

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

"The more a community comes to resemble 'Anyplace, U.S.A.', the less reason there will be to visit."

Edward T. McMahon, Director, American Greenways Program



Torrington is nestled in the Litchfield Hills, countryside noted for its scenic beauty. The City is the largest in Litchfield County and has been the industrial and commercial hub of northwestern Connecticut for over a century.

Torrington has the largest concentration of Art-Deco buildings in the State of Connecticut and this is an important part of the character of the community. The core of Downtown was classified as a National Historic District in 1988.

Unfortunately, the face of Torrington changed forever in 1955, when a catastrophic flood significantly altered the city, tearing up Main Street and washing numerous buildings away. The resulting flood protection projects have altered the scenic aspect of the Naugatuck River. Torrington's challenge is to find ways to embrace their past and move forward into the future.

Downtown Warner Theater



Maintain agricultural feel in rural areas (above),
The Naugatuck River (below)



Currently, Torrington is a mix of manufacturing, retail, tourist attractions, farmlands and rural areas. Downtown is being preserved as a thriving cultural center, boasting the Warner Theatre and the renowned Nutmeg Conservatory. It's eclectic mix of antique dealers, art houses, architecture and small specialty shops makes Torrington an appealing choice for residents and tourists alike. – From the Torrington website www.torringtonct.org

Historic Districts

Torrington has two National Register Historic Districts:

- Downtown
- Torrington Street

According to Historic Resource Surveys there are several other areas in the City that could qualify as National Register Historic Districts.

These areas include:

- Barber Street,
- Prescott Street,
- Cook Street - Taylor Street, and
- a portion of Migeon Avenue.

There are also buildings that might also qualify as National Register Historic Places:

- First Congregational Church,
- Lewis Whiting House,
- Fowler House, and
- Villa Friuli.

What is Community Character?

To take an active role in preserving the City's character you must first find out what makes it unique and special. Below is a snapshot of what sets Torrington apart from the other 168 towns in Connecticut:

- a compact modern Downtown with excellent examples of Art-Deco, commercial Victorian and Modernistic architecture;
- rivers and headwaters – the City was built around the confluence of the East and West Branch of the Naugatuck River with many other important rivers and streams that define the area (Still River, Bantam River, Gulf Stream) with their associated wetlands and upper reach tributaries;
- a community affected and defined by the 1955 Flood; and
- a small concentrated city core surrounded with approximately two-thirds of the land in light suburban and rural development.

Protect Scenic Resources

Scenic resources are those visual elements of the landscape and community that help define Torrington - Downtown buildings, riverside landscape, farmland and wooded hills. The *Community Character/Scenic Resources Map* illustrates the locations of resources that need to be protected in order to preserve the quality and uniqueness of Torrington's character. Often times preserving the elements of the community character end up preserving natural resources as well, as they are often one and the same.



Open meadows along Rossi Road (above), Scenic roadways like Pothier Road (below)



Farmland-Carroll's Farm

Legend for Community Character/Scenic Resources Map on Facing Page

SCENIC VIEWS

A	Views south to Klug Road – Weigold Farm
B	Stillwater Pond and north to Norfolk Mountain Rd.
C	Views towards Downtown from Indian Lookout – Mountain Rd.
D	Views across the valley – Mazzarelli land
E	Panoramic views east – Klug Farm

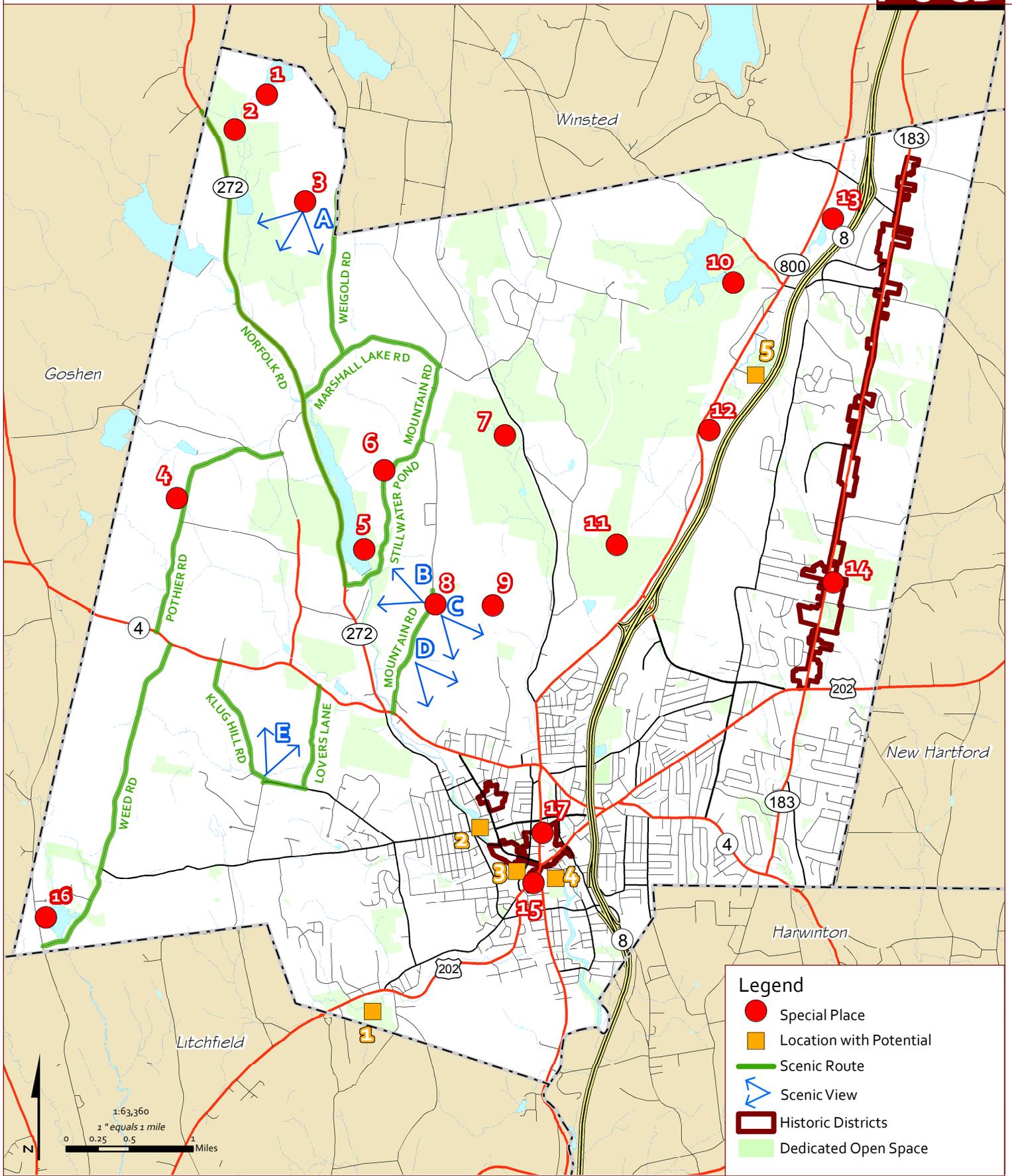
POTENTIAL SCENIC AREAS

1	Massive wetland complex – Gulf Stream
2	Potential public access area – Church St. Dam
3	Naugatuck River
4	Farmer's market (expand to all year)
5	Potential destination park on the Sue Grossman Greenway – Machuga Park

SPECIAL PLACES

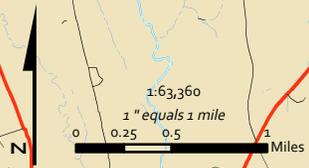
1	Very picturesque with lake – Lake Ouleout
2	Wild and scenic streams - Hopmeadow
3	Unique grasslands and bog system – Weigold Rd.
4	Farm with historic buildings – Carroll Farm
5	Picturesque lake – Stillwater Pond State Park
6	Great waterfowl and wildlife site - Skogan's Pond
7	Known for its hiking trails - Sunnybrook
8	Mountain Laurel display - Indian Lookout
9	Heron rookery, ponds - Top of Red Mountain
10	Recreational lake and trails - Burr Pond State Park
11	Wooded hills & hiking trails - Paugnut State Forest
12	Still River wetland complex
13	Birding area with scrub meadows and ponds
14	Family farm – Ruwet Farm
15	An historic park with beautiful plantings - Coe Park
16	Timber Lake on the Bantam River
17	Historical Society and Museum (Main St)

COMMUNITY CHARACTER/SCENIC RESOURCES



Legend

- Special Place
- Location with Potential
- Scenic Route
- ↔ Scenic View
- ▭ Historic Districts
- Dedicated Open Space



Village District

Section 8-2j of the Connecticut General Statutes allows a community to adopt zoning regulations which will give the Planning and Zoning Commission greater authority over the design aspects of an application.

The statutes require that:

- such a district only be established in an area with a distinctive character, landscape, or historic value, and
- that the Commission retains a "village district consultant" to provide advice and guidance on design issues.

Protect Ridgelines

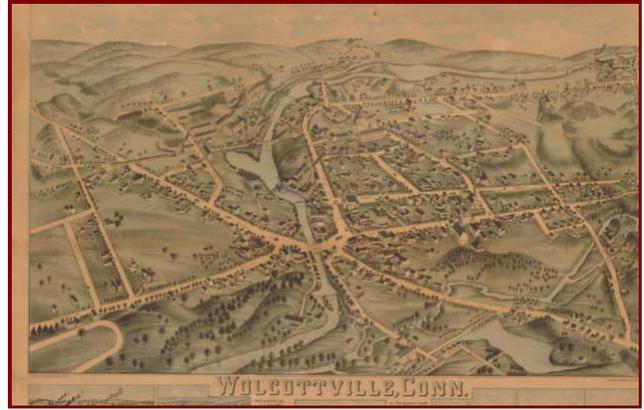
Torrington has many unspoiled ridgelines that maintain the green valley walls surrounding the City. The protection of major ridge lines, especially along the Route 8 corridor on both sides of the valley, the prominent Red Mountain area, views from Mountain Road northwest towards the UCONN campus including both sides of the Stillwater Pond, and the wooded hillsides of Besse Hill near New Litchfield Street should be a priority for protection. The Planning and Zoning Commission should consider the impact of proposed uses, including subdivisions, to the scenic ridgelines throughout Torrington.

Identify and Preserve Historic Resources

The *Community Character/Scenic Resources Map* is included to show current preserved or protected properties. It also identifies which of those lands are permanently preserved. The Torrington Historical Society and the Torrington Historic Preservation Trust along with the City of Torrington should work collaboratively to ensure that community history is preserved.



The Torrington Historical Museum (above), Historic Downtown – Yankee Pedlar Inn (below)



Early Wolcottville Map of Torrington

Preservation strategies should include conducting more historic resource surveys, designation of additional historic properties and historic districts, and the storage of historic documents, maps and photographs in a modernized manner that allows greater protection of the resources and provides better public access. Electronic filing and up to date methods of storage and sharing should be explored.

Torrington will take action to preserve the City's key natural, cultural and historical resources including taking action to preserve and upgrade the City's oldest cemeteries. Historic trails within the City should be enhanced and expanded to connect into other trail systems throughout the City. Specifically the Walking Tour of Downtown Historic District should be enhanced with signage and directional keys to direct someone around the trail even without a map handout.

Reduce Light Pollution

In 2001 the Planning and Zoning Commission adopted a new Outdoor Lighting Regulation aimed at minimizing "light trespass" and the glow surrounding development at night. The regulations were based on the Dark Sky Organization's model (www.darksky.org) and include requirements that limit lighting levels for different uses and require full cut-off fixtures to focus light downward, not out or up into the sky. All new commercial and industrial developments will comply with the dark skies initiative.

Efforts should be made to continue to limit the wasted energy and light that creates the glow around the City's developed areas to allow the residents to more clearly see the stars. Special emphasis should be given to utility pole lighting of private properties from the right of way. All of this type of lighting should be eliminated or replaced with 100 percent full-cutoff fixtures by 2010 to meet CGS 13a-143d requirements.

Glare from restaurant lighting



Sky glow (above); No sky glow (below)



The City of Torrington has about 3,700 street lights they maintain. Approximately 1 percent of those have been replaced with full cutoff light fixtures. Torrington is working to replace older fixtures with the full-cutoff fixture when the fixture requires replacement or when new installations are done.

The City should pursue any available grant monies to speed up the process of converting these old fixtures to reduce glare, and light trespass and to lower the City's utility usage. Efforts to change over or eliminate unneeded street lights should be a priority in the more rural areas first to have a more immediate effect in reducing sky glow.

The Campaign for Dark Skies deserves wide support during this special year [2009, International Year of Astronomy].

But it's not just astronomers who want to experience a clear view of the stars, just as it's not just keen ornithologists who would feel deprived if song-birds disappeared from parks and gardens.

It's indeed a deprivation if young people living in cities never see a dark starry sky - just as it is if they never see any natural countryside.

Sir Martin Rees
Astronomer Royal of England

CGS 13a-143d

In 2003 the Connecticut General Assembly passed legislation to remove floodlights from the public right of way. This law seeks to:

- reduce light trespass
- reduce glare, and
- promote energy-efficient light fixtures.

www.cga.ct.gov/2007/pub/Chap238.htm#Sec13a-143d.htm

Light Trespass



Full Cut-off Fixture



www.starlightcascade.ca/rl/

Farmland Preservation

Connecticut Department of Agriculture and the Connecticut Farmland trust have developed a number of programs and initiatives to protect farmland and promote farming.

www.ct.gov/doag

www.ctfarmland.org

Connecticut Grassland Habitat Conservation Initiative

In 2006 Connecticut developed a grassland habitat conservation program to protect critical grassland areas.

www.ct.gov/dep/lib/dep/wildlife

Preserve Farmland and Promote Farming

The *Farmland Plan* identifies area farms that are permanently preserved and which should be preserved indefinitely. The parcels are divided into a couple of categories: active and protected, active not protected, small farms and hay lots. A priority list of farms follows which identifies farms that should be preserved including property descriptions and key reasons for preservation.

Agriculture is more than just creating attractive rural settings for “city folk” to visit. Farms are viable economic and socially important businesses within our community and region. Aside from the economic benefits of agriculture, the act of farming, whether for dairy production, crops, bees, horses or horticulture, leaves a mark on the land that reminds us of our heritage and a simpler life. The rural countryside is a landscape that is endangered within our community. The ever present pressure to develop new homes and roads, often do so at the loss of agricultural lands.

The *Farmland Plan* also identifies some Potential Agriculture Clusters. The State of Connecticut has placed a high priority on protecting farms that are in close proximity to other farmland and preserved landscapes. By identifying, and refining this Agriculture Cluster concept, Torrington may be able to make a more compelling case for farmland preservation in these areas.

Working Farm Protection Strategies

1. *Klug Farm* area (Klug Hill Road) – (160 acres of the Klug Farm are currently preserved under the State Farmland Preservation Program);
2. *Zordan Farm* area (Area bounded by Weed Road, Klug Hill Road and Route 4);
3. *Weigold Farm* (Weigold Road), (150 acres preserved with funds from the State Farmland Preservation Program);
4. *Ruwet Farm* (Torrington Street near Middle School);
5. *Carroll Farm* (Pothier Road), (100 acres are currently under review with the State Farmland Preservation Program);
6. *Hennesy Farm* (Highland Avenue and Allen Road); and
7. *Rossi Farm* (Rossi Road and Litchfield town line)

Small farms are also critical to the character of Torrington. Under the Torrington Zoning Regulations, to qualify as a farm in Torrington you need a minimum of three acres. These small farms require some form of appreciation and protection as they become more and more important to the local market in supplying local produce and specialty products. They also create an attractive rural character indicative of farming in the hills of Torrington.

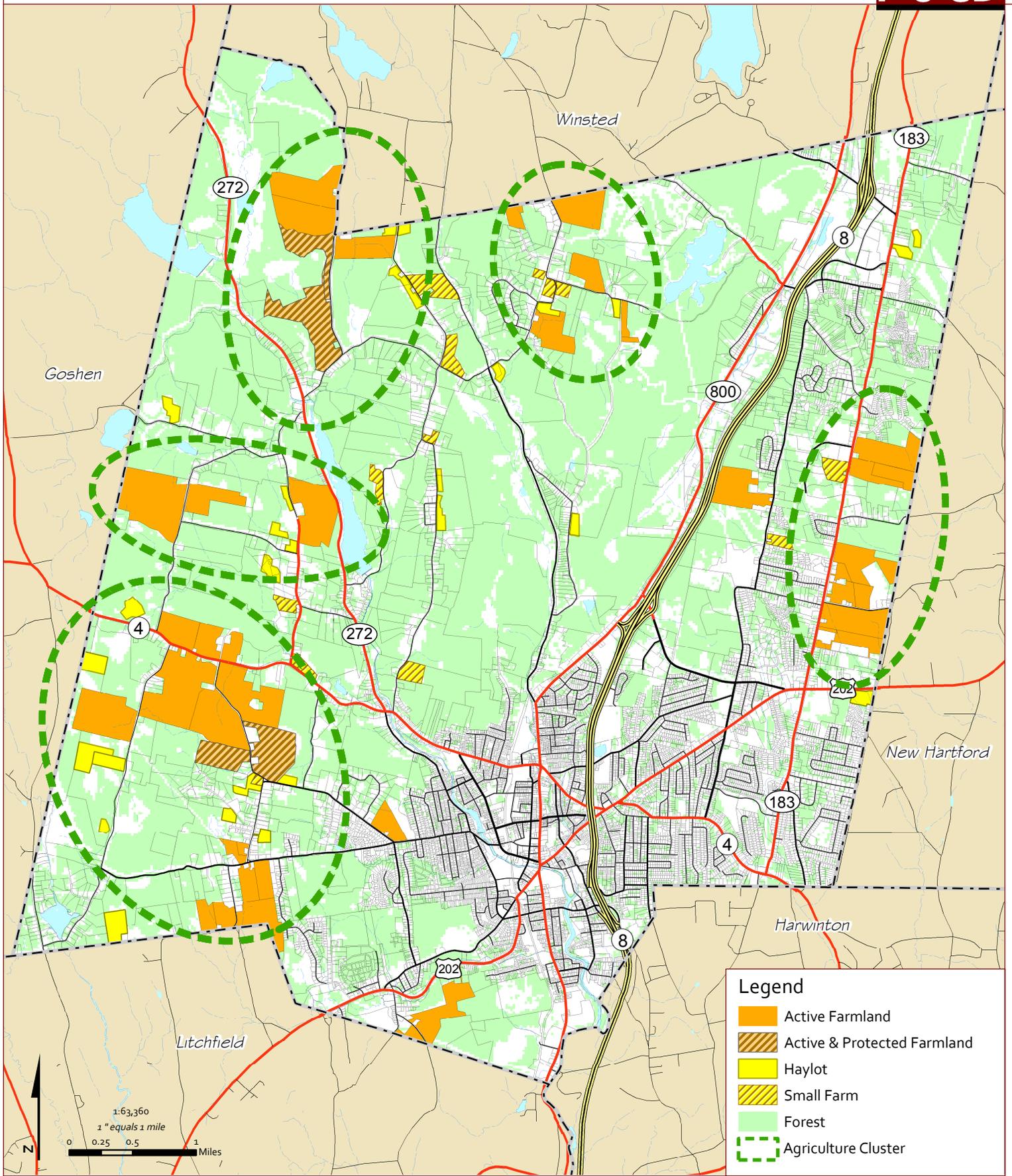


Downtown Farm Market (above), West side dairy farm(below)



East side farm

FARMLAND PLAN



Legend

- Active Farmland
- Active & Protected Farmland
- Haylot
- Small Farm
- Forest
- Agriculture Cluster

Protect Hay Lots

Hay lots within Torrington must be protected. As development continues, hay lots are often seen as expendable. Since two of Torrington’s major working farms are dairy farms, hay is an important crop for their survival. Dairy farms in nearby communities have had to close or move due to lack of close supplies of hay.

Hay lots also serve as vital grassland communities and are necessary for the protection and preservation of many grassland species. DEP has designated grasslands as a priority habitat type to be preserved within the State. Subdivision regulations should encourage and support the preservation of hay lots within the community.

Community Character Strategies

	TASK	DESCRIPTION
6-1	Protect scenic resources	Ensure listed special places are protected by public ownership, conservation easement or other method
6-2	Protect ridgelines	Review and screen proposed development for ridgeline impacts and encourage development away from ridges
6-3	Update the priority historic preservation list	Work with the Torrington Historical Society to update ownership data and conduct outreach for protection
6-4	Reduce light pollution	Enforce the 100 percent full cut-off regulations on all new projects and retrofits. Follow-up with Connecticut Light and Power (CL&P) to change out or remove floodlights in the right of way
6-5	Preserve farmland and protect working farms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concentrate on the priority list of farms.• Refine the Agricultural Clusters concept for open space protection• Protect hay lots