

REGIONAL PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT 2007



SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

REGIONAL PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments
5 Connecticut Avenue, Norwich, CT 06360

Certification of Adoption

This Plan was adopted at a legally convened meeting of the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments on October 17, 2007.



Keith J. Robbins, Chairman



Dennison Allen, Secretary

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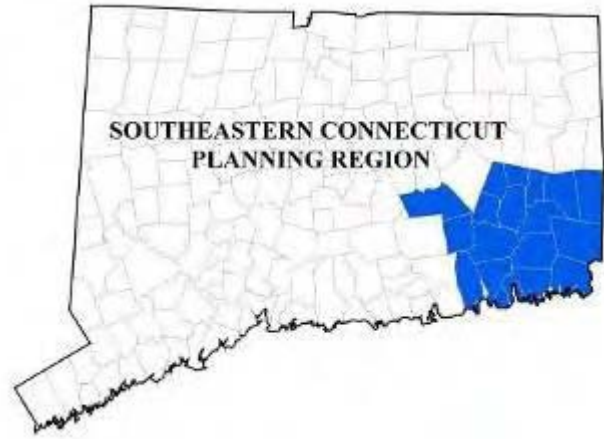
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INTRODUCTION

Southeastern Connecticut encompasses 20 units of municipal government, in addition to two sovereign Native American Tribal Nations. The region contains 560 square miles of land that is bordered by the State of Rhode Island to the east, by the Long Island Sound to the south, with the Midstate, Capitol, Windham and Northeastern regions located to the west and north. Multi-modal access to the region and its favorable location between Boston and New York City, give southeastern Connecticut a distinct competitive advantage. The region's shoreline, natural, cultural and historic resources are only a few of the many assets that provide a multitude of recreation and entertainment opportunities as well as contribute to the high quality of life the region's residents and visitors enjoy.



In 1961, the region's towns joined together to create the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Planning Agency (SCRPA), which adopted the first *Regional Development Plan* for southeastern Connecticut in 1967. In 1992, the region formed the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG), which succeeded SCRPA as southeastern Connecticut's regional planning entity. In 1997, the *Regional Conservation and Development Policy Guide for Southeastern Connecticut* was adopted. Since that time, southeastern Connecticut has experienced economic shifts that manifest themselves in land use changes. The continuing reduction of defense and manufacturing related employment, coupled with the concurrent boom in casino-related development and employment, has altered the basic economic structure of southeastern Connecticut. This is one of a number of identifiable sources of pressure influencing land development patterns in the region.



Farm Stand, Voluntown

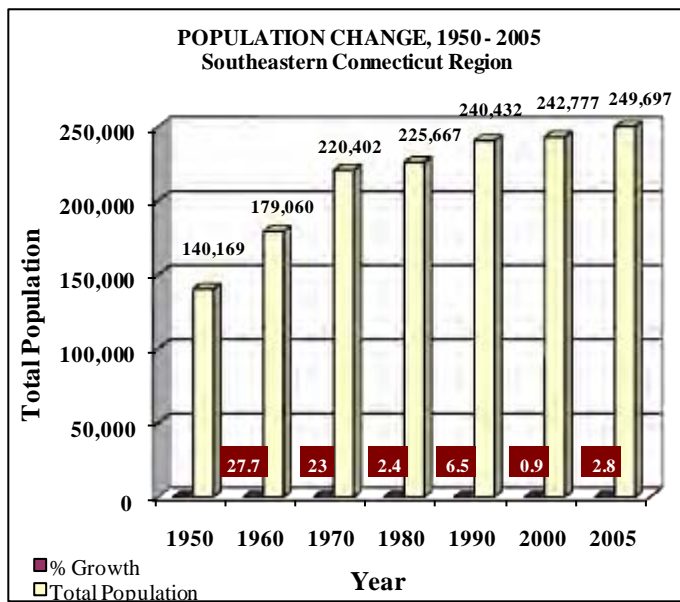
In the future, the interface between land development for economic reasons and the inherent limitations of the region's natural resources, principally related to the continued availability of clean water, will

influence the sustainability of all future development. The region's economic and environmental well being will ultimately be determined by an understanding of the opportunities and limitations with respect to our natural and physical resources and the manner in which they are utilized. It is toward that end that this Plan is presented.

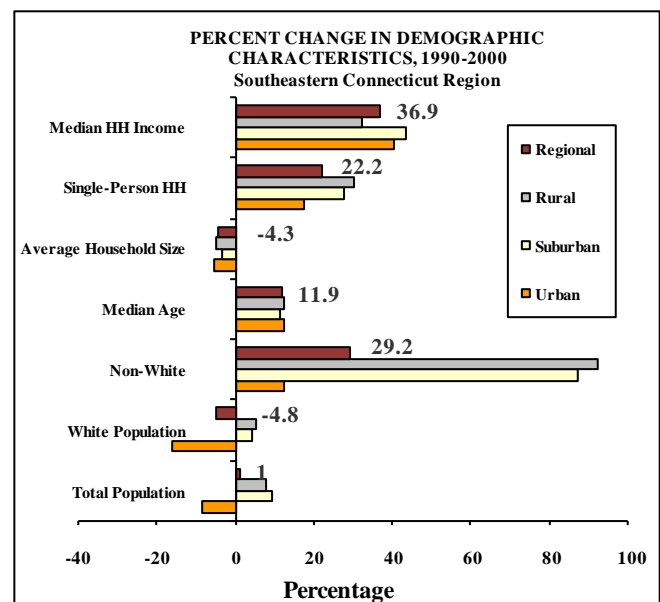
The 2007 *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development* is an advisory document intended to present general recommendations based on a review of regional trends and the identification of issues of regional concern. The Plan identifies five issue areas with associated goals, objectives and recommendations that are based on independent research and analysis as well as responses to a survey, input from a public hearing, public meetings and workshops, and ongoing collaboration with other regional organizations on a number of regional issues and concerns.

REGIONAL POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Although the region's population growth has slowed, the characteristics of the regional population have changed significantly over the last fifteen years. The urban municipalities have experienced an overall net loss in population while the population of suburban towns increased substantially. The region's population is significantly older overall and, consistent with the past 30-year regional trend, more diverse.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and SCCOG



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and SCCOG

The region has seen a sharp increase in the number of one-person households as well as a notable decrease in median income. Despite the modest recent growth in population, it is projected that the region will grow to more than 272,000 persons by the year 2020, an increase of 12% over the 2000 recorded Census population.

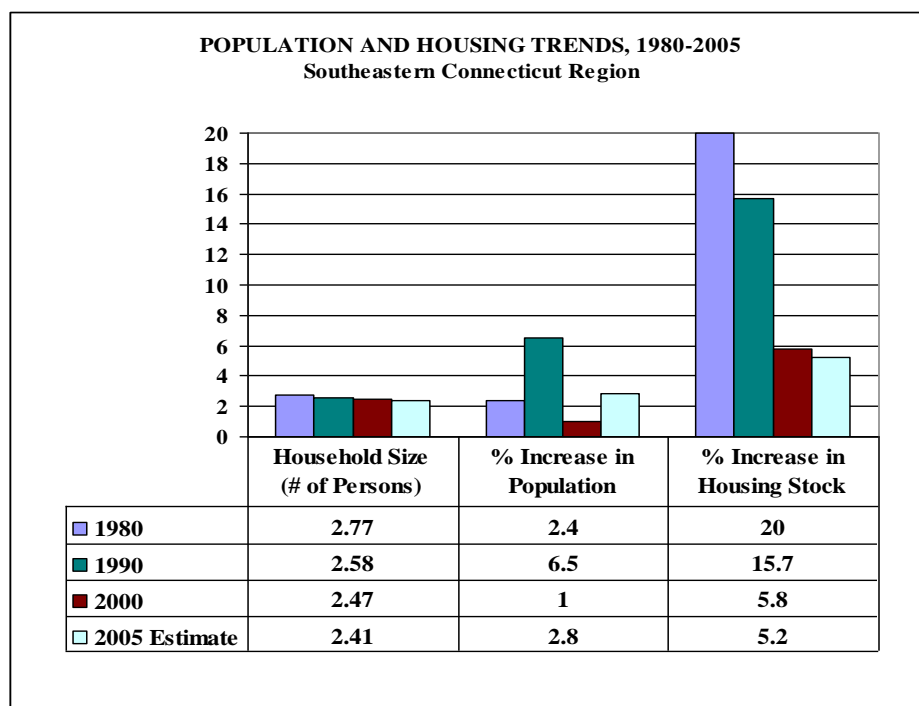
HOUSING

Housing activity between 2000 and 2005 has increased by 31% from ten years earlier. In fact, the annual permitted housing totals for the years 2003, 2004, and 2005 exceeded 1,000 units. This level of housing activity occurred only once during the 1990's and that was in 1994. This level of housing activity is very much in line with estimated housing need presented in the *Housing a Region in Transition, An Analysis of Housing Needs in Southeastern Connecticut, 2000-2005* compiled by SCCOG in 2002. In that study it was estimated that between 860 and 1,020 new units per year were needed to meet the demand for housing.



New Subdivision, Montville

The current housing situation is attributed in part to five major complex variables that influence housing demand, supply and affordability. The five factors are: economic shifts characterized by high-wage manufacturing jobs being replaced with significantly lower-paying service industry jobs; population trends that result in the continued movement away from urban municipalities; zoning policies reflecting the dependence of



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and SCCOG

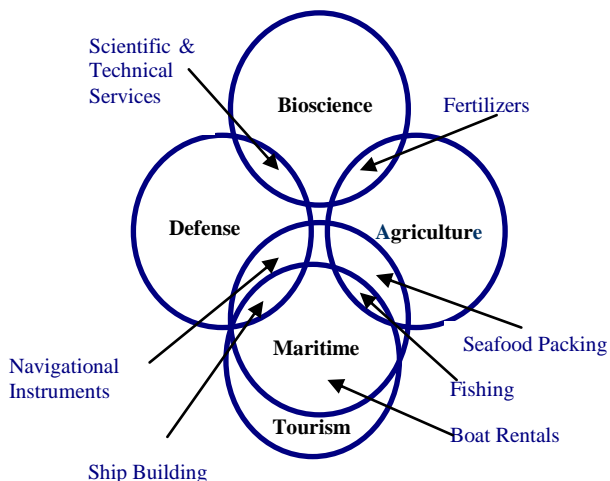
local government on property taxes; limited infrastructure especially water supply, sewerage and transportation systems, which inhibit the development of higher density housing; and limited number of building sites that are physically suitable for development without extensive investment.

Addressing such issues will require extraordinary regional cooperation. Inter-municipal cooperation will be needed to create an environment within which the region's communities can collectively formulate specific actions to address housing issues. Without such cooperation and agreement, efforts to address housing issues will continue to be fragmented and ineffective. With this in mind, the Southeastern Connecticut Housing Alliance (SECHA) and the SCCOG entered into a Memorandum of Agreement in 2007 in the interest of seeing more affordable housing built in the region.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

The region's economy greatly influences land use and transportation decisions. Since the early 1990's, the region's economy has undergone a significant restructuring as it continues its transition from one of the nation's most defense-dependent to a more diversified economy. One effect of this shift is that without appropriate employment opportunities to match the increasing education level of the region's population, much of the region's workforce will be forced to go elsewhere to find suitable work. During the past 10 to 15 years, the region lost almost 11,000 manufacturing jobs with an annual average wage of \$67,000. During this same time period, the service sector increased employment by more than 27,000 jobs with an annual average wage of approximately \$33,000. The reduction of defense industry jobs and the growth in the tourism and entertainment industry present continuing challenges. In this present transition the region risks becoming as dependent on the tourism and entertainment industry as it was previously on the defense industry.

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Southeastern Connecticut, jointly prepared by the Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region (seCTer) and the SCCOG, identified six industry clusters that are important to the regional economy: Bioscience, Defense, Maritime, Tourism, Creative, and Agriculture. Many of these six industry groups are interconnected, indicative of a complex



economy. It must be recognized that economic development is both limited and enhanced by the region's unique characteristics. Southeastern Connecticut's attractiveness as an economic development center is primarily a result of its location halfway between New York and Boston; the fact that it is bisected by two Interstate highways; has a river that connects to Long Island Sound; and finally, that there

are three operational rail lines. At the same time, for the purposes of this Plan, it is equally important to recognize that not all locations within the region are appropriate for all forms of economic development and that the key ingredient that makes southeastern Connecticut an attractive place to live is its historical development around quaint village center clusters with its emphasis on human scale. As much as anything, this form of development was the result of the geological processes that formed the region. The unique physical character of the region has inherent environmental limitations for certain types of development that must be recognized in a plan of this type.

TRANSPORTATION

Within Connecticut, the southeastern Connecticut region is unique with respect to its abundance of transportation infrastructure assets. Functionally, these regional assets include air, marine, rail, and highway transit. The safe and efficient movement of people and goods is one of the key building blocks of a long-range regional plan. In 1999, Michael Gallis, under contract with the Connecticut Institute for the 21st Century, published a study in which he concluded that Connecticut was in danger of becoming an economic “cul-de-sac” in the competition for global development if the major transportation infrastructure issues facing the state, continued to be ignored.

For a variety of reasons, the capacity of many of the region’s key roadways is being exhausted. The *SCCOG Regional Transportation Plan FY 2007 - 2035* recommends a number of projects to address these problems including, the expansion of public transportation as well as capacity improvements to the major highways within the region. Generally, there are three major sources of stress for transportation infrastructure in southeastern Connecticut. These include: energy cost and availability; new traffic-causing development; and limited funding. The region has identified a wide range of public transit needs as experienced by the general public as well as special needs groups such as the elderly, disabled, low-income, and those without automobiles.



Groton-New London Airport, Groton

Volume-to-capacity ratios and high-frequency accident locations are regularly studied as part of the ongoing transportation planning process. Utilization patterns on certain federal and state roads have

changed in the past 15 years as a function of changes in the economy as the region moved away from a defense-dependent economy to a more diversified one with an emphasis on casino gaming and tourism. However, concurrent with the shift in the economy has been an equally important shift in the residential population into the suburban and rural communities. This has resulted in new housing, new schools and new roads and has been fueled by favorable mortgage rates and relatively cheap energy. The dichotomy between external tourist-generated traffic and new locally generated traffic has formed the basis of all discussions related to future highway infrastructure investments in southeastern Connecticut.

WATER AND SEWER

The location of public water and sewer systems has, and will continue to have, a profound effect on the development of the region. Identification of new water sources and the completion of a number of recently recommended interconnection projects will help ensure that the region's water supply and transmission will be sufficient to overcome projected constraints to future development within the region. As new water supplies and distribution networks are developed, new sewerage systems will have to be developed as well.

Currently, 55 square miles of the region are served by either water and sewer systems or water only



Groton Reservoir

systems. This area translates to approximately 29% of the region's developed area or approximately 10% of the region's total land area. It is estimated that over 70% of the region's population are served by one of these utility systems.

The Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority's (SCWA) *Southeastern Connecticut Regional Water Supply Plan*, published in 2003, estimates that demand for water will exceed supply as early as the year 2010. Therefore, the ability of the region to achieve its long-term development goals

will be directly linked to a collective effort to secure future water supply sources. However, the reality is that since the identified future supply sources are not evenly distributed throughout the region, the burden for water supply protection will fall more heavily on certain towns.

A recent initiative, which could impact regional water supply and transmission in the region, was the re-

activation of the SCCOG Regional Water Committee. This Committee has been tasked by the SCCOG with identifying steps needed to realize a more regional, cooperative approach to the provision of water in southeastern Connecticut.

Significant water system expansion will require securing additional water sources. Groundwater wells are envisioned as having the biggest potential for future water supply, making the protection of identified high yield groundwater source locations imperative.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Economic growth and continued quality of life are both important priorities for the people of southeastern Connecticut. The health of the region's natural resources including forests, clean air, surface and ground water sources, unique landforms, wetlands, and wildlife are essential to serve both priorities.

There are several coastal management issues important to southeastern Connecticut that involve the preservation of coastal resources. These issues include matters related to the provision of public access and utilization and expansion of existing water-dependant uses. Additionally, one of the most significant methods to improve coastal water quality is to improve management of non-point sources of water pollution. Coastal water quality in the region is generally very good and has improved by upgrades to area sewage treatment facilities and by managing stormwater runoff throughout southeastern Connecticut.

In a regulatory setting, natural resources are often viewed as potential limitations or obstacles to development. In some cases this is true. But important natural resource features can be critical components that need protection in a sensitive ecosystem. Often these natural resources can be planned around, where

NATURAL RESOURCE FEATURES Southeastern Connecticut Region		
FEATURE	ACRES	SQUARE MILES
Southeastern Connecticut Region	358,706	560.5
Aquifer Area	68,000	107
Steep Slope (>15%)	56,000	88
Floodplain	39,000	61
Wetland	52,000	81
Water Bodies	12,000	20
Bedrock Soils	34,000	53

Source: SCCOG GIS analysis

development is designed to minimize potential adverse impacts. The region's natural resources, especially potable water, open space and farmland must be seriously considered in making land-use recommendations at the local level. Failure to meet this challenge will create significant impacts on every facet of economic growth and quality of life within southeastern Connecticut.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Since the late 1970's, the southeastern Connecticut region has made great strides forward in terms solid waste disposal. Historically, all forms of solid waste were simply buried in local landfills. In 1985, the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resource Recovery Authority (SCRRA) was formed. Several years later SCRRA constructed a waste-to-energy plant in Preston. That plant has now operated almost continuously since 1992, and sells enough power back to CL&P to meet the demands of 10,000 homes. Twelve SCCOG municipalities are members of SCRRA, and four others utilize the SCRRA facility under contract. Two additional SCCOG towns dispose of their waste at a privately owned waste-to-energy facility in Lisbon.



Wheelabrator Technologies, Inc. Waste-to-Energy Plant, Lisbon

In 2006, the *Department of Environmental Protection amended the State of Connecticut Solid Waste Management Plan*. The major goals of this Plan as stated were:

- To significantly reduce the amount of solid waste generated in Connecticut requiring disposal, by way of increased source reduction, reuse, recycling and composting;
- To manage the solid waste that requires disposal in an efficient, equitable and environmentally protective manner, consistent with the statutory solid waste hierarchy; and
- To adopt stable, long-term funding mechanisms that provide sufficient revenue for state, regional and local programs while providing incentives for increased waste reduction and diversion.

The 2006 State Plan set forth as a strategy a 58% diversion rate for municipal solid waste by the year 2024. The estimated diversion rate in 2005 according to the Plan was only 30%, so it is obvious that this strategy will require increased efforts by Connecticut municipalities. Significant resources from the State will be required to prevent this responsibility from being borne solely by municipalities.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Older, well-preserved buildings and historic sites reflect the character of the southeastern Connecticut Region. Over the years, individual homeowners, private groups, and businesses have preserved many buildings. Such preservation through productive re-use has provided needed business and residential space; has improved the appearances of parts of the region; and has enhanced the property values and related tax assessments. During the past several decades, the public sector has become more actively

involved in historic preservation and, through legislation, has created programs to protect historic buildings and structures.

Designating a property on the National Register of Historic Places is the primary tool used to protect historic properties federally. There are currently 169 structures, sites, or districts within southeastern Connecticut listed on the National Register of Historic Places. State protection includes designation on the Connecticut Register of Historic Places, and protection at the municipal level is found within Sections 7-147a-147k of the Connecticut General



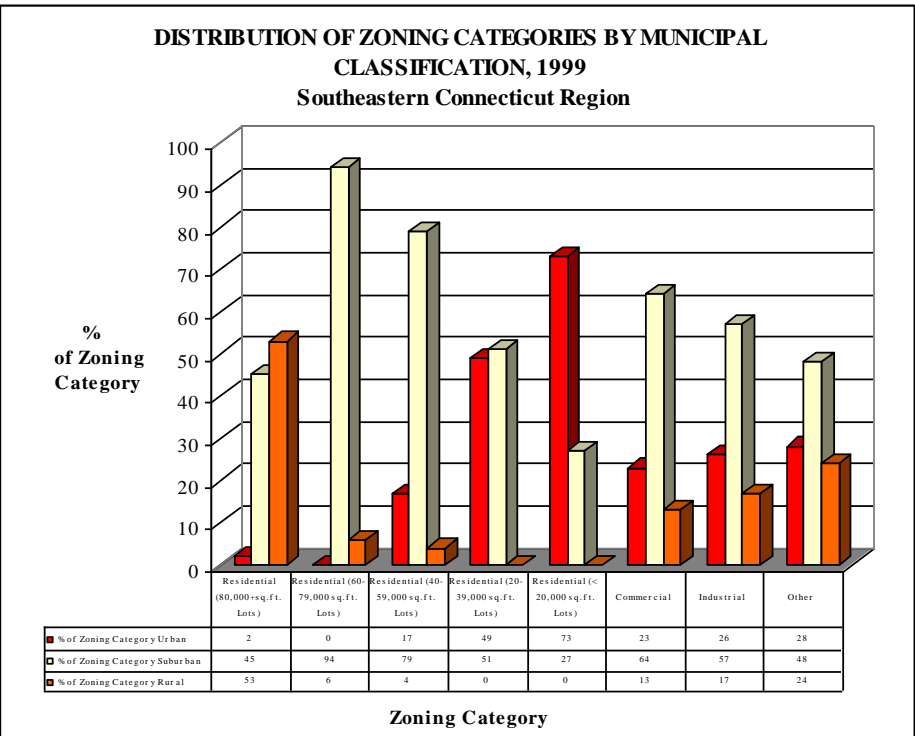
Captain Cook Inn, Preston

Statutes, which authorize municipalities to establish historic districts and to create a historic district commission to regulate certain aspects of structures within the defined historic district(s).

LAND USE AND ZONING

The total developed area within the southeastern Connecticut region comprises slightly more than 34% of the region's 560.7 square miles. The more intensively zoned land reflects the historical trend of

development in the region along the shorelines of the Long Island Sound and the Thames River. Exceptions to this pattern are noted in nodes of non-residential designations along the major transportation corridors. Compilation of recent land use data indicates a continuation of past general trends that include an increasing percentage of land being developed for residential use. This should not be surprising



Source: SCCOG Towns

since the vast majority of land, approximately 90%, is zoned for residential use. It should be noted that although new technology allows for the more precise tabulation of land use acreage, each individual town may classify land use differently. As an example, only four SCCOG municipalities categorize land as being “Mixed Urban Uses.” A continuing challenge for the region is to ensure that non-residentially zoned land be located to reflect site characteristics that lend themselves to a more intensive form of development, and where there is sufficient access to needed infrastructure.

LAND USE TRENDS, 1962-2005
Southeastern Connecticut Region

LAND USE CATEGORY		1962		1970		1980		1990		2000		2005	
		% TLA	% TDL	% TLA	% TDL	% TLA	% TDL	% TLA	% TDL	% TLA	% TDL	% TLA	% TDL
Developed Land	Medium & High Density Residential	3.68	43.76	4.41	30.89	4.88	28.62	6.87	33.46	8.54	34.24	7.20	21.04
	Low Density Residential	2.05	24.32	2.50	17.51	3.86	22.66	4.16	20.27	6.79	27.14	14.98	43.79
	Commercial	0.39	4.62	0.48	3.38	0.62	3.65	0.90	4.38	1.06	4.24	1.53	4.46
	Intensive Industrial	0.23	2.69	0.22	1.55	0.25	1.48	0.54	2.64	0.63	2.5	1.06	3.10
	Extractive Industrial	0.24	2.89	0.19	1.32	0.42	2.47	0.36	1.74	0.24	0.94	0.59	1.73
	Institutional	1.62	19.30	2.15	15.07	2.55	14.94	2.57	12.51	2.48	9.9	3.08	9.00
	Mixed Urban Use	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.03	0.09
	Transportation, Communication & Utilities	0.20	2.42	4.33	30.28	4.47	26.20	5.13	24.99	5.26	21.04	5.72	16.74
	TOTAL %	8.4	100.0	14.3	100.0	17.1	100.0	20.5	100.0	25.0	100.0	34.2	100.0
Designated Open Space	Active Recreational	% TLA	% TOS	% TLA	% TOS	% TLA	% TOS	% TLA	% TOS	% TLA	% TOS	% TLA	% TOS
		1.39	7.93	2.50	13.12	2.84	21.19	2.80	15.15	2.53	12.97	2.34	10.26
	Agriculture, Agricultural Reserve	8.14	46.32	6.94	36.35	NA*	NA*	4.13	22.33	3.76	19.29	5.08	22.29
	Open Space	8.04	45.75	9.64	50.53	10.57*	78.81*	11.57	62.53	13.22	67.74	15.37	67.44
	TOTAL %	17.6	100.0	19.1	100.0	13.4	100.0	18.5	100.0	19.5	100.0	22.8	100.0
Undeveloped Land		% TLA	% TUL	% TLA	% TUL	% TLA	% TUL	% TLA	% TUL	% TLA	% TUL	% TLA	% TUL
	Undeveloped Land	74.01	100.00	66.63	100.00	69.55	100.00	60.96	100.00	54.58	98.39	42.24	98.11
NATR	Native American Tribal Reservation (NATR)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.88	NA	0.77	NA
Total Land Area	Calculated Total Land Area in Square Miles	513**		559.20		559.20		559.20		559.50		560.70	
	TOTAL %	100.0		100.0		100.0		100.0		100.0		100.0	

Source: SCCOG Towns

* Note: In 1980, the **Agriculture, Agricultural Reserve** acreage was included in the **Open Space** acreage.

** Note: Colchester was not a member of the Southeastern Connecticut Region until 1971

TLA: Total Land Area TDL: Total Developed Land TOS: Total Open Space TUL: Total Undeveloped Land

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The following summarizes the process used to solicit input received from the public and local officials during the course of the formulation of this Plan. In addition to the distribution of a questionnaire that solicited opinion on a variety of land use and development issues, four public meetings/workshops and a public hearing were held. A Steering Committee, comprised of four members of the Regional Planning Commission and four members of the SCCOG, oversaw staff preparation of the Plan document, and staff regularly provided Plan progress reports to the Council of Governments and the Regional Planning Commission.

PUBLIC MEETINGS/WORKSHOPS

In the course of preparing this *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development*, four public workshops and a public hearing were held to receive input concerning issues of regional concern. In addition, municipal official and public comment was solicited via the previously mentioned questionnaire. This public comment, along with input from SCCOG's Plan of Development Steering Committee and a technical analysis of regional data, were key determinants in the formulation of the 2007 Plan.

QUESTIONNAIRE

As part of the process in preparing this *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development*, SCCOG distributed questionnaires to the region's chief elected officials, land use commissions, and municipal planners in an attempt to identify and quantify prominent issues facing the region. The questionnaires were also posted on the SCCOG web site and distributed at two public workshops. In total, 75 questionnaires were completed and evaluated. The questionnaire was broken into seven primary categories: Growth Patterns/Impacts and Sprawl; Resource Protection; Planning Document Authority; Affordable Housing; Transportation; Intergovernmental Issues; and Development Priorities.

RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

Growth Patterns/Impacts and Sprawl: Responses indicated that sprawl, which was defined as "dispersed, auto-dependent development outside of compact urban and village centers," was considered a serious concern locally and regionally. The majority of the respondents felt it was very important or somewhat important to control sprawl. Responses were split on the question of whether residential growth was burdening existing town services, yet 83% of the respondents felt that commercial/industrial growth did not burden town services at all. A strong majority, 73%, also felt that it was important for a community to have its commercial development reflect traditional New England character.

Resource Protection: Adopting additional regulatory controls to protect "special natural resources" had both regional and local support. With regard to these "special natural resources," it appeared that the protection of undeveloped woodlands and farmland by regulation was less important than the protection

of other special natural resources, such as water resources and wetlands. Fifty-one percent of the respondents favored the use of tax dollars to protect woodlands, and 53% thought tax dollars should be used to protect farmland. Additionally, a strong majority, 85%, supported the acquisition of undeveloped parcels for future open space use.

Affordable Housing: Opinions involving affordable housing were varied. Overall, a majority of respondents, 59%, felt there were not enough affordable, owner-occupied housing units in the region. While responses to this question were consistent throughout the rural, suburban and urban towns, this issue was of more concern in the region's urban municipalities. With regard to the availability of affordable rental units, the responses from the region's rural and suburban towns indicated that not enough units were available, while a majority of the respondents from the region's urban communities felt they currently had an adequate number of affordable rental units. Approximately 57% of the respondents appeared to recognize the need for more affordable owner occupied and/or rental housing units in the region, 71% of all respondents strongly or somewhat supported a requirement for new housing developments to include a percentage of affordable units. In one question, respondents were asked if the cost of education were isolated from residential development, would their community be more likely to support affordable housing. The responses received to this particular question, indicated that only a slight majority, 52%, of the respondents stated that they would be more active in supporting affordable housing within their communities with the cost of education isolated.

Transportation: On the subject matter of transportation, three questions specifically addressed public transit. While 59% of the respondents stated that there was inadequate public transit in their towns, 65% felt that public transit was not practical within the region. Additionally, 30% of the regional response indicated strong support, with 49% indicating some support, and only 21% indicating no support, for the use of taxpayer money to improve mass transit versus building new roads.

Overall, the respondents rated the road systems across the region as *good to fair* within the suburban and urban communities, and *good to very good* for rural communities' road systems. With the exception of some concern expressed in rural communities about congestion on some state secondary roads, traffic congestion was generally only considered a problem on the region's interstate highways, and not on other state or local roads.

Intergovernmental Issues: The questionnaire also posed two questions involving intergovernmental policies with regard to regulatory control over large projects. Among the urban and rural communities there was support for inter-municipal oversight of large-scale developments. Only 35% of the respondents from suburban communities were in favor of this type of regulatory arrangement. Overall 37% of the regional response indicated some support for a regional agency to participate in the regulatory control of large-scale developments, with an additional 35% responding that they were unsure.

Development Priorities: The final category on the questionnaire asked how important it was for the *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development* to address specific development priorities. Under these questions, the respondents rated the following items as *extremely important* or important:

- Preserving the physical character of a community (100%);
- Protection of undeveloped areas (98%);
- Attracting new business (96%);
- Reducing traffic congestion (96%); and
- Encouraging non-residential development (95%); and
- Encouraging residential development (66%).

As the questionnaire was available to the general public on the SCCOG website as well as at two public meetings, there is no way to calculate an overall response rate. While the total number of respondents for the questionnaire was small, all public input is vital in preparing a plan of conservation and development. With this in mind, the results of the questionnaire generally appear to indicate strong regional support for the following objectives:

- Promoting growth in compact urban and village centers (as a means to control sprawl);
- Adopting programs to acquire undeveloped parcels for open space or future municipal use;
- Preserving the physical character of communities;
- Promoting existing businesses and attracting new business;
- Reducing traffic congestion and expanding mass transit options;
- Encouraging non-residential development; and
- Protecting special natural resources

There were also a number of items that only received moderate support that are worth noting here. Some respondents concluded that promoting a framework for joint community land-use regulatory control on



Office Building, Colchester

large-scale projects at the municipal level might be relevant. Some respondents stated that encouraging affordable rental and/or owner-occupied residential units are *somewhat important*. Although some respondents appear to recognize the need for more affordable housing, they remain unclear as to who is responsible for supplying these units. Likewise, the need to improve public transit is inferred from the regional response to the inadequacy of the current system (59%), and as expressed by 79% of respondents being strongly supportive or somewhat supportive to spending taxpayer money on public transit versus roads, with only 21% not at all supportive.

RECOMMENDED PLAN

REGIONAL CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN MAP

The discussions and mapped data presented in the Plan represent the basis upon which several issues of regional concern were identified. These issues, and the potential measures to address them, represent the SCCOG's blueprint for the future of the region. This blueprint is graphically depicted in the Regional Conservation and Development Plan map. The Plan map was influenced by land development patterns, local zoning, transportation systems, water and sewer systems as well as the development limitations imposed by the region's natural environment, especially those associated with existing and potential high yield ground water aquifers. Additional basis for the development of the Regional Conservation and Development Plan map included review of the *Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut, 2004-2009*, and SCCOG member municipalities' Plans of Conservation and Development.



City Hall (background) and Wauregan Hotel (foreground), Downtown Norwich

The region's 2005 estimated population of 249,697 is expected to grow at a rate of 6.5% over the first decade of the 21st Century, a rate the region has not experienced since the 1980's. This population will require housing as well as other public and private services, which in turn will stimulate additional forms of land development. In addition, municipalities will continue to attempt to grow their tax base by allowing land uses that generate additional property taxes.



Buttonwoods Farm, Griswold

This Plan has concluded that it will be necessary to protect the area's natural environment in order to achieve this anticipated growth in land development. Many view the protection of current and future water supply resources as one of the most critical elements in the physical and economic well being of the region. As discussed in the Plan, the essence of the 2003 SCWA *Regional Water Supply Plan* and by extension, the *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development*, is that new sources of water will be required to satisfy demand from all forms of

development In fact, the *Regional Water Supply Plan* stipulates that a projected deficit in water supply will begin to occur between 2010 and 2020 if new sources of supply are not developed.

The region's existing and proposed highway and mass transit systems are also viewed as very important future development factors, both in terms of mobility and access. While there are several significant highway projects that require completion, such as Routes 11 and 2/2A/32, there are improvements needed in mass transit, including bus, rail and waterborne that are equally important to the region's future transportation system.

In summary, this Plan is a vision for the region's future. This vision will require a departure from



House in North Stonington

traditional ways of viewing certain resources as belonging to one town for the exclusive benefit of that town, to a vision that sees the necessity for a regional shared approach to resource management. While it is understood that each municipality must have an adequate tax base to be able to provide the necessary services required by its residents, the development required to achieve that tax base must be sited in such a way to protect the region's natural resources, to maintain the region's quality of life, and to ensure the viability of

sound growth for many years to come.

DESCRIPTION OF MAP CATEGORIES

CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT CATEGORIES

The following describes the various land use categories depicted on the Regional Conservation and Development Plan Map located at the end of this document.

- **Existing and Proposed Urban Uses:** These are areas used, or recommended for the most intensive residential and/or industrial and commercial development. These areas include the region's urban centers as well as concentrations of intensive development in village and town centers. The Urban Use designation denotes the utilization of both public water and sewer systems, existing or planned, that support this development density. These areas can accommodate residential densities of greater than 3 units per acre and similar non-residential activity densities. Where feasible, these areas should be considered for the location of compact, transit accessible, and pedestrian-orientated mixed use.
- **Existing and Proposed Suburban Uses - Medium:** These areas are used, or recommended for residential and/or industrial and commercial development. These areas contain either public water or sewer system service or are recommended for such systems. The high density suburban use areas can

accommodate residential densities ranging from 2 to 3 units per acre and similar non-residential activity densities.

■ **Existing and Proposed Suburban Uses - Low:**

These areas are used, or recommended primarily for residential use at a density of 1 to 2 units per acre. These lower densities, suburban areas are also suitable for limited non-residential activity such as small professional offices and for governmental or low intensity institutional uses.

■ **Existing and Proposed Rural Uses:** These areas are used, or recommended for residential uses at a density of less than 1 unit per acre. These areas are also suitable for agricultural, recreational, limited governmental or institutional uses.

■ **Existing Institutional Uses:** These areas include public and private institutional uses such as governmental, military, correctional, educational and medical facilities.

■ **Existing Recreation and Open Space Uses:**

These areas include state forests, local and private preserves, water company lands, and cemeteries that are two acres or larger. They also include recreational lands designated for intensive uses such as state and local parks, camps and campgrounds, golf courses and sporting clubs, as well as property under the State of Connecticut Agricultural Rights Program.

■ **Proposed Conservation Areas:** These are large areas with significant limitations to development and/or areas that contain a significant special natural resource that makes them suitable for conservation. These areas are generally larger than 5 acres. Included in this category are regulated lands such as inland wetlands, tidal wetlands, stream belts and potential mitigation land. Conservation areas may include land having potential passive and active recreation opportunities. Where appropriate, due to existing and anticipated land use, existing water supply well recharge areas and areas with potential ground water supplies are included in this category.

■ **Federally Recognized Native American Tribal Reservations (NATR):** These areas represent the trust lands of the region's two federally recognized Native American Tribes. Land uses within this category include casinos, tribal government offices and services, hotels, retail, residential, and open space.



West Main Street, Baltic section of Sprague



Lantern Hill, Ledyard

OVERLAY DESIGNATIONS

■ **Existing Reservoir Areas:** This overlay depicts existing watershed areas having surface water impoundments used for public water supply.

- **Level B Aquifers:** This overlay area depicts the recharge area for existing public water supply wells currently used for public water supply. Water utilities are preparing more detailed mapping which after Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection approval will be designated as Level A and regulated by the local municipality under the Connecticut General Statutes Section 22a-354 inclusive. Where appropriate, due to existing land use, these areas have been designated as Proposed Conservation Areas. These are areas that require special attention with regard to the type of land use permitted.
- **Potential High Yield Aquifers:** These are areas designated by the 2003 *Regional Water Supply Plan* as having significant potential to yield large amounts of potable ground water. These are areas that require special attention with regard to permitted land uses. Where compatible with existing land uses, these areas are designated as Proposed Conservation Areas.

REGIONAL ISSUES, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

During the formulation of this Plan, a number of issues important to the future of southeastern Connecticut have been identified as requiring resolution. These issues can be categorized under five general areas including: governmental fragmentation; diversification and growth of the regional economy; effects of future growth on the environment; transportation demands; and public utility infrastructure needs. The Plan's goals, objectives, and recommended actions are presented below for each of these issue areas.

A central theme becomes apparent when examining these issues. The essence of regionalism is that a given population, regardless of town of residence, shares natural and manmade resources. It is vital that this concept of regionalism is understood and endorsed to sustain the notion that the region's quality of life supersedes home rule practices and municipal boundaries. It is hoped that this *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development* will be a useful tool in achieving the necessary cooperation and collaboration between the region's municipalities in order to assure the long-term well being of southeastern Connecticut.



Harkness Memorial State Park, Waterford
Photo courtesy of the Eastern CT Tourism District

ISSUE # 1: GOVERNMENTAL FRAGMENTATION

In Connecticut, governmental fragmentation continues to restrict a region's ability to effectively deal with many problems of a regional nature. Achievement of a true regional approach to future development will require much higher levels of governmental integration. Connecticut's strong tradition of home rule and its lack of regional government results in a highly fragmented governmental structure that is often inadequate to deal effectively and efficiently with a variety of problems that are regional in scope. The responsibilities and powers of regional Councils of Government (COGs), authorized under the general statutes, are extremely limited. COGs may discuss, recommend and coordinate responses on a variety of different issues. However, without regulatory or taxing powers, COGs must look to other levels of government to implement actions.

Within southeastern Connecticut, there are 20 towns, cities or boroughs, two federally recognized, sovereign Native American Tribal Nations, and a number of independent public service authorities or districts. Developing consensus among these separate governmental entities is enormously cumbersome and frequently impossible. Initiating action is even more difficult.

With respect to the 2007 *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development*, the issue of governmental fragmentation becomes immediately evident as it relates to local government's control of land use. The tradition of local land use regulation exists side by side with Connecticut's local governments' high dependence on the taxation of real property. It is necessary to directly link these functions to derive the financial base to underwrite the costs of operating local government.

Under this system of public finance, municipalities are put into the position of having to continuously search for new tax-yielding development in order to expand their tax base to meet growing local expenses. To support this effort, towns zone the most suitable sites within their boundaries that they determine will likely support such new development. Therefore, towns are by default, in competition with their neighboring communities for tax-producing development. Consequently, until the dependence on the property tax is substantially altered, local governments cannot be expected to willingly relinquish any significant degree of land use control to a regional entity.

Since reform in local governmental financing is unlikely in the foreseeable future, the function of regional land use policy-making will continue to strive to be coordinative rather than regulatory in nature. In the

past decade the issue of property tax reform has received growing attention and may someday be implemented, but the effect of that reform on local land use decision making at some point in the future remains unknown. In the interim, overcoming the inherent handicaps of this fragmented governmental structure into the 21st Century will require close working relationships among all the region's municipalities, state agencies, tribal nations, and service authorities.

REGIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

Since the late 1950's Connecticut has lacked a unit of general government at the regional level, between the municipal and state governments. The absence of county government in Connecticut creates a no-man's land with respect to the development of governmental policy and the provision of public services on a multi-municipal basis. The practical response has been a proliferation of single-purpose regional agencies in an attempt to grapple with the policy and service delivery vacuum at the regional level. This situation has served as a fundamental barrier to creating an integrated regional service delivery system.



Regional Multicultural Magnet School, New London

The 1997 *Regional Conservation Development Policy Guide* recommended addressing the issue of fragmentation and lack of integration between the region's multi-town service providers through the provision of SCCOG oversight of these agencies in the future. This recommendation was repeated in the 1999 SCCOG study *Regional Governance for Water Supply in Southeastern Connecticut* and in the 2007 *Report of the SCCOG Regional Water Committee*. Although no steps have been taken to create a direct link between SCCOG and the before mentioned regional agencies, discussions concerning the need for such a relationship are beginning to occur, one example of which is the recent conversations between the SCCOG and the regional Water Authority (SCWA). Another example is the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that SCCOG entered into with the Southeastern Connecticut Housing Alliance (SECHA) in 2007, which among other things, makes the SECHA Housing Director a SCCOG employee. This Plan reiterates the 1997 Plan recommendation calling for more SCCOG oversight of southeastern Connecticut's regional service providers.

GOAL: Reduce intergovernmental fragmentation to enable SCCOG to deal more effectively with issues of a regional nature.

OBJECTIVES:

1. SCCOG oversight of regional public service organizations. At a minimum these would include Southeast Area Transit (SEAT), and the Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority (SCWA).
2. Continued coordination between SCCOG and the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resources Recovery Authority (SCRRRA), Eastern Connecticut Tourism District, Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA), Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB), Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region (seCTer), and the Southeastern Connecticut Housing Alliance (SECHA).
3. Regional cooperation and coordination in the review and approval of large-scale land uses that impact more than the host municipality.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

1. Pursue the formation of a multi-service regional authority that, under the oversight of the SCCOG, would perform regional planning, water supply, solid waste management, and transit functions, all of which are currently provided by separate agencies.
2. In the interim, increase coordination through the use of Memorandums of Agreement that set forth how SCCOG, and other regional agencies, can coordinate the provision of service to the region's residents.
3. Continue close staff-level cooperation with other major regional organizations.
4. Continue the policy of inviting other regional agencies to SCCOG meetings for the purpose of maintaining an inter-relationship on issues of high priority for the region.
5. Sponsor workshops, forums and meetings with other regional agencies to explore improved mechanisms for the coordinated delivery of public services regionally.
6. Continue to work to change the system of municipal finance to reduce local dependence on the property tax as a means to facilitate more effective and coordinative regional land use policy.
7. Continue to provide advisory reviews of statutorily required referrals of development applications to SCCOG; and investigate and support legislation that would provide a stronger role than currently exists in statute, for regional planning organizations in the review and approval of large-scale developments having region-wide impacts.

ISSUE #2: DIVERSIFICATION AND GROWTH OF REGIONAL ECONOMY

Events beyond the region's control largely influence the economy of southeastern Connecticut. Enhancing the characteristics of the emerging economy with the least adverse effects will require time, resources and new levels of cooperation among many interests.

The decline of defense spending at the end of the Cold War destabilized southeastern Connecticut's

economy. With the opening of the Foxwoods Resort Casino in 1992, southeastern Connecticut's economy suddenly shifted direction. In the past 15 years, Southeastern Connecticut lost almost 11,000 manufacturing jobs at an annual average wage of \$67,000, while the service sector increased employment by more than 27,000 jobs at an annual average wage of \$33,000. While the regional economy is more diversified than it was in the past when the defense sector dominated, there is a growing gap in the



General Dynamics Electric Boat, Groton

average earning power of the employees of the various economic sectors.

In the global economy of the 21st Century, the region must focus its resources on creating a supportive environment for manufacturing, both to retain current manufacturers and to attract new firms. Marshaling these resources effectively will require new levels of cooperation among many interests, some of whom have been traditional competitors. Municipalities accustomed to competing for tax base will need to begin to view the entire region as a shared resource that provides

the human and physical capital for economic growth. Likewise, municipalities must seek new ways of sharing both the benefits and impacts of economic development if the region is to prosper.

GOAL: Actively seek to create opportunities for the development of a balanced, diversified, and sustainable economic base to minimize risks of high unemployment and overdependence on any single economic sector.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Implementation of SCCOG and seCTer's 2004 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region.
2. Coordination of SCCOG activities with those of other entities having primary economic development responsibility.
3. Promotion of economic development through multi-municipal, regional organizations.
4. Concentration of compact, mixed-use development in areas that are transit accessible and pedestrian-orientated.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

1. Work collaboratively with seCTer, the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board, the

Eastern Connecticut Tourism District, chambers of commerce, and others, to implement the region's economic development plan.

2. Encourage the improvement of the aging and strained infrastructure of the region's urban centers.
3. Advocate for the revitalization and re-use of existing structures in the region's urban and village centers, including compact, energy-efficient, transit accessible, pedestrian-orientated mixed use development.
4. Support infrastructure expansion to various development sites such as Route 117 in Groton, Route 12 in Ledyard and, the expansion of the Norwich Business Park in Norwich and Franklin.
5. Promote the social infrastructure necessary to address the growing demographic diversity in the region.
6. Support the Southeastern Connecticut Housing Alliance (SECHA) in its effort to encourage increased housing availability, design choice, and affordability.

ISSUE #3: EFFECTS OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Continued development without regard to the carrying capacity of the land poses the single largest threat to the region's natural resource base. Absent the ability to establish regional growth boundaries, the



*Tidal Wetlands at Rocky Neck State Park,
East Lyme*

region's shared natural resources will be placed under growing pressure through random municipal and market-driven development actions. The identification and purchase of land adjacent to areas with special natural resources such as farmlands, tidal marshes, inland wetlands and potential water supply areas, will become increasingly important to maintain the environmental and economic well-being in the region as well as the overall quality of life enjoyed in southeastern Connecticut.

For the past 40 years, despite minimal population growth, the focus of development in the southeastern Connecticut region has shifted from the urban centers to the region's rural and suburban municipalities. This new development pattern is supported both by local zoning and an active private sector marketplace. The need for each municipality to encourage new commercial and industrial development to build tax base has been

previously identified. But the continuing effects of this municipally-based development process on the region's natural resource base, especially as related to air and water quality, presents the biggest governmental challenge for the region, now and in the future.

As the region continues to develop, the region's twenty independent municipalities that have historically promoted development for their own fiscal benefit will have to recognize that the success of their future growth and development could be dependent upon the availability of natural resources, such as water supplies, that exist in another municipality. Conversely, municipalities with plentiful natural resources will realize that, at some point in the future, they have a commodity that will be in high demand. In short, the stakes are extraordinarily high for both resource-abundant and resource-deficient towns as to how and when this scenario manifests itself and whether it occurs in a market-driven, regulatory, or some other environment.



Stonington Commons, Stonington Borough

Early recognition of this new paradigm is essential because of the following three facts:

- The distribution of essential natural resources is imbalanced throughout the region;
- The region's resources are fragile and need protection to ensure future viability; and
- Certain types of fiscally attractive, intensive development pose the greatest threat to the future viability of the region's natural resources.

Balancing the continuing fiscal needs of all towns through the process of resource protection and redistribution is essential to the region's future.

GOAL: Strive to preserve the region's natural resource base by concentrating development where the fewest natural resource limitations exist and establish a process whereby resource-abundant towns begin dialogue with resource-deficient towns concerning future demand for the use of the resource.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Compatibility of local plans with regional and state land use policies.
2. Adoption of state legislation leading to real and comprehensive tax reform, one result being to lessen the influence of property taxes on local land use decision-making.

3. Further identification and protection of future regional water supplies.
4. Identification and protection of wildlife corridors and open space lands that can interconnect adjoining towns.
5. Reduction of hypoxia, pathogens, toxic contaminants and floating debris in Long Island Sound.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

1. Meet with local officials to discuss differences in regional and local land use policies.
2. Conduct studies to identify properties with significant natural resources, especially those located near areas identified as potential high yield aquifer sites.
3. Provide technical assistance and education to member municipalities in the development and administration of natural resource protection regulations and policies, and policies resulting in the preservation of region's farmland.
4. Give priority to the programming of infrastructure improvements in the region's urban core.
5. Support legislation that would provide comprehensive tax reform and lessen the local property tax burden, thereby decreasing the need for towns to permit environmentally detrimental development.
6. Assist member municipalities in implementing their local Coastal Area Management Programs through education and workshops.
7. Encourage municipalities to periodically review their designated open space within their jurisdiction, as delineated in their open space master plan, and to actively acquire open space through the subdivision approval process, using funding from state and federal grant programs, municipal appropriations, and providing the option of requiring developers to provide fees in lieu of open space, for this purpose.
8. Protect sensitive resources by encouraging protective buffers between development and wetlands and identified existing and potential future water supply areas.
9. Noting the success of projects like Jordan Cove subdivision in Waterford, encourage towns to protect valuable natural resources through innovative site design, best management practices with respect to storm water treatment, and open space planning.
10. Assist member municipalities in educating the public concerning the impact of stormwater pollutants and methods for reducing such impacts.
11. Encourage and assist the region's municipalities with the implementation of the *Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan*.

ISSUE #4: TRANSPORTATION DEMANDS

Changes in the national and local economies are resulting in new demands and challenges on all major

transportation facilities in the region. Airports, highways, railroads and ports are all under pressure to perform in new ways. In meeting these challenges, local, regional, statewide and national interests frequently find themselves in conflict over the development or expansion of transportation infrastructure systems in, and through, the region. Achieving a consensus on what best serves the region's interests for all these systems is at times extremely difficult. As a result of both external and internal changes, the region is beset with challenges and opportunities for which transportation is a key underlying requirement.

TRANSIT

Modern public transit bus service in the region was initiated in the mid-1970's as a result of an oil embargo. In 2007, rising energy costs are making bus transit again attractive. In the interim, the nation experienced a binge of suburban development accompanied by a new type of gas consuming vehicle (SUV) to serve the demand of the growing suburban population. The role of transit in the future must be calibrated in terms of serving low-density development patterns and the need to serve the tourism based economy.



Southeast Area Transit (SEAT) Buses

RAIL

Amtrak has completed the electrification of the rail line in the Northeast Corridor. Rail service was expected to increase significantly, from 14 to as many as 52 trains per day passing through the region. This has not happened. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly clear that Amtrak is not serving the commuter needs of the region. Extension of Shoreline East into New London with regular daily and weekend service has emerged as a high priority need. Additionally, protection and enhancement of New London's Union Station as a rail depot and multi-modal transportation center is also a top priority.



Interstate 95 in East Lyme

HIGHWAY

An uncertain energy future, an expansion of the gaming industry, and other traffic generating development will continue to exacerbate highway congestion in portions of the region. In addition,

through traffic on the Interstates will continue to increase. Even though differing views among citizens groups, municipalities and tribal nations have sometimes created barriers to consensus, the need for several significant highway improvements is well documented.

AIR QUALITY

With the passage of the *Clean Air Act Amendments* of 1990, transportation activities became fully integrated with air quality mitigation. From this, the development of clean fuels has become a national priority. Future investment in clean, fuel-efficient forms of transportation and the land use patterns to support them, will help lessen the potentially negative impacts to air quality and thereby also help address the problem of global warming. However, while SCCOG is vested with oversight responsibility for clean air through its transportation planning activities, control of the resources necessary for the development and implementation of a clean air program, is beyond the authority of a regional council of governments.

AIR SERVICE

For decades, Groton-New London Airport functioned as the region's main air carrier facility. Deregulation of air service in the 1980's has resulted in a consolidation of air services in the best markets having the best facilities. The constrained physical layout of Groton-New London Airport and the relatively limited market has resulted in a complete loss of air carrier service. The long-term future of Groton-New London Airport as an air carrier facility remains in doubt given the existence of other nearby, larger airports.



Admiral Shear State Pier, New London

STATE PIER

The State Pier continues to be underutilized. It has the potential to become a key freight handling resource. The Pier's future, however, has undergone a series of intensive technical and political re-examinations. Possible use of the Pier as a passenger depot, and the option to convert the surrounding property for tax-generating purposes need to be studied. Most recently, State Pier has been used to dock cruise ships visiting the Port of New London and surrounding attractions.

These visits have proven to be advantageous to the local economy. SCCOG's proposed Tourist Transit System, if implemented, could serve the passengers from these cruise ships who wish to travel around the region.

FREIGHT

Movement of goods into and through the region is accomplished by three principal means: rail, truck and barge. Over the past 50 years, the interstate highway system and network of state and local roads, coupled with scattered suburban development in the region, has weighed heavily in favor of trucking as the most efficient means of freight movement. According to a recent CONNDOT study that included interstate highway utilization, trucks represent 17% of all vehicles on the road. Despite rising fuel costs, completely reversing this trend in favor of rail freight is unlikely. Efforts are presently underway however, to explore barge off-loading opportunities for certain kinds of freight. This might have a small but measurable effect on truck usage.

Transportation has historically been, and continues to be, one of the region's most important priority issues. Rapid increases in demand, especially for highways and transit, will continue. Providing adequate funds to meet new highway and transit infrastructure needs will be the major challenge in the coming decades.

GOAL: Create a balanced regional transportation system that strives to meet the needs of all segments of the population, including tourists, regardless of age, income or disability, and which promotes responsible development within the region's core.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Coordination of policies among key transportation stakeholders.
2. Conservation and restoration of natural and cultural resources in the development of new transportation infrastructure.
3. Regional transportation systems, which are planned and budgeted for within the context of fiscal constraint.
4. Expansion of opportunities for intermodal linkages among various elements of the transportation system including freight.
5. Development of alternative modes to single-occupant highway transportation that would include mini-buses, ferries, bicycle and pedestrian ways, and increased rail service.
6. Expansion of public transit systems in conjunction with other Plan objectives such as promoting Transit Orientated Design (TOD), increasing social infrastructure, and protecting natural resources.
7. Location and support for new funding mechanisms for transportation and transit improvements.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

1. Regularly update pertinent transportation policy documents, including the *Regional Transportation Plan*.

2. Continue to support SCCOG's highest priority highway projects, including the completion of Route 11 from Salem to I-95 in Waterford; capacity improvements to I-95 from Branford to the Rhode Island state line; and improvements to Routes 2, 2A, and 32, including capacity improvements to the Mohegan Pequot Bridge.
3. Work with CONNDOT to provide a higher level of regular commuter rail service from New London to New York via Shoreline East or an extension of Metro North into southeastern Connecticut.
4. Work to ensure the continuation of the regional multi-modal transportation center at New London's Union Station.
5. Conduct studies and collect data on changing transportation system trends.
6. Continue to pursue the creation of a new tourist transit system that would connect the region's tourist attractions.
7. Identify and promote areas where compact, energy efficient, transit accessible, pedestrian orientated, mixed-use development are feasible.
8. Support the development of a regional demand-response system of transportation to complement fixed-route service.
9. Support efforts to improve shipping and freight handling capability and related economic growth in the Port of New London and throughout the region through the region's rail network.
10. Support actions to improve service levels and the use of Groton-New London Airport.
11. Plan and advocate for the connection of the region's towns with a pedestrian trail system.

ISSUE #5: PUBLIC UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS



*Department of Public
Utilities, Jewett City*

Management and maintenance of major public utilities infrastructure are critical to support future growth in the region's economy. Development pressures, high costs of utility infrastructure and fragmented governmental responsibilities will require the development of new approaches in order to meet infrastructure needs.

Perhaps more than any other single factor, utility infrastructure helps determine a region's development future. The availability of public water, sewer and solid waste facilities enable more intense, higher density development to occur. This is also becoming increasingly true for electric, gas and telecommunication services.

At present, the region is served by over 100 separate community water systems that supply potable water to more than 70% of the region's population. Coordinating the fragmented system of water supply is fundamental to the orderly growth of the region in the future. This coordination is especially critical with respect to future water supplies and service areas.

As a matter of cost, the policy of sewer avoidance remains strong. However, the desire for more intensive development as a vehicle to generate tax base or to serve other purposes conflicts with this policy. This in turn may pose environmental problems where intensive development exceeds the carrying capacity of the site on which it is located.

While the region's solid waste disposal needs have been significantly addressed through the construction of two resource recovery facilities, the disposal of bulky waste, sewage sludge, household hazardous waste material, electronics waste, and low level radioactive waste remains a challenge. These are matters that will require cooperation among many public and private interests.

GOAL: Provide a system of public utilities that will protect the health of the region's population and environment while allowing development to occur that meets the needs of the region's people, businesses and industries.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The maintenance and upgrade of public water, sewerage, and waste facilities and other essential utilities throughout the region.
2. Coordinated and cooperative action among the various utilities serving the region to ensure that the needs of a growing population and economy are met.
3. Location of higher density development in areas suitably served by public utilities.
4. Maximization of solid waste reduction and recycling within the region.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

1. Assist the Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority in the implementation of the *Regional Water Supply Plan*, specifically in the development of new water supply and in the planned extension of the regional water network.
2. Support and encourage the seven-municipality watershed source protection effort initiated by the City of Groton.
3. Continue cooperating with the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resource Recovery Authority to ensure that the region's solid waste management needs are addressed including waste reduction, increased recycling, regional e-waste disposal,



Water Tower, Stonington

and household hazardous waste collection.

4. Support land use policies that would concentrate new intensive development in areas served by public utilities.
5. Encourage the utilization of best management practices and innovative technology for any new intensive development that significantly impacts the region.
6. Pursue regional solutions to wastewater treatment and sludge disposal.

RELATED PLANNING ACTIVITIES

It is important to note that the 2007 *Southeastern Connecticut Regional Plan of Conservation and Development* relates to other local regional and state planning activities. The following list, while by no means exhaustive, illustrates the wide range of planning activities and documents which have been consulted and which provide background for this Plan.

State:

- *Connecticut Conservation and Development Policies Plan 2005-2010*
- *State of Connecticut Master Transportation Plan 2007*
- *State of Connecticut Rail Plan Update*
- *State of Connecticut Solid Waste Management Plan 2006*

Regional:

- *SCCOG – Regional Development Plan, 1967*
- *SCCOG - Regional Development Plan, 1976*
- *SCCOG - Regional Development Plan, 1987*
- *SCCOG - Recommended Regional Development Policy Guide for Southeastern Connecticut, 1997*
- *CEDS - Comprehensive Economic Development Strategic Plan for Southeastern Connecticut, 2004*
- *SCWA - Regional Water Supply Plan, 2003*
- *Regional Transportation Plan FY 2007-2035 for Southeastern Connecticut*
- *Intermodal Connections Study Southeast, 2005*
- *Housing A Region In Transition, An Analysis of Housing Needs In Southeastern Connecticut 2000-2005, 2002*
- *Southeastern Connecticut Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2005*
- *Regional Emergency Management Plan For The Southeastern Connecticut Region, 2004*
- *Route 11 Greenway Development Plan, Route 11 Greenway Authority Commission, 2005*
- *I-395 Corridor Transportation Investment Area Plan*
- *Southeast Corridor Transportation Investment Area Plan*

Local:

- Municipal Plans of Conservation and Development, Southeastern Region
 - Bozrah, 2002
 - Colchester, 2001
 - East Lyme, 1999
 - Franklin, 2000

- Griswold, 2007
- Groton City, 1996
- Groton Town, 2002
- Ledyard, 2003
- Lisbon, 2004
- Montville, 1996
- New London, 1997
- North Stonington, 2003

- Norwich, 2002
- Preston, 2003
- Salem, 2002
- Sprague, 2007
- Stonington Borough, 1999
- Stonington, 2004
- Voluntown, 2000
- Waterford, 1998

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Although SCCOG is required by statute to create a plan for the region's growth and development, it has no legal power to ensure the plan is implemented. Instead, such a plan is implemented because municipal, state, and federal agencies, along with private entities, are convinced that the plan's recommendations are best for the region's future. Because of this, this Plan is not an end by itself, but instead is the beginning of a continuing and complex process of implementation.



SCCOG Office, Norwich

REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

The SCCOG can induce Plan implementation three different ways: by providing assistance to member municipalities and other organizations and agencies in carrying out actions needed to further the goals of the Plan; by recommending policy and action to agencies that have implementation authority; and by coordinating implementing action between municipalities and regional service providers.

Most implementation efforts will require consensus building among the region's municipalities, state governmental agencies, other regional agencies, and at times the private sector. SCCOG should use the Plan as a guide in establishing policy, setting work program priorities, reviewing proposed development proposals, pursuing grant funds, and assisting its member municipalities.

With regard to potential funding for certain actions recommended in the Plan, Section 8(b) of Public Act 07-239, *The Act Concerning Responsible Growth*, establishes a regional performance incentive program to be administered by the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management whereby the SCCOG can submit proposals and potentially receive grant money for the joint provision of a municipal service or services not currently provided on a regional basis.

The Regional Plan should be consulted when reviewing applications for federal or state funding; agreements between municipalities; zoning and subdivision referrals that potentially have inter-municipal impact; funding for economic development projects; municipal Plans of Conservation and Development; proposals and work initiatives proposed by SCCOG member towns. The Regional Plan should also be used as a source of information about the southeastern Connecticut region, and as a statement of SCCOG's philosophy concerning the region's future growth.

MUNICIPAL IMPLEMENTATION

There are a number of mechanisms available to SCCOG member municipalities that can be used to assist in the implementation of the Regional Plan. Local Plans of Conservation and Development must now be referred to SCCOG to determine their consistency with the Regional Plan. These local Plans should be the



Welcome Sign, Route 32, Franklin

basis for land use decisions made by municipal Planning and Zoning Commissions. Provided that municipal Plans are reflective of the Regional Plan, the Regional Plan's policies and goals can be accomplished through planning process conducted by the region's land use commissions.

Municipal zoning and subdivision regulations are two of the tools that towns use to implement their own planning vision.

If the regulations are consistent with the local Plan, and then the Regional Plan, the actions of the local planning and zoning boards in applying their regulations results in the implementation of the Regional Plan.



Bozrah Town Hall

Municipalities prepare Capital Improvement Programs for programming capital expenditures over a long-term period. These Capital Improvement Programs can be used to implement actions recommended in this Plan where a specific town expenditure is required.

Under Section 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statutes, municipalities must refer certain actions and improvements to municipal infrastructure to their local planning board before taking any action. The planning commission must

then make a determination if the proposed action is consistent with the local Plan of Conservation and

Development. Any proposed action disapproved by the planning commission requires a two-thirds vote of the legislative body before the action can be implemented. If this planning tool is to contribute to the implementation of the Regional Plan, the local Plan being consulted must be consistent with it.

STATE IMPLEMENTATION

The *Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut* is prepared every five years by the Office of Policy and Management (OPM). The most recent State Plan was adopted by the General Assembly in 2005.

State agencies consult the State Plan when preparing agency plans; acquiring real property; considering development projects, reviewing grant applications, and when considering state infrastructure improvements. Before the State Bond Commission allocates bond funds for certain actions, the Secretary of OPM submits an advisory statement to the Bond Commission concerning the actions' conformity with the State Plan.

The 2005-2010 *Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut* cites the importance of regional coordination in implementing the growth management principles and policies set forth in the State Plan. It recognizes the vital role that regional planning organizations like SCCOG perform in facilitating inter-municipal cooperation. It is imperative then, that the Regional Plan and the State Plan are consistent with and complement each other.

In accordance with recent legislation entitled *An Act Concerning Responsible Growth*, as of July 1, 2009, and every five years thereafter, the state Commissioner of Economic and Community Development will prepare an economic strategic plan that is consistent with the *Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut*, the long-range state housing plan, and the transportation strategy adopted by the state. The SCCOG is among the various organizations and agencies to be consulted with for the purposes of developing the state economic strategic plan.

FEDERAL IMPLEMENTATION

Federal agencies should refer to the *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development* when considering funding programs and major projects in the region. Probably the most significant influence that the Regional Plan has is on transportation projects and funding in the region. As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region, SCCOG is responsible for the planning and programming of transportation projects requiring federal funding. The *Regional Transportation Plan*, which is viewed by SCCOG as an extension of this *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development*, is the basis for all

projects programmed in the Region's *Transportation Improvement Program*. The Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, and other federal agencies refer to all of these documents as the basis of SCCOG requested federal funding and action.

PLAN CONSISTENCY

Section 8-35a of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that each regional plan note any inconsistencies with the following growth management principles:

- Redevelopment and revitalization of regional centers and areas of mixed land uses with existing or planned infrastructure.
- Expansion of housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs.
- Concentration of development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options and land reuse.
- Conservation and restoration of the natural environment, cultural and historical resources, and traditional rural lands.
- Protection of environmental assets critical to public health and safety.
- Integration of planning across all levels of government to address issues on a local, regional, and state-wide basis.

In addition to the above growth management principles, whereas portions of the southeastern Connecticut region are contiguous to Long Island Sound, the 2007 *Plan of Conservation and Development* is designed



Ayers Mountain, Franklin

to reduce hypoxia, pathogens, toxic contaminants and floatable debris in Long Island Sound.

Pursuant to the above-referenced statute, this Plan has been referred to the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management for a determination that the Plan is not inconsistent with the *State Plan of Conservation and Development*.

Whereas the 2007 *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development* was prepared with both the before-mentioned growth management principles and *State Plan of Conservation and Development* in mind, it is the finding of the Southeastern Connecticut Council of

Governments that this 2007 Plan is consistent with all state planning policy and plans.

GENERALIZED LAND USE, 2005

Southeastern Connecticut Region

Legend

- Active Recreation
- Agriculture
- Agriculture Reserve
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Industrial - Extraction
- Institutional
- Institutional - Extensive
- Mixed Urban Use
- Residential - Low Density
- Residential - Medium Density
- Residential - High Density
- Native American Tribal Reservation
- Open Space
- Transportation, Communication and Utilities
- Undeveloped Land
- Waterbodies
- Primary Road
- Secondary Road
- Railroad
- Town Boundary

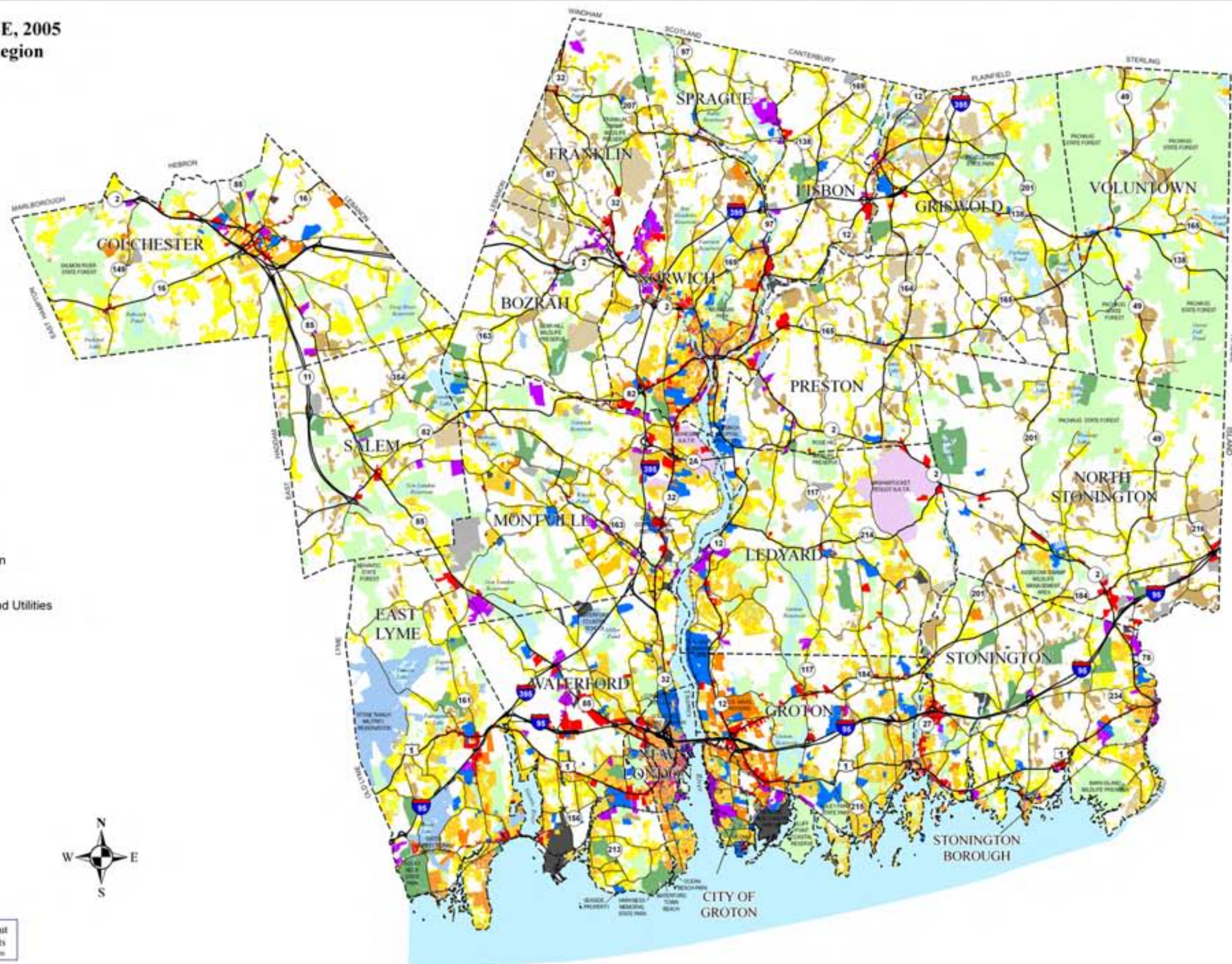
Source:
SCCOG and SCCOG Towns

0 1 2 3 4 5
Scale in Miles



Prepared by:

SCCOG Southeastern Connecticut
Council of Governments
Geographic Information System



REGIONAL CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2007 Southeastern Connecticut Region

Legend

- Existing and Proposed Urban Uses
- Existing and Proposed Suburban Uses - Medium
- Existing and Proposed Suburban Uses - Low
- Existing and Proposed Rural Uses
- Existing Institutional Uses
- Existing Recreation and Open Space Uses
- Proposed Conservation Areas
- Federally Recognized Native American Tribal Reservation
- Waterbodies and Watercourses
- Existing Reservoir Areas
- Level B Aquifers
- Potential High Yield Aquifers
- Primary Road
- Secondary Road
- Proposed Arterial Road
- Railroad
- Town Boundary

Source:
SCCOG and SCCOG Towns

0 1 2 3 4 5
Scale in Miles



Prepared by:

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