

Regional Plan Association

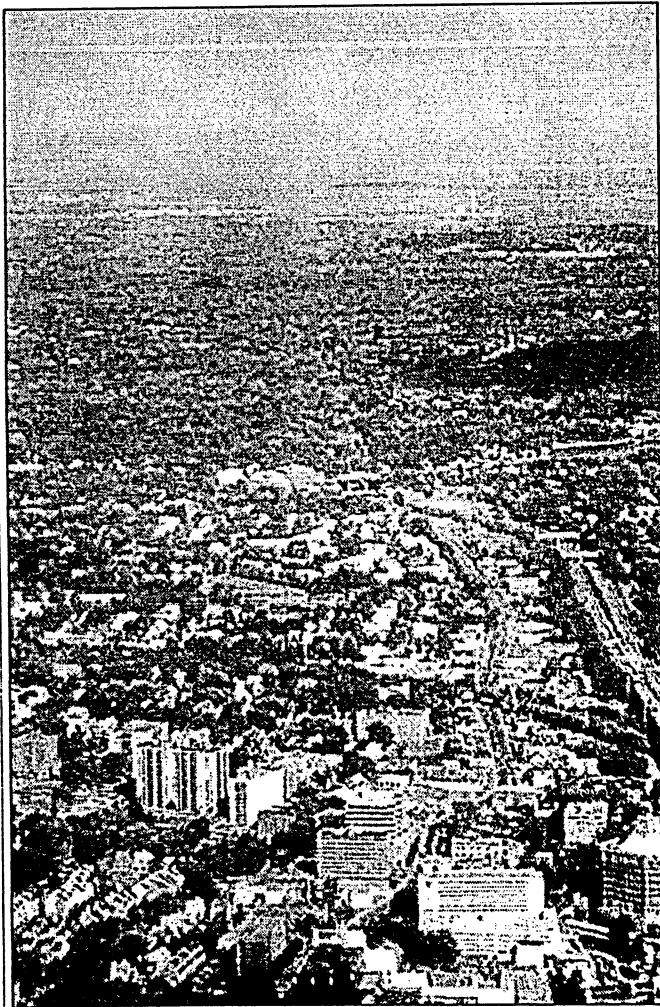
CT
NJ
NY

Attachment 2

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

Is Connecticut Sprawling?

May 21, 2002



*Prepared by Regional Plan Association for
The Connecticut Regional Institute for the 21st Century*

Table of Contents

	Page
Section I: Introduction	2
Section II: Sprawl in Connecticut: Findings of Trends and Facts	-
Sprawl	3
Land Consumption	3
Environmental Quality	4
Getting Around in Connecticut	4
Public Finance	5
Economic Segregation	5
Section III: Analysis and Next Steps	6
Recommendations for Action	7

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Is Connecticut Sprawling?

- New Jersey has conservation planning areas/specific policies
 - No mandate to comply
- Citizen watchdog organizations for smart growth have been formed in many states, including:
 - 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania
 - New Jersey Futures
 - 1000 Friends of Oregon

Common success factors in states with Smart Growth programs

- Sense of common destiny
 - Often spurred by a sense of crisis, such as water shortages in the case of Florida
- Threat of inaction
 - In Oregon it was a loss of farmland and resultant loss for the economy
- Strong leadership
 - Gubernatorial leadership is key
- Oversight by government and an independent watchdog group
 - A governmental body such as a hearing board as in the case of Washington
 - Nonprofit organizations to monitor and advocate for progress

What are the fundamental goals of smart growth policies?

- Efficient use of government resources
- Sustainable economic growth
- Transportation connectivity and mobility
- A sustainable and beneficial environment
- A high quality of life
- Access to opportunity for all income and ethnic groups
- A productive level of human equity

Smart Growth is not anti-growth, nor is it the enemy of suburban lifestyles. Smart growth is about increasing people's choices. It is the enemy of inefficient growth, air pollution, increased traffic congestion, degradation of neighborhoods, higher infrastructure costs, higher taxes and damage to environmentally sensitive areas.

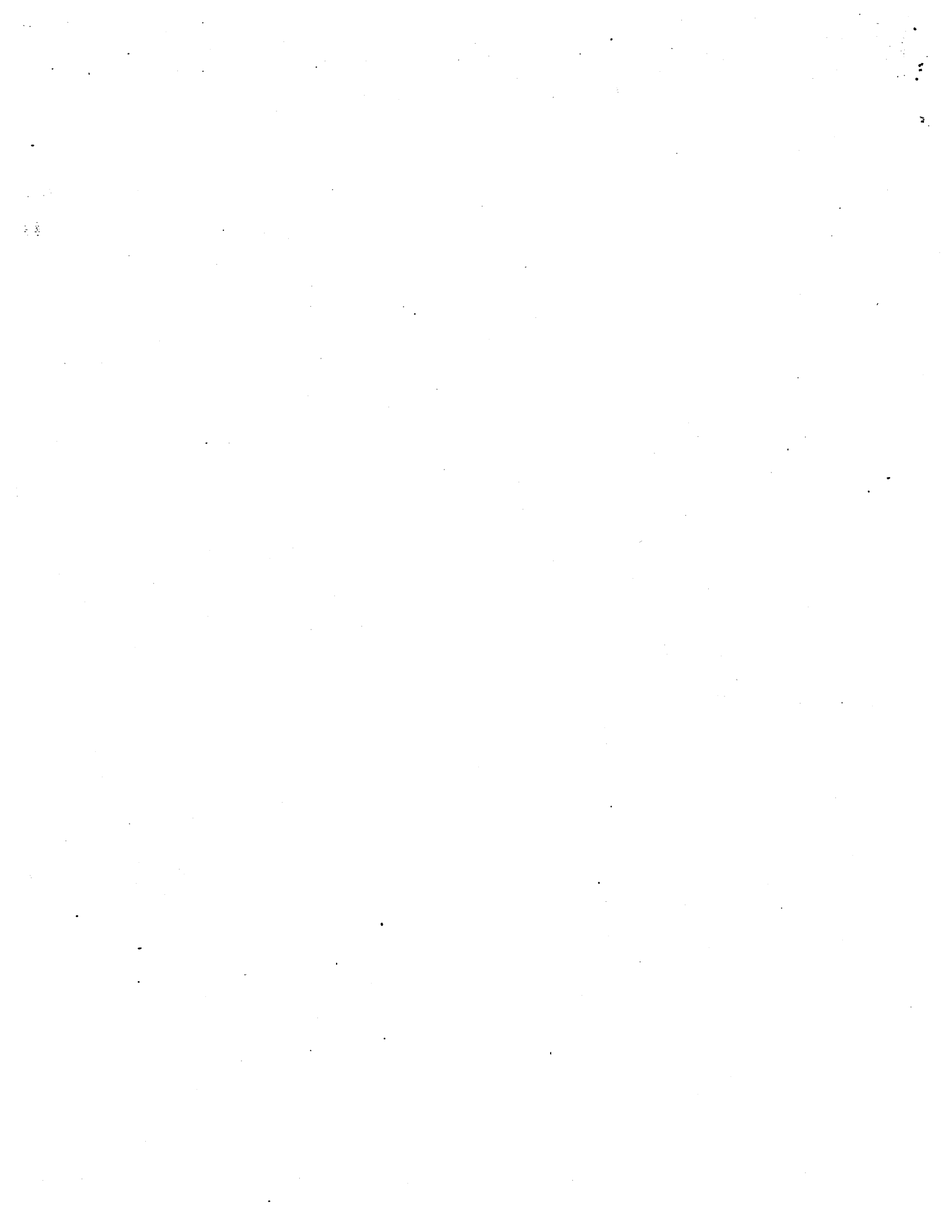
—David Crossley, Gulf Coast Institute

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION IN CONNECTICUT

- Bring the importance of land use planning to the attention of the public and opinion leaders
- Make growth forecasting tools widely available
 - A digital data base mapping system could analyze current land uses and assist future land use decisions
- Analyze what Connecticut would look like in 25, 35, 50 years
 - if the land use planning system is left unchanged
 - if smart growth principles are used
- Study the costs of sprawl
- Adopt incentive-based programs to coordinate local, regional and state land use planning
- Strengthen CT's economic development through the C&D plan

"Smart growth acknowledges what we have known all along. It all fits together like a puzzle. Jobs and transit. Transit and housing. Housing and schools. They are all interrelated and we must approach them as such."

—Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura



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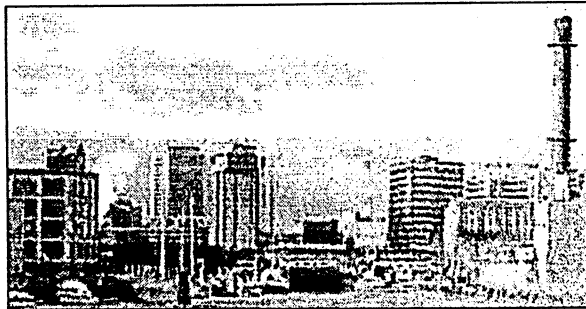
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Connecticut Incomes

- * According to the 2000 census, CT once again has the highest income per capita in the country (statistical dead heat with NJ, AK, and MD)
- * The 2001 estimated average household income ratios of New Haven, Bridgeport and Hartford to the average household income in their neighboring suburban towns is:
 - o New Haven: 1 to 1.52
 - o Bridgeport: 1 to 1.86
 - o Hartford: 1 to 1.86

Connecticut's Cities

- * Four of Connecticut's 5 largest cities lost population between 1990 and 2000
 - o Elsewhere: NYC grew by 9.4%; Boston by 7%; Portland, OR by 26%
- * CT's 3 largest cities rank among the lowest 8 towns in the state for per capita income
- * As of 1990, 59.9% of those below the poverty level lived in one of 10 CT cities with 25% of the total population
- * 76.4% of Hartford's occupied units and 68.1% of New Haven's are renter occupied
- * A full-time CT worker must earn \$16.45/hour to afford a 2 bedroom apartment
- * The state minimum wage is \$6.70/hour



SECTION III — ANALYSIS AND NEXT STEPS

What does all this mean and what can be done to improve our planning tools to help us understand what Connecticut will look like in the future?

Implications for future economic growth

- * CT's most important economic resource is its highly skilled workforce
- * The biggest risk to the state economy is losing the ability to attract and keep skilled workers
- * Congestion can affect business location decisions and
 - o drive potential new employees to other areas
- * High cost of housing can prohibit valuable potential employees from joining CT firms
- * Continued weakness of urban tax bases drags down economic growth

Implications for maintaining a high quality of life

- * Continued manifestations of sprawl could threaten CT's attractiveness as a desirable place to live, work and visit

Options for future growth in Connecticut

- * Continue along fragmented patterns of the past
- * Decide what we want Connecticut to become and work toward it

What have other states done about sprawling patterns of growth?

Other states have dealt with this issue head on

- * As of 2001, 16 states have adopted a variety of statewide growth management techniques
- * These programs have been built incrementally, often over 10 years or more
- * Statewide mandates for growth boundaries in Oregon, Tennessee and Washington
- * Maryland uses an incentive model
 - o Mandated land use plans/policies/priority growth areas
 - o State funding for development in priority growth areas only

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SECTION I — INTRODUCTION

How is Connecticut doing in taking control of its future?

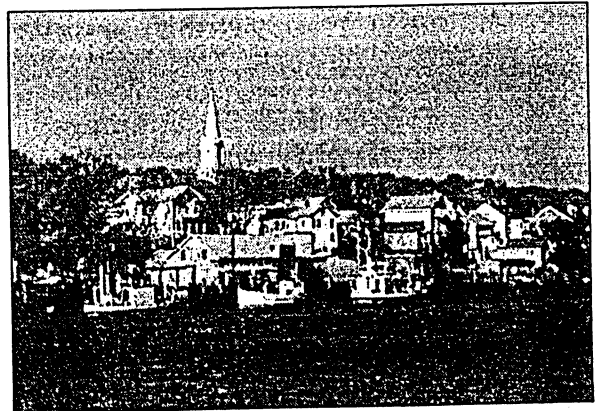
A number of trends are evident in Connecticut that show us how and where we are growing

- * Many are quite positive and contribute to our quality of life
- * Others are disturbing and may be signals of negative outcomes in the future
- * It is not clear how these trends relate to one another and how extensively they are occurring

Making land use decisions in Connecticut is multi-layered

- * Historically, CT has grown into a highly attractive state with an enviable quality of life
 - o New England flavor, Long Island Sound
 - o High income, rail service to NYC
- * Most land use decisions are made locally
 - o Statutes give broad planning authority to municipalities
 - o Updated local plans of development are required every 10 years, but are often abstract concepts and objectives
 - o Zoning regulations are often not consistent with local plans of development
 - o Large residential lots and commercial development are encouraged to minimize the impact on school costs
- * Regional planning is not fully integrated into city and town plans
 - o Each Regional Planning Organization (RPO) must approve a regional plan every 10 years
 - o No requirement for local plans to be consistent with regional plan, or vice versa
- * Connecticut's Conservation and Development (C&D) Policies Plan
 - o Is a framework for development decisions of state government
 - o Recognizes that land-consuming development patterns are linked to environmental quality and quality of life

- o Is not fully integrated with regional, town and city plans
- o Does not provide a blueprint for local land use decisions
- o Does not describe actual land usages in municipalities
- * No "snapshot" exists of Connecticut's present land use picture, or where we are heading
- * CT does not have a consensus idea of what we want to look like 50 year from now, nor the process to realize such a vision.



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- * More commuters are taking the train to work rather than driving their cars, a positive sign
 - o From 1997 through 2000 Metro North ridership increased by 2213 passengers per day
- * Yet, road usage increased as well
 - o Vehicle miles traveled on I-95, *parallel to Metro North rails*, increased 10.8% from 1997 through 2001
 - o Vehicle miles traveled on local CT roads increased 46% from 1986 to 1995
- * Registered vehicles rose 38% since 1970 compared to population growth of 12.3% from 1970 to 2000
- * A higher percentage of those living in high density areas use transit than those living in lower density areas
 - o Density is the key factor for creating demand for a transit system
 - o Transit requires higher concentrations of both population and jobs to function effectively

Public Finance

Connecticut's state-local tax system encourages decisions that promote sprawl

Cities and towns have no real alternative to the property tax to meet growing public service needs

- * Two-thirds of municipal revenue comes from the property tax
- * CT ranks third among all states for property tax burden per capita (1998)
- * On average, about 57% of municipal budgets go to pay for K-12 public education
- * The state share of K-12 public education is declining while local costs increase, particularly for costly special education services
- * Over 80% of towns and cities had to increase their property tax rates in 2001

Therefore municipalities have an economic incentive to grow grand lists and maximize property tax revenue

- * The result is often "fiscal zoning" techniques that encourage sprawl by
 - o Promotion of large lot housing development to minimize new school children and maximize property values
 - o Competition for new commercial and industrial projects
- * State aid is now the only other significant source of revenue for town and cities to offset some of the property tax burden
 - o Per capita state aid throughout CT is \$572, and \$1389 in the four most distressed municipalities
 - o Aid is distributed at a 4/1 ratio between the distressed and the wealthy communities

Economic Segregation

Land use practices contribute to the separation of rich and poor in Connecticut

Fiscal zoning

- * Forces
 - o Land use decision based on the need to grow the grand list
- * Ignores
 - o Scale
 - o Consistency with a town's character and vision
 - o Socioeconomic balance
 - o Other considerations
- * Favors
 - o Commercial and industrial uses
 - o Large lot/large house residential development
- * Often excludes
 - o Low and moderate income families
- * Contributes to
 - o The separation of rich and poor

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Is Connecticut Sprawling?

SECTION II — SPRAWL IN CONNECTICUT: FINDINGS OF TRENDS AND FACTS

Sprawl

"Sprawl is much more than an environmental issue – it affects virtually all aspects of the day-to-day lives of Connecticut citizens, urban and suburban alike."
—1998 Annual Report of CT's independent Council on Environmental Quality

Characteristics of sprawl

- * Low density
- * Segregation of land uses (residential, commercial, etc)
- * Consumption of open spaces
- * Dependency on automobile
- * Many independent developers
- * Lack of integrated land use planning
- * Waste of tax dollars to build new infrastructure

Costs-of-sprawl studies quantify these characteristics

- * Pennsylvania's study showed
 - o Higher costs to build infrastructure and schools
 - o Higher costs to operate infrastructure and schools
 - o Higher combined construction and life-cycle costs
 - o Higher land costs for housing
 - o Avoiding sprawl development can reduce the costs for roads, utilities and schools up to 25%
- * Rhode Island's study found that staying on their present sprawl course for the next 20 years would cost RI taxpayers \$1.5 billion
 - o More than 50% would be tax revenues lost in decaying urban centers
 - o Another 15% would represent lost tax revenues in non-urban areas
 - o 30% would be costs associated with building and maintaining extra infrastructure to accommodate sprawl

Land Consumption

Do trends and facts tell us Connecticut is sprawling?

Some facts about loss of farmland and forests reveal

- * Connecticut is in the top 10 states that lost land to development from 1982-1997
- * Since 1988 Connecticut has lost more than 100,000 acres of farmland
- * Since 1988, 8 acres per capita have been developed in Connecticut
- * Farmland declines about 2% each year in CT, twice the national average of 1%

Connecticut is preserving open space

- * Connecticut's goal is to have 21% (673,000 acres) of the state preserved as open space by 2023
 - o 10% to be owned by the state
 - o 11% to be owned by municipalities, non-profit land-holding organizations, and water utilities
- * In 2001
 - o DEP acquired nearly 2800 acres
 - o The state's open space program helped towns, nonprofits and utilities acquire an additional 2900 acres
- * At the end of 2001, 451,000 acres had been protected per the above plan
- * In 2002 15,340 acres of BHC (Kelda) open space and watershed property were placed in permanent protection

Reusing sites in older, developed areas can reduce land consumption

- * "Opposite side of the coin" from open space preservation
- * Less costly for infrastructure, police/fire protection
- * Easier access for urban workforce
- * Takes advantage of locations near transportation facilities
- * Needs further state encouragement to solve environmental and liability problems

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

Is Connecticut Sprawling?

Environmental Quality

How good is Connecticut's environmental report card?

Land use decisions affect our environmental quality

- * CT has made progress improving environmental quality in the state
- * CT's independent Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) monitors environmental trends and makes recommendations for improving policies
 - o Issues an annual environmental "report card"
 - o CT's report card is mixed

Air Quality

- * CEQ's 2000 Annual Report reveals
 - o Connecticut had just under 365 days of "satisfactory air quality" that year
 - o Connecticut's air pollution levels have improved since 1987 measuring
 - o carbon monoxide
 - o sulfur dioxide
 - o particulates
- * Yet for the primary measure used by EPA, ground level ozone (smog), all of Fairfield County (except Shelton) is rated by EPA as a *severe non-attainment* area, caused by
 - o Motor vehicles, power plants, factories, solvents and consumer products
 - o Many of these pollutants are "blown in" from the Midwest
- * The rest of CT is rated as *serious*, as is all of Massachusetts and Rhode Island
- * Automobile exhaust is a major source of ground level ozone
- * Land use and automobile usage are closely linked

Water Quality

- * CEQ reports a good news/bad news picture about water quality in CT
 - o Wetland loss has declined since 1995

- o About 70% of CT's 950 miles of major rivers are suitable for swimming and supporting aquatic life
- o Yet, the number of miles of CT rivers in which the fish are *not* contaminated with mercury is 0
- * Water utilities as a whole in CT are in compliance with drinking water standards
- * However, problems persist with smaller systems serving a small number of households
- * Increases in land coverage of pavement, buildings, etc, directly decrease water quality in the watershed

Getting Around in Connecticut

The what and where of land use impacts how we get around in Connecticut

Results of the search for more affordable homes and less congested areas

- * Commute times are increased
- * Few suburban communities have a transit alternative to the automobile
- * Congestion worsens nearer to employment centers

Corporate parks and shopping malls in suburban areas increase dependency on the automobile

- * Vehicle miles traveled by workers increase
- * Household services (such as drycleaners) are often distant from/inconvenient to the exurban work place
- * Downtown stores and restaurants lose critical business

How we get there

- * 80% of workers statewide drive alone to work
 - o Under 9% car pool
 - o 2.5% walk
 - o 2.5% take the bus
 - o 1.73% take the train
 - o About 3% work from home