

Town of Thompson Plan of Conservation & Development 2021

Adopted 4 March 2021 - Amended 18 May 2022

Town of Thompson Plan of Conservation and Development - 2021

Contents

Introduction and Acknowledgments.....	5
1.1 Introduction.....	5
1.2 Acknowledgments	6
Town Overview	7
2.1 Location.....	7
2.2 History.....	9
2.3 Demographics	12
Governance.....	14
3.1 Board of Selectmen.....	14
3.2 Budget and Finance.....	16
3.3 Civic Engagement.....	16
3.4 Suggested Action Steps.....	19
Infrastructure and Public Works	21
4.1 Overview of Infrastructure and Public Works	21
4.2 Road Construction and Maintenance	21
4.3 Public Buildings and Facilities.....	24
4.4 Waste Management	25
4.5 Sidewalks, Bike Paths and Trails	27
4.6 Public Parks and Green Space	28
4.7 Suggested Action Steps.....	32
Safety Services	34
5.1 Fire and EMS.....	34
5.2 Emergency Management	36
5.3 Law Enforcement.....	38
5.4 Pandemic Response and Recovery.....	41
5.5 Suggested Action Steps.....	42
Local Identity	43
6.1 Historic Landmarks and Artifacts	43
6.2 The Thompson Historical Society - Advocacy.....	47

6.3 Villages.....	48
6.4 Municipal Branding.....	49
6.5 Suggested Action Steps	50
Housing.....	52
7.1 General Overview	52
7.2 Affordable Housing.....	53
7.3 Housing Density	55
7.4 Suggested Action Steps.....	57
Economic Development.....	59
8.1 Overview	59
8.2 Factors Affecting Economic Development	60
8.3 Economic Development Commission: Roles, Responsibilities & Advocacy... 61	
8.4 Economic Development Initiatives.....	62
8.5 Suggested Action Steps	65
Transportation.....	67
9.1 Overview	67
9.2 2016 Road Safety Audit.....	67
9.3 Additional Intersections Requiring Attention	68
9.4 Complete Streets.....	70
9.5 Suggested Action Steps	73
Agriculture	75
10.1 Overview	75
10.2 Inventory of Agricultural Assets.....	77
10.3 A Farm Friendly Community.....	78
10.4 Challenges Faced By Farmers in Thompson	81
10.5 Agriculture Commission - Roles, Responsibilities and Advocacy	81
10.6 Suggested Action Steps.....	82
Recreation & Trails	84
11.1 Thompson Recreation - Background.....	84
11.2 Recreational Assets.....	84
11.3 Recreation Commission - Roles, Responsibilities and Advocacy.....	87
11.4 Recreation Department Challenges	87

11.5 Recreation Department Goals.....	88
11.6 Suggested Action Steps – Recreation.....	88
11.7 Thompson Trails - Inventory and Usage	89
11.9 Challenges for Thompson Trails.....	96
11.10 Suggested Action Steps –Trails	96
Conservation and Open Space	98
12.1 Overview.....	98
12.2 Inventory of Dedicated Open Space	99
12.3 Commitment to Conservation.....	100
12.4 Challenges to Conservation	101
12.5 Conservation Commission – Roles Responsibilities and Advocacy.....	103
12.6 Suggested Action Steps	103
12.7 2022 Amendment to the PoCD Regarding Public Act 490 and Open Space	105
13.1 Overview.....	107
13.2 Dams & Flood Management.....	109
13.3 Drinking Water Supply in Thompson.....	111
13.4 Water Quality.....	113
13.5 Inland Wetlands and Watercourses & Their Regulation	114
13.6 Suggested Action Steps	117
Education.....	118
14.1 Education in Thompson: A Historical Foundation.....	118
14.2 Student Body Demographics & Economics.....	119
14.3 Board of Education: Roles, Responsibilities & Advocacy	121
14.4 Portrait of a Graduate	121
14.5 Challenges and Opportunities for Education in Thompson.....	123
14.6 Suggested Action Steps	125
Library Services.....	127
15.1 Background	127
15.2 Library Services	129
15.3 Challenges and Opportunities for Library Services	132
15.4 Suggested Action Steps	133

Renewable Energy & Energy Conservation	135
16.1 Overview of Energy Use in Thompson.....	135
16.2 A case study - portrait of a Thompson home (contributed by Alvan Hill) ...	137
16.3 Renewable Energy	138
16.4 Renewable Energy - Anaerobic Digestion	140
16.5 Solar Siting and Agricultural Use.....	142
16.6 Suggested Action Steps	144
Future Land Use.....	146
17.1 Review of 2009 PoCD Future Land Use Issues, Strategies & Action Steps..	146
17.2 Subdivision Regulations Revision	147
17.3 Infill Development	151
17.4 Adaptive Reuse of Buildings	154
17.5 Brownfields.....	158
17.6 Suggested Action Steps	160
An Action Plan for Thompson	161
Table 1 Ongoing or Immediate Time Frame.....	161
Table 2 Short Term Years 1-3	167
Table 3 Medium Term Years 3-5	179
Table 4 Long Term Years 5-10.....	184
Appendices.....	189
Appendix A Chapter 126 Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes	189
Appendix B Thompson CT CERC Town Profile 2019.....	193
Appendix C Thompson Rates of Voter Turnout 2011-2019	195
Appendix D Comparison of Budget Revenues & Expenditures FY20, Projected for FY21.....	196
Appendix E 2018 Partnership for Strong Communities Housing Data Profile - Thompson	197
Appendix F Partnership for Strong Communities Housing Data Profile - Thompson	203

Introduction and Acknowledgments

1.1 Introduction

[Chapter 126 Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes \(CGS\)](#) requires that, at least once every ten years, the Town shall prepare or amend, and shall adopt, a **Plan of Conservation and Development (PoCD)**. The PoCD is a guidance document that articulates the vision and priorities of the community as it plans for its future; and, it also enumerates specific action items to pursue over a ten-year period to realize that stated vision. The full text of Section 8-23 is included in **Appendix A** of this document.

As an expression of community values and priorities, this iteration of the Thompson PoCD can be viewed as the fulfillment of a series of civic engagement events hosted by the Branding Implementation Sub-Committee of the Economic Development Commission and the Office of Planning and Development, starting in 2019. In those exercises, regard for local identity and affinity for preserving community history consistently emerged as high priorities. In this context, that may be best understood as a desire to protect the natural, agricultural and historic assets already in place in Thompson. Any pattern of development proposed for the next decade, therefore, will take these factors into account, prioritizing the preservation of the culture and heritage that make up the unique fabric of the community. This document articulates means by which Thompson will build on its past and present strengths in ways that look forward, rather than backward. In accordance with statutory requirements, among other topics this PoCD will address goals related to conservation of open space; improvements to walkability and bikeability; expansion of housing choice, including affordable housing; and protection and enhancement of agricultural resources. Additional consideration will be given to the development of sustainable local food systems; the strengthening of the public education system; and the development of the local economy to best capitalize on Thompson's extensive outdoor recreation assets.

The responsibility to amend and prepare the PoCD is assigned, by statute, to the **Thompson Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC)**. Members of several of Thompson's many volunteer boards, commissions and committees; as well as staff, elected officials and engaged residents have worked together with members of the PZC to identify and describe these community priorities. It is our goal that, by taking stock of our current conditions and identifying our challenges and aspirations, Thompson will be able to chart a navigable path toward a vibrant, sustainable and resilient future. The PoCD will provide a framework for decision-making by municipal government, private businesses and other organizations as they pursue their goals within Thompson.

The process by which this document has been created involved five months of discussion and writing by the project team. Facilitated by the Director of Planning & Development, participants engaged in monthly meetings of the full team. Smaller working groups met weekly to focus on developing the narrative for specific subtopics, according to team members' expertise and affinity. Individual chapters and subchapters were then further aligned, creating a philosophically consistent document reflecting Thompson's current reality and its aspirations for the next phase in its evolution.

1.2 Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the work of the following individuals in the creation of this document:

- **Rich Benoit** - Director of Public Works
- **Steve Benoit** - Emergency Services Manager
- **Randy Blackmer** - Agriculture Commission - Chair, Planning & Zoning Commission
- **Dennis Blanchette** - J& D Engineering
- **Geoff Bolte** - Zoning Board of Appeals
- **Alison Boutaugh** - Library Director
- **Marla Butts** - Wetlands Agent
- **Cindy Dunne** - Zoning Enforcement Officer
- **Karen Durlach** - Trails Committee - Chair, Transfer Station Advisory Committee
- **Matt Grauer** - Fire Chief Thompson Hill Fire Station 84
- **JoAnn Hall** - Economic Development Commission, Mill Sites Redevelopment Advisory Committee, Ordinance Committee
- **Kathleen Herbert** - Board of Education - Chair
- **Alvan Hill** - Planning & Zoning Commission
- **Joe Iamartino** - Thompson Historical Society - President, Tourtellotte Trust - Chair
- **Lynn Landry** - Sunrun Gardens, Transfer Station Advisory Committee
- **Charlene Langlois** - Branding Implementation Subcommittee, Mill Sites Redevelopment Advisory Committee, Planning & Zoning Commission, Thompson Business Association - President
- **John Lenky** - Planning & Zoning Commission
- **Brian Loffredo** - Economic Development Commission, Branding Implementation Subcommittee, Trails Committee
- **Lesley Munshower** - Director of Recreation
- **George T. O'Neil III** - Inland Wetlands Commission - Chair
- **Charlie Obert** - Branding Implementation Subcommittee, Economic Development Commission, Inland Wetlands Commission, Trails Committee, Water Pollution Control Authority
- **Kies Orr** - Agriculture Commission, Fort Hill Farms
- **Joseph Parodi-Brown** - Planning & Zoning Commission - Chair
- **Tyra Penn-Gesek** - Director of Planning & Development
- **John Rice** - Building Committee - Chair, Planning & Zoning Commission, Thompson Historical Society
- **Judy Rondeau** - Eastern Connecticut Conservation District
- **Brian Santos** - Building Committee, Economic Development Commission, Planning & Zoning Commission
- **Melinda Smith** - Superintendent of Schools
- **Renee Waldron** - Branding Implementation Committee - Chair, Mill Sites Redevelopment Advisory Committee, Recreation Commission, Town Clerk
- **Carolyn Werge** - Conservation Officer
- **Brian Yacino** - Economic Development Commission - Chair, Thompson Business Association

Town Overview

2.1 Location

Thompson is located in the northeastern corner of Connecticut, bordered by Dudley, Webster and Douglas in Massachusetts to the north; Burrillville, Rhode Island to the East; Woodstock, CT to the west; and Putnam, CT to the south. Thompson is located within easy reach of the three largest cities in New England and three state capitals: 25 miles from Worcester, MA; 32 miles from Providence, RI; 52 miles from the state capital of Hartford; and 65 miles from Boston, MA. Due to the ease of highway access and broad diversity of employment opportunities, a large proportion of Thompson residents commute to work in the greater Worcester area, rather than finding employment in Thompson or neighboring communities in Connecticut. Where residents are employed in nearby Connecticut towns, Putnam hosts the greatest number of commuters from Thompson. Within Thompson, the largest employers are the Thompson Public Schools, Superior Bakery and Numa Tool. In 2020, as a result of nationwide anxiety regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, a paradigm shift occurred concerning employment and commuting. One of the consequences of the re-alignment to remote work for professionals has been an uncoupling of the need to live in immediate proximity to high-cost metropolitan areas. As companies shift to permanent remote work for their office staff, communities like Thompson, with their relatively low real estate costs, become more desirable alternatives. The images below are included as an illustration of the comparative value of Thompson real estate.

This is a side-by-side screenshot of four properties of roughly equivalent square footage in Boston, Providence, Worcester and Thompson. For the comparison, listings were chosen that were closest to the average home size in Thompson (1550 sq. ft).

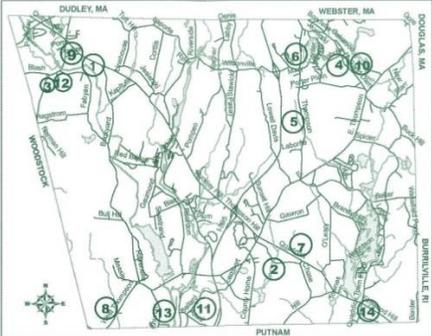
Even the closest comparison, \$310k vs \$249k for a 1,469 sq. ft. home (Providence vs Thompson), shows that the property in Thompson represents a significant cost savings for a potential homebuyer. **This opportunity should be capitalized, both by local real estate professionals and by the municipality, as a promotional point on its website.**



The Town of Thompson has over 100 miles of roadways, including six State roads. The Town is bisected by Interstate 395, with the historically identified villages of East Thompson, Quaddick and Thompson Hill falling to the east of the highway; and Fabyan, Grosvenordale, Mechanicsville, North Grosvenordale, Quinebaug, West Thompson and Wilsonville to the west. The Town covers an area of 48.7 square miles with a population of 9,602, for an average density of 197 residents

per square mile. Two significant man-made water bodies with associated lands are West Thompson Lake, an impoundment of the Quinebaug River covering 1,900 acres and managed by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers; and Quaddick Reservoir and State Park, an impoundment of the Five Mile River covering more than 600 acres. The French River passes through the geographic center of Thompson, north to south, converging with the Quinebaug River in Mechanicsville. Other significant water bodies include the Five Mile River, Grosvenordale Pond and Little Pond.

Farms play an important role in the landscape, history and identity of the community. There are 7,760 acres (roughly 25% of total acreage) of prime and important Farm Soils and 2,440 acres (8% of total acreage) of farm land in Thompson¹. The Town is home to more than 20 active farms, of which 14 have a strong forward-facing component (retail sales, riding lessons, agritourism), as seen in a [2018 brochure produced by the Thompson Agricultural Commission](#), below. The less public faces of agriculture in Thompson include fields leased for feed corn and hay; and small homesteaders operating as farm stand gardeners, small apiarists, egg producers, etc. There is also a vibrant equestrian community in Thompson. The role of agriculture will be further explored in **Sections 6, 8, 10, 13 and 16**.

<p>1 Blackmer Farm Randy and Myrtle Blackmer 860-923-2710 438 Quinebaug Rd. (Rte 131) May - Oct Daily 10-6 rlblackmer@charter.net Retail greenhouse & farm stand selling perennials, hanging baskets, bedding & vegetable plants. Famous for its fresh picked sweet corn, tomatoes & other vegetables. Also offering Beef, Pork & Chicken. See us on facebook.</p> <p>2 Chase Road Growers 860-923-9926 Warren and Jayne Reynolds 174 Chase Road chaserdgrowers@gmail.com <i>Call for hours</i> Spring Bedding Plants & Specialty Hanging Baskets. The SWEETEST sweet corn! Vegetables, Cut Flowers, Fall Mums and Gourds. See us on facebook.</p> <p>3 Siegmund Family Farm Colin Siegmund 860-315-7684 woolyone@charter.net 47 Fabyan-Woodstock Rd. Border Leicester & Oxford Sheep Shearer and Breeder</p> <p>4 Orchard Products <i>since 1938</i> David W. Eddy 860-935-5610 270 Sand Dam Rd. Eldo92@aol.com <i>Mon - Fri 8-4 Sat 8-12.</i> orchardproducts.net Custom cut lumber. Design & construction of sheds & barns, kitchens, and woodworking. PYO Blueberries, apples, peaches in season. See us on facebook.</p> <p>5 Sweet Sue's Sugar Shack 932 Thompson Road See us on facebook Joe Langer 860-428-9112 Kelli Langer 860-933-0162 Pure Maple Syrup year round. Call ahead. Maple Candy, Cream and Coated Peanuts in season.</p> <p>6 Go Organic LLC <i>since 2007</i> John Tycz 860-935-5235 info@goorganicllc.com 1244 Thompson Road goorganicllc.com 100% organic lawn and landscape. Organic nutrient dense vegetable gardens.</p>	<p>THOMPSON, CT</p> 	<p>9 Little Bit of Heaven <i>since 2008</i> Diana Couture 860-933-5564 655 Fabyan Rd. couturelboh@gmail.com <i>Call anytime for hay & eggs</i> <i>Noon-evening for seasonal sales May through Fall</i> Sustainably grown hay, free range eggs, seasonal vegetables, specially selected perennials & annuals.</p> <p>10 Morning Beckons Farm 343a Sand Dam Road 860-821-0627 Alpaca Fiber & fiber products. Emu oil products: soap, lotion, oil</p> <p>11 Olde Azud Farm Nancy Donatelli 860-428-8227 245 Ballard Road Equestrian Boarding, Lessons and Training By appointment only</p> <p>12 New Boston Beef <i>since 2007</i> Jonathan R. Eddy 860-315-2408 9 Fabyan-Woodstock Road newbostonbeefsales@gmail.com www.newbostonbeefllc.com <i>*hours by appointment</i> All naturally raised on our farm. Available by select cuts or by the hanging weight.</p> <p>13 Bitgood Performance Horses 91 Church Street 860-227-7144 Stacy.cimochowski@gmail.com Training, Lessons, Boarding National Top 5 Showing</p> <p>14 Sunrun Gardens & Gift Shop <i>since 1982</i> Sustainably and Organically Grown Al and Lynn Landry 1121 Quaddick Town Farm Road <i>Early May - Sept, 10-6 Daily; Oct 10-5 Daily;</i> <i>Nov & Dec Weekends 10-4</i> Heirloom tomatoes and vegetables in season. Cut and everlasting flowers. Tie-dyed clothing, handwoven goods, gifts.</p>
<p>7 Fort Hill Farms <i>since 1990</i> 860-923-3439 See us on facebook. 260 Quaddick Road www.forthillfarms.com herrrootsmuddeep@aol.com <i>April - December</i> Destination farm offering seasonal farmland experiences, including their own "The Farmer's Cow" Ice Cream & Dairy products. Educational commaze, PYO organic lavender, blueberries, pumpkins. Stroll the gardens.</p> <p>8 Maplewood Farm Heather & Brian Laffin 396 West Thompson Road 860-315-5420 www.MaplewoodFarmer.com Sheep, Chickens, Ducks, Rabbits and More!</p>		

Housing in Thompson skews heavily toward single-family residences, which make up 77.9% of the Town's housing stock. That proportion is significantly higher than other communities in either the county (66.2%) or the state (59.2%). Of the homes in Thompson, roughly one third (32%) were

¹ Town of Thompson Conservation Commission Conservation & Open Space Plan, December 2005, page 8

built prior to 1950, which is consistent with the age of homes in both the county and the state. Issues of housing diversity and affordability will be addressed in **Section 7** of this document.

Thompson is host to a number of late-19th and early-20th-Century mill sites, presenting a significant opportunity for adaptive development and reuse. Of these, the most notable are the pair of mill sites that bookend the historic downtown area of North Grosvenordale: the remains of the Belding-Corticelli site at 630 Riverside Drive; and the 750,000 square foot River Mill site at 929 Riverside Drive. Additional mills that have been, or are in the midst of being, redeveloped are the Thomas Mill at 1020 Riverside Drive, currently the site of a dance studio and a popular café with room for additional tenants; and the Wilsonville Mill at 1405 Riverside Drive. In Thompson, as in so much of New England, these irreplaceable properties are being repurposed to new life in a new century.

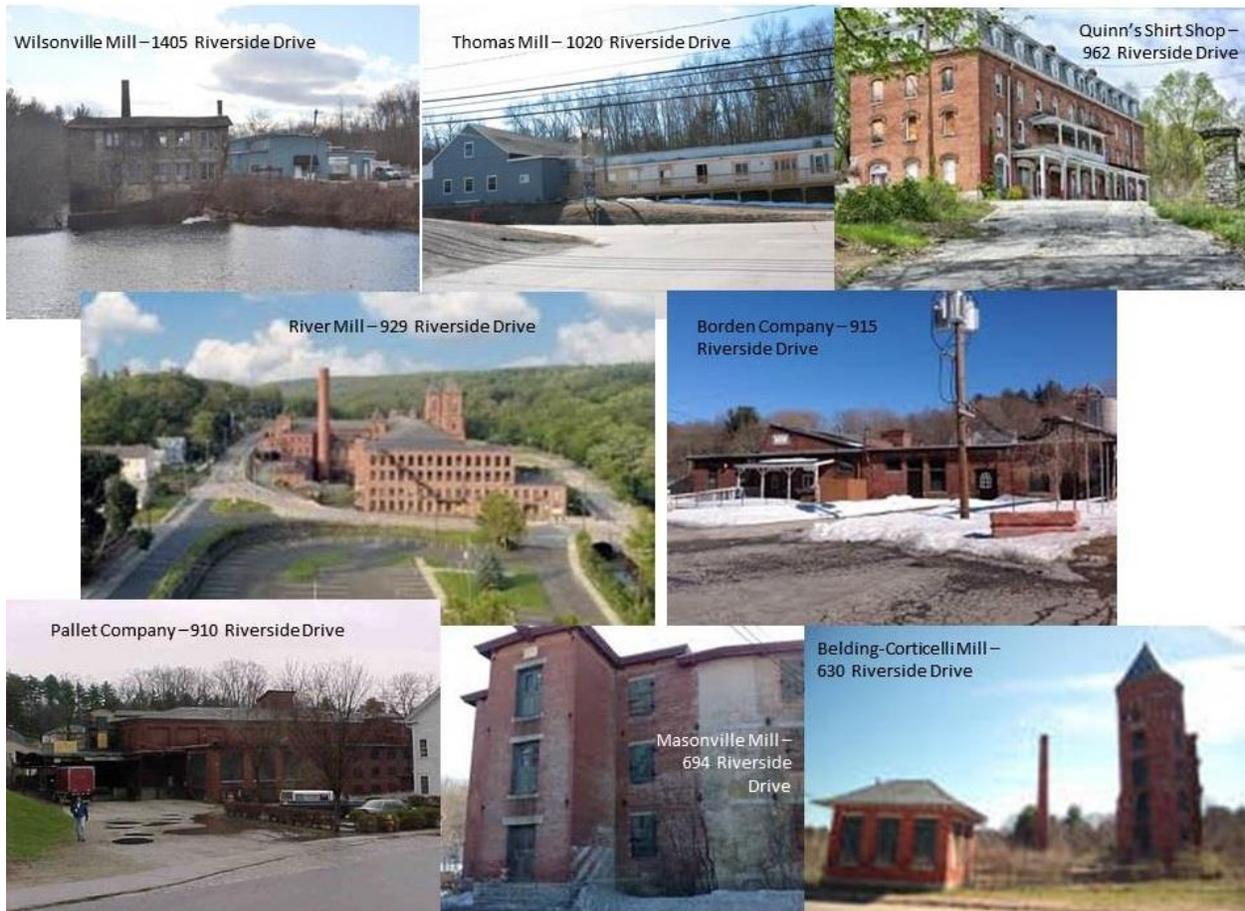
Data cited on in this section were drawn from the [Thompson, Connecticut CERC Town Profile 2019](#), produced by Connecticut Data Collaborative, included as [Appendix B](#).

2.2 History

For thousands of years prior to European colonization, the area was territory for Indigenous Peoples including the Nipmuc. Three major trails intersected in this area, the most notable being the Old Connecticut Path, which passes through the area now called Fabyan. These trails connected Native American villages in modern day Webster (Chaubunagungamaug), Woodstock (Wabbaquasset), Thompson Hill (Quinnatisset) and Fabyan (Maanexit). Large land tracts were purchased from Indigenous leaders following King Philip's War. One large landowner, Major Robert Thompson, gave his name to the district. Thompson, by 1730, had established an independent church and formally broke away from Killingly, incorporating as a town in 1785. Near the epicenter of the Industrial Revolution started by Samuel Slater, Thompson developed a thriving mill economy which persisted well into the 20th Century. Unlike more urbanized New England mill towns, Thompson never lost its connection to agriculture and other aspects of its rural identity during the prominence of the industrial era. Because the residents of Thompson have identified preservation and promotion of its historic assets and character as priorities, this document will seek to identify ways in which the town can capitalize on that history to drive economic development. To that end, special attention will be given to several specific sites, or groups of sites, as follows:

Historic Mills: Thompson was home to several production mills when the textile industry was dominant in Connecticut. The Father of the Industrial Revolution in the United States, Samuel Slater, established major operations in Webster, Pomfret and Thompson with his father-in-law Oziel Wilkinson and brother-in-law Smith Wilkinson. Thompson's three rivers, the Quinebaug, French and Five Mile, all had significant mills in operation, first in grist, fulling and trip hammer work; and later in cotton, wool and other textile materials. Some of those sites, although often underutilized, show continued activity into the present day. Because the mills were dependent on flowing water to drive their operations, the remaining mill properties are found on Riverside Drive/Route 12 parallel to the French River. From north to south, those properties are: The Wilsonville Mill, 1405 Riverside Drive; The Thomas Mill, 1020 Riverside Drive; "Quinn's Shirt Shop", 962 Riverside Drive; The River Mill, 929 Riverside Drive; The Borden Company, 915 Riverside Drive; The Pallet Company, 910 Riverside Drive; The Masonville Mill, 694 Riverside Drive; and the Belding-Corticelli site, 630 Riverside Drive. Phase I, II and III environmental assessments have been completed for the sites at 929, 915 and 630 Riverside Drive, in anticipation of future

development. The Town considers the mills to be essential to the plan for economic growth in the next decade.



The “Tourtellotte Buildings”: In 1907, Dr. Jacob F. Tourtellotte and his wife Harriet A. Tourtellotte provided the means to build Thompson’s first public high school; a residence for its Superintendent; and a separate residence for lady educators. Both Dr. Tourtellotte, a Civil War Navy surgeon, and his wife Harriet were born and raised in Thompson by affluent families. Harriet was the daughter of Mr. William Arnold, a mill owner in town and operator of the mill’s company store. Jacob was born into the successful Tourtellotte farming family from the Wilsonville area, descendants of Protestant Huguenot settlers fleeing France amid religious persecution. It is noteworthy that, in 1687, Major Robert Thompson settled these persecuted Huguenots on land he owned in Oxford MA. The French River in Thompson is connected to those settlers as the river name was originally the Frenchtown River, passing through Oxford on its way to Thompson CT.

The Tourtellottes moved west to the Minnesota Territory postwar where they both became successful investors in rail and grain, as well as prolific philanthropists. Two massive Greek Revival buildings were erected by the Tourtellottes: the Methodist Deaconesses in Minnesota, and the first free high school in Thompson. The latter was named the Tourtellotte Memorial High School to honor Jacob and Harriet’s two daughters, who both died in childhood. That original high school building remains in use as the administration building for the Thompson Public School District, which shares a campus for all levels elementary through high school. The

administration building also houses a trio of excellent museum rooms featuring art collected by the Tourtellottes; a collection of railroad memorabilia with a heavy emphasis on the Great East Thompson Train Wreck (see below); and a reproduction of the interior of Kenney's General Store, formerly located in the village of Mechanicsville. The original high school is also the home of Ryscavage Auditorium, an early 20th Century proscenium stage which retains much of its original character. The Superintendent's residence, located at 65 Main Street, has been vacant since 2012, having served many functions for the town since its original purpose was rendered obsolete. At this time, plans are being developed to rehabilitate that former residence into an innovative multi-purpose site incorporating a small business center for agricultural and food system entrepreneurs; a single live-work housing unit for a property manager; and a system of public food gardens with an attached playground. More will be discussed regarding this latter project in **Sections 6, 8, 10, 11 and 17.**



The original Tourtellotte High School, now the administrative building for the public schools



Community volunteers cleaning up the site of the superintendent's house at 65 Main St, Autumn 2019

The Great East Thompson Train Wreck: East Thompson was the site of a unique historic railroad disaster, the collision of four trains on the foggy morning of December 4, 1891. The location of the wreck is now a part of the multi-state Air Line State Park Trail, running approximately 80 miles from Portland CT to Franklin, MA. During the annual June tourism event "Connecticut Trails Day", the Trails Committee and the Historical Society have often hosted guided hikes at the site, the popularity of which inspired the pursuit of its development into a permanent park. This is a keystone project in a larger plan to capitalize on Thompson's historic sites and outdoor recreation assets as economic drivers, working in partnership with the National Park Service Rails, Trails and Conservation Assistance program. One of the first initiatives completed toward the development of the asset was The Great East Thompson Trainwreck Songwriting Competition to write a modern-day folk song commemorating the events of the day. Production of the song and a video for use promoting tourism to the area was subsidized under the NPS assistance program. The winning song and video by singer-songwriter Mark Moriarty can be heard and viewed here: [East Bound Train on a Westbound Track](#). Additional details regarding the future development of a public park at the site of the wreck can be found in **Sections 6, 8 and 11** of this document.



Photos from the Great East Thompson Train Wreck, presented as part of a guided tour of the site by the Thompson Historical Society.

2.3 Demographics

In addition to the information found in the Thompson, Connecticut CERC Town Profile 2019, the data aggregator website www.towncharts.com provides additional demographic information about the population of Thompson². During the reporting period from 2013-2017, the population of Thompson was 95.9% white/non-Hispanic. This is in contrast to the State of Connecticut at 68% white/non-Hispanic. While Thompson's rate of diversification lags behind the state overall (98% and 87% white/non-Hispanic in 2010, respectively), some progress has been shown in this area.

The median age of all Thompson residents is 44, compared with the state average of 41, with the largest age cohort being 45-66 (34% of the population). In comparison, there is a relatively low number of individuals age 15-24 (10%). Reflecting trends statewide, there is an implication that households in Thompson are aging without being replaced by a younger generation in sufficient numbers to maintain population levels. There are challenges inherent to this demographic shift (e.g. declining numbers of children may have negative implications for the viability of the public school system; a decline in residents of prime working age may have additional negative consequences for the tax base). One of the goals of this document is the identification of proactive strategies to increase the appeal of the community to younger individuals and families seeking to relocate to the region, taking advantage of the proximity of Thompson to so many of the economic powerhouses of New England.

From 2013-2017, median household income was \$77,267 compared to \$73,781 for the State, with a reported poverty rate of 5.6% vs 10.1% for the State. In aggregate, these statistics reflect favorably

² "Towncharts.com - United States Demographics Data." Towncharts.com - United States Demographics Data. December 15, 2019. Accessed July 14, 2020. <https://www.towncharts.com/Connecticut/Demographics/Thompson-town-CT-Demographics-data.html>

on the Town; however, income disparities between districts within the community are not well-depicted using this metric. A useful tool, when considering the economic health of the overall community, is the data compiled by CTData.org under the heading "[Cost-Burdened Households](#)". Cost-burdened households are defined as those spending "30 percent or more of annual household income on housing costs. Householder status subgroups are homeowners with a mortgage, renters and all householders...Housing costs for homeowners include utility, tax, mortgage, insurance and related payments for the home. Renters' housing costs are gross rental and related payments." An alternate term for such households, used frequently by the United Way, is **A.L.I.C.E.:** Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. The acronym is useful, as it emphasizes that those who struggle financially are very likely to be working full time, thereby disarming some of the negative stereotypes around those who find themselves in need of relief or assistance. Using the percentage of cost-burdened households to assess the economic health of Thompson's residents sidesteps the problem of using town-wide average income levels, as a small handful of very high earners will not skew the statistic, thus masking true community needs. In the chart from CT Data, Thompson still compares favorably to the state in terms of the percentage of households falling into the Cost-Burdened category; nonetheless, with almost a quarter of all residents falling under that heading, and nearly a third of all rental households, it would be prudent for Thompson to develop strategies to promote greater economic stability for the community. Such strategies could include such short-term measures as improving access to direct-aid organizations; as well as longer-term initiatives to reduce car-dependence for travel, employment and other daily needs; or to build local food systems and food security. Strategies to achieve these latter goals will be explored more fully in **Sections 7-10**.

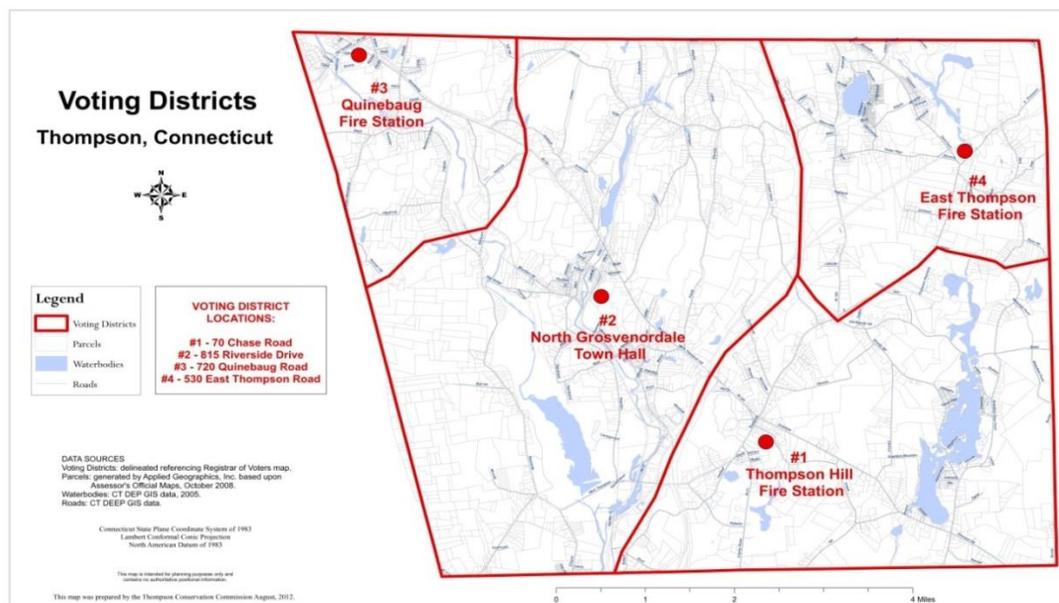
Governance

3.1 Board of Selectmen

As is common in New England, Thompson is governed by a Board of Selectmen with an annual Town Meeting. The Thompson Board of Selectmen is made up of three members, and the First Selectman is the Chief Executive Officer for the Town. Selectmen serve two year terms, and the terms are not staggered, so the entire board comes up for election in every municipal cycle. It has occasionally been noted that replacing the full Board in each election cycle creates challenges to continuity. Two suggestions have been made regarding the issue of continuity of leadership with the current system: one being that the town explore moving to 4-year terms; the other moving to a town manager or town administrator in addition to the Board of Selectmen³. Neither of these options has been substantively explored, to date.

Thompson has four voting districts (Voting Map shown below):

- District 1: Thompson Hill Fire Station, 70 Chase Road
- District 2: Town Hall, Merrill Seney Community Room, 815 Riverside Drive
- District 3: Quinebaug Fire Station, 720 Quinebaug Road
- District 4: East Thompson Fire Station, 530 East Thompson Road



The possibility of consolidating one or more of the districts has occasionally been raised, with the stated goals of reducing election costs and the number of poll workers required, as well as building more unity between the residents of the districts. A study of costs was conducted in 2019, shown below. The study demonstrates that by consolidating to a single polling location, the

³ As per CGS Sec. 7-98. Appointment, removal and salary of manager. Any town having a board of finance and which has adopted the provisions of this chapter as provided in section 7-100 may appoint a town manager.

cost savings for a ten-year period would be \$132,693. The Louis P. Faucher Community Center at the Public Library has been suggested as a possible site to relocate two or more of the polling places. The Community Center would have several advantages as a polling station: the parking lot and the facility itself have greater capacity than most, if not all, of the other public buildings in Thompson; it is centrally located along the Route 12 travel corridor; and, as a Community Center, hosting the polls would be consistent with its purpose. In light of the potential cost savings and challenges renewing the pool of poll workers, **it is recommended that the town take a formal survey to measure community receptiveness to the idea of consolidation. Any action taken toward such consolidation, however, must be done with care so as not to inadvertently disenfranchise challenged communities.** Seniors with limited access to transportation, for example, should be accommodated by means of organized rides to the polls. Regardless of any survey results, due to the current pandemic, polling place reduction should be considered only after circumstances are more normalized.

Thompson Voting Districts	Referendum	Election	Single Primary	Double Primary	Total
2007	6	1			7
2008	1	1		1	3
2009	1	1			2
2010	1	1		1	3
2011	2	1			3
2012	1	1		1	3
2013	1	1			2
2014	5	1			6
2015	4	1			5
2016	3	1			4
2017	5	1			6
2018	3	1		1	5
Average '07 - '18	2.75	1	0	0.33	
Cost per vote/district	\$885	\$1,375	\$1,171	\$1,843	
for four districts	\$3,540	\$5,500	\$4,684	\$7,372	
Ten year cost	\$97,350	\$55,000	\$0	\$24,573	\$176,923
Savings by eliminating					
one District	\$24,338	\$13,750	\$0	\$6,143	\$44,231
reducing by two	\$48,675	\$27,500	\$0	\$12,287	\$88,462
reducing by three	\$73,013	\$41,250	\$0	\$18,430	\$132,693

Appendix C is a table showing rates of voter turnout for Presidential, State and Municipal elections from 2011-2019. Thompson compares favorably with statewide turnout rates in Presidential elections (76.62% vs 63.15%) and State elections (57.62% vs 48.65%). Comparisons for Municipal election turnout were not drawn; however, while it may be fair to extrapolate that

Thompson likely compares favorably in head-to-head matchups with other towns, it is also clear that residents show the least engagement with campaigns for local office (average 34.75% turnout rate from 2011-2019). A related synopsis of voter turnout for budget referenda will be provided in Section 3.2 – Budget & Finance.

3.2 Budget and Finance

For Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 (1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021), the Town budget was set at \$26,772,486. Of that, \$18,980,513 (70.8%) is assigned to Education; \$5,989,028 (22.3%) is given to the Town's general budget; and \$1,092,945 (4%) represents debt service. The mill rate (property tax rate per \$1,000 assessed value) for FY21 was set at \$24.23.

As required by State statutes, the Town's annual budget is prepared by an elected Board of Finance. In Thompson, that Board is comprised of 6 members serving staggered 6-year terms, advised by the Director of Finance for the Town. The budget recommendation of the Board of Finance is presented to the residents at the Annual Town Meeting. Upon approval of the budget at a referendum, the Board of Finance sets the mill rate.

The Board of Finance is responsible for providing an annual independent audit of the books and accounts of the Town. The Board also considers all requests for special appropriations, additional capital projects, and budget transfers during the year; and provides oversight and guidance in all financial affairs of the Town.

Appendix D shows the comparative budget revenues and expenditures for Fiscal Year 2020, as well as projections for Fiscal Year 2021, based on the budget approved by the Board of Finance headed into FY21.

According to data compiled by the Town Clerk, on average two referenda are required in order to pass the annual budget. Over the period from 2009-2019, in five of those years the budget passed on the first ballot (2009, 2010, 2012, 2013 and 2018); in three of those years, two ballots were required (2011, 2014 and 2019); in 2015 and 2016, three referenda were called; and in 2017 there were four referenda. Difficulty in passing a budget on the first pass creates procedural and societal challenges for the Town: procedurally, it delays the proper collection of municipal taxes and creates uncertainty for municipal departments in planning projects for the fiscal year; socially, as the Board trims individual department budgets in an attempt to create a budget that will pass, debate becomes increasingly contentious, with factions arising within departments and resident groups as they advocate for their priorities. Some strategies have been suggested to increase public understanding of the budget process, which will be further discussed in sections **3.3 Civic Engagement** and **3.4 Suggested Action Steps**.

3.3 Civic Engagement

In the prior iteration of the PoCD, a number of issues were identified, with goals and action steps established to mitigate those challenges. The greatest challenges at the time were felt to be: poor awareness of the complexity of town government; low resident confidence in local government; and low citizen participation in all aspects of Town governance. The action steps established in that prior document were:

- To create access to government through a preference to evening meeting hours for Boards and Commission and public notice to vacancies to Boards and Commissions
- To create greater transparency in government through publications such as the quarterly “Selectmen’s Report”, the Annual Town Report and legal notices placed in effective locations; and
- To create a pamphlet describing government functions and procedures for citizens.

The Town did take these actions; but, despite some improvement, the challenges of low resident awareness, confidence and participation remain. To a great extent, these deficits in participation reflect trends in the larger society. Thompson is hardly unique in its reliance on a minority of its most involved community members to run for office, serve on volunteer boards and commissions, and drive the public dialogue. As seen in **Appendix C**, on average only a third of Thompson’s eligible voters participate in Municipal elections. It is in the best interest of Thompson to develop a pro-active strategy to inform and empower voters, bolstering their desire to engage in the democratic process.

Local government provides many important services such as schools, assistance for veterans, child-care, road maintenance, vital records, voter registration, recreation and library services, to name a few. When these services run smoothly, they are often taken for granted by residents. When changes or interruptions to services do occur, residents may not know how best to communicate their concerns to the Town. Recognizing that a more engaged citizenry starts with reliable access to information, a concentrated effort has been made to improve functionality and navigability of the municipal website, with good initial success in a 2017 redesign. Efforts to further improve the utility of the website continue, as the town pursues online permitting systems to increase ease of use and transparency for applicants. Additional progress has been made in accelerating the Town’s use of social media platforms, which enables a more “real-time” method of communication with residents. The increased use of social media was made possible in part by the decision of the Economic Development Commission to fund a new position, the Social Media Intern. Providing 10 hours per week of support, the return to the town in time saved for the full time staff, for the small investment in wages, has been significant. Following the first successful year of the internship, the decision has been made to carry the position into a second year; it is hoped that the internship will provide increased value as the position evolves over the long term. **Section 3.3a** is a letter contributed by the first intern, summarizing his experience.

Since the formation of the EDC Branding Implementation Subcommittee, additional efforts have been made to increase civic engagement by soliciting direct feedback. Starting in February of 2019, that subcommittee presented an escalating series of engagement events. At the outset, the Chairs of Thompson’s various Boards, Commissions and Committees were invited to the rollout of the municipal brand concept of the “Green and Growing Community”, and encouraged to incorporate that philosophy into their own work on behalf of the Town. Subsequent events expanded the circle of participants to all Board, Commission and Committee members, inviting them to apply the “Green and Growing” ethos to visioning exercises around community development, and priorities for the public education system under the Portrait of a Graduate initiative. The most recent event, held in March 2020, was an “Ask Me Anything” open house for all Thompson residents. Attendees were encouraged to ask questions of Town staff and volunteers in an informal, conversational setting. One of the goals of Ask Me Anything was to

solicit interest in a “Citizen’s Academy”, intended as a deep-dive into how local boards or departments operate. Out of the Citizen’s Academy, it was hoped that a new class of volunteers would be developed for Town committees. All of these events were well received, and although the restrictions of COVID-19 temporarily postponed further plans for large public events, the hope is to return to hosting similar events, including the Citizen’s Academy, post-pandemic.

These are positive developments; however, many of the challenges to citizen engagement persist. Public cynicism toward governance is increasingly visible and audible, often by means of the same social and traditional media platforms that also serve to inform. It is easily observed online and in broadcast media that, whether intentional or inadvertent in its origin, misinformation spreads more rapidly than plain fact. Thompson’s challenge is to make factual information more accessible to residents, in ways that are relevant and personal. In **Section 3.4 - Suggested Action Steps**, goals will be established to increase constructive citizen participation.

3.3a Update from the Social Media Intern

In Fiscal Year 2020, as referenced in the prior section, a new position was created at Town Hall to assist staff in managing the Town’s social media platforms. The update below was provided by the Town’s first intern, a member of the 2020 graduating class of Tourtellotte Memorial High School, as a synopsis and assessment of his experience. It is included in this document as a benchmark for Thompson’s progress in this area, to be used as a point of comparison in the 2030 update of this document. The letter is condensed from the original, but remains in the voice of its author.

As the first intern for the Town of Thompson I was responsible to draft a Social Media Strategy which was completed in June of 2019. In addition I was responsible to help with the growing the reach of the platforms and reviewing analytics. In fact, the town’s Instagram account was established with my input.

My daily tasks as the Social Media intern:

- Check email for department communications
- Check facebook pages including Recreation, Library, Trails, Historical Society, and TEEG for post sharing opportunities.
- Write and schedule stories for the Town’s Website based
- Create and schedule facebook posts using web based software like CANVA.
- Attend and document town sponsored events and meetings and at times video tape them.
- I did create several promotional videos for the town as well.
- I was also responsible to update the Google calendar we used to schedule stories and posts.

I felt the communication and guidance from several staff; Recreation Director, Director of Planning & Development, Town Clerk, and the Administrative Assistant in the Selectmen’s office was the key to my success in this position. Having clear directives on what information needed to be communicated and when through news stories and social media posts was very helpful to me.

Inter-departmental communication could be improved at town hall. In addition, departmental use of social media and the website could be increased. Much of my time was doing outreach to encourage departments to use these platforms.

3.4 Suggested Action Steps

In order to strengthen the connection between the people of Thompson and those elected and employed to serve them, the following action items are recommended:

In progress, or for implementation > 1 year

- **Refine the municipal website for greater ease of navigation.** Reduce the number of clicks required to find important information; add online platforms for permit applications and payment options; adjust the interface to be more visual and less text-heavy.
- **Review that the department pages have a consistent look, a link to each department and staff directory.** Each department should have a short descriptor and phone and emails. The current online contact form creates extra steps for the residents.
- Departments and administrators need to **review for outdated information with more regularity.** A good practice is for each department to conduct a monthly audit and update of its own page, reporting needed changes to a web administrator if the department lacks webpage authorization.
- **Improve the communication between volunteer boards, commissions and committees** by pro-actively sharing agendas with recording secretaries and chairpersons, inviting attendance by relevant committee/commission members to discuss agenda items of mutual interest.

Short Term – Years 1-3

- **Lower barriers for residents to participate in public meetings.** In the age of COVID, much has been learned about the benefits and limits of hosting meetings via online platforms vs traditional in-person forums, thanks to a near-universal shift to online meetings during the pandemic. Online meetings increase overall rates of participation from citizens, who are able to dial in from home rather than drive to a central location, seek childcare, interrupt mealtimes or other household needs, etc; therefore, continued hosting of public meetings via ZOOM or a comparable service is essential. Such platforms, however, are not without their flaws. Certain segments of the population (e.g. the elderly, or those without reliable internet connection) are still made uncomfortable or left out by the online process. Some exploration of a live-online-hybrid process is being done, incorporating live-streaming and automatic upload of the meetings to the Town's YouTube channel. Costs must be absorbed to facilitate the maximum number of allowed participants. Issues with residents getting locked out of meetings due to insufficient account capacity are unacceptable.
- To further facilitate any new meeting process, **formal policies must be established for Board/Committee/Commission members, recording secretaries and other staff responsible for hosting.** Such policies should include protocols for members dialing in, protocols for committee Chairs in communicating the flow of the meeting to the public, and protocols for recording secretaries to manage participants entering meetings or requesting to speak.
- **Purchase software to fully digitize the Code of Ordinances.**

- **Increase the frequency of online communication to residents** by local government via regular emails sent to web-subscribers and frequent updates to the website and official social media pages. The latter will be the primary responsibility of the Social Media Intern.
- **Expand communications to better take advantage of mobile technology.** Engagements via mobile should be designed to be personalized, friendly and easy to use.
- Work on **prioritizing the information that residents seek out the most, using Google analytics.** Consider providing a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page.
- Add a monthly or quarterly online-only newsletter, while still producing semi-annual hard-copy Selectmen's Updates. **Transition the Selectmen's Update over time to a primarily online mode of delivery,** with print copies available as a secondary option only. This would enable more frequent publication with fewer space constraints.
- **Continue with periodic events to gather direct feedback from residents,** volunteers and staff. The model of quarterly events organized around a single theme, hosted by the Branding Implementation Subcommittee, has been very positively received.
- **Develop a "Citizens' Academy",** whereby interested residents can do a deep dive into the inner workings of local governance.

Medium Term - Years 3-5

- Contract with a media company specializing in citizen engagement platforms to **develop an interactive budgeting tool to embed on the town website.** This would help residents understand how their tax dollars are allocated across departments; and the data captured by the town through its use would help Town departments better understand residents' priorities as they develop their annual budgets.

Long Term - Years 5-10

- Work with the public school system to **develop a program for civics education with an emphasis on local governance** as part of the regular curriculum, either as a designated class or a series of special modules.

Infrastructure and Public Works

4.1 Overview of Infrastructure and Public Works

Thompson encompasses 95.97 miles of improved roads and 2.08 miles of unimproved roads. The Thompson Public Works Department handles all aspects of road maintenance, including mowing, sweeping, drainage and resurfacing of the improved roads; and grading of the unimproved roads and some public trails, including the Air Line State Park Trail. The Department of Public Works also maintains parks and playgrounds; the Library Community Center; and several cemeteries in the Town.

The Transfer & Recycling Station is also operated by the Public Works Department. Recycling services are available for cardboard, paper, plastic, and glass. The Transfer Station also accepts electronics, mercury products, brush, grass clippings and leaves.

The Town of Thompson is a permittee under the General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater from Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4 General Permit). The MS4 is an unfunded mandate of the Clean Water Act by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as part of its Stormwater Phase II Rules in 1999. The EPA required the states, and the states, in turn, required certain towns (of which Thompson is one) to take various actions regarding stormwater. In the first phase, the Town was required to register for the General Permit, develop a Stormwater Management Plan and map all the outfalls in the Town. In the second phase, the obligation was to map and inspect all catch basins connected to those outfalls within the priority areas. While well intended, this unfunded mandate has cost the town many thousands of dollars and produced few results to date. The ultimate goal is to prioritize certain outfalls to be tested. In larger cities, the scale of these procedures is more practical; but in small towns such as Thompson, the administrative burden is inefficient. To date, very little pollution has been discovered in any of the outfalls checked.

Public works projects are often viewed favorably by residents, particularly highly visible projects such as road improvements; however, there is a disparity in public expressions of support for such projects and the willingness of residents to accept a level of taxation equal to infrastructure needs. In a low-density municipality such as Thompson, the tax base is insufficient to subsidize adequate levels of long-term maintenance to existing roads. An increase in allowable density along existing public roads can serve to offset some of the additional costs; but, it should be stated plainly that it is not in the best interest of Thompson to permit any new roads to be accepted by the Town. Accordingly, **it is recommended that the Thompson Subdivision Regulations be revised to dis-incentivize the construction of new roads to serve new subdivisions.** More on this topic will be explored in **Section 17**.

4.2 Road Construction and Maintenance

In Fiscal Year 2021, the Public Works budget was set at \$993,237 representing 16.5% of the general budget for the town, or 3.7% of the combined town budget. Of that total department funding, \$375,000 was budgeted to the Department of Public Works for road resurfacing projects. Average costs for road repairs on local roads are \$250,000 per road mile (a road mile being both sides of a typical two-lane road). Therefore, in FY21, the Town of Thompson has budgeted for repairs on 1.5 miles of local roads. This figure does not include any potential state or federal grant money which may be awarded for specific projects, but only represents funds sourced directly from Thompson taxpayers.

Asphalt roads typically have a functional lifespan of roughly 15 years before they are assumed to require significant repairs (resurfacing). With 95.97 miles of improved roads in Thompson, budgeting for 1.5 miles of road resurfacing per fiscal year clearly is insufficient to properly maintain the roads in an acceptable and safe condition. Assuming that the schedule of repairs should be staggered to resurface all public roads on a 15-year cycle, the Town should be budgeting for the resurfacing of roughly 6.5 road miles per year. Further assuming that the average cost per road mile remains stable at \$250k, an appropriate annual resurfacing budget would therefore be **\$1,625,000**. The Town funds are supplemented by two State programs; in FY21 those programs added approximately \$336,000 to Thompson's road maintenance funding. This still leaves a wide gap between the Town's maintenance needs and the funds available for fulfillment.

The average costs described above represent standard cyclical maintenance costs; however, the current model for road repairs being used by DPW is more restorative in nature. Years of sub-par road surface processes have left roads throughout the Town in unsatisfactory condition. Low-budget processes used throughout the years in lieu of a Hot Mix Asphalt (HMA) surface on most roads have left Thompson with soft surfaces which are easily susceptible to failure.

Prior to recent years, the accepted method of road resurfacing in Thompson was a process called cold in-place recycling, followed by a layer of 1/4" or 3/8" chip seal. This process, when used on a surface made of HMA, can successfully reduce costs while extending the life of an existing road. Most improved roads in Thompson either consist of layers of oil and stone, cold mix asphalt or a combination of the two materials. Some locations have had HMA repairs to heavily damaged sections and a few roads have had thin surface HMA overlays. Most roads with repairs or overlays, however, had little to no preparation before the surface treatments were applied. Key cuts, raising drainage structures, or needed repairs to existing drainage often were not completed. Many times, large sections of potholes have been skimmed over with HMA to serve as a temporary solution, which in practice have been left in place for a longer term. Neglecting to make a key cut and barely using enough asphalt to compact is an unacceptable means of making a repair. Most of these locations are easily degraded by snow plows during winter storm operations, resulting in material being torn out and thrown by plows and causing stress and damage to DPW equipment.

In light of these challenging conditions, the current restorative plan for road resurfacing in Thompson involves the removal of built up layers of inferior materials in order to replace them with an HMA surface. During the 2019 construction season DPW began using the process of Full Depth Reclamation to pulverize existing road surfaces. The process grinds the road material and mixes it with the dirt below, compacting it to make a stronger base material for the HMA. Before paving takes place, repairs to drainage structures, pipes and culverts are completed and the road is graded for proper crown and pitch. Paving consists of a 2-inch-thick base layer of .5-inch HMA followed by a 1.5-inch layer of .05-inch HMA. By the end of the 2020 construction season, DPW will have successfully restored 9.76 miles of road, or roughly 10% of Thompson's improved road inventory.

Having what is essentially a new road surface gives DPW the opportunity to begin a maintenance program based on modern pavement preservation techniques. The Director of Public Works has set a goal, following this restorative period, to see a 10 to 12-year span with minimal upkeep on these new surfaces. At the ten year mark the roads should be inspected for consideration of crack sealing followed by a chip seal. This will add years to the ability of the repaired road

surfaces to handle wear. At a later point, an additional chip seal may be considered based on condition; or, if the surface requires it, DPW now has the ability to mill off the top 1.5" layer of HMA and replace with a new HMA top coat.

By adhering to this pavement plan, Thompson will be able to transition to a lower-intensity maintenance program, with an inventory of roads composed of materials that can be properly maintained. This would be a welcome contrast to road materials that have long outlived their useful span, leaving Thompson with severely deteriorated road surfaces.

The costs described at the beginning of this section and the depiction of the intensity of labor required for maintenance of local roads underscore the assertion that Thompson must take steps to discourage the construction and adoption of new roads by the Town. The recommendation is therefore repeated that the Subdivision Regulations be revised to minimize the extent to which the construction of new roads would be permitted. New cul-de-sacs, which provide no utility to any taxpayers beyond the residents on such roads, should be explicitly disallowed for acceptance by the Town, and where proposed by the developer of a subdivision should exist only as private roads or shared driveways, maintained by the homeowners along its course in association. Where new roads are proposed, the burden must be on the developer to demonstrate how the proposed road would meet a compelling Town interest for transit connectivity, in order to be eligible for acceptance by the Town.

Increasing allowable residential density on existing roads is a means by which property tax income could be increased, without adding a significant maintenance burden to the town. Using the hypothetical of a one-mile stretch of road with the current minimum allowable frontage of 150', a maximum of 70 homes could be located on that road (35 per side). If that mile of road costs \$250,000 to repair every 15 years, then the amount of tax paid per household dedicated to road maintenance should be \$238.10 per year for 15 years (a 15-year total of \$3571.43). The average annual property tax bill for Thompson is \$2870.76, meaning that at current levels an average of 8.3% of a Thompson resident's annual tax levy should be designated for road maintenance. If allowable density is increased by reducing the frontage requirement to 100', that same mile of road could accommodate up to 104 houses, reducing the average annual tax burden per household to \$160.25 over 15 years (total \$2403.85), or 5.5% of the annual average tax bill. When the PZC recently revised their zoning regulations, the idea of increasing allowable density by reducing the minimum road frontage in the Rural Residential Agricultural District (**RRAD**), newly created and defined in the 2020 overhaul of the Thompson Zoning Regulations, was rejected by a majority of the Commissioners. Resistance was based on concern that Thompson would be at risk of losing its rural character if an increase in density is permitted. While such concerns are reasonable, the calculations shown above demonstrate that current density rates do not support a fully funded road maintenance program. This creates a conflict between two reasonable demands. It should be pointed out that it may not be necessary to increase density in every neighborhood and along every road to the full capacity of 104 parcels per road mile, as long as the *average* density of 104 parcels per mile is achieved. In the recent overhaul of the Thompson Zoning Regulations, higher density was made possible in the Downtown Mill Rehabilitation District (**DMRD**), Common Residential District (**CRD**) and parts of the Thompson Corridor Development District (**TCCD**), with a reduced frontage requirement of 50 feet. These areas are served in whole or in part by public water and sewer utilities, and can therefore easily accommodate higher density, serving to offset the wider separations between parcels in the RRAD. If the optimal average density is not achieved by means of the changes to the districts named above, and taxation rates remain below that required for effective maintenance of public

infrastructure, then it is recommended that allowable density in the RRAD be examined again. In the event that further increase in road frontage density is pursued, stormwater runoff and attendant pollutant load will also increase. While it was noted previously that no water quality concerns from municipal stormwater systems have been identified, an increase in runoff and pollution will likely be detrimental to current good water quality conditions and result in the need for additional outlay from DPW to address those problems per the MS4 permit. Regardless of the strategy pursued to improve the Town's capacity, road maintenance is absolutely critical. The longer maintenance and repairs are delayed, the greater the eventual cost. If no maintenance or repairs are performed some roads will completely fail, reaching a state where repairs are useless and the roads must be completely reconstructed. Failure to budget for road maintenance, therefore, is short-sighted and leads to increased future costs, defeating the purpose of deferring repairs in the interest of short-term savings.

4.3 Public Buildings and Facilities

As is typical of many small New England towns, Thompson's public buildings have been modified and used for a variety of functions over the years. For example: the 1842 Old Town Hall and the 1902 Library still stand, fully restored by the Thompson Historical Society and in use as museums. These venerable buildings are located near the Thompson Common in the heart of the Thompson Hill village. This historic village center was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. Several of the little village school buildings remain in use, housing small businesses, function halls and private social clubs. Repurpose and reuse is a consistent theme in Thompson, a town that appreciates its past, maintains its traditions and shows its character by incorporating the old into the new. Adaptive reuse of buildings, in addition to preserving structures of local historic interest, also reduces landfill from demolition; and uses fewer materials, energy and other resources than new construction. Given these facts, adaptive reuse of public structures as they age out of current uses must remain a priority going forward.

The current Town Hall began life as the town garage, housing the few school buses in use in the 1930s. Ever economical in thinking, Thompson launched a Depression-era WPA work project that added a second story of offices for town officials following the great 1938 hurricane. With other renovations over the years, and the town vehicles moved to a purpose-built garage about one mile away, the two-story Town Hall remains in regular use today, nearing its 90th year of operation.

The other public buildings in town include:

- The public school campus built around the original 1909 Tourtellotte Memorial High School. Today the Riverside Drive complex also houses the Mary R. Fisher Elementary school and Thompson Middle School. The school will be discussed in more detail in **Section 14**.
- The Thompson Public Library and Louis P. Faucher Community Center was built in 1994 in North Grosvenordale, the largest of Thompson's 10 villages. Further exploration of the Public Library may be found in **Section 15**.
- The Thompson Sewer Authority facility, located in the village of Mechanicsville, is located just north of the Putnam town line on Rt. 12. The facility treats an average of 350,000 gallons per day (roughly 127,750,000 gallons per year) for approximately 1200 customers. Slightly less than one third of the residential and commercial properties in Thompson, therefore, are connected to the municipal water utility.

- The Town Highway Garage houses the construction vehicles, snow plows and school buses serving the municipality. Other town facilities include the town dog pound and the efficiently run Transfer & Recycling Station.

The Building Committee is made up of eight appointed volunteer members, overseeing major capital projects in Thompson at the request of the Board of Selectmen. The committee is not a permanent, standing body; rather, it is periodically constituted by the Board of Selectmen to oversee specific projects. A side-effect of this structure is that the Building Committee is, by its nature, a managing body rather than a planning body and no single, long-term master plan for projects under the committee has been developed. **It is a recommended that the Board of Selectmen either re-structure the Building Committee as a permanent committee, expanding its mandate to include long-range planning; or constitute a separate volunteer advisory committee to develop a long-range (10-year) plan for major municipal capital projects. It is also recommended that the resulting 10-year plan be published on the Town website.**

4.4 Waste Management

4.4a Thompson Transfer and Recycling Station

Located at 185 Pasay Road, the Thompson Transfer and Recycling Station serves approximately half of all Thompson households. Recycling is mandatory in Connecticut and Thompson's facility has a thoughtfully planned, well-maintained system for residents to deposit a wide variety of recyclable materials. Under State of Connecticut guidelines, computers, electronics, televisions and mattresses are accepted at no charge. Information on proper paint disposal is available. There are several items that incur a fee, including Freon appliances, tires, propane tanks and bulky waste. There is a periodic Household Hazardous Waste Collection, which is open to all Thompson residents.

The Transfer Station is operated by the Department of Public Works and is open four days each week, excluding holidays or storm days when the two staff members are required for different duties. The Transfer Station is also a popular site for fundraisers like the Veterans' Poppy Sale. There is a "swap shack" for sharing reusable discarded items.

Annual Permits are sold in the Tax Collector's Office. There is a reduced rate for Senior Households (age 65 or over). Permits are also available for multi-unit dwellings, or for those who collect for more than one household.

The Board of Selectmen sets the rates for permits and fees at the Transfer Station. **A regular examination of expenses and revenue would be appropriate before each Town budgeting cycle, to assess changing costs and user demographics.**

The Transfer Station Advisory Committee, begun in September 2001, meets semi-annually and is advisory to the Board of Selectmen. It has the following mission statement: *"The Thompson Transfer Station Advisory Committee is a committee of volunteer residents formed to improve the waste disposal system for the Town of Thompson which will be cost effective, equitable for users of the Transfer Station and environmentally sound. This committee addresses issues facing the Thompson Transfer Station regarding cost, regulation, recycling, recycling education and options of efficient operations and enforcement. By acting as a forum for Transfer Station issues, we hope to increase awareness of Thompson residents to recycle, to care for the environment and to be responsible citizens for the beautification of our town."* The Transfer Station Advisory

Committee periodically researches and assesses various options for the Station, including more equitable disposal fee structures. Their 2012 document titled [Comparison of Disposal Systems](#) can be found on the Town's website⁴. The comparison includes Pay-As-You-Throw programs favored by the State of Connecticut and Sustainable CT. A weight-based model appears to be the most favorable and fair for Thompson, since disposal costs (tipping fees) are also based on weight. The substantial commitment to infrastructure changes required for such alternate plans may be offset by the long-term benefits.

Several other challenges face the Thompson Transfer Station:

Facility & Equipment: There is no running water at the site. The aging facility and the many pieces of equipment need constant attention and repair. **A ten-year plan to repair or replace the facility is necessary to maintain this service.** Efficiencies and cost-cutting may be possible as automation and technologies improve, but funding remains an issue. Grant funding may be necessary to update equipment that is not included in the Town budget as a capital expense. Major facility changes would be required to shift from the current permit fee model to a different disposal fee structure. The unfunded State of Connecticut mandate to accept computers, electronics, televisions and mattresses at no charge requires dry storage facilities and personnel for disposal. Items deposited incorrectly contaminate loads.

Non-Compliance: Some users do not recycle, costing the Town more in tipping fees. Trucks continue to enter the facility without being secured or covered, spewing roadside trash. Some permit-holders dispose of trash from multiple households that should each be paying for an individual household permit. **On-site staff holds limited enforcement authority. A violation policy and enforcement policy with penalties must be developed, and must be supported by the Board of Selectmen.**

Roadside Dumping: Due to its proximity to the MA and RI state lines, Thompson has frequent issues with surreptitious dumping, particularly by out-of-state residents who would otherwise be subject to their states' higher fees. Cleaning up large deposits of roadside garbage takes staff time and disrupts normal workflow at the DPW. **A surveillance camera program on those roads and sites with a history of clandestine trash dumping could help identify offenders.** Dumping would also be discouraged if public examples were to be made of scofflaws. Again, this means a commitment to an enforced policy with adequate mandatory fines and penalties.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection: The Thompson Transfer & Recycling Station does not have the capacity to collect and dispose of hazardous waste. It would be ideal to partner with surrounding communities to establish a regional household hazardous waste collection facility, as opposed to residents waiting for a single hazardous waste collection day every two years. At the time of this writing, such a facility has been proposed for the nearby community of Pomfret.

National/Global Markets: The volatility of national and global recycling markets impacts the cost of operating the Thompson Transfer Station and adds to budget uncertainty. As recycling technologies develop, and the U.S. invests in infrastructure supporting those technologies, Thompson needs to stay abreast of and take advantage of new opportunities to increase recycling revenue.

⁴https://www.thompsonct.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf5076/f/uploads/transfer_station_comparison_chart_05-2012.pdf.

4.4b Commercial Trash Haulers

Several commercial trash haulers operate within Thompson, and their services are contracted by most households that do not opt to use the Thompson Transfer & Recycling Station. There is a Commercial Hauler's Fee required, to offset wear & tear on roadways by trucks. Several "smaller" commercial haulers in town currently do not pay the Commercial Hauler's Fee, and it is recommended that this be addressed, possibly by instituting a reduced rate for smaller-capacity commercial haulers. Some haulers do not cover their loads, creating an increased incidence of roadside trash.

4.4c Grassroots Programs to Address Waste

The well-established annual April clean-up organized by local non-profit Thompson Together has, since 2003, successfully activated area residents to collect litter from the Town's roadsides and waterways. Supported by grant funding from The Last Green Valley, the April clean-up is an expression of civic pride that over the years has removed tons of roadside litter.

In June of 2019, the EDC Branding Implementation Subcommittee hosted a community visioning exercise, where attendees were invited to work in teams to discover common priorities for Thompson. The closely related topics of Litter Management and Waste Management were rated as important by the vast majority of participants (91% and 82% scored these topics "important", respectively). Responding to this, two grassroots initiatives arose to increase awareness of litter management, both facilitated by the Office of Planning and Development in partnership with Thompson Together:

- In October 2019, the first annual "UPcycled Art Show" was presented at the popular town-wide celebration Community Day. Participants were asked to submit works of art utilizing materials diverted from the waste stream. The event proved popular, and the feature was continued for October 2020.
- To help gather data in support of an improved bottle bill for the State of Connecticut, a limited-duration pilot program titled "Nips for Holiday Cheer" was introduced. Beginning in April 2020, Thompson residents were encouraged to separately collect the single-serving spirits bottles commonly known as "nips". The program captured easy-to-understand, high quality data regarding the number of nips that accumulate on the roadsides during a given year; and also supported the hypothesis that assigning value to nips, alongside the other returnables on the current bottle bill, will result in higher numbers diverted off the roadsides and ultimately out of our rivers, streams and oceans. 48,244 nips were diverted off the roadsides of Thompson during the five-month period from April - August 2020. Data collected is being shared with State lawmakers and beverage industry non-profits to support work on an improved bottle bill for Connecticut.

4.5 Sidewalks, Bike Paths and Trails

In CGS 8-23, (e) (1) it is stated that, among other requirements, the PoCD "shall (A) be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality, (B) provide for a system of principal thoroughfares, parkways, bridges, streets, sidewalks, multipurpose trails and other public ways as appropriate, (C) be designed to promote, with the greatest efficiency and economy, the coordinated development of the municipality and the general welfare and prosperity of its people and identify areas where it is feasible and

prudent (i) to have compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns and land reuse, and (ii) to promote such development patterns and land reuse". Currently, transportation options in Thompson are almost entirely automobile-oriented, to the extent that on the website walkscore.com, Thompson currently rates a 0/100 for walkability. Using a zip code search for 06255-North Grosvenordale, instead of a general search for Thompson CT, does provide a slightly better result (28/100); but on the whole, in its current configuration, Thompson serves pedestrians and cyclists poorly. The sub-standard offerings for pedestrian access are explored in depth in a 2016 Road Safety Audit (RSA) under the ConnDOT Community Connectivity Program. More discussion of those results is found in **Section 9, along with suggested action plans derived from its recommendations.**

In 2020, with the assistance of the Office of Planning and Development, the Mill-Sites Redevelopment Advisory Committee (MSRAC) engaged engineering firm Freeman Companies, LLC to undertake the design of an extensive stretch of sidewalk running northbound on Route 12 from the intersection with Route 200 to the intersection with Rawson Avenue, utilizing funds from the 2018 DECD Brownfield Area Revitalization (BAR) Grant. As of this writing, the resulting plans are under consideration by ConnDOT for funding under the LOTCIP grant program. Assuming that grant is awarded, the project will address several of the deficits called out in the 2016 RSA. Other areas in need of substantial upgrades or extensions to the sidewalks include Main Street, and Riverside Drive continuing north of Rawson Avenue toward Heritage Park. Elements from the 2016 RSA will be incorporated in **Section 4.7, Challenges to Infrastructure and Maintenance;** and the **10-Year Plan** at the conclusion of this document.

The 2016 RSA also called out the lack of safety accommodations for cyclists. Possible solutions include painting shared bike lanes onto the pavement, and putting roads on "lane diets", narrowing the space given to automobiles in order to add dedicated bike lanes and slow traffic speeds. Further attention is given to connectivity with Thompson's extensive system of trails, and enhancing safety for recreational trail users. Key access points to the Air Line Trail to be considered for development have been identified at Plum Road/Riverside Drive and Thompson Hill Road. There will be further exploration of Thompson Trails in **Sections 8.7, 9 and 11.6-11.8.**

Several recommendations from the 2016 RSA have already been put in motion. For example, in Section 4.1 of that report (Short Term Recommendations) items 11 and 14, regarding placement of new or improved crosswalks at various locations on Riverside Drive, are being addressed in the sidewalk design by Freeman Companies. Similarly, under Section 4.3 Long Term Recommendations, item 3 is to evaluate alternatives to redesign the Route 12/Blain Road intersection. That project has also been contracted for design by local firm Provost & Rovero, to be completed by the Department of Public Works. As of this writing, those plans have been approved by ConnDOT and are tentatively scheduled for construction in Spring of 2021. Additionally, new safety markings have been added at the crossing to the Airline Trail at New Road, with similar painted pedestrian crossing marks added at Sand Dam Road and Lowell Davis Road.

4.6 Public Parks and Green Space

In addition to the general maintenance of the road system, the Department of Public Works also maintains the Town's parks & playgrounds in partnership with the Recreation Department, which is responsible for scheduling and programming. Maintenance of the parks encompasses mowing, clearing of brush, emptying public trash receptacles, repair of park furniture and

equipment, and repair or replacement of public lighting. Line items have not been set aside in the annual budget specific to these tasks. There is no formal inspection and maintenance calendar for the parks, thus repairs to equipment occur only sporadically, when called to the attention of the DPW. The department also maintains certain of the cemeteries in Thompson, while others are mainly cared for by members of the community non-profit Thompson Together. There is, additionally, an understanding of commitment by Public Works to provide some maintenance for the Air Line State Park Trail, mainly in the form of grading and the application of stone dust. Volunteers from the Trails Committee have, to date, provided labor to clear brush and downed trees from the trail as necessary.

Below is an inventory of Thompson's Public Parks:

Bull Hill Recreation Area - Messier Road

Suitable for hiking, bird watching, model-airplane flight and recreational drone use. The Town owns a walking trail that loops around the soccer field, which has potential to connect to Wyndham Land Trust properties adjacent to Bull Hill. High groundwater levels currently render the fields unplayable at certain times of year. The field was constructed after significant quantities of gravel were removed to build West Thompson Dam, excavating almost down to the water table. When the Town decided to build soccer fields there, they were advised to bring in fill to raise the fields above the groundwater level; however, funding at the time was insufficient, so the fields were constructed with the understanding that they would be wet at certain times of the year. An extensive irrigation system was also designed and installed, including a small pond, pumps and a pump house, to make the fields usable in the summer. This system was used in the first year, but the institutional knowledge did not pass on. Lack of clarity in maintenance roles of DPW vs the Youth Soccer League likely contributed to the discontinued use of the drainage system. **It is recommended that the revival of the irrigation and drainage system be explored for viability.**

Community Playground - Central Street/River Mill Village

This playground for children 5-12 primarily serves the residents of the apartment complex known locally as "Three Rows".

Duhamel Park - Main Street

Named for Duhamel Pond, around which the park is located, common activities include fishing, picnicking, bird watching and ice skating. Duhamel Park is also the site for the annual community bonfire hosted by the Recreation Department. **The site would be well-suited to the addition of an open-air pavilion that could be used for town events or offered for rental income.**

Grosvenordale Common Playground - Junction of Route 200 & Riverside Drive

A small park with a swing set and basketball hoop available as amenities. This playground is poorly located, both in terms of accessibility and safety. Because of poor area walkability, the playground is only able to serve a handful of residences in the immediate vicinity. Its location in relation to Riverside Drive/Route 12, one of Thompson's busiest roads, also leaves it at elevated risk for a "rolling ball" incident. In the event that the Belding-Corticelli Mill Site is redeveloped, **negotiation with a potential developer to relocate the park onto that site should be considered.**

Heritage Way Park - Riverside Drive

A recreation area taking advantage of the French River, the park features a walking/cycling trail and is a popular site for fishing, boating and birdwatching.

Mechanicsville Park - Old Route 12

A playground for children 5-12, which also has a basketball hoop.

Riverside Park - Marshall Street parallel to Route 12

The most frequently used public park, which serves as the host site for a number of community events including an annual summer concert series and the Community Day fall festival. A walking/cycling trail runs along the French River and connects to Heritage Way Park. The park is suitable for fishing and birdwatching, and also includes a well-maintained softball field and basketball court. There are public restroom and concession facilities onsite, although they are currently not staffed or under contract. Rental to a concessionaire is an opportunity to explore, to offset some costs for park maintenance and increase the value of the asset to visitors and the neighborhood. A plan to add an additional feature, The Eleventh Village 3-season retail amenity, is underway, with a first phase implementation planned for Spring of 2021. More about these plans for Riverside Park will be discussed in **Sections 8 & 11**.

Wilsonville Playground - Junction of Wilsonville/Wagher Roads

A well maintained playground for children 5-12

A new public park amenity is pending installation at 65 Main Street, in the backyard of the former Superintendent's House stewarded by the Tourtellotte Trust. That park includes the Thompson Garden By the River community garden, playground equipment, picnic table and bike rack, and is further planned for long-term development as a public permaculture park and food forest.

Similar challenges face the public parks system, in terms of funding and labor resources available, vis a vis maintenance by DPW. In annual consideration for the budget by the Board of Finance, the budget for parks has been left flat for several years, while the road maintenance budget has seen frequent increases. This disparity may be rooted in the public perception that road maintenance is higher in value to Thompson residents than maintaining the parks and playgrounds; however, when viewed through the lens of economic and community development, parks, trails, sidewalks and playgrounds generally show a higher return on investment over time. Whereas it is important to maintain roads in a safe condition, they do not in and of themselves contribute substantially to the economic vitality of the community. In contrast, many studies have been done that show a collateral value far beyond the price tag of maintenance for public recreation amenities. As an example, The National Recreation and Park Association 2020 report "[The Economic Impact of Local Parks](#)" makes the following assertions (emphasis added):

- Economic research has demonstrated consistently that homes and properties located near parklands have higher values than those located farther away. Higher home values not only benefit the owners of these properties, but also add to the tax base of local governments. **Eighty-five percent of respondents to the 2019 Engagement with Parks survey indicate that they seek high-quality parks and recreation amenities when choosing a place to live.**
- Parks and recreation improve the quality of life in communities and benefits the local economic development of a region. **More than 80 percent of corporate executives responding to a 2019 Area Development survey rated quality-of-life features as an important factor when choosing a location for a headquarters, factory or other company facility.** Further, **94 percent of adults responding to the March 2020 NRPA Park Pulse poll**

support their local government investing in infrastructure improvements that promote economic activity in their community.

- Many local park and recreation agency amenities spur tourism to their respective locales, generating significant economic activity, including (but not limited to) increased sales at local restaurants/bars and hotels. An August 2017 NRPA Park Pulse poll (shown below) found that people seek out park and recreation amenities – such as beaches, parks, trails and secluded and relaxing places – when choosing a vacation destination.



Key Findings

- Sixty-six percent of U.S. adults say that they support their local government dedicating revenues, taxes and levies that specifically target park and recreation operations or expansion projects.
- Nearly 80 percent of parents support an initiative by their local government to dedicate revenues, taxes and levies to park and recreation operations, making them more likely than non-parents (61 percent) and U.S. residents overall (66 percent) to feel this way.
- Gen Xers (73 percent), Gen Zers (72 percent) and millennials (68 percent) are strong supporters of their local government dedicating different funding sources to target park and recreation operations or expansion projects.

With these facts in mind, it is recommended that maintenance of the public parks be accorded a level of funding prioritization consistent with their potential positive impact on economic development within Thompson.

4.6a Cemeteries

Minor maintenance of several Town cemeteries, in the form of occasional mowing, also falls to the Department of Public Works. There are 23 known cemeteries shown on the List of Thompson Cemeteries compiled by the Conservation Commission. Seven of the cemeteries are maintained by a cemetery association or other organized community group. The remaining 16 cemeteries are orphans, having fallen into disrepair with leaning or broken gravestones, overgrown trees and untrimmed brush. The private organization that maintains the East Thompson Cemetery adjacent to the Speedway estimates their annual costs for basic mowing at roughly \$4,500. Local volunteer group Thompson Together, under the leadership of Norma O’Leary, has taken up the cause of the orphans, and has been able to make some headway by clearing brush and trees and hiring a professional conservator to undertake the painstakingly slow and expensive process of

repairing the damaged headstones. Extrapolating maintenance costs based on those of the single private cemetery makes it clear that a proper program for upkeep will require dedicated planning and fundraising. **It is recommended that the Town form a new volunteer maintenance committee for its cemeteries to address these challenges.**

Cemeteries have value as historical sites and as green space, well beyond their intrinsic function as a resting place for the deceased. The Thompson Historical Society, for example, regularly receives inquiries about touring local graveyards. As the membership of volunteer organizations maintaining the remaining cemeteries ages out, it will be necessary to establish an effective maintenance plan, likely with increased commitment from the Town. More on the topic of cemeteries will be discussed under **Section 12.3 - Challenges to Conservation**, including strategies for how to feature them as an attraction for visitors to Thompson.

4.7 Suggested Action Steps

Unsurprisingly, the main challenges to the public infrastructure are generally those of time, available labor, finance and prioritization. As has been discussed, the current rate of funding for Public Works projects is not commensurate with the public need. Based on observations and recommendations made throughout this section, the following actions are suggested:

In progress, or for implementation during FY20

- Planning and Zoning Commission and the Office of Planning & Development must work with the Department of Public Works to **dis-incentivize the addition of new Town roads within the overhaul of the Subdivision Regulations.**
- Board of Selectmen, Department of Public Works and the Building Committee **must develop a ten-year plan for major public facilities projects**, including the salt shed and the Transfer Station facility.
- **Department of Public Works, Recreation Department and the Board of Selectmen to collaborate on an annual calendar of priorities.** Priorities for parks and other green space maintenance must be developed alongside the road maintenance/construction annual plan, not as an afterthought to it.
- The Director of Planning & Development will **continue to partner with state lawmakers and non-profits to develop effective legislation to address roadside litter.**

Short Term - Years 1-3

- **Implement Best Management Practices (BMP) for each of the 6 Minimum Control Measures of the MS4 permit**, as more specifically described in the Storm Water Management Plan:
 - Complete catchment delineation in priority areas
 - Determine directly contributing impervious area (DCIA) for each catchment
 - Assessment and priority ranking of catchments
 - Continue dry and wet weather screening
 - Remove any illicit discharges found
 - Public education to motivate residents to use Best Management Practices (BMPs) which reduce polluted stormwater runoff.
- **Establish a new volunteer maintenance committee for the cemeteries.**
- **Work with Thompson Historical Society, Conservation Commission, Recreation Department and Thompson Together to develop programs featuring Thompson's cemeteries.** Alongside

any plans for maintenance and restoration of headstones, develop events that feature local history, the symbolism of headstones and the unique ecosystems of cemeteries.

Medium Term - Years 3-5

- Engage a “Stormwater Corps” student team under the NEMO program at UConn to conduct an analysis for Thompson and **develop an impervious cover disconnection action plan**. Having such a plan may help the town ease some of the bureaucratic burdens associated with the MS4 General Permit.
- The French River Watershed Plan includes many recommendations for disconnections in the highly impervious Urbanized Area in North Grosvenordale. Programs could be developed by the Town or local organizations (such as Thompson Together) to **encourage homeowners to adopt practices to disconnect stormwater via the use of rain gardens or rain barrels**. Recommendations are also provided in the Watershed Plan for commercial properties such as the mills, that can be included as part of site redevelopment.
- Develop a clear **violation and enforcement policy for Transfer and Recycling Station use** with the support of the Board of Selectmen.
- **Establish an equitable fee schedule for smaller commercial trash haulers** doing business in Thompson.
- **Develop additional grass-roots initiatives to tackle local roadside litter**, either independent of or in conjunction with the annual April roadside cleanup.

Long Term - Years 5-10

- **Periodically assess the rates of taxation vs density**, to determine whether changes will be necessary in order to fund critical public works programs. If density levels do not support an appropriate level of maintenance, revisit and amend any relevant zoning regulations.
- Transfer Station Advisory Committee should **revisit the various Pay-As-You-Throw options** for evaluation.
- Explore the possibility of **installation of remote cameras in problematic areas** for rubbish dumping.
- **Install monitor wells at Bull Hill** to monitor groundwater levels. Based on that information, **either add drainage or raise the fields** to bring them back to full usability.

Safety Services

5.1 Fire and EMS

As is true of many small towns, Thompson is served by an all-volunteer firefighting force. What is somewhat unusual is that Thompson's fire volunteers are spread out over five stations, each acting independently. In a town with such a large footprint, maintaining five firehouses serves to reduce response times in each of the districts served; however, some challenges to maintaining the departments may be exacerbated by having to spread resources over so many stations. A 2017 assessment report compiled by VFIS Education, Training & Consulting identifies many positives of Thompson's current system, including the overall cost savings of an all-volunteer force (roughly estimated at an annual value of \$2,500,000), and a specific commendation that "The lack of significant major loss events and very few service complaints are a tribute to the performance of the organization as a whole".

Having recognized the outstanding service provided by Thompson's volunteer force, the assessment finds that the funding resources provided by the Town are below those typically furnished by host communities. In their report, VFIS identifies 12 line items which are frequently funded by local government sources; of these, Thompson assumes the costs for three (annual tax relief incentive of up to \$1000 for tax-paying resident volunteers; worker's compensation; and liability/vehicle insurance). The annual out-of-pocket costs per Thompson taxpayer, as shown in an overview document compiled by the Fire Advisory Committee, are estimated at \$25.40 per person/\$65.34 per household. While it is admirable that the local departments have been able to maintain such a high standard of service operating under the current funding levels, that same document points out that the real costs of that service are \$73 per person per year, roughly three times the amount of funding captured through local property taxes.

The potential increases posited above, as excerpted from the Fire Advisory Committee report, cover only the base cost of operations for the departments. They do not accommodate for major repairs or replacement of apparatus, vehicles or buildings. Apparatus and vehicles have mandated maximum lifespans prior to decommissioning, in order to protect the safety of the firefighters who depend on them. Buildings also age out of their uses over time, as borne out by the current condition of the Community Fire station, the department serving Thompson's highest density neighborhood of North Grosvenordale. In response to the prevalence of cancer deaths among firefighters, NFPA and OSHA guidelines for safe facilities indicate that Thompson's fire stations are in need of fume exhausts to be installed, with a rough cost of \$60,000 each. Under current funding levels, that \$60,000 must instead be directed to mandatory gear replacement, providing for immediate needs but further delaying critical firehouse retrofits.

As with Community Fire, each of the individual firehouses faces specific additional needs for structural repairs, vehicles and equipment. As an example, Fire Chief Grauer identifies the following needs for the Thompson Hill station:

- Replace the 1997 Heavy Rescue vehicle, which is no longer sufficient to accommodate current capacity standards
- Install a Turnout Gear Extractor and Dryer, critical to the proper cleaning and removal of potential carcinogens
- Replace the station's 1985 furnace
- Upgrade the station to a modern septic system, replacing the current cesspool.

This is an illustration of the specific needs of a single station; but each of the departments has its own equally pressing concerns.

Several competitive grant programs are available each year for local departments to fund the replacement of some equipment and apparatus; however, these are best thought of as complimentary to a proper funding structure, not a replacement for it. Similarly, there may be grants available to fund the retrofit or replacement of a sub-standard stationhouse (notably CDBG Small Cities or USDA Rural Facilities Grants), but these are also highly competitive programs; some have fund-matching requirements which move them out of reach for a community that has not set capital funds aside; and even a high-quality application may not be chosen for funding in a given year. To complement the low funding, therefore, department volunteers must put in many hours of fundraising to help fill the need. While occasional fundraisers do reinforce the sense of community and camaraderie between firefighters and their neighbors, the constant need for boot drives, barbecues, bake sales and other methods to fill funding gaps risks the erosion of the morale of the volunteers providing this essential public service.

Therefore, to bring the level of funding in line with real costs for the departments, it would be responsible of the Town to raise the line item for fire services in the annual budget, with commensurate levels of taxation. It has been suggested that the Town adopt a taxation strategy similar to those in some local communities, levying an addition to the base mil rate by neighborhood, calculated according to the annual real costs of the fire district in which it is located. The 2019 report uses the fire district assessment of the town of Killingly as an example of such a structure. In Killingly, additions to the mil rate range from a \$.50 upcharge for residents of Dyer Manor to \$4.95 for the more densely populated district of Danielson.

Another alternative funding structure that has received attention in recent years is the "Woodstock Model." The Woodstock Model is a funding and administration system which provides a central association to act as the administrator of the fire departments. The association would receive the funding from the town, pay the bills of each department, hold loans and pay for apparatus and equipment of the fire departments. It would be made up of representation from each of the departments with a board of directors as the governing body. Fire department Chiefs would not be voting members of the board. Each Fire Chief would submit a budget request for large capital expenditures and the board would prioritize those requests and determine if/when expenditures would be made. The individual departments would still retain their separate identities and procedures, but would be members of the association. Properly funding such a Fire Association would help alleviate the burden on each department, whose volunteer Chiefs take on roles as accountants, HR professionals and fundraising coordinators, in addition to fulfilling their duties as firefighters.

The formation of a Fire Association along the lines of the Woodstock model has been proposed as an alternative to potentially consolidating and reducing the number of stations in Thompson. At this time, the option of centralizing the management of expenditures for the departments appears more palatable for the volunteers and the community. Whatever alternate structure is adopted, **it is recommended that a period of evaluation be established, to examine its effectiveness in managing costs.** Should serious imbalances persist following that evaluation, then consolidation must be considered.

Finding and retaining volunteer firefighters remains a persistent challenge to Thompson's fire departments. This reflects nationwide trends of decreasing levels of volunteerism, and likely has many root causes. Training requirements have become increasingly difficult, and so increased time requirements compete with family and work commitments. Given that the Town will not be in a position to fund a professional firefighting force in the foreseeable future, **an examination of the incentive structure for volunteers should be considered in the near-term**, in addition to any adjustments made to annual budgetary commitments.

Thompson's ambulance and emergency medical services are operated out of the Community Fire Station. Unlike the firefighters, emergency medical responders are a paid, professional organization. The relationship between the fire station and the ambulance services has existed in this arrangement for many years, but it does create additional challenges for both organizations. As has been previously noted, the condition of the stationhouse itself is substandard for its purpose, and it is too small to properly house both services. Over the years, the possibility of uncoupling the ambulance from Community Fire has been raised; but, the ambulance corps lacks the capital that would be legally required for them to relocate to a stand-alone facility. Further compounding this obstacle is the very nature of the income structure for ambulance service providers. Income from direct billing for services makes up roughly 60% of the corps' costs. Of the remainder, roughly 30% is provided by the Town, and another 10% is drawn from private donations or fee-for-service detail work (e.g. staffing large public events). Insurance reimbursements typically cover slightly less than half of the charges incurred on a medical emergency call, and the corps is limited in its legal ability to pursue arrears from those on public insurance. In short, Thompson's emergency medical service providers stand as another example of dedicated employees providing an essential public service on a shoestring budget. In the pursuit of more efficient funding structures for the volunteer fire departments, it is further recommended that attention be given to potential strategies to uncouple the ambulance corps from Community Fire, in a manner beneficial to both organizations and the Town.

5.2 Emergency Management

Thompson Emergency Management is responsible for coordinating the activities of all Civil Preparedness-Emergency Management Agency forces and is responsible for the recruitment and training of needed Civil Preparedness-Emergency Management personnel.

The Emergency Management Director assists the First Selectman in the preparation and updating of Town Emergency Operations Plans and Standard Operating Procedures; maintains contact with the State Civil Preparedness-Emergency Management Area office designated for the Town of Thompson; and cooperates with the Connecticut State Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security in preparation of required reports, procedures, and other necessary paperwork to ensure the Town is receiving all possible funding, equipment, and other benefits available to the Town through State and National Civil Preparedness-Emergency Management.

Thompson has a Disaster Recovery Plan that was developed in 2012 under First Selectman Larry Groh, updated by Emergency Management Director Steve Benoit in 2020. The initial plan was prepared in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, a natural disaster that had far-reaching consequences that included flooding, property damage and extended power outages for the eastern states, all the way up through landlocked Vermont. The plan details responsibilities for each municipal department, assigning levels of importance to continuity of certain services and naming alternate locations for local government functions. The 2020 update was undertaken in

response to the procedural gaps revealed by the COVID-19 pandemic response. The new edition has better defined roles for municipal employees during any kind of emergency. Although the 2012 edition was not previously published on the Town website, due to the critical need for information during any emergency, **it is recommended that the Disaster Recovery Plan be uploaded to the Emergency Management Services “Forms and Documents” page, along with a link to the [Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan](#), as published on the website of the North East Connecticut Council of Governments (NECCOG).**

Thompson’s Director of Emergency Management identifies a need to **compile a photographic inventory of publicly owned buildings and other infrastructure.** The primary purpose of such an inventory would be to support applications for emergency funds or other grants made available following a disaster; however, that inventory could also allow Town leaders to identify weak points in the local system, as response plans are formulated. For example: Thompson has an existing facility for an emergency shelter, at the Quinebaug Fire Station. The facility has the factors that make it suitable for use as a shelter (reliable generator, showers, kitchen facilities); however, in a pandemic situation that mandates physical distancing, the capacity of the single shelter is insufficient to serve the needs of the entire community. While it may not be prudent to make a photographic inventory public (due to the potential for use by bad actors), having this information would be a useful guide for Town leadership, enabling them to prioritize repairs or updates to critical facilities based on public risk.

There are further challenges to the local emergency response system that are specific to communication. There is an active [Emergency Management Facebook page](#) for the Town, and information is also shared via the Town website. In a widespread power outage, however, access to information on these sites may be problematic. Information must be shared with urgency, but must also be accurate in order to be effective. The public schools have a direct messaging system for parents of students enrolled in the system, which can be used in the case of extreme weather events or emergencies that occur during the school day; but, as of this writing there is no community-wide equivalent. Communication with Eversource, the main utility provider for the region, has also been identified as a challenge. As a private entity with monopoly position in the area, local officials have little leverage to compel quick service in the event of a widespread outage. Thompson’s position in the northeast corner of the state means that service vehicles often have further to travel from a dispatch hub. In contrast, the public servants of the local DPW have shown excellent response times in plowing and clearing downed trees from roads during weather events. At this time, there is no public utility option for Thompson residents. As a general challenge to first responders, there are a number of Town roads missing street signs, either through theft or damage; and, many homes lack visible house numbers. While these last may seem like small details, in the event of an emergency at a private home, critical time may be lost by first responders trying to find the correct address. **Therefore, it is recommended that the Town take an annual inventory of all street signs, replacing those which are damaged or missing. It is further recommended that a public service campaign should be developed, to encourage homeowners to post house numbers prominently, in a location visible from the street.**

In 2020, global systems were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thompson, like the vast bulk of communities large and small around the world, found itself without an adequate plan in place for an emergency of this nature. A natural disaster such as a hurricane, fire or blizzard occurs suddenly and violently, leaving behind widespread damage to the built and natural environments. In the case of a pandemic, the disaster unfolds over an extended period of time,

disrupting the activities of daily life without necessarily impacting buildings, roads or landscapes. The Director of Emergency Management has identified several items to be prioritized, in the event of future infectious disease events:

- **The Town must be proactive in maintaining a stockpile of personal protective equipment**, at minimum a sufficient quantity of disposable gloves and masks to permit municipal employees to serve the public safely.
- **Testing protocols must be established quickly, and adhered to.** The First Selectman must advocate aggressively with regional and state health officials for a sufficient quantity of test kits for all first-responders and front-line staff upon confirmation of an emergent pandemic.
- **A direct-to-mobile emergency alert system for all residents** should be seriously considered. Such a system would be particularly critical in the case of a long-term shutdown of public facilities.
- Options for **additional emergency shelter locations** should be explored. Given the recent shutdown of St. Joseph's elementary school, it may be prudent to initiate a conversation with the Diocese to convert the building for Town use. As the building is currently off the tax rolls, there would be no loss of property tax income in such a conversion.
- **Additional directional signage to emergency shelters** should be installed in easily seen locations.

The Director of Emergency Services has also identified a need for better defined socio-economic response and recovery plans. Given the complexity of the topic, a separate sub-section will follow, dedicated to observations made and lessons learned during this unprecedented occurrence, with recommendations made as to how Thompson should prepare for the possibility of future global-level events. **It is recommended that a permanent committee be formed to develop a long-range socio-economic response and recovery plan**, with a regular meeting schedule outside the demands of any specific emergent disaster. Further recommendations will also be made in **Section 5.4 -Pandemic Preparedness, Response and Recovery**

5.3 Law Enforcement

5.3a Police

The Connecticut State Police (Troop D) serve as the law enforcement coverage for Thompson. In the past, the Town had a dedicated resident State trooper; however in 2008 the position was cut out of the Town's FY2008/2009 budget. It was felt that the expenses incurred for coverage by the single trooper were out of proportion to any added security for residents. Referring again to the data compiled for the [CERC Town Profile 2019](#), average crime rates in Thompson are significantly lower than rates statewide, both for violent crimes (.75 vs 2.28 per 1,000 residents) and property crimes (3.53 vs 17.77 per 1,000 residents). Given that the absence of a resident trooper for the 10-year period between 2009 and 2019, when the CERC data was published, has not resulted in any spike in crime rates, it would seem to be reasonable for Thompson to continue without any dedicated municipal police presence.

This is not to imply that Thompson does not face the kinds of challenges often handled by police. Anecdotally, there are reports of illegal drug use and the resulting biohazards of discarded needles or other paraphernalia along certain paths and recreational trails. There is no mechanism for apprehending and fining intoxicated drivers inside the Town's boundaries. No matter how

rare violent crime may be in Thompson, in the event of a violent incident, response times from Troop D cannot be as rapid as response from a local station. Additionally, when the resident trooper was a part of the local community, public service programs like D.A.R.E. reached more area youth. How, then, should Thompson seek to fulfill its security needs in an effective but fiscally responsible manner? What are the gaps in public safety that remain when the police presence is so remote from the community?

Some topics are easier for which to posit non-policing solutions than others. Road speeds and road safety, for example, can be targeted with changes to public infrastructure. Where individual roads or intersections are found to have frequent unsafe drivers, passive measures such as road diets⁵, flashing speed monitoring signs⁶ and strategically placed traffic cameras have all been statistically shown to reduce vehicular speeds, thus also reducing harmful incidents. Relying on infrastructure and technology also eliminates any need for physical confrontation with a driver who may be intoxicated or uncooperative during a traffic stop, reducing the potential for harm to or by police officers; and entirely removing the subjectivity of unconscious bias from police-citizen interactions. Therefore, **it is recommended that the town identify roads and intersections where there are frequent speed and safety concerns, and enact some combination of the passive controls mentioned above.**

There is a negative community impact from minor property crimes such as graffiti and other forms of vandalism. As with visible building decay and neglected parks or public facilities, such misdemeanors depress property values, also eroding the desirability of investment in homes and businesses in Thompson. In denser, more urban environments, local police are often called in to address such petty crimes; but, the results of such “Broken Windows” policing have been mixed, and there are serious equity concerns raised by such policies, where they have been enacted.

[Jane Jacobs](#), one of the most influential thinkers in the field of planning, describes the concept of “eyes on the street”:

“...there must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street. The buildings on a street equipped to handle strangers and to insure the safety of both residents and strangers must be oriented to the street. They cannot turn their backs or blank sides on it and leave it blind.

And...the sidewalk must have users on it fairly continuously, both to add to the number of effective eyes on the street and to induce the people in buildings along the street to watch the sidewalks in sufficient numbers. Nobody enjoys sitting on a stoop or looking out a window at an empty street. Almost nobody does such a thing. Large numbers of people entertain themselves, off and on, by watching street activity.”⁷

In Jacobs’ view, “eyes on the street” deter small acts of property destruction or petty crimes organically, by removing one leg of the “motive-means-opportunity” tripod. In a neighborhood where residents are engaged with life at street-level, opportunity is decreased for those who might casually break windows or spray paint buildings. “Eyes on the street” is most effective as a natural deterrent in more densely populated districts where walkability and development

⁵ <https://www.wri.org/blog/2016/12/bigger-isnt-always-better-narrow-traffic-lanes-make-cities-safer>

⁶ <https://trl.co.uk/sites/default/files/TRL548.pdf>

⁷ Jane Jacobs, [The Death and Life of Great American Cities](#)

patterns encourage street-level engagement. The Town can also demonstrate its commitment to improving residents' pride-of-place by adopting policies to identify blight, incentivizing property owners to rehabilitate dilapidated buildings where possible and, where necessary, penalizing landowners who consistently disregard the condition of their properties. Thus an entire class of misdemeanor could be reduced or gradually eliminated without the problematic involvement of law enforcement. Therefore, **the adoption of a Blight Ordinance by the Town is recommended**, to include clearly defined procedures for identification of blight; and processes for both enforcement and incentives to address blighted properties.

Due to Thompson's rural nature, some illegal drug use and trespassing or destruction of property by irresponsible ATV users does occur in the Town's expansive open spaces. Even if the Town were to retain a resident State Trooper again, that officer would not be well-equipped to deal with such violations. Passive measures such as hidden trail cameras at locations known to be problematic could provide some relief to property owners troubled by frequent trespassing. Another solution that has been posited has been to organize, through NECCOG, a program of shared rangers to patrol the system of trails connecting the towns of the Quiet Corner. While limited in terms of the authority to make arrests, such rangers would have the authority to issue citations; and, the increased presence of patrols, even if incremental, would likely serve to deter a portion of the offending behaviors. In 2020, a proposal was advanced by Mr. Jacob Keyes, a resident of Putnam with both law enforcement and ranger experience, to develop such a program. The proposal was presented to the Board of Selectmen, but was not further pursued. **It is recommended that the Board of Selectmen reopen consideration of the proposal for the Regional Ranger Program.** An additional small-scale measure to increase the security in public parks and along public paths or trails would be to **add appropriate lighting in key areas, prioritizing the replacement of fixtures when damaged or inoperative.**

These are examples of alternate strategies to increase traffic safety and reduce certain types of property crimes; but, they are not intended to be exhaustive. It is recommended that an **analysis be done of the types of calls received by Troop D from Thompson, in order to identify the most commonly recurring problems within the community, and develop non-policing strategies to reduce their occurrence.** It is reasonable for the Town to operate without a municipal police presence, given the low incidence of crime in Thompson; it is not reasonable not to have alternative plans in place to assure public safety.

5.3b Constables

Thompson does appoint a number of constables, with a maximum of 7 constables serving. Terms expire every two years, but there is no prohibition against repeated appointments by successive Boards of Selectmen. **Thompson Ordinance 10-012** describes the manner of the appointment of constables, and establishes that they receive direction from the First Selectman or, in times of declared emergency, from the Director of Emergency Management. Ordinance 10-012 further requires constables to receive training in traffic safety and emergency operations; however, their specific duties and authorities are otherwise undefined in the ordinance, stating only that "their qualifications & duties shall be determined by the Board of Selectmen." While a number of possible duties for appointed constables are described in various state statutes (referenced in [this paper by the CT Office of Legislative Research](#)) the duties determined for Thompson constables are limited to activities related to maintaining order at polling places during elections or Town

meetings⁸. Those duties have not been specifically described in any publicly available local document, leaving the nature of the role of the constable opaque to residents. **Therefore, it is recommended that those duties be published on the Town website.** As referenced above, appointed constables may be empowered for additional duties, per statute. For example, under **CGS 14-151**, appointed constables may be empowered to deal with abandoned motor vehicles; whereas **14-386** allows the enforcement of snowmobile/all-terrain vehicle laws. In light of the likelihood that Thompson will not have a municipal police force or resident trooper in the foreseeable future, it may also be prudent to further examine the enforcement tasks which may be assigned to appointed constables, and expand their services to include those most appropriate to Thompson's specific community needs.

5.4 Pandemic Response and Recovery

As was noted in Section 5.2, Thompson's Director of Emergency Management has strongly recommended additional planning for the cascading social, economic and mental health impacts of extended emergency events. The urgency to develop such plans ahead of an emergent pandemic is echoed in the publication **CT Rises: Planning for Long-Term Disaster Recovery - A Guide and Toolkit**. This very thorough document was published, like Thompson's 2012 Disaster Recovery Plan, in response to the widespread devastation caused by Superstorm Sandy. In addition to observations and recommendations regarding damage to the physical environment, pages 39-62 of that guide also address the socio-economic aftermath. While the 2012 disaster was not directly analogous to an infectious disease event, the length of the recovery period does provide some useful lessons for the extended disruption seen in a global pandemic. Clearly, impacts are not only physical and environmental. Businesses suffer when their customer base is locked down, and widespread closures lead to commensurate spikes in unemployment, further leading to insecurities in housing, healthcare and food access. The effects of long-term social isolation are harmful to mental health, and may have additional negative effects on physical health when the medical system is strained. As was stated in Section 5.2, in order to better prepare for similar events in the future, it is recommended that a permanent committee be formed to develop and articulate local plans. The following is a list of factors for such a committee to consider. It is not meant to be exhaustive, nor to substitute for the more thorough work of any permanent planning committee:

- Via individual departments and state/local/federal websites: **catalog a comprehensive list of resources for impacted residents** & publish, with frequent (at least daily) updates as needed.
- **Identify the most vulnerable residents**, starting with those known to be currently at risk for health or economic impacts. What is the best method of reaching them, other than online? What are their specific needs, and what is the town's role in addressing them? What could be put in place to assist further; and, are there any structural barriers to that assistance? Example: how does the Town help facilitate delivery of necessities such as food, medicines or diapers when local social services are stretched to capacity?
- What is the **strategy to mitigate effects on local small businesses**? Beyond pointing them to SBA & other relief programs, what can the Town do directly?
- In the cases of both individual residents & small businesses, **a mechanism to inform the Town of WHEN they are impacted, and in what way, should be established** so that officials can help direct residents/business owners to assistance actively.

⁸ CGS Chapter 145, Sections 9-230 & 9-236

- Can the Town **establish a “mutual aid society”**, allowing less-affected residents to pool funds to support the more vulnerable?
- **Create vibrancy where possible:** encourage continuation of April cleanup efforts. Encourage non-contact public displays of optimism (e.g. as with communities putting their Christmas lights back up, or encouraging “victory” gardens).
- What are Thompson’s agricultural production resources? Can the Town **enlist local growers & producers to create a central local “market” once a week**, to reduce site-to-site travel?

5.5 Suggested Action Steps

In progress, or for implementation >1 year

- **Establish and maintain an appropriate stockpile of Personal Protective Equipment** for municipal employees and other essential staff, in case of future infectious disease events
- **Upload the Town’s Disaster Recovery Plan** to the Town website, with links to the NECCOG Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Short Term – Years 1-3

- Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and Fire Advisory Committee must **establish and transition to an appropriate funding and management structure for the volunteer fire departments.**
- **Improve the incentive structure for volunteer firefighters.**
- **Aggressively pursue grant funding to retrofit/rebuild the Community Fire Station.**
- **Initiate a Public Service Campaign to encourage proper posting of address numbers.**
- **Inventory local street signs, replacing annually as needed.**
- **Contract for a direct-to-mobile emergency alert system for all residents.**
- **Install additional directional signage to emergency shelters.**
- **Proactively solicit regular safety inspections and certification of public lighting and playground equipment by the Town’s liability insurance carrier.**
- **Incorporate regular maintenance of public lighting by DPW.**
- **Compile a photographic inventory of all public facilities and infrastructure.**
- **Form a permanent committee to develop and maintain a long-range socio-economic recovery plan**, for guidance in future long-duration emergencies
- Explore options for **additional emergency shelter locations**

Medium Term – Years 3-5

- Identify problem traffic areas and **develop non-policing solutions to reduce speeds and mitigate hazards**
- **Analyze call patterns to Troop D to identify common complaints and violations, in order to develop non-policing solutions.**
- Work with NECCOG and other member towns to **develop a regional Ranger program.**

Long Term – Years 5-10

- **Consider expansion of the Constable program to include additional duties** authorized by statute. Such duties could include issuance of abandoned motor vehicle citations, snowmobile/ATV citations, or enforcement of Transfer and Recycling Station policies. It may be necessary to include a policy for compensated detail work, for particularly difficult duties.

Local Identity

6.1 Historic Landmarks and Artifacts

In the community visioning event hosted by Branding in 2019 referenced in the Introduction, Local Identity and Historic Landmarks ranked very high in importance among participants (91% and 82% “important”, respectively). It is therefore necessary to properly identify those historic landmarks and how they have contributed to local identity over time. The historic districts and sites below are those which the Thompson Historical Society has identified as the most important in the hearts and minds of Thompson.

Pre-Colonial and Early Colonial History

Lithic structures can be found in various forms with Native American cairns, chambers, prayer seats and serpentine walls all believed to have been built prior to the arrival of the European colonists. The Thompson Historical Society leads popular annual cairn tours, with permission from private landowners. One Harvard researcher claimed that "Thompson has more unexplained rude monuments than any other place in New England."

Thompson's long history draws visitors from around the world to the cemeteries in the 10 villages. Many are well maintained with artistically carved headstones and memorials.

Thompson Hill Historic District (National Register of Historic Places)

This historic village center had a documented Native American longhouse at the summit of the hill. Rev. John Eliot, writing before King Philip's War, mentioned nearly 100 inhabitants from the Quinnatisset area tribe that settled in his Praying Town⁹. Later, the first colonial settler on Thompson Hill built his tavern near the remains of that longhouse. The first Congregational Church was soon erected and Thompson became a parish of Killingly, before eventually breaking away in 1785 and forming the independent town of Thompson. Major Robert Thompson, an influential Englishman and large landholder in the parish, gave his name to the new town, in large part to acknowledge his help in securing support from England for the colonists in times of trouble.

Conveniently located at the intersection of the New York-Hartford-Boston route and the Providence-to-Springfield turnpike, as many as 20 carriages passed daily through the busy little town in the years prior to the coming of the locomotive. Distinctive homes were erected in a variety of housing styles around a stately common green including Federal, Italianate, Tudor/Arts & Crafts, Queen Anne, Victorian and Greek Revival homes. The first trains on Thanksgiving Day, 1839, began a long period of decline for the village of Thompson Hill as a commercial district, gradually transforming into a destination for the rich and famous. Mansions and manor houses were erected, and visitors from across the country escaped from the hot cities to enjoy Thompson's small town amenities, green scenery and the fresh summer air, thought to be more wholesome than that of Newport, RI.

⁹ A term for communities populated by Indigenous Peoples converted to Christianity. See [THE "PRAYING TOWNS" published by the Nipmuc Indian Association of Connecticut, Historical Series - Number 2](#)

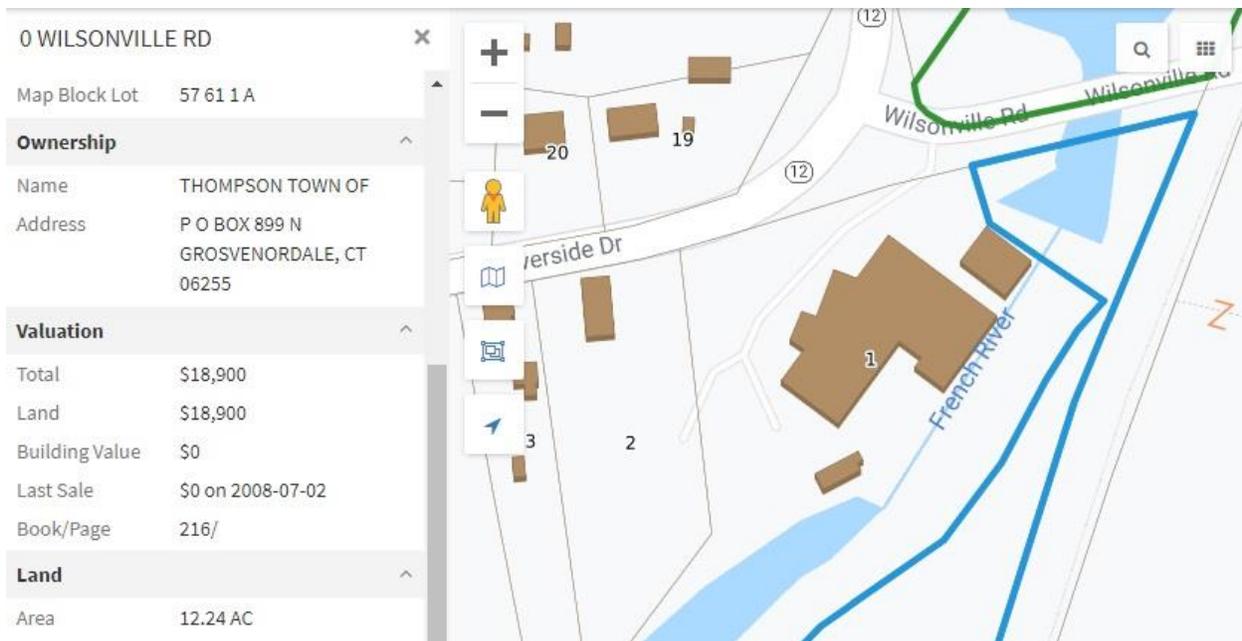
In 1987, the Thompson Hill district was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Included in the district is the third Thompson Congregational Church, built in 1856, overlooking the magnificent Common, maintained since 1845 by the venerable Village Improvement Society. The Common features several historic elm trees, survivors of the catastrophic Dutch Elm Disease. Also in the district are the 1902 Old Library, the 1842 Old Town Hall, the 1840s William H. Mason House, several historic school buildings and the 1814 Vernon Stiles Inn.

North Grosvenordale Historic Mill District (National Register of Historic Places)

North Grosvenordale was originally called Fisherville, after Mr. William Fisher started a small textile mill in 1825 on the French River. The Fisherville Mill and its associated water privileges were purchased by Dr. William Grosvenor, who also purchased other mills further south. Near the mill site then called Masonville, he built a large new mill in 1868 and re-named the entire village Grosvenordale. Three miles north, he built a much larger brick mill in 1872 next to the Fisherville Mill and renamed that village North Grosvenordale. Around 1896, the small Fisherville Mill was taken down and replaced with a massive brick weave-shed attached to the 1872 mill to form a grand manufacturing complex. The mill produced fine cotton fabrics and shirting. The Grosvenor-Dale Company was a successful textile business in Thompson until the 1940s and contributed heavily to WWII efforts with needed textile products. Following the war, it continued as textile enterprise until the 1954/1955 period, when flood waters and lower cost competition combined to end textile manufacturing in the building.

Dr. Grosvenor built sturdy worker housing on both sides of the river. These homes were occupied by groups of immigrant workers, with neighborhood names such as Swede Village, Greek Village, Three Rows and the Long Blocks, each ethnic enclave with its own religions and cultural practices. High quality single-family houses at the north end of the village were occupied by skilled specialists and supervisors. The mill and surrounding mill village have survived largely intact and were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1993 as a fine example of the textile mill village. As of this writing, there are plans in the works to restore the magnificent mill building and convert its use to 300 + market rate apartments with some mixed use amenities.

The French River near the mill is held back by a V-shaped dam, creating the scenic water vista now known as North Grosvenordale Pond. On both sides of the heavily wooded valley, bald eagles and an occasional osprey can be seen lifting heavy fish from the water, drawing birdwatchers and hikers to the trails on the water's edge. A visit to Pond Lily, with the enigmatic remains of the Camp Arrow Boy Scout shack, is a highlight for many youngsters. Pond Lily requires no fishing license for children under the age of 18. The serenity of the scenery is breathtaking, with the visitor's magic spell broken only occasionally by the powerful slap of the tail of a beaver swimming nearby. Heritage Park, behind the former Knights of Columbus hall on Route 12, serves as a public entry point to North Grosvenordale Pond, with ample public parking and a boat slip for kayaks and canoes. A leisurely paddle upstream leads to the Wilsonville Mill, also known colloquially as the Old Stone Mill. An opportunity exists for Thompson to enhance the potential for water recreation by adding a public boat launch on a town-owned parcel adjacent to the Wilsonville Mill. New owners took possession of the Wilsonville Mill in 2020, with plans to rehab the site for mixed use retail and restaurant space. Development of a boat launch on the vacant parcel would improve access for outdoor recreation, and potentially drive traffic to the planned restaurant and retail businesses. It is recommended that the Board of Selectmen **actively pursue the development of the Town-owned parcel for public use as a boat launch, working in partnership with the neighboring private property owners.**



Two serious challenges exist in regards to North Grosvenordale Pond, Heritage Park and the downstream neighborhood. The dam impounding the pond is in extremely poor condition. It is privately owned, leaving the Town with little ability to take direct action to make repairs. Sudden failure would be potentially catastrophic for the homes and businesses south of the dam; and forced decommissioning of the dam by CT DEEP would radically change the surrounding landscape, including Heritage Park. Decommissioning and return of the pond to its original form as a river would also have aesthetic implications for the planned redevelopment of the 929 Riverside Drive mill into market-rate apartment housing. It is therefore recommended that the Town **prioritize working with CT DEEP to pressure the current owners to move swiftly to repair the dam.**

The private owners of the dam are also the owners of the 152-acre parcel in which North Grosvenordale Pond and Pond Lily are located. Thompson currently owns 14.57 acres to the south of the dam along the river trail and the Town also has a conservation easement along the west bank of the mill pond, used as a walking trail. The remainder of the acreage, including Pond Lily and the old Boy Scouts camp, is eligible for development, and therefore vulnerable. As a parcel with a long history of outdoor recreational use within the town, its loss to subdivision or commercial development would be keenly felt. The town currently has a lien on the 152 privately owned, acres resulting from default on a Small Cities Grant awarded to a previous owner. To whatever extent possible **we recommend that a negotiation of the lien to the Town be pursued, to preserve as much public recreational value as possible** under future ownership.

Great East Thompson Train Wreck Site and Airline Trail

On the foggy morning of December 4, 1891, two trains collided near the small rail station in East Thompson Connecticut. With wreckage strewn across the tracks, the station operators knew that other trains were en route from the south on the same line and ran back with a lantern to warn them. Unfortunately, it was too late and two more trains collided in rapid succession with the smoking wreck of the first locomotive collisions. Mercifully, only three men died that fateful day.

Today, the old rail line has been repurposed as the Air Line State Park Trail, running from Portland to Thompson in Connecticut, continuing on to Douglas, MA as the Southern New England Trunkline Trail. In East Thompson, many come to visit the famous site of the 4-Engine Wreck to hear local rail buffs tell its story. Some visit on Halloween when the ghost of one of the deceased, Mr. Rath, supposedly returns to find his lost keys.

A healthy walk to the northeast from the wreck site leads to the Tri-State Marker, where the Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts state lines meet. This rural area attracts wonderful wildlife and recalls the wildness that George Washington wrote about when he came through Thompson in 1789. In fact, President Washington stopped in East Thompson for breakfast at the Jacobs Tavern and was so unimpressed that he wrote "not a good house" in his private journal. The site of Washington's unfortunate breakfast is today the 3rd hole at the Thompson Speedway Golfcourse.

Thompson Speedway Motorsports Park

NASCAR fans may not realize that the first meeting of the founders of NASCAR took place at the historic Thompson Speedway. The famous "Indy of the East" was the first paved banked oval in the nation. Following the great hurricane of 1938, the many downed pine trees were used in the construction of the bleachers, side rails and clubhouse for the race track. Opening in 1940, the track featured the leading racers of the age. The Hoenig family has operated the oval since its opening, and members of the latest generation still make their homes in Thompson and the surrounding towns.

After seeking a location to build the first enclosed, purpose-built road race course in America, George and Barbara Weaver purchased land in Thompson, next door to the Thompson Speedway, and established the Thompson Raceway. The Thompson Raceway ran on its own property as well as on leased portions of land owned by the Hoenig family. The earliest configuration incorporated the oval. It was here that sports car races were held during the post-war era from 1952 through 1967, featuring European cars such as Maseratis and Ferraris.

After 1967, the Thompson Speedway hosted road race events and currently operates a modern road race course next to the oval. To complement racing, there is an 18-hole golf course and restaurant. The annual Swap Meet is a local favorite, drawing crowds looking for an old car part or some new tool.

West Thompson Dam & Reservoir

Constructed in the 1960s following the destructive floods of 1936, 1938 and 1955, the West Thompson Dam was built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to protect Thompson and downstream towns from future floods. The vast water containment system was built by the Corps after moving many homes from the old West Thompson village. West Thompson was noted as the site of a mother church for the Methodists. Traveling by horseback between small village congregations in Northeastern Connecticut, Hezekiah Ramsdell was both a minister and a successful farmer. The Ramsdell farm was known for its fine orchards and, to this day, Ramsdell apples grow on their original land. Frank Ramsdell later ran the farm but always dreamed of being a railroad engineer. In 1937, the Depression had pushed down the price of iron and steel and Frank was able to afford a narrow gauge Portland steam engine, a few rail cars and some track from a defunct rail line in Maine. He brought the equipment to his farm with plans to

restore the engine and set up the track as a steam railroad line to be used for entertainment. WWII intervened and Frank never finished the project. His daughter, Alice Ramsdell, carried on the mission. Holding the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at bay with an old shotgun, she 'negotiated' an arrangement that allowed her to live out the rest of her days on the old farm instead of losing it to the government for the future lake being constructed. An old time Yankee, crusty and homespun, Alice's mannerisms and eccentricities masked a woman who dressed up as Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny each holiday period to entertain the children in town. She too was passionate about everything connected to the railroads and would proudly show visitors her locomotive, housed in an old shed. She vowed that the Portland steam engine would run again, some day. Her nephew Dale King inherited the locomotive upon her passing and, thanks to Alice's negotiations, he was able to lease the locomotive to the Wiscasset, Waterville and Farmington Rail Museum in Alna, ME, the same line on which the engine originally ran. Today, visitors can ride a train pulled by the Ramsdell engine. As of this writing, a PBS special film is nearly completed about the story of the Ramsdells, their farm and the locomotive. If one knows where to look, the foundation of the Ramsdell home can still be found, off a walking trail near the West Thompson Dam.

Today, the massive complex is the site of a beautiful lake with campgrounds, hiking trails and scenic vistas both upstream and downstream of the Quinebaug River. The Quinebaug forms one side of a famous 'Nashaway', a Native American word that describes the land between two merging rivers. The other side of the 'Nashaway' is the nearby French River which flows into the Quinebaug just south of the dam complex. From the terrible tragedy of the floods came the scenic lake and family-friendly natural vista that attracts many visitors to Thompson.

6.2 The Thompson Historical Society - Advocacy

Founded in 1968, the [Thompson Historical Society](#) (THS) currently curates three museum rooms inside the original 1909 Tourtellotte Memorial High School and manages two buildings on Thompson Hill: the 1842 Old Town Hall and the 1902 Old Town Library. The latter building has been re-named the Ellen Larned Memorial Building, housing the Thompson Museum.

The goal of THS is to perpetuate the memory of those who once lived in this quiet corner of land. This is accomplished by preserving physical artifacts; collecting stories, documents, photographs, recordings and video; and, being the designated town historians. In this role, THS brings a reasonable approach to historic preservation. Not everything historic can be saved; but, Thompson has shown a special ability to preserve and/or reuse historic structures. THS has taken on a role to push the people of Thompson to consider the full range of possibilities, rather than just calling in the wrecking balls. While many buildings have been restored in place, not all could be maintained in situ. Some of Thompson's buildings and artifacts today stand in other places, most notably the 1830s Thompson Bank now at Old Sturbridge Village; the Kenney Store of Mechanicsville, now reassembled at the Tourtellotte Memorial High School; the West Thompson Methodist Church, taken apart piece by piece and moved to the Belmont School (Belmont MA); and lastly, the oldest surviving Thompson-built house, the nearly 300 year old Nichols homestead, which still stands today in Gloucester MA.

This tradition of strong advocacy for historical preservation in Thompson goes back to a single, remarkable woman: Miss Ellen Larned. Born into a very literate and educated Thompson family in 1825, Ellen's passion was to learn all there was to know about Thompson's past. Outgrowing the town, her research soon included many neighboring towns and villages. She published historic papers on many topics and then released her classic two-volume 'History of Windham County'. In

1870, she was the first woman to be inducted into the Connecticut Historical Society. In her last years of life, she was a powerful voice in establishing a free library in town for both educational and historical purposes, as well as an advocate for the creation of a free public high school. In recognition for her efforts, in 1907 she was granted the privilege of placing the cornerstone for the Tourtellotte Memorial High School.

The Thompson Historical Society is proud to carry on the enormous historical tradition created by Ellen. The Town makes a point to include the Historical Society on relevant commissions and committees. Society board members, representing a range of backgrounds, regularly participate in many town activities. Importantly, THS works diligently to activate volunteers of all ages to join on restoration projects, or to take part in open house events at the 1842 Old Town Hall, where one may act as a singer in a music hall, a chaperone for 2nd graders learning to use a turkey quill pen and ink, or as a cashier in the gift shop during the winter holiday season. To find out more about membership and volunteering for the Thompson Historical Society, visit: <https://thompsonhistorical.org/membership/>

6.3 Villages

As is common in New England, Thompson is comprised of a number of small named villages. These districts within the larger Town do not have independent municipal representatives, such as an alderman within a city ward. Instead, the villages formed organically around centers of activity, such as the mills or the small school districts. Mill villages, in particular, commonly developed along the paternalistic model put in place by Samuel Slater and his contemporaries.

The ten villages of Thompson are:

- East Thompson
- Fabyan (formerly part of New Boston village)
- Grosvenordale (formerly known as Masonville)
- Mechanicsville
- North Grosvenordale, including the North Grosvenordale Mill Historic District (formerly known as Fisherville)
- Quaddick
- Quinebaug (formerly part of New Boston village)
- Thompson Hill, including the Thompson Hill Historic District.
- West Thompson
- Wilsonville

Because Thompson is blessed with several brooks and three powerful rivers, eight of its villages developed around sizable mill operations, with only the East Thompson and Thompson Hill village centers formed to different purposes. Thompson Hill was important as an early business center at the crossroads for the Boston-to-Hartford and the Providence-to-Springfield turnpikes. Once the locomotives came through, the mill villages, especially the Grosvenordales, replaced the economic and political power of 'The Hill'. East Thompson was noted for its rail connection to the Webster/Dudley area and connections to New York, Boston, Putnam and Hartford.

No longer do village post offices serve these communities; but a certain allegiance to village identities remains. Thompson residents often identify their village, rather than Thompson, in

response to the question “where do you live?” This does foster a certain neighborhood identity, and may strengthen some community bonds within the villages; however, the consolidation to a unified public school campus and the shift to auto-oriented culture marks the village identities as a relic of another era. It has been observed that the continued use of the village names instead of “Thompson” creates confusion when searching for local business or real estate listings online, and may even contribute to fragmentation of the community as a whole by positioning some villages as “better” neighborhoods than others. Mail delivery issues have also occurred due to the confusion between the proper town name and the villages. **Working with the local postmaster to legally change the designation for all zip codes to Thompson is recommended.** A possible way to resolve the respect for local history with the need for a single community identity may be through the **addition of historic markers at the traditional village centers.**

6.4 Municipal Branding

In 2017 and 2018, Thompson contracted with NECCOG to lead an extended Branding study, with the goal of identifying the unique assets and challenges faced by the Town, in order to develop strategies for marketing the community to prospective developers, new businesses, potential homebuyers and visitors. The full report is available here ([Thompson Branding Strategy](#)), or on the [Economic Development Commission page](#) of the Town website.

One of the first actions implemented from NECCOG’s recommendations was the formation of the EDC Branding Implementation Subcommittee (Branding). That subcommittee was tasked with acting on the remaining recommendations to develop a cohesive civic branding and marketing identity, with supporting strategies. After many months of discussion, the brand “Thompson - A Green and Growing Community” was adopted, and the subcommittee acted vigorously to create opportunities for Thompson residents to participate in the development of that brand identity and measures to advance it.

Subsequently, in June of 2020, Branding hired the marketing firm of Sullivan & LeShane to craft a full marketing plan. The following is a summary of their final report to the subcommittee:

Thompson brings all the advantages of a New England countryside combined with easy accessibility and reachability to—and from—larger cities and more populated areas. It’s right here.

- We’re within reach—right here—an ideal location for people to live, work, play, visit ... and thrive.
- We are conveniently positioned within an hour of Boston and Hartford and closer still to Providence and Worcester—yet still serene and beautiful.
- Reach for Thompson. We’re closer than you think.

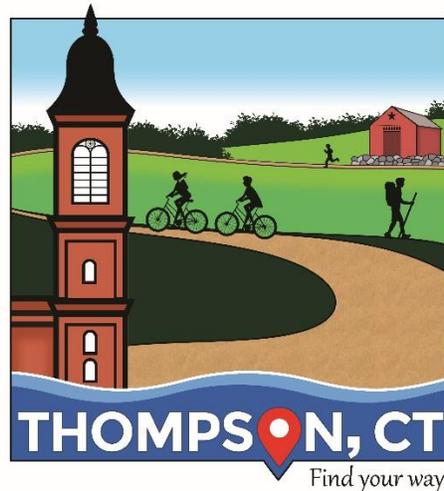
Thompson is a welcoming, green and growing community, brimming with opportunities for those who are looking to live, work, play or visit here. Nothing stands in your way when you come to Thompson. We are:

- A community with a terrific quality of life
- Home to excellent schools
- A river valley trail town with numerous natural resources and amenities
- A business-friendly community with a favorable regulatory environment.

Thompson is committed to achieving growth in a way that is green, sustainable and innovative.

- Consistent focus on keeping our community beautiful
- Collaborative business environment that works for a common goal of future success
- A town of ten villages with hidden treasures and a unified community spirit
- A small-town feel with an innovative mindset.

Having developed the messages and concepts, Sullivan & LeShane also provided a series of sample logos, taglines and slogans to be used in all municipal branding (websites, stationery, signage, etc). After a great deal of collaboration with Branding and a larger focus group from the community, the new slogan “**Thompson, CT - Find Your Way**” was chosen, along with the following image encapsulating the ideas expressed in the project report:



6.5 Suggested Action Steps

The work to identify the best elements of Thompson’s local identity is based on the principle that the most sustainable growth comes from building upon assets already in place. The following suggested action items apply the ideas and recommendations included in the final reports from both NECCOG and Sullivan & LeShane, two projects which incorporated extensive community input.

In progress, or for implementation >1 year

- Using the plan developed for Branding by public relations firm Sullivan & LeShane, **establish a “stylebook” for all Town communications**, including logos, slogans and taglines.
- **Roll out the new logos to Departments, Commissions, Committees in an orderly fashion.** Use logo, tagline on electronic documents (letterhead, email, other documents i.e. ordinance book cover, annual report, budget book, etc.)
- **Establish and maintain a promotional calendar for important Town events**, which also includes annual promotional budget requirements.
- **Consolidate existing social media pages.** Not every department or town-sponsored campaign or event should have its own Facebook. Social Media posts should regularly direct users to the Town’s website.

Short Term - Years 1-3

- **Bulk-ordered branded items (envelopes, business cards) to be replaced as they are depleted.** Variations to the master logo image must be limited to options within the stylebook.
- **Improve the consistency of all marketing efforts, across platforms and media outlets.**
- **Further refine formal social media strategies and policies.** These will include an optimized schedule for daily posting and an improved use of analytics tools.
- **Solicit content frequently** from both official Town sources and community contributors.
- **Develop online and print campaigns to drive attention to Thompson’s key outdoor attractions**
- **Compile a guidebook for new businesses and developers,** to help navigate local processes.
- **Using the report developed by CHA, initiate phased installation of wayfinding signs** highlighting local attractions (pursuing grants for implementation where possible).
- **Continue development of the Train Wreck Park** and other outdoor recreation assets in alignment with the “Trail Town” report developed with assistance from the National Park Service.

Medium Term - Years 3-5

- **Work with Thompson Trails, Recreation Department, Agriculture Commission, EDC, Thompson Business Association, Thompson Historical Society and individual private businesses to develop public events at the key sites.**
- **Offer assistance to local farms who want to increase their public profile.**
- **Develop and promote annual agritourism events** featuring the larger public farms.
- **Apply for grants to add historic marker signs to commemorate the 10 villages**
- **Work with local postmaster to rename Thompson zip codes**

Long Term - Years 5-10

- **Solicit partnerships with trail racing organizations** to establish Thompson as a “top of mind” destination for race organizers.
- **Continue to develop regular events to draw the public into the charismatic projects** that advance the brand identity.

Housing

7.1 General Overview

The [Partnership for Strong Communities \(PSC\)](#) compiles Housing Data Profiles for all Connecticut municipalities. Data cited in this section are drawn from both the 2018 and 2020 PSC publications¹⁰, and both of those data sets will be included as **Appendices E & F**. The profiles compiled for [Thompson](#) reinforce data cited elsewhere in this document, and also include breakouts for additional categories that are useful when considering how well Thompson's existing housing stock matches its future needs. For example: PSC data shows that single-family housing in Thompson represents 77% of the residential properties in the Town; and, those homes are 94% owner-occupied. The 2018 profile notes that 64% of those homes have 3 or more bedrooms, and includes the observation that "Towns and cities that have larger homes with more bedrooms offer fewer housing options for younger workers or downsizing baby Boomers." Nearly a quarter of Thompson's households (23%) are made up of individuals living alone. After a period of decline from 2000-2015, the percentage of households with children under 18 has levelled off at 30%. Households with adults 65+, however, have increased since 2000 from 25% to 43%. The latter cohort is further projected in the 2018 report to increase by 24% between 2020-2030.

All of these data illustrate a mismatch between the existing housing stock in Thompson and the likely needs of future residents. In the PSC closing analysis of Thompson's housing conditions, the following points stand out:

- 34% of the renters and 21% of homeowners spend 30% or more of their income on housing.¹¹
- The projected increase of 24% by 2030 of population aged 65+ potentially leads "to the need for smaller, denser, more affordable homes closer to the town center, services and, if possible, transit connections."
- 48% of single-family homes in Thompson were built after 1970. Because of the needs of the Baby Boom generation at that time, these homes tend to be larger and have more bedrooms than homes built prior to 1970 (64% of homes in Thompson have 3 or more bedrooms). Larger homes are generally more expensive to purchase and more costly to maintain. This makes them impractical choices for many aging residents; and often places them out of reach for first time homebuyers.
- Conversely, 52% of Thompson's housing stock was built before 1970. As noted in the 2020 profile: "Older homes are prone to falling into disrepair, and often carry environmental risks such as lead paint." Older homes are often less energy efficient, thus potentially adding to the financial burden for homeowners in heating/cooling costs.

From this combination of factors, it is possible to draw a conclusion that Thompson would be best served by the construction of smaller new homes, where residential developments are proposed.

¹⁰ Data cited will be from the 2020 publication, except where a category was not continued from 2018 to 2020. In those instances, the source will be clearly stated as the 2018 profile.

¹¹ These households would therefore meet the criteria of "cost-burdened", as shown in **Section 2.3 - Demographics**.

There have been several notable successes where towns have made the effort to encourage development that promotes density and affordability with a mix of residential, service and retail uses in walkable districts. Neighboring Putnam recently opened rentals at the Cargill Mill, a project 10 years under development. Two months after opening to tenants, the units were at 90% occupancy. The Soap Factory condominiums in Glastonbury are also frequently mentioned as a successful adaptive reuse project, which has useful parallels for Thompson in its riverfront location and its walkability in relation to that town's central district. The planned redevelopment of the North Grosvenordale Mill for rental housing represents an infusion of much-needed housing diversity, directly into the neighborhood best adapted for density.

The 2020 overhaul of the Thompson Zoning Regulations has been referenced throughout this document as a step forward in encouraging greater flexibility throughout the Town. One hoped-for consequence is that the sharp reduction in minimum lot sizes for areas served by public water and sewer utilities will enable more development of what has been referred to as [missing middle housing](#) in those districts. These more diverse and often more compact housing styles (e.g. accessory dwelling units, duplexes, cottage courts, row houses and triplexes), while once normative in neighborhoods across the country, became more difficult to build in many communities after the adoption of zoning in the post-war era, leading to the rise of unsustainable suburban development patterns. More on the topic of missing middle housing will be explored in **Section 7.3 – Appropriate Housing Density**.

7.2 Affordable Housing

A key statistic cited in the PSC report is the percentage of recognized Affordable Housing units in Thompson, currently tallied at 5% of all residential units (216 out of 4,171 total units). The State of Connecticut does not explicitly mandate that municipalities maintain the level of Affordable Housing units at 10%. However, being below that threshold leaves municipalities at a disadvantage in the Affordable Housing Land Use Appeal Procedure, with the burden of proof placed on the Town when denying proposed Affordable Housing developments. This, in effect, gives developers of such proposed housing projects wide latitude to disregard local zoning regulations, reducing the extent to which Thompson's Planning & Zoning Commission could set conditions on any such proposals.

In 2020, all of the designated Affordable Housing units managed by Thompson's Housing Authority are found in a single age-restricted development. Pineview Courts, which also incorporates the Gladys Green apartments, accepts seniors aged 62+ and adults with disabilities aged 18+, in 70 one-bedroom units. They are not subsidized, but rentals are income-restricted. The balance of the designated Affordable Housing units is made up of mortgages held under [CHFA](#) or [USDA](#) programs; and subsidized housing under the Section 8 program, managed by private landlords. Historically, public attitudes in Thompson have not been friendly toward the development of affordable rental housing. Biases against low-income individuals, and renters in general, have influenced prior discussions with developers presenting applications for multi-family housing in the past. The proposed redevelopment of the 929 Riverside Mill into 300+ market rate apartments, widely seen as a desirable revitalization project, may have softened some resistance to the idea of additional rental housing for Thompson; but, recent comments received during public engagement exercises and during the open comment period on the rewrite of the Zoning Regulations indicate that there is work to do to clear the stigma associated with Affordable Housing in the minds of many residents. Frequently cited concerns are those of potentially reduced property values; or "urban" levels of density disrupting the overall character of the community. Research shows, however, that these feared effects rarely occur. As shown in

the research report [There Doesn't Go the Neighborhood](#), published by real estate website trulia.com, in the overwhelming majority of cases adjacent low-income housing development had no discernable impact on property values in high-cost districts. Denver, CO showed a slight uptick in property values. Only the Boston/Cambridge metro area showed any statistically significant downward pressure on property values. In examining the latter example, the report notes:

“Given that these two markets are geographically adjacent to one another, this effect might be attributed to region-specific market effects that reflect where low-income housing projects were placed. Concentrating subsidized housing projects in particular areas such as Roxbury and Dorchester in Boston, or Cambridgeport in Cambridge in a short time period, for example, might have the effect of crowding out other development activity.”

The suggestion, therefore, is that it is [concentration](#) of subsidized housing developments that may drive down the adjacent property values. There have been many studies which demonstrate that economic segregation through clustered low-income development has continuing deleterious effects throughout residents' lives. In the report [Invisible Walls: Connecticut's Separate and Unequal Housing](#), the State of Connecticut is specifically called out for driving the construction of subsidized housing for low-income families to already-challenged districts:

“Since the mid-1980s, almost \$2.2 billion in low-income housing tax credits have been awarded to construct 27,000 affordable housing units in the state. Just 10% were built in prosperous towns, an investigation by The Connecticut Mirror and ProPublica has found. About 80% were located in struggling communities, literally erecting pockets of poverty. The rest fall somewhere in between.

While many state leaders across the country direct those credits to poor areas, arguing that's where the need is greatest, Connecticut stands out on the national stage. In a recent federal study of 21 states, it had the second highest concentration of affordable housing in high-poverty neighborhoods, behind only Mississippi.”

The implied solution, therefore, to disarm both the genuine challenges and the social stigma associated with concentrated pockets of designated low-income or other affordable housing is to intersperse lower-cost housing into a district at large. This [mixed-income development](#) is widely thought to help disrupt cycles of systemic poverty. The [Montgomery Mills](#) in Windsor Locks is an excellent example of thoughtful, high-density redevelopment [incorporating Affordable Housing units](#). The designated Affordable units are indistinguishable from their market rate neighbors, refuting the objection that affordable housing degrades neighborhood quality. Well-designed, affordable rental housing or deed-restricted condominiums with built-in or nearby services and amenities serve certain demographics particularly well:

- Young professionals in the early stages of their careers, who may have to maintain flexibility to follow employment opportunities
- Seniors aging out of their larger homes in Thompson wishing to downsize while remaining in the community.

Both of these demographics have been identified as segments served poorly by the existing housing stock in Thompson; therefore, development of more diverse Affordable Housing options to accommodate their needs would be favorable to the community as a whole.

Some real challenges faced by low-or-middle-income property owners can contribute to negative stereotypes. For example, such homeowners may find themselves unable to complete needed property maintenance for financial reasons. In 2020, alongside the creation of the Downtown Mill Rehabilitation District, the Town adopted a resolution to create a Rehabilitation Area as an overlay to that district. Property owners within the Rehabilitation Area may qualify for an assessment freeze during the period of rehabilitation or construction, deferring any increase in assessment attributable to such rehabilitation or construction pursuant to [Connecticut General Statutes Section 12-65e](#). The owners of qualifying parcels must agree to rehabilitate or construct new multifamily rental housing or cooperative housing according to certain requirements described in the resolution, as described in the [Board of Selectmen meeting minutes of 23 July 2020](#). Other incentive programs for rehabilitation are those of [Incentive Housing Zones](#) or [Neighborhood Revitalization Zones](#). **It is recommended that the Town publish a guide for property owners seeking to take advantage of the incentives described in the Rehabilitation Area Resolution. The exploration of the creation of local IHZs or NRZs is also recommended, to further facilitate neighborhood revitalization in low-to-middle-income (LMI) areas.**

The statutes controlling the adoption of the Town's PoCD stipulate that the Town must consider its housing needs, including the need for Affordable Housing. Further, the data shown on the PSC report regarding demographic shifts and percentages of cost-burdened households make it clear that there is a specific need to promote a pattern of development that incorporates homes with smaller footprints, in denser neighborhoods that concentrate public services more efficiently. Given the observations regarding the ill effects of concentrating low-income developments; the statutory requirements; and the demonstrated needs of Thompson's changing population, **development of an Affordable Housing Plan by the Town is recommended, promoting Mixed-Income Housing throughout districts served by public water & sewer utilities.** In 2020, Thompson's Office of Planning & Development was awarded an assistance grant by the CT Department of Housing (DOH), to develop an Affordable Housing Plan using the updated DOH guidelines. In development of that plan, strategies will be articulated to promote development of multi-family housing that includes market rate units in conjunction with set-asides for affordability (scaled to Area Median Income) within the Downtown Mill Rehabilitation District, Thompson Corridor Development District and Common Residential District.

7.3 Housing Density

In the 2010 edition of the PoCD, it was projected that Thompson's population would increase from 9,468 to 25,000 residents over the following decade, a potential increase of 264%. It was feared that such a level of growth would strain ability of the Town to keep up with public services and would stretch the resources of the public schools beyond their capacity.

In 2020, the population of Thompson was 9,602, representing less than 2% growth over the decade. Further, as shown in the Partnership for Strong Communities data, the percentage of families and households with children decreased at rates greater than the population growth over that period (-4% and -9%, respectively).

The data suggests, therefore, that anxiety over uncontrolled growth has been unwarranted. This PoCD has advanced arguments for increasing allowable density based on the need to increase

revenues for public services without raising the taxation burden for individual households. Increased density has been a contentious topic, with legitimate concerns about preservation of landscape and community character being offered as arguments against such increases. Those who oppose a general increase in density posit that Thompson will be transformed from a pastoral setting to a crowded urban environment. Ironically, the forces that are most corrosive to the rural character of Thompson are those of increased suburbanization and sprawl. It is sprawl that gobbles up farmland and open space, cutting up wildlife corridors in favor of added subdivisions and roads. Conversely, dense, compact, walkable neighborhoods amortize public services more effectively, and require less loss of land than development of outlying districts.

The question must then be posed: what is the ideal level of density to boost fiscal health without degrading the qualities that are so important to residents? This document has suggested a potential increase of average density to 104 parcels per road mile, with the stipulation that no new public roads should be constructed within the Town. In 2020, residential density is at roughly 19 parcels per road mile. The potential for density in the Rural Residential Agricultural District is 70 parcels per road mile, and the potential in the districts served by public utility is 211 parcels per road mile. Even without further adjustments to the frontage requirements in the Rural Residential Agricultural District, and with no new roads constructed, Thompson has the capacity to absorb much higher density than currently exists.

In section 7.1, the topic of Missing Middle Housing was raised. These small, often multi-unit, residences exist easily alongside single-family homes in the traditional neighborhoods that were the norm prior to the adoption of zoning and the resulting shift toward an automobile-based society. Recent revisions to the Zoning Regulations will make the infill of certain types of “missing middle” homes easier to achieve: in all districts, two-family dwellings and accessory dwelling units (including conversion of existing structures to these uses) can now be built with only a simple zoning permit. Conversion of existing buildings to multi-family units is permitted with a site plan review by the Commission in all but two districts¹². In districts served by public water and sewer utilities, lot size minimums were reduced to 4,500 square feet. In combination, these measures enable the construction or conversion of smaller, more affordable single family units and small income-generating properties. This brings real estate development more within reach to local residents as a way to build individual wealth and, in potentially expanding the inventory of taxable units, to build community wealth as well.

Three vacant, privately-owned parcels in the Downtown Mill Rehabilitation District have periodically come before the PZC with applications for subdivision: 0 Riverside Drive (21.77 acres, M/B/L 61-58-34), 0 Rawson Avenue (4.04 acres, M/B/L 61-58-46) and 0 Buckley Hill Road (.83 acres, M/B/L 59-61-62). At this time, all prior subdivision plans have expired, and the parcels remain undeveloped. These are, however, properties well-suited to support new subdivision for residential or mixed-use development. Even in the case of the smallest of the three (.83 acres), the potential exists to create up to 8 lots¹³. Constructing duplexes on each of those resulting lots, which may be done on a simple zoning permit, would further increase needed “missing middle”

¹² The Thompson Common Village District (TCVD) and Lake District (LD) were viewed by the PZC to have specific characteristics that make multi-family housing less compatible in those neighborhoods, and so conversion remains restricted to a Special Permit activity.

¹³ Estimated # of lots is based on a simple calculation of square footage, and does not take into account any other factors such as frontages, setbacks, etc. It is intended to represent a “best-case-scenario” only, to illustrate the new potential for development of small parcels.

housing stock in a neighborhood where such construction is most appropriate.

Further measures in the districts with public utilities have loosened the permit requirements for several small business uses, with the hope that more [15-minute neighborhood](#) enterprises will arise. Having daily needs within an easy 15-minute walk for residents will drive the desirability of those neighborhoods for prospective homeowners, renters and businesses. Driving density “downtown” in this way may ease some pressure on the outlying neighborhoods to build out to full capacity, delaying the need to further reduce frontage requirements in the Rural Residential Agricultural District.

Some have speculated, in the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic, that density creates health risk, and that therefore an increase in density may be undesirable on those terms. As seen in [this report](#) published on the website [cityjournal.com](#), [a study conducted by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health](#) concluded that density was not a driving factor for fatalities. There was some evidence cited [in additional studies](#) that crowding, however, was a factor. To understand the difference, it may be helpful to think of the apartments planned for the River Mill. With 300+ units filling the 750,000 square feet, the housing is certainly *dense*; however, if the households in those units are made of 1-3 individuals each, they are not *crowded*. Crowding is often a consequence of poor affordability (e.g. when large families squeeze themselves into small residences); and, in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, crowding adds to factors that contribute to poor health outcomes. Density, therefore, retains its desirable qualities in terms of economic productivity (more retail and service options develop in a denser setting) and community vibrancy (closer contact with neighbors, more housing options). Further, as regards the projection that Thompson’s current trend is toward a graying population: seniors in denser neighborhoods are safer than their more isolated counterparts. In addition to bearing a lower maintenance burden in a smaller home on a smaller lot, the sudden absence of an elderly resident is more likely to be noticed by neighbors, in the case of accident or illness.

7.4 Suggested Action Steps

In progress, or for implementation >1 year

- Retain a qualified consultant to assist in the **development of a comprehensive Affordable Housing Plan**, according to DOH guidelines.
- Within the Affordable Housing Plan, specifically **address the needs of Senior Citizens in planning for future development**.

Short Term – Years 1-3

- **Publish a guidebook for property owners in the Downtown Mill Rehabilitation District**, to provide information on how to take advantage of the Rehabilitation Area tax incentives.
- **Budget for advertising that markets Thompson** as a community of opportunity for disaffected urban residents of Worcester, Providence, Boston and Hartford.
- **Compile an inventory of buildable vacant parcels suitable for subdivision, multi-family or mixed-use development**, with frequent updates, for use by the Town and by real estate professionals in soliciting appropriate developers for “missing middle” housing or larger multi-family developments (particularly in districts served by public utilities).

Medium Term - Years 3-5

- Explore and pursue **designation of one or more Incentive Housing Zones or Neighborhood Revitalization Zones.**
- Work with local banks or real estate agencies to **host classes for local residents interested in purchasing, rehabbing or building small multi-family dwellings or mixed-use properties** in the Downtown Mill Rehabilitation District.

Economic Development

8.1 Overview

The economic history of Thompson closely follows patterns seen across New England. Once prominent as a textile manufacturing hub during the Industrial Era, over time Thompson gradually has become a “bedroom community”, with many residents commuting out of the area for employment and other economic activity. The grand mills still stand in town, a testament to the quality of the workmanship that raised them; but, they are no longer the economic engines powering the community.

In the post-war era, separation of the home community and the work community became increasingly prevalent across the country, mirroring the rise of the automobile and the suburban sprawl that it helped to foster. The [2019 CERC Town Profile for Thompson](#) reflects this, showing 1,578 employment units held within the town of Thompson during the survey period, for a residential population of 9,602. In contrast, neighboring [Putnam](#), with a comparably sized population hosts nearly 4x the employment units (5,954), and does so with less than half the land area. The fields that show the highest concentration of employment in Thompson are in local government (including the public schools), manufacturing, and health care/support services. These sectors do not, generally, present opportunities to keep local dollars circulating within the local economy. One result is that Thompson residents are compelled to spend their income in other communities, even for daily necessities such as groceries. For households that are not cost-burdened, having to travel by car for groceries, medical needs or other necessities may be only an inconvenience; for the 22.79% of Thompson residents who are cost-burdened, the lack of a strong retail and services sector in Thompson adds to the challenges faced by such households.

Elsewhere in this document, it has been suggested that the emergent paradigm shift toward remote work for the professional class can be capitalized to the benefit of Thompson. With well-compensated employment no longer tied to a choice between long commutes or the high costs of living in metropolitan areas, Thompson now presents an opportunity for those seeking a better work-life balance. For both businesses and homebuyers, Thompson real estate is a great value; and there is much for the Town to boast of, in terms of its outdoor recreation assets and its traditional New England small town atmosphere, still within reach of major commercial centers. Given the comfort level of younger generations with remote work, and their relative economic insecurity compared to older workers, a community like Thompson should be well-positioned to meet their needs. However, as has been previously shown, Thompson has relatively few of the smaller, more affordable housing units most suited to younger demographics; and, despite the high costs, Millennials and members of Gen-Y persistently favor living in cities. The Nielsen report [Millennials Prefer Cities to Suburbs, Subways to Driveways](#) supports these assertions. The report also cites some efforts by municipalities to plan for future development which is friendlier to this large demographic. It should also be noted that certain of the qualities most favorable to the younger age cohort are also favorable to aging seniors (walkability, proximity to services, smaller residential units with fewer maintenance needs), which is the demographic showing the greatest projected increase (+24%) for Thompson over the next decade.

In this section, we will examine the current challenges to economic development within Thompson; clarify the role of the Economic Development Commission in advancing thoughtful economic growth consistent with community priorities; and describe a number of economic development initiatives that have been proposed in recent years, along with plans to achieve those ends.

8.2 Factors Affecting Economic Development

In exploring appropriate strategies for economic development in conformity with community character and priorities, it is important to first undergo a clear-eyed assessment of conditions as they currently exist. The following table illustrates a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis compiled by NECCOG, as part of their year-long municipal Branding workshop:

Strengths	Opportunities
Location	Tourism
Visuals	Marketing
Affordability	Rural Industries
Natural Resources	Infrastructure
Cultural/Historic Resources	Jobs - Living Wage Type
Destinations	Host More Events
Agriculture	Railroad
Interstate 395	Transit Connections
Route 12/131 Corridor	Interstate Highway Access
Freight Rail	River Mill
	Route 12/131 Corridor
Weaknesses	Threats
Appearance	Route 12/131 Corridor
No Real Marketing or Social Media Strategy	Poverty
Competition Head-Start	Housing
River Mill	Community Indifference and/or adherence to the "status quo"
Zoning Regulations	
Economic Development	
Civic/Physical Fragmentation	
Housing Redevelopment	
Underemployment	
Grand List Imbalance	
Limited Options for Accommodations	
Access is Limited to Motor Vehicles	

It is interesting to note that a number of the factors identified appear in more than one category. Most notably the River Mill is named as both an “Opportunity” and a “Weakness”; and the Route 12/131 Corridor was simultaneously named as “Strength”, “Opportunity” and “Threat.” The challenge, then, is to identify the specific opportunities to convert weakness to strength. For example, at the time of the NECCOG report, the weakness of the River Mill was its vulnerability to being sold off for salvage of the historic materials and subsequent demolition; the opportunity for redevelopment instead of demolition was identified, and the Director of Planning and Development and the First Selectman¹⁴ at that time pursued environmental assessment grants and diligently sought a developer to take on the project. As of the writing of this document, the property is nearing the final stages of negotiation for sale to a developer with a strong plan for adaptive reuse as market-rate apartment housing. Similarly, the Route 12/131 Corridor, identified as a potential threat to local revitalization goals in the NECCOG study, was rezoned for improved

¹⁴ Mary Ann Chinatti, Director of Planning & Development and Ken Beausoleil, First Selectman.

flexibility along its entire length in the recent re-write of the Zoning Regulations. This overhaul expands opportunities for property owners of all types, and is particularly friendly to the kind of mixed-use development, adaptive reuse and infill development that has been shown to lead to neighborhood revitalization.

Every town faces challenges. What differentiates them is their ability to meet and adapt to those challenges as they arise. Thompson's proactive approach to the rehabilitation of the River Mill shows that the Town has the will to advance, adapting to a changing environment. Every market shift creates opportunity. Although several significant challenges remain, in this discussion of economic development, the focus will be on Thompson's areas of opportunity. Given the zoning overhaul and other background work done to date by key volunteer groups including the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Mill Sites Redevelopment Advisory Committee, the Trails Committee, the Economic Development Commission and its Branding Implementation Subcommittee, several opportunities for positive growth have moved from abstract concepts to workable plans. A thorough description of each of the current Economic Development initiatives, with a summary of their action plans, will be given in **Section 8.4**.

8.3 Economic Development Commission: Roles, Responsibilities & Advocacy

As identified on the [EDC page](#) of the Thompson website, "The Thompson Economic Development Commission is dedicated to further growth and development of the Town by attracting, retaining, and assisting businesses, while also preserving the integrity of the Town's rich heritage." [CGS 7-136](#) is the enabling statute for the creation of a municipal EDC, and further stipulates that "The commission shall conduct research into the economic conditions and trends in its municipality, shall make recommendations to appropriate officials and agencies of its municipality regarding action to improve its economic condition and development, shall seek to coordinate the activities of and cooperate with unofficial bodies organized to promote such economic development and may advertise and may prepare, print and distribute books, maps, charts and pamphlets which in its judgment will further its official purposes." It is interesting to note that the statute also sets an appropriate level to which towns can set the annual budget for an EDC: 1/20th of 1% of the Grand List. For Thompson headed into FY21, the maximum budget could have been set as high as \$34,286.11 (it was set at \$23,442). Thompson's EDC is made up of five members plus two alternates, who are appointed to 2-year terms.

The NECCOG study of 2017-2018 identified areas for improvement by the EDC, including the need for a more robust economic marketing strategy, with details on how those strategic goals would be realized over time. Since the release of that study, the EDC has worked toward many of the specific recommended improvements within that final report. EDC was instrumental in funding the redesign of the municipal website; they established and funded the Social Media Intern position, to assist Town staff in keeping public communication efforts more dynamic and up-to-date; they formed the Branding Implementation Subcommittee to develop and manage marketing the Town's civic brand identity; they have provided seed funding to match grant requests and to launch community-based development initiatives; and they have been instrumental in working with the Office of Planning & Development to capitalize on the agricultural and outdoor recreation assets identified as unique community resources for potential growth.

These are tremendously positive developments for the EDC, but more work remains to be done to further define and strengthen the commission's role within Thompson. Concurrent with the

planning of initiatives to increase economic opportunities for the Town's existing population, more needs to be done to put Thompson in front of businesses seeking to relocate from outside its borders. As has been extensively noted in this document, Thompson is centrally located in relation to New England's largest economic hubs, yet its property costs remain comparatively low; and the regulatory structure for business uses has been rendered significantly more nimble. These are strong assets in marketing the town to businesses seeking a new home.

Another of the recommendations from the NECCOG study was that the Town, through the EDC and Branding, hire a qualified marketing and PR firm to assist with crafting the brand messages, logos, slogans and action plans to facilitate the spread of that message. In 2020 Sullivan & LeShane was retained for that purpose, and their plan was delivered to Branding in the autumn of that year. It now falls to **EDC and Branding to implement the recommendations of the Sullivan & LeShane marketing report**. Thompson has been provided with a suite of marketing messages, media contacts and an annual promotional calendar for its signature annual events. Directives on digital best practices have also been included. With the assistance of the Social Media Intern, EDC and Branding now have a toolkit to use as they publicize their efforts. **This toolkit will be reviewed and adapted by EDC for marketing efforts specific to attracting businesses**, and a list of promotional/networking opportunities will be compiled. **The Director of Planning & Development, EDC members and other Town leaders must then work together, with consistent messaging, in the pursuit of new businesses for Thompson.**

Another project recommended for EDC is to **develop a matrix of incentives to businesses, based on their specific consistency with Thompson's priorities for development**. Such incentives should be **formalized with clear guidelines, adopted by the Board of Selectmen and published to the EDC page of the website**.

Finally, it is recommended that the EDC not only **fully articulate and publish the details of their planned local development initiatives** (as will be described in Section 8.4), but that they should also clearly **delineate the action steps to achieve those initiatives into a ten-year plan, with assignment of responsibilities, deliverables and measurable performance metrics** to appropriate staff and commission members.

8.4 Economic Development Initiatives

The following projects undertaken by the Economic Development Commission are presented in their order of complexity. Many of these initiatives have been started as small risks or micro-projects, and were then further developed to expand their reach as they have gained momentum. While in most cases they have been initiated and given seed funding by the EDC, in every case multiple boards, commissions and outside organizations have been involved in advancing the projects described.

The "Eleventh Village" seasonal retail shops

Over time, Thompson has lost its inventory of traditional storefront properties. Many of these were demolished following catastrophic floods in the 1930s and 1950s, to be replaced instead by residences. As the economy shifted away from the mills, there was little incentive to construct new retail spaces in the downtown neighborhoods. The adoption of zoning regulations also made traditional mixed-use development patterns difficult or impossible to recreate.

As a way to sidestep these challenges, EDC has initiated a project to activate Thompson's primary public recreation space, Riverside Park, with a small "village" of custom built miniature shops. The construction is commissioned from local craftsmen, thereby keeping the funds for its development circulating within the local economy. Students from the UConn School of Engineering class of 2020 provided assistance with drafting a layout and designing facades for the shops based on notable historic buildings from each of Thompson's ten villages. Once the shops are built and in place, they will be available as May-October rentals for regional artisans, crafters and agricultural producers to sell their goods, thus providing an entry-level retail opportunity for micro-entrepreneurs. The project will also activate a portion of Riverside Park which is not well laid-out for recreational use, camouflaging a chain-link safety fence that separates the park from the railroad track. The seasonal shops will also "anchor" other events in the park, adding interest for visitors to concerts or other community festivals and fairs, perhaps is a regular monthly series. It is proposed that the management of "The Eleventh Village" be accomplished in collaboration between EDC and the Thompson Business Association.

Air Line State Park Trail Tourism Map, Brochure and Digital Landing Page

Outdoor recreation has been consistently named as an asset for Thompson, in the NECCOG Branding study and other public engagement exercises. The challenge for any town with extensive public greenspace lies in how to monetize those assets. There are no fees associated with use of the trails or parks, so the economic benefit must be captured by driving visitors to other areas of Thompson during their visit. Thompson has many excellent options for visitors who come for hiking or cycling: Fort Hill Farms and its seasonal attractions; Tee Rex mini-golf; Anya for fine dining; Our Father's Table and other area restaurants for more casual meals; Morning Beckons Farm; and Thompson Speedway, to name some of the most prominent. What the Town has been lacking is a way to guide visitors to these local businesses.

As one of the towns traversed by the Air Line State Park Trail, Thompson has joined a partnership of the host towns to develop a series of highly useful, attractive trail maps that feature local area attractions, with digital jumps to websites, directions and other useful information. The leading partners are Thompson's Office of Planning and Development, Connecticut Rural Conservation & Development Area (the project managers for the Air Line Trail master plan), and the Eastern Region Tourism District. Design and development of the printed materials and its associated digital elements was begun in 2020, with implementation and distribution planned for the Spring 2021. In addition to capturing more dollars for local venues during daytrips to Thompson, the connectivity with other towns on the trail boosts the tourism value for the entire region, allowing visitors to extend their stays in all of the trail towns.

From Willimantic to the MA State line, the Air Line State Park Trail shares the right-of-way with the much larger Rail-to-Trail project of the [East Coast Greenway](#). The East Coast Greenway is a 3,000-mile biking and walking route linking the major cities of the Atlantic coast of the United States from Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida. The route will include the Thompson and Douglas, MA segment with the special designation of Complimentary/Connector Route. This inclusion is expected to expand the economic opportunities by identifying the Blackstone River Bike (Putnam, CT to Uxbridge, MA) for long distance riders, placing Thompson on the map as a convenient day long bike ride from Boston or Hartford. Furthermore, it positions the Town to apply for Federal TAP Grant funding, as the completion of the East Coast Greenway is identified as a top priority for CT DEEP and ConnDOT. Such Rails-to-Trails projects have a thirty year track record as economic drivers and the Air Line State Park Trail is strategically placed to link all

villages of the Town with bike routes for on-road and off-road riders looking to plan day trips with stops for meals or access to lodging and other services.

This project also ties in directly with the development of the site of the Great East Thompson Train Wreck into a permanent park, initiated by the Thompson Trails Committee in partnership with the National Park Service. EDC has provided seed funds and planning toward that master plan process as well, but it will be discussed separately under Section 11, as an important project for the Trails Committee.

The 65 Main Street Project: Small Business Incubator, Gardens and Park

This initiative grew organically out of a small project funded by EDC, starting in Spring of 2019. At that time, EDC matched grant funds from The Last Green Valley to install a brand new community garden with park amenities at the site of a vacant town-owned building. This building has been described earlier in this document in several sections detailing significant historical sites: the former Superintendent's residence donated to the Town by the Tourtellotte family. From that small neighborhood revitalization effort, involving volunteers from several Town committees, The Board of Selectmen, staff, and students from public and private schools, a further reclamation of the property has been proposed, and is in early phases of planning and development: the conversion of the vacant building for use as a small-business incubator, with a proposed focus on agricultural and food-system start-ups¹⁵. Additional aspects of the master plan include the rehab of upper floors of the building as a single live-work unit for an on-site property manager; and the gradual development of the adjacent 14-acre Town-owned parcel into a public food forest park and riverwalk.

The phases of the project have been fully described in a series of grants written by Thompson's Director of Planning and Development, and a partnership of six non-profit agencies has formed to contribute their time and expertise to the master plan: The American Chestnut Foundation, Connecticut Farm Bureau, Connecticut Rural Conservation & Development Area, Eastern Connecticut Conservation District, independent land-use consultant John Guskowski and local social services agency TEEG. Background work is being done to clear hurdles regarding the rehab of the building and any potential conflict with the terms of the original deed; but, the project has been endorsed by the Tourtellotte Trust, stewards of the property, and the Thompson Historical Society; and the planning partners are poised to begin public workshops to develop future programming for the small business center, based on community priorities, in spring of 2021.

Adventure Racing and Cycling

Additional steps have been taken to develop Thompson as a top-of-mind destination for organized trail races for cyclists and runners. Certain racing organizations have already made independent connections with Thompson, responding to the same wealth of trails that EDC has identified as a key asset for the Town. The Hartford Marathon Foundation included Thompson as a leg in its inaugural RI-MA-CONN long-distance relay in 2019. On March 31, 2019, more than 225 riders converged on the Thompson Speedway for the inaugural running of the Natchaug Epic, a "gravel-grinder" bicycle race organized by KMC Crossfest. Thompson Speedway was the beginning and end point of the race, for which participants rode 100 kilometers through the Last Green Valley. This event started at 10:00 a.m. and the fastest riders were back at the Speedway

¹⁵ While this thematic approach to the small business incubator has been the starting point for the plan, final programming will be determined based on a community workshop process with the non-profit partners.

by 1:15 p.m., with the slower riders trickling back by about 4:00. This gave riders and the friends and family who came to cheer them on plenty of time to explore Thompson for the day. The events of COVID-19 temporarily halted a continuation of these racing programs in 2020; but, the organizers had projected a doubling of the number of racers for the event that had been planned for its second year, with another significant surge in ridership expected for year three. EDC is interested in pursuing initiatives with local business to make Thompson a top-tier location for these and other adventure racing organizations, once large public events are again deemed safe. EDC has developed a letter to local restaurants and cafes, urging them to capitalize on this new potential customer-base by taking steps to be more “cyclist-friendly.” Suggested simple steps are adding covered bike racks in their parking areas, and developing menu options geared toward, and advertised to, cyclists.

Richard Fries, organizer of the Natchaug Epic Cyclocross race, has been a vocal booster of Thompson as a destination for cyclists. He has provided some additional context for Thompson’s growing popularity, relative to other New England hot spots:

A search for routes in "Thompson CT" on the Ride with GPS app yields 83 results; "Concord MA" gets 213; "Harvard MA" gets 183. The latter are two of the biggest hubs for riders in the Boston Metro area. Thompson is outpacing "Provincetown MA ", "Burke VT" and "Northampton MA", in terms of routes identified. This showcases the nascent popularity of cycling in the Quiet Corner, some of which is likely driven by past participants in the Natchaug Epic.¹⁶

The challenge for EDC, therefore, is to strategically draw attention to Thompson’s potential as a destination; and to help local businesses reach these niche visitors.

The projects described above have in common a thread of development and reuse of human and property assets already in place within Thompson. Strengthening Thompson from within will position the Town better, when seeking outside investment by businesses and property developers. The EDC has a goal of further escalating and expanding the reach of their initiatives, as these first community-based developments gain momentum.

A further project, briefly touched on in **Section 8.3**, is the **development of a program of incentives for business development**, based on consistency with Thompson’s priorities. The EDC will take on this responsibility in FY21, exploring what incentives are permitted under Connecticut General Statutes, along with the procedural requirements to enact them for Thompson. Following this research, EDC will also develop a scoresheet for businesses seeking incentives, to help guide Town leaders in negotiating with future business developers.

8.5 Suggested Action Steps

In progress, or for implementation >1 year

- **Establish a revolving account for EDC, for self-sustaining or revenue-generating projects** such as the Thompson Garden By the River and the Eleventh Village rentals

¹⁶ Anecdotal evidence supporting this statement is provided by Richard Fries of KMC Cross Fest: “I hosted a ride for seven other older guys, all of whom were experienced racers with money. They came from about 60- to 90-minutes away by car. One as far as the New Hampshire Seacoast. They all had been initiated to the road offerings with our cross race and the gravel event. All were stunned by the quality of the routes, the bucolic nature of the ride so close to metro areas, and the Airline Trail and its development.”

- **Bring the Eleventh Village online by Spring 2021**, with a minimum of three permanent “chalets”, to be supplemented by tent vendors. Program details will need to be established in conjunction with the Thompson Business Association.
- **Establish a schedule to send out press releases** celebrating EDC projects, both large and small, utilizing the press contact list compiled for the Sullivan & LeShane branding report.
- **Establish a regular schedule for updates to the EDC page on the website**, with frequent news features on the progress of the Commission’s projects, links to commercial real estate listings, and updates on the progress of high-profile projects such as mill site redevelopment.
- **Update the welcome package for new businesses**, incorporating the elements above, along with invitations to engage with EDC and the Thompson Business Association

Short Term – Years 1-3

- **Develop a matrix of potential incentives for businesses**, with clear guidelines based on consistency with Thompson’s identified priorities and published on the EDC website.
- **Create promotional materials related to ongoing EDC initiatives** such as The Eleventh Village, Air Line State Park Trail connectivity projects, the future business incubator at 65 Main Street, etc. These should be designed to generate interest from the general public, and invite participation where appropriate.
- **Provide support for efforts to increase tourism to Thompson** via print and online marketing campaigns, networking with outdoor recreation-based businesses and development of special events highlighting Thompson’s tourism assets.
- **Promote and pursue funding opportunities to launch the small business center at 65 Main Street.** Seek out grant funds, private donations and volunteer labor to complete the rehabilitation of the Superintendent’s house while developing the final programming.
- Using the guidebook compiled by Sullivan & LeShane, **craft promotional campaign materials to be sent to Chambers of Commerce, commercial real estate brokers and other relevant organizations**, highlighting the advantages Thompson offers to businesses. Promotion of the business-friendly elements in the Zoning Regulations must be a key component.
- **Publish a 10-year plan for EDC projects** on the Commission’s page on the Town website, including timelines and funding goals.
- **Initiate a formal campaign to support Thompson businesses for Small Business Saturday.**
- **Enhance Thompson’s appeal for trail racers and cyclists.** Work with racing organizations such as KMC Crossfest and the Hartford Marathon to create a top-tier experience for racers passing through Thompson. Encourage local businesses to invest in covered bike racks. Encourage local restaurants to plan and promote menus with the needs of cyclists in mind,
- **Network with other Economic Development Commissions throughout the region**, sharing ideas and developing regional projects.

Transportation

9.1 Overview

This PoCD has explored the extent of Thompson's system of public roads and the challenges faced by the Town in its maintenance. It has been further established that it is not in the Town's interest to accept new public roads. Therefore, shared driveways under association or commercial agreement are preferable to construction of public roads for future subdivisions or business developments. Construction of new public roads should only be permitted where a genuine need for transit connectivity can be shown, and the Town must be satisfied that the maintenance costs for any such proposed roads can be met. This section will explore strategies to strengthen transit connections without additional road construction. This is in keeping with the statutory requirements of CGS 8-23 e (1), which state that:

"Such plan of conservation and development shall ... (B) provide for a system of principal thoroughfares, parkways, bridges, streets, sidewalks, multipurpose trails and other public ways as appropriate, (C) be designed to promote, with the greatest efficiency and economy, the coordinated development of the municipality and the general welfare and prosperity of its people and identify areas where it is feasible and prudent (i) to have compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns and land reuse, and (ii) to promote such development patterns and land reuse"

To that end, the Thompson Riverside Drive (Route 12) & Main Street Road Safety Audit May 16, 2016 (RSA), compiled under the ConnDOT Community Connectivity Program will provide the starting point. The focus area for that report is where existing and projected density will allow for the greatest efficiency in development of alternate transit systems. It will also be noted where progress has already been made against goals set in the 2016 RSA.

9.2 2016 Road Safety Audit

Staff from ConnDOT and their consultants, in partnership with representatives from Thompson's Department of Public Works, Trails Committee and other relevant groups, identified a number of key issues needing attention:

- There are no bike accommodations, and the shoulder width is highly variable. Travel lanes on Route 12 are 12' wide. Wider shoulders and narrower (11') travel lanes are recommended to accommodate cyclists.
- Curb reveal is low in places
- The Air Line Trail at Route 12 is in need of a crosswalk.
- Connectivity is needed from the Trail to the West Thompson Dam via Route 193
- New sidewalks are needed from the intersection of Route 200 south to the medical facility at the 395 on/off ramp. Conditions for sidewalk construction are challenging, due to wetlands and some steep slopes.
- The intersection of Route 200/Route 12 has poor sightlines for pedestrians crossing east-to-west. A new crosswalk is recommended.
- The Blain Road intersection is poorly configured, with too much open pavement and no clear flow for the right-of-way.
- There is no appropriate crosswalk from Thatcher Road to the parking lot of the Dollar General.

Subsequently, the RSA makes a series of Short-Medium- and-Long term recommendations. These recommendations are included in **Section 9.5 – Suggested Action Steps**, further refined to prioritize items which are relatively low in cost with relatively high effectiveness. Items outside the authority of the Town to address (such as work repaving Route 12, which is a State responsibility) have been omitted. A number of recommended measures from the RSA have been put in motion, using funds from the 2018 BAR grant, as follows:

- Evaluate the best location for new pedestrian crosswalks at Route 12 and Thatcher Road to connect sidewalks and provide access to the Dollar General Store. Construct a new crosswalk with handicap ramps, warning strips and signage.
- Relocate the crosswalk on Route 12 by Swanson Park south to below the driveway and extend the sidewalk on the west side to meet the new crosswalk location
- Add a handicap ramp on the west side of the crosswalk at Cumberland Farms and Route 12.
- Repair poor sidewalk and curb fronting the Dunkin Donuts site on Route 12.
- Evaluate alternatives to redesign the Route 12/Blain Road intersection to reduce the intersection width, shorten crossing distances, define travel lanes, slow traffic, and improve safety for all users.

It is **recommended that the remaining action items from the 2016 RSA be fully reviewed and prioritized** by the Department of Public Works, Office of Planning & Development and the Board of Selectmen **into a 10-year plan** for the Town of Thompson. The standard of least expensive + most effective is to be used for the prioritization of these projects.

Several recommendations are made in the RSA concerning addition of painted bike lanes and pedestrian crosswalks. In terms of relative costs, the addition of painted bike lanes (with a concurrent narrowing of automobile travel lanes) and crosswalks are relatively low-cost improvements that may be undertaken by the Town. Given Thompson’s current near-total car-dependence, and given arguments that have been advanced elsewhere in this document regarding the need to increase opportunities and safety for pedestrian access, **it is recommended that pedestrian/cycling access measures be given additional weight in the formation of the 10-year plan.**

Certain of the recommendations of the RSA relate to improved signage, particularly those which support pedestrian and cyclist safety. In 2020, a wayfinding design program was compiled for the Town of Thompson by CHA (formerly CME), funded in part by the DECD BAR Grant. Upon delivery of the final report and proposed designs, the Office of Planning & Development authored an application under the Connecticut Community Connectivity Grant Program (CCGP)¹⁷ to fund the fabrication of a first round of signs for the Town. Pedestrian and cycling access signs are specifically identified as fundable under the CCGP guidelines, therefore if funds are awarded those wayfinding elements will be among those first pursued for Thompson.

9.3 Additional Intersections Requiring Attention

Also funded by the 2018 BAR Grant, CME provided a series of studies of intersections in the area surrounding the River Mill for potential improvement/reconfiguration. Those intersections are:

1. Intersection of Buckley Hill and Route 12

¹⁷ This is the same grant program under which the 2016 RSA was completed.

2. Intersection of Buckley Hill and River Street
3. Intersection of the northern terminus of Main Street with Route 12
4. Intersection of River Street and Route 12
5. Intersection of Park Street at Route 200/12
6. Intersection of Blain Road and Route 12¹⁸

An intersection which was not explored as part of the BAR Grant work, but which long-time residents identify as also problematic, is at the Route 12/131 split. For southbound traffic on Route 12, drivers approaching the stop sign have an awkward view of the southbound lane of 131. For northbound travelers, the right-of-way can be unclear. ConnDOT had previously completed traffic studies for the intersection, but local density and travel volume did not justify any action at the time. Given the anticipated increase in density for the district over the next decade, **it is recommended that the Town request a new study once redevelopment of the River Mill is underway.**

In addition to the initial concepts provided by CME, preliminary designs for improvements at the two ends of Buckley Hill Road have been developed by a student team at the UConn School of Engineering, delivered at the end of the 2018-2019 academic year. Each of these intersections has been identified as problematic in some way. Buckley Hill/Route 12 has had a relatively high number of accidents, particularly for cars making the left turn from Route 12 onto Buckley Hill, as the sight lines are poor for southbound drivers. In the case of the two River Street intersections, the problems to be solved are specifically related to the anticipated increase in traffic demand, as the River Mill is redeveloped for apartment housing. Once the project for the Route 12 Sidewalk is complete, **it is recommended that the Office of Planning & Development seek appropriate grants to fund the design and construction of improvements at one or more of these intersections.**



Given that the Route 12/131 corridor comprises the two main travel arteries through Thompson, the bulk of the Town's attention has been spent on examining improvements along its length. However, as has been previously observed, Thompson has almost 100 miles of roadways in its

¹⁸ As previously referenced, design for the improved Blain Road intersection has been completed and is tentatively scheduled for construction.

inventory, and certain intersections or stretches of road in the outlying districts have also proven troublesome. It is necessary for the town to weigh the potential costs vs benefits of significant road improvements in low-density neighborhoods; but, they must still be considered in any master plan for transportation. One area known to be problematic is New Road, where access points to the Air Line Trail fall on opposite sides of the road. The road itself has a fairly sharp curve, cars often travel it at relatively high speed, and there is no crosswalk marked for trail users. In the 2020-2021 academic year, a UConn student team was engaged to provide preliminary study and design of the area for potential traffic calming measures and improved accessibility for trail users. Their design is anticipated by May of 2021, and can be used as a starting point for a more thorough engineering treatment.

9.4 Complete Streets

The United States Department of Transportation [defines Complete Streets](#) as “streets designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users. Those include people of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they are travelling as drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transportation riders.” Throughout this PoCD, the connection has been made between walkability and quality of life in regards to its benefits for Thompson’s graying population; its attractiveness for potential new residents and businesses; and its added benefit for low-to-middle-income residents. US DOT further points to a reduction in pedestrian-vehicle incidents following adoption of Complete Streets policies; and cites improved health outcomes for residents living in walkable/bikeable communities.¹⁹

US DOT bullet points a number of recommended elements in the design of Complete Streets, several of which echo recommendations made to Thompson in the 2016 RAS:

- Bicycle lanes
- Bicycle parking and storage facilities
- Curb extensions
- Intersection treatments for bicycles – bicycle boxes, stop bars, lead signal indicators
- Landscaping
- Paved shoulders
- Pedestrian- and bicyclist-scale lighting
- Pedestrian overpass or underpass
- Separation/buffers
- Shared-lane markings (“sharrows”)
- Sidewalks
- Signage, especially high-visibility signage
- Signalized pedestrian crossings and mid-block crossings
- Trails or shared-use paths

The bridge to a guidebook for developing Complete Streets within municipalities is somewhat lacking on the US DOT site, although some links are provided to organizations dedicated to the implementation of such programs. The planning website [Sustainable Development Code](#) (SDC)

¹⁹ One study found that 43% of people reporting a place to walk were significantly more likely to meet current recommendations for regular physical activity than were those reporting no place to walk (Powell, Martin, Chowdhury, 2003).

includes examples of Good-Better-Best practices on many topics, including Complete Streets, organized into helpful tables, as seen below:

	Remove Code Barriers	Create Incentives	Fill Regulatory Gaps
BEST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prohibit or Limit the Use of Drive-Through Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rain Gardens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create Safe Routes
BETTER		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installation of Parklets in Retail and Commercial Areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase Pedestrian Mobility to Adjacent Zones Limit Garage Walls Facing Street Mid-block Pedestrian Crossings
GOOD		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stormwater Management Credits for Providing Agricultural Land or Open Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lighting for Sidewalks, Buildings, and Crosswalks Limit Driveway Access Points Minimum Width and Buffer Requirements for Sidewalks Protection of Pollinators from Habitat Loss and Chemical Exposure

It is worth noting that the Thompson Planning and Zoning Commission recently made certain changes to the Zoning Regulations that correspond with SDC best practices for Complete Streets: prohibiting new drive-through services in all but two districts and expressing a preference for limiting curb cuts by means of shared driveway access points in the Downtown Mill Rehabilitation District. Installation of rain gardens is also a recommended Low-Impact Development measure in the Zoning Regulations to help control stormwater runoff. In the context of Complete Streets: properly diverted stormwater is less likely to accumulate in bike lanes or on sidewalks, therefore rendering those transportation options more feasible during rain.

A third best practice identified by SDC is the creation of Safe Routes: protected walking or biking paths that connect neighborhoods and schools. Seen most often in the context of encouraging children to walk to school, routes rendered safe enough for children will also be safer for all users. The benefits of a system designed to encourage walking go beyond individual health results and include reductions in traffic congestion around school zones, and therefore also reduced emissions from idling vehicles at drop-off points. **It is recommended that the Town identify ideal walking routes to the public schools within the Downtown Mill Rehabilitation District and the Common Residential District.** Once identified, strategies to enhance safety along those routes can be properly developed that may include repair or extension of sidewalks, addition of crosswalks and signage, or grading and adding appropriate lighting along known [desire lines](#) leading to the school campus. Additional resources for the implementation of Safe Routes can be found at [Saferoutesinfo.org](#), or on [PedBikeInfo.org](#). The info brief [Safety-Based Prioritization for Youth Pedestrian Travel Planning](#) is found on the latter site, and includes a helpful table of examples of safety measures for children who walk to school. A relatively recent addition to the Safe Routes to School toolkit is the [Walking School Bus](#), employing adult chaperones to lead groups of neighborhood children along established pedestrian routes to school. Thompson’s Superintendent of Schools, Melinda Smith, has experience implementing a Walking School Bus program in a prior district, and has suggested addition of a WSB for the local school system. The Director of Planning & Development is working with the Superintendent on a proposal for a Walking School Bus pilot program for Thompson, under the Active CT technical assistance program of the Connecticut Department of Public Health. Launch of the pilot program is hoped for in October 2021.

Planning for complete streets and policies which support them requires a shifting of priorities away from automobile-centered development. Given that the prevalent development pattern has been to favor auto-oriented transportation above all other modes, that shift may seem daunting or even impractical for local government. Given the real costs associated with the infrastructure required for vehicular transport, it is reasonable to propose that alternative, less costly transportation options be explored. Development of complete streets has more salutary effects than simple cost savings vs development of paved roads, however. Walkable neighborhoods have a lifting effect on local economies. It has previously been noted that, as it is currently configured, Thompson has a walkscore rating of 0/100 when considered as a whole community, with the North Grosvenordale neighborhood scoring slightly better (28/100). The report [How Much is a Point of Walkscore Worth](#), published by real estate search site Redfin, demonstrates a high correlation between walkability and rising real estate values. These increases are consistent with data collected by the American Planning Association for the report [Investing In Place](#), which examines attitudes across demographics regarding strategies for economic growth. As stated prominently in that report:

“When asked what would strengthen their local economy, two-thirds believe that investing in schools, transportation choice, walkability, and key community features is the best way.... For both Millennials and Active Boomers, including those living in today’s suburbs, walkability is in high demand.”

Improved infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists also enhances the visual image of a community. The following image is of neighboring Putnam, and shows an effective “before and after” snapshot of the recently reconstructed sidewalks near the intersection of Routes 12 & 44:



The contrast is clear between the newly installed sidewalks on the left, even in the absence of new landscape plantings, and the degraded sidewalks on the right. Thompson anticipates a similar uplift for its central district upon completion of repairs to the Route 12 sidewalks between Route 200 and Rawson Avenue.

Another aspect of Complete Streets is appropriate wayfinding. Eye-catching, legible directional and information signs are the most common elements of wayfinding, although navigation and information can also be enhanced using pedestrian benches, bus shelters, and informational

kiosks. In 2020, Thompson applied for funding to fabricate and install a system of municipally branded signs under the Community Connectivity Grant Program, administered by ConnDOT. Award notification is pending as of the adoption of this PoCD.

9.5 Suggested Action Steps

The suggested actions below are adapted directly from the 2016 Road Safety Audit, and have been organized for cost and priority.

In progress, or for implementation >1 year

- **Request DOT restriping of Route 12' to 11' lanes, and the addition of bicycle-friendly catch-basin grates, prior to any plans for repaving.**
- **Trim vegetation at potentially hazardous locations to improve sightlines, or replace with lower vegetation.**

Short Term - Years 1-3 (low expense/high priority)

- **Add signage that indicates to share the road with bicyclists where appropriate.** Coordinate with the Trails Committee on optimal locations.
- **Add a pedestrian crossing sign at the Walker Street crosswalk.**
- **Install pedestrian signage at the railroad crossing on Main Street (southerly), west of Route 12.**
- **Add a pedestrian crossing sign with down arrow plaque to all crosswalks where missing.**
- **Install Signage at the intersection of Routes 12 & 193 indicating trail parking, West Thompson Dam and Downtown.**
- **Add active pedestrian protection at the Air Line Trail Crossing at Route 193:**
 - Painted crosswalk
 - Warning signs on the trail of road crossing
 - Directional signs to parking area(s)
- **Install a new painted crosswalk by the Airline Trail parking lot on Route 12, once the trail crossing location is established.**
- **Add safety signage at the New Road intersection with the Air Line Trail.**
- **Add additional directional/safety signage at trailheads and along the trails.**
- **Regrade/repair sections of the trails that are not bike friendly.**
- **Add painted crosswalks from the former Knights of Columbus parking lot to the dance studio at 1020 Riverside Drive.**
- **Develop a Sidewalk Master Plan:** inventory existing conditions and use that to plan repairs, new connections and new ramps. Survey/design plans may not be necessary, unless State Road is involved.
- **Town to work with new developments to provide or improve sidewalks.**

Medium Term - Years 3-5 (low-medium expense/medium priority)

- **Coordinate with Cumberland Farms to study the vehicle circulation in and out of the site to determine options to improve access and circulation.** One option should explore using the adjacent parcel (owned by Cumberland Farms) to the south to expand parking and turn around areas for trucks.
- **Coordinate with Cumberland Farms to accept deliveries in off hours only.**
- **Replace old and faded pedestrian signs with new fluorescent signs per MUTCD.** Notify DOT of any old or faded signs on State roads.
- **Add warning signs to motorists approaching the Air Line Trail crossing at Route 193**

- **Move the stop bar on Main Street and Route 12 closer to the intersection.** Evaluate the potential for a curb extension on the southwest corner to shorten the pedestrian crossing distance. Truck turning radius will need to be evaluated for the right turn from Main Street.
- **Coordinate with the bakery on Main Street concerning truck movements from Main Street turning onto Route 12** due to the location of the railroad crossing by the intersection of Main Street and Rte 12
- The directional route and information signs **by Route 200/12 Intersection** are not visible from all three approaches. **A second set of signs is needed.**
- Undertake the **improvement of the intersection at Route 12/Route 200/Park Street**²⁰
- When the town repaints the Main Street center lines, **sharrows should be considered for some locations along Route 12**
- **Evaluate the need for new crosswalks at Market Street, Central Street and Riverside Drive.**
- **Redirect the lighting at the corner of Walker Street and Route 12.**
- **Widen the crosswalks in front of the library on Walker Street and on Main Street at Walker Street.**

Long Term Years 5-10 (medium-high cost/mixed priority)

- **Replace catch basin grates with bike friendly grates**
- **Make all crossings ADA accessible with handicap ramps and detectable warning strips:**
Year 1: Hire consultant to prepare a map of existing sidewalks and ramps – determine number and cost of ramps to be repaired – determine locations of new ramps.
Year 2: Pursue project funding
Year 3: Install on Town roads
Year 4: Submit design to ConnDot for State roads
Year 5: Install on State roads following ConnDOT approval
- **Prepare a Sidewalk Connectivity Master Plan showing existing interconnections and potential for future connection/extensions**, as well as indicating areas prioritized for repairs. Develop cost estimates to use in pursuit of construction funding.
- Develop a plan for the **improvement of the intersection of Route 12/Buckley Hill Road**¹⁹
- Develop a plan for the **improvement of the intersection of the northern terminus of Main Street with Route 12.**¹⁹
- If a new interchange at I-395/Route 193 is constructed then **the need for grade separation of the Airline Trail at Route 193 should be evaluated.**
- **Construct a new sidewalk from the medical facility by Westside Drive on the west side of Route 12 to meet the existing sidewalk at Park Street/Route 200.** Provide a new crosswalk across Route 12 north of Park Street on the north end and evaluate the location of a new crosswalk across Route 12 on the south end.
- **Develop a master plan for road maintenance, with costs assigned, and add to the Capital Improvement Program**, to be submitted to the Board of Selectmen and PZC for approval, and to garner necessary political support. Funds must be added to the budget each year in accordance with said document. Development of such a plan would require consultants to drive extensively on local roads, grade their condition, determine what type of maintenance/repair is necessary, and develop cost estimates. Additional survey and design plans may be required, especially if there are drainage issues.

²⁰ See section 9.3 for additional context

Agriculture

10.1 Overview

Connecticut General Statutes Section 1-1(q) defines **agriculture** as, “the cultivation of the soil, dairying, forestry, and the raising or harvesting of any agricultural or horticultural commodity, including the care and management of livestock such as horses, bees, poultry, fur-bearing animals and wildlife. Agriculture also includes the raising or harvesting of oysters, clams, mussels, other molluscan shellfish or fish; the production or harvesting of maple syrup or maple sugar; the hatching of poultry; and the harvesting of mushrooms. The term also includes the handling, planting, drying, packing, packaging, processing, freezing, grading, storing, or delivering to storage or to market any agricultural or horticultural commodity as an incident to ordinary farming operations, or, in the case of fruits and vegetables, as an incident to the preparation of such fruits and vegetables for market or for direct sale.”

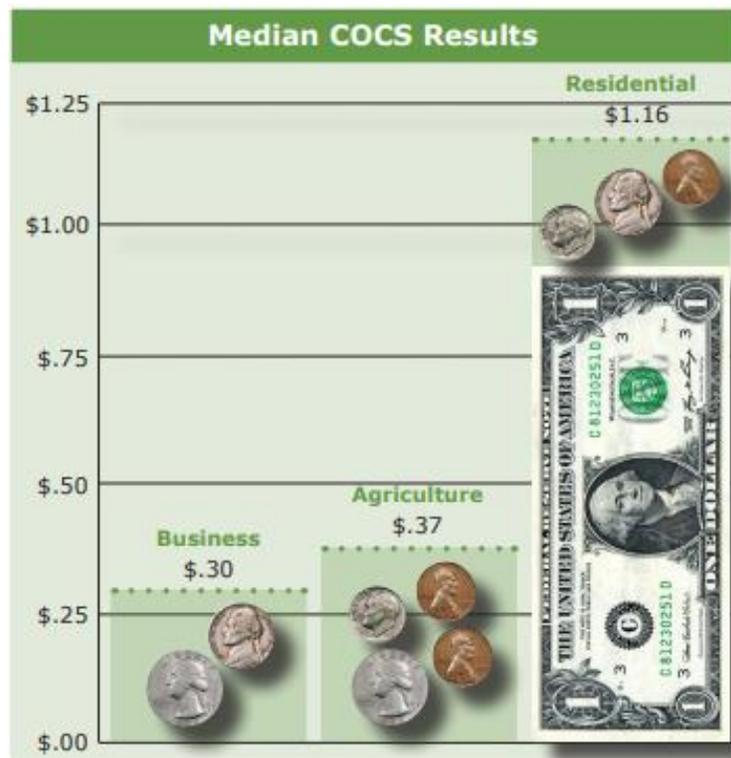
Agriculture is the first economic building block of human society. The cultivation of crops and livestock is what drove the first organized human settlements, and gave rise to the first forms of trade. In New England, Indigenous Peoples cultivated the land long before the arrival of European colonists, growing native crops such as corn, tobacco, kidney beans, squash, and root vegetables. The history of how Native Americans helped to sustain the colonists at Plymouth through their first year, when their own stores and experience proved insufficient to the conditions of their new home, is one of the foundational stories of the American experience.

Thompson has a long history of agriculture. The character of the town is in part defined by the open fields of our present-day farms, barns and other farm buildings and miles of stone walls that define current and past farm fields. Protecting, preserving and celebrating the Town’s agrarian roots are priorities for the people of Thompson, and farming persists as an active and significant part of the community and its identity. The challenges to farming as a means of livelihood, however, are as present in Thompson as they are in farming communities across the country. New residential development and the economics of agriculture both put significant pressure on those presently farming and those contemplating it as a pursuit. It is necessary to encourage flexibility in agricultural enterprises to ensure the future economic viability of local farms. The nearby Killingly Vocational-Agricultural High School and the UConn School of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources are both excellent formal programs for developing new farmers, agricultural engineers and food system entrepreneurs. Thompson has the opportunity to capitalize on its high quality soils, its history of farming and its proximity to these educational centers by working to attract up-and-coming agricultural professionals to bring innovations in farming to the Town. **It is recommended that the Town, through the Agricultural Commission, develop its own outreach programs for aspiring farmers within the public schools and through adult education partnerships with TEEG, EDC, and TBA.**

Residents of Connecticut value locally produced farm products and support “farm-to-table” programs. The success and expansion of local farmers markets attests to their desire for fresh, locally grown food. According to the [USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture](#), 95% of farms in Connecticut are family farms. 23% percent sell directly to consumers. The market value of products sold was \$580 million dollars. The net cash farm income was \$82.5 million, a 223% increase from the 2012 farm census. A 2015 study by the University of Connecticut Zwick Center

for Food and Resource Policy²¹, undertaken to document the importance of agriculture and related industries to Connecticut’s economy, revealed that “...the total impact of Connecticut’s agricultural industry on the state economy was between \$3.3 and \$4.0 billion” and that “The estimated output impact translates into nearly \$1,127 in sales per Connecticut resident.”

The [American Farmland Trust](#) has conducted cost of community services studies since the mid-1980s. Findings show working lands generate more public revenues than they receive back in public services. The median results of the studies show that for every \$1.00 collected in real estate tax, \$1.19 is spent for city services on residential land use and only \$0.37 on working and open lands. Agricultural lands require very few city services and generate positive tax revenue to a level consistent with other business uses, thus subsidizing residential development.



Median cost to provide public services for each dollar of revenue raised.

Agriculture in the 21st century may have a different look and feel than what one may hold in the mind’s eye. Thompson is not likely to host industrial scale agricultural enterprises, nor would that scale of farming be in keeping with the sense of community identity that is so important to local residents. What Thompson is well-positioned for is the development of modern agricultural businesses that shorten local food chains or add value to non-agricultural parcels. Examples include specialty crops such as micro-greens, garlic or mushrooms which require less intensive land use; storage-container greenhouses or hydroponic facilities in areas with public water access; or the development of a local agricultural ecosystem that provides food to schools and restaurants, also capturing food waste for conversion to energy. In this section, we will catalog the current state of agriculture in Thompson, including its challenges; clarify the role of

²¹ https://are.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2327/2018/03/economic_impact.pdf

Thompson's Agriculture Commission; and posit future solutions and opportunities for those wishing to pursue farming or other forms of agriculture as a viable career and lifestyle choice.

10.2 Inventory of Agricultural Assets

As discussed and shown in **Section 1.1**, Thompson is home to 14 named working farms that are, in some regard, open to the public. Of these 14, the four largest farms, both in terms of acreage and their offerings to the public are:

- **Fort Hill Farms** – a four-generation dairy farm, housing 200+ dairy cows. Fort Hill Farms has consistently sought ways to diversify their operation, in order to keep agriculture viable on the property into the future. In addition to operating as a commercial dairy as part of the Farmer's Cow and Cabot Cheese cooperatives, the farm offers several seasonal agricultural entertainment opportunities (corn maze, music festivals, ice cream); and, as of 2020, they are poised to host the first anaerobic bio-digester facility in the region. The project will generate sufficient electricity, through bio-gas, to power up to 300 homes.
- **Morning Beckons Farm** – a breeder of alpacas, with a herd of 300+ animals, as well as emus and other small livestock. Like Fort Hill Farms, the owners of Morning Beckons have also diversified their breeding and shearing operation to incorporate agritourism and an on-site gift shop selling alpaca and emu products.
- **Blackmer Farm** – a retail greenhouse operation, selling perennials, bedding plants, vegetable starts and seasonal produce. The Blackmers are also a multi-generational farm family, and younger members of the family continue the tradition by raising beef cattle and other livestock. Blackmer Beef is available at several area retailers, as well as being sold by the youngest generation at regional farmers' markets.
- **Chase Road Growers** – another business with a long local history in Thompson, the Reynolds family's roughly 50+ acres have had many different agricultural uses over the years, starting as a dairy farm. Currently the family produces bedding plants, specialty hanging baskets and containers in spring; summer vegetables, corn, and cut flowers; and decorative gourds, mums and pumpkins through the autumn.

The remaining named farms include small sugaring houses, seasonal pick-your-own operations, riding stables and greenhouse growers. As will be further discussed in **Section 10.3**, Thompson has, in several ordinances, expressed a policy to encourage the continuation of agriculture within the Town, both as a part of its overall rural character and as a viable component of the local economy. In **Section 8**, encouragement of small-scale innovations in agriculture and food-system enterprises has been proposed as an economic development strategy matching the community's stated priorities. It is also worth noting that, in the wake of systemic weaknesses exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, efforts to shorten the food chain for area residents will build resilience for Thompson in the face of future disruptions.

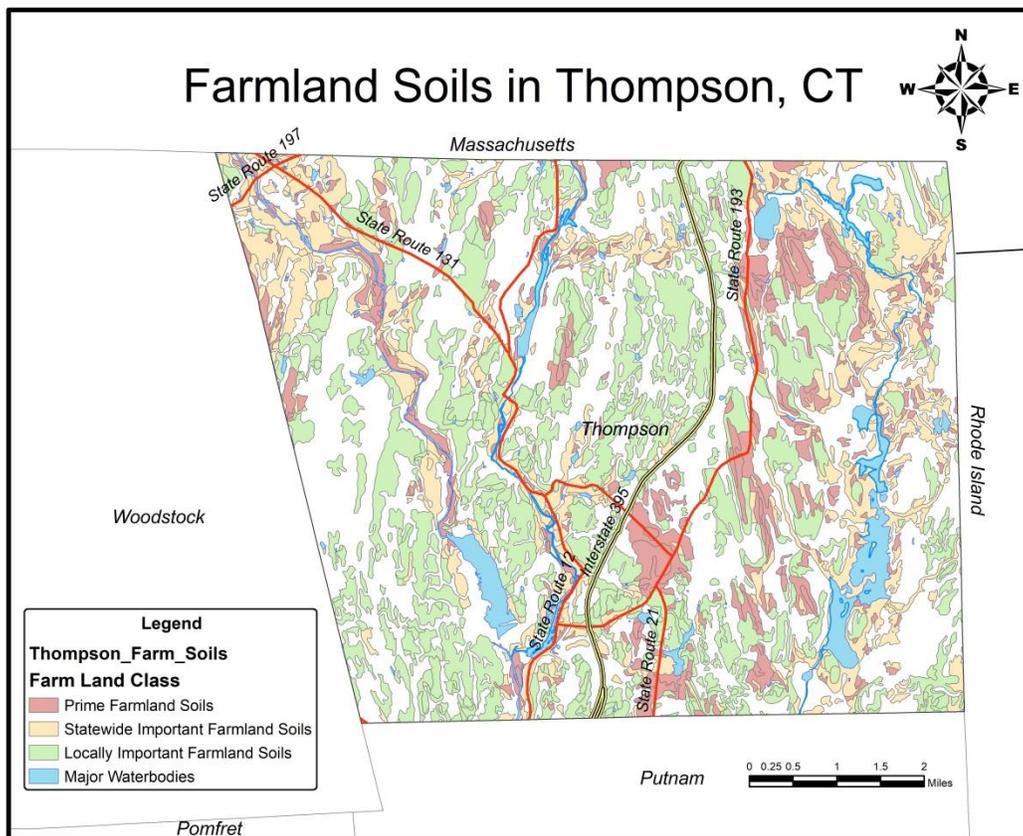
According to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, the Town of Thompson contains 7,760 acres of prime and important farm soils, and 8,364 acres of locally important farm soils, for an aggregate of 16,124 acres. The various soil types are defined below and depicted on the map which follows.

Prime Farmland Soils, "those soils that have the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oil seed crops, and are also available

for these uses (the land could be cropland, pastureland, range-land, forestland, or other land, but not urban built-up land or water). It has the soil quality, growing season and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained high yields or crops when treated and managed, including water management, according to acceptable farming practices.”

Statewide Important Farmland Soils, “those soils that fail to meet one or more of the requirements of prime farmland, but are important for the production of food, feed, fiber, or forage crops. They include those soils that are nearly prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods.”

Locally Important Farmland Soils, “those soils that are not prime or statewide importance but are used for the production of high value food, fiber or horticultural crops. This land may be important to the local economy due to its productivity or value.”



10.3 A Farm Friendly Community

In the previous edition of the PoCD, a series of goals was set, to strengthen the Thompson’s commitment to agriculture as a part of the community. Visitors may note one of the many signs declaring Thompson as a “Farm Friendly Community”, located at key gateway points to the Town. Produced under a grant awarded to the Agriculture Commission, the signs affirm the prominence of farming within the community, and they also provide a prompt to motorists to be mindful of

sharing the road with tractors and other farm vehicles. Following the adoption of the 2009 PoCD, as a part of the suggested action items, several ordinances were adopted. The language below is excerpted directly from each of the referenced ordinances.

- **Ordinance # 10-055 Right to Farm** adopted 2010:

Purpose and Intent

It is the purpose and intent of this ordinance to further the Town's policy and reduce the loss of agricultural resources and that whatever impact may be caused to others through the normal practice of agriculture is offset by the benefits of farming to the neighborhood, community, and society in general.

Declaration

- Present, or future, agricultural operations both conducted for commercial purposes, in a manner consistent with proper and accepted customs and standards of the agricultural industry, and on a recognized farm which is engaged in the act of farming, shall maintain a right to farm regardless of any changed condition of the use of adjacent land.

- **Ordinance # 10-056 Agricultural Commission** adopted 2010

MISSION

Per the Thompson Plan of Conservation and Development adopted November 23, 2009. To maintain, sustain, and enhance agriculture so that it will remain a fundamental part of the Thompson landscape and economy by providing flexibility to assist in the evolution of the agricultural industry.

- **Ordinance # 11-002 Ordinance Authorizing Tax Exemptions for Farm Buildings** adopted 2011
- Pursuant to the authority of the Connecticut General Statutes, Section 12-91(c), the Town of Thompson hereby provides an exemption from property tax for each eligible building, to the extent of an assessed value of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00) used, actually and exclusively in farming, as defined in the Connecticut General Statutes, Section 1-1(q).
- **Ordinance # 11-003 Ordinance Doubling Exemptions of Farm Machinery from Tax** adopted 2011

Pursuant to the authority of the Connecticut General Statutes 12-91(b), the Town of Thompson hereby provides an additional exemption from property tax for all farm machinery qualified for exemption under section (a) of said statute to the extent of an additional assessed value of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00)...

A further action step was established in the 2009 PoCD to develop educational and outreach programs to promote the further understanding of the benefits of locally produced foods, how farms work, farms as businesses, cost of services and how agriculture in Thompson can be supported. Serendipitously, in 2019 the public school system was awarded a USDA "Farm to School Grant", to establish an efficient, controlled-environment aquaponics garden in the school district, giving students the opportunity to learn more about agriculture and the importance of farming in an interactive, hands-on experience. The volunteer group managing the Thompson Garden By the River has discussed various strategies to incorporate youth programs into the community garden, via partnerships with the Recreation Department, TEEG and local Scout troops. The master plan to develop 65 Main Street as a business incubator for agricultural and food system start-ups has been widely referenced throughout this document as an ongoing project to build local food security and reinforce the community's respect for its farming heritage. In combination, therefore, the foundation is in place to strengthen the economic viability of farming in Thompson.

Further evidence of the priority assigned to Thompson farms by its residents is found in the 2007 study [Public Preferences and Willingness to Pay for Farmland Preservation in Four Connecticut Communities](#)²².

“Results show that residents within the four communities support the preservation of farmland and open space, as reflected by an often significant household willingness to pay for farmland preservation. On average, willingness to pay per household, per acre, per year for farmland preservation ranges from \$0.22 in Thompson to \$0.49 in Pomfret. Aggregating these values over town households and time periods results in town-wide capitalized per acre WTP estimates that range from \$5,917 in Thompson to \$8,699 in Woodstock.”

The American Farmland Trust publishes [an interactive checklist: Is Your Community Farm Friendly](#) (shown below), as part of their Community Guide to Planning for Agriculture and Food Systems.

Is Your Community Farm Friendly?
A Checklist to Gauge Local Support for Agriculture in Your Community

DOES YOUR COMMUNITY...

<p>Prioritize natural resource conservation ...have policies or regulations to support access to water for food production (e.g., traditional agriculture, urban agriculture, and/or community gardens)? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>...have policies to address food waste and recovery (through strategies such as composting, gleaning programs, and/or food product recycling programs)? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Encourage agriculture and food production ...have a section on agriculture and food production in your comprehensive plan or other community plans (e.g., economic development, strategic, or sustainability plan)? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>...support agricultural leadership (e.g., an agricultural ombudsman, advisory board, or commission to represent farmers and ranchers in local decision making)? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>...provide public land for farming and food production (e.g., lease land to farmers, provide space for community gardens or urban agriculture)? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>...encourage connections between agriculture and residents (e.g., through agritourism, direct marketing, and/or promotion of local farms)? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Protect farmland ...create agricultural protection zones specifically to support working farms and ranches? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>...purchase conservation easements (development rights) on agricultural land? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>...have urban growth boundaries? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>...have a transfer of development rights program or mitigation ordinance to engage private developers in protection activities? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Improve agricultural viability ...have a local right-to-farm ordinance? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>...provide tax credits and exemptions (e.g., property tax relief, school tax credits, sales tax exemptions)? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>...have ordinances to support agriculture and food production (e.g., accessory use allowances, farm labor housing policies, setbacks and buffers, on-farm processing)? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>...create voluntary districts where agriculture is encouraged and protected? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>...have livestock regulations to address nuisance, environment, and welfare issues (e.g., regulate number of animals per acre, manure and nutrient management)? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Support markets and infrastructure ...have regulations scaled appropriately to address on-farm marketing and direct-to-consumer systems (e.g., agritourism, CSAs, farm and roadside stands)? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>...support marketing infrastructure for local farmers (e.g., farmers markets, food hubs)? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>...support value-added processing (e.g., slaughter facilities, cold storage, packing sheds)? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>...support farm to school and other institutions' procurement policies? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Promote local farms ...have a "Buy Local" campaign? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>...provide promotion materials such as maps, resource guides, and interactive websites? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
--	--

Adapted from New Hampshire Coalition for Sustaining Agriculture and UNH Cooperative Extension's "Is Your Town Farm Friendly? — A Checklist for Sustaining Rural Character"

Thompson has put in place many of the measures identified on the checklist: the adoption of the ordinances identified above; and updates to the Zoning Regulations creating fair policies for agriculture. To better meet the standard of a “Farm-Friendly Community”, pursuit of these additional checklist items is recommended:

- **Develop policies to address food waste and recovery.**
- **Develop and support marketing infrastructure for local farmers.**
- **Start a “Buy Local” Campaign.**
- **Develop promotional materials for local growers and producers. Develop a program to assist farm businesses in using online resources**
- **Keep abreast of updates to state enabling legislation or language that may be adopted**

²² Brooklyn, Pomfret, Thompson and Woodstock were the four communities studied.

10.4 Challenges Faced By Farmers in Thompson

In New England, many field crop operations have traditionally been at a disadvantage due to a shorter growing season. In recent years, increasing effects of climate change such as heavy spring rains that delay planting; drought; and an increased number of 90° days have further complicated the planning process for local farmers. This makes it necessary to diversify in order to survive. Residential real estate values throughout the region are high in comparison to the Midwestern and Northern Plains states, putting added pressure on farmers to sell their land for subdivision or solar field development. Farmers in New England are relatively small in comparison with the industrial agriculture practiced in other states, making it difficult to scale an operation for national distribution.

Another frequently cited challenge to agriculture across the country is the aging of the labor pool. This greying holds true both for farmers and for hired agricultural laborers. A steady rise in the average age of farmers has been shown in the Census of Agriculture for decades: in 1978 the average age of “principal operators” of United States farms was 53.3 years. By 2019, the average age was 59.4 years. Similar to the overall aging trends for the population of Connecticut, in order to remain viable an infusion of younger farmers is necessary.

In regards to the latter, there is some room for optimism shown by the data. Connecticut hosts 5,521 farms, of which 646 (11.7%) are located in Windham County. This [excerpt from the 2017 Census of Agriculture for Connecticut](#) shows that, of those farms, 166 (25.6%) are operated by new producers; and 69 are operated by young producers (age<35). Further, the largest percentage of Windham County farms operates on parcels between 10-49 acres. This implies that Connecticut farmers are seeking ways to be profitable on relatively small parcels. This scale of agriculture best lends itself to production serving local and immediately regional food and fiber needs.

It could be argued that Thompson, a community rich in farms, is also a food desert. It has been demonstrated that the Town is nearly entirely automobile-dependent for daily needs. Residents of North Grosvenordale, the population most likely to lack reliable transit options, have only two convenience stores and a Dollar General providing any kind of retail food options in the immediate vicinity. By making a commitment to support local agricultural enterprises, whether established farms or start-ups, the Town also has the opportunity to add food security for its most challenged residents. Doing so helps to build wealth for local producers, to keep local dollars circulating in the local economy, and to preserve the resources of time and money for a cost-burdened segment of the population. Direct sales to the community may also help insulate Thompson producers from unstable milk prices. Development of a formalized “farm-to-school” or “farm-to-restaurant” framework may also build local demand for high-value specialty crops.

10.5 Agriculture Commission - Roles, Responsibilities and Advocacy

As shown previously, the Agriculture Commission was formed as a direct response to recommendations from the 2009 PoCD. The Commission is a five-member body with two alternates, and commissioners serve 5-year terms. Current membership is made up of active farmers within Thompson, representing some of the Town’s most prominent farm families. Meetings are held five times per year.

The general challenges for agricultural producers in Thompson also have parallels within the Commission: membership skews toward an older generation, and the quotidian demands of

farming limit the amount of time available to dedicate to developing policy initiatives for the Town. A lack of comfort and familiarity with online communication platforms has further hindered the commissioners during the 2020 pandemic response. **Solicitation of membership from the up-and-coming farming generation is highly recommended**, in order to strengthen the commission and diversify viewpoints. It is further recommended that the Agriculture Commission **create an outreach plan to the public schools, Killingly Vocational Agricultural High School, the UConn School of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources, and TEEG**. Youth programs should focus on the basic premise of “no farms, no food” and incorporate easy-to-understand tasks such as vegetable gardening from seed, food waste diversion and food preparation from “whole food” ingredients. Adult programming should be designed to strengthen the connection of the community at large with its farmers, whether through public harvest festivals or other entertainments; or more substantive workshops to develop municipal policies.

A number of agricultural-adjacent projects and policy initiatives have been advanced in this document, for the development of a food system business incubator; the development of centrally located local food retail options; and the development of a municipal food-waste-to-energy program. It is recommended that the Agriculture Commission have a prominent role in the planning for these projects, alongside the Office of Planning & Development, Economic Development Commission and Thompson Business Association.

10.6 Suggested Action Steps

Short Term – Years 1-3

- **Develop policies to address food waste and recovery.** Such policies should incorporate the diversion of commercial and institutional food waste to the anaerobic bio-digester located at Fort Hill Farms. Recommended partners are the public school system; Marianapolis Preparatory School; Superior Bakery; Lord Thompson Manor banquet facility; and all area restaurants.
- **Develop a local “Farm-to-School” distribution program** from area farms to the public and private schools in Thompson, to put local whole food products into their cafeterias, shortening the institutional food chain while building wealth for local producers.
- **Start a “Buy Local” Campaign.** To be coordinated between the Agriculture Commission, Economic Development Commission and Thompson Business Association.
- **Develop promotional materials for local growers and producers.** Enhance the webpage for the Agriculture Commission on the Town website, linking to local farms’ websites or social media; create online or print maps to area farms.
- **Develop a program to assist farm businesses in using online resources,** as another joint project by the Agriculture Commission, Economic Development Commission and Thompson Business Association.
- **Planning and Zoning Commission to conduct annual reviews of the Zoning Regulations,** to assess whether the existing regulatory language is sufficiently adapted to the needs of local agricultural businesses

Medium Term – Years 3-5

- **Develop and support marketing infrastructure for local farmers.** A farmers’ market for Thompson would be an incremental step in developing such infrastructure. A centrally located brick-and-mortar food hub to which local growers could deliver produce would

similarly increase the access to locally grown foods for the community. The planned ag-business incubator for 65 Main is another example of supportive infrastructure for farm entrepreneurs.

- **Organize and Conduct annual farm tours**, to be publicized both within the community and to wider audiences for agritourism events.

Long Term - Years 5-10

- **Continue the development of economic development initiatives aimed at agricultural and food system start-ups**, through the Office of Planning and Development
- **Keep abreast of updates to state enabling legislation or language to further support agricultural business within Thompson.**



Recreation & Trails

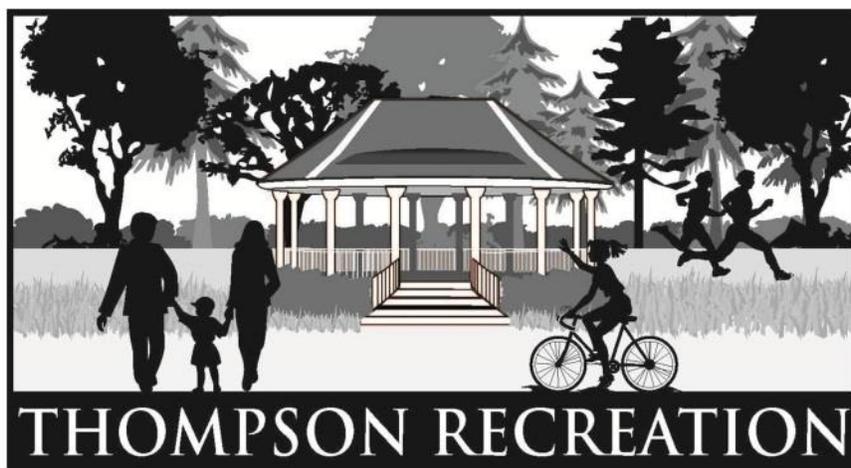
11.1 Thompson Recreation - Background

The Thompson Recreation Commission was formed in 1970. In 1988, the first part-time Recreation Director, Renee Waldron (LaPalme), was hired. Waldron grew the department throughout her tenure, increasing program offerings including the Purely Recreation Before and Afterschool Program and the Summer Adventure Camp Program at Quaddick State Park. In 2003, the Recreation Department added a part-time office assistant responsible for registration management and financial accounting. Waldron left the position for a new role in the Town of Thompson in 2015.

11.2 Recreational Assets

Thompson offers a wide variety of recreation opportunities: public park facilities and trails; programs for youth, families, and seniors; and special events that bring the community together. Thompson's outdoor recreation facilities are funded and maintained by municipal, State, Federal and private organizations. These outdoor resources are not only used by residents, but a significant number of visitors come to enjoy Thompson's green spaces and community events. The Recreation Department program offerings include childcare, youth sports, wellness and art programs that bring together residents with common interests. In collaboration with other Town organizations and departments, the Recreation Department spearheads monthly events including the Town Wide April Clean Up, Thompson Community Day, the annual Summer Concert Series and many holiday celebrations.

Recognizing that Thompson's Recreation assets enrich the entire community, the Recreation Department works to foster a collaborative environment and to serve as an organizational resource for municipal and civic partners. Thompson Little League, Northeast Opportunities for Wellness, Thompson Seniors, NECONN Soccer Club, Thompson Public Library, Thompson Public Schools, Thompson Together, Thompson Ecumenical Empowerment Group (TEEG), It Starts at Home, Thompson Art Committee, Thompson Trails Committee, Thompson Business Association and the Economic Development Committee are all frequent collaborators.



Town Parks & Playgrounds

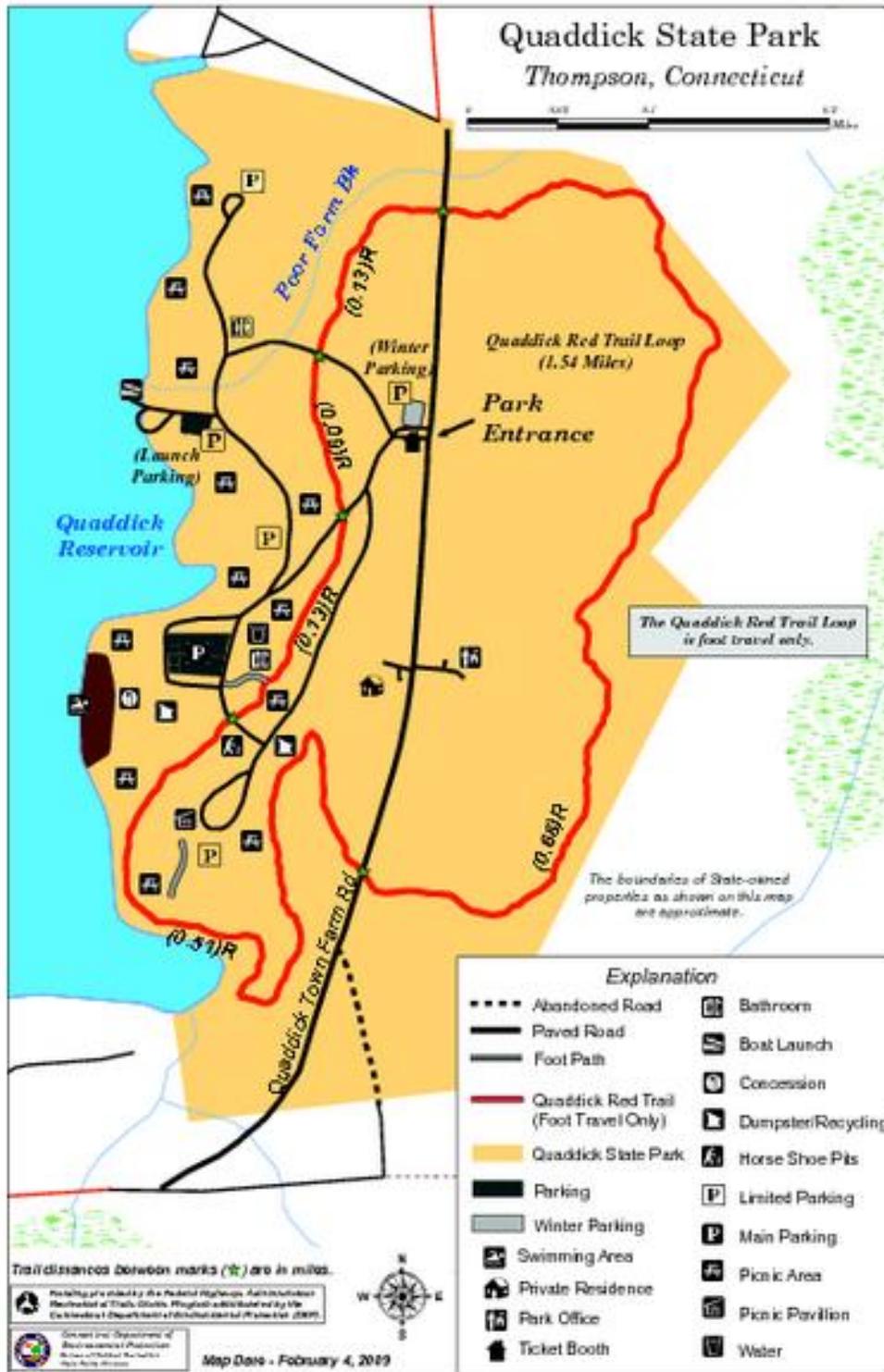
Name	Location	Activities
Bull Hill Recreation Area	Messier Road	Hiking, bird watching, soccer
Community Playground	Rivermill Village, Central Street	Playground for children 5-12
Duhamel Park	Main Street	Fishing, picnicking, bird watching, ice skating
Grosvenordale Common	Junction of Rt 200 & Riverside Drive	Swing set and basketball hoop
Heritage Way Park French River	Riverside Drive	Walking / biking trail, fishing ²³ , boating, bird watching
Mechanicsville Park	Old Route 12	Playground for children 5-12, basketball hoop
Riverside Park	Marshall Street	Walking/biking trail, fishing, bird watching, softball field, basketball court, community events
Thompson Little League Complex	21 Ravenelle Street, 15 Red Bridge Road, 335 Red Bridge Road	Multiple fields for baseball/softball
Thompson Public Schools Complex	Riverside Drive & Thatcher Road	Playscape, tennis court ²⁴ , basketball court, track, baseball field, soccer field
Wilsonville Playground	Jct of Wilsonville & Wagher Roads	Playground for children 5-12

A more detailed description each of these parks may be found in **Section 4.6**.

²³ The French River is stocked with trout by CT DEEP for recreational anglers

²⁴ The tennis courts are currently in poor condition, and therefore unavailable to the public.

Another prominent recreational area is **Quaddick State Park**, A CT DEEP property featuring swimming, boating, cook-outs and walking/hiking. The Recreation Department uses the park for summer camp activities.



The **Airline Trail State Park, Little Pond and West Thompson Lake** are also important recreation areas in Town. They will be described more fully under the topic of Trails, in **Section 11.6**.

Private Recreation Opportunities

Thompson is home to several high-profile, privately owned recreation and tourism destinations. These successful businesses operate independently of one another; however, as tourism grows in Thompson, it may be beneficial for these businesses to consider either joining Thompson Business Association or forming an association specific to tourism. Among these attractions are: Thompson Speedway Motorsports Park & Speedway Golf Course; Fort Hill Farms; Morning Beckons Farm; and Tee-Rex Miniature Golf; Sunnycroft Farms Riding Stable; Koinonia School of Sport; Quinntisset Country Club; the Thompson Rod & Gun Club; and Valley Springs Sportsman's Club.

11.3 Recreation Commission – Roles, Responsibilities and Advocacy

The Thompson Recreation Commission has a stated mission to enhance, promote and support quality recreational facilities and opportunities for all residents of the community. There are nine members, appointed to three-year terms.

11.4 Recreation Department Challenges

The Recreation Department has no dedicated facility, which puts the department in the position of negotiating to share space with the public schools and public library. Because those institutions are obliged to serve their own needs first, the Recreation Department is limited in the amount and type of programming for which it can plan. Use of school or library facilities often comes with associated costs to offset custodial staffing beyond regular hours, further limiting the department's ability to offer after-school programs in a suitable location.

Because there is no line item in the general budget for recreational programming, ancillary costs for facilities must be passed on to participants in escalating fees. This latter passing-on of costs is further exacerbated by scheduled increases to the minimum wage; and by an increase in transportation fees as a consequence of the privatization of the school buses. Relying on programs to be fee-based, rather than planning for the costs within the annual municipal budget, restricts access for some of the households who would most benefit from them.

The public parks are a shared responsibility between the Department of Public Works and the Recreation Department, with the former responsible for maintenance and the later responsible for programming. DPW, however, does not maintain any staff dedicated to the upkeep of the parks. This has the effect of rendering the needs of the parks system subordinate to other needs such as road maintenance.

A number of Town-owned recreational properties have long-standing unmet maintenance needs which rise to the level of infrastructure repairs: the soccer field at Bull Hill suffers from persistent drainage problems, particularly in the spring; and the tennis courts at the public school are in such poor condition as to be unusable. **It is recommended that The Department of Public Works, the Recreation Department, the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance devise and commit to properly funding a plan for structural repair and maintenance of the Town's public recreation properties.**

11.5 Recreation Department Goals

- Highlight recreation as a growing lifestyle enhancement that attracts young families to town and serves as an asset for economic growth.
- Take a leading role on all Town-sponsored recreational efforts.
- Coordinate with key town leaders and organizations to maximize cross promotion potential
- Increase recreational offerings for seniors and adults, focusing on wellness and arts programming.
- Increase scholarship awareness. Set a goal for annual scholarship fundraising efforts.
- Maximize the use of the online registration system.
- Preserve green space and be a leading partner in environmental advocacy.
- Increase park maintenance staffing and scheduling.
- Increase communication with DPW for park maintenance plan and schedule.
- Reactivate the Bull Hill Recreation Area.

11.6 Suggested Action Steps - Recreation

In progress, or for implementation >1 year

- **Work with other departments and organizations to partner with Recreation when planning public events** (e.g. utilizing the Recreation Department email database to reach potential audiences).
- **Create an online calendar of events** for use by all Town departments & organizations.
- Reach out to appropriate local organizations to **encourage use of the Recreation Department online registration system. Create clear guidelines for its use, to share with the Public Schools, PTO, Little League, etc.**
- **Conduct a yearly walk-through of public recreation facilities and establish a calendar of park maintenance** with the Director of Public Works and the First Selectman.

Short Term - Years 1-3

- **Develop a 10-year plan** for Recreation properties and facilities.
- **Create at least one DPW position with the primary responsibility of park maintenance, to better balance prioritization.**
- **Establish new weekly seniors programs and adult wellness programs.**
- **Establish a winter concert series**
- **Create promotional video highlighting recreation assets** for the Town, to be published on website.
- **Economic Development Commission and the Recreation Department to join with the Thompson Business Association to develop cooperative partnerships** to market and promote local recreation assets to potential visitors.
- **Seek grant funding for Recreation Department facility repairs & construction**

Medium Term - Years 3-5

- **Create online and print guides to solicit sponsors for Recreation Department scholarships. Establish escalating yearly fundraising goals.**

Long Term - Years 5-10

- Following improvements to the field drainage by the Department of Public Works, **reactivate and add Recreation Department programs at Bull Hill Recreation Area** (e.g. summer camp, pavilion rentals)

11.7 Thompson Trails - Inventory and Usage

The Town of Thompson has within its borders many publicly accessible trails available for hiking or easy walking, nature study, biking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing and boating. These trails are diverse in terrain. Some provide handicap accessibility. Some connect to trail systems in neighboring communities. They include Town-owned and State-owned properties, Wyndham Land Trust properties, and federally managed land. Thompson's outdoor recreation assets were highlighted in the 2018 NECCOG Branding Study as strengths to be promoted. Following the events of the 2020 pandemic, it seems likely that trail use, paddling, cycling and other outdoor activities will achieve new status as reliably safe forms of recreation. Thompson, therefore, is well-positioned to take advantage of this growing trend.

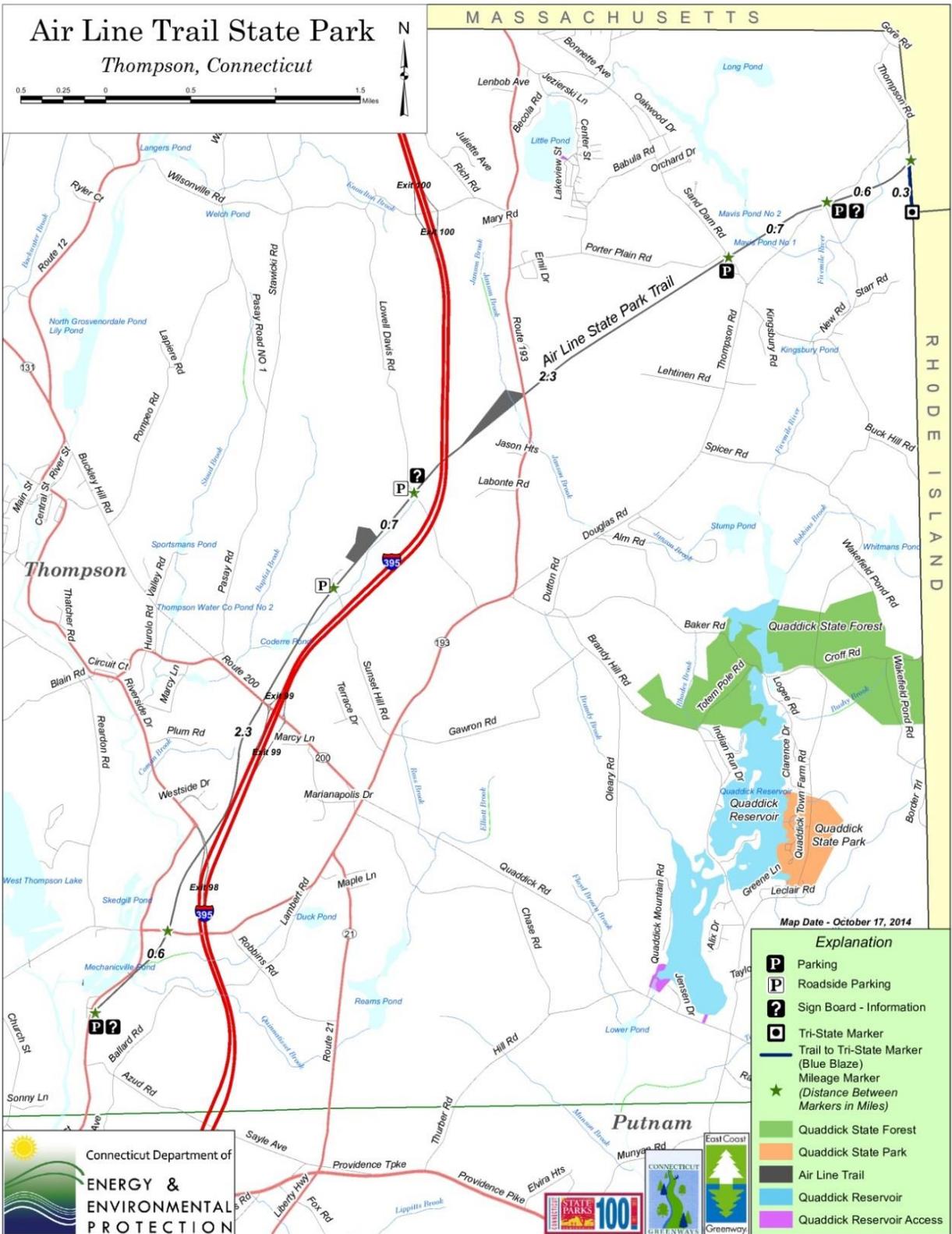
Trail Benefits to the Community

- Provide outdoor recreation and exercise opportunities
- Preserve greenways, native habitat and wildlife corridors
- Enhance the rural character of Thompson
- Contribute to tourism & economic development
- Create connections to neighboring communities
- Create connections to the natural world, encouraging stewardship

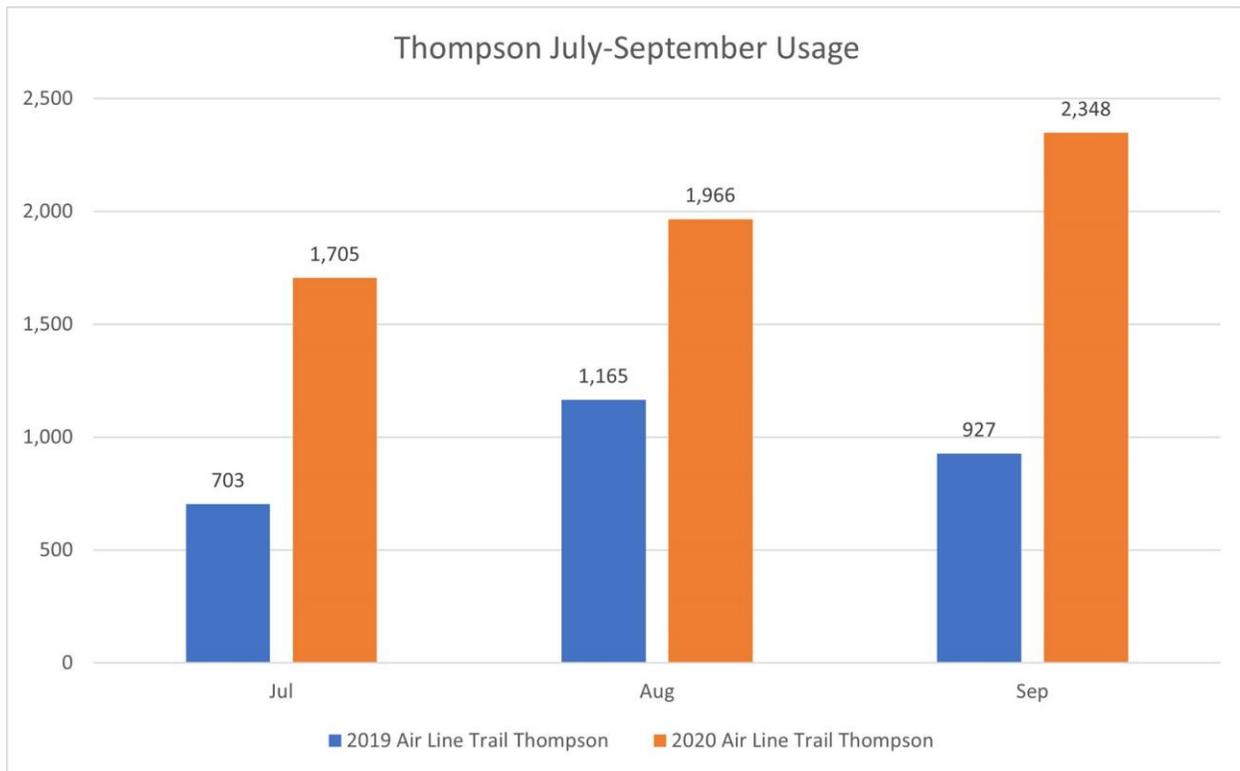
State of Connecticut Properties

Quaddick Lake State Park Red Trail is a 1.5 mile wooded walking trail with some rocky and hilly sections, across the road from Quaddick Reservoir and the state park swimming and boat launch area. It is in close proximity to the Wyndham Land Trust LeClair Preserve and a connecting link may be possible. The park also offers opportunities for paddlers to kayak or canoe through the three basins that comprise Quaddick Lake, an impoundment of the Five Mile River, upstream past Thompson Speedway to Stump Pond. A map of Quaddick is included in **Section 11.2**. The State also maintains a boat launch at **Little Pond**.

The **Air Line State Park Trail (ALSPT)** in Thompson is a popular six and one half (6 ½) mile multi-use trail that links to a larger regional and national trail system. The existing rail bed has been abandoned and the rails have been removed. Since most has been graded and resurfaced with stone dust, it has grown in usage, particularly during the spring and summer of the 2020 virus pandemic.



The snapshot below, from the Connecticut Trails Census, reinforces anecdotal evidence of increased use, showing the year-on-year escalation from 2019-2020, July to September:



The Trail can be accessed from East Thompson Road/New Road, Sand Dam Road, Lowell Davis Road, Sunset Hill Road, Route 193/Thompson Road and Route 12 in Mechanicsville, with hopes for additional access points, particularly from the Plum Road in Grosvenordale on Route 12.

The northern end of the ALSPT extends from Douglas State Forest, with its extensive trail system in Massachusetts and connectors to an equally extensive trail system at the Buck Hill Management Area in Rhode Island; almost to the Putnam town line at the intersection of Routes 12 and 193. Connecting to a Putnam section of trail to the south is a priority being worked on with the Putnam Trails Committee.

Parking areas for multiple vehicles exist near both ends with limited roadside parking at the other road crossings. User safety at all road crossings can be improved by a state commitment to bridges or underpasses. The State Park continues south through 12 towns. The Air Line State Park Trail winds nearly 55 miles from the northeast corner of Connecticut, where Thompson borders Massachusetts, down to East Hampton in the heart of the state. The pathway is nearly seamless, with only one major gap through Putnam. Thompson is a member of the "12-Town Task Force" undertaking cooperative stewardship, promotion, consistent signage, and shared advocacy of this Connecticut asset.

The Thompson section of the ALSPT encompasses several historical sites and artifacts that beg protection and have the potential to bring added tourism to the area. A spur trail to the Tri State marker (see below), a traditional cattle bridge, an historic stone culvert built by the railroad, and the site of the 1891 Great East Thompson Train Wreck all exist within a short distance of each other at the northern end of the trail. Plans for a permanent park-like facility with interpretive

elements at the site of the Great East Thompson Train Wreck are ongoing, building on extensive research by the Thompson Historical Society with 2019-2020 input from the National Parks Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program. UCONN engineering department students have been recruited to develop site designs as part of their 2020-2021 coursework. At the conclusion of the NPS RTCA partnership, the Director of Planning & Development will utilize the final report and all designs produced during the 2-year charrette to submit grants to CT Humanities for the fabrication and installation of interpretive signs at the site; and to the National Endowment for the Arts “Our Town” grant program, funding creative placemaking projects.

Town-owned Properties

The flat, paved, easily accessible **Heritage Park Trail** begins at Riverside Park and winds through the historic River Mill Village, crossing Riverside Drive (Route 12) and Buckley Hill Road, then continuing as the **North Grosvenordale River Walk** along the French River to North Grosvenordale Pond. At the pond, the River Walk continues north as a handicap-accessible, crushed gravel trail. Leaving the gravel path leads to a wooded hiking trail on a conservation easement on privately-owned land. This trail offers vantage points overlooking North Grosvenordale Pond where hikers can watch for osprey and bald eagles that fish in the pond.

Access to the pond is available at a parking area and boat launch for non-motorized craft off Route 12. An up-and-back paddle to the scenic dam and old mill at Wilsonville Road is an easy round-trip. The Town currently owns a 12.24 acre parcel at 0 Wilsonville Road with good river access, which could provide an additional launch/take-out opportunity; however, pressing maintenance issues with the dam at the site take precedence as of this writing. Past consideration of the site determined that its proximity to the railroad tracks may pose a safety hazard, and so it was not pursued. With the Wilsonville Mill under redevelopment for mixed use retail and restaurant space, it now may be possible to explore a partnership with the new owners to share parking space for recreational paddlers. **It is recommended that the Town explore the feasibility of a public boat launch on the Wilsonville Road parcel, once the repairs to the dam have been completed.**

• The **Tri State Marker Trail** is the most popular and challenging Thompson Trail. This blue-blazed trail on Town land starts from a stone marker on the Air Line Trail, then proceeds uphill .68 miles to the historic stone tri-state marker erected in 1883, indicating the corner where three states—Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island—meet. Off-shoot trails lead into Massachusetts and Rhode Island, connecting to the Mid-State Trail and Douglas State Forest Loop Trail, as well as extensive trails in the Buck Hill Management Area.



- **Bull Hill Recreation Area** offers an easy, 1 mile round-trip: 2/3 mile of wooded trail, with an additional 1/3 mile on road that encircles a soccer field. It currently does not connect to the Wyndham Land Trust Bull Hill property, although there is potential for connection.
- **Border Trail** off Elmwood Hill connects to extensive trail systems in Rhode Island that include Pulaski State Park and George Washington Management Area.
- **Old Connecticut Path.** In 1636, after dissenting with Puritan leaders in Massachusetts, the prominent Puritan colonial leader Thomas Hooker and a hundred of his congregation made a two-weeks' journey to the Connecticut River. They founded the English settlement of Hartford and the Colony of Connecticut. By 1643, this trail was being called the "Old Connecticut Path." In 1672, with the establishment of a postal system, it became the first colonial post road. The Old Connecticut Path passes through Thompson, most likely crossing the Quinebaug River and traversing the Bull Hill area. Efforts are being made to establish a commemorative **Connecticut Path Heritage Trail**.

Wyndham Land Trust (WLT) properties

The Wyndham Land Trust protects land in ten towns in northeastern Connecticut, including Thompson. Since they incorporated in 1975, they have acquired more than 50 parcels, totaling over 3,000 acres in the region. In addition, the land trust protects also 700 acres through conservation easements or deed restrictions. There has often been a cross-over between Thompson Trails Committee members and Wyndham Land Trust stewards, volunteers playing a dual role in creating and monitoring WLT trails. This is a beneficial partnership that should be fostered. The WLT website shows maps and allowed activities on the preserves in Thompson.

The **Bull Hill Preserve** already has some hiking trails, which are also open to horses and mountain bikes. Although Wyndham Land Trust owns almost 1000 acres on Bull Hill (as of 2020), the properties are not contiguous, but are instead interspersed with privately owned parcels. Clearly-defined trails lead to a spectacular overlook at its highest point, providing a panoramic view of Woodstock and Thompson. The Old Connecticut Path, historically used by Native Americans and colonial travelers also passes through the Preserve. In developing the potential for increasing public recreation, considerations for maintaining wildlife habitats, stipulations of specific land donors and the rights of private property owners are essential to the successful stewardship of this area. Visitors who want to enjoy this area can park cars either at the West Thompson Dam or the recreation/soccer field and then hike or bike along Ravenelle Road to Bull Hill Road. WLT is hoping to make a parking area on the Thompson side of Bull Hill when funding allows. Plans for a 12 car parking area at the end of the paved section of Bull Hill Road in Thompson are moving forward with the Wyndham Land Trust and the Thompson Trails Committee.

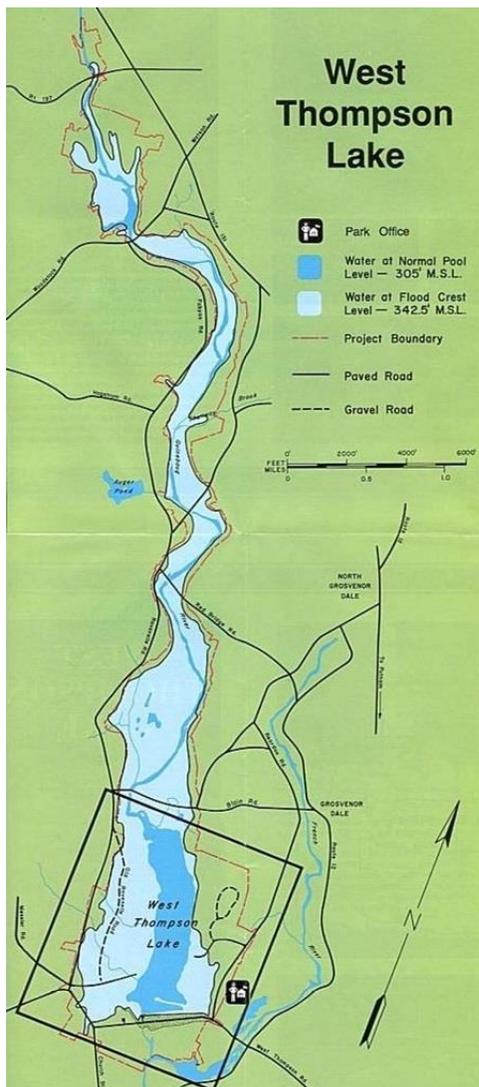
- Although the trail is currently closed (2020), the **LeClair Preserve** off LeClair Road is 76 acres of woodland that abuts Quaddick State Park and is part of a large forest tract that extends into Rhode Island. Originally blazed by Thompson Trails Committee volunteers, WLT stewards have closed the trail, which mostly follows old logging roads. Plans for reopening the trail are uncertain.

- **Tamler Preserve** is accessed off Elmwood Hill Road. Totalling about a mile, an old cart road leads to an easy .6 mile loop. Of the 228 acres comprising this forest block, 196 are in Thompson, with potential for future trail extension.

- The 156-acre **Robbins/O’Leary/Blain Preserve** has a variety of gravel roads for walking. Mountain biking and horses are allowed. A pristine section of the Five Mile River cuts through the center of the property. The Preserve is bounded to the east by Quaddick Town Farm Road. Parking is off of Fred Davis Rd. WLT website has a map.
- **Long Pond Preserve** is 139 acres, but much of it is swampy and ecologically sensitive. Boating/paddling is allowed. It does have a nice trail loop. Four-wheeler intrusions have degraded this trail and remain a major problem.

Federally-owned Properties

West Thompson Lake (Federally-owned flood control area) The Thompson Dam property is 1,745 acres owned by the federal government and maintained by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). There is a network of trails throughout the property, with boating and camping opportunities available as well. A well-used disc golf course is located on the east side of the lake, south of the boat launch. The **Orange and Yellow Trails** offer hiking from West Thompson Dam to Fabyan on both side of the lake, including woods and shoreline. Runners, joggers and dog-walkers are regular trail users.



A much-used bridge shortening the Orange Trail loop at Blain Road has been dismantled and is sorely missed. Both the Town and Thompson Trails Committee allotted monies to a redesign of bridge and abutment, provided by a student team from the UConn School of Engineering. USACE has the student plans, and has had them adapted by a licensed engineering firm, to be ready for implementation. In 2018, the Blain Road Bridge was one of a number of sites identified by Congress in Bill S.3021 to receive expedited funding for replacement. At this time, USACE is awaiting confirmation that the funds will be released for construction.



The Orange Trail from Brickyard Road to Red Bridge Road is a moderate hike crossing fields, stone walls, and varied woodland terrain along the west side of the Quinebaug River. Highlights include ridges that overlook a variety of wetland habitats, making the spot suitable for birdwatching and fishing. Maintenance is sporadic.

The **Fisherman's Walk Trail & Fabyan Boat Launch** offers an easy, 1 mile round-trip (about 30 minutes) between the Quinebaug River and an old spillway canal to a grassy glade. Another 1/10 mile hike leads to a view of the river bend. Parking and a hardtop boat launch for canoes and kayaks provides access to the Quinebaug River Water Trail (a National Recreation Trail), a mostly flat-water paddle with a take-out at the boat launch at West Thompson Lake. Seasonal water levels determine navigability. A fishing area is also open across Fabyan Road and above the scenic stone dam where boats coming from the north can take out and portage to the launch below.

11.8 Thompson Trails Committee

Mission Statement : *The Thompson Trails Committee will build, maintain and promote the use of public trails in Thompson, and work to connect Thompson Trails to neighboring communities. We will work with landowners, non-profit organizations and local, state and federal officials.*

The Thompson Trails Committee is a volunteer committee. Voting members are appointed by the Board of Selectmen for an indefinite term. Originally part of Thompson Together, members subsequently voted to become a Town Committee to make them eligible for grants and other funding sources. The Committee receives no direct funds from the Town budget, but benefits from some support of Town personnel to accomplish its goals. The public is welcome to attend Committee meetings.

Additional non-committee volunteers are recruited to do trail work, lead trips, advocate for trails with governmental organizations and volunteer for other trail-related projects. As the Town of Thompson Trails Committee works to maintain and extend the trail system, provide community events and continue legislative advocacy, more citizen involvement is needed "on the ground" with these endeavors and to act as trail stewards maintaining trails and monitoring their condition. The Committee partners with individuals and organizations. Beneficial relationships with CT DEEP, Thompson Department of Public Works, local staff of USACE, and Wyndham Land Trust are essential to good trail stewardship. Committee members are participating in the work of the "12-Town Task Force" focused on the Air Line Trail and the East Coast Greenway, which has designated the Air Line Trail in Thompson as a "Complimentary Route" between the Blackstone River Bike Path in Uxbridge, MA and the Spine Route in Putnam, CT. This designation connects 15 states, 450 cities and towns, and 3,000 miles of people-powered trails from Maine to Florida as the country's longest biking and walking route.

The Trails Committee has organized activities for the public, including hikes, nature and historical walks, horseback rides, and canoe paddles. They have led events for Connecticut Trails Day, and The Last Green Valley's Walktober and Spring Ahead events. They participate in Thompson's Community Day and they act as a partner with CT Trails Census Program, monitoring a user counter situated on the Air Line Trail. They host a fundraiser in November at the West Thompson Lake: the Turkey Trot (a 5K cross-country race) and the Turkey Wobble (a 2.5/5K walk) for teams and individuals. Profits from this fundraiser help to support TEEG and the Thompson Recreation Department as well as Trails projects.

Trail maps have been available at the Thompson Public Library and Town Hall, and are available via links on the Town's website. The Committee hosts social media pages on Facebook and Instagram.

In addition to the published Mission Statement, the Thompson Trails Committee works toward the following goals:

- Acquire, build, maintain and promote the use of public trails in Thompson, and connect trails to neighboring communities.
- Enhance and support quality recreational opportunities for diverse populations, while protecting green spaces and wildlife corridors in an ecologically responsible manner.
- Develop greater tourism and economic opportunities by promoting Town trails.
- Sponsor programs to encourage children & adults to walk outdoors for health & recreation.
- Adopt consistent standards for trail use, signage and parking.
- Partner with CT DEEP, USACE, WLT, The Last Green Valley, CT Trails Census and other organizations with compatible stewardship goals.
- Develop a calendar-based maintenance schedule with DPW.
- Promote the use of Trails within Thompson through special events.
- Support organizations that develop wildlife corridors and promote the preservation of wildlife habitat.
- Extend existing walking and water trails.
- Develop a permanent interpretive historical installation at the Train Wreck site on the Air Line Trail.
- Help develop and ecologically respectful Bull Hill trail system.
- Advise on enhancement of the Town's on-road bicycle routes.

11.9 Challenges for Thompson Trails

- Rehabilitation and maintenance of existing trails
- Recruitment of volunteer trail enthusiasts for events, projects and committee membership
- Insufficiently safe road crossings for trail users
- Motorized vehicle abuse, particularly destructive use by ATV operators
- Social media site maintenance
- Fundraising

11.10 Suggested Action Steps -Trails

An interconnected system of recreation areas, natural and urban trails is an incredible asset for Thompson. Trails are a great way to build health, appreciation for nature, and an overall sense of community. Trails offer those benefits to residents as well as bring in visitors. It is important to continue to build support and communication with neighboring communities to build our trail network. To that end, the following actions are recommended for the Trails Committee:

In progress, or for implementation >1 year

- **Establish an annual review of Trail maintenance needs** with the Department of Public Works.
- **Department of Public Works to install stone dust on Air Line Trail.**
- **Complete preliminary concept designs for Train Wreck Park.** Final report materials to be used in support of grants to CT Humanities, NEA Placemaking and NEH Public Humanities Grants.

- **Establish an annual calendar of volunteer work days**
- **Actively share agendas and invite partnership** with the Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Inland Wetlands Commission and other relevant municipal boards/commissions/committees.

Short Term - Years 1-3

- **Begin construction and activation of Train Wreck Park.** Plan phases according to any grants or assistance program awards received.
- **Secure agreements with abutting property owners for additional access points to the Airline Trail.**
- **Add trail signage and amenities such as benches.**
- **Improve parking at trail access points.**
- **Establish a plan for volunteer recruitment and succession.**
- **Support Cyclocross and “Gravel Grinder” competitions,** Tri-State Hartford Marathon (Ri-Ma-Conn) and other similar long distance events which use the Air Line or other trails in Thompson.
- **Support the development of trails and events for mountain biking and recreational bike use routes** in the Town.
- **Partner with the CT Trails Census to observe trends in trail use and plan future projects** accordingly.

Medium Term - Years 3-5

- **Seek grant funding for Trails equipment and programming enhancements.** Of particular interest is the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP grants).
- **Pursue additional connections between existing trails,** both those in Thompson and those in neighboring towns (ie. Air Line Trail into Putnam, Quinebaug Valley Bike Trail, Quaddick Red Trail to LeClair, Wilsonville Boat Launch)
- **Maintain up-to-date mapping and media links to related organizations**

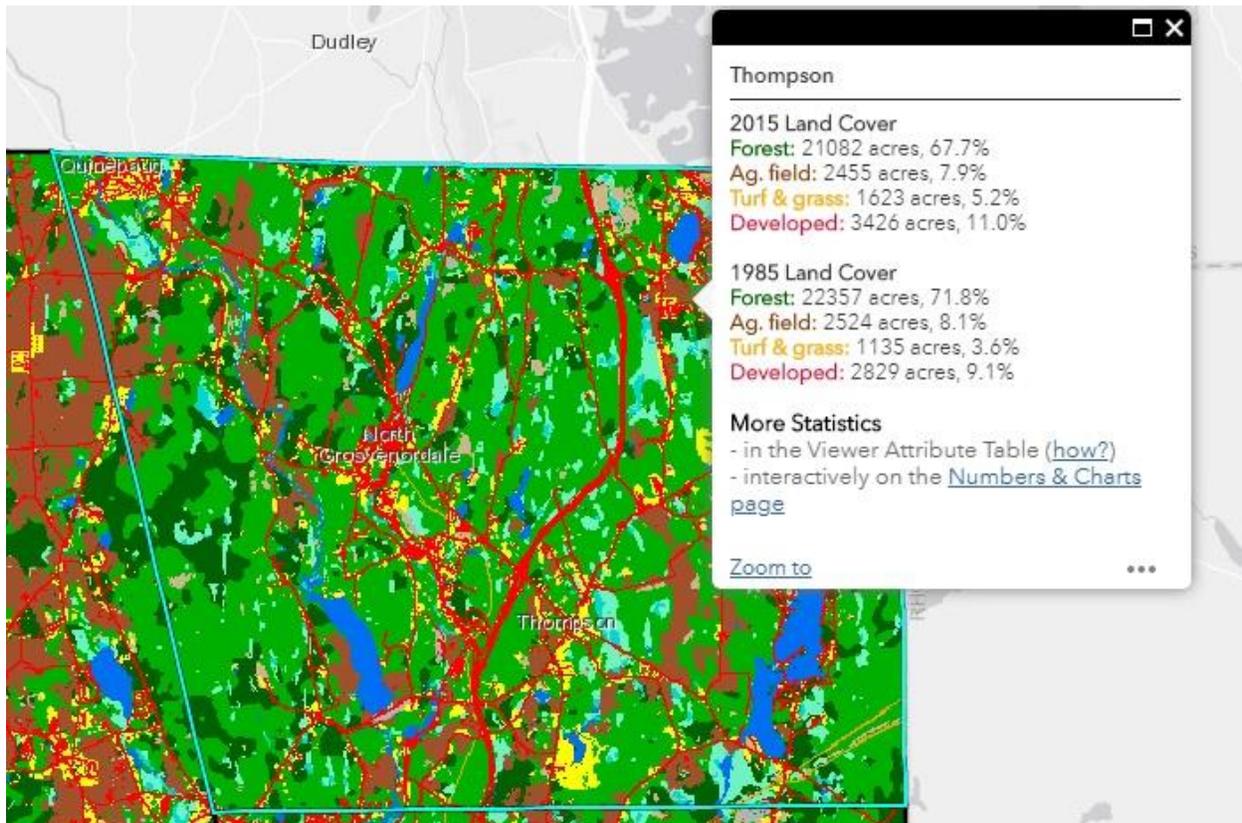
Long Term - Years 5-10

- **Pursue acquisitions of new trail corridors and connectors**
- **Develop partnerships throughout the trail community** to help develop, promote and enhance the trail recreation experience.

Conservation and Open Space

12.1 Overview

The history of the landscape in Connecticut closely mirrors the pattern seen throughout New England: following European colonization, old-growth forests were largely cleared for farm land. Farms, in turn, were frequently crowded out by commercial and residential development. In later stages of economic development for the region, the shift away from a primarily agrarian economy to one built around cities and industrialization had a secondary effect of enabling the more rural communities to experience re-forestation. The image below is excerpted from the [interactive Land Cover maps](#) on the UConn Center for Land-use Education And Research (CLEAR) website:



This visualization shows the composition of Thompson's land cover as of 2015, when the data was compiled. It should be noted that the identified 11% Developed area does not reflect contiguous development. Rather, it represents developed areas that actually cause fragmentation of open space/habitat across the landscape. More than half of all land in the town (67.7%) is shown to be forested²⁵. Darker green on the map indicates coniferous forest, while the lighter green represents the predominant mixed-deciduous forest type. Natural turf and grassland is the least prevalent land cover, at 5.2%. As noted elsewhere on the UConn Clear Site:

²⁵ Presumed to be second- growth forest or younger. There is no known old-growth forest in Thompson.

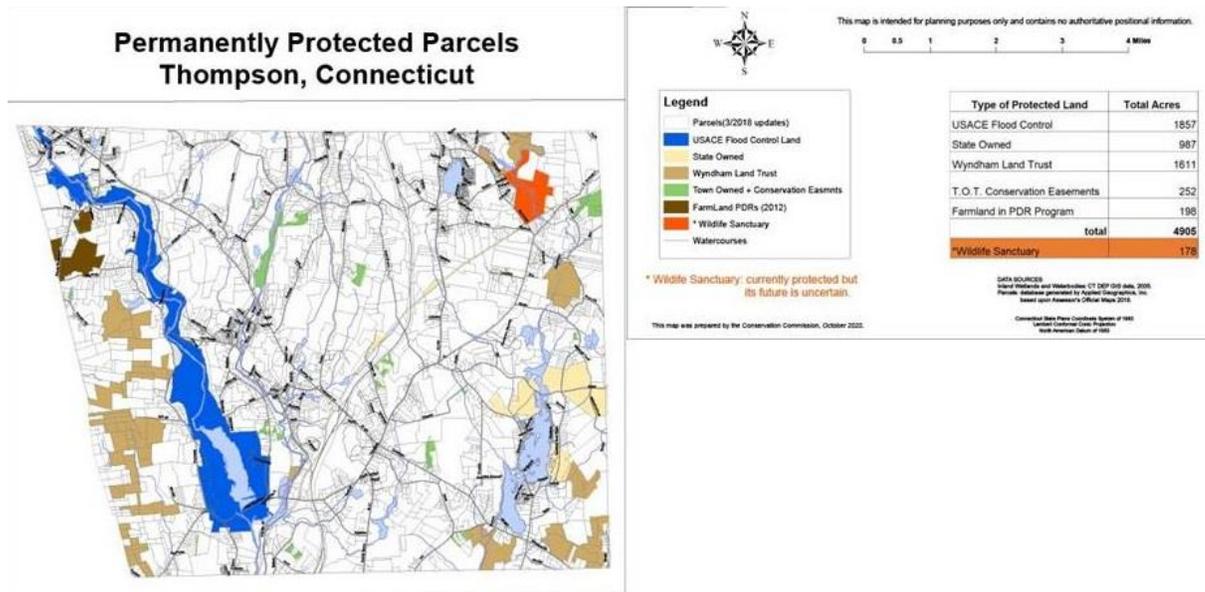
“Grasslands are a vital but diminishing natural resource throughout the northeastern United States. Numerous wildlife species, particularly birds, are dependent on these areas for food, cover or breeding. Animals that can be found in grasslands include bobolink, eastern meadowlark, black racer, horned lark, northern leopard frog, small rodents, turkey, wood turtle and numerous insects.”

Open space provides many benefits for Thompson, regardless of the form in which it occurs. The value of open space is most commonly understood through its relationship to conservation of wildlife habitat and corridors; as such, it is sometimes perceived to be in conflict with economic development. Throughout this document, arguments have been advanced that outdoor recreation assets are well-positioned to be key drivers of Thompson’s future economy. Those assets are dependent upon the quality and integrity of the landscape in which they are found.

Additional known benefits of open space also have salutary relationships with thoughtful development: storm water infiltration and general water quality is improved when natural land covers are preserved or replicated; and “green” covers, particularly tree cover, improve carbon sequestration, thereby slowing the effects of climate change. These functions of the land reduce burdens on the built environment in terms of potential flood damage or heat island effect. It is true that accommodating for these vital roles played by our natural and other open spaces can come into conflict with planned development for human use; however, properly constructed land use regulations strike a balance between these compelling interests.

12.2 Inventory of Dedicated Open Space

A picture is worth a thousand words. The map titled [Permanently Protected Parcels, Thompson, CT](#)²⁶, below, depicts the acreage totals for all categories of protected land.



²⁶ https://www.thompsonconservation.org/downloads/maps/10_2020_All_PermPrctcdLnd.pdf

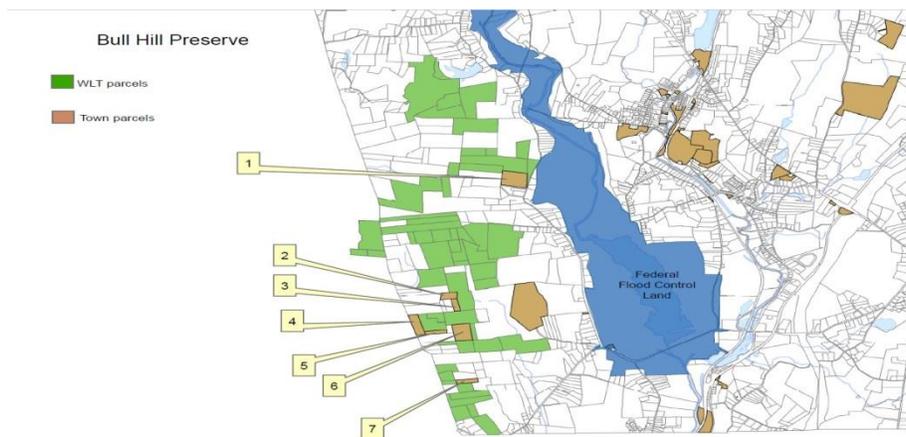
12.3 Commitment to Conservation

An Open Space Study Committee (OSSC) was formed in 2003 with the objective of performing a Natural Resource Inventory and preparing a [Plan of Open Space and Conservation](#)²⁷ that would serve to inform Thompson's land-use decision makers. The committee spent two years completing its mission, and was instrumental in shepherding the split of the previous Conservation & Inland Wetlands Commission into two separate commissions. The separation was approved by the town's legislative authority at Town Meeting in 2005.

July 2005 marks the date that the Thompson Conservation Commission started operating independently from the Inland Wetlands Commission, in order to give the needed attention to conservation activities for the Town. Prior to that date, conservation activities were eclipsed by the quantity of attention the previous combined Conservation & Inland Wetlands Commission had to give to wetlands matters.

As a body dedicated solely to conservation matters, the Commission provides an invaluable service to the Town in its advisory capacity. The Commission provides conservation reviews of land-use applications upon request by town agencies. This is accomplished with a Geographic Information System (GIS) program that is able to overlay various natural resource maps. In its reviews, the commission utilizes the digital natural resource inventory to identify significant features and makes recommendations regarding open space set-asides associated with subdivisions. The objective is to provide vital natural resource information to the land use boards and commissions, so that they can make well informed decisions. The Commission strives to balance growth with conservation.

Wyndham Land Trust (WLT) is an ally to conservation in Thompson. It has acquired and preserves 1,590 acres of undeveloped land in town.



In recent years it has acquired a large amount of acreage in the Bull Hill Area. Most of the land is inaccessible except through trails that link the various parcels. Large undeveloped woodland tracts of this type are most valuable for meeting all of the seasonal needs of large and small mammals, and they are important for interior nesting forest birds. The majority of WLT's holdings in this area are linked, and it is WLT's hope that it will fill the gaps through future acquisitions. The work of the trust in this area enjoys strong support from private abutters. Thompson owns seven

²⁷ https://www.thompsonconservation.org/downloads/documents/Open_space_plan.pdf

land locked parcels in the Bull Hill area that abut WLT properties (shown on the map above), and the Conservation Commission has recommended that the town transfer ownership of those parcels to the WLT. Such a donation would not only assist the WLT in achieving its goals for connecting its parcels, it would move Thompson closer to preservation of a large, unbroken tract of land, enhancing the overall conservation value of the area. Additionally, the Bull Hill highland habitat is adjacent to and complements 1800 acres of diverse river valley habitat, federally protected as flood-control land. In combination, having these various parcels under permanent protection would protect the ecological integrity of a significant portion of Thompson's land cover. This would benefit wildlife, provide increased hiking and other outdoor recreational opportunities for the public, and assure good air quality provided by the extensive tract of forestland.

12.4 Challenges to Conservation

A pressing challenge for Thompson is the balance of growth with conservation, as development pressure grows and available land is utilized for new homes and businesses. Preservation of Thompson's rural character is known to be highly valued by residents. A laissez-faire approach to development will result in a reduced ability to maintain wildlife habitat and bio-diversity, thus degrading many of the qualities that contribute to that prized rural character. Zoning and subdivision regulations, therefore, must support conservation efforts to ensure a future that allows for vibrant human activity alongside a healthy natural ecosystem. In order to prevent detrimental effects of suburban sprawl, such as fragmentation of wildlife corridors, density must be driven toward more developed neighborhood centers. It is possible to promote centralized density without prohibiting development in outlying districts; but ongoing review of land-use regulations for their efficacy in balancing the needs of growth and conservation will be required.

As seen on the maps above showing aggregate land cover and protected open space, while 89% of Thompson is open space, only 17% is permanently protected. A case in point is the 152 acres of land adjacent to North Grosvenordale Pond, at the north end of the Heritage Park River Walk. That parcel, currently undeveloped woodland, is easily accessed by means of a hiking trail through a conservation easement along the west shore of the pond. Residents reminisce about a Boy Scout camp that once stood on the property and many visit Pond Lily, a small picturesque pond that flows into North Grosvenordale Pond. This parcel, despite its local significance, is not protected, and in recent years had been approved for a large subdivision that would have significantly altered the scenic appearance and perceived natural state of the area. The subdivision has since expired, but the property remains vulnerable to development. The Town has some leverage in the form of tax liens against the property, and **using that leverage to preserve the parcel for public use in perpetuity is recommended.**

Preservation of archaeological sites and historic stone walls is a challenge due to lack of regulation at the local level. Currently, the Town employs a negotiating strategy with developers to preserve these sites on a case-by-case basis. **It is recommended that the Town explore means by which preservation standards can be established in local regulatory language, either by Ordinance or in future updates to the Zoning Regulations.**

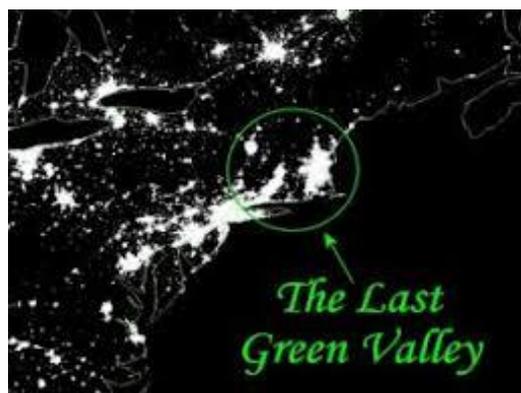
Preservation is similarly needed for Thompson's neglected and orphaned cemeteries, historic treasures in need of major gravestone repairs and maintenance. Thompson Together, Inc. (TT) is a non-profit group that has taken on the task of seeking grants and donations to fund the gravestone repairs. This is a very long-range project, as there are 23 cemeteries, most of which

have no association maintaining them. One Conservation Commission member who is also a member of TT, Norma O'Leary, has spearheaded the town-wide cemetery improvement project. While the Department of Public Works manages to cut the grass in the orphaned cemeteries periodically each year, mowing is infrequent and substantial maintenance needs remain. Norma has enlisted volunteers to assist with cutting overhanging tree branches and brush and removing debris. She also oversees the administration of grants for the gravestone repairs; but, the number of cemeteries and the scale of needed maintenance is a more significant task than can be fully accomplished by a single volunteer leader.

Funding for land acquisition is very low. The town's budget contains an Open Space Fund which barely provides for incidental costs associated with acquisitions. The town has been able to purchase two small land-locked parcels for conservation purposes, but the balance of the fund will only support minor fees associated with land or conservation easement acquisitions. State and federal programs (CT DEEP, CT DoAg, National Resources Conservation Service) exist to preserve open space, but they are highly competitive and typically require some level of matching funds, which places them out of reach for Thompson under the Town's current funding structure. Creating a program that can assist organizations such as land trusts with meeting those matching fund requirements may encourage future land preservation.

The Conservation Commission, like other local volunteer organizations, is challenged in attracting younger residents to get involved in conservation efforts. It is recommended that the Town develop outreach programs to generate interest in the work of the Commission, and in local conservation efforts in general. Partnership with organizations such as The Last Green Valley or the Eastern CT Conservation District may be helpful in developing appealing entry points to conservation advocacy.

Light pollution of the night sky is an environmental concern wherever human activity is concentrated. Detrimental effects of light pollution include the disruption of normal behavior patterns for wildlife, particularly nocturnal animals; excess use of nighttime lighting consumes more energy, thus contributing to higher greenhouse gas emissions; and glare from urbanized areas detracts from the view of the night sky, thus degrading area aesthetics. Negative implications for human health, in terms of destabilization of day/night cycles, have also been posited as a result of light pollution. Thompson is part of The Last Green Valley national heritage area. The satellite image below shows TLGV's dark nighttime corridor. While Thompson's regulations do call for downcast lighting, the public must be educated to encourage implementation of downcast lighting for residential and commercial properties.



The perception of open space should not be confused with land that is permanently conserved or protected. To a casual observer, large parcels covered in lawn grasses may appear to be a lovely, bucolic rural landscape. In reality, residential lawns have very low ecological value, being largely made up of high-maintenance, non-native species with little to no habitat or forage value for wildlife. The preference for lawns as a suburban groundcover option arose as a means to display status (i.e. that the landowner was sufficiently wealthy that he could allow his property to be unproductive); but, particularly where chemical treatments are applied, residential lawns contribute to the decline of many important species. One example of charismatic insect species negatively impacted by the expansion and treatment of suburban lawns is the firefly²⁸. The subject of happy childhood memories for past generations, these insects rely on long meadow grasses, leaf litter and access to water in their habitat to thrive. They are further compromised when chemical pesticides (even those labelled as “safe” or “natural”) indiscriminately kill whatever arthropods are present within the treatment area. This is but one example of how common suburban land-use choices, which may seem innocuous, have hidden negative effects. **It is recommended that the Town publish guides for natural lawns and lawn alternatives on its website**, to help educate its residents about better options to preserve the integrity of Thompson’s ecology.

12.5 Conservation Commission – Roles Responsibilities and Advocacy

The Commission’s role is advisory. Its mission is to inventory and conserve Thompson’s natural and historic resources and open spaces and to serve in an advisory capacity to the Board of Selectmen and other municipal agencies. The Commission advocates the wise use of our natural resources and conservation of priority open space lands. This advocacy involves: advising the Inland Wetlands Commission and the Planning and Zoning Commission regarding the natural resources involved in development proposals before the boards; advising the Board of Selectmen and the land use boards regarding acquisition of priority open space lands and conservation easements; stewardship of the town’s conservation lands; and updating natural resources mapping as new data become available.

12.6 Suggested Action Steps

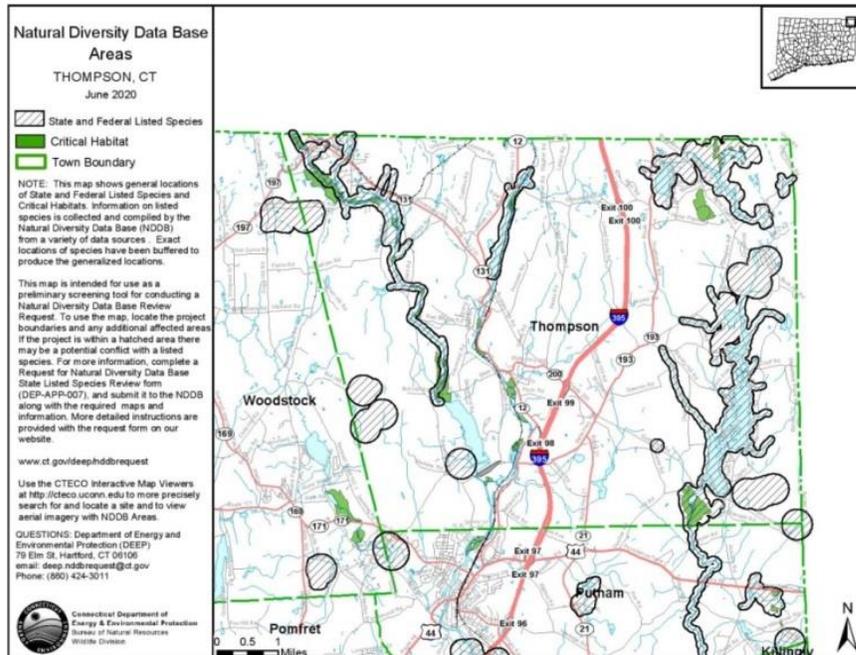
As Thompson continues to grow it must continue to balance that growth with conservation by driving density to the districts best suited for human development, and by preserving/conserving those areas that are vital to our environmental health and welfare. These areas are identified in the Natural Resource Inventory and the aforementioned Plan of Open Space and Conservation. To that end, we recommend the following action steps:

Short Term – Years 1-3

- **Determine the ideal relationship of Thompson’s open space to its developed land**, based on the best available data. Adjust land-use regulations and acquisition strategies accordingly.
- **Increase the percentage of permanently protected parcels in Thompson** to conform to identified priorities. Pursue appropriate conservation easements for private landowners; transfer landlocked town-owned parcels to land conservation organizations where properties are adjacent.
- **Pursue grant funding to enable acquisition of identified parcels for protection.**

²⁸ <https://www.firefly.org/how-you-can-help.html>

- Prioritize particularly threatened land-cover types or known sensitive wildlife habitats.** As shown in the land cover map in Section 12.1, only 1626 acres, or 5.2% of Thompson's landscape is natural turf and grassland. Where publicly owned parcels of this land cover type exist but are not permanently protected, steps to conserve those areas in perpetuity should be urgently undertaken. Where such parcels are privately held, alternate conservation strategies should be pursued by the Town. The [CT DEEP Natural Diversity Database Map for Thompson](#) identifies habitat areas, including critical habitat, for endangered and threatened species, and species of concern. Similar strategies are recommended to permanently protect these areas, and other areas where there is co-occurrence of environmental concerns, where possible.



- Encourage homeowners and businesses to adopt downcast lighting** and reduce or turn off exterior lights during nighttime hours. This is particularly important for businesses with lighted signs, facades and parking lots.

Medium Term - Years 3-5

- Organize regular volunteer workdays to control invasive plant species** such as bittersweet, Japanese knotweed, Japanese barberry, purple loosestrife, Norway maple, multiflora rose and others.
- Cultivate strong relationships with conservation & stewardship organizations** such as the Last Green Valley, Wyndham Land Trust, Eastern CT Conservation District and others, working with these organizations to develop meaningful local conservation and citizen science initiatives.

Long Term - Years 5-10

- Develop engaging educational programs for local residents** to encourage better practices at home: alternatives to lawns, rain gardening, pollinator gardening, “eat the invasives” dinners, etc.

12.7 2022 Amendment to the PoCD Regarding Public Act 490 and Open Space

In the State of Connecticut, Public Act 490 (PA 490) and its related Statutes (CGS 7-131c and 12-107a to 12-107e) enable municipalities to reduce the tax assessment on land that is classified as Farmland, Forest Land or Open Space Land. Recognition of the Farmland and Forest Land Classifications is mandatory for all Connecticut municipalities. Acceptance of the Open Space Classification of PA 490 is left to the discretion of individual towns and requires the completion of certain actions to formalize participation. Neither the reduced tax assessment nor the classification of Open Space afforded by PA 490 is permanent; rather, there is a minimum enrollment period of 10 years during which the designated parcel must remain undeveloped or risk substantial financial penalties. Enrollment runs with the owner, not with the land; therefore, with each change of ownership the classification must be sought again by any new owner.

The first step in the process to adopt the PA 490 Open Space Classification is for the Planning and Zoning Commission to recommend land within the Town for preservation as Open Space within the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development. This amendment to the PoCD is intended to fulfill that requirement.

In considering the areas of Thompson which may be most appropriate for Open Space tax assessment, it is necessary to take into account documentation from June of 1979 which supports the Town's intention at that time to adopt the Open Space Classification. Meeting minutes from the 18 June 1979 meeting of the Thompson Planning Commission²⁹ show the following:

“Discussion of lot size and minimum area for open space, when less than twenty-five acres are involved.

In order to prevent forced sale of land the commission adopts as part of their plan of development for the town a statement which declares those tracts in excess of a given acreage and unbuilt on or undeveloped to be critical to the preservation of the environment in the town. This action will enable those landowners who are not eligible for either the farm or forest use assessment, to be eligible for a lower assessment on their land.

Motion made by Bruce Seger, seconded by Donald Hayes to set the minimum area for open space in the Town of Thompson at 3 acres.

Motion carried.”

While PA 490 is not specifically referenced in the minutes, the language is sufficiently similar to that of CGS 12-107 to indicate that the intention of the Planning Commission was to adopt the Open Space Classification for Thompson; however, the additional requirements for adoption do not appear to have followed. The proper order of action, following approval by the Commission, is for the Board of Selectmen to approve the areas recommended for open space by the Commission; then an Open Space Assessment Ordinance must be written and approved by the Town Meeting. As of January 2022, no such Ordinance is found in any of the Town's records. There is some question as to whether the Statutes at the time required the approval of the BoS and the adoption of the Ordinance, therefore the Assessor has allowed past enrollees to

²⁹ At the time, the Planning Commission and Zoning Commission were separate bodies in the Town of Thompson.

continue their participation in the program. In order to offer enrollment to new applicants going forward, the Town must take steps to be in compliance with the current statutory requirements.

Taking all of the above information into account, the Planning and Zoning Commission for the Town of Thompson therefore makes the following recommendation to the Board of Selectmen:

In order to reduce the financial pressure to sell land and to incentivize the preservation of open space within the Town of Thompson, the Planning and Zoning Commission recommends the adoption of the Open Space Classification of PA 490, with the following criteria:

- Land in all zoning districts of Thompson is eligible for consideration
- The minimum area eligible for classification as Open Space shall be 3 acres of vacant or undeveloped land.
- In the Town of Thompson, the following land types shall be eligible for the Open Space Classification:
 - Land meeting the minimum acreage threshold which is unbuilt and undeveloped.
 - In cases where a parcel includes portions which contain a residential dwelling or commercial building, the 3-acre minimum shall be land in excess of any portion containing such a structure. That portion shall be calculated, at a minimum, as the area of a single building lot within that zone.
- Land set aside under the Open Space requirements for a Subdivision or a Conservation Subdivision shall not be eligible for enrollment in PA 490. Such land is to be preserved permanently as Open Space, as described in the Subdivision Regulations of the Town of Thompson.

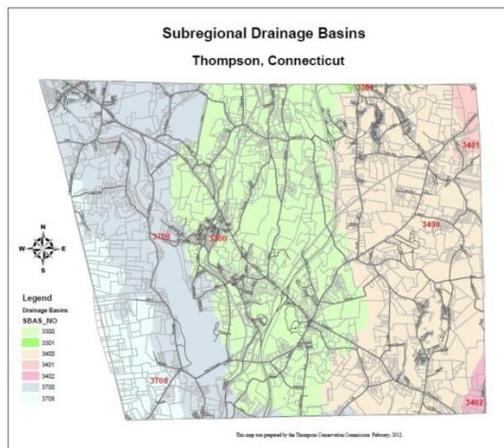
Water Resources

13.1 Overview

This section covers water resource concerns in Thompson including topics on dam safety, flooding and flood management, drinking water supplies, water quality, wetlands and watercourse management.

Water is essential to life. It all begins with rain. After a rainfall, water drains off the surface as stormwater flowing into rivers lakes, streams and wetlands. It supports agriculture, fisheries, wildlife and their habitats and becomes a source of recreation and enjoyment for the public. Some of the rain water is absorbed into the ground. This ground water is then tapped by wells for drinking water and general use by households, agriculture and businesses. Finally, some of the ground water is released slowly over time back to the surface, sustaining flows in wetlands and watercourses between rainfall events. This slowly releasing groundwater is especially important during times of low flow and drought. Although the quantity and quality of the rainfall are outside human control, once the rain has fallen it becomes a resource that human actions can influence. The quality of water resources, both surficial and subsurface, affects the quality of life. The members of the Inland Wetlands Commission and its Wetlands Agent act on behalf of all the people of Thompson as stewards of this vital natural resource as it flows through the Town to connect with regional and global waters.

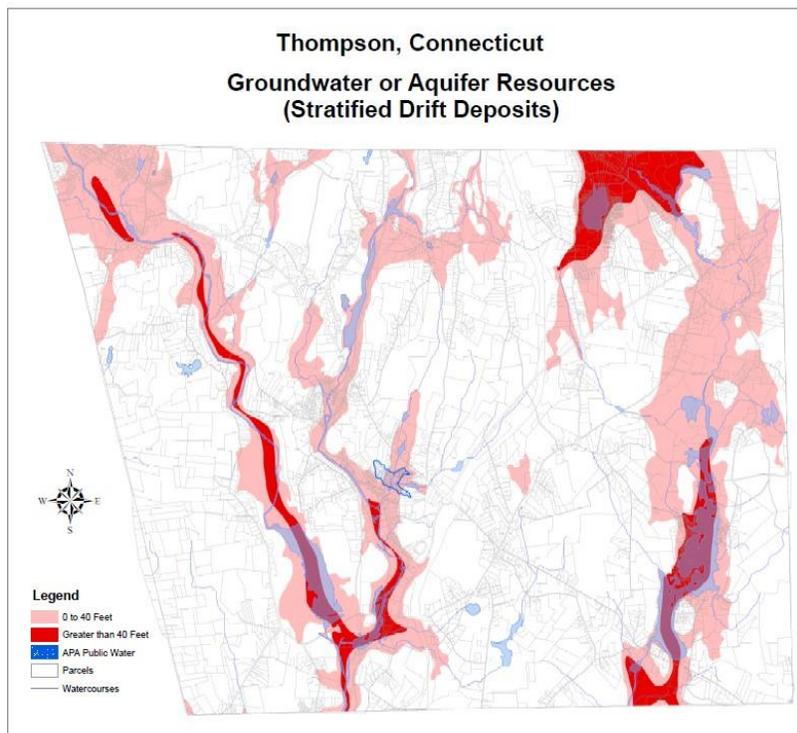
For surface waters, there are three regional watersheds³⁰ containing rivers that flow through Thompson: the Quinebaug River, the French River and the Five Mile River. Both the Quinebaug River and the French River headwaters are located in Massachusetts. The Five Mile River headwaters are located in Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Thompson. The French River joins the Quinebaug River just below the Mechanicsville hydroelectric dam and then flows down to Putnam. These arterial watercourses are influenced by flows coming from stormwater runoff and the smaller watercourses in Thompson, which are in turn influenced by the wetlands contained within the watersheds of these watercourses. The DEEP has broken down into the regional watersheds into subregional watersheds and for identification purposes assigned a numeric label to each subregional watershed.



Map of Subregional Drainage Basins for the Quinebaug River (shaded blue), French River (shaded green) and Five Mile River (shaded pink).

³⁰ A watershed is an area of land that drains all the streams and rainfall to a common outlet such as the outflow of a reservoir, mouth of a bay, or any point along a stream channel.

With respect to subsurface waters, the geology of Thompson has limited resources for public water supply³¹. Most of Thompson is underlain by bedrock of granitic schists and gneisses³². There are some areas where the surficial geology has areas of glacial deposits of sand and gravel (see Figure 13.2). Yields from wells for water supply will be dependent upon the underlying rock formation and the depth of the surficial glacial sand and gravel deposits. Thompson has one Level A Aquifer Protection Area containing two wells operated by the Connecticut Water Company, situated adjacent to Stoud Brook and supplying water to North Grosvenordale. There are three other community public water supply wells, along with a number of non-community public water supply systems supported by wells. Most of Thompson's residents, however, rely on private bedrock wells. A few shallow, hand-dug wells may still be in operation, as well.



Map of Stratified Drift Deposits and Level A Aquifer Protection Area

In recent years, concerns have been raised about how climate change will modify rainfall distribution, causing floods and droughts over time. Further, in the past ten years an expanding beaver population has impacted Thompson's water resources, sometimes causing undesirable flooding of low land; and, alternatively, sometimes providing desirable flood storage, enhancing wildlife habitat and improving ground water recharge. These changes to the natural world are beyond the Town's control, and it is still unclear what the weather changes will be locally; however, how Thompson handles its development and the conservation of open space will influence what effect climate and weather changes have on the water resources and therefore the quality of life in Thompson. The management of Thompson's water resources lies primarily in the actions of the Inland Wetlands Commission and the Planning and Zoning Commission, in concert with actions by the Public Works Department, the Building Official, the Northeast District Department of Health (NDDH), the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) and the

³¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aquifer> for a general definition of "aquifer."

³² <http://70.91.221.154/geology/bedrock/bedrock.htm>

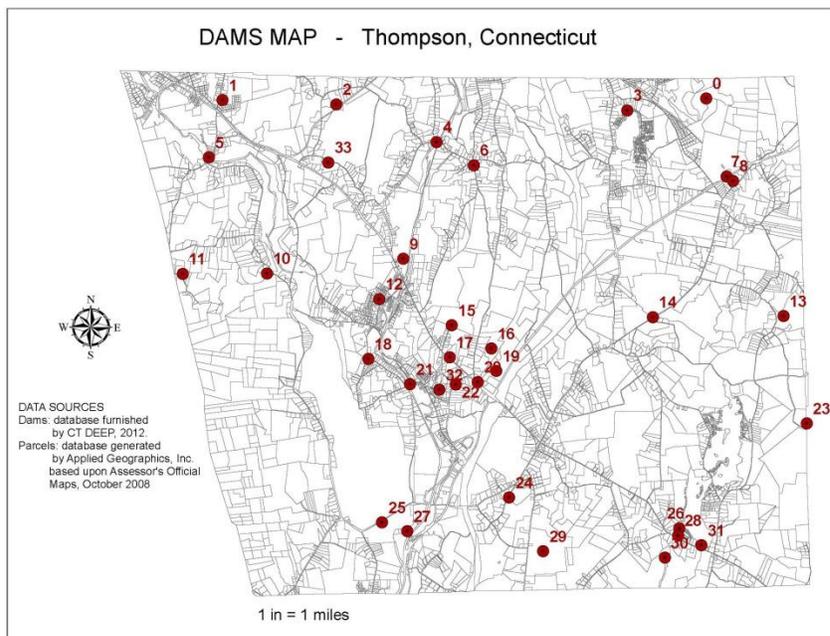
Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP). It is important that Thompson manages its water resources with a conservation ethos, to protect the future quality of life to the greatest extent possible.

13.2 Dams & Flood Management

Historically, the main stems of the Quinebaug River, the French River and the Five Mile River were impacted by the construction of dams for hydropower in the early to mid-1800s. Of those hydropower dams, two still operate functional hydroelectric facilities: one on the French River at the Mechanicsville Dam and another located on the Five Mile River, immediately downstream from the Quaddick Reservoir Dam.

The use of hydropower began to wane in the early to mid-1900s, leaving behind some dams that were no longer feasible to maintain once the financial resources of the mills were lost. Over time these dams deteriorated, requiring inspection and maintenance to prevent failure and resulting flood damage. Depending on the resources of their owners, these dams have either been maintained in a safe condition, exist with safety concerns or have been removed or destroyed.

Of the roughly 30 dams in Thompson (see below), three are classified as high hazard: West Thompson Flood Control Dam on the Quinebaug River, owned and maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; North Grosvenordale Dam on the French River, privately owned by a limited liability corporation; and Quaddick Reservoir Dam & Dike on the Fiver Mile River, owned by CT DEEP. The only other dam of significant hazard is the Mechanicsville Dam on the French River, which supports an active hydroelectric power plant. The remaining dams classified as either moderate or low hazard and are scattered through Thompson. Thompson owns and is responsible for the inspection and maintenance of Langers Pond Dam, a moderate hazard dam, located in Wilsonville on the French River.



Map of DEEP Identified Dams

Dam #	DEEP #	Hazard Class	Dam Name
0	14127	-	LONG POND DAM (no dam)
1	14117	A	WALKER DAM
2	14130	A	OLEKSIK POND DAM
3	14126	-	LITTLE POND DAM (no dam)
4	14106	BB	LANGERS POND DAM
5	14125	A	FABYAN POND DAM
6	14122	BB	WELCH POND DAM
7	14116	?	MAVIS POND DAM #2
8	14110	BB	MAVIS POND DAM #1
9	14103	C	NORTH GROSVENORDALE DAM
10	14118	A	AUGER POND DAM
11	14128	?	COMAN POND DAM
12	14109	B	PHELPS POND DAM
13	14114	BB	WHITMANS POND DAM & DIKE
14	14111	BB	DOUGLAS ROAD POND DAM
15	14121	A	SPORTSMANS POND DAM
16	14115	BB	BAPTIST BROOK POND DAM
17	14112	A	THOMPSON WATER DAM #2
18	14132	A	KRAWIEC POND DAM
19	14113	BB	CODERRE POND DAM
20	14120	A	WARE POND DAM
21	14108	BB	BELDEN DAM
22	14107	?	THOMPSON WATER COMPANY POND DAM
23	14105	BB	WAKEFIELD POND DAM
24	14124	A	DUCK POND DAM
25	14101	C	WEST THOMPSON FLOOD CONTROL DAM
26	14104	C	QUADDICK RESERVOIR DAM
27	14102	B	MECHANICSVILLE POND DAM
28	14131	?	RAWSONS POND DAM
29	14123	BB	REAMS POND DAM
30	14129	?	LOWER POND DAM
31	14134	C	QUADDICK RESERVOIR DIKE
32	14119	A	MASONVILLE POND DAM
33	14133	?	JERZESKIA ROAD POND DAM
	14135	A	TRI-STATE BAPTIST POND DAM

Listing of DEEP Identified Dams circa 2012

The following concerns are identified for Thompson's dams:

- The North Grosvenordale Dam is in poor condition, is privately owned and is under scrutiny by the DEEP.
- The condition of Langers Pond Dam is under investigation, following an inspection that was required by the DEEP in 2018.
- When considering development downstream from a dam there can be a failure to consider potential impact of the dam's failure causing a change in its hazard classification.
- Thompson's Emergency Operations Plan needs to include emergency operation information for dams identified by DEEP as significant hazard and high hazard.

In 1936 and again in 1955 major flood events occurred that devastated the main stems of the Quinebaug River, French River and Five Mile River, with significant damage to homes, businesses, roads, bridges and dams. Following the flood of 1955 the US Army Corps of Engineers built the West Thompson Lake Dam (1965) on the Quinebaug River for flood control, along with four other flood control dams in Massachusetts: in the Quinebaug River watershed the East Brimfield Lake (1960) in Brimfield and Westville Lake Dam (1962) in Southbridge; in the French River watershed the Buffumville Lake Dam in Charlton (1958) and Hodges Village Dam (1959) in Oxford in the French River watershed. Downstream flooding is controlled and minimized by modifying the release of floodwaters from these dams.

In 1984 the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) published a flood study and the mapping for many flood prone areas in Thompson to set standards for development in these areas and establish a federal flood insurance program. As part of this program the town was required to establish a flood protection ordinance that set standards and procedures for development in the identified flood prone areas³³. While technically administered by the Building Inspector, the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Inland Wetlands Commission have direct influence on ensuring the FEMA standards are met. As of 2020, FEMA is investigating changes to Thompson's flood study. Modifications are expected including the digitization of flood prone area maps which can then be integrated into existing GIS mapping platforms such as the MapGeo parcel map on Thompson's website. **Once digitized FEMA mapping is available for integration into the GIS platform, Thompson should be updating its flood prevention ordinance to the current standards set by FEMA.**

13.3 Drinking Water Supply in Thompson

Throughout Thompson there are numerous public water systems that serve communities and local businesses. According to 2003 report by the Connecticut Department of Public Health entitled "Connecticut's Drinking Water Source Protection Strategies: A key Issues Forum for the 21st Century" there are four community public water supply systems in Thompson:

- Connecticut Water Company well field located off of Stoud Brook near the former Masonville Pond Dam providing water to North Grosvenordale
- Quinebaug Mobile Home Park well in Quinebaug
- Briere Community Supply located near the intersection of Route 193 & Route 21
- Marianapolis School water supply system located on the Marianapolis School property.

Additionally, there were 27 non-community public water supply wells that have serviced local businesses, many of which are still in operation.

³³ see Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance as amended to 1988

<u>Non-Community Public Water Well</u>	
Name	Location
Johnson Corrugate Products Co Well	720 Thompson Rd
Numa Tool Co Inc Well	646 Thompson Rd
Ivanhoe Tool & Die Co, Inc Well	590 Thompson Rd
East Thompson Fire Dept Well	East Thompson Rd
Four Corners Pub Well	142 Old Turnpike Rd
Koinonia School of Sports Well	240 County Home Rd
Lido Restaurant Well	773 Quinebaug Rd
Quaddick Pond State Park Well	Quaddick Town Farm Rd
Quinebaug Park Well	111 Old Turnpike Rd
Quinnatisett Country Club Well	221 County Home Rd
Thompson F D & Masonic Temple Well	Rte 131
Thompson Rod & Gun Club Well	Brandy Hill Rd
Sacred Heart Church Well	15 Sacred Heart Dr
St. Stephen Church & Parish Well	Jct Route 131 & Route 197
Bible Fellowship Church Well	400 Quinebaug Rd
Thompson House of Pizza Well	1139 Riverside Dr
Thompson Speedway & Raceway Restaurant Well	205 East Thompson Rd
Thornfield Hall Well	61 Bibeault St (Rte 200)
Valley Springs Sportsman Club Well	65 Valley Rd
West Thompson Lake Campground Well	Reardon Rd
Thompson Congregational Church & Daycare Well # 1	347 Thompson Rd (Rte 193 & 200)
White Horse at Vernon Stiles Inn Well	351 Thompson Hill Rd (Rte 193)
Jasons Restaurant Well	224 Riverside Dr
G7 Caterers Well #1	139 Riverside Dr
Lord Thompson Manor Well #1	236 Thompson Hill Rd
Rollies Variety Well #1	1213 Thompson Rd
Quaddick State Park / Youth Well	Quaddick Farm

These public water supplies are regulated by the CT Department of Public Health and the NDDH. While Marianapolis operates 2 of the community public water supply systems, these systems do not extend to the remainder of the Thompson Hill area. There are also several non-community public water supply systems in the Thompson Hill area. Note that Thompson Hill area is underlain by a bedrock of granitic schists and gneisses with a limit over burden of glacial till.

The following are identified concerns regarding Thompson’s drinking water supply:

- Expansion of sanitary sewer mains into the Thompson Hill area may adversely affect ground water availability by the removal of ground water from the Thompson Hill area via sanitary sewers.
- In 2020 issues were raised by the Connecticut Water Company regarding the increase of sodium in its wells adjacent to Stoud Brook and the potential for salt contamination from

the Thompson Public Works salt storage facility located at the Public Works Garage about ½ mile upstream south of Buckley Hill Road and next to Stoud Brook.

13.4 Water Quality

Historically, from the start of the industrial era in the 1800s until the mid-1900th Century watercourses were disposal sites for untreated wastes from industrial processes and sewerage from homes and businesses. The result was polluted waterways that could not support fish and wildlife as well as the accumulation of hazardous wastes in the impoundments created by the dams used for hydropower. During the floods of 1936 and 1955, many of the industries associated with the hydropower dams were damaged and subsequently ceased to operate.

The 1930s saw the subdivision of land for development of seasonal cottages on small lots and private roads around Little Pond and Quaddick Reservoir. Since then, as these lake communities developed, the cottages have been and converted to year-round homes with lawns. Neither neighborhood is served by public water or sanitary sewers. These changes in land use around these water bodies may accelerate eutrophication³⁴.

In the mid- to late-1960s during the rise of the environmental movement, laws were passed in Connecticut that began to regulate the discharge of contaminants to surface and ground waters. This was followed at the national level by the passage of the Federal Clean Water Act. Created in 1971, CT DEEP was charged to administer many of these laws at both the state and federal level. CT DEEP established and maintains water quality standards for both surface and subsurface waters which are used in the permitting of discharges to waters of the state.

To stop the discharge of raw sewage into the French River the Thompson, Wastewater Treatment Plant (WTP) was built and opened in 1972, servicing a large portion of the developed areas along the French River in North Grosvenordale. Much of the service area for the WTP was supported by a pre-existing public water supply system dependent on wells located in the French River watershed.

In 1994 Thompson entered into a consent order with CT DEEP (Order No. WC5129) to address water pollution concerns generated at Marianapolis Preparatory School and concerns of septic system failures at some of the nearby residences in the Thompson Hill area. In response, Thompson developed a plan to install a sewer line from Thompson Hill, down Route 193 to an existing main sewer line on Route 12. After some opposition, the Town reduced the scope of work and modified its plan to construct a sewer line from the Marianapolis Preparatory School to a sewer line located on Riverside Drive (Rte 12) with the option of extending the sewers in the future to other parts of Thompson Hill. In 2013 Thompson applied for and was granted Inland Wetlands Permit IWA13018 to construct the sewer line from Marianapolis through undeveloped lands and under the I-395 Exit ramps for Riverside Drive. However, efforts to complete the connection stalled due to construction problems associated with horizontal boring under the I-395 on-off ramps to Riverside Drive and as of the date of this Plan the matter is in litigation. As a result, Consent Order No. WC5129 remains outstanding.

³⁴ Eutrophication means excessive richness of nutrients in a lake or other body of water, frequently due to runoff from the land, which causes a dense growth of plant life and death of animal life from lack of oxygen **OR** the process by which a body of water becomes enriched in dissolved nutrients (such as phosphates) that stimulate the growth of aquatic plant life usually resulting in the depletion of dissolved oxygen

By 2004 after addressing most industrial discharges, DEEP issued a general permit for the discharge of stormwater from small municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4 Permit). Thompson is registered for coverage under the MS4 Permit. Some of the requirements of that permit involve developing a stormwater management plan that includes mapping and studying conditions in the town's storm sewer system, performing analysis of discharges from that system looking for water pollution and when found to be contaminated tracking down and eliminating any illicit discharges to that system. The Public Works Department has a major responsibility for the actions required by the MS4 Permit.

As a registrant under the MS4 Permit the Town is required to include low impact development (LID) in its subdivision and zoning regulations. LID is a design strategy that maintains mimics or replicates pre-development hydrology through the use of numerous site design principles and small-scale treatment practices distributed throughout a development site to manage runoff volume and water quality at the source. The Thompson Zoning Regulations stipulate that prospective developers must include LID measures on all application requiring site plan preview by the Planning and Zoning Commission. In 2020 revisions to the Zoning Regulations Appendix B provide a LID checklist to help developers focus on this important aspect of site design. It is vital that the PZC establish the habit of looking for that completed checklist with all relevant applications. As of the adoption of this PoCD, the Subdivision Regulation are awaiting revisions, to include provision for the LID requirements of the MS4 Permit.

Currently, water quality is monitored and regulated by CT DEEP and by NDDH in collaboration with the Connecticut Department of Public Health (primarily drinking water and subsurface sewage disposal). Under the Federal Clean Water Act, every two years CT DEEP issues the Integrated Water Quality Report on the status of surface waters in the state, identifying those waterbodies that fail to meet established standards and are designated as impaired requiring special attention. Changes in water quality status are to be incorporated into the stormwater management plan required by the MS4 permit. As noted in Section 4.1, Thompson has struggled to meet the requirement of the MS4 permit and repeatedly has had non-compliance issues.

13.5 Inland Wetlands and Watercourses & Their Regulation

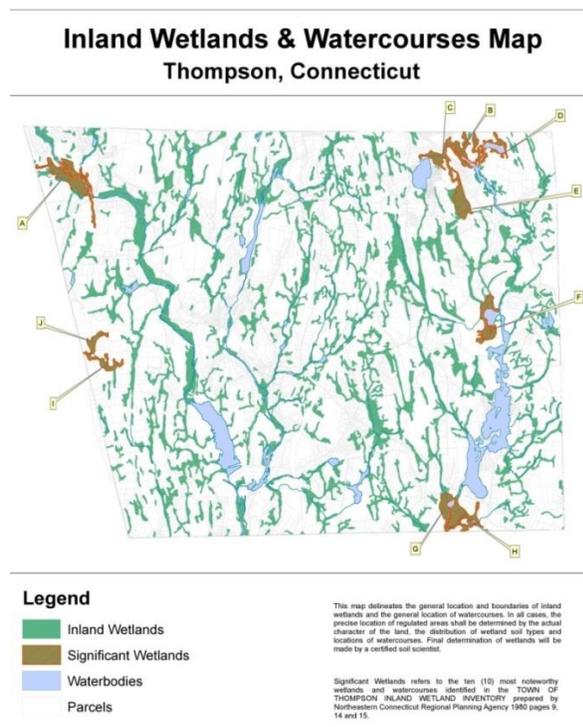
Thompson's wetlands and watercourses are the Town's most visible water resources and their regulation affects all aspects of Thompson's water resources. There are many wetlands in Thompson associated with a direct or indirect connection to the arterial watercourse and their tributaries. They create an interrelated web in the natural system essential to an adequate supply of surface water and underground water, contributing to hydrologic stability; providing flood storage; reducing soil erosion potential; and recharging and purifying ground water. The Town's wetlands and watercourses are critical to the survival of many forms of animal and plant life.

Beginning in 1974, under state statute and town ordinance, wetlands and watercourses were defined and regulated by the Conservation Commission. In 2005, Town Ordinance 10-011B enabled the formation of Inland Wetlands Commission, who then took over those responsibilities. The Inland Wetlands Commission consists of volunteer Thompson residents, appointed by the Board of Selectmen to render decisions on permit applications that affect wetlands and watercourses. The part-time Wetlands Agent acts as advisory staff to that Commission.

By state statute, inland wetlands are defined by soil characteristics. Wetland soils include poorly drained and very poorly drained soils, and also include alluvial and floodplain soils. For the most part, wetland soils formed under conditions of saturation, flooding or ponding long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper part. The general location of all soils were mapped and subsequently published in the “Soil Survey of Windham County Connecticut” issued December 1981 by the Soil Conservation Service (now known as the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service or NRCS). The data contained in this publication was the basis of identifying the location of inland wetlands (see Figure 13.4, below). From this published data it has been estimated that 20% of the town is classified as wetland soils.

In 1980, using the data available from the NRCS the mapped wetland soils were inventoried and classified. The classes of wetlands in Thompson are: forested wetlands - deciduous, coniferous and mixed; shrub swamps; deep marshes; herbaceous wetlands; and wet meadows, which are mostly found in agricultural fields. Forested wetlands are the most abundant type in town, and deep marshes and herbaceous wetlands are the least abundant. It is important to emphasize extra protection for those types of wetlands that are rare; they are also fragile. It is the rare habitats that contribute greatly to the variety of species we see in town. Thompson is home to a few Atlantic White Cedar Swamps. These cedar swamps are a threatened plant community according to scientists Ken J. Metzler and D. L. Wagner, 1998. The largest one in Thompson is now protected by the Nature Conservancy and Wyndham Land Trust³⁵.

10 areas of wetlands soils were classified as “significant wetlands” due to a combination of Uniqueness, Size and Hydrology (indicated by **U, S, H**, in the entries below). The map is particularly useful when considering co-occurring areas of high value for permanent protection along conservation lines, as referenced in **Section 12**.



- A: 155.4 acres of Deciduous Wooded Swamp. S, H**
 - B: 48.4 acres of Deep Marsh, known locally as Jerry's Swamp. U, S, H.**
 - C: 37.9 acres of Shrub Swamp. U, H.**
 - D: 41.4 acres of combined Shrub Swamp and Deep Marsh. U, H.**
 - E: 70.6 acres of Mixed Wooded Swamp. S, H.**
 - F: 66.1 acres of Shrub Swamp. U, S, H.**
 - G: 66.6 acres of Shrub Swamp. U, S, H.**
 - H: 65.1 acres of Deciduous Wooded Swamp. S, H.**
- Areas B-H are associated with the Five Mile River watershed, which has its headwaters at Little Pond. As of 2010, the Five Mile River is a designated Connecticut Greenway.**
- I: 27.2 acres of Herbaceous Wetland. U, S, H.**
 - J: 57.3 acres of Coniferous Wooded Swamp¹. U, S, H.**

³⁵ The Wyndham Land Trust is currently the sole owner of this property.

While the general locations of inland wetlands soils were mapped by NRCS it is the actual character of the land as delineated by a qualified soil scientist that determines if the land in question is subject to regulation as a wetland. Given the passage of time and environmental changes caused by beavers and development, the 1980 inventory of wetlands may no longer accurately reflect conditions. An update to that inventory would therefore be appropriate.

Watercourses are defined as including rivers, streams, brooks, waterways, lakes, ponds, marshes, swamps, bogs and all other bodies of water, natural or artificial, vernal or intermittent, public or private that flow through or are contained with the town of Thompson. In many locations the definition of wetlands and watercourses overlap.

In addition to the value wetlands and watercourses provide to wildlife, healthy wetland soils and hydrology are critical to the proper infiltration of stormwater. Without intact natural systems, or measures to replicate them, communities become vulnerable to flooding, erosion and degraded water quality.

Describing priorities for the conservation of Thompson's wetlands and watercourses is an important component of this PoCD. Wetlands provide a number of important environmental benefits:

- Wetlands are areas of groundwater discharge and may be areas of groundwater recharge. This is a critical function in communities like Thompson where the majority of residents rely on private wells for drinking water.
- Wetlands help slow and provide storage for flood waters and filter contaminants.
- Wetlands and watercourses often form wildlife corridors and provide critical habitat to many plant and animal species.
- Wetlands and watercourses enhance the aesthetic quality of Thompson's rural character. This latter has been repeatedly referenced in this document as a priority for local residents, therefore the conservation of the integrity of Thompson's inland wetlands must also be given prominent attention.

The protection and preservation of Thompson's wetlands is a key component of being a Green and Growing Community. Wetlands and watercourses form the backbone of many green spaces in Thompson. The three arterial rivers that flow through Thompson, with their associated wetlands and floodplains, form scenic greenbelts that enhance the rural character of the community. They provide habitat for wildlife and opportunities for outdoor recreation, not only for residents, but for visitors as well.

Increased human activity inevitably results in some commensurate increase in pollutants. Agricultural activity is often associated with elevated levels of nitrogen from fertilizers, whether chemical or organic in nature; and animal manures from livestock can also carry residues from pharmaceuticals. More urbanized areas with high percentages of impermeable surfaces allow stormwater to travel along pavement, picking up sediment, chemicals and litter. Riparian Buffers, the vegetated areas adjacent to streams and wetlands, play an important role in the filtration of pollutants from stormwater runoff.

13.6 Suggested Action Steps

In progress, or for implementation >1 year

- **Develop a mitigation plan for Langers Pond Dam**, to ensure its safe condition in accordance with DEEP's inspection, repair and maintenance requirements.
- **Ensure revisions to the subdivision regulations meet the requirements of the MS4 permit** including but not limited to:
 - Reduction of effective impervious cover in the MS4 urban areas
 - Prioritize the utilization of green infrastructure/low impact development (GI/LID) practices to reduce stormwater runoff in high impervious cover areas to reduce stormwater volume and protect water quality and protect / preserve high quality tributaries and undeveloped headwater areas from existing pollutant sources and future threats related to new development. Through the use of community practices such as open space preservation, conservation easements, and GI/LID.
- **Research the potential impact of the existing salt storage facility located at the Public Works Garage** and provide adequate resources to address any anticipated adverse impacts to potential ground water contamination.

Short Term - Years 1-3

- **Include emergency operation information for all dams identified by DEEP as significant hazard and high hazard in Thompson's Emergency Operation Plan.**

Medium Term - Years 3-5

- Provide resources to **re-inventory Thompson's wetlands and watercourses to reflect current conditions** based on new information and assessment tools available.

Long Term - Years 5-10

- **Provide adequate funding to complete the work required by DEEP Consent Order No. WC5129.**
- Before any expansion of sanitary sewers beyond the Marianapolis Preparatory School is planned **perform a study of ground water availability**, anticipated infiltration and yield rates and associated water losses generated by sanitary sewer discharges and reduced recycling via existing septic systems.
- **Update the flood prevention ordinance** to current standards set by FEMA, as soon as FEMA's updated mapping of flood prone areas is available in GIS form.
- **Provide adequate funding to Public Works Department to perform actions required by the MS4 permit.**
- Through adequate staffing of the Public Works Department **develop a monitoring system for complying with the MS4 permit** - consider adding a layer for MS4 data in the MapGeo GIS application.
- For Little Pond and Quaddick Reservoir, **develop and provide advice to homeowners on property management techniques that minimize the import of nutrients into those waterbodies.**

Education

14.1 Education in Thompson: A Historical Foundation

Thompson's history of support for public education dates back to the Colonial period. As early as 1735, parish schools provided for the academic needs of the Town's children. During that era, the conventions for public education were quite different than they are today; but, as a general rule, children would be educated in reading, writing and arithmetic through the equivalent of today's sixth grade. After that, the value of a child's labor to his or her family outweighed that of continued education in all but the most affluent families. The community is forever indebted to Dr. Jacob Francis Tourtellotte and his wife, Mrs. Harriett Arnold Tourtellotte, for providing the town with a free, state-of-the-art secondary educational facility. It was Mrs. Tourtellotte who was moved to build the school which now carries their family name, when she witnessed girls going to work in the local mills instead of attending school. The impressive architecture of the original Tourtellotte Memorial High School still stands proudly on the top of the highest point in North Grosvenordale. Having outgrown its original purpose, the building now houses the administrative offices for the school district, serving as a longstanding reminder to Thompson of the importance of educating their youth. Thompson Public Schools are uniquely situated on a single, unified school campus in the center of North Grosvenordale, anchored by the 1909 high school building. The school system consists of three schools: Tourtellotte Memorial High School (located in an updated building since 2008), Thompson Middle School, and Mary R. Fisher Elementary School.

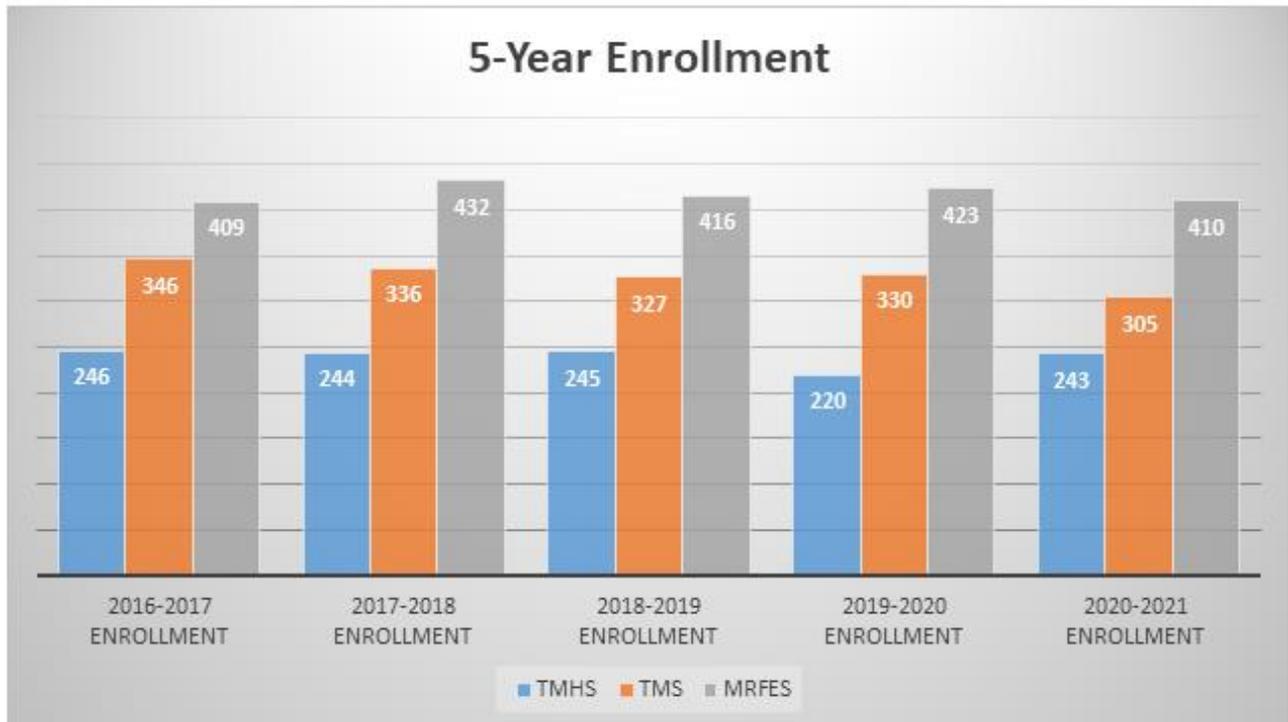
The Tourtellottes also left behind an extraordinary museum filled with artifacts that memorialized their lives, housed at the historic school building. The seven-member Tourtellotte Trust manages and maintains the building in compliance with the wishes of the family, along with the former Superintendent's residence at 65 Main Street. Jacob and Harriett had the foresight to set aside funds, carefully invested over time, to support the academic and enrichment curricula, and to keep the property and the museum in pristine condition for the benefit of the citizens of Thompson. In addition to the Tourtellotte Museum room, the 1909 building houses Ryscavage Auditorium, a proscenium stage and gallery that retains much of its original detail. Two more museum rooms preserving Thompson's history have also been installed within the building: an archive collection of railroad memorabilia; and a reproduction of the interior of Kenny's general store, which once stood in the village of Mechanicsville. These unique collections are a hidden gem in the region, deserving much wider exposure beyond Thompson.

The Town is also the home of a highly regarded private high school. Marianapolis Preparatory School, located in the historic Thompson Common Village District, is a vibrant and energetic community of roughly 400 students from 56 area towns, numerous states around the U.S., and over 20 nations. The student-to-teacher ratio at Marianapolis is 7:1, with an average class size of 12. The school offers many honors classes, 20 Advanced Placement courses, and over 100 electives. Due to its location on Thompson Hill, students at Marianapolis have limited ability to get out into the community during their off time. There are no casual "third place" gathering spots like cafes, bookshops or public recreation facilities for students to socialize outside classtime. As a result, attendees of Marianapolis may have little sense of being a part of Thompson. It would be beneficial for the Town, and for the students of both the private and the public high schools, for those students to be more fully integrated into the fabric of the community. It is recommended that the administrations of those schools explore opportunities for social and civic interactions for their respective student bodies.

Homeschoolers account for roughly 20-25 households with school-age children. These families are a small minority within the education landscape of Thompson; but, there is some anecdotal evidence that this may be a growing segment within the community. As such, the role of homeschoolers within Thompson’s education landscape deserves some consideration over the coming years.

14.2 Student Body Demographics & Economics

Enrollment as of October 1, 2020, is a total of 958 students attending Thompson Public Schools. While this does represent a decrease of roughly 28% since the 2009-2010 academic year (1,324 students³⁶) the district’s five-year data trend indicates that enrollment numbers have stabilized.



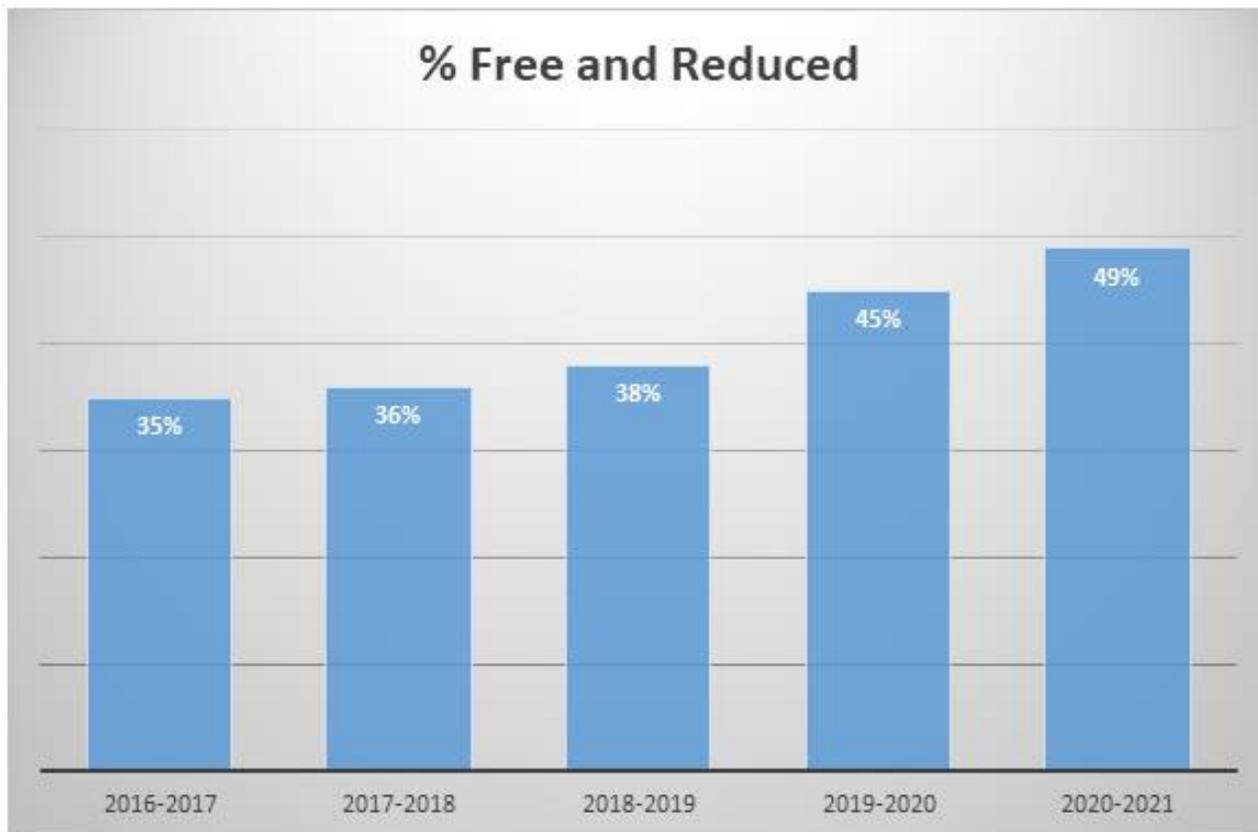
It is not yet fully understood how the events of the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020-2021 academic year may have influenced rates of enrollment. The public high school typically sees an attrition rate of between 26-30% from the middle school, primarily driven by rising freshmen opting into either the Ellis Tech or Killingly Vocational-Agricultural programs. During the 2020-21 academic year, that attrition rate was reduced to 20%. It is speculated that the shift to distance learning during the pandemic may have made it more practical for local families to continue their education under the umbrella of the Thompson system.

The profile of the student population has been slowly changing and becoming more diverse as new families join the schools:

³⁶ [Thompson Public School District Report card 2009-2010](#)

Student Population	Percent of Total Population
Asian	.0%
Black/African American	.82%
Caucasian	86.42%
Latinx	8.64%
Native American/Islander	.41%
Other/Mixed	3.71%

Poverty rates have steadily increased over the last five years, as indicated by the district's free and reduced lunch data. To be eligible for federal meal programs, a family of four must have a combined income at or below \$34,060. More than half of the students at Mary R Fisher Elementary School meet the criteria for free breakfast and lunch.



14.3 Board of Education: Roles, Responsibilities & Advocacy

The members of the Thompson Board of Education are committed to an educational program that will enable children to develop the skills necessary for them to become responsible adults, functioning in and contributing to an ever-changing democratic society. Therefore, the Thompson Public Schools educational program provides each child with the opportunity to acquire fundamental life skills, knowledge and understanding about our social, scientific, technological, political, and cultural world.

School leaders respect students' special rates and styles of learning and their maturational patterns. Faculty and staff are sensitive to children's social, emotional, intellectual, and physical needs at each stage of their development. Thompson Public Schools have high-performance expectations for students. As a result, the community's children will have the opportunity to become self-aware, self-reliant, and self-confident.

Education is a lifelong process. With this in mind, the district's programs will offer Thompson children coordinated and adaptable studies and activities reasonably designed to meet the needs during their school lives and to provide a foundation supporting a lifetime of future learning.

Vision Statement: The Thompson Public Schools will be the highest performing public-school system in Northeast Connecticut.

Mission Statement: To this end, the Thompson Board of Education is committed to ensuring that every student is prepared for success in life in the 21st century. This will be accomplished by:

- ✓ Providing dedicated leadership
- ✓ Encouraging community involvement and support
- ✓ Hiring and retaining engaged, enthusiastic, focused, and professional staff
- ✓ Providing state of the art instruction
- ✓ Maintaining a safe and caring environment that fosters lifelong learning
- ✓ Embracing our differences
- ✓ Striving to help every student reach their greatest potential

District Commitments:

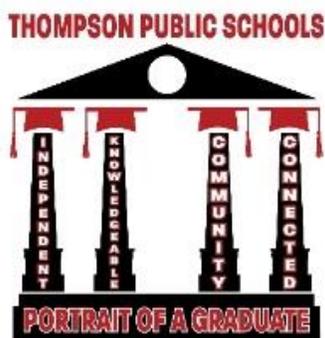
- Create multiple academic pathways
- Revise curriculum with state and federal standards
- Invest in technology to meet the educational needs of all our students
- Establish an environment of engagement, collaboration and community involvement
- Improve facilities to meet the needs of all our students
- Hire, train and retain high-quality professional staff
- Develop fiscally efficient and accountable budgets that maximize resources

14.4 Portrait of a Graduate

With technical support from the Connecticut Center for School Change and the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, Thompson Public Schools undertook a comprehensive study which engaged the community to determine the essential skills and competencies all students should possess upon graduation. The process began with a core group of school leaders who attended several training sessions sponsored by the organizations mentioned above. This professional learning guided the process of Thompson Public School's Portrait of a Graduate (POG).

Data collected from stakeholders was analyzed, resulting in a district POG statement and logo:

A Thompson Graduate is Independent, Knowledgeable and Community Connected.



The district organized sessions and met with a variety of stakeholder groups, ranging from senior citizens to business owners, clergy, town leaders and school educators. In all, over five hundred Thompson citizens participated in the development of the attributes associated with the POG statement, depicted in the table below;

<i>A Thompson Graduate is</i>		
Knowledgeable	Independent	Community Connected
Academically accomplished	Driven toward physical and emotional wellness	Anchored in the values of kindness, honesty, respect and empathy
Skilled at critical thinking	Effective with communication	Ready to lead authentically
Adept at problem solving	Proficient with interpersonal interactions	Service oriented
Financially literate	Organized	Appreciative of local history
Appreciative of the arts	Successful with time management	Civic minded
Aware of other languages and cultures	Equipped with a strong work ethic	
	Confident	

Educators and members of the Board of Education are in the process of creating a POG implementation plan. The plan will fulfill the following goals.

- The Portrait of a Graduate will be widely known, understood, and valued by the Thompson Public Schools and the community they serve
- The curriculum will be aligned with the Portrait of a Graduate
- The curriculum will be delivered using high quality instruction that aligns with research and best practices
- District operations and resources will be mobilized and prioritized to create focus and support on the implementation of the Portrait of a Graduate

Development of the complete POG implementation plan is a complex task, anticipated for completion on a 2-3 year time frame. In the near-term, a public relations campaign will be rolled

out, to share the identified priorities with the community and to begin cementing the ideas of Thompson's Portrait of a Graduate within the minds of residents. This PR campaign will incorporate online and print announcements; media campaigns through local press such as WINY and the Villager; and additional community engagement events.

14.5 Challenges and Opportunities for Education in Thompson

The Town invested in the construction of a new high school building at a time when population trends in the region were rising and projected to continue to rise. Since that time, as has been extensively noted throughout this PoCD, Thompson has seen, along with Connecticut as a whole, an overall "graying" of the population, leading to a commensurate decline in the numbers of households with school-age children. This leaves Thompson's public school district with the challenge of an underutilized facility. With declining enrollment, fixed operational costs mean that per-student costs amortize poorly. While there is not a strict 1:1 relationship between enrollment numbers and costs per student, it is logical to assert that increased enrollment, up to the capacity for which the facility was built, will put downward pressure on per-student costs. The updated TMHS building was built to accommodate the needs of 1400-1600 students, meaning there is ample room for growth of the student body within the capacity of the existing facility. Efforts undertaken by the Planning & Zoning Commission to increase allowable density and to diversify housing options have stated goals of improving economic stability; those same measures are also hoped to provide more affordable housing alternatives for young families, with a commensurate boost to public school enrollment.

While the school buildings do have ample capacity to expand the student body, even at current enrollment levels the facilities require ongoing repairs and maintenance. Funds from CSDE and the Alliance grant program have been committed to a number of improvement projects which are either underway or ready for implementation:

- The final project under the CSDE Safety and Security grant program, the addition of security gates at each access points to enter the school complex, is underway.
- A recent Alliance grant is providing funds to upgrade the entire telephone system and install exterior speakers outside of the school buildings and the athletic fields, to allow students and school personnel to hear all announcements during an emergency.

Additionally, in 2020 residents of Thompson passed a bond referendum to replace a significant portion of the roof on the school campus. This work is expected to be complete by the fall of 2021. The new roof will repair multiple leaks that have been a maintenance issue for several years. The roof replacement will ensure a healthy learning environment for all.

A challenge implied in the student data cited in Section 14.2 is the retention of students in the transition from middle school to high school. Thompson Public Schools was designated one of thirty three Alliance districts in December 2017 due to low student achievement outcomes on state assessments. During the FY 17/18 and 19/20 school years funds were awarded to help support a district wide improvement plan. To date, that funding has allowed the district to add reading specialists, purchase laptops for all students and fund professional development activities for faculty and staff. Due to legislative language in the Alliance regulations, Thompson does not receive an annual grant allocation like the other Alliance school systems. The members of the BOE and our local state representatives continue to advocate for equitable funding for Thompson schools. Despite the acknowledged challenges, TMHS has several outstanding programs that have been developed to meet the particular needs of the Town's students:

Career Pathway Programs

The Program of Studies at Tourtellotte Memorial High School offers six career pathways that provide students with real world learning experiences in a career of interest. Career pathways are a coherent sequence of academic and elective classes that start students on a path which can lead to an associate degree, bachelor's degree, and/or an industry recognized certificate or license. Several pathway classes have an established articulation agreement with area colleges and universities that offer college credits free to students. The goal is to expand career opportunities to more high school students and extend classes to middle school students. The six pathways are:

- Arts and Entertainment
- Business and Finance
- Computer Science and Information Technology
- Manufacturing and Engineering³⁷
- Health Sciences
- Law and Public Safety

Thanks to additional Alliance grant funding, the manufacturing shop at Tourtellotte Memorial High School has been expanded by removing a wall, allowing a reorganization of the equipment to accommodate more students working at one time. The district upgraded the ventilation system and dust collectors are being installed on all equipment to provide a safe working environment.

Art & Music Education

The members of the Board of Education are committed to support art and music education at all levels. All students are provided with a robust art and music education program preschool through grade eight that prepares them to take advanced music and art instruction at TMHS.

Tourtellotte Memorial High School's award-winning music department offers classes in Modern Music Ensemble, Concert Band, Concert Choir, and piano and guitar lessons. Students entertain the community throughout the year at special events in Thompson.

The high school art program includes sculpture, drawing, painting, and photography. Students have earned awards and recognition for their outstanding art entries at statewide competitions.

College Board Advanced Placement Course Expansion

Since 2017, Tourtellotte Memorial School has increased the number of College Board Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Currently the school offers six AP classes on-site: Studio Art, English and Language Composition, Calculus AB, Computer Science, Biology, and Chemistry. In addition, students may take any other AP course offered by the College Board online through the Virtual High School Program. Virtual High School courses are free to students.

USDA Farm to School Grant Program

The district was awarded a USDA Farm to School grant in partnership with Trifecta Ecosystems and Putnam High School. Engineering students are designing and constructing a fully operational aquaponics farm that will provide fresh leafy greens to enhance the food service menu. Teachers

³⁷ Students from this program, with guidance from instructor Mike Joyce, have put their skills to use for the good of the community on several occasions, most recently constructing the system of raised beds installed for the Thompson Garden By the River community garden at 65 Main Street.

and students are learning the science and management of maintaining this system with assistance from Trifecta Ecosystems' consultants.

An additional requirement of the grant program is to procure and purchase more local produce, meat, eggs, and dairy from local farms. The district is securing agreements with farmers to integrate local fresh products into student meals and to reduce the need for processed foods.

These programs align closely with the local values expressed during the POG engagement events, and they are well positioned to meet the needs of students who might otherwise pursue instruction at the regional vocational schools.

The POG also identifies a community priority for an independent student body, driven toward physical and emotional wellness. The district's efforts to reach out to local farmers to procure locally grown fruits, vegetables, meat, and dairy for school menus draws the direct connection between local agriculture, community sustainability and individual health. The Superintendent and the Director of Planning and Development are also partnering on the development of a Walking School Bus pilot program for students in the North Grosvenordale neighborhood. This project is also consonant with the value placed on personal independence and physical wellness expressed in the POG visioning exercises, and it aligns with larger Town goals to increase options for pedestrians and cyclists.

14.6 Suggested Action Steps

In progress, or for implementation >1 year

- **Hire and retain engaged, enthusiastic, focused, and professional staff.** The Board of Education is committed to work with collective bargaining units to develop contracts that are competitive, to attract outstanding candidates for employment.
- **Provide dedicated leadership.** Thompson's leaders are committed to providing faculty and staff with the appropriate supports to ensure they meet with success.
- **Continually revise curriculum to meet or exceed state and federal standards.**
- **Develop fiscally efficient and accountable budgets that maximize resources.**
- **Complete the addition of security gates at each access points to enter the school complex.**
- **Upgrade the entire telephone system and install exterior speakers on the school buildings and the athletic fields, utilizing Alliance grant funds.**
- **Initiate the repair of the school roof.**

Short Term - Years 1-3

- **Establish an environment of engagement, collaboration, and community involvement** through a variety of communication modes and social media platforms to keep the citizens of Thompson updated on school happenings and encourage their participation.
- **Continue to develop and refine the six career pathways within the TMHS curriculum.**
- **Maintain a safe and caring environment that fosters lifelong learning.** Faculty and staff must continuously refine their skills, through training offered by the district and the Connecticut State Department of Education. Administrators are responsible to establish a school culture where everyone feels accepted and safe.
- **Launch the Public Relations Campaign for Portrait of a Graduate**
- **Complete the Portrait of a Graduate final plan**
- **Bring the aquaponics farm online**

- **Activate agreements with farmers** to integrate local fresh products into student meals.
- **Launch the Walking School Bus pilot** for the neighborhood of North Grosvenordale

Medium Term - Years 3-5

- **Invest in technology** to meet the educational needs of all our students.
- **Align district curriculum** to meet the **Portrait of a Graduate** community vision.
- **Create opportunities for social interaction** between students from the public schools and Marianapolis Preparatory School

Long Term - Years 5-10

- **Provide state of the art instruction with learning plans aligned to student strengths**, through project-based learning opportunities along with the arts and athletic programs.
- **Students, faculty, and staff will continually work together to embrace cultural and racial diversity** through curriculum revision, hiring practices, course development and expanded opportunities for students to express themselves through extracurricular programs.
- Develop funding and action plans to **repair the locker rooms and gymnasium floors at TMHS.**



Library Services

15.1 Background

The Thompson Public Library opened in 1902 with a collection of 1,370 books in 1,990 square feet of space. Located on Thompson Hill in a charming stone building, the main library outgrew its space and two branches were opened, one in Grosvenordale in 1958 and one in Quinebaug in 1961. The original library building remains in use by the Thompson Historical Society, as the home of the Ellen Larned Memorial Museum.



1966 saw more changes, as the Quinebaug branch was enlarged and the Grosvenordale branch was closed. The town of Thompson was the first small town in Connecticut to have a bookmobile service in 1966, acquiring an official vehicle in 1970 that ran until 1993. A new, larger location was established in North Grosvenordale with an innovative After School Program started in 1987. The second incarnation of the library was housed at 65 Main Street, one of the buildings gifted to the Town by the Tourtellotte family. Subsequent to its use as the public library, that building served as home to TEEG until 2012, and is now the focus of a plan to develop a local small business center.

The current facility was completed in 1994, at which time the two small branches were closed and bookmobile service was discontinued. Today, The Thompson Public Library and Louis P.

Faucher Community Center is a modern combined facility with a collection of 58,918 items in circulation as of 30 June 2020.



In 2019, to celebrate its 25th year in operation, the Library undertook a remodel of the children's wing. This was a modest but impactful refurbishment of the space, funded completely by donations. The area was repainted with fresh, brighter colors and seating was added for both adults and children, making it a friendly place for families to read together. The children's wing is now also better configured to host toddler and preschool activities. The picture on the bottom-right, below, depicts a "directions to reading" sign on the wall leading into the children's wing. The sign was fabricated using tools from the Library's publicly accessible maker lab.



15.2 Library Services

In addition to its best-understood function lending books and periodicals, Thompson Public Library offers public access to wireless internet and a “maker lab.” With a recent expansion from 3 computer stations to 10, the Library is now equipped to offer a mini-class space for adult education, furthering the Library’s commitment to offer opportunities for life-long learning to Thompson residents.



Launched in 2016, [The Lab](#) features a 3-D printer, generously donated by long-time educator Gladys Tucker; equipment to convert VHS tapes and photo slides to digital formats; and crafting tools, including a Cricut cutting machine, button-maker and 3-D pens. These additional tools are all available for community use thanks to donations from the Friends of the Library, the organization responsible for the popular annual book sale and the Art at the Library program.

The Louis P. Faucher Community Center is comprised of 4 multi-function meeting rooms with access to AV equipment for public presentations, as well as a commercial kitchen. Senior lunches on weekdays, large public engagement events for important town initiatives and monthly rotating art exhibits all find their home at the Community Center. The site has been proposed for a consolidated polling station, replacing two or more of the current locations. Doing so would reduce costs for the Town (as shown in the study cited in **Section 3.3**) and would further emphasize the connection between the library and the Town. Given its capacity for higher occupancy than Town Hall, the Community Center is also a logical location for municipal meetings that draw higher attendance, such as the budget-cycle debates by Board of Finance, annual Town Meeting, and high-profile public hearings in front of the Planning & Zoning Commission. In order to fully utilize the Community Center for these functions, **an investment should be made to upgrade the technical capacity of the Library to live-stream proceedings to the Town’s YouTube channel.** Doing so would therefore be more inclusive of residents for whom in-person attendance is an obstacle to civic participation.

There is a great deal of potential for expanded partnership between the public library and the Recreation Department. Prior to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, several Recreation Department programs regularly took place in the Community Center: Saturday morning yoga; senior citizen line dancing and craft classes; and pre-and-after-care for children attending the Town’s summer camp program, to name a few. The facility has the physical capacity to host many more recreation programs than have typically been offered, and **it is recommended that programming be developed to fully utilize this existing community asset, as a partnership between the Public Library and the Recreation Department.** Strong consideration should be given to developing after school arts and entertainment programs for middle-school

students. At this age, children may be left at home as “latchkey kids” while their parents are at work; but they may be better served by having a safe, secure location to spend that time pursuing new activities such as organized tabletop gaming groups or art instruction, rather than relying on the passive distractions of television or the internet³⁸.

The Public Library also serves as Thompson’s only art gallery, with space for both wall art and case displays. Paintings and photography, textile art and works in many other media have been among the featured exhibits. Professional, avocational and student artists are frequently drawn from Thompson and the immediate area, and group shows organized around a central theme rotate through both display areas on a monthly basis. For 16 years the library has hosted the Annual Thompson Community Art Show, highlighting works by 40 or more local artists each year.

Expansion of all these potential uses of the public library would provide valuable services to Thompson; however, in order to fully take advantage of the physical capacity of the facility, an escalation in funding would be required to cover additional costs in staffing and maintenance. Municipal funding support of the library must take into account both its utility for the Town’s most economically vulnerable populations and its overall contributions to local quality of life. In addition, **it is recommended that possible fundraising opportunities for the library be explored.** Friends of the Library hold a popular annual book sale; **it is recommended that the organization expand its fundraising** with additional public events and regular direct-appeal campaigns. The Recreation Department can also partner with the library to develop revenue-generating services, such as hosting ticketed lecture series or other performances; or winter craft fairs, in which vendor table fees collected would ultimately support the library. Exploring these possibilities is complicated somewhat by State statutes governing the operation of public libraries, in that those institutions are not permitted to take in revenue directly; however, by developing programs with Friends of the Library, the Recreation Department and other non-profit organizations, an acceptable mechanism for revenue-sharing could be determined.

The following image shows a synopsis of the individual library transactions for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. In considering these numbers, it is important to note that in mid-March the library was forced to close its doors for most of the spring during the COVID-19 pandemic response, opening up for partial use in May. In order to adjust to the restrictions imposed by state guidelines, the Library enhanced its digital content and moved several community programs online. Programs moved online to fill the gap left by the closing of the physical facility include bi-weekly story time for toddlers; weekly story hours for preschool age children; and two monthly book group discussions for adults. Circulation of books and periodicals was adjusted to accommodate for curbside or lobby pickup as soon as state guidelines allowed. By remaining flexible, Library staff was able to continue to serve the public during an extremely challenging period.

³⁸ A note from Tyra Penn-Gesek, Director of Planning & Development: “As a personal anecdote, from the time I was in 4th grade through middle school, my most frequent and reliable afterschool babysitter was my hometown public library. Without any program of formal supervision, the library was nonetheless a safe space for a child of 9 to be alone for hours, with only books and librarians for company.”

Thompson Public Library

Year in Review 2019/2020* Covid-19 Pandemic as of 3/13

July 2019 ~ June 2020

33,354 Library visitors

6,923 Card holders ~ 264 new patrons

39,603 Items loaned

4,469 Digital items borrowed

9,836 Reference questions answered

2,632 Computer users

2,744 Computer hours

954 Meetings held at the Library &

Louis P. Faucher Community Center

10,568 people attended

303 programs for families

Services during the pandemic

- ~ 339 Lobby pick up appointments mid-May & June
- ~ Virtual children's programs
- ~ Copy, print, fax and notary service all available
- ~ Digital library content has been enhanced for all ages

Another important set of services noted in the synopsis above is the provision of publicly available photocopy, print, fax and notary services. Having these services available allows the Public Library to act as a de facto small business center for local micro-entrepreneurs who may lack capital for basic office equipment as they launch their enterprises.

Detailing these many services demonstrates that a library is much more than a repository for books. Public libraries are among the quintessential [third places](#) in their communities. As described in the [Brookings](#) report [Third Places as Community Builders](#) :

“Third places is a term coined by sociologist Ray Oldenburg and refers to places where people spend time between home (‘first’ place) and work (‘second’ place). They are locations where we exchange ideas, have a good time, and build relationships.”

Common examples of “third places” include coffee shops, pubs, churches, bookstores and parks. What distinguishes a public library in this catalogue of informal meeting places is its egalitarian nature. In a coffeeshop, pub or bookstore, there is a transactional element, even if it is only the cost of a cup of coffee; in a church, there is some expectation of formal participation and like-mindedness among congregants; even casual social engagement in a park setting may be limited by factors such as the weather. A public library is subject to none of these limitations, therefore providing a truly equal platform for all users. An effective “third place” combines a central location and ease of access with perception of welcome and neutrality. Thompson’s public library embodies all of these qualities, making it a natural anchor for the community.

These qualities and features are particularly meaningful for challenged populations within a community, notably low-income individuals and senior citizens. For the former, the public library enables families without disposable income to provide books and other activities for their children; and also provides access to online resources for job-searches, navigation of the health

system and other tasks which may prove difficult with only a phone or an unreliable internet connection. For seniors, formal meal programs, organized book groups, crafting classes or wellness classes help to maintain an active population while keeping isolation at bay.

Brookings expands on the specific value of libraries as part of the social safety net in a follow up report: [How Public Libraries Help Build Healthy Communities](#):

“A reason public libraries are seen as such important third-place institutions is that they and their librarians have gradually taken on other functions well beyond lending out books. In many communities, librarians are also ad hoc social workers and navigators. They help local people figure out the complexities of life, from navigating the health system to helping those with housing needs. This “go-to” role has influenced library programming and events, with libraries providing advice and connections to health, housing, literacy, and other areas.”

In aggregate, the many services and features offered by the Thompson Public Library bear out this statement of purpose from Library Director Alison Boutaugh:

“We intend to be the place at the center of our community where you can find what you need and want: information, meeting and study rooms, entertainment, knowledge and learning, assistance - and your friends and neighbors”

15.3 Challenges and Opportunities for Library Services

As is true of many municipal departments, funding commensurate with the needs of the library is an ongoing challenge. Budgetary pressures limit staffing levels, at times forcing the library to contract the hours in which it is open to the public. Needed building maintenance has also been put off in favor of other, also compelling, municipal facility repairs. In Section 4.7, the development of a 10-year public facilities maintenance plan has been strongly recommended as a high-priority goal for the Board of Selectmen and the Building Committee. Any such plan must include the public library alongside the school, the highway garage and other critical facilities. Given the positive effect of the library on Thompson’s general quality of life, consideration of its maintenance needs must not be treated as an afterthought. The following have been identified as the most pressing needs of the facility, as foreseen for the next ten years:

- Ongoing replacement of the heat pump units located throughout the facility (4 of 19 done to date)
- Replace an original boiler - \$18,000 estimated cost
- Replace the roof - \$150,000 estimated cost
- Replace the carpeting - \$150,000 estimated cost
- Replace the underground oil tank (6,000 gallons)
- Update the telephone system

Proper funding is necessary to keep the circulating inventory current, and to permit the acquisition of accessibility aids such as e-readers and audiobooks. Exacerbating the challenges to proper funding are arguments, advanced by some opponents of public spending, suggesting that library services are a luxury for the community. For residents without the means to purchase books, tech access and private child-enrichment programs, however, the library is an irreplaceable resource.

An occasional suggestion made by opponents of public spending who may nonetheless have positive views of the public library is to substitute volunteers for library staff as a cost-saving measure. Although well-intended, it must be made clear that volunteers are not an acceptable alternative to qualified professional staff. Similar to state statutes that restrict libraries' ability to generate revenue, regulations concerning the operation of public libraries are clear in delineating what tasks may be acceptably performed by volunteers. These tasks are primarily restricted to limited-duration special projects or the provision of professional services, such as tax accounting assistance, which would otherwise be provided by outside contractors. Volunteer opportunities are an important way to increase community involvement, and it is recommended that an expansion of volunteer programs be explored; but efforts to justify reduced funding to the library along those lines must be firmly repudiated.

In a similar vein, proper staffing of the public library is an ongoing challenge. As of 2020, only Thompson's Library Director is fully credentialed with a Master's Degree in Library Science. The professional standard for library operations dictates that a credentialed Children's Librarian and Reference Librarian should also be on-staff. As referenced in Section 15.2, library staff often find themselves serving in unintended roles akin to those of social workers. This trend has become so prevalent that many libraries across the country have brought on licensed social workers to properly address those demands. Thompson's location in the region leaves it additionally challenged in terms of the available labor pool to fill credentialed positions. While current staff has a wealth of on-the-ground experience within the community which offsets many deficits in formal degrees, as those dedicated employees retire or move on to other opportunities the library will have to confront the issue of attracting qualified replacements.

Alongside the challenges mentioned above, Thompson's Public Library does have an opportunity to improve access to another of the Town's valuable archives. Thompson Historical Society has no regular source of funding, no paid staff and is open on only Sundays from 8-12 and occasionally by appointment. For the many people who visit Thompson or write to THS seeking content, the library could provide much wider access to the Town's collected history. This material is unique to Thompson and not found elsewhere, making it a draw for researchers and a potential source of donations to fund continuing library operations. For example, THS has 100,000 photographs that sit on an isolated private server, waiting to be searched. The simple act of relocating that server to the public library increases access to that unique archive, immeasurably. Other local historical records and self-published volumes are also currently difficult or impossible for researchers to find.

Many historical societies have no facilities of their own and are based inside libraries or other municipal sites. Plainfield follows this model, and a similar arrangement is also planned for Putnam's future municipal complex. Ellen Larned spoke in her 1902 address on the opening of the first public library building in Thompson about the need for the library and historical research to be connected. It is recommended that the Thompson Historical Society and the Library Director explore possibilities to house the society's archive at the Public Library, including any legally acceptable strategies for potential revenue sharing.

15.4 Suggested Action Steps

In progress, or for implementation >1 year

- Work with the Board of Selectmen and the Building Committee on the **development of the recommended 10-year plan for public facilities.**

Short Term - Years 1-3

- **Develop additional early literacy programs through stronger partnership with the Public Schools, the Recreation Department and other community organizations.**
- **Continue to seek out and provide technology for use by the community.** Examples include next-generation e-readers, updated desktop computers, DIY tools.
- **Develop programs for lectures, author's readings, music and fine arts to more fully utilize the Community Center.**
- **Work with Friends of the Library and the Library Board of Trustees to develop new fundraising campaigns, both event based campaigns and direct solicitations to donors.**
- **Partner with Thompson Historical Society to make their archives more accessible to the general public.**
- **Upgrade the technical capacity of the Library to live-stream municipal functions to the Town's YouTube channel.**
- **Upgrade the Community Center Public Address system.**

Medium Term - Years 3-5

- **Increase the number of educational programs and other afterschool programs for all ages.** Programming could be developed as a partnership between Thompson Public Library, Recreation Department, Thompson Public Schools and TEEG. Consultation with QVCC, Nichols College, UConn and the regional vocational high schools may be possible to create an adult education program based at the library.
- **Continue to upgrade and adapt the library website to meet user needs.**
- **Develop more volunteer opportunities connected to the Library.**

Long Term - Years 5-10

- **Complete the critical facility repairs according to the ten-year plan:**
 - Replacement of the heat pump units
 - Replace the original boiler
 - Replace the roof
 - Replace the carpeting
 - Upgrade the telephone system
 - Replace the underground oil tank
- **Consider installation of solar panels following roof replacement**

Renewable Energy & Energy Conservation

16.1 Overview of Energy Use in Thompson

According to the [Connecticut State Energy Profile](#) compiled by the U.S. Energy Information Administration, roughly 44% of Connecticut households use fuel oil or other petroleum products for home heating and 36% rely on natural gas. Thompson does not have infrastructure to support natural gas, therefore property owners are limited to oil, propane, electricity or wood for heat. Statewide, just over half of all electricity is generated by nuclear power (51.5%, the bulk of which comes from the Millstone station); 40.8% comes from natural gas; and 5.5% is generated via renewable energy sources. As of May 2020, 80% of the 688 megawatts of solar photovoltaic electric generating capacity installed in Connecticut was at small-scale, customer-sited facilities of less than one megawatt.

Connecticut has one of the least energy-intensive economies, using less energy to produce each dollar of gross domestic product (GDP) than all other states except California, Massachusetts and New York. Average annual per capita energy expenditures for the state are \$3,960, ranked 25th in the nation, and less than half the amount spent per capita in the three most expensive states (Wyoming, North Dakota and Alaska). At the same time, Connecticut residents pay the highest costs per kWh of the 48 contiguous states, with only Alaska and Hawaii bearing higher kWh rates.

The current average retail price (cents/kWh) for electricity supply and delivery for Connecticut and its immediate neighbors by Eversource (the only carrier available to Thompson residents) is shown below.

Connecticut	18.66
Massachusetts	18.40
Rhode Island	18.49
New York	14.34

As shown in this comparison, Connecticut's costs for energy delivery are consistent with other New England states (although higher than neighboring New York). Also consistent with the New England region is Connecticut's relatively low output of carbon emissions: 41st out of 50 states and the District Columbia, at 9.4 million metric tons of energy-related carbon dioxide per person per year as measured in 2017, compared with 25.1 million metric tons per person per year produced by top emitter Texas³⁹. Regions where carbon emissions were shown to be significantly lower were, as a rule, areas where summer seasons were shorter and summer temperatures milder; one may therefore extrapolate that air conditioning during the hot months is a greater source of carbon emissions than is heating buildings during the winter.

Connecticut's relatively favorable comparisons to other states in terms of energy consumption do not provide much comfort, however, to residents who receive high monthly energy bills. As has been noted in **Section 7 - Housing**, a significant portion of Thompson's housing stock was built prior to 1970, and therefore may not be as energy efficient as homes built after that time. Older homes are more likely to have lower R-values for insulation, single-pane windows and older heating systems. For households which may fall into the cost-burdened category, energy

³⁹ See Table 5 Per capita energy-related carbon dioxide emissions by state (1990-2017) <https://www.eia.gov/environment/emissions/state/>

inefficient housing is another added strain on limited resources. Reduced costs over the long-term following energy efficiency improvements are a high-return investment for homeowners, but initial costs may present a high hurdle. Energize CT offers energy audits for Connecticut homeowners, to identify areas in need of improvement; and, low-or-no interest loans are available to many homeowners to make needed energy efficiency upgrades through that program. The program also offers good incentives in the form of subsidies for weatherization (insulation and window upgrades) and income eligible customers can access these measures at no cost. Participation in the Energize CT program, however, is dependent on a homeowner being pro-active and only operates on a house-by-house basis. To encourage and facilitate resident participation in Energize CT and related programs, **it is recommended that the Town publish a guide to these audit and financing programs for homeowners on their website. It is also recommended that the Town compile a document promoting energy efficiency measures for new construction**, to be made available through the Building Office and their webpage. Some towns in neighboring Massachusetts have adopted what is referred to as a “stretch code”, upping the efficiency standards of new construction. This could be a model worth investigating. The Building Office may also want to provide information about deconstruction as an alternative to demolition, with information on general reuse of building materials during renovations. While not directly related to energy efficiency or renewables, the embodied carbon of materials plays a significant role in climate change and its impacts. The regional nonprofit Center for Ecotechnology operates several technical assistance programs for municipalities, including a high-performance building team that could assist with the development of these suggested guidebooks. These published guides should include clear information regarding the overall cost savings to homeowners over time, to further encourage up-front adoption of energy efficiency measures.

A new challenge to Thompson residents and businesses has come to light more often recently. Weather trends have led to more frequent high-wind events, and in 2020 Thompson suffered several multi-day periods of widespread electrical outages. The longest of these occurred over 7 days during the month of August. Thompson is served by Eversource, a private utility provider. Response times by Eversource for northeast Connecticut were widely criticized during these events, especially in comparison to the more rapid service provided in Norwich by its public utility company. In years past, long-term outages have more typically been the result of heavy snow or ice storms; if climate change is generating more frequent windstorms throughout the region and throughout the year, with interrupted grid service a result, it will not be acceptable for Thompson’s residents to wait until they filter to the top of the private provider’s priority list. Relatively affluent homeowners may be able to install backup generators, or solar panels with battery storage; but such measures are out of reach for low and moderate income households, or renters.

Renewable resources at both utility-scale and small-scale (less than 1-megawatt) facilities provided about 5% of Connecticut’s electricity net generation in 2019. Solar and biomass contributed almost equal amounts of generation and together account for about three-fourths of the state’s total renewable generation. Hydroelectric sources provided about one-fourth. By May 2020 about 690 megawatts of utility-scale and small scale solar PV capacity had been installed in Connecticut.

There are 3,871 residential and commercial parcels in Thompson (3,679 residential and 172 commercial). Of that total number, 185 parcels (4.7%) have some configuration of solar panels

installed; of those, 180 are installations serving single locations and 5 are commercial generators. None of the commercial operations have a power purchase agreement in place with the Town at this time. Thompson will be participating in an electricity-offset arrangement with Fort Hill Farms, once the anaerobic biodigester facility at that site comes on line (anticipated for early 2021). That renewable energy project will be discussed more fully in **Section 16.4**

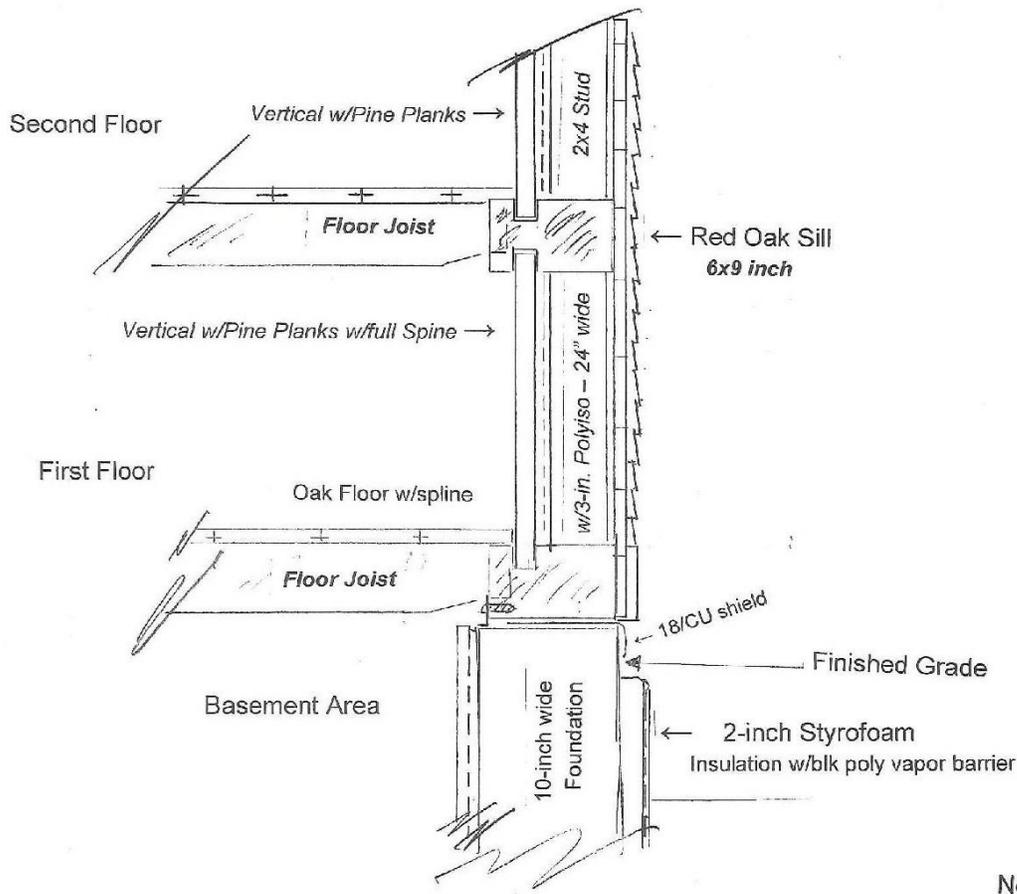
16.2 A case study - portrait of a Thompson home (contributed by Alvan Hill)

As a firm believer in conservation of energy usage then as now, I designed and constructed my home in the 1980's. The electrical usage from November 2019 to November 2020 in total (kWh) is 6,347 kWh. Of that total kWh usage 2,299 kWh was consumed from June to August of 2020 for air-conditioning, etc. This unconventional usage of electricity was made possible by the design of the home.

For 23 years, I worked as a restorer of Early American Homes (1650 to 1750). Married in 1980, my wife and I decided to build our home in Thompson. Most early homes designed and constructed in New England in the 17th & 18th Centuries were based on English church and domestic conventions. Faced with a similar climate to England, early New England builders were very conscious of heat loss and energy needs. One design that began in England and was later adopted in New England used vertical planks attached to the outside of the ground sill, continuing through a top wall plate to attic space. The Anglo-Saxons, during the period from 400 to 1000 A.D., used vertical full logs in their early church wall design, with the inside faces shaved flat and a bottom sill notched-joint and top notched-joint for carrying beams. This type fabrication was brought to my attention by the book 'English Historic Carpentry' 1980, by English author Cecil A. Hewett. Instead of using heavy solid logs, I chose to use two-inch thick eastern pine planks set vertically into a two-inch by two-inch groove in the sill's flat plane for flooring attachment. The two-inch grooves to receive the vertical planks were set in one-inch from the edge of a 6 x 9-inch oak sill for future flooring. The wall design extended two-stories, ending with modern roof trusses. In today's construction terms, the wall became a 'Structural Insulated Panel' or SIP. With the walls up, construction moved forward by attaching 4'x8'x 1/2-inch insulated sheathing to enclose the entire SIP around the appropriate openings.

With the walls and floors in place, work progressed to the exterior. At each of the four corners of the structure, 2"x4" studs were placed 24-inches on-center against the face of the 1/2" polyisocyanurate insulated surface of the vertical planks, adding sheets of three-inch by 24-inch thick poly insulation along the length of the walls. With the corners of the structure braced, horizontal pine sheathing was added, then sided over with red cedar clapboards on front and back. The gable ends also received red cedar shingles. The final completed wall thickness is 10-1/2-inches for a two-story structure. Flooring insulation used a combination of fiberglass, Styrofoam and polyisocyanurate sheathing.

What does the wall thickness mean for insulated value? The house living wall area R-Value is 26.82. The foundation wall R-Value is 11.92, with 2-inch in thickness Styrofoam on the outside, and inside with 1/2" poly and over the concrete basement wall with one-inch vertical pine board. Floor insulation from basement to attic ranges from R-21 to R-30. During the winter, the main heat source is a woodstove drawing air from the exterior. The home uses roughly 1-1/2 cord wood over the course of a season.



Not To Scale

It is important to note: with these R-values the structure would lose at least 10% of insulated heat/gain value without the correct orientation and glass windows with a high energy value. For our latitude in Connecticut, 14-degrees southwest is the optimal orientation, meaning the longest side of the structure should face 194 on a compass dial.

This is a one-of-a-kind structure, but it has withstood Connecticut weather well for four decades, even having been constructed with the materials available in the 1980's. This personal example is included to illustrate how thoughtful up-front planning for new construction can lead to high energy efficiency over time. With today's high density closed cell foam insulation, along with SIP and renewable energy from solar or geothermal sources, a residential structure can be entirely off-grid⁴⁰, which is permitted under Connecticut building codes.

16.3 Renewable Energy

Renewable energy is most commonly discussed in terms of its potential to reduce future rates of climate change. As implied in the name, renewable energy sources are generally those which are self-sustaining, such as solar, wind, water or geothermal, needing only technology to harness them for our use. These sources are also carbon neutral. Another category of renewable energy is that generated from various organic sources: wood or other forms of biomass, or biogas produced from sources such as anaerobic biodigestion. These sources are renewable in that they can be constantly produced by cultivation and harvesting, or as a byproduct of agricultural

⁴⁰ As a point of clarification: the private home in the example is not off-grid.

activity. They are not necessarily carbon neutral, but they generally release lower amounts of carbon into the atmosphere than fossil fuels. In all cases, switching to or supplementing energy generation with renewable sources has many benefits for both public and private users. In addition to reducing overall carbon emissions, the technologies associated with producing renewable energy have increasingly driven job creation; and, switching to or supplementing with renewable energy sources provides significant cost savings for users over time. Renewable energy sources also have the socio-political benefit of being produced closer to their point of use, if not precisely in situ then from local or regional installations. The result is less reliance on foreign trade and any potential moral hazards that arise from energy dependence on regimes with questionable human rights records. Closer to home, residential solar panels with battery backup can help lighten the burden for individual households during lengthy service interruptions due to weather or other emergencies.

In April 2020, Bloomberg published the report [Solar and Wind Cheapest Sources of Power in Most of the World](#). In addition to finding that average costs worldwide for solar and wind generated energy had declined below that of fossil fuel energy production, large countries such as the United States, China and Brazil had seen even better reductions than the average:

“A decade ago, solar was more than \$300 a megawatt-hour and onshore wind exceeded \$100 per megawatt-hour. Today, onshore wind is \$37 in the U.S. and \$30 in Brazil, while solar is \$38 in China, the cheapest sources of new electricity in those countries.”

Despite this development, as seen in the U.S. EIA data, Connecticut currently generates only 5.5% percent of its electricity from renewable sources. The state has a goal of reaching 48% of its power sourcing from renewables, with at least one major offshore wind installation coming on-line in the near term. Nonetheless, a wide gap remains between current levels and the goals for the region. Filling that gap can be taken as an opportunity by forward-thinking municipalities; but, doing so will require careful, orderly planning.

In 2014, [Thompson signed on to the Clean Energy Communities Pledge](#), an initiative of the Clean Energy Finance and Efficiency Fund and the Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund. As a part of that (non-binding) pledge, the Town committed to procuring 20% of its electricity for municipal use from renewable sources. To date, the Town has not entered into any power purchase agreement with any commercial solar energy producer. There have been some proposals made for solar fields within Thompson, which would in turn generate power for the Town; but, to date, each of them has met with significant obstacles and been abandoned. Shortly before COVID-19, a conversation had been initiated with CT Green Bank, regarding their Solar Municipal Assistance program. Under that initiative, town owned sites are reviewed by consultants from that program for suitability for solar installation. Following an initial site assessment via satellite imagery, four municipally owned properties were identified as having strong potential for solar installation: the Highway Garage, the Water Treatment Plant, the Public School campus and the Public Library. Although the response to COVID interrupted follow-up with CT Green Bank, **it is recommended that the Town continue pursuit of the CT Green Bank municipal solar partnership program**. The school campus and the library have frequently been raised as possible sites to add solar collection; but, both of these structures require significant repairs before any installation of roof-mounted panels would be feasible. It is recommended that installation of solar collectors be prioritized for the public library, once roof replacement has been scheduled. Cost savings for electricity at the Town-owned TEEG building at 15 Thatcher Street illustrate the practicality of

pursuing installation of solar power for municipal buildings: estimated costs for that facility are roughly 5-cents/kWh, only 26% of the state average cost for Connecticut service and delivery charges (18.66 cents/kWh).

The public school campus has been the subject of several proposals for solar installation. The plans currently being most closely considered are for roof-mounted systems; however, as has been noted, extensive and costly repairs are required prior to any kind of roof installation. Some areas of the campus have been suggested as alternate locations for ground-mounted systems. **It is recommended that new attention be given to assessing the feasibility of all proposed solar options for the public school campus, including ground mounted panels.** Given the pressure to find cost savings for the public school system which do not reduce student services, reducing energy costs must be considered with high priority.

As a remnant of the mill economy, there is infrastructure in place that could be reactivated to generate hydroelectric power. The most notable sites where hydro-power could be harnessed are at the Wilsonville Dam/Langer Pond Dam and the North Grosvenordale Dam, both located along the French River; and potentially in connection with the West Thompson Dam. While activation of these sites would require complex long-range planning, **it is recommended that an exploratory committee be formed to study the feasibility of bringing hydro-electric generation on line for Thompson.**

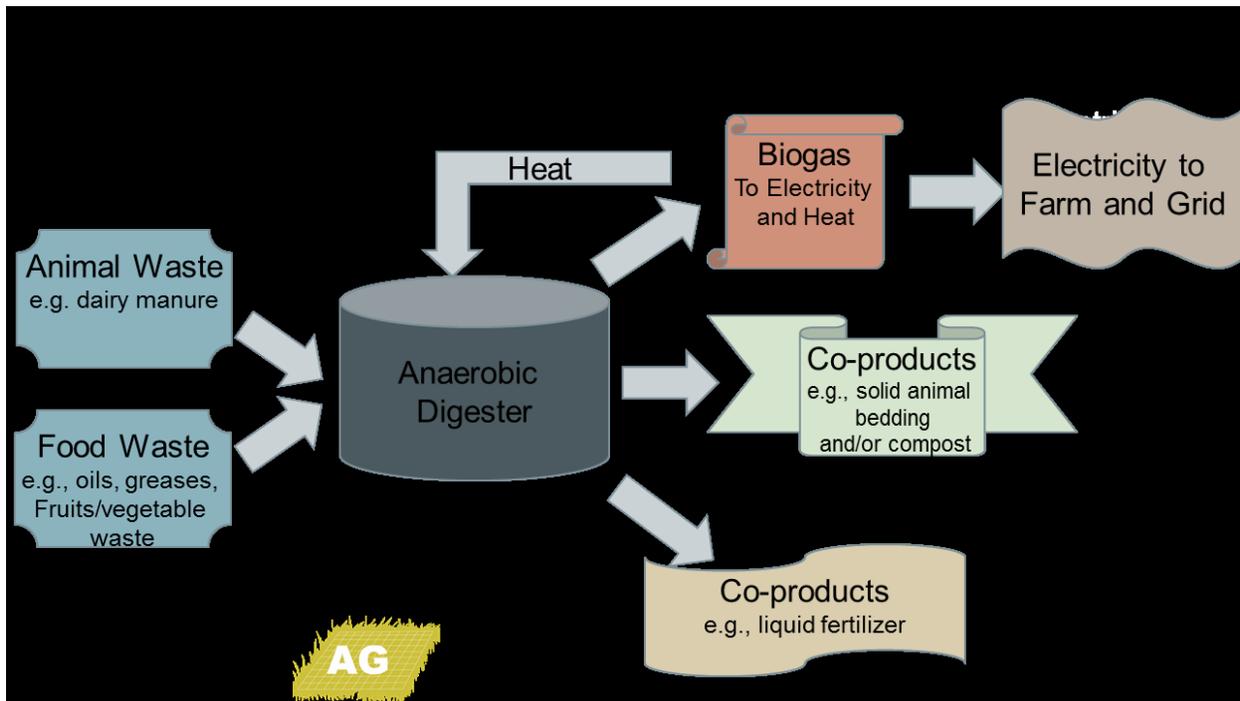
16.4 Renewable Energy - Anaerobic Digestion

One area where progress has been made, in terms of connecting Thompson to a renewable energy source, is in a new partnership with the Fort Hill Farms anaerobic biodigester. Described in greater detail in Section 10 - Agriculture, Fort Hill Farms is a family-owned and-operated dairy farm, with a total of approximately 500 animals on-site. The farm owns greater than 1000+ acres and has a crop production base of 600 acres. Over 400 acres are forest managed with a sustainable harvesting program, and the family has been proactive in purchasing development rights to protect their prime agricultural land in perpetuity.

While dairy was once a more prominent component of farming in the region, Fort Hill Farms is now the only remaining dairy operation in Thompson. The family has been able to continually pursue farming as a viable livelihood in large part because members of all four generations have consistently sought to diversify their operations. The biodigester facility, initiated by the late Peter Orr and carried on by his daughter Kies Orr, will be the first of its kind in northeastern Connecticut; one of only two woman-led biodigester facilities in the state; and the only one in Connecticut established to generate electricity as part of its revenue stream⁴¹. Of all the many successful diversifications originating at Fort Hill Farms, this most recent innovation is poised to be the one with the broadest benefit to the community and the region. On an annual basis Fort Hill Ag-Grid LLC is expected to generate 3.3 million kWh of electricity. This output will power lighting, heat and hot water for the barns and the family's home, replacing current oil and wood-burning sources. The biodigester will also produce enough excess electricity to serve local communities such as Thompson, New Britain and Middletown. Agreements with these latter two municipalities will generate an ongoing cash flow for Fort Hill Farms.

⁴¹ Another Connecticut Farm, Freund's Farm of East Canaan, utilizes their biodigester for on-site energy needs. Rather than selling power to their municipality, the farm monetizes the composted digestate into CowPots, a specialty product for home gardeners.

In the case of Thompson, the Town is poised to enter into a virtual net metering (VNM) agreement with Fort Hill Farms for up to 300,000 KWH per year. Under this agreement, 15% of the facility's VNM credit would be re-directed to Town of Thompson based on the Standard VNM price, updated by Eversource every 6 months. As an example of the potential savings in energy costs to the Town, the VNM price in June 2019 (when the proposal was accepted by the Board of Selectmen⁴²) was 13.7-cents/kWh. At that price, the VNM credit to Fort Hill Farms for 300,000 kWh = \$41,100. Of that sum, \$6,165 would offset annual energy costs for the municipality. Over a 10-year period, aggregate savings for the Town would be over \$60,000.



The basic operations of a biodigester system are illustrated above. Waste produced by the farm's herd is supplemented with food waste trucked into the site from a variety of high-volume sources. Given estimated recoverable manure from a combined 546 head, and average cow weight of 1,400 pounds (lb) for milk cows and 1,000 lb for the dry cows and heifers, the combined total live animal weight (LAW) of the animals housed in these barns is estimated to be 686,000 lb. Including the wash water from the milking parlor, based on an estimated average milk production level of 90 pounds/cow/day, the estimated recoverable dairy cow manure totals about 37 tons/day, roughly around 13,525 tons annually.

Heat is applied to the mixture in the biodigester, where organic processes break down the contents into the biogas (methane) that is then captured for electricity; composted solids, which have utility both as animal bedding and a saleable farm/garden product; and high-value liquid fertilizer for the farm's feed crops. The individual elements of the system thus create a functional ecosystem, closing the energy loop for the farm itself, and providing energy and environmental relief for Thompson as a whole. Compared to solar generation, the anaerobic digester will generate electricity 24/7, 365 days per year, as the biological processes that fuel the system operate continually.

⁴² [Board of Selectmen minutes, regular meeting 9 July 2019](#)

Certain steps can be taken to maximize the effectiveness of the Fort Hill Farms anaerobic biodigester, thus benefitting the farm and the Town. Full efficiency of the facility is dependent on combining large quantities of food waste with the farm's animal manure. Using the [Food Waste Estimator](#) found on the website for [Recycling Works Massachusetts](#), at current rates of enrollment, the public schools have the potential to divert roughly 771 lb of weekly food waste toward energy generation. The town of West Hartford initiated a [food waste separation program](#) in their school system, with assistance from the non-profit Center for EcoTechnology (CET). **It is recommended that the Town and the Public School District initiate a program to separate and deliver food waste from the school cafeterias to Fort Hill Farms. It is also recommended that the Town assist the farm in reaching out to food service businesses in and around Thompson, to develop an organized program of food waste separation and delivery by the private businesses and institutions (e.g. supermarkets, restaurants, schools and assisted living facilities).** Food waste separation by individual residents should also be encouraged, but would require thoughtful planning in order to make it feasible for the Transfer Station staff to facilitate. CET was the recipient of a 2020 EPA grant to develop outreach and education programs to assist municipalities in supporting anaerobic biodigestion projects, and Thompson has the opportunity to partner with CET in development of any of the local food waste diversion strategies proposed. Connecticut's [Commercial Organics Recycling Law](#) currently covers entities that generate >52 tons/year (~1 t/week); but, CT DEEP is considering lowering the threshold⁴³. It would be prudent for Thompson to take the initiative in developing policies for food waste recycling in advance of any such changes, particularly in light of the opportunity for partnership with the local biodigester project.

16.5 Solar Siting and Agricultural Use

The topic of solar installations on high-value parcels is sensitive, and requires the balancing of equally important concerns. The need for increased renewable energy production has been widely demonstrated. Solar installations, however, are often proposed on agricultural lands, or on parcels that would require extensive clearing of tree cover. It would not be favorable to ameliorate one potential climate change problem (dependence on fossil fuels) by exacerbating another (loss of landscape). Some members of the working group for the development of this document have strongly opposed any statements of support or encouragement for the siting of solar installations on agricultural lands or other green spaces, based on valid, factual arguments. On the other hand, the rights of property owners (including farmers) to monetize their land must also be observed. Solar field installations are, at least theoretically, a reversible land use that would more easily allow for a return to agricultural use or natural recovery than the development of subdivisions. Nonetheless, it is in the best interest of Thompson's commitment to the preservation of open space and agricultural land to articulate clear guidelines along which larger solar installations can be undertaken within the town.

The September 2020 adoption of new Zoning Regulations for Thompson has been referred to throughout this PoCD. In that update, the PZC has tried to address some concerns around solar siting. It must be noted: in Connecticut, the authority of local land use bodies to regulate solar installations is limited to proposed sites producing less than one megawatt of electricity. For practical purposes, this means sites proposed for commercial generation that are less than 8-10

⁴³ Adjustments to the current organics recycling law are anticipated in the recommendations of the CT DEEP final report due out 5 January 2021.

acres. Jurisdiction over facilities larger than one megawatt capacity is held by the Connecticut Siting Council.

In an effort to strike a balance between equally worthy, but sometimes conflicting, goals for regulating solar land use activity, the PZC incorporated the following into their new regulations⁴⁴:

D. Large-Scale Installations, Special Considerations

1. Purpose

The purpose of this section is to encourage the development of renewable energy resources, while preserving core forest, prime farmlands and other open spaces.

- a. **Core Forest** means unfragmented forest land that is 500 feet or greater from the boundary between forest land and non-forest land, as determined by the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection (CGS 16-50k)
- b. **Prime Farmland** means land that meets the criteria as described in 7 CFR 657, as amended.
- c. **Open Space** means land set aside for parks, playgrounds, active or passive recreation or conservation purposes.

2. Lot Coverage Considerations

- a. The footprint of the equipment and the projection of the panels on the ground of a large-scale solar PV installation shall not cover more than 50% of the lot on which it is situated, with the exception of the considerations delineated below.
- b. Any undeveloped portion of the remaining 50% of the lot not covered by the solar installation shall be maintained as one of the three land types defined in **Article 5A, Section 5E, 1** (above).
- c. In the **Business Development District**, these restrictions are waived for Open Space. For an installation proposed on a site in the Business Development District that incorporates Core Forest or Prime Farmland, these restrictions shall not be waived.
- d. These restrictions may be waived by the Commission if the installation is proposed as a means of reclaiming a site under the conditions of a special permit for earth and gravel removal. Such waiver shall be for the percentage of lot coverage, only. Replacement of topsoil and re-vegetation requirements, or any other erosion and sediment control requirements, shall not be waived.
- e. For an installation proposed on prime farmland or actively being used for the purposes of agriculture (as defined in these regulations and in **Connecticut General Statutes, Sec. 1-1 (q)**) in any district, these restrictions may be waived, at the discretion of the Commission, if the application includes panels of sufficient elevation to allow agricultural activity to continue below them. Such an application must show the plan for the continuation of the agricultural activity. Examples of agricultural activity that may occur alongside elevated solar installations include grazing/pasturing of livestock, apiaries and high-value vegetable or fruit crops requiring hand-picking for harvest. Any waiver under such a plan would only apply to the elevated portion of the proposed installation.

In summary, these regulations seek to communicate a series of priorities for potential solar developers that include maintenance of the landscape. Solar array locations are preferred for sites in the Business Development District, and as a means of reclaiming gravel mining sites.

⁴⁴ Found in **Article 5A, Section 5 Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Array Systems**, p.p. 69-70 of the [Thompson Zoning Regulations, Effective 15 September 2020](#)

Solar field developers may also achieve balance in land use by actively allowing for the concurrent pursuit of agricultural activity. So-called “solar grazing⁴⁵” and co-location of apiaries⁴⁶ are two forms of agriculture that have received attention in recent years, and the [American Solar Grazing Association](#) has hosted workshops in Connecticut to advocate for its pursuit.

The strategies suggested above are not without their challenges; and as of yet, the new Zoning regulations concerning solar siting are untested by any active application. Concerns around the potential for erosion or the degradation of valuable soils must not be ignored or minimized. Stating a preference for co-location of agricultural activity where solar installations are proposed on farmland is also not enough on its own. Therefore, **it is recommended that the PZC review and adjust its regulations annually**, to continually align them to the priorities of the community. In the case of regulations regarding solar siting, strengthened language regarding erosion controls and vegetative cover requirements may be explored. Additionally, **it is recommended that developers proposing co-location of agricultural activity should be required to show not only a plan for such co-location, but also demonstrate an agricultural partner has signed on to the plan.** For proposed gravel mining operations, the PZC should discuss with the developer any potential for incorporating solar installations as part of the reclamation plan.

16.6 Suggested Action Steps

In progress, or for implementation >1 year

- **Work with CT Green Bank to assess the potential for municipal solar collection sites.**
- **Work with the Center for Ecotechnology to develop food waste diversion to the Fort Hill Farm biodigester.** Strategies must include policies and best practices for municipal (school) and private business sources.

Short Term – Years 1-3

- **Annually review and adjust Zoning regulations to encourage renewable energy development** in a sustainable manner consistent with Town priorities
- When new residential subdivisions or commercial developments are proposed, **PZC should encourage incorporation of renewable energy sources** and design that aligns with ENERGY STAR or Passive House standards.
- **Form a committee to explore potential for adding municipal hydroelectricity generation**, with a goal to initiate implementation by 2030.
- **Identify and pursue suggested energy efficiency actions toward certification by the Sustainable CT program.**

Medium Term – Years 3-5

- When commercial renewable energy installations are proposed, **assign an ombudsman to shepherd these projects through all aspects of the Town permitting process.** Development should include preliminary meetings with the Board of Selectmen and Planning and Development Staff, with the purpose of confirming municipal support prior to the formal application process.

⁴⁵ [Solar Grazing: Livestock as Landscapers at Utility-Scale Solar Arrays](#)

⁴⁶ [Flowering Solar Farms](#)

- **Compile and publish guides to energy efficiency resources for homeowners, on the municipal website.** Include information for financing upgrades to existing homes, as well as potential energy efficiency strategies for new construction. Also provide information and links to PACE financing as an option for commercial entities.

Long Term - Years 5-10

- **Set a goal to install solar collectors on at least one municipal building and/or derive 50% of municipal energy from renewable sources by 2030.**



Future Land Use

17.1 Review of 2009 PoCD Future Land Use Issues, Strategies & Action Steps

The prior edition of the Thompson Plan of Conservation and Development identified concerns related to future land use and established a list of policies and strategies, as well as a number of Future Land Use Action Steps. This edition of the PoCD also will posit strategies and action steps for land use headed into the next decade. Before articulating that action plan, it is worthwhile to revisit those prior concerns, strategies and goals, and assess the Town's successes and shortcomings in achieving them.

When the 2009 PoCD was developed, three key issues were identified regarding planning for future land use for Thompson:

- Erratic and sprawling commercial and residential development patterns
- Industrial zones with primarily residential uses
- Lack of tools to protect existing rural and historic character

To address these concerns, the following policies, strategies and action steps were advanced:

2009 proposed Future Land Use Policies and Strategies

1. Create a comprehensive vision for the Exit 100 interchange off of Interstates 395.
2. Identify ideal locations for a commuter rail station in Thompson.
3. Review the location of industrial zoned land to assess appropriateness.
4. Review all land uses along the Interstate 395 corridor to assess appropriateness.
5. Review the TC-80 zone and consider adding architectural design review.
6. Improve access to industrial land, including a study of RT200 & Plum Road.
7. Support the development of green land use technologies.
8. Support the construction of a State rest stop and welcome center at Exit 100.

2009 proposed Future Land Use Action Steps

1. Create a comprehensive plan for Exit 100 off of I-395 to include the proposed State welcome center.
2. Review the land use and zoning along the I-395 corridor for appropriateness and consider a comprehensive zone change for the corridor.
3. Support a comprehensive plan to develop green land use technologies and multi-modal transportation.
4. Review land use along the Rt. 12 corridor to maximize mixed commercial development.

Several of these strategies and goals have seen success. Strategy points 3-5 and Action Steps 2 and 4 were substantively accomplished during the overhaul of the Zoning Regulations. The resulting document expanded flexibility of land use throughout the Town, with specific attention given to providing opportunities for mixed-use development along the length of Routes 12 and 131. Additionally, as recommended in the 2009 PoCD, an appendix of Design Guidelines was adopted, the provisions of which are prescriptive for the Thompson Common Village District (TCVD, formerly TC-80). They are also indicated as the preferred standard for the higher density

districts. This latter inclusion specifically addresses the concern expressed in 2009 regarding a “lack of tools to protect existing rural and historic character.” Additional protection of that character will be derived from regulations permitting agricultural activity throughout the Town, as well as the frequently referenced measures taken to drive density to the districts where it is most appropriate. These same measures are intended to reduce suburban sprawl. Throughout this edition of the PoCD, under several topic headings, it has also been stated that the PZC should undertake annual review of its regulations to ensure that they are having their intended effects, and to adjust them where they are not. A more difficult issue to resolve is the mix of industrial zones with primarily residential uses. In the overhaul of the regulations, it was observed that industrial zones are most frequently located on the margins of a community, or on land adjacent to highways. It is not possible to retrofit that pattern to Thompson, as the land uses adjacent to the highway run through the center of the Town, and those parcels already have longstanding uses established. The previously designated Industrial Zones remain in place, now renamed as either the Business Development District (BDD) or, in some areas, incorporated into the TCDD. As a means to try to prevent adjacent location of truly incompatible uses, PZC has prohibited Heavy Manufacturing within Thompson; and site design standards are articulated to provide buffers between adjacent residential and commercial parcels.

The remaining strategies and aspirations have seen less progress. In certain cases, such as the strategies and action steps articulated around the welcome center which had been proposed for Exit 100⁴⁷ off Interstate 395, State agencies have sole discretion to act to move that project forward. At this time, there appears to be no momentum from the State to pursue the welcome center; therefore, this edition of the PoCD will not specifically revisit that issue. The project is one that could have positive potential for Thompson, however; therefore, if the State renews interest in construction of the welcome center at that location, the Town will work to partner with State agencies to bring it to fruition.

Identification of possible locations for a commuter rail station in Thompson would be a worthwhile goal for improving transit options; however, there is no known plan to extend any commuter rail service to Northeast Connecticut at this time. Therefore, specific goals to develop plans along those lines will not be articulated in this document. Should a project develop to extend MBTA or Amtrak commuter rail service to Northeast Connecticut from Worcester or Providence (the most likely connecting hubs), the Town will certainly take up the issue. Strategy #7 and Action Step #3 from the 2009 PoCD were not accomplished to any appreciable extent; however, in as far as Section 16 has articulated a number of strategies and suggested actions regarding Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation, that goal has been carried forward into this new edition of the PoCD.

17.2 Subdivision Regulations Revision

The 2020 rewrite of the Thompson Zoning Regulations has been extensively cited as a vital first step in encouraging development that is most appropriate for Thompson’s future. Revision of the Subdivision Regulations must now follow, as a logical next step. Updating the Subdivision Regulations will eliminate any contradictions or inconsistencies between the two documents; and it will also allow for a better-articulated set of standards to drive residential development and density according to the priorities identified in both the Zoning Regulations and this Plan of Conservation and Development.

⁴⁷ Renamed in 2014 as Exit 53, to match the State’s highway mileage markers.

In summary of points made elsewhere in this document regarding patterns of development which are also relevant to subdivisions:

- Thompson's road maintenance budget is severely underfunded, therefore the acceptance of new public streets should be dis-incentivized. New public streets should only be permitted where a compelling transportation interest for the Town can be demonstrated by the developer (**Section 4.2**)
- New cul-de-sacs provide no utility to the town, and going forward should be disallowed as public streets. Where cul-de-sacs are proposed, they should be treated as shared private driveways or private streets, maintained in association by the residents who share them (**Section 4.2**)
- Average density for Thompson must increase, in order to better amortize the cost of public services. (**Section 4.2**)
- 2020 average density is 19 parcels per road mile, as compared with an allowable density of 70 parcels per road mile in areas with private water/sewer, 211 parcels per road mile in areas with public utility connections (**Section 7.3**)
- 34% of renters and 21% of homeowners are "cost-burdened" for their housing needs (**Section 7.1**)
- Existing housing inventory in Thompson is a poor fit for homeowners at the two ends of the age spectrum (first-time homebuyers and seniors). Thompson has high concentrations of large single-family homes with three or more bedrooms, as well as a high percentage of homes built prior to 1970 (**Section 7.1**)
- Thompson is below the recommended threshold for designated Affordable Housing Units, and is therefore at a disadvantage in the Affordable Housing Land Use Appeal Procedure (**Section 7.2**)
- There is a high correlation between walkable neighborhoods and increased property values/neighborhood desirability (**Section 9.4**)
- Thompson residents place high value on the rural nature and historic character of the Town (referenced throughout, but particularly in **Sections 1, 6, 10 & 12**)

The through-line between these points shows the logic of driving development toward those areas best able to absorb density, due to their access to public utilities and potential for the creation of desirable, walkable neighborhoods. With the recent revision of the Zoning Regulations, permitting individual lots of 4,500 sq. ft. in the Downtown Mill Rehabilitation District, Common Residential District and parts of the Thompson Corridor Development District, the opportunity now exists to encourage precisely that pattern. Where subdivisions are to be proposed in districts without the existing infrastructure to support economically sound levels of density, the standards under which such plans are developed must be adhered to closely, to ensure that Thompson does not fall victim to unsustainable suburban sprawl in its green spaces. Topics that will require immediate action include regulations regarding construction of new roads, shared driveways and cul-de-sacs; requirements for the inclusion of sidewalks; and standards for Open Space set-asides and Conservation Subdivisions.

A seemingly simple provision, for the allowance of shared driveways in proposed new developments, has the potential to ease the path toward more sustainable subdivision development. From a conservation point of view, shared driveways reduce curb cuts and total impermeable surface; and they allow for more tightly clustered lots, therefore infringing less on remaining green spaces. Within the framework of municipal budgets and manpower, permitting

privately maintained access-ways relieves the Town's potential maintenance burden for new roads. Shared driveways also make the development of smaller lots more feasible, allowing developers to maximize their return with more compactly sited parcels. The rewritten Zoning Regulations do express a preference for shared driveways; however, they remain prohibited in the current (5th Edition) Subdivision Regulations. **Correcting this contradiction must be undertaken immediately by the Planning & Zoning Commission.** Furthermore, **the revisions must clarify that cul-de-sacs will no longer be eligible for acceptance as public roads, and must always be treated as private driveways.** There are challenges to homeowners in developments with shared driveways, which must be acknowledged: HOAs must be formed in order to fund and maintain them; fees and responsibilities of association members must be made clear at time of sale; and some borrowers may experience friction from mortgage lenders when shared driveways are in play. These challenges, however, do not outweigh the benefits the Town derives by allowing them. One challenge which must be addressed in the revision of the Subdivision Regulations is the standard to which shared driveways must be built. The Town will protect its own interests as well as the interests of new homeowners by articulating those standards clearly, to ensure that developments will not receive final approval unless construction methods used for the shared driveways are sufficient for their anticipated traffic burden.

The current edition of the Subdivision Regulations does include a requirement for the inclusion of sidewalks in a subdivision development plan; however, waivers are also permitted, and the practice has generally been to grant waivers whenever they have been requested. A list of factors is provided which the PZC may consider where a sidewalk waiver is requested; however, the factors listed are a combination of pros and cons without clarity as to how those elements should be weighted for consideration. The unintended result has been to leave most Thompson neighborhoods without sidewalks, and therefore difficult or dangerous for pedestrian use. Given the strong correlation of sidewalks to economic vitality, and that it is often prohibitively inconvenient and costly to the Town to retro-fit a neighborhood with sidewalks, **it is recommended that the Subdivision Regulations articulate more clearly the conditions under which a waiver may or may not be granted. It is also recommended that the PZC narrow the conditions under which a waiver may be granted.** For example: it may be articulated that a subdivision of less than four lots in the Rural Residential Agricultural District, with low potential for connectivity to other sidewalks, may be eligible for a waiver. **It is recommended that no sidewalk waivers be permitted for subdivisions or mixed-use developments in the higher-density districts served by public utilities, barring a demonstrated insurmountable physical obstacle to their construction.**

A third important component of the Subdivision Regulations is the inclusion of provisions for Conservation Subdivisions and Open Space, found in Sections 7 and 8 of the 5th Edition. First, it is important to make a clear distinction between Conventional/Traditional Subdivisions and Conservation Subdivisions:

- Conventional subdivisions require a minimum 20% set-aside for Open Space or a fee-in-lieu of such set aside, in the amount of 10% of the appraised value of the parcel prior to subdivision.

- According to the 5th Edition regulations, Conservation Subdivisions may be proposed in the outlying districts⁴⁸ for parcels of 20 acres or more.
- Although Section 7F of the 5th Edition does describe the general design standards for Conservation Subdivisions, there is no defined percentage of Open Space to be set aside; **therefore, as written, it must be assumed that the developer has no obligation above the standard 20% set-aside.**
- In the 5th Edition, in return for the set-aside in a Conservation Subdivision developers are permitted to reduce minimum frontage to 100', and reduce minimum lot sizes to 30,000 sq ft.

To date, no developer has proposed a Conservation Subdivision in Thompson. This implies that the incentives for such developments in the 5th Edition are not sufficient to move a developer away from a more conventional plan. In order to increase the efficacy of the Conservation Subdivision regulations, the PZC must consider how those standards could be adjusted to incentivize developers to preserve more open land in the Rural Residential Agricultural District. Points for the PZC to consider for revision:

- Smaller acreages should be considered for Conservation Subdivisions, particularly where they may connect with other protected land. How small could a parcel be and still have practical conservation value?
- In order to make a clear distinction, protected land in a Conservation Subdivision should be referred to as Conservation Land, as opposed to Open Space required in a conventional subdivision.
- Conservation Subdivisions should have a clear percentage of the parcel to be dedicated as Conservation Land. Logically, that percentage should be higher than that required for a conventional subdivision. Woodstock requires 40% and some towns require 50% in order to qualify.
- In order to allow more flexibility in the configuration of the lots, a revision could be considered to allow up to 60% of the Conservation Land to be wetlands/watercourses, dependent on its demonstrated value for conservation.
- Minimum lot sizes should be reduced even further, to allow developers more opportunity to monetize their parcels while preserving a greater percentage of the remaining open space. On the developable land, the standard for lot sizes could be set as the minimum which satisfies the NDDH standards for septic and potable water.
- Dedicated Conservation Land should have an attendant conservation easement in favor of the Town, clearly stating the purpose of the conservation land and the allowable and disallowable activities. It is beneficial to the Town to have the conservation land remain in private ownership, therefore a provision regarding the establishment of an HOA for the development could be considered. This would also be consistent with the preference for shared driveways in subdivisions, maintained in association.
- Section 8.A. of the 5th Edition Subdivision Regulations states: "All subdivisions of four (4) or more..." To further clarify the distinction between the requirements for conventional vs conservation subdivisions, the text should be amended to: "All subdivisions, **except Conservation Subdivisions**, of four (4) or more..." Additionally, Sections 7 & 8 should be

⁴⁸ Referred to as R-40 and R-80 in the 5th edition Subdivision regulations, designated as of 15 September 2020 as the unified Rural Residential Agricultural District (RRAD).

reordered, to further distinguish between the standard requirements and the additional provisions for the conservation subdivisions.

Fees-in-Lieu of Open Space set asides have been specifically cited by the Conservation Officer as extremely valuable to the Town, as they assist in funding the purchase of high-value parcels for permanent protection. The account was started in 2005 and as of 2020 had a balance of approximately \$85,000. This represents fees that were collected from subdivisions where an Open Space set-aside was not of value to the town. The account has been used to purchase two land acquisitions of 13 acres and 3 acres, respectively, along with the attendant costs of appraisals and legal fees. Funds from the Fees-In-Lieu account were also used to pay for a 2010 surveyed boundary line for the conservation easement associated with the acquisition of the French River trail north of the former Knights of Columbus hall. The survey became necessary following some clearing of a path with tree cutting and ground disturbance within the recreation trail, which was a negotiated purchase in 1996 with state funding. The resultant easement from that purchase did not require a survey at the time; but, in order to address the later easement violation, the Town needed to confirm the exact boundary.

Fees-in-lieu have not generated enough funds to allow large purchases; however, they do support purchase of inexpensive land and incidental costs associated with acquisitions. If a property owner were to gift land or a conservation easement to the Town, the Fees-In-Lieu fund enables the Town to offset legal costs or other incidental expenses.

In bulk, the 5th Edition Subdivision Regulations have served Thompson reasonably well since their adoption in 2008, despite some of the specific shortcomings identified here. Some adjustment will be required to align them with the 2020 Zoning Regulations. The time is therefore opportune for the PZC to make further updates to nudge potential developers toward the districts targeted for revitalization.

17.3 Infill Development

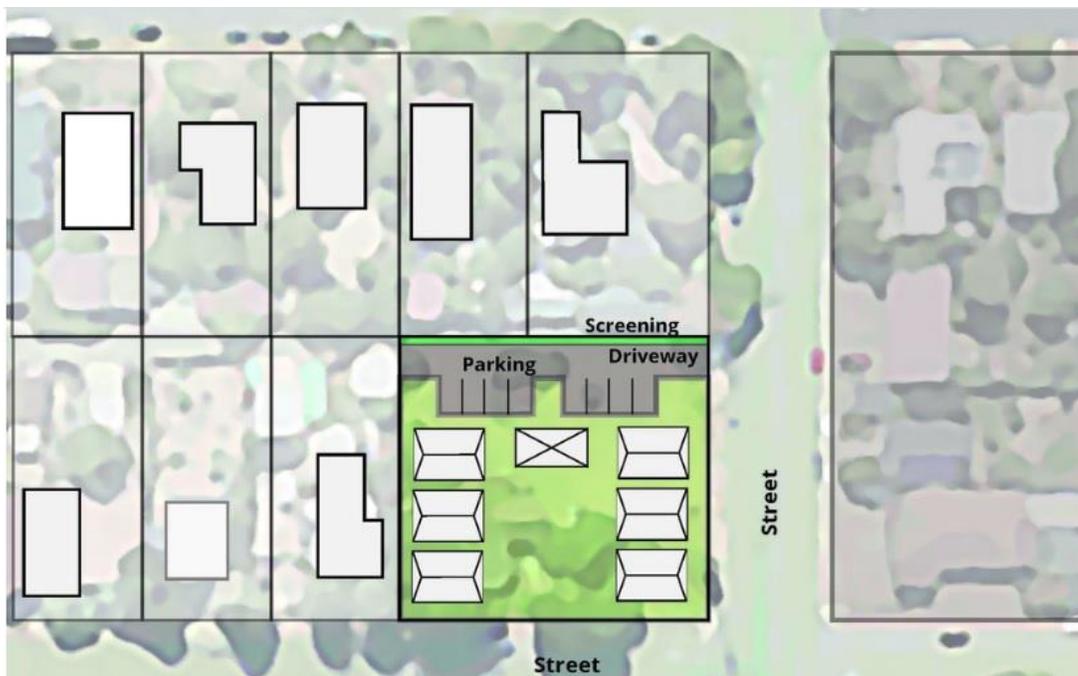
The [American Planning Association](#) describes infill development as redevelopment that “optimize[s] prior infrastructure investments and consumes less land that is otherwise available” Simply put, infill development occurs on the parcels in-between existing uses, often on lots that may have been unbuildable under previous regulations. When encouraged in neighborhoods that are well-suited to density, infill is an important tool in economic revitalization. The reduction of minimum lot sizes and encouragement of shared driveways in the DMRD, CRD and TCDD were two recent regulatory adjustments that open the door to infill in those districts. A more challenging task is to draw awareness to the revitalizing potential of such small-scale, lot-by-lot development.

In Section 17.2, points were drawn from prior sections within this document, connecting arguments advanced under other topics and the work to be done to revise the Subdivision Regulations. The points below are those statements articulated within this PoCD which support planning for infill development:

- Thompson is committed to achieving growth in a way that is green, sustainable and innovative (**Section 6.4**)
- The projected increase of 24% by 2030 of population aged 65+ potentially leads to the need for smaller, denser, more affordable homes closer to the town center, services and, if possible, transit connections (**Section 7.1**)

- Revisions of the Zoning Regulations will make “missing-middle” housing styles easier to construct, particularly in districts with public utilities (**Section 7.3**)
- Further measures in the districts with public utilities have loosened the permit requirements for several small business uses, with the hope that more “15-minute neighborhood” enterprises will arise (**Section 7.3**)
- Smaller lot sizes and looser usage restrictions bring real estate development within closer reach of individual entrepreneurs (**Section 7.3**)
- Having daily needs within an easy 15-minute walk for residents will drive the desirability of those neighborhoods for prospective homeowners, renters and businesses. This in turn eases pressure to develop outlying districts to their full capacity (**Section 7.3**)
- Due to a lack of neighborhood-scale businesses, Thompson residents are currently compelled to travel to other towns for most of their daily needs and discretionary spending (**Section 8.1**)
- The Route 12/131 Corridor, which encompasses the higher density districts, was identified as a key opportunity by participants in the 2018 NECCOG Branding workshop (**Section 8.2**)
- Walkable neighborhoods have a lifting effect on local economies (**Section 9.4**)

There is important overlap between some of the points noted above and points raised to support the refinement of the Subdivision Regulations, most notably in the potential for infill development to provide wider variety in housing options. The following image shows a proposed layout for a “cottage court” within a residential neighborhood. Once common, particularly in the Western states, cottage courts are now nearly impossible to construct in many communities because of restrictive zoning regulations.



The illustration is a clear depiction of compact development with common parking and green space. The larger view of the surrounding neighborhood also shows how comfortably such projects fit within a traditional residential district.

Diversification of housing stock is only one aspect of desirable infill development. Particularly in the newly drawn Downtown Mill Rehabilitation District, infill development of business and mixed-use properties will be critical to the long-term success of the Town's economic revitalization. As it is currently configured, Thompson has no inventory of storefront properties. This was not historically the case, particularly for the neighborhoods surrounding the mills. During the heyday of the industrial area, North Grosvenordale was configured as a traditional town center: single family homes, duplexes and triplexes stood side-by-side with shops, cafes and other services in a compact neighborhood where many walked to work in those businesses, or in the mill itself. The following images are taken from Echoes of Thompson, a publication of the Thompson Historical Society. They show the same block in North Grosvenordale over a period from the 1890's to the 1960's. Throughout that time, the photos make plain that the area was a local center for commerce. Longtime residents still refer to local landmarks from the neighborhood, nostalgically recalling its vitality. The final photo is from 1960's. Shortly afterward, the entire commercial block was demolished following a fire. The same observation may be made for the type of mixed-use development seen below as was made for the small "cottage courts" described earlier: the introduction of zoning regulations, however well intended, made the re-creation of these kinds of mixed-use blocks prohibitively difficult and expensive in most places. Towns where the historic inventory of buildings remains intact have had a tremendous advantage in reviving their historic centers, as evidenced by the success of Connecticut towns such as Canton, Hebron and Thompson's own close neighbor Putnam⁴⁹.



Business property in Thompson currently constitutes 4.24% of the Grand List. The ideal proportion for a community of Thompson's size, by contrast, is generally presumed to be 15-20% in order to maintain a healthy standard of living. This disparity places additional strain on residents, particularly LMI families and seniors on fixed incomes. Adopting a preference for infill development in Thompson's core districts is an important strategy for closing the gap in revenue sources. The report Best Bet for Tax Revenue: Mixed-Use Downtown Development⁵⁰ illustrates the disproportionate value provided by dense infill vs "conventional" big box or strip development projects (emphasis added):

⁴⁹ Examples cited are drawn from the website of the non-profit Connecticut Main Street Center.

⁵⁰ Philip Langdon, writing for the Congress for the New Urbanism, Sept 2010

“From a tax revenue-per-acre (versus per lot or per household) perspective, the properties that are typically occupied by retailers like Walmart, Costco, and Sam’s Club turn out to be very disappointing. They generate about \$8,350 per acre – “maybe \$150 to \$200 more per acre per year than single-family houses in the city like mine,” Katz says...

“Low-rise construction – just two or three stories, with housing or offices over retail – the kind of ‘town center’ redevelopment now replacing many older suburban shopping areas, can bring in around \$70-90,000 per acre. The high end of that range is more than four times that of the county’s highest earning mall,” Katz emphasizes.”

The comparisons cited in that report are not outliers, but are supported by findings in numerous studies from reputable planning organizations and government agencies ([U.S. EPA](#), [CA Office of Planning & Research](#), [Smart Growth America](#) are a few examples). The principle scales well for communities of all sizes, as noted in the excerpt above regarding two-to-three story mixed use buildings retro-fitted to existing town centers. At this scale, real estate development also comes within reach of individual entrepreneurs, therefore “punching above its weight” in building both individual and community wealth.

17.4 Adaptive Reuse of Buildings

An additional important strategy to proactively pursue going forward is the adaptive reuse of existing buildings for new purposes. This strategy is also supported by prior arguments made in this PoCD:

- Regard for local identity and affinity for preserving community history consistently emerge as high priorities for residents (**Sections 1 & 6**)
- Thompson’s historic mill buildings are considered essential to the Town’s plan for economic growth (**Section 2.2**)
- Thompson has an established history of adapting public buildings to new purposes (**Section 4.3**)
- Thompson is committed to achieving growth in a way that is green, sustainable and innovative (**Section 6.4**)
- The proposed private redevelopment of the River Mill is widely viewed as a crucial project for overall revitalization of the Town (**Section 7**)
- The proposed project to rehabilitate 65 Main Street is an opportunity to demonstrate sustainable, adaptable reuse for community benefit (**Section 8.4**)

Adapting an old building to a new purpose dovetails directly with the community’s articulated priority for preserving its history. For many, the demolition of the Belding-Corticelli mill building at 630 Riverside Drive crystallized the imperative not to discard thoughtlessly the landmarks of Thompson’s past. Had the building remained standing, the Town might have had the opportunity to host two large scale redevelopments for needed housing and commercial space. The silver lining to the loss of the Belding-Corticelli mill has been the determination of many within the community to see that such a mistake will not be repeated. Support for the redevelopment of the River Mill at 929 Riverside Drive has been nearly universal and was a motivating factor in the overhaul of the Zoning Regulations. The challenge going forward is not to lose sight of those priorities, and not to allow the casual demolition of other properties which could have useful second or third lives. Preservation of history is not the only reason to embrace adaptive reuse over one of demolition of aging buildings. While some buildings may be legitimately beyond

rehabilitation, in cases where they may reasonably be brought back to use, repair instead of demolition followed by new construction reduces the environmental burden of increased landfill.

The Thompson Historical Society has identified a number of properties with significant local history which are under threat of loss. In certain cases, the owners have shown interest in the responsible repurposing of the structures, but lack a feasible plan for preservation. In other cases, the buildings are threatened by careless intentional demolition or de facto demolition by neglect. In each case, **it is recommended that a plan be devised to reclaim and reuse these properties.**

- The Thompson Congregational Church - 347 Thompson Road
- The Brandy Hill Church - 654 Thompson Road
- St Joseph's School - 26 Main Street
- The Superintendent's House - 65 Main Street

Many of the historic mill buildings also fall in this category. These latter properties will be addressed separately in **Section 17.4 - Brownfields.**

Three of the four properties listed above are privately owned by religious organizations. Being privately owned, the Town has no jurisdiction in the disposition of these buildings; however it would be beneficial for the Town to meet with representatives of those churches to discuss mutually favorable strategies.

Both 347 Thompson Road and 654 Thompson Road are owned by the Congregational Church. In December of 2016, the congregation's main house of worship on Thompson Common at 347 Thompson Road was severely damaged by a fire. The structure is still standing, but despite some progress funding has not been available to make it suitable for services. In the case of the 1803 Brandy Hill Church at 654 Thompson Road, despite being structurally sound the building has been almost entirely vacant for many years. It has been suggested that the Congregational Church could privately market and sell the latter property, using the proceeds to fund the badly needed repairs to the congregation's main house of worship on Thompson Common. As a building on the Connecticut Historic Resources Inventory, the Church has latitude to condition purchase of the 1803 church on maintaining its historic character. Careful marketing of the property for use as retail, restaurant or professional office space could bring the structure back to life while adding a business property to the Grand List.

St Joseph's School building at 26 Main Street is owned by St. Joseph's Catholic Society. This property became vacant after the permanent closure of the school following the 2019/2020 school year. Some interest has been expressed by the Town in pursuing the relocation of the DMV registry building from its current sub-standard location in Putnam to the school building, also potentially co-locating some municipal functions at the site (e.g. an additional Emergency Shelter or a dedicated Recreation Department facility).

For all of the properties described above, the Town would be limited to a role as a mediating partner; however, putting those buildings back into productive use would be beneficial for the community. Therefore, **it is recommended that the Director of Planning and Development, Thompson Historical Society and the First Selectman reach out to the ecclesiastical owners and initiate conversations regarding potential repurposing of those structures.**

Thompson has the opportunity to take the lead on adaptive reuse by committing to the rehabilitation of the Superintendent's house at 65 Main. As has been previously described, the house was a gift to the Town from the Tourtellotte family, and the conditions of the will preclude its sale. The building has come under threat for demolition, however, an outcome which the Historical Society strongly opposes. The justification for possible demolition or disposition of the property has been the assumption that rehabilitation would be prohibitively expensive; however, estimates compiled in 2009 were developed based on the presumed use of the building to house social services agency TEEG; and, the purpose of compiling those estimates was to support a grant application for construction of a brand new facility. Therefore, at the time it was advantageous to portray the existing site as unsuitable. The current plan for adaptive reuse of 65 Main would not require the expense of a full building retrofit for ADA compliance, which was the primary driver of the exorbitant costs of the 2009 estimate. Further, little or no Town funds have been proposed for its implementation⁵¹. Given the significance of the property to Thompson's history, and given the lessons learned from the demolition of other locally important landmarks, **the property at 65 Main must be considered a prime candidate for adaptive reuse to benefit the community.**

There is precedent within Thompson for successful rehabilitation of previously threatened historic properties. The Historical Society has also provided examples of notable redevelopment successes:

- The Wilsonville Mill - 1405 Riverside Drive
- The Thomas Mill - 1020 Riverside Drive
- The 1902 Library - 339 Thompson Road
- The Masonic Temple - 64 Chase Road
- The William Mason House - 20 Chase Road

Three of these properties have received periodic mentions within this PoCD:

The Wilsonville Mill is under active redevelopment for a planned mixed-use retail, office and restaurant space, with potential for the eventual reactivation of a hydroelectric generator at the site. The Town also has the opportunity to further enhance the property by pursuing the installation of a boat slip on the adjacent municipal parcel, as suggested in **Section 6.1**.

The Thomas Mill has been refurbished and brought back in use by Thompson residents Charlene and Frank Langlois. The property is anchored by a popular café and dance studio, with room for additional tenants. The repurposing of the mill demonstrates that economic and community development is within reach for forward-thinking Thompson residents. That project succeeded despite inadvertent obstacles that were built into the prior edition of the Zoning Regulations. The Langlois' honest account of their experience during the project was invaluable to the PZC as they worked through the process to create the updated regulations adopted in 2020.

As discussed in **Section 14**, the Thompson Historical Society was the driving force behind the repurposing of the 1902 library building on Thompson Common as the Ellen Larned Museum. It is

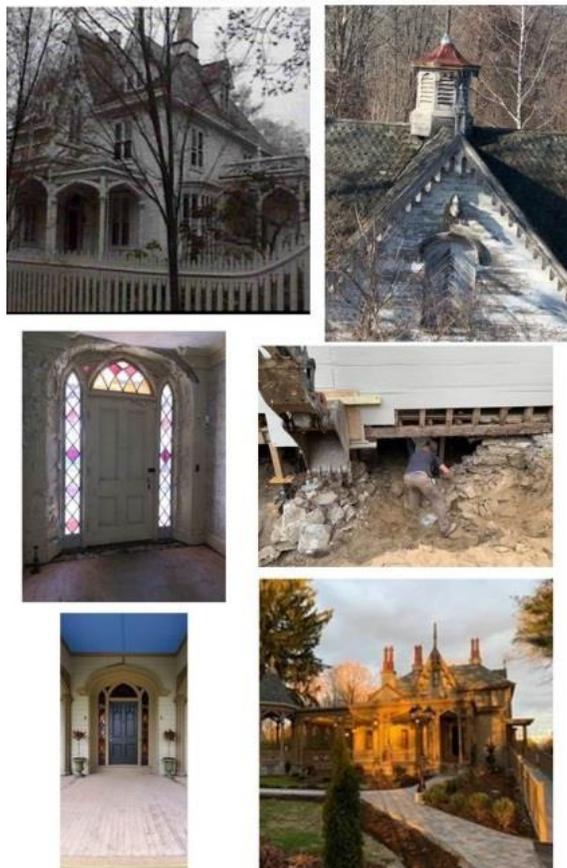
⁵¹ \$8,000 was approved by the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance within the FY20/21 EDC budget for development of projects at 65 Main. These are the only municipal funds in play as of the writing of this PoCD.

hoped that, in the future, the resources will be available to extend access to the Society's collections at the museum through digitization of the archive.

A property which deserves special notice as a success story of adaptive reuse is the William Mason House, located at 20 Chase Road on Thompson Common. Built in 1845, the house was a fanciful example of Gothic Revival architecture, and is a sister property to [Roseland Cottage](#) in Woodstock, known locally as The Pink House and curated as a house museum by [Historic New England](#). Purchased by an absentee owner in 1992 as a "project house" for his private design company, circumstances led to the abandonment of the Mason House for over 20 years, during which it stood vacant and in danger of "demolition by neglect." When the absentee owner passed away, the house came up for sale; but the degraded condition of the interior was so severe that only a truly dedicated buyer could possibly revive it.

A dedicated buyer did step up: the owner of local fine-dining restaurant Anya. He has undertaken the rehabilitation of the property, retaining or recreating as much of the historic detail as possible. Thompson craftsman Dave Eddy of Orchard Products was contracted for the structural rehab, and the work is scheduled to wrap up during the winter of 2020/2021. When completed, the Mason House will have new life as a boutique wedding venue and bed-and-breakfast with spa services. The project has met with near universal enthusiasm, and is an outstanding example of the rejuvenating effect that adaptive reuse of historic buildings can have within communities.

Reviving the William Mason House



17.5 Brownfields

As seen on the CT DEEP webpage for [Brownfields in Connecticut](#):

A brownfield is defined by Connecticut General Statutes [§32-760](#) as “any abandoned or underutilized site where redevelopment, reuse or expansion has not occurred due to the presence or potential presence of pollution in the buildings, soil or groundwater that requires investigation or remediation before or in conjunction with the restoration, redevelopment, reuse and expansion of the property.”

Sites once used for industrial, manufacturing, or commercial uses were abandoned or underutilized due to known or suspected contamination from past uses. Unknown environmental liabilities were preventing communities, developers and investors from restoring these properties to productive use and revitalizing impacted neighborhoods.

Thompson’s industrial history left the Town with a physical legacy of historic mill properties. That legacy includes daunting potential obstacles from environmental residues and contaminants. For many decades after the decline of the mill economy, these obstacles have put the reclamation of these properties out of reach for municipalities and private owners. The result across New England is a landscape dotted with massive decaying buildings and fenced-off lots, and towns without the tools to address them.

As with other sub-topics within this section, statements made throughout this PoCD are supportive of the redevelopment of Thompson’s brownfield sites:

- Phase I, II and III environmental assessments have been completed for the sites at 929, 915 and 630 Riverside Drive, in anticipation of future development **(Section 2.2)**
- The Town considers the mills to be essential to the plan for economic growth in the next decade **(Section 2.2)**
- In the community visioning event hosted by Branding in 2019 referenced in the Introduction, Local Identity and Historic Landmarks ranked very high in importance among participants (91% and 82% “important”, respectively) **(Section 6.1)**
- Thompson is committed to achieving growth in a way that is green, sustainable and innovative **(Section 6.4)**
- The River Mill is named as both an “Opportunity” and a “Weakness”; and the Route 12/131 Corridor was simultaneously named as “Strength”, “Opportunity” and “Threat.” **(Section 8.2)**
- A pressing challenge for Thompson is the balance of growth with conservation, as development pressure grows and available land is utilized for new homes and businesses. **(Section 12.4)**
- While some buildings may legitimately be beyond rehabilitation, in cases where they may reasonably be brought back to use, repair instead of demolition followed by new construction reduces the environmental burden of increased landfill. **(Section 17.4)**

In recent years, public agencies and private developers have shifted their thinking regarding these properties, viewing them as opportunities for sustainable redevelopment. Having established brownfield reclamation as a priority, the Town must now identify available resources to facilitate that reclamation.

The [Connecticut Brownfields Initiative \(CBI\)](#) is a technical assistance program offered through the UConn School of Engineering. Students and their advisors in the program offer several forms of assistance to area towns, including the compilation of brownfield inventories. In spring 2020, CBI compiled an inventory of Thompson brownfield properties, an excerpt from which is seen below:

Site Name	Address	Site Type	Acres	Sq. Ft. of structure	Year Built	Past Uses
The River Mill	929 Riverside Drive	Mill	9.44	750,000	1872	Mill
Borden Company	915 Riverside Drive	Industrial	4.45	26,490	1900	Factory
Belding Corticelli Mill	630 Riverside Drive	Mill	33	n/a	1861	Mill
The Pallet Co.	910 Riverside Drive	Industrial	1.45	42,624	1875	Factory
Quinn's Shirt Shop	962 Riverside Drive	Comm.	1.21	9,975	1872	Commercial
Masonville Mills	694 Riverside Drive	Mill	0.65	24,138	1831	Mill
Wilsonville Mill	1405 Riverside Drive	Mill	3.36	13,156	1880	Mill
Delta Tool Company Inc	445 Thompson Road	Industrial	2.3	9,440	1962	Commercial Warehouse
Saveway Propane	459 Thompson Road	Petroleum Site	3.4	3360	1940	Propane Storage

The properties above are all under private ownership, and show varied levels of current use. Some, such as the River Mill and the Wilsonville Mill, are under active redevelopment. In order to preserve the privacy of the current owners, tax status of the parcels has not been included here; however, where properties are tax delinquent it may be mutually beneficial for the owners and the Town to negotiate a resolution where title is surrendered to the Town to forgive the debt. In the past, such a course of action may not have been feasible, as the Town lacks the resources required to redevelop these properties on its own, and the transaction would inevitably be a loss for the Town.

With legislation passed in 2017 by the Connecticut General Assembly, the State has enabled to creation of Land Banks to act as middlemen in the remediation process. Land banks are able to offer technical assistance to brownfield owners, and are authorized to assume surrendered titles; seek grant funding and apply their expertise to remediation of the properties; and then finally return the properties to productivity either for public use or by means of sale to private redevelopers. Thompson falls within the territory of the Eastern Connecticut Land Bank (ECLB), a newly formed organization serving the region. **It is recommended that the Town partner with the ECLB to identify potential brownfield projects within Thompson**, and negotiate with any private owners of distressed properties, as appropriate. Out of similar concerns for protecting the privacy of property owners, as with the tax status of the potential brownfield parcels, this document will not advance hypothetical redevelopment plans for any of the properties named above; however, **it is recommended that the Office of Planning and Development work with the Mill Sites Redevelopment Advisory Committee (MSRAC) and the First Selectman to create**

potential redevelopment plans for future key properties, in the event that collaboration with the ECLB becomes feasible.

17.6 Suggested Action Steps

In progress, or for implementation >1 year

- **PZC to update Subdivision Regulations**, particularly regarding construction of new roads, shared driveways and cul-de-sacs; requirements for the inclusion of sidewalks; and standards for Open Space set-asides and Conservation Subdivisions.
 - Correct contradictions with the Zoning Regulations, specifically in regards to shared driveways
 - Narrow the standards whereby the Town will accept new roads. Clearly define what constitutes a Town-maintained road vs a private road or shared driveway
 - Specify that cul de sacs are to be treated as private roads/shared driveways
 - Clarify the standards under which sidewalk waivers may or may not be allowed
 - Narrow the conditions for sidewalk waivers
 - Clarify the conditions for Open Space set asides vs. Conservation Subdivision requirements
 - Strengthen the conservation value of Conservation Subdivisions by increasing the set-aside percentage and reducing lot sizes and frontages

Short Term - Years 1-3

- **Develop a strategy of adaptive reuse for vacant or distressed Town owned properties.** Specific attention must be paid to the rehabilitation of the property at 65 Main Street, with guidance from the Tourtellotte Trust.
- Office of Planning and Development work with the Mill Sites Redevelopment Advisory Committee (MSRAC) and the First Selectman to **create potential redevelopment plans for key brownfield properties.**
- **Partner with the ECLB on high-priority brownfield projects** within Thompson.
- **Reach out to private owners of threatened properties with significant Town history, to assist them with appropriate planning.**

An Action Plan for Thompson

The tables below are comprised of all action steps suggested throughout the PoCD. **Table 1** shows actions which are already initiated and ongoing, or which are anticipated for completion within FY2020 (ending 30 June); **Table 2** lists actions to be undertaken with a 1-3 year goal for completion; **Table 3** are actions for the 3-5 year timeframe; and **Table 4** are long-term goals anticipated for 5+ years of implementation. On all tables, the individual action steps will be sorted by their relative priority from high-low within that timeframe. Prioritization was based on its perceived urgency, ease of implementation and potential costs (where known). Wherever possible, the actions will be assigned to an appropriate organization or group of partners within the framework of the Town.

Table 1 Ongoing or Immediate Time Frame

Immediate- Ongoing or >1 year			
Action	Sub-Actions	Assigned To	Priority
Governance & Civic Engagement	-	-	-
Refine the municipal website for greater ease of navigation.	Reduce the number of clicks required to find important information; add online platforms for permit applications and payment options; adjust the interface to be more visual and less text-heavy	Website Admins	High
Review that the department pages have a consistent look, a link to each department and staff directory.	Each department should have a short descriptor and phone and emails.	Website Admins & Social Media Intern	High
Regularly review website & webpages for outdated information	Quarterly review by Admins, with review by each page owner after regularly scheduled meetings	Website Admins, Board & Commission Chairs, Recording Secretaries	High
Improve the communication between volunteer boards, commissions and committees	Pro-actively share agendas with recording secretaries and chairpersons, invite attendance by relevant committee/commission members to discuss agenda items of mutual interest.	Board & Committee Chairs, Recording Secretaries	Medium

Infrastructure & Public Works			
Develop annual calendar of Public Works Priorities	Include roads, bridges, parks, trails and cemeteries	Board of Selectmen, Dept of Public Works, Recreation Department	High
Develop a ten-year plan for major public facilities projects	Includes school, library, highway garage, salt shed, transfer station	Board of Selectmen, Dept of Public Works, Building Committee	High
Work with state lawmakers on legislation to address roadside litter		Director of Planning & Development, Legislative & non-profit partners	Medium
Fire and Safety Services & Emergency Management			
Establish and maintain an appropriate stockpile of Personal Protective Equipment		Board of Selectmen, Emergency Management Director	High
Upload the Town's Disaster Recovery Plan to the Town website	Link to NECCOG Regional Plan	Website Admins	Medium
Local identity & Branding			
Establish a branding "stylebook" for all Town communications	Includes logos, wordmarks, colors, taglines and slogans	Branding Implementation Subcommittee, Selectmen's Office	High
Roll out the new logos to Departments, Commissions, Committees	Add logo, fonts & colors to all electronic documents (letterhead, email, other documents i.e. ordinance book cover, annual report, budget book	Website Admins	High
Establish and maintain an internal promotional calendar for important Town events	Includes annual promotional budget requirements	Branding, EDC, Trails, Recreation Department, Library	High

Consolidate existing social media pages under the municipal page		Website Admins, Social Media Intern, Existing Page Administrators	Medium
Housing			
Draft and adopt an Affordable Housing Plan for Thompson	Issue RFQ January 2021, for completion by 30 June 2021. Plan must specifically address needs for senior housing	Director of planning & Development, Planning & Zoning Commission, Housing Authority	High
Economic Development			
Establish a revolving account for EDC, for self-sustaining or revenue-generating projects	Receive funds for Community Garden, 11th Village rentals	EDC, Finance Office	High
Bring the Eleventh Village online	Projected opening date 1 May 2021 with 2-3 permanent "chalets" completed	EDC, Thompson Business Association, Recreation Department, Director of Planning & Development, Board of Selectmen	High
Establish a schedule for regular press releases	Utilize press contact list provided by Sullivan & LeShane	EDC, Branding, Director of Planning & Development, Social Media Intern	High
Establish a regular schedule for EDC webpage updates		EDC, Website Admins, Social Media Intern	High
Update the welcome package for new businesses		EDC, Website Admins	High
Transportation			
Request DOT restriping of Route 12' to 11' lanes	In conjunction with sidewalk repairs along Route 12 from Rawson Ave to Route 200. Ideally incorporate bike-friendly catch-basin grates	First Selectman, Director of Planning & Development, MSRAC	High

Trim vegetation at potentially hazardous locations to improve sightlines, or replace with lower vegetation.	In conjunction with sidewalk repairs along Route 12 from Rawson Ave to Route 200.	Department of Public Works	High
Recreation & Trails			
Work with other departments and organizations to partner with Recreation when planning public events	Share Recreation email lists, cross-posting relevant events and information via social media	Recreation Department, local event organizers	High
Create an online calendar of events		Recreation Department, local event organizers, Web Admins	High
Actively encourage use of the Recreation website to other organizations for online event registration.		Recreation Department, local event organizers, Web Admins	High
Conduct a yearly walk-through of public recreation facilities and establish a calendar of park maintenance	To include all parks, playgrounds and recreational fields	First Selectman, Director of Public Works, Recreation Director	High
Establish an annual review of Trail maintenance needs with the Department of Public Works		First Selectman, Director of Public Works, Recreation Director, Trails Committee	High
Install stone dust on critical sections of the Air Line State Park Trail		Department of Public Works	High
Complete Preliminary Concept Designs for Train Wreck Park	Final report materials to be used in support of grants to CT Humanities, NEA Placemaking and NEH Public Humanities Grants	Trails Committee, Thompson Historical Society, NPS partners, Uconn student team, Director of Planning & Development	High
Establish an annual calendar of volunteer work days		Trails Committee	High
Actively share agendas and invite partnerships with compatible organizations	Ongoing	Trails Committee	Medium

Water Resources			
Develop a mitigation plan for Langers Pond Dam,	Initiated	Board of Selectmen, Director of Public Works, Director of Planning & Development	High
Ensure revisions to the subdivision regulations meet the requirements of the MS4 permit	Including but not limited to: Reduction of effective impervious cover in the MS4 urban areas, utilization of green infrastructure/low impact development (GI/LID) practices	Planning & Zoning Commission, Director of Planning & Development, Wetlands Agent	High
Research the potential impact of the existing salt storage facility located at the Public Works Garage	Initiated	Director of Public Works, Director of Planning & Development	High
Education			
Hire and retain engaged, enthusiastic, focused, and professional staff.	Ongoing	Board of Education, School Administration	High
Provide faculty and staff with the appropriate supports to ensure they meet with success	Ongoing	Board of Education, School Administration	High
Continually revise curriculum to meet or exceed state and federal standards.	Ongoing	Board of Education, School Administration	High
Develop fiscally efficient and accountable budgets that maximize resources.	Ongoing	Board of Education, School Administration	High
Complete the addition of security gates		Building Committee, Operations Manager	High
Upgrade the entire telephone system and install exterior speakers		Building Committee, Operations Manager	High

Initiate the repair of the school roof.		Building Committee, Operations Manager, School Administration, Board of Selectmen	High
Library Services			
Develop a 10-year facility maintenance plan		Library Director, Building Committee, Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance	High
Renewable Energy & Energy Conservation			
Work with CT Green Bank to assess the potential for municipal solar collection sites.	Initiated	Building Committee, Director of Planning & Development, Director of Public Works, Board of Selectmen	High
Work with the Center for Ecotechnology to develop food waste diversion to the Fort Hill Farm biodigester.	Strategies must include policies and best practices for municipal (school) and private business sources.	Fort Hill Farms, Director of Planning & Development, Board of Selectmen, Public & Private Schools, private businesses	High
Future Land Use			
PZC to update Subdivision Regulations	Particularly regarding construction of new roads, shared driveways and cul-de-sacs; requirements for the inclusion of sidewalks; and standards for Open Space set-asides and Conservation Subdivisions	Planning & Zoning Commission, Director of Planning & Development, Land Use Staff	High

Table 2 Short Term Years 1-3

Short Term - 1 to 3 Years			
Action	Sub-Actions/Notes	Assigned To	Priority
Governance & Civic Engagement			
Lower barriers for residents to participate in public meetings	Develop a permanent protocol for meetings that includes online and in-person engagement options	Board of Selectmen	High
Establish formal policies for Board/Committee/Commission members, recording secretaries and other staff responsible for hosting.	Define protocols for attendees, for committee Chairs in communicating the flow of the meeting to the public, and for recording secretaries to manage participants entering meetings or requesting to speak.	Board of Selectmen, Committee Chairs, Recording Secretaries	High
Purchase software to fully digitize the Code of Ordinances.		Board of Selectmen, Town Clerk, Building Office Admin	High
Increase the frequency of online communication to residents by local government	Use email blasts to subscribers, website updates & social media posts	Website Admins, Social Media Intern	Medium
Expand communications to better take advantage of mobile technology		Website Admins, Selectmen's Office	Medium
Prioritize the information that residents seek out the most, using Google analytics.	Add FAQ page to Town website	Website Admins & Social Media Intern	Medium
Add a monthly or quarterly online-only newsletter, while still producing semi-annual hard-copy Selectmen's Updates	Transition over time to online-only delivery, with paper copies sent only on request	Website Admins, Social Media Intern, Selectmen's Office	Medium
Restart periodic events to gather direct feedback from residents		Branding Implementation Subcommittee & partners	Medium

Develop a “Citizens’ Academy”	To be developed based on feedback from public feedback events	Branding Implementation Subcommittee & partners	Medium
Infrastructure & Public Works			
Implement Best Management Practices (BMP) for each of the 6 Minimum Control Measures of the MS4 permit	As specifically described in the Storm Water Management Plan	Department of Public Works	High
Establish a volunteer maintenance committee for Town cemeteries		Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Thompson Historical Society, Thompson Together	High
Develop programs featuring Thompson cemeteries	Organized cleanup days, walking tours, genealogy lectures, citizen science events	Conservation Commission, Thompson Historical Society, Thompson Together, Cemeteries Commission (new)	Medium
Engage a “Stormwater Corps” student team under the NEMO program at UConn to conduct an analysis for Thompson and develop an impervious cover disconnection action plan		Director of Planning & Development, NEMO Program	Medium
Develop a clear violation and enforcement policy for Transfer and Recycling Station use		Board of Selectmen, Department of Public Works, Transfer Station Advisory Committee	Medium
Establish an equitable fee schedule for smaller commercial trash haulers		Board of Selectmen, Department of Public Works, Transfer Station Advisory Committee	Medium
Develop additional grass-roots initiatives to tackle local roadside litter		Recreation Department, Thompson Together, Conservation Commission, Branding, Director of Planning & Development	Medium

Fire and Safety Services & Emergency Management			
Establish and transition to an appropriate funding and management structure for the volunteer fire departments.		Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Fire Advisory Committee, Fire Chiefs	High
Pursue grant funding to retrofit or replace the Community Fire House	CDBG or USDA Rural Facilities Grants	Director of Planning & Development, Fire Advisory Committee, Fire Chief	High
Initiate a public service campaign to encourage proper posting of address numbers		Selectmen's Office, Emergency Services	High
Contract a direct-to-mobile emergency alert system for residents		Board of Selectmen, Emergency Services	High
Solicit regular safety inspections and certification of public lighting and playground equipment by the Town's liability insurance carrier.		Finance Office, Selectman's Office	High
Incorporate regular maintenance of public lighting by DPW.		Department of Public Works	High
Compile a photographic inventory of public facilities and infrastructure		Emergency Services, Selectmen's Office	High
Form a permanent disaster response committee	Focus to be on socio-economic recovery planning	Board of Selectmen, Emergency Services, Director of Planning & Development	High
Inventory local street signs, replacing annually as needed		Department of Public Works	Medium
Explore options for additional emergency shelter locations		Emergency Services, Board of Selectmen	Medium
Improve the Incentive Structure for Volunteer Firefighters		Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Tax Office, Fire Advisory Committee, Fire Chiefs	Medium

Local identity & Branding			
Initiate phased installation of wayfinding signs	Continue to pursue grant funding for installation as needed	Director of Planning & Development, Board of Selectmen	High
Compile a Guidebook for new businesses and developers		EDC, Planning & Development Office, Building Office, Assessor's Office	High
Develop outdoor recreation assets in alignment with the "Trail Town" report from the National Park Service assistance program	Train Wreck Park to be the first implementation project	Director of Planning & Development, Trails Committee, Recreation Department, EDC	High
Improve the consistency of all marketing efforts, across platforms		Branding, Selectmen's office, Social Media intern	High
Develop online and print campaigns to drive attention to Thompson's key outdoor attractions		Branding, EDC, Recreation Department, Director of Planning & Development, Social Media Intern	High
Further refine formal social media strategies and policies	Include an optimized schedule for daily posting and an improved use of analytics tools.	Branding, Selectmen's office, Social Media intern	Medium
Bulk-ordered branded items to be replaced as they are depleted.	Envelopes, business cards	Department Directors	Medium
Develop public events at key tourism and recreation sites		Branding, Thompson Trails, Recreation Department, Agriculture Commission, EDC, TBA, Thompson Historical Society	Medium
Develop public events tied to key economic development projects	11th Village, Train Wreck Park, Trail Races	Branding, EDC, Director of Planning & Development	Medium

Offer assistance to local farms who want to increase their public profile		Branding, Agriculture Commission	Medium
Add historic markers to the 10 Village centers	Pursue grant funding through the William G. Pomeroy Foundation	Director of Planning & Development, Historical Society	Medium
Housing			
Publish a guidebook for property owners in the Downtown Mill Rehabilitation District	Provide information on how to take advantage of the Rehabilitation Area tax incentives	Selectmen's Office, Planning & Development Office	High
Compile an inventory of buildable vacant parcels suitable for subdivision, multi-family or mixed-use development	To be featured on the municipal website, with frequent updates	Planning & Development Office, Website Admins, local real estate professionals	Medium
Create a budget line item for advertising Thompson real estate to regional urban centers		EDC, Director of Planning & Development, local real estate professionals	Medium
Economic Development			
Develop a matrix of potential incentives for businesses	To be offered based on consistency with Thompson's identified priorities and published on the EDC website.	EDC, Board of Selectmen, Director of Planning & Development, Assessor	High
Promote and pursue funding opportunities to support development of the small business center at 65 Main Street.		Director of Planning & Development	High
Provide support for efforts to increase tourism to Thompson	Print, online	EDC, Branding, Director of Planning & Development	High
Create promotional materials related to ongoing EDC initiatives	11th Village, Train Wreck Park, 65 Main Projects	EDC, Branding, Director of Planning & Development	High

Initiate a formal campaign to support Thompson businesses for Small Business Saturday		EDC, Thompson Business Association, Branding, Director of Planning & Development	High
Publish a 10-year plan for EDC projects	Include timelines and funding goals	EDC, Director of Planning & Development, local real estate professionals	High
Craft promotional campaign materials to be sent to Chambers of Commerce, commercial real estate brokers and other relevant organizations, highlighting the advantages Thompson offers to businesses		EDC, Branding, Director of Planning & Development	Medium
Network with other local & regional Economic Development Commissions		EDC	Medium
Enhance Thompson's appeal for adventure racers and recreational cyclists	Encourage local businesses to invest in covered bike racks. Encourage local restaurants to plan menus aimed at cyclists.	EDC, Branding, Trails Committee, Thompson Business Association, race organizers	Medium
Transportation			
Add signage that indicates to share the road with bicyclists	Coordinate with the Trails Committee on optimal locations.	Department of Public Works, Trails Committee	High
Add a pedestrian crossing sign at the Walker Street crosswalk.		Department of Public Works	High
Install Signage at the intersection of Routes 12 & 193	To indicate Trail Parking, West Thompson Dam, Downtown	Office of Planning & Development via private vendor	High
Add active pedestrian protection at the Air Line Trail Crossing at Route 193	Painted crosswalk, warning signs on the trail for road crossing, directional signs for parking areas.	Office of Planning & Development via private vendor	High
Install a new painted crosswalk by the Airline Trail parking lot on Route 12	Ideal location TBD with assistance from Trails Committee	Department of Public Works, Trails Committee	High

Add safety signage at the New Road intersection with the Air Line Trail		Department of Public Works, Trails Committee	High
Regrade/repair sections of the trails that are not bike friendly.	Includes addition of stone dust	Department of Public Works, Trails Committee	High
Add painted crosswalks from the former Knights of Columbus parking lot to the dance studio at 1020 Riverside Drive.		Department of Public Works	High
Develop a Sidewalk Master Plan	Inventory existing conditions and use that to plan repairs, new connections and new ramps.	Director of Planning & Development, Director of Public Works, MSRAC	High
Work with new developments to provide or improve sidewalks	Includes revision of Subdivision Regulations as described in Section 17	Planning & Zoning Commission, Director of Planning & Development, Director of Public Works	High
Add a pedestrian crossing sign with down arrow plaque to all crosswalks where missing.		Department of Public Works	Medium
Install pedestrian signage at the railroad crossing on Main Street west of Route 12.		Department of Public Works	Medium
Add additional directional/safety signage at trailheads and along the trails.		Department of Public Works, Trails Committee	Medium
Agriculture			
Develop policies to address food waste and recovery.	Such policies should incorporate the diversion of commercial and institutional food waste to the anaerobic bio-digester located at Fort Hill Farms.	Board of Selectmen, Director of Planning & Development, Fort Hill Farms, Center for EcoTechnology, Public & Private Schools, Private Food Businesses	High

Develop a local "Farm-to-School" distribution program		Public & Private Schools, Agriculture Commission, local farmers, Director of Planning & Development	High
Start a "Buy Local" Campaign		Agriculture Commission, local farmers, Director of Planning & Development, EDC, Branding, Thompson Business Association	High
Develop promotional materials for local growers and producers.		Agriculture Commission, local farmers, Director of Planning & Development, EDC, Branding, Thompson Business Association	Medium
Develop a program to assist farm businesses in using online resources		Agriculture Commission, local farmers, Director of Planning & Development, EDC, Branding, Thompson Business Association	Medium
Organize and Conduct annual farm tours		Agriculture Commission, local farmers, Director of Planning & Development, EDC, Branding, Thompson Business Association	Medium
Recreation & Trails			
Develop a 10-year plan for Recreation properties and facilities.		First Selectman, Director of Public Works, Recreation Director	High

Create at least one DPW position with the primary responsibility of park maintenance		First Selectman, Director of Public Works, Recreation Director	High
Establish new weekly seniors programs and adult wellness programs		Recreation Commission, Public Library	High
Establish a winter concert series		Recreation Commission, Public Library, Public Schools	Medium
Create promotional video highlighting recreation assets		Recreation Commission, Social Media Intern, Branding, Web Admins	Medium
Develop cooperative partnerships to market and promote local recreation assets to potential visitors		Recreation Department, Trails Committee, EDC, Branding, Thompson Business Association	Medium
Seek grant funding for Recreation Department facility repairs & construction		Recreation Director, Director of Planning & Development	Medium
Begin construction and activation of Train Wreck Park	Plan phases according to any grants or assistance program awards received.	Trails Committee, Board of Selectmen, Department of Public Works	High
Secure agreements with abutting property owners for additional access points to the Airline Trail.		Board of Selectmen, Trails Committee, private landowners	High
Add trail signage and amenities such as benches.	Signs added as part of the Town-wide Wayfinding project, in addition to any subsequent grants received	Trails Committee, Board of Selectmen, Department of Public Works	High
Improve parking at trail access points.		Department of Public Works	High
Establish a plan for volunteer recruitment and succession		Trails Committee	Medium

Support Cyclocross and “Gravel Grinder” competitions	Natchaug Epic, Ri-Ma-Conn relay, etc	Trails Committee, EDC, Branding, Recreation Department Thompson Business Association, race organizers	Medium
Support the development of trails and events for mountain biking and recreational bike use		Trails Committee, Recreation Department, Department of Public Works	Medium
Partner with the CT Trails Census to observe trends in trail use		Trails Committee, CT Trails Census	Medium
<u>Open Space & Conservation</u>			
Determine the ideal relationship of Thompson’s open space to its developed land, based on the best available data.	Adjust land-use regulations and acquisition strategies accordingly	Conservation Commission, Board of Selectmen, Planning & Zoning Commission	High
Increase the percentage of permanently protected parcels in Thompson	Pursue appropriate conservation easements for private landowners; transfer landlocked town-owned parcels to land conservation organizations where properties are adjacent.	Conservation Commission, Board of Selectmen	High
Pursue grant funding to enable acquisition of identified parcels for protection		Conservation Officer, Director of Planning & Development	Medium
Prioritize particularly threatened land-cover types or known sensitive wildlife habitats		Conservation Officer, Eastern CT Conservation District	Medium
Encourage homeowners and businesses to adopt downcast lighting	Publish online guidance documents, create public information campaigns	Conservation Commission, ECCD, Director of Planning & Development, Web Admins, Social Media Intern	Medium
<u>Water Resources</u>			
Include emergency operation information for all dams identified by DEEP as significant hazard and high hazard in Thompson’s Emergency Operation Plan		Emergency Management Director	High

Education			
Increase public engagement using a variety of communication modes and social media platforms		School Administration	High
Develop and refine the six career pathways within the TMHS curriculum		Board of Education, School Administration	High
Encourage faculty to take training offered by the district and the Connecticut State Department of Education		School Administration	High
Launch the Public Relations Campaign for Portrait of a Graduate		Board of Education, School Administration	High
Complete the Portrait of a Graduate final plan		Board of Education, School Administration	High
Bring the aquaponics farm online		School Administration, Trifecta Aquaponics	High
Activate agreements with farmers	Also work on food waste capture back to the Fort Hill Farms anaerobic biodigester	School Administration, local farms	High
Launch the Walking School Bus pilot	Grant notification pending, anticipated for activation October 2021	Superintendent of Schools, Director of Planning & Development, CT Dept. of Public Health, Security Staffers	Medium
Library Services			
Develop additional early literacy programs		Library Director, Public Schools, Recreation Department	High
Provide additional new technology for use by the community		Library Staff, Library Trustees	High
Develop programs for lectures, author's readings, music and fine arts		Library Staff, Library Trustees	High

Develop new fundraising campaigns	Events-based campaigns and direct appeals	Library Director, Library Trustees, Friends of the Library	High
Transition the Thompson Historical Society Archive to the Public Library		Library Staff, Thompson Historical Society	High
Upgrade the technical capacity of the Library to live-stream municipal functions to the Town's YouTube channel		Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Library Director	High
Upgrade the Community Center Public Address system.		Library Director, Library Trustees	Medium
<u>Renewable Energy & Energy Conservation</u>			
Annually review and adjust Zoning regulations to encourage renewable energy development		Planning & Zoning Commission, Land Use Staff	High
PZC should encourage incorporation of renewable energy sources	Specifically applicable to Special Permit activities (subdivision, commercial uses)	Planning & Zoning Commission, Land Use Staff	High
Form a committee to explore potential for adding municipal hydroelectricity generation		Board of Selectmen	Medium
Identify and pursue suggested energy efficiency actions toward certification by the Sustainable CT program.		Director of Planning & Development	Medium
<u>Future Land Use</u>			
Develop a strategy of adaptive reuse for vacant or distressed Town owned properties	Prioritize the rehabilitation and programming for 65 Main Street	Director of Planning & Development, Board of Selectmen, Economic Development Commission, MSRAC, Thompson Historical Society	High
Create potential redevelopment plans for key brownfield properties		MSRAC, Director of Planning & Development, Board of Selectmen	High

Partner with the ECLB on high-priority brownfield projects within Thompson		MSRAC, Director of Planning & Development, Board of Selectmen, ECLB	High
Reach out to private owners of threatened properties with significant Town history, to assist them with appropriate planning.		Director of Planning & Development, Thompson Historical Society, private owners	Medium

Table 3 Medium Term Years 3-5

Medium Term 3-5 Years			
Action	Sub-Actions	Assigned To	Priority
<u>Governance & Civic Engagement</u>			
Develop an interactive budgeting tool to embed on the municipal website		Website Admins, Selectmen's Office, Finance Office	Medium
<u>Infrastructure & Public Works</u>			
Develop municipal information campaigns to encourage homeowners to adopt practices to disconnect stormwater via the use of rain gardens or rain barrels.	Recommendations are also provided in the Watershed Plan for commercial properties such as the mills, that can be included as part of site redevelopment.	Conservation Commission, Inland Wetlands Commission, Eastern CT Conservation District, Director of Planning & Development	Medium
<u>Fire and Safety Services & Emergency Management</u>			
Develop a regional Ranger program		Board of Selectmen, NECCOG, Trails Committee	Medium

Identify problem traffic areas and develop non-policing solutions to reduce speeds and mitigate hazards		Board of Selectmen, Department of Public Works, Director of Planning & Development	Medium
Analyze call patterns to Troop D to identify common complaints and violations, in order to develop non-policing solutions.		Selectmen's Office	Medium
Local identity & Branding			
Build partnerships with trail racing event organizations		Branding, EDC, Trails Committee, Recreation Department, race organizers	High
Develop & promote annual agritourism events		Branding, EDC, Agriculture Commission, local farmers	Medium
Housing			
Pursue designation of one or more Incentive Housing Zones or Neighborhood Revitalization Zones		Board of Selectmen, Director of Planning & Development, Planning & Zoning Commission	High
Host classes for local residents interested in purchasing, rehabbing or building small multi-family dwellings or mixed-use properties		Director of Planning & Development, Public Library, local real estate professionals, local finance institutions	Medium
Transportation			
Add warning signs to motorists approaching the Air Line Trail crossing at Route 193		Department of Public Works	High
Replace old and faded pedestrian signs with new fluorescent signs per MUTCD	Coordinate with ConnDOT where applicable	Department of Public Works, ConnDOT	High
Redirect the lighting at the corner of Walker Street and Route 12		Department of Public Works	High

Widen the crosswalks in front of the library on Walker Street and on Main Street at Walker Street.		Department of Public Works	High
Move the stop bar on Main Street and Route 12 closer to the intersection.	Evaluate the potential for a curb extension on the southwest corner to shorten the pedestrian crossing distance.	Department of Public Works	Medium
Improvement of the intersection at Route 12/Route 200/Park Street		Department of Public Works, MSRAC, Director of Planning & Development	Medium
Evaluate the need for new crosswalks at Market Street, Central Street and Riverside Drive.		Department of Public Works, MSRAC, Director of Planning & Development	Medium
Add sharrows for some locations along Route 12	In conjunction with repainting the Main Street center lines	Department of Public Works	Medium
Add a second set of signs at the junction of Route 12/200		Department of Public Works	Medium
Coordinate with the bakery on Main Street concerning truck movements from Main Street turning onto Route 12		Department of Public Works, First Selectman, Director of Planning & Development, Bakery	Medium
Coordinate with Cumberland Farms to study the vehicle circulation in and out of the site	Determine options to improve access and circulation. One option should explore using the adjacent parcel (owned by Cumberland Farms) to the south to expand parking and turn around areas for trucks.	Department of Public Works, First Selectman, Director of Planning & Development, Store owner	Medium

Coordinate with Cumberland Farms to accept deliveries in off hours only.		First Selectman, Director of Planning & Development, Store owner	Medium
Agriculture			
Develop and support marketing infrastructure for local farmers	Start with local farmers' market, escalate to a central food hub for local farmers	Agriculture Commission, local farmers, Director of Planning & Development, EDC, Branding, Thompson Business Association	High
Recreation & Trails			
Create online and print guides to solicit sponsors for Recreation Department scholarships.	Establish yearly fundraising goals.	Recreation Commission	Medium
Seek grant funding for Trails equipment and programming enhancements	Prioritize TAP grant once the program reopens	Director of Planning & Development, Trails Committee	High
Pursue additional connections between existing trails		Trails Committee, Board of Selectmen	Medium
Maintain up-to-date mapping and media links to related organizations		Trails Committee, Web Admins	Medium
Open Space & Conservation			
Organize regular volunteer workdays to control invasive plant species		Conservation Commission, ECCD, TLGV	Medium
Cultivate strong relationships with conservation & stewardship organizations	Partner on targeted conservation projects and citizen science initiatives	Conservation Commission, Trails Committee, ECCD, TLGV	Medium
Water Resources			
Re-inventory Thompson's wetlands and watercourses to reflect current conditions	Funding and other resources must be made available	Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Wetlands Agent	Medium

Education			
Invest in technology to meet the educational needs of all our students.	Periodically assess & upgrade in-school tech	Board of Education, School Administrators, Board of Finance	High
Align district curriculum to meet the Portrait of a Graduate community vision.		Board of Education, School Administrators	High
Create opportunities for social interaction between students from the public schools and Marianapolis Preparatory School		Public School Administrators, Marianapolis Administrators, Recreation Department	Medium
Library Services			
Increase the number of educational programs and other afterschool programs for all ages.	Consultation with QVCC, Nichols College, UConn and the regional vocational high schools may be possible to create an adult education program based at the library.	Thompson Public Library, Recreation Department, Thompson Public Schools and TEEG	Medium
Continue to upgrade and adapt the library website to meet user needs		Library Director, Library Trustees	Medium
Develop more volunteer opportunities connected to the Library.		Library Staff	Medium
Renewable Energy & Energy Conservation			
Designate an ombudsman to shepherd applications for commercial renewable energy installations through all aspects of the Town permitting process	Can be an existing member of staff	Land Use Staff	Medium
Compile and publish guides to energy efficiency resources for homeowners		Building Office, Land Use Staff, Center for Ecotechnology	Medium

Table 4 Long Term Years 5-10

Long Term - Years 5-10			
<u>Action</u>	<u>Sub-Actions</u>	<u>Assigned To</u>	<u>Priority</u>
<u>Governance & Civic Engagement</u>			
Develop a program for civics education with an emphasis on local governance		Public Schools, Board of Education, Thompson Historical Society	Medium
<u>Infrastructure & Public Works</u>			
Periodically assess the rates of taxation vs density in relation to municipal funding needs		Finance Office, Planning & Zoning Commission	High
Install monitor wells at Bull Hill to monitor groundwater levels.	Based on that information, either add drainage or raise the fields to bring them back to full usability.	Board of Selectmen, Department of Public Works	High
Reevaluate the various Pay-As-You-Throw options for the Transfer Station		Board of Selectmen, Department of Public Works, Transfer Station Advisory Committee	Medium
Explore the possibility of installation of remote cameras in problematic areas for rubbish dumping.		Board of Selectmen, Department of Public Works, Transfer Station Advisory Committee	Medium
<u>Fire and Safety Services & Emergency Management</u>			
Explore expansion of the Constable program to include additional duties authorized by statute.		Board of Selectmen, Ordinance Committee	Medium

Local identity & Branding			
Work with local postmaster to rename Thompson zip codes		Selectmen's Office, Postmaster	Medium
Transportation			
Develop a master plan for road maintenance, with costs assigned, and add to the Capital Improvement Program	To be submitted to the Board of Selectmen and PZC for approval. Funds must be added to the budget each year in accordance with said document. Development of such a plan would require consultants to drive extensively on local roads, grade their condition, determine what type of maintenance/repair is necessary, and develop cost estimates. Additional survey and design plans may be required, especially if there are drainage issues.	Board of Selectmen, Planning & Zoning Commission, Director of Public Works	High
Prepare a Sidewalk Master Plan showing existing interconnections and potential for future connection/extensions	Also indicate areas prioritized for repairs. Develop cost estimates to use in pursuit of construction funding	Board of Selectmen, Planning & Zoning Commission, Director of Public Works, Director of Planning & Development	High
Make all crossings ADA accessible with handicap ramps and detectable warning strips	Year 1: Hire consultant to prepare a map of existing sidewalks and ramps - determine number of ramps to be repaired - determine costs of ramps to be repaired - determine locations of new ramps. Year 2: pursue project funding. Year 3: Install on Town roads. Year 4: Submit design to ConnDOT for State roads. Year 5: install on State roads following DOT approval	Board of Selectmen, Director of Public Works, Director of Planning & Development	High
Develop a plan for the improvement of the intersection of Route 12/Buckley Hill Road		Board of Selectmen, MSRAC, Director of Public Works	High
Develop a plan for the improvement of the intersection of the northern terminus of Main Street with Route 12.		Board of Selectmen, MSRAC, Director of Public Works	High
Replace catch basin grates with bike friendly grates		Department of Public Works	Medium

Construct a new sidewalk from the medical facility by Westside Drive on the west side of Route 12 to meet the existing sidewalk at Park Street/Route 200		Board of Selectmen, Director of Public Works, Director of Planning & Development	Medium
Evaluate the need for grade separation of the Airline Trail at Route 193.	Assumes a new interchange at I-395/Route 193 is constructed	Board of Selectmen, Director of Public Works, Director of Planning & Development	Medium
Agriculture			
Continue the development of economic development initiatives aimed at agricultural and food system start-ups		Director of Planning & Development, EDC, Agricultural Commission	Medium
Recreation & Trails			
Re-activate and add Recreation Department programs at Bull Hill Recreation Area	Dependent on improvement of drainage	Board of Selectmen, Director of Public Works, Recreation Director	High
Pursue acquisitions of new trail corridors and connectors	As opportunities arise	Trails Committee, Board of Selectmen	Medium
Develop partnerships throughout the trail community	Ongoing/long-term	Trails Committee	Medium
Open Space & Conservation			
Develop engaging educational programs for local residents to encourage better practices at home	Examples: alternatives to lawns, rain gardening, pollinator gardening, "eat the invasives" dinners	Conservation Commission, ECCD, TLGV	Medium
Water Resources			
Provide adequate funding to complete the work required by DEEP Consent Order No. WC5129.		Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance	High

Before any expansion of sanitary sewers beyond the Marianapolis Preparatory School is planned, perform a study of ground water availability		Board of Selectmen	High
Provide adequate funding to Public Works Department to perform actions required by the MS4 permit.		Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance	High
Update the flood prevention ordinance to current standards set by FEMA	Once FEMA's updated mapping of flood prone areas is available in GIS form	Board of Selectmen, Ordinance Committee, Wetlands Agent	Medium
Develop a monitoring system for complying with the MS4 permit	Requires commitment of funding. Consider adding a layer for MS4 data in the MapGeo GIS application.	Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Director of Public Works, Wetlands Agent	Medium
For Little Pond and Quaddick Reservoir, develop and provide advice to homeowners on property management techniques that minimize the import of nutrients into those waterbodies.		Eastern CT Conservation District, Wetlands Agent, Inland Wetlands Commission, Web Admins	Medium
Education			
Provide state of the art instruction with learning plans aligned to student strengths	Ongoing/Long-Term	Board of Education, School Administrators	High
Work to embrace cultural and racial diversity through curriculum revision, hiring practices, course development		Board of Education, School Administrators	High
Develop funding and action plans to repair the locker rooms and gymnasium floors at TMHS.		Board of Education, School Administrators, Building Committee	High

Library Services			
Complete the critical facility repairs according to the ten-year plan	Replacement of the heat pump units; replace the original boiler; replace the roof; replace the carpeting; upgrade the telephone system; replace the underground oil tank	Library Director, Building Committee, Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance	High
Install solar panels	Following roof replacement	Library Director, Building Committee, Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance	Medium
Renewable Energy & Energy Conservation			
Set a goal to install solar collectors on at least one municipal building and/or derive 50% of municipal energy from renewable sources by 2030.		Board of Selectmen, Building Committee	High

Appendices

Appendix A Chapter 126 Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes

Sec. 8-23. Preparation, amendment or adoption of plan of conservation and development. (a)(1) At least once every ten years, the commission shall prepare or amend and shall adopt a plan of conservation and development for the municipality. Following adoption, the commission shall regularly review and maintain such plan. The commission may adopt such geographical, functional or other amendments to the plan or parts of the plan, in accordance with the provisions of this section, as it deems necessary. The commission may, at any time, prepare, amend and adopt plans for the redevelopment and improvement of districts or neighborhoods which, in its judgment, contain special problems or opportunities or show a trend toward lower land values.

(2) If a plan is not amended decennially, the chief elected official of the municipality shall submit a letter to the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management and the Commissioners of Transportation, Energy and Environmental Protection and Economic and Community Development that explains why such plan was not amended. A copy of such letter shall be included in each application by the municipality for discretionary state funding submitted to any state agency.

(b) On and after July 1, 2016, a municipality that fails to comply with the requirements of subdivisions (1) and (2) of subsection (a) of this section shall be ineligible for discretionary state funding unless such prohibition is expressly waived by the secretary.

(c) In the preparation of such plan, the commission may appoint one or more special committees to develop and make recommendations for the plan. The membership of any special committee may include: Residents of the municipality and representatives of local boards dealing with zoning, inland wetlands, conservation, recreation, education, public works, finance, redevelopment, general government and other municipal functions. In performing its duties under this section, the commission or any special committee may accept information from any source or solicit input from any organization or individual. The commission or any special committee may hold public informational meetings or organize other activities to inform residents about the process of preparing the plan.

(d) In preparing such plan, the commission or any special committee shall consider the following: (1) The community development action plan of the municipality, if any, (2) the need for affordable housing, (3) the need for protection of existing and potential public surface and ground drinking water supplies, (4) the use of cluster development and other development patterns to the extent consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity within the municipality, (5) the state plan of conservation and development adopted pursuant to chapter 297, (6) the regional plan of conservation and development adopted pursuant to section 8-35a, (7) physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends, (8) the needs of the municipality including, but not limited to, human resources, education, health, housing, recreation, social services, public utilities, public protection, transportation and circulation and cultural and interpersonal communications, (9) the objectives of energy-efficient patterns of development, the use of solar and other renewable forms of energy and energy conservation, (10) protection and preservation of agriculture, (11) the most recent sea level change scenario updated pursuant to subsection (b) of section 25-68o, and (12) the need for technology infrastructure in the municipality.

(e) (1) Such plan of conservation and development shall (A) be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality, (B) provide for a system of principal thoroughfares, parkways, bridges, streets, sidewalks, multipurpose trails and

other public ways as appropriate, (C) be designed to promote, with the greatest efficiency and economy, the coordinated development of the municipality and the general welfare and prosperity of its people and identify areas where it is feasible and prudent (i) to have compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns and land reuse, and (ii) to promote such development patterns and land reuse, (D) recommend the most desirable use of land within the municipality for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial, conservation, agricultural and other purposes and include a map showing such proposed land uses, (E) recommend the most desirable density of population in the several parts of the municipality, (F) note any inconsistencies with the following growth management principles: (i) Redevelopment and revitalization of commercial centers and areas of mixed land uses with existing or planned physical infrastructure; (ii) expansion of housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs; (iii) concentration of development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options and land reuse; (iv) conservation and restoration of the natural environment, cultural and historical resources and existing farmlands; (v) protection of environmental assets critical to public health and safety; and (vi) integration of planning across all levels of government to address issues on a local, regional and state-wide basis, (G) make provision for the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multifamily dwellings, consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity, for all residents of the municipality and the planning region in which the municipality is located, as designated by the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management under section 16a-4a, (H) 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 identified in the state's consolidated plan for housing and community development prepared pursuant to section 8-37t and in the housing component and the other components of the state plan of conservation and development prepared pursuant to chapter 297, and (I) consider allowing older adults and persons with a disability the ability to live in their homes and communities whenever possible. Such plan may: (i) Permit home sharing in single-family zones between up to four adult persons of any age with a disability or who are sixty years of age or older, whether or not related, who receive supportive services in the home; (ii) allow accessory apartments for persons with a disability or persons sixty years of age or older, or their caregivers, in all residential zones, subject to municipal zoning regulations concerning design and long-term use of the principal property after it is no longer in use by such persons; and (iii) expand the definition of "family" in single-family zones to allow for accessory apartments for persons sixty years of age or older, persons with a disability or their caregivers. In preparing such plan the commission shall consider focusing development and revitalization in areas with existing or planned physical infrastructure.

(2) For any municipality that is contiguous to Long Island Sound, such plan shall be (A) consistent with the municipal coastal program requirements of sections 22a-101 to 22a-104, inclusive, (B) made with reasonable consideration for restoration and protection of the ecosystem and habitat of Long Island Sound, and (C) designed to reduce hypoxia, pathogens, toxic contaminants and floatable debris in Long Island Sound.

(f) Such plan may show the commission's and any special committee's recommendation for (1) conservation and preservation of traprock and other ridgelines, (2) airports, parks, playgrounds and other public grounds, (3) the general location, relocation and improvement of schools and other public buildings, (4) the general location and extent of public utilities and terminals, whether publicly or privately owned, for water, light, power, transit and other purposes, (5) the extent and location of public housing projects, (6) programs for the implementation of the plan, including (A) a schedule, (B) a budget for public capital projects, (C) a program for enactment and enforcement of zoning and subdivision controls, building and housing codes and safety regulations, (D) plans for implementation of affordable housing, (E) plans for open space acquisition and greenways protection and development, and (F) plans for corridor management areas along limited access highways or rail lines, designated under section 16a-27, (7) proposed

priority funding areas, and (8) any other recommendations as will, in the commission's or any special committee's judgment, be beneficial to the municipality. The plan may include any necessary and related maps, explanatory material, photographs, charts or other pertinent data and information relative to the past, present and future trends of the municipality.

(g) Any municipal plan of conservation and development scheduled for adoption on or after July 1, 2015, shall identify the general location and extent of any (1) areas served by existing sewerage systems, (2) areas where sewerage systems are planned, and (3) areas where sewers are to be avoided. In identifying such areas, the commission shall consider the provisions of this section and the priority funding area provisions of chapter 297a.

(h) (1) A plan of conservation and development or any part thereof or amendment thereto prepared by the commission or any special committee shall be reviewed, and may be amended, by the commission prior to scheduling at least one public hearing on adoption.

(2) At least sixty-five days prior to the public hearing on adoption, the commission shall submit a copy of such plan or part thereof or amendment thereto for review and comment to the legislative body or, in the case of a municipality for which the legislative body of the municipality is a town meeting or representative town meeting, to the board of selectmen. The legislative body or board of selectmen, as the case may be, may hold one or more public hearings on the plan and shall endorse or reject such entire plan or part thereof or amendment and may submit comments and recommended changes to the commission. The commission may render a decision on the plan without the report of such body or board.

(3) At least thirty-five days prior to the public hearing on adoption, the commission shall post the plan on the Internet web site of the municipality, if any.

(4) At least sixty-five days prior to the public hearing on adoption, the commission shall submit a copy of such plan or part thereof or amendment thereto to the regional council of governments for review and comment. The regional council of governments shall submit an advisory report along with its comments to the commission at or before the hearing. Such comments shall include a finding on the consistency of the plan with (A) the regional plan of conservation and development, adopted under section 8-35a, (B) the state plan of conservation and development, adopted pursuant to chapter 297, and (C) the plans of conservation and development of other municipalities in the area of operation of the regional council of governments. The commission may render a decision on the plan without the report of the regional council of governments.

(5) At least thirty-five days prior to the public hearing on adoption, the commission shall file in the office of the town clerk a copy of such plan or part thereof or amendment thereto but, in the case of a district commission, such commission shall file such information in the offices of both the district clerk and the town clerk.

(6) The commission shall cause to be published in a newspaper having a general circulation in the municipality, at least twice at intervals of not less than two days, the first not more than fifteen days, or less than ten days, and the last not less than two days prior to the date of each such hearing, notice of the time and place of any such public hearing. Such notice shall make reference to the filing of such draft plan in the office of the town clerk, or both the district clerk and the town clerk, as the case may be.

(i) (1) After completion of the public hearing, the commission may revise the plan and may adopt the plan or any part thereof or amendment thereto by a single resolution or may, by successive resolutions, adopt parts of the plan and amendments thereto.

(2) Any plan, section of a plan or recommendation in the plan that is not endorsed in the report of the legislative body or, in the case of a municipality for which the legislative body is a town meeting or representative town meeting, by the board of selectmen, of the municipality may only be adopted by the commission by a vote of not less than two-thirds of all the members of the commission.

(3) Upon adoption by the commission, any plan or part thereof or amendment thereto shall become effective at a time established by the commission, provided notice thereof shall be published in a newspaper having a general circulation in the municipality prior to such effective date.

(4) Not more than thirty days after adoption, any plan or part thereof or amendment thereto shall be posted on the Internet web site of the municipality, if any, and shall be filed in the office of the town clerk, except that, if it is a district plan or amendment, it shall be filed in the offices of both the district and town clerks.

(5) Not more than sixty days after adoption of the plan, the commission shall submit a copy of the plan to the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management and shall include with such copy a description of any inconsistency between the plan adopted by the commission and the state plan of conservation and development and the reasons therefor.

(j) Any owner or tenant, or authorized agent of such owner or tenant, of real property or buildings thereon located in the municipality may submit a proposal to the commission requesting a change to the plan of conservation and development. Such proposal shall be submitted in writing and on a form prescribed by the commission. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of section 8-7d, the commission shall review and may approve, modify and approve or reject the proposal in accordance with the provisions of subsection (h) of this section.

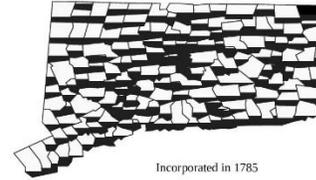
Appendix B Thompson CT CERC Town Profile 2019

Thompson, Connecticut

CERC Town Profile 2019 *Produced by Connecticut Data Collaborative*

Town Hall
P.O. Box 899
North Grosvenordale, CT 06255
(860) 923-9561

Belongs To
Windham County
LMA Danielson - Northeast
Northeastern Planning Area



Demographics

Population				Race/Ethnicity (2013-2017)										
	Town	County	State		Town	County	State							
2000	8,878	109,091	3,405,565	White Non-Hisp	8,922	97,434	2,446,049							
2010	9,458	118,428	3,574,097	Black Non-Hisp	12	2,110	350,820							
2013-2017	9,299	116,674	3,594,478	Asian Non-Hisp	45	1,519	154,910							
2020	9,602	126,432	3,604,591	Native American Non-Hisp	5	26	5,201							
'17 - '20 Growth / Yr	1.1%	2.6%	0.1%	Other/Multi-Race Non-Hisp	191	2,623	84,917							
				Hispanic or Latino	124	12,946	551,916							
	Town	County	State	Poverty Rate (2013-2017)										
Land Area (sq. miles)	47	513	4,842		Town	County	State							
Pop./Sq. Mile (2013-2017)	198	227	742		5.6%	11.1%	10.1%							
Median Age (2013-2017)	44	41	41	Educational Attainment (2013-2017)										
Households (2013-2017)	3,681	44,529	1,361,755		Town	County	State							
Med. HH Inc. (2013-2017)	\$77,267	\$62,553	\$73,781	High School Graduate	1,940	28%	673,582	27%						
				Associates Degree	757	11%	188,481	8%						
Veterans (2013-2017)		718	180,111	Bachelors or Higher	1,854	27%	953,199	38%						
Age Distribution (2013-2017)														
	0-4		5-14		15-24		25-44		45-64		65+		Total	
Town	417	4%	970	10%	915	10%	2,464	26%	3,157	34%	1,376	15%	9,299	100%
County	5,832	5%	13,454	12%	16,632	14%	28,476	24%	34,503	30%	17,777	15%	116,674	100%
State	186,188	5%	432,367	12%	495,626	14%	872,640	24%	1,031,900	29%	575,757	16%	3,594,478	100%

Economics

Business Profile (2018)				Top Five Grand List (2014)	
Sector	Units	Employment			Amount
Total - All Industries	188	1,578	Connecticut Light and Power Inc.		-\$666,666
23 - Construction	20	62	Melrose Associates		-\$666,666
31-33 - Manufacturing	13	235	Quinnatisset Country Club, Inc.		-\$666,666
44-45 - Retail Trade	11	49	NORAMPAC-Thompson		-\$666,666
62 - Health Care and Social Assistance	14	233	North Grosvenordale Restoration		-\$666,666
72 - Accommodation and Food Services	16	196	Net Grand List (SFY 2016-2017)		\$598,445,230
Total Government	18	301	Major Employers (2014)		
			Thompson Public School	Mary R. Fisher Elementary School	
			Superior Bakery	NORAMPAC Thompson	
			Numa Tool		

Education

2018-2019 School Year				Smarter Balanced Test Percent Above Goal (2017-2018)						
	Grades	Enrollment		Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 8		
				Town	State	Town	State	Town	State	
Thompson School District	PK-12	994		Math	60.3%	53.8%	29.9%	51.3%	19.1%	43.0%
				ELA	54.8%	53.1%	45.5%	54.9%	*	56.1%
Pre-K Enrollment (PSIS)										
Thompson School District		40		Rate of Chronic Absenteeism (2017-2018)						
				Connecticut						All
				Thompson School District						10.7%
4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate (2017-2018)										
	All	Female	Male							10.7%
Connecticut	88.3%	91.8%	85.1%							
Thompson School District	82.4%	84.4%	80.6%	Public vs Private Enrollment (2013-2017)						
					Town	County	State			
				Public	84.3%	92.0%	86.8%			
				Private	15.7%	8.0%	13.2%			

Thompson, Connecticut

CERC Town Profile 2019



Connecticut
Economic
Resource Center

Government

Government Form: Selectman - Town Meeting

Total Revenue (2017)	\$27,950,785	Total Expenditures (2017)	\$26,586,412	Annual Debt Service (2017)	\$1,004,563
Tax Revenue	\$15,968,224	Education	\$20,836,396	As % of Expenditures	3.8%
Non-tax Revenue	\$11,982,561	Other	\$5,750,016	Eq. Net Grand List (2017)	\$944,526,861
Intergovernmental	\$11,076,048	Total Indebtedness (2017)	\$11,259,790	Per Capita	\$101,693
Per Capita Tax (2017)	\$1,675	As % of Expenditures	42.4%	As % of State Average	67.4%
As % of State Average	57.1%	Per Capita	\$1,212	Moody's Bond Rating (2017)	A1
		As % of State Average	48.2%	Actual Mill Rate (2017)	26.06
				Equalized Mill Rate (2017)	16.47
				% of Net Grand List Com/Ind (2017)	5.4%

Housing/Real Estate

Housing Stock (2013-2017)

	Town	County	State
Total Units	4,112	49,577	1,507,711
% Single Unit (2013-2017)	77.9%	66.2%	59.2%
New Permits Auth (2017)	18	134	4,547
As % Existing Units	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%
Demolitions (2017)	5	26	1,403
Home Sales (2017)	94	947	21,880
Median Price	\$204,000	\$196,800	\$270,100
Built Pre-1950 share	32.0%	31.6%	29.3%
Owner Occupied Dwellings	2,931	31,142	906,798
As % Total Dwellings	79.6%	69.9%	66.6%
Subsidized Housing (2018)	217	5,827	167,879

Distribution of House Sales (2017)

	Town	County	State
Less than \$100,000	8	80	536
\$100,000-\$199,999	34	376	5,237
\$200,000-\$299,999	33	339	6,681
\$300,000-\$399,999	18	110	3,863
\$400,000 or More	1	42	5,563

Rental (2013-2017)

	Town	County	State
Median Rent	\$990	\$869	\$1,123
Cost-burdened Renters	37.0%	52.2%	52.3%

Labor Force

	Town	County	State
Residents Employed	5,051	60,560	1,827,070
Residents Unemployed	209	2,866	78,242
Unemployment Rate	4.0%	4.5%	4.1%
Self-Employed Rate	8.0%	8.1%	10.0%
Total Employers	188	2,988	122,067
Total Employed	1,578	38,584	1,673,867

Connecticut Commuters (2015)

Commuters Into Town From:	Town	Residents Commuting To:	Town
Thompson, CT	444	Putnam, CT	520
Putnam, CT	143	Thompson, CT	444
Woodstock, CT	107	Killingly, CT	358
Killingly, CT	98	Webster, MA	347
Webster, MA	56	Dudley, MA	144
Plainfield, CT	42	Woodstock, CT	110
Southbridge, MA	42	Oxford, MA	109

Quality of Life

Crime Rates (per 100,000 residents) (2017)

	Town	State
Property	353	1,777
Violent	75	228

Disengaged Youth (2013-2017)

	Town	State
Female	5.5%	4.2%
Male	9.0%	5.6%

	Town
Library circulation per capita	6.53

Distance to Major Cities

	Miles
Providence	26
Hartford	44
Boston	50
New York City	141
Montreal	261

Residential Utilities

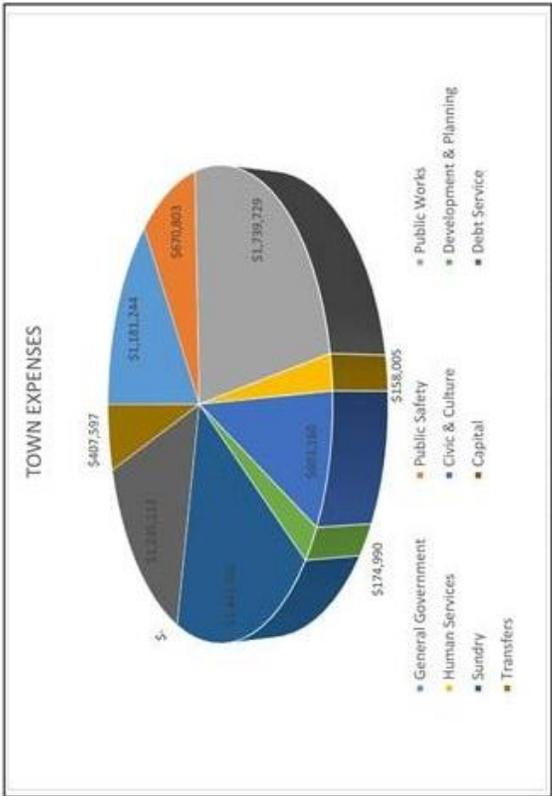
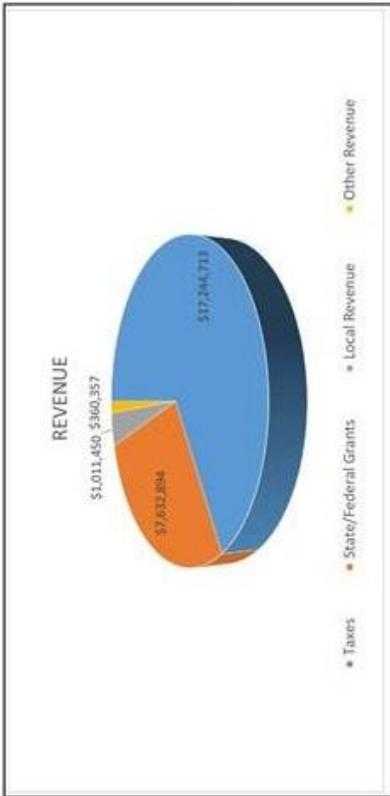
Electric Provider	Eversource Energy (800) 286-2000
Water Provider	Connecticut Water Company (800) 286-5700
Cable Provider	Charter Communications of Northeastern CT (800) 827-8288

Appendix C Thompson Rates of Voter Turnout 2011-2019

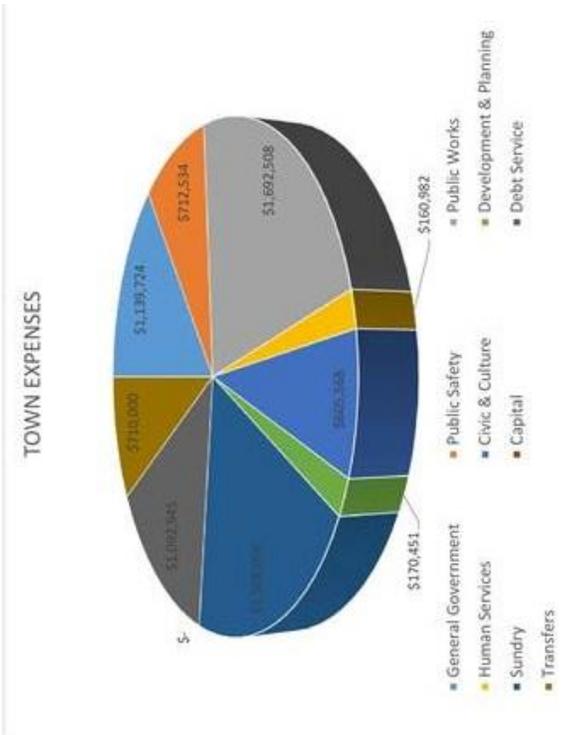
	<u>Presidential</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Municipal</u>			<u>Presidential</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Municipal</u>
<u>2011</u>					<u>2016</u>			
District 1			31%		District 1	81%		
District 2			30%		District 2	79%		
District 3			27%		District 3	79%		
District 4			24%		District 4	88%		
<u>2012</u>					<u>2017</u>			
District 1	69%				District 1			38%
District 2	70%				District 2			33%
District 3	72%				District 3			34%
District 4	75%				District 4			33%
<u>2013</u>					<u>2018</u>			
District 1			34%		District 1		66%	
District 2			32%		District 2		59%	
District 3			38%		District 3		61%	
District 4			28%		District 4		60%	
<u>2014</u>					<u>2019</u>			
District 1		57%			District 1			38%
District 2		53%			District 2			33%
District 3		53%			District 3			33%
District 4		52%			District 4			34%
<u>2015</u>								
District 1			44%		<u>Average</u>	76.62%	57.62%	34.75%
District 2			47%					
District 3			43%					
District 4			41%					

Appendix D Comparison of Budget Revenues & Expenditures FY20, Projected for FY21

BUDGET FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020 **TOTAL \$26,249,414**



BOARD OF EDUCATION EXPENSES
\$18,637,572



Appendix E 2018 Partnership for Strong Communities Housing Data Profile - Thompson



Thompson

Housing Data Profiles 2018



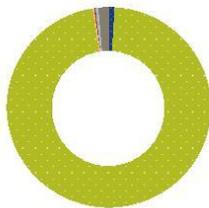
Population, Age, & Race

Source: 2011-15 American Community Survey

	2011-15	2000	% Change		2011-15	2000	% Change
Population	9,357	8,878	5%	Householders living alone	27%	24%	4%
Households	3,736	3,482	7%	Residents living in families	67%	71%	-4%
Average household size	2.48	2.55	-3%	Households with someone <18	26%	35%	-9%
Average family size	3.04	3.02	1%	Households with someone > 65	29%	25%	5%

Median age for those living in Thompson is 43.8 years old, 3.4 years older than CT's median age of 40.4 years old.

Race and Ethnicity: Thompson



Racial and Ethnic Groups	Total	%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	88	1%
White	9,037	97%
Black or African American	28	0%
American Indian and Alaska Native	18	0%
Asian	37	0%
Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0%
Other/Multi-Race	149	2%

Connecticut is becoming increasingly diverse. Between 2010 and 2015, the nonwhite population increased from 28% to 31%. In Thompson, 97% of residents are white, while 3% are nonwhite.

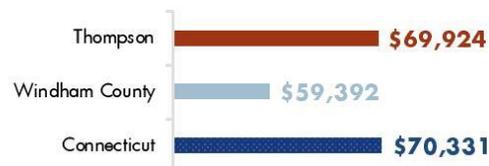
Source: 2011-15 American Community Survey

\$\$\$ Household Income

Thompson's annual median household income in 2015 was \$69,924, 1% less than Connecticut's median household income of \$70,331. It is 18% more than Windham County's median household income of \$59,392. Thompson's median household income ranks 128 (1=highest, 169=lowest) among CT's 169 municipalities.

Median Household Income

Source: 2011-15 American Community Survey

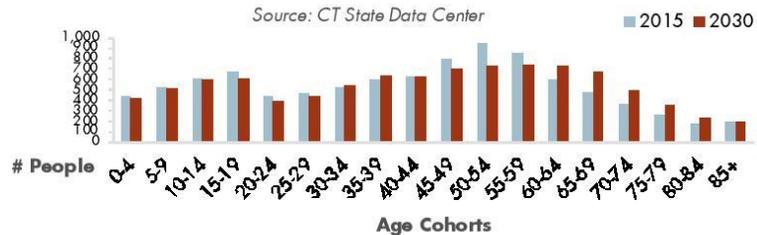


Aging of the Population

Thompson is one of the 116 Connecticut municipalities projected to see a drop in their school-age population between 2020 and 2030. Many municipalities will see declines over 15%. In Thompson, the projected decrease is 2%. Meanwhile the 65+ population for Thompson is projected to increase by 24%.

Age Cohorts - 2015, 2030 Population Projections: Thompson

Source: CT State Data Center



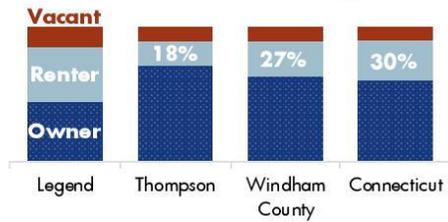
Characteristics of Housing Stock

Tenure

	Thompson	Windham County	Connecticut
Total	4,132	49,176	1,491,786
Owner-Occupied	2,978	31,184	906,227
Renter-Occupied	758	13,092	446,356
Vacant	396	4,900	139,203

Source: 2011-15 American Community Survey

Percent of Owner-Occupied, Renter-Occupied and Vacant Housing Units



Thompson saw its number of housing units increase by 11% from 2000 to 2015. Renters live in 18% of Thompson's housing stock, compared to 27% for Windham County and 30% for Connecticut.

Units in Structure

Overall, 66% of CT's occupied housing stock is comprised of single-family housing, while 33% is multifamily housing (2+ units in structure) and 1% is mobile homes.

In Thompson, 81% of occupied homes are single-family, 16% are multifamily (2+ units in structure), and 3% are mobile homes. Renters live in 92% of Thompson's 612 multifamily homes, and owners occupy 94% of its 3,017 single-family homes.

Units in Structure by Tenure: Thompson



Source: 2011-15 American Community Survey

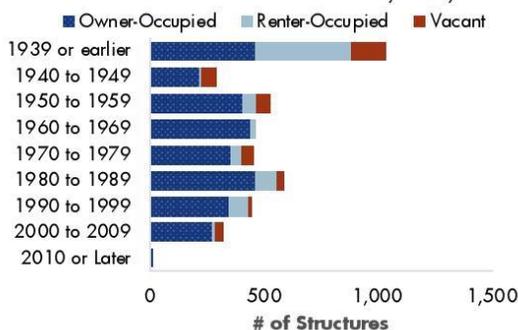
Year Built

CT's housing stock varies in age, with 22% built before 1939, 36% built from 1940 to 1969 and 42% built from 1970 on.

In Thompson, 25% of the housing stock was built prior to 1939, 31% was built between 1940 and 1969 and the remaining 44% was built after 1970. Shifting demographics indicate that housing built from 1970 on may not meet the needs of CT's current and future residents.

Tenure by Year Structure Built: Thompson

Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey



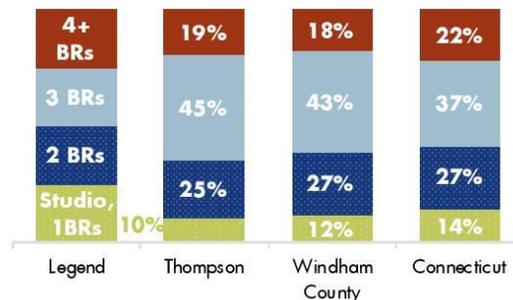
Bedrooms

A majority of homes in CT have 3 or more bedrooms, with 37% having 3 bedrooms and 22% having 4 or more. 42% of the homes in the state have 2 or fewer bedrooms.

Over 64% of homes in Thompson have 3 or more bedrooms, while 36% have 2 or fewer bedrooms. Towns and cities that have larger homes with more bedrooms offer fewer housing options for younger workers or downsizing Baby Boomers.

Housing Units by Number of Bedrooms

Source: 2011-15 American Community Survey

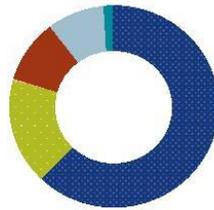


Housing Costs for Owners and Renters

Affordability

Across CT, 50% of renters and 32% of owners spend more than 30% of their income on housing. In Thompson, 44% of renters spend more than 30% of their income on housing, while 21% of owners do the same. Households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing may have little left over for necessities such as transportation, food, health care, etc.

Housing Costs as a % of Household Income: Thompson



	# Units	% Total
Owner-Occupied		
Spending <30%	2,329	62%
Spending >=30%	640	17%
Not computed	9	0%
Renter Occupied		
Spending <30%	381	10%
Spending >=30%	336	9%
Not computed	41	1%

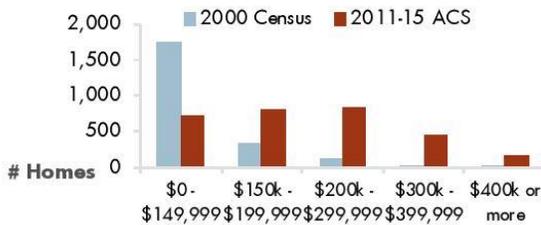
Source: 2011-15 American Community Survey

Home Value

The value of homes in Connecticut has risen significantly over the last 15 years, putting home ownership out of reach for many middle-class households. In Thompson, 77% of homes were valued under \$150,000 in 2000, compared to 24% now. The median home value in Thompson is now \$197,200, an increase of 63% since 2000.

Self-Reported Value of Owner-Occupied Homes: Thompson

Source: Census 2000, 2011-2015 American Community Survey

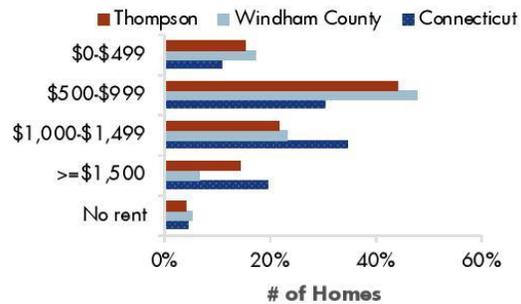


Gross Rent

According to 2011-15 American Community Survey data, 36% of Thompson's 758 rental units have a gross rent over \$1,000 per month and 31% have a gross rent under \$750 per month.

Rental Units by Gross Rent: Thompson

Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey



Housing Costs & Income

Owner Households: Thompson

The average homeowner household in Thompson has a median income of

\$74,921

Households with a Mortgage

Median Income:
\$90,158

Median Monthly Owner Costs:
\$1,495

Households w/out a Mortgage

Median Income:
\$42,804

Median Monthly Owner Costs:
\$562

Median Income Renter Households =

\$37,083

47% less than the median income of all households.

Renter Households: Thompson

Median Gross Rent =

\$882

29% of income spent on rent.

71% of income for all other expenses.

In Connecticut, incomes among those who own their homes tend to be much higher than incomes for renter households. However, incomes for owners who no longer pay a mortgage also tend to be lower than for those paying a mortgage, as those no longer paying a mortgage may be retired and living on fixed incomes.

Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey

 Housing Market General Information

Housing Wage

2017 Housing Wage: Thompson

 **\$18.06**

Thompson is included in the Windham County Metro Area.

Each year, the National Low Income Housing Coalition calculates the "housing wage," the hourly wage needed for a household to afford a typical 2-bedroom apartment in metro areas throughout the United States.

Connecticut's housing costs are typically high, ranking #8 in 2017 with a housing wage of \$24.72.

Grand List

Real Property Grand List Values,
2008-16: Thompson

Total Real Property 2008	\$594,476,306
Total Real Property 2016	\$513,294,421
% Change, 2008-16	-14%

Connecticut housing prices declined precipitously after the 2008 financial crisis and have not rebounded to pre-crisis levels, particularly in municipalities - 113 of 169 - where housing stock is dominated by single-family homes. Across the state, 152 municipalities have seen either no change in real property grand lists, or declines, forcing most to raise mill rates, reduce services, or both.

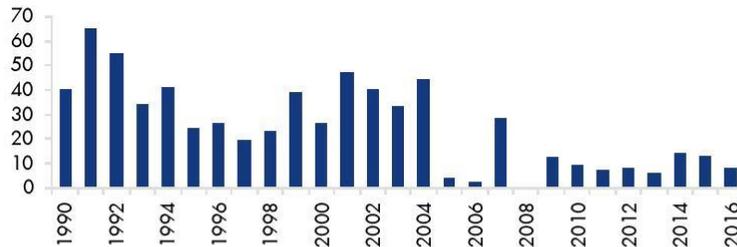
Source: CT Office of Policy and Management

Building Permits

Connecticut saw a sharp decline in building permits following the crash of the housing market in the mid-2000s. As the housing market slowly recovers, statewide building permits have increased by small amounts since 2011, with permits for multifamily units at levels not seen for a decade. Building permits issued, however, remain well below the levels seen in the 1980s and 1990s.

Building Permits by Year, 1990-2016:
Thompson

Source: CT Department of Economic and Community Development



Affordable Housing Appeals List

Each year the CT Department Of Housing surveys municipalities in the state to determine the number of affordable units each has. The data is compiled for the Affordable Housing Appeals List. The following housing units are counted as affordable in Thompson in 2016:

Assisted Units Counted in 2016 Appeals List:

Thompson	
151	Governmentally Assisted Units
16	Tenant Rental Assistance
79	CHFA/USDA Mortgages
+	0 Deed Restricted Units
<hr/>	
246	Total Assisted Units

Calculation of % of Total Units Assisted:

Thompson				
246	÷	4,171	=	5.9%
Total Assisted Units		Total Units, 2010 Census		Units Assisted

Housing Data Profiles are produced by the Partnership for Strong Communities.

For more details about the information presented or to use any of the graphics in the Housing Data Profiles, please contact: Charles Patton, Senior Policy Analyst, charles@pschousing.org.



Analysis of Housing Conditions

Key Stats

Population

9,357

Households

3,736

Projected Change in Population from 2020-2030

5-19 Year Olds: -2%

65+ Year Old: 24%

Median Household Income

All Households: \$69,924

Owners: \$74,921

Renters: \$37,083

Housing Units

Total Units: 4,132

Owner-Occupied: 72%

Renter-Occupied: 18%

Vacant: 10%

Single-Family/Multifamily

Single Family: 81%

Multifamily: 16%

Median Home Value

\$197,200

Median Gross Rent

\$882

Households Spending 30% or More on Housing

All Households: 26%

Owners: 21%

Renters: 44%

Housing Built 1970 or Later

44%

2016 Affordable Housing Appeals List

Assisted Units: 6%

% Change in Total Real Property, 2008-2016

-14%

Thompson's Housing Data Profile: The Story Behind the Numbers

Thompson, unlike most of Connecticut's suburbs, has a median household income close to that of Connecticut, modest-to-high housing costs, an average supply of units for teachers, nurses, electricians, firefighters and town workers, and a reasonable range of housing choices for Baby Boomers seeking to downsize and Millennials and young families seeking to move to town.

Housing remains expensive in Thompson relative to the median household income. Statewide, 50% of renters and 32% of homeowners spend 30% or more of their household incomes on housing. In Thompson, where the \$69,924 median household income is slightly lower than the statewide median of \$70,331, 44% of the town's renters and 21% of its homeowners spend 30% or more of their income on housing.

Thompson is one of the many Connecticut municipalities that could see a decline in school enrollment through 2030 because of a projected decline in school-age (5-19) population of 2% from 2020 to 2030. At the same time, its population is getting much older, with a projected increase of 24% in the 65+ population from 2020 to 2030, potentially leading to the need for smaller, denser, more affordable homes closer to the town center, services and, if possible, transit connections.

While the number of renting households in Connecticut has increased from 30% to 35% since 2007, many towns are ill-prepared to accommodate the needs of renters. Thompson is one of 118 Connecticut municipalities with single-family homes dominating its housing stock (81%) and little modest or multifamily housing to offer (36% units are 0-2 bedrooms, compared to 42% statewide), mostly because many of those towns built the bulk of their homes after 1970 (44% in Thompson) to accommodate the needs of new Baby Boomer families then in their 20s.

Now in their 60s, those families are seeking more modest homes. But their attempts to sell are being met by few offers because few young families can afford to move to those towns, flattening median sales prices and stunting the growth of Grand Lists – the towns' total value of real property – and thus property tax revenues needed to pay for increasingly expensive services. From 2008 through 2016 (latest OPM figures), 150 towns experienced negative growth in real property values, 2 had no growth and 7 had only slight growth of 2 percent or less. The total real property Grand List in Thompson declined significantly by 14% from 2008 through 2016.

Across the state, 138 of the 169 municipalities have affordable homes totaling less than 10% of their housing stock. These are the kinds of homes increasingly sought by young professionals, families, town workers, downsizing Baby Boomers and others. In Thompson, 6% of the homes are affordable, according to the state's 2016 Affordable Housing Appeals List.



Data Sources & Notes

Page 1

- ⇒ Populations, Age, & Race
 - DP-1 - Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000, Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data
 - DP02 - Selected Social Characteristics In The United States, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
 - DP05 - ACS Demographic And Housing Estimates, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
- ⇒ Note: Due to rounding throughout the profile, some results may not appear to correspond with the values in tables, charts and text.
- ⇒ Age & Income
 - Median Household Income
 - B25119 - Median Household Income The Past 12 Months (In 2015 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) By Tenure, Universe: Occupied Housing Units More Information, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
- ⇒ Aging of Population
 - 2015-2040 Population Projections for Connecticut, August 31, 2017 edition, CT State Data Center

Page 2

- ⇒ Tenure, Units in Structure, Year Built, Bedrooms
 - DP04 - Selected Housing Characteristics, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
- ⇒ Tenure note: Universe is all housing units. Total housing stock includes vacant units.
- ⇒ Units in Structure notes: Multifamily includes all units with 2+ units in structure. Does not include boats, RVs, vans, etc. Universe is occupied housing units (does not include vacant units).

Page 3

- ⇒ Affordability
 - DP04 - Selected Housing Characteristics, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Note: Percent income spent on housing costs is not calculated for some households, noted in chart as "Not computed."
- ⇒ Home Value
 - B25075 - Value, Universe: Owner-occupied housing units, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
- ⇒ Gross Rent
 - DP04 - Selected Housing Characteristics, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
- ⇒ Housing Costs & Income
 - Median Household Income by Tenure
 - B25119 Median Household Income The Past 12 Months (In 2015 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) By Tenure, Universe: Occupied housing units, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
 - Median Household Income for Owner-Occupied Households by Mortgage Status
 - B25099 - Mortgage Status By Median Household Income The Past 12 Months (In 2015 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars), Universe: Owner-occupied housing units, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
 - Median Monthly Housing Costs by Mortgage Status, Median Gross Rent
 - DP04 - Selected Housing Characteristics, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Note: Median Gross Rent data suppressed for some geographies by Census Bureau, reasons for suppression may vary.

Page 4

- ⇒ Housing Wage
 - Out of Reach 2017, 2-Bedroom Housing Wage, National Low Income Housing Coalition
- ⇒ Grand Lists
 - Total Grand Lists by Town, 2008 and 2014, CT Office of Policy and Management
- ⇒ Building Permits
 - Connecticut New Housing Authorizations in 2016, Construction Report: Housing Production & Permits, CT Dept. of Economic and Community Development
- ⇒ Affordable Housing Appeals List
 - 2016 Affordable Housing Appeals List, CT Dept. of Housing

Appendix F Partnership for Strong Communities Housing Data Profile – Thompson

2020 Housing Data Profiles

THOMPSON



KEY FINDINGS

Housing

5%

of housing is subsidized

18%

of households rent their home

19%

of housing units are in multifamily buildings

Affordability

16%

of households spend between 30% and 50% of their income on housing

6%

of households spend more than half of their income on housing

\$19.62

the hourly wage needed to afford a 2-bedroom apartment

Population

41

the median age of residents

4%

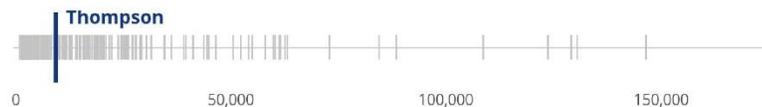
of residents are people of color (BIPOC)

-2%

projected population change from 2020 to 2040

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

Throughout this report, a series of graphs like the one below are used to show how **Thompson** compares to **other towns** in the state on a variety of measures.



ABOUT THE HOUSING DATA PROFILES

The Partnership for Strong Communities' Housing Data Profiles are a free resource to help Connecticut residents, developers, legislators, municipal officials, and others make data-informed decisions. Profiles are available for every town and county in the state. To learn more, please visit pschousing.org or housingprofiles.pschousing.org to view the interactive version of the profiles.

DATA NOTES

Data comes from the 2014-2018 American Community Survey unless stated otherwise. Percentages may differ slightly or not sum to exactly 100% due to rounding.

SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES AS PERCENT OF ALL HOMES

77%

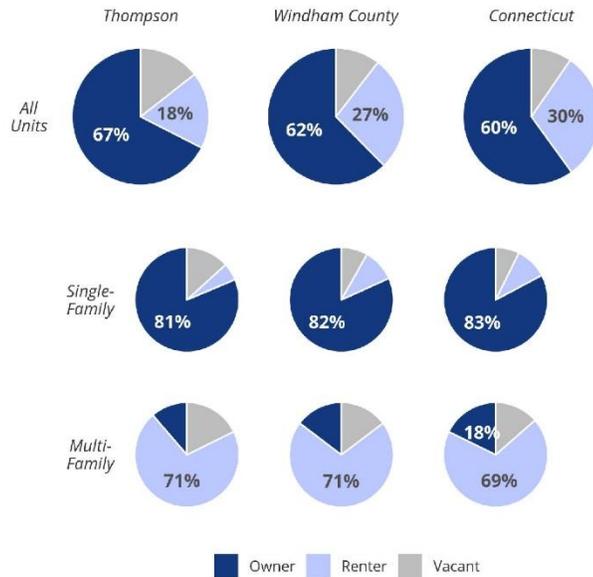


PERCENT OF ALL HOMES OCCUPIED BY OWNERS

67%

Overall, 64% of Connecticut's occupied housing stock is comprised of single-family housing, while 35% is multifamily housing (2+ units in structure). Most single-family homes are occupied by homeowners, while most multifamily units are occupied by renters.

In Thompson, 77% of occupied homes are single-family, and 19% are multi-family. Owners live in 81% of Thompson's 3,209 single-family homes, and renters live in 71% of its 801 multifamily homes.



CHANGE IN BUILDING PERMITS, 1990-2017

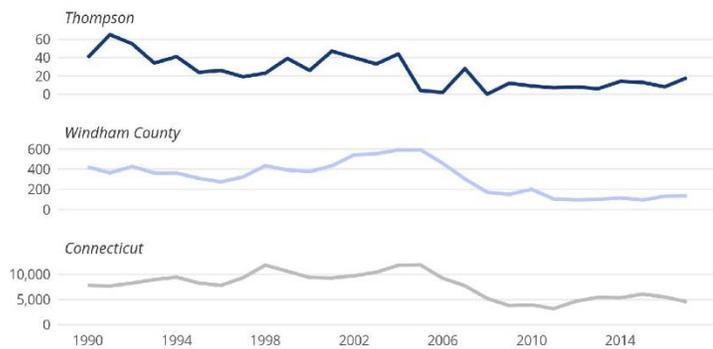
-55%

Growth is slow in the state, which has seen a 42% decrease in building permits between 1990 and 2017.

In Thompson, there were 40 building permits issued in 1990, compared to 18 issued in 2017, representing a 55% decrease.

Number of building permits per year, 1990-2017

Note: y axis varies between locations



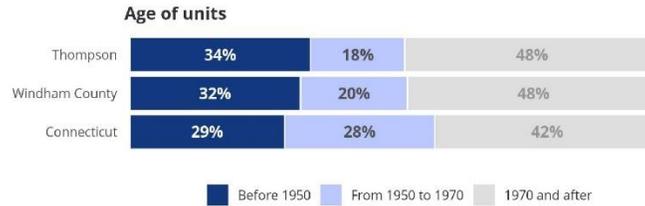
Source: Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development



UNITS BUILT BEFORE 1970

52%

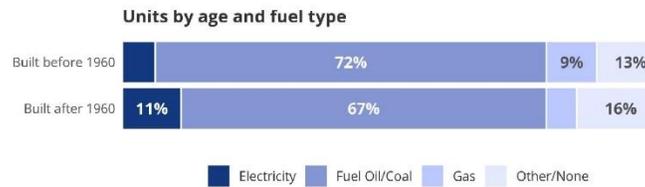
Older homes are prone to falling into disrepair, and often carry environmental risks such as lead paint. An aging housing stock can be a sign of poor housing quality.



SPENDING ON ENERGY AS PERCENT OF TOTAL INCOME

3.8%

Households that use electricity spend 3.8% of their income on energy (4.0% for fuel oil/coal and 3.0% for gas).



Source: United States Department of Energy

AFFORDABLE HOMES AS A SHARE OF ALL HOUSING UNITS

5%

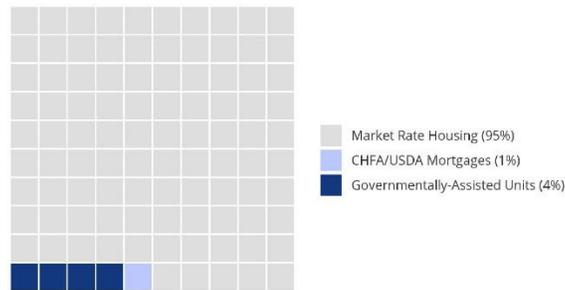
The CT Department of Housing calculates the percentage of affordable units in a municipality annually for the Affordable Housing Appeals List. Affordable units are units that are subsidized below market-rate through programs like Housing Choice Vouchers or CHFA/USDA mortgages.

Of the 4,171 total units in Thompson, 216 are considered to be affordable.



Source: Connecticut Department of Housing

Affordable units by type



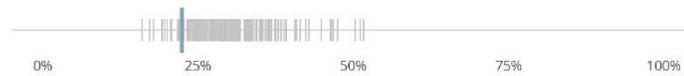
Source: Connecticut Department of Housing



PEOPLE BURDENED BY COST OF HOUSING

22%

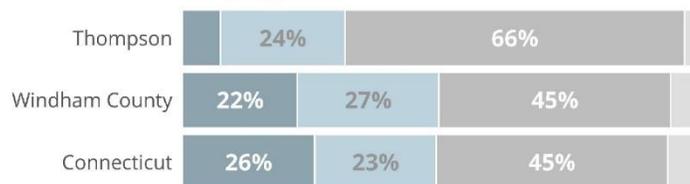
Households that are cost-burdened spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Severely cost-burdened spend more than 50% on housing.



RENTERS BURDENED BY COST OF HOUSING

34%

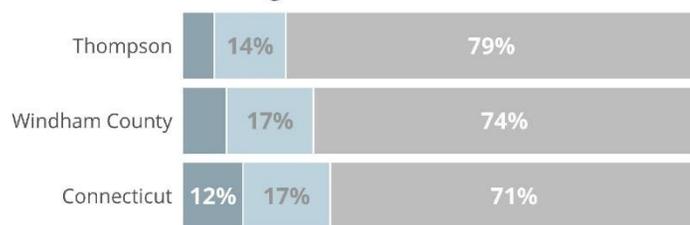
Housing cost burden for renters



OWNERS BURDENED BY COST OF HOUSING

21%

Housing cost burden for owners

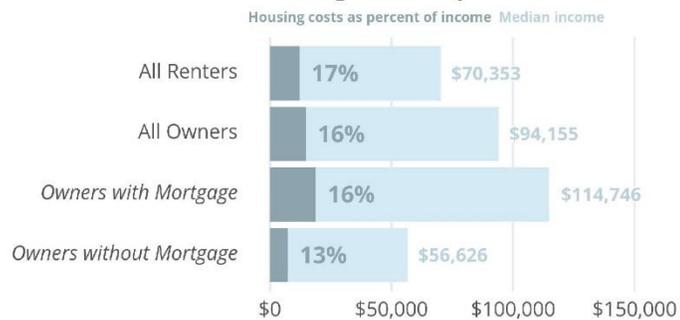


Severe burden (50% or greater) Moderate burden (Between 30% and 50%) Not burdened (Less than 30%) Not Computed

RENTERS' HOUSING COSTS AS PERCENT OF INCOME

17%

Housing costs as percent of income



OWNERS' HOUSING COSTS AS PERCENT OF INCOME

16%



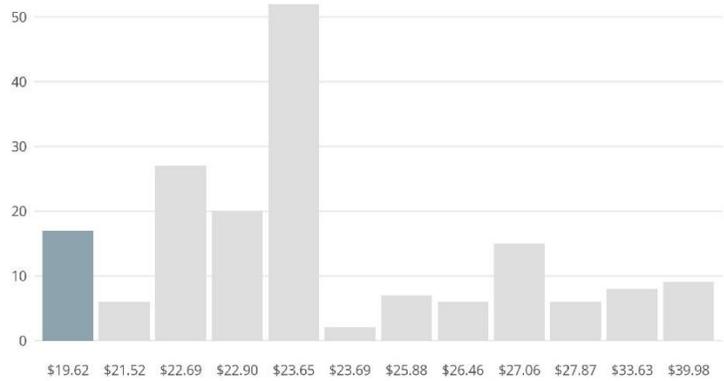
HOUSING WAGE

\$19.62

Each year, the National Low Income Housing Coalition calculates the "housing wage," the hourly wage needed to afford a two-bedroom rental home without paying more than 30% of income on housing.

Thompson is included in the Windham County HMFA. Thompson's housing wage is lower than the state housing wage of \$26.42.

Thompson is one of 17 towns with a housing wage of \$19.62

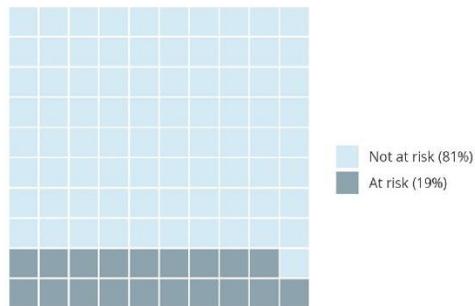


HOUSING PRESERVATION UNITS

19%

Thompson has 151 federally assisted housing units, of which 19% are at risk of loss within the next 5 years.

Housing preservation by risk



Source: National Housing Preservation Database



TOTAL POPULATION

9,343

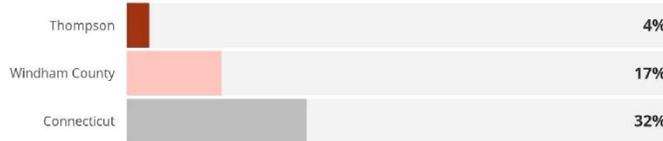


PEOPLE OF COLOR

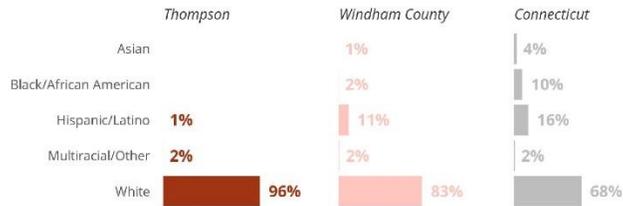
4%

Connecticut population is becoming increasingly diverse, but the BIPOC population is concentrated in certain municipalities, especially Connecticut's cities. In Thompson, 4% of residents are BIPOC, while 96% are white.

Thompson is less diverse than Connecticut



The largest race/ethnicity group in Thompson is White at 96% of the population



MEDIAN AGE

41

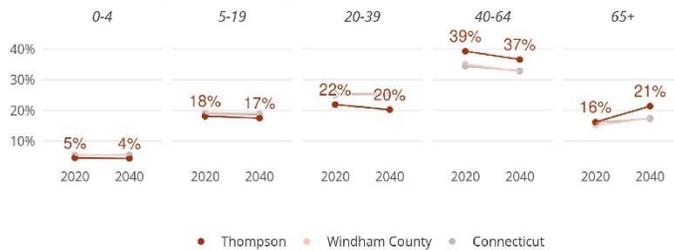


POPULATION CHANGE, 2020 TO 2040

-2%

In the next twenty years, Thompson's population is projected to shrink from 9,602 to 9,390.

People age 65+ are projected to grow the most in the next 20 years in Thompson



Source: Connecticut Data Center



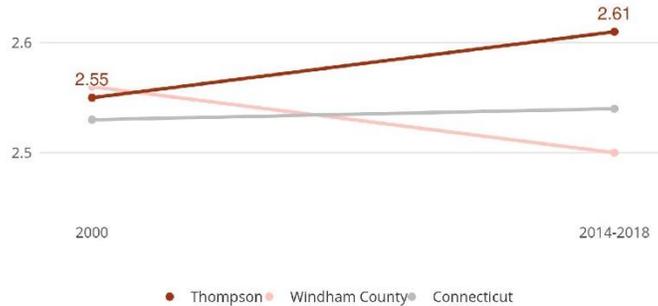
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE

2.61



The average household size in Thompson has grown between 2000 and 2018.

The average household size in Thompson has grown from 2.55 in 2000 to 2.61 in 2018



Understanding who lives in our towns provides insight into the housing and service needs for each community such as accessibility, transportation, child care, and education. Compared to Connecticut, Thompson has more households with someone older than 60 and fewer households with school-age children.

Household types as a percent of total

