

THE COMMUNITY'S VIEWS

2

In preparing this Plan, it has been the goal of the Planning Commission to reflect the sentiments and values of the community garnered from public meetings, the efforts of numerous boards, commissions, and committees and from the many personal comments and conversations that have contributed to the Commission's considerations.

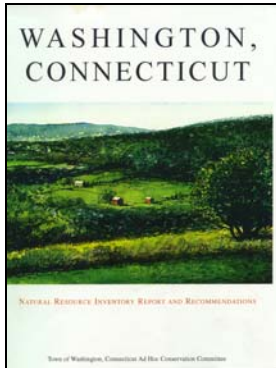
A focused set of challenging, yet achievable, objectives and strategies emerged as the work progressed. These objectives and strategies are put forward in this Plan of Conservation and Development.

In the subsequent chapters of this document, these objectives and strategies will be defined along with recommendations and guidelines as to how they may be achieved. This is a work in progress. The Planning Commission has charted a course; it is for the community to make sure it is followed to realize the Plan's objectives.

"The indispensable first step to getting the things you want out of life is this - decide what you want."

Ben Stein





Special Studies

The Plan preparation incorporated the work and research of several commissions and committees and special studies of specific topics such as:

- the Natural Resource Inventory Report addressing environmental issues,
- the ad hoc open space steering committee to develop open space strategies,
- the Conservation Commission's Open Space Plan,
- the Conservation Commission's greenway committee, and
- a housing steering committee assessment of housing needs.

Natural Resources Inventory Report

In November 2000, the Ad Hoc Conservation Committee completed a report entitled "Natural Resource Inventory Report and Recommendations." The report contains detailed and comprehensive information about the geologic, cultural, and economic history of Washington.

This widely acclaimed report was the result of several years of effort by a dedicated group of Washington volunteers who received assistance from many open space and natural resource organizations including the Steep Rock Association, Washington Environmental Council, Housatonic Valley Association, Litchfield County Soil and Water Conservation District, and others.

The Planning Commission incorporates by reference the Natural Resources Inventory Report into this Plan of Conservation and Development.

Open Space Planning Reports

An ad hoc Open Space Steering Committee prepared a report, published in February 2000, recommending open space goals and strategies. This report was followed, in March 2002, by an Open Space Plan – Interim Report prepared by the Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission, working with members of the Open Space Steering Committee, revised and adopted a final Open Space Plan on August 6, 2003, which is incorporated by reference into this Plan.

Housing Study Report

In December 2000, the Board of Selectmen appointed a Housing Study Committee to conduct an "organized, comprehensive written evaluation of housing needs and to develop a long-term housing plan for the Town." The Committee issued its Final Report in June 2002. The Report is incorporated by reference into this Plan.

Community Issues

Several community meetings and exercises were held during the process of preparing this Plan to learn about issues important to Washingtonians. These meetings involved Washington residents in thinking about the future of the community and in developing Plan strategies. The following tables summarize the results.

Community Strengths

Rural Character

Community Character	Beauty, Beauty of the landscape, Rural charm, Overall rural character, Working farms (Averill, Seymour, Wells, Potter, Swanson), The Green, Historic districts.
Open Space	Steep Rock, Hidden Valley, Meeker Swamp, Open space lands, Shepaug Greenway, Conservation easements.
Natural / Scenic Resources	Shepaug River, Lake Waramaug, Bee Brook, Pinnacle, East Street Viewscape, Clamshell, New Preston Hill, Green Hill, Smokey Hollow, Vista from Route 202, Painter Ridge view.

Village Centers

Village Areas	Washington Green, New Preston, Washington Depot, Marbledale center, Cohesive town centers, Small shops.
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Residential Development

Residential Development	Senior housing, Dodge Farm housing, Affordable housing projects, Affordable rental housing, Bee Brook condos.
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Other Strengths

Community Spirit / Quality of Life	Engaging community, Culture of volunteerism, Active citizenry, Cultural institutions, Conservation / preservation activism, Diversity of community, Well-informed-community, Active and participative government, Private generosity.
Community Services / Facilities	Gunn Memorial Library, Washington Town Hall, Washington Primary School, Town Beach, New Town Garage, Primary School field, New Fire House, Fire service, Ambulance service, Senior Center, Strong school system, Good educational opportunities.
Transportation	Winding roads, Dirt roads.
Miscellaneous	Congregational Meeting House, Salem Covenant Church, Institute for American Indian Studies, St. John's Church, St. Andrew's Church, New Preston Boys Club, Washington Art Association, Mayflower Inn, Lake Waramaug boat inspections.

Strengths

During the planning process, participants were asked to identify things in Washington that they:

- were the proudest of,
- felt were the most symbolic of Washington,
- felt should be recognized, or
- wanted to protect or encourage.

The responses were grouped into major categories for comparison with the community concerns that are presented on the following page.

Concerns

Similarly, participants were asked to identify the things in Washington that they:

- were the sorriest about,
- felt were least symbolic of Washington,
- felt needed to be addressed, or
- wanted to change or discourage.

The responses were grouped in the following major categories for comparison with the community strengths presented on the preceding page:

Community Concerns

Rural Character

Community Character	Loss of rural character, Balancing growth and preservation, Continuing smart growth tradition, Potential acceleration of growth, Development at Gunnery, Gunnery's septic system, Montessori school, Loss of farms, Flirtation Avenue, Trash on roadways, Neglected properties, Demolition of historic structures, "Sculpture" on Baldwin Hill Road, DOT Garage site.
Natural / Scenic Resources	Preserving natural resources, Potential loss of scenic vistas.
Open Space	Preserving enough open space.

Village Centers

Village Areas	Lack of plan for Depot, New Preston, and Marbledale, Depot revitalization, Traffic and parking, Old town garage reuse, Strip development on Bee Brook Road.
Business Development	Rt. 202 commercial development, Marbledale Self Storage Facility, Marbledale Pub, Marbledale Citgo, New Milford Bank, Vacant commercial land on Rt. 47, Strip commercial development.

Residential Development

Residential Development	Out of scale residential development, Too tall houses, "McMansions," Poor residential architecture (Lake Waramaug Area, Tinker Hill, Nettleton Hollow, Tompkins Hill Road, Bee Brook, South Street), Overdevelopment, Sprawl, Speculative development, Lack of housing opportunities, Lack of housing choices.
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Other Concerns

Community Spirit / Quality of Life	Loss of working class, High cost of living, Planning for aging population, Shortage of opportunities for youth, Building community consensus, Newcomers reluctant to volunteer, Growth of seasonal population.
Community Services / Facilities	Town Garage, Town Dump, High School / School System, Lack of recreation fields, Town Beach, Recreation facilities in Depot.
Transportation	Loss of dirt roads, State control of roadways, Road straightening / widening, Rt. 109 / Rt. 47 intersections, Speeding cars, Traffic in New Preston Village.
Miscellaneous	Education overspending, School system budget, Property taxes, Postal Zones, Lack of inexpensive eating places.

Community Priorities

Residents and Town officials identified the following topics as having the highest priority as part of this Plan of Conservation and Development:

Topic	Total Points	Resident Percent	Town Official Percent	Total Percent
Preservation of Open Space	825	19%	21%	19%
Housing Needs	800	17%	23%	19%
Natural Resources	630	14%	17%	15%
Village Enhancement	510	14%	8%	12%
Community Character	310	7%	7%	7%
Housing Development	265	5%	8%	6%
Historic Resources	250	6%	5%	6%
Community / Recreation Facilities	215	6%	2%	5%
Business Development	180	4%	4%	4%
Pedestrian / Bicycle Circulation	150	3%	4%	4%
Vehicular Circulation	75	2%	1%	2%
Utilities	50	2%	0%	1%
Total	4,260	100%	100%	100%

Priorities

Another exercise asked participants to assign points to the topics that they felt were most important to address as part of the planning process.

The adjacent table shows that Washington residents and public officials had similar priorities in terms of the most important issues to address in this Plan.

Interestingly, local officials thought that open space, housing needs, natural resource protection, and housing development were more important issues than did residents.

On the other hand, residents felt that village enhancement and community / recreation facilities were much more important than did local officials.

Community Objectives

The identification of strengths, concerns, and priorities led to the development of the following community objectives. These are the basic themes of this Plan of Conservation and Development:

- **Preserve Washington's rural character.**
- **Enhance the community's village centers.**
- **Guide and manage housing development.**
- **Address other community issues.**

These objectives are discussed in detail in Sections 3 through 6.