



Litchfield

Plan of Conservation & Development

2017

**Adopted by Litchfield
Planning & Zoning Commission
on May 15, 2017**

Contents

The Plan

Introduction.....	1
Implementation.....	9
Demographics.....	15
Housing.....	19
Land Use.....	23
Economic Development.....	27
Conservation, Open Space and Recreation.....	31
Cultural and Historic Resources.....	35
Transportation Network.....	39
Sewer & Water Infrastructure.....	43
Schools.....	47
Governance.....	51
Maps.....	55

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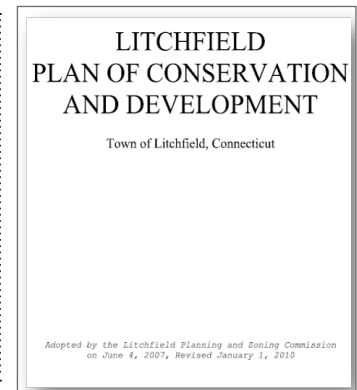
Introduction

The Plan of Conservation and Development

Why Prepare a Plan?

A Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) is a tool for examining the state of a community and formulating a guide for its future. It is an opportunity for a community to come together and reach a consensus about the kind of place everyone wants it to be. This plan's purpose is to establish a common vision for the future physical form, economic health, and quality of life for the Town of Litchfield and to express the community's collective policies that will help frame that vision. That common vision provides a foundation for land use management in the town through the zoning regulations. Thereby, this plan's purpose is also to support and reinforce the zoning regulations intent to protect the health, safety and welfare of the people of Litchfield. This plan then lays out a set of recommended strategies and complementary actions to implement those policies and help them be realized.

This plan also meets state statutory requirements for municipal planning. The Connecticut General Statutes require that a municipal plan of conservation and development be updated every ten years.



Litchfield's 2007 POCD

Summary of Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-23 Plan of Conservation and Development

The Planning Commission:

- Shall prepare (or amend) and adopt a plan of conservation and development at least once every ten years
- Shall regularly review and maintain the Plan
- May adopt amendments to the Plan or parts of the Plan as it deems necessary
- May prepare/amend plans for the redevelopment and improvement of districts or neighborhoods containing special problems or opportunities

The Plan Shall:

- Be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality,
- Provide for a system of principal thoroughfares, parkways, bridges, streets, sidewalks, multipurpose trails and other public ways as appropriate,
- Be designed to promote, with the greatest efficiency and economy, the coordinated development of the municipality and the general welfare and prosperity of its people
- Recommend the most desirable use of land within the municipality for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial, conservation and other purposes and include a map showing such proposed land uses,
- Identify areas where it is feasible and prudent to have compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns and land reuse, and to promote such development patterns and land reuse,

- Recommend the most desirable density of population in the several parts of the municipality,
- Note any inconsistencies with the State Conservation and Development Policies Plan
- Make provision for the development of housing opportunities,
- Promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing and encourage the development of housing which will meet the housing needs and
- Consider focusing development and revitalization in areas with existing or planned physical infrastructure.
- Consider the following:
 - The need for affordable housing
 - The need for protection of existing and potential drinking water supplies
 - The use of cluster development
 - The state plan of conservation and development
 - The regional plan of development
 - Physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends
 - The needs of the municipality
 - The objectives of energy-efficient patterns of development
 - Protection and preservation of agriculture

How the Plan Will Be Used

This Plan of Conservation and Development is an advisory document for the Litchfield Planning Commission and Zoning Commission. It provides a framework for decision-making with regard to growth and development activities in the town over the next decade. Yet, the plan will be most useful when everyone in the town is familiar with it and endorses it. All town boards and commission should refer to it on an ongoing basis when decisions are being made about not only development applications, but public facilities improvements, public works projects, resource protection, and annual town budget preparations.

This plan updates the 2007 Town of Litchfield Plan of Conservation and Development and focuses on how the town has changed over time and how the community should respond to those changes. This plan must be formally adopted by the Planning Commission and endorsed by the town's legislative body. While the state statutory responsibility to adopt the Plan rests with the Planning Commission, implementation will only occur to the degree that the community at-large collectively contributes to undertaking its recommendations.

In order to facilitate the implementation process, this plan includes a process for conducting regular updates. Periodic 'reality checks' for the plan will allow the town to evaluate progress being made on its recommendations or to decide on changes in direction if warranted. Thus, this plan is a living and dynamic document. It is designed to be used as an action plan and set of benchmarks over time, making it possible to keep track of measurable progress rather than a static report that will sit on a shelf until a subsequent update is prepared in another ten years.

Guiding Principles and Goals

Contemporary community planning is an active process that uses "smart growth" principles to promote the kind of place a community wants to be. Smart growth for Litchfield is an approach to long-term community development that focuses on quality of life and economic stability for everyone today and which is sustainable into the future. It relies on these principles to:

- Preserve valued community and natural resources while growing the economy;
- Place development where there is or will be infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, and schools) and optimize use of available infrastructure before expanding it;
- Place priority on re-use of previously developed sites and to encourage new development in targeted growth areas;
- Take steps to preserve and safeguard preserved open space as well as land identified for preservation
- Pursue a compact, mixed-use pattern of development for key core areas that creates walkable neighborhoods
- Provide a range of type and style of housing so that households from young adults to seniors can choose to live in town
- Promote a transportation system that encourages travel by a variety of modes (walking, bicycling, and transit in addition to the automobile)
- Apply these principles in a tailored way that supports the vision of where and how Litchfield wants to grow

Consistency with the State Conservation and Development Policies Plan

The findings of this plan were compared with the current State Conservation and Development Policies Plan (2013-2018) for consistency. The 2013-2018 Plan provides a benchmark for municipal plans of development going forward.

The 2013-2018 Plan is organized around six growth-management principles. Municipalities must consider these principles as they update their plans of conservation and development:

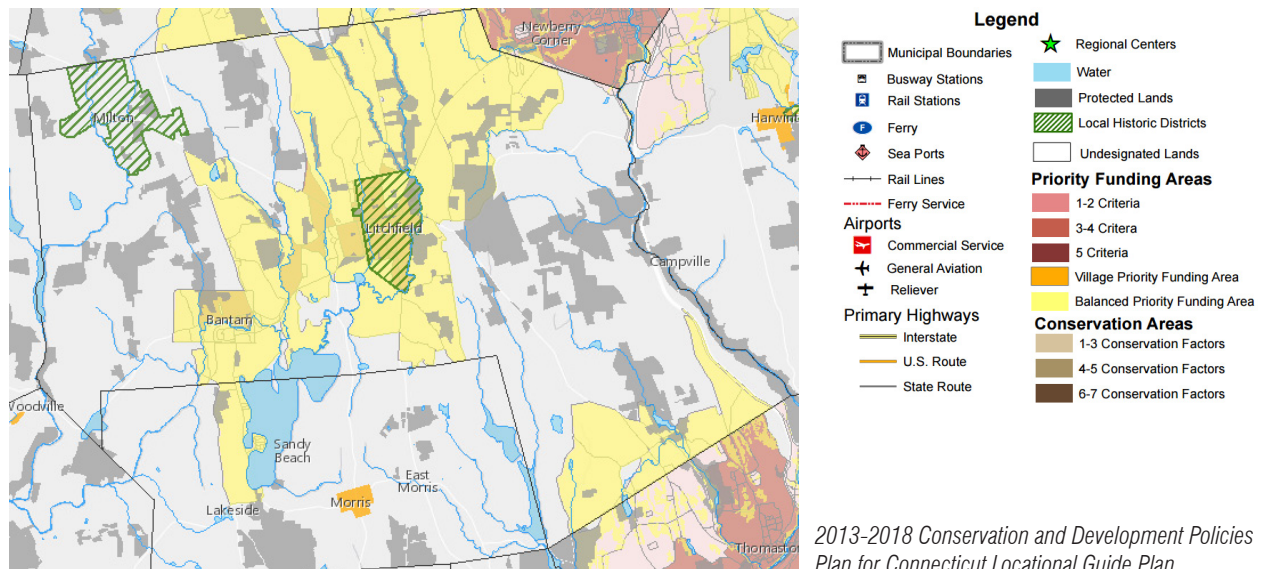
1. Redevelop and revitalize regional centers and areas with existing or currently planned physical infrastructure
2. Expand housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs
3. Concentrate development around transportation nodes and along major transportation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

The policies and strategies which comprise this plan are complementary to the growth principles stated above.

This plan was also compared for consistency with the 2013-2018 Plan with regards to designations of the 2013-2018 Locational Guide Map, which identifies targeted conservation areas and priority funding areas to guide the award of state funds in support of local programs and projects. The policies within this plan are consistent with the 2013-2018 Locational Guide Map (below).

The 2013-2018 State Plan establishes the following requirements:

- “Effective upon adoption of the 2013-2018 State C&D Plan by the General Assembly, CGS Section 16a-35d requires that no state agency provide funding for a “growth-related project” that is outside the boundaries of priority funding areas, unless it meets any listed criteria for exceptions
- Public Act 09-230 defines “principles of smart growth” and Public Act 10-138 requires state agencies to consider whether certain grant application proposals comply with such principles. “



2013-2018 Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut Locational Guide Plan

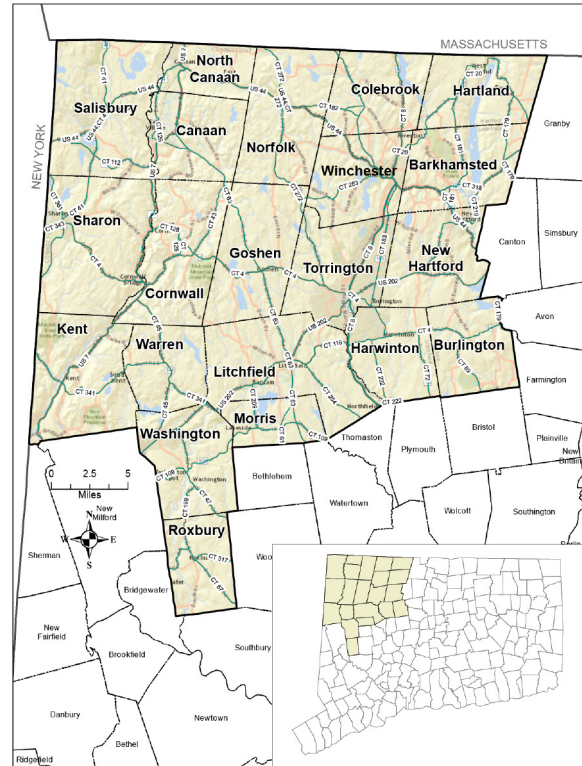
Consistency with Regional Plan of Conservation and Development

Litchfield sits near the southernmost center of the Litchfield Hills. It is a member of the Northwest Hills Council of Governments (comprised of the former Northwest and Litchfield Hills COGs) which includes twenty-one communities encompassing 808 square miles in northwest Connecticut.

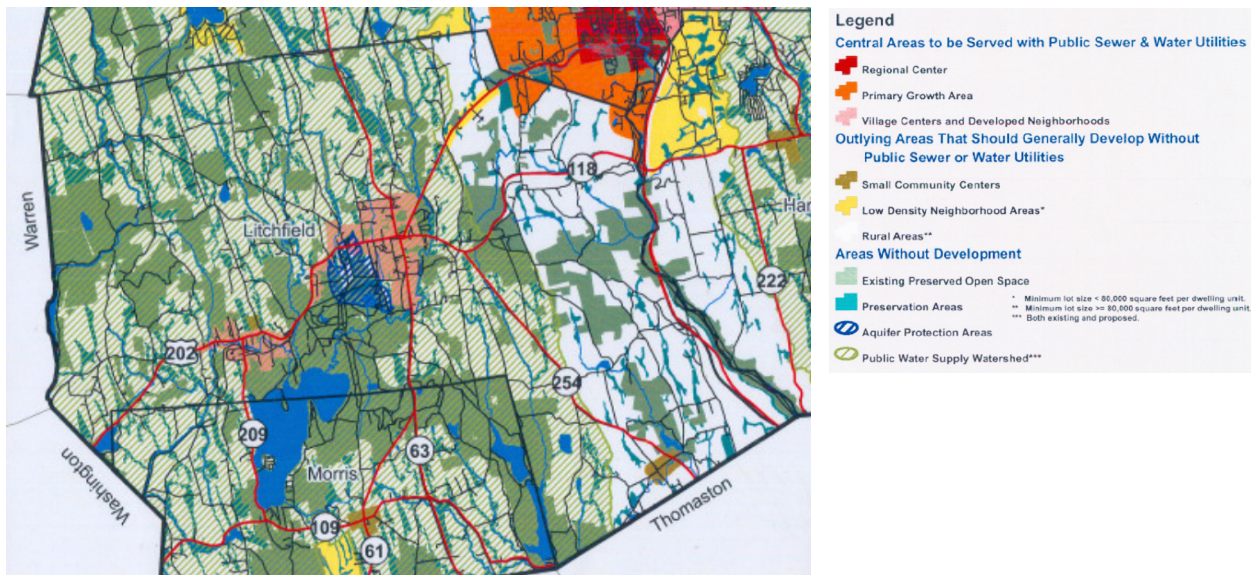
The Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOC) is currently working to update the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development. This document, expected to be completed in Fall 2017, will provide general recommendations for the future physical development of the region and its municipalities. Its purpose is to recommend policies that will guide decision making about the future direction, form and character of the region as a whole. The Plan will guide NHCOC in developing regional goals, strategies, and partnerships.

The current regional plan is the 2009 Litchfield Hills Regional Plan of Conservation and Development. This document and its recommendations are consistent with the goals and policies of the current regional plan.

The plan identifies areas of Litchfield as being within the Primary Growth Areas identified by the plan. Primary growth areas identified in Litchfield area along the Torrington line and include the Riverview commerce area along Thomaston Road and the Clark Road/Hunter's Chase area.



Northwest Hills Region



Litchfield Hills 2009 Regional Growth Policy Map

Litchfield’s POCD Planning Process

Litchfield’s POCD update was led by the Land Use Department and was advised by the Planning and Zoning Commission. All efforts were made to make this process as inclusive as possible. An online community survey was provided in September of 2016 and remained open for approximately six weeks. Additionally, a public workshop was conducted at the Litchfield Community Center in September of 2016. Both the survey and workshop were advertised in the local press and on the town’s website.

The project team also conducted multiple focus-group-format stakeholder interviews with various department heads and representatives from boards, commissions, and other advocacy groups.

Data for the trends analysis was sourced from the Town of Litchfield, Northwest Hills COG, State of Connecticut, and U.S. Census data in addition to other sources. The SWOT analysis organizes all information received through the preceding efforts into Strengths (S), Weaknesses (W), Opportunities (O), and Threats (T).

The recommended guiding policies, strategies, and actions presented in the plan were generated in response to the input received and analysis conducted.

How the Plan is Organized

This plan contains an introduction to Litchfield, followed by an analysis of and recommendations for specific focus areas and concludes with an implementation plan. The format is as follows:

1. Introduction including Vision Statement
2. Implementation Plan; this includes a guiding policy and recommended strategies. A policy champion is identified for each guiding policy. These policy champions include town departments, boards, and commissions. The recommended champion is not expected to undertake all the actions on their own, but to serve as the driving force necessary to engage others in helping to see those policies realized.
3. Topic Areas
 - a. Trends Analysis – A critical look at what has remained constant in the town in the last decade and what has changed
 - b. SWOT Analysis – An examination of Litchfield’s strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T).
4. Maps

Includes required maps and additional supplemental maps for topic areas.

Community Survey



Public Workshop



Stakeholder Interviews



Trends Analysis



SWOT Analysis



Recommended Policies and Strategies

A Vision for Litchfield's Future

A Vision Statement was written for Litchfield based on the thoughts, ideas and desires of the community as a whole. The town's collective ideas were documented based on a community-wide public involvement process for this plan.

Town of Litchfield Guiding Vision Statement

Litchfield is a rural community with a rich agrarian and industrial history. The town is home to unique villages that are comprised of historic structures anchoring Litchfield to its past. Open space is highly valued and Litchfield actively protects its most sensitive ecological and scenic areas. Litchfield's stewardship of its open space and historical architecture contributes to its economic base by attracting tourism to the town. Litchfield is home to life-long families, new arrivals, and is welcoming to visitors. The town values its local farms and businesses many of which provide essential goods, services, and employment opportunities to residents. The town has a range of housing that allows its families to grow and remain members of the community throughout their lives. Litchfield's students are provided with a high quality education and diverse recreational opportunities. The town's leadership carefully balances the challenge of providing quality services and facilities while ensuring that Litchfield remains a community where residents and businesses can sustain their presence. Litchfield is a community that is open to growth and change that is consistent with the town's identity and respectful of the town's unique natural and cultural resources.

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Implementation

Housing Policies and Strategies

Guiding Policy: To expand housing options, encourage housing creation in Litchfield, and foster a balance among housing types to promote housing choice for all residents.

Recommended Policy Champion: Board of Selectman, Litchfield Planning and Zoning Commission

Housing Strategies:

1. Encourage the development of a variety of housing options for young adults, families, and older residents throughout Litchfield.
2. Encourage housing conservation in traditional neighborhoods and continued preservation of traditional neighborhood character.
3. Promote development of affordable housing: Utilize zoning tools and state-funded support programs that facilitate the creation of affordable housing.
4. Encourage the construction of more affordable housing for young families and moderate income singles, in addition to adding to the number of state-defined affordable units.

Housing Recommended Actions:

1. Amend zoning to allow for inclusion of high-density housing, independent of commercial uses, in commercially zoned areas.
2. Review zoning regulations to identify zoning modifications that may be necessary to support the development of housing in existing sewer service areas.
3. Promote energy assistance and other programs to help residents with their housing-related needs.

Land Use Policies and Strategies

Guiding Policy: To maintain Litchfield's traditional overall pattern of development while fostering development of key locations along the Old Route 8 and Thomaston boundaries, in the Riverview Commerce Zone.

Recommended Policy Champions: Land Use Office, Planning and Zoning Commission, Historic District Commissions, Conservation Commission

Land Use Strategies

1. Encourage mixed-use and higher density residential development in commercial districts.
2. Encourage residential development in areas currently served by sewer infrastructure.
3. Continue to preserve historic resources.
4. Seek opportunities to permanently protect farm land and open space resources.

Land Use Recommended Actions

1. Create a community character guide (preferred architectural and site design features) based on the town's historic architecture and land use.
2. Develop design guidelines, based upon the community character guide, that are associated with each zone type. Incorporate those guidelines into the town's zoning regulations.
3. Consider revising zoning to allow for higher density residential development in areas currently served by sewer infrastructure.
4. Encourage clustering of homes in new subdivisions (rather than simply permit them). Clustering will assist in reducing the amount of additional roadway that may be necessary to support new development, thereby reducing construction costs, environmental impact, and cost of maintenance. The degree to which homes can be clustered may be limited by septic field requirements.

Conservation, Open Space & Recreation Policies and Strategies

Guiding Policy: To preserve existing open space, protect sensitive natural resources, and expand access to recreational opportunities for all residents.

Recommended Policy Champion: Litchfield Land Use Office, Parks and Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, partnerships with Litchfield Land Trust and Litchfield Community Greenway Group

Open Space and Recreation Strategies

1. Improve access to, and parking for, open space properties.
2. Continue to establish greenway linkages between key open space parcels.
3. Leverage Litchfield's recreational assets to foster recreational tourism.
4. Pursue public-private partnerships to enable public access to recreational facilities.

Open Space and Recreation Recommended Actions

1. Improve public access to information resources about Litchfield's open spaces.
2. Identify unique assets such as historic cemeteries, farm properties and scenic vistas and prioritize the conservation of these sites.
3. Develop strategic plan for the acquisition or protection of unique open space and farm properties.
4. Support the Litchfield Land Trust in acquiring and/or managing open space.
5. Develop a concept plan for connecting the town's open spaces via a pathway or trail network.
6. Further develop the Litchfield Community Greenway between Litchfield's village centers.
7. Coordinate and seek technical assistance from the State of Connecticut Department of Commission on Culture and Tourism to develop a tourism program for Litchfield.
8. Collaborate with the Connecticut Parks & Forest Association to promote passive recreation on State Forest land.
9. Develop a Litchfield open space brochure to guide both residents and visitors to open spaces and to town recreational facilities.

Economic Development Policies and Strategies

Guiding Policy: To encourage sustainable economic growth and foster new job creation.

Recommended Policy Champion: Economic Development Commission

Economic Development Strategies

1. Expand sewer and water infrastructure in commercial development areas.
2. Preserve and enhance the town's farms as an economic development asset.
3. Improve the retail and dining environment in the Litchfield Borough Commercial District.
4. Change perceptions that Litchfield is not business friendly.

Recommended Economic Development Actions

1. Provide sewer and water services along Thomaston Road (Riverview Commerce area). Connect to Torrington's wastewater system where Litchfield currently has an underutilized allocation. Seek grant funding to assist in financing. Establish a sewer tax district to ensure that the cost of infrastructure is carried by properties and development in that area.
2. Explore developing a heritage and agricultural tourism program centered on the town's historic, rural, recreational, and agricultural assets to promote it as a tourism destination. Pursue technical support and grant funding through the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism to support this effort.
3. Conduct a market study to determine potential demand for housing, retail and services in the Litchfield Borough Commercial District and along the Route 202 corridor.
4. Consider adopting a policy and process to allow short-term or seasonal retail businesses in the Litchfield Borough Commercial District. Review and revise zoning to allow these businesses if established as feasible.
5. Support mixed-use, infill development for all historic commercial buildings.
6. Assess potential future uses for the Litchfield Courthouse and other vacant facilities.
7. Update the town's website and streamline processes for new businesses to locate and establish in Litchfield.
8. Develop a simple and clear permitting process and guidance for businesses seeking to establish themselves in Litchfield, targeted towards retail and restaurant businesses seeking to locate in the Litchfield Borough Commercial District.

Cultural and Historic Resources Policies and Strategies

Guiding Policy: To promote, protect and enhance the historical, architectural and landscape heritage of Litchfield.

Recommended Policy Champion: Borough of Litchfield and Milton Historic District Commissions, Planning and Zoning Commission, Conservation Commission

Cultural and Historical Resource Strategies

1. Encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures, barns, and landscapes.
2. Identify areas in need of special historic protection and consider adopting a historic overlay zone in those areas.

Recommended Cultural and Historic Actions

1. Assemble comprehensive inventory and map of Litchfield's historic landscapes, cemeteries, barns and stone walls. Collect and update information from previous surveys such as the CT Trust barn and farm surveys and various architectural and historic resources surveys. Integrate this data into a GIS system.
2. Review the recommendations of the four existing architectural and historic resource surveys of the town's historic structures and consider adopting an historic overlay zone in those areas and/or nominating individual properties to the state and national historic registers.
3. Adopt a 90 day demolition delay ordinance for historic structures throughout the town, not just those located in historic districts.
4. Establish priorities for long-term preservation of historic resources and identify issues related to preservation efforts.

Transportation Network Policies and Strategies

Guiding Policy: *To increase opportunities for all modes of travel within Litchfield and maintain the transportation network in a state of good repair.*

Recommended Policy Champion: *Town Engineer/Public Works, Litchfield Land Use Office*

Transportation Strategies

1. Maintain transportation infrastructure at existing or improved levels.
2. Seek to expand bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
3. Continue to improve safety and traffic conditions throughout the town with a focused effort on major commercial corridors.
4. Work with the Northwest Transit District to provide additional transit services to seniors and those without a car.

Recommended Transportation Actions

1. Conduct comprehensive inventory and assessment of the roadway network and generate a pavement restoration schedule and program. Assemble this information in a GIS database.
2. Develop an access management plan for Route 202 that seeks to minimize and consolidate curb cuts along as a means of calming traffic and improving traffic safety.
3. Prepare bicycle and pedestrian masterplan for the town as a means of identifying strategic areas for expansion of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
4. Regularly apply to state administered grant programs such as LOTCIP, STEAP, and Local Bridge Improvement programs as a means of funding strategic transportation improvements.

Sewer & Water Infrastructure Policies and Strategies

Guiding Policy: *To maintain sewer and drinking water services in a state of good repair; To ensure that the system is capable of supporting appropriate economic development; To limit system expansion in favor of enhancements to the existing system; and to protect water supply resources.*

Recommended Policy Champion: *Town Engineer/Sewer Department*

Facilities and Infrastructure Strategies

1. Address current aging infrastructure issues.
2. Prioritize enhancements to the existing water and sewer systems over system expansion.
3. Continue investment in conservation as a means of protecting public water supply resources.
4. Continue to work with property owners who have failing septic systems.

Recommended Infrastructure Actions

1. Inventory town-wide drainage system.
2. Document current water and sewer distribution system deficiencies and set priorities for upgrades.
3. Make improvements to sewer network to minimize inflow and infiltration.
4. Provide sewer and water facilities in Riverview Commerce area, connect to Torrington's wastewater treatment system.

Schools Policies and Strategies

Guiding Policy: To maintain and continuously improve school facilities and services and to build educational partnerships.

Recommended Policy Champion: Litchfield Board of Education

Schools Strategies

1. Pursue educational partnerships with surrounding towns and Region 6 district.

Schools Actions

1. Assemble a task force to pursue the feasibility of partnering with nearby school districts or regionalizing schools.
2. Conduct a study of potential cost savings associated with educational partnerships or regionalization.

Governance Policies and Strategies

Guiding Policy: To provide a high level of service to residents, business and property owners and to ensure fiscal stability for Litchfield.

Recommended Policy Champion: Board of Selectmen

Governance Strategies

1. Consolidate town facilities, as feasible, while maintaining access and levels of service.
2. Improve technology resources within town departments and facilities.
3. Pursue expansion and diversification of tax base.
4. Pursue grant funding to assist with capital improvements.
5. Improve public access to town services.
6. Bolster volunteerism and participation in town board and commissions.

Recommended Governance Actions

1. Explore feasibility of combining Town Hall and Town Annex functions into one facility.
2. Apply for Connecticut Local Capital Improvement Program (LOCIP), Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP), and Small Cities Community Development Block Grant to assist with capital improvements.
3. Support expansion of sewer and water infrastructure in commercial development areas (such as the Riverview Commerce area) as a means of bolstering and diversifying tax base.
4. Upgrade technology and provide training for staff across departments.
5. Improve town website and access to town services via more online services.
6. Consider identifying a community ombudsman/help desk person at Town Hall who is accessible online via email to direct residents to needed services.
7. Continue to encourage local volunteerism with recognition of local organizations, event sponsors, and programs. Develop a community recognition program to publicize and thank local volunteers for their contributions.

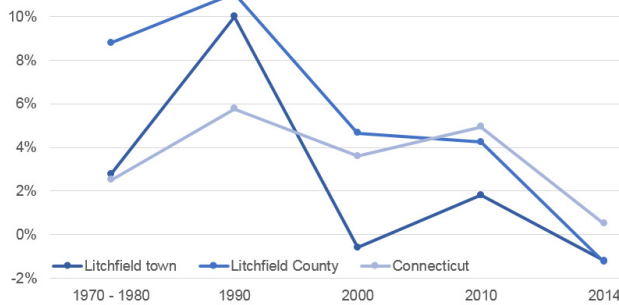


Demographics

Demographic Trends

Litchfield's population is slowly decreasing, while also becoming less diverse. The town is home to 8,365 residents and the population is aging, with 35 percent of the population falling in the 45 to 64 age bracket. Litchfield's median age is 47, this is older than that of the county and also the state. Likewise, fewer residents are in the 20 to 44 age bracket than in the county or the rest of the state.

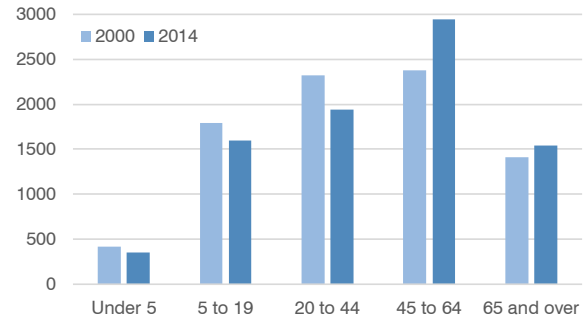
Population: Litchfield's population growth showed a significant upsurge between 1980 and 1990 and then rapidly declined between 1990 and 2000. This trend is similar in both the county and state, but Litchfield had a higher rate of decline. Population growth recovered slightly between 2000 and 2010, but returned to negative between 2010 and 2014. The rate of growth lags behind the pace of the state, but has been consistent with that of the region.



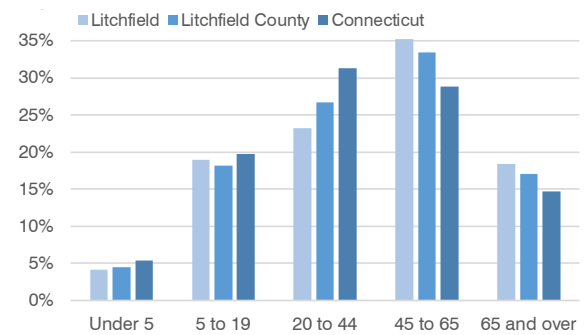
Population Increase per Decade, Source: 2014 American Community Survey

Age: Another noticeable population trend is a shift in the age distribution of Litchfield residents. Litchfield's 45 to 64-year-old age group grew considerably between 2000 and 2014; the 65 and over group also grew. All other age groups declined. This suggests that the population is aging, which is a similar trend seen in the county and the state, although Litchfield's percentage of 45 to 65-year-old and 65 and over, are higher than both the region and the state.

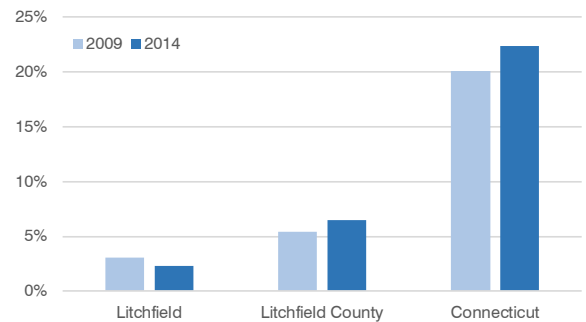
Diversity: Since 2010, the diversity of the town has also changed. Litchfield's diversity is declining, with fewer non-white and Hispanic residents. This trend is the opposite of the county and the state, which have both seen an increase in non-white and Hispanic population.



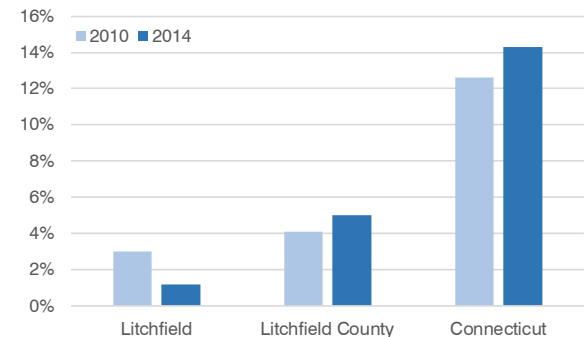
Age Distribution, Source: 2014 ACS



Age Distribution vs County and State, Source: 2014 ACS

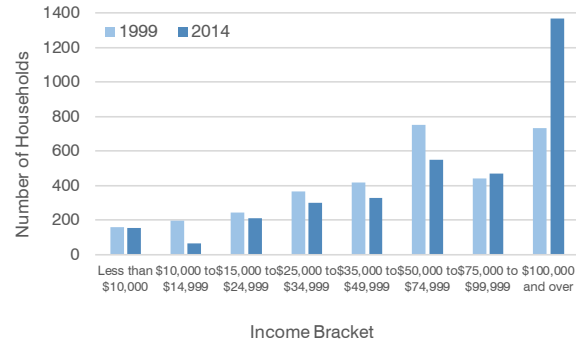


Non-White Population, Source: 2014 ACS

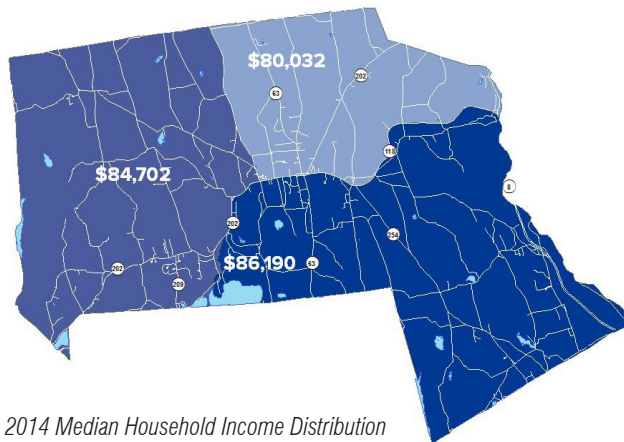


Hispanic Population, Source: 2014 ACS

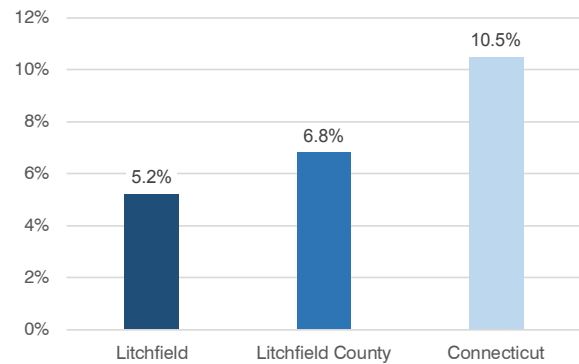
Household Income: Litchfield has a lower poverty rate than both the County and the State. Household incomes in Litchfield have been trending upwards, with the number of households over the \$100,000+ income group doubling since 1999. The \$75,000 to \$99,999 income group also grew slightly during this time frame. All other income groups decreased between 1999 to 2014. This data suggests a growing income gap with middle-incomes not rising in concert with the cost of living, and with a larger income span between relatively wealthy and poorer residents; a trend that reflects national conditions.



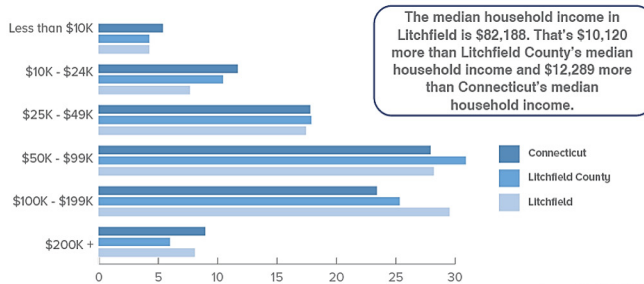
Household Income 1999 vs 2014, Source: 2014 ACS



2014 Median Household Income Distribution

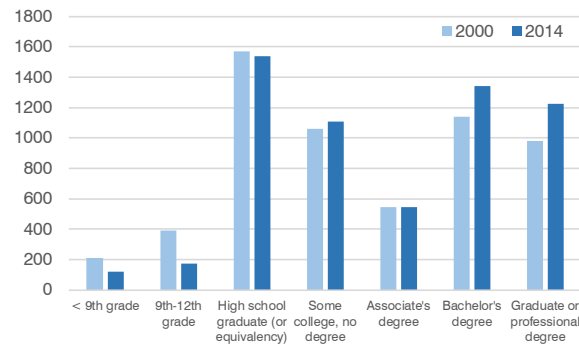


Poverty vs County and State (2014), Source: 2014 ACS

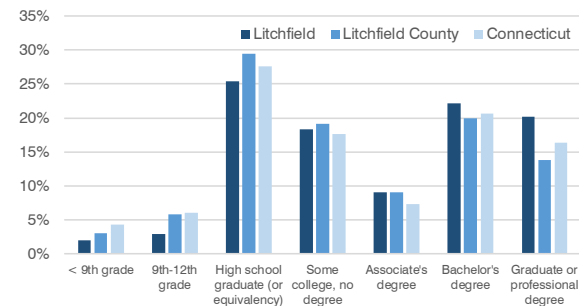


2014 Median Household Income vs County and State

Educational Attainment: The level of education among Litchfield's residents has been rising over the past decade. The town has a growing number of college graduates as well as those with a graduate or professional degree. These percentages are higher than those of both the county and the state.



Educational Attainment (2000-2014), Source: 2014 ACS



Educational Attainment vs County and State (2014), Source: 2014 ACS

SWOT Analysis of Litchfield’s Demographics

Litchfield’s population has been declining at a faster rate than both the county and the state population. Additionally, median age has increased to 47. Population age cohorts from 0 to 44 have seen a decrease since 2000, while the cohorts from 45 to 64 and 65 and over have grown since 2000.

An increasing elderly population in Litchfield suggests there will be a growing demand for services to meet the needs of this group. Median household incomes have increased, with the greatest number of residents making \$100,000 and over. A positive note is Litchfield’s educational attainment, which has a greater number of the population holding bachelor’s and graduate or professional degrees than the County and the State. A more educated workforce creates a positive environment to encourage new sources of employment with higher paying jobs available and a higher standard of living which in turn supports the health of local businesses.

Recent studies have shown that today’s 20 and 30 year-olds as well as a growing number of the elderly seek to live in vibrant neighborhoods where there are a variety of services, cultural opportunities and opportunities to interact. They desire homes in places that are walkable, have good transit connections, and are not automobile-dominated. Given these trends, Litchfield may continue to struggle to attract and retain young adults and will be challenged in providing housing for the elderly, unless a greater diversity of housing is provided within walking distance of goods, services, and transit.

Strengths

- *Very safe community, a good place to raise children*
- *A substantial increase in upper income households*
- *Increasing educational attainment of residents*
- *Lower poverty rate than region and the state*

Weaknesses

- *Low population growth which limits attraction of new businesses and growth of the local tax base*
- *Limited job opportunities for younger people*

Opportunities

- *Potential for population growth by fostering economic development, increasing diversity of housing supply, and increase quality of life to retain and attract new residents*
- *An aging population that may support a new market for independent living/lifestyle change housing for seniors*
- *Continue to invest in strengthening the school system to promote higher educational attainment and attract young families*

Threats

- *Low population growth will not create market demand for retail businesses in the town center*
- *An aging population that may leave Litchfield if there is not sufficient diversity in housing choices*
- *A continued erosion of median household incomes*
- *Aging population may increase demand for health and social services*



Housing

Housing Trends

Housing Units: Litchfield’s housing stock consists primarily of single-family detached units on individual lots which are currently 76% of the total.

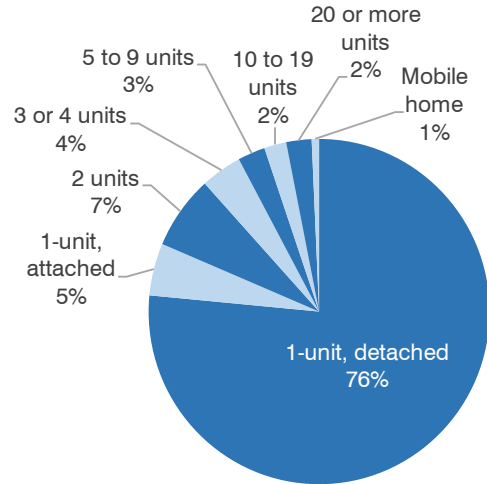
Housing Tenure and Vacancy: Litchfield’s housing remains primarily owner-occupied, with 78% of occupied units falling into that category; 22% of units are renter-occupied. This is comparable to county wide trends, but is lower than percentages for renter-occupied units throughout the state.

Litchfield had 4,166 total housing units as of 2014. Of those, 83% are occupied and 17% of units are vacant. This includes homes that are not primary residences. This is typical for a town such as Litchfield which has a high population of weekend and summer residents. The 2014 homeowner vacancy rate was 1.8%, which while low, is slightly higher than Connecticut’s overall rate of 1.7%. The rate for Litchfield County is higher, at 2%. Although homeowner vacancy rates are higher than the previous decade, housing availability has remained relatively stable. The rental vacancy rate in Litchfield is 2.7%, which is much lower than state and county rates (7.0% and 7.1%, respectively). Additionally, Litchfield has rental stability above the state average.

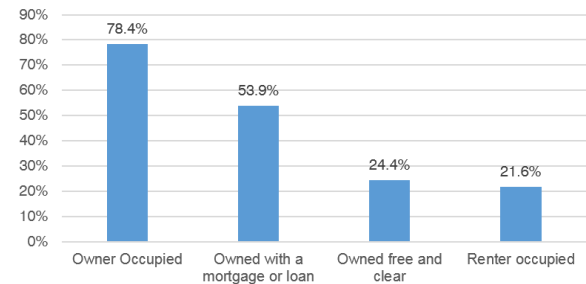
Town of Litchfield	2000	2010	2014	Percent Change 2000-2014
Total housing units	3,629	4,055	4,166	14.8%
1-unit, detached	2,755	3,177	3,187	15.7%
1-unit, attached	167	180	203	21.6%
2 units	267	285	287	7.5%
3 or 4 units	126	121	163	29.4%
5 to 9 units	96	55	110	14.6%
10 to 19 units	44	21	88	100%
20 or more units	73	161	100	37.0%
Mobile home	76	55	28	-63.2%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	25	-	-	-100%

Housing Type Trends 2000 - 2014, Source: 2014 ACS

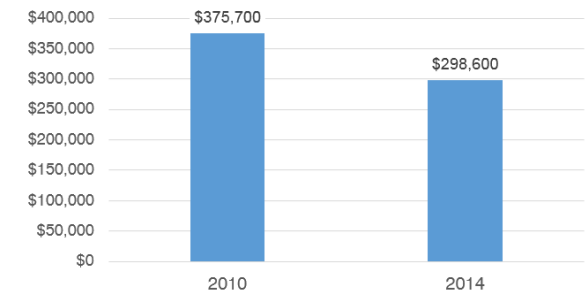
Housing Permits: Like the rest of the state and country prior to the recession, Litchfield had a period of significant housing construction. This boom, between 2003- 2006, follows a bigger construction boom in the mid 1990’s when building permits per year rose above 90. Permit data from the U.S. Census and Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development indicate that since 2006, Litchfield has seen a decrease in housing construction activity. For example, in 2015, there were only nine permits issued in Litchfield, compared to 49 in 2005.



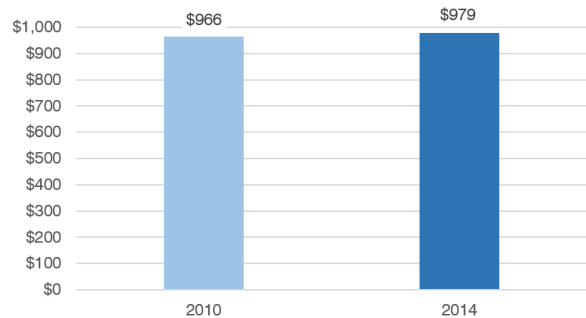
Type of Housing Units (2014 Estimate), Source: 2014 ACS



Litchfield Housing Occupancy Type (2014), Source: 2014 ACS



Litchfield Median Owner-Occupied Housing Value (2014 Estimate Inflation Adjusted), Source: 2014 ACS

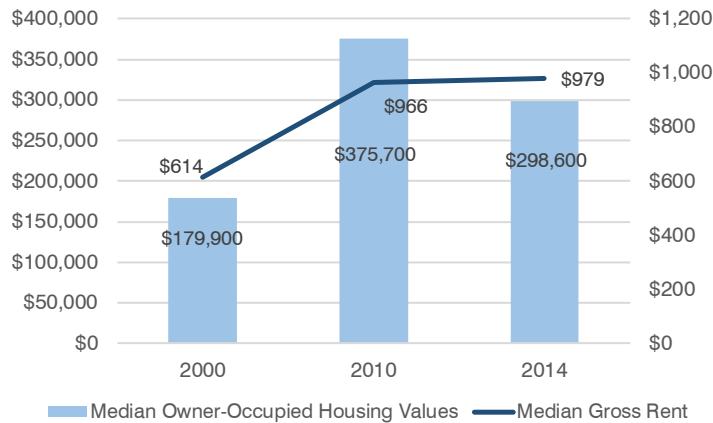


Median Gross Rent (2014 Estimate Inflation Adjusted), Source: 2014 ACS

Owner-Occupied Housing Values: Since 2000, Litchfield has seen an increase of 61% in median owner-occupied housing value, from \$179,900 to \$298,600. Although this is a significant increase, the median housing values have been declining since 2010. Between 2010 and 2014, median owner-occupied housing values decreased by 20%. Historically, Litchfield has had a higher median owner-occupied housing value than the State and County, and this continues to be true.

As has occurred throughout the region, home sales have dropped dramatically from the pre-recession period. Between 2010 and 2014, the median home value in Litchfield has dropped by more than 25%.

Rental Costs: Gross rent is defined as including both monthly rent and utilities. Litchfield’s median gross rent in 2014 was \$979/per month, up 59% from 2000 when the median gross rent was \$614/month. Unlike housing values (Litchfield’s were higher than the State and County) Litchfield’s median rental costs are lower than Connecticut’s 2014 median gross rental cost which was \$1,069/month.



Median Housing Values compared to Gross Rents (2000 - 2014), Source: 2014 ACS

The Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure, created in 1989, allows for appeals to the superior court when development plans for affordable housing are denied by a municipality or when restrictions are placed upon the development that would substantially impact the viability of project development. Communities that have 10% of their total housing stock as affordable units are exempt from such appeals.

Housing Conditions: Litchfield’s housing stock is primarily older. Only 14% of housing units were built in the 1990’s and 2000’s, 27% were built during the 1970’s and 1980’s, and about 59% were built during the 1960’s or earlier.

Affordable Housing: The State of Connecticut has a goal for each municipality to have a minimum of 10% of its housing stock classified as affordable. Affordable units are defined as governmentally assisted units with tenant rental assistance, subsidized mortgages, and deed restricted units preserved as affordable to persons or families whose incomes are less than or equal to 80% of the area median income. These types of homes are sought by young professionals, families, town workers, downsizing Baby Boomers and others. Per the State’s 2016 data, Litchfield’s affordable housing stock is currently at 4.93%, down slightly from 5.13% in 2006. It is notable that only thirty-one communities in Connecticut have achieved the goal of over 10% of housing stock in affordable units.

Many affordable housing units in Litchfield are overseen by the Litchfield Housing Trust (LHT). The LHT provides qualified families with rental, ownership, or land-lease programs, using local, state and federal subsidies to achieve the goals. The LHT administers these subsidy funds working in close coordination with town officials and local financial institutions.

Emphasis for housing opportunities is directed toward income-qualified families whose housing needs are not being met: So, that people who work in Litchfield can live in Litchfield and so that families, young and old, will not have to leave the town to find affordable housing, and so that Litchfield will be a diverse community.

Housing SWOT Analysis

The housing stock in Litchfield’s community core is primarily older, historic homes. While there has been recent interest in development and sewer expansion in East Litchfield, along the Route 8 corridor for this type of mixed-use, the town’s ability to implement development which incorporates new housing opportunities, will continue to be strongly influenced by statewide market forces as well as the success of both local and regional economic development efforts.

Litchfield has a high median household income, high housing costs, and a limited supply of affordable and moderately-priced homes for the municipality’s workforce. Additionally, Baby Boomers seeking to downsize and younger families looking to move into town have a limited options. Single-family homes on individual lots dominate Litchfield’s housing stock at 82% of units, leaving the town ill prepared to accommodate the needs of renters, primarily younger residents looking to remain in Litchfield where they grew up.

Despite high household incomes, housing in Litchfield is expensive relative to median incomes. 46% of renters and 34% of homeowners spend 30% or more of their income on housing. Households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs are considered to be “housing cost burdened”. Gross rents have remained stable in Litchfield since 2010, while median housing values have declined.

Litchfield’s population of 65 and older residents is expected to increase by 31% between 2015 and 2025. This could lead to the need for smaller, more affordable homes closer to the services available in the town center and along the Route 202 corridor.

The need for affordable housing was identified in the previous Plan of Conservation and Development and this need still remains. Less than 5% of homes in Litchfield are classified as affordable, according to the 2014 Affordable Housing Appeals List. These are homes sought by young professionals, town workers, elderly looking to downsize, and others. This adds to the complexity of decision-making regarding housing policy for Litchfield. The Litchfield Housing Trust and Litchfield Housing Authority have been the primary agents for creating and managing new affordable/subsidized units. The Litchfield Housing Trust is focused on creating workforce housing, while the bulk of Litchfield Housing Authority units are for seniors.

An additional consideration is that Litchfield is not exempt from the Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure. Under this procedure, only a community which meets or exceeds the State’s affordable housing goals is protected from lawsuits to the state appeals court to overcome local zoning denials of affordable housing development proposals. Therefore, the town zoning decisions about housing development proposals could be challenged should they include affordable units and be denied.

Strengths

- *Rural character*
- *Distinct village centers with residences*
- *Well maintained historic properties*
- *High home ownership rate*
- *Litchfield Housing Trust, Litchfield Housing Authority*

Weaknesses

- *Lack of affordable housing for elderly and young families*
- *Lack of housing diversity*
- *Limited rental properties available*
- *Sewer/ water limitations restricts density of development in many areas*

Opportunities

- *Infill development of senior independent/lifestyle change housing*
- *Zoning flexibility- potential for adaptive reuse and mixed use/higher density development*
- *Accessory housing and room rentals could aid in affordability*

Threats

- *Delicate balance between existing character and future development*
- *Loss of existing farms*
- *Continued outward migration of an already flat population*

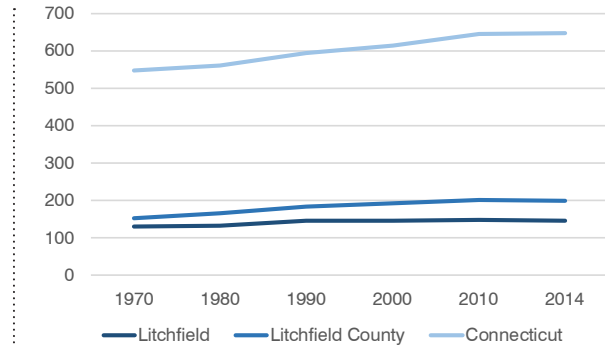


Land Use

Land Use Trends

Current Land Use Patterns

Litchfield is predominantly a rural community with a cohesive town center bookended by stretches of low-density commercial uses along its main arterial road, Route 202. The greatest concentration of commercial development is to the west of the center and extend to the village center in the Borough of Bantam. Yet, it is also an area of mixed use with some homes and multifamily (primarily condominiums) interspersed with the commercial uses. The rural areas are comprised mostly of single family homes on large lots (4 acres or more) and farmland. Litchfield has two large preserved natural areas as well, including Topsmead State Forest with 511 acres of land and The White Memorial Foundation. The Foundation owns approximately 4,000 acres of land, including several ponds.



Population Density per Square Mile 1970-2014,
Source: US Census

Zoning Context

The vast majority of the Town of Litchfield is zoned for residential use of varied density and character. Residential zones range from those for “Large Rural Residences” on lots at a minimum of 4 acres to Zone HR 20 (Historic Residences) on lots of half an acre within the Borough to “Multifamily Residences” at a density of 4 units/acre or up to 30 units. This level of density for multi-family dwellings is considered very low by industry standards. The Rural Residence zone is the largest in Litchfield, applying to approximately 75% of the land in town. This zone is intended for residential and agricultural use and requires a minimum lot size of 2 acres. Other key features of this zone include:

- Building Coverage only allowed to reach 15%
- Building Height can be 35 feet (approximately 2.5 stories)
- Affordable housing is permitted as a Special Exception; such housing must be sponsored by the town or a non-profit
- Two-family homes and accessory apartments are permitted
- Special Exception Uses also include
 - » A Country Inn/Restaurant
 - » Winery
 - » Assisted living facility
 - » Educational facilities

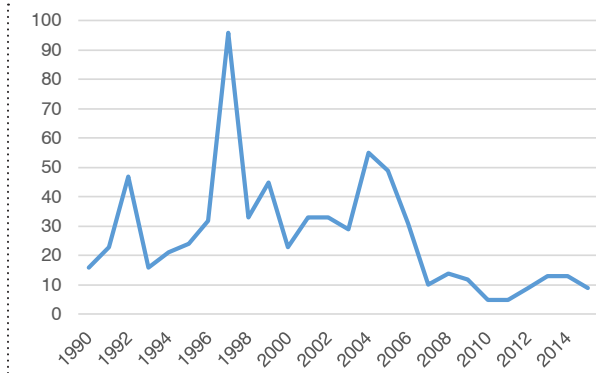
Discreet areas of commercial zoning occur along Route 202 through the town as well as along Thomaston Road where the easterly border of Litchfield meets Route 8 and the Naugatuck River; each permits a wide range of uses. Manufacturing and warehousing/distribution centers are only permitted in the limited commercial zone along Thomaston Road. Heavy industrial uses are not permitted in Litchfield.

The town zoning designations generally mirror existing land use patterns and reinforce them. The regulations as a whole are focused on maintaining and preserving the existing character of the town. The zones in Litchfield particularly acknowledge the abundance of historic properties in the community and seek to protect them. There are two designated historic districts in Litchfield and development within the Borough is guided by the Historic District Design Standards in addition to zoning. The zoning regulations also provide for a Design Review Advisory Committee with the authority to review and comment on aesthetic features of some proposed developments.

It is also notable that the Borough of Litchfield is guided by the town zoning regulations while the Borough of Bantam has its own set of regulations that guide land use within its boundaries.

Development Trends and Potential

Development trends and potential in Litchfield were identified through a review of available data and discussion with the Town Land Use Department. Overall, development has been slow in recent years. The CERC (Connecticut Economic Resource Center) documented just nine (9) new housing permits between 2010 and 2014. There was a single subdivision application to the Planning and Zoning Commission in the first 6 months of 2016. Non-residential development in the past year has been limited to changes in use at existing retail sites and the construction of a new Stop N Shop as part of the redevelopment of an existing plaza. Additionally, according to the town annual financial statements, the town's grand list grew by less than 1 percent between 2011 and 2012, and then declined slightly between 2012 and 2014 (by 0.75%). One notable redevelopment project is the approved adaptive reuse of the former jailhouse in the Borough. This historic structure is planned for a mix of residential and commercial uses.



Litchfield Residential Development Activity 1990-2014, Source: DECD Annual Housing Permits

The Town Land Use Administrator observed that there are limited opportunity areas for new development in Litchfield. There may be some demand for new housing at Litchfield's borders with Torrington and Thomaston. Some developers have explored options for duplex development in areas where this might be permitted. In addition, there is some potential for conversion of existing large farms into rural residential developments, potentially to the detriment of Litchfield's agrarian landscape. As economic pressures on existing farms have grown, making agriculture difficult to sustain, some local farms can be expected to seek approval for broader uses of agricultural lands such as event spaces, or for agri-tourism.

Non-residential zones are largely built-out in Litchfield and constraints on new development, such as type of land ownership and wetlands or steep slopes, can be expected to limit added development in those zones. For example, the White Memorial Foundation owns much of the land surrounding and across the street from the commercial plaza fronting on Route 202 just north of its conservation center. As the foundation is committed to preserving those lands as open space, there are very limited opportunities for this commercial area to expand. As such, most new commercial development in Litchfield is expected to come from redevelopment of existing non-residential sites.

Land Use SWOT Analysis

Land use and patterns of development are essential ingredients in shaping the way people experience a place. They are what define its physical character. The trends analysis revealed the following about Litchfield's land use and development traits.

With a very stable land use pattern over time, opportunities for land use change in Litchfield remain similar to those of the past several decades. Overall, substantial areas of vacant land in 2007 also remain vacant today. While much of that is preserved open space, potential sites for residential infill remain along the borders of Thomaston and Torrington, as well as key parcels along Route 202, such as the soon to be vacant Stop N Shop building.

Strengths

- *Location of village centers along Route 202*
- *Stable development patterns over time*
- *History of steady, even paced growth*
- *Historic resources and the town Green*
- *Protected status of much open space*
- *Cohesive Neighborhoods*
- *Many scenic vistas and gateway roads*

Weaknesses

- *Traditional pattern of single-use zones and traditional site design that limits flexible and creative development and redevelopment*
- *Dispersed development places pressure on the town in keeping up with maintenance of infrastructure*
- *Town zoning promotes sprawl development patterns*
- *Land uses are spread out and disconnected, making them difficult to access for some*

Opportunities

- *Mixed use development in the downtown*
- *Infill of recently purchased Litchfield Jail*

Threats

- *Challenges for successful financing of mixed-use development*
- *Competition for residential development in surrounding communities*
- *Weakness of the regional economy and housing market*
- *Conversion of existing large farms into rural residential developments*



Economic Development

Economic Development Trends

Changes to the local economy are characterized by shifts in sources of employment, types of available jobs, commuting patterns, and employment levels as well as housing values .

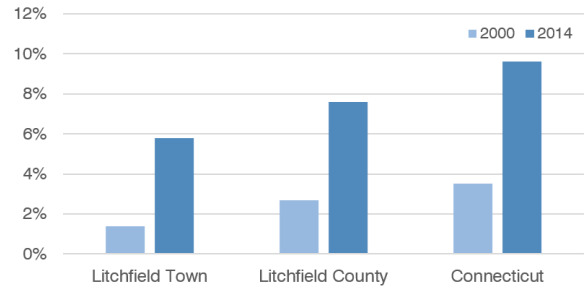
U.S. Census data reveals that Litchfield had 353 businesses in 2012 and retail sales of over \$148,959,000. This equates to retail sales of \$17,833 per capita, which is well above the Connecticut State average of \$14,381 per capita.

Major Employers: Major employers in Litchfield are; the Litchfield School District, Litchfield Firehouse, Visiting Nurses Association, Wamogo Regional High School, and Forman School. With a steady decline of school total enrollment, many of these jobs could be at risk.

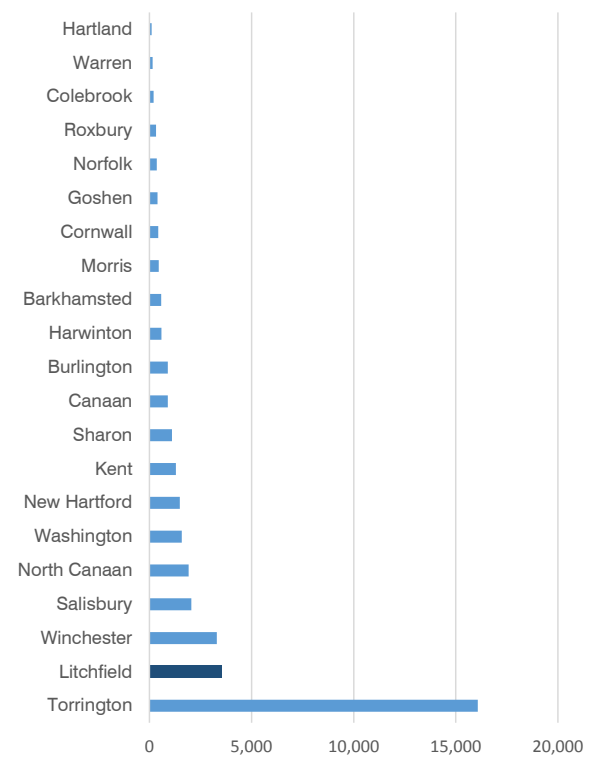
Jobs and Unemployment: The trend in available jobs in Litchfield over the past fifteen years has reflected a transition in the types of major local employers and businesses. This trend, has been away from skilled manufacturing and retail trade to more educational, health care, and professional services. In 2000, 14% of the businesses in Litchfield were in retail and wholesale trade. By 2014, that had dropped to about 9%. In contrast, 22% of jobs in Litchfield were in educational, health, and social services in 2000, and that number rose to 30% by 2014.

The economic downturn in past years has not helped with employment opportunities in Litchfield. The town's unemployment rate has increased from 1.4% in 2000 to 5% in 2014. This is about 2% less than the State's unemployment rate for the same year (2014). These trends have been seen at the regional, state, and federal levels.

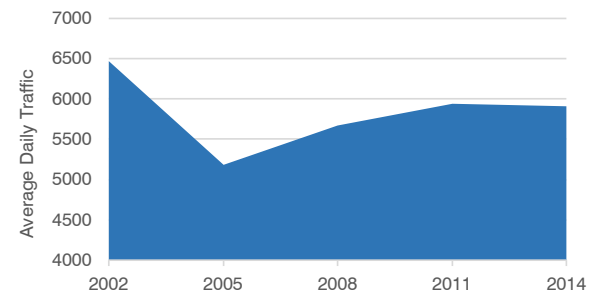
Another indicator of economic activity is traffic volume. Litchfield's traffic volume, when measured at ten locations throughout the town, has dropped since 2002. It rebounded slightly between 2005 and 2011, but has flattened out since. This pattern suggests that the economy is stabilizing but is not growing.



Unemployment Rate: Litchfield versus County and State, 2000-2014, Source: 2014 ACS



Jobs in Region by Town - 2014, Source: 2014 ACS

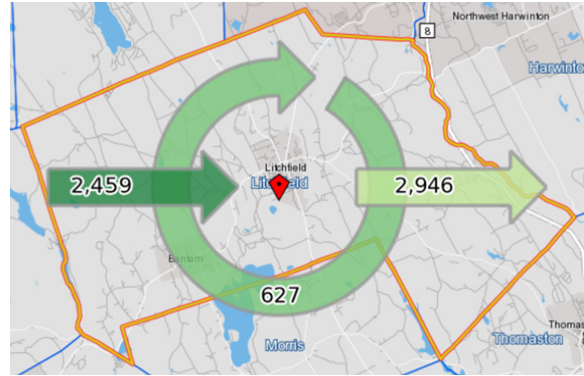


Traffic Volume Aggregate of 10 locations in Litchfield between 2002 and 2014, Source: CT DOT

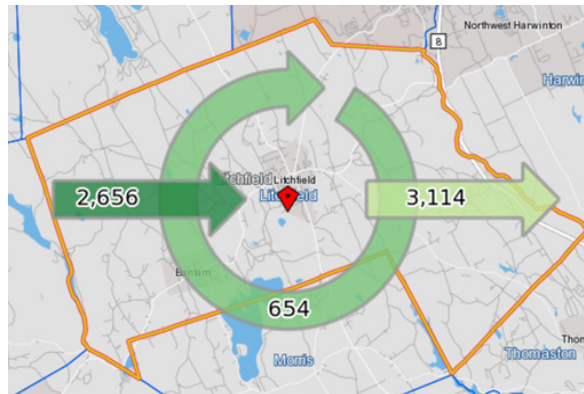
Commuting Patterns: In 2002, 2,946 Litchfield residents commuted to other municipalities for work. Slightly less (2,459 people) commuted into Litchfield for employment and 627 residents both lived and worked in Litchfield.

Commuting patterns have remained stable and in 2014, 3,114 residents commuted to outside locations with 2,656 people commuting into Litchfield for work, and 654 Litchfield residents working in Litchfield. Litchfield residents typically travel to jobs as far away as Hartford, Danbury, and Bristol.

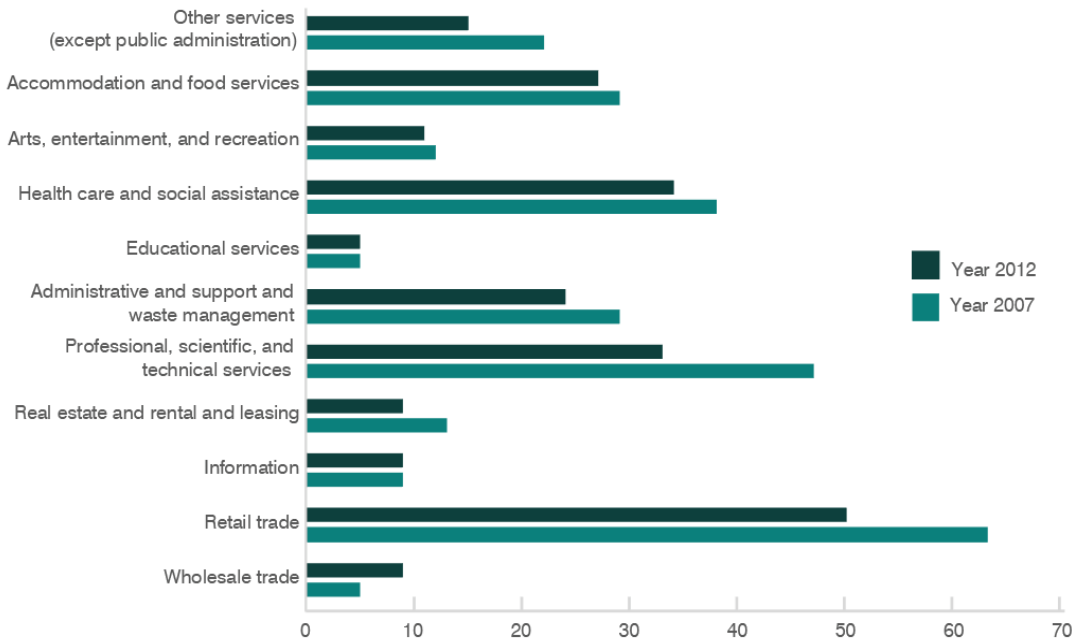
The overall trend is positive although modest with a total of 224 new jobs in Litchfield from 2002 to 2014 and an additional 168 residents employed outside of Litchfield.



Commuting Patterns, 2002, Source: 2014 US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics



Commuting Patterns, 2014, Source: 2014 US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics



Litchfield Business Establishments 2012 vs 2007, Source: 2012 US Economic Census

Economic Development SWOT Analysis

As addressed in Litchfield’s previous Plan of Conservation and Development, the property tax burden on residential property is continuing to expand while the percentage of total tax revenue paid by commercial properties is decreasing. Between 2007 and 2012, the number of business establishments in each business sector decreased, except for the Wholesale Trade category. This could be attributed to businesses such as J. Gallo Wines and Arethusa Farms.

New commercial development has historically been unfavorable, but Litchfield could seek opportunities for infill development in key locations to spur economic growth in town. This could include areas near Thomaston Road where potential water service and sewer expansion has been discussed. Small, local businesses were identified as most favorable, with chain stores and “Big-Box” retail as undesirable for the town.

Strengths

- *Locally owned businesses*
- *Active commercial corridors*
- *High end restaurants*
- *Village center is tourist destination*

Weaknesses

- *Difficult to attract and promote new businesses*
- *Limited retail, many vacant storefronts*
- *Declining commercial tax base*
- *Riverview Commercial zone does not have water and sewer*

Opportunities

- *Further promote that Litchfield is “open for business”*
- *Infill development and redevelopment in the downtown*
- *Capitalize on Litchfield’s status as a tourism destination to further promote economic development opportunities*
- *Expand infrastructure in the Thomaston Road (Riverview Commerce) area*
- *Conversion of jailhouse and courthouse to uses that are supportive of the local economy*

Threats

- *Decline of “Mom and Pops” – displaced by the “big box” and online retail*
- *Jobs leaving Litchfield, the region, and the state*
- *Conversion of farms to other uses*
- *Loss of courthouse may negatively impact Litchfield businesses*



Conservation, Open Space & Recreation

Conservation, Open Space & Recreation Trends

Litchfield's rural character is defined by its scenic landscapes of forest, water resources, farmlands and fields. These resources set the tone for the town while also providing a wide diversity of wildlife habitat and water quality protection. The size, location, and character of open spaces in Litchfield have remained stable and grown in the last decade.

Litchfield is fortunate to have a diversity of high quality natural resources. The town is characterized by large forested areas, rolling hills and steep inclines, as well as numerous streams and waterbodies along with areas of rich farming soils. Specific notable resources include:

- Litchfield falls within four different watersheds with multiple streams and brooks.
- Bantam Lake, the largest natural lake in Connecticut. Much of the area on the northern edge of the lake is protected by the White Memorial Foundation- home to a variety of bird species. It is lined by campgrounds, camps for children and has facilities for various water sports. The lake is a major recreational resource for Litchfield, Morris, and the state. In recent years, water quality issues have been a concern, at times resulting in closures to the lake. Invasive plants, particularly, fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*), as well as algae blooms have spread throughout Bantam Lake and Bantam River. This threatens the recreational use of the lake as well as the lake's ecosystem balance.
- White Memorial Foundation and Conservation Center- located in Litchfield and Morris, this 4,000 acre preserve boasts 40 miles of hiking trails, a nature museum, multiple camping sites, a marina and boat launch for access to Bantam Lake, various ponds, and a rental facility. This creates a large tract of permanently preserved open space within the town.
- Topsmead State Forest - This 615 acre estate, left to the State after the death of owner Edith Morton Chase, provides hiking trails, birding, estate tours, picnicking, and cross country skiing.
- Mt. Tom State Park – Mt. Tom is one of the oldest parks in the State Park System. There is a stone tower on top of the mountain that is a favored destination among hikers. The summit of Mt. Tom is 1325 feet above sea level. This park also offers swimming, picnicking, canoeing and kayaking, and fishing .

The Town of Litchfield, through the Public Works department and working with the Board of Education, maintains the fields around Litchfield High School. The Plumb Hill Playing Fields Inc. offers a 400 meter, 8-lane, running track, and soccer, field hockey, and softball fields. Additionally, the town has access to athletic facilities at the Forman School and Connecticut Junior Republic.

	Football Field	Soccer Field	Baseball Field	Softball Field	Basketball Courts	Tennis Courts	Play-ground	Pool	Beach	Golf	Passive Recreation	Acres	Ownership
Bantam Civic Association		X	X				X					11.8	Municipal
Bantam School		X										11.9	Municipal
Boyd Woods											X	102	Private
Constance B. Ripley Land Trust											X	99.7	Private
Humiston Park (owned By Thomaston)											X	2.6	Municipal
Litchfield Center School		X					X					3.8	Municipal
Litchfield Community Field			X	X	X	X	X					10.7	Municipal
Litchfield Land Trust											X	184.6	Private
Litchfield Country Club						X		X		X		90	Private
Litchfield County Soil & Water District											X	37.7	Private
Litchfield High School	X	X	X	X		X						72.4	Municipal
Litchfield Town Beach									X		X	2.2	Municipal
Mt Tom State Park									X		X	231	State
Prospect Mountain Conservation Trust											X	58.3	Private
Prospect Mountain Conservation Trust (Plehn)											X	513.8	Private
Stonybrook Golf Club										X		31.3	Municipal
The Nature Conservancy Bantam River Preserve											X	316	Private
Topsmead State Forest											X	615	State
Town Green											X	0.8	Municipal
Town Open Space											X	20.2	Municipal
Wamogo Regional High School		X	X	X		X						16.5	Regional
Weantinoge Heritage, Inc.											X	67.6	Private
White Memorial Conservation Center		X							X		X	4,000	Private
White Memorial Soccer Fields		X										7.4	Private
Wigwam Brook Wildlife Sanctuary											X	35.0	Private
Total												6,542	

Litchfield's Open Space and Recreational Resources

Conservation, Open Space & Recreation SWOT Analysis

Open space in a community provides long-term conservation and protection to critical natural resources and enhances the quality of life of residents. Open space and recreation factors that affect the SWOT for Litchfield include location, physical character, maintenance factors and volume of these resources.

The State of Connecticut has an overall goal to have 21 percent of its land area preserved as open space by the end of 2025. Each community would have a goal of a minimum of 11 percent open space. Litchfield is fortunate to have a large portion of protected open space; more than 15% of its acreage is either fully protected or has conservation easements on it. However, much of the undeveloped open space such as White Memorial, Livingston Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy, Marshapaug Forest, local wellfields, and City of Waterbury reservoir is not fully protected.

Strengths

- *Bantam River, Bantam Lake and Naugatuck River*
- *State forest lands*
- *Significant land area dedicated to parks, and open space*
- *Greenway*
- *White Memorial Conservation Center*
- *School athletic fields*

Weaknesses

- *Lack of parking and access at many recreational properties*
- *Lack of support for the Greenway and Land Trust groups*
- *Limited volunteers available to maintain all of the town's open space and recreational resources*
- *No community pool*

Opportunities

- *Develop townwide conservation strategy*
- *Leveraging of outside funds for acquisition and preservation of open space.*
- *Expand and develop greenway*
- *Opportunity for outdoor education*
- *Leverage open spaces for tourism*
- *Link economic development to resources, example- Bike repair shop near trails, café or refreshment spot*
- *Find a way to help farms become stronger economic units, Litchfield could offer farm tours*

Threats

- *Large tracts of open space are not under the Town's control*
- *Zoning regulations may not be limiting enough to protect open space resources*
- *Declining population means fewer volunteers available to maintain resources*
- *Much of open space is not protected: White Memorial, State properties, and many farms can be developed*
- *Water quality issues and invasive plants, particularly, fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*), as well as algae blooms at Bantam Lake and Bantam River*



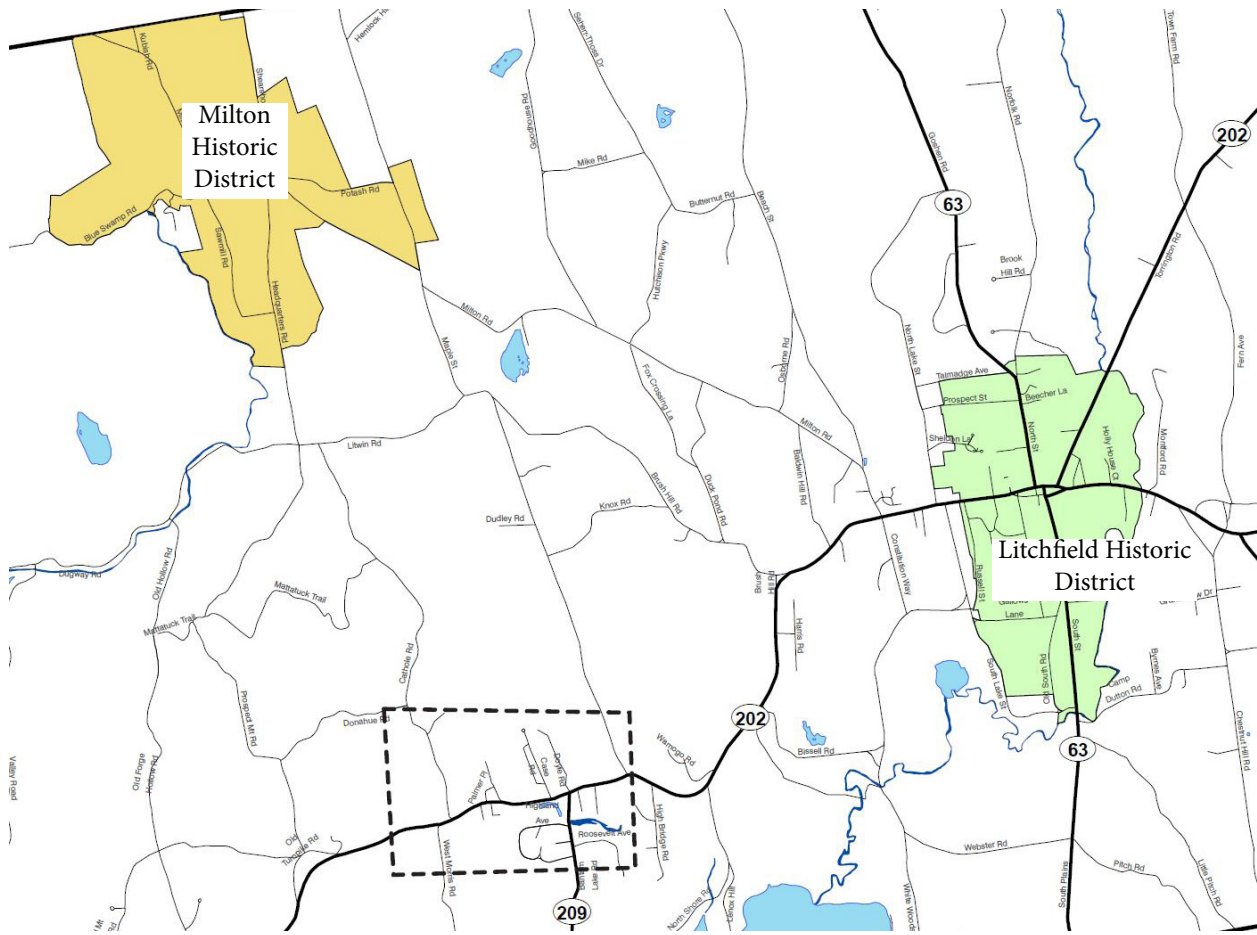
Cultural and Historic Resources

Cultural and Historic Resources Trends

Litchfield is fortunate to have an outstanding inventory of architectural significant historical buildings. Litchfield residents have nourished and protected the town’s valuable historic and cultural resources, which have fostered the aesthetics and sense of place in the town.

In 1959, Litchfield Borough became Connecticut’s first historic district. Creation of this district set a precedent for legislation that now enables communities in Connecticut to establish local historic districts. Milton used this opportunity to create the Milton Historic District and East Litchfield has considered becoming a historic district. The Litchfield and Milton Historic District Commissions review and approve all exterior building development proposals and improvements seen from public places.

In addition to these Historic District Commissions, Litchfield is fortunate to have the Litchfield Historical Society, which is a free resource to the community and tourists alike and has been a continued champion of historic preservation in town. Other groups such as the East Litchfield Village Improvements Society (ELVIS) and the Greater Litchfield Preservation Trust have fostered the historic heritage of the town.



Litchfield's Historic Districts

Cultural and Historic Resources SWOT Analysis

The historical value of Litchfield extends far beyond the boundaries of the Historic Districts. Development pressures may threaten the historic integrity of some properties. Efforts should be made to maintain, protect, and restore the historic buildings and landscapes in town.

Strengths

- *The Litchfield Historical Society*
- *Milton and Litchfield Historic districts*
- *Greater Litchfield Preservation Trust*

Weaknesses

- *Historic resources place a constraint on new development and redevelopment*

Opportunities

- *Potential for additional historic areas of town to be designated and protected with historic district legislation*
- *Educate potential or new home buyers about historic properties in town*
- *Look for ways in which to integrate “green building technologies” (ex. solar panels, energy efficient lights and materials) into properties while still maintaining the historic character*
- *East Litchfield could become a Historic District*
- *Educate community about the rich history and resources in the town*
- *Litchfield’s 300-year anniversary is 2019, this is an opportunity for a town wide celebration of the town’s history*

Threats

- *Spread of development into Historic Districts*
- *Tree trimming by utility companies is not sensitive to the aesthetics or health of trees which are integral to Litchfield’s historic landscapes*
- *Potential loss of historic barns, outbuildings, stone walls contributing to the rural landscape and character of town*

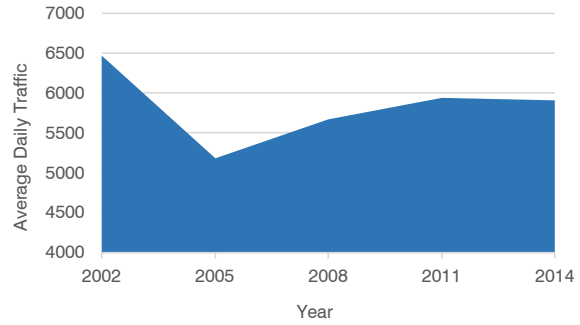
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Transportation Network

Transportation Network Trends

The transportation network in Litchfield has remained essentially the same over the past decade. The volume of traffic on Litchfield’s roads has remained relatively stable in recent years. Traffic dropped between 2002 and 2005 but rose between 2005 and 2011. Traffic volumes have been flat since 2011 and have yet to hit 2002 volumes.



Traffic Volume Aggregate of 10 locations in Litchfield between 2002 and 2014, Source: CT DOT

This decline in traffic is a change from conditions described in the 2007 Plan, when traffic volumes were projected to increase steadily. Despite overall decreases in traffic since 2002, peak hour congestion remains an issue at the intersection of Routes 202, 118, and 63, in the center of town. This location was viewed as a concern in the previous 2007 plan, as a threat to both vehicular and pedestrian safety. This intersection continues to be an issue, as was expressed during the public workshop and in the online survey comments.

At 57 square-miles, Litchfield is the largest town by land area in the Litchfield Hills. Litchfield has a total of 149 miles of roads, 30 miles are state routes maintained by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CT DOT), this includes Routes 8, 63, 118, and 202. The remaining 119 miles of roadways are maintained by the town and are classified as arterial, collector, or local roadways. Of the 119 miles of local road, 96 miles are paved and 23 miles are gravel. While traffic has remained stable, Litchfield’s roads and bridges still need continuous maintenance, repair, and replacement.

Litchfield’s large land area and rural landscape are a restricting factor for public transit services, availability, and accessibility. Despite this, Litchfield does have transit services available to residents. These include the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District, the Candystriper bus, as well as dial-a-ride service. These services operate over eight hours a day, six days a week. Litchfield’s population is aging, so these services will be increasingly vital to elderly residents. Furthermore, the percentage of younger drivers continues to decline. The national trend has shown a decline in the number of drivers between 20-24 from 91.8% in 1983 to 76.7% in 2014. Transit services will be essential to younger generations as this decline continues.

Sidewalks in Litchfield are common in the downtown villages, but pedestrian facilities are limited on rural roads and the routes that connect these villages and boroughs. Additionally, crosswalks and pedestrian signals are also limited. There is a lack of on-road bicycle lanes or other bicycle accommodations in Litchfield although recreational cycling is popular throughout the Northwest Hills Region and Litchfield.

Transportation Network SWOT Analysis

As a rural community, Litchfield’s transportation network is comprised of a rural roadway network with limited bicycle and pedestrian facilities and transit services. Residents are heavily dependent upon automobile travel. Litchfield has over one hundred miles of town owned roadway and multiple bridges and culverts that require ongoing maintenance. Given the low population density in Litchfield, transit services are not likely to be expanded beyond current levels. Opportunities for pedestrian infrastructure are also limited on rural roads, but strategic connections and expansion of the existing pedestrian network may still be feasible.

Strengths

- *Good access to Route 8*
- *Well maintained state and local roads*
- *Scenic roadways*

Weaknesses

- *No on-street bicycle accommodations*
- *Auto-centric transportation system*
- *Limited transit services*
- *Limited bicycle and pedestrian connections to open space*
- *Many bridges and culverts need costly maintenance*

Opportunities

- *Expand local bus service*
- *Incorporate bicycle and pedestrian improvements into already planned redevelopments and consider adopting a complete streets policy that would encourage multi-modal use of roadways*
- *Seek State and Federal funding for grants such as the LOTCIP program, so as to encourage bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements*

Threats

- *Reduction to transit service*
- *Aging population living in disperse areas of town with limited automobile access*
- *Increasing costs of maintaining roadways*
- *Suburban sprawl would increase traffic on local roadways and maintain a car dominated transportation culture*
- *Rising cost of gasoline could impact cost of roadway maintenance*

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Sewer & Water Infrastructure

Sewer & Water Infrastructure Trends

Litchfield's sanitary sewer treatment facility, located on Stoddard Road in Bantam, is operated by the Litchfield Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA). This facility handles approximately 27 miles of sanitary sewer lines that serve residential, commercial, industrial and institutional users. The sewage system is operated under a Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection issued permit. Present permitted capacity is 800 thousand gallons of daily flow. Currently, the facility currently averages 460 thousand gallons per day with occasional weather-related spikes. In addition to processing Litchfield's sanitary sewage, this facility provides treatment for a limited portion of the town of Morris under an inter-municipal agreement. The WPCA also has inter-municipal agreements with the City of Torrington for sewage from the Route 202 and Hart Drive area and with Thomaston for the Northfield Center area. Financially, the Water Pollution Control Authority is a self-supporting entity. Revenue required for operations and maintenance of WPCA activities is generated from treatment facility and sewer user fees.

Litchfield was one of the first towns in Connecticut to adopt a well field protection area in its zoning regulations. This area was created to protect the drinking water supply wells at Hamill Well Field, which is operated by the Aquarian Water Company. The Hamill Well Field is located near the town center, on land owned by the White Memorial Foundation. This well provides auxiliary water supply to Litchfield residents and businesses served by the Aquarian Water Company. The primary wells serving Litchfield are in Goshen and are also operated by Aquarion.

The Aquarion system serves about 2,150 people in Litchfield, Goshen and Torrington and includes water drawn from the Goshen and Hamill Well Fields, and surface water purchased from the Torrington Water Treatment Plant. The wells supply approximately 55% of the 269,000 gallons of water per day that customers of the system use on average. Water purchased from Torrington provides additional supply to meet customer demand. Water from both well fields is filtered underground, then disinfected and further treated to protect the distribution system. Water from the Goshen wells also is aerated to reduce radon levels. The reservoir water is filtered at the Torrington treatment facility, disinfected, fluoridated, and further treated to protect the distribution system.

There are three public water supply watershed areas within Litchfield, two that serve the City of Waterbury and one that is designated as a potential public water supply for Danbury and communities in Connecticut south of Danbury. The City of Waterbury owns 1,388 acres of land in Litchfield that falls within their public water supply watershed.

Sewer & Water SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- *The drinking water supply is reliable and water quality is high*
- *Public sewer and water located in downtown Litchfield and the center of Bantam*
- *City of Torrington allocates the Town of Litchfield up to 150,000 gallons of sewage flow per day to the Torrington sewage treatment plant*

Opportunities

- *Support measures that encourage the commercial and industrial development of the Old Route 8/ Thomaston Road area that has the potential to be served by the Torrington sewer system*
- *Land conservation can be used as a means of protecting the watershed*
- *Reduce sources of inflow and infiltration of groundwater into sewer network*

Weaknesses

- *Many areas do not have public water or sewer and this limits the development potential of those areas*
- *Clean water entering the sewer network from groundwater infiltration & inflow, and illegal connections*
- *Aging and failing septic systems, particularly around Bantam Lake*

Threats

- *Sewer lines may need substantial investment in the near term*
- *Privatization of water resources*
- *Water quality issues with pesticides and fertilizer usage polluting water resources*

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Schools

Schools Trends

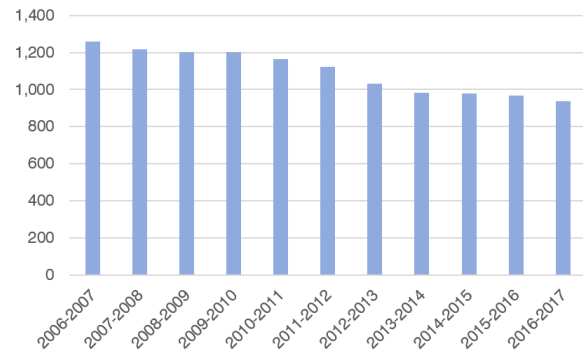
The Litchfield Public School system is comprised of three operating schools that serve 936 students in the 2016-2017 school year. These schools range from preschool to high school, as shown in the table below. School enrollment has been declining annually since 2000, a trend seen across 153 of Connecticut’s 169 municipalities. Litchfield could see a continued loss in school enrollment through 2025, as the school age population between 5 years and 19 years is expected to decline by 26% between 2015 and 2025. Over the last decade, total enrollment in Litchfield has decreased 25.7%. Statewide, public school enrollment has declined approximately 6% over the same period.

The Northwest Hills region is home to the smallest school districts in the state, with half of the state’s twenty smallest districts located in the region. The Litchfield School District is in the bottom third for enrollment of school districts in Connecticut and is approximately the same size as the Region 6 district which serves Warren, Morris, and Goshen. Region 6 enrollment has been projected to contract by approximately 30% over the next several years (see figure on following page).

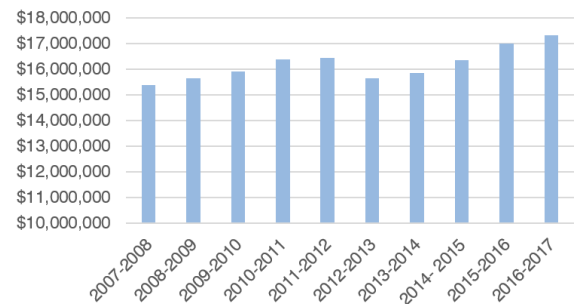
Despite a shrinking enrollment, school budgets have grown between 1.3% and 4.0% per year since 2013. This growth in school spending is on par with spending increases statewide. The cost of education per pupil in Litchfield in 2015 was \$17,328 (88.8% of that cost being incurred locally). Average school district spending per pupil in Connecticut was \$16,249 in 2015.

School	Grade Level	2016-2017 Enrollment
Litchfield Middle & High School	7-12	452
Litchfield Intermediate School	4-6	188
Litchfield Center School	PK- 3	296

Litchfield Public Schools Enrollment 2016-17
Source: Litchfield Public Schools



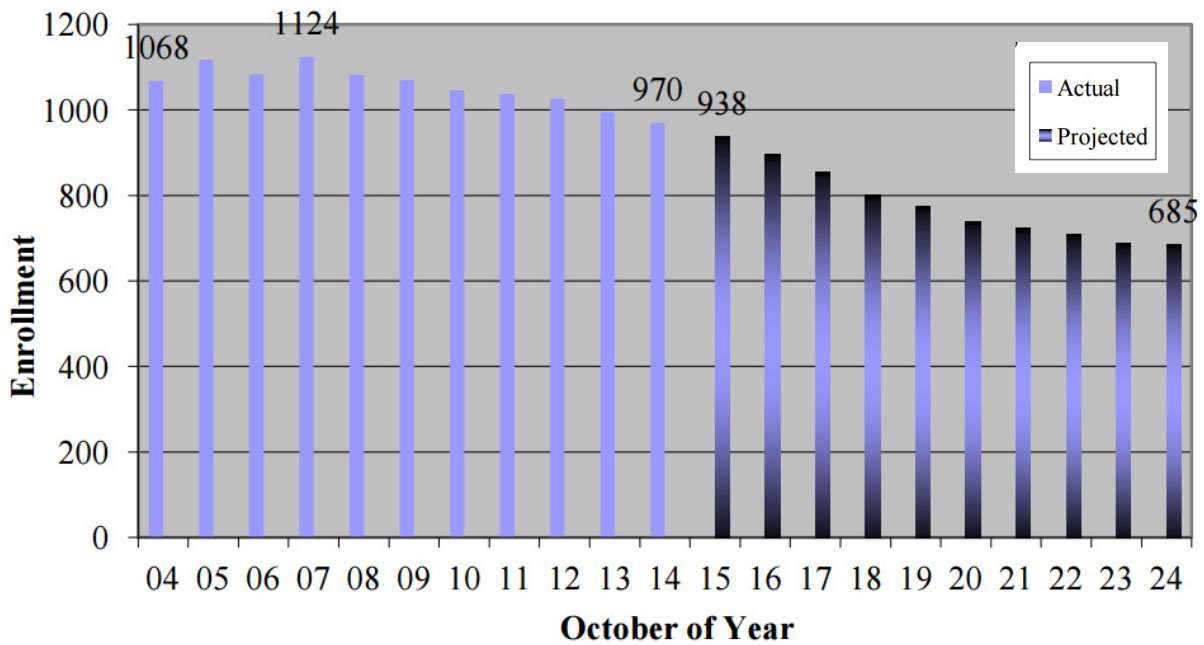
Litchfield Public Schools Enrollment 2006-2017,
Source: Litchfield Public Schools



Litchfield Public Schools Annual School Budgets 2007-2017
Source: Litchfield Public Schools

Year	Students	Year to Year Change
2006-2007	1,259	-3.1%
2007-2008	1,217	-3.3%
2008-2009	1,202	-1.2%
2009-2010	1,202	0%
2010-2011	1,166	-3.0%
2011-2012	1,122	-3.8%
2012-2013	1,031	-8.1%
2013-2014	983	-4.7%
2014-2015	978	-0.5%
2015-2016	969	-0.9%
2016-2017	936	-3.4%

Litchfield Public Schools Enrollment 2006-2017
(using October 1st enrollment), Source: Litchfield Public Schools



Region 6 K-12 Projected Enrollment through 2024. Source: 2014 "Region 6 Public Schools Enrollment Projected to 2024" by Peter M. Prowda, PhD

Schools SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Top Tier school system where education is highly valued
- Litchfield School System is the largest employer in town
- Quality school facilities and athletic fields

Weaknesses

- Expensive to operate and maintain facilities
- Limited diversity in student population

Opportunities

- Regionalization of school facilities and services
- Encourage civic engagement in school system initiatives and programs

Threats

- School expenditures continue to escalate and exceed the rate of inflation
- Diminishing state funding for schools
- Declining school enrollment

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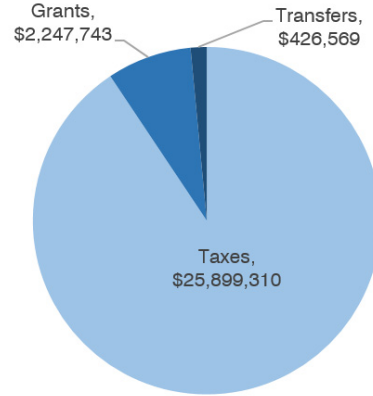
Governance

Governance Trends

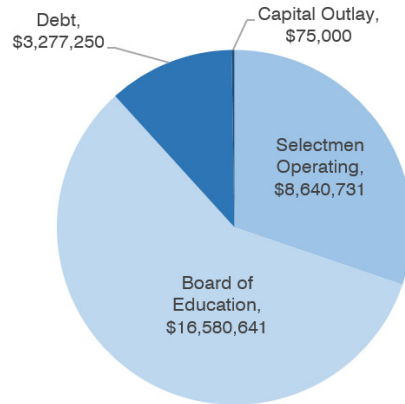
Litchfield has a fiscally sound municipal government that is cautious in its spending and therefore enjoys an Aa2 bond rating. Litchfield has stable leadership in the Selectman's office and experienced department heads.

One of the challenges faced by Litchfield is a grand list that has been declining since 2012. This trend is more dramatic when adjusted for inflation, suggesting declines in the grand list since 2009. This is attributed to a lack of growth in Litchfield's commercial tax base and declining values of Litchfield's housing stock as a result of a downturn in the real estate market.

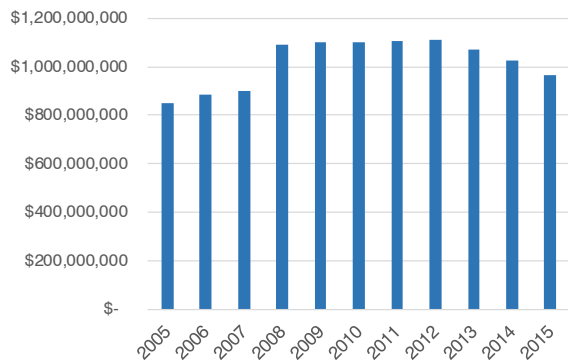
The property tax burden on residential property is continuing to expand, a trend that was noted in the 2007 Plan of Conservation and Development. The town's approved budget for 2016 – 2017 is approximately \$30.5 million, ninety percent of this comes from property taxes, with the remaining revenues coming from grants from the State of Connecticut and transfers. The Board of Education is responsible for 58% of Litchfield's expenditures with the balance of Litchfield's budget financing various departments, including a debt service that represents 11.5% of the town's expenditures. Capital expenditures in 2015 were only 0.3% of the town's expenditures.



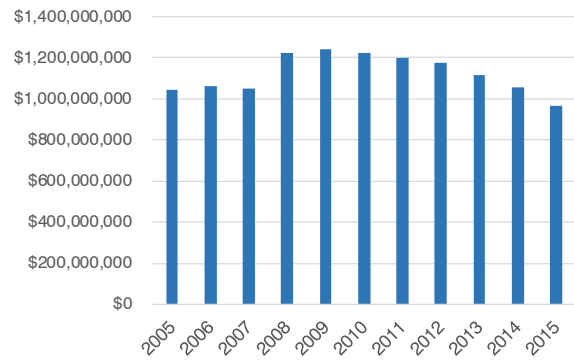
2015 Litchfield Revenue Sources, Source: Town of Litchfield



2015 Litchfield Expenditures, Source: Town of Litchfield



Net grand list 2006-2015
Source: Town of Litchfield



Net grand list 2006-2015 Adjusted for inflation (2015 inflation adjusted)
Source: Town of Litchfield

Governance SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- *Stable leadership*
- *Aa2- Bond rating*

Weaknesses

- *Insufficient technology to support municipal services at Town Hall*
- *Spread out resources; Town Hall in Downtown Litchfield and Town Hall Annex in Bantam*

Opportunities

- *Enhance community awareness of governmental services and programs*
- *Improve and expand technology used at Town Hall and train staff in its use*
- *Offer more online services for residents and businesses*
- *Pursue grant funding to assist in financing capital improvements*

Threats

- *Flat or diminishing commercial property tax base*
- *Declining Grand List*
- *Tax rate increases without easily perceived added benefits in terms of infrastructure and services*
- *Diminishing participation in essential municipals boards, commissions, and committees*

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Maps

- Zoning (*Serves as Future Land Use Map*)
- Housing
- Open Space and Recreational Facilities
- Environmental Features
- Historic Districts
- Transportation Network
- Sewer Infrastructure
- Water Resources
- Government Facilities