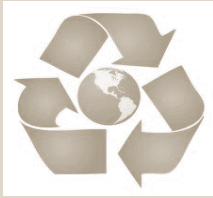




Sherman, Connecticut

Plan of Conservation and Development
Adopted: May 31, 2023



This plan has been developed to be viewed in a digital format.

The digital version of this plan, located on the Town website, is free and environmentally-friendly.

<https://www.townofshermanct.org>

Cover Photo: Linda Hubbard

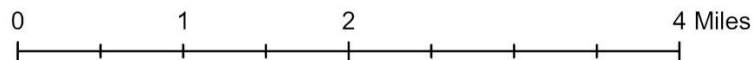
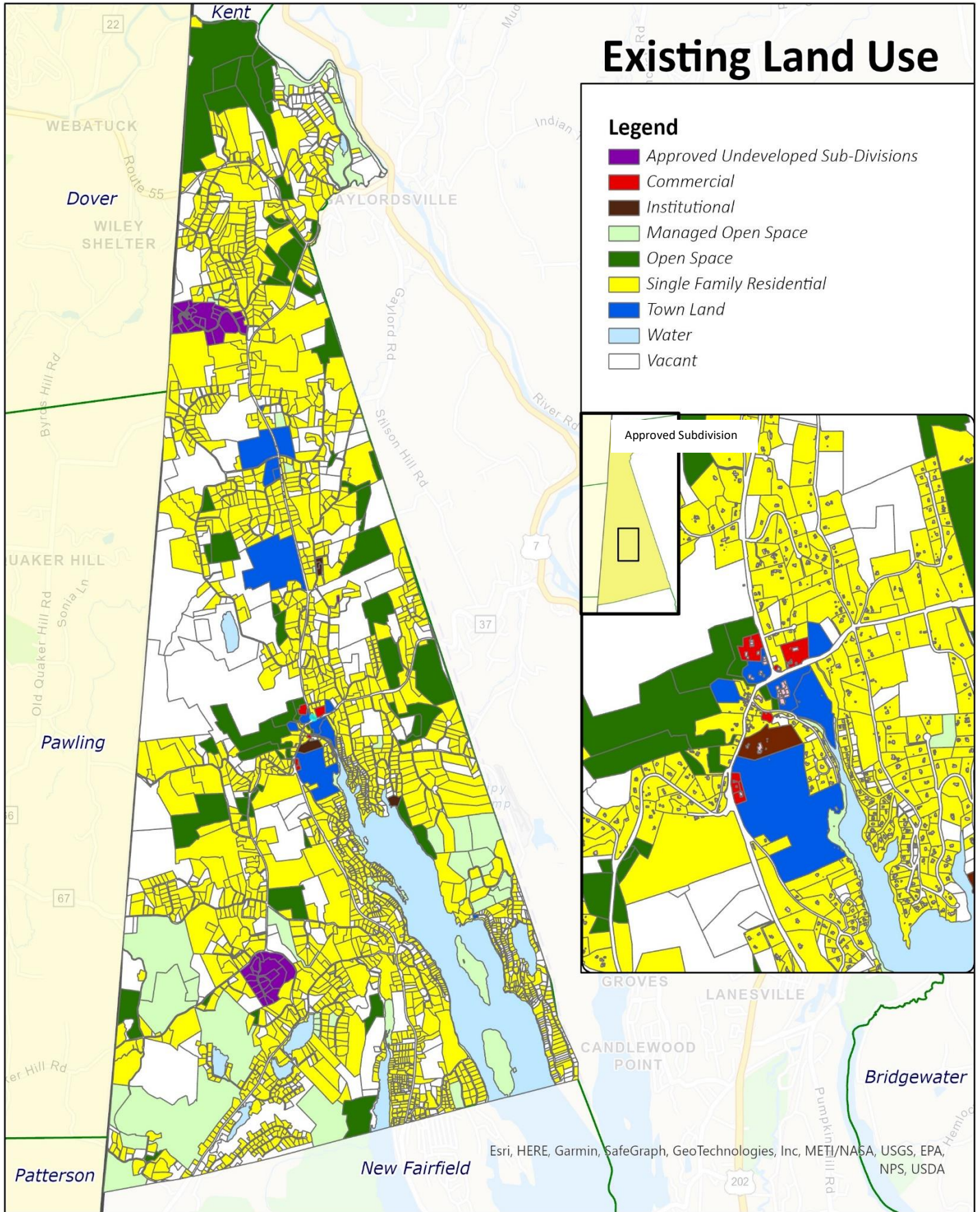
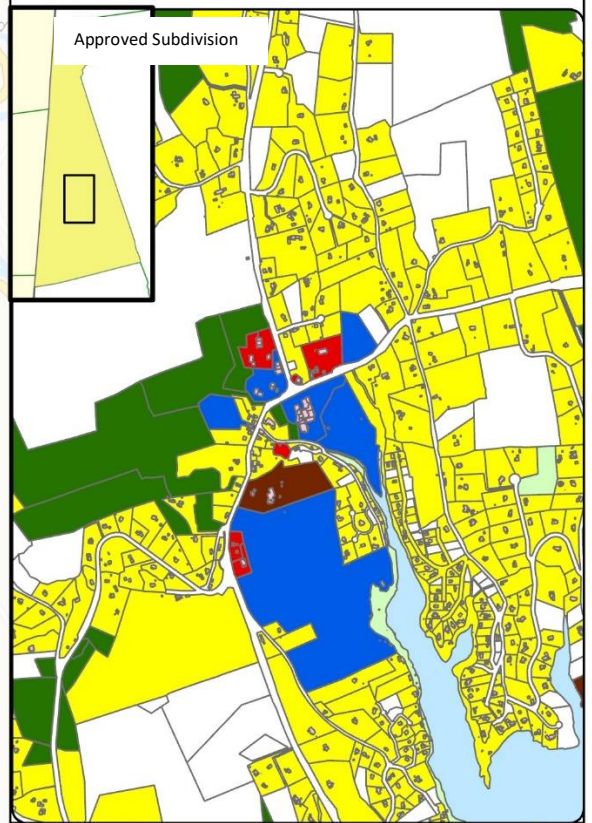
Following a public hearing, this Plan of Conservation and Development was adopted by the Planning and Zoning Commission with an effective date of May 31, 2023.

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Existing Land Use

Legend

- Approved Undeveloped Sub-Divisions*
- Commercial*
- Institutional*
- Managed Open Space*
- Open Space*
- Single Family Residential*
- Town Land*
- Water*
- Vacant*



This map contains no authoritative data and is intended for planning purposes only



Introduction

This document is the 2023 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) for the Town of Sherman, Connecticut.

A POCD is an advisory but influential document intended to guide the future conservation and development of a community. Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that each municipality prepare such a plan and update it at least once every 10 years. This POCD was prepared by the Planning and Zoning Commission after identifying issues likely to affect Sherman over the next 10 to 20 years and considering input and feedback from local officials and residents.

Even though the statutes require that the Planning and Zoning Commission update a POCD, the main reason that Sherman prepared this Plan was to establish a proactive approach to guiding the community's future.

The POCD is not a law, ordinance, or regulation. It is meant to serve as a guideline for Boards, Commissions and Agencies of the Town when they create new rules or exercise their duty and apply the existing rules in the matter of Land Use. The POCD is a statement of goals, policies, and action steps intended to guide the physical and economic development of the municipality.



Photo: Cindy O'Connor

Conditions & Trends

Sherman is a community of about 3,500 people located north of Danbury at the northern end of Fairfield County along the New York border.

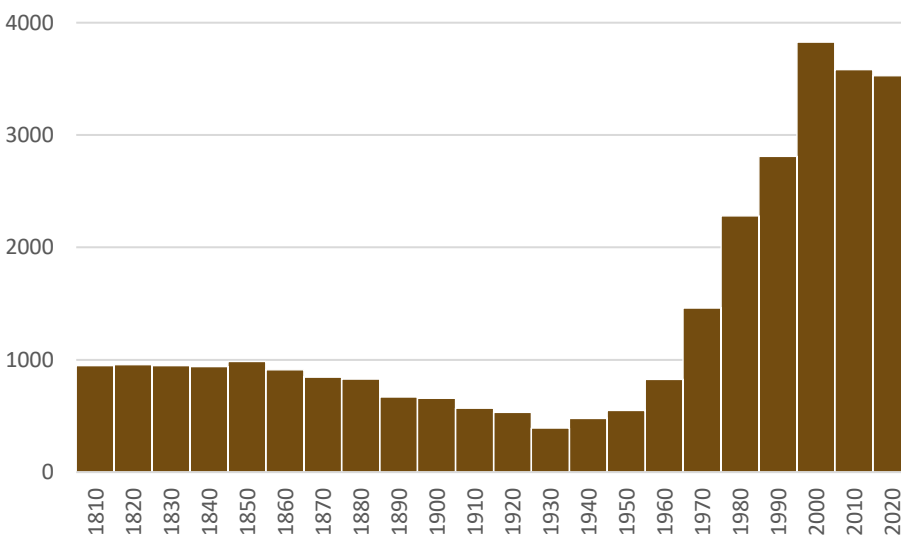
European settlement of this area accelerated in the early 1700s. What we now know as Sherman was originally part of New Fairfield but, as population grew, the residents received permission around 1744 to establish their own congregation and meetinghouse in what was then called “New Dilloway”.

Then, 60 years later residents petitioned the Connecticut General Assembly for permission to become a separate town and in 1802 became Sherman. The town is named for Roger Sherman, the only American to sign four important historical documents: The Continental Association of 1774, The Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and The Federal Constitution.

Farming was the predominant early occupation (dairy, tobacco, etc.), along with mills for timber, shingles, cider and grain. The overall population was closely tied to what the land could support. However, economic opportunities elsewhere resulted in population decreases from 1850 (984 residents) to 1930 (391 residents).

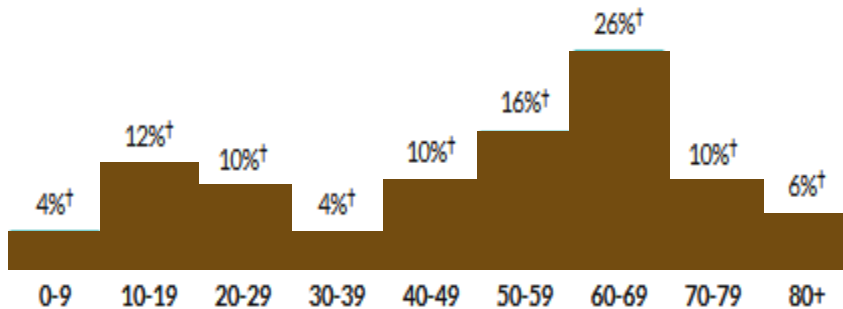
With the flooding of Candlewood Lake in 1928 and the overall trend towards rural/suburban living after World War II, Sherman began to grow again and started to transition towards a more suburban community where people worked elsewhere but were attracted to Sherman by its rural and agricultural resources. The population peaked in 2000 (3,827 residents) and has since decreased to 3,527 residents according to the 2020 Census.

Sherman’s Population 1810 - 2020



In addition to the overall population change, the age composition of Sherman has also been changing. While the median age (half of residents were older and half were younger) in 1980 was 37.4 years, the American Community Survey estimates that the current median age is about 57.1 years. As shown below, about 40% of Sherman's 2020 population was over age 60.

Sherman's 2020 Population Distribution By Age Group



Since older households tend to be smaller households, this helps explain why the population had been decreasing. Put another way, even though Sherman added about 300 housing units since 2000 (an average of about 15 units per year), the population still decreased by about 300 people due to changes in the other housing units in Sherman.

It is unclear what impact the COVID-19 pandemic may have had on this trend since the 2020 Census date of April 1 was just as the pandemic was affecting the United States. Some communities believe they have experienced population increases since people were able to work remotely and may have selected places like Sherman to live.

It is anticipated that there will continue to be development in Sherman. Most of Sherman is zoned for residential/agricultural uses with lot sizes required to be at least 80,000 square feet (about 2 acres in the Residence B Zone in southern Sherman) or 160,000 square feet (about 4 acres in the Farm-Residence Zone in northern Sherman).

Community Survey Results

To help guide preparation of this POCD, the Planning and Zoning Commission conducted an on line survey in the spring of 2022. Overall, 348 people participated:

1. About 86% of participants were owners who live here full-time and about 10% were owners who live here part-time.
2. About 50% of participants had lived in Sherman for 20 years or more. About 22% had lived in Sherman for 10-19 years and about 26% had lived in Sherman for less than 10 years.
3. About 40% of participant were over age 65 and about 57 percent of participants were ages 35 to 64.
4. About 44% of participants identified community character (rural-ness, ambience, reputation, appearance, etc.) as an important factor in their decision to live in Sherman. The next two categories mentioned were “access to natural resources” (15%) and “affordable taxes” (9%).
5. About 89% of participants rated the overall quality of life as excellent or very good.
6. About 86% of participants saw themselves as living in Sherman in 10 years.
7. The characteristics most commonly identified as things participants *liked best* included character, beauty, open space, natural resources, and land trust (participants could identify up to four choices).

	TOTAL
Character	203
Beauty	194
Open Space	174
Natural Resources	146
Land Trust	90
Affordability	74
Schools	67
Town Center	55

	TOTAL
Library	55
Rec. Services / Facilities	55
Government	35
Traffic	26
Housing	25
Businesses	15
Diversity	12
Roads	8

8. Similarly, the characteristics most commonly identified as things participants *would like to see improvements on* included cellphone service, businesses, schools, roads, and recreation services / facilities (participants could identify up to four choices).

	TOTAL
Cell Service	153
Businesses	84
Schools	82
Roads	76
Rec. Services / Facilities	74
Traffic	73
Town Center	69
Internet Service	69
Diversity	68

	TOTAL
Open Space	59
Affordability	59
Housing	43
Natural Resources	38
Land Trust	27
Government	27
Character	19
Beauty	17
Library	3

9. Issues most commonly identified by participants as the *greatest challenge or need* in the next 10 years included age composition, schools, affordability, cellphone service, and economic development.

	TOTAL
Age Composition	124
Schools	114
Affordability	113
Cell Service	104
Economic development	85
Traffic	85
Businesses	83

	TOTAL
Diversity	75
Services	73
Housing	72
Roads	68
Character	59
Internet Service	50
Town Center	29

10. About 68% of participants thought that the historical characterization of Sherman as a rural town with very low future population density, a small commercial center, and little to no industrial activity was very desirable. Another 23% thought this was somewhat desirable and about 8% thought this was somewhat undesirable or very undesirable.

Safeguard Community Resources

The premise that the Town of Sherman is, wishes to remain, and will remain a rural town is consistent with the desires expressed by survey participants and with previous POCDs.

As a rural town, Sherman has country roads; preserved natural features, substantial areas devoted to forestation, agriculture, and open space; preservation of barns and other historic structures; protection of scenic vistas and other scenic resources, a clearly defined town center wherein commercial and municipal services are located; low population density in outlying areas; limited commercial activity; no industrial activity; recreational areas; and no use of sewers, offsite sewage treatment facilities and public water systems.

The key elements of this strategy include:

- Preserve open space
- Encourage preservation of historic resources
- Support agriculture



Photo: Gary Albert:

Preserve Open Space / Undeveloped Land

Preserving open space is widely considered the most effective tool for towns to maintain community attributes, protect natural resources and scenic views, manage growth, and generally enhance the quality of life.

While most people feel that any undeveloped land is “open space”, much of this land is privately owned and could be developed in the future. In other words, much of the town is “perceived” to be open space but is not protected and is potentially developable, subject to regulatory restrictions. For this reason, the POCD urges consideration of three different categories of open space:

- Permanently Protected Open Space
- Land Temporarily Reserved (PA-490)
- Unprotected / Undeveloped Properties

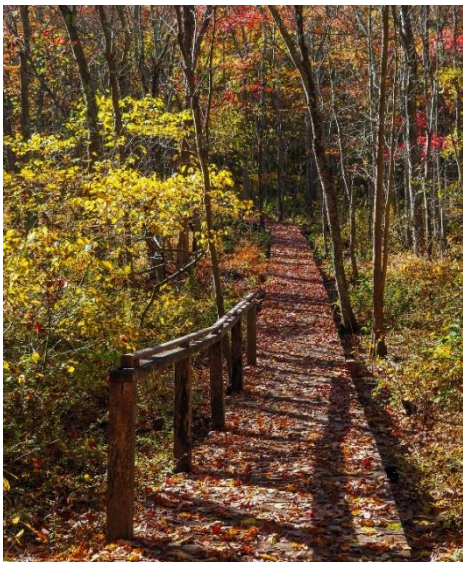


Photo: Linda Hubbard



Photo: Public Domain

Sherman residents have long identified preserving open space as a planning priority.

Priority interest areas for open space preservation identified by the SLAFAB:

- Core forestland
- New York City Croton drinking water system watershed
- Farmland areas
- Candlewood Lake

Permanently Protected Open Space

Permanently preserving land as open space has historically been a Town priority. Based on prior open space planning efforts, the purposes are:

- Protecting natural resources
- Protecting wildlife habitats and resources
- Protecting rural assets and unique aesthetic appeal
- Maintaining and enhancing opportunities for outdoor enjoyment

There are several ways for Sherman to preserve open space. When land is proposed for subdivision development, the Subdivision Regulations require that 15% of the land area be preserved as open space and/or that a payment be made to the Town in lieu of some or all of the open space set-aside requirement. While this may be cost-effective for the Town, the land may not be where the community wants to preserve open space.

Another approach is for the Town (or land trusts or other conservation organizations) proactively seek to acquire open space where it will contribute to a meaningful open space system.

For many years, Sherman has worked to preserve open space, through the efforts of the Town and its Land Acquisition Fund Advisory Board (SLAFAB). However, the SLAFAB no longer receives Town funding, and has been dormant since 2018. If Sherman is to continue to preserve open space an advisory board should be an active part of that process.

The Planning and Zoning Commission recommends a reassessment of the decision to cease the budget item for the acquisition of open space property.

Land Temporarily Reserved (PA-490)

Sherman also uses the “use value assessment program” (codified as CGS Section 12-107 but also known as Public Act 490) to help preserve farm land, forest land, and other undeveloped parcels. This program allows landowners to apply to have their land designated in accordance with the program and reduce their assessment. By making undeveloped land less expensive to own, many property owners hold onto undeveloped parcels longer, thereby enhancing the community. There is a repayment penalty if land is developed within 10 years of its designation. This program is supported by the POCD since it helps Sherman retain its rural appeal.

Unprotected / Undeveloped Properties

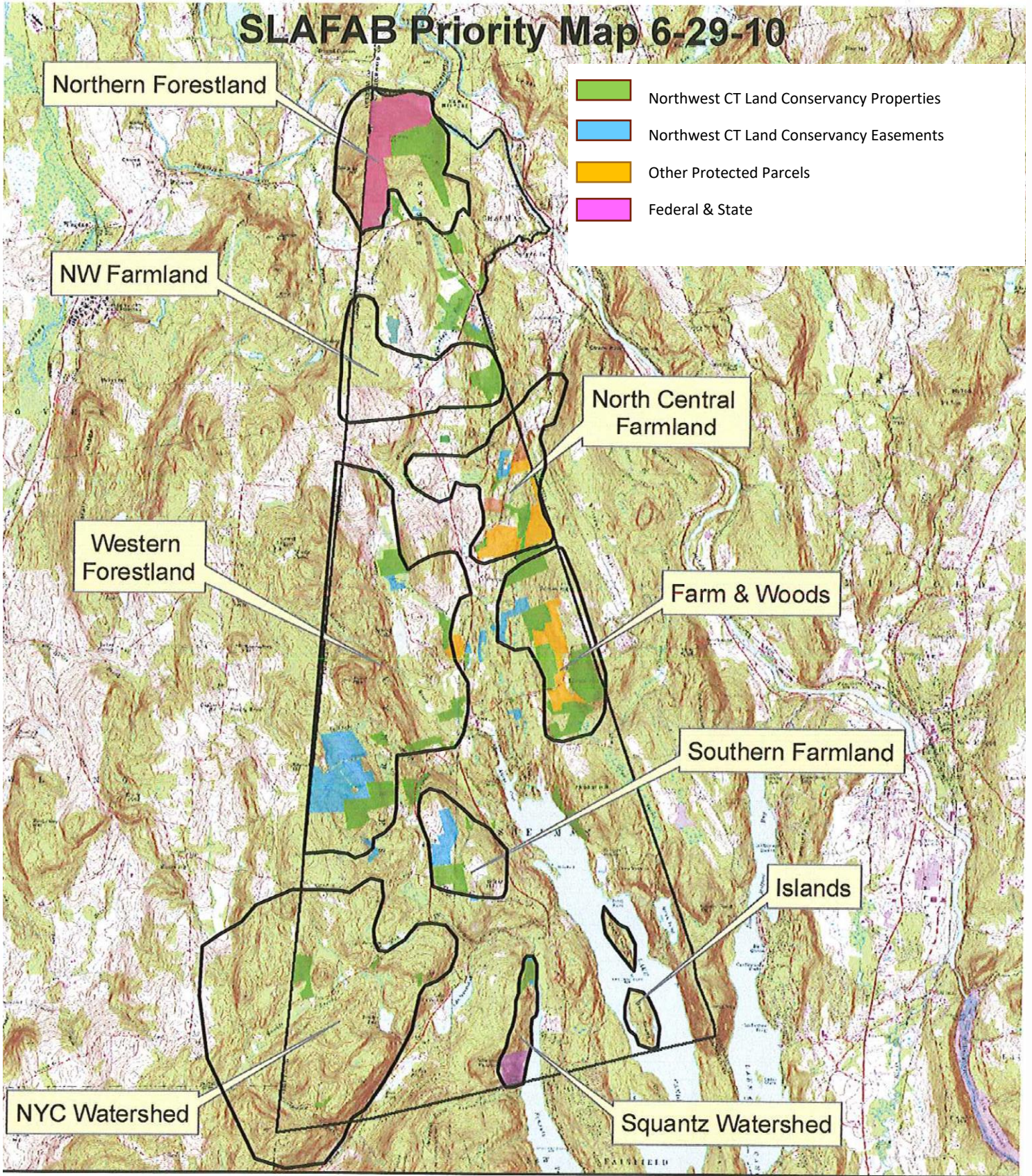
Unprotected and undeveloped properties may be the most likely parcels to be developed in the future. These properties may be the highest priority for evaluation by the SLAFAB.

From The Sherman Conservation Commission

Open Space, Recreational and Scenic Resources: Sherman has a wealth of protected Open Space, including Town-owned Open Space and Town Parks. They define our rural appeal and enhance our recreational opportunities. The following recommendations are aimed at preserving these assets for future townsfolk to enjoy.

- Create a careful review of “perceived open space” that prioritizes land conservation
- Reinstate funding for the Land Acquisition Fund enabling the Town to permanently protect key properties identified above
- Create a Stewardship Plan for all Town-owned Preserves to guide future land use boards as to why these lands were preserved and how to manage them
- Partner with the Northwest Connecticut Land conservancy (NCLC, which absorbed our Naromi Land Trust) to create town-wide and area-wide maps of hiking trails and to collaborate on other conservation projects and programs
- Enhance relationships and possible partnerships between the Town and other local conservation groups, namely CT Audubon’s Deer Pond Farm, Great Hollow Nature Preserve & Ecological Research Center, and the Candlewood Lake Authority

SLAFAB Priority Map 6-29-10



Northern Forestland

NW Farmland

- Northwest CT Land Conservancy Properties
- Northwest CT Land Conservancy Easements
- Other Protected Parcels
- Federal & State

North Central Farmland

Western Forestland

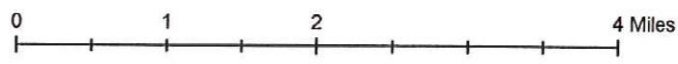
Farm & Woods

Southern Farmland

Islands

NYC Watershed

Squantz Watershed



This map contains no authoritative data and is intended for planning purposes only



Encourage Preservation of Historic Resources

Historic and significant buildings and sites provide a sense of identity and connection to the past, preserve community resources, and enhance the Town's historical heritage. Archeological resources also provide insight into Sherman's and the state's history.

Within Sherman's local historic district, new construction or modifications require a certificate of appropriateness from the Historic District Commission. The POCD recommends that Sherman seek ways to encourage (or require) the preservation of historic and archeologic resources. In addition, the Town should continue to identify properties that contain cultural, historic, archaeologically sensitive and scenic sites and evaluate their preservation potential. The Planning & Zoning Commission may request such archaeologically sensitive surveys for new development in areas where past investigations have shown archaeological potential and/or areas with known archeologic sensitivity.



Outside the designated Historic District, should the Town look to expand the protection of historic or culturally significant structures, barns and properties?

Yes = 72%
No = 16
No opinion = 12%



Photo: Linda Hubbard



Photo: Ashleigh Blake

Encourage Preservation of Scenic Resources

Scenic resources also contribute to Sherman’s appeal. This includes scenic views, scenic roads, and other scenic areas. Since ridge lines (or horizon lines) define much of what we see in Sherman, these areas are particularly important. A question in the community survey looked at this issue:

Which of the following steps should the Town take with respect to activity on ridge lines (or horizon lines) that are determined to be "highly visible" (please select all that apply):

Regulate cutting of trees in areas where that might contribute to sedimentation and erosion	71%
Regulate construction of new buildings in sensitive areas (to minimize building visibility)	69%
Regulate cutting of trees (to minimize overall visibility)	53%
Regulate the architectural features of structures (to mitigate building visibility)	44%
Regulate the color of structures (to mitigate building visibility)	25%
No regulation necessary	9%
None of the above	3%

From The Sherman Conservation Commission

Open Space, Recreational and Scenic Resources: The following recommendations are aimed at preserving scenic assets for future townsfolk to enjoy.

- Promote awareness of the importance of protecting Sherman’s historic stonewalls which are an important part of our town’s rural appeal. Where feasible, utilize existing stonewalls to demarcate property lines in future subdivisions
- Periodically update the newly created Notable Trees of Sherman

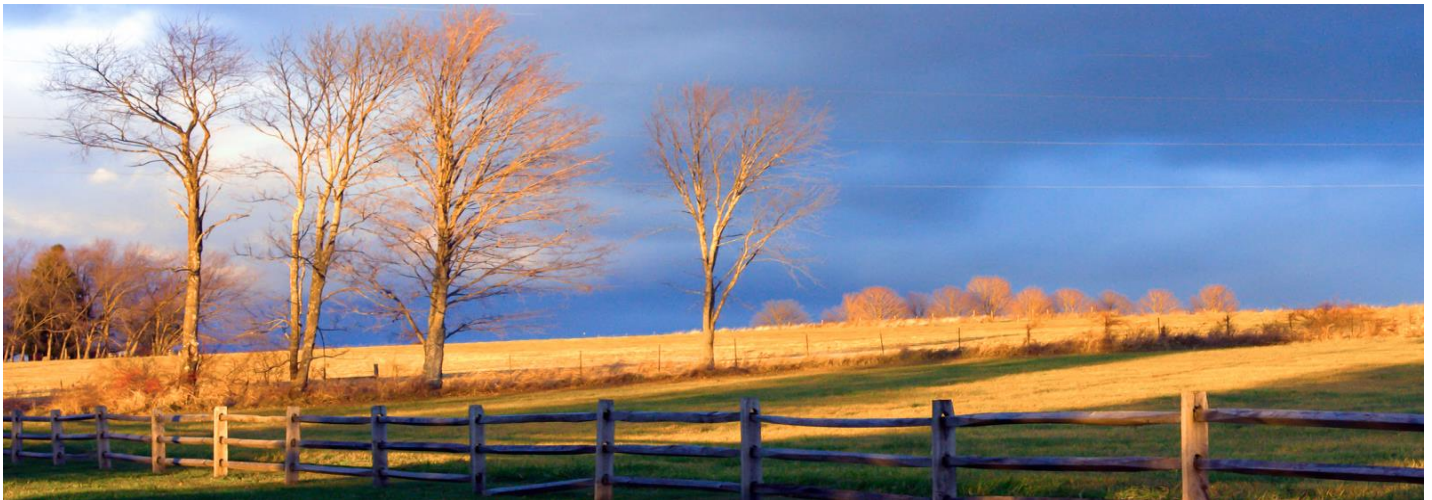


Photo: Cindy O'Connor

Support Agriculture

Farming in its various forms has been central to the history of Sherman since its founding, and agriculture remains an important part of the economy of Sherman today. It is the desire of the town to promote and support farming and farming related activities.

In the 21st century, farming may mean smaller, specialty produce farms addressing the growing demand for organic and locally-grown food and the emergence of a new generation of farmers. These trends may offer opportunities to keep Sherman's farmland in active use.

Over the last decade, the Planning and Zoning Commission added several new regulations to support and encourage farming:

- Allowing farm wineries that permit the growing of grapes, production and sale of wine, a tasting room, and public events
- Allowing farms to add a farm stand or a farm store and host public events on the property, broadening the scope of regulations to encourage economically diverse farm activities which previously had not been allowed

This POCD also recommends the support for reduced local tax assessment on agricultural lands (PA-490 farm assessment); the support of PA-490 farm assessments for property owners who rent their farmland to others for agricultural purposes; the support to conserve agricultural land by allowing smaller home sites in one or more areas and preserving the bulk of the land for agricultural easements.

From The Sherman Conservation Commission

Agricultural Resources: Historically, agriculture had been the center of Sherman's community but like so many of our neighbors in the northeast, the number of farms has drastically declined over the last fifty years. However, society has realized the importance of locally grown food.

- Continue to support our current farmers and encourage development of new farms as we did with Sherman's adoption of a Right to Farm Ordinance in 2019
- Encourage regenerative farming practices that build soil, sequester carbon, enhance biodiversity, and purify air and water while growing healthy food for our community



Photo: Gary Albert



Photo: Gary Albert

Strategies

Open Space

1. Encourage efforts to permanently preserve open space in Sherman.
2. Retain regulations requiring provision of open space at the time of subdivision development.
3. Continue to work with land trusts and other conservation organizations to acquire open space where it will contribute to a meaningful open space system.
4. Continue to utilize the use assessment program (PA 490) to preserve undeveloped land.

Historic Resources

5. Encourage the evaluation and preservation of potentially historic of properties that contain cultural historic and archeologic resources and scenic sites.

Scenic Resources

6. Continue to encourage the preservation of scenic resources.
 - 6.1. Strive to preserve ridgelines and horizons (see report by Office of Legislative Research 94-R-0328).
 - 6.2. Create a Horizon Line map to identify and protect Sherman's ridgelines.

Agriculture

7. Continue to promote and support farming and farm related activities.
8. Encourage "Buy Local" promotional programs.

Seek To Attract Younger Families

As was noted earlier in the Conditions and Trends section, Sherman's age composition is changing and the median age of the residents is trending older. Residents are aware of this and "age composition" was identified in the community survey as the top challenge or issue facing the community over the next 10 to 20 years.

Reasons why Sherman's age composition is trending this way may include:

- Fewer economic opportunities in the community
- Fewer housing opportunities for younger families
- Housing costs outpacing income growth
- Higher costs of living in Sherman

Attracting younger families might help to:

- Support the school
- Replenish the supply of volunteers, and
- Continue to invigorate the community with new initiatives and ideas



Photo: Gary Albert



Photo: Michael Burrmano

To accomplish this overall strategy, Sherman might be able to:

- Explore ways to provide for more affordable housing in Sherman
- Encourage economic growth in Sherman (and the region) to offer more jobs, goods, services, and net tax revenue to help attract and retain potential residents
- Support broadband / fiber optic capacity in Sherman (and cell phone service) in order to better serve the remote work opportunities which could thrive in Sherman

In addition to these efforts, Sherman should be proactive about making people aware of the activities and amenities so that more young people will consider Sherman as a place to live, raise a family, and grow old here as many generations have done so before.

The POCD recommends that Sherman undertake efforts and activities to attract more young people and families.

Strategies

1. Undertake efforts and activities to attract more young people and families to Sherman.
2. Be proactive about making people aware of the activities and amenities so that more young people will consider Sherman as a place to live.
3. Explore ways to encourage more affordable housing options as outlined in Sherman's Affordable Housing Plan.



Photo: Linda Hubbard

Protect Important Resources

Sherman contains many important natural resources which are integral to overall environmental quality and community appeal.

Sherman does not exist in isolation from the larger forces affecting the environment of our planet. Global climate change is happening all around us and our essential planning guidelines must reflect this reality. The use of non-fossil fuels for homeowners' electric and heating need, the availability of tax credits, enticements to foster the installation of solar and geothermal alternatives and any new technologies shall be encouraged.

As indicated below, some resources should be targeted for preservation because of their environmental values while other resources can be targeted for conservation while development occurs around them. We are the stewards of the land, maintaining and enjoying it, then passing it on to the next generation. The quality of life and the value of real property in Sherman are affected by how individual property owners develop and use their land. Education, regulation, and enforcement are tools that Sherman will use to preserve the integrity of our natural environment.

	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
Resources for Preservation	Resources so important to environmental quality or community assets that alterations to these areas should be avoided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality • Watercourses/bodies • Inland wetlands • Steep slopes (>25%) • Flood plains
Resources for Conservation	Resources with important functions that can be maintained, with compatible activities developed in an environmentally sensitive way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitive watershed areas • Stream-belt buffer areas • Unique or special habitat • Environmentally sensitive areas

Sherman's natural beauty and open space are what residents value most, according to the 2022 Town of Sherman Planning and Development Commission Survey. Stresses from climate change, habitat fragmentation and aggressive invasive plants mean our natural resources are in danger of serious damage or depletion. We must act collectively as a Town and individually as property owners to be stewards of our natural resources. The recommendations below have been developed by the Sherman Conservation Commission (SCC) for inclusion in the 2022 Planning and Commission report.

1. Reviews and reports annually on progress toward fulfilling recommendations.
2. Allocates sufficient resources, both budgetary and personnel, to implement them.

Candlewood Lake



Photo: Public Domain

Woodlands / Riparian Buffer



Photo: CT Audubon

Wetland / Watercourse



Photo: Public Domain

Wildlife Habitat



Photo: CT Audubon

Protect Water Quality

Water quality is important to the overall environmental health in Sherman - both for residents and for people who obtain water from the watershed and reservoirs which supply water to the New York City area.

Public education and involvement are essential parts of any strategy to protect water quality. Educational materials and programs about septic maintenance, hazardous materials, reducing or eliminating sediment runoff, lawn and garden fertilizers/chemicals, yard composting, clear-cutting of understory, wetlands protection and other issues may be sponsored by the town commissions and private organizations. Such programs will help educate residents on threats to water quality and the cumulative impact of many individual decisions.

Public sewers are not located in the town and are likely to be avoided in the future. Regular septic tank management is the single most important step homeowners can take to protect the quality of water. It could start with programs to educate property owners, and if problems arise in the future, the POCD recommends that Sherman consider adopting an ordinance that requires septic tanks to be pumped and inspected periodically, with the results to be reported to the Town.

The Town initiated a plan to reduce the amount of salt and chlorides applied to our winter roadways resulting in a reduction of these substances found in municipal and local wells. Continued attention to the best management practices of the application of these products will help to mitigate the impact on our water quality.



The application of fertilizers, pesticides, ice removal agents and other toxic or hazardous chemicals can, if improperly applied, migrate into the waterbodies with harmful effects.

Should the Town make available informational guidelines for property owners covering the use of these materials?

Yes =	87%
No =	7%
No opinion =	6%

From The Sherman Conservation Commission

Aquatic Resources: Our waterways and ground water are very susceptible to contamination by siltation and use of pesticides, fertilizers, and salt. Recent examples are milfoil and blue green algae in our lakes and ponds and salt contamination of wells in the center of town.

- Educate the public on the hazards of certain chemicals and encourage the use of organic pesticides and fertilizers for Town and private use
- Incentivize the creation of vegetative buffer zones along water's edge to protect Candlewood Lake and other Town water bodies from pesticides, fertilizers, and sediment
- Increase the protected setback for vernal pools to maintain this critical habitat
- Create and distribute a pamphlet for homeowners on how a septic system works and how to maintain it, including pumping out of the tank every 2-3 years. Reassess in 5-10 years whether more is needed



Photo: Cindy O'Connor

Protect Key Habitat Areas

Certain lands within the Town of Sherman provide habitat for rare and endangered species. The main resources for this is the State's Natural Diversity Database.

This POCD calls for preservation of the integrity of areas on the Natural Diversity Database. Development of such locations shall be permitted only after all appropriate steps have been taken to safeguard the rare and significant feature or to preserve its natural or social value. In addition, the POCD promotes the use of native species and discourages the use of invasive species.

Protect Forest Resources

Connecticut is about sixty percent (60%) forests with approximately seventy-three percent (73%) being private owned. Sherman falls into that category. Forests everywhere are increasingly stressed by pollution and disease, and their integrity threatened as ownership passes to others who may be more inclined to sell forest parcels for development.

Educating ourselves about best forest management practices is an important task to preserve the long term stewardship and management of our forestlands.

From The Sherman Conservation Commission

Terrestrial Habitats: The preservation of core forestlands is essential to maintaining healthy and critical habitats. Large tracts of contiguous forest are used as wildlife corridors and enable animals to travel between different types of habitats to reach food sources and breeding sites. Our four-acre zoning helps control our overall population density, but does not prevent core forest fragmentation, which creates a significant loss of habitat for our flora and fauna dependent on core forests.

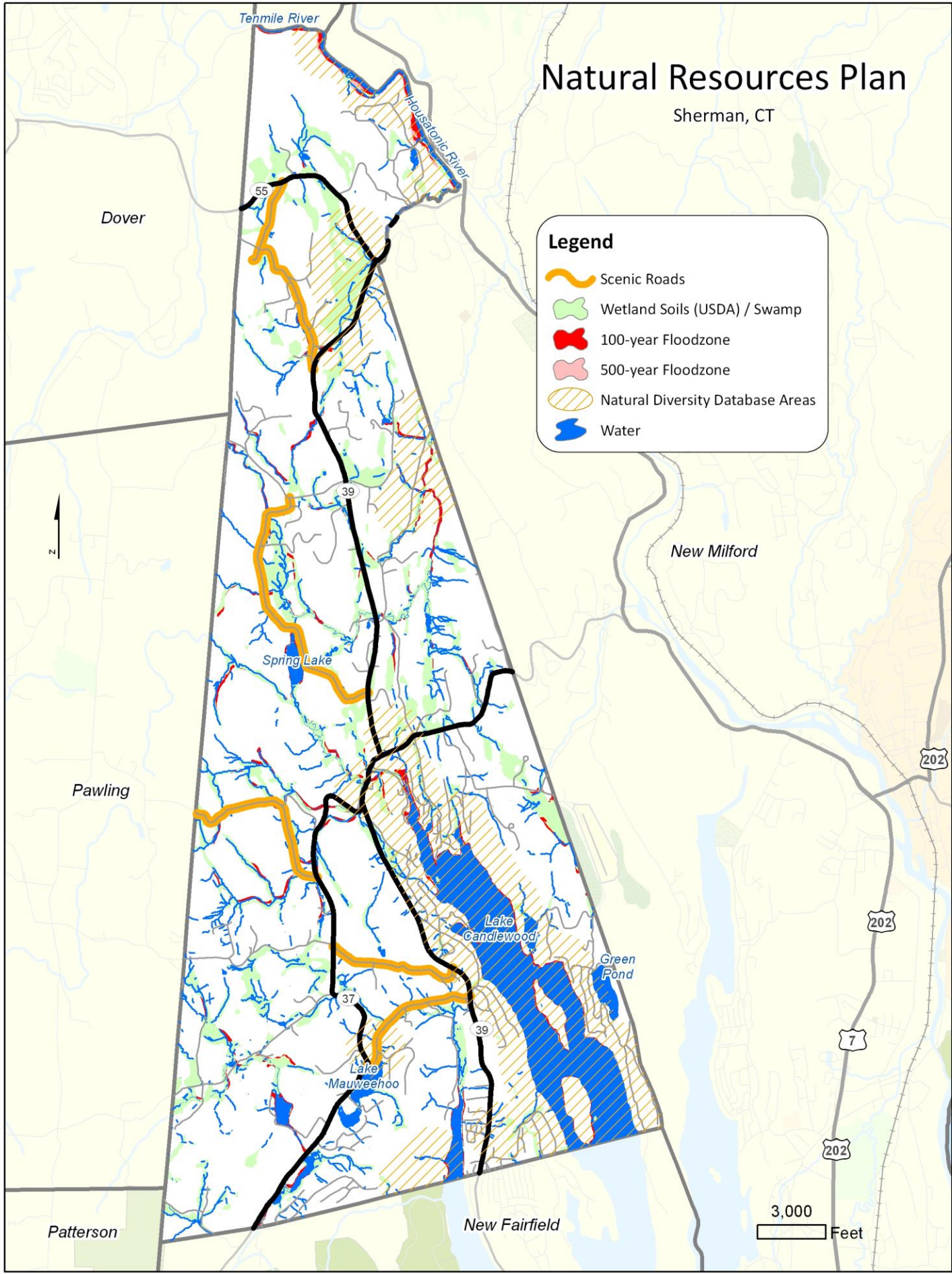
- Research whether Sherman should create Conservation Zoning where homes are allowed on smaller lots to permanently protect contiguous forested areas
- Identify and map core forested areas and wildlife corridors for use in decision-making
- Continue educating the public on the problems caused by invasive plants and insects, as well as how to recognize and control them
- Regulate the clear cutting of forests in sensitive areas, like slopes exceeding 25%
- Create a map locating endangered species, vernal pools, and archeological/historic sites for use when land development decisions are being made
- Continue the Weed Warrior Program, with volunteers helping control invasive plant species on public lands
- Encourage the preservation of mature and notable trees

Natural Resources Plan

Sherman, CT

Legend

- Scenic Roads
- Wetland Soils (USDA) / Swamp
- 100-year Floodzone
- 500-year Floodzone
- Natural Diversity Database Areas
- Water



Strategies

Water Quality

1. Continue to protect water quality (both surface water and groundwater) in Sherman.
 - 1.1. Undertake public education programs to involve residents in protecting water quality and the cumulative impact of many individual decision.
 - 1.2. Encourage regular septic tank management.
 - 1.3. Encourage best management practices for the application of salt and chloride to our roadways.

Key Habitat Areas

2. Seek to preserve key habitat areas, especially those listed on the State's Natural Diversity Database.
3. Seek to identify and eradicate invasive plant species.
4. Promote healthy vegetation for stronger soil base and reduce erosion.
5. Continue to promote the use of native species and discourage the use of invasive species.

Forest Resources

6. Become informed about best forest management practices in order to preserve the long term stewardship and management of our forestlands.

Implementation

7. The Conservation Commission should annually review, report and allocate on progress toward fulfilling recommendations.

Guide Development

Nurture and Support the Town Center

The town center is the focal point of many community activities and Sherman residents are rightfully proud of their village center.

In the POCD survey of 2022 the people of Sherman indicated their preference for small scale commercial activity, the concentration of such activities within the Town Center and maintaining the Town Center at its' present size and boundaries. A thriving Town Center is vital to supporting a viable livable community. We encourage and welcome the introduction of new business and value the economic growth and social benefits they afford. All new commercial establishments seeking to operate within the Town Center are subject to the Special Permit process of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

The POCD anticipates and intends that the intensity of the village area be retained. In keeping with the Town's chosen rural-town orientation, its small resident population, and the wide range of commercial activities available in immediately adjacent towns, this plan anticipates that commercial uses in the Town Center will remain few in number, and directly pertinent to the needs of the Town's resident population.

The Town Center (Zone C and Zone D) is already close to full development and in many cases with lot sizes smaller than the 40,000 square foot requirement within Zone C. No change shall be made in the building lot requirements of the Town Center unless the Health Department determines that a substantial risk of septic system failure exists within the Center. In the event of such a determination, the Town shall take such steps as may be necessary to protect the health of the Town's citizens and the integrity of its health and planning codes.

Other than home occupations and resident contractors, the Town Center contains virtually all the government and commercial business locations that exist in the Town. It is anticipated and intended that this pattern will continue in the future. The central businesses of the commercial zone are the grocery store, tea shop, coffee roaster, bank, bakery, restaurant, liquor store, post office, an auto repair shop, hair salon, and a child care facility.

A plan for pedestrian walkways, which allow safe passage on heavily traveled state highways and Town roads through the Town Center, should be reinvestigated.

Sherman Town Center Area





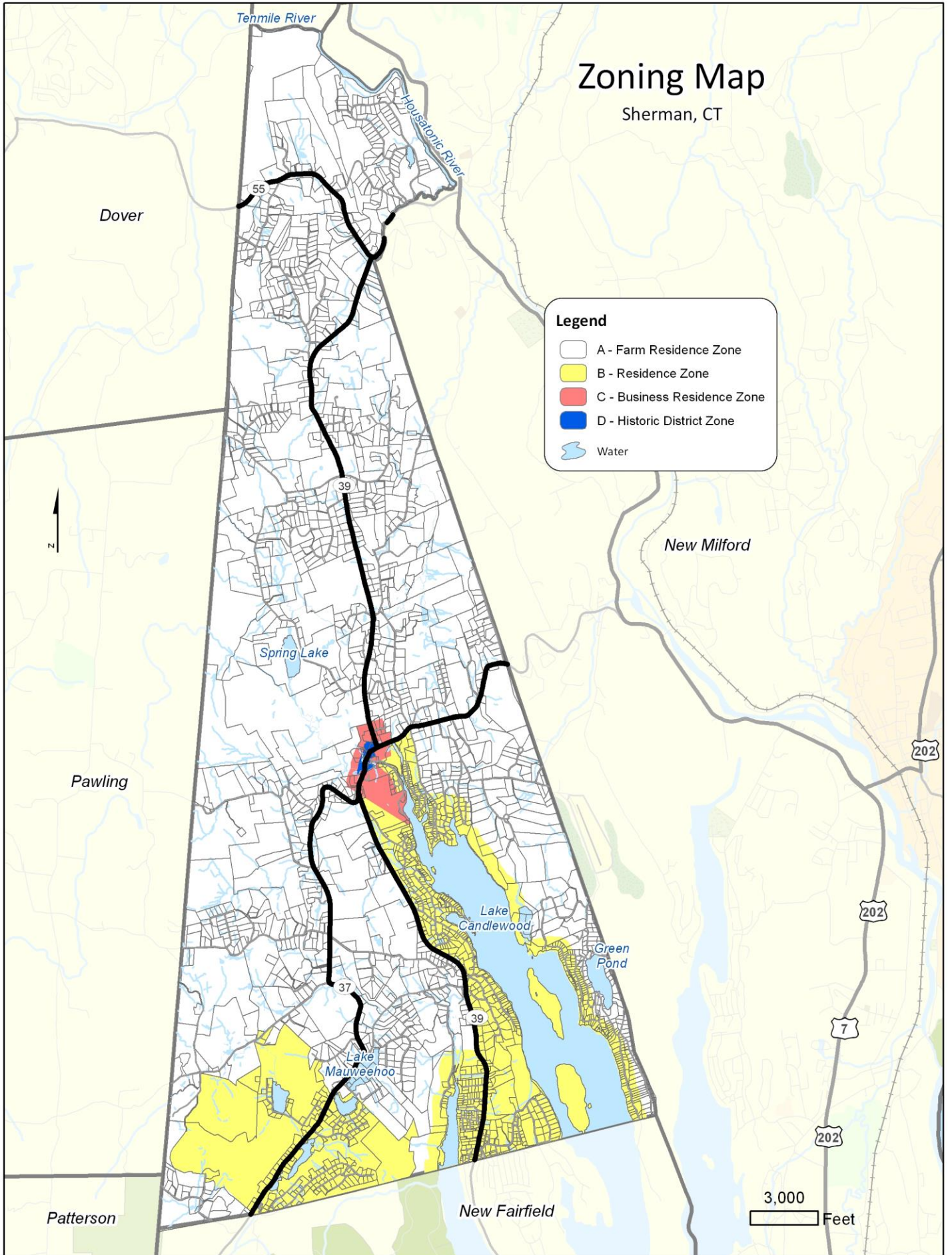
Photo: Public Domain

Zoning Map

Sherman, CT

Legend

-  A - Farm Residence Zone
-  B - Residence Zone
-  C - Business Residence Zone
-  D - Historic District Zone
-  Water



Manage Business Development

Sherman is a rural town, defined by low population density, low population growth, no town sewer systems, relatively little commercial activity and little to no industrial activity. This has been the historic direction of Sherman.

In a community like Sherman, home-based businesses are normal and appropriate to the rural town that Sherman is and wishes to remain. The uses listed below are available equally to the owners of land in the Town, and to those who obtain use of such land by rent, lease, contract or easement.

	DESCRIPTION
Home Occupations	Home occupations are non-agricultural activities carried on by individuals on their property for the production of income and are a vital economic asset to the Town. The Town of Sherman permits home occupation businesses according to the nature of the work being performed and the effect on adjacent and nearby properties. Home Occupations have risen, over the years as more of the workforce has the ability and has been encouraged by employers to “work from home”. The years 2020 through 2022 saw the most dramatic increase.
Resident Contractors	Resident contractors are individuals who perform work at their customer’s properties and work sites, but who use their residential property for office functions, for vehicle parking and for storage of tools and work materials. Resident contractors are a mainstay of the Town population and their continuation is encouraged by Town policy and regulation.

Principles for New Business Activities

Uses of land in the Town of Sherman for income-producing activities, other than those reasonably necessary to the normal and orderly functioning of the Town, should be subject to the following general limitations:

- Not detract from Sherman’s rural town attributes
- Not adversely affect the value of adjacent or nearby property
- Not adversely impact quality of life on adjacent or nearby property
- Not place excessive demands on available services provided by the Town

Implementation of these general principles will reside largely with the Planning & Zoning Commission, which will reflect their intent in the drafting or revision of its regulations, and in the application of its regulations, principally through the special permitting process.

There is at present no industrial activity in the Town of Sherman. Due to the Town’s current inability (and probable future inability) to meet the transportation, water supply and septic disposal needs of such use, this plan does not provide for the possibility of such use. Any change from this direction is subject to the consideration and approval of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Manage Residential Development

This POCD expressly contemplates the continued residential development of lands within the Town, subject to the following considerations:

- Every residential lot within the Town of Sherman shall meet its own water supply and septic disposal needs on site, in perpetuity and comply with the requirements of the State Health Code
- The Planning & Zoning Commission may evaluate the minimum lot sizes and other conditions for the approval of building lots to reflect the amount and conditions of land necessary to meet residential water supply and septic disposal needs on site, in perpetuity
- Where residences or other structures have been constructed on lots that do not meet current standards for water supply and septic disposal, by reason of size or other characteristics, the Health Department shall, to the degree permitted by law, inspect such lots from time to time to ensure that septic system failures are rapidly identified and contained
- Since protection of water quality is so important, the Town will continue to enforce the Health Code, monitor any problem sites or areas, and require remediation as soon as possible

Consider Ways to Enable More Housing Options

The essential nature of a rural town provides limited opportunity for the development of diverse housing opportunities. However, some possible opportunities are discussed below.

Accessory Dwelling Units - Accessory apartments, accessory dwellings, and detached accessory apartments are permitted, subject to Special Permit. Although not meeting the State of Connecticut affordable housing standards, the presence of these apartments and dwellings does help address the need for lower cost housing within the Town of Sherman.

Conservation Development - Permitting of open space development allowing houses to be located closer together in order to preserve larger areas of open space around the housing areas assuming it leads to no more housing units than a normal development would contain. This open space development more closely matches early Connecticut rural development patterns than does our current suburban development pattern.

Sherman could consider "conservation development" approaches which allow the same number of houses as a traditional subdivision but located closer together on a parcel of land in order to preserve scenic views, ridge lines, rural character, and larger areas of open space around the housing areas. Do you feel this approach should be considered?

Yes	66%
No opinion	11%
No	23%

Affordable Housing Choices / Options - There is a growing realization that increasing housing costs are making it difficult for seniors to stay in Sherman and for younger people to come to Sherman. The community survey conducted as part of the POCD asked the following questions:

If Sherman were to look at ways to address housing affordability, what type of housing do you feel might work best in Sherman?

	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	No Preference	Somewhat Disfavor	Strongly Disfavor
Accessory Dwelling Units	37%	28%	12%	9%	13%
Rental Apartments Just For Seniors	23%	25%	10%	13%	29%
Condominium Units Just For Seniors	17%	29%	11%	11%	32%
Mix of Market Rate / Affordable Ownership Units	16%	29%	11%	11%	34%
Mix of Market Rate / Affordable Rental Units	13%	22%	12%	11%	42%
Rental Apartments	10%	17%	10%	17%	46%
Condominium Units	7%	19%	9%	15%	50%

Addressing housing affordability in ways the Town [prefers] might be eased if the Town of Sherman were to participate by donating land or getting otherwise involved. How do you feel about that possibility?

The Town should definitely consider this	15%
The Town should look into this	18%
No opinion / no preference	6%
The Town might establish regulations	7%
Let developers propose things the Town would respond to	12%
Not in favor	43%

Would you be in favor of allowing detached accessory apartments and dwellings to be built on 2 acre and 4 acre lots on the same property as the primary residence when the well and septic can be accommodated?

Yes	66%
No opinion	11%
No	23%

Strategies

Town Center

1. Retain the character and density of the village area.
2. Seek to welcome, and encourage support for businesses within the Town Center.
3. Reinvestigate creating a plan for pedestrian walkways, which allow safe passage on heavily traveled state highways and Town roads through the Town Center.

Business Development

4. Guide and manage business development to:
 - 4.1. Not detract from Sherman's rural town character.
 - 4.2. Not adversely affect the value of adjacent or nearby property.
 - 4.3. Not adversely impact quality of life on adjacent or nearby property.
 - 4.4. Not place excessive demands on available services provided by the Town.

Residential Development

5. Guide and manage residential development to ensure it meets its own water supply and septic disposal needs on site, in perpetuity.

Housing Options

6. Investigate ways to increase the availability of accessory dwelling units (accessory apartments and accessory dwellings) in Sherman.
7. The following strategies have been adopted in Sherman's Affordable Housing Plan, adopted in May of 2022 and therefore became municipal strategies for increasing affordable housing options in the next five years.
8. Educate existing and potential new residents as well as realtors, about various mortgage programs offered through USDA and CHFA.
9. Work with the Danbury Housing Authority on offering the homeownership voucher program in Sherman.
10. Educate the availability of Connecticut Rental Assistance Program and Section 8 Residential Assistance program to new and existing residents.
11. Reinitiate discussions of providing Senior Housing near the town center (as recommended by the Housing Commission). A new Senior Housing development can be constructed privately and deed restricted or use government funding to construct or provide rental assistance to residents or any combination of the above. All of these options would increase qualifying affordable housing in Sherman.
12. Create overall affordability in the town by updating Accessory Dwelling Regulations to comply with the Public Act 21-29.

Provide For Services/Facilities

For the POCD, services and facilities include the following although strategies are generally not identified for private and semi-private facilities:

Town Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mallory Town Hall • Emergency Services Facility • Sherman School • Senior Center • Parks • Recreation facilities • Town-owned land (not designated as open space)
Private and Semi-Private Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sherman Library • Sherman Playhouse • Jewish Community Center • Sherman Congregational Church • Holy Trinity Catholic Church
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads • Sidewalks
Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private wells • Private septic systems • Wired utilities (e.g., electricity, cable and phone) • Wireless utilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Sherman Town Hall



Photo: Public Domain

Sherman Library



Photo: Ashleigh Blake

Address Community Facility Needs

Town Facilities and Services

1. Town Hall is expected to be adequate for community needs for the 10-year planning period of this POCD.
2. At the current time, the size of the elementary/middle school is anticipated to be adequate to meet the needs of the community.
3. The garage and storage facility of the Department of Public Works is located outside the Town Center. With the recent expansion of the garage storage facilities and the construction of a wash station for Town vehicles, this facility is expected to be adequate for community needs during the planning period.
4. The Emergency Services Facility has been expanded and now houses the Volunteer Fire Department, Fire Marshal and the Resident State Trooper, as well as a public meeting place. This expansion is expected to meet the needs of the Volunteer Fire Department and the Town for the foreseeable future. Fire staffing and response times are routinely monitored.
5. The Town is currently considering the expansion of the Senior Center and the services provided.
6. Park and recreation facilities are expected to be adequate for community needs for the 10-year planning period of this POCD.
7. Land owned or controlled by the Town within the Center has been sufficient to accommodate Town facility needs to date and is expected to be able to meet community needs during the planning period.
8. The Town Center has undergone recent renovations providing improved sidewalks, and public areas for sitting and relaxation.

Private and Semi-Private Facilities and Services

9. The Sherman Library is located in the Town Center as well.
10. The Sherman Playhouse and the Jewish Community Center provide the Town with cultural, artistic, and community events.
11. Two churches are located in Town: the Sherman Congregational Church on Church Road, and Holy Trinity Catholic Church in the Town Center.

Address Transportation Needs

The major federal and state highways that provide long-distance access to Sherman (primarily Connecticut Route 7 and New York State Route 22) lie entirely outside the boundaries and control of the Town. Three smaller state highways, Connecticut Routes 37, 39 and 55, provide immediate access into and through the Town.

Sherman has a network of Town and private roads. These roadways are important to the quality of life within the Town not only as transportation routes, but also as vantage points for enjoying the scenic attractions of the Town.

Town roadways should retain as much as possible the character of scenic rural lanes. A Scenic Road Ordinance was adopted in 2005 to help protect the unique character of Sherman's roads.

Land use regulations should encourage setbacks for housing and other development from well-traveled roads to enhance the rural appearance of such roads.

Additional sidewalks to allow walking in the Center of Town should be reconsidered.

Connectivity for bicycles and pedestrians should be considered, especially in areas where "dead-end" roads are in close proximity. Potential connectivity of Town Roads (for example: Jericho Road North into Jericho Road South), to enable pedestrian walking access and passage for emergency vehicles should be considered.

Scenic Road



Photo: Public Domain

Scenic Road

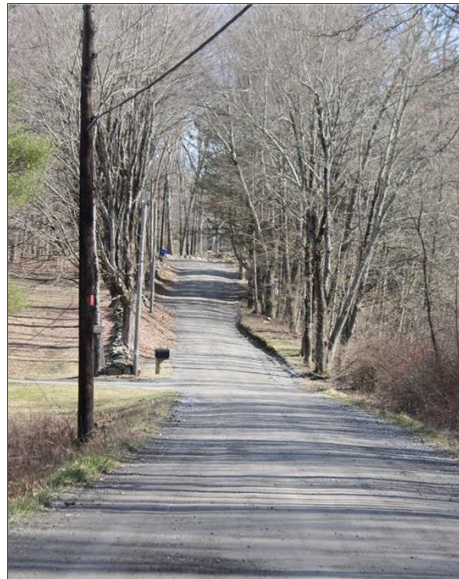


Photo: Public Domain

Address Infrastructure Needs

Infrastructure facilities (such as storm drainage, electricity, cable communications / internet, and wireless services) are important to Sherman residents.

New infrastructure facilities, if any, should be subject to the following principles:

1. New roadside utilities and existing roadside utilities, when replaced or upgraded should, to the fullest extent possible, be placed underground.
2. In general, the use of “site-scaled” renewable and “green” energy sources (solar, wind, geo-thermal, etc.) should be encouraged across the town where possible. The Board of Selectmen should consider these options for new town construction and renovations. Large scale and/or utility-scale energy installations are not recommended by the POCD.
3. Providing full wireless coverage in Sherman is difficult due to topography, as there are dead spots which impact communications. There was a successful installation of a cellular tower on private property in southern Sherman in 2022. When completed, this is projected to improve wireless coverage along the State Route 37 corridor and much of southern Sherman will be improved. The town Emergency Services communications will benefit directly by expanding their coverage as well. Improvements to all town areas should continue to be reviewed.

Strategies

Community Facilities And Services

1. Continue to monitor the adequacy and sufficiency of community facility and services.

Transportation

2. Continue to monitor the safety and condition of local roads.
3. Continue efforts to retain as much as possible the character of scenic roads.
4. Seek opportunities to provide additional sidewalks in the center of Town to allow walking.
5. Consider connectivity for bicycles and pedestrians, especially in areas where “dead-end” roads are in close proximity.

Infrastructure

6. Encourage the use of “site-scaled” renewable and “green” energy sources (solar, wind, geo-thermal, etc.) where possible.

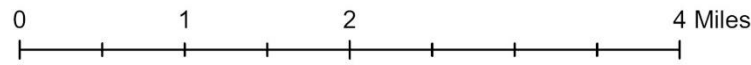
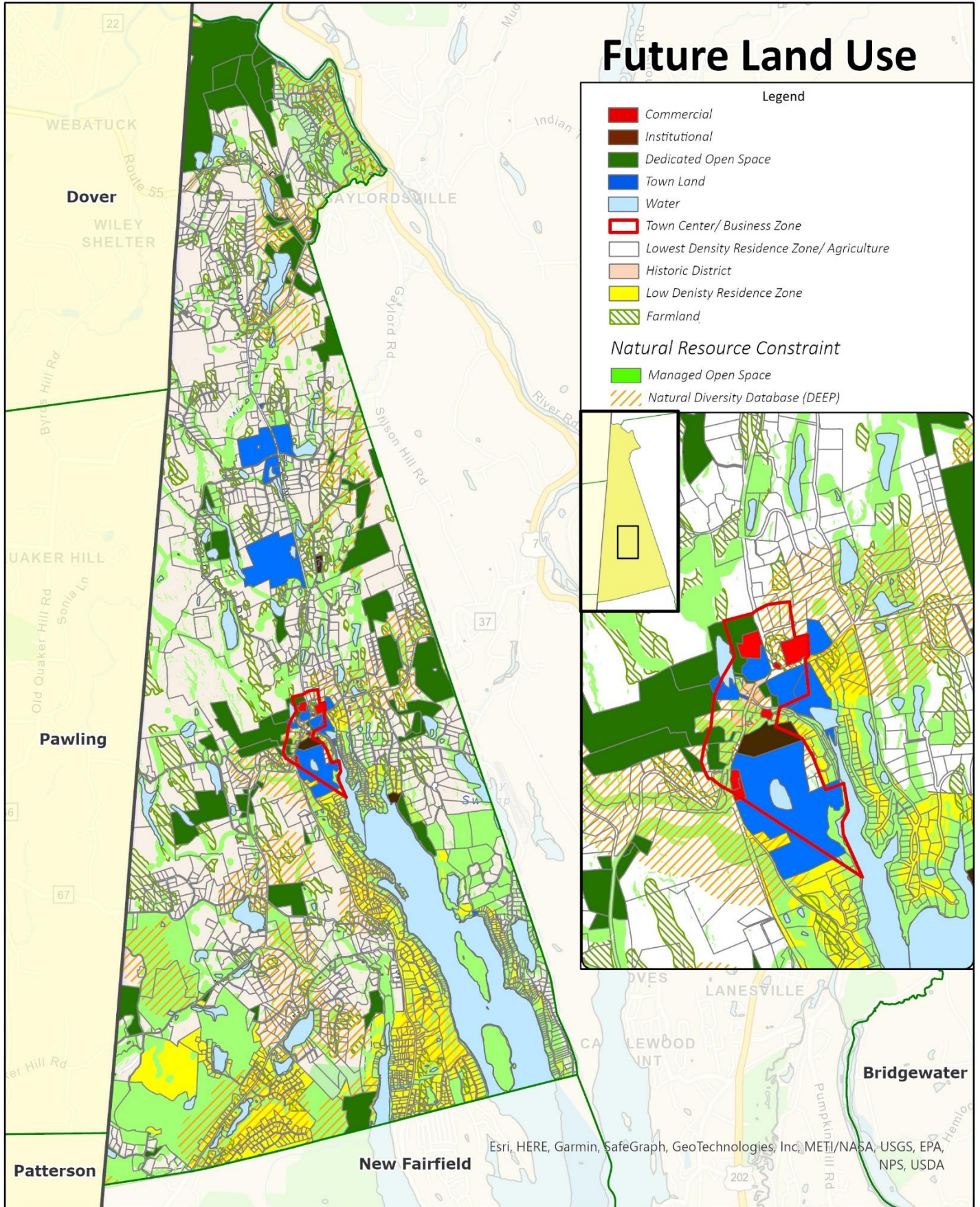
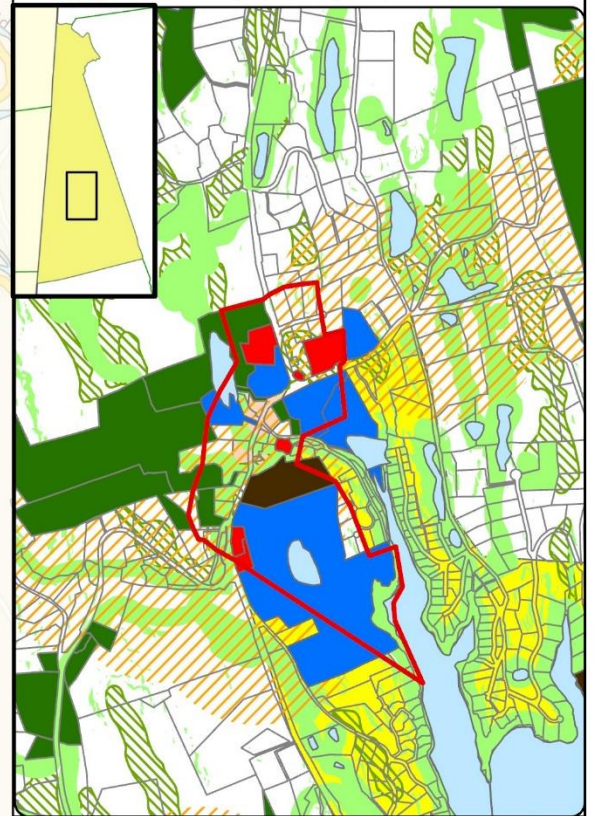
Future Land Use

Legend

- Commercial
- Institutional
- Dedicated Open Space
- Town Land
- Water
- Town Center/ Business Zone
- Lowest Density Residence Zone/ Agriculture
- Historic District
- Low Density Residence Zone
- Farmland

Natural Resource Constraint

- Managed Open Space
- Natural Diversity Database (DEEP)



This map contains no authoritative data and is intended for planning purposes only



Documents and Information

This POCD is a strategic document – that is, it focuses on where Sherman intends to go from here. As a result, much of the inventory and assessment information which was used to formulate the strategies will be found in background documents that collectively make up the Town’s “Planning Library” and an online survey conducted in 2022. The Planning Library provides background and more detailed information about topics in this POCD. For example, documents in the Planning Library include items such as the:

1. POCD Online Survey Results (2022)
2. Natural Resource Inventory Report and Recommendations (2018)
3. Report on the Study to Determine the Feasibility for Senior Housing Options (2020)
4. Open Space Plan (1968) Planning & Zoning Minutes 1937-1984 pgs. 315-321
5. Plan of Conservation and Development (1979)
6. Plan of Conservation and Development (2001)
7. Plan of Conservation and Development (2013)
8. Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations
9. Zoning Regulations & Subdivision Regulations, Last Amended October 27, 2022
10. 2020-23 Western Connecticut Regional Plan of Conservation and Development
11. Open Space Plan Land Map prepared by SLAFAB (2010)
12. The Sherman Annex to the 2022 Western Connecticut Regional Affordable Housing Toolbox (Sherman’s Affordable Housing Plan, adopted May 2022)



Photo: Cindy O'Connor

Acknowledgements

Planning and Zoning Commission

Ryan Peburn, Chairman
Christian Dacunha, Vice-Chairman
Mary Lee, Secretary
Jeannene M. Burruano
David Febbraio
Jerry Siegel
Paul Voorhees
Jill L. Finch, Alternate
Julia Verlaine, Alternate
Lauren Weber, Alternate

Board of Selectmen

Don Lowe, First Selectman
Robert Ostrosky, Selectman
Joel Bruzinski, Selectman

Conservation Commission

William McCann, Chairman
Michele MacKinnon, Vice Chairman
Colette Shulman
Lauren Weber
Anne Weisberg
Christine Aruza, Clerk

Zoning Office Staff

Ronald Cooper, Enforcement Officer
Christine I. Coultrip-Branson, Administrative Assistant

Technical Assistance

Glenn Chalder, Planimetrics AICP

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Cindy O'Connor Big Shots by Cindy
Linda Hubbard Country Elegance Photos

