

# Plan of Conservation and Development Update

Planning & Zoning Commission  
Woodstock, Connecticut  
June 1, 2015

# Woodstock Plan of Conservation & Development Update - 2014

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*Town of Woodstock*  
Plan of Conservation and Development - 2014

*Written by Woodstock Town Planner Delia P Fey, AICP  
Reviewed and approved by Woodstock Planning and Zoning Commission*

This Plan of Conservation and Development was prepared and adopted in accordance with the provisions of section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended. It is based on a thorough review of existing land use regulations and past development, along with public input from informational meetings held during 2009 and 2010, data gathered from an on-line survey in 2011, responses to questionnaires sent to all town boards, commissions and staff members, and public discussions conducted by a designated subcommittee of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

In accordance with the requirements of CGS 8-23, topics include:

- A community development action plan.
- An examination of the availability of affordable housing.
- Protection of existing and potential public drinking water supplies.
- The use of cluster development and other development patterns, consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity.
- Conformity with the state Plan of Conservation and Development and the regional plan.

Although this plan was approved by the Woodstock Planning and Zoning Commission, it is an advisory document only. Changes to land use regulations, subdivision requirements or zone changes can only be implemented by formal action of the Commission.



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## Introduction: Changes Since 2002

The Woodstock *2014 Plan of Conservation and Development* (POCD) builds upon the 2002 POCD and integrates subsequent work conducted by Woodstock's Boards and Commissions. The focus of the 2014 POCD (aka "Master Plan") remains to retain Woodstock's rural agricultural character while accommodating growth.

There have been significant changes since the 2002 POCD was completed, both on the federal and state levels as well as locally. These include a revision to the Connecticut POCD and the Route 169 National Scenic Corridor protections.

Woodstock hired a Town Planner, set aside funds to assist those wishing to preserve their land, and partnered with residents, land trusts, and the State and Federal government in preserving farmland from development. These efforts were spearheaded by the Board of Selectmen, Open Space Acquisition Commission, Agriculture Commission (Committee), Conservation Commission, and the Planning and Zoning Commission. In addition, the Planning and Zoning Commission updated the land use regulations (*Zoning Regulations* and *Subdivision Regulations*) to better organize and clarify these documents and to strengthen the town-wide goals regarding agricultural and conservation standards and development opportunities.

Implementation of the Woodstock *2014 Plan of Conservation and Development* will help to assure that Woodstock remains one of Connecticut's finest examples of a rural agricultural community in which people wish to live, work and play.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey A. Gordon" with "MD" written as a superscript to the right.

Dr. Jeffrey Gordon, Chair, Woodstock Planning and Zoning Commission

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David M. Fortin".

David Fortin, Chair, Regulation Review/POCD Subcommittee

**Woodstock Plan of Conservation & Development Update - 2014**

**Woodstock Planning and Zoning Commission**

**2014 Update of the Plan of Conservation and Development**

**Members of the Commission**

Dr. Jeffrey Gordon, Commission Chair

David Fortin, Chair, Regulation Review (POCD review) Subcommittee

Joseph Adiletta	John Anastasi	Syd Blodgett
Dr. Gail Dickinson *	Dorothy Durst	Douglas Porter
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The Woodstock Planning and Zoning Commission wishes to thank

**TOWN PLANNER DELIA FEY, AICP**

who organized public forums, created the text for the 2014 revision of the Plan of Conservation and Development, and worked with the Regional Planning Agency as well as local elected and appointed officials to present a guiding document for use over the next ten years of Woodstock's history.

\* Members who served on the 2002 POCD Revision Committee

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The Woodstock Planning and Zoning Commission wishes to thank all members of the public, Woodstock Boards, Commissions and Town staff for their input in creating this document.

### **Town Details**

The Town of Woodstock lies immediately south of the Massachusetts border and eight miles west of the Rhode Island line. To the east are the Connecticut towns of Thompson and Putnam, to the west are the towns of Union and Eastford and to the south is Pomfret.

Woodstock is the second largest town in the state, encompassing 61.8 square miles, but with an average density of just 128 persons per square mile, or one person for every five acres, the town has retained its small-town charm. That is exemplified by its several historic villages, some of which still have a neighborhood church, library and post-office.

In *Winds of Change*, Margaret McClellan told a story about the “many Woodstocks”:

*A visitor to the town stopped in North Woodstock to ask if this was Woodstock. “No,” was the reply, “this is North Woodstock.” “Well,” asked the visitor, “does this road lead to Woodstock?” “No,” was the reply again, “it leads to South Woodstock.” “And where does that road go?” asked the visitor. “Oh, that goes to West Woodstock.” “And where is Woodstock?” “Well, you’re in Woodstock,” was the baffling reply. The visitor gave up in despair.<sup>i</sup>*

The long history of Woodstock is evinced by the many fine historic homes that remain in use today, including on Woodstock Hill, originally known as Plaine Hill, which was the center of the New Roxbury settlement of 1686. The original settlement was set out following the English tradition, with house lots arranged around a center consisting of a meeting house and common surrounded with planting fields (Wakely, p.2). This pattern of settlement is emblematic of New England villages and Woodstock’s villages offer largely unspoiled examples.

*In the Town of Woodstock, Connecticut there is no separation between what is “agriculture” and what is “community”. They are a marriage. Without agriculture the very essence of the community would be something other. And without the community there would not be the necessary support and services for farming.<sup>ii</sup>*

### **History of Woodstock**

Agriculture has been the most predominant land use throughout the history of Woodstock and still shapes much of the landscape. This agricultural history began long before European settlement, when Native Americans practiced a type of farming that became known as ‘swidden horticulture’<sup>iii</sup>, moving plantings to fresh plots each year while planting together crops that benefitted each other.

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In 1686, residents from Massachusetts settled the area and called it New Roxbury. These new residents adopted European agricultural practices where they established fields that were planted with single crops and used year after year. The classic rudimentary stone walls that checkerboard the landscape are the detritus left by many years of plowing Woodstock's glacial moraines.



From the Collection of the Woodstock Historical Society

### **Community Update: Changes in Land Use Since the Adoption of the 2002 POCD**

The previous Plan of Conservation and Development was completed in 2002 as the collaborative effort of many people. There have been significant land use regulatory changes since then.

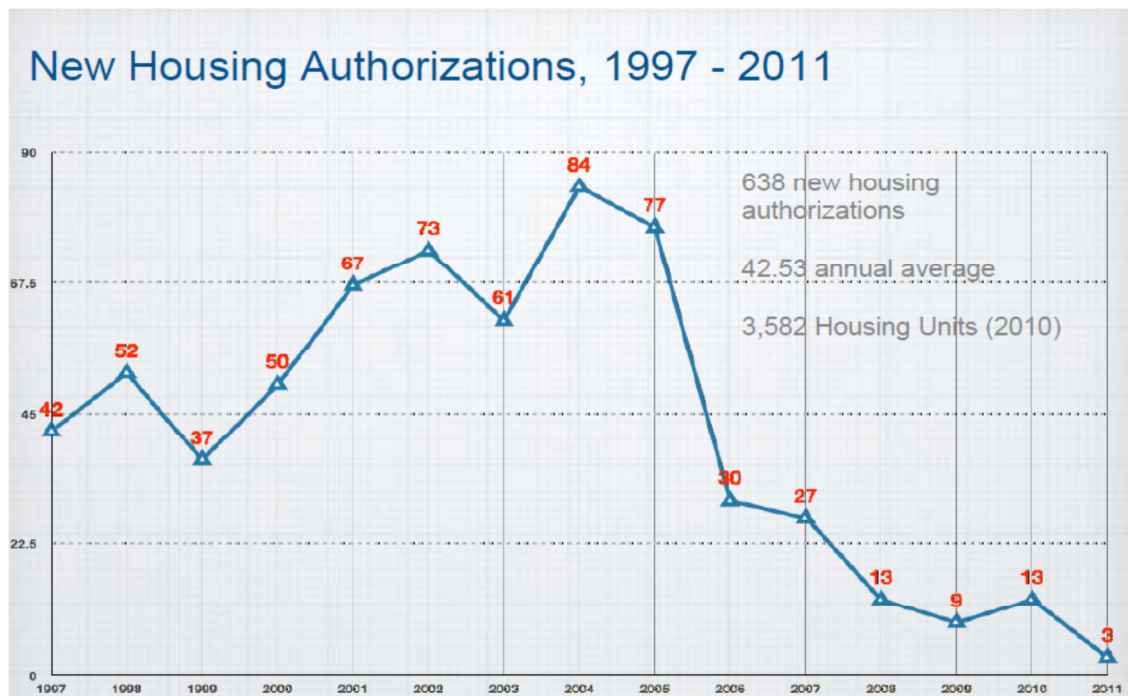
A 2003 text amendment to the Zoning Regulations allowed the creation of a new floating zone in Woodstock, the Village Green District. In 2014, both a text amendment and a zone change were approved creating the new Lake District zone which includes all land within the separate, existing Lake Tax Districts. Woodstock now has three zones or land use districts in town: the Community District, which encompasses a majority of the town; the Lake District and; the Industrial Park District near the Putnam town line. The Village Green District floating zone is an option for developers, but has yet to be pursued.



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In a 2005 text amendment to the Subdivision and Zoning Regulations, the minimum lot size was increased from 2 to 2.5 acres per dwelling, and a requirement was established that at least 50 percent of the buildable area in each subdivision or re-subdivision be set aside as conservation land. The intent of this change was to require the conservation method of subdivision design, which by placing homes closer together and leaving open space around them creates an overall impression of lower population density, as was recommended in the 2002 POCD Update.

Development trends in Woodstock have followed the fluctuations in the national economy. Since 1995, there was a steady increase in demand for residential development. This was followed by a sharp decline with the bursting of the real estate bubble in 2008 with the onset of the Great Recession. The sharp drop in development was attributable to both a drop in demand and the increased difficulty in acquiring mortgages as lenders were forced to tighten their requirements. As a result, subdivision and re-subdivision applications dropped significantly.



Source: Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, also contained in the Buildout Analysis.

## **Population Growth and Change**

According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health 2012 data, the population rose an overall 572 people to a total of 7,904; a 7.8 percent gain since 2001 according to the population data noted in the 2002 POCD Update.

The Connecticut State Data Center at UCONN projects that Woodstock's population will be 8,864 by the year 2025, which would be an increase of 960 people or 12.1%. Based on the year 2000 average household of 2.54 persons, this would mean an additional 378 households; however, the national trend toward larger extended families living in one household may reduce that number, as would people moving into existing but vacant housing. An improvement in the real estate market could also promote development of the 471 vacant subdivision lots. As a desirable and attractive community, Woodstock can expect to continue to see an influx of new residents moving from neighboring towns and states, but the sometimes-rugged geography and plentiful wet areas in town will continue to have a significant braking effect on what might otherwise be a higher than expected level of development.

The 2013 Town of Woodstock Build-Out Analysis, prepared by Jim Larkin of the Northeast Connecticut Council of Governments, estimated that 55 percent of the town, or 20,953 acres, consists of environmentally sensitive areas. Those include slopes over 25 percent, wetlands, water bodies, streams, and upland review areas. Under local regulations, those areas can be developed only minimally or not at all. That leaves 16,800 acres available for future development under current land use regulations, although those are subject to change.

## **Gathering Public Input**

Public input for this update was conducted via public informational meetings held in 2009 and 2010; results from questionnaires sent to all Boards, Commissions and Town staff; an online survey conducted in 2011; and informational meetings conducted by the subcommittee of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

A summary and review of the public input received follows in the appendix. For each of the identified challenges, goals, policies and action steps, it was derived from the public input, followed by specific recommendations for policy objectives and land use management strategies designed to promote the overall health, welfare and safety of current and future residents.

## **Concerns and Opportunities in Land Use**

The following subjects related to land use have been identified by the Planning and Zoning Commission as important topics in need of further review. Those reviews may result in changes to land use management regulations and policies.

### **Community Character**

#### **Maintaining a Sense of Place**

While every town and city needs to consider the impact of new development on its character, it is especially important to do so in a town like Woodstock where historic character is such a salient element.

#### **The Challenges in Retaining Community Character**

The challenges of maintaining the community character and ‘a sense of place’ is balancing the evolving needs of the community with the rights of property owners. For example, regulations that promote development in villages while prohibiting or sharply curbing it in other areas would be problematical, as the development value of some property might be adversely affected.

The growth of a community creates new demands on the municipality, including the need to build or update schools, libraries, the town hall, fire stations, highway department, parks and athletic fields, and to upgrade existing roads and assume responsibility for new ones.

Woodstock is presently well-positioned in that regard. The Highway Department has been expanded and improved to the point where it can meet demands well into the future. The Town Hall, built in 1989, has been well maintained and offers ample space for town offices and community meetings; it is also set up to serve as an emergency shelter in times of natural disaster or crisis.

- In the past Woodstock’s villages and remote areas of town had basic services nearby, such as general stores and small gas stations. Today there is not a single gas station in town, and most of the small stores are long gone, unlikely to return because of daily commuting and other changes in the lifestyles of residents. The negative side of this equation is that residents must drive considerable distances in some cases just to buy a loaf of bread. The positive side is that it is unlikely any large retail operations, housed in what many residents feel are unattractive modern buildings, are likely to locate in town.
- Change is inevitable but not necessarily negative. People will move to Woodstock to start a new life in the country for their families, to enjoy their golden years, to start a farm as a vocation or hobby, or to return home after an absence. Some will build new homes and others will modify existing ones. This growth will be added to the number of local youths who remain here when they become adults and have families. Guided

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by intelligent regulations, growth will change the community without changing it too much.

- To accomplish that, the Planning and Zoning Commission may have to decide whether to change such regulations as lot-size requirements, or even whether Woodstock should be divided into more traditional zones that allow specific activities and which have specific requirements for development.

### **Land Use Goals relating to Community Character**

- Encourage enhancement of the villages by promoting land uses that allow new development while retaining the look, feel and function of a village.
  - Land use policies that support a village community include having a walkable setting, landscaping and appropriate signage. Street-, side- and rear-setbacks on existing buildings should be applied as much as possible to new construction to retain the present look and feel of the villages. Excessive parking requirements should not be allowed to overwhelm the neighborhood or disrupt the pattern of existing development.

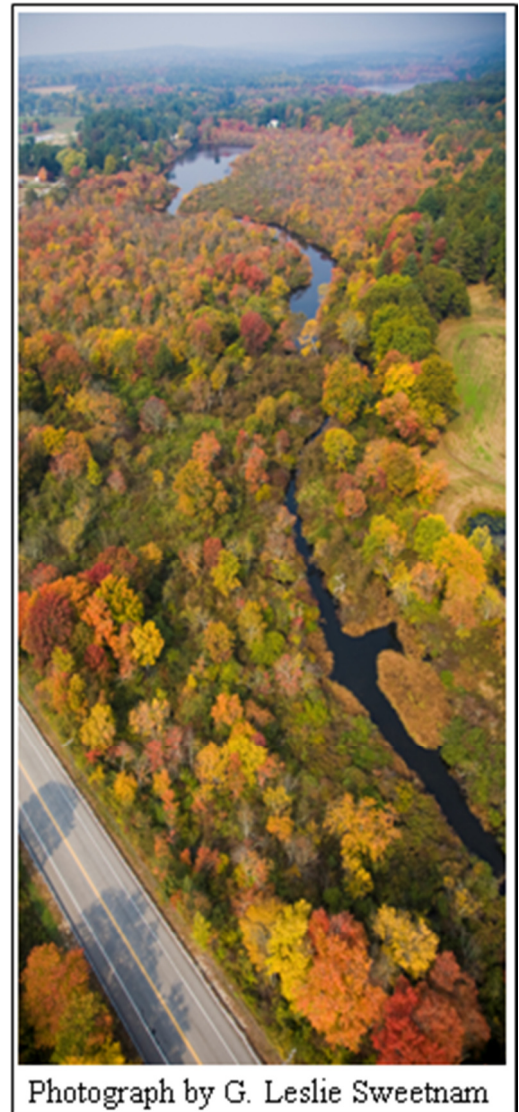
### **Recommended Policy Changes and Action Steps relating to Community Character**

- Identify existing village(s) that could be appropriate for small-scale mixed-use development. This could help the town meet affordable housing goals.
- Create a new application process that would allow for a certain specified list of mixed uses in the identified villages via staff level review. The new process could be limited to properties where no new construction or site modifications are necessary, such as cases where the building simply has a new tenant. Town land use staff would report a list of these applications to the Planning and Zoning Commission.
- Create exceptions to the Special Permit process for a specific list of uses, possibly in designated areas such as villages, which would not involve any major change. This would encourage an influx of desirable small businesses into the community without the perceived barrier of the more formal Special Permit application.
- Review the list of Permitted Uses vs. Special Permitted Uses to see if they encourage new growth and development to occur in community-compatible ways. If some uses are found to be compatible in only certain parts of town, consideration should be made for creating a new zone(s) that would allow these uses while ensuring that the development is appropriate for the community.
- Integrated Development: New development can occur by following performance standards and other regulations that are devised with the goals of blending new development into an existing neighborhood in ways that result in a positive integration.



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- Consider developing performance standards within the Zoning Regulations for new nonresidential development which could aid in minimizing negative impact on the villages. Performance standards could involve minimums or even maximum standards for setbacks. As an example, in village settings, regulations could encourage new development to be compatible and consistent with the existing environment.
- Consider developing Design Guidelines which could provide descriptive and helpful details on how to design compatible development that respects the heritage and character of the community.
- Consider adding standards via a regulation amendment that requires new development to include such features of the new construction as landscaping, lighting fixtures and designed parking areas that work with the subject property. The standards would be flexible enough to allow for achieving compliance with the least disruption to the property and the neighborhood.
  - An example of this would be to allow for parking at a small business where it would fit on the lot; sometimes this might be on the side of the building, in the rear of the building or even all or partly in front of a building. If new development is to be compatible with the existing community, the standards cannot be consistent throughout town.
  - Landscaping design guidelines, intended to make development community-compatible, would take into account the subject property's current layout and space available for various forms of appropriate landscaping.
  - Screening should be encouraged and varied, depending on the intended purpose. Solid fencing, shrubbery or a stone wall can all serve as effective



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screens for objects, such as dumpsters, parking areas or parts of the structure.

### **Natural Resources**

*Set in the Windham Hills, an area with a mix of high land with long, sweeping hills and numerous streams and valleys, Woodstock has long been known for its scenery and natural resources<sup>v</sup>.*

Woodstock has a wide variety of wildlife that inhabit the natural and diverse landscape, from backyards to areas of Atlantic White Cedar swamps. Animals include, for example, bobcat, plentiful white-tail deer, raccoon, skunk, and wild turkey. The landscape ranges from hilly and wooded forestry tracts to gently sloping meadows. It is creased by cascading brooks and streams and dotted with natural and man-made ponds and lakes. The latter include Black Pond, Crystal Lake, Chamberlain Lake, Hatchet Pond, Lake Bunggee, Johnstone Pond, Keach Pond, Morse Meadow Pond, Muddy Pond, Porter Pond, Roseland Lake, Sampson Pond, Shepherd's Pond, Wappaquasset Pond (Quasset Lake) and Witches Woods Lake. Natural resources include good agricultural soils. Woodstock should keep its soils in mind when planning for open space, set-asides, and use of town-owned properties.

Almost all the homes in town rely on private wells and septic systems usually serving a single household. This means that each house must have a lot large enough for the home, driveway, well, septic system and the reserve septic system area, and sufficient distance between the well and leach field and neighboring wells and leach fields.

This minimum area is not consistent throughout town because the leaching capacity of the soil varies greatly in different places. All residential development must comply with the Public Health Code as well as with local Zoning and Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations.

The combination of the various regulations and development codes are intended to protect public health, but also to minimize the impact of development on the natural resources of the town to the benefit of present and future generations of humans and wildlife.

#### **Challenges regarding Natural Resources**

- Balancing a reasonable level of use on small Lake District lots without causing an undue negative impact on the water quality.

#### **Land Use Goals relating to Natural Resources**

- Development standards can be adjusted as needed via the text amendment process to serve the very small existing Lake District lots, as these lake neighborhoods have unique concerns relating directly to their population density and high levels of physical development compared to the rest of the town.

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- The setbacks within the newly created Lake District have been changed to be more consistent with the established neighborhood. Consistency in standards should aid in maintaining property values.

### **Recommended Policy Changes and Action Steps to Natural Resources**

- The Lake District should be reviewed to see how many undersized, i.e.: nonconforming, vacant properties exist in order to estimate any future impact from further residential development.
- The Permitted Uses in the Lake District should be reviewed after having the new District in place to see if all the listed uses are still compatible with the particular character and nature of the land. If necessary, the list could be revised with a focus on only allowing those uses that can reasonably be conducted on the small lots common to the lake neighborhoods.
- Changes should consider the importance of consistency between new and old development which should aid in maintaining property values against the value of making the proposed change.
- The Commission will review, before the next state-required review, the following as presented by the Conservation Commission: 2006 Little River Source Protection Plan; 2006 Little River Declared a Greenway by State of Connecticut; The Natchaug River System Basin Greenway; 2009 Little River, Muddy Brook, Roseland Lake Watershed Base Plan; 2011 Natchaug River Conservation Action Plan; 2012 Town Adoption of Locally Important Farm Soils and Community Farms Preservation Program.



Photograph by G. Leslie Sweetnam

LID has successfully been incorporated into the residential subdivisions at Wetherell Hill, Stone Hill, May Brook, Aplin Hill Lane; the nonresidential subdivision and special permit for Tufts University Veterinary Clinic on New Sweden Road; a bioretention/rain garden at the Woodstock Historical Society/ Palmer Arboretum; and an improved riparian buffer at the Roseland Golf Course.

## **Aquifers and Floodways**

### **Challenges regarding the Environment, specifically aquifer protection and floodways**

- The stratified drift (sand and gravel) aquifer located in eastern and southeastern portion of Woodstock provides a majority of the Putnam population with water via the public water supply or private wells. The fact that land use in Woodstock can affect the availability and quality of such an important resource requires extra caution when considering regulation changes affecting development.
- An important challenge regarding protecting the environment lies in protecting water quality through incorporating the most up-to-date engineering practices in the design

of new development, using best management practices during new construction, and having a good undisturbed natural buffer near environmentally sensitive areas, such as wetlands and watercourses.

- Low Impact Development (LID) methods of design and construction aim to more closely align the drainage for storm water and runoff within new development with that of the pre-development drainage systems. The main goal is to minimize drainage changes resulting from the development. Another goal is to maintain or even improve the quality of runoff by not mixing clean water with flow coming off roads and parking lots, as those are more likely to contain sediments and other contaminants.<sup>vi</sup> Woodstock current Subdivision and Zoning Regulations encourage LID methods.
- Most of Woodstock is in either the Putnam or Willimantic drinking water watersheds. Development occurring in Woodstock can have far-reaching impacts on the quality of drinking water in far-away communities.
- Nonpoint Source Pollution is a water quality challenge relating to pollutants “that are spread across the landscape that are not identified with a single point of discharge.” These pollutants are picked up by precipitation from contaminated soils, which are then carried into nearby water bodies and underground water supplies.<sup>vii</sup>
- This Plan recommends measures called Low Impact Development (LID). They can be implemented to address water quality issues in our watersheds by designing development in a way that will retain more of the precipitation within the local area.



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This gives drainage more time to infiltrate into the ground, restoring groundwater and reducing erosion, sedimentation and other impacts on water quality downstream. LID measures are many and include reducing the area of impervious surfaces which cause the water to run off the site where it falls and flows to another location. This flow can cause erosion and sedimentation along the way, compromising the water quality downstream.

### **Land Use Goals relating to the Environment, specifically aquifer protection and floodways**

- Consideration should be paid to whether changes should be made in the Zoning Regulations in terms of increasing protection of the local aquifer.
- Land Use Regulations in Woodstock take into account the need for protection of existing and potential public surface and ground drinking water supplies by including a strong sewer avoidance policy, by incorporating Low Impact Development (LID) methods of design where possible, and by setting a reasonable minimum lot size for new lots to prevent over-development.

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A collaborative effort of six Woodstock farms and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and partners worked to improve the farms' nutrient management practices in the following ways that resulted in significant improvements in water quality for the Little River Watershed. These achievements were made possible by the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

According to the USDA, NRCS, the improved nutrient management practices, included:

- *A collaboration with six farms to install waste storage facilities and improve management of nutrients applied to farm fields.*
- *Proper storage of over 19 million gallons of manure and waste water on an annual basis and preventing it from running off fields into the Little River Watershed.*
- *The removal of potentially 400,000 lbs. of nitrogen and 240,000 lbs. of phosphorus entering the Putnam public water supply watershed and Long Island Sound annually. These nutrients are utilized by crops rather than potentially polluting surface and ground water. This can also reduce the amount of commercial fertilizer used by the farms.*
- *Maintenance of the viability of farming in an area with very high development pressure, while improving the infrastructure of the farms for future generations by reducing both inputs and costs on fertilizer application.*
- *Three large dairy operations are utilizing multi-species cover crops to improve soil health.*
- *A reduction in odors during nutrient application, promoting better relationships on the urban/rural interface.*
- *The infusion of approximately \$3 million into the local economy.*

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### **Recommended policy change or action step regarding the environment, specifically aquifer protection and floodways**

- If it becomes evident that there is a problem with dwellings affecting water quality, consideration should be made for stricter regulations on development coverage, with particular attention to the problem of small, non-conforming lots.
- If necessary, limitations could be placed on the uses permitted within eastern and southeastern Woodstock, in order to further protect the stratified drift (sand and gravel) aquifer.

## **Land Conservation**

### **The Challenges relating to the Conservation of Land**

- Conservation of land can occur by voluntary donations from private owners to a land trust or to the municipality, by purchase of development rights or through the conservation set-aside requirement of the subdivision / re-subdivision process. Waiting for private parties with a personal or financial interest in conservation to step forward leaves the town with little to say about which properties, habitats, and areas of historical significance are saved and when.

### **Land Use Goals relating to the Conservation of Land**

- The most appropriate areas in town should be identified for the conservation / preservation or open space value they offer to the town so that when an acquisition opportunity arises, guidance is available regarding the preferred method of conservation or preservation. This map or area description need not be property specific; instead, it could rank the open space needs of each part of town so opportunities for the fee in-lieu option could be realized. The goal is to take advantage of the best opportunity, as it is presented, to meet the open space goals.
  - Areas of possible focus may be:
    - Sensitive wildlife habitats to have a priority for passive open space designation.
    - Greater residential development to have a priority for active recreation open space designation so that people can walk or bicycle to the open space and decrease the need for land devoted to parking spaces.
    - Historic significance to have a designation that respects their sensitivity while allowing for the potential of other land nearby to be used for other open space purposes.
    - Subdivision/resubdivision to pay fee-in lieu if the subdivision would not yield an open space parcel that meets previously specified criteria.
    - Conservation of land in Woodstock should include its possible use for agriculture, including forestry. Looking at the soils, parcel location and size, topography, and other physical aspects should be considered in conservation decisions.
  - If the guidance is available when subdivision/resubdivision applications are reviewed, the PZC will be prepared for how to evaluate the potential for the proposed open space to advance the over-arching open space goal, including when choosing the fee-in-lieu will help meet that goal.

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### **Recommended Policy Changes and Action Steps regarding the Conservation of Land**

- Develop a map of open space priorities to facilitate decision-making regarding whether to require either land as open space set-aside or the fee in-lieu option during subdivision/resubdivision process.
- Develop a list of criteria for the purposes of evaluating proposed open space set-asides and consider whether a greater open space goal could be achieved with the fee in-lieu funding alternative.
- Create a guiding open space goal that takes into account the bigger picture of what is desirable for the town as a whole. Each open space opportunity should be assessed with that goal in mind.
  - Wildlife Habitat: Meet this need by requiring open space set-asides in locations that would create larger wildlife corridors in lesser developed areas and/or in close proximity to other large previously protected lands.
  - Human Needs: Meet this need by providing for both active and passive forms of recreation.
  - Water Quality: Buffer sensitive environments from development while protecting both wildlife and water quality by requiring open space set-asides in applicable developments.

### **Public Act 490**

Public Act 490 was adopted in Woodstock on June 17, 1981. PA 490 has three categories for tax reduction on properties: farmland, forestry and open space. CGS 12-107a-f set the minimum acreage for the farming and forestry categories and left the open space minimum up to the Planning Commission in each town. At the time of the adoption, the Woodstock-specific minimum for the open space category was set at 2 acres.

### **Biggest Challenges relating to PA 490**

- The current minimum of 2 acres for the open space category is less than the current minimum lot size for residential uses in the Community District which is 2.5 acres.

### **Recommended Policy Change or Action Step regarding PA 490**

A lengthy discussion on the subject of what the minimum standard should be for the Open Space category of PA 490 was held at a Special Meeting of the PZC Subcommittee on January 9, 2014. Guest speakers were Joan Nichols, Director of Member Relations and Community Outreach, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association, and author of Connecticut's Land Use Value Public Act 490: A Practical Guide and Overview for Landowners, Assessors and Government Officials and Fred Chmura, Director of Assessments and Grants, CT Office of Policy and Management (retired), who had for many years extensive experience with PA

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490. The Subcommittee agreed to propose a revision of the current resolution regarding PA 490 as follows:

The adopted Woodstock Open Space Plan is found in the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Planning and Zoning Commission of the Town of Woodstock has concluded that the Woodstock Plan of Development should contain provisions which would (1) maintain and enhance the conservation of natural or scenic resources, (2) protect natural streams or water supplies, (3) promote conservation of soil and wetlands, (4) enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservation or sanctuaries or other open space, (5) enhance public recreation opportunities, (6) preserve historic sites or (7) promote orderly urban or suburban development; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has further concluded that one method to accomplish and foster such preservation would be to adopt the enabling legislation contained in Chapter 203 of the Connecticut General Statutes providing tax relief for owners of open space lands.

WHEREAS, in 2013 – 2014, the Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed the PA 490 policy regarding the minimum requirements for the open space category as part of updating the 2002 Plan of Conservation and Development and have made the following amendments to the policy:

"The Planning & Zoning Commission recommends that the following land and area be preserved as open spaces:

1. Any tract, plot or parcel of land which is greater in area than ten (10) acres and is undeveloped.
2. That portion of any partially developed tract, plot or parcel of land which remains undeveloped and has a ten (10) acre minimum with the standard minimum lot size deducted from that if there is a building on it.
3. Adjacent lots of less than 10 acres are excluded from eligibility.
4. Subdivision lots and lots in industrial use are allowed if they meet the minimum size required.
5. Any undeveloped tract, plot or parcel of land upon which are located wetlands, as designated by the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency of the Town of Woodstock,

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which wetlands would constitute a significant impediment to residential or commercial development.

6. Any undeveloped tract, plot or parcel of land the location, geological condition or topography of which would constitute a significant impediment to residential or commercial development.
7. Any tract, plot or parcel of land, which is enrolled legally in the open space category of PA 490 at the time of adoption of these changes, may be continued in such PA 490 designation until such time that it is sold, its use is changed or it is otherwise unenrolled from the PA 490 designation. Once such tract, plot or parcel of land is no longer designated in the open space category of PA 490, it can be enrolled at a later time if it meets all Town of Woodstock eligibility requirements for PA 490 open space designation existing at such later time.”

### **The Current State of Agriculture**

Agriculture continues to be an important source of income in Woodstock and remains a significant business sector that generally coexists well with nearby residential development. The wide spectrum of agriculture practiced on Woodstock’s 42 different farms includes dairy, beef, vegetables, fruit, fiber, Christmas trees, wine, forestry products and other specialties. Many of today’s Woodstock farms are state-of-the-art, producing more output per acre with fewer people through modern technology and equipment. *Continued local action, interest and citizen support will be necessary to take advantage of the opportunity to strengthen the existence and viability of agriculture. The town of Woodstock is farm friendly and currently has farmers as members of many boards and commissions and upholds the Right to Farm Ordinance.*

**Farms in Woodstock as of Spring 2014**

Andy Perry (garlic)	Pinecroft Farms (beef, grain, corn, silage, hay)
Blue Horse Equestrian Center	Pulpit Rock Nursery (Christmas Trees)
Boies Burdock Farm (Hay, maple syrup)	Selbuort Valley Farm, (dairy, maple syrup)
Breton Tree Farm (Christmas Trees)	Sherman Farms, (dairy)
Cherry Ledge Farm (horse)	Southwood Alpacas
Coatney Hill Farm, (dairy)	Spalding Farm (forestry, hay)
Devon Point Farm (beef, chicken, pork, flowers, vegetables)	Spruce Hill Farms, (dairy)
Elm Farm, (dairy)	Sprucedale Gardens Nursery & Greenhouse
Fairholm Farm, Inc, (dairy)	Stone Circle Farm (eggs, hay)
Fairview Farms, LLC (bull calves, dairy)	Sunnydale Farm (goat)
French Boys Sugar House	Sunnyside Farm (grain, corn and silage, hay)
Hansen Family Tree Farm (Christmas Trees)	Taylor Brooke Winery
Hearthstone Farm (beef, eggs)	Valleyside Farm, (dairy)
Hibbard Hill Farm, (dairy)	Westview Farm (beef)
High Hill Farm (hay)	Windswept Acres Stable (horse)
High Spring Orchard, (fruit)	Woodstock Acres Riding Stables (horse)
Kowal Farm (hay)	Woodstock Farms, (fruit, flowers, vegetables)
Krushefsky Tree Farm (Christmas Trees)	Woodstock Hill Preserves (jam, marmalade, jelly, preserves)
Mayhill Farm, (dairy)	Woodstock Orchards, (fruit, flowers, vegetables)
Moheda Farm	Woodstock Sustainable Farm (chicken, eggs, lamb)
Norman's Sugar House (maple syrup)	Wrenhaven Farm (lamb, fruit, flowers, vegetables)
Oxbow Acres	



## **Retaining Active Agriculture and Farmland**

Following a national trend, there has been an increased interest among residents in locally-produced agricultural products. This interest is showcased at the “Celebrating Agriculture” event held every September on the Woodstock Fairgrounds in South Woodstock.

Local interest in preserving and growing Woodstock’s agricultural sector led to the creation of an Agricultural Committee in 2011 which became a formal town Commission in 2012. The Agricultural Commission serves an important role,

representing the agricultural community in town and working in an advisory role to the Board of Selectman and other boards and commissions, including the Planning and Zoning Commission.



Photo by G. Leslie Sweetnam

### **Challenges in Retaining Active Agriculture and Farmland**

- People feel one of the biggest challenges or threats facing Woodstock is keeping working farms in town, the loss of which would dramatically alter the character of the community.

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- Dairy farming in Woodstock has changed dramatically over time. In the last century there were 15 dairy bottlers and approximately 150 dairy farms. Each of these farms had on average 10 cows and produced 5 - 6,000 lbs. of milk each year. Currently there are 12 to 15 farms with 80 – 900 cows each, averaging 24,000 lbs. of milk per year. Dairy farming is just one example of the modern farming trend of higher per acre production with fewer people involved. Many farms are also diversifying to meet the growing demands of Woodstock and other consumers and some are increasing in size as choice lands become available.
- An effort should be made to keep currently active farms in production, along with attracting new farmers.

### **Land Use Goals relating to Retaining Active Agriculture and Farmland**

- Woodstock will be a community known as not only welcoming to new farms and people interested in living the rural life, but also a town where there is a diverse range of active farms producing products in demand to be sold locally, regionally and on a larger scale where possible.
- Innovations in farming and entrepreneurs interested in pursuing a living from the land (either full or part-time) are welcome here.
- Farmers can promote their goods to local and regional restaurants, institutions and other larger employers with in-house food service providers who could use food grown in Woodstock. This would broaden the market for local agricultural producers and make the town more attractive as a location for new farms.
- Woodstock should continue to maintain the Open Space Land Acquisition and Farmland Preservation Fund.
- Woodstock should continue to utilize existing planning techniques including conservation easements, fee-in-lieu of open space, and transfer of development rights, as well as exploring other new options where feasible.

### **Recommended Policy Changes and Action Steps to Retaining Active Agriculture and Farmland**

- Consider various ways to attract farm-supportive businesses to town such as revising the permitting process.
- Give farmers regulatory flexibility that would allow them to develop creative and diverse means to generate the extra income that will keep their farms in business. Allowing some types of other for-profit ventures to operate simultaneously with the farm would help do that.
- Find people willing and able to participate on an Economic Development Commission who could find ways to not only encourage and sustain active agriculture, but also how to promote growth of community-compatible small businesses.

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- Plan for future Agri-tourism such as events of limited duration on farms and “farm stays” (B&Bs at farms).
- Plan for on-site housing for seasonal and permanent agricultural workers in appropriate trailers or buildings as allowed within State regulations.
- Plan for alternative energy sources for farming such as windmills and solar arrays.
- When determining set-a-side land for agricultural purposes, the set-a-side land should be large enough and sited such that it can actually be used for agriculture.
- Encourage the Board of Selectmen to have the Agriculture Commission work with the Conservation Commission to regularly appraise all relevant town owned lands for potential income for the town as leased farmland or forest harvesting.

### **Public Infrastructure**

#### **Public Infrastructure and Services: Energy Consumption and Conservation**

In 2008, the Green Energy Committee was formed with the goal of promoting renewable energy sources. The committee’s mission is to support, encourage and assist the efforts of Woodstock residents, businesses and the town government to reduce their impact on the environment through conservation and increased use of green energy options. By 2009, Woodstock became the first town in Connecticut to purchase 100 percent clean renewable energy for the municipal buildings and public schools. Through the CT Clean Energy Fund, the town earns points for individual homes and businesses that switch to clean energy, and for every 100 points earned the Town is given a free solar panel. As of spring 2014, the Town has received 200 free solar panels.

According to the Green Energy Committee, the Town applied to the state in June 2014 and was approved for a 1 megawatt ground-mounted solar panel system, secured by ballasts, to be installed on the former landfill. Because the ballast system would be used to secure the panels and structural supports, there is no need to perforate the cap and membrane on the landfill. This presents a wonderful opportunity to make use of otherwise useless town-owned land that cannot be put to any other use and it may reap significant financial savings for the taxpayer at the same time. The project would contain roughly 1,440 solar panels and generate enough energy to supply the municipal buildings and public schools. Woodstock currently uses close to 1.3 million kilowatt hours of electricity a year and the panels will produce roughly 1.5 million kilowatt hours of electricity. The Town proposes to accomplish this with a third-party investor which enables the Town to pay a substantially lower rate of approximately 4.5 cents per kilowatt hour for 15 years. This should result in a substantial savings in Woodstock's municipal energy costs. This arrangement will allow Woodstock to not pay any inflationary cost due to increased rate changes that would normally be paid to CL&P.

Energy conservation is important to the Planning and Zoning Commission and has been incorporated in the Subdivision Regulations through requirements for consideration of solar access and energy efficiency in the design phase, particularly in terms of lot layout and orientation of proposed homes. Solar panels are allowed with the applicable permits and are not currently assessed or taxed by the town.

### **Biggest Challenges Regarding Energy Consumption and Conservation**

Cost is the biggest deterrent to the installation of solar panels or another green technology by homeowners. Many people have taken advantage of funding incentives and programs at the state level, but those are not always available.

### **Land Use Goals Relating to Energy Consumption and Conservation**

The Green Energy Committee will continue to educate the Woodstock community on ways to reduce environmental impacts through conservation and use of green energy options, and to support those efforts.

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### **Public Infrastructure and Services: Public Education**

Total school population will decrease gradually for several years, with a sharper decline toward the end of the decade, according to the town's Education Department. The schools were reconfigured to better accommodate the elementary and middle school population in the 1990s, including the completion of the new Woodstock Middle School on Route 169 on a portion of the former Annhurst College campus.

#### 2013-2014 Woodstock School Enrollment

#	Grade
23	Pre-k
79	K
88	1
75	2
108	3
99	4
107	5
100	6
106	7
113	8
<b>898</b>	<b>Total PreK-8</b>
85	9
90	10
116	11
97	12
<b>388</b>	<b>Total Woodstock Academy Students (from Woodstock)</b>
<b>Other</b>	
26	Home School
23	Ellis Tech
0	Cheney Windham Tech
4	VoAg
14	SPED (out of district)
0	ACT (Magnet school – Wilimantic)
5	QVCMCHS (at QVCC)
<b>1,358</b>	<b>Total school-age population in Town</b>

Woodstock Academy contracts with Woodstock and the neighboring towns of Pomfret, Eastford, Union, Brooklyn, and Canterbury to educate students in grades 9 through 12. As of 2012, its 936 domestic student population was comprised of 388 from Woodstock; 188 from Brooklyn; 185 from Pomfret; 60 from Eastford; 92 from Canterbury and 21 from Union. The

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Academy also hosts 15 domestic students from other towns and 80 international students. Projected enrollment for the next several years does not show a need for major or significant physical plant expansion. Two recently completed athletic fields, including a multi-purpose turf field to complement three existing fields, will provide for outdoor athletic needs for many years. Contemplated improvements include the possible expansion of the field house facility for athletic equipment storage and possible renovations to the science facilities.

In 2012, the Planning and Zoning Commission approved an application by Woodstock Academy to amend the Zoning Regulations to allow for and regulate the off-campus housing of students. This amendment allowed for an expansion of the International Student Program at the Academy paid for through tuition charged to the parents of international students.

### **Public Infrastructure and Services: Town Department of Public Works**

Woodstock is served by a Department of Public Works staffed by a Department Superintendent, ten full-time and three part-time employees. The department maintains the Town roads, public buildings and grounds and athletic fields. With the construction and acceptance of the following five roads; Stone Hill Road, Jean's Court, Aplin Hill Lane, Herindeen Landing and Senexet Village Road, the town now has 113.56 miles of town roads and 35.08 miles of state roads.

In 2011, a new highway facility was completed that includes a covered salt storage building, a canopy for the fuel pumps and a large addition to the existing garage. The addition includes garage bays that allow for washing vehicles inside and a more environmentally-friendly method of salt storage. Primary duties of DPW personnel include the maintenance of all gravel and paved town-owned roads, snow and sand removal, annual repairs and upgrades, brush and tree removal, signage; maintenance of the Town 'commons' areas at Woodstock Hill, South Woodstock and East Woodstock; and supplemental staffing at the Town transfer station, as needed, with certified personnel.

### **Public Infrastructure and Services: Emergency Services**

Woodstock continues to be well served by its three all-volunteer Fire Departments: Woodstock Volunteer Fire Association; the Bungay Fire Brigade; the Muddy Brook Fire Department. In addition, the Woodstock Volunteer Ambulance continues to furnish emergency medical service to residents.

Ongoing mandated training for volunteer personnel continues to challenge the resources of the departments and services. In 2001, the Town of Woodstock formally implemented a tax-funded assistance program to provide annual operating revenues for the fire departments, alleviating a burdensome fundraising responsibility that had been borne by the volunteer members. The three volunteer departments combined to form the Woodstock Fire Prevention Association to address ongoing and future Town funding for operational expenses.

In fulfillment of one of the recommendations of the 2002 POCD update, the Planning and Zoning Commission requests input from the Fire Marshal on all proposed subdivisions and resubdivisions to ensure that consideration be given in the design of all new proposals of development for adequate water supply for fighting fires.



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### **Recommended Policy Change or Action Step regarding Emergency Services**

Conducting routine maintenance and inspections of all existing emergency water sources and infrastructure, including cisterns and dry hydrants, is important in ensuring they are functioning and remain compatible with the fire department's equipment, and that water holes are not filling in with vegetation and silt that would clog emergency equipment.

### **Public Infrastructure and Services: Sewer Line Expansion**

The Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) follows "The Policy of Sewer Avoidance within the Town of Woodstock", which is intended "to avoid urban sprawl inconsistent with historical or desired development patterns". The WPCA "seeks to avoid the extension of public sewers in all geographic areas within the Town of Woodstock except where required by contract or such extension is determined by the Authority to be reasonably necessary"<sup>ix</sup>

Since installation of the system, the WPCA has only approved two extensions to the sewer line which originates in the industrial zone in South Woodstock and empties under contract into the Putnam sewage treatment plant. After many years of planning and review, the WPCA approved the municipal sanitary sewer line extension of 4,800 linear feet along Route 169 from Frog Pond Road to Woodstock Academy in 2009. The construction phase of the sewer line extension project was completed in the fall of 2012, with road re-striping and the as-built plan being finished in 2014. The Inn at Woodstock Hill received approval to connect to the sewer in 2003, with a revision to that approval in 2009; however that project had not commenced at the time of this printing.

### **Public Infrastructure and Services: Parks and Recreation**

The Recreation Department and Commission oversees and sponsors various athletic and senior events which may include, but are not limited to, basketball, soccer, volleyball, and the ski/snowboard program at Wachusett Mountain. Other programs include wreath making, toddler time and babysitter training, bus trips and organizing the annual road races.

A new recreation park has been created on Senexet Village Road as part of the development plan for the open space subdivision. This new park has a 1-mile walking trail behind the houses, a new soccer field, basketball court and a small playground donated by the Woodstock Recreation Department.

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Woodstock Middle School on left near public ball fields, Hyde School is on the right.  
Photograph by G. Leslie Sweetnam

### **Biggest Challenges: Parks & Recreation**

- The cost of maintaining facilities with limited resources.
- Finding the funding to make it happen.
- Indoor space for Recreation Department-sponsored programs is limited.

### **Land Use Goals Regarding Parks and Recreation**

- Recreational facilities that meet the needs of all age-groups of Woodstock residents.
- Additional recreational fields such as soccer and baseball fields and playgrounds are desired in Woodstock Valley and near Roseland Lake.
- Other options for new recreational facilities would be a walking trail, basketball court, picnic area, or similar venues at the town property north of the Middle School.

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- A building in the community could be renovated for the purposes of providing more indoor space to hold Recreation Department programs year-round.

### **Recommended Policy Change or Action Step Regarding Parks and Recreation**

- Consider applying for grant funding to secure land or materials for new recreation facilities on land the town currently owns or for renovating existing structures that could be used for recreational purposes or as community rooms for programs sponsored by the Recreation Commission and/or the Town.
- Explore new innovative options for the purpose of acquiring or creating recreational facilities. This may include using monies from the Open Space Acquisition funding; PA 228, The Community Investment Act; the PA 490 penalties and/or the subdivision fee-in-lieu payments. This is compatible with open space preservation as it provides a place for people to be physically active and therefore leaves the fragile open space properties untouched.

## **Public Safety**

### **Challenges regarding Public Safety**

- Reaching consensus on what should be done about road maintenance and public infrastructure.

### **Land Use Goals relating to Public Safety**

- The Highway Department and the Planning and Zoning Commission should continue to regularly communicate about planned road improvements on scenic roads, which would allow interested citizens to voice their concerns regarding the impacts of work on the scenic nature of the road and the area covered by the “Ordinance Concerning the Designation of Scenic Roads”.

## **Transportation**

### **Biggest Challenges Regarding Transportation**

- Woodstock is a large, rural town, thus it is unlikely to have the ability to provide public transportation such as a more populous and smaller community. For segments of the population with limited incomes, living in Woodstock can be a challenge due to the difficulty in getting to locations of necessity.
  - The NECCOG Transit District is the rural town solution to this challenge. The NECCOG Transit District provides an affordable dial-a-ride bus service for qualifying elderly and disabled persons on a door-to-door basis within the district.

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- For a town such as Woodstock with such a small population and such a large area, road maintenance work takes on a different level of importance because everyone must travel the roads in town to go about their daily routines. The Town does a great job maintaining the infrastructure while keeping costs for the taxpayer down.
- The Town does not have a local police department which can make enforcing speed limits and other traffic rules difficult.
- We have 14 locally designated scenic roads, yet many people may not be aware of the designation or what it entails.
- Many people walk or run on the local roads yet there are very few sidewalks. Pedestrian safety is important.

### **Goals Regarding Transportation**

- Funding may be sought for sidewalks in the parts of town with the highest pedestrian traffic such as from Woodstock Hill to Sweet Evalina's restaurant and in the village of South Woodstock.
- The Town will continue to fund the NECCOG Transit District which provides an important service for the Transit rider's independence and no doubt factors into whether seniors can age in-place.

### **Recommended Policy Change or Action Step relating to Transportation**

- Consideration should be made to expanding the NECCOG Transit District dial-a-ride service in town, if there is a consistent high demand, to more fully meet the needs of the transit riders.
- Consideration should be made for putting up "scenic road" signs on all roads that have been designated as scenic roads by ordinance to notify the community of the designation and to call these special roads out with distinction as special features of the Town.

## **Population & Housing**

Adapted from Growing Greener: Putting Conservation Into Local Plans and Ordinances (by Randall Arendt).

A four-step design process for a conservation subdivision is performed in which the conservation areas of land first are determined before houses, streets, lot lines, and infrastructure are determined.

Step 1: Identify conservation areas.

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- Primary conservation areas include constrained (unbuildable) land (wetlands, steep slopes >25%, and flood plains).
- Secondary conservation areas include important land and cultural features to be protected (woodlands, greenways, waterbodies, river/stream/brook corridors, prime farmland, wildlife habitats/corridors, historic sites and structures, and scenic views). A prioritized list of such features can be developed pertaining to what can be included for conservation.

Step 2: Locate individual house sites within the potential development area.

Step 3: Align streets and any trails.

Step 4: Draw lot lines.

### **Challenges involved with Population Change**

- Many people have a long commute to their job and therefore may have difficulty in finding the time to get involved in the community.
- New residents may not get the outreach from long-time residents that would get them more involved in the community.
- While the town's housing stock is primarily single-family homes, the aging of the population will likely dictate changes in the future. Seniors who opt to "age-in-place" by living with their adult children may require secondary apartments, and if they continue to live on their own they will increase the market for multi-family homes, condominiums, apartments and smaller homes.
  - Aging-in-place includes both the seniors who remain living in their Woodstock home and those who move to another home in town that better suits them because it has fewer stairs, less maintenance, or is smaller.
  - As the need for easily accessible homes and buildings increase, consideration for how to accommodate changes in parking spaces and accessible ramps at building entrances will be necessary. Many of the buildings needing these modifications may be in village settings.
  - The composition of households may change. Multi-generational households are expected to increase, as well as households with seniors living with unrelated care-givers, an arrangement known as 'co-housing' or 'shared housing'.
  - A significant challenge for older and disabled individuals living alone is social isolation, due in part to difficulties getting out of the house for errands, social events and activities. The difficulties may stem from individuals who cannot safely drive at night, and those who cannot drive at all. Alternative transportation is limited.

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These housing challenges have health implications. According to Connecticut for Livable Communities, An Initiative of Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging:

*At least half of all health outcomes may be driven by community conditions—such as access to quality, affordable housing in walkable neighborhoods, broad transportation options, and community safety. Community conditions can impact physical activity levels, food access, air quality, social cohesion, and economic opportunities. All have profound implications for health.*<sup>x</sup>

### **Land Use Goals relating to Population Change**

- The community should maintain a diverse range of housing options for residents of all ages.
- A community benefits from a population composed of people of all ages. Housing needs can vary somewhat among people in different age groups and phases of life; therefore, Woodstock will continue to have regulations that allow for a variety of new housing options.
- Interested residents, whether newcomers or longtime, can easily find out how they can get involved in the community by checking the town's website or by calling the town hall. Volunteer opportunities abound for both regulatory and advisory boards, commissions, and committees as well as individual events sponsored by the town that need coordination and work to be successful.
- The Recreation Department has the staffing and funding available to continue to offer programs of interest to a wide variety of people, from babies and small children with parenting and play groups, to senior fitness classes and the wide range of other activities in between such as running races, exercise classes, sport teams, culture themed group trips and skill building classes that promote social and physical activity. These programs promote getting out of the house, healthy living and foster community growth through personal interaction and involvement.

### **Recommended Policy Changes and Action Steps relating to Population Change**

- Consideration should be made for conducting a community livability assessment by residents from diverse backgrounds for the purposes of identifying the needs of the different age groups of the town's population, with a special emphasis on seniors aging-in-place and the disabled population. Once the needs have been determined, the group can recommend how best to make changes to better meet those needs and to address any identified issues.
  - The assessment should include whether there is demand for additional senior housing units and, if so, by how many units within the senior and disabled housing complex at New Roxbury Village or if another development is recommended. If another development is recommended, all funding



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opportunities should be explored including grants and funds collected by the municipality per PA 228, The Community Investment Act.

- Review the Zoning Regulations regarding residential uses to see where they may need to be updated for the purpose of encouraging housing that meets the needs of the community for at least the next ten years. If changes are deemed necessary, then a text amendment should be implemented.
- To reduce social isolation and its negative impacts, the socially and physically active programs of the Recreation Department should be promoted to at-risk populations, particularly seniors and the disabled.
- Encourage pedestrian friendly accommodations, such as safe road shoulders in areas without sidewalks as part of new development within village settings.
- Allowing for a mix of uses within the same zone or district in the Zoning Regulations could reduce driving. Encouraging new development to locate near existing development fosters community building and allows undeveloped areas to provide other benefits, such as maintaining a scenic 'viewshed', to act as a buffer to environmentally sensitive areas, and to serve as passive recreational areas and wildlife habitat.

**Population and Housing Diversity**

<b>Woodstock, CT Population Data by Age Group</b>		
<b>Age</b>	<b>2012*</b>	<b>2000**</b>
under 5 years	3.9%	5.5%
5 to 9 years	5.3%	7.3%
10 to 14 years	9.1%	8.4%
15 to 19 years	8.4%	6.3%
20 to 24 years	4.2%	4.1%
25 to 29 years	2.5%	4.2%
30 to 34 years	3.6%	6.4%
35 to 39 years	8.8%	8.3%
40 to 44 years	8.0%	11.2%
45 to 49 years	9.7%	9.2%
50 to 54 years	8.2%	7.5%
55 to 59 years	7.7%	5.3%
60 to 64 years	5.6%	3.6%
65 to 69 years	5.9%	3.5%
70 to 74 years	4.1%	3.0%
75 to 79 years	1.6%	2.7%
80 to 84 years	1.2%	2.0%
85 years and over	2.3%	1.26%
Median Age (years)	42.9	39.5
*US Census Bureau, 2008 - 2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates		
**US Census Bureau, 2000 Census, Summary File 4 - Sample Data		

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Connecticut now has a problem keeping people. With more baby boomers moving into retirement every year, many are deciding to move out of state in search of more affordable locales. Younger people are also emigrating as they seek jobs and lower-cost housing. Woodstock is not immune to those trends.

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Even as people leave the state there may still be an increased need for housing in-state, especially for seniors as the population ages. That may take the form of formal ‘senior housing’, such as New Roxbury Village, or it may mean renovations to existing housing stock through creation of accessory apartments or increases in building accessibility. Some families are choosing a return to multi-generational households; others are opting to have full-or part-time home health care aides to assist infirm residents.

<b>New Roxbury Village</b>	
2 units	466.5 SF
14 units	390.0 SF
8 units	509.8 SF
<b>24</b>	<b>Total units</b>

New Roxbury Village, with 24 units ranging from 390 to 510 square feet, is the only senior housing complex in town. According to the Woodstock Housing Authority, there is only a short waiting list, due in part to the unpredictable availability and possibly the small size of the units. People with immediate housing needs or who want more space usually go elsewhere.

### **Affordable Housing**

CGS 8-39a defines affordable housing as housing for which persons and families pay 30% or less of their annual income, where such income is less than or equal to the area median income for the municipality in which such housing is located, as determined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. Including the 24 governmentally assisted units at New Roxbury Village; the tenant rental assistance, and CHFA /USDA Mortgages Woodstock has a total of 79 “affordable units”, a rate of 2.21%<sup>xii</sup>. Woodstock does not have any deed restricted “affordable” units.

At 2.21%, Woodstock falls well below the 10% state threshold set by CGS 8-30g. Although there is no penalty for failing to have 10% “affordable housing”, the town might lose control over how and where such housing is built if a developer is successful on appeal under CGS 8-30g. It would be beneficial for the Planning and Zoning Commission to consider different ways of allowing the creation of new affordable housing units.

### **Challenges regarding Affordable Housing:**

1. The Subdivision Regulations allow for a lot bonus for subdivisions and re-subdivisions that provide affordable housing, but the calculation to determine how many additional units or lots can be granted is unduly complicated, and it is unclear what the lot size would be for the additional lots and where the space would be found. Either the minimum lot size or the minimum open space requirement would have to be reduced.
2. The definition of “affordable housing” in the Subdivision Regulations needs to be revised to be consistent with that of CGS Section 8-39a.

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### **Recommendation regarding Affordable Housing**

Reconsider both the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations in terms of allowing for affordable housing. This may include encouraging affordable housing in the areas of town that do not pose excessive obstacles for lower-income populations. Without public transportation, the farther people must travel to places of necessity, such as food stores, gasoline stations, employment, doctor's offices, the less affordable the housing.

Affordability is an issue that affects young and old. Woodstock, like other towns in Connecticut, offers Tax Relief Programs for the Elderly and Disabled, including the Renters Rebate Program; the Homeowners Tax Credit Program and the Totally Disabled Program, following state guidelines. These programs provide some financial relief to around 150 residents.

### **Woodstock – Existing housing stock and type according to Assessor's Records (May 2014)**

Single	2969
Accessory Apartments	70
Duplex	18
3 family	1
Condo	151
Apartments	88
Elderly	24
4-family	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,327</b>

In order to consider affordable housing that is compliant with CGS 8-23(d)(2) and to make provision for the development of housing opportunities per CGS 8-23g, the minimum standards pertaining to residential uses in the Zoning Regulations should be carefully examined for the potential for improvements. The following areas of the current Zoning Regulations present potential concerns in achieving a diverse housing stock that meets the needs of Woodstock residents:

### **Accessory Apartments**

In comparison to other towns, Woodstock's regulations are very accommodating as affordable housing options for small households, especially as it has no requirements for familial relationship between the apartment occupant and the property owner. There is also no requirement that the apartment be attached or contained within the same structure as the primary dwelling.

### **Recommendation Regarding Accessory Apartments**

There may be some additional opportunities for apartments in mixed-use properties, such as with new Special Permits or in a mixed-use zoning district if it should be adopted. Both

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changes require a text amendment to the Zoning Regulations. Regarding the affordable bonus lots within subdivisions: it is not clear whether apartments within subdivisions would need to be limited per the affordable housing income guidelines.

### **Multi-family Housing**

The Planning and Zoning Commission has begun to examine the issue of regulating multi-family housing and members have preliminarily agreed that the subject needs reconsideration. Zoning Regulations now require a Special Permit application for all new multi-family housing developments.

### **Recommendations Regarding Multi-family Housing**

To encourage diversity in housing choice per CGS 8-23, the above standards should be revised to be realigned with the housing goals for Woodstock. Prior to any revisions, some guiding principles should be created that will form a basis for creating any new minimum development standards. Under those, duplexes could have different standards than developments with many dwelling units per structure and many structures per property.

“Towns and cities that have larger homes with more bedrooms offer fewer housing options for younger workers or downsizing Baby Boomers.”<sup>xiii</sup>

Seventy-three percent (73%) of Woodstock’s existing housing stock was built in 1979 or prior and, not coincidentally, over seventy percent (70%) of the homes have 3 or more bedrooms. “Towns and cities that have larger homes with more bedrooms offer fewer housing options for younger workers or downsizing Baby Boomers.”<sup>xiv</sup> Many of these large houses may have the potential to either house the multi-generational households or be converted into smaller dwellings within the overall structure to meet the changing housing needs of the population.

### **Biggest Challenges with an Evolving Population**

- Meeting the needs and balancing them with the wants of an ever-changing population, including relating to land use, infrastructure and services.
- As new people move in to town, they bring new ideas which sometimes present notable and controversial changes for the community.
- An aging population presents a new set of challenges, such as who will fill the void left by seniors as they retire or move away. For a community that prides itself on the agricultural nature of the town, this presents a significant issue as farmers are not as readily replaced by their offspring as in generations past.

### **Land Use Goals Relating to Population Change**

- The Planning and Zoning Commission has considered the changing needs of the modern population and has revised the housing standards to be more flexible and

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allow for a wider range of housing units to meet the requirements of the young adult entering the workforce, families and empty-nesters who choose to remain in town.

### **Recommended Policy Change or Action Step Relating to Population Change**

Text amendments are recommended to the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations to better align them with the goals stated above.

- Consider specifically amending the sections of the Zoning Regulations on the minimum standards for apartments and multi-family housing.
- Consideration should be made for allowing duplexes under a different set of standards than larger residential developments, such as condominiums and apartment complexes within the Zoning Regulations.
- Revise the applicable standards for affordable housing and the calculation for determining the number of bonus lots in the Subdivision Regulations.
- Mixed-use zoning would offer opportunities for businesses as well as greater diversity in housing with apartments on the same lot, above or adjacent to those businesses. They could be single family homes, town houses, duplexes or condominiums.

## **Balancing Growth, Change and Development**

The advent of the internet has led to a plethora of new home-based businesses that generally operate unobtrusively in residential areas. At the time of this printing there were approximately 468 businesses in Woodstock, ranging from the home-based contractors, beauty salons, bookkeepers, etc. to larger businesses, including retail stores, restaurants and three long-time manufacturers.

### **Economic Development**

Economic development may involve new construction, reuse or renovations of existing buildings, which are sometimes underutilized or vacant. Over time, aggregate renovation and construction work provides important continuing employment to contractors, trades people and suppliers of materials, whose spending in turn supports other business sectors in the area.

Much of Woodstock's business is either agriculture or directly related to agriculture. Beyond those who make their livings milking cows or tilling the land, there are many companies and individuals providing support services such as veterinarians, sellers and repairers of farm equipment, processors of agricultural goods, feed providers and truckers. A developing industry is agri-tourism where people come to farms to see how plant foods, meat, and milk are produced, and to buy those same products from the source. Examples are the local winery, orchards and community supported agriculture (CSA) operations.





Photograph by David Bohl. Courtesy of Historic New England.

Woodstock's commercial activity is concentrated in South Woodstock, but most of those businesses have blended well with the character of the village because they are either housed in old structures or operate in newer ones built in compatible architectural styles. Most of the more modern commercial architecture is outside the village, located off Route 171 near the Putnam town line.

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### **Tourism is a notable portion of the economy**

Woodstock remains a choice destination for those interested in experiencing rural life, including seeing working dairy, vegetable farms, fruit orchards, wineries and scenic views of hills, valleys and pastures. Some come to experience the rich history of the town through annual events like the Woodstock Fair and Celebrating Agriculture, and to attend special outdoor concerts and crafts shows. The most notable museum is the 1846 Bowen House on Woodstock Hill, owned by Historic New England. Better known as 'The Pink House', it showcases the Gothic Revival style and features extensive outdoor gardens and an indoor bowling alley once used by the visiting President Grant.

Woodstock's rural character provides a nice contrast to neighboring communities, such as downtown Putnam and Sturbridge, MA, with their thriving restaurants and shops. Those attractions and the many private schools in the area help fill the town's inns and bed and breakfasts.

The Woodstock Merchant's Association and the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor District are significant players in bringing tourists to Woodstock.

Annual events that bring visitors to town include:

- Artists in the Country
- 'Celebrating Agriculture' Event
- East Woodstock 4<sup>th</sup> of July Jamboree
- The Garden Tour
- Horse Shows
- Jog with Judy (5k race)
- The Memorial Day 10K Road Race
- The Memorial Day Parade
- Open Studio Weekend (Art Studios)
- The Roseland Cottage Fine Arts and Crafts Festival
- Windham County Kennel Club Annual Dog Show (Woodstock Fairgrounds)
- The Winter Fest Celebration
- The Woodstock Fair
- The Woodstock Merchants' 'Shop Hop' Event
- Walktober



A family fun hayride at Celebrating Agriculture.  
Picture Courtesy of Celebrating Agriculture



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### **The Challenges in Balancing Growth, Change and Economic Development**

- The main challenge is balancing competing interests of residents, large property owners, business owners and potential entrepreneurs.

### **Land Use Goals relating to Balancing Growth, Change and Development**

- Encourage enhancement of the villages by promoting land uses that aid the established village to grow while retaining the traditional look, feel and function.
  - Supporting a village community requires having a walkable setting, landscaping, signage, maintaining existing setbacks for new structures and not allowing parking requirements to overwhelm the neighborhood or disrupt the pattern of existing development.

### **Recommended Policy Changes and Action Steps regarding Balancing Growth, Change and Development**

- Promote education materials available through the land use office and the town website.
- Find people willing and able to participate on an Economic Development Commission, and charge that board with finding ways to encourage and sustain active agriculture and promote growth of community-compatible small businesses.
- Support funding for the Economic Development Commission to reach out to existing businesses to find out what they need to grow in community-compatible ways and for brainstorming ideas on how land use can be managed to balance needs of the business community with those of property owners and residents.
- Expand the Industrial Zone or consider the creation of another zone allowing for industrial land uses should be considered. Woodstock is not in an ideal location in terms of distance to interstate highways thus we are not likely to receive funding from the state to create a new Industrial Park, putting the town at a disadvantage in comparison to other towns that will receive the funding. Also, modern Industrial Parks have the infrastructure installed and the municipality sometimes offers tax incentives for businesses to locate there. In the absence of these offerings, an alternative is to pursue regional options such as the town investing in the creation of a regional industrial development located in another town in order to reap the benefits of tax revenues in the future.
- There is the potential for encouraging new businesses of community compatible sizes and uses to locate in town by creating a mixed use zone(s) which would be the least likely to make a negative impact on community character as opposed to a dedicated land use zone such as a Commercial Zone.

## **Future Land Use Recommendations**

- Cottage Resort Floating District: The Solair Recreation League is unique within the town in terms of the land use as a nudist resort. The Zoning Regulations require a Special Permit and have Cottage District regulations that apply to this use only. CGS 8-2 requires that all regulations be uniform for each class or kind of buildings, structures or uses throughout each district therefore in order to be in compliance a new zoning district should be created called the Cottage Resort Floating District. This would require a text amendment and then a zone change to affix it to the Solair Recreation League's property.
- Route 169 Scenic Byway Overlay Zone: Promote compatible future development along the federally designated scenic byway. Develop design guidelines to encourage any development for non-residential uses within the viewshed to be designed in ways that retain the current rural character of this special corridor.
  - Consider an overlay zone which adds a layer of zoning protection to the underlying zone. Alternatively, a zone change, not as an overlay, could provide additional controls on land along Route 169, for all or part of the length that is in Woodstock.
- Village District Regulations: Currently, the Zoning Regulations include the text for a Village Green District however it has yet to be used.
  - Other Village Districts could be created around other villages and further limit the permitted uses beyond what is allowed in the Community District to retain the village character. By the Commission proposing the text amendment and the zone change, it would not be left up to a private applicant to propose at an unknown future date, if at all.

## **Looking to the Future: A Visionary Land Use Plan**

Throughout the Plan, it has been said many times that mixed-uses on a small scale are desirable, thus a new mixed-use village zone could be created that allows for community-compatible small-scale businesses such as retail, restaurants and offices with a zoning permit, unless new construction or paving is required, in which case a Special Permit would be required. Both residential and business uses would be allowed in the same district and on the same property with set standards that require new structures to meet the specified setbacks which were set with the goal of being compatible with the existing village in mind. A Site Plan review process is also an option for reviewing new proposed businesses.

A Historic District Zone could be considered for the Woodstock Hill Historic District that could work to protect the Hill from land use changes that could drastically alter the character of this traditional New England village.

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The only Cottage Resort in town was established long ago and is quite different from the rest of Woodstock. Consider a new zoning district that recognizes how unique it is within the community and regulate it that way.

Agriculture is both the history and the future of Woodstock, thus the regulations will continue to be farm friendly and to find new ways to encourage a more diverse mix of viable new entrepreneurial farmers to come to our fine town to make their living off the land.

Housing diversity can be encouraged more within the mixed-use village zone as well as with any changes to the standards for accessory apartments and minimum lot sizes. Greater housing diversity will go a long ways towards attracting and retaining people of all ages in town, strengthening the community and for seniors to remain in their beloved community while they age-in-place.

Significant open space has been set aside for wildlife, watershed protection and agriculture in the past 10 years. Open space preservation is a noble goal and should continue as is suitable to the town; however more focus can also be put on the creation of recreational open space facilities for the use and enjoyment of residents of all ages.

### **Conformity with the State POCD**

State Conservation and Development Policies: The Plan for Connecticut 2013 – 2018 is built around six growth management principles of which the following are entirely or partly applicable to Woodstock:

#### **Growth Management Principle #1.**

**Redevelop and Revitalize Regional Centers and Areas with Existing or Currently Planned Physical Infrastructure;** Not applicable in Woodstock.

#### **Growth Management Principle #2.**

**Expand Housing Opportunities and Design Choices to Accommodate a Variety of Household Types and Needs.**

*The sheer magnitude of the number of members in the “baby boom” generation, combined with increased life expectancy, will have profound effects on our communities and society in general well into the future. Notably, the “millennial” generation, whose members are now entering the 25 – 34 year old age group, outnumbers the “baby boom” generation. The different needs and desires of these two large generations will present unprecedented challenges, as well as opportunities, for the state and its communities to attract and retain a diverse and innovative citizenry.<sup>xv</sup>*

The Planning and Zoning Commission is planning on revising regulations to encourage more diversity in housing types in order to meet the increasingly varied needs of current and future households. Specific areas to be considered for regulation amendments include multi-family

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housing, accessory apartments, and mixed-use developments with residential components. Other housing opportunities could involve reusing older and larger structures with additional housing units or adapting them for mixed-use applications that will retain the existing structure. This will minimize physical changes to the neighborhood and retain architectural character.

Woodstock will continue to encourage and promote local parks and recreational opportunities for all ages.

### **Growth Management Principle #3.**

#### **Concentrate Development Around Transportation Nodes and Along Major Transportation Corridors to Support the Viability of Transportation Options**

This Growth Management Principle is only partly applicable to Woodstock but it is nonetheless important. The four state roads, routes 169, 171, 197 and 198, are the main transportation corridors in town and therefore hold great potential for the community in terms of economic growth and community change. How land use is regulated along these main corridors is paramount to the future of the town. To retain the small-town, farm-friendly character of Woodstock, special consideration is needed in setting permitted uses. Regulatory changes could encourage growth in select areas of town and discouraged it in others.

### **Growth Management Principle #4.**

#### **Conserve and Restore the Natural Environment, Cultural and Historical Resources and Traditional Rural Lands**

*It is widely recognized that Connecticut's natural, cultural and historical resources, along with its rural landscapes, have intrinsic values which contribute to the state's high quality of life.<sup>xvi</sup>*

Woodstock has made and will continue to make significant effort to preserve special properties via Purchase of Development Rights funding and by encouraging voluntary conservation and preservation by private landowners. The open space requirement for subdivision and re-subdivision applications has also resulted in significant conservation easements. The PA 490 tax- reduction program encourages private owners to leave land in forestry categories or farming, as it greatly reduces property tax burdens on that land. The Commission also requires the consideration of Low Impact Development methods whenever possible in new development to protect water quality.

Woodstock has significant cultural resources that are unique to northeast CT including historic villages, manufacturing hamlets, landscapes and isolated properties that contribute to the rural character of the town. In accordance with the State POCD, future planning efforts should incorporate measures to assess, document and conserve historic buildings and landscapes throughout the community in a way that enhances economic vitality without jeopardizing the essence of Woodstock.

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### **Growth Management Principle #5.**

#### **Protect and Ensure the Integrity of Environmental Assets Critical to Public Health and Safety**

The protection of critical environmental assets, such as water quality, is of the utmost importance to the health, safety and welfare of residents, and has been incorporated into Woodstock's land use regulations.

### **Growth Management Principle #6.**

#### **Promote Integrated Planning across all Levels of Government to Address Issues on a Statewide, Regional, and Local Basis**

An integrated approach to land use management throughout all levels of government is important. It starts with the municipal land-use boards and commissions.

## **CONCLUSION**

A town's Plan of Conservation and Development must draw on the expertise of professionals and elected officials to identify problems and offer solutions, but it should also reflect the visions and concerns of the residents of that municipality. The lengthy process of completing this plan involved extensive public hearing and survey efforts to acquire that information, and several key issues were identified.

The most significant finding is that residents believe that retaining the town's rural-agricultural character is a top priority. They overwhelmingly support local agriculture and the national Route 169 scenic road corridor, but are more divided on the scenic road ordinance that restricts improvements on selected town roads. While they understand the inevitability of change, they want it to occur in ways that do not seriously impact Woodstock's rural character.

That doesn't mean they are opposed to economic development. As farming is an intrinsic part of that character, respondents showed great concern about retaining and even enlarging Woodstock's significant agricultural sector. They expressed some openness to industrial development, especially along the Putnam town line, and to industrial development in other parts of town that would be carefully screened or housed in buildings that blend with the environment. They want to both retain and expand retail commercial development, but of a type and scale that is community-compatible.

Residents want more varied and affordable types of housing to meet changing demographics, but they prefer that it be designed and scaled to fit in the areas where it would be located. There is openness to encouraging more housing and commercial activity, included mixed residential and commercial buildings in some village areas, as long as the basic character of those villages is not damaged.

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Some respondents expressed concern that current Planning and Zoning regulations had elements that were overly burdensome or unfair. The difficulties small businesses encounter in the Special Permit process were frequently cited as an impediment to retaining and attracting those businesses. The 50 percent conservation set-aside requirement for subdivisions and re-subdivisions was also criticized, especially its potential for affecting farmers' ability to use land as collateral to get financing.

**Residents' top five concerns according to the survey, are as follows:**

- Retaining active farms
- Maintaining quality schools
- Preserving the town's rural character
- Preserving open space /undeveloped land
- Maintaining a stable tax rate without cutting services

Most residents seemed generally satisfied with the results of Woodstock's land use policies, which have played a key role in helping retain the rural-agricultural character they value so highly. The challenge facing the town is to continue that success, while at the same time balancing the desires of residents, the rights of property owners, and the economic needs of the town.

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- <sup>xv</sup> Office of Policy and Management in accordance with CGS 16a-29. **Conservation & Development Policies: The Plan for Connecticut 2013-2018**. Page 12.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Office of Policy and Management in accordance with CGS 16a-29. **Conservation & Development Policies: The Plan for Connecticut 2013-2018**. Page 18.

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## Implementation Table

Implementation Recommendation	Priority Level	Lead Entity	Timeframe
Consider creation of mixed-use zones		PZC	
Create New Application process for nonresidential uses in mixed-use zone		PZC	
Review list of Permitted Uses vs. Special Permitted Uses to see if they encourage new growth and development to occur in community-compatible ways.		PZC	
Create performance standards for new nonresidential development		PZC	
Consider developing Design Guidelines		PZC	
Make landscaping, lighting and parking standards flexible so they work with the neighborhoods with the least disruption.		PZC	
Consider creation of Lake District zoning		PZC	
Consider creation of Aquifer Protection Zone		PZC	
Create Open Space Priority List to evaluate when to require open space vs. fee in-lieu in subdivision/resubdivision applications.		PZC	
Implement on PA 490 minimum open space category change via a town meeting		BOS	
Review options for farms as business, for additional income generation opportunities		PZC	
Reconvene Economic Development Commission		BOS	
Provide budget for EDC		BOS	
EDC do outreach to businesses for input		EDC	
Create new recreation facilities such as playing fields, basketball court, walking trail, picnic area on 1 or more properties.		DPW	
Expand NECCOG Transit District Offerings for Woodstock residents if demand is high enough.		BOS	
Put up signs identifying Scenic Roads so that residents are more aware		DPW	
Community Livability Assessment			
Seek funding for senior housing to be planned and built if an assessment determines that more senior housing is needed.		BOS	
Review Zoning Regulations in terms of housing needs to see where revisions are necessary		PZC	
Promote more senior activity/exercise programs to at-risk populations		Recreation Dept	

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Review if sidewalks and safe road shoulders in areas without are needed. If determined to be a priority for pedestrian safety, then changes need to be made and funding needs to be sought to accomplish that.		DPW	
Revise Zoning Regulations to promote mixed-use zoning		PZC	
Evaluate any measures being considered to encourage affordable housing in the zoning regulations so that distance to necessities, as obstacles to affordability, are taken into account.		PZC	
Consider revising minimum standards for accessory apartments and multi-family housing.		PZC	
The Subdivision Regulations need to be updated per changes in the Zoning Regulations.		PZC	
Consider expanding industrial use zone or create new one		PZC	
Consider seeking regional development agreements where Woodstock could invest in order to benefit from tax revenues without having to host the development and pay for costs associated with it.		BOS	
Consider creating Cottage Resort Floating District and affix it to Solair Recreation League's property.		PZC	
Consider creating a Route 169 Scenic Byway Overlay Zone or simply a new zone along Route 169		PZC	
Consider a zone change for a Village District		PZC	
Promote understanding that historical and cultural resources contribute to economic vitality, i.e. promote heritage tourism.		WHPC, PZC, EDC	
Consider appropriate zoning uses within historic villages that allow for growth and respect historic character.		PZC	
Establish a mechanism for engaging the town's historical commissions (District and Properties) regarding planning issues that affect historic resources in Woodstock.		PZC	

## Appendix

- Summary of public input gathered for POCD Update
- Maps
  - Existing Land Uses in Woodstock
  - Town of Woodstock: Aquifer Potential
  - Town of Woodstock: Fire Districts
  - Town of Woodstock: Open Space
  - Town of Woodstock PA 490 Properties
  - Town of Woodstock: Roads 2014
  - Town of Woodstock: Zoning District Map
  - Woodstock Historic Properties Composite Map
  - Woodstock Non-Land Use Districts



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