

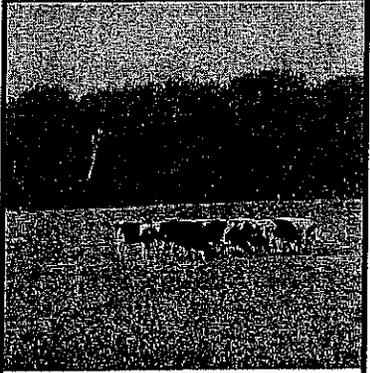
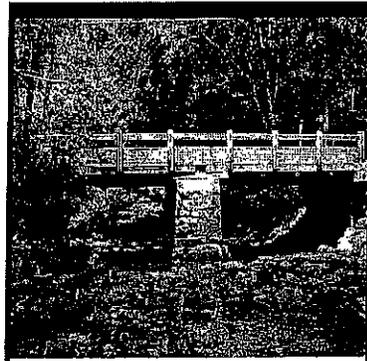
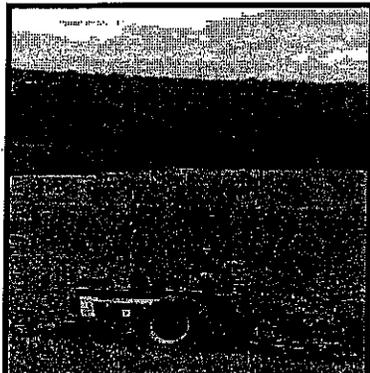
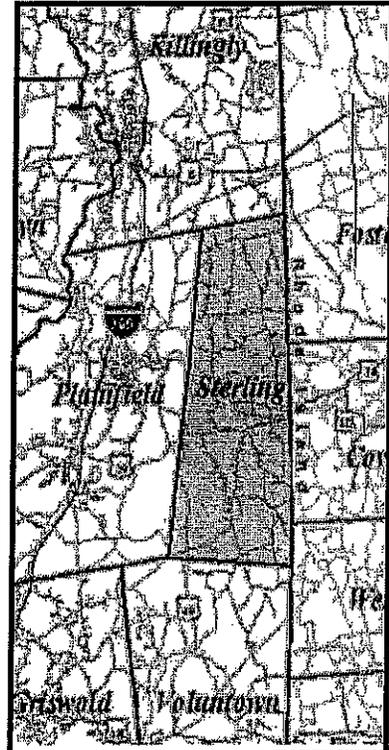
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# STERLING

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## 2009 Plan of Conservation & Development

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June 2009

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# Welcome



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## Residents of Sterling, Connecticut

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The Planning Commission is pleased to submit this 2009 Plan of Conservation and Development to the Community. In Connecticut, a new or updated plan must be developed at least every ten years in accordance with Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes. This "Plan" will help guide activities of the Town through 2019.

Following a number of community workshops over the past two years, our Town Planner, worked with the Commission to develop a Plan that reflects community needs. The draft Plan will be reviewed at a public meeting. It may be modified based on additional input and then presented for final review.

A key element of the Plan is to preserve the things that residents have indicated are important to them. This includes maintaining the integrity of residential neighborhoods, protecting natural resources, and preserving open space and community character.

The Plan's areas of focus for change are:

- establishing greenways for pedestrians and bicyclists along the Moosup-Valley River Trail;
- enhancing the Town's two historic mill villages in Oneco and Sterling; and
- managing growth throughout the town while encouraging particular commercial entities that will serve an emerging residential population to locate within or in close proximity to the villages.

In addition, the Plan addresses single-family housing, transportation, community facilities, infrastructure, and emerging issues related to conservation of all resources.

Sterling's boards, commissions and town departments are responsible for the implementation of the Plan. Section 6 contains specific strategies and recommendations for implementation over the next ten years. The Planning Commission updated the document where necessary and adopted it as Sterling's Plan of Conservation and Development for use in planning the town over the next ten years.

Individuals involved in the preparation of the plan are listed below.

**Planning Commission Members:**

Ronald Marchesseault, Chairman  
Frank Bond, Alternate  
Stanley Chviek  
Paul Ezzell  
Ross Farrugia, Alternate  
Kelly Marchesseault, Alternate  
Dana Morrow, Vice Chairman  
George Simone, Secretary

Former Member: Ralph Gumbs

**Planning Commission Staff:**

Judy Lincoln, Commission Clerk/Recording Secretary  
James D. Rabbitt, AICP, Town Planner

**Board of Selectmen:**

Russel M. Gray, First Selectman  
Neil H. Cook, Selectman,  
Dale P. Clark, Selectman

## Preface

### Plans of Conservation and Development, what are they?

A Plan of Conservation and Development is a tool for guiding the future of a community. The goals and recommendations of this Plan reflect a consensus built from the work of the Planning and Zoning Commission with input from other boards and commissions and from Sterling residents.

Sterling adopted its first Plan of Development in 1970. Significant changes have taken place in Sterling, the State, and across the country since that Plan was prepared. Locally, the Town has dealt with challenges and opportunities through effective land use regulation and planning assistance from their Town Planner and occasional assistance from the Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (NECCOG). However, as the analysis in this Plan describes, increasing development demand, changing demographics, and growing opportunities called for fresh guidance and creative preparation to lead Sterling into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Planning is something that people and organizations perform on a routine basis. Planning helps prepare organizations and individuals for future challenges and opportunities. Communities, or towns are no different. Planning provides the opportunity to:

- focus on the 'bigger picture' and identify significant goals;
- promote overall values and achieve important purposes;
- coordinate efforts and produce consistent results; and
- achieve efficiency and economy in implementation.

Planning helps Sterling identify and address community needs, foresee the long-term consequences of current actions, make good decisions, and produce desired results.

### The Planning Process

Initial efforts in the Plan preparation involved generating public interest, questioning the residents, identifying local issues and preparing an inventory and assessment of conditions and trends in Sterling. The Planning Commission then discussed alternative strategies and desirable future outcomes.

Public input was obtained throughout the process by:

#### Other Information

In addition to this Plan, other relevant information has included workbooks (booklets on different topical issues) prepared during the process for participants, previously adopted plans, and materials. The submitted to the Commission and made available for review during the process.

In the case of conflict between this Plan and such other information, the recommendations of the adopted Plan take precedence.

- public meetings that generated input and discussion;
- public forums that involved residents in planning for the future;
- surveys of residents at public meetings; and
- other exercises and analysis.

Research and consultation with Town officials and other agencies provided much of the background information for this Plan. Proven strategies adopted by other communities were reviewed for appropriate application to Sterling.

Finally, a set of strategies and a recommended implementation process were devised to provide the necessary guidance for the community to achieve the objectives set out by the Plan.

**EXCERPTS FROM CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES  
8-23 - PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

**The Commission shall:**

- prepare, adopt and amend a plan of conservation and development ...
- review the plan of conservation and development at least once every ten years ...
- adopt such amendments to the plan or parts of the plan ... as the commission deems necessary to update the plan.

**The Plan shall:**

- be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality
- show the commission's recommendation for the most desirable use of land within the municipality for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial and other purposes and for the most desirable density of population in the ... parts of the municipality.
- be designed to promote with the greatest efficiency and economy the coordinated development of the municipality and the general welfare and prosperity of its people.
- be made with reasonable consideration for restoration and protection of the ecosystem and habitat of Long Island Sound ...
- make provision for the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multifamily dwellings consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity, for all residents of the municipality and the planning region ...
- promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low and moderate income households, and encourage the development of housing which will meet the housing needs ...
- take into account the state plan of conservation and development ... and note any inconsistencies it may have with said state plan.
- consider the use of cluster development to the extent consistent with soil types, terrain, and infrastructure capacity.

**The Plan may:**

- show the commission's recommendation for a system of principal thoroughfares, parkways, bridges, streets and other public ways; for airports, parks, playgrounds and other public grounds; for general location, relocation and improvement of public buildings; for the general location and extent of public utilities and terminals, whether publicly or privately owned for water, sewerage, light, power, transit and other purposes; and for the extent and location of public housing projects.
- include recommended programs for the implementation of the plan ...
- (include) such other recommendations ... in the plan as will ... be beneficial to the municipality.

# History of Sterling

## Overview

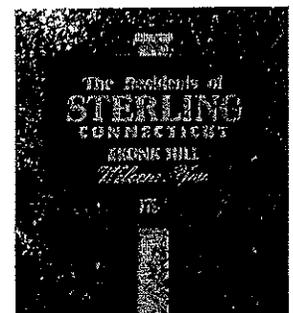
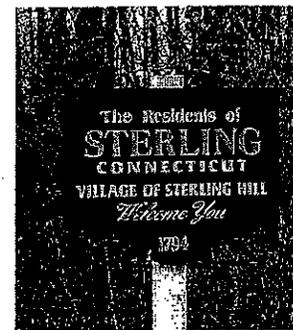
In order to plan for the future of Sterling it is important to understand how Sterling got to where it is today.

## Early History and Settlement Patterns.

The Town of Sterling evolves from the "volunteers' land", better known as the Town of Voluntown. In October, 1696, Lieutenant Thomas Leffingwell, of Norwich, and Sergeant John Frink, of Stonington, moved the general court, that they, with the rest of the English volunteers in former wars, might have a plantation granted to them. A tract of land six miles square was granted in answer to this request, to be taken up out of some of the conquered land, its bounds to be prescribed and settlement regulated by persons appointed by the court. The volunteers sent out upon the discovery of a suitable tract, found their choice very limited. Major Fitch, the Winthrops and others had already appropriated the greater part of the conquered lands, and the only available tract remaining within Connecticut limits was a strip bordering on Rhode Island, a few miles east of Norwich, hence the name "volunteers' land."

In October, 1700, Lieutenant Leffingwell, Richard Bushnell, Isaac-Wheeler, Caleb Fobes, Samuel Bliss, Joseph Morgan and Manasseh Minor moved for its confirmation to the volunteers, which was granted, so far as it concur with the former act of the General Assembly, provided it bring not the Colony into any inconvenience or, as afterward expressed, do not prejudice any former grant of the court. A large part of the tract thus granted is now comprised in the town of Voluntown. Its original bounds were nearly identical with those of the present township, save that eastward it extended to Pawcatuck River.

Little now can be learned of the primitive condition of this area. It was a barren frontier, utilized by various tribes of Indians, and after the Narragansett War (1675), claimed by the Mohegans, Massashowitt, sachem of Quinebaug, also claimed rights in it. No Indians are believed to have occupied it after the war, nor were any white inhabitants found on it when the area was turned over to the volunteers.



Some years passed before the division was completed. After the disputed Mohegan claim was settled a survey of the land was made in 1705. This land extended from the north bounds of Stonington northward to the Whetstone country (presently in Killingly), being a tract some twenty miles long, and from three to six miles in width. Its original size was diminished somewhat by the encroachment of the Rhode Island line, but after that had been established the tract was substantially the same as what is now occupied by the towns of Voluntown and Sterling.

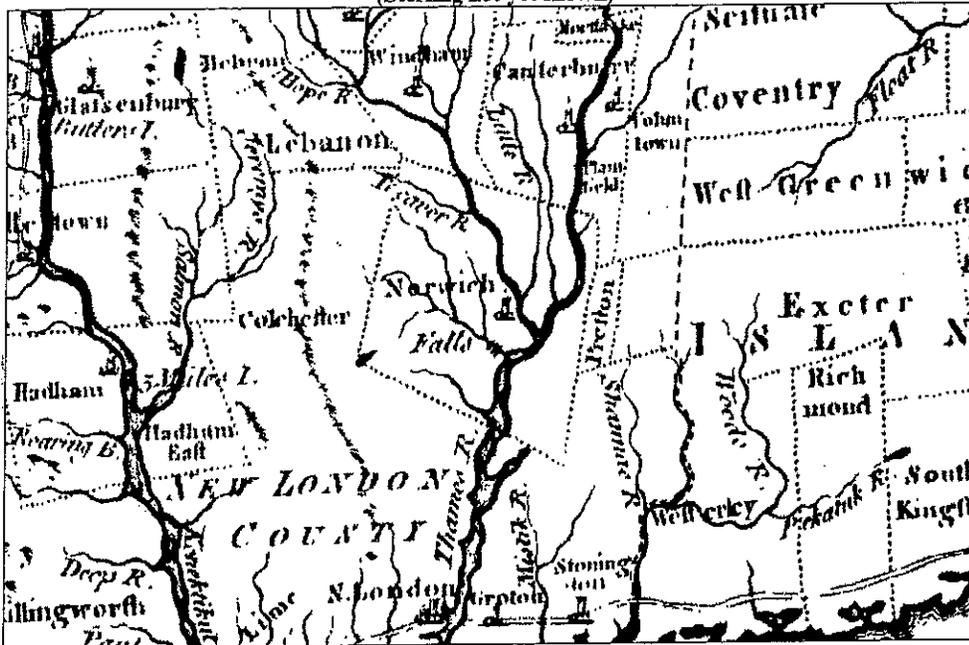
One hundred and sixty persons had enrolled themselves as desirous of sharing in the benefit of this grant, and the land was distributed among them by a drawing made April 6th, 1706. Mr. Coit, of Plainfield, had received a grant of three hundred acres north of Egunk Hill, and he conveyed it to Francis Smith and Miles Jordan. Smith soon put up a mill and opened his house for the accommodation of travelers. Smith and Jordan, in 1714, erected a bridge over the river there, and received in payment 150 acres of land on the Providence road. This convenient road and pleasant locality soon attracted other settlers—John Smith, Ebenezer and Thomas Dow, Robert and John Parke, Robert Williams, Nathaniel French and others. In May, 1719, this vacant country was annexed to Voluntown, by act of the assembly, a strip one mile in width across the north end being reserved as public land. The settlers who were established in the vacant land had their purchases confirmed to them by the assembly, in October, 1719, on condition that each should have a tenantable house and settle themselves within the space of three years and continue to live there three years after such settlement, upon the forfeiture of said purchase.

In May, 1721, the people inhabiting this territory were invested with town privileges, in the exercise of which they proceeded to lay taxes for the support of a minister and building a meeting house. The town government of Voluntown was organized June 20th, 1721. The progress of the town had been greatly hindered, and at that date it was behind its contemporaries, having no schools or meeting house, and only a few roads were laid out. A long continued and obstinate contested debate over the site of the meeting house disrupted the town and prevented the erection of the building.

In 1740 a committee was appointed to lay out the undivided lands belonging to the proprietors. In 1739 the strip of public land, which had been reserved, a mile in width, at the north end of the town, was annexed to this town by an act of the assembly. Up to this time no freemen had yet been sworn, no "country taxes" paid, and no representatives sent to the general assembly. The town now settled down to a more complete fulfillment of the privileges and responsibilities of corporate existence. But the division of land ordered in 1740 was delayed until 1747, when all previous committees being dismissed, Humphrey Avery, Charles Campbell, Robert Dixon, Samuel Gordon and John Wylie, Jr., were appointed to divide the common lots to each proprietor or his heirs, re-measure and rebound old lots, and lay out cedar swamps, which were satisfactorily accomplished. The cedar and pine swamps, said to be the best in the county, were laid out and divided. The lot on which the meeting house stood, and the burial place adjoining, were sequestered for the use of the inhabitants of the town and their successors. Several of the original lots had been taken up by those to whom they had been granted.

In 1772 fifty-four persons north of Moosup River, including John, James and

1758 Map of Connecticut  
(Sterling not yet shown)



George Dorrance, Robert, Thomas and James Dixon, Robert Montgomery, John Coles, John Gaston, Mark and David Eames, some of them six, seven, eight and nine miles from Voluntown meeting house, and greatly impeded by bad roads and traveling, received liberty from the assembly to organize as a distinct society or join in worship with Killingly. A number of these northern residents consequently united with the church in South Killingly, and after some years organized as a distinct society. Sterling obtained town privileges without the customary struggle. The inconvenience arising from the peculiar elongation of ancient Voluntown was abundantly manifest, and a proposition, April 25th, 1793, to divide into two towns met immediate acceptance. The resolve incorporating the new town was passed in May, 1794, as follows: "Resolved by this Assembly, that all that part of the ancient town of Voluntown, within the following bounds, beginning at the northwest corner of said ancient town of Voluntown, at the south line of Killingly; thence running southerly on the east side of Plainfield until it comes to the southeast corner of Plainfield; thence east ten degrees south to the division line between this state and the state of Rhode Island; thence by said state line to the southeast corner of Killingly; thence westerly on the line of Killingly to the first mentioned bounds, be, and the same is hereby, incorporated into a distinct town by the name of 'Sterling,' and shall be, and remain in, and of the County of Windham."

The first town meeting was held at the house of Robert Dixon, Esq., on Sterling Hill, June 9th, 1794. Benjamin Dow was elected town clerk and treasurer; Captain John Wylie and Asa Montgomery, George Matteson, Anthony Brown and Lemuel Dorrance, selectmen. Nearly a hundred inhabitants were soon admitted as freemen. The original Voluntown families-Dixon, Dorrance, Dow, Douglas, Cole, Smith, Gaston, Gordon, Gallup, French, Frink, Montgomery, Wylie-were still represented. Patten, Perkins, Vaughan, Young, Bailey, Burgess, Burlingame, Hall, Mason, and

other later residents appeared among the inhabitants. The name of the town was given by a temporary resident, Doctor John Sterling, who promised a public library in return for the honor, however, this promise was never kept.

## **Economic Evolution**

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The Connecticut Yankee has long been a symbol of ingenuity and inventiveness. These qualities have been matched by production skills since the earliest days. From colonial times, Connecticut has been predominantly a manufacturing state and a world leader in industrial development and in 1794 Sterling entered upon its new duties with the usual spirit and energy. Its population was about nine hundred. Though much of its soil was poor, and its shape inconvenient, it had some peculiar advantages. It had fine water privileges, an excellent stone quarry, a great post road running through its center, and sterling men of good Scotch stock to administer public affairs.

The uprising of the manufacturing interest gave Sterling a fresh impetus in growth and prosperity, Asa Ames, Isaac Pitman and Samuel Dorrance and Dixon Hall, of Sterling, in 1808, as the Sterling Manufacturing Company, buying land "at a ledge of rocks, called the ' Devil's Den Chimney;' thence west by and down a small brook to Moosup River." The Sterling Manufactory was ready for work in 1809. Sterling's manufacturing facilities were well improved during the early part of the present century. Its first factory, built by Dorrance, Hall and others, was destroyed by fire soon after its completion, but its site was soon occupied by a larger building under the more exclusive management of Samuel Ames of Providence, which was described in 1818 as "one of the largest manufacturing establishments in the State, running sixteen hundred spindles." Dyeing of cotton began on site in 1879. The Sterling Dyeing and Finishing Co. operated on site from 1879-1904. The United States Finishing Corp., 1904-1954, the Moosup Finishing Corp., 1959-1960, and the Revere Textiles Prints Corp., 1966-1980, all operated on the site.

The American Factory upon the Quanduck, and a small cotton factory upon the Moosup were also carried on. Three grain mills, one carding machine, one fulling mill and clothiery works, two tanneries, four mercantile stores and two taverns were reported in 1818.

For many years the cotton factories continued in operation, furnishing employment to male and female operatives, and a ready market for farmers. The Sterling Company manifested much enterprise, and was one of the first in the country to whiten their cloth by the use of chlorine instead of sun bath. Mr. William Pike effected this invention, and also experimented in wood distillation, extracting for the use of the dyer the first pyroligneous acid made in the country. His success encouraged him to further enterprise. Brandy and gin distilleries had fallen into disrepute, but the transformation of wood into various chemical agencies met with nothing but favor. Three of these sap works were in time established two in Sterling, one in Voluntown requiring some five or six thousand cords of wood annually, and at least a score of men to prepare the wood and aid in the working. Pyroligneous and citric acids, sugar of lead, tincture of iron, naphtha and fine charcoal were among the products of distillation. Mr. Pike had his residence on Sterling Hill, in one of the fine old Dorrance houses, and was much respected as one of the leading men of the town. He was the first to introduce one horse wagons into use, paying for them in cotton yarn. Charcoal making was carried on quite extensively in Sterling.

Jeremiah W. Boswell was born in Foster, R. I., and came to Sterling, Conn., in 1876. He learned the trade of stone cutter and commenced quarrying granite about one-fourth of a mile east of Sterling Dye Works in 1887. He employs about twenty-five men. The stone is of superior quality for building purposes, and finds a ready market in Providence, Norwich and other places.

The village of Oneco, in the central part of the town, was founded by Henry Sabin, of Plainfield, who built a small cotton factory here about the year 1830. Successive owners gave it their names until it was finally re-christened by the Norwich proprietors, who then utilize its granite, working its fine quarries to good advantage. Indications of yet more valuable ore have been found in the vicinity. Among these are specimens of plumbago and dendrite, and such large and glittering quartz crystals, that their chief depository is known as "the Diamond Ledge." The famous Devil's Den Chimney " was blown up to make way for the railroad when that was built.

About 1860 Smith & Williams commenced granite quarrying. They were succeeded by A. & W. Sprague, and in 1884 by Garvey Brothers, of Providence, who employ at the quarry and in connection with it about 120 men. The granite quarried here is used for paving, building and monumental purposes in Providence, New York, Chicago and many other places, and was also sent to England. Their facilities for handling stone are not surpassed, a railroad running direct to the ledge. Mr. John Garvey, who, since the death of his brother Michael, in 1887, has been sole manager, came to this country in 1869 with about five dollars in his pocket. He learned the trade of stone cutter, became a contractor and builder, and, by his industry, has built up a large and increasing business.

Oscar F. Gibson, son of Allen Gibson, was born in Sterling in 1835. In 1886 he commenced quarrying granite about one mile west of Oneco Village. He employs about 20 men. The stone was chiefly used for building, and was very marketable. Mr. Gibson represented Sterling in the legislature of 1880. He married Ellen, daughter of Arnold Dixon, and has two sons, Allen M. and Merrill A.

The cotton manufacturing interests of the town declined over time. Factories burned down and have not been replaced. Its natural resources now furnish its chief reliance. The "sap works" of Mr. James Pike continue to resolve the forests into their component elements, consuming annually some two or three thousand cords of hard wood, employing a number of workmen, and extracting and combining a variety of useful products. A specialty of this unique establishment is the dissolution of refuse tin and iron, battered tin pans, rusty stove pipes and the like, by which these heretofore indestructible nuisances are made subservient to the will and use of man. Stimulated by the enterprises, Oneco bids fair to become a place of business importance, has a new public hall and public-spirited residents.

Since the relative prosperous times in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries a lot has changed. The once prominent textile industries have become victims of fire or more favorable economic conditions in other states.

### **Post-War Suburbanization**

Unlike most town's, Sterling did not experience a boost in population after World War II. Although, the proliferation of the automobile, government policies that promoted new

housing construction, and the growing post-war economy resulted in new population growth in other towns surrounding Sterling. It was not until the 1960's where Sterling started to experience significant growth. However, in the following decade Sterling experienced a decrease in population. Sterling's population remained relatively stagnant until the 1980 and 90's where they experienced substantial growth.

### **Historical Factors in Sterling's Evolution**

Sterling has experienced growth and decline with the economic ups and downs of the town, region and state. But despite uncertain economic conditions within the Town and surrounding area, people have been attracted to Sterling over the past 30 years due to:

- the character and ambiance of the community
- isolated nature, but with relative reasonable access to employment centers in eastern Connecticut, western and central Rhode Island

The items that have historically attracted residents to this quintessential New England community in the past have the potential to be threatened by increased residential development. Sterling has and will continue to become more attractive to potential homeowners given the increased residential development costs (building lot prices) in near by communities in Connecticut and Rhode Island.

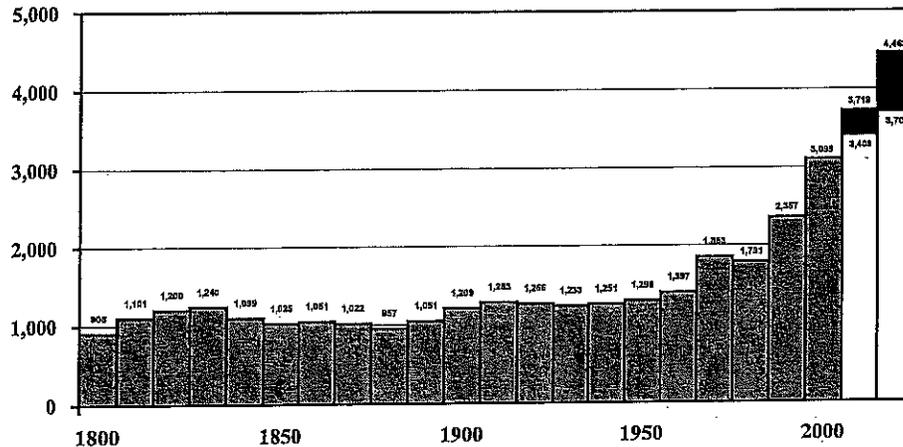
The residents of Sterling have never rested on their past achievements. Although, their historic textiles mills of a bygone era are gone, its entrepreneurial spirit is still alive. Sterling is in the process of re-inventing itself, small manufacturing is making return, stone quarrying and processing is active again. Agriculture, whether it is horses or dairy continues on a steady course of sustainability. While the community's two historic villages are once again are poised for redevelopment.

# Conditions and Trends

## Population Growth

According to the Census, Sterling had a year 2000 population of 3,099 people. This represents an increase of 742 people (31.48 percent) from the 1990 Census. Sterling needs to consider how this growth will affect the community and how to address it.

Between 1810 and 1960, the Town of Sterling experienced either a single digit growth rate and/or negative growth, with the exception of the 1890's (15.03%). Over the last 200 years, Sterling has experienced negative growth in a total of seven separate decades. However, in three of the last four decades, Sterling has experienced their highest growth rates, 1960's (32.64%), 1980's (31.60%) and 1990's (31.48%). While the rate of growth has slowed in Connecticut to single digits, Sterling has been growing at rate greater than 30% per decade 1970's excluded. In fact, Sterling has grown at a rate approximately seven times as fast as that for the State of Connecticut (3.6 percent during the same period).



## Population Growth

Year	Population
1800	908
1810	1,101
1820	1,200
1830	1,240
1840	1,099
1850	1,025
1860	1,051
1870	1,022
1880	957
1890	1,051
1900	1,209
1910	1,283
1920	1,266
1930	1,233
1940	1,251
1950	1,298
1960	1,397
1970	1,853
1980	1,791
1990	2,357
2000	3,099
2010	<i>3,841</i>
2020	<i>4,463</i>

1800 - 2000 Census. Projections from the CT Office of Policy & Management (2010 and 2020 projections) in italics/bold.

## Growth Rate

	Sterling	State
1800s	21%	4%
1810s	9%	5%
1820s	3%	8%
1830s	-11%	4%
1840s	-7%	20%
1850s	3%	24%
1860s	-3%	17%
1870s	-6%	16%
1880s	10%	20%
1890s	15%	22%
1900s	6%	23%
1910s	-1%	24%
1920s	-3%	16%
1930s	1%	6%
1940s	4%	17%
1950s	8%	26%
1960s	33%	20%
1970s	-3%	3%
1980s	32%	6%
1990s	31%	4%

1900 - 2000 Census (Numbers were mathematically rounded).

## Dynamics of Population Change

There are only two ways that population growth in a town can occur. The first is due to natural increase (more births than deaths). The Second is a result of net migration (more people moving in than out).

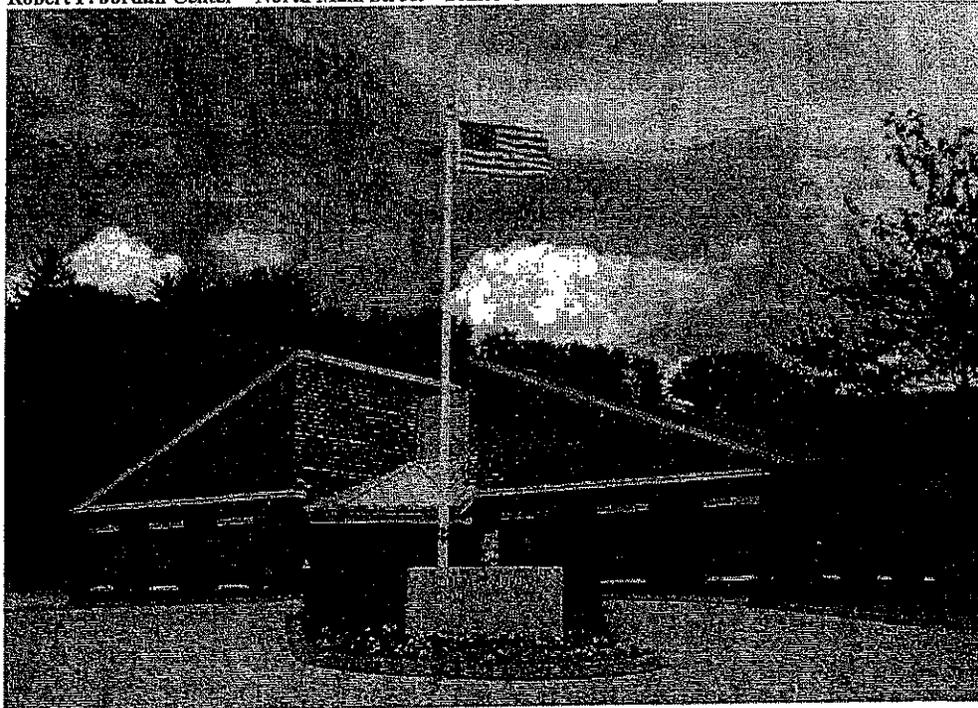
Components of Population Change

	1960's	1970's	1980's	1990's
<b>Total Change</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>-62</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>742</b>
<b>Change Due To Natural Increase (Decrease)</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>208</b>
Births	264	242	205	348
Deaths	151	158	160	140
<b>Change Due To Net Migration</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>534</b>

US Census, Connecticut Health Department reports, 1990s change due to Natural Increase (Decrease) is 1990 to 1998 data extrapolated to a ten-year period.

Sterling experienced significant net in-migration and natural increase during the 1960s. Both growth factors declined during the 1970s. In fact, 147 individuals migrated from Town. During the 1980s, the amount of net in-migration increased significantly while the amount of natural increase slowed. Then, during the 1990s, growth due to natural increase accelerated, as well as, net-in-migration.

Robert P. Jordan Center – North Main Street – Senior Center and Early Childhood Development



## Changing Age Composition

While overall population growth is important, the changing age composition of a community may be even more significant. For planning purposes, the age composition of a community can be considered to include three major age groups with differing needs or concerns - children (ages 0-19), adults (ages 20-54), and mature residents (ages 55 and up). In addition, each group can be further broken down into two or more sub-groups.

Over the past ten years, the most noticeable trends in Sterling are increases (466 residents) in the number of resident's aged 35 to 54 and net increases in:

- the number of residents above age 35 (people), and
- the number of residents under age 20 (98 people).

Ages	1970	Actual		Projections	
		1990	2000	2010	2020
0-4	206	189	224	208	279
5-19	524	573	722	857	1004
20-34	382	591	643	583	776
35-54	404	602	1,064	972	962
55-64	164	168	215	345	548
65+	173	234	231	266	420
<b>Total</b>	<b>1853</b>	<b>2,357</b>	<b>3,099</b>	<b>3231</b>	<b>3989</b>

1970 - 2000 US Census Bureau and OPM Projections (1995.1)

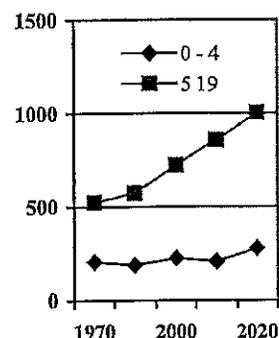
Over the next twenty years, the major demographic trends may include:

- a growing population of older adults as the "baby boom" (people born between 1945 and 1965) ages, and
- a possible increase in the number of school-age children until 2010.

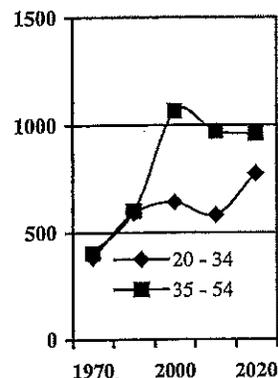
However, since these projections were prepared by the Connecticut Census Data Center in 1995 and do not include the 2000 Census results, these trends should be considered as general trends rather than predictions.

Description	Age Range	Needs	Projection to 2020
Infants	0 to 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Care</li> </ul>	Relatively Stable to 2020
School-Age	5 to 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School facilities</li> <li>• Recreation facilities</li> <li>• Recreation programs</li> </ul>	Projected to steady increase thru year 2020
Young Adults	20 to 34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rental housing</li> <li>• Starter homes</li> <li>• Social destinations</li> </ul>	Projected increases thru year 2020
Middle Age	35 to 54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family programs</li> <li>• Trade-up programs</li> </ul>	Possible decrease to year 2020 as "baby boom" age
Mature Adults	55 to 64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smaller homes</li> <li>• Second homes</li> </ul>	Projected increase to year 2020
Retirement Age	65 and over	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tax relief</li> <li>• Housing options</li> <li>• Elderly programs</li> </ul>	Projected increase to year 2020

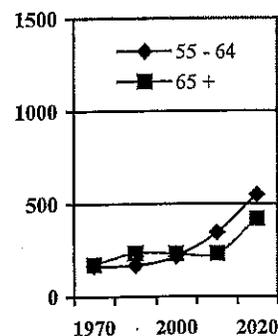
Children (Ages 0 - 19)



Adults (Ages 20 - 54)



Mature Adults (Ages 55+)



## Sterling Housing Growth

	Total Units	Units Added	Percent Change
1970	539	108	20.04%
1980	638	99	15.52%
1990	877	239	27.25%
2000	1193	316	26.49%
2004	1,238	45	3.63%
2005	1,287	149	

1980 - 2000 US Census, and CT DECD (CBRC - Connecticut Economic Resource Center)

## Housing

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Sterling had 1,193 housing units in the year 2000. This represents an increase of 316 housing units (26.5 percent) since the 1990 Census. In comparison, the number of housing units in Connecticut grew by less than half this rate (4.9 percent) during this same period.

## Housing Growth

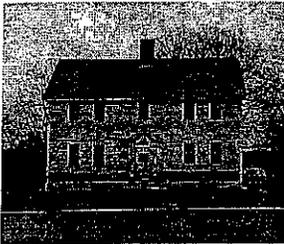
As shown in the sidebar, housing growth in Sterling has exceeded 25% over the past twenty years. In fact, Sterling's housing growth has more than twice as high as many of the nearby communities during the past twenty years.

### Housing Growth (ranked by 1990s growth)

	1970s	%	1980s	%	1990s	%
<b>Sterling</b>	99	18%	239	27%	316	26%
Canterbury	390	50%	380	32%	206	13%
Preston	284	26%	328	24%	212	13%
Lisbon	274	32%	274	24%	163	12%
Griswold	772	29%	803	24%	319	8%
Plainfield	na	na	926	21%	334	6%
Sprague	161	18%	54	5%	55	5%
<b>Connecticut</b>	177,277	18%	161,970	14%	65,125	5%
Norwich	1,109	8%	1,207	8%	128	1%

US Census Bureau

Historic Home - Sterling Hill



## Housing Types

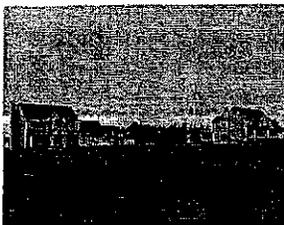
In terms of single family detached housing, Sterling ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> among abutting Towns (Killingly, Plainfield, and Voluntown) with 78%. It also ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> with regards to multi-family housing units (2 or more units) when compared to abutting town and 5<sup>th</sup> when compared to many surrounding communities and the state average.

### 2000 Housing Mix (Ranked by percent one unit detached)

	Total Housing Units	Percent 1-unit Detached	Percent 2 - 4 Units	Percent 5+ Units	Percent Other
<i>Voluntown</i>	1,091	93%	5%	2%	1%
Preston	1,901	92%	6%	1%	1%
Canterbury	1,762	90%	4%	3%	3%
Lisbon	1,563	83%	8%	1%	8%
<b>Sterling</b>	1,193	78%	12%	1%	8%
<i>Plainfield</i>	5,676	65%	21%	10%	3%
Griswold	4,530	65%	19%	10%	5%
<b>Connecticut</b>	1,385,975	59%	18%	17%	9%
<i>Killingly</i>	6,909	59%	21%	12%	4%
Sprague	1,164	57%	33%	5%	1%
Norwich	16,600	43%	29%	23%	4%

2000 US Census

New Development on Porter Pond Road



## Housing Value

While housing values and sales prices are lower in northeastern and southeastern Connecticut than the state as a whole, Sterling has higher housing values (and sale prices) than most of the surrounding communities. Still, the housing stock in Sterling could be considered affordable by a number of measures.

Median Value of Housing – Owner Occupied Units  
(Ranked by 2000 value)

	Median Housing Price		
	1980	1990	2000
Connecticut	\$67,400	\$176,700	\$166,900
Preston	\$55,200	\$143,800	\$139,300
Lisbon	\$45,700	\$137,000	\$133,500
Sprague	\$46,600	\$136,400	\$133,000
Canterbury	\$52,300	\$131,100	\$129,700
Voluntown	\$43,400	\$121,500	\$124,200
Griswold	\$45,300	\$126,100	\$122,800
<b>Sterling</b>	<b>\$40,100</b>	<b>\$122,000</b>	<b>\$116,700</b>
Norwich	\$43,300	\$125,200	\$110,900
Killingly	\$46,300	\$121,200	\$109,100
Plainfield	\$43,300	\$171,200	\$106,900

Estimated housing values from  
1980 - 2000 US Census

## Affordable Housing

However, State statutes (CGS 8-39a and 8-30g) define “affordable housing” differently. Those statutes define “affordable housing” to include governmentally assisted units, units financed with CHFA or FMHA mortgages, or units that are deed-restricted to sell or rent at prices that make them affordable to persons or families earning 80 percent of the median income for the Norwich/New London area.

In terms of the this definition, only 6.29 percent of Sterling’s housing stock meets the affordable criteria and so Sterling is subject to the provisions of CGS Section 8-30g which is intended to enable the construction of affordable housing units.

	2003 Housing Units	Government Assisted Units	CHFA/FmHA Mortgages	Deed Restricted	Total Assisted	Percent
Norwich	16,600	2,620	603	0	3,223	19.42 %
Plainfield	5,676	549	407	0	956	16.84 %
Killingly	6,909	536	413	0	949	13.74 %
Voluntown	1,091	53	44	0	97	8.89 %
Griswold	4,530	175	185	0	360	7.95 %
Canterbury	1,762	77	57	0	134	7.60 %
<b>Sterling</b>	<b>1,193</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>6.29 %</b>
Sprague	1,164	32	26	0	58	4.98 %
Lisbon	1,563	5	66	0	71	4.54 %
Preston	1,901	42	22	0	64	3.37 %

Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure List (2003) Department of Community and Economic Development

## Housing Tenure

The extent of owner occupancy in Sterling is the highest among the surrounding areas and is much higher than the state average.

Town	Percent Owner-Occupied
Lisbon	88.6%
Canterbury	86.0%
Preston	82.7%
<b>Sterling</b>	<b>82.4%</b>
Voluntown	81.8%
Griswold	70.6%
Plainfield	68.6%
Sprague	66.2%
Killingly	64.7%
<b>Connecticut</b>	<b>66.2%</b>
Norwich	52.5%

2000 US Census

## Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure

In Connecticut, communities with less than ten percent of their housing stock meeting the definition of “affordable housing” are subject to the “Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure”.

In this procedure, a developer can propose an affordable housing development and potentially override local zoning regulations.

## Economy

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### Employment

According to the Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL), there were 360 non-agricultural jobs in Sterling in the based on data from 2001. According to CERC (Connecticut Economic Research Center) there were 395 non-agricultural jobs and 26 agricultural jobs for a total of 440. However, this data is over five years old and varies by more than 10% between data sources. In 1993, there were only 280 non-agricultural jobs according to the DOL.

Regardless of the relative accuracy of this data it appears to paint a rather somber picture. However, between 1993 and 2001 there only were approximately 100 new jobs in town. Although this number is not significant, it does represent over 33% of new job creation.

### Types of Jobs in Sterling

The following table shows how the Sterling economy has changed over time by looking at the types of jobs located in Sterling

**Types of Jobs in Sterling**

	1993	2001
<b>Goods Producing Industries</b> Construction, Manufacturing	50	120
<b>Trade</b> Retail, Wholesale	50	60
<b>Services</b> Services, Transportation, Communication, Utilities, Finance, Insurance & Real Estate, Government	180	180
<b>Total Non-agricultural Employment</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>360</b>

Although this is not apparent in the table above, the trend throughout the state reflects an economy that is moving away from goods-producing industries (such as manufacturing) to an economy based on trade and services.



## Jobs Held By Sterling Residents

The Census contains information on the types of businesses that employ Sterling residents. This data shows that, over the past two decades, Sterling residents have also been adapting from goods-producing jobs to trade and service jobs.

**Sterling Residents Employment by Industry**

	1990	2000
Goods Producing Industries	617	503
Trade Industries	190	285
Services Producing Industries	347	864
<b>Total Workers</b>	<b>1154</b>	<b>1652</b>

2000 US Census

## Median Income

While median household incomes in Sterling are higher than that for the state, the per capita income is lower. This would reflect:

- the average household size in Sterling (2.78 persons) is higher than that for the State (2.53 persons), and
- the statistical difference between a household *median* (half the households make more and half make less) and a per capita *mean* (where all incomes are summed and divided by the number of people).

**Income (2000)**  
(ranked by median household income)

	Per Capita Income	Household Income
Canterbury	\$22,317	\$55,547
Lisbon	\$22,476	\$55,149
Preston	\$24,752	\$54,942
<b>Connecticut</b>	<b>\$28,766</b>	<b>\$53,935</b>
Voluntown	\$23,707	\$56,802
Griswold	\$21,196	\$50,156
<b>Sterling</b>	<b>\$19,679</b>	<b>\$49,167</b>
Sprague	\$20,796	\$43,125
Plainfield	\$18,706	\$42,851
Killingly	\$19,779	\$41,087
Norwich	\$20,742	\$39,181

2000 U.S. Census

## Sterling's Regional Role

Sterling's primary role within eastern Connecticut is a rural residential suburb for persons working in the Windham County and surrounding areas. According to the 2000 US Census, Sterling had workforce of 1,745 with 4.2% unemployment.

Sixty percent of the workers from Sterling commute within Windham County, as shown in the table below. Thirty-one percent of workers from Sterling commute to either Killingly or Plainfield. While it is import to note that, 257 workers (15%) commute to jobs within Sterling.

Sterling Residents Commuted To Job Locations In:			Sterling Workers Commuted From Residence Locations In:		
	Num	Percent		Num	Percent
Groton	95	5.79	East Lyme	18	3.32
Killingly	212	12.91	Killingly	41	7.56
Ledyard	103	6.27	<b>Sterling</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>47.42</b>
Plainfield	307	18.70	Plainfield	81	14.94
Norwich	77	4.69	Windham	23	4.24
<b>Sterling</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>15.65</b>	Voluntown	20	3.69
Other Windham County	218	28.93	Other Windham County	41	7.56
Other New London County	134	8.16	Other New London County	31	5.72
Elsewhere in State	86		Elsewhere in State		5.54
Out of State	153	9.32	Out of State	23	4.24
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1642</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>100%</b>

2000 Census

The table below emphasizes Sterling's primary role as residential community (since the number of housing units and workers exceeds the number of local jobs).

### Jobs / Housing / Workers Balance

(ranked by jobs/housing ratio)

Town	2000 Jobs	Local Workers		Housing Units	
	Number	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio
<b>Connecticut</b>	<b>1,665,782</b>	<b>1,746,503</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>1,385,975</b>	<b>120%</b>
Killingly	8401	8828	95%	6,909	122%
Norwich	19,109	18,923	101%	16,600	115%
Plainfield	4954	7969	62%	5,676	87%
Griswold	3,181	5,841	54%	4,530	70%
Sterling	1,028	2,261	45%	1,563	66%
Preston	1,055	2,584	41%	1,901	55%
Sprague	512	1,680	30%	1,164	44%
<b>Sterling</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>1745</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>1,193</b>	<b>35%</b>
Canterbury	616	2,791	22%	1,762	34%
Voluntown	376	1413	27%	1,091	34%

2000 U.S. Census

## Fiscal Overview

### Expenditures

Expenditures are the major component of the municipal fiscal equation. The annual budget in Sterling is approximately ~~\$2 million dollars~~ (Fiscal Year 2006-2007) with education being the highest category of expenditures at approximately \$6.4 million dollars.

On a per capita basis, overall expenditures in Sterling are below the State average. Sterling spends less than the State average on all categories of expenditures except for education. This is a reflection of the high priority that Sterling has given to providing educational services.

#### 1999 - 2000 Per Capita Expenditures Distribution

	Sterling	Rank (N=169)	Connecticut
Education	\$ 1,483		\$ 1,304
Fire	2		87
Police	24		154
Debt Service	87		165
Public Works	179		191
Other Expenditures	246	n/a	421
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,021</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>\$2,322</b>

1999 - 2000 Connecticut Policy & Economic Council

#### 2000 Per Capita Expenditure Comparison (Ranked by Per Capita Expenditure)

	2000 Population	Expenditures (Millions)	Per Capita
Griswold	10,807	\$28.3	\$2,617
<b>Connecticut</b>	<b>3,405,565</b>	<b>\$7,972.8</b>	<b>\$2,341</b>
Voluntown	2528	\$5.8	\$2,285
Norwich	36,117	\$80.9	\$2,241
Canterbury	4,692	\$10.3	\$2,197
Preston	4,688	\$10.0	\$2,142
Plainfield	14619	\$30.3	\$2,069
Lisbon	4,069	\$8.2	\$2,021
<b>Sterling</b>	<b>3099</b>	<b>\$6.2</b>	<b>\$2,001</b>
Killingly	16472	\$32.5	\$1,971
Sprague	2,971	\$5.8	\$1,957

1999 - 2000 Connecticut Policy & Economic Council

# Community Vision and Themes

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## Overview

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Identifying the topics and issues Sterling residents felt were most important to address in preparing the 2008 Sterling Plan of Conservation & Development was an important step in the planning process. Topics for discussion included frequency of use of the Town plan, overall importance of the Plan, and progress made toward implementation. In the course of developing this Plan, a clear consensus began to appear. Sterling residents love their town.

Even though residents would like Sterling to remain the way it is, change will inevitably occur in the future. By finding consensus on strategies that will balance the rural character of the community, with planned growth, Sterling residents will be able to maintain the quality of life they are proud of.

**Sterling Character Scene**



## Summary of Planning Issues

The emerging overall theme of the Plan of Conservation & Development appears to be balancing growth while the residents recognize that change is inevitable as development occurs. However, residents seem to have indicated that they want to

guide this growth and change in ways that will preserve and enhance the overall character of the community.

The major strategies proposed in the 2008 Sterling Plan of Conservation were developed with a view towards addressing residents expressed desire to preserve and enhance the overall character of Sterling and ensure the highest quality of life for its residents.

### **Conservation**

Participants at public meetings identified conservation as the most important theme for the Plan of Conservation & Development to address. Such efforts will help to preserve the rural character of Sterling.

The following elements are seen as important considerations:

- *Conservation of the natural environment by protecting water quality, wetland, forests, slopes, and other natural features.*
- *Preservation of open space in key areas that will maintain the feeling of "openness" in the community, protect important natural resources, and provide recreational opportunities for residents.*
- *Recognition and protection of irreplaceable historic resources that give residents pride in their community.*

### **Development**

Sterling residents expressed interest in balancing rural character with development. While this will be a challenge, Sterling can control the character, location, and to some degree the amount of development through regulations.

The following elements are seen as important considerations:

- *Increasing the business tax base, to maintain needed Town services and a reasonable mill rate, by encouraging high quality retail and industrial development in appropriate locations.*
- *Ensuring future single family development continues to support the rural development patterns of the community.*
- *Providing affordable alternatives to traditional single family housing to meet the needs of elderly residents.*

### **Infrastructure**

Infrastructure is defined as the basic facilities (community facilities, transportation, and utilities) needed to support the type of community that Sterling wants to be. Community facilities were identified as the third highest priority topic to be considered by the plan at one of the Commission public workshops on plan development. While other infrastructure issues did not generate much discussion at that meeting, such infrastructure is important to maintain the quality of life for residents.

The following elements are seen as important considerations:

- *Acquiring land now for future public use.*
- *Maintaining a high quality education system.*

- *Improved town hall and library facilities.*
- *Provide more and/or improved recreation facilities for residents.*
- *Provide a community center for public meetings and youth activities.*
- *Ensuring future development is designed so as not to overburden the existing road system.*
- *Determining road intersections that may be overburdened and require redesign.*
- *Providing land for future utility facilities that will be needed by the community such as pump stations, reservoir storage, and waste treatment facilities.*

Based on a planning points exercise at a public workshop, residents in attendance ranked the important issues listed below in the following order:

Rank	Topic	Total Points	Percent of Total Vote
<b>Conservation Topics</b>			<b>45%</b>
	Community Character	65	16.46%
<b>2</b>	Open Space	150	37.97%
	Historic Resources	45	11.39%
<b>3</b>	Natural Resources	135	34.18%
<b>Development Topics</b>		<b>390</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>1</b>	Business Development	200	51.28%
<b>4</b>	Residential Development	120	30.77%
	Village Enhancement	40	10.26%
	Housing Needs	30	7.69%
<b>Infrastructure Topics</b>		<b>390</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>4</b>	Community Facilities	120	30.77%
<b>6</b>	Pedestrian/Bicycle Circulation	90	23.08%
<b>5</b>	Utilities	105	26.92%
	Vehicular Circulation	75	19.23%
<b>Total Voted</b>		<b>885</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Priority Topics

People were asked to allocate their points towards the topics they felt were most important for Sterling to address in the Plan of Conservation and Development.

The top priorities were

1. Business Development
2. Open Space
3. Natural Resources
4. Residential Development\*
4. Community Facilities\*

\* Tie

## Community Objectives

From these exercises, it was apparent that business development, guiding residential development, preserving open space and protecting natural resources were also important to the residents.

Overriding theme from one of the community workshops.

*“Sterling residents seem to love their Town.”*

Public meeting comment

### **Residents Top Priorities:**

- *Encourage Business Development*
- *Protect Open Spaces*
- *Protect Natural Resources*
- *Guide Residential Growth*

The objectives and implementation strategies for each of these elements are discussed in Section 6 of this Plan.

# PRESERVING COMMUNITY CHARACTER

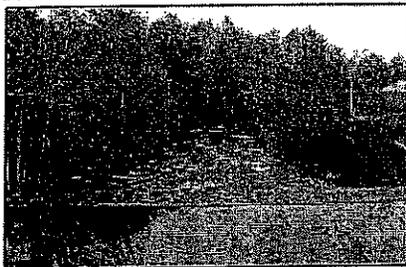
## Overview

Participants at a number of public meetings identified conservation as the most important theme for the Plan of Conservation & Development to address. Conservation was used in a broad sense to define the town's ability to preserve its rural character. Residents need to develop strategies that will balance the rural character of the community, with planned growth. In developing and defining this fine balance, Sterling residents will be able to maintain the quality of life they are proud of. The following elements are seen as important considerations:

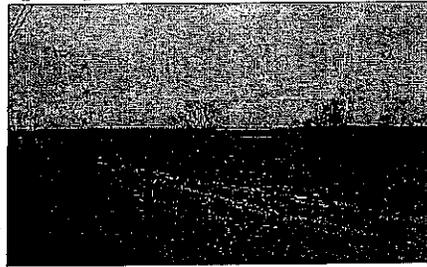
- *Conservation of the natural environment by protecting water quality, wetland, forests, slopes, and other natural features.*
- *Preservation of open space in key areas that will maintain the feeling of "openness" in the community, protect important natural resources, and provide recreational opportunities for residents.*
- *Recognition and protection of irreplaceable historic resources that give residents pride in their community.*
- *Retaining and developing cultural resources within the town.*

Four primary small New England Town elements

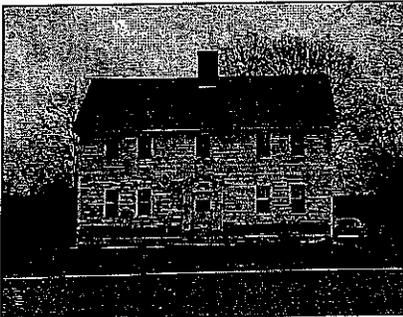
Natural Resources



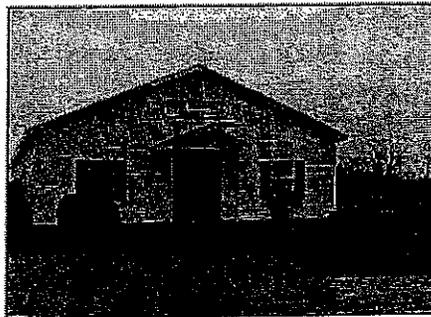
Open Space



Historic Resources



Cultural Resources



Sterling is defined and distinguished by its quintessential small town New England character which are representative of the four elements mentioned above. The town retains many of the qualities and characteristics that have attracted people to the area since the Colonial era. Preservation of these encompassing but vulnerable attributes has been identified as the most important theme for this 2007 Plan of Conservation and Development. The next ten years may prove crucial for the longer term preservation of Sterling's rural character with out any changes in regulatory oversight. Many of the strategies identified in this Plan will lay the foundation for community actions to help retain the qualities that today's residents clearly value and future residents will respect.

Specific strategies to preserve community character are:

- *Preserving open space,*
- *Improving environmental regulation,*
- *Preserving the character of the Town's villages,*
- *Managing existing roads and developing modern design standards of future roads,*
- *Protecting historic resources and cultural resources, and*
- *Establishing community identity as individuals enter the Town.*

## **Natural Resources**

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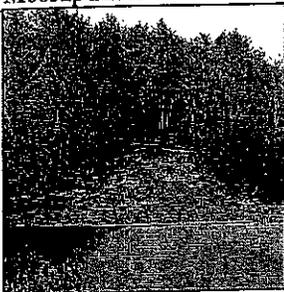
Natural resources are the underpinning of a community's conservation planning and goals. Conserving natural resources helps preserve environmental functions, enhance community character, and sustain the overall quality of life.

### **Land Resources**

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According to the University of Connecticut Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR), approximately 4.9 percent (855 acres) of Sterling's land area consists of wetlands soils and/or water.

### **Moosup River**



Sterling lies within the highlands associated with the Quinebaug Valley. The lowlands within Sterling are associated with the Moosup River and Quanduck flood plains. As a result of glacial action in the eastern Connecticut highlands, the Town contains a diverse array of landforms within a relatively small area, with some rolling hills, riparian plains, forested uplands, and agricultural flatlands.

Despite the general nature of the Town's landforms there are a number of areas in town that contain steep slopes and shallow depth to bedrock. Some of these land forms have been historically mined for their granite over the generation. Granite was first commercially mined by Jeremiah W. Boswell beginning in 1887 a quarter of a mile east of the historic Sterling Dye Works (former Revere Site). Although these areas are not abundant, they merit a delicate mix between conservation and development consideration since disturbance of these areas can:

- *increase the area affected by development,*
- *increase the potential for septic failure and erosion,*
- *increase the cost of developing and maintaining buildings, roads, driveways, utilities, and septic systems, and*
- *impede overall traffic circulation and property access.*

Wetlands soils are widespread throughout Sterling and no one particular area is devoid of these soils. The town does contain a number of significant systems associated with its low lying areas just east of Ekonk Hill in the Cedar

Swamp/Porter Pond area and along Carson Brook, which runs along the Rhode Island Border between Bailey Pond and the Moosup River. Wetlands systems constitute an essential conservation and preservation priority and are protected in Sterling by up-to-date and complete wetlands regulations, although the Wetlands Agency may consider enhancing wetlands protection by extending the upland review area.

## Water Resources

Water resources are a defining characteristic of Sterling. It could be said that Sterling's two rivers are responsible for its historic development patterns beginning in the early 1800 century. In fact, the Moosup River is responsible for Sterling's early prominence during the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the formation of two distinct villages (Sterling and Oneco). Waterbodies account for approximately .6 percent of the Towns landmass. Wetlands, both forested and non-forested account for another 3.3 percent or 756 acres.

The protection of surface and ground water quality is an important environmental issue since Sterling relies primarily on ground water resources for its drinking water. As noted, effective wetlands regulation by the Wetlands and Conservation Commission are a key component of this protection. Open space planning and preservation is another important tool for protecting water resources, as discussed below. Other considerations relative to water quality will be discussed in a future workbook addressing regulatory issues.

Floodplains are areas subject to periodic flooding, threatening both life and property. Flooding can occur at most any time of year in Connecticut due to tropical storms, prolonged rains, and/or spring thaws. The map on the facing page identifies those areas of Sterling that have a 1.0 percent (called a 100-year flood) or 0.2 percent (called a 500-year flood) likelihood of flooding in any one year. More detailed boundaries can be obtained by reference to the detailed federal Flood Insurance Rate (FIRM) maps on file at the Town Hall.

## Biologic Resources

Sixteen Connecticut Natural Diversity Database sites have been identified in Sterling (see page 4-16 for map). Such areas may contain unique habitats, species of special concern, and other valuable resources (such as unique natural areas, scenic resources). The State maintains this special database to help preserve and protect these resources.

Other potentially important biological resources in Sterling include the two river valleys, which are likely migratory corridors for birds and other wildlife, and the remaining agricultural lands. As agricultural lands dwindle, many species of wildlife that depend on open fields and field edges are also declining, in some cases precipitously.

## Water Resources

According to the University of Connecticut Center for Land Use Education and Research.

CLEAR broke these land areas into the following categories:

- Water (99 acres)
- Non-forested Wetlands (75 acres)
- Forested Wetlands (681 acres)

As a whole, approximately 4.9 percent (855 acres) of Sterling's land area consists of wetlands soils and/or water



# TOWN OF STERLING HYDROLOGY

## LEGEND

-  Alluvial and floodplain soils
-  Poorly drained and very poorly drained soils
-  Poorly drained soils
-  Very poorly drained soils
-  Non-wetland soils
-  Water
-  Stream
-  Highway
-  Local Road
-  Parcel boundary
-  Town boundary

## TOWN OF STERLING CONNECTICUT PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

*This Map is for evaluation purposes only. Information relative to features on this map is approximate and subject to change and subsequent surveys may disclose.*

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Town of Sterling Planning Commission  
2006

## **Assessment**

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### **Land and Water Resources**

Under the Town's new Land Use Ordinance, a new building lot requires a minimum of 2 acres. The current regulations define the lot area needed to exclude lands as defined as an inland wetlands or watercourse pursuant to Section 22a-38 of the Connecticut General Statutes. The Planning Commission in concert with the Board of Selectmen may want to consider modifying the language associated with minimum contiguous lot size to include local regulations to more strongly discourage use of steep slopes, easements and rights-of-ways by including specific land use restrictions on building and road development in these areas.

Current regulations (including the State Health Code) appear to provide adequate controls to ensure that soil capability is fully considered at the time of development. However, the Commission may wish to recommend strengthening local inland wetlands regulations to provide an upland review area of 150 feet, as opposed to the 75 foot and 100 foot (Moosup & Quanduck Rivers) setback now in place.

Sterling should also consider encouraging the use of the Planning Commission's fee-in-lieu of open space for the outright purchase of land which has functional value to the residents of Sterling over using the dedication of open space for the permanent protection of steep slope and wetland areas with conservation easements or as open space "set asides" in new subdivisions.

While erosion and sediment control are required in all new developments in Sterling, the regulatory commission should continue to ensure adequate inspection and maintenance for protection of water quality and water resources. Careful inspection and maintenance should be required until areas are completely stabilized.

### **Organization Resources**

Sterling's regulatory commissions have proven very effective at assuring environmentally sound development with limited regulations. Until the development of the new Land Use Ordinance, the Town had no regulatory authority over development outside of the Planning commission and Wetlands Commission Regulations. Planning Commission and Wetlands regulations are up-to-date with respect to protecting land and water resources. The Wetlands Commission may consider enhancing the upland review area provisions of its regulations.

Although the Planning Commission does a tremendous job, the Town's Subdivision regulations have not been substantially updated since 1999, and protection of natural resources and open space (discussed below) could benefit from revisions and additions to those regulations.

### **Land Use Ordinance**

Sterling adopted a Land Use Ordinance on July 24, 2004 to regulate the minimum size of a new building lot. These regulations assure that building lots are adequately sized to provide basic septic treatment and water supply requirements. **Sewer Avoidance History**

Sterling has developed a Water Pollution Control Plan and established a Water Pollution Control Authority to further the policy of sewer avoidance and manage the Sterling Sewer District which was created in association with the development of the Sterling Industrial Park.

Treatment capacity, under contract with the Town of Plainfield, is limited and therefore new connections are only permitted under certain specified conditions within the Sterling Sewer District.

### **Land Use Regulations**

Require a minimum of two acres excluding wetlands to assure that building lots are adequately sized to provide basic septic treatment and water supply requirements.

regional effort to protect and enhance the natural resources within the Valley. Sterling's continued active participation in the program would help ensure that the Town's priorities are a component of future projects funded by this Federal program. James Rabbitt, Sterling's Town Planner is the primary contact for grants proposals and other information about the program.

**The Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor**

***A Special Kind of Park***

*The Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor encompasses about 695,000 acres in northeastern Connecticut and south central Massachusetts. The area stretches from Norwich, Connecticut north to Charlton, Massachusetts and from Coventry, Connecticut east to the Rhode Island border.*

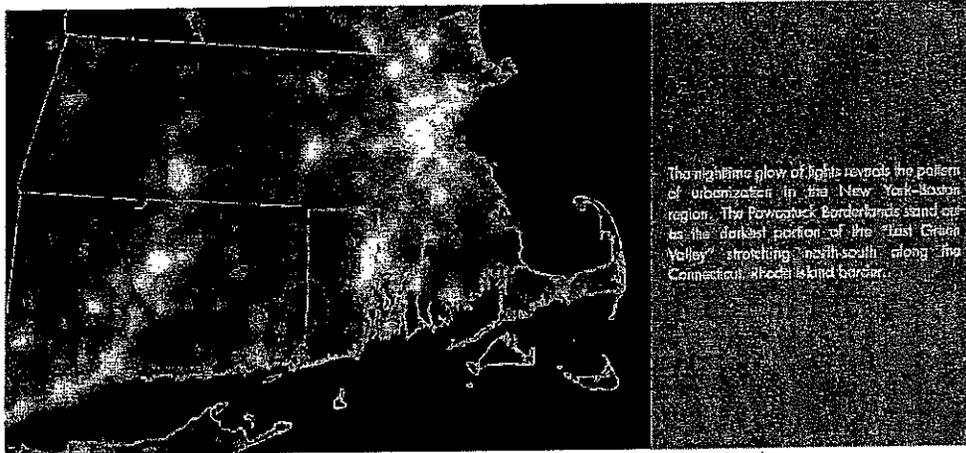
*More than half the size of Grand Canyon National Park and ten times the area of Acadia, the National Heritage Corridor is a special type of park. Its 35 towns with numerous villages has a total population of about 300,000. The Federal Government does not own or manage any of the land as it does in traditional national parks. Instead, people, businesses, nonprofit cultural and environmental organizations, local and state governments, the National Park Service and other federal agencies are working together to integrate the celebration and conservation of the region's resources with the needs for sustained quality of life and quality of place.*

*Today the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers and their tributaries are much cleaner than they were in the 19th and early 20th centuries when bustling textile mills and factories lined their banks. Residents and visitors now enjoy these riverways for fishing, boating, canoeing, and swimming. Besides water activities, the National Heritage Corridor provides recreational opportunities for history buffs, hikers, equestrians, bicyclists, antique collectors, fall-leaf peepers, and families out for a pleasant excursion.*

*The above is an excerpt from the National Park Service Brochure "The Last Green Valley"*

*For information, write to Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc.  
107 Providence St., Putnam, CT 06260.  
Phone: 860-963-7226, fax: 860-928-2189.  
e-mail: quinebaug.shetucket@snet.net  
web: www.thelastgreenvalley.org*

The introduction of the Pawtucket River Borderlands may also provide the Town with another opportunity to maximize the resources available to them. Leaders from the forested communities on the Rhode Island, Connecticut border are working to preserve our last remaining area of relatively un-fragmented forest, which the Nature Conservancy has dubbed the Pawcatuck Borderlands. A Regional Clinic in May of 2005 brought communities together to explore the potential for cooperative regional efforts to accelerate conservation. The collaboration of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, the Nature Conservancy, and the Policy Council, with the leadership of Washington Trust and Northeast Utilities, epitomizes the kind of cross-disciplinary efforts that foster creative place making. A satellite image of the Pawtucket River Borderlands is shown on the following page. The satellite image depicts night sky of Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island.



Sources: Nature Conservancy, NOAA Defense Meteorological Satellite Program, Radiance Calibrated Lights: 1996-1997; MASSGIS; GISB; Census

The nighttime glow of lights reveals the pattern of urbanization in the New York-Hudson region. The Fortwick Borderlands stand out as the darkest portion of the "East Green Valley" stretching north-south along the Connecticut-Albany skilled border.

## Conservation Priorities

Sterling is a special place that contains vast tracts of un-fragmented forestland, agricultural land, and wetlands systems that constitute major natural resource conservation priorities. Although a majority of these areas are protected (i.e. State Forest, state purchase of development rights) the areas that are not are highly sought after for development. Therefore, the criteria for evaluation of these resources for preservation or conservation should be based on:

- *The inter-relationship of the value and function of the resource subject to preservation,*
- *The relationship of the resource as it relates to existing and future greenways or open space,*
- *The sensitivity of the resource to development pressures and*
- *The degree of constraints to development of the proposed resource.*

This methodology and/or philosophy ensure that important resources and functions are preserved and appropriate areas are identified for development at appropriate densities. Some resources are so valued for preserving environmental quality or community character that efforts must continue to ensure that these resources are preserved. Preservation generally means to avoid altering these areas to the extent feasible and prudent. On the other hand, some important functions of other natural resources can be maintained while compatible activities take place nearby. In other words, the natural resource functions of these areas could be conserved in an environmentally sensitive way.

As developmental pressure increases, the Town through its Plan of Conservation and Development, its land use regulations and commissions, and its municipal programs should pro-actively prepare to manage the Town's growth and development. Protection of such resources will not happen without some effort. If Sterling residents are to be successful at preserving the things that matter most to them and that enhance the community, we must take positive steps to identify and protect important resources.

## Preserve or Conserve?

Preservation means:

- to protect from harm
- to maintain intact or unchanged.

Conservation means:

- to save from loss or depletion
- to avoid wasting.

Webster's Dictionary

## Resources for Preservation

- Watercourses
- Waterbodies
- Wetland Soils
- 100 Year Floodplain

## Resources for Conservation

- Slopes over 20%
- 500 Year Floodplain
- Farmland



# TOWN OF STERLING CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

## LEGEND

-  Conservation Priorities
-  Development Rights Sold
-  State Owned Land
-  Town Owned Land
-  Highway
-  Local Road
-  Parcel boundary
-  Town boundary

## TOWN OF STERLING CONNECTICUT PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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Town of Sterling Planning Commission  
2008

## Strategies

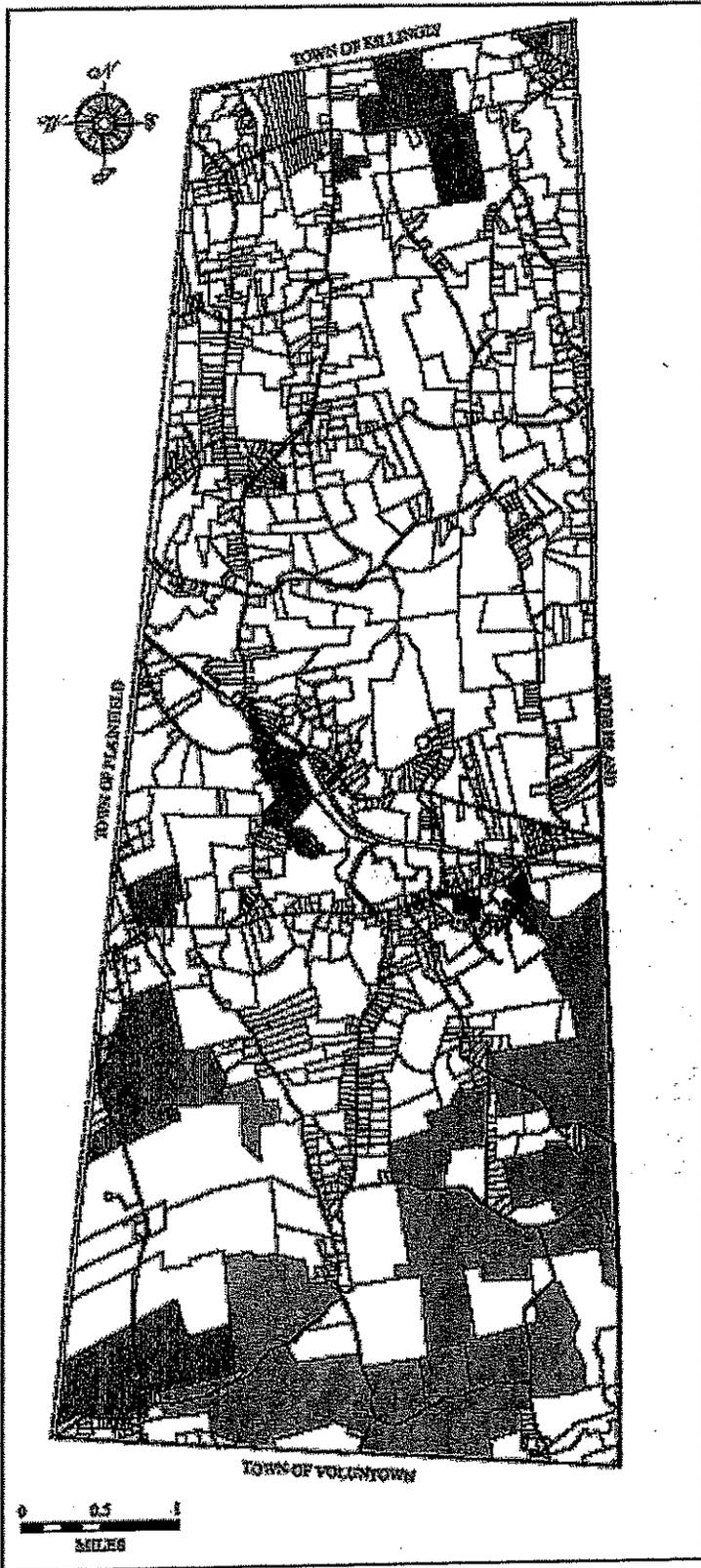
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### Land and Water Resources

1. Encourage the permanent protection of steep slope and wetland areas with conservation easements or as open space "set asides" in new subdivisions.
2. Continue to protect watercourses, waterbodies, wetlands, floodplains, vernal pools, and other important water resources in order to maintain water quality, wildlife habitat, water supply, and ecological balance.
3. Increase inland wetlands regulatory upland review areas to 150 feet to help to preserve wetlands and watercourses in their natural state or buffer them from adjacent activities.
4. Improved land use regulations and/or subdivision regulations that restrict or limit construction on steep slopes
5. Ensure adequate inspection and maintenance of erosion and sediment control materials to protect water quality and water resources.
6. Continue to fully consider natural resource issues at the time of development.

### Quanduck River – River Road Area





# TOWN OF STERLING EXISTING OPEN SPACE

## LEGEND

-  Development Rights Sold
-  State Owned Land
-  Town Owned Land
-  Highway
-  Local Road
-  Parcel boundary
-  Town boundary

## TOWN OF STERLING CONNECTICUT PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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Town of Sterling Planning Commission  
2008

## Open Space

Open space when permanently preserved can help protect community character, enhance the quality of life for residents, conserve important natural resources, provide wildlife habitat, provide fiscal and economic benefits, shape development patterns, and preserve lands for recreational uses. On the flip side undeveloped land (perceived open space) that has not been permanently preserved threatens a municipalities sense of place and community. While most people perceive "open space as any land that is not built upon, it is important to stress that the Plan defines open space as land that is permanently preserved for or dedicated to open space uses.

### Inventory of Open Space

"Dedicated open space" includes land that has been set aside in perpetuity for parks, conservation, recreation, or similar purposes (i.e. Pachaug State Forest). This type of open space is typically owned by the Town, State or a public or non-profit entity that may allow public use of the land.

The term "managed open space" includes land that is used for another purpose but provides the community with open space benefits (private recreational facilities, camp grounds, utility rights-of-way, cemeteries, etc.). Since such land may not allow public use of the land or may be sold or developed in the future, it is not considered dedicated open space.

Finally, "perceived open space" is private land that is presently vacant or underdeveloped. While this land may appear to be open space, nothing prevents this land from being sold or developed at some time in the future.

In Sterling, there are only a few parcels are owned by the Town and there is only one parcel held for open space protection by private land trusts (i.e. Wyndam Land Trust). The vast majority of dedicated open space is owned by the State of Connecticut and contained within the Pachaug State Forest. Several private recreational facilities (campgrounds) constitute the bulk of the managed open space and agricultural fields and former farms are the most evident example of perceived open space. This type of land is also typically at the greatest risk of development, due to ease of road and house construction. One hidden gem within the Town of Sterling is the old rail bed officially known as the Moosup Valley State Park Trail.

### Existing Open Space

Town Owned

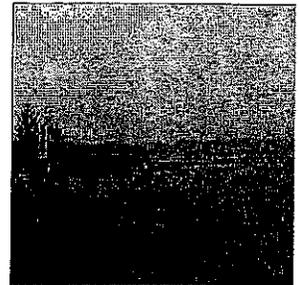
State Owned

Purchase of Development Rights (Farm Land Preservation)

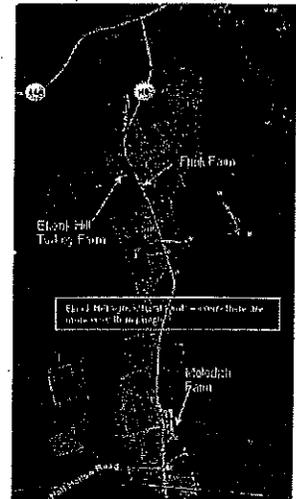
Private Recreation

Other Private

*Frink Farm Purchase of Development Rights - Route 49*



*Ekonk Hill Agricultural Lands*





# TOWN OF STERLING OPEN SPACE CORRIDORS

### LEGEND

-  Development rights sold
-  State owned land
-  Town owned land
-  Proposed future land acquisition
-  Conservation Priorities
-  Open Space corridor
-  Proposed linkage to corridor
-  Parcel boundary
-  Parcel boundary
-  Town boundary

## TOWN OF STERLING CONNECTICUT PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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Town of Sterling Planning Commission  
2003

## **Open Space Programs**

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### **Regulatory Measures**

The only direct regulatory measure used by Sterling to preserve open space is the discretionary 15 percent open space "set-aside" requirement for subdivisions. The Commission could strengthen this provision by increasing the required set aside to 20 percent, as many Towns have done.

### **Town Plans & Programs**

The Town of Sterling has no formal plan in place that contains a prescribed set of policies for identifying, funding or acquiring land for open space preservation. Although the Town has recently established an Open Space Fund or set funds aside for open space acquisitions.

There is no local or regional land trust actively working on open space preservation in Sterling. The Quinnebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor was established in 1994 and which encompasses Sterling. One of the Corridor missions is to assist in the development and implementation of integrated cultural, historical, and recreational land resource management programs to retain, enhance, and interpret the significant features of the lands and resources of the region.

In addition, the Town should consider options for establishing a land trust or identifying other means of assuring that open space, whether purchased or provided as part of future subdivisions, can be expeditiously acquired and properly managed.

The Town could assign a new group or designate an existing commission to establish an open space program, open space fund, and revise regulations to provide at least 20% set aside. In addition, the town could create a separate non-regulatory Conservation Commission, assigned to conduct long range conservation planning, open space planning and implementation, advise other boards and commissions, and related tasks. The town could also investigate options for creation of land trust or other means of supporting open space acquisition.

## **Open Space Coordination**

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Many communities pursue development of an open space program in two steps: the first sets out the overall mission, criteria for setting open space priorities, and recommendations for permanent organizational structure to implement the plan. An ad hoc committee or existing commission may be assigned this task.

The second phase is implementation and acquisition managed by a special committee or existing commission charged with identifying specific properties meeting the plan criteria and finding means to fund and manage acquisitions.

Where private open space entities are in place, the Town's role includes coordination and cooperation.

## Assessment

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### Open Space Importance

For years, Sterling geographic location has not been looked on favorably with regards to residential development. However, as land prices in surround towns in Connecticut and Rhode Island continue to escalate, Sterling has been rediscovered. Sterling prized resource, available forests and open land has become a very valuable commodity. Overtime, this increased demand for residential development will change the very character of the community. Open space acquisition and protection is one of the most effective tools for managing and controlling growth in residential communities. Sterling has an exceptional opportunity to apply such tools before growth pressures become overwhelming.

### Greenbelts and Greenways

A greenbelt is another word for a greenway. A greenway is a corridor of open space that:

- may protect natural resources, preserve scenic landscapes and historical resources or offer opportunities for recreation or non-motorized transportation,
- may connect existing protected areas and provide access to the outdoors,
- may be located along a defining natural feature, such as a waterway, along a man-made corridor, including an unused right-of-way, traditional trail routes or historic barge canals, or
- may be a green space along a highway or around a village.

Connecticut General  
Assembly Public Act 95-335

### Open Space Amount, Location and Configuration

There is no true standard of how much open space a community needs. Every community is different in terms of physical features and residents' desires for public ownership and public use.

Agricultural economics continue to pressure farm owners, leading to disuse or development of farmland. The latter option becomes more appealing to farmland owners as property values rise in response to residential development. With over a 1,000 acres in active agriculture, preserving farmland should be a conservation priority. Although large areas have been saved by the State's purchase of development rights, other agricultural lands (ie. Sterling Hill) have been lost to residential development. Therefore, the community should continue to strive to protect these agricultural resources.

Experience in other communities has shown that, while the amount of open space is an issue, the utility of that open space is more important in the long term.

While isolated open space parcels may preserve an important natural resource or preserve the appearance of undeveloped land, they may not contribute to a meaningful open space system. However, if open spaces are interconnected into a cohesive overall system, the value of open space to residents and the impact on community grow exponentially through:

- increased accessibility for all residents,
- enhanced quality of life for residents,
- improved wildlife corridors, and
- more opportunities for active or passive use.

The most important function of the open space component of the Plan of Conservation & Development will be to identify those areas that appear most worthy of contributing to an integrated open space system. Then efforts can be devoted to implementing the open space plan.

## **Greenway and Trail Opportunities**

Sterling's hidden gem, the Moosup Valley State Trail could anchor an open space plan identifying the potential for a Town-wide network of greenways that would be a significant asset in the community and enhance community character, community spirit, and property values.

The map on the facing page depicts a conceptual framework for establishing open space priorities on Sterling. Such a design would emphasize the preservation of farmlands, scenic vistas, and river corridors and create significant potential for greenways, trail systems, and other passive recreation.

## **Open Space Philosophy**

While open space can be preserved in many ways, a realistic philosophy must recognize that open space preservation may require land acquisition by the Town of Sterling through tax dollars.

Experience in other communities has found that residents support public expenditures for things like open space, greenways, and trails when they see a direct benefit to community character and quality of life.

The Town of Sterling enjoys a mill rate significantly below that of many neighboring towns, a fact that may contribute to increased developmental pressure. The Town may consider mitigating this threat through fiscal planning that includes annual budgeting of funds dedicated to open space preservation or bonding for future open space acquisitions.

Additionally, the Connecticut General Statutes allow a municipality to establish a Land Acquisition Fund, funded up to 2 mills annually, to be used for the acquisition of open space. Unlike other municipal accounts, this fund does not have to be expended in a given year and can accumulate interest. Such an account must be established to hold fees-in-lieu of open space for subdivisions and private donations can also be deposited in this account.

## **Strategies**

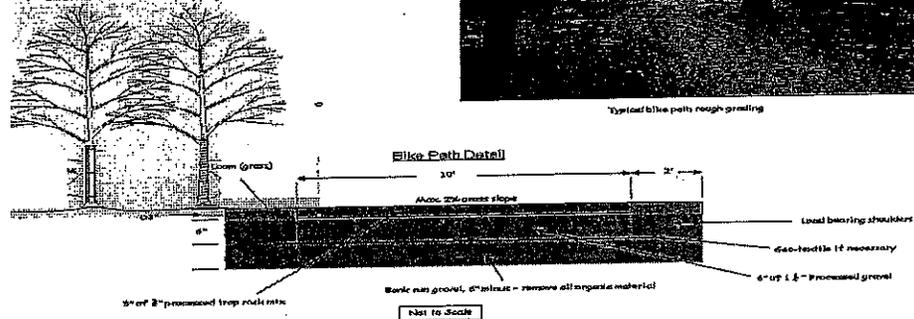
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### **Create a Greenbelt / Trail System**

1. Establish a meaningful open space system in Sterling by interconnecting open space areas into a cohesive overall greenbelt system with trails.
2. Create an interconnected local system of trails and greenways comprised of:
  - A central greenway/trail axis.
  - A southern greenway directly connecting the villages of Oneco and Sterling.
  -
3. Obtain trail easements and other access rights in key trail locations.
4. Encourage acquisitions by land trusts and other local funds that support a greenbelt system connecting existing open space and historic areas.

Proposed Improvements to  
Maasup Valley River Trail

Sterling, CT



**Overall Coordination**

5. However, since the town does not have a Conservation Commission long range conservation considerations have not received adequate attention. The Town may wish to consider creating a non-regulatory Conservation Commission to address the Town's increasingly urgent conservation needs. Consequently, the Sterling Conservation Commission could function as the lead agency to coordinate open space preservation efforts.
6. Cooperate with neighboring communities, regional organizations, and state agencies on open space acquisition and trail development.

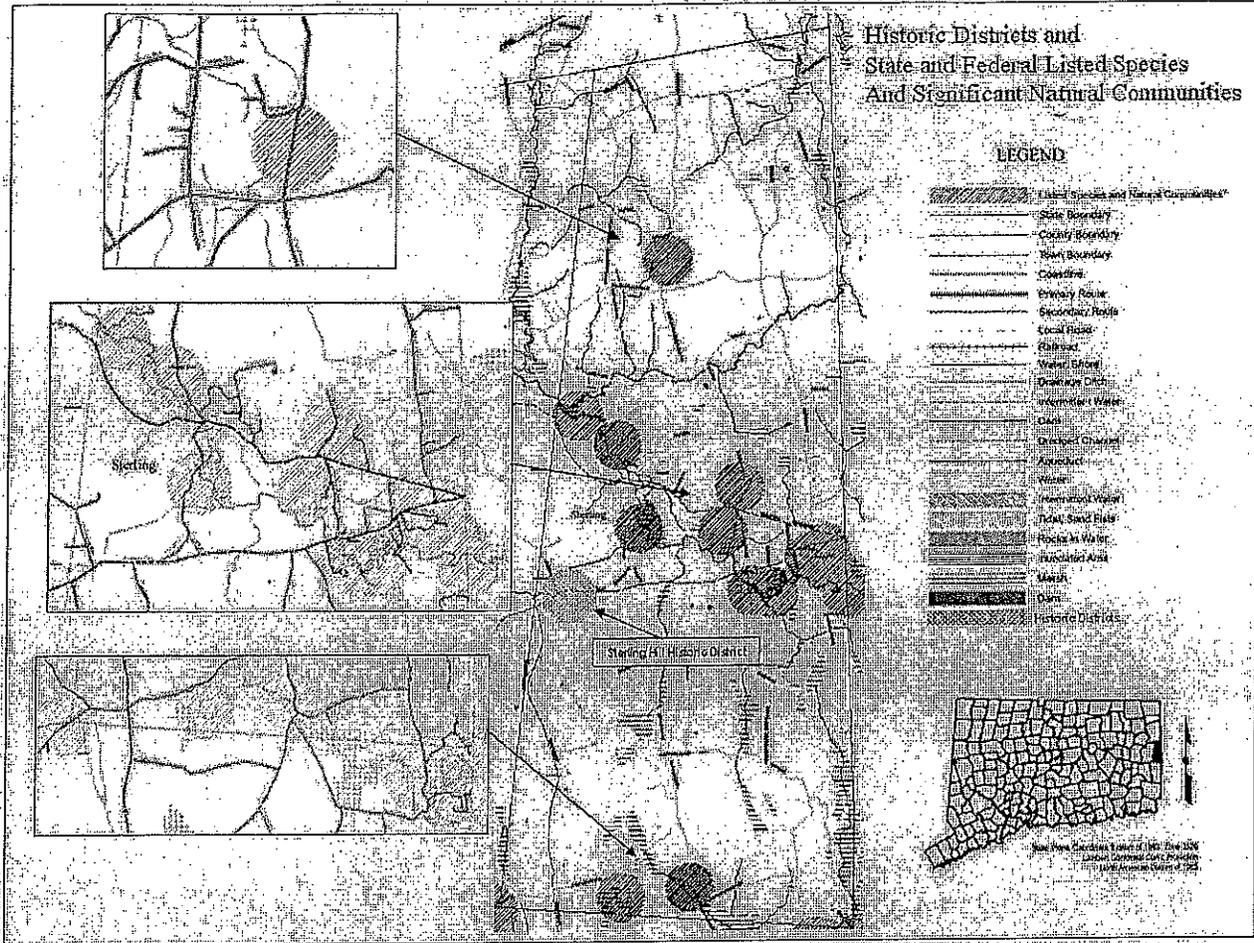
**Regulatory Measures**

7. Consider increasing the discretionary 15 percent open space "set-aside" requirement for subdivisions to a mandatory 20 percent "set aside and/or;
8. Continue to require maximum fee-in-lieu-of open space provision.
9. Consider adopting a regulation to promote open space subdivisions.

**Other Programs**

10. Investigate and, if found feasible, initiate establishment of a land trust..
11. Establish a Land Acquisition Fund and appropriate monies for future purchases of open space.
12. Pursue state and federal funding for open space acquisition and trail development.
13. In addition to authorization for application of Connecticut Public Act 490 provisions for tax abatement for agricultural and forest land, adopt such a provision for privately held open space land.

# Historic & Natural Communities Map



## Existing Regulations

Sterling's Zoning and Subdivision regulations do not provide for the protection of historically significant properties or places.

## Historic Properties

Under CGS Sec. 7-147, a Historic Properties Commission is permitted to serve as the lead agency for coordinating historic preservation activities in a community where a Historic District Commission has yet to be nominated or approved by the local legislative body.

## Demolition Delay

Recently, the Town of Lisbon lost one of the Town's most historic homes. A developer applied for and received a demolition permit. Word of mouth save some of the components of this home, however, much was lost. A community may adopt a demolition delay ordinance to allow the commission (typically Historically Commission) up to ninety-days to evaluate alternatives to demolition, if the building is found to be historically significant.

During this period, the commission may attempt to find a purchaser who may:

- Retain the building,
- Transport the building, or
- Present some other alternative to demolition.

This regulation may not be applied to all buildings within a community. It is typically applied to structures that meet certain criteria for age or location.

## Historic Resources

Preservation of historically significant buildings, properties, monuments, and places helps enhance community character. A well-designed preservation program can accommodate changes that do not threaten Sterling's historic resources or character. Threats to historic resources include land use changes (destruction), building modifications, and or deterioration.

## Inventory of Historic Resources

Sterling contains four properties recognized as historically significant.

## Regulatory Protection

Historic resources are not concentrated in any one area of Sterling, so creation of an historic district may not be a realistic option. However, a demolition delay ordinance may provide additional time to explore and review alternatives to demolition.

## Economic Incentive Programs

Providing financial incentives can also help to encourage historic resource preservation. Some funding, although limited, is available from state and federal sources to aid in the preservation of historic resources.

Income-producing properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places may be eligible for a 20 percent tax credit provided the property is renovated in accordance with federal guidelines. Some communities have reduced the taxes paid by historic properties (for varying periods) if the amount of the taxes threatens the property.

Sterling may wish to consider whether there is a need to modify property assessment policies to aid in historic preservation:

- *Adoption of an ordinance to abate all or part of the real property taxes on a historical structure provided it can be shown that current taxation is a factor which threatens its continued existence (CGS 12-127),*
- *Adoption of a resolution to designate one or more areas that are eligible for a deferral of tax assessment increase resulting from the rehabilitation of the property (CGS 12-127).*

## Education

Sterling may also wish to consider developing an educational program to raise local awareness about the importance of historic resource preservation. Education is often the most cost-effective tool to encourage sensitive historic preservation.

## Strategies

### Identify Historic Resources

1. Undertake a historic resource inventory.
2. Pursue funding from the Connecticut Historical Commission under the Certified Local Government program to undertake a historic resource inventory.
3. Upon completion of the historic resource inventory, review and prioritize properties for preservation efforts.

### Protect Historic Resources

4. Consider adopting local ordinances to aid in historic protection through adoption of a demolition delay ordinance.
5. Promote educational programs on:
  - The importance of historic resources to community character.
  - Ways to preserve and protect historic resources.

State and federal government assistance programs which may provide tax credits and incentives for the rehabilitation of historic buildings.

---

Historic Cemetery – River Road



Historic Barn – North Main Street



# DEVELOPMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

Sterling

5

## Community Structure

The very nature of a Community's historic development patterns, or structure (the overall physical organization of the Town/Community) is an important consideration in the Plan because of its correlation with community character. Structure as it relates to historic development patterns is also an important guide for land use regulations and decisions and for guiding desired economic development.

### Inventory

Sterling's community structure was highly influenced by the historic development of its two mill villages and agricultural areas on Ekonk and Sterling Hill. The community's structure has remained relatively unchanged over the past decade. The historic conditions, particularly the focal points of the town's two villages reinforces the original importance of the Moosup Rivers as energy sources for mills and continues to influence community structure. As a result, the traditional focus of the Community as it relates to structure has not changed.

The following elements that contribute to community structure in Sterling are also identified on the map on the facing page:

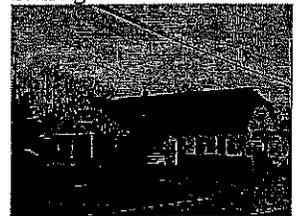
Category	Elements	Description
Enhancing	Nodes / Villages	Identifiable focal points or places with distinctive characteristics (such as Sterling Village, Oneco Village and Sterling Hill historic area).
	Greenbelts	Greenways, trails, streambelts and other linear elements that provide overall context to the community (such as the Moosup River, Quanduck Brook, and Moosup Valley Rail Trail).
	Scenic Resources	Places providing a sense of scale.
Enhancing or Detracting	Roads / Links	The character of roads to, through, and around the community (Scenic Route 49).
Detracting	Commercial Developments	Style and scale as it relates to historic development patterns and sense of place
	Industrial Development	Development that may generate heavy traffic on primary access roads in Town.
	Stip Development and Sprawl	Large areas with little variation in style or character.

*Investment in the Community by the community speaks to community character and is an important guide for land use regulations and decisions...*

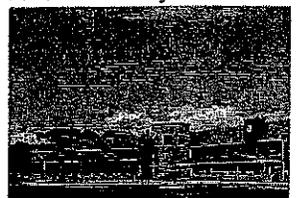
Oneco Post Office

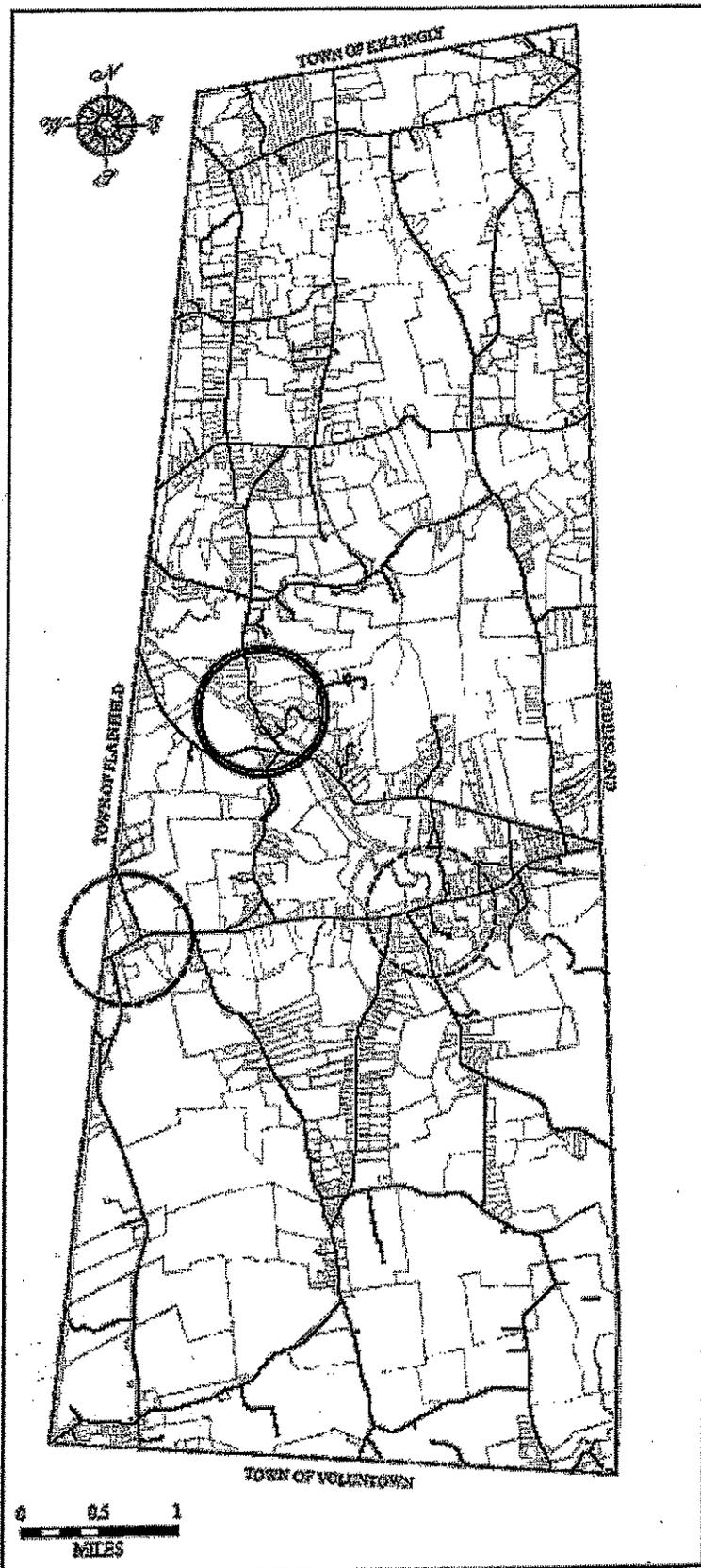


Sterling Town Hall



New Community School -





# TOWN OF STERLING COMMUNITY STRUCTURES

### LEGEND

**STERLING VILLAGE** 

- U.S. Post Office
- Senior Center (Child Development)
- Town Industrial Park
- Town Ball Field and Track
- Fire House
- Town Garage
- New Middle School
- Church
- Commercial Space (retail, auto, service)

**STERLING HILL** 

- Historic District
- Church
- Agricultural Area

**ONECO VILLAGE** 

- U.S. Post Office
- Town Hall
- Town Library
- Ballfields
- Fire House
- Commercial Space (retail, service)

## TOWN OF STERLING CONNECTICUT PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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**Town of Sterling Planning Commission  
2008**

## Overall Development Structure

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Studies of community structure and character show that people identify most strongly with sites and areas that exhibit a strong "sense of place".

Basic structural considerations for Sterling are

- providing a strong community focal point in the Villages of Sterling and Oneco,
- providing appropriate land use controls to effectively manage and guide residential development,
- optimizing development of the available commercial land with sewer and water in a manner compatible with community character, and
- as discussed in the Conservation Workbook, developing an effective open space plan for Sterling.

### Gateways

Gateways contribute to community character since they create anticipation and reinforce the overall "sense of place" in the community. Sterling may wish to consider establishing gateway features (such as signage or thematic elements) at the main entrances to Town from Plainfield, Coventry – Rhode Island, and Voluntown.

In addition, gateway elements could also be considered as people enter Sterling's Sterling Hill, Oneco and Sterling Villages.

### Overall Conservation Structure

In an introductory public meeting, residents of Sterling ranked community character and conservation issues as the highest priorities for the Town. The character of Sterling is reinforced by the remaining open agricultural lands, the rivers and mill ponds that surround the Town, and the scenic qualities of many roads in and through Town.

Open spaces, greenways, vistas, scenic roads, and streambelts provide overall context to the community and enhance community character and community spirit. These types of structural elements play a significant role in the overall organization of Sterling's structure.

### Community Focus

Sterling has an opportunity to enhance historic community focal points, establish and strengthen new ones, and ensure that modern growth patterns do not detract from overall community character and conservation goals. Specific recommendations with respect to these possible goals are discussed below.

Consider strengthening overall community structure with:

- enhanced and expanded villages and Sterling Hill areas,

### Overall Structure

---

The community structure of Sterling consists of:

- two Town Centers with limited functionality
- no formal nodes at entryways into Town,
- a large industrial park area with only primary long term tenant (waste to energy plant), and
- marginal land use controls to guide development.
- Structural change? Oneco has traditionally been the focus of civic activities, however, this could change once the new school opens just outside of Sterling Village.

### Community Structure Priorities

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- Create a stronger village centers.
- Manage and control residential development.
- Promote commercial and industrial development in appropriate areas.
- Institute an open space program with the Plan of Conservation and Development as its base.

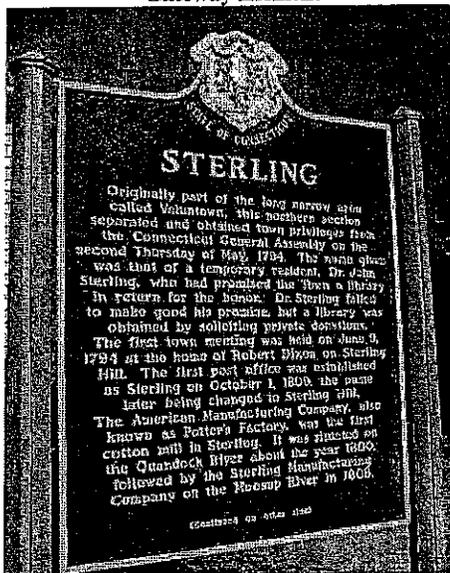


- support appropriate and compatible development of existing commercial areas, avoid strip development, and encourage village appropriate scale.
- develop land use methods to control intensity of residential development, and
- continue and expand support for the preservation of open space, farmland, and woodland areas.
- Encourage elements that enhance community character (greenbelts, gateways, scenic resources, and scenic roads)
- Discourage elements that detract from community character (strip development, sprawl development, and "character-less" roads").

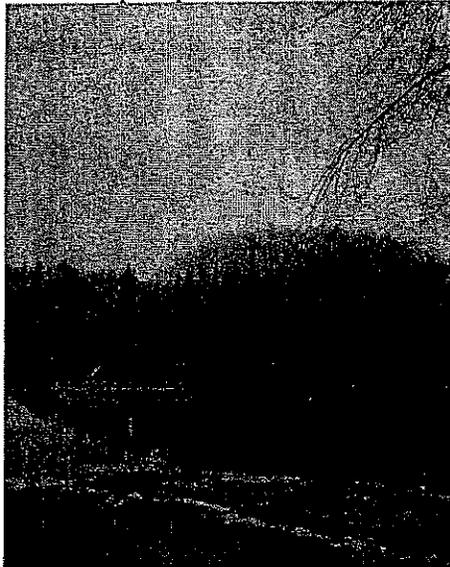
### Supporting Community Elements

Consider establishing gateway elements at main entrances to Sterling from surrounding towns to create anticipation and reinforce the overall sense of place. Consider promoting greenways, trails, streambelts and other linear elements that provide overall context to the community; include such elements in site development considerations where appropriate. Establish appropriately scaled roadway design and guide roadway improvements so that they enhance, rather than detract from, community structure and character.

Gateway Element



Open Space / Scenic View



## Housing and Residential Development

Like many small communities, Sterling faces the challenge of guiding future residential growth. The pace and intensity of this type of development can have far-reaching implications to the Town and this Plan proposes steps to prepare for future growth. The Plan also recognizes the need to consider promoting housing opportunity and diversity in preparing for the future. Sterling's ability to manage residential and non-residential development will affect the Town's fiscal future and community character. As a community grows, development pressures have considerable impact on public health, safety, welfare. In addition the community's historic character and spirit can be modified, which tends to affect the overall quality of life.

Although Sterling's location on the transportation grid tends to stifle new business development, residential develop has prospered in the past twenty years as this quintessential New England community comes into its own. However, this new found attraction with Sterling may undermine the nature of is small town feel. Sterling has and will continue to become more attractive to potential homeowners given the increased residential development costs (building lot prices) in near by communities in Connecticut and Rhode Island.

Approximately 12,000 acres of land, or 70% of the Town's land area, is potentially available for additional development. Under current land use regulations, nearly all of that land could be developed into either single family or commercial/industrial lots. Development of this land could result in as many as 6,000 additional housing units in the future (approximately 1,193 residential units already exist). Sterling's lack of adequate land use controls does not help this scenario.

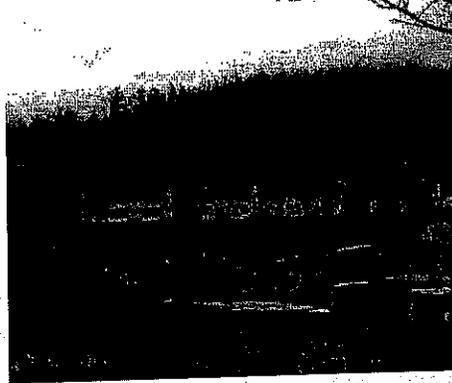
*The main housing issues in Sterling are:*

- *Anticipating increased demand for residential development, and*
- *Updating land use regulations to promote appropriate development and.*
- *Promote standards that allow the community to permit high quality development at sustainable rates of growth.*

**Cul-de-sac Development**



**Multi-Family Housing (duplex units)**



Sterling's quintessential New England charm will be threaten by increased residential development. Sterling has and will continue to become more attractive to potential homeowners given the increased residential development costs (building lot prices) in near by communities in Connecticut and Rhode Island. The Town, through its Plan of Conservation and Development, can take steps to anticipate and direct future growth, to avoid the growth issues all communities have encountered.

### **Future Residential Land Use Strategies**

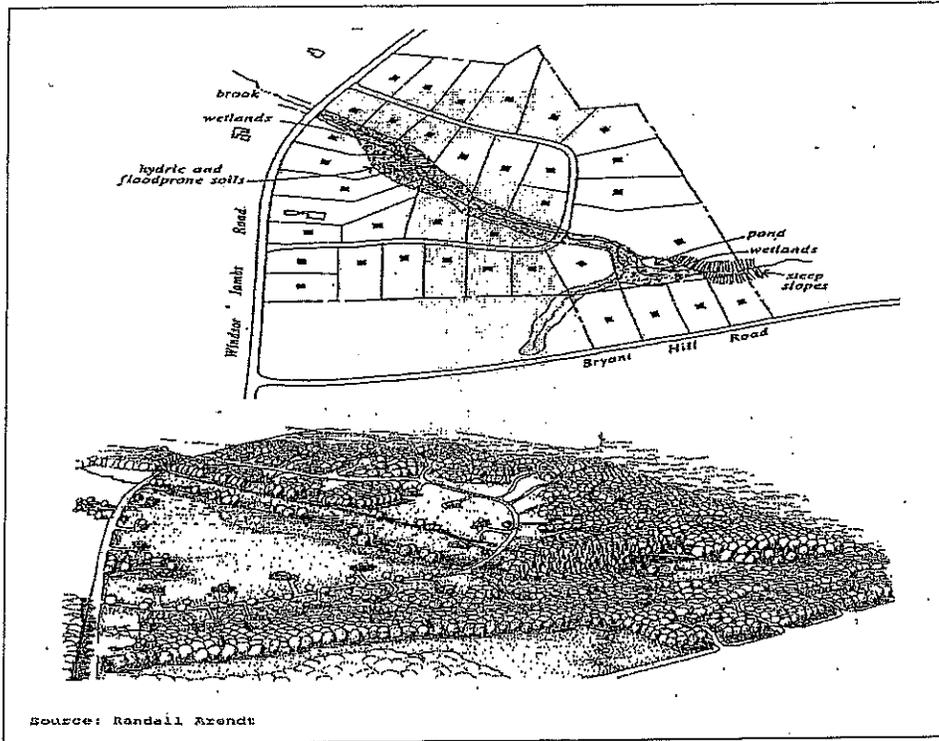
Sterling's historical residential development is based on pure speculation by individuals and corporations. This developments where not based on any traditional development standards or patterns. Recent residential development has occurred without serious regard for specific natural resources, land characteristics or structural goals of the community. Consequently, the key strategies that need to be developed in the community should have positive influence on acceptable development standards which should allow the community to permit high quality residential development at sustainable rates of growth. Issues that should be considered in the near future and reflected in alternative land use regulations are;

- Capability of the land to support development (e.g., water supplies, septic treatment capacity, accessibility, slopes, etc.),
- Housing density goals for Sterling (what is populations goal of the community),
- Road and drainage system designs, and
- Open space goals.

The Community needs to clearly identify specific development issues and adopt appropriate land use regulations to guide development in the near future. Land use decisions tend to influence development patterns for many years. The community needs to continually evaluate and establish open space requirement, subdivision design options to promote lower impact development, proper street design and other public improvements to insure the proper placement of residential and non-residential uses to limit their impact on each other.

Examples of a conservation subdivision are shown on the following page. This example is shown as an alternative to traditional residential development strategies. However, the regulatory aspects associated with these types of development do no always achieve the desired result. In most cases developers use the regulation to maximize lot yield on marginal parcels. In these cases a well-intentioned development standards is abused. If development styles like this are embark on, the utmost care needs to be used in creating the appropriate regulatory language to achieve the desired result.

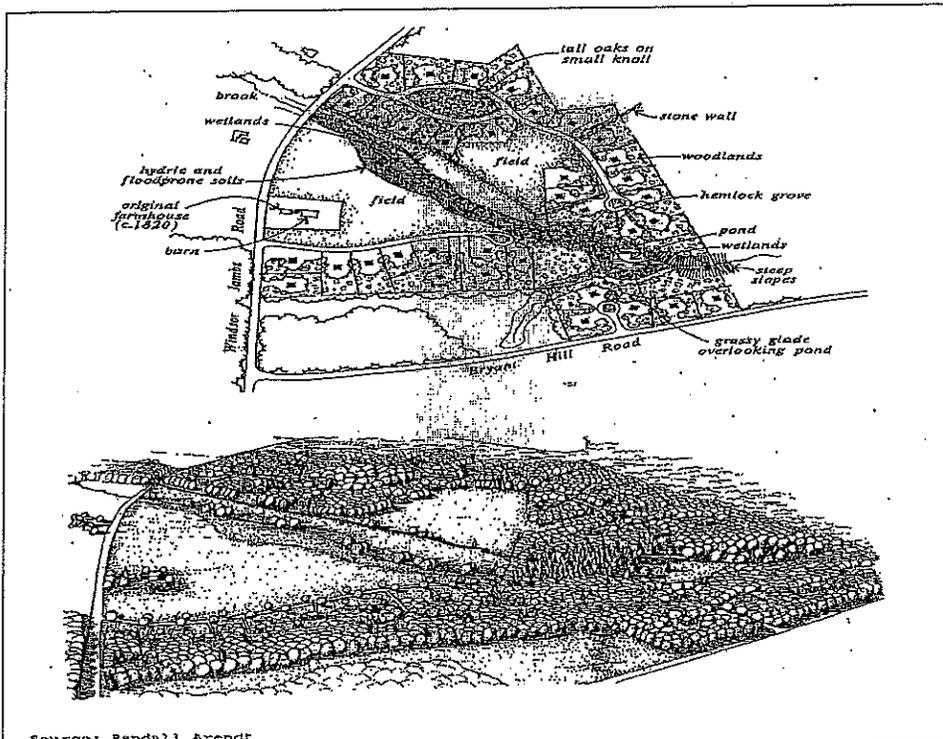
## Subdivision Design Concepts



**Conventional Design Subdivision**

### Conventional Subdivision Characteristics:

- All land divided into lots
- Little or no open space or public access
- No consideration of natural resources
- Rural character changes to suburban



**Conservation Design Subdivision**

### Conservation Subdivision Characteristics

- Open space protected
- Natural resources conserved
- Scenic features preserved
- Rural character maintained

## Other Design Standards

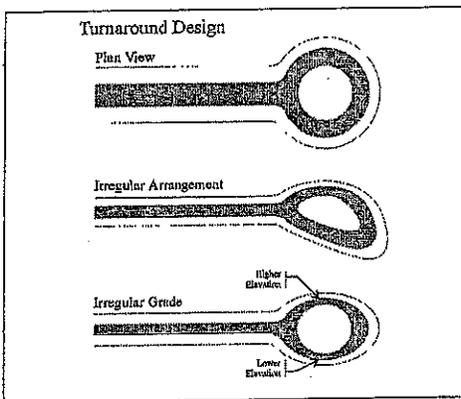
Subdivision and street design standards that apply to cul-de-sacs, streets, and drainage may be evaluated for refinements that will enhance the incentive for consideration of conservation designs for new subdivisions.

**Cul-de-sacs** – Current standards require a circular turn-around of 50 foot radius. Regulations should be considered to require a circular turnaround to be irregularly shaped (and meeting turning radius requirements) and include a vegetated island. Alternative terminus designs should also be permitted including “T” or “hammerhead” turnarounds.

**Road Standards** – As discussed in Chapter 3, minimum road width should be a function of the use. Standards should attempt to permit roads only as wide as necessary for safe and efficient travel.

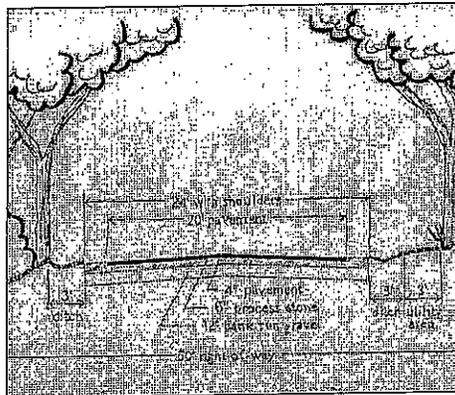
**Drainage** – Regulations should make clear that alternative designs making use of infiltration and natural topography are acceptable. Such designs may be more readily incorporated into conservation design developments and will reduce the potential for storm water run-off impacts on water quality.

Circular Turnarounds



Example of a well designed Circular Turnaround

Swale Drainage



Typical offset cul-de-sac (60ft. radius)



## Housing Diversity

State Statutes require a Planning Commission to consider housing opportunities in its Plan of Conservation and Development. The availability of housing to meet diverse needs and the overall affordability of housing are two issues that Sterling needs to address.

Over the next 20 years, the composition of mature adults (ages 55+) in Sterling is expected to increase significantly as older residents live longer and healthier lives. Only about 6% of Sterling's housing stock meets the State of Connecticut affordable criteria (see sidebar) and so Sterling is subject to the provisions of CGS Section 8-30g, intended to enable the construction of affordable housing units.

At some point over the ten year Plan period, the Town may wish to pursue specific strategies to address housing diversity and affordability. Some of these options, which would require further study and evaluation, are described below.

Regulatory – Regulatory approaches to encouraging diverse and affordable housing could include the following.

- Identification in regulations of preferred locations (villages) and standards for multifamily and other housing types to promote housing diversity.
- Allowing more diverse housing options (such as apartments on upper floors in mixed use buildings) in village center areas.
- Current 2 acre land use regulations do not allow for village development patterns to continue in appropriate areas. Alternative land use regulations would allow the Town to better address development throughout the community.

Town Involvement – Non-profit or municipal developments should be designed to fit the location and be consistent with Sterling's character and structure. The Town may be able to play a role in an affordable housing project or elderly housing by seeking or identifying opportunities for land donations, use of existing Town owned property, or leasing of land for affordable housing development.

Aerial View of Sterling Village - 2007.



## Connecticut Statutory Reference

"The Plan shall make provision for the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multifamily dwellings consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity, for all residents of the municipality and the planning region."

"The Plan shall promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low and moderate income households, and encourage the development of housing which will meet the housing needs."

CGS 8-23

## Affordable Housing Defined

"Affordable housing" includes governmentally assisted units, units financed with CHFA or FMHA mortgages, or units that are deed-restricted to sell or rent at prices that make them affordable to persons or families earning 80 percent of the median income for the Windham County area.

CGS 8-39a and 8-30g

## Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure

In Connecticut, communities with less than ten percent of their housing stock meeting the definition of "affordable housing" are subject to the "Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure".

In this procedure, a developer can propose an affordable housing development and potentially override local land use regulations.

## Strategies for Guiding Residential Growth

- Evaluate alternative land use regulatory standards
  - Evaluate revising and or adopting new land use regulations to provide development standards such as well defined net buildable area and or density-based standards for parcel subdivision
- Update and Refine Subdivision Regulations
  - Evaluate develop standards to encourage conservation design subdivisions, within maximum density limits or as permitted under revised land use regulations density standards, to maximize the preservation of open space and reduce environmental and aesthetic impacts of development, including
    - Road design standards
    - Cul-de-sac specifications
    - Drainage design options
- Evaluate subdivision regulations regarding effectiveness of minimum open space set-aside, criteria for such open space, and permit a fee-in-lieu of open space as presently utilized
- Promote Housing Diversity
  - Evaluate regulatory standards to encourage affordable housing and promote housing diversity
  - Consider regulation revisions to encourage housing options, such as mixed residential uses in village areas
  - Support public and private efforts to develop elderly housing

## Commercial and Industrial Development

Since the decline of the textile industry in the Northeast, Sterling has struggled with industrial development. The Town has experienced marginal success with the development of their industrial park, beyond the tire burning plant. The lack of overwhelming success can only be attributed to the town's small population, geographic location and changes in the region's economy. As the Northeast Region's manufacturing base continues to struggle, so will Sterling. If possible, Sterling can position itself in a niche market in an attempt to develop its industrial and business base. The continuing challenge will be to accommodate additional non-residential activity without creating further impacts on the environment and character of the community.

Given, the lack of land use controls, the Town has no specific industrial or commercial districts. This lack of regulator oversight further enforces the notion that Sterling is not strategically located with regards to non-residential development, since this development could have occurred anywhere in Town and has not. Based on this observation, there has been no pressing need to expand or add to the industrial area. Although, Sterling has discussed and even attempted to provide addition space in the vicinity of the Town's Industrial Park they have not been successful. Monies necessary for infrastructure improvements to support non-residential growth are difficult to come by in rural communities. However, as a capitalist community Sterling will be targeted at some point in time as land in other areas becomes scarce. When this occurs Sterling may face some difficult choices.

### Support and Expand Existing Business

Ekonk Hill Farm, Walking Weekend – Route 49



Sterling Industrial Park



It may be timely for the Town to identify its development preferences (from the list of permitted uses in the existing regulations) for the existing commercial properties in and around the two villages, as suggested in the sidebar.

### Overall Business Structure

Without traditional land use regulations it is difficult to discuss structure within the Town of Sterling as it relates guiding growth in specific areas. Without zoned land use districts, non-residential growth can occur almost anywhere in town. A non-residential could be located anywhere in town and is only limited by its ability to provide infrastructure (i.e. sewer and water). As long as provisions can be made for facilities infrastructure, growth can occur anywhere. This is further supported by the advent of individual batch plants for sewage disposal. Over the past decade, historic development patterns have been influenced by natural resource availability. Recent development has occurred in locations based on ownership and individual entrepreneurial gumption. While Sterling is not threatened with large scale retail development, such as Lisbon Landing or Killingly Crossings (former Anchor Glass site) or Waterford Commons, large scale industrial/warehousing could become a reality in Town. Sterling should continue to encourage appropriately scaled business.

These facilities are extremely large and tend to threaten a community's traditional rural character. These developments, which need to be placed somewhere, are viewed as perfectly acceptable when they are located in another town or far away from one's home in their own community. But when inappropriately placed in the view of a neighbor, they are typically referred to as NIMBY's (not in my back yard).

If the Town is concerned about the location of NIMBY's, it could benefit from adopting more stringent land use controls. The adoption of more land use controls could assist the Community to recognize the different types of development that have occurred in Town and surrounding areas and avoid incompatible developments from occurring in the future. Sterling may also wish to consider revising current land use regulations to further develop current business and industrial areas.

The following items need to be answered by the Town as development pressures continue:

- Should the town discuss regulations to guide business growth? In specific areas? Not at this time?
- Where should non-residential growth occur?
- Should the disjointed non-residential development that has historically occurred be allowed to continue unchecked? Should it revert to residential (with provisions for continuation of existing uses)?

If a number of the answers to the above questions are yes, then the Town should consider the following:

- Consider developing land use regulations which delineate land uses and criteria for permitting those types of land uses that are deemed

### **Potential Business Development Priorities**

Develop expanded infrastructure for non-residential uses

- develop strategies to retain agricultural base.
- continue economic development initiatives.
- attract agricultural focused development to enhance existing facilities
- support commercial recreational facilities that support agri-tourism.

### **Village Districts**

- Retail business and full service restaurants (as defined).
- Business service establishments.
- Consolidated parcel developments.
- Create incentives to develop within villages
- develop former Revere Textile site as municipal/retail center with a mix of residential to anchor Sterling Village (development should enhance existing development patterns)
- redevelop middle school site as municipal/retail center with a mix of residential to anchor Oneco Village

### **Support and Expand Existing Business and Industry**

#### **Sterling Industrial Park**



acceptable.

- Support growth in and around the village centers
- Continue to allow mixed uses in the BV Districts.
- Develop regulations that avoid “strip development” patterns by adopting regulatory standards for consolidated parcel standards to minimize access cuts and total parking area in new commercial developments.
- Seek ways to promote more of a pedestrian-friendly character where feasible.
- Identify priorities for preferred development(s) in and around the Town’s current industrial park.

Aerial view of Sterling Village – New Sterling School is shown on the far left



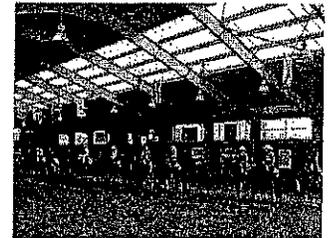
Wickford General Store, appropriate scale for village setting.



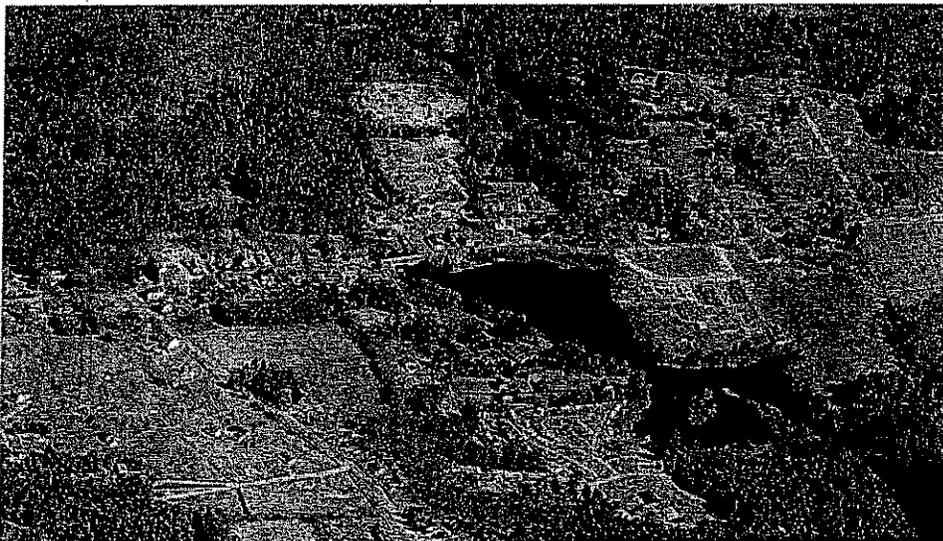
Sterling Village, historic mill housing, appropriate scale and character



Horse Show - Falls Creek Farms, Oneco, CT



Aerial view of Oneco Village – Old Sterling School is shown on the far right



# CONCLUSION AND IMPLEMENTATION

## Sterling's Vision

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Throughout the process it became apparent that the residents of Sterling appreciate the general nature and atmosphere that has existed in town that has helped to define the community. However, as internal and external forces pressure this unique balance between the historic development and new development, which, has had a visible impact on the town's historic landscape, the residents have become increasingly concerned about the future and direction of the community. This Plan of Conservation and Development identifies the critical issues that must be faced over the next ten years and beyond to address a vision for Sterling:

Sterling will guide future growth and change to:

- *Protect its quintessential rural character,*
- *Provide business opportunities in order to build a strong economic base, and*
- *Provide infrastructure to enhance the quality of life for its residents.*

To achieve this vision, Sterling will pursue four guiding objectives:

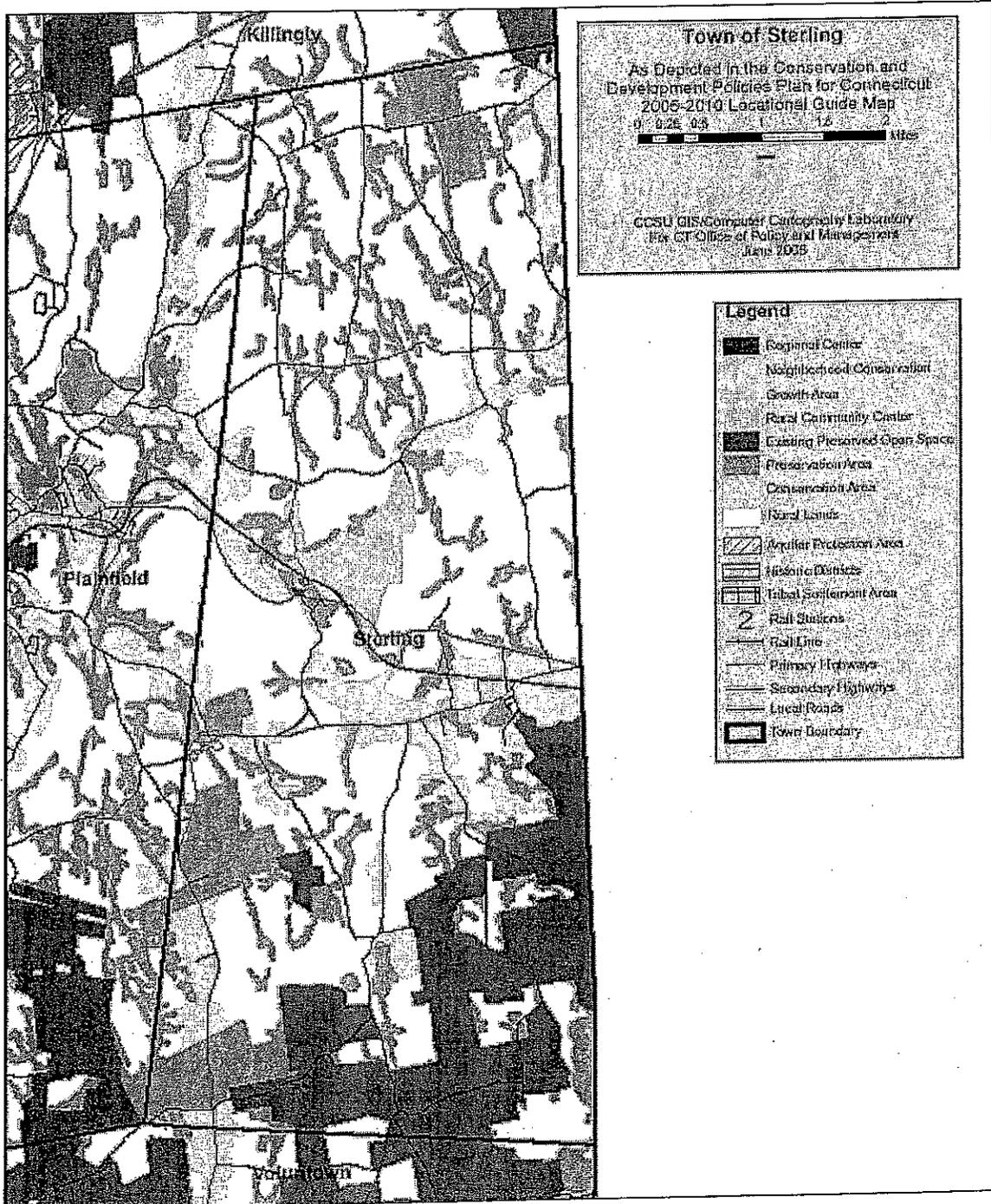
- *Preserve the historic community character,*
- *Establish efficient Town Villages in Oneco and Sterling Center*
- *Explore developing a municipal campus at the former Sterling Central School*
- *Guide residential growth through appropriate land use controls, and*
- *Guide non-residential development in a manor, that will encourage economic development.*

For each of the above objectives, this document identifies a definitive set of challenging, yet achievable, strategies and action steps. These are summarized in the implementation table provided in each Chapter and in the complete implementation table below.

## Plan Consistency (State Plan)

This Plan was compared with the Locational Guide Map in the 2005-2010 State Plan of Conservation and Development and found to be generally consistent with that Plan.

The policies contained in the C&D Plan text provide the context and direction for state agencies to implement their plans and actions in a manner consistent with the following six Growth Management Principles (GMPs):



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

The Locational Guide Map plays an important role in coordinating relevant state actions by providing a geographical interpretation of the state's conservation and development policies. Consistency becomes extremely important when a municipality seeks funding for a particular project. For example, infrastructure (sewer/water) improvements made by the municipality utilizing state funds need to be consistent with the above map. In this case improvements would need to be made inside of the Rural Community Centers.

### **Future Land Use Plan**

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The Future Land Use Plan on the facing page provides a graphic representation of the possible future land uses, structural, and other physical concepts discussed in this Plan. Sterling has developed over the past 200 hundred plus years without regulatory guidance. The Town has not created a regulatory environment utilized in most Connecticut Town's (ie. zoning). As Sterling faces may internal and external forces which shape the way that land is developed and utilized they may want to choose to investigate way to influence growth in the community.

### **Implementation**

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There is little doubt that the most important step of the planning process will be implementation of the recommended strategies. For this, the Plan calls on all Sterling residents to ensure that the vision of the community's future is realized.

The Plan proposes to establish an implementation subcommittee of the Planning and Zoning Commission, which will work with the Board of Selectmen, other town agencies and officials, and Sterling residents and business people to develop a program and schedule for conducting the evaluations, studies, development of regulations, organizational tasks, and program development outlined in this Plan.

This Chapter provides a complete set of the objectives and strategies developed to guide implementation of the Plan of Conservation and Development for Sterling. Although all of the strategies are considered important, an appropriate timeframe is provided for each. The implementation tables are organized as follows. Column headings are described in the sidebar.

## Strategy

It is important to recognize that the following objectives are the main policy statements and planning goals of the Town of Sterling. The strategies associated with each objective identify specific initiatives intended to help implement the strategy.

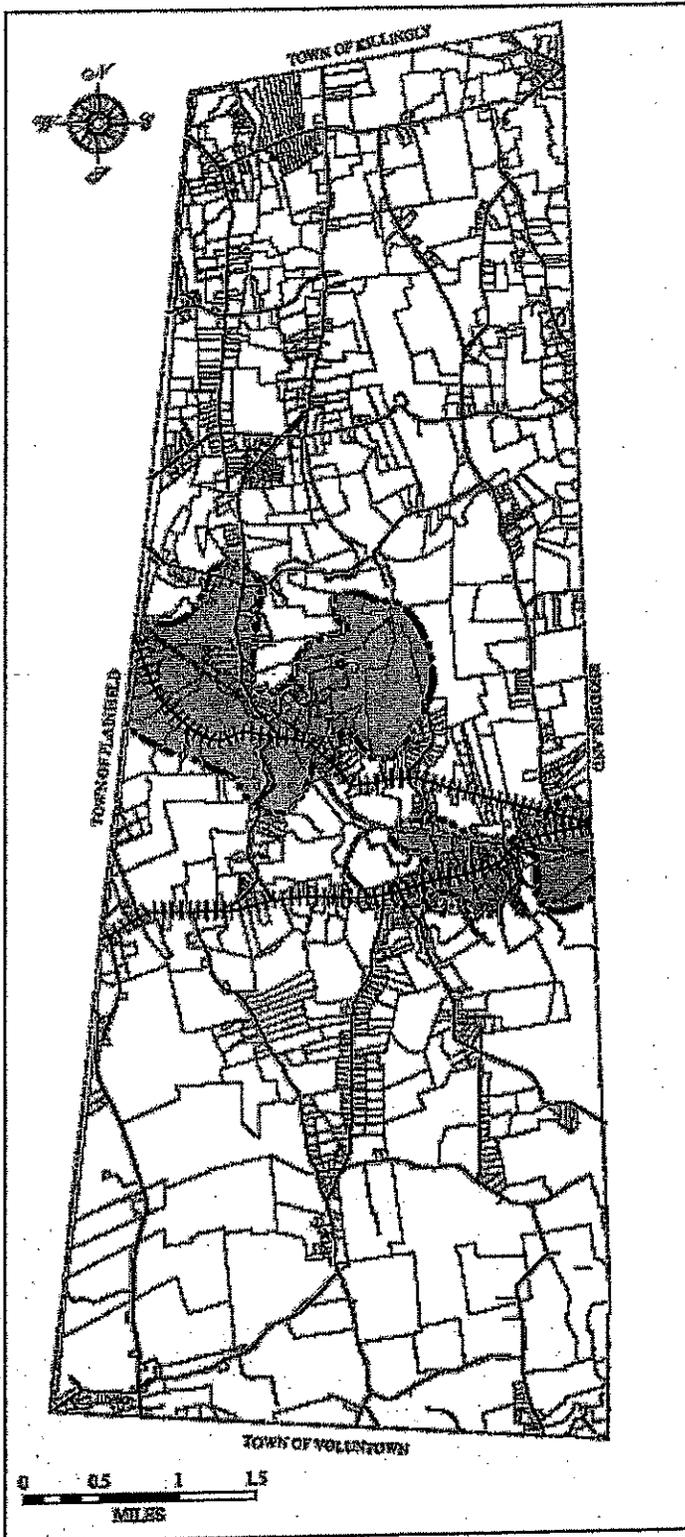
Issues will arise in the future that are not identified specifically in the Plan. In such situations, the overall strategies of the Plan will be the benchmarks used in evaluating whether a proposed activity or proposal is consistent with the Plan.

It should also be recognized that objectives and strategies will evolve over time as implementation or new situations provide insight into desirable policy directions. In other words, the Plan is not a static document and will continue to be reviewed and refined over time.

These implementation guides are intended to be used and refined over time as strategies are implemented and as priorities may change.

The priorities outlined on the following pages may be adjusted due to resource constraints (fiscal or staff) or changing policy issues.





# TOWN OF STERLING FUTURE LAND USE

## LEGEND

- ||||| Rural Growth Corridor
- ▨ Rural Growth Area
- Highway
- Local Road
- Parcel boundary
- Town boundary

**TOWN OF STERLING  
CONNECTICUT  
PLAN OF CONSERVATION  
AND DEVELOPMENT**

*This Map is for evaluation purposes only. Information relative to features on this map is approximate and subject to change as subsequent surveys may disclose.*

*The Town of Sterling and Planning Commission assumes no legal responsibility for information acquired on this map. It is not valid for legal description or the transfer of property.*

**Town of Sterling Planning Commission  
2008**

## Preserve Community Character

### A. Open Space

Action	Primary	Others	Timeline	Done
1. Investigate the creation of a Conservation Commission to work on the identification of Conservation issues in Town - Develop and adopt the Open Space Plan for the Town	BS	PC/IW W	2 years	
2. Assign implementation of the Open Space Program to the Conservation Commission.	BOS		3 years	
3. Establish open space land acquisition fund to be utilized by the town to implement Open Space Program established above, consider bond issuance for open space, and consider annual appropriation based on Conservation Commission recommendations.	BOS, BOF	CC, PC, WC	1,3	
4. Prepare, implement, and regularly update open space action plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and refine priorities</li> <li>• Identify and evaluate resources</li> <li>• Evaluate existing municipal properties</li> <li>• Develop evaluation tools</li> <li>• Recommend subdivision set-aside priorities</li> <li>• Identify and seek funding, grants, donations, etc.</li> <li>• Evaluate PA 490 program for open space land</li> </ul>	CC	BOS IWWC PC	2	

### B. Environmental Regulation

Action	Primary	Others	Timeline	Done
1. Create Conservation Commission as stated above. PC and IWWC should be represented on this Commission	BOS	IWWC/ CC	1	
2. Revise and update subdivision regulations	PC		1	
3. Strengthen wetlands and water resource protections	IWWC	CC	2	
4. Evaluate and revise environmental and site development monitoring and inspection procedures, including fees	PZC, IWWC		2	

### C. Historic Resources and Welcoming Nodes

Action	Primary	Others	Timeline	Done
1. Continue support for Sterling Historic Society	All		3	
2. Consider adoption of demolition delay ordinance	PC		3	
3. Establish welcoming elements at entrances to Town, into Sterling Village, Sterling Hill Section and Oneco Village.	BOS	PW	2	
4. Identify potential partner organizations to contribute or cooperate with entry node elements.	BOS		2	

## Establish an Efficient Town Centers

### A. Pedestrian and Vehicle Access

Action	Primary	Others	School	Timeline	Done
1. Consider development of sidewalk system connecting municipal properties and private institutions in Village areas area including Sterling Hill Section. (New School Connection to Sterling Village)	BOS	PW, PR	BOE	1	1
2. Consider development of Moosup Valley Trail System – New surface treatment. Work with State DOT and DEP to control access and explore interconnection to Oneco Village through historic rail spur to quarry site, replace old trestle crossing Moosup River.	BOS	PC, CC, IWWA			
3. Evaluate future Connecticut Department of Transportation plans for Route 14 and 14a intersection, Route 14/Church Street/Main Street and propose appropriate alternatives, incorporating traffic calming techniques.	BOS			2	1
4. Seek funding for sidewalks and other area improvements through Small Town Economic Assistance grants, Federal TEA grants, Quinebaug-Shetucket Rivers Valley Corridor programs, Boarderlands and other sources.	BOS	PW, PR	BOE	2	1

### B. Municipal Facilities

Action	Primary	Others		Timeline	Done
1. Conduct municipal space needs and facility availability including offices, public works, public safety, schools, recreation, and community center.	BOS	COM		1, 3	1
2. Set goals for expanding town office capacity, relocating public works and public safety functions, establishing a community function center, and planning for future school facilities.	BOS	PW, COM		2	1
3. Initiate site assessment of municipal properties (Old Elementary School, Town Hall, Library) for establishment of integrated municipal campus.	BOS	COM		2	1
4. Monitor properties abutting existing municipal properties or located on State highways in Town for possible acquisition by the Town.	BOS	COM		2	1

### C. Special Design District

Action	Primary	Others		Timeline	Done
1. Consider establishment of special Village Design District, subject to New England Design criteria for defined commercial uses consistent with overall goals for the two historic town villages.	PZC			2	1
2. Develop standards for defined commercial and mixed uses, based on developing appropriately scaled buildings honoring village design standards.	PZC			2	1

### D. Village Center Study

Action	Primary	Others		Timeline	Done
1. Establish an ad hoc study committee to conduct a comprehensive study of the Town's two historic village centers including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal space needs assessment and design of municipal campus to integrate services, recreation, schools, and related facilities;</li> <li>• Land use regulations and other approaches to enhancing and preserving the essence of these centers, including special design district concepts and standards and preservation of historic assets; and</li> <li>• Designs and plans for accessible and safe pedestrian circulation inside and outside the area with sidewalks, pedestrian paths, and trails.</li> </ul>	BOS	PZC	BOE, PR, PW	1, 3	1

## Guide Residential Growth

### A. Land Use Concepts

Action	Primary	Others	Timeline	Done
1. Explore developing modern land use regulations to provide buildable area, density-based standards for parcel subdivision.	PC	BOS, COM	2	1
2. Explore developing modern land use regulations to provide orderly growth as it relates to non-residential development	PC	BOS, COM		

### B. Update and Refine Subdivision Regulations

Action	Primary	Others	Timeline	Done
1. Explore the pro's and con's of developing standards to encourage conservation design subdivisions, within maximum density limits as an alternative to conventional subdivisions, to maximize preservation of open space and reduce environmental and aesthetic impacts of development, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road design standards,</li> <li>• Cul-de-sac specifications,</li> <li>• Drainage design options.</li> </ul>	PC	BOS, COM	2	1
2. Revise subdivision regulations to detail development procedures on new Roads (ie. surety, issuance of building permits etc.)	PC	BOS	2	1

### C. Housing Diversity

Action	Primary	Others	Timeline	Done
1. Evaluate regulatory standards to encourage affordable housing and promote housing diversity.	PC	BOS	3	1
2. Consider encouraging housing options, such as mixed residential uses in village areas.	PC	BOS	3	1
3. Support public and private efforts to develop elderly housing.	PC	BOS	3	1

## Encourage Economic Development

### A. Route 14 and 14a Commercial Corridors

Action	Primary	Others	Timeline	Done
1. Restructure and seek financial assistance to encourage investment in traditional small town Villages.	BOS	PC, COM	1	1
2. Develop regulatory standards for Village area, including parking, access, and other standards to encourage mixed-use, pedestrian friendly development and discourage strip development.	PC	BOS	2	1
3. Develop design standards (coverage setbacks, height, parking, access, etc.) applying to new non-residential development in Town to ensure appropriately scaled development.	PC		1	1
4. Seek ways to balance historic industrial type uses (rock quarrying) with existing and future residential growth.	PC		1	1
5. Seek ways to protect agricultural land along Route 49	PC	CC, PC, IWWC	2	1

### B. Other Commercial Areas

Action	Primary	Others	Timeline	Done
1. Seek was to retain Industrial Park tenants and explore expansion to industrial base in appropriate areas based on infrastructure availability.	PC	BOS	3	1
2. Evaluate reuse of Revere Textile site as mixed use village.	PC		2	1

## Appendix A:

### *Discussion of Planning Topics*

A public discussion was organized around the topics that received the most points in the Planning Issue Exercise. The topics listed in this summary have been arranged to correspond with issues, which may be addressed in the Plan of Conservation and Development.

#### **Emerging Overall Theme**

##### **Community Character**

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- Rural character is important to maintain
- Sterling is also a “bedroom” community
- Small style stores are need in our villages
- Junk yards and junk on residential lots can detract form community character
- State forests are an integral part of our community
- Walking track provide civic gathering point
- Farming is important to the heritage of the town
- The character of Route 49 “Ekonk Hill” should be protected
- Gateways should be preserved
- Noise pollution can also detract from community character

#### **Conservation Themes**

##### **Open Space**

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- Is necessary to preserve the rural character of Sterling
- Should discourage housing to promote more open space
- Needed to prevent overcrowding of community
- Developers should provide open space or pay for it
- Open space needs to be defined and preserved
- Provide tax incentives to protect open space preservation
- Protects natural resources

##### **Historic Resources**

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- Historic resources are important to maintain community character
- Preserves community character
- Need to be protected
- Are part of the identity of the Town
- The historic villages in Oneco and Sterling are part of the character of the community
- Sterling is part of the Quinebaug/Shetucket National Heritage Corridor

##### **Natural Resources**

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- Scenery and trees contribute to the character of Sterling
- The rivers and streams in town contribute to character
- Protect the History of the town

## **Development Themes**

### **Residential Development**

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- Keep growth from overwhelming services that have to be paid by local taxes
- Larger lot sizes may help limit growth
- Promote cluster development to preserve open space areas
- Should consider types for elderly housing to keep seniors in Sterling
- Consider housing options for seniors and starter homes for younger adults
- Limit the number of building permits issue each year
- Develop impact fees for all new residential development

### **Business Development**

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- Keep it in the villages and/or industrial park area
- Develop Revere site to replicate old mill village setting – no strip malls
- Develop gas station in town
- Encourage agricultural based business
- Continue to develop the industrial park and expand it if possible
- Need small, clean, non-polluting industry
- It is most important for Sterling to have economic development to keep taxes low

## **Infrastructure Themes**

### **Community Facilities**

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- There is a fear that the schools will be overwhelmed by growth (new school to small before even being built do to new residential growth)
- Should Sterling's school system consider consolidation with other towns
- Create more recreational opportunities for all age groups youth to senior
- Senior Housing, Library, Youth/Community Center are needed
- Larger facilities are needed for the Town Hall and Fire House
- Reuse of the Sterling Elementary School for new community center, town hall, library, senior housing, commercial and/or industrial incubator space.
- Provide better cellular communications in town
- As the population grows the town will need more parks, recreation facilities as well as schools
- Work with State to develop Moosup Valley Trail (old railroad bed)

## **Miscellaneous Themes**

### **Miscellaneous**

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- The form of Town administration may have to change as it grows.
- Need to use the Plan of Conservation and Development to fold together as many of the Town's existing plans, on different subjects, as possible
- The Town has to distinguish between wants and needs
- Everyone seems to like living in Sterling
- Most seem to be concerned with the growth that has occurred in town
- Most seem to be concerned with the cost of living in town
- Most are in favor of growth control regulations but not sure what type of regulations would be appropriate for residents
- Most are afraid that the town is changing and they have no control

## *Survey Responses*

In addition to the public workshops, a town-wide survey was sent to all residents in Town asking them to respond to a number of questions. The survey was designed to provide input on a variety of local issues. The results of this mailed survey are presented throughout the plan. A complete analysis of the results are included in Appendix A.

### What do you LIKE about the way Sterling has developed?

- Rural Character (quiet, not too many houses, woods between neighbors, small, friendly etc)
- Industrial/commercial businesses provide good tax base and convenient shopping
- Balance of rural character and commercial development
- Sterling and Oneco Villages
- School system
- Location – between Hartford and Providence

### What do you DISLIKE about the way Sterling has developed?

- Destruction of land for new residential housing
- Condition of some buildings and properties in Town
- Lack of a Town identity (Town Green) sense of place
- Not enough variety of retail and restaurants
- No high school
- Impact future housing will have on tax base
- Lack of enough industry
- Lack of adequate land use controls

### What would you like to see ENCOURAGED in Sterling?

- Well-managed development on Route 14 and 14A in village centers
- Further development of the industrial park
- High quality homes
- Long range planning to prevent rapid/dense growth
- A long-term plan for the Village Centers
- Larger lot size
- Economic Development
- Protect Rural character
- Conversion of historic properties to “Bed & Breakfasts”
- More land purchased by the Town for recreation
- Elderly housing

**What would you like to see DISCOURAGED in Sterling?**

- Abandonment of farms for housing development
- Landfill and refuse types of business
- Apartment buildings and housing on small lots
- Asphalt plants, gravel pits, rock crushing and blasting operations
- "Slum and/or blighted" properties that devalue neighboring areas
- Further degradation of the environment
- Further industrial development outside of the existing Industrial Park and/or an expansion of existing park, especially gravel pits and similar types of businesses around town
- Low income housing

**What will be Sterling's greatest CHALLENGE over the next 10-20 years?**

- Growth
- Controlling development along Route 14, 14A and scenic Route 49 (Ekonk Hill)
- Enhancing Sterling's Recreational opportunities
- Increasing the business tax base
- Maintaining the mill rate at a level that will not overburden residents
- Finding adequate funding to maintain quality schools
- Meeting the needs of schools that face increasing enrollments
- Maintaining the rural character of the community
- Preventing over-development of farmland
- Maintaining a reasonable tax rate while funding schools and public facilities
- Traffic and other transportation related issues

**What will be Sterling's greatest NEED over the next 10-20 years?**

- A high school
- Community Center
- Better recreational facilities (tennis courts, gym, swimming pool)
- Environmentally sound economic development
- Meeting the needs of an aging population
- Examining the need for schools in light of an aging population
- Careful land use planning to manage growth
- Expansion of the Sterling Town Hall and Library
- A better balanced tax base
- Senior housing
- More volunteers for fire department and ambulance services

**What are the major TOPICS you think the plan should address?**

- Curbing residential development
- Maintaining rural character
- Recreational facilities for Sterling residents
- Maintaining historic resources
- Preserving natural resources
- Economic Development
- Town facilities (town hall, community center, library complex)
- Encouraging residents to volunteer their time
- Growth controls
- Land acquisition
- Land acquisition for public utility facilities
- Neighborhood blight and junkyards
- Housing for older persons

**Appendix B:**

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Planning Resources:

Green Valley Institute: [www.theLastGreenValley.org/GVI](http://www.theLastGreenValley.org/GVI)

American Planning Association: [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org)

Lincoln Land Institute: [www.lincolninst.edu](http://www.lincolninst.edu)

Smart Growth Network: [www.smartgrowth.org](http://www.smartgrowth.org)

Vermont Forum on Sprawl: [www.vtsprawl.org](http://www.vtsprawl.org)

Grow Smart Rhode Island: [www.growsmartri.com](http://www.growsmartri.com)

