The HVCEO Regional Plan provides definitions for minimal, moderate, severe or prohibitive soil and slope conditions and provides a Development Opportunity Map prepared by the federal Soil Conservation Service. The Commission should consider using the definitions provided by HVCEO and the soil survey maps of the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture as a standard in determining land use regulations, an action which is authorized by Connecticut General Statutes, Chapter 124, Section 8-2b.

Adopt Buildable Land Provisions

Buildable land regulations, typically applicable only to residential development, relate the number of housing units on a property to the natural carrying capacity and the character of the land. This is accomplished by excluding certain areas that are essentially unbuildable when considering the amount of “buildable” land on a piece of property. Unbuildable land refers to lands within the road right-of-way, wetland, steep land, or lands with other constraints.

As the Commission revises the Zoning Regulations, it should adopt a buildable land regulation to ensure that each building parcel has sufficient buildable land. This will include provisions that exclude slopes steeper than 25 percent from counting towards the minimum amount of buildable land on a parcel. Floodplains and floodways, streams, wetlands, and rights-of-way will similarly be excluded from consideration of the buildable land area of any parcel. Additional discussion of this topic is in the development section of this Plan.

Actions for Preserving Land Based Resources

1. Revise the definition of steep slope in the Zoning Regulations.
2. Consider requiring a special permit for residential development on steep slopes; but do not allow the outright removal of steep slopes or hillsides.
3. Encourage the Board of Selectmen to authorize topographic mapping at two-foot contours for the entire Town.
4. Require topographic mapping at two-foot contours for all development activities.
5. Add a definition in the Zoning Regulations for buildable land. Exclude steep slopes, floodplains, floodways, and wetlands from buildable land areas.



Erosion and sedimentation



Hilltop clearing

Protect Important Habitat Resources

There are several areas in Bethel which contain important habitat resources for rare, endangered, and threatened species. These areas include forested areas, abandoned fields, intact wetland ecosystems, and migratory corridors. In Bethel, the State DEP has identified several areas within the Town containing lands with these qualities which have been identified in the State's Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDB).

As part of the land use application process, applicants should be required to identify NDDB sites on their applications and to consult with DEP if proposing development on lands identified as an area of concern in the NDDB. The Inland Wetlands Commission requires this procedure if any part of a proposed development is within or adjacent to a wetland or waterway. Our Commission should also require the DEP to review and comment if any part of a development project lies within an area identified in the NDDB. The Commission should then adopt a practice of considering the DEP's comments when reviewing applications on lands in the NDDB and include the comments as conditional requirements of approval, to the maximum amount practicable.

Use Native Species in Landscaping

A simple measure for protecting native species habitat, used in several Towns in Connecticut, is a requirement to only allow the introduction of plant species listed on the Connecticut Native Tree and Shrub List. This list provides not only a complete list of those plants which are native and compatible with our region, but also provides information on the availability and location of suppliers of these plants. A copy of this list can be found in the Land Use office and a link is maintained on the Town's web site. The Commission will require that applicants only make use of the species identified on the Connecticut Native Tree and Shrub list.

Prohibit the Introduction of Invasive Species

Another simple measure for preserving the natural ecosystem is to prohibit the deliberate introduction of non-native or invasive species during the site development or subdivision process. Invasive plant and animal species with no predators can aggressively multiply, replacing or depleting native wildlife food sources, leading to erosion, costly property damage and even threatening human health and safety when species are toxic, such as the giant hogweed recently found in Bethel.

Actions for Protecting Habitat Resources

1. Require all applications within the NDDP to be reviewed by DEP.
2. Consider DEP's comments during application review.
3. Require the use of native species in landscaping plans.
4. Prohibit the introduction of invasive species.

Protect Bethel's Trees

Bethel's character is shaped in large part by the many trees found throughout Town, particularly the old and notable trees. According to the Connecticut Botanical Society, which tracks large, notable, and champion trees in Connecticut, there are two officially recognized notable trees in Bethel. The two trees, both *Platanus Occidentalis*, commonly known as Sycamores, measure 256" and 228" in circumference respectively. One is the well-known tree at the intersection of Route 302 and Route 53.

Bethel has a tree ordinance that addresses some activities related to street trees and public trees. It does not address the preservation of notable trees, or prevent the practice of clear-cutting large amounts of land.

The Commission recommends that the Board of Selectmen revise the tree ordinance to provide protection for notable trees and to discourage clearcutting, to the degree possible within the constraints of State Statutes. Definitions for tree harvesting, clearcutting, land disturbance, and caliper should be included in the revised ordinance.

Currently there is a 500-cubic yard threshold that triggers a Special Permit for extraction and grading activities. As the Commission revises the Zoning Regulations, it should also consider requiring a special permit whenever land disturbance activities in excess of 5,000 square feet (or more than 1/10 of an acre), are proposed, with exceptions for foundations and septic systems. Integrating these requirements into the erosion, sedimentation, and grading regulations will provide a framework and rationale for these requirements.



Sycamore Tree

The Subdivision Regulations require that trees over 18" in diameter be considered during development activities. The Commission should pursue efforts that will preserve mature trees to the maximum amount practicable. Where it is not possible to preserve trees, the Commission should pursue regulatory efforts to replace trees during the development process. Elm and Chestnut trees are two tree species that were commonly found throughout our region. Both species were subject to diseases that killed many trees over the last decade. Recently a disease resistant Elm tree has become available and a disease resistant Chestnut will be available in the next couple of years. The Commission will recommend that applicants make use of these species in their landscaping plans.








Actions for Protecting Trees

1. Encourage the Board of Selectmen to revise the tree ordinance to discourage clearcutting and to include definitions for tree harvesting, clearcutting, land disturbance and caliper.
2. Integrate tree protection measures into the soil erosion and sedimentation regulations.
3. Revise the subdivision and Zoning Regulations to require replacement of mature trees lost during the development process, as practicable.
4. Encourage the use of disease resistant Elm and Chestnut trees.

Natural Resources Plan

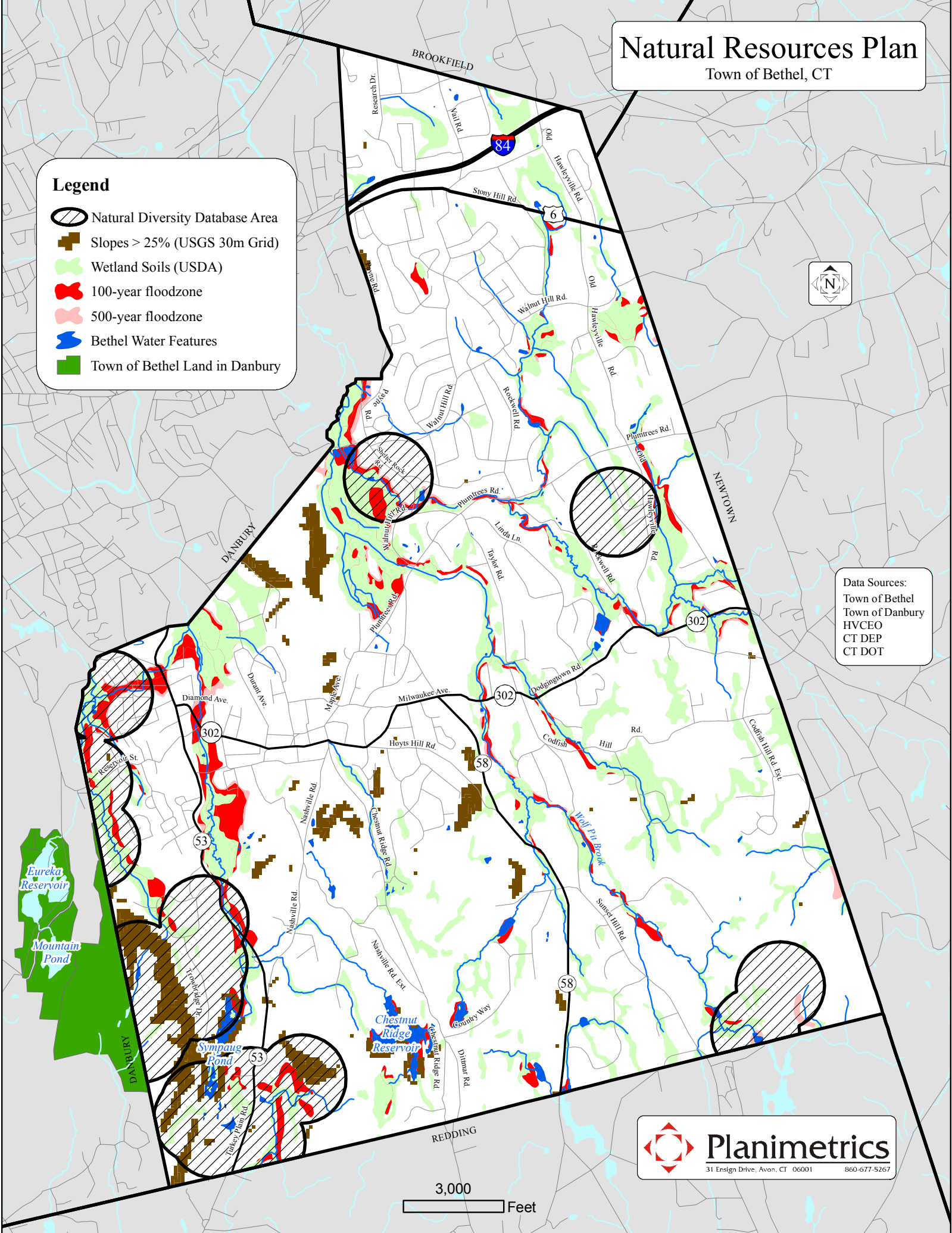
Town of Bethel, CT

Legend

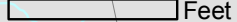
-  Natural Diversity Database Area
-  Slopes > 25% (USGS 30m Grid)
-  Wetland Soils (USDA)
-  100-year floodzone
-  500-year floodzone
-  Bethel Water Features
-  Town of Bethel Land in Danbury



Data Sources:
 Town of Bethel
 Town of Danbury
 HVCEO
 CT DEP
 CT DOT



3,000 Feet



Point vs Non-Point

Since the adoption of the Clean Water Act in 1972, the focus of water quality protection had been to regulate direct discharges of pollution, such as industrial discharges of contaminants, into waterways. This was referred to as pollution points.

In recent years, the focus has been on less direct sources of pollution, referred to as non-point sources, which includes polluted stormwater and agricultural run-off.

Protect Water Resources and Water Quality

Water, a basic building block of life, provides drinkable water, contributes to biological diversity, and adds to the overall quality of life. Both surface and groundwater are fragile resources, which once contaminated can be lost forever as a source of potable water. Therefore, the best strategy is to protect all water resources from contamination to the maximum amount practical.

Since 1990, water quality has been regulated, in part through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program. Phase I of the NPDES involved permits issued by the CT DEP to large municipal stormwater systems and for construction activities equal to or in excess of five acres of land.

Since 2003 Phase II of the NPDES has required regulation of even small discharges from municipal storm water systems and permits for construction activities that disturb as little as one acre of land.







There are six program elements of the NPDES Phase II program. The Commission along with the IWC, the Health Department, and the Board of Selectmen, should continue participation in all of these program elements. The following table identifies the various program elements and provides examples of Best Management Practices that should be encouraged and promoted through all available avenues and through a coordinated effort of all appropriate Town agencies.

Program Element	Description	Examples of Best Management Practices
Public Information and Outreach	Programs to help make the public aware and concerned about the impact of their behavior on pollution and water quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an outreach program • Prepare information materials • Implement the outreach program
Public Participation and Involvement	Joining forces with other groups to work toward the same goal with complementary programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community meetings • Clean-up days • School programs and field trips
Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination	Preparing pro-active and reactive approaches to finding and eliminating untreated discharges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop detection program • Develop avoidance program • Develop response plan • Implement programs
Construction Run-off Controls	Programs to control erosion and sedimentation (E&S) for sites disturbing one or more acres.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update erosion and sedimentation regulations • Review all development plans • Require use of prevention / management techniques • Regularly inspect construction sites
Post-construction Run-off Controls	Reducing the amount of run-off occurring as a result of development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require infiltration • Minimize impervious surfaces • Buffer sensitive resources
Pollution Prevention	Preventing pollution by municipal organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize street sanding • Clean up street sweepings • Contain possible pollution sources

Water Supply Resources Plan

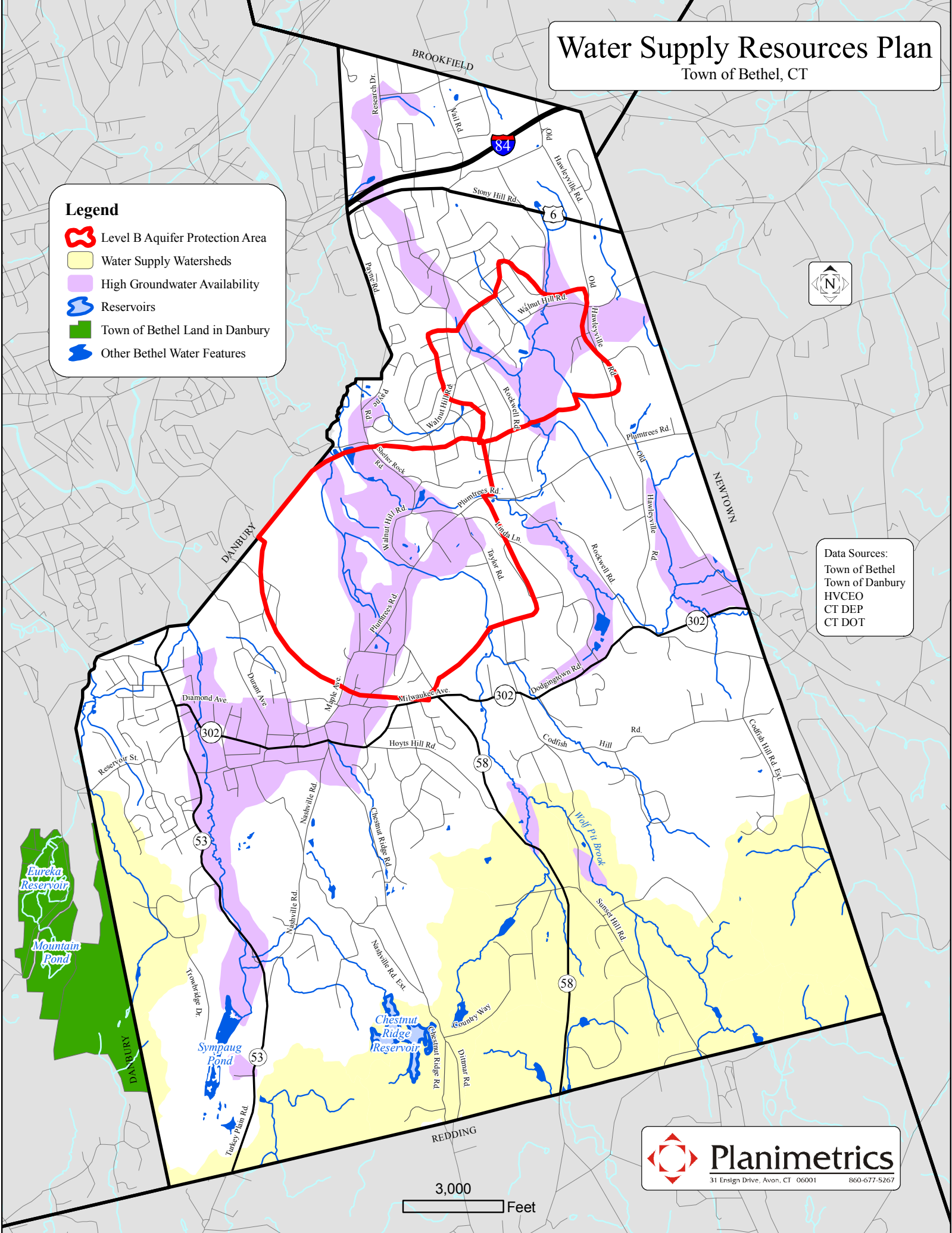
Town of Bethel, CT

Legend

-  Level B Aquifer Protection Area
-  Water Supply Watersheds
-  High Groundwater Availability
-  Reservoirs
-  Town of Bethel Land in Danbury
-  Other Bethel Water Features



Data Sources:
Town of Bethel
Town of Danbury
HVCEO
CT DEP
CT DOT



3,000 Feet

Protect Aquifers and Groundwater

Wellhead areas are well sites that produce a source of public water. These are the areas that the CT DEP refers to as aquifers. Areas of high groundwater availability are areas where geologic conditions may be appropriate for the development of future public water supplies. In Bethel, the Inland Wetlands and Waterways Commission (IWC) has the responsibility for protecting aquifers and groundwater.

The Commission recommends that the IWC adopt Aquifer Protection Overlay Zones for the Aquifer Protection Areas (APA), once the Aquifer Protection mapping has been completed. Aquifer Protection zones should prescribe uses according to the potential risk each use poses. As the Commission revises its Zoning Regulations, it should ensure that our regulations addressing sedimentation and erosion control are consistent with the practices recommended and required by the 2002 Connecticut Guidelines for Erosion and Sedimentation Control.

Pollution of groundwater from incompatible land uses, accidents, or the introduction of common groundwater contaminants another concern of the Commission. The Commission recommends that the IWC consider adopting regulations to protect areas identified as high groundwater areas.

Develop a Septic Management Program

Septic systems pose a threat to ground and surface water resources. Septic system failure can lead to contamination of stormwater runoff, which can contaminate drinking water supplies. Steps that Bethel can take to prevent water contamination problems include Septic Management Programs that encourage or require residents to monitor and regularly maintain septic systems.

The Commission, in cooperation with the Health Department, should evaluate the threat of septic systems on drinking water resources, and if warranted, request that the Board of Selectmen adopt and fund a Septic Management Program which would require the periodic inspection and maintenance (pumping) of septic systems.

Manage Underground Storage Tanks

Underground storage tanks (UST) for residential fuel oils are another significant threat to groundwater resources. The CT DEP estimates that one in every five residential USTs in Connecticut have leaked at some point in the past. For many residents, a UST out of sight is out of mind and no thought is given to them until something goes wrong. To address this potential problem, some communities have adopted UST ordinances which may require any combination of registration, monitoring, and removal.

The Commission recommends that the IWC evaluate the threat of USTs to groundwater and ultimately all public water supply resources. If warranted by the results of the UST evaluation, the Commission requests that the Board of Selectmen adopt an ordinance that prohibits the installation of new underground oil tanks and requires the removal of existing underground residential fuel tanks to avoid pollution of water resources from tank leakage.

Manage Impervious Coverage

Impervious coverage refers to areas of land which are paved or developed and which do not allow water to percolate through the soils and into ground water resources. Except for the recently enacted Designed Conservation District, there are no restrictions on impervious coverage in Bethel. The Town's Zoning Regulations address lot coverage, but this only applies to roofed buildings, and does not include driveways, patios, pools and other types of land development that prevent infiltration or increase stormwater runoff.

As the Commission revises the Zoning Regulations, it should encourage site designs that minimize impervious surfaces, promote infiltration and reduce runoff. The Zoning Regulations should also include impervious coverage performance objectives including the use of roof leaders, rain gardens, a minimum amount of landscaped and/or natural areas, and the use of porous paving materials to allow clean water from building roofs to infiltrate the ground. The coverage requirements should include stronger standards in environmentally sensitive areas (aquifer protection zones) and more relaxed standards in historically dense developed areas (Downtown Village area and along Route 6). Site designs that minimize impervious surfaces, promote infiltration, and reduce runoff should be encouraged.

Protect Public Water Watersheds and Reservoirs

Public water supply watersheds are areas that drain into drinking water supply reservoirs. Pollution, which comes primarily from development activity, is the primary concern. Approximately 26 percent of Bethel's total land area is designated by the DEP as "existing or potential water supply watershed" (see the Water Supply Resources Plan).

Two of Bethel's reservoirs are located in Danbury, (the Mountain Pond and Eureka Lake Reservoirs) and are protected from land use activities that could potentially contaminate them. However, the Chestnut Ridge Reservoir in southern Bethel, and other DEP designated surface water supply tributary areas throughout Town, are not currently protected. Even though the Chestnut Ridge Reservoir may be put on reserve status as a future water supply, given Bethel's very limited reserve supply resource it is possible that the Chestnut Ridge Reservoir may need to be reactivated in the future. The Commission recommends that the Board of Selectmen consider acquiring the lands around the Chestnut Ridge Reservoir whenever those properties become available for sale.

The Board of Selectmen and the Commission are currently working with HVCEO to quantify future potential water resources. The results of these assessments should be used to modify and shape future land use policies and regulations, including the development of an overlay zone for all watersheds. Additional recommendations are contained in an HVCEO report entitled "Adopting a Water Supply Watershed Protection District Overlay Zone for Bethel, CT" dated October 2006. These recommendations should be implemented when the Commission revises the land use regulations.



Protect Wetlands and Watercourses

Wetlands, which in Connecticut are defined as poorly drained areas or areas containing floodplain soils types, are the links between water and land. Wetlands are essential to the adequate supply and quality of surface and underground water; to the stability and control of flooding and erosion; to the recharging and purification of groundwater; and are vital for the existence of many forms of life.

Bethel has an Inland Wetlands Commission (IWC) which regulates specific and defined “core activities” within wetlands, and adjacent uplands within 100 feet of wetlands. The existing wetland regulations define “core activities” as activities involving the deposition or removal of 100 cubic yards or more of materials. Activities involving less than 100 cubic yards can also have significant impacts. The existing 100-cubic yard threshold is therefore allowing activities with significant impacts to both wetlands and adjacent upland areas to occur without any review or regulatory guidance.



The Commission recommends that the IWC establish a policy of no net loss of wetlands and adopt regulations that will allow for the evaluation of direct impacts to wetlands that occur outside riparian review areas. The Commission will work with the Inland Wetlands Commission to identify a lower threshold for consideration of core activities, in order to ensure that all wetlands and the adjacent upland areas are protected from development impacts to the maximum amount practicable.



Protect Vernal Pools

Vernal pools are seasonal pools of water, found in depressions in the soil with no above ground outlet. Many species of salamanders, frogs, and insects require vernal pools for breeding and reproduction. Vernal pools support fauna specifically adapted to breed in the seasonal and cyclical nature of these unique water resources. While it is likely that there are vernal pools in Bethel, there is limited data on locations.

Vernal pools are not protected under any State or Federal program, although some species, such as the state-listed Jefferson salamander, which is a species of special concern, is dependent upon vernal pools for habitat conditions. As discussed in the section on rare and endangered species, asking applicants to confer with the DEP prior to submission of an application to the Commission can provide some protection for these valuable natural resources.

The Commission should endorse a policy of no net loss of vernal pools and should pursue a contract with a certified wetlands scientist or herpetologist to prepare a town-wide vernal pool study, identifying the probable location of existing vernal pools. As the Zoning Regulations are revised, the Commission should adopt regulations to protect vernal pools such as requiring that any development within a 750-foot radius of any identified vernal pool meet specific performance standards such as cape cod curbing.

Three Views of the Same Vernal Pool During Fall/Winter/Spring

Manage Floodplains and Floodways

Floodplains and floodways are typically low-lying lands adjacent to rivers subject to periodic flooding. These areas should be managed to prevent water from entering the roadways from adjacent streams and brooks.

The Town's Zoning Regulations do not currently prohibit development in the floodway or the floodplains, which can impact the Town's ability to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). When the Commission revises the Zoning Regulations, it should carefully consider how best to manage development in these flood-prone areas. Areas within the floodplain should be excluded from the buildable land area and the Flood Plain Regulations amended to limit additional development in areas subject to flooding.

Protect Streams

Just as a roadway network is the skeletal support for most land uses, the stream system is the backbone of the water resources. The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection stream classification system could be considered the spine of the Town's water resource policy.

The CT DEP has developed water quality standards in conjunction with the principles of the federal Clean Water Act, as follows:

Class AA

Designated uses are existing or proposed drinking water supply, fish and wildlife habitat, some recreational use, agricultural and industrial supply. Discharges are severely restricted.

Class A

Designated uses are potential drinking water supply; fish and wildlife habitat; recreational use; agricultural and industrial supply; and other legitimate uses including navigation. Discharges are severely restricted. No reclassification of A or AA allowed down to B.

Class B

Designated uses are varied and include discharges from industrial and municipal wastewater treatment facilities providing Best Available Treatment and Best Management Practices are applied. All water bodies must eventually reach the minimum standards of the B classification.

Classes C & D

Indicates unacceptable quality. DEP will issue orders requiring improvement to Class B or Class A.

Each stream or water body in Bethel has two classifications; one for existing use and one for ultimate future use. These two classifications are written in an existing/future format such as "B/A" or "A/AA". The highest standards refer to water supply areas which provide drinkable water, or "AA" classified streams.



Flooded Street



Sympaug Brook

Streams in Bethel have been classified by CT DEP as identified in the following table, Stream Classifications in Bethel.

DEP Stream Classifications in Bethel, CT

Name and Description of Stream	Classifications Existing/Future
Aspetuck Reservoir tributaries reaching north into Bethel from Redding and Newtown	AA/AA
Bethel Reservoir Brook from west of Hudson Street north to the Danbury City Line	B/A
Chestnut Ridge Reservoir and its tributaries	AA/AA
Murphy Brook (aka Braunies Brook) from source in Danbury to pump station at Reservoir Street	AA/AA
Saugatuck Reservoir tributaries reaching north into Bethel from Danbury and Redding	AA/AA
Sympaug Brook from Sympaug Pond and the old Bethel Landfill flowing north to just north of railroad bridge	B/A
Sympaug Brook from just north of railroad bridge to Danbury City Line	B/B
Wolf Pit Brook and tributaries that are upstream of a point just north of the intersection of Route 58 with Hoyts Hill Road	A/AA
All other streams in Bethel including but not limited to: Chestnut Brook, Dibble's Brook, East Swamp Brook, Limekiln Brook	A/A

The Commission recommends that a Town Conservation Commission, which is discussed in greater detail in the section addressing Open Space, be charged with the task of working cooperatively with the State DEP and HVCEO to establish buffers along all streams. These stream buffers can and should become part of the Town's trail system (also discussed in the Open Space chapter). In addition, the Commission, as it revises the Zoning Regulations, will include limitations on development along all streams, particularly those classified B or better, to the maximum amount practicable.

Educate the Public

Since human activities pose the greatest threat to water resources, the public needs to be educated about the activities that can have an impact on these vital resources. Educational strategies should be developed and a number of avenues for distributing the information should be utilized. Display tables in the library, inserts in municipal mailings, and partnerships with utilities can assist in educating the public about the importance of protecting water resources.

The Commission recommends that the Board of Selectmen distribute a flyer or mailing insert summarizing the recommendations of this Plan and provide a copy of the information to every household in Town.

Actions for Protecting Water Resources

1. Continue to implement the NPDES program components.
2. Adopt aquifer protection regulations.
3. Revise the Zoning Regulations for consistency with the 2002 CT Guidelines for Erosion and Sedimentation Control.
4. Protect areas identified as high groundwater through the IWC regulations.
5. Assess the need for a septic management program and if warranted, develop and fund the program.
6. Evaluate the threats to groundwater from underground storage tanks (UST) and if warranted, adopt an ordinance prohibiting the installation of new USTs and requiring the removal of existing USTs.
7. Adopt provisions in the Zoning Regulations to limit the amount of pervious surfaces, including performance standards encouraging the use of roof leaders, rain gardens and other measures that limit run-off and promote infiltration.
8. Consider acquiring lands around the Chestnut Ridge Reservoir.
9. Implement the recommendations of the October 2006 HVCEO watershed protection report, including adopting a water supply overlay zone.
10. Use ongoing water resource assessments to guide revisions to land use regulations.
11. Adopt a no-net-loss of wetlands policy.
12. Lower the threshold of disturbance, for consideration of core activities in wetlands, watercourses, and upland review areas.
13. Identify significant wetlands, and all wetlands in undeveloped areas within recharge areas.
14. Establish a no-net-loss of vernal pool policy.
15. Contract a vernal pool specialist to inventory vernal pools.
16. Adopt regulations to protect vernal pools such as requiring that any development within a 750-foot radius of any identified vernal pool meet specific performance standards such as cape cod curbing.
17. Consider prohibiting additional development within floodplains and floodways.
18. Establish buffers along streams and limit development within the buffer particularly along streams classified as B or better.
19. Educate the public about the threats to and strategies available to protect water resources through mailings, flyers, and distribution of the water resource recommendations of this Plan.



OPEN SPACE

Overview

Preserving open space can conserve important natural resources, protect wildlife habitat, create more environmentally sensitive development patterns, provide fiscal benefits, protect community character and enhance the quality of life for the residents of Bethel. In addition the future residents of Bethel will need open space and this Plan is committed to providing future residents with the resources they will need.

Open Space Definitions

This plan refers to actual and perceived open space and defines these terms as follows:

- Permanently protected open space is referred to in this Plan as dedicated open space. It includes State-owned lands such as Huntington State Park, lands owned by local land trusts, and lands owned by private home owner associations. It should include Town-owned parks, however, as none of the Town's parks have a formal conservation easement, none can be considered permanently protected at this time.
- Managed open space refers to lands that may be used for passive and/or active recreational activities, including the Town's parks. It also refers to lands surrounding reservoirs which are managed for water quality issues. Other land use types include DOT owned right-of-way lands and cemeteries. Many of the managed open space lands in Bethel are without any formal mechanism preventing development.
- Perceived open space refers to lands that are not developed. In Bethel, the perception may be that more than 40 percent of land is "open space," because the land is uncommitted, undeveloped and appears in a natural state providing many of the benefits of open space. The majority of lands categorized as "perceived open space" are privately owned and zoned for residential uses, with approximately 20 percent owned by the Town.

Open Space Vision

The Commission envisions that within the next ten years, there will be significant parcels of open space in all parts of Town connected by trails, streams, and sidewalks. These open space parcels will provide both active and passive recreational opportunities. In some instances these areas will be inaccessible to humans in order to protect important resources such as water supply resources. In order to achieve this vision of a network of open space parcels connected by trails and other accessways, additional open space must be acquired. The Commission has identified those areas of Town where acquisition of additional open space is a priority, which includes:

- southwest corner of Town, including Terre Haute, Bald Rock, and Chestnut Ridge Reservoir;
- southeast corner of Town including lands adjacent to the Huntington State Park as far northwest as the intersection of Route 302 and 58;
- the area around East Swamp as far southwest as the intersection of Route 302 and 53 and as far southeast as the intersection of Route 32 and 58; and
- the northeast section of Town bounded by Route 6, Plumtrees, Rockwell, and the Town border with Newtown.

In addition, the Commission has identified approximate locations for open space connections along streams, trails, or easements, or through acquisition of additional open space parcels. These areas, identified on the Open Space Plan as Conceptual Open Space Connections, are not site specific, but do provide guidance when reviewing potential open space acquisitions. The Commission will monitor acquisitions and refine these goals as necessary. A priority will be to complete the Ives Trail connections.

Create Connections

The physical act of connecting open space is usually accomplished with greenways (typically trails and wildlife corridors) and blueways (trails along stream belts) as well as sidewalks, and conservation easements. Interconnecting open spaces is one of the most effective ways of maximizing the benefits of open space.

Greenways and blueways can provide educational and passive recreational opportunities, benefit wildlife, and support water quality programs. A system of greenways and blueways allows wildlife to migrate between larger open space habitats. The Open Space Plan identifies existing and desirable open space parcels as well as existing and proposed greenways and blueways.

Making trail connections to the parks, the Village Center, the Educational Park, and the Ives Trail can increase passive recreational opportunities and increase the value of each piece of the open space network. The Town, ideally through the Conservation Commission, the Board of Selectmen, and our Commission, should continue to work with appropriate partners such as the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials (HVCEO), the Bethel Land Trust (BLT) and PATH (Preservation Advocates for Terre Haute) to complete existing trails, like the Ives Trail. The Town and its partners should construct and maintain additional trails, including those proposed by the Town's Parks and Recreation Department and obtain conservation easements along the greenways, blueways, cemeteries, and parks. The Commission should also consider pursuing easements for trails or greenways across or at the edge of cemeteries and vacant lands to help link the existing open space network together.

Ives Trail

The Ives Trail is a 15-mile hiking path, which connects Terre Haute in Bethel to parks and natural areas in Ridgefield and Danbury.

HVCEO Proposed Trails

HVCEO has identified a number of proposed trails, greenways, and blueways, which if developed would go a long way towards connecting many of the existing open spaces in Bethel.

Terre Haute Findings

- Development potential and access is limited by shallow depth to bedrock, steep slopes, and the presence of wetlands.
- Terre Haute has the potential to provide more economic opportunities through open space and recreational land uses than through housing or additional industrial development.
- Terre Haute and the reservoir lands are an enormous amenity for the Town with the potential for becoming a major "Gateway to Recreation."

Protect Significant Portions of the Terre Haute Lands

In 1980, the Town of Bethel purchased a parcel known as Terre Haute which currently consists of approximately 255 acres located in the southwestern part of the Town and approximately 208 acres located in adjacent Danbury. The original intention was to develop some of the land for industry and economic development, preserve open space, and provide recreational opportunities for the citizens of Bethel. While the Town has developed a segment of the land as the Francis J. Clarke Industrial Park, there has been no formal action taken to preserve the open space or develop recreational opportunities.

Terre Haute is a unique natural resource in southwestern Connecticut with heavily forested land, steep slopes, vernal pools, wetlands, meadows, and significant habitat for many wildlife species, some of which are listed in the State's NDDDB. In 2003, the Board of Selectmen contracted a design team from the Conway School of Landscape Design to prepare a land-use feasibility study of the Terre Haute property and adjacent reservoir land. (Findings from that report are identified in the sidebar.). With respect to the approximately 208 acres located within the city of Danbury, the Commission recommends that, in accordance with the town charter, a legal instrument, such as a conservation easement, be applied, preserving this valuable resource for passive recreation in perpetuity.

The future of Terre Haute is an important consideration for the Commission, and generates passionate discussion in Town meetings. The Commission recommends that significant portions of the Terre Haute property be permanently protected. While some development may be appropriate on a portion of the property immediately adjacent to the Francis J. Clarke Park, the Commission recommends that any development proposal also address the Industrial Park's inefficiencies related to parking, loading and infrastructure. In addition, the Commission should adopt regulations and design standards to promote and protect the environmental resources associated with these lands. The Conway report proposed design criteria for development and the Commission recommends that the criteria in the Conway report be applied to any development on the Terre Haute lands.

Open Space Plan

Town of Bethel, CT

Legend

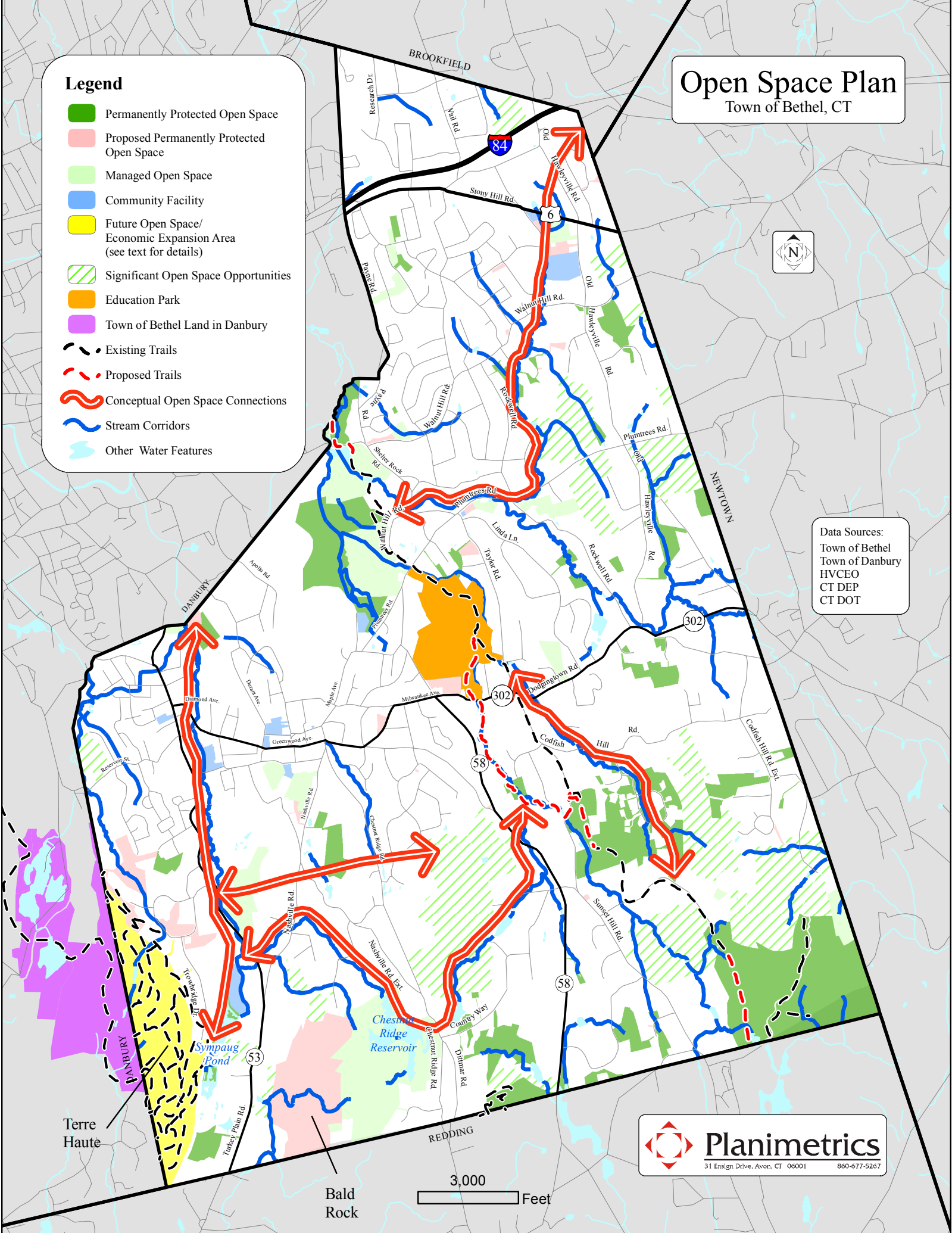
- Permanently Protected Open Space
- Proposed Permanently Protected Open Space
- Managed Open Space
- Community Facility
- Future Open Space/
Economic Expansion Area
(see text for details)
- Significant Open Space Opportunities
- Education Park
- Town of Bethel Land in Danbury
- Existing Trails
- Proposed Trails
- Conceptual Open Space Connections
- Stream Corridors
- Other Water Features



Data Sources:
 Town of Bethel
 Town of Danbury
 HVCEO
 CT DEP
 CT DOT



3,000
 Feet



Terre Haute

Bald Rock

Preserve Portions of Bald Rock for Passive Recreation

In 1984, the Board of Selectmen requested an analysis of the Bald Rock parcel to assist the Town in the development of a management plan for this 158-acre Town-owned land. A report was produced by the King's Mark Environmental Review Team (ERT). That report found that due to topographic and geologic constraints, the land would be best suited for passive recreational uses and concluded that "the Bald Rock tract has excellent potential for passive recreational use."

With judicious trail development, the site can provide an attractive area for hiking, nature study, and backpack camping. Opportunities also exist for forest management and wildlife habitat improvement.

There is no direct access to Bald Rock. The Commission recommends that, working in collaboration with the Board of Selectmen and willing land owners, lands adjacent to the Bald Rock tract be acquired to provide access for cars and hikers.

The Board of Selectmen should authorize the preparation of a management plan for this Town-owned property that takes advantage of the unique topographic and geologic resources and contributes to open space connections and resources.

Actions to Realize the Open Space Vision

1. Monitor open space acquisitions focusing acquisition strategies in areas identified on the Open Space Plan as highest priority.
2. Connect open spaces along trails and stream corridors with acquisitions and easements.
3. Collaborate with adjacent towns and interested non-profit organizations to complete the Ives Trail.
4. Connect Bethel trails to the Ives Trails.
5. Permanently protect significant portions of Terre Haute, particularly on the western portions.
6. Create development guidelines for undeveloped lands in the Francis J. Clarke Industrial Park.
7. Prepare a management plan for Bald Rock that includes recreational opportunities.
8. Acquire adjacent lands to provide and improve access to Bald Rock.

Establish a Conservation Commission

While the Commission is overseeing the implementation of the Open Space vision, in the future it would be better to have a Conservation Commission charged with these tasks. The Commission recommends that the Board of Selectmen amend the Town Charter to allow for the creation of a Conservation Commission, in conformance with Section 7-131a of the CGS. Members should have expertise in land management and the ability to work cooperatively with the Commission. It will also be important to provide the Conservation Commission with appropriate authority, staff, and other resources.

One of the first tasks of the Conservation Commission should be to propose a mechanism, such as conservation easements, for Town-owned lands used as parks, to provide assurance that these facilities will be preserved for future generations for both passive and active recreational opportunities. The appropriate conservation easement should allow for some limited construction of buildings that support active and passive recreation, appropriate lighting that does not trespass off the site, and adequate parking. However, any significant development should be prohibited and the conservation easement should define the parameters of any potential development. The Commission should consider creating a Park Zoning District, as is used in communities such as Stamford, limiting development in the Park Districts.

The Conservation Commission should pursue conservation easements that help connect existing open space parcels. The Conservation Commission should also consider obtaining easements through cemeteries, particularly when the cemetery helps to facilitate open space parcels.

The Commission recommends that another goal of the Conservation Commission should be to pursue a right-of-first-refusal on significant parcels of privately owned lands that are offered for sale. Significant parcels would be those that complete connections between existing open space parcels or that provide open space in those parts of Town identified as priority areas for acquisition, as identified on the Open Space Plan.

Another task that should be addressed by the Conservation Commission should be identification of appropriate stream buffers. Stream buffers physically protect and separate a stream from disturbance or encroachment and act as a water right-of-way during floods. The streamside buffer is typically comprised of three zones: a streamside zone; a middle zone; and an outer zone. The three-zone buffer is variable in width, typically ranging between 75 and 300 feet. Variation is required to allow for protection of special areas such as wetlands and floodplain areas.

Actions for a Conservation Commission

1. Establish a Conservation Commission.
2. Create conservation easements for Town-owned parks.
3. Consider a Park Zoning District.
4. Consider easements across or at the edge of cemeteries as part of the Town's trail system.
5. Pursue right-of-first-refusal for significant parcels of privately owned land.
6. Identify and define the parameters of stream buffers.

Raising Open Space Acquisition Funds through the Mill Rate

Average Tax Assessment	\$205K
Mill Rate (FY/2006 per \$1,000 of valuation)	\$28
Average Tax Bill per household	\$5,740
Average Increase per tax bill at ¼ of 1% of the mill rate	\$51
Approximate Amount of money that would be raised for open space acquisition annually	\$351K

Acquire Open Space

In order to implement the Open Space Plan, it will be necessary to acquire additional lands for both passive and active recreational opportunities. Bethel needs to develop a proactive land acquisition strategy because if the Town waits until a property is proposed for development, the community may miss the best open space parcels or pay excessively for them. A prudent overall land acquisition strategy can help avoid this situation. The following strategies, which should be developed and implemented through the Board of Selectmen and the Conservation Commission, with assistance from our Commission, can be used separately or in combination, to acquire additional open space.

Apply for State Aid

The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection recommends that by the year 2023, approximately 21 percent of the State be preserved as protected open space, with the State acquiring 10 percent and municipalities acquiring the rest. In order to assist local municipalities acquire the local share, the State has financial assistance programs for land acquisition. A requirement of the State's open space acquisition programs is that the land be identified in the Town's Open Space Plan and/or Plan of Conservation and Development. There is, typically, a requirement that the municipality contribute a portion of the funds.

The State programs promote the purchase of agricultural lands, the addition to and/or creation of contiguous open space, open space adjacent to urban areas, and compliance with local and regional conservation and development plans. The State's financial assistance programs allow communities to purchase properties that previously seemed beyond the reach of the local entity.

Create a Land Acquisition Fund

The Board of Selectmen should establish a fund for open space acquisitions, in conformance with CGS 7-131r. These funds can be used to leverage open space grants, as required by many funding organizations. Money in a land acquisition fund can also be used to purchase open space when appropriate open space land become available.

One method is to establish an annual line item in the budget supported by ¼ of one percent of the mill rate. If this provision had been applied to the 2006 tax bill, the Town would have raised approximately \$350,000 for open space acquisition in one year (see sidebar).

Another funding tool is an open space bond, where funds can be immediately obtained and paid back over time to allow for the purchase of open space whenever it becomes available.

Collaborate with Appropriate Partners

The Town, either through the Conservation Commission, or through our Commission, should develop collaborative relationships with willing landowners, non-profit organizations, and governmental agencies to acquire meaningful and protected open space. Organizations such as the Nature Conservancy, the DEP, the Trust for Public Land, local land trusts, and other organizations committed to land preservation are already working with us to protect specific properties. Working in partnership, and working proactively to implement the Town's long range Open Space Plan, will increase opportunities for adding desirable properties to the list of protected open spaces.

Encourage Philanthropy

Many property owners have a spiritual attachment to their land and given a choice would prefer to see their property preserved in a way that enhances the community, if they can do so in a financially responsible manner. The active solicitation of land donations is an increasingly popular and successful open space implementation device and efforts in this direction should be promoted in Bethel. The Town, through the Conservation Commission once that has been created, and with the Board of Selectmen and our Commission, should work with landowners, land trusts, and conservation organizations to encourage the use of philanthropic donations and convert perceived open space to dedicated open space.

Update Regulations

The Town's subdivision regulations require ten percent (10%) of lands subject to subdivision be reserved for parks or open space; or provide lands elsewhere in Town, equal in value. Open space acquired through the subdivision process must be usable for passive recreation and not be solely unfit for construction. Additionally, such open space must be deeded to an entity acceptable to the Commission. The Town has had a philosophical approach to ownership of open space that places the Town at the bottom of the hierarchy (see sidebar). The Commission recommends that this hierarchy be reviewed and possibly revised, placing the Town at the top of the hierarchy.

Some communities require as much as 20 percent of subdivided lands be dedicated as open space. Bethel should consider revising the subdivision regulations to require that at least 15 percent of any subdivided parcel be dedicated as open space during the subdivision process, or an equivalent fee-in-lieu be provided.

Encourage Conservation Residential Developments

In addition to conventional and mandatory open space set-asides, there is another "no-cost" option for preserving more open space during the development process. Conservation Residential Developments (CRD) allow reduced frontages and lot sizes in return for preserving more open space. By permitting development flexibility in return for preserving more open space, developers unencumbered by conventional zoning requirements are able to set aside additional and often more significant open space.

To encourage the use of CRDs, the Commission should consider CRDs as-of-right and require a Special Permit for conventional subdivisions in the R-40 and R-80 Zoning Districts. By adopting density standards for CRD and applying them to the buildable land within a CRD, a development yield approximating a conventional subdivision can be easily determined without the added expense of additional soil testing and preliminary subdivision designs. The increased development flexibility, reduced infrastructure costs, and streamlined approval process would make CRDs the preferred development option. More detailed information on these regulatory approaches is discussed in the Residential Development chapter.

Hierarchy of Preferred Open Space Ownership

The following is a summary of the Town's Subdivision Regulations (§95.10.A) relative to preferred ownership and management of Open Space Lands:

- Bethel Land Trust
- Home Owners Associations with conservation easements
- Other Land Trusts
- Town of Bethel

Fee-In-Lieu

A fee-in-lieu is an acceptable approach, particularly if the lands in question do not contribute in a meaningful way to the Town's existing open space network, as determined by the Commission. This approach will become even more meaningful with an adopted Open Space Plan that clearly identifies criteria for desirable lands.

Promote the Benefits of PA 490

Public Act 490 (PA 490) is a State authorized, locally managed assessment program that can be effective in reducing the cost of owning large tracts of land used for forest, farm land, or open space preservation. This program allows for reduction of property taxes on applicable properties. The Board of Selectmen and the Assessor's Office should promote this program particularly with owners of large tracts of undeveloped lands. Although it does not provide for permanent protection, it does allow owners of large properties to hold onto properties that add to the perception of open space.

Actions for Acquiring Open Space

1. Develop funding strategies for open space land acquisition.
2. Apply for state aid, using this Plan as a tool.
3. Create a land acquisition fund with small percentage of the mill rate (1/4 of one percent) and through bonding.
4. Collaborate with appropriate partners.
5. Encourage philanthropy of Bethel residents and property owners to increase land donations to the open space plan.
6. Increase the open space requirement of subdivided lands.
7. Encourage conservation residential development.
8. Promote the benefits of PA 490.



Terre Haute Hillside



Terre Haute Path

HISTORIC RESOURCES



Overview

Bethel's historic resources are a significant component of the Town's character. Successfully protecting these resources will contribute to Bethel's unique sense of place for years to come.

Identifying Historic Resources

Various dictionaries define "historic" as anything having importance in or influence on history. The National Trust for Historic Preservation takes a broader approach asking not whether a building is historic but whether it is worth saving because of its architectural character. Many buildings in Bethel fit this broader definition because their destruction and/or replacement with contemporary structures would ultimately alter the character of the Town.

In Bethel, there are several recognized historic resources, identified in the sidebar and the Historic Resources Plan, which include the Library, the Ely House and the Greenwood Historic District all listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). There are two additional structures listed on the State Register of Historic Places.

Other historic resources, with no official historic status, include Victorian homes along Grand Street and many historic homes throughout the Town. While some of Bethel's historic resources are officially recognized, there is currently no mechanism in place that ensures that the many historic resources in Bethel will be preserved. If not adequately protected, these resources could be lost forever. This chapter suggests a number of strategies to provide protection for Bethel's many historic resources.

Complete a Historic Resources Inventory

A comprehensive town-wide inventory was begun several years ago and should be completed to identify all architecturally and historically significant structures. The State provides financial assistance for the preparation of a historic resource inventory. The Board of Selectmen should apply for State assistance to complete the inventory.

Actions to Identify Historic Resources

1. Complete and maintain the historic resources inventory.
2. Apply for State assistance to complete the inventory.
3. Consider creating a local registry of historic places.
4. Publicize events and programs for historic preservation in collaboration with the Bethel Library, the Historical Society, and the Board of Selectmen.

Bethel's Recognized Historic Resources

- Seth Seelye House aka Bethel Library
- Rev. John Ely House on Milwaukee Avenue
- 1st Congregational Church at 46 Main Street
- 1842 2nd Meeting House at 40 Main Street
- Greenwood Avenue Historic District running along Greenwood Avenue and South Street from Nashville Road and the P.T. Barnum Square on the east to the railroad tracks on the East.



Old Opera House

Certified Local Government Status

Once the Town creates a local Historic District it will become eligible for certification as a Certified Local Government, and is able to establish a Historic District Commission, which is able to apply for grants for educational and rehabilitation purposes.

Provide Financial Incentives

The Board of Selectmen can provide economic incentives such as tax abatements for the restoration or improvement of historic resources, provided such improvements do not compromise the architectural or historic integrity of the property.



Historic Victorian

Support Local Historic Preservation Efforts

Bethel has a local Historical Society which provides information and education, but has no authority and limited access to financial resources. The Commission recommends that the Historical Society consider developing a local Registry of Historic Places, which is a voluntary program that involves the placement of a small placard on historic structures or locations to indicate the original owner and date of activity. While adding no legal protection for a property, this program provides visibility for historic resources and can instill pride in ownership and encourage additional preservation efforts.

The Commission also recommends that the Historical Society continue to provide educational programs, technical assistance, and information about the types of financial assistance available to historic property owners. The Historical Society, in collaboration with the Board of Selectmen and the Library, should publicize events and programs so that a wider audience is exposed to the efforts of this local, volunteer-run organization.

Establish Local Historic Districts

Local Historic Districts (LHD) should not be confused with National Register Districts (NRD). Although both are listed on the State Register of Historic Places, they are structured very differently. A LHD is established and administered by a local Historic District Commission to protect the distinctive and significant characteristics of a listed area. New development and renovations to existing structures need to be compatible with the area's historic distinctiveness.

Establishing a local historic district requires adoption of a local ordinance (approved by the local legislative body) and approval by two-thirds of the properties to be included in the district. A local historic district, under the auspices of a local Historic District Commission, provides the highest level of regulatory protection for historic resources. Generally, any activity that affects the exterior of a property must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness from the local Historic District Commission.

This approach has been successfully adopted in neighboring communities such as Brookfield, New Fairfield, New Milford, and Southbury. While the scope of historic district regulations varies from district to district, the intent is typically to ensure that repairs and improvements do not harm the architectural character of properties or the district. Preservation-minded property owners within local historic districts often appreciate the assurance that their investment in maintaining and rehabilitating their property is protected by the continued historic and architectural integrity of neighboring properties. The Commission recommends that efforts by the local Historical Society to establish a LHD be supported by the Board of Selectmen.




Encourage Stewardship of Private Structures

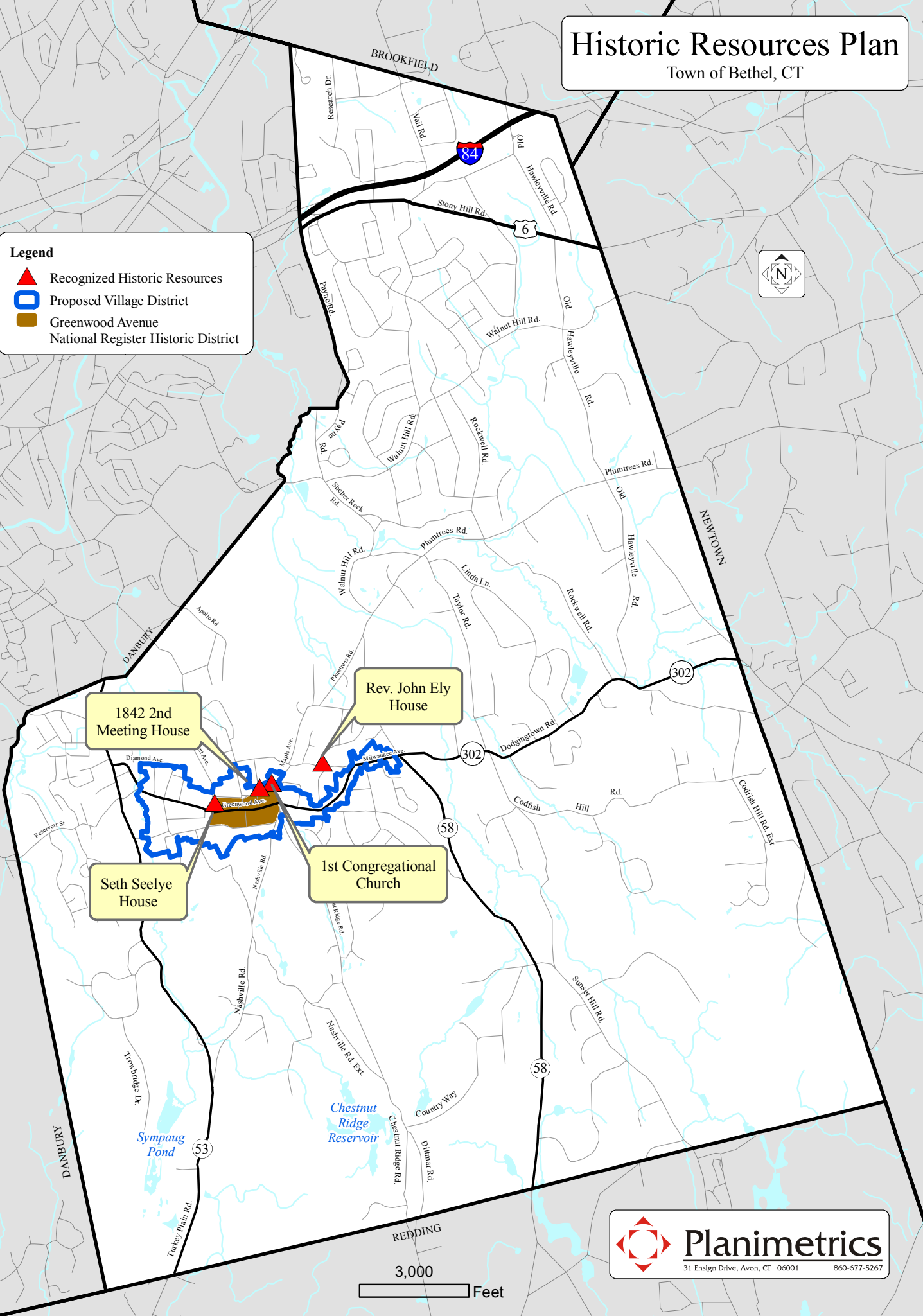
Property owners who are emotionally and financially committed to maintaining a historic resource are the most effective source for protecting and preserving historic properties. Sensitive stewardship programs should be encouraged since without the willing participation of the property owner, no regulatory or incentive program can prevent the loss of these resources from demolition or neglect. The Historical Society, with support from the Board of Selectmen, can spearhead these efforts. Annual awards for most improved property can help stimulate rehabilitation efforts.

Historic Resources Plan

Town of Bethel, CT

Legend

-  Recognized Historic Resources
-  Proposed Village District
-  Greenwood Avenue National Register Historic District



1842 2nd Meeting House

Seth Seelye House

Rev. John Ely House

1st Congregational Church




Planimetrics
 31 Ensign Drive, Avon, CT 06001 860-677-5267



Historic House



Renovated Historic Home



Historic School

Consider Regulatory Approaches

To encourage historic preservation, regulatory incentives can be adopted by our Commission to give owners of significant historic properties flexibility in re-tenanting their properties in return for making repairs that ensure the continued architectural and historic integrity of the property.

One regulatory tool that Bethel currently makes use of is the demolition delay ordinance. This ordinance requires as much as a 90-day waiting period before historic buildings can be demolished. While not preventing demolition, the waiting period allows the opportunity to seek alternatives such as purchasing the property, relocating the structure(s), or at a minimum, salvaging architectural components. This tool has been successful in protecting some historic resources and the Commission recommends that we continue to make use of this ordinance. Working collaboratively with other governmental and non-profit organizations to publicize each Demolition Delay Permit may allow for additional assistance in the preservation of threatened historic properties.

The Commission should consider another regulatory tool that can be included in the Zoning Regulations, which is an adaptive re-use provision that provides for redevelopment of historic properties, such as mills, or barns, in ways that allow for modern land uses in historic structures.

The Commission is also considering establishing a Village District which can provide protection for historic resources through regulatory criteria allowed under CGS 82-j. A more detailed consideration of the approach is discussed in the Development section of this Plan.

Actions to Protect Historic Resources

1. Consider establishing Local Historic Districts.
2. Encourage sensitive stewardship programs and reward outstanding efforts.
3. Continue to use the Demolition Delay provisions with increased public notice.
4. Revise the Zoning Regulations to include adaptive reuse strategies.
5. Consider Village District regulations for historic protection.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER



Overview

Community character is typically a reflection of the physical resources and appearances of a community. Preserving and enhancing community character was identified by Bethel residents as an important issue to address during the planning process. While there is no accepted definition of what constitutes community character in Bethel, it is believed to include the following physical characteristics.

Category	Resource	Description
Enhancing	Natural / Scenic Resources	Forests, hillsides, wetland areas, meadows, ridgelines and scenic features (vistas, stone walls, barns, fences)
	Open Space	Dedicated, protected, and managed open spaces and undeveloped land
	Historic Resources	Historic resources that contribute to a sense of history
	Community Structure	Village Center, Stony Hill Corridor, densely developed areas adjacent to commercial centers and forests and meadows in the outlying parts of Town.

Enhancing or Detracting Depending on a Number of Factors

Residential Development	Older homes and neighborhoods establish character, new developments can detract
Business Development	Walkable village area enhances character, “strip development” can be seen as detracting
Community Facilities	Community facilities / services can enhance or detract from community character
Transportation	Streets, sidewalks, and other transportation facilities can affect community character
Community Design	Architectural styles can complement Bethel’s identity as an historic New England town

Strategies throughout this Plan have been made with consideration of how they may affect community character and enhance the overall quality-of-life in Bethel.

Encourage Community Spirit

Community spirit is directly related to how people feel about their community and how it presents itself to the outside world. Community spirit tends to be a reflection of the emotional or social connections that people feel about their community. When nurtured, this spirit permeates the community and creates a culture of positive results.

Bethel should focus on enhancing community-wide quality of life by encouraging values that support the preservation and enhancement of community character, and which strike a balance between competing values, such as lower taxes and better town services. Over the years, the tireless devotion of residents have preserved community character, built community spirit, and allowed the Town of Bethel to do more with less financial resources. The following table identifies some of the resources that contribute to community spirit in Bethel.

Enhancing

Unique Events	Events such as the St. Mary's Carnival and the Downtown Spring Festival where residents join in a common activity
Volunteerism	Volunteers on boards and commissions and volunteer organizations help Bethel do more for its residents, making it a special place
Philanthropy	Voluntary donations of time and money help make Bethel a special place
Shared Visions / Goals	Establishing and attaining shared visions and goals
Open Communication	Discussion of community issues and priorities is an important part of community spirit
Positive Recognition	Positive recognition of local activities and events helps build community spirit and pride

Detracting

Negative Communication	A lack of communication or negative communication can undermine community spirit
Negative Recognition	Negative recognition of a community can undermine community spirit and pride

Activities that contribute to community spirit should be encouraged since these activities will contribute to the overall quality of life in Bethel. Volunteer efforts are enhanced by positive publicity and recognition by elected and appointed officials. Recognizing and celebrating the efforts of volunteer contributions through events such as an annual picnic, a "hometown hero's plaque," and /or a "volunteer of the year" goes a long way towards encouraging additional efforts.

Actions to Encourage Community Spirit

1. Promote unique Bethel events.
2. Regularly recognize volunteer efforts.

Protect Scenic Resources

Bethel's numerous scenic qualities are important elements of the community's character. Fields, stone walls, and pastoral views, remnants of the Town's agricultural heritage, contribute to quality of life and rate high among resources valued by Bethel residents. Like the Town's other important resources, if not adequately protected, they could disappear forever.

Preserve Scenic Vistas

Preservation of the Town's many scenic vistas is an important recommendation of this Plan. Vistas should be considered in development decisions as they provide visual relief. The existing land use regulations provide for some consideration of scenic features, but many of the Town's scenic features have not been formally identified, making it difficult to incorporate scenic vistas into the design phase and as a result, they were often overlooked.

The Character Resources Plan element of this Plan identifies a number of important scenic vistas. Property owners and developers should be encouraged to preserve these vistas. When they have knowledge about the location of vistas important to the community, applicants will often willingly include them in the design phase, since they can contribute positively to the design of the project. When development threatens an identified scenic vista, the Commission and the applicant should work together to develop appropriate mitigation measures. The Commission, perhaps with the assistance of the Conservation Commission, should update the scenic resources component of the Character Resources Plan accordingly.

Adopt a Scenic Roads Ordinance

Bethel has scenic roads throughout the Town, many lined with stone walls, some shaded by majestic trees others offering stunning vistas or along pastoral meadows and fields. The scenic qualities of these roads should be protected to the maximum amount practicable. Preservation of scenic roads can be supported by Connecticut State Statutes (CGS 7-149a), which allows for some scenic roads meeting specific criteria (see sidebar) to be identified as official Scenic Roads. The adoption of scenic road ordinances have been popular in the area, with Danbury, Brookfield, Newton, and Redding having scenic road ordinances in place.

By adopting a scenic road ordinance and designating a certain road as a scenic road, a municipality may regulate improvements or changes to the roadway, which would otherwise alter its character. Widening, paving, straightening, changes in grade, and removal of mature trees or stone walls, whether by the municipality or a property owner, can all affect the character of a road. A scenic road ordinance does not interfere with normal maintenance activities, nor prevent essential safety improvements or the construction of new roads or private driveways that intersect with the designated scenic roads. The Commission recommends that the Board of Selectmen adopt a scenic road ordinance.

Actions for Protecting Scenic Resources

1. Adopt and maintain the scenic resources component of the Community Character Plan.
2. Work with applicants to protect scenic resources.
3. Consider adopting a Scenic Road ordinance.

Possible Scenic Roads

- Codfish Hill Road
- Chestnut Ridge Road
- Plumtrees Road
- State Road 58
- State Road 53
- Sunset Hill Road

Scenic Road Criteria

Designation as a scenic road includes a requirement that at least 50 percent of the landowners with road frontage support the Scenic Road designation. In addition, the road must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Unpaved
- Bordered by nature
- Traveled portion no more than 20 feet wide
- Offers scenic views
- Blends naturally into the terrain
- Parallels or crosses brooks, streams, lakes, or ponds

Benefits of the State Farmland Preservation Program

- Allows farms to remain in private ownership and to be farmed in perpetuity.
- Prevents farmland from ever being developed.
- Provides farmers with an influx of cash, eliminating the need to sell all or part of a farm for development.
- Reduces the taxable values of the land, making farming more viable.



Blue Jay Orchards

PA 490

PA 490 allows local tax assessors to assess lands that are in agricultural production, forested, or other locally determined undeveloped states, at a lower rate than developed land. This provides private landowners with incentives to keep land undeveloped.

Preserve Bethel's Agricultural Character

Farming operations played a major role in Bethel's history, with most land outside of the Village Center in self-sufficient farms until the 20th century. Today, only a handful of working farms remain in Bethel, mostly dependent on tourist and retail supported operations. However, the agricultural character of the Town is still evident and steps should be taken to preserve this piece of Bethel's past, which contributes positively to Bethel's community character. There are several programs available for farmland preservation, and the Commission encourages farmers and landowners to make use of these programs whenever and wherever possible.

Provide Flexibility for Farmers

To remain viable, some farmers have diversified their farms to include educational and recreational components including corn mazes, hayrides, and maple sugaring operations, as well as retail components such as farm stands, dairy stores, nurseries, bakeries, wineries, and restaurants showcasing farm products. When the Commission revises the Zoning Regulations, it should provide additional flexibility for agricultural uses by permitting many more farm related activities as by-right accessory uses including craft products and farm products from other farms, and only use the Special Permit process when absolutely necessary.

Promote the Benefits of Public Act PA-490

Public Act 490 (PA 490), discussed in the Open Space section, is a State authorized, locally managed assessment program that can be effective in reducing the cost of owning farmland, by allowing the Town Assessor to reduce property taxes on land used for farming. Many owners of large properties make use of this tool. The Commission encourages the Board of Selectmen and the Assessor's office to work together to ensure that property owners with properties that conform to the locally developed PA 490 criteria are aware of the benefits of this program.

Promote the Farmland Preservation Program

The State Farmland Preservation Program is a voluntary program wherein the State Department of Agriculture purchases the development rights to the land and the land is kept in agricultural use. One of Bethel's largest farming operations, the Blue Jay Orchards, is in this program.

Collaborate with Agricultural Trusts

Agricultural land trusts are dedicated to holding and leasing farmlands, and offer another alternative to preserving agricultural lands. The American Farmland Trust operates nationwide to preserve farms and address farmland issues while the Working Land Alliance has recently established the Connecticut Farmland Trust for the donation of agricultural land and preservation funds. Such organizations make ideal stewards to own and maintain the productive use of preserved farmland.

Support the Local Farmer's Market

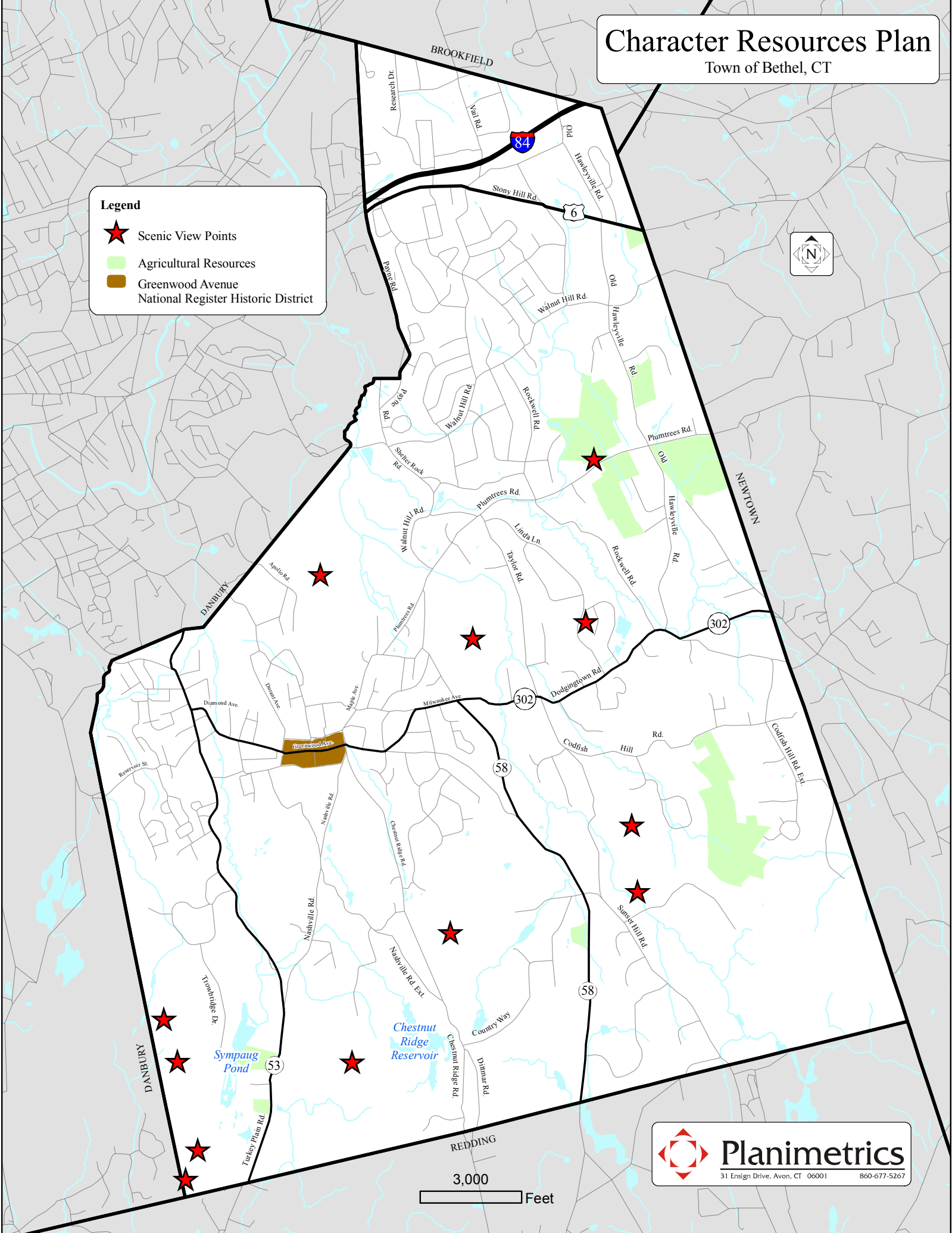
Farmer's markets support farms and preserve agricultural heritage. A farmer's market can be found, seasonally, at the State Agricultural Extension Service property on Route 6. The Board of Selectmen and the EDC should promote this local venue.

Character Resources Plan

Town of Bethel, CT

Legend

- ★ Scenic View Points
- Agricultural Resources
- Greenwood Avenue National Register Historic District



Actions to Support Bethel's Agricultural Character

1. Provide flexibility in the Zoning Regulations for agricultural uses including crafts, products from other farms and more as-right accessory uses.
2. Promote the benefits of PA 490.
3. Encourage use of the Connecticut Farmland Preservation Program.
4. Collaborate with appropriate partners to protect farmland.
5. Support the local farmer's market.



Blue Jay Orchard Windmill



Blue Jay Orchard Barn



Nursery



Farmer's market

Protect Stone Walls, Foundations, and Bridges

Scattered throughout Bethel are foundations of structures long since vanished. At first glance, many of these old stone walls and foundations look like nothing more than a pile of stones. However the location, dimensions, structure, and material of these foundations are an archeological key to Bethel's past.

Some communities have enacted ordinances to protect stone walls from unnecessary demolition. Without depriving citizens' use of their property, or detracting from the property's value, these ordinances provide a process to identify, protect, and preserve stone walls of historic, aesthetic and/or cultural merit. The purpose of a stone wall ordinance should be to preserve highway boundary stone walls; prevent the scavenging and destruction of historic stone walls during subdivision of agrarian land; preserve the scenic qualities of roads lined by stone walls; and regulate excavations adjacent to stone walls. Bethel should adopt a stone wall preservation ordinance that addresses these purposes.

Complete Bridge Improvements

Within Town-owned rights-of-way are several stone bridges in need of repair, some of them well over 100 years old. These old stone bridges are an important element of the Town's character and should be preserved for future generations. The Town Engineer's office maintains a database of the bridges with information on capacity, structural deficiencies and needed improvements.

State and Federal funds are sometimes available for bridge repair and replacement. The Town, through the Town Engineer's office, should continue to work with its partners at the Regional, State and Federal levels to access transportation enhancement funds and historic preservation grants that can be used for bridge enhancements. As matching funds are typically required for these particular grants, the Board of Selectmen should consider identifying a yearly line item for bridge maintenance of approximately \$50,000. Bridge maintenance should be more highly prioritized in order to preserve these unique bridges and reduce the possibility of replacement with modern structures.

Actions for Protecting Stone Walls, Foundations and Bridges

1. Consider a historic stone walls and foundations ordinance.
2. Maintain the historic stone bridges.
3. Create a line item for maintenance of historic bridges.



Historic Stone Bridge

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DEVELOPMENT THEMES



Overview of Development Themes

The next several chapters address development policies and patterns affecting the Town of Bethel as the Plan of Conservation and Development was being prepared.

Unless additional development in Bethel is guided appropriately, areas of forest, meadow, and wildlife habitat could disappear, and historic resources could be damaged or destroyed, altering the character of the Town. The strategies in this section are guided by the vision that Bethel has appropriate development providing a range of goods, services, and employment opportunities, that areas with existing infrastructure are the densest parts of Town

"Growth is inevitable and desirable, but destruction of community character is not. The question is not whether your part of the world is going to change. The question is how."

Edward T. McMahon, The Conservation Fund



Residential Development



Commercial Development



Village Development



Moderate Density Housing



COMMUNITY STRUCTURE

Overview

Community structure refers to the physical organization of the developed areas of a Town and provides a guide for future land use policies and regulations.

In studies of community structure and character, people feel most comfortable and identify most strongly with specific focal points in a community. These focal points provide the community with its unique “sense of place.” If one examines Bethel’s structure from an aerial perspective, the following elements, which can be traced back to Bethel’s historical development, become apparent:

- strong mixed-use Village Center;
- secondary commercial districts along Route 6 and Grassy Plain;
- densely developed residential areas adjacent to the commercial districts; and
- decreasing residential densities in other outlying areas.



Village Center



Route 6



Downtown Mixed-Use













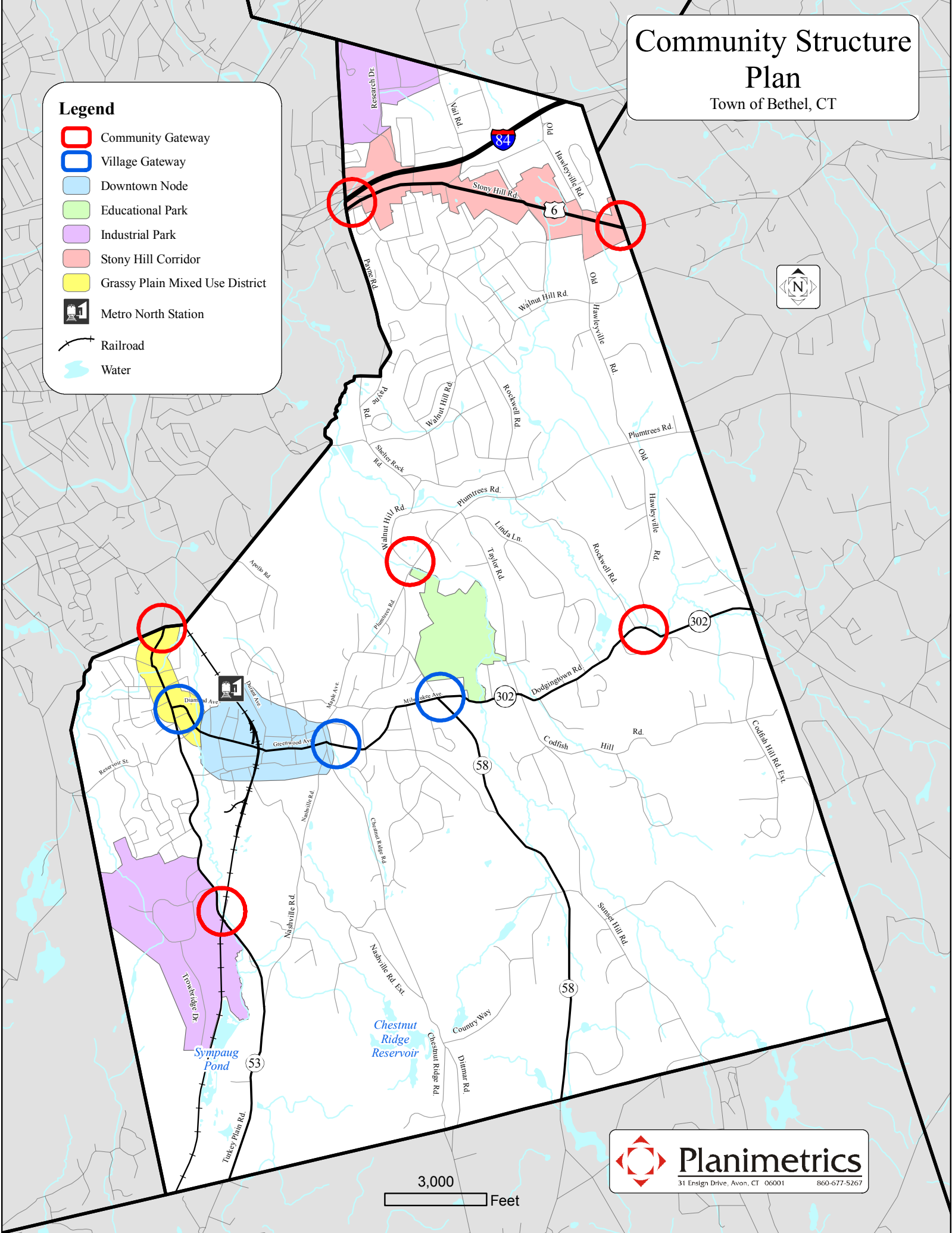
Stony Hill

Community Structure Plan

Town of Bethel, CT

Legend

-  Community Gateway
-  Village Gateway
-  Downtown Node
-  Educational Park
-  Industrial Park
-  Stony Hill Corridor
-  Grassy Plain Mixed Use District
-  Metro North Station
-  Railroad
-  Water



3,000 Feet



Planimetrics
 31 Ensign Drive, Avon, CT 06001 860-677-5267

What are Nodes?

Nodes are areas of more intense activity that serve as a focal point for the surrounding areas. Nodes can be defined as including office, retail, residential, recreational, and institutional uses at a scale appropriate for the location.

What is Mixed-use Development?

Mixed-use development refers to development of a single parcel that includes a mix of uses such as residential and retail, or retail and office uses.

Support Enhancing Elements

The Town’s land use policies and regulations should guide future development so that it is compatible with Bethel’s unique character and structure. Elements that enhance community structure should be encouraged and elements that detract community structure should be discouraged and/or avoided. The following table identifies those elements that can enhance a community’s character and which should be supported. Also identified are those elements that detract from the desired character and which should be minimized.

Element	Description
Enhancing Community Elements	
Nodes	Identifiable focal points or places with distinctive characteristics and more intense development, such as the Village Center.
Cluster / Campus	Neighborhoods, educational or business development identifiable by use, location, character, or style, such as the Educational Park.
Greenbelts	Greenways, trails, stream belts, and other contextual linear elements such as the Ives Trail.
Gateways	Places providing a clear sense of entry or arrival with landscaping or signage, such as the Sycamore Tree at the intersection of Routes 53 and 302.
Detracting Community Elements	
Strip Development	Linear areas, usually commercial, with automobile-orientation.
Sprawl	Large areas with little variation in style or character.
Either Enhancing or Detracting	
Roads/Railways	Roads and railways can be positive or negative elements.

Actions for Enhancing Community Structure

1. Maintain and enhance the strong, mixed-use node in the Village Center.
2. Support cluster and campus development that includes design considerations.
3. Promote greenways, blueways, and other linear elements.
4. Create design plans for gateways.
5. Maintain the gateways.
6. Avoid sprawling development patterns in areas without public infrastructure.
7. Manage conflicts between roads, railways, and adjacent land uses.

Enhance the Village Center

The Town's historic Village Center is a vibrant node that contributes positively to the community's character. Preserving and enhancing the character and structure of the downtown is an important recommendation of this Plan. A vibrant Village Center may also be an important economic development tool and additional strategies to encourage increased economic vitality in the Village Center, are discussed in the discussion about encouraging quality design.

Continue Streetscape Improvements

In order to support the pedestrian friendly environment that exists in the Village Center today, Zoning Regulations, grants for streetscape improvements, and other tools that promote an active streetscape should continue to be utilized. The streetscape improvements that were added to parts of Greenwood Avenue a few years ago should be extended throughout the Village Center. Maintaining an attractive and safe environment for pedestrians will encourage shoppers to window shop which can lead to visits and purchases at additional stores, contributing to a vibrant Village Center that supports the local retailers. The EDC should consider working with local banks to identify low-interest loans, which could be used in conjunction with grants, for façade improvements and extension of the streetscape improvements.

Develop Integrated Parking Strategies

Residents expressed concern about parking availability in the Village Center and believe that additional parking is necessary in order for the area to be financially successful. The Commission should undertake a parking study for the Downtown that explores the following elements:

- occupancy rates for existing parking spaces in order to determine the nature and extent of any potential parking shortage;
- identification of shared parking strategies that allow for lower parking ratios when serving residential, retail, and office uses;
- signage directing traffic to available parking;
- municipal agreements with downtown property owners to make use of available parking spaces located on private property;
- integrating innovative stormwater management techniques including roof top gardens;
- potential development of municipal parking facilities including garages;
- consideration of the former train station as a parking facility if such a program includes preservation of the historic train station; and
- potential public/private redevelopment of the School Street properties incorporating parking, retail, and open space.

Downtown Green Spaces

As discussed in Chapter 4, Bethel does not have an abundance of protected green or open spaces. This is particularly apparent in the Village Center. Efforts to acquire properties should involve the Chamber of Commerce, a possible Conservation Commission, and a potential Economic Development coordinator.



PT Barnum Square



Green Open Space at the Municipal Center



Historic Train Station

Identify More Green and Public Spaces in the Village Center

The Village Center does not have any significant public spaces, particularly green and open spaces, except for the lands associated with the Municipal Center and the small triangle of land known as P.T. Barnum Square. Green and open public spaces are necessary for public gathering and community events and allow for passive recreational opportunities. Additional green and open spaces should be acquired and preserved as public spaces.

The Commission recommends that any additional development or redevelopment in the Downtown consider provisions for additional green and open spaces particularly those suitable for public gatherings and passive reflection. The Board of Selectmen and/or the Conservation Commission should make the acquisition of additional open and green space in the Village Center a priority.

Preserve the Historic Train Station

The Town’s historic train station, located within the Village Center, provides retail space, currently for a local non-profit organization. The surrounding land provides parking for Main Street businesses and the Library.

The Commission recommends that the site be more thoroughly studied to determine if there are any redevelopment possibilities on the site. Any plan to redevelop the site needs to consider the following:

- preservation of the historic train station building;
- ability to co-locate any public green and /or open spaces;
- the nature and amount of parking on the site;
- access and circulation opportunities and constraints, particularly in relation to Greenwood Avenue and Depot Avenue; and
- public private partnership.

Actions for Enhancing the Village Center

1. Continue streetscape improvements throughout the Village Center.
2. Maintain sidewalks and street furniture.
3. Develop integrated parking strategies for the Village Center.
4. Identify more open and green spaces for the Village Center.
5. Consider structured parking with open spaces, gardens, and innovative stormwater management techniques at the former train station.
6. Preserve the historic train station.
7. Support public-private partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Commission.

Encourage Quality Design

The development and management of land can affect the quality of our lives. In addition to dimensional standards and type of use, there are also aesthetic aspects of development that can play a role in the character of a community.

Establish Design Districts and a Design Review Process

The Commission is considering establishing design districts in several parts of Town, including:

- the Village Center; (discussed in the next section)
- gateway areas (identified in the sidebar);
- transit-oriented districts; (discussed in the next chapter).

Bethel can make use of a process to have all applications in design designated districts reviewed by a design professional as allowed under CGS 8-1c. The design review process is usually an iterative process and works best if applications are reviewed early in the design stages. Some communities use an informal pre-submission conference, but other communities feel that the entire process is best addressed in regular Commission meetings. As the Commission revises its land use regulations, it will explore the various options to determine which will be the best approach for Bethel.

Create Design Criteria

For the Village Center, the State's Village District enabling legislation CGS 8-2j provides specific criteria against which all development must be reviewed. The following section provides a more detailed discussion of the process and objectives of Village District regulations. For all other design designated districts, specific design criteria providing quantitative and qualitative design guidelines and regulations will need to be developed in conformance with CGS 8-2m. The primary considerations in drafting design guidelines are to ensure that they are consistent with due process and sufficiently clear that a person of ordinary intelligence can understand what they mean.

In order to implement a design review process, the Commission will need to establish either specific design districts or overlay districts. The Commission should establish a Village District for the Village Center, the boundaries of which are identified on the Village District Plan map. Other areas of town, including the Route 6 Corridor and a newly created transit-oriented development, will need clear boundaries for the design district, or have a design overlay for all non-residential development, and design criteria against which proposals can be measured for compliance.

In some communities where design is an important consideration, form-based or performance-based codes are adopted. Form-based codes contain traditional zoning elements such as minimum and maximum heights, with increased flexibility for a property owner to meet changing real estate markets by having the ability to build apartments, offices, or retail based on market demand, as long as the appearance of the development conforms to the community's vision. Wilton uses an ad-hoc board to review design considerations in design districts. Another possibility, used in Simsbury, is to consider a Design Review Board which has the ability to review all non-residential development in any district. The Commission will explore the various options and determine the best approach for Bethel as it revises its Zoning Regulations.

Potential Gateway Locations

- Grassy Plain Street and Greenwood Ave.
- Greenwood Ave. and Chestnut
- South Street and Route 53
- Old Hawleyville Road and Route 6
- Payne Road and Route 6

Village District Regulations Criteria

- Proposed buildings and modifications to existing buildings be harmonious with their surroundings and their terrain, and to the use, scale, and architecture of nearby buildings to which they are functionally or visually related.
- Spaces and structures visible from the road be designed to enhance the visual amenities in the area around the proposed building or modification.
- The characteristics of residential or commercial properties, such as color and materials, be evaluated for their compatibility with the local architectural motif, and the maintenance of views; historic buildings, monuments, and landscaping.
- Removal of or disruption to historic, traditional, or significant structures or architectural elements shall be minimized.
- An architect or architectural firm, contracted by the Commission and designated as its consultant for the application, must conduct reviews and submit recommendations to the Commission within 35 days of receipt and the Commission must consider it in decision-making.

Adopt Village District Regulations

Bethel's historic downtown Village Center is a mixed-use New England Village with shops, restaurants, residences, and municipal services. The architecture is typical of an early American New England village, with peaked roofs reminiscent of the village churches that were the Town's first buildings, and narrow streets with tightly developed lots. As mentioned earlier, there is good sidewalk infrastructure throughout the Village Center.

The design qualities of the Village Center are important components of the Town's character, with distinct sub-areas including:

- the Downtown Core, a vibrant commercial district with a mix of uses including retail, restaurants, residential, and municipal uses, with a 19th century New England architectural character, and a pedestrian oriented streetscape;
- the surrounding historic residential areas which includes: the Greenwood Avenue residential area along both sides of Greenwood Avenue east from the Downtown Core, with moderately dense single-family residential homes in a mix of 18th through 20th century styles; South Street, Blackman Avenue, High Street, Farnam Hill, and Grand Street, with many 18th and 19th century homes providing additional residential options for multi-family living with a historically authentic character; and an area north of the downtown core with a mix of single family and multi-family homes, converted from single-family residences, many of which are architecturally and historically significant from the 18th and 19th centuries.

The Commission has discussed the possibility of including additional areas, including properties along Grassy Plain Avenue, many of which are historic and contribute to the Town's attractive character. At this time, the conceptual map for the Village District does not include those properties, but in the future, the Commission may expand the boundaries to include additional properties.

Connecticut General Statute's 8-2j allows for the establishment of village districts through an amendment to the Zoning Regulations that includes architectural and site design components to ensure that new development reflects the most desirable attributes of the village. Village District regulations must include specific criteria, identified in the sidebar.

Within the Village Center, under Village District regulations, the law requires that applications for all new construction and substantial reconstruction that are visible from the road must undergo architectural review. All development in the district must be designed to meet various compatibility objectives including arrangement and orientation of proposed building; and all accessory structures must support a uniform architectural theme and present a harmonious relationship to the neighborhood.

As the Commission revises the Zoning Regulations, it should develop Village District regulations in conformance with CGS 8-2j. The conceptual boundaries for the Village District are identified on the adjacent page, on the Village District Plan. The Commission will determine the exact boundaries which may include areas as far west as Grassy Plain. The Commission may decide to adopt regulations applicable to the Village Core at its earliest possible convenience and to later include those areas of the Village District which are more residential in character.

Encourage the Use of Sustainable Design Principles

With growing concerns about climate change and on-going improvements in building practices allowing sustainable development to be competitive with approaches that involved negative consequences for communities and their natural environments, designers and developers are adopting sustainable design principles. Some of Bethel's neighbors, including Redding and Brookfield, are already exploring ways to revise their land use regulations to encourage the use of green and sustainable technologies.

Examples of this development practice are found in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System, known as the LEED standards. These standards include a set of nationally accepted design, construction, and maintenance principles for high performance green buildings. Key elements are sustainability, optimizing energy performance, and environmental awareness. Sustainable building practices also encourage collaboration between builders, businesses, and residences to encourage all new development and redevelopment to incorporate these sustainable practices.

Land use policies that support sustainable design principles take advantage of the relationship of the building to the sun; integrate energy efficient and water efficient technologies; use specific materials that meet sustainability criteria and address indoor environmental quality.

Simple actions, like requiring that all windows can be opened, and allowing for differing setbacks on north-facing as opposed to south-facing streets to take advantage of the heating and lighting benefits of the sun; and allowing for permeable parking areas designed to freeze and thaw as a unit, are examples of sustainable design practices.

Today, in order to be competitive when securing governmental funding, developers are encouraged, sometimes even required, to comply with basic sustainable building practices. In Redding, a recent LEED certified project to redevelop a former wire mill brownfield site, known as the Georgetown Village and/or the Gilbert and Bennet mill site, resulted in \$72.5 million in tax exempt bonds. In a number of municipalities and states, such as New York City, Oregon, and California, in order to obtain permits for a development project that includes a public building or involves public funds, the use of sustainable design practices is required.

It is anticipated that over the next ten years, this trend will continue. Therefore, as the Commission revises its land use regulations it will consider and include sustainable design and building practices to the maximum amount practicable.

Develop a Unified Sign Design Plan

In order to help create a positive image for the Town, a unified sign design plan should be developed that would be applicable to all Town-owned and/or managed signs. The sign design theme should be used on all signs that identify Town-owned facilities and properties. Currently most publicly owned facilities have some signage, such as the creative sign identifying the location of the Public Works Department. The unique and distinctive signage apparent at some locations should continue to be displayed but augmented by a consistent design approach to improve the Town's overall image and to facilitate finding and identifying municipal facilities.

The Commission recommends that the Board of Selectmen and / or EDC develop a unified sign design theme that can also be used for signs identifying parking areas in the downtown, directing travelers to and from the Train Station and along Town roads directing visitors and residents to places of interest.

Develop “Wayfinding” Signs and Maps

One way to preserve and reinforce Bethel's community structure would be to develop a system of “wayfinding” signs and maps to direct residents and visitors to key areas of town. The maps could highlight business centers and commercial activities as well as public buildings and facilities. Wayfinding signs and maps, using the Town's adopted unified design motifs, can be used to direct motorists and pedestrians. Some of the locations that should be identified on the wayfinding maps and signs are identified in the sidebar. The Commission encourages the Board of Selectmen and/or EDC to develop wayfinding signs and maps.

Actions for Design Consideration

1. Establish a design review process.
2. Create appropriate design guidelines and/or criteria for design designated districts.
3. Consider form-based codes in design designated districts.
4. Adopt Village District Regulations.
5. Institutionalize architectural review for the Village District.
6. Encourage the use of sustainable building practices such as siting development appropriately in relation to natural light.
7. Develop a unified sign design for all Town-owned and managed properties.
8. Develop “wayfinding” signs and maps.

“Wayfinding” Locations

- Between the Village Center and the Route 6 Corridor;
- Municipal Center, identifying it as the location of Town Hall and the Senior Center;
- Library;
- Teen Center;
- Railroad Station;
- Educational Park;
- Clusters of business activities such as shopping or dining areas;
- Tourist attractions such as Blue Jay Orchards or Huntington State Park
- Historic Districts, Structures and Places



Public Works Entrance



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Overview

Attracting and retaining appropriate businesses are important for a variety of reasons, which includes providing goods and services to residents, maintaining jobs, enhancing community character and vibrancy in the community, and providing tax benefits. Bethel has a number of business districts for both commercial and industrial businesses. These business districts include a diversity of businesses which contributes approximately 25 percent of the Town's Grand List. Commercial businesses are located primarily in the Downtown Village Center and along Route 6. Industrial businesses are located within the Town's two industrial parks, and within the historic industrial zone adjacent to the Village Center.

Reorganize the EDC

Bethel would benefit from a coordinated and supported Economic Development Commission (EDC) with comprehensive economic development responsibilities for the entire Town. Currently the EDC has a limited mission to oversee the orderly development of the Francis J. Clarke Industrial Park. There are other parts of Town, such as the Village Center, that would benefit from the oversight of an EDC. The Board of Selectmen should expand the scope of the EDC to oversee economic development activities throughout Bethel.

The newly reorganized commission will need financial support. The EDC might also benefit from staff assistance, including the services of a full-time Economic Development Director to provide expertise relative to the complex issues related to economic development activities in Bethel. The Board of Selectmen should consider hiring a full-time experienced person to support the EDC.

Actions for Reorganizing the EDC

1. Expand the mission of the EDC to provide Town-wide economic development oversight.
2. Provide staffing support to the EDC.
3. Consider hiring a full-time Economic Development Director.

Economic Development Plan

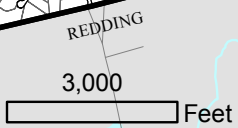
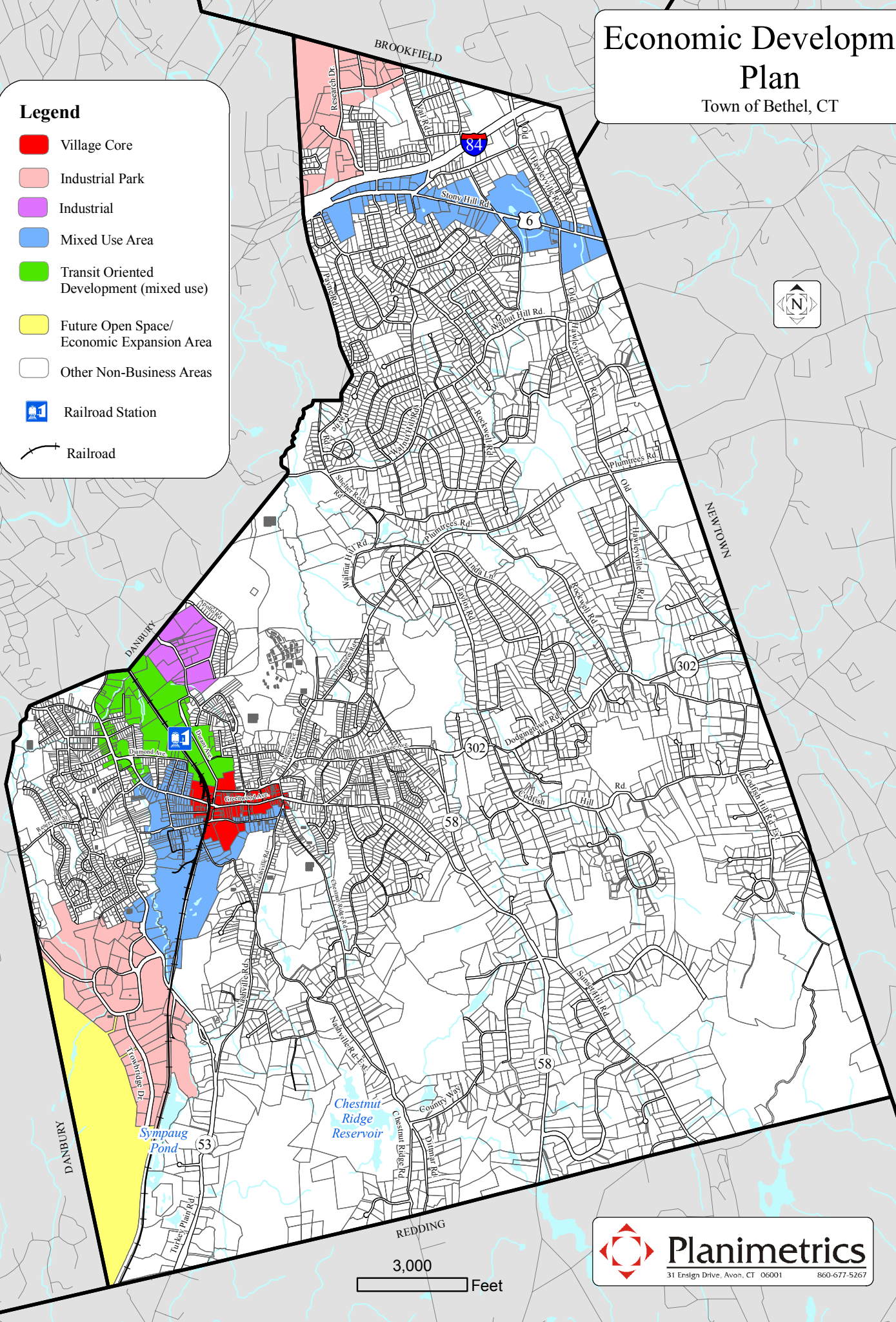
Plan

Town of Bethel, CT



Legend

- Village Core
- Industrial Park
- Industrial
- Mixed Use Area
- Transit Oriented Development (mixed use)
- Future Open Space/
Economic Expansion Area
- Other Non-Business Areas
- 1 Railroad Station
- Railroad



Planimetrics
31 Ensign Drive, Avon, CT 06001 860-677-5267



Bethel Cinema



Northern Access into Berkshire Industrial Park



Francis J. Clarke Industrial Park

Attract and Retain Appropriate Business

During the scoping sessions for the Plan, residents identified a desire to attract consumer oriented retail, restaurants; medical businesses; and research and development firms. The EDC and/or the Town’s economic development staff should work collaboratively with existing business and property owners, Town Staff, the Commission, and elected officials to identify potential businesses, manage recruitment activities, and provide assistance in identifying appropriate locations for new business development.

One location in Town zoned for industrial and commercial uses is the Berkshire Industrial Park, a privately developed and maintained industrial park. This sixty-four acre parcel is not proximate to any water supply resources and the Park’s owners provide water, sewer, electrical, and fiber optic connections, and security with good access to Routes 7 and 84. The owners of the Berkshire Industrial Park have been working with the Board of Selectmen and the Land Use Office to attract light industrial and commercial office operations appropriate for Bethel. The Board of Selectmen, the Land Use Office, and our Commission should continue to work with the owners of the Berkshire Industrial Park to identify additional tenants. The EDC should also be involved in assisting in this effort.

The other industrial park, the Francis J. Clarke Industrial Park, is a publicly managed industrial park located within the Terre Haute lands. The Commission will consider design considerations and other development regulations and criteria for these lands as it revises the Zoning Regulations. The EDC and the Commission should collaborate to identify and attract the most desirable tenants for these sites, once development guidelines for the undeveloped areas have been established. Consideration should be given to making more efficient use of this existing industrial park, including the use of regulatory strategies.

Site Businesses Appropriately

Finding the right location for the right business is an important goal and one that needs the attention and direction of the Economic Development Commission. Some businesses have little impact on their surroundings, while others can become a source of irritation, particularly if they are improperly sited.

Bethel is fortunate in having a number of successful businesses and several well-developed business areas. However, as the Town’s recent water supply study indicates, some of the Town’s historic industrial areas are located on top of critical water supply resources. The Commission and the Board of Selectmen may wish to provide incentives for business and property owners in the older industrial areas to relocate to more appropriate locations, in order to avoid conflicts with these resources. The Commission should consider rezoning some of the industrial zoned lands north of and on Taylor Avenue for inclusion in the Village District.

Actions for Attracting and Retaining Business

1. Identify appropriate businesses types for Bethel.
2. Identify appropriate locations for appropriate businesses.
3. Consider identifying incentives for industrial businesses located over public water supply resources to relocate.
4. Identify support services for new businesses.
5. Recruit appropriate businesses.

Support Transit-Oriented Development

The Commission recommends identifying locations for compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use development, sometimes referred to as transit-oriented development (TOD). TOD, as defined by the American Public Transportation Association, is compact, mixed-use development near new or existing public transportation infrastructure that serves housing, transportation, and neighborhood goals.

According to the Census and studies by the Housatonic Area Regional Transit (HART), transit travel to New York City from Fairfield County, as well as increased employment opportunities in Fairfield County commercial centers, has been increasing, making Bethel a desirable location for those working to the south and living in northern Fairfield County.

Components of compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use development patterns are:

- transit station as the prominent feature;
- walkable design with pedestrian as the highest priority, designed to include the easy use of bicycles and scooters, and supported by transit that includes streetcars, trolleys, buses, etc;
- high density, (approximately 15 to 20 units to an acre) high-quality development within a 1/2 mile (approximately a ten to fifteen minute walk) radius surrounding the transit station,
- a mix of uses in close proximity to each other, including office, residential, retail, and civic uses; and
- reduced parking ratios; and
- a transportation management plan.

One area that is appropriate for TOD is the area adjacent to the Metro North Railroad Station on Durant Avenue. The Board of Selectmen, the Commission, and the EDC should work together to begin the process of identifying and / or helping property owners to assemble appropriate parcels in the area for TOD development. A map describing the proposed boundaries of the district is found following the discussion on transit-oriented development.

As the Commission revises the Zoning Regulations it will develop transit-oriented development regulations for areas deemed appropriate for TOD to encourage multi-story buildings set close to the street, with some on-street parking and bus kiosks. Other considerations include ground floor retail and restaurants with upper story residential. Parking should be structured, either in stand-alone or mixed use buildings. Landscaped sidewalks connecting the mixed use development with the train station and downtown should include benches, water fountains, and other pedestrian amenities.



Transit Hub Adjacent to Mixed-use Development

Currently, access to the train is only from the east side of the tracks. The Commission recommends that there be consideration of a west side platform for commuters living on the west side of the tracks. Since there is only one rail line, trains stopping at Bethel could open doors on both sides of the track to let passengers enter and exit from the most convenient side. If it is possible to build a west side platform, additional parking on the west side should be constructed, as well as bicycle facilities and additional sidewalks to improve access to and use of the train. The Commission would like to communicate this request directly to CONN DOT and encourages the Board of Selectmen to endorse the concept through a Resolution.

In addition to transit-oriented developments, there may also be locations appropriate for moderately dense residential development (approximately 10 to 15 units per acre) that integrates transit options by providing access to the train station by shuttle van, bus, bike, pedestrian paths, and other non-auto dependent transportation modes. The transit-supportive development locations should be identified and zoned appropriately, allowing for denser development with low parking ratios than used in more suburban districts which are strictly dependent upon automobiles for transportation.

In addition to good transit options, these transit-supported locations will also need access to retail, restaurants, and recreational opportunities. In particular, the area along Grassy Plain north of Greenwood Avenue should be examined as a potential location for transit-supported development. This area already has a mix of uses and is served by public water and sewer. In addition to considering revisions to the Zoning Regulations to allow for denser development, strategies to increase transit services should be explored. This could include a requirement that any new development provide a transportation management plan that provides shuttle service to the train station during peak commute hours.

As the Commission revises the regulations to allow for transit-oriented development, staff should be directed to communicate and collaborate with Metro-North Railroad to ensure compliance with the railroads efforts to develop TODs. The Commission and staff should also coordinate with HVCEO.

Actions for Transit-Oriented Development

1. Identify appropriate locations for Transit-oriented development (TOD) and consider assembling parcels.
2. Work with property owners to educate them about the benefits of TOD.
3. Rezone the areas around the Metro North Rail Station to support TOD.
4. Encourage Metro North to build a west side platform at the train station.
5. Consider similar regulations for transit-supportive development with lower densities than allowed in a TOD.
6. Coordinate and collaborate with MNR and HVCEO.



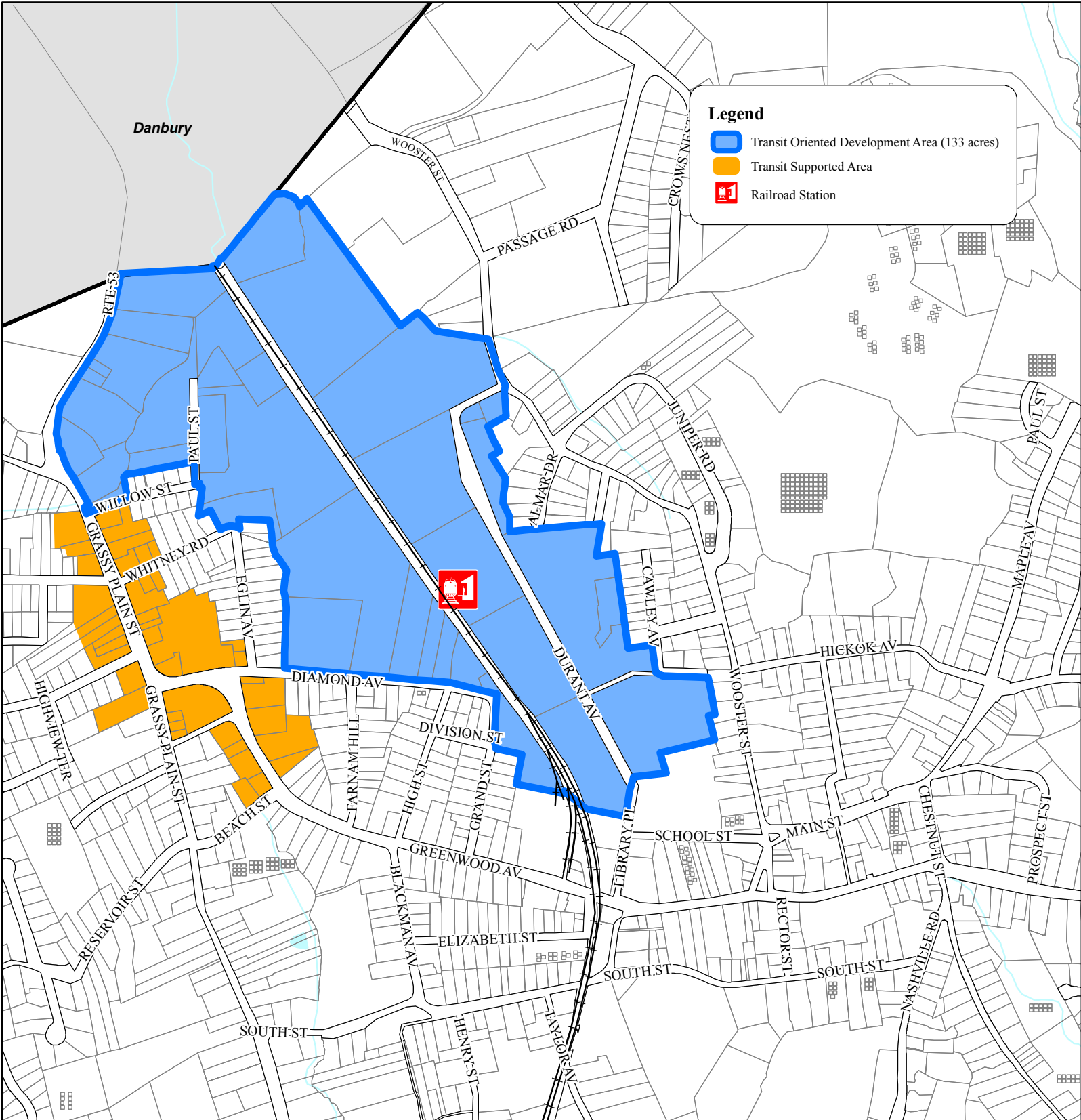
Proposed Transit Oriented Development

Town of Bethel, CT

Danbury

Legend

- Transit Oriented Development Area (133 acres)
- Transit Supported Area
- Railroad Station



490 Feet



**Sycamore Drive-in
Restaurant**

Support Local Businesses

The Bethel Cinema has become a destination location for the region. Encouraging compatible and synchronistic businesses, such as restaurants adjacent to the theatre, might be successful if sufficient parking can be identified. When the Bethel Cinema is involved in statewide film programs the Board of Selectmen and the EDC should consider organizing one day street fairs piggybacking on the festival. The Commission will work with the owners of the Bethel Cinema and adjacent properties to identify shared parking options.

There are many historic buildings and sites that could be developed as regional attractions. With Bethel's long history and many buildings dating back to the 1700's, there are locations and stories that could provide interest.

Family oriented attractions, with activities catering to children, should be pursued. Examples include historic agricultural activities, such as maple sugar operations, which could provide a regional interest and some limited income for town-owned lands with mature maple trees.

Bethel also owns significant tracts of undeveloped lands with recreational opportunities. The EDC working with a Conservation Commission could create regional attractions with the development of hiking trails and nature preserves on lands already owned by the Town.

Support Economic Vitality in the Village Center

Residents who attended scoping meetings for the Plan identified a desire to encourage and promote consumer oriented retail and restaurants in the Village Center. One tool that may stimulate appropriate retail and service oriented businesses, which in turn will support a vital Village Center, is to allow residential development on the upper floors of a building only if the ground floor provides space for desirable retail that promotes an active streetscape.

Desirable retail in Bethel is likely to be stores that provide everyday necessities such as apparel stores, small general merchandise stores, stationary and book stores, and similar establishments. Restaurants that cater to family dining and destination restaurants that cater to special occasion meals should be encouraged where practical.

Public-private partnerships, including collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Commission, should be encouraged to create a vibrant Village Center with the full support of the business community.

Develop a Route 6 Corridor Plan

The Route 6 corridor in the Stony Hill section of Town is sometimes referred to as the "other Bethel." It is an area of Town that could allow for significant new and redevelopment opportunities. There are currently a number of vacant parcels along Route 6 and approximately 60 acres available for new development within the Berkshire Industrial Park. In addition, many of the existing commercial developments provide redevelopment opportunities.

The Route 6 corridor may be an appropriate location for mixed-use development. A concurrent planning effort to develop specific redevelopment proposals for this corridor is underway and the results of that study will be incorporated into this Plan as appropriate.

Support Home Based Businesses

According to the US Bureau of Labor, small businesses create the majority of new jobs in the US. According to the National Federation of Independent Businesses, two out of every three new businesses are started at home.

In today's wired global economy, small businesses can grow into multi-million dollar enterprises. As businesses add employees and outgrow the home environment, many business owners will look to move locally rather than uproot their own families. The EDC, with the help of an Economic Development Director, should collaborate with state agencies to make programs available to small businesses and help them remain in Bethel.

Actions for Supporting Local Businesses

1. Promote synchronistic businesses such as restaurants adjacent to the Bethel cinema.
2. Hold street fairs in conjunction with film festival events.
3. Work with the Bethel Cinema and adjacent properties to identify shared parking solutions.
4. Consider developing historic-theme activities for tourists such as maple-sugaring operations.
5. Consider developing recreational opportunities on Town-owned lands.
6. Revise the Zoning Regulations for the Village Center to encourage mixed use buildings with active ground floor uses and upper story residential.
7. Encourage public-private partnerships.
8. Develop a Route 6 Corridor Plan.
9. Ensure regulations relative to home businesses are consistent with today's global economy.
10. Assist small business owners identify and make use of state and national programs.



RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Overview

The focus of this chapter is on strategies to improve the pattern of residential growth and to ensure that Bethel has the range of housing opportunities appropriate for the diverse needs of the community.

The primary issues related to residential development identified during the planning process include:

- managing densities in areas of Town with large parcels of vacant and/or sparsely developed land and without public water or sewer services;
- conversions of single-family homes into multi-family homes;
- conversions of owner-occupied homes to renter-occupied homes;
- providing workforce housing affordable for people employed in and around Bethel; and
- future concerns relative to a phenomena seen widely in lower Fairfield County, involving the tearing down of older homes, some of which are historic, and replacing with houses that feel overly large in scale.



Low-density Residential



Multi-family Club House

Manage Residential Development

This Plan recommends that the Commission consider modifying the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations applicable to subdivisions. The conservation section of this Plan discussed some approaches that may affect development patterns, including a revision to the Zoning Regulations relative to a buildable land provision and a revision to the definition of steep slopes. Other approaches are discussed here.

The current regulations adhere to a traditional form of zoning that relies on minimum and maximum specifications. Another form of zoning, referred to as “performance based” zoning, includes a collection of flexible zoning tools that are particularly useful where there are large pieces of undeveloped land, a situation that exists in the south and eastern parts of Town.

The primary benefits of the revised conservation subdivision regulations are that they preserve the character that Bethel residents cherish, protect natural and scenic resources, relate development to the capacity of the land, and allow more flexibility for the developer. These regulations include the following elements:

- a definition of buildable land (discussed in detail in an earlier chapter);
- establishment of density standards to regulate the total number of lots on a parcel being subdivided;
- flexibility in lot sizes and setbacks;
- requirements that a specific percentage of the parcel area be preserved as open space; and
- allowance for community septic systems.

The Commission supports the concept of clustering residential development along existing road frontage and minimizing the amount of land required for each individual building lot. However, due to concerns about soil suitability for community septic or dense development dependent upon individual septic systems in close proximity to one another, the Commission wants to explore the regulatory mechanisms for conservation subdivisions before making a determination relative to any specific density on areas with challenging soils and / or steep slopes.



Example of a Conventional Subdivision Site Plan

Benefits of Density-Based Zoning

- lot sizes can be reduced without increasing the number of housing units;
- the total buildout potential of the Town can be moderated through adjustments in density;
- amount of infrastructure to be constructed and maintained can be reduced
- sensitive areas can be avoided and the impacts on larger sensitive areas such as aquifers and steep slopes can be reduced; and
- residents and wildlife are able to enjoy all the benefits of the larger open spaces surrounding the newly developed homes.

Adopt Residential Density Regulations

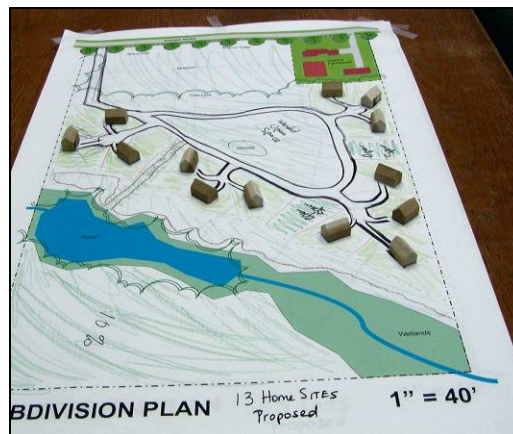
Currently, the development yield of a property is determined by an engineer or developer trying to locate as many lots on a parcel as will comply with the local health code and land use regulations. This approach can result in development patterns that are insensitive to the resources on a parcel, and do not contribute meaningful open space to the community.

The current text and calculations for conservation subdivisions are cumbersome and, as identified in the 1997 POCD, should be simplified. Rather than requiring a developer to produce a subdivision plan under existing minimum lot size requirements and then calculate the total number of lots that might be approved, the approach proposed in this Plan relies on the establishment of a density factor. A density factor identifies a number applied to the buildable acreage of a parcel which determines the total number of lots. For instance, if the density factor is determined to be 0.37 and there are ten buildable acres in a two-acre district, then the total number of buildable lots will be 4 (3.7 rounded up). The buildable acreage is different than the total acreage due to land being excluded from the calculations because road right-of-ways, wetlands and waterways, steep slopes, and other conditions are not included in the buildable land calculation.

The developer then prepares one plan for four home sites as a conservation subdivision plan. The four home sites should be clustered to the maximum amount practicable given the constraints of the land and its ability to accommodate septic sewer systems. The remaining land is shared land accessible to the residents of the subdivision and in some cases, available to the greater community.

The Commission will incorporate the provisions discussed in this section into the land use regulations as those are revised. It is anticipated that the Commission will use density factors in the range of 0.7 lots per buildable acres in the R-40 zone and approximately 0.37 lots per buildable acres in the R-80 zone. Prior to adoption of new Zoning Regulations, the proposed density standards should be compared to actual development experience in Bethel.

When subdivision plans are approved it will be necessary to place a note on the approved plans that certain oversize lots cannot be further subdivided, once the maximum density for the parcel has been reached. It will also be important to preserve a set of assessor maps that show the configuration of property at the time the residential density regulations was adopted.



Example of a Conservation Subdivision Site Plan

Residential Densities Plan

Town of Bethel, CT

Legend

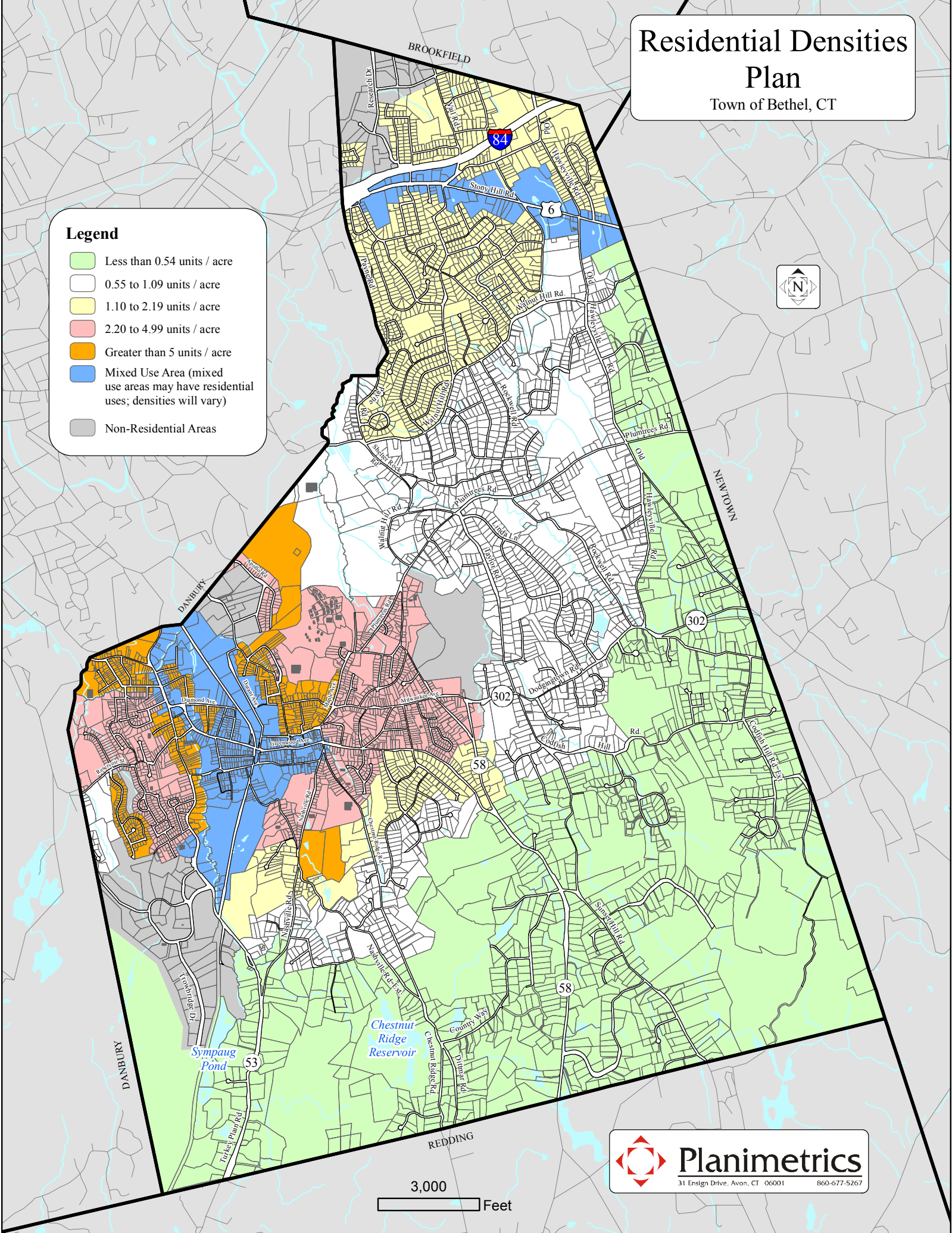
- Less than 0.54 units / acre
- 0.55 to 1.09 units / acre
- 1.10 to 2.19 units / acre
- 2.20 to 4.99 units / acre
- Greater than 5 units / acre
- Mixed Use Area (mixed use areas may have residential uses; densities will vary)
- Non-Residential Areas



3,000 Feet



Planimetrics
 31 Ensign Drive, Avon, CT 06001 860-677-5267



Consider Community Septic Systems

The Commission is interested in obtaining more detailed information about the possibility of community septic systems. Based on input from the Bethel Health Department (BHD), this approach has some merits, including the ability to provide for much larger, contiguous pieces of open space, and less road construction. However systems larger than 33 bedrooms continue to pose problems and the BHD does not support the development of large community septic systems or in areas of Town identified as existing or future potential water supply areas.

Areas with soils of high sand and gravel content, such as the southern section of Route 53, where there is minimal impact of septic system discharge on public water supply watersheds, are the most appropriate. Factors that support community septic systems include well drained soils; and groundwater levels deep below existing grade.

A technical reference, "Analysis of Open Space Conservation Subdivisions by the Newtown Commission," is available from HVCEO as publication # 114 and should be considered as the Commission revises the Zoning Regulations and considers making allowance for community septic systems in conservation subdivisions.

Review Residential Dimensional Standards

The issue of tearing down homes and replacing them with much larger houses is an issue that some Connecticut communities, particularly in southern Fairfield County, have been grappling with for years. This trend results in situations where housing units that were of reasonable size relative to the size of the lot, are being replaced by housing units that are maximizing the amount of floor area, in what was originally intended to be a flexible building envelope. The desire to maximize the building size within the maximum limits of the building envelope results in a situation where existing houses are demolished ("teardowns") to make way for new construction of much larger homes ("monster homes"). While there are situations where the replacement of older homes is appropriate, the concern in Bethel is that historic homes with significant architectural and community character resources may be lost.

One approach is to identify appropriate floor area ratios (FAR) in residential zones. The floor area ratio establishes a consistent relationship between the maximum size of the house and the size of the lot. A smaller lot would result in less floor area. A larger lot could result in more floor area. The Commission wants to explore this concept in greater detail as it revises the Zoning Regulations and believes that it may be particularly applicable in the Village District. Other tools include coverage regulations, setbacks, building height, etc. all of which should be reviewed and revised as appropriate as the Zoning Regulations are updated.

Actions for Modifying Residential Development Patterns

1. Modify the land use regulations relative to conservation subdivisions.
2. Establish density standards for the R-40 and R-80 Districts.
3. Allow community septic systems in appropriate locations.
4. Consider floor area ratios and other dimensional standards.
5. Review and consider revising the coverage, bulk, and dimensional standards for all residential zoning districts.

Preserve Housing Diversity

In Bethel today, there is a diversity of housing choices with a variety of size, type, ownership versus rental options, and housing geared for specific demographic groups such as active adults. In the future, there will continue to be a need to provide housing appropriate for the diverse needs of the community in terms of age, abilities, income, as well as for people moving to northern Fairfield County.

As discussed in the Conditions and Trends chapter, the age composition of the community is changing. Whereas decades ago approximately two-thirds of the population lived in a nuclear family and wanted a single-family home with a yard, by 2020, it is anticipated that a much smaller percentage of the population will be living as a two-parent household with children. While the predominant type of housing will continue to be a single-family residential unit, a growing percentage of the population is demanding housing closer to services and without the responsibilities of house and yard maintenance, which includes a variety of multi-family housing options.

Continue to Allow Multiple-Family Housing

Multi-family housing is currently allowed in several areas of Town including the Village Center and areas on the Bethel/Danbury town line. Although the sewer system is near or over capacity in the Village Center, this is perhaps the most appropriate area in Town to permit multi-family housing. If additional sewage capacity can be diverted to the Village Center then additional multi-family housing units in a range of price options should be encouraged close to retail services and transit. Discussions and negotiations between the Town of Bethel and the Town of Danbury relative to the sewer system are underway to address this issue. Once those negotiations have been completed the Commission will determine if and how to allow increased residential densities in the Village Center.

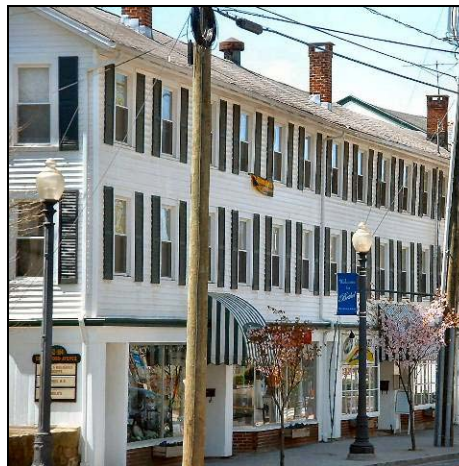
When the Town undertakes a study of the Route 6 corridor, it is possible that parts of that corridor will be identified as appropriate for multi-family housing, particularly in mixed-use buildings. If that is the case, the Commission, as it revises the land use regulations, will consider how best to allow multi-family housing as part of a mixed-use development in this corridor.

Statutory Reference

The CGS require all Plans of Conservation and Development to “make provisions for the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multi-family dwellings, consistent with soil types, terrain and infra-structure capacity, for all residents of the municipality and the planning region.”



Moderate Density Residential



Mixed-Use Moderate Density



Reynolds Ridge Senior Housing



Parking at Reynolds Ridge

Issues for Age Restricted Housing

- Public water
- Public or community sewer
- Buffers
- Open space set-asides
- Legal protections
- Maximum Densities

Allow Live-Work Units in Additional Districts

Bethel currently allows live-work units in the RMO zone. This housing type is particularly appropriate for certain professions including chefs, dance and art instructors, doctors and lawyers, artists, and consultants in a variety of professional arenas. The Commission is considering allowing live-work units in additional parts of Town. The Route 6 Corridor may be an appropriate location and the Commission encourages the Route 6 Study, currently underway, to examine the possibility of live-work units along the Route 6 corridor.

Manage Conversions of Single-family Homes

The area north of the municipal center is a location where many conversions from single-family to two-family and multi-family have taken place. While single-family homes with owner occupancy typically provide the greatest stability to a neighborhood, conversions can sometimes provide benefits such as affordable housing options. Converting single-family homes into two-family and multi-family housing units is also a way to adaptively reuse some of the Town’s historic housing stock. However, there are concerns about some of these conversions, which have occurred without any permits or apparent regard for fire safety issues, water and septic issues, and parking.

When the conversion can incorporate adequate parking, has access to adequate water and sewer service, provides fire safety measures for all residents, and manages garbage and other services in an efficient and aesthetically appropriate manner, some of the objections to these conversions might be eliminated. The Board of Selectmen could consider requiring a safety and occupancy certificate for all multi-family residences, which can only be issued after evidence that all safety, water, sewer, and parking issues have been satisfactorily resolved.

Provide Housing for Older Adults

As discussed in the chapter on Conditions and Trends, one of the fastest growing segments of the population is the cohort of adults aged 55 and older. This age cohort requires and desires different types of housing options than previous generations. Living longer and healthier lives, today’s older adults want more options and flexibility in their housing choices. Bethel already has provisions for active adult housing, one housing type desired by some of the 55 and older cohort. The Commission wants to ensure that the Town’s Zoning Regulations allow for and support the development of other housing options for these individuals.

Encourage the Development of Additional Senior Housing

In addition to Active Adult communities, there is also a market for traditional senior housing. Although there are a couple of housing projects specifically designed for seniors, such as the Bishop Curtis homes and the Reynolds Ridge homes, waiting lists for these housing units currently exceed the number of units many times over. The Commission and the Board of Selectmen should collaborate with the owners and managers of existing senior housing in Town, such as the Reynolds Ridge development and the Bishop Curtis homes, to develop ways to expand the number of units.

One strategy includes building on the site of the existing senior housing, providing single-level living in multi-story buildings, with elevators and parking facilities. The Board of Selectmen, the EDC, and the Town’s Commission on Aging should collaborate to pursue this recommendation and other options for providing more housing for seniors.

Provide for Affordable Housing

As mentioned earlier, Bethel's housing stock provides housing at a range of housing prices for both rental and housing ownership. In comparison with neighboring communities, Bethel has some relatively affordable housing options, with over 17% of the housing units valued below the State median house value. However, in Connecticut, any municipality that does not have at least ten percent (10%) of its housing stock affordable, in conformance with very specific State determined affordability criteria, is subject to the affordable housing appeals procedure as outlined in CGS 8-30g. As of 2006, according to records prepared by the Town and maintained by the CT Department of Economic and Community Development, 4.87% of Bethel's housing met the State's criteria for affordable housing. With approximately 6,700 housing units, 324 of them qualifying as affordable, Bethel would need to have another 350 affordable units built, plus one more for every ten units of market rate housing that is approved and built, in order to attain an exemption from the affordable housing appeals act.

In the past several years as a result of the State affordable housing appeals process, a number of affordable housing projects have been constructed in Bethel, resulting in housing that does not conform to the Town's zoning regulations and is not architecturally compatible with the character of the community. While the Commission is committed to providing for housing affordable to people who work within and adjacent to the Town, it would like to find ways to encourage housing that meets the needs of people with a range of income levels, while still conforming to the overall vision and character of Bethel.

One strategy that Bethel is using to increase the number of units that meet the State's affordability criteria is a requirement that all newly approved accessory apartments in Bethel qualify as affordable under the State criteria, discussed earlier. In order to receive approval of the accessory unit from the Commission, the property owner must guarantee that no rent will be charged for the unit for at least 40 years. The Land Use Office should continue to monitor these units to ensure that they are producing the desired type of housing.

Another strategy that Bethel can employ is a revision to the land use regulations requiring that certain housing developments include housing affordable to persons and families of low and moderate income. The provision can be met by ensuring that a percentage of the housing units are certified as affordable housing or payment of a fee-in-lieu of compliance with such a requirement. Fee-in-lieu of payments can be funneled into an affordable housing trust fund to build affordable housing. Affordable housing funds can be managed by the Town, or through partnerships with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, religious organizations or local housing trusts. Local housing trusts have shown that small-scale projects, often as small as two or three homes, can be effective. The Commission recommends studying this issue particularly as a trade-off with open space, in most residential districts, except for the R-40 and R-80 Zoning Districts.

The Commission also recommends that the Board of Selectmen, working with elected State officials, seek to amend the existing State Statutes relative to affordable housing in order to address this issue at a regional and state level and allow additional housing units, such as rental units which provide lower income housing options, to meet a community's affordable housing goals.

Actions for Encouraging Housing Diversity

1. Continue to allow multi-family in appropriate areas with sufficient infrastructure including water, sewer, and access to transit and services.
2. Consider allowing increased residential densities in the Village Center if sewer concerns are resolved.
3. Consider allowing residential as part of a mixed-use development along Route 6.
4. Consider allowing live-work spaces in additional areas of Town such as the Village Center, the TOD, along Grassy Plain, and along Route 6.
5. Consider requiring evidence of safety compliance for conversions of single-family to multi-family housing units.
6. Monitor the accessory housing units to ensure that they are producing affordable housing.
7. Collaborate with owners and managers of existing senior housing to provide additional housing units.
8. Identify appropriate areas of town for senior housing.
9. Develop an affordable housing plan that requires all residential development to include either some affordable housing or payment of a fee-in-lieu to support the development of affordable housing.
10. Consider developing an affordable housing partnership with an organization like Habitat for Humanity or a local housing trust.
11. Work with elected State officials to revise the State Statutes relative to affordable housing to include rental housing that meets the needs of low and moderate income residents.

INFRASTRUCTURE THEMES



Overview of Infrastructure Themes

For the purposes of preparing a Plan of Conservation and Development, the term “infrastructure” refers to community facilities and services, transportation facilities, and public utilities. Infrastructure supports overall community structure and plays a significant role in determining the quality of life in a community.

In the preparation of a Plan, infrastructure topics follow conservation and development issues. This sequence helps ensure that infrastructure decisions support, but do not dictate, the desired overall land use patterns. While infrastructure availability can guide other land use decisions, it should not be the overriding consideration.



Municipal Center



Library



Sewer Pump Station



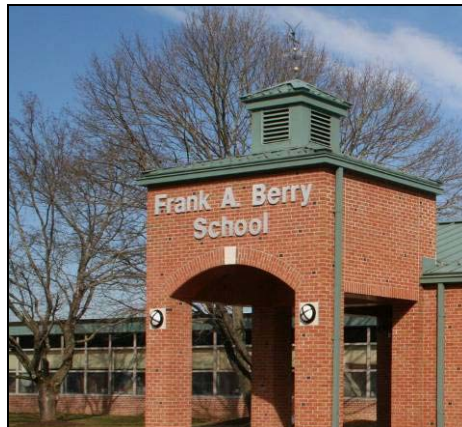
Sub-Station Power Facility



COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Overview

The next several chapters look at the Town's existing facilities and public services to determine what improvements will be required or should be considered, in order to provide the facilities and services that the residents of the Town will need over the next ten years.



Educational Facility



Teen Center



Municipal Center



Town Garage

Maintain a State of the Art Educational Facility

The Bethel Public School System consists of five schools located on one centrally located, 140-acre educational park near the geographical center of the community, as shown in the aerial photograph below. For many, the educational park is also the social and recreational center of the community. The following are the schools managed by the Bethel Board of Education:

- F. A. Berry School for Kindergarten through 3rd grade
- A. H Rockwell School, for Kindergarten through 3rd grade
- R.M.T. Johnson School, for 4th and 5th grades
- Bethel Middle School for 6th through 8th grades
- Bethel High School, for 9th through 12th grades

The primary focus of the Plan of Conservation and Development in relation to educational facilities is the physical capacity to provide for the long range educational needs of the community. Bethel's foresight in acquiring and managing the 140-acre campus provides Bethel with the ability to site and / or expand school facilities should the need arise in the future.

It is difficult to determine how many if any additional school aged children will be residing in Bethel in the future. Population projections indicate that the population may increase and that there may be more school aged children in the future than there are today. If this age cohort does increase, Bethel would likely need to build additional educational facilities. Despite the presence of wetlands, steep slopes, and other constraints on the lands in the Educational Park, Bethel has the ability to accommodate additional school-aged children by expanding the existing facilities.

Action to Maintain the Educational Facilities

1. Maintain adequate land and facilities for potential expansion of the school aged population.



Bethel High School



Bethel's Educational Park

Bethel Parks & Fields

Parks	Acreage
Meckauer Park	39
Bennett Park	8
Overlook Park	38

Ball Fields	Acreage
Mitchell Park	19
Parloa Park	7
Educational Park	28
Rourke and Freebairn	46
Crowe Field	5



Ball Field

Increase Recreational Opportunities

The Parks and Recreation Department has six full-time and as many as 60 part-time and/or seasonal employees and manages approximately 190 acres of land for recreational uses. A consistent theme heard in public meetings held during the scoping phase of this Plan is a desire for additional recreational facilities, programs, and opportunities, including more parks for passive recreational activities, more ball fields, swimming facilities, and a community recreational facility. The Commission recommends that the Board of Selectmen identify funding mechanisms to provide recreational opportunities at town owned properties such as Terre Haute and Bald Rock with investments in trails, parking areas, and other improvements.

Improve the Capacity of the Senior Center

The Town Senior Center is located in the Municipal Center, where there is insufficient space to accommodate all the desired programs. As the number of seniors in Bethel is likely to increase in the future, it will become increasingly difficult to accommodate all who want to use the facility. In addition, as seniors live longer and healthier lives, they may want more challenging activities. The Commission recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Board of Selectmen consider development of a community facility with designated areas for seniors.

Provide Appropriate Recreational Services to Teens

The Town operates a Teen Center in the former Town Hall, which needs major repairs and does not provide the full range of activities and programs desired by the Center's Director. Some communities have determined that a stand-alone facility for teens is not the best use of municipal facilities and dollars. Offering services and programs in multi-use facilities can be a more effective and cost-efficient way to serve this population. The Commission recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Board of Selectmen consider development of a community facility with designated areas for teens.

Consider a Multi-Use Recreational Facility

The Town has no public facilities for indoor recreation, and no public swimming facility. Developing a single multi-use facility with both common areas and separate areas for the various age cohorts might be the most economical way to provide recreational opportunities for all segments of the population. While these disparate age groups need some separate programming, there are many areas, supplies, and facilities that can be more economically delivered in a multi-use facility.

The Commission recommends the development of a multi-use indoor recreational facility, with either an in-door or outdoor swimming pool. In any proposal to develop a recreational facility, an analysis of combining the resource needs of the senior population and the teen population should be addressed.

Action Steps for Increasing Recreational Opportunities

1. Develop recreational infrastructure on Town-owned properties.
2. Determine how best to meet the needs of seniors and teens.
3. Consider development of a multi-use recreational facility with programs for seniors and teens and with a swimming pool.

Community Facilities Plan

Town of Bethel, CT

Legend

Public Safety

- 1 Stony Hill Fire Station
- 6 Police Department
- 14 South St. Fire Station

Town Hall

- 10 Town Hall

Education

- 7 Educational Park

Other Municipal

- 11 Teen Center
- 12 Library
- 16 Public Works Facility
Town Garage
- 19 Paul St. Pump Station

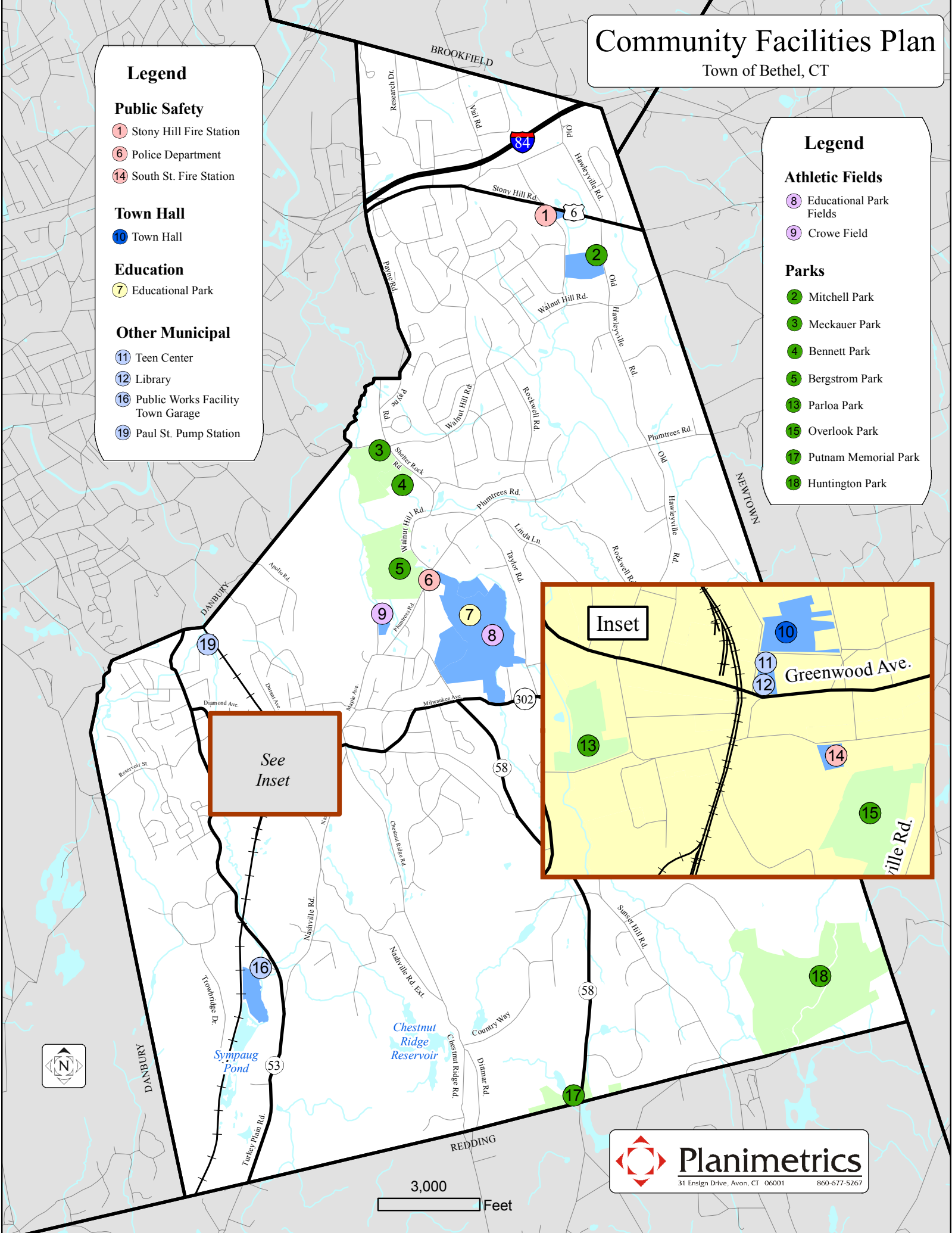
Legend

Athletic Fields

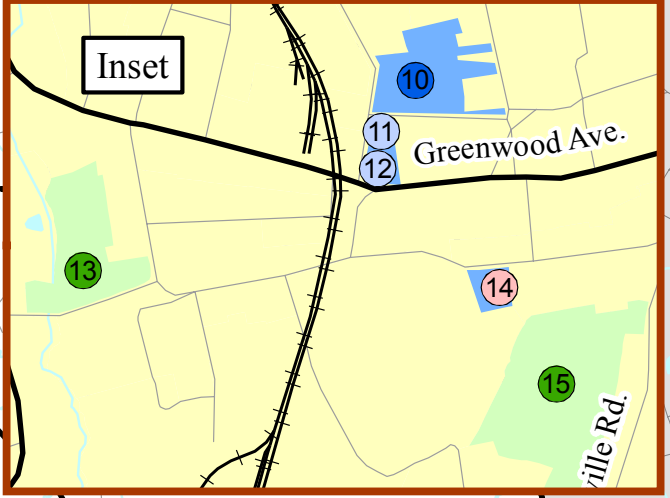
- 8 Educational Park Fields
- 9 Crowe Field

Parks

- 2 Mitchell Park
- 3 Meckauer Park
- 4 Bennett Park
- 5 Bergstrom Park
- 13 Parloa Park
- 15 Overlook Park
- 17 Putnam Memorial Park
- 18 Huntington Park



See Inset



3,000 Feet

Support Public Safety Services

The Town of Bethel has Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services. Each of these public service entities has facility needs which are necessary in order to adequately provide the full range of emergency and public safety support services required by the community.

Support the Town's Emergency Response Teams

The Town of Bethel has two Fire Departments; one located Downtown on South Street and the other in the Stony Hill area on Route 6. Both Fire and Emergency Medical Services are handled out of the Town's two Fire Departments.

The Stony Hill Department recently built a new facility that accommodates all of that Department's equipment, personnel, and training needs.

The South Street Station has a facility plan, developed in the 1980's, to build an extension to the existing facility to accommodate additional training and administrative services. The Board of Selectmen should identify funding sources to complete the South Street Fire House expansion.

Bethel is currently protected by two volunteer fire departments with a combined membership exceeding one hundred and twenty volunteers. All emergency medical responses as well as fire and rescue calls are handled by these dedicated volunteers. The Town of Bethel offers incentives for volunteering in the form of tax abatement and pension plan. Certification and training fees for both firefighting and emergency medical training are paid for through the town budget. A paramedic is funded by the town to provide advanced life support care when necessary. If future growth of the town dictates a change to the current system it should be approached cautiously to develop the best emergency services possible.



South Street Fire Station



Stony Hill Fire Station

Construct a New Police Department Facility

The Bethel Police Department is located in an 8,000 square-foot building built in the 1970s. Since then, the nature of police work has changed significantly. The current building does not provide the type or amount of space necessary for today's police work. An independent space needs assessment was conducted of the existing facility in 2005. Some of the major deficiencies identified in the space needs assessment are as follows:

Prisoners and potentially violent persons are interviewed and/or processed in the same areas:

- where the general public visits;
- where victims are being interviewed; and
- in areas which provide access to police officer's weapons and other equipment which can be used as weapons.

The current facility has insufficient space for:

- storage of evidence;
- storage of files;
- training;
- target practice;
- sanitary facilities;
- keeping male and female prisoners and youth offenders separated from each other as required by law;
- parking of police vehicles;

The building has been subjected to flooding with water and sewage due to the building's location in or adjacent to a wetland. In addition, the building was constructed with materials making it impossible to secure all areas of the building.

Another finding of that report was that it would be more cost effective to build a new facility than to try to renovate the existing building due to the presence of wetlands at the current location. The Board of Selectmen should continue to work with architects, engineers, and the various Town Departments to identify an appropriate site and finalize plans for construction of a new Police station facility.

Actions to Support the Town's Public Safety Services

1. Complete the South Street Fire House expansion project.
2. Consider options for ensuring full-time coverage by emergency responders.
3. Identify an appropriate location for construction of a new Police Department facility.
4. Identify funding sources for construction of a new Police Department facility.
5. Construct a new Police Department facility.

Agencies and Departments in the Municipal Center

- 1st Selectman's Office
- Building Maintenance
- Social Services
- Tax Assessor's and Tax Collectors offices
- Town Clerk
- Registrar of Voters
- Comptrollers Office
- Building Department
- Fire Marshall's Office
- Health Department
- Land Use, Planning and Zoning and Inland Wetlands
- Town Engineer
- Parks and Recreation
- Tree Warden
- Board of Education

Support the Municipal Center

The Municipal Center, formerly the Bethel High School at one time and the Middle School at another time, now houses almost all town agencies and departments, identified in the sidebar. In addition to the many agencies and departments, the Municipal Center also houses the Senior Center and the Visiting Nurse Association.

The Town should be commended for the adaptive reuse of this building, which has many historic and architecturally significant qualities. However, a lack of space for additional and necessary employees in several departments has been identified by many of the Department Managers. Meeting rooms are frequently double-booked due to a lack of appropriate space for community meetings.

The antiquated HVAC system and energy-inefficient windows create situations which do not meet energy efficiency goals. While these issues may be expensive to address, the Town may realize cost savings from increased energy efficiencies over time. The Commission recommends that the Board of Selectmen address needed renovations and improvements particularly in regards to the HVAC system, windows, meeting room space, and storage facilities. These improvements should be addressed in the Town's Capital Improvement Plan.

Conduct a Space Needs Assessment

The Board of Selectmen should consider conducting a needs assessment of the Municipal Center to determine whether future staffing, training, storage, and meeting room space will be available for the Town Departments housed in the building.

Improve the Networked Computer System

Many of the departments in Town Hall would benefit by having increased inter-departmental access to data. A networked system, allowing the Land Use office, the Town Engineer's Office, the Assessor's office, the Health Department, the Police and Fire Departments, the Building Department, Parks and Recreation, and other departments to communicate and share data is beneficial for both internal communications and communications with the public.

The Town's networked computer system should include inter-departmental access to joint permitting software and GIS. GIS, which stands for geographic information systems, is a database of information used to produce highly detailed maps and was used to produce the maps and related data in this Plan.

The Commission recommends that the Board of Selectmen fund a computer upgrade allowing all departments access to data, GIS, and related inter-departmental information.

Actions to Improve the Municipal Center

1. Complete renovations at the Municipal Center including installation of a new HVAC system and window replacement.
2. Consider conducting a needs assessment of the Municipal Center.
3. Expand the capabilities of the Town's networked computer system.
4. Consider acquisition of joint permitting software and provide inter-departmental access to the software.
5. Fund computer upgrades linking all departments with a shared GIS program.

Support the Public Works Department

The Public Works Department is responsible for the upkeep of the infrastructure of the town. Comprised of a number of related operations, it is the organization responsible for plowing and removal of snow, road and street repair, and sidewalk construction and maintenance. The positions reporting to the Public Works Director are identified in the sidebar.

This office maintains and oversees the water and sewer systems for the residents and businesses located within the Town's water and sewer service supply areas. It oversees all building maintenance for the municipal structures. It works with the State and Federal Governments to coordinate and implement the major bridge replacement projects around town. It oversees the engineering aspects of all new construction within the Town and ensures that these projects conform to local and state regulations.

Except for the Town Engineer's office, the Public Works Department is located at the Town Garage off Route 53 on Sympaug Park Road. The current size and configuration of the Town Garage is not sufficient to store all equipment indoors. This is a concern since outdoor storage of heavy equipment can hasten deterioration of the Town's many expensive pieces of road and utility equipment.

There are also concerns that there is not adequate space for all public work employees in the Town Garage, particularly if staffing is increased on the Highway Department, (discussed in the next Chapter on Transportation). Some consideration has been given to moving the water and sewer service employees to another location in order to provide sufficient indoor space for the storage of all equipment and sufficient sanitary and meeting space for the public works employees. While the Commission believes that the Engineer's office should continue to be maintained in the Municipal Building for customer-service related issues, it recommends that the Board of Selectmen review the options and determine how best to manage and maintain the equipment and personnel at the Town Garage.

Action to Support the Public Works Department

1. Consider adjustments or renovations to the Town Garage to ensure adequate space for all equipment and personnel.

Positions Reporting to the Public Works Director

- Highway Superintendent
- Town Engineer
- Transfer Station Manager
- Tree Warden
- Utility Supervisor

Support the Library

The Bethel Library is consistently identified as a valuable community resource. It is located in a historic building listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Ongoing support is necessary in order to ensure that the facility is able to meet the needs of the community.

Parking continues to be a problem, in part due to the Library's convenient location in the Village Center. The Library makes use of the parking lot at the former train station, but better signage is recommended for those unfamiliar with this practice. If at some time in the future, the School Street properties are redeveloped, parking considerations for the library should be addressed.

Actions to Support the Library

1. Complete the library renovations and provide signage for all library related parking.



Bethel Library

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS



Overview

Transportation systems tie a community together, connecting it with the larger community. Local streets and roads need to provide safe, reliable access to work, schools, shopping, and residences. Transportation systems also need to provide for the movement of goods and services both into and out of a community.

For most of the last century, transportation systems have primarily relied on vehicular traffic. This chapter also includes transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities, to ensure that these systems move people and goods safely and efficiently, support community character and structure, and protect residential neighborhoods and provide transportation options for the 21st century.



Road with Stormwater Management



Train Station

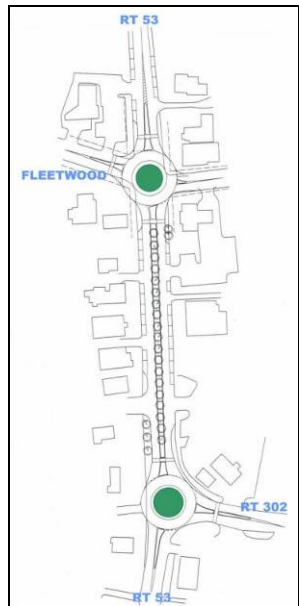


Big Truck on Small Street



Bicycle Parking

Route 6
Route 53
Route 58
Route 302



HVCEO

**Proposed Roundabouts
on Route 53**

Improve the Town's Road Network

Implement HVCEO Recommendations

The Town's Highway Department works with the State Department of Transportation (CONN DOT) and the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials (HVCEO) on most transportation issues related to State and Interstate roads in Bethel. HVCEO conducted an overview of traffic issues in Bethel in 2005 with a focus on state roads and major regional issues. That review generated a number of recommendations for future traffic improvements in Bethel. Those recommendations are included in the *Bethel, CT, Traffic Issues Report*, available from HVCEO or on-line at HVCEO.org. The Board of Selectmen should continue to work with HVCEO to implement the recommended improvements.

CONN DOT has prepared a plan for widening I-84 and redesigning the access at Exit 8. The State's plan for I-84, if implemented, would facilitate movements for local traffic seeking I-84 access. A notable improvement would be for northbound Payne Road traffic entering I-84 eastbound immediately to the right of the intersection of Payne Road with Route 6, rather than requiring a circuitous trip around the large Exit 8 rotary. Access to I-84 westbound would be improved via a new bridge extending Payne Road across I-84 to Exit 8. The Board of Selectmen should continue to work with both HVCEO and CONN DOT to see these plans are fully implemented.

Another improvement proposed by HVCEO is the use of roundabouts for the intersections of Route 53 with Fleetwood Avenue, Route 53 with Route 302, and Route 53 with Willow Street (see sidebar). These proposed locations on Route 53, which include a heavily used shopping area, would benefit by the increased safety conditions that a roundabout provides. The reconfiguration would allow also for additional parking spaces, which are needed to support this busy commercial area. The Board of Selectmen should support the development of a detailed feasibility study, funded by the HVCEO transportation planning program as soon as possible. This study should include an evaluation of the conceptual plan in regards to CONN DOT's roundabout criteria. The completed feasibility study should then be submitted to the CONN DOT Project Development Unit with an application for funding.

Address Congestion, Capacity, and Access Management

Congestion occurs when traffic volumes exceed the capacity of a roadway or intersection. In Bethel, congestion or capacity deficiencies are primarily located along the State roads, including the mile and a half of Route 6 in the northern part of Town, along Route 302 particularly in the Village Center, and at the intersection of Route 302 with Route 53. All of these road segments are addressed in the *Bethel, CT, Traffic Issues Report*, one of several reports prepared by HVCEO relative to traffic and transportation in Bethel.

When the Commission conducts an update of the Town's Zoning Regulations, the recommendations in the HVCEO reports, particularly those related to access management, should be reviewed and incorporated as appropriate.

In 1997, HVCEO completed an access management plan for Route 6. As part of the Route 6 Corridor Study already underway, the Route 6 access management plan will be updated.

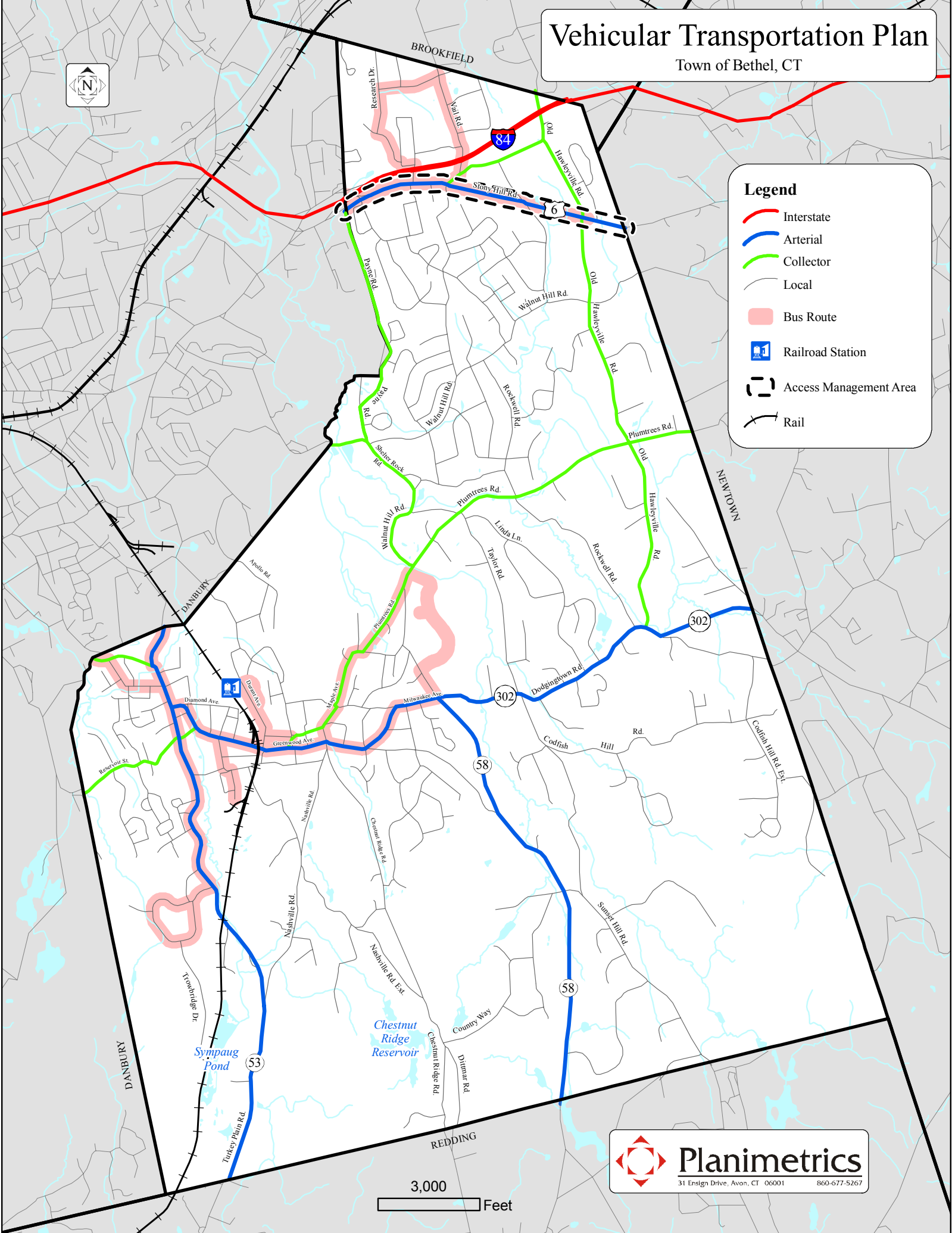
Vehicular Transportation Plan

Town of Bethel, CT



Legend

- Interstate
- Arterial
- Collector
- Local
- Bus Route
- Railroad Station
- Access Management Area
- Rail



3,000 Feet

Planimetrics
31 Ensign Drive, Avon, CT 06001 860-677-5267

Encourage Scenic Roads

A major element of road engineering in the 20th century was on removing road hazards and moving cars as efficiently as possible. This approach frequently resulted in wide, flat, and straight roads, characteristics that encourage speeding and detract from community character. Many of Bethel's roads, originally cow paths or wood trails, were built prior to those 20th century standards and as a result many of the older roads are narrow and windy.

Today new roads in Bethel are built to standards requiring wider road widths, as required by the Town's Road Ordinance. These standards create roads which are often incompatible with scenic road criteria.

In the last several years, the Highway Department, working with the Town Engineer and the Public Works Director, has developed a manual for new road construction and subdivision infrastructure to replace outdated standards in the Town's *Road Ordinance*. The manual, "*Design and Construction Standards*" provides guidance on road materials, width, slope, stormwater management, and access management. While this manual has some improvements over the existing Road Ordinance, it relies on the Road Ordinance for many of the standards.

The Commission should review the manual and make recommendations to the Town Engineer to revise the manual. Revisions should include removing all references to fees, which should be managed by the Board of Selectmen and not be included in policy and regulatory documents. Other revisions that should be incorporated into the Road manual before it is formally adopted address the road standards and include the following:

- paved widths of less than 25 feet for secondary roads;
- prohibitions against grading flat for the full width of the road right-of-way;
- allowing gradients of up to 15% where site conditions permit;
- requirements that stone walls along rights-of-ways be preserved or built; and
- requirements for street tree plantings in the road rights-of-way.

Once these revisions have been made, the Commission requests that the Board of Selectmen adopt a new roads ordinance that identifies the manual as the source of all road standards. The roads ordinance should state that the Town Engineer has the authority to administer and maintain the Manual and the Commission has the authority to review any proposed amendments to the manual, with the provision that any such proposed amendments are not to be effective until the Commission has made a positive recommendation.

Maintain the Town's Highways, Roadways, and Bridges

Bethel's Highway Department is located in the Public Works Garage on Sympaug Park Road near the Francis J. Clarke Industrial Park. Responsibilities of the Highway Department include leaf removal, sand removal, snow and ice removal, sidewalk maintenance, and storm drainage maintenance.

Recent State and Federal legislation mandates additional stormwater management tasks, requiring additional equipment and manpower. The staff of the Highway Department should be expanded in order to adequately provide these valuable services to the community in the most cost-effective manner possible.

The Department does the majority of the road reclamation work in Bethel and is able to perform local road maintenance and new road construction cheaper and quicker than any of the neighboring towns. Regular maintenance minimizes the total amount of work required, cost-effectively maintains good road conditions, and helps avoid expensive road reconstruction projects. Deferred maintenance results in significant efforts and expenditures to restore the original integrity of the roadway. For this reason, Bethel should continue to make regular road improvements on local roads.

In addition to the historic stone bridges discussed in an earlier chapter, there are also many bridges in Town, all of which need regular maintenance. Some of these bridges, particularly those crossing the Sympaug River, are in need of replacement. The Board of Selectmen should ensure that bridge replacement efforts are fully funded and a work plan is proceeding in a timely fashion.

Resolve Train Track and Road Network Conflicts

The railroad, designed long before cars and trucks dominated the transportation system, provides an important link between Bethel and southern Fairfield County and New York City. As a result, roads and the railroad tracks intersect in several critical locations creating conflicts for truck drivers, residents living on narrow streets where the heavy truck traffic is diverted, and the Town owned Industrial Park.

One of the most serious of these conflicts is on State Route 53 adjacent to the Francis J. Clarke Industrial Park. The railroad tracks cross over the road on a railroad trestle that prevents trucks taller than 11' 4" from passing under the trestle. In addition to thwarting the economic potential of the Industrial Park by limiting the size of trucks that can easily access the park from the State Highway, the Commission is also concerned about the number of large trucks that must travel through residential areas on narrow, winding, and densely populated residential streets, ill-equipped to accommodate large vehicles.

If the Town is going to realize the full potential of its location in Fairfield County, vehicles of all sizes must have unimpeded access to all state routes. The Commission recommends that the Board of Selectmen, working collaboratively with CONN DOT, CONN Rail, Metro North, and HVCEO, pursue options for moving truck traffic across the railroad and out of residential neighborhoods. The Board of Selectmen should actively pursue raising the height of the Danbury Branch railroad overpass to allow for the free flow of all legal truck heights.



Truck on Sidewalk



Car on Railroad Track



Large Truck Small Street

Provide Access for Trucks Out of the Historical Industrial Area

There are conflicts between trucks and residential streets resulting from limited access from the historical industrial area adjacent to the Village Center. A potential solution is to identify a road right-of-way from Henry Street to Route 53. However, this is not a simple solution, as the area between Henry Street and Route 53 is largely wetlands. The Board of Selectmen should hire a transportation engineer with wetlands expertise to identify a potential route with minimal impacts to the wetlands. If a possible route is identified, the Board of Selectmen should submit an application to the Town's Wetlands Commission and to the State DEP. Depending on the size of the disturbance, it is likely that the Army Corps of Engineers will also need to approve the project.

The Commission recommends that the Board of Selectmen consider the magnitude of the problem and determine an appropriate solution, using this Plan for guidance. The Commission also suggests that a partial solution to this problem is related to finding more appropriate locations for the businesses in the historic industrial area, located over a public water supply watershed.

Actions to Improve the Town's Road Networks

1. Implement the recommendations of the HVCEO report "Bethel, CT, Traffic Issues Report" to the maximum amount practicable.
2. Continue collaborative efforts with Regional, State, and Federal Transportation officials, and policy makers to resolve conflicts between local roads and Interstate 84.
3. Request a roundabout feasibility study and then submit the study to the CT DOT Project Development Unit with an application for funding.
4. Request updates to the 1997 Access Management Plan for Route 6.
5. Request realignment of the Route 6/Hawleyville/Benedict Road intersection and of the Route 6/Sand Hill intersection.
6. Adopt a scenic roads ordinance.
7. Continue to maintain the Town's highways and road network.
8. Adequately staff the Highway Department to address additional stormwater management tasks.
9. Revise the draft "Design and Construction Standards" manual removing all references to fees and revising road standards to encourage narrower, scenic roads.
10. Once revisions have been made, adopt the manual. Request that the revised manual replace the Road Ordinance, identifying the Town Engineer as the administrator.
11. Ensure that all revisions to the manual are subject to the Commission's approval.
12. Maintain bridges and continue to make bridge improvements.
13. Actively pursue options for resolving the road/railroad conflict on Route 53 near the Francis J. Clarke Industrial Park.
14. Consider hiring a transportation engineer with wetlands expertise to identify a potential route from Henry Street to Route 53.
15. Consider incentives to relocate businesses out of the historic industrial areas and then rezone to a mixed-use district, supported by transit.

Support Transportation Options

For more than 50 years, Bethel's transportation system, like most communities in the United States, has relied primarily on vehicular circulation. With rising gas prices, increasing congestion of the roadways, and mounting evidence that burning fossil fuels are contributing to unwelcome climate changes; the time has come to better balance vehicular transportation with other transportation options. In addition, providing pedestrians and bicyclists with safe and attractive routes adds vitality to the commercial areas and helps to calm traffic on the streets.

Support Rail Service

The Metro North Railroad operates a train station in Bethel on Durant Avenue, provides rail service north to Danbury and south to Norwalk, with connections into New York City. The Commission supports the continuation of rail service to New Milford along existing tracks that provided this service in the past.

The Commission also supports more convenient connections to the New Haven line with more frequent service to both Stamford and New York City for both peak and off-peak periods. The Commission recommends that the Town, through the offices of the First Selectman, and in coordination with HVCEO, continue to work with Metro North Railroad and CONN DOT to increase the availability of train service into and through Bethel.

The Train Station, located at 13 Durant Avenue, has parking for 199 cars. This parking lot is usually fully occupied between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM. The Board of Selectmen, working with Metro North, should pursue options for additional parking capacity on this site. Metro North is supportive of Transit-oriented development and might be able to assist with some funding if a development proposal is consistent with Metro North's TOD guidelines.

Bethel should also work with its partners in the Region to advocate for an additional station, perhaps in the northern part of Danbury to provide convenient access from the rail to the Berkshire Industrial Park and Route 6.

In order to make the train station more accessible to those living on the west side of the tracks, the Commission supports the development of a platform on the west side of the station so that train doors can open on both sides. The Commission recommends that the Board of Selectmen and HVCEO advocate for a west side platform and additional parking for both cars and bicycles.

Support Additional Transit Service

HART (Housatonic Area Regional Transit), the greater Danbury public transportation provider, operates a 15-route bus system providing service between Bethel and Danbury with connections to the Connecticut communities of New Milford, Brookfield, Newtown, Redding, New Fairfield, Norwalk, Ridgefield, and Wilton, and additional locations in New York State. Other HART services include the SweetHART (Dial-A-Ride) system, and bus-to-rail shuttles between Ridgefield and the Katonah Metro North Railroad Station and between Danbury and the Brewster Metro North Railroad Station. The Commission recommends that the Board of Selectmen continue to work with HART to provide additional transit service in Bethel including increased frequency of existing services, additional capacity of the SweetHART system, more amenities for transit riders, and the creation of additional transit options.



Parking Lot at Train Station



Track at Train Station

Trackless Trolley

HART operates a trackless trolley in Danbury that serves as a model for a potential trolley system in Bethel. While the densities do not currently exist to support such a system in Bethel today, it is envisioned that such a system could provide transit service in the future.

Potential routes include Stony Hill corridor to the Train Station(s) and Downtown; and from the Train Station to locations such as the Town's Industrial parks, the Village Center, and the Route 6 corridor.



Support the Development of Bus Shelters

An important amenity for transit users are bus shelters. Currently there is not a single bus shelter in Bethel. The Commission will ask that HART study this matter. Considerations in a study of bus shelters in Bethel should include identification of locations such as the Village Center, adjacent to the train station, and along Route 6. There should also be consideration given to the aesthetic qualities of the shelters and ongoing maintenance.

Create a Pedestrian Network

Sidewalks, trails, and greenways provide for safe pedestrian circulation, an important element in creating and maintaining an active and vital community. In addition, providing an adequate pedestrian network will increase the chances that someone will choose walking over driving, particularly when the destination is a mile or less away.

In Bethel, the installation of sidewalks on one or both sides of a roadway occurs in one of two ways:

- the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations require the installation of sidewalks for most new projects; and
- the Town undertakes sidewalk construction projects, through the Capital Improvement Program or in conjunction with specific projects such as the STEAP (Small Town Economic Assistance Program) funded sidewalk improvement program for the Downtown's Village Center.

Bethel has a concentration of sidewalks in the historic Village Center. Sidewalks also exist along Durant Avenue up to the Metro North Rail Station. There are some residential subdivisions and commercial developments that installed sidewalks as part of their site development. The *Sidewalk and Walkways Plan* shows the location of existing and proposed sidewalks.

A recommendation of this Plan is to increase and improve the pedestrian network in Bethel. This includes construction of new sidewalks, maintenance of existing sidewalks, connecting sidewalks with greenways and other trails, and addressing conflicts between pedestrians and roadways. A fee-in-lieu of sidewalks may be appropriate in some locations and should be an option where it is appropriate.



The Commission recommends that the Board of Selectmen fully fund a *Sidewalk Improvement Plan (SIP)*, to be administered by the Town Engineer. The Goal of the SIP should be to assess the condition all sidewalks addressing gaps, potential extensions, handicap access, and maintenance issues at one time.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan



Town of Bethel, CT

Legend




Bike Routes

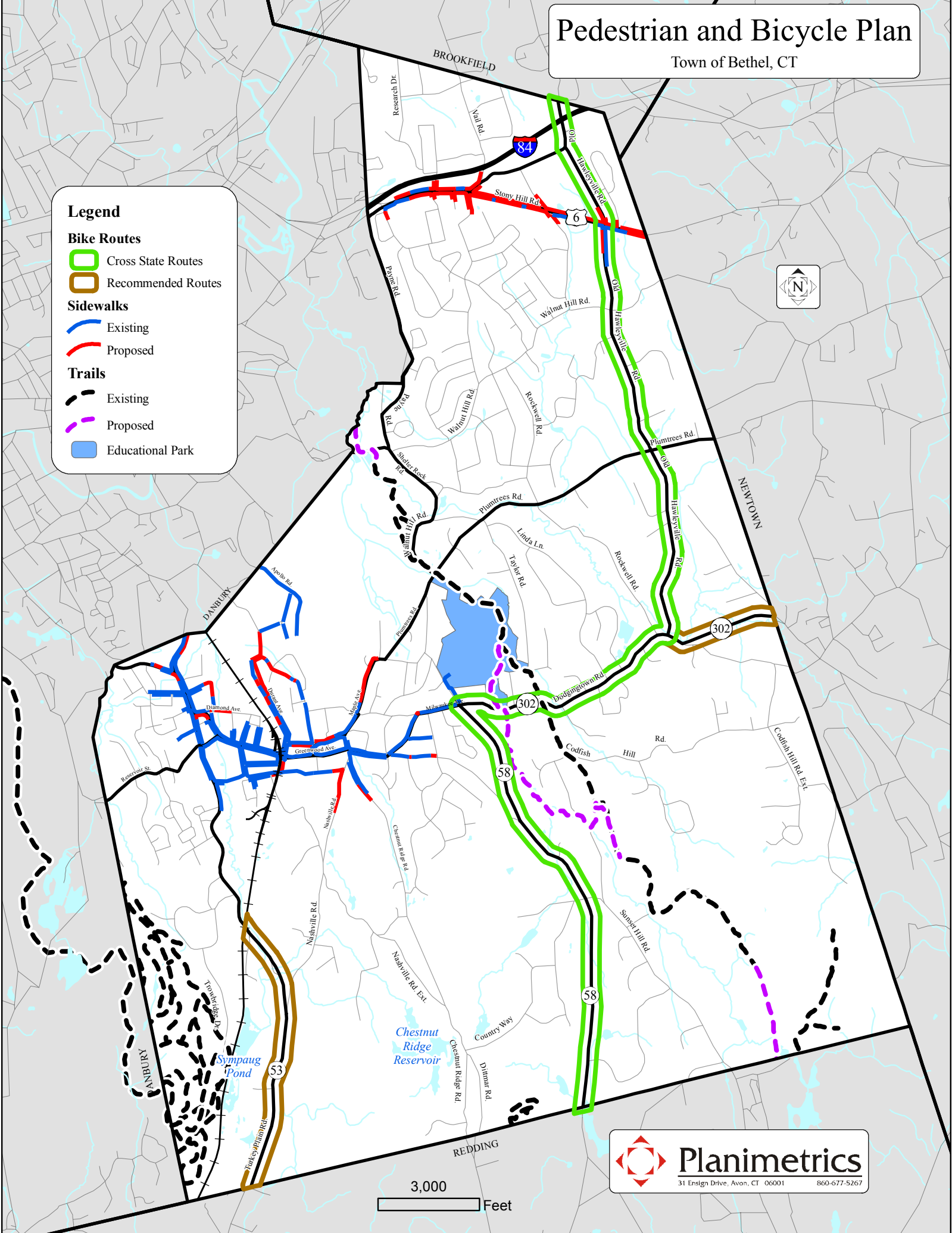
-  Cross State Routes
-  Recommended Routes

Sidewalks

-  Existing
-  Proposed

Trails

-  Existing
-  Proposed
-  Educational Park



3,000 Feet



Planimetrics
31 Ensign Drive, Avon, CT 06001 860-677-5267

Support Bicycle Infrastructure



Bike path



**Bicycle parking at
Railroad Station**



**Cannondale Bicycles
Headquarters**

Bicycling is a popular activity in the region. The Bethel Town Hall is used by a number of cycling clubs and bicycle enthusiasts as a meeting point for bicycle trips. The Hat City Cyclists, a bicycle club based in Bethel, has been organizing bike trips since 1985 which start at the Municipal Center and end up at a local restaurant.

The two major types of bicycle facilities are on-road and off-road. On-road facilities share the road with motor vehicle traffic, and may include either lanes specifically designated for bicycles or lanes that are shared by both bicycles and motorized vehicles. Off-road facilities include bike paths, which are exclusively for bicycle use, or multi-use trails, which are shared with pedestrians, in-line skaters, and other non-motorized forms of transportation. The Commission recommends that transportation facilities should become more bicycle friendly.

The State Bicycle Map identifies suitable on-road bicycle facilities which are identified on the Sidewalks and Bicycle Plan on the following page. There is a segment of Route 302, on the eastern edge of town, identified as a bicycle route on the State Bicycle Map. In addition, Route 58 is identified as a Cross State Route. According to a disclaimer on the State Bicycle Map “extreme caution is advised with both of these roads as motor vehicle speeds can be excessive and visibility can be impaired by terrain and vegetation.”

Off-road facilities do not currently exist for bicycle users in Bethel. Bethel should take advantage of the proximity of the world headquarters of Cannondale Bicycles, a premiere manufacturer of bicycles, to make Bethel a more bicycle friendly community, perhaps by developing some off-road bicycle trails within Terre Haute. Cannondale might also be a good partner for developing and supporting other bicycle friendly infrastructure and amenities. The Board of Selectmen should consider creating an ad-hoc committee comprised of members of the Hat City Cycling Club, Cannondale, the EDC, and Parks and Recreation to oversee the development of more bicycle friendly facilities.

Bicycles and Transit

Two additional recommendations to increase bicycle use would also support transit riders.

One recommendation is a bikes-on-buses program. This program, successfully operating in other communities, allows bicycles to be placed on a rack in the front of the bus, allowing many more riders to access the bus lines by traveling a portion of the trip by bicycle.

Another possibility for individuals wishing to ride their bicycle at least a portion of the way to work, is to drive the bike, in a car, to a park and ride facility, park the car, and then ride the bike the remainder of the commute.

The Board of Selectmen should consider collaborating with bicycle advocates and State sponsored car-pooling programs to develop a map of potential park-and-ride locations that Bethel residents can use. This map should also be made available to commuters wishing to participate in carpooling programs.

Actions to Support Transportation Options

1. Collaborate with Regional, State, and Federal transportation officials to extend the rail service north to New Milford.
2. Encourage increased service to the New Haven line for both peak and off-peak hours.
3. Develop additional parking capacity at the Train Station.
4. Advocate for a Danbury North Railroad Station near the northwest corner of the Town of Bethel.
5. Consider development of a west side train platform with additional parking and facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists.
6. Increase the frequency and coverage of HART bus services in Bethel, including additional service for the SweetHART Dial-A-Ride.
7. Encourage HART to provide bus shelters in Bethel.
8. Consider a trackless trolley route between Stony Hill and the Village Center.
9. Include a fee-in-lieu of sidewalks in the Subdivision Regulations where appropriate.
10. Develop and fund a sidewalk improvement plan (SIP) for ongoing maintenance of sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure.
11. Consider the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists in all transportation projects, integrating facilities to support pedestrian and bicyclists to the maximum amount practicable.
12. Collaborate with bicycle advocates to develop additional bicycle infrastructure in Bethel.
13. Collaborate with Cannondale to develop more bicycle friendly trails and bicycle infrastructure.
14. Encourage HART to accommodate bikes on buses.
15. Identify potential park-and-ride lots for bicyclists and carpoolers.

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UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE



Overview

The availability of public utilities can strongly influence development patterns. There are typically piped utilities such as public water and sewer service; wired utilities such as telephone and cable services and wireless services.

The Plan seeks to ensure that utilities are suitably located and have adequate capacity to support the desired residential and commercial growth pattern expressed throughout this Plan.



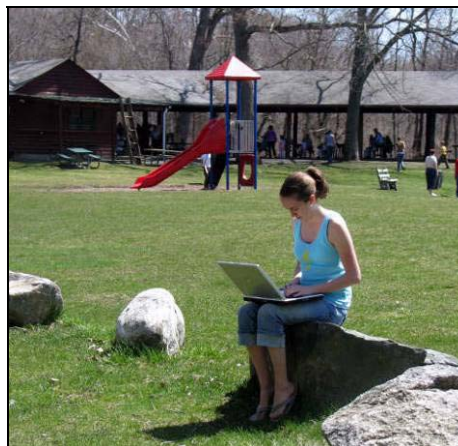
Water Supply Service Area



Sewer Pump Station



Wired Utilities



Wireless Utilities

Provide Public Water for Community Needs

Water supply is a critical element of the Town's infrastructure. Public water service provides potable water for fire protection, residential, and business requirements, and supports desired development patterns. There are two water service areas in Bethel, as identified on the map, *Water Service Areas*. The Bethel Water Department is a municipal utility and the Bethel Consolidated Water Company is a private utility. Areas not identified on the *Water Service Areas Plan* are served by private wells.

The Bethel Water Department obtains water primarily from the Maple Avenue Wells, which supplies 70% of the Town's drinking water. The remaining 30% comes from the Chestnut Ridge Reservoir. Emergency back-up supplies are located in Danbury in two reservoirs owned by the Town of Bethel.

The Bethel Water Department has a safe yield of 1.66 million gallons per day. Average consumption over the last five years, according to the Town Engineer, has been 942,400 gpd. Therefore, there are adequate water supplies to meet existing needs and sufficient capacity for some expansion of service.

The Bethel Water Department is responsible for the maintenance of the municipal drinking water systems and conducts monthly and yearly testing of the Town's water supply systems, including wells and reservoirs, to ensure that the Town's water supply is in compliance with state and federal guidelines. The Bethel Water Department provides water for those areas of the downtown and centrally located areas of town which are connected to the public water system.

The Town's water supplies are currently dependent on two reservoirs and the emergency back-up of Murphy's Brook. The Connecticut DPH recently completed assessments for all reservoirs and associated watersheds in the State. DPH concluded that the absence of source protection regulations in Bethel is a potential risk factor for its water supply. DPH recommends the creation of local watershed protection regulations, including a water supply overlay zone. Commission will adopt a water supply overlay zone when it revises the Zoning Regulations.

The privately owned Bethel Consolidated Water Company provides water for Chimney Heights and the Berkshire Corporate Park. Water for Chimney Heights comes from privately managed well fields in the Dibble Brook Aquifer, which has a safe yield of 224,640 gpd. Average daily consumption is approximately 110,000 gpd. Water for the Berkshire Corporate Park comes from an interconnection with Danbury. Average daily consumption for the Park is at 60,000 gpd.

As noted in the first draft of a water supply study prepared for the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials in October 2006, despite the costs associated with a water supply overlay zone, the benefits of water source protection far outweigh the costs. The report entitled "*Adopting a Water Supply Protection District Overlay Zone for Bethel*" contains a number of recommendations for protection of Bethel's water supply. Once that report has been completed, the Commission should use the recommendations as guidance in the forthcoming revision process to update the Zoning Regulations.

Actions for Protecting Public Water Supplies

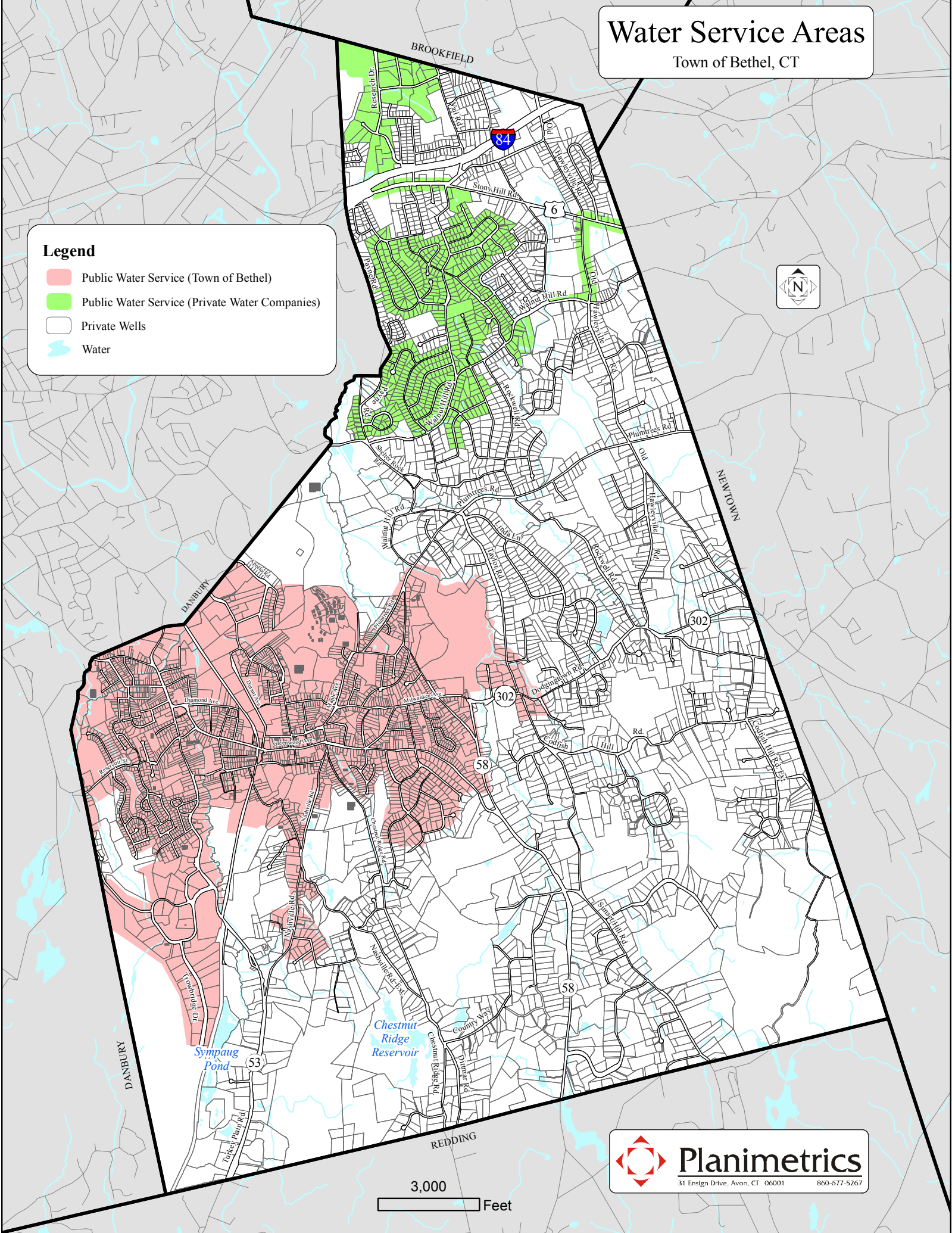
1. Create local watershed protection regulations, including a water supply overlay zone.
2. Implement the recommendations of the "Adopting a Water Supply Protection Overlay Zone for Bethel."

Water Service Areas

Town of Bethel, CT

Legend

- Public Water Service (Town of Bethel)
- Public Water Service (Private Water Companies)
- Private Wells
- Water



3,000 Feet



Planimetrics
31 Ensign Drive, Avon, CT 06001 860-677-5267

Ensure Adequate Sanitary Sewer Service

Public sewers can provide safe and efficient sewage disposal for residential and business needs, protect public health, and support desired development patterns.

Bethel's Public Works Department, primarily through the Town Engineer and the Utility Supervisor, maintain the municipal sewer mains located within the Town. The Town has an Inter-local Agreement with the City of Danbury to send its municipal sewage to their treatment facility. There are three different sewer service areas served by three sewer pump stations. As identified on the *Sewer Service Areas Plan*, sewer lines currently serve the entire downtown Bethel area, the Francis J. Clarke Industrial Park, the Berkshire Industrial Park, Hoyt's Hill, and the Stony Hill/Route 6 Corridor. Sewer service has been approved for Chimney Heights and Phase 1 work on installation of sewer service to this neighborhood has begun. The *Sewer Service Areas Plan* identifies existing, proposed and potential sewer service areas. Areas not identified on the *Sewer Service Areas Plan* use private septic systems.

As of October 2006, there were 3,476 customers of the Bethel Sewer System. An agreement with the Danbury Sewage Treatment Plant (DSTP) allows for up to two million gallons of sewage a day. Current usage is approximately 1.2 million gallons a day indicating that there may be some excess capacity in the system. However, according to a recent study conducted by Tighe and Bond, both the Paul Street Pump Station and the Downtown sewer service areas are near capacity. There are concerns that new development in these areas may jeopardize the current agreement with Danbury.

The Commission recommends that the Board of Selectmen and the Public Utility Commission consider revising the agreement with the DSTP to reallocate some sewage capacity from the northern area, where there is a surplus, to the Village Center, in order to support some limited additional development in the Village Center. As the Commission revises the Zoning Regulations and considers allowing for some increases in density both in the Village Center and within the proposed Transit-Oriented Development District, both the Zoning Map and the Sewer Service Plan may need to be reviewed and amended for compatibility.

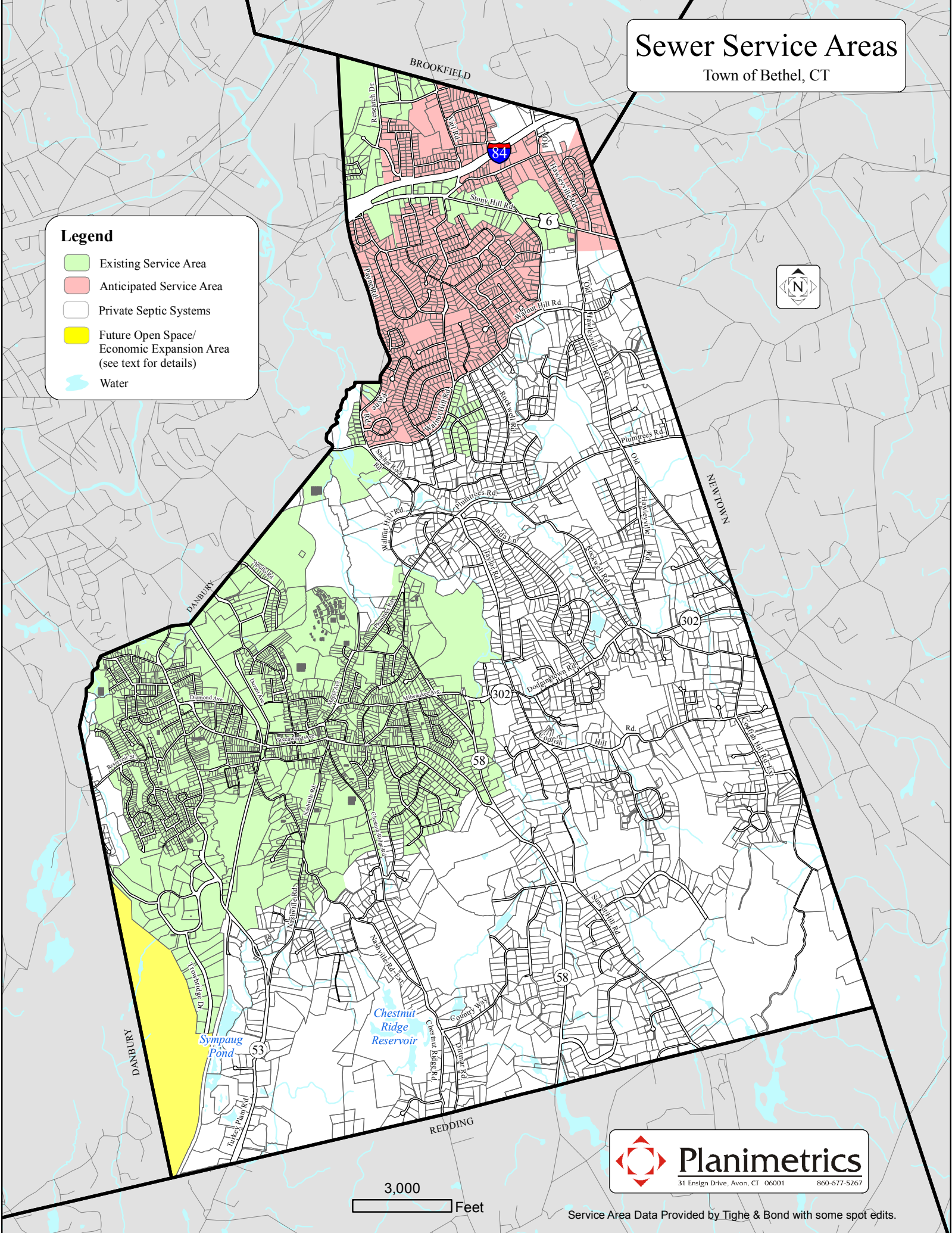
The Public Utility Commission and the Board of Selectmen are considering extending sewer service throughout the southwestern part of Town. This is in conflict with the State Plan of Conservation and Development, which has identified this area as rural land and a conservation area. Therefore, the Commission recommends that the Town work to resolve this discrepancy and clarify the State Plan of Conservation's designation of this area of Town before moving forward with the proposal to sewer the southwestern part of Town and/or to propose or allow any additional development in this area.

Sewer Service Areas

Town of Bethel, CT

Legend

- Existing Service Area
- Anticipated Service Area
- Private Septic Systems
- Future Open Space/
Economic Expansion Area
(see text for details)
- Water



3,000 Feet

Planimetrics
31 Ensign Drive, Avon, CT 06001 860-677-5267

Service Area Data Provided by Tighe & Bond with some spot edits.

In 2006, the Public Utilities Commission conducted a sanitary sewer system capacity evaluation, with the assistance of the engineering firm of Tighe and Bond. That report identified a number of recommendations, many of which the Commission endorses.

A number of recommendations address concerns about the potential for exceeding the flow limits agreement. The Commission recommends that the Board of Selectmen and the Public Utility Commission pursue those recommendations.

Another important recommendation is to develop a system to monitor redevelopment and build-out within the sewer service areas in order to evaluate the impact on wastewater flows and available capacity as development in the Town proceeds. The Commission supports these recommendations.

That report also recommended that the PUC evaluate and potentially upgrade the flow meters at the Payne Road Meter Chamber, the Berkshire Pump Station, and the Plumtrees Road Pump Station. The Commission supports these recommendations.

Actions for Ensuring Adequate Sanitary Sewer Services

1. Update the sewer service area limits to ensure that areas of Town where new sewers are planned are within the sewer service area and are consistent with the State Plan of Conservation and Development.
2. Consider requesting an adjustment to the inter-municipal agreement with Danbury to shift capacity from the northern area to the southern area.
3. Develop a system to monitor redevelopment and build-out within the sewer service area in order to evaluate the impact on wastewater flows and available capacity as development in the Town proceeds.
4. Evaluate and upgrade, if necessary, the flow meters at the Payne Road Meter Chamber and the Berkshire Pump Station.
5. Evaluate options for upgrading or replacing the Plumtrees Road Pump Station.

Manage Stormwater

State and Federal regulations now require greater local management of stormwater. Under the Environmental Protection Agency's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II guidelines, Bethel will be responsible for reducing the discharge of pollutants to the "maximum extent practical." Both the Town and all commercial properties tying into the Town's sewer and stormwater systems will be responsible for meeting the new water quality standards. The Board of Selectmen should investigate the creation of a stormwater utility to manage and pay for compliance with the NPDES guidelines and DEP requirements.

Areas with consistent stormwater runoff problems include Plumtrees Road near the Police Station, the intersection of South Street with Nashville Road, the P.T. Barnum Square, and the Diamond / Farnum Hill intersection. The Commission should review its stormwater run-off regulations to address both the volume and velocity of runoff. The Commission should explore regulatory strategies and other approaches to encourage the development of sustainable stormwater facilities such as catch basins, detention ponds, and rain-gardens, to control stormwater flows and improve the quality of stormwater runoff. As the Commission revises the Zoning Regulations, it should ensure that the Town's regulations are consistent with the *CT DEP Stormwater Management Plan* and the *CT Stormwater Manual, 2004* as amended.

As discussed earlier in the section on transportation, the Town Engineer's Office, has developed "*Design and Construction Standards*", which also provides guidance for storm drainage improvements. This manual used the recommendations and proposed regulatory intent of the EPA's stormwater regulations and the CT DEP stormwater management policies. Once the "*Design and Construction Standards*" manual has been reviewed and revised, it should be adopted to provide applicants and the Town Engineer with clear guidance on how to best address stormwater management systems.

Actions to Manage Stormwater

1. Investigate the possibility of creating a stormwater utility.
2. Consider adopting a Zero Increase in Runoff policy.
3. Revise the Zoning Regulations for compliance with the CT DEP Stormwater Management Plan and the CT Stormwater Manual, 2004 as amended.
4. Adopt the "Design and Construction Standards" manual for guidance on storm drainage improvements.

Stormwater Run-off BMPs

Best Management Practices (BMPs) for managing stormwater include:

- reduce residential density and/or lot coverage in sensitive watershed and aquifer areas;
- improve stormwater treatment by natural or mechanical means including oil and grit separators and natural wetland vegetation;
- continue to provide water quality educational resources to land use commissions and the public; and
- adopt a Zero Increase in Run-off Policy.

Manage Wired Services

Bethel has adequate wired utility services, which includes electrical, telephone, and cable utilities, in place and able to meet community needs. So that such services continue to be available, the Town should work with utility companies who seek to improve the reliability of their systems by undertaking tree trimming projects. There is a delicate balance between the benefits of tree trimming to improve utility availability and reliability, and the negative impacts to community character that can occur when aggressive tree trimming practices are followed. Bethel's Public Utility Commission and Board of Selectmen should continue to work with utility companies seeking to improve the reliability of the wired services by undertaking tree trimming projects in ways that protect community character and involves private property owners.

During the preparation of this Plan, residents expressed a desire to have wired utility infrastructure placed underground whenever and wherever feasible. Bethel's Board of Selectmen, Public Utility Commission, and our Commission should continue to seek ways to have wired utilities placed underground whenever possible, such as the existing provisions in the Subdivision Regulations requiring that new developments place wired utilities underground. Placing wired utilities underground should be a priority in the Design Districts such as the Village Center, the Transit-oriented Design District, the Route 6 corridor, and along scenic roads.

Actions for Wired Services

1. Continue to seek opportunities to place wired utilities underground.
2. Continue to work with utility companies who seek to improve the reliability of their systems by undertaking tree trimming projects.



Wired Utilities

Improve Wireless Services

Over the past several years, there has been a significant increase in the usage and availability of wireless communications. Whereas in the past, the primary concern with cellular phones and wireless services was the visibility of cell towers, today the primary concern is the availability of service.

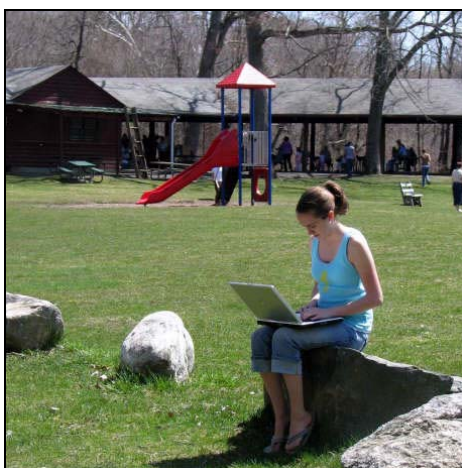
In addition, many owners of laptop computers and other local area network related technologies enjoy the ease with which they can communicate by email and telephone over wireless computer devices and other related services. Cafes, libraries, train stations, and even street benches are becoming likely places to find people communicating wirelessly. The upside is that as more users enter the wireless systems, it is possible to have much smaller cells with less visible antennae.

Due to a Federal Court ruling (*Sprint Spectrum LP v. Conn. Siting Council*, 274 F.3d 674, (2d. Cir. 2001)) the Connecticut Siting Council (CSC) currently has jurisdiction over the siting of telecommunication towers, with few exceptions. Prior to the ruling, Bethel adopted comprehensive tower regulations requiring telecommunications providers and tower builders to comply with the local regulations when applying to the CSC. These regulations should be revised in order to comply with State law and Federal legislation.

The Village Center is an excellent location to provide comprehensive wireless Internet coverage, which is known as a Wi-Fi Hot Spot. Wi-Fi Hot Spots allow anyone the appropriate computer hardware and software to connect wirelessly to the Internet which is a desirable amenity to many citizens and businesses. The Board of Selectmen, perhaps in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce should coordinate with local businesses and local providers to establish such a network.

Actions for Improving Wireless Services

1. Revise the Zoning Regulations relative to telecommunication towers for consistency with State law and Federal legislation.
2. Collaborate with local businesses and Wi-Fi providers to create a Wi-Fi Hot Spot in Bethel's Village Center.



Wireless Services

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FUTURE LAND USE PLAN



Overview

The recommendations of each of the preceding chapters can be combined into a comprehensive plan, known as the Future Land Use Plan. This Future Land Use Plan is a reflection of the stated goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations of this Plan, to present a vision of what Bethel in the future, ten years from now, should look like.



Conservation



Development



Community Facilities



Infrastructure

Descriptions of Future Land Use Categories

Natural Resources

Land Resources	Land based areas with significant environmental constraints that represent the highest priorities for conservation.
Water Resources	Water based resource areas that are needed to ensure adequate water supply resources.

Open Space

Dedicated Open Space	Areas that are currently preserved or are intended to be preserved for open space protection.
Managed Open Space	Areas that provide for passive and active recreation and which contribute to a sense of “openness”.
Conceptual Trail Network	A system of trails, greenways and blueways that connect open spaces and neighborhoods.

Residential Areas

Low Density Residential	Residential densities generally between 1.3 and 1.6 units per acre due to zoning, natural resources, infrastructure availability, or desirable patterns of development.
Medium Density Residential	Residential densities generally between 1.6 and 4 units per acre due to zoning, natural resources, infrastructure availability, or desirable patterns of development.
High Density Residential	Areas where apartments, townhouses, condominiums, congregate facilities, or other multiple dwelling units exceed 4 units per acre.

Business Areas

Commercial	Areas suitable for retail, restaurant, service and general office uses.
Commercial Industrial Park	Areas suitable for large scale corporate and light industrial campuses with manufacturing, assembly, warehousing and distribution operations.
Mixed-Use and Transit Oriented	Areas with high density residential, retail, office, and restaurants.

Other Areas

Community Facilities / Institution	Areas that are suitable for community facilities or institutional uses.
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Future Land Use Plan

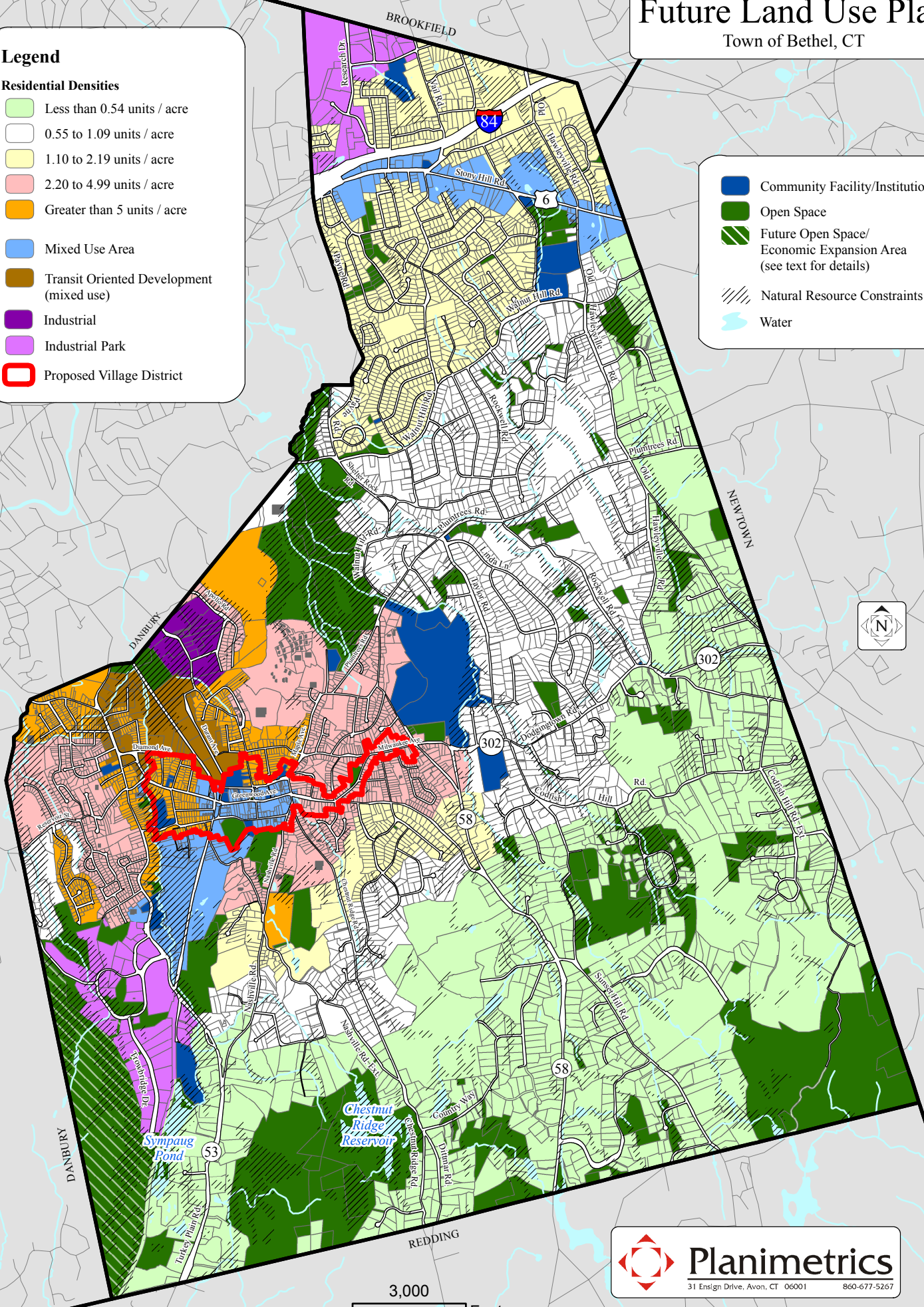
Town of Bethel, CT

Legend

Residential Densities

- Less than 0.54 units / acre
- 0.55 to 1.09 units / acre
- 1.10 to 2.19 units / acre
- 2.20 to 4.99 units / acre
- Greater than 5 units / acre
- Mixed Use Area
- Transit Oriented Development (mixed use)
- Industrial
- Industrial Park
- Proposed Village District

- Community Facility/Institutional
- Open Space
- Future Open Space/
Economic Expansion Area
(see text for details)
- Natural Resource Constraints
- Water



3,000 Feet



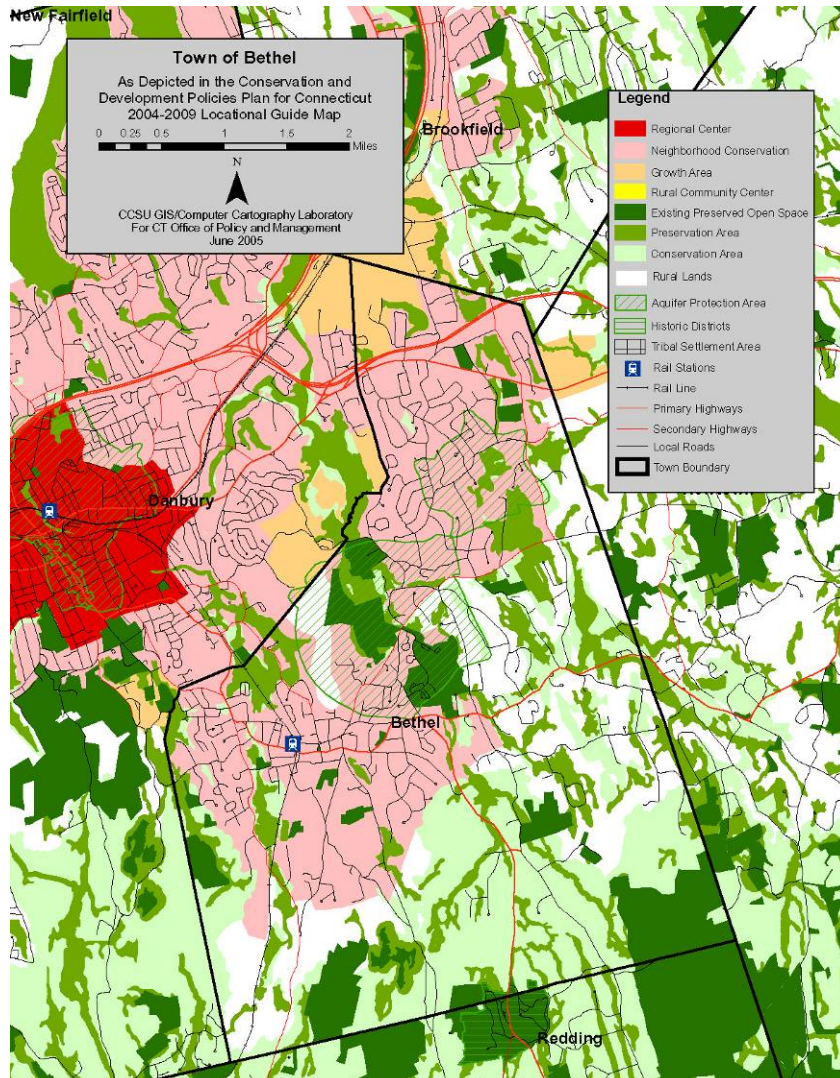
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Consistency with State and Regional Plans

The Future Land Use Plan was compared to the State's *Plan of Conservation and Development Policies Plan Locational Guide Map* for 2004-2009 and the Regional Growth Policy Map adopted by the Housatonic Valley of Elected Officials. While the land use categories used in the three different plans have some variations, all plans focus on the preservation of important natural resources and on concentrating economic development along established transportation corridors with access to utilities.

A major strategy of this Plan is to continue to support economic vitality in the Village Center, located along State highway 302 between State Highway 53 and State Highway 58, with existing connections to water and sewer services. Additional economic growth is proposed for areas along Route 6, a well traveled State Highway. Both of these areas are identified as neighborhood conservation areas in the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

In addition, this Plan will provide maximum protection of community character, environmental quality, and water quality, and is consistent with the six growth management goals of the State Plan of Conservation.



Statewide Growth Management Principles

In accordance with State Statutes, the Bethel Plan of Conservation and Development has been evaluated for consistency with statewide growth management principles. The following recommended actions steps are examples of how the 2007 Bethel Plan of Conservation and Development is consistent with these growth management principles:

Principle 1: Redevelop and revitalize regional centers and areas of mixed-land uses with existing or planned physical infrastructure.

Adopt Village District Regulations for Bethel's historic downtown commercial center on State Route 302 between State Route 53 and State Route 58.

Revise the Zoning Regulations to encourage a mix of active ground floor uses and upper story residential in the Village Center.

Develop a Route 6 Corridor Plan with a 20 year focus to ensure that future development and redevelopment is consistent with State and Regional planning and transportation management goals.

Principle 2: Expand housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs.

Allow and encourage multi-family housing in areas served by existing public water and sewer services.

Develop an affordable housing plan that requires all residential development to include either some affordable housing or payment of a fee-in-lieu.

Allow community septic systems in appropriate locations with approval of health officials in order to allow and encourage conservation subdivisions.

Collaborate with owners and managers of existing senior housing to provide additional housing units.

Principle 3: Concentrate development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options and land reuse.

Maintain and enhance the strong mixed-use node in the Village Center, with activities that promote a strong sense of place.

Rezone the area around the Metro North Rail Station to support Transit-oriented development.

Consider allowing higher density residential development in areas served by or with access to transit.

Principle 4: Conserve and restore the natural environment, cultural and historical resources, and traditional rural lands.

Connect existing open spaces along existing and proposed trails and stream corridors.

Collaborate with adjacent towns and interested non-profit organizations to complete the Ives Trail.

Establish a Conservation Commission.

Create conservation easements for Town-owned parks and open spaces.

Permanently protect significant portions of Terre Haute.

Develop portions of Bald Rock for passive recreation.

Encourage conservation subdivisions to preserve more contiguous open space.

Principle 5: Protect environmental assets critical to public health and safety.

Create local watershed protection regulations, including a water supply overlay zone.

Adopt aquifer protection regulations.

Educate the public about threats to and strategies available to protect water resources.

Implement the recommendations of the HVCEO Report, "Adopting a Water Supply Protection District Overlay Zone for Bethel."

Revise the definition of steep slopes and require a special permit for residential development on steep slopes.

Consider the comments of the DEP for projects located in areas designated as NDDB.

Encourage the use of native species and prohibit the use of invasive species.

Acquire lands around the Chestnut Ridge Reservoir.

Implement the recommendations of the October 2006 HVCEO watershed protection report.

Lower the threshold for consideration of core activities in wetlands, watercourses, and upland review areas.

Principle 6: Integrate planning across all levels of government to address issues on a local, regional, and statewide basis.

Continue to collaborate with Regional, State and Federal officials and policy makers.

Collaborate with Regional, State and Federal transportation officials to extend the Metro North Rail service to New Milford.

Implement the recommendations of the HVCEO report "Bethel, CT, Traffic Issues Report" to the maximum amount practicable.

Encourage HART to accommodate bikes on buses.



IMPLEMENTATION

Overview

Identification of implementation strategies and tasks is the main reason that the Town of Bethel, under the leadership of the Commission, prepared this Plan of Conservation and Development.

Implementation typically occurs in one of two main phases:

- strategies and tasks that are critical and easy to implement will be accomplished in a relatively short period of time; and
- strategies and tasks that are difficult, costly, require additional information or commitment from others will typically take more time.

The Commission is the steward of this Plan and has the primary responsibility of ensuring that the Plan's recommendations are implemented. The Commission, in coordination with other agencies and with the support of Staff, will implement many of the recommendations of this Plan through amendments to land use regulations, the review process, and other formal and informal actions.

Other recommendations will require the cooperation and action by other boards and commissions. However, if the Plan is to be successfully realized over time, it will be because it has served as a guide to all residents, applicants, agencies, and individuals, interested in the orderly growth of Bethel.

This chapter identifies the various tools that are available to implement the recommendations of this Plan, and provides a table which identifies policies, tasks, and implementing boards, and commissions. Strategies and tasks are delineated and short-term and long-term recommendations are prioritized. The tools to accomplish the recommended tasks include:

- use of the Plan;
- use of the Capital Improvement Program;
- establishment of a Plan Implementation Committee
- Annual Update Program;
- revisions to zoning and subdivision regulations;
- referral of municipal improvements;
- use of an Annual Update program;
- referral of municipal improvements; and
- inter-governmental cooperation.

Updating Tools

- holding annual public informational meetings to summarize the Plan recommendations and receive feedback from the community;
- holding workshop sessions for local boards, commission and other interested persons to discuss Plan strategies and suggest alternative language;
- revising Plan sections as appropriate; and
- re-adopting the Plan whenever there are minor text or map changes; or when the PZC wants to reaffirm the existing policies of the Plan.

Use of the Plan

Using the Plan as a basis for land use decisions by the Commission (PZC) will help accomplish the Plan's stated goals and objectives. All land use proposals should be measured and evaluated in terms of the Plan and its various elements.

The Plan is not a static document that can only be amended every ten years. It is becoming increasingly more difficult to anticipate change during a ten year time frame. If dramatic change alters a premise on which recommended strategies are based, or creates unanticipated issues, the PZC can make interim amendments to this Plan to address these changes. In doing so, the Commission and other agencies can continue to make decisions that are consistent with an up-to-date Plan of Conservation and Development, regardless of what the future brings.

Plan Implementation Committee

Many communities establish a Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) to oversee implementation of the Plan's recommendations, which is an effective way to implement the Plan. The PIC could use implementation schedules (proposed below) to guide the ongoing implementation and assessment of specific elements of the Plan.

The Town's various boards and commission should be represented on the PIC to help prioritize, coordinate, and refine implementation of the Plan. The PIC would meet three to four times a year to establish priorities and guide implementation of the Plan's recommendations. In addition, the Committee could assess the status of specific recommendations, establish new priorities, and suggest new implementation techniques.

Annual Update Program

A Plan that is only updated once every ten years can be silent on emerging issues, trends, and current policy objectives, which could lead to conflicts in land use decisions or missed opportunities. When a Plan is considered strictly as a reference document rather than a working document, its effectiveness in guiding the community can diminish over time. Bethel, with the assistance of the Plan Implementation Committee, should consider reviewing the Plan with the following schedule:

Conservation Themes	Development Themes	Infrastructure Themes
2008	2009	2010
2011	2012	2013
2014	2015	2016

Each review and update extends the Plan's ten-year life, until a comprehensive update is needed. Tools that the PZC and the PIC can use to ensure that the broader community is involved in the updating process are identified in the sidebar.

Other Implementing Actions

Updating Land Use Regulations

Many of the recommendations in the Plan can be implemented by the PZC through regulation amendments, application reviews, and other means. The Town's land use regulations, which are mostly contained in the Zoning Regulations and the Subdivision Regulations, provide specific criteria for land development at the time of application. As a result, these regulations are important tools to implement the Plan as long as the regulations are consistent with the recommendations of this Plan.

The Town should maintain its maps, inventories, and recommendations and update these as well as the Town's land use regulations as appropriate. If maps and/or inventories are updated, this Plan should be updated to incorporate any additional adopted inventories, policies, or recommendations.

As the Commission undertakes a comprehensive review of the Zoning Regulations, Zoning Map, and Subdivision Regulations it should make revisions to achieve the policy objectives identified in this Plan.

Capital Improvement Program

The Capital Improvements Program, or CIP, is a tool for planning major capital expenditures of a municipality so that local needs can be identified and prioritized within local fiscal constraints.

This Plan contains several proposals whose implementation may require the expenditure of Town funds. The Plan recommends that these and other items be included in the Town's CIP and that funding for these necessary and desired projects be included in the Capital Budget.

Referral of Municipal Projects

Section 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that municipal improvements (as defined in the Statutes) be referred to the PZC for a report before any local action is taken. A proposal disapproved by the Commission can only be implemented after a two-thirds vote in favor of the proposal by the Board of Selectmen. All local boards and agencies should be notified of Section 8-24 and its mandatory nature so that proposals can be considered and prepared in a timely fashion in compliance with this requirement.

Inter-Governmental Cooperation

Bethel can continue to work with other towns in the region, the Housatonic Valley Council of Governments, the many agencies of the State of Connecticut, and other governmental entities to explore opportunities where common interests coincide. It is recommended that increased consideration be given to the Region's role in preserving natural resources, agriculture, establishing greenways and trail systems, preserving open space areas, and enhancing village areas. The Town and its Boards and Commissions should continue to work with, coordinate and collaborate with HVCEO and its member municipalities.

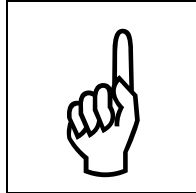
Implementers

BHA - Bethel Housing Authority
BHD – Bethel Health Department
BOE - Board of Education
BOF – Board of Finance
BOS - Board of Selectmen
CIT– Citizens of Bethel
CoC – Chamber of Commerce
CC – Conservation Commission
DPW – Department of Public Works
EDC – Economic Development Commission
FM- Fire Marshall
HC – Historic Commission
HVCEO – Housatonic Council of Elected Officials
IWC – Inland Wetland Commission
LUO – Land Use Office
MNR – Metro-North Railroad
PRC – Parks and Recreation Commission
PZC – Planning & Zoning Commission
PVT – Private Entities (corporate, individuals and non-profits)
PSBC – Public Site & Building Committee
PUC – Public Utility Commission
STATE – State Agencies
TC – Town Counsel

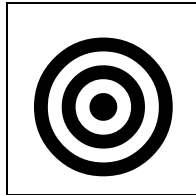
Table of Implementation

Implementation of this Plan will be a gradual and continual process. While some recommendations can be carried out in a relatively short period of time, others may only be realized towards the end of the planning period or beyond. Future, since some recommendations may involve additional study or a commitment of fiscal resources, their implementation may take place over several years or occur in stages.

The tables that follow summarize the recommendations of this Plan. Recommendations have been categorized either as a strategy or as a specific task.



A strategy is a long—term policy that does not readily lend itself to a specific schedule or measurement.



A task is a specific action that can typically be scheduled and measured.

A list of abbreviations used for the implementers is in the sidebar.

The Plan’s recommended Action Steps are organized into tables to be used by the Planning and Zoning Commission (and an Implementation Committee if one is established). These strategies and tasks will be used to develop work programs to address the goals of this Plan. These action steps have been summarized. For details on any specific action, refer to the appropriate text in this Plan

How to Use the Table

Policies guide actions, so each policy is followed by the specific actions or tasks which will help implement the policy.

The column labeled “Who” refers to the organizations which will be needed to implement the tasks. Generally, the organization with the primary responsibility is listed first, with supporting organizations following in alphabetic order. The letter codes for each organization is in the sidebar. This list is not meant to be exhaustive or exclusive. Any individual or organization that can assist in the implementation of the policies, strategies and tasks in this Plan is encouraged to do so.

The column labeled “Priority” identifies the relative importance of the particular task. The Commission identified each task with a High, Medium or Low priority.

The column labeled “Done” provides a check box () for tasks, which can be checked () once the task is completed.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS

Protect Natural Resources



Preserve Land Based Resources

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
⊙	1. Revise the definition of steep slope.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
↑	2. Consider a special permit for residential development on steep slopes; but do not allow the outright removal of steep slopes or hillsides.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	3. Require replacement of mature trees lost during the development process.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	4. Require topographic mapping at two-foot contours.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	5. Add a definition in the Zoning Regulations for buildable land, excluding steep slopes, floodplains, floodways and wetlands.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>



Protect Habitat Resources















	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
↑	1. Consider DEP's comments during application review.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	2. Require all applications within the NDDP to be reviewed by DEP	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	3. Require the use of native species in landscaping plans.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
↑	4. Prohibit the introduction of invasive species.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>



Protect Trees

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
⊙	1. Revise the tree ordinance to discourage clearcutting and to include definitions for tree harvesting, clearcutting, land disturbance and caliper.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	2. Integrate tree protection measures into soil erosion and sedimentation regulations.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	3. Require replacement of mature trees.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	4. Encourage the use of Elm and Chestnut trees.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>

Protect Water Resources

<u>Implementers</u>	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	 1. Continue to implement the NPDES program components.	PZC	High	
	 2. Adopt aquifer protection regulations.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	 3. Revise the Zoning Regulations for consistency with State and Federal standards.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	 4. Protect areas identified as high groundwater through the IWC regulations.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	 5. Assess the need for a septic management program and if warranted, develop and fund the program.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	 6. Evaluate the threats to groundwater from underground storage tanks (UST) and if warranted, adopt an ordinance prohibiting the installation of new USTs and requiring the removal of existing USTs.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	 7. Limit the amount of impervious surfaces through performance standards that encourage the use of roof leaders, rain gardens and other measures that limit run-off and promote infiltration.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	 8. Consider acquiring lands around the Chestnut Ridge Reservoir.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	 9. Implement the recommendations of the October 2006 HVCEO watershed protection report, including adopting a water supply overlay zone.	IWC, PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	 10. Use ongoing water resource assessments to guide revisions to land use regulations.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	 11. Adopt a no-net-loss of wetlands policy.	IWC, PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	 12. Lower the threshold of disturbance, for consideration of core activities in wetlands, watercourses and upland review areas.	IWC, PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	 13. Identify significant wetlands, and all wetlands in undeveloped areas within recharge areas.	IWC, PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	 14. Establish a no-net-loss of vernal pool policy.	IWC, PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>

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☉	15. Contract a vernal pool specialist to inventory vernal pools.	BOS, PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
☉	16. Require that any development within a 750-foot radius of any identified vernal pool meet specific performance standards.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
☝	17. Consider limiting development within floodplains and floodways.	PZC, IWC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
☉	18. Establish buffers along streams and limit development within the buffer particularly along streams classified as B or better.	PZC, IWC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
☝	19. Educate the public about the threats to and strategies available to protect water resources through mailings, flyers and distribution of the water resource recommendations of this Plan.	PZC, BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>

Protect Open Space

☝ Realize the Open Space Vision

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
☝	1. Connect open spaces along trails and stream corridors with acquisitions and easements.	PZC, CC	High	
☝	2. Monitor open space acquisitions focusing acquisition strategies in areas identified on the Open Space Plan as highest priority.	PZC, CC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
☝	3. Collaborate with adjacent towns and interested non-profit organizations to complete the Ives Trail.	PZC, BOS, CIT, CC, PVT	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
☉	4. Connect Bethel trails to the Ives Trails.	PZC, PVT	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
☉	5. Permanently protect significant portions of Terre Haute, particularly the western portions.	BOS, CIT	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
☉	6. Create development guidelines for undeveloped lands in the Francis J. Clarke Industrial Park.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
☉	7. Prepare a management plan for Bald Rock that includes recreational opportunities.	CC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
☉	8. Acquire adjacent lands to improve access to Bald Rock.	BOS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Create a Conservation Commission

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
🎯	1. Establish a Conservation Commission	BOS, PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
🎯	2. Create conservation easements for Town-owned parks	PZC, BOS, CC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
👉	3. Consider a Park Zoning District.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
👉	4. Consider easements across or at the edge of cemeteries as part of the Town's trail system.	PZC, CC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
👉	5. Pursue right-of-first-refusal for significant parcels of privately owned land.	BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
🎯	6. Identify and define the parameters of stream buffers.	PZC, IWC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>



Acquire Open Space

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
👉	1. Collaborate with appropriate partners.	BOS, CIT	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
👉	2. Encourage philanthropy of Bethel residents and property owners to increase land donations to the open space plan.		High	<input type="checkbox"/>
👉	3. Develop funding strategies for open space land acquisition.	PZC, CC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
👉	4. Apply for state aid, using this Plan as a tool.	BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
🎯	5. Create a land acquisition fund with small percentage of the mill rate (1/4 of one percent) and through bonding.	BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
🎯	6. Increase the open space requirement of subdivided lands.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
👉	7. Encourage conservation residential development.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
👉	8. Promote the benefits of PA 490.	PZC, BOS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>

Protect Historic Resources



Identify Historic Resources

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Publicize events and programs for historic preservation in collaboration with the Bethel Library, The Historical Society and the Board of Selectmen.	BOS, HS, LIB	Medium	
	2. Complete and maintain the historic resources inventory.	BOS, HS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Apply for State assistance to complete the inventory.	BOS, HS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4. Consider creating a local registry of historic places.	BOS, HS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>



Support Local Preservation Efforts

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Encourage sensitive stewardship programs and reward outstanding efforts.	PZC, BOS, HS	High	
	2. Continue to use the Demolition Delay provisions with increased public notice.	BOS, HS, PZC	Medium	
	3. Consider establishing Local Historic Districts.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4. Revise the Zoning Regulations to include adaptive reuse strategies.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5. Use Village District regulations for historic protection.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Protect Community Character



Encourage Community Spirit

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Promote unique Bethel events.	BOS, CIT	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Regularly recognize volunteer efforts.	BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Work with applicants to protect scenic resources.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4. Adopt and maintain the scenic resources component of the Community Character Plan.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>



Protect Scenic Resources

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Consider adopting a Scenic Roads ordinance.	PZC, BOS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>



Support Bethel's Agricultural Character

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Promote the benefits of PA 490.	PZC, BOS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Encourage use of the Connecticut Farmland Preservation Program.	PZC, BOS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Collaborate with appropriate partners to protect farmland.	BOS, PVT	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4. Support the local farmer's market.	CIT	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5. Provide flexibility in the Zoning Regulations for agricultural uses.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>



Protect Stone Walls, Foundations and Bridges

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Maintain the historic stone bridges.	DPW	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Consider a historic stone walls and foundations ordinance.	BOS, PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Create and fund a line item for maintenance of historic bridges.	BOS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>

DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

Enhancing Community Structure



Support Enhancing Elements

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Maintain and enhance the strong, mixed use node in the Village Center.	EDC	High	
	2. Support cluster and campus development that includes design considerations.	PZC	Medium	
	3. Promote greenways, blueways and other linear elements.	PZC	High	
	4. Maintain the gateways.	PZC, DPW	Medium	
	5. Avoid sprawling development patterns in areas without public infrastructure.	PZC, PVT	High	
	6. Manage conflicts between roads, railways and adjacent land uses.	BOS, HVCEO, STATE, MNR	High	
	7. Create design plans for gateways		Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>



Enhance the Village Center

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Continue streetscape improvements throughout the Village Center.	BOS	High	
	2. Maintain sidewalks and street furniture.	DPW	High	
	3. Support public-private partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Commission.	BOS, CoC, EDC	High	
	4. Develop integrated parking strategies for the Village Center.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5. Identify more open and green spaces for the Village Center.	PZC, CC, CIT, PVT	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	6. Consider structured parking with open spaces, gardens and innovative stormwater management techniques at the former train station.	PZC, HS, BOS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	7. Preserve the historic train station.	HS, BOS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Encourage Quality Design

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Encourage the use of sustainable building practices such as siting development appropriately in relation to natural light.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Establish a design review process.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Create appropriate design guidelines and/or criteria for design designated districts.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4. Consider form-based codes in design designated districts.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5. Adopt Village District Regulations	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	6. Institutionalize architectural review for the Village District.	PZC, BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	7. Develop a unified sign design for all Town-owned and managed properties.	PZC, BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	8. Develop “wayfinding” signs and maps.	BOS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>

Economic Development



Reorganize the EDC

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Expand the mission of the EDC.	BOS, EDC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Provide staffing support to the EDC.	BOS, EDC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Consider hiring a full-time Economic Development Director.	BOS, EDC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>



Attract and Retain Business

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Identify appropriate businesses types for Bethel.	EDC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Identify appropriate locations for appropriate businesses.	PZC, EDC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Identify incentives for industrial businesses located over public water supply resources to relocate.	PZC, BOS, EDC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4. Identify support services for new businesses.	EDC, BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5. Recruit appropriate businesses.	EDC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>



Create Transit-Oriented Development

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
☉	1. Identify appropriate locations for Transit-oriented development (TOD).	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
☉	2. Work with property owners to identify and assemble appropriate parcels for TOD.	PZC, EDC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
☉	3. Rezone the areas around the Metro North Rail Station to support TOD.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
☉	4. Encourage Metro-North Railroad to build a west side platform at the train station.	PZC, BOS, HVCEO	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
☉	5. Consider similar regulations for transit-supportive development with lower densities than allowed in a TOD.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>



Support Local Businesses

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
☉	1. Promote synchronistic businesses such as restaurants adjacent to the Bethel cinema.	EDC, PZC	High	
☉	2. Hold street fairs in conjunction with film festival events.	BOS, EDC, CoC	High	
☉	3. Encourage public-private partnerships	EDC, CoC	High	
☉	4. Assist small business owners identify and make use of state and national programs	EDC	High	
☉	5. Work with the Bethel Cinema and adjacent properties to identify shared parking solutions.	PZC, CoC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
☉	6. Consider developing historic-theme activities for tourists such as maple-sugaring operations.	BOS, PVT, CoC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
☉	7. Consider developing recreational opportunities on Town-owned lands.	BOS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
☉	8. Revise the Zoning Regulations for the Village Center to encourage mixed use buildings with active ground floor uses and upper story residential.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
☉	9. Complete and implement the Route 6 Corridor Plan.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
☉	10. When revising the Zoning Regulations, ensure regulations relative to home businesses are consistent with today's global economy.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Modify Residential Development Patterns

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Protect residential neighborhoods threatened by replacement housing that is out of proportion to lot size.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Modify the conservation subdivisions regulations.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Establish density standards for the R-40 and R-80 Districts.	PAC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4. Consider community septic systems for conservation subdivisions.	PZC, IWC, BHD	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5. Consider floor area ratios.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	6. Consider revising the coverage, bulk and dimensional standards.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>



Encourage Housing Diversity

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Allow multi-family in areas with sufficient water, sewer and access to transit and services.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Monitor accessory housing units to ensure that they are producing affordable housing.	PZC, BHA	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Consider increased residential densities in the Village Center.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4. Consider residential as part of mixed-use developments along Route 6.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5. Consider allowing live-work spaces in additional areas of Town.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	6. Consider requiring evidence of safety compliance for conversions of single-family to multi-family housing units.	PZC, FM, LUO	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	7. Collaborate with owners and managers of existing senior housing to provide additional housing units.	PZC, BHA	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	8. Identify appropriate areas of town for senior housing.	PZC, BHA	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	9. Develop an affordable housing plan that requires all residential development to include some affordable housing or payment of a fee-in-lieu to support the development of affordable housing.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	10. Consider developing an affordable housing partnerships.	BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	11. Work with elected State officials to consider affordable rental housing in the State accepted affordable housing calculations.	LUS, BOS, TC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>

INFRASTRUCTURE ACTIONS



Maintain the Educational Facilities

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Maintain adequate land and facilities for potential expansion of the school-aged population.	BOS, BOE	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>



Increasing Recreational Opportunities

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Develop recreational infrastructure on Town-owned properties.	BOS, PRC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Determine how best to meet the recreational needs of seniors and teens.	BOS, PRC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Consider development of a multi-use recreational facility with programs for seniors and teens, and a swimming pool.	BOS, PRC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>








Support the Town's Public Safety Services

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Complete the South Street Fire House expansion project.	BOS, PSBC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Consider options for ensuring full-time coverage by emergency responders.	BOS, PSBC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Identify an appropriate location for construction of a new Police Department facility.	BOS, PSBC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4. Identify funding sources for construction of a new Police Department facility.	BOS, PSBC, BOF	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5. Construct a new Police Department facility.	BOS, PSBC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>


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 **Improve the Municipal Center**

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Complete Municipal Center renovations.	BOS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Consider conducting a needs assessment of the Municipal Center.	BOS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Expand the capabilities of the Town’s networked computer system.	BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4. Consider acquisition of joint permitting software for all departments.	BOS, LUS, DPW, PRC, PUC, BOF	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5. Fund computer upgrades linking all departments with a GIS program.	BOS, BOF	High	<input type="checkbox"/>






 **Support the Public Works Department**

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Consider adjustment or renovations to the Town Garage to ensure adequate space for all equipment and personnel.	BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>

 **Support the Library**

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Complete the library renovation and provide signage for all library related parking.	BOS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>

 **Improve the Town’s Road Networks**

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Continue to maintain the Town’s highways and road network.	BOS, DPW	High	
	2. Adequately staff the Highway Department.	BOS, DPW	High	
	3. Maintain bridges and continue to make bridge improvements.	BOS, DPW	High	
	4. Implement the recommendations of the HVCEO report “Bethel, CT, Traffic Issues Report”.	BOS, DPW	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5. Continue collaborative efforts with Regional, State and Federal Transportation officials and policy makers to resolve conflicts between local roads and Interstate 84.	BOS, DPW	High	<input type="checkbox"/>

⊙	6. Request a roundabout feasibility study and then submit the study to the CT DOT Project Development Unit with an application for funding.	BOS, DPW	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	7. Request updates to the 1997 Access Management Plan for Route 6.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	8. Request realignment of the Route 6/Hawleyville/Benedict Road intersection and of the Route 6/Sand Hill intersection.	BOS, DPW	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	9. Adopt a scenic roads ordinance.	PZC, BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	10. Revise the draft "Design and Construction Standards" manual removing all references to fees and revising road standards to encourage narrower, scenic roads.	PZC, DPW, BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	11. Once revisions have been made, adopt the manual. Request that the revised manual replace the Road Ordinance, identifying the Town Engineer as the administrator.	PZC, BOS, DPW	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	12. Ensure that all revisions to the manual are subject to the Commission's approval.	BOS, PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	13. Actively pursue options for resolving the road/railroad conflict on Route 53 near the Francis J. Clarke Industrial Park.	HVCEO, BOS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	14. Consider hiring a transportation engineer with wetlands expertise to identify a potential route from Henry Street to Route 53.	BOS, DPW	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	15. Consider incentives to relocate businesses out of the historic industrial areas and then rezone to a mixed-use district, supported by transit.	EDC, BOS, PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>













Support Transportation Options



	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
⊙	1. Encourage increased service to the New Haven line, especially to Bethel.	HVCEO, BOS	High	
⊙	2. Consider the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists in all transportation projects.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	3. Collaborate with Regional, State and Federal transportation officials to extend the rail service to New Milford.	HVCEO, BOS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	4. Develop additional parking capacity at the Train Station.	HVCEO, BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
⊙	5. Advocate for a Danbury North Railroad Station near the northwest corner of the Town of Bethel.	HVCEO, BOS	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>

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- 6.  Consider development of a west side train platform with additional parking and facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists. HVCEO, BOS Medium
- 7.  Encourage increased frequency and coverage of HART bus services in Bethel. HVCEO, BOS Medium
- 8.  Encourage HART to provide bus shelters in Bethel. HVCEO, BOS Medium
- 9.  Consider a trackless trolley route between Stony Hill and the Village Center. BOS, DPW, BOF Medium
- 10.  Include a fee-in-lieu of sidewalks in the Subdivision Regulations where appropriate. PZC Medium
- 11.  Develop and fund a sidewalk improvement plan (SIP) for ongoing maintenance of sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure. BOS, DPW High
- 12.  Collaborate with bicycle advocates to develop additional bicycle infrastructure in Bethel. BOS, DPW, PVT High
- 13.  Collaborate with Cannondale to develop more bicycle friendly trails and bicycle infrastructure. BOS, DPW High
- 14.  Encourage HART to accommodate bikes on buses. HVCEO Medium
- 15.  Identify potential park-and-ride lots for bicyclists and carpoolers. HVCEO Medium

 **Protect Public Water Supplies**

Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
 1. Create local watershed protection regulations, including a water supply overlay zone.	PZC, BOS, PUC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
 2. Implement the recommendations of the “Adopting a Water Supply Protection Overlay Zone for Bethel.”	PZC, BOS, PUC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>

 **Ensure Adequate Sanitary Sewer Services**



Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
 1. Update the sewer service area limits.	PUC, DPW, BHD	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
 2. Consider requesting an adjustment to the inter-municipal agreement with Danbury to shift capacity from the northern area to the southern area.	PUC, BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
 3. Develop a system to monitor redevelopment and build-out within the sewer service area.	PUC, DPW	High	<input type="checkbox"/>

- ④ 4. Evaluate and upgrade, if necessary, the flow meters at the Payne Road Meter Chamber and the Berkshire Pump Station. PUC, DPW High
- ④ 5. Evaluate options for upgrading or replacing the Plumtrees Road Pump Station. PUC, DPW Medium

Manage Stormwater

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
④	1. Investigate the possibility of creating a stormwater utility.	BOS, DPW	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
④	2. Consider adopting a zero increase in runoff policy.	PZC, DPW	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
④	3. Revise the Zoning Regulations for compliance with the CT DEP Stormwater Management Plan and the CT Stormwater Manual, 2004 as amended.	PZC	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
④	4. Adopt the “Design and Construction Standards” manual for guidance on storm drainage improvements.	PZC, BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>

Protect Wired Services

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
	1. Continue to seek opportunities to place wired utilities underground.	BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Continue to work with utility companies who seek to improve the reliability of their systems by undertaking tree trimming projects.	BOS, DPW	High	<input type="checkbox"/>

Improve Wireless Services

	Action Step	Who	Priority	Done
④	1. Continue to ensure that the Zoning Regulations relative to telecommunication towers are consistent with State law and Federal legislation.	PZC	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>
④	2. Collaborate with local businesses and Wi-Fi providers to create a Wi-Fi Hot spot in Bethel’s Village Center.	EDC, CoC, BOS	High	<input type="checkbox"/>

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CONCLUSION



As stated in the Introduction, a Plan of Conservation and Development is a statement of a community's vision for its future. This vision, along with the goals, policies and tasks required to implement that vision, reflect the Community's assessment and desired physical layout over the next ten years. While the Plan is a strategic document and should be used as a guide for policy makers and implementers, the policies and recommendations of the Plan identify specific actions and strategies which have been determined to be in the best interests of the community. This document, if used regularly and referred to frequently, will increase the capacity of the Town of Bethel to develop in conformance with an accepted and compelling vision for the future.

The residents of Bethel have demonstrated their commitment to preserving the character and vitality of the community by their active participation in the preparation of this Plan. Strong volunteer efforts provide the Town with leadership, which will be necessary to accomplish many of the strategies and recommended tasks of this Plan. This leadership and the accompanying community spirit will serve the Town well as it implements this Plan of Conservation and Development.

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