

TOWN OF CANAAN FALLS VIL- LAGE

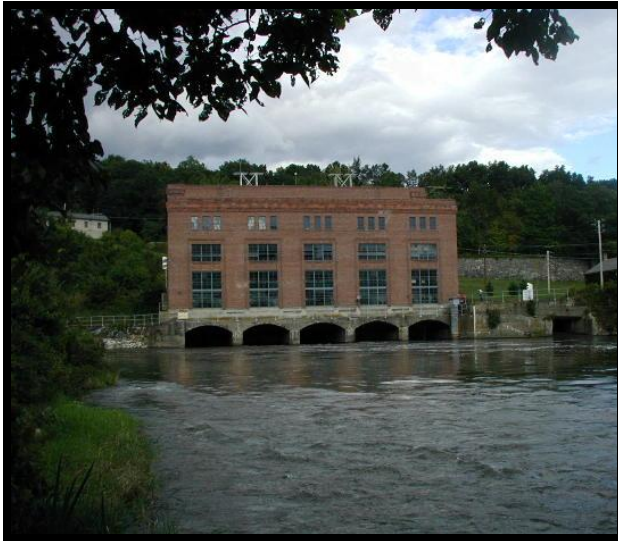
2002 PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT



Preserve Community Charac-
ter



Address Community Needs



Guide Community Development



Promote Community Spirit

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION



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Effective Date

The Planning & Zoning Commission adopted the Plan of Conservation & Development at a meeting on January 9, 2002. The effective date of the Plan is February 15, 2002.

A date footer has been placed on pages of the Plan so that any amendments or revisions can be readily located.

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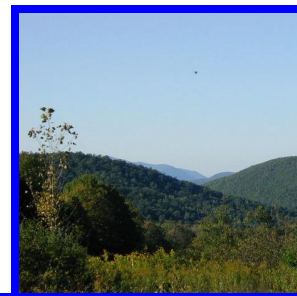
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“The practice of conservation must spring from a conviction of what is ethically and esthetically right; as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right only when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the community and the community includes soil, waters, fauna, flora, as well as people.”

Essay / The Ecological Conscience
Aldo Leopold

WELCOME!



January 9, 2002

Fellow Townspeople,

Pursuant to the Connecticut General Statutes, the Planning and Zoning Commission has prepared this Plan as a guide for future decision-making with regard to land use, environmental protection, and economic development in our town.

This Plan has been developed by the Planning Committee and the Planning and Zoning Commission. Preliminary drafts of the Plan were refined based on verbal and written comments received from residents during numerous public meetings, workshops and surveys.

It has been the Commission's goal to develop a Plan that incorporates sound planning practices, reflects the consensus of the community, and establishes a working blueprint for the future of our town. It is important to stress that the recommendations in the Plan:

- **are based on factual public data from state and local sources,**
- **reflect the voices of our fellow residents from public meetings, workshops, written comments, and two town-wide surveys,**
- **are intended to improve and maintain the overall quality of life, and**
- **are designed to preserve, enhance, and promote the rural character of our town and its traditional New England village.**

In this document, we have chosen to use the common name of Falls Village when referring to our town instead of the legal name of Town of Canaan to avoid common confusion with the "village of Canaan" and the Canaan postal address in the Town of North Canaan.

It is our intent that the Plan be referred to, discussed, and refined over time as conditions change. We look forward to working with all residents to preserve community character and enhance the quality of life for all in Falls Village.

Sincerely,

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION



PREFACE

Statutory Reference

Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that the Planning Commission prepare, adopt, and amend a Plan of Conservation and Development for Falls Village. The requirements for the Plan are listed in that statute.

Purpose of The Plan

This Plan of Conservation and Development is a tool for guiding the future of Falls Village. The goals and recommendations of the Plan are intended to reflect the overall consensus of Falls Village residents about what is best for the community and its residents in the future.

Summary of Directions

During the process of preparing this Plan, numerous public meetings and exercises were held to help identify and understand issues that are important to residents and the community as a whole.

The Plan strategies fall into the following major themes:

- **Preserve Community Character** – Since Falls Village residents are unanimous in their desire to preserve those characteristics that make Falls Village special, the Plan begins by identifying what those characteristics are and how to preserve them.
- **Address Community Needs**– The next section of the Plan identifies community needs that were identified by residents and strategies to address them.
- **Guide Development** – The Plan then looks at how to guide land use activities in the different parts of the community to help preserve community character and help address needs and opportunities.
- **Promote Community Spirit** – In order to help preserve and maintain its small town character, the Plan identifies strategies to promote and enhance community spirit and pride.

Since this is a Plan of “Conservation” and “Development”, it is intended to address both stability and change. It is the philosophy of the Plan to preserve and enhance community character while addressing community needs and guiding future development and change.



Use of the Plan of Conservation and Development

This Plan is an advisory document for the Planning & Zoning Commission, other Town boards and commissions, and current and future Falls Village residents. It is intended to guide local residents and to provide a framework for consistent decision-making with regard to conservation and development activities in Falls Village over the next decade.

While the statutory responsibility to adopt the Plan rests with the Planning & Zoning Commission, implementation will only occur with the diligent efforts of the residents and officials of Falls Village.

Implementation

While adoption of the Plan denotes the end of the planning process, it marks the beginning of the implementation process. Creating a guide for implementation is the major advantage of a comprehensive planning process.

However, planning never really ends. As strategies are implemented and evaluated, new information can help refine the Plan recommendations and lead in new directions. In such an evolving process, the challenge will be to keep the Plan current in terms of implemented programs and current community priorities.

With this Plan, an important tool is in place for Falls Village residents to begin this journey and implement strategies that will help maintain and enhance the quality of life for current and future residents.

While there may be refinements in the goals and strategies of this Plan over time, it is anticipated that this philosophy will remain relevant during the anticipated ten-year life of this Plan of Conservation and Development.

Other Relevant Information

In addition to a comprehensive inventory and assessment of local conditions and trends, the process used to prepare the Plan included many meetings with the Planning & Zoning Commission, other Town agencies, and Falls Village residents where various ideas and recommendations were discussed and refined.

In addition to the information contained in this Plan, other relevant information has included:

- workbooks (booklets on different topical issues) prepared during the process for participants,
- previously adopted plans, and
- materials such as resident surveys.

The workbooks were placed at Town Hall and the David M. Hunt Memorial Library for residents to review during the process.



STREET MAP

CONDITIONS & TRENDS

1

Introduction To Falls Village

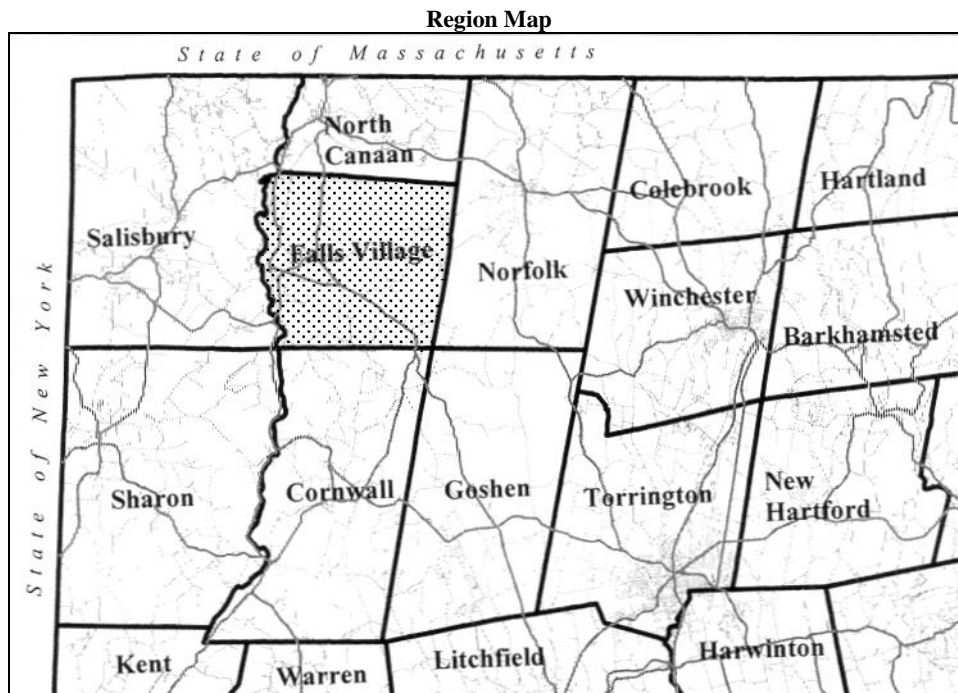
Falls Village (Town of Canaan) is located in Litchfield County in northwest Connecticut. The town is bounded by Salisbury to the west, North Canaan to the north, Norfolk to the east, and Cornwall to the south. Falls Village is located about 35 miles northwest of Hartford, the State capital.

Falls Village is one of the most beautiful communities in Connecticut with varied and distinct land formations ranging from the Great Falls on the Housatonic River through the flat expanse of Robbins Swamp to the dramatic rise of Cobble Hill and Canaan Mountain.

Upon this beautiful landscape rests a community of about 1,100 people, settled in a small village near the Housatonic River and spread throughout the community on estates, farms, and in established neighborhoods. With an area of about 33 square miles, Falls Village's population density (about 32 persons per square mile) makes it one of the most rural towns in Connecticut.

“If we could first know where we are and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it.”

Abraham Lincoln



Ancient History

There is no written history for Falls Village in the period before European settlement. What is “known” has been surmised from geologic and archeological data from a variety of sources.

History Of Falls Village

The Falls Village landscape was formed over millions of years by the interaction of geologic and climatic forces. The retreat of the last Ice Age (about 15,000 years ago) left the Great Falls, Canaan Mountain, Cobble Hill, and many other physical features that make the setting of Falls Village what it is today.

The first Native Americans are believed to have inhabited this area about 10,000 years ago. Over time they organized into tribes and lived as hunters, fishers, gatherers, and farmers. Trails and seasonal settlements were located along the Housatonic River and a large settlement was located in what is now Kent.

European Settlement

The Dutch began trading with Native Americans along Long Island Sound about 1614 and British Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620. However, it was not until 1720 that European settlement came to the Falls Village area. The Dutch set up a camp at the area known as Point of Rocks and Dutch and English explorers traveled to and through this area. Some even negotiated land purchases from the Native Americans.

However, this area was considered to be the property of the Colony and a comprehensive survey was undertaken in 1731. The area that became both Canaan and North Canaan was shown on the survey as “Town C”. In 1733, the Colony decided that these “western lands” would be sold at auction to support schools in the state.

In 1738, the western lands that included Falls Village were auctioned in New London. Fifty rights were sold for 60 pounds each and bidders had to build a house on the land and live there within three years. People with prior agreements with the Native Americans had to relinquish their rights to the land. In 1739 the Connecticut General Court (today’s General Assembly) officially granted incorporation to Canaan when a minister was called and a congregation was established.

View of Forests and Cobble Hill



Great Falls of the Housatonic River



Resource Based Economy

The natural landscape of the region provided a bounty for the early settlers. The fertile flat areas in the valleys proved excellent for farming. The “Great Falls” on the Housatonic River were widely recognized as an important resource and the first saw mill was established in 1738. By 1740, a gristmill and a bolting mill had also been built along the Falls. This was followed in later years by other mills at the Great Falls, at Little Falls, and along the Hollenbeck River and other streams from Canaan Mountain and elsewhere.

Earth products also provided the basis for development of an important industry in colonial times. The entire northwest corner of Connecticut became renowned for the existence of limestone and iron ore that spawned a significant iron industry. In addition to making iron materials for farming tools and other needs, the industry also made major contributions to the Revolutionary War by making cannons and cannon balls.

The first iron ore smelting facilities were established in Huntsville along the Hollenbeck River in the southeast corner of Canaan. What made this location prime for smelting operations was the availability of waterpower and its central location to the raw materials needed in the smelting process (iron ore, limestone for flux, and wood charcoal for fuel). Information indicates that the first iron mill was established in this area by 1743 and possibly even earlier.

These operations and the massive amount of iron ore in the ground sparked the first growth in the Region and the population of Falls Village grew from 2,137 people in 1800 to 2,834 people in 1860, the height of iron production.

Falls Village and Canaan

Once one Town, what is now known as Canaan and North Canaan split into separate ecclesiastical societies in 1768 and separate Towns in 1858. This change was due, in part, to the difficulty of travel within this area to conduct public business, philosophical differences, the arrival of the railroad, and different directions.

The naming of Falls Village was a result of the railroad. Originally known as “The Falls”, it later became Falls Village as a community built up around the station.

Over time, the use of the name “Canaan” to refer to the municipality also known as Falls Village and a separate village in North Canaan has become very confusing.

Charcoal Hearth on Canaan Mountain



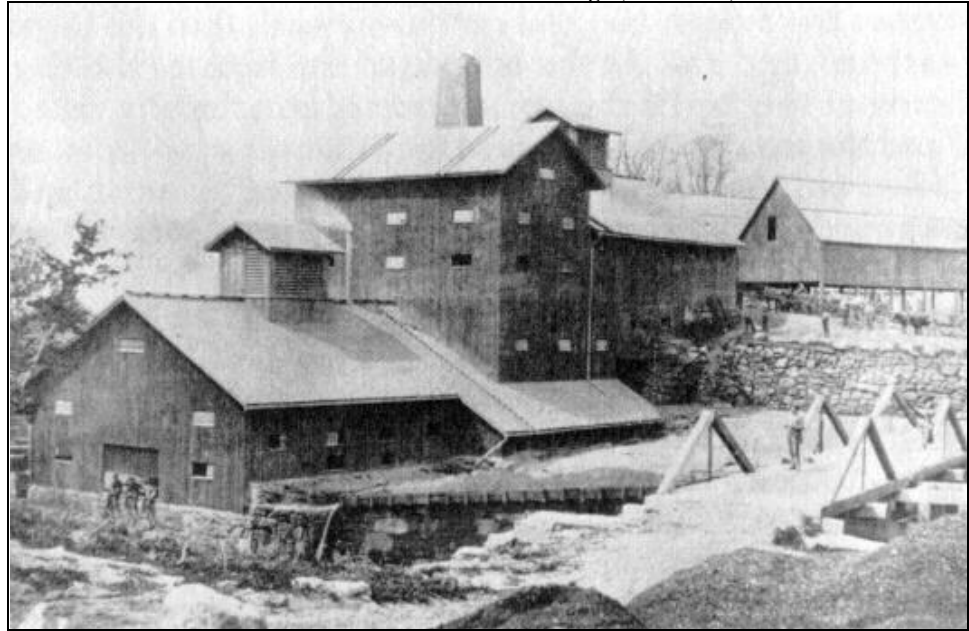
Limestone Quarry on Sand Road



Changing Fortunes

It is remarkable to think of the Falls Village of 1850. The iron industry was strong, waterpower at the Great Falls was a powerful locational advantage, and the railroad was serving this area. The robust economy and the railroad resulted in the establishment of inns and other services and outlets. Falls Village was a “boom town”.

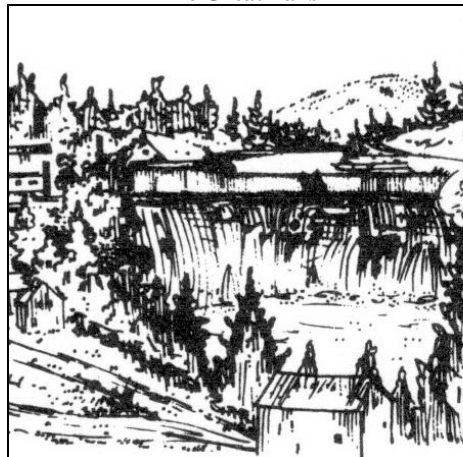
Buena Vista Furnace in Falls Village (circa 1890)



As published in “America’s Valley Forges and Valley Furnaces”. The original picture was obtained from the Falls Village Historical Society.

Several area residents had a vision of large industrial city built around the iron industry and the waterpower of the Great Falls. Money and effort was expended to continue growing the economy. In the 1850s, an idea was conceived, but never initiated, to build a canal system that would connect Falls Village with Long Island Sound.

The Great Falls



Town of Canaan

Historic District Sign



Another ambitious project was the development of a water canal adjacent to the “Great Falls”. By building canals at different levels, it was felt that the number of companies using the waterpower at this site could increase significantly.

This canal, started in 1849, was a major engineering and construction project. However, when the canal was finished in 1851, it was found not to be watertight. Despite efforts to mend the canal, it was never completed.

1851 Water Canal

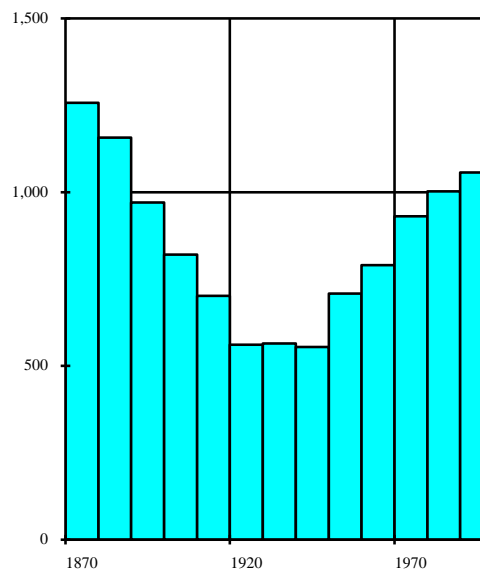


In later years, the fortunes of Falls Village would change. The iron industry was having a harder time finding fuel with the widespread cutting of local timber. While the railroad made local products available over a larger area and could have expanded local industries, it actually had the opposite effect. Rail service also opened up iron deposits in other areas and local businesses could no longer compete. Following the split with North Canaan in 1858, the 1870 Census revealed a Falls Village population of 1,257 residents and a North Canaan population of 1,695 residents.

With the advent of electrical power, industry no longer needed to be located at waterfalls and businesses were established in and moved to other areas. In recognition of this, the Great Falls were dammed in 1914 as the Connecticut Power Company built a hydroelectric power plant to tap this resource and send the power to mills and factories elsewhere.

Population declined in Falls Village from about 1,300 people in 1870 to about 555 people in 1940. In the meantime, the population of North Canaan increased from about 1,700 to about 2,300 during the same period.

Falls Village Population: 1870-2020



Falls Village Population

Population	
1920	561
1930	565
1940	555
1950	708
1960	790
1970	931
1980	1,002
1990	1,057
2000	1,081
2010	1,120
2020	1,160

1920-2000 Census, Linear projections by Planimetrics in italics

1990 Housing Occupancy

	Falls Village	State
1-2 people	61%	57%
3-4 people	32%	34%
5+ people	7%	9%
Median	2.4	2.6

1990 Census

Median Age

	Falls Village	State
1980	37.0	32.0
1990	37.7	34.4
2000	41.8	37.4

1980-2000 Census

Year Moved Into Unit

	Falls Village	State
1980-90	49%	60%
1970-79	24%	18%
1960-69	14%	11%
Pre- 1960	13%	12%
Total	100%	100%

1990 Census

People Of Falls Village

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Falls Village had population of 1,081 people in the year 2000. This is an increase of 24 people from the 1990 Census population of 1,057 people.

From a population of 1,257 people in 1870, the number of local residents declined to 555 people in 1940. While the population has been increasing since 1940, the amount and pace of population growth has been very modest. If recent trends continue, limited population growth would be expected over the next ten to twenty years.

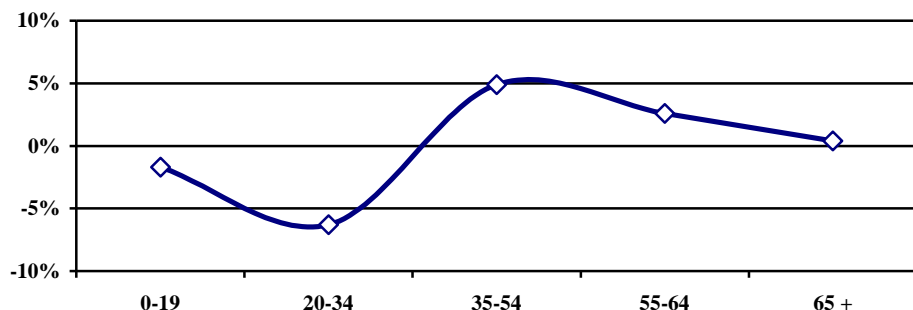
	Absolute Population Change				% Change	
	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	60-90	90-00
Goshen	63	355	623	368	81%	16%
North Canaan	109	140	99	66	16%	2%
Sharon	359	132	305	40	37%	1%
Falls Village	141	71	55	24	34%	2%
Cornwall	126	111	126	20	35%	1%
Salisbury	264	323	194	(113)	24%	(3%)
Norfolk	236	83	96	(400)	13%	(19%)

1960-2000 Census

Age Composition

The most significant population trend in Falls Village is the changing age composition of the community. As shown in the following chart, Falls Village has fewer residents under age 35 and more residents over age 35 than the state average. As a result, the median age (half the people in town being older and half being younger) was about four years higher than the state average.

Percentage Variation From State Average By Age Group (2000)



In age-specific population projections prepared by the Connecticut Census Data Center in 1995, Falls Village is expected over the next 20 years to experience:

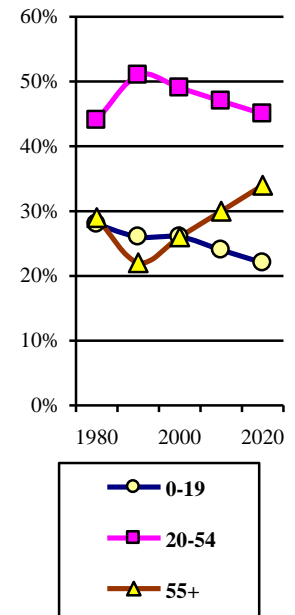
- a decrease in the number and proportion of residents aged 0 to 34,
- an increase in the number of residents aged 35 to 54, and
- an increase in the number and proportion of residents aged 55 and over.

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 over). If these population projections bear out (if birth, death, and migration patterns continue), the need for different types of community programs can be anticipated.

Overall, the 55 and over age groups could grow substantially to the year 2020. If this trend occurs (since some people may elect to relocate to other areas), increases in some municipal services (social services and senior activities) might be anticipated, as well as an interest in smaller housing units with maintenance provided.

Description	Age Range	Needs	Projection To 2020
Infants	0 to 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child care 	Steady
School-Age	5 to 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School facilities Recreation programs 	Decrease
Young Adults	20 to 34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental housing Starter homes 	Peak around 2010
Middle Age	35 to 54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family programs Trade-up homes 	Modest decline
Mature Adults	55 to 65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller homes Second homes 	Increase to 2020
Retirement Age	65 and over	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax relief Housing options Elderly programs 	Increase to 2020

Age Composition To 2020



Falls Village Population History by Age Groups

Ages	1980	1990	2000
0-4	43	61	58
5-19	235	216	218
20-34	193	197	135
35-54	244	346	390
55-64	104	90	126
65 +	183	147	154
Total	1,002	1,057	1,081

1970-90 Census, Projections by Connecticut Census Data Center (1995).

Ages	1980	1990	2000
0-19	28%	26%	26%
20-54	44%	51%	49%
55+	29%	22%	26%
Total	100%	100%	100%

1970-90 Census, Projections by Connecticut Census Data Center (1995).

1997 Median Sales Prices

Salisbury	\$240,000
Norfolk	\$235,000
Cornwall	\$204,000
Sharon	\$177,500
Goshen	\$175,000
State	\$140,000
Falls Village	\$127,250
North Canaan	\$97,000

CT Policy & Economic Council

'Affordable Housing'

Falls Village	1%
State	11%

Source: CT Department of Economic & Community Development

Housing Tenure

	Falls Village	State
Owner Occupied	59%	63%
Renter Occupied	14%	31%
For Rent or Sale	6%	4%
Occasional Use	21%	2%
Other	1%	1%

2000 Census

1996 Per Capita Income

Sharon	\$58,413
Salisbury	\$57,170
Cornwall	\$48,365
State	\$33,875
Goshen	\$32,338
Norfolk	\$31,438
Falls Village	\$29,730
North Canaan	\$23,212

CT Policy & Economic Council

1989 Income Type

	Town	State
Wage/ Salary	71%	80%
Non-Farm Self-Employed	21%	4%
Farm Self-Employed	5%	<1%
Social Security	27%	27%
Retirement	15%	17%

Total may exceed 100% due to multiple income sources.

Housing In Falls Village

In terms of the number of housing units and population, Falls Village has been one of the slowest growing communities in Connecticut. During the 1990s, Falls Village added 23 housing units.

What is unique about Falls Village is the number of homes kept for occasional use. Overall, about one of every five housing units are not occupied year-round but are kept for weekend, seasonal, or occasional use. If these units were occupied year-round, Falls Village's population would be over 300 people higher.

It may surprise some people to know that over 60 percent of the housing units in Falls Village in 1990 were occupied by only one or two people. This is not uncommon since many factors (affluence, longer life expectancy, smaller families, and divorce) result in the typical housing unit containing fewer people than before.

Compared to other communities in northwest Connecticut, housing in Falls Village would be considered more affordable. However, just over one percent of the housing units in Falls Village are considered "affordable housing" (assisted housing, financed by CHFA mortgages, or sale price restricted by deed).



Economic Conditions In Falls Village

It is very difficult to estimate the actual number of jobs in Falls Village since businesses using a "Canaan" mailing address would actually be in North Canaan. While the State Labor Department reported about 880 jobs in Canaan and about 1,620 jobs in North Canaan in 1996, this number seems very high.

About one of every four households in Falls Village had some type of self-employment income in 1989 - much higher than the state average. This is representative of the rural nature of the local economy. In terms of income, the per capita income in Falls Village was lower than the state as whole in 1996.

Fiscal Overview

Fiscal issues are important to Falls Village residents. In the 1998 UConn telephone survey of Falls Village residents, nearly three-fourths of respondents (72%) stated that taxes in Falls Village were too high with respect to town services. About four-fifths of respondents (83%) stated that taxes in Falls Village were higher than in other towns. In addition, a majority of respondents stated that they were very concerned (56%) or somewhat concerned (30%) about future increases in property tax rates.

Expenditures

The annual budget in Falls Village is focused on education and public works. On a per capita basis, spending is higher in Falls Village than for surrounding towns and the state average (*Table 1 in the sidebar*) because the population base is lower.

Per Capita Expenditures

Expenditure Category	Falls Village		State Average	
Education	\$1,915	66%	\$1,245	56%
Public Safety	\$54	2%	\$233	10%
Public Works	\$528	18%	\$186	8%
Debt Service	\$9	<1%	\$156	7%
Other	\$377	13%	\$420	19%
Total	\$2,883	100%	\$2,240	100%

"Other" includes general government, recreation, and social services.
CT Policy & Economic Council

Revenues

Local programs are mainly supported by property taxes on local property. Unlike some other communities, Falls Village receives much less state aid than the state average (*Table 2 in the sidebar*). The use of a fiscal surplus from prior years to reduce current year taxes can vary considerably from year to year.

Revenue Category	Falls Village		State Average	
Current Taxes	\$2,118	73%	\$1,449	65%
State Aid	\$301	10%	\$573	26%
Surplus	\$277	10%	\$37	2%
Fines & Fees	\$36	1%	\$77	3%
Other	\$150	5%	\$104	5%
Total Revenue	\$2,883	100%	\$2,240	100%

"Other" includes use of surplus, prior year taxes.
CT Policy & Economic Council

Budget History

Over the past ten years, the local budget has increased 60 percent while the Consumer Price Index has increased about 32 percent over this same period (*Table 3 in the sidebar*). In other words, spending increased at about twice the rate of inflation.

Table 1
Per Capita Expenditures

Falls Village	\$2,883
Norfolk	\$2,613
Cornwall	\$2,538
State	\$2,240
Goshen	\$2,192
North Canaan	\$1,986
Sharon	\$1,951
Salisbury	\$1,937

CT Policy & Economic Council

Table 2
Per Capita State Aid

North Canaan	\$776
Norfolk	\$607
State	\$573
Falls Village	\$301
Cornwall	\$199
Sharon	\$151
Goshen	\$117
Salisbury	\$88

CT Policy & Economic Council

Table 3
Town Budget History

1990-91	\$1,998,588
1991-92	\$2,075,927
1992-93	\$2,124,143
1993-94	\$2,207,930
1994-95	\$2,347,978
1995-96	\$2,367,506
1996-97	\$2,517,738
1997-98	\$2,780,038
1998-99	\$2,861,005
1999-00	\$3,206,830
2000-01	

Annual Budget Report

Table 1
1996 Per Capita Grand List

Cornwall	\$185,379
Salisbury	\$165,101
Sharon	\$136,428
Goshen	\$133,839
Norfolk	\$101,248
Falls Village	\$95,606
North Canaan	\$84,484
State	\$80,477

Equalized Net Grand List
CT Policy & Economic Council

Table 2
Taxable Grand List

Residential	64%
Bus./Ind./Other	21%
Total Real Estate	86%
Motor Vehicle & Personal Property	15%
Gross Grand List	101%
Exemptions	(1%)
Net Grand List	100%

Town of Falls Village

Table 3
Taxable Grand List History

1990	\$67.6 million
1991	\$67.8 million
1992	\$70.0 million
1993	\$72.7 million
1994	\$71.3 million
1995	\$72.2 million
1996	\$74.2 million
1997	\$74.4 million
1998	\$86.6 million
1999	\$86.4 million
2000	\$87.6 million

Revaluation occurred as of the 1998
Grand List
Annual Budget Report

Tax Base

Compared to adjacent communities, Falls Village has a smaller taxable Grand List (a compilation of all taxable property) on a per capita basis (*Table 1 in the sidebar*).

While all property in Falls Village created a consolidated grand list of about \$105 million dollars in the year 2000, there was about \$17 million of tax exempt property. As a result, the taxable Grand List was only about \$88 million.

The following table compares the amount of the taxable grand list and the tax-exempt grand list in Falls Village (as a percentage of the consolidated grand list) to communities in the Waterbury region that were the subject of a recent fiscal impact study.

	Taxable Property	Tax Exempt Property		Taxable Property	Tax Exempt Property
Falls Village	84%	16%	Prospect	95%	5%
Beacon Falls	94%	6%	Southbury	93%	7%
Bethlehem	93%	7%	Thomaston	93%	7%
Cheshire	88%	12%	Waterbury	83%	17%
Middlebury	93%	7%	Watertown	92%	8%
Naugatuck	90%	10%	Wolcott	94%	6%
Oxford	91%	9%	Woodbury	95%	5%

Fiscal Impact – Regional Summary Report, Central Naugatuck Valley Region, 2000

Note that Falls Village has a much higher proportion of tax-exempt property than any of these other communities except Waterbury (with its major hospital and various state and federal facilities).

In terms of tax base composition (*Table 2 in the sidebar*), Falls Village is fortunate to have about 21 percent of the taxable grand list comprised of business and industrial real estate (most of this is the Falls Village Power Station). Tax revenue from these uses typically helps support programs and services to residents.

Tax Base History

Over the past ten years, the taxable grand list in Falls Village increased by about 30 percent while the Consumer Price Index has increased about 32 percent over this same period (*Table 3 in the sidebar*).

The Connecticut Policy and Economic Council reports that the equalized net grand list (a reflection of the estimated market value of all property in a community) has stayed fairly constant (around \$125 million) since 1990.

Tax Burden

The actual tax burden for Falls Village residents can be measured in several ways. When the actual taxes paid by residential property is compared to per capita income, local property taxes consume a higher percentage of income in Falls Village than in surrounding towns and for the state as a whole.

	Tax Revenue Per Capita	% Business Tax Base	Actual Per Capita Tax Burden	Per Capita Income	Taxes / Per Capita Income
Falls Village	\$2,118	20.2%	\$1,690	\$29,730	5.7%
Norfolk	\$1,930	7.9%	\$1,778	\$31,438	5.7%
Goshen	\$1,917	5.7%	\$1,808	\$32,338	5.6%
Cornwall	\$2,115	7.5%	\$1,956	\$48,365	4.0%
State	\$1,449	18.9%	\$1,175	\$33,875	3.5%
North Canaan	\$1,137	34.6%	\$744	\$23,212	3.2%
Salisbury	\$1,702	9.7%	\$1,537	\$57,170	2.7%
Sharon	\$1,615	6.1%	\$1,516	\$58,413	2.6%

Connecticut Policy & Economic Council. Calculations by Planimetrics.

When the property tax rate is compared to the market value of property (as opposed to the assessed value), the effective tax rate is higher than most surrounding communities but lower than the state average (*Table 1 in the sidebar*).

In other words, while the typical tax burden on a per capita basis is similar to surrounding communities, the more modest incomes in Falls Village make the tax burden to residents among the highest for surrounding towns.

While the high proportion of tax exempt property (over 21 percent) creates difficulties in terms of funding municipal services that benefit all properties, some of these tax-exempt properties are preserved as open space and make a significant contribution to community character.

Tax Rate History

Over the past ten years, the tax rate in Falls Village increased by about 25 percent while the Consumer Price Index has increased about 32 percent over this same period (*Table 2 in the sidebar*).

The Connecticut Policy and Economic Council reports that the effective tax rate (taxes as a percentage of market value) increased from 1.2 percent in 1990-91 to 1.79 percent in 1997-98. This represents an increase of about 49 percent.

Summary

It is abundantly clear that Falls Village residents appreciate the rural character and community spirit that is found in our town and have chosen to support a variety of services to meet community needs. In essence, Falls Village residents have shown that they value the community character and quality of life that is found here.

Table 1
Effective Tax Rate

State	1.85%
Norfolk	1.80%
Falls Village	1.79%
North Canaan	1.42%
Goshen	1.39%
Sharon	1.23%
Cornwall	1.16%
Salisbury	1.05%

Equalized mill rate expresses taxes as a percentage of market value. CT Policy & Economic Council

Table 2
Town Mill Rate History

1990-91	25.00
1991-92	25.00
1992-93	25.00
1993-94	26.00
1994-95	28.00
1995-96	27.00
1996-97	29.00
1997-98	30.50
1998-99	31.75
1999-00	31.75
2000-01	31.25

A mill represents \$1.00 in taxes for every \$1,000 in assessed value. Revaluation occurred as of the 1998 Grand List (the 1999-00 budget year). Annual Budget Report

Definitions

Developed Land - land that has buildings, structures, or improvements used for a particular economic or social purpose (such as residential or institutional).

Committed Land - land that may have no buildings, structures, or improvements but that is used for a particular economic or social purpose (such as open space).

Vacant Land - land that is not developed or committed.

Possible Future Development - developed land that could possibly contain additional development in the future (such as a 10-acre parcel with one house in a two-acre residential zone).

Dedicated Open Space - land or development rights owned by the Federal government, the State, the Town, land trusts, or conservation organizations (including land formerly owned by Bridgeport Hydraulic around Wangum Lake and the Childs estate) intended to remain for open space uses.

Managed Open Space -land owned by fish and game clubs, cemeteries, recreational clubs, and other organizations which is used for other purposes but provides open space benefits.

Land Use In Falls Village

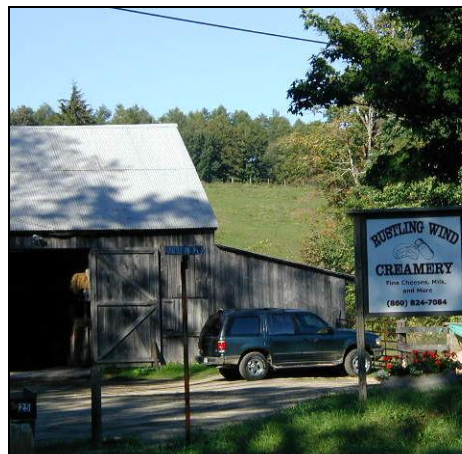
Falls Village contains approximately 21,180 acres. Overall, more than half of all land in Falls Village has been committed as dedicated or managed open space.

The land use survey found that about 64 percent of the community (13,537 acres) is occupied for residential, commercial, or institutional use or is dedicated to a specific purpose such as public land or protected open space. Conversely, about 36 percent of the area in Falls Village (7,641 acres) is vacant or uncommitted to a specific use.

1999 FALLS VILLAGE LAND USE SUMMARY

Use	Acres	Percent of Committed Land	Percent of Total Land
Residential	875	6%	4%
Commercial	84	<1%	<1%
Industrial / Quarry	119	<1%	<1%
Community Facilities / Institutions	165	1%	<1%
Dedicated Open Space	9,938	73%	47%
Managed Open Space	1,776	13%	8%
Utility / Public Service	53	<1%	<1%
Transportation / Roads / Water	527	4%	3%
Developed / Committed	13,537	100%	64%
Vacant / Possible Future Development	7,641		36%
Total Land Area	21,178		100%

Planimetrics (Totals may not add due to rounding.)



LAND USE MAP

Buildout Estimate

A build-out scenario is based on natural resource constraints, zoning designations, and development practices.

It is only an estimate of how many people could live in Falls Village in the future if all land was developed to its maximum potential in accordance with current zoning and after considering possible development constraints.

The analysis is used to evaluate the possible future need for community facilities and other infrastructure.

The estimates make no prediction about when development will occur on a particular property or in a specific area. The timing of development is a function of economic conditions, land availability, land suitability, location, accessibility, utility availability, market demand, and other factors.

Development Potential

As part of the planning process, it can be informative to estimate the potential future population of a community based on the amount of land area and other factors.

In Falls Village, if the potentially developable residentially-zoned land (land that is presently vacant or land that has additional development potential remaining) is fully developed in accordance with current zoning and considering physical and environmental constraints, it is estimated that Falls Village could eventually contain about 2,400 total housing units. Thus, based on typical household sizes at the present time, Falls Village could eventually be a community of about 5,000 people under current zoning.

In 1970, when the prior Plan was being prepared, Falls Village had about 450 housing units, the local population was about 930 residents and approximately 4,369 acres of land were considered committed or developed.

For comparison, the 1972 Plan of Development estimated an ultimate population of about 16,000 people. Of course, since 1970, much land has been preserved as open space and the 1970 estimate was based on one housing unit per acre of undeveloped land (compared to one unit per two acres presently).

Thus, regulatory changes, open space preservation, prevailing development patterns, smaller household sizes, and better knowledge of environmental and other constraints has refined the future population estimate since 1970.

During the next ten years, the population of Falls Village is expected to stay fairly constant.

It is important to note that the Plan does not recommend a future population of 5,000 people. In fact, the Plan makes recommendations with regard to open space preservation, buildable land regulations, and residential density regulations that may reduce this estimate.

In considering this potential future population estimate, it is important to realize that this development potential is what might happen if current land use regulations are not updated to reflect the recommendations of this Plan.

ISSUES FOR THE PLAN

2

Overview

The goal of this Plan is to carefully manage Falls Village's future in order to protect the community elements that residents most cherish and encourage the most appropriate development patterns.

How Falls Village approaches its future is not an academic issue. Although population growth may be modest in Falls Village, more land area is being committed in the community each year and changes are occurring in ways that are hard to perceive or that may result in unforeseen consequences.

How and where conservation and development activities occur, whether they protect important resources, how they relate to community character, whether they help produce the kind of community that people want is what this Plan is all about.

What do Falls Village residents want? Several public meetings, surveys, and other exercises helped to identify the issues important to Falls Village residents and provide structure and guidance to the Plan.

"It is really the community itself which must try to pull together ... in order to preserve those things that the community values and to foster the growth and change that the community wants."

Russell Peterson
Former EPA Director



Gale Courey Toensing

Messages

We place very high importance on rural character and like the “can do” attitude in our community.

We care about community appearance and vitality and want to improve local facilities and services.

What We Like

At one public informational meeting, residents were asked to identify things about Falls Village that they were particularly proud of or sorry about:

“Prouds” in Falls Village		Votes
Community Facilities / Services	Schools, Library, Volunteer Fire & Ambulance	42
Natural / Scenic Resources	Falls, Ridgelines, Wangum Lake, Robbins Swamp	23
Community Character	Rural charm, Beautiful setting, Peace & quiet	23
Open Space	Preserved open space, Walkways	14
Community Spirit	Community Warmth/Spirit, Community	7
Miscellaneous	Historic buildings, Music Mountain	8

“Sorrys” in Falls Village		Votes
Non-Residential Issues	Quarries, Inn, Ailing Main Street, No restaurants	20
Community Appearance / Character	Rental housing not maintained, Overhead power lines & poles, Junk car lot on Main Street	17
Community Facilities	Pool, Location of Highway department, Lack of quality swimming area, Landfill	8
Miscellaneous	Blind spots in intersection, Roads too wide, High taxes, Loss of farms, Hamilton building, Character assassinations, Bad town image, P&Z Regulations	17



Lakeville Journal

What We Feel Is Important

Residents were also given “planning points” of different denominations to spend on issues that were important to them or that they were in favor of.

Topic	Total Points	Percent of Total Vote
Conservation Issues	1,645	53%
Preservation of Open Space	520	16%
Preservation of Community Character	485	15%
Conservation of Natural Resources	395	13%
Preservation of Historic Resources	245	8%
Development Issues	890	28%
Development of Community Centers	145	5%
Housing and Residential Issues	0	0%
Business and Industry	535	17%
Improvement of Community Facilities	210	7%
Miscellaneous Issues	595	19%
Land Use Regulations	350	11%
Transportation	245	8%
Other Issues	0	0%
Total Voted	3,130	100%

Messages

By a wide margin, we identified conservation issues as being the most important theme for inclusion in this Plan. This reinforces that community character is an important issue for us.

While development issues were considered less important overall, economic development (business and industry) got the most points of all topics.



Lakeville Journal

Messages

We expressed our desires about what we want in Falls Village through public meetings and surveys.

The planning process investigated these desires and synthesized them into this Plan of Conservation & Development.

What We Want In Falls Village

Through public meetings during the planning process, residents expressed their desires about what they want in Falls Village, both today and in the future. Evaluating and synthesizing these feelings into a cohesive program is one of the advantages of the planning process.

The sentiments expressed were carefully absorbed by the Planning and Zoning Commission and our planning consultants. However, it can be very difficult in such a planning process to know whether the feelings that are expressed reflect the consensus of the community. Falls Village has the advantage of additional information that helps provide even more insight into community desires.

UConn Telephone Survey

In 1998, the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut conducted a random sample telephone survey of Falls Village residents. The almost 320 surveys that were completed reflect a 70 percent sample of all year-round Falls Village households. Consequently, there is very high confidence that the results reflect the feelings of residents.

As was found in the public meetings conducted as part of the Plan, residents gave high ratings to the quality of life in Falls Village. Four-fifths of the respondents rated the quality of life as excellent (34%) or good (49%) and a similar proportion rated it as an excellent (49%) or a good (38%) place to raise a family. Respondents also strongly believe that Falls Village is unique as a community. In fact, 75 percent of respondents indicated that Falls Village is unique from other towns in the area or the state.

As shown in the following table, residents were also generally pleased (based on an excellent or good rating) with various services provided by the town:

<u>Town Service</u>	<u>Excellent or Good</u>
Fire Department	94%
Hunt Library	89%
Public Works / Highway Department	82%
Town Hall Services	75%
Recreation Facilities	58%
Senior Services	43%

These findings are similar to what was learned in the public meetings as part of the planning process. Of course, with the recent improvement of the senior center on the second floor of Citizen's Hall (the former Town Hall), senior citizens now have a better facility to conduct senior services and activities.

Recreation facilities (particularly the swimming pool/pond and activities for youth) remain as important issues. In fact, 30 percent of survey respondents felt that recreational services were fair (24%) or poor (6%). These issues will be addressed in more detail in the Plan.

Business and economic development were important issues to respondents and residents clearly support increased economic development in Falls Village.

Economic Development	Response
The level of economic development must be increased in order for the town to survive	56%
Economic development is not necessary for the town to survive, and is not a threat to the character of the town	36%
Economic development is a threat to the character of the town	8%
Economic Development	Response
The town should be very active in working to create economic development	50%
The town should be somewhat active in working to create economic development	35%
The town should be somewhat passive in working to create economic development	9%
The town should be very passive in working to create economic development	4%

The UConn survey report went on to state a philosophy that was also supported by this planning process:

“Residents appear to have a sophisticated view of what they want and expect in terms of economic development. . . . They do not want haphazard, ill-planned and poorly conceived development. They want a controlled process that manages development in a way that is compatible with. . . doing what is necessary to preserve the character and quality of life in town. They recognize that because they are concerned with taxes they will likely require development to supplement the tax base. However, if development is not controlled and appropriate, it may help the tax rate but destroy what is best liked about Falls Village.”

Messages

As we visualized and better understood our community, we identified areas where we felt conservation was most important.

In addition, we identified areas we felt were appropriate for different types of development and the preferred development patterns.

Where We Want Things In Falls Village

Other public meetings included planning studios held at the National Iron Bank Building on Main Street on Saturday mornings. Residents stopped by for coffee and pastries and had the opportunity to review relevant materials, participate in different exercises, ask questions, and provide input into the process.

To help Falls Village residents better understand and visualize their community, Planimetrics constructed a three-dimensional topographic model of the community and used it for various exercises.

With the assistance of the model, residents were able to identify important conservation areas and better understand what made them special. In addition, residents were also able to evaluate alternative development scenarios and identify what types of development would be preferred if development were to occur in different areas of the community.



Overall Directions

From public meetings and workshop sessions, a number of issues were identified for the Plan to address. Falls Village residents have indicated that they want to:

Themes		Components
• Preserve Community Character	Com-	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preserve Natural Resources• Preserve Open Space• Preserve Historic Resources• Enhance Other Character Resources
• Address Community Needs	Com-	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance Local Programs, Services, And Facilities For Residents• Enhance Local Revenue Sources• Encourage Appropriate Economic Development
• Guide Community Development	Com-	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance the Village Center• Guide Community Development• Enhance Land Use Regulations
• Promote Community Spirit	Com-	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote Community Spirit

Once these issues have been identified in the Plan and strategies have been formulated to address them, significant progress has been made in terms of addressing community needs.

It is important to note that Falls Village residents are the source of the issues addressed in the Plan. In other words, the Plan is intended to reflect the consensus of the community in terms of issues (such as maintaining community character, improving the water system in the Village, addressing the swimming pool/pond, and promoting appropriate economic development).

Messages

Primarily, the Plan addresses issues and desires that Falls Village residents have indicated are important to them and are supported by a majority of residents.

The Plan also addresses issues that are important to supporting initiatives or addressing related issues in Falls Village.

Assets & Constraints

However, consideration must also be given to assets and constraints that may affect our ability to accomplish our goals.

Assets / Strengths / Opportunities

- Preserved open space and community character
- Residents who care deeply about Falls Village
- Strong sense of community involvement that encourages people to pitch in and help
- Volunteer groups that contribute time and money to local events and programs
- Local institutions that contribute resources and energy to local issues
- A local government that works diligently to address local issues and concerns
- Housing affordability and diverse community

Constraints / Weaknesses / Threats

- Small population that limits the number of people able and willing to volunteer
- High amount of tax exempt property that increases service costs for a small population
- Limited revenue sources that make providing some programs and services difficult
- Tax base impact of power station re-licensing by Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
- Increasing costs of providing or funding some programs and services
- Loss of revenue from sources other than local property taxes (such as state aid)

PRESERVE COMMUNITY CHARACTER

3

Overview

Based on all of the comments received from residents during the process of preparing the Plan, the main concern shared by all was the importance of preserving community character.

The attributes that people think of when they talk about community character are unique to each person. While there is no common definition of this term, there are some common elements that typically comprise community character.

During the planning process, residents indicated that preserving character was the most important community priority.

Natural Resources



Open Space



Historic Resources



Rural Character



Natural Resources

Comments from residents about natural resources included:

- Our natural resources are what make this place special. Please protect them.
- Please preserve
- Promote and protect them
- Encourage local citizens to enjoy them, gain an understanding and respect for what we have in our unique town
- Preserve!
- Emphasize their value.
- All of the above!

National Heritage Corridor

The upper Housatonic River is currently being studied by the National Park Service for possible designation as a National Heritage Corridor. This designation can be conferred upon places “where natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources combine to form a nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography.” Designated regions receive federal money and help in preserving local natural and cultural resources.

Natural Soils Groups

The map on the facing page is often referred to as a Natural Soils Group Map since soils are aggregated into broad categories based upon common attributes and overall suitability for development.

The primary source of information about soil types and capabilities is contained in the Litchfield County Soil Survey.

Continue To Conserve Natural Resources

Conservation of natural resources is important in terms of preserving environmental functions, protecting community character, and enhancing quality of life. This is especially true in Falls Village due to the uniqueness and prevalence of significant natural resources in the community. Falls Village residents recognize this and have indicated that protection of natural resources is an important strategy for the community.

Water Resources

The most important natural resources in Falls Village are water related. The Housatonic River and the Great Falls are significant resources. Robbins Swamp is the largest calcareous swamp in the state. Wangum Lake is a water supply reservoir for Norfolk. The Hollenbeck River is a unique resource in the community. Groundwater is the water supply source for all Falls Village residents.

While threats to water quality are minor or diffuse due to the amount of preserved open space and the lack of hazardous land uses, that does not reduce the importance of protecting water quality for present and future generations.

Soil Resources

The map on the facing page summarizes the location of different soil types in Falls Village based on major soil groups. The prevalent soil types in Falls Village include “shallow and rocky soils” and “hardpan” soils – soils that are considered fair for development without special design and construction practices, especially for septic systems.

Natural Soil Group	Development Potential	Description
Excessively Drained	Good	Primarily sands and gravels where care must be taken to guard against water contamination.
Well Drained	Good	Generally well drained soils.
“Hardpan”	Fair	Restricted drainage poses constraints to development and septic systems.
Shallow and Rocky	Fair	Presence of rock poses constraints to development and septic systems.
Floodplain / Alluvial	Poor	Regulated “wetland” soil with potential for flooding
Poorly Drained (Wetlands)	Poor	Regulated “wetland” soils with poor drainage and/or high water table.
Made / Urban Land	Varies	Excavated, filled or developed areas where soil types are not discernible.

NSG Map

Significant Resources

Significant local natural resources include:

- at least 22 different endangered or special concern plant species,
- sightings of eagles on Canaan Mountain,
- unique natural areas (such as Great Falls, Robbin's Swamp, Dean's Ravine, and the large expanse of protected lands on the Canaan Mountain plateau),
- aquifer areas (areas of high groundwater availability).

Unique Habitats

The unique habitats and special areas identified on the map on the facing page are sites that have been recognized by the State Department of Environmental Protection (CTDEP) for:

- unique natural areas
- unique cultural areas
- endangered or special concern species

When development or other activities are proposed in these areas, the applicant and/or the Town should contact CTDEP for additional information at 860-424-3550.

The following table and the map on the facing page identify the environmental resources where conservation efforts should be focused in order to sustain Falls Village's environmental quality and help contribute to the overall quality of life.

Category	Definition	Proposed Criteria
Significant Conservation Areas	Very sensitive lands worthy of preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Watercourses and waterbodies• Poorly drained soils (wetlands)• Floodplain (100-year, 1.0% probability)
Important Conservation Areas	Sensitive lands worthy of conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public water supply watershed areas• Areas of high groundwater availability• Identified aquifers and recharge areas• Unique or special habitat areas• Any slope in excess of 25%• Floodplain (500-year, 0.2% probability)

Natural Resource Conservation Strategies

1. Continue to protect watercourses, waterbodies, wetlands, floodplains, vernal pools, and other important water resources.
2. Consider establishing appropriate buffer zones for important water resources while considering the impact on agricultural operations.
3. Consider modifying the Inland Wetland & Watercourses Regulations to define "regulated area" as any area within 50 feet of a wetland or 100 feet of a watercourse.
4. Consider updating the Inland Wetland & Watercourses Regulations to reflect modifications in the enabling legislation and current practices.
5. Adopt floodplain regulations as part of the Zoning Regulations that are compatible with guidelines from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.
6. Protect water quality in Falls Village by adopting an ordinance requiring the replacement of underground fuel storage tanks that are more than 20 years old.
7. Maintain a River Overlay Zone to guide activities adjacent to the Housatonic River.
8. Modify local regulations to incorporate review or notification of sites in CTDEP's Natural Diversity Database.
9. Discourage building and road development on steep slopes.
10. Maintain and enhance regulations regarding earth excavation.

Conservation Plan

What Is Open Space?

While most people think of “open space” as land that is not built upon, the Plan defines open space as land that is preserved as open space.

It is really *preserved* open space, in adequate quantities and appropriate locations, that conserves important natural resources, shapes development patterns, and maintains the quality of life.

Open Space

Residents provided the following open space thoughts:

- Preserve it, it makes our town so special.
- Preserve it. Promote it.
- Our open space is who we are, it defines us, it is what most of us cherish about living here.
- Publicize trails on all public open space land.

Trail Routes

Falls Village contains a portion of the Appalachian Trail (which extends from Georgia to Maine). Part of the trail along the Housatonic River was recently improved to make it handicapped accessible (the first such section on the Trail).

The Mohawk Trail (a former portion of the Appalachian Trail) goes over Barrack Mountain into Cornwall. There are also a number of informal trails in other parts of Falls Village.

Bicycle Routes

The types of bicycle facilities that may be appropriate in Falls Village include:

- shared roadway use (such as wide curb lanes or a shoulder bikeway),
- separate facilities (such as dedicated bike lanes, or multi-use paths).

Preserve Open Space

From a community character perspective, Falls Village is fortunate to have a lot of preserved open space that makes the community unique and helps protect community character. Open space preservation is the most significant means of preserving the rural character of Falls Village.

Organizations actively working to preserve significant open space and natural resources in the community include:

- The Nature Conservancy which has been acquiring land, development rights, and conservation easements as part of their Robbins Swamp / Canaan Mountain Conservation Project,
- the State of Connecticut which has been acquiring land on Canaan Mountain through purchase of watershed lands from Kelda Group, purchase of land from The Nature Conservancy, and by negotiating with the Childs Estate / Great Mountain Forest for purchase of development rights,
- the federal government which is involved in the purchase of development rights from the Child's Estate / Great Mountain Forest on Canaan Mountain as part of the Federal Forest Legacy Project, and
- the Department of the Interior which purchased land along the Appalachian Trail.

Greenways with Trails

With the significant amount of open space in Falls Village, the community has an opportunity to create a significant greenway trail system. The development of a system of trails will help enhance community character and quality of life.

By interconnecting existing trails (such as the Appalachian Trail and the Mohawk Trail) with new trails, Falls Village can create a recreational amenity for the community and neighbors in surrounding towns. Where pedestrian such trails have been established, they have proven to be very popular. Examples of this include the rail trails in Millerton, New York, the Farmington / Avon / Simsbury corridor, and in Cheshire, Connecticut.

During the planning period, Falls Village should work with land conservation and other agencies to integrate access to and between open space areas in such a way as to create an overall greenbelt trail system throughout Falls Village.

Some trails could be also designed for bicycles, cross-country skiing and rollerblading. Bicycle routes could also be signed and marked on existing roads.

Greenway Trail



Greenway Trail



Fiscal Implications

Many other communities in Connecticut (and elsewhere) would be envious of Falls Village if they knew that more than half of the land area in the community was preserved as open space. However, all the open space that we prize comes at a cost to the community since it does not contribute to the revenue base of Falls Village. Consider the following:

- the federal government pays no taxes and makes no payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT payments) resulting in a revenue loss of approximately \$1,000 annually,
- tax-exempt organizations (such as land trusts) pay no taxes and, while a few organizations make some PILOT payments to the Town, Falls Village receives no PILOT payments from some tax-exempt organizations resulting in a revenue loss of at least \$6,250 annually, and
- Land owned by the State of Connecticut makes PILOT payments of \$57,632 (about 40 percent of the tax bill) for the property they own in Falls Village.

While these properties are preserved as open space and help maintain and enhance community character, they provide little or no revenue to help defray the cost of providing municipal services.

The dilemma of open space for communities like Falls Village is that, on the one hand, preserving open space land helps protect community character and quality of life. On the other hand, because open space land does not contribute to the tax base, it increases the revenue that must be raised from taxes on other properties to support municipal services.

Part of the challenge in Falls Village is providing municipal services over 33 square miles of property and 31 miles of roads when more than half of the property is either tax-exempt or making reduced PILOT payments and there are only about 1,080 residents to support local services. In other words, half of the property (the taxable component) is responsible for funding services that benefit all of the land area in Falls Village.

Falls Village is working hard to manage the fiscal impacts of open space preservation. Falls Village should strive to increase the revenues received from open space properties in order to reduce the cost burden of providing municipal services that benefit those properties.

Open Space Assessment

Some interest has been expressed in considering an “open space assessment” (CGS Section 12-107e) program in Falls Village. This program reduces the assessment of vacant land if it is left undeveloped.

The Plan recommends that the Inland Wetlands / Conservation Commission evaluate options and recommend such a program for enactment by residents at a Town Meeting.

Fiscal Implications

Open space preservation can provide long term fiscal stability in developing communities because the preserved land will not be developed in the future for residential uses (which have been shown to require more in service costs than they provide in tax revenue).

However, more than half of the land in Falls Village is either tax-exempt or making modest PILOT payments. Although this situation has not been explored in the literature, there may come a point fiscally where additional open space shifts a burden to local taxpayers.

The only fiscal difference between undeveloped land and open space land is that the undeveloped land pays some taxes. In other words, preserving land as open space results in an immediate revenue loss to a community.

Since the service demands of open space lands are modest, receiving some tax revenue or PILOT payments may result in a fiscal surplus and protect existing taxpayers from tax increases.

In other words, getting some revenue from open space lands would be a form of “economic preservation.”

Inland Wetlands / Conservation Commission

A Conservation Commission was established in Falls Village in 1972. Once that commission began administering inland wetland and watercourse regulations, it became known as the Inland Wetlands / Conservation Commission and that is the name that has been used in the Plan.

Regional Overburden

Communities with a large percentage of tax-exempt properties can result in an unfair burden on taxpayers.

In Falls Village, the high percentage of open space means that municipal services over a large area must be funded predominantly by only about 1,100 residents. In the meantime, these services can benefit residents of many other communities.

A similar situation exists in major cities such as Hartford and New Haven. Federal facilities such as office buildings and courthouses require some local services but provide no revenues. Social service agencies and other tax-exempt organizations can create a situation where services are required from the municipal government (and funded by local taxpayers) but that benefit people from a larger region. This is an unfair burden on local taxpayers.

This is called a “regional overburden” because it reflects a burden on local taxpayers above and beyond the services that they require for themselves.

Falls Village should work with the State Legislature to consider reimbursing municipalities for the regional overburden caused in communities of all types by public and tax-exempt facilities.

Open Space Preservation Strategies

1. Continue to preserve open space that makes Falls Village unique and helps protect community character.
2. Encourage the transition of *managed* open space (land that could possibly be developed in the future) to *dedicated* open space.
3. Strive to maximize open space benefits by interconnecting open spaces into a cohesive overall greenbelt system.
4. Seek ways to establish trails throughout open spaces in Falls Village to provide recreation and tourism benefits.
5. Establish bikeways throughout the Village and certain outlying areas (such as open space greenbelts) for recreation and transportation.
6. Encourage formation of a Falls Village Trail Association to coordinate the establishment and maintenance of trails on open spaces throughout Falls Village and publicize the trails inside and outside the region.
7. Prepare materials to educate residents and visitors on the availability of trails and bicycle routes in Falls Village.
8. Strive to increase revenues from open space properties in order to reduce the cost burden of providing municipal services that benefit those properties.
9. The Inland Wetlands / Conservation Commission should evaluate and recommend an “open space assessment program for enactment.
10. Work with the State Legislature and other municipalities similarly affected to consider reimbursing municipalities for the “regional overburden” caused in communities of all types by public and tax-exempt facilities.

Encourage Agricultural Uses

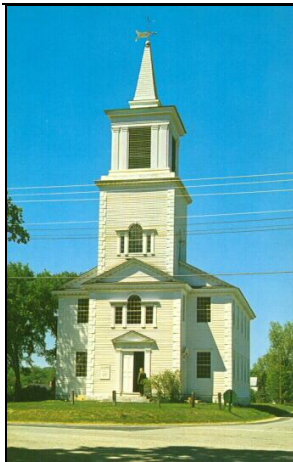
Falls Village has a strong agricultural history. Agricultural uses make a major contribution to the character of the community and enhance the perception of open space. Current farming operations provide a living to residents and workers and provide goods and services to the region. Falls Village should continue to encourage agricultural operations.

Agricultural Use Strategies

1. Continue to encourage agricultural operations.

Open Space Plan with Trails overlay

South Canaan Meeting House



Postcard Picture

Historic Protection

National and State historic districts are established by federal and state agencies and such designations are based only on historic significance.

However, these designations are largely ceremonial and only influence state or federal projects proposed in that district.

On the other hand, local historic districts can be established by municipal ordinance to protect designated areas. The ordinance also establishes a local Historic District Commission to implement regulations. Prior to commencing a regulated activity (such as exterior renovations), a Certificate of Appropriateness must be obtained from the Historic District Commission.

More Information

More information on historic resources in Falls Village can be obtained from the Hunt Library or the Canaan / Falls Village Historical Society. For example, the NRHP nomination forms contain much interesting historical information.

Protect Historic Resources

Falls Village has a wonderful history and, as a result, a variety of interesting historic resources.

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) recognizes places that have national significance in architecture, archaeology, culture, and American history. The State Register of Historic Places (SRHP) recognizes places significant to the history of Connecticut. Properties on the National Register are automatically listed on the State Register. There is no local register of historic places or local historic district.

EXISTING NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICTS

A. Falls Village National Historic District	NRHP
--	------

EXISTING NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

1. South Canaan Congregational Church (also known as South Canaan Meeting House)	Route 63	NRHP
2. Music Mountain	Music Mountain Road	NRHP
3. Holabird House	Kellogg Road	NRHP

Residents recognize the contribution of these resources to community character and their identification and preservation is an important component of the Plan.

Historic Resource Preservation Strategies

1. Undertake a historic resources survey.
2. Encourage preservation of archaeological and historical resources.
3. Encourage the Falls Village / Canaan Historical Society to conduct educational programs that promote awareness of historical and cultural resources.
4. Nominate eligible districts, buildings, and sites to the National or State Register of Historic Places.
5. Consider establishing local historic districts that protect community character and are supported by residents.
6. Continue to pursue funding for the preservation and restoration of local historic resources.
7. Establish a demolition delay ordinance to allow time for the identification and preservation of historical structures.
8. Review the zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure there is flexibility and incentive to preserve historic properties, and consideration of historical factors in land use decisions.

Historic Resources Map

Character Resources

In addition to the resources already mentioned, Falls Village also has a variety of other resources that contribute to the overall character of Falls Village.

These include:

- Beebe Hill School house,
- Music Mountain,
- The old railroad depot (now home of the historical society),
- The Great Mountain Forest (a “working forest”),
- The Yale Summer School of Forestry,
- Pine Grove,
- the Falls Village Power Station,
- Dean’s Ravine,
- Hunt Library.

Character Programs

Since 1995, the Village Gardeners have been planting trees and shrubs around the village in order to promote and maintain community character. The program is based on a professionally prepared landscape plan and is funded entirely by donations.

This is an excellent example of a program that adds to community character and promotes community spirit.

Preserve Other Character Resources

At planning studios and public meetings, residents helped identify other physical attributes that they felt contribute to, or detract from, community character and quality of life in Falls Village:

Contributing Elements

Landforms / Ridgelines	Landforms (such as Canaan Mountain and Cobble Hill) and ridgelines enhance the character of Falls Village.
The Village	The village center is the focal point of the community and a source of pride for local residents.
Community Facilities	Community character is also enhanced by local facilities such as the Kellogg School, Town Hall, the Recreation Complex, and the Library
Agricultural / Rural Features	While Falls Village only has five remaining active farms, it also contains barns, stone walls, and other features that contribute to community character.
Special / Unique Facilities	Falls Village is one of the few towns in Connecticut to have the Appalachian Trail and the Mohawk Trail.
Vegetation	Vegetation and significant trees also contribute to community character.
Scenic Resources	Scenic views, areas, and roads all enhance the rural and scenic character of Falls Village (Undermountain Road has been identified as one of the most scenic roads in all of Litchfield County).

Detracting Elements

Inappropriate Uses	Uses out of character with the perception of the community.
Inadequate Maintenance	Buildings and/or properties that exhibit a lack of maintenance negatively affect community character.
Insensitive Development	Development that occurs without regard for natural or other important resources.

Taken together, these resources create a “character-rich” environment” that contributes to community character and establishes a nucleus of resources to build upon.

The community should work towards encouraging cooperative efforts on the part of many people to preserve these resources.

Community Character Conservation Strategies

1. Continue to identify physical character resources.
2. Establish and maintain regulations that protect and encourage the preservation of identified physical character resources (such as ridgelines, steep slopes, stone walls, barns, significant trees, and other features).
3. Adopt a local scenic road ordinance (CGS 7-149a) and designate scenic roads while retaining the ability to make necessary improvements.
4. Encourage the Department of Transportation to designate State highways in Falls Village as scenic highways (CGS Section 13b-31).
5. Promote the best possible building design, especially for public buildings, in order to promote community character.
6. Establish a “local register of important places” to catalog and document important local resources including contributing buildings and structures in the historic district.
7. Establish educational programs to promote awareness of character resources.
8. Encourage awareness of character resources.

Green Fields And Rolling Hills



Road Classifications

Arterial Roads

The following state highways are intended to carry traffic from one major area to another:

- Route 7
- Route 63
- Route 126

Collector Roads

The following roads connect local streets to the arterial road network:

- Barnes Road
- Beebe Hill Road
- Johnson Road
- Kellogg Road
- Music Mountain Road
- Page Road
- Sand Road
- Undermountain Road
- Warren Turnpike
- Lime Rock Station Rd.

Village Roads

The following streets are located in the Village Center:

- Main Street
- Beebe Hill Road
- Prospect Street
- Miner Street
- Railroad Street

Local Roads

Roads not classified elsewhere are intended primarily for property access.

Unimproved Roads

Local roads that are unimproved include:

- Stein Lane
- Amy Road
- Cobble Road
- Facchin Street
- Deer Road
- Lower Barrack Road
- Steep Road
- Wangum Lake Road

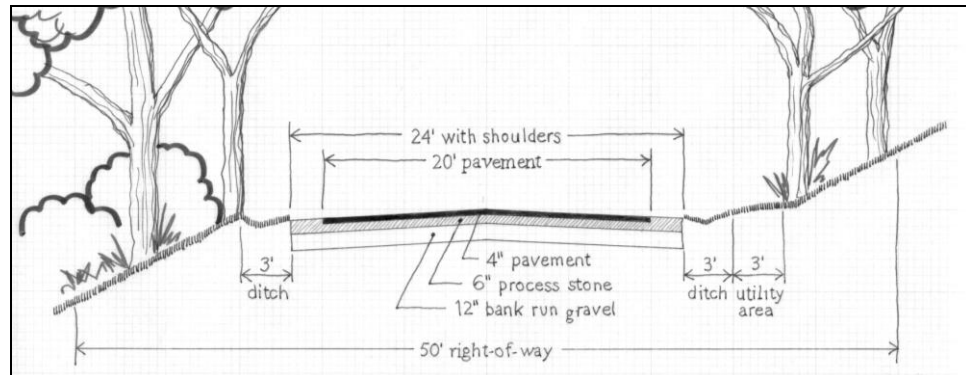
Modify Road Standards

While many people appreciate the rural character of roads in Falls Village, they might be surprised to realize that current regulations require that new roads be built to a more urban standard. In other words, current road standards in Falls Village are not consistent with the desire to maintain community character. The Plan recommends that the road standards be modified to provide for safe roads that are the scenic roads of the future.

Proposed Road Design Criteria

Road Type	Design Speed (Mph)	Right Of Way Width	Pavement Width	
			Existing	Proposed
Highway	45 mph	60 feet		30 feet
Collector	30 mph	60 feet	34 feet	26 feet
Local	25 mph	50 feet	26 feet	22 feet
Village	20 mph	50 feet		20 feet

Potential Road Cross-Section



Studies in other towns have found that dirt roads can be much more expensive to maintain than a paved road. While the materials are cheaper on a unit basis, the frequency of maintenance and the time required to properly maintain them makes a dirt road up to three times more expensive to maintain over time. While dirt roads may be appropriate in some areas, the Plan recommends that no new dirt roads be permitted in Falls Village unless an environmental or other community benefit can be clearly demonstrated.

Road Character Strategies

1. Modify road standards to help create the scenic roads of the future.
2. Do not permit new dirt roads in Falls Village unless a community benefit can be demonstrated.

ADDRESS COMMUNITY NEEDS

4

Overview

Falls Village residents have indicated that they want to:

- enhance local programs and services for residents,
- obtain additional revenue to support local programs and residents.

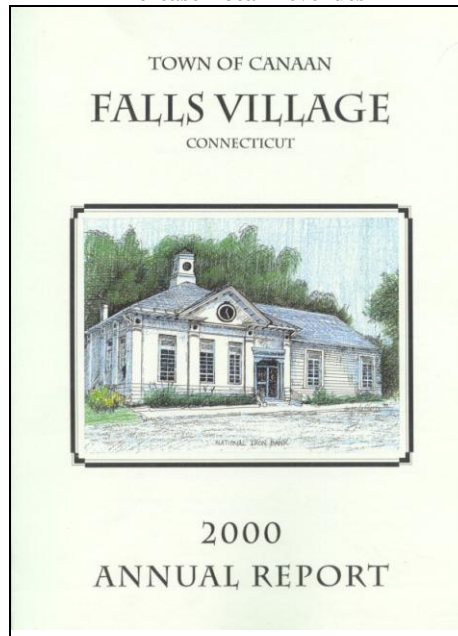
The Plan contains several strategies to help address these issues. All of these strategies are intended to be compatible with and support the character of the community.

Residents indicated that addressing a variety of community needs was also an important priority.

Enhance Community Facilities



Increase Local Revenues



Citizens Hall Renovation

The Town recently received a \$400,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development to renovate the upper level at Citizens Hall for handicapped access and use as a Senior Center.

With these improvements, the Senior Center is well-equipped and adequately sized to meet community needs during the planning period.

Overall, this is an extraordinary facility that can have an enormous impact on the day to day life of Falls Village residents.

Emergency Volunteers

Due to the difficulty of maintaining adequate volunteer staffing, even small communities are adding paid fire staff.

Barkhamsted recently funded a paid fire fighter to enhance daytime response and perform administrative duties.

Address Community Facility Needs

Complete the Town Office Relocation

The Town is in the process of relocating municipal offices to the new Town Hall building on Main Street (the former National Iron Bank building). With the proposed improvements, this building is expected to meet municipal space needs during the planning period. Most importantly, the Town Hall will remain at the “foot” of Main Street in the Village Center and support this area as the community focal point.

With the relocation of Town offices, the bottom floor of Citizens Hall will become available for another use. Reuse of the building should, if possible, be oriented towards use that generates tax revenue as well as traffic and activity in the center.

Town Hall



Citizens Hall



Attract & Retain Public Safety Volunteers

Attracting and keeping volunteer staff (fire and ambulance) is expected to become more difficult in small towns like Falls Village due to increased training requirements and changing community demographics such as an aging population. While the fire department currently consists of 56 people, thirty of them are active, and a lesser number shows up on most calls. The ambulance service has a roster of 27 volunteers.

Falls Village should seek ways to encourage volunteer participation. In addition to promoting community involvement and community spirit, such volunteers save the Town money compared to paid fire and emergency medical staff.

Establish A New Public Safety Facility

Fire protection and emergency medical services (EMS) in Falls Village are provided by the Falls Village Volunteer Fire Department. The fire station, presently located on Railroad Street in the village, is undersized for current equipment. As a result, some equipment is kept at the public works garage delaying response times. In addition, any new equipment for the station must be special-ordered to fit into the facility.

Over time, it will be more cost-effective for the community to establish a new public safety facility. The department is planning a new fire station on Town-owned land along Route 7 south of the Village and the Town has indicated that it will deed the land to the Fire Department for the new public safety facility.

Relocate the Public Works Garage

The town garage on Railroad Street appears adequately sized for the planning period. Although additional space for inside storage of equipment is an issue, this will be relieved by the new public safety complex (since some safety equipment is currently stored at the public works garage). The main needs include:

- A covered salt and salt/sand storage area, and
- Vehicle washing facility (possibly shared with another community).

These facilities are required by the Department of Environmental Protection in order to help protect water quality. The sand/salt storage facility is being planned and a vehicle washing facility could be integrated with the design for the new public safety complex.

When the time comes for an expansion or major addition to the Public Works facility, its current location within the community should be evaluated. As the Village Center grows, this site may be more important for other uses and the Public Works facility could be relocated to the transfer station site.

Public Works Facility



Coordination

Recreation programs often make use of educational facilities and this is an efficient use of community spaces.

Planning for any new or expanded recreational or educational facility should consider the needs of other community groups and programs.

Relocate The Day Care Center

The community building at the recreation complex on Page Road is presently leased to a private non-profit institution for a day care center. This use has met a real community need and is strongly supported by residents. The Town recently budgeted funds to help support the day care center.

Additional space is needed to meet the current and projected demand. Fundraising efforts are planned to help fund a new day care center. However, rather than expand at the present site, consideration should be given to relocating the day care center to another site.

The most promising option could be to locate the day care center at or near Kellogg School. In addition to being a compatible use of this area, it will provide for efficient use of common facilities at the school (library, gymnasium, and outdoor play areas). This shared usage could be significant since the education and literacy programs require a bus, which is a sizable expense.

Current Day Care Center on Page Road



Plan For A New Community Recreation Complex

The current recreation complex on Page Road contains an outdoor pool, a community building, and a multi-purpose recreation field. The community building is leased to a private non-profit institution that runs a day care center.

At the present time, this site is unable to meet many of the recreational needs of the community because the site is subject to high groundwater and this limits use of the fields during the spring and after rainfall. The high groundwater also causes issues for the day care center. The pool, which was built as an artificial pond, was closed recently due to siltation from a flash flood and has had safety issues related to its fiberglass construction over an asphalt base.

Many residents have spoken of the need to improve the swimming facilities available to residents. At the same time, interest has been expressed in providing

The Town is studying the possibility of providing recreation facilities at Town land between Route 63 and Route 126. Facilities being considered include recreation fields, a new pool, a fitness trail, and an amphitheater.

Pool at Current Recreation Facility on Page Road



LEGEND

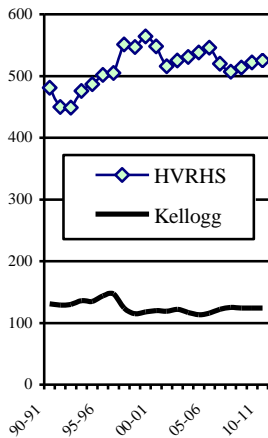
Developed Paved	1	Shaded Green	2
Unpaved	3	Water	4
Grass	5	Shaded Yellow	6
Grass	7	Shaded Yellow	8
Grass	9	Shaded Yellow	10
Grass	11	Shaded Yellow	12
Grass	13	Shaded Yellow	14
Grass	15	Shaded Yellow	16
Grass	17	Shaded Yellow	18
Grass	19	Shaded Yellow	20
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Grass	89	Shaded Yellow	90
Grass	91	Shaded Yellow	92
Grass	93	Shaded Yellow	94
Grass	95	Shaded Yellow	96
Grass	97	Shaded Yellow	98
Grass	99	Shaded Yellow	100

PROPOSED SITE FEATURES

- Tee Course & Fairways
- Bunkering Fields
- Sandtraps
- Hazards
- Greens
- Water Features
- Paths
- Signage
- Parking

ACCESS TO ADJACENT TRAILS IN THE ADJACENT MUNICIPALITY SHALL BE MAINTAINED AND THE TRAIL SHALL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

Enrollment Projections



Enrollment Ratios

Falls Village's enrollment ratio (pupils/population) is presently about 17 percent (about 11 percent for grades K-8 and about 6 percent for grades 9-12). Applying these ratios to the ultimate population of 5,000 residents would mean that Falls Village might need to have elementary school capacity for about 550 students.

School enrollment ratios may rise and fall depending on the overall demographics of the community.

The current ratio of 17 percent is lower than the state average and some communities are projecting enrollment ratios peaking at around 25 percent.

Consider Long Term Education Facility Needs

Falls Village has one elementary school (Lee H. Kellogg School) and shares a high school with the towns of Cornwall, Kent, North Canaan, Salisbury, and Sharon (Regional School District #1). Enrollment trends have been, and are projected to be, fairly steady. With recent expansions and improvements at each school, these educational facilities are expected to be adequate for the planning period.

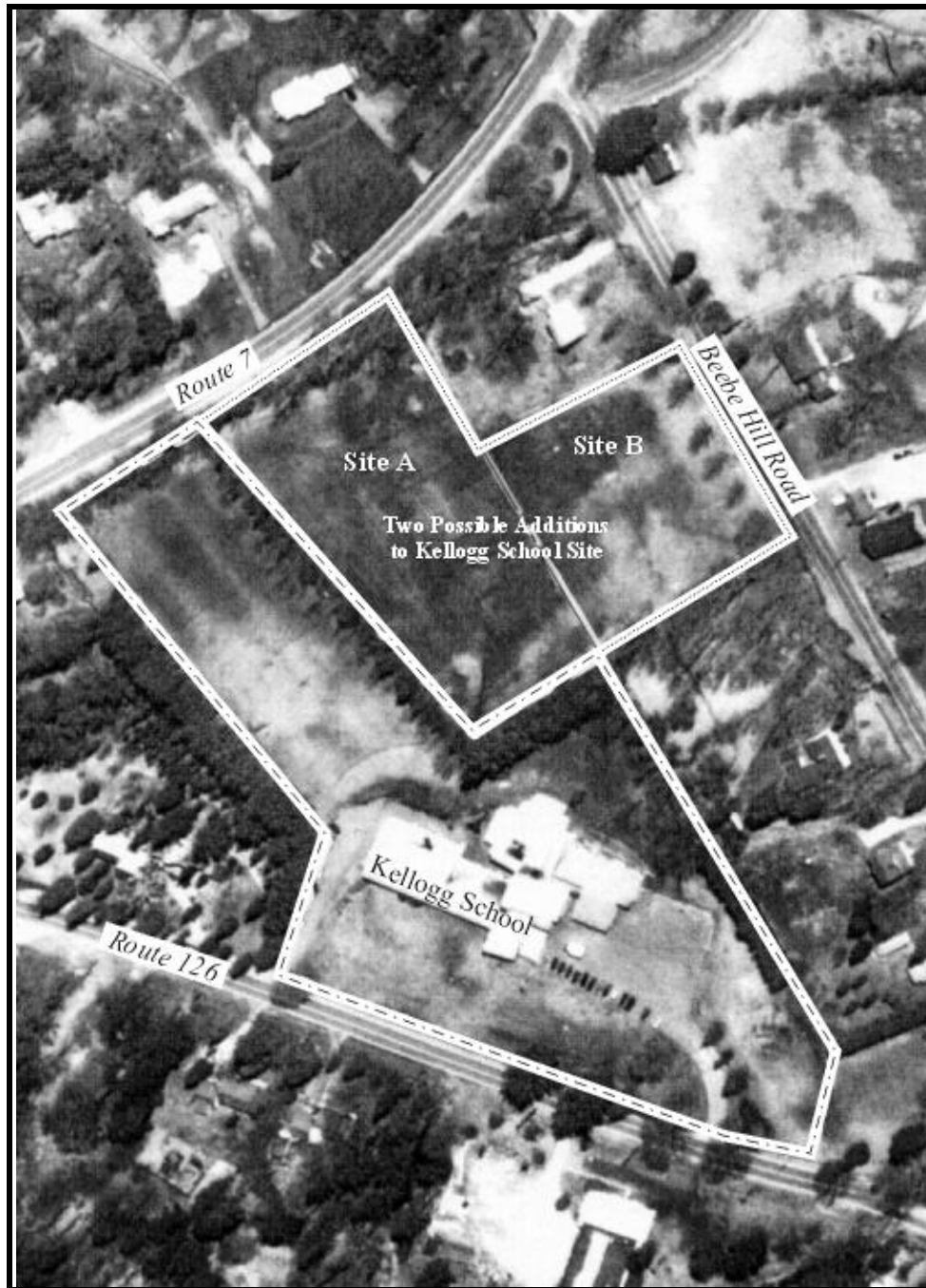
However, since elementary school enrollments in the distant future are likely to be higher than they are today, thought should be given in the long term to identifying and acquiring a future school site. In the meantime, it will make sense to acquire land adjacent to the Kellogg School site to allow for expansion, when needed, in the future. Sites near the Village Center will be the best location for future additional school sites.

Land should be acquired in the near future so that it is available when needed (and has not been developed for other uses). Such land can be used for recreation facilities until it is needed for a school site.

Community Facility Strategies

1. Complete the Town Office relocation to the new Town Hall building on Main Street (the former National Iron Bank building).
2. Make effective use of Citizens Hall.
3. Seek ways to encourage volunteer participation, especially fire and emergency medical staff.
4. Establish a new public safety facility.
5. Relocate the Public Works Garage to a location outside of the Center.
6. Investigate how to help the day care center obtain additional space in a convenient and suitable location.
7. Establish a new recreation complex close to the community focal point (the Village Center).
8. Consider acquiring land adjacent to Kellogg School to allow for future school and/or recreation expansion.
9. Over the long term, identify and acquire land for a possible future school site.

Kellogg School Expansion Area (including possible day care center)



1995 Aerial Photograph - One inch equals approximately 200 feet (1:2,400)

Net Tax Revenue

Net tax revenue is defined as the tax revenues paid to a municipality by a given use minus the costs to the municipality of providing services that use.

For example, a residential use that produces school children may require more in service costs than it provides in tax revenue. On the other hand, a “weekend” home or a house occupied by an elderly couple may provide more in tax revenue than it requires in services.

Higher PILOT Payments

One strategy to increase PILOT payments to Falls Village would involve encouraging land trusts (such as The Nature Conservancy) to deed properties that were acquired for open space to the State of Connecticut (with some preservation restrictions, if necessary).

If this were done, a land trust would still preserve the natural habitat, the State would gain protected open space, and the Town would receive PILOT revenue. Thus, it would be a positive situation for all parties.

The land use survey found at least one property in Falls Village owned by the State of Connecticut with a conservation easement held by the Nature Conservancy.

Seek Ways To Increase Local Net Revenues

There are some community needs and desires that have been identified by residents that will require the expenditure of municipal funds. In order to address these issues, Falls Village faces a choice between:

- Increasing municipal expenditures to meet community needs or desires (such as spending funds to build a new swimming pool/pond),
- Deferring community needs or desires until funding can be arranged (such as waiting to build a swimming pool/pond until funds are available), or
- Not meeting community needs or desires.

During the planning process, residents expressed interest in obtaining additional tax revenue to support local programs and services and, if possible, reduce the local tax rate. To do this, Falls Village must generate income from:

- higher taxes on existing development
- increased state aid
- payments in lieu of taxes from conservation organizations
- net tax revenue from new economic development.

Increase Local Tax Revenue

Since increasing taxes on existing development was not widely supported by current residents, the other options should be pursued.

Increase Intergovernmental Revenue /Grants

Efforts have been undertaken by area legislators to increase the amount of state aid to Falls Village. Such payments would help relieve any burden on current Falls Village taxpayers that fund services that benefit State-owned open space and residents of other communities in Connecticut.

In addition, Falls Village should continue to identify and pursue grants from various public and private sources to enhance local facilities and services.

Increase Payments In Lieu of Taxes

While the Town does receive some PILOT payments from the State, it receives no revenues from some tax-exempt organizations. The Town should, on a case-by-case basis, explore ways to receive PILOT payments from such organizations to relieve any burden on current Falls Village taxpayers who fund services that benefit these properties. Alternatively, other arrangements could be discussed, on a case-by-case basis, for other types of compensation to the community from tax-exempt organizations.

Promote Compatible Economic Development

Economic development that is compatible with Falls Village's character is another way to increase local revenues. In fact, both this planning process and the UConn survey found that residents support appropriate economic development in Falls Village.

Economic development is defined in this Plan as uses that pay more in local tax revenue than they receive in local services.

Studies that have evaluated the municipal tax impact of different land uses have generally found the following (ranked from positive to negative impact):

Fiscal Impact	Use Type	Description
++	Commercial / Industrial Uses	Can produce considerable net tax revenue depending on the type of facility.
++	Public Utility Uses	Can produce considerable net tax revenue depending on the type of facility.
+	Specific Residential Uses (age restricted, second homes, nursing homes)	Produce net tax revenue since result in few school children.
+	State Facilities / Land	Can produce net tax revenue from PILOT payments unless they generate school children.
+	Vacant Lands	Produce modest net tax revenue
+	Communication Uses	Can produce lease payments and net tax revenue and enhance communication
+	Farm / Forest Assessment (PA-490)	Produce modest net tax revenue
+/-	Apartments / Condominiums	May produce net tax revenue if result in few school children.
-	Tax Exempt Uses (open space, churches, non-profit camps)	Such uses enhance character, spirit, and quality of life but require some net expenditures.
--	Single-Family Residential Uses	Typically require net expenditures due to education costs.

For examples see Cost of Services Study, Southern New England Forest Consortium, or Fiscal Impact Study of the Central Naugatuck Valley Region

Economic Development

Comments from residents about economic development included:

- We need business here as a tax base.
- Expand the tax base as taxes are highest in the area.
- We need to expand the tax base as much as humanly possible in the year 2000.
- We need to reduce the mill rate by increasing our tax base.
- We need tax base to address fiscal impacts of population growth.
- More money in taxpayer pockets = higher quality life
- We need to provide more opportunities for people while maintaining the charm and rural feeling.

Rationale

Falls Village residents have identified economic development as a key issue since it can provide:

- tax revenue to support local services,
- goods and services for residents and visitors,
- job opportunities for residents of the community and the region,
- economic benefits to other uses in the community, and
- increased vitality in the community.

Of these, residents have indicated that providing additional tax revenue to support local services is the primary goal. However, regardless of the tax revenue, residents have strongly indicated that such development should be compatible with community character.

FERC Relicensing

As this Plan was being prepared, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission was in the process of reviewing materials as part of the relicensing of the Falls Village power station.

This issue has become contentious due to conflicting views among environmental, boating and fishing groups,

In addition, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection has provided input in terms of establishing a river flow regime that would make it difficult or impossible to economically generate electric power at the power station.

Since the power station comprises over 12 percent of the Falls Village tax base, this is an issue of major significance in the community. In essence, changes in the FERC license could result in “negative economic development” in Falls Village.

The Board of Selectmen and other town officials are monitoring this situation and seek to have economic issues included in the overall analysis.

With a low population base, distance from the transportation network, and the lack of water and sewer infrastructure, Falls Village must rely on other locational advantages and pursue other economic development strategies than seeking to attract major corporate facilities or other large uses.

On the other hand, Falls Village has a number of local strengths that can provide a foundation for future economic development.

Electrical Generation

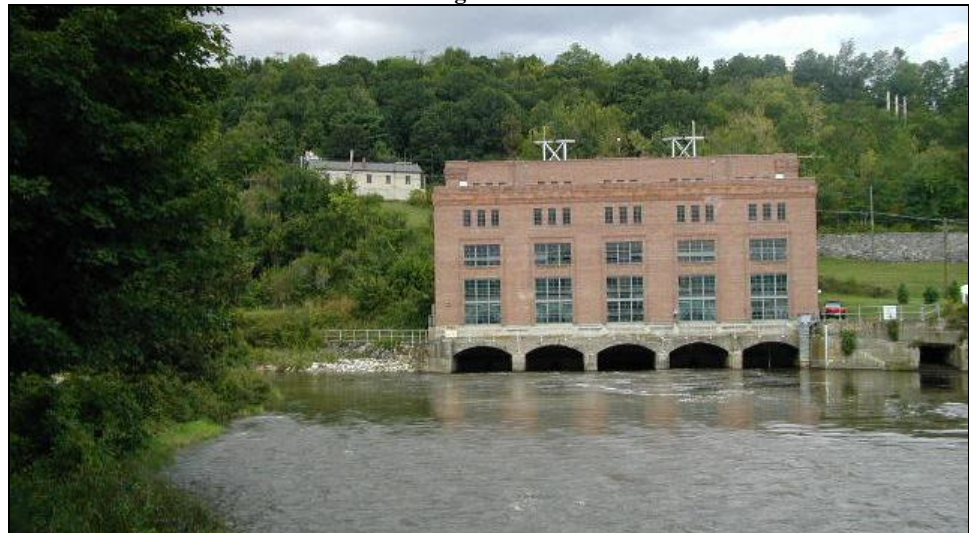
One “cluster” that Falls Village already has relates to electricity generation. Due to the hydroelectric facility operated at the Great Falls, there is already a substantial infrastructure in place for electrical generation and distribution.

Since the hydroelectric facility is already the largest taxpayer in Falls Village, it is easy to see why such facilities could be considered economic development.

With all of the concern over electrical supply and the deregulation of the electric industry, a market has developed for peak power generation. Falls Village may have the potential to capitalize on this due to the significant infrastructure already in place.

As with any other economic development strategy, any such use must be appropriate for Falls Village. For example, jet turbines that generate noise would not be appropriate for Falls Village. Similarly, projects such as the Wangum Lake pump storage facility (a proposal from the early 1970s) would destroy much of the community character and would not generally be appropriate.

Falls Village Power Station



Rural Character / Recreation

Another “cluster” that Falls Village already has and that offers potential for future results would be “rural character” and recreation. To reinforce how prevalent and underestimated this cluster is by local residents, consider the following variety of uses available locally or nearby:

Activity	Examples
Recreation	Hiking, bicycling, canoeing, paddling
Natural Resource Exploration	Great Falls, Canaan Mountain, Robbins Swamp, Great Mountain Forest, Yale School of Forestry, Nature Conservancy
Cultural Resource Exploration	Music Mountain, iron ore legacy, historical resources, South Canaan Meeting House
Seasonal Activities	Golf, skiing, foliage, wine tours, railroad tours
Special Events	Balloon festivals, antique shows, arts & crafts shows, Lime Rock Park

With such symmetry between the community’s character and its economic development strategy, this approach is most likely to have the support of residents and help support the type of community Falls Village wants to be today and in the future. It will also lead to the types of activities that will promote community character and spirit and maintain the overall quality of life for residents.

Find and Develop Other Clusters

While these two clusters have been identified, there may be other clusters (such as performing arts with Music Mountain) that will preserve and maintain community character while providing or supporting economic development in the community.

Encourage Other Net Revenue Providers

Falls Village should also seek to encourage uses that other uses that are compatible with community character and provide net tax revenue:

- Other commercial / industrial uses,
- Public utility uses,
- Age restricted, second home, nursing home, and similar residential uses,
- State facilities / land,
- Communication uses
- Apartments / condominiums

Capitalizing on Character

Falls Village offers something (rural character) that is not available in many other places.

Falls Village could capitalize on this fundamental characteristic and retain its rural character while accommodating economic development.

If this cluster is effectively marketed and flourishes, the following types of economic development might be expected:

- Country inns and bed & breakfast establishments)
- Restaurants / cafes
- Village retail shops (antiques, clothing, arts, sporting goods)
- Recreation businesses (bicycle rental, canoe tours)
- Transportation businesses
- Second home/vacation home

There are many organizations already active in Falls Village that can contribute to this program.

For example, The Nature Conservancy might be a logical group to establish a country inn focused around natural resources and compatible recreation opportunities. An article in the *Hartford Courant* on July 29, 2001 (page F3) indicated that the Nature Conservancy has nine such lodging facilities throughout the United States.

Strategies to Increase Local Revenues

1. Continue to support efforts by area legislators aimed at increasing the amount of state aid to Falls Village.
2. Continue to identify and pursue grants from various public and private sources to enhance local facilities and services.
3. Explore ways, on a case-by-case basis, to receive PILOT payments from tax-exempt organizations to relieve the burden on current Falls Village taxpayers that fund services that benefit these properties.
4. Consider encouraging land trusts (such as The Nature Conservancy) to deed land to the State of Connecticut (with a conservation easement) to result in some PILOT payments to the community.
5. Pursue compatible economic development to provide net tax revenue to support local services.
6. Investigate the possibility of expanding appropriate electric generation facilities in Falls Village.
7. Pursue economic development oriented towards blending “rural character” and recreation.
8. Seek to identify and develop economic development focused on other economic “clusters” in Falls Village.
9. Consider ways to attract other forms of economic development such as age-restricted housing developments, nursing homes, and weekend/recreation homes.
10. Consider ways to attract other uses or activities that provide net tax revenue and are compatible with community character.

GUIDE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

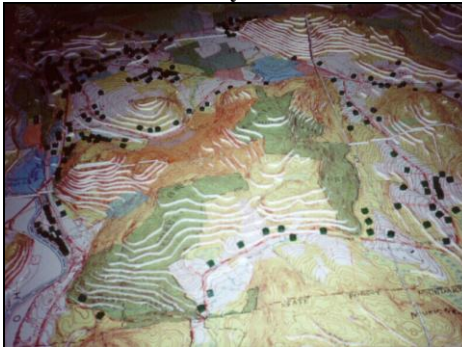
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Overview

While development has been modest in Falls Village in recent years, activity continues. In order to preserve community character and help meet community needs, development needs to be guided in ways that will promote those things the community most values and minimize activities that may detract from community character.

Guiding community development patterns will be important in terms of preserving community character and meeting community needs.

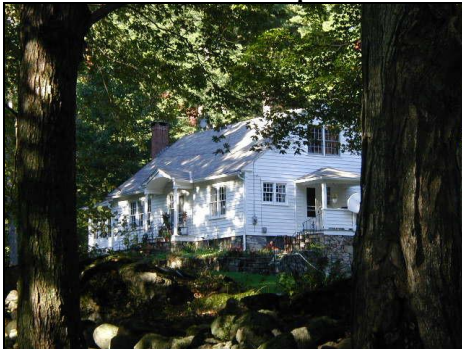
Community Structure



Village Center



Residential Development



Business Development



Modify Community Structure

Community structure refers to the overall physical organization of Falls Village. Structure is an important consideration in the Plan since it addresses how people, both residents and visitors, perceive and understand the community.

Surprisingly, community structure is closely related to community character. Developing and enhancing a strong community structure will maintain community character.

Structure is also an important guide for land use regulations and decisions. Regulations can be designed and implemented to reinforce the community structure and promote community character.

During the process of preparing this Plan, residents evaluated alternative community structures and selected the following pattern as being the most appropriate for Falls Village:

Development Pattern	Description
Expanded Village	Enlarging the area of the village beyond its current boundaries and reinforcing village development patterns.
Mountain Reserve	Establishing lower densities in the area east of Undermountain Road due to natural resource and access constraints.
Resource Conservation	Relating the level of development throughout Falls Village to the natural constraints that exist on each parcel.

This overall structure (shown on the map on the facing page) will help to guide development in ways that will:

- Protect community character,
- Support the development of the Village Center,
- Respect natural features, and
- Provide for alternative housing types in the community.

Community Structure Strategies

1. Modify the zoning pattern in Falls Village to provide for possible future expansion of the village area and a lower density mountain reserve area.
2. Modify the zoning regulations to relate the level of development throughout Falls Village to the natural constraints that exist on each parcel.

Overall Density Map

Village Center

Comments from residents about the village center included:

- Downtown could use more of a center than a parking lot, railroad tracks, car garage, and liquor store.
- Do something to make it a little more like a comfortable destination.
- The tendency to de-enterprise the downtown has been a poor idea.
- We need business in the village center that local folks would enjoy such as bakery, coffee shop, quaint inn, etc.
- If the Center works, everything else will fall into place in other areas.
- We need a good inn / restaurant, post office in Town center.
- I would like to see more of what is outside of downtown return to Main Street (bank, general store with food, coffee shop).

Center Businesses

Falls Village residents indicated that they wanted to see the following types of business uses in the Center:

- Small retail shops,
- Coffee shop,
- Country inn,
- Restaurants,
- Banks,
- General store,
- Food Market,
- General Offices,
- Personal Services,
- Small movie house.

Enhance The Village As A Focal Point

At public meetings on the Plan, residents identified the Village Center as an important focal point of the community. However, people want the Center to be more than it is today. As one resident put it – “It is like “Brigadoon”, most people don’t even know there is a Town Center here!”

One of the strategies of the Plan is to reinforce the Center’s role as the community focal point, create a destination for residents and visitors, and provide an important foundation for community character and spirit. This will also provide important benefits in terms of economic development.

Establish A Village Business Zone

The mail survey found that residents want a Village Center with traditional types of uses that might be expected in a rural community. Yet, at the present time, there is no business zone in the Village to identify where the “center of the Center” is.

To encourage business uses in the Center, a village business zone should be established along a portion of Main Street and Railroad Street. Destination uses (such as unique retailers, restaurants, country inns) are the most likely activities to attract people from a broader area, be successful, enlarge the local business economy, and contribute to community character. Uses that compete with other retailers or that rely solely on the travelling motorist are less likely to be successful.

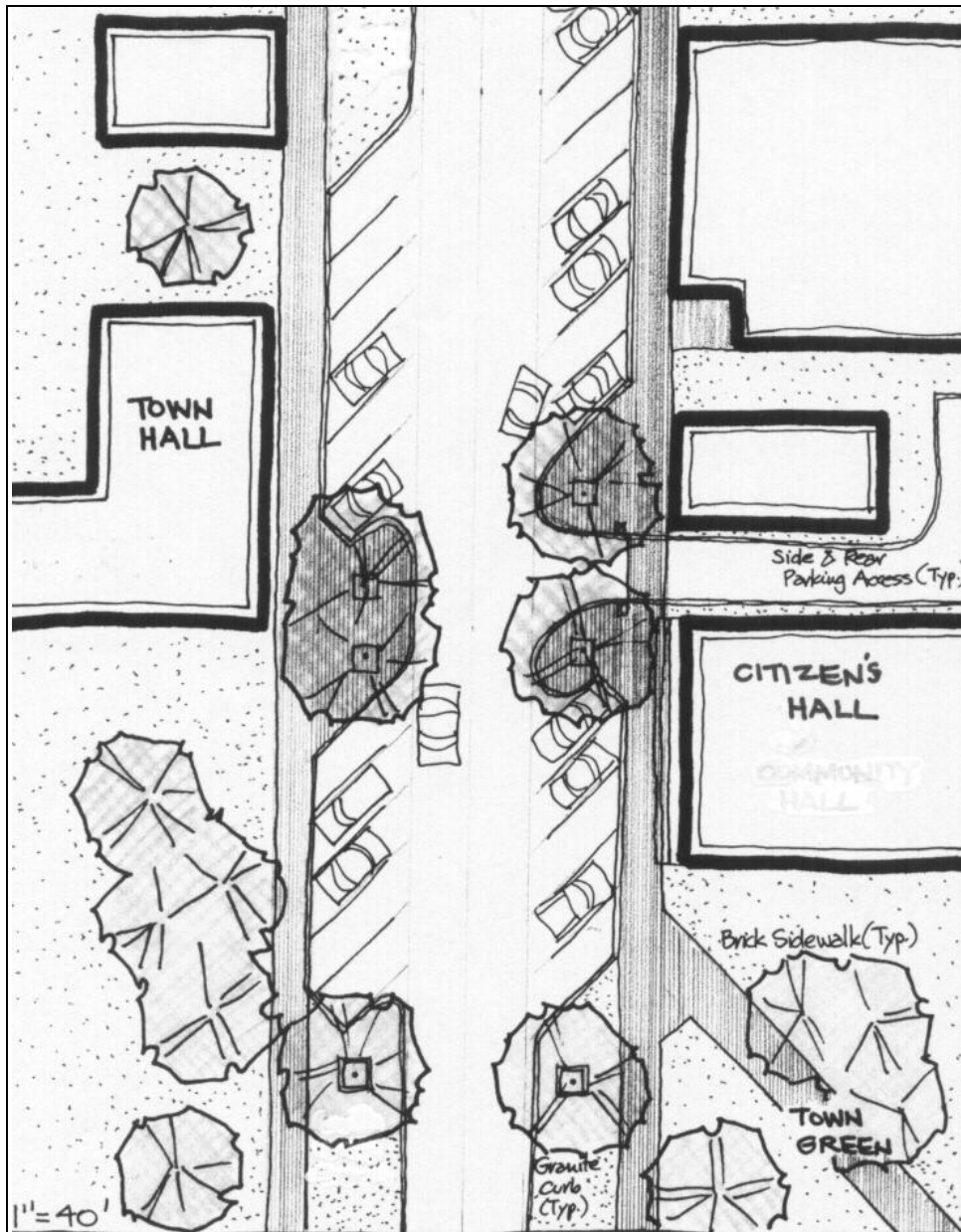
Attract New Businesses/Activities

Attracting more uses and activities to the downtown area will have the greatest impact on the vitality and success of the village. Efforts should focus at the corner of Main Street and Railroad Street and work out from there. Appropriate use of historic structures in this area should be the centerpiece of these efforts.

Improve the Streetscape

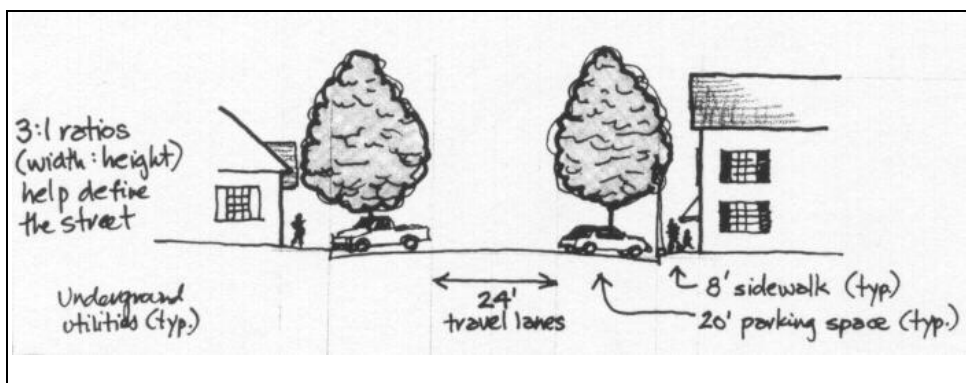
The pavement on the lower section of Main Street is also quite wide and this leaves visitors ambiguous in terms of where parking is located and detracts from the area’s appearance. In addition, the Center needs to have sidewalks that invite people to walk around and feel comfortable.

As suggested by residents, much can be done to improve the aesthetics of the lower part of Main Street. Landscaping and screening will also help to improve the ambience of this area. Residents also expressed interest in a bulletin board or kiosk to identify local events. The Northwest Connecticut Council of Governments can coordinate funding for these types “transportation enhancements” under the federal TEA-21 program.



Village Improvements

In addition to enhancing the streetscape along Main Street and elsewhere in the Village Center, benches, furnishings, and other improvements should also be made in other places, especially the Town Green.



Expand The Sidewalk Network In The Village

The sidewalks in the Village add to the character and charm of Falls Village and this network should be maintained and expanded. Sidewalks should be extended throughout the Village in order to emphasize pedestrian scale, provide for transportation and recreation, and enhance Falls Village's character.

The subdivision regulations discuss the requirements for sidewalk construction but do not indicate where such sidewalks should be installed. The Plan recommends the following sidewalk policy for the community:

- in the Center:
 - at least 6-8 feet wide on both sides of the street in business areas,
 - 4 feet wide on one side of the street in residential areas,
- where pedestrian traffic from a specific use is expected to be high, and
- elsewhere as determined appropriate by the Commission.

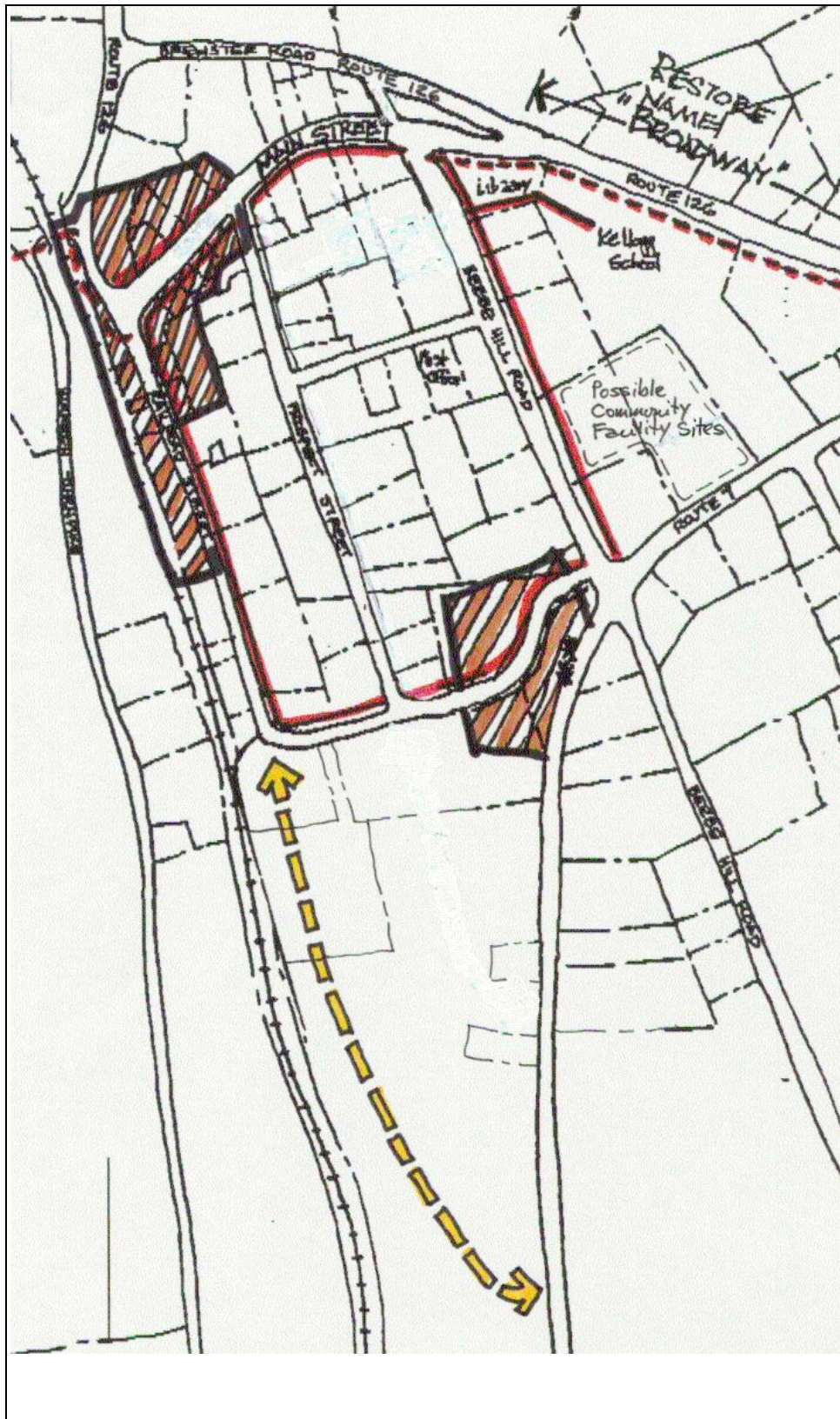
Brick pavers on a stonedust base are the preferred sidewalk material. A detailed sidewalk inventory and Plan should be prepared to guide sidewalk installation and maintenance.

Guide Traffic Patterns to the Village

The existing road network in Falls Village is both a blessing and a curse for the Center. Since Route 7 bypasses the Center, the Center has been unaffected by heavy traffic and remains an area with a lot of character. On the other hand, as shown in the following picture, the lack of traffic flow has left the Center as an area where businesses may struggle to survive.

Main Street





Access Improvements

The Planning and Zoning Commission feels that extending Railroad Street to Route 7 at some time in the future may be desirable to enhance access to the Village Center.

A southern approach to the Village Center from Route 7 will help encourage people to visit the center and support local businesses. Over time, as the activity level in the Village increases, this access will also help to maintain the village center as the focal point in the community.

Utility Systems

Funding programs are available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture under their Rural Utility Service program to help in the development and improvement of water and sewer infrastructure in rural communities.

The specific program that may be of most interest to Falls Village (Part 1780 – Water & Waste Loans & Grants) provides for:

- Funding up to 75 percent of the cost of providing such infrastructure,
- Interest rates as low as 5 percent, and
- Repayment periods as long as 40 years.

New Hartford recently received over \$2.2 million in grants and loans under this program to address water system issues in their community.

Falls Village would score favorably in relation to other communities due to its small population size and community needs.

Additional information on this funding program can be obtained from:

www.usda.gov/rus/

Information on additional funding programs may also be available from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

Address Water System Needs In The Village

The Town of Canaan Water Department (TCWD) was originally started around 1940 as a private water company to provide water service in the village. The company is now a quasi-public entity that is affiliated with the Town of Canaan (Falls Village). The 125 residential, business, and institutional customers are supplied from six wells and storage tanks located near Beebe Hill Road.

While the system has adequately supplied existing customers for some time, the TCWD is facing several significant issues. First, there is no current inventory or master plan of the system. With limited knowledge of the location, size, age, or type of pipes, there are few ways to anticipate needs or respond to emergencies.

Second, there has been no overall analysis of the adequacy of the system to meet current and projected needs. In this situation, current decisions (such as replacing the current storage tanks) are rendered more complicated.

It is estimated that a thorough study of the TCWD would cost about \$50,000. In addition to the cost of the study, the findings and recommendations may exceed the financial ability of the TCWD to address them.

While the TCWD could borrow funds and finance improvements through water rates, it may prove to be more prudent to sell the TCWD. On the other hand, an affiliation with a company such as Kelda Group (which uses Wangum Lake for water supply to Norfolk) may also prove advantageous in terms of ensuring an adequate supply of water.

These issues have been around for some time and need to be addressed. The 1972 Plan of Development noted that 42 percent of the water customers in the Village found the service inadequate at that time. Many of the same issues presently discussed were identified in the 1970 Community Development Action Plan and the 1972 Plan of Development but have still not been addressed.

Investigate A Sewer System

Falls Village does not presently have a public sewer system and residents and businesses in town rely on septic systems to treat waste.

While this is adequate in outlying areas of the community given the prevailing lot sizes, it is a potential long-term issue in the Village Center. Due to the small lot sizes and the requirements of the current Public Health Code, some recent septic repairs have gotten quite extensive and expensive. At the same time, there are some limitations on how people in the Village can use their property due to septic limitations (clothes washer, dishwasher, sink grinder, shower duration, and other amenities).

Many people do not realize that a septic system can have a limited life span. Since it is really only a matter of time before all septic systems in the Village will need repair or replacement, continued monitoring of the Village Center area is needed in order to ensure adequate public health protection.

A sewer avoidance program can be created to oversee septic system operations, monitor septic tank pumping, and coordinate the disposal of waste from septic tank pumping. While such a program can help ensure the long term functioning of septic systems, it cannot solve problems related to small lot sizes, poor soils, improper installation, or improper operation.

A limited sewer service in the Village Center area could address these and other issues. A limited sewer system would improve the quality of life for residents and property owners in the village by removing septic limitations. Such a system could enable certain uses to locate in the village center that would add character and vitality to the downtown area. Additional treatment capacity would allow more restaurants in the Village Center, addressing a need that has been expressed by Falls Village residents. In addition, a limited sewer system would help support residential development in the Center that would enhance its vitality and contribute to community character. Senior citizen housing could be developed near the village center area. Public bathrooms could be provided in the village.

In essence, the lack of capacity for sewage treatment posed by existing soil conditions and lot sizes limits the utility of some properties in the Village Center and constrains the ability of the Center to meet community needs and desires.

During the planning period, the potential benefits of some sort of limited sewer system in the Village Center should be investigated. Once the costs and benefits of such a system are better understood, the community can discuss various options and decide whether to implement a program in the Center.

Sewer System

Residents expressed the following thoughts in terms of a sewer system:

- Sewer all areas toward and including “downtown” so that changes of use and expansion of existing buildings can be accomplished. We’re pretty stuck otherwise.
- Be sensitive to the thought / fact that sewers will most likely encourage development
- Present individual systems are working and can be upgraded if and when the need arises.

Sewer Funding

Information on sewer funding is presented in the sidebar on the previous page.

Sewer Allocation

To manage whatever sewer capacity might be created in Falls Village, the community can establish a sewer allocation scheme where each land parcel gets a specific sewage allocation based on its existing or projected future use.

Since the community can establish these allocations, no property owner could apply for a greater discharge (or a more intensive use) than what they had been allocated. In addition, the community can restrict or prevent the transfer of allocation from one property to another.

Lighting Standards

In the Village Center area, Falls Village should adopt a consistent light standard and pursue public and private grants and donations to install traditional lampposts over time.

Bury Utilities In The Center

In new developments, wired utilities are placed underground. This enhances overall community character and improves overall reliability of service.

However, this typically occurs in the most rural parts of the community while the most visible wires and the most visited area of Falls Village is the Village area. In the long term, it will be desirable to locate wired utilities in the Center underground. This will have important benefits for community character and the overall ambience of this area.

Whenever opportunities present themselves in the Village Center, existing above-ground utilities should be relocated underground. Communities like New Milford are obtaining grants and appropriating funds to bury overhead wires in their downtown area. During the planning period, the Town should investigate ways to bury utility cables in the Village and strive to accomplish this strategy over the long term.

Over time, this strategy can also be expanded to other parts of Falls Village.

Revise Parking Requirements

To encourage an active streetscape, the Commission should explore ways to provide for on-street parking in the Village Center. Convenient off-street parking areas should also be provided nearby. Excessive parking should not be required or provided in the village center area.

Over time, Falls Village should seek to establish a hierarchy of parking in the Village Center for different needs:

- Paved on-street parking for short-term daily needs,
- Off-street or remote parking areas for long term daily needs, and
- On-grass or elsewhere for special events and major activities.

When needed, additional on-street and off-street parking can be provided at the foot of Main Street and along Railroad Street. Shared parking could also be provided for Kellogg School, the Hunt Library, the church, and other uses in the village.

Market the Village

Even after attracting new businesses and improving the streetscape, the success of the Village Center will depend on people knowing what is here. Signage and advertisement that maintain and enhance the character of the village are strongly encouraged. Through special events and other activities, people can be encouraged to experience the Center and then, hopefully, come back on a regular basis.

Village Center Enhancement Strategies

1. Reinforce the village center as the business, civic, institutional, and cultural center of the Town and as the major community focal point.
2. Establish a village business zone along a portion of Main Street and Railroad Street and encourage mixed uses that complement community character and add activity and stability to the Village Center.
3. Undertake programs to establish a dynamic village center with the appropriate use of historic buildings as the centerpiece of these efforts.
4. Move the post office to the area near Main Street and Railroad Street when the opportunity presents itself.
5. Encourage or require new buildings to be compatible in scale and materials with neighboring buildings, especially in the village, by establishing design guidelines or a volunteer design committee.
6. Improve the village streetscape by better integrating parking, sidewalks, landscaping, and buildings into a cohesive overall plan.
7. Pursue grants and other funding to make physical improvements in the Village Center (sidewalks, parking, lighting, landscaping, street furniture).
8. Expand the sidewalk network in the village center area to emphasize pedestrian scale, provide for transportation and recreation, and enhance Falls Village's character.
9. Seek ways to guide traffic patterns to the village center to encourage appropriate uses and development while protecting community character.
10. Address water system needs in the village.
11. Consider investigating the desirability of a common sewerage system in the village area.
12. Over the long term, seek to put wired utilities underground in the Center.
13. Explore ways to provide for more flexible parking requirements in the village center using interconnected on-street and off-street parking areas.
14. Promote marketing and tourism for the village center through signage, advertising, special events, and other activities to attract people.

Phased Implementation

It is important to realize that the implementation strategies in the Village Center are not meant to all be accomplished at the same time.

While it might be advantageous to undertake a number of improvements simultaneously, it is unlikely that all of the funding could be obtained at one time.

It is considered much more likely that incremental improvements will be made over time to enhance the Center area.

The Plan supports the notion of small-scale incremental improvements over time and in phases in the Village Center area.

“Pyramid” Zoning

Although “pyramid” zoning is an adequate zoning system for a community not exposed to rapid growth pressures, “pyramid” zoning eventually leads to use conflicts as development increases.

Thus to prevent future nuisance issues, the Town may wish to restructure its zoning ordinances.

The Town may also want to include a regulation that promotes adaptive reuse in a restructured zoning code. Adaptive reuse is an attractive means for small communities to accommodate economic growth in existing structures.

Configure For Appropriate Business Development

To encourage economic development, Falls Village must make some reasonable provisions for business development. Yet, this must be done in way that protects and even enhances community character.

Reconfigure Existing “Zones”

At the present time, Falls Village does not really have a typical business zoning concept. Existing business zoning regulations are considered to apply to a particular property but exactly which area is eligible for business use is unclear.

For example, local zoning indicates that a doctor’s office is in a business zone. Does that mean the portion of the building used for the doctor’s office is zoned business? Is the whole building eligible for business use? If the building is located on a large parcel of land, is the entire property zoned for business? There is no clear concept in Falls Village what the business designation really means.

One of the advantages of zoning is that it creates reasonable expectations on the part of owners, buyers, and sellers of property and for residents of the community. When the extent of business zoning is not clear and is subject to interpretation, it does not allow for reasonable expectations and has probably had the effect of deterring any business development in Falls Village.

Falls Village needs to establish reasonable and defined business zones to guide business development in the community and create rational expectations for all residents and property owners.

Reevaluate “Pyramid” Residential Use in Business Zones

Falls Village allows single-family residences in all zones, including business and industrial zones, and this has several possible economic development implications. First, it reduces the amount of land available for business development since property is developed and used residentially rather than for business. Second, it makes it difficult to assemble property or encourage consolidated business development because people reside on properties that may be critical to an overall assemblage or plan. Third, it has the potential to create conflicts between land uses (both existing and proposed).

At some time in the future, Falls Village may wish to reconsider whether this zoning structure is still appropriate for the community. While such a zoning structure can provide for flexibility in creating a mixed use Village Center, it may not be appropriate in other areas intended for business or industrial use.

Home Based Businesses

Home occupations (persons who work at home) are a major factor in Falls Village. In fact, the 1990 Census found that about one in four households reported some sort of self-employment income in 1989. This level of self-employment is almost five times higher than the state average.

At the present time, home occupations are permitted in residential zones as a conditional use (provided they meet the special exception criteria in the regulations). While this can provide maximum protection for the community by requiring Commission review of every home occupation, it could become an administrative and procedural burden over time. In addition, unless there is some enforcement mechanism, there is no reason for anyone to apply for a home occupation in the first place.

Falls Village should consider adopting a system for home occupations where:

- home occupations with minimal impacts are allowed as an accessory use (as-of-right), and
- uses that are likely to have a more substantial impact are considered a conditional use (and required to obtain a special permit from the Planning & Zoning Commission).

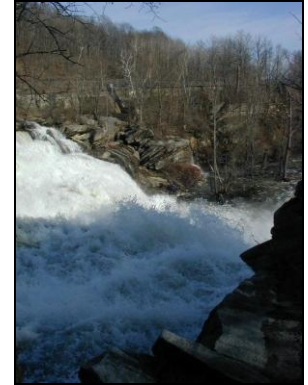
Additional criteria that might be considered include:

- whether persons other than the inhabitants of the dwelling may be employed in the home occupation and, if so, how many,
- a limitation on the floor area occupied by the home occupation,
- whether any outdoor storage of materials or equipment is required,
- the amount of traffic or activity generated by the activity.

Type	Description	Examples
Home Office / Telecommuting	Occasional use of home for functions associated with employment elsewhere	
Arts	Preparation of products for home use or sale elsewhere	Artist, Photographer, Home Handicrafts, Woodcrafts
Personal Service	Provision of services involving goods or materials and generating minor customer traffic	Phone Answering Service, Hair Care, Nail Care, Dress Making And Tailoring Services
Professional Office	Services generally provided off-site and involving minor customer traffic	Architect, Engineer, Surveyor, Appraiser, Professional Consultant, Marketing Services
Service Business	Services generally provided on-site and involving moderate customer traffic	Attorney, Accountant, Realtor, Insurance Agent

Great Falls Restaurant

The establishment of a restaurant overlooking the Great Falls would be a tremendous draw to Falls Village and add immeasurably to the visibility of the community.



Since Dublin Road is effectively a residential neighborhood on a long cul-de-sac at the present time, access would need to be developed off Route 126 or Water Street.

Legend

In the table on this page, the codes should be interpreted as follows:

OK Should be a permitted use in this zone (may require some additional criteria)

SP Should be a conditional (or Special Permit) use in the zone

SP-A Should be a conditional (or Special Permit) use on an arterial road in the zone

Guide Business Development To Appropriate Areas

A 1998 UConn telephone survey and the 2000 mail survey found a great deal of symmetry in terms of what types of business uses that residents feel are appropriate for Falls Village. In addition, the mail survey helped identify where residents felt these uses would be appropriate in Falls Village.

	Residential	Village Business	Route 7 Business Overlay	Industrial
Rural Businesses				
Home-Based Businesses	OK	OK	OK	OK
Farm Stand/Store	OK	OK	OK	OK
Animal Boarding/Care	SP		SP	OK
Lumber Mill			SP	OK
Retail/Service Businesses				
Small Retail Shops		OK	SP	
Food Market		OK		
General Store		OK		
Convenience Store			SP	
Personal Services		OK	SP	
Gasoline Station			SP	
Auto Service/Repair			SP	
Recreation Businesses	SP	OK	SP	SP
Hospitality Businesses				
Country Inn Lodging	SP-A	OK	SP	
Bed & Breakfast	SP	OK	SP	
Restaurants		OK	SP-A	
Office Uses				
General / Professional Offices		OK	SP	
Financial Institutions		OK	SP	
Medical Offices		OK	SP	
Retirement Communities	SP-A			
Other Uses				
Product Assembly				SP
Transport / Warehouse				SP
Trade Contractor				SP
Manufacturing / Processing				SP
Earth Extraction / Processing				SP

Development of the Village Center with a complementary mix of small-scale businesses should be the highest priority. This will help create a destination and these businesses will all reinforce each other and promote vitality in the Center.

Some locations along Route 7 may also be appropriate for economic development. These uses should complement, but not compete with, the businesses in the Center. Strict controls are advised for business development in this area.

As this Plan was prepared, it was anticipated that residential zoning would remain along Route 7 and that identified areas on the map may be suitable for establishment of a “special development district” (SDD) for business development. The SDD would be established through a zone change procedure where regulations would be established on a case-by-case basis with site-specific guidelines to protect and enhance community character.

The existing industrial zone on Sand Road should be maintained. Other business areas should be rezoned to residential use.

Encourage or Require Appropriate Development Styles

Falls Village residents are adamant that business development should be compatible with community character. Design criteria that may be appropriate for Falls Village to consider include:

	Encourage/Require	Discourage/Prevent
Building Mass And Location	Small building size Complexes of small buildings Buildings “oriented” to street	One large building footprint “Strip” orientation of a building Buildings oriented internally to site
Building Design And Materials	Colonial character / facades Sloped roofs (>6:12 pitch), gables Building eaves / Shutters / Porches Adaptive reuse of existing buildings Brick / stone masonry Traditional building / trim colors Architectural roof shingles	One-story “box” buildings Flat / mansard / unbroken roof line No windows / metal display windows New buildings with no character Stucco / Block / Metal buildings Inappropriate building or trim colors Flat shingles / metal roofs
Site Design	Provision of walkways Parking to rear / side of buildings Interconnected sites Few, defined or narrow curb cuts	No pedestrian amenities Undefined traffic or parking layouts Separate sites with no connections No landscape areas in parking lots
Landscaping	Saving large existing trees Grass with mulch planting beds Mass plantings and stone walls	Clear-cutting a site Large areas of stone or mulch Chain link or stockade fences
Utilities/ Lighting	Underground utilities Screened HVAC units / service areas Coordinated lighting fixtures Low lighting levels	Overhead utilities Exposed HVAC unit / service area Uncoordinated fixtures / floodlights Glaring lighting levels
Signage	Low, modest, visible signage Wood / Stone wall signage	Large, elevated, excessive signage Internally lit metal or plastic signs
Drainage	Storm water renovation Detention basins / Water recharge	Direct discharge
Maintenance	Diligent maintenance	Low maintenance/No maintenance

Strip-Type Development

Strip-type development typically refers to non-residential development that occurs along major roads in a linear fashion and is generally characterized as:

- having wide and shallow lots,
- individual or strips of stores that orient towards parking areas between the building(s) and the street,
- having one-story buildings with very simple architectural features,
- multiple curb cuts,
- limited pedestrian interconnections between sites,
- unscreened parking and service areas, and
- uncoordinated signage.

Design Requirements

The following design principles should be used to guide development in the Route 7 Business Overlay Zone once it is established:

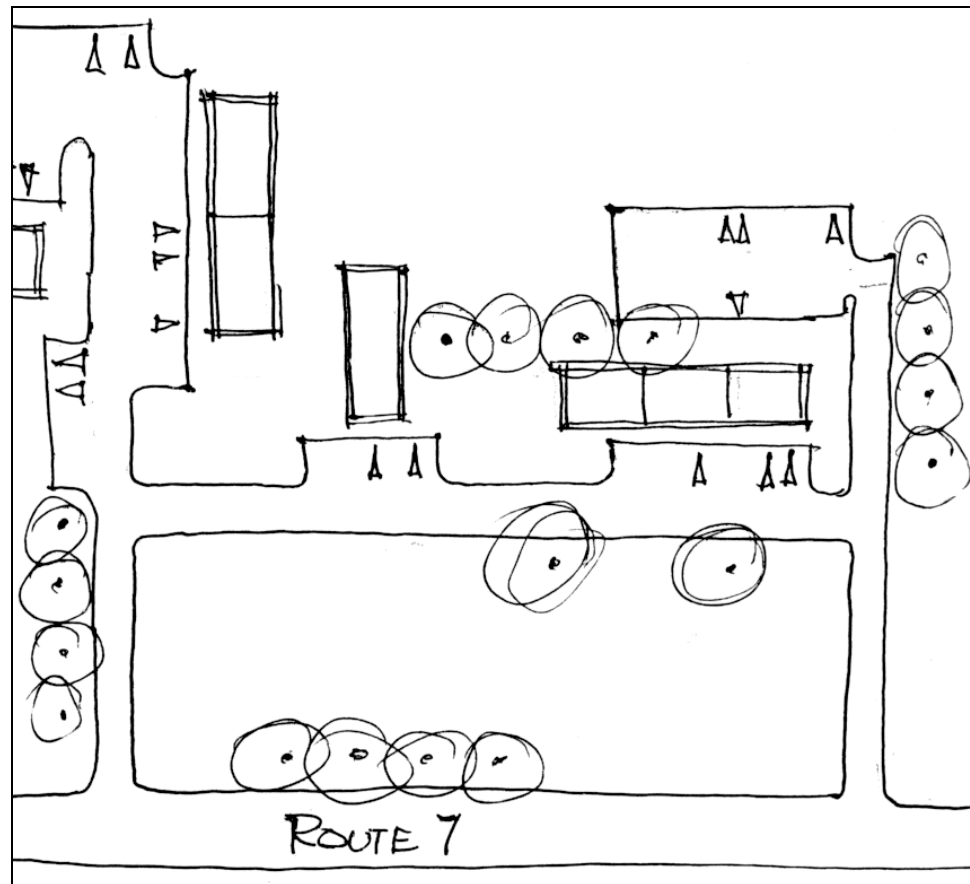
1. Businesses may near to and be visible from Route 7 but shall not directly abut on the highway.
2. Large parking areas should be located to the side and rear of buildings to reduce their visual prominence from Route 7.
3. Driveways used to access businesses shall be located perpendicular and parallel to Route 7.
4. All driveways shall be configured to provide shared access to adjacent properties in order to minimize the number of driveways intersecting Route 7.
5. All properties being developed for business uses shall share access and parking with other existing and future business properties in the vicinity as evidenced by mutual cross-easements.
6. A generous landscaped front yard shall be provided and well landscaped in order to enhance the visual appearance of the development.
7. To provide for a generous landscaped front yard, parking areas should be set back at least 100 feet from Route 7 and buildings should be set back 150 feet from Route 7.

Adaptive reuse of existing buildings (such as conversion of an existing residential use to a business use) should be encouraged. This will help to reinforce the historical architectural style of the community, especially in the Village Center.

Along Route 7, efforts need to be devoted to ensuring that strip development patterns do not emerge. In studies of community character, "strip" commercial development is among the lowest rated of all alternative development patterns.

Strip commercial development is typically characterized by large signs and prominent parking areas in front of architecturally simple buildings. The desired development pattern in Falls Village is for landscaping and architecturally appropriate buildings to be prominent with parking and signage complementing the principal features of the development.

It will be important for the Town to carefully manage the portion of the road right-of-way between the edge of pavement and the abutting property line. This can be done through curb cut requirements and similar programs.



Richard Stone, AIA

Business Plan

Support

Organizations that can help Falls Village in terms of implementing its economic development strategies include:

- Northwestern Connecticut Council of Governments,
- Connecticut Rural Development Council,
- Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development
- Main Street Program

Make It Happen

However, zoning areas for appropriate economic development and wishing for it to happen will not make it happen. If Falls Village is serious about economic development, pro-active steps must be taken.

Existing organizations such as the Economic Development Commission, the Falls Village Association, and other organizations (see sidebar) are available to help encourage appropriate and compatible economic development, especially in the Village Center.

If additional assistance is needed, Falls Village can arrange with:

- a grants specialist to help secure funding for local initiatives, or
- an economic development specialist to help the community prepare a strategic economic development plan with specific action steps.

Business Development Strategies

1. Establish reasonable and defined business zones to guide business development in the community and create rational expectations for all residents and property owners.
2. At some time in the future, reconsider whether “blanket” residential zoning structure is still appropriate for Falls Village.
3. Re-evaluate home occupation zoning in order to allow for reasonable home occupations as-of-right and more involved home occupations as conditional uses (requiring a special exception approval).
4. Implement the business zoning scheme outlined in the Plan.
5. As part of any new business development, encourage or require appropriate development styles as outlined in the Plan.
6. Encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings (such as conversion of an existing residential use to a business use).
7. Ensure that strip development patterns do not emerge along Route 7.
8. Take pro-active steps to make economic development happen in Falls Village.

Modify Residential Development Patterns

Of the different types of residential development patterns that could be expected to occur in Falls Village, residents were generally accepting of the following:

Development Pattern	Description
Village residential	Similar to the existing village center.
Individual house site	Homes built along existing roads.
Farm / Rural estate	Large parcels with farms or other rural uses.

Residents do not favor the typical residential subdivisions like they have seen in other communities since it is not consistent with their perception of the community. However, the existing zoning regulations allow (and require) the very development pattern that residents have indicated they do not want in Falls Village.

The Plan recommends that Falls Village modify local regulations to encourage open space development patterns. The program for encouraging open space development patterns includes changing current regulations to:

- include a definition of buildable land,
- establish a density standard to regulate the total number of lots on a parcel being subdivided,
- require a specific percentage of the parcel area be preserved as open space, and
- provide flexibility in minimum lot size requirements within acceptable Health Code standards.

POSSIBLE LANGUAGE – OPEN SPACE DEVELOPMENTS

- a. Only land classified as buildable area (land exclusive of wetlands, watercourses or waterbodies, 100-year floodplain, ledge outcrops, and slopes greater than 25%) shall be used to calculate density for any residential use.
- b. Any parcel developed for residential use shall observe the following standards:
- | Zone | Maximum Density
(units/acre of
buildable land) | Minimum Frontage
Major/Local |
|-------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Mountain Reserve | 0.2 | 400'/200' |
| Rural Residence | 0.4 | 400'/200' |
| Village Residence | 1.6 | 100' |
- c. Every subdivision shall preserve a minimum of twenty percent (20%) of the parcel area as open space, either on the parcel or elsewhere in Falls Village where acceptable to the Commission.
- d. Such open space shall be deeded to the Town of Falls Village, a recognized Land Trust, or a homeowner's association.

Single Family Development Patterns

Conventional

A parcel of land is divided into residential lots with little or no dedicated open space.

Open Space

A parcel of land is divided into roughly the same number of residential lots that are smaller in area than in a conventional development and the remaining area is preserved or dedicated as open space.

Density Definition

Residential density is simply another way of looking at development yield. For example, seven lots on a 20-acre parcel is the same as a density of 0.35 units per acre.

Density is used to regulate development yield from a piece of property.

Density Standards

Prior to adoption, density standards should be:

- compared to actual development experience in Falls Village, and
- be reviewed to ensure design flexibility.

It will be important to:

- place a note on approved subdivisions that certain oversize lots cannot be further subdivided if the maximum density for the parcel has been reached, and
- preserve a set of assessor maps that show the configuration of property at the time the residential density regulation was adopted.

Development Flexibility

To encourage even more open space preservation at the time of development, the Commission could reduce the minimum lot area and/or minimum lot frontage requirements when the amount of open space that is preserved in perpetuity in a subdivision exceeds the minimum requirement.

One option would be to reduce the minimum lot area and/or minimum lot frontage requirements by up to two percent for each one percent of the parcel preserved as open space in excess of the minimum requirement.

For example, if 35 percent of the parcel is preserved as open space and the open space requirement is 20 percent, the minimum requirements per lot may be reduced by up to 30 percent.

Excess open space preserved:

35% minus 20% = 15%

Flexibility allowed:

15% times two = 30%.

Prior to modifying any such requirement, the Commission should determine that:

- there will be a significant or community benefit resulting from the open space that is being preserved,
- the open space will not result in small or fragmented open space parcels that do not provide community benefits.

The graphic on the facing page illustrates the difference between a “conventional” development and an “open space” development. The major advantages of open space development can be that:

- important natural resources and features are protected,
- environmental impact is lessened,
- fields, stone walls, and vegetation along roads are preserved,
- open space areas are set aside for trails and greenbelts, and
- homes are nestled into appropriate areas of a parcel.

As a result, even though parcels are being developed for residential use, open space development can provide benefits and amenities to existing residents and help realize important objectives of the Plan. If residential subdivisions are going to occur in Falls Village, they should at least happen in a way that preserves as much of the community character as possible.

An open space development program will not result in any additional lots being built on a particular parcel. Since the maximum yield (number of lots) is determined by the density regulation, the regulatory review process focuses on determining the best overall plan for the conservation and development of the parcel. The Commission should also consider allowing other flexible development types that preserve meaningful open space.

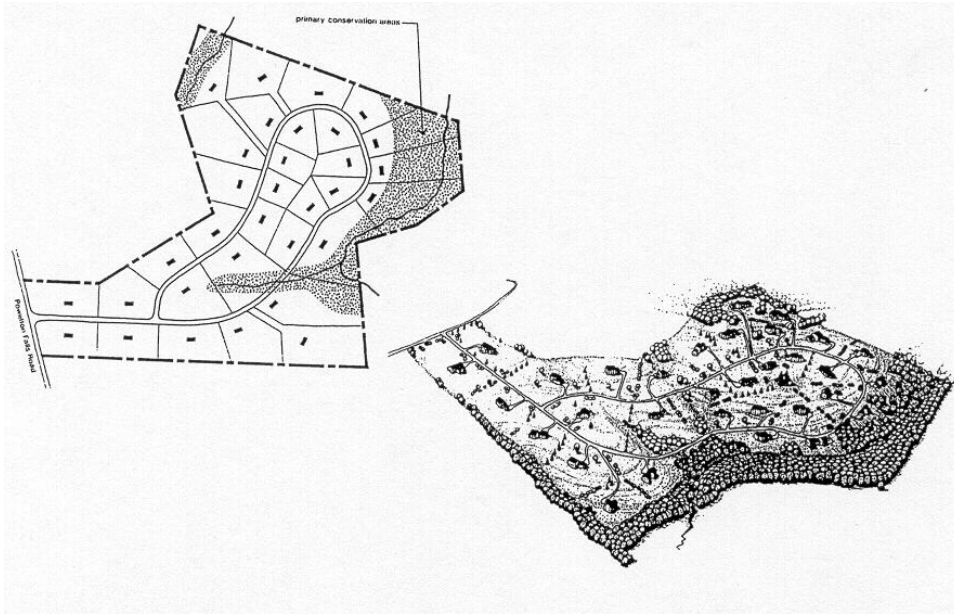
In addition, the Commission may wish to consider adopting regulations to increase the lot area and frontage requirements on arterial and collector streets. This type of regulation can encourage the retention of vegetation and character along existing streets although it may also encourage the construction of new roads to service lots located off the arterial or collector street.

Open Space Development Strategies

1. Modify local regulations to include a definition of buildable land.
2. Modify local regulations to include a density standard that regulates the total number of lots on a parcel being subdivided.
3. Modify local regulations to require a specific percentage of the subdivision parcel area be preserved as open space for public use.
4. To maximize open space, provide flexibility in minimum lot size requirements within acceptable Health Code standards.
5. Consider allowing other flexible development types that preserve meaningful open space.
6. Consider adopting regulations to increase the lot area and frontage requirements on arterial and collector streets.

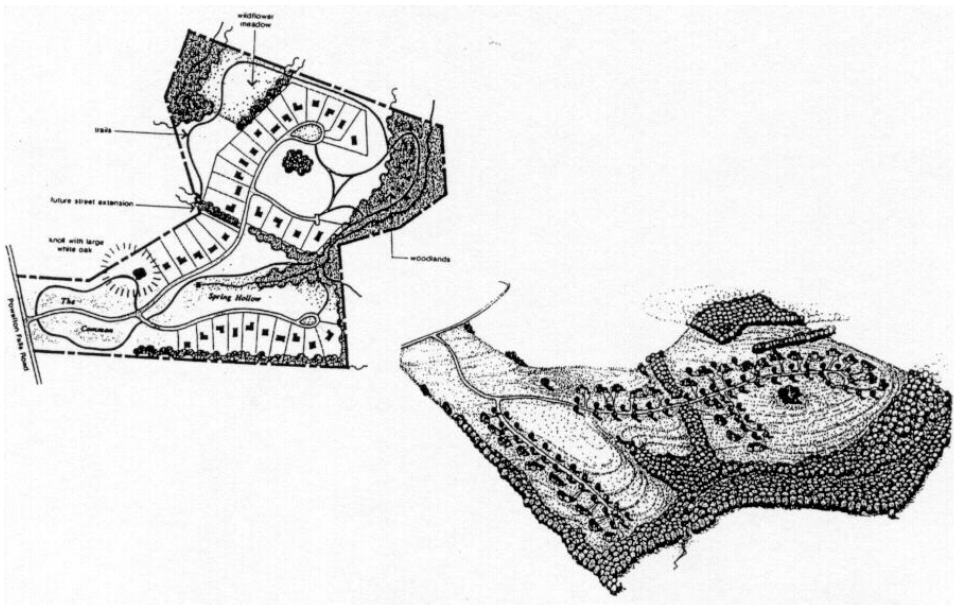
Conventional Subdivision Design

32 lots on 82 acre parcel (77 acres in lot areas) with
10% open space (8 acres) in a conservation easement)



Open Space Subdivision Design

32 lots on 82 acre parcel (29 acres in lot areas) with
65% open space (50 acres) owned by a conservation organization



Source: *Conservation Design For Subdivisions: A Practical Guide To Creating Open Space Networks*, Randall G. Arendt, Published by Island Press, Washington, DC.

Statutory Reference

“The Plan shall show the commission's recommendation for the most desirable use of land within the municipality for residential ... purposes and for the most desirable density of population in the ... parts of the municipality.”

“The Plan shall make provision for the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multifamily dwellings consistent with soil types, terrain and infra-structure 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

Encourage Housing Diversity

In addition to development densities and patterns, provisions also need to be made for the diverse housing needs of the elderly, the disabled, moderate-income families, ‘empty-nesters’, and people relocating to this area.

Two-Family Housing

Two-family housing is currently permitted in any residential zone in Falls Village provided a larger lot size is maintained. This provision helps to provide for housing choice and economic diversity and should be maintained.

Multi-Family Housing

Multi-family development is presently allowed in the Village residential zone. However, such development is difficult to envision in this area due to the soil types and the lack of public sewer. However, if sewer infrastructure can be made available, the Village Center would be an appropriate place for such development provided that existing regulations are updated to:

- enhance the design of the project,
- require service by public water and sewer,
- limit to moderate density developments, and
- limit to smaller scale projects.

Accessory Housing Units

A number of different types of housing needs or personal situations can be met by an accessory apartment (a secondary dwelling unit located in a building). For example, such a housing unit may be used:

- in a single-family home to accommodate an elderly or disabled family member,
- to allow an on-premises caretaker or caregiver for a business or for an elderly or disabled person, or
- to generate additional rental income for an elderly person or a business owner.

Falls Village should consider modifying the zoning regulations to allow accessory apartments in residential zones (either as a permitted use or with Special Permit approval). These provisions will, with appropriate controls, help meet the housing needs of Falls Village residents and provide housing opportunities with minimal community impact.

In addition, such units can also be permitted in business uses in the Village Center (a business use below with a residential unit above).

Affordable Housing

Providing affordable housing can be a challenge in Litchfield County where home sale prices are influenced by people from New York City and elsewhere. Still, Falls Village should consider appropriate opportunities to enhance housing diversity, such as:

- working with the Northwest Connecticut Regional Housing Council and other agencies,
- encouraging creation of affordable units by churches or other local organizations (such as Habitat For Humanity), and
- pursuing development of housing opportunities (such as elderly housing or moderate-income housing) with state and federal grants or subsidies.

Elderly Housing

In addition, given the projected increase in the local elderly population during the planning period, there is expected to be a need for additional housing units in Falls Village that are suitable for the elderly and/or the disabled.

Some senior and disabled persons will want to remain in their own homes as long as possible. This can be facilitated through such local policies as tax “circuit breakers” and the availability of local assistance such as dial-a-ride, meals-on-wheels, senior activities, and home health services. While some may see these services or programs as requiring expenditures or giving up tax revenue, it may be more productive to think of each housing unit as a community investment. If each “empty nester” household pays more in revenue than it requires in services, it provides net tax revenue to the community and is a form of economic development that subsidizes other local services.

Other seniors may be interested in alternative housing options, particularly smaller units in the Village Center that are within walking distance of local stores and other amenities.

Elderly Housing Options

1. Remain in current home.
2. Retain day-time help.
3. Remain in home with an accessory apartment for caretaker, caregiver, and/or income.
4. Move to smaller home.
5. Move to condominium with exterior maintenance provided.
6. Move in with family in their home or accessory apartment.
7. Move to congregate or assisted living complex.
8. Move to subsidized elderly housing development.
9. Move to nursing or convalescent home.

Congregate / Assisted Living / Nursing Home Facilities

Other senior or disabled persons may move to congregate and assisted living developments that provide some services (such as meals, recreation, and minor assistance with daily living). Nursing and convalescent homes provide services for the elderly and disabled who need significant assistance with daily living.

While some of these types of developments are being undertaken by the private sector, there is still a need for housing developments for elderly and disabled persons of limited means. Regardless of how such a project is proposed, the most appropriate location in the community is in and near the Village Center where services are (or will become) available.

Housing Diversity Strategies

1. Continue to consider the diverse housing needs of the elderly, the disabled, moderate-income families, 'empty-nesters', and people relocating to this area.
2. Continue to allow for two-family housing in order to provide for housing choice and economic diversity.
3. Consider the village center as the most appropriate area for future multi-family development provided that sewer infrastructure and capacity is available.
4. Consider modifying the zoning regulations to allow accessory apartments in residential zones (either as a permitted use or with Special Permit approval).
5. Consider allowing mixed residential / business uses in the Village Center (a business use below with a residential unit above).
6. Continue to consider appropriate opportunities to enhance housing diversity for low and moderate-income families.
7. Seek ways to address the projected future need for elderly housing.

PROMOTE COMMUNITY SPIRIT

6

Overview

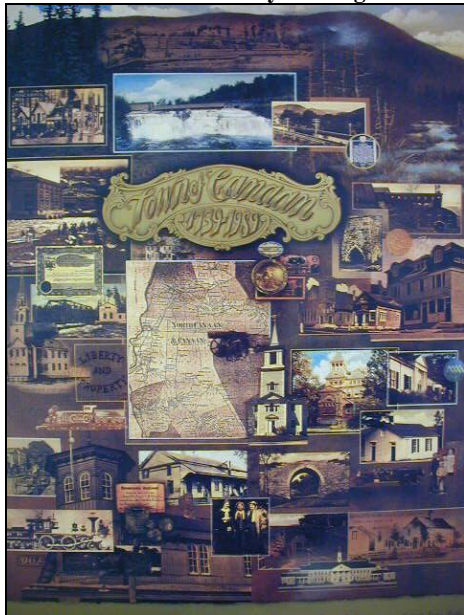
Community spirit refers to how people feel about their community and how they feel other people perceive Falls Village. In other words, spirit is about town image and community pride. It is about the social and emotional ties that people have to their community.

Community spirit is hard to define but you know it or feel it when it is there. Falls Village has many examples of this community spirit. It can be efforts by groups such as the Village Gardeners that is planting trees and shrubs and making people proud of their community. It can be the selling of canvas bags to support the Hunt Library. It can be the celebrations that go on as part of the 250th anniversary and the preparation of a historical montage to celebrate the anniversary. It is residents participating in the preparation of this Plan of Conservation & Development.

Community participation (a sign of community spirit) is very high in Falls Village. It has been estimated that more than 100 people (about 10 percent of the local population) are involved in local organizations and activities.

Community spirit, one of the most important attributes of successful communities, is also one of the hardest things to define and influence.

250th Anniversary Montage



Montage by Victor R. Valla

Public Participation



Gale Courey Toensing

Community Spirit

Residents identified the following things as contributing to community spirit:

- People
- The school
- Emergency services
- Volunteers
- Good neighbors
- Community involvement
- Spirit is a result of the visual and spatial.
- The spirit felt towards your neighbors.
- Diverse people, ideas, interests
- Excellent people from the schools, library, and fire /ambulance service.

Promote Community Spirit

Things that can contribute to community spirit in Falls Village include:

Contributing Activities	Description
Positive Local Recognition	Community spirit and pride is promoted by positive publicity of local events and activities. This includes those things important to residents such as educational quality, community appearance, community events, local excellence, and other factors.
Local Programs Or Events	Events (such as community festivals, art or antique shows, fireworks displays, and community concerts) raise a community's visibility as a special place.
Local Organizations	Local organizations (such as religious institutions, charitable organizations, sports leagues, and other organizations where people help each other and their community accomplish important priorities) also build community spirit.
Volunteer Contributions	Volunteerism promotes community spirit because it involves residents pulling together to accomplish things that otherwise might not happen and that feeling of purpose and accomplishment promotes community spirit for them and transfers it to others.
Significant Landmarks	Music Mountain, Great Falls, Yale School of Forestry

Community Spirit Strategies

1. Seek ways to maintain and promote community pride and spirit.
2. Continue to encourage local recognition, volunteer contributions, and local organizations / programs / events in order to promote community spirit.
3. Coordinate and schedule community social events (such as an annual picnic for volunteers and other "hometown heroes", historic festival, dinner theaters, talent shows) in order to build and maintain community pride and spirit.
4. Maintain strong communication between the Town Hall and community.
5. Pursue the idea of recognizing and commending citizens who have contributed to the community.

Community Recognition



PHOTO BY CYNTHIA HOCHSWENDER

Students at the Lee H. Kellogg School jump for joy in anticipation of a new playground system to be installed on the school grounds. Some of the funds to pay for it will come from a \$5,000 prize awarded to the town for its participation in the "1999 Governor's Fitness Challenge." Thanks to the efforts of Tax Collector Jean Bronson (far right) and Town Clerk Mary Palmer (far left), over 200 town residents took part in the challenge.

A Fit Falls Village Wins \$5,000 for Playground

LJ 1/6/00
Lakeville Journal

Volunteer Contributions



Falls Village Volunteer Fire Department

Local Organizations

Local organizations that contribute to community activities and community spirit include:

- Volunteer Service Providers (such as Fire Departments, Ambulance),
- Civic Organizations (such as Falls Village Association, Lions Club, Rotary Club, Garden Club),
- Business Associations (such as Chamber of Commerce),
- Cultural Organizations (such as Historical Society),
- Recreational Associations (such as sports clubs, fish / game clubs),

Local Events

Local events that contribute to community character, pride, and spirit can include:

- Parades,
- Carnivals/Fairs,
- Community Festivals,
- Craft Shows,
- Community concerts, parties, and dances,
- Special events (such as award dinners, auctions)

History

Many people assume that the area we now know as Falls Village has “always” been known as Canaan. This is not the case.

In fact, a description of a tour of iron facilities in this area from 1818 reports an over-night stay in “... a very comfortable house, situated in a part of a valley on the banks of a rivulet near Falls Village” (*America’s Valley Forges and Valley Furnaces*, page 18).

Note that the year 1818 is 40 years before the separation with what became the Town of North Canaan.

Confusing Names

When the name Canaan is used, most people think of the *village* of Canaan in the Town of North Canaan (rather than the *Town* of Canaan) since the village:

- is more populated,
- is at the junction of two major roads (Route 44 and Route 7), and
- has the postal address of Canaan.

This causes confusion in many different ways. Almost on a daily basis, the Town Clerk in the Town of Canaan receives a phone call, letter, or document that is intended for the Town of North Canaan.

For example, births recorded to mothers who reside in the *village* of Canaan (in North Canaan) are often credited to the Town of Canaan. As a result, the birth rate for the Town of Canaan is reported to be about 2.5 times *higher* than the state average while the birth rate for the Town of North Canaan is reported to be less than one-third of the state average.

Consider Renaming the Town to Falls Village

Use of the name “Canaan” invites confusion in northwest Connecticut (and elsewhere). Consider the following:

Official Name	Common Name	Postal Name
Town of Canaan	Falls Village	Falls Village
Town of North Canaan	Canaan	Canaan

As can be seen from the following picture, even the State of Connecticut uses the terms to give directions.



While local residents live in the Town of Canaan, they are practically forced to refer to their community as Falls Village to avoid confusion with the village of Canaan. This is a continuing annoyance for those who have to deal with explaining the difference on a regular basis. The real issue locally is the identity crisis that affects residents of Falls Village. In a sense, if you have to explain who or where you are, it is hard to develop the community pride and spirit that helps hold communities together.

While it is certainly not the most important recommendation of this Plan, the idea of renaming the Town to Falls Village was raised by many residents. In the 1998 UConn telephone survey, more than seven of ten residents either strongly favored (56%) or somewhat favored (15%) changing the town name. The process of changing the name of a town will require an act of the Legislature.

Strategies

1. Hold an advisory local referendum on the name change issue.
2. If residents favor the name change, ask legislators to sponsor the necessary legislation.

ADDRESS MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES

7

Maintain the Regional Health District

Health-related issues in Falls Village are not likely to be as complex as they may be in larger communities. However, the public health in Falls Village will be best served by having a professional health department available to assist the community.

Expand the Emergency Water Supply

An emergency water supply for fighting fires is an issue. Falls Village should require the installation of fire ponds or underground cisterns as part of new development. In addition, the fire department should identify locations throughout the community where emergency water supplies are needed so that fire ponds and underground cisterns can be provided in these locations.

Monitor Wireless Communication Trends

Wireless communications are becoming increasingly popular. Even though the local population is modest, there has been interest in establishing wireless communication towers in this area in order to meet the needs of the travelling public.

Falls Village recently adopted regulations regarding wireless communications facilities. Although regulatory jurisdiction may end up with the Connecticut Siting Council as the result of a recent court decision, the community should continue to monitor trends in wireless communications and anticipate how these might best be addressed in Falls Village (minimizing the number of towers, minimizing impacts on community character, maximizing municipal revenue). The Commission should continue to discuss siting of wireless facilities with other interested groups and coordinate efforts where desirable.

Encourage Broadband Capabilities

E-mail and the Internet are becoming more prevalent locally and globally. Unfortunately, Falls Village is located away from major communications facilities and some services (such as broadband capabilities) are not available or are very expensive to obtain. Falls Village should work to encourage the establishment of broadband facilities in the community.

Support Transportation Alternatives

The Northwestern Connecticut Transit District operates a Rural Transit Dial-A-Ride service in Falls Village, Sharon, and Canaan, which is available to residents on weekdays with prior day advance reservations. This service is important in these communities, especially with the projected increase in the elderly population, and should continue to be supported.

The rail line through Falls Village is occasionally used for freight and may be available for recreational excursions on an occasional basis. Use of this rail line for these (and possible future passenger service) should be supported and encouraged in order to promote economic development in the community.

Make Intersection Improvements

In terms of the number, frequency, or rate of accidents, there are no significant problem areas in Falls Village. However, the following locations represent intersections where improvements might help to improve traffic safety and the Connecticut Department of Transportation should be encouraged to consider improvements at these locations:

- Route 7 @ Route 126
- Route 7 @ Beebe Hill Road
- Route 7 @ Route 63
- Route 7 @ Six Rod Road
- Route 7 @ Undermountain Road

Miscellaneous Issue Strategies

1. Maintain membership in the Regional Health District in order to effectively address public health needs in Falls Village.
2. Require the installation of fire ponds or underground cisterns as part of new development.
3. Continue to monitor wireless communication trends and coordinate efforts where desirable.
4. Encourage the establishment of broadband facilities in Falls Village.
5. Continue to support the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District.
6. Support and encourage reuse of the rail line through Falls Village for recreational excursions and possible future passenger service.
7. Consider making traffic improvements at intersections where desirable.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

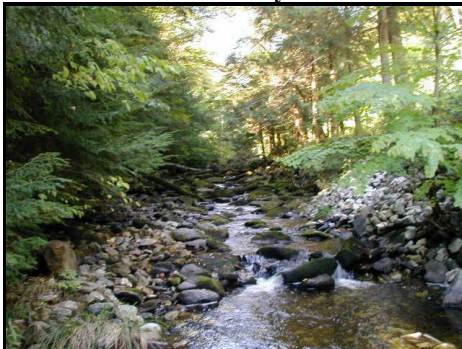
8

Overview

The Future Land Use Plan is a reflection of the stated goals, objectives, and recommendations of the Plan as well as an integration of the preceding elements of the Plan of Conservation & Development.

In essence, the Future Land Use Plan is a statement of what the Falls Village of tomorrow should look like.

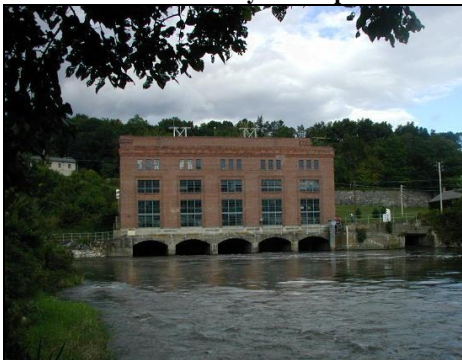
Preserve Community Character



Address Community Needs



Guide Community Development



Enhance Community Spirit



Lakeville Journal

Descriptions Of Future Land Use Categories

Open Space

Existing Open Space	Areas that are currently preserved or used for open space purposes.
Natural Resources	Areas with significant environmental constraints that represent the highest priorities for conservation.

Residential Areas

Mountain Reserve	Areas where density less than one unit per four acres would be expected due to sensitive natural resources, infrastructure limitations, or desirable patterns of development.
Low Density	Areas where density less than one unit per two acres would be expected due to sensitive natural resources, infrastructure limitations, or desirable patterns of development.
Village Residential	Areas in the Village where the density of development may exceed two units per acre.

Business Areas

Village Center	The areas that is intended to develop with small scale business uses that help meet the needs of residents and the community and promote and enhance community character.
Route 7 Overlay	Areas that have developed with and may be appropriate for small-scale business facilities along major roads.
Industrial	Areas that have developed or are intended to be developed with corporate research, development, office, or industrial facilities.

Other Areas

Community Facilities	Areas that have developed or are intended to develop with community facilities.
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Future Land Use Plan

Plan Consistency

This Plan was compared with the Locational Guide Map in the 1998-2003 State Plan of Conservation & Development and found to be generally consistent with that Plan.

Any inconsistencies can be generally attributed to:

- differences in definitions of desirable uses or development densities,
- local (as opposed to State) desires about how Falls Village should grow and change in the coming years, or
- the fact that the State Plan makes policy recommendations for relative intensity and environmental sensitivity while this Plan suggests specific land use types.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS & SCHEDULE

9

Overview

The Commission has the primary responsibility of implementing many of the Plan's recommendations. Other recommendations may require the cooperation of, and actions by, other local boards and commissions such as the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and similar agencies.

However, if the Plan is to be successfully realized, it must serve as a guide to all residents, applicants, agencies, and individuals interested in the community.

Implementation



Gale Courey Toensing

Implementation Committee

Oversight of implementation can be coordinated by the Planning & Zoning Commission or another committee.

An “ad hoc” committee made up of residents and representatives of local boards identified in the implementation schedules would be a significant step towards including a variety of Town agencies in implementing the Plan and monitoring progress. This Committee could provide status reports to the Planning & Zoning Commission, Board of Selectmen, and others.

Such a committee could meet quarterly to review implementation and coordinate local activities.

Annual Update Process

An appropriate way to regularly update the Plan may be to update major sections of the Plan every year by:

- holding a public informational meeting to summarize the Plan recommendations and receive feedback from the community,
- holding a workshop session for local boards and other interested persons to discuss Plan strategies and suggest alternative language,
- revising Plan sections, as appropriate, and
- re-adopting the Plan (even if there are no text or map changes).

Tools

The tools that are available to implement the Plan's recommendations include:

- a Plan Implementation Committee / annual work program,
- an annual update program,
- the Plan of Conservation and Development,
- Zoning and Subdivision Regulations,
- Capital Improvements Program,
- Referral of Municipal Improvements (CGS 8-24), and
- inter-municipal and regional cooperation.

Plan Implementation Committee / Annual Work Program

A Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) is an effective way to help implement the Plan. The PIC could use the implementation schedules that follow to develop an annual implementation program of issues to be addressed by boards and commissions.

The PIC would generally include representatives of various boards and would help to prioritize, coordinate, and refine implementation of the Plan. The PIC could meet two to four times a year to establish priorities and guide implementation of the Plan's recommendations. In addition, the committee could assess the status of specific recommendations, establish new priorities, and suggest new implementation techniques.

Alternatively, the Planning & Zoning Commission can assume the responsibility for coordinating implementation of the Plan's recommendations.

Annual Update Program

A Plan that is only updated once every ten years can be silent on emerging issues, not reflect current policy objectives, or not reflect current conditions, trends or opportunities. When a Plan is considered a reference document rather than a working document, its effectiveness in guiding the community is hindered. Falls Village should consider keeping this Plan current and not waiting to update it every ten years. A preliminary schedule might be as follows:

Character Themes	Development Themes	Other Plan Themes
2003	2004	2005
2006	2007	2008

The process of annual updating would be continued in subsequent years until the community felt that a comprehensive update was required. A work program for annual updates of the Plan is discussed in the sidebar. A Plan Implementation Committee could also assist in this effort.

Plan of Conservation & Development

Using the Plan of Conservation & Development as a basis for land use decisions by the Planning & Zoning Commission will help accomplish the goals and objectives of the Plan. All land use proposals should be measured and evaluated in terms of the Plan and its various elements.

Zoning and Subdivision Regulations

Many of the recommendations in the Plan of Conservation and Development can be implemented by the Planning & Zoning Commission through regulation amendments, application reviews, and other means. The Zoning and the Subdivision Regulations provide specific criteria for land development at the time of applications. As a result, these regulations are important tools to implement the recommendations of the Plan. However, this is only true if the regulations reflect the recommendations of the Plan.

In the near future, the Planning & Zoning Commission should undertake a comprehensive review of the zoning regulations, zoning map, and subdivision regulations and make whatever revisions are necessary to:

- make the regulations more user-friendly,
- implement Plan recommendations, and
- promote consistency between the Plan and the regulations.

In particular, the Falls Village Zoning Regulations need to have criteria incorporated in them to help guide the Commission and potential applicants.

In considering an application for Special Exception, the Commission shall determine that the following specific conditions are met:

1. Compliance With Regulations

That the proposed use or uses are permissible by these regulations and that the proposal meets "de facto" or by variance all applicable bulk, dimensional and other requirements of these regulations;

2. Suitable Location for Use

That the location and size of the proposed use and the nature and intensity of use in relation to the size of the lot will be in harmony with the orderly development of the area and compatible with other existing uses.

3. Suitable Structures for Use

That the kind, size, location and height of structure and the nature and extent of landscaping on the lot are appropriate for the use and will not hinder or discourage the appropriate use of adjoining property nor diminish the value thereof.

Regulation Updates

The importance of updating local regulations as soon as possible cannot be over-emphasized.

Compared to a number of other communities, the regulations in Falls Village lack a lot of the basic land use tools that will serve to promote the best possible conservation and development of the community.

4. Neighborhood Compatibility

That the design elements of the proposed development are attractive and suitable in relation to the site characteristics and style of other buildings in the immediate area, and that the proposed use will not alter the essential characteristics of the area or adversely affect property value in the neighborhood.

5. Adequate Parking & Access

That the parking and loading facilities are adequate and properly located and the entrance and exit driveways are laid out to achieve maximum safety.

6. Adequate Streets For Use

That streets providing access to the proposed use are adequate in width, grade, alignment and visibility, and have adequate capacity for the additional traffic generated by the proposed use.

That the proposed use will not pose undue inconvenience to pedestrian and vehicular circulation nor impede implementation of the Traffic Circulation Plan.

7. Adequate Emergency Access

That the proposed use shall have easy accessibility for fire apparatus and police protection and is laid out and equipped to further the provision of emergency services.

8. Adequate Public Utilities

That the water supply, the sewage disposal, and the storm water drainage shall conform with accepted engineering criteria; comply with all standards of the appropriate regulatory authority; and not unduly burden the capacity of such facilities.

9. Environmental Protection and Conservation

That the proposed plans have provided for the conservation of natural features, drainage basins, the protection of the environment of the area, and sustained maintenance of the development.

10. Consistent with Purposes

That the proposed use will not have any detrimental effects upon the public health, safety, welfare, or property values, and that the proposed use will not conflict with the purposes of the Regulations.

Capital Budget

The Capital Budget (or Capital Improvement Program) is a tool for planning major capital expenditures of a municipality so that local needs can be identified and prioritized within local fiscal constraints that may exist.

The Plan contains several proposals (such as land acquisition or community facility development) whose implementation may require the expenditure of town funds. The Plan recommends that these (and other) items be included in the town's Capital Improvements Program and that funding for them be included as part of the Capital Budget.

Referral of Municipal Improvements

Section 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that municipal improvements (defined in the statute) be referred to the Planning & Zoning Commission for a report before any local action is taken. A proposal disapproved by the Commission can only be implemented after a two-thirds vote by Town Meeting. All local boards and agencies should be notified of Section 8-24 and its mandatory nature so that proposals can be considered and prepared in compliance with its requirements.

Inter-Municipal and Regional Cooperation

Falls Village can continue to work with other towns in the region, the Northwestern Council of Governments, the State of Connecticut, and other agencies to explore opportunities where common interests coincide.

“The Tipping Point “

The philosophy of this Plan is to try and create a “social epidemic” for positive change that motivates people to do positive things in Falls Village.

As suggested in a book by *New Yorker* writer Malcolm Gladwell entitled “The Tipping Point”, the real purpose of a Plan such as this is to:

- pollinate new ideas,
- make ideas infectious, and
- sustain positive change in Falls Village.

Hopefully, this Plan will be a road map to change and a “well-placed lever” to effect positive change.


Implementation Schedule

Implementation of the Plan is a gradual and continual process. While some recommendations can be carried out in a relatively short period of time, others may only be realized towards the end of the planning period, and some may be even more long-term in nature. Further, since some recommendations may involve additional study or a commitment of fiscal resources, their implementation may take place over several years or occur in stages.

The charts on the following pages assign primary responsibilities and preliminary schedules to the Plan recommendations. In many instances, the responsibilities are shared by a number of entities.

In addition, the charts identify both strategies and tasks. Strategies are long-term and continuing policies that do not readily lend themselves to a specific schedule or measurement. A shaded box indicates those entities that share responsibility for implementation.

Tasks, on the other hand, are specific actions that can typically be scheduled and measured and their implementation can be readily identified. Preliminary priorities are identified in the table. Again, a shaded box indicates those entities that share responsibility for implementation.

		Page	PZC	IWCC	EDC	BOS	Town	Other
Plan Strategy								
	1. Strategy							
	2. Task.		1					

PRESERVE COMMUNITY CHARACTER

		Page	PZC	IWCC	EDC	BOS	Other
Continue To Conserve Natural Resources							
	1. Continue to protect important water resources.	26					Res.
*	2. Consider buffer zones for water resources while considering agricultural impacts.	26		1			
*	3. Modify the Wetland Regulations definition of "regulated area".	26		1			
*	4. Update Wetland Regulations to reflect the enabling legislation and current practices.	26		2			
*	5. Adopt floodplain regulations as part of the Zoning Regulations.	26	2				
*	6. Adopt an ordinance requiring replacement of underground fuel storage tanks.	26				3	
*	7. Maintain a River Overlay Zone to guide activities along the Housatonic River.	26	2				
*	8. Modify regulations to include review of CTDEP's Natural Diversity Database.	26	2	2			
	9. Discourage building and road development on steep slopes.	26					
	10. Maintain and enhance regulations regarding earth excavation.	26					
Preserve Open Space							
	1. Continue to preserve open space that makes Falls Village unique.	30					Res.
	2. Encourage the transition of <i>managed</i> open space to <i>dedicated</i> open space.	30					Res.
	3. Strive to interconnect open spaces into a cohesive overall greenbelt system.	30					PRC
	4. Seek ways to establish trails throughout open spaces in Falls Village.	30					PRC
*	5. Establish bikeways throughout the Village and certain outlying areas.	30				2	PRC
*	6. Encourage formation of a Falls Village Trail Association.	30				1	PRC
*	7. Prepare materials on the availability of trails and bicycle routes in Falls Village.	30					PRC
	8. Strive to increase the revenues received from open space properties.	30					
*	9. Evaluate and recommend an "open space assessment" program.	30		2		2	
	10. Seek compensation for the "overburden" caused by public and tax-exempt facilities.	30					
Encourage Agricultural Uses							
	1. Continue to encourage agricultural operations.	30					Res.











Legend

ID	Reference
PZC	Planning & Zoning Commission
IWCC	Inland Wetlands / Conservation Com.
EDC	Economic Development Commission
BOS	Board of Selectmen
Other	Other Boards, Agencies, or Persons





BOE	Board of Education
BOF	Board of Finance
DOT	CT Dept. of Transp.
HD	Health District
HS	Historical Society
Lib.	Library
PRC	Parks & Recreation
PW	Public Works
Res.	Residents
VFD	Volunteer Fire Dept.

	Definition
1	Highest Priority
2	Moderate Priority
3	Should be complete in five years

PRESERVE COMMUNITY CHARACTER (cont.)

		Page	PZC	IWCC	EDC	BOS	Other
Protect Historic Resources							
	1. Undertake a historic resources survey.	32					Res. HS
	2. Encourage property owners to preserve archaeological and historical resources.	32					Res. HS
	3. Encourage the Historical Society to conduct educational programs.	32					Res. HS
	4. Nominate eligible resources to the National or State Register of Historic Places.	32					Res. HS
	5. Consider establishing local historic districts that are supported by residents.	32					Res. HS
	6. Continue to pursue funding for the preservation of local historic resources.	32					Res. HS
	7. Establish a demolition delay ordinance to help preserve historical structures.	32				2	
	8. Review local regulations to ensure there is incentive to preserve historic properties.	32	2				
Preserve Other Character Resources							
	1. Continue to identify physical character resources.	35					Res.
	2. Establish regulations that protect identified physical character resources.	35	1	1			
	3. Adopt a local scenic road ordinance and designate scenic roads.	35				2	
	4. Encourage the Department of Transportation to designate State scenic highways.	35				2	PW
	5. Promote the best possible building design in order to promote community character.	35					
	6. Establish a "local register of important places" to catalog important resources.	35					Res. HS
	7. Establish educational programs to promote awareness of character resources.	35					Res. HS
	8. Encourage awareness of character resources.	35					Res. HS
Modify Road Standards							
	1. Modify road standards to help create the scenic roads of the future.	36	1				PW
	2. Do not permit new dirt roads unless a community benefit can be demonstrated.	36					PW

ADDRESS COMMUNITY NEEDS

		Page	PZC	IWCC	EDC	BOS	Other
Address Community Facility Needs							
	1. Complete the Town Office relocation to the new Town Hall building.	42				1	
	2. Make effective use of Citizens Hall.	42					Res.
	3. Seek ways to encourage volunteer participation.	42					VFD
	4. Establish a new public safety facility.	42				2	VFD
	5. Relocate the Public Works Garage to a location outside of the Center.	42					PW
	6. Investigate how to help the day care center obtain additional space.	42				2	
	7. Establish a new recreation complex close to the Village Center.	42					PRC
	8. Consider acquiring land adjacent to Kellogg School to allow for future expansion.	42					BOE
	9. Over the long term, identify and acquire land for a future school site.	42					BOE
Seek Ways To Increase Local Net Revenues							
	1. Continue efforts to increase the amount of state aid to Falls Village.	48					Res.
	2. Continue to identify and pursue grants from various public and private sources.	48					
	3. Explore ways to receive PILOT payments from tax-exempt organizations.	48					
	4. Request that land trusts deed land to the State to result in some PILOT payments.	48				1	
	5. Pursue compatible economic development to provide net tax revenue.	48					
	6. Investigate the possibility of expanding appropriate electric generation facilities.	48					
	7. Pursue economic development blending "rural character" and recreation.	48					
	8. Seek to develop other economic "clusters" in Falls Village.	48					
	9. Consider ways to attract other forms of economic development.	48					
	10. Attract uses that provide net revenue and are compatible with community character.	48					






Legend

ID	Reference
PZC	Planning & Zoning Commission
IWCC	Inland Wetlands / Conservation Com.
EDC	Economic Development Commission
BOS	Board of Selectmen
Other	Other Boards, Agencies, or Persons

BOE	Board of Education
BOF	Board of Finance
DOT	CT Dept. of Transp.
HD	Health District
HS	Historical Society
Lib.	Library
PRC	Parks & Recreation
PW	Public Works
Res.	Residents
VFD	Volunteer Fire Dept.

	Definition
1	Highest Priority
2	Moderate Priority
3	Should be complete in five years

GUIDE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

		Page	PZC	IWCC	EDC	BOS	Other
Modify Community Structure							
	1. Modify zoning for future village expansion and a mountain reserve area.	50	1				
	2. Modify zoning to relate the level of development to the natural constraints.	50	1				
Enhance The Village As A Focal Point							
	1. Reinforce the village center as the business and cultural center of the Town.	59					Res.
	2. Establish a village business zone and encourage mixed uses.	59	1				
	3. Undertake programs to establish a dynamic village center.	59					PRC
	4. Move the post office to the area near Main Street and Railroad Street.	59					
	5. Encourage new buildings to be compatible in scale and materials.	59					Res.
	6. Improve the village streetscape into a cohesive overall plan.	59					
	7. Pursue grants and other funding to make improvements in the Village Center.	59			1		
	8. Expand the sidewalk network in the village center area.	59					PW
	9. Seek ways to guide traffic patterns to the village center.	59					PW
	10. Address water system needs in the village.	59				1	HD
	11. Consider investigating the desirability of a sewerage system in the village area.	59					HD
	12. Over the long term, seek to put wired utilities underground in the Center.	59					PW
	13. Explore ways to provide flexible parking requirements using interconnected areas.	59					
	14. Promote marketing and tourism for the village center.	59					Res.

GUIDE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (cont.)

		Page	PZC	IWCC	EDC	BOS	Other
Configure For Appropriate Business Development							
	1. Establish reasonable and defined business zones to guide business development.	66	1				
	2. Reconsider whether "blanket" residential zoning structure is still appropriate.	66					
	3. Re-evaluate home occupation zoning.	66	1				
	4. Implement the business zoning scheme outlined in the Plan.	66	1				
	5. Encourage or require appropriate development styles as outlined in the Plan.	66					
	6. Encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings.	66					
	7. Ensure that strip development patterns do not emerge along Route 7.	66					Res.
	8. Take pro-active steps to make economic development happen in Falls Village.	66					
Modify Residential Development Patterns							
	1. Modify local regulations to include a definition of buildable land.	68	2				
	2. Modify local regulations to include a density standard.	68	2				
	3. Modify regulations to require a percentage be preserved as open space for public use.	68	2				
	4. Provide flexibility in lot size requirements within acceptable Health Code standards.	68	2				HD
	5. Consider allowing other flexible development types that preserve open space.	68					
	6. Consider increasing the area and frontage requirements on arterial / collector streets.	68					
Encourage Housing Diversity							
	1. Continue to consider the diverse housing needs of different people.	72					
	2. Continue to allow for two-family housing provide for housing choice.	72					
	3. Consider the village center as appropriate for multi-family development.	72					
	4. Consider modifying regulations to allow accessory apartments in residential zones.	72	1				
	5. Consider allowing mixed residential / business uses in the Village Center..	72					
	6. Continue to consider appropriate opportunities to enhance housing diversity.	72					
	7. Seek ways to address the projected future need for elderly housing.	72					

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ENHANCE COMMUNITY SPIRIT

		Page	PZC	IWCC	EDC	BOS	Other
Promote Community Spirit							
	1. Seek ways to maintain and promote community pride and spirit.	74					Res.
	2. Continue to encourage local recognition, volunteer contributions, and local events.	74					Res.
	3. Coordinate and schedule community social events.	74					Res.
	4. Maintain strong communication between the Town Hall and community.	74					Res.
	5. Pursue the idea of recognizing and commending citizens.	74					Res.
Consider Renaming The Town To Falls Village							
	1. Hold an advisory local referendum on the name change issue.	76					
	2. If supported, ask legislators to sponsor the necessary legislation.	76					

ADDRESS MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES

		Page	PZC	IWCC	EDC	BOS	Other
Address Miscellaneous Issues							
	1. Maintain membership in the Regional Health District.	78					HD
	2. Require the installation of fire ponds or underground cisterns in new development.	78					VFD
	3. Continue to monitor wireless communication trends and coordinate efforts.	78					
	4. Encourage the establishment of broadband facilities in Falls Village.	78					Res.
	5. Continue to support the Northwestern Connecticut Transit District.	78					
	6. Support and encourage reuse of the rail line through Falls Village.	78					
	7. Consider making traffic improvements at intersections where desirable.	78					PW

CONCLUSION

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The Plan of Conservation & Development has been prepared to meet the challenges that will confront Falls Village in the future.

The first step in the planning process was to find out where we are. A great deal of information was collected, presented, reviewed, and discussed as part of the process of assembling this Plan. The second step was to determine where we want to go. Many meetings were held to assess issues in Falls Village and discuss alternative strategies. Through this work, general goals and policies were developed. The third step was to lay out specific actions that will help us remember how we will get there. These specific strategies are detailed throughout the Plan and summarized in the implementation tables.

However, the most important step of the planning process will be implementation of the recommendations. While the task of implementation rests with all Falls Village residents, the realization of the Plan is orchestrated by the Planning and Zoning Commission and other Town agencies and officials.

The Plan is intended as a guide to be followed in order to maintain and enhance the quality of life and the community character of Falls Village. It is intended to be flexible in order to allow adjustments in the manner that specific goals and objectives are achieved while maintaining stability in the long-term goals of the community. It is intended to be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect community conditions and trends.

During the next few years, some of the goals will hopefully be achieved, some circumstances will undoubtedly change, and some conditions will certainly arise that will suggest that it is time to reconsider the Plan or some of its elements. Such situations are to be welcomed since it will mean that the Plan is being used as a beacon by residents. Programs that help achieve community consensus, establish community goals, and promote community welfare will all turn out to be positive steps in the history of Falls Village.

By preparing this Plan of Conservation & Development, that process has already begun.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Residents of Falls Village

Planning Committee of the Planning & Zoning Commission

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Frederick J. Laser

Thomas M. Scott

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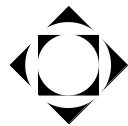
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