

Beacon Falls

Plan Of Conservation & Development



Smart Growth For The All-America Valley

Preliminary Draft For Discussion
January, 2002

2002 Beacon Falls Plan of Conservation & Development

Acknowledgments

The Residents of Beacon Falls and the

Plan of Conservation & Development Committee

Mary Harvey, <i>Chair</i>	<i>Planning & Zoning Commission</i>
William Abromaitis, Jr.	<i>Planning & Zoning Commission</i>
David Moran	<i>Planning & Zoning Commission</i>
Larry Hutvagner	<i>Historic Commission</i>
Edward Jurzynski	<i>Conservation Commission</i>
Richard Minnick	<i>GIS Committee</i>
Michael A. Krenesky	<i>Economic Development Commission</i>
Dominick Sorrentino	<i>Parks & Recreation Commission</i>
Rick Cherhoniak	<i>Tomorrow's Downtown Com</i>
John Smith	<i>Inland Wetland & Watercourse Com- mission</i>

Planning & Zoning Commission

Mary Harvey	<i>Chair</i>
William Abromaitis, Jr.	<i>V.Chair</i>
Lynn Sirowich	<i>Secretary</i>
Robert Egan	
Donald Molleur	
David Moran	
Donald Perkins	
Ellen Schultz	

Other Town Officials

Richard Mihalcik	<i>First Selectman</i>
Susan A.Cable	<i>Selectman</i>
Richard Rydzik	<i>Selectman</i>
David Scott	<i>Former Selectman</i>
Karen Wilson	<i>Administrative Assistant</i>
James Galligan	<i>Consultant Town Engineer</i>
Helene Skrzyniarz, Ph.D.	<i>Superintendent Of Schools</i>
Marsha Durley	<i>Librarian</i>
Brian Fitzpatrick	<i>Waste Water Treatment</i>
Michael Krenesky	<i>Historian</i>
Anthony P. SanAngelo	<i>Economic Development Commission</i>

Information and assistance in preparing this plan was also provided by:

Valley Reg. Planning Agency	<i>Derby, CT</i>
Central Naugatuck Valley COG	<i>Waterbury, CT</i>
NEMO Program, UConn	<i>Extension Center, Haddam CT</i>
Brownfield Pilot Program	<i>Derby, CT</i>

January, 2002

To Beacon Falls Residents,

This document is a draft of the proposed 2002 Plan of Conservation and Development for Beacon Falls, Connecticut. It is a strategic plan that creates a framework for future more detailed planning work to be done on the major topics included.

The Plan is the product of many meetings and discussions among Beacon Falls residents and the Planning & Zoning Commission. As we have all worked together to develop the Plan, many recommendations have been included that are designed to:

- improve and maintain the overall quality of life in Beacon Falls, and
- promote and build upon the “Olmsted” principles of community design originated for Beacon Falls in the early 1900’s.

It is the Commission’s belief that this Plan of Conservation & Development establishes a working blueprint for the future of Beacon Falls that will build upon our heritage while preparing for what the future may bring.

Sincerely,

Mary Harvey, Chairman
Beacon Falls Planning & Zoning Commission

2002 Beacon Falls Plan of Conservation & Development

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Conditions & Trends	5
3	Conservation Issues	11
4	Development Issues	21
5	Infrastructure	35
6	Conclusion	41



Technical and Administrative Assistance

Linda Sakon, Project Manager
Glenn Chalder, AICP, Principal
Richard Eigen, Executive Director

Planimetrics, LLP
Planimetrics, LLP
Valley RPA

INTRODUCTION

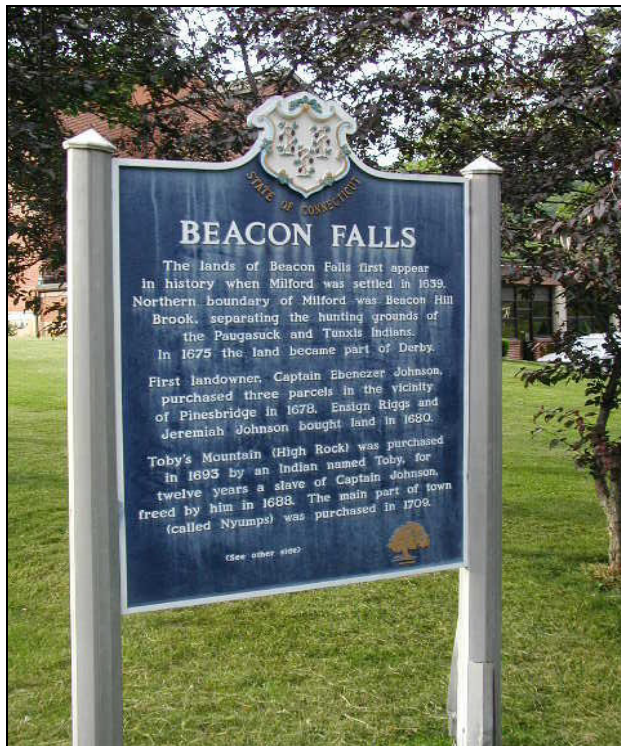
1

Introduction to Beacon Falls

Beacon Falls is located in New Haven County in southwest Connecticut. The town is bounded by Naugatuck on the north, Bethany on the east, Bethany and Seymour on the south, and Oxford on the west. Beacon Falls is located about 37 miles southwest of Hartford, the State capital.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Beacon Falls had a 2000 population of 5,246 people within its land area of about 9.78 square miles (6,259 acres). This is an increase of 163 people (3.2 percent) from the 1990 Census.

The pace of population growth, housing growth, and economic growth in Beacon Falls continues. This Plan has been prepared to help guide Beacon Falls's future and help address this growth.



Statutory Reference

Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that the Planning Commission prepare, adopt, and amend a Plan of Conservation and Development for Beacon Falls. The requirements for the Plan are presented on the following page.

Planning Overview

This Plan of Conservation and Development is a tool for guiding the future of Beacon Falls. The Plan is an advisory document for the Planning & Zoning Commission, all other Town boards and commissions, and Beacon Falls residents. It is intended to provide a framework for consistent decision-making with regard to conservation and development activities in Beacon Falls.

It has been over 40 years since Beacon Falls prepared a comprehensive land use plan for the community. While the Planning & Zoning Commission might have preferred to have embarked on a more ambitious planning process at this time, budget constraints dictated that this more abbreviated plan be prepared. Beacon Falls is located within the Central Naugatuck Valley Region and is a member of the Central Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments, but is participating with the Valley Regional Planning Agency in preparation of this plan.

This format was designed to be part of a regional planning initiative lead by the Valley Regional Planning Agency, University of Connecticut NEMO Project and Naugatuck Valley Brownfields Project. This initiative entitled “Smart Growth For the All American Valley” mobilizes seven towns, including Beacon Falls, that have united in many past activities. These efforts were recently recognized by the designation of seven southern valley communities as the recipient of the “2000 All American Valley Award” by the National Civic League. It is our hope that the regional efforts that have led to the preparation of this abbreviated “strategic” plan will provide the impetus to continue planning for the future of Beacon Falls on a more regular basis.

The major strategies in this Plan have been adopted by the Planning & Zoning Commission based on input from Beacon Falls residents (through public meetings), other Town commissions, Town officials, our consultants (Planimetrics of Avon), and independent research and investigation. While the statutory responsibility to adopt the Plan rests with the Zoning & Planning Commission, implementation will only occur with the diligent efforts of the residents and officials of the Town of Beacon Falls.



Plan Issues

A public survey was distributed and several public meetings were held during the process of preparing this Plan. As a result of survey findings and public meeting participation, residents indicated that the following topics were important to address in the plan.

Coordination of Local Activities

Commissions in Beacon Falls are working on many diverse, but related, activities. In addition, there are grants that have been received by Beacon Falls for the Downtown Study, Brownfield Remediation, and Economic Development. What appears to be needed is an overall vision to pull all of these projects together in a meaningful way and provide coordination. Through the establishment of a special committee, with representatives from town commissions, to oversee the Plan of Conservation and Development, a formal linkage between committees has now been put in place.

Economic Development

Improving Beacon Falls' Main Street and overall Economic Development were high priority issues in all of the exercises done as part of this process. These two topics are closely related, since the Main Street Area is the major commercial district for Beacon Falls. Residents have indicated that they are supportive of economic development provided it is in the right places.

Open Space & Natural Resources

In the exercises conducted to date, preserving open space, protecting natural resources, and maintaining community character were also identified by Beacon Falls residents as being important to them.

Specific open space recommendations include continuing the river walkway and developing trails connecting the Naugatuck State Forest and the Naugatuck River. Requiring open space as part of developments was also discussed, as well as the need to either purchase land outright or buy development rights for large remaining farms.

Community Facilities

The issue of community facilities was ranked highly in the exercises conducted to date. Beacon Falls is a growing community and one of the challenges it will face is keeping up with the demand for community facilities and services. An in-depth look at the current and future need for community facilities should be an element of a more detailed Community Facility Plan for Beacon Falls.

Facility Needs?

The following community facility needs were identified in the survey by Beacon Falls residents:

- Library
- Community Center
- Town Hall
- Meeting Room Space
- Affordable Senior Housing
- Improved Fire, Police & EMS
- Expanded Recreational Facilities at Matthies Park
- Purchase land for future public use

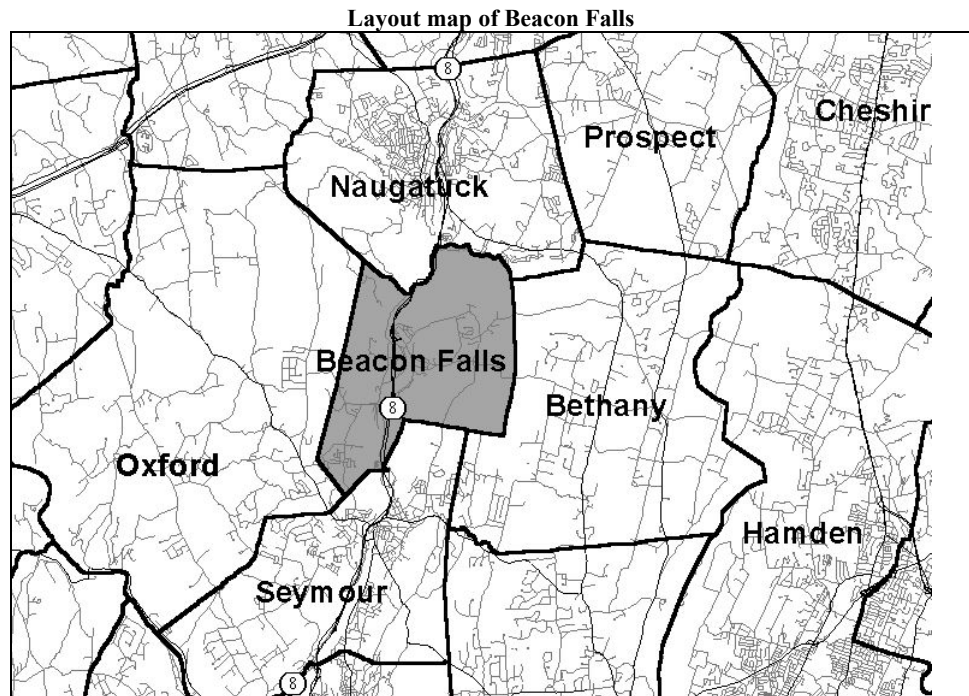
Plan Overview

Beacon Falls has an interesting past and a promising future.

What many people may not know is that the “Hill Section” of Beacon Falls was designed by the renowned Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture and planning firm. Widely recognized to be pioneers of land use planning and urban design, principals of the Olmsted firm were involved in the design of Central Park in New York City, the Biltmore Estate in Asheville NC, the parks system in Boston MA, and numerous other significant places throughout the country.

The Olmsted vision of Beacon Falls was a residential community designed around park areas on the “Hill” and a commercial “Village Center” for the Main Street Area. This framework or structure has relevance as we talk about the future of Beacon Falls. Community structure is important in how residents and visitors perceive and understand the community.

It is also consistent with the historical structure established for Beacon Falls by Olmsted Brothers almost 100 years ago.



CONDITIONS & TRENDS

2

History Of Beacon Falls

Early Settlements

The Paugasset Indians were probably the earliest known inhabitants of the area between the Housatonic and Naugatuck Rivers.

Beacon Falls was originally part of Derby and was considered “settled” as part of a 1675 land grant to twelve families by the British Courts. With immigration and population growth in western Connecticut, new farmsteads were created in areas more distant from original village centers.

In 1779, there was demand for division of a school district for the northwest part of Derby (now Beacon Falls). The Rimmon School was not built until 1830 however, and the State of Connecticut did not approve a town charter for Beacon Falls until 1871.

The period between 1780 and 1850 marks the evolution of Connecticut from an area of dispersed isolated farmers into a complex society of rapidly growing industrial centers. As a sign of this change the first business, a tannery, was located in what is now Beacon Falls in 1792. Improved transportation led to the establishment of a cotton mill in 1830 at the mouth Beacon Hill Brook.

Beacon Mill Village



The Industrial Revolution

In 1852 the Beacon Dam Company was formed, changing its name in 1858 to the American Hard Rubber Company and moving to Long Island in 1860.

By 1863 the Home Woolen Company, a Hartford Corporation, had taken over the rubber factory buildings in Beacon Falls, and began manufacturing woolen shawls. The business prospered and in 1868 the Naugatuck Railroad built a passenger station in Beacon Falls.

In 1882 the Novelty Rubber Company was formed, later becoming the Beacon Falls Rubber Shoe Company. Around 1915, this company hired Olmsted Brothers to design a residential district for its workers. The company became part of the United States Rubber Company in 1921, later to be known as Uniroyal.

Suburban Development

By the mid 1940s, the automobile's importance was made visible by the brisk pace of road improvements as state highways were established along former turnpikes and major roads.

The construction of the Route 8 Expressway in the 1950's helped change Beacon Falls from a small industrial town to the suburban community of today. With improved transportation and the decline of manufacturing activity in the state, Beacon Falls began to become a home for people who worked elsewhere in the region and with about 2,000 residents in 1950, Beacon Falls grew to over 4,000 residents by 1980, an increase of 100 percent in thirty years!

Factors in Beacon Falls Evolution

Beacon Falls has historically been less developed than surrounding communities due to a rolling and hilly terrain, which made development difficult and also tended to isolate Beacon Falls. With transportation improvements and economic growth in the region over the past 50 years, people have been attracted to Beacon Falls due to:

- the proximity to major employment centers (Naugatuck Valley and Fairfield County),
- the rural character,
- accessibility via the Route 8 Expressway,
- The perception of open space,
- Local recreational facilities,
- The overall quality of life, and
- The availability of residential land at relatively reasonable prices

Regional Role

Beacon Falls has many more housing units and workers than it has jobs. As a result, residents of Beacon Falls generally travel elsewhere for employment. In other words, Beacon Falls is primarily a residential community.

Jobs / Housing / Workers Balance (2000)

Town	Jobs	Housing Units	Ratio to Jobs	Labor Force	Ratio to Jobs
Shelton	21,180	14,707	144%	19,810	107%
Derby	5,080	5,568	91%	6,255	81%
Naugatuck	9,210	12,341	75%	16,840	55%
Seymour	4,470	6,356	70%	7,479	60%
Ansonia	4,430	7,937	56%	8,453	52%
Oxford	1,870	3,420	55%	4,866	38%
Beacon Falls	960	2,104	46%	2,834	34%

2000 US Census, CT Dept Of Labor

In fact, Beacon Falls has the lowest ratio of local jobs to housing units and local jobs to labor force in the lower Valley Communities. These ratios indicate that Beacon Falls is a net exporter of workers. In fact, two out of three workers in Beacon Falls must be employed out of town. This is important to consider as we plan for future transportation improvements and economic development.

Residents tend to commute to communities easily accessible from Route 8. While the most significant places of employment for residents in 1990 were Beacon Falls, Waterbury, and Shelton, these three locations accounted for only 29% of employment destinations.

With the exception of Waterbury, most Beacon Falls residents commute to jobs located south and west of Beacon Falls. With the growth in employment in Fairfield County during the 1990s, it is expected that the year 2000 journey-to-work data will show a shift with even more residents commuting to the south and west.

About 75% of workers who were employed in Beacon Falls in 1990 lived in Beacon Falls, Waterbury, Naugatuck, Oxford or Seymour.

Beacon Falls Population

	Population
1920	1,593
1930	1,693
1940	1,756
1950	2,067
1960	2,886
1970	3,546
1980	3,995
1990	5,083
2000	5,246
2010	5,690
2020	6,040

US census with year projections provided by CT DOT.

Growth Comparison

	1990-00
Oxford	13.1%
Prospect	12.0%
Seymour	8.2%
Shelton	7.6%
State of CT	3.8%
Beacon Falls	3.2%
Derby	1.6%
Ansonia	0.8%

US Bureau of the Census

The 2000 US Census

The number of housing units reported by the Census in Beacon Falls is significantly lower than expected based on the number of housing units built in the 1990's. This also leads Beacon Falls officials to question if the population figures are possibly understated.

People Of Beacon Falls

The U.S. Census Bureau reported Beacon Falls 2000 population to be 5,246 persons. This represents an increase of 163 persons from the 5,083 persons reported in the 1990 census. The chart in the sidebar illustrates the historical and projected population for Beacon Falls.

Projections are from recent figures prepared by the CT Department of Transportation based on the 2000 Census. These projections can help assess the implications of demographic changes on municipal services and housing types. Of course, it must be remembered that variations can occur in these projections in the future.

The population of Beacon Falls more than doubled in the 40 years between 1950 and 1990. The most recent census shows slower growth between 1990 and 2000, but this is typical of the state and region as a whole illustrated in the Growth Comparison chart also included in the text box.

Dynamics of Population Change

Most of the growth that occurred in Beacon Falls in the 1980's was due to in-migration. This was a significant change since most prior growth (1960's and 70's) was a result of natural increase. This large change in in-migration can be partly attributed to an unusually large number of housing units added as a result of the conversion of a historic mill to apartments in the late 1980's.

1990-2000 net migration figures actually show a negative number for net migration for the first time in the last 50 years. This reflects the slower growth of the state and region as a whole due to a weak economy from 1990-1997. It may also indicate that fewer young people are choosing to move to Beacon Falls and are choosing to locate in towns showing higher population growth such as Oxford, Seymour and Shelton.

Components of Population Change

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s*
Total Change	+819	+660	+449	+1,088	+163
Change due to natural increase	+372	+441	+285	+274	+367
Births	554	703	568	581	656
Deaths	182	262	283	307	289
Change due to net migration	+447	+219	+164	+814	(-204)

*1999 births/deaths estimated

Changing Age Composition

In addition to looking at general population trends, it is also important to look at the changing age distribution of residents. For planning purposes, a community's age composition can be considered to include three major age groups with differing needs -- children (ages 0-19), adults (ages 20-54), and mature residents (ages 55 and over).

Based on general population trends in the state, we can anticipate the following changes in the community over the next 20 years.

Description	Needs	Change 2000-2020
Infant 0 to 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child care 	Declining after history of increases.
School-Age 5 to 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School facilities Recreation programs 	Will continue to increase until 2010, in higher age range, then decreases.
Young Adults 20 to 34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental housing Starter homes 	Declines significantly by 2010.
Middle Age 35 to 54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family programs Trade-up homes 	Continues to increase until 2015 then declines.
Mature Adults 55 to 64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller homes Second homes 	Increases significantly
Retirement Age 65 and over	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing options Elderly programs 	Increases significantly.

Children (ages 0-19) - Available data suggest that the number of younger families are decreasing as the large "baby boom" generation ages. As a result, elementary school enrollments would not be expected to decrease after 2005. The number of middle school and high school age children are expected to grow until 2010 and then decline.

Adults (ages 20-54) - The number of young adults (ages 20 to 34) decreased significantly between 1990 and 2000 in Beacon Falls and will continue to decrease. Some of this decrease is due to the aging of the large "baby boom" segment of the population that is moving through the higher end of this range. A continued large reduction may also be an indication that Beacon Falls is not attracting younger families, and this is somewhat confirmed by negative net migration figures already discussed.

Residents Aged 55 and over - The number of residents aged 55 and over is expected to continue to increase in Beacon Falls as the "baby boom" ages and people live longer. In the year 2020, these residents are expected to represent over 30% of Beacon Fall's population.

Tax Base Composition

	Percent Business
Naugatuck	32%
Shelton	28%
State of CT.	27%
Seymour	26%
Derby	23%
Beacon Falls	18%
Ansonia	18%
Prospect	11%
Oxford	9%

Per Capita Spending

State of CT	\$2,322
Naugatuck	\$2,219
Seymour	\$2,178
Oxford	\$2,162
Derby	\$1,913
Shelton	\$1,826
Ansonia	\$1,786
Beacon Falls	\$1,786
Prospect	\$1,715

Per Capita Tax Revenue

Oxford	\$1,548
State of CT	\$1,531
Shelton	\$1,445
Derby	\$1,224
Prospect	\$1,160
Seymour	\$1,136
Naugatuck	\$1,106
Beacon Falls	\$1,035
Ansonia	\$1,008

1998-99 Fiscal Year
CT Policy & Economic Council

Land Use & Development Potential

Beacon Falls contains approximately 6,259 acres. While detailed land use information is not available, the Conservation Commission based on a review of Assessment Records estimated that about 30 percent of the community (1,900 acres) is occupied for residential, commercial, or institutional use and 35% (2,100) acres is protected open space or water.

Conversely, about 35% percent of the land in town (2,200 acres) is vacant or uncommitted to a specific use and may be capable of supporting additional development in the future.

After considering physical and environmental constraints on the vacant and under-developed land, it is estimated that Beacon Falls could eventually contain as many as 3,400 total housing units if fully developed under existing zoning. Thus, based on typical 2000 household sizes, Beacon Falls could eventually be a community of about 9,000 people.

Fiscal Issues

Expenditures - Beacon Falls spends about \$9.2 million in order to provide services to residents and property. Expenditures in Beacon Falls are lower than the state average on a per capita basis. Local expenditures are clearly focused on education with seven of every ten dollars spent going to education.

Revenues - While the Town generates most of its revenue from local property taxes, Beacon Falls is fortunate to receive a larger than average amount of state aid and other intergovernmental revenue. As a result, the amount of money to be raised from current taxes is less than the state average.

Tax Base - Beacon Falls is not considered to have a wealthy tax base since it has less property wealth (measured by Equalized Net Grand List) than the state average. This makes Beacon Falls eligible for more state aid under current state formulas

Fiscal Impact - The “2000 Municipal Fiscal Impact Study,” funded by the Central Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments, reviewed the different land uses in Beacon Falls and their impact on the community. The study allows policy makers in Beacon Falls to determine whether a particular use pays more in taxes than it receives in services and vice versa. Although this should not be the only criteria for future land use planning it should be a consideration.

Major findings based on the \$9.4 million dollar in expenses for 1998/1999 are:

- Single family residences receive over \$900,000 more in services than they pay in taxes. If single family residences “paid their way”, their taxes would be 16% higher.
- Industrial developments pay about \$530,000 more in taxes than they receive in services, and commercial uses pay \$155,000 more than they receive.

CONSERVATION ISSUES

3

Overview

Conservation issues addressed in the Plan of Conservation & Development include:

- Natural Resources
- Open Space
- Historic Resources
- Community Character

Protect Natural Resources

Protection of natural resources is important in terms of preserving environmental functions and protecting community character. The following table identifies the environmental resources where conservation efforts should be focused:

Conservation Summary Table

Category	Definition	Proposed Criteria
Priority Conservation Areas	Very sensitive lands worthy of preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watercourses and waterbodies • Poorly drained soils (wetlands) • Floodplain (100-year, 1.0% probability) • Any slope in excess of 25% • Ridgelines
Important Conservation Areas	Sensitive lands worthy of conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public water supply watershed areas • Aquifers and recharge areas • Unique or special habitat areas • Floodplain (500-year, 0.2% probability)

Watercourses and Waterbodies

The most important natural resources in Beacon Falls are water-related. Major water resources include the Naugatuck River, Carrington Pond, Rimmon Brook, Beacon Hill Brook, Hockanum Brook, Spruce Brook and Hemp Swamp Brook. These areas are the principal elements in maintaining an ecological balance because of the essential role and function they play in maintaining and improving water quality, maintaining water supply, providing scenic value, supporting wildlife, and controlling floods.

1998 Central Naugatuck COG Regional Plan

The Natural Resource Summary table included in the Central Naugatuck Regional Plan, which included Beacon Falls, is differs slightly different from the one adopted by the Town:

Significant Conservation Areas

- Watercourses & waterbodies,
- Poorly Drained Soils
- Floodplain (100 year)

Important Conservation Areas

- Slopes exceeding 25%
- Shallow or rocky soils (15-25% slopes)
- Hardpan soils (15-25% slopes)
- Hardpan soils, high seasonal water table
- Floodplain (500 year)

More information about this topic can be obtained by referencing this 1998 Plan

Water Quality Considerations

When projecting future land use and zoning, consideration should be given to the fact that:

- commercial and industrial development can generate 70%-90% impervious surfaces, and
- residential areas can range from 15% (1 acre zoning) to 65 % (1/8 acre zoning) impervious surfaces, depending on the density allowed.

Water Quality

Pollution of water resources should be a concern of government and citizens alike. Water pollution can come directly from a known *point* such as sewage treatment plants, landfills or industrial locations. Progress has been made in recent years to limit this type of pollution.

Most pollution currently, however, comes from *non-point* sources in the form of polluted runoff. Polluted runoff occurs when water runs over the land (whether from rain, car washing, or watering lawns) and picks-up contaminants. Common contaminants can be salt/sand from roads, oil/gas from roads, agricultural chemicals from farmlands, and nutrients and toxic material from our lawns.

Polluted runoff is largely a result of how land is developed and used. As more impervious surfaces are built less water percolates into the soil and more runoff flows into streams and rivers. As development increases, it should be a goal of the community to increase protection of water quality.

The following elements should be included in land use regulations and site review standards to minimize runoff and protect watershed lands:

- Reducing the clearing and grading of sites so as to minimize the impact on natural drainage patterns.
- Emphasizing the economic and environmental benefits of natural drainage systems such as grassed swales, vegetative filters and, porous pavements materials over manufactured systems.
- Establishing wetland and riparian buffers to filter pollutants and protect them from direct receipt of runoff.
- Emphasizing preservation of open space as a tool to filter polluted runoff from adjacent impervious areas.
- Encouraging site design with a goal of minimizing imperviousness of streets, parking lots, driveways, and structures.

More detailed information about land use standards and technical assistance to local land use commissions is available from the University of Connecticut NEMO (NonPoint Education For Municipal Officials) Program. NEMO can be contacted through their web site at nemo@canr.uconn.edu.

The Town of Beacon Falls should consider minimizing non-point pollution before more of the town is developed by limiting impervious surfaces, maintaining storm sewers and drainage systems, and carefully planning sites for vehicle washing, waste disposal and outdoor storage of sand and salt.

Open Space Preservation

At an initial public meeting held to begin the planning process, residents of Beacon Falls indicated that Preservation of Open Space was a top priority for the Town to consider. Residents also indicated a willingness to pay more in taxes to preserve open space.

Open space, in adequate quantities and appropriate locations, can help conserve important natural resources, serve as a natural filter to protect water quality, protect community character, provide fiscal and economic benefits, enhance the quality of life, and enhance structure by defining development patterns.

While most people tend to think of “open space” as land that is not built upon, the Plan defines open space as land that is preserved in perpetuity for open space uses. Beacon Falls, however needs to develop a definition of it’s own to consider the desirable amount of open space in the community.

The configuration of the open space system in Beacon Falls is as important as the amount of open space in preserving character. If parcels of riverside open space can be interconnected into a cohesive overall system, the value of the open space to residents and the impact on community character grows exponentially. Connecting open space areas with trails and with Main Street pedestrian areas will greatly enhance the value of the open space to all Beacon Falls residents. Smaller parks designed by Olmsted in the Hill area can be landscaped as designed to enhance the overall character of the center of Beacon Falls.

In addition, connections to open space lands in adjacent communities, as part of the Naugatuck River Greenway, will create opportunities to establish a greenbelt of regional and even state-wide significance. *The Naugatuck Greenway Project, initiated by the Central Naugatuck Valley Council Of Governments, is one of the official State Greenway Projects.* Beacon Falls has the opportunity to become the gateway to such a greenbelt system and enhance both the Main Street Area and the general character of the community by placing emphasis on maintaining, connecting and enhancing parks and open space areas.

In summary, open space preservation efforts should be targeted towards protecting important resources and maximizing open space benefits to Beacon Falls. Beacon Falls also has the opportunity to become a regional focal point for recreational activities that capitalize on its “ring” of scenic hills and open riverfront areas.

In particular, efforts in Beacon Falls should be directed towards:

- providing for contiguous open space “greenbelts” connecting a riverwalk along the Naugatuck River with trails in the Naugatuck Forest in order to enhance the overall open space system,
- protecting important natural resources such as watercourses, wetlands and slopes,
- providing greater public access to open space, where appropriate
- enhancing the appearance of existing smaller green areas.

Historic Resource Preservation

Since historic resources significantly contribute to community character and quality of life, their identification and preservation is an important Plan component.

There are two Beacon Falls historic resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and the State Register of Historic Places (SRHP):

	NRHP	SRHP
Home Woolen Company – Main Street		
Riggs House – Residence built 1790		

In terms of historic districts, it is important to realize that National and State historic districts are established largely for ceremonial significance and such designation provides little regulation or protection. Local historic districts established by municipal ordinance, on the other hand, provide real protection of designated areas.

Beacon Falls has a unique town heritage to recognize and build on in the future. The “Hill Section” of Beacon Falls, designed by the famous Olmsted Brothers at the turn of the beginning of the 20th Century, contained designs for parks and residences. The owner of the Home Woolen Mill buildings, which is on the National and State Register, commissioned the Olmsted designs.

Over 97 pages of designs on file at the Olmstead Archives in Massachusetts, indicate the extent to which plans were developed to ensure Beacon Falls was a “model” community. These plans could become the basis for future preservation efforts in Beacon Falls. Plans exist for existing park areas that could enhance this historic center of Beacon Falls and direct future preservation efforts in this area. Historic homes which capture the “Olmsted Styles” could be highlighted.

Beacon Falls is just beginning efforts to make historic preservation an important part of the town’s future. The Beacon Falls Historic Commission has recently purchased computer equipment to begin documenting historic resources. Historic preservation efforts should be directed towards:

- **Coordination** - Local individuals and organizations (such as a local Historical Society, a local Historic Commission, and a Municipal Historian) should coordinate historical documentation and preservation.
- **Identification** - Historic resource surveys identify important resources and provide recent information on which to base historic preservation efforts. The Historic Commission is starting this effort. State funds are made available for this purpose.
- **Programs** - Beacon Falls should develop a Cultural Resource Preservation Plan that identifies specific actions for preserving identified historic resources such as the Olmsted designed parks. Such a plan can identify areas where the creation of village districts (through zoning regulations) or historic districts are a priority.

Community Character

Community character is a term that is widely used, but which has no accepted definition. What comprises community character in Beacon Falls? Some of the common elements that are referred to when residents of Beacon Falls have discussed community character are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• unique natural resources• preserved open space areas• scenic resources• undeveloped land	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• historic resources• community structure• architectural character• economic activities
---	--

Almost 100 years ago, Beacon Falls was designed by the Olmsted Brothers with a clear vision of the kind of community it was to become. Beacon Falls was to be a model for integration of open space and parks in a “company” town. It was intended to have a balance of business areas and residential areas surrounded by parks and open spaces.

The change of the state and local economy away from industrial employment has also changed the way residents perceive Beacon Falls. Beacon Falls has become a mostly suburban community, whose residents want to enhance the character of Beacon Falls as a residential community. They are fortunate to have the basis for a future vision for their community rooted in original plans for their town.

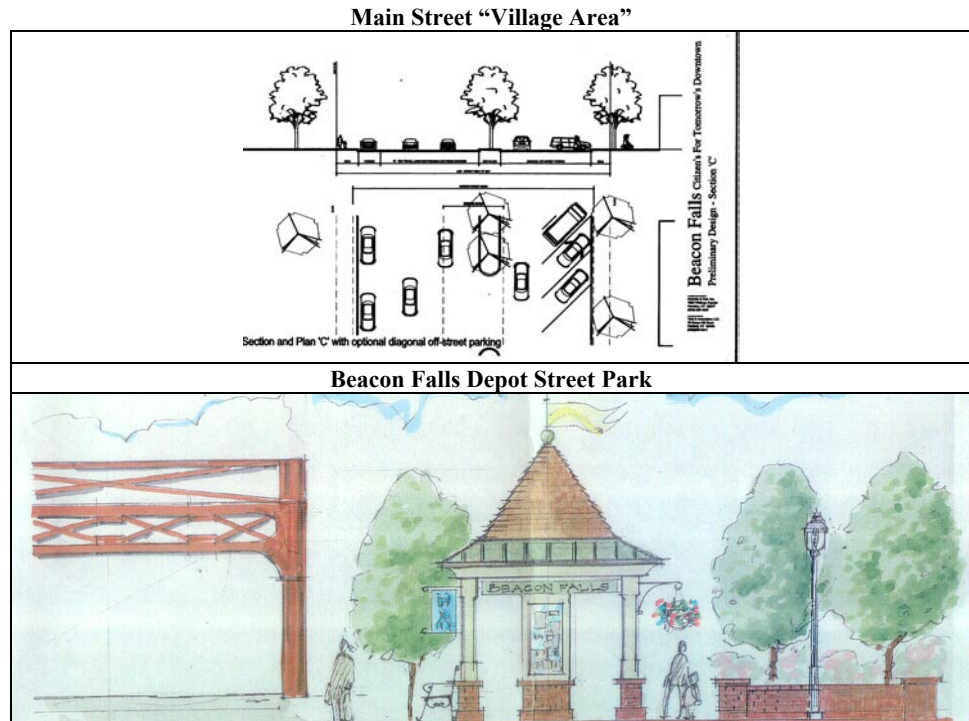
Many of these elements of character were included in the original layout of Beacon Falls. Beacon Falls residents want to improve their quality of life by enhancing community character. The vision in 2002 for the future of Beacon Falls is rooted in this philosophy and tied to the past

Railroad Depot



Of particular importance is the continuation of historic Main Street as a focal point for the town. A Main Street Study (preliminary concept plans are shown below), is currently underway in the community. It is an important effort in determining how to best enhance community character in the center of Beacon Falls. Any plans which call for municipal facilities or commercial uses in other locations in town should be discouraged, since they risk further disintegration of this important community focal point.

Main Street Study



(DeCarlo & Doll, Inc)

Open space, scenic resources and park areas are now viewed as being just as important as development. At the public meeting held to prioritize issues for this plan preservation of open space and economic development tied as the number one concerns. These concerns can direct the town to a vision created over a hundred years ago by Olmsted Brothers for Beacon Falls. Although "green areas" were an integral part of the original community design this vision has been compromised through the years.

Recapturing it's basic principles of establishing a community with a balance of business uses and a quality of life for residents. involves the following overall conservation strategies.

plan

Strip-Type Development

Strip-type development typically refers to non-residential development that occurs along major roads in a linear fashion and is generally characterized as:

- having wide and shallow lots,
- individual or strips of stores that orient towards parking areas between the building(s) and the street,
- having one-story buildings with very simple architectural features,
- multiple curb cuts,
- limited pedestrian interconnections between sites, and
- uncoordinated signage.

Conservation Strategies For Discussion

Natural Resources

1. Continue to discourage building and development on steep slopes.
2. Analyze impervious surface in sections of Beacon Falls near water bodies and in aquifer areas, to determine if regulations should be changed to further restrict the density of development allowed.
3. Encourage the use of natural drainage systems, grassed swales, and porous pavement materials to reduce impervious surfaces in sensitive areas.
4. Continue to implement wetland regulations and use riparian buffers to prevent polluted run-off from entering water bodies and groundwater.
5. Have applicants for land subdivision present information about special animal habitats, which can be obtained from the CT DEP.
6. Strive to be a leader in seeking ways to limit impervious surfaces in building construction and planning public works activities.
7. Consider the importance of large stands of forest and farmlands in maintaining an ecologically balanced environment.

Open Space

1. Provide a continuous open space “greenbelt” connecting the proposed Naugatuck River Greenway with the Naugatuck State Forest trails.
2. Require open space to be deeded or a fee in lieu of open space to be given to the town with each new development approved in Beacon Falls.
3. Prepare an open space preservation ordinance which defines open space and calls for the development of an open space plan and preservation fund.
4. Prioritize future open space purchases so as to complete the Naugatuck River Greenway and preserve scenic and natural resources.
5. Protect and enhance the small parks and green areas in Beacon Falls with landscaping.

Historic Resources

1. Continue efforts by the Beacon Falls Historic Commission to prepare an inventory of significant historic resources in Beacon Falls according to State Preservation Commission standards.
2. Continue to allow for flexible design on large parcels and where historic structures are involved.
3. Seek funding to create a Local Historic Preservation Plan which includes:
 - Identification of significant historic resources for inclusion in the Federal and State Registers of Historic Places.
 - Consider creating a local historic district for the “hill area”.
 - Research Olmsted Brothers historic plans for parks, houses and street-scapes in Beacon Falls.
 - Determines ways of promoting the history of Beacon falls as an Olmsted designed community.

Burton Road



Community Character

1. Discourage strip-type development patterns.
2. Consider zoning regulations to discourage cellular towers on scenic hills.
3. Ensure new business areas proposed for Beacon Falls are well designed, landscaped and respect natural resources.
4. Continue to protect the Naugatuck River open space areas and interconnect a river greenway through Beacon Falls using rights of way where necessary.
5. Improve the Railroad Station Area by building a small station and beautifying the depot site and streetscape on Railroad Avenue.
6. Identify and designate scenic roads in Beacon Falls.
7. Obtain funds to plan and implement streetscape improvements to beautify the “Hill” area.
8. Use tax credits, revolving funds or other programs to encourage façade improvements where necessary.
9. Review and implement plans developed by Olmsted Brothers for park and green areas and implement landscaping designs.
10. Provide an enhanced pedestrian connection with Main Street, for the Hill Area neighborhood, to encourage use of businesses and the Naugatuck River Greenway.
11. Evaluate the advantages of PA 00-145 in establishing Village District Zoning authorized to preserve historical character and implement design and streetscape standards in the town center.
12. Encourage variable road widths and incorporate the use of porous and other innovative materials in site design.

Volunteer Park



DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

4

Development issues addressed in the Plan of Conservation & Development include:

- Community Structure
- Housing & Residential Areas
- Business & Economic Development
- Community Facilities

Beacon Falls Center

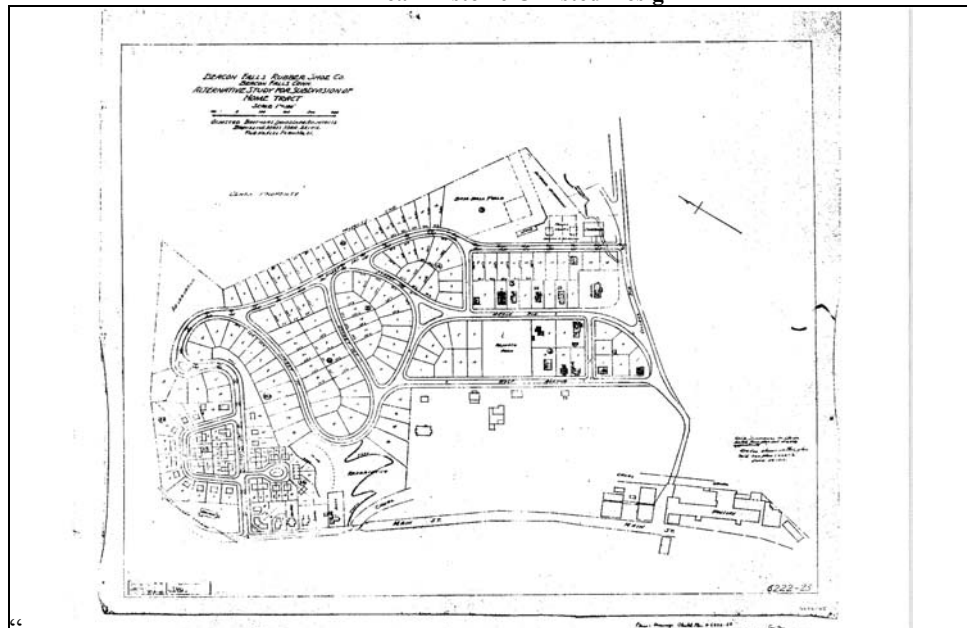


Community Structure

Community structure addresses the overall organization of Beacon Falls. Structure is an important consideration in this plan, since it is strongly correlated with community character. Structure is also an important guide for land use regulations and decisions. Regulations can be designed and implemented to reinforce the community structure and enhance community character. The major elements of community structure in Beacon Falls consist of:

- **A historic Town Center on Main Street.**
The former Beacon Falls Rubber Shoe Company buildings are the dominant structures on Main Street. Clearly Beacon Falls was established as a “Company Town” and the area around the Rubber Company was its historical commercial and industrial center.
- **A historical residential focal point in the” Hill Section**
The basic street pattern in the Town Hall / “Hill Area” of Beacon Falls is still configured largely as it was designed in the early 1900’s by the Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architecture Firm. An original plan, shown below illustrates that development of this area was to be enhanced by designed parks and greens.
- **Industrial areas on Railroad Avenue and the Pines Bridge Road Area**
Past plans have called for industrial uses to be in the area accessed by Railroad Avenue, between Route 8 and the Naugatuck River. A number of construction related businesses operate in this area currently. In addition, the Town has planned a newer business park just north of Pines Bridge Road where development is about to begin.

“Hill Area” Historic Olmsted Design



Although Beacon Falls is not fully developed, the character and structure of the community has clearly been established. Beacon Falls's zoning scheme should continue to recognize the prevailing development pattern of:

- higher densities and diverse housing where water and sewer are available,
- predominantly lower density development in outlying areas,
- commercial businesses on Main Street, and
- industrial development north of Pines Bridge Road

New emphasis should be placed on the Main Street Area becoming a commercial, institutional and recreational center for the town. A focal point is important to reinforcing community structure. The placement of future town facilities and the entrance to the Naugatuck River Greenway on Main Street would enhance this area as a focal point and gateway to the community.

Housing & Residential Areas

Housing and residential areas are important topics in the Plan since about 70% percent of Beacon Falls is zoned for residential purposes. This section of the Plan looks at existing land use regulations and housing issues Beacon Falls residents feel need to be addressed including:

- The *amount* of development,
- The need for affordable and senior citizen housing, and
- The rehabilitation of older housing

Review of Zoning and Subdivision Regulations

There are three residential zones in Beacon Falls all of which allow for one or two-family dwellings and accessory apartments for occupancy by family members. For the most part, boundaries of the residential zoning districts appear generally reasonable given the soil types, terrain, and patterns of development.

Technical assistance should be requested from the UConn NEMO (Non-Point Education For Municipal Officials Project) to address how regulations can better promote protection of water quality by natural storm water drainage practices such as swells, minimizing impervious surfaces and minimizing the disturbance of natural grades and vegetation, as well as natural wetland and stream buffers.

Beacon Falls may want to consider whether the potential density allowed in residential zones is what is desired.

- Allowing two-family residences in all residential zones limits the town's ability to plan for the density of development. It is of particular concern in the R-1 Zone where very low density development is desired. Limiting two-family development and allowing low density multi-family development in areas around the town center reinforces community structure.
- Minimum lot sizes in residential zones vary from 7,500 square feet to 45,000 square feet and there are different minimum standards within the same zone

depending on the availability of public sewer and water. The density of development desired in the R-1 and R-2 Zones should be determined and the availability of sewer and water should not be the only consideration determining density allowed.

- High density development in the center area of town reinforces the historical structure of Beacon falls. The level of density allowed in the R-3 Zone should however, be reconsidered given modern day development standards. In the R-3 zone there is no reason why historical density should determine future density, unless this is truly the desired density. Future higher density development should be targeted to meet specific needs in the community.

Smart Growth

The term “smart growth” has been coined to reference development patterns that encourage conservation of land and emphasize high utilization of existing infrastructure. Beacon Falls needs to define what this term means for the community.

Beacon Falls should consider the uses allowed in the I-1 Zone and whether it is desirable to continue to allow industrial uses along the Naugatuck River. Continuing the open space beltway along the southern part of the river and zoning it for open space, should be considered a priority. This change is important to ensure the eventual completion of the planned regional Naugatuck River Greenway.

There is also a special provision in the regulations for special “Planned Adaptive Reuse Developments” (PAR) Zones to be established by the Planning and Zoning Commission. PAR zones can be established to facilitate the development of a tract of land of considerable size or existing improvements needing reconstruction or rehabilitation. Such a development has to be consistent with the character of the town and compatible with the neighborhood. The PAR District allows for the creative reuse of properties of historic and or architectural significance. The reuse of the Uniroyal industrial buildings on Main Street as a multi-family complex was achieved under this section of the regulations and is known as PAR #1.

How Much Growth?

The 2000 US Census shows a growth of 122 housing units in Beacon Falls from 1990-2000. This is 4% growth rate.

The Beacon Falls Building Department recorded 301 new homes built, and only 3 demolitions from 1990-2000.

If the number of housing units from 1990-2000 increased by 298 units then the rate of growth would be 14%.

Housing Growth Rate

As part of the planning process, Beacon Falls residents expressed concern over the rate of housing growth. However, the amount of residential growth has not been excessive in recent years when compared to previous decades. In fact, the rate of housing growth in Beacon Falls over the last decade has declined significantly, as has the rate in Connecticut as a whole (see side bar).

Housing Growth

BEACON FALLS				CT
Decade	Units at Start	Growth	Rate	Rate
1970s	1,092	288	26%	18%
1980s	1,380	610	44%	13%
1990s	1,990	114	5%	4%
2000s	2,104		-	
US Census				

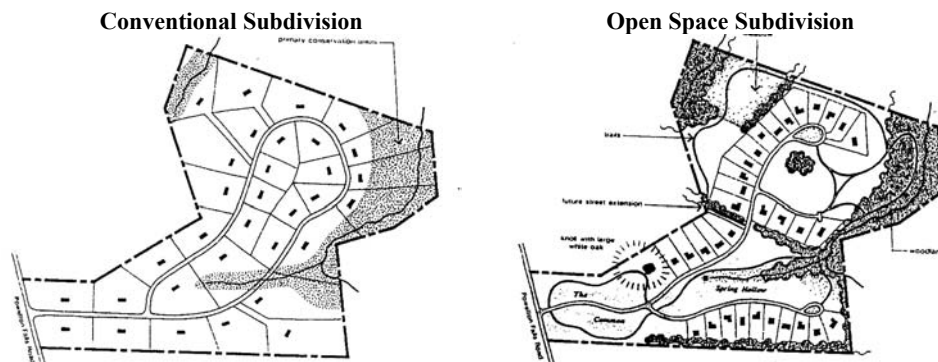
Creating “Smart Growth”

Residents' concern about residential growth is probably less about the number of houses being built and more about where and how development is occurring. In essence, residents are concerned because they feel that the rural character of Beacon Falls is being harmed by each new subdivision that is built.

Since zoning regulations already regulate lot size, coverage requirements and require that significant natural resources be preserved, the real issue of concern may be that town regulations do not go far enough in creating patterns that preserve land and discourage patterns that create "sprawl". Zoning regulations may also not go far enough in determining the desired density of development. Consideration should be given to increasing density and allowing mixed-uses in the center areas and decreasing density in more rural sections. Since development cannot be prevented the challenge is to create patterns of development that help maintain the rural character of Beacon Falls by encouraging visible open space and reinforcing community structure.

This can best be done by:

- *Requiring that open space be deeded to the town or land trust with each subdivision.* Open space conservation is currently permitted by the subdivision regulations at the discretion of the Planning & Zoning Commission. The town should consider actually requiring a certain percentage of open space be deeded by each new subdivision. This can, however, create a number of insignificant vacant parcels throughout town where they have little impact. Allowing for fees in lieu of deeding of open space, where appropriate, can allow the town to purchase open space where it will have impact in maintaining a rural character. Connecticut Statutes call for such payments to be "equal to not more than 10% ...of the fair market value of the land to be subdivided prior to approval of the subdivision."
- *Promoting more desirable development patterns.* Flexible patterns of land subdivision should be promoted based on defining buildable land and density requirements. Buildable land (land that is not designated as wetland, water-course, floodplain or steep slope) is subtracted from a parcel to be developed and then a yield (number of lots to be allowed on the parcel) is determined. A developer is then free to design a subdivision, which best preserves natural features, minimizes paved areas and conserves open space.



Source: *Conservation Design For Subdivisions: A Practical Guide To Creating Open Space Networks*, Randall G. Arendt

Housing Diversity

Housing Affordability

Beacon Falls housing stock would be considered affordable in comparison with the average price of housing in Connecticut and many neighboring communities.

	Average Housing Value
Connecticut	\$220,858
Shelton	213,107
Prospect	161,088
Seymour	135,044
Beacon Falls	126,219
Ansonia	122,999
Derby	114,378
Naugatuck	110,745

CT DECD 1999

State Criteria For Affordable Housing

Units counted in determining a community’s percentage of affordable housing are:

1. Assisted housing units receiving assistance under any government program for construction or rehabilitation of low or moderate income housing. Housing occupied by persons receiving State Rental Assistance.
2. Ownership Housing currently financed by the CT Housing Finance Authority or Farmers Home Administration.
3. Deed restricted properties requiring dwelling units be sold or rented as units which will preserve the units defined as affordable in
4. C. G. S. 8-9A, for persons whose income is less than 80% of the area median income.

In, Beacon Falls there appears to be some concern about the lack of housing variety being built. The greatest housing needs in Beacon Falls in the future are anticipated to be for younger residents who will not find “start-up” housing and older residents who will need a variety of accessible housing

State statutes encourage construction of affordable housing. The state allows developments meeting affordable housing criteria to be exempt from zoning requirements, if a community does not have 10% affordable housing. Beacon Falls is reported to have 1.68% affordable housing by the state and is not exempt from this provision. Although much of the housing in Beacon Falls may be considered relatively affordable (See side bar chart), the state uses very limited criteria (as shown in the side bar on this page) to determine what is counted as affordable housing.

Appointing a Housing Authority to investigate and apply for grants to build and operate affordable senior housing, should be a top housing priority for Beacon Falls. Other strategies to address identified housing needs in Beacon Falls might include:

- Less expensive single family housing units can be constructed within each new development. Zoning regulations can require that each new subdivision contain some affordable units and allow some smaller lots / homes in a designated price range.
- Planned Unit Developments in residential zones can be permitted. Beacon Falls can allow the development of smaller clustered lots and residences that meet affordability guidelines by special exception in locations where infrastructure and topography permit.
- Conversion of existing commercial or institutional facilities to congregate or assisted living facilities for seniors. The current PARD regulations can be used to foster rehabilitation of properties for congregate or assisted housing for the elderly.
- Allowing for housing alternatives to be built for persons age 55+. Current zoning regulations can be changes to allow clustered single family housing, elderly housing rental units, congregate or assisted living complexes in a “Senior Housing Zone”.
- Accessory Apartment provision can be modified. Many communities allow accessory apartments to be occupied by non-family members when one of the units is occupied by the property owner and a resident age 55+. This can help older residents remain in their homes by providing rental income and also help younger and senior residents with limited incomes find affordable apartments in town.

Property Rehabilitation

A number of streets in Beacon Falls were identified by residents as locations where improvement of housing condition was a priority. There are several ways towns can foster improved housing condition:

- State or local funds can be used for low interest loans and/or grants to improve building facades and streetscapes in targeted areas.
- Code enforcement can be targeted in areas of concern and a local ordinance passed, which includes fines for offending properties.
- Historic preservation funding and tax credits can be used to help revitalize appropriate areas.

Business & Economic Development

This section of the Plan looks at the type and location of business activities in the Town of Beacon Falls. It also looks at the Economic Development Program established by Beacon Falls.

According to the Valley Chamber of Commerce, there were about 177 firms in Beacon Falls employing about 960 employees in the year 1999.

About 29% of all firms are involved in construction / mining and another 21% are involved in service industries. Only about 13% of firms are involved in manufacturing.

Like the state as a whole, the economy in Beacon Falls is going through some structural changes. Consider the following:

- Construction/mining is the major business category in town even though the number of jobs declined 65% between 1987 and 1996.
- 29% of the businesses in Beacon Falls are in the construction / mining category.
- The number of service businesses increased by 57% in Beacon Falls between 1987 and 1996.
- This increase in service sector businesses was typical of the region where 30% of the labor force is now employed in service businesses.
- Only 13% of Beacon Falls businesses were in manufacturing even though this is one of the region's major business sectors.

Business Breakdown-1999

Category	# of Bus	%
Const/Mining	51	29
Services	37	21
Retail Trade	24	14
Manufacturing	22	13
Wholesale	17	10
Trade		
Fin, Ins, RE	7	3
Other	19	10
TOTAL	177	100

Valley United Way, 1999

Economic Development

Possible reasons for a community to invest in an economic development program include:

- Grow the tax base: . . .
- Improve attractiveness to new companies . . .
- Provide goods and services for residents . . .
- Increase job opportunities . . .
- Create higher paying jobs . . .
- Prepare residents for jobs . . .

Location of Businesses

Beacon Falls has three major focal points for business activities:

- **Main Street (B-1 Zone)** - Most of Beacon Falls' retail and service businesses are located on Main Street (old Route 8) and construction of a newer Route 8 diverted much of the traffic that once benefited these businesses.
- **Railroad Avenue Area (Zone I-1)** - This is the older industrial section of Beacon Falls. The town's construction and mining operations are mostly located in this location including the town's largest employer O&G Industries.
- **Lancaster Drive / Lopus Road Area (IPD Zone)** - This area includes the planned Pines Bridge Industrial Park on Lancaster Drive and land east of Rimmon Hill and Lopus Roads along the rail line. Currently, 5 sites have been sold in the Industrial Park and construction is about to begin.

Economic Development Program

Beacon Falls has an active Economic Development Commission that is promoting an economic development agenda for the Town. There are many reasons why a Town might embark on an economic development program, some are listed in the text box on this page. The primary reasons for Beacon Falls appear to be:

- Growing the tax base to reduce the mill rate or at least keep it at the current rate,
- Improving the town's attractiveness as a location for business so more businesses will want to locate there.
- Providing goods and services desired by residents.

The "1997 Economic Strategic Plan" prepared by Mt Auburn Associates for the Central Naugatuck Council of Governments indicates that "maximizing the region's core economic strength - manufacturing - should be a top priority. The Beacon Falls Economic Development Commission has been trying to implement this plan by:

- Bringing light manufacturing and warehouse businesses to the planned Pines Bridge Industrial Park. Five businesses have committed to purchase sites in the Park including a large trucking company, machine shop, industrial welding company and distributor. The industrial park is privately owned, but the town promotes and solicits businesses.
- Developing plans and seeking funding to improve the southern access to Lopus / Old Pines Bridge Road to encourage business development in this area.

- Creating a revitalized and more attractive Main Street retail business area with a recent grant obtained from the Department of Transportation. This grant will look at improving the roadway and enhancing the aesthetics of the area to make the town more attractive for residents and business solicitation.

In addition, the Economic Development Commission is trying to capitalize on Beacon’s Falls good river access and the Naugatuck State Forest to develop tourism and entertainment activities. The commission is hoping to have the Naugatuck Scenic Railroad stop at the Beacon Falls Railroad Station.

To promote tourism the Main Street Study has been asked to include plans for improving the railroad platform area with a station and tying it to the Naugatuck River Greenway with a gateway on Main Street. These efforts are in keeping with Beacon Falls’ heritage as a town designed around parks and green areas and opens the possibility for the entire region to enjoy the scenic natural resources of Beacon Falls.

Main Street



Naugatuck Valley Pilot Brownfields Program

The term “smart growth” is applied to adaptive reuse of older and often contaminated sites. The industrial heritage of the region has left many polluted sites and buildings to be assessed and cleaned if they can be put to productive use again.

Eleven towns in the Naugatuck Valley Area, including Beacon Falls, have joined together to be part of the Pilot Brownfield Program, administered by the Valley Regional Planning Agency. The program provides assessment, technical advice, and a revolving loan fund for clean-up.

Beacon Falls has two locations that have been evaluated by the program:

- The Nutmeg Bakery Property, and
- 2 parcels in Pines Bridge Industrial Park

Public Works can take leadership and set an example for the community in maintaining and improving water quality. Public Works can:

- adopt a regular program of maintaining the town storm water management system by vacuuming catch basins, maintaining ponds, and careful sand /salt application and removal.
- Encourage road developments and sidewalk development to be of porous materials where appropriate.
- Utilize natural runoff techniques when developing roads.
- Ensuring the public works garage manages runoff by proper vehicle washing and salt and sand storage techniques.

Community Facilities

Community services and facilities include such governmental functions as education, public works, public safety, and recreational services. Such services contribute significantly to the character of a community and its quality of life. The Plan of Conservation & Development reviews the physical aspects of such services and facilities to ensure they are appropriately located and sized to meet community needs during the planning period and beyond. The Plan is not intended to address the management, operations, or programs of individual departments or facilities.

There are a number of issues related to community facilities that can be directly related to the growth of the community. It is reasonable to expect that community growth will increase the need for community facilities and the challenge will be to prioritize and phase these improvements over time.

Town Hall/Library

The Beacon Falls Town Hall and Library Facility is located in the “Hill Area” at the corner of Burton Road and Maple Avenue. The facility is a renovated school and does not function well as either a town hall or library. The town government actually has most of its office space located in the basement of the building. There is not adequate office or meeting room space for town business.

A campaign is now underway to gather support for a new library building. The library has only 1,100 square feet and is located on the second floor of the town hall facility. The Connecticut Library Association has indicated that a Town the size of Beacon Falls should have a library of approximately 12,000 square feet. There may be opportunities as part of the Downtown Design Study to locate municipal facilities in the town center.

Public Works

The Public Works Garage is located on Lopus Road and provides adequate space for necessary equipment and an office for the town engineer. Public Works is mainly responsible for the maintenance of town roadways. There is currently no formal pavement management system, and the town engineer indicated that such a system would improve road condition in Beacon Falls. Central Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments has made computer and software equipment to implement such a system available to Beacon Falls. A Pavement management system requires each road be rated and that all roads be maintained at an average rating. To accomplish this a 10-15 year plan is generally done, which utilizes crack sealing, chip sealing and repaving to minimize the need for expensive reclaiming of roads.

Senior Citizens Programs

There is a senior citizens facility on Main Street and activities are planned by a senior citizens commission and club. Dial-a ride services are provided by the town and a part-time dispatcher located at town hall coordinates this service.

Recreation Facilities

The Town is fortunate to have several large recreation areas:

- Matthies Park – The Park contains 96.8 acres of land including hiking trails, gazebo and pond.
- Pent Road Recreation Area – This area consists of 48.9 acres of land and has baseball fields, soccer fields, tennis courts, and picnic pavilion with bathrooms. An adjacent parcel of 7 acres is available and could be added to this park for future town needs.
- Volunteer Park/Naugatuck River Greenway – is partially developed and expansion plans are included in the Main Street Study.

The Parks and Recreation Commission is taking more responsibility for maintaining these park areas and needs a full-time director and additional maintenance staffing. Attention could then also be directed towards the Olmsted designed greens and park in the Hill Area and to expand the Naugatuck River Greenway, already started at Volunteer Park.

Emergency Medical /Fire

The emergency medical and fire facility is located on Main Street. Both the fire and emergency medical personnel are volunteers. First response EMT and ambulance service is provided by Beacon Falls. Paramedic service when needed is obtained from American Medical Response located in Waterbury

Education Facilities

Beacon Falls has a combined school system with the Town of Prospect and shares a Superintendent of Schools. The Region 16 School System consists of the following facilities for Beacon Fall’s students:

- *Laurel Ledge School Elementary School* (Grades PreK-5) –is located off Burton Road, behind the Town Hall. Although the school was enlarged in 1994, it is at capacity (475) with 462 students currently and may need expansion.
- *Long River Middle School* (Grades 6-8) located in Prospect, has 637 students enrolled with about 237 from Beacon Falls. The school was renovated 4 years ago and has a capacity of 700 students.
- *Woodland Regional High School* (Grades 9-12) A new high school for Beacon Falls and Prospect opened in September 2001 on Back Rimmon Road. The high school will accommodate 800 students.
- There is no “latch key” type of before and after school program in Beacon Falls.. The only day care center in Beacon Falls providing this service has a two year waiting list.

Region #16 School Enrollment	
Enrollment	
1997	2,315
1998	2,334
1999	2,358
2000	2,332
2001	2,447
2005*	2,423
<small>CT Department of Education, 1997 Projections</small>	

Plan

Development Strategies For Discussion

Community Structure

1. Promote Main Street as the focal point for the Town.
2. Consider enhancing the revitalization of this area as a mixed-use district by allowing moderate density multi-family residential uses.
3. Cluster town facilities on Main Street to allow for multiple uses of facilities and promote activity.
4. Complete the detailed Main Street Study underway in order to:
 - reinforce the historic and scenic character of the area,
 - maintain an appropriate balance among different uses
 - avoid “strip type” development
 - address parking and circulation problems
 - provide better access to the Naugatuck River
 - build pedestrian and bicycle paths
5. Rezone areas along the Naugatuck River with the intention to encourage industrial and construction uses to locate in more appropriate locations.

Housing & Residential Areas

1. Modify local regulations to encourage or require what are known as open space subdivision regulations.
2. Consider increasing the lot area and frontage requirements on existing arterial and collector streets to maintain the rural character of Beacon Falls by encouraging new lots on side streets.
3. Evaluate the density of residential development that is permitted by current zoning regulations and determine if it is in keeping with the character of Beacon Falls.
4. Consider allowing multi-family housing that:
 - is moderate in scale,
 - meets local housing needs,
 - is located in the Main Street area,
 - forms a transition between commercial and single family districts, and
 - is compatible with the rural character of Beacon Falls.
5. Encourage affordable “starter” and housing for the elderly by:
 - appointing a housing authority to develop a plan for obtaining state and federal grants to construct special senior citizen housing.
 - requiring a certain percentage of new developments meet affordable guidelines.
 - evaluating the benefits of changing accessory apartment regulations to allow occupancy by non-family members if one apartment is occupied by a senior citizen.

Economic Development

1. Revitalize the Main Street Area by providing convenient and visible parking, providing landscaping and infrastructure to improve its appearance, building sidewalks and bikeways and allowing for a wide variety of uses.
2. Continue to encourage development of business parks in appropriate locations to help diversify the Town's tax base and employment.
3. Encourage planning efforts to improve highway access to new business areas north of Pines Bridge Road.
4. Redesign the Old Pines Bridge/Lopus Road southern entrance or rezone land on Lopus Road for less intensive uses.
5. Do more to address the design and landscaping requirements for business developments to ensure they do not detract from community character.

Community Facilities

1. Purchase land *now* for future town use on Main Street and make it the focal point for town activities.
2. Investigate the relocation of a new Library and Town Hall on Main Street.
3. Consider moving the Senior Center and expanding it to become a community center. It should be relocated to a building proximate to the Town Hall and Library, since clustering of municipal facilities allows for shared use of meeting rooms, parking and other facilities
4. Utilize the existing senior center to expand emergency fire and medical facilities.
5. Give the library the responsibility for becoming a youth and media center for the town by developing special programs and facilities.
6. Implement a pavement management system for maintenance of town roads.
7. Take leadership, through the public works department, in developing policies which minimize non-point water pollution.
8. Recognize the importance of parks and recreation areas to the character and quality of life in Beacon Falls by:
 - buying available land adjacent to the Pent Road Recreation Area for future recreation needs,
 - hiring a Parks and Recreation Director to be in charge of design, maintenance of park areas and programming,
 - determining appropriate methods for watering parks areas,
 - expanding the Naugatuck River Greenway by negotiating for rights of ways as appropriate and purchasing land where necessary, and
 - landscaping Olmsted designed parks where they remain to enhance the character of the historical sections of Beacon Falls.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Overview

Infrastructure issues addressed in the Plan of Conservation & Development include:

- Transportation
- Utilities

Transportation

The transportation system in a community is an important factor in its growth and development. This element of the Plan of Conservation and Development is concerned with the means by which people and goods are moved from one place to another. It is designed to encourage, support, and serve the current and desired land use pattern for Beacon Falls.

Improve Roadway Circulation

The current roadway system in Beacon Falls consists of expressways, arterials, collectors and local roads, as illustrated on the map on page 39. This classification is based on the function of the roadway, major land uses, traffic volumes and overall location. Changing the classification and therefore the level of improvements made to a roadway is necessary whenever there is a significant change to any of these elements.

There are four areas in Beacon Falls where roadway circulation is an issue:

- *Main Street* – With construction of the Route 8 expressway, studies are underway to turn Main Street (old Route 8), still owned by the State of Connecticut, into a two-lane roadway owned by the Town.

Route 8 Expressway Interchanges - There are presently two partial interchanges on the Route 8 expressway in Beacon Falls and the lack of full interchanges requires traffic, especially from the industrial park, to travel through the center of town to access Route 8 North. This impacts current discussions about streetscape improvements along Main Street. Plans to narrow Main Street's four lanes have to be guided by industrial park plans and Main Street Redevelopment efforts.

- *Old Pines Bridge Road / Lopus Road* - There is a significant amount of industrially zoned land in this area that it is not feasible to develop because of the curve and slope of the southern part of this roadway. A redesigned access from Pines Bridge Road needs to be constructed or the land in this area should be rezoned for less intensive uses.
- *Burton Road / Lasky Road Connection* - The amount of new residential construction in the northeast section of Beacon Falls, makes the construction of an east/west roadway, connecting Burton Road near Rice Lane with Lasky Road north of Dolly Drive worth considering.

Improve Transit Service

The Town of Beacon Falls is fortunate to have passenger rail service between Waterbury and Bridgeport connecting to New York City. The Main Street Study underway is looking at both the redesign of the rail station area and the connection of the railway area to Main Street. As Beacon Falls population increases the need for increased commuter rail service should be monitored.

In addition the expansion and development of the Naugatuck River Greenway, the Naugatuck State Forest Trails and other parks areas could enhance Beacon Falls reputation and make it a regional tourism destination enhanced by recreationally oriented rail service.

Dial-a Ride service for the elderly is an important town service, since there are few medical and shopping locations in Beacon Falls. With the expanded number of persons expected to reach age 65 increased participation in this service can be anticipated.

Enhance Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel

The Main Street Study should incorporate recommendations for bicycle paths and sidewalks on Main Street. These routes can be extended along the Naugatuck River as part of a river greenway system to be established. In addition sidewalk and streetscape improvements in the “Hill Area” could enhance this area and provide improved pedestrian linkage to Main Street.

Transportation Facilities & Water Quality

The town should take a leadership role in ensuring water quality is protected especially as changes in use and transportation routes along the Naugatuck River and elsewhere in town are planned. Transportation facilities have a significant impact on the volume of impermeable surfaces and polluted runoff that enters water bodies and aquifers. Standards regarding pavement type, sidewalks, road profile specifications, road length, drainage requirements, and use of naturalistic landscaping should all be incorporated in plans to reduce impervious surface and runoff in sensitive areas.

Piped Utilities

Utility infrastructure includes piped utilities (public water, public sewer, natural gas), wired utilities (electric, telephone, cable television) and wireless communication. The location/capacity of infrastructure is important to the future development of Beacon Falls, since it can direct the type and density of growth.

Public Water Service

Beacon Falls is serviced with public water by the Valley System of the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company (BHC), a subsidiary of the Kelda Group. The Valley System, which serves portions of the towns of Oxford, Seymour and Beacon Falls, has one groundwater source of supply (wells), an interconnection with the South Central Connecticut Regional Authority (SCCRA), and an emergency interconnection with Birmingham Utilities.

The 2000 Water Supply Plan for BHC indicates there is adequate supply for the Valley System and sufficient safe yield provided by contractual interconnections to service the area even in time of drought. The Valley System has remained in compliance with state and federal water quality regulations. Water quality problems, however, have included:

- contamination of several Oxford wells by volatile organic compounds (VOCS) and the presence of the gasoline additive MTBE .
- periods of elevated levels of manganese, which results in water discoloration.
- Higher than average sodium concentrations at the Oxford wells are close to the DPH public notification level of 28 mg/l, ranging from 26.2-27.1 mg/l. Treated water levels have remained stable and do not show signs of increasing. elevation of sodium. Most high concentrations of sodium come from road salt run-off.

Public Sewer Service

The Town Beacon Falls operates it's own wastewater treatment plant, which was upgraded five years ago. These types of facilities usually rely on mechanical, chemical and/or biological treatment. The plant has a capacity of 700,000 gallons per day and currently uses about half of this capacity with most of the town serviced. Service is provided on a demand basis, but the planned Pine Bridge Industrial Park has 75,000 gallons per day reserved. Upgrading of older lines on Main Street is a priority for the near future.

Gas Service

Yankee Gas, located in Meriden, CT provides service to Beacon Falls. And a majority of towns in Connecticut. Gas service is available for residential and commercial use in the following areas: Haviland Drive, Lancaster Drive, MolleurView Drive, Pine Ridge Drive and Beacon Hills Condominiums. Expansion of the area serviced is possible based on demand.

Other Utilities

Electrical Service

Northeast Utilities Systems provides electrical service to Beacon Falls with a principal sub-station located in town and four lower demand 115 and 69 Kv transmission circuits. Northeast Utilities does not anticipate significant upgrades in service or large increase in demand over the planing period. No major problems have been noted in terms of the reliability of the electrical supply in Beacon Falls. Adequate capacity and service is expected to be available to meet local needs. Future electrical service should be placed underground.

Cable TV

Telemedia of Western Connecticut operates from offices in Seymour and Waterbury and services all of Beacon Falls with fiber optic cable service. This also allows for high speed computer modem hook-up

Telephone Service

Southern New England Telephone provides general telephone service to Beacon Falls from a local office located in Seymour. Other services now include wireless (cellular) provided by related Cingular Wireless and DSL service, which allows for high speed computer internet access.

Wireless Communications

Wireless communications, especially mobile phone systems, are an expanding area of the infrastructure network. Beacon Falls is currently serviced by a number of providers and has three cell tower locations providing fairly good coverage throughout the Route 8 corridor.

Beacon Falls Zoning Regulations do not address standards for location of cell towers. State legislation has given the decision of location of towers to a state-wide siting council, allowing them to bypass local zoning. Even though a final decision on siting may be made elsewhere, the aesthetic concerns about tower placement should not be ignored by the town.

Beacon Falls may want to address location and standards for towers and other communication equipment in zoning regulations. This will allow the town to address concerns about scenic, historical, and natural resources if the need arises, to explore alternatives with applicants, and advise the State Siting Council.

Infrastructure Map

Infrastructure Strategies For Discussion

Transportation

1. Improve Roadway circulation by:
 - Ensuring the Main Street study sponsored by the CTDOT takes into account the total needs of the town and ties in the Railroad Avenue Area.
 - Working with the CT Dept of Transportation and Central Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments to design and build a full interchange for the Route 8 Expressway in the Pines Bridge Road Area.
 - Redesigning the access to Old Pines Bridge Road/Lopus Road.
 - Connecting Burton Road and Lasky Road and limiting cul-de-sac streets where possible
2. Improve Mass transit by:
 - Encouraging more convenient passenger rail service by monitoring usage and demand.
 - Coordinating with regional recreational rail services to provide service in Beacon Falls as Riverwalks and other tourist venues are built.
3. Enhance Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel by:
 - Including sidewalks and bicycle paths along the redesigned Main Street.
 - Improving the access between the Burton Road and “Hill Area” with walkways designed as part of the Main Street Study.
 - Developing connecting trails along the Naugatuck River and other open space locations in Beacon Falls.
4. Develop road, trail and sidewalk design standards, which limit impervious surface and runoff in sensitive areas.

Utilities

1. Improve public water supply and sewer service by:
 - Requiring the expansion of public water service for all new developments.
 - Requiring homeowners within a certain distance of public water service to “hook-up”.
 - Rebuilding sewer pipes in older areas of town especially on Main Street.
2. Encourage improvements to other utility services.
3. Adopt regulations guiding the placement of cellular towers and work with the State Siting Council to manage tower locations.

CONCLUSION



Overview

As part of a Town Plan, the recommendations of each of the preceding chapters are generally reviewed to present an overall Future Land Use Plan.

However, this plan is an overview of topics usually included in a Plan of Conservation and Development. Without more detailed mapping and more in-depth analysis typically found in such a plan, it is difficult to prepare a future land use plan. The plan does however, in a general way, provide a broad direction to guide land use decisions.

This plan is a reflection of the stated goals, objectives, and recommendations of Beacon Falls municipal commissions, staff and the general public. It presents a vision for Beacon Falls based on historic character, current land use patterns and desired economic growth and community facilities. It outlines the general policies the town should pursue in future.

Plan Consistency

This Plan was compared with the Locational Guide Map in the 1998-2003 State Plan of Conservation & Development and found to be generally consistent with that Plan. In addition, this Plan was compared with the 1998 Regional Plan of Development for the Central Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments and found to be generally consistent with that Plan.

Any inconsistencies can be generally attributed to:

- differences in definitions of desirable uses or development densities,
- local (as opposed to State or regional) desires about how Beacon Falls should grow and change in the coming years.

Responsibility

While the Planning & Zoning Commission has the primary responsibility of implementing the Plan's recommendations, other local boards and commissions such as the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and similar agencies, are also involved.

If the Plan is to be successfully realized, it must serve as a guide to all residents, applicants, agencies, and individuals interested in the orderly growth of Beacon Falls.

“The Plan shall show the commission's recommendation for the most desirable use of land within the municipality for residential ... purposes and for the most desirable density of population in the ... parts of the municipality.”

Implementation Priorities

Implementation of the Plan is a gradual and continual process. While some recommendations can be carried out in a relatively short period of time, others may only be realized towards the end of the planning period, and some may be even more long-term in nature. Further, since some recommendations may involve additional study or a commitment of fiscal resources, their implementation may take place over several years or occur in stages.

Implementation Tools

Tools available to implement the Plan of Conservation and Development include:

- **Annual Work Program** - The strategies in this plan can be used by the Planning & Zoning Commission to develop an annual work program, both for itself and other boards and commissions.
- **Plan of Conservation & Development** - Using the Plan of Conservation & Development as a basis for land use decisions by the Planning & Zoning Commission will help accomplish the goals and objectives of the Plan. All land use proposals should be measured and evaluated in terms of the Plan and its various elements.
- **Zoning and Subdivision Regulations** - The Zoning and the Subdivision Regulations provide specific criteria for land development at the time of applications. As a result, these regulations are important tools to implement the recommendations of the Plan. However, this is only true if the regulations reflect the recommendations of the Plan.
- **Capital Budget** - The Capital Budget (or Capital Improvement Program) is a tool for planning major capital expenditures of a municipality so that local needs can be identified and prioritized within local fiscal constraints that may exist. A five-year capital budget should be prepared for Beacon Falls.
- **Referral of Municipal Improvements** - Section 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that municipal improvements (defined in the statute) be referred to the Planning & Zoning Commission for a report before any local action is taken. A proposal disapproved by the Commission can only be implemented after a two-thirds vote by Town Meeting.

Summary

The Plan of Conservation & Development has been prepared to outline a vision for Beacon Falls as it grows and faces the 21st century. It is intended as a guide to be followed in order to enhance the quality of life and the community character of Beacon Falls. As a result of the planning process it was determined that this can best be done by:

- recognizing and protecting scenic and historic resources,
- preserving open space in visible locations,
- *protecting water quality*
- creating a town center as a focal point, and
- providing for business growth in proper locations.

The first step in this planning process was to find out where Beacon Falls has been. This was done by researching town history and through the discovery of its illustrious roots as an Olmsted Brothers planned community. Realizing that we can capitalize on a heritage of planning, with natural resources and parks at the forefront of development, gives new focus to the kind of community Beacon Falls can become. What better way is there to face the future, but with an eye to the past.

The second step in the planning process required finding out where Beacon Falls is today. A great deal of information was collected, presented, reviewed, and discussed as part of the process of assembling this Plan.

The third step was to determine what direction Beacon Falls' residents want to go in. Many meetings were held to assess issues in Beacon Falls and discuss alternative strategies. Through this work, general goals and policies were developed and a vision for the future of Beacon Falls was confirmed. This vision will be further developed as the Main Street Study currently underway defines a revitalized center for Beacon Falls.

The fourth step was to lay out specific actions that will help the town remember how it will get there. These specific strategies are detailed throughout the Plan and summarized in the strategies that follow each section of the plan.

Beacon Falls is at the crossroads of building a spectacular community with great scenic and historic character. Creating a vision for the community, that will significantly impact the quality of life for future generations, is the foundation for mobilizing the community to move forward. This plan begins to provide that vision, but the most important step of the planning process will be implementation of the plan recommendations. While the task of implementation rests with all Beacon Falls residents, the realization of the Plan is orchestrated by the Planning and Zoning Commission and other Town agencies and officials.

The Work Ahead

In creating a vision for the Boston Park System, Frederick Law Olmsted included a quote in his report that is also relevant to the work ahead:

“let it not be for present delight, nor for present use alone, let it be such work as our descendents will thank us for, and let us think...that a time is to come when ...men will say “See this our fathers did for us”.

*From: A Clearing In The Distance
By Whitold Rybczynski*

2002 Beacon Falls Plan of Conservation & Development

References

While many documents were reviewed in the preparation of this Plan of Conservation & Development, the following documents are considered the most significant and should be consulted for additional information:

Beacon Falls Plan of Development –1957

Central Naugatuck Regional Plan of Conservation & Development - 1998

Naugatuck Valley Corridor Economic Development Strategy – 1998

Council of Governments - Central Naugatuck Valley Municipal Fiscal Impact Study - 2000

Greater Valley Economic Development Alliance Marketing Plan-1997

Greater Valley Resource Guide, Valley Chamber of Commerce

Linking Land Use to Water Quality, U-Conn Cooperative Extension Center, Non-Point Education For Municipal Officials (NEMO) Program

Northeast Utilities System –1995 forecast for 1995-2014

BHC Company-2000 Water Supply Plan

2000 U.S. Census

Beacon Falls:

- Zoning Regulations
- Subdivision Regulations
- Inland Wetland & Watercourse Regulations
- Ordinances



Planimetrics

136 Simsbury Road, Avon, CT 06001 860-677-5267

