

Nov. 20, 2024
Policy Board



CONNECT CAPITOL REGION

2024 Plan of Conservation and Development

DRAFT October 30, 2024



Today:

1. Brief Staff Presentation
2. Action requested: Resolution to Adopt the Plan



Brief Background



Regional POCD

State Statutes

- CGS 8-35a
- Prepare at least once every 10 years
- Procedural & notice requirements

CRCOG

- Bylaws:
 - Charge Regional Planning Commission (RPC) with “development and maintenance” of POCD
- RPC refers to Policy Board for Adoption

How We Use It

- Referrals
- Letters of support (grant applications)
- Our own grant applications
- CRCOG workplan

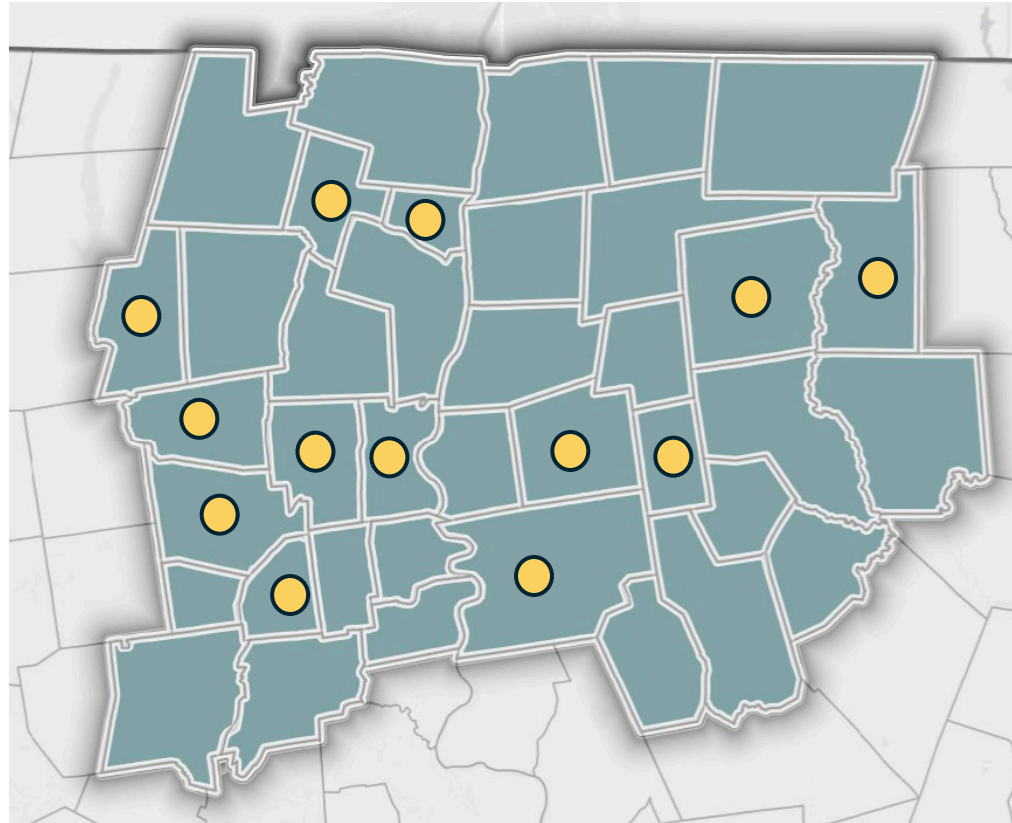
Technical Advisory Committee

Who

- 18 city / town planners
- Representing 13 municipalities

What

- Input and advice
- Review initial themes, goals, and strategies



Public Engagement

- Online Survey
- SWOT at Events
- Table Talk
- Technical Focus Groups
 - Housing
 - Environment
 - Governance
- Public comment period and public hearing
- Details in POCD Appendix



Public Engagement

- **Governance** improvements could strengthen our region.
- **Community** is a regional strength.
- People value **social places**, yet few social spaces exist.
- Residents seek more **things to do**.



Key Findings

- Most are satisfied with local **amenities** and want to live in areas with amenities.
- We've made progress with **public transportation**, but car reliance remains high.
- Many want **walkable, bicycle-friendly** neighborhoods.



- **Sustainability** innovations are important.
- Division over whether we have enough **housing diversity**, yet issue of **affordability** is acknowledged.
- People want to maintain the Region's high **quality of life**.



2024 POCD



Vision

“We all will work together to build communities of **choice, opportunity, and belonging.**”



Themes

Cultivate a Green and Resilient Future

Develop a Competitive and Inclusive Regional Economy

Reform Outdated “Steady Habits” in Our Institutions and Governance

Invest in Transportation Options for Every Journey

Expand and Diversify the Region’s Housing Stock

Chapter 5

Cultivate a Green and Resilient Future

Throughout the last decade, climate change has exacerbated regional environmental issues and exposed vulnerabilities of our built infrastructure. Climate change impacts are linked to increased flooding, higher incidence of invasive species, extended periods of excessive heat, and inconsistent water supply in the region. Flooding from heavy rainfall resulted in a loss of nearly \$21 million in agricultural sales due to damaged crops in 2023. Invasive species jeopardize forest health and native species abundance. Excessive heat contributes to heat-island effects in urban areas, increasing climate-related health risks in vulnerable communities.



Key Considerations

Public outreach identified the environment, sustainability, and open space as key areas of interest...

...and these topics resonate in our cities as well as our small towns and countryside.

New mandates and regulations – opportunities for assistance and regional approaches.

Heightened importance of open space post-pandemic.

Climate change impacts are tangible.

Need for a sustainable regional food system for all people, regardless of income and location.

Cultivate a Green & Resilient Future

Goals

1. Protect our region's natural resources and landscapes and minimize impacts from development and human activity.
2. Cultivate spaces that connect people to nature and their community.
3. Reduce regional gas emissions and adapt to climate change.
4. Improve the resiliency of the region.
5. Support a sustainable and equitable regional food system.



Cultivate a Green & Resilient Future

Sample of Strategies and Actions

- Identify cross-boundary or watershed-level issues and opportunities for collaboration, studies, and projects.
- Help municipalities implement stormwater MS4 requirements.
- Ensure that everyone in the region can access parks and open space.
- Encourage farm-friendly zoning regulations.
- Work with municipalities on reducing the amount of food in the waste stream.

Chapter 6

Develop a Competitive and Inclusive Regional Economy

The region is home to 577,510 jobs and approximately 36,000 employers, ranging from global or national corporations like Aetna (in Hartford) and Jackson Laboratory (in Farmington) to small, locally owned businesses. The region is also home to the state's international airport, which is a significant economic engine.



Key Considerations

We are now an officially designated Economic Development District – an opportunity for proactive economic development work.

Job growth has been stagnant – need to be proactive and capitalize on opportunities.

A strong region needs strong cities, competitive suburbs, and opportunities for economic development in rural areas.

Importance of place-making and third places – especially if we want to retain/attract young adults.

Develop a Competitive & Inclusive Regional Economy

Goals

1. Build regional economic development capacity and support.
2. Create a 24/7 Capital City.
3. Reimagine underutilized commercial districts as vibrant destinations.
4. Invest in the power of “fun,” placemaking, and third places.
5. Support economic development in the region’s rural communities.
6. Ensure growth occurs in areas with adequate utilities.
7. Ensure that our archeological and historic resources are preserved and celebrated.





Develop a Competitive & Inclusive Regional Economy

Sample of Strategies and Actions

- Conduct a study on municipal tax incentive deals in the region.
- Invest in the power of "fun," placemaking, and the importance of third places to retain young adults and fuel social and economic prosperity.
- Continue efforts to re-establish and expand waterfront access.
- Proactively identify, regulate, and solicit alternative uses for underutilized office space.
- Prepare malls and legacy commercial corridors for the changing retail landscape.

Chapter 7

Reform Outdated “Steady Habits” in Our Institutions and Governance

Connecticut is commonly known as the “Land of Steady Habits”, referencing a culture and temperament that is slow to evolve. This characterization can be fairly applied to the Capitol Region. Connecticut has 169 towns, each with their own set of rules, regulations, governing bodies, infrastructure, and stakeholders. Many of our communities were established hundreds of years ago and operate under the same fundamental organization and governance models. Some aspects of our traditional government have served and still serve us well. But it also presents challenges.



Key Considerations

CRCOG communities widely vary in abilities and resources to meet emerging challenges and state mandates.

Cities and towns have limited options to fund public services.

CRCOG has had success with providing / facilitating shared services – opportunity to build.

Public input revealed sense of disconnection and distrust of government.

Reform Outdated “Steady Habits” in Our Institutions & Governance

Goals

1. Improve public service delivery through robust shared services and partnerships.
2. Create fiscally sustainable and equitable systems for funding public services.
3. Enhance the operational efficiency and effectiveness of local government operations.
4. Increase equitable community participation in local decision-making.



Reform Outdated “Steady Habits” in Our Institutions & Governance

Sample of Strategies and Actions

- Review and advocate for the reform of state statutes impeding regional cooperation.
- Reform the PILOT system.
- Help municipalities with operational best practices including succession planning.
- CRCOG should continue to build out its GIS and data capabilities.
- Look to interlocal or region-wide solutions for state-mandated boards and commissions.

Chapter 8

Invest in Transportation Options for Every Journey

The Capitol Region's transportation network is comprised of local roads, state routes, and the federal highway system, along with passenger and freight rail lines, ferry service, an international airport, and smaller, regional airports. This indispensable system connects us but also presents mobility limitations for many users.



Key Considerations

Public input emphasized our residents want and need more transportation options.

Recognition that our transportation system should support a stronger sense of place and identity.

Existing transportation system places burdens on us – greenhouse gases, equity issues, cost of car ownership, safety.

Opportunities to rethink our streets, especially with funding now available.

Invest in Transportation Options for Every Journey

Goals

1. Align transportation investments with land use, housing, and other development and place-making goals.
2. Expand transportation options for all users and purposes.
3. Address the burdens and costs of transportation.



Invest in Transportation Options for Every Journey

Sample of Strategies and Actions

- Prioritize transportation investments that support land use goals.
- Provide safe, appealing, and accessible walking and bicycling infrastructure.
- Track development in TOD corridors to assess growth and return on investment.
- Proactively plan for transit dependent older populations and transit supportive younger populations by providing resources and services for these populations.
- Prioritize the inclusion of safety improvements, particularly for vulnerable roadway users, into transportation projects, plans, and studies.

Chapter 9

Expand and Diversify the Region's Housing Stock



Key Considerations

Region (and all of CT) lags in housing production.

Frequent public comments on lack of affordable ownership opportunities and rent.

Greater recognition and acknowledgement of how historic land use decisions impacted minority communities.

Opportunities to increase housing supply in ways that respect and complement the variety of community types found in our region.

CTRail and CTfastrak offer opportunities to connect housing and transit.

Safe and adequate housing is a fundamental human need, and its provision impacts all aspects of our lives.

Expand & Diversify the Region's Housing Stock

Goals

1. Preserve the region's housing stock.
2. Diversify the region's housing stock.
3. Increase affordable housing in the region.
4. Build housing adjacent to transit.
5. Provide the region's vulnerable populations with a safe place to live.



Expand & Diversify the Region's Housing Stock

Sample of Strategies and Actions

- Preserve older housing units through repair, rehabilitation, and enforcement.
- Bring together stakeholders, including non-traditional stakeholders, on a regular basis to review progress, identify emerging needs and trends, and adjust strategies.
- Actively work to preserve affordability of units with expiring deed restrictions.
- Encourage light touch density in areas with supporting infrastructure.
- Explore targeted expansion of water and sewer infrastructure in rural areas to meet the need for affordable housing and new housing options

Policy Map

Suitable Development Areas

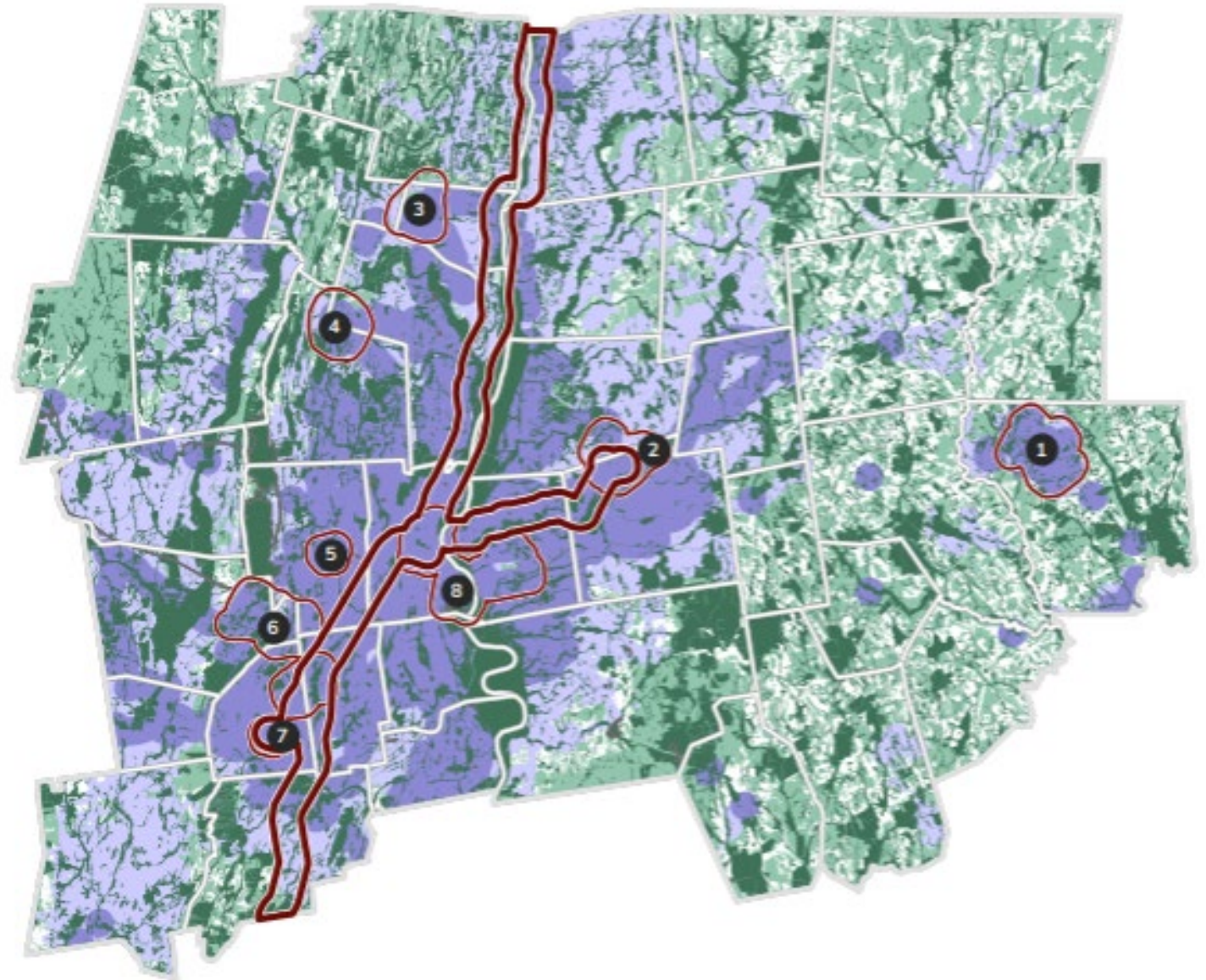
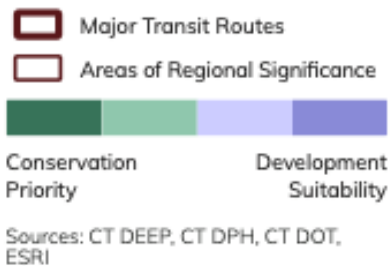
Areas of regional significance; served by water and / or sewer with a 1/4 mile buffer; transit, Hartford Line, & CTfastrak with a 1/2-mile buffer.

Priority Conservation Areas

High: 100-year floodplain, wetlands and water bodies, preserved open space.

Medium: steep slopes (greater than 15%); habitat, Aquifer Protection Areas.

- 1 UConn main campus
- 2 Buckland Hills Commercial Hub
- 3 Bradley International Airport
- 4 Day Hill Corporate Area / Blue Hills
- 5 West Hartford Center
- 6 Westfarms / UConn Health Center
- 7 Downtown New Britain
- 8 Downtown Hartford / East Hartford



Why Does the Plan Matter?

For CRCOG:

- Referrals
- When we apply for grants and discretionary funding
- CRCOG workplan

For You:

- Data and Information – region-wide, your community, your neighbors
- Support your efforts when you:
 - Apply for grants
 - Implement your own policy and planning initiatives
 - Advocate for change in your community or at the state level
- Conversation starter for topics that can be difficult to approach at the local level.
- Policy map can help justify local development and conservation decisions.

Timeline



May 22: Initial Presentation to Policy Board



June 19: Review updated draft with RPC



July: Post on-line mid-month for public review



September 19: RPC Public Hearing & approval



November: Policy Board approval



Post-Adoption: Implementation Plan, Annual Progress Reports