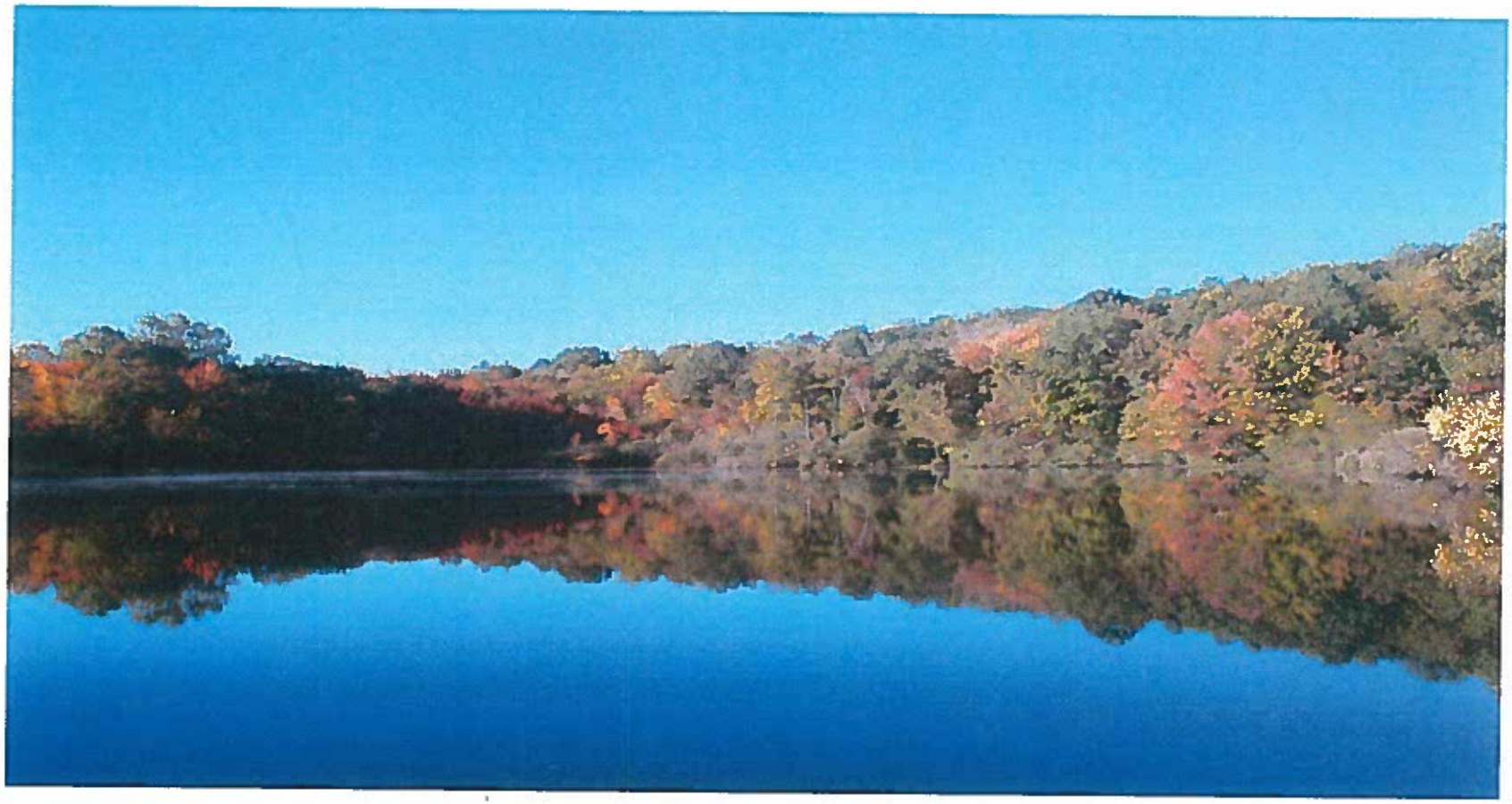
# TOWN OF CHESHIRE

# PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

*"The Bedding Plant Capital of Connecticut"*



# Cheshire Plan of Conservation and Development
# Town of Cheshire, Connecticut

## Effective July 1, 2016

Prepared by the Cheshire Planning and Zoning Commission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# Introduction and Findings of Consistency

Presented herein is an update of the Cheshire Plan of Conservation and Development prepared in accordance with Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes. During preparation of this Plan, the Planning and Zoning Commission strove to prepare a Plan that would preserve and protect community character, as well as satisfy the requirements set forth within this statute. This Plan includes recommendations that should protect and strengthen Cheshire's economic base and maintain an ability to compete for business within the region.

Efforts included a Community Survey with more than 200 responses from which many valuable insights were provided to the Commission. A summary of the survey results is included within this Plan for reference.

This Plan is a product completed by people who live and breathe within this community who recognize that development patterns within Cheshire are long established, and whose recommendations are intended to reflect and capitalize on that. Cheshire is a desirable place to live, and this Plan is written to protect the characteristics that make this so.

Cheshire is a member of the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments whose 2008 Regional Plan provides guidance and focus for the preparation of this plan. Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires consideration of the **2008 Regional Plan of Conservation and Development** adopted by the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments in the preparation of the municipal plan, and also requires consideration of the **2013-2018 Conservation and Development Policies: The Plan for Connecticut** prepared by the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management in the preparation of municipal plans.

Goals and policies from each are summarized here by category along with responses based upon the text of this Plan to demonstrate consistency with the regional and state goals.

## Consistency with the 2008 Regional Plan adopted by the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments:

### Land Use and Growth Patterns

***Guide the location of growth in the region towards the regional center and areas with infrastructure.*** Growth within Cheshire will continue in the pattern that currently exists. Industrial properties lie generally in the northerly portion of the Route 10 corridor, and this Plan recommends amendments to the Zoning Regulations that should facilitate further growth within industrial areas. The Plan

also recommends amendments that will encourage growth and reinvestment in the West Main Street corridor which is one of the oldest village center areas within Cheshire.

***Educate municipal commissions and others about the fiscal impacts of growth within the region.*** The Planning and Zoning Commission understands that growth of the commercial and industrial sectors within Cheshire will have positive fiscal impacts region wide, especially considering that Cheshire is a net importer of labor within the Naugatuck Valley region. Growth within these sectors will provide regional benefits.

***Encourage periodic review of local land use regulations.*** This Plan contains specific recommendations for review of regulations to satisfy various purposes, including cluster, affordable housing, industrial lot size and coverage, the Special Development District and adopting new regulations to help achieve outcomes within the West Main Street focus areas.

***Encourage settlement patterns that reduce the rate of land consumption in the region.*** This Plan includes a specific recommendation to review the cluster regulations with the goal of making them more useable. Cluster development is a land conservation tool that is in keeping with this goal. Enabling residential growth in the already developed core areas will also be in keeping with this goal.

***Recognize farmland as an important natural resource worthy of conserving for farming activity as well as its present aesthetic and economic benefits.*** Cheshire has worked to conserve farmland in our purchase of open space, and has worked with the Cheshire Land Trust and the Regional Water Authority to do the same. Continuation of this collaboration is recommended within this Plan. Commercial farming is also a major part of our economic base.

***Facilitate sustained and coordinated efforts to renovate contaminated sites.*** Brownfield contamination is not a major problem within Cheshire, but the Commission understands the value of land reclamation and will continue to advocate for adaptive reuse when necessary. The plan to rehabilitate and remediate the Ball and Socket Arts facility is noted as an important activity center within the West Main Street focus area within this Plan.

***Encourage preservation of cultural resources.*** This Plan includes a chapter entitled Historic and Cultural Resources and also recommends the protection of the two historic districts and their importance as setting context for the design of new developments that may be proposed in their vicinity.

## Natural Resource Conservation

***Protect water resources in the region.*** Safeguarding these essential resources is discussed including continuing our collaboration with the Regional Water Authority in our Aquifer Protection regulations and protection of the Mill River Watershed in southern portions of Cheshire. The Plan also recommends continuing to work with Meriden to protect of Broad Brook Reservoir and the

extensive watershed that lies within Cheshire, including retaining the low density residential land use pattern that exists within this area.

***Relate land use intensity to the capability of the land.*** This Plan includes a recommendation to review and modify cluster regulations to make this alternative an effective development option to obtain more open space. This Plan also agrees with and incorporates by reference and by map the Facilities Plan that was adopted by the Cheshire Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) to supply sanitary sewer to growth areas identified by the Connecticut Conservation and Development Policies Plan, and also to limit extension of sanitary sewers in lower density areas zoned Residential 40 (R40) and Residential 80 (R80).

## Housing

***Increase opportunities for affordable housing in the region.*** The Plan recommends review of the existing affordable housing regulations and cluster regulations with the Cheshire Zoning Regulations to facilitate their use over Section 8-30g of the Connecticut General Statutes.

***Promote a variety of housing types in the region.*** The Cheshire Zoning Regulations were amended to permit infill, multi-family housing within the Residential 20A zone along portions of South Main Street. The Plan recommends review of the Special Design District (SDD) and the writing of a new Planned Area Development (PAD) to enable effective mixed use developments with a residential component in the Town Center, West Main Street and West Main Street Gateway focus areas.

***Promote housing that allows for a variety of transportation choices.*** Infill Development projects are already located along the South Main Street (Route 10) corridor, and the Special Design District (SDD) and future Planned Area Development (PAD) are also located on state highways where public transportation is available.

## Major Regional Plan Goals for Economic Development

***Nurture the region's strength as a center of precision manufacturing.*** Proposed modifications to the industrial zone regulations to promote additional coverage from 25 to 35 percent and reducing lot size in the Industrial 2 (I-2) zone and the Interchange Zone (IC) are recommended to support industrial growth.

***Aggressively pursue economic development in the region.*** The recommended changes to the Industrial and Interchange regulations will support this goal.

***Guide the location of economic development in the regional center and major economic areas.*** Substantial portions of Cheshire's economic base are located in the northerly portions of Cheshire, close to the highway network and the regional center. This Plan includes a specific recommendation that the industrial sector should be protected from conversion to highway commercial uses.

***Prepare workers for current and future needs.*** This Plan expresses nothing that is in conflict with this goal.

## Major Regional Plan Goals for Transportation

***Maintain and improve the region's transportation system.*** Plan proposes no measures that are contrary to this goal.
***Coordinate land use and transportation actions.*** Proposed amendments to the Special Design District (SDD) and proposed Planned Area Development (PAD) regulations are considered with respect to locational context. Recommendation to reduce the Industrial 2 lot area includes a recommendation to require an access management plan in exchange for that reduction.
***Emphasize connectivity in developing local roads.*** The 2002 Plan of Conservation and Development discussed the need for the reduction of cul-de-sacs for efficient circulation and safety within Cheshire. This Plan agrees with those statements, but also recognizes that much of the remaining undeveloped properties within Cheshire, especially those zoned for residential purposes have substantial wetlands and watercourses and environmentally sensitive areas. These include watersheds or unique habitats that should be considered before requiring the extension of public roads. Temporary cul-de-sac designations on subdivision plans represent an affirmative statement that a public road should be continued, but these should be required only after the Commission has reviewed the characteristics of the adjoining property and considers the impacts of roadway construction on any apparent sensitive environmental areas or resources.
***Continue to plan for needed transportation improvements.*** The Plan includes recognition that public transportation is essential to reducing traffic volumes and to supporting our economic base, and states the following: "the Commission will encourage the inclusion of transit stops within larger scale development projects and more along our major arterials. Consideration should also be given to bike sharing where appropriate and to establishing linkage to the linear park so that it may become a genuine alternative for commuters. The Commission also encourages consideration of established traffic calming techniques along our major arterials and at high volume intersections. It is also recommended that the Route 10 corridor be reviewed to examine specific problems and to determine appropriate methods for their resolution. In addition, pedestrian needs should also be satisfied with construction of new sidewalks and replacement of older ones that provide access to and through commercial areas, including the Town Center, parks and other public places, and to provide linkage between neighborhoods."

## Major Regional Plan Goals for Open Space

***Protect more open space in the region.*** This Plan makes various recommendations regarding open space acquisition and management especially within the Environmental Resources Section. Cheshire has acquired more than 1500 acres of open space making the town the largest open space land holder, and this Plan recommends continued support for that strategy. Cheshire has

taken advantage of public funding programs to assist with acquisition, and the Plan recommends that we continue to do so. In addition, the Plan recommends continued collaboration with the state, Regional Water Authority and Cheshire Land Trust to acquire open space property and fulfill valid and identifiable public goals.

***Coordinate and prioritize open space preservation throughout the region.*** Open space within Cheshire serves many major regional functions including environmental and natural resource protection, as well as ridgeline protection, especially along our western border.

## Major Regional Plan Goals for Water Supply and Sewer Service

***Focus efforts on obtaining sites for water based recreation.*** Cheshire maintains public access to the Quinnipiac River for recreation purposes in the vicinity of the sewer treatment plant, and has organized guided canoe trips on the river for the public to participate in cleanup efforts. In addition, Cheshire maintains canoes for public use on the pond at Mixville Park.

***Preserve declassified water company land as open space.*** All water company property within Cheshire is associated with active water public water sources, and there is no declassified water company land within Cheshire. The South Central Regional Water Authority (RWA) is, however, an active partner in the acquisition and protection of open space within Cheshire.

***Protect the quality of the region's water supply.*** Cheshire has had Aquifer Protection regulations for many years, and continues to work with the South Central Regional Water Authority (RWA) for their implementation. This Plan also recognizes the Broad Brook Reservoir as an essential public resource, and recommends continued cooperation with its owner, the city of Meriden to protect the reservoir and its surrounding watershed. In addition, portions of the watershed for Lake Whitney which is a public water supply reservoir in Hamden are located within the southern portion of Cheshire are also noted and recommended for protection.

***Ensure an adequate supply of water for the region.*** This Plan reinforces the ongoing protection efforts and collaboration with the Regional Water Authority and the city of Meriden to make sure that the water supply remains safe for consumption.

***Reduce the impacts of sewage discharges.*** Cheshire actively manages a sewer treatment plant and sanitary sewer system in accordance with an adopted Facilities Plan. This Plan incorporates that Facilities Plan by map and reference.

***Use the infrastructure system to guide growth.*** This Plan makes recommendations and recognizes the limits of existing infrastructure. Proposed modifications to the Zoning Regulations and recommended focus area strategies are all sensitive to context and the infrastructure available within each of those.

***Carefully manage existing infrastructure systems.*** The Community Facilities section of this Plan makes various recommendations regarding improvements to community infrastructure including essential municipal buildings, roads, and utility systems. The Plan states that sustainable practices should be incorporated into daily operation of municipal facilities in ways that will reduce the long

term maintenance and energy costs required for their operation. Sustainable infrastructure design requirements for both public and private sector projects should be included within Cheshire's zoning and subdivision regulations.

## Consistency with the 2013-2018 Conservation and Development Policies: The Plan for Connecticut:

**GROWTH MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLE #1: Redevelop and Revitalize Regional Centers and Areas with Existing or Currently Planned Infrastructure.** This principle provides guidance for infrastructure maintenance, repairs and upgrades for regional centers around the state. Areas of Cheshire are included in this, especially in the vicinity of the Interstate 691 interchange. This principle includes a number of policy recommendations that can be transmitted into municipal policies. These include:

1. ***Promote infill development in areas with existing infrastructure including town centers with an appropriate scale and density for the particular area.*** Cheshire has had developed land use strategies for specific growth areas including the Interchange Zone and Infill Zoning along the South Main Street corridor and this Plan makes recommendations for various focus areas that are consistent with this policy.
2. ***Promote the continued use or adaptive reuse of existing facilities and developed property, including brownfields in strategic locations.*** This Plan recognizes the adaptive reuse approved for the Ball and Socket Arts building within the West Main Street Focus Area as an activity generator that is an essential component of revitalization within this village center.
3. ***Proactively identify and market available properties that are currently served by infrastructure and that could meet the needs of new or expanding businesses.*** Cheshire is very proactive and has a very active Economic Development Coordinator and Commission that offers outstanding support to the business community.
4. ***Encourage local zoning that allows for a mix of uses "as-of-right" to create vibrant central places where residents can live, work, and meet their daily needs without having to rely on automobiles as the sole means of transport.*** This Plan makes specific recommendations for the development of mixed use areas within the West Main Street Focus area and the West Main Street Gateway Area all of which offer the opportunity for public transportation. The importance of public transportation services is recognized in other focus areas as well.
5. ***Promote urban areas such as centers for arts, entertainment and culture, while also supporting community based agriculture, historic preservation, and access to urban green spaces and waterways.*** As noted in item 2, the adaptive reuse of the Ball and Socket Arts facility is consistent with this policy. In addition, the Plan includes an entire chapter on Historic and Cultural Resources, and the Community Facilities and Environmental Resources sections also support the remaining items.

**GROWTH MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLE #2: Expand Housing Opportunities and Design Choices to Accommodate a Variety of Household Types and Needs.** This principle encourages innovative housing strategies to provide support for expanding the

economy and promoting a "vibrant population" by proactively addressing "current policies and regulations that hinder private developers from building the types of housing options and amenities that the market demands". These include providing opportunities for higher density, mixed income housing stock in areas that are within walking distance to retail, recreational and cultural attractions, jobs and public transit. This Plan is consistent with the policy goals that are stated within this principle including:

1. ***Enhance housing mobility and choice across income levels and promote vibrant, mixed-income neighborhoods through both ownership and rental opportunities.*** This Plan recommends amendments to the existing Affordable Housing, Cluster and Special Design District regulations to promote efficiency and offer housing choice, and also recommends development of a Planned Area Development regulation which will include residential as a component of mixed use development.
2. ***Promote housing and/or affordable housing as part of mixed use and transit-oriented developments within walking distance to public transportation facilities.*** As already noted, the proposed amendments to the Zoning Regulations and potential for mixed use development within the West Main Street focus areas are in accordance with this policy.
3. ***Encourage and promote access to parks and recreational opportunities, including trails, greenways, community gardens and waterways for affordable and mixed–income housing.*** The importance of completion of the linear park within Cheshire is noted within the West Main Street Focus Area, and will be an essential component of the functioning of that village area.

**GROWTH MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLE #3: Concentrate Development around Transportation Nodes and Along Major Transportation Corridors to Support the Viability of Transportation Options.** This principle recognizes that transportation corridors and hubs are critical assets that affect Connecticut's ability to compete for economic development, and provide ready access to jobs, education, recreation and other daily activities. Recommended policies within this principle that most relate to Cheshire are:

1. ***Promote compact, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use development patterns...within transportation corridors and village centers.*** Cheshire has had a strategy for development at the I691 Interchange since 1981 and this plan continues to envision major development around that node, some of which will likely be mixed use, especially within the north western quadrant. In addition, the mixed use developments within the West Main Street Focus area all lay along a state highway where public transportation is available.
2. ***Encourage a network of pedestrian and bicycle paths and greenways that provide convenient inter- and intra-town access, including access to the regional public transportation network.*** Cheshire is working with the Connecticut Department of Transportation for completion of the linear trail which is entirely consistent with this goal.

**GROWTH MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLE #4: Conserve and restore the Natural Environment, Cultural and Historical Resources and Traditional Rural Lands.** This principle encourages municipalities to invest in the state's natural infrastructure while recognizing the functional values that these resources provide such as storm water management, flood control, oxygen production and carbon storage and the filtration and purification of water for human consumption and habitat preservation. Recommended policies within this principle that most relate to Cheshire are:

1. ***Continue to protect permanently preserved open space areas and facilitate the expansion of the state's open space and greenway network through continued state funding and public-private partnerships for the acquisition and maintenance of important multi-functional land and other priorities identified in the State's Open Space Plan.*** The recommendations contained within the Environmental Resources section of this Plan are entirely consistent with this principle. Cheshire is the largest owner of open space properties, and has developed management plans for most of the larger holdings. In addition, we work collaboratively with the State, Regional Water Authority and Cheshire Land Trust to acquire and protect open space assets that protect local character and also fulfill many of the functions identified in this policy.
2. ***Limit improvements to permanently protected open space areas to those that are consistent with the long-term preservation and appropriate public enjoyment of the natural resource and open space values of the site.*** Cheshire's acquisition strategies are always known before any purchase is made. The only improvements that are made to such areas are the construction of small parking areas to provide the general public with improved access. This Plan makes no recommendations that are in conflict with this policy.
3. ***Protect and preserve Connecticut Heritage Areas, archaeological areas of regional and statewide significance, and natural areas including habitats of endangered, threatened and special concern species, other critical wildlife habitats, river and stream corridors, aquifers, ridgelines, large forest areas, highland areas, and Long Island Sound.*** The Environmental Resources section is directly on point with respect to this policy and identifies the various natural resource features in Cheshire and follows with a discussion of the importance of protecting these. This Plan is in concert with this policy.
4. ***Encourage collaborative ventures with municipalities, private non-profit land conservation organizations and other entities to provide a system of appropriately preserved and managed natural areas and resources that allow for a diversity of well-functioning habitats and the sustainable use of resources.*** Cheshire has collaborated with the State and the Cheshire Land Trust to preserve and protect over 400 acres along the westerly ridge line. We have also sought linkage of natural areas in open space acquisitions and consider this to be a significant point for consideration in our evaluation.
5. ***Seek to achieve no net-loss of wetlands through development planning that: 1) avoids wetlands whenever possible; 2) minimizes intrusions into wetlands when impacts are unavoidable; 3) mitigates any resulting impacts through wetland enhancement or creation; and 4) encourages ongoing maintenance of functional wetlands and buffer areas.*** The Environmental Resources section recognizes that inland wetlands provide important functions to the natural world and built community through flood control, water quality, recharging drinking supplies and they support biodiversity of species. Both direct and indirect impacts to these areas can have detrimental effects to public health and safety and therefore the cost/benefit of such proposals should be thoroughly evaluated. In addition, Cheshire's Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission exercises their authority very diligently which is in keeping with this policy.

6. ***Revitalize rural villages and main streets by promoting the rehabilitation and appropriate reuse of historic facilities, such as former mills, to allow a concentration of higher density or multiple use development where practical and consistent with historic character.*** This Plan makes specific recognition of the benefits to be accrued from the adaptive reuse of the Ball and Socket building into a community arts center in the West Main Street Focus Area. The Plan also makes specific recommendations to encourage growth within this historic West Main Street village area. In addition, the Plan also recommends that consideration be given to maintaining historic character when considering new development in proximity to the two historic districts.
7. ***Utilize the landscape...and incorporate sound storm water management design, such as low impact development techniques, in existing and new development to maintain or restore natural hydrologic processes and to help meet or exceed state and federal water quality standards, so that the state's waters can support their myriad functions and uses.*** This Plan makes a specific recommendation to review and update the regulations governing cluster development which will include consideration of these specific standards. In addition, the Plan supports the current net-zero increase in storm water runoff policy adopted by the Engineering Department which includes promotion of on-site and underground detention designs that promote natural hydrologic processes.
8. ***Manage water resource conflicts by balancing the competing needs of water for human consumption, waste assimilation, habitat sustainability, recreation, power production, agriculture and transporting people and goods.*** This policy is very broad in its scope, however, this Plan makes specific recommendations regarding protection of public water resources including watersheds and aquifers and collaborating with the Regional Water Authority and City of Meriden.
9. ***Rely upon the capacity of the land, to the extent possible, to provide drinking water and wastewater disposal needs beyond the limits of the existing service area. Support the introduction or expansion of public water and/or sewer services or advanced wastewater treatment systems only when there is a demonstrated environmental, public health, public safety, economic, social, or general welfare concern, and then introduce such services only at a scale which responds to the existing need without serving as an attraction to more extensive development.*** In addition to the protection of water supply resources, this Plan also incorporates the Facilities Plan adopted by the Cheshire Water Pollution Control Authority which generally advocates for sewer expansion within growth areas and limits it within lower density residential areas, thus limiting the attraction for more extensive development in portions of the community which are rural in character.
10. ***Protect the ecological, scenic and recreational values of lakes, rivers and streams by promoting compatible land uses and management practices in the vicinity of these resources.*** As already noted, land use policy within Cheshire is proactive with regard to this policy, and this Plan makes no recommendations contrary to its intent.

**GROWTH MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLE #5: Protect and Ensure the Integrity of Environmental Assets Critical to Public Health and Safety.** This goal includes an array of policies regarding the protection of the public health of Connecticut residents by protecting

the air, water and food supplies within the state. It includes a statement that "municipal land use commissions fully consider the broader regional implications of their decision-making processes, whenever there are potential impacts to the integrity of environmental assets and working lands that are critical to the well-being of citizens beyond their local boundaries." Policies discussed within this principle include the following:

1. ***Utilize a multiple barrier approach, including source water protection and appropriate treatment, to ensure the availability of safe and adequate public water supplies that meet or exceed state and federal drinking water standards.*** As noted within the Plan, the Regional Water Authority and City of Meriden are the suppliers of public water to customers within and around Cheshire. As also noted, the Plan makes specific recommendations for continued collaboration with both of these partners for the protection of this essential resource.
2. ***Ensure that water conservation is a priority consideration in all water supply planning activities and regulatory decisions.*** Cheshire's Zoning Regulations and permitting processes require referrals the Regional Water Authority and City of Meriden for proposed development activities within their watersheds, and recommendations within this Plan support continuance of that policy.
3. ***Utilize an integrated watershed management approach to ensure that high quality existing and potential sources of public drinking water are maintained for human consumption.*** As noted within the Plan, the Regional Water Authority and City of Meriden are the suppliers of public water to customers within and around Cheshire. As also noted, the Plan makes specific recommendations for continued collaboration with both of these partners for the protection of this essential resource.
4. ***Discourage new development activities within floodway and floodplain areas.*** The Cheshire Zoning Regulations regulate new development within floodway areas in ways to require compensation for loss of storage and velocity, thereby constraining new development, and this Plan makes no recommendations that are in conflict with this policy.
5. ***Minimize the impacts of development on drinking water sources by utilizing development forms and densities that limit impervious surface coverage to 10% of the overall area to be developed and which preserves the most amount of land in a natural or undisturbed state.*** As already noted, the Plan recommends a reexamination of the open space cluster regulations to improve their use as a development alternative that will provide appropriate forms of development consistent with this goal. There are substantial portions of Cheshire that are zoned for Industrial purposes that are also within Aquifer Protection areas, and the 10% will not be achievable. The Plan does recommend increasing the impervious coverage in Industrial areas within Cheshire to support the economic base, but does state that the zone text change required to do this will be done in collaboration with the South Central Regional Water Authority so that effective storm water management techniques will be used to minimize impacts.

**GROWTH MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLE #6: Promote Integrated Planning across all Levels of Government to Address Issues on a Statewide, Regional and Local Basis.** This goal encourages cooperation among state, regional and municipal governments to

"leverage their myriad assets in a manner that will enhance the vibrancy of the overall state economy and its populace. It includes seven policy statements that encourage this cooperation. Of specific relevance is the following:

1. ***Encourage municipalities to incorporate utility service areas from approved wastewater facility plans into the local Plan of Conservation and Development, so that any future state agency-sponsored actions can be coordinated and designed to accommodate locally desired development forms and/or outcomes that are consistent with growth management principles.*** This Plan incorporates the Facilities Plan adopted by the Cheshire Water Pollution Control Authority both by reference and inclusion of the map from the adopted plan.

# Policy Overview for Commercial Areas

The Community Survey that the Planning and Zoning Commission put together was very useful in providing guidance for the preparation of this plan update. We are encouraged that 85 percent of survey respondents would like to see new businesses encouraged to come to Cheshire, and that 70 percent of respondents would support an effort towards increasing variety in both retail and service businesses. In addition, approximately 47 percent of respondents believe that recently added commercial development fits into Cheshire's character, but 70 percent would support an effort to strengthen requirements to enhance the aesthetics of commercial areas. The Commission has examined our commercial sector by examining four specific focus areas and analyzing the challenges within each one. These are the Town Center, Main Street, West Main Street, and South Main Street.

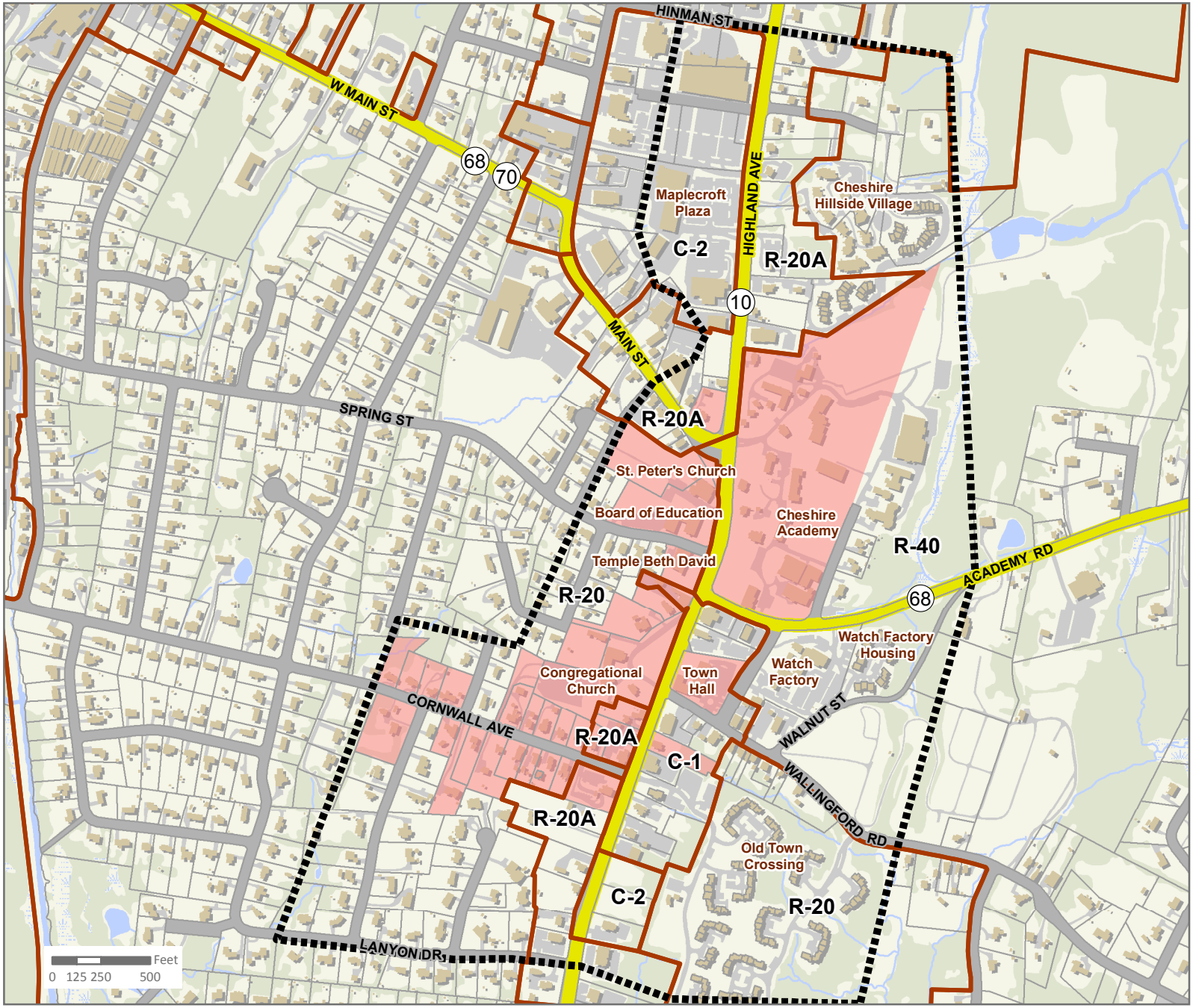
## Town Center Focus Area

Like most New England towns, Cheshire grew around its center which was the hub of commerce and transportation. During the past sixty years, Cheshire has evolved into another automobile dominated suburban community and investment in the traditional center area has waned. An example of this was the closing of the former Cheshire Cinema that removed one of the primary reasons for coming to Cheshire after dark, and this was followed in turn by the closing of restaurants which also took advantage of the after- hours commerce that is one of the hallmarks of a healthy community.

A strong, revitalized Town Center has been consistently recommended in past Plans of Development. The 2002 Plan observes that traditional growth in the retail sector in the Town Center area was unlikely, due in part to market conditions and the lack of properties available for new development. For the purposes of this Plan, the Town Center is the commercial area that extends from Hinman Street, south to Lanyon Drive. Within this area are a variety of uses including retail, professional services, and restaurants, residential, municipal and religious. Zoning designations include Commercial 1 (C1), Commercial 2 (C2), Residential 20 (R20) and Residential 20A (R20A).

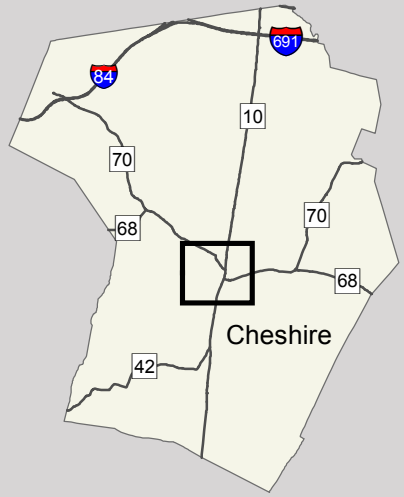
Cheshire's Town Center area is framed by larger scale uses, including Cheshire Academy, the Watch Factory, Town Hall, St. Peter's and the Congregational churches, Temple Beth David, and the Board of Education. The northern gateway is established by the large scale Maple Croft Plaza on the westerly side of route 10. The Center lacks strong pedestrian linkages with the residential neighborhoods that surround the center, due in part to the nature of the state highway network that defines the only major intersections of Route 10 (South Main Street) and Routes 68 & 70 (West Main Street and Academy Road).

# Town Center Focus Area




- Main Street Focus Area
- Zone Boundaries
- Parcel Boundaries
- State Routes
- Streets
- Cornwall Avenue -Town Center Historic District
- Parking and Driveways
- Streams
- POND
- WETLAND
- Vegetation

Location Map




For planning purposes only.
Delineations may not be exact.



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Well maintained, single family neighborhoods line the streets along the westerly side of the corridor, but many of these are on a significant downslope from Route 10 which tends to discourage pedestrian activity. There are also three major residential projects located along the easterly side of Route 10 within the Center including the 122 unit Old Towne Crossing located across from Cornwall Avenue, the 26 unit Watch Factory affordable housing project, and the 85 unit, age restricted Cheshire Hillside Village located across from Maplecroft Plaza. Very little of the activity from these neighborhoods within the Town Center is pedestrian in nature.

Development in the Town Center is significantly influenced by the fact that it is bisected by Route 10, a major arterial that carries in excess of 20,000 motor vehicle trips per day. Though portions of both sides of the street have sidewalks and are potentially walkable, there is very little human synergy between the east and west sides of the street. Button activated pedestrian crossings are located at only a few intersections including Main Street across from Cheshire Academy, Academy Road, Cornwall Avenue, and two at the Maplecroft Plaza. Pedestrian signals are integrated into the signal control system operated by the Connecticut Department of Transportation, and the crossing time is limited in a way that does not result in a pedestrian friendly Town Center. There is some pedestrian activity in selected areas, especially along Elm Street between Town Hall and the Watch Factory complex, and some commerce is generated by students from Cheshire Academy and Cheshire High School that patronize a few of the local restaurants, shops, and service facilities. Some consideration should also be given to improving the pedestrian crossing at the Cornwall Avenue /South Main Street intersection which will recognize the residential neighborhoods that lie on both sides of this intersection. The fact remains, however, that most of the Town Center commerce is generated by trips that are motor vehicle in nature, and it is unlikely that there are any policy choices that will amend this.

### *Protecting the Historic District*

Another major factor influencing development is the existence of the Cornwall Avenue-Town Center Historic District (see attached map) which is administered by the Historic District Commission. This Commission is charged with protecting the unique character of the district by reviewing visible changes to buildings within the District. This District includes properties located along Route 10 and Cornwall Avenue, and extends from just north of the Route 10/Main Street intersection, south to properties located on the southerly side of Cornwall Avenue. This is one of two such districts located within Cheshire. The second is the South Brooksvale Historic District, the importance of which will be discussed within the Historic Resources portion of this Plan. Property owners within the District must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic District Commission before a building permit can be issued for exterior work on their buildings. This approval is separate from any approval that must be obtained from the Planning and Zoning Commission. As already noted, the District provides and protects essential aspects of community character.
Protecting this and other such areas is encouraged within the Cheshire Zoning Regulations when the Commission is asked to consider Zone Map and Text amendments, Site Plans, and Special Permits. The Commission will take note of the specific language written into Section 40.4 of the Cheshire Zoning Regulations (Planning and Zoning Commission Responsibilities) that requires the

Commission to consider various factors related to the design of a proposed Special Permit, especially Section 40.4.7 which specifies consideration of the "nature of the surrounding area and the extent to which the proposed use and its features and appearance will be in harmony with the surrounding area."

Development in the Center area will likely include reinvestment, rehabilitation and reuse for existing properties, especially for those within the Historic District, with the potential for reuse that may require rehabilitation, with the potential for demolition and new construction for properties that are not within the Historic District. This Plan does not encourage demolition, but the Commission recognizes this possibility, and should therefore prepare for such outcomes with amendments to the Cheshire Zoning Regulations that encourage or require context sensitive design.

## *Function of the Special Development District*

To facilitate a flexible approach to development, the Planning and Zoning Commission developed what is known as the Special Development District (SDD), the boundaries of which are shown on the attached map. This district was created under the 1977 Plan as an overlay district and gives property owners an option of development under existing regulations, or an opportunity to establish a Special Development Project with special regulations that would be applicable to that project. The SDD is regulated under Section 45 of the Cheshire Zoning Regulations with a stated purpose and intent "to permit modification of the strict application of the plan and standards of the Zoning Regulations" for purposes that include the following:

1. To implement the Commercial Chapter of the Plan of Development by providing a concentration of future retail uses in the center, but also flexibility in uses and design in the center.
2. To permit development of tracts of land to be developed and designed as harmonious units consistent with the character of the town and neighborhood.
3. To permit the establishment of uses that are not otherwise permitted in an established zone, but which would be beneficial to and consistent with the orderly development of the Town Center.
4. To permit residential use, as a secondary use in conjunction with a commercial application or by itself, when the size, scope and magnitude of such residential use is subordinate to the primary use and purpose of the SDD which is to implement the Commercial Chapter of the Plan of Development by encouraging primarily commercial growth.
5. To permit the design and construction of buildings that – by virtue of their location, orientation, texture, materials, landscaping, general bulk and height would be consistent with the Town Center and would show design merit.

### *A More Flexible SDD*

Projects within the SDD must be at least one and one-half acres, which has the potential to limit its applicability. The other difficulty is that the SDD was implemented to concentrate future retail uses in the Center, which may have made sense in 1975, but has limited potential now for the various reasons already discussed. It is important, however, that the Zoning Regulations provide sufficient flexibility to maintain the economic health of private properties within the Center. This Plan therefore recommends consideration of amendments to the SDD regulations as necessary to achieve this flexibility. Some consideration may be made to reducing the minimum lot size for SDD projects and to permitting primary residential, rather than requiring them to be subordinate to the commercial uses. This adjustment is not a recommendation to convert large portions of the commercial base in the Center to residential. It is instead, meant to encourage investment and economic activity.

### *Strategic Locations*

Outside the SDD, there are some specific properties that should receive some attention and focus to encourage them to be used. These include two vacant properties at 266 and 292 South Main Street and a former gasoline station located at 687 South Main located at its intersection with Higgins Road. Maps of these properties are attached. The 266/292 properties are adjacent and are owned together by a single party. They are zoned Commercial 2 (C2) and also lie within the Aquifer Protection Zone which eliminates some potential uses, including motor vehicle fueling and repair. Their total area is nearly two acres, and each has 150 feet of frontage on Route 10. These properties once held a movie theater and automobile repair facilities. Some remediation work was done in the last few years to eliminate pollution that was left from the former automobile repair use.

This location is a gateway to the Center area from the south, and a carefully considered design, both in terms of layout and appearance, is essential. The location is very close to the Historic District, and the architecture of the buildings and location and screening of parking areas should all show consideration of this.

These properties are also located on a downhill portion of the easterly side of South Main Street, approximately 400 feet south of a traffic signal located at the intersection with Cornwall Avenue so, access management will be critical. Careful consideration must be given to the location and number of curb cuts. The Commission has previously required rear rights-of-way for properties on the east side of Route 10, with the intention of adding a service road, and channeling exiting traffic to intersections controlled by traffic signals. This approach is still recommended and should continue to be considered. In every case, the Commission should require a careful, coordinated layout that demonstrates a sensitivity and respect for the surrounding area for any development of these properties.

The former gas station site at 687 South Main offers similar challenges. This .69 acre parcel is on the northwest corner of the Higgins Road/South Main Street intersection. It is zoned Residential 20 (R20) and is also within the Aquifer Protection Zone. The attached map illustrates the location of the former convenience store/gasoline station with a curb cut that provided access from Higgins Road. Property to the north at 677 South Main is zoned Residential 20A (R20A) and contains a professional office building that also has an access onto Higgins Road as well as a shared access with 673 South Main Street to its north. The R20A designation continues north across Elmwood Drive up to the southerly boundary of Cheshire High School. Property to the south is zoned Residential 20 (R20) and includes a detached single family home as well as the multi-family Brookshire Condominium development.

The future development of this property is likely to be non-residential, so an R20A designation should be considered to promote a professional office development that would be consistent with the pattern of the properties to the north. Careful consideration must to given to site and building design to achieve compatibility with the surrounding area. As much as the redevelopment of this site is important to eliminate blight and strengthen the economic base of Cheshire, it is just as important to view it as a gateway to the residential neighborhood that begins on Higgins Road. This property is currently undergoing remediation for gasoline leakage from spoiled tanks, and the completion of that will likely slow the pace of redevelopment.

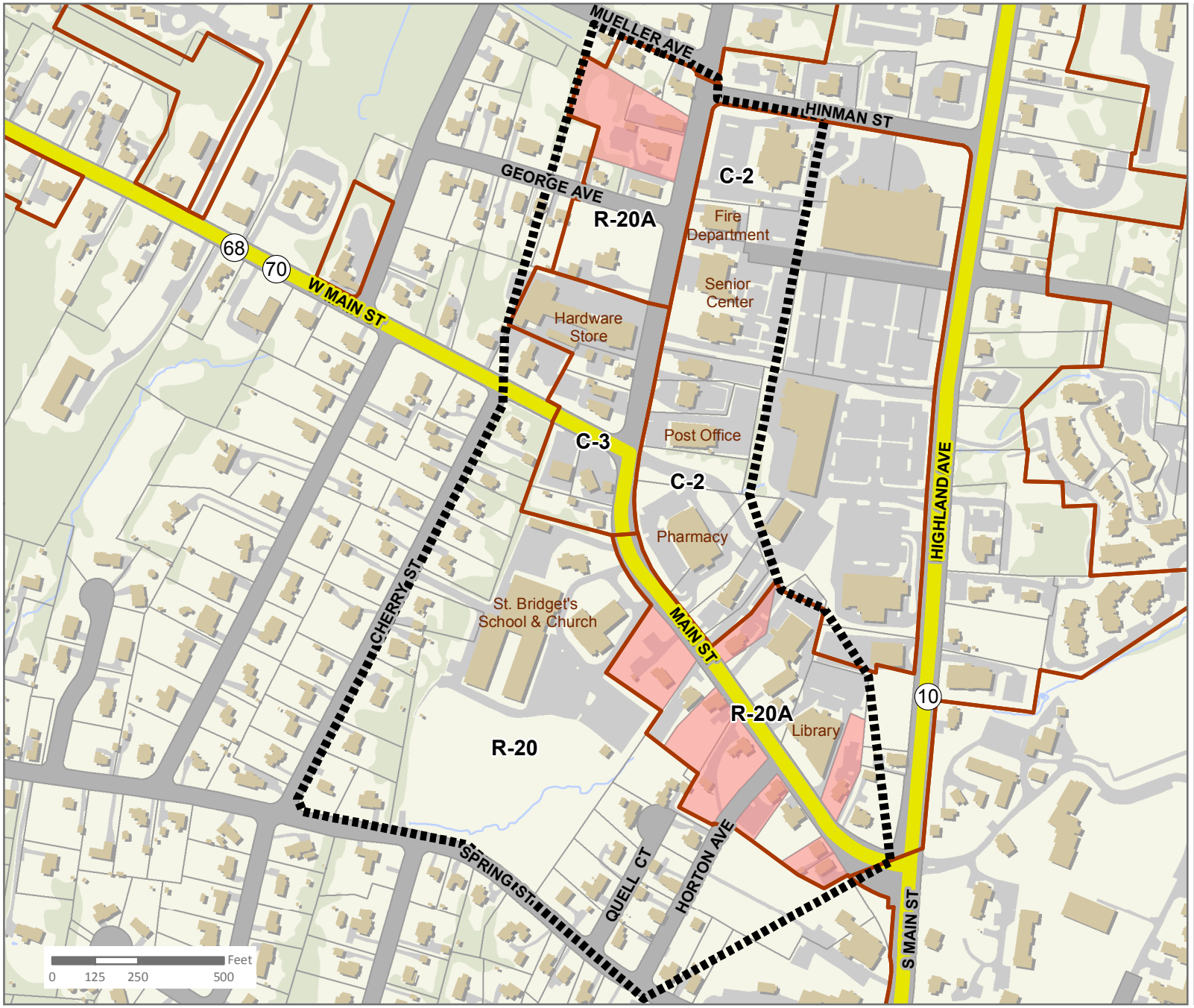
## Main Street Focus Area

The Main Street focus area is largely an extension of the Town Center area, and extends northwest along Main Street from its intersection with Highland Avenue, and continuing on Maple Avenue to Hinman Street and Mueller Avenue. The area is shown on the attached map. This is another area that contains a variety of institutional uses and neighborhood scale commercial uses. The institutional uses include St. Bridget's church and school, the Cheshire Public Library, the Post Office, the Cheshire Senior Center and the headquarters of the Cheshire Fire Department. Zoning designations include Commercial 2 (C2), Commercial 3 (C3), Residential 20 (R20), and Residential 20A (R20A).

Commercial uses within this neighborhood are professional offices, a bank, restaurants, and retail uses that include a 21,000 square foot hardware store and a 15,000 square foot retail/pharmacy. There is also an active residential component of this area that includes well-maintained single and multi-family homes, especially along the southerly side of Main Street on both sides of the intersection with Horton Avenue. Sidewalks are within this area, and it has uses and scale that encourage pedestrian activity, the safety of which should be a factor in the review of any applications for development within this focus area.

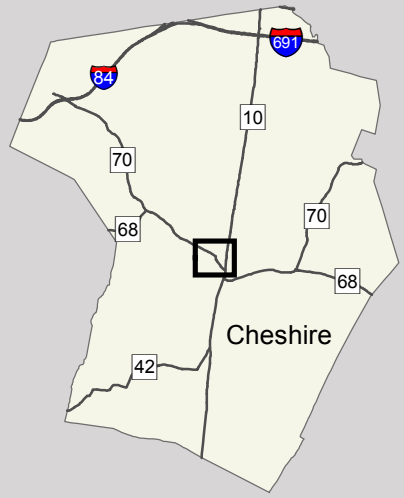
Though not within the Historic District, many structures within this focus area – both residential and commercial – are historic, and contribute to the character and unique sense of place which defines this area. Three of the buildings were constructed in the 18$^{th}$

# Main Street Focus Area




- Main Street Focus Area
- Zone Boundaries
- Historic Buildings
- Building Structures
- Parcel Boundaries
- State Routes
- Streets
- Parking and Driveways
- Streams
- POND
- WETLAND
- Vegetation

Location Map

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century (87 Main – 1740, 92 Main – 1780, 125 S. Main – 1780), two were constructed in the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century (97 Main – 1850, 275 Maple Avenue – 1860, 81 Main – 1900, 105 S. Main – 1900, 143 Main – 1926, 134 Main – 1900, 291 Maple Avenue – 1920).

Preservation of these historic structures is due, in part, to availability of the Residential 20A zone that allowed owners to reap investment value through the conversion of some of these structures to multi-family homes and professional offices. Community character is further reinforced by locating of much of the off street parking to the rear and sides of the buildings, as well as landscaping treatments that reinforce the historic elements of this focus area. Continued use of the R20A zone should be encouraged where appropriate, and rezoning properties to Commercial zones is not recommended. The R20A regulations require that buildings be residential in character and that parking be located to the side and or rear of buildings where appropriate, and this enhances the quality of the area. This is another area within which alternatives to demolition should be encouraged. The Main Street focus area also benefits from not having parking as a dominant, visual element along much of the frontage, and this should be continued. Commercial zones have the potential to introduce a variety of uses and design elements that are out of character and inappropriate for this area.

A principal problem for this area is that it is framed by two very busy Main Street intersections at Highland Avenue (Route 10) and at West Main Street (Route 68). The Main Street/West Main intersection also receives traffic from a rear entry to Maplecroft Plaza. Additional traffic and turning movements are also generated – particularly during the late afternoon peak hour – to and from the Post Office, bank and the retail/pharmacy located within the vicinity of this intersection. Careful access management should be a key concern in the review of any development proposals within this area. These strategies should include minimizing the number of curb cuts, shared access and parking wherever possible, and providing vehicles and pedestrians with safe, logical approaches and entry to all site use areas. Applicants should be expected to demonstrate to the Commission that these elements have been considered in all applications.

## West Main Street Focus Area

For the purposes of this discussion, the West Main Street focus area begins at its intersection with Maple Avenue, and proceeds westerly to the intersection with Deepwood Drive. This forms the core of the West Main Street village. It is an area containing a distinct mixture of neighborhood scale commercial land uses including restaurants, convenience retail, motor vehicle repair and gasoline filling, coffee shops, hair solons, professional services, physical fitness. It also contains and is surrounded by older and well-maintained single, two and three-family homes as well as multi-family developments, all of which have a strong relationship to the commercial core. Residents within these neighborhoods are also well organized with a strong sense of community pride. Willow Street, Grove Street, and Warren Street intersect with West Main, and the health of the village area will translate directly into the

health and property values of these local neighborhoods. Zoning designations within this area include Commercial 3 (C3), Industrial 1 (I1), Residential 20 (R20), and Residential 20A (R20A).

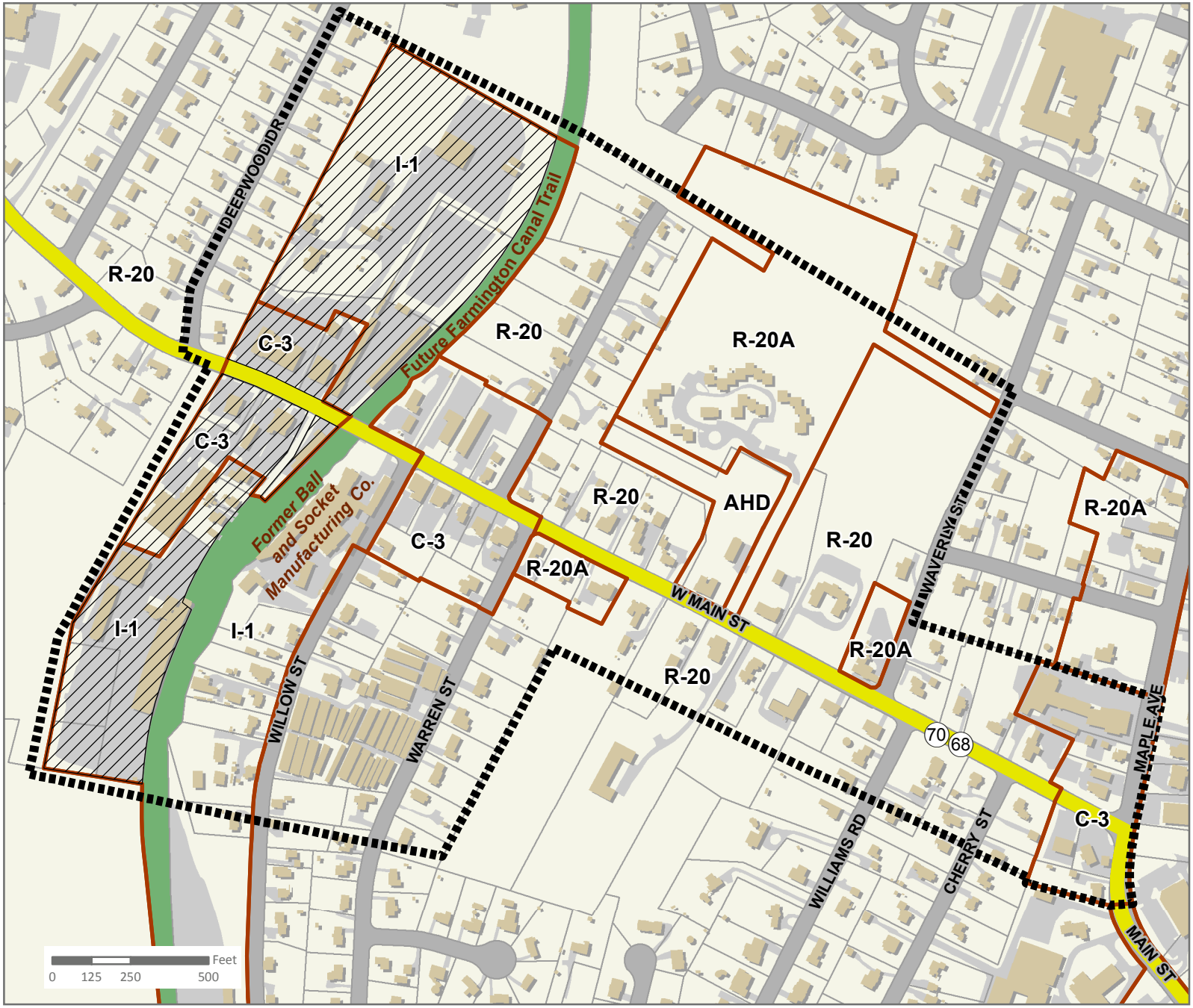
The dominant feature in this area is the former Ball and Socket manufacturing facility that is in the process of being converted into a community arts facility through adaptive reuse. This project has the potential to provide significant benefits as it becomes a major activity center. It is proposed to be a destination for multiple purposes every day of the week, and will likely increase pedestrian activity and provide incentive for new investment in the village area.

West Main Street is a state highway (Route 68/70) and carries a very high volume of traffic in excess of 19,000 vehicles per day. The village core sits at the bottom of a long hill descending from the Town Center vicinity, and from behind a curve when approaching from the west. The hill increases the speed of motor vehicles and the curve shortens the sight distance, making pedestrian crossings of West Main Street difficult. The West Main focus area is to become an essential node on the linear trail, and a safe pedestrian crossing of the highway must be completed. The Connecticut Department of Transportation estimates that as many as 100,000 people per year will use the trail and pass through the heart of the West Main Street village core. The potential commercial benefits from this traffic should not be underestimated. The DOT has installed a pedestrian "island of refuge" in the middle of the highway for crossing the trail, and will also install a High Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) signal system on West Main to facilitate pedestrian crossings.

During the past seven years, the Town has received $1,000,000 from the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development for streetscape improvements along both sides of West Main Street. These have improved the aesthetics of this area and reinforced the village atmosphere. The street should continue to be maintained as a major pedestrian area, and local businesses – especially restaurants – should be encouraged to organize and provide for trail access and appropriate outdoor service and activities wherever reasonably possible.

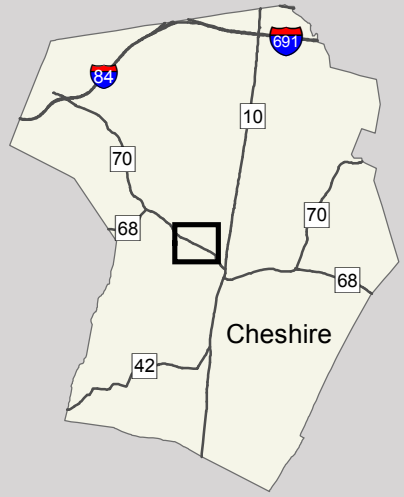
Many commercial buildings on West Main Street – particularly from Warren Street westerly to the edge of the focus area – could not be constructed under the 50 foot front yard setback requirement of the Commercial 3 (C3) zone. In recent years, there have been inquiries regarding the potential for demolition and redevelopment of a few individual properties in this area. Interested parties are always informed that this is not possible under the current setback regulations. Demolition is made attractive by the difficulties with adoption of current structural, life safety, and energy codes that make conversion and remodeling of older buildings very difficult. Under the existing C3 regulations, a demolition/rebuild approach would force new construction to meet the 50 foot front yard setbacks. This approach destroys the historic street rhythm and would likely bring off street parking to front yards, making the accommodation of motor vehicles a dominant design feature on this street.

# West Main Street Focus Area




West Main Street Focus Area
Potential Special Development District (SDD) Areas
Zone Boundaries
State Routes
Building Structures
Parcel Boundaries
Streets
Parking and Driveways
Future Farmington Canal Trail
Streams
POND
WETLAND
Vegetation

Location Map

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It is therefore recommended that flexible zoning regulations be written to facilitate mixed residential and commercial uses that will allow for reconstruction on portions of sites that are currently precluded by the setbacks in the C3 zone. It is also recommended that new development be regulated by Special Permit in order to enable consideration of locational context in the design of the site and buildings to be located thereon. Section 40.4.7 of the Cheshire Zoning Regulations enables the consideration of the "nature of the surrounding area and the extent to which the proposed use and its features and appearance will be in harmony with the surrounding area." It is likely that such an approach will encourage redevelopment where appropriate without the 50 foot front setback requirement and should protect the character of this essential focus area.

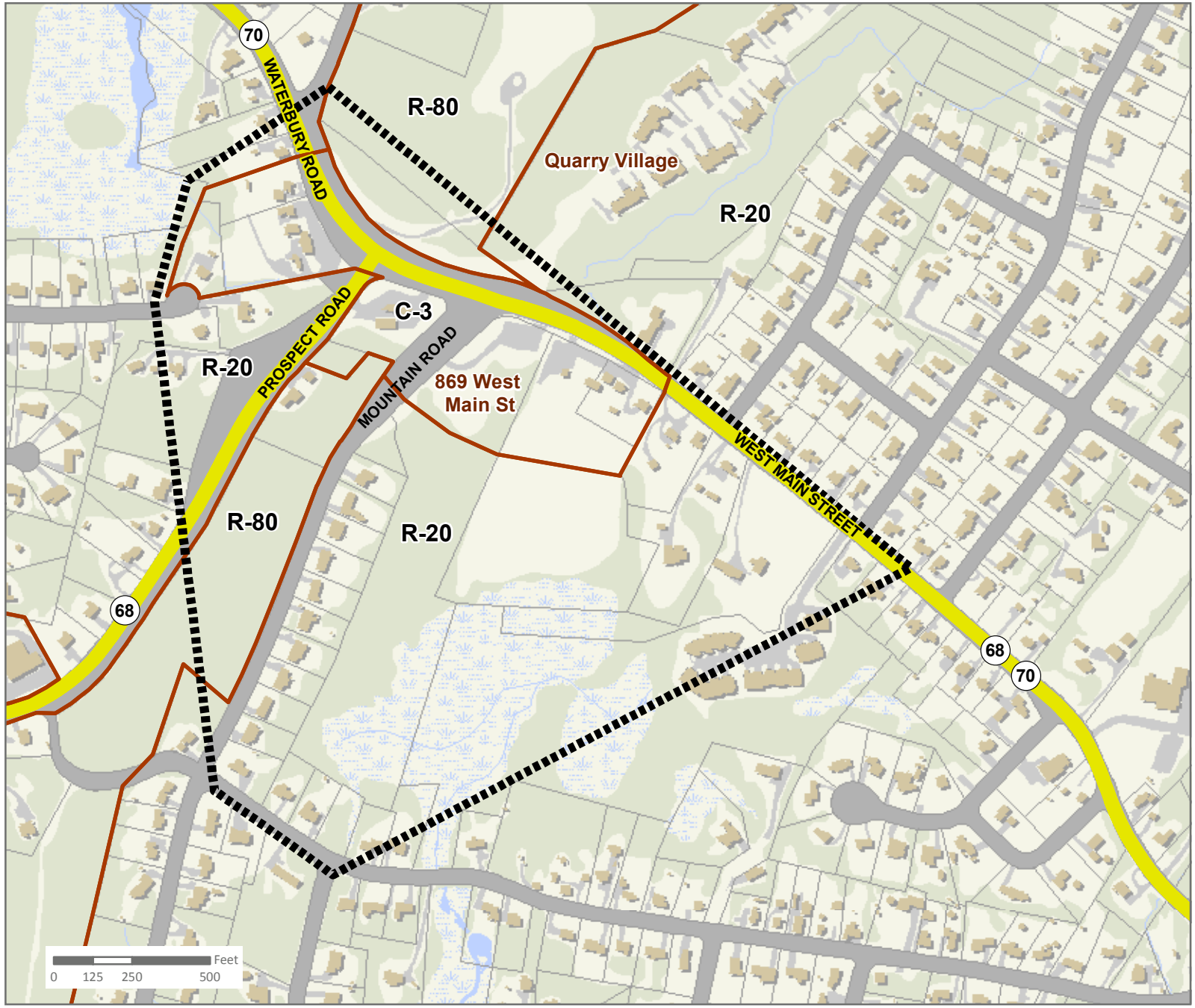
There are also comparatively large groups of properties within the West Main focus area whose future redevelopment should be done in a coordinated manner, and which should include consideration of appropriate uses, scale, parking location, access management, and building design that will also withstand the scrutiny set forth in Section 40.7. These areas are shown on the maps entitled "Potential Special Development District (SDD) Areas Within the West Main Street Focus Area". These include approximately 14 acres on the northerly side of West Main Street located between the westerly boundary of the Farmington Canal and the rear boundaries of the Deepwood Drive neighborhood, and 9.23 acres located directly across on the south side of West Main. These property groups include commercial, industrial, and residential uses, and their zoning designations include Industrial 1 (I1) and Commercial 3 (C3). It is recommended that consideration be given to writing a Special Development District (SDD) or Planned Area Development regulation to enable a mixture of uses that will include all three use categories in a manner that will achieve their coordinated development and satisfy the various goals already stated for West Main Street. These regulations should enable and encourage projects to be done in a manner that extends and reinforces the neighborhood atmosphere that exists within this focus area.

## West Main Street Gateway Focus Area

This area is located at the intersections with Waterbury Road, West Main Street, Prospect Road, Mountain Road and the entry drive to Quarry Village. It is a mixture of residential and commercial uses including a gasoline filling station, restaurants, and a golf driving range. Residential uses include Quarry Village and some detached single and two family homes. Commercial properties are zoned Commercial 3 (C3) and residential zoning includes R20 for homes on West Main Street and Mountain Road, and R80 for homes on Prospect Road. It is a gateway to the West Main Street Focus area leading in from the Interstate 84 interchange further west on Waterbury Road, and it is the first substantial node of mixed residential and commercial uses along this corridor. It is also a busy intersection with commuting traffic moving to and from the I-84 interchange as well as Prospect.

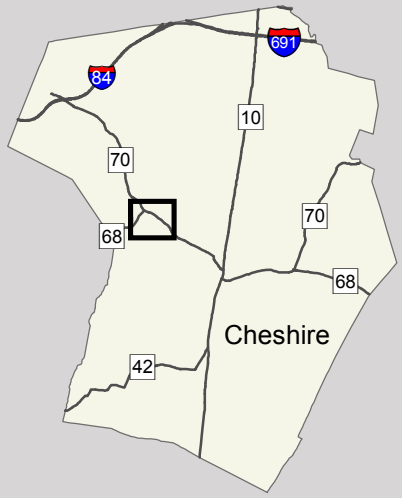
There are some properties within this focus area that are likely to receive consideration for redevelopment. These include a 2.26 acre commercial property (C3) located at 869 West Main Street which is adjacent to 8.51 acres of residential property (R20). This property

# West Main Street Gateway Focus Area




West Main Street Gateway Focus Area
Zone Boundaries
State Routes
Building Structures
Parcel Boundaries
Streets
Parking and Driveways
Streams
POND
WETLAND
Vegetation

Location Map

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runs southerly behind ten residential properties on Mountain Road and five with frontage on Ives Road, all of which are zoned R20. These properties were included in a mixed use development project that has been approved for a 14,000 square foot retail building on the commercial property and seven age restricted dwelling units on the residential piece which was approved in 2008. The 8 acre driving range property that is zoned R20 and the adjoining .97 acre commercial property which houses the recently constructed restaurant and an older two-family home are also likely to be considered in a future development scenario. Total acreage of all of these properties is nearly 20 acres.

Conventional development of the undeveloped residentially zoned portions of these properties will be constrained by a substantial area of inland wetlands. These wetland areas and the overall layout encourages the clustering of residential units along with some pedestrian friendly commercial uses that can be complementary to the residential portion, support the already existing residential neighborhoods and function as a commercial node similar to the historic uses of this property. New residential development in this area could be consistent with that which is recommended within Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes which encourages expansion of "housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types, and needs including affordable; concentration of development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options and land reuse."

It is recommended that regulations be developed to permit a Planned Area Development (PAD) approach to redevelopment of this area which will permit mixed use development with the integration of commercial and residential land uses; and permitting residential at a density that is compatible with this gateway location and similar areas within Cheshire, including the potential Infill Development areas that may be permitted along South Main Street. These regulations should include sufficient design standards to establish character features and functional relationships between all uses included in projects, buffering between already existing neighborhoods and effective access management to avoid traffic conflicts.

The West Main Street corridor includes State Routes 68 and 70 and begins at the intersection with Prospect Road. However, it is an extension of the arterial corridor that begins at the I-84 Interchange on Waterbury Road and serves primarily as an artery carrying high volumes of traffic through Cheshire, and maintaining the efficiency of this function is important, especially to the Connecticut Department of Transportation. However, the recommendations within this Plan are intended to amend the perception of this corridor as primarily a traffic artery to one that includes and should be supportive of an historic village area by acknowledging its importance as a pedestrian area.

## South Main Street Focus Area

The South Main Street focus area extends from the intersection along Main Street (Route 10) with North Brooksvale Road (Route 42) south to its intersection with King Road. It includes various commercial uses on both sides of the street, as well as some residential and professional offices. Zoning designations include Commercial 3, Commercial 2, Residential 20A and Residential 20. The entire area is located within the Aquifer Protection district.

It is framed to the north by the 1.32 acre 802 South Main Street property, upon which sits a well preserved 2200 square foot home constructed in 1930 that is zoned Residential 20A and a 1.7 acre parcel at 830 South Main that is zoned Commercial 3. A cluster of three buildings owned by Bovano Industries are located on this site, and they are used for commercial and industrial purposes. These buildings are of historic interest, as one was constructed in 1840, one in 1904, and a third, although built in 1960, was designed to be consistent with the style of the other two structures. They are residential in character, are of an appropriate scale for this area, and have been maintained by the owner. The home at 802 South Main is also adjacent to the 32 unit, Stonegate active adult community to its north. Stonegate includes two rehabilitated historic homes that face Route 10, and the balance of the units are detached single family homes. The overall scale and design of these areas are desirable for this portion of the community.

There have been a number of inquiries made over the years about development alternatives for both 802 and 830 South Main, individually or combined into a single development project. The R20A zoning designation of 802 South Main is appropriate, and offers future owners an opportunity to convert the home for professional office purposes which will preserve the structure and enable it to continue to serve as a signature piece at the gateway to this focus area. The properties at 830 South Main may provide an opportunity for adaptive reuse, or the design of a small mixed use project that could include residential and commercial uses, and preserve most of the historic structures that exist on this property. The C3 designation does not enable this, and in fact may encourage more intense uses that could result in the demolition of these structures.

The South Main Focus area is framed to the south by Cheshire Nursery located at 1263 South Main on the westerly side of the street. This 12 acre property has had a functioning nursery business on it since approximately 1910. It is zoned Residential 20, and is surrounded by single family neighborhoods that are located on Brentwood Drive, Brubaker Road, Bates Drive, and South Brooksvale Road. It is also directly across the street from the Southwick residential community, and just down the street from the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority well head. It is recommended that this property remain as a non-conforming use within the R20 district, and that no consideration be given to rezoning it for commercial purposes which would likely introduce uses that will be disruptive of these neighborhood areas, and could be detrimental to the well.

The central portion of this focus area contains many uses that are highway commercial in nature, including two community shopping centers, and a number of smaller properties that contain a variety of uses including retail, service, restaurants, a motel, and automotive sales and service. Properties on the easterly side are fairly shallow, which forces a design that includes parking to be located in the front of the structures. Care should be taken with future redevelopment applications to minimize the number of curb cuts to reduce traffic conflicts on Route 10 and to introduce landscaping elements that will soften the dominance that these parking lots impose on this corridor.

Properties on the westerly side of the street are much deeper, and have been developed as two larger scale community shopping centers. The same landscaping considerations should also be given for development on this side to soften the impact of the vast parking areas as well as reducing the perceived scale of these shopping center buildings.

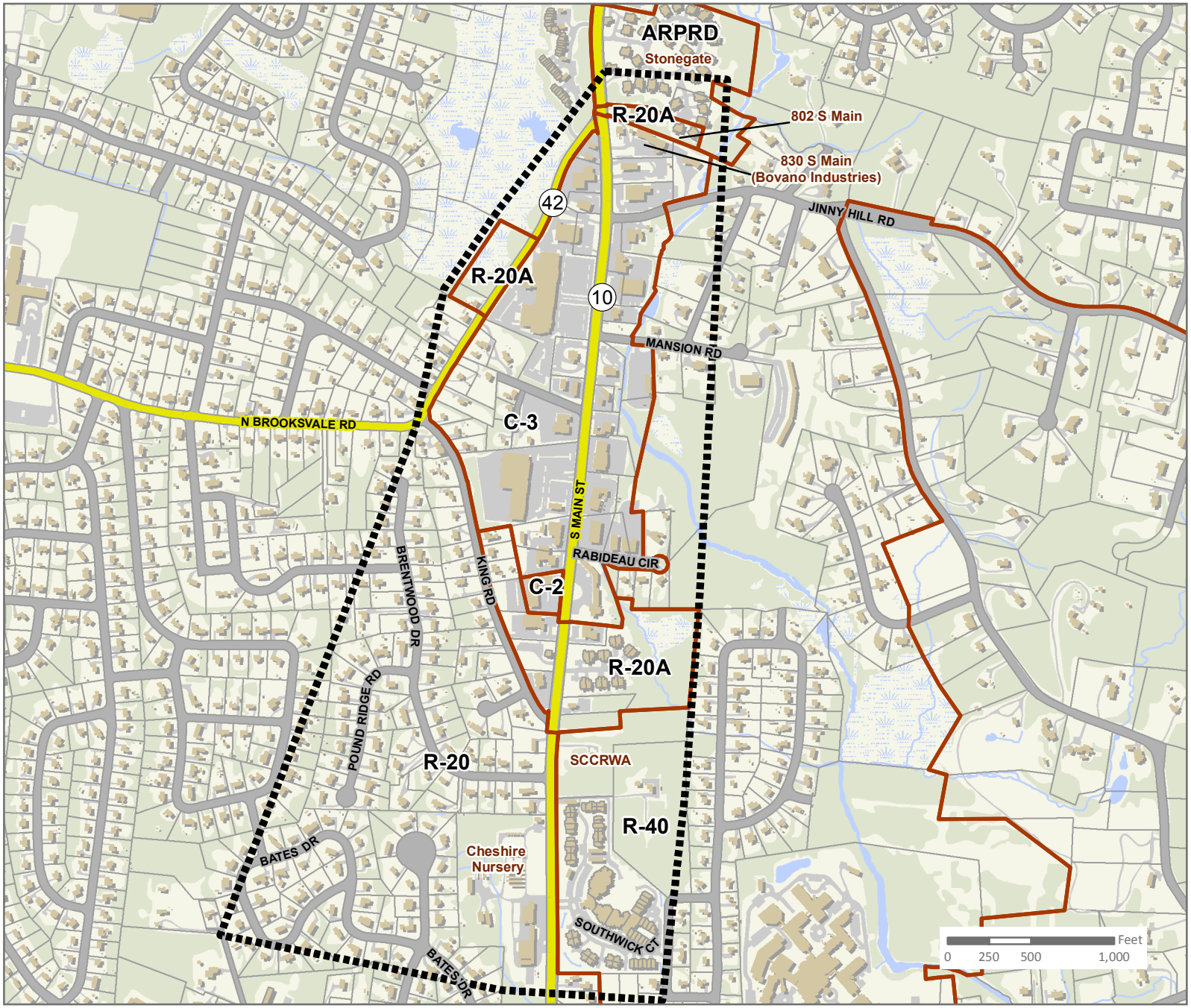
The most westerly portion of this focus area lies to the rear of these community shopping centers which includes a number of single family homes that are zoned Commercial 3, yet have their frontage and access on North Brooksvale Road and King Road. They are in every way part of those neighborhoods and, if developed for commercial purposes, would completely disrupt the fabric of this area. It is therefore recommended that consideration be given to rezoning these properties for residential purposes.

## Summary of Commercial Policy Recommendations

1. Amend the Zoning Regulations to encourage and require context-sensitive design, especially in the vicinity of Historic Districts.
2. Amend the Special Development District regulations to achieve more flexibility in SDD projects with consideration given to lot area and residential uses.
3. Continue consideration of a service road south of Cornwall Ave to Lanyon Drive on the east side of Route 10.
4. Maintain the R20A zoning in the Main Street Focus Area and avoid parking in the front yards.
5. Access management in the Main St/ West Main St commercial area should be a principal design factor in the review of new development proposals to avoid traffic conflicts and reduce the number of curb cuts.
6. Revise the Zoning Regulations for properties within the West Main Street Focus Area to enable the village atmosphere to be maintained with buildings located closer to the street than is currently allowed.
7. Revise the Zoning Regulations to facilitate mixed residential and commercial uses in the C3 zone in the West Main Street Focus Area.
8. Consider establishing a Special Development District or Planned Area Development Regulations for select areas within the West Main Street Focus Areas.

9. Maintain the Residential 20 designation for the Cheshire Nursery property.
10. Rezone nonconforming residential properties on King Road and North Brooksvale Road from Commercial 3 (C3) to Residential 20 (R20).
11. Continue to make improvements to pedestrian crossings in all commercial areas, especially in the Town Center Focus area to improve linkage of residential areas on both sides of South Main Street.
12. Strive to emphasize the importance and benefits of safe pedestrian activity within the West Main Street Focus Area and change its perception as primarily arterial.

# South Main Street Focus Area




South Main Street Focus Area
Zone Boundaries
Parcel Boundaries
Building Structures
State Routes
Streets
Parking and Driveways
POND
WETLAND
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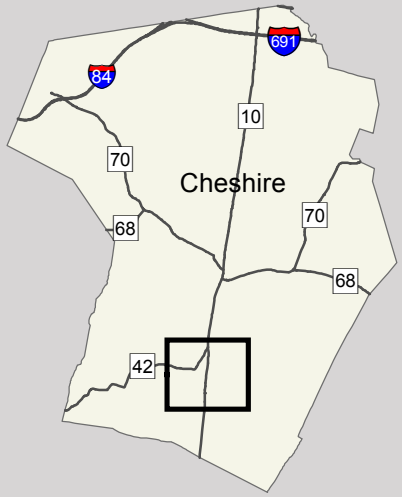
Streams

Location Map

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# Policy Overview for Industrial Areas

Industrial policy was summarized in our 2002 Plan of Conservation and Development through a goal of continuing "to provide an adequate amount of industrially zoned land and encourage industrial development that is compatible with the environment, residential growth, and community facilities", as well as supporting and enabling "existing industrial facilities to expand in town".

Industrial land use is regulated through three classifications: Industrial 1 (I-1), Industrial 2 (I-2), and Interchange Zone (IC). Total industrial land area is approximately 2500 acres, nearly 400 acres of which is within the Interchange District. These districts extend from Creamery Road, north along Route 10 through its interchange with I-691, ranging from approximately one mile easterly from Route 10 along East Johnson Avenue, and as far westerly as Marion Road. The range of these areas is shown on the map entitled Industrial Districts. A smaller area zoned I-1 is located in the West Main Street focus area, and policy options regarding that area are reviewed within the Commercial Section of this Plan. Most of the industrially zoned property on the easterly side of Route 10 (Highland Avenue) is also within the Aquifer Protection Zone, and that designation places additional limits on potential uses for those properties.

Industrial uses constitute a major portion of Cheshire's economic base and includes a wide range of uses and employment in various industrial categories, including manufacturing and assembly, agriculture, bio-technology, warehousing and distribution, and professional office.

Cheshire lies within the nineteen town Council of Governments of the Naugatuck Valley Region (COGNV) that includes Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Bethlehem, Bristol, Cheshire, Derby, Middlebury, Naugatuck, Oxford, Plymouth, Prospect, Seymour, Shelton, Southbury, Thomaston, Waterbury, Watertown, Wolcott, and Woodbury. In 2014, COGNV staff completed an Economic Profile, 2014 for this region that analyzes our regional economy and includes a comparison of employment versus workforce in the region and within each town.

Employment is a measure of how many people are actually employed, and workforce is a measure of the number of employed persons living within an area of employment. According to this report, the Central Naugatuck Valley Region (CNVR) has a significant employment to workforce mismatch as 98,453 people work within the geographic region, compared to 130,968 employed residents who live within it. This means that there is a daily net export of over 32,500 workers from the CNVR to places outside of the region.

The good news is that Cheshire is the only community in the CNVR that is a net importer of workers with an employment of 15,431, and a workforce of 14,474 persons. The major employment sectors are warehousing and distribution, agriculture, manufacturing, and service. Cheshire's strong and diversified industrial sector is a major reason that we are a net importer of labor, and this sector should be protected and strengthened to protect our economic health.

### *Support for Sanitary Sewer Extensions*

Industrial uses are also major consumers of public sanitary sewer, and most industrial property within Cheshire has sewer available. Public sanitary sewer in Cheshire is regulated by the Cheshire Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) in accordance with a **Facilities Plan** that was adopted in 2010. The town owns and operates a Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) that treats collected wastewater prior to its discharge into the Quinnipiac River. This facility is currently undergoing a major upgrade at a cost of $32,000,000 that should be completed by October of 2015.

The Commission takes note of **Public Act 15-95** that requires Plans which are adopted after July 1, 2015 to include existing and planned sewer service areas within the document. According to Office of Policy and Management (OPM) staff and an analysis completed by the Office of Legislative Research, this requirement will reveal any differences between recommendations regarding sanitary sewer installation made within POCD's and those within a **Facilities Plan** adopted by public sewer authorities. Its purpose is to provide guidance to state agencies that provide funding for various growth related projects that may occur within municipalities, and to resolve any differences between plans.

The Planning and Zoning Commission has had guidance from the WPCA staff and finds that the **Facilities Plan** adopted by the Cheshire WPCA in 2010 provides sufficient sanitary sewer to accommodate the long term interests of Cheshire to satisfy our growth and public health needs, and hereby adopts that plan by reference. The map contained in the Facilities Plan is included herein.

One other important policy consideration to remember in the overall is that industrial properties cannot be easily replaced, in part because they are so dependent upon highway and utility infrastructure, and because the range of uses that are allowed within these districts are inappropriate for many of the undeveloped portions of this community. Therefore, it is recommended that properties zoned for industrial purposes remain so zoned in order to protect this portion of our economic base and to discourage invasion of commercial uses into industrial areas, especially along the Route 10 corridor south of East Johnson Avenue and West Johnson Avenue.

### *Increasing Lot Coverage*

Since industrially zoned properties make up such a significant portion of Cheshire's economic base, it is worthwhile to consider ways in which the industrial sector can remain strong and competitive. Some amendments to applicable zoning requirements should be considered to accomplish this. A primary factor limiting scale of development within both industrial districts is a requirement for a maximum of 25 percent lot coverage. Lot coverage is that portion of ground area on a property that may be covered by buildings. A comparison of industrial coverage requirements within abutting municipalities (Table 1) reveals that our current 25 percent ratio is significantly lower than any of these communities.

## Table 1 Lot Coverage In Surrounding Communities

| Town | % Coverage |
|---|---|
| Southington | 35 to 50 depending upon location |
| Wallingford | 35 |
| Prospect | 35 |
| Hamden | 40 |
| Meriden | 30 to 50 depending upon location |
| Waterbury | 50 |

Consideration should be given to increasing lot coverage to at least 35 percent as a potential starting point. This coverage ratio is competitive and will provide opportunity for new projects as well as expansion of existing industrial users. It is also modest in terms of potential scale and character of industrial areas. It can also be accomplished without any significant environmental consequences, as our storm water management policy of no net increase in runoff will remain in effect.

Under our existing 25 percent coverage, a 40,000 square foot lot could support a 10,000 square foot building. An increase in building coverage to 35 percent could enable construction of up to an additional 4,000 square feet of ratable space. This proposition was discussed with the Regional Water Authority who requested that consideration be given to the management of additional storm water flows that may result from an increase in hard surfaces, including development of a total lot coverage requirement and a requirement for on-site management of storm water runoff. A total lot coverage ratio will be difficult to develop as it has a potential outcome of making existing industrial sites nonconforming. Existing policy and practice encourages on site management since the Engineering Department has historically required a net zero increase in peak runoff rates resulting in the creation of

detention ponds, underground detention devices and rain gardens. Permitting of deferred parking also aids in reducing additional storm water generated from industrial sites. It is recommended that potential zoning amendments regarding increased coverage show some consideration of these concerns and be referred to the Authority for comment.

### *Reducing Lot Size in Exchange for Access Management*

Another item for consideration is a review of minimum lot area requirements within each industrial district. Cheshire's Zoning Regulations require a minimum lot size of 40,000 square feet for properties zoned Industrial 1 and 120,000 square feet for those zoned Industrial 2. A distinction between required lot areas has existed at least as far back as 1959. It appears that 40,000 square feet has always been required for I-1 properties, but was as high as 240,000 square feet for I-2 properties until 1970 when it was reduced to 120,000 square feet as part of a major update of the entire zoning ordinance.

The larger lot size requirement of the I-2 district anticipated potentially larger users in an industrial park setting at a time when it was more realistic to anticipate larger industrial projects, and when Cheshire was more rural in character. Large lot zoning was also used before the installation of sanitary sewers in order to provide sufficient area making large lot sizes necessary to establish larger on-site septic systems. However, Cheshire and the market for industrial development have evolved considerably, and it is recommended that lot size regulations be amended to accommodate smaller users. It is also recommended that the minimum lot size in the I-2 district be reduced to 40,000 square feet to match that of the I-1 district. Any zoning text amendment written to reduce lot size should include measures to avoid poor access management.

In 1988, a Route 10 Planning Study was completed for Cheshire by Wilbur Smith Associates to review potential widening of Route 10 between Creamery Road and the intersection with West/East Johnson Avenue in the northerly part of Cheshire. This study made a number of recommendations on the impacts of this widening which included a recommendation to implement a curb cut control program. Such a program is designed to minimize the number of site access points, regulate their location to advantageous points to reduce conflicts, encourage connections between adjacent properties, and to provide for future consolidation of driveways serving adjacent properties. These are all very effective access management tools.

The Commission may choose to reduce minimum industrial lot area requirements in the I-2 zone in exchange for the incorporation of access management measures into a plan, thereby providing more flexibility and opportunities for economic development and achieving some of the objectives recommended in the 1988 study.

For example, under existing regulations, a 10 acre frontage parcel on Highland Avenue that is zoned Industrial 2 could be subdivided into a maximum of three individual building lots with a potential of up to three access points onto the public highway. Under an amended regulation, the property might be divided into as many as ten industrial lots with the potential for the same – or fewer – number of access points onto Highland Avenue using these access management strategies. Reducing lot size also provides more flexibility for development of industrial parks, and may provide some advantage for Cheshire in our regional market place.

This reduction should be granted by Special Permit which includes an additional level of discretionary review under Section 40 of the Zoning Regulations and requires a public hearing. If the regulations are amended to permit this reduction, then it is advisable to require a master plan of an overall development in order to assess access management and curb cut control strategy for a particular location. The Special Permit process is ideal for this type of review.

## Interchange Focus Area Considerations

The Interchange Zone (IC) was developed in 1985, and was based upon a study entitled **Land Use Analysis and Plan of Development, Land Surrounding I-691/Route 10 Interchange** that was written by the FIP Corporation in collaboration with town officials to develop an overall strategy for the development of the area surrounding the I-691/Route 10 interchange. Most of this area was originally zoned for industrial purposes under the I-2 regulations.

This study observed that the interchange area was Cheshire's "front door" and that consideration be given to optimizing the attractiveness of the area, protecting natural resources, ensuring compatibility between adjacent land uses, minimizing traffic conflicts, and providing for a balanced tax and employment base. Land uses including office buildings, high-tech research centers, hotels and conference centers were anticipated by this study, and a proposed land use plan was developed that led to the development of the Interchange Zone (IC) regulations and changes to the Cheshire Zoning Map.

This focus area is shown on the Interchange Focus Area map and includes four quadrant areas wrapped around the I-691/Route 10 interchange. The northwesterly quadrant has been rezoned to Interchange Special Development District (ISDD) to facilitate development of a mixed use commercial center that has already been approved. The Plan of Conservation and Development was amended in 2007 to facilitate this.

A major portion of the northeasterly quadrant is owned by the State of Connecticut and includes a commuter parking lot. There are also three residential properties wedged between the interchange ramps and the commuter lot. The southwesterly quadrant is largely undeveloped, but does include an abandoned single family home along Highland Avenue, and an active home along West Johnson Avenue. This entire quadrant area was recently acquired by a local company with a likely intention for business development. Most of the southeasterly quadrant is owned by a utility company whose intentions appear to be to remain on the property for an extended period of time.

The original vision for major office buildings, high-tech research centers, hotels and conference centers has been impaired by fluctuating market conditions and the lack of public utilities. This mix of uses may still have potential with users that are willing to bear the cost of various improvements, but it is almost certain that changes will be requested. If so, it will be important to remember that this is still Cheshire's front door, and that any proposed amendments to the Interchange Zone regulations or Cheshire Zoning Map within this Focus Area be reviewed with a perspective that recognizes this as Cheshire's gateway. Therefore, any proposed changes or projects should include a master plan with a comprehensive vision of potential impacts, and emphasis given to access management and to the scale and design of buildings and how they will show context sensitive consideration for this area.

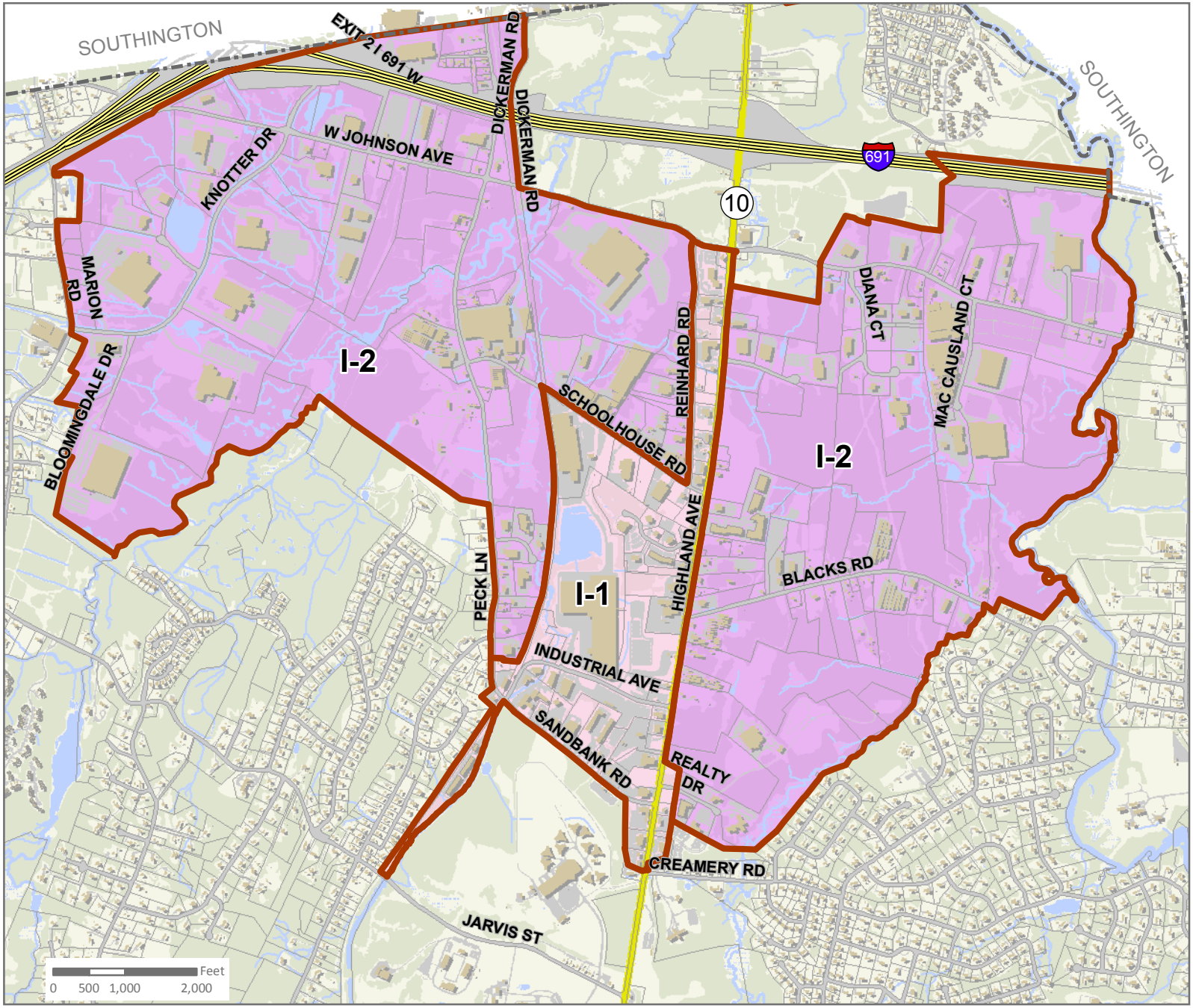
While it is reasonable to expect that developments of larger scale are desirable in the Interchange Focus Area, it may also be time to examine the ten acre requirement for minimum lot size within the Interchange Zone regulations. While ten acres encourages larger users, it is recommended that consideration be given to smaller lot sizes, perhaps in the three to five acre range to encourage the development of smaller corporate parks. The same access management principles used for the reduction of lot size in the Industrial 2 zone should be included in the Interchange Zone.

## Summary of Industrial Policy Recommendations

1. Properties zoned for industrial purposes remain so zoned in order to protect this portion of our economic base and to discourage invasion of commercial uses into industrial areas, especially along the Route 10 corridor south of East Johnson Avenue and West Johnson Avenue.
2. The Zoning Regulations should be modified to increase the lot coverage to at least 35% to improve Cheshire's competitive position with neighboring communities.

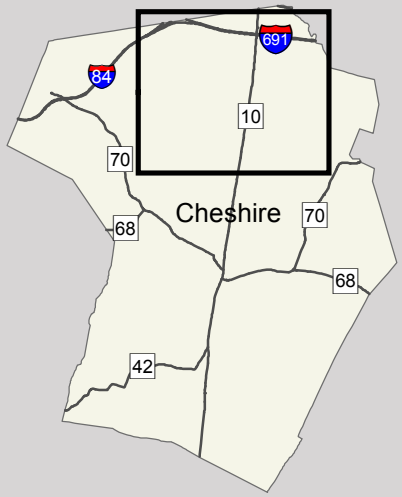
3. The Zoning Regulations should be modified to reducing minimum lot area to 40,000 square feet in the Industrial 2 zone to match that of Industrial 1 zone in exchange for an overall site development plan that includes an access management strategy with shared parking and fewer curb cuts.
4. Continue to recognize the Interchange Focus Area as Cheshire's gateway and emphasize access management and context sensitive design for any development projects proposed within.
5. Continue to recognize the Facilities Plan for the sanitary sewer system adopted by the Cheshire Water Pollution Control Authority as an extension of this Plan.
6. Consider modification of reducing the minimum lot area from ten acres in the Interchange Zone to three to five acres in exchange for an overall site development plan that includes an access management strategy with shared parking and fewer curb cuts.

# Industrial Districts




- Cheshire Town Boundary
- Zone Boundaries
- Interstate
- Parcel Boundaries
- State Routes
- Streets
- Building Structures
- Parking and Driveways
- Streams
- POND
- WETLAND
- Vegetation

Location Map

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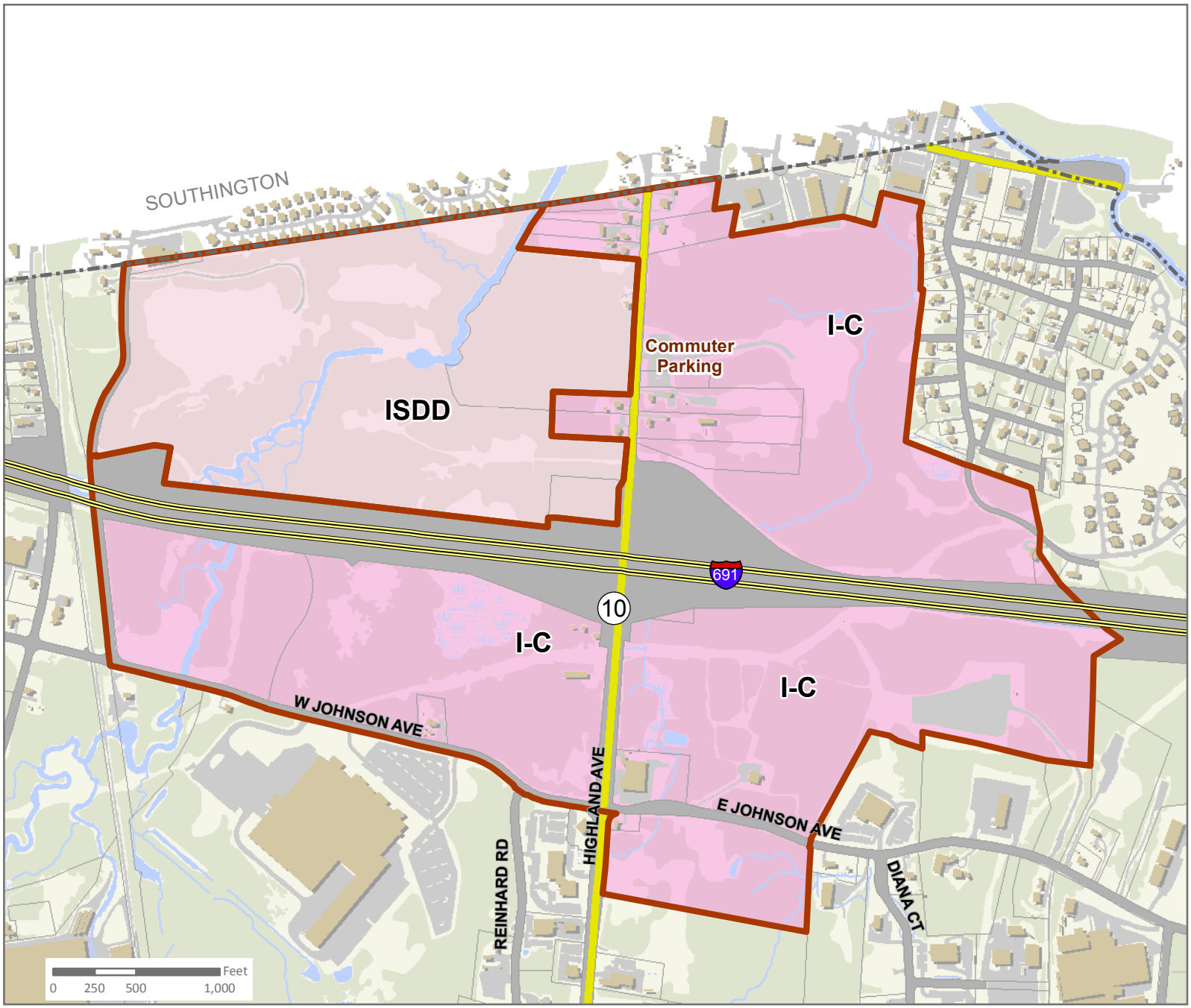
Delineations may not be exact.



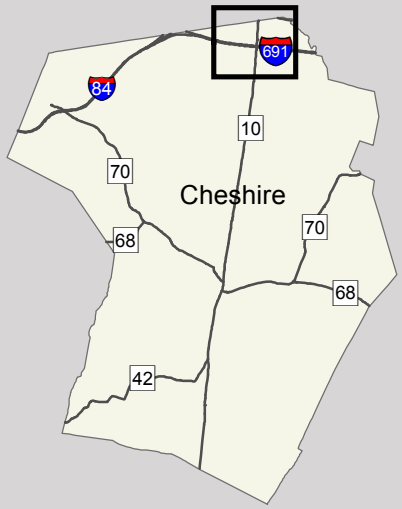
NAUGATUCK VALLEY COUNCIL of GOVERNMENTS

# Interchange Focus Area




Interstate
Cheshire Town Boundary
Zone Boundaries
Parcel Boundaries
State Routes
Streets
Building Structures
Parking and Driveways
Streams
POND
WETLAND
Vegetation
CNV_CT911_roads selection

Location Map




For planning purposes only.
Delineations may not be exact.



NAUGATUCK VALLEY COUNCIL of GOVERNMENTS

# Policy Overview for Residential Concerns

Approximately 87 percent of land within Cheshire is zoned for residential purposes, making residential uses an essential component of both the community character and economic base. The density pattern is typical for a suburban community within Connecticut, and is characterized by predominantly single family development with higher densities within and adjacent to the commercial core areas along Route 10 and West Main Street, and lower densities as the distance from these areas increases.

Cheshire is also a community of neighborhoods, all of which function to provide community character, spirit, and integrity. Cheshire residents care about this community and are the human capital that is necessary for it to function. Residents volunteer their time to serve on the various boards, committees, commissions, church groups, and youth organizations that form the heart and soul of this community. The Community Survey was also helpful in preparation of this portion of the Plan with 66 percent of respondents stating that they would support an effort to attract moderately-priced housing to meet the needs of residents of moderate incomes, including a broad cross section of community residents such as police, firefighters, teachers, young adults, and senior citizens.

According to the **Naugatuck Valley Regional Profile 2014** prepared by the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments, approximately 82% of housing units within Cheshire are detached, single family homes. In 2013, the Council prepared a **Residential Build-Out Analysis for Cheshire** which calculated that up to 1,554 dwelling units could be constructed on remaining residentially zoned property. This profile also estimated a potential population increase of up to 4,134 persons that could result from construction of these 1,554 additional dwelling units, calculated at a rate of 2.66 persons per household. This Plan does not challenge any assumptions or predictions made within this analysis, but does recognize that rates of new construction and absorption are not linear, and are tied to economic cycles that vary the pace of new development.

In addition, population projections prepared by the **Connecticut State Data Center** at the University of Connecticut forecast that our population will shrink by nearly 1 percent from 29,261 persons in 2010 to 28,931 persons in 2025. These projections indicate that there will be a reduction in the number of persons who are younger than age 39.

This Profile indicates that there has been very modest population growth (2.1%) between 2000 and 2013, and a small decline (-0.4%) between 2010 and 2013. The 2.1% increase was the second lowest within the entire 19 town Naugatuck Valley Region. Bristol was lowest at 0.8% and Oxford was highest at 31.1percent, and the regional average is 4.6%.

The median age has increased within Cheshire, and in the entire region. In 1990, this median was 35.5 years, in 2000 it was 38.4 years, and in 2010 it was 42.2 years. The regional averages are 34.3, 37.6, and 40.1 years respectively. Median age growth is affected primarily by out-migration of younger persons and declining household size. This change is also evident in that 45% of Cheshire's population is older than 45 years, and nearly 60% is older than 35.

The Profile also shows that household size has also declined from 3.06 persons in 1980 to 2.66 persons in 2010. The regional average is 2.81 to 2.53 for the same range. Household occupancy is 10.8% single parent, 64.1% married couple, and 25.1% non-family. A non-family household includes people who live alone, or where individuals share homes with persons to whom they are not related. The regional average for households is 18.3% single parent, 49.2% married couple, and 32.5% non-family.

In summary, Cheshire's population has become older and lives in smaller households – a significant portion of which are comprised of unrelated persons, and these characteristics are considered within the policy recommendations of this Plan.

Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes governs the preparation, amendment and adoption of plans of conservation and development. In 2013, the General Assembly amended CGS Section 23 to require consideration of policies that will allow older adults and persons with a disability the ability to live in their homes and communities whenever possible. This amended section includes consideration of various strategies to accomplish this goal, including home sharing, accessory apartments, and expanding the definition of family to allow for inclusion of aging persons, and those with a disability and their caregivers. It is recommended that the Cheshire Zoning Regulations be reviewed to include appropriate strategies, especially in consideration of our evolving demographic characteristics. These amendments might relate to the accessory apartment regulations and a review of the definition of family set forth with these regulations.

In addition, Section 8-23 requires that this Plan include policies regarding housing diversity and affordable housing. Specifically, Section 8-23, a, (3), (d) states that "the commission...shall consider...the need for affordable housing". This requirement is emphasized within Section 8-23, a, (3), (e) which states that the POCD must show consistency with various growth management principles including "expansion of housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs"; providing "for the development of housing opportunities...for all residents of the municipality and planning region", and promoting "housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low and moderate income households."

Town records show that there are approximately 8,082 dwellings in Cheshire (which includes single, two, three, and four family dwellings) and an additional 1,366 condominiums for a total of 9448 dwellings. Of these, 337 qualify as affordable, *i.e.* available to

households with income levels that are at or below the 80 percent of the median income that is adjusted for family size. Relevant income guidelines are published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the current 80 percent adjusted level within Cheshire is $63,900 for a family of four persons.

There are three primary means to develop affordable housing within Cheshire, two of which are contained within the Cheshire Zoning Regulations, and the third is through appeals filed under Section 8-30g of the Connecticut General Statutes. Section 44A of the Cheshire Zoning Regulations (Omnibus Affordable Housing Regulations) has a stated purpose of providing standards and procedures for the design and development of affordable single family, multifamily, and congregate housing. It provides for a two-step process – zone change and special permit – through which affordable housing projects can be reviewed and processed by the Planning and Zoning Commission. A review of this section leads to a conclusion that it was written as an alternative to CGS Section 8-30g which provides for a complete override of local zoning requirements.

This regulation was last used by the Cheshire Housing Authority for the expansion of the Beachport affordable housing project in 2009. It is recommended that Section 44A be reviewed and revised to remove any inconsistencies between it and the provisions of CGS Section 8-30g, and to enable it to become a more effective tool for the creation of affordable housing with more local control.

Affordable housing is also permitted under Section 44 of the Regulations (Planned Residential Subdivision Development), a residential cluster regulation that offers an affordable density bonus in exchange for open space. The terms of this regulation require no less than 20 percent of the total units be maintained as affordable as set forth by the HUD guidelines for 30 years. This regulation was used in 1993 for development of the Moss Farms Subdivision which resulted in the creation of 13 affordable units scattered along Dundee Drive, Maplehurst Court, Orleton Court, and Shipton Court. It is recommended that this regulation also be reviewed and updated for it to remain an effective tool for both the creation of affordable housing and the protection of open space.

CGS Section 8-30g is also known as the Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals Act which provides a complete override of local zoning authority in communities where less than 10 percent of the housing stock is affordable for projects in which at least 30 percent of the dwelling units are "sold or rented at, or below, prices which will preserve the units as housing for which persons or families pay 30 percent or less of their annual income, where such income is equal to 80 percent or less of the median income." As noted, Cheshire is well below this 10 percent threshold, and it is unlikely that this level can ever be achieved. The review of the existing described above should also consider means of further reducing the likelihood of such burdensome appeals.

The 2002 POCD states that the principal residential goal is "to encourage a balanced growth that is compatible with our infrastructure; to preserve the semi-rural nature of the community and to provide a variety of housing types which offers a choice to meet the needs of various income levels and lifestyles." This language is nearly echoed in the text of CGS Section 8-23, and these policies are also a principal goal of this plan.

Preservation of Cheshire's rural characteristics is also a very important goal. Much of the remaining undeveloped residential land has rural characteristics and important environmental features. These include protected open spaces listed in the Environmental Concerns chapter of this Plan that are owned by the Town, the Cheshire Land Trust, the Regional Water Authority, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and the City of Meriden – all of which protect and preserve important environmental assets, as well as defining the character of large portions of the community. Cheshire's total landmass (including water bodies) is 21,165 acres, of which 4,687 acres (22.14%) is protected as open space.

These environmental assets include a ridgeline along our westerly boundary with Prospect, watershed property surrounding Broad Brook Reservoir that is an essential resource for Meriden, those former agricultural areas that establish a greenbelt along our southeasterly boundary with Wallingford, and large open space areas that protect rural character in our northwesterly quadrant, directly adjacent to Waterbury. Much of the remaining residential land is also characterized by steep and irregular topography and areas with substantial wetlands and important watercourses, all of which makes development more difficult and can result in degradation of these resources.

Section 42 of the Cheshire Zoning Regulations is entitled "Cluster Subdivisions" that offers an alternative to conventional subdivision that could be useful in protecting rural character and our environmental resources. These regulations were originally adopted in 1984, and have had some amendments through 2000. There has been little use of Section 42 in recent years, and it is recommended that it be reviewed and revised to make it a more useful tool for the protection of our character as well as these environmental assets. Any revision of these regulations should provide for a review of the responsibilities of homeowners associations. Regulations should provide for a method of reimbursement to the town should an association fail to fulfill its responsibilities that would be specified in an approval, resulting in the town having to perform them in the interests of public health, safety, and welfare. Review should also be given to the rear lot regulations found in Section 5.5 of the Cheshire Subdivision Regulations. A review of these regulations was recommended within the 2002 Plan of Conservation and Development, and it is once again recommended within this update. This review should be done to clarify and/or eliminate inconsistencies in the language and to enable a comprehensive review of the design standards.

## Summary of Residential Policy Recommendations

1. Review and amend the Zoning Regulations to include appropriate strategies concerning Cheshire's evolving demographic characteristics.
2. Review and amend Section 44A (Omnibus Affordable Housing Regulations) of the Zoning Regulations to be make it an effective alternative to Section 8-30g of (Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals) of the Connecticut General Statutes and protect local review of affordable housing projects.
3. Review and amend Section 44 (Planned Residential Subdivision Regulations) of the Zoning Regulations that regulate residential cluster subdivisions to provide for more open space for recreation and/or conservation and to provide for affordable housing within Cheshire as already stated within the purposes of this section.
4. Review and amend Section 42 (Cluster Subdivisions) of the Zoning Regulations to make cluster an effective development option that can provide for more usable open space.
5. Review and amend the Subdivision and Zoning Regulations regarding the responsibilities of home owner associations to protect the town from inheriting the maintenance of improvements that are to be maintained by such associations.
6. Review and amend Section 5.5 (Rear Lots) of the Subdivision Regulations to clarify language and review design standards.

# Policy Overview for Community Facilities

## Sustainability and the Design of Public Facilities

This chapter focuses on infrastructure and municipal facilities that supports everyday life for Cheshire residents including Town Hall, our public library, police and fire department buildings, parks and recreational assets, and public water and sewer operations.

Real benefits can be realized from careful, sustainable design of municipal facilities including public buildings, parks, and rights-of-way. Sustainability promotes public health, safety, reliability, cost effectiveness, and quality of life within Cheshire, and consideration should be given to including sustainable design into new municipal buildings and to those waiting to be improved.

Sustainable practices should also be incorporated into daily operation of municipal facilities in ways that will reduce the long term maintenance and energy costs required for their operation, and sustainable infrastructure design requirements for both public and private sector projects should be included within Cheshire's zoning and subdivision regulations.

Cheshire has many old and beautiful trees. Our streetscape is an important factor in our overall attractiveness as a community. We also value the ecological importance of our trees. Therefore we support maintenance of existing trees and encourage planting new trees where appropriate, especially along our major highway corridors.

## Community Service Facilities

### *Town Hall, 84 South Main Street*

Town Hall is located within the Town Center Focus Area, and Town Center Historic District. This building has a usable area of nearly 40,000 square feet, and sits upon approximately 2.1 acres of land. It is characterized as being Late Greek Revival in style with features that include a pedimented gable, symmetrical shape, bold simple moldings, and a heavy cornice. It was constructed in phases beginning in 1867, with the last phase constructed in 1988.

There are 77 on-site parking spaces, 51 of which are reserved for municipal employees during business hours. An additional 8 spaces are reserved for municipal use in the Grange Hall parking lot located on Wallingford Road, and the Grange makes additional parking available as needed for special events at Town Hall.

Parking is generally adequate for municipal staff and visitors, although limited during peak tax and licensing seasons during June and July. From a functional perspective, Town Hall is complete, and there is no land available for any significant changes within its boundaries; however, continued efforts should be made to preserve and protect its historic architectural elements, and to improve both sustainability and efficiency of its operating systems.

### *Humiston School, 29 Main Street*

Humiston School is located within the Town Center Historic District and Town Center Focus Areas. It provides offices for Cheshire's Board of Education and houses an alternative high school with an enrollment of up to 25 students. This property is approximately 3.1 acres in area, and is served by a large parking lot located on Spring Street which functions very well for both school and Board purposes. This lot is also shared with Temple Beth David, and this arrangement causes no problems for any users. The Board of Education occupies approximately 30,000 square feet of this structure, and the school is sufficient in size to satisfy its operational needs for many years.

This building was constructed in 1912 and is described as Colonial Revival in style. Elements of this style include classical columns and a cornice treatment, constructed to show the importance of this public institution. It is generally successful in fulfilling its functional purposes as a school and administrative center, and there do not appear to be any near-term need to make additions. In any case, efforts should also be made to preserve and protect its historic integrity, and to improve the sustainability and efficiency of its operating systems.

### *Hitchcock Phillips House, 43 Church Drive*

The Hitchcock Phillips House is home to the Cheshire Historical Society. It is also located within the Town Center Historic District and Town Center Focus Area on 1.2 acres of land on the semi-circular Church Drive that surrounds the green across from Town Hall. This building was constructed in 1785, and is Georgian in architectural style, featuring a five-bay façade with a central chimney, gabled roof, small pane sash and clapboard exterior. It is expected that the Historical Society's tenancy will last for many years. Though small in size, it is historically important and should be maintained in its historic state.

### *Cheshire Public Library, 104 Main Street*

Cheshire's public library is located within the Main Street Focus Area. The library has existed on this site since 1961, and was expanded to its current form in 1996. Parking at this location is limited at times, and it is shared with the adjacent Baptist Church of Cheshire. That shared parking arrangement is important, and it may be beneficial to consider examining a reconfiguration of the parking layout to improve its efficiency.

### *Cheshire Senior Center, 240 Maple Avenue*

This structure was originally constructed in 1900, and is the former home of Dr. Wilbur J. Moore who was once a health officer for Cheshire as well as a physician at Cheshire Academy. This property lies within the Main Street Focus Area, adjacent to the Cheshire Fire Department. It is home to the Cheshire Senior Center and has nearly 12,000 square feet in total floor area. Despite the nature of the use, this structure maintains residential features, and this is in keeping with overall character of the Maple Avenue corridor. It is also a pleasing contrast to the institutional character of the Cheshire Fire Department headquarters building to its north. In addition, there is a large lawn area in front of the building that presents very well within this portion of the Focus Area. It is recommended that this building's residential character be maintained, and that its lawn also be preserved as a character feature that is not converted into a parking area.

### *Linear Trail*

The Linear Trail is an essential element of Cheshire's community fabric. It will be approximately 7.56 miles in length when completed, and will eventually be part of a system enabling nearly uninterrupted travel from New Haven to Massachusetts. The existing portion runs a distance of 2.9 miles from Cornwall Avenue to Hamden. Its completion is a partnership between Cheshire and the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT). Municipal responsibility includes overseeing completion of a 1.6 mile segment from West Main Street to Jarvis Street, and ConnDOT will oversee construction of a .66 mile portion from Cornwall Avenue to West Main Street, and a 2.4 mile extension from Southington to Jarvis Street.

Other improvements related to this project include construction of a 77 space parking lot on Jarvis Street. It is difficult to overvalue this asset, as it is an essential recreational facility that provides significant benefits to a wide range of people. It is also an important link within Cheshire and to our regional neighbors including Southington to the north, and through to New Haven heading south. This trail has great potential to stimulate local economic growth, especially within our West Main Street focus area.

The Commission recommends that this trail be maintained and improved where necessary, and that public parking be made available to support its use. While it is recognized that continued investment in it must always compete with other resources, proposed improvements will remain consistent with this Plan. The Lock 12 historic park is located along its length, and this is an essential feature that should also be maintained as needed.

## Public Safety Facilities

The Cheshire Fire Department has a proud history dating back to 1912, and it has grown along with this community. It is comprised of nearly 80 persons including 5 paid professional fire fighters and approximately 75 volunteers. There are currently three stations: one at Byam Road, one on South Main Street near King Road, and headquarters on Maple Avenue. The Planning and Zoning Commission understands that improvement of these facilities and development of new ones may be required to protect Cheshire, and it will remain supportive of those requests that may be included in a Capital Budget.

Cheshire's Police Department provides many essential services within the community in addition to the everyday protective and law enforcement activities including child safety seat inspection, an Explorer program, and an annual bicycle rodeo. This department is located at 500 Highland Avenue in a facility that may also require improvement or enlargement depending upon community needs. Any such improvements that may be included in a Capital Budget will also be supported by the Commission.

## Public Water and Sewer

Cheshire is one of twenty member municipalities within a non-profit water public corporation known as the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority whose headquarters is in New Haven. This utility provides public water to approximately 15,000 customers within Cheshire provided through local well fields which the Authority and the town will continue to protect. Town staff and the Commission have worked collaboratively with the Authority to develop and enforce aquifer protection regulations, as well as develop teamwork leading to effective review of land use applications that may occur in and around aquifers and watershed areas so essential to the protection of our precious water supply.

Cheshire is also the home of the Broad Brook Reservoir which is a major source of water for residents living within Meriden, and also supplies water to some customers within Cheshire. It is protected by a large watershed area in the easterly side of town, most of which is zoned for low density residential development. The Planning and Zoning Commission has historically recognized that protection of this reservoir and watershed is a mutual interest with Meriden, and has worked collaboratively with them to protect this essential resource. In addition, portions of the watershed for Lake Whitney which is a public water supply reservoir in Hamden are located within the southern portion of Cheshire should also be protected.

It is hereby recommended that the Commission continue to exercise good stewardship by carefully regulating land uses in and around aquifer protection areas, well fields, and watershed areas, and to work collaboratively with the Regional Water Authority and Meriden Water Department to protect our mutual interests.

Public sanitary sewer in Cheshire is regulated by the Cheshire Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) in accordance with a **Facilities Plan** that was adopted in 2010. The town owns and operates a Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) that treats collected wastewater prior to its discharge into the Quinnipiac River. This facility has undergone major upgrade at a cost of $32,000,000 that was completed in 2015.

The Commission takes note of **Public Act 15-95** that requires Plans which are adopted after July 1, 2015 to include existing and planned sewer service areas within the document. According to Office of Policy and Management (OPM) staff and an analysis completed by the Office of Legislative Research, this requirement will reveal any differences between recommendations regarding sanitary sewer installation made within POCD's and those within a **Facilities Plan** adopted by public sewer authorities. Its purpose is to provide guidance to state agencies that provide funding for various growth related projects that may occur within municipalities, and to resolve any differences between plans. The Planning and Zoning Commission finds that the **Facilities Plan** adopted by the Cheshire WPCA in 2010 provides sufficient sanitary sewer to accommodate the long term interests of Cheshire for growth and public health needs, and hereby adopts that plan by reference.

## Parks and Recreational Facilities

The Cheshire Parks and Recreation Department has furnished an overview of the recreational facilities within town which includes a summary of needs that could be fulfilled at these locations. This overview is included in this section for reference. The Commission understands that the needs and upgrades identified by Parks and Recreation must be prioritized against all other municipal needs, but the Commission will continue to recommend that these improvements are consistent with this Plan. Respondents to the Community Survey were generally positive about these facilities with 53 percent showing satisfaction with the maintenance of existing parks and recreation facilities.

Substantial resources have been dedicated throughout Cheshire for the benefit of active recreational activities. Team sports have enormous benefits for those who are able to participate in them. Cheshire, however, like all communities, has residents whose recreational needs cannot be met only with active recreational facilities, and whose children are not able to participate in the structured and competitive environments provided by organized leagues. Community health improves from the provision of facilities and opportunities for a broad cross section of people who already live within its boundaries. Cheshire has already been proactive with the

construction of two playground facilities for handicapped children, one at Bartlem Park and one at Mixville Park. Three more will soon be located at Quinnipiac Park, McNamara Field, and Cheshire Park. Cheshire's needs for alternatives will likely grow as our population ages. Therefore, it is recommended that consideration continue to be given to a broad cross section of the community when designing new active and passive recreational facilities. Facilities should also include places for casual and informal activities such as strolling, picnics, kite flying, and others that stimulate social interaction within our public spaces.

## Roads and Transportation Facilities

Cheshire is served by 150 miles of public highway including 90 that are local and maintained by the town, 50 that are owned by the state, and 4 miles of private road. Cheshire also has direct access to the interstate system with the I-691 interchange located on the northerly end of Highland Avenue. Roads are categorized according to function into three main categories: arterial, collector, and local. These are illustrated on the map entitled **Functional Classification of Roads** included in this plan.

Arterial streets include all of the state roads within Cheshire including Route 10, Routes 68 and 70, and Route 42. Arterials generally are designed to carry large volumes of traffic with as few interruptions as possible and have wider rights-of-way and paved surfaces. They collect and distribute traffic from collector streets and local roads. Collector streets function to collect trips from the local network and distribute them to the arterial network. They are generally designed with narrower paved surfaces and rights-of-way than arterials due to the lower traffic volumes. Local streets provide access to the collector and arterial streets and also function to provide neighborhood connections within Cheshire.

Street classifications provide an additional context for envisioning the scale of existing and proposed developments and how they will fit in within specific areas within Cheshire. Traffic volumes and safety are also very important, but highway characteristics give immediate context for envisioning scale. These classifications are also used within zoning and subdivision regulations as a way of determining where specific uses may be located and also to regulate access points. Streets within the major categories are listed below. Interstate highways 84 and 691 are limited access highways, and are not listed. All other streets not listed are considered local.

**Arterials:** Route 10 (South Main Street through Highland Avenue)
Route 68 (Prospect Road through Galesville Avenue)
Route 70 (Waterbury Road through Meriden Road)

**Collectors:** Bethany Mountain Road Peck Lane Jarvis Street

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| South Brooksvale Road | Maple Avenue | Marion Road |
| Cook Hill Road | Country Club Road | Summit Road |
| Cornwall Avenue | Wiese Road | East Johnson Avenue |
| Wallingford Road | Creamery Road | West Johnson Avenue |
| Willow Street | Wolf Hill Road | |
| Spring Street | Cheshire Street | |

The Planning and Zoning Commission advocates for safety and efficiency on our streets and within parking and circulation areas of development projects. Within this plan the Commission recognizes the importance and value of the linear park as an alternative transportation system as well as an important recreational facility. The Commission also believes that public transportation is essential to reducing traffic volumes and to supporting our economic base. Therefore, the Commission will encourage the inclusion of transit stops within larger scale development projects and more along our major arterials. Consideration should also be given to bike sharing where appropriate and to establishing linkage to the linear park so that it may become a genuine alternative for commuters. The Commission also encourages consideration of established traffic calming techniques along our major arterials and at high volume intersections. It is also recommended that the Route 10 corridor be reviewed to examine specific problems and to determine appropriate methods for their resolution. In addition, pedestrian needs should also be satisfied with construction of new sidewalks and replacement of older ones that provide access to and through commercial areas, including the Town Center, parks and other public places, and to provide linkage between neighborhoods.

The 2002 Plan of Conservation and Development discusses the need for the reduction of cul-de-sacs for efficient circulation and safety within Cheshire. This Plan agrees with those statements, but also recognizes that much of the remaining undeveloped properties within Cheshire, especially those zoned for residential purposes have substantial wetlands and watercourses and environmentally sensitive areas including watersheds or unique habitats that should be considered before requiring the extension of public roads. Temporary cul-de-sac designations on subdivision plans represent an affirmative statement that a public road should be continued, but these should be required only after the Commission has reviewed the characteristics of the adjoining property and considers the impacts of roadway construction on any apparent sensitive environmental areas or resources.

## Summary of Policy Recommendations for Community Facilities

1. Incorporate sustainable practices into all public projects.
2. Maintain existing trees and encourage the planting of new trees along public roadways and within public spaces.
3. Preserve the historic architecture of Town Hall, Humiston School and the Hitchcock Phillips House.
4. Preserve the lawn at the Senior Center as a character feature and avoid converting it to a parking area.

5. Consider examining a reconfiguration of the Cheshire Library parking layout to improve its efficiency.
6. Encourage transit stops within large scale development projects and major arterial roads.
7. Encourage bike sharing in conjunction with the linear trail as an alternative for commuters.
8. Support implementation of traffic calming techniques along major arterials and at high volume intersections.
9. Review the Route 10 corridor to examine specific problems and determine methods for their resolution.
10. Construct new sidewalks replace old ones to provide safe pedestrian access through commercial areas, Town Center, parks and other public places, and to provide linkage between neighborhoods.
11. Complete, maintain and improve the Linear Trail where necessary including the provision of public parking to support its use.
12. Support improvements and enlargements to the Fire Department and Police Department facilities that are included in the Capital Budget.
13. Continue to carefully regulate land use in and around aquifer protection areas, public water supply watershed areas and the Broad Brook Reservoir and surrounding watershed.
14. PZC adopts the 2020 Facilities Plan of the Cheshire Water Pollution Control Authority.
15. Consideration should be given to the needs of a broad cross-section of the community when designing new active and passive recreation facilities.
16. Continue the extension of public roads to facilitate public safety and efficient circulation, but consider the effects of such extensions on wetlands, watercourses and environmental resources that may be impacted by such extensions before requiring them.

# CHESHIRE PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITY INVENTORY AND NEEDS

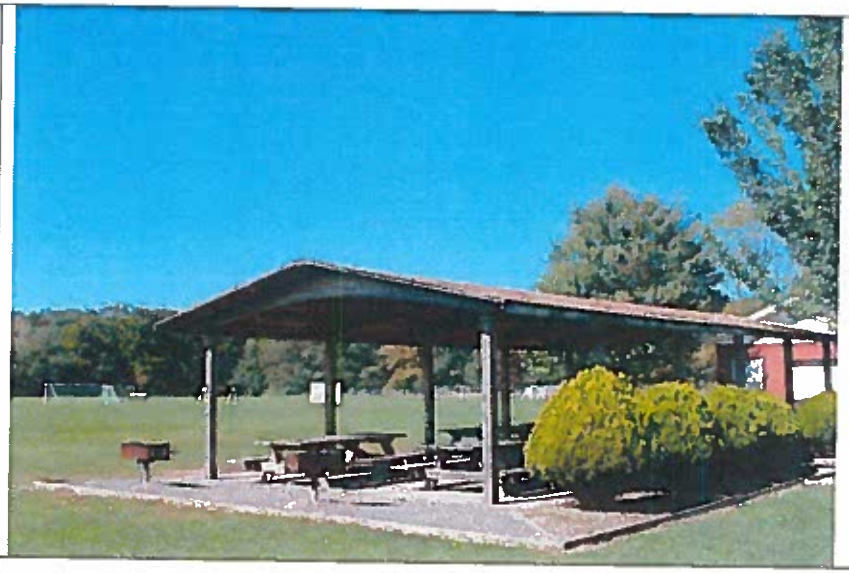
**Cheshire Youth Center**
6 lighted tennis courts ( used by CHS) for high school tennis
1 lighted basketball court
1 lighted sand volleyball court

**Needs**
6 to 8 new tennis courts
Renovated basketball court
New lights on all facilities

**Bartlem Park**
2 full-size baseball fields (90 foot diamonds)
2 baseball/softball fields (60 foot diamonds)
4 multi-use rectangular fields ( used by lacrosse/football/soccer/cricket)
Cricket pitch
Skate Park
Large children's playground
Picnic Pavilion
Community Garden (30 plots)
Concession Stand

**Needs**
More multi-use fields
Additional Parking
Outdoor basketball court
Possible location of 6 to 8 tennis courts
Possible lights for some of the

| | |
|---|---|
| above facilities<br>Possible Nature-Outdoor learning center area | |
| **<u>Linear Trail</u>**<br>2.9 miles of paved trail with a 2 foot stone apron<br><br>**Needs**<br>Section 1 - West Main St to Jarvis St (2015)<br>Section 2 - Jarvis St to Southington (2016)<br>Section 3 - Cornwall Ave to West Main St (2017) | |
| **<u>Quinnipiac Fields</u>**<br>6 Soccer Fields of various sizes<br>Picnic Pavilion<br>Concession Stand<br>Roller Rink<br>Playground<br><br>**Needs**<br>New Playground (2015)<br>Increased parking (possible site where crews park for Waste Water expansion)<br>Possible installation of lights on fields | |



**McNamara/Legion Field**
4 various size Baseball fields
Basketball court
Playground

**Needs**
New Playground (2015)
Resurface Basketball Court

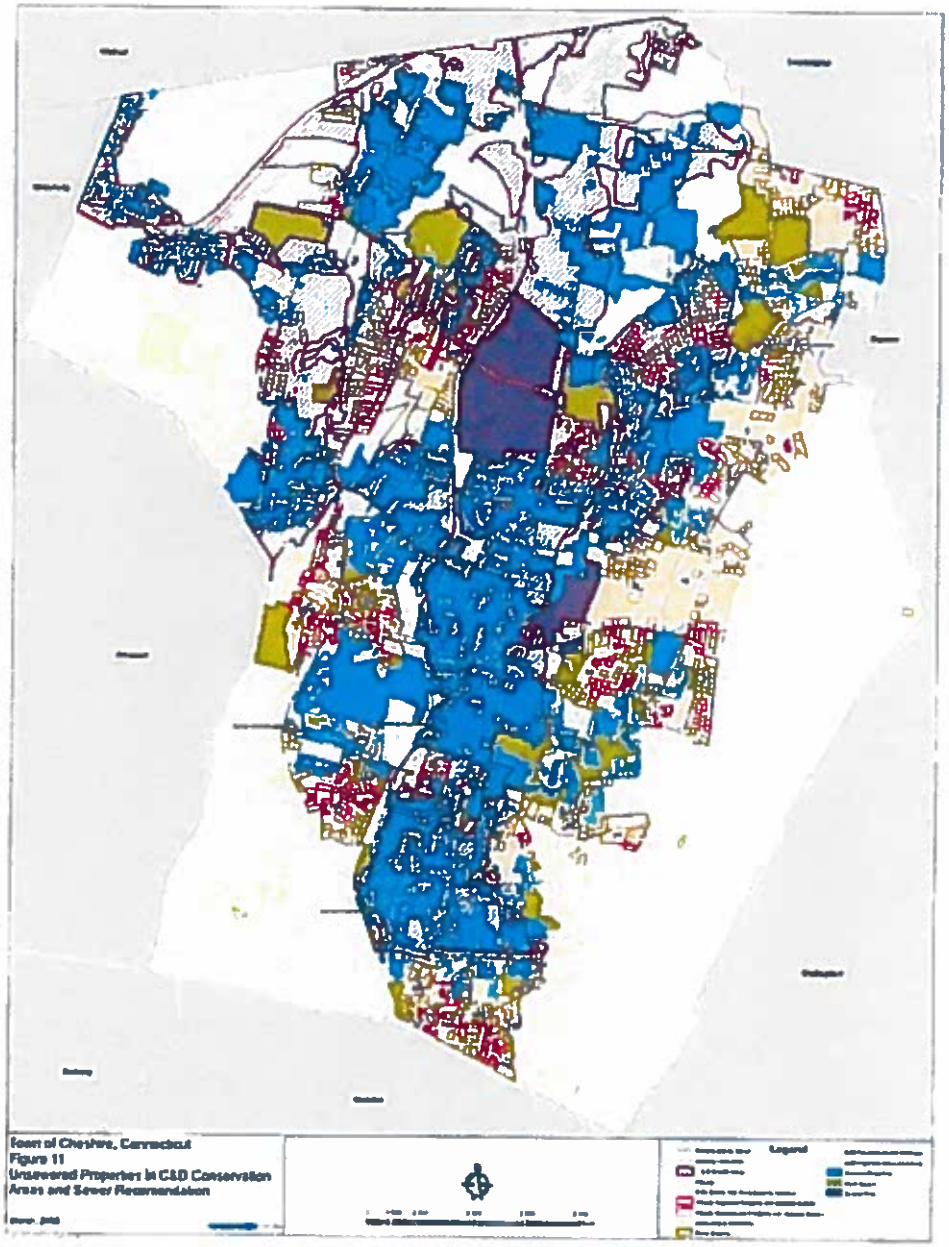
**Cheshire Park**
3 Baseball/Softball fields (one with lights)
Sand volleyball court
5 tennis courts (3 with pickleball lines)
Picnic pavilion
Basketball court
Playground
Outdoor Concert/Theater area
Hiking/running trails through the wooded area

**Needs**
Tennis court renovations
Drainage improvement throughout the park
New Playground (2015)
Improved lighting
Possible expansion onto 10 acres across Route 10 on former prison property
Resurface basketball court

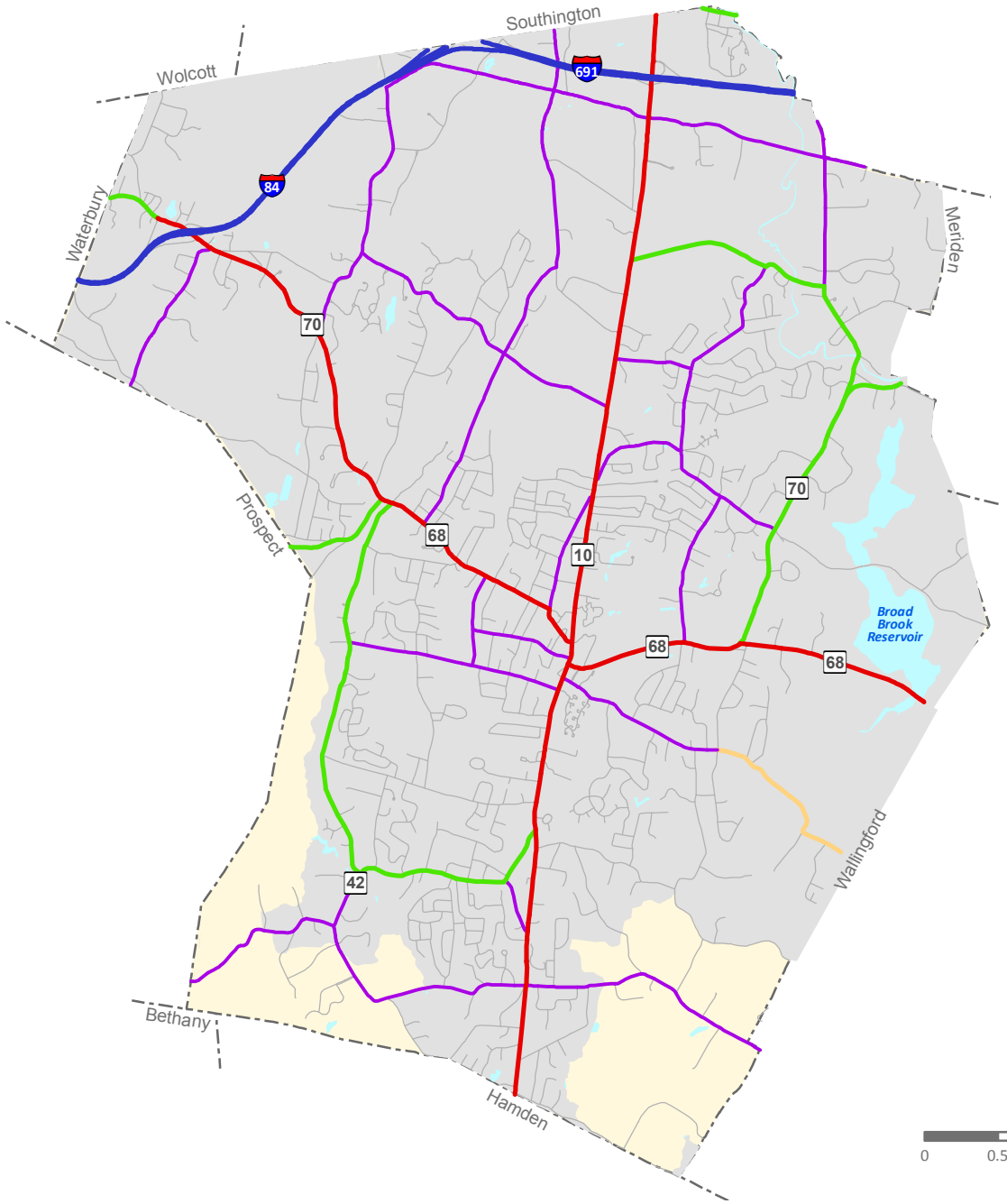
**Mixville Park**
Sand volleyball courts (2)

Bocce court
Basketball court trails
Sledding hill
2 ponds
Large and small picnic pavilions
Softball field
Beach on northern pond

**Needs**
Ball field renovation (drainage)
Possible expansion onto east side of pond (where dredging work was done)


Town of Cheshire, Connecticut
Figure 11
Unsewered Properties in C&D Conservation
Areas and Sewer Recommendation
Legend

# Functional Classification of Roads

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NAUGATUCK VALLEY COUNCIL of GOVERNMENTS

# Policy Overview for Environmental Resources

Cheshire's natural resources provide the physical foundation of this community. Natural resources in Cheshire include basalt ridges, inland wetlands, watercourses, vernal pools, lakes, ponds, aquifers, expansive forest lands, and grasslands. Design choices for developing land are fundamental to the balance between development outcomes and the protection of natural resources.

These environmental resources are our natural heritage. The development of land and the protection of such resources are not mutually exclusive, and site sensitive and responsible design proposals work to conserve irreplaceable resources. Much of the remaining undeveloped land in Cheshire is characterized by environmental conditions including wetland soils, irregular topography, water courses, and the existence of sensitive habitat areas which limit the scope and scale of potential development.

The Cheshire Planning Department consults with the State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environment Protection's Natural Diversity Database to locate and identify known rare, endangered species of concern, as documented in the state mapping. This resource is invaluable to understand the potential pressures of development on the life cycles of known species, and how to incorporate best management practices to avoid land use conflict.

Photo 1: Salamander at Ten Mile Lowlands (Suzanne Simone)

Photo 2: Trailhead kiosk at DeDominicis Property (Suzanne Simone)

The Community Survey was revealed that nearly 50 percent of respondents are satisfied with how we have protected natural areas including wetlands, watercourses, and plant and animal habitats, and 44 percent noted satisfaction with our efforts toward acquiring and maintaining open space. The 2014 **Hazard Mitigation Plan** adopted by the Cheshire Town Council identifies and quantifies potential natural hazards existing in Cheshire and prescribes preventive actions. Many of the issues identified in this Plan involve the management of storm water and maintenance of storm water basins.

### *Watercourses and Vernal Pools*

Watercourses are natural and artificial bodies of water with vernal, intermittent, seasonal or perennial water supply, such as rivers, streams, brooks, lakes, ponds, marshes, swamps, and bogs. These water bodies serve to manage storm water flows, provide species habitat, and recharge the quantity and quality of drinking water supplies. In addition to the two aquifers that serve Cheshire residents, over 1,307 acres of watershed protecting the Broad Brook Reservoir are located in eastern Cheshire. While Broad Brook is owned and operated by the City of Meriden, it provides water to a number of Cheshire residents, and is an essential public resource. Cheshire is located within five water basins, dictating the direction and flow of storm water and aquifer recharge areas. Residential zoning within this watershed is primarily large lot single-family, and should remain so. Within each of these water basins are major rivers: Quinnipiac River, Ten Mile River, Mill River, Cuff Brook, Honeypot Brook, Broad Brook, Willow Brook, Mountain Brook, and Roaring Brook (Map A).

In addition to these major and perennial watercourses, the intermittent vernal pools provide breeding habitat for upland amphibian and reptile species, the protection of which is essential to the survival of these creatures. The Town recognized the importance of these ecosystems with the purchase in 1993 of 146 acres of open space known as the Ten Mile Lowlands.

### *Inland Wetlands*

The State of Connecticut defines inland wetlands based on soil type. In 1974 the location of inland wetlands was formally mapped, first identified through aerial photographs and field verified. The Inland Wetlands and Watercourses regulations identify this map as the official inland wetlands map of Cheshire.

Inland wetlands provide important functions to the natural world and built community through flood control, water quality, recharging drinking supplies and they support biodiversity of species. Both direct and indirect impacts to these areas can have detrimental effects to public health and safety and therefore the cost/benefit of such proposals should be thoroughly evaluated.

### *Woodlands*

A majority of the land coverage in Cheshire is forested woodlands. This ecosystem provides habitats for a wide range of plant, animal, bird, reptile and amphibian species. The continuity of this habitat provides corridors for larger mammals to travel and maintain territory, increasing the success rates of reproduction and vigor.

Development proposals should avoid fragmentation of woodlands, and provide for easy passage to connected woodlands. In addition to habitat protection, many of these woodland acres are available for passive recreation, allowing the public to connect with nature in their own community.

### *Open Space*

Open space provides for protection of natural resources through preservation of interior forest complexes of significant ecological value. Purchased for the purpose of passive recreation and protection of natural habitat, open space parcels are located in a variety of ecosystems.

In 1987, the Town Council sought to formally initiate the open space program by adopting a land preservation master plan to properly evaluate and prioritize sites with respect to geological, ecological, aesthetic and historical significance. A list of "interest areas" was developed locating general areas for potential open space acquisition.

Between combined efforts of the Town, the State Department of Environmental Protection, the Cheshire Land Trust, and private land owners, many listed properties have been successfully acquired or otherwise protected **(Map B)**. Several other parcels, although not on the original list, have also been acquired.

The Town is the largest open space land owner in Cheshire, with 1,507 acres. This acreage accounts for 7% of Cheshire's land mass, including water bodies. Additionally, the Town has 24 forested acres preserved through conservation easement. The town does not heavily rely or encourage conservation easements as a means to protect and preserve open space, but rather as a strategy employed under particular development conditions.

Of the 21,165 acres comprising the town of Cheshire, approximately 22% of this acreage is preserved as open space. This figure also includes large, privately owned parcels of undedicated open space that may, in the future, be subdivided and developed. The town

has not established a goal to preserve a determined percentage of total Cheshire land mass, rather the location and features of individual parcels have been the criteria in their acquisition.

In 2007, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection adopted a report entitled **The Green Plan, Guiding Land Acquisition and Protection in Connecticut** in which it is recommended that up to 21% of the land area of Connecticut be preserved for open space for public recreation and natural resource conservation purposes. In this report, municipalities are identified as among the partners to work collaboratively with the State to achieve this goal.

Cheshire has taken advantage of public funding programs to assist with acquisition, and it is recommended that we continue to do so. This community also works with a number of partners to acquire open space property and fulfill valid and identifiable public goals.

Dedicated open space includes properties owned by the town, the state, the city of Meriden (watershed land for the public drinking supply), the Cheshire Land Trust, Regional Water Authority and the Quinnipiac Audubon Association, and land set aside that is maintained by home owners associations **(Figure 1)**.

Photo3: Roaring Brook Falls (Suzanne Simone)

Photo 4: Red Trillium (Suzanne Simone)

### *Land Acquisition Strategies*

Since 1986, Cheshire has acquired more than 1500 acres of open space, not including public parks, municipal grounds, or sport fields. In 1998, the Town Council accepted the final report of an Open Space Land Use Advisory Committee – a group comprised of members representing various municipal boards and commissions – who devised a system for evaluating open space in terms of community value and appropriate use. Their report provides a framework to evaluate potential purchases.

With much of the eastern and western greenbelt established, the Town seeks to obtain properties that enhance current acquisitions with access, habitat protection, connectivity, etc. The most recent acquisition, the Puchalski property, is located along Prospect Ridge and has direct connectivity to other town open space properties, which is a key consideration in the purchase of open space parcels. It is recommended that Cheshire should remain committed to the purchase of open space – alone and in partnership with other agencies – that fulfills important public purposes. These will include the protection of our historic and rural character, preservation of significant environmental resources, provision or enhancement of passive recreational areas, linkage with other open space properties, and the protection of ridge lines, especially around our western perimeter.

Accessibility for persons with special needs should also be considered, especially when planning for improvements to open space areas. Those considerations include accessible parking and the provision for some usability for portions of trails, walkways, and open areas for persons whose ability to have any access may be challenged.

### *Stewardship*

In 2005 the Town Council adopted the **Open Space Ordinance** which mandates the management of open space properties. As prescribed, the majority of open space properties have adopted management plans that regulate the permitted and prohibited uses of the property; predicated on the properties topography, habitat, historical use, soils and access. These plans are drafted by town staff, reviewed and approved by the Environment Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission, and are then adopted by the Town Council. The contribution of these stakeholders is important in the fostering of stewardship among appointed and elected public officials.

Public access to public open space remains a priority for the town. Departments have coordinated efforts to recycle materials, when possible. An example of this is the parking area of the Casertano parcel, which was paved with mills retrieved from street paving

projects throughout town. Efforts should be made to continue the practice of reusing materials and timing the sequence of work to maximum benefit and waste reduction.

With the updated Town website, the open space properties have a dedicated webpage, which is updated regularly and contains trail maps, directions, historical information, current updates and events. There is collaboration among planning department and town library staff members to develop and co-host spring events and lectures, focusing on open space and habitat protection. Open space events are jointly advertised on the town website and email notifications from the library. Staff and volunteers continue to host open space hikes and clean up days. In 2013, staff from the planning department created maps for 10 open space properties. These maps are on permanent display at Town Hall, offices of the Parks and Recreation Department, and the public library. Since September 2013, over 12,000 maps have been distributed to the public.

The open space webpage on the town website has been revamped and has a more predominate location on the website, with a link available from the middle column of the homepage. Descriptions of the property's habitat and attractive features are posted for each property, as well as maps and driving directions to the trailhead.

The Town of Cheshire Facebook page provides a social media component to distribute information about the passive recreation options on public land. The most visited open space properties are outfitted with kiosks at the trailhead, with information posted about the property and the open space inventory in general. This visual markers help visitors locate the property and serve to remind the public of this public asset.

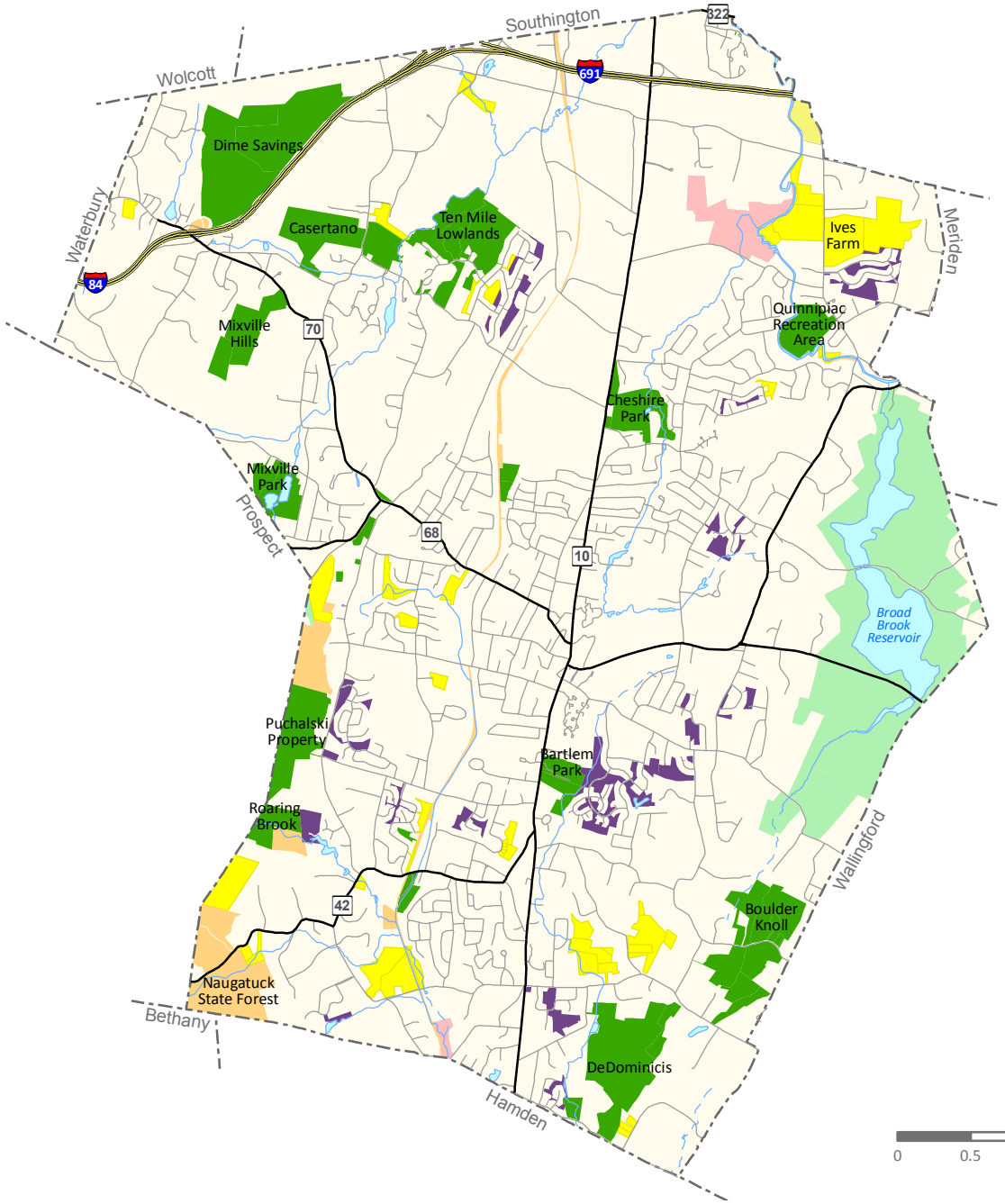
In 2013, planning department staff drafted an **Open Space Maintenance Program** which is currently being reviewed by the town administration. The goal of this program is to provide proactive and reactive maintenance for the 1500 acres of town land. Open space requires periodic maintenance from damage caused by storm events, establishment of invasive plant species, unpermitted activities and general safety issues.

The Town has relied on volunteers in the past for many of the maintenance items, and over time these needs have increased as the inventory has grown larger as well as the use of these properties through more public promotion and awareness. Additionally, the recent storms have led to trail and access issues with downed trees and erosion. Many of these issues require designed remedies that often require land use commission approval, and therefore necessitate a detailed proactive plan among various town departments.

## Summary of Environmental Policy Recommendations

1. Remain committed to the purchase of open space alone and in partnership with other agencies including the Cheshire Land Trust, the Regional Water Authority, and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.
2. Open space purposes should fulfill important public purposes including the protection of our historic and rural character, preservation of significant environmental resources including farmland, provision or enhancement of passive recreational areas, linkage with other open space properties, and the protection of ridge lines, especially around our western perimeter.
3. Maintain public access to public open space so that it may be enjoyed.
4. Consideration should be given to accessibility for persons with special needs when planning improvements to open space properties.
5. Adopt and Implement the Open Space Maintenance Program.

# Existing Open Space




- Interstate
- State Route
- Local Roads
- Stream
- Intermittent Water
- Water
- South Central Regional Water Authority
- Quinnipiac Valley Audubon
- Town
- State of CT
- Private Open Space
- Land Trust
- Meriden Water Company

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

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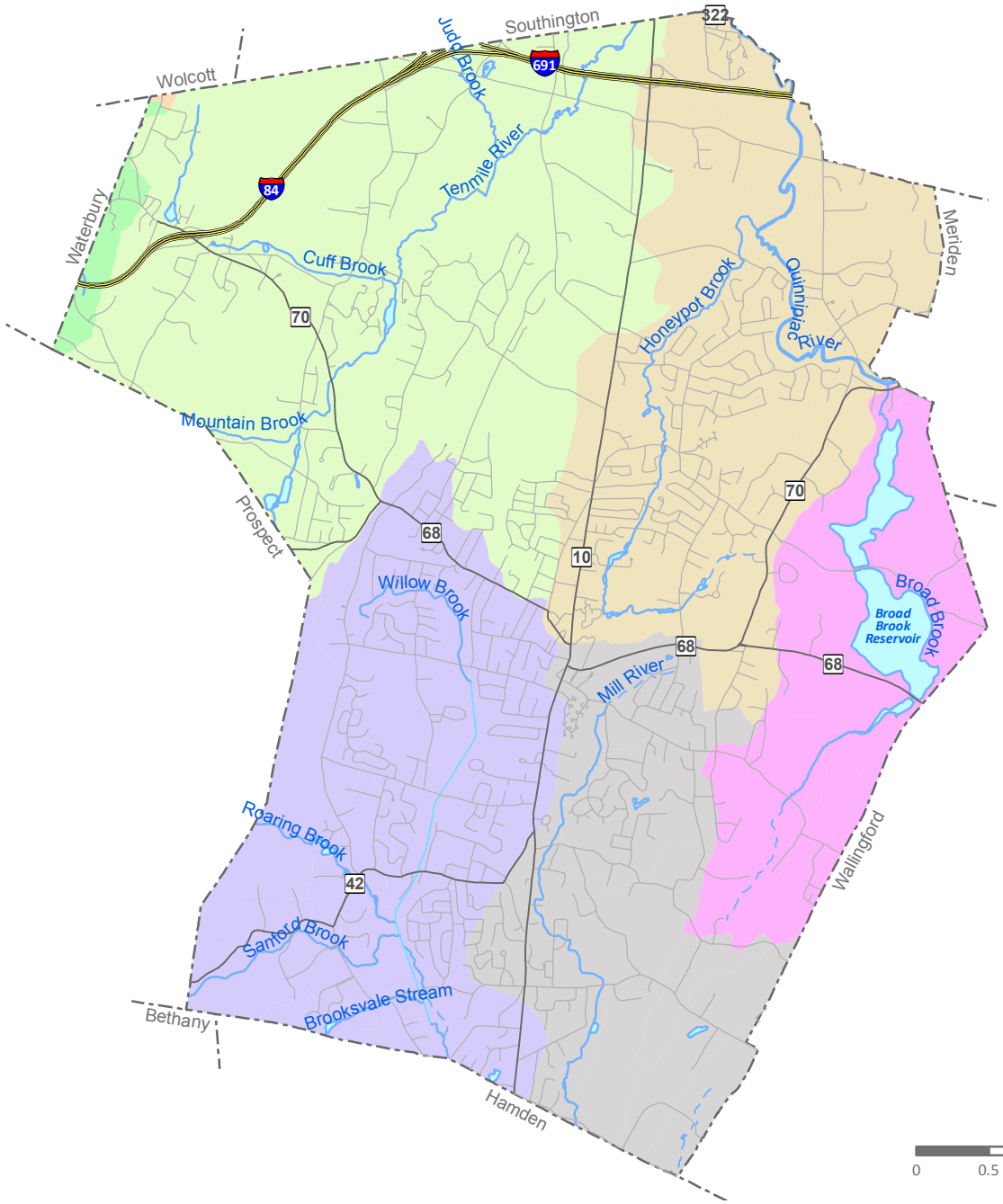
# Watershed/Watercourses




- Interstate
- State Route
- Local Roads
- Water
- Drainage Ditch
- Intermittent Water
- Water

SUBREGIONAL BASIN

- Beaver Pond Brook
- Broad Brook
- Mad River
- Mill River
- Quinnipiac River
- Tenmile River
- Willow Brook

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

For planning purposes only.
Delineations may not be exact.



NAUGATUCK VALLEY COUNCIL of GOVERNMENTS

# Policy Overview for Historic and Cultural Resources

The Planning and Zoning Commission recognizes that developing policies for the protection of our historic and cultural resources is and should be just as important as any other policies within this Plan. The Commission is also very appreciative of the efforts made by members of the Cheshire Historic District Commission whose work was essential to the completion of this chapter. Much of the following narrative comes directly from the policy recommendations prepared by them. In addition, 64 percent of respondents to the Community Survey feel that Cheshire has done a very good job of protecting its historic character.

The Historic District Commission has prepared the **Cheshire Historic Inventory** map illustrating that various historic resources are found throughout community. The map shows the location and age of historic neighborhoods and home sites as well as historic barns, cemeteries and the area of the South Brooksvale Historic District and the Cornwall Avenue-Town Center Historic District. The Planning and Zoning Commission recognizes that Cheshire is rich in history, and the importance of these historic resources is underscored in this Plan.

Native Americans hunted in Cheshire's forests and fished in the streams for hundreds of years before the arrival of European settlers. Significant prehistoric sites have been found within which Native American artifacts from the Quinnipiac tribes have been unearthed. Many sites likely remain undiscovered, and are a source for further study of the Quinnipiac culture.

European settlement began in 1694 when two English settlers from Wallingford chose to build their simple log homes here. Soon after that more people settled here, built handsome framed houses and in 1723 the first Congregational church was constructed, the site of which is marked on what is now Lanyon Drive, near the intersection with South Main Street. The second Congregational church was built at the front of the green, behind which the larger church now stands.

The eighteenth century brought intensive clearing of forested land to make way for farms. In the 19$^{th}$ century the residents built the first town hall and a variety of industries arose: barite mining, tin smithing, brick making, and the manufacture of metal products, including buttons for Civil War uniforms. The Ball and Socket facility along West Main Street was a major producer of these products. After World War II, especially in the years from 1950 to 1990, Cheshire's population quadrupled from 6000 to 25,000 as many farmlands were turned into subdivisions. Today, many historic homes, industrial buildings and other structures still stand, many in use, and some awaiting a productive re-use.

### *Economic Benefits*

Historic preservation plays a role in the beauty and culture of a town, but is also an important economic asset. The Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism reports that between the years 2000 and 2001, nearly $450 million were invested statewide by the private sector for the preservation and reuse of historic buildings. This investment generated over $350 million in salary and wages for the rehabilitation of these properties, over $15 million in additional income taxes, $10.8 million in additional sales taxes, $7.8 million in increased property taxes for local governments, and an additional $2 million in business income taxes. Historic rehabilitation is also an employment generator with nearly 4,144 direct jobs and 2,293 indirect jobs created within Connecticut from rehabilitation projects. Cheshire's historic resources contribute to the quality of life here, and their preservation is also likely to result in similar economic benefits.

### *Adaptive Reuse*

Our historic sites, buildings, and structures present various challenges and opportunities. In some cases they are in need of repair and rehabilitation so they can be put to new uses – a factory to an arts center, a 19th century home to a professional office. These re-purposed resources are vital to Cheshire's continuing prosperity and to our strong and environmentally responsible economic development.

Section 45A of the Cheshire Zoning Regulations entitled **Special Adaptive Reuse Development District** was written to enable the reconstruction and/or rehabilitation of older buildings that have significant historic and/or architectural merit to uses that are consistent with the character of the neighborhood and that would be beneficial to the town. This regulation was most recently used to approve the conversion of the former Ball and Socket manufacturing facility to the visual and performing arts center that it will become. It is recommended that this regulation be maintained and reviewed periodically to make sure that it is consistent with its original purpose stated within Section 45A.1 of the regulations, and is flexible enough to remain a useful tool for the preservation of significant historic and cultural resources, and inclusive of uses that are appropriate for this community. Adaptive reuse should always respect the architectural integrity of the original structure.

### *Development within Historic Districts*

At various times the Planning and Zoning Commission will review projects that are also within the Historic District, including those that are contained within the Special Development District regulated under Section 45 of the Zoning Regulations. This happened most recently during the review of development of the George Keeler house and stove shop located on South Main Street midway between Old Towne Road and Wallingford Road. Rehabilitation and reconstruction within these areas requires the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic District Commission, and a 90 day waiting period for demolition. Section 40.4.7 which is part of the Special Permits section of the Regulations requires the Commission to consider the nature of the surrounding area in their review of Special Permit uses and Section 45.6, h of the Special Development District regulations has more specific language regarding consideration of the design and construction of buildings. It is hereby recommended that the Commission continue to remember the historic context that such projects may be proposed within and to require applicants to demonstrate that they have also considered this important factor within their designs.

### *Stone Walls, Cellar Holes, and Historic Barns*

All three of these can be found within Cheshire and are evidence of the different stages of settlement throughout our history. Stone walls may be significant features that are important to the community. A good example of this is the stone wall that is located along the street line of Cheshire Street, just south of East Johnson Avenue, along the top of which is the edge of the public right-of way for East Johnson. Potions of this wall may have been constructed in the 18$^{th}$ century, and its importance was recognized by the Planning and Zoning Commission when the Commission protected it during their review of the Sterling Ridge Court subdivision. Other stone walls mark the edge of former boundary lines or outline the edge of pasture areas abandoned long ago. These walls can be lost during the development of properties, and it is recommended that some consideration be given to requiring an assessment of these walls during the review process and to encourage their preservation, including the use of conservation easements to ensure their protection where deemed appropriate by the Planning and Zoning Commission. This requirement can be incorporated into the Zoning and Subdivision regulations.

Cellar holes are the remnants of original home sites and may still hold artifacts that provide historical clues about the former owners and the history of the community. Consideration can be given to requiring an assessment of these facilities during the development review process before any conclusions are made as to their disposition.

Historic barns are found in many locations around town, and their protection and restoration should be considered within the Zoning regulations. Their reuse and restoration can be limited by coverage and setback requirements. These requirements can be made more flexible for these historic resources, provided that improvements are made that respect the historic nature of their appearance. It is recommended that this be done using the special permit process.

### *Municipal Properties*

There are three properties that are municipally owned that are discussed in the Community Facilities portion of this Plan. These are: Town Hall, Humiston School, and the Hitchcock-Phillips House located on Church Drive next to the Congregational Church. These are recognized again in this chapter because they each have historic features in their design, and these features should be respected and preserved any time that improvements to these building become necessary. The Planning and Zoning Commission should review any proposed changes in the context of their review of the Capital Budget required under Section 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statutes, and in Special Permit applications required by the Cheshire Zoning Regulations.

### *Collaborative Efforts*

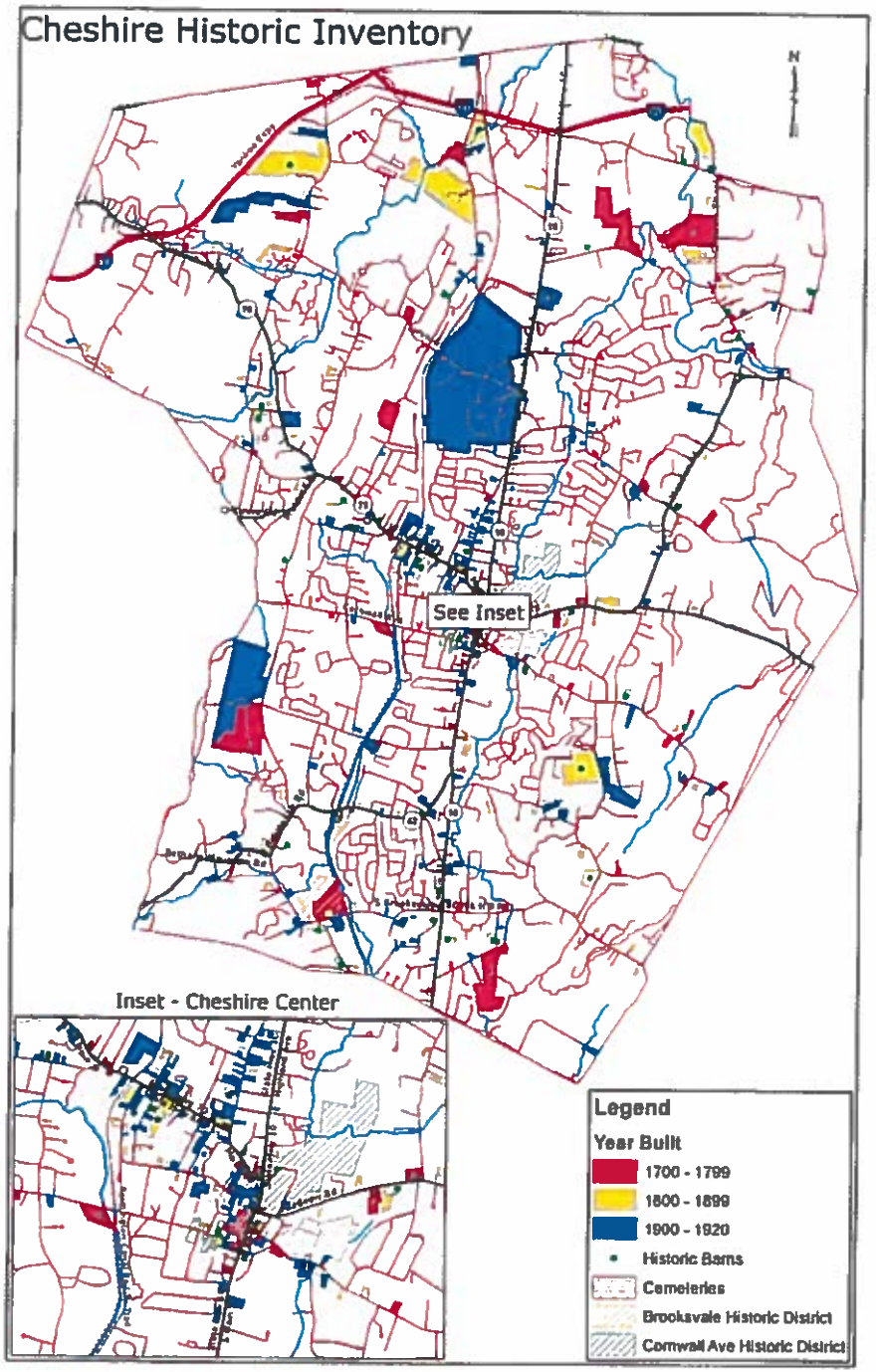
The Historic District Commission has recommended various strategies and objectives to increase awareness and protection of historic resources. These include forming additional historic districts, designation of scenic roads, adopting a delay of demolition ordinance for historic properties outside of the districts, pursuing financial incentives for preservation, purchasing development rights on historic properties, and other similar efforts. Each of these strategies requires the inclusion of various parties with efforts that exceed the scope of this Plan and the specific authority given to the Commission within the Connecticut General Statutes. However, the Planning and Zoning Commission remains supportive of the preservation of historic and cultural resources town wide, and will evaluate, encourage and support those efforts within which the Commission has specific authority.

## Summary of Historic and Cultural Resources Policy Recommendations

1. Retain Section 45A (Special Adaptive Reuse Development District) of the Zoning Regulations and review and amend when necessary to ensure it is consistent with its purpose to enable the reconstruction and/or rehabilitation of historic buildings for uses that are compatible with and beneficial to this community.
2. Context sensitive design should be emphasized for development projects that include historic properties that are located within or adjacent to both historic districts. Section 40.4.7 of the Zoning Regulations provides the Commission with authority

to determine if projects are in harmony with the surrounding area, and applicants should be required to demonstrate that consideration of context was given in project design.

3. Encourage preservation of historic walls, barns, and other historic features through flexible regulatory requirements including coverage.
4. Support the preservation of historic and cultural resources town wide.
5. Respect the historic features of municipal buildings, especially Town Hall, Humiston School and the Hitchcock-Phillips House when doing renovations, expansions or improvements.


Cheshire Historic Inventory
N
See Inset
Inset - Cheshire Center
Legend
Year Built
1700 - 1799
1800 - 1899
1900 - 1920
Historic Barns
Cemeteries
Brooksvale Historic District
Cornwall Ave Historic District

# APPENDIX

# TOWN OF CHESHIRE

# 2015 COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

# Town of Cheshire
# 2015 Community Survey Results

**Executive Summary**

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# Introduction

The Town of Cheshire Connecticut is updating its Plan of Conservation and Development, which is a strategic policy document that provides a vision for the community's future. The Town's Plan is the principal statement of policy for Cheshire. It presents a vision of the Town's future, and defines a series of strategies for achieving that vision. The Plan guides the Town's efforts in land use planning and growth management; the provision of public facilities and services; environmental protection; economic development; and the protection of cultural and historic resources.

In 2014, a self-survey was created as part of the updating of the Plan of Conservation and Development. Through collaboration, the Planning and Zoning Commission, the city planner, and Town Council agreed upon specific goals for the Town of Cheshire Plan of Conservation and Development survey project were defined, and uses for the information were determined. The findings provide information for use in the update of the Plan and can also serve to inform the design and delivery of education and outreach programs related to planning efforts[1].

This executive summary report presents the results and conclusions from the surveys in a condensed format. Analyses of the questionnaire responses included the examination of relationships between demographic variables (age, income, residential status) and attitudinal and perceptual performance measures of the Town. Questions were open-ended, multiple choice, and scaled, and included the following topics:

- Community Identity
- Natural Resources and Open Space
- Residential Development
- Commercial and Industrial Development
- Public Facilities and Services

# Methodology

The self-administered survey was posted on the Town's web site and Facebook page, copies were available in Town Hall, the Library and Senior Center. The survey was also reported in the local newspaper. A total of 235 responses were received over the course of 9 months; August 2014-May 2015. It was open to city residents, business owners, Town officials, and anyone else interested in the future of Cheshire. Based on the completion of 235 surveys, the margin of error for the survey is 6.37%. These results may be extrapolated to the Town's entire population of

[1] Note: The results reported can only be considered the opinions of the survey participants.

29,261 with a 95% confidence level. This means that if the survey were conducted 100 times, the data would be within 6.37 percentage points above or below the percentage reported in 95 of the 100 surveys.

## Demographics

Part of the survey analysis factored in community member's perception of Cheshire. It is recognized that each person creates his or her own unique cognitive picture of their community based on their personal experiences.

The majority of survey respondents (99%) were current residents of Cheshire and homeowners. 43% of those who answered the survey have children in the Cheshire school system. Over 50% of those surveyed have a family income of $100,000 or more and 11% were business owners. The trend of respondent's age is indicative of Cheshire's general population, with most participants falling into the 45-64 age group, followed by the 25-44 yr. olds, and then the 65+ age group.

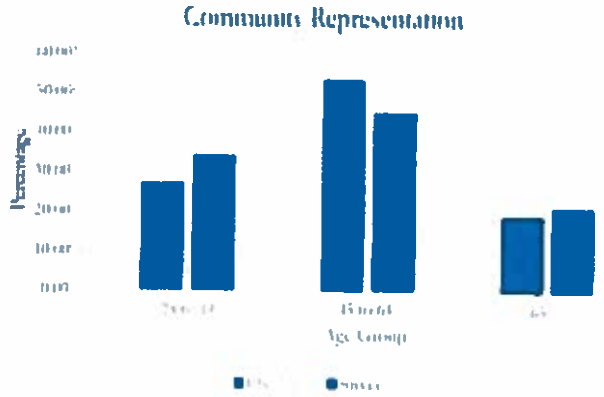


Figure 1 Population of Cheshire from 2010 Census compared to the age of survey respondents

## Community Identity

The survey asked a series of questions with the hopes of discovering perceptual patterns among survey participants. The following questions were delivered to participants in an open-ended format and then condensed based on common occurrence.

*In the section of the questionnaire 1 = most popular response 5=least.*

**If you could change anything to improve the quality of life in Cheshire, what would it be?**

1. Decrease taxes
2. More restaurants downtown
3. The pool
4. Reduce Traffic on Route 10
5. Promote/ increase support for small local businesses

**What are the most important issues now facing Cheshire?**

1. High taxes
2. Deteriorating school infrastructure
3. Traffic congestion
4. Development
5. Education

**What will be the most important issues for the town in the next 10 years?**

1. Expanding the tax base
2. Maintaining a good school system
3. Traffic control
4. Small business development
5. Aging Population

**Why did you choose to live in Cheshire?**

1. School System
2. Community Reputation
3. Location (Close to work/highway)\
4. Community Amenities
5. Housing

**How has the quality of life changed in Cheshire in the past 10 years?**
**37% responded positively, 22% negatively and 41% no change.**

1. Increased Traffic

2. The Town now has a pool
3. Taxes have increased
4. Houses have increased in size and quantity
5. Loss of small local businesses

## Natural Resources and Open Space

In this section of the survey the Town was graded on multiple preservation and land use efforts on a scale of no opinion, poor, fair, good, or excellent.

58% believe that the Town has done a good-excellent job of creating the historic district; 64% of survey respondents feel that the Town is doing a good-excellent job protecting its historic character.

66% feel that a good-excellent job is being done protecting its wetlands, rivers and streams, lakes, ponds, plant and animal habitat. 69% believe that the Town has done a good-excellent job acquiring undeveloped land as open space. On the other hand, 51% of people believe that the Town was doing a fair-poor job of protecting and planting trees along main roads and new developments. 48% of respondents say that the Town is doing a good-excellent job (vs 26% fair-poor) of supporting community farming. 69% of participants feel that Cheshire does a good-excellent job of maintaining existing parks, recreational facilities, and preserving open space.

47% of those who answered believed that additional funding should be allocated to acquire more open space, 33% disagreed, and 18% had no opinion. A 69% majority of people believe that the Town should require open space within new subdivisions. Of the 235 received surveys, 67 people chose to leave specific suggestions including:

- Preserve fields and add to existing green belts. Protect land along Academy Road and Meriden Road.
- Complete acquisitions along Prospect Ridge.
- Acquire any farmland that becomes available to prevent its development into subdivisions.
- Acquire land that protects wetlands and provides habitat for birds and small animals and that allows residents to visit and observe this wildlife.

## Residential Development

A majority of respondents feel that Cheshire has the right amount of land zoned for residential development. 58% of people feel that Cheshire should not consider re-zoning existing undeveloped residential areas to commercial or industrial use to encourage business development. 51% of respondents would not support the re-zoning of existing undeveloped commercial and industrial areas into areas for residential use. The majority (69%) of participants feel that Cheshire should construct more sidewalks and 6666% favor an effort by the Town to attract moderately-priced (affordable) housing to meet the needs of residents of moderate income (e.g. police, firefighters, teachers, young adults, senior citizens).

A majority of respondents feel that there is a "right amount" of all housing types throughout Town. However a strong minority of 42% feel that Cheshire had too much "expensive" housing and a strong minority of 47% and 40% respectively feel that there wasn't enough middle and



lower income affordable housing.

| | Too few | Too many | About right |
|---|---|---|---|
| Single-family houses | 4.46% | 13.84% | 81.68% |
| Expensive (upper income) houses | 5.85% | 42.44% | 51.71% |
| More affordable (middle income) houses | 47.17% | 2.83% | 50.00% |
| Affordable (lower-middle income) houses | 40.38% | 9.62% | 50.00% |
| Condominiums | 11.85% | 23.22% | 64.93% |
| Apartments | 22.22% | 19.81% | 57.97% |
| Multi family/duplex | 19.80% | 15.50% | 65.50% |
| Active adult (55+) | 17.04% | 22.75% | 60.19% |
| Assisted living housing | 26.24% | 8.91% | 64.85% |
| Mixed-use | 29.82% | 12.32% | 58.55% |

Table 1. Results taken directly from Question 19 of the survey

## Commercial and Industrial Development

The majority of respondents are not satisfied with Cheshire's commercial and industrial development over the past 10 years, and they want the Town to limit commercial development to areas where it is currently allowed. Approximately 47% survey respondents believe that recently added commercial development fits into the town's character but 70% would support the Town in an effort to strengthen requirements to enhance the aesthetics of commercial areas.

A majority of respondents feel that there are too many temporary signs throughout Town. There were a significant number of comments on the architecture of commercial buildings in town such as:

- The majority of those who left responses feel the Ball and Socket development fits perfectly.
- Many are opposed to the North End outlet mall development.
- The large chain stores do not fit into the Town's character.

New Business Development: 85% of people would also like to see the Town encourage new business development, and 70% would support an effort towards increasing the variety of retail and service business offered.

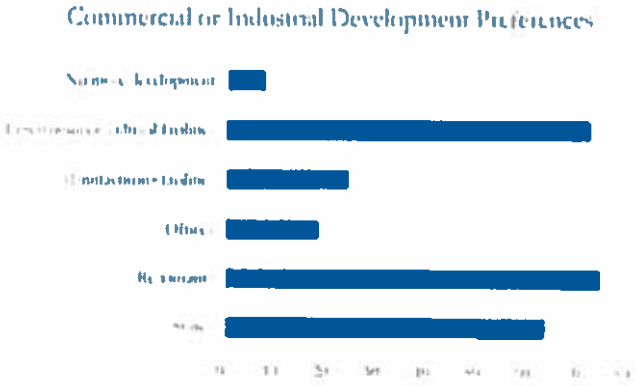


Figure 2: Response to Question 23. Respondents were allowed to pick all options that applied to them

## Public Facilities and Services

**Road Conditions:** 66% of respondents believe that the conditions of town and state roads are acceptable. 77% of those surveyed feel the Town should direct additional resources to alleviate traffic congestion along major roads. 77% do not feel that the state is doing enough to alleviate congestion on major roads in Cheshire. The majority of people , 69%.would like to see the Town direct additional resources to alleviate traffic on town roads that are used as cut-through alternatives to avoid main roads. The majority of respondents do not think the major intersections in Cheshire (RT10 and RT68 at the center of town; West Main Street and Maple Avenue; and Mountain Road/RT70) are safe for pedestrians and 44% of people believe other intersections throughout town are not safe for pedestrians. A majority would like to see more and improved signs and plantings (the bedding plant capital) welcoming motorists to Cheshire at major arteries entering Town.

**Parking:** 55% of people believe there is sufficient parking at most Town facilities, however, Town Hall, the library and the Post Office are major exceptions.

**Public Facilities:** The majority of those who answered are satisfied with Town Hall, the police department facility, fire stations, ambulance station, public works facility, library, parks and recreation facilities, the senior center, youth center and the Yellow House, and bicycle/walking trails. Strong minorities of those surveyed are dissatisfied with school facilities, and the swimming pool. Over 80% of people are not content with the current state of the post office or cultural interest opportunities

## Conclusion

Identifying residents' desires for the future through self-administered surveys and understanding their concerns about critical issues is very helpful to Town officials in developing effective recommendations for the new Plan of Conservation and Development. The data clearly indicates that community members have a strong desire to ensure the beauty and economic vitality of Cheshire into the future. The Plan of Conservation and Development is an essential step in the process of the long-term planning for the well-being of Cheshire residents.

The data reported here was collected using Survey Monkey.