

FALLS VILLAGE

Plan Of Conservation And Development
2023-2033



REVISED DRAFT – August 2023

**Community Input Meeting Scheduled For
Saturday September 30 At 10:00 AM At
Lee H. Kellogg School Multi-Purpose Room**

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

Town Of Canaan / Falls Village

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GREETINGS!

August 2023

To Falls Village Residents,

This document is the **REVISED DRAFT** of the 2023-2033 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) for Canaan / Falls Village, Connecticut.

This **DRAFT** POCD will be the subject of a **public informational meeting** on:

**Saturday September 30, 2023
10:00 AM to Noon
Lee H. Kellogg School– 47 Main Street
Multi-Purpose Room**

To date, the process of preparing this document included:

- An on-line survey of Falls Village residents,
- A community workshop meeting where residents got together to talk about issues important to them,
- Independent research and investigation by a planning consultant,
- Working meetings of the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) where planning issues and potential strategies were discussed and refined,
- Preparation and refinement of a draft POCD.

It is anticipated this document will be further reviewed and refined following the public information meeting and before moving towards adoption.

Sincerely,

Planning & Zoning Commission

Fred Laser, Chair

1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Conditions & Trends

This section of the POCD provides a general overview of conditions and trends affecting Falls Village at the time the 2023 POCD was being prepared.

History of Falls Village

The landform of the area we now know as Falls Village evolved over millions of years as a result of geologic forces. Native Americans are known to have inhabited this area for the past 10,000 years or so. European discovery and settlement of Connecticut by the English and Dutch began in the early 1600s starting along Long Island Sound and the Connecticut River.

While trade between Europeans and Native American inhabitants of this area is believed to have begun earlier, it was not until 1720 that European settlement came to the Falls Village area. Eventually, the Connecticut Colony auctioned off the land in this area and, in 1739, the Connecticut General Court (today's General Assembly) officially granted incorporation to Canaan.

Most early settlers were subsistence farmers although the Housatonic River and other waterways supported early mills. The existence of limestone and iron ore spawned a significant iron industry.

Railroad service arrived in the mid-1800s and this resulted in the following:

- The name "Canaan" was given to the station on the Hartford - Albany roadway (now Route 44) and the name "Falls Village" was given to the station near the Great Falls.
- Differences in opinion resulted in a split between the northern and southern parts of the community with the southern part retaining the name "Canaan" and the northern part being branded as "North Canaan" yet having the village called Canaan within its borders.
- While rail service could have accelerated growth in the local iron industry, it actually made iron from other places more available and resulted in a decline of the iron industry in northwest Connecticut.

After the split with North Canaan, population decreased in Falls Village until starting to increase again after World War II. In the late 1900s, Falls Village became a haven for seasonal residents, much like other parts of Litchfield County.

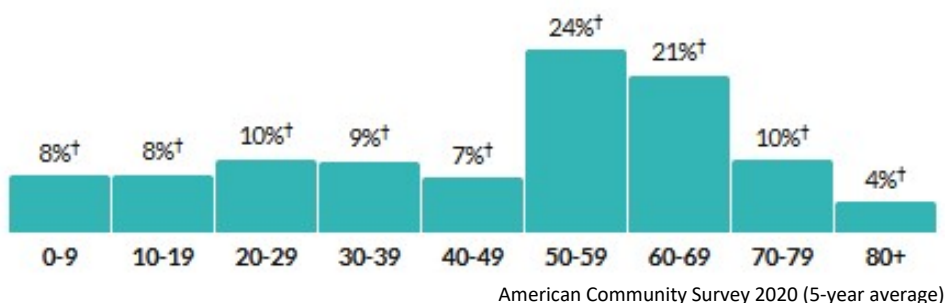
People Of Falls Village

The 2020 Census reports that Falls Village had 1,080 residents in 2020. This represents a **decrease** of about 154 residents since 2010. It is thought that this decrease is mainly the result of an aging population (fewer persons per household).

The age composition of Falls Village has trended significantly older in recent years and almost 60% of the population is over age 50. A changing age composition has implications for schools (such as decreasing enrollments, especially at the elementary level) and other municipal services. This changing age composition can be viewed in a couple of ways:

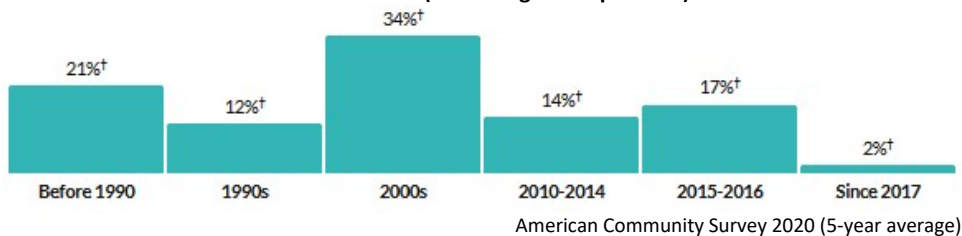
- Residents aging in place because they love it here,
- New, but older, residents attracted by the rural ambience, and/or
- An inability to attract younger people and families due to housing costs or other factors.

Falls Village's Population By Age Range (Percentage of Population)



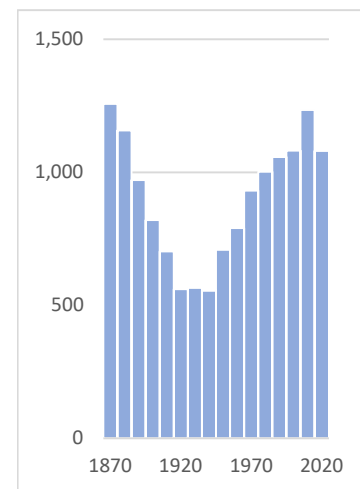
Census information suggests there is population turnover in Falls Village. About one-third of Falls Village residents in 2020 had moved to Falls Village before 2000, about one-third between 2000 and 2010, and the other third since 2010.

Year Moved In (Percentage of Population)



While Census data is updated once every 10 years, the American Community Survey (ACS) produces estimates more frequently but based on a small sample size with a margin of error. ACS data can be found at www.censusreporter.org and other data can be found at www.profiles.ctdata.org.

Falls Village's Population

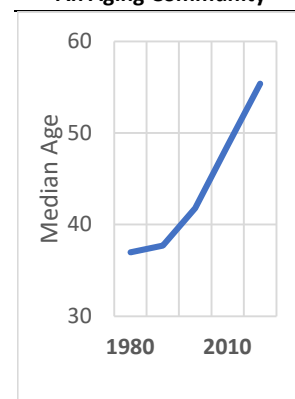


Falls Village's Median Age

1980	37.0
1990	37.7
2000	41.8
2010	48.6
2020	52.1

US Census, Planimetrics

Graph Illustrating An Aging Community



Median Home Value	
Salisbury	\$494,500
Cornwall	\$441,800
Sharon	\$374,100
Falls Village	\$338,800
Goshen	\$329,900
Norfolk	\$320,800
North Canaan	\$190,900

CERC, 2021

Median Monthly Rent	
Goshen	\$1,810
Salisbury	\$1,249
Falls Village	\$1,119
North Canaan	\$1,042
Cornwall	\$968
Sharon	\$954
Norfolk	\$913

CERC, 2021

Percent Affordable Housing	
North Canaan	7.9%
Cornwall	3.6%
Norfolk	2.7%
Sharon	2.0%
Salisbury	1.5%
Falls Village	1.3%
Goshen	0.3%

CT DOH, 2022

Housing In Falls Village

According to 2020 Census, Falls Village had 639 housing units in 2020. For several decades, Falls Village has been one of the slowest growing communities in Connecticut.

Household sizes in Falls Village (2.42 persons per unit) are smaller than many other communities. Past Census surveys have found that over 60 percent of the housing units in Falls Village were occupied by one or two people.

According to the 2020 Census results, about 19% of the homes in Falls Village are kept for weekend, seasonal, or occasional use (second homes). Such homes provide net tax revenue to support local services but may not support local businesses or provide volunteers to participate in local organizations. Since these housing units are occupied seasonally or occasionally, the “effective” population of Falls Village is probably higher than the number reported in the Census.

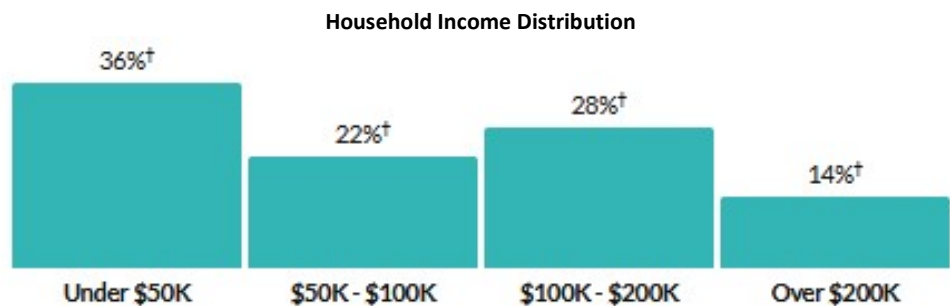
About 1.3 percent of the housing units in Falls Village are categorized as affordable housing by the State of Connecticut (assisted housing, CHFA mortgage, rental assistance, deed-restricted). Communities where less than 10 percent of the housing stock meets the State definition are subject to possible judicial over-ride of certain local zoning decisions (see CGS Section 8-30g).

Economy Of Falls Village

A local economy is important in terms of:

- Providing for jobs and income for people,
- Ensuring a range of goods and services is available, and
- Providing tax revenue to support local services.

The American Community Survey (ACS) estimates that about 24 percent of all households in Falls Village earn some self-employment income. The ACS also estimates the median household income (half the households earn more and half the households earn less) in Falls Village as of 2021 was \$80,938. However, as can be seen below, over one-third of the households in Falls Village earn less than \$50,000 per year.



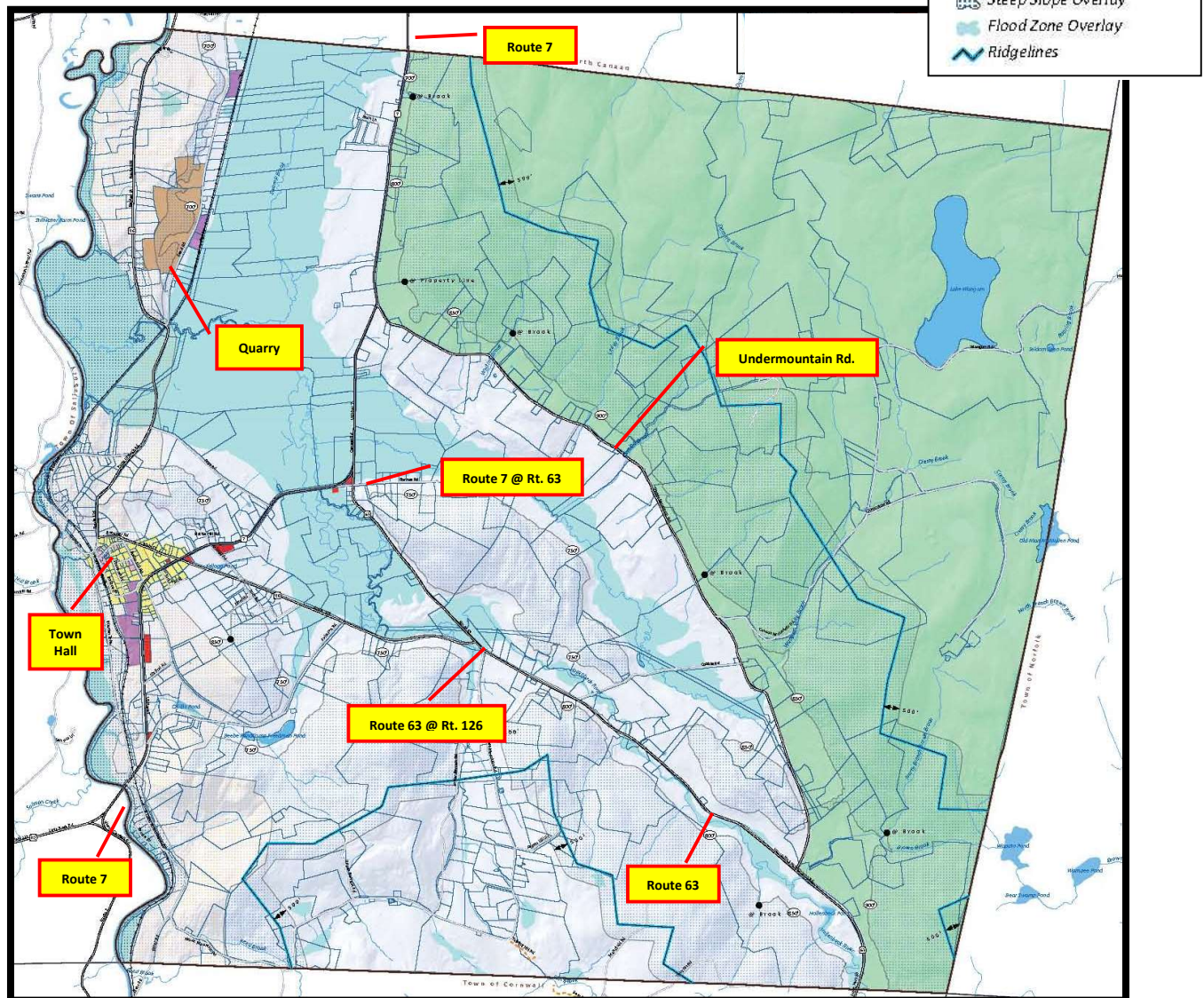
American Community Survey 2021 (5-year average)

Zoning In Falls Village

A zoning map is used to identify what types of land uses are allowed in different areas of a community. A scalable PDF version of the Falls Village Zoning Map may be found at www.canaanfallsvillage.org.

The vast majority of land in Falls Village is zoned for residential purposes. There is a Village Business zone in the Village Center and some other business / industrial zones in outlying areas (Rural Business, Light Industrial, Quarry).

There are also three zoning districts which overlay the other districts to protect sensitive resources (Housatonic River corridor, steep slopes, and floodplains).



On-Line Survey

The on-line survey was open for about 4 weeks. A flyer was sent to all mail customers and the Town's electronic newsletter helped raise awareness of the survey. Overall, 231 responses were received. Some results are highlighted below.

1.2 Community Accomplishments & Celebrations

As part of the planning process, the Planning and Zoning Commission conducted several exercises to get input and insight from residents and business owners:

- An on-line survey.
- A survey of members of local boards and commissions.
- An in-person workshop meeting.

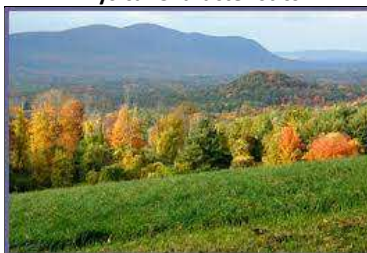
From the on-line survey, it was learned that the characteristics that were most important in attracting people to Falls Village included:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Community characteristics / ambience, etc. | 89% |
| • Ruralness / small town | 84% |
| • Housing type / value / affordability | 82% |
| • Location (close to work, close to family, etc.) | 61% |
| • Town amenities / services | 56% |
| • Education system | 53% |

In other words, the top three attributes were:

- The physical appearance / character
- The feeling people get from our unique community
- The availability of housing that meets their needs

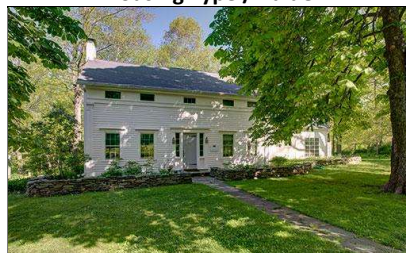
Physical Characteristics



Sense of Community



Housing Type / Value



Also from the on-line survey, residents identified a variety of things they were “proud of” about the community:

<p>Physical Characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural beauty • Open space / Protected lands • Open agricultural land • Housatonic River / Great Falls • Closeness to nature • Architecture of village • Village atmosphere • Main Street • Quiet / clean / beautiful • Historical ambiance • Not too crowded • The "look and feel" 	<p>Local Facilities / Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lee H Kellogg School • David M. Hunt library • Fire Station / Ambulance • Senior Center • Historical Society and Museum • The Town Pool • Our K-8 school is a treasure • Town garage and crew • The quality of the education my children got at Kellogg • Good community events • Music Mountain Concert Hall • Annual car show
<p>Sense of Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The people • Friendliness • Large number of volunteers • Quirky diversity • My happy place • Quality of life • Feeling of community • It's all like an extended family. • People love this town • Never ending 'community spirit' • Increasingly engaged community • Quaintness • Safety • Quiet • Small town lifestyle • Small size and scale • Peacefulness of the town • Small town living 	<p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very little traffic • Dark skies at night • Fresh air • Hiking trails • Economic diversity • The mix of people from different economic brackets • Local artists and artisans • Falls Village Inn • 100 Main Street • Falls Village Cafe • Outdoor activities • Land conservation ethic • Near to Berkshire, Hudson, NYC • It's a great place to raise kids • Great Mountain Forest • Isabella Freedman Retreat Center • Jacobs Garage

1.3 Community Issues & Concerns

The on-line survey also gave participants the opportunity to identify things they were “sorry about” in the community. Some of the key issues written in by participants were categorized as follows :

- Discord (63)
- Lack Of Affordable Housing (53)
- Taxes (52)
- Village Center (52)

Discord



Lack of Affordable Housing



Taxes



Village Center



Overview Of Participants

1. 82% of participants were full-time residents (74% were owners and 8% were renters). 11% owned a second home in Canaan / Falls Village.
2. 30% of participants were from the Village Center area, 30% from areas south of Rt 126 and Rt 63. 21% percent from areas north and west of Rt.7 and 19% from areas east of Route 7 and Route 63.
3. 57% of participants were 20 to 64 years old - 43% were over age 65.
4. Half of participants have lived here less than 20 years – half for longer.
5. 81% of participants indicated they had no children living at home.
6. As to overall quality of life, 71% rated it very good or excellent, 23% rated it good, and 7% rated it fair or poor.
7. 70% of participants felt they would still be living here in 10 years. About 30% felt they might live elsewhere.

Importance / Performance - When asked to rate the “importance” and “performance” of a list of 15 pre-selected POCD topics, the top responses included:

Importance	Performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting Natural Resource Preserving Open Space Promoting Agriculture Improving Facilities / Services Providing Quality Education Promoting Bus./Eco. Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing Quality Education Enhancing the Village Center Preserving Open Space Protecting Natural Resource Enhancing Characteristics / Assets Improving Facilities / Services

Greatest Challenge - When asked an open-ended question about what they see as the greatest challenge or need facing Falls Village in the next 10 to 20 years, the top responses included:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| • Affordable Housing / Housing | 36 |
| • Younger Population | 33 |
| • Taxes / Cost of Living | 21 |
| • Growth / Economic Development | 19 |
| • Character | 16 |

Make One Thing Happen - When asked about the one thing that could happen to make Falls Village a better place, the top responses included:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| • Affordable Housing / Housing | 38 |
| • Community / Communication / Discord | 22 |
| • Village Center | 17 |
| • Facilities / Services | 17 |
| • Government | 15 |

Support For Specific Initiatives - When asked about their level of support of certain initiatives which have been discussed in Falls Village in recent years, participants indicated the following levels of support:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| • Attracting younger residents and families | 91% |
| • Attracting economic development to generate tax revenue | 90% |
| • Enabling the creation of housing that is more affordable | 86% |
| • Adding new businesses and uses in the Village Center | 75% |

Board Members Survey

A survey of members of some local boards and commissions early in the planning process revealed some “top of mind” topics to be considered in the POCD.

What do you particularly like about Falls Village and how it has evolved?

- Sense of community
- Rural / environment

Is there anything about how Falls Village has evolved that you do not care for?

- Social discord
- Housing debate

What do you see as the greatest challenge ... in the next 10 to 20 years?

- Housing / age composition
- Agreeing on a common vision
- Maintaining what we have
- Generating revenue

What types of things should Falls Village encourage in the future?

- Housing / younger population
- Growth / Revenue / Businesses

What types of things should Falls Village discourage in the future?

- Character change

If the Plan of Conservation and Development could help make one thing happen in Falls Village in the next 10 years, what would you want that to be?

- Affordable housing / Younger populations

Community Workshop Meeting

As part of preparing the POCD, a public workshop meeting was held in the gymnasium at Lee H. Kellogg School to learn about issues that Falls Village residents felt were important to consider in the POCD. People were informed about the meeting through a town-wide mailer, social media posts, press releases, word-of-mouth, and other means. About 70 people attended the meeting.

Planning Points Exercise - Attendees at the meeting were given an envelope containing planning points and asked to use those planning points to express their feeling about topics typically considered as part of a POCD. People were given five vouchers representing “planning points” (one @ 20 points, two @ 10 points each, and two @ 5 points each) to allocate among twelve boxes representing topics that might be considered for Falls Village’s POCD. The results are presented below.

Tabulation of Planning Points

	# of 20 points	# of 10 points	# of 5 points	Total Points
Lead Group				
Community Character	1	17	5	375
Housing Affordability / Needs	10	8	17	365

Second Group				
Economic Development	5	9	13	255
Village Center	5	10	10	250
Community Facilities	4	13	5	235
Community (aging / younger / diversity)	5	9	8	230
Natural Resources	3	10	9	205

Third Group				
Open Space	3	6	6	150
Sustainability / Resiliency	3	6	6	150
Traffic and Circulation	4	5	4	150

Fourth Group				
Utilities	0	5	7	85
Walking / Biking / Other	0	2	10	70

The remaining portion of the community workshop meeting was devoted to an interactive discussion about the topics which received the most planning points. The key parts of those interactive discussions have been included in the POCD chapters that follow.

Change Over Time ...

It is interesting to note how Falls Village's planning priorities have changed over time. While different categories were used during preparation of the 2002 POCD, the same type of exercise was conducted. The following graphic is intended to illustrate how community priorities may have changed over the past two decades (change in percentage of points received).

1. Housing Affordability (+15% = NEW)
2. Community (+9% = NEW)
3. Sustainability (+6% = NEW)
4. Village Center (+5%)
5. Utilities (+3%)
6. Walking / Biking / Other (+3%)
7. Community Facilities (+2%)
8. Housing and Residential Issues (0%)
9. Community Character (0%)
10. Transportation / Traffic / Circulation (-2%)
11. Conservation of Natural Resources (-5%)
12. Economic Development (-7%)
13. Preservation of Historic Resources (-8%)
14. Open Space (-10%)
15. Land Use Regulations (-11%)

-10% 0% 10%

Town-Wide Mailer



What Do You See For The Future Of Canaan / Falls Village?

1.4 POCD Organization

Based on input from the community and discussion by the Planning and Zoning Commission, the chapters of the POCD are organized around four main themes:

- Each theme contains one or more sub-sections addressing specific topics of importance to Falls Village, and
- Each theme presents goals and strategies (including policies and action steps) for the future of Falls Village.



Address Key Issues

- Become A More Sustainable / Resilient Community
- Create Housing Opportunities
- Increase The Vitality Of The Village Center
- Promote Economic Development
- Promote A Diverse Community



Maintain / Enhance Community Assets

- Protect Natural Resources
- Preserve And Enhance Open Space / Trails
- Encourage Working Lands
- Protect Historic Resources
- Protect Other Community Assets



Address Other Issues

- Support Community Spirit / Civic Participation
- Address Transportation Needs / Issues
- Promote Improvement of Broadband / Wireless
- Consider Renaming The Town To Falls Village



Implementation

- Implement Policies
- Complete Action Steps

Using The POCD

This is the 2023 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) for Falls Village, Connecticut. The POCD is an official document intended to outline a vision for the future of Falls Village and to identify strategies to help make that vision a reality.

The POCD was prepared by the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) and the process included a community survey, several public meetings, and a number of P&Z working sessions to collect and evaluate information relevant to the POCD. Above all, the input from residents and businesses talking about their visions for the community they call home was a key element of preparing this Plan.

Implementation is the most important part of the planning process and a key focus in this POCD. Several elements of this POCD have been specifically configured to promote implementation:

1. **Action Steps Specifically Called Out** – Action steps (described in the sidebar) highlight the pro-active steps that should be taken to implement the POCD.
2. **Policies Listed** – Policies (described in the sidebar) have been listed and organized to facilitate their use by the Planning and Zoning Commission (and others) to evaluate potential actions in terms of POCD consistency, such as:
 - Zoning amendments (text or map changes).
 - Granting of Special Permits
 - Reviewing municipal improvements (as provided in CGS Section 8-24).
3. **Leaders / Partners Identified** – Each policy and action step in the POCD has a leader (and often one or more partners) identified. These are the entities most responsible for implementation of that policy or action step. Experience has shown that specifically identifying the responsible entity has a dramatic effect on implementation. A legend for acronyms used to identify leaders and partners is on the back cover.

Policies Listed

Action Steps Called Out

A. POLICIES		Leader / Partners
1. Continue to protect watercourses, waterbodies, wetlands, floodplains, vernal pools, and other important water resources.		IWC PZC
2. Discourage clear-cutting, building and road development on steep slopes.		PZC
3. Strengthen communications between the regulatory (land use) boards and commissions.		PZC IWCC ZBA HDC
B. ACTION STEPS		Leader / Partners
1. Update stormwater and erosion control regulations, including application of low impact development techniques.	<input type="checkbox"/>	PZC
2. Modify local regulations to require DEEP notification when development sites are within areas shown on the Natural Diversity Database map.	<input type="checkbox"/>	PZC

Leaders / Partners Identified

Policies / Action Steps

The POCD contains two types of strategies – policies and action steps. These are located at the end of each topical section of the POCD.

Policies are statements in **black text** which should be used to evaluate proposed activities or initiatives for consistency with the POCD. Note that policies may never be considered implemented since they are intended to be on-going.

Action steps are specific tasks in **italic text** which should be taken to implement the POCD. Action steps can be considered implemented when complete.

2

ADDRESS KEY ISSUES

Sustainability / Resiliency

For the purposes of this Plan, the term “sustainability” refers to the concept of using resources in ways that balance current desires with future needs so that all generations will have what they need.

The term “resiliency” refers to the community’s ability to adapt to new circumstances and/or recover from sudden changes or adversity.

2.1 Become A Sustainable /Resilient Community

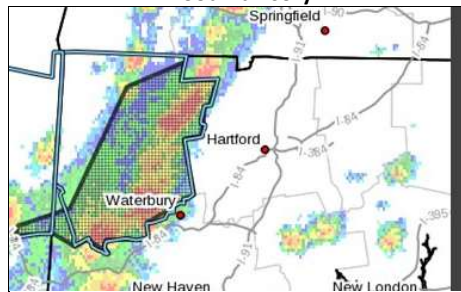
In recent years, the concepts of sustainability and resiliency have grown in visibility and importance and, perhaps more importantly, recognition that communities like Falls Village have important roles to play in addressing them. The POCD recommends that Falls Village continue to be aware of and sensitive to promoting a more sustainable and resilient future.

The need for action became especially apparent in Falls Village (and surrounding communities) during July of 2023 when an intense rain event overwhelmed storm drainage facilities and the stormwater runoff eroded drainage channels, undermined roads, flooded roads and properties, and closed a number of local facilities and businesses. Climate change is likely to result in more frequent and intense storms that will affect the community and the residents and properties in Falls Village.

This POCD chapter identifies strategies to:

- Address climate change,
- Promote environmental /ecological sustainability, and
- Promote resilience from impactful events.

Flood Advisory



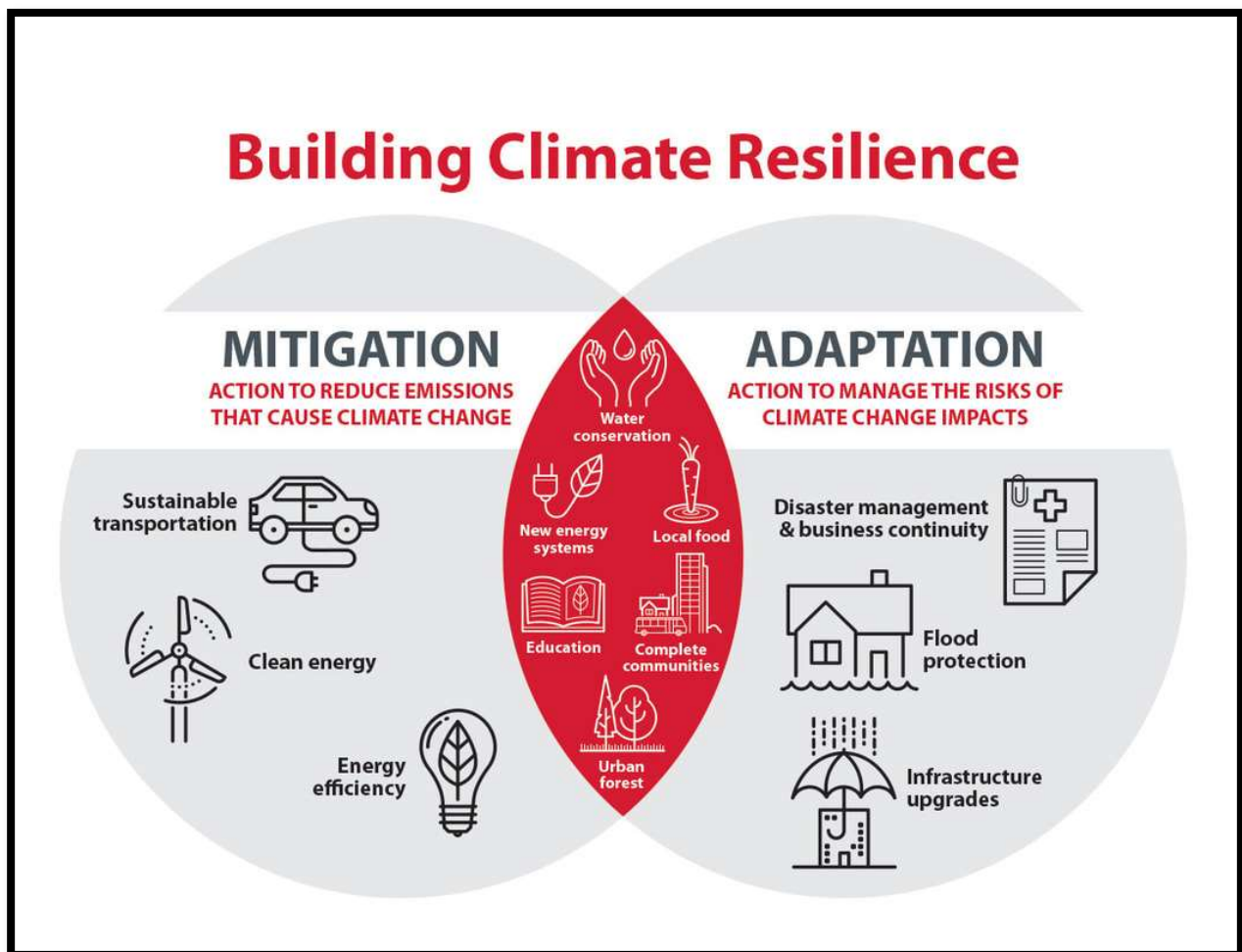
Road Closure



Climate Change

Climate change is part of the discussion of sustainability. Climate change has been occurring over time because of the use of “fossil fuels” (energy sequestered over millennia) at a rapid pace and in a way that results in the emission of heat and other negative effects. News sources report that July 2023 was the warmest month in history across the globe. Climate change has resulted in global warming, sea level rise, more frequent and more intense storm events, habitat changes, and other effects.

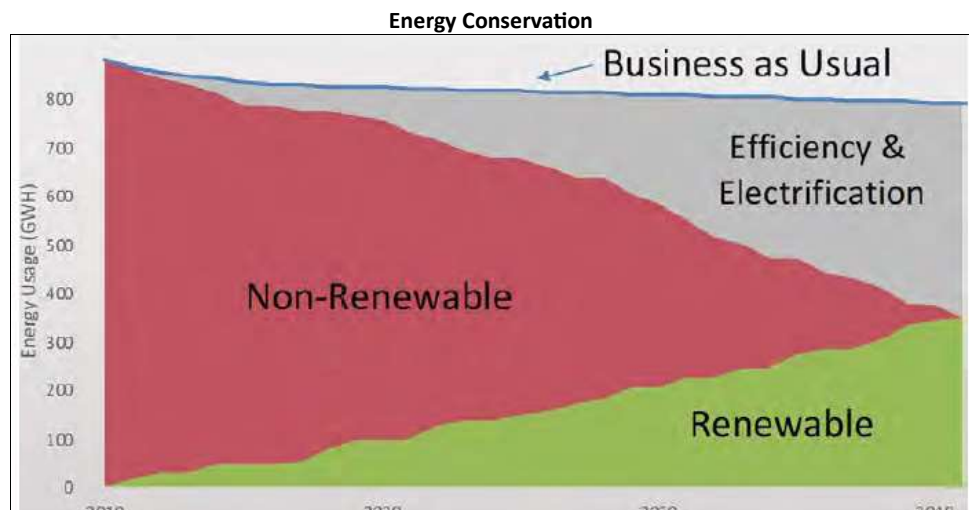
Strategies to address climate change have to address how people and organizations use energy and this is what makes it so hard. People have become accustomed to how they use energy, and they can be reluctant to change. Yet, if we are to make a difference in addressing climate change, these are the actions that must be taken to address the root causes of climate change.



Environmental /Ecological Sustainability

Energy Conservation / Transition – Reducing energy usage (especially fossil fuel energy usage) by people and organizations (including the Town) will enhance overall sustainability. Falls Village should:

- Help residents, businesses and government accelerate the transition from conventional energy approaches to more sustainable approaches.
- Encourage residents and businesses to find ways to reduce energy consumption (more efficient equipment, better insulated buildings, a transition from oil to heat pumps, solar, and other approaches).
- Seek to acquire one third (or more) of the Town's energy through renewable sources by 2030.
- Promote the installation of solar arrays on residential, commercial, institutional, and Town buildings.
- Install electric vehicle charging stations in the Village Center .



Water Conservation – Falls Village should promote water conservation in the community. Even though many residents get their water from private wells, such sources are reliant on groundwater and the state recently experienced a drought and water restrictions were established into a number of communities. There has been a growing awareness for many years about the need for water conservation and building codes now require and appliance manufacturers now provide low usage fixtures.

Waste Reduction / Recycling – Falls Village should continue to encourage reducing the amount of trash entering the waste stream and promoting reduction, composting and recycling.

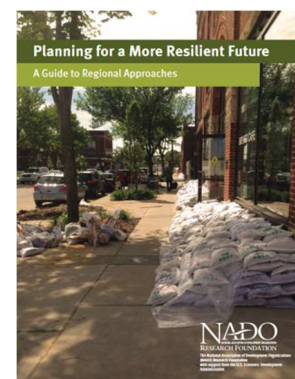
Sustainability Education – Becoming more sustainable will be enhanced by educational efforts. Falls Village should continue educating residents about sustainability concepts and how to be as sustainable as possible.

Resiliency

As the world continues to change in ways that we cannot fully envision today (climate change, severe storms, health pandemics, economic upheavals etc.), it is important Falls Village seek to become an even more resilient community in order to be able to adapt to new challenges and opportunities. Falls Village should continue to identify possible hazards so preparation (and mitigation, if possible) can be made beforehand.

In terms of natural hazards, Falls Village continues to participate in the preparation of a regional hazard mitigation plan (NHCOG) and is implementing various recommendations intended to reduce risks and promote recovery.

Approaches



Information from www.adaptationclearinghouse.org indicates that small communities and rural areas face unique climate adaptation / sustainability / resilience challenges due to:

- Limited administrative capacity within government,
- Less diversified economies,
- More dependence on natural resources, and
- Greater physical isolation from critical infrastructure and services.

There are numerous sources of information on how to start addressing these issues.

Overall, coordinating with the Northwest Hills Council of Governments and adjacent communities will be very helpful in overcoming some of the challenges that can face small communities.

A. POLICIES	Leader / Partners
1. Continue to participate in programs offered by SustainableCT.	Town
2. Seek to reduce energy consumption (facilities, vehicles and equipment) by becoming more energy efficient, acquiring energy through renewable sources (solar, wind, etc.) and other means.	SC
3. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement strategies that will address the root causes of climate change.	All
4. Inform and educate residents, businesses and government on addressing climate change, energy conservation, energy micro-grids, water conservation, waste reduction, and other	SC
5. Promote recycling through Town publications and coordination with waste haulers.	SC
6. Become an even more resilient community in order to adapt to new challenges (climate change, severe storms, health pandemics, economic upheavals etc.),	SC
7. Promote the responsible deployment of solar energy (rooftop, canopy ground mount, larger scale) including a public discussion of land appropriate for solar development.	P&Z
8. Participate with regional agencies on updating and refining "hazard mitigation" strategies and climate adaptation strategies.	Town

B. ACTION STEPS	Leader / Partners
1. <i>Establish a Sustainability Committee to help guide Falls Village towards becoming a more sustainable / resilient community.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> BOS
2. <i>Update Zoning Regulations to address private solar arrays (attached and free-standing) and wind energy systems.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> P&Z

What Is Affordable Housing

Housing is considered to be affordable when its occupants spend 30% or less of their income on it. If a household earned \$5,000 per month (\$60,000 per year), housing costing less than \$1,500 per month would be considered to be affordable.

Since wealthy households may be better able to afford spending more on housing (without having to give up other needs such as food, medical care, transportation, etc.), public policy is mostly concerned with persons and families earning 80% or less of the area median income.

The 2021 Affordable Housing Plan indicated that 80% of the area median income for a household of 4 people was about \$82,000 at that time. Housing would be considered affordable to that household if it spent less than \$2,050 per month.

In 2023, the income threshold for a family of four had increased to about \$83,000.

The median income threshold changes each year and the most recent information may be found at:

www.huduser.org

OR

www.portal.ct.gov/doh

2.2 Create More Housing Opportunities

Falls Village is primarily a residential community and the vast majority of the land in Falls Village is zoned residential. However, due to a lack of housing production in northwestern Connecticut and elsewhere, interest in seasonal homes, expansion of AirBnB and other short-term rentals, and other factors, the price of housing has outpaced median income growth and so housing has become less affordable over time.

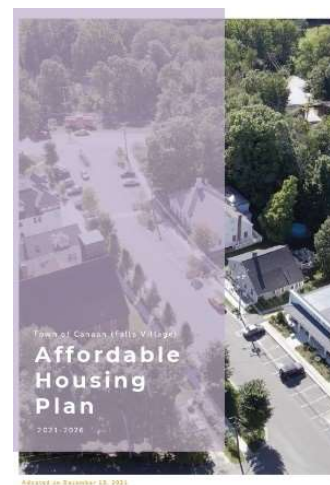
This mismatch between housing prices and what people can afford to spend on housing affects existing residents as well as people seeking to live in the community on a full-time basis.

In a number of exercises conducted as part of preparing this POCD, the lack of housing that is affordable to an older population, to young persons and families just starting out, and to people earning typical wages was identified as a key issue for Falls Village for a number of reasons:

- Affordable housing brings in younger people and families that help energize and refresh our community with new ideas.
- Affordable housing lets seniors (who may be living on fixed incomes) stay in the community where they may have lived for decades.
- Affordable housing supports so many elements of our community:
 - Volunteer organizations.
 - Workers at local businesses.

Some people can afford housing at median prices and above but a significant part of the population may not be able to afford it now or in the future.

This is why Falls Village has chosen to make housing a priority in this Plan of Conservation and Development and the recently adopted Affordable Housing Plan.



This change in focus and increase in emphasis compared to previous Plans of Conservation and Development is deliberate and is intended to enable and encourage housing options so that Falls Village's housing portfolio can adapt to meet changing needs. The overall intent is to address identified housing needs for:

- An aging population, and
- Low- and moderate-income persons and families.

In recent years, the Falls Village Housing Trust (a non-profit corporation) has been working on creating affordable housing units:

- In a new development on River Road, and
- On individual properties in the Village Center area.

The POCD supports efforts such as these which will help provide affordable housing options for those who need it today or may need it at some time in the future.

Proposed Affordable Housing Development On River Road



Getting Started



Senior Cottages

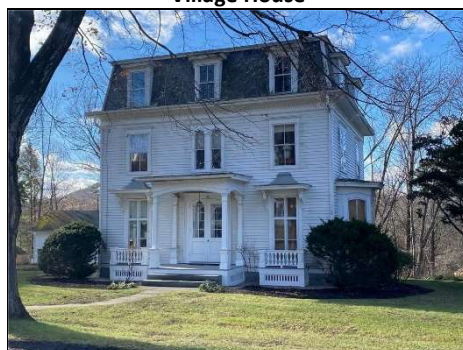


Family Housing

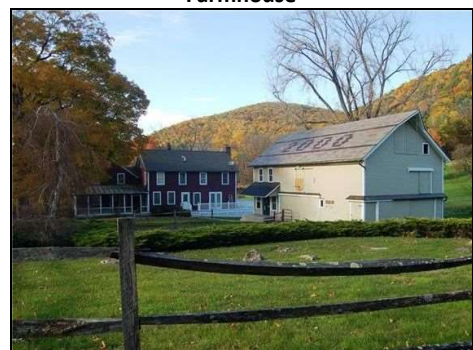


A. POLICIES	Leader / Partners
1. Seek ways to address the diverse housing needs of the elderly, the disabled, moderate-income families, ‘empty-nesters’, and people re-locating to this area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership units. • Rental units. 	All
2. Continue to support organizations seeking to provide affordable housing (such as the Falls Village Housing Trust, Habitat For Humanity, Litchfield County Center for Housing Opportunity, Northwest Hills Council of Government, and others).	All
3. Seek ways to accomplish the goals of the 2021 Affordable Housing Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create 5 new units of affordable housing for homeownership. • Create 20 new affordable rental units (16 units-River Road Homes). • Create 5 market-rate rental units for long-term basis (one+ year lease). 	All
4. Consider the Village Center as the most appropriate area for future multi-family development (see strategy elsewhere regarding sewage disposal).	All
5. Continue to allow for two-family housing, especially in the Village Center, in order to provide for housing choice and economic diversity.	P&Z
6. Continue to encourage accessory dwelling units in residential zones.	P&Z
7. In outlying areas of Falls Village, continue to encourage flexible development patterns that preserve meaningful open space.	P&Z
8. Inform and educate the community about affordable housing and continue to advocate for affordable housing.	AHC

Village House



Farmhouse



B. ACTION STEPS		Leader / Partners
1. Form an Affordable Housing Committee (with technical support as needed) to advocate for and coordinate affordable housing efforts in Falls Village.	<input type="checkbox"/>	BOS
2. Modify the Zoning Regulations to allow multi-family housing in the Village Center including new construction and the rehabilitation and conversion of existing buildings into housing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	P&Z AHC
3. Modify the Zoning Regulations to allow for the conversion of larger homes into two or three-family homes provided at least one of the units is deed-restricted as affordable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	P&Z AHC
4. Modify the Zoning Regulations that allow for co-housing/cooperative housing and cluster housing as well as opportunities for smaller houses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	P&Z AHC
5. Conduct a feasibility study to identify Town-owned parcel(s) most appropriate for a multi-unit development dedicated for use as senior housing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	BOS AHC
6. Conduct a feasibility study of state-owned land to see if any parcels would be suitable for housing and could be acquired.	<input type="checkbox"/>	BOS AHC
7. Conduct a feasibility study of utility-owned land (eg Ever-source) to see if any parcels are suitable for housing and could be acquired below market-rate or considered for a land swap.	<input type="checkbox"/>	BOS AHC
8. Conduct an annual "Open House About Housing" to assess the progress of implementing the Affordable Housing Plan and discuss additional ways to create more housing opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	AHC
9. Review the Zoning Regulations regarding accessory dwelling units to see if improvements could be made	<input type="checkbox"/>	P&Z

Feasibility Studies

This section of the POCD recommends three feasibility studies – all of which are related to seeing if there are Town, State, or utility properties that might be used to create more housing opportunities in Falls Village.

While the feasibility studies are listed separately, these studies could be undertaken in some combination in order to find opportunities to create more housing opportunities.

Mid-Century Modern



Rural Estate



Possible Strategies

The Public Works facility (blue circle) occupies a prime location in the Village Center and relocating this facility could allow the site to be devoted to uses which will enhance the vitality of the Village Center.

Should development occur south of Railroad Street, it would be important to consider requiring construction of a road connecting to Route 7 (red oval). This will help make the Village Center feel like an easy connection to motorists and enhance the prospects for business and residential development. The Town could also initiate this connection should funding become available.



2.3 Increase The Vitality Of The Village Center

For many years, residents have identified the Village Center as an important focal point of the community. However, people want the Village Center to be more than it is today in terms of its overall vitality. Over the last several decades, there have been improvements in the overall streetscape of the Village Center (sidewalks, planters, benches, crosswalk, etc.) but overall vitality will come from more residents and businesses in the Village Center area.

Over the next 10 years, efforts should be devoted to promoting, encouraging, and supporting residential and business development in the Village Center area. The Village Center is a great location for:

- more residential units (especially small multi-family residential buildings to help create more housing opportunities), and
- more business uses to attract even more people to the Village Center.

An obstacle to making this happen is the lack of a sewer system which means that residents and businesses rely on septic systems to treat waste. The lack of a sewer system creates impediments for existing properties and would possibly detract from the desirable density / intensity of new developments.

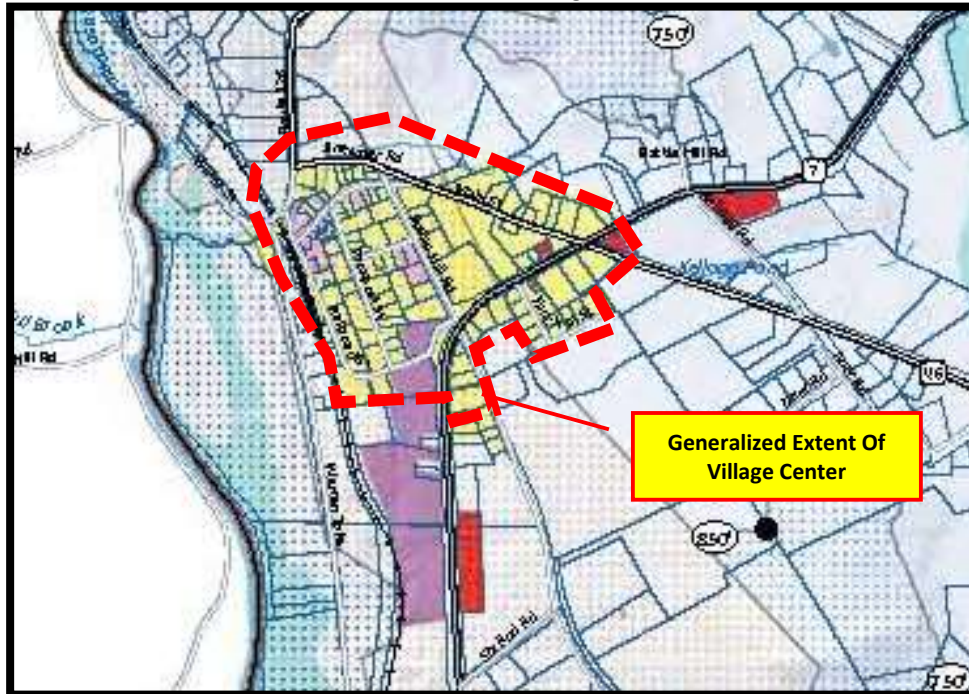
A limited sewer service in the Village Center area could address current issues and facilitate the type of development that residents say they want to add character and vitality to the Village Center area. In essence, the lack of capacity for sewage treatment posed by existing soil conditions and lot sizes limits the utility of some properties in the Village Center and constrains the ability of the Village 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 Village Center.

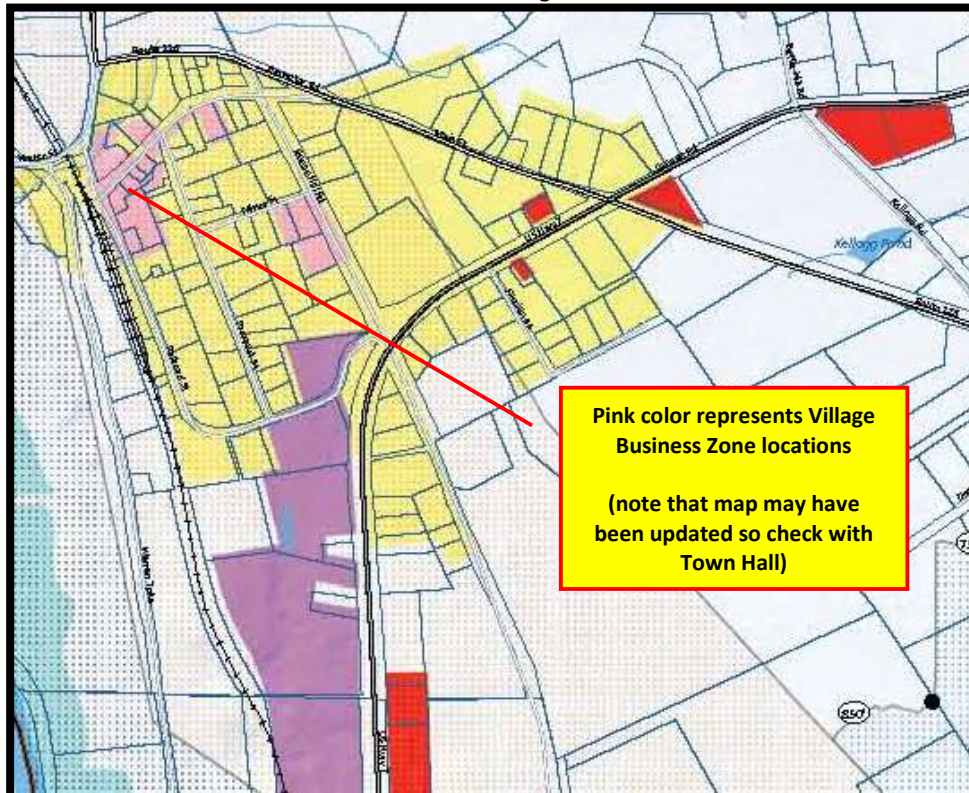
In addition:

- Re-use of historic structures in the Village Center and the construction of new buildings that reflect the existing ambience will be important.
- It would be beneficial if the road network created a more direct connection to the Village Center from Route 7 (see sidebar).
- Expanding and improving the sidewalk network should be a goal.
- Over time, as opportunities present themselves, wired utilities should be placed underground.
- Special events and other activities (and signage and advertising) are strongly encouraged to help bring more people and businesses to the Village Center.

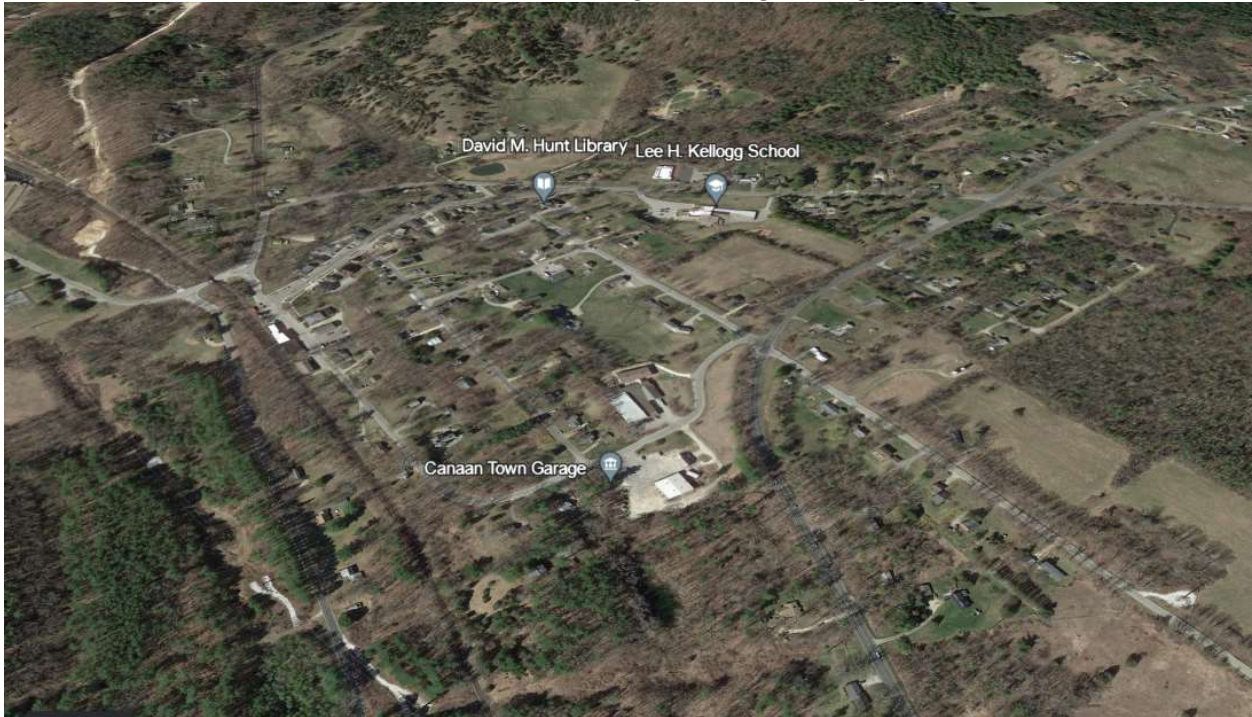
Generalized Extent Of Village Center



Generalized Location Of Village Business Zones



GoogleEarth Image of Village Center



Falls Village Inn



Iconic Caboose



Main Street

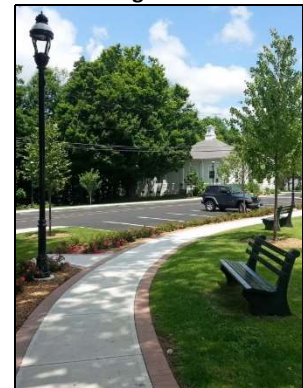


David M. Hunt Library



A. POLICIES		Leader / Partners
1.	Reinforce the Village Center as the business, institutional, historic, and cultural center of the town and as the major community focal point.	All
2.	Work on ways to increase businesses and visitors to the Village Center including more businesses, events, activities, marketing, advertising, special events, road configuration, signage, wayfinding, etc.	All
3.	Encourage mixed-use buildings in the Village Center.	P&Z
4.	Encourage or require new buildings to be compatible in scale and materials with neighboring buildings in the Village Center.	P&Z
5.	Undertake programs to support a dynamic Village Center with the appropriate use of historic buildings as the centerpiece of these efforts.	All
6.	Continue to improve the village streetscape by expanding sidewalks and integrating parking, landscaping, and buildings into a cohesive overall plan.	All
7.	Over the long term, seek to put wired utilities underground in the Village Center.	BOS

Village Center



Special Events



B. ACTION STEPS		Leader / Partners
1.	<i>Continue to investigate the feasibility of a common sewerage system in the village area.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> BOS
2.	<i>Consider expanding the Village Business Zone to enable creative development.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> P&Z
3.	<i>Apply to CT DEEP for a wastewater planning grant to determine possible wastewater management solutions and costs.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> BOS
4.	<i>Investigate relocating the Public Works facility so that the site could be devoted to uses which will enhance the vitality of the Village Center.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> BOS
5.	<i>Explore using Town-owned properties in the Village Center to support revitalization of the Village.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> BOS
6.	<i>Consider designating the Village Business zone as a "village district" under CGS Section 8-2j to have the ability to consider aesthetics as part of application reviews.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> P&Z
7.	<i>Consider designating some or all of the Village Residential zone as a "local historic district" under CGS Section 7-147c so that a local Historic District Commission could be established and have the ability to issue "certificates of appropriateness" for construction visible from a public road.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> BOS

Feasibility Study

This section of the POCD recommends a feasibility study to evaluate the potential approaches (and costs and funding sources) for a sewerage system in the village area. This study will address the present and future needs of existing uses and set the stage for new uses that will help increase the vitality of the Village Center.

2.4 Promote Economic Development

Economic development is important to Falls Village because it will contribute tax revenue to support local services, supply goods and services to meet local needs, and provide jobs for residents.

In a small town, it can be challenging to be able to devote adequate resources (like money and people) to economic development to make measurable progress. In recent years however, the Board of Selectmen was able to muster a modest stipend to have an Economic Development Director to:

- Seek grant funding to support community objectives,
- Cultivate relationships with other organizations, and
- Improve economic conditions and overall quality of life in Falls Village.

Additional economic development initiatives important to Falls Village include:

- Supporting home-based businesses (roughly one quarter of all households in Falls Village reported some self-employment income),
- Seeking to avoid strip development patterns (automobile-oriented commercial development along roadway corridors).
- Jobs to support people and families who already live nearby and attract more people and families.
- Enhancing the overall vibrancy of the community.
- Alleviating the tax impact resulting from fewer residents supporting the overall municipal infrastructure.

The Northwest Connecticut Economic Development Corporation and the Falls Village Community Development Corporation (a private, non-profit) can support and complement these efforts.

Falls Village Inn / Old Fire House



A. POLICIES		Leader / Partners
1.	Pursue development, uses, and activities that will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide jobs, • provide goods and services, • provide net tax revenue to support local services, and • be compatible with Falls Village's vision. 	All P&Z
2.	Maintain the tax abatement policy as an incentive for existing and new businesses to invest in Falls Village (a temporary reduction of taxes in exchange for a capital investment in a local facility) .	BOS BOF

B. ACTION STEPS		Leader / Partners
1.	<i>Review the Zoning Regulations to see if there are any impediments to economic development which could be ameliorated.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> P&Z
2.	<i>Review the Zoning Regulation provisions for the Rural Business and Light Industrial zones to ensure they are appropriate for the overall vision.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> P&Z
3.	<i>Review the home-based business regulations.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> P&Z
4.	<i>Explore using a "planned development district" regulation as a tool to enable creative economic development.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> P&Z
5.	<i>Explore using Town-owned properties to support economic development in Falls Village.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> BOS

Using Town Property

As recommended in Action Step 2.3.B.5 on this page, the Town issued a "request for proposals" for the sale of the Old Fire House on Railroad Street.

This approach, and future ones like it, are intended to attract potential buyers whose business or other activity will help increase the vitality of the Village Center, enhance the local economy, and have a "multiplier" effect on existing businesses.

Mountainside Cafe



Special Events



Diverse Community

Diversity - the presence and celebration of variety (such as in gender, race, age, identity, or opinion) within the community.

Equity – the establishment and maintenance of fairness and justice within the community so that all people are treated equally, especially for groups that have historically been disadvantaged, so that the end result is equal.

Inclusion – creation of a culture and an environment that results in a sense of opportunity for all and a sense of belonging where all people feel their voices are heard,

2.5 Promote A Diverse Community

Falls Village has a very strong sense of community and an evident sense of community spirit. As was stated by a resident in a community meeting: “The overall sense of community and connections within the community are critical to our character and to our future. These are the things that hold us together.” While people can feel anonymous or unconnected in larger communities, people in Falls Village feel connected to, and responsible for, their community. Residents love Falls Village and want to share it with others.

Residents want Falls Village to be a diverse community with residents of all ages—old, young and in between. Attracting a younger population was mentioned several times during the planning process. Residents commented that they would like to do more to attract more young people and families in order to support the school, replenish the supply of volunteers, and continue to invigorate the community with new initiatives and ideas. Other strategies of the POCD support this initiative (affordable housing, economic development, broadband infrastructure, etc.).

Falls Village also would like to attract people from a variety of backgrounds and cultures with a diverse array of interests and avocations. While the concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion (see sidebar) have been recently adopted in other communities, Falls Village feels that it has always embraced them.

As part of the process of preparing this POCD, Falls Villager residents indicated they want to continue this tradition of diversity, equity, and inclusion and invest in keeping people connected in the future.

Children’s Theater



Younger Residents



Kellogg School Artwork

A. POLICIES

Leader /
Partners

1. Help Falls Village be a community with residents of all ages —old, young and in between — and seek to attract more younger people and families in order to support the school, replenish the supply of volunteers, and continue to invigorate the community with new initiatives and ideas:
 - provide for more affordable housing.
 - provide for more economic opportunities.
 - improve broadband / fiber optic capacity to better support an entrepreneurial / creative economy.
2. Increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in Falls Village.

All

All

As part of the process of preparing this POCD, the students at Kellogg School were asked to create pictures of things they really liked about Falls Village today or might want to see in Falls Village in the future. Some of the artwork created is shown on this page.

B. ACTION STEPS

Leader /
Partners

1. Undertake branding to help Falls Village promote its many assets and to help encourage more young people and families to live here.



Artwork From Kellogg School Students



Artwork From Kellogg School Students



Artwork From Kellogg School Students



Artwork From Kellogg School Students



3

MAINTAIN / ENHANCE COMMUNITY ASSETS

3.1 Protect Natural Resources

Great Falls



Wangum Lake



Residents understand that natural resources are important to the overall ecological balance in Falls Village and want to preserve those resources:

- Watercourses, waterbodies, wetlands, and floodplains.
- Water supply watersheds, areas of high groundwater availability, and identified aquifers and recharge areas.
- Unique or special habitat areas.
- Steep slopes.

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.

A. POLICIES		Leader / Partners
1.	Continue to protect watercourses, waterbodies, wetlands, floodplains, vernal pools, and other important water resources.	IWC P&Z
2.	Discourage clear-cutting, building and road development on steep slopes.	P&Z
3.	Strengthen communications between the regulatory (land use) boards and commissions.	P&Z IWCC ZBA HDC

B. ACTION STEPS		Leader / Partners
1.	Update stormwater and erosion control regulations, including application of low impact development techniques.	<input type="checkbox"/> P&Z
2.	Modify local regulations to require DEEP notification when development sites are within areas shown on the Natural Diversity Database map.	<input type="checkbox"/> P&Z

3.2 Preserve And Enhance Open Space / Trails

The Plan defines open space as land that is permanently preserved as open space through ownership, deed restriction, or other means. Falls Village is fortunate to have a lot of preserved open space that makes the community unique and helps establish the overall community ambience that people find attractive.

With the significant amount of open space in Falls Village, the community has an opportunity to establish and promote a greenway trail system. The development of a system of trails will help enhance community ambience and quality of life. It is also a way to attract visitors to Falls Village and support some of the economic development goals of the POCD.

Great Mountain Forest



A. POLICIES	Leader / Partners
1. Recognize that interconnected open spaces help protect natural resources, contribute to community ambience, and make Falls Village unique.	All
2. Seek to identify existing (and establish new) walking/hiking trails in open space areas in Falls Village to provide recreation and tourism benefits.	REC

Remains Of Charcoal Midden On Canaan Mountain



B. ACTION STEPS	Leader / Partners
1. Prepare informational materials on the availability of open space trails in Falls Village in order to better publicize these amenities and capitalize on any economic opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/> REC

Green Fields



Rolling Hills



Woodlands



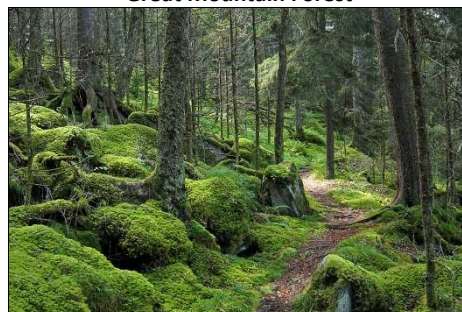
3.3 Encourage Working Lands

Falls Village has a strong history of a resource-based economy and farms, farming, and forestry continue to contribute to provide a living to residents and workers, provide goods and services to the region, and contribute to overall ambience of the community. Falls Village should continue to encourage such uses.

A. POLICIES	Leader / Partners
1. Continue to encourage farms, farming, and agricultural and forestry operations.	All
2. Support educational programming (such as at Great Mountain Forest and VoAG program at HVRHS) that will support current and future agriculture.	All
3. Maintain awareness of funding for farmland protection available through Agriculture Viability Grants from the CT Department of Agriculture.	

B. ACTION STEPS	Leader / Partners
1. <i>Evaluate local regulations to enable more diverse activities on farms and support local farming and farm businesses.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> P&Z
2. <i>Investigate additional ways to enhance and promote the viability of local farms, farming and farm businesses.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Town

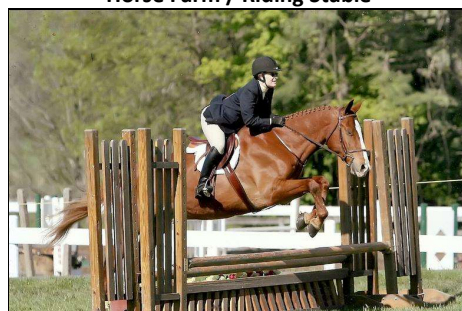
Great Mountain Forest



Vegetable Farming



Horse Farm / Riding Stable



Flower Farming



3.4 Protect Historic Resources

Falls Village has several recognized historic resources and most of the Village Center area is nationally recognized for its historic attributes.

A. POLICIES		Leader / Partners
1.	Encourage preservation of historical and archaeological resources.	All
2.	Support educational programming that promotes awareness of historical and cultural resources.	FVHS Library
3.	Encourage the nomination of eligible resources to the National or State Register of Historic Places.	FVHS
4.	Consider establishing a Historic Advisory Committee.	BOS

B. ACTION STEPS		Leader / Partners
1.	<i>Adopt a demolition delay ordinance to allow time for the documentation and preservation of historical structures.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> BOS
2.	<i>Investigate establishment of a "local historic district" in accordance with CGS Section 7-147c.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> BOS HAC

Historic Resources

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) recognizes places that have national significance in architecture, archaeology, culture, and American history. In Falls Village, this includes:

- Falls Village National Historic District
- South Canaan Congregational Church (also known as South Canaan Meeting House)
- Music Mountain
- Holabird House

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.

3.5 Protect Other Community Assets

Protecting and preserving other features which contribute to the overall appearance, ambience, and sense of place in Falls Village will also be important.

A. POLICIES		Leader / Partners
1.	Seek to preserve the scenic aspects of local roadways.	All PW
2.	Encourage the Department of Transportation to designate State highways in Falls Village as scenic highways (CGS Section 13b-31).	BOS
3.	Prevent the emergence of strip development patterns along Route 7.	P&Z
4.	Carefully evaluate proposed siting of telecommunications towers and other facilities to mitigate environmental and scenic impacts.	All
5.	Support non-profit organizations that enrich the local quality of life.	All

B. ACTION STEPS		Leader / Partners
1.	<i>None at this time</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4


ADDRESS OTHER ISSUES

4.1 Address Community Facility Needs

The term “community facilities” refers to buildings and sites used to provide community services and this includes the Town Hall, schools, fire station, public works garage, recreation facilities, library, etc. The POCD looks at these facilities to ensure they are capable of addressing community now and in the future.

Some of these facilities are not owned, managed, or operated by the Town.

A. POLICIES		Leader / Partners
1.	Continue to provide and maintain community facilities to meet the needs of residents.	BOS BOF
2.	Continue to support a local elementary school in Falls Village and a regional approach to secondary school grades.	All
3.	Seek ways to encourage volunteer participation, especially fire and emergency medical response.	BOS BOF VFD
4.	If larger developments are proposed in more remote areas, encourage or require the installation of fire ponds or underground cisterns.	P&Z VFD
5.	Explore ways to promote the efficient use of local facilities to support community events and activities.	All

B. ACTION STEPS		Leader / Partners
1.	<i>Repurpose Town-owned facilities (such as of the Old Fire House on Station Street) for private development or use.</i>	 BOS

Town Hall



New Fire Station



Lee H. Kellogg School



David M. Hunt Library



Town Pool / Recreation Complex



Transfer Station



Senior Center



Public Works Garage



4.2 Support Community Spirit And Civic Participation

Community spirit (pride in one's community) is an important part of people's perception of their quality of life. While community spirit is generally high in Falls Village, several observations were made in the on-line survey and community meetings about a number of instances involving lack of civility in public discourse. Falls Village should seek ways to address this so that residents do not become fearful of public meetings and discussions.

In addition, Falls Village also needs to encourage a culture of volunteerism so that people can be engaged in the issues important to the community.

A. POLICIES	Leader / Partners
1. Continue to nurture the social and emotional ties (community pride and spirit) that residents have to the community of Falls Village.	All
2. Continue to promote local volunteerism, community participation (social, civic), respect, and inclusion.	All
3. Continue to promote local programs, activities, and events that celebrate Falls Village and bring positive attention to the community.	All RC
4. Continue to support local public and private organizations that enhance the community (including, but not limited to, Music Mountain, Great Falls, Yale School of Forestry, car and motorcycle show, etc.).	All
5. Maintain strong communication between the Town Hall and community.	BOS

B. ACTION STEPS	Leader / Partners
1. <i>Seek ways to promote positive community discussions and best practices for community interactions (such as "we are better together", etc.).</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> BOS

Memorial Day Parade



4.3 Address Transportation Needs / Issues

Falls Village has a road system which evolved over centuries to meet the needs of the community. It is anticipated that the current road network will be adequate for community needs for the foreseeable future.

The POCD supports:

- Continuing to maintain the safety and condition of local roads
- Addressing two locations on Route 7 with possible operational issues due to the configuration of the roadway intersections:
 - The Route 126 intersection (sight lines), and
 - The Route 63 intersection (sightline for NB Rt. 7 traffic).
- Continuing to support regional dial-a-ride services for people in Falls Village who need it (currently limited to medical appointments).
- Upgrading the rail line tracks to handle existing freight traffic and, at some point, passenger service.

A. POLICIES	Leader / Partners
1. Continue to maintain the safety and condition of local roads.	PW DOT
2. Continue to support regional dial-a-ride services for people in Falls Village who need it.	All
3. Support and encourage upgrading the rail line tracks to handle existing freight traffic and, at some point, passenger service.	All

B. ACTION STEPS	Leader / Partners
1. Urge the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CT-DOT) to address the limited sight lines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On Route 126 (EB and WB) at the intersection with Route 7, and • On Route 7 (NB) at the intersection with Route 63. 	<input type="checkbox"/> BOS NHCOC
2. Consider establishment of a more transparent “pavement management system” to budget and plan for roadway maintenance.	<input type="checkbox"/> BOS BOF PW

Rt 7 @ Rt 126

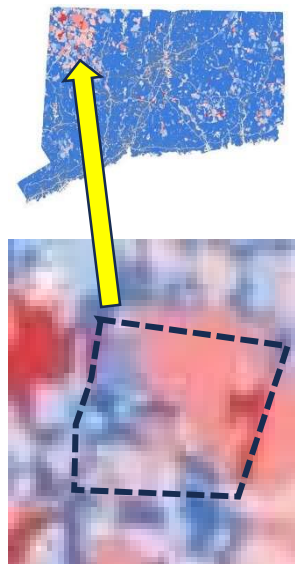


Rt 7 @ Rt 63



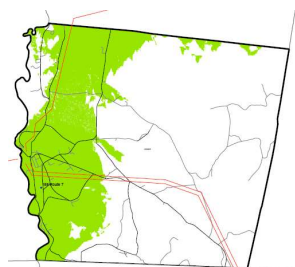
Internet Service

The following maps, prepared by the Connecticut Office of Policy & Management, shows the general quality of internet service in Connecticut and northwest Connecticut. Red areas are less likely to have 25 Mbps download and/or 3 Mbps upload speeds available.



Wireless Coverage

The following map, provided by the Connecticut Siting Council in 2023, shows the general extent of wireless communication coverage in Falls Village from all service providers. Areas colored green are considered to have reliable coverage from one or more providers. Areas colored white have inconsistent coverage or may have no coverage at all.



4.4 Promote Improvement Of Broadband / Wireless Capacity

In this day and age, electronic communications have overtaken the roles once played by seaports, railroad stations, electricity services, roadway systems, and wired telephones. As a result, the accessibility, speed and capacity of broadband (fiber) and wireless services available to local residents and businesses is of significant importance both economically and socially. This may be especially true in Falls Village since about one-quarter of all residents have some self-employment income.

Broadband has become especially important in the age of remote work, remote schooling, remote meetings, and other functions.

A. POLICIES

Leader /
Partners

1. Encourage improvement in the capacity and speed of cable communications.
2. Encourage improvement in the coverage and capacity of wireless communications.

BOS

BOS

B. ACTION STEPS

Leader /
Partners

1. *Investigate possible partnerships with telecommunication providers to enhance local telecommunication services.*



BOS

Broadband For Home-Based Businesses / Remote Work / Remote School



Wireless Service For Business Needs / Personal Needs Emergency Assistance



4.5 Consider Renaming the Town to Falls Village

While it is certainly not the most important recommendation of this POCD, the idea of renaming the Town to Falls Village has been raised by many residents over many years. In a telephone survey about 25 years ago, more than seven of ten residents favored changing the town name. The process of changing the name of a town will require an act of the Legislature.



Name Confusion

Local residents are practically forced to refer to their community as Falls Village to avoid confusion with the village of Canaan. When the name Canaan is used, most people in Connecticut 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. 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.

If Census data from Falls Village is incorrectly attributed to North Canaan, Falls Village may get short-changed for State and Federal funds which it is otherwise entitled to (and are needed locally).

A. POLICIES

Leader /
Partners

1. Continue to clarify that Falls Village is its own community, not part of a separate municipality.

All

B. ACTION STEPS

Leader /
Partners

1. Conduct a non-binding referendum on the name change issue. ☐
2. If residents favor the name change, consider asking legislators to sponsor the necessary legislation.

BOS

BOS

5

IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Implement The POCD



Challenges

One of the biggest challenges to implementation of the Falls Village POCD is people and organizations to make it happen. As a small community, Falls Village may have responsibilities similar to larger communities but less staff and fewer entities to pitch in.

As a result, Falls Village will have to continue to prioritize what it can accomplish and be at least as resourceful as they have been in the past.

Implementation of strategies is the most important part of the POCD process. Implementation takes place when:

- POCD policies are applied during decision-making processes, and
- POCD action steps completed.

As a result, the POCD has been set up to promote implementation in a couple of ways. First, the POCD distinguishes between policies and actions steps:

- Policies are statements used to guide decisions. Typically, policies are on-going, do not lend themselves to being categorized as implemented, and do not lend themselves to target completion dates.
- Action steps (*italic text*) are specific pro-active actions or tasks which will help accomplish a desired outcome. Since action steps are discrete tasks, their implementation can typically be prioritized, scheduled, measured, monitored, completed, and evaluated.

Second, each policy and action step in the POCD has a leader and some have partners. These are the entities most responsible for advocating for the policy / action step and/or for implementation of that policy or action step. A legend (on the back cover) is used to explain the acronyms used.

The Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) has at least three roles in POCD implementation:

- Applying relevant POCD policies to P&Z decisions.
- Initiating and completing the action steps assigned to the P&Z.
- Encouraging other leaders and partners to apply POCD policies and complete action steps in order to accomplish POCD objectives.

The P&Z anticipates that it will, on a regular basis, schedule round table meetings with other Town boards and agencies and with other organizations to promote POCD implementation. Such meetings (perhaps 1-2 per year) will provide opportunities to coordinate implementation efforts and find ways to partner to accomplish key priorities.

Of course, implementation will be greatly enhanced by assistance from Falls Village residents and officials. Having a pro-active process to engage the community in helping implement the POCD will help ensure it is influential in guiding future actions of the Town.

A. POLICIES		Leader / Partners
1.	Apply the policies of the POCD when reviewing land use applications such as Special Permits, text amendments, or zoning map changes.	P&Z
2.	<i>Maintain / enhance communication and collaboration between local officials and boards / commissions to help implement the POCD.</i>	P&Z
3.	Use the POCD to review and comment on municipal improvements as required by CGS Section 8-24.	P&Z
4.	Use the POCD when preparing operating and capital budgets.	BOS BOF
5.	Apply the policies of the POCD when reviewing proposals or strategies.	All
6.	Complete the action steps identified in the POCD.	All
7.	Maintain memberships in regional organizations which can help Falls Village provide important services and accomplish its goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional High School (and similar regional education programs). • Torrington Area Health District. • Northwest Connecticut Transit District. • Northwest Hills Council of Governments. • Northwest Connecticut Conservation District. • Litchfield County Center For Housing Opportunity • Housatonic Valley Association. 	BOS

B. ACTION STEPS		Leader / Partners
1.	<i>Establish a POCD Action Subcommittee (with a designated representative/liaison from relevant other boards and commissions) or other plan implementation process to help implement the POCD and coordinate efforts.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> P&Z
2.	<i>Obtain funding to implement policies and complete action steps.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> BOS BOF
3.	<i>Retain a grant writer / special projects coordinator to help support implementation of POCD strategies.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> BOS
4.	<i>Annually review (and report on) the progress of implementing POCD sections, policies, and action steps.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> P&Z
5.	<i>Update the Zoning Regulations to incorporate POCD recommendations.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> P&Z
6.	<i>Update the Zoning Map and coordinate with the Assessor database.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> P&Z

6

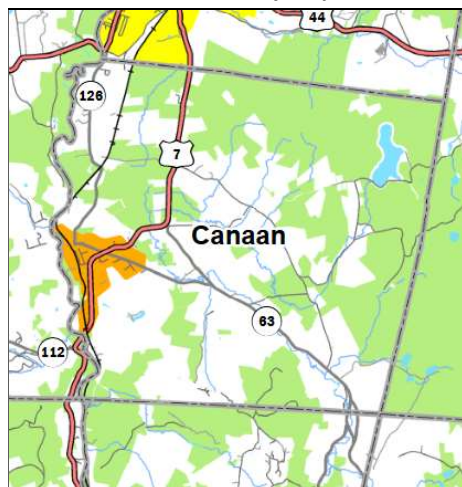
CONCLUSION

The 2023-33 POCD has been prepared to help Falls Village address the opportunities and challenges it may face in the future. It is meant to serve as a guide for enhancing the Town's character, ambience, economy, and quality of life. During the next decade or so, it is envisioned that policies and action steps in the POCD will be implemented as opportunities arise.

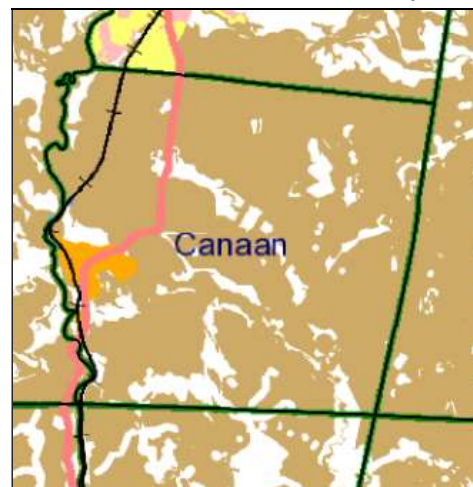
In accordance with Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes, the POCD has been evaluated for consistency and found to be generally consistent with:

- the 2017-27 Regional Plan of Conservation and Development prepared by the Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOCG).
- the Locational Guide Map in the 2018-2025 State Conservation and Development Policies Plan (approved by the Legislature in 2023).

NHCOCG Policy Map



2018-25 State Locational Guide Map



Legend

-  Regional Center
-  Primary Growth Area
-  Balanced Growth Area
-  Village Growth Areas
-  Protected Open Space
-  Rural Areas

-  Village Priority Funding Area (VPFA)
-  Priority Funding Area (PFA)
-  Balanced Priority Funding Area (BPFA)
-  Conservation Area

Consistency With State Growth Principles

In accordance with Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes, the Falls Village POCD was found to be consistent with statewide growth management principles.

Principle	Findings
1. Redevelop and revitalize regional centers and areas of mixed land uses with existing or planned physical infrastructure.	CONSISTENT – Although Falls Village is not a regional center, the POCD promotes mixed use, pedestrian-friendly development in the Village Center.
2. Expand housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs.	CONSISTENT - The POCD promotes strategies to help provide for housing options that are more affordable and to address the housing needs of an aging population.
3. Concentrate development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options and land reuse.	CONSISTENT - The POCD promotes mixed use, pedestrian-friendly development in the Village Center.
4. Conserve and restore the natural environment, cultural and historical resources, and traditional rural lands.	CONSISTENT - The POCD contains specific strategies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote sustainability / resiliency, • Protect natural resources, • Preserve open space, and • Protect historic and scenic resources.
5. Protect environmental assets critical to public health and safety.	CONSISTENT - The POCD contains recommendations to protect water quality (both surface and ground), preserve floodplain areas, minimize runoff, and other similar strategies.
6. Integrate planning across all levels of government to address issues on a local, regional, and statewide basis.	CONSISTENT - The POCD has been used, and will be used, to coordinate efforts with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjacent communities, • Regional organizations, and • State agencies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to residents, business owners, and others who participated in the survey, attended meetings, and helped create this POCD for Falls Village.

Planning and Zoning Commission

Fredrick Laser	Chairman
Stephen Koshland	Vice Chair

Doug Cohn
Vincent Inconiglios
Greg Marlowe
Edward Moy
Matt Maachi
Ruth Skovron

Marc Rosen	Alternate
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Guidance / Assistance

Janell Mullen	<i>Land Use Consultant</i>
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Glenn Chalder, AICP	<i>Planimetrics, Inc.</i>
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Been to Canaan

Carole King

Green fields and rolling hills
Room enough to do what we will
Sweet dreams of yestertime
Are running through my mind
Of a place I left behind

Been so long, I can't remember when
I've been to Canaan
And I want to go back again
Been so long, I'm living 'til then
'Cause I've been to Canaan and I
I won't rest until, I go back again

Though I'm content with myself
Sometimes I long to be somewhere else
I try to do what I can
But with our day-to-day demands
We all need a promised land

And it's been so long, I can't remember when
I've been to Canaan
And I want to go back again
Been so long, I'm living 'til then
'Cause I've been to Canaan and I
I won't rest until I go back again

Oh, I wanna be there
In the wintertime
With a fireplace burning to warm me
And you to hold me when it's stormy

Been so long, I can't remember when
But I've been to Canaan
And I wanna go back again

Been so long, I'm living 'til then
I've been to Canaan and I
I won't rest until I go back again

I've been to Canaan and I
I won't rest until I go back again

According to Wikipedia:

"**Been to Canaan**" is a song written by Carole King introduced on King's 1972 album release, *Rhymes & Reasons*.

Released as that album's lead single, "Been to Canaan" peaked at number 24 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 in January 1973 and it was the second of King's four number one hits on the Easy Listening chart. The single also reached number 20 on the Cashbox chart.

Local Connection

From the mid-1960s to 1982, Carole King lived in a house on Music Mountain Road in Falls Village, CT.

The "official name" of Falls Village is Canaan and that is the Canaan referred to in the song.

- Green fields and rolling hills
- Room enough to do what we will
- Be there in the wintertime

Area Of Music Mountain Road



LEGEND OF LEADERS / PARTNERS

These acronyms are used in the POCD to identify organizations thought likely to be involved in implementation of the policies and action steps
(red italic text refers to organizations suggested as part of this POCD)

AHC	<i>Affordable Housing Committee</i>	NHCOG	Northwest Hills Council of Governments
All	All residents, businesses, and organizations	NWCD	Northwest Conservation District
BOE	Board of Education (local and/or regional)	NWEDC	Northwest Economic Development Corp.
BOF	Board of Finance	NWLC	Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy
BOS	Board of Selectmen	NWRHC	Northwestern CT Regional Housing Council
		NWTD	Northwestern CT Transit District
CMSC	Connecticut Main Street Center	PW	Public Works
CSC	Connecticut Siting Council	P&Z	Planning and Zoning Commission
DEEP	CT Department of Energy / Env. Protection	RC	Recreation Commission
DOH	CT Department of Housing	SC	<i>Sustainability Committee</i>
DOT	CT Department of Transportation	SS	Social Services
FS	First Selectman's Office	Town	Town boards, departments, and Staff
FVHS	Falls Village Historical Society	TAHD	Torrington Area Health District
FVHT	Falls Village Housing Trust	VFD	Falls Village Volunteer Fire Department
HAC	<i>Historic Advisory Commission</i>		
HVA	Housatonic Valley Association		
IWCC	Inland Wetlands / Conservation Comm.		