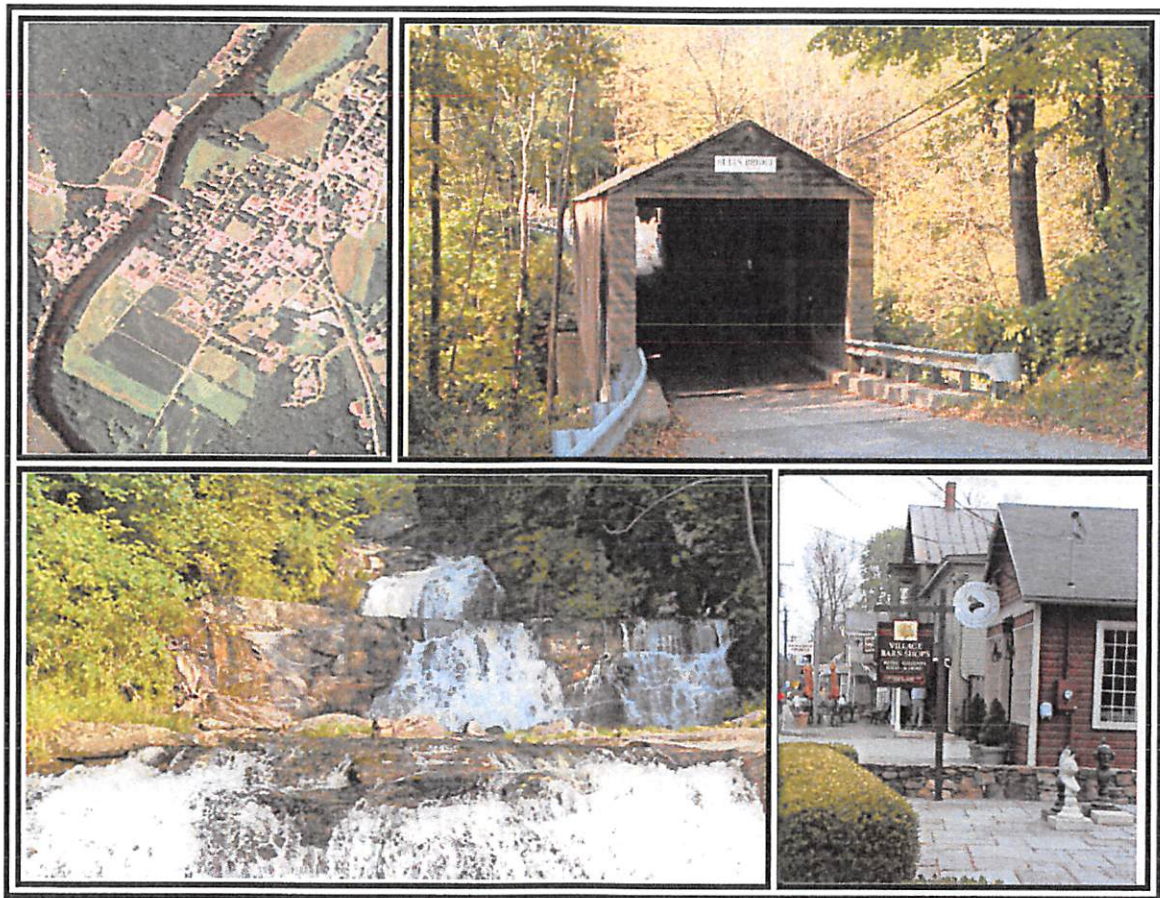




KENT CONNECTICUT

2021 PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT



KENT PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

JANUARY 10, 2013

KENT PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

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The Planning and Zoning Commission thanks the support and assistance of the Board of Selectmen and the input of Kent's boards and commissions.

Kent, Connecticut

2022 Plan of Conservation and Development

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APPENDICES (click here to access Appendices on the Kent website)

Appendix A: Objective criteria determining the elements of New England ‘Rural Character’

Appendix B: Kent Village Center Physical Layout

Appendix C: Development Build Out Analysis

Appendix D: Litchfield Hills Greenprint Map – Kent Conservation Resources

Appendix E: Kent Zoning Maps

Appendix F: Social Services Available in Kent

Appendix G: State of Our Town Report

Appendix H: Village Center Revitalization Strategies – NWCT Regional Planning Collaborative

Appendix I: Permanently Protected Open Space – Conservation Commission Map (HVA)

Appendix J: Agricultural Resources – Conservation Commission Map (HVA)

Appendix K: Cultural Resources – Conservation Commission Map (HVA)

Appendix L: Kent Conservation Commission Town Character Study

Appendix M: Kent Conservation Commission Open Space Plan (to be added)

2022 PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

WHAT MAKES KENT SPECIAL



"...the shape of the land does indeed affect the course of human events played out in its midst. Kent's expanse of rugged up and down terrain, naturally terraced flood plains, rock strewn soils, and the roiling waters of the Housatonic River that cleave lengthwise through town prove the rule."

From "Natural and Cultural Riches of Kent"
2009

Change is inevitable. The question is: "will change occur by design or by default?"

Quality of Place

Many factors help define a community: people, appearance, natural and cultural resources, businesses, services, and more. These factors combine to create the quality of place that defines the Town of Kent. It is up to the community to evaluate, plan for, and manage the inevitable change in these factors that occurs.

Kent's Character of Community

Three sets of character qualities define the sense of place that Kent imparts: New England small town qualities; rural qualities; and modern qualities. All of these contribute to the Town's character and combine to make Kent a well-rounded and distinctive community. However, these characteristics also need attention and management to ensure their continued contribution to the quality of life in Kent. A compilation of small town qualities and characteristics is provided in [Appendix A](#).

Kent – New England

Kent represents the essence of small town New England, characterized over its recent history by its low population density, relatively slow population growth, a well defined village center, many historic structures, multi-generation families, active agriculture, and active volunteerism, within a diverse and often dramatic landscape.

Kent presents a distinct boundary from the spreading urbanization found to the south and west. This distinction is enhanced by the Town's efforts to keep the village center intact and to keep the entrance gateways to Kent attractive and representative of New England small town qualities.

Kent – Rural

Kent's rural character is highlighted by the valley and ridge topography of the Town's land area, with the dominating Housatonic River valley bisecting the Town diagonally. Open space protection efforts and strong land use controls, including horizonline protection, have helped preserve Kent's rural character and should be continued.

Farmlands and agricultural activities also contribute to the rural sense of place found in Kent. Although commercial farming has declined significantly, local produce is available and many residents preserve farms and farmland components.

With open fields and farm structures at most of the gateway entrances to Town, residents and visitors alike can easily relate to Kent's agrarian past. Kent's farms and farmland resources may support more local food production as the economics of food production change and the demand for fresh and wholesome produce grows.

Kent's historic structures, cultural amenities and museums, and social and cultural events are also part of our village and rural character, and need to be cared for in our Plan as well.

Kent's rural character is accentuated by its proximity to busier and more intensively developed areas to the south and west, as well as its access from New York City, only two hours away. The challenge to the community is to protect the substance behind these assets so that the appearance of the Town is preserved.

Kent – Modern

Kent is also a contemporary place, with a healthy economic center, a dynamic population of active and involved residents, several private schools that attract people from all over the world, art galleries and cultural events of regional significance.

Certainly Kent's favorable location on the primary access route to Northwestern Connecticut and the Berkshire region contributes to the attractiveness of the Town to residents and visitors. Local businesses, and in turn the entire region, benefit from Kent's position as a regional gateway.

Population Density

Town	Persons/ Sq.Mi.
New Milford	438
Washington	90
Salisbury	63
Kent*	57
Warren	53
Sharon	46
Norfolk	36
Cornwall	30
State Average	737

Source: OPM Municipal Fiscal Indicators,
7/1/18

*162 lowest density of 169 State towns

Kent Town is the entire community, including residential and commercial areas; infrastructure and facilities; social and cultural amenities; and the natural landscape.

Kent Village is the social and commercial core of the community, used and maintained as the Town center.

Small Town Characteristics

- 57% of Kent's workforce work in the Town
- Over 240 of Kent's 2000 parcels of land are 25 acres or larger
- Nearly 50% of the houses in Kent were built prior to 1960

Kent's Cultural Assets

- Sloane-Stanley Museum
- Connecticut Antique Machinery Museum
- Cream Hill Agricultural School Buildings
- Connecticut Museum of Mining and Mineral Science
- Kent Historical Society Seven Hearths Museum
- Kent Memorial Library
- Veteran's Memorials
- Swift House
- Bull's Bridge
- Flanders Historic District

Private Schools in Kent

- Kent School
- South Kent School
- Marvelwood School

Protected Open Space

	Acres*	Percent of Town Land Area
Federal	2,360	7.5
State	3,320	10.5
Kent Land Trust	1,378	4.3
Weantinog Heritage	1,737	5.5
Pond Mtn. Nature Conservancy	774	2.4
Sharon Land Trust	316	1.0
Town of Kent	262	0.8
Other	240	0.8
	74	0.2
Total	10,451	32.8

Source: *Natural and Cultural Riches of Kent, -2009* (Data currently being updated by Conservation Commission for inclusion in the pending Open Space Plan update)

* Fee and easement

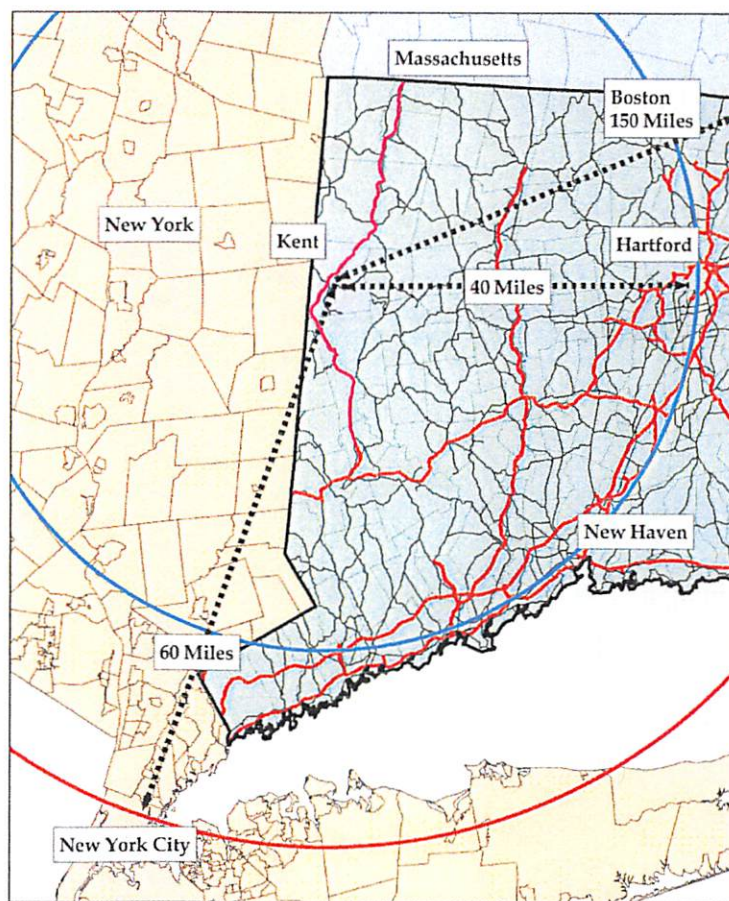
Primary Land Cover (2006)

Type	Acres	%
Forest	24793	77.9
Agriculture	3062	9.6
Developed	1809	5.7
Water/Wetland	1092	3.4
Other	1044	3.3
Total	31800	100

Source: Connecticut Center for Land Use Education and Research

Natural and Cultural Riches of Kent

The Kent Conservation Commission published a comprehensive inventory of the community assets that define the Town of Kent, along with a set of illustrative maps and a series of recommendations. This report provides the Town with not only a baseline categorization of its defining characteristics but also the guidance necessary to ensure their ongoing protection. This Plan incorporates the Natural and Cultural Riches inventory and recommendations as they apply to the Plan's implementation.



Wood Planning Associates

Where We Are

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A VISION FOR OUR COMMUNITY

A combination of old and new, natural and built, and resident and visitor makes Kent a well-rounded community. The challenge for the community is to ensure that the Town's village, rural, and modern assets are protected in the face of local development pressures and regional pressures that are largely beyond the Town's control.

This Plan continues to set priorities for the future based on community interests, local and regional influences, and community strengths and weaknesses. The 2012 rewrite sought direct input from the community on the key planning issues and on ideas for how to address them.

A Vision for Kent

The Kent Community will sustain and enhance its New England town character; encourage a diversity of people, housing, and employment opportunities; ensure a healthy and safe living environment; protect its natural and cultural resources and support the economic and cultural value of the village center.

Planning strategies and action steps to support this vision are organized around three general planning themes: Preserve Our Natural and Rural Heritage; Guide Our Community's Development; and Enhance Our Community Assets. This Plan provides recommendations for Town actions in response to each of the planning themes.

Collaboration between local agencies, commissions, and organizations continues to be vital to the successful implementation of this Plan and contributes to the continued health and wellbeing of the Town and its citizens.

2012 Community Input

- Community Opinion Survey
- Public Planning Workshop
- Issue Focus Group Sessions

Key Influences

- Regional Development Potential
- Adjacent Towns' Planning
- State Planning (DOT, DEEP, DECD, etc.)
- State and Private Conservation Efforts
- Municipal Budget
- Regional and National Economy

Planning Themes

- Natural and Rural Heritage: Cultural and Natural Resources
- Community Development: Economic Health and Housing Diversity
- Community Assets: Facilities, Services, and Public Involvement

"If Kent is to protect its rural values it must have the active engagement of its land use decision-makers and the citizens whom they represent, both in how we regulate the present and how we

PLANNING OVERVIEW

This Plan

Kent, Connecticut Fast Facts

Incorporated:
1739

Form of Government:
Selectmen, Town Meeting

Population:
2010 – 2979
2018 – 2785

Median Population Age:
2010 – 47 years
2018 – 54 years

Land Area:
49.6 Square Miles

Expenditures (2009):
Education – \$6,340,748
Other – \$2,654,115
Total – \$9,800,316

The Town has recognized how important effective planning is to help preserve the qualities and valued character of our community. Building on the efforts of previous Town Plans and more recent evaluations of Town resources and development options, the Planning and Zoning Commission (“PZC”) undertook to develop a new and comprehensive Plan of Conservation and Development. This effort is based on a clear understanding of the community’s goals and consideration of outside influences and other regional planning. The result is a framework for ensuring that the Town can continue to accommodate growth while retaining the very qualities that attract residents, businesses, and visitors to Kent.

Planning in Kent

Kent developed its first comprehensive Town Plan in 1975. The Plan was updated and revised in 1989 and updated again in 2001. A *Town Character Study and Open Space Plan* was prepared in 1990 as recommended by the 1989 Plan revision, providing guidance for preserving critical elements of the Town’s rural character, including specific open space protection. Endorsed and supported by this Plan of Conservation and Development, the Conservation Commission has recently updated the *Town Character Study*. The updated Study is incorporated by reference into this Plan and is attached as Appendix L.

The Kent Conservation Commission recently developed a detailed evaluation of natural and cultural resources in Kent, providing background information and recommendations for preserving, conserving, and protecting these invaluable Town assets. The *Natural & Cultural Riches* report is incorporated by reference into this Plan as recommended by the Conservation Commission and has been used to guide the updated *Town Character Study*.

To support the development of this Plan, a compilation of data and information about Kent, the *State of Our Town* report, was prepared and used to inform Commission consideration of Plan goals and strategies. (Appendix G)

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Why We Plan

The primary reason for planning is to identify and help sustain those qualities and characteristics that define a community. At the same time, the State of Connecticut General Statutes provide guidelines for municipalities to “at least once every ten years...prepare or amend and...adopt” a Plan of Conservation and Development. Statutes also provide a set of “growth management principles” which town plans should consider.

Towns use plans to guide development of land use controls, prioritize resource protections such as open space, support development of municipal facilities and services, and provide the community at large with an overall understanding of the town’s goals and priorities.

Kent has historically made effective use of its planning, as demonstrated by the significant amount of protected land, the implementation of Horizonline and Village District regulations, and the establishment of an active and effective Conservation Commission. All of these actions were recommended in one or more Town Plans.

Growth Management Principles

The State of Connecticut has adopted a series of Growth Management Principles, intended to provide a consistent framework for municipal, regional, and State Plans. The strategies laid out in this Plan of Conservation and Development are consistent with those principles, as well as the policies in the current State Plan, including the land use categories provided on the State Locational Guide Map. This Plan has also considered, and is consistent with, the latest Plan of Conservation and Development by the NW Connecticut Council of Governments.

Regional Concerns

In addition to planning challenges that arise and are addressed locally, Kent faces a unique set of regional threats and opportunities that this Plan also considers. These include environmental, transportation, and economic and residential development conditions that must be monitored and, wherever possible, responded to in order to protect Kent’s interests.

Growth Management Principles (CGS §8-23)

- Redevelopment and Revitalization of Commercial Centers and Areas of Mixed Uses
- Expansion of Housing Opportunities and Design Choices
- Concentration of Development Around Transportation Nodes and Corridors
- Conservation and Restoration of the Natural Environment, Cultural and Historical Resources and Existing Farmlands
- Protection of Critical Environmental Assets
- Integration of Planning Across All Levels of Government

Regional Concerns to Kent

- State DEEP actions regarding State Parks and recreational areas
- State DOT and TSB planning and actions regarding State highways
- Appalachian Trail and extensions
- Development of passenger rail service
- Regional tourism promotions
- Dutchess County (NY) development (residential and industrial)
- Bulls Bridge hydro facility (FERC)
- State approval of telecommunications and alternative energy facilities
- State and Regional planning

PRESERVE OUR NATURAL AND RURAL HERITAGE

NOTE: Recommended actions are underlined and summarized in a table at the conclusion of the section



"...it's never been more important to Kent's future that we keep that sense of connectedness to the land in our planning."

From *Natural and Cultural Riches of Kent*
2009

Kent enjoys a diversity of natural, historic, and cultural resources that make it a wonderful place to live, work, and visit. These assets also provide the Town with tremendous opportunity, both for maintaining our high quality of life and for building on the economic and cultural potential of the Town's location as a gateway to northwestern Connecticut and all of New England.

Kent residents recognize and value these resources, and agree that they should be a high priority in the Town Plan.

Key elements of these community assets that are evident in Kent are detailed in a report prepared by the Kent Conservation Commission entitled *Natural and Cultural Riches of Kent, Connecticut*. That report is incorporated into this Plan of Conservation and Development for the purposes of providing guidance for planning objectives and actions to preserve and sustain these assets.

Natural and Rural Heritage Strategy

Kent will support and retain its natural and rural heritage by protecting and enhancing natural, agricultural, scenic, cultural, recreational, and environmental resources and promoting sustainable uses of these assets.

Natural resource and open space protection benefit not only from public and private preservation actions but also from growth management tools, which are identified in this section as well as the following section addressing Community Development.



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Natural Resources

Water and wetlands, forests, and farmlands dominate the landscape in Kent. These assets, and the diverse ecological habitats they support, are protected by a variety of means including land use regulations, open space protection, and public and private land management. Kent continues to work with public and private interests to ensure that these resources are protected, properly managed, and, where appropriate, used sustainably.

Kent will collaborate with regional entities on resource conservation, including the Housatonic River Commission, the Lake Waramaug Authority, the Housatonic Valley Association, the Northwest Conservation District, and local land trusts.

Kent will initiate a review of potential land use regulation improvements to address development impacts and other ecological and environmental threats. This review will consider improvements to existing horizonline regulations, mining and extraction limitation regulations, conservation design subdivision standards, and incentives for community goals such as targeted open space protection. The Planning and Zoning Commission will encourage the Conservation Commission to review and comment on subdivision applications.

Wetlands regulations, including upland review areas and lakes and ponds protections, will be maintained and updated as technological and legal options become available. Flood Plain standards will be closely reviewed and updated to incorporate the latest technical standards available. Low impact development concepts, including no net stormwater flow increases, will be integrated into standards wherever appropriate.

Regulations and procedures will be reviewed to ensure that compatible and appropriate land uses, particularly agriculture, are not discouraged or unduly restricted. Kent will continue to use the Horizonline Conservation District standards to help preserve scenic integrity of the Town's landscape. Stone walls add to this scenic quality; PZC should consider regulations to protect these elements.

Natural and Rural Heritage Preservation – Implementation

- Planning and Zoning Commission
- Inland Wetlands Commission
- Conservation Commission
- Board of Selectmen
- Land Trusts
- Historic District Commission
- Kent Historical Society

Natural Resource Protection Regulations – Retain and/or Improve

- Water body upland review areas
- Stream and waterbody bank protection buffers
- Flood Plain
- Aquifer Protection
- Low Impact Development
- Horizonline
- Conservation Subdivisions
- Open Space priorities and Incentives
- Outdoor Lighting
- Mining and extraction controls
- Tree maintenance and replacement programs

Survey Responses

- 87% agree or strongly agree with preserving open space as a high priority
- 94% believe open space will contribute to a positive quality of life
- 52% think open space will keep taxes low
- 97% agree open space will maintain the Town's rural character

The town should encourage and cooperate with efforts to reduce or mitigate eutrophication problems at Hatch Pond (in accordance with the Kent Land Trust's pending Hatch Pond Water Quality study) and other water bodies. The Inland Wetland Commission should promote the use of native vegetative buffers along water bodies and encourage maintenance or reestablishment of native vegetation along the banks of rivers and stream belts.

The Town should also continue efforts to control and eradicate invasive plant species on public and private lands, however, a Town wide process and educational effort should be developed to ensure that State actions to control invasive species and protect water quality include the Town's full review and input.

Open Space

Open Space Priorities

- Town recreational opportunities
- Integrated open space and recreation projects
- Northern Gateway to Kent Village
- High quality farmland
- Roadscapes with scenic features such as mature native vegetation and stonewalls
- Ridgelines and other scenic priorities
- Significant ecological habitat protection
- Significant archeological sites
- Connecting open space corridors and streambelts, including the Housatonic River Corridor
- Town Character Areas
- Stratified Drift Aquifers
- Wetlands and Streambelts

Kent has a significant amount of protected open space. State properties, such as Macedonia Brook State Park and Kent Falls State Park, Federal land associated with the Appalachian Trail, Kent Land Trust holdings, and other private conservation holdings make up about 33% of the Town's land area (see sidebar note page 3). Because of the importance of these resources to Kent and the sensitivity of their ecological and environmental value, additional opportunities to extend natural corridors, permanently protect scenic vistas, and enhance recreational access should be pursued.

In 1990, Kent worked with the Northwestern Connecticut Council of Governments and a private consultant to prepare a *Town Character Study and Open Space Plan*. Additionally, the recent *Natural and Cultural Riches of Kent* report provides a detailed resource inventory. The Kent Conservation Commission is currently updating the Town Open Space Plan, which will be incorporated into this Plan and attached as Appendix M.



The Town has supported the work of the Kent Conservation Commission to update the *Town Character Study*, the result of which has been adopted into this Plan of Conservation and Development. This effort has involved representatives of all major land interests, public and private, and should also reach out to the community at large.

The updated *Town Character Study* identifies and prioritizes land protection targets, including those that expand Town holdings and meet the goals listed in the sidebar on the previous page, or where Town participation is necessary for success. Such priorities will be referenced in Kent's subdivision regulations to provide guidance to developers and the Commission for set-aside open space.

To support the Town's open space goals, Kent should establish a Land Acquisition Fund based on the Open Space Plan protection priorities and criteria.

The Town has benefitted from the use of statutory provisions, known as the PA 490 program, to abate property taxes on forestland, farmland, and open space, which provides an incentive for property owners to delay development. The 490 program should be continued. Many large parcels remain available for subdivisions or estate development in Kent. This highlights both the threats and opportunities the Town faces with respect to open space planning. The Town should consider additional incentive strategies for open space conservation and preservation.

"Our town's rural character and the natural ecosystems that make up its critical parts are threatened by development that has the potential to bring irreversible changes to the quality of life we hold dear."

From Natural and Cultural Riches of Kent
2009

Survey Responses

- 72% agree or strongly agree that Kent should establish a land acquisition fund.
- 62% would be willing to pay \$100 or more in additional taxes for land conservation.
- 89% agree or strongly agree that Kent should promote farming opportunities.



Transfer of Development Rights – CGS §8-2

“Such regulations may provide for a municipal system for the creation of development rights and the permanent transfer of such development rights, which may include a system for the variance of density limits in connection with any such transfer.”

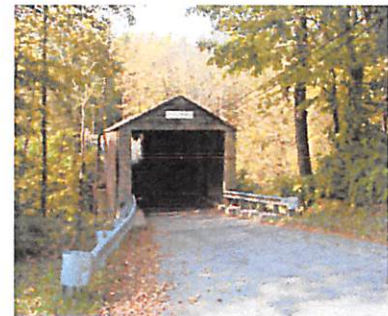
Kent will also evaluate incentives and other regulatory concepts to promote natural resource protection and other planning goals. The conservation design subdivision regulations are an example of a density incentive. Others might include a transfer of development rights program which could allow concentrated development in appropriate locations in exchange for the permanent protection of open space and agricultural resources elsewhere in Town.

The primary entrances to Kent and the gateways to the village center display the natural and rural character of the Town, and these assets must be protected. In addition to evaluating additional open space protection in these areas, zoning regulations continue to ensure that suitable controls over clearing, landscaping, building locations, and other standards protect Kent’s gateways.

Scenic roadscapes also provide a sense of openness and rural character and Kent should retain and encourage use of the Scenic Road Ordinance.

Designated Scenic Roads in Kent

- Cobble Lane (full length)
- Cobble Road (full length)
- Dugan Road (full length)
- Geer Mountain Road (full length)
- Kent Hollow Road (1 mile of the 4.52 miles)
- Skiff Mountain Road (1.52 of 5.69 miles)
- Treasure Hill Road (full length)



Farms and Farming

Although farming activity has changed in Kent, the remaining farmland and the potential for future farming activity can benefit from the Town's implementation of additional tools to promote agriculture. Although dairy farming has vanished from Kent and most of Connecticut, smaller, specialty farming activities appear to be increasing, supported by interest in fresh local produce.

The scenic qualities of Kent's remaining farmland are obvious, but this Plan recognizes that protecting farmland from development is not enough. Protecting prime agricultural soils is crucial to ensuring the potential for future agricultural production and this should be one of the considerations for the Land Acquisition Fund recommended by this Plan.

In addition to supporting farmland protection through open space programs, Kent will promote sustainable use of agriculture through public/private partnerships to support agri-tourism and eco-tourism, "buy-local" promotional programs, and other sustainable farming and forestry programs.

Kent land use regulations shall continue to ensure "farm friendly" standards, including "right-to farm" provisions, permitting farm markets by site plan review rather than special permit, relaxed residency restrictions for farm workers, adaptive reuse of farm structures for farm related activities, and use of active agricultural properties for related commercial activities.

The Town should consider creating an agriculture advisory group to develop and advocate farm friendly practices and promote farming interests. This could include development of an inventory of agricultural resources and activities in Kent as well as working with regional and State entities.

"...it is the open farm fields and the way of life that farming has imprinted here that give the community important aspects of its character and these make it a resource to cherish and protect in a changing economic environment."
From Natural and Cultural Riches of Kent

"Maintaining the delicate balance between preserving Kent's rural character and respecting property owners' rights is a constant struggle. But...the close-knit community of Kent has adopted standards that promise to retain a good bit of its identity in the face of 21st century pressures."
From Natural and Cultural Riches of Kent 2009



Cultural Resources

Statutory Growth Management Principles

Conservation and restoration of the natural environment, cultural and historical resources and existing farmlands.

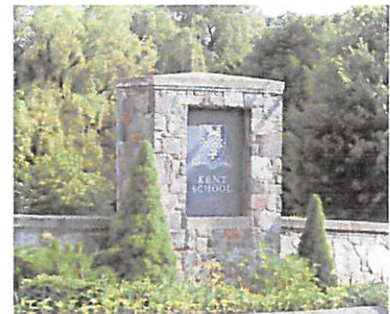
Protection of environmental assets critical to public health and safety.

Kent's many historic and cultural resources provide residents and visitors with enjoyable experiences and learning opportunities. Along with ample recreational opportunities, these resources not only help define the community's character, but also create economic benefits by attracting people to Kent and its businesses.

Kent should continue to develop and maintain a current inventory of historic structures and identify any clusters of historic structures that may qualify for Historic District designation as provided in Connecticut statutes. Kent should also continue to apply, and review for possible improvements, the Demolition Delay ordinance to provide opportunity for private or public acquisition of historic structures that an owner may decide to remove.

Kent's New England flavor depends largely on the integrity of its historic assets and the compatibility of new development, especially in the village center. The Village District design review process shall continue to be applied to new developments and redevelopments to ensure historic continuity throughout the entire Village area.

Additionally, the Historic District Commission and private interests, particularly the Kent Historical Society, should evaluate the current Flanders Historic District boundaries and identify potential expansions. Opportunities for additional Historic Districts, such as East Kent, should also be evaluated. Such evaluations should include consideration of historically scenic landscapes.



Historic and cultural resources provide recreational and tourism opportunities to residents and visitors. Kent should actively partner with private interests that attract tourism and provide local cultural opportunities. Museums and historic sites should be included in future tourism and recreational programs.

Kent also benefits from the social and cultural stimulus provided by the presence of several private schools. The Town should continue to work closely with these schools and support specific projects that will benefit the entire community as well as the respective school.

Environmental Issues

Much of the high quality rural character in Kent can be attributed to its healthy environmental condition. This Plan's goals to protect farmland, open space, water and natural resources will also sustain environmental qualities, but other specific actions are necessary.

As the *Riches of Kent* report notes "water is truly a defining characteristic of Kent today..." The importance of surface and ground water resources for drinking water supply, recreation, habitat, and scenery is evident as is the sensitivity of those resources to environmental degradation. Kent's Inland Wetlands Commission provides the first line of defense for these assets. As previously noted, that Commission should regularly review and update its regulations as technological and legal options become available. This should include evaluation of the potential for additional lake protections.

Kent will identify additional protections such as the Connecticut DEEP *Stormwater Quality Manual* and *Erosion and Sedimentation Controls* guidelines, which incorporate state-of-the-art low impact development standards, and revise zoning and subdivision regulations accordingly.

To ensure that future residential developments have minimal environmental impact, as discussed in the next section of this Plan, the PZC will also revise Conservation Development subdivision standards to help address environmental impacts and promote the Town's open space and scenic protection goals.

Low Impact Development Principles

- uses site design principles and small-scale treatment practices
- employs site design techniques to conserve natural hydrologic functions
- provides retention, detention and filtration of runoff in a manner that more closely mimics the natural water balance

From Connecticut DEEP Stormwater Quality Manual

***NW Connecticut Council
of Governments 2017
Plan Recommendations:***

- Promote the use of zoning regulations such as cluster zoning...that minimize the impact of development.
- ...make use of open space provisions in subdivision regulations.
- Continue to support the preservation...of open space and active agriculture.
- Support the continued use of open space for agriculture.
- Support efforts to improve the region's ground and surface waters.

With limited access to public water supplies, protection of groundwater is a high priority for the Town. Underground oil storage and subsurface sewage treatment facilities pose the most significant risk, other than catastrophic spills or contamination. In addition to the monitoring program recommended above, Kent should investigate and consider an underground oil storage ordinance to prohibit or restrict future such installations and require regular inspections of existing tanks.

The Sewer Commission, acting as the Town's Water Pollution Control Authority, is monitoring and will develop contingency plans for several community sewage treatment facilities in case of failure. The Town, through the Board of Selectmen and the Conservation Commission, should support this effort.

The Town should monitor the use of outdoor wood furnaces and other localized air quality threats, as well as any State level action to regulate such uses, and be prepared to implement regulatory controls if determined necessary. Similarly, the Town should consider establishing monitoring programs for underground oil storage and subsurface septic treatment systems.

The historic qualities and appearance that Kent has worked hard to maintain in the Kent Village Center are disrupted by the necessary, but intrusive, utility infrastructure that brings electricity and communications services. However, the impacts of these facilities can be mitigated by placing at least portions of them underground. A private group of volunteers is working on this with the utilities and the Town should support the effort to bury utility lines where feasible in the Village Center.

Kent also faces exposure to environmental threats well beyond the Town's borders. The PCB contamination of the Housatonic River is a well-known example, but others include possible air quality impacts from new industrial developments in New York State (up-wind). Increased traffic in western Connecticut may also arise from new developments nearby, such as the potential creation of a new community on the grounds of the former Harlem Valley Hospital in Dover, New York, only 13 miles from Kent. The Town should carefully monitor regional developments and be prepared to evaluate and propose responses or participate in public considerations of such proposals.

As energy costs climb and as alternative energy technologies improve, more opportunities arise for businesses and private individuals to install such facilities as wind generators and waste to energy generators. Kent should identify potential risks and environmental issues and develop regulations, based on the potential scale of development, to ensure that neighborhoods and the Town generally are protected from potential environmental impacts of such facilities. Kent should seek to work collaboratively with other towns and interests throughout the region and the NWCCOG to develop consistent approaches to siting and regulating alternative energy facilities. The PZC is generally in favor of developing alternative energy resources contingent upon enforcement of proper environmental controls and regulations.

Kent has proactively recognized the need to address energy efficiency through the formation of a volunteer Energy and Environmental Task Force. The Town should carefully consider options including recommendations from the Task Force and other sources and provide support for their efforts. Examples include regulatory incentives to encourage conservation retrofits and high efficiency ("green") building construction. Kent should also consider adopting ordinances exempting renewable energy systems from property tax, in accordance with CGS §12-81.

Quiet and dark are defining characteristics of rural areas and despite busy main roads and an active village center, those qualities remain dominant throughout most of Kent. Light pollution is controlled by specific commercial development standards in Kent's Zoning Regulations but no such controls apply to residential areas outside of the Horizonline Conservation District.

The PZC or the Conservation Commission should consider adopting regulations for residential area lighting such as have been developed in the Town of Washington and elsewhere. The PZC should also review current lighting regulations to identify possible improvements or strengthening, such as reducing the minimum required and the maximum allowed lighting intensity in the Village Center District.

The PZC should also consider adopting regulations for residential and commercial area noise control.

Dark Skies

"The mission of the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) is to preserve and protect the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies through environmentally responsible outdoor lighting."

The IDA provides technical guidance, model codes, and support information, available on its website <http://www.darksky.org/>

Rural and Natural Heritage Goals - Summary

Immediate Actions

1. Review Kent's zoning and wetlands regulations to identify and implement improvements to protect water quality, address development impacts, and address other ecological and environmental threats.
2. Review Kent's land use regulations to identify and remedy potential impediments to agricultural activities or provide support for agriculture.
3. Incorporate recommendations of the revised *Town Character Study* into subdivision regulations.
4. Establish a Land Acquisition Fund to support priority open space acquisitions.
5. Update Flood Plain standards to incorporate the latest technical standards.
6. Create a Historic Buildings Task Force to catalog historic features and identify potential threats to historic structures.
7. Review Conservation Development subdivision standards to ensure effectiveness and applicability, particularly in high priority conservation areas.
8. Support the Sewer Commission's efforts to develop contingency plans for several community sewage treatment facilities in case of failure.
9. Create a task force to catalogue all buried oil storage tanks.
10. Investigate and consider an underground oil storage ordinance to prohibit or restrict future such installations and require regular inspections of existing tanks.

Near Term Actions

11. Consider development of guidelines and supplemental zoning regulations to minimize light pollution, particularly outside of the Village Center area.
12. Update zoning and subdivision regulations to integrate low impact development standards from the State of Connecticut DEP Stormwater Quality Manual and DEP Guidelines for Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control.
13. Refine and implement Historic District Regulations and evaluate expansion of the Flanders Historic District and creation of additional historic districts where appropriate.
14. Support development of a Town wide process and educational effort to ensure that State actions to control invasive species and protect water quality are made with the Town's full review and input.
15. Identify and pursue opportunities to extend natural corridors, permanently protect scenic vistas, and enhance recreational access through additional open space protection.
16. Consider creation of an agriculture commission or other advisory group to counsel Town agencies on agricultural matters.

Evaluation for Future Action

17. Evaluate incentives and other regulatory concepts to promote natural resource protection and other planning goals.
18. Review zoning regulations to ensure that suitable controls over clearing, landscaping, building locations, and other standards protect Kent's gateways.
19. Monitor the use of outdoor wood furnaces and other localized air quality threats, as well as any State level action to regulate such uses and be prepared to implement regulatory controls.
20. Consider development of additional zoning regulations, or amendment of existing regulations as appropriate, to control the development of private alternative energy generating facilities and to provide guidance for State or Federal regulators with authority for commercial generating facilities.
21. Consider adopting ordinances exempting renewable energy systems from property tax, in accordance with CGS §12-81.

Continuing Policies

22. Preserve Town and Village gateways and other scenic assets.
23. Integrate historic resources, including the Sloan - Stanley Museum and other museums, into planning for future trails and other tourism and recreational programs.
24. Work with public and private interests and regional conservation entities to ensure that natural resources are protected, properly managed, and used sustainably where appropriate.
25. Continue use of, and refine as necessary, the Horizonline Conservation District standards to help preserve scenic integrity of the Town's landscape.
26. Continue and promote the tax abatement (PA 490 program) for forestland, farmland, and open space meeting the applicable criteria; consider reducing the tax rate for qualifying open space to encourage greater participation.
27. Retain and encourage use of the Scenic Road Ordinance.
28. Promote appropriate and sustainable uses of natural and agricultural resources.
29. Apply the Village District design review process to new developments and redevelopments in the Village District; maintain and improve the Village District standards and design guidelines as appropriate.
30. Continue use of the Demolition Delay Ordinance and revise or update as necessary.
31. Work closely and, where appropriate, collaborate with private schools on projects with cultural benefits.
32. Support private efforts to remove overhead utility lines from portions of Kent Village Center.
33. Carefully monitor regional developments and be prepared to evaluate and propose responses or participate in public considerations of such proposals.
34. Maintain and update Inland Wetlands Regulations as technological and legal options become available.

GUIDE OUR COMMUNITY'S DEVELOPMENT

NOTE: Recommended actions are underlined and summarized in a table at the conclusion of the section

"The past must be deferred to where its features are still readily recognized and where modern land use demands can be integrated with these older elements."

From "Kent Town Character Study" (1990)

The vitality of a community depends on its people, who in turn rely on businesses for goods, services, jobs, and the taxes they generate. People also need housing, and the availability of a diverse housing stock, in terms of size, style, and cost, promotes a diverse and socially strong community.

Therefore, this Plan addresses the related needs and opportunities for economic activity and housing availability, as well as the challenges to community character and existing neighborhoods that new development and growth bring.

Community Development Strategy

Kent will promote sustainable economic health, encourage a diversity of available housing throughout the community, and successfully integrate future development into existing neighborhoods and the community at large.

Economic Health

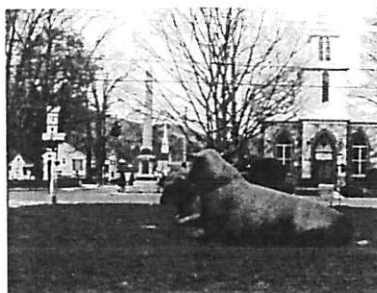
Kent's Village Center constitutes the economic hub of the community, and this Plan continues the policies of strengthening the Village as the Town's economic, cultural, civic, and social center. Future development will be guided not only by the small town character priorities defined in this Plan, but also by the need to provide goods and services, local jobs, and tax base that are critical to the Town's economic health.

Other economic assets that the Town should continue to benefit from are its Industrial District, home-based entrepreneurship, specialty agriculture, private schools, and tourism.

Grand List Assessment

Category	% of Total Assessment
Residential	78.8
Commercial/Industrial	6.9
Personal Property	2.1
Motor Vehicle	3.6
Other	8.7

Connecticut OPM Municipal Fiscal Indicators 2010



Kent Village Center

Kent has implemented effective regulations addressing development in the Village Center, most notable the creation of a Village District as authorized by CGS §8-2. The establishment of an Architectural Review Board ("ARB") and the recent overhaul of its standards have helped ensure that the Village Center will retain its New England village character while accommodating economic activities.

As conditions change and additional statutory options are adopted, the Town needs to consider additional opportunities to promote economic health. The Planning and Zoning Commission should undertake a complete evaluation of zoning regulations to identify revisions of standards and district boundaries that may enhance the town's economic health. Regulations should be revised accordingly. This review should include consultation with business interests and the Economic Development Commission ("EDC" – see page 27).

The PZC will continue to refine the Village District Regulations to emphasize design standards and examine permitted uses in the Village Center. Examples of uses that could be promoted by zoning standards include medical, technology, mixed commercial/residential, and hospitality.

Future economic activity may be encouraged by improvements to traffic circulation throughout the Town's Commercial and Industrial Districts. Village Center regulations should ensure that new development or redevelopment incorporates master planning to promote connecting street grids, shared parking and access, and overall design consistency. Existing cul-de-sacs should be integrated into such connecting grids whenever possible.

The most obvious example of street patterns that restrict access as well as development potential is the Kent Green area, which has limited access only from Route 7. The Town should work with private property owners to design and incorporate into future development plans and Town capital improvement plans a Main Street bypass road connecting the Kent Green shopping area to the area's existing road network.

Kent Village forms the Town's economic, cultural, municipal and social center. Sustaining its vitality is a critical Plan objective.

Economic Development - Kent's Strengths and Weaknesses

- + Engaged business owners and active Chamber of Commerce
- + Diverse and unique mix of businesses
- + Adequate parking
- + Village District zoning regulations
- + Village Center clustered retail
- + Attractive main street
- + Pedestrian friendly commercial center
- + Convenient vehicle access from regional population centers (strength and weakness)
- Inconvenient pedestrian access in some areas
- Limited light industrial development area and potential
- Intrusive and potentially hazardous traffic conditions
- Limits on home based occupations

***NW Connecticut Council
of Governments 2008
Plan Recommendations***

- Encourage efforts to provide affordable housing.
- Encourage the use of accessory apartments as part of an overall effort to increase affordable housing.
- ...recognize the importance of small, home based businesses to the local economy.
- Encourage increased support for local tourist businesses and home based businesses.
- Support regional economic development efforts.

***Statutory Growth
Management Principles***

- Redevelopment and revitalization of commercial centers and areas of mixed land uses with existing or planned physical infrastructure.
- Expansion of housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs.
- Concentration of development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options and land reuse.

Appendix B provides maps from the Connecticut DOT Route 7 Scenic Corridor Plan illustrating a potential Village Center build-out scenario that incorporates these concepts. Additionally, Appendix B provides a series of illustrations of the physical layout of the Kent Village Center, which may be used to help design and coordinate future improvements.

Other physical and structural improvements that are necessary to enhance the economic environment of Kent Village include pedestrian access, sidewalk and road improvements or additions, and better signage throughout the Village Center. Such improvements should be integrated into development plans where possible, in conformance with ARB standards. The Town should consider the recommended improvements in its capital improvement planning as appropriate.

Legislation adopted in the October 2011 Special Session of the State General Assembly includes additional financial support specifically for small town economic development. The Kent EDC, or other Town officials, should pursue this and other potential funding to support structural and aesthetic improvements in the Village Center.

The Town should initiate a study of traffic, existing road conditions, and improvement options and request DOT consideration of improvements within the State highway right of way such as traffic calming measures, alternative parking options, safe pedestrian crossings, and bicycle lanes. The Town should monitor and, whenever possible, ensure that Kent's interests and concerns are represented in future planning for State highway improvements by the Transportation Strategy Board and the State DOT.

The PZC should provide Village Commercial standards and incentives to promote open space, public infrastructure improvements, shared parking and parking access, interconnecting pedestrian access, and other public benefits. Incentives might include increased coverage, reduced parking, reduced fees, and relaxed signage standards.

Kent officials and businesses have been leaders in recent efforts to promote economic vitality in Kent and regionally. This has included the Northwestern Connecticut Regional Planning Collaborative ("RPC") Village Center Economic Development Initiative ("Village Initiative"), designed to promote the individual village centers in northwestern Connecticut as well as promote economic collaboration among towns.

As one of the most prominent and accessible of the region's village centers, Kent Village is well-positioned to benefit from these efforts. The Town should continue to support and participate in the Village Initiative program and other regional economic development activities.

The regional Village Initiative includes an informational and directional signage plan that includes prospective sites in Kent for gateway welcoming signs and an informational kiosk. The kiosk would be located in the Village Center and would include information about shopping and amenities as well as promotion of museums, recreational opportunities, and events throughout Kent. If pending funding is received, the Town should work with the RPC to finalize sign locations and installation.

The Town should also support the Streetscape Improvement planning currently in progress by local volunteers, which is evaluating removal of utility poles and wires, improved sidewalks, landscaping, and stormwater infrastructure.

Additionally, the Town should prepare plans for ensuring that adequate overflow parking is available for special events and Village Center activities. The Kent Volunteer Fire Department should be approached to discuss the use of available parking on the Emergency Service site and access to existing municipal parking should be facilitated with signage and pedestrian access. Such planning can help minimize the total area of the Village that is committed to vehicle parking.

This Plan proposes consideration of several significant projects and actions pertaining to the future of Kent's Village Center, including connector roads, visitor center, utility facilities, open space acquisition, pedestrian enhancements, and more. The Town should undertake a comprehensive planning study of these and other options for enhancing the important contributions of the Village Center to the character and vitality of the entire Town.

Main Street Investment – PA 11-1

Projects eligible for funding under the Main Street Investment Fund will develop or improve commercial centers to

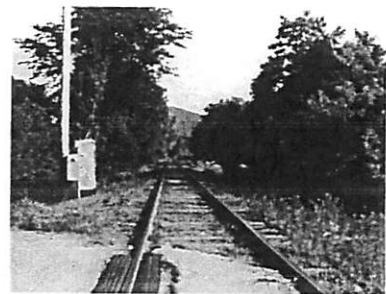
- (1) attract small business,
- (2) promote commercial viability, and
- (3) improve aesthetics and pedestrian access.

An effort is underway to reestablish passenger rail service on the Housatonic line. While such service would bring potential benefits to Kent residents and businesses, Kent must carefully monitor rail service developments. The Town must ensure that locations and management of physical developments, such as parking areas, rail stations, and grade crossings properly consider pedestrian access, safety, traffic impacts, aesthetic impacts, and other Village Center goals.

The Board of Selectmen should recruit and appoint a task group to work with the Department of Public Works, the PZC, the Kent Chamber of Commerce, and other potential stakeholders to develop and promote the Town's preferences for development and implementation of additional rail service through Kent.

Other commercial uses along Route 7, outside of the established commercial zones, have continued while avoiding the creation of sprawling strip developments. Kent should ensure that future uses and improvements of such properties continue to be consistent with the overall goal of retaining Kent's New England small town character, with special consideration for protection of the northern gateway to the Village. The open fields surrounding and within the Village Center are of prime concern for the Town's rural and scenic character.

The PZC should closely monitor the Bulls Bridge area and develop plans to coordinate future development and uses with existing conditions. In particular, the Town should work with the Connecticut DOT and DEEP and the Connecticut Light and Power Company and First Light Hydro Generating Company to properly maintain the area and accommodate the various commercial and recreational uses, including safe and convenient pedestrian access.



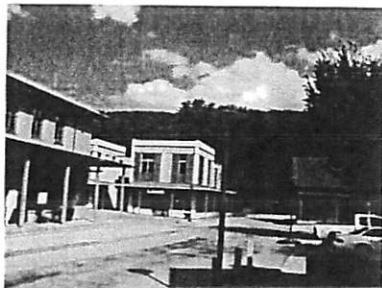
Industrial District

The established Industrial District has historically been limited to a few specified industrial uses and has been underused. The pending extension of the sewer service to the Industrial Zone will expand development opportunities and the existing rail service offers another transportation option that may be attractive to developers and businesses. The Town should continue to support enhancements of infrastructure improvements including the sewer extension project and private efforts to install three-phase electrical service and provide access to the existing rail line.

The PZC will review the existing zoning regulations and monitor conditions in the Industrial District. As determined appropriate, the PZC will consider revising the permitted uses and standards to encourage future economic activity. Such changes, including the possible street connection to Kent Green, may increase the potential for new developments and uses of the Industrial District properties. The PZC should monitor development trends in the Industrial District to determine if expansion of the District boundaries is appropriate.

Community Development – Implementation

- Board of Selectmen
- Board of Finance
- Planning and Zoning Commission
- Historic District Commission
- Economic Development Commission
- Conservation Commission
- Chamber of Commerce
- Department of Public Works
- Sewer Commission
- NW Connecticut Council of Governments
- Northwestern Connecticut Regional Planning Collaborative



Other Economic Opportunities

Kent Occupation Categories (2000)

Management, Professional	590
Service	213
Sales and Office	389
Farming, Fishing, Forestry	5
Construction, Extraction, Maintenance	144
Production, Transportation	169

Source: US Census 2000

Eco-tourism, agri-tourism, entertainment events, and commercial recreational activities are all potential economic opportunities for Kent. Town officials and businesses should cooperate with and assist the public museums, events, and other cultural assets that contribute to the Town's social and economic vitality.

Kent's land-use standards should evaluate current regulations for home occupation uses in residential districts and monitor such uses as well as possible additional home based commercial uses that may be accommodated with proper safeguards for neighborhoods.

Adequate access to telecommunications services and broadband infrastructure is necessary for business to develop, grow, and compete. The Town should support enhancement of these services whenever possible. However, the Town should carefully evaluate proposed locations and siting of telecommunications towers or other major facilities to prevent or mitigate environmental and scenic impacts.

Kent benefits from the presence of several private schools that attract students and visitors from all over the world. The schools also constitute a cultural presence that enhances the community. The Town should continue to cooperate with and seek appropriate partnerships with these private schools to advance mutually compatible goals.



Economic Development Commission

To implement Kent's economic development goals, the Town should establish and support an Economic Development Commission (EDC) which would be responsible for identifying, together with the Planning and Zoning Commission, prime economic development opportunities, recruiting businesses, providing support and local input to grant and other funding applications, and coordinating with regional economic development activities. The EDC would be expected to collaborate and cooperate with the Kent Chamber of Commerce.

A pending program of the Regional Planning Collaborative's Village Initiative intends to provide organizational and technical support to local economic development functions. Kent should take advantage of this program. The EDC should specifically work with the Village Initiative to market business opportunities in Kent Village, focusing first on filling vacant commercial spaces.

The EDC should monitor vacancy rates and other conditions in the Industrial District and identify development priorities, such as medical facilities, hospitality facilities, and light manufacturing or industrial activities appropriate for the Industrial District. The EDC should also identify and, if qualifying sites are located, apply for brownfield remediation funding.

The EDC should evaluate and recommend regulatory incentives to promote development of necessary professional services, including expedited land use approvals and alternative development standards that encourage medical, legal, and financial businesses.

The EDC should also evaluate the potential for enhancing the business environment in Kent through the application of tax incentives as authorized by Connecticut General Statutes.

As discussed in the previous section, Kent is vulnerable to potential impacts, including economic impacts, from development activities beyond its borders. The EDC should monitor major regional development projects to identify and respond to potential economic impacts on Kent businesses. This should include establishing communications with officials and business interests throughout northwest Connecticut and in Dutchess County, New York.

CGS §7-136: Economic Development Commissions

- Conduct research into the economic conditions and trends in its municipality.
- Make recommendations to appropriate officials and agencies of its municipality regarding action to improve its economic condition and development.
- Seek to coordinate the activities of and cooperate with unofficial bodies organized to promote such economic development.
- Advertise and prepare, print and distribute books, maps, charts and pamphlets.

Kent Housing Characteristics

	2000	2010
Occupied Units	1,143	1,246
Owner Occupied	836	907
Renter Occupied	307	339
Average Household Size	2.43	2.25
% Single Occupant	28.3	30.8

Source: US Census

CGS §8-18

Conservation design subdivisions (statutory "Cluster development") means a building pattern concentrating units on a particular portion of a parcel so that at least one-third of the parcel remains as open space to be used exclusively for recreational, conservation and agricultural purposes...

Kent Housing Sales

Year	# of Sales	Median Price
1990	74	\$148,500
2000	110	\$205,000
2005	93	\$346,800
2008	59	\$310,000
2010	49	\$250,000

Source: The Warren Group 2011

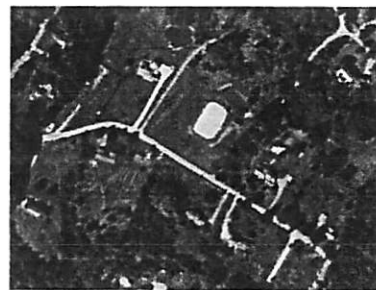
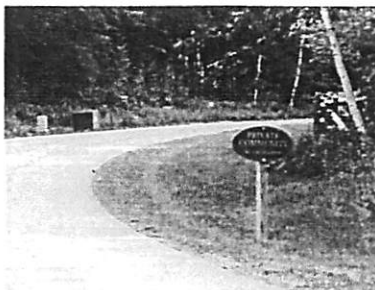
Residential Housing Development

The large amount of available and developable land in Kent indicates that further development of residential subdivisions is inevitable (see map Page 12 and Appendix C), but the Town can prepare for and minimize the potential impacts of such developments.

As discussed in the previous section, Kent will evaluate and adopt low impact and other regulatory standards to minimize environmental and ecological impacts of development.

The PZC will evaluate statutory options, recent development trends, and the Kent Build-Out Analysis (Appendix C) to identify potential improvements to residential development regulations consistent with the objectives of this Plan. This review will include consideration of mandating cluster type (conservation design) development in specified rural residential areas.

Many Connecticut towns have required conservation design subdivisions, most commonly based on the size of the property or the number of lots proposed. Other factors may include the location of the subdivision relative to priority conservation targets or other resources (see Future Land Use Plan discussion, below). Regulations could provide that conservation style subdivisions be permitted by right, subject to regulatory standards.



Housing Diversity

The high cost of housing precludes many from living in Kent, threatening the long term social and economic vitality of the community. Several statutory options (see sidebar) are available to Connecticut municipalities to encourage or facilitate the availability of housing that can be afforded by working families, seniors on fixed incomes, and young people just starting out.

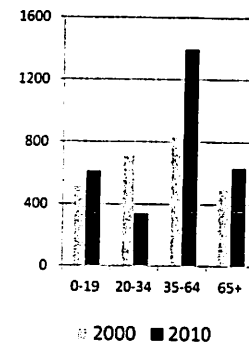
Additionally, lower cost housing options such as rental units are very limited in Kent. It is important, therefore, to closely monitor housing conditions and pursue strategies to address these and other related issues.

Kent has already employed some of the statutory tools to promote housing options, including special zoning regulations for town-sponsored affordable housing. The PZC and other Town agencies should continue to evaluate options for promoting affordable housing. Considerations include zoning standards for conversion of single family to multifamily residences, standards for creation of accessory apartments, and mixed-use development options in the Town's commercial and industrial areas.

The *Natural and Rural Heritage* section of this Plan calls for regulations to provide that agricultural activities and accessory uses are permitted as of right in the rural residential areas. The PZC should consider providing additional flexibility for farm worker housing, such as allowing more than one accessory apartment and permitting use of temporary or mobile housing on any active farm property.

Kent Village Housing for the Elderly, a long standing partner with the Town, is a major housing resource providing subsidized, low cost housing for elders in Kent. The Town receives annual reimbursement from the State for a tax abatement agreement set up for the KVHE-owned Templeton Farm, and has collaborated with KVHE on two Small Cities Block Grants. Through support and advocacy for ongoing funding, the Town should continue to support Templeton Farm in its efforts to maintain the 24c unit facility as a housing option for low to moderate income elders.

Kent's Changing Age Composition



Affordable Housing – Statutory Options

- §8-19(b) – exempt first subdivision lot if restricted as affordable
- §8-25 – do not require open space if 20% of subdivision restricted as affordable
- §8-2g – exemption from density limits for affordable housing
- §8-2i – inclusionary zoning incentives for affordable housing
- Chapter 124b – Incentive Housing Zones

To support these efforts, the Town should create a permanent housing oversight group, as recommended in the 1989 Plan and 2001 update. Tasks for this oversight group would include, but not be limited to, the undertaking of a survey to determine Kent's moderate and lower cost rental and home ownership needs and to investigate what inclusionary zoning regulations could be adopted. Kent should also consider collaboration with neighboring towns on efforts to provide additional affordable and senior housing.

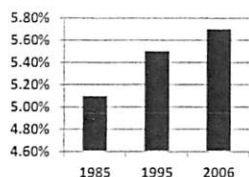
Future Land Use Plan

The Planning Overview map on Page 31, while general and schematic in nature, illustrates areas of the Town approximately delineated by their contribution to the Town's rural character. The protected open space coupled with the Horizonline Overlay Zone represent areas of significant natural and scenic value that are already protected or regulated.

However, large areas of Kent, delineated on the map as Forest and Ridge Preservation and Farm and Forest Preservation areas, include significant rural assets that are protected only by existing zoning, wetlands, and subdivision standards. These areas encompass large undeveloped or underdeveloped property parcels (see also map page 12), which are, therefore, candidates for large scale residential development, within the respective preservation areas.

The PZC and the Conservation Commission should review and refine these preservation area delineations based on the Kent Riches report, the Kent Build-Out Analysis, and the updated Open Space Plan to guide future land use controls.

Developed Land in Kent - % of Town Land Area



Source: CLEAR

Land Use Regulations – Retain and/or Improve

- Village District
- Conservation Subdivisions
- Open Space Priorities
- Parking and Lighting
- Industrial and Commercial District Uses
- Home Occupations
- Accessory Apartments and Adaptive Reuse



The Planning Overview Map also highlights key Plan land use objectives, based generally on applicable locations in Town. However, these objectives may apply at various locations or throughout the entire Town.

All of the Town's land use regulations will be reviewed to ensure they are up to date and take advantage of all of the protections authorized by Connecticut General Statutes. In particular, the PZC should consider requiring conservation subdivision design concepts in the designated preservation areas.

As noted above, the PZC will continue to monitor commercial activities around Bulls Bridge and along Route 7 to ensure that such uses remain compatible with surrounding properties and the overall goals of this Plan.

This Plan also supports the general zoning plan for the Town, as currently delineated on the Zoning Map (Appendix E), with revisions as appropriate based on the recommendations of this Plan.



Community Development Goals - Summary

Immediate Actions

1. Provide in zoning regulations that new development or redevelopment in the Village Center incorporates master planning.
2. Undertake a comprehensive planning study of infrastructure needs and options, open space acquisition, municipal and other public facilities, vehicle and pedestrian traffic management, and other factors to guide the future development of the Village Center.
3. Work with the Regional Planning Collaborative to install Village Center directional and informational signage.
4. Initiate a study of traffic, existing road conditions, and improvement options on Route 7 through the Village Center and request DOT consideration of improvements.
5. Establish and support an Economic Development Commission.
6. Create a permanent housing oversight group.
7. Work with private property owners to design and incorporate into future development plans and Town capital improvement plans a Main Street bypass road connecting the Kent Green shopping area to Maple Street and the Industrial District (see also Community Needs section).

Near Term Actions

8. Provide incentives in zoning regulations to provide open spaces, public infrastructure improvements, shared parking and parking access, interconnecting pedestrian access, and other public benefits.
9. Review Village Center and Village Commercial District zoning regulations to address economic development opportunities, including consideration of commercial district boundaries, additional permitted uses, and allowing more permitted uses by site plan approval.
10. Review statutory options, the Kent Build-Out Analysis (Appendix C), and recent development trends to identify potential improvement to residential development regulations including mandated conservation developments in specified rural residential areas.
11. Review the existing zoning regulations for the Industrial District and consider adding to the permitted uses to include commercial, professional, medical, and mixed uses.
12. Develop plans and work with other interests to coordinate future development and uses with existing conditions in the Bulls Bridge area.
13. Revise zoning and subdivision regulations to require application of state-of-the-art low impact development and storm water management techniques.
14. Identify and promote the Town's preferences for development and implementation of additional rail service.
15. Evaluate regulatory revisions to promote more affordable housing opportunities in Kent.

Evaluation for Future Action

16. Consider necessary public improvements to Village Center infrastructure and include in future municipal capital plans and grant proposals as appropriate.
17. Prepare plans for ensuring that adequate overflow parking is available for special events and Village Center activities.
18. Evaluate the commercial potential for additional professional services and identify appropriate regulatory revisions to encourage such uses.
19. Monitor use and development trends in the Industrial District and evaluate potential expansion of District boundaries as warranted.

20. Evaluate regulations controlling home occupation uses and monitor such uses for possible regulatory improvements.
21. Review and refine preservation area priorities and delineations, consider requiring conservation subdivision designs in designated preservation areas.

Continuing Policies

22. Support and participate in regional economic development activities including the Regional Planning Collaborative's Village Center Economic Development Initiative.
23. Support the private Streetscape Improvement project.
24. Ensure that future uses and improvements of commercial use properties outside of commercial and industrial districts continue to be consistent with the overall goal of retaining Kent's New England village character.
25. Support and consult regularly with the Architectural Review Board.
26. Continue to support the sewer extension project and enhancements to rail and utility services to support the Industrial District.
27. Support enhancement and improvement of telecommunications services.
28. Cooperate with and assist the public museums, events, and other cultural assets that contribute to the Town's social and economic vitality.
29. Cooperate and seek partnerships with private schools in Kent to advance mutually compatible goals.
30. Monitor major regional development projects to identify and respond to potential economic impacts on Kent businesses.
31. Continue to support Templeton Farm in its efforts to maintain the 24c unit facility as a housing option for low to moderate income elders.

Draft and notes for some revisions to 2012 Kent POCD
Virginia Bush Suttman, February 2021

Introductory remarks:

The task of writing the POCD for 2022 is a big, daunting job and a long-term project. The previous version needs fresh thinking rather than small tweaks and updates. It is characterized by language that—in my opinion—tends towards generalizations, repetition and consultant-speak (monitor, evaluate, consider). It seems to need less formal and more specific wording to make it easy to read.

I have no background in land analysis or land use, but I have written and edited information essays for most of my life, and worked in affordable housing for nearly twenty years. I offer here some revisions: at the beginning, on the housing section, and on the overall 2012 POCD. This is a 4th draft, and it became impossible to track all changes in red. A few comments to the text are highlighted in yellow. This draft can certainly be changed and improved by others, and I am willing to do more in other sections.

Pp. 1- 6 are an overall introduction that supposedly covers both conservation and development, but perhaps could balance that discussion better. There may be a sense that the two elements are at odds with each other, and certainly the conservation side is more stressed in this whole report—probably due to the devotion of the Conservation Commission and the extensive use of their previous report. The open spaces and rural beauties of Kent contribute to the economic strengths of the town through visitors and residents, but smart development (constructed and online) also help conserve the environment and the global climate.

The PZC has a restrictive mission to say what cannot be built or changed in Kent. It shares that conservation and preservation responsibility with the Conservation Commission, Land Trusts and the Architectural Review Board. However, the entities that bear responsibility for positive and responsible development should have input, including the Chamber of Commerce and the Streetscape Committee, and new Economic Development and Housing Oversight groups that should be created.

Who receives the final report? State, Town, NW Council of Governments?

Page 19: GUIDE TO OUR COMMUNITY'S DEVELOPMENT

NOTE: Recommended actions are summarized in a table at the end of the section. However, I believe those summaries are unnecessary, as discussed below. And the underlining distracts from the ease of reading. This report was written in the midst of climate and housing crises, and pandemic and economic inequality challenges, and parts of the plan reflect those issues. Internet access needs to be improved in some areas too.

Kent PZC will work to integrate future development into existing neighborhoods and the community at large in order to promote sustainable economic health. A community depends on its people, who pay taxes, which support town government and services, and infrastructure. Businesses provide jobs as well as taxes and promote tourism. State and federal financial contributions both help with some of these, and have requirements in return. Variety in the housing stock, in terms of size, style, and promote an economically diverse and socially strong community. This Plan addresses the related needs and

opportunities for economic activity and housing availability, as well as the challenges to community character and existing neighborhoods that new development and growth inevitably bring.

Kent's Village Center is the economic hub of the community, and this Plan continues the policies of strengthening the Village as the Town's economic, cultural, civic, and social center. Future development will be guided not only by the small town character priorities defined in this Plan, but also by the need to provide goods and services, local jobs, and tax base that are critical to the Town's economic health.

Important economic assets that the Town should continue to strengthen are its Industrial District, home-based entrepreneurship, specialty agriculture, private schools, and tourism. Those come next PP 20-26 and can also be reviewed for language.

p. 27 Residential Housing Development

The large amount of available and developable land in Kent indicates that further development of residential subdivisions is inevitable (Appendix C), but the Town adopt low ecological impact and other regulatory standards to minimize negative environmental impacts of development and stress positive ones.

The PZC will evaluate statutory options, recent development trends, and the Kent Build-Out Analysis (Appendix C) to identify potential improvements to residential development regulations consistent with the objectives of this Plan. This review will consider mandating conservation design development (cluster development) in specified rural residential areas, including individual houses, as well as subdivisions Isn't some of this done in 2020 regs?

CT General Statutes GS §8-18 defines conservation design subdivisions ("Cluster development") as units concentrated on a parcel so that at least one-third of the parcel remains as open space to be used exclusively for recreational, conservation and agricultural purposes. Other factors may include the location of the subdivision relative to priority conservation targets or other resources (see Future Land Use Plan discussion, below). Regulations could provide that conservation design subdivisions be permitted by right, subject to regulatory standards.

pp. 28-29 Housing Diversity

It is important to pursue strategies that support the development of affordable housing. The high cost of housing prevents many different people from living in Kent, threatening the long term social and economic vitality of the community. More than a quarter of the homes in Kent are seasonal or second residences. In addition, lower-cost housing options, such as rental units, are very limited in Kent. Rental units are preferred to home ownership for many reasons, including job mobility, cost, size, and location.

Affordable housing is defined as homes that cost their occupants no more than 30% of family income. The state has passed legislation (Statute 8-30g) that any of its 169 communities that do not possess 10% deed-restricted affordable housing may be forced to waive local zoning regulations for developers who include 3 of 10 affordable units, as long as the construction meets health and safety standards. In 2019 only 30 municipalities met this regulation, but it is still on the books. Kent's average affordable housing, including Templeton Farm (see below) is 4.02%.

Connecticut also has several statutory options that encourage Connecticut municipalities to facilitate the availability of homes that can be afforded by working families, seniors on fixed incomes, and young people just starting out:

§8-19(b) – exempt first subdivision lot if restricted as affordable –
§8-25 – do not require open space if 20% of subdivision restricted as affordable –
§8-2g – exemption from density limits for affordable housing –
§8-2i – inclusionary zoning incentives for affordable housing –
Chapter 124b – Incentive Housing Zones provide additional affordable and senior housing

The PZC and other Town agencies should continue to evaluate ways to promote affordable housing. Kent already has some of the statutory tools to promote housing options, including special zoning regulations for town: the Village Housing Overlay District and Village Mixed Use Overlay District (sec. 3400 and 3500) Other options include zoning standards for conversion of single family to multifamily residences, encouragement for creation of accessory apartments, and mixed-use in the Town's commercial and industrial areas.

Since the 1970s Kent Village Housing for the Elderly (Templeton Farm), a long standing partner with the Town, provides 24 subsidized rental apartments for elders in Kent. The Town receives annual reimbursement from the State for a tax abatement agreement set up for Templeton Farm, and has collaborated with them on two Small Cities Block Grants.

Kent Affordable Housing, Inc. (KAH) a non-profit volunteer organization, has for three decades pursued a mission to develop and manage housing options in town, and should be given strong support. In 2003 KAH opened South Common, which provides 24 affordable rental apartments, and since 2010 it has built Stuart Farm Apartments, which provides 13 affordable rentals. Both complexes were developed with federal financing, town tax abatements and community contributions. Through the town of Kent South Common has recently been awarded a Small Cities Block Grant for safety repairs and environmental upgrades.

The Natural and Rural Heritage section of this Plan calls for regulations to provide that agricultural activities and accessory uses are permitted as of right in the rural residential areas. The PZC should consider providing additional flexibility for farm worker housing, such as allowing more than one accessory apartment and permitting use of temporary or mobile housing on any active farm property.

To support these efforts, the Town should create a permanent Housing Oversight group, as has been recommended since the 1989 COPD Plan and 2001 update. Tasks for this oversight group would include but not be limited to:

1. Create, in conjunction with the PZC and other community groups, the town's plan for affordable housing development, due by state mandated by (8-30j) in mid- 2022.
2. Search for ways to realize the proposed Incentive Housing Zone Report of 2016 for the field south of Town Hall, now authorized in PZC Regulations 3400 and 3500 (Village Housing Overlay District and the Village Mixed Use Overlay District). I cannot find these on any zoning map. If they are the same as the R1, R2 and C, that needs to be said.
3. Analyze the Buildout Study in Appendix C to seek additional land for affordable housing. The town presently owns no appropriate properties for such development.
4. Kent should also consider collaboration with neighboring towns on efforts to provide additional affordable and senior housing. (?? Very hard to do that—don't think it ever has been)

pp. 29-30 Future Land Use Plan

A chart from in Appendix C shows that the developed land in Kent has increased from 5.10% in 2006 to 5.70% in 2006 (this is now a side bar. current numbers?) The Planning Overview map on Page 31 schematically shows areas of the Town that contribute to the Town's rural character. The preserved open space, coupled with the Horizon Overlay Zone, represent areas of significant natural and scenic value that are already protected or regulated. However, the areas shown on the map as Forest and Ridge Preservation and Farm and Forest Preservation areas (red and green) include significant rural assets that are protected only by existing zoning, wetlands, and subdivision standards. These areas include large undeveloped or underdeveloped property parcels (~~see also map page 12~~ Not there.), that are candidates for large scale residential development.

The PZC and the Conservation Commission should review and refine these preservation areas based on the Kent Riches report, the Kent Build-Out Analysis, and the updated Open Space Plan to guide future land use controls.

The Planning Overview Map also shows boxes pointing to areas where desired protections and enhancements (such as? Define or mention some??) are desirable. To take advantage of all of the protections authorized by Connecticut General Statutes (which ones?), the PZC will review Kent regulations to encourage conservation subdivision design in these areas, and to assure that commercial activities around Bulls Bridge and along Route 7 remain compatible with surrounding properties, the overall goals of this Plan, and the Town Zoning Map (Appendix E)

These side bars float, and the various elements could be headings for detailed treatment elsewhere

Land Use Regulations –
Retain and/or Improve

- Village District
- Conservation Subdivisions
- Open Space Priorities
- Parking and Lighting
- Industrial and Commercial District Uses
- Home Occupations
- Accessory Apartments and Adaptive Reuse

There is nothing positive here on additional land for development. Would it be possible to discuss some areas where more development would be desirable? If there's going to be enough housing diversity, it has to go somewhere. Development in the Village Overlay and Mixed Use Overlay Zones are good, but are they going to be sufficient?? And will they happen??



Donna Hayes <landuseadmin@townofkentct.org>

Climate Language1 message

David Birnbaum <davidb@chelsea.net>

Fri, Feb 19, 2021 at 4:55 PM

To: Donna Hayes <landuseadmin@townofkentct.org>, Matthew Winter <mawinter06757@gmail.com>

Here's a very rough first pass, trying to use similar language/structure to what's there:

Kent believes that climate change will negatively impact the healthy environment and rural character of the town as the pace of change accelerates. Avoiding a catastrophic change requires action at every level of government, and the town should do its part to avoid the worst case scenarios currently forecast by the scientific community. The local government should investigate zoning changes, statues, and construction requirements to encourage architectural and engineering designs that are carbon neutral or carbon negative.

Construction, development, and farming all contribute substantial greenhouse emissions as well, but are an essential part of the Kent community and as such cannot be stopped. Progressive towns and cities around the country and the world are finding new ways to decarbonize these sectors of the economy through grants, loans, and other forms of financial incentive. Kent may want to consider a carbon tax that can be used to assist the process of making these industries carbon neutral by support innovation and allowing those sectors to offset their carbon emissions though other entities.

Carbon emissions don't end at the border with Kent, which means broader coordination will be necessary. The town should also work with neighboring townships (through NHCOC, WestCOG, and similar organizations) and the local power grid producers and owners to incentivize green power sources like solar, wind, hydro, and power-storage options, and ensure the growing national fleet of electric cars have charging stations, hydrogen fueling stations, and other technologies as they become available. A consistent approach to siting and regulating these entities will help accelerate public and private investment and ensure transportation deserts don't stymie efforts to migrate away from fossil-fuel powered vehicles.

As broader national programs become available, Kent should make sure it is positioned to participate financially and logistically.

I found a lot of useful reading to inform this from the recent White House actions, and some interesting town-driven changes from this website as well:

<https://climate-xchange.org/2020/03/12/how-municipalities-are-playing-a-part-in-solving-the-climate-crisis/>

I looked at the websites for NHCOC and didn't see much on climate change (other than an acknowledgement that they really ought to get around to it at some point).

NWCCOC doesn't seem to exist anymore? At least maybe it has split into the above entities.

Let me know if you think this is on track and I should enhance a bit, or if it doesn't ring true.

Have a nice weekend,

David.