

*PLAN OF CONSERVATION  
AND DEVELOPMENT*



*Canton, Connecticut*

*September, 2003*

*Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.*

**TOWN OF CANTON  
PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Adopted by the Canton Planning Commission  
September 8, 2003

Prepared for:

Town of Canton  
Land Use Department  
Canton, Conn.

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In Association with:  
Urbanomics

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Town of Canton has undertaken the update of the 1990 Plan of Development, and the preparation of this Plan of Conservation and Development in conformance with the requirements of Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), Title B, Chapter 126, Section 8-23, that requires each municipality to review its Plan of Conservation and Development every 10 years. This plan update is a joint effort of the Plan of Conservation and Development Committee (POCDC), the Planning Commission, the Director of Planning and Community Development, our planning consultant, Buckhurst Fish and Jacquemart Inc. (BFJ), and numerous Town residents who participated throughout the process. To kick off the process, a Town-wide survey was conducted to gauge public opinion on various planning issues. The results were compiled and presented at a public workshop to gather additional feedback. After gathering additional information from Town staff as well as numerous boards and commissions, BFJ produced technical memoranda addressing various issues such as land use, infrastructure, economic development, and conservation of natural and historic resources. These memoranda were presented to the POCDC for its feedback and ultimately compiled into a draft plan. The draft plan was reviewed during four public workshops, leading to significant revisions before being forwarded to the Planning Commission for its review and adoption.

The end result is a document designed to create a pattern of existing and future land use that encourages economic growth; maintains a diversity of housing opportunities; protects Canton's small-town character as well as our historical and environmental resources; and minimizes conflicts between incompatible uses. The Plan of Conservation and Development will promote and guide the development and preservation of Canton into the 21st Century. The Plan presents a vision for the future and suggests the tools and techniques to achieve that vision. Crucial to the planning process is ongoing review and modification of the Plan, to insure that it remains representative of Canton's vision and that the implementation strategies remain viable. The Planning Commission should review the recommendations contained within the Plan on a biannual basis and share its findings with the boards and commissions responsible for its implementation.

## 2.0 DEMOGRAPHICS

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines Canton's demographic trends and characteristics, as depicted in existing conditions, recent trends, and future projections. It focuses on the information contained in the 1990 and 2000 Census, supplemented by information from the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and the Office of Policy and Management (OPM). The purpose of this examination is to describe the social framework for the *Plan of Conservation and Development* – that is, the defining traits of Canton as a community and the perceived needs of its people.

### 2.2 Population Growth

According to the 2000 Census, 8,840 people reside in Canton. Between 1990-2000, the population increased by 572 persons, or 6.9%. Table 2.1 compares Canton's population and recent growth rate with that of the surrounding towns, indicating that Canton's growth rate was slightly below average.

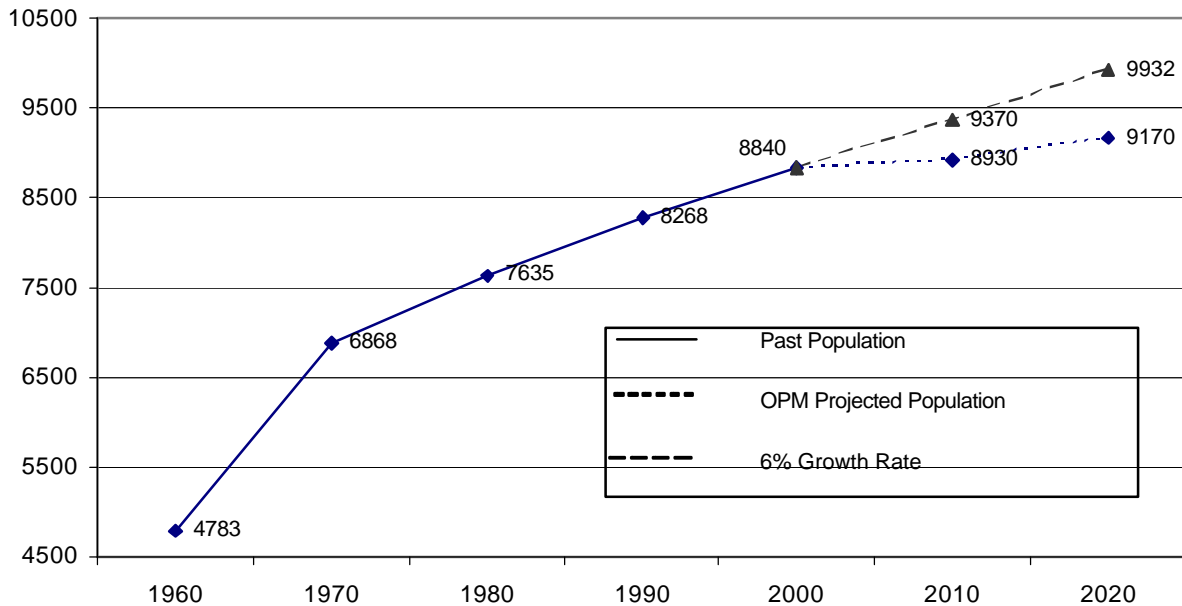
**Table 2.1**  
**Population Growth of Canton and Surrounding Towns**  
**1990-2000**

Town	1990	2000	% Change, 1990-2000
Canton	8,268	8,840	6.9
Avon	13,937	15,832	13.6
Barkhamsted	3,369	3,494	3.7
Burlington	7,026	8,190	16.6
Granby	9,369	10,347	10.4
New Hartford	5,769	6,088	5.5
Simsbury	22,023	23,234	5.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (1990 & 2000)

As Chart 2.1 on the following page illustrates, there are differing opinions on how Canton is projected to grow. OPM has consistently underreported Canton's estimated population prior to the release of the 2000 Census and its projection of future population clearly continues that trend, anticipating only a modest upturn in otherwise low population growth rates.

**Chart 2.1**  
**Canton's Population, 1960-2020**



Source: US Census Bureau; CT Office of Policy & Management (OPM) projections

Chart 2.1 also shows a theoretical population growth rate of 6% over the next 20 years. This represents a continuation of the trend experienced over the last 30 years, which is a modest but slightly declining rate of growth. Canton's growth rate has slowed to 0.69 percent annually, down from 1.58 percent in 1980. Under this scenario, Canton would grow to just under 10,000 people by 2020. These additional residents will require new infrastructure and additional services such as roads, schools, recreation programs and emergency services.

### 2.3 Population By Age Group

Table 2.2 illustrates the changes in Canton's age composition over the last 20 years. The Census Bureau's age groupings or "cohorts" vary in size according to life stages, making comparisons between cohorts difficult. While aging patterns have fluctuated from decade to decade, Canton's population is clearly growing older as "Baby Boomers" in the largest age group in 1990 (25-44), moved into the 45- to 64-year-old age group. Several other notable trends are: an increase in school-age children, possibly resulting from new home construction and turnover in older homes; a decrease in the 15- to 19- and 20- to 24-year-old categories, possibly attributed to the increase in residents attending college; and a significant increase in residents 85 years and older, possibly attributed to increased longevity.

**Table 2.2**  
**Changes in Age Composition - 1980, 1990, 2000**

Age Composition	1980		1990		2000	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Youth (0-14)	1,660	21.7	1,624	19.6	1,890	21.4
(15-19)	682	8.9	466	5.6	488	5.5
(20-24)	568	7.4	431	5.2	237	2.7
Working (25-44)	2,578	33.8	3,116	37.7	2,725	30.8
(45-64)	1,442	18.9	1,765	21.3	2,445	27.7
Retirement (65-84)	705	9.2	768	9.3	887	10.0
(85+)	N/A	N/A	98	1.2	168	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,635</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8,268</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8,840</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1980, 1990, 2000).

## 2.4 Race and Hispanic Origin

During the 1990s, Canton's racial composition did not change significantly. Although the white population grew, it decreased marginally as a percentage of the entire population. The Black, Native American, and Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander populations all stayed relatively constant. The number of people categorized as "Other" rose considerably, and for the first time, people were able to indicate more than one race on the census form. There has been an increase in the number of residents of Hispanic origin in Town, though their overall numbers remain small when compared with the entire population. Table 2.3 shows the changes in race and Hispanic origin for the Town over the past decade.

**Table 2.3**  
**Population by Race and Hispanic Origin, 1990-2000**

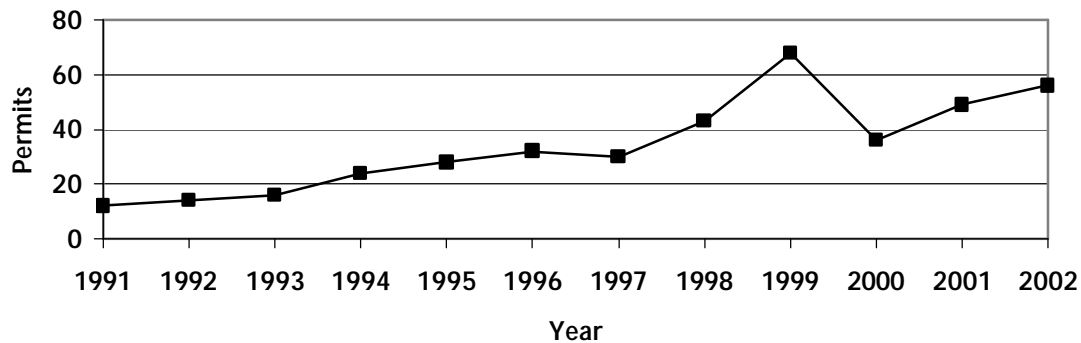
Race	1990	%	2000	%
White	8,145	98.51%	8,588	97.15%
Black	49	0.59%	47	0.53%
American Indian	3	0.04%	4	0.05%
Asian/Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	60	0.73%	66	0.75%
Other	11	0.13%	43	0.49%
Two or more races	-		92	1.04%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,268</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>8,840</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Hispanic Origin (all races)</b>				
Hispanic	89	1.0%	110	1.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990, 2000).

## 2.5 Households

According to the 1990 US Census, Canton had 3,323 housing units. Canton's Building Department reports that by mid-April, 2001, Canton had 3,638 dwelling units. This represents an increase of 9.5% over the past decade.

**Chart 2.2**  
**New Residential Building Permits (1991-2002)**



The rate of household formation (9.5%) exceeds Canton's population increase (6.9%), indicating that the average household size in Canton is decreasing. In 1990, the average household size was 2.58 persons per household, falling to 2.51 in 2000. This trend should continue as birth rates continue to decline nationally and several approved multi-family, active adult and senior housing complexes move forward over the next decade.

### Household Income

The median household income in Canton grew 21.6% from \$53,449 in 1989 to \$65,013 in 1999. Table 2.4, on the following page, shows the changes in the income distribution of households over the past decade. As evidenced by the number of households earning over \$150,000 more than doubling over the decade, Canton's population is becoming more affluent.

**Table 2.4**  
**Distribution of Income Among Canton Households, 1989-1999**

Income Distribution	1989*		1999	
	#	%	#	%
Median Household Income	\$53,449		\$65,013	
< \$10,000	175	5.5	114	3.3
\$10,000-\$14,999	81	2.5	97	2.8
\$15,000-\$24,999	331	10.3	216	6.2
\$25,000-\$34,999	352	15.7	342	9.8
\$35,000-\$49,999	539	11.0	493	14.1
\$50,000-\$74,999	829	25.9	741	21.2
\$75,000-\$99,999	482	15.1	549	15.7
\$100,000-\$149,999	314	9.8	549	15.7
\$150,000-\$199,999	99	3.1	211	6.0
\$200,000+			181	5.2

\*The Census Bureau only reported \$150,000+ in 1989  
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990, 2000).

## 2.7 Education

In 1990, 1,475 children were enrolled in pre-primary, elementary, or high school, 86% of whom attended public institutions. For the academic year 1999-2000, that number rose to 1,549<sup>1</sup>, for an increase of 5%, compared to a 6.9% increase in the Town's population during the decade. The overwhelming majority of Canton's children attend public schools (94%). The cost of educating a child in the Canton school district is \$8,237. Despite being below towns in its Educational Reference Group (\$9,009) and the state (\$9,312)<sup>1</sup> in expenditures per child, Canton schools are able to maintain a solid reputation for providing a quality education for our children.

Canton residents have a high level of educational attainment. In 1990, 3,754 residents aged 25 and over had attended college, with more than 60 percent of these receiving at least a bachelor's degree. By the 2000 Census, that number had grown by over 15 percent to 4,328, with 60 percent of these again receiving at least a bachelor's degree.

## 2.8 Labor Force

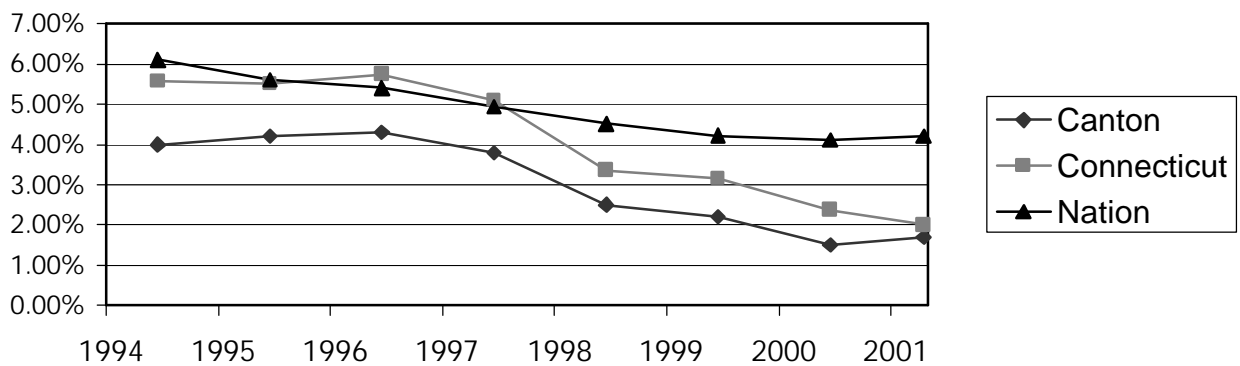
According to the 1990 Census, 5,022 residents, or approximately 77% of all Canton residents age 16 and older, were in the labor force. The average unemployment rate was 3.8%, well below state and national averages. By 2000,

<sup>1</sup> Connecticut Department of Education. Strategic School Profile, 1999-2000, p. 5.



the number of residents in the labor force had declined slightly to 4,946 and the unemployment rate had dropped even lower to 3.2 %. The decrease in the number of residents participating in the labor force could be attributed to an aging population that is leaving the labor force in greater numbers, which could become an issue for the Town as residents' incomes become fixed and the demand for services continues to increase.

**Chart 2.3**  
**Annual Average Rates of Unemployment in Canton, Connecticut, and the Nation**



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor

## 2.9 Journey to Work

According to the 2000 Census, the percentage of workers residing in Canton who live and work in Town grew significantly from approximately 17% in 1990 to almost 25% in 2000, reversing the trend of the prior decade and outpacing all other towns in Hartford County. There are two possible explanations for this increase. The growth of two of Canton's largest employers during this time period and continued growth in the number of people starting small businesses and working from their homes, which grew from 110 in 1990 to 242 in 2000. Table 2.5 shows the work location changes that took place during the 1980s and 1990s for Canton residents. Between 1980 and 1990, there was a significant drop in the number of residents working in Town, a significant increase in employment in neighboring towns such as Avon and Simsbury and a relatively constant level in the number of commuters traveling to Hartford.

**Table 2.5**  
**Place of Work for Canton Labor Force\***

<b>Town</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>% Change 80-90</b>
Canton	985	799	-18.9%
Hartford	765	755	-1.3%
Simsbury	152	578	280.3%
Avon	311	470	51.1%
W. Hartford	192	297	54.7%
Farmington	337	294	-12.8%
Bloomfield	284	230	-19.0%
Torrington	62	163	162.9%

\*2000 Census information regarding work location data, by town, has not been released.

Source: 1980, 1990 Census Bureau

## **2.10 Population Summary**

The population demographics portray a town that continues to grow at a healthy pace of around 6-7% each decade. Regional characteristics support a stronger growth rate for outlying suburbs rather than central cities, so additional population growth is expected to continue through 2010. Growth rates are not expected to evenly occur across all population age groups, however. The number of school-age children is expected to increase over the next decade, with the biggest impact on those in the high school years. The number of young adults and those under 45 years old declined considerably during the 1990s. This population segment may rebound slightly, but it is not anticipated to grow significantly over the next decade. The older age groups have seen the most growth and the average age in Canton will most likely continue to rise, along with the need for additional senior services.

The ethnic diversity of the Town did not change considerably in the 1990s, though the numbers of Asian and Hispanic residents are increasing. As long as Canton maintains its quality of life and is seen as a desirable community, the Town should be able to attract a diverse population.

During the past decade, Canton has witnessed a need for additional community facilities, park and recreation space, school classrooms, and other services. As the population continues to expand, more services will be needed. Canton should monitor its population growth rate carefully so that existing services are able to keep pace with the increase in residents and the overall quality of life does not suffer.

As Canton's population continues to grow, our average household size continues to shrink, compounding the need for more residential housing units. Most of the population growth will likely occur north of Route 44, where there are significant amounts of vacant land. South of Route 44, there is limited available undeveloped land for new construction, though some areas, such as Huckleberry Hill, will likely be developed further during the next decade. In addition to land availability, there are other development issues, such as road and sewer capacity, that will impact population growth over the next decade.

## **2.11 Goals, Policies, and Recommendations**

### **Goals**

- A well-educated population that is diverse in age, race, ethnicity, and income.
- A manageable growth rate that does not outstrip the Town's ability to pay for increased demand for services.
- A workforce gainfully employed and increasingly able to find employment opportunities in the home or in Town.

### **Policies**

- Encourage a diverse population, especially in age and economic status.
- Support subdivision and zoning regulations that encourage slower, steady population growth, avoiding growth spurts that might overwhelm Town services.
- Encourage and promote home occupations that do not detract from the residential character of neighborhoods.

### **Recommendations**

- Make adjustments to Subdivision and Zoning Regulations as necessary to: encourage housing diversity; regulate the rate of growth; and encourage home occupations and small businesses. (Planning Commission, Zoning Commission)
- Monitor population growth to anticipate increased infrastructure and service demands. (Town Planner)

## 3.0 HOUSING

### 3.1 Introduction

Housing units occupy approximately 40% of all the land in Canton, making residential uses the single largest land use within the Town. As a result, housing decisions shape Canton's image, natural environment and quality of life. Existing dwellings, particularly historic homes, need to be maintained and protected from incompatible land uses. New housing units raise issues of appropriate design and location. New subdivisions impact Canton's environmental quality and our ability to provide efficient services to residents. Equity issues arise relating to affordable housing, senior housing, and the ability of working families to purchase a home within Town.

### 3.2 Existing Conditions

According to the 1990 Census, Canton had 3,323 dwelling units. The following table shows that Canton issued 303 new residential building permits during the 1990s, raising its total housing unit figure to 3,626. The 2000 Census reports that Canton had 3,616 housing units in April of 2000, with the discrepancy probably attributed to demolitions during the decade. Table 3.1 compares the number of new building permits issued in Canton with the surrounding towns. Canton grew by 8.8%, the median for the past decade among Canton and six surrounding towns.

**Table 3.1**  
**Number of New Building Permits, Canton and Surrounding Towns, 1991-2000**

	Building / Demolition Permits			# Housing Units		
	1991-1995	1996-2000	TOTAL	1990	2000	% Change
Avon	81	690	771	5709	6480	13.50%
Barkhamsted	-1	103	1023	1334	1436	7.65%
Burlington	233	296	529	2372	2901	22.30%
CANTON	94	209	303	3323	3616	8.82%
Granby	122	273	395	3492	3887	11.31%
New Hartford	-117	166	49	2319	2368	2.11%
Simsbury	264	300	564	8175	8739	6.90%

Source: Town of Canton Building Department; State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development; US Census Bureau.

Figure 3.1 (page 12) illustrates the residential areas in Canton. Existing residences account for approximately 40% of the Town's land area. The map shows that most of the land in the southern part of Town, adjoining and south of Route 44, has been developed. Most of the remaining residentially zoned land lies in the central and northern parts of Town. Much of the white area is undeveloped, except for commercial areas along Route 44.

Canton has a significant number of homes considered historic and the Town has two historic districts (see Chapter 5). Many of the remaining active farms have historic houses, creating a link between the historic and rural elements that residents see when driving along Canton's roadways. The historic houses, as well as their associated landscapes, such as mature trees, cleared meadows, stone walls, and dirt roads, are important to residents and add to the Town's character.

As Table 3.2 illustrates, single-family detached homes are the most common type of housing unit in Canton. The Town retains a diverse housing stock that includes apartments, townhouses (single-family attached), duplexes and a variety of other multi-family configurations, although no new units of these types have been built in over a decade. This trend will certainly end as over 300 multi-family units are awaiting construction in the near future.

**Table 3.2**  
**Housing Units by Type**

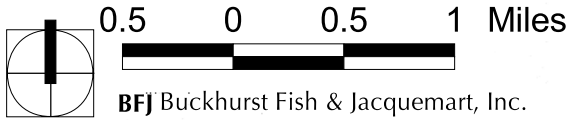
	1980		1990		2000	
<b>TOTAL UNITS</b>	<b>2,859</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>3,323</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>3,616</b>	<b>%</b>
Single-family detached	2050	71.70%	2290	68.91%	2568	71.31%
Single-family attached	328*	11.47%	382	11.50%	382	10.61%
Two-family	228	7.97%	293	8.82%	293	8.14%
Three-Four family	95	3.32%	120	3.61%	120	3.33%
Five+ family	158	5.53%	205	6.17%	205	5.69%
Other			33	0.99%	33	0.92%

Source: Canton Plan of Development (1990); US Census Bureau; Canton Building Department

\*May include some apartment complexes with more than 19 units.

In 2000, Canton's share of single-family detached homes accounted for 69% of the Town's housing units. As Chart 3.1 shows, this figure is lower than Canton's neighbors. The number of multi-family units usually serves as an indicator of the number of rental properties in a town. In 2000, Canton had the highest percentage of renters at 18.0% although that number had dropped from 27% in 1990 due in part to no new multi-family units built during the decade. Existing market conditions tend to favor families purchasing homes in Canton, so the Town will likely see stable owner-occupation rates into the future. However, tightening of the rental market could result in rent increases, which place a stress on families and individuals of limited means or fixed incomes.

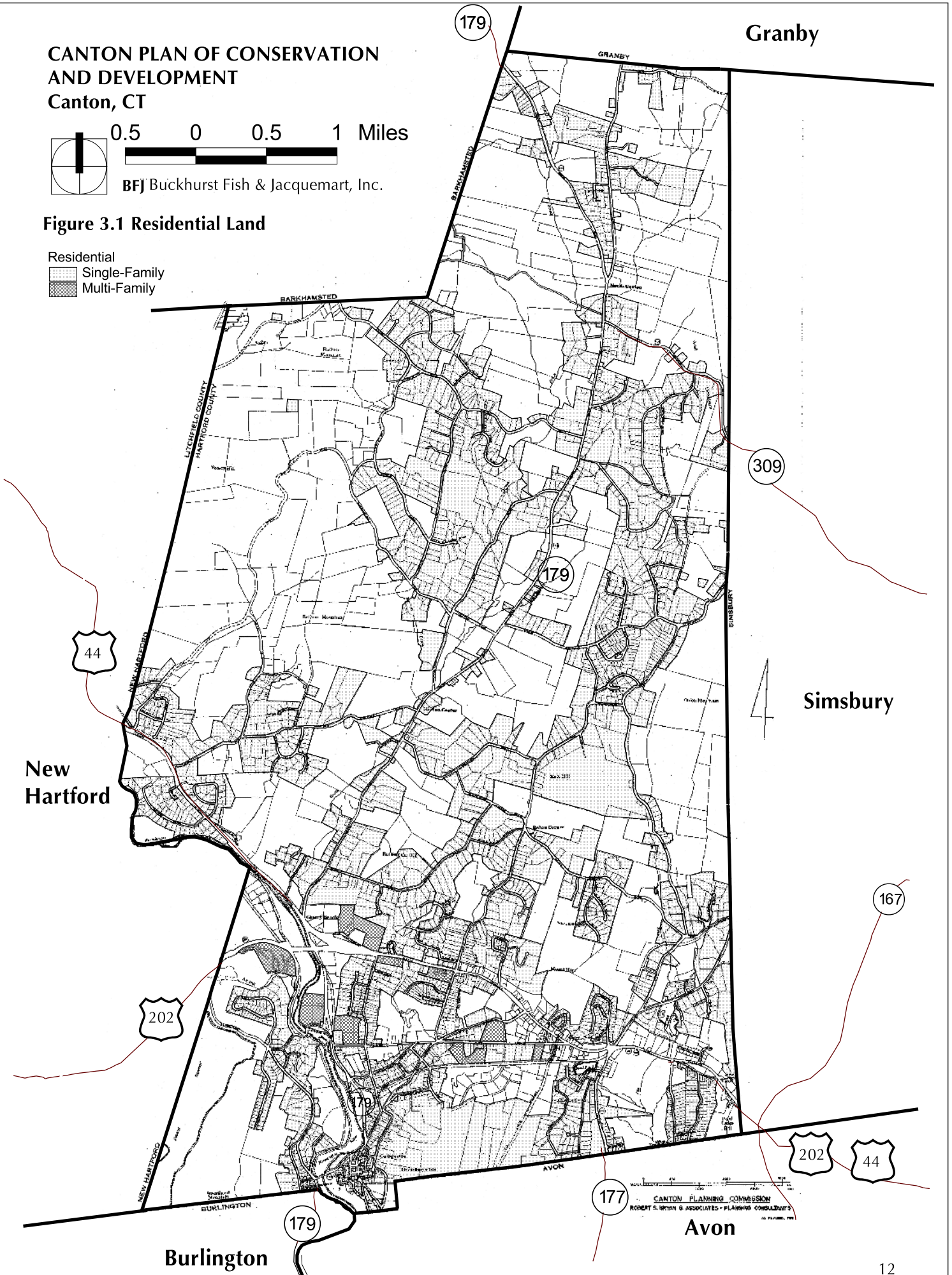
# CANTON PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT Canton, CT

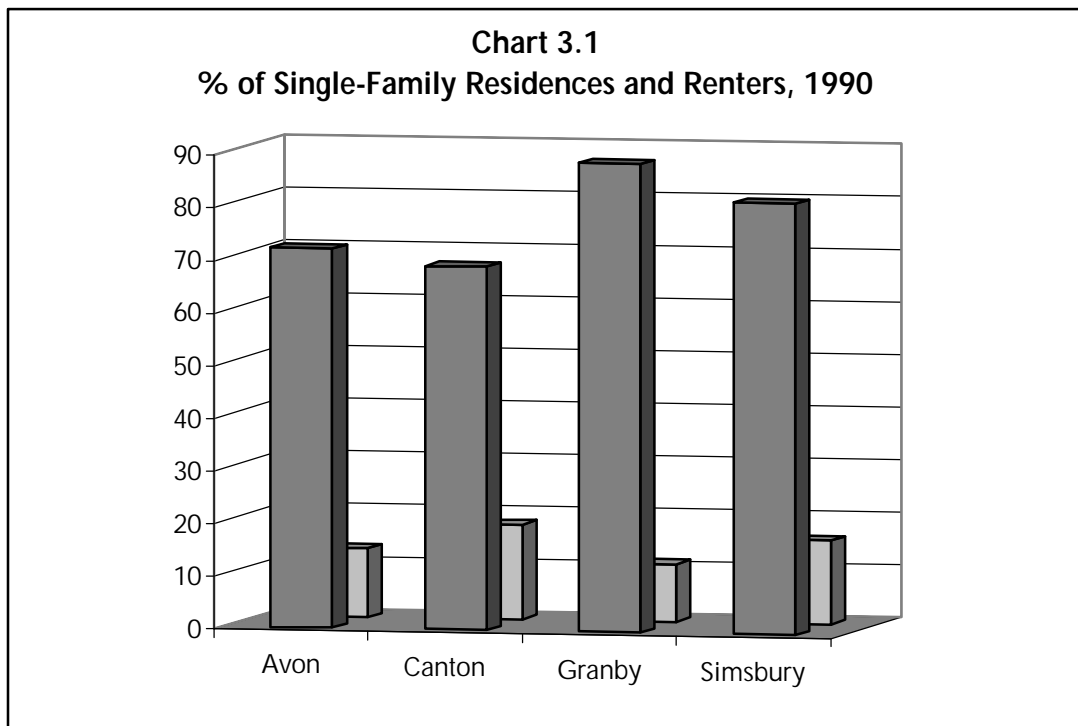


**Figure 3.1 Residential Land**

Residential

- Single-Family
- Multi-Family





Since 1992, the Town of Canton has conducted a housing rehabilitation program using federal Community Development Block Grant funds (commonly referred to as Small Cities funds or CDBG funds). Administered by the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, these funds are used to rehabilitate privately owned homes of income-eligible families or individuals living in Town. Individuals and families are eligible if they earn less than 80% of the median area household income. The Town has served over 100 families since the program's inception. The majority of clients have been very poor, most earning less than 50% of the median area income. Improvements to date include repairs to or replacement of polluted wells, septic systems, furnaces, and roofs, many on an emergency basis. Moreover, the program provides badly needed improvements, focusing mainly on housing-code related items. The program has been instrumental in keeping people in their homes who could not afford to move elsewhere.

New residential construction has become a source of concern for Canton residents. The town-wide survey conducted in March-April, 2001, revealed that 85% of respondents like the small-town atmosphere and 65% enjoy Canton's natural environment. However, many residents have voiced their opinion that the current pattern of new development does not preserve Canton's rural and small-town character. Fifty-two percent of survey respondents said that the rate or pattern of new development was one of the things that residents disliked most (this response was second only to taxes). Many of the new subdivisions are traditional, "cookie-

cutter” subdivisions that do not create a sense of place or character. The houses are generally oriented toward higher income levels, which affect affordability within the Town and may adversely impact the diversity of the population. Residents want to see greater creativity in new developments, such as preserving landmarks like historic houses, stone walls and mature trees. When asked if there should be greater design review, 77% of the survey respondents agreed. Although the Town recognizes that the quality and style of new homes is a function of the housing market, many residents expressed a desire for greater creativity and imagination on the part of developers.

### 3.3 Housing Affordability

In 1989, the median sales price of a house in Connecticut was \$149,900 while the average was \$220,858. In Canton, the median sale price was \$168,000. Ten years later, 1999, the median sale price in Canton equaled \$156,000 with an average sale price of just over \$181,000. Table 3.3 highlights the recent median and average sale prices for the State, Canton, and surrounding towns.

**Table 3.3**  
**Median and Average Sale Prices, 1996-1999**

Municipality	1996		1997		1998		1999	
	Average	Median	Average	Median	Average	Median	Average	Median
State	194,593	138,000	204,229	140,000	215,173	145,000	220,858	149,900
Canton	161,701	148,000	174,209	154,000	166,266	151,500	181,089	156,000
Avon	250,942	215,000	262,456	217,250	258,464	220,500	313,805	260,000
Barkhamsted	132,972	139,000	142,035	144,500	149,046	145,000	138,838	140,000
Burlington	189,015	183,500	195,124	183,900	191,428	181,450	203,685	186,375
Granby	177,556	170,000	171,725	160,000	186,845	171,225	N/A	N/A
New Hartford	156,822	155,000	147,534	148,850	141,642	137,600	154,881	148,500
Simsbury	209,082	185,000	226,819	197,000	228,448	205,000	234,170	208,000

Source: State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development

Table 3.4 provides an inventory of single-family and townhouse units for sale, as of June 2001. The table shows that the average asking price for 48 housing units is \$313,660. The single-family prices ranged from \$125,000-\$1,292,600. Only 4 properties were available for sale with an asking price under \$150,000.



**Table 3.4**  
**Housing Listed for Sale in Canton, June 2001**

# of Units	Price Range	Average Asking Price	# of Bed Rooms	# of Baths
<b><i>Detached Single Family Units for Sale<sup>1</sup></i></b>				
10	\$350,000 & Over	\$613,680	3 or 4	2.5-3.5
13	\$250,000 to \$350,000	\$309,615	3 or 4	2.5-3.5
10	\$200,000 to \$250,000	\$230,870	3 or 4	1.5-3
11	\$150,000 to \$200,000	\$183,240	2 or 3	1-2.5
4	Under \$150,000	\$142,425	1-3	1-2
Total	All Prices	\$313,660		
Median		\$249,900		
<b><i>Condominium Townhouse Units for Sale<sup>2</sup></i></b>				
1	Under \$100,000	\$ 82,000	2	1.5
1	Over \$100,000	\$117,000	2	2
Total	All Prices	\$ 99,000		
Median		\$ 99,000		

Source: <sup>1</sup>Multiple Listing Search performed June 18, 2001.

<sup>2</sup>Homestore.com, search performed June 6, 2001.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the median family income for towns in Hartford County was \$67,000 in 2001. That income translates into a family being able to spend approximately \$1,700/month (30% of its gross monthly income) on housing-related expenses. An average family could therefore afford a house with a purchase price of roughly \$210,000, with a 10 % down payment and \$400/month in local taxes. Approximately 38% of Canton's single-family housing market is affordable to households earning the median income and 100% of Canton's available townhouse market is affordable. The following table highlights actual home sales in Canton. Forty-six home sales closed within the first six months of 2001. Table 3.5 shows that the average asking price is higher than the average selling price and that while 38% of the average asking price is affordable to households earning the median income, 43% of the sales are affordable to median-income families.

**Table 3.5**  
**Home Sales in Canton, Jan-Jun, 2001**

# of Units	Sale Price Range	Average Sale Price
<b><i>Detached Single Family Units for Sale</i></b>		
6	\$350,000 & Over	\$513,000
11	\$250,000 to \$350,000	\$303,000
10	\$200,000 to \$250,000	\$222,000
15	\$150,000 to \$200,000	\$170,000
4	Under \$150,000	\$134,000
Average		\$255,000
Median		\$220,000

Source: Multiple Listing Search performed June 18, 2001.

In a well-functioning housing market, the relationship between housing demand and supply should reasonably match not only household preferences, but also housing needs and the ability to pay. Housing needs are best defined by measurement against acceptable standards of housing conditions, such as household occupancy by housing size and physical condition. Ability to pay is largely determined by whether housing costs, associated with household preferences, represent an affordable percentage of household income. A gap in the relationship between demand and supply can be considered a housing market deficit or deficiency.

Housing deficiencies existing in Canton stem primarily from a lack of affordable housing to meet the needs of residents. Virtually all inhabitants are adequately housed from the perspective of modern housing standards, with virtually all inhabitants having one room per occupant and complete plumbing facilities. From the perspective of affordable housing, Table 3.6 shows that in both 1989 and 1999, Canton, had a significant number of households that spent more than 30% of their incomes on gross rent or monthly owner costs, a threshold at which housing affordability becomes an issue.

**Table 3.6**  
**Housing Affordability Conditions in Canton, 1989-1999**

Annual Household Income*	Households Spending >30% of Income							
	Owner Occupied				Renter Occupied			
	1989	%**	1999	%**	1989	%**	1999	%**
Less than \$10,000	31	100.0%	26	100.0%	62	66.7%	48	71.6%
\$10,000 to \$19,999	56	62.2	44	74.6%	67	59.3	62	53.0
\$20,000 to \$34,999	86	40.0	94	39.0%	124	61.7	48	36.
\$35,000 to \$49,999	115	33.0	161	54.2%	0	0	24	18.2
\$50,000 or More	148	10.6	222	10.6%	0	0	6	2.9
Total	436	21.1%	547	22.7%	253	38.9%	188	28.9%

**Source:** U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1990, 2000 Census of Housing: Connecticut*

\* Household incomes are in 1989 and 1999 dollars respectively.

\*\* Percentage of all households within the income bracket.

Table 3.6 indicates that housing affordability generally has not improved over the last decade. The percentage of owner occupied households spending too much for housing remained approximately the same despite the addition of 14 deed-restricted affordable housing units. Strangely enough, with 21% of all Canton homeowners overspending for housing costs in 1989, not one of the income restricted housing units was sold to an existing Canton resident. The percentage of renter-occupied households overspending for rent decreased over the decade despite no new multi-family housing units built during the same period. This is due to the fact that the median rent only increased \$55 over the decade, from \$639 in 1989 to \$694 in 1999 (a 37% decrease when adjusted for inflation). With Canton's

housing stock dominated by single-family homes, the overall affordability of housing did not improve significantly, despite the improvement in the rental market. In 1999, 20.3% of all households spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs, compared to 21.5% in 1989.

As housing prices increase beyond the median-income family's ability to purchase a home, low- and moderate-income families may face housing hardships. Through the use of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, the Town's housing rehabilitation program has helped low- and moderate-income families (many of whom are elderly) keep their homes, thus preserving age- and income-diversity within the Town.

The State of Connecticut provides an affordable housing land use appeals procedure (Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 8-30g) for developers to appeal local decisions rejecting affordable housing projects. This procedure is available to developers in towns with little or no affordable housing if the developer agrees to set aside a portion of the units for 40 years at prices low- and moderate-income residents can afford.

Canton is not exempt from Section 8-30g because only 4.89% of its housing stock, less than the 10% threshold established in the Statutes,<sup>2</sup> is defined as affordable. In order to encourage towns to provide additional affordable housing opportunities, the State General Assembly passed House Bill 6007, which establishes an Affordable Housing Incentive Program. Under this program, the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development shall provide grants to municipalities that add affordable housing units to their housing stock, in order to defray costs associated with any additional services. The program also provides municipalities with technical assistance in the planning and development of affordable housing.

As a further incentive, municipalities that increase the stock of their affordable housing units by 2% will receive priority funding under the open space and watershed land acquisition grant program established pursuant to section 713-d.

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<sup>2</sup> State of Connecticut, Department of Economic and Community Development. Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure List, October 22, 2001.

### 3.4 Future Projections and Build-Out

According to the Canton Building Department, the Town added 409 new homes between 1991-2002. Approximately 25 demolition permits were issued during the 1990s, for a net addition of 384 housing units. On average, each new housing unit added 2.06 residents to the Town's population.

If Canton maintains its 1990s growth rate of 6.9% into the near future, Canton will have 9,450 residents in 2010, and 10,102 in 2020. The 610 new residents projected by 2010 will require additional housing units, which at 2.06 people/household would equal an additional 296 homes or an annual increase of 30 new housing units/year. The private housing market in Canton has consistently supplied more than 30 units/year since 1996, so the housing market is in balance with likely future household formation and population increases.

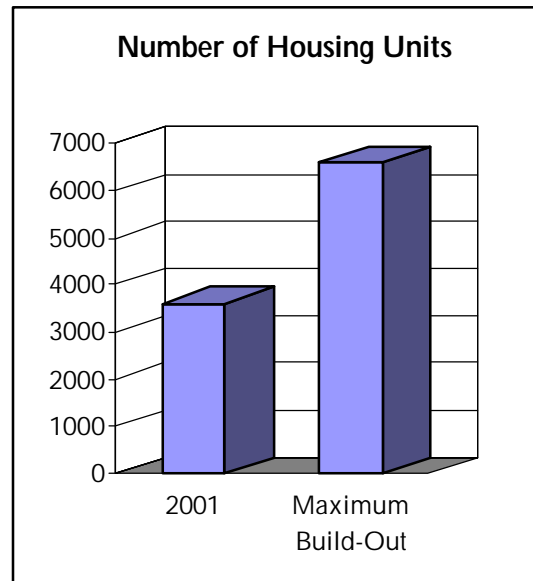


Figure 3.2 illustrates the undeveloped land areas in Canton. The green area represents developable land. Approximately 6,200 acres of residentially zoned land could be developed in the future. After accounting for new roads and un-buildable conditions, such as wetlands and steep slopes, it is estimated that 4,400 acres could be developed under present zoning regulations. The majority of this land is found within the central and northern parts of Town, which have historically been rural areas. The additional 600 housing units built over the next 20 years would require over 1,200 acres, if built entirely within Canton's AR-3 zone (2 units/acre). If current population growth continues, Canton may lose more than 20% of its existing undeveloped land over the next 20 years.

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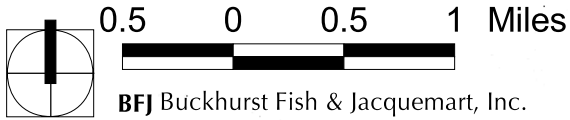
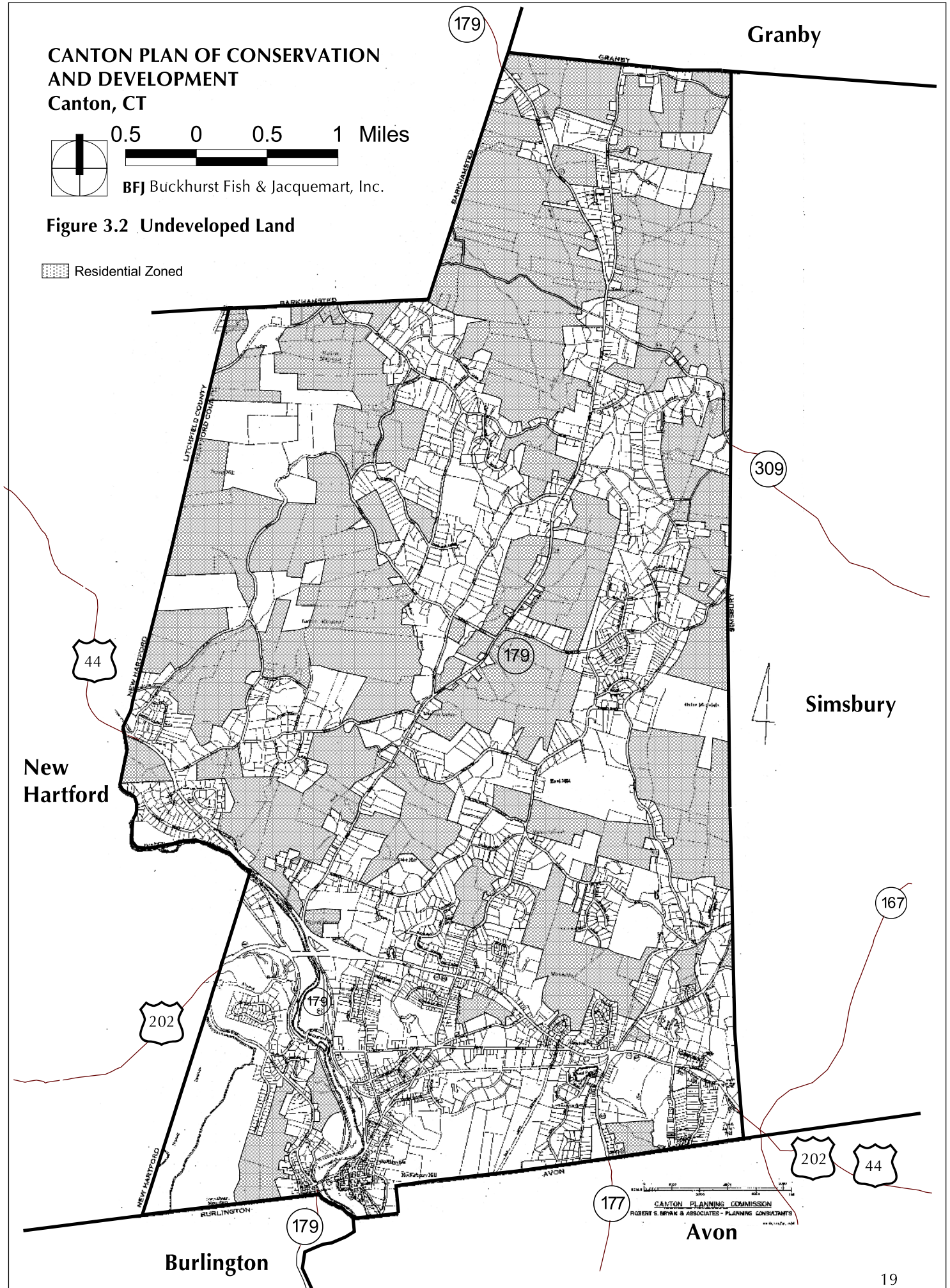
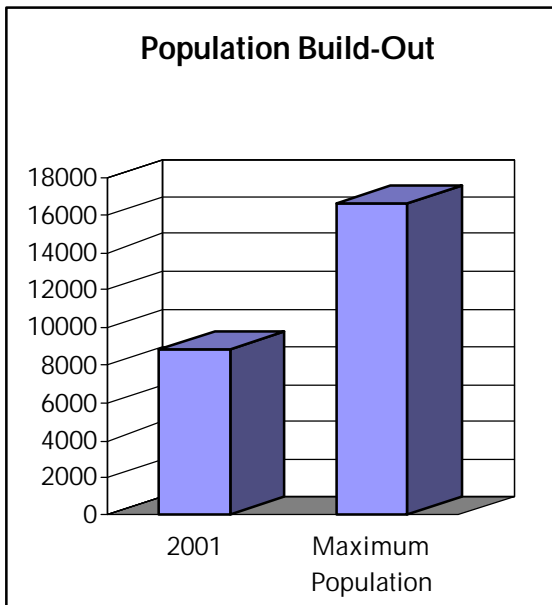


Figure 3.2 Undeveloped Land

Residential Zoned





Multiplying the 6,200 acres of remaining residential land by the underlying residential zone densities suggests that approximately 3,000 additional residential units could be constructed within the Town. These homes would translate into 7,620 new residents, using the 2000 average household size of 2.51 persons per household, raising the potential future population of Canton to 16,460. This figure does not represent a short-term prediction for Canton, nor are we suggesting Canton will have over 16,000 residents in the future. However, it offers guidance to the Town, relative to its current zoning and

subdivision regulations, so that the impacts of its policies on housing and population levels can be understood.

### 3.5 Summary

The majority of recent homes built in Canton have been within conventional subdivisions. The single-family home on its own, one- to two-acre lot has been the dominant housing type during the past decade. This type of development has produced a standard “cookie-cutter” look to many new homes and suburbanized areas of Canton. In addition, these homes tend to target families with a specific income level in excess of what the average resident can afford. The loss of open space, the lack of affordable housing opportunities, and the demands on community services caused by the additional housing units has caused many residents to question the type and impact of future residential development in Canton.

### 3.6 Goals, Policies, and Recommendations

#### Goals

- A diverse housing stock that will retain and attract an economically and culturally diverse population to improve the pool of labor available to Canton businesses and generally improve the current status of the community.
- 10 percent of all housing units are affordable.

- Conserve and retain the existing housing stock, particularly historic homes.
- Maintain a rural, small-town atmosphere.

### **Policies**

- Encourage diversity in the housing stock.
- Encourage the construction of affordable housing units. Work with state and non-profit agencies (e.g. Habitat for Humanity) to increase the supply of affordable housing units and take advantage of state programs for technical assistance and funding.
- Promote legislation that conserves and retains the existing housing stock, particularly historic homes.
- Support developments that promote the rural, small-town atmosphere.
- Encourage imaginative and inventive subdivisions that preserve the Town's small-town character, avoid uniformity, and blend with the existing housing stock.
- Encourage development of housing units that supply niche markets (such as active adult housing) as well as increase alternatives to traditional, cookie-cutter subdivisions, such as cluster developments.
- Encourage rehabilitation of older housing, using CDBG funds where applicable, to improve housing quality and provide additional units if site conditions are adequate. When historic properties are being subdivided, encourage flexibility and creativeness, including clustering. Whenever possible, maintain their rural and historic appearance and incorporate the historic home, stonewalls, and outbuildings as dominant features of the subdivision.
- Encourage the creation of new districts utilizing the Village District Act that include a mix of housing and commercial uses as-of-right.

## Recommendations

- Sidewalks or paths should be encouraged in new subdivisions, particularly those with higher densities, linking them to community elements. (Planning Commission)
- Require that new developments minimize deforestation during development. Establish regulations preventing over-cutting during, and immediately preceding, development. (Planning Commission, Zoning Commission)
- Require larger setbacks or lots in environmentally sensitive areas, such as on ridgelines and near watercourses, to allow adequate setbacks from these sensitive areas. (Planning Commission, Zoning Commission)
- Consider creating transitional zones where residential areas abut commercial zones. (Zoning Commission)
- Where appropriate, require active recreation areas in dedicated open space, utilizing private ownership unless needed for Town purposes. (Planning Commission, Zoning Commission)



## **4.0 LAND USES AND ZONING**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the pattern of land development within Canton and shows the existing land uses for the Town. It includes a discussion of the relationship between land use and zoning, and the costs to community services from the different land-use classifications.

### **4.2 Existing Land Uses**

The Town of Canton contains 25.00 square miles (16,000 acres), including 0.40 square miles of water within its boundaries. Canton's population is spread unevenly over that area, at an overall density of approximately 360 people per square mile or 0.56 persons per acre. While the area south of Route 44 contains only 18% of Canton's land area, it accounts for 45% of the total population. Current land use in the community reflects a pattern of compact development in and around the historic village centers, surrounded by low-density residential and rural areas (Figure 4.1). Route 44 represents the Town's commercial spine.

Table 4.1 shows the general breakdown of acres by land use, based upon the illustration in Figure 4.1. As the table demonstrates, Canton is predominantly a residential town, with significant reserves of undeveloped or agricultural land.

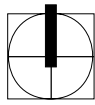
A detailed land-use analysis of existing land-use patterns was done to quantify the number of acres currently in use by different land-use categories. This information allows residents to understand how much of the Town is developed and how many acres are used by a particular land use. It also provides an opportunity to monitor land-use changes over time, which can influence policy decisions that affect future development. Unfortunately, the 1990 Plan of Development did not analyze the land-use categories and the amount of acreage devoted to them, so a comparison with 1990 is not possible. Prior to 1990, Canton prepared a Plan of Development in 1972, using land-use data from 1969. The following table compares land-use changes between 1969-2001.

**Table 4.1**  
**Town of Canton, Land Use by Acres, 2001**

<b>Land Use Classification</b>	<b>Acreage</b>
<b>Developed</b>	
Single-Family Residential	5,850
Multi-Family	140
Commercial	150
Industrial	180
Other Town or State Lands	145
Private Institutional	60
<b>Subtotal Developed</b>	<b>6,525</b>
<b>Undeveloped</b>	
Open Space	1,390
Canton Land Trust	660
Town Open Space	60
State Lands	100
Private Open Space	150
Water Company	300
Private Recreation	120
Agriculture/Woodland/Vacant	6,650
<b>Subtotal Undeveloped</b>	<b>8,040</b>
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>14,565</b>
Roads/Water Bodies	1,435
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,000</b>

Table 4.2 highlights the growth of residential properties during the past 30 years. The number of residential acres has more than doubled, rising from 2,274 to approximately 5,990 acres. During the same period, industrial acreage increased 150% to 180 acres, while land devoted to commercial uses rose 67%. The large increase in the Public category is due largely to the number of new roads that have been built. Parkland increased slightly, though the number of acres reserved for open space more than doubled to 1,110 acres. New roads and residential developments account for approximately 78% of the 6,240 acres of undeveloped land that have been converted to developed uses. There is a slight discrepancy in total acreage between the two plans. The 2001 Plan uses data from a statewide geographic information system, which is considered to be more accurate than the earlier maps.

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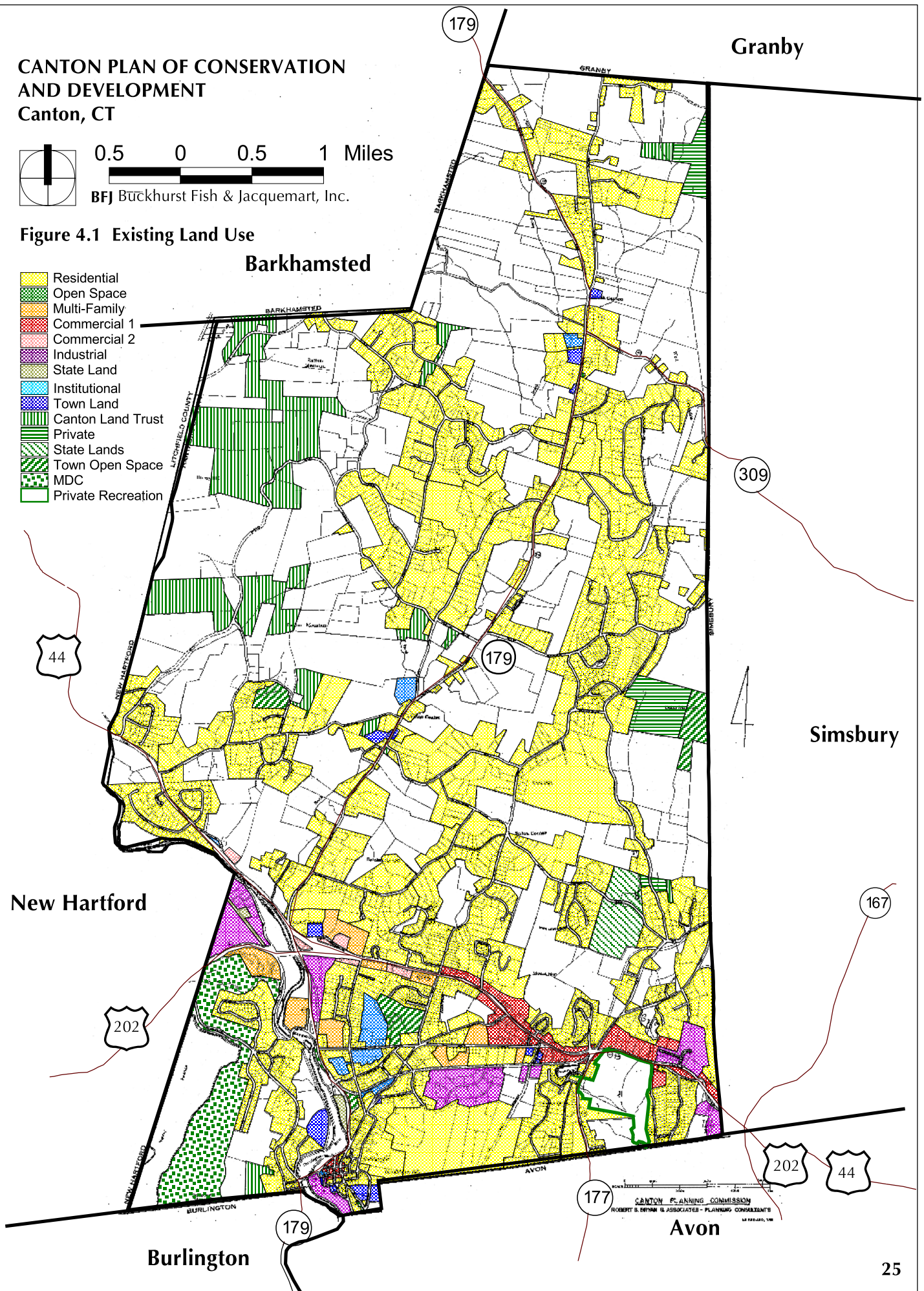
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BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.

Figure 4.1 Existing Land Use

**Barkhamsted**

- Residential
- Open Space
- Multi-Family
- Commercial 1
- Commercial 2
- Industrial
- State Land
- Institutional
- Town Land
- Canton Land Trust
- Private
- State Lands
- Town Open Space
- MDC
- Private Recreation



CANTON PLANNING COMMISSION  
ROBERT S. BRYAN & ASSOCIATES - PLANNING CONSULTANTS  
14 FEBRUARY, 2004

**Table 4.2**  
**Comparison of Existing Land Uses, 1969-2001**

	1969 Plan			2001 Plan		% Change
	Acres	%		Acres	%	
Residential	2,274	13.6		5,990	37.4	163.4
Commercial	90	0.5		150	0.9	66.7
Industrial	72	0.4		180	1.1	150.0
Public <sup>a</sup>	423	2.5		1,360	8.5	221.5
Parks <sup>b</sup>	206	1.2		280	1.8	35.9
Reserved <sup>c</sup>	528	3.1		1,110	6.9	110.2
Undeveloped <sup>d</sup>	13,174	78.6		6,930	43.3	-47.4
TOTALS	16,758	100.0		16,000	100.0	

<sup>a</sup>Includes Town facilities (exc. parks) and roads

<sup>b</sup>Includes Town/State recreational lands and semi-public rec. land

<sup>c</sup>Includes dedicated open space lands including watershed lands

<sup>d</sup>Includes woodland, agricultural land, and water bodies

As part of the Plan of Conservation and Development process, Canton undertook a town-wide survey in March 2001. The survey asked residents a variety of questions relating to land use and development. Respondents indicated that the top two qualities that they like best about Canton are its small-town atmosphere and the natural environment. The Town's most disliked characteristics are its tax rate, rate or pattern of new development, traffic conditions, and appearance of commercial areas.

At the June 2001 Public Workshop, residents expressed the opinion that residential development has grown too quickly and disproportionately to commercial and industrial growth. The survey results support this sentiment as 54% and 59% of respondents want to see additional commercial and industrial growth, respectively. Workshop participants also spoke in favor of additional commercial and industrial growth, but qualified their support for non-polluting businesses that maintain the historic scale of other businesses in Town. Many residents voiced their opinions against large-scale, "big-box" development and some stated their preference for the existing eclectic appearance of Route 44, believing it to be more interesting and attractive than uniform stretches of the same road in Avon and Simsbury. Eighty percent of the survey respondents agreed that there should be greater design review and concern about the appearance of new development. When asked to rate the importance of a variety of objectives on a scale of 1 through 5; protecting the natural environment was listed as the most important objective (4.38) followed by preserving Canton's historic character (4.15).

Many workshop participants expressed concern over what they nebulously referred to as “suburban sprawl.” While there is no commonly accepted definition of suburban sprawl, it is generally characterized by the decline of central cities; rapid consumption of rural land; widespread strip commercial development; low-density residential development; heavy reliance on automobiles; and the loss of community character or “sense of place.” It is the antithesis of another concept known as “smart growth.” Smart growth includes such principles as: focusing growth in and around existing community centers to take advantage of existing infrastructure and reduce dependence on the automobile; appropriately mixing land uses in close proximity to allow working, shopping and recreating within easy reach of homes; and encouraging residential development that promotes housing choices in distinctive and attractive structures. These and other smart growth initiatives can be found in the policies, goals and recommendations found throughout this Plan.

### **4.3 Development Potential**

Future development in Canton is contingent upon a variety of factors including the availability of land and the local economy. This Plan presents a potential build-out, or saturation point, scenario. The potential build-out numbers assume that all undeveloped land in Town is developed according to the underlying zone. This information is a guide and does not suggest actual building levels for the next decade.

Figure 4.2 shows all of the undeveloped land in Canton. The map includes dedicated open space land for illustrative purposes, but because of legal restrictions that prevent it from becoming developed, the acreage is not included in the build-out scenario. Canton has approximately 6,600 acres of undeveloped land that could be developed into residential, commercial, and industrial uses.

An analysis of potential development by zoning district indicates that the greatest amount of undeveloped land lies within the two-acre, AR-3 agricultural/residential zone. This zone encompasses approximately 6,100 acres of undeveloped land. After excluding a factor of 25% for roads, open space and environmentally sensitive areas, approximately 2,287 new homes could be built. The AR-2 district contains 124 undeveloped acres and AR-1 districts contain approximately 200 undeveloped acres. After excluding 25% from both districts, approximately 124 additional homes can be built in the AR-2 district on one-acre lots and roughly 300 additional homes on one-half-acre lots could be constructed in the AR-1 district, or a total of 3,711 houses. Nearly all of these residential units would be single-family detached homes, as permitted by current zoning. Multi-family developments such as @Collinsville, Boulder Ridge and Oxbow Ridge, that are approved but have yet to be built, account for as many as 294 additional dwelling units. At the current household size of 2.49 persons/household, full build-out would add 7,639 additional residents, for a maximum Town population of 16,479.

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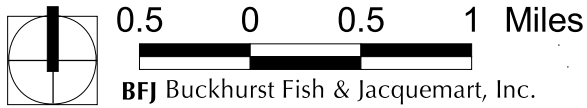
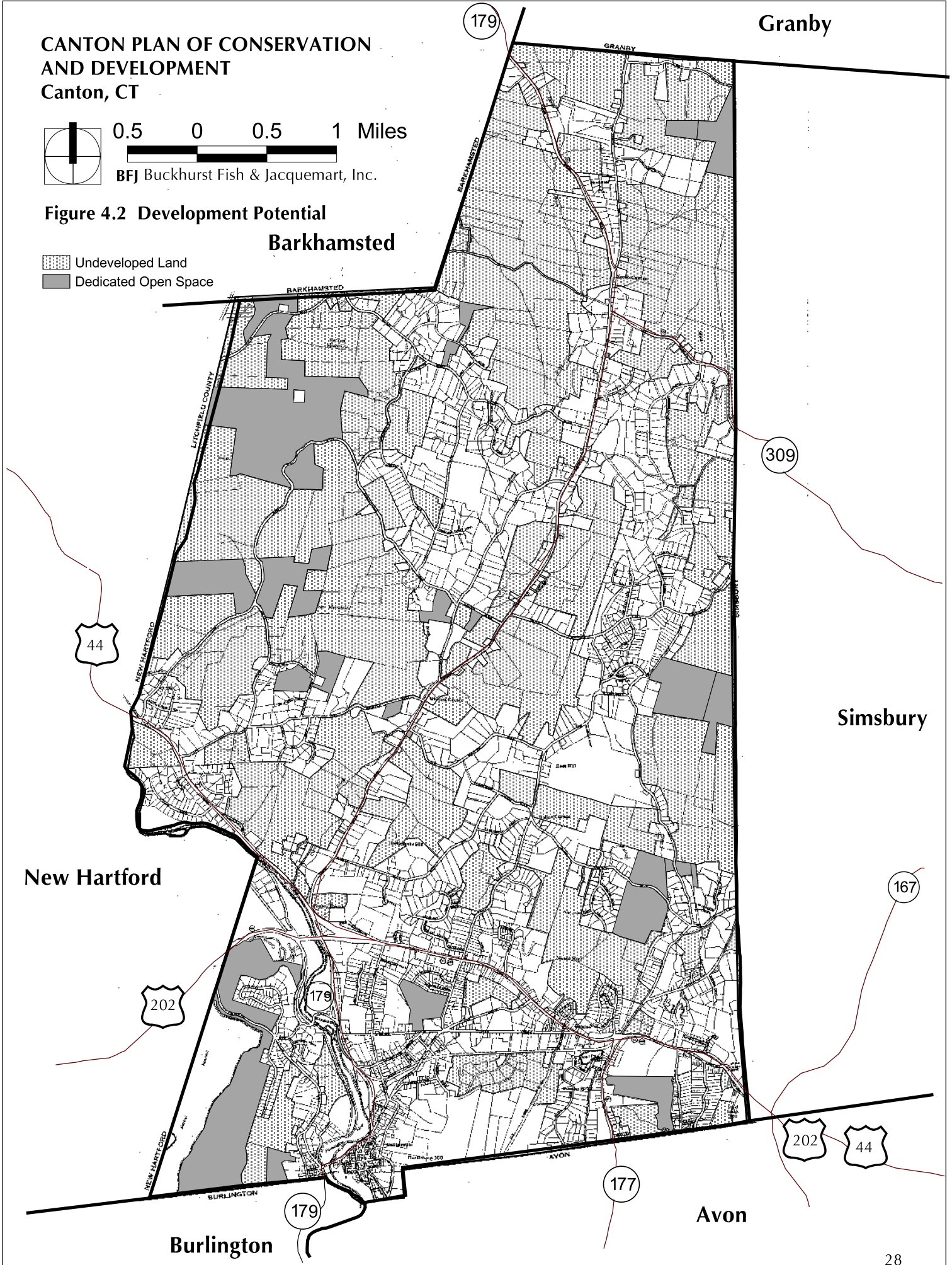


Figure 4.2 Development Potential

**Barkhamsted**

- Undeveloped Land
- Dedicated Open Space



During the 1990s, Canton issued approximately 300 permits for the construction of new homes but with over 500 dwelling units or lots approved and awaiting construction, that rate is likely to increase significantly in the decade to come. If development were to continue at the 1990's pace into the future, it would take over 100 years to reach the residential saturation point. While this analysis is oversimplified, it does serve as a warning that there is the potential to nearly double the present day population of the Town. Table 4.3 highlights the potential for additional residences as well as new commercial and industrial floor area according to the theoretical saturation point.

There are two significant undeveloped areas zoned Special Business (SB) along Route 44. One is the Canton Public Golf Course and the other is across the street from it at the northeast corner of Lawton Road and Route 44. The golf course, or "The Shoppes at Farmington Valley" as it will soon be known, has received approval for approximately 380,000 square feet of retail, office and restaurant space. While not developed, this floor area and its flexibility to grow has not been included in Table 4.3, raising the potential commercial/industrial floor area as high as 1,114,500 square feet. The land across the street remains vacant, awaiting a suitable project. It is hoped that the new Albany Turnpike Gateway District can be utilized to maximize the development potential of this area while minimizing its impact on the surrounding neighborhood. Additional commercial acreage can be found along Route 44, but the remaining parcels are typically small, perhaps one to two acres in size.

**Table 4.3**  
**Development Build-Out**

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Undeveloped Acreage</b>	<b>Undeveloped Minus 25%</b>	<b>Potential Homes</b>
<b>AR-3</b>	6,100	4,575	2287
<b>AR-2</b>	165	124	124
<b>AR-1</b>	200	150	300
<b>AAH</b>	35	n/a	96
<b>SB</b>	15	n/a	63
<b>IHD-1</b>	n/a	n/a	100
<b>IP</b>	11	n/a	98
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,526</b>	<b>4,875</b>	<b>3,068</b>
<b>Zone</b>	<b>Undeveloped Acreage</b>	<b>Undeveloped Minus 50%</b>	<b>Potential Square Feet</b>
<b>SB</b>	30	15	334,000
<b>IP</b>	52	26	378,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>712,000</b>



The Canton Commerce Center (CCC) represents the Town's efforts to attract high-value office and industrial development. The Town zoned the area Industrial Park (IP) in the hope of attracting office, high-tech manufacturing and research uses. The Industrial Park regulations are designed to achieve attractive, new construction in the campus-like setting that these uses typically demand. Casle Corporation of Avon has purchased the developable acreage from the Town and is constructing the infrastructure necessary to support the CCC. The IP floor area illustrated in Table 4.3 is based on the assumption of one-story buildings throughout the CCC. It is highly likely that any office buildings constructed would be two or three stories in height, potentially allowing for as much as 100,000 square feet of additional floor area within CCC.

#### 4.4 Zoning

Canton originally adopted a simple set of zoning regulations in 1957. As the Town has grown, the regulations have grown in sophistication to keep pace with changes in development and they now include 20 zoning districts. Table 4.4 lists the different zoning classifications, together with the amount of acreage dedicated to each group of land-use categories. Many of the special zoning districts do not have acreage figures next to their description because they overlay the business and industrial zones listed above them and provide additional regulations to supplement the underlying zones. Figures 4.3-4.4 show the different zoning classifications for the Town.

**Table 4.4**  
**Zoning Table**

Map Code	Regular Districts	Acres	% Total
	<b>Residential Districts</b>	<b>14,755</b>	<b>93%</b>
AR-3	AR-3 District (2-acres)	11,865	
AR-2	AR-2 District (1-acre)	1,330	
AR-1	AR-1 District (1/2-acre)	1,460	
GA	Garden Apartment District	10	
MR	Mixed Residential District	55	
AAH	Active Adult Housing District	35	
CLCC	Continuing Life Care Community District	n/m	
	<b>Business Districts</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>3%</b>
B-1	Business B-1 District	70	
SB	Special Business District	440	
ATGD	Albany Turnpike Gateway District	n/m	



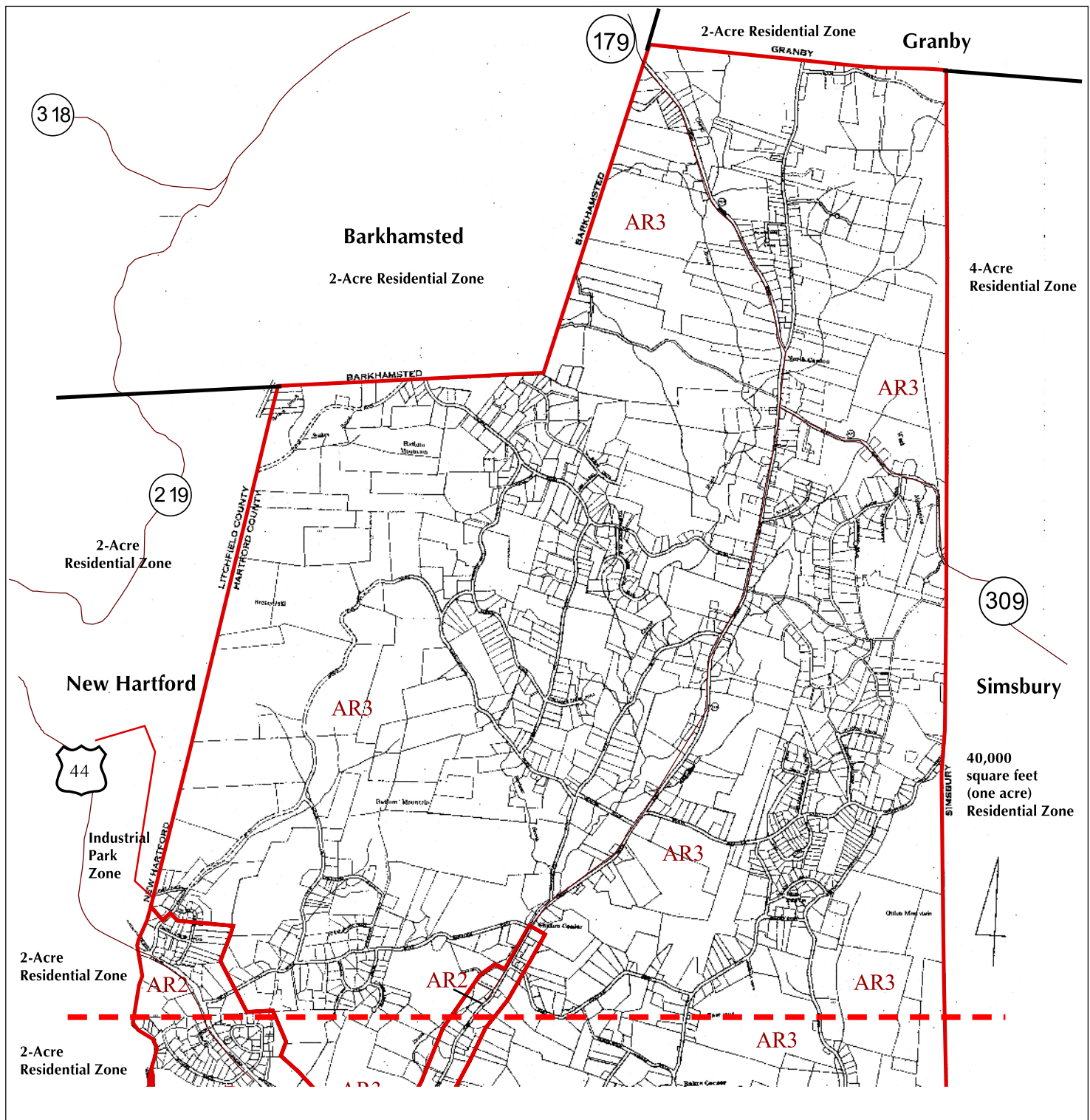
**Table 4.4 (cont.)  
Zoning Table**

	<b>Industrial Districts</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>2%</b>
LI	Light Industrial District	188	
HI	Heavy Industrial District	2	
IH	Industrial Heritage District	20	
IP	Industrial Park District	90	
RLI	Restricted Light Industrial District	35	
	<b>Special Districts</b>		
ATOD	Albany Turnpike Overlay District		
CBD	Collinsville Business District		
POD	Professional Office District	n/m	
FPD	Flood Plain District		
FRPO	Farmington River Protection Overlay District	<b>200</b>	<b>1%</b>
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>15,800</b>	<b>99%</b>
	Nepaug Reservoir	200	1%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

n/m = not mapped

An overwhelming 93% of the Town is zoned for residential uses. The residential AR-3 zone, with its two-acre minimum lot size, covers approximately 74% of the Town. The AR-2 zone requires a one-acre minimum lot size while the AR-1 zone requires one-half acre. The AR-1 and AR-2 zones are generally located in the more densely populated areas of Town, where public water and sewer are available to ensure development on smaller lots is feasible. The AR-3 zone encompasses the rural areas outside of the public water and sewer service districts.

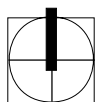
There are also many special residential districts including: Active Adult Housing (AAH), Continuing Life Care Community (CLCC), Mixed-Residential (MR) and Garden Apartment (GA) districts. Each performs a specific function, from providing affordable housing opportunities to addressing the needs of older residents. The GA district is currently inactive, with its function assumed by the Special Business District, where apartments and condominiums are permitted by Special Exception. It should be eliminated and any necessary regulations moved to the Special Business District.



**CANTON PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**  
Canton, CT

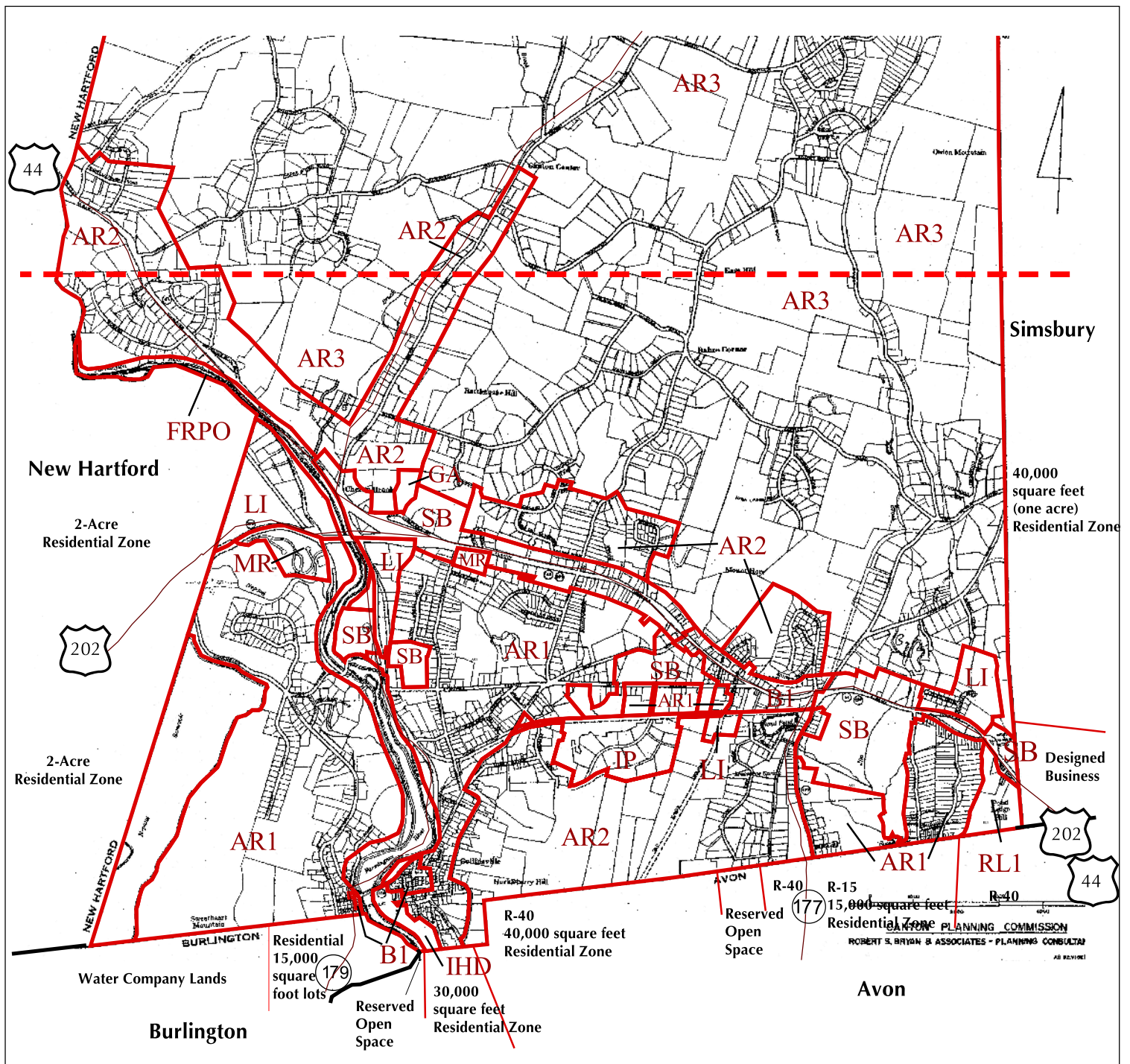
**Figure 4.3 Zoning Map of Northern Canton**

**Zone Boundary**



0 2000 4000 6000 Feet

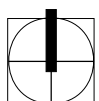
**BFJ** Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.



CANTON PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
Canton, CT

Figure 4.4 Zoning Map of Southern Canton

Zone Boundary



0 2000 4000 6000 Feet

BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.

Business and industrial uses are generally confined to areas adjacent to or south of Route 44. The Route 44 corridor, the Canton Commerce Center, Collinsville, Powder Mill Road and River Road (Route 179) account for the bulk of commercially and industrially zoned land in Town. These areas have access to public water and sewer and are close to major transportation routes. The B-1 District and the Special Business (SB) District are mixed-use zones, allowing both residential and commercial uses. B-1 zones are located within the central Collinsville area, along Route 44 and along streets immediately south of Route 44. The SB zone is found along Route 44 and several of its side streets. Despite their commercial nature, all commercial uses require a Special Exception in the B-1 and SB districts. The Zoning Commission should consider a limited number of permitted uses, allowed by right in these districts. Size thresholds could be used to trigger the requirement for Special Exceptions for larger establishments that are more likely to have adverse impacts on the immediate area or Town.

Over the past decade, Canton has updated and amended its zoning regulations to proactively regulate future growth in a way that benefits general public goals. The Albany Turnpike Overlay District (ATOD) is just such a regulation, developed in response to the promise of new development on a scale previously unseen in Canton. The ATOD is an overlay district that provides the Zoning Commission with added control over the impacts of large-scale commercial development, such as noise, traffic, lighting and architectural compatibility, in addition to any town-wide standards or standards contained in the underlying zone.

The Albany Turnpike Gateway District (ATGD) is a new district that evolved out of discussions on the development of the Route 44 corridor east of Lovely Street, during the preparation of this Plan. The ATGD is a design development district that gives developers flexibility in developing large commercial projects while at the same time giving the Zoning Commission maximum control over the potential development at the time of the zone change. This is achieved through a master planning process that allows a developer to choose from a broad selection of uses and modify existing zoning standards to fit the unique characteristics of the properties involved. The developer must illustrate the implementation of those standards through schematic plans and architectural drawings that become binding upon the developer and its successors. In return for the flexibility granted to the developer, the Commission gains control over access, architecture, buffers, landscaping, permitted uses and other aspects of development at the time of the zone change when it has maximum legal discretion. With conventional re-zoning of the B-1 and SB districts, the Commission is unable to control these aspects of development due to its inability to place conditions on zone changes.

The Route 44 corridor west of Lovely Street is also an area of great concern to many residents and business owners. This area is the historic heart of commercial activity outside of Collinsville and has a different character than the more suburban area east of Lovely Street. This area is, in some cases, severely restricted by geographic constraints such as a steep ledge and inland wetlands, resulting in a compact development pattern. Originally populated with Greek revival and Victorian structures, the area has a historic character that should be preserved. Buildings in Canton Village, Fleet Bank and Atlas Outdoor each contain architectural elements evocative of these structures but, for the most part, many buildings in this area are the reason that 80 percent of the survey respondents agreed that there should be greater design review. Residents are concerned about the appearance of new development: one of the most disliked things about the Town, after taxes, is the appearance of our commercial areas.

To protect and encourage the appropriate development of this area, a new Center Business District (CBD) should be established. The CBD could use the State's Village District Act as its impetus to: create design standards that reflect the historic and pedestrian character of the area; encourage buildings close to sidewalks and the street; encourage parking to the side and rear of buildings; and encourage inter-parcel access and the closure of excessive curb cuts. Like the proposed changes to the B-1 and SB zones, the Zoning Commission should consider a limited number of permitted uses, allowed by right in this district, utilizing size thresholds to trigger the requirement for Special Exceptions for larger establishments that are more likely to have adverse impacts. The district might also include density bonuses for superior design within the historic context or for preserving existing historic structures. The CBD would not include limits on the size or scale of development since the existing impervious coverage requirements and the natural constraints of the area will sufficiently address these issues.

Canton Center could benefit from its own distinctive zoning district. Canton Center contains many historic structures spread along and to the rear of Cherry Brook Road (Route 179), most of which are regulated by the Canton Center Historic District Commission. Within the Historic District, there are several residentially zoned structures used for commercial and other non-residential purposes. Many of these structures are non-conforming not only in their use but in their physical dimensions as well (i.e. too close to the street). With only the B-1 and SB zones at their disposal, with their multitude of inappropriate uses for these properties, it is understandable that the Zoning Commission would rather declare these properties non-conforming by zoning them AR-2 residential. However, in doing so they are discouraging the continued commercial use of buildings that might not lend themselves to the residential use they are expected to transition to. By creating a Canton Center District, these non-conforming, non-residential properties can be rendered conforming once more, encouraging their continued preservation and use. Design standards, zoning standards that more closely match the existing pattern of development, and a limited number of permitted small-scale,

commercial uses would protect the existing character of these properties and provide the financial flexibility for reinvestment in them by removing their non-conforming stigma. A similar district might also be used in North Canton where a collection of non-residential buildings such as the North Canton Post Office and the Grange Hall contain non-conforming uses or lay dormant.

Collinsville has its own unique problems with respect to the B-1, HI and AR-1 designations throughout the village. Unlike Canton Center, Collinsville's businesses are, for the most part, conforming uses thanks to their commercial and industrial zoning. However, most of the buildings and the properties they are located on are non-conforming with respect to front yards, side yards, building height, lot area, lot coverage, etc. The same can be said for most of the residences. Collinsville was a thriving mill village that grew for over a hundred years before Canton adopted planning and zoning regulations in 1957. As a result, the B-1 and AR-1 zones used in Collinsville are imposing latter day suburban ideals on an otherwise compact urban historic area.

By creating both a Collinsville Residential District and a Collinsville Business District, the Zoning Commission could create design and zoning standards that more closely match the existing character and pattern of development. Existing properties could be made conforming in many respects. In-fill development would mirror the existing character of the village. Structures could receive modest additions, and new accessory buildings could be built without the incessant need for variances. Apartments and offices over retail stores, once considered traditional elements of Main Street, could be encouraged. The last remaining property in the Heavy Industry (HI) District, now home to Collinsville Canoe and Kayak, should be considered for inclusion in a Collinsville Business District or voluntarily rezoned by its owners to Industrial Heritage District in a manner similar to the Collins Company. In either event, the HI District should be removed from the Zoning Regulations.

In order for all of these new districts created under the Village District Act to function, the Town will need to establish a Design Review Board. Initially, such a Board would develop the architectural standards to be used in each district, working closely with the Zoning Commission and the respective Historic District Commissions where applicable. Once the standards have been established and the districts created, the Design Review Board would review applications for development in these and perhaps other districts such as the Albany Turnpike Gateway District. They would report their findings to the Zoning Commission who could take them into advisement and incorporate them into an approval, or in the case of a non-village district, recommend that a developer incorporate their findings into its plans. Depending upon the expertise required of the Design Review Board, the Collinsville and Canton Center Historic District Commissions might serve as Design Review Boards within their respective districts to avoid redundancy with their own historic preservation function.



An added benefit of a Design Review Board is that it would relieve the Zoning Commission of the burden of administering the aesthetics of new development so that it can concentrate on broader issues. Despite claims that design review boards are an added layer of bureaucracy, many developers and design professionals prefer the consistency of architectural standards and review by a separate, more focused agency.

#### **4.5 Zoning Administration and Enforcement**

In order for zoning to be an effective tool for protecting the public health, safety and welfare; maintaining and improving the character of the Town; and facilitating economic development; it must be administered and enforced effectively. Over the last decade, the Zoning Commission and Land Use Office have made great strides to streamline the development process. Regulations, bylaws and application forms have been revised with an eye toward clarity and efficiency. Where many regulations were once rigid, requiring variances to deviate from a standard, they now have built-in waiver provisions. The Zoning Commission has delegated authority to the Land Use Office to administer minor technical matters that used to take as long as a month to handle at a Commission meeting. Application forms, regulations, agendas and minutes were all made available on the Internet for easy reading and printing. Despite this progress, there is still much work to be done.

When regulations undergo many changes, as they have over the last decade and will continue to do as the recommendations of this plan are implemented, they begin to lose their cohesiveness. Definitions and seemingly related regulations become scattered throughout the document. Obsolete regulations lay unnoticed and unused. To address these and other problems, a comprehensive rewrite of the Zoning Regulations is recommended. This is no small task and should not be taken lightly. It will require a significant commitment of time and funding for either a consultant or temporary staff to free the Town Planner to perform the task.

Zoning enforcement has been inconsistent during the last decade. With tight budgets and increasing workloads, zoning enforcement was given a low priority, with only the most egregious violations being prosecuted. With recent surges in residential and commercial development activity, planning and zoning has come to the forefront of many residents' agendas and zoning complaints have risen dramatically. The Board of Selectmen responded by creating a new position in the Land Use Office called the Development Technician. The Development Technician combines the clerical duties of the former half-time position of Building Technician with the enforcement duties of the Inland Wetlands Agent and Zoning Enforcement Officer. As a result, both the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations and Zoning Regulations have been enforced more consistently, but there is room for improvement.

The current zoning enforcement process is cumbersome and at times ineffective. If gentle persuasion through visits, phone calls and letters does not resolve a violation, a Cease and Desist Order is issued, which can be appealed to the Zoning Board of Appeals. If the Order is upheld and/or the violation continues, the Town's only recourse is to prosecute the matter in civil court, which is costly in both time and money. Some zoning violations are periodic or fleeting in nature and are gone before any action can be taken or before a court date arrives, only to return at a later date. To make zoning enforcement more timely and effective, the Town should adopt an ordinance authorizing the Zoning Enforcement Officer to issue tickets for zoning violations. Used as a last resort, tickets with substantial fines attached would get the attention of uncooperative violators and repeat offenders. Recent changes to the Connecticut General Statutes allow tickets to be issued for each day that a violation continues, creating a financial incentive to cooperate early. Failure to pay fines is an offense in itself and is as enforceable as any traffic ticket.

#### **4.6 Costs of Community Services**

Commercial, industrial, and residential development provides new tax revenue and a larger tax base for Canton. However, in recent years we have become keenly aware of the costs associated with these different types of development. Industrial development, and to a lesser degree commercial development, tend to be revenue positive in that they generate significant tax dollars but require few services from the Town. Conversely, residential development is often a tax revenue liability, requiring more in services than it generates in tax dollars. The primary reason for this is the cost of education.

Because the education budget makes up such a large percentage of the Town's entire budget (65% of the 2001-02 Town budget), development that does not have an impact on the school system is often seen as "paying its own way." For instance, residential developments that cater to older residents are often welcomed because these households do not add children to the local schools. On the other hand, a home with one or more children can be a significant drain on the Town, given the cost of educating one child is over \$8,500, not to mention the new school facilities that many such children would require.

Taking that notion to the next logical step, buying land suitable for residential development (leveraging federal or state funds whenever possible) and setting it aside for open space can also be revenue positive for the Town. While initially costing tax dollars and not generating tax revenue, the offset between the taxes generated and the cost of services required by the land if developed residentially will eventually pay for the land and become revenue positive for the Town. The Southern New England Forest Consortium published a report entitled Cost of Community Services in Southern New England. The report analyzed the fiscal impacts of residential, commercial and industrial development as well as open



space land for 11 towns in Connecticut<sup>3</sup>, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. The study found that in Connecticut, additional residential development costs the local municipality between \$1.06 (Pomfret) and \$1.33 (Farmington) for each additional residential tax dollar. On the other hand, open space lands generate tax dollars, requiring, on average, municipal services worth only 44 cents for each dollar of tax revenue. Another economic benefit from buying open space is that residential land near open space parcels typically rises in value, generating additional tax dollars to the municipality (Weicher and Zerbst, 1973; Hendon, 1971; McLeod, 1984).

While it is generally recognized that commercial and industrial development generates tax dollars, often overlooked is the fact that it also generates residential growth by attracting new residents to fill the jobs created. This has the effect of reducing some of the economic gains brought about by the development in the first place.

#### **4.7 Summary**

The dominant land use within the Town of Canton is residential. Residential properties pay the majority of the property taxes and represent 35% of the Town's area. There are still considerable amounts of vacant land within the Town, though development is frequently hindered by environmentally sensitive lands such as wetlands, steep slopes, and rock outcrops. At the public workshop, residents voiced their concerns regarding future residential, commercial, and industrial development within Canton. Residents do not want to stop growth, but they do want it controlled and channeled so that new developments better the community. There was general consensus that the most intensive development should take place south of the Route 44 corridor, where public water and sewer is readily available. The more rural parts of Town should remain rural and not burden the existing transportation infrastructure.

#### **4.8 Goals, Policies, and Recommendations**

##### **Goals**

- Maintain the historic, small-town character. Continue historic village, rural, and open space land-use patterns, avoiding suburban sprawl. Strengthen the distinctive character of each of the four centers in Town.
- Maintain community diversity by providing a variety of residential densities and housing types.

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<sup>3</sup> The Connecticut towns documented in the book include Litchfield, Farmington, Durham, and Pomfret.

- Attract commercial and light industrial development that reflects the Town's existing character and infrastructure capacity.
- Preserve the Town's quality of life, historic rural character and natural environment.
- Create a streamlined development process by reducing bureaucracy and optimizing the Zoning Regulations.
- Practice consistent, effective enforcement of the Zoning Regulations

### **Policies**

- Preserve open space, farmland and undeveloped areas of local importance.
- Encourage creation of new zone(s) or new zoning text to reflect the historic characteristics of Canton's four centers, particularly Collinsville and Canton Center.
- Consider new, low-density zones or environmental preservation techniques for areas north of Route 44 to continue its rural development pattern.
- Promote "Smart Growth" principles.
- Support Canton's entrepreneurial spirit through effective home-occupation regulations and the creation of incubator space.
- Require cluster subdivisions where soils will support smaller lot sizes.
- Support the Development Technician/Inland Wetlands Agent/Zoning Enforcement Officer in performing his or her duty.

### **Recommendations**

- Explore options to acquire/preserve agricultural properties and important open space areas. The Open Space chapter includes additional information regarding the preservation of open space and funding possibilities. (Planning Commission, Conservation Commission, Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance)
- Establish new districts in Collinsville, Canton Center and North Canton utilizing the Village District Act that reflect the historic character and pattern of development and allow mixed-uses and small-scale convenience retail uses. (Zoning Commission)

- Establish a Center Business District (CBD) extending from Lovely Street (Route 177) to River Road (Route 179) that reflects the historic character and pattern of development. (Zoning Commission)
- Consider revising the SB and B1 zones to include a limited number of small-scale, permitted uses. (Zoning Commission)
- The Garden Apartment District regulations should be updated, incorporated into the SB District regulations, and eliminated as a separate chapter in the Zoning Regulations. (Zoning Commission)
- The last remaining areas of the Heavy Industrial District should be voluntarily eliminated in favor of the Industrial Heritage District or proactively rezoned to a new Collinsville Business District **utilizing the Village District Act**. The Heavy Industry District could then be removed from the regulations. (Zoning Commission)
- Create performance standards for home occupations, including limitations on the generation of additional traffic, contextual requirements for maintaining the character of the neighborhood, etc. (Zoning Commission)
- Establish a Design Review Board to review all non-residential developments. (Board of Selectmen)
- Conduct design charrettes to identify the character of the Town that we want to create and/or preserve. (Planning Commission, Zoning Commission, Board of Selectmen, Historic District Commissions)
- Adopt an ordinance to allow tickets and fines for violations of the Zoning Regulations. (Board of Selectmen)
- Strengthen Zoning Regulations on outdoor lighting to reduce excessive light pollution and glare. Adopt an ordinance to ban floodlights on utility poles within the Town and State rights-of-way. (Zoning Commission, Board of Selectmen).
- Pursue funding for a Geographic Information System. (Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Town Engineer, Tax Assessor, Conservation Commission, Town Planner)

## 5.0 HISTORIC RESOURCES

### 5.1 Introduction

Canton's historical heritage provides an identity and source of pride for residents. It is also an economic engine that helps drive the recreation, retail and tourism aspects of our local economy. The Town has two historic districts and a rich legacy dating to its earliest colonial settlements. The Town's historic development and characteristics affect housing styles, land use patterns, transportation routes and today's quality-of-life.

In the town-wide survey and public workshops leading to the development of this Plan, citizens spoke out in favor of maintaining the Town's historic legacy. "Preserving Canton's Historic Character" was the second most important objective for the Town, according to survey respondents. Workshop participants expressed their support for development that respects the local vernacular style and retains a human-scale to new buildings. At the same time, some residents expressed concern that the current zoning code did not ensure the type of development that they would like to see take place within the historic centers.

### 5.2 Town History



**North Canton Schoolhouse**

and three school districts were established in North Canton, Canton Center, and Canton Village. In 1806, the parish of West Simsbury was incorporated as the Town of Canton, with Canton Center serving as the seat of government.

Attracted by fertile soils, the first settlers arrived in Canton in the area that is now Canton Center. In 1750, the General Assembly created the First Ecclesiastical Society of West Simsbury. Prior to Canton's incorporation, the Society handled many of the present Town functions, including taxing local residents. After surveying the parish, the Society built a meetinghouse at its center, becoming the basis for the name Canton Center. The School Society of West Simsbury was formed in 1759

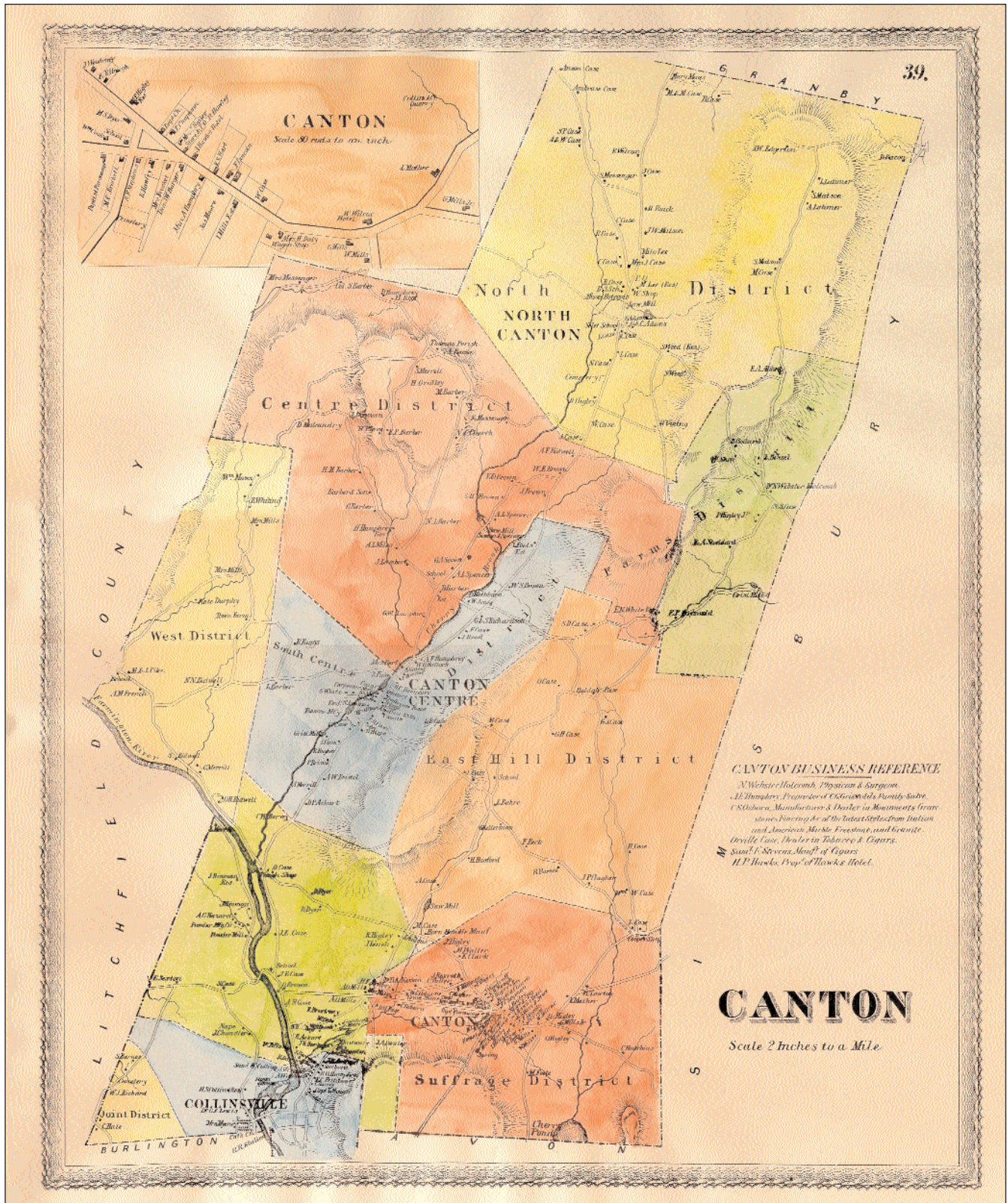
In 1826, Sam Collins, his brother and a cousin bought a grist mill on the Farmington River in South Canton with the intent of using waterpower to help manufacture axes. Within six years, the Collins Company had built new forging shops and erected 45 two-family houses for workers. The village grew and prospered, tied to the fortunes of the Collins Company. In 1866, South Canton was renamed Collinsville and recognized as a separate village. In 1920, the seat of Town government was moved to Collinsville.

At its incorporation in 1806, Canton had 1,300 residents. By the turn of the century, the Town's population had approximately doubled, largely attributable to the growth of the Collins Company. Population growth slowed during the period of the Great Depression, but rebounded in the subsequent decades. The Town's population grew over 30% each decade between 1940-1970. The Collins Company continued to manufacture goods in Collinsville until it closed the factory doors in 1966. However, by that time, suburbanization was beginning to impact Canton and despite the loss of its largest industry, Canton continued to see new residential growth. The loss was not painless, as the Collins Company accounted for approximately one-third of the Town's annual revenue.

After closing its doors, the Collins Company holdings in Collinsville were purchased by a group of local investors calling themselves the Collinsville Company, led by Tom Perry. The Collinsville Company operated the factory complex for over 35 years as a business incubator, offering affordable rents in somewhat primitive spaces by today's standards. Many Canton businesses started in the complex, moving to larger, modern quarters as they outgrew their spaces.

Today, the Collins Company buildings are poised for redevelopment into a mix of entertainment, light industry, office, restaurant, residential, and retail uses. The idea for the redevelopment project came from the Connecticut Department of Transportation funded Collinsville Scenic Corridor Management Plan that suggested a new zoning designation for the factory complex, offering flexibility in use in return for protecting the architectural integrity of the property. The Collinsville Scenic Corridor Management Plan contains many other elements that will help to protect the character of Collinsville. It is hereby incorporated into this Plan by reference.





**CANTON PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**  
**Canton, CT**

**Figure 5.1**  
**Historic Map of Canton**







Canton Green

Over 250 years of history has endowed Canton with a rich legacy. Historic homes and landscapes can be found throughout the Town but there are two significant concentrations of historic structures in Canton Center and Collinsville. Homeowners within these two areas petitioned the Town, in accordance with the General Statutes of Connecticut, to form separate historic districts.

### 5.3 Canton Center Historic District

In 1975, Canton established the Canton Center Historic District (figure 5.2) for the purpose of protecting and preserving buildings and places of historic interest in Canton Center, recognizing them as land-marks in the history of the Town. The district contains approximately 500 acres and 70 individual properties bordering Cherry Brook Road (Route 179), Barbourtown Road, East Mountain Road, Humphrey Road, Meadow Road, West Mountain Road and West Road. The district extends for 1,000 feet along both sides of the primary roads.



Canton Center

In 1985, the Canton Center Historic District Commission prepared a report entitled *The Canton Center Historic District: Its Evolution and Preservation*, documenting every building in the district, with maps, photographs and a brief history of each. This report guides the Canton Center Historic District Commission as it reviews applications for Certificates of Appropriateness that propose to alter the exterior features of structures and other elements within the district.



**CANTON PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**  
**Canton, Connecticut**

*Figure 5.2*  
*Canton Center*  
*Historic District*



Scale - 1" = 1,000'

*BFJ* Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.



For over 100 years, Canton Center was the political, economic, and religious center for the Town. It contained a variety of land uses: churches, grist mills, residences, creameries, dairy farms, post office, general store. Today, some of those uses no longer exist, but the history of Canton Center is as a village center that encouraged commercial enterprises and mixed land uses that brought people to the village. Different, but compatible, land uses existed on adjoining lots. The Canton Center Historic District Commission would like to see a continuation of that type of organic, mixed-use, historic pattern of development for Canton Center.

#### 5.4 Collinsville Historic District



**Collinsville**

Collinsville is one of the finest, best preserved examples of a New England mill village. It has retained many landmark buildings such as the Collinsville Savings Society, the Valley House and Town Hall as well as the bulk of the former Collins Company complex. But Collinsville is special not only because of individual structures, but because of its atmosphere as a unified village of distinctive houses, stores, and public places. Collinsville represents a true traditional village. It contains a variety of residential options that allows residents of different age groups and income levels to live near one another and to share similar neighborhood concerns. The proximity of different land uses allows residents to walk or bicycle to stores, which promotes greater interaction and adds to the sense of place. It is this relationship between people and buildings, private and public spaces that many developers are trying to recreate when they label their developments neo-traditional.

The Collins Company (originally called the Collins Manufacturing Company) was directly responsible for the physical form of Collinsville. The company built houses for its workers and a bridge across the Farmington River; dedicated rights-of-way for railroad tracks; brought telegraph wires to the Town; owned and operated stores; and even dedicated land for churches. The rapid development that took place within a brief span of time, coupled with the company's prosperity for the next 130 years, helped Collinsville retain its distinctive style and vernacular architecture.

Collinsville has been lucky in retaining its historic character, while continuing to flourish and be part of a growing, dynamic community. However, in 1985, Collinsville residents decided not to continue to trust that luck would preserve their village. A group of Collinsville residents met and shared their common concerns regarding the village's future development. A study committee was appointed in

1986, issuing "A Report of the Collinsville Historic District Study Committee" the same year. The study recommended creating a Collinsville Historic District Commission that would be charged with preserving and protecting "the distinctive characteristics of the buildings and places of architectural and historical significance in the village of Collinsville."<sup>4</sup> In 1988, the Town created the Collinsville Local Historic District (Figure 5.3) and Collinsville Historic District Commission, in accordance with Chapter 97a of the Connecticut General Statutes.



**Former Collins Company Buildings**

In 1976, prior to the Town designation, Collinsville residents successfully petitioned the Department of the Interior for the village to be named to the National Register of Historic Places. The district received National recognition, though the designation is honorary and does not afford any regulation. At the time of nomination to the National Register, the National Park Service named Canton a "Certified Local Government." This distinction allows the Historic Commission to receive federal and state grant money for preservation projects. The Historical Commission has successfully petitioned the Connecticut Office of Historic Preservation to receive grant money. The old firehouse building in Collinsville is one example of a building that has received grant money for rehabilitation.

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<sup>4</sup> *Report of the Collinsville Historic District Study Committee*, Canton, Conn., 1985, p. 3.

In addition to its primary responsibility of issuing Certificates of Appropriateness, the Commission is considering possible expansion of the Historic District under State guidelines, and some adjoining streets may qualify to be placed on the National Register.

Collinsville, like Canton Center, was constructed long before the Town instituted zoning. Today, many of the lots are too small for the underlying zoning and often the buildings exceed the maximum coverage requirements or do not meet the minimum required setbacks. New zoning districts that recognize Collinsville's unique attributes and encourage its historic pattern of development are needed. Several such districts are explained in Chapter Four.

The Commission strongly supports the redevelopment of the Collinsville Company buildings and the continued success of other stores within the village. Economic development is important to ensuring a unified village where residents can live, shop, work and play, all within easy walking distance.

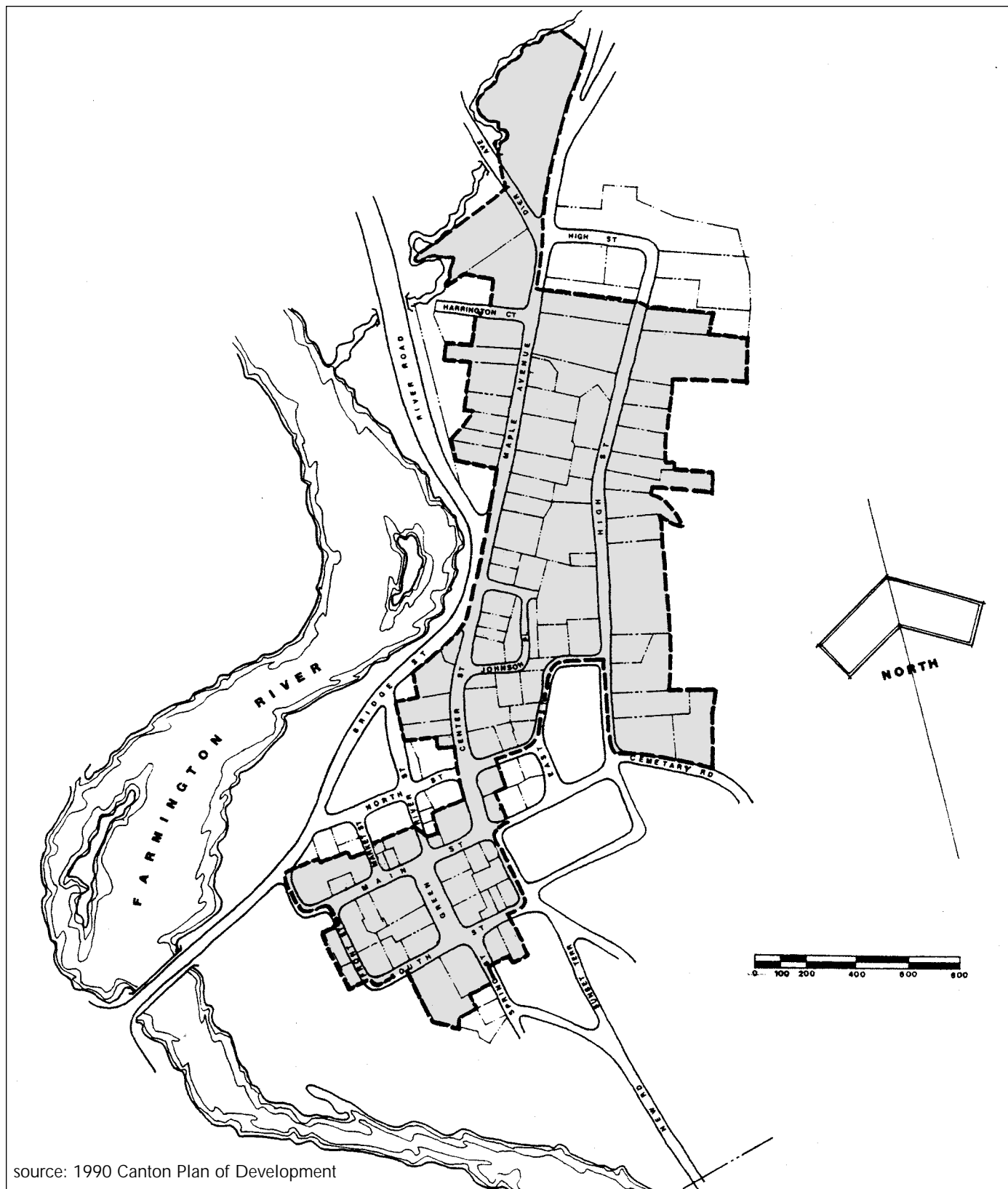
## 5.5 Canton Historical Society



**Canton Historical Society**

The Canton Historical Society, located in the Canton Historical Museum, maintains a comprehensive collection of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century artifacts and documents that offer a glimpse into the lives of early Canton residents, including: a reconstructed 19<sup>th</sup>-century general store, a post office, a blacksmith shop and a barbershop. The museum also contains an

extensive collection of axes, machetes, tools, weapons and other historical items that help to document and preserve the history of the Collins Company.



**CANTON PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**  
**Canton, CT**

*Figure 5.3*  
*Collinsville Local Historic*  
*District*



## 5.6 Other Historic Resources

The Canton Center and Collinsville Historic Districts do not lay claim to all of Canton's historic resources. Due to the voluntary nature of their formation, the historic districts do not include all of the historic properties in their respective villages. There are many historic and architecturally significant buildings located throughout Canton, with additional concentrations along Albany Turnpike, due to its history as an old toll road, and in North Canton, owing to Canton's agricultural and religious roots. These buildings and properties are no less deserving of preservation but lack the willingness of their owners to be included in a district or lack the critical mass or historic integrity of surrounding properties to qualify as a district.

New zoning districts (described in Charter Four), utilizing the State's Village District Act as their legal basis, can be used to protect the character of undesignated properties in and around the existing historic districts as well as clusters of historic buildings along Route 44 and Route 179 in North Canton.

A town-wide Historic Resources Committee should be created, whose mission would be to inventory historic properties throughout Town, and with the permission of the owner, maintain a photographic and written record of significant historical features (mantles, doors, etc.) in each historic building, as well as associated outbuildings (barns, sheds, etc.) stone walls, etc. This historic inventory could be used to implement a town-wide demolition delay ordinance that would encourage preservation or relocation of historic structures when demolition is imminent. A demolition delay ordinance is not a panacea for preventing the loss of historic resources. It is only as effective as the owner's willingness to cooperate and the public and private sector's willingness to pay for the purchase, preservation and/or relocation of threatened buildings. If adopted, a town-wide demolition delay ordinance should provide for ample notice to the public when a Demolition Permit is sought.

Although less tangible than historic structures, streetscapes are also a major factor contributing to the historic character of Canton. Older tree-lined streets with stone walls, historic fences, meadows and ponds are also being threatened by development. Connecticut Light and Power Company and other utilities have been aggressively cutting trees and limbs that threaten the reliability of their lines. The Town should work cooperatively with these utilities and the affected property owners to minimize the removal of older trees and to replace street trees with shorter varieties or locate replacements in locations that will not threaten utilities in the future. Stone walls and street trees are being threatened by residential development that is causing tree cutting and breaks in the walls for roads and driveways. To afford visibility of oncoming traffic, these breaches can be significantly larger than the rights-of-way passing through them and can often lead

to additional tree cutting as well. Meadows and pastures behind these walls are being consumed as frontage for residential building lots.

The Connecticut Department of Transportation's (ConnDOT) mission to provide a safe, efficient, inter-town road network is often at odds with the preservation of historic resources. Widening lanes and shoulders, or adding lanes is often done at the expense of buildings, fences, walls and trees historically located close to the old carriage roads that preceded the state highways. Stone walls and significant trees within ConnDOT's rights-of-way are viewed as vehicular hazards and liabilities to be removed, despite their long, seemingly safe existence.

ConnDOT is currently in the midst of a significant paradigm shift to a more conscientious design philosophy called Context Sensitive Design (CSD). CSD involves property owners and Town agencies early in the design process, in an effort to design facilities that are sensitive to the character of the area and the needs of the affected parties. The Town should be vigilant in making sure that ConnDOT adheres to these principles while reviewing permits or making improvements in Canton that affect historic or other scenic resources.

The Planning Commission has several tools at its disposal to help preserve these features. The Town has a Local Scenic Road Ordinance that enables residents of qualifying roads to petition the Planning Commission for local scenic road designation. Once designated the Town is prohibited from making improvements to the road that would alter its scenic character. Through the subdivision process, the Planning Commission can locate roads and driveways to minimize wall breaches and tree cutting. The Town should support developers' efforts to retain scenic features when seeking permits from ConnDOT. Significant meadows and pastures can be preserved as open space, allowing the continued farming or pasturing of animals where appropriate.

## **5.7 Summary**

Canton was recognized as a distinct parish over 250 years ago and will celebrate its bicentennial as an incorporated town in 2006. This rich legacy has endowed the Town with distinctive architectural homes and buildings, varied landscapes, and diverse settlements such as Collinsville, Canton, Canton Center, and North Canton. These older centers provide residents with a unique sense of place. Historic features outside of the two historic districts will require documentation and added protection if they are to be preserved. The Town and its agencies must continue to work cooperatively with residents, developers, public utilities and ConnDOT to ensure that these valuable historic resources are not needlessly lost forever.

## **5.8 Goals, Policies, and Recommendations**

### **Goals**

- Protect the historic character of the Town.
- Strengthen the different identities of the Town's four centers.
- Land-use regulations should reflect the mix of uses found within village centers and promote conformance of older buildings with local laws.

### **Policies**

- Support adaptive reuse of older structures, maintaining their historical integrity as individual buildings and as groups of historic buildings, where applicable.
- Support efforts to preserve historic buildings and their landscapes.
- Encourage local scenic road designations where appropriate.
- Cooperate with residents, developers, public utilities and ConnDOT to preserve historic and scenic streetscapes.

### **Recommendations**

- Create a town-wide Historic Resources Committee whose mission would be to document historic properties throughout Town. (Board of Selectmen)
- Adopt a town-wide demolition delay ordinance to include documented historic properties outside of the Collinsville Historic District and improve public notice for all demolition permits. (Board of Selectmen)
- Pursue state/federal funding opportunities for rehabilitation of older structures, including but not limited to seeking amendments to the Connecticut General Statutes to expand the use of historic tax credits throughout the State. (Land Use Office, Board of Selectmen)
- Provide local assistance and/or incentives to homeowners of older homes to maintain the structure's historic integrity. (Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance)
- Expand the boundaries of local historic districts with the support of property owners. (Historic District Commissions)

- Enact legislation to preserve historic buildings and historic property elements, such as outbuildings, stone walls, and mature trees. (Board of Selectmen, Planning Commission, Zoning Commission)
- Identify important views and landscapes that further Canton's historic image. (Conservation Commission, Historic District Commissions)
- Create new zoning districts that reflect the historic, mixed-use characteristics of the village centers and the compact residential development surrounding them, bringing many properties into conformance and encouraging reinvestment. (Zoning Commission, Historic District Commissions)



## 6.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### 6.1 Introduction

Canton once played a major role in the global economy as the home of the Collins Company: a leading producer of edge tools that could once claim that its axes and machetes cleared the jungles of the world. Today, with the loss of the Collins Company and with most of Hartford's suburban office and high-end residential settlement directed to neighboring communities south and east of Canton, the Town has been insulated from major economic development, becoming a bedroom community to the Greater Hartford Region. As Avon, Farmington, Simsbury and other adjacent communities reach a saturation point along their commercial corridors, developers have begun looking to Canton to accommodate big-box retailers and other national or regional chain store operations.



Residents of Canton are receptive to economic development but some have expressed strong preferences for retaining the prevailing small-town character and proprietary nature of business ownership. The town-wide survey of residents clearly reveals the community's desire for more high paying companies, stable year-round employment, and low traffic generating development. Residents equally reject their high property tax

burden and the rate or pattern of new development. Over half of survey respondents want Canton to actively pursue commercial and industrial development, but ranked preserving Canton's historic character the second highest priority.

With such seemingly conflicting goals, it is going to require compromise on everyone's part if Canton is going to pay for the public facilities and services that we have all come to expect without significantly raising taxes. With limited land available for commercial and industrial development to offset the residential tax burden, the Town must embrace a certain amount of commercial development in order to maximize the potential of this limited resource. This is not to suggest that the Town sacrifice its small-town character and sense of place by accepting any and all development proposals. There are reasonable standards in place, and a few more suggested elsewhere in this Plan, that should attract and guide quality development without compromising the Town and adjacent neighborhoods in the process.

The stretch of Route 44 between Lovely Street and the Simsbury line contains the last significant areas of commercial land capable of supporting large-scale retail developments in Town. While the Shoppes at Farmington Valley will develop the bulk of this available, undeveloped land with over 380,000 square feet of mixed commercial space, there is significant vacant acreage available and still more opportunities for redevelopment. Regulations such as the new Albany Turnpike Gateway District, the Albany Turnpike Overlay District and the new impervious coverage requirements should help balance the need for additional commercial growth with the desire to protect Canton's character. The 55-acre Canton Commerce Center, with potential for 350,000 square feet of office or light manufacturing space, awaits development with less than 5 percent of its build-out developed. The Collins Company factory is on the brink of redevelopment into a mixed-use complex of homes, offices, retail stores, restaurants, and light manufacturing, thus returning the complex to a more prominent position on the tax rolls.

The financial condition of Canton strongly supports the need for additional economic development. Town budgets are stretched, property values have been reassessed, and despite taxes being comparable to neighboring towns, the mil rate is perceived as high. (The mil rate alone cannot be used for direct comparison of taxes as the year of revaluation and other factors affect the assessed value of property that is multiplied by the mil rate to determine taxes.) In the last two years, only \$1 million of commercial assessed value was added to Town tax rolls compared to \$12 million of residential assessed value. With only 15 percent of taxable property in non-residential development, the bulk of resources for school and general government operations must come from residential property. It is generally accepted that all but high-end single-family housing does not pay its own way.

## **6.2 Strengths and Weaknesses**

In addition to the preferences of Town residents and the goals of public officials for job growth and tax ratable development, an effective economic development strategy must reflect a realistic assessment of Canton's strengths and weaknesses. The following attributes are of primary consideration in business location decision-making:

- **Transportation:** Canton is geographically limited from a goods distribution aspect; lacking direct interstate access, rail service, and port facilities. From a commuter perspective, Canton is not conducive to heavy flows of commuter traffic to or from points south or east of the Farmington Valley. Despite these limitations, Canton is not without its transportation strengths. Interstate 84 and Route 8 are only 15 minutes away via state roads, which is insignificant when considering the length of many interstate trips. As part of the Greater Hartford Region, Canton enjoys a location midway between

New York City and Boston, with both cities approximately two hours away by motor vehicle. Bradley International Airport is only 30 minutes away by uncongested, scenic highways, making the Town more competitive than many towns in the region. JFK, LaGuardia, Newark and Logan International Airports are all less than three hours away. Canton is served by Connecticut Transit express bus service to Hartford, although this service is not conducive to reverse commuting.

- **Communications:** Adequate communications are available with: dial-up, ISDN, T-1, T-3, and cable modem data service; cable, digital cable and satellite television service; and all forms of wireless communication service. Fiber-optic telecommunication service is available in the Canton Commerce Center. Wireless communication coverage has been uneven but with two new towers coming online and improvements to existing towers, coverage should improve significantly town-wide. Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) service is currently unavailable in Canton. DSL is desirable to small businesses because it offers a lower cost alternative to dedicated T-1 and T-3 lines. Limitations in the length of DSL lines can be overcome by installing neighborhood nodes to extend the DSL network. The Town is working with the Metro Hartford Economic Growth Council to justify the need for DSL service to SBC/SNET. Despite many businesses reportedly using the service, Comcast's digital cable modem service is limited to residential use only, due to bandwidth limitations that can cause degradation of service.
- **Other Utility Services:** Connecticut Light & Power offers electricity rates that are below average within the Northeast Region, but the region as a whole is uncompetitive with all but California and Hawaii in terms of electricity costs. Water and gas service is available within the Albany Turnpike commercial district and points south but extensions of both services are needed to serve the entire length of Route 44 between Simsbury and Route 179. Wastewater treatment capacity is adequate for the Canton Commerce Center, as well as all currently approved residential and commercial projects along Route 44 and in Collinsville.
- **Land Availability:** With the exception of two major sites in the eastern portion of the Route 44 corridor and the Canton Commerce Center, there is limited vacant land available for a mid-sized office, industrial or other commercial enterprises. The Canton Commerce Center can accommodate up to 12 buildings of approximately 20,000 to 25,000 square feet, though lots can be combined to accommodate mid-sized buildings. Multi-story office buildings could also increase the potential floor area as well.

Much of the commercially zoned land along the Albany Turnpike corridor, with the exception of the Canton Golf Course property, is composed of smaller lots in various states including: vacant, underutilized, residentially developed, and commercially developed. Assembling these smaller parcels to achieve larger scale development can be problematic for developers.



Topography and hydrology are factors that limit development in Canton because of the prevalence of ledge outcroppings and inland wetlands.

- **Labor Resources:** Canton is characterized by well-educated, relatively high-income families with a diverse, entrepreneurial, resident labor force. Recent move-ins typically work elsewhere, in adjoining suburban towns, with job opportunities in Hartford reached only by a longer auto commute. Commuter bus routes do not allow for efficient reverse commuting. Several four-year colleges and three post-graduate schools are located in neighboring towns, including the UConn. medical school. Unemployment rates are low among the resident labor force and wage rates tend to be high. The per capita income, household income, and education levels are higher than the State average and the Hartford region.
- **Business Climate:** The Town offers a friendly business environment with elected and appointed officials supportive of economic growth that reflects the character of the Town. There is an active Economic Development Agency and a Director of Planning and Community Development serving as the Town's economic development professional. The industrial and commercial areas have flexible zoning with the Zoning Commission and its staff working to balance economic development with the preservation of the Town's character. Property taxes are on par with neighboring communities. Limited by State guidelines, the Town cannot match many of the incentives that other areas of the country offer but the Metro Hartford Economic Growth Council, Connecticut Economic Resource Center and similar agencies offer a wealth of loan programs, training resources and other valuable services to businesses relocating to Connecticut.

- ***Hospitality:*** Canton is sorely lacking in hotel and motel space as well as bed and breakfast facilities. Meeting space is also in short supply. These facilities must be available and reasonably convenient if Canton is going to attract office and high-tech manufacturing firms. Hotel, motel and B&B rooms are also a necessary component of a vibrant tourist economy. Canton offers a wide variety of dining options and an influx of new restaurants is expected as the Shoppes at Farmington Valley are developed.
- ***Quality of Life:*** Canton's strongest selling point is its quality of life. In an age of telecommuting and high-tech companies that are as footloose as global telecommunications will allow, quality of life has risen to the top of many companies' list of site selection factors.

Canton offers housing opportunities for every lifestyle, with neighborhoods ranging from the near-urban village of Collinsville to the pastoral setting of North Canton. Housing styles range from historic single-family homes to contemporary apartments and condominiums. Canton contains two historic districts with an impressive number of historic homes and buildings throughout the Town. The Collinsville area represents one of the finest, best preserved 19<sup>th</sup> Century New England mill villages. The historic character of the Town lends a unique sense of history and place to Canton, becoming an economic engine unto itself.

Canton offers a wealth of outdoor recreational opportunities including: walking, biking and skating on the Farmington River Trail and at the Nepaug Reservoir; hiking and cross-country skiing on the extensive land and trails of the Canton Land Conservation Trust; fishing, canoeing, kayaking and tubing on the Farmington River; swimming, field-sports, tennis, basketball, skating, a playscape and outdoor concerts at the Mills Pond Recreation Park; and downhill skiing at Ski Sundown. Indoor activities include the Roaring Brook Nature Center, the Canton Historical Museum, a community theater company and even antiques auctions.

Canton has an excellent school system and is in close proximity to three four-year colleges, three post-graduate schools, and two technical-community colleges. Renowned private schools abound in neighboring Farmington Valley Towns.

What Canton does not provide is more than made up for by its central location in Connecticut, affording easy access to world-class sports, culture and leisure activities from New York to Boston and Long Island Sound to Vermont.

### 6.3 Potential Markets

The *Strategic Economic Framework for Connecticut*, a report of the Connecticut Regional Institute for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century prepared by Michael Gallis & Associates, identifies Hartford and its region as a critical node in the “New Atlantic Triangle,” a massive concentration of economic, institutional and cultural resources unequalled in the world. Hartford’s region of influence, the linear I-91/Connecticut River Valley corridor, is essentially bi-polar, with extended gateways to New Haven and Amherst. Canton is positioned on the western edge.

The Hartford economic region has a diverse mixture of government, finance, high-tech “New Economy,” and traditional manufacturing and goods distribution jobs. Its concentration of major educational and medical institutions, its logistical infrastructure, and the quality of its environmental setting contribute to the region’s structural soundness, but it faces significant challenges from the decline of manufacturing and the restructuring of financial services. For the region’s economic development, the *Strategic Framework* recommends support of the commercialization of technology by institutions and private research entities; further development as a significant transportation and logistics corridor to support manufacturing, research and information-based industries; and the revitalization of its cities as residential, business and cultural hubs.

The Connecticut Department of Labor, which monitors the state and regional economies, has identified the top 20 industries with the highest employment growth momentum in Connecticut. Four of the top 20 industries were in the finance and insurance sector, including the lead industry: *pension, health and welfare funds*. Explosive growth also occurred in the computer-related services industries, which had six of the top 20, including *information retrieval services* and *computer programming services*. Combining employment and wage growth momentum, both the financial and computer-related service sectors performed well over the past five years.

In the past, Canton has demonstrated its ability to attract and nurture information-based services and high-tech business. Largely the initiative of local entrepreneurs, firms such as the former *Funnybone Interactive* and *Technical Industries Inc. (Tech II)* confirm that the business climate exists to start-up and grow high-tech, small office and light manufacturing activities. However, concern exists on the issue of business retention as local businesses have been forced to look elsewhere for additional space of the size and quality that that meets their needs.

## 6.4 Economic Development Strategy Options

Based upon Canton's goals and objectives for economic development, its relative strengths and weaknesses, and the direction of regional and local market trends; seven options have been identified for consideration as economic development targets:

### Commercial Development on Route 44

Currently, the last remaining large undeveloped commercially zoned parcels are along Route 44 between Lovely Street and east to the Simsbury town line. The *Shoppes at Farmington Valley*, now being built on the former Canton Public Golf Course, will provide 380,000 square feet of retail, office and restaurant space in a neo-traditional main street setting, while retaining a 9-hole golf learning center. Across Route 44 from the *Shoppes at Farmington Valley* lie several undeveloped commercial properties that, under existing zoning regulations, could result in an additional 100,000 square feet or more of commercial space. Combined, the development of both areas would generate approximately \$1 million of additional tax revenue, promoting more diversity in Canton's tax base. Other land along this stretch of Albany Turnpike is underutilized with a variety of automotive uses that consist of expanses of pavement, relatively inexpensive buildings, and with no inventory tax, minimal taxable property. These properties combined together or with adjacent vacant land could accommodate significantly more commercial investment.

The segment of Albany Turnpike from Lovely Street west to River Road has a decidedly different character than the area to the east. Filled with historic buildings and constrained by ledge, inland wetlands and adjacent neighborhoods, this area requires more careful development of a character and scale appropriate to its surroundings. There are opportunities for combining small, underutilized properties to create larger more developable parcels but not on the scale afforded by the Canton Golf Course and other properties to the east. To encourage economic growth in this area, a limited number of small-scale commercial uses should be permitted by right, rather than requiring a Special Exception Permit.

The Connecticut Main Street Program is a bootstrap program that helps independent businesses help themselves by working cooperatively toward common goals such as effective management, promotion and enhancement of shopping opportunities in older, established shopping environments. The Main Street Program would involve a Main Street Coordinator to act in a capacity similar to a mall manager: promoting Canton businesses as a whole, facilitating cross-promotion of businesses, assisting new and prospective tenants, unifying hours of operation, organizing special events, decorating for the holidays, etc. For the program to be successful, Canton businesses will have to participate both

financially and cooperatively in order to be competitive with shopping opportunities in nearby malls and major shopping centers.

### **Adaptive Reuse of the Collins Axe Factory**



Recognizing the historic and architectural integrity of the Collins Company axe factory, At Collinsville LLC proposes to restore and adaptively reuse the existing structures and property, augmented by new construction in a contextual manner. The plan mixes residential, office, street-level retail, artisan, recreational, hospitality and

light manufacturing uses in a village-like, pedestrian-friendly setting. It would preserve the property's riverfront, canals, dams and fore bay (mill pond), while integrating the site with the existing village. The zone change from Heavy Industry District to Industrial Heritage District, together with its required master plan, has been approved, leaving site plan approvals as the final step before renovations can begin. The Plan of Conservation and Development supports the adaptive reuse of this location.

### **Canton Commerce Center**

As many economic professionals know, there are thousands of economic development agencies nationwide, all competing for the handful of major companies looking to relocate in any given year. Canton cannot hope to compete against the superior locations and lucrative incentive packages being offered to these firms. It is also a recognized fact that the majority of new jobs created nationwide are in small companies. According to the 2000 Census, Canton experienced a 46% increase in the number of residents who live and work in Town since 1990, despite attracting no new major employers to the Town. Canton must think smaller and look closer to home to find economic development opportunities. In fact, most of Canton's businesses started right here in Town: some outgrowing their original locations and moving to larger quarters in Town, while others have outgrown the Town and left altogether.

Canton's primary economic development strategy must be to take care of and keep the businesses that we have and encourage new businesses to start up and grow in Canton. To this end, the Canton Commerce Center (The Center), with 11 three- to six-acre parcels remaining available for development, should be marketed as an



“Information Services Incubator” for the purpose of attracting and nurturing small computer-related service industries with growth momentum at the state level. The Center should include an incubator facility with centralized support services provided for start-up operations and undercapitalized entrepreneurs. Typically these include common reception and meeting rooms, accounting services, photocopying and distributing functions, and general business assistance. In keeping with the computer-related services concept, other parcels of the park should be marketed to computer-driven light manufacturing, like plastic injection molding or wood milling.

With its state-of-the-art infrastructure, attractive setting and high construction standards, the Center is an ideal location for smaller companies in the insurance and financial services industries. Small headquarters, regional offices or back office operations in these sectors can all be easily accommodated. Medical research and development is also highly suited to the Center with a nearby research hospital in the UConn Medical Center. Call centers for research, technical support and telemarketing are a good match for the Center as they are a fast growing industry that is totally location independent, needing only reliable telecommunications to function.

Having been involved in several movies, commercials and a TV show filmed in Canton, the CT Film Office has expressed an interest in the Center as a hub for production-oriented activities in the state.

As new buildings are proposed for the Center, businesses should be encouraged to build additional space that can be rented to tenants in the short term, creating needed space for other growing companies and leaving room to grow in the future if necessary.

The Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC), together with its sponsors, has developed a new program called Quick Tracts that will give preferential treatment to properties statewide with available infrastructure and permits in place to allow groundbreaking within 90 days of completed site selection and design. The Canton Commerce Center meets all of the criteria necessary to participate in this free program that will highlight the Center and provide property data to businesses searching for sites in Connecticut. All the Town and developer must do is agree to facilitate the rapid permitting and development of the Center.

### **Home-Based Businesses**

Canton has long been known for its entrepreneurial spirit and nowhere is that more evident than in the hundreds of home occupations registered in Town. According to the 2000 Census, the number of residents working at home more than doubled from 110 in 1990 to 242 in 2000. Canton has very liberal home occupation regulations, allowing commercial vehicles, signs and even a small number of non-

resident employees. For ease of administration and enforcement, these regulations need to include clear performance standards while maintaining the flexibility that has made them so successful. The Town should promote itself as a location for home-based businesses to attract the kind of entrepreneurs that will eventually outgrow their home offices and workshops, moving to new or existing facilities in Canton.

### **Year-round Tourism and Recreational Attractions**

The Farmington River has proven to be a magnet for outdoor recreation in spring and summer, as Town residents and visitors use the river for fly-fishing, canoeing, kayaking, and tubing. Adjacent to the river, a segment of the Farmington River Trail opened in June 2000 and serves as a destination point for those interested in bicycling, skating, jogging and hiking. The segment,



which is part of a network that will one day connect Hamden, Conn. to Northampton, Mass., has interpretive signage describing the history of the area, including the impact of the Collins Company on the river and community. The trail will eventually be extended from Route 179 in Collinsville to Route 44 at Route 177. Businesses along Route 44 that abut the trail should be encouraged to provide parking and access points for trail users as a means of building their customer base, either by serving their recreational needs directly or through pass-by or return visits from the good will that they generate. While the river and the trail draw visitors to Canton, their use is limited by the weather and they typically do not entail over-night stays.

As an economic development initiative, recreation and tourism needs to be extended to multiple, year-round opportunities linked to existing assets of the Town. Heritage tourism, such as tours of historic homes and the Canton Historical Museum will tie in with the growing antiques trade. Agro-tourism or attractions based on farm products or processes are another year-round industry that could include: maple sugaring and the sale of maple products; wineries and wine tasting; farm tours, including hay or sleigh rides, Christmas tree cutting, pick-your-own fruits and vegetables, animal feeding and milking, corn mazes, and the sale of farm-based products such as ice cream and baked goods. Horseback riding lessons and horses for hire could also be easily accommodated. Canton Land Conservation Trust (CLCT) land or similar large tracts of land could be used for a cross-country ski center, perhaps tying into the facilities of Ski Sundown, which already rents land from the CLCT for its ski slopes.

To maximize the capture of tourism income, the Town requires several historic era bed and breakfasts or inns. Overnight visitors will patronize restaurants and other businesses in addition to sampling a broader variety of recreational activities that cannot fit into a single day. Such facilities would also serve residents well when visiting family and friends cannot be accommodated in their homes.

### **Home Restoration Center**

As a nearly intact, 19th Century mill village with a National Register Historic District designation, Collinsville is a perfect environment for a home restoration center. The existence of nearby Victorian, Greek revival and other period homes, together with the growth of antiques, interior design, and historic restoration services for the home, provide not only a market for such activities based upon the local economy, but also the credentials for drawing shoppers from outside the Town. The home restoration center might be situated in the Collins Company axe factory complex where it would display locally produced goods and services, as well as direct shoppers to a network of products or services located throughout the Town. An example of an existing service referral would be the antique lamp restoration operations of Griffin Bros. & Co., while a new restoration business might be based upon computer-driven wood milling for frames, balustrades and moldings. In addition to locally produced goods and services, the center could include dealers in architectural antiques as well as a dealer in replica fittings such as the Restoration Hardware Company. The Center would cater to a specialized market of period home restoration and thus provide a unique attraction that could draw from a large market area.

### **High Value-Added Agriculture**



Residents of the Town expressed strong preferences for preserving the natural environment and retaining open space. A means toward reaping economic development benefits from the land, while preserving its undeveloped nature, would entail promoting *high value-added* agriculture. This might include farms with heirloom cattle for consumption, small livestock farms of goats or sheep

for production (goat cheese or fleece), and breeding farms of alpaca, llamas, and other herds. Hillside with low soil fertility, good drainage, and warm daytime and cool evening climates may be conducive to vineyards and farm-based wineries. A farm cooperative might be promoted to market local produce on a regional basis, including Hartford's farmers' market.

## **6.5 Summary**

Canton offers the business community a diverse, well-educated, highly entrepreneurial labor pool. Employees enjoy a high standard of living and a high quality of life within Canton and the Farmington Valley. Residents are close to arts and entertainment activities in major urban centers, shopping areas, and outdoor recreational pursuits. However, Canton lacks some important infrastructure criteria, such as direct highway and rail access. As a result, firms that locate within Canton will choose the area for the quality of life that it offers its employees. The Town should review those economic development strategies that it has control over such as incentive programs (tax strategies), zoning, etc. to ensure that policies and regulations support the activities most suited for Canton.

## **6.6 Goals, Policies, and Recommendations**

### **Goals**

- Increase the non-residential tax base as a proportion of the net taxable Grand List of the Town to relieve the residential tax burden.
- Maintain diversity in the local economy so that the Town does not become dependent on one industry.
- Encourage business location and retention by offering businesses a fast and efficient permitting process that does not adversely affect other goals of this Plan, such as protection of natural resources.

### **Policies**

- Encourage the EDA to have a more visible and more active role in Canton through business visitations, forums and participation in the land-use process.
- Promote agricultural and home-based businesses.
- Allow some mixed-use of residential/office/retail in Canton Center and Collinsville.
- Make retention a key part of the Town's economic strategy and encourage local expansion of existing businesses.
- Build upon the Town's natural assets and recent accomplishments such as the Farmington River Trail. Develop an image/identity marketing plan and pursue grants for marketing and promotion.

- Promote incubator space, with emphasis on the Canton Commerce Center and former Collins Company Axe Factory.
- Promote niche industries (e.g., antiques, furniture, and restoration).

### **Recommendations**

- Encourage location of desirable businesses by making them as-of-right within commercial zones, rather than requiring special permits for all uses. (Zoning Commission)
- Route 44 has a number of underutilized properties that could be more intensively developed. Design, bulk standards, and access management should be considered for these properties. (Zoning Commission)
- Continue to support Route 44 as the Town's commercial spine and limit intensive commercial and industrial growth to the southern part of Canton served by water and sewer districts. Some small-scale, convenience retail could be considered for Canton Center. (Zoning Commission)
- Canton businesses, perhaps in concert with the Canton Chamber of Commerce, should consider participation in the Main Street Program. (Canton Chamber of Commerce)
- Attract a high quality, full-service hotel/inn and encourage bed & breakfasts to serve the business community and promote tourism. (Economic Development Agency, Canton Chamber of Commerce)

## **7.0 TRANSPORTATION**

### **7.1 Introduction**

A transportation network is comprised of several different components that connect and complement each other. In Canton, this network is comprised of local streets, state and federal highways, bridges, sidewalks and trails. The town's rural, polycentric nature, as well as its employment patterns, has favored the use of the automobile over other transportation alternatives.

### **7.2 Streets and Highways**

U.S. Routes 44 and 202 combine to form the spine of Canton's transportation network, traveling east to west before splitting at Route 179 to go northwest and southwest respectively. Where combined, they create a four-lane undivided highway that is considered the commercial center of Canton. Most of Canton's traffic issues relate to the design, location, and significance of U.S. 44/202.

In addition to U.S. Routes 44 and 202, there are four two-lane state roads, three of which, CT Routes 177, 179 and 309, provide access to neighboring towns and connections to local roads.

State Road 565, or Dowd and Maple Avenues, provides access to local roads between Collinsville and Routes 44/202. A portion of this roadway has been named a scenic road, which is discussed in greater detail on page 71.

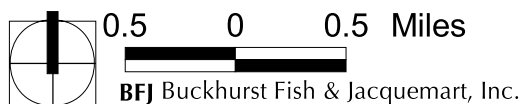
Streets and highways are grouped and classified according to the function that they serve. Figure 7.1 shows this plan's functional classification map for Canton roads. This POCD uses the CT DOT "rural" classification system of principal arterial – interstate, principal arterial – other, major arterial, minor arterial, major collector, and minor collector. Town-owned roads classified as major collectors are eligible for federal funding under the STP-Urban Program when making improvements to them. All roads that are not listed here are considered local roads.

#### **Principal Arterials**

U.S. Routes 44 and 202 are labeled "principal arterial – other" on the functional classification map. These roads are generally two to four lanes wide and carry significant volumes of traffic, much of it traveling through the town to get to other destinations. The primary function of principal arterials is to move traffic from one destination to another. In many cases they also give access to adjacent properties.



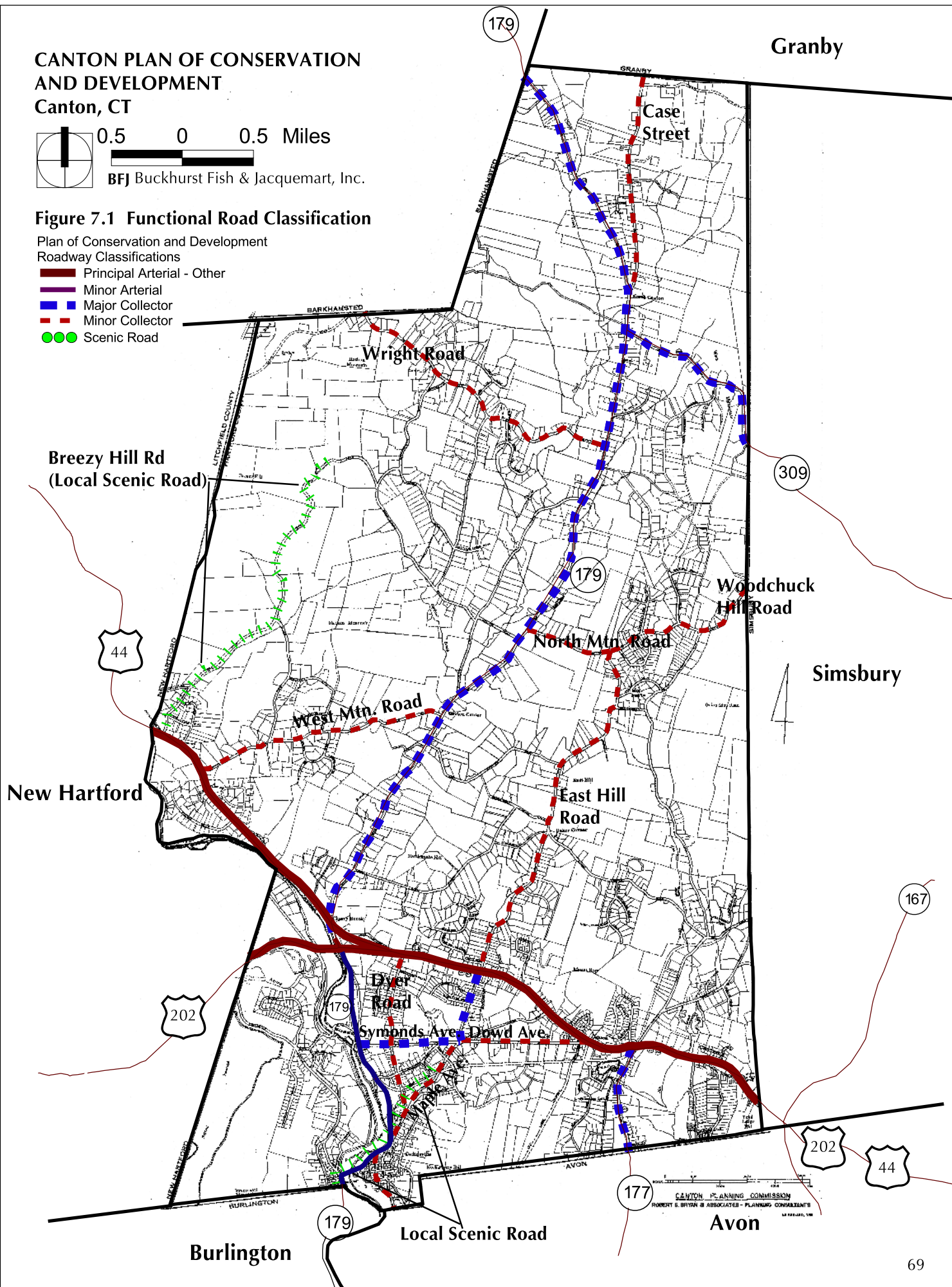
# CANTON PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT Canton, CT



**Figure 7.1 Functional Road Classification**

Plan of Conservation and Development  
Roadway Classifications

- Principal Arterial - Other
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Scenic Road



Depending on the number and frequency of access points to adjacent parcels, access driveways may detract from the arterial's primary purpose of moving traffic. This potential conflict is discussed in Section 7.4 Access Management.

### **Minor Arterials**

Minor arterials provide alternative options for through traffic movement and may also serve to connect principal arterials. Traffic volumes are lighter than along the major arterials. The only minor arterial is CT Route 179 south of U.S. Route 202.

### **Major and Minor Collector Streets**

Collector streets provide for traffic movement between neighborhoods within the Town and collect traffic from local roads. They create the connecting links in the street network. In areas designated "rural," collector streets are divided between major collectors and minor collectors.

#### **Major Collectors**

- CT Route 177
- CT Route 179 north of U.S. 44
- East Hill Road south of U.S. 44
- CT Route 309
- Symonds Avenue

#### **Minor Collectors**

- East Hill Road north of U.S. 44
- North Mountain Road
- Woodchuck Hill Road
- Case Street
- Wright Road
- West Mountain Road
- Dyer Avenue
- SR 565 (Dowd/Maple Avenues)
- Center Street
- Huckleberry Hill

The traffic along these roadways should be monitored so that the Town is able to verify increases in traffic. Minor collector road standards should be considered when reviewing subdivisions or other development applications along these roads. New lots along these roads would ideally access off of a local road, rather than have a driveway on the collector. Street width and right-of-way should be reviewed if subdivisions are proposed and mitigation applied where appropriate.



Some of these policies may differ slightly with the goal of maintaining the small-town character, but there are safety issues that need to be addressed.

### **Local Streets**

Local streets provide direct access to properties along them. All streets in Canton not classified as collectors or arterials are considered local streets.

### **Scenic Roads**

Canton has portions of two roadways designated as scenic roads: Bridge Street and Maple Avenue in Collinsville and Breezy Hill Road at the western edge of Town. Public Act 87-280 authorizes the Commissioner of Transportation to designate state highways or portions thereof as scenic roads in consultation with the Commissioners of Environmental Protection and Economic & Community Development. A scenic road is defined as any state highway that: 1) passes through agricultural land or abuts land on which is located a historic building or structure listed on the National Register of Historic Places or the State Register of Historic Places; or 2) affords vistas of marshes, shorelines, forests with mature trees or notable geologic or other natural features. Canton residents successfully petitioned the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) under PA 87-280 to designate portions of CT Route 179 and SR 565 from the Burlington town line to Allen Place as a CT Scenic Road.

In 1997, the Collinsville Scenic Corridor Advisory Committee, working with a ConnDOT consulting team, prepared the *Collinsville Scenic Corridor Management Plan*. This plan outlines ten strategies for the Collinsville Scenic Corridor including: traffic calming, signage, landscaping, pedestrian needs, and other management issues; and must be consulted whenever changes are proposed to this section of the roadway.

Locally, Canton adopted a Scenic Road Ordinance, allowing the Planning Commission to designate local scenic roads to protect their scenic character. Breezy Hill Road was the first road to be designated under the new ordinance and property owners adjacent to qualifying scenic roads should consider petitioning the Planning Commission to designate additional scenic roads as part of a comprehensive system to preserve Canton's rural character.

### **Bridges**

The Town of Canton maintains many town-owned bridges and culverts that are a vital part of our local road network. The Town should continue with its ongoing program of monitoring, repairing and replacing these bridges and culverts where necessary. Some of these bridges are eligible for funding under the state and

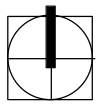
Federal Local Bridge Program administered by ConnDOT, should they need repair or replacement.

### **Traffic Volumes**

Analyzing the existing traffic conditions on Canton's arterials and collector roads helps to determine where capital improvements are needed. The general unit of measurement for traffic is the average daily traffic (ADT), which is defined by ConnDOT as: "an estimate of the number of vehicles passing through the defined section of highway on an average day for both directions of travel combined."

ConnDOT gathers traffic volume data for state and interstate highways on a continual basis. Figure 7.2 illustrates the traffic volumes on major roads in Canton. The data is from the '96-'98 Traffic Accident Surveillance Report (TASR). As can be seen from the map, the greatest traffic volume is on Route 44, the major east-west arterial.

# CANTON PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT Canton, CT



0.5 0 0.5 1 Miles

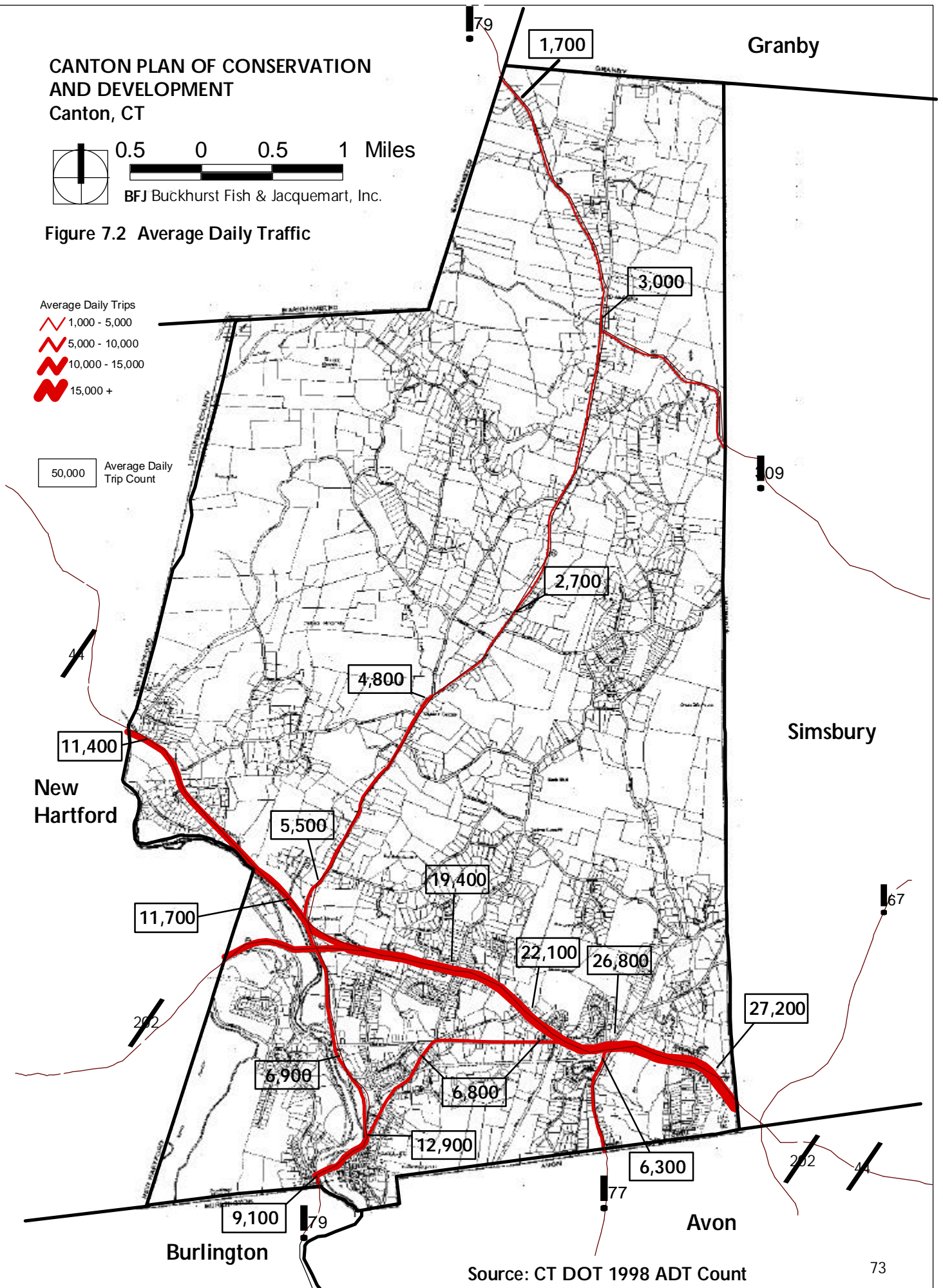
BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.

Figure 7.2 Average Daily Traffic

Average Daily Trips



50,000 Average Daily Trip Count



Source: CT DOT 1998 ADT Count

## Accident Data

ConnDOT maintains a database of accident data, based on police accident reports, on all state-owned roadways. ConnDOT publishes an annual report known as the Suggested List of Safety Surveillance Sites (SLOSS) that reviews the preceding three-year period for locations that have above-average accident occurrences. The SLOSS enables ConnDOT to identify and prioritize locations that warrant further review and action. Table 7.1 lists accidents on Routes 44 and 179 and Figure 7.3 shows the SLOSS locations.

**Table 7.1**  
**Accident Data**

Map #	Accident Location	# of Accidents
<b>Route 44</b>		
1	Between Daynard Drive and East Hill Road	13
2	Between East Hill Road and Bristol Drive	17
3	Between Old Canton Road and Dunham Road	42*
4	At SR 565 (Dowd Avenue)	20
5	Between SR 565 and Trailsend Drive	33
6	At RT 177, Lawton Road & Trailsend Drive	31*
7	Between Lawton Road and Secret Lake Road	28
8	At Secret Lake Road	13
9	Between Secret Lake Road and Old US 44	44*
10	At Brass Lantern Road and Old US 44	12
11	Between Brass Lantern Road and Hoffman Auto	14
<b>Route 179</b>		
12	At SR 565 (Maple Avenue)	14
13	Between Morgan Road and Humphrey Road	12
14	Between Case St. and Hillcrest Dr. (Barkhamsted)	13

\*SLOSS location

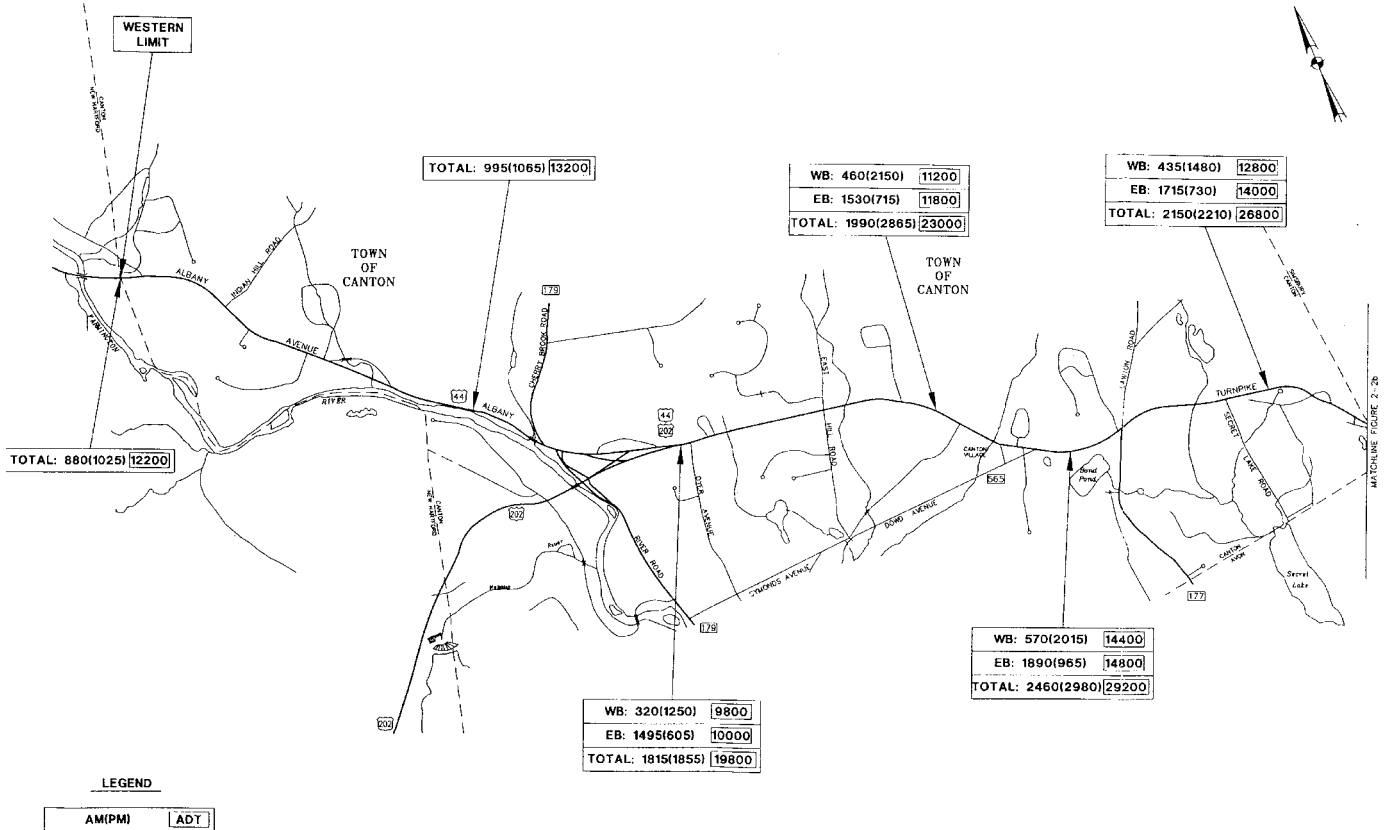
Figure 7.3 SLOSS Accident Locations



### 7.3 Route 44 Corridor Study

The Capitol Region Council of Governments completed the Route 44 Corridor Study for Canton in September 2000 (Figure 7.4). This report is incorporated into the Plan of Conservation and Development by reference. The Corridor Study presents recommendations for improving the roadway, traffic conditions, and pedestrian movement along the Route 44 corridor. The corridor study calls for redesigning Route 44 to include a center left turn lane, improved access management, and a landscaped median along stretches of Route 44 (p. 80). These improvements should allow for safer turning movements, fewer access points, and a reduction in accidents along Route 44.

Route 44 west of Route 179 is the most rural part of the roadway and only minor changes are proposed, such as left turn lanes at the intersections of Breezy Hill Road and Indian Hill Road. To accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists, a trail is proposed to run along the south side of Route 44 from the New Hartford line to the intersection with 179. For the stretch of road between Dyer and Dowd Avenues, the Corridor Study recommends a center left-turn lane and access management, to limit the number of access points along the roadway. The primary concern along this portion of Route 44 is safety. This portion of the roadway includes one of the critical accident locations, between Old Canton Road and Dunham Road, which had 42 accidents over the three-year study period. Route 44 between Dowd Avenue and Route 177 includes the second critical accident location, the intersection of Route 177, Lawton Road, and Trailsend Drive. This 5-point

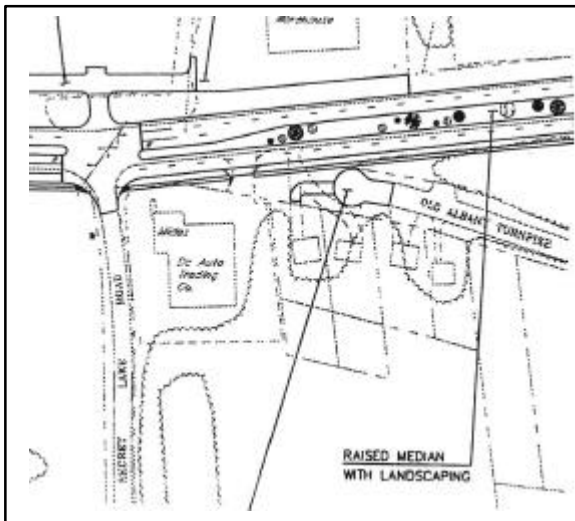


Source: Route 44 Corridor Study. Task 4 Technical Memorandum. JHK & Associates, November 1996.

## PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT Canton, CT

Figure 7.4 Route 44 Corridor Study

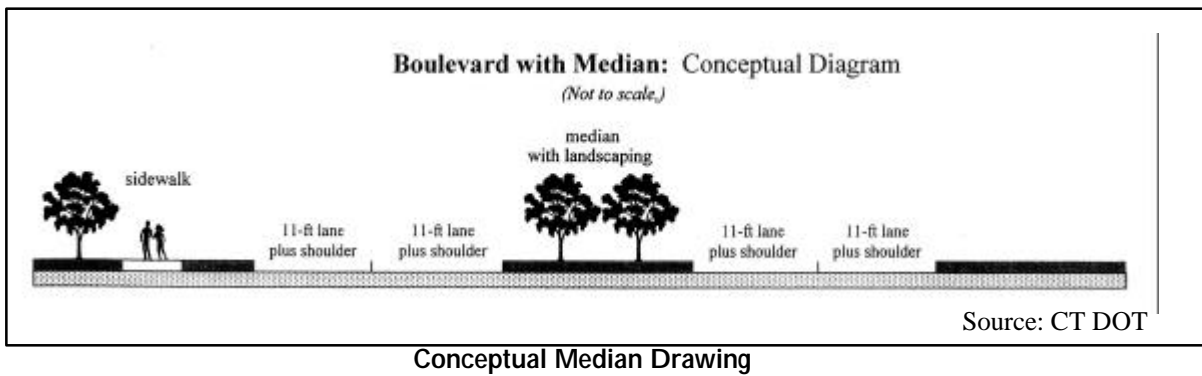
Trailsend Drive and Lawton Road would also be redesigned to create a four-way intersection. The above figure shows one of three possible roadway realignment schemes in the Route 44 Corridor Study. The Town should continue to monitor future developments and have input into the decision-making process.



reduce the number of rear-end and lane-change accidents caused by vehicles stopped in the travel lane waiting to make left turns, they are not as effective as medians at reducing accidents. Despite this, extending the median west of Route 177 is not recommended because it would be created at the expense of historic buildings that would not survive the road widening to benefit from the safer turning movements. This segment of Route 44 is too confined to afford the width necessary for a median.

The Corridor Study cites safety as a primary concern for the entire roadway and recommends improvements to make the roadway safer. The Corridor Study states that while center turn lanes





Access points and turning locations along the roadway should be coordinated with the Town's emergency services to allow for safe and expeditious response rates. The Town is installing a system to allow emergency vehicles to activate signalized intersections to move traffic along potentially congested roads.

#### **7.4 Access Management**

Route 44/202 serves a dual purpose as a principal arterial road and a local road. As a principal arterial, its primary purpose is to move through-traffic to destinations elsewhere in Canton and other towns. As a local road, it provides access to collector roads, businesses, and residences. There is an inherent conflict between these two types of travel as one wishes to move through the Town quickly while the other slows traffic by frequent stopping and turning movements. The numerous turning movements, weaving patterns, and cycles of acceleration and deceleration caused by access points onto the road, combine to reduce the ability of an arterial to move traffic. As traffic volumes increase, this conflict becomes more apparent. If traffic moves very slowly along the arterial, motorists may choose local streets as better alternatives, creating adverse impacts for the residents who live there.

Access management can reduce these conflicts by requiring the consolidation of access points along a roadway to achieve more efficient traffic flow and a safer road. Figure 7.5 illustrates the concept of access management. Prior to access management, four of the five properties have their own driveway directly onto the arterial. With access management, the driveways onto the arterial have been eliminated but the parking lots have been joined so that each business still has vehicular access and parking stalls. While this is an extreme example, if every business simply shared driveways with adjacent properties or closed redundant driveways when they have more than one, the result would be significant improvements in traffic flow.

Reducing the number of driveways not only improves the efficiency of the roadway for motorists, it also increases safety for pedestrians. Eliminating driveways removes the conflict between pedestrians on the sidewalk and motorists turning to/from the driveway.



Service roads are another means of access management that can be used to reduce curb cuts and direct traffic to signalized intersections where available. Service roads achieve results similar to joint parking lots but are separated from the parking lots to facilitate the safer, more efficient movement of traffic. Service roads and joint parking lots can be used to provide safe access points to properties that would otherwise have poor accessibility.

The width of driveways also affects traffic flow and the risk of accidents. Broad, poorly defined driveways or worse, curb cuts that run the entire width of a property, create confusion and indecision in the minds of motorists. Motorists may enter and exit these properties with little regard for keeping to the right of opposing vehicles or may hesitate in deciding where to turn, all leading to accidents. Driveways should only be wide enough to allow two cars to safely pass (24 to 30 feet for a typical driveway with two-way traffic) and should be marked with directional signs and pavement markings where appropriate.

One of the greatest difficulties with access management along an arterial is the general lack of incentives for property owners to share common access points and lack of regulatory powers to require owners to consolidate driveways. It is therefore important to use every opportunity to achieve access management.

Canton can use its Zoning Regulations to encourage the minimum number of access points along an arterial by providing incentives to commercial properties that share driveways. Also, the Town could require an owner to explore obtaining an easement from a neighbor or provide a neighbor with an easement to eliminate unnecessary access points along arterials.

The Town should also encourage connectivity of the local street network by discouraging the use of cul-de-sacs. Connecting local roads provides residents with route options, may reduce unnecessary travel along arterials, and may improve emergency response time to subdivisions.

## **7.5 Road Network Issues**

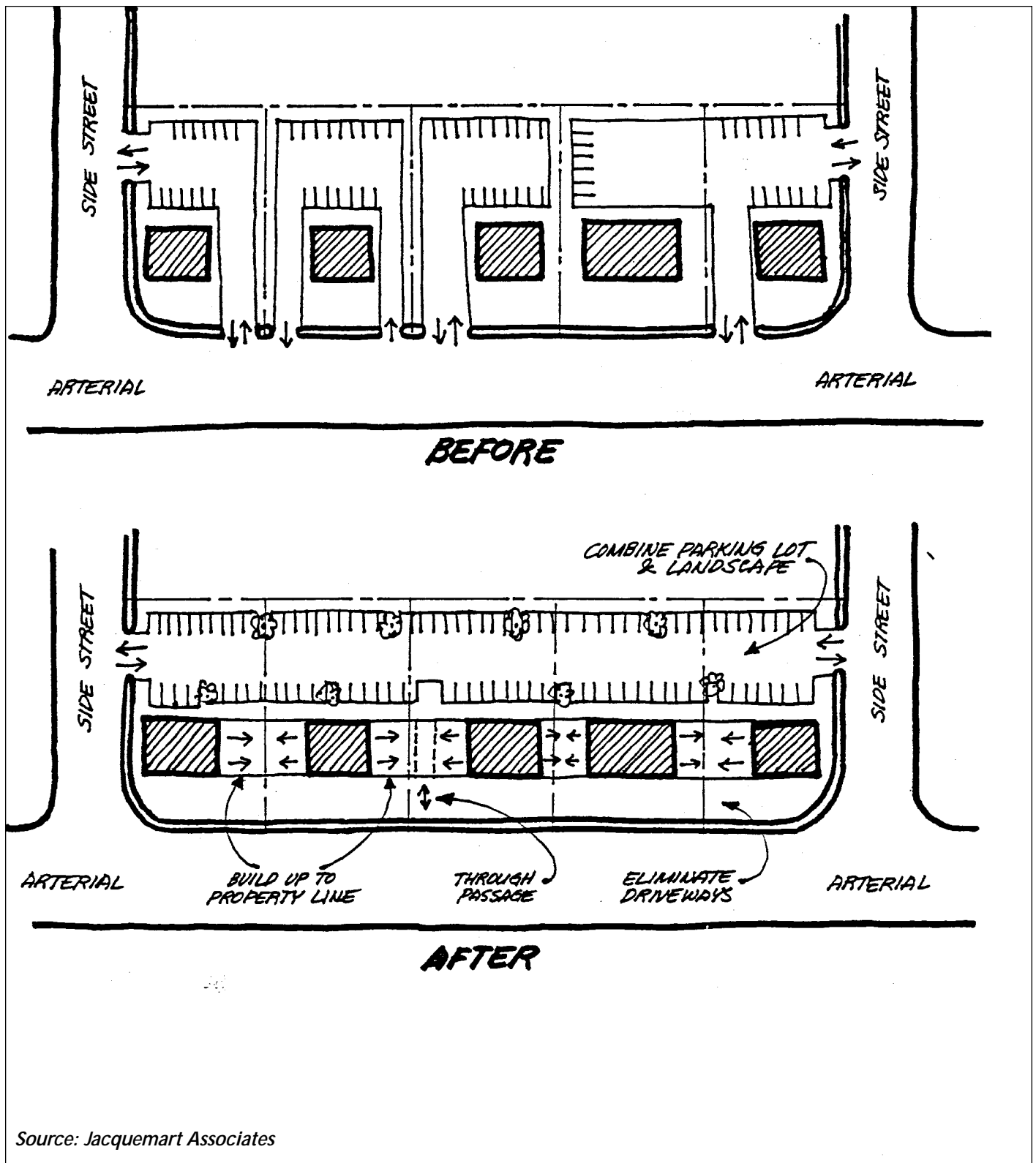
Canton's topography often dictates the location of new roads and future subdivisions. Wetlands, traprock ridges, and other environmental constraints may limit roadway connections. The existing road network functions well, though there are on-going issues such as safety, convenience, and emergency access that should be evaluated periodically.

The Town has a number of long roads that end in cul-de-sacs. In an emergency, access could be an issue for some houses at the end of such roads. Future connections and emergency access points should be considered for new roads. When possible, emergency access points should be considered for existing roads. Freedom Drive is an example of a long road that ends in a cul-de-sac. Although a

connection to another street is not practical, an emergency vehicle connection could tie into the MDC road network around the reservoir. Such a connection would provide emergency vehicles with a second access point while allowing residents to continue to live along quiet, dead-end roads. Discouraging developers from building cul-de-sacs that do not connect to abutting properties would help to alleviate this issue.

Many of Canton's town roads are old and pre-date modern road engineering standards. Some, like Meadow Road, are one-lane and may or may not be paved. These roads are frequently short and do not carry much traffic. They are typically adequate as rural roads that serve a limited number of homes. Though the Town maintains these roads, the Town is not obligated to bring these older roads up to modern standards. Residents who purchase existing or new homes that front on these older roads should be aware that the Town does not have to rebuild and modernize the roadway at the petition of a homeowner along that road.

The current road standard for new subdivisions is 26-feet wide. As pointed out above, many existing roads in Canton do not meet this minimum width. Sometimes, new subdivision roads appear excessively wide when constructed off of older, narrow town roads. The Town should review its road standards and consider designing roads for the speed that is appropriate. For residential subdivisions, that speed is probably 25-30 mph. Roads should be designed to encourage slower speeds.



PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
Canton, CT

Figure 7.5 Access Management

As the Town's population increases, traffic along major roadways is also increasing. Residents who live along arterials and collector streets experience the increased traffic in a negative way, often with a decrease in their quality of life. The Town should look to ways to try to balance the transportation needs of residents with the needs of adjacent property owners. The Town has control over local roads, but not over state roads.

State Route 565 (Dowd Avenue and Maple Avenue) connects Collinsville with Route 44 and the center of Canton. This roadway is a significant link for motorists and carries traffic volumes that create problems for residents who live along the road. The Town should continue to work with ConnDOT toward redirecting through-traffic onto Route 179. The Collinsville Scenic Corridor Management Plan recommends reorienting the intersection of Route 179 and SR 565, eliminating the northbound left turn so that Route 179 experiences continuous through traffic. SR 565 would intersect perpendicular to Route 179, forcing a southbound left turn and a northbound hard right turn, thus discouraging through traffic.

ConnDOT is preparing to begin the reconstruction of the intersection of Routes 44, 179 and 202. The State intends to realign Route 179 north of Route 44 so that the new intersection lines up with Route 179 south of Route 44. Removing the "dog leg" in Route 179 will eliminate separate northbound and southbound signal cycles, making the intersection safer and more efficient. A new Park and Ride commuter lot is included at the northwest corner of the intersection.

## **7.6 Public Transportation**

Connecticut Transit operates the Avon-Canton Express bus route for commuters, utilizing a parking lot at the Town Garage on Old River Road. Express buses make four stops in Canton – the Town Garage, Simonds/Dyer Avenue, Canton Hollow Condominiums, and Canton Village – before continuing to Avon and Hartford. There are four buses between 6:30-7:20 a.m. and five in the afternoon between 4:30-6:00 p.m., each taking approximately 50 minutes to travel between Canton and downtown Hartford.

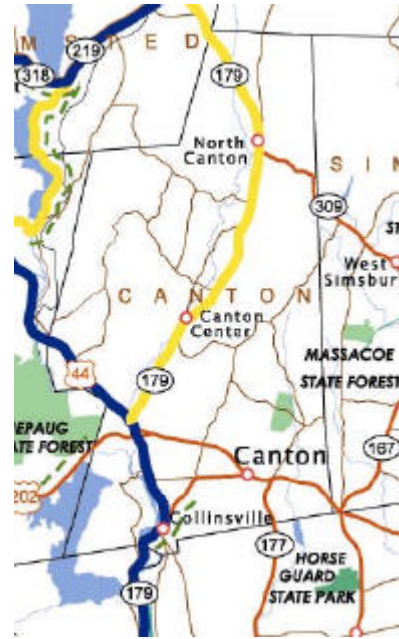
The express bus is geared toward commuters who live in Canton and work in Hartford. However, there is a growing demand for buses that serve "reverse commuters" who live in Hartford and work in Canton. Many of these workers are employed in the service industry and do not have typical 9-5 work hours. The Rideshare Program is helping retail and service businesses meet their personnel needs by providing pool vans but with hundreds of thousands of new retail square feet planned, the demand for labor from outside of Canton may outpace the ability of these programs to provide adequate service. Connecticut Transit should explore the possibility of providing additional bus service between Canton and Hartford to serve these workers.

A lesser known but equally vital transportation service is the Dial-a-Ride Program administered by the Town. Dial-a-Ride is a bus service for elderly and handicapped residents who would otherwise have no access to transportation. Dial-a-Ride offers a limited schedule by appointment, for shopping, medical appointments, recreation and similar trips.

## 7.7 Bicycle and Pedestrian Circulation

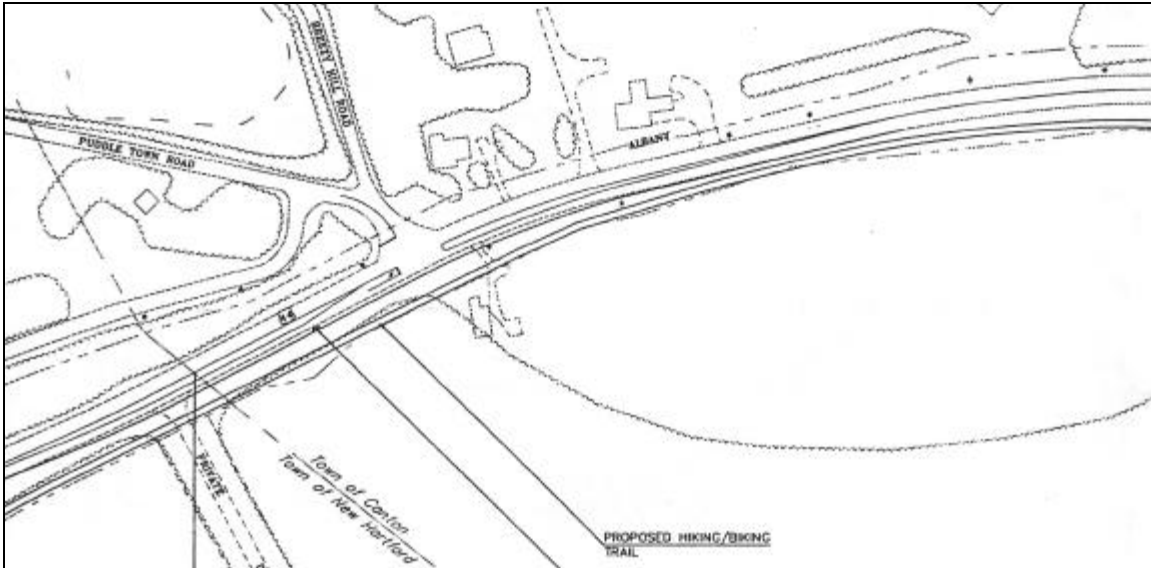
Bicycle routes are an important component of a Town's transportation network. Such routes provide an alternative mode of transportation and serve as a recreational resource. ConnDOT's statewide bicycle plan identifies Route 179 north of US 44 as a "recommended route" and US 44 west of 179 and Route 179 south of 44 as a "cross-state route."

In addition, the Farmington River Trail has been completed into Collinsville. This trail is a spur of the Farmington Heritage Canal Greenway that follows the right-of-way of the historic Farmington Canal. The trail is paved and suitable for bicycles, pedestrians, rollerbladers, and strollers. When completed, the Farmington River Trail will connect Collinsville to a statewide trail network running from the Massachusetts border south to New Haven. Additional segments have yet to be built in Canton, with funding in place for the next phase from its present terminus at River Road to the Park and Ride lot on Old River Road. The final phase from Old River Road to the intersection of Routes 44 and 177 is designed and awaiting future federal funding opportunities. This final segment is critical in that it passes through a densely populated area in close proximity to schools, playing fields, elderly housing developments, retail businesses and the Canton Commerce Center, providing a multitude of recreation and transportation opportunities.



State Bicycle Map

The Route 44 Corridor Study recommends that a bicycle/pedestrian trail run along the south side of Route 44 from the New Hartford town line to the intersection with Route 179. In addition, the Conservation Commission has recommended a public trail which runs along the west side of the Farmington River and is shown on the Future Land Use Map (Figure 11.1). It should be noted that this property is privately owned.



**Route 44 Corridor Study with Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail**

Sidewalks and footpaths also play a critical role in Canton's transportation network, reducing our dependency on the automobile. The Town should continue its program of installing and replacing sidewalks in critical locations where they can provide safe travel between residential areas, shopping, schools, playfields and other community facilities. The Planning Commission should require sidewalks and footpaths when opportunities exist to connect adjacent subdivisions, access open spaces, link existing sidewalks, or connect to the Farmington River Trail. Portions of the trail that also serve a vital function as a sidewalk should be maintained year-round.

With the opening of the Farmington River Trail, the issue of bicycle and pedestrian safety has come to the attention of the Town. Many motorists are ignoring crosswalk laws, prompting additional signs and pavement markings to warn of approaching crosswalks. Cyclists are behaving like pedestrians, riding against traffic or not dismounting at crosswalks and expecting motorists to stop. Motorists and trail users alike need to be re-educated about bicycle and pedestrian safety. The Town should continue to work with the Capitol Region Council of Governments and the Farmington Valley Trails Council to promote bicycle and pedestrian safety through their websites, brochures and informational signs.

Over time, wear and tear will warrant repairs to limit liability and keep the Farmington River Trail functioning safely. Money should be periodically set aside to make repairs to bridges and pavement as well as to replace vandalized signs.

## **7.8 Summary**

In general, the Town of Canton has an adequate transportation network. The Town is well connected to the surrounding region. Several opportunities exist to build on the Town's strengths and to create a transportation network that provides a broader range of transportation choices to Canton residents.

## **7.9 Goals, Policies, and Recommendations**

### **Goals**

- A system of roads that provides safe, convenient, un-congested access for residents between home, work, shopping, public facilities and recreation, with sufficient capacity to absorb inter-town traffic.
- Direct arterial traffic to arterial roads and, to the extent possible, use collector roads for their intended purpose of collecting traffic from local roads.
- An effective mass transit system that meets the needs of Canton residents and employers.
- A system of sidewalks and trails that provides safe, convenient, alternative modes of travel between home, work, shopping, public facilities and recreation.

### **Policies**

- Monitor ConnDOT projects and local site development plans for conformance with the Collinsville Scenic Corridor Management Plan and Albany Turnpike Corridor Study, leveraging recommended improvements when possible.
- Improve existing rural roads and bridges found to be insufficient in width, pavement, structure or drainage and/or having alignment and intersection layout inconsistent with safety, but with consideration for maintenance of scenic roadsides and rural character.
- Protect the inter-town and local traffic carrying capacity of US Route 44 through access management.
- Carefully monitor the design and reconstruction of Route 44, encouraging access management, maintaining access to businesses during construction and maximizing landscaping.

- Strive to maintain of Level of Service (LOS) "C" or better on arterial and collector roadways and intersections.
- Encourage inter-town mass transit bus service, commuter parking and ride-share arrangements which can reduce the number of vehicles on the highway at peak hour and provide transportation to those who would otherwise have none.
- Establish a hierarchy of roadways and the appropriate design and improvement standards for each, ranging from arterial and major collector streets serving large areas of the Town to minor collector streets serving neighborhood streets and driveways. Once established, maintain the function consistent with the appropriate standards and intended purpose of the road.
- Recognize the importance of sufficient off-street parking and loading facilities as an adjunct to the transportation system but avoid roadway capacity reduction due to on-street parking.
- Provide adequate access throughout the Town for emergency vehicles, both on the road and in off-street facilities.
- Hold significant new development projects accountable for providing access management, traffic management and capacity improvements on existing roads to mitigate the traffic impacts caused by their projects.
- Continue to improve pedestrian and bicycle routes to provide safe and convenient alternative modes of transportation.
- Support the efforts of ConnDOT, CT Transit and others to make mass transit convenient and accessible to Canton residents and workers. Pursue additional facilities and services to meet unfulfilled needs such as reverse commuter bus routes.
- Require subdivision roads to reflect the desired travel speed.

### **Recommendations**

- The Board of Selectmen should oversee the implementation of the Collinsville Scenic Corridor Management Plan. (Board of Selectmen)
- Monitor traffic counts for significant trends and changes in LOS so that emerging problems or deterioration of service can be identified and mitigated. (Town Engineer)
- The Zoning Commission should require traffic studies for all significant development proposals to ensure proper mitigation of the traffic impacts caused



by these projects, with a goal of maintaining at least a LOS of C or better. (Zoning Commission)

- Account for and mitigate any impacts of traffic capacity improvements upon the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists as well as the landscaping and appearance of streets. (Zoning Commission, Planning Commission, Town Engineer, Public Works)
- Continue to develop a road condition and improvement inventory for existing Town roads and establish an annual program of safety and maintenance improvement projects. (Town Engineer, Public Works)
- The Planning and Zoning commissions should review and adjust their regulations as needed to implement traffic monitoring procedures, as well as mechanisms for assigning responsibility for traffic capacity improvements. (Planning Commission, Zoning Commission)
- The Planning Commission should review new subdivision roads with an eye toward future connectivity and emergency access. (Planning Commission)
- The Planning Commission should encourage petitions to designate additional scenic roads where the streetscape adds scenic or historic value to the character of the community. (Planning Commission)
- As demand grows, expand the dial-a-ride program to better serve residents. (Senior Services, Board of Selectmen, Commission on Aging)

Level of Service (LOS) Definitions		
LOS	Roadway Segments or Controlled Access Highways	Intersections
A	Free flow, low traffic density.	No vehicle waits longer than one signal indication.
B	Delay is not unreasonable, stable traffic flow.	On a rare occasion motorists wait through more than one signal indication.
C	Stable condition, movements somewhat restricted due to higher volumes, but not objectionable for motorists	Intermittently drivers wait through more than one signal indication, and occasionally backups may develop behind left turning vehicles; traffic flow still stable and acceptable.

D	Movements more restricted, queues and delays may occur during short peaks, but lower demands occur often enough to permit clearing, thus preventing excessive backups	Delays at intersections may become extensive with some, especially left-turning vehicles waiting two or more signal indications, but enough cycles with lower demand occur to permit periodic clearance, thus preventing excessive backups.
E	Actual capacity of the roadway involves delay to all motorists due to congestion	Very long queues may create lengthy delays especially for left turning vehicles.
F	Forced flow with demand volumes greater than capacity resulting in complete congestion. Volume drop to zero in extreme cases.	Backups from locations downstream restrict or prevent movement of vehicles out of approach creating a storage area during part or all of an hour.

## **8.0 COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

### **8.1 Introduction**

Community facilities and services must meet the needs of Canton's residents. In order to be responsive to these needs, facilities must have adequate resources and an understanding of the services for which people rely on them. Funding for these services comes primarily from the Town budget, though many services are supported by user fees, donations and other means. Volunteers also play a crucial role in delivering services such as firefighting, emergency medical services and recreation programs.

### **8.2 Library**

The library is located in the Canton Library/Community Center at 40 Dyer Avenue, formerly the Canton Elementary School. The library occupies over 16,000 square feet of the 35,000 square foot facility, which also houses the Park and Recreation Department, the Senior Center, a large community meeting room, and five additional public meeting rooms. Prior to December 1999, the library was located in a 3,000 square foot facility on Center Street. Due in part to the success of the new state-of-the-art facility, the Town has expanded the hours of operation, which now vary seasonally from 47 hours in July and August to 57 hours during the winter. With the increase in size and hours of operation, the library staff has grown to five full-time librarians and 17 part-time employees, serving 4,600 registered patrons, with a circulation approaching 95,000 volumes annually.

With the significant increase in space, the library now offers a wide range of products and services including: approximately 49,500 books, magazines; videos, and CDs; an inter-library loan system offering the collections of 27 area libraries; computers for Internet access, word processing and other uses; over 200 enrichment programs annually for residents of all ages; a Children's Department featuring a room designed to accommodate both crafts and stories for toddlers and pre-school children; two local history rooms housing a collection of Canton historical material and photographs; and a program room with seating for 39. With room to grow, this facility should not need additional space in the near future, but changes in technology and increasing demand for services should be monitored to anticipate future capital improvement and operating expenditures.

# CANTON PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT Canton, CT

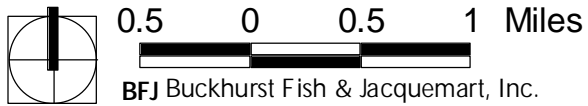
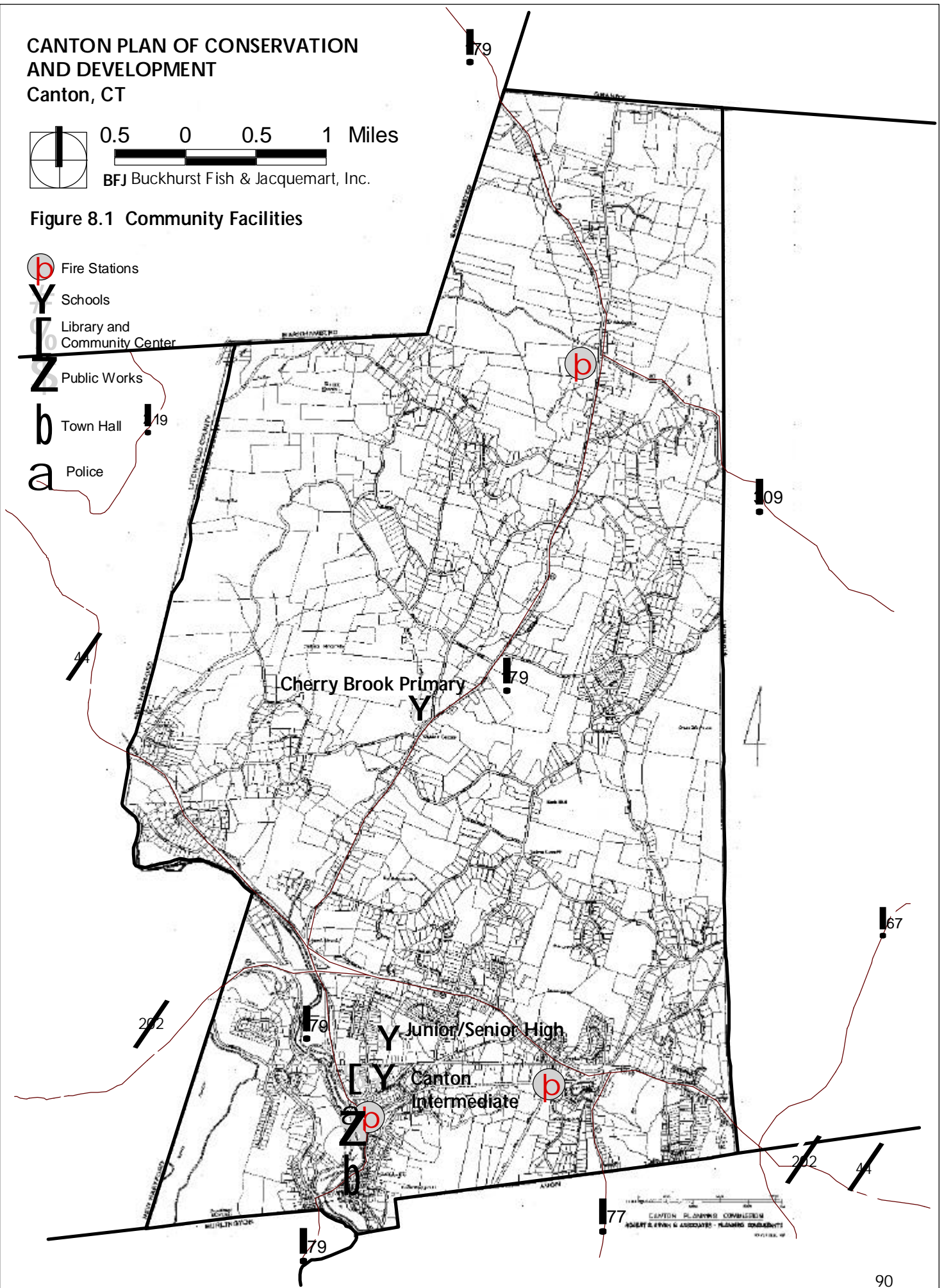


Figure 8.1 Community Facilities

- Fire Stations
- Schools
- Library and Community Center
- Public Works
- Town Hall
- Police



### **8.3 Police**

In August 2002, the Canton Police Department relocated from its 2,900 square foot facility in the basement level of Town Hall to its new 8,200 square foot state-of-the-art facility adjacent to the Collinsville Fire Station on River Road. The new police station contains: separate entrances for the public and police personnel; a sally port for securely loading and unloading prisoners; a cell block; a secure dispatch center; workstations for report-writing; private interview areas; ample space for processing and storing evidence; separate locker room facilities to accommodate female personnel; and an emergency operations center. Staffing includes a chief, deputy chief, four sergeants, one detective and eight patrol officers.

The demand for police services has mirrored the residential and commercial growth of the Town during the past decade. Calls for police services increased from 11,500 in 1992 to 15,200 in 2000. Traffic has increased throughout the Town, particularly along Route 44/202, which now carries more than 30,000 vehicles a day. With over 500 approved dwelling units and nearly 400,000 square feet of approved commercial space yet to be built, the demand for police services should grow at an even quicker pace than it did in the last decade. Fortunately, the new police station is designed to handle the growth of the coming decade and beyond.

### **8.4 Fire and Emergency Medical Services**

Following a 1994 report commissioned by the Board of Selectman entitled *Final Report Relating to Fire Services*, the Canton Volunteer Fire Company, Collinsville Volunteer Fire Department, North Canton Volunteer Fire Association and Canton Memorial Ambulance Service were merged in 1996 to form the Canton Volunteer Fire and EMS Services. Prior to 1996, the four companies operated independently, with their own boards of directors, fire chiefs, and internal hierarchy. The report recommended the merger in order to improve the organizational structure, simplify the chain of command and provide more cost-effective service to the Town.

The Canton Volunteer Fire and Emergency Medical Services operates three facilities: the North Canton Fire Station on Cherry Brook Road, the Canton Fire Station on Canton Springs Road and the Collinsville Fire Station on River Road. The Collinsville facility also houses the Emergency Medical Services (EMS). The three facilities house nine pieces of equipment: seven fire apparatus and two emergency response vehicles. There are currently 79 men and women in all divisions under the direction of one chief. In addition to fighting fires, volunteer fire personnel are trained to handle motor vehicle accidents, hazardous waste incidents and technical rescues, such as river rescues. The EMS Division currently responds to over 600 calls per year.

Many homes and businesses in Town now include alarm systems that notify emergency personnel of a potential problem. However, the technology is not perfect and false alarms do occur, requiring emergency response services to investigate. These false alarms take personnel away from other responsibilities, including a possible true emergency. The Town should continue to monitor incidents of false alarms and consider instituting a charge to homeowners if home alarms repeatedly send false alarm signals. Businesses are now required to provide an external key safe that can be readily accessed by emergency personnel.

Businesses and homeowners should also consider sprinkler systems when constructing new or expanded facilities or homes. Sprinkler systems are capable of extinguishing many fires and suppressing others long enough for emergency personnel to arrive. Sprinklers will lower insurance rates, oftentimes paying for themselves in the long term.

Another problem facing the fire services is the fact that the majority of land in Town is located outside of the central public water service area and therefore not served by fire hydrants. To compensate for the lack of hydrants, the fire services need alternative sources of water to supplement the limited supply that can be carried by fire apparatus. When reliable ponds and streams are not in close proximity to new developments, man-made fire ponds have been constructed but on an inconsistent basis. Yet another option is underground cisterns that can be strategically located to provide more limited quantities of water. Both fire ponds and cisterns can be problematic if not monitored and maintained. The Canton Volunteer Fire and Emergency Medical Services need to work cooperatively with the Planning Commission to develop and implement reasonable regulations for fire ponds and cisterns. Such regulations should establish standards for: the size, ownership and maintenance of fire ponds and cisterns; the number of residential units allowed before requiring a fire pond or cistern; and the maximum distance from a reliable water source to a new residential development.

The Canton Volunteer Fire and Emergency Medical Services and the Planning Commission also need to work cooperatively to develop and implement reasonable public and private road standards as well as private driveway and bridge standards that balance public safety requirements with environmental and aesthetic considerations.

## **8.5 Town Hall**

Canton's Town Hall is located on Main and Market streets in Collinsville. The town hall contains 27,000 square feet of office, storage and meeting space with an additional 2,900 square feet of space in the former police station. The 1990 Plan of Development noted that the town hall was overcrowded and had inadequate meeting space. The completion of the new Library/Community Center alleviated many of the problems associated with inadequate meeting space while the

relocation of the Park and Recreation Department and Senior Services Department to that facility freed still more space. Minor revisions to some offices are under consideration to better service Town residents through the use of additional counter space and transaction windows. The Town should continue to expand the use of the Internet to provide information to residents. By answering many simple questions, the Town's web page has eliminated the need for many phone calls and visits to Town Hall, freeing staff for other duties. Vault and general storage space is in short supply, requiring additional space in the immediate future. Digital archives could alleviate some of the need for additional vault space and may prove more cost effective. Current plans call for the Board of Education to move some of its administrative offices out of the Canton Intermediate School to the former police station to provide more space for intermediate school needs.

## 8.6 Schools

Canton's public school facilities consist of Cherry Brook Primary School, Canton Intermediate School, and Canton Junior/Senior High School (Figure 6.1). Table 8.1 shows the grades that attend each school and total enrollment numbers for the three schools.

**Table 8.1**  
**Canton Public School Enrollment, 2001-02 School Year**

School	Grade	Enrollment
Cherry Brook Primary	PK	19
	K-3	487
Canton Intermediate	4-6	408
Canton Jr./Sr. High	7-12	707
<b>Total PK-12</b>		<b>1621</b>

Source: Connecticut State Department of Education

Canton has a reputation for having an excellent public school system. As growth pressures increase in town, concern for the quality of the school system has also grown. Canton has recently experienced a considerable amount of new, single-family home construction, which brings new students into the system. The enrollment increase has put pressure on the schools to hire new teachers, build additional classroom space, and modernize their facilities.

In January 2000, H.C. Planning Consultants, Inc. completed a report for the Canton Public Schools entitled *Canton School Enrollment Dynamics and Projections 2000-2009*. The report analyzed the factors that influence enrollment growth: 1) the number of births, 2) the number of newly constructed homes, 3) existing home sales, and 4) the percentage of residents attending private schools. The report concluded that for all children in grades K-12, the total enrollment would rise from

1530 (1999) to 1658 (2009), for an increase of 8.4%. Actual experience since the study was completed demonstrates these projections to be low.

Table 8.2 indicates that this increase is not evenly distributed throughout the school system. Projection figures anticipate that children attending grades K-6 will actually decrease over the coming decade. Compared with 1999 attendance, grades K-3 enrollment will have peaked in the 2001 school year and will decrease through 2009 with a loss of 9 students (-1.8%). Current enrollment figures do not bear this out. Between 1999 and 2005, when grades 4-6 are projected to peak, 51 additional students will enter those grades. However, between 2006-2009, those grades will lose 74 students for a net loss for the decade of 23 students. This reflects a national trend as the children of the Baby Boom Generation move through the school system. Enrollment projections for grades 7-12 show the greatest gain at 160 students, with yearly increases for that age group through 2009.

The Board of Education is facing two major problem areas with regard to its facilities. The first concerns the buildings themselves. Two of the three buildings have code violations, which must be corrected. Canton Junior/Senior High School and Canton Intermediate School are in need of major renovations to conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act. The buildings violate numerous safety and fire code regulations and their mechanical equipment is in need of updating.

The second problem concerns overcrowding. The enrollment at Cherry Brook Primary School was projected to be 511 students for the 2001-2002 school year, the peak year according to demographic studies. The State Department of Education and a report by noted demographer Dr. Chung projects that Canton Intermediate School will reach its peak enrollment of 422 students by the 2005-2006 school year. The actual enrollment at CIS in 2001-2002 was 408 students, 17 students higher than the projection of 391. This enrollment surge entering the Intermediate School raises concern for long-range total growth and implications for the school building program. Moreover, Canton Junior/Senior High School enrollment, grades 7-12, is projected to reach 828 students in 2009-2010, increasing stress on the capacity of the facility to provide a quality educational program. To address these issues, the Board of Education hired Jacunski & Humes Architects, LLC to prepare a facilities analysis of the three schools that concluded that space and overcrowding are serious issues for the school system.



**Table 8.2**  
**Canton Public Schools Enrollment Projections**

<b>School Year</b>	<b>K-3</b>	<b>4-6</b>	<b>7-12</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% Change from 1999</b>
<b>Actual Enrollment</b>					
1999	491	371	668	1,530	--
2000	476	379	701	1,556	1.6%
2001	506	408	707	1,621	5.9%
<b>Projected Enrollment</b>					
2002	508	400	720	1,628	6.4%
2003	490	407	737	1,634	6.8%
2004	456	416	764	1,636	6.9%
2005	440	422	775	1,637	7.0%
2006	442	419	782	1,643	7.4%
2007	457	385	810	1,652	8.0%
2008	476	356	826	1,658	8.4%
2009	483	348	828	1,658	8.4%
<b>Ten Year Change, 1999-2009</b>					
Number	-9	-23	160	128	
Percent	-1.8%	-6.2%	24.0%	8.4%	

Source: CANTON School Enrollment Dynamics & Projections 2000-2009.

### Cherry Brook Primary School

The original building was constructed in 1941 and underwent an extensive renovation and addition that was completed in 1994. According to the facilities analysis, the school is somewhat overcrowded. Although the school population is projected to decline, those projections do not include students in the pre-kindergarten program (birth to age three) nor a full-day kindergarten, if mandated by the State.

### Canton Intermediate School

The Canton Intermediate School is the smallest and oldest of the three schools in Canton. The school does not have an adequate number of classrooms, the classrooms are too small for the average classroom size, and the administrative rooms are too small to serve the school population. Overcrowding is anticipated to worsen through the 2006 school year as the size of the student body increases and the average classroom size increases from 22 to 25 students. Temporary space has been added in the form of a portable building containing three classrooms, connected to the front of the building. This building should serve to alleviate growth pressure pending a more permanent addition to the schools approved by Town Meeting in the Fall of 2002.

## Canton Junior/Senior High School

The Junior/Senior High School also has a shortage of space. Classrooms are overcrowded, administrative offices are inadequate, and the Science Department does not have enough laboratory space. Enrollment in grades 7-12 is expected to increase 27% over the coming decade, straining resources even more. The average classroom size was 27 in the 1999-2000 school year and will reach 33 if projections are correct through 2009. To accommodate the increase in population, the school will require at least another 30,000 square feet of space.

The Board of Education would like to address the issues at Canton Junior/Senior High School by creating a Canton Middle School. This concept addresses both a facilities and educational goal of the Board to establish a free-standing middle school building for grades six through eight. This concept would bring the third grade to the Canton Intermediate School and allow Cherry Brook Primary School to contain an all-day kindergarten program. Site work for fields to address sports and play ground activities and major parking lot repairs are also components of the Board of Education's plan.

The Boards of Finance and Selectmen have scaled down the Board of Education's recommendations. The Town's debt limit will allow for only a seventh/eighth grade addition to the Canton Junior/Senior High School and no room for all-day Kindergarten at Cherry Brook Primary School.

Based upon Board of Education recommendations, a resolution was forwarded by the Board of Selectmen to the Town Meeting to submit an application to the State Department of Education for funds to develop architectural and engineering designs and specifications for building additions and renovations, and to establish a Building Committee for these projects. The Town's voters approved funding for the final recommendations at Town Meeting in the Fall of 2002.

## **8.7 Social Services**

### Youth and Family

The Towns of Canton and Avon share a social service worker on a part-time basis. The social worker provides a variety of assistance to teens and families in Canton. Social services include short-term counseling, information and referral, crisis intervention, assessment of family needs, and assistance to low-income families participating in energy-assistance programs. These services are underutilized. The social worker has noted that affordable housing is a major concern for many families, particularly single-mothers.

## Canton Senior Services

Services for Canton seniors are administered by the Senior Services Department, located at the Canton Library/Community Center. The Senior Services Coordinator works on a part-time basis, 19 hours per week. Social work services are provided to senior residents by the social worker that Canton shares with the Town of Avon. The focus of the Senior Services Department is to provide services and activities that address the needs and interests of Canton seniors. These include, but are not limited to, public health issues, outreach to the homebound, meals-on-wheels, education and safety issues, transportation, entertainment, socialization, local trips, and volunteerism. Dial-A-Ride service provides transportation to seniors five days per week. Hot lunches are available at the Community Center two days per week. Regular activities include: handwork group, exercise class, computer class, book club, health screenings, weekly movies, bingo, weekly speakers' bureau, numerous social activities, trips, and various senior clubs. Programming is also done in conjunction with the Town Park and Recreation Department and the Library, both located in the same facility.

There are two elderly housing developments in Canton which are primarily Section 8 subsidized and not run as part of the Town's Senior Service program: 21 and 121 Dowd Avenue. At 21 Dowd, there are 40 units, 30 which are one-bedroom and 10 which are efficiencies. The 121 Dowd complex contains 74 units, with 61 subsidized. There are 51 one-bedroom units and 23 two-bedroom apartments. 121 Dowd receives subsidies from the USDA Rural Development program. Both 21 Dowd and 121 Dowd have extensive waiting lists of eligible residents with waits of approximately one and one-half to two years for an available unit. Once developed, the recently approved Boulder Ridge development in the Canton Commerce Center will contain 98 senior, rental-assisted apartments that should alleviate much of the current need for units. Although not guaranteed as affordable units, another project under development, located on Canton Springs Road, will contain 96 units of active-adult housing that should prove to be affordably priced.

In addition to the independent living offered by these developments, there is a growing demand for assisted-living housing. Assisted-living allows older people and disabled individuals to live on their own, with some assistance. This assistance may take the form of prepared meals, limited medical assistance or help performing once simple skills such as dressing.

While these senior housing projects are looked upon as tax revenue positive due to their lack of school children, whose education accounts for roughly two-thirds of the Town budget, they do require a significant amount of other less quantifiable services such as social services and emergency medical services. The latter could prove taxing upon our volunteer fire and EMS services.

## 8.8 Public Works

The Public Works Department has ten full-time employees and two part-time employees. The Department maintains and repairs 65 miles of roads, sidewalks, drainage systems, the transfer station, Mills Pond Park and all but four playing fields. The Town currently contracts with outside firms to provide specialized maintenance such as street sweeping and has also privatized some snow plowing routes.

The Town Highway Garage, located on Old River Road, was remodeled in 1995 to provide employees with administrative office space, a lunchroom and showers – sacrificing two truck bays in the process. The facility has not grown to keep pace with the needs of the department, resulting in five trucks and a backhoe parked outside year-round. In addition to the need for more garage space, most new subdivisions increase the number of road miles that the department must maintain. This will eventually lead to additional employees and equipment or further privatization.

There is a growing need for additional highway garage space and an enclosed sand/salt storage facility. While a new expanded facility away from the Farmington River would be ideal in terms of protecting the river, creating riverfront recreation space and promoting river-related tourism, the reality of such a move is unlikely for a number of reasons. Before much-needed additional space even could be considered, the Town would have to purchase land, replace the existing building and fueling facilities, and clean up the existing site -- all in a time of severe fiscal constraints. Such a move could also prove pointless if expansion of the adjacent Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) is needed in the future and it must encroach into the newly created recreation space, making its value for recreation questionable. The State of Connecticut, Department of Transportation maintenance yard opposite the WPCF from the Town Highway Garage is being moved to Burlington. Once cleaned up, the land will be turned over to the Town for recreation purposes, alleviating the need for a riverside recreation area at the existing highway garage site.

The Town should not dismiss the idea of moving the highway garage if opportunities to cost effectively move the facility arise before anticipated expansion of the garage occurs and the expansion of the WPCF proves either unnecessary or can be accommodated without encroaching further north. Gifts of land, grants and/or significant improvement in the Town's ability to bond could make such a move possible.

Absent these circumstances, the momentum created by recent improvements to the existing facility dictates careful expansion in place. Such an expansion could include measures to consolidate the facilities away from the river while enhancing the potential for recreation adjacent to the river.

## **8.9 Parks and Recreation**

The Town of Canton offers active and passive recreational opportunities to residents. Some outdoor recreation activities occur on private land, but most occur at Town-owned facilities. The Town maintains fields and facilities for a variety of sports and other activities. The Parks and Recreation Department offers a wide variety of well-rounded programs for citizens of all ages, such as dancing, language classes, arts and crafts, swimming lessons, and summer camp.

The major facility operated by the Parks and Recreation Department is the Mills Pond Recreation Area off of East Hill Road. This 40-acre property includes a 50-meter Olympic swimming pool, a wading pool, basketball courts, a sand volleyball court, tennis courts, multi-purpose fields, a new playscape and playground equipment, a new skate park, picnic pavilion and other amenities. The recreation area is heavily utilized; especially the playing fields where demand outpaces supply. To help cope with the demand, the Park and Recreation Department uses fields located on school grounds, competing with school programs for field time. When a conflict arises, school sports receive priority. The Canton Youth Soccer Association has permission from the Collinsville Volunteer Fire Department to use Memorial Field on Powder Mill Road that can be configured to accommodate up to two near-full size soccer fields and two smaller fields. In addition to outdoor recreational activities, the Park and Recreation Department utilizes the Community Center/Library building for numerous indoor classes and activities, as well as the community gardens. Town residents heavily patronize active and passive recreational programs and many existing facilities are overburdened.

In 1997, the consulting firm of Nafis & Young completed the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan for the Town of Canton, Connecticut*. The plan notes that in 1996 there were over 1,500 participants in youth soccer, youth baseball/softball and Jr./Sr. High School girls and boys field sports, utilizing nine playing fields. By 2002, the participation level had jumped by 60 percent to approximately 2,400 participants, as illustrated in Table 8.4. Two new Little League fields and a new Jr./Sr. High School athletic field have been added since 1996 to absorb some of the increased demand. In addition to organized sports, Jr./Sr. High School, and Intermediate School recess and gym classes use the school playing fields, Mills Pond Recreation Park, and the Intermediate School facilities during spring and fall sports seasons. The frequency of these activities causes continuous damage to the turf on the fields. Intense spring and fall use of some fields does not allow sufficient time for the turf to recover. Efforts should be made to improve the use and efficiency of all existing facilities such as irrigation and lighting.

Based upon participation rates as well as game and practice schedules, additional fields are needed. Accounting for the three new fields, the Nafis and Young plan recommends these additional facilities:

**Town Facilities**

- Five soccer fields - three large fields and two small fields
- Two baseball fields - one major league, and one softball field.
- Four playgrounds/playscapes/basketball courts (one per 1,500 residents)

**School Facilities**

- One multi-purpose practice field
- Four tennis courts
- Running track

In addition to playing fields, the Director of Parks and Recreation notes that the demand for indoor sports activities could fill another gym with year-round, after-school and evening programs.

There are plans to resurface the existing 50-meter swimming pool and the 2003-04 capital budget includes funds for a study to determine whether to repair or replace the existing 25-year-old pool and possibly begin a sinking fund if a determination to replace the pool is made. The fiscal year 2002-03 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) includes funds for the construction of a performance shell and an additional picnic pavilion at Mills Pond Recreation Park while the fiscal year 2003-04 CIP includes funds for a trail system and reconstruction of the Upper Mills Pond spillway.

The first phase of the Farmington River Trail has been an overwhelming success, drawing thousands of residents and visitors a week to Canton and Burlington to walk, run, bike and skate. The 2002-03 CIP includes funds to match a federal TEA-21 grant for Phase 2 of the trail from the corner of Maple Avenue and River Road to Old Canton Road. Phase 2 will feature a boardwalk suspended over the bank of the Farmington River and a handicapped accessible fishing platform. The trail should integrate nicely with the Park & Ride facility on Old River Road, taking advantage of the much-needed parking, as well as with the riverfront recreation land to be turned over to the Town by the Connecticut Department of Transportation when its maintenance facility is closed in 2002-03. Additional grants should be sought and matching funds set aside for Phase 3 of the trail from River Road to Albany Turnpike.

Maintaining quality park and recreation facilities as well as open space remains a top priority. The Park and Recreation Department continues to tailor its programs to meet the expanding, long-term needs of the community. The Department and the Park and Recreation Commission should work with the Conservation and Planning Commissions, Town staff and residents to develop action plans to meet

these needs. By working cooperatively with neighboring towns and other entities such as the Canton Land Conservation Trust, Collinsville Canoe and Kayak, Roaring Brook Nature Center and Ski Sundown, these entities can fill gaps or create economies of scale to allow programs that would otherwise be impossible to provide.

Tables 8.3 and 8.4 list the town-wide facilities and the activities that take place at each location, as well as the number of existing and proposed fields recommended by the Nafis and Young plan. Some of the additional demand can be met by developing the 25 acres of town-owned land along Lawton Road that can accommodate additional athletic fields, basketball, tennis, or paddle courts, parking and support structures.

**Table 8.3**  
**Town-Wide Recreation Activities**

<b>FACILITY</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>
Bicentennial Park (Old Canton Road)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men's Softball Practice/Games</li> </ul>
Millennium Field (Simonds Ave)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little League Baseball Games</li> <li>• Softball Games</li> </ul>
Memorial Field (Dyer Avenue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girls Softball games</li> </ul>
Canton Intermediate School (if classrooms are added, field may be relocated)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girls Softball Practice/Games</li> <li>• Jr. High Softball Practice/Games</li> <li>• Youth Soccer Practice/Games</li> <li>• School Gym and Recess</li> </ul>
Bowdoin Field (Simonds Avenue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High School Baseball Practice/Games</li> <li>• JV Baseball Games</li> <li>• High School Boys/Girls Soccer Games</li> <li>• Connie Mack Games</li> <li>• Babe Ruth Games</li> <li>• 13 yr. old Babe Ruth Games</li> <li>• American Legion Games</li> <li>• Over 30 Adult League Games</li> </ul>
Canton High School Lower Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High School Softball Practice/Games</li> <li>• High School Field Hockey Games</li> <li>• Men's Softball</li> </ul>
Canton High School Upper Field (J.V. Soccer Field)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High School JV Soccer Practice/Games</li> <li>• High School Girls Soccer Practice/Games</li> <li>• School Gym classes</li> </ul>
Canton High School New Field (DeSimas Field)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth soccer Practice/games</li> <li>• Jr. High School Practice/games</li> </ul>
Mills Pond Park <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50 Meter Pool</li> <li>• Wading pool</li> <li>• 2 Lighted basketball courts</li> <li>• Playscape</li> <li>• 4 lighted tennis courts</li> <li>• Picnic pavilion</li> <li>• Skatepark</li> </ul> Proposed : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Portable band shell</li> <li>• Picnic pavilion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High School Baseball Practice</li> <li>• Jr. High Baseball Practice/Games</li> <li>• Jr. High Field Hockey Practice/Games</li> <li>• Jr. High Soccer Practice/Games</li> <li>• Youth Soccer Practice/Games</li> <li>• Parks &amp; Rec. T-ball</li> <li>• High School Tennis Practice/Matches</li> <li>• Jr./Sr. High School Gym classes inc. tennis</li> <li>• Drop-in tennis</li> <li>• Pick-up basketball</li> <li>• Swimming Pool/swim teams</li> </ul>
Canton Community Center/Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Gardens</li> </ul>
Cherry Brook School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Soccer Practice</li> <li>• School Recess</li> <li>• School Gym</li> </ul>
Memorial Field (Powder Mill Road)*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Soccer Practice/Games</li> </ul>
Farmington River Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking</li> <li>• Running</li> <li>• Biking</li> <li>• Skating</li> </ul>

Source: Nafis & Young Report/Park and Recreation Director

\*The Canton Youth Soccer Association uses Memorial Field by agreement with the Collinsville Volunteer Fire Department.



**Table 8.4  
Town-Wide Recreation Needs**

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Existing Number of Facilities</b>	<b>Proposed Number of Facilities</b>
Youth Soccer	600	11*	16
Little League Baseball/Softball T-ball	605 105	12**	16
Youth Basketball Rec. Hoops K-1-2	280 100	3	3
Pick Up Basketball	40	2	8
Tennis	50	4	6
Men's Softball	50	1	2
High School/Jr. High School Baseball	78	1	2
High School/Jr. High School Softball	72	2	2
High School/Jr. High School Soccer (Boys)	83	1	2
High School/Jr. High School Soccer (Girls)	84	1	2
High School/Jr. High School Field Hockey	93	1	2
High School/Jr. High School Tennis	78	0	4
High School/Jr. High School Cross Country	97	1	1
Walking Trails	N/A	1	1
Playgrounds/Playscapes	N/A	4	8
Pool & Amenities	N/A	2	2

Source: Nafis & Young report/Parks and Recreation Director

\*Includes 4 Fields at Memorial Field

\*\*Includes 2 Temporary Fields at Canton Firehouse

N/A = Not Available

## **8.10 Summary**

The construction and maintenance of community facilities and the provision of community services accounts for roughly one third of the Town's annual budget. Canton will experience significant growth in the coming decade, placing intense pressure on these facilities and programs to meet the demand for quality, cost-effective services. The Town must be creative in its pursuit of funding for capital projects; aggressive in its pursuit of additional tax and other revenue to pay for annual expenditures; and supportive of the efforts of volunteers, without who's help, many programs would not exist. Canton should support a growing interest in legislation to enable impact fees on new residential developments, to help defray the cost of added demand on infrastructure such as schools, roads and drainage facilities that these developments generate.

With the new Library/Community Center and new Police Station, the Town is poised to handle the anticipated demands that will be placed upon these facilities well into the future. The schools, athletic facilities, and other Town facilities are inadequate for their respective tasks and will all need significant improvements during the coming decade.

## **8.11 Goals, Policies, and Recommendations**

### **Goals**

- Provide services that meet residents' needs. Maintain, improve and add to existing facilities and levels of service as financial and public support allows.

### **Policies**

- Improve the effectiveness of Town facilities through improved management and maintenance.
- Encourage volunteer efforts and participation in the provision of both public and private community services.
- Homeowners and businesses should play a more proactive role in protecting their property in the event of fire. Homeowners should be financially accountable for false burglar/fire alarms.
- Reliable water supplies should be located in close proximity to new residential developments to effectively fight fires.
- When siting future public facilities, take into account the nature of the public function, impact on environment and neighborhood, access, appearance and coordination with other goals and policies.

- Pursue outside financial sources to supplement Town plans to build, expand, or implement facilities or services.

## **Recommendations**

- The Volunteer Fire and Emergency Medical Services and the Planning Commission should develop standards for fire fighting water sources; public and private roads; as well as private driveways and bridges. (Volunteer Fire and Emergency Medical Services, Planning Commission)
- The Town should adopt a false alarm ordinance to improve the effectiveness of the police and volunteer fire services. (Board of Selectmen)
- Relocate the Board of Education offices to the former Police Station to free much needed educational space in the Canton Intermediate School. (Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance)
- Continue to make improvements to the Town Hall to address critical space needs and improve customer service. (Board of Selectmen)
- Continue to make improvements to the Town web page and consider other online services to improve customer service and reduce trips to Town Hall. (Board of Selectmen, Webmaster)
- Encourage expansion of dial-a-ride program. (Board of Selectmen, Commission on Aging, Senior Services)
- Expand the Town Highway Garage while consolidating the facilities away from the Farmington River to afford limited recreational opportunities along the river. Consider relocating to a new, expanded facility if opportunities to cost-effectively do so present themselves before further investment in the existing site is required. (Board of Selectmen)
- Continue to pursue funding and plan for the development of a Lawton Road recreational facility, the extension of the Farmington River Trail and other recreational facilities to meet growing demand. (Board of Selectmen, Park & Recreation Commission, Friends of Canton Park & Recreation)
- If raised in the State Legislature, actively support enabling legislation to allow for impact fees on new residential development to help defray the cost of associated capital improvements such as parks, roads, sewers and schools. (Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Planning Commission, Town Planner)

## **9.0 UTILITIES**

### **9.1 Water Supply**

Potable water is supplied in Canton by private on-site wells and by a central water supply that provides treated surface water. The central water system serves most, but not all, of the built-up areas of the Route 44/Route 179/Dowd-Maple Avenue triangle, including Collinsville and Huckleberry Hill. Private on-site wells serve the remaining areas of town, particularly north of Route 44.

#### **Central Water System**

The Connecticut Water Company (CWC) supplies water to Collinsville, Huckleberry Hill, and the Route 44/Route 179/Dowd-Maple Avenue triangle, except for a significant gap on Route 44 between Route 179 and Old Canton Road. The company also serves adjacent parts of Avon and Burlington. CWC provides water for residential, commercial, and industrial purposes as well as for fire protection. The effectiveness of the central system depends upon sufficient sources of supply, treatment to meet federal and state drinking water standards, and a distribution system of pipes, pumps, and storage sufficient to meet demand.

The Nepaug Reservoir is the sole source for all of CWC's water. Prior to 1992, CWC also used water from wells along Huckleberry Hill. However, the new pumping station along Cemetery Road enabled CWC to deactivate the wells and rely completely on the reservoir. Total reliance on the one water source could pose a danger if the source were to become contaminated. During a recent incident regarding the possible contamination of the Nepaug Reservoir, the CWC was able to temporarily open connections to the Avon Water Company until the crisis was over. The CWC needs to address this issue on a more permanent basis, as the Avon Water Company facilities are not designed to handle the water needs of both towns over a prolonged period of time.

The Metropolitan District Commission owns, operates, and maintains the Nepaug Reservoir and its associated water treatment facilities. The MDC has an agreement with the Connecticut Water Company to supply it with up to 0.65 million gallons of water per day.

In 1993, the Connecticut Water Company completed its most recent Water Supply Plan. This document is a long-term plan for the company and describes existing conditions, short-term and long-term projected needs, and capital improvements to the system. As of 1990, the Connecticut Water Company provided potable water to approximately 24% of Canton's households. Table 9.1 highlights the residential service connections by town.

**Table 9.1**  
**1990-2000 Residential Population Served – Collinsville System**

Town	# Connections	# Housing Units	Service Ratio
Canton	784	3,323	24%
Avon	138	5,709	2%
Burlington	41	2,372	2%
<b>TOTAL-1990</b>	<b>963</b>	<b>11,404</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>TOTAL-2000</b>	<b>1,213</b>		

Source: Connecticut Water Company

According to the CWC, the number of residential connections throughout the Collinsville system increased by 26% to 1,213 connections in 2000. A breakdown of users by town was not available for 2000 data, however. In addition to residential customers, CWC provides water to commercial, industrial and municipal customers.

The Connecticut Water Company maintains over 20 miles of water pipes, all of varying sizes, ages, and materials, as part of the Collinsville system. All mains installed or replaced since 1970, however, are cement lined ductile iron pipes. In addition to pipes, the distribution and supply system includes two 0.20 million gallon/day storage tanks, three hydropneumatic tanks, and one pumping station. A new water storage tank was recently completed on Huckleberry Hill. The existing water mains are along or south of Route 44. At this time, no water expansions north of Route 44 are proposed or anticipated.

**Table 9.2**  
**Actual and Projected Water Consumption by User Category**

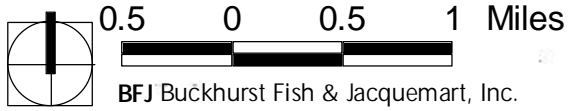
Year	Residential (mgd)	Commercial/Industrial (mgd)	Public Authority/Non-Revenue/Misc. Water (mgd)	Cumulative Total Average Daily Production (mgd)
1996	0.227	0.069	0.091	0.385
2010	0.266	0.106	0.083	0.455

Note: mgd means millions of gallons per day

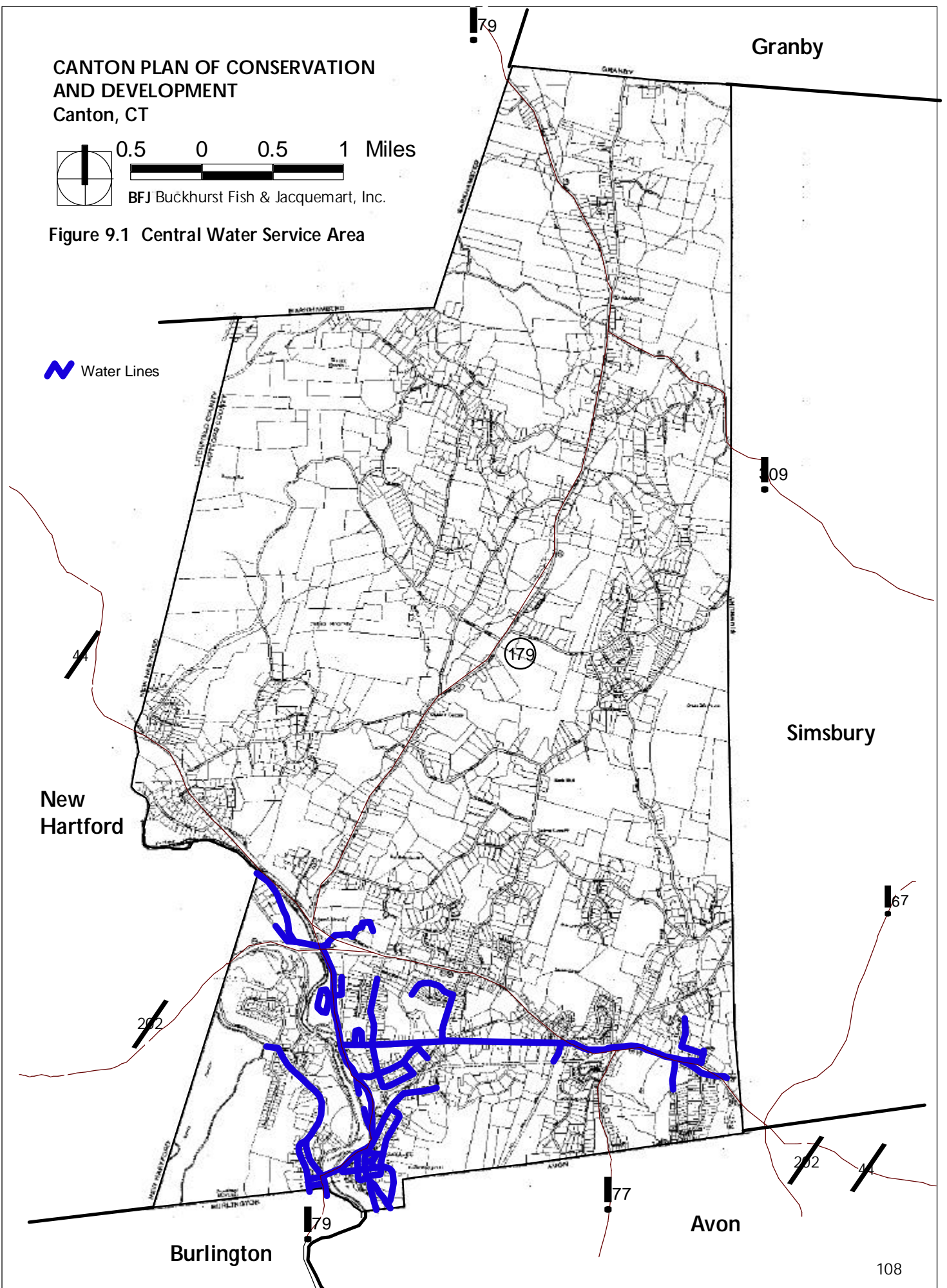
Source: 2010 Data from Connecticut Water Company Water Supply Plan Update, 1993

The existing distribution system is adequate to handle existing daily and projected demand. The CWC is currently using much less water than the 0.65 million gallons per day (mgd) that the MDC has agreed to provide. In 1996, the projected yearly average day demand for water equaled .385 mgd and projections for 2010 suggest a need for .455 mgd. Table 2 shows the actual water demand for 1996 and the projected demand for 2010.

**CANTON PLAN OF CONSERVATION  
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**Figure 9.1 Central Water Service Area**



“Safe Yield” is another term to measure the adequate supply of water. According to the CWC 1993 Plan, the term safe yield is defined as “the maximum quantity of water which can be withdrawn daily during a drought period which recurs, on average, once in a hundred years.” The Metropolitan District Commission has established the safe yield of the Nepaug Reservoir to be 21.5 million gallons per day. Of that, 0.65 is guaranteed to the Connecticut Water Company. Therefore, even during times of drought, the CWC has an ample supply of water to serve Canton residents.

Although there is adequate water to serve additional residents, any extension of the water system is paid for by local users. One exception to this policy was the construction of the Secret Lake water main. Constructed in 1994 using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, this water main provided potable water to an entire neighborhood suffering from serious groundwater contamination.

In order to safeguard the public drinking supply, the Metropolitan District Commission owns the property surrounding the reservoir. Visitors may use the lands for passive recreation, but the land will not be subdivided or developed in a manner that would adversely affect the reservoir’s water quality.

### **On-Site Water Supply**

Buildings and water users in the remainder of the Town, the vast majority of Canton, rely on individual on-site wells. Homes that rely on individual wells pump water to the surface. Significant concentrations of groundwater are found in aquifers. Aquifers are like underground lakes that are recharged when rainwater filters down through the soil. The Connecticut State Plan of Development (1998-2003) identifies one aquifer site in town, under Secret Lake. Like surface water reservoirs, groundwater is susceptible to contamination; however, groundwater has the advantage of being filtered through many layers of soil.

Successful reliance upon individual wells depends upon protection of groundwater from contamination and a proper balance between quantity of water drawn and natural recharge of the groundwater supply. Safe and secure use of individual wells necessitates limitations in land density (lot size) and site design. A lot size of less than one acre per house is generally untenable when the house relies on individual wells and on-site septic disposal. A larger lot size may be needed because of soil and slope conditions and groundwater supply experience.

Community water supply systems, a well and distribution system serving separate buildings and properties in a neighborhood or project may be a possible water supply solution. Community systems are subject to State Department of Public Utility Control and Department of Public Health regulation. Protection and

reservation of high-yield groundwater aquifers for potential community systems should be considered to address problems that may arise from well failures and alternate land use patterns.

The state recognizes the need for safe drinking water and has adopted legislation to safeguard the water supply. The Connecticut legislature adopted Public Act 89-305, as amended 90-275, "An Act Concerning the Aquifer Protection Areas." According to the law, any existing hazardous materials and any toxic chemicals in the aquifer recharge area or public watershed should be carefully managed and eliminated wherever possible.

When new subdivisions rely on community water systems or individual wells, fire protection is a concern. Fire hydrants connected to a central water supply ensure adequate protection and water availability. However, in the more rural areas, the majority of the town, this is not the case. In order to establish a level of safety and security, the fire chief should review all subdivision applications and make recommendations as to the need for a cistern or fire pond and its location. Any cistern or fire pond shall be constructed in accordance with the most recent edition of the National Fire Protection Association Standard and Standard on Water Supplies for Suburban and Rural Fire Fighting and shall include dry hydrants as approved by the fire chief or his/her designee.

## **9.2 Public Watersheds and Ground Water**

Public water supplies or individual wells deliver potable water to residential homes. Canton's public water supply comes from the Nepaug Reservoir, which straddles the Canton/New Hartford town line. Reservoirs are part of public watersheds, and the land around the reservoir requires special legislation to safeguard land uses in order to prevent activities that may result in the possible contamination of the reservoir. The Metropolitan District Commission owns a significant amount of the land surrounding the reservoir as a means to control land uses near the water body and help ensure the quality of the drinking water. Homes that rely on individual wells pump ground water to the surface. Significant concentrations of underground water are called aquifers. Aquifers are like underground lakes, which are recharged when rainwater filters down through the soil. The Connecticut State Plan of Development identifies one aquifer area within Canton – underneath the Secret Lake part of town. Like surface water reservoirs, groundwater is susceptible to contamination. However, groundwater has the advantage of being filtered through many layers of soil before being recycled.

As Canton's population grows and new buildings are constructed, care must be taken to ensure that land uses do not adversely impact water supplies. This means that chemicals and toxic substances should not be allowed near drinking water supplies and that aquifer recharge areas should not be substantially paved or significantly built over so as to adversely impact their important function.



### 9.3 Sewer Supply

Sewage disposal in Canton is accomplished through individual on-site sewage disposal systems (septic systems) and a central sanitary sewer service system. The Farmington Valley Health District regulates the installation of on-site septic systems and the public sewers operate under the direction of the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) and the Board of Selectman. Canton's sewerage area lies generally south of and along Route 44. The WPCA enters into contractual agreements with other towns and sewage from areas of Avon and Burlington is treated at the Canton Wastewater Pollution Control Facility (WPCF). The WPCA does not treat all of the sewerage areas within Canton, however. The Secret Lake area of Town sends its sewage, by agreement, through the Town of Avon to the Farmington wastewater treatment plant.

One of the main determinants in how a community develops is the presence or absence of a sewer system. On-site sewage disposal relies on soil capabilities to adequately treat and filter household effluent. Some soils, such as those containing exposed bedrock, wetlands, and/or poor drainage, impose serious restrictions on the ability of the soil to process the wastewater and therefore impose restrictions on development patterns and land use. The presence of sewers removes these natural restrictions and therefore may allow development patterns and densities that the underlying soils would not support. This needs to be carefully considered when sewer line extensions are proposed.

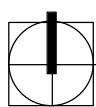
The Farmington Valley Health District reviews the design and installation of septic systems to insure compliance with standards established by the State of Connecticut Public Health Code. Difficult soil conditions north of Route 44 tend to support a low-density land use pattern. Creative developments that utilize package treatment plants or community septic systems would necessitate management by the Water Pollution Control Authority.

The Canton WPCF and its associated sewer system were built in 1965 and upgraded and expanded in the early 1990s. The plant has an average capacity of 0.8 million gallons/day (mgd) with a current annual average flow rate of approximately 0.55 mgd. However, development currently approved or proposed could increase the design average flow rate to 0.76 mgd. In addition to projects that have approval, there are areas of Town with small lots, poor soils and aging septic systems that may not be capable of being repaired or replaced. In order to connect these areas of Town to the wastewater treatment plant, planning for the extra capacity should begin soon. Once the WPCF's operating flow rate exceeds 90% of the design flow rate for 180 days, planning must begin to determine how to accept the additional flow. The WPCA should consider initiating this planning process in advance of the flows actually reaching these levels.

Three main trunk lines bring effluent to the wastewater treatment facility. According to the WPCA's engineers:

- The Town Bridge Ramp Station has a rated peak flow capacity of 2.25 mgd and recent (April & May 2001) monitoring indicated a peak flow rate of 0.178 mgd, indicating considerable excess capacity within this line.
- The Collinsville/Burlington sewershed receives wastewater from Collinsville, Burlington, and Avon and had a measured peak flow of 0.688 mgd with a pipe capacity of 1.0 mgd.
- The main Canton trunk line into the plant has excess capacity. However, the upper Dowd Avenue segment of the sewershed will be receiving the majority of the large-scale ongoing and proposed commercial developments. This portion of the line is a smaller diameter pipe installed at the minimum allowable slope. As additional development is proposed, increasing the capacity of this segment may be required.

**CANTON PLAN OF CONSERVATION  
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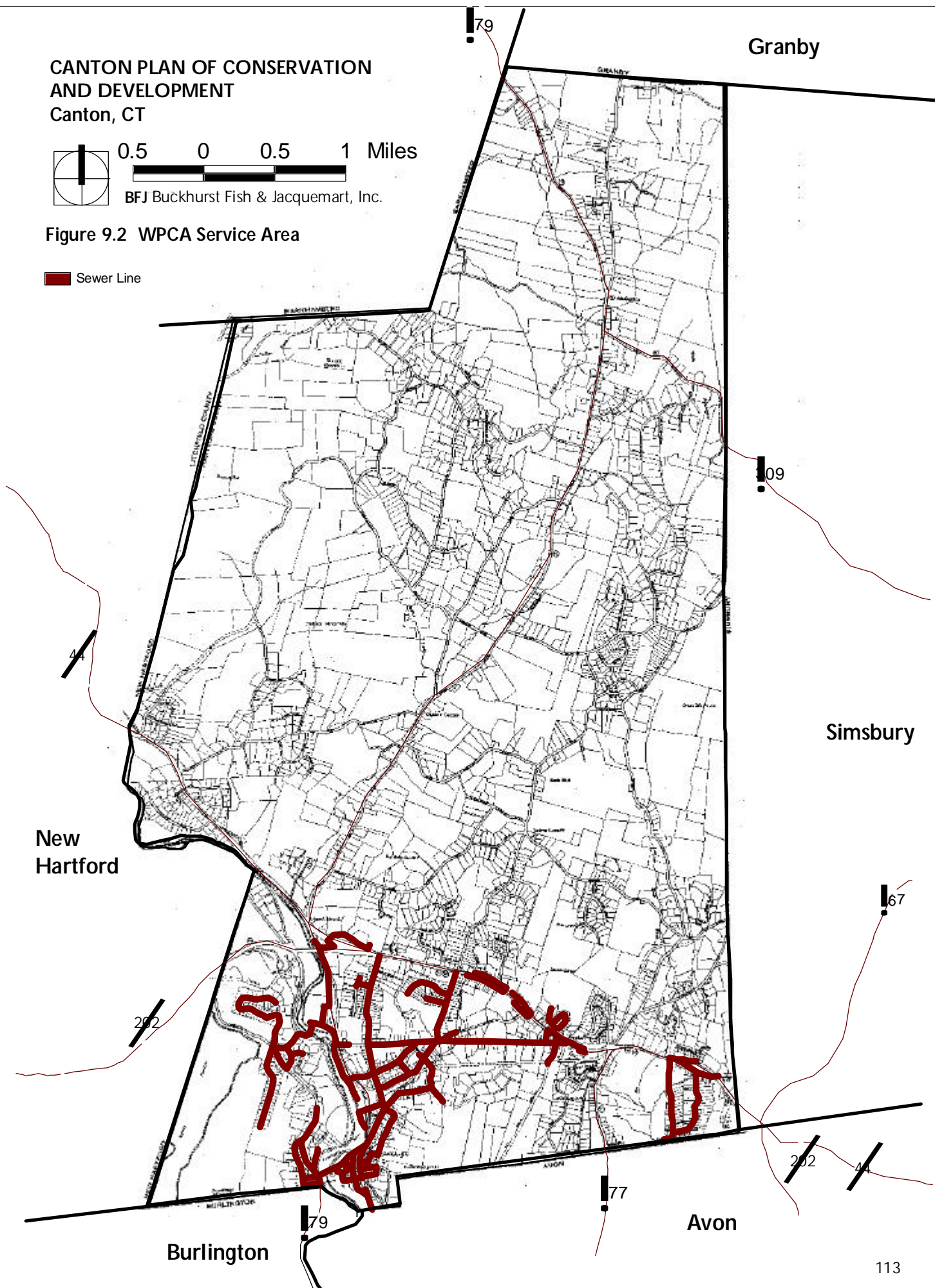


0.5 0 0.5 1 Miles

BFI Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.

**Figure 9.2 WPCA Service Area**

 Sewer Line



The WPCA has recently adopted a “reservation of flow” program in which a developer can secure a guarantee of sewer service once approvals are secured from the other Town agencies. Unless this “reservation” is secured, there is no guarantee that capacity will be available for an indefinite period because existing capacity is determined on a first-come first-serve basis. This policy will necessitate close interaction between the Land Use agencies and the WPCA.

In order to maximize the economic benefits of the remaining sewer capacity and minimize the need for additional capacity, a clear delineation of the sewer shed area should be established. With the exception of those residentially developed areas with the potential for irreparable septic systems immediately north of Route 44, the remaining land north of Route 44 should be designated as a sewer avoidance area. The undeveloped land on Sweetheart Mountain, generally west of Dunne Avenue and south of Freedom Drive, and the area west of the Cherry Brook should also be designated as a sewer avoidance area. Bristol’s Farm, immediately west of the Cherry Brook, is recommended for a small area study to determine its most appropriate future land-use. The results of that study may warrant its exclusion from the sewer avoidance area.

The WPCA manages the treatment plant and collection system on a “user pays” basis, which means that the users are responsible for repairs and upgrades to the system. Past discussions regarding any Town financial support for the treatment plant have been controversial, with those residents who have on-site septic systems generally opposed to funding costs associated with the treatment plant. One way to expand the user base of the treatment plant would be to allow septage pumped from on-site septic tanks to be treated at the WPCF. This service could reduce the cost of pumping out septic tanks and disposing of the waste by providing a local disposal destination. Currently, the sewage treatment plant does not have the capability of treating septage. If the plant could provide this service to those portions of Town not connected to the sewer system, then the associated costs of any future upgrades could be spread among a larger user base, perhaps including the Town’s ability to bond for capital improvements.

One exception to the “user pays” system is for the Town to use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds to extend the sewer system. CDBG funds were used in 1996 to construct a pressurized sewer line on Powder Mill Road to allow a manufacturer to expand, provided that new employees are hired from a pool of low- and moderate-income applicants. This same sewer line will serve a large affordable housing development, furthering the goals of the CDBG program.

The ongoing capital maintenance and planning program must take into account any limitations in the collection and treatment system with the goal of providing sufficient treatment capacity to allow for a diverse mix of development that would enhance Canton's property tax base while providing for a well-rounded community and protecting the Farmington River.

## 9.4 Other Services and Utilities

### Natural Gas

Connecticut Natural Gas provides natural gas service within the Albany Turnpike commercial district and points south but extensions are needed to serve the entire length of Route 44 between Simsbury and Route 179. The existing lines provide adequate pressure and consistent service to local customers.

### Electricity

Connecticut Light & Power delivers electricity to Canton and is responsible for the upkeep of the power lines and poles. Canton homes and businesses can now choose from a growing number of power generators and aggregators that offer a choice of rates, and for the environmentally conscious consumer, even a choice of fuel source.

### Wireless Communications

Most major wireless communication service providers have coverage within Canton utilizing five existing towers, with another tower pending before the Connecticut Siting Council (CSC). The CSC has jurisdiction over the siting of all telecommunication towers except town-owned towers carrying municipal antennas. The CSC must objectively balance the statewide public need for adequate and reliable services with the need to protect the environment and ecology of the state. Wireless communication coverage has been uneven but with two new towers coming online and improvements to existing towers, coverage should improve significantly town-wide.

Telecommunication towers are currently located at:

- Dyer Avenue and Route 44
- East Hill Road and Hoffman Road
- Canton Springs Road at the Volunteer Fire Department
- Cherry Brook Road at the Volunteer Fire Department
- Powder Mill Road and Ramp Road

## High Technology

Internet access is available through dial-up, ISDN, T-1, T-3, and broadband cable. Comcast's digital cable modem service is limited to residential use only. Fiber-optic lines are available in the Canton Commerce Center. Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) service is currently unavailable in Canton due to limitations in the length of DSL lines but SBC/SNET now has the ability to install neighborhood nodes to extend DSL service into areas that were previously unreachable. The Town is working with the Metro Hartford Economic Growth Council to justify the need for DSL service to SBC/SNET.

### 9.5 Summary

Significant growth in recent years has impacted the Town's utility infrastructure. Canton has adequate supplies of potable drinking water from the Nepaug Reservoir and from underground water sources for private wells. Though the majority of homeowners rely on on-site septic systems, Collinsville, Huckleberry Hill and the Route 44, Route 179, Dowd-Maple Avenue triangle are connected to a central sewer system. This system has adequate capacity for the immediate future, though increased development threatens to push the facility beyond its present capacity. The WPCA will have to work with the Town to find the money to fund any enlargement of the system.

Cellular phone service is relatively poor within Canton and high-speed Internet connections are limited. The Canton Commerce Center is the only area in Town with a fiber optics line and DSL service is not planned for the Town in the near future.

As Canton continues to grow and compete with other areas, it will have to make sure that its infrastructure has the capacity for growth and remains competitive.

### 9.6 Goals, Policies, and Recommendations

#### Goals

- Assure a safe and sufficient potable water supply for all types of building development.
- Upgrade the supply and distribution capacity of the public water supply system to meet identified current and projected future needs.
- If necessary, increase the capacity of the Canton sewage treatment plant to accept sewage from within and adjacent to the "triangle."

## **Policies**

- When widespread groundwater contamination occurs, public water lines should be extended where necessary. Community Development Block Grant funds have been used in the past to extend public water into areas affected by groundwater pollution as well as to repair or replace individual wells affected by contamination. The Town should continue to avail itself of these funds in the future as conditions warrant.
- With the exception of existing residential areas immediately north of Route 44 that may experience irreparable septic systems in the future, and with the possible exception of Bristol's Farm after completion of a small area study, the areas north of Route 44, west of the Cherry Brook, west of Dunne Avenue and south of Freedom Drive shall be designated as sewer avoidance areas.
- Water extensions should be discouraged from those areas designated as conservation and rural areas in the State Plan for Conservation and Development.

## **Recommendations**

- The Town should continue to invest in high technology infrastructure (fiber optics, high-speed cable, cellular service) that will encourage additional investment in high-tech industries. The Town should also continue to campaign to bring high technology products and services to the Town and its businesses. (Board of Selectmen, Economic Development Agency)
- Require all future utilities to be laid underground. Work with utilities when making repairs or upgrades to consider placing existing lines underground. (Planning Commission, Zoning Commission, utilities)
- Water and sewer extensions should be discouraged where zoning allows only low-density development, especially the AR3 zone. (Planning Commission)
- Conduct a continuing on-site sewage disposal educational program under the leadership of the WPCA in cooperation with the Farmington Valley Health District. (WPCA , FVHD)
- Conduct an analysis of the entire sewer system to determine if adequate capacity exists for the full build-out of the sewer shed area. (Town Planner, WPCA, Zoning Commission, Planning Commission)



- Institute a joint committee between the Town and the WPCA to study cost-effective ways to expand the existing system, direct benefits to the Town of expanding the system, and means of financing any expansion. (Board of Selectmen, WPCA)
- Central water service should be extended to intensive commercial areas, especially along Route 44. (Connecticut Water Company)

## **10.0 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE**

### **10.1 Introduction**

Canton's 25 square miles contain a wide diversity of natural environments, including wooded uplands, Traprock and Amphibolite ridges, riverfronts, and inland wetlands. Canton's undeveloped land plays a critical role in shaping the Town's image, appearance, and attractiveness. Uplands provide passive recreational opportunities such as walking and hiking. They also provide wildlife habitat for a variety of species. Traprock and Amphibolite ridges represent a unique and localized geologic formation with specialized plant species that add to the local identity. The Farmington River offers recreational opportunities, and outside of Collinsville, an undeveloped riverine corridor adds to the Town's rural nature and supports wildlife habitat. The abundant opportunities available to Canton residents within a small geographic area enable residents to interact with and enjoy the Town's natural assets. According to the 2001 town-wide planning survey results, "natural environment" received the second highest number of responses for "best-liked" element in Canton. "Protecting the natural environment" was the number-one choice for town-wide objectives.

### **10.2 Inland Wetlands and Waterbodies**

The Farmington River is the principle water resource in Canton. Its tributaries include the Nepaug River, Cherry Brook, and Rattlesnake (Ned's) Brook. Connected to these tributaries are smaller streams and wetland areas that are interconnected with the entire ecology of the area. The tributaries follow the Town's landscape, collecting rainwater from central and northern Canton and carrying the water through the Town to the Farmington River. For most of their lengths, these watercourses pass through relatively rural lands, though increased residential development poses some danger to water quality. Development within the watershed may increase the rate of erosion and storm water runoff, adversely impacting habitat within the river and streams and along their edges.

Depending on your point of view, Canton is either blessed or cursed with an abundance of inland wetlands. There is an old adage describing land in Canton that says: "If it isn't steep, it's wet." Before wetlands were recognized for their ecological diversity and other benefits, there was tremendous pressure to encroach upon or completely fill them to create developable land. However, educational efforts demonstrated the value of these areas for flood storage; as habitat for a diversity of plant and animal species; for groundwater recharge; and for cleansing storm water runoff. With the passage of the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act in the early 1970s, towns were able to regulate activity within and adjacent to wetlands and watercourses. Canton's Inland Wetland and Watercourses Agency and its agent review development applications for compliance with their regulations.

Canton is also a member of the Farmington River Coordinating Committee that monitors the 14 miles of federally designated wild and scenic Farmington River between the Massachusetts border and the Canton/New Hartford town line. The wild and scenic river designation mandates the creation of a cooperative river management plan; precludes federally licensed dams; and prohibits federal assistance to projects that diminish the outstanding qualities of the river. The purpose of the Coordinating Committee is to promote long-term protection of the River through information sharing and the coordination of local actions to provide consistent regulations.

### **10.3 Steep Slopes and Ridgelines**

Like the Farmington River, mountains and hills form many natural boundaries with surrounding towns and shape the visual character of the Town. Ridges and hillsides such as Huckleberry Hill, Sweetheart Mountain, Mount Horr, and Onion Mountain provide a visual contrast to the lowlands of the Cherry Brook and Farmington River Valleys. Many of these hillsides, while not generally suited for development, are valued for their scenic quality as well as their native flora and fauna.

Many of these ridges consist of "Traprock" or "Amphibolite" rock. Rising from 300 feet above the ground, the Traprock Ridges run north from Long Island Sound to the New Hampshire border. The ridges, which were formed by an ancient volcanic lava flow, have dramatic, precipitous cliffs to the west and soft gradual slopes to the east. Glacial action and eons of weathering have produced a fragile, windswept environment with thin soil and plants not found elsewhere in the valley. Because of their prominent hillsides and unique geological content, the Connecticut General Assembly has recognized Traprock ridges and Amphibolite ridges; authorizing municipalities to restrict building activity, clear cutting, and quarrying within ridgeline setback areas defined as:

- 1) a line that parallels the ridgeline at a distance of 150 feet on the more wooded side of the ridge, and
- 2) the contour line where a ridge of less than 50 percent is maintained for 50 feet or more on the rockier side of the slope, mapped pursuant to Section 8-2.<sup>5</sup>

These relatively pristine ridges provide an essential habitat for birds, animals, and insects. Vernal pools on the eastern slopes provide breeding grounds for some rare and endangered salamanders. Because these ridgelines can be seen from long distances, their aesthetic qualities are also an important asset. Development should

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<sup>5</sup> Act 98-105 Connecticut General Statutes

be restricted above elevations that would interfere with the ridgelines' scenic qualities. Creative development, including cluster subdivisions, should be encouraged for any subdivision that impacts these slopes or ridgelines. Through selective cutting, careful siting and thoughtful selection of building materials and colors, residential development, complete with scenic vistas, can be accommodated on these ridgelines without ruining the scenic beauty of the larger landscape. Towers, clear-cutting of trees, and other visually obtrusive elements should be discouraged. Large tracts of Huckleberry Hill, as well as Onion and Ratlum Mountains have already been preserved, ensuring scenic views of these hillsides into the future. Many others are still at risk of clear-cutting or development.

#### **10.4 Air Quality**

Air quality is a concern for local residents. Since the previous Plan of Development was adopted, the state has improved its air quality and now meets health-related standards for five of the seven major pollutants regulated under the federal Clean Air Act. Reported air emissions of toxic substances declined from 12,700 tons in 1988 to 4,000 tons in 1994.<sup>6</sup>

The primary air quality concern in Connecticut is ozone. Ozone is a byproduct of the chemical reaction between heat, sunlight, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen Oxides (NOx). Motor vehicles, paints, solvents, chemical plants, and gasoline stations all produce VOCs while motor vehicles, power plants, and burning fossil fuels create NOx. Ozone is a prime ingredient in smog, which, when inhaled, can aggravate a number of health conditions including acute respiratory problems and asthma. The Greater Hartford Area has been labeled a serious ozone non-attainment area by the Environmental Protection Agency, meaning that the region exceeds federal limits. Since 1991, however, the state has worked to lower ozone in the air through measures including cleaner gasoline and new automobile and power plant emission standards.

Measures to reduce air pollutants have been counter-balanced by the growing number of motor vehicles in the area. Motor vehicles represent the dominant non-point source of pollutants in the state. Given current trends, it is projected that the number of vehicle miles driven will continue to grow into the future. As gasoline prices continue to rise and tougher emission standards are enacted, it is expected that cleaner, more efficient electric and hybrid gas-electric cars will continue to gain favor. Through a diverse economy that provides opportunities to live, work, shop and play in Canton and initiatives such as the Farmington River Trail, dependence on the automobile and the pollution they create can be reduced significantly.

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<sup>6</sup> Connecticut Office of Policy and Management

Despite our efforts, the state is subject to pollution carried by winds from metropolitan areas hundreds of miles away. Therefore, meeting federal air quality standards will greatly depend upon federal legislation and improvements made in other states as well.

## **10.5 Open Space**

In November 1999, *The Board of Selectmen's Open Space Committee* was temporarily established for the purpose of developing strategies for the identification, acquisition, and preservation of open space land. As a recent and comprehensive reflection of the Town's attitude concerning open space, the *Open Space Committee Report, Findings of the Board of Selectmen's Open Space Committee* has been updated and incorporated into this document.

Open space comes in many forms, depending on ownership (public, private, non-profit), accessibility (public park with parking lot versus hilly hiking trail), and intended use (soccer field versus endangered habitat). Perhaps the most ingrained use of open space parcels in the public consciousness is for recreational purposes, which can be broken down into active and passive recreational uses. Active recreation involves intensive use of ball fields, courts, playgrounds, and other structured recreational activities. Passive recreation, such as fishing, bird watching, hiking, and canoeing enjoys open space land in its natural state.

Open space parcels perform many other beneficial functions besides recreation. Open space is often used to preserve active farmland, environmentally sensitive areas, scenic roadsides, wildlife habitat, ridgelines and scenic views. Open space may also serve as a buffer between incompatible land-uses such as residential and industrial, and between neighborhoods as well. A controversial benefit of open space preservation is the effect that it has on the local economy. Several studies and analysis performed by the Committee have determined that open space can have a long-term, positive effect on the Town's tax structure. When one considers that new residential construction usually does not generate enough property taxes to offset the additional demand for educational and general services, it is easy to see that open space preservation in lieu of new residential construction can be cost effective.

Open space benefits are not limited to the community, however. Individual owners may benefit from open space planning. Farmers may sell their development rights and continue to farm their land. Estate planning may lower the burden of estate taxes in the future. Easements and land donations may also be used to reduce income taxes, capital gains taxes, and property taxes. On a temporary basis, Public Act 490 allows land to be "preserved" for ten years in return for local property tax abatements.

Ownership of open space parcels can take many forms ranging from fee-simple ownership to conservation easements. Within Canton, the most common open space owners are the State of Connecticut, the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC), the Town of Canton, the Canton Land Conservation Trust (CLCT), and private homeowners' associations. The preservation of open space land, however, does not guarantee public access to that land. For the most part, state- or town-owned land invites public access, while non-profit owners or homeowners' associations may restrict or even deny public access. If access is allowed, use by the public may be restricted to certain parts of the property, times of the day, and uses, such as walking but not dirt-bike riding.

## **Boards and Commissions**

The preservation of open space in Canton is a coordinated effort by many Town boards and commissions. The Board of Selectmen (BOS), Conservation Commission, Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency (IWWA), Planning Commission, and Zoning Commission all play vital roles in preserving open space.

The Board of Selectmen appoints land use commissioners, reviews open space policies, recommends adoption of open space ordinances to the Town Meeting and accepts open space parcels.

The Conservation Commission conducts site walks with developers looking to subdivide land, identifies desirable open space areas and makes recommendations to the Planning Commission.

The IWWA acts somewhat independently of the other boards with respect to open space. In its efforts to protect significant wetlands and watercourses, the IWWA often requires conservation easements in new subdivisions, which may be in addition to any open spaces mandated by the Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission lies at the center of the current open space process. It legislates open space policy, administers the subdivision process, approves open space set asides, and reviews the Board of Selectmen's recreation and open space initiatives.

The Zoning Commission works with the Planning Commission to provide the legal framework for open space subdivisions through its zoning regulations. It can also promote the goals of the Plan of Conservation and Development by affecting change through general zoning policy.

## Open Space Tools

There are a multitude of open space acquisition tools available to the Town and interested residents. Some tools are available under existing legislation while others would require new laws and expenditures to bring about.

### Existing Laws

Conventional Subdivisions – The Planning Commission currently plays the largest role in open space acquisition, requiring that in all conventional subdivisions, fifteen (15) percent of all land must be set aside as open space.

Open Space Subdivision – There is an optional means of achieving larger open space set-asides approaching 30 percent of the land in a subdivision. Open space subdivisions allow developers to minimize road construction and reduce lot sizes by 25 percent in return for donating up to 30 percent of the subdivision as open space. The Planning Commission could encourage greater use of the open space subdivision by allowing more flexibility in the layout of lots and by making conventional subdivisions a more difficult alternative. The following table summarizes the open space requirements of neighboring towns.

**Table 10.1**  
**Subdivision Set-Aside Requirements**

<b>Town</b>	<b>Conventional Subdivision</b>	<b>Open Space Subdivision</b>
Avon	Up to 5% for parcels $\geq$ 10 acres	Clustering permitted with no fixed %
Burlington	Up to 15%	N/A
Canton	Up to 15%	Up to 30%
Farmington	10%	Mandatory clustering if protected resources are present, no minimum %
Granby	20% for parcels $\geq$ 6 acres or $\geq$ 6%	50% for cluster subdivisions
New Hartford	Up to 10%	N/A
Simsbury	20%	N/A

Source: Board of Selectmen's Open Space Committee Report

Fees in Lieu of Open Space – There may be instances where the land offered for open space has no intrinsic value due to its size, quality, or location. In these cases, recently adopted regulations allow the Planning Commission to accept a fee in lieu of open space equal to ten percent of the fair market value of the land prior to subdivision, in accordance with state statutes.

Density-Based Zoning - The Zoning Commission recently adopted standard formulas for calculating density in response to the criticism that developers can gain additional lots as a result of the reduced lot size and frontage requirements of open-space subdivisions. The density factors apply to both conventional and open space subdivisions, taking into account the areas devoted to roads and open space.

#### Possible Amendments to Existing Laws

Real Estate Taxes - During the 1999 Session of the Connecticut Legislature, an unsuccessful bill was proposed that would apply a nominal transfer tax to the sale of real estate, to be used exclusively for the purchase of open-space by the participating Town. Proponents of the bill will likely continue to pursue this initiative. Another form of open-space tax that would require an act of the legislature would be to apply a nominal tax surcharge to the real estate portion of the property tax, to be used exclusively for the purchase of open-space.

Soil Based Zoning -Another less common practice is soil-based zoning which, in conjunction with a density factor, allows lots to be reduced as small as the soil's ability to handle on-site wells and septic systems will allow. Any remaining land is set aside as open-space.

Ridgeline Protection – Another tool within the purview of the Board of Selectmen and Zoning Commission is ridgeline protection. There is enabling legislation in place to allow Canton to regulate development of many prominent ridges in Town. The purpose of ridgeline protection is not to prohibit the development of ridges but to regulate development in such a manner as to balance the property rights of the owner against the community's desire to protect the ridgeline and its impact on community character. This may be achieved through regulations that control the color and material of exterior finishes and limit the amount of tree clearing. The results, as demonstrated in Simsbury, can be very effective when compared to areas such as Avon Mountain or Sunrise Ridge where these measures were not used.

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) - Development rights represent the property rights that a landowner has to subdivide and develop his/her parcel. The State of Connecticut allows PDR and it is often used to protect agricultural land. For example, rather than subdivide the property to recoup a farmer's investment in the land, a farmer will simply sell the development rights, leaving him/her with the land and a lump sum payment. Once the development rights are sold, the land may not be developed in the future. Purchasing the development rights, however, does not purchase the land. The land remains in private hands and may not be accessible to the public.



Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) – Sometimes when development rights are purchased, the local government allows those rights to be transferred or sold to another piece of property or properties. Under this scenario, the Zoning Commission must pre-designate suitable areas where one may purchase development rights (sending areas) and areas where the development rights may be used (receiving areas). Establishing density limitations within the receiving areas is a high priority to prevent abuse of the program. An added step would be to create a banking system wherein development rights can be bought, held and sold as a commodity. A property owner with a desirable piece of open-space could sell his development rights into the bank which can then be purchased at a later date by someone wishing to maximize the potential of a property in the designated reception zone.

Transfer of Residential Density - A variation on TDR is the transfer of residential density (TRD). This process leaves out the actual sale of rights between parties and typically requires both the donor and receptor parcels to be owned by the same entity. Like TDR, TRD allows the transfer of a given number of residential dwellings to a more suitable parcel, leaving the donor parcel undevelopable.

Farmland Purchase and Lease Back - Another means of protecting farmland would be to purchase the land and lease it back to the farmer. Like the purchase of development rights, this tool provides the farmer with an infusion of cash; but, when the farmer chooses not to farm anymore, the Town or other purchaser would own the land and be free to lease to another farmer or allow public access.

Despite all of the tools available to acquire funds for open-space and purchase land or development rights, the cost of doing so can still be prohibitive. There are two State programs designed to help make the acquisition of open-space and farmland easier. The Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program and the Connecticut Farmland Preservation Program both provide matching funds on a first-come, first-serve basis to towns and private non-profit entities such as the Canton Land Conservation Trust (CLCT) to purchase and preserve land. The CLCT was successful in securing a 50 percent matching grant for the purchase of land from Sun, Wind and Woodlands on Breezy Hill Road. The State is separately using these funds to acquire land near Bahre Corner and Lawton Roads to be added to Werner's Woods, which adjoins the Roaring Brook Nature Center.

Tax Incentives - The State of Connecticut offers landowners an incentive for not developing their land. Public Act 490 (PA 490) provides tax incentives to landowners to maintain their land for farming, forestry, or open space. In order to receive the tax benefit, property owners agree not to subdivide their property for a period of ten years, when the property is reassessed. If the owner should subdivide within the ten-year timeframe, then the owner must repay the difference in assessment for the intervening years. According to the Assessor, the Town has

collected penalties on several occasions in the form of a transfer tax. Table 10.2 shows the number of PA 490 acres in Canton in 1990 and 2001.

**Table 10.2**  
**PA 490 Lands (in acres)**

	<u>1990</u>	<u>2001</u>
Farm	2,578	2,013
Forest	2,545	2,677
Open Space	<u>2,861</u>	<u>1,568</u>
	7,984	6,278 <sup>7</sup>

Since 1990, approximately 1,700 acres have been returned to the tax rolls. The biggest loss came from the open space category, followed by farms. The number of acres classified as forest increased during the 1990s. As the loss of acreage in the program illustrates, this is only a temporary open space measure as there is no restriction on developing the land after the ten-year period expires.

Private donations and estate planning round out the tools for acquiring open-space. Many civic- and conservation-minded people choose to acquire or donate land for open-space. In the last few years alone, Mary Conklin made a significant donation to the CLCT and Dale Martin of the Uplands Group, LLC has acquired another significant piece of open-space to be deeded to the CLCT. Still others like Sun, Wind and Woodland have chosen to sell their property for open-space purposes rather than develop it. The benefits of estate planning and private donations have already been explained above but without educating the public about these benefits, significant opportunities to acquire open-space may be lost.

Public awareness of open-space and its benefits must be increased in order for a comprehensive open-space program to be successful. Public awareness of open-space can be significantly increased through the use of such tools as brochures, newsletters, web pages, opinion surveys, seminars and displays in places such as the Canton Library/Community Center and Sam Collins Day. A better-informed public is more likely to support future open-space initiatives and consider using such tools as open-space subdivisions, estate planning, PA 490 tax abatements, and private donations.

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<sup>7</sup> 1990 Plan of Development; Canton Assessor's Office

## Open Space Inventory

The State has established a target of 21 percent of the State's land to be preserved as open-space, with ten percent owned by the State and 11 percent owned by municipalities, quasi-public agencies and private entities. As of the year 2001, Canton has 11.7 percent of its 25 square miles preserved as open-space. Table 10.3 shows the ownership and change in acreage of protected open space lands in Canton between 1990-2001.

**Table 10.3**  
**Open Space Acreage**

	<u>1990</u>	<u>2001</u>
Canton Land Trust	670	1,125
MDC	300	300
Private Organizations	160	205
State of Connecticut	100	100
Town of Canton	<u>135</u>	<u>145</u>
	1,345	1,875

The majority of growth in open space lands came from the acquisition of properties by the Canton Land Trust. Other private landholders, such as neighborhood associations in new subdivisions, added open space acreage as well. The Town also increased its holdings of open space, though at a slower rate. While each town is not expected to mirror the State goals, one would expect that rural towns such as Canton would bring up the average while larger cities and urbanized towns would bring the average down. Based on this assumption, Canton must continue to enlarge both its public and private open-space inventory if it is to maintain its rural character.

Before acquiring additional land, we must identify the most desirable types of open-space so that we can make the most of our limited resources. The (Open Space) Committee decided that ranking desirable types of open-space would not be prudent due to the complex and subjective nature of open-space valuation. For instance, parks and athletic fields are highly valuable to the Town but they are not needed everywhere. The following categories of desirable open-space are offered in no particular order of importance.

**Recreation Land** - Our growing population is overburdening Canton's recreation facilities, leading to a need to expand and add new facilities. As land becomes available adjacent to existing recreational facilities such as Mills Pond or the Farmington River Trail, careful consideration should be given to whether such land could be used to enlarge these facilities. New opportunities for recreation facilities, such as the State sand/salt storage site on River Road, will present themselves and must be acted upon.

Linkages between existing open-space parcels as well as between residential areas and amenities are also valuable. By linking open-space parcels, vast tracts of open land can be assembled, creating significant wildlife habitat and relieving the pressure on animals that might otherwise be squeezed out, becoming a nuisance in residential areas. Interconnected open-space also affords opportunities for hiking and cross-country skiing. Linkages between residential areas and amenities are important as they may reduce the need for automobile trips and lead to a healthier lifestyle. While not necessarily providing linkages between open-space parcels, contiguous parcels may be valuable for many of the same reasons.

Endangered species habitat is critical for maintaining local and global biodiversity. The DEP has identified several general areas of concern in Canton where endangered species might reside.

Scenic vistas are important to preserving the character of the Town. Scenic road frontage, prominent ridgelines and general viewsheds are all worth protecting. For example, Huckleberry Hill, Sweetheart Mountain and Mount Horr all form prominent valley walls for Collinsville and the Route 44 corridor. Indiscriminate development of these areas would mar the landscape and, in the case of Collinsville, undo much of the effort to beautify and restore the village. Scenic roadsides with stone walls and mature canopy trees also contribute to the character of the Town and can usually be protected without significantly impacting development.

Farmland is also important for several reasons including: local food production, diversity in land use and tax base, and scenic as well as historic character. Farmland is readily developable and as small farms struggle to survive, the temptation to sell to developers for financial reasons will become stronger. Existing programs such as tax abatements and the Connecticut Farmland Preservation Program are designed to combat this problem.

Stream corridors are important for preserving access for wildlife, flood storage, scenic value and recreation. By their nature, stream corridors are oftentimes protected as a matter of course by the IWWA during the subdivision process but there may be critical areas in need of preservation that are not subject to subdivision.

There are many areas in Town that are de-facto open-space due to their natural or man-made features. Land with steep slopes in excess of 30 percent; large, clearly defined wetlands; and flood plains are all relatively safe from development. Fire ponds in subdivisions are a necessary aspect of development but have little value as open-space. As such, they should not be considered as part of any mandatory open-space set-aside.

As opportunities for acquiring open-space arise, they should be evaluated within the context of the desirable open-space categories outlined herein. Any parcel is likely to possess a combination of positive and negative attributes, which must be carefully weighed. An otherwise worthless piece of marginal land may contain an endangered species habitat or provide a vital link between areas making it valuable as open-space. Scarce resources, namely money, should be focused on critical parcels that will offer the most value for the investment, whether scenic, recreational or some other value.

The 2001 town-wide household survey asked residents if they wished to have more open space and why. Nearly 70% of those returning the survey responded that they wanted to see more open space preserved. When asked to prioritize their reasons, respondents cumulatively answered:

1. Maintain the Town's rural quality.
2. Preserve native habitat.
3. Preserve natural features.
4. Enlarge existing open space areas.

As a result of the survey, this plan recognizes that some undeveloped land may have characteristics that make preserving the property, or portions of the property, a higher priority than other undeveloped parcels. The plan identifies three type of landscapes:

1. Large-scale landscapes.
2. Areas of higher significance.
3. Streetscapes.

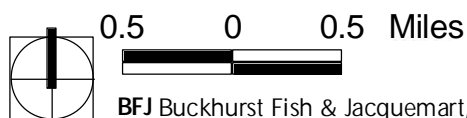
Three large-scale landscapes are identified on the map for conservation are:

- Mount Horr – commonly seen from many areas in the Canton Village area.
- Sweetheart Mountain – establishing the western edge of Collinsville.
- Onion Mountain – a ridge extending into Simsbury now listed by the Nature Conservancy and Department of Environmental Protection as a Connecticut Natural Area.

Areas of higher significance include parcels that add to the Town's rural character and include known environmentally significant areas.

The streetscapes identified on the map also reflect outstanding examples of the Town's character that residents wish to preserve. These streetscapes include forested areas, stone walls, street trees, historic properties, and historic views that local residents have come to identify with the Town.

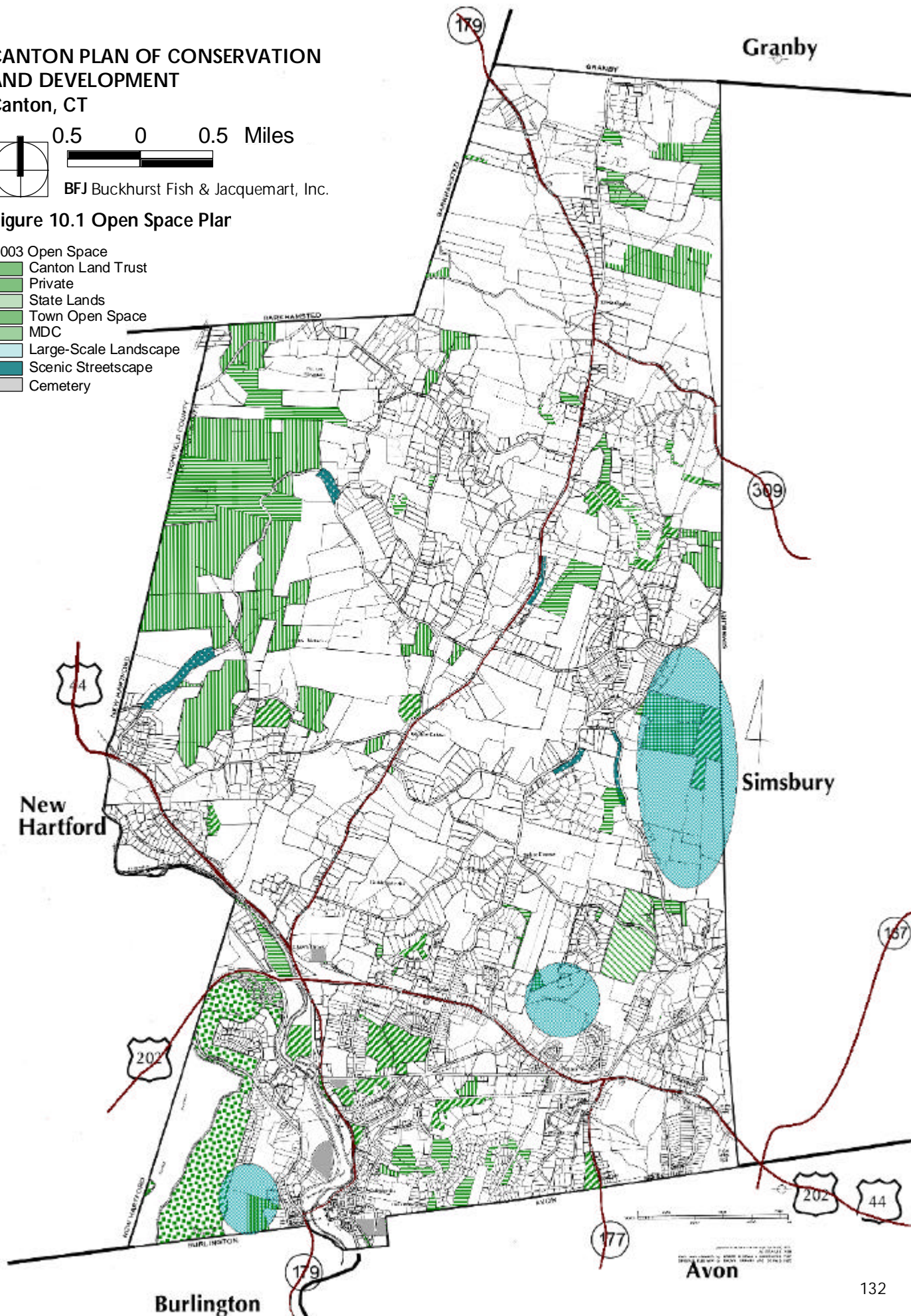
# CANTON PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT Canton, CT



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Figure 10.1 Open Space Plan

- 2003 Open Space
- Canton Land Trust
  - Private
  - State Lands
  - Town Open Space
  - MDC
  - Large-Scale Landscape
  - Scenic Streetscape
  - Cemetery



Ownership of future open-space goes hand-in-hand with its intended purpose, degree of access and location. Where the general public is expected to use the land, the Town, or possibly the CLCT for more passive use, should be candidates for ownership. For smaller, isolated parcels of open-space to the rear of residences, a homeowners' association or private ownership with easements would limit general-public access while achieving the desired results. When an entity such as the Town or CLCT owns contiguous land, it would make sense to add to that entity's holdings rather than create a patchwork of ownership.

In order to carry out the recommendations of this committee, a concerted effort on the part of all of the aforementioned boards and commissions, as well as state and non-profit agencies, will be required. Each entity has specific tasks that they must perform, often in conjunction with counterparts.

If the real estate transfer tax is made into law, the Board of Selectmen (BOS) should consider recommending adoption at the Town level. Consideration should also be given to a possible real estate surcharge on property tax as an alternative to the real estate transfer tax. Penalties for prematurely removing land from PA 490 status should be placed in the Town's newly established open space account. The BOS and others should lobby for the release of funding for the State's open-space and farmland preservation programs. The BOS will be responsible for purchasing open-space using funds from the open-space account which should be used to leverage additional grant money from the State grant programs whenever possible. The BOS should pursue the acquisition of the state sand/salt storage site on the Farmington River. Finally, the BOS should coordinate with the Conservation Commission and the CLCT on open-space dedications in subdivisions to ensure that the land is owned by the most suitable entity.

The Conservation Commission must continue to provide advice to the Planning Commission on open-space in subdivisions, coordinating its activities with the BOS and the CLCT. Working with the Town Planner, the Conservation Commission should keep the open-space inventory current and continue to pursue better means of mapping. Another critical role of the Conservation Commission is to promote public awareness of open-space and its benefits: a shared goal of the CLCT. Finally, the Conservation Commission should generally assist in the implementation of these recommendations in whatever capacity it can.

The Planning Commission should consider incentives for developing open-space subdivisions.

The Zoning Commission must coordinate with the Planning Commission on modifying the open-space subdivision regulations. The Commission should consider adopting density-based zoning, soil-based zoning or a combination of both. The Zoning Commission should adopt ridgeline protection regulations and consider adopting transfer/banking of development rights regulations as well.



## **10.6 Summary**

It is clear that in order to achieve the desired goals of preserving the natural environment, safeguarding environmentally sensitive areas, and acquiring open space lands, the Town can no longer rely on passively acquiring open space parcels through the subdivision process. Through a unified effort, the Town can make some relatively simple changes in regulations and perhaps some tougher choices in the future that can lead to significant increases in the quantity and quality of open spaces. These efforts, when implemented, will result in a more beautiful, enjoyable and livable community and represent a legacy for our children to enjoy.

## **10.7 Goals, Policies, and Recommendations**

### **Goals**

- Promote and enhance a rural character for the Town by actively supporting (a) the wisdom of preserving open-space, (b) the importance of identifying highly desirable areas of open-space, and (c) communicating both the variety of ways for preserving open-space as well as its attendant stewardship needs.
- Maintain sufficient and carefully selected undeveloped land in order to preserve the Town's rural character and minimize habitat fragmentation.
- Improve access to the Farmington River for fishing, boating, and other forms of recreation that would bolster Canton's image and facilitate tourism and recreation.
- Preserve undeveloped areas recommended for open-space on the Open-Space Plan.

### **Policies**

- Coordinate between the Conservation Commission, Planning Commission, Board of Selectmen and Canton Land Conservation Trust to determine the most suitable entity to own open-space acquired through the subdivision process.
- Target the large-scale landscapes, areas of significance, and streetscapes identified on the Open-Space Plan for future acquisition.
- Encourage land-use policies that reduce reliance on automobile or truck traffic as a primary means of transportation.



- Seek tax and land-use regulations that encourage private acquisitions, dedication and active stewardship of open-space.
- Seek alternative or matching sources of revenue other than the Town funds to acquire open-space lands.
- Build the open-space fund using alternative revenue sources such as:
  - Lobbying the state legislature for enabling legislation to include an open-space conveyance tax (perhaps 0.25 percent) on home sales, to be paid by the buyer.
  - Designating a space on the car tax bill that will allow residents the option to contribute to the open-space fund.
  - Consider alternative economic development of portions of open-space parcels, such as limited logging, rental of garden plots, or some other non-destructive or renewable use of the natural area.
- Encourage non-destructive active and passive recreational use of the Town's natural resources.
- Encourage adoption of regulations that provide ridgeline protection, preserving views of the hills and ridges named (and unnamed) in the state's enabling legislation. Preclude cell-phone towers from being built on top of ridges.
- Preserve unique specimens of vegetation, waterfalls, and other natural treasures, including aquifers and recharge areas.
- Seek land-use regulations that encourage agricultural uses that are appropriate to and viable in the soils, topography, and modest-size land parcels available in Town for such use. Agriculture adds diversity to the Town's open-space and provides both symbolic and practical benefits to our rural Town character.
- Protect and preserve the aquifers.
- Seek the clean-up of existing contaminated areas, such as the former Swift Chemical site.

## Recommendations

- Purchase development rights to farms, prioritizing those with high-visibility that are most in danger of being lost to development. (Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission)
- Place P.A. 490 penalties into the Open-Space Fund. (Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance)
- Acquire sand/salt shed site along the Farmington River. (Board of Selectmen, Connecticut Department of Transportation)
- Require removal of underground oil tanks in watershed areas or at homes where owners have wells. (Board of Selectmen, Fire Marshal)
- Expand the rails-to-trails system. Secure additional parking spaces and ensure adequate public access to the trail system. (Town Planner, Board of Selectmen)
- Require larger lot sizes in environmentally sensitive areas, such as on ridgelines and near watercourses, to provide adequate setbacks from the sensitive areas. (Planning Commission, Zoning Commission, Inland Wetlands and Watercourses agency)
- The Conservation Commission, in concert with the Town Planner, should maintain an open-space inventory to track existing open space and aid in targeting future acquisitions. (Conservation Commission, Town Planner)
- Pursue funding for a Geographic Information System. (Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Town Engineer, Tax Assessor, Conservation Commission, Town Planner)
- Inform local residents of federal and state programs as part of aggressive open-space acquisition plan. (Conservation Commission, Town Planner)
- Use data from Farmington River Watershed Association biodiversity study in land use planning. (Town Planner, Zoning Commission, Inland Wetlands, Conservation Commission)

## **11.0 FUTURE LAND USE MAP**

The purpose of a future land use map is to provide a vision for the growth and conservation of the Town in terms of density, infrastructure provision and land use. The Future Land Use Map should also be seen in the context of the existing land use map and the zoning map. Obviously, the future land use plan hopes to recognize many existing uses and also much of the existing zoning context of the Town. However, it does vary from these two existing maps and where it does so, it is suggesting that densities or uses are inappropriate for the long-term future of the Town.

### **11.1 Land Use Categories**

The Future Land Use Map is divided into the following suggested categories:

#### Residential

- Conservation/Residential – this category is being suggested for much of northwest Canton and is indicated on the map in white. Much of this land is characterized by very steep slopes and rugged terrain as well as significant acquisitions by the Canton Land Trust. It is meant to imply a density of one unit per four acres and is recommended to become the AR-4 District. This land use category is aimed at conserving the sensitive ecological nature of northwest Canton and at the same time permitting limited, very low-density residential development.
- Rural Density – this land use category is the general equivalent of the current AR-3 two-acre zone. It is indicated on the future land-use plan as a pale yellow. The zone is meant to imply a low-density residential development that does not need public water or public sewer. This land-use category and the conservation/residential category are meant to indicate sewer avoidance areas and comprise most of the land area in the Town north of Route 44.
- Low Density – Indicated on the map in a bright yellow color, this land use category generally equates to the current AR-2 District, indicating a density of approximately one unit per one acre. This area is generally mapped in the southern part of the Town and north along Cherry Brook Road to Canton Center.
- Medium Density – this land use category generally equates to one-half acre development, which is expected to have public water and sewer. This category represents the AR-1 District and is indicated on the future land use plan as a tan color. This category is located exclusively in the southern part of Town.

- High Density/Multi-Family – this land use category includes: affordable, cluster homes; garden apartments; townhouses; and various densities generally greater than four units per acre. These areas are also expected to have public water and sewer.

#### Centers

- Village Center – this category indicates a significant town or village center. Two areas are mapped in this way: 1) Collinsville and 2) Canton around the Town Green on Route 44. These are designations that encourage mixed-use, commercial and residential development. Both of these areas are eligible for protection under the Village District Act of the Connecticut General Statutes. Details on these districts can be found in Chapter Four – Land Use and Zoning and Chapter Five - Historic Resources.
- Rural Center – these designations are indicated for the very small hamlets of Canton Center and North Canton and again imply the encouragement of mixed uses and of shopping areas of a limited nature to serve the rural areas in the northern part of Town.

#### Commercial

- Village Business – this designation indicates areas that will allow a mixture of retail, restaurant, office and business uses along with residential. It also implies that there would be a design review of specific new developments to preserve the built form and historic context of the existing areas. The Village Business areas are composed of present day B-1 and SB Districts and may include the recommended Center Business District outlined in Chapter Four – Land Use and Zoning and Chapter Five – Historic Resources.
- Highway Business – this designation is meant to indicate a broader range of highway oriented commercial business, primarily along Route 44. The Highway Business area consists of LI, RLI, SB, and AR-3 Districts and is strongly recommended for designation as Albany Turnpike Gateway District to afford maximum flexibility in design and maximum protection of the surrounding neighborhoods as well as the Town's character.

#### Industry

- Light Industry/Office/Research – this designation is meant to indicate light industry and office research parks within the Town. The single designation implies that the present Heavy Industry District should be eliminated in the future, leaving the IH, IP, LI and RLI Districts as more specialized districts that reflect the desire of the Town for cleaner, low-impact industries.

## Institutional

- Institutional/Public Facility – this category is meant to indicate a range of public buildings or institutional uses such as schools, Town Hall and the library/community center and major institutional uses such as health care and nursing homes. These are indicated in dark blue on the map and the letter S appears on those locations where a school is located. This category breaks out only major uses not uses such as churches and post offices that are expected to be allowed in every zoning category.

## Utilities

- Utilities/Storage/Garages – this category is meant to indicate a range of public utilities (transfer stations, substations, sewage plants and highway garages)

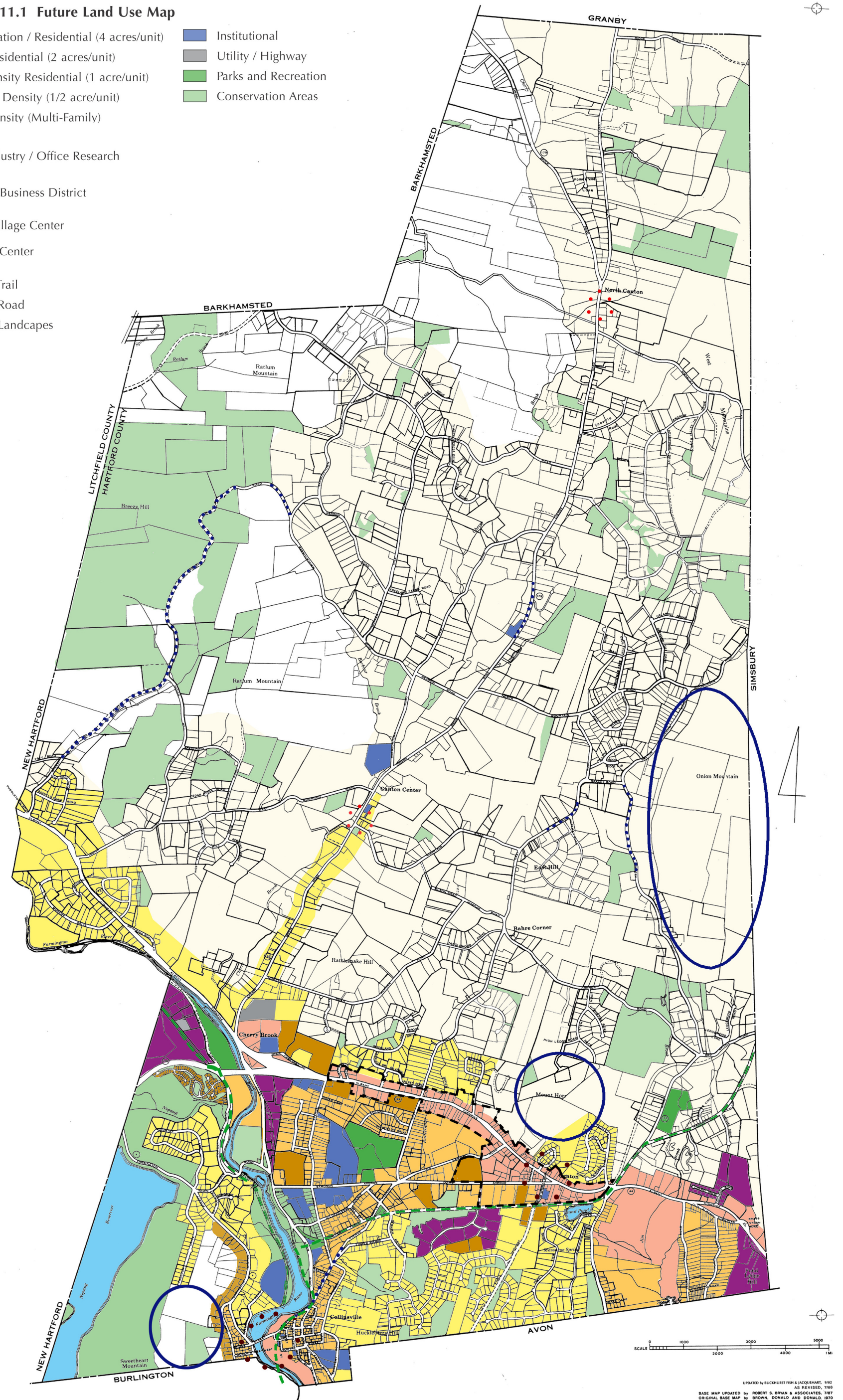
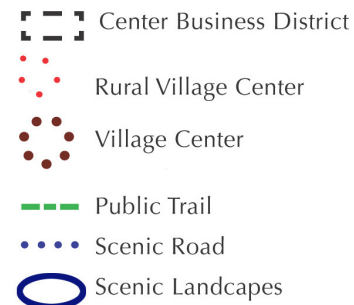
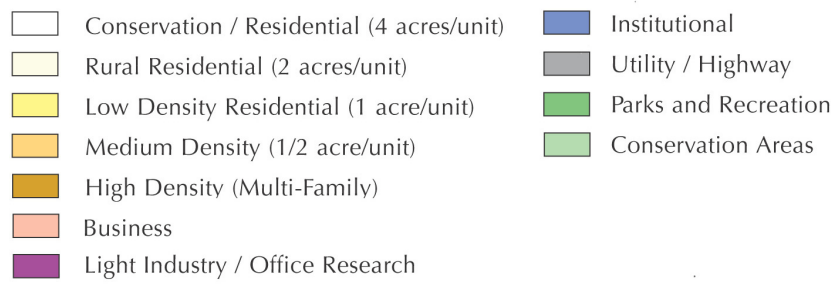
## Open Space

- Parks and Recreation – this category is indicated in dark green on the future land-use map. It is meant to indicate public parks and ball fields and other recreational facilities.
- Conservation Areas – this category is indicated in light green on the future land use map. It is meant to indicate open space lands that are protected by public or private entities whose mission is to preserve the land because of the sensitive ecological value or are properties that are otherwise aimed at open space conservation. These lands include those of the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) as well as the Canton Land Conservation Trust.



**TOWN OF CANTON**  
**Connecticut**

### Figure 11.1 Future Land Use Map





## **11.2 Goals, Policies and Recommendations**

### **Goals**

- Create a pattern of existing and future land use that: encourages economic growth; maintains a diversity of housing opportunities; protects Canton's small-town character as well as our historical and environmental resources; and minimizes conflicts between incompatible uses.
- Undertake visual build-out as analytical planning tool when evaluating future land use proposals.

### **Policies**

- Be proactive in implementing the Future Land Use Map through zoning regulation and map amendments: facilitating economic growth; controlling residential growth; and protecting sensitive areas before they are threatened with inappropriate development.
- When implementing the Future Land-Use Map, be aware of conflicts between potentially incompatible land uses and make every attempt to minimize them.

### **Recommendations**

- Establish a new, low-density AR-4 District in northwest Canton to preserve the sensitive mountainous areas of the Town, as originally indicated on the 1990 Future Land Use Map. (Zoning Commission)
- Rezone the undeveloped parts of Sweetheart Mountain to a rural AR-3 or AR-4 (4 acres/lot) District as opposed to the current half-acre zoning of the AR-1 District. (Zoning Commission)
- Create unique districts for Canton, Canton Center, Collinsville and North Canton utilizing the Village District Act that reflect and protect the historic character of these areas and encourage mixed-use development, where appropriate. (Zoning Commission, Historic District Commissions)
- Eliminate the Heavy Industry District. (Zoning Commission)
- As new development is proposed, encourage voluntary rezoning of the Highway Business areas east of Lovely Street to Albany Turnpike Gateway District. (Town Planner, Zoning Commission)

- Working in cooperation with the Bristol family, prepare a small area study for the future use of Bristol's Farm, to be incorporated into this Plan.  
(Planning Commission, Town Planner)



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Mary Tomolonius, First Selectwoman  
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