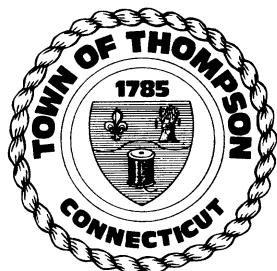


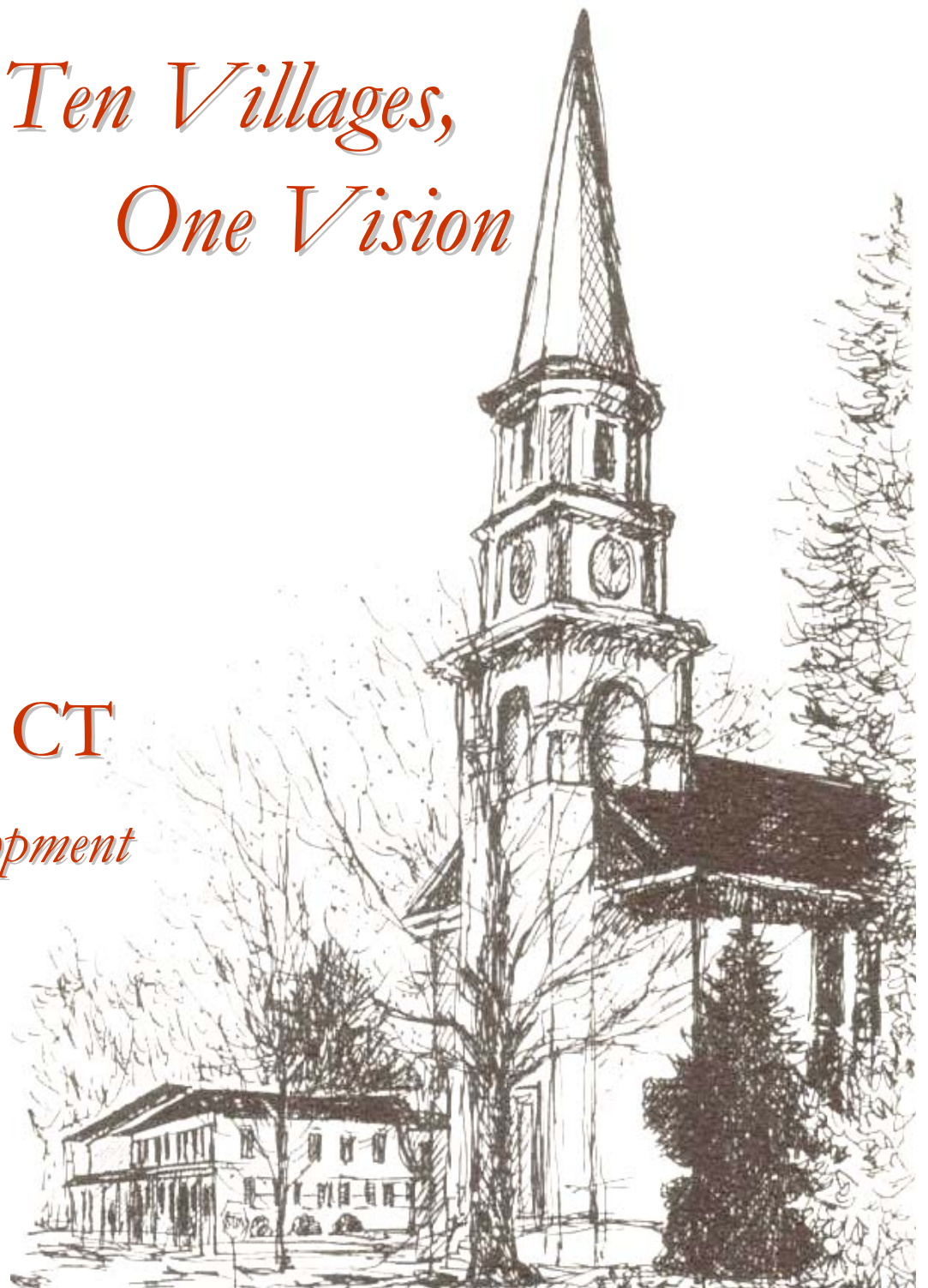


# *Ten Villages, One Vision*

## *Town of Thompson, CT Plan of Conservation and Development 2010 - 2020*



*Adopted November 23, 2009*



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*“Thompson is a unique town located in the northeast corner of Connecticut...*

*In Thompson you will find many different villages with a variety of housing. Also, you will find unique rural character in a beautiful country setting.”*

**Lawrence K. Groh, Jr.**  
*Thompson First Selectman*

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*Plan of  
Conservation &  
Development  
2010 - 2020*

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## Acknowledgements:

Gina Papen – front cover illustrations  
Ronald Tillen – photography  
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## 1.1 Our Town

The Town of Thompson, CT is truly **the** sum of its many parts. Made up of ten separate and unique villages - East Thompson, Fabyan, Grosvenordale, Mechanicsville, North Grosvenordale, Quaddick, Quinebaug, Thompson, West Thompson and Wilsonville - [see Table 1], Thompson's rich historic past continues to shape both its present and future. Currently, almost 10,000 people call Thompson home. It is a home for many generations and for those seeking out it's rural qualities. What makes Thompson special is difficult to quantify by numbers, for it is not what is on paper that defines this Town. It is the people, the landscape, and the rich history that makes Thompson a special place to live. The Town must protect its assets.

## 1.2 Our Purpose

This Plan update is Thompson's guide for the future – a blueprint to the Town's future growth, resource management and public policy. The purpose of this Plan update is to protect, nurture and improve that which makes Thompson unique. This purpose can be summarized with three statements:

**To lose our history would be to lose our identity** – with each lost house, mill, tree, meeting place, or brook the Town changes. This Plan update is intended to direct future development, land use issues and policies to ensure that the unique identity of Thompson does not lose its resources nor become a community deprived of history.

**To lose our landscape would be to lose our opportunity** – the lakes, rivers, brooks, farms and wetlands which make up our environment have defined Thompson in the past. Were it not for these rivers the historic mills would have not been built. Were it not for our agricultural heritage, Thompson would be far different than it is today.

**To lose our youth would be to lose our future** – it is critical that our housing, policies and opportunities in Thompson do not turn our youth away and do not prohibit others from entering our community. These are the future families that will shape and protect Thompson's future and must not be shut out.

## 1.3 Our Sources

The specific topics and subject matter covered in the Plan update is a blend of statutory requirements (set forth by the State of Connecticut) and those issues and matters that the people of Thompson deem appropriate and necessary. Other documents used in the updating of this Plan include the following:

Thompson Documents:

*Plan of Development (1970)*, Thompson Planning Commission

*Plan of Conservation & Development (2000-2010)*, Town of Thompson

*Conservation & Open Space Plan (2005)*, Thompson Conservation Commission

# 1 – Introduction

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TABLE 1 Thompson Villages	
East Thompson	
Fabyan	
Grosvenordale	
Mechanicsville	
North Grosvenordale	
Quaddick	
Quinebaug	
Thompson	
West Thompson	
Wilsonville	





# 1 – Introduction

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### State & Regional Documents:

Conservation & Development Policies Plan for Connecticut (2005-2010), State of Connecticut – Office of Policy Management  
Regional Plan of Conservation & Development (2009-2019), Northeastern CT Council of Governments  
Planning for Agriculture: A Guide for Connecticut Municipalities, American Farmland Trust & Connecticut Conference of Municipalities

This plan is advisory only and is not regulatory or binding to the Town regarding future actions of the Town. The plan is, however, a critical document which assesses the Town and generates recommendations which may become formal policy. It provides guidance to decision makers on a range of issues affecting the history, landscape and people of Thompson.

### 1.4 - Our Obligation

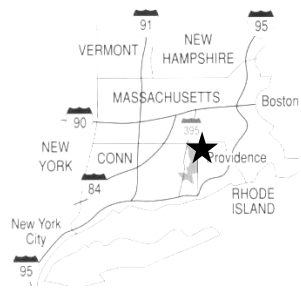
The State of Connecticut (through Section 8-23 of the General Statutes) requires that in all Towns “...at least once every ten years, the commission shall prepare or amend and shall adopt a plan of conservation and development for the municipality.” State and federal agencies place great importance on these plans in determining future growth policies and investment decisions. Towns with updated plans documenting their collective vision, are in better position to secure state and federal support and funding for various projects and needs. The General Statutes further declare that “In preparing such plan, the commission...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 drinking water supplies
- 4) cluster development consistent with soil, terrain and infrastructure capacity
- 5) the State plan of conservation and development
- 6) the regional plan of development
- 7) physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends
- 8) the needs of the municipality
- 9) objectives of energy-efficient patterns of development
- 10) protection and preservation of agriculture
- 11) conservation and preservation of traprock and other ridgelines
- 12) parks, playgrounds and other public grounds
- 13) location and extent public utilities
- 14) location and extent of public housing
- 15) programs for implementation of the plan
- 16) priority funding areas

*“Such plan of conservation and development shall be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality”*

**GS Sec. 8-23**





### 2.1 - Our Location

Thompson is located in the northeastern corner of Connecticut – bordered by Massachusetts to the north, Rhode Island to the East, Woodstock, CT to the west and Putnam, CT to the south. Thompson is twenty minutes from Worcester, MA, eighty minutes from Boston, MA, and forty minutes from Providence, RI. As a result, the Town’s employment, culture and economy tend to be more related to Massachusetts and Rhode Island than to Connecticut. Thompson has over one-hundred miles of roadways including six (6) State roads and is bisected by Interstate 395 north to south. The Providence and Worcester Railroad operates a freight line running north-south through the town’s western/central section serving several businesses within the Town.

### 2.2 - Our Landscape

The Town of Thompson covers an area of 48.7 square miles and had a population of 9,612 in 2007, according to the Connecticut Economic Resource Center. This makes Thompson one of Connecticut’s geographically largest towns while also being one of the least dense. The Town has two significant water bodies with associated lands in West Thompson Dam (managed by the Army Corps of Engineers), an impoundment of the Quinebaug River covering 1,900 acres and Quaddick Reservoir and State Park (managed by the State of Connecticut), covering more than 600 acres. The French River passes through the geographic center of Thompson, north to south, and converges with the Quinebaug River in Mechanicsville. Other major water bodies include Grosvenordale Pond in North Grosvenordale and Little Pond in the northeast corner of Town. The 3 significant rivers in Thompson are rich in history, culture, industry and power generation.

### 2.3 - Our History

The Town of Thompson has its formal beginnings in 1785 but its origins date back to both European and Native American tribal settlement. Like most towns in Northeastern Connecticut and South Central New England, Thompson has a strong agricultural heritage. Thompson was a cornerstone during the Industrial Revolution as well as the industrialization of the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. The stone walls crisscrossing the Town and its old mill buildings are a testament to this past [see Table 2].

### 2.4 - Our People

Thompson is a classic Connecticut rural community with a 98% white population. This is in contrast to the State of Connecticut with an 87% white population. There is no indication that the current ethnic mix of Thompson will significantly change over the next ten years. Thompson’s 2007 median household income was \$55,632 compared to \$65,859 for the State (a 15% difference), however Thompson’s 2007 poverty rate (5.4%) was significantly lower than the State’s (7.9%). This is due primarily to cost of living in Thompson compared to the rest of the State.

TABLE 2

#### Historic Places

##### CT Registry - Thompson

Thompson Hill Historic District (Chase & Quaddick Roads)
Hezekiah S. Ramsdell Farm (formerly on Ramsdell Road)
George Pickering Nichols House (42 Thompson Road)
N. Grosvenordale Mill Dist. (Rt.12,Buckley Hill,Floral, Market,Marshall,Center,River)



## 2 – Town Overview

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### 2.5 - Our Growth

Population growth has slowly increased during Thompson's history and the projections are for that trend to continue. According to the Connecticut Economic Resource Center the 2007 population of Thompson was 9,612. Since 2000, Thompson has grown in population by eight percent, compared to four percent growth for the State of Connecticut. The population growth has primarily been people from Massachusetts and Rhode Island seeking a more rural and affordable community.

### 2.6 - Our Housing

For the most part Thompson remains one of Connecticut's most affordable communities in which to live. A greater percentage of Thompson's housing stock (35.3%) was built prior to 1950 compared to the rest of the State (31.5%). The 2007 median sale price of a home in Thompson (\$219,450) was 25% less than the State (\$295,000). Less than 20% of house sales in the State were under \$200,000 while in contrast 40% of house sales in Thompson were under \$200,000. Thompson's housing is older and more affordable than what the State offers as a whole.

### 2.7 - Our Jobs

Though Thompson represents 9.4% of Connecticut's land area it only represents 2.8% of Connecticut's labor force. Over 80% of the labor force in Thompson leaves Thompson for employment [see Table 3]. Thompson has a strong contingent of commuters driving into Massachusetts for employment. The Town profile has started to trend towards becoming a bedroom community for the Worcester area. These commuters tend to have higher incomes and are less involved in the community.

### 2.8 - Our Services

Thompson has five fire districts (Community, East Thompson, Quinebaug, Thompson and West Thompson) which are all volunteer forces. Police coverage is provided by the Connecticut State Police barracks Troop D located in the Town of Killingly. Thompson has four post offices (Grosvenordale, North Grosvenordale, Quinebaug and Thompson) with four unique zip codes. The Town's administrative body is the Board of Selectmen, three elected individuals serving two year terms. The backbone of Thompson has historically been, and continues to be, the numerous committees and boards filled with dedicated volunteers. We have two private education institutions, St. Joseph K-8<sup>th</sup> grade and Marianapolis Prep 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade.



TABLE 3

#### Workforce Commute

*Commuting From*      *No.*

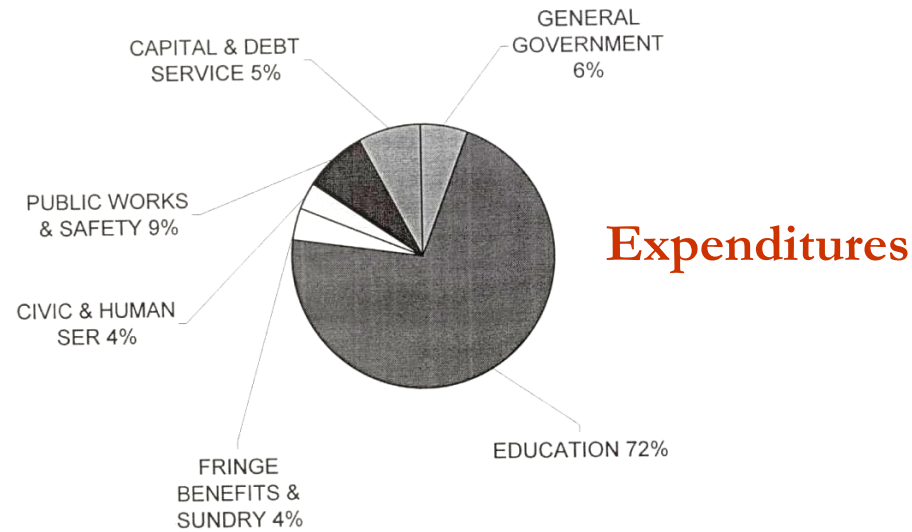
Putnam, CT	620
Webster, MA	487
Worcester, MA	457
Killingly, CT	288
Woodstock, CT	182
Dudley, MA	130
Southbridge, MA	115
Plainfield, CT	100
Auburn, MA	96



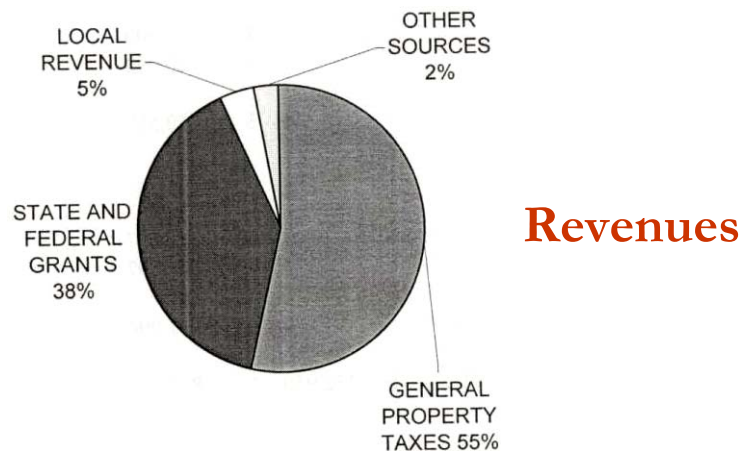
## 2.9 - Our Budget

The Town budget now exceeds \$20 million dollars annually, with approximately 72% going to education and 15% to public works and government services. Thompson receives about 55% of its revenues from property taxes and about 38% from state and federal grants.

Thompson's adjusted tax levy (FY06) of \$1,068 per capita ranks Thompson number 166 of 169 towns, well below the State average of \$2,104 per capita. The Town has a A3 bond rating as determined by Moody's which is an acknowledgment of the Town fiscal responsibility.



## Town of Thompson 2007-2008 Budget



## 2 – Town Overview

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# 3 – Town Surveys

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### 3.1 - Our Community Input

The Town of Thompson places a high value on direct citizen input. This update of the Plan of Conservation and Development relies upon both expertise of staff and Commission, as well as input from the people of Thompson. The planning process loses much of its value without meaningful citizen input. Obtaining diverse and representative feedback from the community is critical at every step of the process, not just the beginning or the end.

### 3.2 - Our 1998 and 2007 Surveys

In 1998, in preparation for the 1999 Plan update, the Town created a town-wide survey directly mailed to each resident. This approach received responses by 7.4% of the population. In 2007, in preparation for this Plan update, a similar survey was inserted into a paper with town-wide circulation and received a 3.4% response. These surveys were intentionally kept similar in terms of questions and format to allow for both comparison and identification of trends.

### 3.3 - Our Community Support

One goal of the 1998 and 2007 surveys was to be able to identify the issues the community deems important and would likely support. The preservation of agricultural land in 1998 was a high priority with 86% of respondents supporting preservation. The 2007 survey showed a slight increase in support to 90%. In the same way preservation of open space also received strong support in 1998 (85%) and 2007 (83%). This affirmation of support is critical to make sure policies in this Plan update reflect the Town's views.

### 3.4 - Our Community Prioritization

The citizens of Thompson were asked to not only identify issues worthy of support but also assess priorities for both protection and growth. Community priorities are important to gauge in order to know how to set goals for action and funding. The citizens indicated the highest priorities for protection were lakes and ponds (98% support) followed closely by existing farms (92% support) and forested land (87% support). The overwhelming priority location for growth and development in Thompson are the historic mill buildings (91% support) with the Interstate 395 corridor and Reardon Road (both 73% support) far behind.

TABLE 4

### Gauging Support

<i>Survey Question</i>	<i>%</i>
The preservation of existing agricultural land is important.	90%
Thompson should increase efforts on preserving open space.	83%
Thompson should encourage residential development.	23%
Truck traffic is an issue in Thompson?	36%

TABLE 5

### Priority Protection

<i>Resource</i>	<i>%</i>
Lakes & Ponds	98%
Existing Farms	92%
Forested Land	87%
Historic Buildings	83%



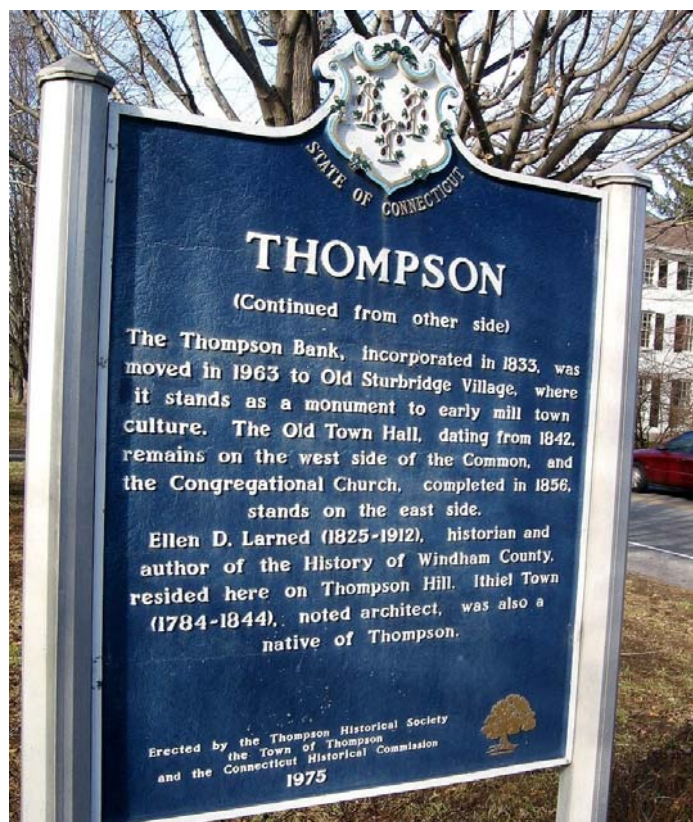
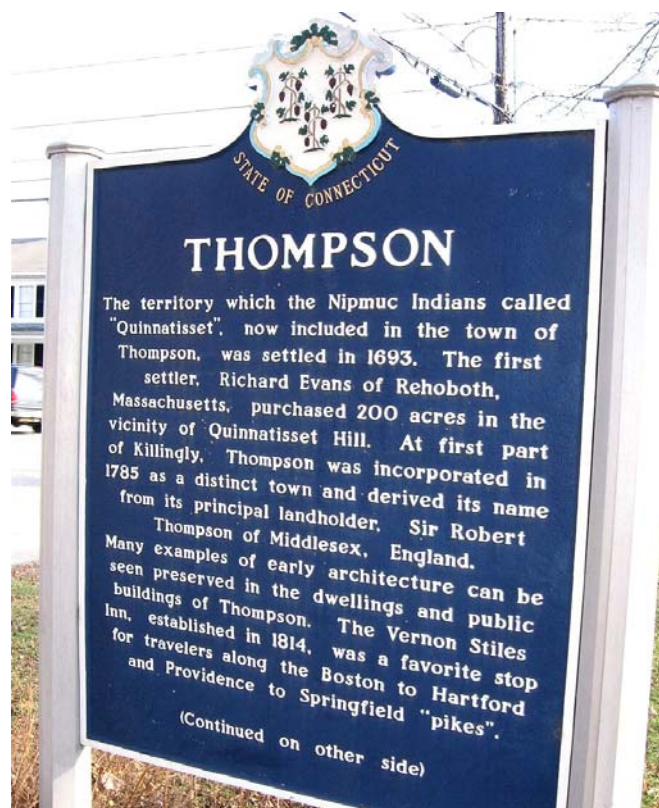


TABLE 6 Priority Growth Areas	
Location	%
Mill Structures	91%
Interstate 395	73%
Reardon Road	73%
Route 12	69%

### 3.5 - Our Community Values

The citizens were also asked to assign a value (scale of 1 to 5 – with 5 being “high need”) to a series of seventeen topics. This was an attempt to gauge the current values and priorities of the community. The first (1st) and third (3rd) highest values were “river & lake quality” and “open space preservation” which indicates a strong emphasis on preservation. In a similar manner, the second (2nd), fifth (5th) and sixth (6th) highest values were “broaden tax base beyond residential”, “property tax reduction” and “economic development” which indicates an emphasis on a nurturing a broader economy in Thompson.

It is interesting to see what topics were assigned the lowest values by the citizens. The lowest (17th) and third lowest (15th) values were “major grocery store” and “police department” which indicates a desire to retain the feeling of being a small, rural community by not desiring features common to larger, more developed communities.



## 3 – Town Surveys

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### 4.1 - Our Education Background

Thompson provides education for its youth – early childhood education through high school through two programs – the school and library systems. This is the largest task in terms of money and the future well being of the community that Thompson undertakes. It is also an aspect of the Town that provokes the most debate and emotion on an on going basis. Thompson, similar to the other communities of Northeastern Connecticut, is continually challenged in trying to provide the best education for its youth. It is true both with the systems academic work and the physical plant of buildings and grounds.

### 4.2 - Our Education Profile

Enrollment in October 1, 2007 for grades Pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade was 1,484 students. Of this number 24% received free/reduced price meals. The total minority population within the school system is 6.3% or 94 students. Of the graduates of the Thompson school system, 73.4% were pursuing higher education (compared to 83.4% for the State of Connecticut). Special education expenditures account for about 18% of the total school budget.

### 4.3 - Our Education Goal

Ensure success for every student leaving school with the tools necessary to have a productive future and assisting students in building academic, civic and learning foundations necessary to pursue future endeavors.

### 4.4 - Our Education Policies & Strategies

ENSURE – That education facilities are safe, accessible, have sufficient space, and are compatible with the delivery of effective instruction.

ENSURE – That students are exposed to progressive technological advancement providing an opportunity to compete in an ever changing world.

ENCOURAGE – All residents, especially parents, to be active in the education system.

ENCOURAGE – The dissemination of information regarding afterschool opportunities for youth, such as school-based or non-profit programs, library-based, church-based, volunteer and recreation programs.

REVIEW – The plan for Thompson’s education future at least annually.

STRENGTHEN – School curriculum by ensuring a dedicated and dynamic development process with new methods, technology, staffing development & resources.

## Our Goal:

**“Ensure success for every student leaving school with the tools necessary to have a productive future and assisting students in building academic, civic and learning foundations necessary to pursue future endeavors.”**



#### **4.5 - Our Education Action Steps**

Each of our schools has individual School Improvement Plans with goals as follows:

**I.Student Achievement**

**II.School Climate**

**III.Partnership**

**IV.Resources/Support**

**V.Personal Growth**

#### **4.6 - Our Education Conclusions**

Education shapes the minds of the current and future residents of Thompson. It is critical to have a strategy which invests wisely into this future but investment is truly necessary. The School and Library systems are the way in which the youth of Thompson will be enriched and prepared for the future.



## **4 – Education**

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# 5 – Library Services

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### 5.1 - Our Library Services Background

The Library has been serving the Town of Thompson since 1902. The current Library/Community Center opened in 1994 and is located on Riverside Drive. It is a 20,400 square foot one story facility which offers a wide array of services to the public. The Community Center hosts a daily senior lunch program and many civic, educational and recreational programs.

### 5.2 - Our Library Services Provided

During 2008/2009, the Library had 50,827 visitors, loaned 85,408 items, answered 14,173 reference questions, provided 3,521 hours of computer use to 3,659 patrons, hosted 1,237 meetings, and shared stories and programs with 5,114 children & families. The collection contains more than 55, 800 items. The Library has more than 6,000 cardholders.

### 5.3 - Our Library Services Issues

- Budgetary pressures affecting hours of service
- Continual need for a clean facility
- Increased computer usage
- Interact with Schools, Town Boards and Commissions to meet our mission
- Need for appropriate technologies for both staff and patron use
- Need for a more secure facility
- Need for increase in programs for all age groups
- Need to expand volunteer opportunities
- Need for a more user friendly, resource rich website
- Need to expand early literacy programs
- Need to expand building function and space

### 5.4 - Our Library Services Mission

To provide the best possible informational, educational, cultural and recreational services in a warm and inviting environment

### 5.5 - Our Library Services Policies & Strategies

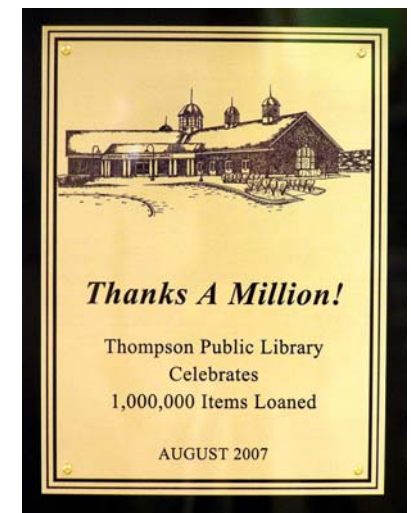
ENCOURAGE – An increase in the library’s hours of service

ENCOURAGE – A more user friendly, resource rich website

EXPAND – Volunteer opportunities at the library

## Our Mission:

**“To provide the best possible informational, educational, cultural and recreational services in a warm and inviting environment.”**





# 5 – Library Services

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Library Patronage	
Frequency	%
Weekly	66%
Monthly	25%
Every 3 Months	6%
Every 6 Months	1%
Never	1%

Primary Library Use	
Resource	%
Books/Magazines	48%
Music/Movies/ Audio Books	28%
Adult Programs	7%
Children Programs	7%
Research/Study	6%
Computer Use	4%

INCREASE – The number of computers available to patrons

INCREASE – Programs and services for all age groups

INCREASE – Interaction with the school, Town boards and commissions

IMPLEMENT – More appropriate hardware and software technologies for more effective staff and patron use

REVIEW – The facility cleaning plan to find opportunities for improvement

REVIEW – The facility security plan to find opportunities for improvement

REVIEW – Options for expansion of building functions or space

### 5.6 - Our Library Services Action Steps

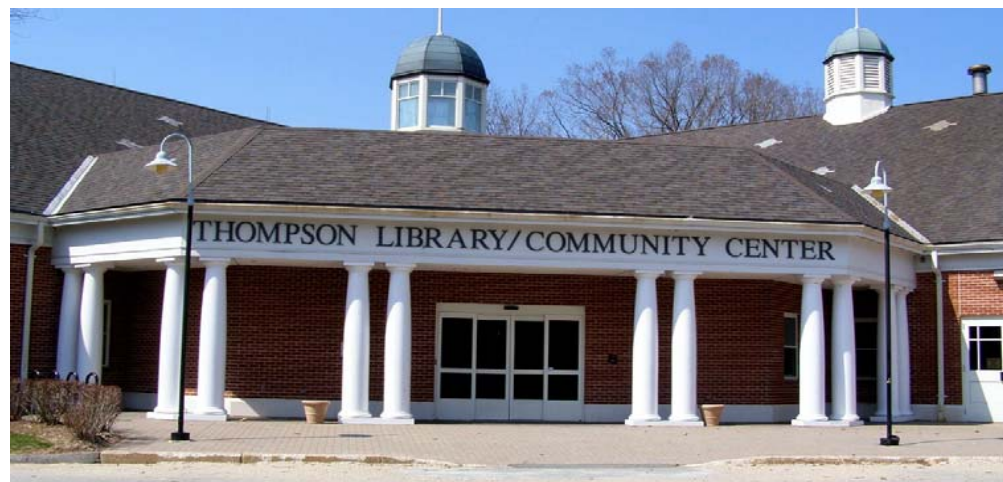
1) **IMPROVE** – Library services through effective programs for all age groups and modern technologies.

2) **MAINTAIN** – Facilities to be a clean, safe, and efficient environment for delivery of services.

3) **IMPROVE** – Communication with the school and Town agencies.

### 5.7 - Our Library Services Conclusion

The Library Board of Trustees, six elected members from the community, is committed to supporting the literacy needs of our community, ensuring quality service, providing adequate access and offering enriching programs to patrons of all ages.



# 6 – Governance

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### 6.1 - Our Governance Background

Town government is supposed to be the least complex of the three general levels (local, state and national) of government. Most certainly it is similar in size and cost. Thompson has an annual budget of about \$20 million and is the Town's largest employer. By contrast, Connecticut has more than 50,000 employees and an \$15 billion dollar annual budget. Thompson's government is smaller, but not necessarily less complex and challenging. Where the State has a myriad of agencies and extensive specialized staff to deal with a variety of issues. Thompson has a team of dedicated elected officials, staff and volunteers to manage Town affairs.

### 6.2 - Our Governance Issues

- Awareness of the complexity of town government
- Resident confidence in local government
- Securing more citizen participation in all aspects of Town governance

### 6.3 - Our Governance Goal

Thompson's residents will have confidence that the Town's governance structure is sound, fair and responsible and that the facilities and services needed to address the needs and desires of its residents are in place.

### 6.4 - Our Governance Policies & Strategies

ENCOURAGE – Greater access to Town government

ENCOURAGE – Greater transparency of government

ENCOURAGE – The adoption of a management system that is an effective day-to-day operations of the Town independent of the election cycle

ENCOURAGE – Timely filling of any vacancies on Boards and Commissions

ENCOURAGE – Continued support of its volunteer emergency services.

ENCOURAGE – Greater effectiveness in posting of legal notices

ENCOURAGE – Greater communication between Boards and Commissions

## Our Goal:

**“Thompson’s residents will have confidence that the Town’s governance structure is sound, fair and responsible and that the facilities and services needed to address the needs and desires of its residents are in place.”**





### 6.5 - Our Governance Action Steps

- 1) **CREATE** – Greater access to government through a preference to evening meeting hours for Boards and Commission and public notice to vacancies to Boards and Commissions.
- 2) **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.
- 3) **CREATE & PUBLISH** – A pamphlet describing government functions and procedures for citizens.

### 6.6 - Our Governance Conclusion

The issues challenging a Town are often complex and often require significant decisions. Citizen confidence in government is critical for Thompson to have effective governance. This confidence can be most effected by greater access, communication and greater transparency.



## 6 – Governance

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# 7 – Town Character

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### 7.1 - Our Town Character Background

Town greens, village centers, stone walls, farm fields, mill buildings and houses, architecture, street widths, traffic patterns, trees, water quality, wildlife, recreational opportunities and historic heritage all contribute to the Town's identity and character. Development, in most forms, tends to alter the existing structure and make-up of the Town. Therefore, future development must be well thought out and comprehensively approached so as not to deter or diminish those elements that make the Town special. Generally, people want to protect what makes their Town special. However, more often than not the things that make a Town special are not protected and very often at risk. This is the case with Thompson today.

### 7.2 - Our Town Natural Resources

Thompson's natural resources (soils, water, wildlife and geology) are all regulated to varying degrees by the State and Federal rules and regulations. The CT Inland Wetlands Act, Aquifer Protection Act, Endangered Species Act and the Federal Clean Water Act each forms part of a the regulatory umbrella under which natural resources are sought to be protected. Despite this list of regulations enforcing these laws there is much that the Town can do to influence these resources (negative and positive). Towns through their use-value assessments for property taxation, wetlands commission, conservation commission, planning and zoning commission and other land use commissions have significant direct and indirect impacts on natural resources. Thompson also has a Level B and Level A Aquifer Protection Area identified for protection by the State. This stratified drift, high yield aquifer is an important and fragile resource. Thompson will bear, under the CT Aquifer Protection Act, the primary responsibility for protecting this resource.

Zoning is another key component in the protection and preservation of Thompson's natural resources. Zoning has been in place in Thompson since 1975 and has been modified several times since that adoption. Currently, Thompson's zoning and subdivision regulations have been recently updated but are limited in the extent to which resource protection is possible. The regulations require standard soil and sedimentation and flood plain control provisions, buffer areas adjoining significant waterways, open space set aside for subdivision and aquifer protection regulations. Beyond the conventional approaches stated there are few specific approaches or strategies employed that seek to protect specific resources. In 2005 the Thompson Conservation Commission created a Conservation & Open Space Plan which identifies resources, promotes wise use of resources, recommends preservation actions and promotes a reasonable balance between conservation efforts and growth strategies.

## Our Goal:

“Thompson's natural, rural and historic resources will be protected and persevered without imposing unreasonable burdens on individual property owners or residents in general.”







### 7.3 - Our Town Character Issues

- Defining Thompson's role regarding State and Federal laws and regulations
- Establishing clear watershed protection goals
- Protecting and preserving historic structures and sites
- Protecting open space & management of Town owned lands
- Rural and mill village character protection
- Scenic roadways and traffic impacts on resources

### 7.4 - Our Town Character Goal

Thompson's natural, rural & historic resources will be protected and perpetuated without imposing unreasonable burdens on individual property owners or residents in general.

### 7.5 - Our Town Character Policies & Strategies

ADOPTION – Of an archaeological protection regulation.

CREATE – Architectural guidelines for new construction which are compatible with the Town's existing New England character.

CONTINUE – The reduced tax assessment of open space and undeveloped land.

DEVELOP – Special protections for the Quinebaug, French and Five-Mile Rivers including the establishment of greenways.

DEVELOP – The official history of Thompson into a curriculum for the school.

DEVELOP – Greater cohesion between State, Federal and local regulatory processes.

ENCOURAGE – The connectivity of open space parcels of land.

ENCOURAGE – Land owners of open space to have a forest management plan

ENCOURAGE – The funding of historic preservation projects within Town.

ENCOURAGE – The reuse of privately and publicly owned historic buildings.

ENSURE – The historic records of Thompson are maintained and protected

IDENTIFY – The location of scarce/rare habitats and provide special protections.

MAINTAIN – A database of GIS information for public access.

MAINTAIN – A pro-active plan to acquire and protect natural resources, including prime and important agricultural soils.

PROTECT – Historic materials such as stone walls from damage and/or theft.



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**PROTECT** – The scenic, historic, recreational and natural areas of Thompson as important economic and cultural assets.

**PROTECT** – The character of each village and establish village greens.

**PROTECT** – Upland review areas influencing wetlands and watercourses.

**REVIEW** – Standards for new roads to preserve the rural character of the landscape.

**SEEK** – Becoming a Certified Local Government to better protect historic resource.

**UPDATE** – The inventory of all historic sites and structures.

**STRIVE** – To balance growth with preservation/conservation efforts



### 7.6 - Our Town Character Action Steps

**1) CREATE** – Greater awareness of Thompson’s history and historic and prehistoric landscapes through education. This would include creating a curriculum for the schools, protection of records, discussion of existing landmarks and structures, and projects focused on restoring or retaining historic and prehistoric integrity.

**2) CREATE** – Architectural guidelines which are unique to Thompson region in New England to ensure future development could be directed towards such a standard.

**3) PROTECT** – The character of Thompson by focusing on the protection of its natural resources such as wetlands, watercourses, flood plains and open spaces including the establishment of greenways. This protection may begin as regulatory in nature, but would evolve into a proactive method of asset management.

### 7.7 - Our Town Character Conclusion

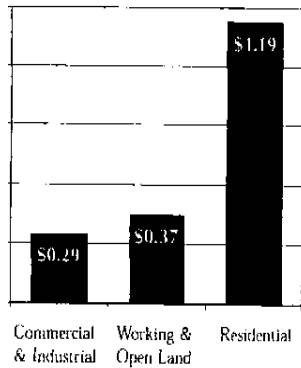
Thompson has a long and colorful history. Fortunately, much of that history has been documented in text and archived. It lives as well in the many structures of historic significance throughout the Town. The North Grosvenordale and Grosvenordale mill districts define the character of those villages. Thompson Hill is recognized as a special and unique area with the formation under the Town’s zoning regulations of the Thompson Common Preservation District. It is these efforts which help preserve that which is unique to Thompson.





Brickyard Road, Thompson

### Cost of Community Services (for each tax dollar collected)



Source: American Farmland Trust



## 8.1 - Our Agriculture Background

Thompson's agricultural past dates back to the earliest settlers of its lands. It is a pursuit that has stayed the history of Thompson and continues today as an active and significant part of the community. However, it is not a given that agriculture will always be in Thompson. New residential development and the economics of agriculture both present significant challenges to those presently farming and to those contemplating it as a pursuit. It is necessary to incorporate flexibility of agricultural pursuits to ensure future economic viability of farms. Agriculture takes many forms and Thompson has a range of agricultural operations. The Town has two dairy farms, several nursery/greenhouse operations, tree farms, crop farms, orchards, private and commercial equestrian operations, apiaries, organic farms and home gardens. Each of these, no matter the size or income, is agriculture.

## 8.2 - Our Agriculture Defined

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." The State provides that for zoning purposes, each Town may more narrowly define agriculture.

## 8.3 - Our Economic Benefits of Agriculture

Agriculture is an economic business and as such needs to be able to grow and expand its business operations. Creating an environment that clearly states agriculture is a valued part of the town's past, present and future will go a long way to ensuring that the benefits of agriculture are secure for years to come. The economic benefits of having diverse and healthy agriculture are significant. Farmland consumes only \$0.37 per tax dollar collected in Town services, leaving a \$0.63 subsidy for other land uses.

## 8.4 - Our Cultural Benefits of Agriculture

While cultural benefits of agriculture are easily overlooked and/or taken for granted, they are significant. Being an agricultural community, Thompson has been built on farming. The loss of this agricultural history would change the makeup of the Town.

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There is practical, quantifiable value, as well as aesthetic and spiritual value to all farmland, especially in a rural community such as Thompson. Generations have worked the land, and the land along with its history is transferred to the next owner. This cycle is critical to maintaining the character of Thompson.

### 8.5 - Our Agricultural Resources

According to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, the Town of Thompson contains 7,760 acres of prime and important farm soils. The majority of farm acreage is devoted to pasture for dairy and beef cattle, horses and the production of silage and hay. Additional farm acreage is devoted to nursery crops and orchards. Smaller enterprises include horse farms, Christmas tree farms, apiaries, and maple sugar production, among others. In 2009, 2,446 acres of land are actively farmed.

### 8.6 - Our Agriculture Issues

- Agriculture and non-farming activity conflicts
- Challenges of modern farming and marketing
- Preservation verses protection
- Private farms viewed as public resources
- Retailing of locally grown products

### 8.7 - Our Agriculture Goal

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.

### 8.8 - Our Agriculture Policies & Strategies

ENCOURAGE – The sale and purchase of products grown locally or regionally.

ENCOURAGE – Additional signage in key locations to support local farm operations and farm stands.

ENCOURAGE – The permanent preservation of existing agricultural lands in a way which does not diminish the value or productivity of existing agricultural operations.

ENCOURAGE – The long-term food producing capacity of Thompson.

ENCOURAGE – The use of State or Federal funds as well as the purchase of development rights (PDR program) to permanently protect key parcels of farmland.

ENCOURAGE – The use of properties (private or Town owned) viable for agriculture production.

## Our Goal:

**“To maintain, sustain and enhance agricultural 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.”**







Fort Hill Farm, Thompson

**ENCOURAGE** – The continuation of agricultural activities without unduly restricting the rights of property owners.

**ENCOURAGE** – The establishment of guidelines for new residential developments which consider the realistic impact of current and future agriculture activities.

**ENCOURAGE** – The maintenance or provision of protective vegetative buffers on land adjacent to existing farmland to limit the effects of dust, noise and odors.

**ENCOURAGE** – Equine interests as a means of preserving open space and demand for agricultural products.

**ENCOURAGE** – Coordination with neighboring Towns to support and preserve agricultural interests.

### **8.9 - Our Agriculture Action Steps**

**1) CREATE** – An Agricultural Advisory Committee to serve as an advisory body to the Board of Selectmen and land use boards/commissions in order to provide a continuity of agricultural policies.

**2) WRITE & ADOPT** – A right to farm ordinance to further the Town's policy and reduce the loss of agricultural resources. 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.

**3) WRITE & ADOPT** – A property tax reduction policy for certain agricultural properties and buildings, as provided for in the Connecticut General Statutes, due to the lower cost of services when compared to the potential residential use.

**4) 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.

**5) IDENTIFY** – Agricultural resources to provide the best and most recent information to new and existing farms in Thompson.

### **8.10 - Our Agricultural Conclusion**

It makes good sense to support agriculture. It contributes to the local economy, requires minimal services from the Town, provides open spaces, scenic vistas and wildlife habitat and corridors. It also provides a living presence of our history and a reminder for our future. Growing and buying locally is also an effective means of conserving energy through decreased product transport and/or consumer travel.



## **8 – Agriculture**

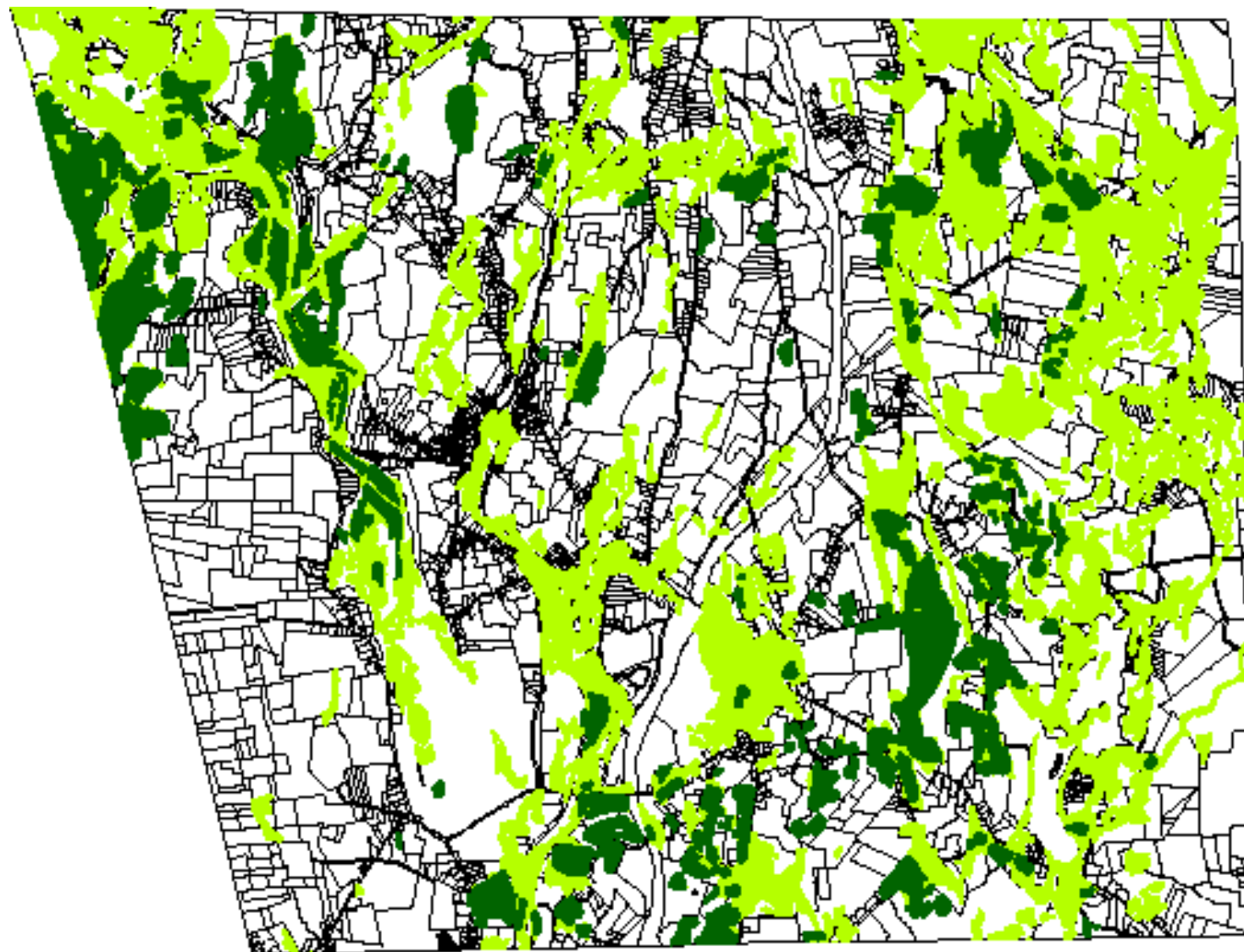
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-  Important Soils
-  Prime Soils

## Farmland Soils Thompson, CT



## Our Goal:

**“To wisely manage land development and carefully protect the environment so that Thompson remains a rural community with a balanced approach to sustaining its natural and cultural heritage.”**



### 9.1 - Our Open Space Background

The Town's natural resources are its most valued commodity. The loss of these resources would result in the loss of identity and eventually overall vitality of the Town. Protecting these resources for future generations is a critical goal. Placing these resources in open space or under conservation or preservation easements is the best way to ensure future protection.

### 9.2 - Our Open Space Resources

The open and wild places and spaces of Thompson are an interrelated web of nature. Forests, the natural vegetative cover in Thompson, provide many important benefits. In addition to providing timber, forests remove carbon dioxide and pollutants from the air, produce oxygen, and play a major role in groundwater recharge. Forests cleanse and moderate flow of our water supply, and prevent soil erosion. They provide habitat for native wildlife species and an important recreation outlet for our residents. Forestland, like farmland, provides more tax revenue than it consumes in services.

Thompson's wetlands and watercourses are essential to hydrological stability. Our wetlands provide an abundant supply of surface water and groundwater, recharging and purifying our drinking water. They provide flood control and storage. They are critical to the existence of animal, aquatic and plant life, including threatened, rare and endangered plant and animal species. Wetlands and watercourses link many of our open spaces, and provide green corridors for the movement of wildlife. Wetlands provide fish and wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, some pollution abatement, community aesthetics and educational opportunities.

Thompson is fortunate to have retained active farming operations in the Town and to have landowners who maintain agricultural fields for lease to farmers. In addition to their farm crops and products, these farms add immeasurably to the aesthetic beauty and rural character of Thompson.

### 9.3 - Our Open Space Issues

- Forests are a renewable natural resource when managed properly.
- The need for an understanding to protect and conserve these vital resources.
- The need to support agriculture within the Town.
- The need for open space dedications and conservation easements to protect vital land.
- Water resources are vital to the health and well being of all living things.

### 9.4 - Our Open Space Goal

To wisely manage land development and carefully protect the environment so that Thompson remains a rural community with a balanced approach to sustaining its natural and cultural heritage.

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### 9.5 - Our Open Space Policies & Strategies

ACQUIRE – Land and/or conservation easements in identified resource areas.

AVOID – Night time outdoor light pollution by adopting regulations.

BUILD – Communication between boards, commissions and town staff.

DEVELOP – Special protections for the Quinebaug, French and Five Mile Rivers including the establishment of greenways.

ENCOURAGE – The best use of land through conservation development regulations.

ENCOURAGE – Private donation of land to land trusts and other conservation organizations.

ENCOURAGE – The use of environmentally clean sources of energy.

ENCOURAGE – The use of low impact development techniques including porous materials instead of impervious materials.

IMPLEMENT – The review of development proposals by the Conservation Commission prior to land-use commission decision making.

MANAGE – Town owned renewable natural resources such as forests as a source of income for open space acquisition.

SUPPORT – The preservation of scenic vistas, stone walls and other aesthetic, historic and prehistoric landscape features.

SUPPORT – Appropriate economic growth that fits in with Thompson's rural character

### 9.6 - Our Open Space Action Steps

**1) REVIEW & FOLLOW** – The Natural Resources Inventory and guidance provided by the Town's Conservation and Open Space Plan (December 2005)

**2) IMPLEMENT** – The recommendations to protect the natural resources contained on sites under review for development to include establishment of greenways.

**3) REVIEW** – Existing land use regulations to identify any additional opportunities to protect Thompson's existing natural resources.

### 9.7 - Our Open Space Conclusion

The protection of Thompson's existing natural resources is critical for protecting Thompson's future. Changing our ways of valuing and conserving our natural and cultural resources will be an involved and inclusive process. The ultimate goal is for cooperative land-use decisions that will achieve a balance between conservation and development.



Quaddick Lake



Quinebaug River







Rocky Brook

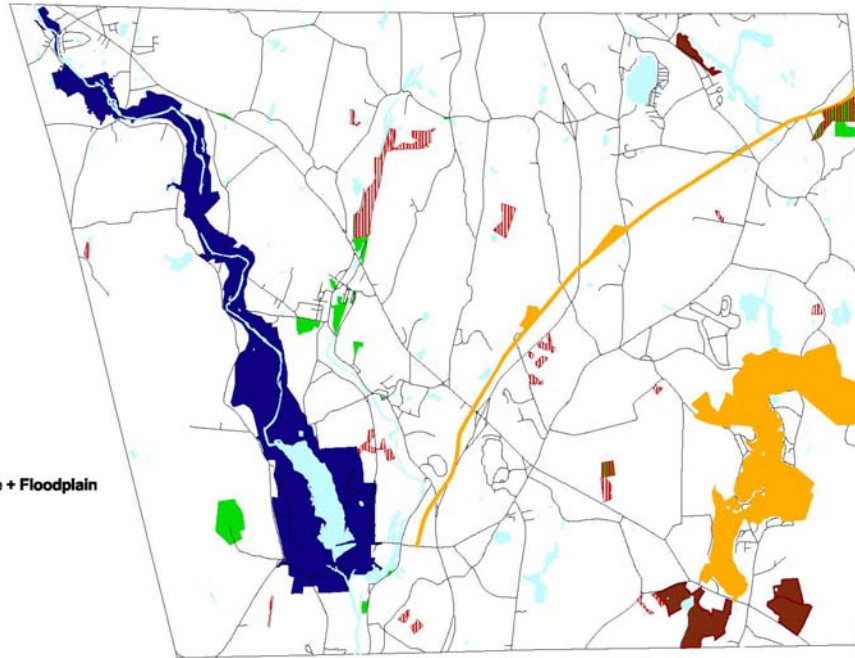


Stone Cairns














## Thompson, CT Permanently Protected Open Space 2009

 Conservation Easements  
 CT State  
 Streets  
 2006 Town Open Space  
 Water  
 Privately Protected Land  
 USACE West Thompson Lake + Floodplain

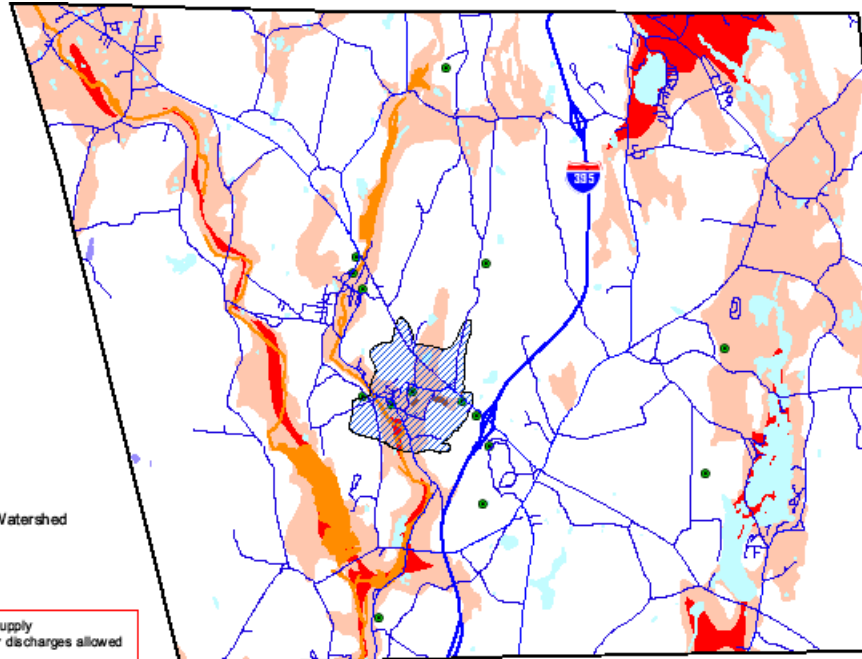


## Thompson, CT Water Quality

Map 7

**LEGEND**  
 Water Quality Class  
 A  
 AA, A/AA  
 B  
 B/A, B/AA  
 C/B, D/B  
 Groundwater Resources  
 Greater than 40 Feet  
 0 to 40 Feet  
 Roads  
 Town Boundaries  
 Public Water Supply Watershed  
 DEP - Leachate Sites

A, AA-drinking water supply  
 -only clean water discharges allowed  
 B -recreational use  
 -only clean water discharges allowed  
 C/B, D/B-unacceptable quality  
 -only clean water discharges allowed



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### 10.1 - Our Energy Conservation Background

Over-reliance on fossil fuels is acknowledged to be a substantial problem for Thompson, and society in general, and is likely to remain a problem in the near future. While oil and coal derived energy sometimes appears less expensive, there are hidden costs to the environment. Thompson is forested over sixty percent of its surface. Inevitably more timber is going to be harvested and used as fuel. Deforestation reduces filtering of the air and reduces the photosynthesis process that removes carbon dioxide and releases oxygen.

### 10.2 - Our Energy Conservation Options

Thompson residents can currently opt to buy electricity from their utility company that is derived from wind and hydroelectric energy sources. These sources benefit the growth of local energy production and reduce dependence on crude oil and natural gas, of which there is a finite supply.

### 10.3 - Our Energy Issues

- Increasing energy costs and air pollution
- Use of inefficient, non-renewable, fuel sources
- Future fossil fuel shortage
- Climate change

### 10.4 - Our Energy Conservation Goal

To encourage the use of cleaner renewable energy options through innovative energy generation and conservation technologies.

### 10.5 - Our Energy Conservation Policies & Strategies

INCREASE – Awareness for the need to conserve energy for local industry, commercial enterprises, governmental facilities and residents.

EXPAND – Public awareness of energy conservation options through public outreach and informational meetings.

ADVOCATE – For the inclusion of energy and conservation curriculums in all educational systems in Thompson.

EXPAND – The use of photovoltaic panels and geothermal technologies at Town owned facilities, private businesses and residential dwellings.

PROMOTE – The use of efficient lighting, motion sensors, reduced lighting levels, energy efficient appliances and better insulation.

SUPPORT – The replacement of inefficient heating systems with more efficient, cleaner and safer methods of heat generation.

## Our Goal:

**“To encourage the use of cleaner renewable energy options through innovative energy generation and conservation technologies.”**





North Grosvenordale Pond



West Thompson Dam



**SUPPORT** – The use of passive solar technologies and proper solar orientation in all new construction.

**SUPPORT** – The gradual replacement of Town owned vehicles with hybrid gas/electric vehicles or other fuel efficient alternatives.

**ENCOURAGE** – Continued cooperation between Town staff, Town boards and commissions, design professionals and contractors to promote best energy practices.

**SUPPORT** – The use of State and Federal economic incentives encouraging energy conservation and alternate energy production.

**SUPPORT** – The economic development and attraction of energy conservation industries and businesses to Thompson.

**CREATE** – A renewable energy training and learning center in Thompson to benefit the surrounding region.

### **10.6 - Our Energy Conservation Action Steps**

**1) MAINTAIN** – A comprehensive study of current energy use in all Town owned and operated facilities.

**2) MAINTAIN** – A map of all existing and proposed solar, geothermal and hydroelectric generation sites located within Thompson.

**3) COMPLETE** – A study of the hydroelectric generation potential on the Quinebaug River (in West Thompson and Fabyan), on the French River (in Wilsonville, North Grosvenordale and Grosvenordale), and on the Five Mile River (in East Thompson).

### **10.7 - Our Energy Conservation Conclusion**

The primary fuel sources used in our society, and in Thompson, are non-renewable and produce harmful bi-products. The shift to renewable sources of energy production is wise and necessary. If the current tread is altered, Thompson's physical landscape, air quality and citizen health will improve. Thompson has incredible resources with its rivers, ridgelines and sun to pursue more sustainable energy options. It is the ethical duty of the Town to make every effort to encourage the development and implementation of responsible energy options.

## **10 – Energy Conservation**

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# 11 – Affordable Housing

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### 11.1 - Our Affordable Housing Background

Housing (shelter) is a basic need of all persons. Thompson's almost 10,000 residents live in a variety of housing types: single family, multi-family, apartments, condominiums, senior citizen housing, low and moderate income housing, manufactured homes and mobile homes. Thompson's housing for the most part is single-family dwellings which is consistent with its rural character. Housing densities vary within the Town and is a reflection of the Town's historical development. The highest density housing is found in Grosvenordale, North Grosvenordale and Quinebaug sections resulting from the Town's early experiences with industrialization. The Thompson Hill area also has a higher density due to its historic role as the Town's governing, religious and social center. Other areas of high residential concentration are remnants of seasonal housing in the Little Pond and Quaddick areas.

### 11.2 - Our Affordable Housing Issues

- Protection of housing value as most people's greatest asset and investment
- Importance of existing affordable housing opportunities and its continuation
- Necessity of a greater variety of housing types for a greater variety of individuals

### 11.3 - Our Affordable Housing Goal

All residents should have reasonable access to the housing of their choice and such housing should maintain and/or enhance the rural/historic character of the Town.

### 11.4 - Our Affordable Housing Policies & Strategies

ENCOURAGE – The preservation of historic housing types and architecture

ENCOURAGE – The continual maintenance and improvement of existing housing which show signs of disrepair or blight

ENSURE – That all building, fire and health codes are enforced

PARTICIPATE – In any programs for low-income energy assistance programs

REVIEW – Town policy and practices to ensure compliance with all Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity federal legislation

REVIEW – Existing development patterns of housing to ensure it meets the current needs of residents and future development will meet future needs

REVIEW – Any potential for extensions of infrastructure and services to new development in outlying areas

SUPPORT – Programs that seek to protect and strengthen our neighborhoods

## Our Goal:

**“All residents should have reasonable access to the housing of their choice and such housing should maintain and/or enhance the rural/historic character of the Town.”**





### 11.5 - Our Affordable Housing Action Steps

- 1) **COMPLETE** – A comprehensive Housing Study of both existing housing development and projected housing supply for future residents.
- 2) **CONSIDER** – Applying the Incentive Housing Zone incentives to the current and former mill sites through the Housing Program for Economic Growth established in 2007 by the CT General Assembly.
- 3) **REVIEW** – The Town’s Ordinances, Zoning Regulations and Subdivision Regulations to ensure future housing development type will meet future housing needs.

### 11.6 - Our Affordable Housing Conclusion

Like the other Towns in northeastern Connecticut during the building booms of the mid-1980’s, Thompson realized significant residential growth. Nearly all of this growth was single-family residential in nature. Much of this growth came from persons working outside of the region. Connecticut defines affordable housing as housing which does not cost a family more than thirty percent (30%) of its gross income. Housing costs include both the cost of rent (or mortgage) and utilities. The Town also has a significant portion of its housing that falls into the category of “assisted” units as required in Section 8-30g of the General Statutes requiring Towns to provide affordable housing options. The State’s Plan of Conservation and Development housing goal is “to establish and maintain an adequate supply of decent and affordable housing in a suitable living environment for all citizens”. Thompson is well on its way to meeting this goal.



Historic Thompson Hill housing development

## 11 – Affordable Housing

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# 12 – Economic Development

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### 12.1 - Our Economic Development Background

Thompson has a long history of economic activity and growth. The mills and farms are confirmation to the past. Although the Town is no longer a mill town, nor is it dependent on agricultural production, Thompson has an active and growing business community. Unlike the Town's economic past, there exists today no dominant employment type or employer. Its business base is not large, but is growing and has over 300 businesses. The largest employer in Thompson is education (both public and private). Of particular note, in recent years, the River Mill of North Grosvenordale has been restored and, once essentially abandoned, it now boasts many businesses that provide a number of jobs. Tourism and recreation bring many visitors and revenue to Thompson. The West Thompson Dam, Quaddick State Park, the extensive trail system, and Thompson Speedway bring people from throughout southern New England. Additionally, the Town's two golf courses bring in a steady flow of people from outside the Town. Like most towns in Connecticut, Thompson is under significant pressure to diversify its tax base by developing commercial activity. This is an attempt to minimize the ever-growing tax burden to homeowners.

### 12.2 - Our Economic Development Potential

According to the State of Connecticut's most recent Plan of Conservation and Development, the areas approved for future development are those immediately adjacent to Route 12 North and Route 200. The State will only assist with projects that are within these defined growth areas. Within this area is the site of the former Belding Mill at Route 12 and Blain Road, which is the area available for greatest development potential.

### 12.3 - Our Economic Development Issues

- Access to interstate, rail, and utilities.
- What type of growth should the Town encourage
- Compatibility with existing uses and character
- Roles of Economic Development Commission, staff and Selectmen

### 12.4 - Our Economic Development Goal

To further the growth and development of our town by retaining, attracting, and assisting businesses, while also preserving the integrity of the town's rich heritage.

### 12.5 - Our Economic Development Policies & Strategies

CREATE – A document to help those trying to locate or start a business in Town.

CREATE – A central location for information regarding economic development opportunities within Town.

MAINTAIN – Businesses currently based in or located in Thompson

## Our Goal:

**“To further  
the growth  
and  
development  
of our town  
by  
retaining,  
attracting,  
and  
assisting  
businesses,  
while also  
preserving  
the integrity  
of the town's  
rich  
heritage.**



DEVELOP – The strengths and opportunities currently found within Thompson.

DEVELOP – A comprehensive economic development commission website.

ENCOURAGE – Economic growth within areas that are most beneficial to the Town.

ENCOURAGE – Green industries to develop in Town

MAINTAIN – Businesses currently based in of located in Thompson. WORK – With the Belding Mill owners towards a clean site for development.

PARTICIPATE – In local and regional economic development organizations.

REVIEW – Existing zoning within the Town to ensure contextual compatibility.

### **12.6 - Our Economic Development Action Steps**

**1) CREATE** – Greater awareness to consumers of existing businesses within Thompson and promote the interconnection.

**2) DEVELOP** – A professional and comprehensive website by the Economic Development Commission.

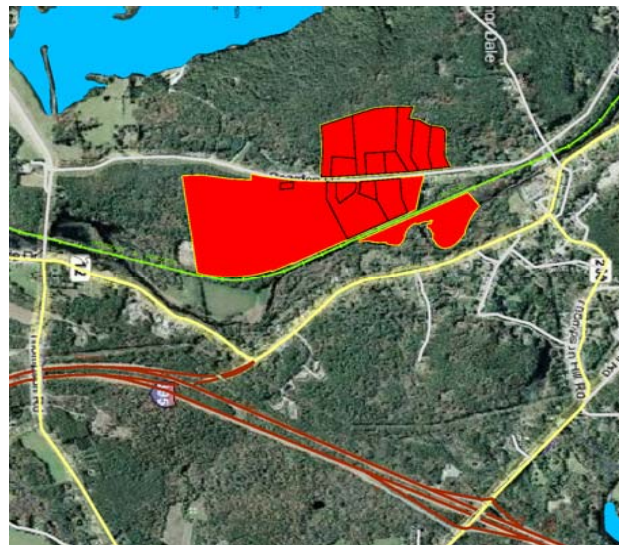
**3) PROMOTE** - Development of new businesses within existing infrastructure in targeted growth areas.

### **12.7 - Our Economic Development Conclusion**

Like most towns in Connecticut, Thompson is under significant pressure to diversify its tax base by developing commercial activity in order to minimize the ever-growing tax burden to homeowners. It is not an easy task with 169 towns and cities in Connecticut with the same goal where competition is intense and the rewards sparse.



Thompson Social Service Facility (Thatcher Rd)



Thompson Rail Business Park (Reardon Rd.)

## **12 – Economic Development**

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# 13 – Safety Services

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### 13.1 - Our Safety Services Background

The safety services of Thompson include five (5) volunteer fire departments, law enforcement coverage by Troop D and an emergency management office.

Thompson's five volunteer fire departments are:

- Community Fire Company – 862 Riverside Drive
- East Thompson Volunteer Fire – 530 East Thompson Road
- Thompson Fire Engine Company – 70 Chase Road
- West Thompson Independent Fire – 248 West Thompson Road
- Quinebaug Volunteer Fire – 720 Quinebaug Road

The Connecticut State Police (Troop D) serve as the law enforcement coverage for the Town. The Town had a dedicated resident State trooper, however in 2008 the position was cut out of the Town's FY2008/2009 budget. The emergency management office has been the emergency preparedness focus for the residents of Thompson. This office has been created to be a central command post during natural or manmade disasters to be able to collect and disseminate information to the community.

### 13.2 - Our Safety Services Issues

- Adequately staffing five volunteer fire companies in Town
- Adequately equipping and training all volunteers
- Adapting to evolution of new fire equipment
- Apathy of younger residents towards volunteerism
- Dealing with underfunded mandates for fire protection
- Loss of inside community knowledge with loss of resident State trooper
- Need for improved communication during times of emergency
- Response time for law enforcement coverage

### 13.3 - Our Safety Services Goal

To provide adequate services to the residents of Thompson to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community.

### 13.4 - Our Safety Services Policies & Strategies

CREATE – A plan for each fire company to anticipate the life span of existing equipment and plan the purchase of new equipment or capital improvements.

CREATE – More dialog with State and Federal government to open more funding to meet mandated guidelines. DEVELOP – A strategy of how to bring new volunteerism into fire departments.

## Our Goal:

**“To provide adequate services to the residents of Thompson to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community.”**





**CREATE** – A plan for equipment upgrades and/or purchases to improve emergency response or the dissemination of information.

**ENCOURAGE** - Increased communication between fire departments to share experiences and innovations.

**PUBLISH** – A list of certified emergency shelters within Thompson.

**REVIEW** – Response times of Troop D to calls of residents.

**REVIEW** – The emergency response plan yearly to assess effectiveness and identify potential for improvement.

### **13.5 - Our Safety Services Action Steps**

**1) CREATE** – A development plan for each fire company to prioritize equipment and capital expenditures.

**2) DEVELOP** – A strategy to increase volunteerism of new residents.

**3) DEVELOP** – Signage for emergency shelters in Town..

### **13.6 - Our Safety Services Conclusion**

In a rural community that is as spread out as Thompson, it is challenging to provide consistent safety services throughout the Town. Our fire services rely solely on volunteers. Our law enforcement relies solely on State troopers based out of Danielson, CT. These conditions create a degree of vulnerability which, at times, may make difficult situations worse. Despite these issues, a small community like Thompson must continue to utilize the available safety services and find ways to maximize the effectiveness of these services to protect the safety of our residents.



## **13 – Safety Services**

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# 14 – Transportation

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### 14.1 - Our Transportation

Roads and bridges, rails, bikeways, pathways and public transportation are the linkages to homes, businesses, schools, safety and other basic or discretionary needs. Town residents, visitors and businesses interact with this system every day – it is a critical issue to the Town’s well being into the future.

### 14.2 - Our Transportation Background

The Town’s transportation system is well established with little opportunity for substantive change in terms of re-locating or building new roads. Most of Thompson’s roads were once dirt pathways (as some are still today) that were eventually paved. At the time, little thought was given to now common engineering practices such as drainage, slope, grade, and sightline. This lack of engineering greatly increases costs as the roads are repaired and upgraded.

In 1986 just over 30 miles of roads were in need of reconstruction or rehabilitation; however in 1996 over 70 miles were in need of reconstruction. The miles of roads needing repair today is well over 100 miles. Roads begin to deteriorate and require some form of routine maintenance almost immediately after a road is rehabilitated. The design life of a typical town road is between 15 and 20 years depending on how well it is maintained. The current work force and equipment devoted to the Town’s roads is adequate for routine maintenance but is not adequate to take on extensive rehabilitation and/or reconstruction projects.

The Town’s active rail line, the Providence and Worcester, runs north to south through Thompson. The line is used daily as a freight line and occasionally for special event passenger service. Other abandoned rail beds are now part of the regional and national trail system (the East Coast Greenway) that is a recreational trail that will eventually run from Florida to Maine

### 14.3 - Our Transportation Issues

- Access to and from Interstate 395
- Lack of bus or rail public transportation
- Town roads used as shortcuts for those passing through Thompson
- Traffic safety in terms of road design, speed and volume
- Transportation maintenance, rehabilitation and construction costs
- Truck traffic

### 14.4 - Our Transportation Goal

To create and maintain a safe, reliable, historically sensitive, attractive and affordable transportation system for the Town.

## Our Goal:

**“To create  
and maintain  
a safe,  
reliable,  
historically  
sensitive,  
attractive and  
affordable  
transportation  
system for the  
Town.”**





# 14 – Transportation

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### 14.5 - Our Transportation Policies & Strategies

**CREATE** – A comprehensive transportation plan for the upgrade, repair and maintenance of the roadway system, including an inventory of streets, condition survey, project ranking, programming and implementation.

**DEVELOP** – A strategy to minimize truck traffic in residential neighborhoods.

**ENCOURAGE** – The development of public transportation options including rail and bus services.

**ENCOURAGE** – Provisions for bikeways in road improvement projects and placement of crosswalks at critical locations.

**ENSURE** – That the design of new road construction or modification meets minimal standards, and is able to adapt with innovation within the industry.

**PROTECT** – Natural and cultural aspects of the surrounding landscapes.

**REVIEW** – The use of roads used as cut-throughs from majors roads and submit to the DOT for reclassification.

**SUPPORT** – Para-services to residents with special needs.

### 14.6 - Our Transportation Action Steps

**1) CREATE** – A comprehensive transportation plan for the Town to include policy and procedure for maintenance and repair.

**2) ENCOURAGE** – The increased use of public transportation to include rail, bus service and recreation trails.

### 14.7 - Our Transportation Conclusion

The road network in Thompson is well established and needs constant improvement across the board. Old roads with poor design and drainage keep the Town at a constant up-hill climb to keep the existing roads safe for residents and visitors. The focus on planning for more regional and public transportation options will pay off over time as the reliance on the automobile slowly regresses.



# 15 – Parks & Recreation

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## 15 - Parks & Recreation

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### 15.1 - Our Parks & Recreation Background

Thompson enjoys a mix of recreational opportunities provided by the Town, State Federal Government and through private initiative. The majority of these resources are either outdoor (hiking, boating, swimming) natural resources (Quaddick State Park or West Thompson Dam) or fee based entertainment (Raceway Golf Course or Thompson Speedway). These resources are not only used by residents of Thompson but by a significant number of individuals located outside of the Town or region.

### 15.2 - Our Parks & Recreation Issues

Lack of sufficient active recreation facilities with neighborhood service areas  
Affordable after school and summer programs for all working families  
Improvement and maintenance of existing recreation facilities

### 15.3 - Our Parks & Recreation Goal

To enhance and support quality recreational opportunities for all Thompson residents and promote a sustainable and healthy lifestyle for all ages and incomes.

### 15.4 - Our Parks & Recreation Policies & Strategies

DEVELOP – Youth programming that includes before and after school programming, summer day camp, summer programs, cultural and special events.

CONTINUE – To provide activities before and after school for youth Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade at school and other locations.

ENSURE – Cohesion by making the recreation department the public face of all Town recreational activities through which all other boards and commission work through.

ENHANCE – Resident access to recreation programs by utilizing the on-line forms, the recreation website for information and providing appropriate administrative staff.

CREATE – A plan for the redevelopment and continual maintenance of existing recreation facilities and the identification of any unmet recreation needs in Town.

CONTINUE – To provide an array of out of school time programs on a year round basis.

CONTINUE – To provide financial assistance for youth programs for eligible families.

DEVELOP – A plan to provide recreation that is affordable for families at all incomes.

CONTINUE – To provide recreation activities to meet the needs of senior citizens.

DEVELOP – A plan to protect the environment through all our Recreation programs.

## Our Goal:

**“To enhance and support quality recreational opportunities for all Thompson residents and promote a sustainable and healthy lifestyle for all ages and incomes.”**



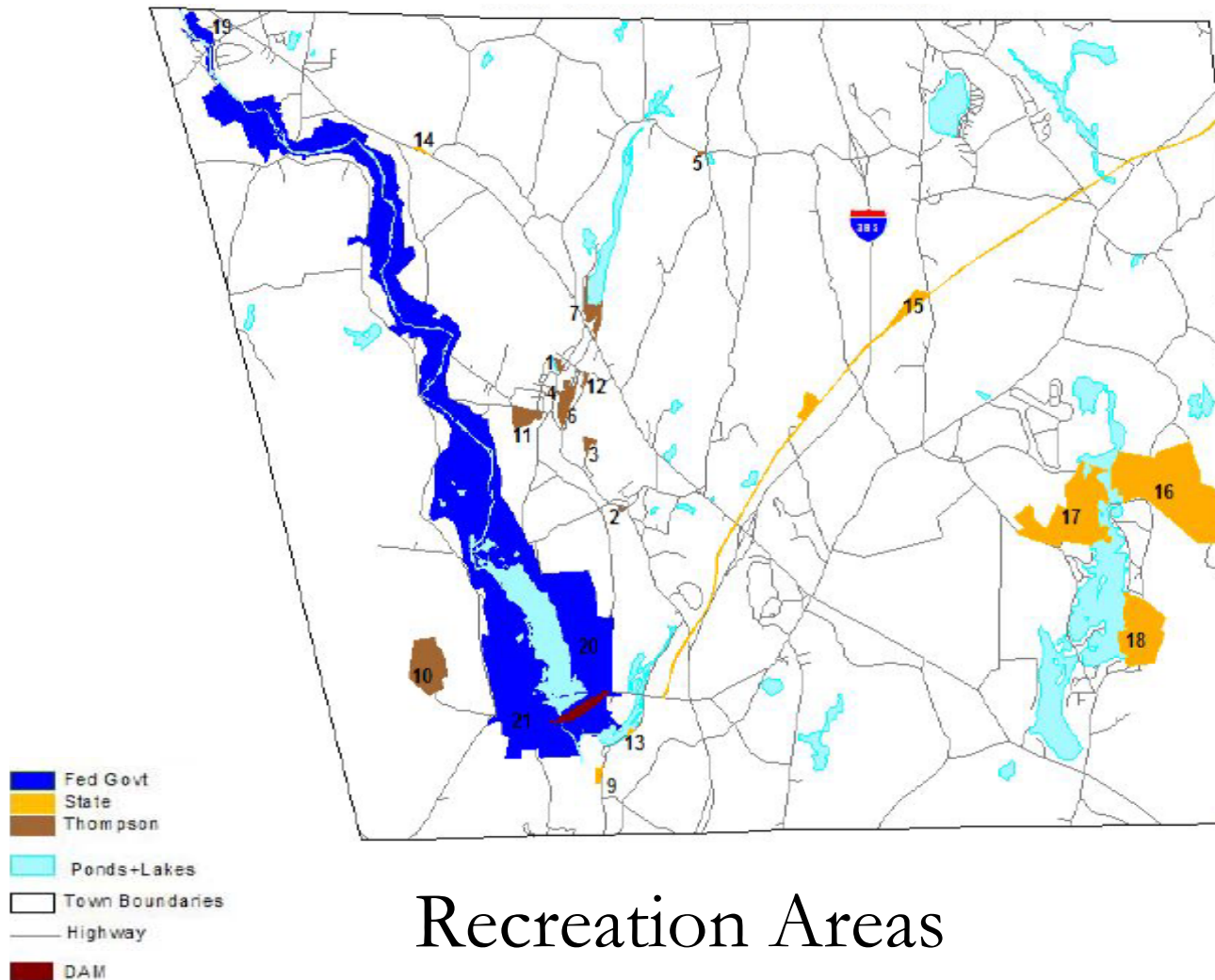
### 15.5 - Our Parks & Recreation Action Steps

1) **SUPPORT** – Recreation programs that are able to create community connections and meet the needs at all age and income levels.

2) **DEVELOP** – An overall plan of recreation facilities including use, maintenance and rehabilitation, to also include a plan for the location and development of new recreation facilities.

### 15.6 - Our Parks & Recreation Conclusion

Recreation is a resource to residents of the community. It provides the opportunity for enhancement of physical, emotional, and social well-being. In many instances it serves to unify the community.



## Recreation Areas

# 15 – Parks & Recreation

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# 16 – Trails

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### 16.1 - Our Trails Background

The two primary recreation trails that are within the Town are either located on the Thompson Dam property or a part of the Airline Trail. The Thompson Dam property is 1,745 acres owned by the federal government and maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers and has a network of trails throughout the property. The Airline State Park Trail in Thompson is a six and one half (6 ½) mile link for a larger regional and national trail system. The existing rail bed has been abandoned and the rails have been removed, however, the trail has not been regularly maintained over the years. There are several trails on private Town and State owned property.

### 16.2 - Our Trails Issues

Connections to trails in Town and to neighboring communities  
Rehabilitation and maintenance of existing trails  
Compatible use of trails for hiking, bicycling and equestrian use  
Trail signage and parking

### 16.3 - Our Trails Goal

To build, maintain, acquire and promote the use of public trails in Thompson and connect trails to neighboring communities.

### 16.4 - Our Trails Policies & Strategies

DEVELOP – Greater tourism and economic opportunities by promoting Town trails.

SPONSOR – Programs to encourage children & adults to walk outdoors for health and recreation.

ADOPT – Consistent standards for trail use, signage and parking.

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 focal piece for the Tri-State marker site

### 16.5 - Our Trails Action Steps

1)DEVELOP – Partnerships throughout the trail community to help develop, promote and enhance the trail recreation experience.

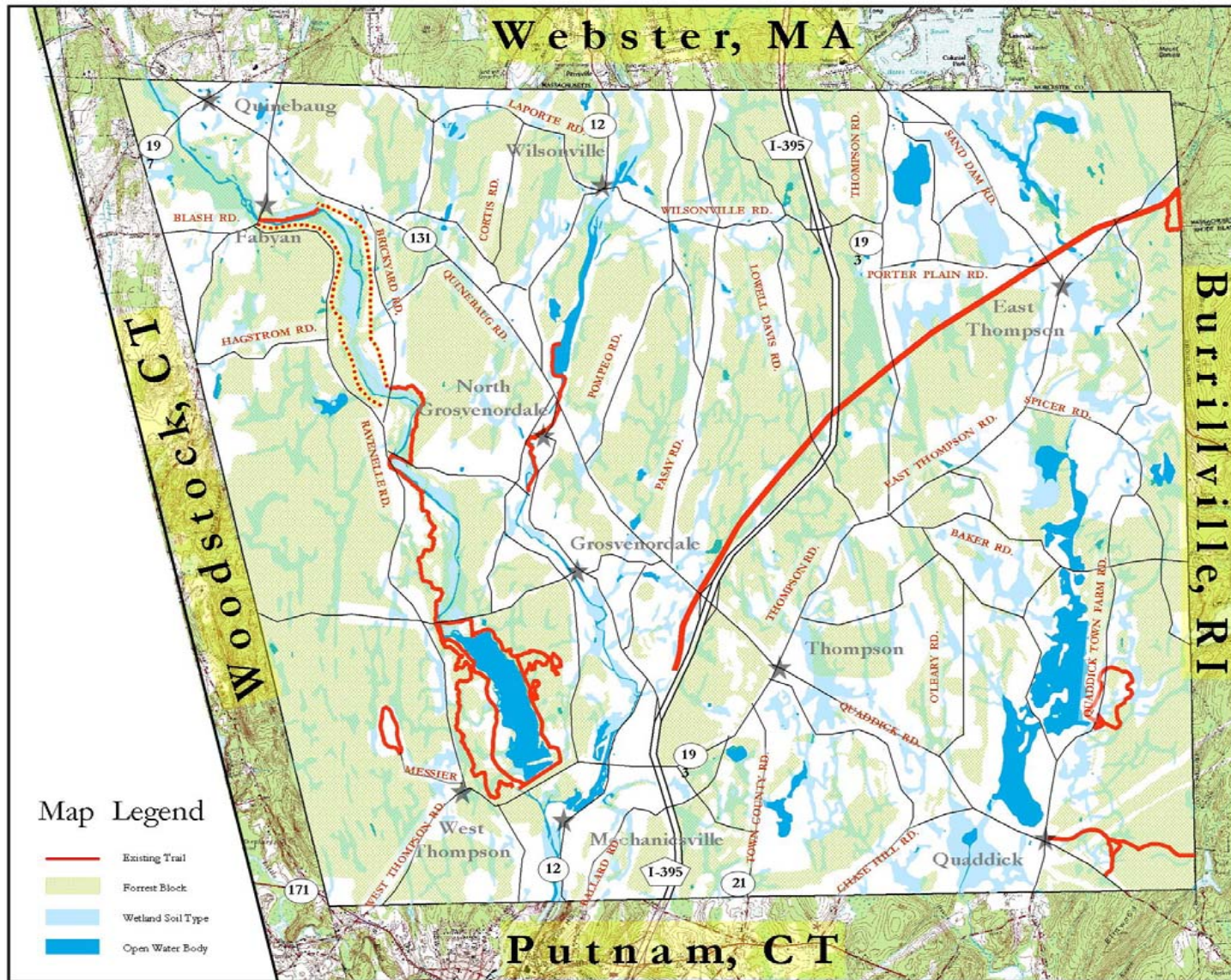
2)UPDATE – maps and emergency management plans.

### 16.6 - Our Trails Conclusion

An interconnected system of natural and urban trails are an incredible asset to a community such as Thompson. Trails are a great way to build health, appreciation for nature, and an overall sense of community. It is important to continue to build support and communication with neighboring communities to build our trail network.

## Our Goal:

“To enhance  
and support an  
inter-connected  
local and  
regional trail  
system that  
provides  
opportunities  
for a variety of  
users.”



# Recreation Trails Thompson, CT

## Map Legend

- Existing Trail
- Forrest Block
- Wetland Soil Type
- Open Water Body

## 16 – Trails

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# 17 – Future Land Use

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## 17 - Future Land Use

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### 17.1 - Our Future Land Use Background

Thompson has had zoning, subdivision and wetlands regulations in place since 1975, 1969 and 1974 respectively. These regulations are administered by the combined Planning and Zoning Commission and the Inland Wetlands and Watercourse Agency with the Conservation Commission reviewing proposed development in an advisory capacity. These Town agencies address land use matters both in response to applications and in protecting the Town's natural resources.

The Neighborhood Commercial zone was recently adopted in 2007 in an attempt to provide some flexibility for mixed-use development with a eye on the reuse of the underused mill structures in Thompson. A recent analysis of Thompson's existing industrially zone that showed that only 68 acres (7.3%) of the total land zoned industrial (940 acres) is being used for an industrial use.

In November of 2007 the Planning and Zoning Commission completed a comprehensive update of the Zoning Regulations with over 100 text revisions. In December of 2008 the Planning and Zoning Commission completed a comprehensive update of the Subdivision Regulations to include a new conservation subdivision option for developers.

### 17.2 - Our Future Land Use Issues

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

### 17.3 - Our Future Land Use Goal

To encourage a sustainable development pattern that limits incompatible uses, protects the Town's natural/cultural resources, and does not adversely impacting the rural character.

### 17.4 - Our Future Land Use Policies & Strategies

CREATE – A comprehensive vision for the Exit 100 interchange off of Interstates 395.

IDENTIFY – Ideal locations for a commuter rail station in Thompson.

REVIEW – The location of industrial zoned land to assess appropriateness.

REVIEW – All land uses along the Interstate 395 corridor to assess appropriateness.

REVIEW – The TC-80 zone and consider adding architectural design review.

IMPROVE –Access to industrial land, including a study of RT200 & Plum Road.

SUPPORT – The development of green land use technologies.

SUPPORT – The construction of a State rest stop and welcome center at Exit 100

## Our Goal:

**“To encourage a sustainable development pattern that limits incompatible uses, protects the Town's natural/cultural resources, and does not adversely impacting the rural character.”**



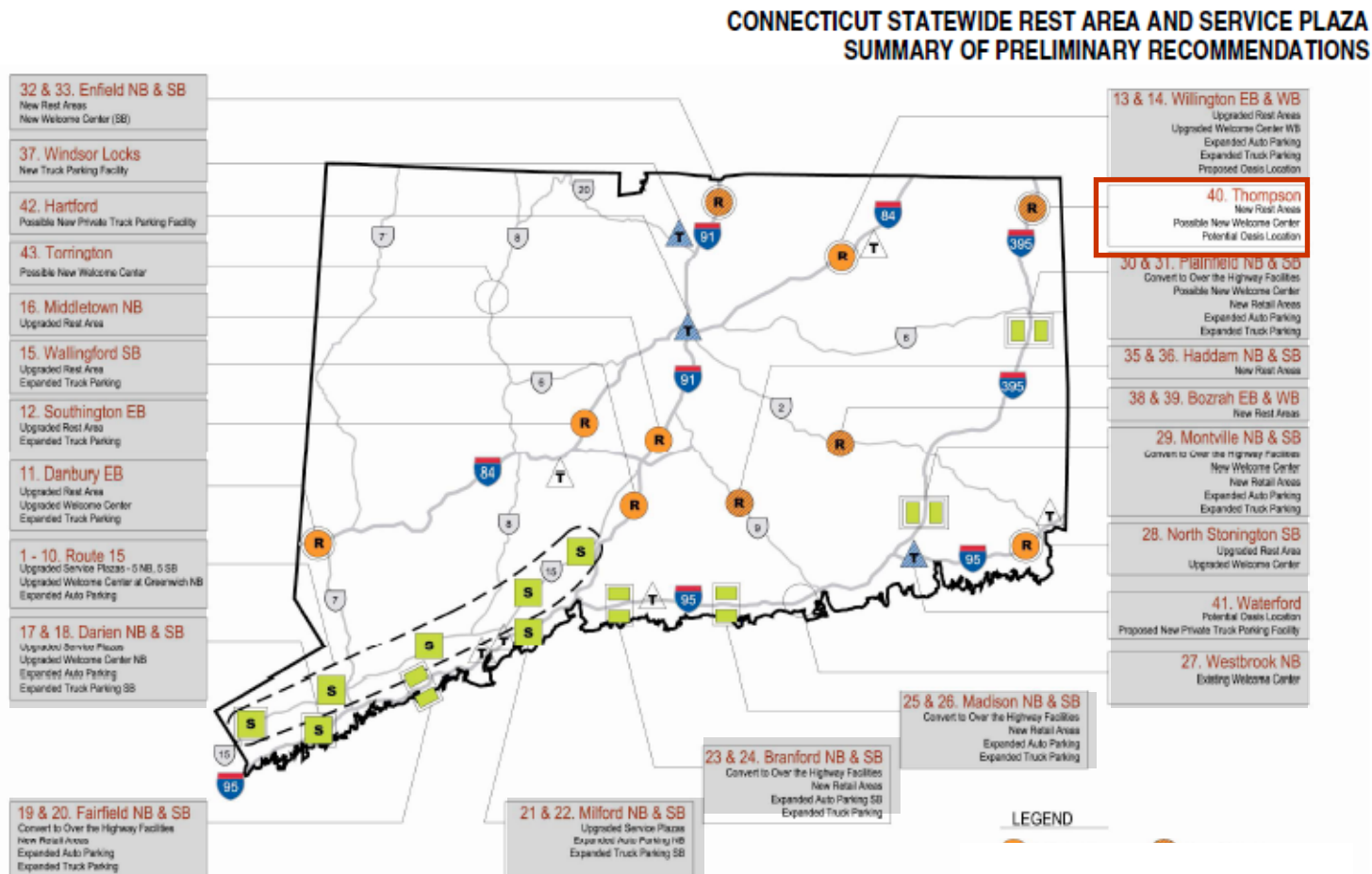


### 17.5 - Our Future Land Use Action Steps

- 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.

### 17.6 - Our Future Land Use Conclusion

Thompson is situated in an ideal location for development in the future. Ideal Interstate access and distance from urban centers such as Worcester, Boston, Hartford and New York has Thompson as the next frontier . Now is the time to plan and prepare for development. Now is the time to lay the framework and infrastructure that support the development to come. Now is the time to think about the future of Thompson and start steering it before the momentum of development takes over.



## 17 – Future Land Use

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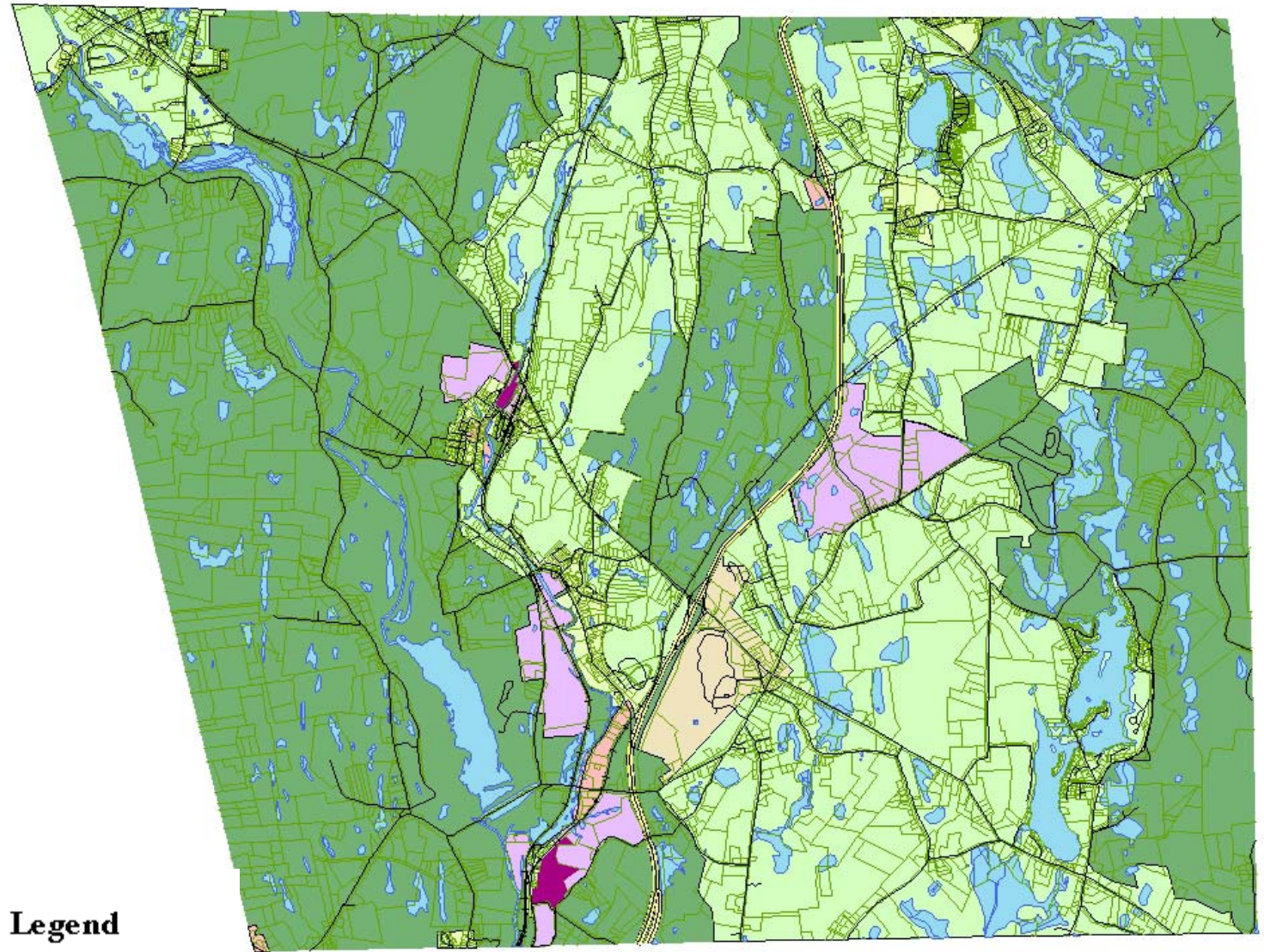
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## Legend

- R-20 Zone
- R-40 Zone
- TCPD Zone
- Industrial
- Commercial
- R-80 Zone
- NC Zone

# Zoning Map Thompson, CT

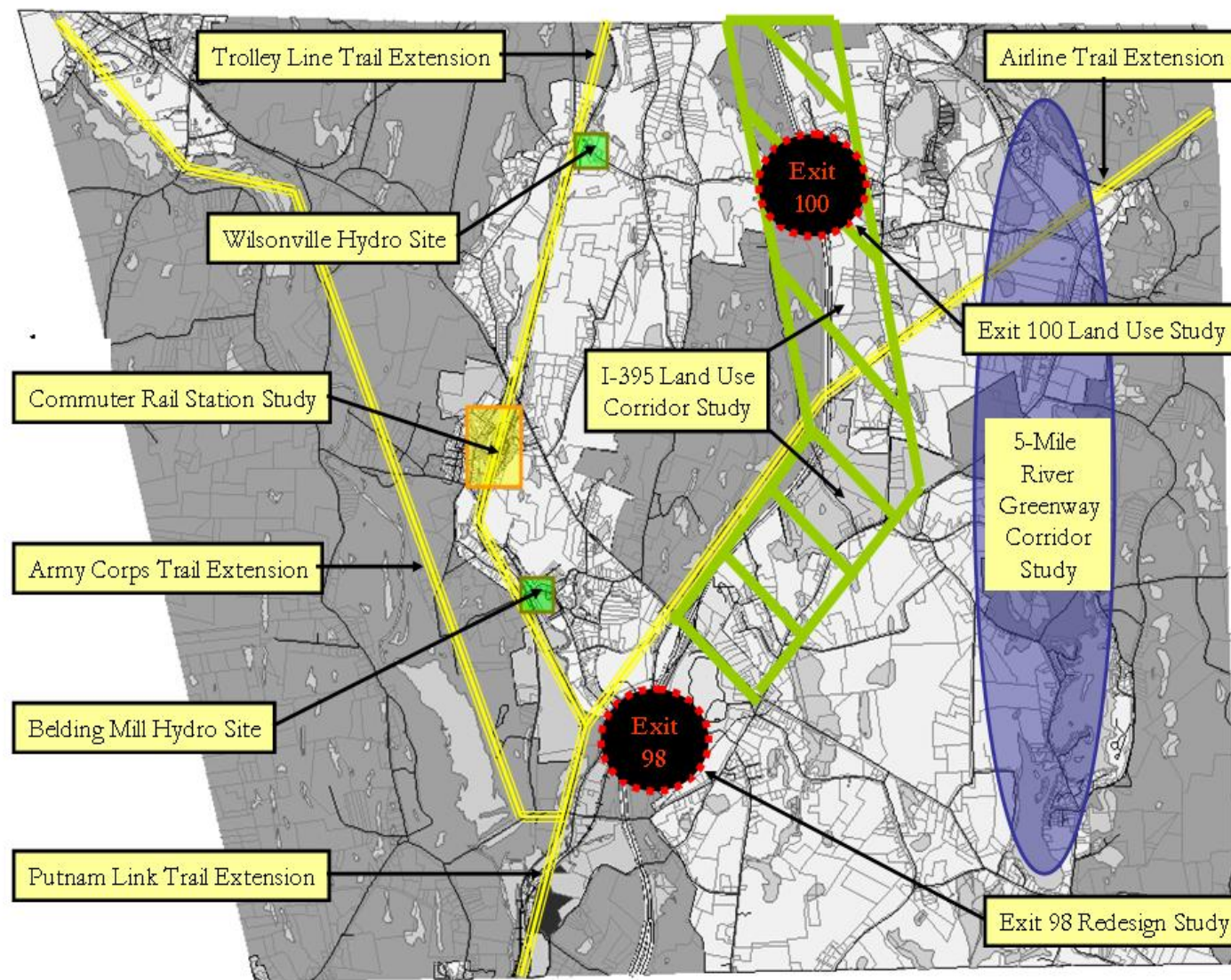




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## Future Land Use Study Thompson, CT



# 18 – Build Out Analysis

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### 18.1 - Our Build Out Analysis Background

This build out analysis develops estimates of future residential growth based on current zoning and land use regulations and policies. A build out can provide a road map for present and future boards to better manage growth, so the Town can preserve and enhance community character, protect essential natural resources, promote long term fiscal integrity, meet demands for quality public services, and provide for a better transportation and circulation system. It can begin the discussion of important issues and can help develop a consensus on steps that might be taken to address the issues raised during the analysis.

### 18.2 - Our Build Out Analysis Assumptions

- 20% of all land is wetland, 20% of all land contains steep slopes, ledge or is upland review area, 10% of all land is water or right of way for roads
- 2700 acres Permanently Protected Land: 2700 acres (RA-80 zone) & 700 acres (R-40 zone)
- 2.65 members of each household (based on 2007 numbers)
- Thompson Zoning Regulations – 7th addition (amended to February 9, 2009)

### 18.3 – Our Build Out Analysis Findings

Land zoned **R-20** comprises **551** acres with a potential of **550** total lots

Land zoned **R-40** comprises **10,607** acres with a potential of **5,200** total lots

Land zoned **RA-80** comprises **15,776** acres with a potential of **3,500** total lots

Land zoned **TC-80** comprises **481** acres with a potential of **100** total lots

Land zoned **NC** comprises **35** acres with a potential of **150** total housing units

Projected total housing units: **9,500** & Projected total population: **25,000**

### 18.4 - Our Build Out Analysis Concerns

This build out analysis highlights a number of land use concerns within the Town.

Thompson is made up of large blocks of land that hold incredible potential for quick development. If a couple of large farms or forest blocks were to be completely developed, the impact would be staggering in terms of demand on Town services. These large parcels that make up the Thompson landscape are the key to the Town's future land use stability.

### 18.5 – Our Build Out Analysis Conclusion

According to this build out analysis, with its assumptions, Thompson's current population of almost 10,000 people could more than double before total build out is reached. The impacts of this type of growth are far reaching. For example, assuming almost 15% of the population is children of school age, based on 2005 numbers, then a total school enrollment could reach close to 3,700. Revenues from taxes would be clearly be up however the demand for services would increase at an even faster rate. The shear demand such a population would have on Town services and roads can be quantified with further analysis but it clearly will be substantial. In addition, the impact that such a growth would have on the Town's rural character would be significant.

**Total  
Projected  
Housing  
Units:**

**9,500**

**Total  
Projected  
Population:**

**25,000**



# 18 – Build Out Analysis

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## Areas of Development Concern

*Privately Owned, Non-Restricted Parcel Blocks Over 90 Acres*

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*Plan of  
Conservation &  
Development  
2010 - 2020*

# 19 – Implementation

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Section	Action Step	Lead	Goal
Library	<b>IMPROVE</b> – Library services through effective programs for all age groups and modern technologies.	Library Board	Ongoing Development
Library	<b>MAINTAIN</b> – Facilities to be a clean, safe, and efficient environment for delivery of services.	Library Board	Ongoing Development
Library	<b>IMPROVE</b> – Communication with the school and Town agencies.	Library Board	Ongoing Development
Governance	<b>CREATE</b> – Greater access to government through a preference to evening meeting hours for Boards and Commission and public notice to vacancies to Boards and Commissions.	Board of Selectmen	Ongoing Development
Governance	<b>CREATE</b> – Greater transparency in government through publications such as the quarterly “Selectman’s Report”, the Annual Town Report and legal notices placed in effective locations.	Board of Selectmen	Ongoing Development
Governance	<b>CREATE &amp; PUBLISH</b> – A pamphlet describing government function and procedure for citizens.	Board of Selectmen	Fall 2015
Character	<b>CREATE</b> – Greater awareness of Thompson’s history and historic landscape through education. This would include creating a curriculum for the schools, protection of records, discussion of existing landmarks and structures and projects focused on restoring or retaining historic integrity.	Historic Society	Ongoing Development
Character	<b>CREATE</b> – Architectural guidelines which are unique to Thompson region in New England to ensure future development could be directed towards such a standard.	Planning & Zoning	Spring 2012
Character	<b>PROTECT</b> – The character of Thompson by focusing on the protection of its natural resources such as wetlands, watercourses and flood plains. This protection may begin as a regulatory in nature but would evolve into a proactive method of asset management.	Inland Wetlands Commission	Ongoing Development
Agriculture	<b>CREATE</b> – An Agricultural Advisory Committee to serve as an advisory body to the Board of Selectmen and land use Boards/ Commissions in order to provide a continuity of agricultural policies.	Board of Selectmen	Winter 2011
Agriculture	<b>WRITE &amp; ADOPT</b> – A right to farm ordinance to further the Town’s policy and reduce the loss of agricultural resources. 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.	Agricultural Commission	Summer 2012
Agriculture	<b>WRITE &amp; ADOPT</b> – A property tax reduction policy for certain agricultural properties and buildings, as provided for in the Connecticut General Statutes, due to the lower cost of services when compared to the potential residential use.	Agricultural Commission	Winter 2012
Agriculture	<b>DEVELOP</b> – 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.	Agricultural Commission	Ongoing Development
Agriculture	<b>IDENTIFY</b> – Agricultural resources to provide the best and most recent information to new and existing farms in Thompson.	Agricultural Commission	Ongoing Development
Open Space	<b>REVIEW &amp; FOLLOW</b> – The Natural Resources Inventory and guidance provided by the Town’s Conservation and Open Space Plan	Conservation Commission	Ongoing Review
Open Space	<b>IMPLEMENT</b> – The recommendations to protect the natural resources contained on sites under review for development.	Planning & Zoning	Ongoing Review
Open Space	<b>REVIEW</b> – Existing land use regulations to identify any additional opportunities to protect Thompson’s existing natural resources.	Planning & Zoning	Ongoing Review
Energy Cons.	<b>COMPLETE</b> – A comprehensive study of current energy use in all Town owned and operated facilities.	Energy Commission	Winter 2015
Energy Cons.	<b>COMPLETE</b> – A map of all existing and proposed solar, geothermal and hydroelectric generation sites located within Thompson.	Energy Commission	Winter 2011
Energy Cons.	<b>COMPLETE</b> – A study of the hydroelectric generation potential on the Quinebaug River (in West Thompson and Fabyan), on the French River (in Wilsonville, North Grosvenordale and Grosvenordale), and on the Five Mile River (in East Thompson).	Energy Commission	Spring 2013



Section	Action Step	Lead	Goal
Housing	<b>COMPLETE</b> – A comprehensive Housing Study of both existing housing development and projected housing supply for future residents.	Town Planner	Spring 2017
Housing	<b>CONSIDER</b> – Applying the Incentive Housing Zone incentives to the current and former mill sites through the Housing Program for Economic Growth established in 2007 by the CT General Assembly.	Town Planner	Ongoing Review
Housing	<b>REVIEW</b> – The Town's Ordinances, Zoning Regulations and Subdivision Regulations to ensure future housing development type will meet future housing needs.	Planning & Zoning	Ongoing Review
Economic Dev.	<b>CREATE</b> – Greater awareness to consumers of existing businesses within Thompson and promote the interconnection.	Economic Development	Ongoing Development
Economic Dev.	<b>DEVELOP</b> – A professional and comprehensive website by the Economic Development Commission.	Economic Development	Summer 2010
Economic Dev.	<b>PROMOTE</b> – Development of new businesses within existing infrastructure in targeted growth areas.	Economic Development	Ongoing
Safety Services	<b>CREATE</b> – A development plan for each fire company to prioritize equipment and capital expenditures.	Fire Companies	Ongoing Development
Safety Services	<b>DEVELOP</b> – A strategy to increase volunteerism of new residents.	Fire Companies	Ongoing Development
Safety Services	<b>DEVELOP</b> – Signage for emergency shelters in Town..	Fire Companies	Ongoing Review
Transportation	<b>CREATE</b> – A comprehensive transportation plan for the Town to include policy and procedure for maintenance and repair.	Town Planner	Spring 2013
Transportation	<b>ENCOURAGE</b> – The increased use of public transportation to include rail, bus service and recreation trails.	Planning & Zoning	Ongoing Development
Parks & Rec.	<b>SUPPORT</b> – Recreation programs that are able to create community connections and meet the needs at all age and income levels.	Recreation Commission	Ongoing Development
Parks & Rec.	<b>DEVELOP</b> – An overall plan of recreation facilities including use, maintenance and rehabilitation, to also include a plan for the location and development of new recreation facilities.	Recreation Commission	Winter 2018
Trails	<b>DEVELOP</b> – Partnerships throughout the trail community to help develop, promote and enhance the trail recreation experience.	Trails Commission	Winter 2013
Trails	<b>UPDATE</b> – maps and emergency management plans.	Trails Commission	Winter 2015
Land Use	<b>CREATE</b> – A comprehensive plan for Exit 100 off of I-395 to include the proposed State welcome center.	Planning & Zoning	Spring 2014
Land Use	<b>REVIEW</b> – The land use and zoning along the I-395 corridor for appropriateness and consider a comprehensive zone change for the corridor.	Planning & Zoning	Ongoing Review
Land Use	<b>SUPPORT</b> – A comprehensive plan to develop green land use technologies and multi-modal transportation.	Planning & Zoning	Ongoing Review
Land Use	<b>REVIEW</b> – Land use along the Rt. 12 corridor to maximize mixed commercial development.	Planning & Zoning	Ongoing Review

## 19 – Implementation

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# 20 – Conclusions

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## 20 - Conclusions

### 19.1 - Conclusions

The Town of Thompson is at a crossroads. Due to its proximity to major urban centers such as Worcester (30 minutes), Hartford (70 minutes), Boston (70 minutes) and New York (120 minutes), Thompson will see future development. Easy access to Interstate-395, which runs through the heart of Thompson, only solidifies pending development. Now is the time for Thompson to have a choice in how and where the development will occur. Will it happen in the denser areas, supplied with public utilities and other necessary infrastructure, or will it happen in remote areas of undisturbed forested or prime agricultural land? Planning today can affect the realities of tomorrow.

Historic mill structures stand testament to the Town's history as a center of industry. These same structure still sit and are underused by today's standards. How can Thompson once again become a center for industry? How can this be done without losing the rural character of the Town that exists today? Planning for this development is the key to successful growth.

The Town Plan of Conservation and Development, updated every 10 years, is where the vision for the Town can be revealed. Without a vision, development will occur on its own terms. Development without direction can and will cause unintended consequences such as sprawl and waste. It is during the calm before the development storm that the foundation of planning and efficiency can be laid to provide a framework and infrastructure for the future.

