

PROPOSED
**CORNWALL TOWN PLAN
OF
CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**



CORNWALL PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

Special thanks to: Annie Kosciusko, who as chair of the Planning and Zoning Commission from 2006 - 2009, steered this Plan almost through to completion; to Rick Lynn, who served with particular distinction on the Commission from 1997 - 2009; to planner Tom McGowan, who has offered invaluable guidance throughout the process; and to all those who contributed in large ways and small towards the realization of this plan.

© **Art Gingert / Wildlands Photography**

Title: "Boulders in Housatonic River at mouth of tributary stream and famous covered bridge at West Cornwall CT at foggy, early summer sunrise."

As required by the Connecticut General Statutes, the preparation of the Town Plan of Conservation and Development is the responsibility of the Planning and Zoning Commission. The Commission Plan identified four key areas of Town Plan study based on the results of a town wide citizen forum on the preparation of the Town Plan. Town Plan subcommittees were then created to address each of these subjects. Subcommittees were composed of the following citizen volunteers who, for the past two years, assisted the Commission in the work of preparing this Town Plan.

Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission Members:

Lynn Cheney, David Colbert, Pat Hare, Chris Hopkins, Anne Kosciusko (Chair), Heidi Kearns, Jim LaPorta, Rick Lynn, Emilie Pryor

Cornwall Town Plan of Conservation and Development Subcommittee Members and Chairs:

Cultural and Community Resources

Louise Dunn, Ledlie Laughlin, John Calhoun, Becky Hurlburt, Joyce Hart, with Planning and Zoning Commission member co-chairs: Lynn Cheney and Emilie Pryor.

Housing:

Dave Cadwell, Tim Prentice, Denny Frost, Anne Baren, Will Calhoun, Don Bardot and Planning and Zoning Commission member co-chairs Pat Hare and Chris Hopkins.

Economic Development:

Todd Piker, K. C. Baird, Harriette Dorsen, Paul Baren, David Grossman, and Bianca Griggs and Planning and Zoning Commission co-chairs Jim LaPorta, Anne Kosciusko and Heidi Kearns.

Natural Resources and Conservation:

Jean Bouteiller, Nikolle Kuehnert, Jeff Lynch and Fred Scoville and Planning and Zoning Commission member co-chairs David Colbert and Rick Lynn.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

1. **“Cornwall in the Zeros Decade”** Background Information and Analysis of Cornwall’s Population, Incomes, Economic Base, Property Values, Budgets and Taxes by David A. Grossman
2. **“Town of Cornwall Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment”** by the Kings Mark Environmental Review Team. Information and analysis of Cornwall’s natural resources prepared by the Town Plan subcommittee on Natural Resources and Conservation which includes extensive mapped information prepared with the assistance of the Housatonic Valley Association and the Northwest Conservation District.
3. Report of the Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission on the **Results of the June 23, 2007 Town Forum** in preparation for the update of the Cornwall Town Plan of Conservation and Development.

CORNWALL TOWN PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

Connecticut towns prepare and update a Town Plan of Conservation and Development (“Town Plan”) for two fundamental reasons. First it’s the law. Connecticut requires that towns update their Town Plan every 10 years. Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires a local Planning and Zoning Commission to prepare, adopt and amend a Town Plan for the community, with recommendations for the most desirable land use and density within the town.

In the language of the statute, the Town Plan should be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical conservation and economic development of the municipality, and should be “designed to promote with greatest efficiency and economy the coordinated development of the municipality and the general welfare and prosperity of its people”. Also, Connecticut statutes were recently revised to provide that towns that do not have up-to-date Town Plans can be penalized when seeking certain State grants. The second and more important reason is experience demonstrates that when successful communities have a sound Town Plan, they use it and keep it up to date. Whether for a business or a community, a good Plan provides the agreed upon guidelines and recommendations needed to move forward toward common goals.

Updating the Cornwall Town Plan has been a thorough and lengthy process. From the outset, it has been designed to receive the support, cooperation and constructive suggestions of town officials, citizens, local boards, commissions, and volunteer organizations. It began with a town- wide forum in June, 2007, where citizens gathered to offer their ideas and suggestions for the Town Plan. Using the results of this forum as a guideline, the Planning and Zoning Commission appointed four citizen volunteer subcommittees to assist with the preparation of the Town Plan. Over the past 27 months, these citizens devoted a tremendous amount of thought, time and energy to this work.

In carrying out this process the Planning and Zoning Commission aimed to:

- Focus on the long term big picture.
- Identify core values and a vision for the future.
- Define objectives and specific strategies that will move the town toward its vision of the future.
- Assign responsibilities for various elements of the plan and coordinate town efforts to achieve its goals and to produce consistent results.

Like all towns, Cornwall is always in the process of evolving so it is very important to step back and take stock by revisiting the Town Plan every ten years. The Planning and Zoning Commission has worked to produce an updated Plan of Conservation and Development that reflects on past town plans, assesses current conditions and incorporates the wishes of its citizens for the future.

Brief Overview of the Town Plans Goals and Recommendations:

This 2010 Town Plan is an update of the 1998 Town Plan. These Plans share the following common goals:

- Preserving the town’s natural resources and scenic qualities
- Supporting its local businesses
- Supporting its residents’ needs for affordable housing
- Nurturing and supporting its local volunteers both in government and emergency services
- Delivering land use regulations that fit these aims

While this Town Plan provides much more detail and extensive recommendations, the Commission can continue to use the 1998 Town Plan as both an historic resource and a reference in carrying out its planning work.

In a broad sense, the objectives and recommendations of the 2010 Town Plan concentrates on people, places, business and housing. The following is a brief overview of the goals and central recommendations in each of these four areas.

People: *Addresses Cornwall’s residents’ wish to retain the town’s strong sense of community and the spirit of cooperation and volunteerism that is the backbone of the community.*

Recommendations focus on actions that:

- Improve local services offered by the town, especially recreational services for school age children and social opportunities for the elderly segment of the community.
- Take measures to encourage and support the citizen volunteers who are so important to the everyday workings of town government.
- Create more opportunities for residents to socialize and be a part of the Cornwall community.
- Initiate recreational improvements and programs that use Cornwall's major recreational features, such as the Housatonic River, and that support recreational activity and business opportunities.

Places: *Recognizes Cornwall is endowed with outstanding natural and scenic features and resources that need to be conserved and preserved for their intrinsic value and as a vital community economic asset.*

Recommendations focus on actions that:

- Retain, protect and expand the natural, scenic and historic features of Cornwall that make it such a special, beautiful and resource rich community.
- Form a Conservation Commission to assist and coordinate with Planning and Zoning and the Cornwall Conservation Trust in implementing the many detailed Town Plan recommendations designed to preserve and protect Cornwall's environment.

Business: *The economic development focus is the need to maintain Cornwall Bridge and West Cornwall as viable and vibrant New England village centers with successful businesses mixed with residences and community facilities.*

Recommendations focus on actions that:

- Support retention and expansion of local businesses in the village centers of Cornwall Bridge and West Cornwall.
- Support businesses that provide local services, bolster the commercial tax base and contribute to the community vitality.
- Support coordinated local government and private action recommended in the recently completed village center business improvement and marketing plan, prepared by a consultant to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Housing: *The plan for housing has a dual focus. One is on measures, both existing and new, that will help the town address its need for local affordable housing. The other is aimed at avoiding the kind of housing sprawl that can defeat Cornwall's goal of retaining its rural character and highly valued conservation resources.*

Recommendations focus on actions that:

- Are innovative, such as a Cornwall Housing Trust Fund and Housing Finance Authority, and are aimed at improving the opportunities for people of moderate means to remain in Cornwall.
- Support and expand upon existing regulations for accessory apartments and affordable non-profit housing plans.
- Establish a system for continually examining and refining local regulations aimed at avoiding residential sprawl, including cluster subdivision regulations and the potential of transfer of development rights programs.

CORNWALL TOWN PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – VILLAGE CENTERS

The kickoff, town-wide Town Plan forum held in June, 2007, rated economic development as one of the highest priorities for the Town Plan update. This led the Planning and Zoning Commission to form a special town plan subcommittee on economic development.

Citizens agreed the plan should focus on improving business activity in the town's two commercial areas at Cornwall Bridge and West Cornwall in a manner that retains the town's rural character.

Vibrant and attractive village centers will help strengthen the economic base and already strong sense of community. Village centers with local services, ongoing community events, and places for citizens to gather reflect the collective wish expressed at the 2007 forum that Cornwall should have places and venues encouraging local social interaction and discourse. Consistent with past Town Plans, this plan also strongly supports sustaining opportunities for home businesses which are an important element of Cornwall's economy.

Based on the results of the 2007 forum and the extensive additional citizen outreach conducted by the subcommittee, the Economic Development sub-committee set the following goals:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

- To reinforce and improve business development in the town's business centers at Cornwall Bridge and West Cornwall.
- To encourage economic development that strengthens the economic base, relieves residential property taxes, and keeps young families in Cornwall.
- To support, encourage and permit expansion of businesses in the center areas.
- To accomplish these goals in a manner that maintains the attractive, small-town character of the village centers.

The two village centers are distinctly different and require an action plan for each that fits into the context of the overall Town Plan.

WEST CORNWALL

Brief History – Extracted From the Cornwall Historical Society's – "The Eight Cornwalls"

Where Mill Brook plunges into the rapids of the Housatonic River sits the village of West Cornwall on the eastern bank. Known today for its covered bridge, an icon of rural New England, West Cornwall is also an emblem of the early industrial revolution in Connecticut's rural hinterland.

The tiny riverbank settlement originally known as Hart's Bridge received the name West Cornwall in 1841 when the Housatonic Railroad reached it. It rapidly became the business center of the town of Cornwall, acquiring a post office and a general store. These were followed by a feed store and mill; a drug store; a tin shop, a school, and a blacksmith shop; a millinery; a barbershop; and a hotel. To this day, West Cornwall's architecture resembles more a 19th century mill village than a colonial town center.

West Cornwall boasted small industries typical of the early industrial era. An iron furnace operated through the middle years of the 19th century. The Gold Sanitary Heater Company was formed in 1875 and manufactured items such as Gold's Patent steam heater and the Magic Heater stove.

The settlement's largest employer was the Mallinson Shear Shop, established in West Cornwall in the 1850s. The company produced for both local and wider markets; its records show orders ranging from a single pair of shears to 400-gross pairs. Like many early Connecticut enterprises, the Shear Shop was linked with other activities, including a dam on the river, a foundry, and a gristmill.

While these industries declined in the late 1800s, West Cornwall remained Cornwall's commercial center. Bertie Cartwright, who arrived in West Cornwall as a young woman in 1908, recalled many years later that businesses included the Mansion House hotel, with bar-room attached and livery stable in the rear, a barber shop, a grocery store, a plumbing and kitchen-utensils business, and a general store selling "meat, groceries, clothing, books, shoes, and almost anything one might then ask for."

In 1915 Ransom Smith sold his store in West Cornwall to F. A. Yutzler. The store stayed in the family for 60 years. To this day many lament the closing of Yutzler's which had been not just a store providing basic supplies, but a place to meet fellow citizens.

West Cornwall Merchant and Citizen Participation

In May 2008, the Economic Development subcommittee sponsored a citizen forum on the future of West Cornwall. Approximately 50 residents attended this lively session, producing valuable information and suggestions. These suggestions were used to develop specific objectives and recommendations for the future of West Cornwall. A summary of the comments and suggestions compiled at this forum are provided in the Appendix.

West Cornwall Objectives:

- To retain the village center's historic appearance and scale.
- To retain its mix of commercial and residential uses.
- To plan improvements and development while respecting West Cornwall's existing challenges: steepness of topography, lack of good soils for sewer disposal, proximity to the river, compact development pattern, and traffic and parking limitations.

West Cornwall Recommendations

The following recommendations are sorted into several categories. Each includes suggestions for a primary implementing board, commission or organization.

General Planning Recommendations: Maintain balance between commercial and residential uses and sustain the rural New England character and appearance of West Cornwall Center.

1. **Create Village District Regulations.** Develop "Village District" regulations that will permit flexibility for building siting and expansion, parking and signage, while maintaining the historic rural character and appearance of West Cornwall Center. These regulations should provide for setbacks and other zoning requirements designed to fit the unique compact development pattern of the center. Guidelines will need to be developed to retain the scale and appearance of the existing buildings, and provide for parking and signage.

Who: Planning & Zoning Commission

2. **Maintain a mix of residential and commercial use in the West Cornwall Business Zone.** Amend the Zoning Regulations to provide for appropriate commercial uses on the main floor, with residential use on the second floor of business buildings. Remove residential uses as a principal permitted use in the business zone.

Who: Planning & Zoning Commission

Business and Commercial Recommendations

1. **Form a West Cornwall Business Association.** Encourage business owners and other interested parties to form a formal business association either specific to West Cornwall, or as part of a townwide business association. The business association would assist and support existing, as well as new businesses and promote West Cornwall as a destination, and cooperate in the implementation of the recommendations of the Town Plan.
Who: Local business owners.
2. **Promote West Cornwall as a tourist destination.** Encourage the business community to unite around a plan that advertises and attracts visitors to West Cornwall capitalizing on the attraction of the covered bridge, the unique riverside and the historic village center setting.
Who: Planning and Zoning Commission – special village center area marketing and planning study, Business Association.
3. **Promote river-related recreational business opportunities.** Encourage recreational and nature-related businesses associated with the Housatonic River, and other outdoor recreational activities—fishing, hiking, camping, and boating.
Who: West Cornwall Business Association, Planning and Zoning Commission, Recreational Commission.
4. **Create a West Cornwall brochure.** Create a brochure that lists all local businesses, tourist attractions and recreational opportunities.
Who: West Cornwall Business Association - Seek grant from State Department of Economic Development.
5. **Support Farmer’s Markets.** Encourage and support the expansion of the existing West Cornwall farmers market with the goal of sustaining it as a weekly in-season event. Incorporate farm-related sales and other activities to assist in drawing customers. Link the market with Cornwall’s historic role in development of modern agriculture in Connecticut. Revise the zoning regulations as needed to permit farmers markets.
Who: West Cornwall Business Association and local farmers, Cornwall Agricultural Advisory Commission. Seek grant monies from the State Department of Agriculture, Planning & Zoning Commission.
6. **Encourage the expansion of technology.** Promote new forms of technology, including townwide DSL to provide needed services for businesses, and help move Cornwall further into the information age.



Mowhawk Mountain - Spring Flooding Photo by: Katherine Freygang

Village Center Traffic, Safety, Parking, and other Public Improvements

1. **Improve directional signage.** Improve directional signage on Route 7 to guide traffic seeking West Cornwall.
Who: Board of Selectmen, Business Association, assistance from state legislators.
2. **Improve pedestrian safety.** Improve the center area for pedestrians by:
 - Installing traffic calming measures,
 - Providing sidewalks and crosswalks,
 - Providing additional parking for pedestrians, and public bathrooms, possibly using CL&P land.**Who: Board of Selectmen capital improvement program, State Department of Transportation, Northwest Regional Council of Governments, Planning and Zoning Commission, Business Association.**
3. **Investigate a public water supply.** Evaluate the options for improving water supply sources and sewer waste treatment. Additional information will be provided by the Incentive Housing Zone IHZ study currently in progress.

This study should evaluate the feasibility of a location for a common septic system in the center area. A study of the topography and soils by the Northwest Conservation District shows no obvious location for a community septic system or other alternative type of sewer treatment. Options for alternatives to the conventional septic system or sewer treatment plant system are not yet readily available under State of Connecticut rules.

An assessment conducted as part of the Town Plan update concluded that a sensible approach would be to focus on creating a central water supply or perhaps a series of common wells in uphill areas of the center. One of the factors limiting business expansion in the center is the requirement that for every parcel with a well and septic there must be a minimum separation distance. A public or central water supply system would allow more compact development.

Who: Board of Selectmen, Business Association, Torrington Area Health District, Aquarion or other private water supply companies.

4. **Create boat access.** Establish a canoe and kayak access to the river above the bridge, and encourage enhancements to existing river access on CL&P land.

Who: Recreation Commission, Business Association, Planning and Zoning Commission.

5. **Create hiking/walking/biking trails.** Evaluate the potential to create walking trails in the area around both West Cornwall and Cornwall Bridge, and a walking and perhaps biking connection near the river on the east side between West Cornwall and Cornwall Bridge. Seek grants from Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, Connecticut Department of Transportation and other sources. Support region bikeway plan by Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area to connect New Milford and Ashley Falls, Massachusetts, along the Housatonic.

Who: Planning and Zoning Commission, Recreation Commission, Board of Selectmen.

6. **Participate in regional recreational, river, and Route 7 corridor programs.** Consider participating and supporting regional recreational and cultural projects including bike trails, farm and wine tours, iron industry history tours and similar recreational and cultural projects.

7. **Support North West Connecticut businesses and tourism.** Cornwall Business Association and town officials should participate in local area efforts to improve and coordinate projects and programs that promote tourism in Northwest Connecticut, especially where these endeavors will benefit business in the two village centers.

CORNWALL BRIDGE

Brief History – Extracted From the Cornwall Historical Society’s – “The Eight Cornwalls”

The settlement known as Cornwall Bridge lies toward the southern end of Cornwall along the Housatonic River. Early in the life of the town a ferry crossed the river to Sharon. The community then became the site of a succession of bridges, including a covered bridge that was washed away in the 1936 flood. It was early known as the South Depot, then as Lewis’ Bridge, and also as Deantown.

Dr. Reuben Dean built Cornwall’s first mill, known as the Red Mill, about 1750. Mills--sawmills, fulling mills, gristmills--were built along the streams that ran into the Housatonic. Cornwall Bridge arrived as a commercial center only after the Housatonic Railroad came through. As historian Edward Starr wrote, it then boasted “a blacksmith’s shop, a vinegar factory, three stores, a Methodist Episcopal Church and railroad station.” Farmers brought their milk to Cornwall Bridge for shipment to New York City and Bridgeport. In the 1920s, a carload of milk and another of “Berkshire Spring” water from a bounteous local source went daily from Cornwall to New York.

Cornwall Bridge was the location of what was probably Cornwall’s largest factory building ever, the Cornwall Bridge Iron Company. Sited on what came to be known as Furnace Brook, it opened in



Bairds Store Photo by: Lazlo Gyorsok

1833. The remains of the charging wall, furnace stack, dam, race, retaining walls of the charcoal storage sheds, casting sheds, and wheel pit are more or less visible along Furnace Brook today.

Cornwall Bridge's school district, Number Eight, was formed in 1804. In 1840, the schoolhouse was moved to make room for the railroad. In the late 1920s, the State of Connecticut built a large concrete bridge across the river and retired the covered bridge to foot traffic. The old business district, which was centered on the road that ran along the river, was gradually relocated to the junction of Routes 4 and 7.

Cornwall Bridge Objectives:

- To support the plans, such as that for the Merz property, that provide nearby compact housing design, additional space to enhance the center commercial area, and community services such as the Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department facilities.
- To revise regulations and encourage expansion of existing business buildings.
- To moderate the through traffic rate of speed and capture a greater portion of customers to center commercial uses.
- To encourage and support reaching a consensus on improvements to traffic and pedestrian safety, convenience vehicular access, and pedestrian and vehicular interconnections between businesses.

Cornwall Bridge Recommendations.

The following recommendations include suggestions for a primary implementing board, commission or organization.

General Planning Recommendations:

1. **Maintain local services.** Maintain a part of Cornwall Bridge center for local delivery of necessities—grocery, hardware store, appliances, banking, post office, package store, etc.
Who: Planning and Zoning Commission, Business Association, Cornwall Housing Corporation.
2. **Promote community.** Encourage maintaining local necessity uses (post office, service establishments, coffee shop) at Cornwall Bridge to preserve Cornwall's smalltown quality of life. Encourage citizens to shop Cornwall. Encourage a local village center carpooling and car sharing business.
Who: Business Association, Board of Selectmen, Cornwall Housing Corporation, Cornwall Historical Society.
3. **Integrate elements of the center area.** Support walkway links between grocery store, firehouse, new elderly housing, etc.
Who: Board of Selectmen, Volunteer Fire Department, Business Association, Cornwall Housing Corporation.
4. **Create Village District Regulations.** Develop "Village District" regulations that permit flexibility for business building siting and expansion, parking and signage, and support businesses consistent with the New England rural appearance of "upper" Cornwall Bridge. Separate guidelines will be needed to encourage the historic residential village "under" the bridge. Modifications to existing buildings and sites should be based on guidelines that support a compact village setting. This will require flexibility in lot area, setbacks, lot coverage, and other conventional zoning requirements. Guidelines will be needed also for landscaping, lighting, signage, parking and connecting walkways. These changes will relieve some of the nonconforming situations that limit the improvement of existing business buildings and uses.
Who: Planning and Zoning Commission, Business Association.
5. **Partner with Sharon.** Long term plans for the Cornwall and Sharon sides of the Bridge should be developed with the Planning and Zoning Commission and business community from each town. This cooperation will benefit both towns and can lead to a design and plan that will improve the overall attraction of this center area.
6. **Improve Cornwall Bridge Green.** Enhance the Cornwall Bridge Green through landscaping to make it an attractive visual centerpiece and a community resource. The plan must make the Green pedestrian friendly, provide

for places to walk and relax, and to permit occasional community events. Establishing a Cornwall information pavilion on the Green is suggested. Longterm plans should provide for safe pedestrian access between the Green and businesses on the west side of Route 7. This will require cooperation with the State of Connecticut. In the near term, conducting events on the Green will require state permission to shut down traffic on the west leg of the highway intersection. Other communities in the region have established local non profit organizations dedicated to the care and improvement of town greens. Creation of a similar Cornwall Bridge Green Improvement Society is suggested.

Who: State legislators, Board of Selectmen, Department of Transportation, Business Association, Cornwall Bridge Green Improvement Society.

Traffic, Parking, Access Improvements and Other Capital Improvements

1. **Improve traffic flow and safety in center area.** Employ a variety of measures to slow down traffic through the village center to improve traffic and pedestrian safety and promote ease of access to business uses. Examples of the type of improvements needed are found in the State Route 7 Scenic Highway report funded by the State Department of Transportation.

Who: Board of Selectmen, Planning and Zoning Commission, Business Association, State Department of Transportation, Northwest Council of Governments, state legislators.

2. **Improve state highway signage.** Urge the state to install signage designed to slow down traffic and alert drivers that they are entering a village and business center. This is especially important for traffic coming from south and west.

Who: Board of Selectmen, Planning and Zoning Commission, State Department of Transportation, State legislators

3. **Work towards consensus on improvements to Route 4 & 7 intersection in center.** Continue to evaluate and pursue a consensus on the best alternative for modification or re-alignment of the State highway intersections at Cornwall Bridge. Incorporate traffic calming measures such as reduction of State highway lane width in center area and other measures suggested in the State Route 7 Scenic Highway report funded by the State Department of Transportation, and as suggested as part of the Town Plan update, and the special Planning and Zoning Commission study of Cornwall Bridge.

Who: Board of Selectmen, Planning and Zoning Commission, Business Association, State Department of Transportation, Northwest Council of Governments, State legislators

4. **Create safe pedestrian walkways—sidewalks, crosswalks.** An important part of recreating a viable village center commercial area is the design and implementation of safe walking connections between stores and services such as the post office. Examples of the type of sidewalk and connection improvements needed are found in the State Route 7 Scenic Highway report funded by the State Department of Transportation.

Who: Board of Selectmen, Planning and Zoning Commission, Business Association, State Department of Transportation, Northwest Council of Governments, State legislators.

5. **Utilize the Cornwall Bridge firehouse.** The firehouse is centrally located in the village center and offers the possibility, with improvements, to become a more community friendly building. Improvements to the kitchen and the creation of a meeting room would provide usable space for town groups to meet and hold community functions.

Who: Board of Selectmen, Volunteer Fire Department, Business Association, Cornwall Housing Corporation.

6. **Develop plan for hiking/walking/biking trails.** Evaluate the potential for a short walking trail on the Merz property, open space, along the river under the bridge, and a walking and biking connection near the river on the east side between West Cornwall and Cornwall Bridge.

Who: Planning and Zoning Commission, Recreation Commission, Board of Selectmen. Seek grants from Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, Connecticut Department of Transportation, and other sources.

7. **Encourage expansion of technology.** Promote new forms of technology, including townwide DSL, to provide needed services for businesses, and help move Cornwall further into the information age.

West Cornwall and Cornwall Bridge Action Plan

Retain professional assistance to forge a coordinated priority and action plan for West Cornwall and Cornwall Bridge. This will follow up on the findings and recommendations of this section of the Town Plan and encourage continued cooperation and communication with local business owners. The goal is to begin this special study as soon as possible, adopt it as part of the Town Plan, and focus on early implementation.

Develop an action plan for West Cornwall

Engage an experienced rural community planning and marketing expert to assess existing conditions, define the center's unique qualities, meet with West Cornwall business owners and the Planning and Zoning Commission, and recommend options. This plan should cover as many as possible of the following:

- Define and strengthen West Cornwall's unique qualities, its special "sense of place".
- Recommend theme or themes that build on assets of center and its "sense of place".
- Recommend measures designed to strengthen the business activities including potential community and business events built around identified themes.
- Identify products and services that appear to have market support.
- Recommend organizational and branding approaches to marketing the center.
- Retain the commercial residential mix of uses in village center.
- Encourage tourism, capitalizing on the covered bridge attraction.
- Support and promote the successful existing businesses.
- Recommend improvements to the infrastructure including parking, pedestrian linkages and public amenities.
- Recommend traffic calming and safety measures that address high rate of vehicle speed entering village centers.
- Identify the most appropriate mix of uses given the location and its opportunities and limitations.
- Recommend how to "capture" the tourists who now stop to view and photograph the covered bridge then leave.
- Recommend location and design of signage needed on Route 7 and other places to direct cars to the village center.
- Provide a plan for parking and pedestrian access in the center area.
- Address the potential for, and measures to capitalize on, recreational and nature based businesses—fishing, hiking, camping, and boating in both West Cornwall and Cornwall Bridge.
- Identify where and how to maintain a public rest room facility in the center area.
- Address conceptual feasibility for providing either a public water system or public sewage treatment in the center area.
- Recommend guidelines for creating Village District zoning regulations tailored to West Cornwall's layout, building spacing and historic appearance.
- Recommend the creation of an effective public/private organization or mechanism that encourages the business community to assist in the implementation of the action plan.
- Identify grant sources and other financial mechanisms to assist in the implementation of the action plan recommendations.

Develop an action plan for Cornwall Bridge

Engage an experienced rural community planning and marketing expert to assess existing conditions, define the center's unique qualities, meet with Cornwall Bridge's business owners and the Planning and Zoning Commission, and recommend options. This plan should cover as many as possible of the following:

- Define and strengthen Cornwall Bridge's unique qualities, its special "sense of place",
- Recommend theme or themes that build on assets of center and its "sense of place".
- Recommend measures designed to strengthen business activities including potential community and business events built around identified themes.
- Identify products and services that appear to have market support.
- Recommend organizational and branding approaches to marketing the center.
- Encourage tourism, capitalizing on the river setting and "under bridge" historic village setting.
- Support and promote the successful existing businesses.
- Recommend improvements to the infrastructure including parking, pedestrian linkages, and public amenities.
- Recommend traffic calming and safety measures that address high rate of vehicle speed on Route 7.
- Recommend location and design of signage needed on Routes 7 and 4, announcing the village center business areas and need to reduce speed, stop, and visit Cornwall Bridge.
- Provide a plan for parking and pedestrian access in the center area.

- Address the potential for, and measures to capitalize on, recreational and nature-based businesses—fishing, hiking, camping, and boating.
- Identify specific traffic calming measures and curb cuts, parking, and access improvements that will benefit both safety and business traffic activity.
- Address state highway intersections and large inaccessible center green. Alternatives for road re-alignment have been discussed but a solution consensus is needed.
- Address options for the creation of a community room, and village/town meeting place.
- Design a pedestrian link between grocery store, firehouse, new elderly housing with safe walkway and also link businesses on the west side of Route 7.
- Design regulation changes to encourage recreational and nature-based businesses.
- Recommend a Cornwall Bridge brochure with highlights on local trails, boat launch, fishing guide services, inns and motels.
- Address feasibility for improving delivery of water and treatment of sewage that will permit expansion of business building area on lots in center.
- Recommend guidelines for creating Village District zoning regulations tailored to both “upper” bridge business area and “lower” bridge residential area.
- Recommend the creation of an effective public/private organization or mechanism that encourages the business community to assist in the implementation of the action plan.
- Identify grant sources and other financial mechanisms to assist in the implementation of the action plan recommendations.

CORNWALL TOWN PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

Introduction:

This Natural Resources and Conservation section of the Town Plan covers a deep and wide range of resource recommendations for several reasons:

- During forums held on the Town Plan, Cornwall citizens gave a high priority rating to the protection of Cornwall's natural environment. The expectation was that this would be a major element of the Town Plan.
- Cornwall is one of Connecticut's most beautiful and undeveloped towns. We still have the opportunity to conserve and preserve intact natural areas.
- Connecticut is one of the country's most developed and urban states. For Connecticut to reach its goals for open space protection, a disproportionate amount of land preservation needs to be accomplished in rural remote communities such as Cornwall.
- If Cornwall does not continue to act aggressively to preserve its invaluable natural resources, over time the impact of development will gradually erode property values, the quality of the town's environment and its quality of life.



Artists' View, Coltsfoot Valley Photo by: Jeffery Jacobson

King's Mark Environmental Review Team report "Town of Cornwall Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment"

At the request of the Planning and Zoning Commission, the King's Mark Environmental Review Team prepared a comprehensive assessment of Cornwall's environment and natural resources. This 100+ page report provided invaluable information to the Commission and the Town Plan subcommittee on Natural Resources and Conservation. The King's Mark team consists of a host of highly qualified environmental professionals who spent a considerable time in Cornwall reviewing a wide range of natural resource information in the preparation of this report.

A summary of the King's Mark report is provided in the Background Information and Analysis section of this plan. A full copy of the King's Mark report is available for review at the Planning and Zoning Office and is at the Cornwall Library.

Oversight, Planning and Implementation Objective:

To provide leadership, coordination, cooperation and support for planning and implementation of a focused natural resource and conservation protection program.

Recommendations:

1. **Conservation Commission.** Establish a Cornwall Conservation Commission as authorized by State Statute to assist with the detailed work required to implement the recommendations of this section of the Town Plan. The Statutes state that the purposes of a town Conservation Commission are for "the development, conservation, supervision and regulation of natural resources, including water resources, within its territorial limits".
(Who: Board of Selectmen. When: 2010. Priority: High.)

Strategy:

- a. The Board of Selectmen should create a Conservation Commission and select members with an interest in assisting with these Town Plan recommendations, and with an eye toward creating a commission that will cooperate and coordinate with other local conservation groups in the town.
- b. The initial focus of the Commission should be to assist and in some cases lead the effort to implement conservation - related recommendations of the Town Plan. This includes but is not limited to:

- Update and refine the list of natural resource features and properties of highest importance for town participation for open space protection. This should be based on the guidance in the Town Plan and in coordination with other town boards and conservation organizations.
- Research and develop grant opportunities and other financial resources for land preservation and natural resource conservation programs.
- Review other successful local land preservation programs and adopt methods and alliances that improve the potential for land preservation in Cornwall.
- Maintain ongoing communication, coordination, and consensus building among the town, the Planning and Zoning Commission, land trust and other local land protection organizations to maximize the potential for Cornwall land protection.
- Provide for oversight and maintenance of town-owned open space land and monitoring of town-owned conservation easements.
- Advise the Board of Selectmen and the Planning and Zoning Commission on the priorities for the use of fee in lieu of open space funds for purchase of open space or easements in Cornwall.
- Encourage private donations to the Town Open Space Fund.

c. A Conservation Commission can work in many other ways to inform, educate and lead local efforts to conserve the town's natural resources. Examples of the kind of recommendations and programs it can provide are:

- Refining the Town Plan inventory of natural resources.
- Offering recommendations for protection of natural resources.
- Identifying and offering suggestions for protection of wildlife corridors.
- Assisting in planning for trails and public use and access to public properties.
- Encouraging recycling and energy conservation.
- Providing information on and support control of invasive plants.
- Preserving historic stone walls.
- Improvement in land owner forestry management practices.
- Protecting scenic roads and roadside buffers.

2. **Protect Priority Open Spaces.** Pursue the preservation and protection of important open space land with a focus on the protection of scenic areas, wildlife corridors, farmland, water resources, and land with opportunities for passive recreation. Establish and work on a priority list of areas for protection including the Housatonic River Corridor, Cream Hill Lake watershed, Shepaug watershed, unprotected scenic ridgelines, land with water access, roadside buffers, and unprotected land supporting the Mohawk Trail and Mattatuck Trail. Support the ongoing land protection and management activities of the Cornwall Conservation Trust .

(Who: Board of Selectmen, Planning and Zoning Commission, Conservation Commission, private citizens and Cornwall Conservation Trust. When: On-going. Priority: High.)



Farm In Winter Photo by: Martha Louft

Strategy:

a. As recommended above, the Conservation Commission, following the guidance in the Town Plan, should lead a coordinated effort to establish and maintain a priority list of areas and properties to be preserved. All conservation organizations in town, public and non profit, should be encouraged to offer recommendations and participate in maintaining the open space protection priority list.

b. The Conservation Commission, Planning and Zoning, Cornwall Conservation Trust and others can co-sponsor an annual forum to hear reports from each participating land conservation group. Each organization should offer suggestions for revision and additions to the land preservation priority list based on conservation values, urgency of protection and opportunities for donations or funding. At the forum and throughout the year, discussion and agreement should be encouraged on how the local conservation groups can cooperate and assist each other to achieve common goals and complete priority projects.

c. As part of its annual review of progress on implementation of the Town Plan, the Planning and Zoning Commission should include a review of progress towards implementation of the Town Plan Natural Resource and Open Space protection goals and recommendations.

d. The Planning and Zoning Commission, Conservation Commission and all other boards and commissions involved in land preservation should include a section in their annual report on “Progress on Land Preservation in Cornwall”.

e. Include in the Town Annual Report the current list of properties protected during the report year and a review of current preservation projects and priorities identifying organizations assisting in these preservation efforts.

f. Support private efforts to preserve Cornwall’s abundant scenic areas, wildlife corridors, farmland, water resources, and land with opportunities for passive recreation. Among the most important measures available to property owners for open space protection are gifts or bargain sales of conservation easements to a land trust or the town. This Plan endorses and encourages gifts of land and conservation easements that contribute to the protection of Cornwall’s extensive valuable open spaces as described and identified in this Plan and on the Town Plan natural resources maps.

3. Fund Open Space Programs. Include funds in the town budget over the next five year period to insure that where needed local boards and commissions will be able to engage the assistance of necessary professional advisors. Consider also at least modest annual contributions to the Town Open Space Fund.

(Who: Local Commissions, Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance. When: On going. Priority: High.)

Strategy:

a. Implementation of the recommendations in this section will require focused work by local volunteer boards, commissions and non profit organizations. In certain cases the volunteer boards will need professional assistance. This will require clearly defining the program, the type of assistance needed, and a budget.

b. To the extent possible, the Commission should utilize the expertise available through local and area government and non-profit organizations such as the Northwest Conservation District, HVA, the Regional Council of Elected Officials and the Regional Collaborative.

c. Commissions can seek grants such as funds available from the State to towns for purchase of open space or acquisition of conservation easements. Over time, budgeted contributions to the Town Open Space Fund and funds received as a fee-in-lieu of open space under the Subdivision Regulations will permit the Town to take advantage of more State grant funds.

d. It will be important for the Town to recognize that the professional assistance needed to carry out some of these recommendations will require a town commissions to request financial support from the Town in its annual budget appropriation.

4. Energy Conservation. Encourage cooperative efforts to diversify local renewable energy supply options where practical, including solar, hydro-power and wind. Consider guidelines that promote energy efficient development siting and energy efficient building construction practices.

(Who: Conservation Commission, Board of Selectmen, Planning and Zoning Commission, Cornwall Energy Task Force. When: On going. Priority: Medium.)

Strategy:

a. Cooperate with the Connecticut Siting Council and renewable energy organizations to select the options and sites for generation of renewable energy consistent with the overall goals of the Cornwall Plan of Conservation and Development.

Water, Wetlands, Wildlife and Habitat Objective:

To conserve and protect Cornwall’s drinking water and recreational water bodies, wetlands, related buffers, and the Housatonic River; improve protection against storm water impact; and assess development impact on biodiversity and vernal pools.

Recommendations:

1. **Lakes and Streams.** To help preserve the recreational value and ecological significance of Mohawk Pond and Cream Hill Lake, develop lake and watershed management plans including a program to routinely monitor water quality. In addition, support appropriate remediation efforts to improve the impaired water quality of Mill Brook, Furnace Brook, and the Housatonic River.

(Who: Conservation Commission. When: 2011. Priority: High.)



Daily Swim, Cream Hill Lake Photo by: Katherine Freygang

Strategy:

a. Create a task force or subcommittee of the Conservation Commission to lead the watershed planning effort for Mohawk Pond and Cream Hill Lake. Important participants in these efforts should include the State Department of Environmental Protection for Mohawk Pond (given the state owned boat launch on Mohawk Pond) and the Cream Hill Association for Cream Hill Lake.

b. Encourage state scientists from the DEP and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station to offer recommendations and to review and comment on the design of the watershed management plan scope of work.

c. Invite representatives of successful lake restoration programs to explain their watershed management planning programs and utilize successful strategies in the watershed plan.

d. Use local expertise to identify watershed land use issues, erosion sources and sources of nutrients impacting the lake. Include organizations with professional expertise, such as the Northwest Conservation District and HVA, in the planning and the implementation process and to assist with grant funding research.

e. Complete the inventory and analysis of the two watersheds in 2010 - 2011 and the lake management plans in 2012.

2. **Drinking Water Supply Well Field Protection.** Delineate a well field protection zone around the Cornwall Center and Cornwall Bridge well fields and adopt regulations protecting these and any future drinking water supply well sources. (Who: Planning and Zoning Commission, Cornwall Water Company, Aquarion Water Company. When 2010-2011. Priority: High.)

Strategy:

The state has mandated that public water supply well fields larger than Cornwall's be protected under State established minimum standards for the regulation of land uses within the area around a public drinking water supply well. Cornwall should also protect its drinking water supply from activities that could harm its water quality.

Aquarion could assist the Planning and Zoning Commission in the delineation of a well field protection boundary area and the Commission, based on the model State Aquifer Area Protection regulations, can adopt standards and requirements sufficient to preserve this drinking water supply source.

3. **Inland Wetland Regulations.** Update Cornwall's Inland Wetland and Watercourses Regulations to create provisions for regulating upland review areas of at least 100 feet.

(Who: Inland Wetlands Agency. When: 2010 - 2011. Priority: High.)

JULY 2006

TOWN OF CORNWALL Water Resources

Resources Map Series
Sponsored by the
Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission
and Cornwall Conservation Trust

Cornwall Village 1:8,000

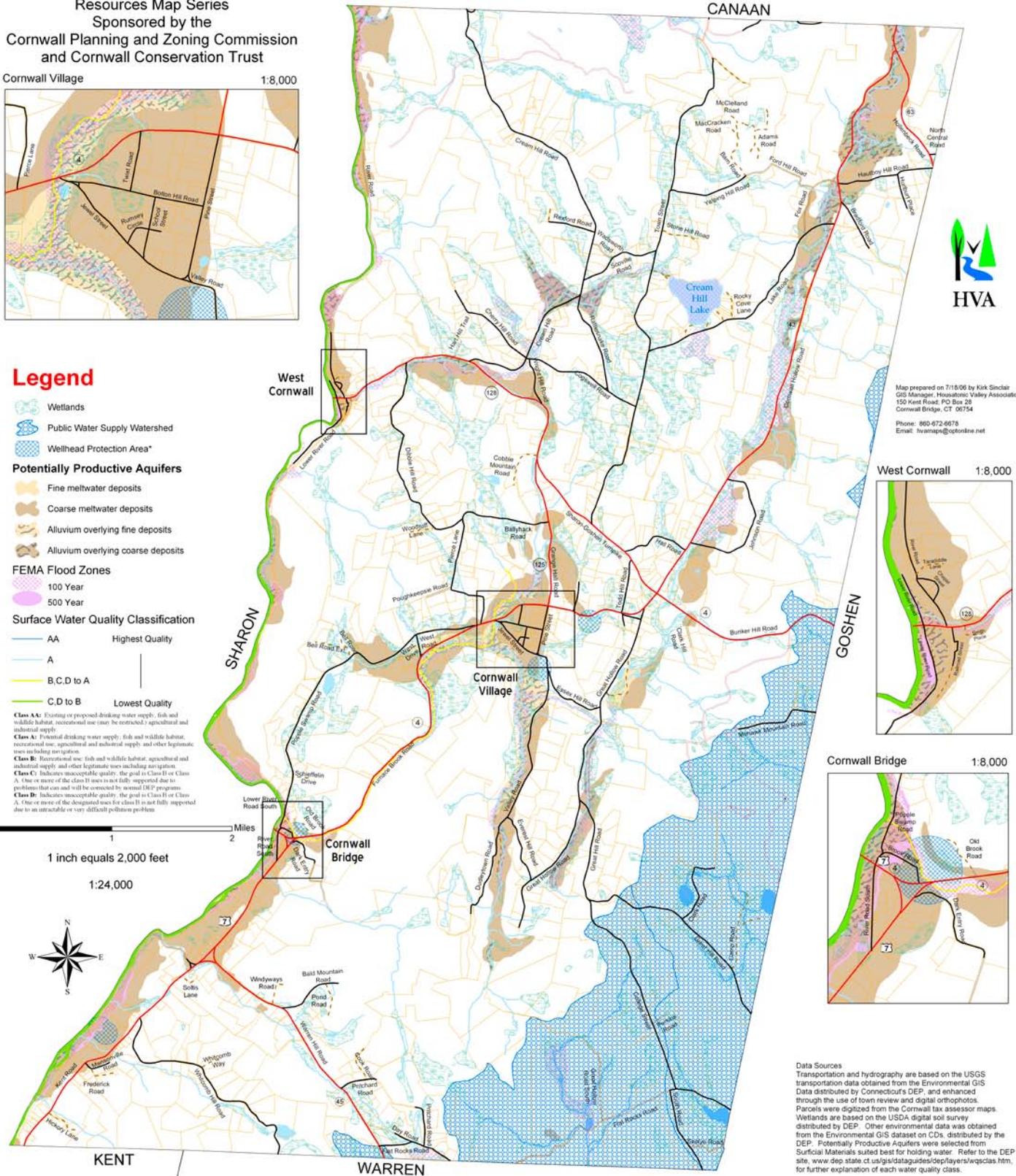


Legend

- Wetlands
- Public Water Supply Watershed
- Wellhead Protection Area*
- Potentially Productive Aquifers**
- Fine meltwater deposits
- Coarse meltwater deposits
- Alluvium overlying fine deposits
- Alluvium overlying coarse deposits
- FEMA Flood Zones**
- 100 Year
- 500 Year
- Surface Water Quality Classification**
- AA Highest Quality
- A
- B,C,D to A
- C,D to B Lowest Quality

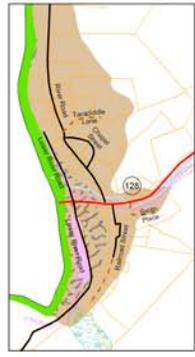
Class AA: Existing or proposed drinking water supply, fish and wildlife habitat, recreational use may be restricted, agricultural and industrial supply.
Class A: Potential drinking water supply, fish and wildlife habitat, recreational use, agricultural and industrial supply, and other legitimate uses including navigation.
Class B: Recreational use, fish and wildlife habitat, agricultural and industrial supply, and other legitimate uses including navigation.
Class C: Indicates unacceptable quality, the goal is Class B or Class A. One or more of the class B uses is not fully supported due to problems that can and will be corrected by normal DEP programs.
Class D: Indicates unacceptable quality, the goal is Class B or Class A. One or more of the designated uses for class B is not fully supported due to an intractable or very difficult pollution problem.

0 1 2 Miles
1 inch equals 2,000 feet
1:24,000

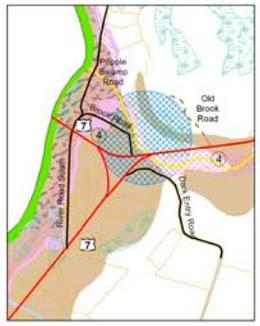


Map prepared on 7/18/06 by Kirk Sinclair
GIS Manager, Housatonic Valley Association
150 Kent Road, PO Box 28
Cornwall Bridge, CT 06754
Phone: 860-672-6678
Email: hvamaps@optonline.net

West Cornwall 1:8,000



Cornwall Bridge 1:8,000



Data Sources
Transportation and hydrography are based on the USGS transportation data obtained from the Environmental GIS Data distributed by Connecticut's DEP, and enhanced through the use of town review and digital orthophotos. Parcels were digitized from the Cornwall tax assessor maps. Wetlands are based on the USDA digital soil survey distributed by DEP. Other environmental data was obtained from the Environmental GIS dataset on CDs, distributed by the DEP. Potentially Productive Aquifers were selected from Surficial Materials suited best for holding water. Refer to the DEP site, www.dep.state.ct.us/gis/dataguide/dep/players/wcpqcas.htm, for further explanation of each water quality class.

Strategy:

According to the Connecticut Attorney General, local inland wetland commissions that wish to review activities outside of inland wetlands or watercourse must amend their regulations to define these wetland buffer or “upland review areas” to assert its jurisdiction to regulate.

Currently Cornwall’s Inland Wetland and Watercourse Agency do not define an upland review regulated area. However the Commission is currently revising its regulations to clarify that construction and land disturbances adjacent to wetlands or watercourses will be subject to review by the Agency to insure there will be no adverse impact on these resources. This is a very important natural resource protection revision to the Wetland Regulations and is strongly supported. Most inland wetland commissions in Connecticut have established an upland review requirement in their wetland regulations. Over a long period this has proven to be an invaluable tool in protection of water quality, water recharge, water storage, wildlife and other invaluable functions of wetlands and watercourses.

A regulated review area requirement is especially critical where construction is proposed close to a wetland and on steep slopes or erosive soils near wetlands. Special attention should be devoted to activities proposed in upland review areas on high priority wetlands and watercourses. High-priority wetlands and watercourses include the town’s six water bodies, its 20 watercourses, all vernal pools, wetlands and watercourses in headwater areas, wetlands and watercourses in public drinking water supply watersheds, and recreational water body watersheds.

4. **Housatonic River Overlay Zone.** Update the Housatonic River Overlay Zone based on recommendations in the Housatonic River Commission’s 2006 Housatonic River Management Plan.
(Who: Planning and Zoning Commission. When: 2011. Priority: Medium.)
5. **Shepaug River Overlay Zone.** Establish a watershed protection overlay zone for the Shepaug River watershed as recommended in a 1991 report prepared by a consultant for the NWCCOG.
(Who: Planning and Zoning Commission. When: 2011. Priority: Medium.)
6. **Storm Water Management Regulation.** Amend the Subdivision Regulations and Zoning Regulation requirements on Storm Water Management to require wherever feasible the use of low-impact-development design (LID) techniques for the management of storm water runoff.
(Who: Planning and Zoning Commission. When: 2011. Priority: Medium.)
7. **Biodiversity Study.** Prepare a biodiversity database study for Cornwall, including the mapping of vernal pools.
(Who: Conservation Commission. When: Multi-year effort. Priority: High.)



Bonney Brook Photo by: David Colbert

Strategy:

a. Gather, consolidate and record existing information from the State DEP, the land trust and other local conservation organizations on biodiversity and vernal pools.

b. Consider arranging for summer student internships to complete the biodiversity-vernal pool database. Ideally this would be under the direction of a qualified professional such as the biodiversity survey program, offered by the Cary Arboretum. Such programs should be considered to guide or assist the Commission in completing this project.

8. **Subdivision Regulation Amendment.** Amend the subdivision regulations to require that environmental assessments, including an “Existing Resources and Site Analysis Map” be prepared by the applicants for all new subdivision proposals. Sample regulations are available in Torrington’s regulations for conservation subdivisions.
(Who: Planning and Zoning Commission. When: 2010. Priority: High.)

Planning and Land Use Regulation Objective:

To assess and implement land use commission options to improve protection of important natural and scenic resources.



Autumn Road Photo by: Chandra Casteel

Recommendations:

1. Scenic Roads. Protect town scenic roads and State scenic roads. Investigate the adoption of a Cornwall Scenic Road ordinance, as authorized by State Statute, to help protect key features along scenic roads such as historic stonewalls and large trees. Apply to the State to designate all state highways in Cornwall as State Scenic Highways.

(Who: Board of Selectmen, Cornwall Historical Society, Conservation Commission. When: 2011. Priority: Medium.)

Scenic roads are an important part of the rural and scenic character of Cornwall. Under authority granted in the Connecticut General Statutes, the town can adopt a town ordinance permitting the majority of residents on a scenic road to vote to designate their road as

“scenic”. The provisions of a scenic road ordinance are limited to the town owned right of way. It cannot require or impose conditions on private property. Protection of scenic roads is consistent with the goals of this plan, allowing both adjoining property owners and the traveling public to continue to enjoy the beauty of these valued rural byways.

To qualify as a scenic road, the road and road right-of-way must have one or more of the following characteristics as set forth in the General Statutes: it is unpaved; bordered by mature trees or stonewalls; has a traveled portion that is no more than 20 feet in width; offers scenic views; blends naturally into the surrounding terrain; parallels or crosses over brooks, streams, lakes or ponds; or is part of a pre-designated historic district.

The town ordinance may include guidelines for road pavement and road side maintenance including: the requirement to maintain mature trees; removal of brush to enhance views of stone walls and other scenic road features; preservation of stone walls wherever possible; maintaining a gravel surface in a manner consistent with the existing surface material; maintaining paved surfaces without widening, except for safety purposes; and guidelines for making other alterations to the scenic road in a way that will do the least possible damage to identified scenic features.

Strategy:

a. The Planning and Zoning Commission or the Conservation Commission, in cooperation with the Board of Selectmen, should prepare a model local scenic road ordinance.

b. The Planning and Zoning Commission should identify the roads it recommends for designation and protection under a town scenic road ordinance.

c. In accord with State Statute, a local road can not be designated “scenic” under a town scenic road ordinance unless the owners of a majority of the road frontage vote in favor of such designation. The Board of Selectmen should propose adoption of an “enabling” scenic road ordinance to provide the opportunity for land owners on a scenic road to pursue scenic road designation. The ordinance should include a petitioning process for residents on a scenic road to apply for scenic road designation.

d. The Conservation Commission should offer to conduct workshops for land owners on recommended scenic roads and provide educational information on scenic road ordinance provisions and the value of protecting scenic roads.

- e. The list of recommended scenic roads and the model ordinance should be posted on the Cornwall website. Property owners on scenic roads should be encouraged to petition the town to establish their road as scenic under the ordinance.
- f. The Conservation Commission should prepare applications to the State for designation of the rest of the State highways in Cornwall that do not have a scenic designation.
2. **Hiking Trails.** Encourage the use of all available means to protect existing trails and create new trail networks to provide additional passive recreational opportunities in the community.
(Who: Recreation Commission, Cornwall Conservation Trust. When: On-going. Priority: Medium.)
3. **Ridgeline Protection.** Define and implement a process for drafting and adopting a local ridgeline protection regulatory program for Cornwall's priority ridgelines.
(Who: Planning and Zoning Commission. When: 2010-2012. Priority: High.)

Strategy:

The plan recommends conducting a detailed investigation of opportunities and options for protecting ridgelines through the land use regulatory system. The following are recommended steps for this process.

- a. Based on the assessment in the Town Plan, work to refine the purposes and intent of the Cornwall ridgeline protection program. There are many important natural resource protection reasons supporting conservation of ridgelines: to prevent excessive erosion and sedimentation; to protect water quality in lakes, ponds, rivers, and public drinking water supply reservoirs; and to preserve sensitive headwater areas and important wildlife habitat.

Other supporting reasons of great significance to residents include preservation of Cornwall's rural character, its special "sense of place"; and protection of its recreation based economy, which relies heavily on the retention of Cornwall's outstanding scenic views and vistas especially from public viewing places such as the town center, main roads, trails and streams, waterbodies and the Housatonic River.

- b. Based on a clearly defined set of purposes for ridgeline protection, the next step is to identify priority ridgelines and define the boundaries of ridgeline protection. The Town Plan identifies Cornwall's "prominent mountains" and generally defines a "ridgeline". Refine this with specific ridgeline protection boundaries areas and appropriate regulatory recommendations. Cornwall is 80% forest. Accordingly, it is recommended that a focus of the ridgeline protection program should be to retain the mature tree forest cover especially where it will mask views of new ridgeline development.

- c. The implementation program must take into account existing protected lands and regulations that prevent, control and limit development consistent with the purpose of the Cornwall ridgeline protection program. Existing regulations that bear upon ridgeline protection include the Subdivision Regulations on roads and Zoning Regulation requirements for driveways and especially the "buildable area" regulation which limits construction of new structures on slopes in excess of 25%.

- d. Final regulatory recommendations should be based on the ridgeline program's defined purposes, the analysis of existing regulations and concepts from other town ridgeline protection programs that fit Cornwall. The Kent "Horizon Line" Zoning Regulation's protection methodology and program appears to be working well and should be included in the review of other regulations that can benefit Cornwall's program.



View From Mowhawk Mountain Photo by: Ray Olsen

e. Include as a part of the Mohawk Pond and Cream Hill Lake watershed management plan, an element addressing ridgeline protection and use this information to assist in developing ridgeline regulations in other areas of Cornwall.

4. **Conservation Subdivisions.** Consider regulations for “conservation subdivisions”(also known as cluster subdivision) in Cornwall similar to the “Flexible Residential Design” zoning provisions in the Town of Granby to better protect important open space, enhance housing affordability, reduce land disturbance, and promote improved subdivision design.

(Who: Planning and Zoning Commission. When: 2010. Priority: High.)

Cornwall has been spared large multi-lot subdivisions which over time will inevitably creep into Northwest corner towns. These developments radically change a rural landscape. As discussed in the Housing Section, without the authority to direct new housing into higher density existing or new planned village centers for the foreseeable future, an alternative is to design a conservation subdivision regulation for Cornwall that will, to the extent feasible, preserve critical elements of a property subjected to subdivision development.

(Please refer also to the commentary on Cluster subdivisions in the Housing section of this plan.)

The following are key steps and regulation elements that should be incorporated into a Cornwall conservation subdivision regulation.

Strategy:

a. In all areas of the town, there should be incentives in the regulations to encourage cluster development. Consider offering incentives to encourage conservation subdivisions where the benefits to the community would be highest.

b. Basic elements of a cluster regulation should include:

- A requirement to conduct a site inventory and analysis which shows that the plan, to the greatest extent possible will protect site features identified in the site inventory and analysis that are consistent with the recommendations for open space and natural resource protection in the Town Plan and preserves rural character.
- A requirement that open space natural resource protection areas shall be maintained in their natural condition with limited exceptions. Changes can be considered if the plan is designed to restore valued resource features and natural processes; or improves scenic values; and the changes are recommended by natural resource professionals and incorporated into an open space land stewardship plan.
- A requirement that wherever possible, open space shall be located along common boundaries with existing or planned open spaces or designed to create links with open space on adjacent lands.
- A requirement that wherever possible, open space shall protect scenic views, ridge tops and hilltops, and that trees shall not be removed from designated ridge lines.
- A requirement that wherever possible, that prime and important farmland soils and active farm fields shall be protected.

c. A critical element of the cluster regulation is the formula for determining the maximum density in a cluster subdivision. There are a number of effective formulas to consider. A simple approach is to base the number of dwelling units permitted on net buildable acreage. This involves removing land in rights-of-ways, flood hazard areas, wetlands, waterbodies, and a percent of the steep slopes (over 25%). The balance of the property is then divided by the required minimum lot area to arrive at the number of permitted lots.

5. **Floodplain Regulations.** Compare the existing floodplain regulations in Cornwall with DEP’s “Model Floodplain Management Regulations” and revise as appropriate.

(Who: Planning and Zoning Commission. When: 2011. Priority: Medium.)

6. **Roadside Open Space.** To prevent adverse impacts to rural character from new housing located along Cornwall’s roads, consider increasing setback requirements along the roads, focusing open space set-asides for new subdivisions along the roadway corridor, and promoting conservation subdivision design. Consider the establishment of a “Gateway Corridor Overlay District” to maintain the rural appearance of Cornwall’s “Gateway Roadways” as illustrated in this report’s “Land Use Plan Map”.

(Who: Planning and Zoning Commission. When: 2011. Priority: Medium.)

7. **Telecommunications infrastructure.** To prevent adverse impacts to the rural character of Cornwall from inappropriate siting of telecommunications infrastructure, encourage the Town to work with planning agencies in siting telecommunication infrastructure consistent with the Town Plan. Update regulations as necessary.
(Who: Planning and Zoning Commission. When: Ongoing. Priority: Medium.)

Farmers and Farmland Objective:

To encourage preservation of additional active farmland, prime and important farmland soils. Support other measures that will assist and support local farm businesses, including support of local farmers' markets.

Recommendations:

1. **Donations of Protected Farmland and Farm Overlay Zone.** Encourage land trust and conservation donors to protect prime farm soils. Investigate the establishment of an agricultural protection overlay zone in selected areas to direct development activity away from valuable farmland soils through such techniques as mandatory cluster provisions.
(Who: Agricultural Advisory Commission, Cornwall Conservation Trust, Planning and Zoning Commission. When: Ongoing. Priority: High.)

Strategy:

a. The remaining modest areas of USDA Prime and Important Farmland Soils should be a high protection objective by the Town, the Cornwall Conservation Trust, other local and area conservation organizations and conservation donors. Equally important should be farmland areas adjoining and near working farms.

b. The assessment of conservation subdivisions and an agricultural overlay zone should be conducted at the same time to avoid duplication of effort.

c. Because farmland soils are typically the most suitable for both farming and development, consideration should be given to mandatory cluster in these areas, with incentives to place buildings and roads off the prime farm soil areas.



Farm on Poppleswamp Road Photo by: Lazlo Gyorsok

2. **Supporting Local Farming Viability.** Recognize farming as a business and support regulatory, educational and taxation methods to assist and support local farm businesses, local farmers markets, and sound forestry management. Support the development of appropriate forms of farming consistent with the changing nature of farming in the 21st century.

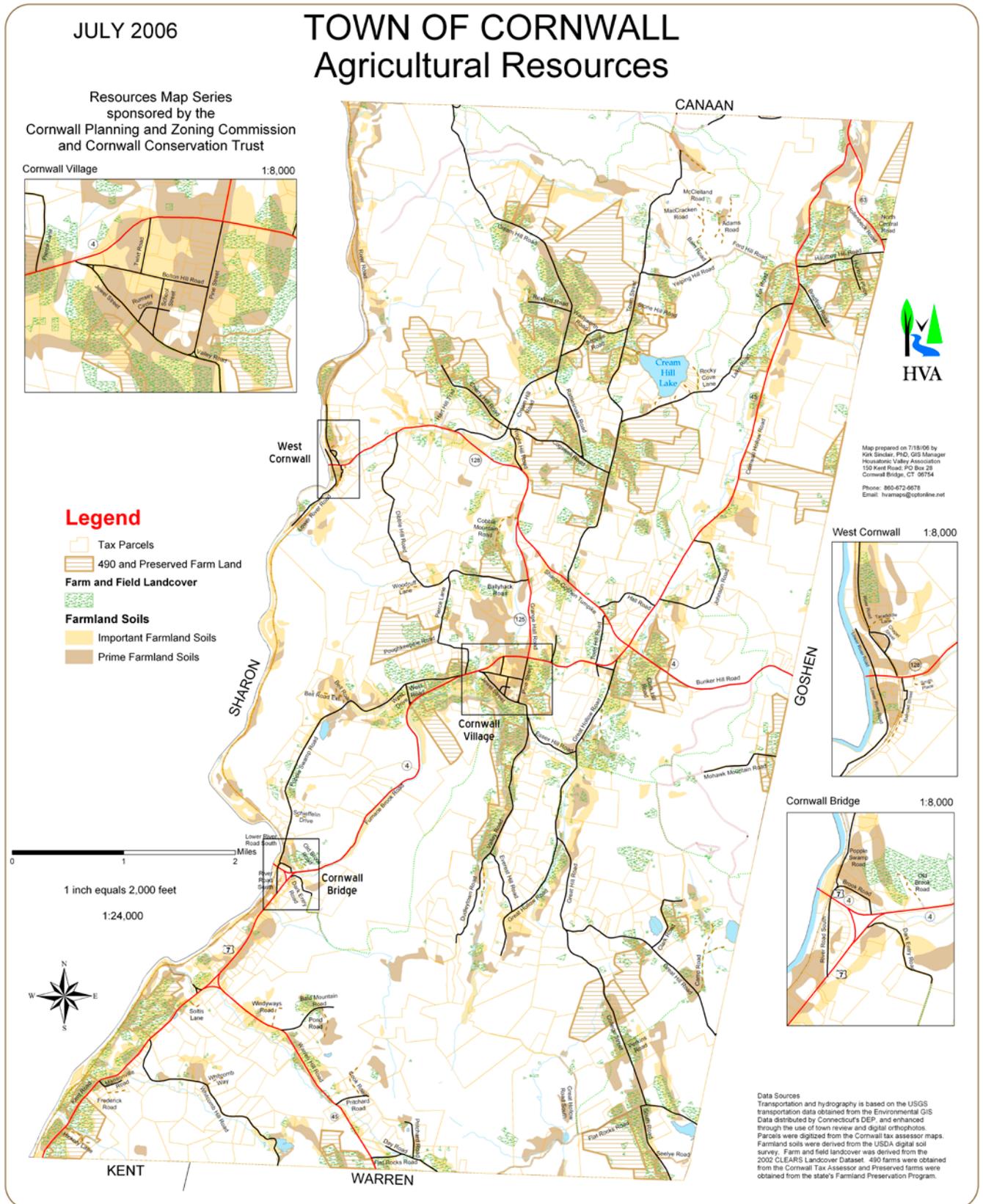
(Who: Cornwall Agricultural Advisory Commission, Cornwall Conservation Trust, Planning and Zoning Commission. When: Ongoing. Priority: High.)

Strategy:

a. Revise the Zoning Regulation to permit sale of produce grown on a farm or a farm “pick-your-own” operation as a use by right subject to Site Plan review rather than a Special Permit.

b. Permit at least one off farmstand sign for a farm stand or “pick-your-own” farm that is not located on a state highway. Define seasonal by requiring that the stand be closed a minimum number of weeks per year and require that most of its sales are from farm products or products made from raw materials from the farm.

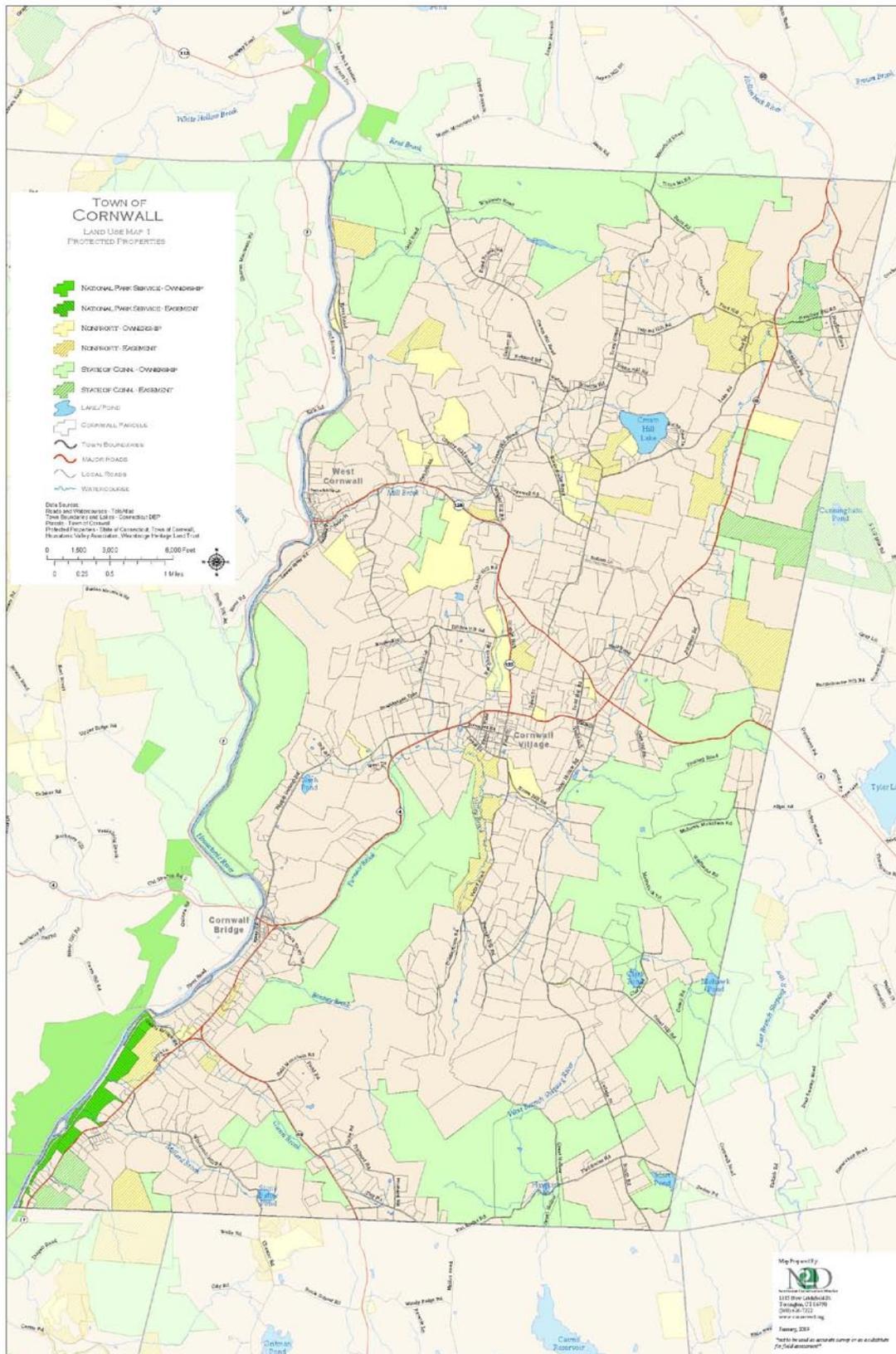
- c. The Planning and Zoning Commission should work with the Agricultural Advisory Commission to evaluate other options such as permitting a farm “store” or accessory uses such as a bed and breakfast, antique or gift shop, garden equipment repair or other compatible non traditional farm related accessory uses where these would be viable and useful in support of a farm operation.
- d. Support local agriculture and the promotion of local farm products through events, school programs and literature that celebrate Cornwall’s farm community and its historic place in Connecticut’s farming history.



e. Publicize the opportunity and advantages of P.A. 490 local tax classification for both farm and forest uses and the State tax exemptions available for farm tools, products and seasonal greenhouse structures.

f. Consider use of State enabling legislation allowing abatement of up to 50% of the property taxes for most farms by vote of town meeting.

For more information on these and other farm-friendly actions see “Planning for Agriculture: A Guide for Connecticut Municipalities” by the American Farmland Trust and Connecticut Conference of Municipalities.



CORNWALL TOWN PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

HOUSING

Introduction

A few years ago, when house prices were going up rapidly, a landowner in Cornwall, someone who had grown up here, was “accosted” about affordable housing. He was challenged by another Cornwall native whose sister could not afford to buy in Cornwall. The long term landowner was accused of making Cornwall unaffordable by keeping his land off the market.

There were truths and untruths in the accusation. It is true that landowners keep their land off the housing market. They want to preserve the landscape around their homes. Also, many feel that land is a very good investment. But, while most will not sell land for actual homes, some landowners have sold their rights to develop homes to the state for as little as \$15,000 for a five acre house lot. Many more probably would if the state had more money to buy them. The untruth in the challenge mentioned earlier is the implication that people do not want affordable housing. Almost everyone, including most landowners in Cornwall, supports more affordable housing. But in spite of wanting more affordable housing, almost no one wants more housing, affordable or not, if it would change the landscape, and especially not if it would change the landscape of their own part of Cornwall.

To try to address this problem and others, the Housing subcommittee developed seven specific affordable housing recommendations. They are described in the first section of this chapter.

The second section addresses the conflict between preservation of the landscape and growth in housing, whether it be affordable housing or not. It is important to recognize that many residents of Cornwall make their living off providing services to homeowners, so in many ways, housing growth is synonymous with job preservation and job growth.

The second section describes the efforts of the Housing subcommittee, the Natural Resources subcommittee and the Planning & Zoning Commission itself to improve Cornwall’s residential zoning regulations so that we can minimize the impact of new homes on the landscape. For reasons that are explained in the second section, we could not find a way to do that which fully addresses the problem. Planning practice offers two major solutions: “Transfer of Development Rights” or TDR’s and “Cluster Zoning”. Both solutions have pros and cons. Richard Pruetz, a planning consultant used in the Housing subcommittee’s work, pointed out that towns like Chesterfield, New Jersey, Red Hook, New York and North Kingston, Rhode Island have created successful programs permitting the “Transfer of Development Rights” that concentrate development rights in new villages or next to old ones. Many towns in Connecticut have varying versions of “Cluster Zoning”. Granby has the reputation of being the most successful.

The second section discussed the advantages and limitations of both “Cluster Zoning” and “Transfer of Development Rights” as ways to stop sprawl. “Sprawl”, for the purposes of Cornwall and its rural areas, may be defined as new homes that substantially change the existing landscape. The concern is that over the long-term, any housing growth, affordable or not, will lead to “sprawl” under Cornwall’s current zoning requirements. The same concerns exist in other towns in Northwest Connecticut



Sedgwick House Photo by: Alec Frost

and in most rural towns across the country. If it were easy to stop sprawl, many towns would have done it. There is no town in Connecticut that has gotten a reputation for having stopped sprawl. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Planning and Zoning Commission revisit the issue of improving the Town's residential zoning every year until a solution is found, while, at the same time, taking some short term measures that not only limit the Town's exposure to sprawl, but also help find future solutions.

Affordable Housing Objective:

To improve existing affordable housing regulations and employ new organizational and financial and regulatory tools to improve the potential to achieve the State mandated goal for local affordable housing units.

Issue:

Cornwall is losing its young adults primarily because there is not a supply of moderate cost housing in the community. The Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department and Emergency Services volunteers rely on young adults to maintain their ranks and if the number of volunteers drops below a critical minimum level, the Town would have to contract for these essential services.

Long time residents who no longer wish to live in a large single family residence often find no option but to leave Cornwall.

The State of Connecticut Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals Procedure Act (AHLUAPA) has set a goal that each town in the state should have a minimum of 10% of its total housing units qualified as "affordable". The qualifications for an affordable housing unit are set forth in this housing law. For communities such as Cornwall, that do not meet the 10% threshold, the law provides a penalty. It allows that any residential developer who makes 30% of his or her homes affordable housing units does not need to meet to the town's zoning regulations.



Kugeman Village Photo by: David Colbert

At present, Cornwall has only the 18 affordable units at Kugeman Village that meet the AHLUAPA requirements. It needs approximately 75. The Cornwall Housing Trust's very successful parcel program does not qualify, primarily because it does not limit incomes once people are in the houses. Cornwall also has 40 accessory apartment units, based on a survey of Cornwall zoning permit records. We estimate about 25 of those are rented. The others are used as guest houses. Based on studies of accessory apartment rentals elsewhere, most of the 25 would probably qualify as affordable in terms of the rental rate. However, in order to meet State affordable qualifications, owners would need to record on their deeds that the units would be kept affordable for a minimum of 10 years. Many would not want to do that, although Trumbull, Connecticut has been able to qualify about 150 accessory apartments in accord with the terms specified under ALUADPA.

Recommended below are seven ways that Cornwall can deal with these issues and over time substantially increase the number of affordable units by taking a more proactive role in cooperation with the private non-profit Cornwall Housing Trust.

Recommendations:

1. **Housing Trust Fund.** Amend the Zoning Regulations to establish a zoning fee to be collected and dedicated to a Town housing trust fund for the purpose of developing and supporting affordable housing in Cornwall. To employ new financial and regulatory tools in order to generate more affordable housing, and to meet State mandated goal for local affordable housing.

Strategy:

The authority to establish such a fee is provided under Section 8-2i of the Connecticut General Statutes. It permits a zoning commission to require a portion of the housing units in a housing development application to be affordable units or, as an alternative, to require a zoning fee that will provide funds dedicated to affordable housing.

Implementation of this recommendation would require the Planning and Zoning Commission to prepare an amendment to the Zoning Regulations, setting forth the proposed fee schedule. At the end of this section is an amendment adopted in New Canaan, Connecticut. It is recommended that the fee be 1% of the building permit construction cost estimate.

This fee would apply to zoning permits for new building construction or additions over a certain minimum amount. Consideration could be given to the fee being applied to zoning permits for the construction of new homes that cost more than a typical middle class home. The fee would not apply to building permit fees associated with interior renovations or any application involving construction of affordable housing.

- 2. Budget line item.** The Town has established an “Affordable Housing” dedicated line item in the Cornwall annual budget. A successful town affordable housing program will require that this budget item be funded with both annual private donations and contributed town funds. Funds collected under recommendation #1 above would be deposited into this budget account.

Strategy:

Maintaining a standard affordable housing line item in the Town budget provides a secure budget category for town contributions, private housing donations and for grant funds received for affordable housing purposes. It allows funds not expended during the year to be carried over to subsequent years without reverting to the General Fund. Even modest funding of this budget line can be of great value. For example it could be used to provide the local matching share required for a State or foundation grant, for seed funding for an affordable housing program or construction project or to secure an option to purchase of a property for affordable housing.

- 3. Local Housing Finance Authority.** Create a Cornwall Housing Finance Authority to be responsible for financing and encouraging affordable housing in Cornwall.

Strategy:

A local housing authority would be authorized to:

- seek grants for affordable housing,
- receive donations, investments, and town funds earmarked for affordable housing,
- provide mortgages, the payments from which would go back into financing additional houses,
- recommend the best use of town funds for affordable housing,
- provide information and services that will encourage formation of additional affordable housing opportunities for Cornwall citizens.
- finance specific kinds of homes for people whom the town might want to attract, for example, finance homes with workshops for artisans and artists, or homes with small 10-20 acre farms for young farmers.

To avoid duplication of efforts, a Cornwall Housing Finance Authority should be set up either as a committee of the Cornwall Housing Corporation, or share board members with it.

- 4. Existing Regulations.** Continue to support existing affordable housing related zoning regulations.

Strategy:

Maintain provisions in the Zoning Regulations that permit by “Special Exception”, an affordable lot of one acre when the housing on it will be developed as affordable by either the Town or by a local non-profit affordable housing. In a recent amendment to the Zoning Regulations, the Planning and Zoning Commission acted on one of the Town Plan affordable housing recommendations. The Commission amended the provision for a town or local non-profit affordable housing plan by permitting affordable housing in the General Business zone. It allows for housing lot line setback requirements that match the setback requirements for other uses in the GB zone.

5. Sale of One Acre Lots From Farms

Many farmers sell lots to provide a temporary infusion of cash in order to keep farming. Under five acre zoning, this can mean giving up significant amounts of their farm land to sit essentially vacant as part of someone else's lot.

Strategy:

In the five acre and three acre zones, on land in a working farm or land which remains suitable for active farm use, the Zoning Regulations should be amended to permit farmers to apply for a Special Exception to sell one acre lots provided:

- The one acre meets the buildable area requirements of the Zoning Regulations which do not permit counting wetlands and steep slopes, and;
- A farm conservation easement is recorded on the land records for the property that prohibits development on the additional 4 acres (in the 5 acre zone) or 2 acres (in the 3 acre zone) adjacent to the lots being sold.

To make sale and purchase agreement more feasible, buyers of the one acre lots should be allowed under the easement, if necessary, to put all or part of their septic systems in the 4 or 2 acres retained for farm use. The farm easement will need to be carefully crafted to protect both the farmer and the home owner. The easement will not be for tax purposes or be tax deductible. It will be authorized by the Planning and Zoning Commission as a part of a Special Exception permit. What constitutes a farm and farm uses will need to be carefully defined.

6. Accessory Apartments. Revise the Zoning Regulations to improve the potential for the creation of additional accessory apartment units.

An accessory apartment is a dwelling unit associated with a single family residence on a residential lot. The Cornwall Zoning Regulations for many years has allowed the creation of these units as a Special Exception.

As noted earlier, town records indicate that there are approximately 40 accessory apartment in Cornwall, some of which were established before zoning.

About 25 of these units serve as guest quarters and are not rented. The rest are rented, mostly at rates that would qualify these units as "affordable". However, none have a binding requirement that the rental will remain "affordable" for the minimum time period required by the State Affordable Housing Law. Therefore, none of Cornwall's accessory apartments count toward the minimum state established requirement that each town have 10% of its total dwelling units in affordable housing.

Strategy:

Accessory apartments are a part of the housing fabric of the Town and with some effort, more of these units can provide for local moderate income and affordable housing needs.

It is recommended Cornwall encourage the creation of more accessory apartments in the affordable and moderate income range by:

- Revising the Zoning Regulations to permit an affordable accessory apartment as a "by right" permit under standardized criteria.
- Encouraging owners of accessory apartments with affordable rental rates to work with the Cornwall Housing Corporation or a local housing committee to formulate a way that affordable rental rates will be maintained for the minimum of 10 years *without locking homeowners into being unable to sell for 10 years.*
- Maintaining a record of accessory apartments and updating the supply of these units, especially when a unit is removed from the affordable category.
- Providing information to land owners on how to construct an accessory apartment and the steps involved in securing approvals under the Building Code, Health Code and Zoning Regulations.
- Encouraging volunteers to serve as accessory apartment advocates who can assist homeowners considering establishing these units on their property.

7. Support the Incentive Housing Zone Study.

Strategy:

The Town is currently undertaking an Incentive Housing Zone study to determine where housing developments that would include at least 20% affordable housing would be appropriate and fit into the existing pattern of development and landscape. This planning study examines areas in town that may have the potential to support community septic systems which would allow more housing units per acre than under a traditional septic system approach.

The concept is to create an overlay zone that would allow smaller minimum lot sizes than are currently allowed “as of right” as long as the development conforms to all regulation requirements (including design standards if applicable) and includes at least 20% affordable housing.

Because it is an overlay zone, it would not change the existing zoning on that land. This is a special kind of zone allowed by state statute that can cover one or more parcels of land. Originally the state proposed providing an “incentive” payment to the Town for adopting such a zone. Under the current economic and budget conditions it appears at least questionable, if not unlikely, that the State will continue to offer this incentive.

When this report is complete, the Planning & Zoning Commission should study and consider the findings and recommendations of the Incentive Housing Zone study group.

8. Condominium development of large older homes. Consideration should be given to amendments to the Zoning Regulations that would permit condominium development of older large homes into separate, individually owned units, either in the villages, or in the rural areas of town, or both.

The following is the New Canaan Zoning Regulation section providing for an “Inclusionary Zoning Fee” which is discussed above under recommendation #1. Housing Trust Fund.

NEW CANAAN ZONING REGULATIONS Adopted June 16, 2007

SECTION 7.6. AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A. Inclusionary Zoning Fee

1. Authority. This Subsection is adopted under the authority of Section 8-2i of the Connecticut General Statutes.
2. Applicability. All applications for a zoning permit for any new building construction or addition (excluding interior renovation) in any zone shall be accompanied by an inclusionary zoning fee of \$10.00 per \$1,000 of construction value, to be paid into a housing trust fund to be used for constructing, rehabilitating or repairing housing affordable to persons and families of low and moderate income.
3. Exemptions. The following applications shall be exempt from this fee:
 - a. Any application submitted on behalf of the United States of America, the State of Connecticut, the Town of New Canaan, the New Canaan Board of Education, the New Canaan Housing Authority, or any of their agencies;
 - b. Any application for any construction in an affordable housing development approved in accordance with the requirements of CGS 8-30g;
 - c. Any application for a dwelling unit designated as affordable housing that complies with the affordability criteria and other requirements of CGS 8-30g in effect on the date of approval.

B. Affordable Housing Developments. For any affordable housing development, the following requirements shall apply:

1. After June 18, 2005, any proposed affordable housing development shall submit a Housing Affordability Plan to the Commission and the development shall thereafter conform to the Housing Affordability Plan approved by the Commission.
2. Any affordable housing development approved prior to June 18, 2005 shall comply with the affordability criteria and other requirements of CGS 8-30g which were in effect on the date the application was applied for and subsequently approved.
3. Unless otherwise provided in the Housing Affordability Plan approved by the Commission,
 - a. construction quality of affordable housing units shall be comparable to market-rate units within the development,
 - b. affordable housing units shall be dispersed throughout the development,
 - c. affordable housing units shall be built on a pro rata basis as construction proceeds,

- d. occupancy of affordable housing units shall be restricted to persons and families eligible under State law, and
- e. the New Canaan Housing Authority shall be designated as the municipal agent monitoring the enforcement of the standards contained in the definition of an affordable housing development

Improving Residential Zoning Objective:

To continually assess and implement new regulatory and other techniques that will retain Cornwall's rural landscape and avoid a residential sprawl pattern of development.

Issue:

Almost everyone wants to preserve the rural landscape, but almost no one wants to preserve it at the cost of having new homes concentrated near their house. The main threat to the rural landscape comes from the basic logic of our planning system. Zoning allocated development rights to landowners in Cornwall at a time when almost no one thought many of those rights to build housing would ever be used. It was also at a time when almost no one considered the impact on the landscape and the environment of the spreading out all over the land of both new houses and all the roads and vehicle trips they require. Today, spreading houses across the rural landscape no longer seems like a good idea, but planning practice provides no politically easy way to change zoning like Cornwall's.

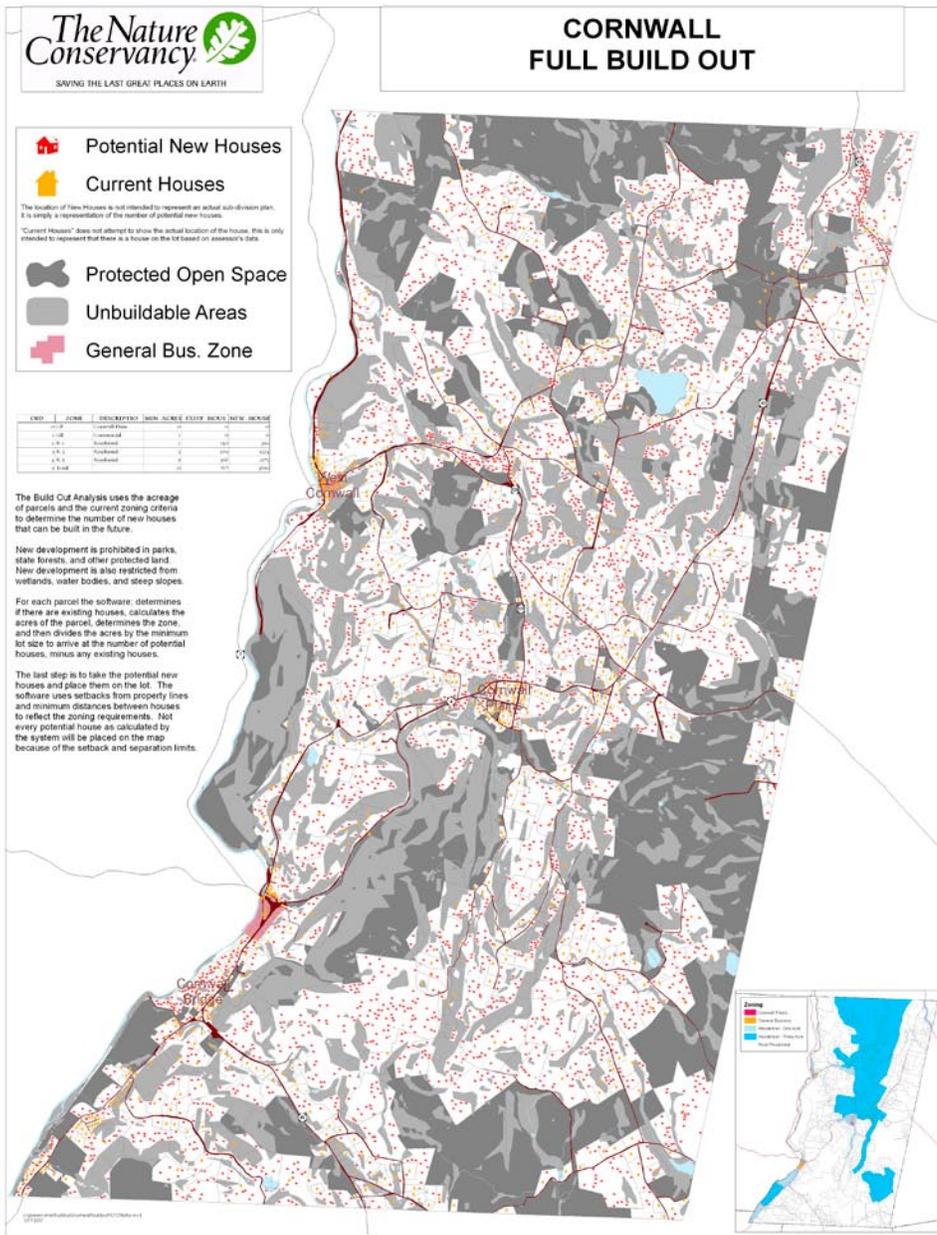
Residential Sprawl. The Town's current zoning is overwhelmingly residential, and is primarily for 5 acre lots, with a few smaller 3 acre areas, and even fewer and smaller 1 acre areas. The "Build-Out" map prepared as part of the Town Plan update shows that current zoning for Cornwall's unprotected residential land theoretically could result in the gradual spread up to 3,800 new homes over all the unprotected land. The "Build Out" map took into account wetlands, steep slopes, and protected land. The Housing Subcommittee for the Town Plan estimated only about 1900 new homes may be built within the foreseeable future. Even if only 1900 houses are added to the roughly 800 we have now, however, Cornwall's landscape will change. With our current zoning, no one can trust that the unprotected land and landscapes around their homes will remain unchanged, or know how much or how soon they will be changed.

Planning practice offers two ways to improve Cornwall's residential zoning in order to reduce the impact of sprawl. One is called "Cluster Zoning." The other is called "Transfer of Development Rights" or "TDRs." Each technique has advantages and disadvantages.

"Cluster Zoning's" advantages are that it is politically easier to put in place and practically, easier to administer. Its disadvantage is that it does not do as good a job of protecting the landscape as "Transfer of Development Rights". A "TDR" program, in contrast, is both politically harder to put in place and practically, harder to administer than "Cluster Zoning". Its advantage is that it does a better job of protecting the landscape. Those advantages and disadvantages will be discussed below, but there are additional obstacles faced by any effort to improve residential zoning like Cornwall's. They are reviewed first because it is all too common for someone to get up in a public meeting and say residential zoning should be changed as if getting consensus on how to change it is as easy and obvious a task as changing the sheets on a bed. One reason why this Plan does not go much further than recommending that the current zoning be reconsidered is the generic obstacles to any change in zoning. The additional obstacles raised by both "Cluster Zoning" and "Transfer of Development Rights" are discussed later.

Generic Obstacles That Make Any Change in Residential Zoning Difficult. Any effort to amend Cornwall's current zoning pattern so growth does not change our unprotected landscapes must consider certain concerns. Because growth in Cornwall, at least by some standards, is slow and scattered, most residents are not urgently concerned until development is proposed or occurs near them. Genuinely urgent concern occurs mostly among the few people who live near the few new homes that change the landscape each year. As a result, urgent concern is dispersed, both over the years, and over different parts of town. That dispersal means only a few people are really urgently concerned with landscape change in any given year and part of town. As a result, opposition to landscape change is dispersed and ineffective while the landscape keeps changing.

Any zoning changes can affect land values. Typically, land values do not change or they change for the better. Nonetheless, the possibility of lower property values makes some land owners very nervous and very outspoken over changes in zoning such as those that would occur under either Cluster Zoning or Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs).



Almost no one wants to accept new homes near them in order to protect open space near someone else. That is what often happens in the case of both Cluster Zoning and TDRs. Also, zoning offers no generally accepted way to fairly compensate those who accept new homes near them in order to preserve land elsewhere.

Land ownership gives many people a highly valued sense of control of their environment. Any change in the zoning of their land is likely to raise strong opposition. Land owners feel instinctively that the zoning changes will restrict the control they have over their land. Many people have the mistaken impression that the Planning and Zoning Commission has considerable discretion when it comes to acting on proposed subdivisions; that the Commission's public hearings will allow them to voice effective opposition on any grounds; and that the Commission will listen to and can act on that opposition. In fact, the Commission has very little discretion at public hearings on subdivisions. If an application meets the Subdivision and Zoning Regulations, no matter how big or ugly the proposed subdivision may be, the Commission must approve the application. A public hearing's purpose is only to give people a way to see that the proposed subdivision is in accordance with existing Zoning and

Subdivision regulations. It will be too late to say that the subdivision isn't what the Town wants.

People are often of two minds about what happens to the land they themselves own. When zoning law was developed about a hundred years ago, promoting growth was a *national* obsession. Making it a little more orderly was the goal of zoning. But the overall goal remained "the highest and best use of the land," and "highest and best use" meant "highest and best *economic* use." Environmental and landscape issues, as we know them today, were hardly considered. When considering the future of the land they own today, many people think in environmental terms. But others often have to think financially. They have to think in terms of highest and best economic use. This division of the way individuals in a community thinks about their land often divides communities. At any given time, personal circumstances require some people to carry the financial value of their land closest to their heart, and at public meetings, they often speak from the heart about protecting that value, as if there was nothing else to discuss. Others are fortunate enough, at least at that moment, so they carry environmental and landscape issues closest to their heart, and at public meetings, they speak about protecting the environment from the heart, as if there was nothing else to discuss. The resulting public heart-to-heart is painful. Often it is so painful that it makes everyone else want to avoid any debate at all, and makes everyone feel that trying to stop sprawl is too painful to be worth pursuing.

In summary, there are many obstacles facing any effort to improve the residential zoning in Cornwall, or any other similar town. Those obstacles are a major reason why so few towns in Connecticut, and other states, have stopped sprawl. In addition to those difficulties, there are the ones raised by Cluster Zoning, and/or Transfer of Development Rights.

The Housing Subcommittee, and the Natural Resources Subcommittee, and then the full Planning and Zoning Commission invested large amounts of time discussing how to improve Cornwall's residential zoning. There is wide spread agreement that the Town, and therefore its zoning, should preserve Cornwall's rural atmosphere. This Plan follows that agreement by concluding that Cornwall's current zoning should not be allowed to gradually destroy the Town's familiar landscapes, as similar zoning has in so many other towns. But the Town Plan Subcommittees and the Commission were unable to come up with a clear recommendation on how to change the Town's zoning, in part because of the issues just discussed, and in part because of time constraints and the many other issues the Town Plan had to address. Other towns have had similar problems stopping sprawl. It is worth noting again that among the large number of small towns, and once small towns, in Connecticut, no town is widely recognized as having a good reputation for protecting its landscapes from residential sprawl.

The Town Plan's recommendation is that the Town needs to reconsider how to change our residential zoning every year until some consensus is reached, and also that the Town should take some short term measures within the next year. The specifics of the short term measures are given below, following a detailed comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of both "Cluster Zoning" and "Transfer of Development Rights". That comparison is very important. It outlines the choices and trade-offs and compromises that will have to be made if the Town wants zoning that protects our environment and rural landscape.

Recommendations:

The debate to change Cornwall's residential zoning should continue. Therefore, the Plan recommends:

1. Annual Planning and Zoning Commission Review Meeting.

Strategy:

- a. The Planning and Zoning Commission should hold at least one meeting a year to review the progress of implementing the Town Plan, and, in particular, to review the changes in the techniques for improving rural residential zoning to provide affordable housing options and community vitality.
- b. Substantial preparation should be made for this meeting which may include consultation with outside experts and expert presentations at the meetings.
- c. The annual Town Plan review meeting should be held one year from the month in which this Town Plan is approved, and the requirement for an annual review in that month each year should be written into the Planning and Zoning Commission bylaws. Participants in the review should include, in addition to members of Planning and Zoning Commission, elected officials and members of the community who represent concerns about energy, overuse of cars, walkability, aging, affordability for young families, the environment, etc.

2. Short Term Measures.

Strategy:

- a. During the next year, and in preparation for the annual review, the Planning and Zoning Commission should revise its existing, optional cluster (called "Planned Conservation Zone") section of the Zoning Regulations. It should delete the requirement for a zone change and consider making the cluster option mandatory. The Planning and Zoning Commission should also develop a proposal for a Transfer of Development Rights program that applies only to a limited area of town; one that almost everyone believes has the highest priority for protection from additional development.

Comparison of Cluster Zoning and Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs)

Cluster Zoning. Cluster zoning is one alternative to our current zoning. Transfer of Development Rights is another. The pros and cons of both techniques are discussed here. Section 8 of the Natural Resources section also discusses Cluster Zoning.

Cluster zoning offers a number of advantages over conventional large lot zoning by siting houses on somewhat smaller lot sizes so that more contiguous and meaningful areas of open space can be protected. The overall density of development on the entire parcel remains the same. In addition to offering better open space protection, cluster zoning also serves to protect wildlife habitat, reduce the amount of impermeable surface created, minimize land disturbance, lower housing costs, and protect water quality. Cluster zoning is also more energy efficient and can promote the creation of neighborhoods.

While cluster zoning, also known as open space or conservation subdivision zoning, offers a number of advantages over conventional development, it also has a number of limitations with regard to controlling sprawl. These are outlined below.

Some may view the future land pattern under cluster zoning as simply “clustered sprawl”. New homes could still be spread throughout unprotected land, but just in tighter clusters of homes. Without careful siting, these clusters may be more visible than conventional development, especially if they are concentrated near roads to protect intact natural areas.

Clustering works best when there is a map of the unprotected land areas the Town wants to protect, and new developments are “clustered” away from that land. However, defining what land to protect, and how to cluster away from it, is difficult, particularly in areas with smaller parcels.

A significant challenge with cluster zoning is that the smaller the parcels of land that come up for subdivision, the more difficult it becomes to cluster. Many people might imagine cluster zoning happening on parcels of 400 acres or more. In contrast, most parcels that come up for development in Cornwall are about 30-50 acres. Due to Cornwall’s predominant 5-acre zoning, wetlands, steep slopes, and other issues, including market preference for large lots, subdivision of 30-50 acre parcels usually results in 2-5 house lots. Clustering of such small subdivisions may not result in the scale of land protection often imagined by proponents of cluster development.

Even under mandatory cluster zoning, it is common in many communities to exempt small subdivisions of up to 5 houses because of the burden imposed on land owners who want to subdivide. This alone could mean exempting most development from clustering in Cornwall because currently most subdivisions are small, and most, but not all, will probably continue to be small.

Landowners with homes next to parcels up for subdivision will almost universally insist that the clustering take place as far from their homes as possible. They will ask, “Why should I accept homes clustered near me while the landscape near others is protected?” Assuming that the Town wants to move away from over-reliance on cars that produce climate changing emissions and require foreign oil, cluster zoning has another problem. It would result in groups of houses that are still so small that any financially viable services, such as small stores, are not possible, and it is still necessary to get in a car to do anything.

A final political advantage is that Cluster Zoning is easier to understand, and is a more fully developed and accepted option than Transfer of Development Rights. It is already in place in many towns in Connecticut and other states.

Transfer of Development Rights. “TDRs” could concentrate new homes around the three existing villages, or in a new village. “TDRs” would preserve the rural atmosphere of most of Cornwall by concentrating landowners’ rights to build houses in new, higher density neighborhoods. Landowners would keep their land undeveloped, and be paid for their development rights using the proceeds from sale of lots in the new neighborhoods. But TDRs are very difficult politically.

The major problem with Transfer of Development Rights is that the landscape around some homes will change dramatically in order to protect the landscape around homes in the Town’s more rural areas. If the development rights “sent” from land protected by a TDR program are located in a “receiving area” that is near an existing village in order to keep the all rural landscape unchanged, that should make it possible for more homeowners to be near shops and services. Unfortunately, it will also change the landscape for a larger number of homeowners, those in the selected village, which will make acceptance of TDR zoning more difficult.

In current zoning practice, there is no way to compensate homeowners in villages for changes in the landscape near them in order to protect the landscape elsewhere. A related issue is the frequent lack of appreciation among home buyers of the benefits of villages, especially villages like Cornwall Plains which are surrounded by protected land with wonderful walks, and villages like the Plains and West Cornwall where children can play with other children without first having to be hauled somewhere in a car.

A second problem of “TDRs” is that transfer of development rights requires a system for matching buyers and sellers of development rights, since in a small town like Cornwall, when someone wants to sell development rights, there may not be a buyer, or vice versa. The solution to that problem in other communities is a TDR bank which can buy and sell and hold development rights. However, a TDR bank, as well as other requirements of a TDR program, would require much more than the usual amount of effort a Town like Cornwall puts into planning and zoning.

In discussions of this issue with consultant Richard Pruetz, Mr. Pruetz pointed out that three towns larger than Cornwall but still small towns, Chesterfield, New Jersey, Red Hook, New York, and North Kingstown, Rhode Island, have “TDR” programs. The Chesterfield program has been very successful, and has become a model for a New Jersey law on “TDRs.” Red Hook’s has also been successful. North Kingstown’s is just starting.

A third problem often raised is that the concentration of new homes in receiving areas under TDRs will require municipal sewer and possibly municipal water. Fortunately, it is possible to reach high densities under existing state regulations for water and septic systems. This has been done in the “Myfields” project in Washington, CT. The Regional Planning Collaborative (which Cornwall is part of) is documenting how high density neighborhoods can be built without municipal sewer and water.

Details of Recommended Short Term Measures

Cluster Zoning.

Within the first year following the approval of the Plan, the Planning and Zoning Commission should amend the existing cluster zone, the Planned Conservation Zone, and consider making it mandatory for large subdivisions.

The Planning and Zoning Commission should also develop proposals for making Cluster Zoning work better for small subdivisions.

Finally, the Planning and Zoning Commission should develop a map that outlines the best places to cluster new homes on large parcels. The map should make clear how future clustering on large parcels can create new open space that works with existing protected land to provide the largest possible intact natural areas. It should also provide a rough outline of undeveloped links between intact natural areas.

These tasks should be done in time for the annual residential zoning review. If possible, the amendment making cluster zoning mandatory for large subdivision should be approved as soon as possible, even before the annual zoning review.

Transfer of Development Rights.

Within the first year following the approval of the Town Plan, the Planning and Zoning Commission should consider developing a proposal for a Transfer of Develop Rights program that may include:

- The goal of protecting a limited area of the Town from development. The area chosen should be one that virtually all residents believe should be preserved
- A provision allowing two landowners to propose a transfer of development rights between them in a manner that supports the letter and spirit of the Town Plan.
- A provision allowing the Planning and Zoning Commission to offer density bonuses when it believes the transfer of development rights will further the goals of the Town Plan.
- A request to the Northwestern Connecticut Council of Governments and the Regional Planning Collaborative, to look at how a regional body could spread the added administrative costs of a Transfer of Development Rights program across several jurisdictions. Other towns in the area face the same residential zoning issues Cornwall does and could benefit from a collaboration to lower the administrative costs of a TDR program.

CORNWALL TOWN PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Introduction

Based on the results of the Cornwall Town Plan Forum held on June 23, 2007, as well as a survey of community organizations in town, the Community and Cultural Resources (CCR) subcommittee conducted the following analysis: (1) a list was made of existing community organizations; (2) representatives of many of these organizations were contacted to ascertain their main challenges and priorities; (3) major issues were identified; and (4) some specific recommendations or general ideas were formulated to address needs.

At the Cornwall Town Plan Forum, several themes were highlighted as concerns among townspeople about the future of Cornwall as it relates to community and cultural resources.

(1): Cornwall residents would like more social interaction opportunities such as the West Cornwall Farmers Market, a community baseball game, or events at the library.

(2): More opportunities are needed for both teens and seniors to keep them engaged with the community.

(3): There is a big need to maintain a healthy (both in numbers and vibrancy) volunteer pool since most organizations in town are dependent on volunteers.

In addition, the CCR Subcommittee identified several specific town needs that should be addressed over the ten year time frame of this Town Plan. Many of these can and should be acted on as soon as possible. For example, to facilitate communication, Cornwall needs its own phone directory that provides not just the traditional land lines but also the cable or mobile numbers not listed in the public phone book.

List of Organizations:

Art at the Dump

Cemetery Associations (11 cemeteries in town; 4 have their own formal associations)

Churches (Chapel of All Saints, St. Bridget's, St. Peters, United Church of Christ)

Church Boards and Committees

Cornwall Association

Cornwall Child Center

Cornwall Chronicle

Cornwall Conservation Trust

Cornwall Energy Task Force

Cornwall Consolidated School Fund
for Excellence

Cornwall Food and Fuel

Cornwall Foundation

Cornwall Library

Cornwall Historical Society

Cornwall Housing Corporation

Cornwall House Tour

Cornwall Village Improvement Society

Cream Hill Lake Association

Democratic Town Committee

FISH

Housatonic Valley Association

Hughes Memorial Library



Cake Walk, Memorial Day Carnival Photo by: Tim Prentice

Motherhouse
Parent Teacher Association (CCS)
Rose Algrant Art Show
Republican Town Committee
The Town Hall Players
West Cornwall Village Improvement Association
Women's Society/Rummage Sale
Yelping Hill Association
Town Commissions and Organizations

Town Commissions and Organizations:

Agricultural Advisory Commission
Board of Education
Board of Finance
Board of Selectmen
Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department (includes Rescue Squad)
Housatonic River Commission
Inland Wetlands Agency
Park and Recreation Commission
Planning and Zoning Commission
Zoning Board of Appeals

All this for a town with approximately 1,400 full-time residents!!

Community and Cultural Resource Objectives: Volunteerism

- To support and sustain the strong system of Cornwall community volunteers essential to the delivery of local services and operation of town government.

Volunteerism

Issue:

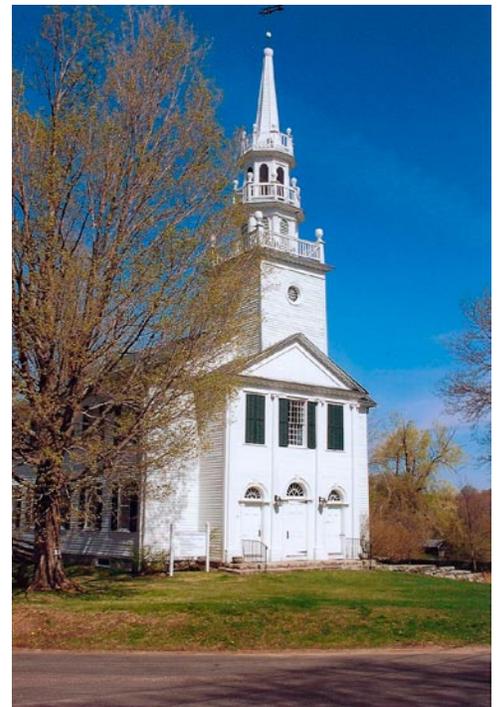
Volunteers are an important part of Cornwall and its sense of community. Firemen and EMTs provide safety and security. Most local non profit organizations and town agencies rely on volunteers as board members. Volunteers provide needed social services and raise the funds needed to sustain their programs.

Unfortunately, too few people in Cornwall are asked to support too many organizations both financially and with their time. It's hard for parents with young children to participate; often newcomers or weekenders don't get asked or are not informed of all the opportunities.

These recommendations are aimed at improving volunteer operations and support of local volunteers.

Recommendations:

1. **Hire a volunteer coordinator.** The Town of Cornwall could hire a volunteer coordinator to work with groups, recruit and train volunteers, create a volunteer pool and coordinate calendars and special events. This person could also be responsible for getting coaches for town teams.
2. **Decrease redundancy.** Look at the list of organizations and see which can work together or be combined. Explore ways to consolidate fund raising efforts, particularly annual appeals.



North Cornwall Church Photo by: Alec Frost

3. **Support inter-organizational sharing.** Establish a central location with secretary, office space, copy machine, mailing lists, etc. Organizations could pay a monthly fee for access, and reduce the need for board members or volunteers to do time-consuming tasks like database management.
4. **Dedicate one night a month for meetings.** Hold the meetings at the school, offer recreational/babysitting service for kids, and have dinner available. This would limit the number of boards people serve on and encourage more parent involvement. Some inter-organizational discourse might also occur.
5. **Encourage wider volunteer base.** Acknowledge the good work of local volunteers. Institute a “volunteer of the month” program with writeups in the Chronicle. Encourage school awards for youth volunteers/community service.

Community and Cultural Resource Objectives: Recreation

- To support improvements that will enhance local recreational facilities and delivery of service.
- To recognize and promote the town’s valuable recreational resource economic base including its trail system and river recreational opportunities.

Recreation

Issues:

Cornwall is blessed with many recreational assets, including the Housatonic River (rafting, fly fishing, kayaking), Cream Hill Lake (swimming, canoeing, skating, cross-country skiing), Mohawk Pond (swimming and boating) and Mohawk Ski Area. Cornwall abounds with natural beauty and wildlife, and offers unlimited opportunities for bird watching, nature study, hiking and hunting.

The Town of Cornwall owns considerable active recreational facilities including; Foote Fields, Hubbard Field, the school field, and the Town Green, and it operates a Park and Recreation program.

Many of Cornwall’s natural and recreational assets are well utilized. But with some additional effort and improvements these assets can be used to build a stronger sense of community and promote the local economy and appreciation of natural resources.

Staffed by volunteer Commissioners and a half time paid coordinator, the Cornwall Park and Recreation Commission oversees numerous valued local programs at the town field, the school gym and sponsors many other recreational events. With greater financial, volunteer and professional support, Park and Recreation programs can reach more residents and substantially increase the opportunity for community social interaction.

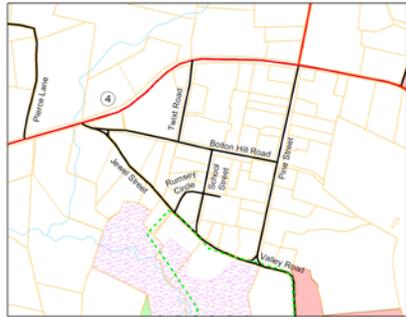
Recommendations:

1. **Enhance the Town Beach.** Deed restrictions on the Town Beach property limit what can be done (size of building, no boat launch, restricted swim area, etc) However, a committee should be established to investigate:
 - a) The possibility of low impact dredging to create a bigger and better swim area;
 - b) Approaching the Cornwall Conservation Trust (adjacent land owners) about providing daytime access for kayaks/canoes for Cornwall Town Beach permit holders.
2. **Park and Recreation Commission.** The tremendous amount of time and energy devoted by Park and Recreation Commission volunteers can be leveraged in a variety of ways to enhance the depth and reach of its multi-faceted programs:
 - a) Include in the Park and Recreation annual program, specific goals and benchmarks for enhancing community outreach and communication of park and recreational services.
 - b) Conduct an annual program evaluation and assessment. Expand existing programs and add new ones that improve the delivery of highly rated and needed recreational services and programs that improve community social interaction.

JULY 2006

TOWN OF CORNWALL Open Space and Recreation Resources

Resources Map Series
sponsored by the
Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission
and Cornwall Conservation Trust
Cornwall Village 1:8,000



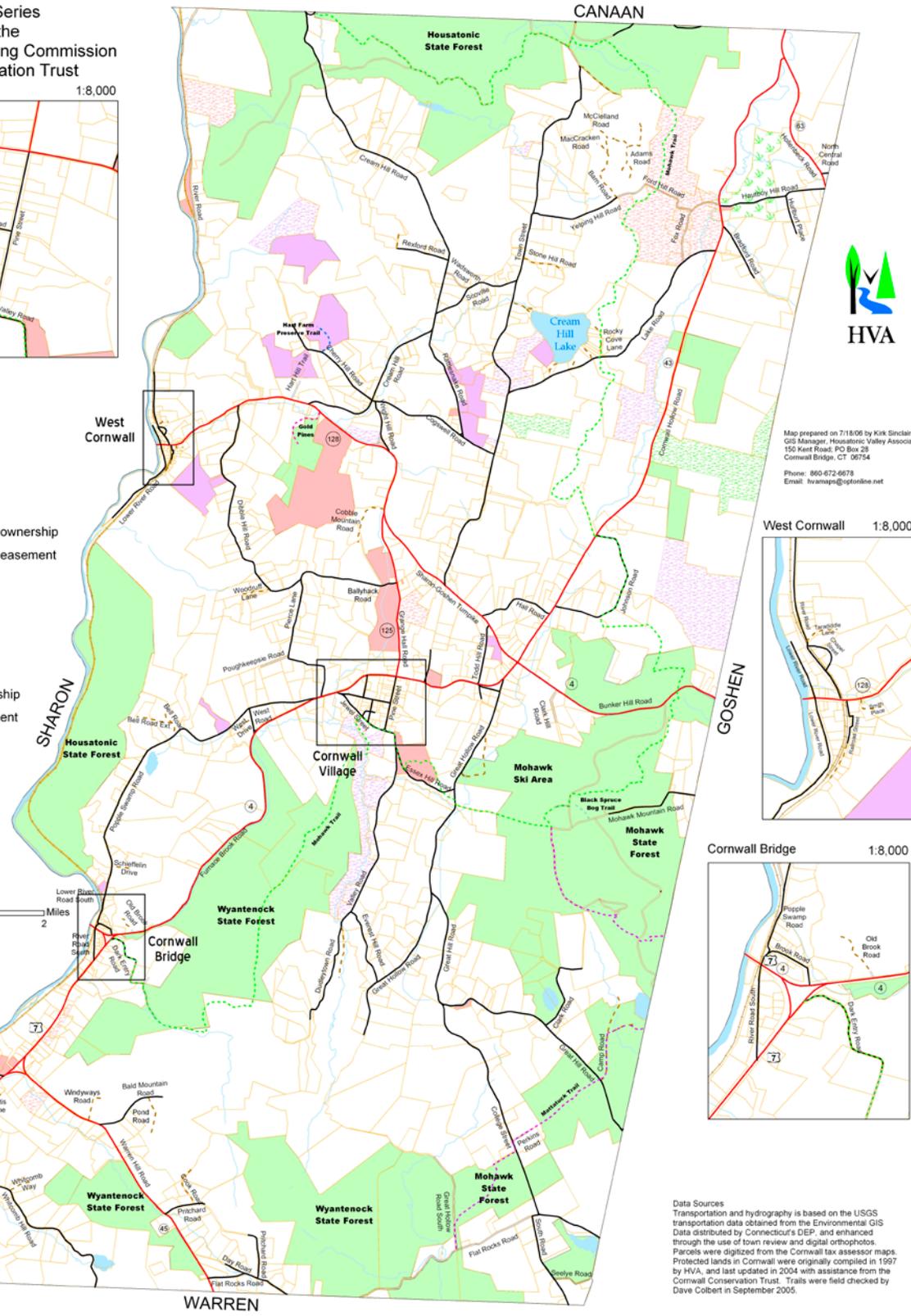
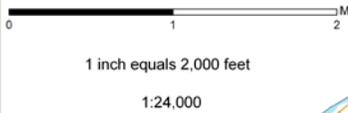
Legend

Protected Land Status

- Cornwall Conservation Trust ownership
- Cornwall Conservation Trust easement
- Other Nonprofit ownership
- Other Nonprofit easement
- State Park or Forest
- State easement
- State agricultural easement
- National Park Service ownership
- National Park Service easement

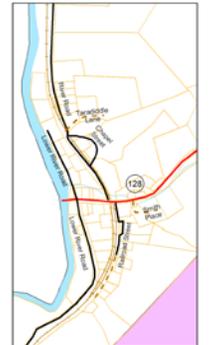
Public Hiking Trails

- Mohawk Trail
- Mattatuck Trail
- Black Spruce Bog Trail
- Golds Pines
- Hart Farm Preserve Trail

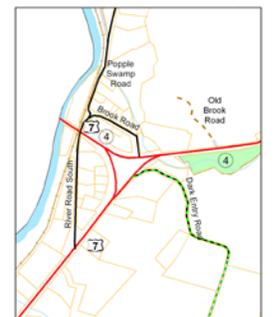


Map prepared on 7/18/06 by Kirk Sinclair
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West Cornwall 1:8,000



Cornwall Bridge 1:8,000



Data Sources
Transportation and hydrography is based on the USGS
transportation data obtained from the Environmental GIS
Data distributed by Connecticut's DEP, and enhanced
through the use of town review and digital orthophotos.
Parcels were digitized from the Cornwall tax assessor maps.
Protected lands in Cornwall were originally compiled in 1997
by HVA, and last updated in 2004 with assistance from the
Cornwall Conservation Trust. Trails were field checked by
Dave Colbert in September 2005.

- c) Revise the Park and Recreational coordinator job description, annual program and budget to stress communication and other improvements based on evaluation.
- d) Design a scheduling program and other measures that will enhance the availability and use of the community field and gym to a broad range of groups and uses.
- e) Establish an annual field maintenance program and budget.
- f) Refurbish the Park and Recreation Website to include the annual program and budget, recruitment of Park and Recreation volunteers, posting of policies, posting and updating of game schedules including coaches, and deadlines for sign-up. Use the website to promote and encourage participation and attendance at programs and special events.
- g) Include notices and promotion of non-Park and Recreation programs and events of community interest such as biking group rides, and ultimate Frisbee games so as to generate new ideas for community recreation (hiking groups, tennis tournaments, etc).
- h) Investigate the possibility of a skating rink.

3. **Promote recreational areas and public hiking opportunities.** Currently public trails (in Cornwall and just across the river in Sharon) include: Appalachian Trail, Mohawk State Forest Trails, and the Mohawk Trail (or Blue Trail) as it winds through many parts of town, Gold Road, Wickwire Road, Gold’s Pine, Hart Farm Preserve, Rattlesnake Road Preserve, Day Preserve, West Cornwall/Trinity Conference Center trail, Bread Loaf Mountain, and Pine Knob Loop. It is recommended these resources be improved and promoted:
- a) Expand upon the existing trail map to include distances/time estimates, trail conditions and difficulty.
 - b) Create a brochure that includes all recreational activities in Cornwall. The brochure (“*Cornwall – Enjoy!*”) should also promote economic activity by listing and describing inns, restaurants, shops, historic and other relevant features of the town.
 - c) Consider development of an inter-Cornwall trail system that links as many trails as possible.
 - d) Develop a trail between West Cornwall and Cornwall Bridge along the east side of the Housatonic River. Coordinate with intertown and regional trail planning by other organizations such as the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area. (Special committees should be established to address these recommendations.)
4. **Establish bicycle lanes.** Encourage biking connections between the three Cornwall village centers. Request the Connecticut Department of Transportation to designate the portions of the state highways (Route 4, 125 and 128) on the state map of recommended biking trails connecting Cornwall Bridge, Cornwall Village and West Cornwall.

Community and Cultural Resource Objectives: Social Services

- To conduct regular review and need-based assessment of Cornwall’s population.
- To support adjustments and enhancements to service programs based on need.

Social Services

Issues:

A tight economy and health care costs are creating financial difficulties for increasing numbers of individuals and families. This year’s Town Report from Cornwall’s Social Service Office noted “a dramatic increase in requests for assistance” in everything from heating fuel, groceries, prescription assistance, and intervention help to prevent electrical service shut-off and eviction. Fuel assistance has increased 250% in five years. The Cornwall Food Pantry has increased its distribution of food and has recently moved to the United Church of Christ. A volunteer has stepped in to take over shelving and organizing the pantry goods so that it is now possible for local gardeners and farmers to donate some fresh food.

There are many concerns for Cornwall’s elderly population. A special focus is on housing needs (availability and cost issues) and the need for better access to elderly services and support programs. Many older people in the community would prefer staying in their homes but worry about the cost of up-keep and the need for more social interaction. Cornwall Social Services and the Agency for the Aging have one director who is responsible for food, fuel and medical services for those in need and the elderly as well as all the paperwork for Medicare prescription drug programs. While demand for these services is increasing, this Agency is stretched very thin. Future elderly housing planned for Cornwall Bridge may

significantly add to the number of elderly needing assistance. The resources drawn on for help include different services and funds from a number of church, non-profit, town, regional and government organizations, each with different requirements. Office hours remain 9-4 on Fridays and by appointment.

Recommendations:

1. **Regular survey and assessment.** Conduct a new community-wide survey (the last one was approximately five years ago) evaluating programs and asking about specific needs. Include a list of programs provided.
2. **Support need-based assessment improvements.** Evaluate hours and funding of the Cornwall Social Services and Agency for the Aging, and determine whether the position needs to be ramped up and hours increased.

Community and Cultural Resource Objectives: Fire and Emergency Services Volunteers

- To undertake programs and support incentives needed to sustain an adequate emergency services volunteer corps.
- To support recruitment, educational and training programs that enhance delivery of emergency services.

Fire and Emergency Service Volunteers

Issue:

The Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department is an invaluable town asset. Unlike some other small towns, at present Cornwall has enough volunteers serving on the rescue squad and as firefighters. This is largely due to the deep commitment Cornwall residents feel toward their town. Also important is the very successful Junior Fire Department program which has produced several new fire fighters and EMS volunteers as they turn 18. Keeping this strong pool of volunteers and attracting new members is an ongoing high priority.

Recommendations:

1. **Improve opportunities for moderate income families.** In order to ensure that volunteers exist for the Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department and EMS, the town needs to be attractive to moderate income full time resident families.
2. **Emergency release of Fire/EMS Volunteers.** Encourage local employers to release Cornwall Fire and EMS volunteers to respond to emergency calls.
3. **Support and enhance fire/EMS volunteer incentive programs.** Review incentive programs (such as the scholarship fund) and improve as needed to retain volunteers.
4. **Consider offering fire/EMS volunteer health insurance.** Investigate a health insurance pool for members which would be very helpful to those who are self-employed.
5. **Support fire/EMS training programs.** Keep adequate town funds available for mandatory training and certification, as well as for equipment.
6. **Fitness center.** Consider the development of a fitness center at one of the firehouses for use by members (for free) and townspeople (for a fee). This would be a nice benefit for members and could become a local place where people could meet, stay healthy, and generate a bit of income for the fire department.

Community and Cultural Resource Objectives: Communications and Socialization

- To continue and improve in-town communication and opportunities for resident education on Cornwall issues.
- To improve opportunities for residents' social and educational gatherings and interaction.

Communication and Socialization

Issue:

Local socialization and discourse is an essential element of a rural community and promotes good government. Currently, several different locations serve to host different community events such as the Cornwall Consolidated School, The Cornwall Library, the Town Hall, and the United Church of Christ. These facilities generously share their space as their schedules permit but have primary uses of their own.

The Cornwall Chronicle and the Cornwall website are invaluable tools of local communication and education and can be used to promote attendance at local community and church events.

More events such as “Art at the Dump” which is a unique Cornwall experience are needed. Opportunities to gather at community events are especially valuable for elderly and young residents.

There are many projects and programs that can help improve communication and bind community ties. For example, Cornwall’s many local cemeteries are an invaluable Cornwall historical resource that could become the basis for a “Cornwall Roots” story.

Recommendations:

1. **Local phone directory.** The local phone company directory no longer includes all Cornwall residents or businesses and those that rely on cell phones. Develop a “Cornwall” local phone directory which lists 672 numbers as well as the others (by choice of resident: land line or mobile or both), and includes all local businesses and organizations and town offices.
2. **Explore other locations for use as a dedicated community center.**
3. **Support for the Cornwall Chronicle and Cornwall town website.** Continue to support the Cornwall Chronicle and improve the elements of the Cornwall website announcing and promoting local events and opportunities for socialization and discourse.

Community and Cultural Resource Objectives: Cornwall Cemeteries Historical Record.

- To complete and maintain an updated historic record of all persons buried in Cornwall’s eleven cemeteries.

Cemeteries

Issue:

There are eleven cemeteries in Cornwall, four of which have their own associations. The names of people buried in these cemeteries have not been updated since 1934 and could provide both a valuable historic record and help residents old and new to better appreciate Cornwall’s history. Completing this historical record is important to the community and would allow family members and friends to find a loved one in a timely fashion.

Recommendation:

Create a directory. Perhaps in collaboration with the Cornwall Historical Society, a directory (hard copy and disc) needs to be



Route 4 Cemetery Photo by: Lazlo Gyorsok

designed and completed with all the names, locations, and dates of those buried in all 11 cemeteries in Cornwall.

There is data available prior to 1934 and updates can be obtained using current town records, the VFW, and the churches. Tie all data together with map references, and make information available to churches, schools, the VFW, and the Historical Society. Once the disc is complete, include updates every year or so.

This project might be funded by grant or town money, private donations, or with help from the Cemetery Associations. Costs include purchase of appropriate software, map copying, labor for input (use volunteers perhaps), and discs.

Community and Cultural Resource Objectives: Schools and educational facilities

- Continue support for Cornwall Consolidated School's programs and facility.
- Continue use of Cornwall Consolidated School as a community center.
- Continue use of Cornwall Child Center for pre-K education if State mandates a public Pre-K program.
- Continue support for the Cornwall Library

Cornwall Consolidated School

Issue:

The Cornwall Consolidated School provides both local control over the quality of education for our children and an important community center. The State of Connecticut mandates educational programs while cutting funding. The town has shown strong support for educational services and the maintenance of the facility. The enrollment numbers are currently falling but history indicates student levels will rise again.

Recommendation:

1. **Continue strong town support for the Cornwall Consolidated School.** Keep the use of the building open to the entire community as much as possible. Facilitate the use of the gym area through Park and Recreation programs and a clear sign up and scheduling policy.

Cornwall Child Center

Issue:

The Cornwall Child Center is an important community resource that provides daycare and a nursery school for children ages two to six. Within the next ten years, the State of Connecticut might impose mandatory Pre-Kindergarten classes at public elementary schools. If this happens, the Cornwall Child Center would face a tremendous loss of clientele and therefore might not be viable.

Recommendation:

1. **First Option – Use the Cornwall Child Center for mandated Pre-Kindergarten.** If and when the state mandates a Pre-kindergarten program, first consider the Child Center as a location. The Center is across the street from the local elementary school and is already positioned to serve this age group in an appropriate and professional manner.

Cornwall Library

Issue:

Many groups and organizations use the Cornwall Library as a place for meetings, fund raisers, educational programs and exercise programs. Its staff, resources, and computers provide key services for the entire community during the week, weekends and after hours.

Recommendation:

1. **Continue support for the Cornwall Library.** The town should continue to work closely with and support the Cornwall Library.

Community and Cultural Resource Objectives: Roads

- To eliminate responsibility for all town owned road rights-of-way no longer used or maintained for vehicle traffic.
- To provide safe access for emergency vehicles on residential driveways.
- To keep traffic in village centers to posted speeds and to improve traffic flow, parking and safety of pedestrian circulation in village centers.

Roads

Issues:

Our town roads are facing safety problems with increased traffic and speed. Every town center—Cornwall Bridge, West Cornwall, and Cornwall Village—would like to slow traffic as it passes through.

A major issue and concern are the town’s “abandoned” roads. An “abandoned road”, as defined in the Connecticut General Statutes, is a road that a town no longer maintains but still retains ownership of the road right-of-way. There are a number of abandoned road rights-of-way in Cornwall. Most were abandoned because they were not needed; were laid out over steep, rocky or wet terrain and were excessively costly to maintain or improve. Owners of land along an abandoned road have the right to access over the right of way to their property.

In other towns, abandoned road rights-of-ways have become a major liability. Developers proposing a subdivision of land on an abandoned road request that the town build a new road and upgrade the right-of-way to provide access to proposed subdivision lots. Because the town still owns the abandoned road right-of-way, courts have ruled it the town’s responsibility to provide a safe and suitable access to the proposed subdivision lots. The town has the right to assess adjoining land owners for the expense of upgrading a road but in most cases it will cost the town, often dearly, to settle such a claim. Normally of course, a developer proposing a new road to access interior land must pay for the construction of a new subdivision road.

Under the somewhat confusing terms adopted by the Connecticut legislature and as set forth in Connecticut General Statutes, a town is permanently and fully relieved of the responsibility for “abandoned” roads by adopting an ordinance declaring these roads “discontinued”. Once discontinued, the land in the road right-of-way is partitioned to owners of the adjoining road frontage and land, and road is no longer the town’s responsibility.

Recommendations:

1. **“Discontinue” existing “abandoned” road rights-of-way.** All roads not maintained by the town or state need to be officially discontinued. The following provision of the Connecticut General Statutes establishes the requirements for discontinuance of a town road (or highway).

“Sec. 13a-49. Discontinuance of highways or private ways. The selectmen of any town may, subject to approval by a majority vote at any regular or special town meeting, by a writing signed by them, discontinue any highway or private way, or land dedicated as such, in its entirety, or may discontinue any portion thereof or any property right of the town or public therein, except when laid out by a court or the General Assembly, and except where such highway is within a city, or within a borough having control of highways within its limits.”

The town should complete the research of the town records to determine each road and road segment the town continues to own but not maintain. Some Cornwall roads have been formally discontinued by action of town meeting. But there remain a number of roads abandoned either by action of town meeting or in effect by long-term neglect. These remained owned by and the responsibility of the town.

Collectively, Cornwall's town-owned abandoned roads represent a major potential liability to the town. This justifies the time and expense of completing the necessary research and formally discontinuing all abandoned road rights-of-way.

The town has a list of roads it maintains (snow-plowing, grading, paving and repaving, etc.). This list and an accompanying map provide clear documentation of the existing maintained town roads. In fact, the State of Connecticut provides funds to Cornwall (and other towns) for road maintenance purposes based upon this list and map of town maintained roads.

If it becomes clear that the work to complete research of the existing abandoned roads will require a prolonged effort, it is recommended the town take a more direct approach. The town can propose a town ordinance that declares that all road rights-of-way not on the town maintained road list and map are to be discontinued. The Town of Kent discontinued its unused road rights-of-way using this procedure in 1982.

2. **Driveway and emergency access.** Existing subdivision and zoning regulations and the town driveway curb cut ordinance require that driveways be designed and constructed for safe access. However, these regulations are not specific in requiring safe access for fire engines and large emergency vehicles. The Planning and Zoning Commission should consider amending the zoning and subdivision regulation to include a provision that long driveways shall require "pull-offs" to permit emergency vehicles to pass and to permit turning around at the driveway end. The PZC should refer proposed driveways with a length of over 200' or steep grade driveways to the Volunteer Fire Department for review and comment.
3. **Traffic control in village centers.** For the village centers, action plans need to be developed to slow traffic. Painted crosswalks are needed on the main road connecting businesses and services or recreational opportunities from one side to the other.

In West Cornwall, a crosswalk should be created from below the post office to Railroad Street/Farmers Market; and in Cornwall Village from the library to the tennis court/playground area, and perhaps from St Peters Church to the Congregational Church. In Cornwall Village, traffic calming measures are needed to slow traffic on all roads in town. A speed bump on Pine Street and another on Jewell Street would help immensely.

In Cornwall Bridge, two ideas emerged about traffic and pedestrian issues. One solution might be to have the traffic flow around the triangle in a one-way manner based on a rotary idea.

Another approach would be to create a designated off road parking area for all the shops on the west side of Route 7 similar to Route 7 through the center of Sheffield, Mass. In Cornwall Bridge, an island could separate Route 7 from the parking area and one cut would lead cars into it. This would make a safer walking zone and allow through traffic to move past as it does now. Adding planters and street lights would enhance the overall ambience. The hardware store could remain with its own entrance, but a sidewalk connecting the shops with the hardware store area would be put in near Housatonic River Outfitters. This sidewalk would lead one to the crosswalk going to Baird's.

JULY 2006

TOWN OF CORNWALL Base Map

Resources Map Series
sponsored by the
Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission
and Cornwall Conservation Trust

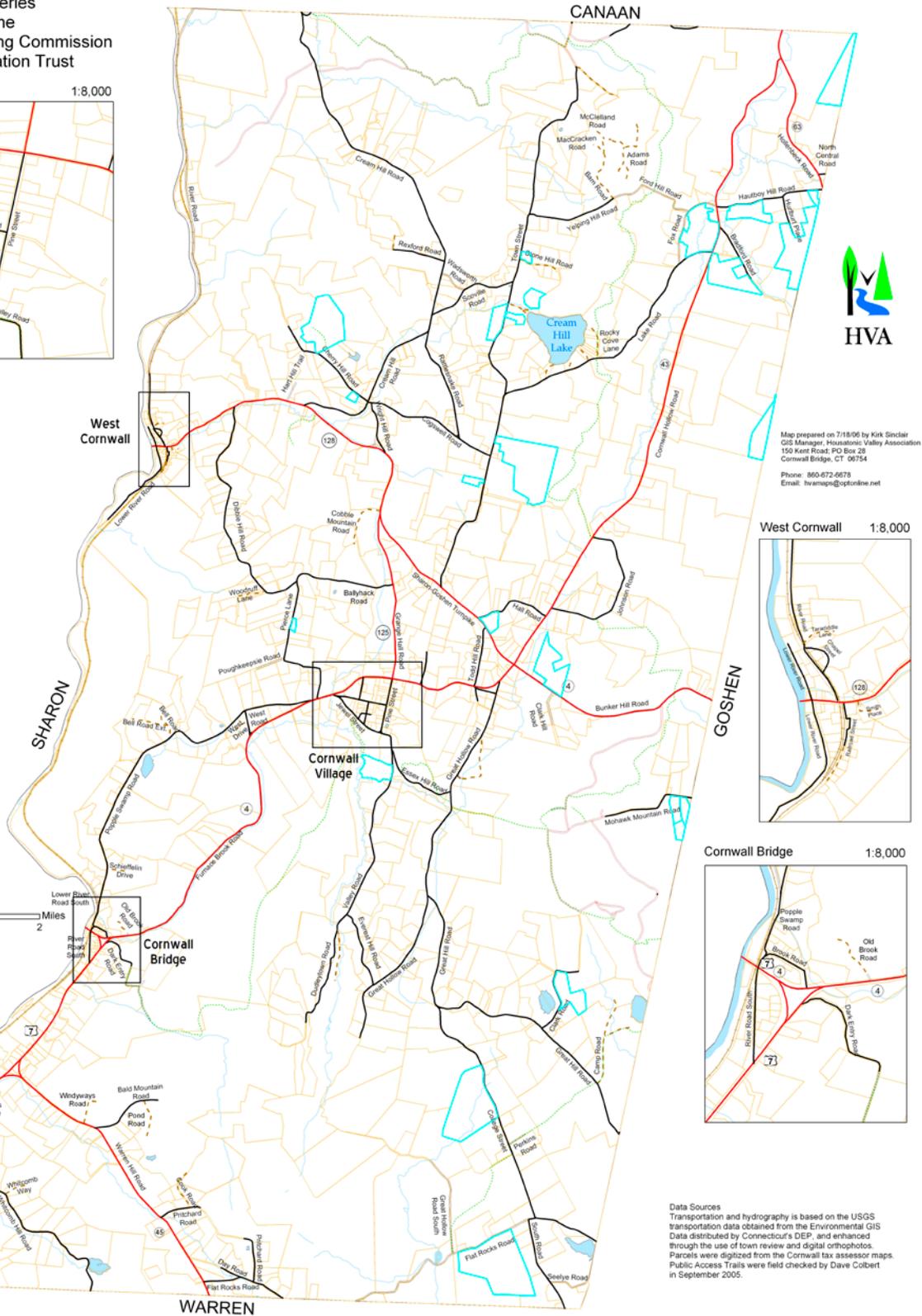
Cornwall Village 1:8,000



Legend

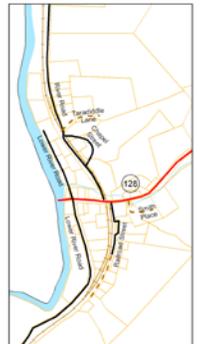
- State Highway
- State Forest Road
- Paved Town Road
- Unpaved Town Road
- Private Road
- Railroad
- Public Access Trails
- Tax Parcels

0 1 2 Miles
1 inch equals 2,000 feet
1:24,000

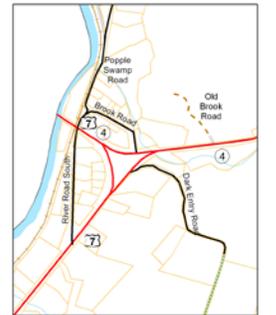


Map prepared on 7/18/06 by Kirk Sinclair
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West Cornwall 1:8,000



Cornwall Bridge 1:8,000

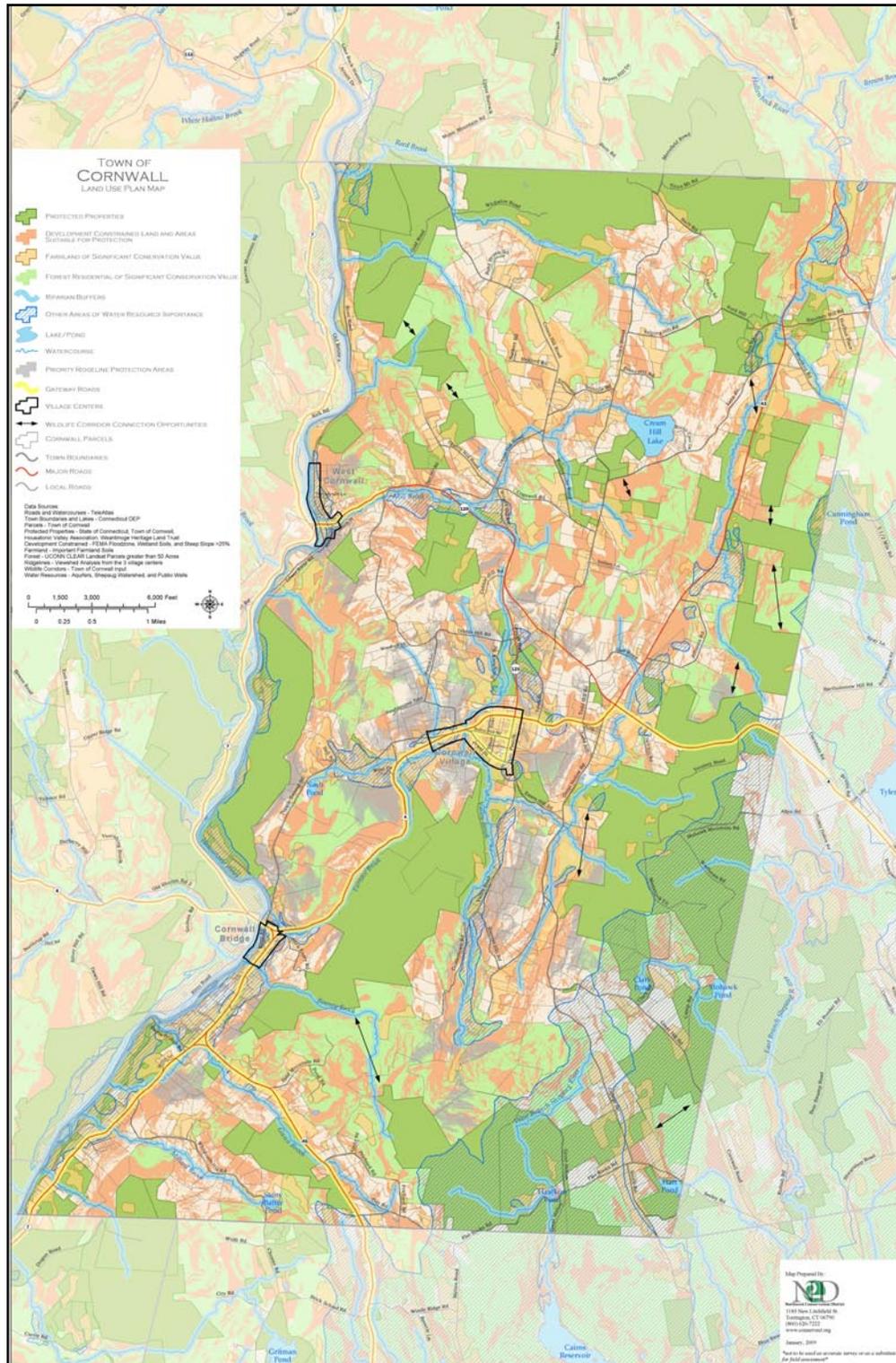


Data Sources
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transportation data obtained from the Environmental GIS
Data distributed by Connecticut's DEP, and enhanced
through the use of town review and digital orthophotos.
Parcels were digitized from the Cornwall tax assessor maps.
Public Access Trails were field checked by Dave Cobert
in September 2005.

LAND USE PLAN MAP

Extensive mapped information was completed as part of the preparation of the Town Plan. It includes maps prepared for the Commission by the Northwest Conservation District and the Housatonic Valley Association. The HVA maps of natural resource information are included in the Kings Mark report.

The Land Use Plan Map is displayed on a base map with town and state roads and property parcels. It identifies the town's village centers, existing protected lands, areas with significant development constraints and areas suitable for protection. Farmland and forest areas of significant conservation value are depicted along with important riparian buffer areas, gateway roads, priority areas for ridgeline protection and general locations for connections for wildlife corridors.

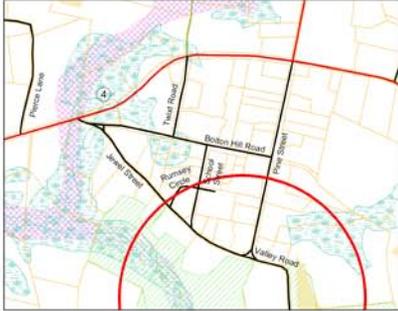


JULY 2006

TOWN OF CORNWALL Development Constraints

Resources Map Series
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Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission
and Cornwall Conservation Trust

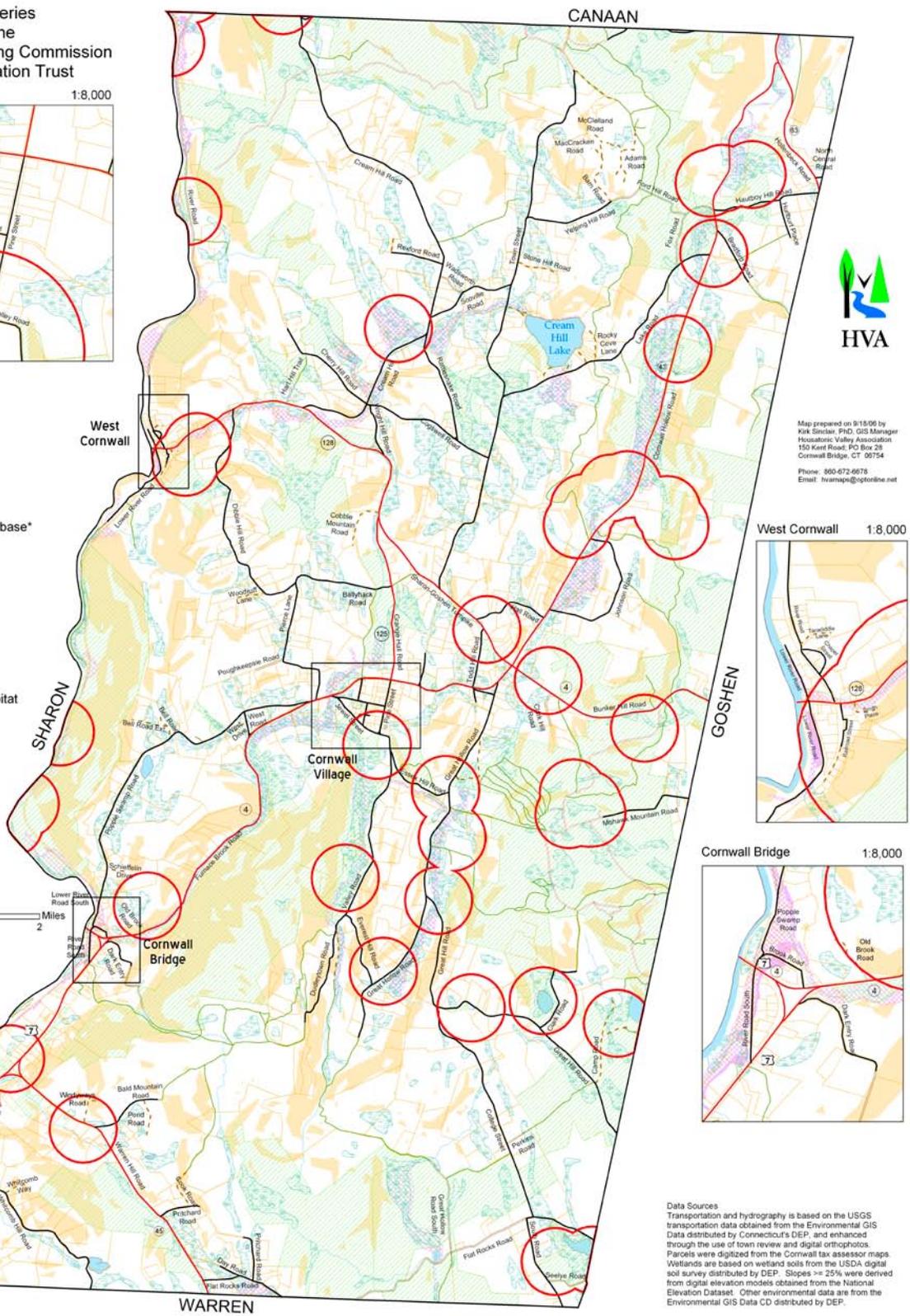
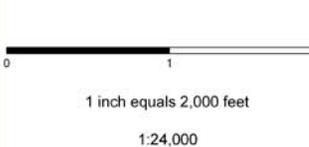
Cornwall Village 1:8,000



Legend

- DEP Natural Diversity Database*
- Slopes >= 25%
- Wetlands
- Protected Lands
- FEMA Flood Zones**
- 100 Year
- 500 Year

*Rare and endangered critical habitat

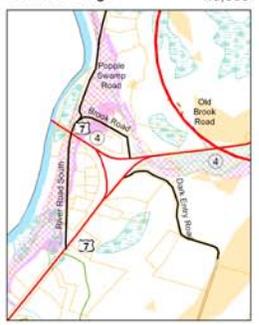


Map prepared on 9/18/06 by
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West Cornwall 1:8,000



Cornwall Bridge 1:8,000



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Data distributed by Connecticut's DEP, and enhanced
through the use of town review and digital orthophotos.
Parcels were digitized from the Cornwall tax assessor maps.
Wetlands are based on wetland soils from the USDA digital
soil survey distributed by DEP. Slopes >= 25% were derived
from digital elevation models obtained from the National
Elevation Dataset. Other environmental data are from the
Environmental GIS Data CD distributed by DEP.

CORNWALL PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Statement of Consistency with the State Plan of Conservation and Development and

Northwestern Connecticut Council of Governments (NWCCOG) Plan of Conservation and Development 2009

The Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut, 2005-2010 (C&D Plan) is comprised of two separate, yet equally important, components – the Plan text and the Location Guide Map. Both components include policies that guide the planning and decision-making processes of state government relative to: (1) addressing human resource needs and development; (2) balancing economic growth with environmental protection and resource conservation concerns; and (3) coordinating the functional planning activities of state agencies to accomplish long-term effectiveness and economies in the expenditure of public funds.

The policies contained in the State C&D Plan text provide the context and direction for state agencies to implement their plans and actions in a manner consistent with the following six Growth Management Principles (GMPs):

- 1) Redevelop and Revitalize Regional Centers and Areas with Existing or Currently Planned Physical Infrastructure
- 2) Expand Housing Opportunities and Design Choices to Accommodate a Variety of Household Types and Needs
- 3) Concentrate Development Around Transportation Nodes and Along Major Transportation Corridors to Support the Viability of Transportation Options
- 4) Conserve and Restore the Natural Environment, Cultural and Historical Resources, and Traditional Rural Lands
- 5) Protect and Ensure the Integrity of Environmental Assets Critical to Public Health and Safety
- 6) Promote Integrated Planning Across all Levels of Government to Address Issues on a Statewide, Regional and Local Basis

The NWCCOG Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (2009) provides extensive information on the nine town northwest Connecticut planning region and recommendations for the future conservation and development of the region.

The Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed both of these plans as part of its preparation of the Town Plan. The Commission finds that the proposed Town Plan is consistent with the State Plan policies and Location Guide Map and the recommendations of the NWCCOG Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (2009). As required by the Connecticut General Statutes, the Planning and Zoning Commission has determined that there are no inconsistencies between the proposed Town Plan and the above Growth Management Principles in the State Plan.

CORNWALL TOWN PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

The following reports provided vital background information and analysis and suggestions for the preparation of the Town Plan and its recommendations. The Planning and Zoning Commission, and its Town Plan subcommittees are most grateful to the citizens of Cornwall who participated in town plan forums, resident David Grossman for his insightful “Cornwall in the Zeros Decade” report and the Kings Mark Environmental Review Team for its report assessing Cornwall’s natural resources.

1. **“Cornwall in the Zeros Decade”** Background Information and Analysis of Cornwall’s Population, Incomes, Economic Base, Property Values, Budgets and Taxes by David A. Grossman
2. **“Town of Cornwall Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment”** by the Kings Mark Environmental Review Team.
3. Report of the Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission on the **Results of the June 23, 2007 Town Forum** in preparation for the update of the Cornwall Town Plan of Conservation and Development.

CORNWALL ***IN THE ZEROES DECADE***

MAY 20, 2006

By
David A. Grossman

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - CORNWALL IN THE ZEROES DECADE

1. POPULATION

Census data shows that Cornwall barely grew from 1990 to 2000, going from 1,414 to 1,434, thus gaining only 20 residents. But the census counts only the resident population. I estimate that our total population (including weekenders) grew to about 2,000.

In the same period, the number of Cornwall children (under 5) declined by nearly a quarter, presaging declining enrollment at CCS. More worrisome, the number of our young working age people (20-44) shrank by nearly a fifth, a drop that was probably triggered by rising housing costs and declining job opportunities.

2. INCOMES

Taking inflation into account, the income of Cornwall's median household rose by 9% in the decade between censuses, less than 1% a year. Our median household income is slightly below that of the state as a whole. *Median* means that half of all households have higher incomes, while half have lower incomes.

Per capita (or *mean*) income here is very high relative to the rest of the state. This reflects the presence of many high income people who live in Cornwall.

Our town also has a substantial number of low income households. Nearly one household in five (114 in all) reported receiving less than \$25,000 in 1999. At that income level, families experience severe economic hardship due to today's high costs.

3. ECONOMIC BASE

The diverse activities of Cornwall's labor force reflect the diversity in the local economy. Most of the 800 people in our labor force (over 98%) were employed in 2000.

To cite a few local job categories: 88 people (11% of our labor force), were employed in the "arts" in the year 2000. Only 13 people were listed as occupied in farming.

4. PROPERTY VALUES

Starting in 1990, house prices in Cornwall dropped as the state economy suffered. Then, in the later years of the 90's, prices rose and continued to do so into the early 2000's. By 2006, the *median* Cornwall house had a market value on the order of \$400,000

Higher house prices are good for sellers, but create difficult problems for would-be buyers. People who want to move here and whom our economy needs – teachers, nurses, and other public sector workers – find it nearly impossible to find affordable houses.

The problem is even more serious for Cornwall's lower and moderate income residents. For them, the cost of maintaining and operating their existing houses -- fuel, lighting, property taxes, etc. – is an ever-present and rising burden.

5. THE BUDGET AND TAXES

Cornwall's budget has grown slowly -- on an after-inflation basis, a bit less than 3% a year. Most of the growth has been in the Board of Education's share of the budget as it has expanded from 65% of the total budget to 71% over the last ten years.

Cornwall's budget is almost totally dependent on property taxes. We get little State aid because our high per capita incomes show up in State aid formulas and make us look wealthier than we really are.

Even so, our property taxes are still low in comparison to those in most parts of the State. Most residents here pay less than 2% of their incomes in town taxes. However, lower income Cornwallians must pay up to 15% of their incomes in property taxes.

6. PROJECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Cornwall's resident population will remain at about the same level or even shrink slightly by 2010, the date of the next census. But the number of weekenders is likely to keep growing. Most new housing built here costs too much for residents to afford.

Cornwall's economy will remain diverse, but home-based work – whether artistic production or internet-enabled activity – seems certain to grow. Additional weekender-occupied housing will add more to the tax base than it will to town expenditures.

Maintaining or creating affordable housing is a difficult task. One way to cut costs for low and moderate income families would be through a homeowner tax exemption. Such tax-cutting measures are already available in Massachusetts, Texas and many other states. Our State Legislature will have to act for Connecticut towns to have such an option.

It is vitally important – but difficult – to acquire land on which to build affordable housing in Cornwall. One promising source would be land from the State forests.

In addition to local efforts, it is critically important to get more financial aid from the State and Federal Governments to make it possible to build affordable housing.

CORNWALL IN THE ZEROES DECADE

Trends in Population, Incomes, Economic Base, Property Values, Budgets and Taxes At The Half-Way Point Of the Decade

Introduction

A little over ten years ago, my wife and I became full-time residents of Cornwall after many years as weekenders. As we became year-rounders, I thought I should know more about my new home. So I did what I do professionally: I did some research and wrote a paper about Cornwall. Because I wanted to find out if Cornwall was different from the surrounding communities in the Northwest Corner, I included them in my study, titling it *Cornwall In Context*. Although I wrote the paper for myself, friends on the Cornwall Association asked for copies and it soon was widely distributed.

Then, as now, Cornwall was preparing to review and revise its town plan. To help in that process, the Cornwall Association sponsored a forum at which I presented in my paper. I didn't find that Cornwall was very different from most of the nearby towns, at least as far as statistics went. Ten years of being a year-rounder has, however, taught me that the spirit and character of Cornwall is *very* different from those other towns in important -- if hard to measure -- dimensions.

This year, when First Selectman Gordon Ridgway called to say that another review of the town plan was under way and asked if I would be willing to do another version of *Cornwall In Context*, I readily agreed. Like most of us, I wanted to find out how the past ten years has changed our community. Here's at least part of my answer, and I look forward to hearing how other people saw the decade, too.

Why The Zeroes?

A note of explanation about the title of this paper. It's easy to abbreviate the decade of the 80's or the 90's, but what do you say for a decade that starts with 00? What to call the first decade of Twenty-First Century was addressed in a survey by a British public relations consultant. The most popular response -- 33% of the total -- was to call it the *zeroes*. The term hasn't caught on in the US, but neither has any other -- such as the *oughties* or the *naughties*. So I have used it for want of a better option.

Sources Of The Data

Much of the data in this paper comes from the US Censuses of 1990 and 2000. The Bureau of the Census asks every resident household to fill out a form in April of the censal years (those ending in "0"). In addition, a sample of households is asked to complete a more detailed form so that the answers can then be expanded and applied to the whole town. Non-residents, or week-enders, aren't asked to complete forms in Cornwall but it is possible that a few found one in their mailbox and did it anyway. Also, the sample survey may not have been truly representative. But despite these and other quibbles, for many pieces of information the census is all we have.

Other data comes from a variety of sources and I have tried to note them in the text and tables in the report. Also, portions of the analysis of the data in this paper first appeared as articles I wrote for the *Chronicle* over the years, so if some of it seems familiar, it's because you have seen it before.

1. POPULATION

The US Census, the only reliable count of population that we have, says that there were 1,434 people in Cornwall in Spring, 2000. This is a mere 20 more people than ten years earlier when the Census had us at 1, 414. This should not come as much of a surprise: Cornwall's population has fluctuated between 1,000 and 1,500 throughout most of the 20th century. The

State's Office of Policy and Management (OPM) estimates that our population grew to 1,482 by 2004, but that's not based on any actual count.

The Two Meanings Of "Cornwall's Population"

The US Census only counts residents. These are what are sometimes known in Cornwall as "year-rounders", people whose legal residence is here and who, for the most part, live here full time. But like many towns in the Northwest Corner, Cornwall has a second population that consists of "week-enders" who own or rent houses here but have their legal residences elsewhere, most often in New York City or its suburbs.

The Census doesn't count week-enders directly, but it does provide information that helps estimate their numbers. The most useful data in this regard is the total number of housing units -- in Cornwall these are mostly single-family houses. In 2000, there was a total of 873 housing units in Cornwall. Of these, 615 units were occupied full-time by Cornwall's 1,434 year-round residents. Most of the remaining 227 housing units were occupied on an "other than year-round" basis. Clearly, these were the houses of week-enders. If average household size for week-enders was the same 2.33 people as for year-rounders, then it can reasonably be estimated that Cornwall had about 530 week-enders in 2000, when they made up about 27% of our "combined" total population of about 1,960 people. This is higher than the estimated week-end population in 1990, when the same analysis indicated just under 360 week-enders or 25% of a "combined" total of about 1,770.

Cornwall's week-end population is small, but it has been growing much faster than the year-round population. This is confirmed by building permit data. During the decade 1990-2000, the building inspector issued about 10 permits for houses per year or about a hundred in the decade. At Cornwall's average of 2.33 persons per housing unit, 100 new houses would have triggered a population gain of about 233 people. But the measured rise in year-round population was only 20 persons. This implies that over 200 of the extra occupants of Cornwall houses were week-enders, close to the growth of 170 extra week-enders that can be estimated from census data.

It may also be worth paying some attention to the question "Who are the weekenders?" For example, some current residents (myself included) are former weekenders. Some people live in Cornwall full-time part of the year and elsewhere (e.g., Florida) the rest; some so-called weekenders summer in Cornwall but live elsewhere most of the year. Yet others spend part of the week in Cornwall and part of it in New York, not necessarily weekendening in any one place. There is no existing source of data on the characteristics or interests of this complex population. It might be useful for the Selectmen and P & Z to conduct a survey so that we would know more about them and their concerns.

Our Resident Population Is Growing Slowly, But Our Age Composition Is Changing

From 1990 to 2000, most of the census-reported characteristics of Cornwall's population changed little, with the sharpest differences shown in age patterns. Table 1.1 shows this.

- **Children And Youth.** The census reported a drop of 27% in the number of children under 5 years of age, from 95 to 69 kids. In contrast, the number of school and college age youth (aged 5-19) increased substantially, rising one-third during the decade. This older group passed through CCS and went on to high school and higher education in the years after 2000. When the smaller numbers of children born in the years after 1990 started school, declines began to be experienced in enrollment at CCS.
- **Young Workers.** The number of young working-age residents (20-44) exhibited an 18% decline in the decade from 1990 to 2000. This loss is a serious concern for the future of Cornwall's economy. Workers in this age group are building skills and establishing themselves. Their loss is likely to be felt more in future years.
- **Older Workers.** In contrast to the pattern among younger workers, the number of residents in the age group 45-64 increased by 16%. This apparently reflects Cornwall's ability to retain more mature working age persons. However,

with the “zeroes” decade more than half over, the smaller number of residents in the younger worker category in 2000 suggests that today Cornwall has a labor force that is aging and that lacks an energetic younger component.

• **The Elderly.** The number of residents over 65 years of age was essentially stable from 1990 to 2000, growing by barely over one percent. For those who may have thought that Cornwall had a growing number of very old residents, the census figures may be surprising: in 2000 there were 110 Cornwallians age 75 or older, as compared to the 116 who were that old in 1990.

**Table 1.1 Population By Age Group,
Cornwall, 1990 and 2000**

Item	Category	1990	2000	% Change
POPULATION	Total	1,414	1,434	1%
AGE GROUPS				
Children	Under 5	95	69	-27%
Youth	5-19	222	295	33%
Young Workers	20-44	491	403	-18%
Older Workers	45-64	357	415	16%
Elderly	65+	249	252	1%

Note: In 1990, the census age categories were 5-20 and 21-44; I have adjusted the figures to try to make the data comparable.

Source: US Census

A Few More Vital Statistics

Add A Bit To The Picture

The 2000 Census is a wealthy font of information and is also nearly the only reliable source of reasonably current population data. However, detailed census data on a town as small as Cornwall must be viewed with caution because much of the data is based on a sample, not a complete census of all the people who live here. Also, remember that many of our fellow Cornwallians filled out their census forms in Manhattan or elsewhere and so they are not included in what the census reports about Cornwall. With all these *caveats*, here is some interesting information:

- **Gender.** There are more women than men in Cornwall, 739 as compared to 695. Thus, we were 51.534% female in 2000 and the disparity seems to be growing slightly. We were only 51.485% female in 1990. This should not come as a surprise: as local populations in the US age, they tend to become more predominantly female.
- **Marital Status.** Just over half of Cornwall’s households in 2000 were of the traditional “married-couple” type - - 323 out of 615 total households or 53%. The remaining 292 households included 225 “non-family “ households and 52 families with a female householder but no husband present. Of the non-family households, 189 consisted of a householder living alone. In 74 of these households, the sole occupant was over 65 years of age.
- **Birthplace.** The great majority of residents are native born (94%). And all but 30 of our residents in 2000 were US citizens.
- **Stability.** Most Cornwallians over age five (62%) lived in the same house in 2000 as they had five years earlier. Another 21% had lived in a different house -- but still in Litchfield County -- in 1995 and another 5% had lived elsewhere in Connecticut. Only 13% had lived in another state or country in 1995. We are a pretty stable group.
- **Race and Ethnicity.** It should come as no surprise that Cornwall’s population is nearly all white. The 2000 Census recorded just 36 people of all other races, up from 12 a decade earlier. The number of residents of Hispanic ethnicity (not recorded as a race by the Census) was steady at just 21 over the intercensal decade.

**Cornwall's Declining Birth Rate
Is Reflected In School Trends**

The census data seems consistent with the recent enrollment declines at the Cornwall Consolidated School. Birth data gathered by the Town Clerk suggest that the declines may continue for a while in light of the fact that there were only 57 births recorded here from 2001 to 2005, compared to 77 births in the ten year earlier 1991-1995 period.

Table 1.2 shows how Cornwall's pupil enrollment pattern changed in the past decade. The most significant change has been a decline in the number of children enrolled in grades K-8 at the Cornwall Consolidated School. Data for the number of Cornwall pupils at the Housatonic Valley Regional High School show an increase over the past decade, largely due to the number of pupils enrolled at CCS in earlier years. Projections for future enrollment prepared by the CT Department of Education show elementary enrollment leveling off while high school enrollment declines.

Table 1.2 Selected Birth And Enrollment Data For Cornwall, 1995-96 To 2005-06 And Projected To 2010-11 And 2015-16				
	Number of Births (Year)	School Year	CCS Enrollment (K-8)	Cornwall's HVRHS Enrollment
ACTUAL DATA :				
	20 (1990)	1995-96	168	55
	10 (2000)	2005-06	135	73
PROJECTIONS:				
	11 (2005)	2010-11	133	50
	12 (2010)	2015-16	148	38

Source: CT Department of Education (Projections for 2010-11 and for K-8 in 2015-16 by Dr. Peter M. Prowda, Education Consultant; allocation for HVRHS in 2010-11 and 2015-16 by NE School Dev't Council)

2. INCOMES

**Incomes In Cornwall Were Up In
2000 As Compared To A Decade Ago**

According to the census, the household incomes of Cornwall residents rose 40% in the ten years from 1989 to 1999. Median household income (by definition, half of all households earn less than the median; half earn more) went from \$38,837 per household to \$54,886, a \$16,049 gain. More realistically, taking inflation into account, median household income rose by only about 9%. Cornwall's median household income in 1999 was slightly below that of Connecticut as a whole (\$55,935).

Cornwall's per capita (mean or average) income rose from \$30,270 per person in 1989 to \$42,484 in 1999. Taking inflation into account, that was an 11% gain. In 1999 our per capita income was second highest among all Northwest Corner towns with only Sharon topping us. Cornwall's per capita income was 48% higher than that of the state as a whole (\$28,766).

**Table 2.1. Selected Income Data
For Cornwall, 1989 and 1999***

Item	Category	1989	1999
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	Per Household	\$39,950	\$54,886
	% Change, 1989-99		41%
	<i>Real Change %**</i>		9%
PER CAPITA INCOME	Per Person	\$30,270	\$42,484
	% Change, 1989-99		40%
	<i>Real Change %**</i>		11%

* Census income data is for the year before the census.

* FY 1995-96 data converted to 2005-06 dollars by the CPI inflator over the period (by multiplying all numbers by 1.26, based on the New England office of the BLS data base)

NB: In 1999 CT as a whole had median household income of \$53,935 and per capita income of \$28,766

Source: US Census (for basic data). Real Income Change caclulated as noted.

These numbers suggest that even after inflation our resident population as a whole did fairly well over the decade. However, the data also show once again that we do far better in comparison with the rest of the State on per capita income than we do on median household income. This is the “median vs. mean” disparity of which I have written in the Chronicle. It reflects the fact that Cornwall has a number of very wealthy residents who pull our per capita level up, while we also have many households with very modest incomes, so that our median remains low.

Nearly One-Fifth Of Cornwall Households Receive Less Than Half The Median Income

Cornwall has a substantial low-income population. In 1999, 114 households – nearly one in five (18%) -- reported receiving less than \$25,000 in total income. That’s less than half the town-wide median income. While \$25,000 is still twice that year’s Federal Poverty Guideline for a family of 2.5 people (\$12,500), many recent population researchers use a poverty measure of at least 150% of the Guideline, or an income of about \$19,000. Given the high cost of living in southern New England, most Cornwall households with incomes under \$25,000 are likely to be experiencing serious economic hardship.

Not all households with very low incomes at the time of the census consider themselves to be poor. Some may have variable incomes, with some high incomes years and some low. Other low income people may simply prefer to live here than move to where they can gain higher wages. But most of Cornwall’s low income households are not likely to fall in one of these categories.

In the broad middle of the income spectrum, three-fifths of Cornwall households (58.5%) reported incomes between \$25,000 and \$100,000. Depending on household size, many of the people in the lower-income half of this group are also likely to be feeling pressure from the rising cost of fuel and other commodities.

At the high end of the income spectrum, nearly one-fourth (23%) of all Cornwall households reported annual household incomes above \$100,000 in 1999. If comparable information were available on the incomes of weekenders, it seems likely that most of them would fall in the high income group as well.

3. ECONOMIC BASE

The Activities of Cornwall's Labor Force Reflect The Town's Character

The 2000 Census estimated that there were 800 persons in Cornwall's labor force – defined as anybody over age 16 who was ready, able and willing to work. Nearly all of these potential workers – 98.5% of the total -- was employed. Nearly half (44%) were in occupations defined as management or professional, with the next most common occupational groups being sales and office (20%) and service (15%). Only 1.6% or 13 people were classified as being in farming.

The census also classified the jobs of employed town residents by industry. The leading categories in 2000 were education, health and social service (23%) and professional and scientific (14%). Only 39 town residents worked in manufacturing industry as defined in the census. However, Cornwall has a substantial representation in a category described in the census as the “arts”. This category contained 88 workers, 11% of our labor force. It probably includes the people who work in Tim Prentice's mobile production shop under arts, rather than manufacturing.

Two other dimensions of our economic base reflect Cornwall's particular character. Some 93 people or 12% of the labor force work at home; in Litchfield County as a whole only 4% of the labor force works at home. Under what the census defined as “class of work”, some 202 Cornwall residents said that they were self-employed. This was 26% of the total work force as compared to only 9% who are self-employed in Litchfield County as a whole. Cornwall's relatively high degree of reliance on work at home by self-employed people is made clear by the census data.

Another aspect of Cornwall's population differentiates it. For example, economic base studies used to classify activities into “basic” industries that produce goods for export and “secondary” industries such as the services. In Cornwall's case, “basic” industry now includes the production of paintings and other art works to be sold in New York galleries as well as internet-connected consultants who produce research for clients around the world.

4. PROPERTY VALUES

Cornwall's House Price Roller-Coaster Ride

The early years of the Zeroes decade have seen unparalleled increases in the value of single-family houses in certain parts of the United States. In much of the Northeast – as in Florida and California -- housing values have escalated rapidly. Cornwall has experienced much the same rapid price rise as other parts of southern New England and metropolitan New York. These sharp increases have come after a roller-coaster ride in house prices in the past decade and a half. Here are some indications of how typical Cornwall house values have changed:

- **Up In The Early 90's.** In 1991, Cornwall's Assessor followed State law and set all assessments at 70% of market value. That year, I calculated that the market value of the median residential property was \$197,000 (half of all properties had values above the median, half below).
- **Down In The Middle 90's.** In the middle years of the 1990's, as the Connecticut economy staggered from defense industry cutbacks, house prices plummeted across the state. This shows up in data gathered by the State's Office of Policy and Management on 125 Cornwall house sales between 1993 and 1996. The data shows that by 1996 the median market value of Cornwall properties had dropped to about \$181,600.
- **Starting Up In The Late 90's.** The Connecticut economy revived in the late 1990's. I examined residential sales listed in the Chronicle from July 1998 to June 1999 and found that the market value of the median property in Cornwall had risen to about \$218,000.
- **Up Again In The Early Zeroes.** Analysis of Cornwall's last full revaluation in 2001 indicates that by that year the median property had an assessment of \$164,000 while its market value had risen to more to \$234,000.

• **Is Cornwall In A Bubble?** Most recently, I studied the market value of 19 residential property sales from April 2004 to March 2005. On average, they jumped 86% during the few years that passed since the revaluation. This is roughly similar to the result of Salisbury's 2005 revaluation which saw that town's Grand List increase by 83% over the five-year earlier total. If this pattern holds, when the revaluation now under way is completed. A Cornwall house and lot assessed in 2001 at the median level of \$164,000 could be expected to see its assessment jump to around \$300,000 and its market value to be over \$400,000.

In the five years since Cornwall's last revaluation, the Consumer Price Index has risen about 13%. If the coming revaluation sets our average rate of increase in the Grand List at a figure close to that of Salisbury, it will suggest that our residential property values have gone up more than six times as fast as prices in general. What goes up can also come down. Today's high prices may be just the much-discussed housing bubble that will burst and then prices will plummet. Or maybe we will experience the "soft landing" hoped for by many in the real estate industry. In Spring 2006, as this paper is being written, there are reports from cities and towns in the Boston suburbs and elsewhere of rising lists of houses for sale and the start of falling prices. Only time will tell if the bubble bursts or we slide to a soft landing.

Higher House Prices Are Good News For Some, Bad News For Others

To someone selling a house and lot today, rising prices may seem an unmitigated good thing. Well-off homeowners who aren't interested in selling may see high prices as an interesting phenomenon, but not one of much significance. After all, even if the coming re-assessment raises the assessed value of your house, the property tax rate is almost certain to drop proportionately, so there will be little if any change in the amount of property taxes due. Even low or moderate income residents with no intention to sell probably feel little impact from rising house values. For them, more serious problems are likely to be continuing increases in town taxes – a topic addressed in the next section of this paper – or the rising cost of heating fuel.

Sharply higher prices for land and houses in Cornwall do have a serious impact on some people, however. High property prices make it very hard for children of Cornwall families who seek, as young adults, to buy their own house and land here. High prices also make it much harder for people of modest means to move into Cornwall. Teachers at CCS, other municipal employees and employees of businesses located here now find it almost impossible to afford even a modest house in Cornwall. Renters, who make up one-fifth of Cornwall's year-round residents, also face very difficult problems as house prices rise and increase the prospect that the house they rent will be sold or their rent raised.

At a recent forum, First Selectman Gordon Ridgway responded to a question about what was the most serious problem Cornwall faced by citing the impact of rising prices for houses and land. He noted that high house and land prices threaten our income diversity – the mix of people of different means from poor to rich and in-between -- that is vital to making Cornwall what it is and what many of us love about it. Towns south of us in Fairfield County have already gone through this wringer and most of us do not want to see Cornwall go the same way.

Cornwall's Lowest Income Households Have Additional Housing Cost Issues

In addition to the problems triggered by rising sales prices of houses, there is the problem of the escalating cost of living in Cornwall -- paying for light and heat, mortgage payments and the other basic costs of living in a house.

Data from a recent Bureau of the Census survey indicate that most Cornwall homeowners – about seven in every ten – can afford their housing when measured by the traditional rule that you ought not to allocate more than 25% of your annual income to housing costs. On the other hand, three out of ten Cornwall homeowners must allocate more than 25% of their incomes to paying for their living quarters. Those under the toughest pressure are the nearly two in every ten homeowners who must allocate over 35% of their income for housing. A recent article in *The New York Times* noted "...spending more than 35% on mortgage payments, taxes and fuel is considered a heavy burden, especially for lower-income people."

The one-fifth of Cornwall residents who rent are in even worse trouble. Just under half of them are fortunate enough to be able to pay less than 25% of their income for rent. Fully one-fifth, one out of every five Cornwall renter households, pays more than 35% of their income as rent. Whether sale prices of residential property rise or fall, many Cornwall families will continue to face difficult problems due to the high cost of living here.

5. THE BUDGET AND TAXES

Connecticut Law Allows Towns Few Revenue Sources Except Property Taxes

State law restricts the revenue sources available to towns in Connecticut. As a result, they must rely more heavily on property taxes to finance the cost of municipal services than anywhere else in the nation. In addition to thus limiting local tax options, the State provides only a low level of financial aid to towns like Cornwall that have relatively high property values. This means that apart from taxes on real and personal property the Town of Cornwall has few sources of revenue to finance its annual budget. Also, because there is little industry here, most of the real property tax burden is borne by residential properties.

On An After Inflation-- Basis, Cornwall's Expenditures Have Increased Slowly

Cornwall's operating budget for fiscal year 2005-06 is \$5.6 million, or about \$2,800 for each of the roughly 2,000 year-round and week-end residents. The operating budget is composed of two principal components: the Board of Selectmen's budget and the Board of Education budget. The Selectmen's budget is largely devoted to paying the salaries and fringe benefits of municipal employees but it also pays for a lot of other things, including support for nonprofit community organizations like the library. The Board of Education budget pays for the operating costs of the Cornwall Consolidated School and Cornwall's share of the regional school budget. In addition to the operating budget, the Capital Budget/Debt Service account provides includes funds for new capital projects and to pay debt service on the bond issued for the recent CCS addition.

Table 5.1 shows that Cornwall's operating budget has grown by 29% over the past decade on a *real* (i.e., after inflation) basis, a little less than 3% a year. The Board of Selectmen's budget has increased by only 6% in the decade on an after-inflation basis, or less than 1% per year. Most of the *real* increase that has taken place has been in the Board of Education's budget which has risen by 42% over the decade.

**Table 5.1 Selected Budget Data
For Cornwall, FY 1995-96 and FY 2005-06**

Item	FY 1995-96 (\$000's)	FY 2005-06 (\$000's)	Change In Decade (\$000's)	Change Over Decade (%)
Board of Selectmen	1,028	1,370	342	33%
Board of Education	1,912	3,409	1,497	78%
Total	2,940	4,779	1,839	63%

<i>When Calculated In Constant 2006 Dollars*</i>				
Item	FY 1995-96 (\$000's)	FY 2005-06 (\$000's)	Real Change In Decade (\$000's)	Real Change Over Decade (%)
Board of Selectmen	1,295	1,370	75	6%
Board of Education	2,409	3,409	1,000	42%
Total	3,704	4,779	1,075	29%

Note: The capital budget and debt service accounts are not shown.

* FY 1995-96 data converted to constant (2006) dollars by the CPI inflator over the period (by multiplying all numbers by 1.26, based on the New England office of the BLS.)

Source: Cornwall Finance Office (actual budget data). Real change calculated as noted above).

In the current budget, real property taxes – primarily on houses and land -- account for 93% of the revenue needed to finance expenditures. Property taxes are levied on property owners by a mill rate measured in dollars of tax per \$1,000 of a property's assessed value. Cornwall's current mill rate, set by the Board of Finance after the town meeting adopts the budget, is 21.8 mills (or 2.18% of the *assessed* value of any taxable property). In order to make it possible to compare Cornwall's mill rate to those adopted by other cities and towns in the state, the State calculates *equalized* mill rates for every municipality to put tax rates on a common basis. Cornwall's equalized rate is 10.5 mills for fiscal 2005-06 (or about 1% of the *market* value of any taxable property). To put this number in context, the average equalized mill rate for all CT municipalities was 20.5 in 2005-06, nearly twice as high as ours. What this low equalized mill rate means is that Cornwall's property taxes are among the lowest in the entire state. Cornwall's equalized mill rate has remained at close to the same low level over the past decade.

The State Doesn't Help Us Much Because It Thinks We're Rich

State aid is a minor component of Cornwall's budget, amounting to only 5.5% of the town's total revenue in FY 2005-06. The principal reason for this low aid percentage is that the principal form of State aid to localities in Connecticut is education aid and Cornwall gets relatively little education aid. This is because of the way the school aid distribution formula is structured. The State's education aid formula views us as a community whose *mean* income per person is high and thus treats us as if we were a wealthy community, despite the reality of our unusual income distribution with relatively large numbers of both low-income and high-income residents.

Cornwall does get more equitable amounts of State aid in other categories, such as aid for road repair and construction. In addition, Cornwall's leadership has been quite successful in getting grants from the State for specific projects. But these forms of aid are all for capital projects and do not help meet the rising costs of both CCS and the regional high school.

Even Our Low Property Taxes Can Be A Steep Burden For Lower-Income Residents

Town property taxes are not a serious financial burden for most Cornwall residents, especially those whose household incomes are well above the median for the town. While no current data is available on what fraction of income is required to pay town property taxes, detailed data from the 1990 census that was analyzed by the State's Office of Fiscal Analysis indicated that most resident households in Cornwall with above-median incomes only had to allocate 2% or less of their incomes to pay their property taxes. On the other hand, the same analysis indicated that most Cornwall households below the median income level had to allocate between 3% and 20% of their household income to pay their property taxes.

State law provides modest property tax exemptions for certain limited classes of homeowners such as the low-income elderly and veterans. These exemptions are provided after submission of an application to the Town Assessor. In addition, the Board of Selectmen has adopted a provision of State law allowing temporary exemption from property taxes for persons unable to pay; however, this provision requires ultimate repayment with interest by means of a lien placed on the homeowner's property. Little use has been made of this temporary exemption.

The State Legislature has also adopted a program designed to ease the impact of local property taxes on some homeowners. This provides homeowners who also pay State income taxes a credit of about \$350 (the amount has varied over the years) against their income tax liability. To take advantage of this credit, however, a homeowner must first owe at least as much as the credit amount in State taxes. Many lower-income homeowners do not file State income tax forms because the minimum level at which such taxes apply is more than they earn. Thus, lower-income homeowners often cannot take advantage of the State's property tax credit.

6. PROJECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I have written this paper to contribute to the ten-year update of the Cornwall town plan by the Planning and Zoning Commission. In it, I have tried to describe and examine, as value-neutrally as I could, recent trends and factors likely to influence Cornwall's future. In this section, I will focus on what I see as the most significant implications of the findings presented earlier, including some recommendations for how we can address the severe housing affordability problems that are changing the nature of Cornwall.

A. PROSPECTS FOR THE NEAR FUTURE

1. Population. In many respects, Cornwall's future seems likely to resemble its current situation and recent past. For the foreseeable future – at least the next decade or so -- Cornwall seems highly likely to remain a lightly-populated rural community. The principal reasons for this are the town's substantial distance from any major urban centers and that it is not, and is not likely to become, directly accessible from the regional expressway system. In addition, Cornwall's difficult topography – the steep hills and wetlands that are responsible for much of its beauty – also protect it from urban or even suburban development.

By the year 2010, a decade after the previous census, I expect that the *total* population of Cornwall – residents and weekenders together – will still be close to the current level of 2,000 people. However, the balance between year-round and seasonal population is likely to continue to shift toward fewer year-round residents and more weekenders. From 1990 to 2000, the weekender proportion of the total population went from 25% to 27%. In light of the fact that nearly all of the additions to Cornwall's housing stock are being built for seasonal occupancy, in another ten years the weekender fraction is likely to rise to one-third or more of the *total* population of the town. In light of the pattern of loss of the "young worker" age group seen in the past decade, the number of year-round residents is likely to remain at the same level or decline.

2. Economy. Over the past centuries, Cornwall's economy has gone through significant changes while, in many respects, leaving it much the same rural community. At the outset of the twentieth century, the landscape had been drastically changed from the virgin forests of the nineteenth century, cut back to make room for dairy farms and burnt for charcoal to fuel the iron furnaces of Salisbury and Norfolk. Today, the trees have largely re-grown and over a third of the town has become State-owned forest. The local economy has changed in other ways, too. Few vestiges are left of the town's former manufacturing plants. Instead, artists of many types – painters, sculptors, writers and others – have found the town a compatible place and their collective efforts have had a strong impact on its character. A growing number of residents now work at home, activities made feasible by computers and the internet. And while Cornwall is too distant from New York City or other major job centers for daily commuting, its location two hours from Manhattan has attracted a growing number of weekend residents who pay town taxes while requiring few of the more costly public services, especially schools.

3. Taxes. In comparison with other local communities in Connecticut or the New York metropolitan region, Cornwall's residents are lightly taxed. Real property taxes here amount to about one percent of the value of residential properties. If anything, the tax burden on the "average" Cornwall property is likely to decline or remain the same in coming years. Two factors are largely responsible: first, declining numbers of school children should at some point be reflected in school costs (which account for more than two-thirds of the municipal budget) and, second, growing numbers of weekenders who tend to own more highly assessed properties will add to the tax base but not to town expenses. As a result, the *real* increase (after inflation) in Cornwall's budget over the next decade should be able to be held to a minimum.

B. MAKING HOUSING AFFORDABLE

Despite the generally positive pattern reflected in the preceding projections of Cornwall's future, all is far from well. Together with neighboring communities, the low and moderate income residents of Cornwall face a double threat – the rising cost of living here as the cost of fuel for cars and heating escalates and the rising price of land and houses which make it very difficult for anyone not wealthy to afford to buy a house here.

At a recent forum sponsored by the Cornwall Association, Nichols Breuhl, a real estate broker familiar with the Cornwall housing market, said that he felt that the minimum price of even a modest house here has risen to \$300,000. To obtain a mortgage to purchase a house of this price would require an income on the order of \$75,000, he noted, an amount well above the means of most Cornwall residents. What went unsaid, but what was clearly implied, was also that most houses in Cornwall are now priced beyond the reach of all but well-off weekenders.

Steps have been and are being taken by groups such as the Cornwall Housing Association to provide affordable accommodations for moderate income families. Their most significant achievement to date is Kugeman Village in Cornwall Bridge. In addition, Habitat has produced several affordable units here. But these steps, while laudable, are both small in scale and do not reach the housing concerns of two critical groups. First, the low and moderate income people who already live in Cornwall – many of them for generations now find the rising cost of housing maintenance and operation (fuel, lighting, taxes, etc.) a burden beyond their means. Second, moderate income people who want to move here, including some the town urgently needs to attract, such as schoolteachers, nurses and other public sector workers, cannot afford the steep current price of Cornwall housing. These twin housing problems are discussed below.

1. Keeping Housing Affordable. Low and moderate income people who have lived in Cornwall for many years are burdened today by the sharply rising cost of fuel, electricity and other essentials. One major step that might be taken to reduce the burden of the property tax on low and moderate income families would be to adopt a *homeowner tax exemption* such as has been authorized in states such as Massachusetts, Texas, Illinois and Georgia. The objective of such an exemption is to lower the amount of tax imposed on properties occupied by residents and shifting more of the burden to non-residential properties or to properties that are occupied on only a seasonal (or weekend) basis on the assumption that the owners of such properties have greater capacity to pay the taxes.

The way such an exemption typically works is that every homeowner is given the benefit of a reduction (or “exemption”) in the assessment on any residential property that is occupied by the homeowner for all or most of the year. The effect is to reduce the Grand List by the total amount of such exemptions. However, because exemptions don’t reduce either the municipal budget or the amount of taxes that need to be raised in a given year, the overall tax rate must be raised to compensate. The net effect is to reduce the burden of property taxes most on lower income households because the exemption (being a fixed amount) has a higher relative value for homeowners with lower assessments. There is a general correlation between property values and income, and therefore most of the benefit from a homeowner tax exemption goes to low and moderate income homeowners. Because the exemptions do not reduce the total amount of money that must be raised for the budget, the taxes levied on other properties increase. Depending on the amount of the exemption, homeowners with the most highly assessed properties may have to pay more, as do owners of nonresidential properties and houses occupied on a seasonal basis. To make the homeowner exemption more equitable, many communities that have adopted it have extended the exemption to houses occupied year-round by renters.

Before Connecticut communities could adopt a homeowner tax exemption, it would be necessary for the State to enact enabling legislation. There are many forms that such legislation might take, but perhaps the most desirable would be a law that allowed a “home rule” option: a town could offer a homeowner tax exemption if its town meeting so voted. Nonresidents could also speak at and vote in such a meeting.

How would a homeowner tax exemption work in Cornwall? To test the idea, I have applied it to Cornwall using data from the Grand List of 2001 and the real property tax levy voted to support the town budget for 2005-06. Table 6.1 shows an analysis that divides taxable property into two basic categories -- that owned by residents and that owned by nonresidents, with the division based on the mailing address given in the Grand List. The table shows the current property tax imposed in 2005-06 on the median-valued properties occupied year-round or by nonresidents. It also shows the effect of providing a \$50,000 exemption to resident homeowners. The median homeowner property, assessed at \$152,960, would see its tax bill reduced by \$741, or nearly a quarter, and a lower-valued homeowner property (at the 25th percentile) would benefit from a 37% cut in its taxes. On the other hand, non-homeowner properties would see their tax bills rise by 15%.

Table 6.1
How A \$50,000 Homeowner Tax Exemption
Would Affect Various Cornwall Properties

Homeowner Properties				
Properties Assessed At -	Current Assessment (\$)	Current Tax (\$)	Tax After Exemption (\$)	Change In Tax (\$)
25th Percentile	110,360	2,362	1,485	-877
50th (Median)	152,960	3,273	2,533	-741
75th Percentile	224,630	4,807	4,296	-511

Non-Homeowner (Seasonal) Properties				
Properties Assessed At -	Current Assessment (\$)	Current Tax (\$)	Tax With No Exemption (\$)	Change In Tax (\$)
25th Percentile	86,120	1,843	2,119	276
50th (Median)	153,690	3,289	3,781	492
75th Percentile	253,430	5,423	6,234	811

Basis: Calculations are based on the Grand List (2001, updated). Excludes all tax-exempt property and all parcels assessed at less than \$50,000. Current system assumes a total tax levy of \$5 million and a mill rate of 2.14. After exemptions of \$50,000 for each homeowner property, the mill rate must be increased to 2.46 to compensate for the exemptions.

Source: Calculations by the author

Assuming lower or higher amounts of homeowner exemptions would, of course, change the numbers involved. Whatever the numbers, however, the question of whether such a homeowner exemption is a good idea for Cornwall is open to discussion. In a number of states, the benefits of lowering the tax burden on residents have been found to outweigh the arguments against such action. From the point of view of trying to ease the impact of rising costs on Cornwall's low and moderate income residents, the potential merits of exploring a homeowner tax exemption seem clear.

2. Expanding The Stock of Affordable Housing. If Cornwall is to retain its traditional diversity, it is vitally important to increase the amount of affordable housing available in the community, especially for younger couples who want to live and work here. One useful approach would be to create a "land bank" of vacant sites where less costly housing could be built. Ideally, such a land bank should be located close to one of the three small concentrations of development in Cornwall Bridge, West Cornwall and Cornwall Village.

There are several possible sources for assembling such a land bank:

- Owners of properties in appropriate locations can be asked to contribute land for this purpose. Cornwall has many generous people and such an approach may well produce useful sites. Alternatively, a fund could be established to which donors could contribute and the proceeds then used to acquire land for affordable housing.
- The State owns substantial areas along existing town roads where building sites could be set aside without detriment to the basic conservation objectives of the State forests. Landowners with forested tracts might be persuaded to make compensatory contributions to the State forests. The Board of Selectmen is already moving on such an initiative.
- The town itself might appropriate funds to purchase development rights over large parcels of farm land that might otherwise be at risk of use for high-priced housing or other activities. As part of such a process, the town could set aside portions of such sites for affordable housing. As an example, the proposed acquisition of the Lorch Farm near the southern gateway to Cornwall by private contributions to finance a municipal purchase is under active consideration at present.

We Need Help From The Higher Levels Of Government

Realistically, it must be recognized that while the actions described above might help ease Cornwall's housing affordability problem, they are unlikely to have major impact on it. In the absence of significant State or Federal initiatives to support the production of affordable housing – which at present seems an unlikely prospect – Cornwall and the other Northwest Corner communities face a serious threat of continued out-migration of our younger workers and an increasingly difficult task in attracting such workers from elsewhere. We are responsible for doing all possible within our own resources, but those resources are limited. We also need help from our State and Federal Governments.

TOWN OF CORNWALL NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

PREPARED BY KINGS MARK ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TEAM AND THE TOWN PLAN NATURAL RESOURCE AND CONSERVATION SUBCOMMITTEE

This report is on file in the Cornwall Town Hall and The Cornwall Free Library

As part of the Cornwall Town Plan update process, the King's Mark Environmental Review Team prepared a "Town of Cornwall Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment" at the request of the Planning and Zoning Commission. Section I below provides selected excerpts from the 100+ page King's Mark report. Sections II and III below which includes extensive mapped information were prepared by the Town Plan's Natural Resource and Conservation Subcommittee based on the Kings Mark Report and other information sources.

I. Overview of Natural Resources – Summary King's Mark Environmental Review Team Report

Geology and Soils

- Four major metamorphic rock associations are found in Cornwall: 1) gneisses of pre-Cambrian age, 2) marble, 3) schist and gneiss, and 4) granite. The pre-Cambrian rocks are the oldest and underlie the high areas in the northwestern half of Cornwall. The areas underlain by marble form the prominent valleys in Cornwall. Granite is the youngest rock in the area, having formed as an igneous rock that intruded or forced its way, in a molten state, into the schists and gneisses of Cornwall.
- There are no active mines in Cornwall. In the past, however, rock has been extracted from several sites in Cornwall. The rock was excavated for construction purposes rather than iron ore. Granite was excavated for foundation stones or other construction purposes, and marble was excavated for agricultural lime.
- More than 90% of the surficial deposits in Cornwall consist of glacial till deposited during one or more glacial stages. Most of the remaining deposits consist of stratified drift, which are deposits of sand and gravel from meltwater streams at the end of the last glacial episode. Stratified drift was deposited in most of the major valleys, and since it is porous and permeable it makes a good aquifer where thick enough. The areas underlain by water-saturated stratified drift should receive aquifer protection as they generally yield high quality, good tasting water.
- The soils of Cornwall primarily developed from glacial till deposits, although the valleys and terraces have stratified sand and gravel or stratified sand and silt deposits.
- Soil suitability for development is frequently impacted by steep slopes, wetlands or floodplains. Approximately 40% of the town has soils with greater than 15% slopes. Development of these steep slope areas is difficult and problematic for erosion and sediment control. As a result, development on soils with 15% slopes or greater should be discouraged.
- Inland wetland soils support ecosystems which provide a myriad of beneficial functions, including groundwater recharge, floodflow alteration, fish habitat, sediment/toxicant retention, nutrient removal/retention, and wildlife habitat. Consequently, Cornwall should continue to protect and preserve its inland wetland soils and development within or immediately adjacent to Inland Wetland soils should be avoided.

Agriculture

- According to the State, 12.5% of the businesses in Cornwall are agricultural, and agricultural businesses employ 2.9% of the total workforce. Agricultural businesses include production of beef, pork, lamb, milk, eggs, vegetables, flowers, herbs, hay, maple syrup, wood products, Christmas trees, llamas, as well as horse boarding. Most of the food produced is sold locally, directly to consumers.
- There are several farms in town that have been preserved. These include the Ridgway Farm, Hammond Farm, Cream Hill Farm, and Stone Wall Dairy Farm.
- There are only 200 acres of class 1 soils in Cornwall that are the best soils for crop land. Protection of this land for agricultural use should be a priority. Protection of class 2 and 3 soils, which are also well suited to agricultural use, should also be considered for land protection where feasible. The King's Mark report shows the location of these

Watershed Overview

- Cornwall lies entirely within the Housatonic Major Drainage Basin, meaning that all the surface and ground water within the town's geographic area ultimately flows into the Housatonic River by one route or another. Three Regional Drainage Basins comprise the Housatonic Major Drainage Basin in Cornwall: the Housatonic Mainstem, the Hollenbeck, and the Shepaug basins.
- The Shepaug Regional Drainage basin is classified as Class AA (DEP's highest classification level for water quality) because it is part of a public water supply watershed that drains to reservoirs that serve the City of Waterbury. The Hollenbeck is classified as Class A as is most of the Housatonic Mainstem with a couple of exceptions. These exceptions include Furnace Brook which is classified as Class B with a Class A goal, and the Housatonic River which is classified as Class D with a Class B goal. Furnace Brook is classified as Class B due to the presence of an inactive landfill near the stream. The Housatonic River is classified as Class D due to the presence of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) which are primarily associated with releases from a General Electric facility in Pittsfield, MA.
- Two surface water resources in Cornwall have been identified as impaired through water quality assessments conducted by the DEP: the upper section of Mill Brook and the Housatonic River. A 2.2 mile segment of Mill Brook is considered impaired with the suspected sources including nonpoint runoff from agricultural activities. As mentioned above, the cause of the Housatonic River's impairment is the presence of PCBs.
- Mohawk Pond and Cream Hill Lake are in good condition according to the DEP (i.e. fully supporting with regard to fish consumption, recreation, and habitat for fish, other aquatic life, and wildlife). However, the size of the watershed areas contributing to these water bodies is relatively small and the future use and/or protection of these lands will be important to maintain their water quality. Agricultural runoff, excess application of fertilizers, and malfunctioning septic systems are examples of activities that may contribute excess nutrients to a lake and degrade water quality. Ongoing monitoring of the water quality in these water bodies should be conducted and lake management plans developed and implemented.
- Cornwall basically relies on its underlying bedrock aquifer to supply both public and private drinking water wells. However there are three areas of stratified drift in Cornwall that have been identified as having the potential to serve as high and/or moderate yield aquifers for public water supply. The location of these aquifer areas is shown in the King's Mark report.
- Because it gives rise to so many watersheds, Cornwall has many headwaters wetlands. These headwaters wetlands are a particularly sensitive and important part of the overall wetlands system and for the most part are in a good state of health. Due to this ecological integrity, the wetlands provide a high value for wildlife habitat.
- An important component of the town's wetland resources are vernal pools and an effort should be made to document these pools and their contributing areas so that future planning may provide for their longevity.
- A plan for protecting ridge tops should be pursued to facilitate the protection of headwaters wetlands.

Aquatic Resources

- According to USGS mapping, there are five waterbodies and twenty two watercourses in Cornwall. The ponds and lakes include Cream Hill Lake, Hart Pond, Hawkins Pond, Mohawk Pond, and Stony Batter Pond. Among the largest watercourses are the Housatonic River, Hollenbeck River, Shepaug River, Furnace Brook, and Mill Brook.
- Cream Hill Lake has a surface area of 72 acres and a maximum depth of 43 feet and an average depth of 15 feet. The lake has been stocked with brook trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and other species.
- Mohawk Pond has a surface area of 16 acres and a maximum depth of 26 feet and an average depth of 15 feet. The Pond is stocked with brook, brown and rainbow trout. Largemouth bass and other species are also present.
- The King's Mark report contains a comprehensive description of the aquatic survey information the DEP has on file for the watercourses in Cornwall, and includes numerous photos of the major fish species.
- The length of Furnace Brook from the Route 4 Bridge upstream a distance of nearly two miles has been designated the Heather Reaves Wild Trout Management Area. It is one of two Class 2 WTMA's in Connecticut and contains wild trout as well as stocked trout. The confluence of Furnace Brook with the Housatonic River is an important thermal refuge. Thermal refuges are critical for trout during the summer months when the river water increases above optimum temperatures for survival. Through the relicensing of the Falls Village Hydroelectric facility in 2005, the mode of operation was changed from the historic "pond and release" to "run-of-river" specifically to protect the thermal refuges against warm water intrusions.
- The Housatonic River is the most prominent aquatic resource in Cornwall. Approximately 12 miles of the river

are found in Cornwall. The river channel is approximately 200-250 feet in width and the fish population includes brown trout, rainbow trout, smallmouth bass, pumpkinseed sunfish, rock bass, fallfish, longnose dace, and white sucker. The 14-mile section of the River from the Rte 7 bridge crossing in Canaan south to the Rte 4/7 bridge in Cornwall has been designated the Housatonic River Trout Management Area. This is the longest of the fourteen TMA's in Connecticut. Catch and release trout fishing in the TMA is allowed year round. There is a health advisory for the consumption of smallmouth bass due to PCB contamination.

- Trout fishing in the Housatonic River is good to excellent with approximately 4000 adult and 6000 yearling aged brown trout stocked annually. There can be significant number of trout holding over from one year to the next with some trout reaching lengths of up to 20 inches.
- The comparatively sparse development in Cornwall has helped to protect the aquatic habitats that sustain the species diverse fish communities. Additional development may present threats to these resources through riparian area degradation or habitat segmentation. In recognition of the critical functions of riparian areas, the DEP recommends that a minimum protected riparian area of 100 feet in width be maintained along each side of perennial watercourses and 50 feet along intermittent watercourses. DEP also typically recommends buffer widths of 25 to 50 feet around waterbodies (lakes and ponds). It is recommended that Cornwall adopt no less stringent guidelines to protect the town's waterbodies and watercourses from future development.
- Habitat segmentation is another area of concern for watercourses, and the town is encouraged to take steps to minimize the number of new road and driveway crossings and ensure that any new crossings permitted are designed to protect habitat quality and ecosystem processes. In particular, crossings should be located away from sensitive areas (e.g. fish spawning or juvenile rearing habitat) and consideration should be given to installing span bridges or arch culverts for the crossing of perennial watercourses. These preserve physical aquatic habitat and do not create barriers to fish migration.
- Consideration should be given to conducting an inventory and evaluation of all watercourse crossings in town with the subsequent development of a strategy to correct those structures adversely impacting aquatic habitat or resources. An example of such a measure is the fishway installed at the Rte 4 crossing of Furnace Brook to provide passage for brook trout and brown trout.

Forest Resources

- Cornwall contains the following major forest types: oak-hickory, mixed hardwoods, northern hardwoods, white pine, hemlock, plantation, oakridge, hardwood swamp, field, shrub-old field, and open wetland.
- State forest management operations are used to maintain a mix of plant species and ages, improve plant productivity, provide forest products, provide a variety of forest habitats, protect and improve aesthetics and long term recreational opportunities, and to educate the public about forests. In addition to management of state owned forest lands, the DEP Forestry Division offers free technical assistance and advice to private forest landowners in Cornwall through the DEP Western District Headquarters in Harwinton.
- Two significant forest areas on state-owned land in Cornwall are the Black Spruce Bog Natural Area Preserve and the Gold's Pines Natural Area Preserve. The Black Spruce Bog consists of 19 acres of land within Mohawk State Forest. This acidic bog has long been recognized as a unique natural area and represents one of the few such plant communities of its type in Connecticut. This plant community is considered an outstanding example of a late stage peat bog.
- The Gold's Pines Natural Area Preserve consists of 12 acres of state-owned land lying within the Housatonic State Forest. One portion of this area contains a unique assemblage of very large and very old white pine. This stand is approximately 180 years old and is considered the oldest stand of white pine in Connecticut.
- DEP's Natural Diversity Data Base identifies numerous places in Cornwall where endangered, threatened, and special concern species are located along with significant natural communities. The exact locations have been masked to protect sensitive species from collection and disturbance. The data base provides important information in identifying areas of potential conservation concern, The general locations of these areas in Cornwall are shown in the King's Mark report.

Wildlife Resources

- Generally, the greater the habitat diversity and degree of interspersed of various habitat types, the greater the variety of wildlife there will be using the area. In addition, larger areas of habitat are generally much more valuable to wildlife because they can provide for the requirements of more species and a greater number of individuals of a particular species.
- Because Cornwall provides extensive blocks of high quality forests interspersed with a diversity of other high quality habitats in a lightly developed setting, it provides excellent wildlife habitat.

- The Housatonic River provides an important travel corridor for wildlife, and is especially important to migrating birds during the spring.
- Conserving as much wildlife habitat in the town as possible will help ensure that the town continues to provide for large expanses of habitat for a wide variety of Connecticut's wildlife from bears to butterflies.
- Of the 12 major types of wildlife habitats in Connecticut, 9 occur in Cornwall. These include upland forest, upland woodland and shrub, upland herbaceous, forested inland wetland, shrub inland wetland, herbaceous inland wetland, sparsely vegetated inland wetland, freshwater aquatic, and intensively managed. Each of these types is described in the King's Mark report along with major wildlife species and threats to each habitat type.
- Linking protected lands together through the protection of corridors of habitat should be encouraged whenever possible. Forestry practices should be used to benefit both forest health and wildlife.
- Riparian buffers should be a minimum of 100 feet, but the wider and larger they are the more valuable they are for wildlife.
- Development is by far the biggest threat facing the habitat resources in Cornwall. By careful land use planning, Cornwall has the opportunity to maintain its character and the excellent wildlife habitat it currently provides for a vast array of Connecticut's wildlife species.

Planning Comments

- According to the University of Connecticut's Center for Land Use Education and Research, over 80% of Cornwall's land is forested, with less than 6% developed. Development claimed approximately 75 acres (0.3% of the Town) between 1985 and 2002. Permits for new housing units average roughly eight units per year.
- A build out analysis recently completed for the town by the Nature Conservancy determined that under current zoning a maximum of 3,866 new housing units could be constructed, which represents nearly a fivefold increase from the current 787 housing units in town.
- More than thirty percent, or 9,023 acres +/- of Cornwall's land is protected from development either through direct ownership or easements. Of these 9,203 protected acres, the State of Connecticut owns 7,140 acres and holds easements on another 245 acres.
- Cornwall has 24 miles of State highway, and there are no plans to expand or widen any of these highways. The town has one officially designated scenic road: Route 7 from the Cornwall-Kent town line to its intersection with Route 4.
- In addition to the State program for designating selected State roads as scenic, towns may also designate local roads as scenic under State Statute. A good argument could be made for protecting many of Cornwall's roads using a local scenic road ordinance.

II. Summary of Cornwall's Natural Resource Map Series

The Appendix of this plan contains a series of maps that have been prepared to assist the Commission in its work, and facilitate Town Plan preparation. Larger scale versions of each map are available for review at the Town Land Use Office. A brief summary of each of these maps is presented below.

A. Zoning Map. This map shows the location of the various residential and commercial zones in town. The map also shows the Housatonic River Corridor Overlay Zone and Aquifer Protection Overlay Zone. As shown on the map, the vast majority of land in Cornwall is zoned for residential use, with minimum lot sizes of one acre, three acres, or five acres. There are also two business zones (Cornwall Bridge and West Cornwall) and a Cornwall Plains zoning district. The zoning, subdivision, and inland-wetland regulations that apply to these zones are available for review at the Cornwall Land Use Office.

B. Agricultural Resources. This map shows the location of the "Prime Farmland Soils" and "Important Farmland Soils" in the community. Prime Farmland Soils are the best soils for agricultural use, according to criteria established by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Important Farmland Soils also have considerable potential for agricultural use, but are not rated as high as Prime Farmland Soils. In addition to this soil based information, the map also shows "490 Farm Land", which receives favorable tax treatment for remaining in agricultural use, and the extent of farm and field land cover based on aerial photographs.

C. Historical Sites. This map identifies over 50 locations in town with historical significance including houses, cemeteries, monuments, churches, stone quarries, and schools.

D. Open Space and Recreation Resources. Approximately one-third of the land in Cornwall is permanently protected by the National Park Service, State DEP, or nonprofit organizations like the Cornwall Conservation Trust. This map shows

MARCH 2008

TOWN OF CORNWALL Historical Sites

Resources Map Series
sponsored by the
Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission
and Cornwall Conservation Trust

Cornwall Village 1:8,000



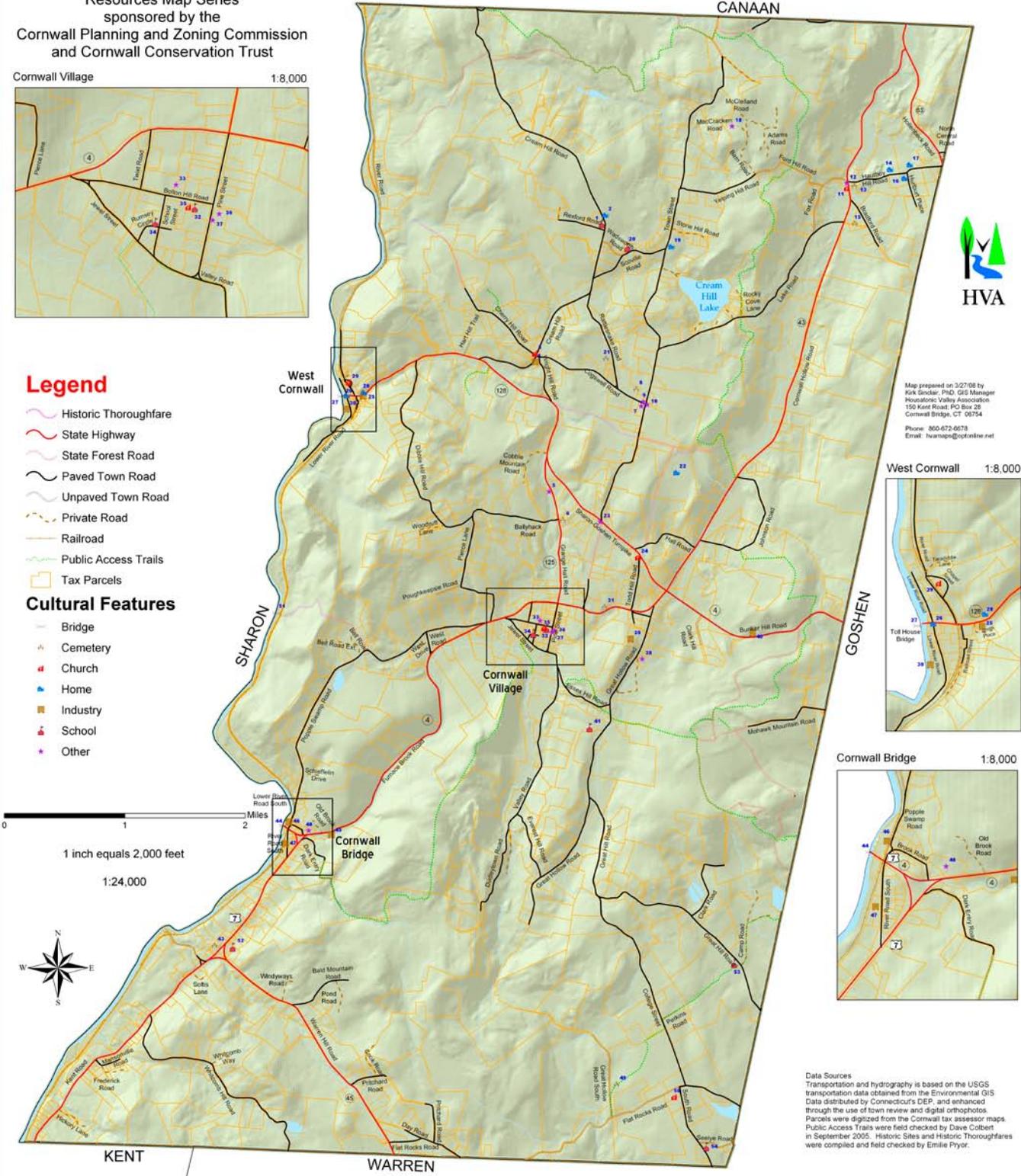
Legend

- Historic Thoroughfare
- State Highway
- State Forest Road
- Paved Town Road
- Unpaved Town Road
- Private Road
- Railroad
- Public Access Trails
- Tax Parcels

Cultural Features

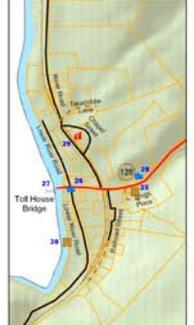
- Bridge
- Cemetery
- Church
- Home
- Industry
- School
- Other

0 1 2 Miles
1 inch equals 2,000 feet
1:24,000

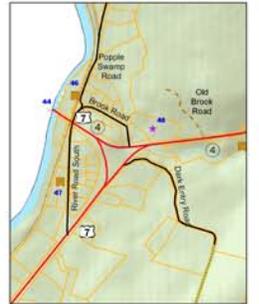


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West Cornwall 1:8,000



Cornwall Bridge 1:8,000



Data Sources
Transportation and hydrography is based on the USGS
transportation data obtained from the Environmental GIS
Data distributed by Connecticut's DEP, and enhanced
through the use of town review and digital orthophotos.
Parcels were digitized from the Cornwall tax assessor maps.
Public Access Trails were field checked by Dave Colbert
in September 2005. Historic Sites and Historic Thoroughfares
were compiled and field checked by Emilie Pryor.

ID	Description	ID	Description	ID	Description
1	1st Agricultural School in North America 1855	15	Bradford (Sedgwick) Cemetery	42	Purposely Left Blank
2	James Douglas House 1739	16	Maj. General John Sedgwick's home 1862	43	Calhoun Cemetery
3	N. Cornwall Baptist Church 1820-1843	17	Maj. General John Sedgwick's (grandfather) home 1775	44	Cornwall Bridge Cement Bridge 1930
4	Gold's Mill	18	Yelping Hill Association	45	Cornwall Bridge Iron Company 1833-1897
5	Grange Hall	19	Gouldie Farm 1734	46	Cornwall Bridge Railroad Station
6	Allen Cemetery	20	Cream Hill School 1788-1855	47	Spring "Berkshire Spring Water"
7	Land owned by Ethan Allen for one day	21	N. Cornwall Cemetery 1871	48	Old Village of Cornwall Bridge under the bridge until 1920
8	Simloux Cemetery	22	Peel House	49	Southwest Cemetery
9	N. Cornwall meetinghouse 1826	23	Cornwall Village Historic Area	50	E. Cornwall Baptist Church 1787
10	Adelphic Institute 1847-1890	24	Methodist Church 1908	51	Young's Bridge
11	Cornwall Hall Farmer S. Cornwall Baptist Church	25	Union Sash Company 1860-1901	52	Pullingham School 1798
12	Monument to Maj. General John Sedgwick	26	Toll House early 1800's	53	School District Sixteen 1855
13	Cornwall Hollow Cemetery	27	Covered Bridge 1804	54	School District Seventeen 1855
14	Haulboy Hill Farm 1748	28	Hotel Mansion House late 1800's-1924		
		29	Shoreland Congregational Church 1877		
		30	Mellon's Shoe Shop late 1800's-1920		
		31	Cornwall Cemetery		
		32	Foreign Mission School 1817-1826		
		33	Runway Hill 1854		
		34	School 2nd District 1769		
		35	The Chapel 1873		
		36	Town Building 1908		
		37	Cornwall Free Library 2002		
		38	Mohawk Six Area 1947-48		
		39	Stone Quarry		
		40	Stone Quarry		
		41	East Street School House 1909		

the location of these protected properties as of 2006. Major open space preserves in the town include the Housatonic State Forest, Mohawk State Forest, Wyantnock State Forest, and Housatonic State Forest. The map also shows the location of the public hiking trails in town, including the Mohawk Trail and Mattatuck Trail that are part of the Connecticut Blue Trail network.

E. Water Resources. This map shows the location of the major streams, rivers, and ponds in town, including the Housatonic River and Cream Hill Lake. The map also shows the extent of wetland soils in town, along with flood zones and the most productive aquifers. The Shepaug Reservoir watershed land located in Cornwall is also shown. This public water supply watershed land drains into the Shepaug Reservoir in Warren and serves as a source of potable water for the City of Waterbury. DEP's water quality classification system for the town is also shown.

F. Development Constraints. This map shows the locations in town that have severe limitations for development. These include lands that have steep slopes in excess of 25%, contain inland wetland soils, are flood prone areas, or may have been identified by the DEP as critical habitat areas for rare or endangered species. The map also shows lands that have been protected and are therefore not available for future development.

G. Buildout Map. This map shows the growth capacity of the town under current zoning. The analysis uses the acreage of parcels and existing zoning in town to determine the number of new houses that could be built in the future. Protected open space land and land already developed are removed from consideration, as are unbuildable lands that have steep slopes over 25% or wetlands. This map illustrates that under current zoning, the number of houses in town could increase nearly fivefold from the current 800 houses to over 3800 houses.

III. Conservation and Preservation Priorities by Function

This section identifies the features and resources in Cornwall that have emerged through this planning process as being of highest conservation and preservation priority. The resources are described by open space function under the following headings: (1) natural resource protection, (2) natural resource management, (3) outdoor recreation, (4) areas that protect public health and safety, and (5) cultural resources. The geographic location of many of these areas is shown on Map 3 in this section of the report entitled "Important Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Areas". In preparing this section of the report, consideration was given to other land use plans that have been prepared and relate to the town including DEP's *The Green Plan*; the *Connecticut Statewide Forest Resource Plan*; the *Connecticut Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies*; the *Connecticut Recreational Trails Plan*, the *CT Conservation and Development Policies Plan*, various planning documents prepared by the NWC Council of Governments, and previous Town of Cornwall Plans of Conservation and Development.

A. Natural Resource Protection

1. Cream Hill Lake.

Clearly one of the jewels of Cornwall, Cream Hill Lake is a 73-acre lake with a maximum depth of 43 feet. It is home to largemouth and smallmouth bass, sunfish, and yellow perch. It has also been stocked with additional species, including rainbow trout, brook trout, brown trout, bullhead, and pickerel. Nearly all the watershed surrounding Cream Hill Lake is privately owned. One 13-acre parcel is protected by the Cornwall Conservation Trust. To maintain the water quality of the lake, and protect the recreational amenities offered by the lake including the existing beaches, protecting the watershed lands is a major conservation priority.

2. Housatonic River Corridor (Inner and Outer Corridor).

The Housatonic, beyond its importance as a fishery and recreational resource, provides an important riparian habitat as well as being a travel corridor for wildlife, including migrating birds. The waters in the Housatonic are considered by DEP to be of low quality and its fish not fit for human consumption due to PCB contamination, but the river supports a wide array of fish (brown trout, brook trout, white suckers, rock bass, etc.) and other aquatic life.

The Housatonic River Commission in 2006 updated their 1981 River Management Plan.

The 1981 Plan contained model zoning regulations for "Inner Corridor", "Outer Corridor", and "Village Centers" overlay layers. These model regulations created an "overlay zone" requiring that development conform to the Housatonic River overlay regulations as well as the zoning regulations governing the underlying zoning district.

The new regulations are based on the 1981 regulations but were modified to reflect current concerns and circumstances.

Implementation of the Commission's updated recommendations should be pursued.

3. Shepaug Reservoir Public Water Supply Watershed.

The southeastern quadrant of Cornwall comprises a significant part of the headwater watershed for two City of Waterbury reservoirs, the Cairns Reservoir and the Shepaug Reservoir. While the City Water Bureau does not own any land in Cornwall, a majority of the Cornwall portion of this watersupply watershed is protected by the state in State Forest land under the Mohawk and Wyantnock State Parks. The Waterbury Watersupply Plan supports protecting more land in this watershed, either by purchase or by conservation easements.

In 1991, the Northwestern Connecticut Council of Governments undertook a watershed protection study of the Shepaug and Cairns Reservoirs. The resulting report evaluates the extent to which current municipal regulations of Cornwall, Goshen and Litchfield serve to protect this public water supply watershed. Recommendations are offered in the report to improve municipal land use regulations to better protect water quality.

One of the major recommendations in the report is the creation of an overlay zone encompassing the watershed in each town. Regulations could then be developed that would pertain only to this water supply watershed overlay zone. This would allow local officials to develop regulations necessary for the long-term protection of the watershed of the Shepaug and Cairns Reservoirs. Many of the specific recommendations in the report are still valid, and should be considered for implementation.

4. Streambelt Buffers.

While the Housatonic River and Cream Hill Lake are the showcase water resources in town, it is important to note that there are four other water bodies and twenty watercourses in Cornwall worthy of protection. One example is Furnace Brook. While Furnace Brook's water quality is impaired due to the presence of the old landfill nearby, the stream has good riparian vegetation cover overhanging the stream and its fish population includes brook trout, brown trout, dace, chub, and white sucker. The stream also provides an important thermal refuge for trout during hot summer months at its confluence with the Housatonic River.

It is important to protect the riparian zones bordering these aquatic habitats in order to resist erosion, provide shade to maintain water temperature, provide food for aquatic insects, and to filter pollutants from surface runoff. The Inland Fisheries Division guidelines recommend setback areas along perennial watercourses of 100 feet, and along intermittent watercourses of 50 feet. The division has informal recommendations of 25 – 50 foot setbacks on water bodies. The protection of these aquatic areas through the use of these setback guidelines and other measures should be considered by the land use commissions in Cornwall.

As noted above, the Housatonic River Commission recently updated their River Management Plan and the recommendations included in the updated Plan should be pursued.

5. Rare and endangered species habitat.

Most of the areas in Cornwall shown on the DEP Natural Diversity Database (which shows areas known or presumed to contain rare and endangered species of plants or animals) are in the eastern half of town. Map 3 in this report shows 27 of these areas, including several large areas created by the overlap of three or more small areas. Only three of these areas lie completely within the borders of protected land. The largest collection of areas in the database exists along the Route 43 corridor, and along Great Hollow Road. Most of these areas also seem to be associated with wetlands. This provides another strong argument for requiring riparian protection zones of at least 100 feet from wetlands. A biodiversity database study for the entire town could enhance the town's ability to make informed decisions and institute appropriate regulations for development that will protect these sensitive areas. It is recommended that as part of the land use application process, applicants be required to identify NDDDB sites on their applications and to consult with the DEP if proposing development on lands identified as an area of concern in the NDDDB. The Planning and Zoning Commission can augment this process by requesting that the DEP review and comment on a development project that lies within an area identified in the NDDDB. The Commission can then adopt a practice of considering DEP's comments and incorporate them as a condition of approval where practicable.

Vernal Pools may be defined as seasonal bodies of water that attain maximum depths in spring or fall, and lack permanent surface water connections with other wetlands or water bodies. While not specifically defining "vernal pools", legislation passed in 1995 (P.A. 95-313) and included in the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act expanded the definition of "watercourse" to include, "all other bodies of water, natural or artificial, vernal or intermittent."

Cornwall should endeavor to identify and protect vernal pools. The first step toward this goal would involve undertaking a scientific vernal pool inventory. This inventory could then be used to develop practices for protecting this resource. Short of this comprehensive inventory, a program that would promote vernal pool awareness and encourage voluntary stewardship of this valuable resource could be established. A useful reference is "Best Development Practices, Conserving Pool-Breeding

B. Natural Resource Management

1. Prime Farmland and Working Farms.

As shown on Map 3, major portions of town in North Cornwall, the Cream Hill area, Cherry Hill area, along the Housatonic River, Cornwall Plains, Cornwall Hollow, and East Cornwall contain prime farmland soils. Cornwall’s prime agricultural land is classified as tillable C and D. Tillable C is very good, quite level land, and Tillable D is good to fair, with moderate to considerable slopes.

As noted in the King’s Mark report, over 10% of the businesses in Cornwall are agricultural, and include the production of beef, pork, lamb, milk, eggs, vegetables, flowers, herbs, hay, maple syrup, wood products, Christmas trees, and llamas, as well as horse boarding. Most of the food produced is sold locally, directly to consumers. The Cornwall Agricultural Advisory Commission maintains a listing of Cornwall’s active farms; there are currently eighteen working farms. Due to the historical and present-day-significance of agriculture in Cornwall, a high priority is placed in this Plan on protecting and encouraging farming in the community. A useful publication for achieving this goal is “Planning for Agriculture: A Guide for Connecticut Municipalities” recently prepared by the American Farmland Trust and the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities. This report discusses tools to support farming and protect farmland and includes a section on promoting local farm viability.

2. Wildlife corridors.

The rich diversity of wildlife habitat in Cornwall, described in the King’s Mark report, also merits consideration for protection and management.

Generally, large areas of habitat are more beneficial for wildlife, being capable of providing for more species, more individuals within a species, and for species with large home range needs. However, the factors that need to be considered when determining best habitat use and habitat quality are many and often complex. Some of these factors include not only habitat type, but size, quality, amount of isolation, diversity, soil type, and relationship to neighboring habitats as well. Questions also arise regarding unique or at risk habitat or species. A biodiversity database or comprehensive natural resources inventory would be extremely helpful in determining specific corridors that merit priority for protection. However some broad observations on wildlife corridors are discussed here.

One prominent, existing wildlife corridor in Cornwall is the Housatonic River, which acts as a thoroughfare for wildlife, and for migrating birds with the insect life produced in its associated aquatic and riparian habitats. While much of this river corridor is protected, without a riparian protection zone it remains vulnerable.

Other identifiable corridors are the large, unfragmented forest habitats in town that have diverse tree, shrub, and ground cover. Not only do these areas provide food, shelter, and denning areas for larger species, the smaller reptiles and amphibians require the rotting logs, leaf litter, and vernal pools in these forests for all their life stages. Other important habitat corridors include large grasslands and the swamps and wetlands often created by beaver. Though loathed by some, the beaver create crucial habitat for aquatic species and many birds, while improving downstream flow and water clarity by holding back sediment and regulating flow, and reducing flooding in high rainfall periods.

As can be seen from the Open Space Map included in the Appendix of this report, large tracts of protected wildlife habitat already exist within the town’s boundaries. The potential exists to expand some of these tracts by connecting them via new protection zones, or adding key areas of protection on their borders. Some of these are contiguous with protected areas in neighboring towns. Potential wildlife corridor connections are presented in Map 4 of this report. The wildlife corridor along the eastern border of the town is particularly important and includes many areas of special concern, as well as being an area of much wetland habitat.

The identification of large, unfragmented tracts of land, with areas of special species concern, represents a good starting point for identifying significant wildlife corridors. As noted above, however, a biodiversity study of the entire town should ideally be conducted to help make informed decisions about wildlife corridors and their protection. The database created by such a study would also enable the town to determine where development should be encouraged or discouraged, the need for additional zoning regulations, how forest areas might be managed, etc. It is therefore recommended that the town pursue the preparation of a biodiversity study for the entire town, including the mapping of vernal pools. While this is a costly endeavor, it would be an invaluable tool. The biodiversity database created by this study would show areas sensitive to development; some of which might be quite small but could prove to be just as important to protect as large habitat blocs. The study could also show areas that are most suitable for development in town.

Additional tools that should be considered to help maintain and protect wildlife habitat include (1) developing land use regulations that would encourage the clustering of homes and thus the protection of more useful open space, (2) discouraging home owners and developers from ‘cleaning up’ the forests by removing large areas of forest understory, logs, dead trees (snags), and large den trees with cavities that provide habitat for species both large and small, (3) instituting a requirement of riparian buffers of at least 100 feet, (4) managing large grassland areas (more than five acres) by mowing in sections in alternating years to create diversity in vegetation heights and density, and encouraging the mowing of hay fields and grasslands after the nesting season (after mid-August).

3. Forest Management Areas.

As noted in the King’s Mark report, Cornwall contains a rich diversity of forest types including oak-hickory, mixed hardwoods, northern hardwoods, white pine, hemlock, plantation, oak ridge, hardwood swamp, field, shrub-old field, and open wetland.

Forest management of both state and privately owned forested tracts is recommended to maintain a healthy mix of plant species and ages, improve plant productivity, provide forest products, provide a variety of forest habitats, protect and improve aesthetics, and support long-term recreational opportunities. The DEP Forestry Division offers free technical assistance and advice to private forest landowners in Cornwall through the DEP Western District Headquarters in Harwinton. Owners of forested land in Cornwall are encouraged to take advantage of this service.

4. Significant fishery resources.

The three most prominent fisheries habitats in Cornwall are the Housatonic River, Cream Hill Lake, and Furnace Brook. The Housatonic, beyond its importance as a fishery, provides an important riparian habitat as well as being a travel corridor for wildlife, including migrating birds. The waters in the Housatonic are considered to be of unacceptable quality and its fish not fit for human consumption due to PCB contamination, but the river nevertheless supports a wide array of fish (brown trout, brook trout, white suckers, rock bass, etc.) and other aquatic life.

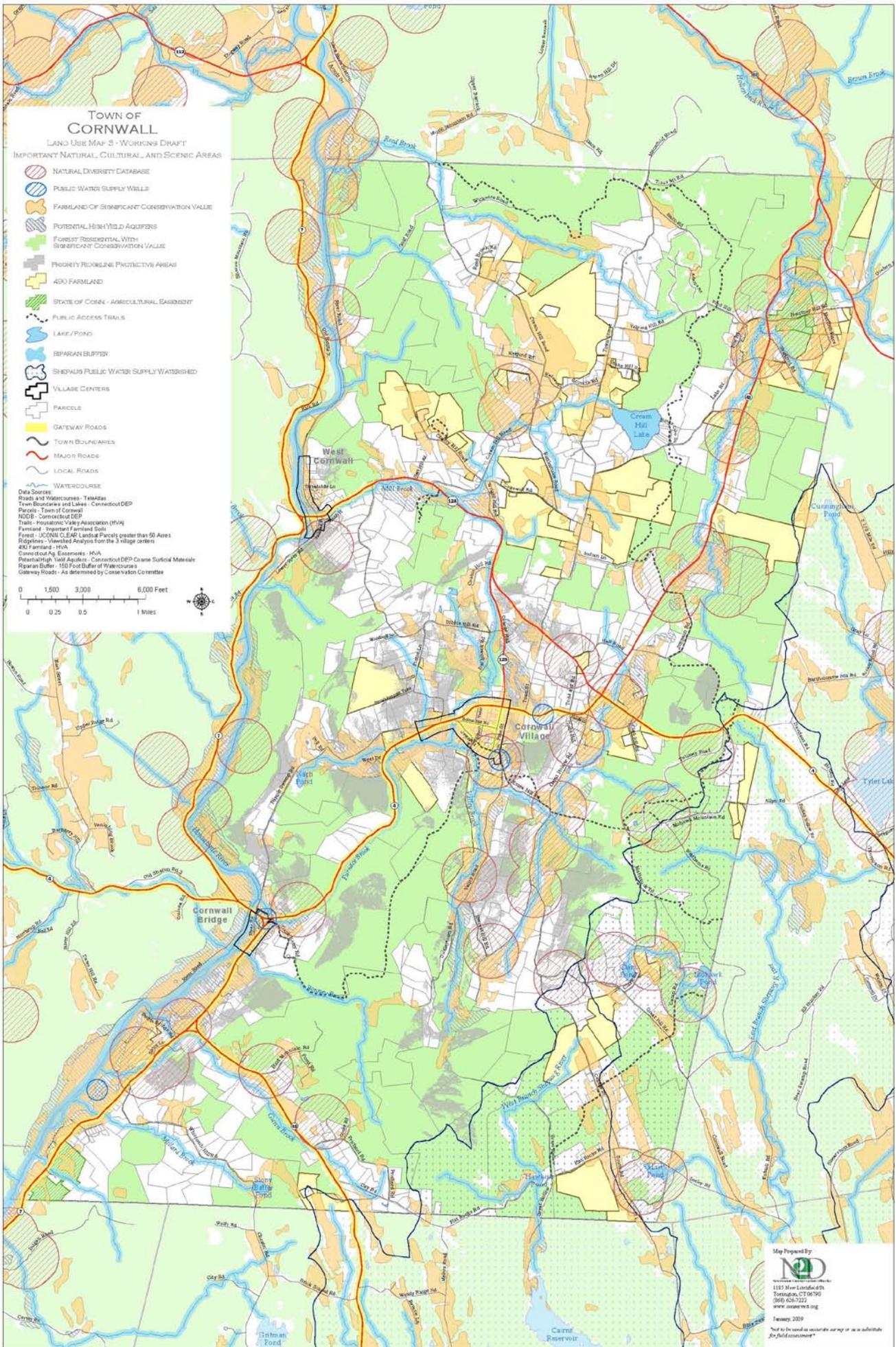
Cream Hill Lake is a 73-acre lake with a maximum depth of 43 feet. It is home to largemouth and smallmouth bass, sunfish, and yellow perch. It has also been stocked with additional species, including rainbow trout, brook trout, brown trout, bullhead, and pickerel. Nearly all the watershed surrounding Cream Hill Lake is privately owned. One 13-acre parcel is protected by the Cornwall Conservation Trust. To maintain the water quality of the lake protecting the watershed lands should be a priority.

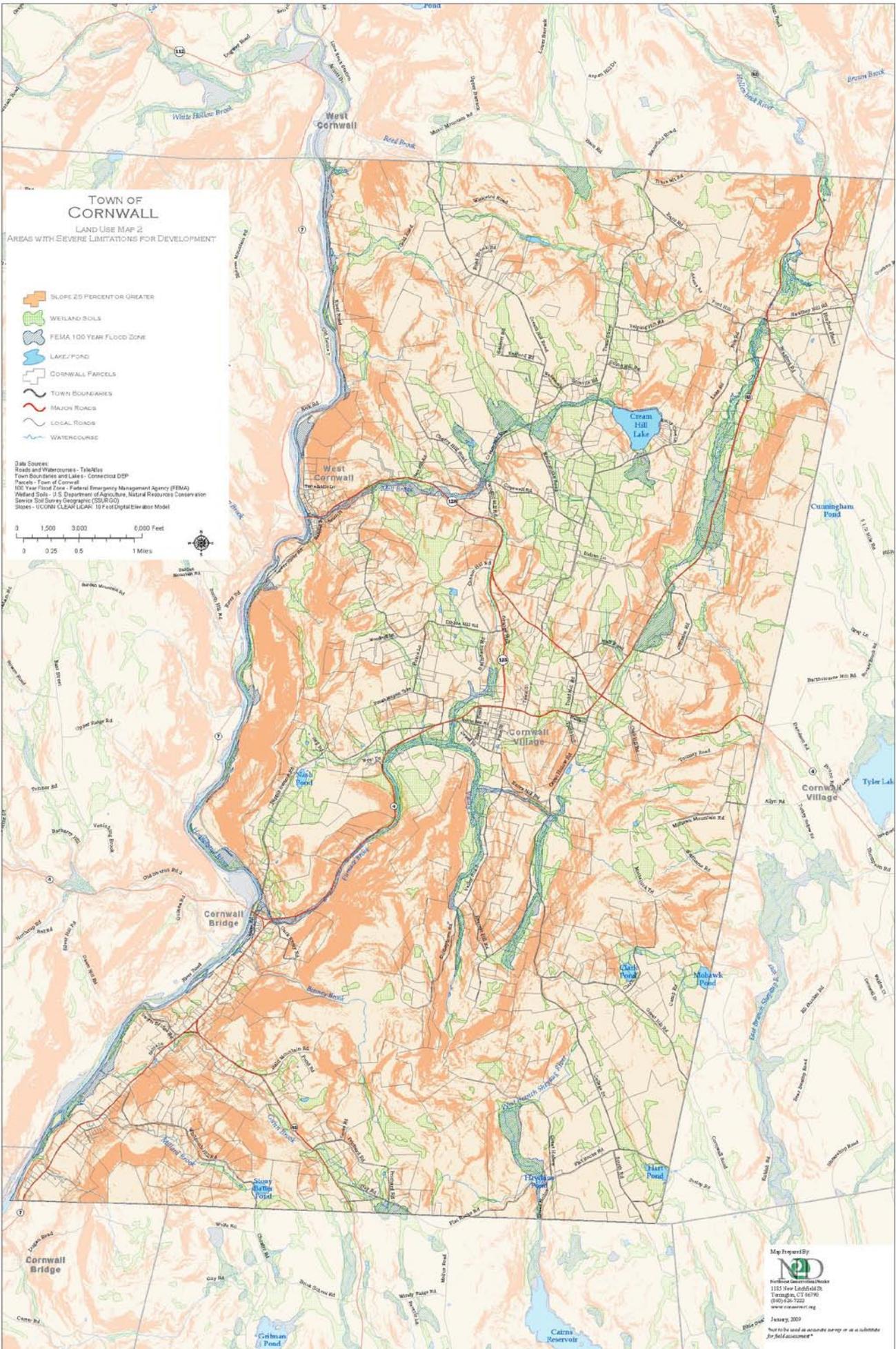
Furnace Brook’s water quality is impaired due to the presence of the old landfill nearby. The stream has good riparian vegetation cover overhanging it and its fish population of brook trout, brown trout, dace, chub, and white sucker. The stream also provides an important thermal refuge for trout during hot summer months at its confluence with the Housatonic River. There are four other water bodies and twenty watercourses of note in Cornwall. It is important to protect the riparian zones bordering these aquatic habitats in order to resist erosion, provide shade to maintain water temperature, provide food for aquatic insects, and to filter pollutants from surface runoff. The Inland Fisheries Division guidelines recommend setback areas along perennial watercourses of 100 feet, and along intermittent watercourses of 50 feet. The division has informal recommendations of 25 – 50 foot setbacks on water bodies. The protection of these aquatic areas through the use of these setback guidelines and other measures should be considered by the land use commissions in Cornwall.

C. Outdoor Recreation

Public access trails are an important recreational asset for Cornwall residents and visitors alike. They should be protected, and the creation of new trails and trail networks should be encouraged. Cornwall currently has one major public through-trail and numerous smaller trails. The Mohawk Trail starts in Cornwall Bridge, goes over Coltsfoot and Mohawk Mountain, and exits Cornwall near Dean’s Ravine. It connects with the Appalachian Trail at both ends. Smaller public trails include those in Mohawk State Forest (including the unique Black Spruce Bog), the Mattatuck Trail, and trails in Gold Pines. Recently the Cornwall Conservation Trust established public hiking trails at its Hart Farm Preserve, Day Preserve, and Rattlesnake Road Preserve. The Mohawk and Mattatuck trails are maintained by the Connecticut Forest and Park Association. The Cornwall Conservation Trust maintains the trails on their properties.

Public access points to the Housatonic River are provided in West Cornwall and at Housatonic Meadows in Cornwall Bridge. These access points are very important to maintain, protect, and enhance for fisherman, boaters, and others who wish to enjoy the river.





D. Areas That Protect Public Health and Safety

1. Floodplains.

Most of the natural disasters that have affected Connecticut in the past 100 years have involved flooding. Connecticut's vulnerability to this natural hazard is evidenced by the property damage, loss of utilities, and loss of life that has resulted from major flooding events. Floodprone areas in Cornwall, as defined by FEMA, are shown on the Water Resources Map in the Appendix of this report. This map shows the 100 year floodplain, which is the area of the community with a 1% chance of flooding in any given year. These areas are important for public health and safety because they provide critical storage space for floodwaters. Development should be strictly regulated in these areas to prevent any expansion of the flood zone, minimize damage from flooding, and to protect the existing flood storage function. Acquiring flood prone areas for open space protection should be considered where feasible. The existing floodplain regulations in Cornwall should be compared with DEP's recently released "Model Floodplain Management Regulations" and revised as appropriate.

2. Wetlands.

The Water Resources Map in the Appendix also shows the geographic extent of wetland soils in Cornwall. These areas are important for public health and safety because they serve as flood storage areas for storm water run-off. They also provide important ecological functions including providing an adequate supply of surface and ground water, providing for hydrological stability and control of erosion, recharging and purifying groundwater, and providing valuable habitat for animal, aquatic, and plant life. Due to the importance of these areas, Connecticut's Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act was passed. The regulation of any disturbance to these areas in Cornwall is provided by Cornwall's Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency.

3. High yield stratified drift aquifer recharge areas.

An adequate supply of high quality drinking water is a basic human need. Cornwall has several locations of high yielding groundwater aquifers, and these areas are important to protect. The Water Resources Map in the Appendix shows the location of these aquifers, and Cornwall's Zoning regulations include an "Aquifer Protection Overlay Zone" to protect these areas. According to the regulations, "Land uses which pose a potential threat to groundwater supply should not be permitted within the zone in order to protect these supplies for drinking water use."

4. Steep slope and other unbuildable areas.

Development on steep slopes exceeding 25%, inland wetland soils, floodplains, and other lands with severe limitations for development can have a significant adverse impact on public health and safety. Due to this concern the Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission adopted a "buildable area" provision in the zoning regulations. The purpose of the regulation is to assure that future residential lots have a reasonable shape generally free from severe limitation to building development. In effect, the buildable area requirement establishes an environmental performance standard for new development in town. The regulation helps to (1) protect Cornwall's rural landscape by minimizing land grading and disturbance, (2) reduce the potential for severe soil erosion and sedimentation and the resultant adverse impacts on water quality, and (3) encourage environmentally sound land development and design.

E. Cultural Resource Protection

1. Scenic ridgelines.

A ridgeline is a line along the summit of a mountain formed by the crest of two slopes. For the purposes of this report, both summits and ranges will be included in this discussion of ridgelines. Cornwall's ridgelines are a part of the Berkshire Mountain range of the Appalachians, which runs from Berkshire County in Massachusetts south through both Litchfield and Fairfield Counties in Connecticut. They hold aesthetic as well as ecological value, and it should be recognized that the character of Cornwall is in large due to its scenic, unspoiled views.

Prominent mountains in Cornwall are Coltsfoot, Quarry Hill, White Rock, Dean Hill, Bald, Mine, and Green Mountain. In terms of ecologic importance, land incorporating Cornwall's ridgelines provide 3 types of wildlife habitats as described by the King's Mark report: upland forest, upland woodland and shrub, and upland herbaceous. Also, as a part of the Housatonic Major Drainage Basin, ridgelines in Cornwall direct surface water to the Housatonic River. In addition to protecting the quality of water entering the river, it is also important to protect the quality of water that supplies Cornwall's two lakes: Mohawk Pond and Cream Hill Lake. The health of these two bodies of water is dependent upon the type and degree of human activity in the surrounding areas. Should activity increase in an unchecked manner and create more run-off to the lakes, higher nutrient levels would raise the rate of eutrophication.

The economic value of unspoiled ridgelines is evident in property values and revenue generated by tourists. Recreational

activities, including hiking, kayaking and rafting, fishing, and skiing, provide residents and visitors with ways to enjoy the local scenery.

Ridgelines visible from the Housatonic River and from main and scenic roads should be under strict protection. Map 3 of this report illustrates some of the major ridgelines that merit protection. These include Coltsfoot Mountain as seen from Cornwall Village, Buck Mountain as seen from the Cumberland Flats area, and Cream Hill as seen from Town Street. A detailed investigation of opportunities for protecting ridgelines should be undertaken. This may involve improved regulation of house siting, additional construction limitations, and restriction on tree removal. This is considered of high priority to ensure that the scenic vistas in Cornwall from the town centers, main roads, trails and rivers will not be disrupted.

2. Scenic Roads.

Scenic Road designation can help mitigate some of the effects of development that would be damaging to Cornwall's rural character. The State of Connecticut controls the designation of all state highways. Currently, only Route 7 has that designation. This Plan recommends that applications be made to also designate Routes 4, 43 and 45 as State Scenic Roads. Town roads may also be designated as scenic if the town adopts a Scenic Road ordinance. With adoption of an enabling ordinance, a road might be designated as scenic if the majority of homeowners on that road vote for that designation. This Plan recommends that Cornwall adopt a Scenic Road Ordinance and that Cherry Hill, Cream Hill, Flat Rocks, Great Hill, Popple Swamp, River (Lower and Upper), and Valley Road and Town Street residents consider scenic road designation of their roads.

REPORT OF THE CORNWALL PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION ON THE RESULTS OF THE TOWN PLAN FORUM JUNE 23, 2007

Approximately 70 citizens participated in the June 23 town plan forum held at the Cornwall Consolidated School. This includes the Planning and Zoning Commissioners and other citizens who served as facilitators and recorders.

The group assembled was fully involved and seemed to enjoy the opportunity to learn what the Commission has accomplished to date and most particularly to offer their comments and suggestions for developing the Town Plan.

There were 7 room – group sessions and the results of the offerings from these sessions provides the Planning and Zoning Commission a direct insight into the what the townspeople consider to be important as well as many good ideas for the Commission’s consideration.

The citizens assembled at this forum were substantial in number and they offered a wide variety of views. These residents freely spoke their minds, listened to others and worked to reach a consensus within each of the group sessions. The results provided here rely on the ideas/comments/recommendations that were ranked by each group as important. There were many other ideas and comments offered which are all of interest. These results are very valuable for the purpose of preparing a town plan for Cornwall.

The Planning and Zoning Commission is currently forming subcommittees to assist the Commission with its work on preparing the Town Plan. Each Committee will begin its work by reviewing the results of this forum and using the ideas and recommendations provided by the citizens at the forum as one of the essential elements guiding their committee work.

Summary of Results

Affordable Housing

Highest Ranked Issue: Overall the issue that was ranked highest by almost every group was the need for affordable housing for the locals who need it. This includes especially the younger set looking for a starter home and older persons looking for smaller modest cost housing. One group summed it up this way: “Help make it possible for residents to live in Cornwall through all changes in their lives.”

Ideas/Recommendations: One group ranked high (3 stars) the recommendation to “encourage small house size/limit”. Another group ranked at the top “preserve the mixed community – parcel program”. By implication all groups support this of the Cornwall Housing Corporation. The Corporation acquires or constructs affordable housing and the dwelling sold to a qualified buyer while the Corporation retains ownership of the land. The program is supported under the current Zoning Regulation which allows an affordable house to be constructed on an undersized lot subject to a Special Exception permit.

There several new ideas including using the local property taxation system to “adjust” taxes on existing homes to make existing housing less expensive. Some communities have offered tax breaks to elderly residents and this appears to be the thought offered here.

All groups offering suggestions on affordable housing recognized that developing new affordable housing units was a necessity and also cited “rentals” and “maintaining existing (affordable) housing stock” as ways to address this critical issue. Affordable “accessory apartments” was a ranked recommendation of one group and the comments from almost all groups indicates continued support for this option.

Location of Affordable Housing

It was revealing to find that most groups felt that affordable housing should be dispersed around the community.

Most groups embraced “cluster development” as a principle that needs to be followed. One cited the need for “smart growth”. There was also a general acknowledgement that “clustering” housing could reduce housing costs and allow inclusion of “affordable” housing units.

One group cited the need for “centralized elderly housing” with the intent of focusing elderly housing in centers or villages.

In terms of focusing new development in the town centers one group ranked “encourage village centered developments” (two stars). Another ranked high “Increased population in already built up areas and in cluster zoning developments”. A third group cited but did not rank “focus development in town centers”.

Affordable Housing and Open Space Linked

In several cases “affordable housing” was linked to “preservation of open space” in the sense that these are two preeminent issues and deserve equal attention in the Town Plan and by local government.

This suggests that if an effort is made to protect open space by the Town and the location of the land offers and opportunity for providing affordable housing that this should be pursued together. The Merz property project is a good example of a town project that merges these two goals. The results of the forum endorse this two pronged approach by the Town and non profit organizations.

Theme: Social Discourse, Sense of Community and Support for Seniors and Teens

As one would guess the goals of “conserving open space, protecting the environment and especially retaining the rural character” appeared high all of the group lists. “Economic development” was another top ranking issue. These will be discussed further in a moment.

The theme that perhaps was most surprising and that ran through many of the group discussions was one that could be called the need to sustain Cornwall’s “sense of community”. This focused on the importance of developing a plan that provides places and venues that engender and encouraging social interaction/discourse. Most all of this was directed at the need to pay more attention to the social and practical needs of seniors and teens.

One group made this their top objective. But this was cited as a need and theme throughout the group discussions. Citizens feel a real need to provide opportunities for seniors and teens to socialize and for senior supports services, such as car pooling. Observations were made in several groups that the social fabric of the Cornwall was deteriorating for a lack of opportunities for social interchange. One group observed that with the meat market closed and with the demise of a number of other civic traditions that brought people together the only remaining place for meeting and discussion was the town dump!

Remedy’s were offered: “target town planning for seniors”, provide “shuttles to save gas”, “keep up communication and discourse on town issues”, “improve social opportunities for teens” (such as a “late night coffee shop and music venues”), “encourage balance between old timers/newcomers and full/part timers”. Another ranked suggestion was to improve “opportunities to bring generations together”.

Other groups offered allied suggestions such as the need for “increased community interaction”, more “community conversations” to solve local problems and address local needs. Others cited the importance of “maintaining the volunteer pool” (for local emergency services and boards and commissions), creating “places (for citizens/residents) to gather” and “socialization”.

One group recommended looking back at all the good things done by past generations in Cornwall and build on that by creating a “mentoring program”. This program would seek encourage community involvement and support by learning from and “copying the generosity of past generations”.

It was also suggested that a program should be established to visit with new comers to the Town with the goal of instilling the volunteer spirit of Cornwall.

Economic Development

A common theme resonating with almost all groups was “economic development” must be a priority. Most mentioned was

the need to reinforce and improve business development in the town's two business centers - Cornwall Bridge and West Cornwall.

It was widely recognized that improved economic development would help meet many goals that are important to Cornwall; strengthen the economic base, relieve residential property taxes, and help keep young families in Cornwall

One group added that business development was important but it should be "in keeping with the rural character of the town". The need to promote increased business activity by local residents was cited. It was suggested that the Cornwall Bridge commercial activity could improve if it became more pedestrian friendly. It was suggested all commercial areas should be at a "human scale".

Small non-retail business (10 – 75 workers) was seen as a priority by one group. Another offered specific incentives to "encourage/create maximum economic activity". This included: "Minimum footprint, preservation and encouragement of economic and social diversity, preservation and encouragement of natural environment."

One group urged that the town become "more creative about supporting and using local businesses – step it up a level". This group also suggested "expand business in residential zones – maybe not occupied by the owner".

Conservation and Preservation

Conservation, preservation and retaining rural character was a highlight in all groups.

One group ranked "preservation of the agricultural community" with 4 stars calling action to save farmland, to preserve a critical mass of farmland and to retain and attract farmers.

EAT Cornwall was repeated in several groups and was a ranked goal. This slogan is aimed at encourage local residents and others to consume Cornwall produce and to support town farmers.

Protected Places. Most groups identified categories of land/features that should be protected (e.g. ridgelines, farmland). However one group provided a detailed list of special places that should be a high priority for preservation/protection. Others offered some specific examples.

Among the regulation techniques supported was "cluster" housing which was cited as a way to save open space and provide housing. Also mentioned was use of "conservation subdivision", "transfer of development rights, and the need to create a "fund to purchase land, using federal and or other outside funds". One group suggested special zoning to protect: "environmental and open fields, farming and historical" areas.

Priorities cited for protection included:

Ridgeline protection, historic district (two groups), maintain cemeteries, habitat corridors, key habitats (forests, rivers, farms),

Others placed some focus on what they did not want in Cornwall including: night light pollution (ranked), cell phone towers, golf courses, wildlife fragmentation, weak wetland rules, sand dumped on beaches.

Conservation goals cited included: cluster development, "green" opportunities, "solar/renewable, etc.", protect views (long list provided by one group) and "special places" (another good list by one group). Both of these lists will be reviewed and considered for ranking as priorities in the Town Plan.

Maintaining scenic views was a two star ranking by one group. Another offered "increased zoning acreage for scenic places" and recommended protecting ridgelines, views, valleys, and fields.

Another suggestions was to "identify rural characteristics and develop guidelines accordingly" (two stars) and "identify/re-zone high and low density areas and areas to be protected" (three stars).

Rev. to Aug. 07 and approved by the PZC

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Safety/Traffic/Parking/ and Other Recommended Improvements - Issues

Signs are needed entering the village center of W. Cornwall providing information on the services provided in the center This needs to be placed on Rt. 7.

Need the State of Ct to deal with the speeding problem in the W.Cornwall center area. The down hill traffic speeding into the center is especially dangerous to citizens attempting to cross the road at Post Office.

Traffic calming measures are needed in W.Cornwall to slow down speeding and encourage visitors to stop and shop.

A small “radar” sign is needed on the approach to the W.Cornwall center to warn speeders coming down the hill that speed is checked by radar and strictly enforced.

Such a radar sign can be operated on solar power showing the actual speed of violators.

Need concerted plan to influence State of Connecticut policies and changes needed to benefit Cornwall, such as permitting signs to slow speeding entering W. Cornwall center.

In order to urge the State to take action on speeding issues the Town should hold a referendum on this issue and send a message to Hartford.

Visitors:

75% of the visitors to W.Cornwall cross the covered bridge take in a view of the center and the bridge then turn around the rotary and go back to Rt. 7 without stopping and visiting W. Cornwall.

It was suggested that a pavilion is needed in W Cornwall to provide a place for visitors to ask questions and receive information on the services and events in W Cornwall.

Sidewalk/Curbing:

A sidewalk is needed in W. Cornwall between the Moose and the Wish House. This would add to the village character and improve business access.

The State constructed sidewalks in W. Cornwall and this was imposed on the village. The sidewalks are not helping and we do not need more sidewalks.

The curbing installed by the State in the W.Cornwall village center area has limited the opportunity for parking along the State road (and it should be removed).

It was suggested that the town or the State revise the metal railings and posts on the 3 bridges in W Cornwall and refurbish these with wooden railings in a manner consistent with the historic and rural appearance of W Cornwall.

Planning General

Need a comprehensive plan and study of W.Cornwall that takes into account the wishes of the citizens, identifies the needs and the opportunities to improve and develop the center area.

Any plan for W. Cornwall must be a part of an overall Plan for the entire town. W. Cornwall is one of 3 villages. The plan for the Town should be a plan that views each village in the context of the long term development of the town. The villages should not be viewed as 3 independent entities.

A town plan must look 20 years ahead and anticipate the needs of the community over that time span. For example Kent is changing in anticipation of the increased growth in New Milford and the movement of development north of New Milford. Cornwall appears to be the next town in the wave of development expanding from the south and east. The plan needs to address how Cornwall will deal with this coming change.

The plan for W Cornwall must be designed to respect the sensitive environmental features of the center area, especially the Housatonic River.

Suggested that the Town Plan should acknowledge that Cornwall Bridge is the only “real” commercial village center in Cornwall, i.e. CB has the size and location to provide a range of commercial services (bank, stores, PO, etc). West Cornwall on the other hand could be planned as a “family business” or “boutique” type of specialized commercial area. Perhaps a commercial “theme” could be designed for West Cornwall such as the antique shopping area in Woodbury.

West Cornwall is not suited as a commercial village center. The limited existing businesses are great but there should be no urgency to add more commercial in W Cornwall. Advise going slow on making any major changes to the W Cornwall zoning and planning as it is.

The Sharon side of the Housatonic River is effectively a part of the centers of Cornwall Bridge and W. Cornwall. The citizens and business owners on the Sharon side should be made a part of the planning for these two village centers.

One business owner suggested that the survey of business and other properties in terms of building potential should be followed up with personal interviews with each of the business owners in W. Cornwall. Need to hear about business owner needs / issues first hand and this would help with the development of a plan for the center area.

Favor business uses in W Cornwall provided the business uses “fit” the center area especially in terms of the historic and rural character of the center.

West Cornwall needs a place for social gatherings of citizens especially for teenagers.

5,000 to 6,000 visitors (fishermen related) a year were lost in W Cornwall when the CL and P converted the Housatonic power plant releases from timed releases to “free flow”. One suggested that the town should urge CL and P to revert to the timed release program. Another felt that the free flow as better for fly fishing and for the environment and should remain.

Assistance to and Collaboration by Business Owners to Improve Business

Two commented that the “town hall” (especially Planning and Zoning) was not helpful in assisting business owners in securing permits and other improvements needed to establish and improve their local businesses. Another commented that the town hall folks were helpful.

Village center zoning was discussed and one commented that it has the potential to be of assistance to the village center business and residents. Another said that we need less not more zoning and restrictions (this comment was meant with some vocal agreement).

The Torrington Area Health District rules and “bureaucratic” application of its rules has been a serious obstacle to the expansion of business use in W. Cornwall. It was suggested that the town should consider a local sanitarian and perhaps withdrawing from the TAHD. Could Cornwall and Sharon share a sanitarian?

High rents in W Cornwall are one of the main impediments to the expansion of local businesses. We are coming into more difficult economic times and the town and west Cornwall business community needs to band together to address the challenges posed by a recession.

Trails:

It was suggested that there is the beginnings of a hiking trail in W Cornwall which could be extended to connect W Cornwall and Cornwall Bridge. Problems with this concept were cited including the fact that it is almost impossible to get approval for a new crossing of the RR tracks. It was also mentioned that in the C.Bridge center area a trail would cross some private property and back yards and that this would be an imposition on property owners.

Suggestions Regarding Planning for Specific Properties in West Cornwall:

CL and P Property in W Cornwall: The town and W.Cornwall needs to create a vision for the future use of the CL and P property in West Cornwall. This is a key large parcel on the river and it will be very important to the future of W. Cornwall.

- It was noted that the Library will be able to use a part of this property for a septic field enabling the library in W Cornwall to have a bathroom which it never has had before.
- Also noted that the Selectmen are working with CL and P to provide a possible public bathroom facility on the CL and P property for W.Cornwall visitors/tourists.

Pink House: It was stated that the “pink” house in W Cornwall is a key building in the village center and that the town needs to work on this. It was mentioned that the house is owned by an historic foundation and that the Selectmen are in communication with the owners regarding the future of this building.