

**Easton
Town Plan
of
Conservation and Development
2006**

**A guide to land use policy and civic goals for the
Town of Easton, Connecticut**

**Prepared for the town Planning and Zoning Commission
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Adopted Effective Date: July 1, 2007

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**TOWN PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND
DEVELOPMENT
EASTON, CT**

2006

Easton Planning and Zoning Commission

Acknowledgements

Many persons have contributed data and insight to the preparation of this document, Easton's Town Plan 2006. Without their valuable assistance over the past five years this Plan would not have been possible.

Particular appreciation is expressed to the members of the Planning and Zoning Commission, and especially chairman Robert Maquat, for their contribution of expertise and many extra hours of review time. In addition to current members, listed on the title page, past members Scott Centrella, Ronald Kowalski, Philip Luckhardt and Emmett Wallace have been key contributors to this effort.

Several members of the Easton Conservation Commission have provided important guidance with respect to Town conservation and open space issues; these are acknowledged with appreciation.

Among Town staff persons and officials who contributed significantly to our effort special recognition is due to Phillip Doremus, Zoning/Wetlands Officer and former Conservation Commission chairman, to Valerie Buckley, Senior Center Director, to Gary Csanadi, Police Department officer and statistician, to Bill Martin, Building Official, to Edward Nagy, Town Engineer and Public Works Director, to Terri Rainieri, Tax Assessor, to staff and commissioners of Fire, Emergency Medical and Police departments, and many others.

Special gratitude is extended to Lois Bloom of the Easton Historical Society for data on the town's historical sites and buildings, and to Commission members Steve Carlson, Marjory Tracy and Darrin Silhavy for assistance in the final production of this report.

Finally, a special debt of gratitude is owed to Margaret Anania, Office Secretary for the Planning and Zoning Commission, for the many extra hours she has devoted to word processing both preliminary and final drafts of this report.

To all who have assisted, my sincere appreciation.

John Hayes, Consultant
September 2006

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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Easton – A Special Place

Although Easton now lies on the fringe of an increasingly urban and suburban area of Fairfield County it remains distinctively different from its neighboring towns. Here there still exist extensive forests, open meadows, sparkling streams and lakes, country homes, and stone-wall-bordered winding roads and lanes. When one enters the town from any direction there is a sense of arriving at a country-like unspoiled place – whether leaving the Merritt Parkway and climbing Sport Hill into a pleasant neighborhood of spacious homes, arriving from the southwest at the Aspetuck Historic District with its meadows and mill pond, or leaving behind the commercialized sprawl of Route 25 for the cool forests of northern Easton.

In the ever more complex and congested twenty-first century Easton remains a serene and special place, worth special effort to preserve. Its conservation and appropriate development is the subject of this Plan.

How is it that we have inherited such a green and unspoiled place? First, after the virgin forests were cleared early in the eighteenth century, there was farming – ten or twelve generations of effort which produced the many ancient homes, barns, stone walls, mill sites and old place-names which still color the landscape. Then, about a century ago, came the automobile, paved roads, water supply reservoirs with thousands of acres of watershed land, and exurbanites desirous of preserving the rural beauty they found here. Zoning, enacted in 1941, defined the town as rural and residential, 92 percent of it to be no more dense than one family for every three acres of land.

Today, after six decades and a five-fold population increase, Easton is no longer an isolated agricultural community. Its residents, for the most part, commute daily to employment, shopping and services in various metropolitan centers. Easton children, after daily attendance at state-of-the-art education facilities, are more likely to be found at organized sports or recreation activities than working at home on farm chores. Town government, once conducted informally from officials' homes and at an annual Town meeting, is now a substantial enterprise employing over 100 persons, not including a schools staff of 150. Despite the town's growth it is good to note that volunteerism and civic spirit remain alive and well.

The town's landscape has changed dramatically. Less than a century ago Easton was a mosaic of farm fields, quiet dirt roads and widely-separated farmsteads. A flight over the town now reveals, in addition to the several reservoirs, a nearly unbroken forest with spacious homes dotted throughout the terrain.

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Easton – A Special Place (continued)

Today's Easton residents are predominantly well educated, affluent and anxious to protect the natural environment in which they dwell. Support for land trusts, scenic roads, Town open space, and low-density zoning is strong.

Within the past decade, through grassroots citizen efforts and State funding assistance, over 5,500 acres of Aquarion Water Company land in Easton – 37.5% of the town's area – have been permanently protected, through purchase and development rights acquisition, as public open space. Along with adjacent protected greenspace areas in Weston and Redding, Easton will share a 15,000 acre forest preserve in perpetuity.

Toward The Next Century – A Vision For The Future

Over the three centuries since it was first occupied by colonial settlers, the land of Easton has undergone countless changes. The purpose of a town plan is to channel those inevitable changes into a vision of what the community should become – what it should look like, how it should work, and in what manner it should serve the needs and interests of its citizens.

When Easton's first town plan was prepared in the mid 1970's it presented a basic vision of a small, low-density suburban town with open space corridors protecting streams and reservoirs, and with cluster subdivisions shown at eight separate localities. It stressed the desire of residents to retain the small-town atmosphere and the need to constrain development within the natural limitations of the land. Interestingly, it also proposed an elementary school site (present Helen Keller School), two alternative high school sites, a "Center Shopping" area (at present Easton Library site) and three "Neighborhood Shopping" areas, as well as three public recreation sites (none realized). Roads throughout Easton were classified as "arterials", "collectors", and "local", with recommended pavement, widths respectively at 40, 36 and 26 feet, none of which, fortunately, have been implemented. Prepared during the population boom of the 1970's, the first plan projected that Easton's population would be between 9,000 and 10,000 persons by 1990; in fact the population in 1990 was 6,300 and in December 2006 the population was about 7,600 persons.

The vision of the 2006 Town Plan is substantially different. While recognition of the critical importance of protecting the town's water resources and the objective of preserving Easton's low-density residential character is common to both plans, we now see a quasi-rural, more exurban than suburban, residential greenspace in the midst of an intensifying northeastern metropolis. Easton's predominant role in the larger region should be as a source of clean air, clean water and natural open space of benefit to more

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Toward The Next Century – A Vision For The Future (continued)

than a half million other residents of Fairfield County and beyond. In furthering this regional greenbelt role Easton should be prepared to resist urbanizing pressures for major highways, obtrusive wireless towers, major commercial projects or institutions, high-density development of any type, and to strive for a high degree of environmental sensitivity in all future development.

Because Easton is a community of people who will be stewards of this special responsibility, moreover, it is important that its unique “character of place” be sustained and strengthened. The 2006 Town Plan projects a low-density residential community of four sections:

- a New England-style rural village of widely-spaced homes and small-scale public services and civic institutions within the town’s central area,
- an attractive and well-preserved neighborhood of suburban single-family homes in southeastern Easton,
- a “rural” hinterland of homes and open spaces (including farmland and forest) where the built and natural environments will be in close harmony,
- and finally a great wilderness of inter-connected greenspaces in western and northern Easton where Land Trust, Nature Conservancy, Town, State and Aquarion open lands have been assembled for posterity.

In this balance Easton’s distinctive role and character will be fulfilled.

Much has been accomplished since the 1977 Town Plan to make Easton a special place. The challenge of the 2006 Plan is to show the way to build the best possible community for the generations to come.

The Plan , In Summary

The twelve major policy recommendations of the 2006 Town Plan are summarized below. Following each point is a parenthetical reference to the particular chapter(s) of the text in which more background and detail may be found.

Town’s Role in the Region:

1. Easton’s role within the densely developed region of southwestern Connecticut should be primarily that of providing pure water, clean air and permanent greenspace to support a livable environment for the half million people of the area. (Chapter 2).

Watershed Land:

2. Protect the environmental quality and low-density character of the watershed lands consistent with the density standards of the State Conservation and Development Policies Plan – i.e., no more than one dwelling unit or six bedrooms for every two acres of upland soil and three acres of site area. (Chapter 3)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The Plan, In Summary (continued)

Residential Character

3. Maintain the low density quasi-rural residential character of established three-acre residential neighborhoods throughout the town.
4. Maintain the attractive residential character and present density of Easton's established one-acre residential neighborhoods. (Chapters 4 and 5).

Open Space:

5. Conserve Easton's extensive watershed lands, wilderness areas, existing public open space preserves and other open lands as permanently dedicated open space.
6. Farmland and other privately-held large tracts of land should be conserved in their present open character as completely as possible and – where developed – planned to limit development area in the interest of preserving as much open space as possible in each tract. (Chapters 3 and 5).

The Town's Heritage:

7. Easton's rich cultural and historical heritage should be protected wherever possible by appropriate regulations, design districts and review procedures for new development. (Chapter 7).

Public Facilities:

8. As the town grows public facilities must keep pace with town needs and new technology. Recent school facility construction at the Morehouse Road site and at Joel Barlow High School will meet the Town's public school needs for the foreseeable future. Serious space and operational deficiencies exist at the Senior Center, the Town Hall, the Police Department, the Emergency Medical Service, the Department of Public Works and the School Administration offices, all of which must be addressed in the near future. The retired Staples School building complex should be thoroughly evaluated as part of an overall Town Space Needs study. Additional active recreation space is also needed and the Plan recommends use of the level field areas of the Town's Morehouse Road property for this purpose. (Chapter 6).

Housing:

9. Housing needs of Easton's senior citizens and less affluent residents should be addressed in a variety of ways including age-restricted residential in appropriate locations, affordable accessory apartments, increased elderly tax relief, limited duration elderly and in-law accessory apartments, and possible planned retirement communities; in all cases restricted to densities in persons per acre compatible with the State Plan of Conservation and Development and the natural limitations of the area in which located. (Chapter 4).

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The Plan, In Summary (continued)

Roads and Transportation:

10. While Easton is adequately served for local circulation by a well maintained network of Town and State roads, increasing inter-town traffic poses a threat to the tranquility and safety of many local neighborhoods. A pro-active program of traffic calming measures, speed enforcement and support for regional plans to reduce traffic volume growth on local and secondary roads is endorsed. Protection of the scenic quality of all Easton roads is an important component of preserving the town's special character. Bikeways and pedestrian paths should be developed in various sections to supplement travel by automobile and connect public facilities with various neighborhoods. (Chapter 8).

Civic Life:

11. The Town's civic life should be strengthened by encouraging volunteerism from many segments of the community, and also by encouraging the service facilities of the future to locate in the central area of the town where they will be most accessible to residents. Where public facilities are located design review should be mandatory in order to protect the visual character of the community. Special planning is needed for several of the historic community centers of the town to guide their appropriate development and architectural conservation. (Chapter 10).

Financial Strategy:

12. Because most undeveloped land in Easton lies on public water supply watersheds and the town desires to preserve its predominantly residential character, opportunities for broadening the tax base are extremely limited. Recommended financial strategy focuses on encouraging high-value tax-positive forms of residential development, preservation of open lands and other low-service-cost uses, efficient management of public services, and encouragement of civic volunteerism as well as other measures to enhance Easton's quality of life and residential property values. (Chapter 9).

The Town Plan of Conservation and Development map, described in Chapter 11, depicts in graphic form the major recommendations of the Plan. A guide to achievement of its goals is presented in Chapter 12, Program of Action.

Chapter 2
THE REGIONAL SETTING

Perspective

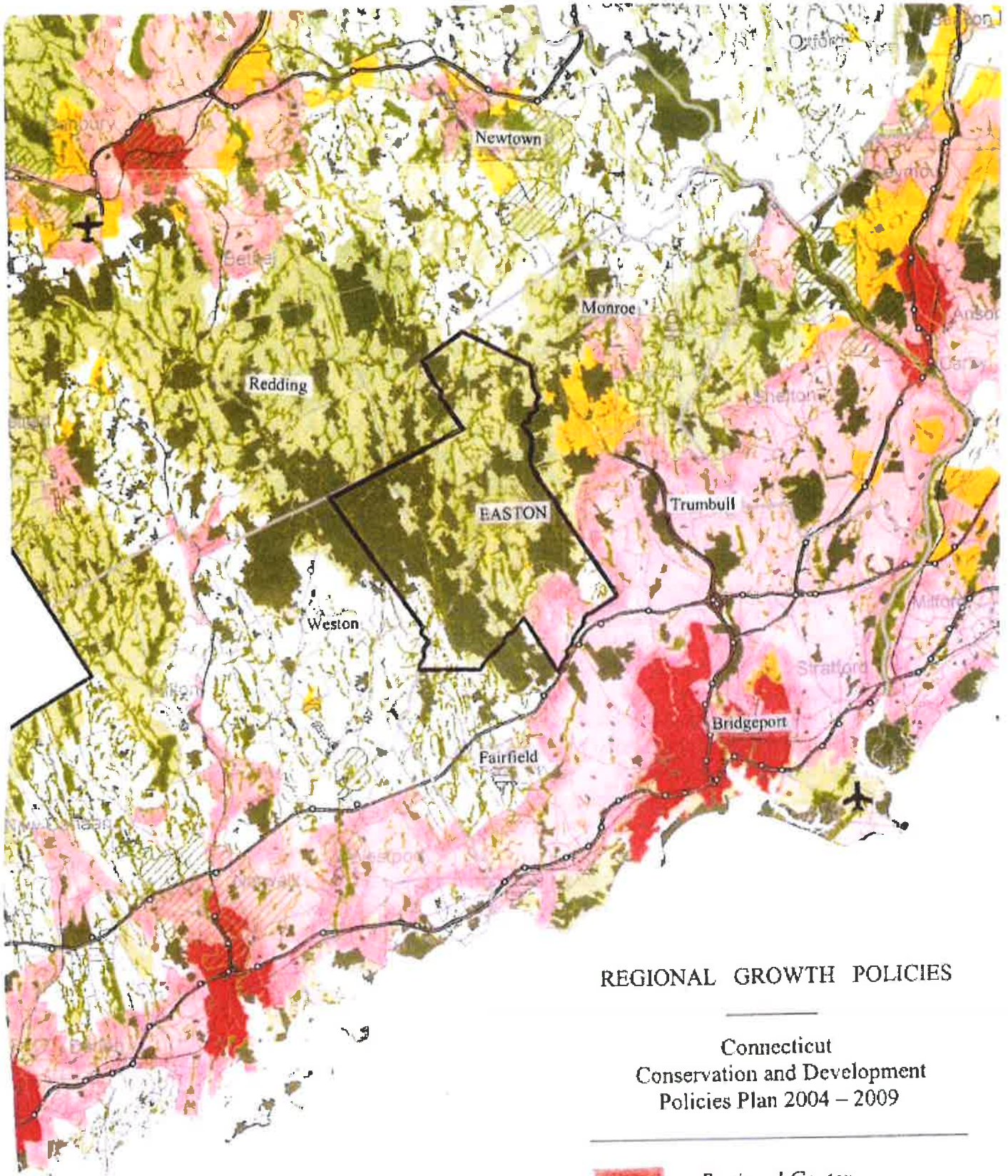
Easton's location within the heart of dynamic Fairfield County has made it one of the most desirable residential communities in the northeast United States. Within minutes of the Metro North main line rail service, the Merritt Parkway, Interstate 95 and other expressways of the region, Easton is within easy commuting distance of world-class corporate offices and revitalizing urban centers at Bridgeport, Norwalk, Stamford and New Haven. A little over an hour away are the nation's financial capital in Manhattan and the corporate offices of Westchester County.

Once closely tied economically and culturally to the central city of the immediate region, Bridgeport, Easton now has a more cosmopolitan orientation to southwest Connecticut and the New York metropolitan region supplementing its traditional ties to Bridgeport and its nearby suburbs.

As a result of its extensive water supply lands and low density residential zoning Easton has preserved a greater degree of rural ambience than its neighboring towns to the south and east, Fairfield, Trumbull and Monroe. Low-density residential zoning and extensive water supply lands adjoin Easton's western and northern boundaries over virtually all of Weston, Redding and southwestern Newtown. Reflecting the vital public interest in conserving the quality of public water supplies and the maintenance of a natural greenbelt separating the three urbanized regions of southwest Connecticut, the Connecticut Conservation and Development Policies Plan 2004-2009 designates over ninety percent of the land area of three towns -- Easton, Weston and Redding -- for conservation and low density residential as Preservation Area, Conservation Area, or Rural Land. The State Plan strongly endorses channeling new growth into urban centers, such as Bridgeport, Norwalk and Danbury, and to adjacent areas where urban infrastructure -- such as utilities and mass transportation -- are readily available (see accompanying map "Regional Growth Policies", page 7.).

For over four decades Easton and five other towns -- Bridgeport, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford and Trumbull -- have been members of the Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency (GBRPA), which maintains a staff and offices at 525 Water Street in Bridgeport. The following description of the local planning region is excerpted from the Regional Profile, published by GBRPA in December 1997:

(continues on page 8)



REGIONAL GROWTH POLICIES

Connecticut
 Conservation and Development
 Policies Plan 2004 – 2009

- Regional Center*
- Neighborhood Conservation*
- Rural Land Area*
- Conservation Land Area*
- Preserved Open Space*



Chapter 2

THE REGIONAL SETTING

Perspective (continued)

“ The Greater Bridgeport Planning Region comprises six municipalities that are home to approximately 300,000 residents. The three most urbanized communities (Bridgeport, Fairfield and Stratford) lie along the shores of Long Island Sound, whereas the inland communities to the north (Easton, Monroe and Trumbull) are more rural and residential. Covering 146 square miles, the Region is the most densely populated of Connecticut’s 15 planning areas. The core of the planning region – the City of Bridgeport – is not only the largest city in the state, but also serves as the regional hub for services ranging from medical care to transportation, education, and banking. Bridgeport is also the judicial seat of Fairfield County, containing the Federal, State, and County Courthouses.

Situated approximately 50 miles from New York City and 150 miles from Boston, the Greater Bridgeport Planning Region is part of the I-95 urban corridor that forms the “spine” of the megalopolis that stretches from Boston south to Washington, D.C. Given its close proximity to New York City, the area is also included within the Tri-State Metropolitan Region. This close proximity to major population centers has enabled the Greater Bridgeport Planning Region to become one of the premier transportation hubs in southern New England. The Region offers area residents a diverse and integrated range of transportation options, most of which are centered in Downtown Bridgeport. Amenities include an extensive highway network, rail facilities, intra-regional bus services, a regional airport, port facilities, and ferry services to Long Island.

Within this compact region is a diversity of people, natural features, culture, and recreational activities. Long Island Sound is the Region’s dominant natural feature, adjoining coastal beaches, marshlands, and natural harbors. Further inland, the topography includes numerous streams and rivers, low-lying coastal terrain, rolling hills, and steeper terrain with elevations up to 700 feet. . . . ”

The GBRPA land use plan for the six-town region closely parallels the State Conservation and Development Plan in endorsing a growth policy which favors new development for the central city, Bridgeport, and conservation of the low-density rural and watershed character of Easton. In their recommendations for preservation of the greenbelt encompassing the water supply lands of central Fairfield County, all three regional plans – South Western RPA (for Weston), Housatonic Valley Council (for Redding), and Greater Bridgeport (for Easton) – are in agreement.

Chapter 2
THE REGIONAL SETTING

Regional Trends

Table 2-1 presents a comparison of trends among the six towns of the Greater Bridgeport Region, over the three decades from 1970 to 2000. Data is derived from the decennial U.S. Census figures as reported in the GBRPA 2004 Annual Report.

The figures reveal that Easton has the highest family income and median housing value of the six towns in the GB Region, and also the highest median age in the region, generally reflective of the town's desirability and high property values. Employment in Easton, confined primarily to the public and service sectors of the economy, increased substantially as it did in the four suburban towns, while Bridgeport suffered a catastrophic loss of jobs. Easton, with the smallest population and number of housing units in the GB Region, experienced the fastest growth rate in the region. While projections by state and regional agencies indicate that population of the GB Region is likely to stabilize over the next twenty years, the two smallest towns -- Easton and Monroe -- are expected to continue to grow over the next twenty years but at a slower rate.

Table 2-1
 TRENDS IN GREATER BRIDGEPORT REGION

	EASTON	Suburban Towns:				Regional Center:
		Fairfield	Monroe	Stratford	Trumbull	Bridgeport
Population						
1970	4,885	56,487	12,047	49,775	31,394	156,542
2000	7,272	57,340	19,247	49,976	34,243	139,529
Median Age						
1970	33.8	31.9	25.1	34.3	31.6	29.9
2000	40.4	38.5	38.1	40.3	40.3	31.4
Housing Units						
1970	1,478	17,231	3,145	15,823	8,574	54,675
2000	2,511	21,029	6,601	20,596	12,160	54,367
Employment						
1970	270	13,730	1,580	21,940	4,080	84,680
2000	780	23,870	6,170	26,600	14,200	48,650
Median Housing Value						
1970	\$ 48,172	\$ 36,659	\$ 31,802	\$ 28,354	\$ 36,954	25,590
2000	\$455,700	\$325,900	\$256,600	\$163,400	\$260,400	117,500
Family Income						
1970	\$ 17,506	\$ 14,225	\$ 13,553	\$ 12,268	\$ 14,772	9,849
2000	\$125,557	\$ 83,512	\$ 85,000	\$ 53,494	\$ 79,507	34,658

Source: United States Census, 1970 and 2000

Chapter 2

THE REGIONAL SETTING

Regional Issues and Proposed Policies

As development intensifies in southwestern Connecticut in the years to come a number of significant issues affecting Easton and nearby towns are likely to demand concerted attention. In summary, with recommended policies (*in italics*) following each issue, these are:

- Land Use and Development Density
Support State and Regional Plans which maintain low and rural densities for all permissible types of development in Easton's water supply watersheds, in its "B" Zones and in the adjacent towns, as recommended for Rural or Conservation uses. Encourage the location of urgently needed low and moderate income housing in locations planned for future public services and urban infrastructure.
- Urban Infrastructure
Limit the extension of public water supply service to the immediate vicinity of areas presently served in south and central Easton, and to more densely developed areas of the Greater Bridgeport Region. Oppose the extension of sanitary sewers into Easton. Coordinate with other towns of the Greater Bridgeport Region in compacts for solid waste management, mutual assistance for public safety and disaster response.
- Power and Communications
Support the proposed 345kv southwestern power line underground route; oppose the alternative above ground route. Collaborate with other towns in opposing randomly located wireless (cell) towers; support co-location of such facilities where not in conflict with residential or environmental values.
- Traffic and Transportation
Support the upgrading of rail and mass transit systems in the area, including ferry service, vanpooling for commuters and other systems for lessening congestion. Support essential improvements in major arterial highways of the region, such as I-95 and Route 25. Oppose upgrades or significant widening of such minor arterial or collector roads as Routes 136, 59 and 58. Work with Connecticut Dept. of Transportation and adjacent towns to implement traffic calming measures on local state highways and other collector roads.
- Environment
Endorse State and Federal efforts to reduce regional air and water pollution, including energy conservation measures and encouragement of new development in compact urban centers. Work with public and private agencies, and other towns, for conservation of major open space lands, protection of streams and watersheds, and regional parks and passive recreation areas.

Chapter 3

LAND, WATER AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Town's Natural Heritage

Easton's 28.6 square miles of terrain lie within the portion of Connecticut's Western Highlands which slope down to the coastal plain along Long Island Sound.

There are three distinctive physiographic regions which define the land surface of the town, each reflecting the northeast to southwest alignment of the underlying bedrock. In the west central, northwest and northeast sections are the town's most rugged terrain, a country of high hills, many steep slopes and abrupt ledges. By contrast a gentler terrain of broad hills, shallow valleys and more moderate slopes extends in a wide band across the center of the town, from its southwest corner around Redding Road to the Mill River, more or less between Beers Road on the south and Westport and Stepney Roads on the northwest. A third distinctive area lies along the southerly perimeter of the town and is made up of a range of high, glacially-formed hills which include Hoyden's Hill on the Easton-Fairfield border, Sport Hill in Easton, Chestnut and Tashua Hills along the Easton-Trumbull border.

Two deep valleys cut through this varied landscaped, formed by the Aspetuck River in the west and the Mill River along the town's eastern border. Both streams originate in the high terrain just north of Easton, flow southward through Easton and then turn southwesterly in their course toward Long Island Sound. Each has been impounded for public water supply by the former Bridgeport Hydraulic Company, respectively creating the Aspetuck and Easton Reservoirs. Two other water supply impoundments by BHC, the Saugatuck Reservoir along Easton's border with Weston and the Hemlocks Reservoir at the Easton-Fairfield border are located in the valleys of the Saugatuck River and of Cricker Brook. As a consequence about 78% of Easton's land surface lies within the watersheds of public water supply reservoirs. In addition another 11.5% of the land, located along the Weston border, drains to the Saugatuck River below Senior Dam and is a potential recharge source for the Coleytown wellfield in Westport. Almost ninety percent of Easton's land surface is therefore existing and potential water supply for the populous towns to the south. Reflecting this reality the State Department of Environmental Protection has established surface and groundwater quality goals of "AA" (suitable for drinking water) for all water supply watersheds in Easton; all other streams and lands in Easton are classified "A" (suitable for all purposes except drinking water).

Myriad small streams and wetlands extend throughout all sections of the town. Among the larger of these tributary streams are Gilbert and Hawley (Trout) Brooks which flow to the Saugatuck River, Lyons Swamp and Ballwall Brooks which are tributary to the Aspetuck River, Tatetuck, Patterson, Cricker, East Branch Cricker, and Morehouse Brooks, all of which are in the basin of the Mill River. Most of the wetlands are poorly drained or alluvial soils along stream corridors although there are four or five extensive wetlands in the easterly portion of the town including a swamp in excess of 70 acres along Patterson Brook at Stepney Road. Over 90 small ponds dot the Easton landscape.

Chapter 3

LAND, WATER AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Town's Natural Heritage (continued)

Because of its semi-rural character Easton has not suffered significantly from major floods. During the flood of record (October 1955) a bridge on Center Road was destroyed and various other damages occurred to Town roads, bridges and buildings. The more significant 100 year flood plains, where there is a one percent probability in any year of a flood volume which would inundate homes and other developed land, occur along the Aspetuck River south of the Reservoir dam, in the Mill River valley below the Easton Lake dam and along Ballwall Brook.

Easton lies in the humid, continental climatic region of southern New England, and its summer and winter temperatures are tempered by proximity to Long Island Sound. January average daily temperatures range between 18 and 35 degrees Fahrenheit, the average for July between 60 and 83 degrees. Average annual precipitation over a thirty-year period before 1996 was 41.7 inches but recent meteorological records have indicated that average annual precipitation and temperatures are each increasing over the long term in Connecticut.

With its favorable climate, Easton's loamy till soils support a dense forest cover throughout the town. Although at least 90% of the land was intensively agricultural in the mid-nineteenth century, most of Easton's remaining undeveloped land has now reverted to second-growth woodland with hardwood species such as maple, oak, ash, hickory, birch, beech and sycamore predominant. Dense shrub understories are typically present in many recovering woodlands and in wetland margins. Once dense stands of spruce and pine, planted many years ago by Bridgeport Hydraulic on their watersheds, are gradually yielding to hardwood forest. As the town becomes more developed its omnipresent forest canopy, typically 50 to 80 feet in height, effectively preserves its residential quality with a "green" and pristine appearance in all sections.

With a landscape now mostly in forest and homes, the town's ecology has become more diverse. Beavers, coyotes, fox, deer, wild geese, turkeys and other native species are frequently observed in the wilderness areas of town, even in the margins of subdivisions. Trout, stocked by the State, swim in the Mill and Aspetuck Rivers. Several habitats of endangered species near the Hemlocks and Aspetuck Reservoirs are listed in the State's Natural Diversity Database. The Saugatuck Watershed Partnership, a program to prepare a conservation plan for the 90 square mile Saugatuck basin (which includes much of western Easton), with special focus on the watershed's biodiversity, has recently been launched by The Nature Conservancy.

(continues on page 14)



Clear sparkling streams are the essence of the town's environmental quality (Aspetuck River near Valley Road)



Traditional farms are disappearing from the Easton landscape. Can such land be preserved? (scene near Orchard Lane)

Chapter 3

LAND, WATER AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Town's Natural Heritage (continued)

Public policy has shifted, too. Once seen as a resource to be exploited and used as fully as possible, land and water with the natural processes which accompany them are now rightly regarded as the indispensable ingredients of everyone's life. Action by private groups and the State in 1999 and 2001 has resulted in permanent reservation of over 8,000 acres of former BHC watershed land in Easton, Weston and Redding, recently named the "Centennial Watershed State Forest". The more than 15,000 acres of permanent "greenspace" now set aside in the three towns, of which 45 per cent is in Easton, comprises a legacy of pure water, clear air, natural science education and outdoor recreational opportunity of immense benefit to all of Fairfield County.

Geology and Soils

Easton's terrain began to take shape some 570 million years ago in a monumental collision between the North American and Euro-African continental plates. The pressure of this collision buckled the original North American shoreline and adjacent ocean floor into enormous mountain ranges over 25,000 feet high, composed of hard metamorphic rock. About 200 million years ago the continents began to drift apart and continuing erosion over these eons has reduced the once-lofty mountain ranges to the vestigial hills which form the bedrock underlying the surface of Easton today. These eroded mountain ranges still exhibit a distinct pattern of north-northeast to south-southwest ridging wherever bedrock is close to the land surface, as in northwest Easton and in the North Street vicinity. Three major fault lines, each trending along these directions, have been identified in Easton -- in the easterly side of the Aspetuck valley, in the valley of Ballwall Brook to North Street and beyond, and through Easton center from Cricker Brook to North Street. The extensive faulting and fracturing of this bedrock makes possible the subterranean water supply which is tapped by most of Easton's domestic wells.^a

About 18,000 years ago the last of a series of great continental ice sheets which had covered this area began to recede. Left in its wake were the undulating terrain and smoothly-contoured hills of glacial till soil, full of stones and boulders, which blanket the upland surface today. Drumlins, landmark elliptical-shaped hills of glacial till, rise above the horizon at several locations in Easton, notably Powell's Hill on the Weston border, Flirt Hill which towers above the Aspetuck valley, and Round Hill near Center and Sport Hill Roads.

Also deposited by glacial meltwaters were several sizable stratified-drift aquifers, originating as temporary lakes dammed by ice or sediment, located in the Aspetuck valley from the Old Redding Road vicinity northward to Silver Hill Road, in the lower valley of Ballwall Brook, and in the lower Mill River valley near South Park Avenue.

^a Bedrock Geological Map of Connecticut, compiled by John Rodgers, Yale University, 1985; published by Connecticut Geological and Natural History Survey in cooperation with U.S. Geological Survey.

Chapter 3

LAND, WATER AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Geology and Soils (continued)

These coarse-grained deposits of sand and gravel typically have a water-saturated thickness of ten feet or greater and are important recharge sources for nearby streams and the bedrock aquifers of the vicinity.^b

The surface stones and boulders which litter the landscape in many sections, and from which the many miles of stone wall in Easton were built, were deposited by the once mile-high glacier as it melted from the land. As this icy behemoth advanced and retreated its mixing and sorting action resulted in the great diversity of surface soils present in town, many of which are shallow in depth to bedrock or hardpan, resulting in seasonal wetness or poor drainage in extensive areas. Poorly drained alluvial and wetland soils in fact interlace all sections of the town except the more built-up Sport Hill "A Zone" neighborhood.

Major Natural Constraints

The forces which shaped Easton's land and water resources have significantly influenced its past development and impose practical limits on its future development.

Foremost among these constraints are wetlands and the annual flood plains which lie along all streams. When added to the major flood plains -- those broad areas which flood only once in every 50 or 100 years -- and existing lakes and ponds, an estimated 14 percent of Easton's land has severe limitations for development due to wetland conditions or potential flooding.

Almost as severely constrained for development is steeply sloping terrain -- generally land of 20 per cent or greater slope -- and exposed bedrock or ledge. Here the hazards and limitations are different. There is too little soil for safe sewage renovation, excessive erosion potential due to rapid stormwater runoff, unsafe access for driveways, and such terrain usually requires environmentally destructive earth cuts and fills. Although such conditions occur in all sections the greatest concentrations of steep slopes are in the northwest and northeast areas of the town.

(continues on page 16)

^b Surficial Materials Map of Connecticut, (Stone, Schafer, London & Thompson, compilers); published by State of Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Geological and Natural History Survey, 1992.

Ground-Water Availability in Connecticut, by Daniel B. Meade (map with text), published by State of Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection in cooperation with U.S. Geological Survey, 1978.

Chapter 3

LAND, WATER AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Major Natural Constraints (continued)

The most significant stratified-drift aquifer in Easton is that which lies in the Aspetuck valley south of Silver Hill Road (including the Aspetuck Reservoir). Not only is this the largest capacity aquifer but it is highly significant in two ways: as a primary recharge source for the Aspetuck Reservoir surface water supply, and below the dam as a potential or occasional recharge source for the downstream Coleytown wellfield public water supply. Thus the entire Aspetuck watershed in Easton is a critical public water supply resource. A smaller stratified-drift aquifer along the Mill River above Easton Lake is critical to that reservoir. Other, shallower stratified-drift aquifers in Easton also have considerable importance because they supply groundwater recharge to surface streams and to the bedrock aquifer on which virtually all private wells depend for potable water. All aquifers are highly prone to contamination because of their rapidly permeable soils, frequently high water tables and easily developed surface terrain. Pollution introduced to any stratified drift aquifer can be transmitted through underlying bedrock fracture systems to both nearby and distant wells. Great caution must be exercised in developing both the primary and secondary recharge areas surrounding an aquifer.

Stormwater runoff from approximately 89 percent of Easton's land and water surface either directly or potentially reaches public drinking water supplies, 78 percent to surface reservoirs and 11 percent to wellfield recharge area. The Saugatuck, Aspetuck, Hemlocks and Easton Reservoirs in combination provide more than two-thirds of the water consumed in the urbanized towns to the south. For Easton's resident population, moreover, protection of surface and groundwater quality is essential for health and life quality, a basic imperative therefore of Town land use policy.

Land areas with severe limitations for development, including wetlands, problem soils, aquifers, flood plains and steep slopes, when considered with the public water supply watershed and the dependence of much of the town on individual wells, comprise an array of factors which mandate strong efforts to preserve Easton's low-density quasi-rural character. Large-scale maps illustrating these constraints have been prepared as part of the planning process and are embodied in the recommendations of the Town Plan.

Conservation of the town's natural heritage is the fundamental principle on which all other planning policies should rest.

Chapter 3

LAND, WATER AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The 1994 Town Open Space Plan

In February 1994 a specially commissioned Town Open Space Task Force, comprised of representatives from the Conservation Commission, Citizens For Easton, Garden Club, and Easton Woods and Field, issued a report with far-seeing recommendations designed to protect the natural resources and rural character of the town. As stated in the report the objectives would be:

- To protect and preserve Easton's forests, fields and waterways.
- To maintain and enhance Easton's aesthetic appeal.
- To provide our citizens with outdoor recreational and educational opportunities."

While much has changed in the decade since the 1994 report was written – especially the acquisition of nearly 6,500 acres of former Bridgeport Hydraulic Company land as permanent open space – the report's vision and many of its recommendations remain valid. Briefly summarized, the report identified a number of strategies for land acquisition and preservation, including gifts, subdivision setbacks and/or fees, municipal transfer tax and bonding, state and federal grants. The report also proposed that "an ongoing open space task force" with representatives from the Conservation, Park and Recreation, and Planning and Zoning Commissions be created and charged with carrying out the report's twelve specific recommendations. The recommendations embrace financing, mapping and inventory, developing priorities for preservation, maintenance of reservations and trails, and public education.

A number of innovative "Regulatory Options" were suggested in the report, all of which are relevant to protection of the town's environment, quoted in full:

"1. Planning and Zoning Commission Options

- a. Easement (a right in land which is less than full ownership i.e. rights of way over land for trails or road set backs)
- b. Open space extractions from subdivisions (land, \$, trails, alternate site exchanges)
- c. Open space preservation district or zone (provides additional developmental guidelines for siting, etc. in significant natural/historic areas)
- d. Reduction in road standards where appropriate
- e. New roads to include multi-use trails
- f. Roads and houses sited to save significant trees, stonewalls, driveways and utility trenches for adjacent houses consolidated
- g. Net density exclusions (not counting wetlands or steep slopes into density calculations and prohibiting construction on those sites)
- h. Cluster zoning or subdivisions
- i. Increased set-backs & protection of ridge tops for preservation of visual corridors and historic sites
- j. Character of open space extraction to be consistent with wetland/upland characteristics of overall subdivision
- k. Scenic roads ..."

(continues on page 18)

Chapter 3

LAND, WATER AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The 1994 Town Open Space Plan (continued)

"2. Conservation Commission Options

- a. Regulations control activities within a buffer area around wetlands and watercourses.
- b. Conservation easements

The landowner gives up developmental rights in perpetuity. He retains all other property rights including freedom to use his land and enjoy it in any way that is consistent with its open and natural character."

The Open Space Plan was endorsed by the Planning and Zoning Commission in 1994 and about half of its proposals have been implemented to a greater or lesser extent. Proposals adopted include subdivision 15% setbacks and fees-in-lieu, reduced road standards for common driveways, combined driveways and utility lines, and scenic road designations.

The 1994 Open Space Plan is the foundation for many of the specific recommendations of the current Town Plan.

Current Inventory of Open Space Land

Easton's protected open space has dramatically increased over the past decade with acquisition of former BHC lands by the State, Nature Conservancy, and Aspetuck Land Trust as shown by Table 3-1 on the following page.

Open space land is land which is permanently dedicated to conservation or passive recreation purposes only. It may be in public ownership, such as the Town of Easton or State of Connecticut, or owned by a non-profit entity dedicated to conservation purposes, such as the Aspetuck Land Trust or The Nature Conservancy. Because municipally owned school sites, recreation parks, ballfields and other tracts which serve active recreation needs are typically developed intensively with constructed facilities, and are subject to intensive use as well as further development, such tracts cannot be considered conservation preserves and are classified as Public Facilities (see Chapter 6 and Table 6-1). Similarly, private clubs such as the two golf course tracts in Easton are not classified as "open space" because they are not protected from development nor permanently reserved as conservation land; these facilities are considered Developed Land, and classified as Active Recreation, Private (see Chapter 5 and Table 5-1). Privately-owned undeveloped land which is permanently protected by conservation or greenbelt easements is properly classified as open space, but has not been shown on Table 3-1 since these areas are a very small fraction of reserved open space in Easton. Some public-ownership lands which may at present function as open space, such as Town-owned fields adjacent to the new school site on Morehouse Road, are not classified as open space because they have not been permanently dedicated to such use.

Table 3-1
OPEN SPACE INVENTORY
1994-2006

	1994 <u>(acres)¹</u>	2006 <u>(acres)²</u>
<u>PUBLIC LANDS:</u>		
Town of Easton Purchases		
Paine Open Space (Maple Rd.)	127.8	127.8
Portion of School Site (Morehouse Rd.)	<u> --</u>	<u> 24.8</u>
Town Purchases Total	127.8	152.6
Subdivision Setasides, Town-Owned		
“A” Zone	4.3	18.0
“B” Zone	<u> 35.3</u>	<u> 98.9</u>
Subdivision Setasides Total	39.6	116.9
 <u>QUASI-PUBLIC LANDS:</u>		
Centennial Watershed State Forest (Joint State DEP, Nature Conservancy, Aquarion Water Co.) ³		
“A” Zone	--	22.0
“B” Zone	<u> --</u>	<u> 5,498.0</u>
Centennial Watershed State Forest Total	0	5,520.0
Aspetuck Land Trust ⁴		
“A” Zone	--	3.7
“B” Zone	<u> 50.0</u>	<u> 1,066.2</u>
Aspetuck Land Trust Total	50.0	1,069.9
 OPEN SPACE TOTALS	 217.4	 6,859.4
Per Cent of Town Area	1.2%	37.4%

¹ - Source of 1994 data: Town of Easton Open Space Plan, prepared by (Town) Open Space Task Force; February 1994. Figures exclude non-dedicated parcels and reflect actual acreages per Town assessor records.

² - Source of 2006 data: Town of Easton grand list, tax-exempt properties, as compiled by assessor in 2004, updated 2006.

³ - Former Bridgeport Hydraulic Co. lands excluding 129 acres of improved property retained by Aquarion Water Company.

⁴ - Crow Hill, Jump Hill and Trout Brook Preserves form one continuous tract of 961.1 acres in western Easton. The remainder of 97.3 acres is in six separated locations.

Chapter 3

LAND, WATER AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Areas of Concern

Despite the historic enhancement of Easton's greenspace which occurred during the past decade, a thirty-fold increase in permanent open space from 217 acres to over 6,800 acres, the town's environment remains at risk in several areas:

a) **Quality of Natural Environment**

As the town's population increases and much of the remaining privately-held land is converted to homes, roads and other paved or developed area, less actual natural land will be left to filter contaminants, protect ecosystems and preserve the appearance of rurality which present residents cherish. Serious groundwater protection and limits on land clearing are urgent issues.

b) **Loss of Farms**

Easton treasures its rural character and agricultural heritage, yet most of its few remaining farms are at risk due to escalating land values and the economic squeeze on farming. Creative initiatives will be needed if any of the town's extant farmland or its traditional farms are to be saved for future generations to experience this aspect of the town's heritage.

c) **Massive Earth Reconstruction**

Although erosion and sediment regulations and soil removal regulations have been in place for some years there is little control on the extent of work which may be allowed to regrade unsuitable terrain for safe building sites, and such accessory uses as pools, parking, lawns, courts, paddocks, etc. Land unsuitable for development needs stronger protection.

d) **Historic and Cultural Heritage at Risk**

Virtually every year one or more historic buildings or sites is lost or altered due to various pressures. A program to protect the town's cultural treasures is needed (see also Chapter 7).

e) **Management of Forest and Open Space Lands**

While the assurance of protection for more than 5,000 acres of former BHC land is a great benefit to Easton, the town must nonetheless be vigilant to assure that any future development and use of these lands – whether logging, trails, stone wall removal, built facilities, etc – is consistent with the Town's environment.

Conservation Policies: Key To The Future

Easton's critical role in the effort to sustain the last major area of greenspace in Fairfield County is the foundation of the town Plan of Conservation and Development.

Three fundamental principles underlie the policies of the entire Town Plan and especially its conservation policies:

- 1) The existing open space reservations and very-low-density development area of Easton constitute a major and essential piece of the greenbelt between three urbanizing regions to the north, southeast and southwest. Preservation of this greenspace is critical to control urban sprawl and to maintain a healthful and attractive environment for all of southwest Connecticut.

Chapter 3

LAND, WATER AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Conservation Policies: Key To The Future (continued)

- 2) Protection of the water supply watersheds which encompass nine-tenths of Easton's land and water resources is essential to the public health of more than a dozen populous communities.
- 3) Easton's land is for the most part unsuitable for intensive development due to soil conditions, topography and numerous wetland areas, requiring special measures for safe sewage disposal, stormwater control and site development, all of which are documented in mapping which forms the basis of this Plan.

The major policies and goals of the town Plan in respect to resource conservation are:

- Protect the natural, scenic, historical and cultural resources of the town, especially its wetlands, streambelts, surface and ground water resources, but also its steep slopes, ridgelines, major trees and significant wildlife areas, as the cardinal principle of the Town Plan.
- Adopt revised and more comprehensive land use regulations, to provide additional protection to sensitive natural areas such as steep slopes, erosive soils, stratified-drift aquifers, major streambelts, mature trees, historic and archaeological sites, and to reduce impervious area coverages.
- Provide for conservation of significant open space within farms and other large tracts, through conservation residential standards to allow alternative design at the same or lower residential densities.
- Act to acquire significant open space parcels or easements which provide for trail linkages, protect streambelts or other important natural areas, protect historical or cultural sites, or provide for valuable educational or recreational opportunity, with special priority for those shown on the Plan.
- Adopt a financial strategy for land or development rights needed to complete recommendations of the Town Plan, based on innovative use of such tools as joint public and public initiatives, special purpose grants, tax abatement and other techniques.
- Work in collaboration with other towns, private conservation and recreation interests, and the State to achieve desirable multi-town trails, greenway corridors, streambelt protection zones and wildlife conservation areas.

Chapter 4

THE PEOPLE OF EASTON

Town Population: An Historical Perspective

In 1787 the northern section of Fairfield separated from the parent town and incorporated as the "Town of Weston", encompassing the modern towns of Easton and Weston. Over half of the approximately 2,400 residents of the new town were located in what is now Easton, an estimated 1,420 persons based on the 1790 Census.

With somewhat more favorable farmland than the western half of the area, the Easton portion grew steadily for forty years, reaching a population peak of approximately 1,725 persons by 1830. However, rural population was streaming westward at this period, drawn by the fertile lands of the west, and Easton began to suffer a gradual population decline, caused by emigration in excess of natural increase. The decline would last for the next seventy years. As Table 4-1 shows, Easton's population nadir was reached in 1900, with only 960 inhabitants present that year, a 44% decline from the peak seventy years earlier.

1900 however marked the beginning of the automobile age. Located in the backcountry, several hours by horse and wagon from the New York to New Haven rail line which had brought nineteenth century growth and prosperity to the shoreline towns, Easton residents could now travel by automobile to daily employment in Bridgeport and other towns to the south. During the early decades of the twentieth century, moreover, the rural beauty of Easton's landscape was discovered by affluent New York residents who began to purchase old farms and establish country estates. Although the town's economy was still fundamentally agricultural, its population stabilized with the advent of new residents over the three decades prior to 1930.

From 1918 through the twenties the State of Connecticut undertook an ambitious road building program which resulted in the construction of Routes 58, 59 and Center Road in Easton. State funding for the paving of local roads also became available during this period. With all parts of the town now becoming readily accessible a steady growth in population began, despite the depression of the 1930's. By 1940 the town's population had increased by nearly 25%, and despite the intervention of World War II escalated by another 71% in the following decade.

Easton's attractiveness and convenience to Bridgeport and to lower Fairfield County produced an explosion in residential growth during the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's, adding nearly 3,800 residents (a 175% increase) over three decades. While growth slowed in the 1980's and 1990's as a result of a softer regional economy the town nonetheless gained an additional 1,310 residents during this period bringing the town's total to nearly six times its pre-World-War II population.

As of December 2006 Easton had an estimated 7,600 residents, or about 80% of its maximum population capacity under present zoning.

Chapter 4
THE PEOPLE OF EASTON

Table 4-1
POPULATION GROWTH, 1790 –2000

<u>Census Year</u>	<u>Easton Population*</u>	<u>Numerical Increase (Decrease)</u>
1790	1,420	
1800	1,540	+ 120
1810	1,510	(- 30)
1820	1,590	+ 80
1830	1,720	+ 130
1840	1,470	(- 250)
1850	1,432	(- 38)
1860	1,350	(- 82)
1870	1,288	(- 62)
1880	1,145	(- 143)
1890	1,001	(- 144)
1900	960	(- 41)
1910	1,052	+ 92
1920	1,017	(- 35)
1930	1,013	(- 4)
1940	1,262	+ 249
1950	2,165	+ 903
1960	3,407	+1,242
1970	4,885	+1,478
1980	5,962	+1,077
1990	6,303	+ 341
2000	7,272	+ 969

*Population figures for the years 1790 through 1840, during which period Easton was part of the Town of Weston, are estimates derived from census-reported figures for Weston allocated to the proportion of the combined Town represented by Easton's population (57.5%), as established by the actual counts of 1850. This allocation is reliable because the combined population of Easton and Weston remained "flat" (no significant growth) with no discernible shifts in population location from 1790 to 1850. Period maps showing dwellings of each section confirm that the settlement pattern was stable over the entire period.

Population figures from 1850 to 2000 are as reported by the Federal Census for each year.

Chapter 4

THE PEOPLE OF EASTON

Growth in Comparison with Region and State

As illustrated in the following table, Easton, with the lowest population density in the Greater Bridgeport Region, is the fastest growing town in the Region.

Table 4-2
CURRENT GROWTH RATES

	<u>2000 Census Population</u>	<u>Persons Per Square Mile</u>	<u>Growth Rate 1990 - 2000</u>
EASTON	7,272	264	+ 15.4%
Fairfield	57,340	1,785	+ 7.3%
Monroe	19,247	789	+ 13.9%
Trumbull	34,243	1,438	+ 7.0%
Bridgeport	139,529	7,579	- 1.5%
Stratford	49,976	2,593	+ 1.2%
G B Region	307,607	2,113	+ 2.6%
Connecticut	3,405,565	681	+ 3.6%

(Source: Reports by U.S. Census and Greater
Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency)

Because of the scarcity of land for residential growth in the general area and the dynamic economy of southwestern Connecticut it is a reasonable conclusion that continued population pressure will be exerted on Easton until the town has reached its maximum holding capacity, or full potential development based on zoning and land available for development.

Characteristics of Present Town Population

Easton's complexion as an upper middle-class exurban residential community is amply demonstrated in a variety of statistics from the 2000 census.

Of its inhabitants 96.7% are white, 89.9% are native-born American, 80.4% are college-educated and 28.6% hold advanced degrees. 62% of those gainfully employed are in management and professional positions, and less than 15% work in service trades, farming, construction, production and related occupations. Median household income, as of 1999, was \$125,557 and 72.8% of Easton's households had annual incomes above \$75,000, with one-fourth of the town's homes enjoying an annual income above \$200,000. The same survey shows that the typical household (81.6%) has at least two motor vehicles and more than one-third possess three or more vehicles. Reflecting Easton's character as a "bedroom community", of its 3,400 employed persons 83% commute to work by car, 8% work at home and 9% use public transportation or other means of travel.

Chapter 4
THE PEOPLE OF EASTON (continued)

Characteristics of Present Town Population (continued)

The median age of town residents is 40.4 years. Family households comprise 84.3% of the town's total of 2,465 households, and of these 43.8% contain children under 18 years of age and 27.3% contain one or more persons age 65 or older. Easton's attractiveness for families with children is shown by its age distribution with larger than average segments of its population in the youth (under age 20) and mature adult (age 35 to 64) groups:

Under 5 years, 7.7%; 5-19 years, 22.3%; 20-34 years, 9.6%; 35-64 years, 47.2%; 65 years and over, 13.3%.

Easton's senior (65 and over) population at 13% however matches the nationwide 13% proportion for this age group. Demographers now predict this group will increase to at least 20% of the population by the year 2030 with consequent impact on lifestyle, service needs and housing preferences.

Reflecting the quality of life in Easton, the town's residential values are exceptionally high. The 2000 census found the median value of Easton dwellings to be \$455,700, the highest in the Greater Bridgeport region, with 35.9% above \$500,000 in estimated value. Significantly, reported home sale prices since 2000 for the Easton area indicate that the average home price has been rising at about 14% per year.

Of the 2,511 housing units counted in 2000, 98.9% were single-family dwellings, 90.9% contained at least six rooms and 39.7% contained nine or more rooms. 34% of the householders had moved to Easton with the past five years (1995 – 2000) and only 14% had resided in the same dwelling for 30 years or more. The average number of persons per household, 2.95, has not varied significantly in recent decades.

The age of Easton's housing stock closely parallels the population growth of the town (Table 4-1). Dwellings built in 1990 or later comprise 16.4% of the housing stock, those constructed in the 1940 to 1989 period comprise 66.2%, and those dating from prior to 1940 are 17.5% of the total.

Future Growth

The 1977 Town plan, written in the midst of Easton's greatest building and population expansion, predicted a 1990 population "in the range of 9,300 to 10,500 people"; the actual population total that year was only two-thirds of the low end of that range. Much has happened in the last quarter century which postulates a more modest rate of growth for the foreseeable future, including removal of the Bridgeport Hydraulic (BHC) lands from potential development, shrinkage in the supply of land suitable for building, and altered economics for home builders and purchasers. These factors as well as recent recessions have brought the rate of Easton's growth over the last two decades down to 5.7% and 15.4% respectively, and are likely to restrain the rate of future growth in similar fashion.

(continues on page 26)

Chapter 4

THE PEOPLE OF EASTON

Characteristics of Present Town Population (continued)

As noted in the LAND USE section of this report (Chapter 5) the town's growth to capacity is not likely to exceed a population of 9,300 to 9,600 persons, and very likely a lesser total if presently undeveloped but uncommitted land is preserved as open space or used for other purposes.

Since the 2000 census, based on new residential permits issued, the town appears to have added about 350 persons for an estimated 2006 population of about 7,600. Should this rate continue a town population of approximately 7,900 persons may be anticipated in 2010 and a population within the range of 8,400 to 8,600 would be forecast for 2020. However any significant changes in the land use pattern, such as land allocated to conservation or more intensively developed as for affordable housing projects, will alter both the town's population capacity and its rate of growth.

Statutory Mandates

The Connecticut Statutes which govern municipal plans of conservation and development (Sec. 8-23) require among other directives that the plan "...make provision for the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multifamily dwellings, consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity, for all residents of the municipality and the planning region...". The same law requires the town plan to "... promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low and moderate income households..." and to consider "... the need for affordable housing and the protection of existing and potential public surface and ground drinking water supplies...".

In addition the "Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals" Act (General Statutes 8-30g) subjects Easton to potential judicial over-ride of its minimum lot area requirements for any proposed affordable housing development, because less than ten percent of local housing stock is affordable under State guidelines.

Opportunities to provide for multifamily dwellings and other types of housing which would serve the objectives of housing choice and economic diversity are extremely limited in Easton for the following reasons:

- Except for the southeastern portion of the town ("A" Zone and vicinity) virtually the entire land surface of Easton lies within the public water supply watershed of Aquarion Water Company, serving the pure water needs of a population of more than a half million consumers. The State Plan of Conservation and Development strongly advocates low-density land use standards and rigorous protection of this essential public resource, given added emphasis recently by the State's financial commitment for purchase of the Aquarion Water Company lands.

Chapter 4

THE PEOPLE OF EASTON (continued)

Statutory Mandates (continued)

- As shown on the Natural Features maps prepared for this plan (see Chapter 3, LAND, WATER AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT) a major proportion of the undeveloped land in Easton consists of wetlands, steep slopes, poor soils or flood plains – not the type of land for which intensive development is economically possible or desirable.
- Essential infrastructure for concentrated development, primarily sanitary sewers, is not available anywhere in Easton.
- The portion of Easton which lies off the public water supply watershed and is served by public water, roughly the “A Residence” Zone, is already intensively built up with little vacant land remaining.

Despite the natural limitations imposed by its terrain and watershed character, Easton does have a need for affordable and convenient accommodation for those who serve the community in various ways, such as civil servants and service tradespeople, as well as for the resident elderly who diversify and enrich the community in many ways.

Existing Apartment Regulations

Since 1995 Easton’s Zoning Regulations have made provision for an “Affordable Accessory Apartment” within a single-family residence, subject to a special permit which establishes adherence to State affordability guidelines for renter income and maximum allowable rent. A residence containing an apartment must be owner-occupied and may not exceed a total of four bedrooms. The same regulations, effective February 8, 1995, required registration by existing unauthorized apartments and existing elderly accessory apartments, but such registrations for continued use have over time proven unworkable or unenforceable.

Eleven affordable accessory apartments have been created since the inception of these regulations, the majority for elderly relatives of the applicant-owner.

Several factors strongly suggest a need to re-examine the efficacy of the present apartment regulations. These include the increasing proportion of “over 60” persons within the town’s population, rapidly escalating land values, the tendency of new dwellings to have five (or more) bedrooms, the evidence that present regulations tend to discourage new affordable apartment applications, and the continuing imperative to preserve low residential densities for water supply watershed protection.

Encouragement of widely dispersed small accessory apartments, carefully blended into existing residences within “safe watershed” densities and as presently allowed under Town regulations, appears to be the most effective answer to Town housing need.

Chapter 4

THE PEOPLE OF EASTON (continued)

Recommendations

Preservation of the established rural residential character of the town is not only a regional obligation, consistent with state and regional plans, but a goal espoused by nearly all Easton residents.

To better serve present and future residential needs of the town the Town Plan advocates the following additional measures:

- Re-establish permission in Town regulations, by right as a "permitted accessory use", for a limited-duration small accessory apartment restricted to one or two "over 60" family members of the resident property owner, covenanted to be discontinued when vacated.
 - Continue present "affordable accessory apartment" regulations governed by special permit for other accessory apartments, but revise regulations to simplify and encourage the application process.
 - Require that larger subdivisions (possibly five lots or more) provide a site plan for one or more dwelling sites engineered for potential accessory affordable apartment capability (septic, access, parking, etc.).
 - Consider providing for low-density age-restricted residential communities, on large sites, where the occupancy ratio in persons-per-acre will be within State guidelines for water supply watershed protection.
-

Chapter 5

TOWN DEVELOPMENT: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Land Use: Foundation of the Plan

Easton's character as a community is a direct outgrowth of the manner in which its 18,325 acres of land area has been settled and is in use today. The character of the Easton of the future will be largely determined by policies on land use which will comprise the essence of the Town Plan.

Table 5-1 (page 28), "Land Use By Zone: Town of Easton", reveals that about half of the town's land resource (46.7%) has been developed for various intensive uses, such as dwellings, institutions and roads. Moreover, within the undeveloped "half" a substantial proportion (38.4%) is not available for development because it consists of water bodies and permanently protected water supply or open space land.

While it is true that less than 15% of the town's land area remains "available" for new development, it is equally true that Easton lies within an intensely developed region and in close proximity to a number of urban centers. Because future life styles, economic conditions and development trends cannot be predicted with any certainty, the 61% of Easton's land area which is not permanent "greenspace" is subject to long-term pressures for change. The great value of a Town Plan is the opportunity it provides to shape inevitable change, especially through wise allocation of land use and natural resources, to protect important values in the face of an uncertain future.

Recent Town Development

While to a casual observer the town appears much the same as it was in 1975-77 when the first Town Plan was prepared, the current Land Use Map demonstrates that very significant changes have occurred over the past quarter century.

In the mid-1970's there were about 5,420 residents; now there are approximately 7,600, a 40% population increase. The 1977 Town Plan indicated about 4,650 acres of developed land in town (residential lots, roads, institutional, etc.) whereas now there are over 8,350 developed acres, an 80% increase. While most of the growth has been in residential lots, the most striking change has occurred in the amount of permanently reserved open space land. In 1977 there were just 203 acres of dedicated open space (1.1% of town area and now the total of preserved acreage stands at about 7,040 acres, which is 38.4% of Easton's land area. Two dramatic land acquisitions, by Nature Conservancy and the State of Connecticut of former Bridgeport Hydraulic Company watershed lands, constitute much of the added acreage but private donations to the Aspetuck Land Trust of several sizeable preserves and subdivision setbacks have also contributed significantly. As dedicated open space and land in residential development have escalated in area, vacant land (30.5% of Town area in 1977, now 10.6%) and land in agricultural use have correspondingly declined (farmland in 1977 was 880 acres, 733 acres remain).

(continues on page 31)

Table 5-1

LAND USE BY ZONE: TOWN OF EASTON

Source: Town Survey

	<u>"A" ZONE</u> <u>acres:</u>	<u>"B" ZONE</u> <u>acres:</u>	<u>TOWN TOTAL</u> <u>acres:</u>	<u>percent:</u>
<u>DEVELOPED LAND:</u>				
Residential	1,139	6,528	7,667	41.8%
Commercial	0	5	5	--
Public Institutions	8	42	50	0.3
Private Institutions	7	66	73	0.4
Active Recreation, Public	0	45	45	0.2
Active Recreation, Private	0	162	162	0.9
Utilities	5	16	21	0.1
Roads & Transportation	<u>137</u>	<u>404</u>	<u>541</u>	<u>3.0</u>
TOTAL DEVELOPED	1,296	7,268	8,564	46.7%
<u>UNDEVELOPED LAND:</u>				
Water Supply Land *	22	4,898	4,920	26.9%
Open Space, Public	31	251	282	1.5
Open Space, Private	9	1,024	1,033	5.6
Water Bodies**	4	805	809	4.4
Agriculture	0	783	783	4.3
Vacant Public	4	137	141	0.8
Vacant Private	<u>144</u>	<u>1,649</u>	<u>1,793</u>	<u>9.8</u>
TOTAL UNDEVELOPED	214	9,547	9,761	53.3%
TOTAL, ALL LAND AREA	1,510	16,815	18,325	100.0%

Explanatory Notes:

Refer to Town of Easton LAND USE Map 2001, updated 2003. Data sources include Town of Easton Assessor's maps, filed subdivision and plot plan maps, aerial photographs, USGS topographic maps (for road and natural feature locations), and selective field inspection. Residential areas have been plotted analytically to indicate excess acreage. Other developed uses have been plotted to record the extent of land area actually in use, or intensively developed, for the cited use. Except for water bodies and agriculture, each measured for actual extent, undeveloped land totals portray the extent of ownership.

* Water Supply Land as shown on LAND USE Map includes all present and 1998-2002 BHC property ownership (5,649 acres) comprising approximately 4,920 acres of land area and 729 acres of water area. As of late 2002 approximately 129 acres of improved property (dwellings, barns, office, dams, filtration plant, etc.) were retained by Aquarion Water Co. (successor to BHC) and 5,520 acres were jointly held by Aquarion, The Nature Conservancy and the State of Connecticut as permanent open space.

**Water bodies include BHC reservoirs (722 acres) and approximately 92 smaller ponds (87 acres).

Chapter 5

TOWN DEVELOPMENT: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Recent Town Development (continued)

Easton is now less rural and more developed, yet more assured than formerly of remaining a green and spacious place. The 1977 Town Plan foresaw a 1990's town population approaching 10,000 persons, yet we can now confidently project a maximum town growth to not more than 9,600 persons – which will take several decades more to be reached.

Land Potentially Available For Development

Easton's future development will be determined to a large extent by the amount and distribution of land which remains available for development.

The table Land Use By Zone: Town of Easton reveals that although the town is at present less than 50% "developed" in built-up uses of land only about 14% of town area (2,576 acres) consists of land which remains uncommitted, or available for new private development. This reflects the fact that approximately 6,850 acres (about 37% of town area) are now in permanent "greenspace", comprised of public and private open space, water supply lands and major water bodies. Of the 2,576 acres of land subject to development, moreover, more than 360 acres consists of wetlands, ponds, flood plain or very steep slopes. Some of the land apt to attract development (over 750 acres) is presently in agricultural use. Much of the remaining 1,800 + acres of private land is woodland and smaller parcels widely distributed throughout the town. The following analysis summarizes the potential for land use change.

TOTAL LAND AREA, Town of Easton	
(Source: Land Use Survey, 2002, updated 2003)	18,325 acres
-- Total Developed Land, January 2003, A & B Zones (includes residential, commercial, institutional, BHC improved parcels, active recreation, utilities & roads)	8,693 acres
-- Protected Open Space Land:	
BHC Class I, Nature Conservancy & State of Connecticut	5,520 acres
Town-owned open space land	282 acres
Aspetuck Land Trust preserves	<u>1,058</u> acres
Total Protected Open Space	6,860 acres
-- Vacant Public (Town-owned) Land	104 acres
-- Undevelopable Private Land:	
Water bodies	80 acres
Wetland, flood plain, steep slope	<u>284</u> acres
Vacant private land not suitable for development	<u>364</u> acres
-- Total Land Not Available For New Development.	16,021 acres

TOTAL DEVELOPABLE LAND (All Zones) 2,304 acres

Chapter 5

TOWN DEVELOPMENT: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Town Growth Capacity

The extent to which a community may grow and change in character is a function not only of the supply of land which remains available for development but, of equal importance, of the policies which are chosen to control future development. As noted in the earlier portion of this chapter Easton's long-standing three-acre residential zoning over nearly 92% of the town area, and long-held water supply land (which totaled 34% of Town area at its greatest extent, have effectively preserved the semi-rural, low-density residential character of the town.

Although the amount of land which remains to be developed or committed is relatively small (\pm 2,300 acres, about 12.5% of town area), the policies now chosen for future use of this land will have a significant long-range impact on the town for several reasons:

- much of the new development will be on poorer, more marginal or less suitable land, with consequently greater potential impact on the environment;
- some of the development will be "fill-in" character, such as splits of larger lots or new houses in close proximity to existing ones, resulting in some loss of character for existing residences or neighborhoods; and
- as the town develops further important opportunities for outdoor recreation, open space linkages and other public purposes may be lost as the larger parcels are subdivided.

The potential for Easton's growth has been examined under three sets of development assumptions -- maximum, mid-range, and low-growth.

In the estimates of potential additional dwellings which follow, the intensity of residential development reflects these assumptions as applied to the developable lands in the A (40,000 sq. ft. minimum lot) and B (3 acre minimum lot) Residential Zones. It is assumed in each case that present zoning and developed land remain unchanged, and that "affordable housing" developments or other forms of more intensive housing will not occur.

Maximum Potential Development (a) assumes 90% of all developable land (2,070 acres) will be intensely subdivided and used for new dwellings with minimal open space allocation. Average land consumption per new dwelling will be 1.2 acres in A Zone and 3.5 acres in B Zone. Roads, accessways and lot shape account for lot "oversize".

Mid-range Probable development (b) assumes that close to one-fourth of the total developable land will not be used for residential but set aside for open space or other purposes (including larger lots), and that at least 75% of the developable land will be intensely subdivided and used for new dwellings. Average land consumption per new dwelling will be the same as for (a) above.

Town Growth Capacity (continued)

Low-growth Initiative (c) assumes that a concerted effort is made to limit additional residential growth through adoption of more stringent development standards and a program to acquire or reserve significant additional lands for open space or other purposes. Under this hypothesis only 50% of the developable land will be intensely developed for residential use and stricter standards will increase average land consumption per new dwelling to 1.3 acres in A Zone and 3.6 acres in B Zone.

The potential development of vacant private land would be likely to yield:

- (a) Maximum Potential Development (Holding Capacity)
 - “A” Zone, 133 developable acres, 120 developed : 100 dwellings
 - “B” Zone, 2,167 developable acres, 1,950 developed : 557 dwellings
 - Total 657 additional dwellings
- (b) Mid-range Probable Development
 - “A” Zone, 133 developable acres, 100 developed : 83 dwellings
 - “B” Zone, 2,167 developable acres, 1,625 developed : 464 dwellings
 - Total 547 additional dwellings
- (c) Low-growth Initiative
 - “A” Zone, 133 developable acres, 67 developed : 51 dwellings
 - “B” Zone, 2,167 developable acres, 1,083 developed : 300 dwellings
 - Total 351 additional dwellings

Maximum Potential Development would forecast a Town population ultimately reaching 9,300 to 9,600 persons. The Low-growth Initiative would be likely to produce a “final” Town population in the range of 8,400 to 8,700 persons (present population estimate: 7,500 persons).

The Town Plan (see Chapters 10 and 11) projects that some of the land currently available for development will not develop due to topographic and other natural limitations, especially if the Plan’s recommendations for stronger development standards are adopted. The Plan also recognizes that additional land may be reserved for open space, either by purchase or by donation. Yet the rapid increase in land values currently occurring, and the probability that Town expenditures for further open space acquisition will be small, implies that the “Low Growth Initiative” would also be unrealistic.

Consequently the Plan projects a modified, lower-growth version of the “Mid-range” estimate as the most realistic for Easton. Approximately 480 to 500 additional dwellings are probable before the town reaches “saturation”, at a potential population of approximately 9,000 persons.

Chapter 5

TOWN DEVELOPMENT: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Policy Proposals

The following recommendations, for future policy on the use of land are more fully described in other chapters of this report and on the Plan Map.

1. Protection of the public water supply watershed in all sections of the town, as recommended in the State Plan of Conservation and Development and the Greater Bridgeport Regional Plan, is essential to the health, safety and property values of Easton and the most fundamental element of the Town Plan. Residential densities in public water supply watershed areas should not exceed one family per every two contiguous acres of upland soil on a site, or two to two and a half bedrooms per upland acre. All uses should be held to strict standards to protect the quality of surface and groundwaters.
2. Maintain the established low-density residential character of Easton, as shown on the Town Plan, generally the one-family-per-three-acres and the one-family-per-acre areas as shown thereon.
3. Preserve presently established open space lands, both public and private, as shown on the Town Plan, in their present natural condition for conservation of the town's environment and for passive recreation only. Where shown on the Plan, additional lands should be acquired for trail linkage or natural feature protection to complement existing open space tracts.
4. Proposed Open Space lands, as shown on the Town Plan, should be preserved either as dedicated open space or as very-low-density use in concert with extensive conservation easements. Proposed Active Recreation lands, as shown on the Town Plan, should be acquired or reserved and developed for public recreation facilities.
5. Adopt more comprehensive development standards in Town land use regulations to protect the present and future developed character of the town, with attention to marginal soils, steep slopes, lot layout, land filling and regrading, roadside planting and tree preservation, design review for nonresidential buildings and sites, performance standards for environmental impacts, and similar areas.
6. Encourage future public, quasi-public and service uses to locate in the central area of the town, as generally outlined on the Town Plan, in order to strengthen community life, enhance accessibility and efficiency, and to avoid the sprawl effect of institutional uses dispersed among outlying residential neighborhoods.
7. Prepare plans and consider appropriate regulations to protect the distinctive character, landscape and historic structures within the several established community centers shown on the Town Plan.
8. Age-restricted residential use would be beneficial to the town by encouraging senior residents to remain in the community, and by strengthening the residential quality of the town, wherever possible on larger sites within established densities.

Chapter 5

TOWN DEVELOPMENT: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Policy Proposals (continued)

9. Conservation residential design, based on flexible layout for preservation of site amenities within established zoning densities, would significantly enhance the character of future development as well as achieve energy-efficient patterns of land development, and should be incorporated as an option in Town regulations.
10. To preserve farms and other large tracts, very-small-scale carefully controlled alternative uses compatible with watershed protection and residential character could be considered where part of a site plan for permanent protection of a significantly-larger part of the same tract. Such uses might include quiet low-impact research facilities, administrative offices, technology libraries, private schools or clubs, or age-restricted housing, subject to special findings on environmental protection and residential compatibility, public hearing and quality design review by the Town.
11. Town purchase at an early date of one or more large tracts of land, to supplement the recent acreage acquired on Morehouse Road, would be a prudent investment in stabilizing the town's growth rate and service demands while providing opportunities for long-range development of extensive recreation facilities or other unforeseen future needs of the Town.
12. Due to its extensive soils with severe limitations for development, its extensive areas of public water supply watershed, and its lack of supporting urban infrastructure (especially the lack of water supply in most undeveloped sections and public sewerage in all sections), Easton is neither suitable nor capable of accommodating housing development of greater densities than present zoning provides.

Chapter 6

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Town Infrastructure – A Perspective

In earlier years, before Easton began its growth from a rural farming town to an exurban residential community, public facilities were a simple matter. Roads were cared for by farmers and ox teams contracted by the Town, often with equipment stored at the first selectman's barn. There was no town hall, or public offices – records (including the valuable land records and tax rolls) were kept in the private residences of Town officials. Education, grades one through eight only, was provided in approximately a dozen small neighborhood schools, typically a one-room building presided over by a single teacher. Most Town business was transacted at the annual Town Meeting, usually held at the Staples Academy.

As the town began to grow and transform during the 1920's the importance of organized public facilities became apparent. In 1930 Samuel Staples Elementary School was built, consolidating all grade school education in one building; the original portion is still in use today as part of a complex which consists of the 1930 building and six additions. A one-story brick town hall was constructed shortly thereafter, in 1934, and doubled in size in 1997. By 1958 the need for local secondary education in Easton and Easton's neighbor town to the north, Redding, resulted in creation of Regional School District 9 and the construction of Joel Barlow High School, originally serving grades 7 through 12 for both towns. Continued growth in population and school enrollment soon forced each of the two towns to build a "middle" school, serving grades 5 through 8; Helen Keller School was constructed in 1964 and has been most recently enlarged in 2001.

Over the years a wide range of public and quasi-public facilities and programs have come into existence in response to the needs of an increasingly sophisticated community. A volunteer fire company was organized during the 1920's and a firehouse constructed in 1926. During the 1940's youth recreation facilities were created at Toth Park, named for its founder. The Town's Police Commission was established in 1937 and a paid force initiated shortly thereafter; the Police Department, housed in the ground floor of the Town Hall, now consists of fifteen professional officers. An expanding network of Town roads led to the creation of a professionally-directed Public Works Department during the 1960's and construction of a Town Garage in 1970, since enlarged with additional buildings and equipment. Additional recreation fields were created during the mid-1970's with the Town's acquisition of the 31 acres comprising "Veterans' Park". An important cultural need was addressed in 1984 with construction of a Town library, as a wing at the rear of the Town Hall, and this was replaced in 1995 with a new and much more spacious facility at the corner of Morehouse and Center Roads.

Chapter 6

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Town Infrastructure -- A Perspective (continued)

In 1989 a new and much larger fire house was constructed by the Volunteer Fire Company, with Town assistance, at the corner of Center and Sport Hill Roads. The old fire house is now occupied by the Town's Volunteer Emergency Medical Service (originally founded in 1946 as the Easton Ambulance Association). Contemporary youth recreation needs have recently been addressed in a community-wide effort which resulted, in 2002, in construction of the Easton Community Center on land leased from the Town in Veterans' Park. The Town's most recent addition to its major infrastructure is its acquisition of a 127 - acre tract on Morehouse Road, the northerly portion of which is the site of the new Samuel Staples Elementary School, constructed in 2005.

As is apparent from the evolution of public facilities in Easton, summarized above, cooperation between public and private entities has been a consistent keynote in building much of the Town's infrastructure. The Town Plan recognizes the importance volunteerism has played in getting to where we are, and strongly endorses the principle of continued constructive collaboration between citizens and Town government in meeting the facility needs of the future.

Anticipating Future Needs

Easton is projected to grow, in future years, by another 20% or so in population (see Chapters 4 and 5).

While much of the Town's physical plant and array of facilities is in good shape, it is inevitable that the growing demand for services needed by townspeople and the obsolescence of some of these facilities will require new capital investment by the Town. The current program by the Town to replace the outmoded and overcrowded present Samuel Staples School is a case in point.

The first step in this analysis is an evaluation of the adequacy of present major facilities and a determination as to whether the sites on which they sit can reasonably or economically accommodate future space needs. In the tabular compilation which follows the next section (Table 6-1, pages 47-49) the seventeen major public facilities now serving the Town of Easton are analyzed for adequacy and site expansion space. Recommendations are presented in the final section of this chapter.

Chapter 6

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Town Services and Facilities

The public services and infrastructure which serve Easton fall into eight broad categories, discussed below. Details of each major public facility site are presented in Table 6-1, with an evaluation of expansion capability.

(2) Town Government

Most of the Town's municipal administration facilities are accommodated at the Town Hall, located at 225 Center Road, with the notable exception of the offices of the Town Engineer and Public Works Department, at 15 Westport Road, and the Park and Recreation Commission, located at Veterans' Park to the rear of Helen Keller School. The Town Hall offices include those of the First Selectman, Town Clerk, Assessor, Treasurer, Tax Collector, Registrars, Building Department, Conservation Commission, Health Department, Planning and Zoning Commission, and Zoning Board of Appeals, comprising a staff of 20 – 24 persons in eleven departments. The Town Police Department, staffed by 15 officers, 10 special officers, and 12 other staff is housed at the basement level of the Town Hall. In addition to these facilities there is a single conference room, in daily and evening use, with a capacity of approximately 30 persons. Most of the offices, at both levels of the building, are crowded with narrow passageways through work spaces, congested file areas, minimal desk and table areas, and a shortage of daytime conference space. Parking available to staff and visitors consists of 14 spaces at curb on Morehouse Road and 13 spaces at curb on Center Road (all of which require backing out into road traffic). Overflow parking space is located in the Library parking lot across Morehouse Road, shared by the Library, the Town Hall and Police Department.

In addition to the schools, the fire and rescue services, the public works department and the park and recreation administration, all located at other sites, the Town is currently served by approximately two dozen volunteer boards and commissions. The majority of these boards meet regularly at the Town Hall. Most spaces in the present building, remodeled in 1997 from the original Town Library, are effectively managed. However the continued growth of Town programs and staff, Town population increase, inefficiencies in the presently available space, and the need for encouraging citizen participation in Town affairs all strongly demonstrate that a long-term solution for centralized Town Hall and civic meeting space is much needed.

Chapter 6

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Town Services and Facilities (continued)

(2) Public Schools

Easton's school system until 2005 included the original Samuel Staples Elementary School (grades K – 4), comprised of a rambling layout of 26 classrooms and 6 portable classrooms. Helen Keller Middle School (currently grades 6,7 and 8) was enlarged in 2001 to 24 classrooms and 16 other instruction spaces. Joel Barlow High School (grades 9 – 12), a regional facility is shared with and located in Redding. The high school has recently undergone a major renovation and enlargement in which 11 classrooms, 4 computer labs, 5 science labs, 4 special education rooms, and 3 art/music areas have been added, increasing the school's capacity to 1,200 students.

In 2005 construction was completed on the new Samuel Staples Elementary School, serving pre-kindergarten through grade 5, at the Town-owned site at Morehouse and Banks Roads (see line 4 of Table 6 – 1). This 41-classroom facility, which has a present capacity of 830 to 850 students, is expected to accommodate future enrollments for at least a decade. While the Town considers various options for public use of the old Staples School a major portion of that building has been leased to a private academy.

Public elementary school enrollment, as of October 1, 2006, was 1,149 students. Of this enrollment 32 students were in pre-kindergarten, 749 were in kindergarten through fifth grade, and 368 were in grades 6 through 8. The pre-k through grade 8 enrollment, 1,149 students, compares favorably with the combined capacity of the Helen Keller and new Staples Schools, approximately 1,460 students. School system projections of enrollment for the next decade anticipate between 1,262 and 1,402 students in Easton's grades pre-k through 8 by the 2012-13 school year.

Joel Barlow High School, with an October 1, 2006 enrollment of 970 students is projected by District 9 to have an enrollment within the range of 926 to 1,193 students in the 2012-13 school year, which compares favorably with the school's newly enlarged capacity of 1,200 students.

Should Easton's population increase over the next two or three decades to its maximum capacity under existing zoning, and should school enrollment retain its present proportion to the town's population, the Town will probably be looking at a future in which there will be between 1,380 and 1,440 students in the pre-k through

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Chapter 6

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Town Services and Facilities (continued)

(2) Public Schools (continued)

eighth grades – which just fits within the capacity added by construction of the new elementary school. However, assumptions and projections are always at risk of change due to unforeseen events, and it would be prudent to reserve sufficient space adjacent to the new elementary school site to accommodate additional school growth if ever needed. For this purpose a total of 32 to 35 acres should be allocated, representing a modest addition of site space to the 28 acres which will effectively be used for the new elementary school as presently planned (including playfields, septic areas, stormwater detention, parking and setback areas now on the school site plan).

The current enrollment of 970 students at Joel Barlow High School represents about 5.9% of the combined population totals of Easton and Redding, approximately 16,000 persons. By consultant estimate, remaining growth capacity for the two towns, combined, is about 1,350 additional single-family dwelling units, which postulates a full-to-capacity growth of Easton and Redding to a two-town population of approximately 20,400 persons. If the grades 9 through 12 enrollment remains at the same proportion to the total population as at present, the Joel Barlow enrollment at “ultimate” growth of the two towns would be 1,204 students, or exactly at the newly-enlarged capacity.

It is therefore apparent that this newly-enlarged secondary school will have adequate capacity for the foreseeable future. While the Joel Barlow High School site has reached the limit of its practical development potential, there is no apparent need for site enlargement or additional facilities planning. In the view of school administrators, the high school in its present configuration is at an optimum size to support a wide curriculum with effective class sizes, and it would not be effective in terms of cost or educational quality for either town to undertake creation of a separate local high school.

School administration offices for Regional District 9 (Easton, Redding and Joel Barlow High School) have been housed for several years in rented office space at 605 Main Street in Monroe. The central office staff, currently 10 persons including the superintendent and other professionals, serves three boards of education and administers an establishment of five schools, approximately 350 staff and 3,350 students. The administration has compiled an analysis of central office space needs, based on a potential staff of 13 persons and approximately 20 specialized work station and facility areas, which indicates a need for 3,655 square feet of floor space. In the administration’s view a new central office should be flexible in design, possibly with moveable partitions, and the soon-to-be retired Staples School could provide an ideal future location for the central office.

Chapter 6

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Town Services and Facilities (continued)

(3) Parks and Recreation

Easton's public recreation facilities have recently taken a giant leap forward in several areas. Since 2001 have occurred the construction and staffing of the privately-funded Easton Community Center at Veteran's Park, the construction of two new ballfields (pee-wee baseball and soccer/baseball) at Veterans' Park, acquisition by the Town of a 127-acre tract on Morehouse Road with excellent potential for recreational use, and authorization for two new regulation-size playfields to be constructed at the Morehouse Road site in conjunction with the new elementary school. These new facilities join older Town recreation fields at four locations: Toth Park (#14, Table 6-1), a 4-acre baseball field for youth leagues; Veterans' Park, a 7-acre multi-purpose sports field north of the Park and Recreation Commission building (#9, Table 6-1); Helen Keller School, a 3-acre soccer field in front of the school (#3, Table 6-1); and Staples School, a 4-acre multi-purpose ballfield and running track at the rear of the school. In addition the Park and Recreation Commission maintains playgrounds at both schools, two tennis courts at Keller School and two tennis courts at Veterans' Park, as well as the outdoor grounds at both schools and at the Town Hall and the Town Library. The Town swimming area, long maintained at Toth Park, is not currently available due to water quality issues.

In 2005 Plans for two new ballfields on the Town's Morehouse Road property were approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission and eventually constructed in 2006. A wide array of youth recreation programs are conducted throughout the year by the Park and Recreation Commission Department regular staff with assistance from a temporary summer staff.

In response to rapidly growing participation in its programs and public demand for additional facilities the Park and Recreation Commission in 2001 prepared a six-point "Field Development" plan. The plan advocated the development of additional baseball, soccer, lacrosse, tennis and other facilities, estimated to require 24 to 28 acres of new land area. By late 2004 two of the proposed field areas had been developed at Veterans' Park, totaling 2 ½ acres of new field space. The remaining facilities in the Commission's program will require 22 to 24 acres of additional land area for proper development, space which is not available at existing park or school sites but for which the level fields at the Town's newly-acquired Morehouse Road tract are admirably suited.

The experience of other towns in the area indicates that the growing popularity of new field sports and more intensive use of playfields will require additional field space for pre-season practice and between-seasons field rehabilitation, as well as the space required to accommodate increased participation from town population

Town Services and Facilities (continued)

(3) Parks and Recreation (continued)

The future may also bring additional demand for public recreation programs of types now popular in other communities, such as swimming, court games, concert grounds, ice skating and winter sports slopes, par-3 golf, curling or jogging tracks. It would be prudent to allocate sufficient land area now so that recreational space needs of the future may be met. The Town's quality of life is directly influenced by the quality and availability of its recreational assets.

Passive recreation resources, such as hiking trails, nature preserves, scenic and historic sites are also a vital part of Easton's recreational ambience, and are discussed in Chapter 3.

(4) Social and Cultural Facilities

Complementing the Town's programs for youth are the facilities and outreach programs provided for adults, especially retirees and the physically handicapped, by the Easton Senior Center. This privately funded organization operates from space in the basement level of Samuel Staples School under a 99-year lease from the Town, which commenced in 1989. A wide array of social, educational and recreational programs is offered at the Senior Center, which is open five days a week from 8am to 5pm and occasionally on weekends, under the supervision of a director and assistant. Attendance averages between 500 and 700 persons per week. Transportation to the Senior Center and throughout the local area, for those in need, is provided daily by van operated by the Center. While the majority of the persons served by the Center's programs are current Easton residents some are former residents who have moved to other towns nearby to find housing more suitable for seniors.

Problems associated with the Senior Center's current quarters are threefold: inadequate space for current and needed programs, a shortage of parking space, and problems associated with the building (plumbing, ventilation, poor room arrangement, etc.). The approximately 5,900 square feet of usable floor area is only half the space needed for major programs such as luncheons, audio-visuals and other events. The director states that people are frequently turned away due to legal occupancy limitations and more space is urgently needed for health services, kitchen, art and music rooms, ceramics, reading, private conferences, director and outreach worker offices, equipment storage, and other functions. The Center's van is stored in a makeshift garage at the rear of the EMS building on Sport Hill Road. Parking is occasionally in short supply, a burden for seniors and handicapped persons. Despite the space and building limitations there are many positive attributes to the present site, in the view of the director; these include its centrality, its quietness, its

proximity to the Library and Town Hall, and its garden at the rear. In its day to day
Chapter 6

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Town Services and Facilities (continued)

(4) Social and Cultural Facilities (continued)

operations the Senior Center is in close contact with the Emergency Medical Service, the Town Hall, the Municipal Agent for the Elderly and the nine-member Senior Center Advisory Board.

The other major quasi-public cultural facility in the town is the Easton Public Library. This Town-supported facility is located on a 4.5-acre site at the corner of Morehouse and Center Roads, opposite the Town Hall. The Library's 14,800 – square feet of floor space is housed in an attractive brick-façade one-story building constructed in 1995, with ample parking and room for future expansion. In the 2001-02 year the Library, which is open six days a week, contained over 56,000 books plus DVD's and enjoyed an annual circulation of more than 118,000 items. Children's literacy, an adult summer reading program, an expanded web page, a cooperative outreach to the two elementary schools, and a "community calendar" maintained for the many activities, meetings and events throughout the town are active on-going programs of service which the Library renders to the community. The "Community Room" of the Library functions as a much-used meeting hall for many civic organizations, public hearings and other Town events. Library staff consists of a director, a children's librarian (assistant director), and thirteen other staff persons.

(5) Public Safety

Protection of the lives, safety and property of Easton residents is the mission of the town's three public safety services – police, fire and emergency medical.

The Easton Police Department, which is governed by a five-member Board of Police Commissioners, is comprised of a chief, captain, lieutenant, two sergeants, and ten officers, all trained professionals. There are, in addition, eight special officers, three of whom have administrative or records duties. The Department works closely with the town's Emergency Medical Service in a "First Responder" capacity; all patrol cars are equipped with defibrillators and all of its officers are certified to administer defibrillation in cases of cardiac arrest. Joint training exercises are held with the EMS and many of the police officers have emergency training for various medical and accident traumas. The department also supervises the Communications Center, staffed by three full-time and seven part-time dispatchers, which is operated 24 hours a day and 7 days a week to receive and dispatch all emergency police, medical and fire calls. In addition to these duties the department directs the Municipal Animal

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Chapter 6
PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Town Services and Facilities (continued)

(5) Public Safety (continued)

Control Department, staffed by one full-time and three part-time animal control officers. In matters of law enforcement the department in its 2002-03 year dealt with nearly 6,700 complaints and investigations and made 1,080 arrests.

Housing for the Police Department is in the basement of the Town Hall at 225 Center Road, with ground-level entrance from Morehouse Road. Crowded conditions are evident in the approximately 6,000 square feet of floor area which includes offices, files, computers, special purpose areas, communications center, and three lock-up cells. Department patrol cars are parked across the street at the Library parking lot and two other police vehicles – the “D.A.R.E.” (youth anti-drug) car and speed-monitor trailer – are garaged at the EMS building on Sport Hill Road.

The Easton Volunteer Emergency Medical Service (EMS) began in 1946 as the Easton Ambulance Association and has evolved into a life-saving service provided by trained emergency personnel under the general supervision of the Town-appointed five-member Emergency Medical Services Commission. There are currently thirty volunteers including the service chief and a small cadre of full or part-time paid personnel, all of whom are certified emergency medical technicians or paramedics with advanced life-support skills. Volunteers provide 24-hour protection with personnel on station daily from 7AM to midnight and back-up paramedic capability from other towns in the Southwestern Regional EMS network. Full round-the-clock service is presently hampered by lack of overnight sleeping accommodations for volunteers at the EMS building. Training sessions are held monthly, often with police personnel participating since police officers are typically the “first responders”. However EMS volunteers respond to all fires, accidents and serious medical emergencies. Equipment in use includes two well-equipped rescue vehicles, defibrillators, oxygen masks, litters, protective gear, portable radio phones and a radio base station at the EMS building. An “all terrain” vehicle, not now available, is urgently needed for rescue work in difficult locations.

Conditions are crowded at the present Town-owned EMS building on Sport Hill Road, the former firehouse which grew by multiple additions from a one-bay garage in 1926 to its present size. The first floor accommodates the two rescue vehicles, two police vehicles, an inadequate conference room, the radio room, a small lounge, desks and files. The second story is unusable, except for storage, due to code-compliance problems. An EMS plan for a desired new one-story 8,400 square-foot building would include four garage bays, a 34-person training room, a “day room”

Chapter 6
PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Town Services and Facilities (continued)

(5) Public Safety (continued)

and dispatcher's office, a conference room with two offices, an exercise/game room, storage and supply space, lavatory/shower rooms and bunkrooms for overnight volunteers.

Fire protection for the town is provided through the collaborative efforts of the five-member Board of Fire Commissioners and the Easton Volunteer Fire Company #1. Under this arrangement the Town provides four full-time paid firefighters who maintain 24 hour, 7 day coverage from the firehouse, and also provides fire fighting apparatus which currently includes three pumper trucks and two brush fire vehicles. In addition the town funds the Office of the Fire Marshal, comprised of four part-time personnel including the Fire Marshal and three deputies, who conduct inspections of public buildings, issue burning permits, investigate the causes of fires, enforce the Fire Safety Code, review plans for water supply reservoirs in new subdivisions, and disseminate fire prevention information. The privately-supported Easton Volunteer Fire Co. #1 provides the major manpower for fire fighting, building alarms, search and rescue, hazardous waste spills, and extrication from motor vehicle accidents. In the 2005 calendar year the Fire Company responded to 462 calls, of which 48 were motor vehicle accidents.

The Fire Company, a private non-profit corporation, is the owner of the 2.5 acre site at the corner of Center and Sport Hill Roads on which the fire house is situated , and also of an adjoining 2.1-acre vacant lot to the west as well as the triangular green in front of the firehouse on which the annual Fire Company Carnival is held. Constructed in 1989, the multi-bay 1 2/3 -story masonry fire house is sound and spacious, providing shelter and storage for all departmental equipment as well as an apartment for the on-duty firefighter and upper story meeting facilities. The site is strategically situated at a confluence of major roads near the center of town population which aids response time. In common with other towns Easton is experiencing difficulty in recruiting volunteers willing and able to contribute the many hours of training and drill required to be an effective firefighter, and "mutual aid" calls to neighboring towns are increasingly necessary.

Chapter 6
PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Town Services and Facilities (continued)

(6) Public Works

The Town Public Works Department is responsible for repairs, maintenance and improvement of Easton's 93-mile network of Town roads, including drainage, resurfacing, snow plowing, bridges and culverts, catch basins, curbs and guide rails, street and traffic signs, and right-of-way care such as mowing, brush removal and roadside trees. Operations of the department are under the supervision of the Town Engineer and Director of Public Works, assisted by a Highway Supervisor and staff of twelve other employees. Department headquarters is located on a 3.2-acre triangular site bounded by Bibbins, Sport Hill and Westport Roads which has been excavated to create a level staging yard for trucks, storage of materials and equipment. The largest building on the site, with approximately 8,400 square feet of floor area, houses the department's maintenance garage and office. To the rear of the principal building is a vehicle and equipment garage of approximately 4,000 square feet, the town dog pound and kennel area, and storage area for road sand, salt, fuel tanks and other materials. Construction of a 6,840 sq. ft. salt storage building near the Bibbins Road side of the site is scheduled for the near future. Except for roadside banks 15 to 30 feet high along the southerly and easterly sides of the site and a shallow landscaped area along a portion of the Westport Road frontage, the entire site is intensely used and has little room for expansion or additional facilities. Portions of two other Town-owned properties, the closed 12-acre landfill site on North Street and the recently acquired 127-acre Morehouse Road property, have in fact been recently used by the department for overflow storage of pipe, chip seal sweepings and other materials. Additional space for department operations is needed.

(7) Utility Services

Virtually all providers of various public utility services in Easton are private entities. The dominant public service companies are United Illuminating Company for electric power distribution, Southern New England Telephone (SBC) for telecommunication ground lines, and Aquarion Water Company (AWC, formerly Bridgeport Hydraulic Co.) for public water service. In addition wireless telecommunication service is provided throughout the area by several of the seven telecom companies licensed to operate in Connecticut, from two towers in Easton (at the North Street town Landfill site and from a privately-owned site on Everett Road) as well as from several towers in the nearby area. Wireless towers, now regulated by the State Siting Council, are controversial because of their height, typically 150 feet or more, and visual impact on nearby residential areas.

Chapter 6

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Town Services and Facilities (continued)

(7) Utility Services (continued)

Five recently proposed tower sites have been disapproved by the Planning and Zoning Commission -- two near Sport Hill Road north of Center Road, one on Burr Street, and two on Black Rock Road. Town efforts to negotiate alternative sites have often been rebuffed by the service provider applicants.

Solid waste collection is handled by private contractors who transport this material to the Regional Resource Recovery plant (State-licensed incinerator) in Bridgeport. The Town has a Recycling Committee which operates, through the Department of Public Works, a curbside pickup program for recyclable materials and also, with Trumbull and Monroe, a regional drop-off center and transfer station (in Trumbull) for scrap metal, newspaper, tires and other recyclable products. In 2001-02 Easton generated 2,615 tons of solid waste and 868 tons of recycled material.

Easton has no sanitary sewers although such facilities exist close to the southeastern portion of the town in adjacent sections of Fairfield and Trumbull. Rigorous monitoring of on-site sewage disposal systems, especially in the "A" Residence Zone where minimum lot sizes are only 40,000 square feet, together with required connection to public water service where available, has successfully avoided the impact of a State-mandated sewage collection and treatment system. The State Department of Environmental Protection also monitors reported hazardous waste discharge sites; as of February 2004 of 37 identified sites in Easton (primarily leaking underground tanks) 29 had been remediated or were in the process of correction.

School bus transportation is another private "utility" which serves the Town of Easton, under contract negotiated on behalf of the Board of Education. There are currently 18 buses in operation over Easton roads to serve the three schools. Because of lack of local parking space the buses must travel daily to Danbury or Bridgeport for overnight storage at extra operating cost to the Town.

Public water service is provided to several sections of Easton by Aquarion Water Company. AWC's system of distribution mains extends throughout the southeastern ("A" Residence Zone) section, covering virtually every street from Laurel Drive and Flat Rock Drive southward to the Fairfield line, and extending northward along Sport Hill Road to Helen Keller School. Small AWC water main extensions into Easton from Monroe serve the Stepney Road / Hayes Street / Fieldstone Drive neighborhood and from Fairfield serve the Burr Street Neighborhood. A 36-inch trunk line from the AWC water filtration plant at Easton Lake dam extends southward to Fairfield through South Park Avenue.

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Chapter 6
PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Town Services and Facilities (continued)

(7) Utility Services (continued)

Concurrent with the town's plans for the new elementary school water service was extended northward in 2005 along Morehouse Road to Banks Road, and beyond to the Town Hall and Library at Center Road. Fire hydrants are provided at regular intervals throughout the watermain served area.

A major part of Easton's land area lies in the watersheds of four AWC watersupply reservoirs, Easton Lake and the Aspetuck, Hemlocks and Saugatuck Reservoirs. Water from these sources is the primary supply to 337,000 people in towns nearby and a supplemental supply to another 180,000 persons in towns along the shoreline from Norwalk to Greenwich. The AWC system delivers an average of 51 million gallons per day to its users; average daily consumption per household is 216 gallons. The water company constantly tests its source water for 90 regulated compounds and reports that results for the Easton Lake and the Hemlocks Reservoirs are consistently above EPA standards for quality and purity. Continuing protection of the watersheds from septic, pesticide, chemical and hydrocarbon pollutants is a high priority for AWC and the Town of Easton.

(8) Quasi-public Institutions

There is a strong tradition of volunteerism in Easton, whether civic, cultural, social or religious. Many citizens serve as members of public boards, coach youth athletics, perform charitable service, or work to make community life better for their neighbors. The importance of private institutions which serve the common good is recognized in the Town's Zoning Regulations which allow these beneficial uses to live and grow within residential environs. The Town Plan recognizes that vital services required as Easton grows toward its full population capacity will continue to be provided in a constructive partnership between the Town and its many civic organizations and institutions. Such constructive collaboration may include recreation programs, social service programs, services to the elderly and disadvantaged, historic preservation, civic beautification, emergency medical and disaster response, trails development in open space lands, cultural events and many other areas of civic need.

An incomplete listing of Easton's many private civic institutions would include its six churches, two recreation clubs, two service organizations (Exchange Club and Lions Club), six nursery schools, two museums (Historical Society), the Volunteer Fire Company and the Volunteer Emergency Medical Service, the Easton Community Center, and the open space lands and trails of the Aspetuck Land Trust. All have a role to play in Easton's future.

Table 6-1
MAJOR PUBLIC FACILITIES
Town of Easton

PUBLIC FACILITY Locations	Ownership & Present Uses	Site Area (acres)		Buildings On Site Stories	Floor Area (sq. ft.)	Evaluation of Condition & Potential for Expansion
		Total	Developed			
(1) TOWN HALL 225 Center Road	Town of Easton Municipal offices & Police Department	1.34	1.10	1 & 2	7,830 6,000	Sound. Original portion (1937) + addition (library, 1969). Both remodeled & enlarged, 1997. Site slope and lack of septic area limit expansion.
(2) OLD SAMUEL STAPLES SCHOOL 680 Morehouse Road	Town of Easton Private academy (under lease) and Town Senior Center	11.59	7.70 (excl. playfield)	1 & 2	69,200	Structurally sound but with recent maintenance problems (roof deterioration, possible mold). Rambling layout, constructed in stages: 1930, 1945, 1949, 1954, 1958, 1970, 1988. Portables recently added. 32 classrooms (incl. portables), plus 2 gymnasias, 1 auditorium, 1 library, 4 special ed rooms. Playfield at rear (approx. 3.8 acres). Town senior center housed at lower level; see (7) below. Inadequate parking, septic and site space curtail expansion potential. Town school use was replaced by new elementary school on Morehouse Road in 2005. Appropriate for alternative uses.
(3) HELEN KELLER SCHOOL 360 Sport Hill Road	Town of Easton Middle School	27.14	13.10 (excl. soccer field, access road, tennis courts, pond, etc.)	2	84,850	Sound. Original unit built in 1964 and enlarged in 2001. Currently 24 classrooms, 1 gymnasium, 1 library, 3 laboratories, 4 special ed rooms, 9 special purpose rooms (art, music, industrial ed, etc.). Overflow parking provided in adjacent Veterans Park parking lot (newly constructed to primarily serve expanded school). On-site expansion potential is approx. 2.75 acres; any additional would encroach on soccer fields, wetlands or Veterans Park.
(4) NEW SAMUEL STAPLES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SITE Corner of Morehouse & Banks Roads - 515 Morehouse Road	Town of Easton Elementary school site and recreation fields	18.90	-	-	-	Northeasterly corner portion of 127.20 acre tract purchased in 2000. New elementary school (preK-grade 5), constructed in 2005, replaced Old Staples School, providing 41 classrooms with full range of support facilities, plus 2 playfields, for capacity of 930-950 students. Adjacent Town-owned land to south provides ample site expansion capacity. (See next section below.)

(continued on next page)

Table 6-1 (continued)
MAJOR PUBLIC FACILITIES
Town of Easton

PUBLIC FACILITY Locations	Ownership & Present Uses	Site Area (acres)		Buildings On Site	Evaluation of Condition & Potential for Expansion
		Total	Developed		
(5) MOREHOUSE ROAD TRACT West side of Morehouse Rd. south of Banks Rd.	Town of Easton Recreation fields and vacant land	108.30 (excludes 18.9 acre elementary school site)	--	--	Conservation easements protect western portion (11.5 acres) and a specimen oak tree at center (2.5 acres). Steep slopes and wetlands in southerly portion (approx. 30 acres) limit potential in that area. Level to gently sloping terrain adjacent to Morehouse Road (approx. 34 acres) is well suited to active recreation (additional fields) or future school use.
(6) EASTON LIBRARY 691 Morehouse Rd., at corner of Center Rd.	Town of Easton Public Library & Community Room	4.56	3.40	1	Sound and spacious structure, constructed 1995. 61 developed parking spaces provide supplemental parking for Town Hall/Police Dept. on opposite corner of Morehouse Rd. Undeveloped area for 32 additional parking spaces is at rear of building. Approx. expansion area (south side) is 1.0 acre.
(7) SENIOR CENTER 680 Morehouse Rd.,	Town of Easton Senior Center	--	--	1	Structurally sound but inefficient layout; basement area of Staples School. Facilities need updating and expansion to serve program.
(8) PUBLIC WORKS FACILITY 15 Westport Rd.	Town of Easton Public Works Dept office, garage, yard; Town dog pound	3.20	3.20	1	Structurally sound utility buildings (3). Salt shed (6,840 sq. ft.) authorized for construction in near future. Site is fully utilized for buildings, equipment and materials storage; no expansion space.
(9) VETERANS' PARK 366 Sport Hill Rd.	Town of Easton Park & Recreation Cmsn. office and maintenance garage; public park includes ballfields, tennis courts and parking lots	27.50 (excludes 3.96 acre area leased to Easton Community Center)	23.50	1	Utility garage (sound) houses park maintenance equipment and small office, both areas very congested and overcrowded. Approx. 0.3 acre adjoining building is available for potential addition(s). Park site is near full development capacity; wetlands and buffer against residential area restrict small undeveloped areas.
(10) EASTON COMMUNITY CENTER 355 Sport Hill Rd.	Town of Easton (site leased to Easton Community Center Inc.) Youth recreation.	3.96	3.70	1	Sound (constructed 2002), privately-owned building on leased site within Veterans Park, provides indoor social and recreation facilities for youth. Depends on adjacent Town-owned parking lot for overflow parking. No significant expansion space within site lease area.

Table 6-1 (continued)
MAJOR PUBLIC FACILITIES
Town of Easton

PUBLIC FACILITY Locations	Ownership & Present Uses	Site Area (acres)		Buildings On Site Stories	Floor Area (sq. ft.)	Evaluation of Condition & Potential for Expansion
		Total	Developed			
(11) FIRE DEPARTMENT 1 Center Rd. 19 Center Rd. 435 Sport Hill Rd.	Easton Volunteer Fire Company #1, Inc. Fire Station Vacant Lot "Firehouse Green"	2.50 2.10 0.40	1.40 - -	2 - -	7,650 - -	Structurally sound, multi-bay ground level fire apparatus garage; meeting room(s) and apartment on 2 nd floor. Level vacant lot to west provides ample expansion space. Approx. 1 acre of wetlands limits potential use to east side. Vacant triangle between Center, Banks & Sport Hill Roads. Insufficient size for building.
(12) POLICE DEPARTMENT 225 Center Rd.	Town of Easton Police Station	- (In lower level of Town Hall south wing entrance from Morehouse Road)	-	1	6,000	Sound. Quarters expanded from original basement location in 1997. Configuration of building and adjacent site slopes severely limit expansion potential. Police vehicle parking shares library parking lot on opposite side of Morehouse Road.
(13) EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE 448 Sport Hill Rd.	Town of Easton EMS station	0.52	0.20	2	6,250	Fair condition (77 years old), former fire house, partially on street r.o.w. Narrowness of lot and side yard access, lack of available parking, limit expansion potential.
(14) TOOTH PARK Redding Rd. @ Black Rock Rd.	Town of Easton Recreation fields (front) & vacant (land at rear)	13.10	4.10	1	1,300 (total of 2 bldgs.)	Fair condition. 2 small park buildings. Little League fields (intensely used). River through tract, hillside beyond, lack of parking limit further development.
(15) LANDFILL SITE 197 North St.	Town of Easton Closed landfill, public works storage, leased wireless site	12.20	4.60 (estimate)	-	-	Capped landfill, leased wireless tower site and wetlands limit development potential to possibly 3-4 acres.
(16) PAINE OPEN SPACE Maple Road	Town of Easton	127.80	-	1	850 (barn)	Dedicated open space land, contains on-site parking and extensive hiking trails. Adjacent to two Aspetuck Land Trust parcels (10 acres): Recently completed major additions and new athletic fields; sound condition throughout. Undeveloped portions of site have limited capacity for further expansion due to wetlands and steep slopes.
(17) JOEL BARLOW HIGH SCHOOL 100 Black Rock Tpk, Redding	Regional School District #9 Grades 9-12 high school, serves Easton & Redding	118.10	74.70	1 & 2	-	

Data Sources: All figures on sites and buildings have been derived from Town records: Assessor's listings, insurance data, departmental records, filed surveys and plot plans. Evaluation of Condition and Potential For Expansion analysis by consultant (right hand column) is derived from interviews with Town officials and estimates of land area on each site which may be available for facility enlargement or new development after excluding presently developed area and significant natural constraints such as wetlands and severe slopes. Site developed area figures and floor area figures have been rounded down to nearest tenth-acre and fifty square feet. All figures are as of December 2003.

Chapter 6

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Evaluation and Recommended Program

The future growth of Easton can now be safely projected to a population not exceeding 9,600 persons, and possibly less, largely as the result of the recent acquisition of the Trout Brook Valley and Aquarion Water Company lands for permanent open space. Yet there remains sufficient growth capacity that prudent planning must anticipate the possibility – indeed even the probability – that the town's population and need for services will increase by another 22% to 28%.

Two other factors will also affect the need for a variety of new or enhanced public facilities. The first is the obsolescence, inefficiency or crowding which affects a number of the present buildings and sites, as demonstrated above, such as Staples School, the EMS and Public Works sites, and the Town Hall – all of which will need attention soon. Second, less apparent but equally significant, the growing affluence and public expectations of the community are likely – as the history of the past half century demonstrates – to result in a greater diversity in the future of public programs, civic activities, and community involvement. Examples of the latter newly established in recent years include the senior center, youth soccer and increase, wetlands and flood plain regulation, social outreach to disadvantaged persons, expanded police and emergency response protection, pre-kindergarten and day-care facilities, and many others. In short, the Plan must anticipate that the people of Easton will continue to expect an enhancement in the quality as well as the quantity of public services and facilities commensurate with the quality of the town's environment and residential values.

A number of the seventeen major public service facilities have recently been updated or expanded, and have sufficient site area available to accommodate the added space which may be necessary to serve future town growth. These include the Helen Keller Middle School, the Easton Library, the Easton Community Center, the Volunteer Fire Department, and Joel Barlow High School. Construction of the new elementary school has alleviated the problems affecting the lower school grades with room for future on-site expansion and playground space. The landfill site on North Street, now permanently closed, does not now function in the Town's solid waste management program since collection of materials is by private contract with recycling on a regional basis. The Paine Open Space tract (#16 in Table 6-1) is a valuable passive recreation center which should be linked to other open space areas via a future network of hiking trails (see Chapter 3).

The Plan recommends significant action in the following five major areas.

Schools - The new Samuel Staples Elementary School, serving grades pre-K through 5, located on Town property at Morehouse and Banks Roads, has potential expandability and now provides a state-of-the-art school facility adequate for the foreseeable future. The old Staples School complex, with nearly 70,000 square feet of floor area, comprises both a challenge and an opportunity for the town to secure needed additional facility space for various departments.

Chapter 6

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Evaluation Recommended Program (continued)

Schools (continued)

Reserve sufficient land area at the Town-owned Morehouse Road tract to accommodate future enrollment growth and possible transfer of an additional grade to the new school in the future should that option be selected when the Helen Keller School reaches capacity -- a potential addition of six classrooms to the 41 provided in present plans. Total reserved area recommended to accommodate all facilities including outdoor playspace: 30-35 acres.

Active Outdoor Recreation Facilities - Two new multiple-use playfields constructed adjacent to and in conjunction with the new elementary school (above) have alleviated some of the pressure on existing Keller and Veterans' Park fields, but a deficiency in field space remains due to active Little League, soccer, baseball, softball and other programs. The 30 to 40 acre gently contoured fields south of the new elementary school site, along Morehouse Road, comprise the best available location for active recreation facilities needed now and in the future, and should be largely reserved for this purpose. Existing fields at several locations (Staples, Keller, Veterans Park, Toth) should be retained for supplemental use or as needed in new programs.

Reserve approximately 34 acres of the Town-owned Morehouse Road site, immediately south of and adjacent to the 30-35 acre school site discussed above, consisting of the level to gently-sloping old fields along Morehouse Road, for long term development of active outdoor recreation fields and related facilities, land which is well suited for and needed for active recreation for all age-groups in the future. Recommended facilities should include three or more regulation ball fields, practice fields, tennis and court games, track and field sports areas, possible swimming pool, concert bandshell and other activity areas. Preserve the immediate frontage area along Morehouse Road (both School and Recreation portions) as a natural open-meadow greenbelt compatible with its rural residential environment. Develop trails and bikeways linking this recreation and school complex to residential Neighborhoods in all directions. Continue use and maintenance of existing recreation fields, especially those at Veterans Park and Keller School, as valuable components of the public recreation system and complements to the Morehouse Road facilities.

Social and Cultural Needs - Easton's Senior Center operates an extensive program for senior and handicapped residents from space in the basement of the old Staples School north wing, including a van service. A more attractive and functionally efficient facility is needed to serve this component of the town population. The present central location is highly desirable for ease of access; a new senior center on the same site or a close by site would greatly improve the Town's level of assistance to its senior citizens.

(continues on page 54)

Chapter 6
PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Evaluation and Recommended Program (continued)

Social and Cultural Needs (continued)

Plan and construct a more spacious and functional, handicapped-accessible Senior Center at the old Staples School Site, in conjunction with other needed Town facilities.

Public Safety Facilities - The Town's Police Department, operating from the basement of the Town Hall, and the Emergency Medical Service, operating from the former fire house on a small lot, both without adequate parking, is each hampered operationally by space constrictions which should be alleviated to allow these essential services to operate with maximum efficiency.

The most appropriate site for the expanded facilities required by the Police Department and by the Emergency Medical Service would be at the vacant 2.1-acre lot west of and adjacent to the existing fire house on Center Road (owned by the Volunteer Fire Company). This would bring the town's three emergency services together at one central location for optimum efficiency in training, coordination and response, and is strongly recommended.. Town acquisition of the site could also be financially beneficial to the Fire Company's long-term needs.

Plan and construct a new public safety center designed to coordinate and meet the operational requirements of the three services, at the recommended location.

Public Works Department - Managing well on an extremely constricted 3.2 acre triangular site within three roads, this department has been obliged to use other Town-owned sites for overflow storage needs such as chip-seal sweepings, pipe and other materials. The present DPW site at Westport and Sport Hill Roads is at a strategically excellent location but means must be found to accommodate operational space needs at this location or nearby. Options to enlarge the site by acquisition of surplus Route 59 right-of-way and closing the portion of Bibbins Road between Sport Hill and Westport Roads should be vigorously pursued. Construction of the planned salt shed is a high priority. The Town's Morehouse Road property should be reserved for public school, active recreation and open space purposes, and DPW storage of materials discontinued there; the North Street former landfill site may be a storage yard alternative with proper site planning.

Investigate long-term DPW site enlargement possibilities through potential realignment of Route 59/136 intersection and/or nearby property purchase.

Town Government and Meeting Space - Although the Town Hall was expanded in 1997 by conversion of the former Library wing to offices and a conference room, space for all of the Town departments remains congested and inefficient, and some departments are of necessity housed elsewhere. Public meetings where sizeable attendance is anticipated must be scheduled for one of the schools or the Community

Chapter 6
PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Evaluation and Recommended Program (continued)

Town Government and Meeting Space (continued)

Room of the Library. A more functional and efficient space for town offices and public meetings is a major long-term need.

Conduct a comprehensive space needs analysis for all Town departments and an engineering evaluation of the present Staples School building complex for optimum long-range conversion and use. Construct and remodel for optimum civic effectiveness, preserving site amenities, parking and recreation facilities.

Priorities For Town Facilities

The following program is recommended for town action over the next two to ten years.

(1) Most Urgent Priorities:

- *Construct, as planned and approved, the Public Works Department salt shed on the DPW site at Westport and Sport Hill Roads. Secure additional site space by closing the adjacent portion of Bibbins Road and applying to CT DOT for surplus Rt. 59 right-of-way.*
- *Construct, as planned, additional playfields and active recreation area on the Town- owned Morehouse Road tract adjacent to the new elementary school.*
- *Prepare a space needs analysis, engineering evaluation and conversion plan for the present Staples School building and site. Retain property in Town ownership, and continued use of the playfield in Town's recreation program. Consider as preferred options for future use of the building a new and enlarged senior center, District 9 school administration offices, and expansion space for presently crowded Town offices. Space should be considered to provide for public meetings, reserve school or special education space, and appropriate areas may also be designated for lease to professional offices of a type beneficial to the community (such as medical, dental, engineering, legal, charitable, public service).*

(2) Urgent Priorities:

- *Convert the former Staples School in accordance with the plan discussed above. Prepare a master plan for this area to provide design control and long- range strategic public uses for this civic complex.*

(continues on page 56)

Chapter 6
PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

Priorities For Town Facilities (continued)

(2) Urgent Priorities: (continued)

- *Address the Town's urgent public safety needs by planning new facilities for the Police Department and the Emergency Medical Service. Consider as the preferred option a site in close proximity to the Volunteer Fire Department, and close coordination at this one general location of all three emergency services in order that optimum efficiency in training, response and manpower may be achieved.*
- *Consider (as recommended in Chapter 3) steps to acquire or reserve the several missing gaps needed to complete linkages in the Town's open space network. Close to vehicular traffic old semi-abandoned Town highways (as recommended in Chapter 8), and initiate construction of the hiking trails recommended on the Town Plan.*
- *Develop additional active recreation facilities at the Town's Morehouse Road tract.*

(3) Near-term Priorities:

- *Plan and construct the network of bikeways as proposed on the Town Plan, to link the several established community centers, the Town schools and active recreation areas.*
- *Rehabilitate the Public Works Department facilities at the present site, as to be expanded, for improved efficiency and enhanced screening.*
- *Plan and construct street improvements, including school bus parking, safety and traffic-calming measures, as recommended on the Town Plan.*
- *Plan and remodel the present Town Hall for more spacious work conference areas, improved technology, and more effective public service.*



“Old Staples School – an opportunity to meet future Town office and meeting space needs



Bikeways – such as that, illustrated here – are recommended along several of the busier roads in Easton, separated from traffic. Healthful recreation, mobility and safety are key benefits.

Chapter 7
HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Tradition and a Sense of Community

Among the qualities of Easton which its residents typically cite as unique assets of the town, "traditional New England appearance", "excellent schools", and "scenic rural environment" often top the list. These perceptions point clearly to the cultural resources and historic traditions which have created the town's civic personality and express a sense of what is best about the town -- and most worth keeping for the future. The Town Plan is firmly based on preservation and enhancement of this cultural heritage as an essential part of town civic life.

Cultural Resources

Easton has a substantial literary, educational and artistic tradition, ranging from the Staples Academy through such notable residents as Helen Keller, Edna Ferber, Bellamy Partridge and Ida Tarbell to the artists, educators and other creative persons who reside here today. The town's current commitment to cultural advancement is exemplified in its recently constructed public library, a new elementary school, and such private educational resources as the two Historical Society museums and Senior Memorial Park nature trail boardwalks. Many of the sites of significance in the cultural heritage of the town are specifically identified on the Town Plan and thereby recommended for conservation or preservation.

Encouragement should be given, as a matter of planning policy, to the growth of cultural institutions such as schools, libraries, museums, art galleries, music or drama theaters, and historic restorations which enhance the civic and cultural life of the community. Such facilities should be located in the central area of the town whenever possible.

Historical Sites and Buildings

As a result of nearly three centuries of existence as a settled community Easton has an extraordinarily rich heritage of houses, barns, public buildings, stone walls and other structures which have graced the community for over a century. In addition there are six historic cemeteries, many sites of early dwellings and mills, and countless century-old trees distributed throughout all sections of the community.

Chapter 7

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Historic Sites and Buildings (continued)

In August 1996 the Historical Society of Easton released a seminal report titled "Historic Homes in Easton" which documented approximately 240 historic buildings and sites in the town. From this survey, which noted construction dates, architectural style and historic significance of many of the structures, Easton presently contains:

- 215 historic homes, of which 87 date from the eighteenth century, 73 were erected in the period between 1800 and 1850, and 55 were built after 1850 but before 1900;
- four historic commercial buildings, built respectively about 1740, 1780, 1800 and 1922; and
- three historic churches, constructed in 1813 (Jesse Lee Methodist), 1829 (Easton Baptist), and 1836 (Easton Congregational).

Of the historic homes two have been converted to private dwellings from early churches (the 1844 Center Street Methodist Church and the 1864 Episcopal Chapel) and three were once district schoolhouses (constructed 1850-1880).

Other buildings deemed historic include the Staples Academy at Westport and Center Roads and Aspetuck Masonic Lodge (formerly Easton Grange) at Center and Adams Roads.

Three of the old burial grounds are located at what once was the "center" of the town before Easton was separated from Weston, at the corner of Black Rock and Redding Roads, the Aspetuck, Center Street and Gilbertown Cemeteries. The small Den and Lyons burial grounds are in the northern section of town near the Redding line, and Union Cemetery is at the crossroads where Church Road, Stepney, Westport and Sport Hill Roads all converge. Together these grounds preserve an invaluable record of Easton's founders and leading families.

The 1867 F. W. Beers & Co. Atlas map of the Town of Easton, a copy of which is reproduced in the book "Easton- Its History" (by Helen Partridge with Francis Mellen, 1972), depicts the locations of the town's dwellings, public buildings and business enterprises at that period. At least seven water power mill sites, now long abandoned with only their stonework dams still remaining, have been identified on various Easton streams. Several of the early mills are illustrated in the book "Redding and Easton" (by Daniel Cruson, Arcadia Publishing, 2000).

The Aspetuck Historic District, a designation on the National Register of Historic Places, was established in August 1991 by the U.S. Department of the Interior on nomination by the Connecticut Historical Commission. Located along Redding, Old Redding and Westport Roads in the southwestern corner of Easton, and extending into Weston, the 80-acre district includes the home of Helen Keller, a mill dam and two dozen other historic structures. Many of the buildings in the district date from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries. The designation states "The cultural landscape of the district retains a high degree of historic integrity."

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Chapter 7

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Historical Sites and Buildings (continued)

Another nationally significant historic site in Easton is the Ida Tarbell House at Valley and Rock House Roads (built c. 1815, and occupied by the famous author for 40 years in the early twentieth century), listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Bradley-Hubbell House at 535 Black Rock Road, dating from 1816 and recently restored by the Historical Society of Easton, has recently been designated a National Historic Landmark on recommendation of the Connecticut Historical Commission.

Any inventory of sites and structures which comprise Easton's historical heritage would be incomplete without mention of the many miles of dry-laid stone walls which survive from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when they were laboriously erected to mark the boundaries of fields, roads, lanes and farmsteads. A quintessential element in Easton's traditional landscape, many have been pillaged in modern times for building stone. Under the Town's Scenic Road Ordinance an effort is being made to secure the preservation of those walls which border designated Scenic Roads, but most walls elsewhere are unprotected and are gradually succumbing to weather and development demands.

Obviously there is much in Easton's heritage worth saving and much effort required to secure this legacy for the future. The Town Plan shows many recommended Historic Preservation Sites, including all of the highly significant ones listed above. The proposal of the Historical Society to create three historic districts, under State enabling legislation, along Redding and Black Rock Roads, at Westport and Center Roads, and in the vicinity of Church Road, is highly appropriate and is endorsed. An alternative approach to conservation of specific districts of historic significance is available in Section 8-2j of the General Statutes, the "Village District" law, discussed in Chapter 10. It is strongly recommended that the town establish an Historical and Archaeological Preservation Commission or Committee to work, in concert with the Historical Society and other civic groups, and with the owners of historic properties, in an advisory capacity to Town land use boards and property owners, to secure technical assistance from the State where appropriate, and to recommend preservation strategies. As in other towns, consideration should also be given to formation of an Historic Properties Commission, pursuant to Sections 7-147 p-v of the General Statutes, for the purpose of reviewing and authorizing proposed exterior alterations in designated historic sites and buildings.

Chapter 7

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Easton's Pre-history

A significant part of Easton's cultural heritage is hidden from public view and frequently overlooked in development projects because it lies just beneath the surface of the ground. It is only in recent years that the pre-historical human record of the area has begun to receive serious attention from municipal historians and land use boards. Yet it is well documented that Native American peoples were living a fairly-settled existence here in Fairfield County for at least 10,000 years before the arrival of the first European settlers in the mid-seventeenth century. Scholars have identified seven distinct periods of cultural advance among this population from about 12,000 years ago to the final phase, the Contact Period, which lasted from the 1630's to the final extinction of Native American culture in the local area.*

Areas of high sensitivity for evidence of early peoples generally occur, according to local archaeologists, along streambanks, on river terraces and in areas where rock shelters occur. Several sites have been documented in Easton along the Aspetuck and Mill Rivers, including one on a terrace near Silver Hill Road which yielded evidence of habitation in the earliest "Paleo Hunter" period approximately 11,000 years ago. Historical accounts from the Contact Period (early 1700's) have identified the presence of several later Indian villages in the local area, including a site along the Mill River in Fairfield and a site in the Aspetuck section of Easton.

Concern about loss of Connecticut's archaic cultural heritage resulted in the establishment of the State Historic Preservation Office during the 1970's and the Office of State Archaeology in the late 1980's to assist municipalities in planning for conservation of cultural sites, preparation of appropriate regulations and review. Within the local area comprehensive historical and archaeological preservation regulations have been adopted in Greenwich, Westport and Redding. A firm legal base for such regulations was established in 1993 when the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled that planning and zoning boards may consider historic and cultural resource preservation issues in their land use regulations and decisions, provided that the comprehensive town plan specifically addresses local historic preservation concerns (Smith vs. Town of Greenwich Zoning Board of Appeals, 227 Conn. 71, 1993).**

(continues on page 62)

* "The Prehistory of Fairfield County", by Daniel Cruson, published by The Newtown Historical Society, 1991.

** "Municipal Planning Strategies For The Protection of Archaeological Resources in Connecticut", by Nicholas F. Bellantoni, William R. Haase and Deborah Winick, published by Office of State Archaeology (CT), undated.

Chapter 7
HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Easton's Pre-history (continued)

Preservation of Easton's historic and prehistoric cultural heritage is vital to its future civic character and quality of life. It is strongly recommended that a historic preservation ordinance be adopted, or be incorporated in the Town Zoning Regulations. Provisions for archaeological review of all major development proposals and for protection of designated historic sites should be included in such regulations. It is also recommended that a special committee or commission be formed to conduct research and provide advice and assistance in historical/archaeological concerns to all Town agencies (see recommendations of the preceding section).

Town Appearance

Few residents of Easton would disagree that the town's scenic quality is one of its greatest assets. Testimony to this widely-held perception of Easton's extraordinary scenic character is expressed in numerous ways -- from the Town Seal with its evergreen cone and branches, to the prize-winning landscape photos in the Town Hall, to the many designated "scenic roads" in town. Perhaps it is because most residents take for granted the attractive appearance of their surroundings that no formal visual analysis of what makes Easton especially appealing to residents and visitors alike has ever been undertaken, as has been done in adjacent towns including Fairfield, Newtown and Redding. Such visual assessments typically examine the "view from the road", outstanding natural features, and the architectural and aesthetic quality of public spaces.

At an early stage in the planning process various public officials were given an opportunity to identify those features of Easton which contribute most significantly to its attractive character. Most often cited were:

- open fields and traditional farms
- roadside stone walls and major trees
- historic buildings
- scenic vistas, especially water and distant views
- winding rural roads
- stream, ridgelines, ledges and mature forests.

The Town's Scenic Road Ordinance, adopted in 1989 and administered by the Planning and Zoning Commission, has protected the roadside character of major portions of ten of the more picturesque Town roads. These include Adams Road, Bibbins Road, Burr Street, Cedar Hill Road, Everett Road, Judd Road, Norton Road, Redding Road, Silver Hill Road, and Wells Hill Road.

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Old stone walls, often framing an original road, are an integral part of the town's history (Old Redding Road)



A scene worth preserving (Westport Road at Hemlocks Reservoir)

Chapter 7

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Town Appearance (continued)

Preservation of the town's scenic character is an essential ingredient in the Town Plan for several reasons.

- (1) The public image of the town's appearance directly impacts its desirability and consequently its property values.
- (2) The quality of the town's environment contributes directly to its civic values and thereby to the health and comfort of its citizens.
- (3) The visual integrity of the town is an important legacy for future generations of town inhabitants.

The Town Plan identifies a number of uniquely picturesque localities which contribute significantly to town's scenic image, and these are designated on the Plan map as proposed Scenic Protection Areas. These include the Aspetuck Corners area mill pond and meadows, the isthmus between the Aspetuck and Hemlocks Reservoirs, the "historic center" at Center and Westport Roads, and the Aspetuck River and valley along Valley and Rock House Roads. The Plan also proposes a number of additional Scenic Roads, as shown on the Plan Map, all of which have outstanding scenic characteristics.

Several measures would be desirable to protect and enhance the town's visual character, and are recommended, as follows:

- Designate Special Scenic Protection overlay zones, in consultation with affected property owners, establishing a degree of design control for new development visible from public ways, to assure the preservation through scenic and conservation easements of the unique characteristics which make each area special.
- Take proactive action to encourage and designate additional Scenic Roads, especially those shown on the Town Plan.
- Add scenic protection standards to Town land use regulations.
- Adopt plans and design standards for the several existing community centers as proposed in Chapter 10.
- Enact design review provisions for all "Permitted Special Uses" in Town Zoning Regulations.

Chapter 8
ROADS AND MOBILITY

Twenty First Century Mobility

In little more than a century our ability to move from place to place has progressed from the horse-and-buggy era to expressways and jet air travel. This dramatic shrinkage in travel time has brought Easton and all of southwestern Connecticut within easy reach of major employment centers as well as high-speed rail and international airport facilities.

A key factor in the increase in long-distance mobility is the omnipresent automobile, now averaging 2.9 motor vehicles per household in Easton. The private automobile is directly responsible for the explosive growth of suburban Fairfield County and formerly rural areas such as Easton. As a result of the widespread network of major roads which extends throughout this area all sections of Easton are now but minutes away from the shopping, employment and most of the services on which modern life depends.

Long-range plans of the Connecticut Department of Transportation are heavily focused on alleviating congestion on Interstate 95 and improving the capacity of the two north-south arterials which connect to Interstate 84, Routes 25 and 7. Route 25, the major arterial closest to Easton, is programmed for major widening in the near future from the end of the present expressway in northern Trumbull to the center of Newtown. Although this project may provide a north-south traffic alternative to Route 59 (Stepney and Sport Hill Roads) it may also tend to increase development pressure in the Stepney section of Monroe adjacent to northeastern Easton.

The heaviest traffic volume of any road in Easton presently occurs on Route 59, although this road's approximately 10,000 vehicles per day volume pales in comparison with the 22,000 vehicles per day of Route 25 in Trumbull and Monroe, the 58,000 vehicles per day of the nearby Merritt Parkway and 98,000 to 140,000 vehicles per day carried by Interstate 95 in this region.

The Year 2020 Regional Transportation Plan recently published by the Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency aims to "enhance mobility in order to reinforce the Region's land use and economic development objectives" (Plan report). In addition to promoting improvements in mass transportation systems such as rail, ferry and bus facilities, the GBRPA Transportation Plan recommends "expressway upgrades" of portions of I-95 and the Merritt Parkway, and "arterial reconstruction" within several urbanized corridors including Routes 25 and 111 in Monroe. No significant projects are recommended within Easton.

Chapter 8
ROADS AND MOBILITY

Twenty First Century Mobility (continued)

Currently evolving transportation and communication technologies are likely to have an impact on Easton in the future. Among these are likely to be new inter-modal transportation facilities in the nearby area and a trend toward home-based work stations made possible by teleconferencing and tele-commuting. Vehicles with greater fuel efficiency and advanced guidance systems are predictable, but unfortunately there appears to be no end in sight to the growth in vehicles per household so it is likely that congestion on many local roads will continue and increase for the foreseeable future.

Development of the Town's Road System

In 1671 the Town Meeting of Fairfield adopted a plan to allocate its unsettled backcountry lands among some 100 resident proprietors. Laid out on the plan for this territory, about seven miles wide and thirteen miles in depth, were a series of parallel "upright highways" at an eleven o'clock orientation, roughly perpendicular to the shoreline, from what is now Long Lots Road in Fairfield to modern-day Cross Highway in Redding. East of a mile-wide strip of common land six upright highways were mapped out in what is now Easton. Although the upright highways were not definitively surveyed until shortly after 1725, these parallel public travelways became the basic framework for Easton's future settlement and road system. Major segments of these ancient highways survive today as (from west to east): (1) A portion of Wells Hill Road and Eleven O'Clock Lane; (2) Burr Street, Norton Road, and Burr's Highway; (3) Wilson Road; (4) Morehouse Road and a portion of Bibbins Road; (5) Sport Hill Road; and (6) South Park Avenue and North Park Avenue. Slightly later the Fairfield Town Meeting laid out seven east-west "cross highways" as perpendicular paths to connect the upright highways; within Easton several of these cross highways have become segments of present-day Beers and Flat Rock Roads, Adams and Center Roads, Freeborn Road, Rock House Road, and Den Road. Thus the early "Town Plan" of Fairfield profoundly influenced the basic layout of Easton's road system.

About 1760 a County road was laid out from Fairfield to Danbury which later became the Fairfield, Weston and Redding Turnpike, now Redding Road and its continuance northward as Black Rock Road. Several other privately-funded turnpikes were established in the early nineteenth century, including the Black Rock Turnpike (along Cricker Brook, now mostly submerged in Hemlocks Reservoir) and the Westport Branch of the Bridgeport Turnpike (now Westport and Stepney Roads). Prior to the turnpikes most highways were little more than rutted, mud-bound cart paths, frequently impassible. The turnpikes, usually constructed along better grades with gravel beds and bridges instead of fords for stream crossings, immediately opened up markets for Easton's produce and brought an element of prosperity to the Town.

Chapter 8 ROADS AND MOBILITY

Development of the Town's Road System (continued)

In 1916 the State of Connecticut began an ambitious program to construct a network of two-lane paved highways linking population centers and providing farm-to-market access for its rural towns. During the period between 1918 and 1930 Routes 58, 59 and 106 (now Center Road) were constructed through the town, and State-aid funds began to be provided for the improvement and paving of local roads. Recognizing the town's growing accessibility, the Easton Town Meeting in October 1936 adopted official names for the 46 principal roads in the town. By 1940 most of Easton's road network had been paved and the town was no longer an isolated rural enclave.

Over the past sixty years Easton's road network has greatly expanded as older roads have been reconstructed to safer standards for motor vehicle travel, bridges have been replaced and hazards eliminated, and many new subdivision roads have been constructed. The Town now maintains a Public Works Department, with a staff of 14 persons under direction of a professional Town Engineer and Director of Public Works responsible for the operation and maintenance of all Town roads. The Department's current program includes regular bridge, drainage, guide rail and other repairs, and chip-seal repaving of all of the more heavily-traveled roads.

At present there are 181 Town-maintained roads, totaling 92.25 miles of Town roadway of which only .85 mile is unimproved (gravel surface) road. Three-fourths of these roads were created by subdivision, the majority since 1960. There are presently three State highways traversing Easton: Route 58 (Black Rock Rd., 5.8 miles), Route 59 (Sport Hill and Stepney Roads, 7.6 miles), and Route 136 (Westport Road, 4.3 miles). Route 58 is a State-designated Scenic Road from the Fairfield line to Center Road. Altogether there are 110 miles of public roadway in Easton and six minor private roads.

Road Form and Function

Easton's system of public roads fulfills three basic functions: access to individual homes and properties, conveyance of travelers from local neighborhoods to main roads, and connection of Easton and other towns with major centers. These functions are generally described, respectively, as local roads (typically subdivision and local neighborhood streets; e.g. Westwood Drive or Cedar Hill Rd.), collector roads (typically streets which collect traffic from local neighborhoods and convey it to a main or arterial road; e.g. South Park Avenue or upper Sport Hill Road), and connector or arterial roads (typically roads which link larger towns and urban centers and carry heavy volumes of through traffic; e.g. Routes 59 and 136).

(continued on page 68)

Chapter 8
ROADS AND MOBILITY

Road Form and Function (continued)

Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency, in its role of arbiter for State and Federal funding of transportation projects, has established functional classifications for Easton's roads as follows:

- Route 59 (Sport Hill Rd.), from Center Road to the Fairfield Town Line, and Route 136 (Westport Road) from Redding Road to the Fairfield Town Line, are deemed "Urban Area Minor Arterials".
- South Park Avenue, Buck Hill Road, and Redding Road south of Rte. 136 are deemed "Urban Area Collectors".
- The remainder portions of Routes 59 and 136, and all of Route 58, are classified "Rural Major Collectors".
- Center Road, Sport Hill Road north of Rte. 59, Redding Road north of Rte. 136, and Judd Road east of Rte. 59, are classified "Rural Minor Collectors".
- All other roads in Easton are considered "Local" streets.

While such classifications may seem arcane to the average citizen they are important in Town efforts to secure financial assistance for needed safety improvements or for measures to control speeds and volume which affect adjacent residential neighborhoods. Current State planning policy, for example, looks to improve traffic capacity and efficiency on arterial roads and to discourage, where possible, through traffic on collector roads in residential neighborhoods.

Traffic circulation, the extent to which local and collector roads interconnect to form a network for efficient travel in two or more directions, is a traditional concern in town planning. The 1979 Town Plan visualized a number of needed future street connections so that public services could be provided efficiently and citizens could travel conveniently from one neighborhood to another. However current conditions as the town has developed over the past quarter century justify a slightly different perspective:

- The basic road network of Easton, with few exceptions, provides quite direct and effective access to all developed neighborhoods. Such major roads as Sport Hill, Stepney, Westport, Center, Black Rock, Morehouse and South Park bring emergency services within ten minutes of all sections of the town. There is good linkage through and around most of the "superblocks" framed by the lesser collector streets such as Adams, Banks, Flat Rock, Everett, Wilson, Silver Hill, Bibbins, and Rock House.

Chapter 8
ROADS AND MOBILITY

Road Form and Function (continued)

- The Town's program over several decades of improving the collector roads to safe standards for efficient circulations has minimized the need for inner-block road connections.
- While lengthy dead-end roads are undesirable and should be discouraged, relatively short and winding local streets contribute both to resident safety and town property values.

Consequently the Plan advocates short dead-end roads and short common driveways in new residential development wherever feasible for safety and consonant with protection of neighborhood values.

Traffic capacity and safety considerations have been examined as part of this study.

There is little doubt that Easton's two-lane connecting and collector roads, which now operate mostly at "Level A" (no significant delays) Service, can continue to comfortably accommodate the future growth in traffic volumes likely to occur should the town's population increase by 20 – 25% - the town's maximum growth capacity. However inter-town traffic – such as the increasing volumes occurring on the State roads, especially Routes 59 and 136 – is a cause for concern. Route 136 especially, many portions of which are relatively narrow with difficult sightlines and intersections, now carries the second highest volume of all Easton roads. The Town should work vigorously to support the capacity improvements GBRPA advocates in such regional arteries as Routes 25 and 15, and endeavor to control the effects of volume growth on all of its State highways and other connecting roads through "traffic calming" and speed enforcement measures. These may include additional "stop" intersections, roundabouts, low-speed zones in developed areas and other measures.

(continues on pages 70, 71 and 72)

Table 8-1

AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC VOLUMES

For

Selected Roads in Easton

(2001)*

<u>Road</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Vehicle Count</u>
Westport Rd. (Rt. 136)	At Fairfield Town Line	6,900
“ “	Southwest of Rt. 58	7,700
“ “	Northeast of Rt. 58	6,200
“ “	Southwest of Rt. 59	6,000
Sport Hill Rd. (Rt. 59)	Southeast of Center Rd.	9,200
“ “	Southeast of Adams Rd.	6,100
“ “	Southeast of Bibbins Rd.	5,200
Stepney Rd. (Rt. 59)	Northeast of Rt. 136	9,400
“ “	Southwest of Judd Road	9,400
Black Rock Rd. (Rt. 58)	East of Rt. 136	6,100
“ “	Northwest of Rt. 136	4,300
“ “	North of Redding Road	5,700
“ “	At Redding Town Line	5,500
Center Road	East of Old Sow Road	1,900
“ “	West of Morehouse Road	2,800
“ “	Southeast of Banks Road	3,400
Morehouse Road	South of Center Road	2,100
“ “	Southeast of Banks Road	800
“ “	South of Beers Road	900
Old Oak Road	East of Route 59	1,300
South Park Avenue	North of High Ridge Road	1,600
“ “	North of Tersana Drive	4,200
Buck Hill Road	North of South Park Avenue	3,300
Judd Road	East of Rt. 59	6,800
“ “	South of Skyline Drive	1,100
Rock House Road	Northeast of Sport Hill Road	700
“ “	West of Valley Road	750
Old Redding Road	Northwest of Rt. 136	2,100
Old Redding Road	Southeast of Rt. 136	550

* Data provided by Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency, 2003, from 2001 machine counts at indicated locations. Average Daily Traffic is an estimate derived from counts on a typical midweek day. Vehicle Count data is typically considered reliable, for secondary roads in non-urbanizing locations, for 5 to 8 years.

Table 8-2
 FREQUENT MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS
 By Location
 (2002)*

<u>Principal Road & Adjacent Intersecting Road</u>	<u>Number of Accidents Documented in 2002</u>
Rte. 59 (Stepney Rd.) & Judd Rd.	7
South Park Ave. & Riverside La.	7
Center Rd. & Banks Rd.	6
Rte. 59 (Stepney Rd.) & Church Rd.	5
Rte. 136 (Westport Rd.) & Rte. 58 (Black Rock Rd.)	5
Rte. 59 (Stepney Rd.) & No. Park Ave.	4
Rte. 59 (Sport Hill Rd.) & Center Rd.	4
Rte. 136 (Westport Rd.) & Old Redding Rd.	4
Rte. 58 (Black Rock Rd.) & Valley Rd.	4
South Park Ave. & Tersana Drive	4
Rte. 59 (Sport Hill Rd.) & Adams Rd.	3
Rte. 59 (Stepney Rd.) & Maple Rd.	3
Adams Rd. & North Park Ave.	3

Total of Frequent Location Accidents: 59
 Per Cent of All Accidents: 32.6%

* Data compiled by Easton Police Department from departmental records for 2002 (Latest available compilation).

In addition to the intersection locations reported above, at which three or more accidents occurred in 2002, there were twelve intersections at which two accidents occurred during the year, of which ten were on State highways. The two-accident locations were:

- Rte. 59 (Sport Hill Rd.) @ Banks Rd., Old Oak Rd., Keller School Driveway, Westwood Dr. (total 8).
- Rte. 59 (Stepney Rd.) @ April Dr., Sherwood Dr., Sherwood Rd. (total 6).
- Rte. 58 (Black Rock Rd.) @ Rt. 136 (Westport Rd.), Country Club La. (total of 4),
- Rte. 136 (Westport Rd.) @ Bibbins Rd. (total 2).
- Rock House Rd. @ Old Stonewall rd. (total 2).
- Kachele St. @ Madison Ave. (@ Trumbull line, total 2).

The total motor vehicle accidents reported for the year 2002 was 181.

Table 8-3
MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS
By Contributing Factors
(1999-2002)*

<u>Major Operating Factor</u>	<u>Number of Accidents</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Animal or Object in Road	166	21.5%
Speed Too Fast For Conditions	106	13.7
Following Too Closely	101	13.1
Driver Lost Control	78	10.2
Failure To Grant Right-of-way	<u>65</u>	<u>8.4</u>
Five Major Operating Factors	516	66.9%
31 Other Factors	<u>255</u>	<u>31.1%</u>
Total MV Accidents, 4-Year Period	771	100.0%

<u>Inclement Weather Factor</u>	<u>Number of Accidents</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Rain	77	10.0%
Fog	16	2.1
Ice, Snow, Slush	<u>79</u>	<u>10.2</u>
Weather Factors	172	22.3%
Total MV Accidents, 4-Year Period	771	100.0%

<u>Time of Day Factor</u>	<u>Number of Accidents</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Morning Commute (6-9AM)	142	18.4%
Daytime (9AM - 4PM)	277	35.9%
Afternoon Commute (4 - 7PM)	152	19.7%
Evening / Night (7PM - 6AM)	<u>200</u>	<u>26.0%</u>
Time of Day Factors	771	100.0%
Total MV Accidents, 4-Year Period	771	100.0%

* Data compiled by Easton Police Department from departmental records for 1999 through 2002 inclusive. Contributing factors were determined by investigating officer(s) at the scene of each accident.
Of the total accidents, 181 resulted in personal injuries (23.5%) and there was one fatality.
In general, 200 of the accidents could be attributed to roadway conditions (25.9%) and the balance (74.1%) to driver error. It is noteworthy that of all contributing factors animals or objects in the road and excessive speed account for over 35% of the recorded accidents.

Chapter 8
ROADS AND MOBILITY

Recommendations

- The Plan supports the proposed improvements in service and capacity for Routes 15 (Merritt Parkway), 25 and Interstate 95, and proposed commuter rail and transit service improvements, as generally recommended in the Greater Bridgeport Regional Transportation Plan 2004 - 2028 – since these measures will benefit Easton by focusing future development in existing urban centers and mitigate potential traffic and development pressures on Easton land and roads.
- Easton’s present network of minor arterial and collector roads provides an adequate circulation system throughout the town. Except for minor safety improvements needed at various locations and several limited site-specific roadway revisions as shown on the Plan, there is no need for additional connecting roads, extensive street widening or significant upgrades of the present road system.
- Higher speeds and growing traffic volumes on existing connecting roads are concerns for the safety and tranquility of local residents and pedestrians along these roads. Traffic calming measures are strongly advocated for each high-volume roadway, and several of the critical locations are identified on the Plan. The Town should vigorously pursue the installation of such measures with the Connecticut Department of Transportation, and work closely with local school, police, fire and public works officials for coordination and design.
- Within subdivisions slower vehicle speeds correlate directly with residential quality and resident safety. It is recommended that the Town Subdivision Regulations be revised to limit the maximum length of subdivision roads, through traffic and wide travel ways, and to encourage shared driveways where feasible. Design standards for local streets should also encourage curvilinear layout to preserve natural features, roadside planting plans, variations in design of terminal turnarounds to create parklike islands or landscaped area, and grassed curbless shoulders for stormwater control and snow storage.
- A network of planned bikeways within the town, generally aligning with existing roads or available “greenway corridors, as shown on the Plan, should be created to enable local trips for youth and recreational travel for all age groups, and to provide safety and enhanced mobility separated from road traffic.

(continues on page 74)

Chapter 8
ROADS AND MOBILITY

Recommendations (continued)

- Designation of additional Town Scenic Roads is highly desirable to protect the Town's roadside viewscape. The Town should take the initiative to encourage and assist abutting owners to endorse such designation, and study legal means to protect the immediate margins of scenic roadways (such as 5 - 10 feet adjacent to the right-of-way). Such roads as South Park Avenue north of the reservoir dam, Valley Road from Black Rock Road to the Redding line, Orchard Lane, and Morehouse Road from Old Staples School to Beers Road are examples worthy of consideration. The Town should also request the State to designate the remainder of Route 58 (Black Rock Rd.) and Route 136 (Westport Rd.) from the Fairfield line to Route 59 as State Scenic Roads.
- Because the original network of Town roads, especially in the more rural sections of the town, is an important component of Easton's attractive residential character it should be Town policy to preserve the roadside stone walls, major trees, irregular and winding character of all such roads -- even at the expense of regulated slower speeds and higher maintenance costs, provided there is no compromise with basic safety.



A busy intersection: Center Road at Westport Road

Chapter 9
ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

An Overview of Easton's Economic Base

From the time of its settlement in the early eighteenth century to the dawn of the twentieth century Easton's economy was largely based on self-sufficient agriculture and small domestic industries. Water-powered mills were built on the larger streams, especially along the Aspetuck and Mill Rivers, turning out sawn lumber, flour, cider, buttons, paper products, wagons and carriages. In addition there were shops throughout the town operated by tanners, shoemakers, harness makers, blacksmiths, gun makers, sieve makers, distillers and other entrepreneurs, as well as a number of stores and taverns.

Late in the nineteenth century as agriculture declined and the small industries were gradually displaced by steam-powered factories elsewhere, the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company began acquiring land along Easton streams for water supply. A dam and reservoir were built on the Mill River just north of Buck Hill Road, followed in 1896 by a second and larger reservoir farther up the same stream. Continued growth of Bridgeport and its suburbs resulted in BHC's acquisition over the next several decades of extensive additional acreage in the Mill River, Crickers Brook, Aspetuck River and Saugatuck River watersheds, and construction in order of the Hemlocks, Aspetuck, Easton Lake and Saugatuck Reservoirs. Easton's principal "industry" has ever since been its export of pure water to the thirsty urbanized towns and cities to the south. Recent acquisition of the development rights of most of the more than 5,000 acres of the BHC land in Easton by The Nature Conservancy and The State of Connecticut, as permanent open space, safeguards this regional water resource and protects Easton from a massive future development influx.

Following World War I paved roads reached the town and Easton began to attract year-round residents who could commute to jobs in nearby towns, thereby diversifying its agricultural base. As agriculture has declined and Easton has experienced a seven-fold population increase over the past three-quarter century, the town has become a quintessentially residential community in which less than 5% of its land is in agricultural use and less than 0.1% of its land serves commerce in any form. The economic base of the town, the source of its residents' livelihood, is now firmly rooted in the metropolitan region outside its borders. The money required to operate Town services is very much dependent on the state of the national economy and the southwestern Connecticut economy in particular.

Tables 9-1 through 9-5, which follow, summarize the Town's present financial picture. These tables will be updated periodically as successive editions of this report are published.

Table 9-1
TOWN GRAND LIST AND TAX REVENUE PER CAPITA
Twenty-Five Year Trend

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Grand List (1)</u>	<u>Mill Rate (2)</u>	<u>Adopted Budget (3)</u>	<u>Tax % Of Town Revenue (4)</u>	<u>Per Capita Levy (5)</u>
1979-80	\$ 125,903,550	31.0	\$ 4,797,357	81.4%	\$ 655
1984-85	141,755,290	47.1	7,931,273	84.2	1,089
1989-90	373,554,660	28.5	12,483,037	85.3	1,689
1994-95	428,672,616	33.9	16,043,197	90.6	2,141
1995-96	652,053,520	22.2	16,616,187	87.2	2,103
1996-97	670,141,130	23.4	17,423,464	90.0	2,246
1997-98	684,537,530	24.1	18,417,686	89.5	2,330
1998-99	697,596,240	25.1	19,718,651	88.8	2,440
1999-2000	719,571,663	25.7	20,582,452	89.9	2,543
2000-01	743,323,925	26.7	21,576,040	92.0	2,693
2001-02	763,419,035	28.2	23,828,512	90.3	2,886
2002-03	777,451,950	30.5	26,795,732	88.5	3,160
2003-04	1,200,997,670	21.7	28,087,503	92.5	3,444
2004-05	1,212,378,685	23.6	30,501,323	93.8	3,768

Explanatory Notes:

1. The total of taxable real estate and personal property as of October 1 preceding the fiscal year. Grand List excludes tax-exempt properties which as of 6/30/04 totaled \$49,716,390. Real estate assessments are generally fixed at 70% of fair market value at date of last Town-wide revaluation, hence the large increases in Grand List for tax years 1995-96 and 2003-04.
2. Mill rate expresses rate of taxation in dollars per thousand of assessed property value.
3. Adopted budget is the total financial outlay, combining all expenditure accounts (see Table 9-2) for the particular Fiscal Year (July 1 – June 30), as approved by the annual Town Meeting (usually the preceding spring).
4. This column has been computed from the Grand Levy (grand list x tax rate) divided by estimated Town population at fiscal year midpoint (tax levy/person) as a proportion of the per capita Town budget. It indicates the approximate share of Town expenditures, per person, raised by town taxation.
5. Per capita levy is the approximate total Town tax levy divided by estimated population, indicating average Town tax obligation per person.

Table 9-2

TOWN REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

For The Fiscal Year Ended June 2004*

SOURCES OF REVENUE:

	<u>amount</u>	<u>per cent</u>
Property Tax	\$26,052,087	94.0%
Intergovernmental (State aid etc.)	667,387	2.4
Investment Income	232,901	0.8
Fees (all types)	<u>772,453</u>	<u>2.8</u>
Total Town Revenues	\$27,724,828	100.0%

ALLOCATION OF EXPENDITURES:

	<u>amount</u>	<u>per cent</u>
General Government (all Town agencies and programs except those listed below)	\$ 1,324,220	5.0%
Public Safety	1,556,596	5.8
Public Works	1,411,661	5.3
Health and Welfare	233,085	0.8
Easton Board of Education (local schools)	10,678,480	40.1
Regional District No. 9 (regional high school, Easton share)	6,215,382	23.3
Town Library	395,161	1.5
Parks and Recreation	286,100	1.1
Employee Benefits	1,544,216	5.8
Insurance	327,100	1.2
Miscellaneous	24,856	0.1
Debt Service	<u>2,671,155</u>	<u>10.0</u>
Total Town Expenditures	\$26,668,012	100.0%

Excess of Revenues To Expenditures \$1,056,816

Less Transfers To Other Accounts \$ 341,813

Increase In Fund Balance . . \$ 715,003

GENERAL FUND BALANCE: July 1, 2003 \$2,360,389

June 30, 2004. \$3,075,392

* Source: Town of Easton Annual Report, 2004 (published 2005)

Table 9-3
RESIDENTIAL VALUE COMPARISONS

a) Year 2005 (January – June) Average Home Sale Prices, Selected Residential Towns

EASTON (51)	\$ 858,708
Fairfield (373)	\$ 778,490
Monroe (128)	\$ 504,385
Redding (81)	\$ 734,117
Trumbull (216)	\$ 484,153
Weston (79)	\$1,310,422
Westport (230)	\$1,344,986

Data Source: Town values are as compiled from public records and published by Multiple Listing Service. Figures in parentheses () indicate number of sales during period.

b) Trend in Recent Home Sale Values in Easton

<u>Period:</u>	<u>No. of Sales:</u>	<u>Average Sale Value:</u>
Jan.-June 2003	46	\$ 699,504
Jan.-June 2004	59	\$ 757,270
Jan.-June 2005	51	\$ 858,708

Annual Average Rate of Increase in Home Values: 10.8%

Data Source: Figures compiled from Town Assessor records and Multiple Listing Service

c) Trend in Values of New Home Construction in Easton

<u>Fiscal Year:</u>	<u>New Dwellings Constructed:</u>	<u>Average Permit Value</u>
2004	17	\$ 410,333
2003	14	\$ 348,863
2002	14	332,522
2001	34	415,537
2000	55	335,341
--	--	--
1997	41	261,878

Data Source: Town Building Department Records. Permit value does not include land value.

d) Value Added By Average New Dwelling, Year 2004

Average Permit Value x Assessment Ratio x Tax Rate = Average Tax Revenue
Added by Construction

\$410,333 x 0.70 x .0236 = \$6,779

Add Allowance For Increased Site Value From Construction: \$200,000.

\$200,000 x 0.70 x .0236 = \$3,304

Estimated Average Tax Revenue
Generated By New Dwelling \$10,083.

Table 9-4
 A COMPARISON OF RESIDENTIAL TAX LEVY AND
 RESIDENTIAL SERVICE COSTS
 For Tax Year 2003-04

a) Estimated Tax Levy Per Typical Single-Family Dwelling: (1)

average single-family residence sale value, October 2002	x	assessment ratio, Oct. 2002	x	tax rate Oct. 2002 21.7 mills	=	estimated tax levy per average Dwelling
\$650,000	x	0.70	x	0.0217	=	<u>\$9,874</u>

b) Residential Contribution To Total Town Services Cost: (2)

Total Town Budget, 2003-2004	x	Proportion From Town Taxation, 2003-2004	x	Proportion of Taxation Derived From Residences 2003-2004	=	Proportion of Town Budget Supported by Taxation of Residences
Total Town Budget, 2003-2004						
<u>\$28,087,500</u>	x	<u>.92</u>	x	<u>.904</u>	=	<u>\$23,359,800</u>
\$28,087,500					=	<u>83.17%</u>

c) Estimated Town Services Cost Per Typical Dwelling: (2)

<u>MAJOR BUDGET PROGRAM</u>	<u>2003-04 BUDGET</u>	<u>AMOUNT FROM RESIDENTIAL TAX</u>	<u>ESTIMATED COST PER DWELLING</u>
EDUCATION (Town & District 9)	\$16,915,382	\$14,068,523	\$4,464
GENERAL GOVERNMENT	8,162,346	6,788,623	2,636
<u>DEBT SERVICE</u>	<u>3,009,775</u>	<u>2,503,230</u>	<u>972</u>
TOTALS	\$28,087,503	\$23,360,376	<u>\$8,072</u>

Notes

- (1) Based on average sale value for residences reported in October-December 2002, corresponding to October 1, 2002 Town revaluation date and 70% assessment rate established at that date. Mill rate for 2003-04 tax year is based on October 1, 2002 valuation and assessment rate. Figures rounded.
- (2) Fiscal year 2003-04 budget figures from recent Town financial reports. Number of dwellings derived from census and permit records.

Table 9-5
 SCHEDULE OF DEBT LIMITATION
 and
 LONG TERM DEBT

a) Statutory Debt Limit, As of June 30, 2003

The Town's indebtedness does not exceed the legal debt limitations as required by Connecticut General Statutes as reflected in the following schedule:

CATEGORY	DEBT LIMIT	NET INDEBTEDNESS	BALANCE
General purpose	\$ 53,785,717	\$ 9,875,500	\$ 43,910,217
Schools	\$107,571,434	23,542,123	84,029,311
Sewers	\$ 89,642,861		89,642,861
Urban Renewal.....	\$77,690,480		77,690,480
Pension deficit	\$71,714,289		71,714,289

The total overall statutory debt limit for the Town is equal to seven times annual receipts from taxation, \$167,333,341.

The indebtedness reflected above includes bonds outstanding in addition to the amount of bonds authorized and unissued against which bond anticipation notes are issued and outstanding. School building grants receivable of \$1,122,874 for bond principal are reflected as deductions in the computation of net indebtedness.

(Source: Official Statement for General Obligation Bond Issue of November 1, 2004)

b) Long Term Debt

As of June 30, 2003* the Town's outstanding General Long-term Obligations stood at \$24,394,076, of which \$9.91 million were "General Purpose" bonds, \$13.23 million were bonds for school improvements and \$1.25 million were for other projects, issued between June 1995 and January 2003 with maturity dates to June 30, 2022.

In November 2004 the town issued \$12.4 million in 20-year General Obligation bonds to finance the construction of the new elementary school on Morehouse Road, supplemented by bond anticipation notes of \$12.6 million. Currently authorized major projects total approximately \$32,330,000, of which \$31,150,000 is the project cost of the new school and \$515,000 is for Staples School repairs. Combined bonded indebtedness therefore stands at approximately \$36 million, to be fully retired by 2024.

* Date of latest published figures

Chapter 9

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Evaluation of Town Financial Position

There is little doubt that Easton is in sound financial condition and that its financial affairs have been managed with prudence and foresight. The preceding tables show a healthy reserve fund, significant investments income and close correlation of expenditures with current revenue sources. Moreover the Town's physical plant is in relatively sound condition and capital investment has recently been undertaken to acquire land needed for school and recreation facilities, and to bond for school modernization and replacement sufficient for the next 25-30 years.

The Town continues to benefit from the voluntary participation in provision of services by many citizens and civic organizations, which should be encouraged as a means of containing future service costs. While all public facilities – except undeveloped land – have definite life spans and eventually require renewal or replacement, planning for long-term capital projects should be undertaken in order to minimize borrowing and adapt future capital investments in an orderly way to the Town's anticipated revenue resources. This proposal is addressed more completely in Chapter 12 on the Program of Action.

Perhaps the significant financial challenge for the immediate future is to balance the Town's outlay for both operating expenses and capital investment with tax levels which are comfortable for average citizens, prudently favoring long-term value for the town. One element of this equation is protection and enhancement of the existing tax base of the town by sound land use policies, a key principle of the Town Plan.

Recommendations

Guiding the Town's future growth for optimum benefit for all its citizens requires, and the Town Plan recommends, adherence to several basic policies:

- (1) Preserve the quality of the established tax base by sound land use management which reinforces residential values and provides for optimum use of the remaining undeveloped land.
- (2) Manage Town operating and capital outlay for minimal tax impact on average taxpayers, including continued encouragement of volunteer service contributions and effective management of resources.
- (3) Invest in public infrastructure on a scheduled basis for optimum Town values, including both new and replacement facilities.
- (4) Consider new land uses only in proportion to their financial as well as aesthetic and social benefit to the community.
- (5) Encourage high-value residential development in recognition of its revenue-positive contribution to the Town's tax base.

Chapter 10
ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY CENTERS

A (Mostly) Residential Town

The rurality and residential nature of Easton is clearly shown in the land use statistics of Chapter 5. Almost 40% of the town's area is permanently committed "greenspace" and of the existing developed land over 90% is in residential use. Land devoted to nonresidential uses (such as schools, parks, and scattered small business establishments) represents but 1.5% of the town's developed area.

A strong consensus exists among townspeople that Easton should not provide for major commercial services, shopping centers or other intensive business development such as that found in nearby towns. This is wholly consistent with regional plans which identify much of Easton as greenbelt or "rural fringe" area, and with protection of the four-fifths of the town area which is public water supply watershed. The majority of residents are accustomed to traveling to other towns for shopping, employment and major services, most of which are readily available in Fairfield, Monroe, Westport and other commercial centers of the nearby area.

The Town Plan therefore does not propose to create commercial zones or a central business district in Easton. However, the future of the five small clusters of nonresidential use which have developed in Easton over many years and which continue to serve various needs of the town as it grows is a question which must be addressed by the Town Plan.

Although some might wish to keep the town exactly as it is today, this view does not recognize the inevitability of continued town growth and change, nor the potential of the several small long-established non-residential hamlets to evolve in ways less than beneficial to the community. The Plan is an opportunity to proactively guide the future development of these areas in a way which will enhance the quality of life in Easton.

The Town Plan aims to carefully balance the essential civic and service needs of the future town population with conservation of Easton's environment and its residential quality of life.

Historical Perspective

From its earliest history Easton has accommodated numerous small enterprises and specialized skills conducted by local residents to serve the community

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries water-powered grist mills, saw mills, cider mills and small industries producing buttons, boots, paper goods, wagons and carriages operated all along the Mill, Aspetuck and Saugatuck Rivers and many of their

Chapter 10

ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY CENTERS

Historical Perspective (continued)

tributaries. Shoemakers, carpenters, mechanics, blacksmiths, tanners, merchants, coopers, tavern keepers and numerous other entrepreneurs conducted business throughout all sections of the town. Early in the twentieth century, with the advent of automobile travel, small business clusters developed at Sport Hill and Center Roads (blacksmith, gas station, store and other businesses), at Center and Westport Roads (general store, post office, gas station), and at Black Rock and Redding Roads (roadside refreshment stands and gasoline station). Modern-day business establishments continue at all three locations, and there are historic sites and buildings at each location.

As Easton has evolved from a rural to an exurban community new centers of community activity have developed at Morehouse and Center Roads (Town Hall, library, school) and at Veterans Park (school, community center, recreation fields). The later two areas, developed over the past 75 years, may be considered of "historic" significance in the legacy of civic service they have established and will continue to provide for future generations of Eastonites.

Because the character of a community is strengthened by common places where residents can meet with fellow townspeople -- even on a random basis -- for help with daily needs, to obtain essential goods and services, to exchange views on civic matters, and to participate in improving the quality of life with neighbors, all of these special places have a role to play in Easton's future.

Easton's Five Existing Community Centers

Each of the small existing community service "clusters" or centers identified above is unique, yet all share certain common characteristics.

They are:

- small in land area, yet developed quite intensively;
- located at crossroads or major road intersections;
- centers of activity which bring people together for various needs;
- predominantly nonresidential, with three or more institutional or commercial uses in close proximity to one another;
- long established, with a history of important contributions to town civic life.

These long-established, mostly non-residential complexes have gradually evolved over a century or more, and range in size from a few acres to about fifty acres (Veterans Park and Keller School complex). They provide a variety of valuable services to the community at large. The clusters include the "historic" village center at Westport and Center Roads, the municipal center at Morehouse and Center Roads, the firehouse and local business center at Sport Hill and Center Roads, the community center and recreation facilities at Veterans Park, and the Toth Park business center at Black Rock and Redding Roads.

(continues on page 84)

Chapter 10

ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY CENTERS

Easton's Five Existing Community Centers (continued)

To conserve the unique rural and residential character of the town two basic planning policies are therefore recommended:

- (1) Preserve the quality and integrity of all existing residential neighborhoods and rural land in Easton, by prohibiting the encroachment of incompatible uses in these areas; and
- (2) Limit the five small existing nonresidential "centers" to their present extent, and guide the future use of each area in accordance with a plan which preserves its civic and historic character, and controls its layout, architecture and future uses for optimum benefit to the community as a whole. In this manner these small islands of nonresidential use and intense activity can fulfill their potential as civic assets rather than liabilities.

Protection of the special qualities of each of these areas is discussed in a following section.

The Broad Central Area: Enhancing Easton's Sense of Community

Preserving Easton's inherent sense of identity, public participation in civic affairs, and strong spirit of volunteerism are essential to its future life as a community.

Much of the strength of Easton's future civic life, residential quality and citizen satisfaction depends on a well-organized, attractive focal "center" which embodies the town's civic spirit and brings people together in their ordinary recreational, social, and service transactions.

Four of the five non-residential clusters or "village centers" share a common centrality to the Town as a whole, in that they are located close to the portion of Center Road between Westport Road and Sport Hill Road. Within this mile-and-three-quarter long central neighborhood are located the Town Hall, the Public Library, the Senior Center, Staples School, two churches, a Masonic lodge, a nursery school, a historical museum (Adams Schoolhouse), the post office, the fire house, the emergency medical headquarters, Veterans Park, the Easton Community Center, public tennis courts and playfields, the "Firehouse Green", and several commercial establishments. Many of the most important events in the town's civic life regularly take place here, such as Easton Day, the Library Book Fair, Volunteer Fire Company Carnival, Community Center events, Historical Society "Open House" at the Adams School House, Veteran's Field sporting matches, and Town Memorial Day and Independence Day observances – to name but a few. In addition many informal gatherings occur throughout this area in the heart of the community, whether for tennis at Helen Keller, posting signs about civic events at the "Firehouse Green", transacting business at Town Hall, borrowing a book at the library, attending religious services, or making purchases at the "Village Store". In short Easton has a well developed and focused civic life and it revolves to a major degree around this central spine of Center Road and vicinity.

(continues on page 86)



Easton's little crossroad hamlets, where nonresidential uses have evolved over many generations, could have their charm and character protected by enactment of design review. (Above: traditional church and green, Center and Westport Roads. Below: green at Sport Hill and Center Roads).



Chapter 10
ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY CENTERS

The Broad Central Area: Enhancing Easton's Sense of Community (continued)

While some economic, civic and social activity does occur in widely dispersed individual locations throughout the town -- such as several of the churches, the Aspetuck Valley Orchard sales barn and various home enterprises -- it is clear that most of Easton's community life is focused in the central part of the town where the four centers described above are located.

The Plan proposes a very broadly-defined central locality of the community, generally embracing the vicinity of Center Road between Westport Road and Sport Hill Road and the nearby areas within which new public and civic uses serving Town needs would be appropriate and encouraged, subject to rigorous standards of planning, design and compatibility with the town's residential environment. This central area would continue to be a low-density rural residential area requiring strict standards of neighborhood compatibility for any new or enlarged public service uses. Large sites, special permits and design review would be mandatory, as at present, for new institutional uses.

New institutional and other intensive uses, now permissible anywhere in Easton by special permit, should be discouraged from locating in outlying areas to the detriment of established residential neighborhoods. By encouraging those uses important for service to the community to locate within the central section of the community where easily accessible for all town residents, greater protection from intensive traffic-generating uses will be accorded to existing residential neighborhoods and outlying "rural" areas, and Easton's civic and residential values will be greatly strengthened.

The following principles should guide the future of the Town's central area:

- An attractively developed, low-density rural quality central village or series of villages, limited to residential, cultural and public uses serving the community would significantly enhance the town's image and quality of life.
- Coordinated architectural design, linking bikeways, traffic calming measures, and expanded public parks and greens would be desirable unifying elements in Easton's central area.
- Because the four existing nonresidential small centers within this broad area are widely separated, although closely linked by the 1.4 mile easterly section of Center Road, the future "Town Center" would be a spacious low-density rural village blending homes, civic uses, open space, institutional and public service uses in a traditional setting of residential-scale buildings compatible with the openness and residential character of the town. Perhaps an appropriate model for this area would be a traditional New England country village consisting of a long central street with widely spaced homes, civic and public service buildings such as town hall, library, museum or cultural center, a public green or two, religious buildings, and a consistency of architecture, layout and landscaping. Uses in each of the four compact existing villages would be flexible but attuned to community needs, rigorously

Chapter 10

ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY CENTERS

The Broad Central Area: Enhancing Easton's Sense of Community (continued)

controlled by "special permit". Single-family dwellings on three-acre lots, as at present, would remain the only use "by right" throughout the central area.

The entire central area should be carefully coordinated with site and architectural plans which preserve the desired image of a rural village reflective of Easton's character. To achieve this end a special design district would be desirable for this broad central area, to complement the specific design standards which would govern future development within the five existing community center villages.

Planning the Future of Easton's Existing Town Centers

Although the five small non-residential enclaves, identified above together comprise less than one percent of Easton's land area they have a disproportionate importance to the community for the services they provide as well as their potential impact should uncontrolled "intensification" of their present land uses occur. Because many of the uses in these areas are "nonconforming" there are no effective plans or zoning standards to guide their future.

The key to preserving Easton's rural and small-town character while providing appropriate locations for the civic, institutional and service needs of its citizens lies in utilizing the existing small non-residential clusters or villages in a manner which benefits the community as greatly as possible. Each of these small enclaves is identified on the Plan, with discrete boundaries, and shown as a "Community Center".

It is proposed that a detailed and unique master plan be prepared to guide the conservation and development of each of these special areas. Each plan would focus on the individual character and special potential of its particular area with emphasis on:

- preservation of historic landmarks and sites
- appropriate land uses in consideration of the character of the area and community needs
- traffic calming and pedestrian circulation
- attractive building design and site amenities
- abundant parkland, greenspace and effective environmental conservation.

None of these plans would be designed to promote commercial development or significant new uses. Each plan would be based on preserving the character of its small area and projecting its future development along lines which would reinforce community civic values and the attractive, low-density residential character of the town. Following a public hearing on each of these "mini-neighborhood" plans, the Planning and Zoning Commission could propose appropriate zoning, site plan, historic preservation and architectural regulations consistent with available statutory authorizations.

(continues on page 88)

Chapter 10

ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY CENTERS

Planning the Future of Easton's Existing Town Centers (continued)

The Town Plan shows the five existing "Community Centers", based on historic existing public activity locations. The first four, labeled A, B, C and D, are complementary to the Town Central Area discussed above. The fifth, Area E, although not central, is important in the history of Easton and as a recreational center. The general location, important features, and proposed role for each special planning area follows.

(A) -- "Historic Village Center"

At intersection of Center and Westport Roads; approx. 28 acres. 10 historic buildings, including Staples Academy, Congregational Church, Adams Schoolhouse, general store. Non-residential uses: church, nursery school, post office, store, gas station, museum.

Open space: church green (0.3 acre). 5 dwellings.

Purpose: Preservation of historic buildings and landmarks within Easton's traditional village center; with adaptive reuse as needed, pedestrian amenities, traffic calming, off-street parking and landscaping.

(B) -- "Municipal Center"

Intersection of Center and Morehouse Roads; approx. 50 acres. 3 historic buildings (including 1934 original Town Hall).

Nonresidential uses: Town Hall, Library, Police Department, Staples School, Senior Center, Notre Dame Church, Masonic Lodge.

Open Space: Senior Memorial Park, Staples Field, school grounds, BHC land (approx. 24 acres). 2 historic dwellings.

Purpose: Enhancement of Town civic facilities setting, and its social, cultural, governmental, recreational and public meeting facilities in a well-planned, attractive civic campus; with appropriate civic, service, educational, social and religious uses adjacent, including on-site pedestrian amenities and landscaping.

(C) -- "Town Green Center"

At intersection of Center, Banks and Sport Hill Roads: approx. 28 acres. 2 historic buildings.




Nonresidential uses: fire house, emergency medical building, retail store, gas station, farm produce store, animal zoo, miscellaneous accessory buildings.

Open space: firehouse green (0.4 acre). 2 dwellings.

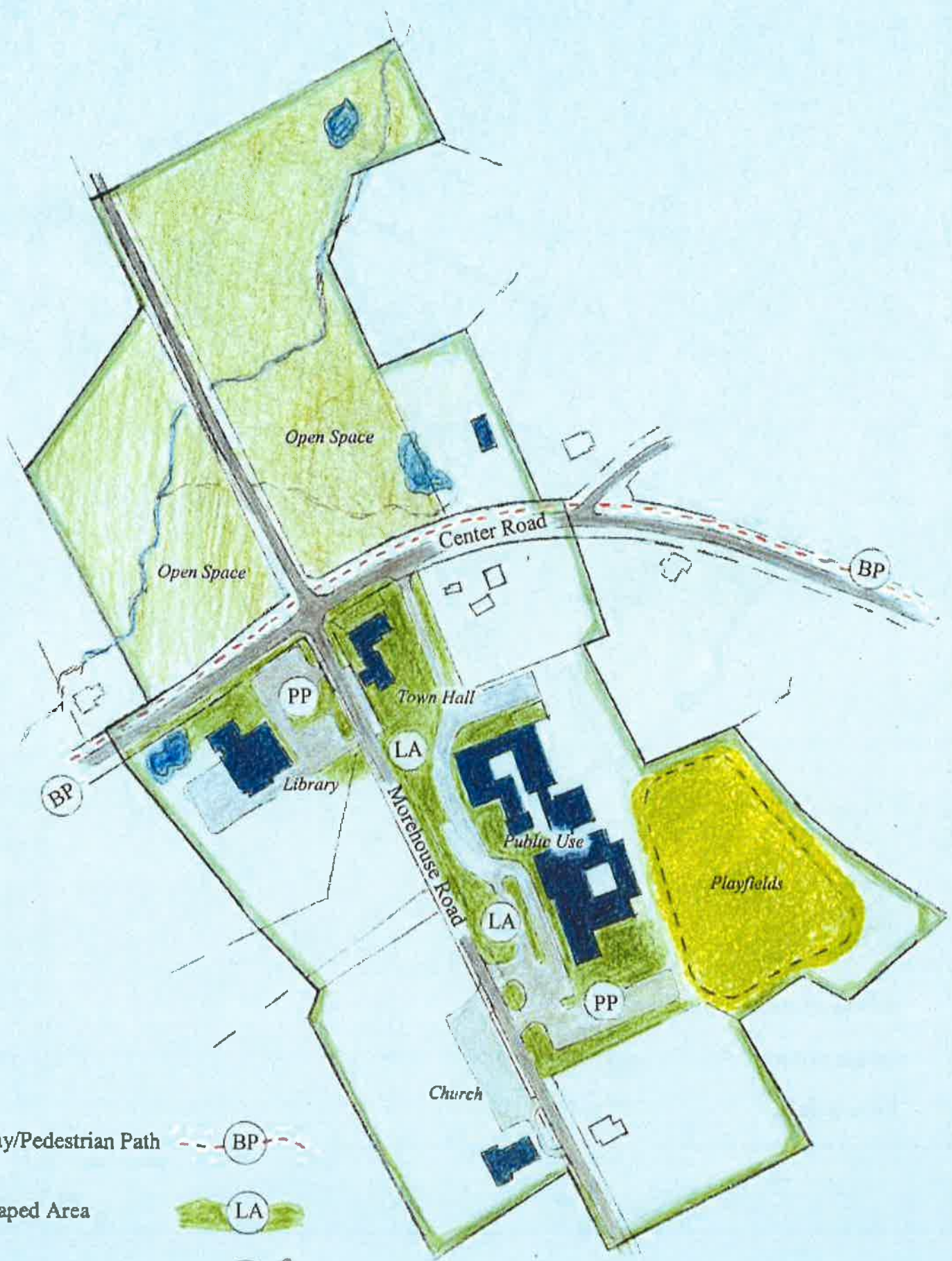
Purpose: Rehabilitation of historic mixed nonresidential area (a business center over 100 years) into an attractive, well-planned small service and cultural center consistent with town needs, including new public safety building, expanded public green, street landscaping, off-street parking, traffic calming and pedestrian amenities.

(continues on page 92)



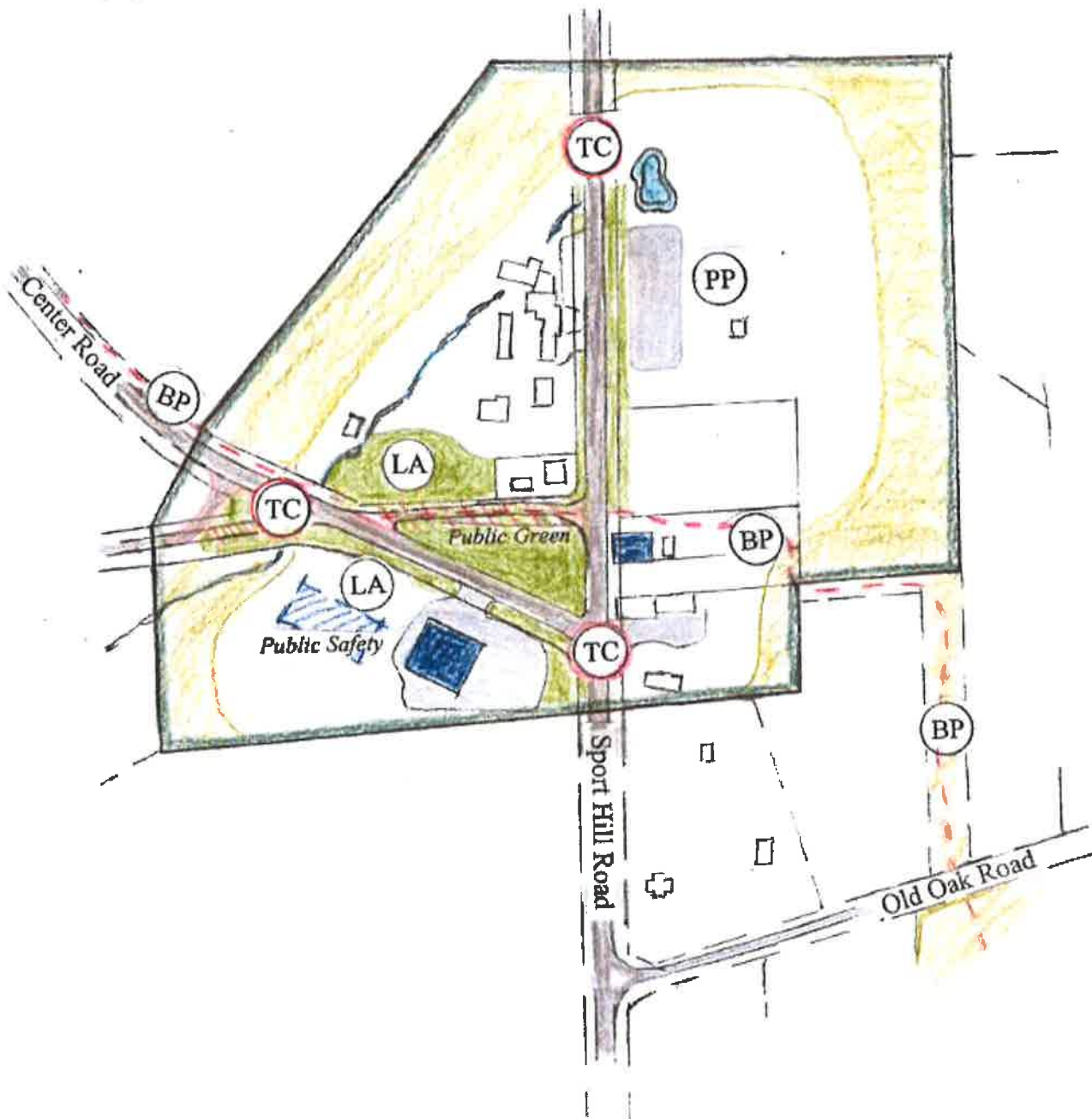
- Bikeway/Pedestrian Path 
- Landscaped Area 
- Public Parking 





HISTORIC VILLAGE CENTER



- Bikeway/Pedestrian Path 
- Landscaped Area 
- Public Parking 

MUNICIPAL CENTER



- Bikeway/Pedestrian Path 
- Landscaped Area 
- Public Parking 
- Traffic Calming 

TOWN GREEN CENTER

Chapter 10
ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY CENTERS

Planning the Future of Easton's Existing Town Centers (continued)

(D) -- "Veterans Park Center"

At Veteran's Park and vicinity, just east of Sport Hill Road and District C, adjacent to Helen Keller School; approx. 50 acres. No historic buildings or dwellings.

Nonresidential uses: public recreation fields (2), tennis courts, Town recreation office and garage, Easton Community Center, supplemental school and recreation parking lot.

Open space: adjacent Aquarion Water Co. tract, 16 acres.

Purpose: Coordination of very active public recreation park, community recreation center and public school site with adjacent open space to improve pedestrian access, aesthetics, bikeway linkage to Center Road, landscaping and other public benefits.

(E) -- "Toth Park Center"

At the intersection of Black Rock and Redding Roads; approx. 13 acres. 2 historic cemeteries; site of early town meetings (no historic buildings survive).

Nonresidential uses: restaurant, gas station / repair garage, Toth Park, (Town Little League fields), 3 cemeteries. 1 dwelling.

Open Space: park area adjoins undeveloped 9 acres of Toth Park at rear.

Purpose: protection of historic site and cemeteries, scenic enhancement of small commercial area and public recreation park as recommended in 2002

Scenic Route 58, Corridor Management Plan, including streetscape improvements, traffic calming, off-street parking and landscaping.

In Summary

The Town Plan proposes the creation of overlay zones and other measures to enhance the civic image of the town, guide the future development of its small existing centers, protect historic landmarks, and restrict the location of new intensive uses to the central area of the community. Proposed measures include a special design district for a portion of Center Road and special plans to guide the future development of the town's historic community centers.

(illustrations continue on pages 93, 94 and 95)



VETERANS PARK CENTER



Bikeway/Pedestrian Path



Landscaped Area



Public Parking



Traffic Calming



Note: Central portion of illustration and related text on following page is from Route 58 Corridor Management Plan prepared for The Route 58 Scenic Road Advisory Committee and the Connecticut Department of Transportation, 2002.

TOTH PARK CENTER

(A) CROSSROADS

1. A stone facade treatment to match the stone walls in the area could be applied to the existing concrete bridge to improve the bridge's appearance and make it consistent with existing scenic elements.
2. Overhead utility wires could be placed underground to remove visual clutter.
3. A sign program should be developed to incorporate and organize all directional and informational signage in the area, as well as along the scenic corridor. A new sign for Toth Park could be developed and positioned to be seen from both vehicle directions along Route 58.
4. Existing guide rail should be replaced with rusted or painted W-rail and shrub border. (See photo simulation - Figure 4D).
5. Tighten turning radius and slightly modify intersection layout to provide maximum visibility from Redding Road and to require slower turning movements onto Redding Road.

(B) CORRIDOR EDGES

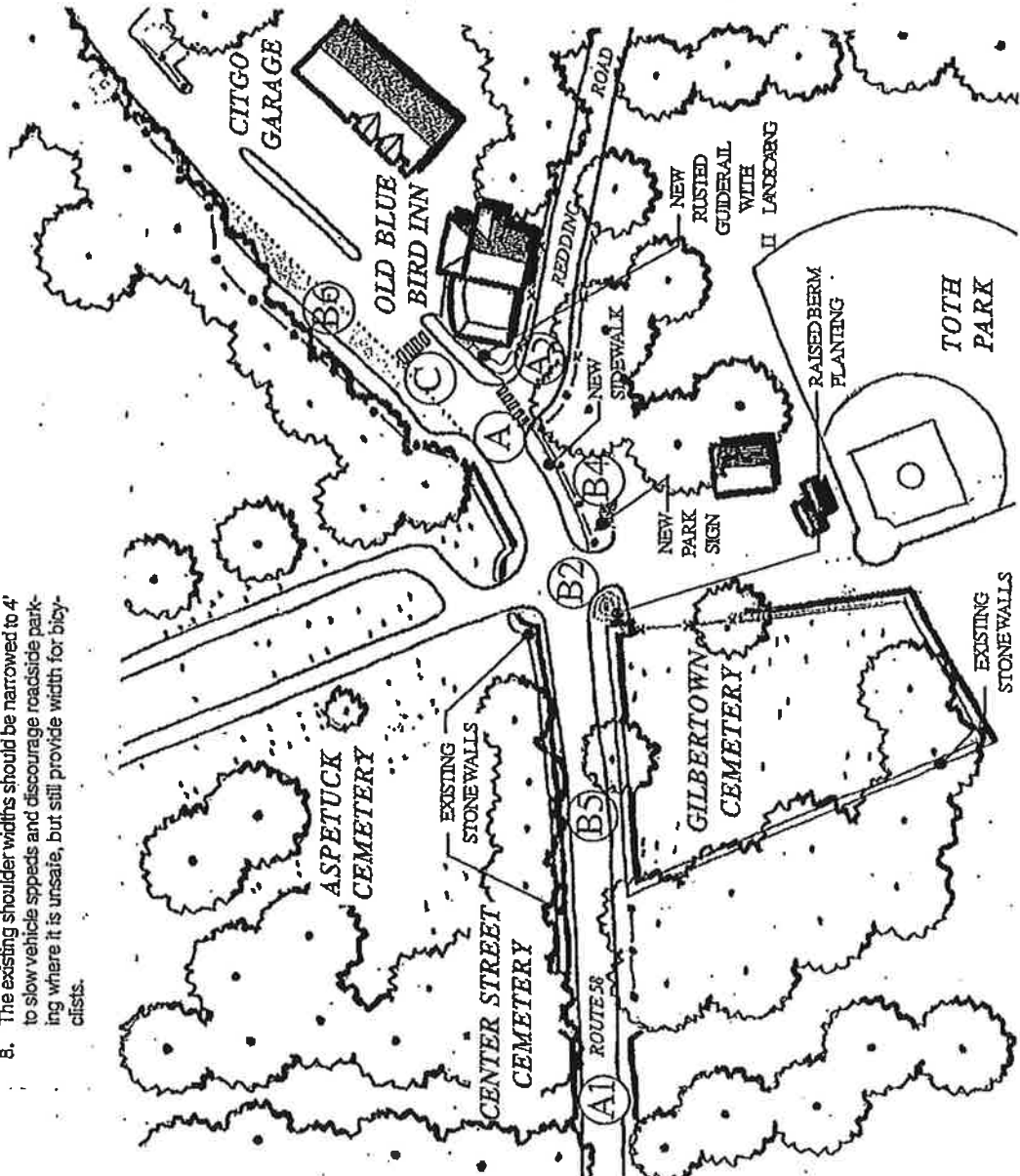
1. Granite curbing at a height of 6" should be added throughout the activity zone from gateway to gateway to provide definition to the roadway and provide a physical separation between vehicular and pedestrian areas.
2. Landscape treatments such as in-ground plantings of annuals and perennials could assist in providing visual indicators for access points onto the corridor.
3. Consult with an arborist to selectively prune existing trees and to remove invasives trees and shrubs. Adding or realigning wood post and rail fencing could provide a more consistent edge to the corridor, filling in gaps and reducing the scale of the roadway. Incorporating roadside edge elements such as fencing into the landscape can visually minimize the scale of the road and promote slower driving behavior.
4. The corridor edge in front of the Gilbertown Cemetery could be cleaned up to give the cemetery a more prominent "face" on the corridor.
5. The unpaved "overflow" parking area across from the Old Blue Bird Inn should be eliminated or reconfigured for parallel parking to improve corridor safety.

(B) CORRIDOR EDGES (continued)

7. The parking area across from the Old Blue Bird Inn should be covered with a colored stone dust to define the limits of the parking area and provide an attractive surface parking consistent with the corridor aesthetics. Stone color should be selected to match the stone type of the existing stone walls in the area. The parking should be bordered with a wood post and rail fence to further reinforce the limits of the parking.
8. The existing shoulder widths should be narrowed to 4' to slow vehicle speeds and discourage roadside parking where it is unsafe, but still provide width for bicyclists.

(C) CIRCULATION AND TRAFFIC

1. Sidewalks and crosswalks should be added between parking areas to accommodate pedestrian circulation among the Old Blue Bird Inn, Toth Park, and the Aspetuck and Gilbertown Cemeteries.
2. Provide cross walk across Route 58 to parking area to promote pedestrian crossing in one location rather than multiple random crossings.



LEGEND

- SIDEWALK
- NEW & REALIGNED WOOD FENCING
- PROPOSED CROSS WALK
- COLORED STONEDUST OVERFLOW PARKING
- EXISTING WOOD FENCING



Chapter 11
THE TOWN PLAN

Legal Guidelines

Connecticut State Law requires every town with a planning commission to prepare and periodically update a comprehensive plan which addresses the present and future needs of its citizens.

In years past, local master plans tended to focus primarily on land use, densities and traffic circulation -- as a glance at Easton's 1977 "Plan of Development" will show. Today town plans are required to be much broader in scope, taking into account regional, environmental and social issues often neglected in past planning. Consequently Easton's Plan of Conservation and Development 2006 is a much more comprehensive document for guidance in reaching the town's future goals.

The General Statutes require that each town plan address a number of specific issues and also authorize the plan to make recommendations in other important areas. Land use regulations and municipal projects must generally be in accordance with the adopted town plan.*

Summarized in the following paragraphs are the mandatory as well as the permissible inclusions which the law specifies for a town plan, as applicable to Easton. Parenthetical references indicate the particular chapters of the Town Plan report and the Plan Map categories which fulfill the statutory directives.

The plan must consider (Sec. 8-23c):

*The need for affordable housing
(Chapter 4)*

*Protection of surface and ground drinking water supplies
(Chapters 3, 5; Plan Map Land Use, Conservation)*

*Cluster development consistent with soils and infrastructure
(Chapters 3, 5)*

*State Plan of Conservation and Development
(Chapters 2, 3, 5, 11; Plan Map Land Use, Conservation)*

* See Connecticut General Statutes, Sections 8-23 (c), (d) and (e), as amended, for plan content; also Sections 8-2 and 8-24 as to conformance with the town plan.

Chapter 11
THE TOWN PLAN

Legal Guidelines (continued)

Regional Plan, Greater Bridgeport Region
(Chapters 2, 5, 8, 11; Plan Map Land Use, Conservation)

Physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends
(Chapters 1 – 10 inclusive)

Municipal needs, including education, health, recreation, social services, utilities, public safety, circulation, cultural and other needs
(Chapters 6 – 10 inclusive; Plan Map Public Facilities, Circulation, Conservation)

Energy efficiency and conservation
(Chapters 6, 8, 10; Plan Map Public Facilities, Circulation, Conservation)

Protection and preservation of agriculture
(Chapters 3,5; Plan Map Conservation, Open Space Proposed)

The plan shall include (Sec. 8-23d):

A statement of policies, goals and standards
(Chapter 11)

Design for coordinated development, with efficiency and economy
(Chapters 11, 12; Plan Map, all categories)

Most desirable uses of land and densities of population
(Chapter 5; Plan Map Land Use)

Consistency with State Plan of Conservation and Development
(Chapter 2)

Provision for housing opportunities, with choice and economic diversity, including low and moderate income, consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity
(Chapter 5)

The plan may show recommendations for (Sec. 8-23e):

Streets and public ways, parks and other public grounds, the general location of public buildings and utilities
(Chapters 6, 8; Plan Map Public Facilities, Circulation, Conservation)

Program for plan implementation
(Chapter 12)

Chapter 11
THE TOWN PLAN

Legal Guidelines (continued)

*Open space acquisition and greenways protection
(Chapter 3, Plan Map Conservation)*

As recently amended the statutes now require that the town plan be updated at least once every ten years, and further provide that the planning commission may amend the plan “as it deems necessary” and may “at any time . . . adopt plans for . . . neighborhoods which, in its judgment, contain special problems or opportunities . . .” (Section 8-23).

Toward A Solid Plan For The Future of Easton

Preparations for the current Town Plan of Conservation and Development began in the summer of 2000 with a decision by the Planning and Zoning Commission to formulate a totally new and comprehensive plan for the Town. The original Town Plan, prepared in 1975-76 and adopted in 1977, had become hopelessly out of date and no longer relevant to Town needs and policies.

The very extensive work program required for the new Plan began in October 2000 and continued over the next four to five years. A coordinated effort between the planning consultant, Town staff and the members of the Commission ensued, with each segment of the work effort reviewed in depth.

At the very outset it was recognized that much in Easton had changed since the 1970's and that it would take time not only to construct a solid data base but also to develop fresh perspectives on Town needs and opportunities. A series of meetings with Town officials and a broad spectrum of local interest groups was conducted over a three-year period by the Commission and consultant to gather data, assess needs and chart desirable policies. A detailed mapping program produced a new GIS lot-line base map of the town as well as maps on topography, soils, slopes, hydrology and land use. Extensive data were compiled and evaluated on regional influences, environmental resources, population, historical development, land use, development trends, public facilities, recreational facilities, cultural and historical sites, public roads, economic trends, and other factors which shape the community. The results of this research and policy formulation have laid the foundation for the Plan and are presented in the first ten chapters of this report.

In addition to the statutory directives governing for the Town Plan, noted in the previous section, a number of significant issues have been addressed in the Plan. Each issue has been thoroughly examined by the Commission in terms of feasible alternatives and impact on the town. Recommendations relevant to each issue are presented in the final section of this chapter. Briefly, the principal policy issues which have been addressed, but not necessarily endorsed or recommended, are:

Chapter 11
THE TOWN PLAN

Toward A Solid Plan For The Future of Easton (continued)

- Appropriate residential densities in the various types of land, including water supply watersheds, flood plains, poor soils, steep slopes;
- Town economic base, including various tax favorable uses such as luxury residential, corporate office, research, other uses;
- Housing needs, for retirement-age local residents and others, such as civil servants, elders and youth of the community;
- Cluster development, as a means to conserve open space, protect environmental resources and facilitate senior housing, while maintaining existing residential densities;
- Public facility needs, especially schools, public safety, public works, town hall, and active recreation;
- Conservation of open space, cultural and historical resources;
- Roads and traffic circulation, including bikeways;
- Town land use regulations and needed revisions;
- Consistency of the Town Plan with the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

A Twenty-first Century Perspective

Since the 1977 Plan Easton has changed in significant ways. No longer is it as rural and insular as formerly. Undeveloped land has shrunk from 5,600 acres, 35% of the town, to approximately 2,200 acres, only 12% of the town. As farmland has continued to decline, now only 4.3% of Easton's land area, land in development has nearly doubled, from 24.2% to 46.7% of town area. Paralleling this growth has been a 38% rise in population, from approximately 5,420 persons in 1975 to about 7,600 persons today. Most of Easton's residential growth has occurred in the town's exurban 3-acre lot area. In 1977 about 54% of Easton residents lived in the "A" Zone (40,000 sq. ft. lots) in the Sport Hill vicinity; today only 42% of the townspeople reside in that more densely-built neighborhood.

Increased commuting to work, longer travel for ordinary errands and the growth of three-car households in Easton and nearby towns, has produced a dramatic increase in daily traffic over Easton roads. In a town-wide questionnaire preceding the 1977 plan 63% of the respondents indicated some degree of receptivity to more local stores and shops; today, however, a large proportion of residents strongly favor travel to other centers over the "local option".

The town's infrastructure has grown along with its population. Major additions to Joel Barlow High School and Helen Keller Middle School, a new elementary school, new library, new fire house, new community center and expanded town hall are but the most significant facilities added over the past 30 years.

(continues on page 100)

Chapter 11
THE TOWN PLAN

A Twenty-first Century Perspective (continued)

As land for building has become scarce its value has skyrocketed and consequently the typical “spec-built” new dwelling is now a mini-mansion of five bedrooms, three-car garage and amenities scarcely imagined 30 years ago.

Nonetheless, of all of the changes wrought over the past several decades the most significant long-term change is clearly the great increase in permanently-dedicated open space which has occurred with transfer of former Bridgeport Hydraulic Company land to public and quasi-public ownership. In 1975 dedicated open space land in Easton totaled 162 acres, 0.9% of the town; in 2005, 6,835 acres were “forever green”, 37.3% of the town. This monumental land reservation is not only significant for Easton’s future but a clear public recognition that a livable environment for densely populated southwestern Connecticut depends on preserving the watershed lands of central Fairfield County. As a bulwark against suburban sprawl these lands provide clean air, clean water and recreational greenspace for the benefit of the three metropolitan regions which surround them.

From this new perspective it is clear that Easton’s long-term role in the greater region will be that of a “greenbelt community” in which very-low-density residential is juxtaposed with wilderness open space, protected stream corridors and natural areas, with carefully-sited small groups of facilities essential to serve the resident population. Preservation of the town’s cultural, scenic and historic character, moreover, will harmonize closely with these objectives. A healthful environment for the town’s citizens, stronger civic values, and conservation of the natural environment are all possible – and are the basic principles which underlie of this Plan of Conservation and Development for Easton.

Policy and Recommendations

As Easton approaches its fourth century of existence as a settled community its prospects are bright in a rapidly changing world. The town is blessed by nature with extraordinary resources of land and water, is rich in historical tradition, is strategically situated in the affluent northeast corridor, and is peopled by residents who share a concern for their community. Easton’s quality of life and importance to the region should – with foresighted guidance by town leaders – become appreciably greater in the decades to come.

The Town Plan aims for a balanced community in which conservation and new development work in partnership for the benefit of all. Making it all work will require collaboration between Town government, civic groups and private citizens as outlined in Chapter 12.

Chapter 11
THE TOWN PLAN

Policy and Recommendations (continued)

The major policy recommendations of the Town Plan are summarized in Chapter 1, and expressed graphically in the Plan of Conservation and Development map which accompanies this report. Presented in the following text are the specific action recommendations by topics listed in Chapter 1, to implement the Plan. References in parentheses are to particular chapters of this report and to the Plan map where fuller descriptions appear.

The Region

- *Actively support state, regional and local area plans which incorporate principles of smart growth by directing major development into regional centers and existing urban infrastructure areas while limiting growth in rural fringe areas such as Easton. (Chapter 2)*
- *Maintain low-density development standards for all areas of Easton, especially the public water supply watersheds. (Chapters 2, 3, 5 and Plan Map)*
- *Support regional plans for transportation projects which strengthen urban centers and reduce traffic impacts on Easton, specifically, enhancement of rail commuter, I-95 and Rt. 25 improvements, and maintenance of Rts. 58, 59, and 136 as secondary two-lane roads. (Chapters 2 and 8)*

Land on Water-supply Watersheds.

- *Protect the environmental quality and low-density character of all water-supply watershed lands, as recommended by the State Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut, especially to maintain residential dwelling densities no greater than one 4 to 5 bedroom dwelling unit, or equivalent occupancy, for every two acres of contiguous upland site area. (Chapters 3, 5 and Plan Map)*
- *Work with the State, Nature Conservancy and Aquarion Water Company to protect the environmental and scenic quality of watershed open space lands, including future trail connections and appropriate limited recreational uses of benefit to the community. (Chapter 3)*

Residential Development and Housing

- *Preserve the attractive low-density and rural residential character of existing neighborhoods throughout the town, particularly by limiting development intensity and by controlling or barring uses incompatible with residential neighborhoods. (Chapter 5)*
- *Maintain the residential rural density of established three-acre residential neighborhoods and all water-supply watershed areas. (Chapter 5 and Plan Map)*
- *Maintain the residential low density of established one-acre (40,000 square feet) residential neighborhoods, with only minor zone-boundary adjustments where desirable to maintain neighborhood integrity. (Chapter 5 and Plan Map)*

(continues on page 102)

Chapter 11
THE TOWN PLAN

Policy and Recommendations (continued)

Residential Development and Housing (continued)

- *Adopt special standards for age-restricted residential or for a planned retirement community, subject to special permit and density no greater than existing zoning, where located on a large tract of land and found compatible with neighborhood and environmental protection. (Chapter 5 and Plan Map)*
- *Adopt provisions to allow by right a small limited-duration accessory apartment for one or two seniors who are relatives of the resident owner, subject to discontinuance when vacated. Continue present "affordable accessory apartment" regulations governed by special permit for other accessory apartments. (Chapter 4).*
- *In conformity with statutory mandate, and as limited by soil types, terrain, infrastructure capacity and water-supply watershed protection imperatives, explore means of increasing the availability of housing choice and economic diversity in housing such as public or private non-profit dwellings and "setaside" units in subdivisions. (Chapter 4)*

Open Space and Conservation of Natural Resources

- *Protect the quality of surface and ground water in all development review, plans and public activities as a cornerstone of Town land use policy. (Chapter 3)*
- *Conserve Easton's extensive water-supply watershed lands, wilderness areas, existing public and quasi-public open space preserves, and other open lands wherever possible, as permanently dedicated open space. (Chapter 3 and Plan Map)*
- *Take early action to acquire or reserve the several intervening tracts needed to complete linkages in the Town's open space network. (Plan Map)*
- *Adopt environmentally-sensitive land development standards to limit massive land disturbance, tailor new building to fit more compatibly with natural features, reduce new road construction and site clearances, allow plan-based or flexible siting, protect aquifers and extreme slopes, and preserve scenic and historic features. (Chapter 3)*
- *Use creative efforts and special land use standards (such as tax relief, negotiated easements or purchase of development rights, and compact or cluster design to preserve remaining farms and farmland wherever possible. (Chapters 3, 5 and Plan Map)*
- *Focus future open space acquisitions on protection of vital natural or scenic areas, desirable recreation space, and key linkages for trails between existing open space tracts. (Chapter 3 and Plan Map)*

(continues on page 103)

Chapter 11
THE TOWN PLAN

Policy and Recommendations (continued)

Open Space and Conservation of Natural Resources (continued)

- *Collaborate with other towns, State and regional agencies, Aquarion Water Company, The Nature Conservancy, Aspetuck Land Trust and other private groups as appropriate for watershed conservation, inter-town trails and greenways, stream protection and other aspects of area-wide environmental or recreational benefit. (Chapters 2,3 and Plan Map)*
- *Close to vehicular traffic old semi-abandoned Town highways (as recommended in Chapter 8), and initiate construction of the hiking trails recommended on the Town Plan. (Chapter 3 and Plan Map)*
- *Allocate at least one half of the funds collected from new subdivisions as "fee in lieu of open space" for specific acquisition of land recommended as open space on the town Plan. (Chapter 3)*

Historical and Cultural Resources

- *Preserve significant historic sites, buildings and districts through enactment of appropriate regulations as authorized by the General Statutes, especially for historic districts and historic properties. (Chapter 7)*
- *Research and prepare an archaeological sensitivity map of the town, and amend Town regulations to require that major development projects preserve or recover evidence and pre-historic artifacts of significant value. (Chapter 7)*
- *Strengthen protection of the town's scenic character by enacting design review standards for all public and quasi-public buildings, for specially-designated scenic-protection and historic sites, and for the several established centers of the community. (Chapters 7, 10 and Plan Map)*
- *Encourage designation of additional town and state Scenic Roads, and strengthen the Town Scenic Road Ordinance by clearer definition of permissible changes and added protection for significant trees and stone walls. (Chapter 7 and Plan Map)*
- *Add protection for landmark trees, historic stone walls, and special viewsapes to Town regulations. (Chapter 7)*

Public Facilities

- *Construct, as planned and approved, the Public Works Department salt shed on the DPW site at Westport and Sport Hill Roads. Secure additional site space by closing the adjacent portion of Bibbins Road and applying to CT DOT for surplus Rt. 59 right-of-way. (Chapter 6 and Plan Map)*
- *Construct, as planned, additional playfields and active recreation area on the Town-owned Morehouse Road tract adjacent to the new elementary school. (Chapter 6 and Plan Map)*

(continues on page 104)

Chapter 11
THE TOWN PLAN

Policy and Recommendations (continued)

Public Facilities (continued)

- *Prepare a space needs analysis, engineering evaluation and conversion plan for the present Staples School building and site. Retain property in Town ownership, and continued use of the playfield in Town's recreation program. Consider as preferred options for future use of the building a new and enlarged senior center, District 9 school administration offices, and expansion space for presently crowded Town offices. Space should be considered to provide for public meetings, reserve school or special education space, and appropriate areas may also be designated for lease to professional offices of a type beneficial to the community (such as medical, dental, engineering, legal, charitable, public service) (Chapter 6)*
- *Convert the former Staples School in accordance with the plan discussed above. Designate a special design district for this area to provide design review and long-range planning for this Town civic complex. (Chapter 6 and Plan Map)*
- *Address the Town's urgent public safety needs by planning new facilities for the Police Department and the Emergency Medical Service. Consider as the preferred option a site in close proximity to the Volunteer Fire Department, and close coordination at this one general location of all three emergency services in order that optimum efficiency in training, response and manpower may be achieved. (Chapter 6 and Plan Map)*

Roads and Mobility

- *Support improvements in major arterial routes of the region, such as Routes 15 and 25, and in regional rail and transit service, since these measures will benefit Easton by focusing future development in urban centers and tend to mitigate potential traffic pressures on Easton roads. (Chapter 8)*
- *Work with the Connecticut Department of Transportation, and with local school, police, fire and public works officials, to secure traffic calming measures and more effective speed control on the major high-volume roads such as Routes 59, 136 and 58, and specific realignment of several potentially hazardous intersections. (Chapter 8 and Plan Map)*
- *Maintain the present network of minor arterial and town collector roads in their present form since these roads provide an adequate circulation system throughout the town. Except for minor safety improvements needed at various locations and several limited site-specific roadway revisions as shown on the Plan, there is no need for additional connecting roads, extensive street widening or significant upgrades of the present road system. (Chapter 8 and Plan Map)*

(continues on page 105)

Chapter 11
THE TOWN PLAN

Policy and Recommendations (continued)

Roads and Mobility (continued)

- *Revise Town Subdivision Regulations and Road Standards to limit the maximum length of dead-end roads, encourage curvilinear layout to preserve natural features, provide for roadside planting plans and tree protection, allow variations in turnaround design, promote on-site stormwater detention, and reduce mandatory right-of-way clearance. (Chapter 8)*
- *Construct a network of planned bikeways within the town, generally aligning with existing roads or available "greenway" corridors as shown on the Plan, to enable local trips for youth and recreational travel for all age groups, and to provide safety and enhanced mobility separated from road traffic. (Chapter 8 and Plan Map)*
- *Encourage the designation of the remaining northerly portion of Black Rock Road (Route 58) as a State Scenic Road, and the designation of several additional local roads as Town Scenic Roads. The winding, rural character of Easton's roads is compatible with residential values, safe speeds and adequate mobility for residents. (Chapter 8 and Plan Map)*

Civic Life

- *Encourage volunteerism for strengthening of the community in all aspects of the town's civic, cultural, social and economic life. (Chapter 10)*
- *Plan for facilities and linkages to bring townspeople together for social, civic, cultural, public service, artistic and professional purposes, at the several existing central localities which presently serve the community in various ways. (Chapter 10 and Plan Map)*
- *Prepare plans for existing village areas and establish design review for existing community centers and all public buildings and sites. (Chapter 10 and Plan Map)*
- *Provide for a central village green for civic activities, and encourage future institutional or other non-residential activities to gather at central locations rather than to disperse into outlying residential neighborhoods (Chapter 10 and Plan Map)*

Financial Strategy

- *Encourage high standards for future residential development, including special age-restricted communities, in recognition of their tax-positive impact for the Town. (Chapter 9)*

(continues on page 106)

Chapter 11
THE TOWN PLAN

Policy and Recommendations (continued)

Financial Strategy (continued)

- *Consider possible alternative environmentally-compatible low-density uses, where not in conflict with residential values or productive of undesirable traffic, which could enhance the Town tax base without significant service costs, but only to the extent fully compatible with community character and protective of neighborhood values. (Chapter 9)*
- *Adopt a long-range capital improvement program to spread out major infrastructure investments and anticipate future needs in a manner which will minimize cost. (Chapter 9)*
- *Plan for efficient re-use and rehabilitation of Town facilities where feasible, such as accommodating Town offices or a new senior center at the former Staples School, and future active recreation facilities on Town-owned land at Morehouse Road. (Chapter 9)*
- *Strengthen civic spirit and Easton's public image as a highly desirable community by planning an attractive central area, preserving scenic views, funding education and cultural programs, and protecting the town's pristine environment -- as the most effective formula for enhancing the tax base. (Chapter 9)*

Town Plan Map

The Town Plan of Conservation and Development map which accompanies this report describes the principal recommendations of the 2006 Plan in graphic form. Depicted on the Plan map are twenty-one categories of recommended Land Use, Public Facilities, Circulation and Conservation, showing the location and extent of each of the proposals discussed in the text. Together the Plan map and text form a comprehensive guide for the future of Easton.

Summarized in the following text are the specific guidelines and locations for each of the features shown on the Plan map.

LAND USE, PROPOSED

- *Rural Residential: Very low density single-family residential use (3 acres or more per family), large-lot civic and public uses, agricultural and open space land. Extends across all public water supply watersheds and established three acre per dwelling neighborhoods.*
- *Suburban Residential: Low density single-family residential use (40,000 square feet or more per family), large-lot civic and public uses; and open space land. In southeastern section west of Mill River, generally extending over all existing one-acre per dwelling residential neighborhoods.*

Chapter 11
THE TOWN PLAN

Town Plan Map (continued)

LAND USE, PROPOSED (continued)

- Established Community Center: Existing small nonresidential enclaves, proposed for special design review and limited public service uses and historic preservation. At five historic and long-established locations on Center, Westport, Morehouse, Sport Hill and Black Rock Roads.

PUBLIC FACILITIES, EXISTING & PROPOSED

- Town Civic Campus: Existing Town Hall, public schools, Town Library, former Staples School and related site areas, proposed for future public civic and cultural uses. Comprised of three Town-owned sites at Morehouse, Center and Sport Hill Roads.
- Public Safety and Utilities: Existing fire station and Public Works Department sites, existing public utility sites (water filtration and gas transmission facilities). Proposed emergency medical and police station site at central location near fire station on Center Road.
- Active Recreation: Existing Town-owned active recreation parks and playfields, including Toth and Veterans Parks, and existing extensive private lands (2 golf courses). Proposed public active recreation site at Town-owned site Morehouse Road tract.
- Cultural Facility, Existing: Quasi-public cultural uses (library, museums, religious, etc.) recognized as vital public service institutions.

CIRCULATION, EXISTING & PROPOSED

- Collector Road: A road which is essential for traffic circulation and distribution to local neighborhoods.
- Local Street: A road which primarily serves for local access within a neighborhood.
- Bikeway or Pedestrian Path, Proposed: A graded, constructed roadside path designed for mobility, and safety; separated from vehicular traffic. On rights-of-way of sufficient width, including Center, Sport Hill, Banks, Black Rock Roads, possibly others.
- Roadway Closure: Approximately thirteen abandoned former-highway rights-of-way and several portions of current Town roadway to be closed to vehicular traffic and reserved for recreational hiking trail or pedestrian greenway.
- Safety Improvement/Traffic Calming, Proposed: Location of roadway redesign to slow traffic or improve safety. (continues on page 108)

Chapter 11
THE TOWN PLAN

Town Plan Map (continued)

CONSERVATION, EXISTING & PROPOSED

- Open Space, Existing Public/Existing Private: Lands which are permanently dedicated to public or quasi-public open space; Public Open Space is comprised primarily of Town-owned lands. Private Open Space is comprised of all others, including Aspetuck Land Trust and lands jointly-held by Aquarion Water Company, The Nature Conservancy and State of Connecticut.
- Open Space, Proposed: Lands recommended for public acquisition or permanent reservation as dedicated open space. The Plan shows eight proposed open space tracts: five privately-owned sites to be acquired or protected by conservation easements (at Mill River, Redding Road, Black Rock Road, Burr's Highway; and Wood End Drive, comprising vital recreational and open space linkages), and three Town-owned sites to be formally dedicated as open space (off Morehouse Road and Sierra Lane, adjacent to new Staples School and recreation fields on Morehouse Road, and acreage west of Toth Park). The Plan also proposes that substantial acreages of eight existing farmland tracts be preserved as permanent open space (identified on Plan by open space circles).
- Greenway Trail, Proposed: An intertown, approximately fourteen-mile, hiking trail comprising a loop to link all of Easton's major wilderness open space tracts.
- Historic Preservation Site, Proposed: Recommended special historic protection/conservation areas, including Aspetuck National Register Historic District, the historic center around Staples Academy, the Bradley-Hubbell and Ida Tarbell National Register sites, others.
- Scenic Road, Existing/Proposed: Ten existing Town-designated scenic roads and one State-designated scenic road (Rte. 58) are shown. The Plan proposes five additional Town roads and two portions of State road for scenic designation.
- Scenic Protection Area: Localities of unique scenic value, proposed for special conservation or scenic easement, are shown on the Plan..
- Water Body & Protected Streambelt: The major streams and bodies of water which support the Town's natural environment and require protection from degradation.

Chapter 12
PROGRAM OF ACTION

Carrying Out The Plan

The value of a town plan lies in its usefulness as a constructive guide to the day-to-day actions which shape the future community. In the process of community-building all residents of the town have a part to play – whether public officials, members of civic, social or religious groups, or just interested citizens.

Set forth in the following chart is a general guide for actions needed -- both public and private -- to implement the Town Plan. Because the Plan is long-range in nature it looks to both short term actions (Priorities, I and II, over the next five years) and long-term actions (Priority III, after 2010). Parenthetical references direct attention to the particular chapters of text wherein more description is provided. Fundamental to all policies and actions is the Plan of Conservation and Development map, which depicts the general location of each component of the Plan and expresses the comprehensive scheme for the community of the future -- an Easton to be cherished by future generations.

(continues on page 110)

<u>Recommendation</u> ¹	<u>Priority</u> ²	<u>Responsibility</u> ³	<u>Estimated Cost</u> ⁴
STATE & REGIONAL ISSUES (Chap. 2)	I - III I - III I, II	PZC PZC, BS PZC, BS	(Not determined)
LAND & WATER RESOURCES (Chap. 3)	I II II I - III	PZC, CC PZC PZC, LT, CG PZC, CC, BS, LT, CG	(Not determined)
RESIDENTIAL & HOUSING (Chap. 4)	I I I II - III	PZC PZC PZC PZC	(Not determined)
LAND USE CONTROLS (Chap. 5)	I, II II	PZC PZC	(Not determined)
PUBLIC FACILITIES (Chap. 6)	I I II I I - III II, III I, II II, III	BE Region 9 BS, BF BS, BF PRC, BF BS, BF BS, BF, DPW BS, BF	\$ 32,350,000 +/- 2,024,000 +/- 515,000 +/- conversion cost (\$500,000 state grant approved, total cost not determined) 214,000 + (Not determined) (Not determined) (Not determined)

PROGRAM OF ACTION: Priorities and Responsibilities (continued)

(Table 12-1)

<u>Recommendation¹</u>	<u>Priority²</u>	<u>Responsibility³</u>	<u>Estimated Cost⁴</u>
ROADS & MOBILITY (Chap. 8)	I	PZC, BS	
- Road regulations revised & updated			
- Minor safety improvements, various Town roads	II	BS, DPW	
- Traffic calming measures, arterial & collector roads	II, III	State, PZC, BS, DPW	
- Designation of additional State & Town scenic roads	II, III	State, PZC, BS	
- Discontinuance of quasi-abandoned old roadways	I-III	PZC, BS	(Not determined)
- Plan & construct recommended bikeways	II, III	PZC, BS, DPW	(Not determined)
ECONOMIC & FINANCIAL (Chap. 9)	II, III	BS, BF	
- Long-range (15-25yr.) capital improvement program, anticipated major projects			
- Tax-positive conservation or new uses only where compatible with environment	I-III	PZC	(Not determined)
COMMUNITY & CIVIC AREAS (Chap. 10)	I-III	PZC	
- Establish "special design areas" to provide design review and to conserve character of five historic and public areas	II, III	PZC, BS	(Not determined)
- Town green or civic park			

¹ - Limited to specific programs required to implement Town Plan.

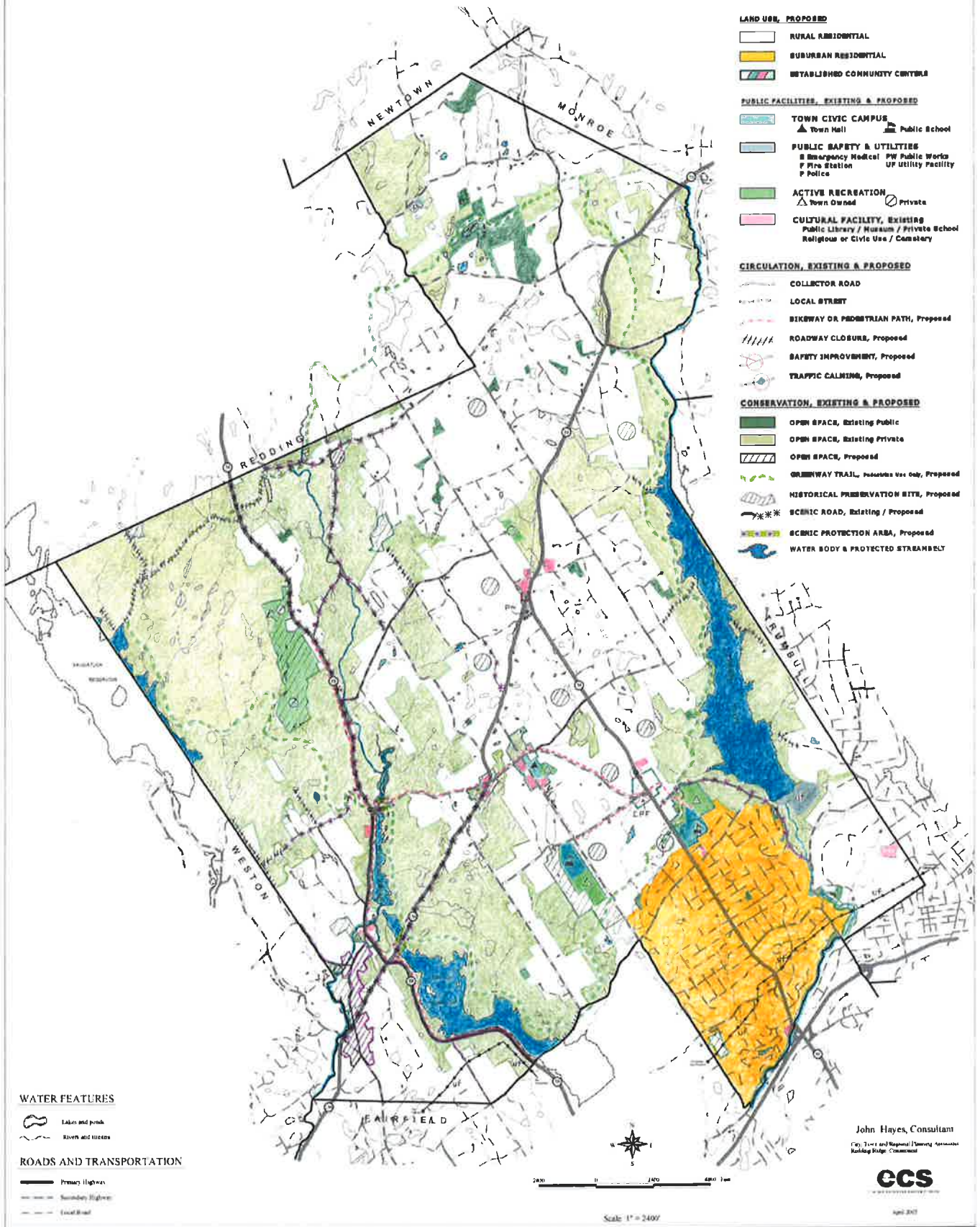
² - Priorities may vary due to funding constraints and other considerations.

³ - Explanation of abbreviations: PZC, Planning and Zoning Commission; BS, Board of Selectmen and various Town departments; BF, Board of Finance; CC, Conservation Commission; BE, Board of Education; DPW, Town Department of Public Works; LT, Land Trust(s); CG, Citizen Group(s).

⁴ - General estimates from available records, rounded. Cost figures to be developed in future Capital Improvement Program.

EASTON, Connecticut

TOWN PLAN of CONSERVATION and DEVELOPMENT 2006



EASTON, Connecticut

DEVELOPED LAND

- Residential
- Commercial
- Public Institution
- T Town Hall
- L Library
- E Elementary School
- MS Middle School
- F Fire House
- PW Public Works Garage
- EMS Emergency Medical Service
- P Police Station
- Private Institution
- R Religious
- SC Social/Cultural/Recreational
- C Cemetery
- Active Recreation
- REC Private
- PK Public
- Utilites

UNDEVELOPED LAND

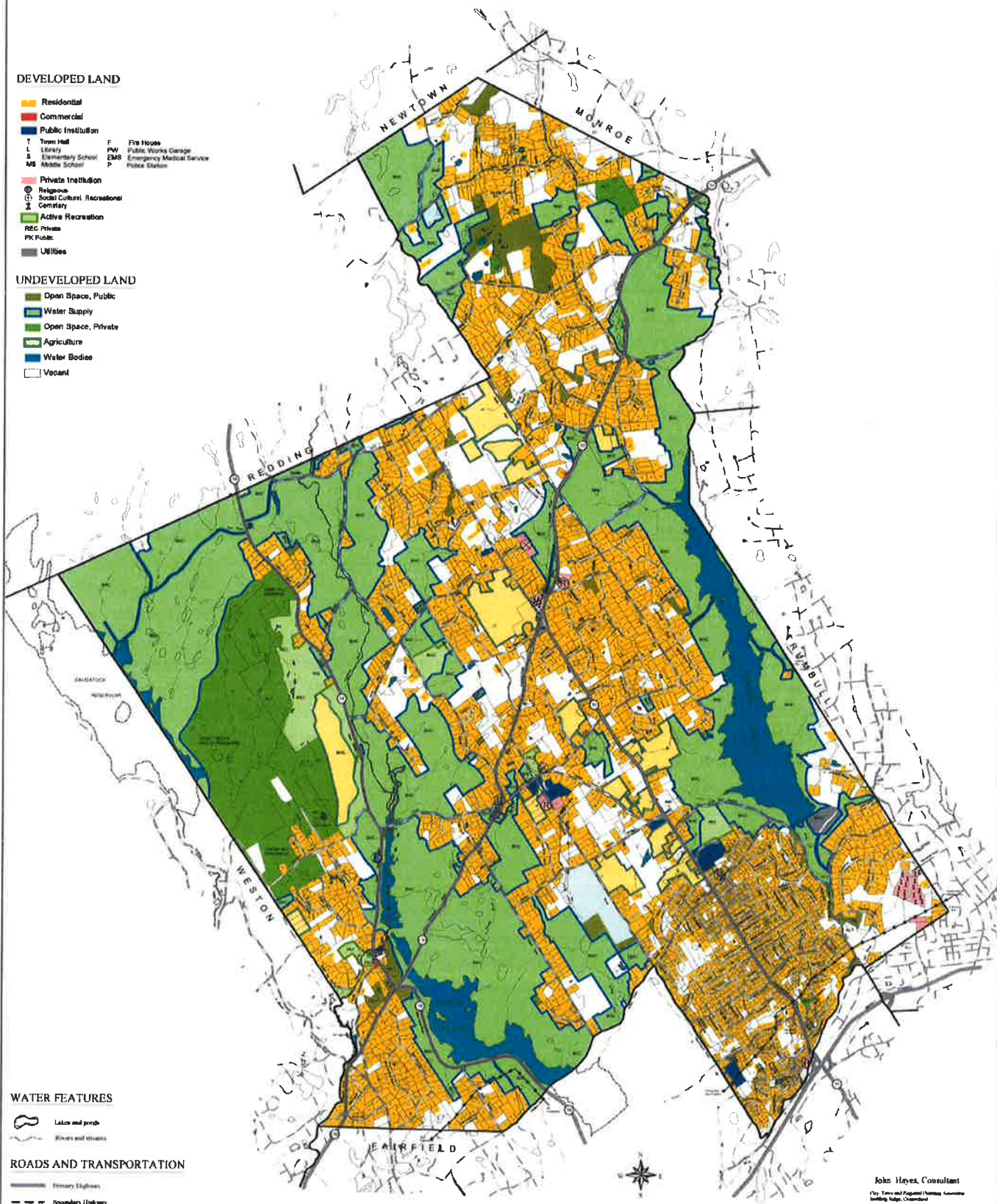
- Open Space, Public
- Water Supply
- Open Space, Private
- Agriculture
- Water Bodies
- Vacant

WATER FEATURES

- Lakes and ponds
- Rivers and streams

ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION

- Primary Highways
- Secondary Highway
- Local Road



Scale 1" = 2400'

John Hayes, Consultant
City, Town and Regional Planning Commission
Hartford, Connecticut

ECS

Map 501

Adopted Amendment to Easton Town Plan of Conservation and Development, 2006
Effective December 5, 2015*

MOREHOUSE CIVIC PARK
A Master Plan, October 2015

Introduction and Summary

When the Town Plan and Conservation and Development was adopted in 2007 it foresaw the need for additional detailed planning for several localities within Easton. The largest and least developed of these localities was the 127-acre tract of Town-owned land along the west side of Morehouse Road, identified for a school site and other “municipal purposes”.

For the past several years the Planning and Zoning Commission in concert with the Park and Recreation Commission, the Conservation Commission and the Board of Education has studied the features and characteristics of this property in order to identify the most appropriate uses of the land for public benefit.

The Plan proposes three major functions of the site to enhance the quality of life in the Community: Education, Conservation and Public Recreation. Within the general framework of the plan the proposed uses will serve the needs of the entire community.

Perspective

As the millennium approached, in 1999, the Town of Easton faced a challenge. The Samuel Staples Elementary School, constructed in 1930 and subsequently enlarged six times, could no longer accommodate the basic educational needs of the growing community. Nearby, at the crossroads of Morehouse and Banks Roads, an old farm of 127 acres had just been subdivided into 28 building lots and an open space parcel. Sensing the opportunity of a lifetime, the Town moved with alacrity to purchase the entire “Fairhaven Estates” tract for a new school site and other municipal needs of the future.

The site thus acquired was a magnificent addition to the Town’s facilities. A scenic ridge with nearly two thousand feet of frontage along Morehouse road, the site encompassed old stone-wall-bordered fields, forested slopes and along its westerly rim a long stream corridor of East Branch Cricker Brook. A pond, small wetlands and a massive white oak tree embellished the scene.

Planning began at once for the new Samuel Staples Elementary School, located near the confluence of Banks and Morehouse Roads, which opened in 2005. Four athletic fields soon joined the new school, two on the school site and two immediately to the south in an old field area. The Town’s first comprehensive Town Plan, in 2006, identified three broad land areas within the tract for future planning purposes -- the school environs, the central meadows for recreation and conservation, and the lowland stream corridor area for natural resource protection and greenbelt.

*Revised by the Planning and Zoning Commission in consideration of public comments on the record of the public hearing held September 28, 2015.

MOREHOUSE CIVIC PARK PLAN

Recent Development History

In the intervening years there has been much pressure to develop the land for a variety of often-competing purposes. The need for a comprehensive plan, respectful of the natural character of the land, balancing conservation and development objectives for optimum benefit to the entire community, has become urgent. The efforts of the Planning and Zoning Commission to produce this plan have been greatly assisted by the detailed site planning work of John J. Broadbin, ASLA, who has produced a detailed master plan for active recreation facilities on behalf of the Parks and Recreation Commission, much of which is the foundation for the proposed recreation facilities envisioned in this Plan.

This comprehensive Master Plan attempts to bring together the collective vision of many elements of the Easton community, for this “Civic Park” to become a public resource enhancing the quality of life for all residents of Easton.

In addition to the natural features which define the character of the site, existing development had an important influence on proposed future facility locations.

Since Town acquisition of the property in 2000 the following major facilities have been constructed or established at the site.

- Samuel Staples (new) Elementary School (SSES), including two playing fields, parking lots and circulation drives, the wastewater leachfields and septage lagoon.
- Two Park and Recreation Commission ball fields adjacent to the SSES recreation fields.
- A small baseball diamond at the southeast corner of the SSES site.
- An entrance drive and 50-car parking lot south of the SSES site.
- Public water lines and gas service extended northward along Morehouse Road to serve SSES, Old Staples School and the Town Hall.
- An interior driveway which connects the entrance drive to an old field at the south end of the meadow area, in use by the Public Works Department as a storage and staging area for gravel, stone, logs, pipe, excavated soil and other materials.
- An animal control shelter with access driveway and a small parking lot, at the southerly end of the site, designed to also function as access to nearby on-site open space.

In addition to the above facilities several new structures have been authorized for the site since 2012, but not yet completed. These include:

- A wireless telecommunication (cell) tower, needed to alleviate weak cell phone coverage in the area, to be located in the southern interior of the site;
- An array of solar energy panels currently under construction at the rear of SSES, to meet the school’s electric power needs; and
- An open-air pavilion adjoining the SSES baseball diamond.

MOREHOUSE CIVIC PARK PLAN

Recent Development History (continued)

From the beginning of Town ownership portions of this 127-acre tract have been dedicated as a permanent open-space reservation. These include a 24-acre parcel which protects wetland at the south end of the tract and the west side stream corridor, as well as conservation easements within the upper portion of the stream corridor and the central meadow, and an 80-foot-wide greenbelt easement along Morehouse Road. All are shown on the Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan

In its array of user-friendly facilities for all ages and interests, in its provision of spaces for education and cultural activities, and in its layout preserving significant areas of forest, meadow and natural landscape, this Plan aims to be an expression of Easton's civic character and values.

Examples of this aspiration will be found in the Plan's passive recreation meadow, hiking trails, outdoor classrooms, sports fields, picnic groves, meeting rooms, open spaces for civic fairs and other public events, winter sport slopes, environmental education exhibits and much more

There are five major geographic units, or functional land areas, which form the basis for this long-range Plan. These are delineated graphically on the Plan map, and are as follows:

A - Samuel Staples Elementary School

Existing school delineated site, including accessory parking areas, septic fields, three ballfields, outdoor instruction areas, and reserve space for expansion. Approximately 31 acres.

B - Active Recreation Area

West central portion of the site, encompassing the two existing ballfields south of the central east/west parking lot, the undeveloped fields west of the central circulation driveway and present Public Works Department storage and staging area. Space is planned for future active recreation facilities in this area as needed. Approximately 18 acres.

C - Upland Meadow

Passive recreation field(s) along ridgeline west of Morehouse Road, for preservation of scenic view and informal recreation activities. Approximately 8 acres.

D - Conservation Lands

Forest, hillside and stream corridor, land areas in south and west portions of the tract, to be preserved as permanent open space for nature study, watershed protection, hiking and cross-country ski trails, and scenic value. Approximately 56 acres.

MOREHOUSE CIVIC PARK PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan (continued)

E - Reserve Recreational and Utility Area

Land area presently in use and committed to solar power generation, school wastewater treatment area, the animal shelter, the wireless telecommunications site, septic reserve area, and potential school or recreation facility expansion. Approximately 14 acres.

The total area of the site is 127 acres.

Carrying Out The Plan's Recommendations

Fulfillment of the recommendations presented in this Plan will be a shared responsibility requiring collaboration among several Town agencies – specifically the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Education, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Public Works Department, and the Conservation Commission. The program described in this Plan is a composite of the goals and perspectives expressed by each of these agencies.

This Plan is both long-range and flexible in character. It is anticipated that the development of future facilities within each area of the site -- whether for education, recreation or other civic needs -- will evolve as the Easton community grows and changes. The value of a long-range plan is to provide general guidelines for land use and goals with detailed site planning to follow at each phase of development. The Commission acknowledges that unanticipated future civic needs may require revisions in Plan details but believes that the general principles which underlie the Plan and the size of the site create sound guidelines for this major public asset.

Accordingly, the Plan proposes the development of future facilities in three phases. In the following Summary of Phases for Construction the letters within parentheses after each listed project signify its general location on the Plan map. Please refer to the preceding section, The Comprehensive Plan, and to the Plan map.

Morehouse Civic Park: Summary of Phases For Construction

Phase 1 2015 - 2018

- Entrance Drive Relocation & Adjacent Parking, North Section (Plan Areas A & C)
- Expanded Parking Area, North Section (Plan Area B)
- Identification of existing septic functionality and the future need for wastewater treatment facilities; restrooms serving existing recreational facilities are an immediate priority (Plan Area A & E)

MOREHOUSE CIVIC PARK PLAN

Summary of Phases For Construction (continued)

Phase 1 2015 - 2018 (continued)

- Hiking / Cross Country Trail, South and Central Sections (Plan Area D, E & B)
- Circulation Road, Middle Section (Plan Area B)
- Passive Recreation Meadow, North & Middle Sections, to serve civic activities and functions. (Plan Area C)
- Solar Collectors Area , first phase (Plan Area E)
- Wireless Telecommunication Facility, including access drive (Plan Area E)

Phase 2 2018 - 2020

- Recreation Field Extension, Central Area (B)
- Two Additional Tennis Courts, Central Area (B)
- Skating Pond (C)
- Additional Parking along Inner Rim of Meadow (C)
- SSES Outdoor Classroom Areas (A)
- Hiking Trails, remainder; North and East Sections (D, A)

Phase 3 2021 - 2024

- DPW Yard Relocation & South Meadow Restoration (E, C)
- Recreation Facilities Building, addition to North Pavilion (A, C)

MOREHOUSE CIVIC PARK PLAN

Summary of Phases For Construction (continued) MOREHOUSE CIVIC PARK PLAN

Phase 3 2021 – 2024 (continued)

- West Central Recreation Complex, possible tennis courts, paddle courts, multi-purpose field and parking areas (B, E)
- South Central Recreation Complex, various facilities to be determined in future as generally proposed by Park and Recreation Master Plan (B).

Phase I Program, 2015 -2018

The initial phase for construction of facilities at Morehouse Civic Park is focused on projects already planned or approved, such as the open-air North Pavilion, the Solar Collectors at Staples School and the essential long-term infrastructure improvements, such as the new entrance drive and expanded parking facility. Actual scheduling of projects will depend on design, financing and construction management considerations.

North Pavilion @ Baseball Field

This open-air structure was approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission in April 2015 for the location shown on the Plan. It is designed to provide shelter from the elements for spectators and participants in game events, and is centrally located among the group of Samuel Staples School fields. Private financing has been provided by a civic group to underwrite a major share of the cost of this project.

Entrance Drive Relocation & Adjacent Parking, North Section

This new entrance way to the Morehouse Civic Park will significantly enhance the esthetics of approach to the park, will improve traffic flow in and out of the site, and will facilitate internal access to available parking. An additional benefit provided by the relocation will centralize the location of utility pads and enclosures and provide space for a small parking facility to serve the North Pavilion. The new entrance drive will be the first element in a circulation system needed to serve the entire site area.

Expanded Parking Area, North Section

This present 50-foot wide parking lot, serving all of the ballfields, is frequently inadequate to accommodate the many visitors who attend game events at the nearby fields. Increasing the cross-sectional width of this parking lot by an additional 20 feet at its north side will double its parking capacity to 100 spaces and alleviate the crowding and congestion problem. Care must be exercised to protect sections of an old stonewall to the north and to provide shade trees and landscaping along the north side.

MOREHOUSE CIVIC PARK PLAN

Phase I Program, 2015 -2018 (continued)

Staples School Septic Field Reconstruction

The imminent expiration of State of Connecticut Wastewater Treatment Permits issued to the Town for Staples School in 2005 will require design changes to the present septic system, according to CT DEEP, to eliminate possible effluent discharges to nearby Cricker Brook. Design of an expanded leachfield area is expected to require the use of land located north of the present septage lagoon west of the school. This project must be completed by early 2017. An engineering study, currently underway, will assess the Town's options for either a new specific permit serving only the Samuel Staples School or a general permit which would provide potential capacity for waste water treatment resulting from the addition of other buildings in the future. In either case it is anticipated that up to one acre of site area must be included in the plan to accommodate the future facilities.

Hiking / Cross Country Trail, South to Central Sections

An informal pedestrian trail designed for hikers and cross-country skiers is proposed for the open space portions of the site, from its southerly entrance drive near the animal shelter to the northerly portions of the site. This recreational trail will provide healthful recreation for all age groups and will display the natural and scenic qualities of the land. It is expected to be constructed by Town volunteers.

Circulation Road, Middle Section

Proposed to follow the present driveway to the middle of the site, this improved roadway will complete a major section of the circulation road and provide access to additional recreation facilities in the west central and southerly portions of the site, as well as space for overflow parking along its edges.

Passive Recreation Meadow, North & Middle Sections

This open meadow is a central scenic feature of the site and affords a spectacular opportunity for a public green which can accommodate all types of passive recreation activities, benefiting all visitors to the site. A central wetland area could potentially accommodate a scenic pond, providing summer time esthetics and winter time skating.

Solar Collectors Area

An area of open meadow located to the rear of Staples school was approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission in April 2015 for the installation of Solar Energy Panels which will serve the electric needs of Samuel Staples School and possibly other Town facilities. In accommodating this facility the Town endorses the principle of clean energy for a major facility. Space exists within Area "E" for additional panels if needed or desired in the future.

MOREHOUSE CIVIC PARK PLAN

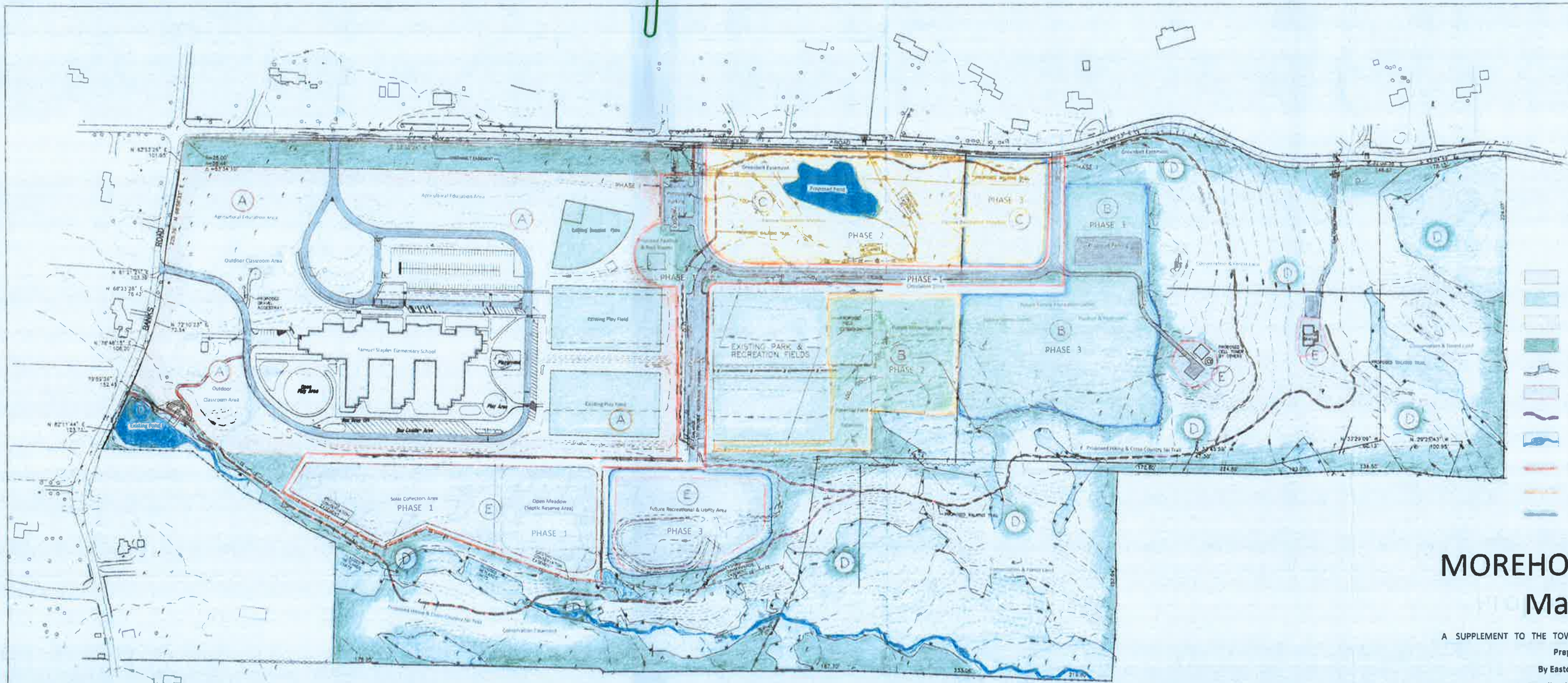
Phase I Program, 2015 -2018 (continued)

Wireless Telecommunication Facility

The WTF site, within a wooded knoll at the south end of the meadow area, will fill an important communication gap for this area of the Town. Access and utilities will be provided through the southerly portion of the circulation drive shown on the Plan. This site has been selected for environmental compatibility and public safety.

Phases II and III Program, 2018-2025

Specific proposals for additional public facilities will be determined by the Planning and Zoning Commission as this Plan is updated in 2016 or 2017.



LEGEND

- Samuel Staples Elementary School
- Active Recreation Facilities
- Passive Recreation / Open Land
- Conservation Land / Greenbelt
- Roadway & Parking
- Utilities / Infrastructure
- Pedestrian Trail
- Wetland & Waterbody
- PHASE 1
- PHASE 2
- PHASE 3

**MOREHOUSE CIVIC PARK
Master Plan**

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE TOWN PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT
 Prepared For The Town of Easton
 By Easton Planning & Zoning Commission
 In Coordination With The Town Board of Selectman,
 Parks & Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission,
 Public Schools, and Public Works Department.
 Survey and Mapping by Ochman Associates Inc.

Adopted By Planning & Zoning Commission
 Effective December 5, 2015

Robert E. Hoff
 Chairman

SCALE: 1" = 100'
 JOHN HAYES
 Surveyor