

# Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, 2006-2015



**SWRPA**

*South Western Regional Planning Agency*

# **Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, 2006-2015**

*Adopted February 6, 2006*

South Western Regional Planning Agency  
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# South Western Regional Planning Agency

February 6, 2006

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The South Western Regional Planning Agency would also like to recognize the contributions of the following in the development of the *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, 2006-2015*:

- The Cities of Norwalk and Stamford, and the Towns of Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, Weston, Westport and Wilton, *for their ongoing support and financial assistance*
- Connecticut Office of Policy and Management, *for their financial assistance*
- Roy Fuchs, *for his contributions as a CPU member until November 2005*
- Daryl Scott, *for his contributions as a member of SWRPA's staff until July 2005*

# Table of Contents

<b>A Message from SWRPA’s Chairman</b> . . .	i	<b>Chapter 5 – Transportation, Infrastructure and Critical Facilities</b> . . . . .	25
<b>Foreword</b> . . . . .	iii	Transportation . . . . .	25
<b>Chapter 1 – Introduction</b> . . . . .	1	Energy . . . . .	26
Regional Planning . . . . .	1	Water Supply . . . . .	26
South Western Region Map . . . . .	3	Regional Highway System Map . . . . .	27
Centrality, the Plan’s Guiding Principle . . . . .	5	Sewers . . . . .	29
Basic Goals of the Plan . . . . .	6	Communications . . . . .	29
<b>Chapter 2 – Demographic Profile</b> . . . . .	7	Waste Management . . . . .	29
Population Density . . . . .	7	Hospitals . . . . .	29
Population by Age . . . . .	8	Recommendations . . . . .	30
Population by Race and Ethnicity . . . . .	8	<b>Chapter 6 – Housing</b> . . . . .	31
Population Density Map . . . . .	10	Non-Market Housing . . . . .	33
<b>Chapter 3 – Economic Profile</b> . . . . .	13	Affordable Housing . . . . .	33
Employment . . . . .	13	Other Housing Challenges . . . . .	34
Income . . . . .	15	Housing Resources . . . . .	35
Educational Attainment . . . . .	15	Recommendations . . . . .	36
Commercial Development . . . . .	15	<b>Chapter 7 – Natural Resources and Recreation</b> . . . . .	37
Cultural and Educational Resources . . . . .	16	Long Island Sound and Other Waterways . . . . .	37
Trends . . . . .	17	Aquifers . . . . .	38
<b>Chapter 4 – Land Use</b> . . . . .	19	Air Quality . . . . .	38
Historical Development Patterns . . . . .	19	Urban Wildlife Control . . . . .	38
Current Patterns of Development . . . . .	19	Open Space Map . . . . .	39
Trends . . . . .	20	Open Space . . . . .	41
Land-Use Classification and Growth Management Principles . . . . .	20	Recreation . . . . .	41
Land Use Policy Map . . . . .	21	Recommendations . . . . .	42
The Transportation-Land Use Connection . . . . .	23	<b>Chapter 8 – Emergency Planning and Disaster Relief</b> . . . . .	45
Recommendations . . . . .	23	The Model . . . . .	45
		Resources . . . . .	46
		The Role of SWRPA . . . . .	46
		Recommendations . . . . .	46

## Appendices

Public comments linked to online document at [www.swrpa.org](http://www.swrpa.org)



## A MESSAGE FROM SWRPA'S CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, 2006-2015*. This Plan represents the South Western Regional Planning Agency's vision for our region, which comprises the cities of Norwalk and Stamford and the towns of Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, Weston, Westport and Wilton. I am confident that this Plan is representative of the voice of our Region as great emphasis was placed on reaching out to the public, elected officials and municipal boards. The Plan was adopted by a unanimous vote of SWRPA's Board on February 6, 2006.

The Plan is the result of nearly three years of dedicated effort on the part of SWRPA's Committee for the Plan Update (CPU) – which oversaw the development of the Plan – and SWRPA's staff, which researched and wrote it. All meetings of the CPU were publicly noticed and announced on SWRPA's website, [www.swrpa.org](http://www.swrpa.org), which also contained a page dedicated to the preparation of the Plan. In the fall of 2005, members of the CPU and SWRPA's executive director presented the draft Plan to seven different municipal boards and commissions. During the 128-day public comment period, SWRPA received and carefully reviewed comments and suggestions from 30 different individuals, organizations and officials. All of these contributions are included in the appendix of the online version of this Plan.

While recognizing that home rule is a well-established principle in Connecticut, this Plan strives to identify those issues that are regional in nature and offer recommendations toward solutions requiring regional cooperation. The Plan is also an integral part of the forward planning process in Connecticut, where there is no county government, taking its place between the *Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut, 2005-2010* and our Region's eight municipal plans of conservation and development, which are necessarily focused on the specific needs of each city or town.

On behalf of SWRPA's Board and staff, I would like to express our thanks to all who participated in this planning process to help make this Plan a well-considered vision that will serve our Region in addressing the challenges that confront us. I also encourage you – the reader – to continue to be involved in ensuring the well being of the South Western Region!



Daniel A. Wilder, Chairman  
South Western Regional Planning Agency



## Foreword

The *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, 2006-2015* (“the Plan”) is the result of more than two-and-a-half years of effort on the part of the Board and staff of the South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA). The Plan presents SWRPA’s ten-year vision for Connecticut’s South Western Region, which includes the cities of Norwalk and Stamford and the towns of Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, Weston, Westport and Wilton.

In the summer of 2003, SWRPA created its ad hoc Committee for the Plan Update (CPU), which was charged with overseeing the development of the Plan. Early on in the process, the CPU recommended – and the Board accepted – the concept of “centrality” as the Plan’s guiding principle, which also guided SWRPA’s *1995 Regional Plan of Conservation and Development*. Centrality involves directing development to those places with the infrastructure necessary to support growth, while at the same time restricting development in rural or environmentally-sensitive areas. To facilitate centrality, SWRPA’s Board established the following “basic goals” of the Plan:

- Encourage municipal land-use planning that recognizes the need to direct development to those areas with the infrastructure, including transportation, to best accommodate it.
- Preserve the Region’s dwindling supply of permanent open space and, whenever possible, add to it through either outright acquisition of open space or through conservation easements.
- Improve and expand the Region’s public transportation system, including the New Haven Line Railroad, bus transit services and facilities that support transit use.
- Provide for the Region’s growing energy needs while protecting human health, natural resources and property values.
- Encourage the development of a broad range of housing alternatives, and whenever possible, direct new housing to locations that are served by transit.
- Encourage the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic structures.
- Foster continued cooperation among the Region’s first responders to develop coordinated plans to address emergencies that cannot be contained within a single municipality’s boundaries.
- Plan for an aging and increasingly diverse population.
- Protect the quality of life in all of the Region’s neighborhoods by ensuring that low-income areas or other communities of concern are not targeted for the location of undesirable land uses.
- Maintain the Region’s strong business climate by building on those assets that stimulated the Region’s business growth in the first place: viable transportation facilities, attractive communities, good schools and a well-educated and trained workforce.

The Plan contains the following eight chapters: Introduction; Demographic Profile; Economic Profile; Land Use; Transportation, Infrastructure and Critical Facilities; Housing; Natural Resources and Recreation; and Emergency Planning and Disaster Relief.







## Chapter 1 – Introduction

Connecticut's South Western Region ("the Region") comprises the Fairfield County municipalities of Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, Norwalk, Stamford, Weston, Westport and Wilton. The formal association of these eight cities and towns was inaugurated in 1962 with the formation of the South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA), one of Connecticut's 15 regional planning organizations.

The Region – which forms the panhandle of Connecticut – contains 225 square-miles of land area on the northwestern shore of Long Island Sound. The Region is bordered to the west and northwest by Westchester County in New York State, and the northeastern and eastern boundaries are the Greater Danbury and Greater Bridgeport regions, respectively. In 2000, the population of the South Western Region was nearly 354,000.

The Region is economically tied to the New York metropolitan area, of which it is an integral part. For example, more than 32,000 of the Region's residents worked in New York State in 2000, while nearly 27,000 New Yorkers (as well as nearly 2,000 residents of New Jersey) worked in the Region (Census 2000). The cultural and entertainment attractions of New York City – which are easily accessible via MTA Metro-North Railroad – are visited frequently by the Region's residents. New York City newspapers, radio and television stations serve the Region, and the overwhelming majority of its residents' loyalties are to New York sports teams.

Despite the Region's inclusion in the New York metropolitan area, it strongly embraces its New

England identity. The Region's land-use patterns are still influenced by its Colonial founders, who built their Congregational churches and established village greens in what remain today as the town centers. For two centuries the Region's primary thoroughfare was the *Boston Post Road*, which was designated as U.S. Route 1 early in the 20th Century. The Coastal Fairfield County Convention and Visitors Bureau emphasizes the Region's "New England charm" in its marketing campaigns, and local telephone directories contain a large number of listings with business names containing "New England."

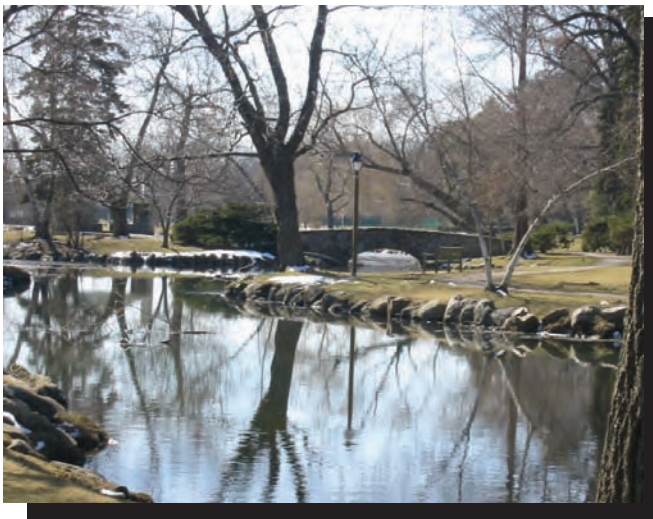
Of course, the Region has its own distinct character. It is one of the premier suburban corporate centers in America and is home to companies like Pitney Bowes, UBS, Xerox and many others. Over the past three decades, the Region's employment base shifted further from manufacturing to white collar industries with the growth in the number of national and international corporate facilities located in the Region. This – combined with its proximity to Manhattan, attractive communities, excellent schools and the cachet associated with living in Lower Fairfield County – has made the Region one of the most desirable and expensive suburbs in the country.

Unfortunately, this has also led to the middle class being essentially priced out of the housing market in the Region's six towns and, to a lesser extent, in its two cities, resulting in more of the Region's workers moving increasingly farther away to find affordable housing. This, in turn, requires people to commute longer distances, exacerbating the significant traffic congestion problem for which the Region has long been known. These issues, as well as others, are addressed in more depth later in this Plan.

### Regional Planning

Connecticut holds dear its long tradition of "home rule," including as it applies to planning and zoning. With few exceptions, the state's cities and towns are solely responsible for making land-use decisions within their boundaries and the overwhelming majority of the time they use this authority with great care. Of course, home rule, by its nature, does not lend itself to intermunicipal cooperation and oftentimes can work against it when local land-use decisions negatively impact an adjacent municipality, or the Region as a whole.

As a result of the abolition of county government in the 1950s, Connecticut created planning regions to address issues that extend beyond the boundaries of any single municipality and to identify potential



Binney Park, Greenwich



impacts to the Region’s municipalities that could result from the actions of another. According to its mission statement:

“SWRPA is dedicated to preserving and improving the quality of life and economic vitality in southwestern Connecticut. SWRPA focuses on issues of transportation, housing, environment and open space and provides a forum for local governments to foster communication and collaboration in addressing intertown issues and needs.”



Darien River

The Connecticut General Statutes (Section 8-35a) require the state’s regional planning organizations to “make a plan of development for its area of operation, showing its recommendations for the general use of the area. . .” The General Statutes go on to cite specific elements to be included in the plan, including land use, housing, transportation, public utilities and “such other matters as, in the opinion of the agency, will be beneficial to the area.”

*The Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, 2006-2015* (“the Plan”) fulfills SWRPA’s statutory responsibility to prepare a regional plan. More important, though, is that the Plan enunciates SWRPA’s vision for the Region. While it builds on the *1995 Regional Plan of Conservation and Development* (and, by extension, the 1974 and 1983 Regional Plans), it also takes into account the significant changes to the Region in the decade since the 1995 Plan was adopted. It also gives significant consideration to other plans prepared by SWRPA as well as those of other jurisdictions and organizations, including:

- The Region’s eight member municipalities
- The State of Connecticut
- The Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency
- The Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials
- Connecticut MetroPatterns*
- Westchester County in New York State

### SWRPA Planning Studies

In addition to the three previous regional plans of conservation and development, SWRPA and its sister agency – the South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (SWRMPO), which SWRPA staffs – have conducted numerous other studies that have influenced this Plan. For instance, this Plan defers to the transportation recommendations contained in the SWRMPO’s *Long-Range Transportation Plan, 2004-2030*, which itself was influenced by SWRPA’s 2003 *Congestion Mitigation Systems: Vision 2020* study. SWRPA’s emergency planning activities – including its *Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan (2005)* – provided the bulk of the information contained in Chapter 8. The *1996 Regional Housing Needs and Supply Assessment* provided valuable information in the preparation of the “Housing” chapter (Chapter 6).

### Municipal Plans

SWRPA’s eight towns are required by statute to update their municipal plans of conservation and development every 10 years. These plans provide valuable information on each town’s development and conservation goals, growth patterns and land-use policies, which are implemented through their zoning and subdivision regulations. The date of each municipality’s current plan appears below:

Darien (1995)*	Stamford (2002)
Greenwich (1998)	Weston (2000)
New Canaan (2003)	Westport (1997)
Norwalk (2005)	Wilton (1999)

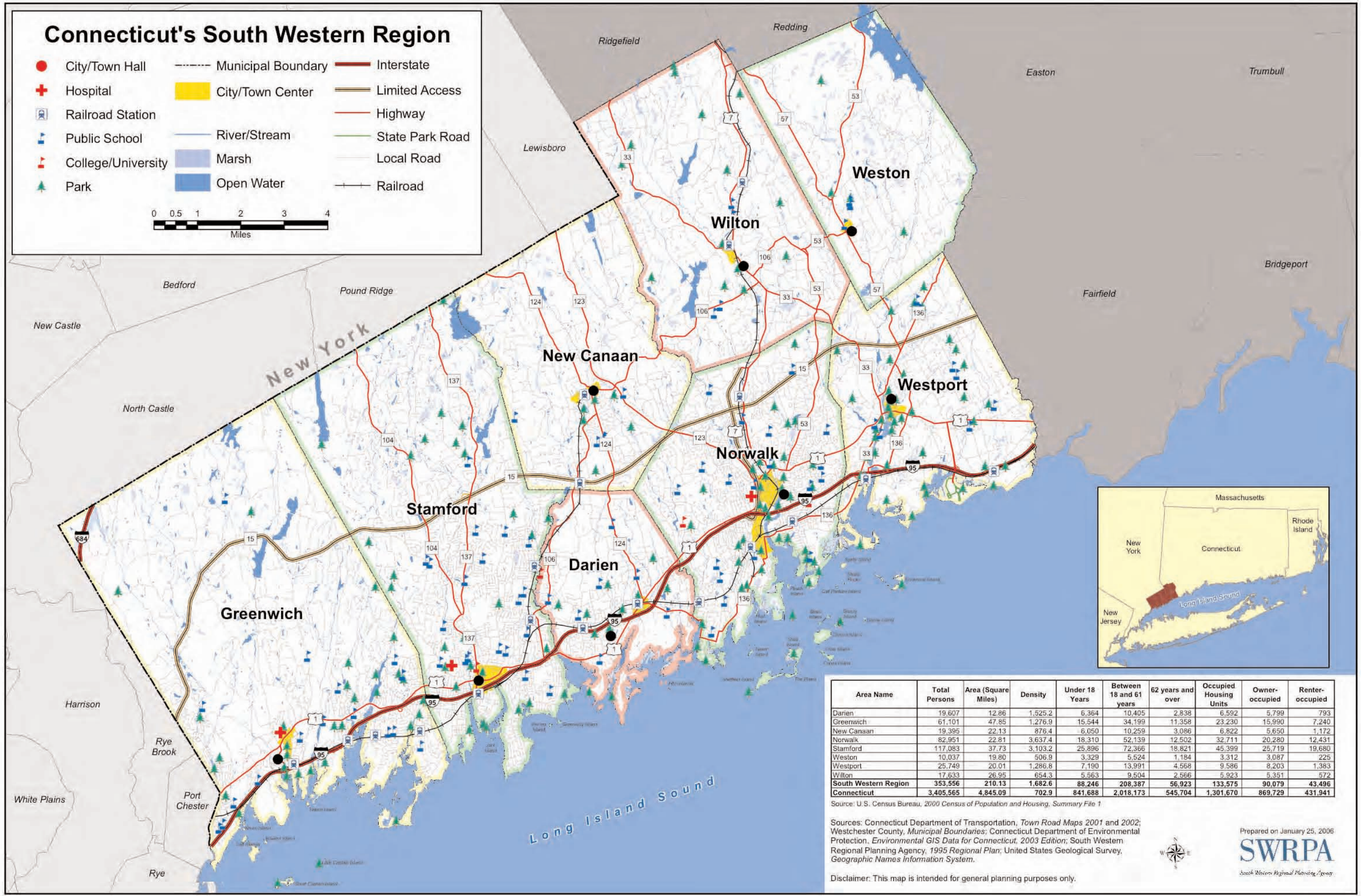
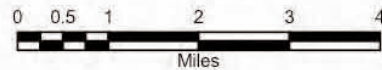
\*Update was underway in 2006.

### State of Connecticut

The *Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut, 2005-2010* (“the State Plan”) was approved by the General Assembly during its 2005 session. That plan contains six “growth management principles” and associated policy recommendations

# Connecticut's South Western Region

- City/Town Hall
- ⊕ Hospital
- 🚂 Railroad Station
- 🎓 Public School
- 🏛️ College/University
- 🌲 Park
- Municipal Boundary
- 🟡 City/Town Center
- 🌊 River/Stream
- 🟡 Marsh
- 🟦 Open Water
- 🛣️ Interstate
- 🛣️ Limited Access
- 🛣️ Highway
- 🛣️ State Park Road
- 🛣️ Local Road
- 🚂 Railroad



Area Name	Total Persons	Area (Square Miles)	Density	Under 18 Years	Between 18 and 61 years	62 years and over	Occupied Housing Units	Owner-occupied	Renter-occupied
Darien	19,607	12.86	1,525.2	6,364	10,405	2,838	6,592	5,799	793
Greenwich	61,101	47.85	1,276.9	15,544	34,199	11,358	23,230	15,990	7,240
New Canaan	19,395	22.13	876.4	6,050	10,259	3,086	6,822	5,650	1,172
Norwalk	82,951	22.81	3,637.4	18,310	52,139	12,502	32,711	20,280	12,431
Stamford	117,083	37.73	3,103.2	25,896	72,366	18,821	45,399	25,719	19,680
Weston	10,037	19.80	506.9	3,329	5,524	1,184	3,312	3,087	225
Westport	25,749	20.01	1,286.8	7,190	13,991	4,568	9,586	8,203	1,383
Wilton	17,633	26.95	654.3	5,563	9,504	2,566	5,923	5,351	572
<b>South Western Region</b>	<b>353,556</b>	<b>210.13</b>	<b>1,682.6</b>	<b>88,246</b>	<b>208,387</b>	<b>56,923</b>	<b>133,575</b>	<b>90,079</b>	<b>43,496</b>
<b>Connecticut</b>	<b>3,405,565</b>	<b>4,845.09</b>	<b>702.9</b>	<b>841,688</b>	<b>2,018,173</b>	<b>545,704</b>	<b>1,301,670</b>	<b>869,729</b>	<b>431,941</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 1

Sources: Connecticut Department of Transportation, *Town Road Maps 2001 and 2002*; Westchester County, *Municipal Boundaries*; Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, *Environmental GIS Data for Connecticut, 2003 Edition*; South Western Regional Planning Agency, *1995 Regional Plan*; United States Geological Survey, *Geographic Names Information System*.

Disclaimer: This map is intended for general planning purposes only.



Prepared on January 25, 2006  
**SWRPA**  
South Western Regional Planning Agency

**South Western Region Map**



intended to better integrate state planning functions across agency lines and to increase the value of the State Plan as an advisory tool for municipalities and regional planning organizations like SWRPA. In addition, Public Act 05-205, which adopted the State Plan, also added the requirement that Connecticut's 15 regional planning organizations update their plans every 10 years.

The *Blue Ribbon Commission Report on Property Taxes and Smart Growth* was released in 2003. The Blue Ribbon Commission recommended that the state increase its funding to local governments to reduce their reliance on property taxes to fund public services, notably education. It also recommended strengthening regional planning and more effective growth management tools.

The *State Transportation Strategy*, approved by the Connecticut Transportation Strategy Board in 2002, was also considered during the preparation of this Plan.

### The Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency

The Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency (GBRPA) was in the process of preparing its *Regional Conservation and Development Plan 2006* in December 2005; GBRPA's last regional plan was adopted by that agency in 1990. Central to the 2006 plan is the development of a regional growth management strategy to ensure that when land-use decisions are made they "have the effect of retaining the characteristics which make the [Greater Bridgeport] Region a good place to live in terms of economic opportunity, social conditions and environmental quality." The preamble to the draft 2006 plan also defines urban, suburban and rural "service areas," as well as "special areas for consideration," such as those with important cultural, historic and environmental features.

### The Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials

The Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials (HVCEO) adopted its regional *Growth Guide Map* in 1997 and was updating it in the summer of 2005. According to the narrative that accompanies the *Growth Guide Map*, its "fundamental purpose . . . is to reduce the negative effects of unchecked scattering of economic and housing development across the landscape" and to "conserve existing urban and intown [sic] areas and promote staged growth around them." To this end, the *Growth Guide Map* established six categories of development in the Region, with the "regional center" (Danbury) prioritized for the most intensive development and "semi-rural remote areas" and "small community centers" targeted primarily for conservation.

### Connecticut MetroPatterns

In 2003, the Office of Urban Affairs of the Archdiocese of Hartford released *Connecticut MetroPatterns*. This report – which focuses on how Connecticut's strong reliance on property taxes to fund municipal services results in competition between municipalities to grow their grand lists – compares the state's 169 municipalities based on many different socioeconomic factors.

### Westchester County

The County's land-use plan, *Patterns for Westchester*, was adopted in 1995. While covering an area much larger than the South Western Region, *Patterns* nonetheless shares this Region's emphasis on centrality to preserve Westchester's character.

### Centrality, the Plan's Guiding Principle

The principle of "centrality" – which guided the *1995 Regional Plan of Conservation and Development* ("the 1995 Plan") – involves focusing development in those parts of the Region with the infrastructure in place to best accommodate growth. By doing this, the Region's urban areas are strengthened, making them exciting, vibrant places to live and work. Centrality also preserves the Region's dwindling supply of open space by encouraging developers (oftentimes through incentives) to forego building on "green spaces" and concentrate instead on the Region's town centers. As stated so succinctly in the 1995 Plan, "centrality is the planning alternative to sprawl."

Another benefit of centralizing new development in the urbanized portions of the Region is that it provides the critical mass needed to make public transportation more viable for a greater number of people, including



Old Greenwich



residents of those areas and the people who work there. Given the fact that the Region must rely on an overtaxed and, in some cases, deteriorating transportation system, this is arguably the greatest potential benefit of centrality.

It is important to recognize that implementing centrality is reliant on the Region's municipalities, which establish or modify land-use regulations within their boundaries. These can include zoning city centers for the highest-density uses, encouraging office and residential uses around transit stations and discouraging the extension of sewer lines into low-density areas to reduce their development potential.

### Basic Goals of the Plan

In adopting the Plan, SWRPA seeks to achieve the following goals for the Region, which appear below (the order in which they have been placed is random and should not be inferred as being in priority order):

- ❑ Encourage municipal land-use planning that recognizes the need to direct development to those areas with the infrastructure, including transportation, to best accommodate it.
- ❑ Preserve the Region's dwindling supply of permanent open space and, whenever possible, add to it through either outright acquisition of open space or through conservation easements.
- ❑ Improve and expand the Region's public transportation system, including the New Haven Line Railroad, bus transit services and facilities that support transit use.
- ❑ Provide for the Region's growing energy needs while protecting human health, natural resources and property values.
- ❑ Encourage the development of a broad range of housing alternatives, and whenever possible, direct new housing to locations that are served by transit.
- ❑ Encourage the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic structures.

- ❑ Foster continued cooperation among the Region's first responders to develop coordinated plans to address emergencies that cannot be contained within a single municipality's boundaries.
- ❑ Plan for an aging and increasingly diverse population.
- ❑ Protect the quality of life in all of the Region's neighborhoods by ensuring that low-income areas or other communities of concern are not targeted for the location of undesirable land uses.
- ❑ Maintain the Region's strong business climate by building on those assets that stimulated the Region's business growth in the first place: viable transportation facilities, attractive communities, good schools and a well-educated and trained workforce.



**New Canaan Town Hall**



## Chapter 2 – Demographic Profile

Between 1990 and 2000, the population of the South Western Region increased by 7.2 percent, from 329,925 to 353,556. This rate was twice that of the State of Connecticut and marks the most rapid population growth since the decade 1960-1970. Between 2000 and 2004, the Region’s population continued to increase, growing by approximately 8,595 persons, or 2.43 percent. However, this rate of growth was slightly lower than that of the state as a whole during that period (see Table 2.1).

In 2000, Stamford, Norwalk and Greenwich were ranked respectively as the fourth, sixth and tenth most populous municipalities in the state. As indicated in Table 2.2, between 1990 and 2000, each of these municipalities experienced population growth, which is noteworthy considering that Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven and Waterbury all experienced population loss during the same period. Altogether, Stamford, Norwalk and Greenwich accounted for 69 percent of the Region’s population growth during the 1990s. Although less dramatic, each of the other five towns also experienced growth during the 1990s, ranging from Westport’s 5.5 percent growth rate to Weston’s 16.1 percent rate. In fact, population growth during the 1990s was the most rapid since the decade of the 1960s. Population estimates generated in 2004 indicate that the Region’s municipalities are continuing to experience population growth, ranging from approximately 1.4 percent in Greenwich to 2.6 percent in Stamford.

**Table 2.1 – Population Change, 1960-2004**

Year	South Western Region		Connecticut	
	Total Population	Percent Change	Total Population	Percent Change
2004	362,151	2.43%	3,503,604	2.88%
2000	353,556	7.2%	3,405,565	3.6%
1990	329,935	1.3%	3,287,116	5.8%
1980	325,546	-2.5%	3,107,576	2.5%
1970	333,935	19.6%	3,032,217	19.6%
1960	279,204	--	2,535,234	--

Note: The 1960-2000 population figures are actual counts while the 2004 figures are population estimates.  
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 1960-2000; 7/1/2003 Sub-County Estimates File for Internet Display

### Population Density

In 2000, the Region had a population density of 1,683 persons per square mile. Norwalk and Stamford were the most densely populated communities in the Region, with 3,637 and 3,103 persons per square mile, respectively, while Weston was the least densely populated town with 507 persons per square mile.

The Region’s population is generally concentrated south of the Merritt Parkway in Stamford and Norwalk, and along the Route 1/I-95 corridor in the coastal

**Table 2.2 – Population by Municipality, 1960 to 2004**

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2004	Percent Change 1960 to 2004
<b>Darien</b>	18,437	20,336	18,892	18,196	19,607	20,508	11%
<b>Greenwich</b>	53,793	59,755	59,578	58,441	61,101	62,240	16%
<b>New Canaan</b>	13,466	17,451	17,931	17,864	19,395	19,965	48%
<b>Norwalk</b>	67,775	79,288	77,767	78,331	82,951	84,401	25%
<b>Stamford</b>	92,713	108,798	102,453	108,056	117,083	120,226	30%
<b>Weston</b>	4,039	7,417	8,284	8,648	10,037	10,278	154%
<b>Westport</b>	20,955	27,318	25,290	24,410	25,749	26,544	27%
<b>Wilton</b>	8,026	13,572	15,351	15,989	17,633	17,989	124%
<b>South Western Region</b>	279,204	333,935	325,546	329,935	353,556	362,151	30%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing. Note: the 1960-2000 figures represent population counts and the 2004 figures represent population estimates





**Table 2.3 – Population Density by Municipality, Region and State, 1960-2004**

Area Name	Area (Sq. Mi.)	Persons Per Square Mile					
		2004	2000	1990	1980	1970	1960
Darien	12.9	1,590	1,525.2	1,415.5	1,469.6	1,582.0	1,434.2
Greenwich	47.9	1,299	1,276.9	1,221.3	1,245.1	1,248.8	1,124.2
New Canaan	22.1	903	876.4	807.2	810.3	788.6	608.5
Norwalk	22.8	3,702	3,637.4	3,434.8	3,410.1	3,476.8	2,971.9
Stamford	37.7	3,189	3,103.2	2,863.9	2,715.4	2,883.6	2,457.3
Weston	19.8	519	506.9	436.8	418.4	374.6	204.0
Westport	20.0	1,327	1,286.8	1,219.9	1,263.9	1,365.2	1,047.2
Wilton	27.3	666	654.3	593.3	569.6	503.6	297.8
Region	210.1	1,724	1,682.6	1,570.1	1,549.3	1,589.2	1,328.7
Connecticut	4,845.1	723	702.9	678.4	641.4	625.8	523.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 1; 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 1

communities. Notable exceptions include the New Canaan and Wilton town centers and a few other areas along state and federal highways in Stamford and Norwalk. The map on the following page illustrates the Region’s population density in 2000.

**Population by Age**

While the total population of the Region increased by 7.2 percent between 1990 and 2000, there were some significant changes among the various age cohorts within the population. Chief among these was the loss of 17,199 persons between the ages of 18 and 34 (inclusive). Because this cohort provides virtually all entry-level and early-career workers, the significant flight from the Region of these young adults will only serve to exacerbate the Region’s labor shortage. The number of children (17 years of age and younger) increased by 19,128, or nearly 28 percent. This growth will impact the need for schools and day care, although it will likely be offset to some degree due to the decrease in the population of the Region’s young adults. Also, the Region’s population of persons 50 and older increased by 7,879, although that cohort’s share of the total population was essentially unchanged from 1990 to 2000, growing from 30 percent of the total population in 1990 to 30.2 percent in 2000. Still, the absolute growth in the number of seniors and those approaching retirement age will also necessitate additional services to meet the needs of this group.

**Population by Race and Ethnicity**

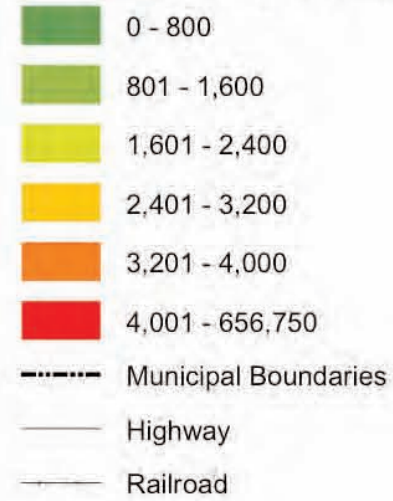
Between 1990 and 2000, the Region became more racially and ethnically diverse. Although changes to the Census 2000 questionnaire that allowed respondents to select more than one racial group to describe themselves may account for some of the changes in the Hispanic or Latino population between 1990 and 2000, the 16,336 population increase in this ethnic group (74.4 percent of the Region’s total growth) far exceeds that which could be expected from the changes to the questionnaire alone. When compared to the 1.7 percent growth rate in the Region’s White population, and the 2.8 percent decrease in Black population, the growth among Hispanics/Latinos appears even more dramatic. Indeed, in the 1990s, Hispanics/Latinos overtook Blacks to become the largest minority group in the Region, although Blacks continue to be the Region’s largest racial minority. All population projections indicate continued strong growth in the Region’s Hispanic/Latino community.

In 2000, Norwalk, Greenwich and Stamford accounted for 93.8 percent of the Region’s minority racial population groups, and 95.2 percent of the Hispanic/Latino population. On the other hand, the White population in Darien, New Canaan, Weston, Westport and Wilton was at least 95 percent of the total population in those towns.

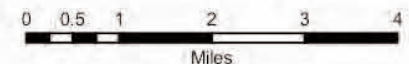
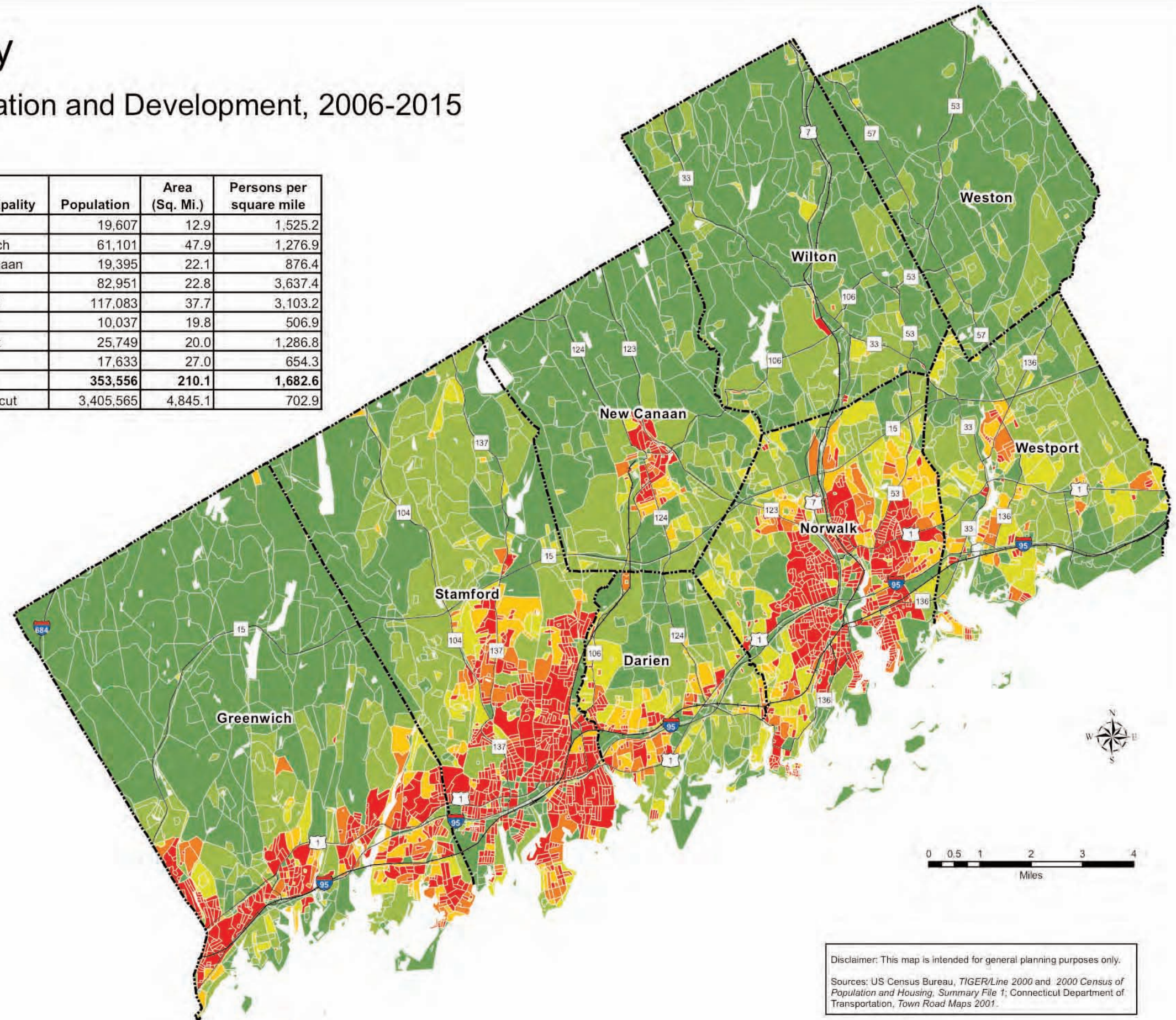
# Population Density

## Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, 2006-2015

### Persons per square mile



Municipality	Population	Area (Sq. Mi.)	Persons per square mile
Darien	19,607	12.9	1,525.2
Greenwich	61,101	47.9	1,276.9
New Canaan	19,395	22.1	876.4
Norwalk	82,951	22.8	3,637.4
Stamford	117,083	37.7	3,103.2
Weston	10,037	19.8	506.9
Westport	25,749	20.0	1,286.8
Wilton	17,633	27.0	654.3
<b>Region</b>	<b>353,556</b>	<b>210.1</b>	<b>1,682.6</b>
Connecticut	3,405,565	4,845.1	702.9



Prepared on January 26, 2006

**SWRPA**

South Western Regional Planning Agency

Disclaimer: This map is intended for general planning purposes only.  
 Sources: US Census Bureau, TIGER/Line 2000 and 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 1; Connecticut Department of Transportation, Town Road Maps 2001.

**Population Density Map**


**Table 2.4 – Population by Age, 1990-2000**

Age Cohort	2000		1990		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Region</b>						
Under 5 years	25,782	7.3%	21,610	6.5%	4,172	19.3%
5 to 17	62,464	17.7%	47,508	14.4%	14,956	31.5%
18 to 34	68,642	19.4%	85,841	26.0%	-17,199	-20.0%
35 to 49	89,884	25.4%	76,071	23.1%	13,813	18.2%
50 to 64	58,239	16.5%	54,796	16.6%	3,443	6.3%
65 years and over	48,545	13.7%	44,109	13.4%	4,436	10.1%
<b>Total (all ages)</b>	<b>353,556</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>329,935</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>23,621</b>	<b>7.2%</b>
<b>Connecticut</b>						
Under 5 years	223,344	6.6%	228,356	6.9%	-5,012	-2.2%
5 to 17	618,344	18.2%	521,225	15.9%	97,119	18.6%
18 to 34	723,225	21.2%	929,315	28.3%	-206,090	-22.2%
35 to 49	833,803	24.5%	711,235	21.6%	122,568	17.2%
50 to 64	536,666	15.8%	451,078	13.7%	85,588	19.0%
65 years and over	470,183	13.8%	445,907	13.6%	24,276	5.4%
<b>Total (all ages)</b>	<b>3,405,565</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>3,287,116</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>118,449</b>	<b>3.6%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 1; 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 1.

**Table 2.5 – Population by Race and Ethnicity, 2000**

	Population 2000	White		Black or African American		Asian or Pacific Islander		Some other race		Two or more races		Hispanic or Latino (any race)	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Darien	19,607	18,816	96.0%	89	0.5%	479	2.4%	66	0.3%	157	0.8%	429	2.2%
Greenwich	61,101	55,001	90.0%	1,017	1.7%	3,181	5.2%	944	1.5%	958	1.6%	3,846	6.3%
New Canaan	19,395	18,477	95.3%	201	1.0%	446	2.3%	81	0.4%	190	1.0%	338	1.7%
Norwalk	82,951	61,339	73.9%	12,663	15.3%	2,739	3.3%	3,765	4.5%	2,445	2.9%	12,966	15.6%
Stamford	117,083	81,718	69.8%	18,019	15.4%	5,902	5.0%	7,851	6.7%	3,593	3.1%	19,635	16.8%
Weston	10,037	9,610	95.7%	88	0.9%	205	2.0%	36	0.4%	98	1.0%	206	2.1%
Westport	25,749	24,503	95.2%	292	1.1%	630	2.4%	115	0.4%	209	0.8%	602	2.3%
Wilton	17,633	16,848	95.5%	106	0.6%	476	2.7%	63	0.4%	140	0.8%	269	1.5%
Region	353,556	286,312	81.0%	32,475	9.2%	14,058	4.0%	12,921	3.7%	7,790	2.2%	38,291	10.8%
Connecticut	3,405,565	2,780,355	81.6%	309,843	9.1%	83,679	2.5%	156,840	4.6%	74,848	2.2%	320,323	9.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 1



**Table 2.6 – Change in Population by Race and Ethnicity, South Western Region, 1990-2000**

	Region				Connecticut			
	2000	1990	Change <sup>1</sup>		2000	1990	Change <sup>1</sup>	
			Number	Percent			Number	Percent
Total Population	353,556	329,935	23,621	7.2%	3,405,565	3,287,116	118,449	3.6%
White	286,312	281,586	4,726	1.7%	2,780,355	2,859,353	-78,998	-2.8%
Black or African American	32,475	33,411	-936	-2.8%	309,843	274,269	35,574	13.0%
Asian or Pacific Islander	14,058	7,614	6,444	84.6%	83,679	50,698	32,981	65.1%
Some other race	12,921	7,324	5,597	76.4%	156,840	102,796	54,044	52.6%
Two or more races	7,790	n/a	n/a	n/a	74,848	n/a	n/a	n/a
Hispanic or Latino (any race)	38,291	21,955	16,336	74.4%	320,323	213,116	107,207	50.3%

<sup>1</sup>Changes in the 1990 and 2000 Census questionnaires account for some of the changes in the 1990 and 2000 statistics.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 1; 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 1.



## Chapter 3 – Economic Profile

The South Western Region can fairly be called the “economic engine” of Connecticut. The Region’s economy is built on a foundation of large international corporations, exceptional regional and local retail centers, and a strong professional services sector. Although the Region contains only about 10 percent of the state’s population, it contributed 30 percent of the real estate conveyance tax revenue collected by the state in 2003, and 22.5 percent of state income tax revenue.

**Table 3.1 – Top Five Grand List Contributors, 2003**

Company	Location	Grand List Amount
Swiss Bank Corporation/UBS	Stamford	\$152,458,372
EOP Stamford Atlantic Forum	Stamford	\$136,459,707
Merritt 7 Venture LLC	Norwalk	\$118,063,820
Connecticut Light & Power Co.	Stamford	\$110,948,032
Ten & Twenty Westport II, LLC	Wilton	\$ 94,365,970

Source: CERC Town Profiles, 2005 (<http://www.cerc.com/detpages/resources374.html>)

To a large degree, the Region owes its strong economy to its proximity to New York City. During the various fiscal crises of the 1970s and 80s, many large companies chose to leave New York and build corporate facilities in the Region, and especially Stamford. These companies were drawn to the Region by a number of factors, including lower real estate costs, good accessibility, a well-educated workforce and Connecticut’s relatively stable fiscal climate. The fact that the Region was also home to many of these companies’ top executives very likely factored into the decision to relocate here.

The corporate outflow from New York abated during the economic boom of the late 1990s, and in fact, Manhattan reaffirmed its status as the nation’s economic capital. Just as the Region had benefited from New York’s economic and social decline in the previous decades, so it did as a result of the City’s ascension in the latter half of the 1990s. Dramatic growth in property values and, to a lesser extent, income levels, occurred through the last decade and into the new millennium. Although this growth was stemmed as a result of the recession that began in

2000, the Region generally fared well, especially when compared to other parts of the state. Indeed, as of 2005, property values in the Region continued their remarkable growth.

The Region’s economic strength, however, brings with it its own set of concerns. The large number of commuters into the Region – combined with a lack of investment in the regional transportation network – has resulted in chronic traffic congestion. This problem is exacerbated by the Region’s extraordinarily high real estate prices, which have essentially priced out middle-class and even upper middle-class families, causing them to live farther and farther from their jobs as they seek affordable housing outside the Region. While salaries in the Region continue to be among the highest in the U.S., they have not kept pace with real estate prices. As commuting distances grow, some workers will reach a tipping point at which they will choose to accept less money to work closer to home, making it more expensive for the Region’s employers to find qualified employees. Ultimately, this could result in an out-migration of employers to other parts of Connecticut, if not out of the state altogether. Whether the Region’s other economic strengths and its quality of life are enough to offset these negatives remains to be seen.



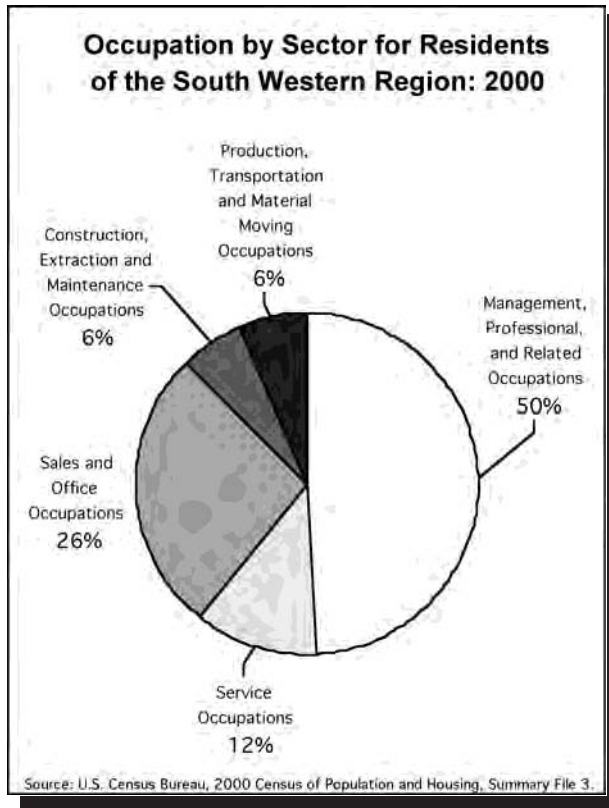
**UBS, Stamford**

### Employment

According to Census 2000, 88 percent of the Region’s residents worked in service and business oriented professions, as indicated in the pie chart. According to BLS data, nearly 92 percent of the Region’s jobs were in the service sector in 2004. In fact, the Region employs a higher percentage of people in service-sector professions than either the



**Figure 3.1**



state or nation, where the figure for each is approximately 84 percent. Financial services represent a significant portion of the Region’s service sector, also exceeding the State and national averages.

Historically, employment in the major sectors has tracked with national averages. When the nation experienced increases in certain employment sectors, the Region tended to as well. An exception to this is the goods-producing sector, which experienced a loss of 7,200 jobs, or roughly 31 percent of that sector, between 1994 and 2004. Conversely, the financial services sector increased by 7,300 jobs (36 percent) during that same period. Interestingly, this pattern does not correspond with that of the state or nation but appears to be a reflection of the Region’s strong niche in this sector.

The increase in financial sector employment was likely a factor in the development of certain patterns in the demographics of the Region’s workers. Workers in business and financial occupations had an average annual income of \$66,030 in 2000, and by 2003, that figure had risen to \$84,400, a 29 percent increase in that three-year period. It is important to recognize that the Census data does not include commissions or bonuses in its calculation of average incomes, which in many cases in the financial services sector are actually larger than base salaries. For this reason, actual

**Table 3.2 – Employment Statistics: 1994, 2004 and Change from 1994-2004**

**Non-Farm Employment**

	Goods-Producing Employment			Service-Producing Employment			
	Total Number Employed	Number Employed	Percent of Non-Farm Employment	Number Employed	Percent of Non-Farm Employment	Financial Activities Number Employed	Percent of Non-Farm Employment
<b>1994, Annual Average</b>							
South Western Region	185,100	23,300	12.6%	161,700	87.4%	20,200	10.9%
Connecticut	1,543,700	303,300	19.6%	1,240,300	80.3%	135,600	8.8%
National	114,291,000	22,774,000	19.9%	91,517,000	80.1%	6,867,000	6.0%
<b>2004, Annual Average</b>							
South Western Region	196,020	16,050	8.2%	179,970	91.8%	27,500	14.0%
Connecticut	1,642,670	258,120	15.7%	1,384,550	84.3%	143,200	8.7%
National	131,287,000	21,889,000	16.7%	109,398,000	83.3%	8,048,000	6.1%
<b>Change in Employment from 1994-2004</b>							
	Percent Change in Number Employed	Change in Number Employed	Percent Change in Number Employed	Change in Number Employed	Percent Change in Number Employed	Change in Number Employed	Percent Change in Number Employed
South Western Region	5.9%	-7200	-30.9%	18,300	11.3%	7,300	36.1%
Connecticut	6.4%	-45200	-14.9%	144,300	11.6%	7,600	5.6%
National	14.9%	-885000	-3.9%	17,881,000	19.5%	1,181,000	17.2%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics, <http://www.bls.gov/sae/home.htm#dataae>

Note: The data are not seasonally adjusted. December 2004 data is preliminary

**Table 3.3 – Median Family Income, Adjusted for Inflation: 1990 and 2000**

	1990		2000	Percent Change 1990-2000	
	Median Family Income	Income Adjusted for Inflation (1990 Income in 2000 dollars)	Median Family Income (in 2000 dollars)	Percent Change in Family Income	Percent Change Adjusted for Inflation
<b>Darien</b>	\$ 101,583	133,838	\$ 173,777	71.1%	29.8%
<b>Greenwich</b>	\$ 80,558	106,137	\$ 122,719	52.3%	15.6%
<b>New Canaan</b>	\$ 109,512	144,284	\$ 175,331	60.1%	21.5%
<b>Norwalk</b>	\$ 55,269	72,818	\$ 68,219	23.4%	-6.3%
<b>Stamford</b>	\$ 57,360	75,573	\$ 69,337	20.9%	-8.3%
<b>Weston</b>	\$ 115,779	152,541	\$ 162,032	39.9%	6.2%
<b>Westport</b>	\$ 95,791	126,207	\$ 152,894	59.6%	21.1%
<b>Wilton</b>	\$ 101,156	133,275	\$ 158,415	56.6%	18.9%
<b>South Western Region</b>	\$ 69,658	91,776	\$ 94,228	35.3%	2.7%
<b>Fairfield County</b>	\$ 57,990	76,403	\$ 77,690	34.0%	1.7%
<b>Connecticut</b>	\$ 49,199	64,821	\$ 65,521	33.2%	1.1%
<b>National</b>	\$ 35,225	46,410	\$ 50,046	42.1%	7.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, STF-3; 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 3; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index Inflation Information (<http://www.bls.gov/cpi/home.htm>).

incomes for this sector are higher than data suggest. Those working in office and administrative support occupations also saw their incomes increase during this period, from an average of \$32,960 in 2000 to \$35,950 in 2003, an increase of nine percent.

## Income

The 2000 regional median family income of \$94,228 was nearly twice the national average and also significantly exceeded the averages of Fairfield County and the state. In the Region's six towns, median family income grew by between 39.9 percent (in Weston) and 71.1 percent (in Darien) from 1990 to 2000. Median family income in 2000 in the Region's six towns ranged from \$122,719 in Greenwich to \$175,331 in New Canaan. Even when adjusted for inflation, median family incomes in the towns still grew dramatically between 1990 and 2000. Income growth in the cities of Norwalk and Stamford was more modest, with growth rates of 23.4 percent and 20.9 percent, respectively. However, median family incomes in Norwalk and Stamford actually *decreased* during the 1990s when adjusted for inflation.

A powerful indicator of the Region's income levels is the fact that, in 2003, more than 22 percent of the state's income tax revenue came from the Region,

which contains only about 10 percent of the state's population (Department of Revenue Services, *2002-2003 Annual Report*).

## Educational Attainment

Educational attainment in the Region exceeds both the state and national averages. Of those residents age 25 and older, 49.4 percent held at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 31.4 percent of Connecticut residents and 24.4 percent of all American adults. Additionally, almost 22 percent of the Region's adult residents held a graduate or professional degree, compared to the state and national averages of 13.3 percent and 8.9 percent, respectively.

## Commercial Development

Commercial activity has historically occurred in a network of town and city centers throughout the Region, which were established more than 300 years ago. These historic centers – from Stamford's highly urbanized downtown to Weston's small commercial center – are still clearly defined and remain viable despite competition from outlying shopping centers, "big box" stores and strip developments. In fact, contrary to the national norm, the Region's largest





**The Region's high income levels attract high-end retailers like these in Westport.**

mall – the Stamford Town Center – is located in the midst of the most heavily urbanized part of the Region. The Region's hierarchy of established commercial centers benefits its residents by providing easy access to goods and services. Like the 1995 Plan, this Plan encourages further development in these established centers at a degree of intensity appropriate to the character of each individual community.

## **Cultural and Educational Resources**

### *Tourism*

Tourism is an important part of the Region's economy. In 2003, tourism brought approximately \$1-billion into Fairfield County's economy and employed as many as 20,000 people. In fact, the promotion of tourism within the Region was listed as a strategy in the 1995 Plan. The Coastal Fairfield County Convention and Visitors Bureau is charged with promoting tourism in the Region and five other municipalities. The Visitors Bureau works with the Connecticut Office of Tourism to both support tourism and track tourist volume and revenues.

### *Museums and Historic Landmarks*

The Region is home to many museums and historic sites that showcase its culture, history and environmental beauty. Among the best known of these facilities are the Bruce Museum of Arts and Sciences in Greenwich, the Stamford Museum and Nature Center, The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk and the Weir Farm National Historic Site in Wilton, the only National Park Service site in Connecticut.

### *Theater and the Performing Arts*

Perhaps because the Region is home to a great many people in the entertainment industry, there are several outstanding theatrical venues, some with international reputations. A case in point is the Westport Country Playhouse, a haven for stars of stage and screen since the 1930s. Other important venues include the Stamford Center for the Arts, the Norwalk Concert Hall and the Wilton Playhouse. In addition, the Region's municipalities have robust community theater offerings.

### *Communications*

The Region enjoys extensive media coverage. The Advocate, Greenwich Time and The Hour are the principal daily newspapers covering the Region, although many residents also read New York City dailies. The Region's towns are also served by numerous weekly newspapers. Households in the Region are served by network television affiliates in Connecticut, New York or both. Many locally-based AM and FM radio stations serve the Region, as do stations in New York City, Westchester County, Long Island and other parts of Connecticut. The Region's cellular network is well developed with coverage virtually throughout. Home and mobile Internet access is also common, with numerous public Internet sites available throughout the Region.

### *Libraries*

Each municipality in the Region is served by a public library or library system offering public Internet access, youth activities, classes and presentations, and other services. They also participate in an inter-library loan program. Additionally, holders of local library cards may use other municipal libraries in the state as well as certain academic libraries.

### *Educational Facilities*

The Region is home to some of the finest public and private elementary and secondary schools in the nation. The availability of high-quality schools encourages families to stay in the Region and attracts new families to it. Indeed, between 1990 and 2000, the number of school-aged children in the Region increased by 17.7 percent (Census 2000), which has put pressure on local school districts, and their taxpayers, to expand existing schools or build new ones.

Higher and continuing education is offered at the University of Connecticut's Stamford Campus, Norwalk Community College and through satellite programs offered by the University of Bridgeport, the



**Norwalk Community College**

University of New Haven and Sacred Heart University. Many residents also avail themselves of educational offerings in New York and other parts of Connecticut.

#### *New York City*

As mentioned numerous times in this Plan, the Region's proximity to New York City is a great benefit to its residents. One of the most tangible of these benefits is the availability of the City's unparalleled cultural attractions, including Broadway, museums, galleries, professional sports, historical sites, ethnic neighborhoods and restaurants. Residents of the Region are frequent visitors to New York's attractions.

## **Trends**

The Region is not insulated from downturns in the national and global economies, although it has weathered these events better than many other regions. While the Region's manufacturing sector has declined, its lucrative corporate and financial sectors have expanded, bringing with it rising income levels and the concomitant strengthening of the Region's retail sector.

However, as stated previously, the Region's stature as one of the country's premier suburban corporate centers is potentially vulnerable due to the Region's extremely high land and rent costs; its aging transportation infrastructure and the resulting traffic congestion that currently chokes the regional transportation network, and which is projected to get worse; and the need to pay workers salaries that are very high relative to those paid in other parts of the state and the nation. Furthermore, currently unforeseen state and federal tax policies and other regulations could also negatively impact the Region's appeal as a place to do business.





## Chapter 4 – Land Use

### Historical Development Patterns

Navigable rivers, miles of coastline and fertile lands influenced both the early growth of the Region's economy and its settlement patterns. Like many other cities and towns in New England, the Region's early economy was rooted in agriculture and the design of local communities supported its growth.

The green served as the geographic center of town and provided a central gathering point for civic events, recreation and commerce. Churches developed around the green, becoming the social and cultural centers of the community. At a time when political participation was limited to "freemen" (i.e., White males), the church also served as the town hall.

Local streets radiated out from the green and created blocks in which housing and local shops and services were clustered. Outside the grid created by these local streets were grazing fields, farms and large estates or "long lots."



Norfield Church, Weston

Over time, ports and commercial hubs developed along on the shores of navigable rivers and created opportunities for the export of agricultural goods and the import of other critical commodities. Later, the rivers served as a source for powering manufacturing enterprises and aided the transport of raw materials and finished goods into and out of the Region. The construction of railroad lines and roadways connecting the Region's ports with inland settlements further fueled the growth of southwestern Connecticut.

This development pattern dominated until World War II, when the needs of the military led to migrations to the manufacturing cities. After the war, returning veterans created a market for new housing and cars,

which in turn fostered a significant increase in the mass production of both. These advances, along with the construction of the Connecticut Turnpike (I-95) and the Interstate Highway System, resulted in a shift away from the historical emphasis on centralized development and ushered in the dawn of the suburb.

The suburban development patterns that emerged in the 1950s continue today. The characteristics of this development include:

- Separation of residential from industrial and commercial land uses
- Growing demand for housing, primarily for single-family detached homes outside of urban centers
- Concentration of commercial uses along major roadways, often near limited-access highways;
- A disconnected street pattern in residential areas with a high number of non-through streets and cul-de-sacs; and
- Increased reliance on automobiles.

The result of this is a community that extends both physically and economically from its core. Urban and town centers – although still prominent – no longer serve as the sole centers of social, economic and cultural activity. Walking and cycling have become less viable modes of travel due to distance and safety concerns. The use of the automobile for almost all trips has become, in most cases, a necessity. Evidence of these settlement patterns can be seen clearly in all of the Region's cities and towns.

### Current Patterns of Development

Each of the Region's cities and towns has its own unique character and, in most cases, blends elements of town or city center development with suburban-style development. Several of the Region's towns also have retained elements of a rural landscape, most notably Weston.

Generally speaking, current patterns of development in the Region are a mix of three forms:

*Permit and market-driven development.* This pattern occurs when local zoning regulations are incompatible with municipal plans of conservation and development. Permits are granted where allowed by regulation and to satisfy market demand, but without broader local or regional coordination or incentives to encourage achievement of stated development goals



**Main Street, Westport**

*Development of transportation corridors.* Transportation corridors are defined as both roadway and transit corridors. These corridors are characterized by heavy development, either along an entire corridor or at particular intersections. Some mixing of land uses is present, although commercial development dominates. While many transportation corridors have sufficient destination densities to support mass transit, the automobile remains the most popular mode of travel.

*Town or city centers.* This pattern is characterized by clusters of dense, mixed use development, sometimes adjacent to a transit hub. The clustering of origins, destinations and complementary land uses – combined with the proximity of transit hubs – creates an environment where reliance on the automobile for daily personal and business travel is significantly reduced.

## Trends

A scarcity of available land, high development costs, traffic congestion, an interest in preserving community character, and heightened awareness of the economic, social and environmental costs associated with sprawling or inconsistent development patterns have led to the following trends:

- ❑ Increased support for implementation of “smart growth” policies at the local level. Examples include adaptive reuse of historic and commercial properties, infill development in urban centers, redevelopment of brownfields and transit-oriented development.
- ❑ Renewed interest in revitalizing neighborhoods through initiatives such as the “Connecticut Main Street Program” and village district designations.

- ❑ A surge in the development of new housing, including development of residential rental complexes in urban centers, substantial renovation of existing older and tract homes, and the demolition of existing, smaller homes on large lots to make way for new and much larger homes, the so-called “McMansions.”
- ❑ Increased demand for office space and housing located adjacent to or within walking distance of transit facilities and, in particular, commuter rail.
- ❑ An out-migration of back office and other business operations from the Region to the less expensive Bridgeport, New Haven and Waterbury areas, which also feature significantly lower housing prices for these businesses’ employees.
- ❑ A growing emphasis on the acquisition of open space either for passive use or to accommodate recreational needs resulting from increased population density and sprawl.

## Land-Use Classifications and Growth Management Principles

In 2005, the General Assembly approved the *Conservation and Development Policies Plan, 2005-2010*. One of the guiding principles of the State Plan is the integration of local, regional and statewide planning. In preparing *The Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, 2006-2015*, SWRPA gave consideration to the following growth management principles identified in the State Plan:

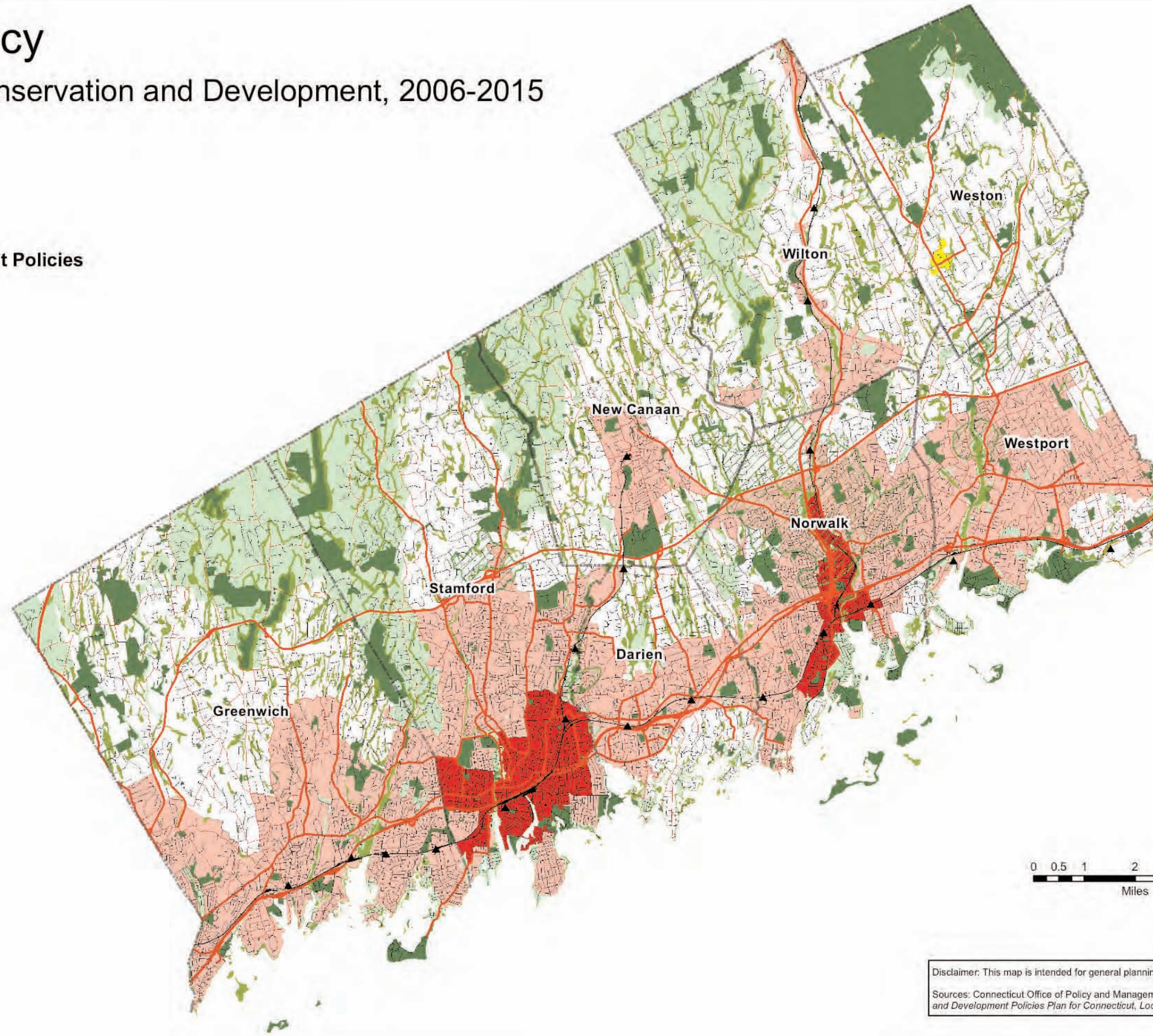
- ❑ Redevelop and revitalize regional centers and areas with existing or currently planned physical infrastructure.
- ❑ Expand housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs.
- ❑ Concentrate development around transportation nodes and along major transportation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

# Land Use Policy

## Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, 2006-2015

### Conservation and Development Policies

-  Neighborhood Conservation
-  Regional Center
-  Rural Community Center
-  Existing Preserved Open Space
-  Preservation Area
-  Conservation Area
-  Rural Land
-  Aquifer Protection Area
-  Historic District
-  Municipal Boundary
-  Primary Highway
-  Secondary Highway
-  Local Road
-  Railroad
-  Rail Station



Prepared on January 26, 2006

**SWRPA**  
South Western Regional Planning Agency

Disclaimer: This map is intended for general planning purposes only.  
Sources: Connecticut Office of Policy and Management, *Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut, Locational Guide Map*

**Land Use Policy Map**



## The Transportation-Land Use Connection

In the past two decades planners have come to recognize and accept the inextricable connection between land use and transportation. Indeed, it was with this recognition that SWRPA's *Congestion Mitigation Systems: Vision 2020* plan (2003) was developed. The Vision 2020 Plan recommended numerous land-use practices intended to mitigate traffic congestion by directing housing and business development to those areas that are well served by transit or that are within walking or biking distance of employment centers. Of course, because of Connecticut's long history of home rule, these practices must be implemented at the local level as part of a municipality's plan of conservation and development, zoning regulations, and/or other plans intended to better manage growth or improve the local transportation-land use connection.

## Recommendations

The Plan's "Land Use Policies" map appears on the preceding page; it was derived from the "Conservation and Development Areas" map in the State Plan. It is important to note that the land-use policies reflected on the map are not necessarily consistent with municipal zoning, but rather, they reflect a vision for the Region shared by the state and SWRPA.

SWRPA also encourages its member municipalities to consider incorporating the following principles into their land-use plans, policies and regulations:

- *Allow Compact Design:* Housing, retail, commercial and office uses should be encouraged where public transit is within walking or cycling distance. Such mixed uses should be at their highest density adjacent to or within one-quarter mile from transit stations. Municipalities should consider revising local zoning codes to increase density and floor-area-ratios and allow a mix of uses within districts and buildings. Where possible, land uses and building densities should be mixed within a site plan or subdivision. Sidewalks should be encouraged, if not required, in those neighborhoods with appropriate densities, and within a reasonable distance of all schools to facilitate safe walking conditions for school children.
- *Encourage Mixed Use Development:* Allowing for a variety of uses along transportation corridors and in commercial centers encourages the development of vibrant, attractive communities by locating jobs, homes and convenience services within close proximity to one another. A mixed-use corridor or center encourages drivers to combine their car trips, thereby reducing the number of trips and thus congestion. The location of complementary land uses along a corridor or within a center also lengthens the average visit to that location, boosting economic activity. The mix of uses in centers may include cultural, recreational, educational uses as well as housing and commercial establishments. In addition to allowing housing in commercial districts, municipalities should also consider allowing housing in commercial structures where this can reasonably be done.
- *Increase Residential Density in Targeted Locations:* Density is the land-use variable that has the greatest effect on the feasibility and success of alternative transportation modes. Municipalities should consider increasing residential density in those areas that are well served by public transit and have public water and sewer infrastructure in place. Conversely, residential density should be decreased in sewer-avoidance areas lying outside the center. Density increases should be in conjunction with more stringent design controls; reduced minimum lot sizes for residences; reduced side and front setbacks; more housing types, such as two- and multi-family structures and accessory apartments in single family structures; and the use of a residential floor-area-ratio to ensure that new buildings on small lots fit within the established context of the center. Furthermore, municipalities should consider offering density bonuses to spur the development of affordable housing.
- *Reduce Residential Density in Targeted Locations:* Municipalities should consider lowering the allowable residential densities in areas with historic importance, scenic views, watersheds, open space potential, or other unique value to the community. Municipalities should identify large parcels with environmentally significant features and seek to curtail their development potential through conservation easements or direct acquisition.





- ❑ *Rehabilitate Abandoned or Under-Used Properties:* Municipalities may be able to enhance their grand lists by redeveloping sites and structures along existing corridors or within their centers, most of which are already served by transportation and utility infrastructure. These include vacant or under-utilized lots, tax delinquent structures, unused historic buildings, vacant urban renewal sites, “brownfields” (old industrial sites) and “greyfields” (vacant or derelict shopping malls). Their reuse can help lessen the sprawl-inducing pressure to develop natural open areas such as farmland for residential development. In the case of brownfields, local governments will need to work with state agencies for site analysis, funding and reclamation, but should retain a strong voice in seeing that new development meets the objective of creating a compact, vital and economically productive center linked to outlying areas by efficient corridors.
- ❑ *Create and Implement Incentives to Induce Private Real Estate Developers to Rehabilitate Vacant or Otherwise Underutilized Properties:* Possible incentives include more flexible zoning; higher allowed densities; targeted public funding of highly visible projects; improved tracking of neglected properties and their owners; improved code enforcement; reform of tax foreclosure and transfer ordinances; and a rehabilitation code for façade restoration.
- ❑ *Adopt a Village District Ordinance or Traditional Neighborhood Development Ordinance:* These two types of ordinances are recent improvements in the zoning authority given to Connecticut municipalities. While there are differences between the two, both provide municipalities with greater capacity to create efficient, compact centers.
- ❑ *Require Efficient Circulation and Parking:* Traditional zoning regulations utilize a formula-based approach to calculating parking requirements that normally do not consider factors that may decrease actual parking demand, such as the overall context of the neighborhood, the existence of transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, or the presence of proximate mixed uses that require parking at different times of day. This approach also fails to encourage the incorporation of such design elements in development plans. Municipalities should update their zoning regulations to encourage performance-based parking requirements that reflect actual patterns of use and demand and which lead toward a lesser degree of auto-dependency.
- ❑ *Encourage a Park-and-Walk Pattern:* “Park-and-walk” is when drivers go to a commercial center, park once and walk to their various destinations. To facilitate this, municipalities should consider constructing public parking facilities, implementing flexible parking standards in commercial districts to encourage new or expanded uses, and allowing “shared parking,” which enables businesses and other uses whose peak parking periods do not conflict to share a parking lot. Municipalities should require development applications to include an analysis of the parking demand for each destination by time period (such as weekday mornings, lunch times, afternoons and evenings).
- ❑ *Improve Pedestrian Circulation and Safety:* Making pedestrian circulation more attractive is an important component of a park-and-walk program and of any policy that encourages the use of public transit. Walking is the main method people use to get to public transit, with one quarter of a mile being the maximum distance most people will walk. Since access to a particular transit mode is critical in the decision to use that mode, it becomes incumbent to improve pedestrian circulation and safety. This can be accomplished by creating sidewalks, crosswalks and pedestrian shortcuts, and by lowering allowable traffic speed and enforcing speed limits in commercial centers to calm traffic. Creating retail façades in the centers is another way to make an area more pedestrian friendly and to encourage longer walking distances.
- ❑ *Encourage the Use of Bicycles:* In addition to their recreational benefits, bicycles provide affordable transportation for people with or without access to a car, especially in densely-developed centers with access to transit. Municipalities should create bicycle paths and install secure bicycle storage facilities in mixed-use centers and at transit stops. Zoning regulations should be amended to require bicycle storage in addition to automobile parking for approval of commercial and industrial development proposals.
- ❑ *Consolidate Curb Cuts:* Municipalities should consider developing access management plans for their commercial corridors. These include consolidating curb cuts, identifying new curb cut locations, redesigning intersections and nearby curb cuts, and requiring cross-access between adjoining parking lots. In strip commercial development, municipalities should require parking lots to connect with one another and should discourage new curb cuts onto commercial corridors and other principal roads.



## Chapter 5 – Transportation, Infrastructure and Critical Facilities

Infrastructure is the physical backbone of any community. Significant investments are made each year to maintain and grow existing infrastructure. These investments – which are funded through various taxes as well as regulatory and user fees – are made by state and federal agencies, municipal governments and service providers. Such investments also are made by individuals and organizations living and doing business in the Region.

Over the next 10 years, increasing investment in infrastructure will be needed, not only to keep pace with the Region’s growth but to maintain, repair and replace aging infrastructure. The financial pressure associated with such investment may push providers and beneficiaries of the Region’s infrastructure and its outputs to seek new resources and achieve economies of scale. Increased regionalization of delivery systems and service sharing may be among the solutions.

Assembling the resources needed to grow and maintain infrastructure is only one of the challenges facing the Region. Achieving consensus on the need and location of such infrastructure in a legal environment that, for many infrastructure projects, gives local governments little or no role in the decision-making process further complicates the already complex intersection of land use, infrastructure and services, finance and, of course, politics.

### Transportation

The Region’s transportation infrastructure played a significant role in its development as a hub of economic, residential and cultural activities. The Region is served by several major transportation facilities including Interstate 95, the Merritt Parkway, U.S. Routes 1 and 7, and the New Haven, New Canaan and Danbury rail lines. The Region also is served by a strong network of local, regional and inter-city bus transit services, as well as various paratransit services.

These transportation connections have made the Region easily accessible to and from a number of major cities and metropolitan areas, including New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Washington. The Region’s accessibility has, however, also contributed to a rise in traffic congestion and associated delays.

Several solutions to the Region’s traffic congestion have been identified. First, opportunities exist to expand transit services and opportunities for biking



**Interstate 95 and the New Haven Line railroad tracks, Stamford**

and walking to provide persons traveling to, from and within the Region with safe, convenient and affordable alternatives to the automobile. Second, demand management strategies – including ridesharing programs and various incentives to induce the use of transit, telecommuting and alternate work schedules – have the potential to encourage travelers to leave their cars at home. Opportunities also exist to change the way freight is moved to and through the Region, such as increased use of rail and barges.

Although seemingly unrelated to transportation infrastructure, perhaps the greatest power to mitigate traffic congestion rests with the Region’s municipal land-use boards. In any community, land-use policies and practices play a critical role in establishing population densities, the balance between residential and commercial land uses and the location of certain transportation and public facilities. Research has shown these factors impact the number of vehicle trips, vehicle miles traveled, and availability and choice of travel options. Hence, smart growth decisions can shape travel trends and options available within a municipality or the Region. Land-use strategies and techniques that support transportation options and their benefits are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

In 2005, two major pieces of legislation were passed that would significantly increase transportation investment in the Region and the rest of the state. In 2005, Public Act 05-4 (June Special Session) was enacted to provide \$1.3-billion to repair and replace Connecticut’s aging transportation infrastructure and equipment. Among the specific investments included in the act was the complete replacement of the New Haven Line railcar fleet, the construction of a new fleet



maintenance facility in New Haven, and approximately \$187-million for operational improvements to I-95 and the state's other Interstate highways.

The other critical piece of legislation to be written into law in 2005 was the "Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users" (SAFETEA-LU), the successor to the "Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century," which expired in 2003. SAFETEA-LU provides \$286.4-billion in federal funds over six years for various highway and transit improvements throughout the nation. Of that amount, Connecticut was expected to receive approximately \$3-billion over the life of the bill.

## Energy

Concerns about energy have become significantly more pronounced since the 1995 Plan was adopted. Indeed, energy is barely mentioned at all in the 1995 Plan. Since then, though, there have been "rolling blackouts" in California, the collapse of Enron, the August 2003 blackout of the northeastern U.S. and unprecedented increases in the cost of petroleum and natural gas as a result of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005.

In March 2004, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) proposed the implementation of a so-called "Locational Installed Capacity" (LICAP) market for New England, which would increase rates for electricity in the South Western Region and elsewhere. According to FERC and other proponents of LICAP, the additional revenues would spur energy providers to build new generating facilities, thereby increasing supply, improving system reliability and, ultimately, lowering costs. Opponents of the plan claimed that it would be nothing more than an annual windfall of perhaps \$375-million for energy companies in Connecticut, which would be under no obligation to actually increase generating capacity.

Through 2005, Northeast Utilities was continuing to advance its planned upgrade of southwestern Connecticut's inadequate 115-kilovolt electrical transmission grid to 345-kilovolts, and a consortium of Shell US Gas and Power and TransCanada had proposed building a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in Long Island Sound to supply LNG to gas-fired electrical generating facilities.

Issues and proposals like those mentioned have sparked significant public debate about how to assess community need and to plan for those needs while at the same time protecting the natural environment, public health and residential property values.

## Water Supply

Drinking water is supplied to the Region through a network of aquifers, reservoirs and private wells. These water resources are under the control of several entities, including the state, municipal and proprietary water utilities, and local landowners. In all cases, a variety of state and local regulations protect these water resources against development-related and other adverse impacts to ensure continued access to clean drinking water for the Region.



**Saugatuck Reservoir, Weston**








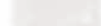

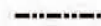
There are five protected aquifers in the Region, the largest of which is located in northern Norwalk and covers an area of approximately nine square miles. Three additional aquifers have well fields measuring approximately one square mile. Two of these are located in Westport and the third is located in Stamford near the Merritt Parkway. A small aquifer, measuring less than one square mile, is situated on the Darien-Stamford line.

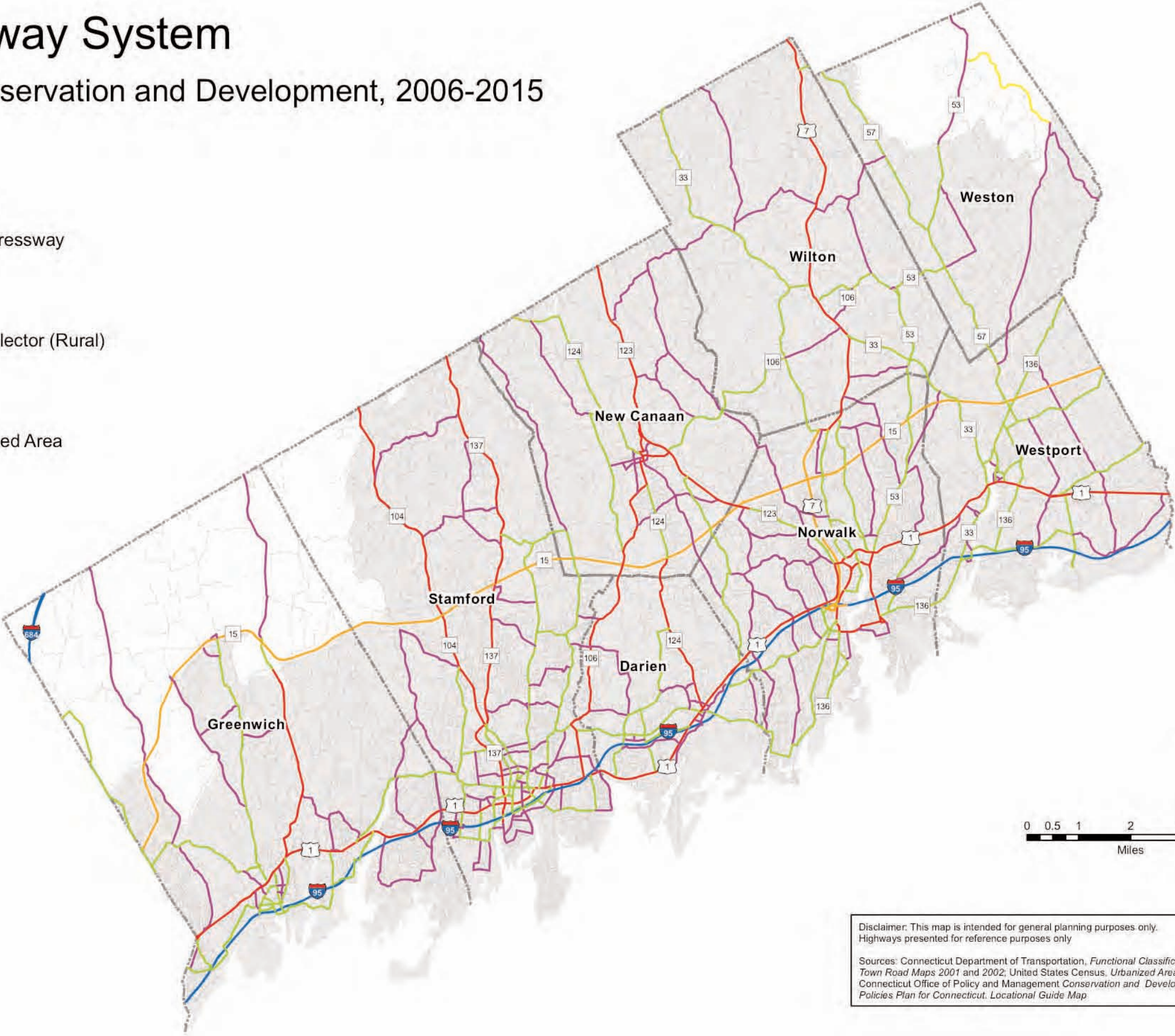
The Region is also served by several reservoirs: the Easton Reservoir System; Putnam, Converse and Rockwood Lakes in Greenwich; Bargh and North Stamford Reservoirs in Stamford; Laurel Reservoir on the New Canaan-Stamford line; the South Norwalk Reservoir in Wilton; and the Saugatuck Reservoir on the Weston-Easton line. With the exception of the South Norwalk Reservoir, which is owned by the Second Taxing District Water Company in Norwalk, the other reservoirs are operated by the Aquarion Water Company.

In six of the Region's municipalities, more than 60 percent of all businesses and households are served by water utilities. In Weston and Wilton, however, the majority of businesses and households are served by private wells.

# Regional Highway System

Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, 2006-2015

-  Principal Arterial - Interstate
-  Principal Arterial - Other Expressway
-  Principal Arterial - Other
-  Minor Arterial
-  Collector (Urban) / Major Collector (Rural)
-  Minor Collector (Rural)
-  Other Roads
-  Bridgeport-Stamford Urbanized Area
-  Rural Area
-  Municipal Boundaries



Prepared on January 26, 2006

**SWRPA**

South Western Regional Planning Agency

Disclaimer: This map is intended for general planning purposes only. Highways presented for reference purposes only.

Sources: Connecticut Department of Transportation, *Functional Classifications, 2004*; *Town Road Maps 2001 and 2002*; United States Census, *Urbanized Area*; Connecticut Office of Policy and Management *Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut*; *Locational Guide Map*.

**Regional Highway Map**



## Sewers

Much of the Region's population is served by public sewer systems, which, since the early 1980s, have generally not been expanded beyond neighborhood-level extensions. Generally speaking, areas not served by sewers lack that infrastructure for one of three reasons. First, some communities have chosen to limit construction of infrastructure such as public water and sewer connections as a tool for controlling types and density of development. Second, geology and/or topography can sometimes make the installation of sewer lines cost-prohibitive. The third reason is to ensure consistency with the "State Urbanized Growth Area Map," which identifies those areas that should and should not develop infrastructure for future growth.

Wastewater management is a shared function within several of the Region's municipalities. Greenwich, New Canaan, Norwalk, Stamford and Westport all operate wastewater treatment facilities, and Darien pumps its effluent to Stamford for treatment. Wilton ties into the Norwalk sewage treatment system through an agreement between the two municipalities that establishes Norwalk's compensation for this service. Weston provides its own public water supply via wells for municipal and educational facilities, as well as tertiary treatment for the expanded school system. Sludge disposal methods vary among facilities and include composting, incineration, landfill burial and off-site disposal.



Cellular tower, Weston

## Communications

As with energy facilities, the siting of communications infrastructure can often be controversial due to concerns about the possible negative health effects of magnetic fields and the impact on community character. Debates over the location of cellular communications towers have been particularly intense. As of August 2005, there were 68 telecommunications towers in the Region, with the majority (41) sited in Greenwich, Norwalk and Stamford.

Communications infrastructure such as telephone and cable television lines are maintained on poles or below ground, often in the rights-of-way of highways such as Routes 1 and 7.

## Waste Management

All of the Region's member municipalities have contracted with the Connecticut Resource Recovery Authority (CRRRA) for the long-term management of household waste and recycled materials such as newspapers, aluminum beverage cans and certain plastics. Under these agreements, household waste and recycled materials are transported from municipal transfer stations to CRRRA's trash-to-energy facility in Bridgeport. Hazardous waste is disposed of separately and is also transported out of the Region.

Like the demand for energy and other utilities, the demand for waste disposal services and sites is likely to grow as the Region grows. In the coming years, the Region's municipalities – in conjunction with SWRPA – should study the Region's waste management needs to help assess future needs.

## Hospitals

Persons living and working in the Region have excellent access to health care facilities, including Greenwich, Norwalk and Stamford Hospitals, as well as hospitals in Westchester County and Bridgeport. In 2006, the Region's three hospitals combined provided nearly 750 beds and offered a broad array of services, including Level II trauma facilities at Norwalk and Stamford Hospitals. The latter also received state approval in 2005 to perform open heart surgery and elective angioplasty. Supporting the work of these hospitals are several not-for-profit community health centers that provide primary health care, pediatric, gynecological and dental services to the medically under-served.

It should be noted that hospital closings in Westchester are felt at the Region's three hospitals to varying degrees. For instance, in 2005, Westchester residents accounted for 35.5 percent of all inpatient



admissions at Greenwich Hospital, more than double the percentage in 1998. The hospital attributes this increase largely to the closing of Westchester hospitals.

## Recommendations

- ❑ *The Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, 2006-2015*, defers to the South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's (SWRMPO) *Long-Range Transportation Plan, 2004-2030* – and its subsequent updates – for the establishment of the Region's transportation priorities. The SWRMPO has been designated by the state and federal governments as the transportation policy board for the South Western Region.
- ❑ Encourage municipalities to implement “transportation-friendly” land-use policies and practices to support a wide range of travel options.
- ❑ Encourage the state to develop a long-range energy plan for Connecticut that focuses on managing demand, alternatives to fossil fuels, and conservation.
- ❑ Encourage municipalities to enact energy-efficiency standards for new commercial and industrial developments, as well as for all municipally-owned buildings.
- ❑ Continue to support municipalities in their efforts to upgrade waste water treatment, drinking water purification and water pollution control facilities.
- ❑ Work with state and federal agencies having authority over the siting of telecommunications and energy facilities to achieve, to the greatest extent possible, a balance between the need for expanded services and preservation of the natural environment and community character.
- ❑ In cooperation with the water companies, conduct an assessment of the Region's water supply.
- ❑ Conduct an assessment of existing waste management facilities and develop a long range plan for meeting future waste management and disposal needs on a regional basis.
- ❑ Continue to support area hospitals in their efforts to secure state approvals to provide the full range of specialized medical services needed to serve the Region.
- ❑ Encourage the Region's municipalities to review their recycling programs to identify those items in their trash streams whose volume and value indicate the potential for additional revenue to the municipality.



## Chapter 6 – Housing

Housing patterns in the Region are well defined, with the areas of highest residential density closest to the Region's road and rail thoroughfares. In general, residential density is greatest along, and to the south, of the I-95 corridor, and least dense north of the Merritt Parkway, where large-lot zoning is the norm.

Data from Census 2000 and later studies indicate an ongoing demand for both larger houses for "trading up" as well as smaller, less expensive starter homes. The data also reveal a gap in the supply of both. Between 1990 and 2000, population growth outpaced housing construction in the Region: The population grew by 7.2 percent (23,631), while the supply of housing increased by 6,754 units, an increase of only

five percent. Sixty-two (62) percent of those units were single-family dwellings. Norwalk and Stamford provided the greatest numbers of multi-family dwellings, with Stamford adding 2,184 units and Norwalk 321. These units were primarily in the form of apartments, condominiums and the conversion of single-family homes to two-family houses. Stamford has the Region's largest share of multi-family units (54 percent of its housing stock), while 45 percent of the housing stock in Norwalk and 30 percent in Greenwich is made up of multi-family units. Generally, the Region's other five municipalities have very little multi-family housing.

Between 1990 and 2000, the median sales price of homes in the Region increased significantly in all eight municipalities, from a high of 77 percent in Westport down to the 30 percent increase experienced in both

**Table 6.1 – Median Sales Price, 1990, 2000, 2004**

Town	Year	Median Sales Price		
		Single Family	Condominium	All Sales
Darien	1990	\$ 372,000	\$ 235,000	\$ 375,000
	2000	\$ 667,000	\$ 396,000	\$ 635,000
	2004	\$ 989,000	\$ 510,000	\$ 959,000
Greenwich	1990	\$ 490,000	\$ 260,000	\$ 400,000
	2000	\$ 920,000	\$ 370,000	\$ 693,750
	2004	\$ 1,450,000	\$ 575,000	\$ 1,151,000
New Canaan	1990	\$ 520,000	\$ 282,500	\$ 460,000
	2000	\$ 900,000	\$ 390,000	\$ 797,500
	2004	\$ 1,275,000	\$ 652,500	\$ 1,190,000
Norwalk	1990	\$ 205,500	\$ 151,000	\$ 182,775
	2000	\$ 309,750	\$ 164,700	\$ 240,000
	2004	\$ 466,000	\$ 266,250	\$ 372,000
Stamford	1990	\$ 275,000	\$ 143,500	\$ 210,000
	2000	\$ 377,500	\$ 158,500	\$ 272,000
	2004	\$ 580,000	\$ 264,000	\$ 425,000
Weston	1990	\$ 415,000	\$ 0	\$ 395,000
	2000	\$ 644,000	\$ 0	\$ 625,750
	2004	\$ 800,000	\$ 0	\$ 751,250
Westport	1990	\$ 379,000	\$ 325,000	\$ 368,000
	2000	\$ 694,000	\$ 352,450	\$ 650,000
	2004	\$ 1,002,000	\$ 744,000	\$ 935,000
Wilton	1990	\$ 370,000	\$ 189,500	\$ 357,000
	2000	\$ 611,000	\$ 279,500	\$ 545,750
	2004	\$ 840,000	\$ 420,000	\$ 793,100

Source: The Warren Group, March 2005.





Norwalk and Stamford. This strong growth continued into the new millennium, with Greenwich experiencing the greatest increase in its median sales price (66 percent) from 2000 to 2004, which was nearly as much it increased during the previous 10 years. Weston experienced the smallest increase in its median sales price since 2000, at 20 percent, while the increase in the other six municipalities varied between 45 and 55 percent.

Contract rent - which is the amount agreed upon in a tenant's lease agreement, excluding utilities - increased by about 30 percent between 1990 and 2000. The greatest increases were in Darien and Greenwich, where rents rose 70 percent. Rental rates in New Canaan, Weston, Westport and Wilton rose between 50 and 60 percent. In Stamford, the rate of increase was 39 percent, while Norwalk had the smallest increase in contract rent, which rose by 24 percent during the decade. The average contract rent for the Region increased by 31 percent during the 1990s. (U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 1990 and 2000.)

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses the Median Family Income ("MFI," which in 2005 was \$111,600) of the Stamford-Norwalk Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA) when allocating funding for housing projects to state and local agencies. The boundaries of the Stamford-Norwalk PMSA are coterminous with those of the Region. An "affordable" unit is defined by HUD as costing no more than 30 percent of a family's income for gross housing costs, including utilities. For example, a family making \$50,000 can afford a unit costing \$15,000 annually, or \$1,250 per month. Forty-five (45) percent of the rental housing stock in the Region is affordable to those earning less than 50 percent of the Region's MFI. Using Greenwich as an example, about 36 percent of the town's rental units are affordable to those earning less than 50 percent of the MFI. Conversely, only 87 of the 15,864 owner-occupied housing units are affordable to families earning 50 percent of the MFI. While families earning less than the MFI may be able to afford to rent in Greenwich, they would almost certainly not be able to own a home there.

Housing in the Region's two cities (Norwalk and Stamford) tends to be more affordable for families earning less than the MFI. Roughly 42 and 58 percent of rental units in Stamford and Norwalk, respectively, are affordable to families earning less than 50 percent of the MFI. In 2000, only nine percent of single family homes in those cities were affordable to the same families, making it difficult, if not impossible, for families earning less than \$47,114 to purchase a home.

Clearly, most housing in the Region is not affordable to those who earn less than the MFI. In Fairfield County as a whole, roughly half of the rental units are affordable to those earning less than 50 percent of the MFI. County-wide, the affordability of owner-occupied units tracks closer to Stamford and Norwalk, with 8 percent of the units affordable to those earning less than 50 percent of the county median family income. Housing is only slightly more affordable statewide, with 56 percent of rental units and 12 percent of owner-occupied units affordable to families earning less than 50 percent of the state median family income. Because these figures are based on the state median family income, such housing would be more affordable to those working in the Region, but would require a longer commute. While many are able to find a home to rent, fewer are able to purchase a home. This is often the result of families spending more of their incomes on higher rents, making it more difficult for them to save for a down-payment on a home.

Of course, the market does meet the demands of many people seeking housing in the Region. As described in Chapter 3, salaries earned by residents of the Region are the highest in Connecticut and are competitive with top salaries nationally. The Region's mean income is impacted by the extremely high salaries earned by a relatively small number of residents, many of whom work in New York City. The regional housing market has increasingly catered to the desires of those with higher incomes rather than focusing on the starter or "first trade-up" markets, where developers' profits would be significantly lower. As a result, many people employed in the Region find it necessary to live elsewhere and endure relatively long commutes.

## Non-Market-Rate Housing

As discussed earlier, HUD defines affordable housing as that for which an occupant pays no more than 30 percent of their income for gross housing costs. HUD distributes funding based on income brackets, which include "very-low-income" families (where family income does not exceed 50 percent of the MFI) and "low-income" families, where family income does not exceed 80 percent of the MFI. Income is adjusted for family size when determining subsidies and the amount a family can afford to pay for housing costs. Assuring an adequate supply of affordable housing will require a greater number of units to be subsidized through local, state and federal programs, and through expanded private lending programs for qualifying low and very low-income families. There are typically different types of services offered to each by the various housing agencies.



**Table 6.2 – Low- and Moderate-Income Families: 1990 and 2000**

	Total Families		Low-Income Families *		Moderate-Income Families **	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
<b>Darien</b>	5,219	5,409	514	449	458	553
<b>Greenwich</b>	15,932	16,310	2,665	2,807	1,946	2,356
<b>New Canaan</b>	5,095	5,228	519	534	390	631
<b>Norwalk</b>	20,662	21,115	5,213	6,653	3,777	5,031
<b>Stamford</b>	28,103	29,239	7,088	9,531	4,751	6,187
<b>Weston</b>	2,516	2,836	190	238	113	308
<b>Westport</b>	7,001	7,170	722	772	608	706
<b>Wilton</b>	4,576	4,858	507	493	346	444
<b>South Western Region</b>	89,104	92,165	17,418	21,476	12,388	16,215

\* A low-income family is a family earning below 50 percent of the area median family income.

\*\* A moderate-income family is a family earning between 50 and 80 percent of the area median family income.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 3; 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 3.

In 1990, almost 20 percent of the Region’s families earned incomes less than 50 percent of the MFI and were classified as having very-low incomes by HUD. That percentage had increased to more than 23 percent by 2000. The percentage of low-income families (those between 50 and 80 percent of the MFI) also increased during the 1990s, from 14 percent to almost 18 percent of all families. Many families bridge the gap between their actual incomes and the income level at which housing would be affordable by using housing programs that supplement their rent or offer low-interest loans for financing a home. These programs have been established to enable families earning less than 80 percent of the MFI to afford homes of their own.

**Affordable Housing in Connecticut**

Regulations promulgated in the Connecticut General Statutes exempt municipalities having 10 percent or more of their housing units classified as “affordable” from certain requirements to provide affordable housing. The state defines affordable housing as that for which individuals and families pay

30 percent or less of their annual income where such income is less than or equal to the area median income for the municipality in which the housing is located, as determined by HUD. For the purpose of determining municipal exemption from the requirement to provide



**Southwood Square, a developed affordable neighborhood in Stamford**



**Table 6.3 – South Western Region Towns by State-defined Affordability**

	<b>Total Housing Units (2000 Census)</b>	<b>Total Assisted Units (calculated under Section 8-30g CGS)</b>	<b>Percent Affordable</b>
<b>Darien</b>	6,792	123	1.81%
<b>Greenwich</b>	24,511	1,114	4.54%
<b>New Canaan</b>	7,141	176	2.46%
<b>Norwalk</b>	33,753	3,972	11.77%
<b>Stamford</b>	47,317	5,234	11.06%
<b>Weston</b>	3,532	1	0.03%
<b>Westport</b>	10,065	225	2.24%
<b>Wilton</b>	6,113	159	2.60%

Source: Connecticut Department of Community and Economic Development, 2004 Affordable Housing Appeals List. <http://www.ct.gov/ecd/cwp/view.asp?a=1098&Q=249724&ecdNav=>

affordable housing, the state includes housing that is assisted by a governmental program, such as subsidized units, homes with mortgages from the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority or the Farmers Home Administration, and deed-restricted units. This housing must be restricted to low or moderate-income individuals or families as defined by the income eligibility rules of the governmental program providing the financial assistance. “Moderate-income” families are those earning between 80 and 120 percent of the MFI.

It is important to recognize that HUD and the state approach the issue of housing affordability somewhat differently. HUD and the local housing authorities that it supports use income to determine if a family or individual qualifies for federal and state housing assistance based on income data from the most recent U.S. Census. The state determines whether housing units themselves are affordable using the criteria established under the various governmental programs that support those units. However, the state does not count as “affordable” any housing units that fall outside of the definition stated in the previous paragraph. This would include the Region’s small supply of relatively inexpensive market-rate housing such as mobile homes, certain condominiums and detached houses in generally undesirable locations or which are substandard to some degree. So, while the supply of actual affordable housing is somewhat greater than that which qualifies under the state’s definition, there still remains a significant shortage of affordable units in the Region.

Those municipalities with less than 10 percent of their housing stock classified as affordable are subject

to appeals from developers whose applications are denied by the local zoning commission, if affordable housing that conforms to state requirements was included as part of the application. Appeals are heard in specially designated courts throughout the state, and the burden of proof is on the municipality, which must demonstrate health or safety reasons for the denial of such an application.

### Other Housing Challenges

While there are programs in place for families earning less than 80 percent of the MFI, many families earning somewhat more may need housing assistance as well. In fact, families living on \$80,000 incomes often find themselves struggling to live in the Region. As a result, the needs of that segment of the population earning between 80 and 120 percent of the MFI have become more prominent. These so-called “workforce” families represented 25 percent of all families in the Region in 1990 but only 16 percent in 2000. This trend was most evident in Norwalk and Stamford, the cities that have historically had the most affordable housing in the Region. The reasons for this decline include workforce families whose incomes rose above the 120 percent level, as well as those who moved out of the Region (but who may continue to work in it), essentially trading a longer commute for a larger home.

The housing needs of the Region’s elderly are also becoming more acute with the growth in this sector of the population. While many seniors are able to live comfortably in their homes, others need assistance,



both financially and physically. While many senior housing communities, nursing homes and assisted living quarters have been developed in the past decade, there has been an absence of orderly planning for these types of facilities to meet the growing need. Despite this movement, many seniors struggle to afford the Region's high cost of living.

The Region also has a considerable homeless population. While there is no reliable count of the homeless population, local shelters estimate that approximately 900 individuals and 70 families are served in a given year. However, since social service providers are quick to point out that many homeless people do not seek services from shelters or other social service agencies, it is safe to assume that the Region's actual homeless population is higher than the previously-stated numbers.

Shelters offer overnight housing for men, women and families, as well as a myriad of services to help these individuals obtain employment and temporary or permanent housing of their own. Some shelters offer programming for the mentally ill, people with HIV/AIDS and children. Each shelter offers temporary housing for people committed to obtaining and retaining employment and securing a permanent home. Some of the shelters provide permanent housing, rented to successful clients of their temporary programs.



**A 1950's era ranch house being replaced by the larger house behind it**

## Housing Resources

Many resources exist for families that meet standard qualifications for housing aid, but workforce families and others desiring non-market housing are often left with fewer options. Housing assistance and advice is available in most towns and offered Region-

wide by various municipal and non-profit organizations. While these groups do assist many families in finding suitable rental housing or securing homeownership, the number of potential client-families exceeds the ability of the organizations to meet the need.

The housing authorities of Darien, Greenwich, Norwalk, Stamford and Westport have made great headway over the years in assisting people of relatively modest incomes locate housing. These housing authorities are the entities through which federal and state funds are channeled to provide publicly-operated low and moderate income housing for the community. The Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) provides assistance to first-time homebuyers in purchasing homes and finances the construction or rehabilitation of affordable units. It has numerous programs to help a variety of qualifying families purchase a home. In addition to first-time home buyers, assistance is available to residents of public housing, persons with disabilities, the elderly, municipal and state police officers, persons in the military, families using Section 8 vouchers, teachers, and those wishing to purchase a home in need of rehabilitation.

CHFA also assists developers secure funding to produce affordable multifamily housing units. This funding helps developers create such housing when it might otherwise be infeasible. CHFA also administers the state share of the federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits program that gives developers added flexibility in constructing units for low-income families. Developers must set aside a minimum percentage of units that are affordable to low-income families and which must remain affordable for at least 30 years. The income limits are usually 50 or 60 percent of the MFI.

The not-for-profit Housing Development Fund (HDF) was established in 1989 to finance the development of affordable housing. It has grown into a loan fund supported by 15 banks throughout Fairfield County, which are required to be CHFA-approved to offer their clients the best interest rate available. HDF - with offices in Stamford, Bridgeport and Danbury - works closely with CHFA and several local housing authorities while serving most of Fairfield County. Much like CHFA, the main goal of HDF is to reduce the deficit between the supply of, and demand for, housing that is affordable to low and moderate-income families. To accomplish this, HDF provides a package of services to first-time homebuyers as well as to developers who produce affordable housing.

There is a strong network of federal, state, regional and local support for low to moderate-income families. However, mortgage and rental assistance is lacking for workforce families in the Region (those earning



between 80 to 120 percent of the MFI) who are often unable to afford to purchase a home. Until programs are developed to provide workforce housing in the Region there will continue to exist an out-migration of these families to more affordable communities. Among other negative effects, the continuation of this trend will result in increasing levels of traffic congestion (as people drive longer distances between home and work) and rising salary requirements for the Region's employers, who will have to pay more to lure employees who must live relatively far from work to afford their own homes.

## Recommendations

SWRPA recognizes that it is the responsibility of each municipality to make land-use and housing decisions that are consistent with its plan of conservation and development, and its zoning and subdivision regulations. SWRPA also recognizes the difficulty municipalities experience in meeting the state-designated thresholds for affordable housing, especially mature communities like those of the Region. Many factors – such as a shortage of suitable land, public opposition and market forces – are generally out of the control of municipalities, including those that favor the development of affordable housing. However, with this understanding, SWRPA strongly encourages the following approach to the provision of affordable and workforce housing in the Region:

- Educate policymakers, legislators and the general public about the need for affordable housing and its positive impact on the regional economy, and encourage the development of a variety of housing options.
  - Promote creative land-use techniques to encourage a diverse housing stock where appropriate.
  - Publicize successful affordable housing developments and programs so that low and moderate-income families are aware of housing options available to them.
- Expand options for funding affordable housing.
  - Work with the Region's affordable housing providers, corporate partners, financial institutions, faith-based organizations and other not-for-profit organizations to raise awareness about state and federal programs that create more opportunities to finance affordable housing.
- Increase coordination among neighboring regions regarding housing and transportation policies.
- Support statewide campaigns that promote the development of supportive housing for persons who are homeless or have other special needs.
- Support efforts that create more opportunities for workforce families to purchase homes and live within the Region.
- Promote the implementation of innovative local and regional land use and development strategies that efficiently and effectively create housing.
  - Promote infill and mixed-use development in town and urban centers and the rehabilitation of existing substandard housing in these areas.
  - Encourage the implementation of zoning mechanisms that promote the creation of affordable housing units, such as legalization of accessory apartments, density bonuses for developers that designate units for affordable housing, and payments in lieu of the provision of affordable units to be paid to a local housing trust fund.
  - Promote the adaptive reuse of vacant, historic or underutilized buildings to increase the Region's housing stock.
- Work with member municipalities to assess the Region's housing needs and to foster intermunicipal coordination in the provision of affordable and special needs housing.
  - Update the *1996 Regional Housing Needs and Supply Assessment* to identify the Region's current housing needs and create a coordinated intraregional strategy for meeting those needs.
  - Encourage member municipalities to work with SWRPA to develop regional cooperation to address the need for affordable and special needs housing on a regional basis.
- Develop new housing, especially low and moderate-income housing, along established transit corridors and in urban and town centers whose infrastructure can support additional development.



## Chapter 7 – Natural Resources and Recreation

The Region is blessed with great natural beauty and a broad range of recreational areas and facilities. However, given the Region's population density and the constant pressures of residential and commercial development, protecting these natural and recreational assets constitutes a major challenge for local, regional and state policy-makers. Striking the appropriate balance between the conservation of natural resources and the development necessary to support the Region's economic well-being is, perhaps, the most basic reason to prepare a regional plan. Since SWRPA has no statutory authority to acquire or even designate land as "open space" or "recreational," it is up to the Region's municipalities, the state and not-for-profit organizations such as land trusts to assume this responsibility. Nevertheless, the Plan can aid the various parties by identifying needs and opportunities, and SWRPA can serve a coordination function in bringing the interested parties together.

### Long Island Sound and Other Waterways

Long Island Sound is arguably the Region's most important natural resource. The Region's character is inextricably tied to the Sound, which impacts the Region's housing values, transportation system, biodiversity and even its weather. Its economic impact is also huge, since it supports vibrant fishing and shellfishing industries as well as tourism. The Sound is also the Region's primary recreational facility. Bathing, fishing, boating and diving are among the most popular recreational pursuits of the Region's residents.



Long Island Sound from Greenwich Point Park

Unfortunately, the Sound suffers from severe environmental degradation that has put its long-term viability in jeopardy. It receives effluent from numerous waterways, including the Byram, Connecticut, Quinnipiac, Housatonic, Saugatuck, Norwalk, Mill and Mianus Rivers. This effluent is often rich in nutrients that lead to algae blooms, hypoxia and the loss of aquatic life. Furthermore, effluent often contains toxins, pathogens, sediments and debris that may negatively impact aquatic organisms directly or indirectly through habitat alteration.

The environmental health of the Sound has been a cause of concern and action for decades. In 1980, the state adopted the Coastal Management Program, which has been successful in protecting parts of the shoreline from development and has created 10 additional miles of public access along the Sound. The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection created the Office of Long Island Sound Programs (OLISP) as the lead state agency in identifying and addressing the Sound's problems. OLISP administers a variety of programs, including public education, conservation, restoration and research. They also manage the Long Island Sound License Plate Program, which provides funding for several of these programs.

The municipalities in the Region have contributed to these efforts by implementing various activities that improved the quality of water draining into the Sound from its tributaries. Some of the successes include:

- Upgrades to sewage treatment plants in Greenwich, New Canaan, Norwalk, Stamford and Westport;
- Expansion of household hazardous waste collection programs;
- Separation of storm-water and sewer drainage systems;
- Regulating construction on or immediately adjacent to wetlands, waterways and water bodies;
- Incorporating environmental awareness into school curricula;
- Participating in the National Flood Insurance Community Rating System program, which often has the secondary benefits of improving water quality; and
- Addressing pollutants in urban runoff through compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Phase II Program.



While these improvements are noteworthy, the Region's waterways are often unsafe for swimming and, in some instances, fishing as well. While the Region has successfully reduced point source pollution, its waterways remain negatively impacted by the following non-point source pollution:

**Urban Runoff:** Driveways, roads, parking lots and other impervious surfaces cause precipitation to drain rapidly into waterways rather than being absorbed into the ground. This runoff often carries sediments, road salt and nutrients that can negatively alter aquatic habitats. The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Phase II program attempts to reduce the amount of pollutants in urban runoff.

**Septic Tank Failure:** In general, the least densely populated areas of the Region are served by private septic systems. When septic tanks fail, untreated effluent may seep undetected into waterways, a problem which is particularly difficult to address since septic tank failures may go undetected for years.

**Canada Geese:** Canada geese often graze in fields near waterways. During storms, their waste enters waterways, which can lead to hypoxic conditions and loss of aquatic life. In addition to the water quality issue, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have also identified Canada geese feces as a source of pathogenic bacteria – including Salmonella and E-coli – that represent a threat to human health when people and geese share the same spaces.†

†As cited in Cole D., Drum D.J.V., Stallknecht D.E., White D.G., Lee M.D., Ayers S., et al. "Free-living Canada Geese and antimicrobial resistance." *Emerging Infectious Diseases* (Internet serial). June 2005. Available from <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/vol11no06/04-0717.htm>.

## Aquifers

The Region's surface drinking water supply is supplemented by several aquifers, including the Coleytown, Canal Street, Kellogg-Deering, Rewak and Wire Mill well fields. Most of the low density areas in the Region are served by private wells.

The state recently initiated the Aquifer Protection Program, which protects major water supply wells in sand and gravel aquifers to ensure a plentiful supply of public drinking water for present and future generations. The program requires municipalities to adopt land-use restrictions in the aquifer protection

areas to prohibit new high-risk land-use activities. It also requires users of hazardous materials to register and follow best management practices. Because aquifer protection areas cross political boundaries, their protection may require multi-jurisdictional cooperation.

## Air Quality

In addition to being a necessity for human life, air is also a natural resource that can be used in certain commercial and industrial applications to provide goods and services. Air quality in the Region is negatively impacted by pollutants such as ozone, nitric oxide, sulfuric oxide, toxins and particulate matter. These pollutants may result in respiratory ailments such as asthma. In addition, many of these pollutants fall as precipitation and contribute to ground and surface water degradation. Furthermore, carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are associated with global warming and sea level rise. Most air pollutants are the result of human activity, exemplifying the need for a balance between conservation and development.

The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's Air Management Bureau works to maintain and improve air quality so that health standards are met without impeding economic development. The Air Management Bureau utilizes a permitting process and the state's vehicle emissions program to attain its goals.

While the Region's air quality is impacted by pollutants generated hundreds of miles away, most of its air pollution is locally generated through the combustion of fossil fuels from motor vehicles and climate control systems in homes and businesses. The problem is greatly exacerbated by traffic congestion, which not only increases emissions but reduces gas mileage as well. Air quality can be improved through a combination of reducing vehicle and stationary emissions, increasing efficiency, and using alternative energy sources.

## Urban Wildlife Control

Even though human activity often disrupts natural systems and reduces animal populations, in some instances, it has actually caused certain indigenous animal species to increase in population, even to the point of overpopulation.

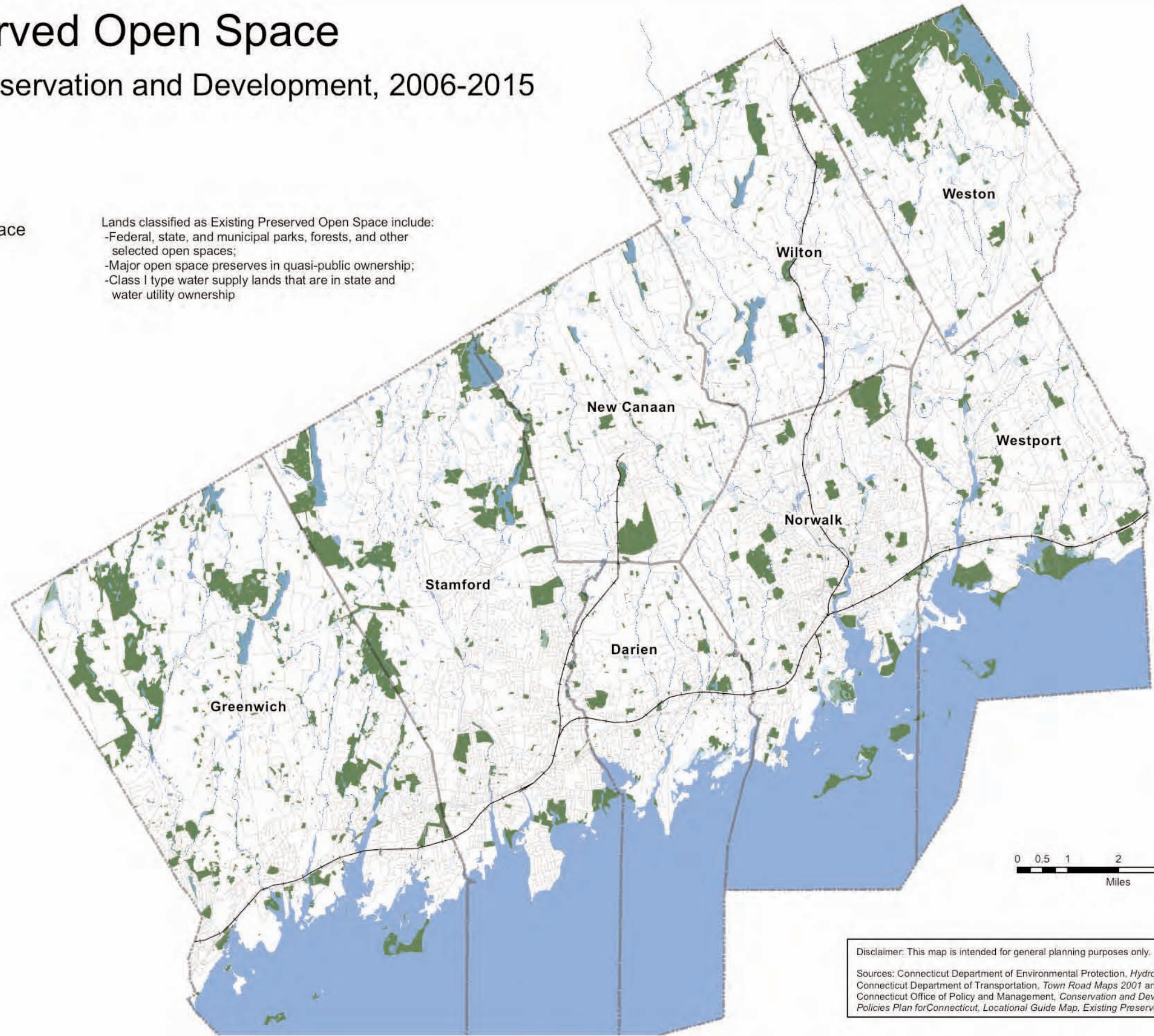
State and municipal governments – particularly those in Fairfield County – have become increasingly concerned about the public health risks posed by deer, mosquitoes and Canada geese.

# Existing Preserved Open Space

## Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, 2006-2015

-  Existing Preserved Open Space
-  Open Water
-  Marsh
-  River/Stream
-  Street
-  Railroad
-  Municipal Boundary

Lands classified as Existing Preserved Open Space include:  
-Federal, state, and municipal parks, forests, and other selected open spaces;  
-Major open space preserves in quasi-public ownership;  
-Class I type water supply lands that are in state and water utility ownership



Prepared on January 26, 2006

# SWRPA

South Western Regional Planning Agency

Disclaimer: This map is intended for general planning purposes only.  
Sources: Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, *Hydrology*;  
Connecticut Department of Transportation, *Town Road Maps 2001 and 2002*;  
Connecticut Office of Policy and Management, *Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut, Locational Guide Map, Existing Preserved Open Space*



**Open Space Map**



Deer typically avoid humans, but due to their overpopulation combined with the relatively dense settlement patterns of the Region, they frequently invade human spaces. This has led to the destruction of gardens and landscapes, the spread of tick-borne diseases (notably Lyme disease) and a significant hazard for drivers as deer wander onto local roads and highways. Mosquitoes are a nuisance that can also transmit virulent diseases, including the sometimes fatal West Nile Virus. As noted previously, Canada geese pose a threat to water quality and, in some cases, human health, when people come in close contact with geese feces, which have been associated with a variety of respiratory and gastrointestinal illnesses.

Animal control options are limited by the relatively high human population density in the Region, the mobility of animals across political boundaries, and potential harm to people that could result from certain animal control measures, particularly hunting. Animal control requires multi-jurisdictional coordination, creativity and persistence in order to lower the population and not merely chase the nuisance species from one municipality to another.

The state has an aggressive mosquito abatement program to prevent the spread of the West Nile Virus. The towns of Darien, Greenwich and New Canaan have programs to control the Canada geese population in areas of significant human activity. In addition, several of the Region's municipalities established the Fairfield County Municipal Deer Management Alliance in 2004 to work cooperatively to address problems associated with deer overpopulation.

## Open Space

Open space remains an important aspect of planned urban environments. Open spaces help protect environmentally sensitive areas and those with unique environmental characteristics; they contribute to water and air quality; and they provide for passive and active recreational opportunities. Open space also positively impacts property values, tourism and public health.

Open space can be protected through land donation, public acquisition, deed restrictions, conservation easements and tax incentives. Desirable open space is often identified in municipal plans of conservation and development and acquired as opportunities arise and funds become available. In addition, access to Long Island Sound was identified as a priority in the 1995 Plan, and it remains so.

In some cases, open space is preserved through financial assistance from the state, land trusts and other not-for-profit organizations. For instance, The



**Mather Meadows, Darien**

Nature Conservancy owns and manages the Devil's Den Preserve in Weston. Also, open space in the Mianus River watershed is owned by a mix of public and not-for-profit entities, including The Nature Conservancy, the state, the City of Stamford and the Town of Greenwich.

Despite these successes, development pressure remains strong in the Region and land is extremely expensive. Unprotected open space is vulnerable to development, and opportunities to acquire desirable open space are often lost due to a lack of available funding for land acquisition.

## Recreation

The Region offers a great variety of recreational opportunities, including bicycle and walking trails, boating, beaches, fishing, golf, hunting, cross-county skiing, snow-shoeing and virtually every type of team sport. Public recreational facilities are available to residents in each municipality.

Some of the challenges to maintain and increase recreational opportunities include:

- Residential or commercial development of unprotected open space, which may contain unique recreational opportunities or scenic beauty.
- Competition for the use of trails from all terrain vehicle (ATV) users. Many of the trails in the Region were not designed for, nor are they appropriate for ATV use. As of 2005, the state was working to identify trails and other areas appropriate for ATV use.



- ❑ Providing designated lanes (or, at least, adequate shoulders) and improved signage to facilitate increased and safer bicycling.
- ❑ Minimizing costs of recreational opportunities to enable low and moderate-income families to take advantage of them.

Bicycling merits special attention because it offers numerous potential benefits for the Region. In particular, bicycling represents a mode of transportation for commuting to work and is an essential component for the integrated intermodal transportation network envisioned in the *South Western Region Long Range Transportation Plan, 2004-2030*. Some of the best potential bike routes are along state highways which generally have little or no capacity for cyclists and pedestrians.

Several inter-municipal bicycle trails have been proposed which have varying levels of political or public support:

- ❑ The East Coast Greenway is a trail extending from Florida to Maine along the Atlantic coast. This ambitious project is being led by the East Coast Greenway Alliance with mixed support from municipalities in the Region. The East Coast Greenway would include the proposed Merritt Parkway Multi-Use Trail, which extends along the 37.5-mile length of the Merritt Parkway right-of-way from the New York State line to the Housatonic River in Stratford. In 2004, a demonstration project was proposed on the south side of the Merritt Parkway in Stamford between High Ridge Road (Route 137) at Exit 35, east approximately one mile to Newfield Avenue.
- ❑ In 1971, a study proposed the Route 7 Linear Park extending from Norwalk Harbor northward in the right-of-way of the then-planned Route 7 Expressway to Danbury. With the elimination of funding for the full expressway project in the 1990s, the prospects for the Route 7 Linear Park remain uncertain. Norwalk has continued to pursue the project as the Norwalk River Multi-Use Trail. The Norwalk Heritage Trail, linking the maritime area with Matthew's Park, was opened in 2000. The Norwalk River Multi-Use Trail will connect with the Norwalk Heritage Trail at Mathews Park and extend north to Route 123.
- ❑ The Mianus River Gorge Trail is located on the border of Stamford and Greenwich.
- ❑ The Stamford Multi-Use Trail will connect the Stamford Transportation Center with the University of Connecticut's Stamford campus and Scalzi Park.

## Recommendations

- ❑ Improve water quality in the Region's waterways and Long Island Sound by addressing non-point source pollution through compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Phase II Program; preservation and creation of riparian buffers; and controlling the population of Canada geese
- ❑ Ensure a safe ground water drinking supply for private and public wells by adopting land-use restrictions in aquifer protection areas in accordance with the Connecticut's Aquifer Protection Program. Also, aging sewers at risk of rupturing should be replaced to prevent contamination of ground water supplies.
- ❑ Improve air quality and reduce respiratory ailments caused by air pollution:
  - Promote clean air by encouraging ridesharing, public transit, and passenger/freight rail usage, improving traffic flow and incident management, and curtailing other sources of pollution.
  - Incorporate energy efficiency measures in capital improvement programs, building codes and zoning and subdivision regulations.
  - Promote pedestrian and bicycle friendly commercial areas.
  - Support public transportation as a means to reduce vehicle dependency.
- ❑ Prevent human disease risks associated with deer, mosquitoes and Canada geese, as well as conflicts between humans and wildlife.
  - Implement multi-jurisdictional deer population control measures.
  - Educate the public about safe and effective ways to reduce mosquito breeding areas.
  - Implement multi-jurisdictional Canada geese control measures.
- ❑ Increase the amount of active and passive open space throughout the Region.
  - Consider acquiring or obtaining an easement when suitable waterfront property becomes available to secure additional public access to Long Island Sound.
  - Encourage public access using boardwalks to adjacent urban waterfront development, and walkways along the rivers flowing into Long Island Sound.



- Help property owners use the tax provisions in Public Act 490 to protect farms, forest land and other forms of open space.
- Complete planned acquisitions of local open space parcels.
- Increase recreational opportunities throughout the Region, particularly bicycling.
  - Provide for the greatest level of access to Long Island Sound.
  - Seek municipal endorsement for a designated route for the East Coast Greenway and complete the Route 7 Linear Trail from Norwalk to Danbury.
  - Propose specific bicycle and pedestrian facilities in municipal plans of conservation and development.
  - Develop safe bicycling and walking routes to schools.
  - Install bicycle storage facilities in suitable areas.





## Chapter 8 – Emergency Planning and Disaster Relief

Traditionally, emergency response organizations serving suburban and rural communities have prepared themselves to manage common crises such as house fires, motor vehicle accidents and severe weather emergencies. Generally speaking, these crises and their consequences were managed within the budgets and boundaries of each municipality. In the event an incident overtaxed the resources or capabilities of a particular municipality, mutual aid agreements provided the assurance that other municipalities would provide support as needed.

In recent years, however, a number of factors have resulted in a need for all communities to shift away from this traditional approach to emergency planning and response. Those factors – such as the high cost of acquiring and maintaining specialized personnel and equipment, the transportation of hazardous cargo through the Region, the growth of special needs populations and the increasing threat of terrorism – have resulted in the emergence of a regional model for emergency planning and response.

The regional model for emergency planning and response broadly defines the boundaries of the Region. Here, use of the word “regional” does not exclusively denote the South Western Region, but rather is used to describe a collection of response organizations and other resources needed to ensure

protection of key assets – such as critical infrastructure, major employment sites and attractions, government facilities and schools – in the event of a catastrophic event. The term “region” also is flexibly defined: mobilization of response organizations and resources is determined as a function of the type of incident, the size and scope of the incident and the assets – human, man-made and natural – at risk.

In this context, the Region is rich in assets. It is home to numerous global and national corporations, major road and rail corridors, water and power utilities, and cultural and educational resources. It also is a short distance from New York City with its incomparable wealth of assets. As such, those persons and organizations charged with protection of the public recognize the importance of cooperative agreements with a wide variety of emergency response and public health organizations not only within the Region but with response agencies in adjacent jurisdictions, including those in New York as well as in other parts of Connecticut.

### The Model

The regional model for emergency planning and response that has been embraced by the Region’s member municipalities and response agencies is one of both formal and informal collaboration. These collaborations enhance, rather than supplant, the work of local emergency planning councils and municipal emergency management and response agencies.

On a formal level, collaboration takes the form of a number of written mutual aid compacts. Some of these compacts, such as those among police and fire departments, involve all of the Region’s municipalities and are longstanding. In fact, these agreements predate the call for such agreements that emerged in the aftermath of the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. Other agreements, such as those between the towns of Wilton and Weston, are sub-regional and somewhat operational in nature. In several cases, municipalities have formed districts to formally administer and share certain public safety functions. The Westport-Weston Health District is an example of this type of arrangement.

Informally, a number of working groups have been formed in recent years to look at regional solutions for public safety challenges that are unlikely to affect a single municipality. These include the South Western Region Emergency Operations Working Group, the South Western Region Public Health Preparedness Working Group and the South Western Region Incident Management Team. Some of the tasks undertaken by these working groups include:



Norwalk Police Headquarters



- ❑ Conducting assessments of regional infrastructure and other critical facilities;
- ❑ Evaluating the potential loss of life and property posed by severe storms and other natural disasters;
- ❑ Inventorying specialized equipment and skill sets present among the Region's first responders;
- ❑ Developing scenarios, drills and plans for regional incident response and recovery, and;
- ❑ Engaging in regular discussions of pressing issues and current events in emergency management.

By 2005, the working groups – in coordination with SWRPA – had completed several critical tasks, including:

- ❑ *The Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan* (for certain natural hazards);
- ❑ Preparation of annexes to local emergency operations plans to guide response to terrorist incidents and natural disasters;
- ❑ Development of specifications for a regional emergency telephone notification system;
- ❑ Creation of a regional preparedness profile, and;
- ❑ Establishment of goals, objectives and priorities for improving regional emergency preparedness.

## Resources

The Region has many resources available to support emergency planning, response and recovery activities. Each municipality has a designated emergency management director and a full-time, professional police department. Supporting these functions are professional and volunteer fire departments, five full-time public health departments, emergency medical services providers, three hospitals, a regional hazardous materials team, a regional bomb squad and numerous ambulance corps. Several municipalities also host local hazardous materials teams. Additionally, the Region is served by several chapters of the American Red Cross and various Community Emergency Response Teams.

These organizations contribute resources to regional emergency preparedness activities including personnel, specialized skills and experience, equipment, and

memberships in statewide and national emergency preparedness organizations. Of all these resources, it is the Region's emergency response personnel that are the most valuable, as they provide the essential human capital and leadership without which effective emergency response is simply impossible.

## The Role of SWRPA

Emergency planning is a new endeavor for SWRPA and one that falls outside the mission ascribed to it by the General Statutes. In late 2001, the state enlisted the help of SWRPA and Connecticut's other regional planning organizations to assist with the coordination of emergency response plans and related activities at a regional level. The state requested SWRPA's assistance again during the following three fiscal years. SWRPA's level of involvement in future emergency planning activities is uncertain and will, in part, be driven by federal and state policies as well as the availability of funding.

As of 2005, SWRPA was providing (or had provided in previous years) various coordination and planning functions in support of regional emergency preparedness activities. In its role as coordinator, SWRPA convened the various working groups and served as both a central point of information exchange and as a meeting coordinator. These services ensure not only that critical information from state and federal authorities reach key municipal staff, but that regular forums for discussion of such information are convened. The information generated through such discussions and consensus opinions issued by the working groups have also been used to advocate for state-level policy changes and resources for the Region.

As part of its planning functions, SWRPA writes regional plans to meet emerging state and federal requirements. These plans are developed with the participation of the working groups, who use a consensus-based approach to approving the plans' content. Often, these plans are used to leverage or qualify for receipt of state or federal grant funds. For example, the adoption of the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan provided the Region's municipalities with access to Federal Emergency Management Agency relief funds to defray the cost of response and recovery from natural events such as hurricanes and other severe coastal storms. SWRPA also assists its member municipalities with the review and update of mutual aid compacts.



## Recommendations

Recommendations for improving local and regional emergency preparedness have emerged as a natural result of information exchange, planning and coordinating activities. Those recommendations are as follows:

- Continue to perform planning coordination and information exchange activities for the benefit of member municipalities.
- Encourage municipalities to implement recommendations contained in the *Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan*, including those related to the preservation of natural storm protectors such as coastal barriers and wetlands, tree and drainage maintenance programs, the increased use of geographic information systems to further identify the potential impacts of severe weather events before they occur, and the review of repetitive property loss data and revision of local zoning and building codes, as needed, to help prevent future loss or damage to property.
- Encourage municipalities to aggressively pursue funding to protect and strengthen natural and artificial systems that offer protection against loss and damage caused by weather events such as flooding and severe winds.
- Encourage member municipalities to reach out to a wide range of local, regional and statewide organizations to identify resources that may be available to aid emergency response and recovery efforts.
- Encourage member municipalities to strengthen existing mutual aid agreements to support a regional response system.
- Support member municipalities in their efforts to improve and expand existing communications systems to achieve greater interoperability.
- Encourage municipalities to implement emergency telephone notification systems and enhanced community alert systems to ensure that persons living and working in the Region are promptly notified of hazardous conditions and events that may pose a threat to life and property.







Graphic Design provided by Norwalk Community College through a special student-internship, faculty-xternship grant from SWRPA. April Baker, Student Designer; Cara Kacin, Faculty Advisor; John Alvord, Chair, Humanities Department.

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