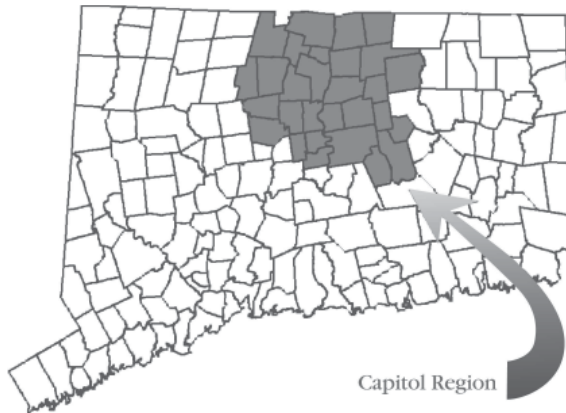


1. Introduction

Connecticut's Capitol Region encompasses the City of Hartford, our State Capital, and the 28 surrounding suburban and rural communities. It is a region rich in history, rich in human resources, and rich in natural resources. Our rivers, hills and farms combine with our town centers, village greens and historic city neighborhoods to form our New England character.



Our success in maintaining the character of our individual communities, and the entire region, is often measured by how well we preserve our important historic and natural resources, while at the same time allowing for compatible new development that serves human needs. Our continued strength as a region will depend upon our ability to maintain the high quality of life and opportunities that many of our citizens now enjoy, while working to extend these opportunities to all current and future residents of our region.

Achieving the Balance: A Plan of Conservation and Development for the Capitol Region presents some of the challenges and choices facing our region as we move through the new millennium. While our region has many strengths and assets, it also faces challenges that could hinder our continued progress. How we respond to the challenges and choices will determine our future. The decisions we make now will create the legacy left to future generations.

Achieving the Balance: A Plan of Conservation and Development for the Capitol Region was prepared under the authority of Section 8-35a of the [Connecticut General Statutes](#) and adopted in 2003. This 2009 update of the *Plan* was prepared in response to Public Act No. 05-205, and seeks to coordinate regional planning efforts with the responsible growth policies of the State. It is not a detailed land use plan, but rather a general guide for the future conservation and development of the Capitol Region. Its individual chapters provide an overview of the many factors that influence our regional development pattern, and the choices available to us as we move into the future.

While a complex array of factors influence how we grow as

a region, the plan recommends a future development pattern guided by six major themes:

- Focus new regional development in areas in which existing and planned infrastructure can support that development.
- Support efforts to strengthen and revitalize Hartford, the Capitol Region's central city, and also support the revitalization of older, urbanized areas throughout the region.
- Develop in a manner that respects and preserves community character and key natural resources.
- Implement open space and natural resource protection plans that acknowledge and support the multi-town nature of our natural systems.
- Support the creation of new employment and housing opportunities, and transportation choices, to meet the diverse needs of our region's citizens.
- Encourage regional cooperation in the protection of natural resources, the revitalization of urban areas, and economic development.



We believe that through this approach, we can achieve the balance between conservation and development that will keep our region strong. The fruits of achieving this balance include:

- Thriving urban, suburban and rural communities.
- The conservation and preservation of natural areas that provide form and contrast to the man-made features of the region.
- A wide range of housing choices that serves citizens of all ages, incomes, races and ethnic groups.
- Varied transportation options that allow people to move freely throughout the region by private automobiles, buses, trains, bicycles or walking.
- A growing economy that provides goods and services to our region, the nation and the world, and offers good job opportunities to the region's residents.

Achieving the Balance: A Plan of Conservation and Development for the Capitol Region is made up of two parts:

- A narrative plan that presents an overview of issues that influence our regional development pattern, and presents goals and policies to guide our future development.
- Four policy guide maps that present the narrative goals and policies in visual form. They are the:
 - o Land Use Policy Map;
 - o Conservation Focus Areas Map;
 - o Economic Development Areas of Regional Significance Map
 - o Municipal Focus Area Map.

CRCOG will use these policy maps along with the narrative goals and policies to support plans, development proposals and conservation/preservation activities consistent with the *Plan's* objectives. While this *Plan* is primarily used to guide CRCOG's planning and review activities, it is hoped that local governments will also support it and work toward its implementation.

The *Plan's* goals and policies are drawn from independent research and analysis, and extensive work by the Capitol Region Council of Governments and other regional organizations on a range of topics, including: building and sustaining livable communities, reducing municipal fiscal disparities, housing, economic development, transportation, and natural resource conservation and preservation.

The CRCOG Livable Communities Project was one notable example of the role such studies have played in the creation of the *Plan*. This project gave us the opportunity to talk directly to over 2,000 people throughout the region. What we found is that a majority of people in our region want similar things, regardless of whether they live in Hartford, the suburbs, or rural communities. These include:

- Growth carried out in a manner that preserves community character and quality of life.
- A strong center and central city.
- Moderate and low-income housing in all communities.
- Better and more balanced transportation options.

Throughout the process of developing the *Plan* and this update, CRCOG also consulted extensively with our member municipalities and the state to maintain harmony and consistency with municipal and state planning goals and objectives. Our recent efforts included conducting regional roundtables to identify strategic issues for the region and CRCOG's role in addressing these concerns, along with gathering recent data for inclusion in the Land Use Policy Map and compiling an extensive inventory of municipal focus areas.

The Capitol Region Today

The following facts describe the Capitol Region as it exists today. The goals and policies of *Achieving the Balance: A Plan of Conservation and Development for the Capitol Region* found in the following sections, suggest some ways in which we can build on our positive attributes, and change patterns and behaviors that threaten our natural resources, our economic strength, and our overall quality of life.

TABLE 1.1:

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGION	
Population	
Total Population (2006)	741,303
Regional Increase (2000-2006)	2.8%
Percent Increase in Rural Towns (2000-2006)	9.0%
Percent Minority (2000)	27.5%
Percent 19 years and Younger (2000)	27.2%
Percent 35-54 Years Old (2000)	31.3%
Percent over 65 Years (2000)	14.1%
Education Levels of Those 25 Years and Older (2000)	
Percent with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher	32.4%
Percent with High School Degree	27.1%
Percent without a High School Degree	16.0%
Income (2000 U.S. Census)	
Median Household Income	\$53,305
Individuals Living Below Poverty Level	62,592
Percent Below Poverty Level Living in Hartford	57.1%
Housing (2000)	
Total Housing Units	297,533
Total Occupied Housing Units	279,871
Percent Renter	34.4%
Percent Owner	65.6%
Median Gross Rent	\$676
Median Specified Home Value	\$151,220
Natural Features (Percent of Region in 2009)	
Aquifer Protection Areas	8.1%
Steep Slopes	10.5%
Floodplain	9.1%
Upland Wetlands	8.2%
DEP Natural Diversity Areas	26.8%
Waterbodies	3.5%
(One or more of these features may exist on a parcel of land)	
Watersheds	
Major Basins (the Connecticut River)	1
Regional Basins Draining to the Connecticut River	8
Regional Basins Draining to the Thames River	1
Rivers Meeting DEP Water Quality Goals (Farmington, Salmon and Willimantic)	3
Rivers in Need of Restoration	6
Land Use (Percent of Region in 2006)	
Developed	24.4%
Turf (Lawns, Golf Courses, Parks)	11.0%
Agricultural Fields	12.6%
Forest	47.8%
Wetlands	3.5%
Water	2.4%
Barren (Bare or Exposed Land, Undeveloped)	1.1%
Zoning (Percent of Region in 2009)	
Residential Use	78.2%
Commercial Use	3.9%
Industrial Use	6.7%
Mixed Use	1.5%
Reserved/Recreation/ROW	9.3%
Size of the Capitol Region in Acres	487,168