

# DEVELOPMENT

# 5

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## Overview

How a community wishes to grow (“development”) is a key component of a Plan of Conservation and Development. The Conservation Chapter provided strategies for those things that should be protected in New Milford (e.g., natural resources, farms, historic resources, overall character). This chapter outlines strategies for future development – residential and business development – including what, where and how growth should occur.



Downtown.



House in New Milford.



Medinstill.

## Community Structure

The physical organization of a community enhances community character and quality of life.

People identify most strongly with areas that have a “sense of place.” “Villages,” “Nodes” and “Gateways” are examples of elements of a community’s structure that can contribute to a sense of place. Examples in New Milford include Downtown and Gaylordsville.

Distinct neighborhoods can also contribute to a sense of place. Many resident identify themselves with a particular neighborhood.

Greenways, stream belts and other linear elements provide overall context to the community and enhance community character and community spirit. While recommendations to enhance some of these aspects of community structure were discussed in Chapter 4, it is important to recognize that they also contribute to community structure.

The Town should encourage positive elements of community structure. The Community Structure Plan identifies New Milford’s existing and recommend structure.

### Enhance New Milford’s community structure:

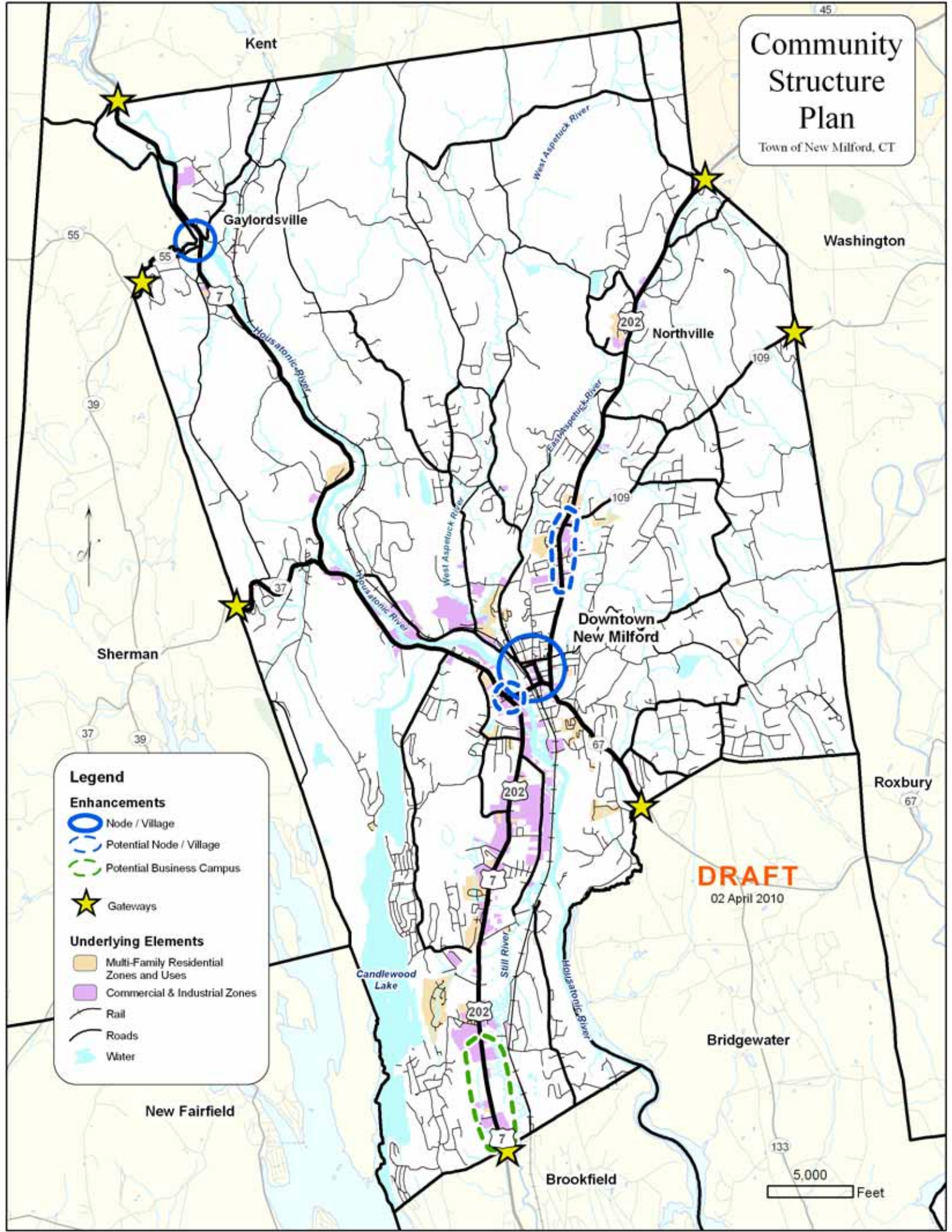
1. Encourage development to occur in locations and in a manner that contributes to the positive elements of New Milford’s community structure and character.
2. Discourage elements that detract from community structure and character.

### Elements that Enhance Community Structure

- **Villages / Nodes** – community-size places with distinctive characteristics (e.g., Downtown).
- **Clusters / Campuses** – neighborhood size places identifiable by use, location, character or style.
- **Focal Points** – site size places identifiable by function, identity, character, or style.
- **Greenways** – trails, rivers, and other linear elements that provide overall context.
- **Gateways** – places providing a sense of entry or arrival.
- **Scenic Resources** – places providing a sense of beauty, scale, or perspective.

# Community Structure Plan

Town of New Milford, CT



**Legend**

**Enhancements**

- Node / Village
- Potential Node / Village
- Potential Business Campus
- Gateways

**Underlying Elements**

- Multi-Family Residential Zones and Uses
- Commercial & Industrial Zones
- Rail
- Roads
- Water

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02 April 2010

5,000 Feet

# Residential Patterns

## Overview

Roughly 85%, or 35,000 acres, of New Milford is zoned for residential uses.

The availability of infrastructure and level of natural resource constraints may limit densities in areas. Conversely, there are areas of Town that are more suitable for additional housing development. These include areas with road, water and sewer infrastructure, served by transit, and near Downtown or other commercial areas.

Strategies to protect existing neighborhoods, promote flexible lot layout, and town-wide residential densities are explained further here.

## Existing Neighborhoods

Many of the strategies outlined elsewhere in this POCD can help preserve the character of existing neighborhoods throughout New Milford. There are some cases where additional protections may be necessary, such as to enhance protection from adjacent incompatible uses.

A number of neighborhoods are located next to business zones. In some cases there is a physical buffer (such as vegetation) to help protect the neighborhood from incompatible activities. In other cases, the neighborhood is separated by vacant land or by a less intense transitional use. And in a few cases, there is no buffer. Maintaining or creating buffers can help ensure that neighborhoods adjacent to potentially incompatible activities are protected.

Many neighborhoods are characterized by historic houses. In Downtown, historic houses contribute greatly to the village character of the area. Preserving these houses is important. While development and redevelopment of parcels will help keep the area vital and healthy, the Town should encourage the continued use of historic houses. In other neighborhoods, such as Merryall and Gaylordsville, protecting historic houses will help protect the character of those and other neighborhoods. Tools to protect historic buildings are found on p. 53.

## Flexible Lot Layout

The next section addresses overall density patterns town-wide, while this discussion focuses on patterns on a given site.

Most residential development occurs through the subdivision process. Residential subdivisions can result in approaches that do not account for sites' natural and scenic features.

To address this issue, the Town adopted provisions to allow Cluster Conservation Subdivisions. Under this provision, landowners are given flexibility in lot layout and dimensional requirements, in return for preserving natural and scenic features.

The Town should continue to allow for diverse subdivision options.

## Overall Residential Density

New Milford's residential development pattern generally follows historic trends. Downtown was an early focal point and people built their houses next to Downtown at higher densities. On a much smaller scale, a similar pattern occurred in Gaylordsville. The outskirts of town remained undeveloped or dedicated to agriculture, resulting in very low density housing patterns. As the community grew, subdivisions sprung up near Candlewood Lake, along state routes and in more remote parts of the Town. When zoning was adopted, it reflected the patterns that were already in place.

Today, this residential zoning pattern creates challenges for the Town. Many natural resources are located in areas currently zoned for medium densities. Also, remote areas without adequate infrastructure have seen more and more residential development.

Current zoning and public health regulations result in densities that reflect the capability of the land. For example, some areas may not have adequate areas suitable for septic systems. Other areas may be so constrained by steep slopes and ledge that it would be cost-prohibitive to build.

The Town has taken steps to address natural resource protection through the "Temple Amendment" and by allowing conservation

subdivisions. The Temple Amendment subtracts out the area of certain natural resources when determining the minimum lot sizes. As a result, the density is reduced on parcels that contain certain natural resource constraints.

Two residential density scenarios are provided on the following pages. The scenarios, which should only be used for discussion purposes, are as follows:

- Existing Zoning
- Soil-based zoning – lowest densities are shown for areas with soils that have low or very low suitability for septic systems.

### **PRD and AAC**

Planned Residential Developments (PRD) and Active Adult Communities (AAC) help to address the demand for smaller units in New Milford and afford flexibility in site layout, which can help protect natural resources and preserve open space.

By their nature, they allow densities greater than the existing zone. It is recommended that these types of developments continue to be permitted in New Milford, but that locational criteria are adopted so that these higher density developments are built in areas that are consistent with the goals and policies of this POCD. Specifically, the zones could be updated to require that new PRDs and AACs must be served by municipal sewer, served by public water, and are located on roads classified as Regional Arterials in this POCD. Other factors, such as proximity to business areas (retail and services) and public transit might also be considered.

### **Areas that Can Support Development**

During the planning process, residents described a vision of mixed uses, where housing is blended with businesses in a village setting such as Downtown. Having more people living in or near Downtown can provide economic benefits and placing housing in areas where residents can walk or take transit. Residents were particularly interested in attracting housing for young workers and those with disposable incomes to build a customer base for existing Downtown businesses and attract additional businesses. A greater residential presence in and near Downtown may enhance vitality.

Current zoning supports higher residential densities in and near Downtown. Some zoning updates could better accommodate housing here. Possible zoning updates might include:

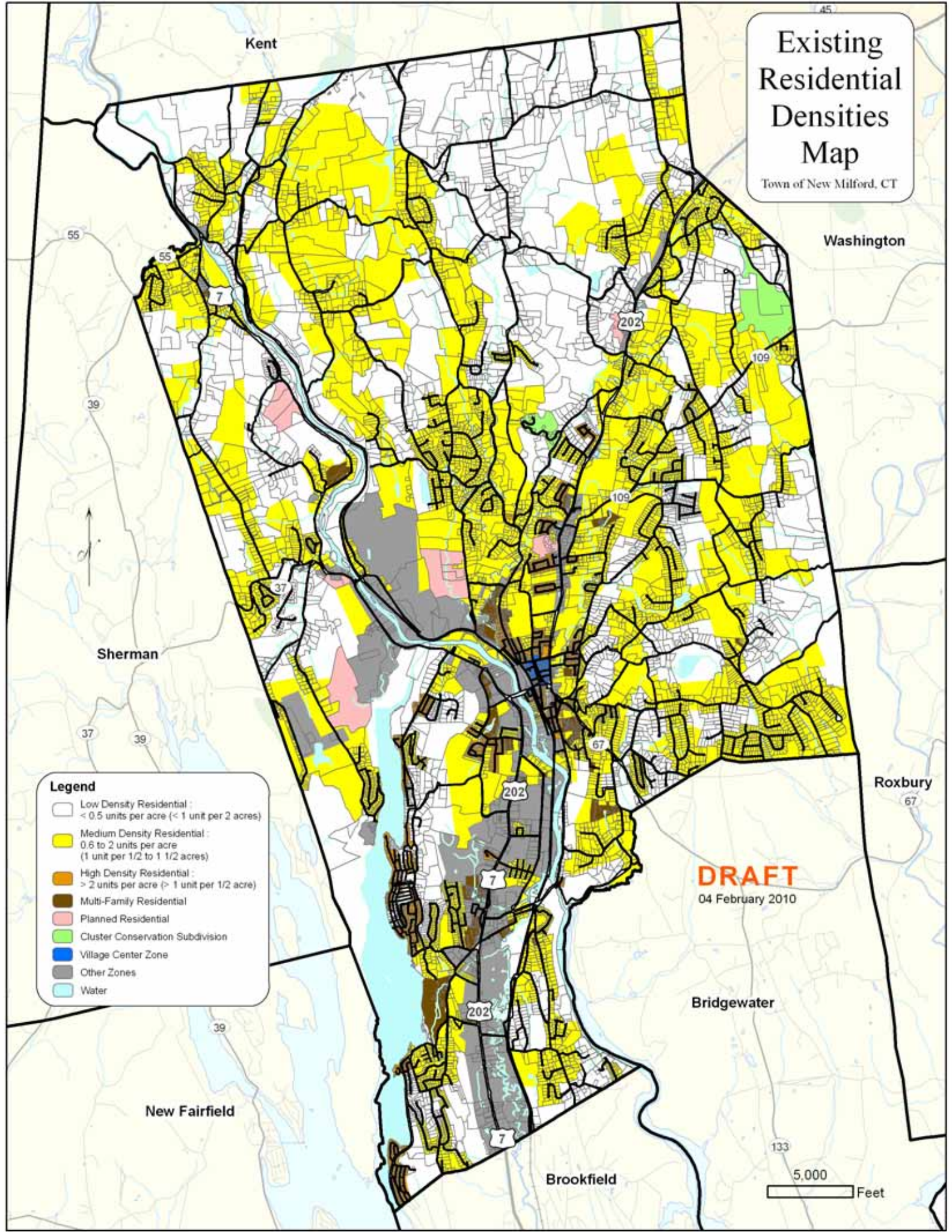
- Removing barriers that might prevent new housing in desired locations. For example, the Village Center Zone does not allow housing to be added to buildings that at one time were used for business purposes. This may prevent housing above retail. Zoning could be updated to allow upper story housing units while limiting non-business uses on the first floor in parts of Downtown.
- Incentive Housing Zones could increase housing opportunities in or near Downtown while providing fiscal benefits to the Town (see description on p. 67).
- Review standards for minimum parcel size and other requirements for PRD and AAC that might prevent its use in areas within walking distance of Downtown.

### **Maintain our Residential Areas:**

1. Ensure that new development provides buffers to protect existing neighborhoods.
2. Continue to allow diverse subdivision options.
3. Consider amendments to special residential zones.

# Existing Residential Densities Map

Town of New Milford, CT



**Legend**

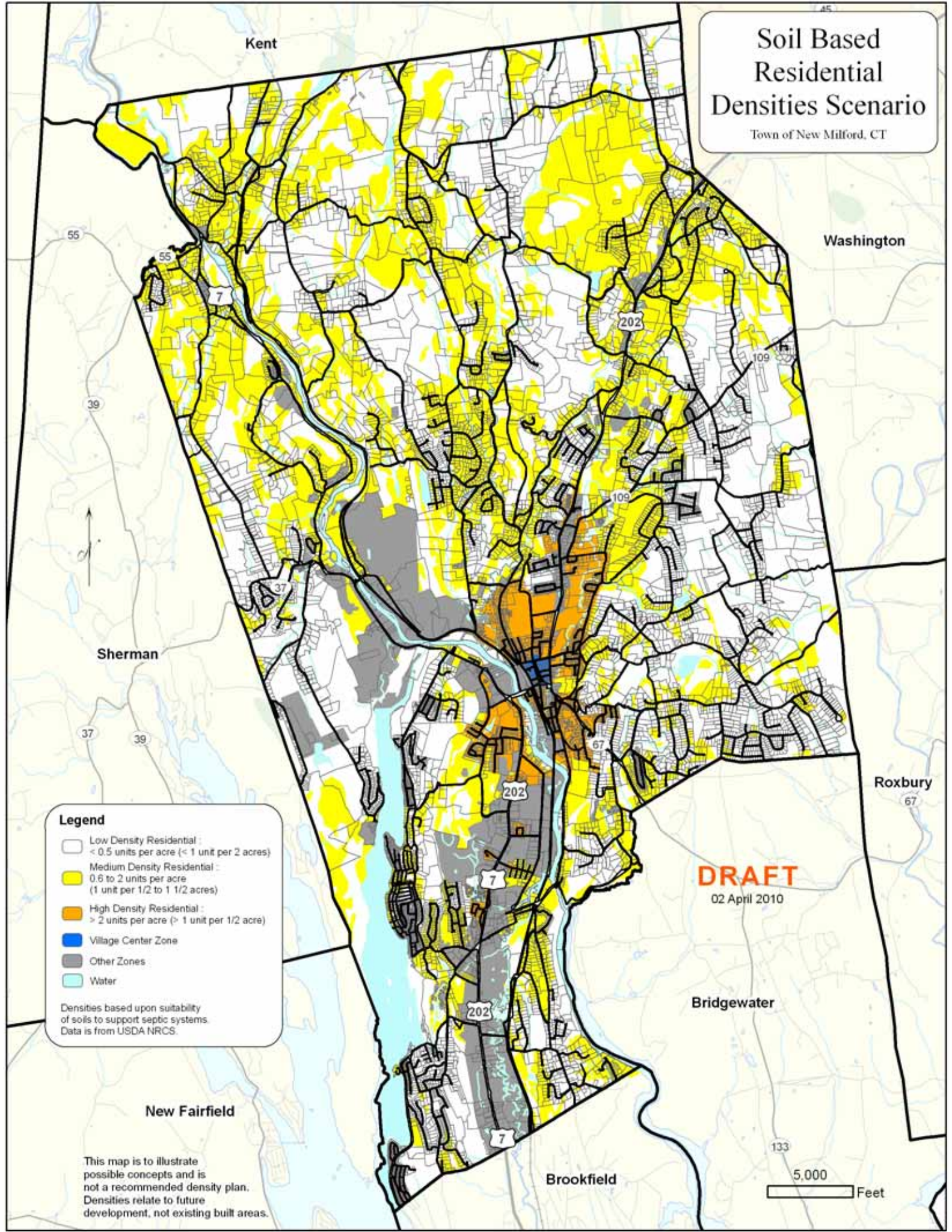
- Low Density Residential :  
< 0.5 units per acre (< 1 unit per 2 acres)
- Medium Density Residential :  
0.6 to 2 units per acre  
(1 unit per 1/2 to 1 1/2 acres)
- High Density Residential :  
> 2 units per acre (> 1 unit per 1/2 acre)
- Multi-Family Residential
- Planned Residential
- Cluster Conservation Subdivision
- Village Center Zone
- Other Zones
- Water

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04 February 2010







133  
5,000 Feet

# Soil Based Residential Densities Scenario

Town of New Milford, CT



### Legend

-  Low Density Residential :  
< 0.5 units per acre (< 1 unit per 2 acres)
-  Medium Density Residential :  
0.6 to 2 units per acre  
(1 unit per 1/2 to 1 1/2 acres)
-  High Density Residential :  
> 2 units per acre (> 1 unit per 1/2 acre)
-  Village Center Zone
-  Other Zones
-  Water

Densities based upon suitability of soils to support septic systems. Data is from USDA NRCS.

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02 April 2010

This map is to illustrate possible concepts and is not a recommended density plan. Densities relate to future development, not existing built areas.

133  
5,000 Feet

## Housing Needs

As discussed in Chapter 3, New Milford is in a good position to address many housing needs, in that:

- There is a range of types of housing units, from single-family units to apartments to mobile homes;
- Compared to the region, New Milford's housing stock (along with Danbury) provides the most affordable opportunities for median, moderate and low income households; and
- Housing prices have remained relatively affordable.

As the population ages, New Milford could see an increased demand for smaller units (for residents who wish to downsize) and for assisted living units. Almost half (49.8%) of residents felt that there are too few housing opportunities for elderly persons in New Milford.

New Milford's natural affordability may not last. While the Town, along with the State and Nation, are experiencing a downturn in housing prices, eventually, the Town could see its housing prices rise again.

The Town should continue to support opportunities for all ages and income levels in New Milford. The following strategies can help to accomplish this.

### Surplus Land

The Town can initiate housing development in locations it feels are appropriate (possibly using the location criteria suggest on p. 6o). The Town could review its property holdings and state-owned properties to identify which might be surplus and whether they are appropriate for housing. Even smaller sites that allow one or two units can help meet housing needs.

### Smaller Scale Housing Opportunities

Accessory apartments and two-family homes provide affordable housing opportunities with minimal impact to character since the buildings are usually of a similar scale as a single family house. New Milford also allows the conversion of some existing houses into as many as four units. The Town should continue to allow the creation of these types of housing units.

The Town also allows accessory apartments in houses that are on lots of at least 40,000 square feet (the minimum lot size can be reduced to 20,000 square feet if the lot is served by public water and sewer). The Town may wish to determine if this minimum lot size requirement is preventing opportunities for accessory apartments on smaller lots in areas that might be most appropriate, such as Downtown.

### Affordable Housing Partnership

Approximately 10 years ago, the Town Council created the New Milford Affordable Housing Partnership. The Partnership, comprised of volunteers, has successfully obtained grants and other sources of funding to create affordable units in New Milford. They have made existing units affordable by purchasing units and then selling them to income-qualified families at affordable prices. Their efforts have also lead to the construction of new units.

The Partnership's work has been invaluable. The Town should continue to encourage and support their work.



Indian Field Apartments.

### Incentive-Based Approaches

Communities can offer incentives to developers to provide affordable housing units. For example, New Milford's zoning regulations allow for a density bonus if affordable units are provided. The Town should consider updating this regulation in order to be consistent with State statutes and to encourage its use (see below).

The State recently passed legislation allowing communities to provide another type of zoning incentive. Communities can adopt "Incentive Housing Zones" to encourage development of mixed income communities — 20% of the units in the zone must be affordable to those earning up to 80% of the area median income. The units must be deed-restricted for 30 years. The State offers communities financial incentives to adopt these zones (see below).

### Seniors

The housing strategies above can help to provide more housing choices for seniors including affordable smaller units and accessory apartments. The Town has seen age-restricted neighborhoods built, which provide opportunities for over-55 residents. The allowance of these developments should continue.

### Promote housing options and choices to meet needs.

1. Identify opportunities to use surplus town-owned and state-owned land for housing.
2. Continue to allow accessory apartments and consider reducing the lot size requirement for accessory apartments in and near Downtown.
3. Continue to allow the conversion of houses into multiple units.
4. Continue to support and encourage the efforts of the New Milford Affordable Housing Partnership.
5. Update the affordable housing density bonus provision.
6. Consider encouraging mixed income zones, possibly through the use of Incentive Housing Zones.
7. Continue to allow over-55 housing and assisted living.

### Bonus Provision in Zoning

CGS 8.2g allows a community to provide a density bonus for affordable housing. The statute states that:

"For each dwelling unit constructed by the developer in excess of the number of such units permitted by applicable density limits, the developer shall construct in the municipality a unit of affordable housing."

In other words, if a developer is able to build 2 additional units with the density bonus, the developer builds 4 extra units – 2 market rates on site and 2 affordable units either on site or elsewhere in the community.

Section 035-100 of New Milford's Zoning states that all of the bonus units must be affordable. This requirement does not appear to be consistent with state statutes and may deter its use since the developer would have to build affordable units without receiving bonus market rate units.

### Incentive Housing Zones

If a community adopts an Incentive Housing Zones (IHZ), the State provides payments to the community when the zone is adopted and when building permits are issued. To qualify, the district must allow the following minimum densities:

- 6 units per acre for single family detached units
- 10 units per acre for duplexes or town houses
- 20 units per acre for multi-family housing

At least 20% of the units must be affordable for a minimum of 30 years at prices where persons earning 80% or less of the median income pay no more than 30% of their annual income for such housing.

## Business Development

### Overview

Business development contributes to the tax base, provides jobs, and provides goods and services. The Town has taken an active role in increasing business development by creating an Economic Development Commission (EDC) and hiring an Economic Development Supervisor. In addition, the Town actively markets appropriate town-owned properties for business development.

The Town recently established a Development Services Team (DST). The DST, which is comprised of various town departments, reviews prospective development and construction projects prior to submission for formal review. This team approach helps applicants navigate the land use approval process.

The EDC adopted a Strategic Plan Initiatives that outlines strategies for marketing, infrastructure, finance, inter- and intra-agency coordination, and overall goals for business areas of New Milford, including Downtown. In addition, the Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) prepared a land use report for New Milford that focused on economic development.

Many of the recommendations from these recent efforts form the basis for business strategies in this POCD. Some additional analysis may be necessary to make sure that New Milford is well-positioned to attract the business sectors that it would like to see and to have alternatives if there are cases where the market may not align with the vision.

Public education should play an important role in future business strategies. Educating residents about fiscal benefits of types of businesses could be important.

This section first discusses the need for an overall market analysis and then provides strategies related to uses and the form of development in key business areas.



A business on Main Street.



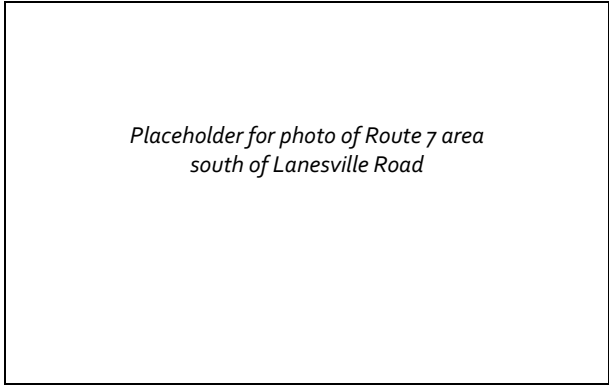
Businesses on Route 202.

### **Market Analysis**

New Milford has traditionally attracted water-dependent industry along the Housatonic River because it was one of the few places along the River with flat, vacant land. The Town has long had a goal to continue to encourage industrial development along the River, generally in the Boardman Road area. In recent years, the Town also has put forth a vision for a “Corporate Boulevard” along Route 7, south of Lanesville Road to the Brookfield border.

New Milford may be at a crossroads. The Town wants to build upon its past successes in attracting manufacturing and industry, but those industries generally are in decline. The Town may need to better understand the types of business it is best suited to attract. Is there still a strong market for water-dependent industry? How might the recent Route 7 improvements increase business opportunities in New Milford?

Moving forward with these initiatives may require town investments, such as tax incentives and upgrades to infrastructure. Prior to making these investments, the Town might seek a professional market analysis to better gauge the local business climate and future prospects. If the analysis indicates that the market is there, then the Town can move forward with needed incentives and investments. If the analysis determines a new approach is needed, the Town would be in a position to create a “Plan B” for these areas – a plan that would still provide fiscal benefits, but is matched to New Milford’s potential economic role.



## Business Development and Business Zones

### Route 7, South of Lanesville Road

The vision for this area is to have campus style development, with office uses, corporate headquarters, and some retail / ancillary uses to serve those offices. In this vision, properties would be well-landscaped and a greenway would run along the Still River. With the campus style development vision, there would be coordinated development of multiple buildings on a parcel with common access drives and parking areas.

A Corporate Boulevard area might be particularly vulnerable to develop in ways not desired by the community. Under current zoning, retail uses are permitted. This portion of Route 7 could ultimately develop in a similar fashion to those stretches north of Lanesville Road.

A proactive approach with appropriate zoning changes could minimize the potential for less desirable land uses here. The Town may desire an amendment to the regulations to discourage or prohibit strip style retail.

As discussed on page 65, the Town may need to further investigate the types of uses that can be attracted to this area with a market analysis. Should it be found that other uses may be more appropriate, it is still desirable that this form and style of development in the vision occurs (i.e., landscaped, greenway, coordinated development).

If it is found that the market might support office / corporate development, but not in the short term, the Town should review zoning to ensure it promotes interim uses that would have less traffic impacts and aesthetic impacts than strip-type retail.

### Route 7, Lanesville Road to Downtown

This area is a “regional retail center” providing goods and services to residents of New Milford and the larger region. The area is characterized by retail and strip-type development, but also includes some industry and housing. Should additional large scale retail be built in New Milford, this area is best suited for it. Strategies could focus on improving the appearance of the area, providing pedestrian amenities, and access management (see sidebar).

New development might provide well-landscaped frontage, provide sidewalks, and comply with the

*Curb Cut and Access Management Plan.* The Town should consider incorporating design review into the approval process to improve the general appearance of buildings and signs. The Town could encourage existing development to make improvements such as consolidating curb cuts in accordance with the plan and improving landscaping.

The Bridge Street, Kent Road and Danbury Road intersection is the transition from a suburban commercial corridor to a downtown village core. Aesthetic enhancements can improve this Downtown Gateway, including:

- Incorporate elements of the Downtown streetscape to this intersection (e.g., plantings, lighting, pedestrian amenities).
- Consider creating architectural design guidelines that complement the downtown style but are flexible to respond to the commercial nature of the immediate area.
- Provide a gateway along the intersection’s northeast quadrant with signage.
- Promote building construction closer to the street and avoid placing parking in front of buildings.



Bridge Street, Kent Road and Danbury Road intersection

### Route 7 & Route 202 Curb Cut and Access Management Overlay Zone

HVCEO commissioned the 2008 access management study for New Milford. This was an update of a 1997 study. Curb cut and access management seeks to improve safety and roadway capacity while still meeting access needs of properties. The study reviewed existing driveway locations along Routes 7 and 202 and provided specific recommendations for access drive improvements, consolidations and closures. New Milford adopted a “Route 7 and 202 Curb Cut and Access Management Overlay Zone.” It requires that site plan and special exception applications comply with the 2008 study.

# Business Development Plan - Route 7 / 202 South

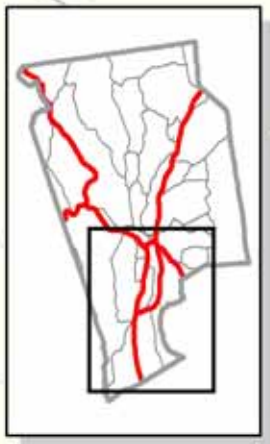
Town of New Milford, CT

**Downtown**  
 Continue implementation of the Downtown Plan  
 Lively destination, with housing, retail, services, offices, civic uses  
 Extend Downtown to River

**Route 7 Lanesville to Downtown**  
 Continue to manage curb cuts  
 Encourage improvements to appearance  
 Encourage improvement / addition of sidewalks  
 Encourage improvements to properties at Bridge St. / Kent Rd. / Danbury Rd. intersection

**Pickett District**  
 Continued industrial development

**Route 7 South of Lanesville**  
 "Corporate Boulevard" vision  
 Coordinated, campus style with green space, greenways, well-landscaped  
 Continue to manage curb cuts  
 Consider "Plan B" if corporate concept not viable

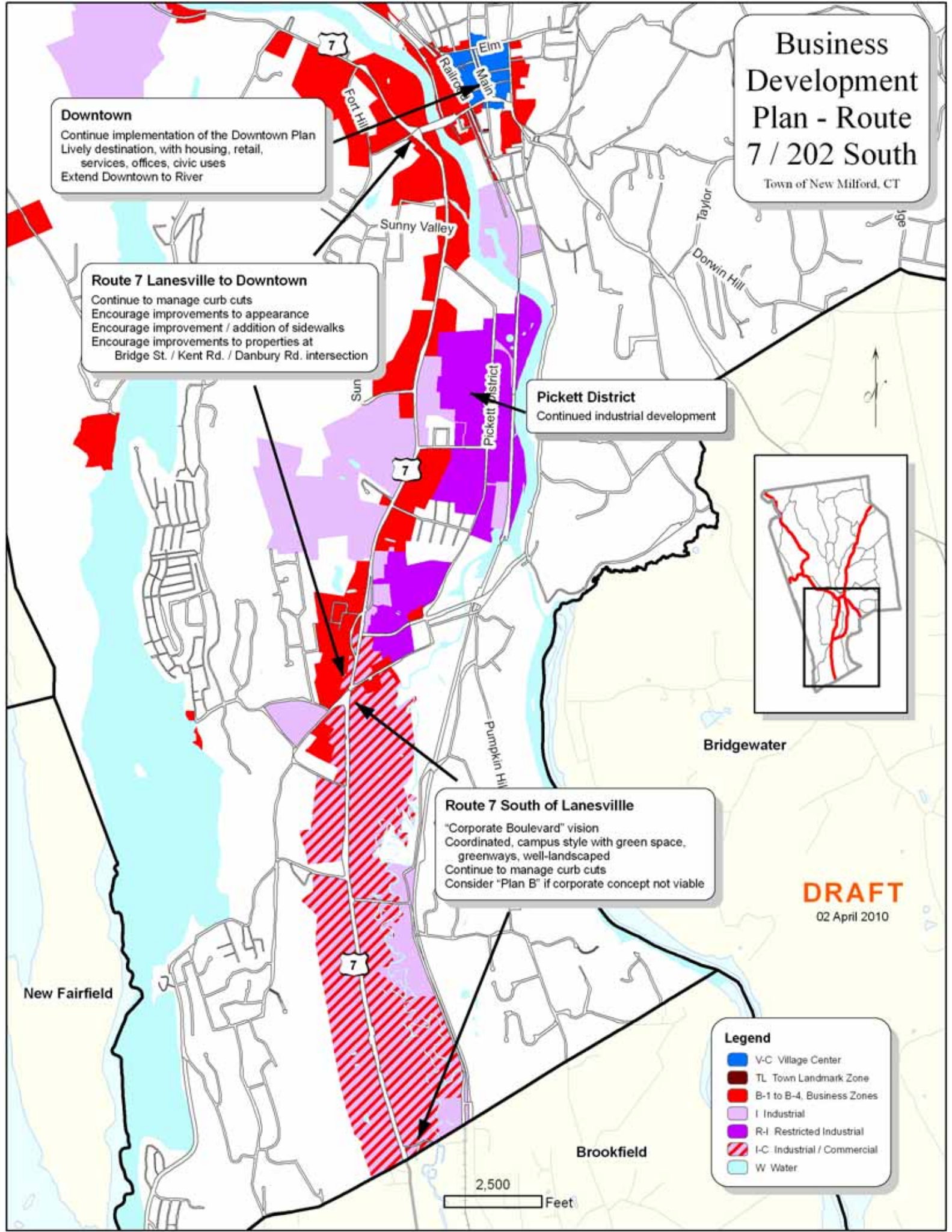
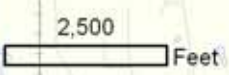


Bridgewater

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 02 April 2010

**Legend**

- V-C Village Center
- TL Town Landmark Zone
- B-1 to B-4, Business Zones
- I Industrial
- R-I Restricted Industrial
- ▨ I-C Industrial / Commercial
- W Water



### Route 7, North of Downtown

There could be pressure to extend strip retail north of Veterans Bridge and it appears that zoning might allow those types of uses. This area serves effectively as a buffer from suburban style development to rural business uses as one travels from south to north on Route 7. Because of the proximity to Downtown, there may be opportunities here for housing within walking distance to Downtown.

### Gaylordsville

Gaylordsville was an early village settlement and the area still retains village elements – historic houses are set close to the street and, although there are no sidewalks, the overall scale of development has a walkable feel. While little growth is anticipated in this area over the planning period, Gaylordsville could be maintained as a small scale, riverside, New England village.

Future business development in the commercial zones should contribute to the village feel and provide enhancements. The Town should be encouraged to promote building architecture that complements the historic village character of Gaylordsville.

The historic core and the neighborhood commercial area to the south could be tied together through pedestrian improvements such as sidewalks along Route 7 and a greenway along the River. Business property owners should be encouraged to improve their frontage.

Residential uses should continue to be allowed in order to provide a mixture of housing and businesses. The adaptive reuse of houses for commercial purposes should be encouraged since it maintains the character of the village.

There is some industrial activity behind the commercial plaza, backing up to Gaylord Road. Over the long term, it might be desirable to transform the area into neighborhood commercial uses (small-scale retail and services). However, the industrial activities do not seem to intrude on surrounding properties so their continued presence should not impact the overall goal of enhancing the village feel of Gaylordsville.

Currently a number of uses are allowed in the business zones in Gaylordsville that are not likely compatible with a village feel, such as restaurants with drive-through windows. New buildings should strive to be compatible with the historic setting.

## Gaylordsville



Image – 2009 Microsoft Corp, 2009 NAVTEQ, image courtesy of NASA.

# Business Development Plan - Route 7 North

Town of New Milford, CT

**DRAFT**

02 April 2010


## Gaylordsville

Rural / neighborhood commercial  
Village-type pattern and architecture  
Pedestrian scale  
Greenway along river  
Encourage Improved appearance

## Boardman Industrial Area

Continued industrial development  
Explore other economic development options  
(such as eco-tourism) for some industrial parcels

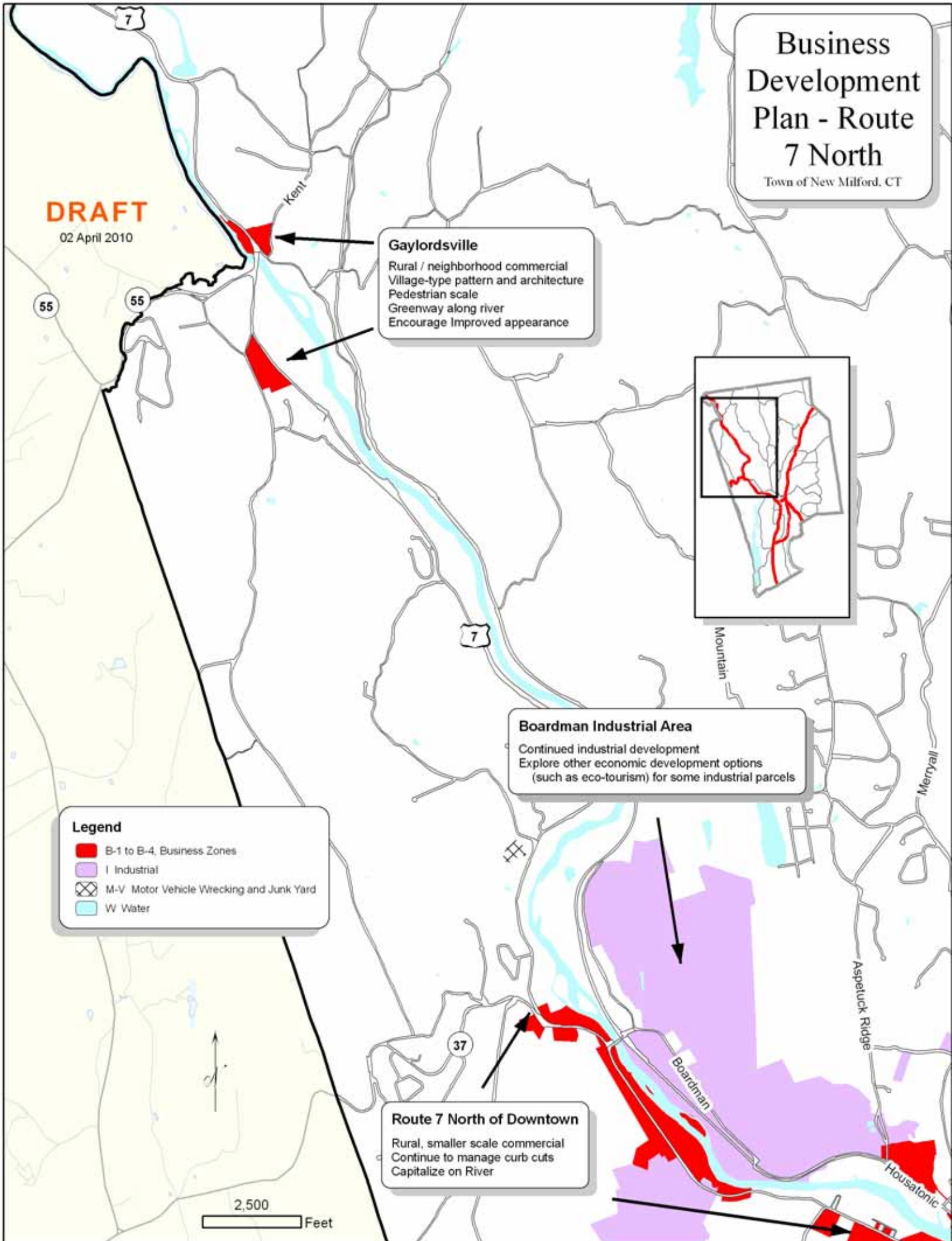
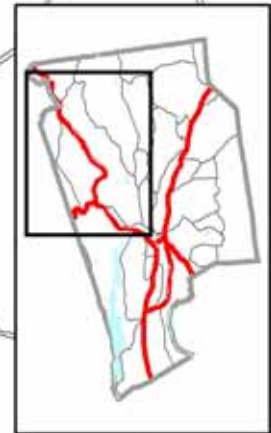
## Legend

-  B-1 to B-4, Business Zones
-  I Industrial
-  M-V Motor Vehicle Wrecking and Junk Yard
-  W Water

## Route 7 North of Downtown

Rural, smaller scale commercial  
Continue to manage curb cuts  
Capitalize on River

2,500 Feet



### Route 202, Northville

This rural section of Route 202 is best suited for the type of commercial development that is currently there – smaller scale, neighborhood style development. The look of new buildings will be important to maintain the rural flavor of this area. The Zoning Commission has adopted the “Litchfield Road (Route 202) Corridor District” to reduce the potential for strip-development in this area. Those restrictions should continue and be strengthened, if necessary.

### Route 202, North of Downtown (Park Lane area)

The Park Lane area has some elements of a village, although it is not as evident here as in other parts of town. The businesses are neighborhood-oriented, buildings are relatively close to the road, and despite the lack of sidewalks, the area is pedestrian-scale.

This area has the potential to become more village-like, with better pedestrian connections and a more distinct “sense of place.” Such improvements could make the area more attractive to businesses and attract residents to visit businesses. With a number of neighborhoods nearby, there is a customer base within walking distance to this area.

Strategies to reinforce the village node here include improving the appearance, providing sidewalks, encouraging upgrades of buildings and facades, and managing curb cuts. The Litchfield Road Corridor District applies to only a part of this area.



The Park Lane area.

### Industrial Areas

As discussed, a market analysis could help refine / amend the locations of and uses permitted in industrial areas to capitalize on market potential. Amending zoning regulations based upon the market analysis could help to reduce the possibility that less desirable forms and types of development occur in the Town’s industrial areas.

Key strategies for industrial areas include:

- Continue to support industry in the Pickett District and minimize the potential for new housing to be placed next to industrial uses.
- Support industry in the Boardman Road area while examining additional opportunities that take advantage of the Housatonic River and stunning scenery. There could be other uses for properties in this area that contribute to the tax base, while capitalizing on New Milford’s natural assets. Ecotourism is one idea that residents identified during the planning process.
- For other industrial zones in New Milford, attention should focus on their continued use for industry, while carefully managing potential impacts to nearby neighborhoods.



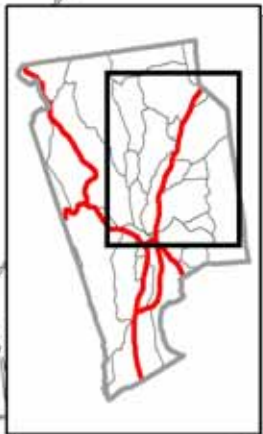
Pickett District businesses.

# Business Development Plan - Route 202 North

Town of New Milford, CT

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**Northville**  
Rural, smaller scale commercial  
Encourage improvements to appearance, building architecture

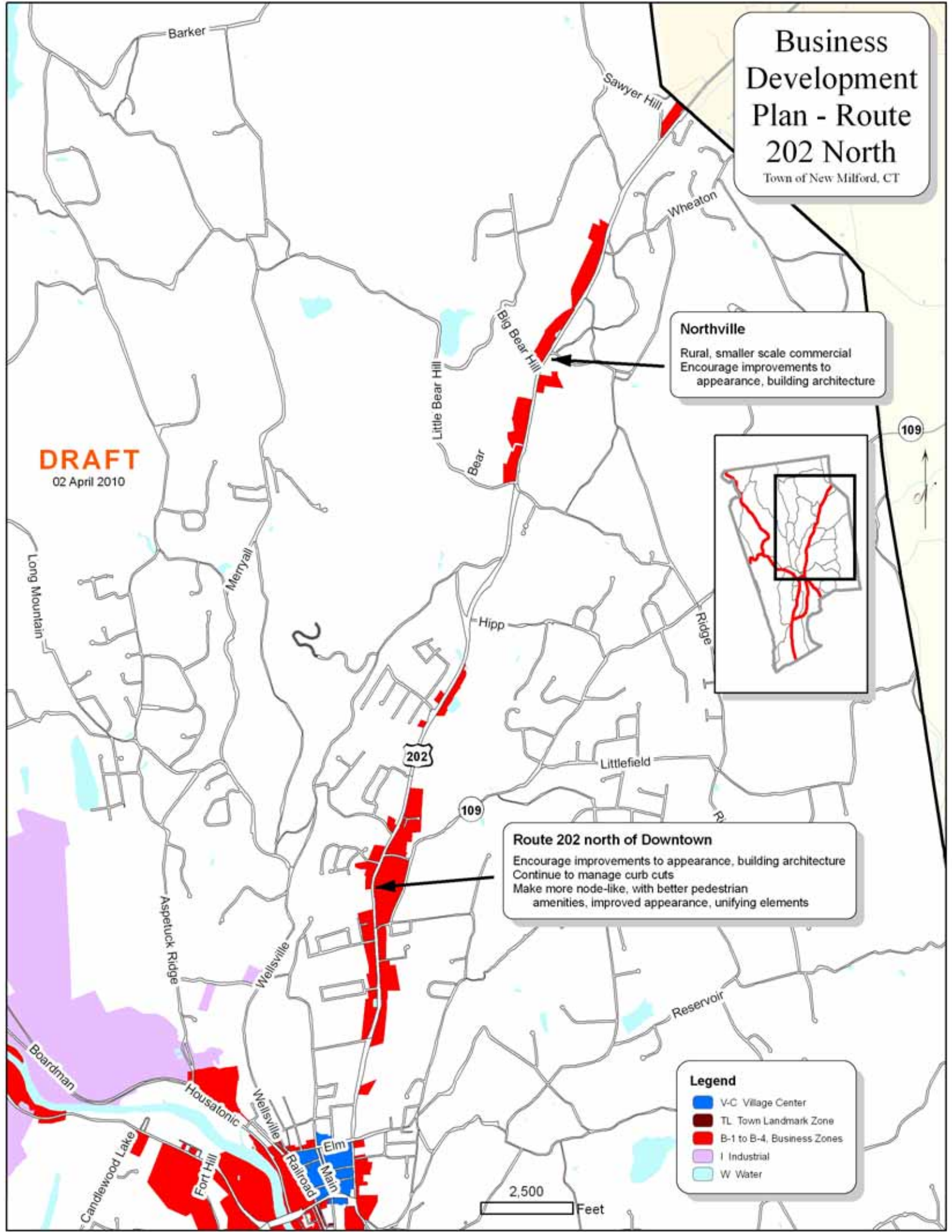


**Route 202 north of Downtown**  
Encourage improvements to appearance, building architecture  
Continue to manage curb cuts  
Make more node-like, with better pedestrian amenities, improved appearance, unifying elements

**Legend**

- V-C Village Center
- TL Town Landmark Zone
- B-1 to B-4, Business Zones
- I Industrial
- W Water

2,500 Feet



**Encourage business development in appropriate areas and enhance business zones:**

1. Consider a market analysis for industrial zones and for the “Corporate Boulevard” concept.
2. Route 7, South of Lanesville Road:
  - a. Promote campus style development with offices and some supportive retail for workers at those sites
3. Route 7, Lanesville Road to Downtown – make overall improvements:
  - a. Encourage improvements to the appearance of buildings, frontage, and signs for new development and when renovations / upgrades to existing buildings are made
  - b. Provide sidewalks
  - c. Continue to manage curb cuts
  - d. Encourage enhancement of the properties at the Bridge Street, Kent Road, Danbury Road intersection to better transition to Downtown
4. Route 7, North of Downtown:
  - a. Continue to explore housing opportunities within walking distance to Downtown
5. Gaylordsville:
  - a. Encourage new development to reflect the historic, village-style architecture and patterns; consider designating as a Village District
  - b. Tie business areas together with sidewalks along Route 7 and a greenway along the River
  - c. Encourage property owners to improve frontage
  - d. Retain residential uses and residential structures

6. Route 202, Northville – maintain as a rural commercial node:
  - a. Continue to ensure that the uses, size and scale of businesses reflect the rural nature of the area
7. Park Lane area – encourage neighborhood business, with elements of village-style patterns, where nearby residents can walk:
  - a. Encourage new buildings to reflect the New England style
  - b. Continue to manage curb cuts
  - c. Provide sidewalks, including connections to nearby neighborhoods
8. Support industrial development in industrial zones and capitalize on other business opportunities.

# Downtown New Milford

## Overview

Downtown New Milford is a treasure – it typifies a traditional New England Village, it is home to successful businesses and historic residences and it serves as a civic focal point. Downtown should continue to be a “destination” and provide a mixture of civic, residential and commercial uses.

Residents appreciate efforts to maintain the Town Green and to improve the appearance of sidewalks and streetscapes. When asked to rate characteristics of Downtown, 84% gave high ratings to the overall appearance, including that of the buildings, sidewalks and the Town Green. Meanwhile, traffic received the lowest ratings.

Having an organized group of downtown business owners is a tremendous resource in helping to promote Downtown and draw people there. The Village Center Organization can play this role and their efforts should continue to be supported by the Town.

## Downtown Plan

New Milford has committed resources in the past to prepare plans for Downtown. The latest plan, the *Downtown New Milford Economic Enhancement Strategy* (1996), has served the Town well and many of its recommendations have been implemented.

The Plan should be updated as needed and implementation should continue. One issue that should be addressed in an updated Plan is parking. There are differing opinions and observations about whether there is an adequate amount of parking Downtown. Some feel that there is not enough parking. Others feel that there is adequate parking, but there may be a need for better signage to direct people to parking. Future parking needs, including the number of spaces and their locations, will need to be determined in order for Downtown to support additional businesses and housing. The idea of building a parking garage has been raised. Issues about location, ownership, and management should be examined. Public garages can be designed to blend into an historic downtown; appearance must be an important consideration.

## Anchor Land Uses and Activities

“Anchor” land uses and activities draw people to the downtown. According to the survey, on average, residents visit Downtown 14 times per month. The top reasons for visiting Downtown were: the Post Office, shopping and the Library. Other anchors are the New Milford Hospital, Town Hall, the many restaurants, and the theater.

Activities such as the farmers market and community events draw residents Downtown. According to the survey, 60% of households have visited the Farmers Market.

Without these uses and activities, there likely would be fewer downtown visitors and thereby fewer customers to support businesses.

Because these uses tend to draw a larger number of visits than other uses in the Downtown, conflicts can arise due to traffic or the need to grow and expand. It will be important to encourage the continued presence of these uses Downtown and to seek long-term solutions for balancing their needs and those of the community.



The New Milford Hospital.



New Milford Public Library.

### River Front

The Housatonic River is one of New Milford's most visible and important assets, yet Downtown is separated from the River by the industrial-type facilities that house the Department of Public Works.

While there are no current plans to re-locate the DPW facilities, the DPW has expressed a need for a new facility at a more appropriate site (see Chapter 6). Moving DPW elsewhere would give the Town the ability to connect Downtown to the River.

Parks, mixed uses, retail, restaurants, civic space and housing could bridge the waterfront to the existing Downtown. Not only would this extension enhance Downtown, but it could contribute to the Town's tax base. Some efforts have begun, such as the planned greenway along the River.

To begin a conversation on what a Downtown River Front could be, some preliminary sketches have been prepared. The sketches consider several potential uses but in general focus on mixed use. The sketches do not represent a recommendation for the area, but are intended to inspire discussions about the potential that this land holds.

The sketches include:

- A mixed use streetscape along Young's Field Road with retail and restaurants on first floor and office on second and third floors.
- Housing and a hotel/conference on the interior part of the site.
- A greenway extending to Bridge Street.
- A green connecting the Bennett Street neighborhood and the Railroad Street commerce area to the River and to the new mixed use development.
- A new community which provides for flexible housing options (i.e., multi-family rentals or condominium).

These sketches assume that the recreation fields and adjacent private businesses would remain.

There are challenges that would need to be addressed, such as determining how to connect across the railway and understanding the extent of flood plains. However, starting to develop initial ideas (a vision) for this area is a key first step.



Housatonic River in Downtown New Milford.

## Conceptual Downtown River Front



The intent of this plan is to illustrate concepts for discussion purposes only, not to recommend specific uses and site layouts.

Existing River Front



Illustrative Potential for River Front



Existing River Front



Illustrative Potential for River Front



### Enhance the Periphery of Downtown

The buildings along the periphery should complement Downtown. There are a number of properties along Bridge Street, on the southern periphery, and along Railroad Street to the north, that detract from Downtown's overall character.

In some cases these buildings house well-established businesses that are successful and have been contributing to the tax base for many years. In other cases, properties are vacant. Short term solutions might include working with property owners to make minor aesthetic improvements to facades and frontage. Longer term, property owners may find that it will be desirable to upgrade or redevelop their property in a form that is more compatible with Downtown.

In any case, the Town should be encouraged to continue to make streetscape improvements to better tie these areas to Downtown (see sidebar).

### Potential Streetscape Improvements

#### Bridge Street

- Continue the streetscape theme from Downtown to the west side of Bridge Street
- Incorporate decorative pavers and decorative lighting
- Enhance store fronts and facades
- Provide benches and pedestrian spaces
- Install crosswalks

#### Railroad Street

- Continue streetscape theme to Bennett Street by incorporating decorative pavers, installing decorative lighting, enhancing store fronts and facades, providing benches and pedestrian 'spaces', and installing crosswalks
- Consolidate curb cuts by promoting interconnected parking
- Capitalize upon Boardman Terrace for access to rear parking areas and interconnections
- Create strong pedestrian connections from Railroad Street east to Main Street and west over Railroad Street to site of future redevelopment of DPW facility.
- Evaluate the intersection of Bennett, Railroad, Housatonic and Wellsville for pedestrian safety and visibility (short term) and overall intersection alignment (long term).

### Examples of Attractive Facades on Bridge Street

*Hold for Food Mart Photo*



**Maintain and enhance Downtown New Milford as a hub of civic, business and residential activity:**

1. Continue to implement the *Downtown Plan* and update as needed.
2. Address parking issues:
  - a. Examine the need for additional and better located spaces.
  - b. Examine the feasibility of a parking garage to support existing and future uses Downtown.
3. Encourage the continued presence of “anchor” uses and activities and seek long-term solutions to balance their needs with a desire to keep the uses Downtown.
4. Make the Housatonic River an integral asset to Downtown by capitalizing on the Town-owned land between the River and Downtown:
  - a. Determine limitations for this area based on the presence of flood plains.
  - b. Explore options, which might include new businesses, community gathering space, housing and / or a river greenway.
  - c. Ensure that public access to the River is provided.
  - d. Encourage the creation of a Master Plan and renderings for the area that will set forth design principles.
5. Encourage improvements to the appearance of properties Downtown:
  - a. Work with property owners to upgrade properties.
  - b. Encourage the long term redevelopment of these properties to be in line with the character of Downtown.
6. Encourage continued improvements to the streetscapes Downtown.

*Hold for photo scenic of Downtown*



Town Green.



Main Street.

Notes: