

# BEACON FALLS PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT



**DRAFT**

**Submitted To Beacon Falls Land Planning and Zoning Commission**

**April 11, 2013**

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# Acknowledgements

Numerous town staff and members of the community participated in the formulation of the plan. The planning process required this assistance to achieve a functional strategic document to be used by the Town of Beacon Falls to adapt to rapidly changing social and economic conditions for the betterment of the community. We are especially appreciative to the Land Use Committee who guided the formulation of the plan through their review of the interim memorandums, opinions, and perspectives concerning the various agencies and interests represented.

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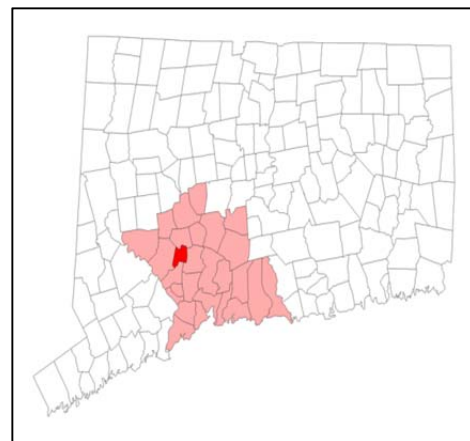
We are particularly grateful to the Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley for their valuable insistence. Staff was particularly helpful in the review of information and especially providing their excellent mapping facilities.

## 1. Introduction & Background

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### 1.1 Introduction

The Town of Beacon Falls, with a population of 6,049, is located in southwestern Connecticut in New Haven County, within the Central Naugatuck Valley Region, and containing High Rock State Park. The Town was incorporated from its immediate neighbors, Bethany, Oxford, Naugatuck and Seymour, in 1871. The town lies on both sides of the Naugatuck River, south of Beacon Hill Brook from which the Town's name was derived. The town has 2,509 total housing units according to the 2010 U.S. Bureau of the Census.



State of Connecticut, with New Haven County and Beacon Falls highlighted.

### 1.2 Purpose of the POCD

Chapter 126 Section 8-23 (a)(1) of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that at least once every ten years, a planning and zoning commission prepare or amend and adopt a Plan of Conservation and Development. Although a State requirement, the most important function for a Plan is to help guide the future growth and development of the Town, through a series of coordinated goals, policies and strategies. The Plan should record the best thinking of the Town as to its future physical growth and development and to give direction to both public and private development.

The Plan should encompass a long term vision of the community, and at the same time, it should be capable upon adoption of offering guidance for short-range land use decisions. Although it is often difficult to address immediate issues and problems with long-range concepts and principles, short term solutions without respect to long-term purposes can dilute, even nullify, the ultimate effectiveness and impact of the Plan.

The Plan contains a functional conservation and development strategy with specific recommendations that can serve as a blueprint for Town officials to guide the growth of Beacon Falls into a contemporary community in the twenty-first century.

### 1.3 Statutory Requirements

Section 8-23(d) of the Connecticut General Statutes states that all plans ***shall*** consider the following at least once every ten years:

1. The community development action plan of the municipality, if any.
2. Need for affordable housing.
3. Need for protection of existing and potential public surface and ground drinking water supplies.
4. Use of cluster development and other development patterns to the extent consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity with the municipality.
5. State Plan of Conservation and Development.
6. Regional Plan of Conversation and Development
7. Physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends.
8. Human resource, education, health, housing, recreation, social services, public utilities, public protection, transportation and circulation, cultural and interpersonal communication needs.
9. Objective of energy efficient patterns of development; use of solar and other renewable forms of energy and energy conservation.
10. Protection and preservation of agriculture

Connecticut General Statutes states that the plan ***shall***:

- A. Be a statement of polices, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality.
- B. Provide for a system of principal thoroughfares, parkways, bridges, streets, sidewalks, multipurpose trails and other public ways.
- C. Promote, with the greatest efficiency and economy, the coordinated development of the municipality, and the general welfare and prosperity of its people, and identify areas where it is feasible to (i) have compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns, and (ii) to promote such development patterns and land reuse.



- D. Recommend the most desirable use of land within the municipality for residential, recreation, commercial, industrial, conservation and other purposes, and include a map showing such proposed land uses.
- E. Recommend the most desirable density of population.
- F. Note any inconsistencies with the six State Growth Management Principles of the State Plan of Conservation and Development. These Growth Management Principles are:
  - **Growth Management Principle #1** *Redevelop and Revitalize Regional Centers and Areas with Existing or Currently Planned Physical Infrastructure.*
  - **Growth Management Principle #2** *Expand Housing Opportunities and Design Choices to Accommodate a Variety of Household Types and Needs.*
  - **Growth Management Principle #3** *Concentrate Development Around Transportation Nodes and Along Major Transportation Corridors to Support the Viability of Transportation Options.*
  - **Growth Management Principle #4** *Conserve and Restore the Natural Environment, Cultural and Historical Resources, and Traditional Rural Lands.*
  - **Growth Management Principle #5** *Protect and Ensure the Integrity of Environmental Assets Critical to Public Health and Safety.*
  - **Growth Management Principle #6** *Promote Integrated Planning across all Levels of Government to Address Issues on a Statewide, Regional, and Local Basis*
- G. Make provisions for the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multifamily dwellings consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity for all residents of municipality and region.
- H. Promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low and moderate income households and encourage the development of housing which will meet the State housing plan prepared pursuant to CGS Section 8-37t and in the housing component and other components of the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

- I. In preparing such plan, the Commission shall consider focusing development and revitalization in areas with existing or planned physical improvements.

The statutes also state that the Plan **may** make recommendations for:

1. Conservation of trap rock and other ridgelines.
2. Airports, parks, playgrounds and other public grounds.
3. General location, relocation and improvement of public buildings.
4. General location of public utilities and terminals, whether publically or privately owned, for water, sewerage, light, power, transit and other purposes.
5. Extent and location of public housing projects.
6. Programs for the implementation of the plan, including schedule, capital project budget, program for enactment and enforcement of zoning and subdivision regulations and guiding and housing codes, implementation of affordable housing, plans for open space acquisition and greenway protection and develop, proposed priority funding areas, and any other recommendations seen as beneficial to the municipality.

## **2. Goals and Policies**

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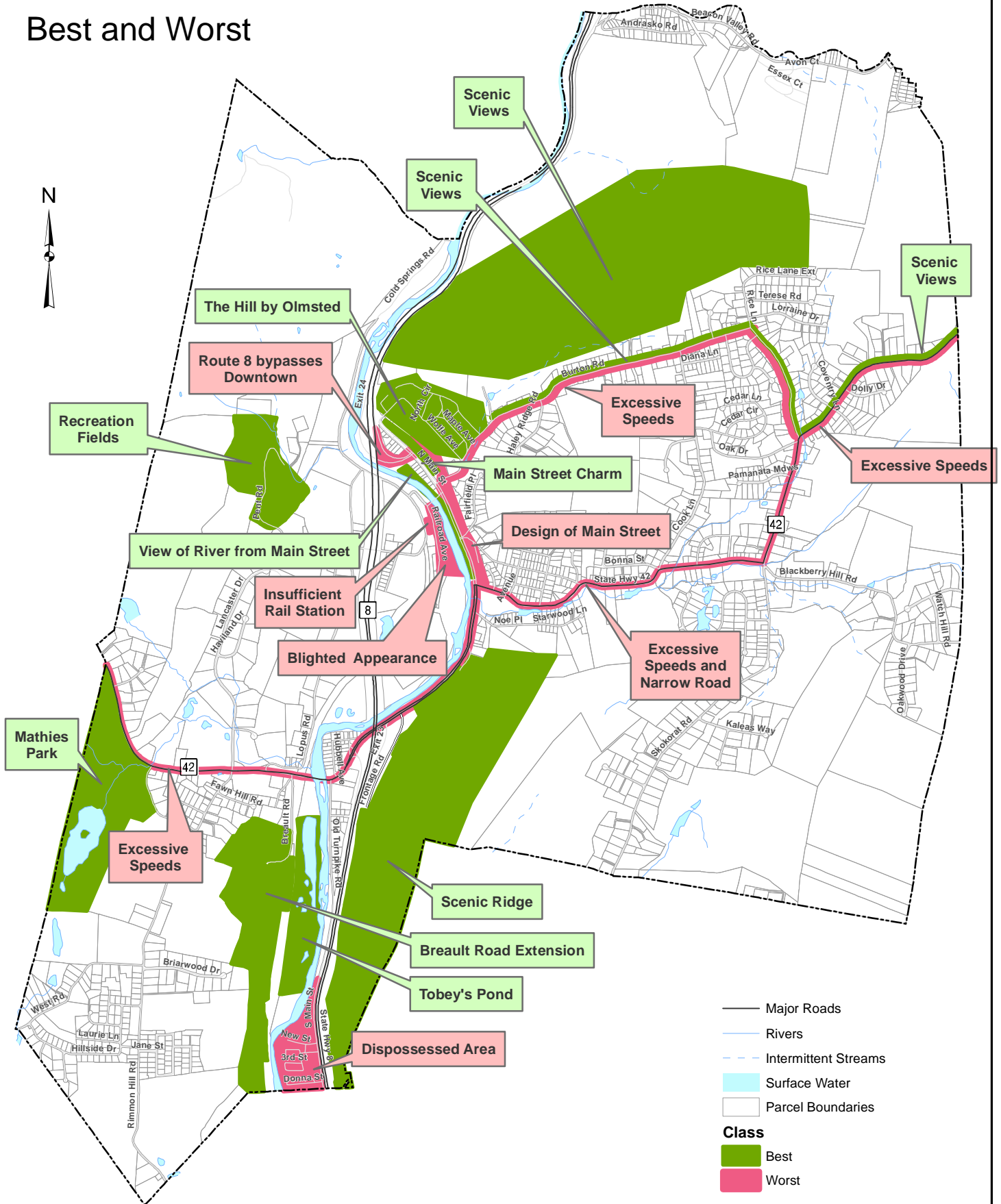
The goals and objectives of a community are central to development of a Plan for Conservation and Development. The goals and objectives are best developed by considering the input of a community's residents, policy makers, business owners and other stakeholders, the status of previous planning goals, and the issues affecting the community.

### **2.1 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**

On May 26, 2010, the Turner Miller Group facilitated a public meeting of the Open Space and Land Use Committee held for the purpose of soliciting public input and enabling the consultants to get a better understanding of what issues matter most to the Beacon Falls community. To gather this information, a S.W.O.T analysis was undertaken, in which the public was asked to identify what they believed were the community's strengths and weakness, and what potential opportunities and threats may face the community. At the end of the meeting, the public was asked to score what they believed were the most significant of the identified factors.

The input collected at the meeting was used as a basis for the formulation of the goals and policies of the Plan. The findings were illustrated in the following map which identifies the best and worst factors of the Town.

# Best and Worst



0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Source: "Roads", State of Connecticut and TeleAtlas 2009  
 "Hydrography", DEEP  
 "Best and Worst", Town of Beacon Falls  
 "Parcel Boundaries", New England Geosystems, 2011

## 2.2 Principles of the Plan

The Plan has been formulated in accordance with a set of overall principles, which should be used as the basis for all Town actions:

1. Pursue the future growth of Beacon Falls in a manner consistent with Smart Growth principles, in which growth and economic development are steered to the traditional growth areas of a community, which have the appropriate land use patterns and available infrastructure to support the growth. At the same time, growth within the outlying and rural areas of the community should not be encouraged.
2. Recognize the uniqueness of Beacon Falls as a traditional small town within the growing region of southwestern Connecticut, and strive to preserve the small town character.
3. Future land use decisions in the Town should be made to further the traditional growth patterns of the community as a core area and development corridor along the Naugatuck River surrounded by rural areas and natural resources.
4. Preserve and acquire open space to maintain the natural resources of the community.
5. Promote economic growth to ensure a balanced and economically viable community.
6. Preserve the important natural characteristics of Beacon Falls.
7. Promote the development of a modern sustainable economy that supports the residents needs and results in a modern, small town with a superior quality of life.
8. Use the Plan as a guide for all activities of the various town agencies, boards and commissions.
9. Enhance the sense of community for the residents of the Town, by providing a central focus of activity, public services that enhance the wellbeing of residents, and increased opportunities to live, work and shop in Beacon Falls.
10. Increase the efficiency of government operations and promote a more involved citizenry.

### 3. Environment and Natural Resources

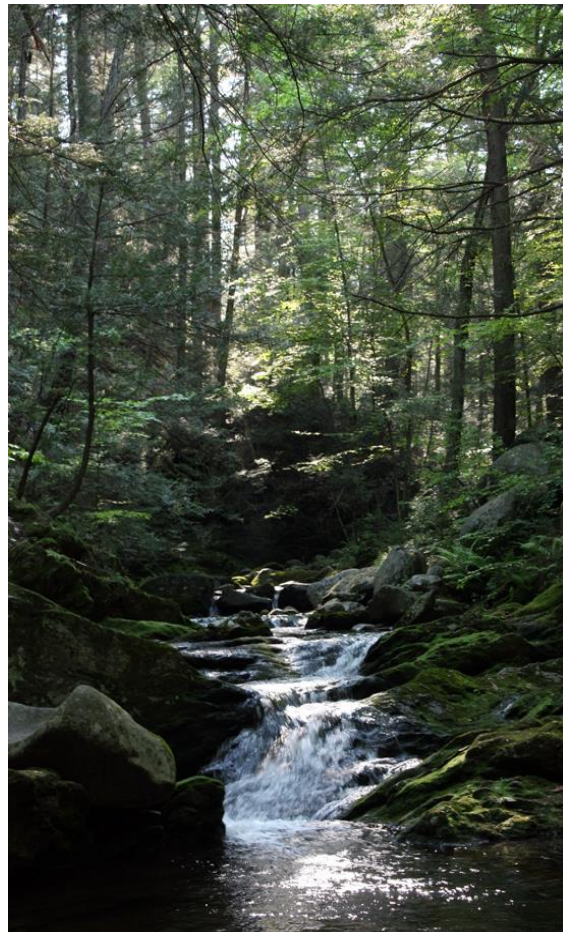
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#### 3.1 Existing Conditions

Like most communities, the Town of Beacon Falls is defined by its natural environment. The town was established because of the Naugatuck River. Originally, the Naugatuck River provided a means of transportation and a source of water for consumption. During the nineteenth century, the Naugatuck River became an important source of power for the growing industries and the focus of the community. As the river became more polluted during the early and middle parts of the twentieth century, it was considered a negative part of the community. Efforts to improve the water quality of the river have been very successful, and currently, the Naugatuck River serves an important open space and recreational function.

Its hills and ridges are another important defining natural feature of Beacon Falls. Like the river, they define the traditional growth patterns of the Town, as most of the traditional growth occurred on relatively level topography. However, recent development patterns have increased the pressure on the removal or alteration of sloped areas, which could reduce the open, scenic vistas and lead to significant changes in the character of the Town.

Additional natural resources are also important to the Town and may need conservation and protection. These resources include wetlands, farms, and watershed areas. Many of these resources are being protected through regulation. In addition, there are other important natural resources whose impact and methods of protection are more appropriately done on a regional, statewide, or national level. These resources include air quality, global climate, and most elements of energy uses, and they are largely beyond the authority and purview of municipal influence and regulation.





It is important to understand that some parcels may be especially valuable to the community as they address more than one of the resource components for natural resource protection.

### **3.1.1 Wetlands**

Connecticut statutes define wetlands as those soil types designated poorly drained, very poorly drained, alluvial, and floodplain. These soil types perform several valuable functions:

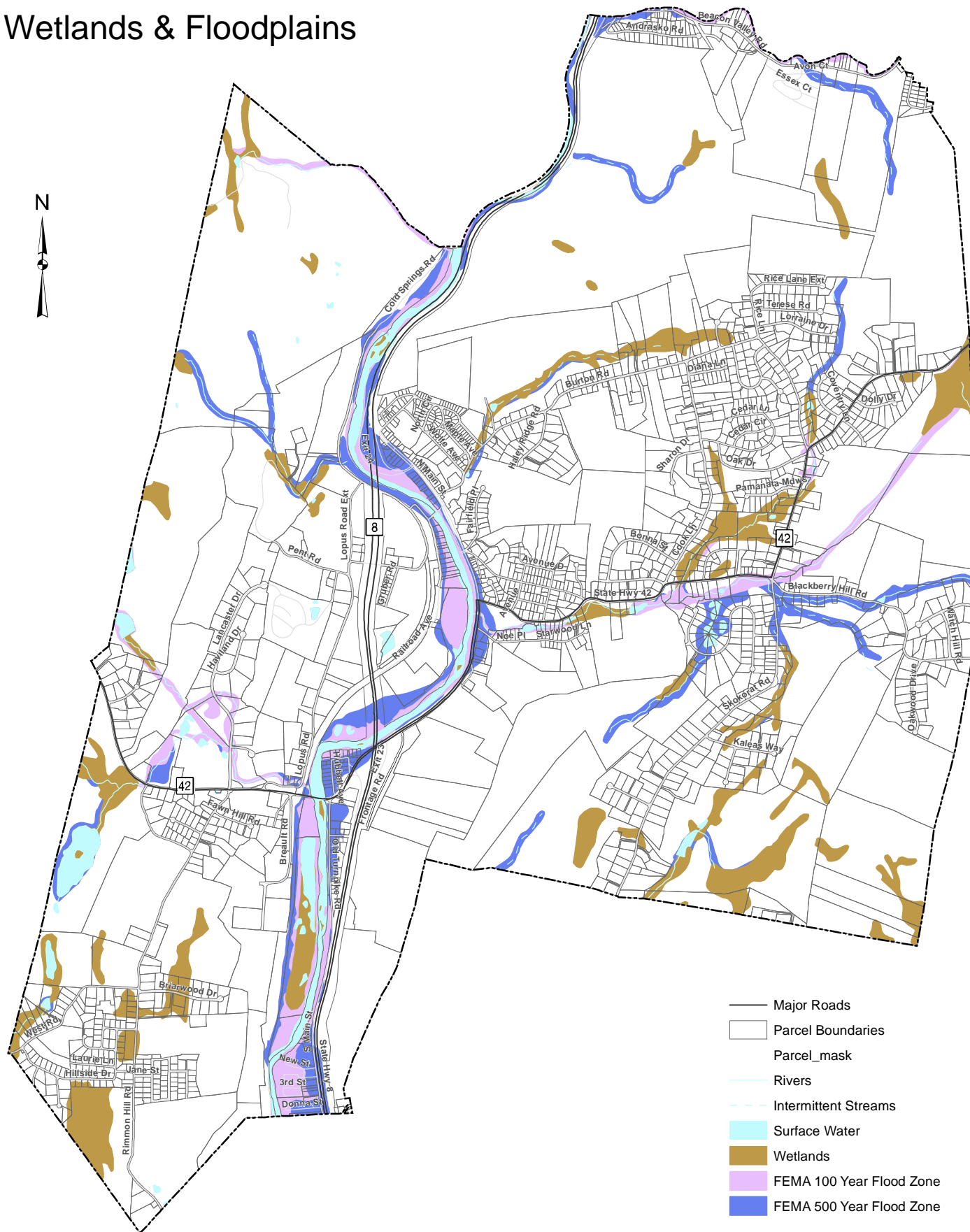
- Flood control, through absorption of water and reduction of runoff;
- Water quality, by absorbing contaminants and allowing vegetation to regulate water quality;
- Wildlife habitat as a source of food and shelter for a wide variety of animals and aquatic life;
- Ground water recharge, by slowly releasing the water that they have absorbed into the ground and recharging the aquifer; and
- Other conservation, economic, aesthetic, recreational uses and values.

To protect these functions and values in Beacon Falls, activities within wetland areas are regulated by the Beacon Falls Inland Wetlands Commission. The Commission is charged by State law to regulate the use of wetlands; to protect the citizens of the state by making provisions for the protection, preservation, maintenance and use of the inland wetlands and watercourses by:

- Minimizing their disturbance and pollution;
- Maintaining and improving water quality in accordance with the highest standards set by federal, state or local authority;
- Preventing damage from erosion, turbidity or siltation;
- Preventing loss of fish and other beneficial aquatic organisms, wildlife and vegetation and the destruction of the natural habitats;
- Deterring and inhibiting the danger of flood and pollution;
- Protecting recreational and other public and private uses and values; and
- Protecting the states potable fresh water supplies from the dangers of drought, overdraft, pollution, misuse and mismanagement.

Much of the wetlands within Beacon Falls are located along the stream and river corridors, although there are patches around small ponds, low lying swampy areas, and vernal pools. The preservation of wetlands is being adequately addressed through enforcement of the Beacon Falls Inland Wetlands regulations and by the ongoing training of commission members.

# Wetlands & Floodplains



- Major Roads
- Parcel Boundaries
- Parcel\_mask
- Rivers
- Intermittent Streams
- Surface Water
- Wetlands
- FEMA 100 Year Flood Zone
- FEMA 500 Year Flood Zone

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Source: "Roads", State of Connecticut and TeleAtlas 2009  
 "Hydrography", "Wetlands", DEEP  
 "Floodplains", FEMA,  
 "Parcel Boundaries", New England Geosystems, 2011



### **3.1.2 Floodplains**

Floodplains are low lands along watercourses that are identified as subject to periodic flooding. Floodways are those areas within the floodplains that convey the floodwaters. The extent and boundaries of the floodplains have been determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). A 100-year flood is a flood that has a one percent probability of occurring in a given year. Similarly, a 500-year flood is one with a 0.2 percent probability of occurring in a given year.

The floodplains throughout the State have been recently re-mapped and converted to a digital base. The mapping was based upon improved data for the determination of ground elevations, and did not include new hydrological studies.

The floodways are subject to water being carried at relatively high velocities and forces. The floodway fringe is those areas of the floodplain outside of the floodway which are subject to inundation but do not convey the floodwaters.

Development or alteration of areas within the 100 year floodplain area is restricted by local regulations. Development activities that are permitted must conform with standards related to safety and the impact on floodwaters. Generally, development within the floodway fringe is permitted if it is adequately flood proofed, and has a base floor elevation above the level of the 100-year flood, while development within the floodway is more restricted. These standards have been incorporated within Town regulations. They have been adopted to be in compliance with FEMA regulations, so that property owners in Town are eligible to seek federally sponsored flood insurance.

Recent FEMA studies have resulted in changes to the floodplain boundaries. Most of the impacted properties are along the Naugatuck River. A map of Beacon Falls flood areas has been reproduced by the Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley.

### **3.1.3 Topography**

The topography of Beacon Falls reflects its location within a river valley surrounded by hills. It is essentially a narrow bowl along the Naugatuck River. Much of the community is characterized by moderate to steep slopes, especially the steep slopes along the Naugatuck River in the northwestern section of Town where it rises to 750 feet within the Naugatuck State Forest, across the northern boundary of the town. The low point of the Town is along the Naugatuck River as it flows into Seymour, dropping to 81 feet.

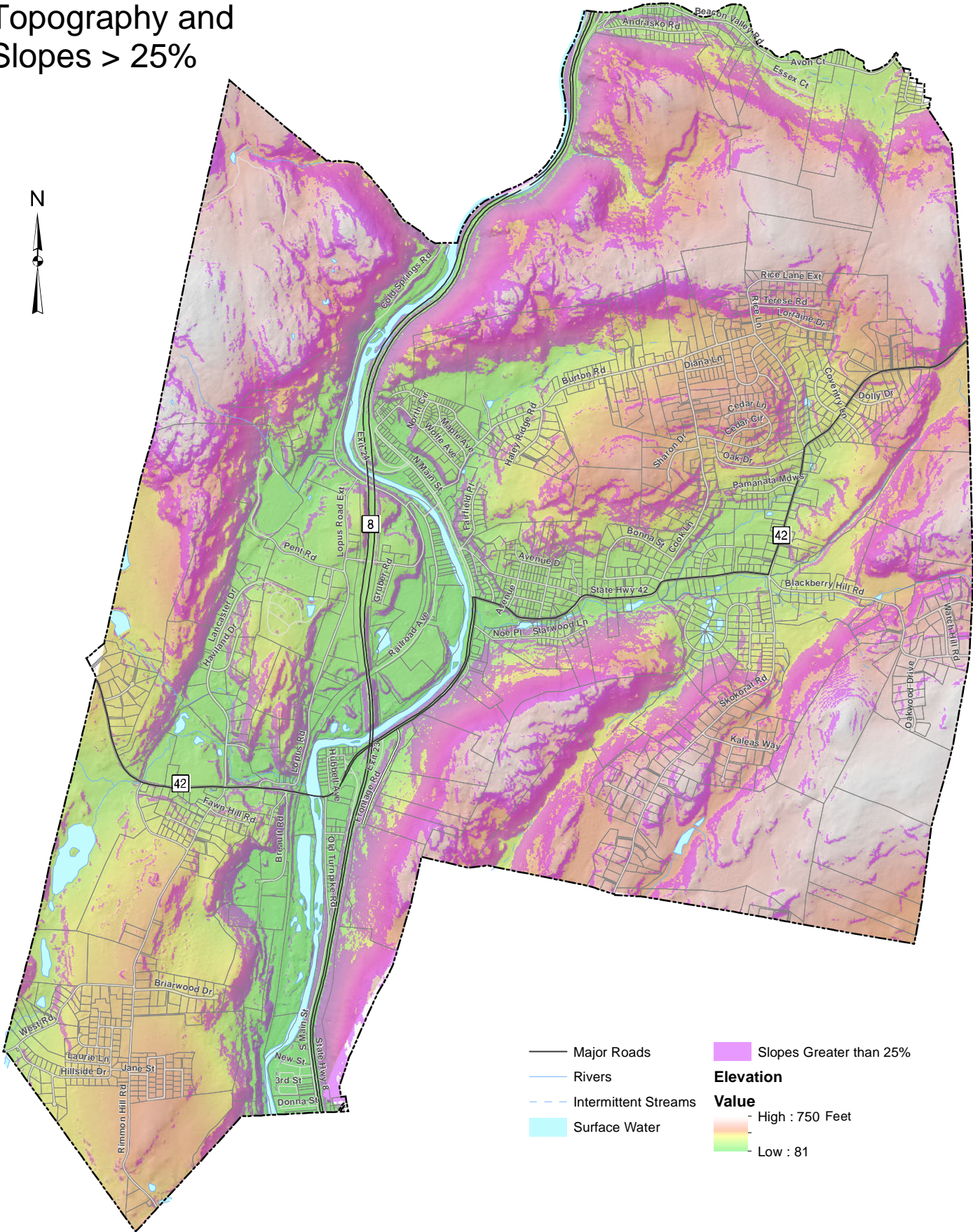
Much of rest of the town is sloped to various degrees, but there are some level areas of Town in the center where the largest relatively level area is on the west bank of the

Naugatuck River, within the bend of the river. The other relatively level areas of the Town are in the southwestern section of Town, and on various hilltops and plateaus scattered through Town.

Other areas of steep slopes include the area just east of Route 8 in the southern area, as the steep hill rises from the Naugatuck River, as well as various hilly areas on the north, and on the east and west sides of the Town. See Map 2: Topography and Slopes.

Generally, the steep topography of Beacon Falls has limited growth and development over the years, and has been a factor in the continued concentration of development activity within the core area along the Naugatuck River. Residents have indicated that they value the abundant views of the green hillsides. The steep topography is an important component of the rural character of the Town.

# Topography and Slopes > 25%



- Major Roads
- Rivers
- Intermittent Streams
- Surface Water
- Slopes Greater than 25%
- Elevation Value
  - High : 750 Feet
  - Low : 81

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

For general planning purposes only. Delineations may not be exact.

Source: "Roads", State of Connecticut and TeleAtlas 2009  
 "Hydrography", DEEP  
 "Topography and Slopes", CT LIDAR 2004  
 "Parcel Boundaries", New England Geosystems, 2011

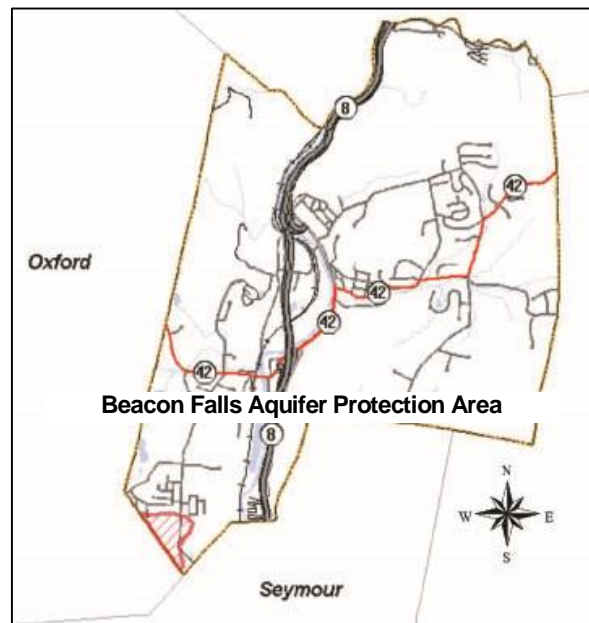


### 3.1.4 Groundwater

Aquifers are pools of groundwater which can be utilized for human consumption. Much of Connecticut relies on groundwater for its domestic water needs, and the State has determined that the protection of this resource is important for the current and future health of Connecticut residents and the growth of our economy.

The groundwater resources of Connecticut essentially fall within two categories. The first is the overall groundwater resources within the state which provide a source of water for individual households on individual wells. This encompasses broad areas of Town. There are a large number of individual wells in Beacon Falls, and the protection of the water supply for the groundwater resources which serve each of these individual homes is of paramount importance.

The State of Connecticut has also designated public supply aquifer areas, lands which directly contribute to the groundwater recharge of the aquifer which supplies a public water system. The state has required that these areas be protected from potentially contaminating influences by local land use law. The Town of Beacon Falls recently adopted a revision to its zoning regulations which establishes an aquifer protection regulation. The area within the Beacon Falls aquifer protection area is very small, encompassing several agricultural and residentially zoned properties within extreme southwestern corner of the Town (See red hatched area on map above right).



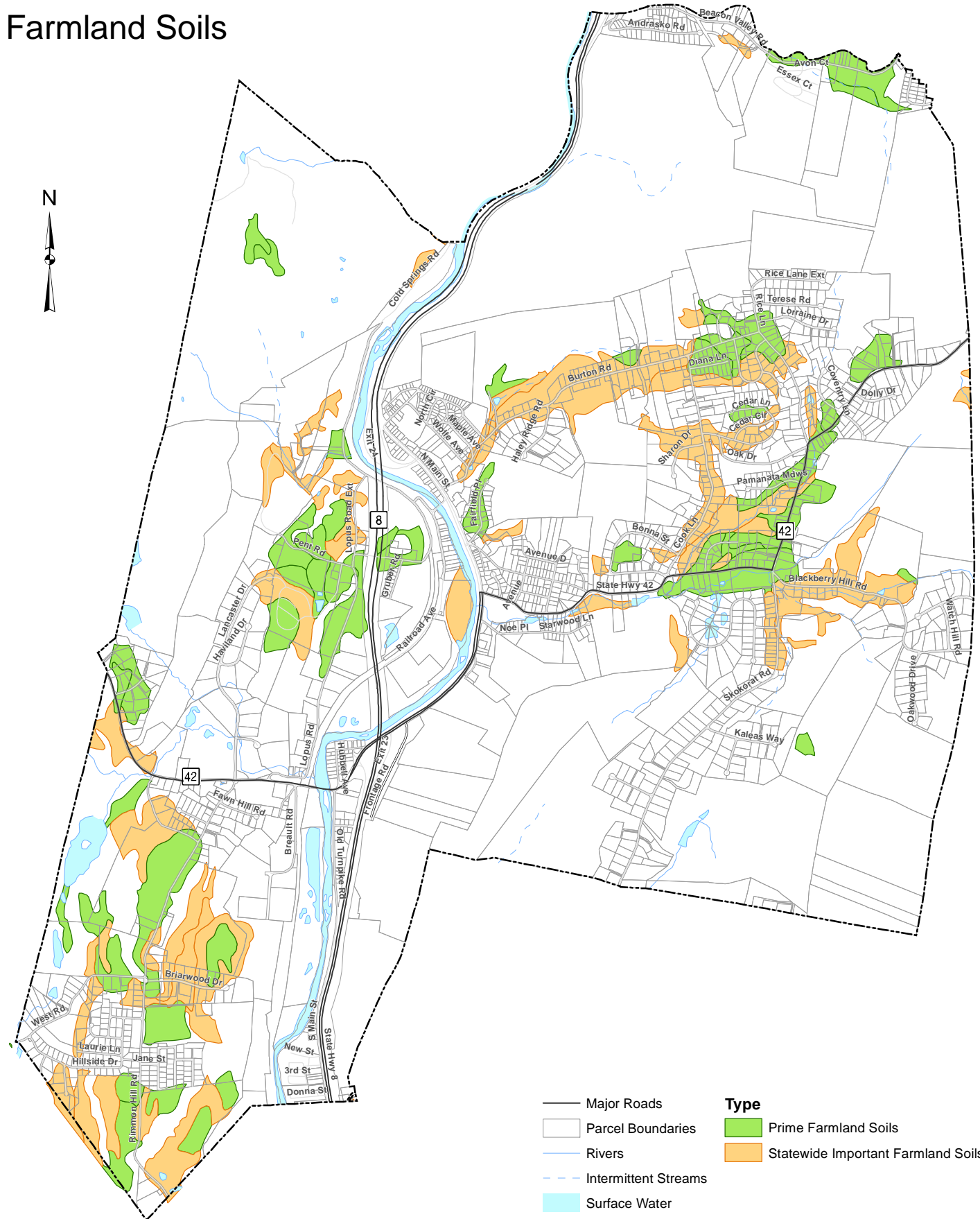
### 3.1.5 Farmland

Source: COG Central Naugatuck Valley

Due to its topography, Beacon Falls has not traditionally been a major agricultural community. However, a number of small farms remain, most within the flat-lands along the west side of the Naugatuck River. The Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley shows areas of prime agricultural soils, although these areas may not be under cultivation at this time. In fact, most of this land has been developed for residential use. (See brown shaded area on map.)

The remaining farms are primarily for vegetable and related crops. Some of the most significant remaining croplands are along Rimmon Road. Although they are not numerous, they are important components to the rural character of the Town and contributors to the local economy.

# Farmland Soils



- |                            |                                      |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| — Major Roads              | <b>Type</b>                          |
| ▬ Parcel Boundaries        | ▬ Prime Farmland Soils               |
| — Rivers                   | ▬ Statewide Important Farmland Soils |
| - - - Intermittent Streams |                                      |
| ▬ Surface Water            |                                      |

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Source: "Roads", State of Connecticut and TeleAtlas 2009  
 "Hydrography", DEEP  
 "Farmland Soils", USDA  
 "Parcel Boundaries", New England Geosystems, 2011

### **3.1.6 Climate Change**

The causes and impacts of changes in climate are being extensively studied and analyzed by the state and federal governments and others. Although there are few definitive answers, there appears to be a consensus that human activity is causing warming of the climate.

The impact of activities under the control of the Town of Beacon Falls on climate change is imperceptible, but collective land use decisions of all municipalities could have an impact. Generally, anything that could be done to reduce automobile traffic and retain or replace natural vegetation would be beneficial. Specifically, the concentration of growth patterns in the center of town and greater use of non-automobile travel would help reduce the carbon footprint of the Town.

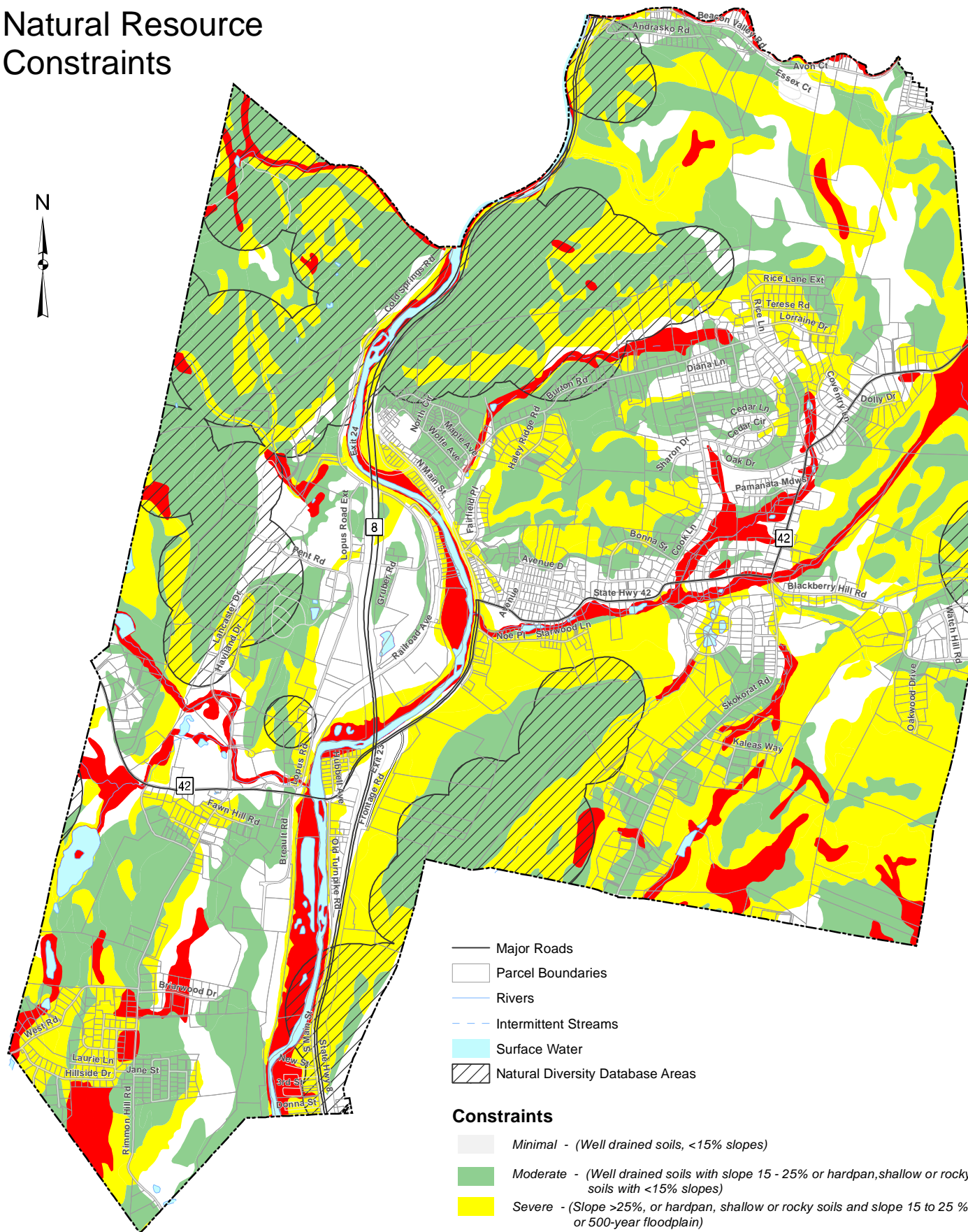
The Town can also have an influence by encouraging the construction of green buildings, which use less energy and other resources. Although there are few large-scale commercial or industrial buildings constructed within the Town, the Town regulatory authorities can encourage such construction and give incentives where appropriate.

There are solar access requirements within the Beacon Falls subdivision regulations, in accordance with State law. However, these regulations have proven very difficult to enforce in Connecticut due to slopes, street orientation, and tree cover.

## **3.2 Natural Resource Inventory**

The Conservation Commission recently completed the Community Resource Inventory for the Town of Beacon Falls. The Conservation Commission utilized the information developed by the Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) program. NEMO is a program of the University of Connecticut Center for Land Use Education and Research, (CLEAR), which is a compilation of research tools available in an internet based table, map and data form. It is intended to link geospatial technology with natural resource protection, providing a basis for local land use planning. The CLEAR maps have been the basis for the overall natural resource analysis of this plan. Additional mapping includes Surface Water Quality, Topography, Ground Water Quality, and Wildlife Habitats (as indicated by Natural Diversity Areas) and Regulated Lands including floodplains and aquifer protection areas. Of particular importance are the habitat areas, which are concentrated within the hilly areas of the Naugatuck State Forest within the northwest area of the town, and along specific areas along the Naugatuck River.

# Natural Resource Constraints



0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Source: "Roads", State of Connecticut and TeleAtlas 2009  
 "Hydrography", DEEP  
 "Natural Resource Constraints", COGCNV and DEEP  
 "Parcel Boundaries", New England Geosystems, 2011



**COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**  
**CENTRAL NAUGATUCK VALLEY**

For general planning purposes only. Delineations may not be exact.



### 3.3 Open Space Management

The natural resource inventory has three basic purposes: to help residents gain greater understanding of their community's assets, to prioritize properties for open space acquisition and/or protection; and to encourage the formulation an open space use and management process/plan for each of the properties owned by the Town of Beacon Falls.

For each municipality-owned open space property, a proposed use and management plan can provide a sustainable program that ensures that each property is managed in a way to achieve maximum ecological benefits in an economically viable manner. The analysis should include the following components:

1. Analysis of underlying ecological conditions and factors.
2. Field review to assess the parcel(s) to include:
  - a. Forest/ Woodlands / shrub lands /grasslands/ meadows
  - b. Geology, including rock and soil
  - c. Streams; vernal pools and waterbodies.
  - d. Wildlife habitats
3. Preliminary usage determination and cost analysis
  - a. Recreational
  - b. Educational
  - c. Research
  - d. Start Up Cost
  - e. Operating budget needs
4. Overall Community Impact
5. Preliminary Report
6. Community Forum to share and gather information
7. Assessment of Liability and Risk
8. Final Plan
9. Communication Submit plan and recommendations to Board of Selectman and other relevant Town Boards
10. Monitor, track and assess data on ongoing basis to promote implementation of Plan.
11. Report Annually.

To help achieve the open space goals, the Town established the Open Space and Land Use Committee, which is comprised of representatives from the Town land use commissions and boards. This Committee is responsible for review and coordination of open space investments and policy.



### 3.4 Existing Open Space Resources

Open space serves a wide variety of purposes within different communities. In some situations, it can be used for rather intensive active recreational uses, such as recreational fields for youth. At the other end of the spectrum, it is used for passive recreational uses like hiking or fishing or the preservation of the natural environment, with little or no human intrusion or activity.

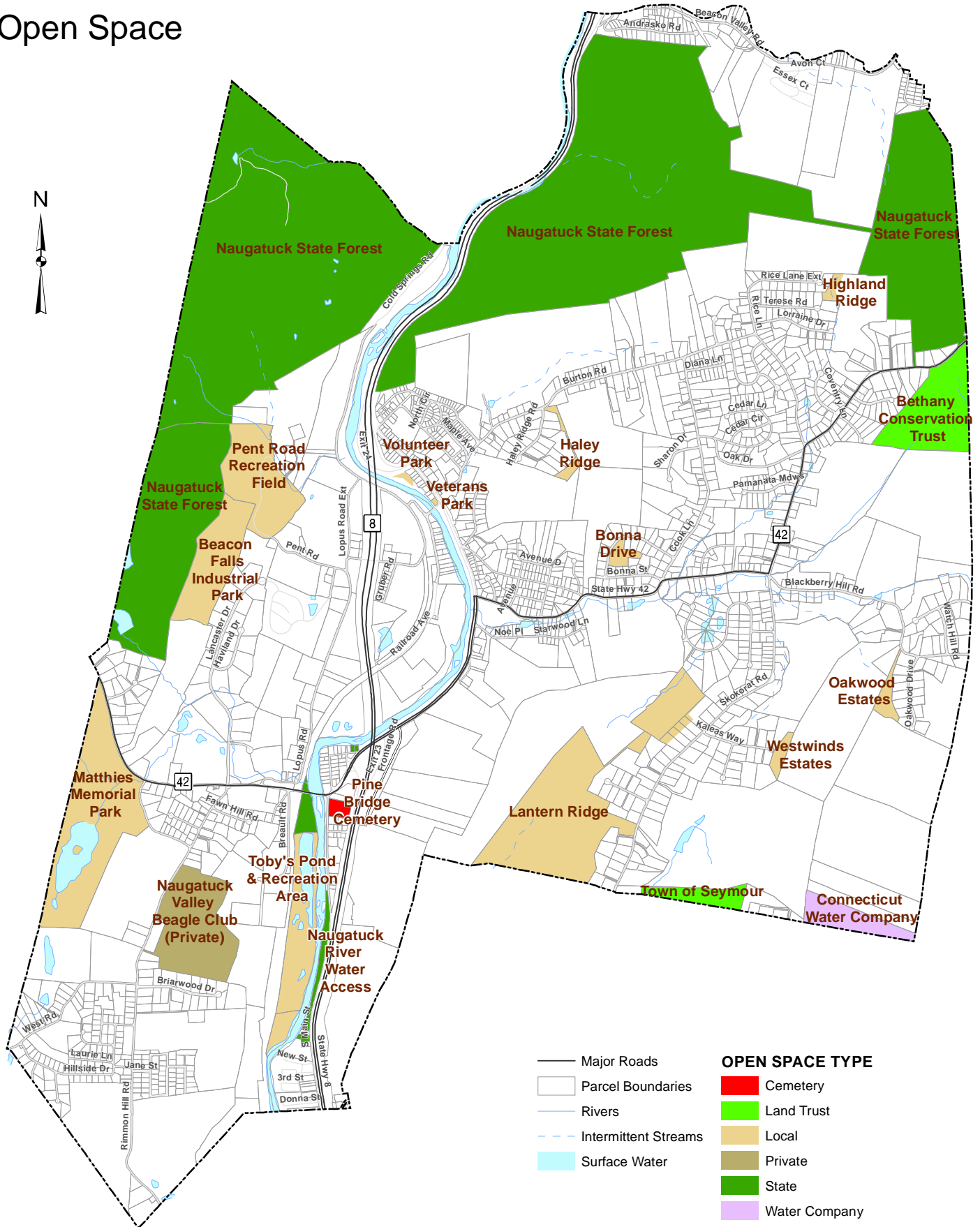
The open space inventory in Beacon Falls encompasses this full spectrum of purposes and activities. The trails along the Naugatuck River in and near the center of Town and Pent Road Park are relatively intensively used, while some areas of the Naugatuck State Forest are relatively untouched and see little human activity.

The Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley inventoried the open space within the region in 2006 and has recently updated its information. This inventory indicated the following for Beacon Falls:

Ownership of Open Space	Acreage	% of Total Open Space
Federal	0	0.0
State	1,188	72.8
Municipal	358	22.0
Other Municipal (Seymour)	13	0.8
Cemetery	3	0.2
Land Trusts	50	3.1
Golf Course	0	0.0
Water Company	21	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,632</b>	<b>100.0</b>

There are an additional 59 acres owned by the Naugatuck Valley Beagle Club that is uncommitted (i.e., not permanently protected) open space. The above table indicates that 24% of the Town is open space. This is a high percentage, compared to most communities. More than three-quarters of the Town's open space is owned by the State, as part of the Naugatuck State Forest. As the attached map shows, areas within the Naugatuck State Forest form a buffer, or collar around the Town to the north and west. This open space, in addition to the protection of significant natural resources, helps to define the geographic limits of the Beacon Falls community, which enhances the small town feel of the community.

# Open Space



0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Source: "Roads", State of Connecticut and TeleAtlas 2009  
 "Hydrography", DEEP  
 "Open Space", Town of Beacon Falls  
 "Parcel Boundaries", New England Geosystems, 2011

### **3.5 Goal, Policies and Recommendations**

#### **3.5.1 Goal**

To preserve the unique character of the community, the preservation of Beacon Falls' natural resources and open spaces for the benefit of current and future residents should be of the highest priority.

#### **3.5.2 Policies**

1. Continue to preserve and improve the environmental quality of the Naugatuck River as a principle asset of the Town.
2. Protect local groundwater resources since much of the town will continue to utilize individual wells into the foreseeable future.
3. Work with State and Regional agencies to maintain the air quality of the Town and Region.
4. Continue to protect inland wetland areas from development that could impair their ability to store floodwater, control erosion, recharge and purify surface and groundwater resources, and support wildlife.
5. Protect the unique natural features of Beacon Falls such as hilltops and stream corridors as these help define the identity of the community.
6. Recognize the environmental assets of the Town as important to the future of Beacon Falls as a sustainable, twenty-first century community.
7. Provide an interconnected system of passive and active recreation areas that link neighborhoods within Beacon Falls with open space and community resources.
8. Continue the process of the Natural Resource Inventory to include all protected and non-protected open space in the Town.

#### **3.5.3 Strategies**

1. Given fiscal constraints, the Town should continue to utilize a range of other methods of open space preservation in addition to public acquisition. The Planning and Zoning Commission should consider amending the subdivision regulations to require the dedication of open space as part of the subdivision

process. Other methods could include the imposition of conservation easements during the development review process, payment of a fee-in-lieu of dedication, and continued cooperation with major land-owners in town such as O&G for improvement to and public use of environmental assets.

2. Continue to enforce the wetland regulations. There should not be significant development in wetland areas, especially where the wetlands are significant natural resources. Generally, alteration should be considered only when there is no feasible and prudent alternative. Wetland alteration should be permitted *only* in conjunction with mitigation procedures, which result in improved and/or replacement wetlands.
3. The Planning and Zoning Commission should evaluate the potential for amending the zoning and subdivision regulations to improve the protection of the slopes and hillsides of Beacon Falls in residential developments. This may include limitations on the extent of the disruption of steep slopes, more specific criteria for the potential grading of finished lots, and standards for retaining walls.
4. Continue the considerable efforts which have been made to open up the Naugatuck River to public access. The Naugatuck River Greenway Plan prepared for the Central Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments provides a framework for the integration of all previous efforts, and its implementation will occur over an extended period of time.
5. Utilize public-private partnerships to preserve open space whenever possible.
6. Ensure that the zoning regulations do not inhibit the operation of bona fide agricultural operations. The Commission should consider permitting farm stores and other agriculturally related uses by special exception in residential zones when conducted in conjunction with an agricultural operation and explore other options to maintain farming as a business.
7. Continue to require the installation of street trees in conjunction with all new development to enhance the streetscapes of the community.
8. Evaluate the feasibility of requiring protection of hilltops and ridges within the zoning regulations as provided for in Section 8-2a Connecticut General Statutes.
9. Use open space to continue to maintain the physical separation of Beacon Falls from its neighboring communities and assist in retaining the town's unique character, as much as feasible. This may include working with the State to acquire additional land adjacent to the Naugatuck State Forest in the northern area of Town, and the expansion of open space resources within the eastern area of Town, near the Bethany Town Line.
10. Prepare Open Space Management plans for each parcel of open space owned by the Town in accordance with the guidelines which have been established and include public input. The Town, guided by the Conservation

Commission, should implement each of these plans, and seek assistance from other public and private groups in maintaining its properties.

11. Utilize the Natural Resource Inventory and a set of agreed upon guidelines to assist the Town in its decision making as to the priorities of open space land acquisition. This should also include the evaluation of land upon which residential development is to occur to aid the Planning and Zoning Commission in its determination as to which area(s) of the site should be set aside as open space. The Conservation Commission or a new committee including members of a variety of land use boards and interested citizens could develop the guidelines.

## 4. Demographic and Housing Characteristics

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### 4.1 Existing Demographic Conditions – Summary

The section has utilized many of the informational resources from the Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley publication, A Profile of the CNVR: 2012 , to analyze the relevant demographic trends impacting Beacon Falls. The Profile can be found on the web at <http://www.cogcnv.org/PDF/Profile2012.pdf>.

#### 4.1.1 The Population

- The Town of Beacon Falls has the second smallest population in the Central Naugatuck Valley Region.
- The population of the Town increased 15.3% between 2000 and 2010, which is considerably higher than the regional average of 5.6%. Of the thirteen municipalities, the percent increase over the past decade in Beacon Falls was exceeded only by Oxford and Middlebury. Its neighbors, Bethany and Seymour, also grew at lesser rates, 10.3% and 7.0% respectively.
- The population density of 619 persons per sq. mile was about in the middle of the municipalities in the CNVR at 6<sup>th</sup> out of 13. Beacon Falls density was well below both the region s (913) and the state s (738).
- The population is over 94% white and 5.1% minority. 5% of the residents are of Hispanic lineage, which includes both white and/or minority persons.
- Interestingly, the Town has the highest proportion of residents in the 35-44 age cohort in the region and higher than the State s. The 35-44 age cohort is generally those who have established families and are involved in their communities. The Town has the third highest percentage of population in the region in under 5 years of age category.
- The median age in Beacon Falls (41.5 years) is higher than the state s (40.0 years) or the region s (40.4 years).
- At \$81,214, the median household income in Beacon Falls is higher than that of the State s, \$67,740. It is also higher than that of many of the suburban communities of the region except Bethlehem (\$82,899), Cheshire (\$107,936), Middlebury (\$100,866), Oxford (\$107,500), and Prospect (\$86,526).
- 3.8% of the persons in town are living below the poverty level, which is less than one-half of the percentage of the State at 8.8% and the region at 10.6%.
- 25.4% of the adult population of the Town has a college degree or higher, which is slightly below that of the Central Naugatuck Region as a whole and significantly lower than that of the State.

#### **4.1.2 Labor Force**

- In both 2000 and 2011, the Town had lower unemployment averages than the region and slightly lower ones than the State.
- Although not unique to Beacon Falls, it is relevant to note that there was a decrease in total non-agricultural covered employment between the years of 2000 and 2011.
- Beacon Falls has a very high proportion of manufacturing employment.

#### **4.1.3 Housing**

- In the decade between 2000 and 2010, Beacon Falls had the second fastest rate of growth in housing in the CNVR after Oxford, reaching 2,509 total units.
- Single-family dwellings are the dominant housing type in Beacon Falls, encompassing 78.5% of the units. This is a lower proportion than all communities within the region, except Waterbury, Naugatuck, Southbury, and Thomaston.
- 6.8% of the Town's housing units are within multifamily structures with more than 5 units.
- Another 5.5% units are mobile homes, which is the highest percentage in the region and higher than the regional average of 0.8%. Prospect is second with 4.3%.
- 18.9% of the dwelling units in Beacon Falls are renter occupied.
- Between 2000 and 2010 median value of owner-occupied housing units almost doubled in Beacon Falls to \$308,800, which was the second greatest increase of all municipalities within the region after Middlebury.
- Median contract rent was \$917 in 2010, lower than Cheshire's, Oxford's, and Southbury's, but higher than the remaining nine towns in the CNVR.
- As of 2011, 1.2% of the housing units are publicly assisted.

#### **4.1.4 Population Growth Trend**

After a significant population increase between 1980 and 1990, Beacon Falls' rate of growth has continued to increase steadily. Between 2000 and 2010, the total population increased 15.3%, the third highest in the Central Naugatuck Valley,



reflecting the boom years of the early part of the decade. During this time, Bethany's population increased by 10.3% and Seymour's by 7.0%.

The Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) has projected the Beacon Falls population will continue its steady increase through 2014. It is projected this population increase will occur at a higher rate than New Haven County as a whole. The town's previous plan projected the population would increase at a slightly slower rate than actually occurred. The Connecticut Census Data Center (<http://ctsd.c.uconn.edu>) projects Beacon Falls population projection rising from its 2010 level of 6,049 to 6,377 in 2015.

### Historic Population with Projection

Year	Beacon Falls	Percent Change	New Haven County	Percent Change
1980	3,995	-	761,325	-
1990	5,083	27.3%	804,219	5.6%
2000	5,246	3.2%	824,008	2.5%
2010	5,708	8.8%	849,161	2.7%
2015	5,916	3.6%	858,241	1.1%

Source: Turner Miller Group with data from CERC and United States Bureau of Census

The COGCNV prepared a Build-Out Analysis for Beacon Falls in February 2013 using the Geographical Information Systems (GIS) software (Community Viz), and the parcel data layer available at <http://cogcnvgis.com>. The software subtracts any land from the total base which is already developed, committed as open space, not residentially zoned, or has environmental constraints. It takes the net remaining land and, using Beacon Falls zoning criteria (density and setback) and a minimum lot size of 7,500 ft., estimates how many additional lots could be developed under current zoning. These additional lots are then multiplied by the 2010 average household size to get an estimate of potential new residents and then added to the existing population to estimate the full build-out population under current zoning. The result was 736 new dwelling units with an estimated 2.56 persons per household resulting in a potential of 1,884 new residents and a total full build-out population of 7,933 at some future time with current zoning criteria. The report is available from the COGCNV and includes an estimate of the impact of the future population on schools, energy, auto emissions and other factors. There is no timeframe with this estimate as to when full build out will occur.



### Distribution of Housing Types by Percent of Total Housing Stock (2010)

Geographic Area	1 Unit	2 Units	3-4 Units	5 Units +	Mobile Homes & Others
Central Naugatuck Region	65.4%	7.4%	11.0%	15.4%	0.8%
Waterbury	44.9	9.5	19.6	25.9	0.2
Remainder of Region	80.1	5.9	4.8	7.9	1.2
Beacon Falls	73.0	4.7	10.1	6.8	5.5

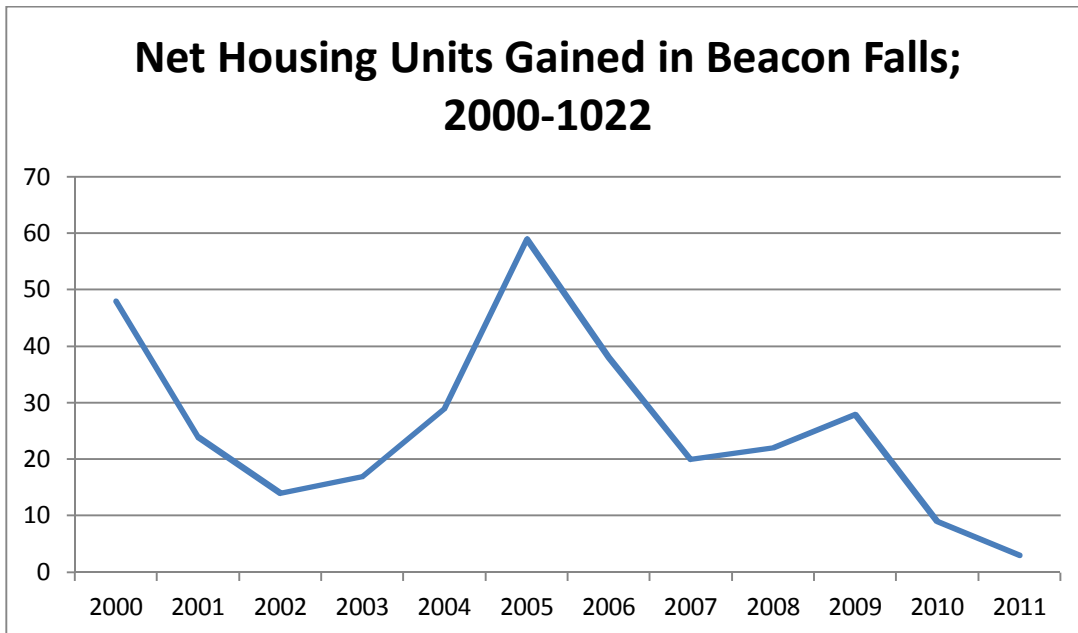
Source: Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley; A Profile of the CNVR: 2012

In its 5 year estimate from 2006-2010, the Bureau of the Census reported that Beacon Falls has a total of 2,447 housing units with 79% of these units single family units. The Census also estimates that approximately 76% of the total housing in Town is owner occupied, significantly higher than the Region or the State. Owner occupied housing is considered desirable in terms of owner maintenance and interest in the community.

## 4.2 Existing Housing Characteristics

Total Housing Units Gained, 2000-2011			
YEAR	Net Housing Units Gained	Total Housing Units	
2000	48	2,104	
2001	24	2,128	
2002	14	2,142	
2003	17	2,159	
2004	29	2,188	
2005	59	2,247	
2006	38	2,285	
2007	20	2,305	
2008	22	2,327	
2009	28	2,355	
2010	9	2,364	
2011	3	2,367	

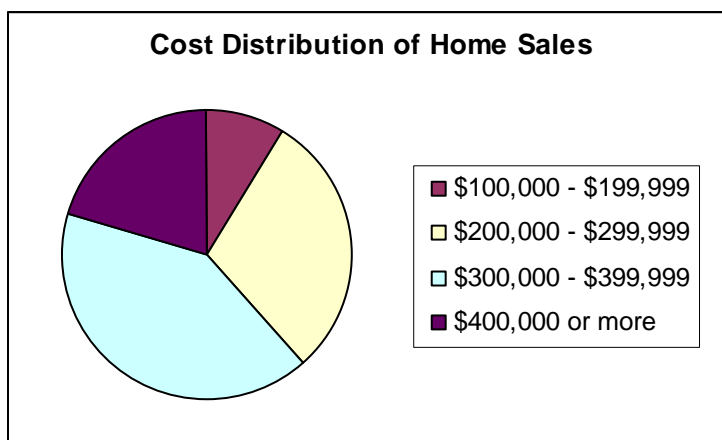
Source: CT DECD Construction Report



Source: CT DECD Construction Report

The chart and graph above show the distribution of new housing units constructed within the Town between 2000 and 2011, an increase fueled in part by the cost housing in Fairfield County. As shown, the peak year was in 2005 when nearly 60 units were added. The Town has added a total of 311 residential units from January 2000 through December 2011, an increase of 12%. The drop in new units in Beacon Falls in 2010 and 2011 reflects the dramatic dip in home construction that has occurred during the continued recession.

### 4.3 Affordability of Housing



The median sales price of an owner-occupied single-family home in 2009 was \$302,800 in Beacon Falls and \$278,000 in 2008 which is slightly higher than the County median. The price distribution of home sales was as follows (in 2007 dollars). No sales were recorded for homes which cost less than

\$100,000. By the 2010, the Bureau of the Census recorded a median home value (different from sales) of \$308,800 for its five year average from 2006-2011.

The Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) reports the Town of Beacon Falls has a total of 31 affordable housing units on the 2011 list. The number of affordable housing units by type for the Town and its neighbors is shown below.

#### **Affordable Housing Units (2011)**

<b>Affordable Units</b>	<b>Beacon Falls</b>	<b>Bethany</b>	<b>Naugatuck</b>	<b>Seymour</b>
<i>Total Number of Assisted Units</i>	31	1	1066	370
• <i>Governmentally Assisted Units</i>	6	0	793	287
• <i>CHFA Mortgages</i>	25	1	301	83
<i>Percentage of Town's 2010 Housing stock defined as affordable</i>	1.24%	0.05%	8.16%	5.31%

Source: Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development

The definition of affordability is included within Section 8-30g of the Connecticut State Statutes is quite narrow. This statute, often referred to as the Affordable Housing Appeals Act, includes a provision that municipalities are not subject to the requirement if a minimum of 10 percent of their housing stock is (1) assisted housing, or 2) currently financed by Connecticut Housing Finance Authority mortgages, or (3) subject to binding recorded deeds containing covenants or restrictions which require that such dwelling units be sold or rented at, or below, prices which will preserve the units as housing for which persons and families pay thirty per cent or less of income, where such income is less than or equal to eighty per cent of the median income, or (4) mobile manufactured homes located in mobile manufactured home parks or legally-approved accessory apartments, which homes or apartments are subject to binding recorded deeds containing covenants or restrictions which require that such dwelling units be sold or rented at, or below, prices which will preserve the units as housing for which, for a period of not less than ten years, persons and families pay thirty per cent or less of income, where such income is less than or equal to eighty per cent of the median income.

Beacon Falls 1.24% shown above is clearly well below the 10% threshold required for exemption from the affordable housing appeals law. However, it would be virtually impossible for the Town of Beacon Falls to ever reach that 10% threshold. An incentive housing study prepared in May 2008 by Turner Miller Group as part of the HOME Connecticut program ranked Beacon Falls 57<sup>th</sup> out of 169 total Connecticut municipalities for housing affordability (with 1 being the least affordable). Municipalities below this benchmark are much more limited in their ability to deny an affordable housing development proposal and are subject to direct appeal to the state's housing court.

The definition embodied within the Connecticut State Statutes does not convey an accurate picture of housing affordability. It does not include overall market factors, such as the actual price and availability of housing. It does not provide any credit or allowance for those communities which have been inclusive in their regulatory process. It also does not include a factor for those communities with relatively large inventories of multi-family rental properties, even with rental levels below the prescribed affordability levels.

### **Estimated Median Household Income (2007-2011)**

Beacon Falls	Bethany	Naugatuck	Oxford	Seymour	Connecticut
\$80,182	\$106,579	\$63,414	\$117,886	\$75,482	\$67,753

Source: United States Bureau of Census, American Fact Finder

Median household income has also increased from an actual \$69,675 in 1999 to a five year American Community Survey (ACS) estimate of \$80,182 in 2011. According to the COGCNV's *Profile of the Region*, Beacon Falls rate of increase in median household income was highest in the Region from 1999 to the ACS estimate for 2006-2010.

### Average Household Size in Beacon Falls, 2010

Year	AVERAGE NUMBER OF PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLD
1980	2.98
1990	2.69
2000	2.58
2010	2.56

Source: US Department of Census, as reported in the COGCNV A Profile of the Region:2012

As is occurring nationally, the average household size in Beacon Falls has been decreasing since 1980. The continuing recession from 2008, however, may increase the average household size in the short term as family members come home to share expenses.

## 4.4 Housing Goal, Policies and Recommendations

### 4.4.1 Housing Goal:

Expansion of the housing stock should be of the highest quality and consistent with the small town character of the community. The existing housing stock should be preserved and maintained to accommodate Beacon Fall residents of a range of incomes.

### 4.4.2 Policies

1. Detached single-family housing shall remain the predominant form of housing within the community, due to minimal anticipated growth and environmental limitations to undeveloped areas.
2. Preserve the integrity and quality of existing neighborhoods, particularly the unique older housing.
3. The neighborhood should be the basis for residential development in Beacon Falls, with residential development designed to create and/or enhance the sense of neighborhood.
4. Continue to ensure that residential development includes the preservation of open space, with various methodologies such as payment in lieu of open space which can be used for acquisition.

5. Recognize the need to provide affordable housing to residents of Beacon Falls, who cannot afford the current high costs of housing, in a way consistent with the character of the community.
6. Ensure that the residential development can be safely accommodated by the road system of the area, through permitting appropriate densities within different areas of Town.
7. Any additional demand for 55 + age-restricted housing will be significantly limited within the foreseeable future. The amount currently permitted within the Town will satisfy demand for the planning horizon and have significant impacts upon future development patterns of the impacts of the Town.
8. Implement the recommendations of the Incentive Housing Report as approved by the Town.

#### **4.4.3 Strategies**

1. The use of conservation developments should be considered as a way to permit residential development while protecting sensitive environmental areas.
2. Evaluate a system of regulatory methods to control the alteration of development in areas of steep slopes.
3. Amend the subdivision regulations to allow the Commission to require that specific building envelopes be designated on lots if the Commission determines that certain environmental features on the lots should not be disturbed during the construction process.
4. Carefully monitor land uses in the older neighborhoods, such as the Hill, to ensure that all activity within the area continues to enhance the neighborhood.
5. Consider the reduction of maximum density in the rural outlying areas of the Town.
6. Support development within the Incentive Housing Zone and consider additions where appropriate.

## 5. Parks and Recreation

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### 5.1 Existing Conditions

The park and recreational facilities of a community are important in defining the character and quality of life. A town's parks are often a symbol of the community, as well as a community gathering spot.

There are a variety of different types of parks, depending upon their purpose, including athletic facilities, picnicking areas, biking paths, fishing and boating areas, as well as the traditional town green, with ornamental, historical and community functions.

The role of recreational facilities has steadily grown over the past several decades. Programs have become important components of a community recreational system, ranging from youth sports and leagues to adult instruction and activities to senior programs and services. This usually requires buildings and different facilities.

The parks should be differentiated from the open space areas, as they have different functions and characteristics. Parks require a high level of improvements, while open space areas have minimal disruptions. Parks are used for recreational activities, while open space is primarily used for environmental protection although there are usually some low intensity passive recreational activities.



The Beacon Falls Parks and Recreation Commission has primary responsibility for the development, operation and maintenance of the town park facilities.

**Pent Road Recreation Complex**

## 5.2 Existing Facilities

Beacon Falls has the following park facilities:

### **Pent Road Complex**

This is the primary recreational facility in Beacon Falls. It is located within the northwest section of Town at the end of Pent Road. It consists of approximately 49 acres, and includes the following facilities:

- 1 Baseball Diamond
- 4 LL Baseball Diamonds
- 4 Tennis Courts
- Basketball Court
- Parking lot
- Service Buildings

The park is heavily utilized with facilities very close to each other. Several of the Little League baseball diamonds are too close to the larger diamond, and cannot be used at the same time. Additional ball fields and soccer fields are needed to support the still growing need for youth sports.

### **Mathies Park**

Mathies Park is a 258 acre parcel on the south side of Route 42, straddling the western border of Beacon Falls with the Town of Oxford. 96 acres are within the Town of Beacon Falls. It is located adjacent to the grounds of Woodland High School. The land is primarily undeveloped, although it does contain some buildings and improvements from its historical use.

Mathies Park's primary use now is for passive recreation, such as nature trails and fishing. A plan was prepared in early 2010 by TPA Design Group which established a series of improvements needed to upgrade the use of the park for passive recreational activities. Certain operational issues were addressed in the Plan. The TPA plan also includes the potential for exploring the use of a section of the property for athletic fields.

### **Tobey's Pond and Recreation Area**

Tobey's Pond is a former O & G gravel pit along the west bank of the Naugatuck River. The O & G Corporation worked with the Town of Beacon Falls and the State Department of Environmental Protection to restore the 41 acre parcel into a water-based recreational facility. The pond has an area for boat launch and fishing, with access and a small parking area. It is anticipated that this area could become an



important component of the Naugatuck River Greenway, a state-designated greenway.

### **Veterans Memorial Park**

The Veterans Memorial Park was established in 2005, at the site of a former Connecticut Light and Power substation. It is at a prominent location in the center of Town, at the corner of North Main Street and the Depot Street Bridge.

The former substation detracted from the aesthetic qualities of the Main Street area and was a detriment to the downtown revitalization efforts. It has been transformed into a small landscaped park with sitting areas, which has greatly improved the community environment. This is also part of the Naugatuck River Greenway.

### **Volunteers Park**

The Volunteers Park is the area along the east bank of the Naugatuck River, behind the Senior Center and main fire station. It consists of a short walkway along the river with benches and views along the river. This passive recreational area provides direct riverfront access from the downtown area. This park was created as one of the initial steps for increased public access to the Naugatuck River and as an important component of the revitalization of the Main Street area. This is also part of the Naugatuck River Greenway.

### **Riverbend Park**

Riverbend Park is a recently completed facility which is located on the east bank of the Naugatuck River, on Nancy Avenue. In cooperation with the Town, this one acre site was improved by Trout Unlimited in 2008 and includes a gravel parking area, footpaths, benches and access to the river for fishing or the launching of kayaks or canoes. One section of the land was donated from O & G.

The Town has also received a grant from the Housatonic River Restoration Fund, thorough the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for additional improvements at the park. Potential improvements could include a link with the overall Naugatuck Valley Greenway.

### 5.3 Other Recreational Facilities

The Beacon Falls Senior Center is located on Main Street, adjacent to the fire station. It is a one story building, consisting primarily of a meeting / activity room and kitchen facilities. It is used for a range of activities to serve the senior population of the town, as well as general municipal use for meetings.

There is no youth center in Beacon Falls. Youth recreational activities are conducted in the parks, where outdoor activities are appropriate, and within the schools of the Regional School District 16.

### 5.4 Needs

The recreational needs of Americans are changing, as the population of our nation and Beacon Falls changes. The need for athletic fields and courts primarily to serve the community's youth remains strong, particularly given the concern about youth obesity and renewed emphasis on physical fitness. However, the maturing population and diversity of their interests also requires different types of both indoor and outdoor recreation, such as hiking, biking, strolling, canoeing/kayaking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and other methods of outdoor recreational activities. Therefore, in order to continue the transformation of Beacon Falls into a twenty-first century community which can meet the lifestyle needs of a more diverse group of citizenry, the recreational needs of all citizens need to be addressed.

1. The Parks and Recreation Commission have identified the need for additional athletic fields, including baseball, football and soccer.
2. The Commission has also identified the need for additional walking tracks.
3. The Regional Naugatuck River Greenway Routing Study was recently completed by the Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley. The study area extends along the Naugatuck River from Beacon Falls to Thomaston, through Naugatuck, Waterbury and Watertown. It is also important to note that segments of the greenway are also planned within Seymour, Ansonia and Derby and up to Torrington, which could result in a comprehensive connective area for public access along the major part of the Naugatuck River.

## 5.5 Issues

1. The Town's growing demand for recreational facilities brings up the question as to where the new facilities shall be located. The basic choices are;
  - The continuation of Pent Road Park as the principal recreational park in the Town. This may include the development of additional athletic fields at the park. However, the current site is not large enough to accommodate expansion. Expansion would necessitate the purchase of land adjacent to the park, possibly the 5 acre parcel to the east.
  - The other option is to develop park facilities elsewhere in town. Options include Mathies Park and the town-owned Lantern Ridge property on Skokorat Road.
2. The Naugatuck River Greenway offers a tremendous potential to provide a facility which will cater to a range of recreational activities and allow residents to enjoy the Naugatuck River. It can also provide green transportation linkages with other neighboring communities, link community facilities, and enhance the economic development of the central core of the Town.
3. The town would benefit from a youth center, which can be developed in conjunction with some other municipal facility, such as a library. It should include a large meeting/activity room to accommodate major town events.
4. The town lacks the resources to properly maintain and administer all the parks within the community. The Town is understandably reluctant to accept or develop additional parkland without the resources to assure that it is properly maintained.

## 5.6 Goal, Policies and Recommendation – Open Space

The following goal, policies, and strategies are presented for discussion by the Committee and other interested townspeople, for eventual inclusion within the Plan of Conservation and Development.

### 5.6.1 Goal

Continue to upgrade and improve the park and recreational facilities of the Town to meet the expanding and more diverse needs of the population, in accordance with fiscal resources available for acquisition, development, and/or maintenance.

### 5.6.2 Policies

1. Coordinate Park and open space acquisition as there are properties which may have multiple uses.
2. Recognize that the Pent Road Complex will remain as the principle outdoor active recreational area of the community with other components of the system providing a diversity of other recreational activities.

### 5.6.3 Strategies

1. Pursue the acquisition of land adjacent to the Pent Road Complex for future expansion to construct additional athletic fields.
2. Pursue the implementation of the Mathies Park Plan as financially feasible, even if on an incremental basis.
3. Continue the development of Tobey s Pond as a unique recreational resource by exploring the possibilities of using it as a swimming facility.
4. Continue to work with the Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley to construct the Naugatuck River Greenway through Beacon Falls. The Plan of Conservation and Development should include the regional Naugatuck River Greenway Routing Study as a component or appendix.
5. The section of the Greenway between Main Street and Toby s Pond should have the highest priority for completion.
6. Continue to pursue additional improvements to Riverbend Park.
7. Riverbend Park should be integrated into the Naugatuck River Greenway. This could include utilization of the local streets in that neighborhood, such as Nancy Avenue and Hubbell Avenue.
8. Formulate a plan for the Lantern Ridge property which may include some active recreation.
9. Establish an entity with the primary responsibility for park maintenance, with adequate resources for adequate maintenance of all park facilities.
10. Pursue land acquisition for park purposes where economically feasible and available, even if the land needs to remain unused for a period of time.

11. Designate or develop a commission to study the recreational needs of the residents by age groups so that no segment is overlooked. This group could also prioritize the potential properties to be acquired.
12. Expand efforts to protection steep slopes and ridgelines in Beacon Falls. Incorporate appropriate recommendations in land use regulations to encourage their preservation. These areas may be included in open space set aside acreage in new developments, purchased by the town with the assistance of DEEP open space funds, donated by property owners, or other means.

## **6. Economic Development**

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### **6.1 Importance of Economic Development**

- Businesses provide a net positive fiscal benefit to the Town, as they pay more in taxes than they consume in services.
- Local businesses provide employment opportunities, which reduce commutation distances of residents and therefore, energy consumption.
- A larger number of retail and service businesses in Beacon Falls would provide a greater choice for local residents and reduce the need for them to travel out of the Town as frequently. This effect enhances the sustainability of the community by localizing economic activity.
- Taxes received by local businesses can allow the Town to add or enhance needed programs and services.
- Many local businesses provide community support ranging from donations to local causes, volunteer time, or other supportive activities.
- Business growth prevents the spread of blight, as businesses re-use and/or renovate underutilized properties.

### **6.2 Economic Conditions**

The formulation of an economic development strategy for a community requires a certain degree of understanding of its demographic and economic trends. The information is intended to help identify Beacon Falls existing and potential role within the regional economy. In addition to the demographic information presented previously, we have analyzed certain labor force, employment and fiscal characteristics.

This component of the plan is being prepared at a time of unprecedented national economic change and upheaval. Economic conditions and data are changing rapidly. For example, the unemployment rate in Connecticut rose dramatically, from 5.2% in February, 2008 to 9.0% in February, 2010. However, as economic conditions stabilize, the unemployment rate has declined to 7.8% in 2012.

### 6.2.1 Labor Force

The change in labor force is an indicator of economic growth.

#### Labor Force Change in Beacon Falls and State of Connecticut

	Labor Force 2006	Labor Force 2012 (January)	% Change
Beacon Falls	3,269	3,402	+4.1
Connecticut	1,826,800	1,895,100	+3.7

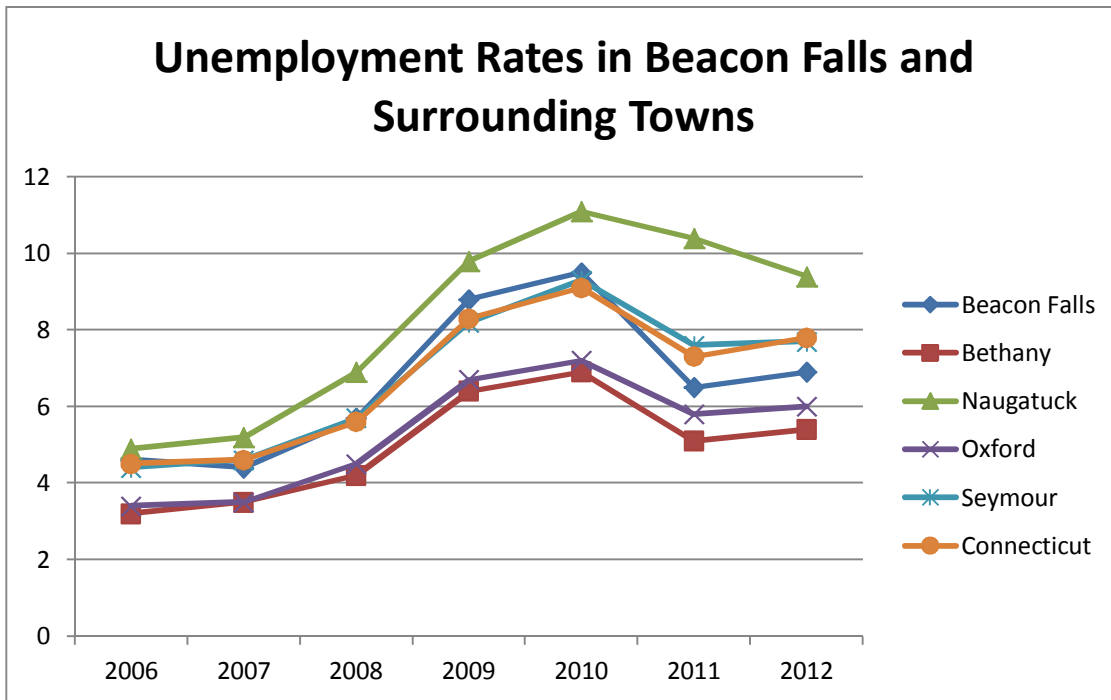
Source: Department of Labor, State of Connecticut

The labor force has grown slightly over the past five years, at a rate consistent with that of the State.

#### Unemployment Rates in Beacon Falls and Surrounding Communities in percent by Year: 2006 to 2012

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Beacon Falls	4.6	4.4	5.7	8.8	9.5	6.5	6.9
Bethany	3.2	3.5	4.2	6.4	6.9	5.1	5.4
Naugatuck	4.9	5.2	6.9	9.8	11.1	10.4	9.4
Oxford	3.4	3.5	4.5	6.7	7.2	5.8	6.0
Seymour	4.4	4.6	5.7	8.2	9.3	7.6	7.7
Connecticut	4.5	4.6	5.6	8.3	9.1	7.3	7.8





Source: Department of Labor, State of Connecticut

The local unemployment rate has generally trended with that of the State and surrounding communities. The unemployment rates within the Town and State significantly increased during the years up to 2010, reflecting the Great Recession. The unemployment rate in Beacon Falls has generally been higher than that of Oxford and Bethany, similar or below Seymour's, and lower than Naugatuck. It has generally been in line with the State's rate, but in each of the last two years has been below it. All areas seem to be showing lower unemployment rates.

## 6.2.2 Employment and Industry

### Percent Employment by Industry – Town, Waterbury Labor Market & State<sup>1</sup>, 2011

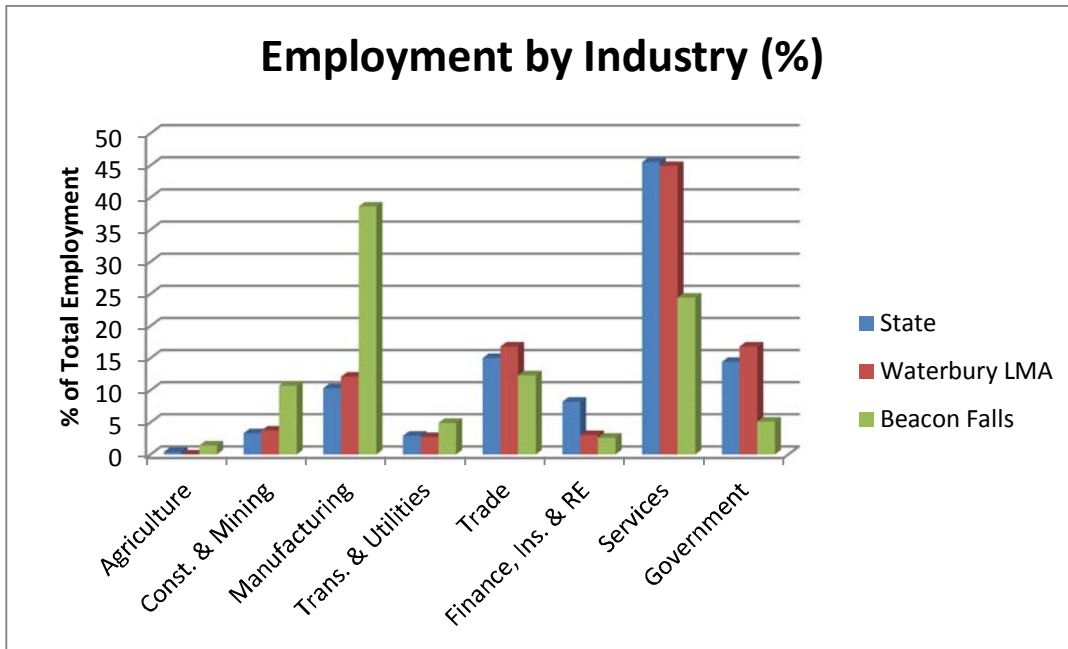
Sectors	Connecticut	Waterbury LMA*	Beacon Falls
Const. & Mining	3.2	3.4	14.0
Manufacturing	10.3	12.2	19.1
Trans. & Utilities	2.8	2.8	4.6
Trade	15.1	16.9	19.4
Information	1.9	1.0	-
Finance, Ins. & Real-estate	8.3	3.1	0.6
Services	43.2	44.4	10.8
Government	14.7	16.0	29.6

Source: US Census; CT. Department of Labor, Office of Research

\*Waterbury LMA consists of Beacon Falls, Middlebury, Naugatuck, Prospect, Waterbury, Watertown and Wolcott.

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<sup>1</sup> The data for the State and Waterbury Labor Market area are 2011 from the Connecticut Department of Labor. The data for the town of Beacon Falls is from 2005, the most recent town level data available.



The largest employment sector in Beacon Falls is manufacturing. This contrasts with the overall State economy, in which services are the largest sector. The employment base of the Waterbury Labor Market area more closely reflects that of the State. Manufacturing is the heritage and has continued importance within the Naugatuck Valley.

It is also important to note that the employment base of Beacon Falls is relatively small, and could be dramatically shifted by changes in a small number of employees.

No one employer dominates the Town's economy. The manufacturing sector consists primarily of small businesses, including metal fabrication and high technology products. Manufacturing in Connecticut is increasingly dominated by small employers.

The retail sector of employment distribution within Beacon Falls is lower than the statewide average. A market study would include an analysis of retail leakage, which is the net amount of retail expenditures of Beacon Falls residents that is being spent outside of the community. A market analysis is not within the scope of this plan, but all indications are that residents of Beacon Falls spend a large proportion of their retail dollars outside of Town, as there are many retail sectors not represented within Town. However, the retail areas within the surrounding communities are geographically positioned.

### 6.3 Municipal Fiscal Environment

We have compared various fiscal indicators of the Town of Beacon Falls with State averages to try to understand the relationship between the town's economy and its ability to raise revenue to pay for services. This is not intended as a full fiscal analysis, but rather as a tool to assist the Town in its economic development planning.

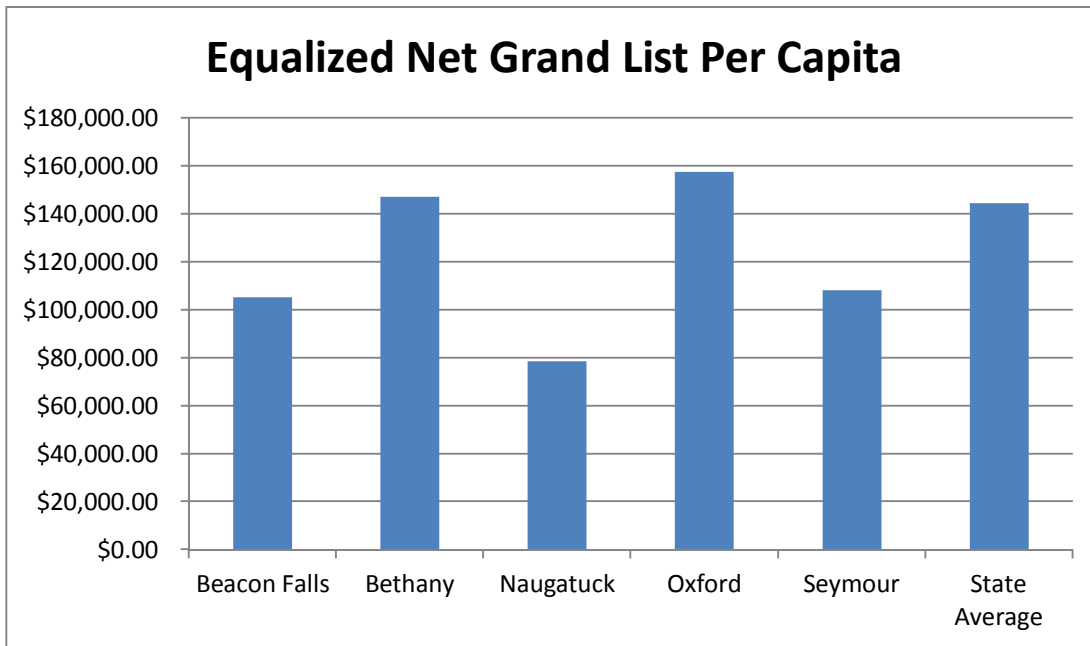
The Equalized Net Grand List (ENGL) is the estimate of the market value of all taxable property in a municipality. Municipalities revalue their Grand Lists based on schedules established by the Connecticut General Assembly (CGS 12-62). Thus, there can be a marked difference between the market value of all property and the assessed value. The State Office of Policy Management calculates the ENGL from sales, and assessment ratio information and grand list reports are filed by the municipality.

Equalized Net Grand List Per Capita is a measure of the total market value of real and personal property (taxable property) within a jurisdiction divided by the jurisdiction's population. It is useful as both a measure of wealth and of the tax base.

#### Equalized Net Grand List per Capita, FY 2011-2012

Beacon Falls	\$105,404.25
Bethany	\$147,315.87
Naugatuck	\$78,686.62
Oxford	\$157,599.43
Seymour	\$108,250.12
<b>State Average</b>	<b>\$144,605.45</b>

Source: Office of Policy Management

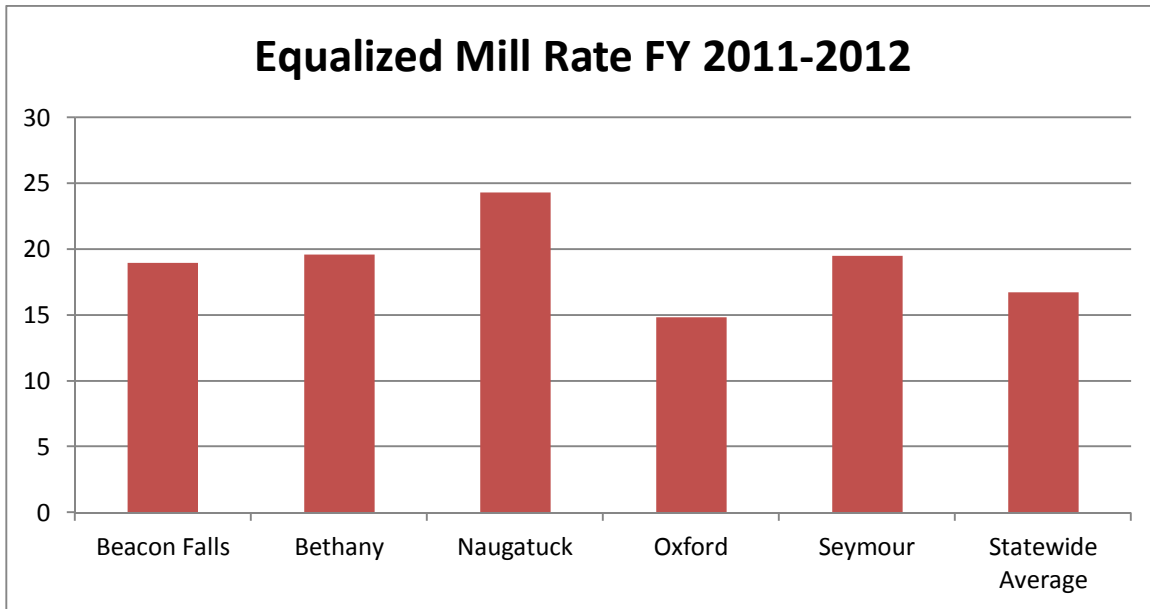


Beacon Falls has a slightly lower Equalized Net Grand List Per Capita than the State average. It is also lower than Oxford and Bethany, and similar to that of Seymour.

**Equalized Mill Rate, 2011-2012**

Beacon Falls	18.98
Bethany	19.63
Naugatuck	24.31
Oxford	14.83
Seymour	19.51
Statewide Average	16.72

Source: Office of Policy Management



The Equalized Mill Rate, or the Effective Tax Rate, is calculated by dividing the adjusted tax levy, as presented in the municipality's Tax Collector's Report, by the Equalized Net Grand List. It is a method of comparison between the mill rates of different communities which compensates for the different dates of re-evaluation. The equalized mill rate in Beacon Falls is slightly higher than the state average, largely due to the lower equalized Grand List per capita.

#### Grand List by Category

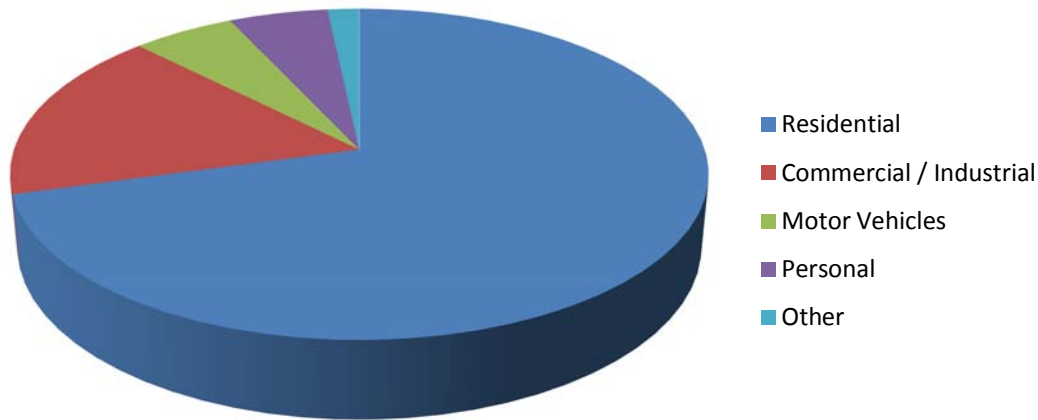
The following chart illustrates the percentage of total grand list by property category of Beacon Falls, and compares it with the statewide average. The data shows that Beacon Falls has a significantly smaller percentage of its total grand list within the commercial - industrial category

#### **Percentage of Grand List by Property Category FY 2011-2012**

	Residential	Com/Ind	Motor Vehicles	Personal	Other
Beacon Falls	77.9%	3.1%	7.2%	3.9%	2.9%
State Average	71.9%	16.5%	5.2%	5.1%	1.7%



**Percentage of Grand List by Property  
Category FY 2011-2012  
Town of Beacon Falls**



*Tax Considerations*

The current tax structure of Connecticut, as of now, places a heavy reliance on property taxes for municipal funding. As the development patterns of Beacon Falls contain a relatively low amount of commercial and industrial uses, the Town has been at a disadvantage in its ability to raise revenue.

The Town faces a significant challenge in enhancing its Grand List, as there is a limited amount of land available for commercial and industrial development. The current tax structure of the State places small towns like Beacon Falls at a disadvantage, as it creates potential distortions in land use policy, in that towns may encourage otherwise inappropriate development with the primary purpose of increasing the Grand List.

## 6.4 Underlying Economic Factors

1. The overall economy of the Central Naugatuck Valley has been stagnant or declining, over the past decade. Employment is moving out of the City into the suburban municipalities.
2. Beacon Falls is in proximity to regional communities with significantly larger commercial and employment bases, such as Naugatuck, Waterbury and Shelton. These communities will continue their role as regional economic centers.
3. The limited potential growth of Beacon Falls is strongly tied to the future growth of the entire region.
4. The economy of lower Fairfield County has exhibited sustained growth over the past several decades. The growth has been concentrated along the shoreline communities, but the congestion, high housing costs and limited availability of affordable and available land has led to economic and residential growth in the communities in close proximity to the shoreline corridor. Examples of this include the growth which has occurred in communities such as Shelton and Danbury. The impact of the expansion of this economic corridor has expanded into the Naugatuck Valley, offering Beacon Falls opportunities to capture some of this growth.
5. As the economy returns from the depths of the recent downturn, a pattern of economic growth can be expected to resume. However, the rate of growth is not expected to be as strong or robust as it has been in recent decades.
6. Beacon Falls is not well positioned for retail growth to serve the region, in comparison to other regional locations. The bifurcated access onto the Route 8 Expressway limits regional accessibility. In addition, the area around Beacon Falls lacks the required population or degree of purchasing power to support large scale retail uses. This is exacerbated by the limited east-west access. However, there are opportunities for some retail growth to serve the local population, as well as specialized retail.
7. One of the best opportunities for economic growth in Beacon Falls is specialized manufacturing which draws upon the traditional manufacturing strength of the Naugatuck Valley. However, there is a shortage of skilled, technical labor to support manufacturing growth.
8. There is an apparent retail leakage in Beacon Falls, as residents leave the Town for much of their consumer retail and service needs. This creates retail growth opportunities in Town.

9. Other promising economic development opportunities are those businesses which can support the local population, including medical services; construction related uses; and other service uses.
10. There appears to be an underlying demand for additional wholesale and distribution facilities with good access to the regional highway system. There is a shortage of suitable sites along the major transportation corridors, and Beacon Falls is well positioned to capitalize upon this opportunity.
11. Additional economic growth opportunities may result from additional residential development.
12. There may be opportunities for additional economic development from the increased utilization of the railroad station. This would result from the physical improvement of the railroad station as well as increased and more reliable service along the Waterbury branch of the Metro North.
13. The development of the Naugatuck River Greenway will also create potential development opportunities for pedestrian-oriented and recreational-based businesses.
14. There are opportunities for retail growth along Main Street. These opportunities for growth may be enhanced by the continuation of efforts to improve the overall environment of Main Street.
15. One of the important economic development issues which has been raised is the bifurcated and sometimes confusing access to Beacon Falls from the Route 8 Expressway. The study undertaken by the State Department of Transportation did not contemplate a complete reconstruction of the access into Beacon Falls. Ideally, this would include a revised interchange near Lopus Road, which would result in a river crossing to Route 42. The scope of the study did not include any such dramatic review. Given the fiscal situation of the State of Connecticut, expensive reconstructions of highway interchanges not required by safety and congestion factors, would appear to be extremely unlikely. Therefore, the Town will need to plan in accordance with the current highway configuration throughout the foreseeable future.
16. The area around Exit 23 of the Route 8 Expressway is an accessible area which includes large areas of undeveloped land. It offers potential opportunities economic development opportunities.
17. Beacon Falls, by virtue of its location within southern Connecticut, is fortunate that its location is in close proximity to many very well respected colleges and universities. There are 13 higher educational institutions within a 30 minute drive of Beacon Falls.

18. Southern Connecticut has experienced a growth within the bio-medical industry. This is expected to continue and be enhanced by cooperation between the universities and local business in research and development.
19. The provision of adequate infrastructure is of paramount importance to foster economic development. The areas most appropriate for economic development in Beacon Falls have access to public water, sewer, natural gas and fiber optics. It is important that the Town ensure the continued provision of adequate service for these services, including the continued advance of telecommunication facilities.

## **6.5 Goal for Economic Development**

Promote the economic growth of Beacon Falls in a way that:

- Preserves the attractiveness of the community;
- Enhances Beacon Falls quality of life;
- Promotes the growth of employment;
- Promotes the growth of the tax base in order to provide improved public services.
- Is consistent with the traditional growth patterns and rural character of the community.

This goal can be accomplished by the continued coordination of all town boards and commissions working together for the common goal, and include the following:

- Ongoing research for opportunities to facilitate economic growth;
- Reaching out and marketing to potential new businesses;
- Continuous efforts to retain the existing businesses of the community;
- Seeking and utilizing partnerships and programs to attract businesses to Beacon Falls;
- Promoting the attractiveness of the community to business.
- Working regionally on strengthening the economic base.

## **6.6 Policies**

1. Support the growth of the manufacturing sector within the planned settings of the Industrial Park Districts.
2. Support and encourage retail and related growth of the Main Street area, by improving its overall environment in accordance with the overall recommendations of the report; Tomorrow's Downtown.
3. Support and encourage the continued growth of home-based business, through re-assessment of the zoning regulations, and encouragement for the growth of any support businesses.
4. Support and encourage the establishment of aesthetic standards within the zoning regulations in business areas, including color themes, energy conservation efforts such as the use of LED lighting, signage (size and dimensions standards), with standards adjusted to area and zone.
5. Prohibit or restrict as legally possible inappropriate uses in Town such as those which create environmental pollution or create potential social problems in the Town.
6. Continue and enhance the active involvement of the Economic Development Commission in business development.

## **6.7 Strategies**

1. Reconfigure Main Street to include two travel lanes, diagonal on-street parking and additional open space.
2. Work with the CT Department of Transportation and COGCVN to establish a better railroad station closer to the Depot Street Bridge.
3. Continue the implementation of the COGCVN Routing Study for paths along the Naugatuck River as a component of the enhancement of the Main Street business district.
4. Complete plans for a comprehensive pedestrian environment in and around the Main Street area, linking it with the riverfront and surrounding residential neighborhoods.

5. Promote the mixed use development of properties along South Main Street to enhance the business environment, increase the potential customer base, and improve the entrance into the center of Town. Establish the creation of commercial and mixed-use zoning district for the downtown core along Main Street area, which would encourage development within this area in a manner consistent with the traditional development patterns of Beacon Falls.
6. The Town should work with local businesses to establish Welcome to Beacon Falls gateway locations at the major entrances into Town, most significantly the exits off of Route 8. These gateway locations should include a higher quality sign within a landscaped area. Each area could be adopted by a local business to assure continued maintenance.
7. Consider the creation of economic incentives to revitalize and redevelop commercial properties within the Main Street area.
8. Improve the aesthetic requirements for commercial development within the Main Street area, including signage and landscaping.
9. The large property, south of Route 42, along the west side of the Naugatuck River, extends into the Town of Seymour, (Haynes Property) and encompasses the southwestern quadrant of the Exit 23 area. It offers a unique opportunity for development which could benefit both communities. The specific nature of the use of this property needs to be determined through a joint planning process between both communities and the property owner. The two regional planning agencies may provide technical assistance. However, it should include public access and a greenway along the Naugatuck River, and a mixture of uses. It may be advantageous for both communities to adopt common or coordinated zoning for this property, to be approved by the commissions of both communities to ensure that this results in a coordinated and rational development which benefits both communities.
10. The undeveloped properties on the east side of the Route 8 Expressway, south of Route 42 also offer potential economic development opportunities. These properties include property currently owned by the Town. A mixed-use development may be appropriate, and a mixture of uses should be beneficial to the economic growth to the Town.
11. There will be pressure for the rezoning of property which is currently zoned Industrial or Industrial Park for residential uses. There should be no additional rezoning on property currently zoned for industrial use, except as described below.
12. The area along lower Lopus Road, near the intersection of Pines Bridge Road is an intact residential neighborhood, within the Industrial Park zoning category. The area suffers from inadequate access to Route 42 and Route 8 due to the grade



configuration of the roadway system. The firmly established residential character of the area also limits industrial development opportunities. This area should be considered for rezoning to residential use, perhaps in the form of a special district which permits a certain amount of commercial and industrial use.

13. The commercial district along Old Turnpike Road, between the Route 8 Expressway and the Naugatuck River is a narrow area, consisting of small lots. The current Business zoning of the area has proven to be somewhat ambiguous in the planning of uses for the area. The zoning should be revised to permit a greater amount of industrial uses, which would not require the degree of parking of commercial uses, and could fit into the narrow constraints of land within the area.
14. Beacon Falls has not been a traditional agricultural community, due to the hilly topography of the area. However, certain agricultural uses can be a significant component of the economic development and land use patterns of the area. Perhaps most importantly, the continued encouragement of agricultural uses can prevent premature conversion to residential uses. In order to promote agricultural uses, the Town should ensure that the zoning regulations do not unnecessarily inhibit agricultural operations, such as the construction of barns, and placement of structures. Beacon Falls zoning regulations appear to be generally conducive to agricultural operations, but the Commission may consider permitting additional agricultural related activities, such as farm stores or food processing of local agricultural products as special permit uses in conjunction with agricultural operations.
15. The backbone on any municipal economic development program is an organized effort to retain existing businesses and to help them grow within the community. The Town needs to continue the lines of communication with existing businesses. It may be advisable to hire someone to facilitate economic development and coordinate grants, at least on a part-time or consulting basis.
16. Although financial incentives for business location are not effective economic development tools by themselves, they can assist in the overall economic development effort of the Town. The Town should establish a specific policy concerning tax abatement phase-ins pursuant to section 12-65b of the Connecticut General Statutes.
17. Economic growth is inherently regional, as each community has strong economic ties to its neighbors. An effective economic development effort requires a joint municipal regional effort.
18. There should be strong coordination between economic development efforts and all aspects of employment training, including non-profit agencies, the vocational education system, community colleges and other institutions of higher learning.

19. Improvements in technology and the expansion of the information-based economy have resulted in the exponential growth of people operating businesses out of their homes. This has enabled people to live in more rural locations. An important benefit is that some of these businesses could expand, and Beacon Falls can be especially attractive to this growing segment of the economy with its accessibility to the major markets of greater New York and southern New England.

The zoning regulations currently permit home-based businesses. This should be maintained. In addition, the Town should explore other ways in which home based businesses can be encouraged as long as they maintain the character of the residential area.

20. The Town should maintain a list of commercial and industrial properties for sale and lease, available to all potential developers and potential businesses. This can be accomplished through membership in Site Finder, operated by the Connecticut Economic Resource Center. COGCNV is also involved in this service.
21. The municipal website is an extremely important economic development tool. It is often the first point of contact by potential developers and businesses potentially interested in locating in a community. The Beacon Falls Town website should be updated to promote economic development in a number of ways:
  - a. The website can be a method of providing general information concerning the Town to prospective businesses and developers. This should include demographic, economic, and quality of life information.
  - b. The website can be used as a data source concerning available properties, utilizing Site Finder.
  - c. It should include the tools that business people or developers would potentially need to conduct business, such as copies of the zoning regulations, description of regulatory procedures, copies of forms that may be needed, and continued connection to the geographic information system (GIS). Many of these features are included on the Town's web site.
  - d. There should be contact information, including telephone numbers and email addresses.
  - e. It can be utilized to make the public aware of the economic development activities underway.

## 7. Transportation and Circulation

### 7.1 Existing Conditions

#### 7.1.1 Roadways

The overall street pattern of the Town of Beacon Falls reflects the local topography. The major transportation elements which dominate Beacon Falls built environment are Route 8 and the Metro-North Railroad Waterbury Line, both of which approximately follow the valley cut by the Naugatuck River in a north-south corridor. This ribbon of the River, rail line, and limited access highway cuts the Town in half, with east/west crossings only possible at the Route 42 Bridge and the Depot Street Bridge, currently undergoing renovations and nearing completion. East/west movements are primarily accomplished via Route 42 which provides access to Beacon Falls to the west (and access to Route 84 for those southbound) and Bethany to the east. Burton Road is an alternate method of travel to the east.

The Central Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (CNVCOG) *Long Range Transportation Plan 2011-2040: (LRTP)* identifies State Route 42 at Cook Lane as the only congested intersection on a state road in the Town based on the volume to capacity ratio, a first-look method of assessing congestion. This intersection exceeded its capacity by about one-third. It is controlled by four-way stop signs.



Intersection of Route 42 at Cook Lane

The State Suggested List of Surveillance Study Sites (SLOSSS) identifies the safety hazard of intersections, taking into account traffic volume and physical characteristics. The most recent report considered locations which experienced more than fifteen accidents between the three years from 2002 through 2004. No high hazard accident locations were identified in Beacon Falls.

The *COGCNV Long Range Regional Transportation Plan: 2011-2040* also reported that there are no areas within the Town with a high-density of bicyclist accidents, but

North Main Street from Route 42 to Church Street is now identified as a high hazardous location for pedestrians based on information from 2003-2007. In addition, *the Plan* found no high hazard accident locations for tractor trailers in Beacon Falls between 2004-2008.

The planning of a community road system should be based upon a functional classification of the road network. According to the Connecticut Department of Transportation, Beacon Falls contains three functional categories of roads. Route 8 is considered a principal arterial expressway. These are defined as limited access highways, which primarily serve longer interregional trips at higher speeds. State Route 42, Burton Road, Skokorat Road, Main Street, Lopus Road, Rimmon Hill Road, and Back Rimmon Road are considered to be collectors. These are defined as roads that carry traffic at lower speeds, linking traffic from local roads to arterial routes. All other roads within the Town are considered to be local streets. Local streets are defined as roads that provide direct access, at low speeds, to properties, generally in residential or undeveloped areas.

The 2011 report by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., *The Route 8 Interchanges 22-30 Deficiencies/Needs Study*, identifies only minor a medium term improvement to the shoulders of Exit 23 NB off ramp for a deceleration lane for Beacon Falls. A copy of the study with a map is available through the COGCNV.

### 7.1.2 Road Design

Generally, the Town's local streets and the Route 42 arterial are narrower than widely accepted design standards. These roads convey a more rural character also due to lack of curbs, horizontal and vertical enclosure by trees, and lack of street lighting in many areas. The subdivisions which have been developed within the past several years vary from the traditional characteristics, with wider streets, curbs, greater setbacks, and these roads are markedly different from the established development pattern and character of the Town.

Recently, many communities have been moving toward reinstituting older design standards for local roads, which provide many advantages including cost, maintenance, traffic calming, and reduced stormwater runoff. The Town's requirements for street width and design should be compared with more contemporary back to basics requirements. Standards should be reviewed by the Fire Department, but could include paved road widths of 26 feet instead of the currently required 30 feet, with only 22 feet of pavement required where on-street parking is unlikely. Cul-de-sacs radii of 30 feet may be acceptable to fire apparatus with one backing movement, as opposed to 50 which allows most fire apparatus to turn around without backing up. Other considerations in determining subdivision street lengths are the number of homes served, average daily traffic on the street and its speed, desired right of way width, type of curbing to be used, sidewalk width and location, sight distance for stopping, grade and curve issues, the number and

location of driveway entrances, lighting, and other elements. CT Department of Transportation's guidelines for subdivision streets can be viewed at <http://cogcnv.org/PDF/Guidelines%20for%20Subdivision%20Streets%20ConnDOT%201987.pdf>.

During previous visioning sessions, members of the Land Use Committee and the public cited traffic calming as desirable, especially along Route 42 and Burton Road. Narrower travel ways, on-street parking, dedication of travel way for bike lanes, horizontal enclosure by street trees, choke points, and traffic roundabouts are all non-obstructive methods for traffic calming. Turner Miller provided a sample small report on traffic calming options prepared for another community, for consideration by the Committee.

### 7.1.3 Mass Transit



Passenger rail service is provided by Metro-North on the Waterbury line between Waterbury and Bridgeport by eight southbound weekday trains daily, seven northbound, and five round trips on the weekends. There is also an early morning weekday train to Stamford. This increased service still leaves a gap during the evening hours. Transfers to the New Haven Mainline are available at Bridgeport and provide access to New Haven, Stamford and New York City. A further transfer from New Haven to the Shore East Line is possible for travel to New

London. Average weekday total ridership is 476 persons on the Waterbury line. One-way fare from Waterbury to Bridgeport is \$2.25, set in 2005, and to Bridgeport is \$2.50. Peak one-way fare to Grand Central is \$18.

In 2010, CTDOT completed the Waterbury and New Canaan Branch Lines Needs and Feasibility Study. The recommendations were: develop two passing sidings (one at Toby's Pond and one at the Naugatuck State Forest), improve signalization to allow multiple trains on a track at the same time, improve train stations, develop a transfer station at the Devon Junction to accommodate increased service on the New Haven mainline, and add supplemental express bus service between Bridgeport and Waterbury. No funding has yet been allocated for the environmental study of these proposals which is the next step. A copy of the study is available from the COGCNV.

Intercity bus service is provided by CT Transit, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the CT Department of Social Services (DSS) through JobLinks via the T-114 Tripper Route which runs twice a day to the industrial parks. The shuttle bus service is between the Town of Beacon Falls Park and the City of Waterbury with a daily ridership in 2009 of approximately 32 persons. The bus will stop along its route



which travels into the Town of Beacon Falls at Exit 24, south along Main Street to Route 42 (Pines Bridge Road) up to Murtha Industrial Park, where it turns around and travels back up Route 42 and Main Street to enter Route 8 at exit 24. It travels to the Rowland Government Center at the Waterbury Green in Waterbury via Exchange Place, from where several transfers and multiple destinations are possible. The one-way fare is \$1.30. Para-transit, Dial-A-Ride service is not available in Beacon Falls. The Town maintains its own Mini-bus service for elderly residents; however, approximately \$7,700 under the State Municipal Grant for Elderly and Disabled Transportation for Dial-a-Ride service has been unclaimed by the town for several years. These funds could be used to expand the senior center's minibus service.

Beacon Falls commuter parking lot is located at the train station and is at less than 50% maximum occupancy. In 2012, the lot had an average daily use of 9 cars and a capacity of 28 on weekdays. Proper placement of commuter lot signs on Route 8 might improve usage.

#### **7.1.4.1. Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel**

The Naugatuck River Greenway is a project of statewide significance and is envisioned to run 42.5 miles from Derby to Torrington along the Naugatuck River. A portion of the greenway opened in Beacon Falls in September 2012, a section in Naugatuck is anticipated to open in 2013, and Waterbury is designing its first section. The entire 2010 study can be found at [www.cogcnv.org](http://www.cogcnv.org). The U.S. Department of the Interior's 2011 America's Great Outdoors report cited the Naugatuck River Greenway as one of the top 101 outdoor projects in the country.

Trails are currently proposed in towns from Beacon Falls to Thomaston. Several routing options are proposed by the study including direct trails along the Naugatuck River, along existing access roads, and along the Metro-North Waterbury Branch Rail Line. Considerations are given to connecting the Greenway with downtown, existing parking facilities at Cold Springs Road, Town Hall, Woodland Regional High School, Naugatuck State Forest, and the Pent Road recreational fields. The trail is intended to provide non-motorized options for residents traveling to the Town's several parks, recreation and shopping locations. A notable obstacle to development of the greenway is the steeply sloping land along the River. Initially, these are planned to be overcome by routing the greenway away from the River through these areas along roads and existing blazed trails in the Naugatuck State Forest. Future options can be considered however, including a long span suspension pedestrian bridge which would span the rail line, the Naugatuck River and Route 8 and provide access from the Naugatuck State Forest east and west of the Route 8 Corridor.

There are few other sidewalks or pedestrian paths in Beacon Falls. The few sidewalks which exist are within certain residential neighborhoods and along Main Street. There are few walkways along the collector roads to tie the various sections of



Town together. This has resulted in potential safety problems with pedestrians walking along the narrow, increasingly travelled collector roads, such as Burton Road and Route 42.

### 7.1.5 Other Modes

General aviation services are available at the Waterbury-Oxford Airport located in the Towns of Oxford and Middlebury. Scheduled passenger flights are available from Hartford's Bradley International Airport, (53 miles away); Tweed New Haven Airport, (23 miles away); and Westchester County Airport, (51 miles away).

## 7.2 Funding and Planned Projects

There are currently no projects for Beacon Falls listed on the Connecticut DOT's 2010-2014 Transportation Infrastructure Capital Plan.

The *Long Range Transportation Plan* does not make specific recommendations for improvements of roads or transit in the Town of Beacon Falls. General recommendations include encouraging further use of the Waterbury Metro-North line and upgrading commuter lot signage along Route 8.

## 7.3 Transportation Deficiencies

During our analysis, we identified the following deficiencies within the Town's transportation system.

1. The Industrial Park area along Lopus Road and Lopus Road Extension does not have good accessibility. One element of this is the bottom of Lopus Road as it intersects Route 42.
2. The circulation system is very automobile-oriented, with few accommodations in town for pedestrian circulation.
3. Similarly, there are no accommodations for other non-motorized transportation, such as bicycle paths.



4. As noted in previous studies, Main Street has excess capacity, and can be reduced in size to accommodate downtown revitalization.
5. The narrow pavement width and geometry of the collector roads are important components of the town's rural character. However, they do result in some safety issues.
6. Standards for new streets should be evaluated as to actual need and environmental impact.
7. Access to the Route 8 Expressway from Beacon Falls is not direct and efficient. Specifically, it does not provide efficient access to the center of Town. However, the recent DOT study does not contemplate dramatic improvements to Route 8 within Beacon Falls.
8. Vehicles travel at high speed along Route 42 through residential neighborhoods in Beacon Falls.
9. During the railroad/road bridge replacement project undertaken in 2012, the Connecticut Department of Transportation shut down Cold Spring Road to the public, limiting access to the trout and salmon fishing at High Rock Park. That Road has not reopened due to a concern that it is too close to the rail line and the possibility that it is too unsafe to open for public or DEEP use. Improvements such as fencing and possibly rock removal would be required. CTDOT has cancelled the 1996 DEEP license for access, and there is some debate between the agencies as to which is financially responsible for improving and maintaining the road. This access is important for the Naugatuck River Greenway's future also.
10. In many communities, the railroad station is a focal point within the community core. The Beacon Falls railroad station does not have the physical characteristics to serve that role. A railroad station building, which may include room for business uses, would enhance the transit options of Beacon Falls' residents and businesses.

## **7.4 Goal, Policies and Recommendations**

### **7.4.1 Transportation Goal**

Provide for the efficient and orderly movement of people and goods into, out of and within Beacon Falls and provide adequate access to places of employment and residential, recreational and commercial activity.

### 7.4.2 Policies

1. Improve the street system to assure the safety of motorists and pedestrians. However, all improvements to residential roads should be consistent with the character of the rural and residential areas.
2. All collector roads within the residential areas of Beacon Falls should remain as two lane roads.
3. Although automobile travel will remain the dominant mode of travel into the foreseeable future, the Town should explore and be receptive to alternative modes of transportation, especially for those residents who are unable to use an automobile.
4. Access to regional destinations from points within Beacon Falls, such as High Rock Park, need to be improved in cooperation with State and Regional organizations.
5. Non-automotive transportation, such as pedestrian circulation and bicycle paths, should be provided within the Town.
6. Make full use of available transportation funds to expand local service.

### 7.4.3 Strategies

1. Incorporate measures of Traffic Calming on local and rural roads, making it safer for motorists and pedestrians. These measures include bump-outs, rotaries, and strategic narrowing of pavement width.
2. The use of traffic calming techniques, combined with the contemporary green drainage facilities is likely to result in significant redesign of new roads.
3. A major curve in Pines Bridge Road at the intersection with Old Litchfield Turnpike should be softened as much as feasible to increase safety.
4. The Town should continue to work with the State to reconfigure access to Route 8 by constructing a four-directional interchange at or near Lopus Road.
5. An access road between Route 42 and Route 67 would enhance circulation within and between Beacon Falls and Seymour, and encourage economic growth within both communities. The two towns should continue their cooperative effort with the developer to implement this project.
6. The intersection of Lopus Road and Pines Bridge Road is unsafe and needs to be reconstructed.
7. The Naugatuck River Greenway should be constructed as a pedestrian and bicycle path in stages, connecting the communities of the Region.

8. The Town should continue to pursue the reconstruction of Main Street north of Route 42 into a more aesthetically pleasing and pedestrian oriented design.
9. The Town should investigate the establishment of a comprehensive sidewalk system which links the Main Street and the Naugatuck River area with the neighborhoods of the Town. This should include walkways along the collector roads such as Burton Road and Bethany Road, local roads such as Highland Avenue, Railroad Avenue, Lopus Road, Cook Lane; as well as a pedestrian connection between Haley Ridge and Feldspar Road.
10. Town officials should work with its state delegation to resolve the issues between DEEP and CTDOT in order to reopen Cold Springs Road to public access.
11. The Town should claim the annual State Municipal Grant funds for Elderly and Disabled Transportation for Dial-A Ride service.
12. The Town should continue to work with the Connecticut Department of Transportation to extend the Beacon Falls Greenway along Main Street further south along its right of way as is being done in Waterbury.

## **8. Community Services & Facilities**

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### **8.1 Existing Conditions**

#### **8.1.1 Sanitary Sewer Service**

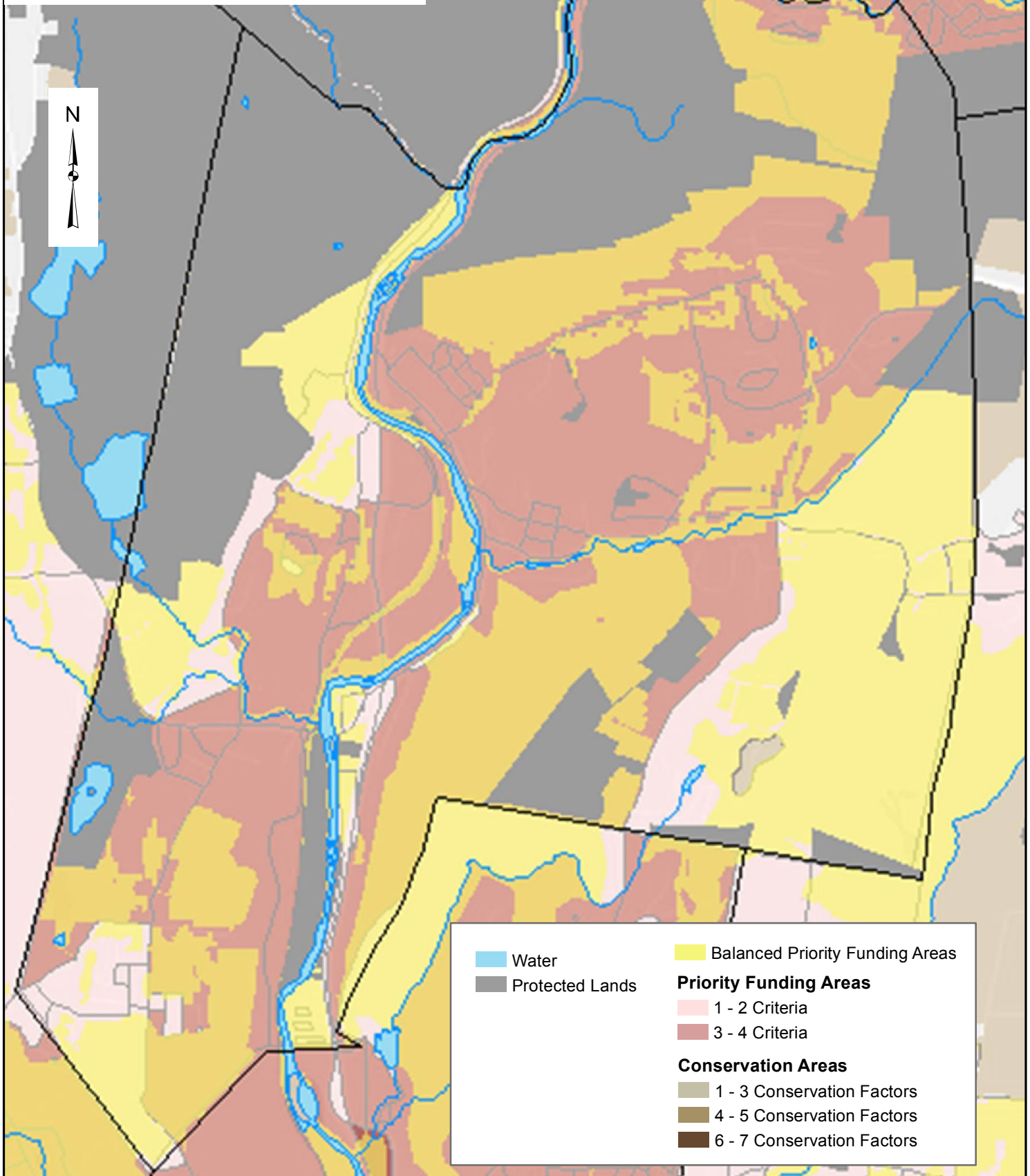
The provision of water and sewer service has always been a major factor and determinant in the extent and intensity of development within a community. Over the past several years, the importance of the extent of the sewer service area and sewer avoidance area has increased because of the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

Current legislation requires that all state expenditures over \$200,000 be consistent with the State Plan of Conservation and Development. The Office of Policy Management (OPM) is charged with the formulation of the State Plan. They have developed a draft plan for submission to the Legislature in January of 2013. Within the past several years, the State Department of Environmental Protection has interpreted the Plan in a way that any sewer service which is not within areas designated as Regional Center; Neighborhood Conservation and Growth Area (See Attached map of the 2005 State Plan of Conservation and Development) is inconsistent with the State Plan, and would make the Town ineligible for any grants or state expenditures which would support development within the Town. Any intensive development outside of these areas threatens state funding for a range of infrastructure improvements, which may include transportation, sewage treatment plant upgrades, and open space preservation fund. This could result in the withholding of State Grants if the development plan of Beacon Falls is not consistent with the State Plan of Conservation and Development. Therefore, the sewer service area should be consistent with the overall land use plan included within the Plan of Conservation and Development policies and map.

The Beacon Falls Water Pollution Control Authority recently formulated a new plan map for the proposed sewer service within the Town which considered future land use development plans. This reflects a potential coordination between the WPCA, Land Use Committee, and the Planning and Zoning Commission that can be used to recommend to the State Office Policy of Management the proposed growth areas within the Town, for the purpose of mutual agreement between the State and Beacon Falls Plan. OPM has stated that, in areas of conflict, the municipal plans will receive significant weight in decision-making.



# Conservation & Development Policies Plan for Connecticut Draft Locational Guide Map



0 0.25 0.5 Miles

For general planning purposes only. Delineations may not be exact.

Source: Office of Policy and Management, State of Connecticut



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The designation of growth areas has been based upon several factors:

1. The capacity of the water pollution control facility, including collection facilities such as sewer mains and pump stations.
2. The prime consideration was to have the sewer system support the overall growth and development policies of the Town. This has three components; to provide services to areas designated for future growth; provide service to areas already developed which require sewer service; and to explicitly exclude areas, both from extensions from the main system and alternative treatment systems, where no growth or only low density growth should occur.
3. The formulation of a WPCA plan which is consistent with the town Plan of Conservation and Development will avoid questions and controversy concerning the provision of sewer service, including alternate treatment systems, to any outlying parcels.

The public sewer system of a community is a major determinant of the location and intensity of growth and development, as well as health concerns. The presence of a public sanitary sewer facilitates higher density development, while the lack of sewer service to a property generally limits the development potential to relatively low density uses, such as single-family houses on lots with a minimum size of at least one-acre. The COGCNV's *Regional Plan* recommends in Chapter 5 that, in areas with private septic systems, a maximum density of 1 unit per acre where there are minimal soil constraints to 0.5 units per acre where there are severe soil constraints. In parcels with public sewers and water, maximum lot sizes of 0.5 are recommended for areas of minimal or moderate constraints and 1.0 for parcels with severe constraints.

According to the State Department of Environmental Protection and the Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley, the wastewater treatment plant is currently permitted for 710,000 gallons per day. A problem with phosphorus was also identified, which needs to be addressed.

The current average flow is 366,000 gallons per day, or 52% of capacity. This would seem to indicate that there is sufficient capacity within the plant to accommodate future growth. However, this does not include any capacity committed for un-built projects, such as Chatfield Farms. Although the overall capacity to support additional development may be present at the treatment plant, there are components within the collection system which may need to be upgraded to accommodate additional developmental projects.



### 8.1.2 Storm Drainage

As most of the land area in the Town is still rural in nature, the coverage of impervious surfaces is relatively low. Therefore, for the most part, the drainage system for properties in the Town works adequately, as little additional runoff is generated.

Most of the drainage problems in Beacon Falls result from the natural floodplain conditions of the Naugatuck River and its tributaries. The town experienced a great deal of flooding from the storms of 1955, which also resulted in massive flooding throughout the Naugatuck River Valley. The impact on Beacon Falls was significant, as much of the Main Street area was destroyed by the flooding.

Since then, the State and Federal government have installed significant flood control measures along the Naugatuck River, in the form of dams and levees. The threat of flooding from severe weather conditions which would impact the Naugatuck River valley appears to have been diminished. However, there are still certain areas of the town still within the designated 100 year floodplain; primarily along the low areas near the Naugatuck River. There are smaller floodplains along the stream tributaries of the Naugatuck River.

Most of the developed areas of town are at a relatively low density. This low intensity of development allows the on-site accommodation of the storm drainage. However, the hilly topography and the prevalence of rock outcroppings in the town has resulted in drainage problems from surface and groundwater flow surfacing in areas where the bedrock has been excavated, particularly along areas where excavation was done for the construction of a road. The problem is especially pronounced along the north facing cut slopes during the winter time, when icing occurs. In these situations, the storm water or groundwater seeps down the hillside onto the road. These areas are shaded by the hillsides and vegetation and receive little sunlight during the winter. Consequently, the water seeps off of the hill, and accumulates on the road, where it often freezes, and causes safety problems. This problem is especially prevalent along Burton Road.

All of the communities within the State are required to adhere to the best management procedures for stormwater management. This requires a different approach toward the management of stormwater to assure the removal of contaminants and on-site detention. The Town has started the implementation of these standards. The Town has been using the 2004 State Storm-water manual, which should be referenced in the Town zoning and subdivision regulations. The situation has also been addressed through actions of the public works department, which physically removes the ice from the roadway.

The Town has implemented best management stormwater management to prevent additional similar situations for new roads by limiting the finished grading slope of new subdivision roads; requiring a site analysis of new subdivision roads to determine which areas will remain shaded during the coldest months, and favoring a north-south orientation of new subdivision roads.

### 8.1.3 Water Service

Generally, the provision of public water supply is not as significant of a determinant of development as the availability of public sewer service, at least not in the northeastern states like Connecticut. The provision of public water service, in and of itself would not encourage or guarantee high density development, but it could, in accordance with all relevant State Statutes, facilitate some development. The provision of water service is considered a desirable component of public protection for fire safety.

A majority of the residents and almost all of the business and commercial uses within the Town of Beacon Falls are served by a domestic public water service provider. The Aquarion Water Company is the principal water service provider in Town, servicing the intensely developed areas, as well as many of the principal road corridors such as Route 42, Burton Road, Blackberry Hill Road, and Lancaster Road. They serve over 1,300 customers.

The Connecticut Water Service Company, under contract with the Borough of Naugatuck provides water service to residential properties on the extreme north end of town, along Beacon Valley Road. In addition, the southeastern section of the Town, along Skokorat Road, is supplied with water from the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority through the system within the town of Seymour.

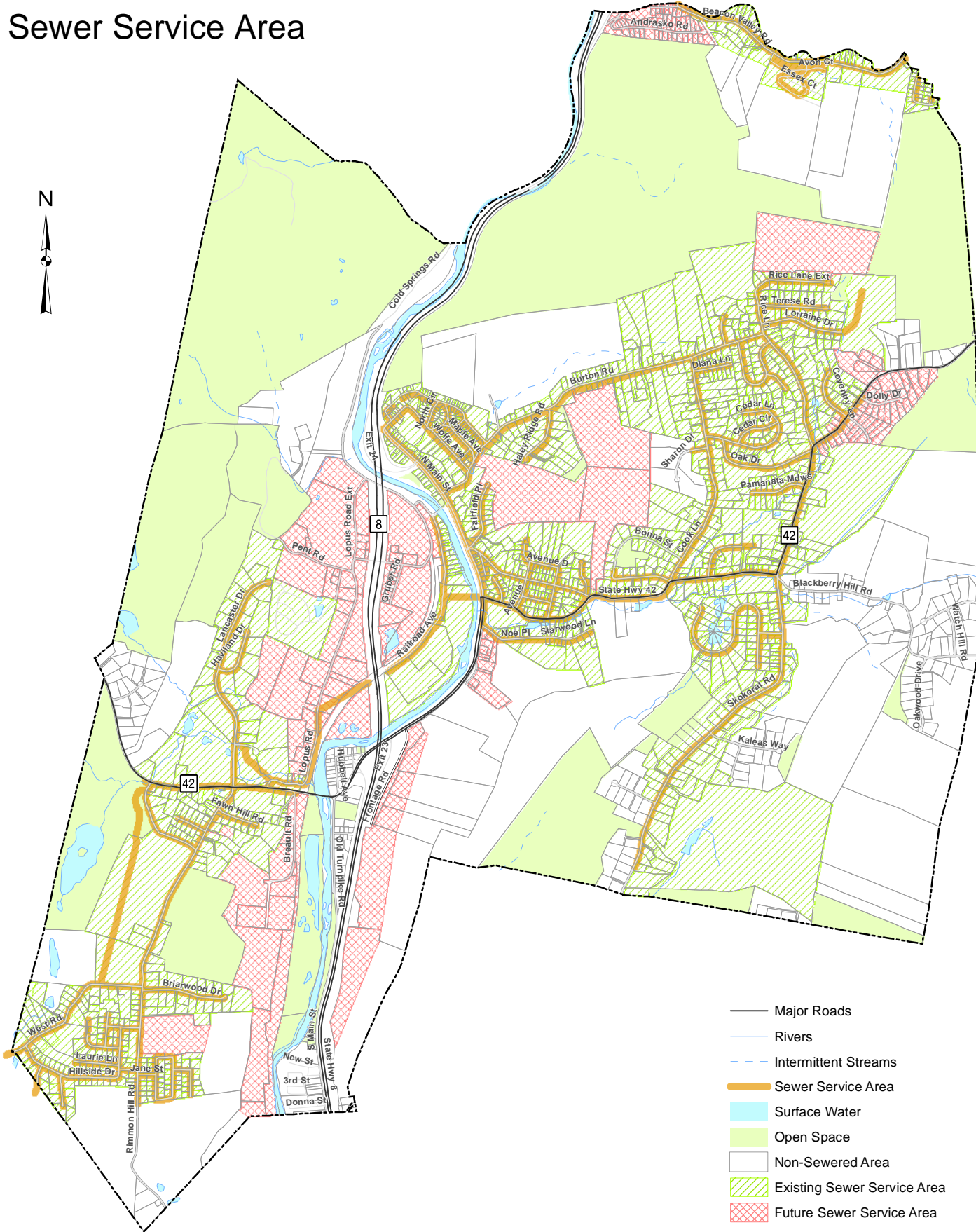
All three of the public water companies have adequate capacity to serve anticipated needs from existing and new development. The major issue facing water service provision in Beacon Falls is maintaining adequate pressure, because of the topography of the Town.

The Department of Public Utilities requires that public water systems offer water pressure between 25 and 125 PSI. Most of the higher elevations in Town are not served by public water. However, there has been significant development activity in the southeastern section of Town which is creating issues with water pressure. The Skokorat pump station needs to be upgraded. Water pressure on Blackberry Hill needs to be improved. A new storage tank was planned to serve the now defunct Chatfield II development.

Most of the areas served by public water are also served by public sewer, with some exceptions. The southwestern section of town, along Rimmon Hill Road, West Road, Hillside Road and surrounding streets are all served by public sewer, but not served by public water. It is safe to assume that any other intensive development within this area would require the extension of public water service. The other area of Town with sewer service and no public water service are properties along the west side of the Naugatuck River, along Railroad Avenue and Lopus Road. Intensive development of this area would also require the installation of public water service.

Generally, the water providers have adequate capacity to meet the anticipated needs of Beacon Falls into the future. However, there are problems in certain areas of the distribution system, which may need some level of improvement to serve existing or planned development. Also, a small portion of Beacon Falls in the southwestern corner which includes land in Oxford, is part of an Aquifer Protection Area from Seymour and requires special zoning and the potential for municipal permitting.

# Sewer Service Area

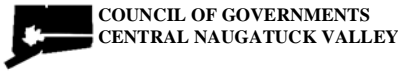


Beacon Falls Water Pollution Control Authority  
 Approved December 13, 2011

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Source: "Roads", State of Connecticut and TeleAtlas 2009  
 "Hydrography", DEEP  
 "Sewer Service Area", Town of Beacon Falls  
 "Parcel Boundaries", New England Geosystems, 2011

For general planning purposes only. Delineations may not be exact.



### 8.1.4 Educational Facilities

Beacon Falls is a part of the Regional School District 16, along with the town of Prospect. The District is served by the following school facilities:

- Woodland High School, 155 Back Rimmon Road, Beacon Fall; serving grades 9 through 12.
- Long River Middle School, 38 Columbia Avenue, Prospect; serving grades 6 through 8.
- Laurel Ledge, 36 Highland Ave., Beacon Falls; serving grades Pre K through 5.
- Community School, 12 Center Street, Prospect; serving grades 4 through 5.
- Algonquin School, 30 Coer Street, Prospect; serving grades Pre K through 3.



Woodland Regional High School, image from CNVCOG POCD

Students from both towns attend Woodland High School and Long River Middle School. Elementary school students from Beacon Falls attend Laurel Ledge, while elementary students from Prospect attend Community School and Algonquin School.

Woodland High School opened in 2000. Before that, high school aged students went to high school in surrounding communities.

Enrollment in the district increased in the beginning of the last decade, due largely to the opening of the Woodland High School. However, since the 2003-2004 school year, district enrollment has remained stable, increased slightly to a peak in the 2007-2008 school year, but declined slightly since then. Enrollment in 2010-2011 was approximately 2% lower than the 2003-2004 school year.

## Regional School District 16

### Enrollment by Year

School Year	Total Students
2010-11	2,536
2009-10	2,585
2008-09	2,609
2007-08	2,685
2006-07	2,682
2005-06	2,665
2004-05	2,666
2003-04	2,590
2002-03	2,398
2001-02	2,180

Source; State of Connecticut, Department of Education

Beacon Falls student growth is reflected in the enrollment data for Laurel Ledge. The following chart shows that enrollment has been relatively stable over the past decade, growing by only 2%, with some fluctuation.

## Laurel Ledge School

### Enrollment by Year

School Year	Total Students
2010-11	471
2009-10	475
2008-09	468
2007-08	494
2006-07	491
2005-06	484
2004-05	479
2003-04	493
2002-03	495
2001-02	462

Source; State of Connecticut, Department of Education



Enrollment within the schools serving Beacon Falls and Prospect has been stable. Given the generally slow level of residential growth since 2007-2008 and underlying demographic forces, it is unlikely that new school facilities will be needed within the foreseeable future.

### **8.1.5 Other Services**

There are other services available to Beacon Falls residents which cooperate with municipal departments including the first selectmen, emergency services, and public works department. Connecticut Light and Power supplies electricity, and Yankee Gas provides gas. Comcast is the cable television service operator. All these companies, as well as public water suppliers, are regulated by Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) at the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

## **8.2 Goal, Policies and Strategies**

### **8.2.1 Goal**

Continue to provide Town residents with a safe and functional public utility system which meets the growing needs of the Town, consistent with the adopted plans of the Town of Beacon Falls.

### **8.2.2 Policy**

Ensure that the proper systems are provided in conjunction with any growth, and ensure that there is adequate capacity for all the systems.

### **8.2.3 Recommendations**

1. Require the extension of water and sewer service in conjunction with development in accordance with all municipally adopted and coordinated plans.
2. Require that stormwater discharge be consistent with the standards of Federal and state stormwater management.
3. Continue close coordination with all utility services in such areas as tree limb maintenance.
4. The Town should continue to cooperate with the Regional School District and the Town of Prospect to ensure that there is adequate accommodation for any physical improvements to the educational facilities are required.

## 9. Historic and Cultural Resources

### 9.1. Existing Conditions

The cultural and historic resources of Beacon Falls contribute greatly to the character of the community. The Hill section neighborhood along with the historic buildings along Main Street and other streets in Town are all important to the uniqueness of Beacon Falls and are important components to the future growth and development of the Town. This plan attempts to provide a basis for actions to continue to preserve and enhance these unique features.

Beacon Falls is an historic community with roots dating back to the 1600s. It grew as an industrial community, utilizing the water power of the Naugatuck River. Most of the historic structures and places relate to the heritage of the growth of the community along the river.

There are various categories of the listing of historic properties. It is important to understand that the listings described below do not protect these historic properties from demolition or alterations. At best, the listing as a National Register property offers some potential financial benefits for historic preservation and requires an assessment of the impact on the historical resource, if federal money is used for renovation or improvement.



South truss section of the 212 foot long, Depot Street Bridge as viewed from the east bank of the Naugatuck River, circa 1940. The bridge, built in 1934 to replace an existing wooden bridge, is an example of Parker truss Design.

*Image by Luc Litwinionek, via Historical Perspective, Inc.*

#### 9.1.1 National Register of Historic Properties

The primary historical resources within the Town of Beacon Falls include the following properties that are on the National Register of Historic Places.

- Depot Street Bridge, shown above right, recently underwent a \$3.5 million major renovation completed in 2011.
- Home Woolen Company, which has been renovated into residential use.



### 9.1.2 Connecticut State Register of Historic Places

The Connecticut State Register of Historic Places is an inventory of buildings and structures which meet certain criteria for historic significance. However, this designation does not prevent alteration or demolition of the property by private land-owners. Two properties are on the State Register:

- Lewis House; Wolfe Avenue
- Rimmon School House(right); Pinesbridge Road.

Other properties are likely to be eligible for inclusion on the Connecticut State Register. These would include High Rock Grove, and numerous buildings in and near the center of Town. In particular, the Hill neighborhood is a unique asset to the Town. It was designed by the Olmsted Brothers at the beginning of the twentieth century as worker housing for the Home Woolen Mills. The unique street system, neighborhood parks, and residences make this area a desirable residential neighborhood to this day.

## 9.2 Goals, Policies and Recommendations

### 9.2.1 Goal

Conserve and enhance the components of Beacon Falls that contribute to the character and quality of life of the Town.

### 9.2.2 Policies

1. Preserve the historically significant structures and landmarks throughout the Town.
2. Encourage the re-use of culturally and historically significant structures in an economically viable way that preserves their cultural or historical significance as much as feasible.
3. Maintain and enhance the streetscapes of the Town, including street trees, especially in keeping with historic neighborhoods.



The Rimmon, one room schoolhouse was built in 1779.

When constructed it was originally part of Derby, then became part of Oxford and was finally transferred to Beacon Falls upon its inception in 1871. The school began with grades 1-8, then reduced to grades 1-5 and finally closed in 1948. Now privately owned and maintained as a civic treasure, it still contains original blackboards, cupboards, books, fire extinguisher and clock.

### 9.2.3 Strategies

1. Inventory the culturally and historically significant structures and landmarks within the Town. The inventory should identify those structures/areas that are at risk due to physical deterioration or changing economic circumstances.
2. Revise the zoning regulations to permit the re-use under special circumstances of those historically significant structures that have been identified. The proposed reuse should be consistent with the character of the neighborhood. These uses should only be permitted where the use permitted in the underlying zone may not be economically viable for the unique nature of the historic structure.
3. Ensure that all zoning and land use controls are supportive of maintaining the historic character of certain especially historically significant areas of Town, including the Hill neighborhood and residential areas along North Main Street.

## 10. Land Use

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### 10.1 Proposed Land Use Considerations

In the formulation of a land use plan for a community, it is important to identify those factors which are the major influences on land use. The following are the primary considerations in the formulation of a land use plan for Beacon Falls.

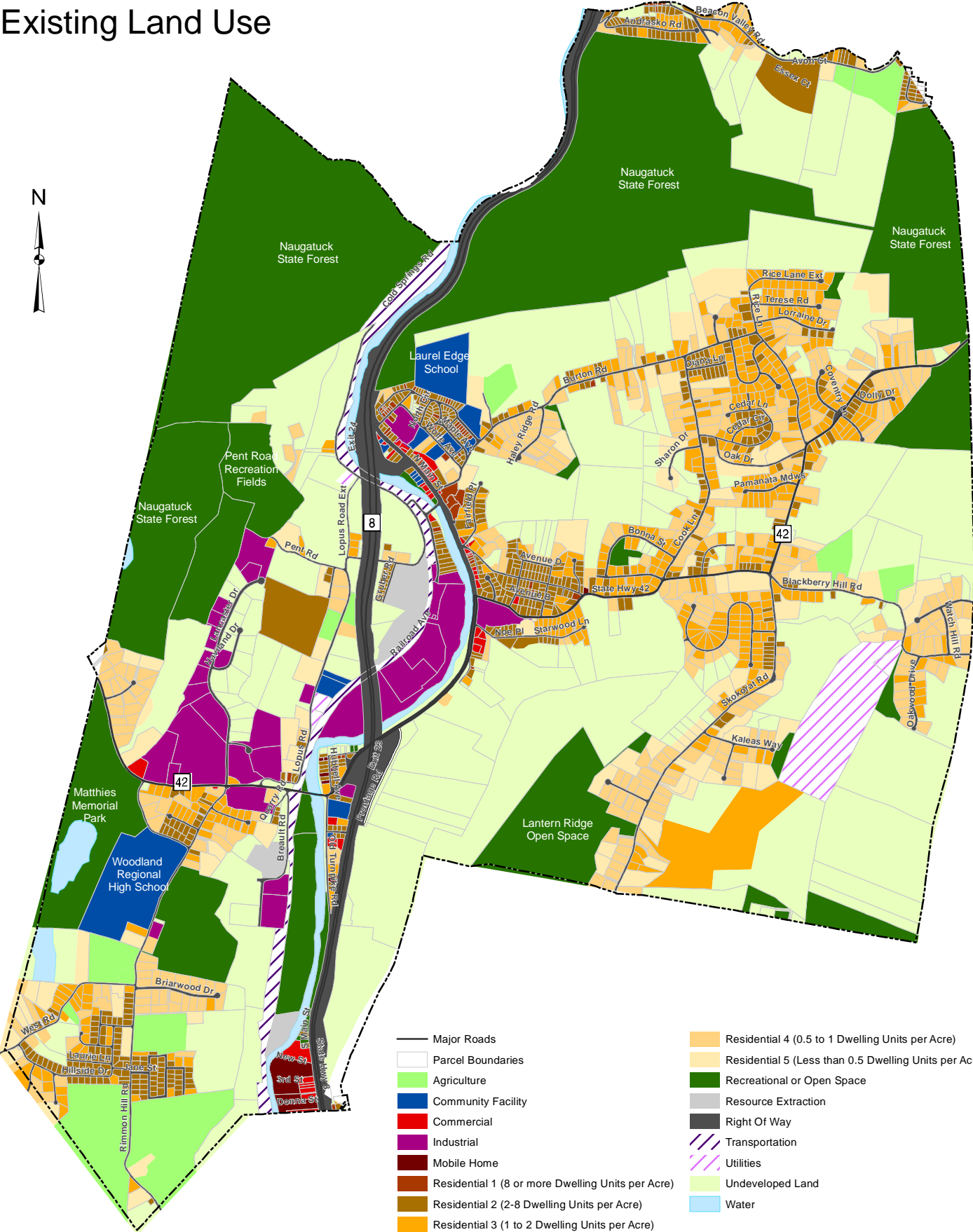
1. The land use pattern of the Town largely conforms to the environmental characteristics of the land. The more level areas closer to the Naugatuck River are more densely developed, while the hilly areas which surround the valley are generally either preserved open space or more lightly developed.
2. Beacon Falls, despite the century of urbanization around it, retains much of its small town character. This is a result of growth around the historic core and the large amount of undeveloped land within the Town, much of it a part of the Naugatuck State Forest. In addition, much of the economic and residential growth has occurred in nearby towns, especially Naugatuck, Seymour, and Oxford.
3. The traditional land use pattern of the Town has been a concentration of development along the Naugatuck River, surrounded by farms and forests. This has been re-enforced by the transportation routes used over time; first the river, then the railroad, followed by the original Route 8, and now the Route 8 Expressway.
4. The potential regional residential analysis, done by the COGCNV, indicates that the full build-out would result in a population of less than 8,000. This would amount to almost a one third increase from the 2010 Census population of 6,049. However, the actual potential build-out is likely to be lower, as that the analysis is based upon a certain theoretical component.
5. The downtown area was developed along the major transportation corridor and thrived in this capacity. The construction of the Route 8 Expressway, and the dead ending of Main Street detracted to a large extent from the vitality of the downtown area.
6. The Hill neighborhood is a prominent residential neighborhood within the Town. Its historic layout and character have resulted in an attractive residential environment near the center of the Town.
7. The downtown area has lost much of its commercial base, although it is still an important center of the community.

8. The Industrial Park Area, along Lancaster Drive, has become the principle component of the recent economic growth of the Town.



9. A significant impediment of the development of the eastern section of the Industrial Park zone, along Lopus Road, is the difficult intersection with Route 42, which could facilitate truck and automobile access to Route 8 if improved.
10. The redevelopment of the small residential areas along the lower section of Lopus Road into industrial uses is unlikely, especially without the improvement of the intersection of Lopus Road and Route 42.
11. Retail and commercial development in Beacon Falls is limited by the relatively low population of the Town, as well as limited four-directional access. Although the Route 8 Expressway provides excellent access to the north and south, east-west access to neighboring communities is confined to Route 42, which is, and is likely to remain, a rural road with limited capacity. Therefore, there are better locations for regional scale retail development within neighboring communities.
12. There are opportunities for retail development within Beacon Falls, to serve the local market, and perhaps provide niche retail services to the region.
13. The approval of the Chatfield Farms 1 development off Skokorat Road introduced a major development node within the outskirts of the Town. However, the proposed Chatfield Farms 2 was not implemented in accordance with the zoning and approvals have expired. The potential for additional age-restricted housing development in Beacon Falls is very limited over the next several years and must compete with other approved age-restricted developments in the region.
14. The bifurcated Route 8 interchanges within the Town provide some opportunities for economic development, particularly at the south interchange – Exit 23. The southeast quadrant of the interchange may offer some opportunities for commercial development as part of a mixed use development that is likely to include multi-family residential uses. This development could only be accommodate by a land exchange for town-owned properties in this area and would require significant excavation.

# Existing Land Use



0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Source: "Roads", State of Connecticut and TeleAtlas 2009  
 "Hydrography", DEEP  
 "Land Use", COGCNV  
 "Parcel Boundaries", New England Geosystems, 2011

For general planning purposes only. Delineations may not be exact.

15. The southwest quadrant offers a significant opportunity for economic growth, as it is part of large parcel of land extending along the west bank of the Naugatuck River within Beacon Falls and Seymour. This is one of the largest parcels with potential access to a limited access highway within southwestern Connecticut. It offers the opportunity for a comprehensively planned mixed-use development within both communities. Development would be facilitated by the construction of an access road through the property, connecting Routes 42 and 67. The potential benefits of this development would be enhanced by a cooperative effort between the relevant boards and commissions of both communities.
16. The State of Connecticut Department of Transportation has concluded a study of the Route 8 Expressway. The scope of the study was to address unsafe conditions at the interchanges. The configuration of the dual interchanges in Beacon Falls was not determined to be a safety issue, and therefore was not within the scope of this study. The potential benefits of installing an interchange that would serve the center of Beacon Falls from both directions, near the current Lopus Road bridge crossing, was not considered within the process. Given the State's financial situation, it is unlikely that the State would approve any expensive roadway project, such as the addition of an interchange here, without a significant commitment from a developer to locate within this area.
17. The proposed Naugatuck River Greenway has the potential to be a focus and enhancement of development within the traditional downtown area. The Town has already begun to implement portions of its section of the routing study.
18. The east-west road system throughout the Town generally does not have a large capacity to accommodate high traffic volumes.

## **10.2 Overall Land Use Concepts**

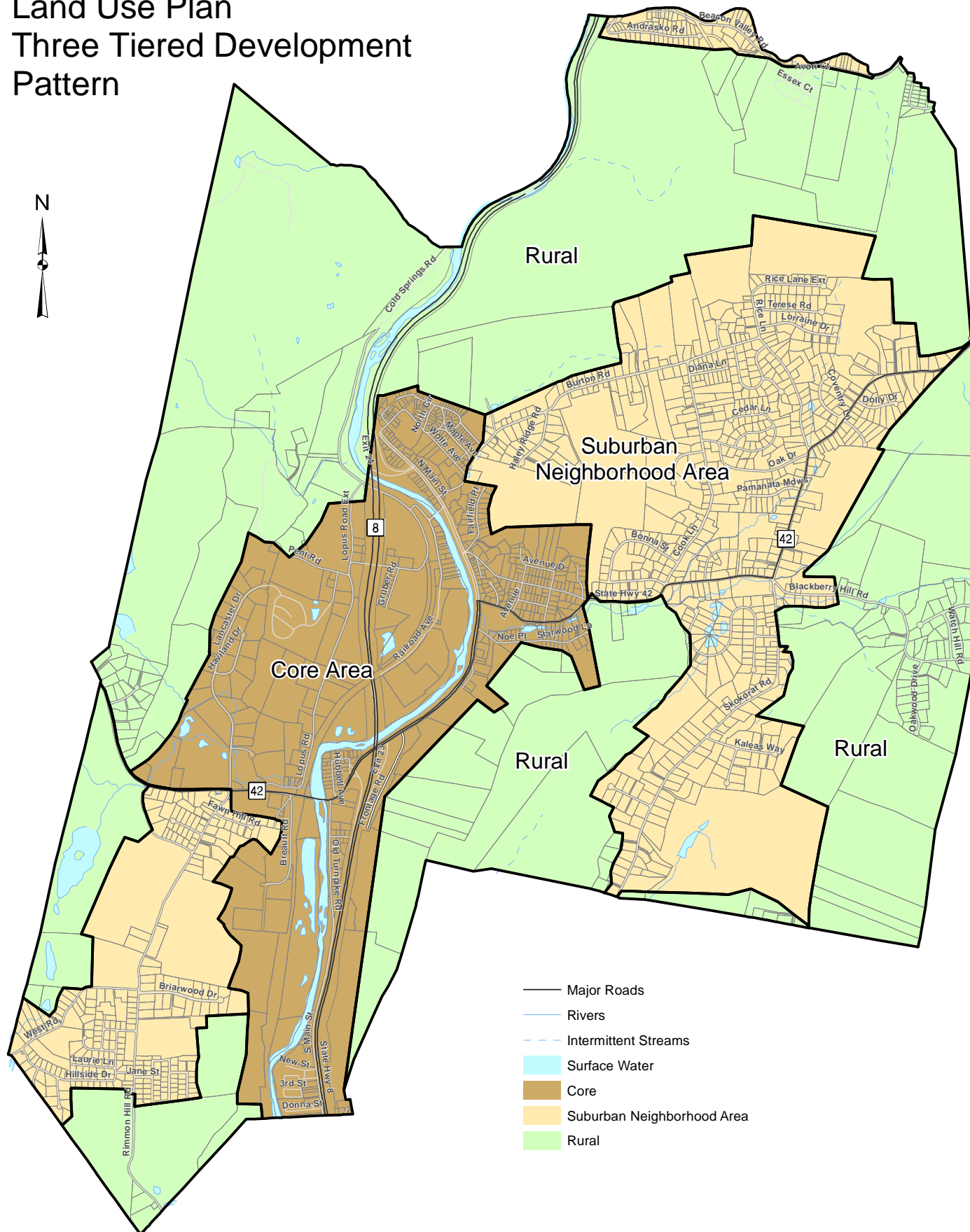
### **10.2.1 Background**

The Town of Beacon Falls was established and grew as a traditional New England factory town. There was a large concentration of industry and worker housing along Main Street, near the Naugatuck River, surrounded by a more rural environment. The current Smart Growth philosophy of community development is an attempt to replicate the overall pattern of development which existed within the traditional New England industrial communities.

This traditional pattern of land use continues in Beacon Falls, although events over the past several decades may have weakened the development pattern to some extent. The emphasis of this Plan is somewhat of a Back to the Future. While other communities are trying to re-create this traditional pattern of town development, this plan is about



# Land Use Plan Three Tiered Development Pattern



- Major Roads
- Rivers
- - - Intermittent Streams
- Surface Water
- Core
- Suburban Neighborhood Area
- Rural

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Source: "Roads", State of Connecticut and TeleAtlas 2009  
 "Hydrography", DEEP  
 "Parcel Boundaries", New England Geosystems, 2011



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emphasizing and strengthening the traditional growth pattern which has existed within the town for more than a century.

Therefore, this plan proposes a basic three-tiered development pattern.

### **10.2.2 Core Area**

This is the traditional heart of the community, consisting of the downtown area along Main Street, some adjacent areas, the industrial area on the west side of the Naugatuck River, the Industrial Park, and the areas in proximity to Exit 23 of Route 8 that are to be considered for future economic growth and development.

### **10.2.3 Suburban Neighborhood Area**

These are primarily established residential areas of the Town where there are existing patterns of development, and public utility service either exists or is planned. Most of these areas are planned for the continuation of the existing pattern of low to moderate density residential development, although some areas may support slightly higher concentrations.

### **10.2.4 Rural Area**

The rural area includes most of the outlying areas of the Town. These areas are lightly developed, undeveloped or protected open space. Much of this area is characterized by steep slopes, and is unsuitable for intensive development. The plan calls for this area to retain in its rural character, primarily by the use of three methods:

- Preservation of additional lands as permanent open space.  
No public water or sewer service permitted within these areas unless there is a situation required to protect the public health for existing residences.
- Encouragement of continued agricultural operations through tax incentives, acquisition of development rights by the State, and review of zoning regulations to assure that they remain encouraging of continued agricultural use.
- Revisions to the zoning regulations to ensure that the intensity of residential development is consistent with the environmental conditions of the site.

## **10.3 Goal, Policies and Strategies**

### **10.3.1 Goal**

Maintain the small town character and compact development of Beacon Falls by encouraging growth within the traditional core area along the Naugatuck River Corridor and discouraging development on the hilly periphery of the Town.

### **10.3.2 Policies**

1. Recognize that the Naugatuck River has been and will continue to be the major focus of the community.
2. Redevelopment of the downtown area, along Main Street north of the intersection of Route 42 should be encouraged into a retail and community center focus of the community.
3. Maintain the historic residential character of the Hill neighborhood by preventing adverse land use influences within the area.
4. Any road improvements to the state highways and collector roads within Town should be minor in nature, and consistent with the residential and rural character of the surrounding areas.
5. The residential areas within or in proximity to the center of town should have pedestrian circulation with the downtown area and the River.
6. The town should encourage and promote development along Main Street to create a unified, pedestrian-oriented community center, which includes governmental, community, commercial, and residential facilities in accordance with existing plans.
7. Promote the continued acquisition of land for open space within the peripheries of the Town, both as a tool of natural resource preservation as well as the promotion of community character.
8. Continue to implement the defined sewer service area, in cooperation with the Water Pollution Control Authority.
9. Pursue appropriate economic development opportunities in the vicinity of Exit 23, consistent with the goals and objectives of the Town. The town should work with the Town of Seymour to plan for the development of the southwest quadrant of this area.

### 10.3.3 Recommendations

1. Revise the overall zoning and subdivision regulations to implement the recommendations of this Plan.
2. The Business District is not well suited for any of the areas so designated. The regulations should be revised to meet contemporary needs.
3. The residential densities of all areas outside the core area should be limited to a maximum of 0.5 to 1.0 dwelling units per acre.
4. The Naugatuck River Greenway should be designed and utilized as the major focus of the community, including acting as a non-motorized transportation artery.
5. The landscaping regulations of the business and industrial zones are not sufficient to promote high quality development, and should be re-evaluated.
6. The parking regulations are not adequate. In some instances, too much parking is required, in others, the standards for design is not clear.

## 10.4 Special Area Recommendations

The analysis and discussion of the issues facing the Town of Beacon Falls have resulted in emphasis on certain areas of the Town. Land use and related initiatives should be concentrated on these following areas:

### 10.4.1 Downtown

Support and encourage retail and related growth of the Main Street area, by improving the overall environment in accordance with the overall recommendations of the report; Tomorrow's Downtown. The range of recommendations within that plan include the following actions:

- a) Reconfigure Main Street to include two travel lanes, diagonal on-street parking and additional open space.
- b) Work with the Department of Transportation to establish a better railroad station closer to the Depot Street Bridge.
- c) Continue the implementation of plans for paths along the Naugatuck River as a component of the enhancement of the Main Street business district.

- d) Complete plans for a comprehensive pedestrian environment in and around the Main Street area, linking it with the riverfront and surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- e) Consider the creation of economic incentives to revitalize and redevelop commercial properties within the Main Street area.
- f) Improve the aesthetic requirements for commercial development within the Main Street area, including signage and landscaping.
- g) Establish the creation of a commercial and mixed-use zoning district for the Main Street area, which would encourage development in a manner consistent with the traditional development patterns of Beacon Falls.

#### **10.4.2. Railroad Avenue**

This area is currently zoned for industrial use. The area is located between Railroad Avenue and the Naugatuck River, south of the Depot Street Bridge, across the street from the Beacon Falls railroad station.

This area is primarily developed as older one to four-family residential structures. The rear of these properties is within the Naugatuck River floodplain.

These properties were included within the Incentive Housing Zone, and are therefore eligible for redevelopment into higher density residential development. The intent of this Incentive Housing Zone is to promote and encourage redevelopment of these properties to provide; (1) affordable housing (available to those with incomes of up to 80% of area income) in a beneficial location; (2) promote redevelopment of underutilized properties; (3) take advantage of the location along the Naugatuck River; (4) Provide for a core residential population to support commercial development efforts along Main Street; and (5) enhance the concept of Smart Growth with a concentration of growth within a center with existing facilities, highway access, and mass transit access.

Given the current parameters; the development of this area should proceed in the following manner:

- The major emphasis should be to encourage redevelopment for residential uses, in accordance with the Incentive Housing Zone.
- The residential development should be consistent with the traditional/historic residential environment of the area including the IHZ zone.
- Additional industrial development within this small area should be discouraged. However, office use in this area would be appropriate.

- As time passes, the Commission may find that the underlying industrial zoning of this area is impractical. There may be a point in which the zoning of this area would need to be revised to encourage beneficial, downtown, riverfront development of this area.

#### **10.4.3. South Main Street**

Most of this South Main Street area was also included within the Incentive Housing Zone. This area consists largely of automobile oriented businesses and single-family homes. The exception, which was not included within the Incentive Housing Zone, is the old industrial complex at the southeast corner of the intersection of South Main Street and Route 42.

This area is the south entrance into the Town. The current situation is unsightly.

The recently adopted Incentive housing Zone requires a mixed use with commercial uses on a ground floor and higher density residential uses above. The zone limits development on steep slopes.

#### **10.4.4. Railroad Station to Route 8**

The area on the west side of the railroad tracks, opposite of the railroad station, may be appropriate for development more consistent with the proximity of the railroad station. This area is bordered by the railroad tracks on the east, generally curving along the valley of the Naugatuck River, and the Route 8 Expressway on the west.

Most of this area is undeveloped. The undeveloped area consists of a hillside which would require regrading to make the area developable. The area also includes residential lots along Gruber Road, at the upper and west end of the property. At some point, there may be a consideration to re-zone these areas for industrial or commercial development.

Development of this area should take advantage of the location within proximity of the railroad station. The ideal situation would be to enhance the economic viability of this area with the addition or replacement of the existing Route 8 intersections in the Town with the construction of an intersection near the point of Lopus Road, which would extend across the Naugatuck River with a new bridge aligning or connecting with Route 42 extending east. Given the overall transportation needs of the State, the findings of the recent Route 8 Study, and budgetary limitations facing the State of Connecticut, this option is remote. Therefore, it would be prudent for the Town of Bacon Falls to plan for the Route 8 Corridor under the assumption that the interchange configuration will not change dramatically.

#### **10.4.5. Old Turnpike Road**

This small area is a triangular one west of the Route 8 Expressway, on the east side of Old Turnpike Road. The uses of the area are a mixture of older residential properties, as well as some commercial uses. Most of the lots are small, and the area is not served by public water or sewer.

Development within this area should be permissive, permitting industrial as well as business uses. However, there are significant constraints to development within this area, including the lack of utilities and the confined area for potential development. The zoning should be revised to permit a greater amount of industrial uses, which would not require the degree of parking of commercial uses and could fit into the narrow constraints of land within the area.

#### **10.4.6. Pines Bridge Road**

Pines Bridge Road, Route 42, west of the bridge over the Naugatuck River, is a major artery within the Town of Beacon Falls. In particular, the section between the bridge and the intersection of Lancaster Road/Rimmon Hill Road is bordered by land zoned Industrial Park.

The Planning and Zoning Commission recently approved a zoning map amendment to change the zoning for a lot on the south side of Pines Bridge Road, west of the intersection of Rimmon Hill Road from R1 to Industrial Park. This decision was cognizant of the impacts of changing the zone in a similar fashion for the other properties on the south side of Pines Bridge Road between the intersection of Rimmon Hill Road and the entrance to Woodland High School. Therefore the PZC should consider similar applications for rezoning to Industrial Park Zone between Rimmon Hill Road and the entrance to Woodland High School in a similar matter.

#### **10.4.7. Industrial Park**

The Beacon Falls Industrial Park was established four decades ago to provide an environment for the future growth of the Town's economy. The area zoned for industrial park includes the actual industrial park along Lancaster Drive, as well as surrounding areas along Lopus Road, Pent Road and Route 42. Not all of this surrounding area has public water and sewer.

This area should remain zoned for Industrial Park. Recent zoning amendments have made this area more accommodating to contemporary economic development.

#### **10.4.8.Lower Lopus Road**

This is a small residential area at the south end of Lopus Road. It is unlikely that there would be any industrial redevelopment of this area due to topographic and access limitations, unless the intersection of Lopus Road and Pines Bridge Road is reconstructed.

#### **10.4.9.Exit 23 Southeast**

There have been proposals for a mixed-use development just to the east of the Exit 23 northbound off-ramp, which would involve a trade of property. The original proposal would involve a significant regrading of the hillsides, and removal of several hundred thousand cubic yards of earth material.

This area is a potential economic resource to the Town. However, development of this environmentally sensitive area should conform to the following requirements:

- It should be limited to the lower areas in order to minimize the environmental impact and preserve the hillsides.
- The development should be restricted to commercial and industrial development, as there are other areas of Town which could support additional residential development without the potential adverse environmental impact
- The design of any potential development on this site should be carefully evaluated to minimize the potential adverse environmental impact.

#### **10.4.10. Exit 23 Southwest**

The large property, south of Route 42, along the west side of the Naugatuck River, which extends into the Town of Seymour – Haynes Property, offers a unique opportunity for development which could benefit both communities. The specific nature of the use of this property needs to be determined through a joint planning process between both communities and the property owner. However, it should include public access and a greenway along the Naugatuck River and a mixture of uses. It may be advantageous for both communities to adopt common or coordinated zoning for this property, and for that zoning to be approved by the commissions of both communities to ensure that this results in a coordinated and rational development which benefits both.



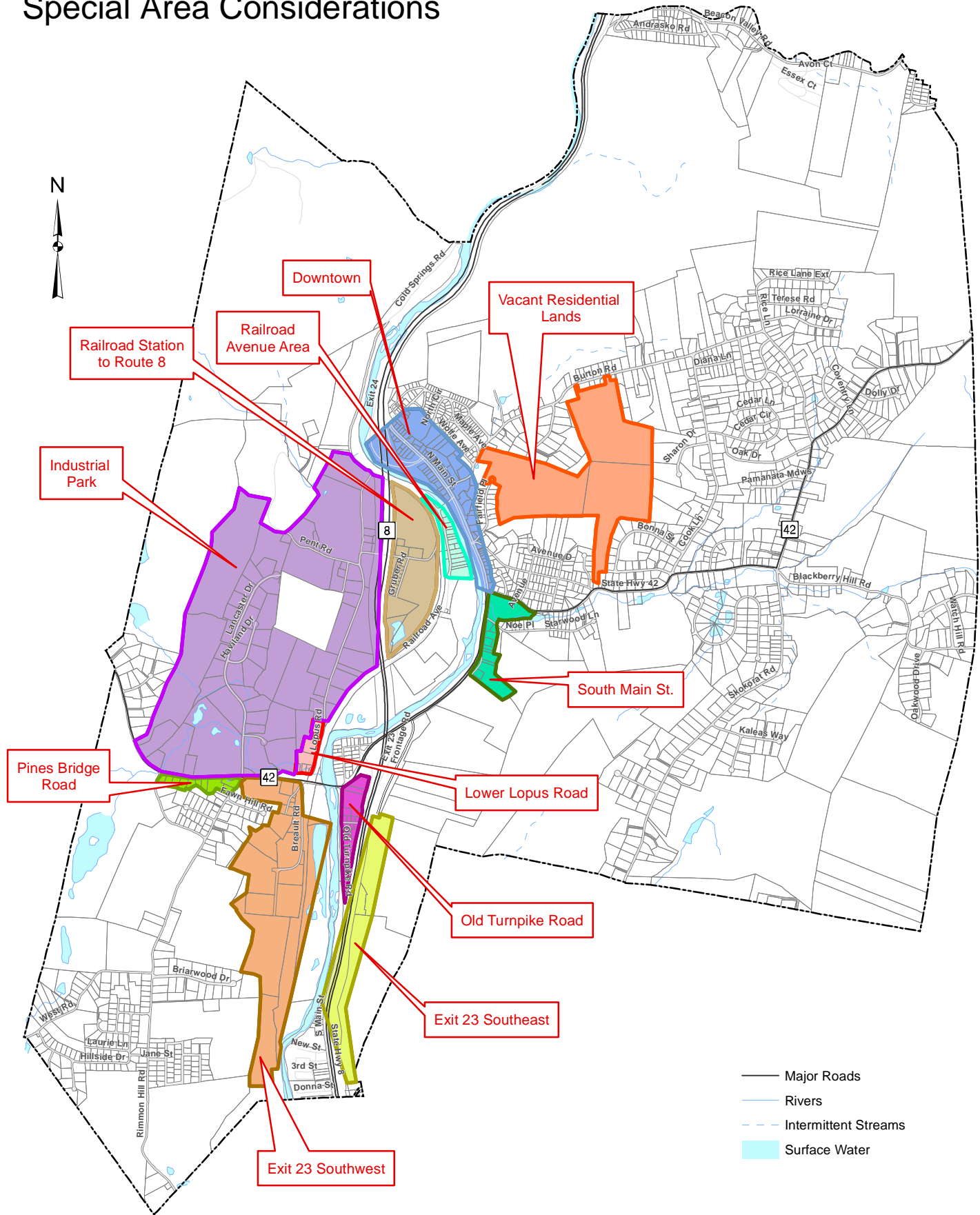
#### **10.4.11 Vacant Lands within area bound by Burton Road, Cook Street, Bethany Road and South Main Street**

This area lies within the developed area of Beacon Falls, yet has remained undeveloped. There are approximately 125 acres of undeveloped property in this area in three major parcels. Other smaller properties may be eligible for additional development.

Residential development within this area should be in accordance with the following standards:

- The traffic circulation within this area needs to be completed to limit additional traffic on Burton Road and Bethany Road. Therefore, any development should include some road connection between Haley Ridge Road and Fairfield Place. Other connections may be appropriate, such as the extension of Bonna Street.
- Development should be done in a way so as to preserve the hilltop as open space and consideration of cluster residential development along the lower areas. This will require an amendment to the zoning regulations to a zone similar to the Planned Residential Development District.

# Special Area Considerations



0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Source: "Roads", State of Connecticut and TeleAtlas 2009  
 "Hydrography", DEEP  
 "Parcel Boundaries", New England Geosystems, 2011

For general planning purposes only. Delineations may not be exact.



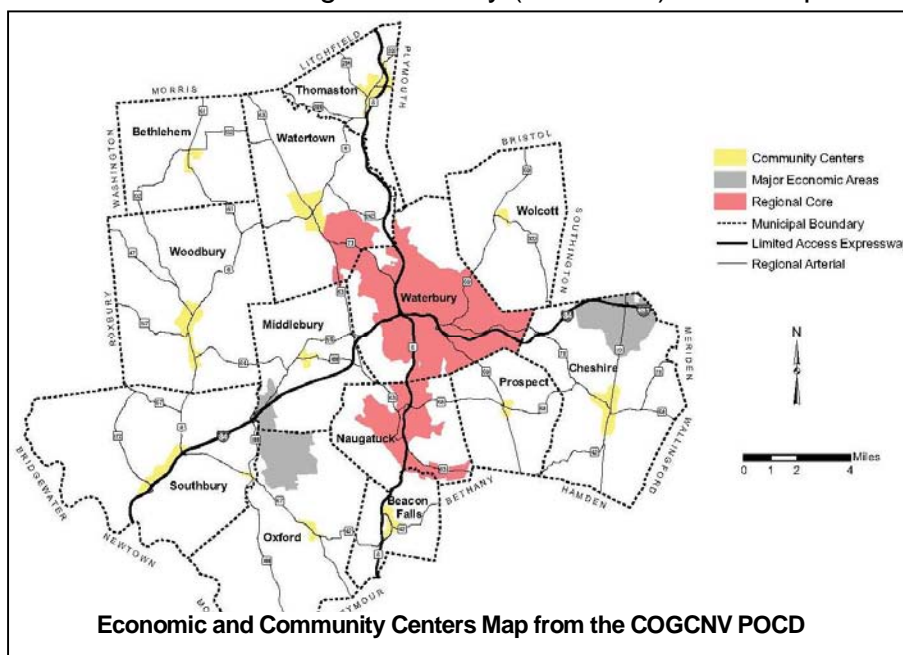
**COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**  
**CENTRAL NAUGATUCK VALLEY**

## 11. Consistency with State and Regional Plans

Section 8-23 of the *Connecticut General Statutes* requires that municipal plans be evaluated as to conformance with State and Regional Plans. The *Conservation and Development Policies: The Plan for Connecticut, 2013–2018 (Plan)* is in draft form currently and has been submitted to the Legislature. Each Growth Management Principle has its own map, strategies, performance criteria, and relevant state plan. For the first time, the State *Plan* uses a voluntary cross-acceptance process among the municipalities and regional planning agencies. It has developed five Priority Funding Areas by Census blocks for State spending over \$200,000. It is the policies in the *Plan* more than the map that will be used for determining acceptance. An exception to this funding requirement may be made if a municipal plan of conservation and development makes a different recommendation and certain specific criteria are met. The State *Plan* remains advisory to the municipalities. The draft *Plan* can be found at <http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.?&=467686>. This plan for Beacon Falls has taken the policies of the draft *Plan* into account.

### 11.1 Conformance with Regional Plan of Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley

The Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley (COGCNV) has completed a number of regional plans including a *Long Range Transportation Plan*, *Regional Greenway Routing Study*, *Regional Bus Route Study* and a *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development: 2008*. The regional plan was intended as a comprehensive approach to regional development. The COGCNV consists of the chief elected officials of the member towns. The Regional Planning Commission, comprised of two locally appointed representatives from each municipality, is COGCNV's regional planning group. COGCNV serves as the state-defined regional planning organization (RPO) as well as the federally-defined metropolitan planning



organization (MPO) for transportation planning in the region. Some of the more important recommendations of the COGCNV *Plan of Conservation & Development Plan* were:

- *Guide the location of growth in the region towards the regional center and areas with infrastructure.*
- *Encourage periodic review of local land use regulations*
- *Encourage Preservation of Cultural Resources*
- *Encourage settlement patterns that reduce the rate of land consumption in the region.*

The draft Beacon Falls plan intends to be a method of implementation of these recommendations.

The regional plan also includes a Future Land Use Map. The Beacon Falls land use plan is consistent with the regional map.

## **11.2 Conformance with Draft State Plan of Conservation and Development**

The Office of Policy Management (OPM) has been working to update the State Conservation and Development Policies for several years. They have been going through a specific cross-acceptance process, in which OPM staff has been meeting with representatives of the municipalities of the State as well as staff of the regional planning organizations. The most recent draft is the Revised Draft 2013-2018, which we are using as the basis to evaluate the consistency of the draft Beacon Falls Plan of Conservation and Development.

The draft 2013-2018 State *Plan* is based upon the following Growth Management Principles:

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

The proposed use of the Locational Guide Map, (LGM) of State *Plan* has changed in guiding State Investment; as follows:

The new role of the LGM is intended to serve three purposes (1) It reinforces the text of the State C & D Plan as the primary determinant of a policy action; (2) it ensures that any reference to LGM is a secondary consideration only after a proposed growth related project has been deemed to be consistent with the policies of the State POCD and (3) it allows state agencies to operate with sufficient discrepancy and transparency, as afforded them in accordance with CGS 16a 35d(c).

There are some discrepancies between the Town Plan and the draft state plan, as indicated a letter sent to the Office of Policy Management dated September 30, 2012. This letter pointed out that the Priority Funding Areas designated by the State included areas not designated with the Sewer Service areas. Some discrepancies between local plans and the State's are due to the State's use of census blocks in their GIS mapping to determine priority areas. This use has resulted in large areas, especially in more undeveloped sections, being classified in a manner suited only to a small portion of that census block.

# Appendix

## Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats

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On May 26, 2010, the Turner Miller Group facilitated a public meeting of the Open Space and Land Use Committee held for the purpose of soliciting public input and enabling the consultants to get a better understanding of what issues matter most to the Beacon Falls community. To gather this information, a S.W.O.T analysis was undertaken, in which the public was asked to identify what they believed were the community's strengths and weakness, and what potential opportunities and threats may face the community. At the end of the meeting, the public was asked to score what they believed were the most significant of the identified factors. Approximately 50 residents attended the meeting. The numbers in the parenthesis show the number of times a general comment on a topic was shown on the recording mechanism used within the process.

### STRENGTHS

1. Open Space (+12). The most highly prized open spaces are: the ridge along the east side Route 8 just south of Exit 23, the ridgeline that is the backdrop to the north side of Burton Road, and the narrow wooded appearance of roads, especially Route 42.
2. Active and Passive Parks including Matthies Park, Tobey's Pond and Recreational Fields (+10). Local parks are picturesque, unique, and provide a range of outdoor sporting activities
3. Small Town Community Feel (+5). Neighbors know and speak to each other. Someone answers the phone at Town Hall. The downtown is small and provides limited necessary services. Town is perceived as a safe location to raise a family.
4. High school (+3). The new high school provides the community with identity and is a draw for families.
5. Olmsted Neighborhood (+3). There are few communities that can claim a neighborhood designed by this visionary architect/planner. It is an example of how higher densities should be designed.
6. Main Street (+3). Main Street is revitalizing and is charming for its scale, lack of traffic and views of the Naugatuck River.
7. Waterbury – Oxford Airport (+1). The presence of nearby Waterbury – Oxford Airport to Beacon Falls gives companies in the community opportunities for regional travel by private jet.
8. Naugatuck River (+1). The Naugatuck River presents opportunities for fishing, boating and other recreational activities.
9. Volunteer Boards (+1). The community has a pool of passionate, involved individuals intent on preserving and improving the community and resident's quality of life.



10. Uniroyal Apartments. A particularly well-executed example of historic preservation and adaptive reuse.
11. Regional Location. The location of the community is central to the State and provides convenient access to major economic centers such as Bridgeport, Waterbury, New Haven, Danbury, and Hartford.
12. RR Station. The location of a railroad station gives the community easy alternative access to employment centers.

## **WEAKNESSES**

1. Recordkeeping and communication between Town Hall and Residents (+16). Additional systems and training are required to ensure better recordkeeping and implementation of initiatives.
2. Road system is obsolete for current uses (+10). Main Street was designed as a four lane regional highway, and the new Route 8 bypasses the downtown altogether. There are no sidewalks in downtown. Main Street dead-ends. Zoning parking requirements do not recognize the capacity of available on-street parking.
3. Speeds on Route 42 and Burton Road (+8). Traffic speeds on Route 42 and Burton Road make it difficult for pedestrians, bicyclists and residents. Traffic on Route 42 is seen as associated with intercommunity traffic, while Burton Road traffic is generally associated with local residents, especially school employees.
4. The deteriorated appearance of Railroad Avenue (+4). Some of the homes along Railroad Avenue are deteriorated and residential occupancy is not compatible with industrial and heavy commercial uses in the area.
5. Tobey's pond is not safe in current form. (+2). Tobey's pond needs to be improved for passive park use
6. Route 8 makes access to Main Street & River difficult (+1).
7. There are a lack of facilities for visitors to Naugatuck River.
8. Old Turnpike Road and its trailer park may not perceive itself as a part of the community.
9. The current condition of the RR Station makes it unattractive for use.
10. Breault Road dead-ends, making developable lands inaccessible.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

1. Railroad Station (+7). By far the most identified opportunity was the opportunity that could be captured by redeveloping the Railroad Station. This station is seen as a very large undeveloped asset.
2. Open Space and Trails (+3). The network of open space and trails surrounding the community, coupled with access to the Naugatuck River and local parks, is a large potential source of tourism.

3. Downtown Potential (+2). With businesses in the downtown improving, a grant and plans to improve the right-of-way for pedestrians, the Downtown has much potential for economic development.
4. Improvements to Zoning (+2). The recent improvements made to the zoning will encourage future private investment in the community.
5. Breault Rd – Haynes Property (+2). This parcel is a very good potential area for future development, if done correctly.
6. Businesses in Industrial Park (+2). Although the occupancy of the Town's industrial park has waned somewhat, the presence of such an industrial park coupled with regional highway, rail and airport access provides an economic development opportunity.
7. Riverfront on Railroad Avenue (+1). While the existing disposition of Railroad Avenue is less than desired, the location on the Riverfront provides a catalyst for improvement.
8. Regional Universities for Business Incubation. The Town is centrally located to several regional institutions of higher learning, creating opportunities for business incubation.
9. Economic Downturn gives time to plan. While the economic downturn has been felt in Beacon Falls, as in many communities, it is also seen as an opportunity to plan for future growth when the economy recovers.

## THREATS

1. Pending development threatens community character (+11). There is much concern that, if future development is not properly planned, it could irreversibly change the character of the community. The area of most concern is the area near Exit 23 off of Route 8. Also mentioned is the area at the south terminus of Breault Road.
2. New residents, especially seniors/empty-nesters won't share values of existing residents (+7). There is concern that new residents are increasingly from upper income areas or are coming to reside in age-limited housing. Such new residents may demand more in the way of local business services, which may fuel commercial growth of the downtown and reduce the small-town charm of the community. Further senior citizen and empty nesters may not support funding of recreational and educational initiatives, making the community less attractive for families.
3. Reduced State/Federal money/cooperation (+6). While the Town has been reasonably successful in achieving State grants, there is some existing dissatisfaction with the cooperation of the State in implementing the projects funded by the grants. With the turn in the economy, there is fear that funding may be reduced and State cooperation will become worse.