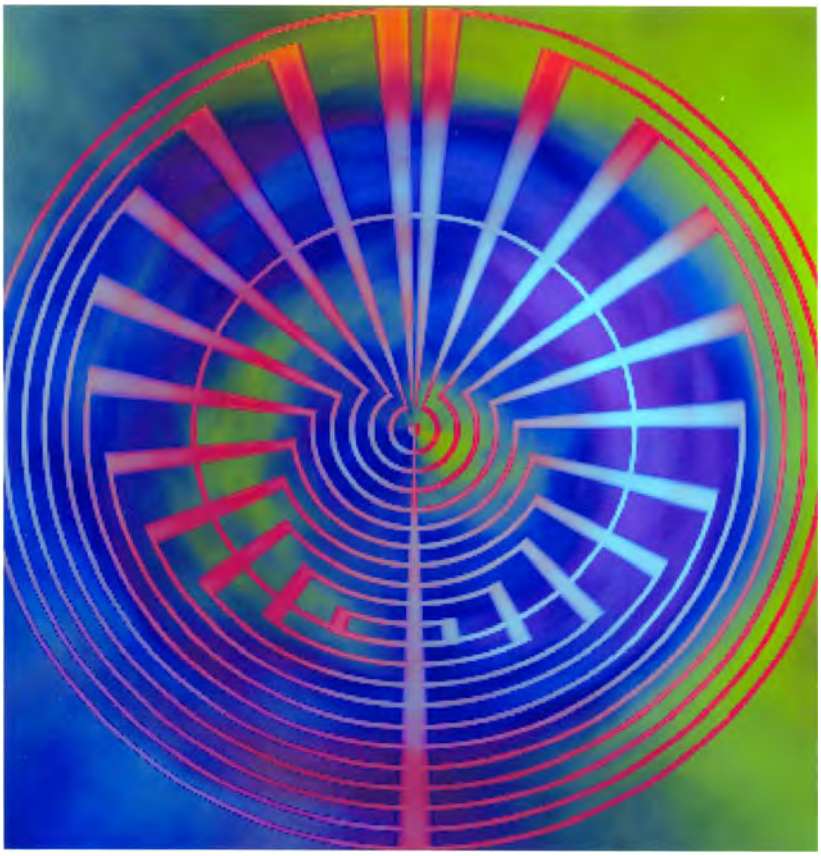
PLAN of CONSERVATION and DEVELOPMENT



City of Bristol, CT

ADOPTED: November 29, 2000

EFFECTIVE: December 18, 2000

City of Bristol

BRISTOL, CONNECTICUT 06010

December, 2000

Dear Citizens of Bristol:

We are pleased to submit to you the 2000 Plan of Conservation and Development for the City of Bristol. Presented in an easy-to-follow format and written in a straightforward style, the Plan includes a series of goals, policies and recommendations intended to address such important community issues as housing, public facilities, transportation, economic development and the environment. Of particular significance in this Plan is its in-depth study of downtown Bristol. That study lays the foundation for a long-term, comprehensive revitalization program designed to re-establish the downtown area as the city's center of governmental, institutional, commercial and office activity.

The Plan is the result of numerous public meetings by the Bristol Planning Commission over the past two-and-a-half years, as well as countless hours of research, review and discussion by the Commission, its staff and its consultant. In preparing this document, the Commission similarly benefited from the assistance and input of numerous city officials and department heads. Most importantly, many of Bristol's citizens contributed to the Plan, taking the time to offer their views and ideas about the future of this great city.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Bristol City Council for its support; to Alan Weiner, our City Planner and Paul Strawderman, our City Engineer, for their input and coordination; and to Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc., the city's planning consultant, for its invaluable assistance throughout this process.

The 2000 Plan of Conservation and Development brings together in a thoughtful, comprehensive manner the various elements that contribute to the quality of life of the city. Its aim is to strike the right balance between preservation and change, between the past and the future, between haphazard development and orderly growth. The Plan however is merely a blueprint; its ultimate value will be measured by the extent to which its ideas are transformed into actions. To that end, we encourage the citizens of Bristol to continue to play an active, ongoing role in the public decision-making process.

Sincerely,

Frank N. Nicastro, Sr.
Mayor, City of Bristol

William Veits
Chairman, Bristol Planning Commission

BRISTOL PLANNING COMMISSION

William J. Veits, Chairman
John Soares, Vice Chairman
John Mastrobattista
Marie Keeton
Domenic Busto
Brian Ewings, Alternate
Anthony V. Savino, Alternate
Alexander J. Carros, Alternate

STAFF

Alan L. Weiner, AICP, City Planner
Paul A. Strawderman, P.E., City Engineer
Jean P. Mariano, Administrative Secretary

MAYOR

Frank N. Nicastro, Sr.

CITY COUNCIL

Kenneth G. Scott
Gerard J. Couture
Chester B. Reed, Jr.
Thomas J. Ragaini
Arthur J. Ward
Joseph P. Wilson

PLANNING CONSULTANT

Buckhurst Fish and Jacquemart Inc.
New York, NY, and Stamford, CT

The Bristol Planning Commission gratefully acknowledges the additional assistance provided by the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency throughout the preparation of this Plan.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1 – OVERVIEW

The Bristol Planning Commission has prepared this Plan of Conservation and Development in accordance with the provisions of Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes. Those provisions mandate that every municipality in the state prepare a Plan of Conservation and Development and that such plan be reviewed and updated if necessary at least once every ten years. The local planning commission is given the statutory responsibility to prepare the plan and has sole authority for adopting and amending it.

Section 8-23 states in part that "[t]he plan of conservation and development shall be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality" and that "the plan shall be designed to promote with the greatest efficiency and economy the coordinated development of the municipality and the general welfare and prosperity of its people." Thus, one objective of the Plan is to guide the growth and development of the community in a manner that affords economic, housing and recreational opportunities for its residents and, at the same time, creates an attractive environment in which to work and live.

This current plan – intended to update the Plan of Development adopted by the Bristol Planning Commission in July of 1989 – was prepared over a period of approximately two years by the Commission with the assistance of both its professional staff and the planning firm of Buckhurst, Fish & Jacquemart, Inc. of New York City. The process was also aided by the citizens of Bristol, whose input was encouraged via a "mailout/mailback" survey of community attitudes (which generated a response rate of nearly 25 percent of the 3,000 households to whom the survey was sent) and at several public workshops. This collaborative effort afforded local residents, the business community and other interested parties a number of opportunities at critical points throughout the planning process to express their views about the past, present and future of the city.

The Planning Commission recognizes that a number of physical, economic and social conditions in the city have changed since the 1989 Plan was adopted and that new planning techniques are available to respond to these changes. This Plan of Conservation and Development is designed to promote and guide both the development and preservation of Bristol. The plan presents a vision for the future of the city and discusses the tools and techniques needed to achieve that vision. Of crucial importance to the ongoing planning process is review and modification of the plan, to assure that it remains representative of the community's vision and that the selected implementation strategies are those that the city can achieve.

As vacant land grows more scarce, the regional economy experiences further change and market conditions shift, Bristol will need to focus on the kinds of growth and development that create jobs, increase tax revenues, and foster reinvestment. The Plan of Conservation and Development is integral to shaping this process. Further, the Plan can discourage arbitrary or piecemeal public and private investments. Under the guiding hand of the Plan's goals and policies, the sum of the many individual investment decisions made over the next ten years can lead to the realization of the community's vision.

Components of a Plan

By statute, the Plan of Conservation and Development *must*:

- Contain the Planning Commission's recommendations for the most desirable use of land within the municipality for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial, conservation and other purposes;
- Contain the Planning Commission's recommendations for the most desirable population densities throughout the municipality;
- Make provision for the development of housing opportunities – including opportunities for multi-family dwellings – consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity, for all residents of the municipality and the planning region in which the municipality is located;
- Promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low- and moderate-income households; and,
- Encourage the development of housing which will meet the housing needs identified in the five-year housing plan prepared by the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development and the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority under Section 8-37t of the Connecticut General Statutes and in the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

In addition, the Plan *may* contain the following:

- Recommendations for a system of principal thoroughfares, parkways, bridges, streets and other public ways;
- Recommendations for airports, parks, playgrounds and other public grounds;
- Recommendations for the general location, relocation and improvement of public buildings;
- Recommendations for the general location and extent of public utilities and terminals, whether publicly or privately owned, for water, sewerage, light, power, transit and other purposes;
- Recommendations for the extent and location of public housing projects;
- Recommendations for the conservation and preservation of traprock ridgelines, as defined in Section 8-1aa of the Statutes;
- Other matters as will, in the judgment of the Planning Commission, be beneficial to the municipality; and,
- Programs for the implementation of the Plan.

In preparing the Plan, the Planning Commission must consider the need for affordable housing; the protection of existing and potential public surface and ground drinking water supplies; and the municipality's Community Development Action Plan, if any. In addition, the Commission "may consider physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends, including, but not limited to, local, regional and state studies of the human resource, education, health, housing, recreation, social services, public utilities, public protection, transportation and circulation, cultural and interpersonal communications needs of the municipality and the objectives of energy-efficient patterns of development, the use of solar and other renewable forms of energy, and energy conservation." The Commission may also prepare and adopt plans for the redevelopment and improvement of districts or neighborhoods which, in its judgment, contain special problems or show a trend toward lower land values.

State and Regional Planning Context

Connecticut Plan of Conservation and Development – The Connecticut General Statutes require that the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) prepare a state Conservation and Development Policies Plan every five years for adoption by the Connecticut General Assembly. The first such plan was adopted in 1979; the most current one was adopted in May 1998 and covers the period from 1998 to 2003. The State plan is "a statement of the State's growth, resource management, and public investment policies. [It] provides a policy and planning framework for the administrative and programmatic actions and capital and operational investment decisions of state government, which influence the future growth and development of the state." (*Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut, 1998 - 2003*) The overall strategy of the State plan is "to reinforce and conserve existing urban areas, to promote staged, appropriate, sustainable development, and to preserve areas of significant environmental value." To that end, the plan apportions the state into eight broad land categories according to each area's characteristics and suitability for different forms of development or conservation action, and then establishes priorities for these categories.

Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that each municipal plan of conservation and development "take into account the state plan of conservation and development…and…note any inconsistencies it may have with said state plan." In addition, the State plan serves as a document of reference for certain types of municipal projects for which state funding is sought; such projects must be reviewed by OPM to determine the extent of their conformance to the State plan. In general, a municipal project which is in (greater) conformance with the State plan is more likely to receive state funds than one that is less so. As such, it is in the city's best interest that, to the maximum extent possible, this Plan of Conservation and Development be consistent with the State plan.

Central Connecticut Regional Plan – The Connecticut General Statutes require that the state's regional planning agencies also prepare and adopt comprehensive plans. The Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency (CCRPA) first adopted a regional development plan in 1978; it has been updated three times, most recently in 1993. Entitled *Central Connecticut Regional Development Plan Future Land Use – 2010*, the regional plan "evaluates the Region as it is presently developed and suggest scenarios and levels of development for the future" to 2010. The regional plan serves as a policy guide to regional growth, seeking to have an impact on decision-making at the local and regional levels.

In addition to Bristol, the Central Connecticut planning region comprises the communities of Berlin, Burlington, New Britain, Plainville, Plymouth and Southington. According to the regional plan, the major issues facing Bristol are growing traffic congestion, the lack of mass transit, the economic viability of its downtown, and the limited amount of dedicated open space. In response to these issues and other factors – such as existing land uses, environmental features, community identity, resources, and regional concerns – the regional plan presents a "blueprint for growth" called a Future Land Use Plan. It foresees for Bristol a central commercial core, with commercial strips along Routes 6 and 72. Most residential areas contain low- and medium-density housing, with scattered areas of high-density housing. Remaining agricultural lands are concentrated in the northwest section of the city. Other significant land uses are protected watershed lands in the northern half of Bristol and an industrial district in the city's southeast section, near the Southington border.

Historical Development

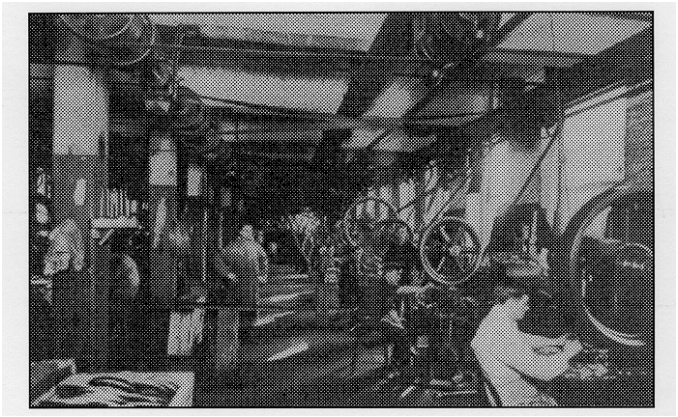
Bristol's present character and role as an industrially based urban center was shaped incrementally over the last two hundred years. The following synopsis highlights the events in the city's history most responsible for its current physical layout.

Early Settlement – In the early 1640's, settlers came from Hartford to farm an isolated area known as West Woods in the town of Farmington. The town was also occupied in other areas by the Tunxis Indians. The remoteness of the West Woods was partly responsible for its slow development, as was a restrictive land ownership agreement that eventually ended in the 1730's. In 1746, a five-mile square parish, known as New Cambridge, became the "foundation for all subsequent local government"[1] and the first settled nucleus. It was the institutional and commercial core of the settlement with the construction on Federal Hill of the Congregational church and the schoolhouse, and the setting aside of public land for pasture and militia training.

In 1785, a new town called Bristol was created by the state's General Assembly, incorporating the parishes of New Cambridge and West Britain. At this time, Bristol's population was about 1,000, with nearly all residents living on farmsteads widely dispersed on the hilly, infertile lands. The center on Federal Hill had not grown substantially since the earliest days of the parish. There were now two churches, a tavern, and a few houses in addition to the first uses there. Industry existed to support the needs of an agricultural economy: a 1792 map shows, in addition to three churches, five sawmills in Bristol, three gristmills, one iron works or blacksmith, and one fulling mill.

Industrialization – Small manufacturing businesses were established around the turn of the eighteenth century, which expanded upon the existing agricultural-based industries and were linked to regional, state and foreign economies. Toll roads built by private companies were an early key to increased industrialization and greater integration with other Connecticut towns and their economies. The construction and maintenance of passable, straight roads had long been the townspeople's largest public expense, and the difficulty of doing so in hilly Bristol had been a primary cause of the early settlement's slow growth. In the early 1800's, two major turnpikes were established, which follow the present Route 4 and Route 6. The construction of the Middle Road Turnpike (Route 6) led to the development of a second nucleus.

The first clockmakers, located on a stream in North Village, marked Bristol's transformation from an agricultural economy to an industrial one. The town had a "unique role in the development of the American clock industry…[C]lockmaking became the single most important economic activity in Bristol in the years prior to the Civil War."[2] As the clock industry grew, support industries, particularly metal fabricators, grew alongside. These in turn became forces in their own right, expanding Bristol's industrial base to include machinery, foundries, saws, woolen cloth, and mining. Bristol Brass was founded in 1850. The street pattern characterizing present-day downtown Bristol was laid at this time following the privately-funded construction of a road and bridge crossing over the Pequabuck River to the Jerome clockworks complex in South Village.



[1] Bruce Clouette and Matthew Roth, *Bristol, Connecticut: A Bicentennial History 1785 – 1985*. (Canaan, NH: Phoenix Publishing, 1984), p.9.
[2] Ibid., p. 43.

Increased economic diversification also brought population growth and change. Towards the end of the 1800's the population stood at 7,362, with one in five residents foreign-born and half either born outside the country or children of immigrants. One of Bristol's first historians identifies 1870 as the year Bristol made the irrevocable physical change from a "small rural village, having no public utilities and no urban institutions, to an enterprising modern city."[3] The physical character of modern-day Bristol was established, as the small villages centered around factories, local churches and stores gave way to new streets, subdivided land and a commercial center which grew up near the train depot. The area between Federal Hill and Water Street was fully developed, with new subdivisions created south of South Street and in the western portion of the town. The downtown was laid out and built up in a way that would remain until the onset of urban renewal in the late 1950's. Significant numbers of new houses were constructed in and around the main streets of the center.

Outside the area that was to become the borough of Bristol in 1893, two unique places developed. One was Lake Compounce, created as a summer entertainment area. The other was Forestville, the "largest and most independent" of the smaller communities within Bristol, "[with] its own schoolhouse, post office, railroad depot, and two stores," social and civic organizations, political identity, and heavily Irish population.[4]

By the end of the First World War, the rapid and uncontrolled development had led to a community-wide desire for a plan to assert the needs of residents against the power of the large industries and railroad. Cars and trucks congested narrow farm roads, houses had been built in the hundreds, the sole high school was over capacity, there was little open space in the town's densest areas, and there was no order or attractiveness to the downtown. A City Planning Commission was created, and the first comprehensive plan was written in 1920.

Bristol implemented the Plan's recommendations for parks and playgrounds, improved land subdivision regulations, and gained the knowledge that privately inspired growth could be shaped. The new subdivision regulations controlled the spate of new housing in the 1920's and 1930's to the north and on the open, flat land between Forestville and the city's center. Zoning, which was adopted in 1930, created separate residential, commercial, and industrial areas. While the 1920 Plan's central recommendations for the downtown were not heeded, strong private sponsorship led to the creation of Memorial Boulevard, and a new high school and parkland were created in the 1920's. Other civic improvements at this time included brick schools, a hospital, the Bristol Boys and Girls Club, and a new state armory.

Following World War II, the city experienced a boom in single-family house construction. New subdivisions shaped the northern and eastern sections of Bristol. These subdivisions generally were laid out along standard block sizes, with regular roads, identical lot sizes, and houses conforming to a few designs. By 1964, the rate of new residential construction was so great that the number of post-War houses in Bristol exceeded the number of houses built between 1720 and 1940. This led to increased demands for municipal water and sewer services, new schools, flood controls and streetlights. During the twenty years between 1949 and 1969, school additions and new schools were responsible for a significant part of the municipal budget. Public housing was not a priority, except for the few projects constructed for the elderly and veterans.

In the 1950's and 1960's, Bristol's economic base began its permanent shift away from heavy manufacturing and metalworking toward a more diverse economy that was more reliant upon modern technology and the service sector. Manufacturing plant

[3] Ibid., p. 111.
[4] Ibid., p. 117-118.

closings and the construction of the New Departure facility on Chippens Hill marked the physical changes in Bristol caused by this economic transformation. When, beginning in the 1960's, the city's central business district was leveled and redeveloped, a symbol was created for Bristol's profoundly altered economy. Ultimately, the downtown was reconstructed with a shopping mall at its heart but, in the interim, its competition was established in a new commercial corridor along Farmington Avenue.

Previous Plans of Development

Five times since the 1920's, the Bristol Planning Commission has adopted a plan of development to define and guide the course of future development in the city. Each of those plans is summarized below.

Local Survey and City Planning Proposals (1920) – This plan, by the renowned John Nolen of Cambridge, Massachusetts, presented recommendations for improvement in seven areas: main thoroughfares, retail business area, public activities, expression of civic spirit, factory district, railroad facilities, and housing, schools and local recreation. The plan also established standards for the city's school playgrounds and for the acceptance of new plats. These latter regulations covered allowed land uses ("districting"), blocks, lots and yards (setbacks), streets and sidewalks, parks and recreation areas, and public building sites. Other significant recommendations concerned municipal services and the upgrade to "first class areas" of residential, industrial, school, and recreation districts. Compared to later documents, the Nolen plan is short but highly focused, with simple, strong statements regarding the improvements. For example, the plan chastised Bristol for its lack of civic spirit, declaring that "Bristol has reached the point where it should awaken and show to the world that it has ideals above those of common necessity and higher than the mere earning of a livelihood." Arising from this, the plan's central recommendation proposed a city center, whose retail spine would be Main Street from the railroad bridge to South Street. The Nolen plan largely resulted in the adoption of land use controls which shaped Bristol over the following decades, especially with regard to residential land uses. Unique improvements to Bristol's physical character, such as Memorial Boulevard, were created, not by the plan, but by private initiative and philanthropy. This had traditionally been the way, with the creation of Rockwell and Page Parks.

Report on a General Plan for Bristol, Connecticut (1958) – This plan, prepared by John T. Blackwell of Boston, noted that Bristol's future lay in transforming itself from a manufacturing-based economy and civic culture to "a future of increasing urbanization and economic involvement in the continuing industrialization of Connecticut." Recommendations addressed capital expenditures for streets and highway improvements, flood control works, and the "urgent" school building program. The 1958 plan also noted that Bristol was at "a decisive moment in its history as a trading center," necessitating the redesign of the downtown's physical pattern. Following substantial public discussion, zoning recommendations were presented affecting residential, industrial and business districts.

Comprehensive Plan (1964) – Written by the Planning Services Group of Cambridge, Massachusetts, this plan presented a series of objectives, policies and standards for economic development, residential development, municipal improvements and plan implementation. The most important recommendation enacted from this plan was the creation of the Redevelopment Agency to redesign the downtown. Few copies of this plan appear to exist, leaving the subsequent two plans as the most recent and readily available in the city's planning history.

Bristol, Connecticut, Plan of Development (1979) – This plan was prepared by Brown, Donald and Donald of Farmington. It was a thorough presentation of existing conditions regarding land use, demographics, the local economy, transportation, housing, municipal facilities, open space and recreation, and the coordination of downtown studies. However, the plan contained few specific recommendations, except for residential zoning policy proposals covering all densities, housing types, and locations. There were no new recommendations made for the downtown. For the most part, this plan is considered to have been adopted but generally not implemented.

Plan of Development (1989) – Harrall-Michalowski Associates of Hamden wrote a plan that focused on determining municipal goals and policies, understanding Bristol's development potential and concomitant impacts, and analyzing the city's demographics; housing; economic base; parks, recreation and open space; and traffic circulation and street network. Routes 229, 6, and 72 were the subject of in-depth planning studies that addressed both traffic and land use issues. The plan devoted a modicum of attention to downtown Bristol. Within each of these functional elements, existing conditions that created problems were discussed, and specific recommendations that thoughtfully responded to the issues were made. A citywide future land use plan was presented. Care was taken that many of the recommendations contained in the plan could be achieved either by amending the local zoning regulations or through other local actions.

CHAPTER 2 – DEMOGRAPHICS

Introduction

This chapter summarizes a number of key characteristics of Bristol's population, including its size, race and ethnicity, age distribution, households and income. Such information is necessary in order to anticipate how other components of the Plan, e.g., housing and transportation, might be affected over time by the changing demographics of the community. Doing so gives the city the opportunity to properly plan for the provision of municipal services and to initiate other appropriate actions in response to those changes.

Sources of Information

- 1989 Bristol Plan of Development
- Central Connecticut Regional Development Plan
- Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development
- Connecticut Office of Policy and Management
- U. S. Census Bureau

Key Findings, Conclusions and Issues

- Bristol's population in 1990 was 60,640 persons, an increase of 3,270 (or 5.7 percent) over its 1980 population of 57,370 persons. According to estimates from the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, Bristol's population was approximately 59,160 persons in 1998. According to estimates from the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management, Bristol's population is projected to reach 63,630 persons in 2010. (See Figure 2-1.)

- The northwest and southeast sections of Bristol experienced the most significant population increases in the city between 1980 and 1990, each growing by some 1,500 persons during that ten-year period.

- The ethnic and racial composition of Bristol changed relatively little between 1980 and 1990. There was, however, a significant increase (83 percent) in the number of persons who identified themselves as being of Hispanic origin (though persons so identified may be of any race). Though the number and percentage of persons comprising various minority groups increased during this period, Bristol remains a predominantly white, multi-ethnic city whose residents come from various European backgrounds, where families trace their ancestry to immigration from another era. (See Figure 2-2.)

- The median age in Bristol in 1990 was just under 32 years old, higher than the median age of 27.5 in 1970 and 30.7 in 1980. This increasing median age is part of a national trend, as the so-called "baby boom" generation advances into middle age.

- Between 1970 and 1990, Bristol's population experienced a decrease in the number of young persons (0-19 years old) and a concurrent increase in the number of older persons (65+ years old). These shifts in the city's age composition are forecasted to continue into the next decade and, as a result, may cause a re-examination of municipal priorities by city officials and taxpayers. For example, public education might become less of a priority of the city's older residents, who no longer have children in school. Similarly, the city may have to more vigorously respond to the needs of its aging population in terms of housing opportunities, recreational facilities and long-term care. (See Figures 2-3 and 2-4.)

- Bristol contained 23,903 households in 1990, an increase of 3,393 households (or 16.5 percent) over the 1980 figure of 20,510 households. Of those totals, 16,750 households were classified as families in 1990, versus 15,560 so classified in 1980.[5] Although families still constitute the primary type of household in the city, their proportion of the total number of Bristol households decreased to 70.0 percent in 1990 from 75.9 percent in 1980 and 84.7 percent in 1970, concurrent with a comparable increase in the number and proportion of non-family households during this same twenty-year period.

- The rate of growth of the city's households has been greater than that of its overall population: between 1980 and 1990, the number of households in Bristol increased by 16.5 percent, while the city's population increased by only 5.7 percent.

[5] According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a *household* is defined as "all the persons who occupy a housing unit," while a *family* is defined as "a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together." All families are also households, but not all households are families, since a household may comprise one person living alone or a group of unrelated persons living together.

- Married couples (with or without children) composed nearly 83 percent of Bristol's 16,750 families in 1990; female householders living alone, with children under the age of 18, composed another 7.4 percent.

- In 1990, 5,924 of the city's 7,153 non-family households (82.8 percent) lived alone; of those, nearly 40 percent were over the age of 65.

- Average household size in Bristol decreased between 1970 and 1990 from 3.3 persons per household to 2.5 persons per household; average household size in 1990 for the State of Connecticut as a whole was also 2.5 persons per household. This decrease, which is reflective of national trends, can be attributed to a variety of factors, including lower birth rates, higher divorce rates, later marriages, and an increase in the number of one-person households.

- Between 1970 and 1990, the number of single persons in Bristol increased (from 9,580 to 12,807), as did the number of divorced persons (from 938 to 3,917). During this same period, the number of married persons rose slightly (from 26,293 to 27,862).[6]

- The median *household* income[7] in Bristol in 1990 was $38,261, slightly below the median household income of $40,609 for Hartford County and $41,721 for the state as a whole. The median *family* income in Bristol in 1990 was higher at $45,631, reflecting the presence of dual-earner couples and the generally more stable finances of families. Bristol's per capita income in 1990 was $16,909, less than Hartford County's per capita income of $18,983 and the state's per capita income of $20,189. (See Figure 2-5.)

- Bristol's 1990 median household income of $38,261 represents a nearly 17 percent increase over its 1980 median household income of $32,713 (the latter adjusted to reflect 1990 dollars). This increase can be explained in part by the higher level of education within Bristol. In 1990, 35.8 percent of the city's 25 years-and-older population had a high school diploma (an increase of nearly 10 percent since 1980) and 17.6 percent had an associate's or bachelor's degree.

- Based upon an analysis of the distribution of household incomes throughout the city, it appears that Bristol's higher income households generally reside on Federal Hill and in neighborhoods near the Farmington, Plainville and Burlington town lines; Bristol's lower income households tend to be concentrated in and immediately adjacent to the center of the city.

- In 1990, 2.9 percent of Bristol's families (493 out of 16,750) had incomes below the poverty level (as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau). Nearly 60 percent of these families were headed by females with no husband present and with children under the age of 18.

[6] Data regarding marital status are for persons 15 years of age and older.

[7] "Median income" is the amount which divides the distribution of all incomes into two equal groups, half having incomes above the median, half having incomes below the median. "Average income" is the amount obtained by dividing the total aggregate income of a group by the number of units in that group. Median income is a more accurate way of measuring a city's wealth, because average income can be skewed in either direction if there are very high or very low incomes.

Figure 2-1. Population, 1970 - 2010

PLACE	Year 1970	1980	1990	1998*	Percent Change 1970-1998	Estimated Population 2000	2010
New Britain	83,441	73,840	75,491	70,492	-15.5%	69,540	72,810
Bristol	**55,487**	**57,370**	**60,640**	**59,158**	**6.6%**	**61,650**	**63,630**
Southington	30,946	36,879	38,518	38,683	25.0%	39,320	40,190
Plainville	16,733	16,401	17,392	16,770	0.0%	17,470	17,880
Berlin	14,149	15,121	16,787	17,246	21.9%	17,380	18,130
Plymouth	10,321	10,732	11,822	12,040	16.7%	12,010	12,410
Burlington	4,070	5,660	7,026	7,892	93.9%	7,720	8,810
Central CT region	215,147	216,003	227,676	222,281	3.3%	225,090	233,860
Hartford County	816,737	807,766	851,783	828,200	1.4%	844,980	868,360
State of CT	3,032,217	3,107,576	3,287,116	3,274,069	8.0%	3,316,120	3,435,400

*estimated

Sources: U.S. Census of Population; CT Department of Economic and Community Development; CT Office of Policy and Management

Figure 2-2. Ethnic and Racial Composition, 1970-1990, City of Bristol, CT

RACE/ETHNICITY	1970 No. of Persons	1970 Percent of Total	1980 No. of Persons	1980 Percent of Total	1990 No. of Persons	1990 Percent of Total	Percent Change 1970-1990**
White	54,758	98.7%	55,791	97.2%	58,242	96.0%	6.4%
Black	577	1.0%	940	1.6%	1,263	2.1%	118.9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	46	0.1%	159	0.3%	465	0.8%	910.9%
Native American	48	0.1%	158	0.3%	102	0.2%	112.5%
Other	58	0.1%	480	0.8%	568	0.9%	879.3%
Total	55,487	100.0%	57,370	100.0%	60,640	100.0%	9.3%
Hispanic Origin*	n/a	n/a	904	1.6%	1,652	2.7%	82.7%

*persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race

**1980 to 1990 for persons of Hispanic origin

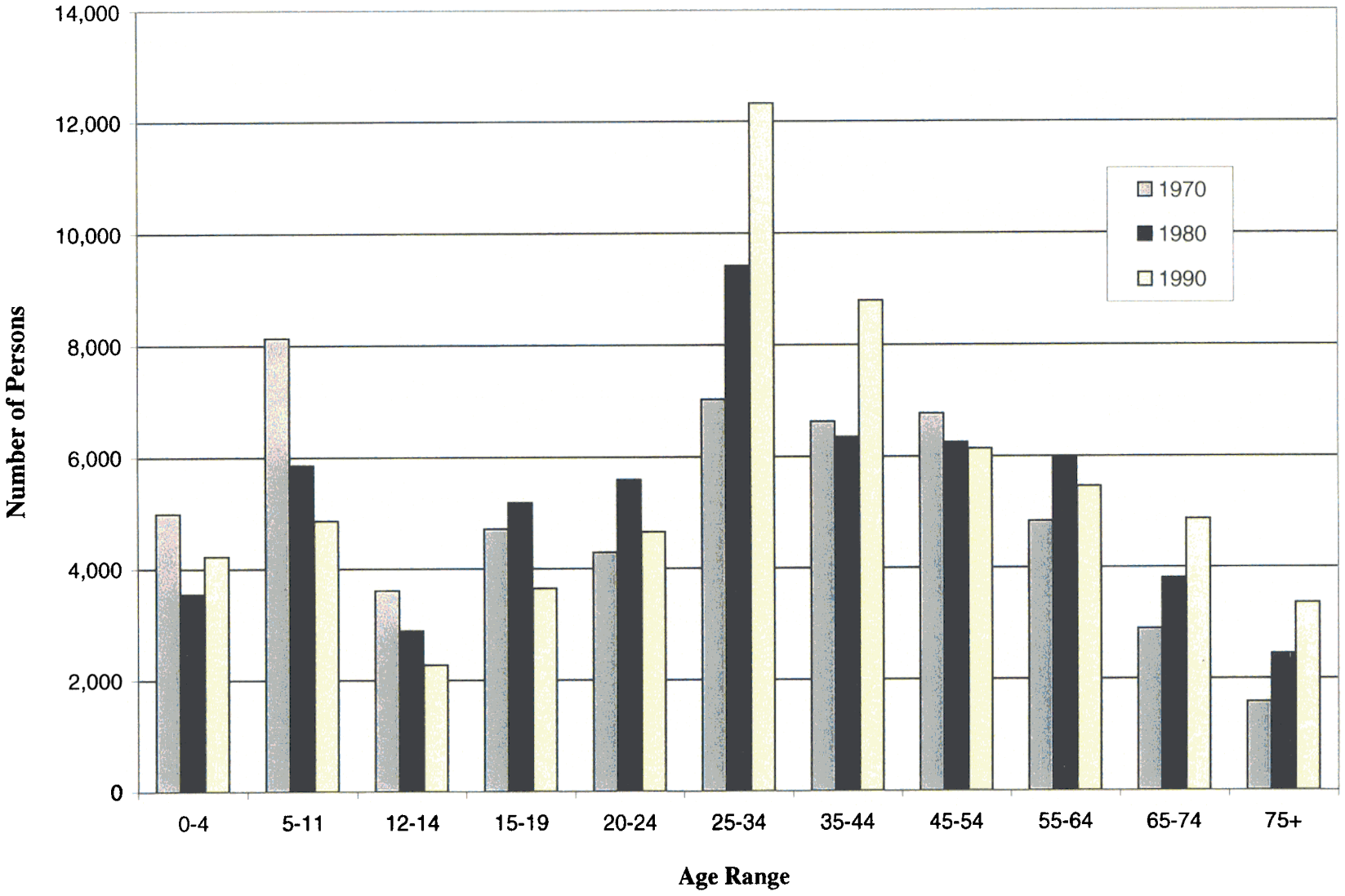
Sources: U.S. Census of Population; 1989 Bristol Plan of Development; 1993 Central Connecticut Regional Development Plan

Figure 2-3. Age Composition, 1970-1990, City of Bristol, CT

AGE RANGE	1970 No. of Persons	1970 Percent of Total	1980 No. of Persons	1980 Percent of Total	1990 No. of Persons	1990 Percent of Total	Percent Change 1970-1990
0-4	4,996	9.0%	3,553	6.2%	4,228	7.0%	-15.4%
5-19	16,474	29.7%	13,936	24.2%	10,789	17.8%	-34.5%
20-24	4,296	7.7%	5,599	9.8%	4,664	7.7%	8.6%
25-34	7,026	12.7%	9,415	16.4%	12,326	20.3%	75.4%
35-44	6,633	11.9%	6,356	11.1%	8,794	14.5%	32.6%
45-54	6,774	12.2%	6,255	10.9%	6,141	10.1%	-9.3%
55-64	4,838	8.7%	6,001	10.5%	5,466	9.0%	13.0%
65-74	2,898	5.2%	3,811	6.6%	4,872	8.0%	68.1%
75+	1,579	2.8%	2,444	4.3%	3,360	5.5%	112.8%
Total	55,514	100.0%	57,370	100.0%	60,640	100.0%	9.2%
Median Age	*27.5 years*		*30.7 years*		*31.7 years*		*15.3%*

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Figure 2-4.
Age Distribution, 1970-1990, City of Bristol, CT



Source: U.S. Census of Population

Figure 2-5. Median Family and Per Capita Incomes, Central CT Region

MUNICIPALITY	Median Family Income	Per Capita Income
Burlington	$59,343	$21,797
Berlin	$55,627	$19,974
Southington	$52,833	$19,954
Plymouth	$46,334	$16,610
Bristol	**$45,631**	**$16,909**
Plainville	$44,990	$17,207
New Britain	$35,711	$14,715

Source: 1993 Central Connecticut Regional Development Plan

CHAPTER 3 – EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING

Introduction

The essential nature of a plan of conservation and development involves defining a vision of the future character of a community in terms of both its natural features and its built environment. The type, location and intensity of land uses – and their existing and future patterns on the landscape – significantly affect that character. Zoning, the process by which those land uses are regulated, is the major regulatory tool with which a municipality can influence future development patterns and practices. This chapter summarizes the existing pattern of land use in Bristol and presents an overview of the city's current zoning regulations.

Sources of Information

- Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
- 1987 and 1997-98 field surveys
- City of Bristol Zoning Regulations, effective December 21, 1990
- City of Bristol Zoning Map, effective December 21, 1990

Existing Land Use

The total area of the City of Bristol is approximately 26.5 square miles, nearly 17,000 acres. Bristol's population density is 2,310 persons per square mile, second only to the City of New Britain (with a density of 5,365 persons per square mile) in the Central Connecticut region.

The pattern of land use in Bristol (as of 1998) is illustrated on the Existing Land Use Map (Figure 3-1), which assigns one of 18 general land use categories to every property in the city. The map indicates that the area in and around downtown Bristol contains the city's densest mix of land uses, smallest lots and greatest variety of single- and multi-family residences, businesses and institutional uses. To a lesser extent, both Forestville and the West End contain a similar array of uses, typical of older, urban neighborhoods.

Outside of these areas, single-family residences dominate the landscape of Bristol's neighborhoods, on lots generally varying in size from 5,000 square feet to 25,000 square feet. Public and private institutions such as schools and churches are often found in these neighborhoods as well. Multi-family residences – primarily in the form of apartments and condominiums – are concentrated in the southeast section of the city (near the intersection of Emmett Street and Redstone Hill Road), at the eastern end of Route 6 (in the vicinity of Stafford Avenue), and in the northwest section of the city (near the intersection of Clark Avenue and Matthews Street).

Many of the city's neighborhoods are served by one or more small commercial areas, while the eastern half of Route 6 (Farmington Avenue) contains the city's most extensive commercial development. Significant commercial areas have also developed around the Broad Street-Emmett Street-Frederick Street intersection and along portions of Pine Street (including at its intersection with Middle Street and Mountain Road).

Many of Bristol's present-day industrial land uses occupy much of the Middle Street corridor between Lake Avenue and lower Birch Street (south of Redstone Hill Road). Another modern industrial area has developed along Clark Avenue in the vicinity of Minor Street and James P. Casey Road (near the former New Departure manufacturing plant – now called the Bristol Business Center – on Chippens Hill). Many of the city's older industrial areas are located along East Main Street (e.g., the former Sessions Clock Company complex), Broad Street (e.g., the former Bristol Brass complex) and Riverside Avenue (e.g., the former J.H. Sessions and Son plant), as well as in and around downtown Bristol (e.g., buildings from the old New Departure complex).

The amount of land in Bristol devoted to each of the 18 designated land use categories (as of 1998) is shown in Figure 3-2. Although the acreage figures contained in the table are only estimates, they are nevertheless indicative of the relative extent to which land in the city is utilized for various purposes. For example, nearly one-third of the land in Bristol is devoted to single-family residences, while streets, overhead transmission lines and railroad rights-of-way (collectively categorized as "Utility, Transmission, Transportation") occupy almost seven percent of the land.

Perhaps most surprising is the amount of vacant land that remains in Bristol. In 1987, an estimated 5,000 acres of land were classified as vacant. In 1998, that figure was estimated at just over 4,500 acres, nearly 27 percent of the total land area of the city. Much of this decrease can be attributed to the construction of single-family residences (most significantly in the southwest section of the city) and, to a lesser extent, to new industrial and commercial development. The majority of Bristol's remaining vacant land is located in the south-central and southwest sections of the city.

Current Zoning

The city's Zoning Regulations – last adopted by the Zoning Commission in December of 1990 and amended several times since – establish a total of 15 zoning districts within Bristol: seven residential zones (two of which are so-called "overlay" zones), four business zones (one of which is an overlay zone), and four industrial zones. The city's Zoning Map establishes the location, extent and boundaries of these districts.

Residential Zones

The Zoning Regulations provide for four single-family residential zones: R-10, R-15, R-25 and R-40. The primary difference among these districts is their different lot area and dimensional requirements; for example, lots in the R-10 zone must have a minimum lot area of 10,000 square feet, while lots in the R-40 zone must have a minimum lot area of 40,000 square feet. In addition to single-family residences, these zones are intended to accommodate certain types of non-residential uses considered to be compatible with residential neighborhoods (e.g., churches and schools).

A review of the city's Zoning Map (as of 1998) indicates that the neighborhoods radiating out from the center of Bristol are primarily zoned R-15, reflective of the pattern of relatively small residential lots that were previously developed around the downtown. The R-15 zone is also the predominant zoning district in the eastern half of the city, although significant areas of R-10-zoned land can be found there as well. Other R-10-zoned areas are scattered throughout the city. The northwest, southwest and south-central sections of Bristol – where most of the city's remaining vacant land is located – are largely zoned R-25. The R-40 zoning district has been used almost exclusively to designate watershed lands, municipal parks, and significant public and private open spaces.

Two residential overlay zones each serve a different purpose. The *Open Space Development* (OSD) zone was created to accommodate alternative forms of residential development – such as clustering – that also preserve significant tracts of open space and conserve and protect the city's natural features. As of 1998, two properties had been so designated: one, on the west side of Warner Street south of Maple Avenue; the other, on the west side of Lake Avenue, near its intersection with Middle Street. The *Mixed Residential* (RM) zone was created to allow additional two- and three-family dwellings on small lots in those city neighborhoods where such dwellings are already concentrated. As of 1998, the RM zone had been established throughout a significant portion of the West End neighborhood, in parts of Federal Hill and the residential neighborhoods immediately to the north and south of downtown Bristol, and in a portion of the residential neighborhood west of the center of Forestville.

Finally, the Zoning Regulations provide for one multi-family residential zone (designated as "A" on the city's Zoning Map). The A zone is intended to accommodate low- and medium-density multi-family development in Bristol at a maximum density of twelve dwelling units per acre and has been used primarily to designate the larger apartment, condominium and public housing complexes located throughout the city.

Business Zones

The Zoning Regulations establish four business zones, including one overlay zone. As its name implies, the *Neighborhood Business* (BN) zone is the most narrowly defined geographically, intended to accommodate small, neighborhood-oriented stores and services. A limited number of properties in the city are so zoned, located primarily along Stafford Avenue, Terryville Avenue, Park Street, Pine Street and Lake Avenue.

Bristol's most extensive business zone is the *General Business* (BG) zone, which is intended to accommodate larger commercial establishments that serve the retail and service needs of the entire city. Properties in the BG zone include the city's major shopping centers, significant portions of the Route 6 corridor east of the downtown, and the centers of Forestville and the West End neighborhood. Other BG-zoned properties are located at several major intersections (e.g., Broad Street-Emmett Street-Frederick Street, Middle Street-Pine Street-Mountain Road) and along portions of East Main Street, Riverside Avenue and Middle Street.

The *Downtown Business* (BD) zone covers Bristol's central business district. The BD zone is intended to concentrate the city's major retail, governmental, institutional, office and cultural activities within a compact area, as well as to accommodate high-density residential development in support of such activities.

Finally, the *Downtown/Neighborhood Transition* (BT) zone is an overlay zone that was designed to provide a functional transition between the intensive, mixed-use development of downtown Bristol and the adjacent, predominantly residential neighborhoods. Among other uses, the BT zone permits certain types of commercial activities not otherwise allowed in single-family residential zones, such as specialty retail establishments, personal service establishments and professional offices. As of 1998, the BT zone had been established west of the downtown along much of the West Street corridor between Route 6 and South Street, and east of the downtown along and adjacent to the upper end of Main Street.

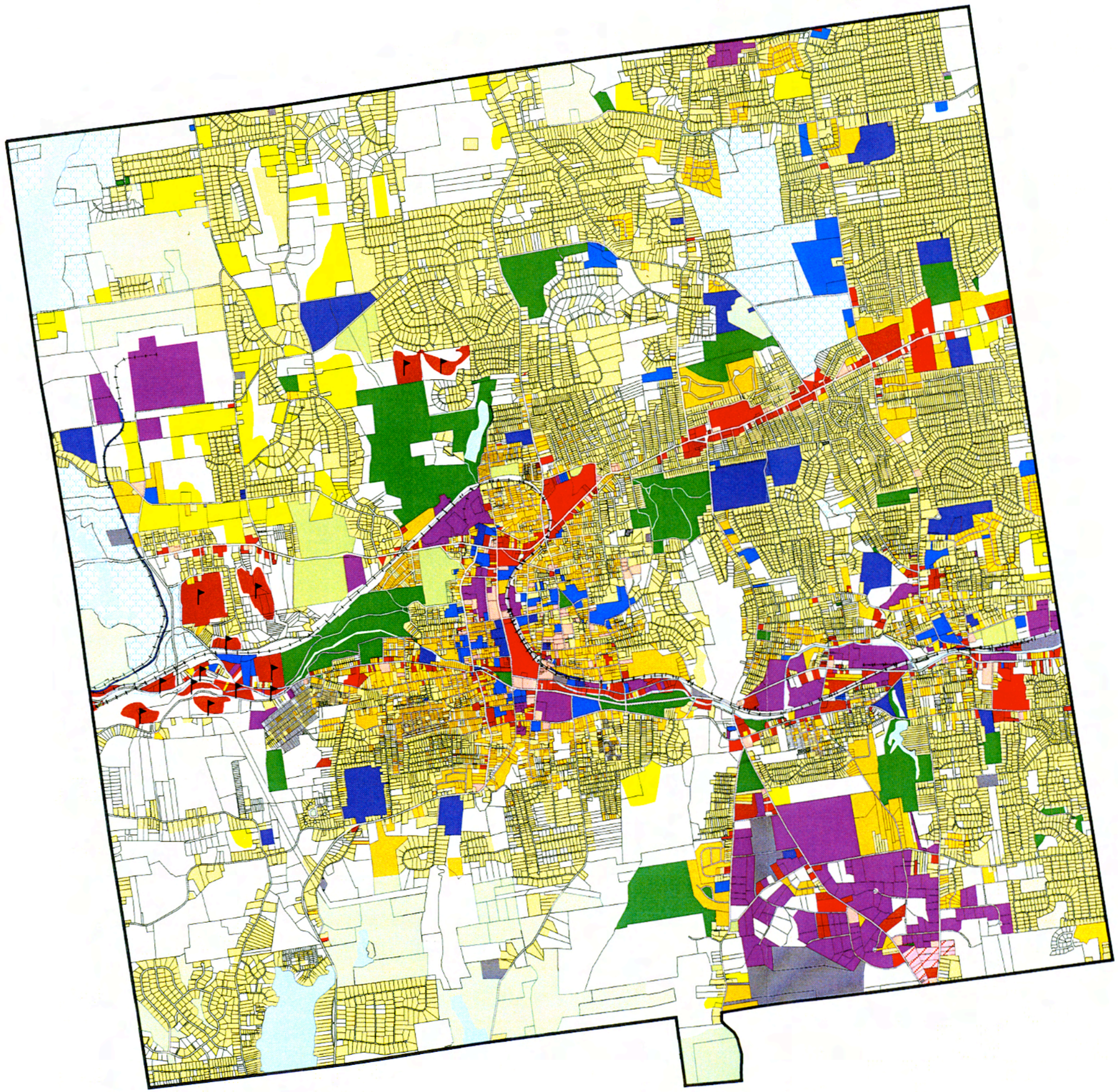
Industrial Zones

The Zoning Regulations establish one *General Industrial* (I) zone and three *Industrial Park* (IP-1, IP-3 and IP-25) zones. The former is intended to accommodate the city's older industrial uses, as well as an array of "heavy" commercial activities such as contractor's yards, trucking terminals and automotive-related facilities. The latter are intended to accommodate more modern industrial uses, including manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, and research and development.

Much of the land in the I zone is located along and adjacent to the Route 72 corridor (East Main Street, Broad Street, Riverside Avenue and Terryville Road), as well as in the triangular area formed by Middle Street, Cross Street and Lake Avenue. Other I-zoned areas can be found on Wooster Court, Terryville Avenue (most significantly, the former New Departure forge) and Mines Road.

The IP zones are located primarily in two areas of Bristol: in the southeast section of the city along significant portions of Middle Street, Cross Street, Emmett Street and Birch Street, and in the northwest section of the city in the vicinity of James P. Casey Road, Clark Avenue and Minor Street.

Figure 3-1.
City of Bristol
Existing Land Uses, 1998



N
W E
S

- Single-Family Residential
- Two- to Five-Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential (Six units or More)
- Office, Bank, Professional Service
- Retail, Restaurant (incl. Hotel)
- General Commercial
- Broadcasting and Telecommunications
- Industrial
- Public Institution
- Private Institution
- Utility, Transmission, Transportation
- Public Park/Open Space
- Private Recreation/Conservation Lands
- Agriculture
- Cemetery
- Water Supply Watershed
- Vacant Land
- Water Bodies
- Sand Pit

0 2000 4000 Feet

Sources: Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
Bristol Land Use Office
Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart Inc.

Figure 3-2. Inventory of Existing Land Uses, 1998, City of Bristol, CT

LAND USE CATEGORY	Estimated Acreage	Percent of Total
Single-Family Residential	5,280	31.1%
Two- To Five-Family Residential	550	3.2%
Multi-Family Residential (6 or more dwelling units)	385	2.3%
Retail, Restaurant	205	1.2%
Office, Bank, Professional Service	85	.5%
General Commercial	340	2.0%
Industrial (includes Broadcasting and Telecommunications)	590	3.5%
Utility, Transmission, Transportation	1,105	6.5%
Institutional (includes Public and Private Institutions)	375	2.2%
Agriculture	570	3.4%
Public Park/Open Space	735	4.3%
Private Recreation/Conservation Lands	815	4.8%
Cemetery	165	1.0%
Water Supply Watershed	795	4.7%
Water Bodies	455	2.7%
Vacant Land	4,510	26.6%
Total	16,960	100.0%

Source: Map of Existing Land Uses, City of Bristol, prepared by Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart

- *Single-Family Residential* – one dwelling unit per lot
- *Two- to Five-Family Residential* – between two and five dwelling units per lot
- *Multi-Family Residential* – an apartment building or condominium with six or more dwelling units
- *Retail, Restaurant* – includes stores selling merchandise to the public, shopping centers, hotels, and restaurants
- *Office, Bank, Professional Service* – includes doctors' offices, banks, insurance firms, real estate agencies, and general business offices
- *General Commercial* – includes gas stations, automotive repair facilities, automotive sales and service facilities, and sand and gravel operations
- *Industrial* – includes manufacturing plants, research & development facilities
- *Broadcasting and Telecommunications*
- *Utility, Transmission, Transportation* – includes power lines, railroad rights-of-way, and streets
- *Public Institution* – includes public schools and municipal facilities
- *Private Institution* – includes churches and private schools
- *Agriculture* – includes all active farmland
- *Public Park/Open Space* – includes publicly owned parks, recreational facilities, and open spaces
- *Private Recreation/Conservation Lands* – includes privately owned parks, recreational facilities, and open spaces
- *Cemetery*
- *Water Supply Watershed* indicates land owned and operated by the City of Bristol Water Department.
- *Water Bodies* – includes all lakes and ponds
- *Vacant Land*

CHAPTER 4 – HOUSING

Introduction

Shelter is a basic human need, and the character of a community and its neighborhoods is defined in no small measure by the amount, type, cost, location and pattern of housing. Typically the single most predominant land use in a community, housing is also a principal indicator of a community's quality of life. In addition, housing characteristics such as age, quality and density often influence local governmental decisions regarding expenditures on transportation, education, utilities and other capital improvements. This chapter summarizes a number of key characteristics of Bristol's existing housing stock and seeks to address potential housing needs for the future.

Sources of Information

- 1989 Bristol Plan of Development
- Community Attitudes Survey and Workshops
- Bristol Development Authority
- Bristol Housing Authority
- Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development
- U. S. Census Bureau
- U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Key Findings, Conclusions and Issues

- The majority of Bristol's housing stock was built before 1969. Approximately 18% of Bristol's owner-occupied units and 32% of its renter-occupied units were built before World War II (1939 or earlier). Almost one-quarter (nearly 6,000) of the housing units in Bristol – whether owned, rented or vacant – were built before 1939. (See Figure 4-1.)

- Between 1980 and 1990, the total number of housing units in Bristol increased by nearly 4,000. This growth occurred in every housing category, most significantly in single-family attached structures, primarily condominiums. Between 1990 and 1997, the total number of housing units in Bristol continued to increase (by more than 700), but this growth was fueled by the rise in the number of single-family detached structures. When compared to the balance of the Central Connecticut region, Bristol's housing market has remained relatively strong. (See Figure 4-2.)

- The median price of a single-family residence in Bristol in 1998 was $110,000.
- As of 1990, close to 40 percent of occupied housing units in Bristol were renter occupied.
- In 1990, approximately 11 percent of Bristol's homeowners and 33 percent of Bristol's renters earning less than $35,000 annually paid more than 30 percent of their monthly income for housing costs.
- As of 1999, 13.7 percent of Bristol's housing stock was considered affordable, based upon the definition of "affordable housing" established under Section 8-39a of the Connecticut General Statutes.
- Lack of maintenance and upkeep, combined with the age of the housing stock, has contributed to deterioration of properties and increased the potential for neighborhood blight.
- Lack of owner occupancy of multi-family housing structures has contributed to neighborhood destabilization.
- As the number of elderly persons continues to grow (see Chapter 2), provisions for their specific housing needs must be addressed.
- The lack of affordable housing for the city's low-income and very-low-income households, including the elderly, continues to be a problem.

Goals, Policies and Recommendations

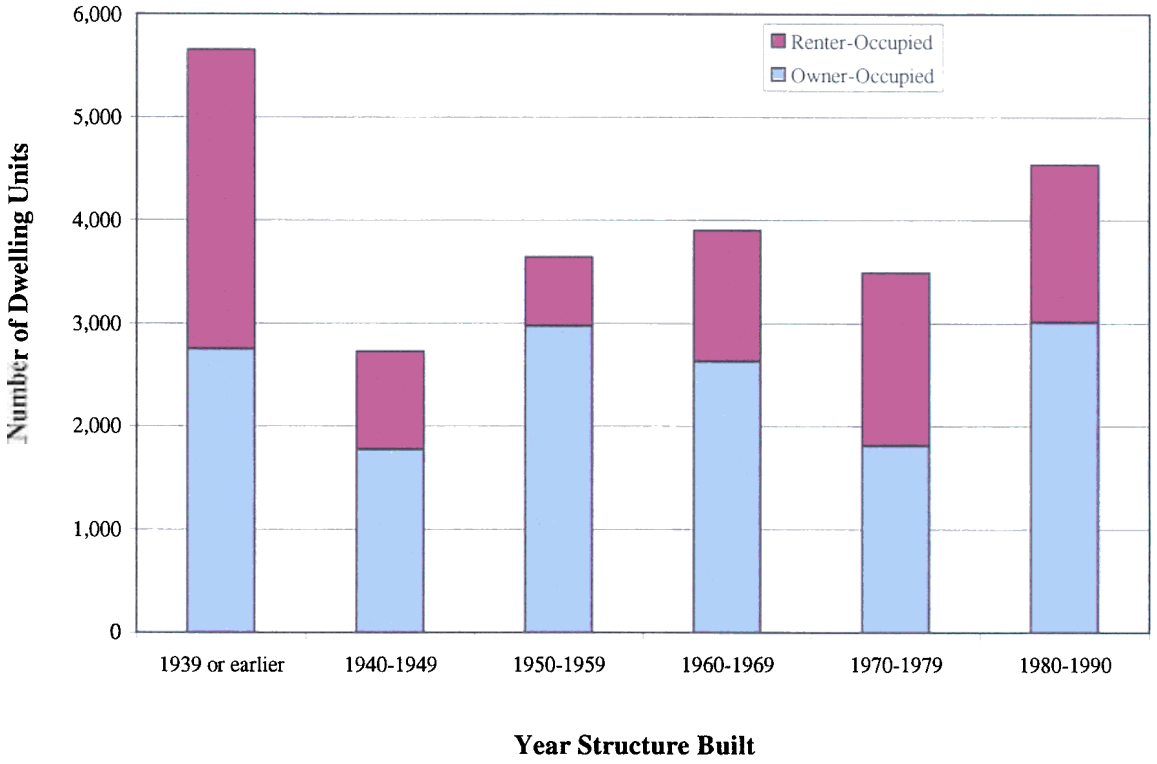
Goal:

Encourage the provision of decent, safe and sanitary housing to meet the social and economic needs of the city's population.

Policies:

1. Promote housing rehabilitation efforts that seek to preserve the supply of housing units in the city, in a manner that maintains the architectural integrity of existing structures.
2. Encourage alternative housing options for mature families ("empty-nesters") and senior citizens who no longer desire single-family housing, but who wish to remain in the city, in planned developments that offer a wide range of residential amenities or in other alternate living arrangements more appropriate for their stage of life (e.g., in-law apartments, congregate housing, life-care facilities). Encourage such housing in locations where services and mass transit are readily available.
3. Recognize, as one segment of the city's housing demand, the desire for large single-family lots.
4. Encourage owner-occupancy of multi-family dwellings, particularly the double- and triple-decker homes prevalent in the city's older neighborhoods.
5. Recognize as a public responsibility the encouragement of affordable housing opportunities for the elderly and for families and individuals that cannot afford current housing costs. Explore available programs of the local, state and federal governments that offer assistance in such housing, including opportunities for first-time homeownership.
6. Expand opportunities for young families to purchase "starter" housing within the city.
7. Encourage housing options such as group homes, emergency shelters, transitional housing and single-room-occupancy hotels for those individuals with special housing needs.
8. Require that government-funded or subsidized housing developments be held to the same design standards as privately developed housing. Consider each application on its merits with special attention given to neighborhood impacts.
9. Encourage the provision of new housing units at appropriate locations in downtown Bristol.

Figure 4-1. Age of Housing Stock, City of Bristol, CT



Source: 1990 U.S. Census of Housing

Figure 4-2. Number of Dwelling Units by Type of Structure, 1980, 1990 and 1997, City of Bristol, CT

UNITS LOCATED IN:	1980		1990		1997 (est.)	
	No. of Units	Percent of Total	No. of Units	Percent of Total	No. of Units	Percent of Total
Single-family detached structures	11,680	55.7%	12,758	51.1%	13,395	52.1%
Single-family attached structures (including townhouses)	386	1.8%	1,424	5.7%	1,333	5.2%
2-unit structures	2,677	12.7%	2,926	11.7%	2,847	11.1%
3- or 4-unit structures	2,695	12.8%	2,931	11.7%	2,942	11.4%
5-or-more unit structures (including apartments and condominiums)	3,505	16.7%	4,316	17.3%	4,532	17.6%
Mobile homes and other*	61	0.3%	634	2.5%	679	2.6%
Total	21,004	100.0%	24,989	100.0%	25,728	100.0%

*"Other" units include houseboats, campers, vans, tents and railroad cars and unidentified homes. In 1980, data on mobile homes and trailers were included only for year-round housing units; in 1990 these data were included for all housing units.

Sources: U.S. Census of Population; 1989 Bristol Plan of Development; CT Department of Economic and Community Development

CHAPTER 5 – PUBLIC FACILITIES and SERVICES

Introduction

As a community grows and its population increases, as existing facilities become outmoded, and as public expectations rise, the demand for additional, improved and varied public facilities and services also increases. The nature, extent and condition of a community's infrastructure all contribute significantly to its quality of life. This chapter summarizes the major components of the public infrastructure in Bristol that directly affect – and/or are affected by – land use and development policies and decisions; these include public schools, police and fire protection, water service and sewer service. (Parks, recreational facilities and open space are addressed in Chapter 8.) The emphasis of this chapter is on long-term land use and capital planning issues, not the day-to-day management or operations of individual municipal departments.

Sources of Information

- Bristol Board of Education
- Bristol Department of Public Works
- Bristol Police Department
- Bristol Fire Department
- Bristol Water Department
- Bristol-Burlington Health District
- Bristol Parks Department
- Bristol Department of Youth Services
- Bristol Public Library
- Hartford Archdiocesan School Office
- Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
- Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development
- *Connecticut's Public Libraries: A Statistical Profile, July 1996 – June 1997*, Connecticut State Library, 1998
- *Principles and Practice of Urban Planning*, Goodman and Freund (eds.), 1968
- *Library Space Planning Guide*, State of Connecticut, 1996
- *Schools Facility Master Plan*, New England School Development Council, 1998

Key Findings, Conclusions and Issues

- Total public school enrollment in Bristol is projected to decline approximately eight percent over the next ten years, from just over 8,600 students in 1998-99 to less than 7,900 students in 2007-08. At the grade-by-grade level, elementary school and middle school enrollments are projected to decrease by 11 percent and 15 percent, respectively. High school enrollments are projected to continue increasing, peaking in the year 2001-02, and then to decrease gradually. (See Figure 5-1.) As such, Bristol is not likely to experience a shortage of school space during that time and therefore does not appear to need to provide for any new school facilities. The problems that exist with several of Bristol's public schools lie with their age, condition, size, configuration and capability to supply technological improvements such as computers.

- Bristol's main library is running low on space, given the advent and popularity of computers, audio-visual equipment, books on tape, etc., and the library's need to expand its adult activities and outreach initiatives. The main library also has an insufficient amount of off-street parking to accommodate its staff and patrons.
- The existing police headquarters, as renovated, will have enough space for future police expansion.
- Based upon standards set by the American Insurance Association – which recommends a travel distance of 1.5 to 2 miles from fire stations to residential developments for cities with populations similar to Bristol's – the city's rapidly developing southwest section remains outside the immediate service areas of all of the fire stations located closest to it. (See Figure 5-2.)

- Municipal sewers serve most of Bristol; those areas of the city without sewer service utilize on-site septic systems. The city's wastewater treatment plant was designed to accommodate a residential population of 70,000 to 75,000 and corresponding non-residential growth. Currently, the plant has the capacity to treat 10.75 million gallons per day and can be expanded to handle 13.5 million gallons per day. The average daily flow received by the plant varies from nine to ten million gallons per day. (See Figure 5-3.)

- Except for the southwest section of the city, public water serves almost all of Bristol. The Bristol Water Department operates the city's public water supply system. The Department provides water to approximately 48,500 customers, 75% of which are served by reservoirs and 25% of which are served by wells. The Water Department has designated a 200-foot radius around each well to ensure groundwater quality and protection; however, the Department does not own or control all of the land around the wells on Barlow or Mechanic Streets. Bristol's water treatment plant, built in 1987 to treat its surface water supply, has a filtering capacity of 12 million gallons per day. The wells are pumped directly into the distribution system with their own treatment systems. (See Figure 5-4.)

- Population projections to the year 2010 indicate that Bristol will have an adequate supply of water in the event of a crisis situation. After that, however, without proposed additions to the water supply system (surface water diversions and/or the construction of Cook's Dam), the city will no longer have an adequate supply of water in the event of an emergency.

Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goal:

Continue to provide municipal services to best serve the needs and expectation of the city's residents.

Policies:

1. Actively maintain public infrastructure facilities throughout the city such as roads, sanitary sewers and storm drainage to prevent physical deterioration, in accordance with the city's Capital Improvement Program. Program capital improvements on the basis of a priority system carefully related to the needs of the community and fully integrated with the Plan.

2. Carefully consider the city's financial resources in the planning for future municipal improvements and resources.

3. Actively maintain city buildings, including schools, to prevent physical deterioration and, as necessary, upgrade and improve them to keep pace with relevant technology.

4. Encourage alternative uses of educational facilities during non-school hours.

5. Where appropriate, return to productive use or to the city's tax rolls unused and underutilized excess land owned by the government, other than properties that fulfill important public purposes such as public parks or open space preserves.

6. Retain city-owned properties, such as schools, rather than selling them, if the city determines that there could be a future need or an alternative municipal use for the property.

7. Recognize the Bristol Public Library as a significant cultural resource in the city and an important component of downtown revitalization.

8. Ensure an adequate supply of water to accommodate the needs of both the existing community and future development.

9. Avoid the extension of public water lines and sanitary sewers into the south-central section of the city dominated by South Mountain, in order to reduce the pressure there for higher-density residential development and to preserve this environmentally sensitive, significant topographical feature.

Recommendations:

1. Expand the Bristol Public Library in its current location or provide a suitable space for it elsewhere in downtown.
2. Promote the underground installation of all utility services to reduce the amount of "visual clutter" created by overhead wires.

Goal:

Provide a broad range of human services and educational opportunities to those city residents who desire or need them.

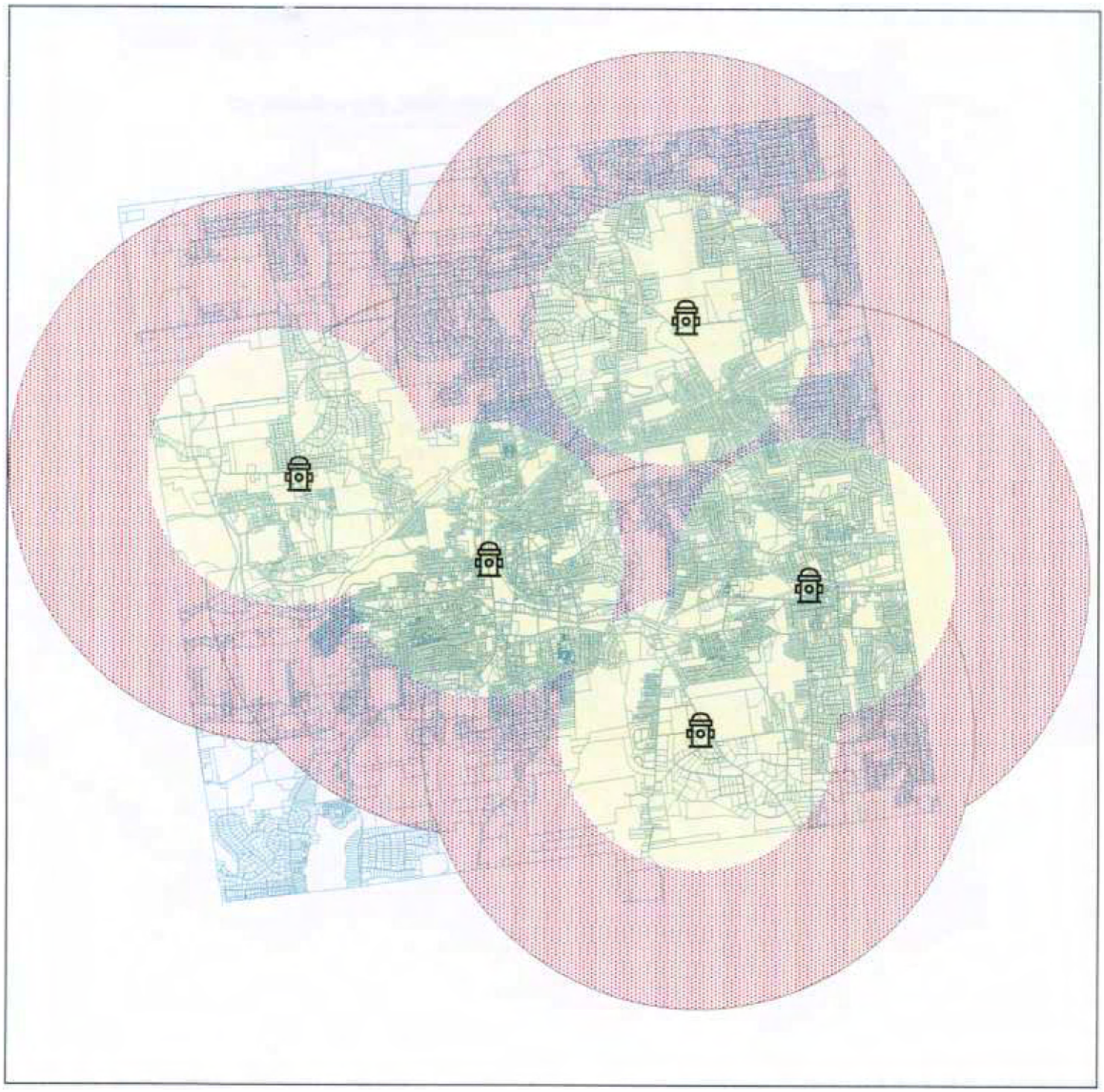
Policies:

1. Provide a range of educational, recreational and social facilities consistent with the population to be served and at reasonable cost; locate such facilities so as to be easily accessible to residents of all ages.
2. Promote the provision of services such as child and adult day care for those persons who need such services to allow them to enter and remain in the job market.
3. Encourage both public and private pre-school education accessible to those who require such services for their children.
4. Encourage public and private educational facilities in appropriate locations.
5. Encourage adult education, to expand/upgrade general knowledge, vocational skills and cultural endeavors, at times and in locations that are convenient for potential enrollees.
6. Encourage as necessary the establishment, maintenance and/or growth of programs and facilities that address the needs of the city's homeless families and individuals.
7. Encourage as necessary the establishment, maintenance and/or growth of services and programs for persons with special needs.

Figure 5-1. School Enrollment Projections, 1998-2008, City of Bristol, CT

SCHOOL YEAR	Grade				
	Pre-K	K-6	7-8	9-12	Total
1998-99	174	4,613	1,348	2,473	8,608
1999-00	174	4,485	1,371	2,542	8,572
2000-01	174	4,409	1,343	2,583	8,509
2001-02	174	4,316	1,307	2,625	8,422
2002-03	174	4,259	1,310	2,572	8,315
2003-04	174	4,202	1,276	2,561	8,213
2004-05	174	4,144	1,276	2,532	8,126
2005-06	174	4,113	1,250	2,472	8,009
2006-07	174	4,110	1,196	2,472	7,952
2007-08	174	4,130	1,145	2,415	7,864

Source: School Facilities Master Plan, Bristol, CT, March 1998 (New England School Development Council)



Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT

Figure 5-2. Existing Fire Service Areas

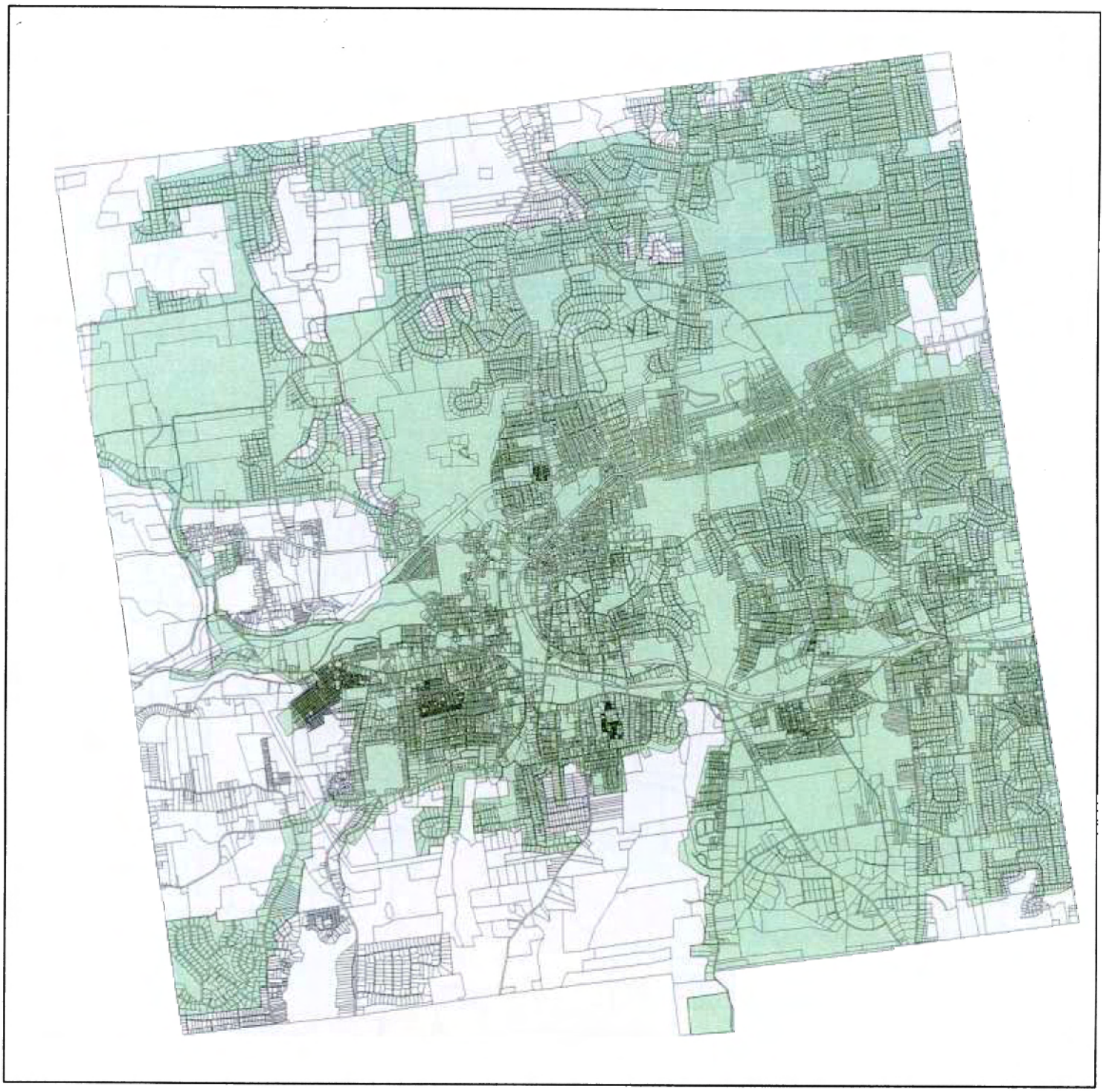
Existing Fire Station
One-Mile Radius
Two-Mile Radius

N
W E
S

0 1 2 Miles

BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart Inc.

Sources: Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
Buckhurst, Fish & Jacquemart Inc.



Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT

Figure 5-3.
Existing Sanitary Sewer Service Area

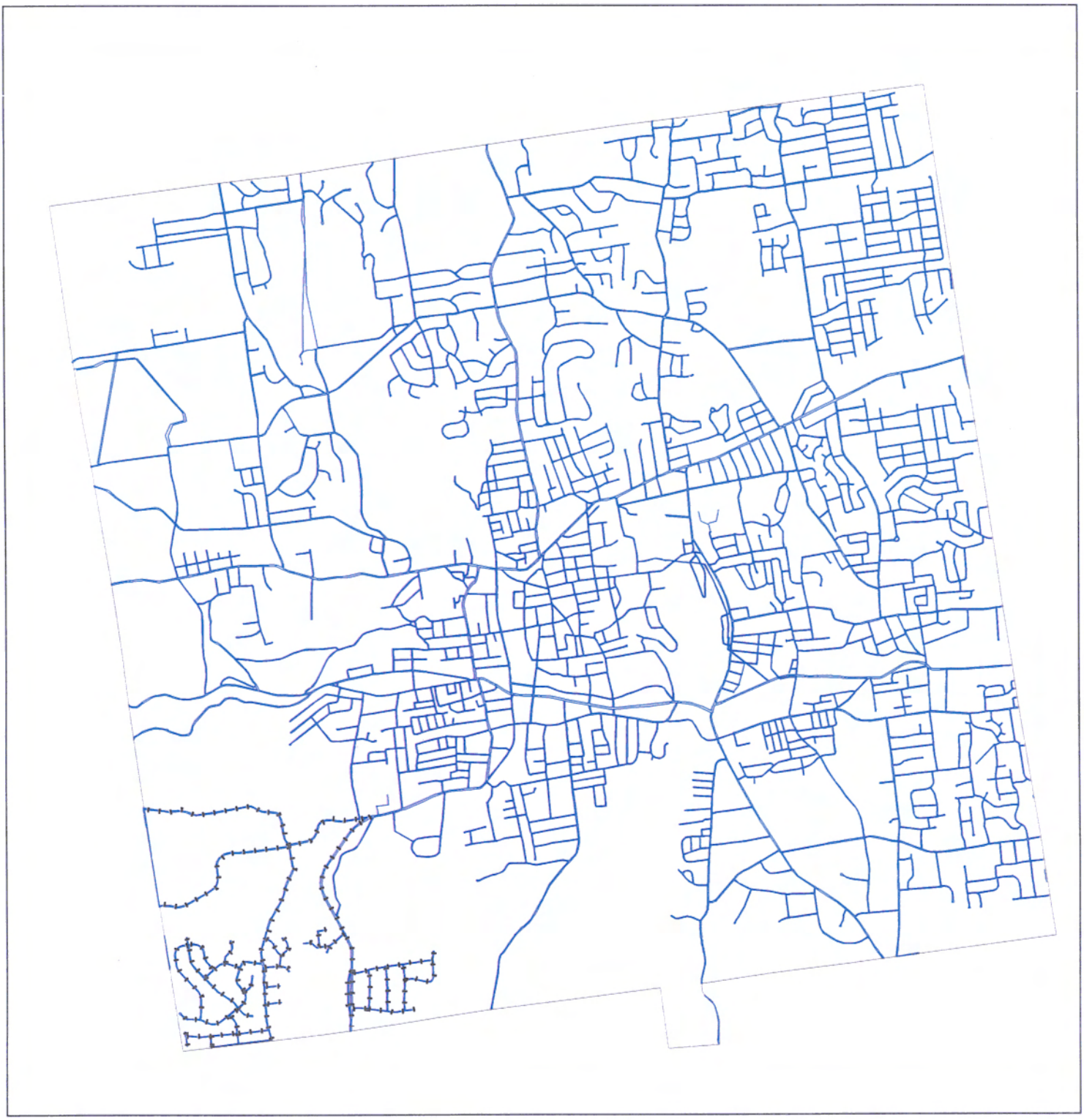
Sewered Area

N
W E
S

0 2 Miles

BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart Inc.

Sources: Bristol Department of Public Works
Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
Buckhurst, Fish & Jacquemart Inc.



Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT

Figure 5-4.
Existing and Proposed Water Service Area

Existing Water Distribution System

Area Proposed for Water Service

N
W E
S

0 1 2 Miles

BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart Inc.

Sources: Bristol Water Department
Bristol Department of Public Works
Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
Buckhurst, Fish & Jacquemart Inc.

CHAPTER 6 – TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

At its most fundamental, the purpose of a community's transportation system is to move people and goods. It provides the primary means by which people can get to work, go shopping or spend their leisure time. It also provides the framework upon which the community is built and, as such, is inextricably bound to the land uses it serves. The number, quality and variety of transportation options in a community influence locational choices for the development of housing, businesses and industry. This chapter briefly describes Bristol's transportation system, which is composed of city streets and State roads, public transit, sidewalks and bicycle paths. The chapter seeks to identify and address a number of existing problems in the city's transportation network as well as its future transportation needs.

Sources of Information

- 1989 Bristol Plan of Development
- Police Department (Traffic Division), City of Bristol
- Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
- New Britain Transportation Company
- DATTCO Bus Company
- Connecticut Department of Transportation
- *Master Transportation Plan, Projects and Programs Through the Year 2017*, Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency, 1997
- *Transit Development Plan for the Central Connecticut Region*, Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency, 1996
- *Suggested List of Safety Surveillance Sites (SLOSSS), 1993-95* and *1994-96*, Connecticut Department of Transportation

Key Findings, Conclusions and Issues

- Bristol's street system is traversed by four state roads – Routes 6, 72, 69 and 229 – which play an important role in carrying local and areawide traffic into, through and out of the city. Routes 6 and 72 carry traffic in an east-west direction and link Bristol with Farmington, Plainville and Plymouth. Routes 229 and 69 carry traffic in a north-south direction and link Bristol with Southington, Wolcott and Burlington. These state roads form the backbone of Bristol's roadway network and are its primary transportation connection to the larger region. (See Figure 6-1.)

- "Functional classification", or the categorization of roads into different operational systems, groups streets and highways according to the level of service they are intended to provide. The functional classification of Bristol's roads is as follows (see Figure 6-2):

  Major arterials provide for traffic movement between the city and surrounding communities and also give access to adjacent properties. Streets in Bristol classified as major arterials are:

  1. Route 6 – Farmington Avenue-North Street-Terryville Avenue
  2. Route 72 – East Main Street-Broad Street-Riverside Avenue-Main Street-School Street-Park Street-Terryville Road
  3. Route 229 – King Street-Middle Street
  4. Route 69 – Burlington Avenue-West Street-Wolcott Street (east of Wolcott Road)-Wolcott Road

  Minor arterials provide options for alternate traffic movement and may also connect major arterials; some through service is provided but traffic volumes are lighter than along major arterials. Streets in Bristol classified as minor arterials are:

  1. Allentown Road
  2. Birch Street
  3. Central Street
  4. Church Avenue
  5. Clark Avenue
  6. Emmett Street (north of Redstone Hill Road)
  7. Fall Mountain Road
  8. James P. Casey Road-Peacedale Street-Maple Avenue-Mix Street
  9. Jerome Avenue
  10. Lake Avenue
  11. Lincoln Avenue
  12. Maltby Street
  13. Memorial Boulevard
  14. Pine Street-Mountain Road-South Street
  15. Redstone Hill Road
  16. Shrub Road
  17. Stafford Avenue
  18. Stevens Street
  19. West Washington Street-Washington Street
  20. Willis Street
  21. Witches Rock Road
  22. Wolcott Street (west of Wolcott Road)

Collectors provide for traffic movement between neighborhoods within the city and also give access to adjacent properties. They create the connecting links in the street system: traffic can be carried from local streets via collectors to major and minor arterials. Streets in Bristol classified as collectors are:

1. Bellevue Avenue
2. Brook Street
3. Center Street (west of Maple Street)
4. Church Street
5. Cross Street
6. Divinity Street
7. Downs Street
8. East Road
9. Hart Street
10. High Street
11. Hill Street
12. Lewis Street-Lewis Road (pt.)-Oakland Street (north of Farmington Avenue)
13. Main Street
14. Maple Street
15. Matthews Street
16. Minor Street
17. North Main Street
18. Oakland Street (between Farmington Avenue and Woodland Street)
19. Peck Lane
20. Perkins Street
21. Queen Street
22. Round Hill Road
23. Sonstrom Road
24. Todd Street
25. Woodland Street

Local streets provide direct access to the properties located along them. All streets in Bristol not classified as major arterials, minor arterials or collectors are classified as local streets.

- Based upon traffic volumes, accident rates, poor alignment and/or improper functioning, 63 intersections and street segments in the city have been designated as "critical." In addition, eight street intersections have been identified for monitoring for possible future traffic problems. (See Figures 6-3, 6-4a, 6-4b and 6-5.)

- The city's public transit operation consists of both a fixed route system and a commuter bus system. The fixed route system is owned by the Connecticut Department of Transportation and managed by the New Britain Transportation Company; it has its hub in downtown Bristol near City Hall and follows two routes. The first is intra-city, serving areas within Bristol such as Central High School, Gaylord Towers, Bonnie Acres, the Bristol Senior/Community Center and the center of Forestville. The second is inter-city, travels along Route 6, and serves Bristol Hospital, Tunxis Community College, and the centers of Plainville and Forestville. The commuter bus system is owned and operated by DATTCO Bus Company of New Britain; it provides express bus service between the park-and-ride lot on Todd Street and Hartford. (See Figure 6-6.)

  The city's public transit operation also includes ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) paratransit service, which mirrors the fixed bus route system and provides transportation for persons with disabilities between Bristol and Plainville, New Britain, Kensington (Berlin), Westfarms Mall and certain medical facilities in Farmington and Hartford. The service is operated by the DATTCO Bus Company under the direction of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency.

- Bristol's public transportation system is underutilized. Most workers living in Bristol drive, rather than take the bus, to their place of employment.

- The Connecticut Department of Transportation's *Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan*, adopted in March of 1999, recommends a number of on- and off-road bicycle and pedestrian routes throughout the state. In Bristol – as elsewhere – these routes are intended to be part of a larger, regional system of bicycle and pedestrian paths that links each community with its neighboring towns and beyond. In Bristol, the on-road routes include: Route 72 between Plainville and Plymouth; Washington Street-West Washington Street-Route 229-Lake Avenue; Stevens Street-Shrub Road-Burlington Avenue-Peacedale Street-James P. Casey Road-Hill Street and Marsh Road; and Burlington Avenue between Shrub Road and Route 6. There are currently no existing or proposed off-road bicycle or pedestrian routes identified in Bristol.

- From a regional perspective, the most significant transportation issue facing the city is its lack of direct access to and from an interstate highway. Cities with such access are at an advantage in terms of regional competition in the marketplace; such cities can offer critical access advantages to potential businesses and industries. As such, Bristol's lack of interstate access has implications for its economic development potential.

- Within the city itself, the most significant transportation issue is traffic congestion along portions of Routes 229, 6 and 72. (See Figure 6-7.)

    - The current capacity of Route 229, particularly given the impending realignment of Route 72 and the widening of Route 229 between Redstone Hill Road and Birch Street, is adequate to handle current and future traffic volumes. Traffic flow on Route 229 is not nearly as impeded as on Route 6 because abutting land uses are more oriented toward office and industrial uses than toward commercial uses.

    - The Farmington Avenue portion of Route 6 is Bristol's most congested corridor. This portion of the corridor currently operates over capacity, and traffic flow is further impeded by the multiple curb cuts and turning movements into and out of adjacent retail and residential land uses. Given the absence of any State plan to widen Route 6, the city needs to continue to utilize local land use and traffic management controls – such as curb cut consolidation, the synchronization of traffic signals and the realignment of intersections – to improve traffic mobility and safety along the corridor.

    - The future of Route 72 between the Bristol-Plainville line and Route 229 is contingent upon the completion of the realignment project proposed by ConnDOT. The project now involves the construction of a four-lane arterial highway from the vicinity of the present terminus of the existing Route 72 Expressway at Forestville Avenue (Route 372) in Plainville to a point west of Middle Street (Route 229) opposite Riverside Avenue in Bristol. (See Figure 6-8.)

    - The proposed realignment of Route 72 will enhance accessibility into and out of Bristol. The new road is expected to ease existing traffic congestion along the existing Route 72 corridor, create a direct link to the city's downtown and help improve traffic conditions on Route 6.

Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goal:

Provide for the safe, efficient and orderly movement of people and goods into, out of, and within Bristol and provide adequate access to places of employment, residential, recreational and commercial activity.

Policies:

1. Promote a balanced transportation system of adequate and safe roads, an adequate mass transit system and – especially in the downtown – a safe and attractive network of public and private sidewalks for pedestrians. Encourage the city, region and state to address transportation issues in a coordinated manner.
2. Support the present Connecticut Department of Transportation plan to improve Route 72 from the Bristol-Plainville town line to Route 229. Encourage the improvement of Route 72 between Route 229 and Memorial Boulevard as a tree-lined boulevard, in order to enhance the appearance of this corridor as a major entryway into the center of the city. Promote Memorial Boulevard as the major entryway by automobile into downtown Bristol from the east.
3. Preserve the attractive character and traffic-carrying capacity of the Route 229 corridor as one of the city's major gateways.
4. Provide for adequate traffic circulation within and between all sections of the city. Dead-end roads or cul-de-sacs should not preclude strategically located through streets that would improve traffic flow through the overall neighborhood.
5. Improve traffic conditions on the city's major arterial system and minimize further congestion through land use controls, with particular attention given to Routes 6, 229 and 72.
6. Encourage bus routes that better connect high concentrations of people with employment centers, shopping areas and entertainment destinations.
7. Require the provision of sidewalks in medium- and high-density residential areas. Promote sidewalk linkages between important places, such as between parks and schools.
8. Encourage the establishment of additional bikeways within the city.
9. Explore the potential for commuter rail service in Bristol.
10. Encourage the establishment of a multi-modal transportation center in downtown Bristol.

Recommendations:

General

1. Improve substandard streets and intersections in order to provide better geometrics, pavement surface and pavement width and, where necessary, greater right-of-way width.
2. Limit/consolidate the number of non-residential curb cuts along heavily traveled streets – including but not limited to Routes 6, 229 and 72 – by encouraging the use of such traffic management techniques as shared driveway openings by adjoining properties.
3. Stripe existing bicycle routes to clearly designate bicycle lanes.
4. Provide bicycle storage facilities in commuter parking lots.
5. Ask the Mayor and City Council to consider establishing the position of a professional traffic engineer.

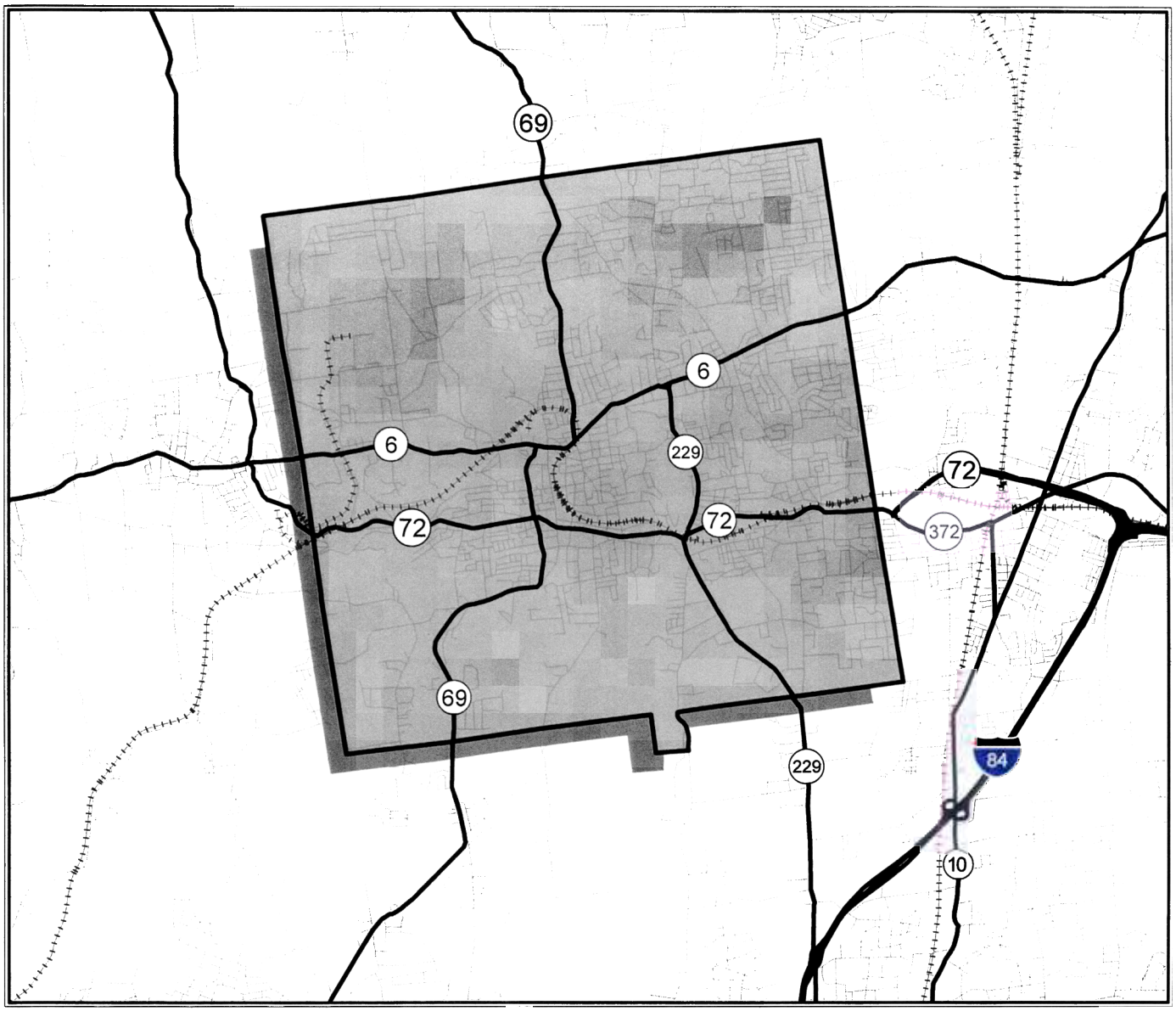
Route 229 Corridor

1. Provide an exclusive right-turn lane northbound and an exclusive left-turn lane southbound on Route 229 at its intersection with Louisiana Avenue/Moody Street.
2. Monitor the intersections of Route 229/Broad Street and Route 229/Riverside Avenue to determine what additional traffic improvements might be necessary once the extension of Route 72 is completed.

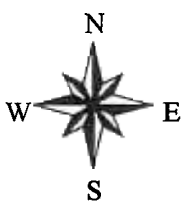
Route 6 Corridor

1. Provide exclusive right-turn lanes eastbound and westbound on Route 6 at its intersection with Stafford Avenue. Provision of these right-turn lanes will require the realignment of curbs and the acquisition of additional right-of-way. Widen Stafford Avenue south of its intersection with Route 6 to provide additional turning lanes; modify the signalization at the intersection accordingly.
2. Provide a left-turn lane westbound on Route 6 at its intersection with Camp Street.
3. Provide additional through lanes eastbound and westbound on Route 6 at its intersection with Clark Avenue.
4. Provide an exclusive right-turn lane westbound on Route 6 at its intersection with Jerome Avenue.
5. Where feasible, widen Route 6 between West Street and Camp Street to a minimum of four lanes.
6. Study the feasibility of a street connection through Kern Park to connect Route 6 with the single-family residential neighborhood to the north.
7. Study the feasibility of redesigning the diagonal leg of King Street at its intersection with Route 6 to improve traffic conditions and to create a safe, landscaped parking area.
8. Continue to coordinate traffic signalization and traffic markings.

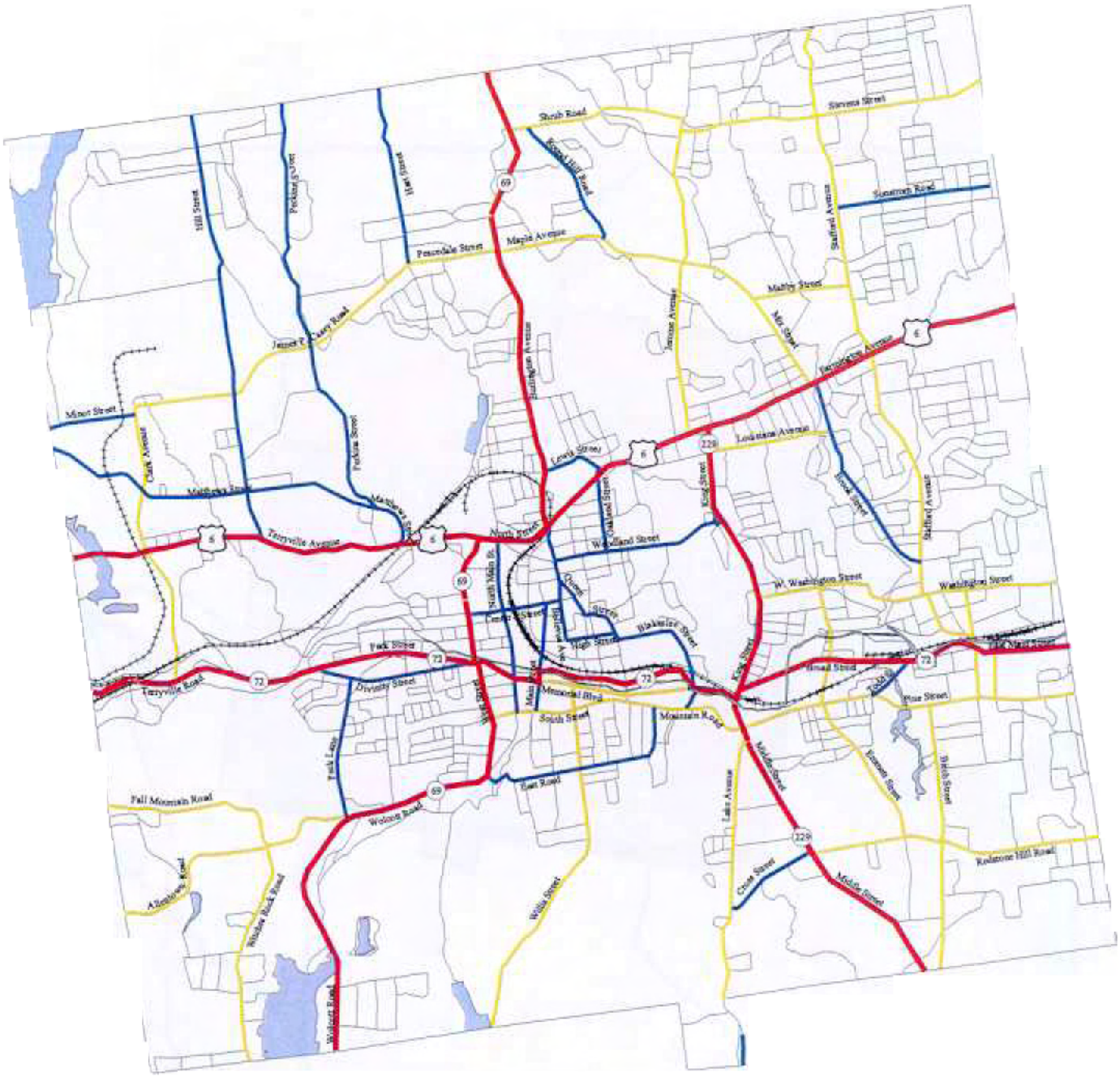
Figure 6-1. Bristol Transportation Network



Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT



A product of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency.
For planning purposes only.



Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT

Figure 6-2.
Functional Classification of Bristol's Streets

Major Arterials
Minor Arterials
Collectors
Local Roads

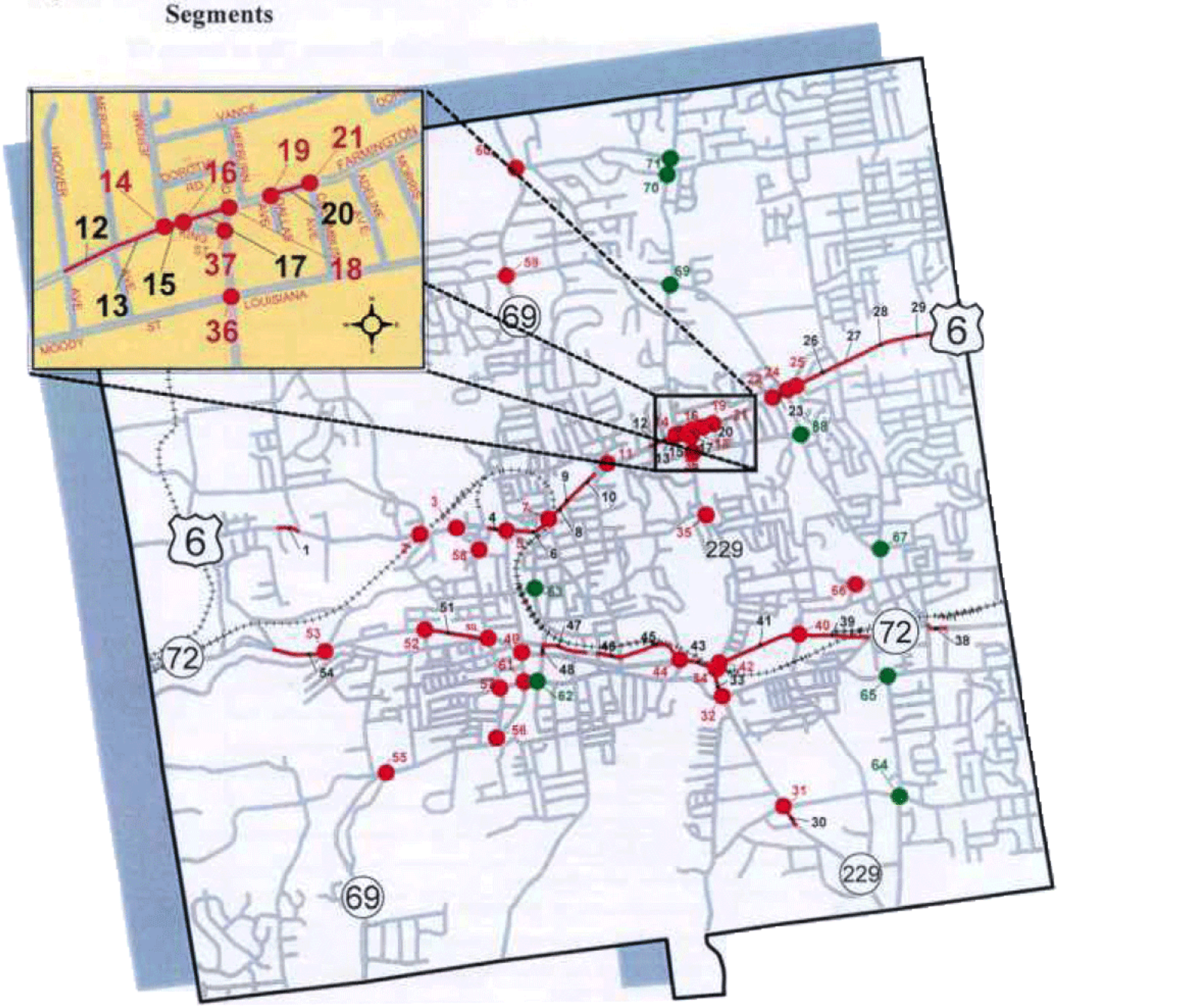
N
W E
S

0 1 2 Miles

BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart Inc.

Sources: Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart Inc.

Figure 6-3. Critical Intersections and Street Segments



Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT

1 0 1 2 Miles

LEGEND

- Critical Intersections
- Critical Road Segments (Black Labels)
- Intersections Requiring Monitoring
- Railroad

Sources: Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
Connecticut Dept. of Transportation
Bristol Planning Commission

A GIS product of the
Central Connecticut Regional
Planning Agency
For planning purposes only

Figure 6-4a. List of Critical Intersections and Street Segments, Route 6, City of Bristol, CT

Location No. (see Fig. 6-3)	Location
1	between Barnum Road and Hill Street
2	at Matthews Street
3	at Pound Street
4	between West Street (Route 69) and North Main Street
5	at North Main Street
6	between Federal Street and Burlington Avenue (Route 69)
7	at Burlington Avenue (Route 69) and Maple Street
8	between Maple Street and Stewart Street
9	between Stewart Street and Rustic Terrace
10	between Rustic Terrace and Oakland Street/Lewis Street
11	at Vanderbilt Road
12	between Hoover Avenue and Mercier Avenue
13	between Mercier Avenue and Jerome Avenue
14	at Jerome Avenue
15	between Jerome Avenue and King Place
16	at King Place
17	between King Place and King Street (Route 229)
18	at King Street (Route 229) and Hefbern Road
19	at Dallas Avenue
20	between Dallas Avenue and Columbus Avenue
21	at Columbus Avenue
22	at John Avenue
23	between John Avenue and Mix Street
24	at Mix Street and Brook Street*
25	at Carol Drive and Collins Road
26	between Boardman Road and Stafford Avenue
27	between Stafford Avenue and Stephen's auto dealership driveway
28	between Stephen's auto dealership driveway and Shop-Rite shopping center driveway
29	between Shop-Rite shopping center driveway and Bristol Farms shopping center driveway

*Intersection realignment scheduled to begin in 2000.

Source: Suggested List of Safety Surveillance Sites, 1993-1995 and 1994-1996, CT Department of Transportation

Figure 6-4b. List of Critical Intersections & Street Segments, Rts. 229, 72 and 69, Bristol, CT

Location No. (see Fig. 6-3)	Location
Route 229	
30	between Pine Brook Terrace and Redstone Hill Road
31	at Redstone Hill Road and Cross Street*
32	at Pine Street and Mountain Road
33	between Pine Street and Riverside Avenue (Route 72)**
34	at Riverside Avenue (Route 72)**
35	at Woodland Street
36	at Moody Street and Louisiana Avenue
37	at King Place
Route 72	
38	between Lincoln Avenue and Central Street**
39	between Todd Street and Emmett Street**
40	at Emmett Street and Andrews Street***
41	between Emmett Street and King Street (Route 229)**
42	at King Street and Middle Street (Route 229)**
43	between Middle Street (Route 229) and Downs Street
44	at Downs Street, Memorial Boulevard and Blakeslee Street
45	between Blakeslee Street and Hooker Court
46	between Hooker Court and Mellen Street
47	between Warner Court and Main Street
48	between Riverside Avenue and Memorial Boulevard
49	at Church Street and North Main Street
50	at West Street (Route 69) and Divinity Street
51	between Divinity Street and Tulip Street
52	at Tulip Street
53	at Waterbury Road and Rockwell Park entrance road
54	between Waterbury Road and Barlow Street
Route 69	
55	at Wolcott Street+
56	at Union Street/East Road++
57	at South Street and South Street Extension
58	at Pound Street
59	at Maple Avenue and Peacedale Street
60	at Shrub Road

*Intersection realignment was completed in 1999.

**Location will be affected by Route 72 relocation project.

***Intersection improvements were completed in 1998.

+Intersection realignment was completed in 1997.

++Intersection realignment proposed but not yet scheduled for construction.

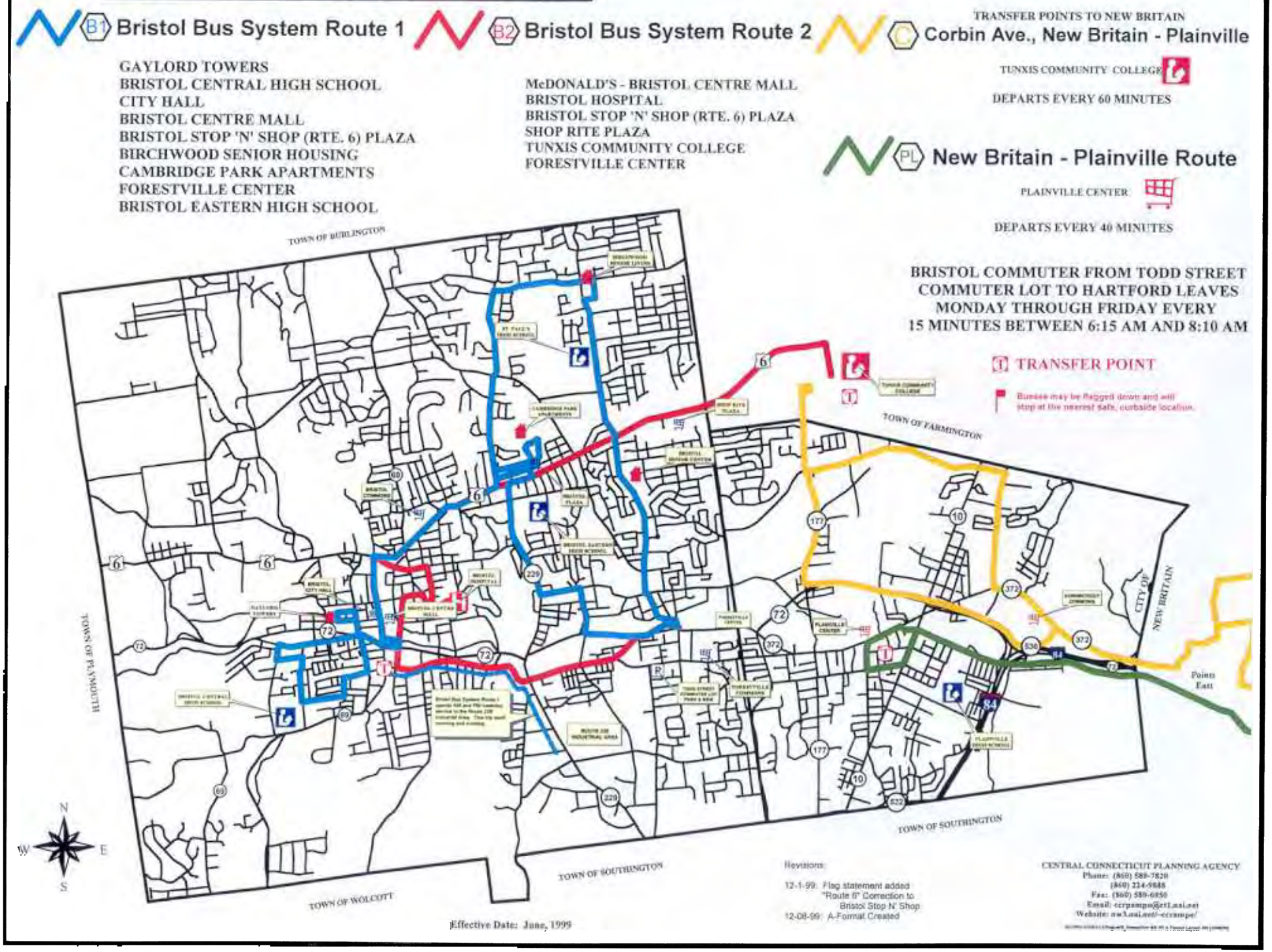
Source: Suggested List of Safety Surveillance Sites, 1993-1995 and 1994-1996, CT Department of Transportation

Figure 6-5. Other Critical Intersections or In Need of Monitoring, City of Bristol, CT

Location No. (see Fig. 6-3)	Intersection	Critical	To be Monitored
61	South Street/Church Street	☑	
62	Main Street/South Street		☑
63	Center Street/Main Street	☑	
64	Birch Street/Redstone Hill Road		☑
65	Birch Street/ Pine Street		☑
66	West Washington Street/Washington Street/Frederick Street	☑	
67	Stafford Avenue/Brook Street/Fair Street		☑
68	Brook Street/Louisiana Avenue		☑
69	Mix Street/Maple Street/Jerome Avenue		☑
70	Jerome Avenue at Stevens Street		☑
71	Jerome Avenue at Shrub Road		☑

Source: Bristol Planning Commission

Figure 6-6. Bus Route Map of Bristol and Plainville



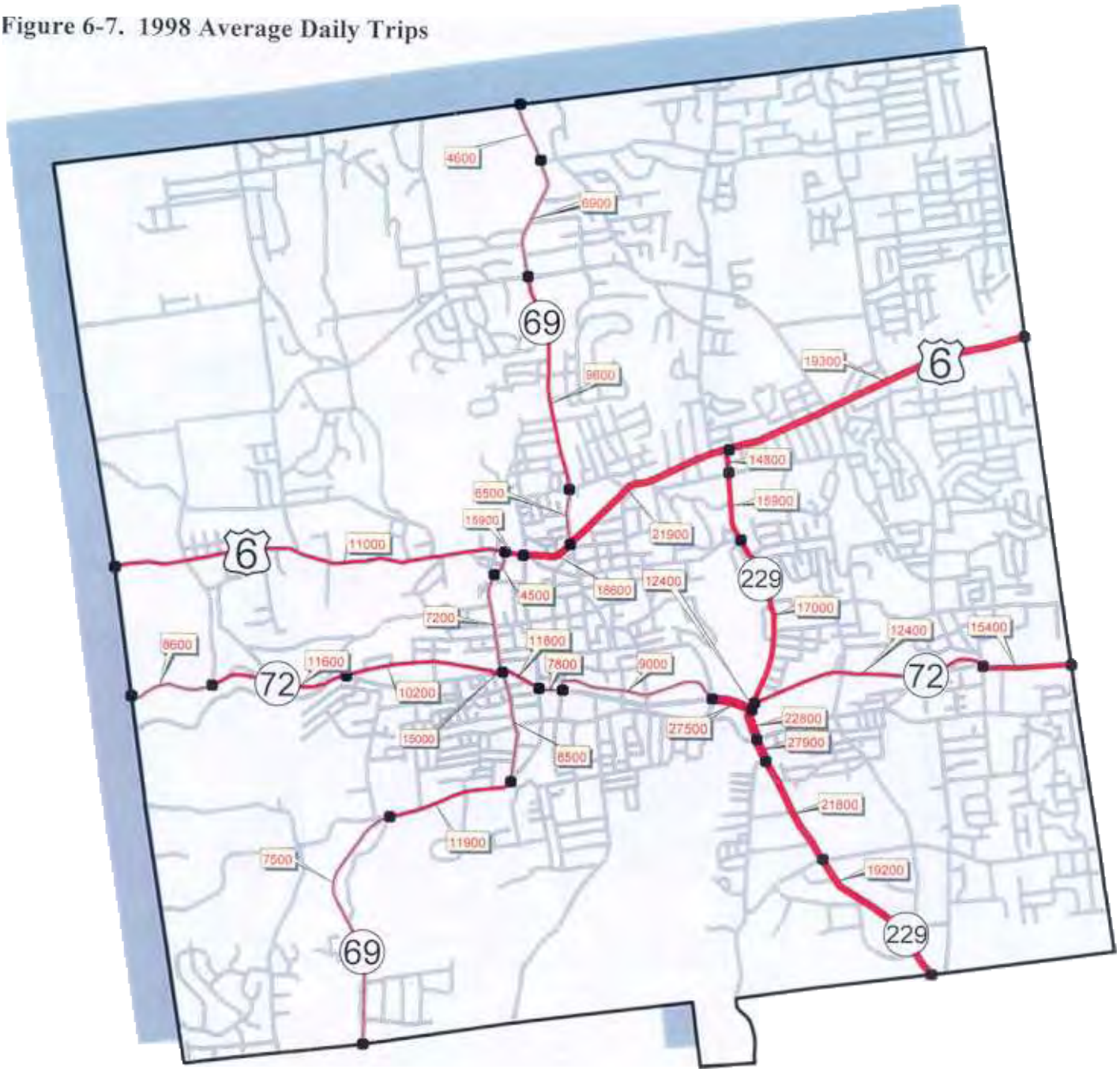
Effective Date: June, 1999

Revisions:

12-1-99: Flag statement added
"Route 8" Correction to
Bristol Stop N' Shop
12-08-99: A-Format Created

CENTRAL CONNECTICUT PLANNING AGENCY
Phone: (860) 589-7820
(860) 234-9888
Fax: (860) 589-6950
Email: ccrpamps@ctlan.net
Website: ww3.ctlan.net/~ccrpmpo/

Figure 6-7. 1998 Average Daily Trips



Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT

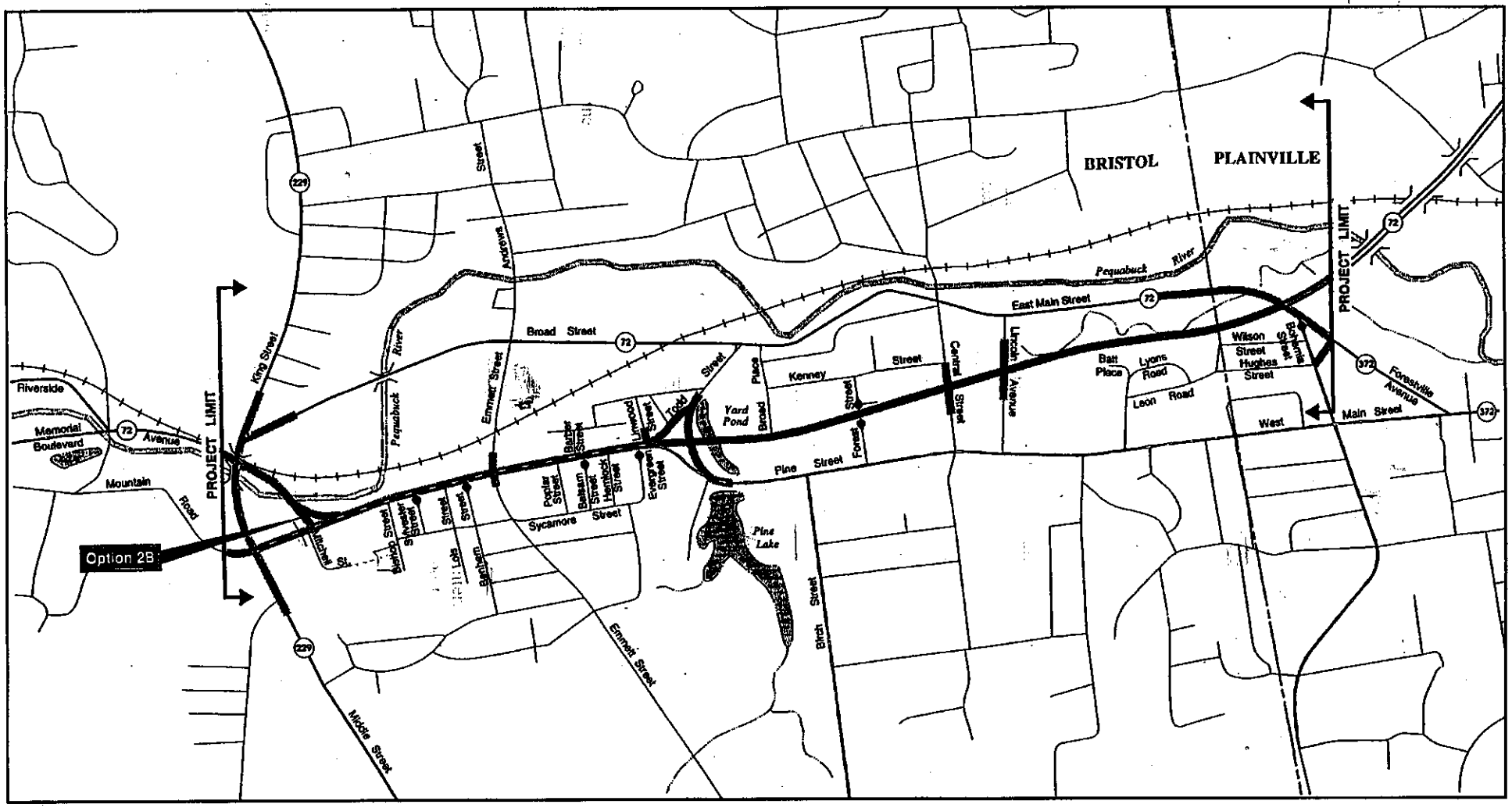
1 0 1 2 Miles

A GIS product of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency.
For planning purposes only.

N
W E
S

LEGEND

- Road Segments Endpoints
- 4,500-9,000 Trips
- 9,001-13,500 Trips
- 13,501-18,000 Trips
- 18,001-22,500 Trips
- 22,501-27,000 Plus Trips



Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT

Figure 6-8. Proposed Route 72 Realignment

N W E S

0 900 1900 ft

BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart Inc.

Source: Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency

CHAPTER 7 – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The economic health of most communities largely depends upon their ability to attract, "grow" and retain business and industry. Commercial, industrial and office developments generate considerable revenues from taxes and fees, provide jobs for residents of the community and the region, and often require fewer public services than residential development. Among the factors that typically influence the location of business and industry are housing and transportation costs, the availability of a suitable labor force, land prices, taxes and even local quality of life (e.g., the quality of a community's schools and the availability of cultural and recreational resources).

This chapter summarizes the key features of Bristol's economic base and labor force, their relationship to the region, and the nature and direction of future economic development efforts in the city.

Sources of Information

- Connecticut Department of Labor
- United States Department of Labor
- Cushman & Wakefield
- *Bottom Line Report, Year-end 1998*, CB Richard Ellis
- *1997 Demographics USA – City Edition*, Market Statistics, 1997
- 1990 Census Transportation Planning Package

Key Findings, Conclusions and Issues

- If Bristol is to maintain its economic and spatial integrity, it must promote well-balanced development that buffers the city's residents and tax base from the vicissitudes of economic cycles.
- Situated within the western suburban sub-market of greater Hartford County, the city is reasonably well-located with respect to attracting future office development, except for the fact that it lacks direct access to an interstate highway. To date, demand for office space in this sub-market has largely been met by communities closer to Hartford, such as Avon and Farmington.
- Both the mid-1990's relocation of CIGNA HealthCare's back offices to the city and the expansion of ESPN's broadcasting network and production center offer evidence of Bristol's ability to compete for the growing demand for office space. An unmet demand also exists for first-class office space in units of 5,000-10,000 square feet, largely by law firms, accountants and other professionals.
- In 1998, the western suburban sub-market of greater Hartford County contained 8.1 million square feet of industrial floor space, of which 1.6 million square feet (22 percent of the total) was vacant. Bristol accounted for 71 percent of this vacant space, primarily contained in the former New Departure manufacturing plant on James P. Casey Road.
- Some of the city's vacant industrial space is considered outmoded by modern industrial standards. Older, multi-story buildings often have inefficient layouts not conducive to the flexible space needs of smaller manufacturers; in addition, many pre-1970 industrial sites may require environmental cleanup and remediation.
- Bristol contains more than 100 acres of vacant industrial land, already subdivided and serviced with public water, sanitary and storm sewers, gas, telephone and electric utilities.
- The greater Hartford retail market is dominated by large regional shopping malls such as Westfarms Mall in Farmington / West Hartford and by "power centers" and "big box" retailers such as those found along the Berlin Turnpike and in Buckland Commons in Manchester. These contemporary developments provide substantial free parking, a complete range of goods and services, a breadth of convenience items, and coordinated marketing services; their success is also due in part to the maximum exposure offered by interstate highway accessibility. They have largely replaced downtown Hartford as the region's retail center and have eclipsed both smaller downtowns – such as Bristol's – and local convenience centers struggling with smaller buildings and inferior parking or access.
- Bristol contains approximately 2.3 million square feet of commercial floor space, located primarily in strip shopping centers along the eastern portion of Route 6 and in downtown Bristol. Other, smaller retail facilities are scattered elsewhere throughout the city, primarily along Route 72, Pine Street and the western portion of Route 6. Most of the city's newer residential areas lack neighborhood-oriented retail stores and services.

- An analysis of buying power in Bristol and neighboring towns indicates that significant retail demand is generated by local residents and still more is captured by local retail outlets. Forecasts indicate that, for the period 1997-2002, retail sales in Bristol will experience a 16 percent increase, even with a stable population and household market. This suggests that, although the character of the retail market may change, retail vacancies are expected to remain at relatively low levels in the large shopping centers on Route 6 and in the downtown.

- Bristol's economy entered the service-based information age with the structural transformation from manufacturing to service industries that occurred in the mid-1990's, symbolized locally by the closing of the New Departure manufacturing plant – with its remaining 500 blue-collar and managerial jobs – and the expansion of ESPN's network broadcasting and production facility – with its 1,200 white-collar and high-technology telecommunication jobs.

- The traditional manufacturing sector of Bristol's economy has been on the decline since 1979. However, instead of three or four large manufacturers, the city now has a greater number of small manufacturers, who continue to flourish. Numbering some 200 firms with approximately 4,400 employees, manufacturing in Bristol is primarily concentrated in fabricated metals and machinery.

- Total non-farm employment in Bristol reached 19,800 jobs on an annual average basis in 1997. Manufacturing accounted for only 22 percent of that total, down sharply from 44 percent in 1980 and 29 percent in 1987. Employment in the wholesale and retail trade sector remained relatively unchanged over the last ten years; at the same time, the service sector expanded rapidly, adding one third more jobs since 1989. The fastest growth rate occurred in the communications and utilities sector – the number of jobs more than doubling between 1993 and 1997 – while jobs in construction, transportation and, to a lesser extent, financial services and government remained relatively stable. (See Figure 7-1.)

- In 1973, there were approximately 22,900 Bristol residents in the civilian labor force. As of year-end 1998, that number was estimated to be 31,500, of which 30,400 were gainfully employed on a full- or part-time basis. Only 1,100 residents were reported as unemployed, for a jobless rate of 3.5 percent, a historic low for the last quarter-century and on a par with the State of Connecticut as a whole. (See Figure 7-2.)

- The increase in the size of Bristol's labor force has been partially due to demographic changes. Whereas the size of the city's population increased only 9 percent between 1970 and 1990, the number of Bristol residents in the workforce grew 40 percent during a roughly comparable 20-year period (1973 to 1993). This growth can be attributed in part to the dramatic increase in female participation in the labor force and the economic need for a two-worker household.

- In the past, a greater proportion of those persons living in Bristol also worked in Bristol, and a much closer balance existed between the supply of local job opportunities and the demand for those jobs met by the city's resident workforce. In 1980, for example, approximately one-half of all employed Bristol residents worked in the city, while the other half worked in neighboring communities. However, out-of-town job opportunities now play an increasingly important role in meeting the employment demands of Bristol's resident workforce. In 1990, only 39 percent (12,550 persons) of all employed Bristol residents worked in the city, while the remaining 61 percent (19,800 persons) worked elsewhere. (See Figures 7-3 and 7-4.)

- Between 1980 and 1990, the city's labor force experienced the greatest growth in its college-educated workers. In turn, these gains concentrated resident labor force growth in white-collar occupations, particularly managerial and professional roles. Whereas 45 percent fewer city residents were employed in manufacturing in 1990 than in 1980, 59 percent more worked in financial services and 50 percent more worked in other professional services. One result has been a rise in the per capita income of Bristol residents, increasing 25 percent between 1990 and 1998, from $16,909 to $21,174 in current dollars.

- It is important to retain and stabilize the city's existing manufacturing base; in addition, the near-term outlook for growth in Bristol's economy rests upon its ability to attract regional- and national-market service industries (e.g., information-oriented corporate services, financial and business services). The city's advantages lie with its strong work ethic, growing educational and occupational attainment, quality of life as a place to live, and ability to attract and retain skilled white-collar workers.

Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goal:

Maintain and improve the economic base of the city in order to enhance its reputation as a desirable place in which to live, work and raise a family.

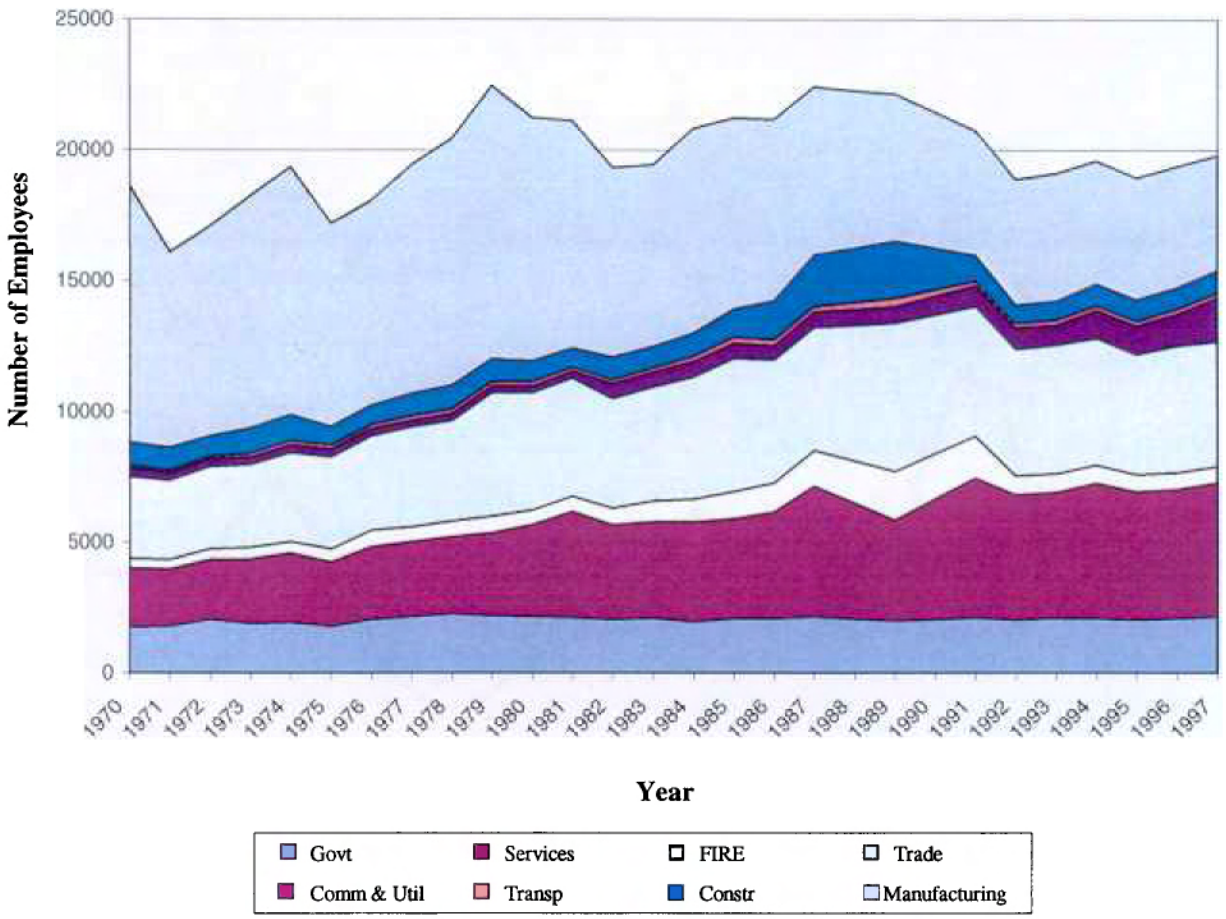
Policies:

1. Encourage a stable, diversified tax base.
2. Re-establish the downtown as a major component of the city's economic base.
3. Recognize the eastern portion of Route 6 (from Burlington Avenue to the Bristol-Farmington line) as the primary highway business corridor in the city; limit future commercial development along the corridor to existing business zones.
4. Recognize the central portion of Route 6 as part of downtown Bristol (from West Street to Federal Street) and as a "transition area" (from Federal Street to Burlington Avenue) between downtown Bristol and the highway business corridor to the east.
5. Limit future commercial development along the western portion of Route 6 (from West Street to the Bristol-Plymouth line) to neighborhood-oriented shopping in existing business zones.
6. Prohibit business expansion onto residential side streets.
7. Recognize the southeast section of the city along the Route 229 corridor as Bristol's major industrial area.
8. Encourage the attraction of new business and industry to suitable locations in the city in order to expand the city's tax base and employment opportunities. Give priority to those new businesses and industries that provide a greater number of high-paying, high-skilled jobs per facility and/or site; that support existing local businesses or industries, or use existing businesses or industries to support them; and that do not overtax the ability of the city's infrastructure to provide necessary services.
9. Encourage the retention and expansion of existing business and industry in the city.
10. Encourage the growth of the office and service sectors of the local economy.
11. Encourage a diversity of local employment opportunities in order to avoid, to the greatest extent possible, the negative effects of cyclical regional or national economic trends.
12. Encourage the inclusion of small businesses, arts and crafts, and cottage industry trades as part of the local economy.
13. Where appropriate, encourage the adaptive re-use of older industrial buildings.
14. Establish Bristol as a regional center of employment and commercial activity.
15. Encourage the installation of a city-wide "information infrastructure" to stimulate economic and community development.

Recommendations:

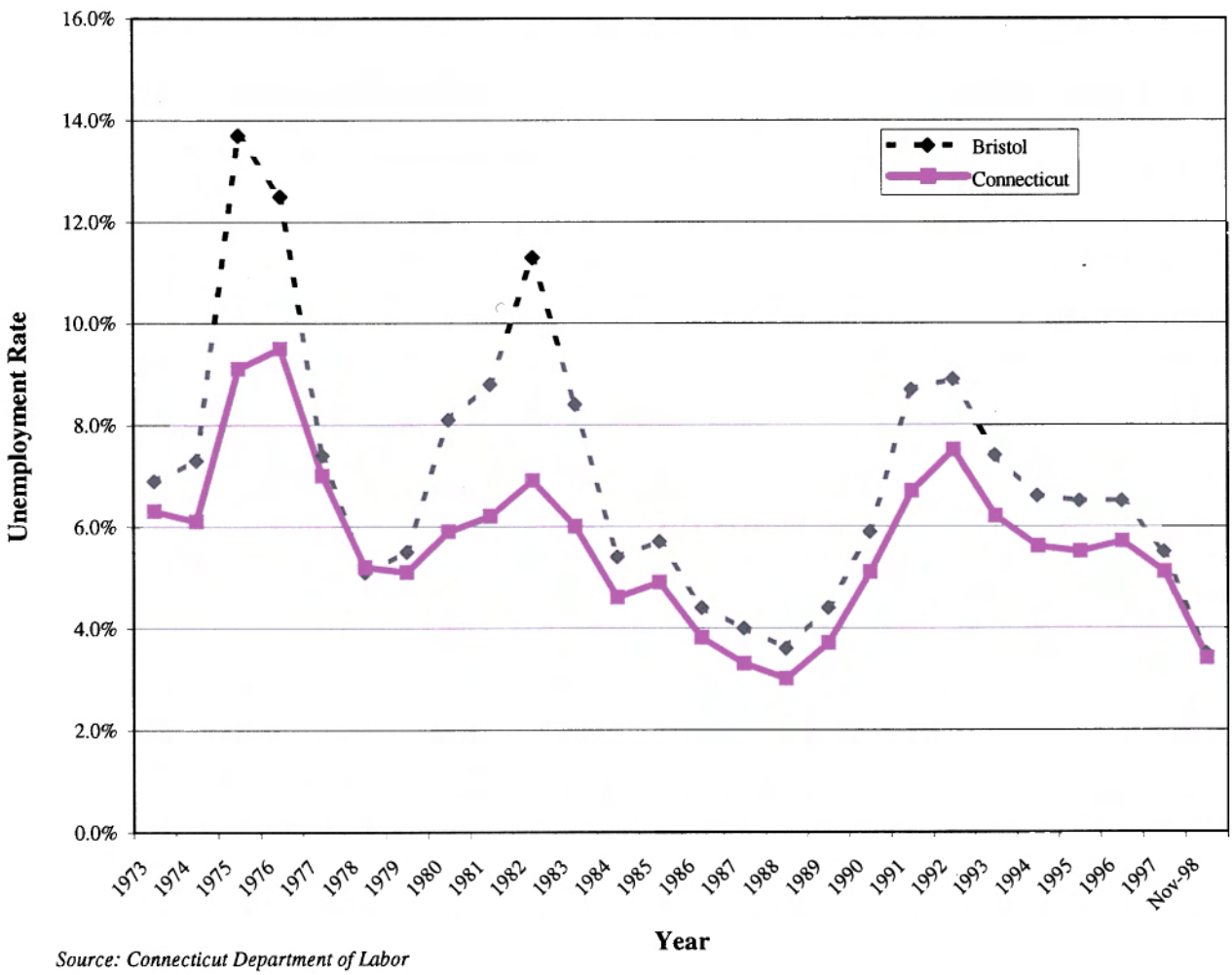
1. Broaden the application of economic development incentives to attract to the local economy a greater mix of higher value-added activities such as research and development and telecommunications.
2. Broaden the possible uses for the former New Departure manufacturing plant to include research and development facilities and offices.
3. Establish a small, neighborhood-oriented shopping area in the northwest and southwest sections of the city to serve the daily shopping and service needs of these growing residential areas.
4. Improve the overall appearance and safety of the city's business areas through the use of graphic symbols, the planting of trees, the installation of sidewalks and street furniture, the regulation of signage and the provision of other functional and aesthetic improvements that make these areas more desirable for pedestrians and shoppers.
5. Improve the gateway entrances into the city.
6. Continue to regulate the size and number of new signs.

Figure 7-1.
Non-Farm Employment in Bristol, CT, 1970-1997



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor

Figure 7-2.
Comparative Unemployment Rates, 1973-1998
City of Bristol and State of Connecticut



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor

Figure 7-3. Place of Work of Bristol Residents, 1980 and 1990

1990				1980		
PLACE OF WORK	No. of Workers from Bristol	Percent of Total		PLACE OF WORK	No. of Workers from Bristol	Percent of Total
Bristol	12,552	38.8%		**Bristol**	14,031	50.6%
Farmington	3,603	11.1%		**Farmington**	1,962	7.1%
Hartford	2,509	7.7%		**Plainville**	1,953	7.0%
Southington	2,095	6.5%		**Hartford**	1,907	6.9%
Plainville	1,778	5.5%		**Southington**	1,791	6.5%
New Britain	1,468	4.5%		**New Britain**	1,581	5.7%
West Hartford	890	2.7%		**Plymouth**	703	2.5%
Plymouth	653	2.0%		**West Hartford**	468	1.7%
Newington	563	1.7%		**Berlin**	423	1.5%
Avon	544	1.7%		**Waterbury**	279	1.0%
East Hartford	454	1.4%		**all other places (51)**	2618	9.4%
Waterbury	399	1.2%		**TOTAL**	27,716	100.0%
all other places (89)	4,869	15.0%				
TOTAL	32,377	100.0%				

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Figure 7-4. Place of Residence of Persons Working in Bristol, 1980 and 1990

1990				1980		
PLACE OF RESIDENCE	No. of Persons Working in Bristol	Percent of Total		PLACE OF RESIDENCE	No. of Persons Working in Bristol	Percent of Total
Bristol	12,552	57.9%		**Bristol**	14,031	65.1%
Plymouth	1,324	6.1%		**Plymouth**	1,693	7.9%
Southington	941	4.3%		**Southington**	999	4.6%
New Britain	778	3.6%		**Meriden**	619	2.9%
Waterbury	611	2.8%		**Plainville**	586	2.7%
Burlington	558	2.6%		**Burlington**	421	2.0%
Plainville	441	2.0%		**Wolcott**	412	1.9%
Wolcott	405	1.9%		**New Britain**	309	1.4%
Farmington	344	1.6%		**Farmington**	246	1.1%
Harwinton	228	1.1%		**Waterbury**	221	1.0%
Torrington	219	1.0%		**all other places (52)**	2,002	9.3%
Thomaston	209	1.0%		**TOTAL**	21,539	100.0%
all other places (108)	3,081	14.2%				
TOTAL	21,691	100.0%				

Source: U.S. Census of Population

CHAPTER 8 – PARKS and RECREATION, OPEN SPACE AND ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

The number, type, location and quality of a community's recreational opportunities contribute immeasurably to the quality of life of its residents and to the attractiveness of the community to new residents, business and industry. In many communities, the provision of such opportunities – which may range from formally established parks to undisturbed open spaces – is often shared by the public sector (e.g., the local or state government), semi-public organizations (e.g., a land trust) and private individuals or institutions. Additionally, many communities seek to identify and protect those features of the natural environment that help define the character of the community or make it a unique place.

This chapter examines the array of parks, playgrounds, ballfields, conservation areas, open spaces and prominent physical features that compose Bristol's recreational resources and distinguish its natural environment. The chapter also seeks to address the "conservation" component of the Plan of Conservation and Development by encouraging both the enhancement of the city's recreational facilities and the protection of its environmentally significant and sensitive areas.

Sources of Information

- 1989 Bristol Plan of Development
- Bristol Parks Department
- Bristol Water Department
- Bristol Board of Education
- New Britain Water Department
- Bristol Regional Environmental Center
- Indian Rock Nature Preserve
- Pequabuck River Watershed Association
- Watershed Improvement Network (formerly Pequabuck River Organization)
- Hoppers-Birge Pond Committee
- Save the Hoppers Association
- Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
- *Bristol, Connecticut, A Bicentennial History, 1785 – 1985*, Clouette and Roth, 1984
- *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines*, National Recreation and Park Association, 1995
- Connecticut Public Act No. 98-105, "An Act Concerning a Model River Protection Ordinance and Protection of Ridgelines"

Key Findings, Conclusions and Issues

- Approximately 790 acres of publicly owned land in Bristol is devoted to parks and other recreational facilities, public squares, and open space (another 148 acres of non-recreational open land are city-owned[1]). In addition, there are an estimated 864 acres of privately owned (i.e., semi-public) properties devoted to open space and recreation and nearly 740 acres of water supply watershed lands. Both public and private open space and recreational resources thus account for almost 2,400 acres, or 14.1 percent, of Bristol's land area. (See Figure 8-1.)

  The city's Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the maintenance of approximately 560 acres of parks, playgrounds and open space. Its facilities range from small, neighborhood playgrounds to large, citywide parks, including Rockwell Park, Page Park and Pine Lake. The city's public school sites contain nearly 180 acres of land devoted to various recreational facilities, while the city's private schools provide another 15 acres. In addition, the State of Connecticut owns the 49-acre Nelson's Field open space parcel at the intersection of Burlington and Maple Avenues (See Figures 8-2 and 8-3.)

  The city owns – and the Bristol Water Department is responsible for – 430 acres of watershed lands, located primarily in northwest Bristol; the New Britain Water Department owns 308 acres of watershed lands, located in northeast Bristol.

  The city has approximately 864 acres of privately owned recreation and conservation lands, including Chippanee Golf Club, the Bristol Fish and Game Club, Barnes Nature Center and Indian Rock Nature Preserve. (See Figure 8-4.)

[1] This estimate includes vacant parcels located on James P. Casey Road/Peacedale Street (14 ac.), Stafford Avenue (8.8 ac.), Malone Avenue (13 ac.) and Fall Mountain Rd. (3.2 ac.); surplus land at the Bristol Senior/Community Center on Stafford Ave. (12.8 ac.) and at Kern Park (21.2 ac.); and the site of the Water Department's water tank on Lakeside Dr. (74.9 ac.).

- Several unique natural features distinguish the city, such as its hilly terrain, the Pequabuck River and the geological formation known as "The Hoppers." (See Figure 8-5.) These features have influenced Bristol's built environment, are important environmental resources for the city, and provide additional open space and recreational opportunities.

Three of the city's most prominent topographical features are Hurley Hill, which separates downtown Bristol from Forestville, Chippen Hill, located in the northwest corner of the city, and South Mountain, located in south-central Bristol.

As it flows east through the entire city, the Pequabuck River – with few exceptions – is largely inaccessible to the public, making it one of Bristol's most under-utilized natural resources.

Bristol is home to a unique geological formation known as "The Hoppers," which is located within a 200-acre open space parcel surrounding Birge Pond. "The Hoppers" is local terminology that refers to huge kettle holes formed during the Ice Age 12,000 years ago.

- Lake Compounce amusement park offers a unique contribution to the city's recreational resources. The oldest continuously operating amusement park in the country, it occupies a total of 325 acres, of which 53 acres are in Bristol (the remainder is in Southington).

- There are several walking and hiking trails located in the city, managed and maintained by the mostly volunteer Southern Tunxis Maintenance Crew.

- The southwest, northeast and northwest sections of the city lack formal neighborhood parks.

- Local land conservation efforts, led in large part by the Bristol Regional Environmental Center, have been very significant in recent years, particularly in the area of South Mountain. Within recent years, the Center, the Jacklin Rod and Gun Club, and the Bristol Fish and Game Club have all acquired significant properties in this part of the city.

Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goal:

Provide various recreational opportunities and adequate open space for all city residents. Protect and maintain the quality of the city's watercourses, groundwater, air and environmentally sensitive lands.

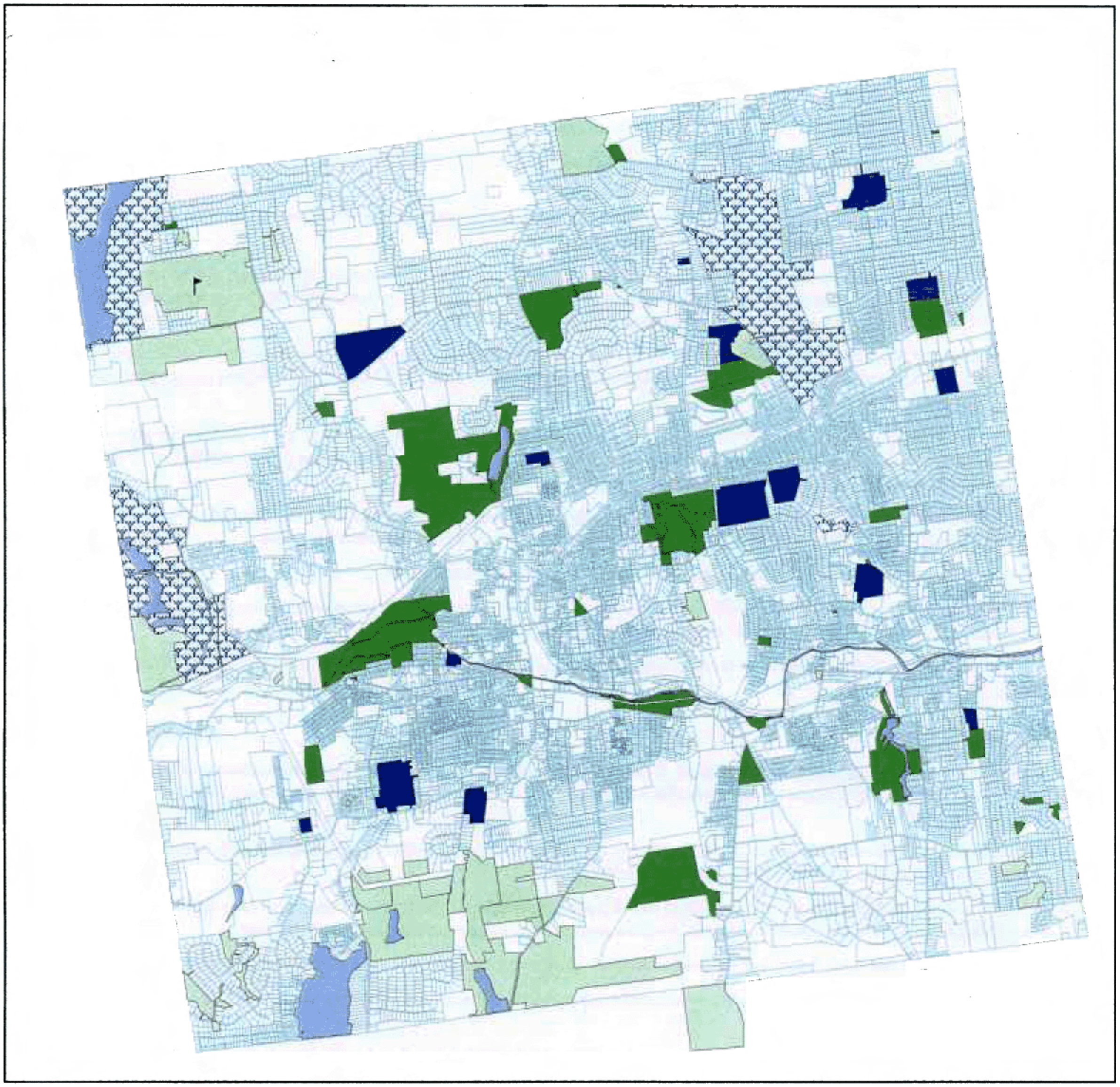
Policies:

1. Protect the city's unique geological and archeological sites and its areas of unique natural beauty through acquisition, land development controls, and other preservation techniques.
2. Acquire land for open space and/or recreational purposes as it becomes available, in locations recommended in the Plan.

3. Encourage the establishment of bikeways and/or hiking trails within the city.
4. Improve existing recreational programs and expand their coordination with existing semi-public recreational facilities.
5. Recognize Lake Compounce amusement park as a unique recreational and cultural resource of local, regional and state significance.
6. Consider vacant city parcels for future recreational use as they become available, to help address the need for more neighborhood playground/playfield and passive park facilities.
7. Continue to coordinate recreation programs among city departments and with private institutions, to maximize recreational opportunities, including school indoor activities for adults and children. Maintain cooperation among city departments for the use of the city's many indoor and outdoor recreation facilities.
8. Give attention to the quality, size and location of open space parcels proposed through the subdivision process to assure that they become assets and not liabilities. Where appropriate, consider utilization of the "fee-in-lieu-of-open space" provisions of the Subdivision Regulations.
9. Recognize the need to preserve the environmentally sensitive areas of the Hoppers; encourage the acquisition of additional areas for both preservation and passive/active recreational purposes at the Hoppers; encourage greater utilization of the Hoppers for both passive and active recreational purposes.
10. Recognize the importance of the Pequabuck River as a significant natural asset to the community. Identify and support opportunities to enhance the use of the river corridor for both open space and recreational purposes.
11. Encourage the preservation of South Mountain as an environmentally sensitive area.
12. Carefully control development, especially in environmentally sensitive areas, which could result in damage to the land and environment. Discourage development on ridgelines and in wetlands.
13. Encourage energy-efficient patterns of development and land use, the use of solar and other renewable forms of energy, and energy conservation.

Recommendations:

1. Establish additional neighborhood recreational facilities in the northeast, northwest and southwest sections of the city appropriate to the specific needs of each area. Such facilities might include tot lots, playgrounds, playfields and/or neighborhood parks.
2. Establish priorities for the maintenance of existing parks, recreational facilities and open space, to enrich both the public’s current enjoyment of them and their long-term cost effectiveness.
3. Establish a dedicated fund for the acquisition of land for parks, recreational facilities and open space, so that opportunities for acquisition can be acted upon expeditiously and/or used to match State or federal funding programs.
4. Rezone all significant open space and watershed lands in the city to the lowest density residential category.
5. Improve public awareness of the Pequabuck River as an open space and recreational asset; increase public access to the Pequabuck River.
6. Encourage the adoption of ridgeline protection regulations to minimize the visual and environmental impacts of new development on and along ridgetops.
7. Promote the “greening” of the city by encouraging the installation of landscaping such as trees and shrubs along city streets, along other public rights-of-way and in public open spaces, and by requiring landscaping in new private developments.



Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT

Figure 8-1. Existing Parks and Open Space

Public Park or Open Space
Private Recreation/Conservation Lands
Water Supply Watershed
Public School Facilities
Waterbodies

N
W E
S

0 0.6 1.2 Miles

BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart Inc.

Sources: Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
Buckhurst, Fish & Jacquemart Inc.
Bristol Parks Department
1989 Bristol Plan of Development
Bristol Regional Environmental Center

Figure 8-2. Inventory of Publicly Owned Parks, Recreational Facilities and Open Space, City of Bristol, CT

Name and Location of Facility	Description of Facility	Size (in acres)
Rockwell Park (Jacobs Street, Dutton Avenue and Terryville Road)	municipal park; contains swimming lagoon, picnic areas, pavilions, playground equipment, tennis courts (lighted), basketball courts, baseball fields, hiking trails, swimming pool	96.2
Page Park (King Street, Moody Street, Page Avenue and Woodland Street)	municipal park; contains outdoor swimming pool, playground equipment, fishing lagoon, picnic areas, six tennis courts (lighted), basketball court, softball field (lighted), baseball field, pavilion and lodge buildings	80.6
Boulevard Park (Memorial Boulevard)	municipal park; contains park benches, fishing lagoon, four tennis courts, memorial monuments, walking path with mile markers	19.2
Seymour Park/Riley Field (Shrub Road)	municipal playground; contains baseball field, basketball court, two tennis courts, playground equipment, picnic areas	5.2
Peck Park (behind Greene-Hills School)	municipal park; contains four tennis courts, playground equipment, softball field	4.0
Kern Park (behind Ivy Drive School)	municipal park; contains playground equipment	3.1
Brackett Park (North Main Street and School Street)	municipal park; contains basketball court, playground equipment, park benches	2.3
Wilson Park (King Street, Fifth Street and Sixth Street)	municipal playground; contains playground equipment, softball field, basketball court	2.0
Veterans Memorial Park (Central Street and Broad Street)	municipal park; contains memorial, park benches	0.1
H.C. Barnes Field (Mix Street)	municipal playfield; contains regulation softball field (lighted)	25.6
E.G. Stocks Playground/J.P. Casey Field (Middle Street and Lake Avenue)	municipal playground/playfields; contains playground equipment, volleyball courts, basketball court, softball field, “midget” football field	10.5
Muzzy Field (Muzzy Street)	lighted baseball, football and soccer stadium complex; seating capacity: baseball - 4,900; football/soccer - 5,800.	8.4
Federal Hill Green (Maple Street, Queen Street and Center Street)	municipal green; contains lighted walkway, playfield, park benches, playground equipment	2.1
Muzzy Triangle (Park Street/Divinity Street)	municipal open space	0.4
Birges Pond/Hoppers (North Pond Street)	municipal open space; contains pond, hiking, walking and bicycle trails, picnic areas; fishing and canoeing allowed on pond	203.3
Pine Lake Open Space (Pine Street, Birch Street and Emmett Street)	municipal open space; contains lake, Challenge ropes course and two soccer fields	54.6
Nelson’s Field (Burlington Avenue and Maple Avenue)	state-owned open space	49.0
unnamed parcel (Mano Lane and Hopmeadow Road)	municipal open space	1.2
unnamed parcel (Cherry Hill Drive)	municipal open space	0.5
unnamed parcel (Marcia Drive)	municipal open space	1.0
unnamed parcel (Violet Drive)	municipal open space	1.4
unnamed parcel (Candlewood Drive)	municipal open space	1.9
unnamed parcel (Jamesdrew Lane)	municipal open space	5.0
unnamed parcels (Brandon Run, Cameron Dr., Corbin Ridge, Tiffany Lane, Tyler Way)	municipal open space	31.7
Bristol Indoor Swimming Pool (Mix Street)	municipal swimming facility	N/A
	Total Acreage	609.3

Sources: 1989 Bristol Plan of Development, City of Bristol Parks Department

Figure 8-3. Inventory of Recreational Facilities at Public and Private Schools, City of Bristol, CT

Name and Location of School	Description of Facility	Area used for recreation (in acres)
Public Schools		
Bristol Central High School (Wolcott Street)	five tennis courts, three baseball/softball fields, one football field, three soccer fields, one track	27.0
Bristol Eastern High School (King Street)	six tennis courts, three baseball/softball fields, one football field, three soccer fields, one track	29.0
Chippens Hill Middle School (Peacedale Street)	two baseball/softball fields, one soccer field	10.0
Memorial Boulevard Middle School (Memorial Boulevard)	two baseball/softball fields, one track	4.0
Northeast Middle School (Stevens Street)	two basketball courts, two baseball/softball fields, two soccer fields	24.0
C.A. Bingham School (North Street)	one basketball court, playground equipment	1.5
Edgewood School (Mix Street)	three basketball courts, playground equipment	12.0
Greene-Hills School (Pine Street)	playground equipment	7.0
E.P. Hubbell School (West Washington Street)	two basketball courts, playground equipment	15.0
Ivy Drive School (Ivy Drive)	one basketball court, one baseball /softball field, playground equipment	15.0
J.J. Jennings School (Burlington Avenue)	one baseball/softball field, playground equipment	3.0
Mountain View School (Vera Road)	two basketball courts, one baseball/softball field, playground equipment	5.0
C.T. O'Connell School (Park Street)	one basketball court, playground equipment	2.0
South Side School (Tuttle Road)	three basketball courts, one baseball/softball field, playground equipment	9.0
Stafford School (Louisiana Avenue)	one basketball court, one baseball/softball field, playground equipment	15.0
	Total Acreage – Public Schools	178.5
Private Schools		
St. Paul Catholic High School (Stafford Avenue)	one baseball/softball field, two football/soccer fields, one track	12.0
St. Stanislaus Montessori School (West Street)	playground equipment	.5
St. Joseph's School (Center Street)	playground equipment	.5
St. Anthony's Grammar School (Pleasant Street)	one basketball court, playground equipment	.5
St. Matthew's School (Welch Drive)	playground equipment	1.0
	Total Acreage – Private Schools	14.5

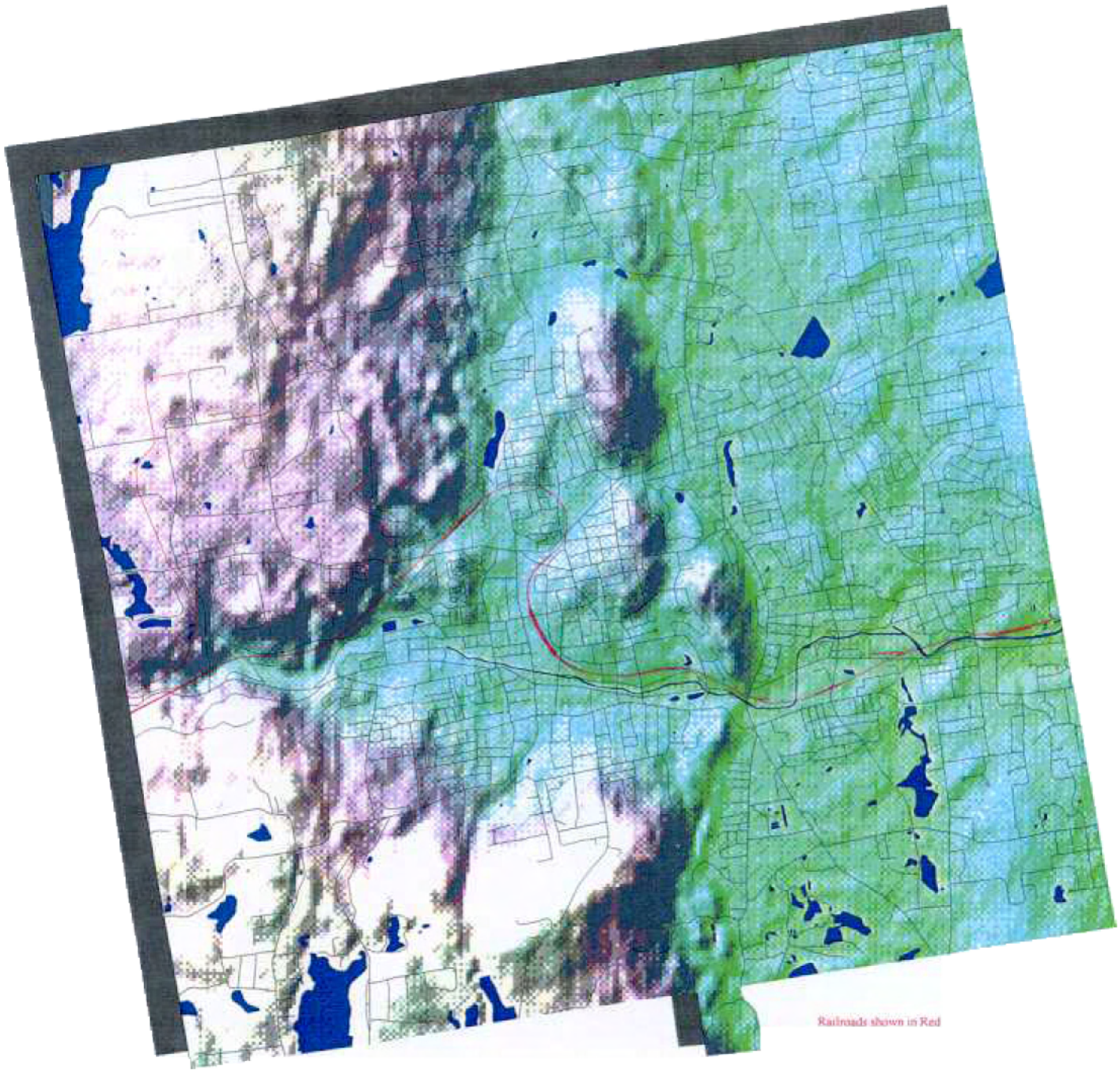
Sources: 1989 Bristol Plan of Development; City of Bristol Board of Education

Figure 8-4. Inventory of Privately Owned Recreational Facilities and Open Space, City of Bristol, CT

Owner, Type and Location of Property	Size (in acres)
Bristol Regional Environmental Center	
Barnes Nature Center – Shrub Rd.	53.2
Indian Rock Preserve – Old Wolcott Rd., Wolcott Rd.	222.0
open space – Willis St.	12.4
open space – Northmont Rd., Southmont Rd., Beecher Rd.	27.6
open space – Marsh Rd.	77.2
open space – Brewster Rd.	9.7
Girl Scouts Connecticut Trails Council	
camp – Willis St.	35.7
Chippanee Golf Club	
golf course/country club – Marsh Rd.	140.7
Jacklin Rod and Gun Club	
rod and gun club – Willis St.	68.8
Pequabuck Golf Club of Bristol	
golf course – Terryville Ave.	66.2
Bristol Fish and Game Club	
fish and game club – Willis St.	126.8
Hickory Hill Estates Inc.	
open space – Julia Rd.	9.2
open space – Poitras Rd.	6.7
Lawrence Lane Community Association	
open space – Lawrence Lane	4.4
JWDC Development Corporation	
open space – Aldbourne Dr. (to be deeded to City of Bristol)	3.7
Total Acreage	864.3

Sources: 1989 Bristol Plan of Development; City of Bristol Assessor's Office

Figure 8-5. Topographic Map of Bristol



Digital Elevation Model (DEM) in Meters
Three Dimensional with Artificial Shading

340
280
220
165
105
45

N
W E
S

0 1 2
Miles

A GIS product of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
For planning purposes only

CHAPTER 9 – HISTORIC and CULTURAL RESOURCES

Introduction

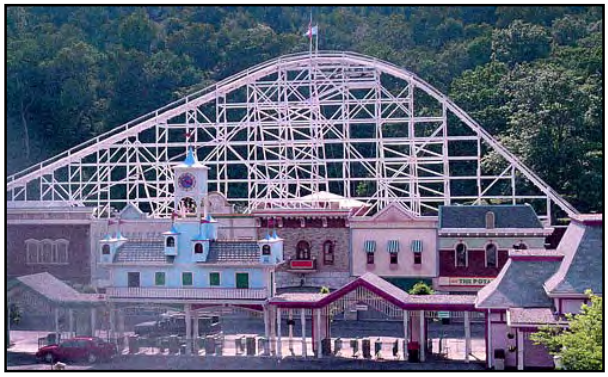
The historic and cultural resources of a community – e.g., its important buildings and structures, its museums and monuments, its arts facilities and programs, its array of community organizations – contribute significantly to the community's quality of life in a variety of ways. They often serve as a reminder of and provide a link to its social, economic and architectural past. They help to define the character of the community and contribute to its vitality, civic pride and uniqueness. They are a manifestation of the richness of the community's heritage and the diversity of its residents, both past and present. This chapter highlights Bristol's existing historic and cultural resources and recommends several means by which they might be preserved, enhanced and otherwise supported.

Sources of Information

- 1989 Bristol Plan of Development
- Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
- Connecticut Historical Commission
- Federal Hill Historic District Study Committee
- *Bristol, Connecticut, A Bicentennial History, 1785 – 1985*, Clouette and Roth, Phoenix Publishing, 1984
- *Federal Hill Walking Guide*, City of Bristol, 1984

Key Findings, Conclusions and Issues

- Bristol is home to a variety of community, cultural and recreational facilities. These include:



Lake Compounce amusement park – the oldest continuously operating amusement park in the United States

A. Bartlett Giamatti Eastern Regional Little League Center

American Clock and Watch Museum – contains over 3,000 clocks and watches, as well as a large library dedicated to the preservation of historic clocks

New England Carousel Museum – houses one of the nation's largest collections of antique carousel art

Bristol Memorial Military Museum – contains uniforms, decorations, weapons, photographs and other military-related memorabilia

Greater Bristol Historical Society – exhibits period furniture, wedding dresses, dolls, toys and tools

Witch's Dungeon Horror Movie Museum – houses legendary horror films and their original props and costumes

- There are other community and cultural activities within the city that currently do not have a permanently designated space or facility. These include the Bristol Symphony Orchestra, the Bristol Art League, and the Bristol Community Theatre.
- Compiled in 1979, Bristol's "Historic Resources Inventory" is a comprehensive survey of 620 properties in the city identified as having historical or architectural value and thus potentially eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. As of mid-1999, eleven individual properties and three areas in Bristol had been placed on the National Register. (See Figures 9-1 through 9-3.) They are as follows:

National Register Properties

Beleden House – 50 Bellevue Avenue
Bristol Girls Club – 47 Upson Street
Ernest R. Burwell House – 161 Grove Street
Copper Ledges – Founders Drive
Chimney Crest – Founders Drive
Forestville Passenger Station – Central Street
William I. Jerome House – 367 Jerome Avenue
Marlborough House – 226 Grove Street
Rockwell Park
Terry-Hayden House – 125 Middle Street
Townsend G. Treadway House –100 Oakland Street

National Register Districts

Federal Hill – Designated in 1986 with 290 structures, this original colonial town center was the civic and religious center of Bristol since the early 1700's. Today Federal Hill includes exceptional structures of Colonial and Greek Revival, Georgian, Italianate and Victorian styles. The mansions from Bristol's era as the clock-making center of the country and other large residences attributed to renowned architects such as Joel Case contribute to the rich character of the neighborhood.

Main Street – Designated in 1995 with 18 contributing structures, this district is located along the east side of Main Street between School and High Streets and along the west end of Prospect Street. The Art Deco-style Lorraine Building, the 1870 Mitchell Block, the 1900 railroad bridge, the Bristol National Bank and the Bristol Trust Company are among its significant structures.

Endee Manor – Designated in 1996, this residential neighborhood consists of 103 single-family and multi-family frame houses constructed in 1916 and 1917 by the New Departure Manufacturing Company as housing for its workers. Due in part to its protected location between the Boston & Maine railroad line, West Cemetery and Rockwell Park, Endee Manor retains much of its original character.

- The urban renewal activities of the 1960's severely altered the physical fabric of the center of Bristol. With the leveling and redevelopment of much of the city's downtown and the spread of strip commercial development along the eastern half of Route 6, Bristol lost some of its unique character and charm.

- Public awareness and education regarding Bristol's history and its cultural and historical resources are crucial to their existence. Increasing the publicity of the city's attractions may generate more usage, promote preservation of historic and community resources, and encourage new cultural or community facilities.

- The contribution of Bristol's cultural and community organizations to the quality of life of the city is significant, and attention should be given to their need for appropriate space for meetings, performances, displays and administration.

- Three types of structures that represent an important part of the city's historical and physical fabric are most at risk of being lost to inappropriate renovation or to destruction: large, architecturally and/or historically significant single-family residences; older, multi-story brick industrial buildings; and multi-story, multi-family residential structures that characterize the city's older, more densely developed neighborhoods, especially the West End.

Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goal:

Maintain and improve those aspects of the city's historic and cultural resources important to its quality of life.

Policies:

1. Protect the city's historically and architecturally significant structures through acquisition, land development controls, and other preservation techniques.
2. Encourage as necessary the establishment, maintenance and/or growth of programs and facilities that address the cultural needs and desires of the community.
3. Promote greater public awareness and education of Bristol's history and its cultural and historical resources.
4. Require that new infill development in historic neighborhoods be compatible with existing development (e.g., in terms of scale, architecture, density, mass and proportion).

Recommendations:

1. Increase the publicity about the city's cultural and historic resources using a variety of promotional techniques such as neighborhood walking guides; informational plaques to identify historic buildings or areas; schedules of community events of interest to both tourists and residents; special events days, festivals and parades highlighting Bristol's heritage; and educational programs.
2. Establish a centrally located, multi-purpose facility to provide performance, display, meeting and administrative space for the city's cultural and community organizations.
3. Utilize a variety of techniques to preserve and enhance Bristol's historical resources, such as local historic districts and properties (Sec. 7-147b through Sec. 7-147v of the Connecticut General Statutes), village districts (Sec. 8-2j of the Connecticut General Statutes) and the Main Street Program (established by the National Trust for Historic Preservation).

Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT

N
W E
S

0 3000 6000 Feet

Figure 9-1. Properties on the National Register of Historic Places

1 Beleden House
2 Bristol Girls Club
3 Burwell House
4 Copper Ledges
5 Chimney Crest
6 Forestville Passenger Station
7 Jerome House
8 Malborough House
9 Rockwell Park
10 Terry--Hayden House
11 Treadway House

Source: Connecticut Historical Commission

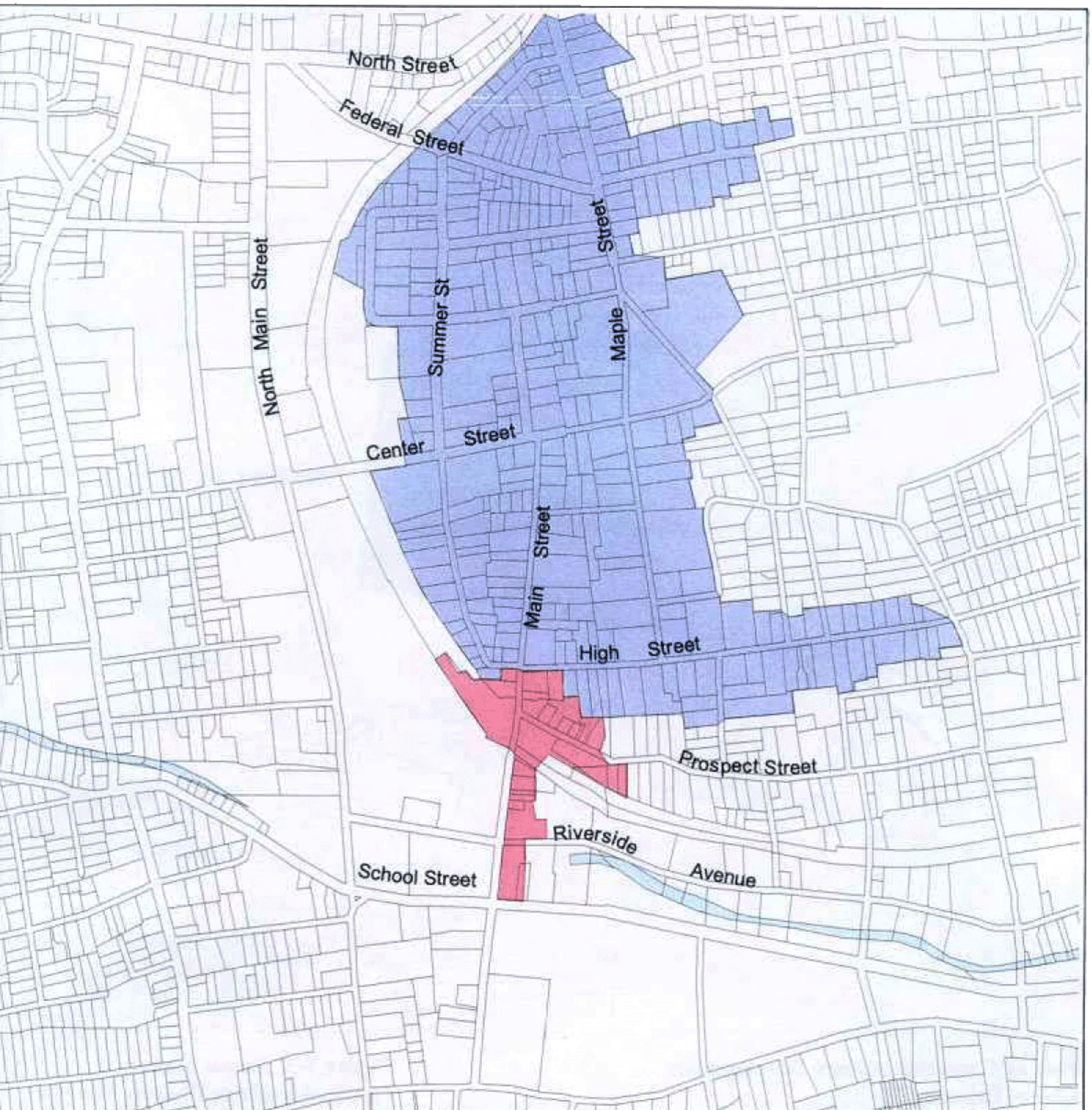
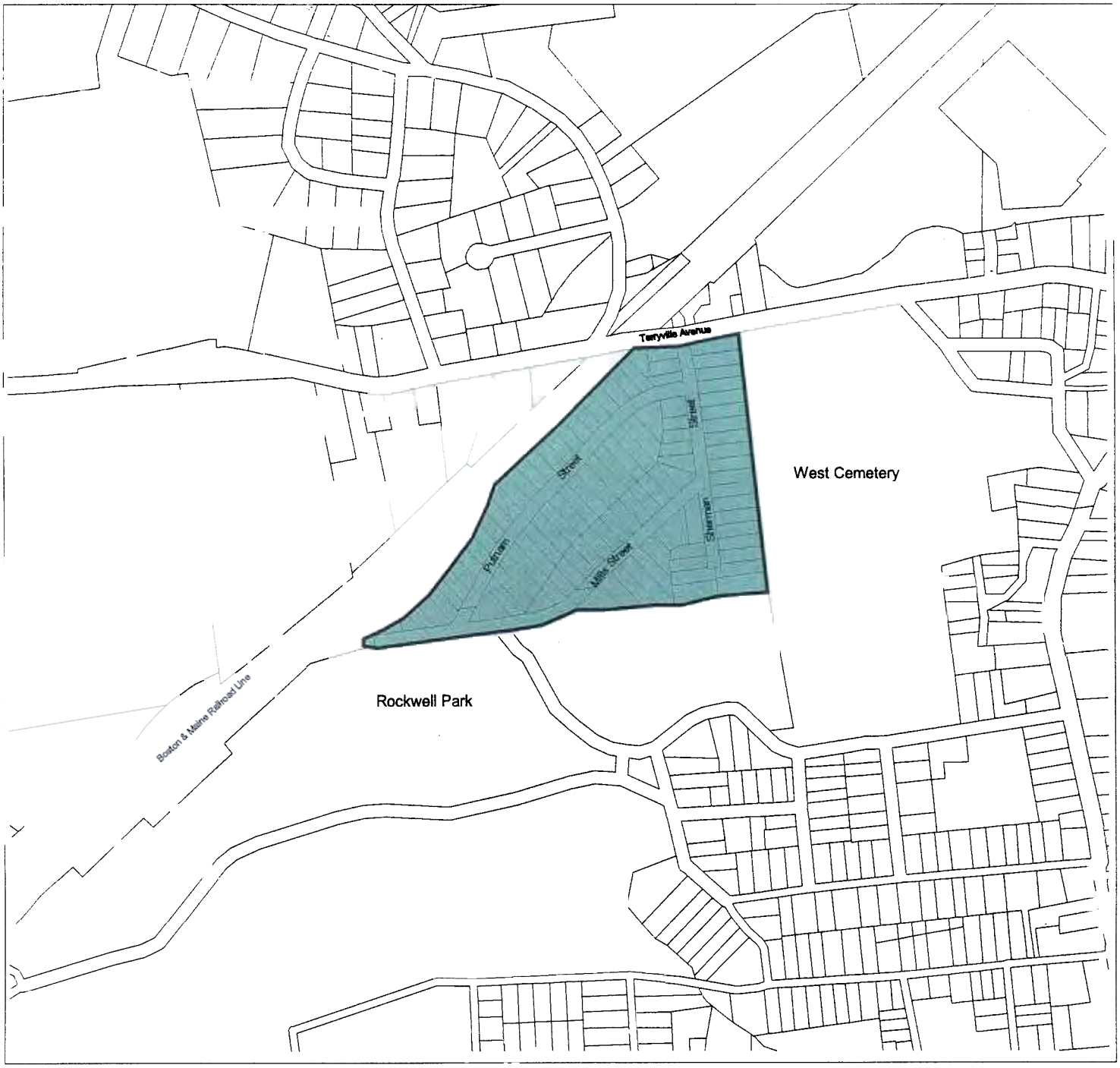


Figure 9-2. Federal Hill and Main Street National Register Historic Districts

Main Street Historic District
Federal Hill Historic District

Source: Connecticut Historical Commission



Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT

Figure 9-3. Endee Manor
National Register Historic District

N
W E
S

0 300 600 Feet

Source: Connecticut Historical Commission

CHAPTER 10 – DOWNTOWN BRISTOL

Introduction

Since the 1950's, downtown Bristol has undergone a series of sweeping changes that have dramatically altered and diminished both its physical form and its economic viability. Only recently have Bristol's citizens expressed the desire to re-establish the downtown as the city's center of governmental, institutional, commercial and office activity. Based upon an inventory and analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Bristol's present-day downtown, this chapter sets forth a broad range of planning, economic, transportation and design objectives and recommendations that can serve as the foundation for a more detailed downtown plan.

For the purposes of this chapter, the boundaries of Downtown Bristol are generally defined as the Boston & Maine railroad tracks to the east, Ingraham Street to the north, South Street to the south, and the West End neighborhood to the west. (See Figure 10-1.) North Main Street and Main Street are the primary north-south axes of the downtown. The downtown extends north to south approximately three-quarters of a mile (between North Street (Route 6) and South Street) but on average is less than one-quarter mile wide east to west.

Existing Conditions

Historical Background

Downtown Bristol has undergone dramatic changes since the end of World War II. As new residential development moved farther away from the center of the city in the 1950's, the downtown was no longer within convenient walking distance for many residents. Insufficient parking and limited access for service vehicles also contributed to the rapid decline in downtown business. In addition, the flood of 1955 destroyed over three million dollars' worth of buildings, roads and bridges. In response to these conditions and with the financial assistance of the federally funded Urban Renewal Program, massive demolition of the downtown took place – an event that radically altered Bristol's urban fabric. The original, irregular street pattern was replaced with long, wide avenues and large, uninterrupted city blocks. Redevelopment took the form of suburban-style commercial structures set within expansive parking lots.

The result of these activities was the creation of a downtown lacking an identity and a focus, a downtown with a diminished economic viability and an unappealing physical environment. Economically, urban renewal eliminated many of downtown Bristol's small retail and specialty shops, and today the downtown finds itself in a losing competition with other retail and office areas, especially Route 6 and the suburban shopping malls. Its urban form was lost to urban renewal and replaced by suburban-style, automobile-oriented development. Greater emphasis was given to the automobile than to the pedestrian. The inappropriate building scale, low intensity of uses and loss of 'streetscape' created a pedestrian-unfriendly environment and a minimized sense of place.

Strengths

Despite its dramatic alteration, downtown Bristol still possesses a number of strengths that can provide the framework for any future program of revitalization. These include:

- A mix of land uses
- Government and civic facilities
- Historically and architecturally significant buildings and areas
- Adjacent residential neighborhoods

Mix of Land Uses

One of downtown Bristol's major assets is its wide array of land uses. (See Figure 10-2.) The economic analysis in Chapter 7 suggests that emphasizing this mix of uses in the downtown may be an ideal response to existing market forces. Retail demand is essentially being met along the Route 6 corridor, although the central location of the downtown may provide some margin for specialty or "power center" shopping. The back office market as represented by companies like CIGNA HealthCare may be able to supplement the more traditional downtown professional office market. Adjacent to the downtown is some of Bristol's most well-preserved historic residences – on Federal Hill – as well as a significant stock of urban dwellings in the West End neighborhood.

Land uses currently found in downtown Bristol include:

Retail – The primary land use in downtown Bristol is retail, dominated by the Mall at Bristol Centre, a 16.7-acre, suburban-style shopping mall that also includes two other freestanding retail buildings (the larger of which contains a supermarket). Other retail uses in the downtown are generally concentrated at its northern and southern ends.

Offices, Banks, Professional Services – Medical-related offices and banking represent an increasingly important function in the downtown. The CIGNA HealthCare offices occupy a large portion of the old New Departure complex on Valley Street, close to the center of the downtown. A number of banks and professional offices are located along North Main Street and Main Street. Significant office buildings in the southern end of the downtown include that of the Barnes Group and the *Bristol Press*, as well as 10 Main Street, which provides space for a variety of tenants, including the Greater Bristol Chamber of Commerce.

General Commercial – Primarily automobile-oriented services, these uses are located primarily along North Street, leading towards Farmington Avenue, and along School Street.

Industrial – Downtown Bristol still contains a sizeable number of general industrial uses, primarily located west of Valley Street. As the demand for floor space changes in response to new technologies, many of the buildings that house these uses may eventually become obsolete for industrial purposes. Currently, these sites also contain large parking lots and service areas.

Residential – One of the smallest land uses, residences in the downtown are primarily of the multi-family type, with a few scattered single-family houses. On the east side of North Main Street is the DeLorenzo Apartments, an elderly housing facility.

Private Institutions – Downtown Bristol is home to a number of private institutional uses, including churches, the Bristol Boys' and Girls' Club, the Connecticut State Armory and the Elks' Club.

Public Parks – Located at the corner of School and North Main Streets, Brackett Park is downtown Bristol's only public park.

Government and Civic Uses

A number of public institutions occupy a key section of the downtown. Bristol City Hall, the Superior Court, the Central Fire Station, the Post Office, and the city's Police Department are clustered along North Main Street between Center Street and Laurel Street. The Board of Education is located farther south, on Church Street. The Bristol Public Library is located at the eastern edge of the downtown, at the corner of Main and High Streets.

These civic functions create a core of uses in the downtown that provide an established draw for residents, workers, and businesses in Bristol. These functions also provide a large employment base for the downtown.

Significant Historical and Architectural Districts and Structures

Historic Districts and Neighborhoods – The Main Street National Register Historic District was part of the original downtown and today contains a group of historic structures that exemplify its old urban fabric. The Federal Hill National Register District, the first settlement of Bristol, is located directly adjacent to the downtown, separated by the Boston & Maine railroad tracks.

Architecturally Significant Structures – Some of the downtown's oldest and most architecturally significant structures create a sense of identity and a link to Bristol's history. Within the Main Street National Register Historic District are 18 structures with historical significance. A group of these structures – including the 1905 Lorraine Building, the 1907 Bristol Trust Company Bank and the 1923 McKim, Mead & White-designed Bristol National Bank – face directly on the Mall at Bristol Centre. To the north is the former City Hall/Bristol Savings Bank, built in 1873. Historic structures continue up Prospect Street, with Bristol's own "flat-iron" building built in 1915 to conform to the shape of the triangular parcel on which it is located. Redman's Hall was built in 1911 and renovated in 1940 as the Carberry Theatre. The 1900 railroad bridge crosses over Main Street and is supported by large stone abutments. As noted previously, the Bristol Public Library is located at the corner of Main and High Streets.

On North Main Street, the former New Departure complex represents the days when Bristol was one of the industrial centers of New England. The building now known as Progress Square – currently occupied by industrial uses and offices (including CIGNA HealthCare) – was once part of a large, inter-connected complex of structures, including a boardinghouse for single workers and pedestrian bridges and paths to the factory buildings and foundry on the opposite side of the railroad tracks.

The bank and mixed-use buildings at the corner of North Street and North Main Street and the office building at 10 Main Street, near South Street, form two significant entryways at each end of the downtown. The intersection of North Street and North Main Street retains a strong sense of closure on three corners, providing an opportunity to create a strong gateway and enhance the human-scale quality of the downtown.

Outside of the downtown core are other significant properties that contribute to its historic character due to their proximity. For example, the original Bristol Girls' Club building on Upson Street and the Beleden mansion on Bellevue Avenue (both National Register properties) are within a few minutes' walking distance of downtown Bristol.

There are also groups of older buildings throughout the downtown that together contribute to the original urban fabric by creating so-called "street walls" and a human-scale environment. Examples of these significant areas include:

- The east side of Main Street between High Street and Memorial Boulevard;
- The west side of North Main Street between North Street and Race Street;
- The north side of Center Street between Myrtle Street and Foley Street; and,
- The west side of lower Main Street between School Street and South Street.

In addition, the area along Church Street between Upson and South Streets – though not strictly urban in built character – has a moderate density and building setback that provide a sense of place and partial closure to the sidewalk. The series of government buildings along North Main Street between Center Street and Laurel Street also foster an urban perception due to their setback, height and mass.

Adjacent Residential Areas

The narrow, linear form of downtown Bristol provides opportunities for residents of the adjacent neighborhoods to walk to the downtown. To the east, Federal Hill is connected to the downtown along Center Street, Federal Street and Main Street. To the west, connected by several east-west streets, is the West End neighborhood. This classic urban neighborhood contains short blocks, two- and three-story multi-family structures (so-called "double-deckers" and "triple-deckers") on small lots, and sidewalks. This area reflects and retains part of Bristol's heritage and character as an industrial-age New England city.

Weaknesses

Downtown Bristol exhibits a number of weaknesses that currently limit its role as the center of commercial and social activity in the city. These include:

- Low intensity of development
- Automobile orientation
- Absence of unique attractions
- Unfriendly pedestrian environment
- Lack of public gathering places
- Unattractive visual and natural environment

Low Intensity of Development

Much of Downtown Bristol's historical development pattern has been replaced by a series of freestanding buildings set within large surface parking lots. As a result of the need to provide the parking necessary to support the public's reliance upon automobiles for shopping and business trips, overall building coverage is typically very low. Development density is unevenly distributed throughout the downtown, creating large, open voids that interrupt building continuity. These gaps in the development fabric interrupt the sense of spatial enclosure usually formed by buildings framing an urban street. Many older buildings with interesting architectural character have been demolished, erasing part of the city's heritage and the downtown's identity. As the visual environment has become less attractive and the distance between destinations has increased, overall use of the downtown has declined, as has pedestrian activity.

Automobile Orientation

The primary commercial spine and north-south axis of downtown Bristol is North Main Street, an undivided, four-lane roadway whose right-of-way is 72 to 76 feet wide between School Street and North Street. Its long blocks are divided by relatively few east-west streets. The main access routes into the downtown are Route 6 (North Street) from the north and Memorial Boulevard and Route 72 from the south. Center Street bisects the downtown at its center, providing access from both the Federal Hill and West End neighborhoods.

A large portion of land in downtown Bristol is used to accommodate surface parking lots. There are approximately 4,000 off-street parking spaces in the downtown, 1,180 of which are located at the Mall at Bristol Centre. Much of the off-street parking in downtown Bristol's post-urban renewal development has been provided along the front and sides of each individual parcel. The result of this development pattern – most evident on the east side of North Main Street – is a suburban-style, automobile-oriented environment. (See Figure 10-3.)

Absence of Unique Attractions

Although downtown Bristol contains the civic buildings typically found in the center of most cities, it offers few special attractions, uses or facilities – such as a community/cultural center, restaurants, entertainment or recreation uses – that would help to make it a unique and inviting place.

Unfriendly Pedestrian Environment

Downtown Bristol lacks a continuous, attractive pedestrian network. As a result, there is little pedestrian activity in the area. Specific shortcomings include:

- Sidewalks that are frequently interrupted by driveways serving parking lots and service areas;
- Poorly defined crosswalks and a paucity of well-marked pedestrian crossing points, particularly along North Main Street;
- A lack of defined pedestrian connections between building entrances and existing sidewalks;
- A general deficiency of amenities (e.g., benches, signage, landscaping) that help to encourage strolling, window shopping, and other pedestrian activities;
- A lack of continuous retail frontage and large display windows at the sidewalk, which discourages shopping and strolling; and
- Large expanses of non-built environment, which creates the perception of long distances and unsafe streets.

Lack of Public Gathering Places

Bristol lacks an identifiable focal point or special place that residents can readily identify as a *downtown center*. At present, downtown Bristol does not have an obvious meeting place, central square or park that could be used for special events, festivals or open-air displays and performances (e.g., for artists and musicians). There are few plazas or other such designated urban open spaces in the downtown. For example, the sunken plaza in front of City Hall is largely unutilized due to its design and orientation.

Unattractive Visual and Natural Environment

Urban renewal and subsequent automobile-oriented development in downtown Bristol have resulted in an environment with few remnants of an urban image or character. The design of individual buildings, parking lots and streets fails to produce a harmonious theme, vitality or sense of place. The human scale has been eroded, and much of downtown Bristol appears to be a patchwork of unrelated land uses. Existing design and site development standards do not readily foster the creation of a high-quality urban environment.

The only designated "green space" in downtown Bristol is Brackett Park, located at the intersection of North Main and School Streets. Although it contains tennis courts, basketball courts, playground equipment and picnic benches, the park is neither well designed nor well landscaped. Some private properties along North Main Street contain street trees, as do some of the downtown's east-west streets, but no systematic program for the planting of *public* street trees appears to exist. A few downtown parking lots are landscaped, but others are devoid of any trees or shrubbery. The Pequabuck River has been piped underground as it flows east through the downtown and, as such, is not accessible to the public.

The paucity of natural features in downtown Bristol offers little relief from the expanses of pavement and hard edges of the built environment. An infusion of trees, shrubbery and other landscape elements can help to create a more human scale and pedestrian-friendly downtown environment.

1989 Plan of Development

In the city's 1989 Plan of Development, the Planning Commission first offered a series of preliminary recommendations to help redefine the form and function of Bristol's downtown. These included:

- Allowing high-density residential development in the downtown (up to 25 dwelling units per acre);
- Encouraging mixed-use developments with retail uses at street level and offices and/or dwelling units above;
- Encouraging more intensive new development (minimum floor-area-ratio of 1.5 and structured parking);
- Establishing so-called "downtown/neighborhood transition areas" to provide a functional transition between downtown Bristol and its surrounding residential neighborhoods;
- Providing zoning incentives – such as density bonuses or the waiver/reduction of certain zoning requirements – for uses that preserve historic buildings and for uses which maintain, upgrade, or increase the supply of housing; and,
- Studying the potential for the construction of one or more municipal parking structures in the downtown.

In 1990, the Zoning Commission adopted a series of zoning provisions intended to implement a number of these planning recommendations (albeit to a somewhat more limited degree than recommended in the 1989 Plan). In so doing, the Zoning Commission clearly cast in regulatory form the city's Downtown Business (BD) zone as accommodating "the major retail, governmental, institutional, office and cultural activities of the City within a concentrated, compact central business district, as identified in the City's Plan of Development" as well as "high-density residential development in support of such activities."

The Future of Downtown Bristol

The key to the revitalization of downtown Bristol is a major reworking of its identity, both economically and physically. To that end, two challenges emerge: one, to differentiate the downtown in the marketplace, so that it functions differently from other commercial areas in Bristol and the region; and two, to create a form that provides a high-quality environment, accessible and attractive to pedestrians and drivers alike, and to workers, residents and visitors.

Function: Principles of Economic Revitalization

In order to better compete with local and regional shopping areas, downtown Bristol's role in the marketplace must be broadened considerably from its current, limited market of workers and nearby residents, and the relative decline in downtown retail activity must be stabilized and reversed. In pursuing these goals, the following economic revitalization principles can provide guidance:

- Development must recognize and be supportive of the context in which it occurs, i.e., within an urban center and not in a suburban mall or along a highway corridor.
- One of the most effective long-term approaches to expanding the downtown's role both locally and regionally is to establish and maintain a mix of economic activity, including offices, restaurants, entertainment and recreational facilities and cultural attractions.
- The programming of events complements and supports physical improvements in the downtown, helping to revive the public's interest in visiting and shopping there.
- The development of a major public space is important in establishing the downtown as a gathering place and focal point for the entire community.
- Public and private expenditures necessary for downtown revitalization should be viewed as investments in the future of the entire City of Bristol.

Form: Principles of Physical Revitalization

An economically healthy, vibrant downtown has a high-quality, pedestrian-friendly physical environment, as well as a diverse mix of uses and activities. The goal for downtown Bristol should be to create an identity, a distinct *sense of place*, which can bring life back to the downtown and promote economic vitality. In pursuing this goal, the following physical design principles can provide guidance:

- In order to attract more retailers and shoppers into downtown Bristol, functional changes must be supported by an attractive and pedestrian-friendly form.
- One of the most effective short-term approaches to making the downtown attractive is to invest in the physical environment, such as landscaping and other pedestrian amenities.
- To re-create a downtown identity, individual parcels must be developed (or re-developed) with sensitivity to the larger, urban context. Design guidelines and implementation techniques can ensure that individual buildings and sites are appropriately integrated into the larger urban environment.
- Public amenities must have a human-scale quality and be coordinated with one another in order to foster a harmonious physical environment.

Planning and Design Techniques

The remainder of this chapter describes a variety of planning and design techniques that can be utilized to integrate the principles outlined above for the economic and physical revitalization of downtown Bristol. Such techniques include:

- Creating a strong identity and focus, a *sense of place*
- Expanding the mix of uses and encouraging new uses
- Linking the downtown to surrounding residential neighborhoods
- Modifying the design of streets
- Improving parking
- Identifying, maximizing and guiding redevelopment opportunities
- Providing pedestrian amenities and other urban design elements
- Creating a consistent design vocabulary for buildings, open spaces and landscaping

Identity and Focus

Creating a sense of place is a critical objective if downtown Bristol is to become a vibrant and distinctive city center. A sense of place is defined and strengthened through diverse visual and physical elements and activities that are unified through a central theme or a set of cohesive guidelines and design vocabulary. Events and activities publicize and bring life to the downtown.

One of the keys to a successful downtown is having an identifiable *focal point*, such as a park, plaza or use that becomes a "memorable" place or visual image that people immediately associate with the downtown. Special uses such as a cultural/community center, entertainment venues, or recreational facilities create a focus and attraction that draws residents and visitors to the downtown day and night. Similarly, establishing gateways, creating visual linkages to surrounding areas, and strengthening street walls and corners further reinforce the memorable identity of the downtown.

Uses and Activities: New and Mixed

The downtown retail, office and housing markets are considerably enhanced when they are organized around civic, cultural, entertainment and recreational uses and activities. These uses and activities have historically been found in city and town centers, providing a reason for resident and customer patronage beyond the draw of individual shops or offices. Downtown Bristol is already home to many traditional governmental functions but contains few well-defined cultural, entertainment, retail or recreational uses.

In national studies prepared by the Urban Land Institute, entertainment and recreational uses – including restaurants – are often cited as the most effective way to draw people into the downtown. Special events both create special interest and support other uses and physical improvements.[1] Nighttime and weekend events are important for retailers, allowing them to extend retail activity into non-working hours. By so doing, the private sector can be encouraged to take investment risks that it otherwise might not be willing to consider.

The target market that downtown Bristol should seek to attract, i.e., the broad, middle market of shopping and service businesses from throughout the region, is based upon expanding the demand for office, retail and residential uses. This market comprises four groups:

- Downtown and nearby office workers;
- Residents of the Federal Hill and West End neighborhoods, as well as others who can drive to the downtown conveniently;
- Potential nighttime patrons of eating, drinking and entertainment establishments; and,
- Potential customers drawn to a specific community, recreational or cultural event/facility.

In order to successfully attract these groups, both existing and new downtown businesses must be prepared to respond to their varying tastes and needs. Indeed, two components of this potential target market either do not currently exist or are under-represented in downtown Bristol: retail and restaurant/bar customers, and patrons of cultural or recreational events. At the same time, the success of some downtown retail establishments is indicative of downtown Bristol's potential drawing power.

Recommendations:

Reinforce the current mix of uses.

- Maintain mixed-use zoning and reinforce the relationship between the downtown and the surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- Limit the types of new retail uses in other areas of Bristol in order to encourage destination retail uses in the downtown.
- Encourage so-called "back office" uses within the downtown, especially in older industrial buildings.
- Investigate non-industrial alternatives for the re-use of older industrial buildings in the downtown (e.g., artists' lofts; retail stores and restaurants; museums; offices of non-profit, civic and community organizations).
- Encourage additional residential development in the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Increase cultural, entertainment, and recreational opportunities.

- Encourage more food establishments, especially higher and mid-range quality restaurants.
- Encourage the development of a community/cultural center that can accommodate a variety of non-profit organizations and community groups. Such a facility should be designed to incorporate practice, performance and display space for an array of artistic endeavors, as well as meeting space for public agencies and private groups.
- Support the establishment of additional museums that document and commemorate Bristol's heritage, such as a sports museum or a manufacturing museum.

[1] Among the special activities and events that downtown Bristol currently accommodates are the Mum Festival Parade and Carnival; the Christmas Carol Sing; the Children's Holiday Parade; the City Light Festival; and the Bristol Home and Business Show.

- Encourage the development of recreational facilities – such as an ice skating rink – that can also serve as a summer performance space or public plaza.
- Support more events that focus on the downtown, such as a "Main Street Festival" organized around turn-of-the century Bristol or an "Industrial Heritage Day" focusing on Bristol's legacy as one of the nation's manufacturing centers.
- Encourage city-sponsored special market days, such as farmers' markets, flower markets, and antique markets.

Downtown-Neighborhood Links

The residential neighborhoods adjacent to downtown Bristol – especially Federal Hill and the West End – can help boost the downtown's vitality and improve its image if they remain stable and are linked both physically and economically to the downtown. The primarily residential character of these neighborhoods should be reinforced while, at the same time, their historically and architecturally significant qualities are preserved. (See Figure 10-4.)

Recommendations

Reinforce residential character.

- Encourage owner-occupancy of multi-family dwellings, especially the double- and triple-deckers in the West End neighborhood (see Chapter 4 – Housing). Owner occupancy helps to preserve the use and stabilize the neighborhood.
- Where appropriate, encourage the re-use of historic properties in the Federal Hill neighborhood for residentially compatible uses (see Chapter 9 – Cultural and Historic Resources).
- Promote the maintenance and preservation of existing residential structures (e.g., through rehabilitation, renovation and restoration).
- Continue to regulate office, retail and other permissible uses in the city's downtown/neighborhood transition areas.
- In downtown and in downtown/neighborhood transition areas, consider the use of zoning incentives (e.g., density bonuses, the waiver or reduction of certain zoning requirements) for projects that maintain, upgrade or increase the supply of housing.

Encourage historic preservation efforts.

- In downtown and in downtown/neighborhood transition areas, consider the use of zoning incentives (e.g., density bonuses, the waiver or reduction of certain zoning requirements) for projects that preserve historic buildings.

See Chapter 9 – Cultural and Historic Resources, for additional recommendations.

Improve pedestrian and visual linkages.

- Reinforce Center Street as a main east-west pedestrian and vehicular connection between the downtown and the adjoining neighborhoods by improving landscaping and adding/improving streetscape amenities.
- Make the intersection of Center and North Main Streets a focal point for pedestrians from the adjoining neighborhoods. A significant feature such as a sculpture, fountain or clock can provide a focus and an identity.
- Provide directional signage at the intersection of Center and North Main Streets and at other such strategic locations to guide visitors to historic areas and special sites in and around the downtown. Provide a consistent system of pedestrian amenities, street furniture and landscaping along the downtown's east-west streets.
- Provide a pedestrian connection over the railroad right-of-way between the Federal Hill neighborhood and downtown Bristol in the vicinity of the Mall at Bristol Centre.
- Improve the appearance of the Main Street railroad bridge in downtown Bristol, and make that portion of Main Street beneath it a safer, more pedestrian-friendly environment (e.g., through the installation of lighting).
- Reconstruct sidewalks and provide better lighting in the residential neighborhoods adjacent to downtown Bristol in order to encourage greater pedestrian movement between these areas and the downtown.

Street Design Modifications

One of the primary goals for the revitalization of downtown Bristol is to transform North Main Street into a distinctive place with an attractive and memorable identity. A balance between convenient vehicular access and parking and a high-quality pedestrian environment can assist in achieving this important objective. The street's reconfiguration might be accomplished through one or more of the following design techniques:

- *Boulevard* – this technique provides a landscaped median down the center of the street, which unifies the street along its length. The median enhances the perception of a pedestrian-friendly, human-scale environment and provides a safe refuge at pedestrian crossing points.
- *Neck-Down Street with Parallel Parking* – this technique eliminates parking near the corners of intersections and extends the sidewalks outward across the parking lanes. As a result, the width of pedestrian crossings is reduced, and safer intersection conditions can be created.
- *Neck-Down Street with Angled Parking* – this technique is similar to neck-down with parallel parking but instead utilizes angled parking, which provides 15 to 20 percent more parking spaces. Lower traffic speeds are required, however, due to the hazards imposed by vehicles backing out into moving lanes of traffic.
- *Combination Neck-Down Street and Boulevard* – this technique further restricts traffic speeds and flow but provides the most pedestrian-friendly environment.

These techniques might also be appropriate for other downtown streets that are excessively wide (such as the segment of Riverside Avenue between Main and North Main Streets). Regardless of which streets in downtown Bristol might be worthy of such reconfiguration, a more detailed feasibility analysis would need to be conducted prior to any actual implementation.

Parking Improvements

Surface parking is the most dominant land use feature in downtown Bristol. As a consequence, the design and configuration of parking will affect the character and image of the downtown more than almost any other use. For example, on the east side of North Main Street between North Street and School Street (a distance of over 3,500 feet), only three structures interrupt the almost continuous line of surface parking lots. Much of the surface parking that surrounds individual buildings provides few (if any) pedestrian amenities or landscape elements, thus discouraging pedestrian movement from building to building.

The future redevelopment of the Mall at Bristol Centre (see below) should include a comprehensive redesign of its extensive parking area. The result would be a major upgrading of a significant portion of the downtown and might lead to similar improvements elsewhere in the area.

Recommendations:

- Use structured parking in order to reduce the amount of parcel area devoted to surface parking lots. Structured parking can also shorten walking distances to building entries.
- Place parking lots *behind* buildings to establish/maintain "street walls" along major downtown streets.
- Soften the visual impact of parking lots through the use of street trees and low-level planting along their edges.
- Reduce the perceived scale within parking lots through the planting of shade trees and ground cover, and through the use of varied paving materials to identify pedestrian routes, building entries, etc.
- Encourage shared parking arrangements among owners of adjoining properties.
- Create development incentives, such as increased buildable areas, tied to mass transit improvements.
- Use the "fee in lieu of parking requirements" provision of the Connecticut General Statutes (Section 8-2c).
- Adopt flexible zoning provisions to permit a combination of techniques to meet on-site parking requirements.

Redevelopment Opportunities

In November of 1998, the Mall at Bristol Centre changed ownership, providing a singular opportunity for downtown Bristol's largest and most prominent commercial development to be redeveloped in a style whose form and function is more consistent and compatible with the urban environment typically found in city centers. The successful redevelopment of this site could, in turn, set the tone and serve as a catalyst for additional revitalization in downtown Bristol.

To capitalize on this redevelopment opportunity, the following recommendations are made (see Figure 10-5):

- Reduce the scale of the 'superblock' created by the Mall property by providing access drives and entry points that help replicate the historic block pattern of the downtown.
- Encourage new development along the west side of Main Street that has a scale and architectural character compatible with and sympathetic to the existing buildings on the east side of Main Street.
- Establish an urban plaza or open space that functions as a downtown meeting place and focal point.
- Provide an integrated network of sidewalks, sitting areas and other such amenities linked to the rest of the downtown that encourages pedestrian activity throughout the downtown.
- Provide adequate (preferably structured) parking in a form that helps to establish a more urban setting in this section of the downtown.
- Place new buildings in a manner that creates "street walls" along North Main and Main Streets.
- Increase the prominence of the Riverside Avenue/North Main Street corner, across from Brackett Park.

In addition to the Mall at Bristol Centre, downtown Bristol contains other sites that potentially offer long-term opportunities for redevelopment. These include:

- The east side of Main Street to the north and south of the office building at 10 Main Street;
- The northwest corner of South and Main Streets;
- The Elks' Club site at the southeast corner of South and George Streets;
- The industrial area along Valley Street; and,
- The site of the former Mills Box factory on the east side of Church Street.

Urban Design Elements

Significant improvements need to be made to both the visual and physical quality of downtown Bristol. To that end, pedestrian routes and their associated amenities should be upgraded and/or provided, new open spaces created and existing ones enhanced, and distinctive gateways to the downtown established.

<u>Pedestrian Amenities</u>

Although sidewalks exist along downtown Bristol's public streets, improvements are needed in order to create a more convenient and attractive sidewalk network that invites greater pedestrian use. An improved system of pedestrian paths and amenities should encourage downtown patrons to walk between stores and businesses rather than drive to and park at individual shopping points.

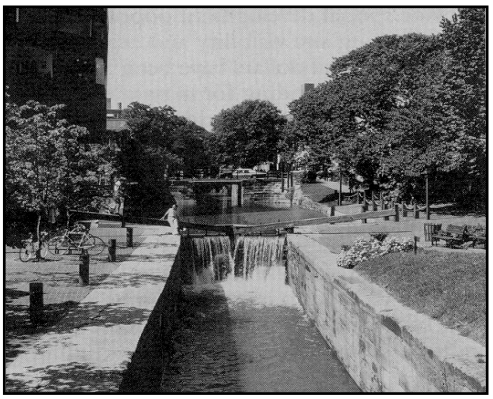
- *Improved sidewalks* – Downtown sidewalks often lack continuity because they are interrupted by curb cuts that serve individual parking lots. In addition, the scarcity of street trees and plantings contributes to pedestrians' near-continual awareness of moving traffic and parked cars. A well-designed series of sidewalk improvements would help to unify the downtown visually and strengthen its identity.

- *Crosswalks* – Additional and better-defined crosswalks are needed to facilitate pedestrian movement in downtown Bristol, especially across the wide expanse of North Main Street. Where feasible, crosswalk designs should incorporate the use of alternative paving materials as both a traffic-calming device and a visual marker for pedestrians. Pedestrian crossing signs, special lighting and the use of neck-down streets should also be considered. New pedestrian crossings should be provided at key downtown buildings, such as the post office and Bristol City Hall.
- *Building entries* – Pedestrian connections between building entrances and existing sidewalks need to be improved. In many cases, entries to major stores are separated from the public sidewalk by large expanses of parking. Walkways redesigned as covered arcades could provide safe and attractive passage for pedestrian traffic.

Public Open Spaces

Most downtowns frequently contain one or more public spaces designed to meet a myriad of recreational, entertainment and visual needs. Shoppers, office workers and visitors need places to relax, gather and socialize that are easily accessible, safe and attractive. Existing public spaces in downtown Bristol need to be upgraded and new spaces developed. Where feasible, these spaces should be connected to one another with an integrated system of pedestrian walkways and a coordinated program of pedestrian amenities.

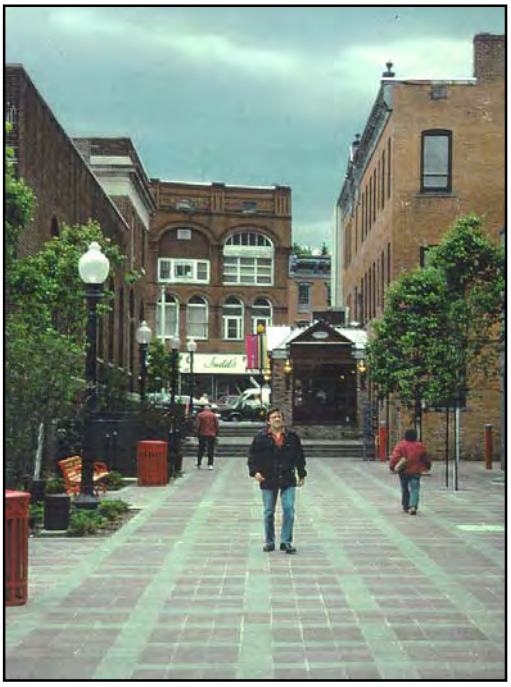
- *Existing Parks and Plazas* – Improvements should be made to Brackett Park to emphasize its status as a significant entryway into downtown Bristol from the south and the west. Similarly, the visibility of, access to and design of the sunken plaza in front of Bristol City Hall should be improved in order to encourage more use of this little-used public space. The provision of additional amenities by private property owners – such as landscaping, decorative pavement and benches – should also be encouraged.
- *Small-Scale Plazas* – If strategically located, additional small-scale public plazas can provide opportunities for seating, information kiosks and special landscaping treatment. These plazas could serve as "urban gateways," identifying major entry points into downtown Bristol. They should be easily accessible and visible from streets and other public areas.



- *New Central Public Open Space* – The main public space in a city's downtown often serves as its primary focal point and offers numerous opportunities for social interaction and community celebration. If properly designed, the space can provide a memorable experience, humanize the urban environment, and serve as a catalyst for private investment. Use of these spaces is often optimized when combined with a special facility (e.g., a community center or theatre) and special events. In conjunction with the redevelopment of the Mall at Bristol Centre, the city has an excellent opportunity to create an important public space in the downtown. In the design and programming of a public space in downtown Bristol, the following features should be considered:
  - A central design element such as a fountain, sculpture or gazebo
  - An adjacent or integrated outdoor amphitheater for outdoor performances, markets, festivals and other special events
  - Landscaping and pedestrian amenities coordinated with other downtown design improvements
  - Direct visual and physical access from North Main Street
  - One or more special facilities nearby, such as an ice-skating rink, hotel, community/cultural center or theatre

Gateways

Strategically located gateways define and reinforce the downtown's identity and provide points of orientation. Sculptures, landscaping, banners, and welcoming signage are among the urban design elements that can establish and reinforce the concept of a downtown gateway.



Urban Design Vocabulary

Downtown Bristol suffers from both a lack of quality urban design and an inharmonious physical character. The scale and architectural style of buildings vary widely from site to site. Landscaping, signage, streetlighting and similar components of the streetscape do little to help unify the otherwise disparate parts of the downtown. To begin to address this situation, a "vocabulary" of urban design elements for downtown Bristol should be developed and implemented.

Architectural Design

The adoption and use of architectural design guidelines for downtown Bristol would help to ensure a more consistent architectural vocabulary for individual developments than currently exists. Design elements such as architectural features, building scale and façade treatment (e.g., materials and textures) should be part of any set of guidelines. Similarly, reference to historic building styles and respect for the local design context would help to achieve a more harmonious built environment within the downtown. In that vein, older downtown buildings with attractive facades might serve as examples for new development.

Landscaping

Additional landscaping treatment is needed along downtown Bristol's major streets and in many of its surface parking lots. Landscaping guidelines that include the following standards should be established and implemented:

- Street tree plantings that create a uniform and continuous green edge to downtown streets
- Plantings that create low-level, year-round screen walls along the periphery of surface parking lots
- Additional landscaping at the entryways of major buildings and developments
- Special plantings that highlight entryways to individual parking lots and can be repeated at adjoining parcels

Signage

Commercial signs often heighten the visual interest and appeal of a city's downtown and contribute to the creation of a livelier, more enjoyable urban environment, especially when the signs are well designed and part of a coordinated plan. To that end, a series of guidelines for commercial signage should be developed for downtown Bristol that encourages a high degree of creativity and, at the same time, maintains a certain amount of consistency of design. In a similar manner, a coordinated program of public signage should be designed and implemented to increase the visual appeal of downtown Bristol.

Streetscape Elements

At present, many of the streetscape elements in downtown Bristol are primarily designed to serve the needs of motorists rather than pedestrians. In order to develop a more pedestrian-friendly downtown, the scale of such features needs to be "downsized" to more human dimensions, e.g., by replacing the tall, highway-style light poles that line many of downtown Bristol's streets with fixtures whose style and illumination are more in keeping with a pedestrian-oriented environment.

Other streetscape elements should be integrated into the downtown landscape in order to attract, foster and enliven pedestrian activity, e.g., benches, trash receptacles, outdoor sculpture, banners, historic markers, information kiosks and planters.

Implementation: A Public-Private Partnership

During the preparation of this Plan, local residents, business owners and governmental and civic leaders alike expressed a renewed interest in the future of downtown Bristol. Along with this interest was the recognition that, in order to achieve lasting success, transforming the goal of downtown revitalization into bricks-and-mortar reality will be a long-term, incremental process that involves an equally long-term commitment by both the public and private sectors of the community. Like urban renewal in the 1960's, reshaping the face of downtown Bristol will again require a massive infusion and expenditure of public funds. It will also require the municipal exercise of appropriate development and design controls (such as the enactment of downtown zoning regulations and/or the establishment of a downtown redevelopment area under Sections 8-125 through 8-139 of the Connecticut General Statutes), as well as the provision by city government of an array of public services, both traditional (e.g., police and fire protection) and non-traditional (e.g., streetscape improvements). Unlike in the past, however, future efforts at downtown revitalization will inevitably necessitate the formation of partnerships – financial and otherwise – between the public sector (i.e., government) and the private sector (i.e., the downtown business community).

As a partner in this process, the downtown business community will need to establish a formal management entity to serve as an advocate for and promote the interests of downtown Bristol on an ongoing basis. Such an organization could take one of several forms, for example, a *business improvement association*, a *downtown council* or a *business* (or *downtown*) *improvement district*. Though they may be created, structured and funded differently, each entity has much the same mission: to improve, maintain and promote the downtown. Often comprised of downtown property owners and merchants, local officials and other civic leaders, these organizations typically involve themselves in such activities as business attraction and retention efforts, promotion and marketing, crime prevention and security, sponsorship of special events and activities, and beautification and streetscape improvement programs. In addition, they often act as the official liaison between downtown businesses and the local government.

This collaborative approach to downtown revitalization will help to ensure a unified vision, coupled with coordinated guidance and a commitment to action.

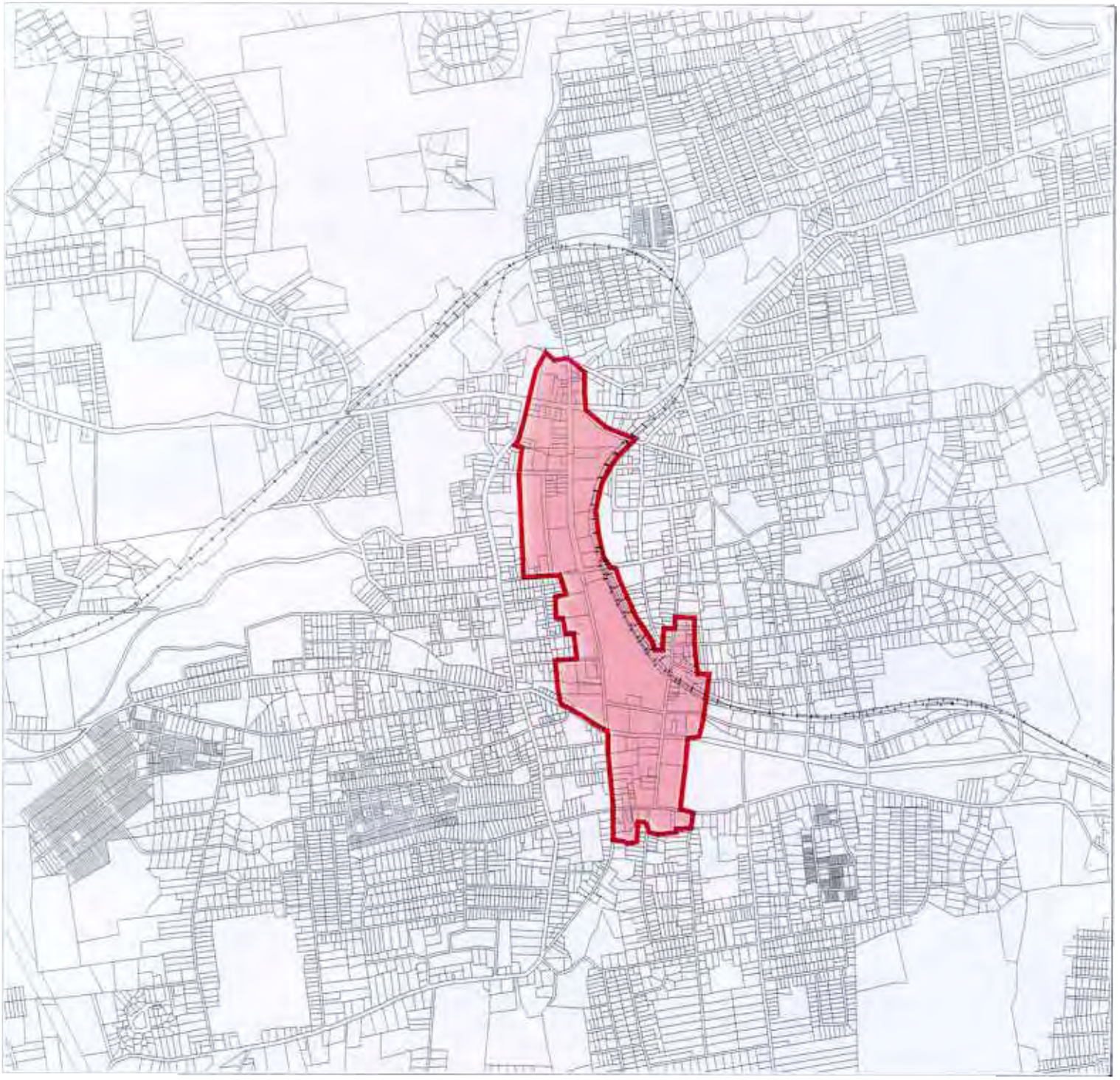
Goals and Policies

Goal:

Recognize and promote downtown Bristol as the center of governmental, institutional, commercial and office activity in the city.

Policies:

1. Promote a concentration and diversity of uses in and around downtown Bristol. The pattern and scale of development should contribute to and reinforce the relative compactness of the area.
2. Give careful attention to the future development of the downtown and enhance and emphasize its value as a unique and efficient place for shopping, entertainment, cultural activities and the conduct of business.
3. Encourage the adaptive reuse of existing vacant buildings and the redevelopment of underutilized sites.
4. Encourage mixed-use development in the downtown.
5. Provide for enhanced pedestrian accessibility throughout the downtown.
6. Promote quality of design in new downtown development and redevelopment projects.
7. Support downtown development with the establishment of consumer amenities. A program of improvements to make the area more desirable for pedestrians and shoppers should include convenient parking, attractive landscaping and pedestrian “furniture.”
8. Reduce the dependence upon off-street surface parking in the downtown; encourage the provision of parking structures, both private and municipal, to satisfy future off-street parking needs.
9. Encourage intensive downtown development suitable for a city of Bristol’s size; discourage low-intensity development that could be accommodated in other business zones outside the downtown.
10. Recognize the need to attract tourists, visitors and shoppers to downtown Bristol from outside the region.
11. Encourage the provision of new housing units at appropriate locations in downtown Bristol.
12. Encourage the establishment of a multi-modal transportation center in downtown Bristol.



Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT

Figure 10-1. Downtown Bristol

Boundaries of Study Area

N
W E
S

0 2000 4000 Feet

BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.

Source: Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency

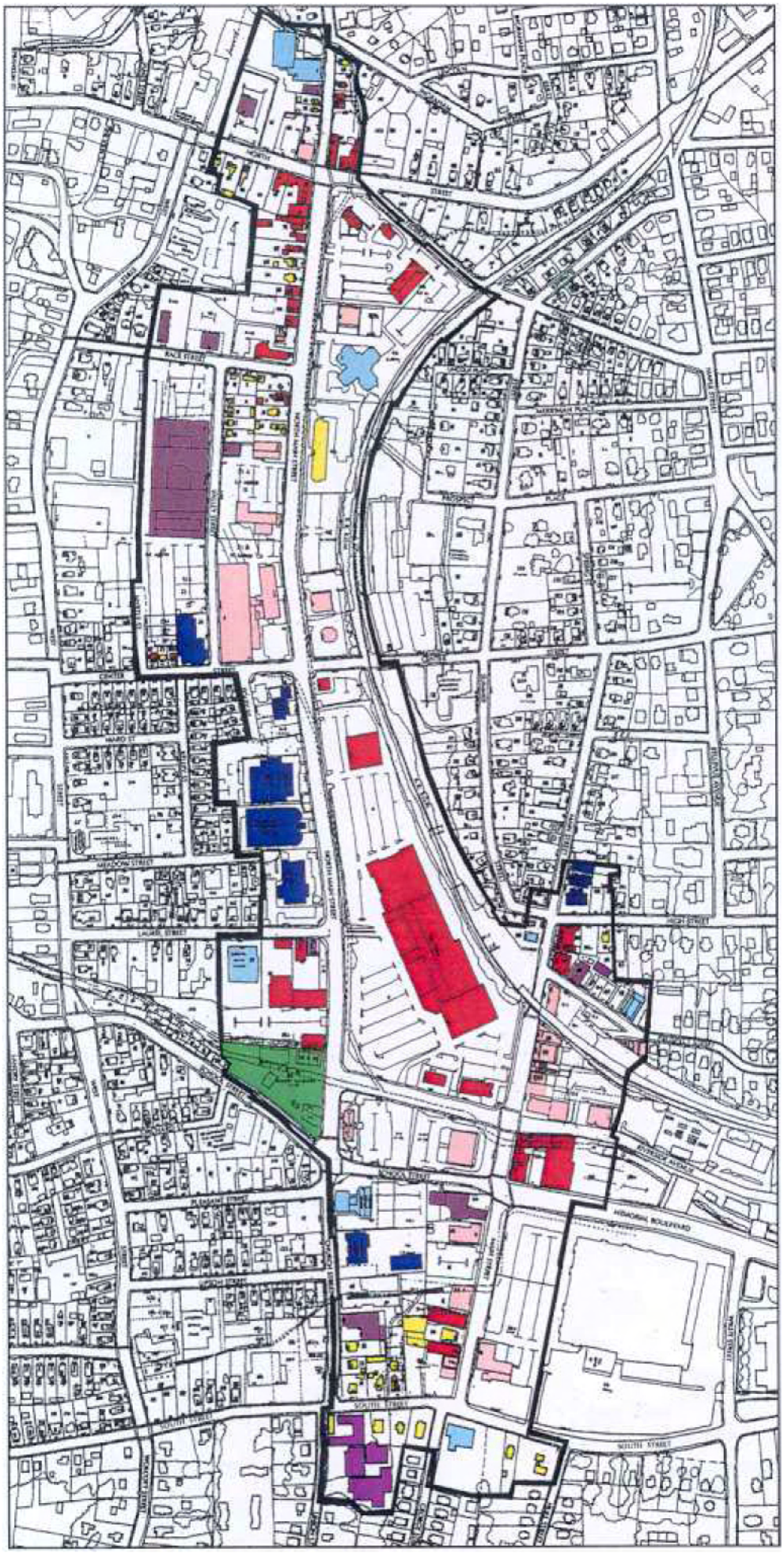


Figure 10-2.
Downtown Land Uses

- Office, Bank, Professional Services
- Retail, Restaurant
- General Commercial
- Industrial
- Residential
- Private Institutional
- Public Institutional
- Public Park
- Study Boundary

N
W E
S

Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT

0 600 1200 ft

BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.

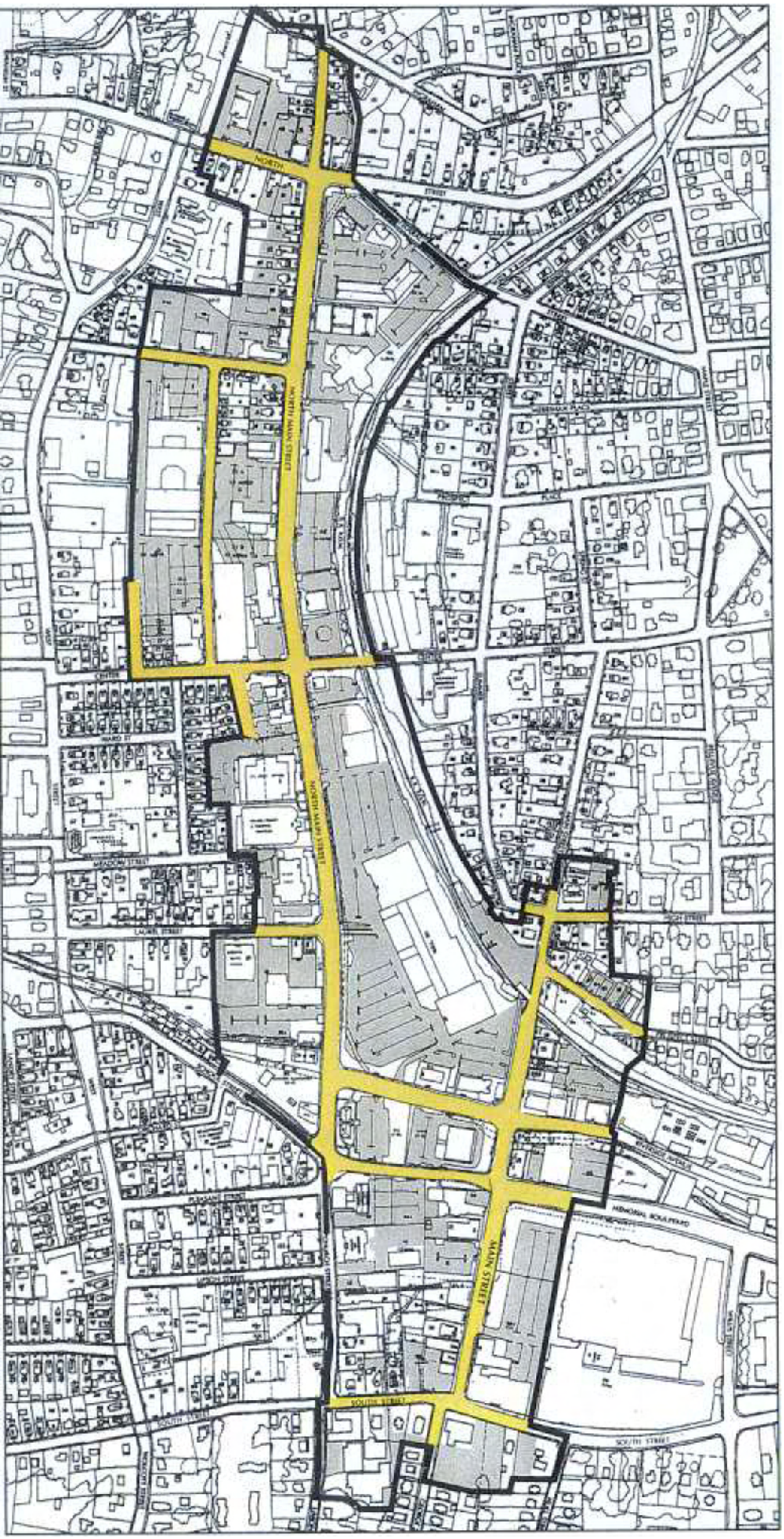


Figure 10-3.
Downtown Streets and Parking

Streets

Parking / Service Areas

Study Boundary

N
W E
S

Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT

0 600 1200 ft

BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.

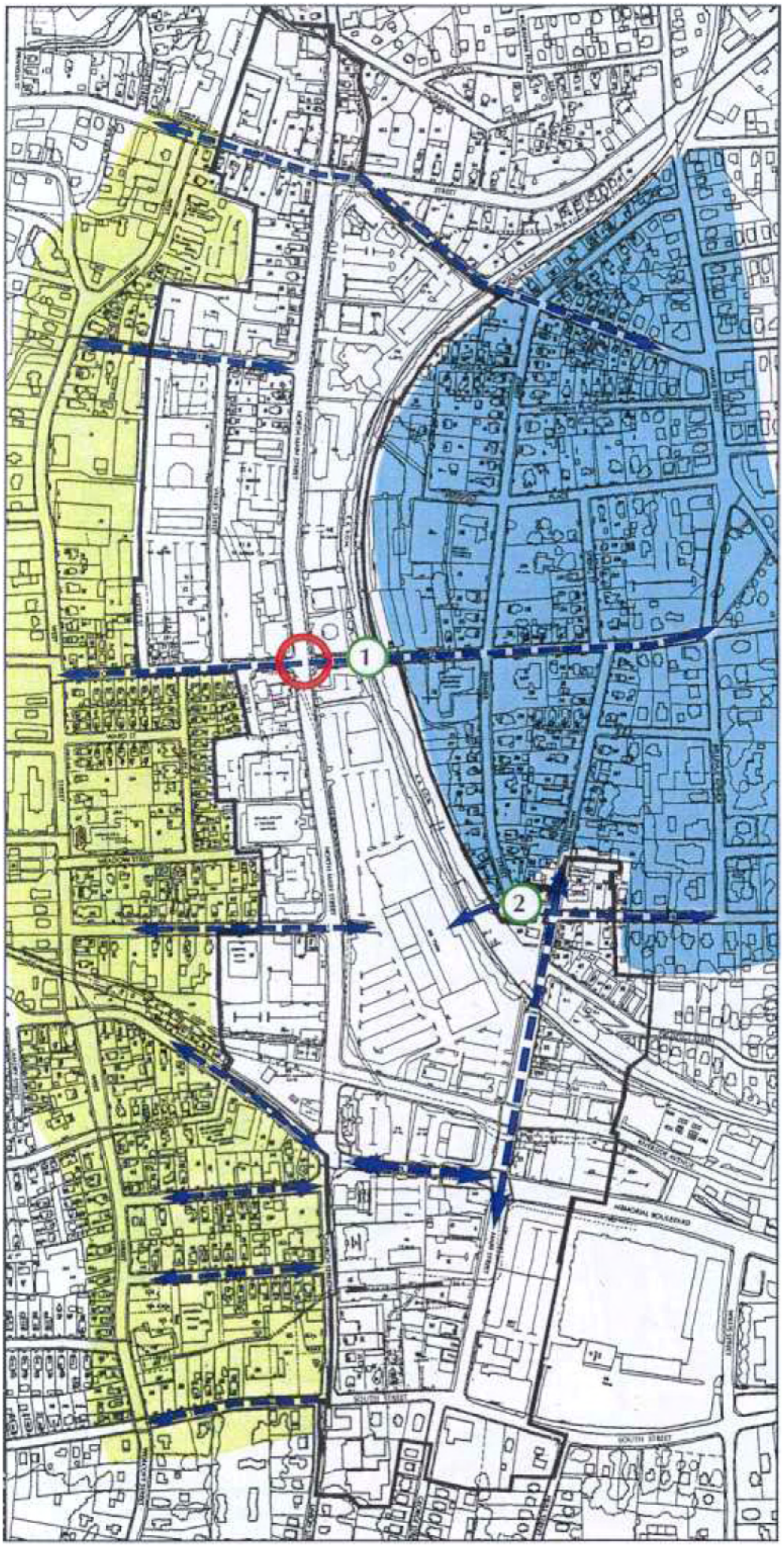


Figure 10-4. Downtown-Neighborhood Links

Pedestrian and Vehicular Linkages

Visual Center Point with Directory

1 Improved Pedestrian Access

2 New Pedestrian Connection Over Rail Lines

Study Boundary

Federal Hill Neighborhood

West End Neighborhood

N
W E
S

Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT

0 600 1200 ft

BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.

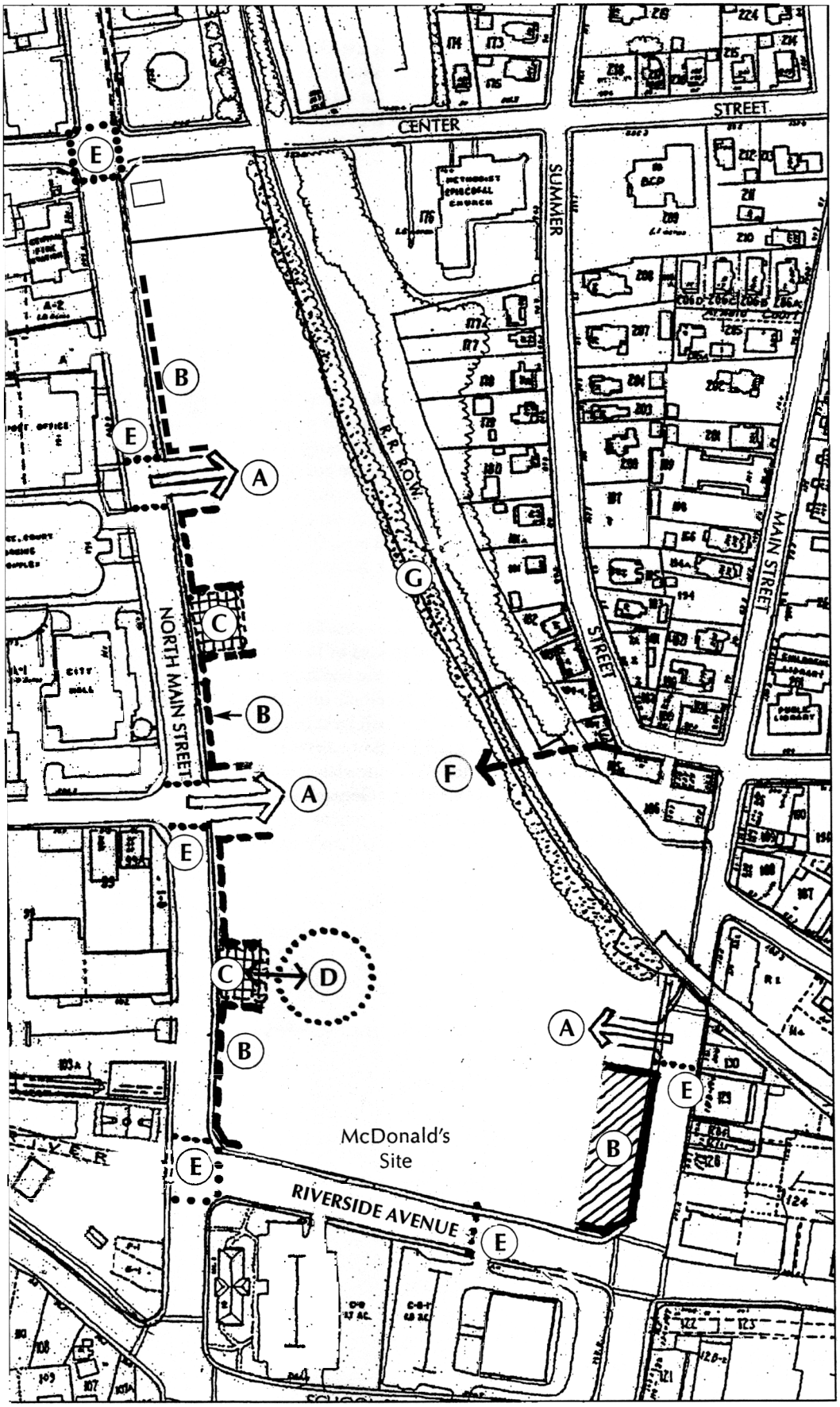


Figure 10-5.
Suggested Design Guidelines for Redevelopment of Mall at Bristol Centre

- (A) Vehicular Entry Points
- (B) Development to Reflect Scale of Existing Buildings Across Street
- (C) Plaza/Urban Park
- (D) Plaza Linked to Community-Related Use
- (E) Upgrade of Pedestrian Crosswalks
- (F) Pedestrian Connection Over Railroad
- (G) Preservation of Existing Vegetation

N
W E
S

Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT

0 225 450 ft

BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.

CHAPTER 11 – FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Future Land Use Plan presented in this chapter (see Figure 11-1) is intended to bring together into a single, graphical representation the various components of the Plan of Conservation and Development. It illustrates *in a generalized manner* the most desirable form, type and location of future development within the City of Bristol, based on a series of categories of land use. The Plan reflects the goals and policies articulated throughout this document, as well as the following considerations:

- Existing physical and environmental features (e.g., topography, watercourses)
- Demographic changes in the population
- The existing patterns of land use and zoning
- The need to provide a variety of housing options
- The existing and future transportation network
- Existing and future infrastructure
- Opportunities for economic development
- The desire for downtown revitalization
- Opportunities for conservation

It is important to note that the Future Land Use Plan differs from the Existing Land Use Map (described in Chapter 3) in at least three significant ways. First, as its name implies, the Future Land Use Plan represents a series of recommendations for *future* land uses rather than merely a depiction of the nature and extent of existing land uses. Second, the categories on the Future Land Use Plan are much broader and more generalized; implicit in these categories are land uses that are considered in principal to be compatible with the category itself, e.g., churches and schools in the Residential land use categories. Third, in some areas of the city, the recommendations of the Future Land Use Plan are intended to alter rather than maintain the existing land use pattern, e.g., an old industrial area in the downtown might be designated for future use as a commercial area. (Conversely, the established land use pattern in an area might well be deemed desirable and appropriate into the foreseeable future; as such, the Future Land Use Plan recommends– and thus encourages and reinforces – its continuation.)

The Future Land Use Plan is also distinct from the city's current Zoning Map. While it is intended to provide the planning framework for future zoning changes, the Future Land Use Plan delineates broad categories of land use and not site-specific zoning districts. In many cases, the recommended future land use category and the existing zoning classification will already be consistent with one another, e.g., an area designated for medium-density residential development may currently be zoned R-10 – Single-Family Residential. In other cases, the recommended future land use of an area will be different from its existing zoning classification, e.g., an area currently zoned R-10 is deemed most appropriate (and thus designated) for future industrial development. When and whether such properties should be rezoned to reflect the recommendations of the Future Land Use Plan is the purview of the city's Zoning Commission, which is authorized by the Connecticut General Statutes to adopt and amend the city's Zoning Map and Zoning Regulations. As with the Plan of Conservation and Development itself, the Future Land Use Plan is intended to serve as a policy guide for Bristol's land use boards and other government officials and agencies whose decisions might affect the course of future land use activity in the city.

A description of each of the land use categories utilized on the Future Land Use Plan follows:

Residential – Conservation (one dwelling unit or less per acre)

- Primary use: single-family residences
- Lowest recommended density
- Intended to provide significant protection to and preservation of environmentally sensitive lands
- Public infrastructure elements such as water, sewers and sidewalks are discouraged
- Most compatible zoning district: R-40 zone (or newly created low-density zone)

Residential – Low Density (one-to-two dwelling units per acre)

- Primary use: single-family residences
- Alternative development techniques to preserve open space (e.g., clustering) are encouraged
- Public water service and public sewer service should be required
- Most compatible zoning district: R-25 zone

Residential – Medium Density (three-to-four dwelling units per acre)

- Primary use: single-family residences
- Public water service, public sewer service and sidewalks are required
- Most compatible zoning districts: R-10 and R-15 zones

Residential - High Density (five or more dwelling units per acre)

- Primary uses: two-family, three-family and multi-family dwellings
- In-fill residential development in the city's most urban neighborhoods

Retail/Service

- Primary uses: retail and service establishments, professional and business offices, financial institutions, restaurants, entertainment facilities
- Type, form and intensity of development are a function of location, i.e., residential neighborhoods, retail corridors (e.g., Route 6) or downtown Bristol

Heavy Commercial

- Primary uses: construction services, manufacturing, motor vehicle repair and services, warehousing and storage, wholesaling and distribution facilities, transportation and utility services

Industrial

- Primary uses: manufacturing, research and development activities, corporate offices, broadcasting facilities, business support services
- Operations involving "high-technology" equipment and processes should be encouraged

Conservation

- Primary uses: public and private parks and recreation areas, public and private open spaces, conservation areas, watershed lands, cemeteries

Goals, Policies and Recommendations

Goal:

Maintain a long-range planning program to anticipate and accommodate the city's needs for the next 10 years and beyond.

Policies:

1. Acknowledge continued growth as inevitable and desirable but expect that such growth will be properly controlled and can be adequately accommodated by various city facilities and services. The purpose of the Plan is to manage and guide, rather than arrest, future growth.
2. Recognize that Bristol is part of a larger urbanized region and that planning for its future must take into account the impact, beneficial or otherwise, of this inevitable relationship.
3. Strive to ensure that all actions by city agencies and departments reflect the goals and policies of the Plan. All pertinent city codes, regulations, and ordinances that affect development should be reviewed periodically, strengthened or updated where necessary, and enforced to support the goals and policies of the Plan.
4. Recognize the need for and encourage consistency between zoning and the Plan.
5. Promote greater citizen awareness of and participation in local planning efforts through meetings, publications, and other appropriate mechanisms.
6. Encourage an ongoing education program for members of the city's land use boards.
7. Preserve the integrity of existing residential neighborhoods. Protect such neighborhoods from commercial encroachment. Discourage zoning actions that would allow mixed uses in established residential areas except at the borders and fringes where major streets are located.
8. Encourage the clustering of new residential units in appropriate locations in order to create or preserve valuable open space. Encourage the diversification of the local housing stock in appropriate locations.
9. Permit established residential neighborhoods to maintain the same pattern of development as in the past, even though this might result in small lots or multi-family units.
10. Consider different forms of residential development within the general densities allowed by zoning, and evaluate each proposal on its own merits.

11. Permit multi-family development of appropriate density and design to be located in the downtown, along major commercial highway corridors, in business districts, and in other suitable locations, but not within established, stable single-family neighborhoods.
12. Prior to the future development of all types of land uses, consider the feasibility of their being served well, efficiently, and at reasonable cost with public facilities. Recognize that providing such facilities may be the responsibility of the developer.
13. Protect industrial land from residential and commercial encroachment.
14. Protect the quality of potable public surface water and groundwater supplies through the control of the use and development of land and activities that pose a risk to watersheds and aquifers.
15. Recognize Bristol's sand and gravel deposits as a valuable and necessary resource, but carefully regulate their extraction.
16. Recognize that Bristol's continued growth and vitality depend in part on the ability of the city to attract and retain younger residents.

Recommendations:

General

1. Require that parcels for multi-family residential development be of suitable size and configuration to accommodate good site layout and design. Encourage such developments to include garages or covered parking, hidden parking, and recreational facilities.
2. To achieve greater compatibility among different categories of uses allowed in the business and industrial zones, consider the use of design districts that permit different lot sizes, floor-area ratios and setbacks for such uses, rather than having one set of standards applicable to all.
3. For older commercial properties, permit slightly intensified development beyond the maximum allowable floor area and/or lot coverage in return for improvements to the site's landscaping, signage, access, parking, lighting and/or design. Use of such a provision would be at the option of the property owner but would require Site Plan approval by the appropriate land use board.

Route 229 corridor

1. Limit development along each side of Route 229 between Battisto Road and the Bristol-Southington line to high-quality, low-traffic-generating uses, primarily of an industrial/office nature rather than a retail/commercial nature. Limit future retail/commercial development along this portion of the corridor to those properties that are currently zoned for business.
2. Maintain the predominantly single-family residential character along the east side of Route 229 between Lake Avenue and the parcel of land north of Superior Electric.
3. Maintain the mixed-use character of Route 229 between Broad Street and Pine Street.
4. Maintain the predominantly residential character of Route 229 between Broad Street and Route 6.
5. Rezone the Masonic Temple parcel on the west side of Lake Avenue to allow low-density multi-family residential development.
6. Rezone the primarily vacant area along the east side of Lake Avenue between Cross Street and the existing multi-family residential development to the south to allow low-density multi-family residential development. Such development would serve as a buffer/transition between the adjacent industrial development to the east and the single-family residential development to the west.
7. Maintain the existing single-family residential zoning on the west side of Lake Avenue between Glenn Street and Lake Compounce Park, reflective of the insufficient parcel depth – due to the proximity of the base of South Mountain – needed to accommodate multi-family residential development

Route 6 Corridor

1. Limit future retail/commercial development along the Route 6 corridor to those properties that are currently zoned for business and that front on Route 6.
2. Maintain the predominantly single-family residential character along Route 6 between Britton Road and Stafford Avenue and between Lewis Street/Oakland Street and Mercier Avenue.

3. Limit future retail/commercial development along the Route 6 corridor between West Street and the Bristol-Plymouth line to neighborhood-oriented facilities on properties that are currently zoned for business.
4. Evaluate proposed developments along the Route 6 corridor in terms of their potential impacts (positive or negative) on revitalization efforts in downtown Bristol.

Route 72 Corridor

1. Consider the use of a design district as one means of implementing a Forestville Village Center plan.
2. Establish an attractive gateway into the city along existing Route 72 at the Bristol-Plainville line.
3. Require, encourage and/or provide that new development along existing Route 72 be coupled with the provision of tree belts, attractive sidewalks, landscaping and greenspace.
4. Study the potential impacts of the realignment of Route 72 on future land use along the Pine Street corridor and in Forestville.

Plan of Conservation and Development
City of Bristol, CT
December, 2000

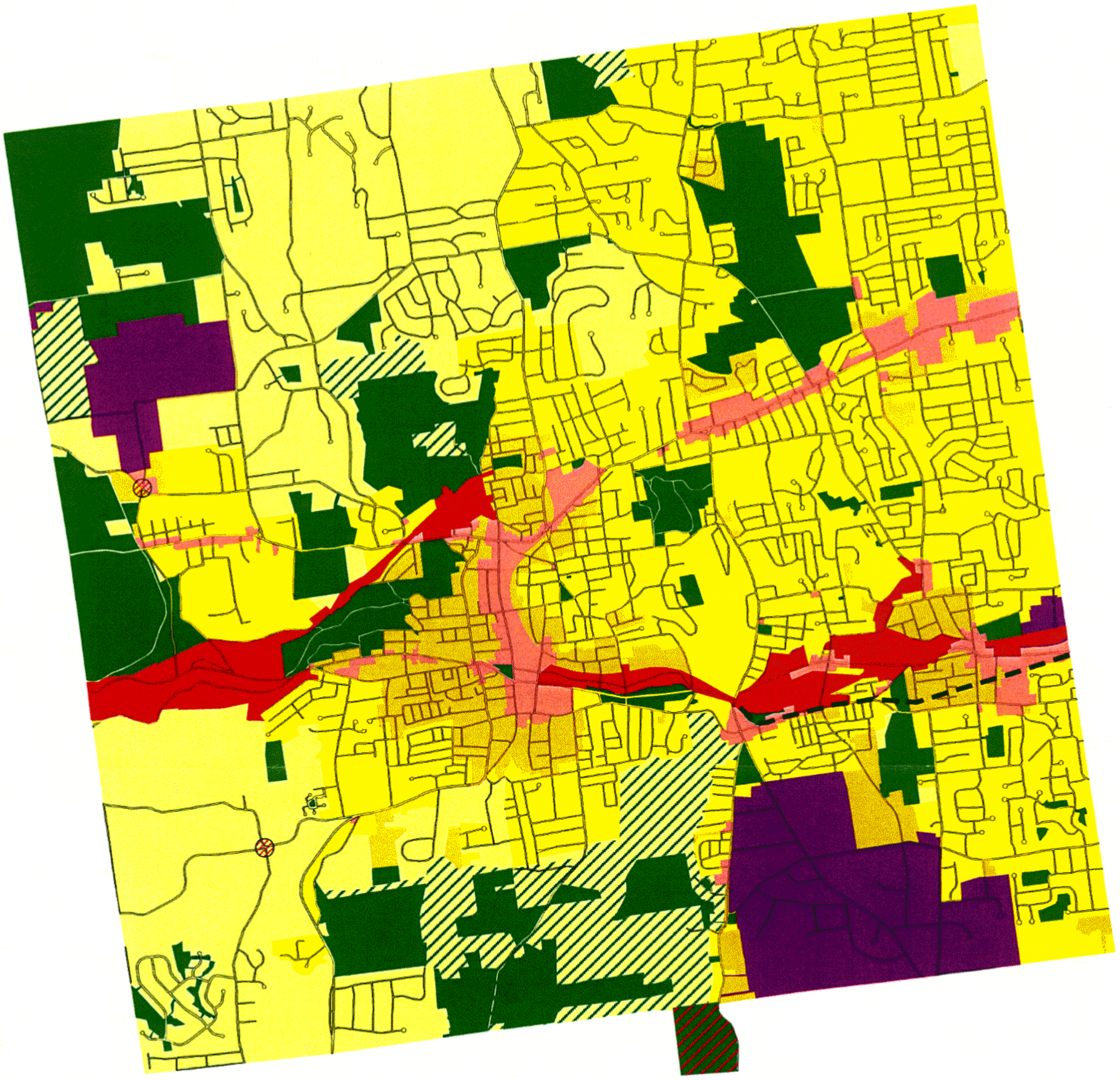


Figure 11-1. Future Land Use Plan

- Residential - Conservation (One Unit or Less per Acre)
- Residential - Low Density (One-to-Two Units per Acre)
- Residential - Medium Density (Three-to-Four Units per Acre)
- Residential - High Density (Five or More Units per Acre)
- Retail / Service
- Heavy Commercial
- Research / Industrial
- Parks / Open Space / Conservation
- Amusement Park
- Future Route 72 Design Corridor
- Future Neighborhood Retail/Service Center

Sources: Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart Inc.
Bristol Land Use Office
1989 Bristol Plan of Development