



## Existing Land Use and Future Land Use Plan Introduction

Community planning is a comprehensive approach to meeting community needs and desires, empowering residents and community members to participate in and give feedback about their town or city's vision. Whether you are planning for underdeveloped communities with acres and acres of land to develop, or you're planning for redevelopment in a mature, built environment like Windsor Locks, the process focuses on the human need and desire for both development and conservation.

Planning also recognizes area of influence and regional relationships. Planning acknowledges the importance of having strong, connected systems, whether they be human, natural, transportation, housing or commerce.

In Windsor Locks, growth lies in maintaining or enhancing existing neighborhoods, recreating commercial district character, understanding and incentivizing redevelopment opportunities, mitigating environmental impact and celebrating historic and natural assets with purpose and passion. In order to maintain balance, quality of life and sustainability, the residents must continue to, strategically and regularly, plan the community together.

**Community Land Use Map** A Land Use Map is an overall, graphic inventory of the distribution and character of various land uses. Such uses are categorized and color coded for ease of comparison. In reviewing such maps, patterns of use can be predicted or determined for current and future activity. Such patterns are influenced by a variety of natural and physical factors such as rivers and streams, wetlands, and topography. Man-made infrastructure, such as utilities, roads and buildings, can also have enormous impact on a community.

Land use patterns have been greatly influenced in Windsor Locks by the existence and growth of Bradley International Airport, a land use that dominates the western half of the Town. The impact of such a facility, which encompasses 1080 acres or approximately 18.4 percent of the 9.2 square mile town, is tremendous.

## **Windsor Locks Plan of Conservation and Development**

### **Section X. Existing Land Use and Future Land Use Plan**

**Population Density** Windsor Locks had 12,043 residents in 2000, and 12,498 in 2010, according to the U.S. Census, representing a 3.78% increase, following a 2.5% decrease in population from 1990 to 2000. This population lives in a Town with a total of 5888 acres (9.2 square miles). To determine the current density we divide the population figure by the acres and find that the density is a mere 2.12 persons per acre, a slight increase from 2000. Historically, Windsor Locks has had the lowest density of population of any of the “fully suburban” towns in the Capitol Region. In 2019 at the time this Plan was finalized, World Media Group, LLC estimated the population density to be 1,340 / sq mi., ranking Windsor Locks to be the 67<sup>th</sup> highest in the State. In This, however, is a misleading figure since Bradley Airport business and industry, governed by the Connecticut Airport Authority, occupy more than one half of the Town’s land area. The relatively low density of the Town is also attributable to the fact that Windsor Locks’ housing is predominately single family. In 2015 there were 4,017 single family dwellings out of the total of all 5521 housing units in town, or 77% of total units.

**Land Use Changes** Windsor Locks’ past Plans of Development used an “Existing Land Use Map” color coded into nine general categories. They also used an “Existing Land Uses” Table that documented the total acres devoted to each land use category and the changes experienced during the last planning period. The same procedure has been employed for the current review so that comparisons can be made in respect to changes as contemplated by the 2007 Plan. Updated land use maps can be found on file in the Building / Planning office for public view.

Since the 2007 Plan of Development, 4 significant changes to the Land Use Plan were approved or adopted by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

**Main Street** Since the 2007 Plan, based on recommendations from the Plan and the various Main Street Studies, the Planning and Zoning Commission approved the creation of the Main Street Overlay Zone (MSOZ). This zone encourages redevelopment in a typical Main Street fashion, recreating the desired wall of buildings close to the street, revitalizing the downtown and adding residential units, foot traffic and a mix of uses that add vibrancy, commerce and activity. The Commission approved a zone change for approximately 6 acres from industrial to RDRD, permitting the conversion of the industrial, long-vacant Montgomery Mill to a residential community.

## **Windsor Locks Plan of Conservation and Development**

### **Section X. Existing Land Use and Future Land Use Plan**

**Multi Family Special Development and Flexible Residential Development** In 2019, the Planning and Zoning Commission increased the permitted density of units per acre in the MFSD zone from 5 to 8. Increasing the allowed units per acre, in a sensible and scaled way, can increase housing supply and overall affordability in the community. Multi Family Special Development zones are often appropriate as transitional areas between commercial districts and single family neighborhoods, or near nodes of activity where there are sidewalks, places of worship, schools, various modes of public transportation and small markets or shops where a village-like setting and connectivity can be or has been established. Communities like Woodridge and Chapman Chase were developed under these multi family regulatory frameworks

**Old County Road** Another significant change to the Town's land use pattern was the Planning and Zoning Commission's approval of a General Plan of Development for the largest parcel of developable land in town along Route 20, previously agricultural land, under the Airport Interchange Overlay Zone (AIOZ). This zone was originally developed to allow a transition in land uses from the single family homes on Old County Road to the Route 20 corridor governed by an overall Master Plan. Since the 2007 Plan a new Assisted Living Community was constructed as a transition from single family and multi-family communities on Old County Road. The uses allowed by the AIOZ are believed to be better able to provide a transition from the single family homes and take advantage of the exposure and proximity to Route 20.

**Waterworks Brook Preservation Area** The town purchased the CT Water Company utility land, previously an abandoned wellfield on over 200 acres in order to preserve the natural resource and provide a passive recreation area for residents and visitors.

In reviewing the land use changes over the last decade, most were considered redevelopment, adaptive reuse or "in-fill" development. In-fill development is new construction or building additions on smaller vacant or underutilized parcels of land. Most development was in accordance with the 2007 Plan.

Changes to the Town zoning districts, zoning regulations and land use pattern can have significant long term impacts on the Town, its character, its tax base and the quality of life of its citizens. These types of changes should only be done with the most careful planning, long term vision, and with the best interests of the citizens of Windsor Locks in mind. An individual property owner's immediate plans or desires should not be a significant factor in these types of important land use decisions and the Commission should never shortcut a careful

## Windsor Locks Plan of Conservation and Development

### Section X. Existing Land Use and Future Land Use Plan

planning process to properly evaluate such changes and to develop a process that enlists the input of all Town agencies, and the general public, in arriving at the best decision for the community.

#### Land Use Inventory

The following Table contains the current inventory of land uses in Windsor Locks and shows the approximate changes in land use over time, rounded to the nearest whole percentage.

Table 6: Land Use Analysis: 1986 – 2016  
Windsor Locks, Connecticut

Land Use Category	1986		1996		2006		2016	
	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%
Residential	1707	29%	1850	32%	1900	33%	2035	35%
Business	239	4%	571	10%	600	10%	1687	29%
Industrial	567	9%	522	9%	620	11%	614	11%
Utilities / Transportation	1530	26%	1750	30%	1750	30%	482	8%
Institutional	320	6%	327	6%	330	6%	330	6%
Recreational /Open Space	165	2%	149	3%	170	3%	395	7%
Agricultural / Vacant	1596	27%	719	12%	530	9%	226	4%

Best available data including Assessor data and manual GIS map measurements of documented changes were used to provide above acreages. Windsor Locks has 5,760 total acres in land including the airport, on which the above percentages are based.

## **Windsor Locks Plan of Conservation and Development**

### **Section X. Existing Land Use and Future Land Use Plan**

X - 3

#### **Future Land Use**

The Windsor Locks Community, through years of participatory planning, submits this Plan of Conservation and Development to the future for all to use as a “road map” in the next decade or more. The Plan offers data, observations and trends to consider in the next planning period. The information and ideas offered here are to be used as a resource as new planning policies and land use changes are contemplated by boards, commissions, staff, elected officials and all decision makers. This plan shall be utilized to guide programming, spending, planning and development activities in the Town.

**While there are many recommendations listed throughout this plan, the most significant zone change and land use recommendations are summarized below.**

**North Street Industrial Area** Based on research by the Town Attorney, it is now apparent that it is not feasible to extend King Spring Road to this industrial parcel due to ownership patterns and fiscal constraints. The Planning and Zoning Commission should now revise the permissible land uses within this remaining industrial area north of North Street and Northgate Drive to those types of uses that do not generate large amounts of truck traffic. Uses such as office, research and development, and light assembly or light industrial uses might be most appropriate. This will reduce the potential impacts on North Street which would be the only remaining means of access. Sufficient buffers to the new residential development to the east should be required in such a revised zoning district

**Old County Road and Halfway House Road** The area in the Industrial Zone, north of the Compost Facility along Old County Road to Halfway House Road should be reviewed for possible rezoning. This discussion should include the residential portion of Concorde Way. The Commission rezoned a parcel north of the Fox Hollow residential development as Multi Family Special Development District (MFSD) to accommodate another cluster residential development. All of the industrially zoned land north of this approved development, continuing to Halfway House Road, should be considered for potential down-zoning to better reflect existing and adjacent land uses and to arrive at an optimal transition of land uses.

## **Windsor Locks Plan of Conservation and Development**

### **Section X. Existing Land Use and Future Land Use Plan**

#### **Ella Grasso Turnpike**

**Hotels:** The Planning and Zoning Commission should look very closely at any new proposals for hotels beyond those already approved. Windsor Locks will have over 1854 hotel rooms following build out of those already approved. 1488 hotel rooms are currently constructed and in use. Developers should provide the justification that additional hotel rooms are needed in the market as the reuse of current hotel buildings may be a challenge in the future.

**Valet Parking:** Valet parking lots have historically posed a unique problem for this area of Town. They occupy valuable frontage on Route 75. The Planning and Zoning Commission should continue its effort to allow these frontages to be developed more intensely with parking relegated to the rear of properties. Additionally, the PZC should consider conducting a corridor study, to include a review of the Connecticut Airport Authority Master Plan and to understand possible impacts and opportunities should a majority of valet parking uses move inward onto the airport property, freeing up significant frontage on Route 75.

**Bradley Area Transportation** Several years ago, even prior to the 2007 Plan, the Capitol Region Council of Governments completed the "Bradley Area Transportation Study". The Study includes a comprehensive analysis of current and future traffic conditions and land use in the airport area. The study identifies transportation improvements, including roadway safety improvements and a pair of back access roads parallel to Ella Grasso Turnpike that are needed to accommodate growth. The study also proposes development of a strategic plan for maintaining safe and efficient access to the airport area. Since this study was conducted, the Town was awarded LOTCIP funding to install sidewalks, some crosswalks and some pedestrian amenities. Additionally, bus shelters have been installed since the 2007 plan. While these are much desired and important changes, roadway changes are still needed to address very dangerous roadway conditions. This is a priority and the community should continue to work closely with the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation and all necessary stakeholders to ensure that traffic improvements are engineered and constructed in this planning period.

## **Windsor Locks Plan of Conservation and Development**

### **Section X. Existing Land Use and Future Land Use Plan**

**Route 20 / Old County Road** The Town applied for, and was selected, to conduct a CT DOT Regional Transportation Study via the Capitol Region Council of Governments. Properties abutting route 20 are highly visible opportunity sites, yet the corridor would benefit from strategic planning, infrastructure improvements (highway access, sewer, broadband) and increased connectivity both for vehicles and active transportation. The Corridor Study funding was not yet awarded due to a pause in State spending in 2018 - 2019, however, the community should continue to pursue such funds to realize this important effort. The 80 plus acre property along Route 20 and Old County Road, aka the Thrall property, the site abutting Ella Grasso Turnpike and Route 20 and underutilized land along Route 20 on the Collins Aerospace property are the largest vacant parcels remaining in Windsor Locks, requiring careful planning to find a highest and best use while minimizing impacts to current and future residents. Of particular concern is reducing truck traffic through residential neighborhoods and increasing traffic calming measures.

**Main Street and Transit Oriented Development (TOD)** The Community has adopted a Transit Oriented Development Plan and has begun implementation, most significant of the efforts is the relocation of the train station to the downtown, just north of the historic station. The town should continue to work closely with the State of CT Department of Transportation, Amtrak and other local stakeholders to see this through completion. Windsor Locks should continue to revisit this TOD plan as a guiding document and implement those recommendations that the community has found feasible and embraced.

**Complete Streets:** The town, at the time of the drafting of this Plan, has been awarded over \$5 million in LOTCIP funds to construct complete streets from the intersection of Church and Main Street to the intersection of Suffield and North Main Street. Once reconstructed, Main Street will provide wider sidewalks, increased pedestrian amenities like benches and street trees, on-street parking and traffic calming measures such as narrow roadways and a roundabout. The community should continue working closely with the State of Connecticut DOT and other stakeholders to overcome engineering challenges and realize construction.

Note: Windsor Locks should consider implementing a community wide Complete Streets policy.

**Windsor Locks Commons and Station Area properties:** Windsor Locks Commons is directly adjacent to the land dedicated to the relocation of the train station. Any future redevelopment of this land, or nearby

## **Windsor Locks Plan of Conservation and Development**

### **Section X. Existing Land Use and Future Land Use Plan**

land such as 254 Main Street (across the street) or the nearby Windsor Locks Housing Authority, must be coordinated with and integrated into the TOD area and complete streets plan. Components should include mixed use buildings, first floor commercial, residential above, increased residential density, public amenities, social places, an inclusive design and should promote active transportation such as walking or riding a bicycle.

**Public Market:** Windsor Locks does not have a supermarket within the community's boundaries. Access to food resources, in particular fresh, local food, is an integral component of a sustainable community. The Town has completed a feasibility study related to a public market close to, or part of the relocated train station. The study finds that a public market in close proximity to the station will be successful, providing nutritious food, diverse cuisine and just as importantly, a place to connect and be social. The community should move forward with the development of a business plan, coordinated with development of the station area and Windsor Locks Commons and pursue related funding.

**Dexter Plaza:** A significant parcel in the downtown area is the Dexter Plaza property. This is a retail plaza that was developed post Urban Renewal in a suburban form rather than a traditional downtown development pattern. While underperforming for several years, in 2019 the plaza experienced a number of new businesses locating there in response to revitalization efforts, some moving from the neighboring Windsor Locks Commons property to this location. While the community works toward revitalization, station relocation and construction of new mixed-use buildings, the plaza seems to play an important interim role for attracting small businesses who want to remain in the community or be part of the revitalization efforts. Still, the Town should work with the property owner to encourage a rethinking and redevelopment of this parcel in the future that looks at a reconfiguration of building placement and locating new buildings at the street line in a traditional multi-use and multistory downtown pattern.

**Montgomery Building/Canal Pedestrian Bridge:** The community has now realized successful site reuse helping to meet residential demand, increasing foot traffic and acting as a catalyst to downtown revitalization. Pedestrian improvements across the canal at Bridge Street and at the new station area should both be pursued. A pedestrian bridge will provide direct connectivity for residents and tourists alike between the station, the Montgomery Mill, the Canal Trail State Park and the Connecticut River, all major assets for Windsor Locks.



## **Windsor Locks Plan of Conservation and Development**

### **Section X. Existing Land Use and Future Land Use Plan**

**Spring Street:** In 2019 staff conducted business a use analysis for Spring Street at the request of the Planning and Zoning Commission. The regulations do not permit auto related or industrial uses, however, a good majority of the existing uses fall into these categories. Interviews were conducted as part of this analysis and property owners were overall happy in their location, not planning to move out of the area and some wished they could expand but couldn't due to their uses being non-conforming. In recent years, the Commission has found new requests for such uses to be welcome and in harmony with other uses on Spring Street. As there is a conflict between such uses and the regulations, it is suggested that the Commission consider a rezone or text amendment which would apply to Spring Street in order to permit a broader list of uses including auto related or light industrial uses.

#### **Open Space Greenways:**

**Spring Park / Kettle Brook:** The existing town open space, consisting of Spring Park along an expanse of Kettle Brook, form a modest greenway in the center of the community. The town should continue to explore opportunities to expand connecting open space along this natural feature.

**Merrigan Brook:** The area around Merrigan Brook provides a Greenway opportunity. Near the upper reaches of this brook lies Circle Drive Park, and further to the west is the open space secured during the development of the new subdivisions near Acorn Drive as well as the Chapman Chase residential community. The town should continue to explore ways to further connect these areas with open space as the surrounding land develops.

**Connecticut River Trail and Greenway:** The State of Connecticut has a long standing, yet conceptual, plan to complete the greenway along the Connecticut River. The greenway highlights the agricultural heritage within Suffield and the canal and mill history of the Windsor Locks riverfront land. There is continued interest by Suffield, Windsor Locks and Windsor in fully connecting the existing pieces of the greenway, in addition to repaving the existing canal trail. A gap exists where the Ahlstrom Munksjo private property is located and the gap continues south to the border of Windsor. An "in road" trail could be considered to provide part of this connection, through changes in roadway striping and proper

**Windsor Locks Plan of Conservation and Development**  
**Section X. Existing Land Use and Future Land Use Plan**

wayfinding. The Town of East Windsor is also interested in working with Windsor Locks to continue that connectivity across the Route 140 Bridge by realigning the roadway to include a dedicated bike lane and improved pedestrian sidewalks. Greenways can be tremendous recreational, tourism and economic assets for the community's residents and visitors. The Town should re-energize its efforts to work with the State of CT, Ahlstrom Munksjo and other stakeholders to find ways to achieve the completed greenway.

**All suggested land uses are depicted on the Future Proposed Land Use map that follows.**