

CONNECTICUT METROPOLITAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

DRAFT REGIONAL PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT 2026-2036



Monroe



Trumbull



Easton



Stratford



Fairfield



Bridgeport



Engineering
& Design

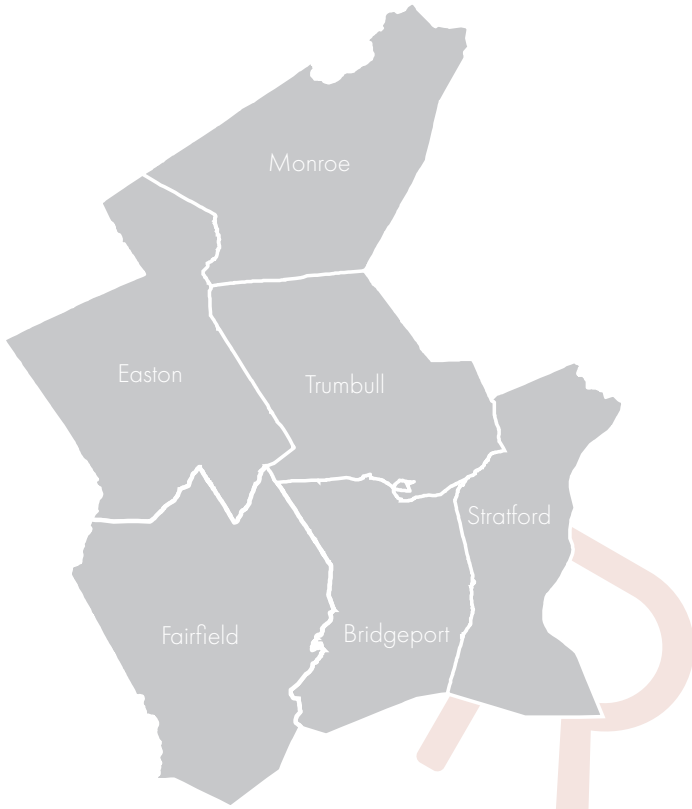


Draft: August 21, 2026



METROCOG
Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments

ABOUT METROCOG & THE PLAN



ABOUT METROCOG

The Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments (MetroCOG) serves as the Regional Council of Governments for the City of Bridgeport and the Towns of Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford, and Trumbull. MetroCOG is the federally designated transportation planning agency for the Greater Bridgeport Planning Region and is also the host agency for the Greater Bridgeport and Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (GBVMPO).

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ABOUT THE PLAN

The State of Connecticut requires all Councils of Governments to develop a Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (RPOCD) every 10 years (CGS 8-35a).

MetroCOG staff are entirely responsible for the design and format of this report. The opinions, findings and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of MetroCOG and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the federal and state agencies through which MetroCOG is funded.

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Colliers Engineering & Design

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

Per CGS 8-35a, the RPOCD makes recommendations for **“land use, housing, principal highways and freeways, bridges, airports, parks, playgrounds, recreational areas, schools, public institutions, public utilities, agriculture and such other matters as will be beneficial to the area.”**

PLAN FOCUS AREAS

Natural Resources Management

Transportation and Mobility

Housing and Neighborhoods

Economic Development

Government and Civic Infrastructure

Since the last MetroCOG Regional POCD update in 2015, the State of Connecticut has introduced new requirements for RPOCDs. These include provisions to **“promote abatement of the pollution of the waters and air of the region”** and **“consider the need for technology infrastructure in the region.”**

As a coastal region, MetroCOG’s plan shall be designed to **“reduce hypoxia, pathogens, toxic contaminants and floatable debris in Long Island Sound.”** Encouraged, but not required is the exploration of energy-efficient patterns of development, the use of solar and other renewable forms of energy, and energy conservation within the plan. The plan must also identify areas for **“compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns and land reuse”** within the region.

The State of Connecticut and local governments also develop their own plans. The RPOCD serves as a “bridge” between the six local Plans of Conservation and Development and the State’s Conservation and Development Policies Plan (State C&D Plan). The State C&D Plan and each member municipality’s POCD was reviewed to guide the development of goals, objectives, and strategies in the Regional POCD. As an advisory document, the Regional POCD can be visionary of how municipalities fit together and function as a region, and the following should be kept in mind:

- The Regional POCD is informed by trends and priorities identified by local plans, as well as input from the community, and focus groups.
- Plans are updated every 10 years and are used as a big picture, or system level planning rather than at the parcel level.
- RPOCDs are advisory rather than regulatory.

MetroCOG primarily serves as an advisory and coordinating body, and it cannot make or enforce laws or ordinances. The agency works to ensure that local planning is aligned with state objectives, provide technical expertise, build consensus on critical regional issues that do not stop at municipal boundaries, and create meaningful partnerships between member communities. The Regional POCD will help to inform this work over the next ten years.

A REGIONAL APPROACH

A coordinated regional approach to land use in the MetroCOG region will help safeguard shared assets such as watersheds, transportation corridors, cultural and historic resources, neighborhood richness, and landscapes that support ecological health, economic activity, and community well-being which will ensure mutual growth, leading to more efficient and equitable development. Through aligned housing, transportation, and infrastructure planning, and natural resources management, the MetroCOG region can reduce the impacts of climate change, direct growth toward appropriate spaces, increase governmental efficiency, boost economic vitality, and protect open space and environmental resources.

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW OF THE REGION

The Metropolitan Council of Governments (MetroCOG) serves the Greater Bridgeport area in Southwestern Connecticut. Centered around the largest city in Connecticut, Bridgeport, the region also includes the surrounding municipalities: Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford, and Trumbull. MetroCOG helps facilitate regional collaboration on land use planning, transportation coordination, economic development, environmental management, and infrastructure investment.

Member municipalities reflect the rich diversity of land use, community identity, and historical

background of the region. Each municipality brings its own economic strengths, natural habitats, neighborhood patterns, and growth priorities that form a dynamic and culturally rich region. Celebrating these differences while ensuring regional collaboration is the key to addressing land use challenges, such as housing affordability, transportation connectivity, and climate resilience.

As one of Connecticut's designated Regional Councils of Governments, MetroCOG helps member communities align local policies with broader regional priorities, supporting coordinated growth, improved mobility, increased resilience, and shared economic opportunity across the region.

KEY INFLUENCES ON FOCUS AREAS & CREATION OF GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & STRATEGIES

ZONING & LAND USE CONTEXT

Local Plans of Conservation & Development

Local Plans of Conservation and Development from Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford, and Trumbull have been fundamental in shaping the update of the MetroCOG Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (RPOCD). Local POCDs have provided detailed, community-

based priorities and conditions that the regional plan considered. Each municipal POCD identified its own land use goals, priorities, and targets for future development.

Plan Bridgeport: Plan Bridgeport is a vision for the future based on the values of the Bridgeport community that proposes actions to make the vision a reality.

Easton Plan of Conservation and Development: The strategies outlined in the POCD are intended to guide future conservation and development in Easton. The plan prioritizes the town's rural nature while managing and planning for low impact growth. Key themes include maintaining low density residential patterns, and environmental stewardship, while supporting recreation opportunities.

Fairfield Plan of Conservation and Development: Fairfield's POCD sets the Town's policy "roadmap" for preservation and growth for the next decade. The POCD establishes goals for open space preservation and natural resource conservation, balanced by identifying future economic development growth opportunities.

Monroe Plan of Conservation and Development: The Plan provides a future vision and guide based on the realities of resources and constraints present in Monroe today.

Stratford Plan of Conservation and

Development: The Plan serves as the Town's guide for managing growth and conserving resources.

Trumbull Plan of Conservation and

Development: The Plan serves as an advisory document and a blueprint for the municipality's future by identifying town needs, setting goals, and outlining strategies for achieving those goals.

Regional and local plans relevant to each focus area are also discussed. For example, the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is discussed in the Economic Development chapter.

State Conservation and Development Policies Plan

The State of Connecticut's Conservation and Development Plan has provided the policy foundation, growth framework, and investment priorities that help guide the Regional Plans of Conservation and Development. The Regional Plan of Conservation and Development reflects local priorities and conditions and pairs them with the broader statewide goals for infrastructure investment, housing and social needs, and natural resource protection.

In alignment with the State of Connecticut C&D Plan, MetroCOG will ensure coordination with local, regional, and statewide agencies that extend beyond the MetroCOG boundaries.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

MetroCOG's outreach approach to the POCD focused on engaging with community members in ways most convenient to them. MetroCOG attended various farmer's markets throughout the region, visited libraries in each municipality, and tabled at CT State University, Housatonic Community College. MetroCOG also hosted an online survey where respondents could select topic areas most interesting to them and provide feedback. When drafting the goals and objectives, MetroCOG took public comments from the engagement events and survey responses. Comments from community members and survey participants have been highlighted in each Focus Area Chapter. Further exploration of conversations with community members and a summary of the survey is detailed in the Outreach Appendix (A).

INPUT FROM FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS & THE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Throughout the planning process, MetroCOG solicited feedback from its Focus Groups and Planning Advisory Committee. MetroCOG engaged with members during the goals, objectives, and strategies development process. Member's comments, concerns, and recommendations strengthened this process, and helped develop a plan that reflects the diverse viewpoints in the region. Focus Group meetings have been documented in Outreach Appendix (A).

TYOLOGIES & REGIONAL FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

To establish a regional development perspective, broad land use categories, or typologies, were defined that can be applied across municipal boundaries. By classifying areas into these typologies, the regional POCD creates a structured framework that guides decision-making in a way that is both strategic and place-sensitive.

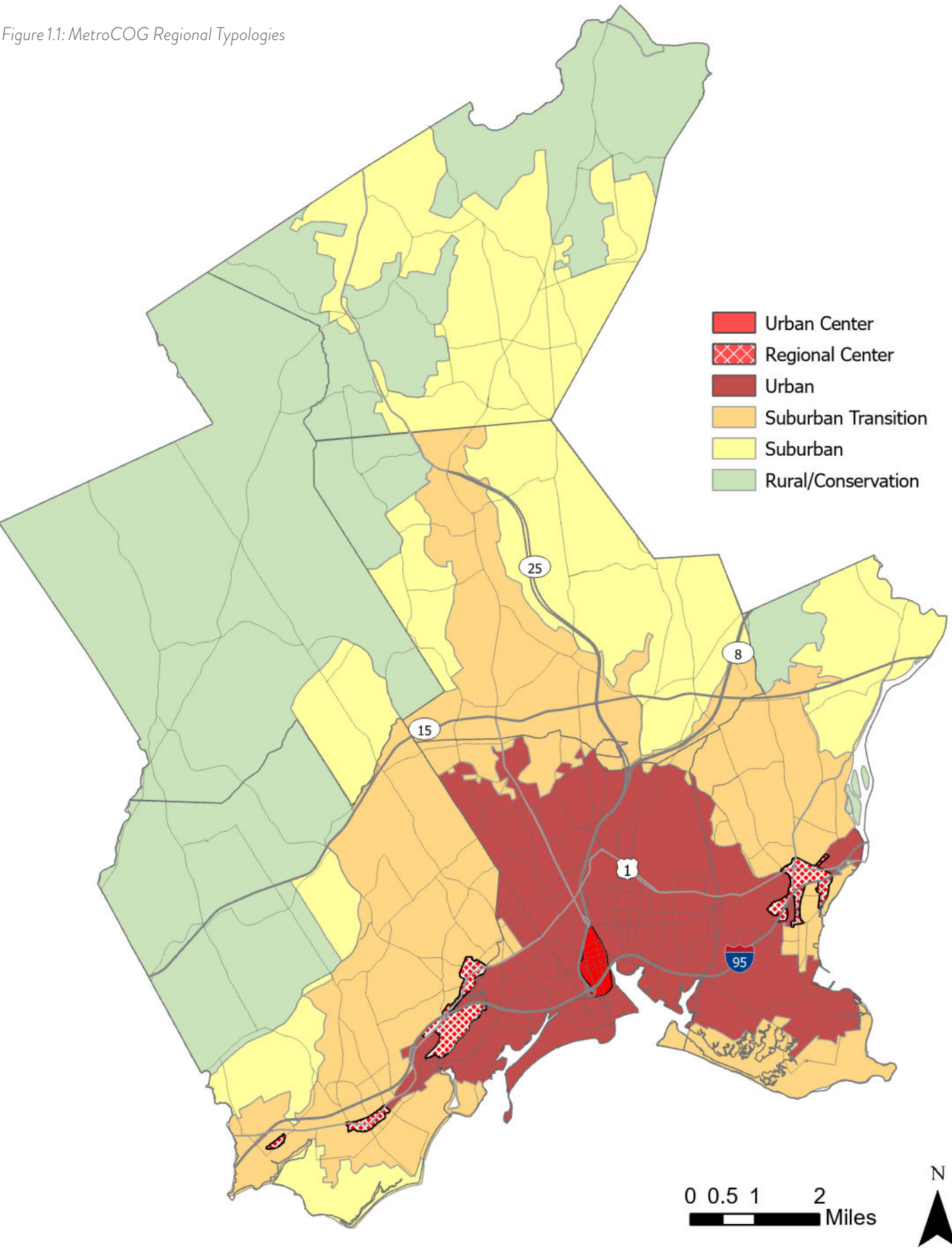
The initial draft of the Regional Typologies Map created by Colliers Engineering & Design generalized land use classifications within each local POCD. After review from MetroCOG staff and Planning Advisory Committee Members, the process was modified to reduce the number of typologies and create more unified zones across the region. To accomplish this, MetroCOG staff used current municipal zoning maps to create categories that shared common development characteristics. Creating the following land uses:

- Low Intensity (Rural/Conservation)
- Moderate Intensity (Suburban)
- High Intensity (Urban Area)
- Urban Core (Downtown Bridgeport)
- Regional Centers
- Waterfront Overlay (FEMA Flood Layer)

While efforts have been made to reflect local policy within this document, it is not meant to be

used as an official or authoritative land use map for individual municipalities. The following definitions and examples provide additional details regarding individual land uses.

Figure 1.1: MetroCOG Regional Typologies



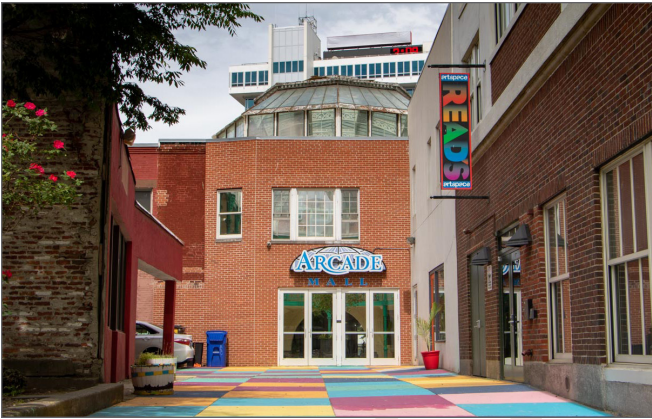


Figure 1.2: Total Mortgage Arena, Bridgeport
MetroCOG GIS & Colliers

Figure 1.3: Southport Center, Fairfield
MetroCOG GIS & Colliers

Urban Center

Location: Downtown Bridgeport

The Region's Urban Center is Downtown Bridgeport, which serves as the Central Business District for the Region. A large mix of commercial, residential, cultural, civic, institutional, and entertainment uses are served by regional transportation hubs (Greater Bridgeport Transit, Amtrak, Metro-North, Interstate 95/Route 8 Interchange, and the Bridgeport-Port Jefferson Ferry). The Center is laid out in a block-grid that allows for a high-density, walkable neighborhood with a large concentration of the Region's employment opportunities, amenities and destination attractions.

Regional Centers

Locations: Fairfield Center, Fairfield-Black Rock Station Area, Stratford Center, Southport

Regional Centers are areas located along major transportation corridors such as Metro-North Railroad, with more intense developments and a mix of uses and housing types. These are laid out as a walkable corridor of small lot mixed-use and commercial buildings with smaller footprints. Many employers, institutions, residential, commercial, and civic/recreational activities are found within these centers.



Figure 1.4: East End, Bridgeport
MetroCOG GIS

Figure 1.5: Long Hill Green, Trumbull
MetroCOG GIS & Colliers

Urban Areas

Locations: Most of Bridgeport (excluding portions of the North End), Western Portion of Stratford, Eastern Portion of Fairfield

Urban Areas consist of a variety of housing types with numerous commercial corridors that allow easy access to a mix of commercial, industrial, civic, and institutional uses. These areas are characterized by proximity to transit and community amenities, walkability, and smaller lot sizes. Locations: Most of Bridgeport (excluding portions of the North End), Western Portion of Stratford, Eastern Portion of Fairfield.

Suburban Transition

Locations: Parts of Fairfield, Trumbull, and Stratford

Areas on the outskirts of urban portions of the region that are lower-density, car dependent, with commercial, industrial, and residential portions.



Figure 1.6: Stepney Green, Monroe
MetroCOG GIS and Colliers

Figure 1.7: Maple Row Farm, Easton
MetroCOG GIS and Colliers

Suburban

Locations: Parts of Fairfield, Stratford, Monroe, and most of Trumbull

This area is predominantly residential, characterized by suburban-style development with a variety of housing types, a majority of which are single-family neighborhoods. Some community-scale mixed-use, commercial and institutional uses are located along principal arterials. Transportation is primarily car-oriented, with limited walkability and access to transit.

Rural/Conservation

Locations: Northern Fairfield, most of Easton, parts of Monroe

Rural/Conservation Areas are portions of the Region that are predominantly rural and are the location of natural resources, public water supply watershed, and agricultural uses. These areas consist of large tracts of open space, state parks, wildlife management areas, recreation, and other protected environments. The limited development that exists in these areas primarily includes single-family homes on large lots with little to no commercial, industrial, or institutional activity.

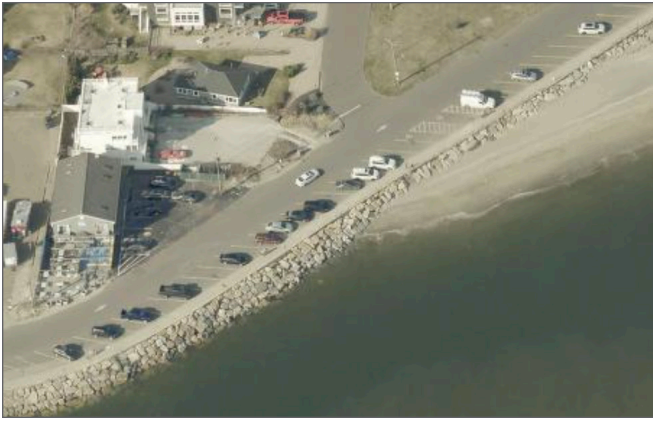


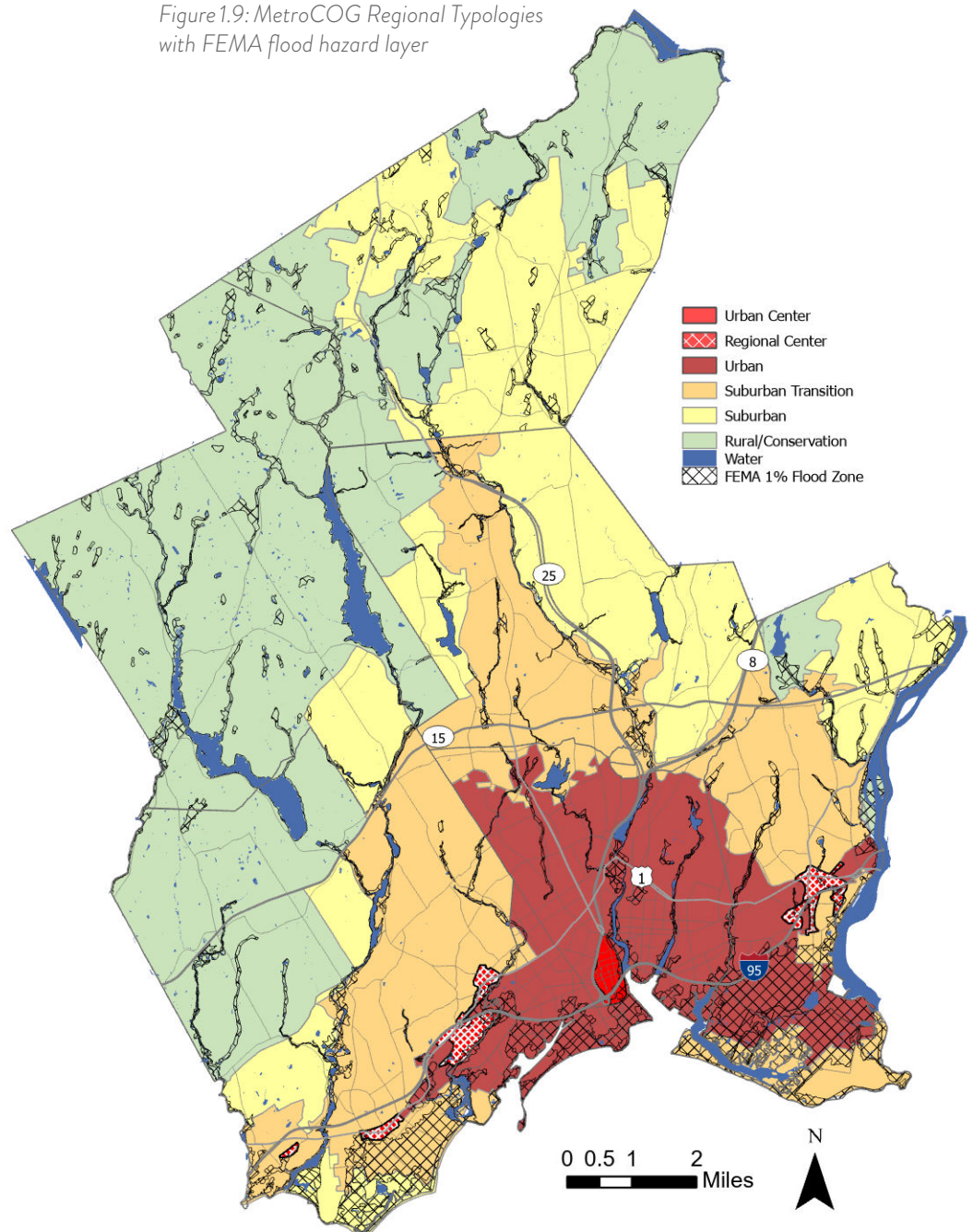
Figure 1.8: Stratford, Long Beach Seawall
MetroCOG GIS and Colliers

Waterfront Overlay

Locations: See Figure 1.9

Using the FEMA mapping layer, crosshatching indicates waterfront areas that may be at risk for coastal related hazards. According to FEMA, Flood maps show how likely it is for an area to flood. Any place with a 1% chance or higher chance of experiencing a flood each year is considered to have a high risk. Those areas have at least a one-in-four chance of flooding during a 30-year mortgage.

Figure 1.9: MetroCOG Regional Typologies
with FEMA flood hazard layer



1 NATURAL RESOURCES

GOAL: PRESERVE, PROTECT, PROMOTE AND ENHANCE THE REGION'S ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

A coordinated regional approach to natural resource management will help safeguard shared assets such as watersheds, air quality, biodiversity, agricultural lands, and natural landscapes that support ecological health, economic activity, and community well-being. By working at a regional scale, communities can better address cumulative environmental impacts, strengthen climate resilience, and ensure sustainable land and resource use over the long term.

OBJECTIVES

- Improve & Expand Access to Open Spaces Within the Region
- Protect Water Resources, Watersheds, & Ensure Water Quality
- Explore & Implement Green Infrastructure, Low Impact Design & Renewable Energy (Resource Efficiency)
- Preserve & Enhance Natural Functioning Systems
- Prioritize Conservation Education

INTRODUCTION

Natural resources are central to the region, play a key role in shaping land-use decisions, and contribute to the quality of life across MetroCOG communities. The region's location along the Long Island Sound supports industries, recreation, critical habitats, and tourism. Inland forests within the region, as well as watersheds and open spaces safeguard drinking-water supplies, maintain biodiversity, and provide recreational opportunities.

Natural resources directly influence the region's economic competitiveness, community health, and resilience. Integrating natural resource protection into land use and zoning decisions is critical for ensuring the future conservation of natural resources.

This chapter is centered around the overarching goal to Preserve, Protect, Promote and Enhance the Region's Environmental Resources: a regional approach to natural resources management that also celebrates the individual characteristics that make each municipality unique.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE C&D PLAN

MetroCOG's natural, cultural, and historic resources will be carefully used and managed to protect their ability to withstand disasters and ensure their longevity, sustainability, and reliability



Figure 1.1: Swans on Hemlock Reservoir, Easton
Cathy Dunsby

KEY INFLUENCES ON THE CREATION OF GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

LAND USE & ZONING

Natural resources play a significant role in zoning and land use decisions, as development can directly affect environmental health, economic resilience, and community well-being. Planning that accounts for natural resources such as water supplies, soils, forests, wetlands, and wildlife habitat helps to ensure that development occurs in areas that can support it without causing long-term ecological damage. Aligning land uses with the natural capacity of the landscape can reduce environmental risks, lower infrastructure costs, and promote sustainable growth within the MetroCOG region while providing community members with access to the natural environment.

TABLE 1.1: PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT GOALS, NATURAL RESOURCES

	State C&D Plan	2015 RPOCD	Bridgeport	Easton	Fairfield	Monroe	Stratford	Trumbull	# of Local Plans	# Local High Priority
Preserve Key Natural Resources/ Corridors									6	6
Acquire and Enhance Open Spaces									6	5
Expand Greenways and Open Space Corridors									6	6
Protect Coastal Resources / Beach Restoration									3	3
Protect Agricultural Land Uses									3	2
Enhance Tree Canopy/Forest Management									4	3
Adoption of Renewable Energy									5	3
Water Conservation/Energy Efficiency									6	3
Improve Storm Water Management									4	2
Implement Green Infrastructure									5	2
Protect Critical Watersheds + Water Quality									6	4
Invest in Resilience Hubs									4	2
Reduce Flood Risks/Development in Flood Zones									4	2
Improve Municipal Solid Waste Man- agement									4	1
Promote Low Impact Development									6	4

Legend POCD Goal Priority Goal See Goal Alignment Appendix (C) for Methodology

LOCAL & REGIONAL PLANS

Local Plans of Conservation and Development from Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford, and Trumbull have been fundamental in shaping the update of the MetroCOG Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (RPOCD). Local POCDs have provided detailed, community-based priorities and conditions that the regional plan considered. Each municipal POCD identified its own land use goals, natural resource priorities, and targets for future development.

Table 1.1 represents common elements and goals related to natural resources as expressed by member municipalities in their own plans.

Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan

The MetroCOG Multijurisdictional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (NHMP) helped shape and inform the RPOCD by ensuring that long-term land use, infrastructure investments, and conservation policies account for known environmental risks by identifying the natural hazards that the region is most vulnerable

to. The NHMP update in 2024-2025 mapped vulnerable areas, evaluated critical infrastructure, and recommended mitigation strategies, and has helped the RPOCD update to determine where development should be limited, what infrastructure should be hardened, and where natural resources should be protected or restored. The NHMP also highlights opportunities for regional coordination, such as shared emergency routes, watershed-scale flood management, and coastal resilience planning.

Climate Pollution Reduction Grant

The Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) and Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) were developed through the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant for Southwestern Connecticut. The two plans established regional greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories, reduction targets, and climate mitigation strategies focused on sectors such as transportation, buildings, energy, and waste. The CCAP outlined actions that can reduce air and carbon pollution, improve public health, and support economic opportunities in clean energy and efficiency. The RPOCD uses the climate plan's emissions profiles, sector specific mitigation strategies, and anticipated impacts to guide decisions about where and how growth should occur, where infrastructure investments should be prioritized, and where natural and working lands should be conserved to both store carbon and enhance resilience.



Figure 1.2: Watching the Sound, Bridgeport
Jhoni Ada

STATE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT POLICIES PLAN

The State of Connecticut's Conservation and Development Plan guides growth and investment in ways that balance economic development with the protection of natural resources and habitats. The plan identifies priority conservation areas which includes forests, farms, wetlands, coastal resources, and drinking water supplies and encourages state funding and municipal planning decisions that preserve these resources. The State C&D plan also promotes smart growth principles through directing development toward already developed or infrastructure supported areas to reduce habitat fragmentation and pressure on ecologically sensitive lands. MetroCOG has taken these principles and incorporated them into the following objectives and strategies.

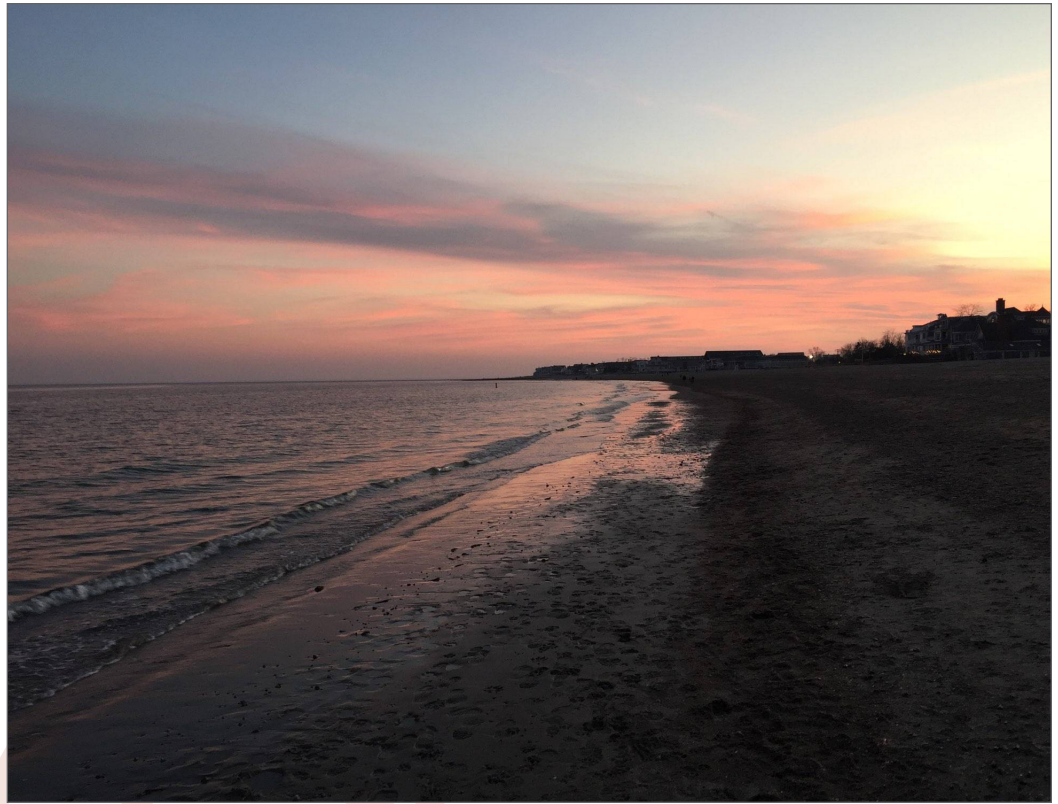


Figure 1.3: Jennings beach sunset, Bridgeport
Porter Sherman

NATURAL RESOURCES FOCUS GROUP & PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Throughout the planning process, MetroCOG solicited feedback from its Natural Resources Focus Group and Planning Advisory Committee. Members indicated that it was important to have an objective related directly to conservation education in the region, both for municipal staff, as well as community-based education. Members were also interested in ensuring that the environment of the region is taken into consideration when development occurs. Focus group members indicated that nature based solutions should be explored in cross cutting focus areas to enhance the region's sustainability efforts. Additional feedback from focus group members detailed the need for invasive species management, increased funding for scientific studies related to heat islands, and ensuring the preservation of farmland.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Responses from the online POCD survey overwhelmingly indicated that the three most important resources in the MetroCOG region are coastal resources, drinking water, and open space. Likewise, over 70% of survey respondents indicated concerns with habitat loss, and 60% with climate change related impacts. Many respondents said they would like increased preserved land and additional policy changes focused on environmental protections. When visiting farmers' markets and libraries in the region, MetroCOG heard concerns about flooding in each community – even inland communities, as well as the need for more parking at key recreational sites.



Figure 1.4: Brett Woods, Fairfield
Colliers

OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

1.1 IMPROVE & EXPAND ACCESS TO OPEN SPACES WITHIN THE REGION

Improving and expanding access to open spaces contributes to public health, social equity, environmental sustainability, and economic vitality. Accessible parks, trails, and natural areas support physical activity, mental health/wellness, and social interaction which can lead to improved health outcomes. Ensuring equitable access to open space helps address spatial and social disparities across the MetroCOG region. Open spaces are essential in ensuring natural resources protection by managing stormwater, mitigating urban heat, preserving biodiversity, and enhancing climate resilience. Enhancing and expanding open space can also support economic development and residential home values across the region.



Figure 1.5: Historical Society, Trumbull
Colliers

1.1.a Provide Regional Open Space Planning & Policy Guidance

Develop open space priorities for the region and promote consistent zoning and land use policies.

Regional open space planning and policy guidance should be developed through a coordinated, data driven process that aligns local goals with regional priorities. Assessing existing open space assets, gaps in access, ecological needs, and growth pressures across the region is the first step in identifying priority areas for conservation, recreation, and connectivity. MetroCOG will use the Connecticut Green Plan as a strategic framework for prioritizing areas in the region for land conservation.

MetroCOG will offer technical assistance to member municipalities to ensure that open space planning is consistent with Connecticut goals, and plans are positioned to leverage state and federal resources effectively.

Survey: If there is anything you feel would be helpful for us to know about the region, please let us know.

“We need better publicity for all our wonderful natural resources: birdlife, shore line, historic areas, museums, and our priceless and incredible local history.”

-Stratford resident

1.1.b Verify Regional Mapping, Data, & Partner with Member Municipalities to Evaluate Open Space

Conduct regional inventories, provide up-to-date regional hazard messaging, map access inequities, identify priority locations, and share data with partners.

A recurring concern of focus group members was the task of compiling, creating, and maintaining open space locations. Developing and maintaining a regional GIS database that compiles data on parks, open space, trails, land ownership, environmental resources, and demographics, will provide this inventory and the basis of a needs assessment. MetroCOG will collaborate with member municipalities to ensure local datasets and assets align with regional mapping. MetroCOG’s role as a clearinghouse for GIS inventories can assist member municipalities with modernizing locations of all open space within the region.

SUCCESS STORY: ASPETUCK LAND TRUST (ALT) GREEN CORRIDOR INITIATIVE

As a regional land trust in Southwestern Connecticut, Aspetuck Land Trust is aware of the region's unique resources and is strongly committed to preserving them. ALT's Green Corridor initiative connects over 1000 acres of protected preserves with backyards, creating a greenway that helps improve local biodiversity. The corridor extends within Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, and to the WestCOG region- including Redding, Weston, Westport, and Wilton. The Green Corridor focuses on land protection and land stewardship. To learn more about the Green Corridor and view their interactive story map, please visit the [ALT website](#).

1.1.c Explore Regional Connectivity & Public Access in All Focus Areas

Coordinate trail, greenway, waterfront, and Blueway networks.

Integrating open space into planning and implementation projects is a critical step in ensuring access across the region. MetroCOG's transportation and mobility projects can incorporate linear parks, greenways, and multiuse trails alongside roads, rail lines, waterfronts, and waterways. Incorporating features such as landscaped medians, buffer zones, and multi-use paths can enhance safety, ecology, and recreation in meaningful ways. To enhance regional connectivity, MetroCOG shall coordinate and engage with state and local partners, such as the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP).

1.1.d Pursue Funding & Resource Coordination

Pursue regional and federal grants, explore regional funding pools, and provide technical assistance.

MetroCOG should explore the creation of regional funding pools or innovative cost share mechanisms to support open-space related planning and capital improvements that benefit multiple communities. Providing technical assistance through grant writing support can help member municipalities and local partners compete more effectively for state and federal funding. MetroCOG will lean on guidance provided by the State's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program in expanding open space throughout the region.

What challenges do you face while recreating?

“Because my town sticker only allows me use in my own town I don’t use other towns’ facilities” -Stratford resident

“Very few properties available for hunting & fresh water fishing” -Stratford resident



Figure 1.6: Twin Brooks Park covered bridge, Trumbull Colliers

1.1.e Partner with Local Open Space Stakeholders for Improved Coordination & Collaboration on Open Space Management

Serve as a coordinator and technical resource to align efforts across municipal boundaries.

MetroCOG can partner with local open space stakeholders by serving as a coordinator and technical resource to align management efforts across municipal boundaries. Establishing a regional open space and parks working group as a portion of the existing Conservation Technical Advisory Committee that engages with municipalities, land trusts, conservation organizations, transportation agencies, and community groups to share information, coordinate projects, and address shared challenges will promote peer sharing and improved coordination.

1.1.f Explore Opportunities to Program & Promote Open Space on a Regional Scale

Leverage the region’s outdoor and coastal assets to provide greater opportunities in recreation and tourism.

By leveraging the region’s outdoor and coastal assets, MetroCOG can help provide greater opportunities in recreation and tourism. Through supporting regional trail networks, waterfront access, and conservation initiatives, MetroCOG can help facilitate high-quality recreational experiences that attract visitors while preserving local character. MetroCOG can also coordinate partnerships with tourism agencies, local governments, and private stakeholders to promote sustainable tourism and ensure economic benefits are shared across the region. Open space and outdoor assets can also be highlighted on social media platforms and MetroCOG’s website.



Figure 1.7: Stevenson Dam, Monroe Colliers

1.2: PROTECT WATER & COASTAL RESOURCES, WATERSHEDS, & ENSURE WATER QUALITY

Water networks extend across jurisdictional boundaries and are inherently interconnected. A coordinated regional approach promotes consistent protection standards, ensures CT Clean Water Act laws are consistent, reduces downstream impacts, and supports effective management of shared resources. Safeguarding these systems helps to ensure clean drinking water, protect public health, enhance resilience to flooding and climate change, and preserve critical habitats. Regional water protection will also support recreation, tourism, fisheries, and local economies.

If there is anything you feel would be helpful for us to know about the region, please let us know.

“It often feels that our 6 communities are in competition with each other. If we had a vision of how we all fit into a larger more regional master plan, it might free us to concentrate on what we do well. We cannot all be all things to all people and yet we are often forced to try by virtue of a lack of regionalization”

-Fairfield resident

1.2.a Ensure Planning Centralized Around Watershed Boundaries Rather than Municipal Borders

Coordinate planning and policy development across all municipalities and jurisdictions within regional watersheds.

Coordination of planning and policy development across all municipalities in a regional watershed will ensure that stormwater management, land development, water quality, and habitat protection consider the impact on the entire watershed rather than the portion limited to a single municipality. This strategy may include engaging with neighboring Councils of Governments (COGs), utility providers, and state agencies for MS4 compliance, promotion of nature-based solutions, and emergency response strategies associated with watersheds and flooding,

habitat, and invasive species concerns. MetroCOG will build upon existing waterfront plans to improve public access to regional water bodies and protect riparian and coastal landscapes. MetroCOG will align its work with the Connecticut Coastal Management Manual, the [2025 Long Island Sound Partnership CCMP](#), the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Plan, and with Public Act 12-101- An Act Concerning the Coastal Management Act and Shoreline Flood and Erosion Control Structures, which expands on initiatives to address sea level rise. MetroCOG will follow guidance from the University of Connecticut’s Coastal Landscaping Guide on incorporating riparian buffers into planning and management.

If there is anything you feel would be helpful for us to know about the region, please let us know:

“preserve our open spaces! protect animal habitats!”

-Stratford resident

1.2.b Provide Data Mapping & Monitoring

Provide data mapping and act as a central hub for collecting, organizing, and analyzing water-related data.

MetroCOG has the existing capacity to provide data mapping and to act as a central hub for collecting, organizing, and analyzing water-related data. MetroCOG should establish best practices for including water-related federal, state, and utility data in coordination with member municipalities. MetroCOG will use GIS-based efforts to strengthen planning around water infrastructure. Communication and coordination with Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) and UConn’s Center for Land Use and Education and Research (CLEAR) will be necessary to build upon resources already created, such as data from Resilient CT.

1.2.c Support & Share Protective Land Use Regulations

Provide member municipalities with model ordinances compiled from best practices.

MetroCOG can provide member municipalities with model ordinances compiled from best practices within Connecticut and New England related to wetland setbacks, aquifer protection zones, and critical habitats. Conservation Technical Advisory Committee meetings will regularly discuss water management strategies. Connecticut has a strong framework of state land use regulations designed to protect water resources. MetroCOG will draw on language from the following:

- **Connecticut Coastal Management Act:** requires planning decisions protect coastal resources.
- **Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act:** regulates activities affecting inland wetlands and water courses.
- **Aquifer Protection Area Program:** regulates land uses within designated protection areas that support and supply public drinking water.
- **Water Pollution Control Act:** land use decisions must account for stormwater management to prevent runoff, erosion, and pollution into water bodies.



Figure 1.8: Community Gardens, Bridgeport Colliers

1.3: EXPLORE AND IMPLEMENT GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE (GI), LOW IMPACT DESIGN (LID), & RENEWABLE ENERGY (RESOURCE EFFICIENCY)

Exploring and implementing green infrastructure, low-impact design, and renewable energy is essential to building resilient and sustainable communities that can adapt to environmental, economic, and climate related challenges. Design considerations such as green infrastructure help reduce environmental impacts, improve air, and water quality, manage stormwater naturally, and lower long-term infrastructure and energy costs. By integrating nature-based solutions and clean energy into planning and development, communities can enhance public health, protect natural resources, support climate mitigation and adaptation, and foster economic vitality.

SUCCESS STORY: MICRO-GRID GRANTS

The State of Connecticut set aside \$15 million to the Microgrid Pilot Program to help establish microgrids to power critical community facilities during flooding and violent storms. The Bridgeport microgrid provides year-round clean energy to City Hall, Police Headquarters, and Eisenhower Senior Center. The microgrid utilizes a combined heat and power (CHP) system to simultaneously produce electricity, heat, and chilled water, significantly improving energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The microgrid also includes multiple design redundancies that enable fail-safe operations in the event of extreme weather or other emergency blackout events, providing additional resilience for the City's critical facilities. The Fairfield Wastewater Treatment Plant Microgrid project consists of cogeneration and microgrid equipment at four critical facilities for both storm hardening and operability during extended electrical grid outages.

into the planning, design, and maintenance of roadways, transit corridors, and multimodal infrastructure. Communication with experts in the field should be pursued at key stages of transportation projects.

1.3.b Identify Priority Retrofit Areas & Locations for GI/LID (critical infrastructure) & Renewable Energy & Pursue Funding for LID/GI Grants

1.3.a Promote & Share Standards for GI, LID, & Renewable Energy

Discuss and share best practices with insight from industry professionals and state leaders.

MetroCOG can expand CTAC meetings to discuss and share best practices and insights from industry professionals and state leaders. MetroCOG will compile state level standards and guidance associated with resource efficiency, such as the Connecticut Renewable Portfolio Standards. MetroCOG will also utilize the Connecticut Stormwater Quality Manual as the basis for low impact design (LID) planning options. LID/GI can be integrated into transportation projects by incorporating stormwater management, environmental preservation, and sustainable design principles

Aid member municipalities in applying for implementation and planning grants at the state and federal level.

MetroCOG can use GIS to identify areas suitable for green infrastructure projects (rain gardens, bioswales, permeable pavements), expanded tree canopy coverage, and renewable energy installations (solar panels or wind turbines) using federal, local, and partner agency data. Improvements should center around resilience and climate change adaptation. Existing tools, such as the Connecticut Low Impact Development Atlas, created by UConn CLEAR and UConn NEMO, will be explored and used as a foundation, as well as GIS data from CT ECO. The agency will build upon data provided by the Community Renewable Energy Siting Tool, developed under P.A. 24-31I; which provides users

SUCCESS STORY: GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE IN BRIDGEPORT

As part of the Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) in Bridgeport, Save the Sound, in partnership with Groundwork Bridgeport, The Nature Conservancy, and MetroCOG assessed site feasibility for bioswale installations in the West Side/West End of Bridgeport. The Flow Project had a goal to assess a minimum of 60 sites by the end of June 2023. As of late June 2023, a total of 85 locations were assessed. The information gathered was submitted to the City of Bridgeport for review and implementation. Local institutions have already begun implementing green infrastructure projects. Bridgeport Central High School planted a rain garden that infiltrates runoff from 5,500 square feet of the school's impervious driveway surface. Projects such as these can be duplicated throughout the MetroCOG region at varying degrees of size and scale to collectively contribute to increased drainage capacity.

1.3.c Explore Regional Procurement & Cost Sharing Related to Natural Resources Management

Integrate LID/GSI into transportation projects and ensure communication with experts in the field.

MetroCOG can facilitate member discussion of cost sharing initiatives and collective bargaining for materials, services, and design. MetroCOG can explore the Connecticut Conference of Municipality's (CCM) Energy Purchasing Program to help members understand energy needs and negotiate future contracts. MetroCOG can also explore partnerships with organizations such as the Connecticut Green bank to identify municipal financing mechanisms for renewable energy and jointly leverage solutions. MetroCOG can explore innovative funding options, such as resilience improvement districts. No-cost support through Sustainable CT can be utilized for additional resilience actions to implement in the region.

with information related to siting potential for renewable energy.

Figure 1.9: South Pine Creek, Fairfield
Harrison Gordon



1.4: PRESERVE & ENHANCE NATURAL FUNCTIONING SYSTEMS

Natural functioning systems support environmental health, community resilience, and long-term economic stability by maintaining water and air quality, supporting biodiversity, and reducing risks from flooding, invasive species, erosion, and extreme weather. When these systems are preserved and enhanced, they provide essential services that would otherwise require costly engineered solutions. Healthy ecosystems strengthen climate adaptation efforts, protect public health, and sustain recreation and tourism. A proactive approach to safeguarding these systems balances community growth and development with the natural processes that support both people and the environment.

What do you think are the most important natural resources in the region?

“I would love to see those wildlife bridges that go over highways so less animals are hit by cars on the Merritt and Route 25/8 Connector.”
- Monroe resident

1.4.a Plan Holistically at the Ecosystem Level

Ensure a balance of preservation with appropriate use by integrating areas of ecological significance into regional plans.

Ecosystems such as the Long Island Sound (LIS) are connected systems-defined as an integrated, interdependent, and complex web of natural and human-made systems that functions holistically and can impact housing and neighborhoods, transportation, economic development, and act as third spaces. Preservation and appropriate use are balanced when management strategies plan for multifaceted factors. MetroCOG will lean on planning frameworks from the State of Connecticut, such as the Green Plan, to align ecosystem priorities with conservation goals across municipalities. Coordination with conservation experts, scientists, organizations and state resources, and data will allow for enhanced planning and prioritization.



Figure 1.10: Great Hollow Lake Trails, Monroe Colliers

1.4.b Identify & Maintain Important Areas

Ensure a balance of preservation with appropriate use by integrating areas of ecological significance into regional plans

MetroCOG can compile and build a regional ecological inventory of wetlands, critical habitat, and floodplains to help municipalities and community members understand the local environment. In the past, MetroCOG has assisted the Town of Fairfield with creating a wetlands inventory. Efforts by the State of Connecticut GIS office can be used for understanding ecosystem connectivity. Data provided by Connecticut Environmental Conditions Online (CTECO) is also critical for identifying key habitat, ecological features, invasive species concerns, and land cover change. CT ECO is the collaborative work of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and the University of Connecticut Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) to share environmental and natural resource information with the general public.

WHAT IS NO NET LOSS?

No Net Loss means that wetland losses must be offset by wetland gains in terms of actual acreage and, to the extent possible, ecosystem function. (US Fish & Wildlife)

1.4.c Promote Best Management Practices for Municipalities

Provide guidance on best management practices for municipal staff.

MetroCOG often provides guidance on best management practices (BMPs) for municipal staff, such as right tree right place guidelines, native planting lists, non-native invasive species, no-net loss principles, and design standards. Resource guides will provide overviews and practical applications. MetroCOG will continue to participate in Connecticut Water Planning Council meetings and share updates and information with member municipalities within the region. MetroCOG will also actively participate in training courses hosted by UConn and CTDEEP to understand best practices and stay up to date on new regulations and BMPs.

1.4.d Provide Model Ordinances Related to Ecological Systems

Aid municipalities with understanding ecological protections.

MetroCOG can provide model policies and ordinance guidance to aid municipalities to provide an understanding of ecological protections that have been adopted by various neighboring communities. MetroCOG can also offer technical advisement on local zoning and amendments. MetroCOG will utilize the CT DEEP Landscape Stewardship Tools for Towns and Cities Model Regulations to help

ensure developers and municipalities consider natural landscape features and ecological impacts during project or site review.

1.4.e Promote Compact Development to Ensure Smaller Footprints & Less Impact to Land Cover/Use

Identify and map underutilized areas for redevelopment potential and provide model zoning ordinances.

MetroCOG can map underutilized areas for potential redevelopment, provide model zoning ordinances for mixed use, form-based codes, reduced or eliminated parking minimums, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), and higher densities standards. MetroCOG will coordinate with the Office of Responsible Growth within the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), to align policies with state standards for reasonable and responsible development patterns. Tools such as those developed through UConn's Resilient Connecticut project will be used to provide sample zoning provisions and will be shared with member municipalities. Coordination with the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development's Brownfield Remediation and Development Program and MetroCOG's existing EPA Assessment and Revolving Loan Fund will also facilitate reuse of underutilized brownfield sites.



Figure 1.11:
Outreach at the
Stratford Farmers
Market
Colliers

1.5: PRIORITIZE CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Building a shared understanding of natural resources fosters coordinated stewardship across communities, regardless of regional typology status. By increasing awareness of how local actions affect interconnected ecosystems, conservation education supports more informed decision-making, encourages consistent practices, and strengthens collaboration among governments, organizations, and residents.

1.5.a Establish & Develop Regional Toolkits for the Community

Establish community driven toolkits aimed at stewardship and ensure accessible materials.

MetroCOG can establish community driven toolkits aimed at environmental education within the region. This should include items such as best practices for lawncare, invasive species management, compost guides, tree planting, and water use strategies. These materials should be multilingual, easy to understand, and include local success stories and contact information. Case studies and success stories across the region, state and New England area should also be compiled and highlighted. Municipalities should be engaged in the creation and distribution of these materials. Key locations for distribution include community centric places, such as member websites, social media, libraries, town halls, schools, senior centers, and community centers.

If there is anything you feel would be helpful for us to know about the region, please let us know:

“Environmental hazards are not understood in my area- people spray environmentally toxic chemicals without regard to damages to wildlife and to themselves.”

-Stratford resident

1.5.b Coordinate Partnerships Across Municipal Boundaries (ie Long Island Sound) & Leverage Existing Educational Networks to Avoid Duplication

Establish a peer share network to best serve large scale resources.

MetroCOG can leverage partnerships with neighboring regions, municipalities, and stakeholder organizations to establish a peer share network to best serve large scale resources. MetroCOG hosts an established Conservation Technical Advisory Committee; this collaborative effort should continue, and the agency should ensure coordination across municipal boundaries. The creation of Working Groups for specific conservation goals should also be explored.

1.5.c Connect with Non-traditional Partners to Promote Stewardship & Citizen Science

Offer incentives for community participation, trainings, and engagement.

An inclusive, strategic, and collaborative approach will help MetroCOG to effectively connect with community members in the region. MetroCOG should explore low-cost incentives for community participation, training, and engagement. Options for incentives may include providing food, childcare, or stipends, as well as training courses at community-based locations and during non-traditional times of the day. This approach is consistent with MetroCOG’s Public Participation Plan by meeting community members where they are. Establishing common goals and shared benefits, while leveraging existing community networks, will help the region share information with and engage the public.

2 HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

GOAL: PROVIDE HOUSING VARIETY TO ACCOMMODATE THE NEEDS OF ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

In order to accommodate housing for all community members throughout the Region, MetroCOG must address housing variety, affordability, and accessibility. Working to increase housing regionally will lead to improved affordability and a stronger local workforce. The environmental impact of housing development can also be mitigated by sustainable and energy-efficient building methods. MetroCOG will provide leadership in housing planning, technical assistance, and outreach to municipalities, which will be crucial for guiding projects and assessing infrastructure capacity.

INTRODUCTION

Housing and neighborhood quality in the MetroCOG region are essential to the well-being of the community and its social and economic success now and into the future. Our region, like the rest of Connecticut, faces challenges related to access to affordable housing, the availability and condition of housing stock, and the resiliency of both new and existing developments. Increasing housing also requires adapting the current landscape with environmentally responsible solutions, while ensuring that critical infrastructure systems, such as sewer

OBJECTIVES

- Provide an equitable balance of housing options at a variety of price points across the region
- Prioritize investment for development and redevelopment within established neighborhoods over the construction of new neighborhoods in undeveloped/greenfield areas
- Encourage the use of sustainable and energy-efficient building methods and safeguard rural lands, environmentally valuable areas, and areas vulnerable to natural hazards from incompatible development
- Provide leadership in housing planning to municipalities

and stormwater management, are able to support expanded needs.

The Connecticut General Assembly has also been updating housing legislation, and MetroCOG will be there to assist partner municipalities under current Public Act 25-1, and policies under Connecticut General Statutes Title 8 “Zoning, Planning, Housing

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE C&D PLAN

MetroCOG will provide support and guidance to member communities as they create diverse and affordable housing options to all community members through resources that support diverse and affordable housing options, promote housing choice, economic diversity, and options for older adults and persons with disabilities.

Housing Growth Varies Across Connecticut

Net change in housing units by town, 2020-2025

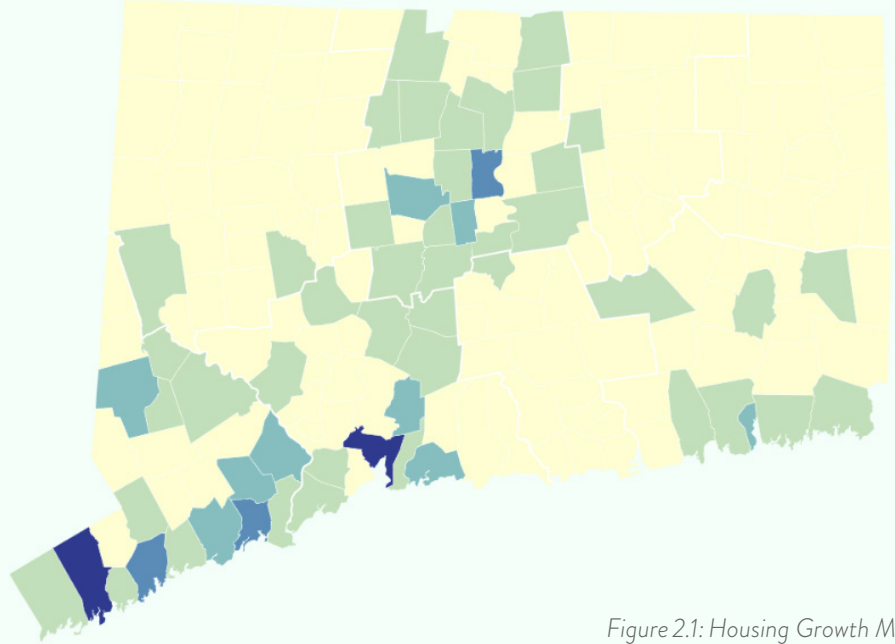
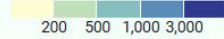


Figure 2.1: Housing Growth Map
DataHaven

Source: DataHaven analysis of Census Address Count Listing Files • Created with Datawrapper

and Economic and Community Development”. Chapter 127 §8-35a of the CGS also requires Regional Council of Governments in their RPOCD to include “recommendations for the general use of the area including land use [and] housing”.

The following chapter outlines a regional approach to the challenges of housing affordability and availability. MetroCOG’s role in assisting municipalities plan for housing needs will ensure community vibrancy, economic prosperity, and housing sustainability for current and future generations within the region.

Data related to Housing and Neighborhoods can be found in Chapter 4 of the Existing Conditions Appendix (D)



Figure 2.2: Southport Harbor, Fairfield
Colliers

KEY INFLUENCES ON THE CREATION OF GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

LAND USE & ZONING

Zoning and land use policies, legislation, codes, and a clear understanding of these concepts are essential to supporting housing and neighborhoods in the region. While MetroCOG does not have authority to enforce municipal or state regulations, it can provide guidance, offer recommendations, and assist municipalities in preparing for and implementing necessary changes.

MetroCOG has a robust GIS program, which is important for helping municipalities map developable land, watershed areas, and other zones that may support future development or conservation efforts. MetroCOG can assist with compiling best practices and case studies, as well as helping to identify areas near transit with adequate infrastructure for infill development. In the future, MetroCOG will continue working with the CT Office of Policy and Management on the development of a stormwater management GIS map, to help towns plan for and upgrade infrastructure in response to an increase in housing.

TABLE 2.1: PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT GOALS, HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

	State C&D Plan	2015 RPOCD	Bridgeport	Easton	Fairfield	Monroe	Stratford	Trumbull	# of Local Plans	# Local High Priority
Compact Growth / Targeted Density / Infill									4	4
Transit Oriented Development									3	2
Mixed-Use Development									6	2
Increase Affordable Housing Supply									5	4
Diversify Housing Stock									6	5
Green Housing Practices									5	2
Expand Senior Housing / Age In Place Policies									4	3
Allow for Accessory Dwelling Units									4	0
Preserve Historic Districts/ Properties									5	0
Prevent Development near Critical Environments									6	2

Legend POCD Goal **Priority Goal** See Goal Alignment Appendix (C) for Methodology

proper zoning and land use management are critical for the safety, well-being of the community, and environment, and additionally for ensuring the resiliency of current and new developments and infrastructure in the face of climate change. This should be a priority for municipalities and will continue to be a focus of MetroCOG planning initiatives.

LOCAL & REGIONAL PLANS

“Increasing Affordable Housing Supply” and a “Diversity of Housing Stock” were goals shared by four municipalities (Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford and Trumbull) in their respective POCDs, and are also reflective of the State of Connecticut C&D Plan, now aligned with MetroCOG’s new plan.

When developing the goals and objectives for the POCD, MetroCOG incorporated what matters

most in local municipal POCDs. While housing and neighborhoods are critical topics, we also consider the unique local conditions of each municipality, but at the same time highlight the important interrelationships between the communities for the overall well-being of the MetroCOG region and the state.

Table 2.1 represents common elements and goals in the housing realm as expressed by member municipalities in their own plans.

Local Housing Plans

Under previous Connecticut legislation (CGS §8-30j), all municipalities were required to submit an “Affordable Housing Plan” every five years. These plans helped shape many of the goals established under the MetroCOG POCD and reflected the needs of the community. CGS §8-30j has

Survey: What interests you about housing and neighborhoods in the MetroCOG region?

“Conveniences to train and public transportation”

- Bridgeport resident

“There is a range of diversity, and beautiful nature”

-Trumbull resident

since been repealed and replaced with Public Act 25-1, which may undergo further changes, but establishes both Regional and Local Housing Growth Plans encompassing affordable housing goals and strategies.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

MetroCOG engaged in many activities that involved local communities to elicit public feedback on a variety of topics, such as “Housing and Neighborhoods.” This topic is important for many because access to housing at all stages of life and cost should be a priority and a fundamental aspect of the POCD. When communities have housing and quality neighborhoods that offer a wide range of services; it helps support the well-being of residents and business.

In the survey responses hosted by MetroCOG through SurveyMonkey, when asked; “I wish my neighborhood had better...” **many participants**

indicated that they spend a large portion of their income on housing and expressed a desire for more “bikeability/walkability.”

When asked, “What type of housing do you feel your community needs more of?”, **many respondents who live in a single-family home indicated that they would like to see more townhouses and mixed-use developments.** Overall, the responses provided generally good feedback and demonstrate that people care about ensuring others have access to quality housing options and a variety of choices throughout the region, in addition to other environmental and service aspects of their neighborhoods.

Figure 2.3: Bridgeport Harbor
Colliers



OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

2.1 PROVIDE AN EQUITABLE BALANCE OF HOUSING OPTIONS AT A VARIETY OF PRICE POINTS ACROSS THE REGION

An equitable balance of housing options throughout the region includes housing variety, accessibility, and the needs of vulnerable populations. MetroCOG can help municipalities plan for housing variety by supporting the development of a range of options that will ensure residents can comfortably and safely remain within their community as their housing needs change throughout their life cycle. Housing accessibility (including ADA accommodation) can be achieved by supporting housing near a range of transportation options and working with local officials and developers to identify incentives and appropriate requirements for the development of affordable and mixed-income housing. MetroCOG will work with municipalities, service providers, and advocacy groups to ensure housing for sensitive and vulnerable populations, including those experiencing housing instability, homelessness. By addressing these issues and assisting with outreach and education, communities throughout the region will have the capacity to ensure that residents are accommodated throughout their lifetime.

2.1.a. Housing Variety

Support development of a mix of housing options that will ensure that residents can remain within the community as their housing needs change throughout their life cycle.

Housing options at a range of prices allows people to age in place, live in the community where they work, and/or in proximity to amenities they enjoy. Housing options help to strengthen the region's social and economic long-term sustainability. Many individuals and families in the region face insecure, unstable and unaffordable housing situations, regardless of the community in which they reside. Removing barriers to a range of housing options and strengthening protections that keep people housed ensures a community responsive to changing needs over a lifetime. MetroCOG can assist towns in reviewing their zoning regulations to identify opportunities to ensure a more diverse housing stock, with a focus on affordability and resident retention. Additionally, MetroCOG should investigate and encourage municipal programs that help community members stay in their homes, if desired, for the long term at a reasonable cost.

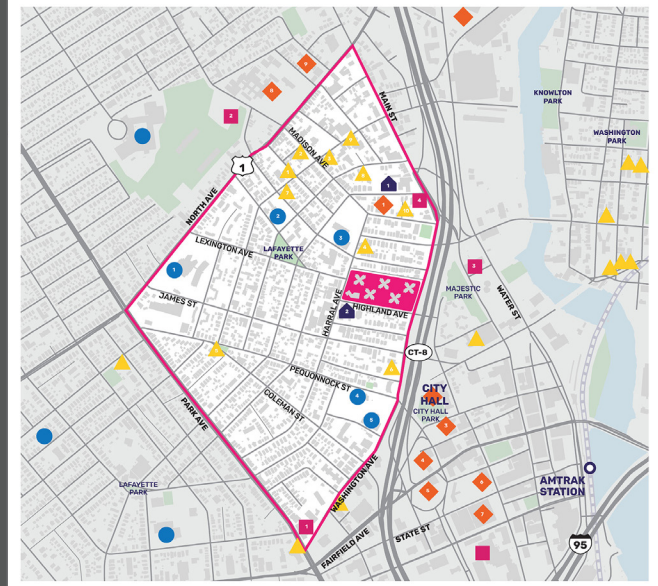


Figure 2.4: The Hollow, Project Area
City of Bridgeport

SUCCESS STORY: THE HOLLOW, CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD

In 2023, the City of Bridgeport was awarded a Choice Neighborhoods grant by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for the Hollow neighborhood. The City and its key partners are working to transform this approximately 260-acre area, which is located adjacent to downtown. The goal is to revitalize the neighborhood and create more recreational activities and safe spaces for residents over the next 5-10 years. Additional goals include developing housing that will “transform distressed public and assisted housing into sustainable, climate-responsive, energy-efficient, mixed-income housing that is physically and financially viable over the long term.” The initiative also aims to convert “distressed neighborhoods into viable, mixed-income communities with access to well-functioning services.” This effort represents a true success story in the MetroCOG region and in the State.

2.1.b Housing Access & Accessibility

Support housing near a range of transportation options. Work with local officials and developers to identify incentives and appropriate requirements for the development of affordable and mixed-income housing accessible to transit and a mix of uses, including employment centers.

Housing in proximity to bus routes, rail, and bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure, as well as major roadways ensures that residents can access healthcare, education, economic opportunities, necessities, and amenities, even without access to a car. Housing in proximity to a mix of uses and employment centers encourages walking, cycling, and reduces traffic congestion. MetroCOG shall assist towns in understanding existing and future housing needs within the region by examining housing in relation to transit access, jobs, and core services.

Understanding the housing accessibility gaps that currently exist within the region shall be explored using current land use maps. A review of zoning codes will be undertaken, as well as the identification of underutilized lots, with a focus on sites accessible to transit and/or job centers. This housing assessment shall help determine options to meet the needs of the community with a focus on potential zoning changes and amendments. Coordination with municipalities on constraints shall be ensured. MetroCOG shall ensure robust multi-model transportation connections for existing and future housing.

2.1.c Sensitive/Vulnerable Populations

Work with municipalities and service providers to ensure housing for sensitive and vulnerable populations, including those experiencing housing instability or homelessness.

Sensitive and vulnerable populations include seniors, persons with disabilities, and individuals and families who are unhoused, or do not have safe and stable place to live. Supportive housing can help people stay housed while also providing voluntary services to help with a range of needs. Food insecurity is a significant issue for sensitive and vulnerable populations and should be addressed as a fundamental human need, alongside housing (see 5.3.g).

MetroCOG can support municipalities by collaborating with local and regional agencies to help residents gain reliable access to both food and housing, which are equally essential for stability and quality of life. MetroCOG will work with municipalities and non-profits to identify the availability of supportive housing solutions targeted to persons and families in-need. MetroCOG will support the development of accessible, mobility-friendly housing options, including elevator-served and ADA-accessible homes, to help meet the needs of the region's growing older adult population. An emphasis will be placed on sites located near transit where medical, mental health, workforce development, and other support services can be provided. MetroCOG will help municipalities and housing authorities with monitoring legislation,

funding, and research for increased housing options and opportunities, while supporting the development of resources to help households access and maintain housing that meets their needs.

2.1.d Outreach Support

Support in the development and distribution of public information on best practices, municipal responsibilities, and partnerships for developing accessible and affordable housing.

Public outreach and engagement is crucial to an informed and rational discussion that identifies suitable local solutions that increase the availability, affordability, and accessibility of housing. MetroCOG will support the development and distribution of public information that explains the need for developing a variety of housing options that can support community members through all stages of their life.

MetroCOG will directly engage and support member municipalities by collecting best practices related to accessible and affordable housing, support financing strategies that will connect vulnerable populations with stable housing in the region, and provide a space for the private, non-profit, and public sectors to discuss housing topics.

SUCCESS STORY: ELLA T. GRASSO PROPERTY

Access to affordable housing should not only be a goal but also a priority for municipalities in Connecticut, and the Town of Stratford is doing exactly that. In 2025, the town acquired the Ella T. Grasso Regional Center after extensive negotiations with the State of Connecticut. Thanks to the strong efforts of Town of Stratford staff, the local housing authority will now pave the way to transform the site into approximately 100 units of affordable housing for senior citizens. Not only is this a significant project, but it also aligns well with the MetroCOG Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), which emphasizes increasing housing access at all stages of life.

MetroCOG shall cooperate with regional and state partners to increase understanding and enforcement of fair housing laws. Partner agencies may include the Department of Housing, CT Housing Finance Authority (CHFA), the Housing Education Resource Center, Inc., the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, local community organizations, the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, and local nonprofits, as well as the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Each community in the region plays a role in ensuring a mix of housing options to support the full life cycle needs of their residents.



Figure 2.5: The Knowlton, Bridgeport
Colliers

2.2 PRIORITIZE INVESTMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT & REDEVELOPMENT WITHIN ESTABLISHED NEIGHBORHOODS OVER THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW NEIGHBORHOODS IN UNDEVELOPED/GREENFIELD AREAS

The region's existing neighborhoods and developed areas provide an opportunity to increase the region's housing stock without extending infrastructure. By targeting housing to areas with existing infrastructure, development of greenfields and environmentally valuable areas are avoided. MetroCOG can help municipalities with sensible development at locally appropriate densities by supporting mixed use and corridor opportunities and identifying opportunities for adaptive reuse. These activities should be balanced by recognizing the importance of preserving the region's historic sites and districts and protecting them from incompatible development patterns. Each neighborhood in the region is unique – and MetroCOG will work with municipalities to help ensure that their local sense of place is considered and enhanced as new development occurs.

2.2.a Mixed Use & Corridor Opportunities

Support higher density development along major roadways and assist municipalities with technical resources to expand mixed-use transit-oriented districts.

The region offers a range of opportunities for developing/redeveloping mixed-use and/or transit-oriented districts. In the survey for the update of this document Survey Summary Appendix (B), participants indicated that they would like to see more of these developments as they create vibrant communities which promote economic growth, walkability, and other features that make towns more community focused.

A mixed-use development combines a variety of uses including residential units, offices, retail, hotels, and more, within a single building or development. These districts give neighborhoods opportunities for increased walkability and improved transit options for residents without vehicles. Mixed-use developments also benefit property owners by increasing leasable opportunities and raising property values. These new values benefit municipalities by generating higher municipal property tax revenues. These mixed-use areas create vibrant places that attract people to visit and live in.

In the MetroCOG region, many mixed-use areas are located in commercial districts, downtown or town centers, near transit stops, and close to major

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADU'S)

ADUs are independent compact units on the same lot as primary single-family homes. They can include basement apartments, garage conversions, or backyard cottages and feature their own bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen.

employers. These mixed-use areas can be vibrant and visually appealing, especially when they incorporate historical and cultural sites.

MetroCOG can help partner municipalities:

- Develop language for local ordinances regarding Incentive Housing Zones (IHZ) which are areas of a town that allow for mixed-business, commercial, or other non-residential uses in addition to establishing minimum required housing density.
- Provide, or help draft, language for local ordinances regarding Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), which are areas designed for mixed-use development in close proximity to transit.
- Identify local zoning regulations that place unnecessary burdens on the creation of ADUs and other housing opportunities.
- Provide technical assistance to municipalities for a range of grant-related tasks and administer state and federal funding streams that support housing development in existing neighborhoods.

2.2.b Middle Housing, Infill Development, & Adaptive Reuse

Work with communities to identify vacant and underutilized sites within existing residential or mixed-use areas and assist in expanding housing opportunities.

Middle housing refers to a range of multi-unit residential buildings, such as duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhouses, and ADUs. Middle housing has been historically “missing” due to zoning ordinances that have restricted multi-unit structures. Where multi-family housing is allowed, developers often plan for higher-end or “luxury” apartments due to higher profits. These missing housing types are critical as they offer more attainable housing options for low to moderate income households, and address changing demographics such as smaller households and aging populations. Middle housing can often be integrated into transit-oriented districts as well.

A housing needs assessment can identify gaps in the housing supply and be used by municipalities to increase middle housing. Public Act No. 25-1 also known as Housing Bill No.8002 allows municipalities to permit Transit Community Middle Housing, defined as developments containing 2–9 dwelling units, or mixed-use developments on lots zoned for commercial or mixed-use uses. These developments may be approved through a “summary review” process, as defined in the act. MetroCOG can assist municipalities with updating their zoning regulations to accommodate middle housing. MetroCOG will

REVOLVING LOAN FUNDS

Brownfields Revolving Loan Funds (RLFs) can help to provide crucial gap funding for developers or municipalities to finance site clean up and remediation for redevelopment. These EPA-funded loans through MetroCOG are able to have flexible terms with low-interest rates to aid developers and municipalities address environmental hazards, which can facilitate projects like mixed-use affordable housing.

also aid municipalities with updating any regulations that reduce minimum lot sizes, reduce or eliminate parking minimums, or increase higher density in small structures.

MetroCOG can work with communities to identify underutilized sites within existing residential or mixed-use areas for infill development, including those near transportation infrastructure. MetroCOG has established a GIS database of vacant and underutilized properties within the region, many of which are in established neighborhoods, and has been committed to aiding municipalities with funding and direction of redevelopment projects for these sites.

Survey: I wish my neighborhood had better...

“Affordable rental apartments/ houses for young families” - Stratford resident

MetroCOG can also encourage mixed-use and middle housing by supporting the adaptive reuse of historic and other existing structures. These buildings may include formerly residential, commercial, or industrial structures. Municipalities can coordinate with MetroCOG to pursue funding and incentives that support the adaptive reuse of spaces and vacant buildings. MetroCOG can also aid municipalities by utilizing the Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP), the Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) and other funding programs to support infrastructure upgrades, environmental remediation on reuse projects, and other capital project needs that align with transit-oriented development and middle housing objectives for the region.

2.2.c Preservation of Historic Sites

Assist with methods to ensure historic forms and sites throughout the region are valued, maintained, and protected from incompatible developments.

Preserving historic sites in the MetroCOG region is essential to maintaining the cultural and historic values of surrounding neighborhoods, as well as the State of Connecticut as a whole. Municipalities should help preserve these areas and work with the community and other partners to identify ways to reuse and revitalize historic sites.

A “historic site” is a building, structure, or area that is recognized by law at the federal, state, or local level as having cultural and historical importance. These sites may require special permission from the appropriate authorities for any changes or modifications. Under the Connecticut General Statutes, local towns may also establish “historic districts” by ensuring they conform with the Connecticut Historical Commission criteria set forth in CGS § 7-147 and other relevant statutory requirements in Chapter 97a.

Municipalities should continue maintaining historic sites and districts while encouraging the adaptive reuse of historic buildings. MetroCOG can support municipalities by helping update local ordinances, working with developers to promote adaptive reuse, and assisting in identifying grants and tax incentives.



Figure 2.6: Downtown Bridgeport

2.2.d Support Placemaking in Neighborhoods

Support strategies that strengthen the community cohesion of residential areas.

Placemaking is an active effort to create dynamic, vibrant, and interesting public spaces that people care about and are drawn to, with an emphasis on strategies that can enhance urban design and public spaces. Placemaking strategies support the cultural and social identity of a place and aim to attract people, while contributing to their happiness and well-being. In addition to placemaking, it is important to consider placeknowing and placekeeping. Placeknowing involves understanding and honoring existing cultural and historical aspects of a site, while placekeeping involves the long-term maintenance of a place’s social and cultural features. While it is crucial to renew public spaces through placemaking strategies, it is important to balance this with



Figure 2.7: Fairfield ADU
Town of Fairfield

understanding the significance of certain areas and preserving public spaces where necessary.

MetroCOG can assist municipalities with evaluating placemaking strategies that strengthen community cohesion in residential neighborhoods. Some examples include incorporating porches or patios to encourage resident interaction, connecting pedestrian walkways directly to streets and the public, and utilizing mixed-use developments that give people the opportunity to socialize. These designs, coupled with integrated public spaces such as pocket parks and plazas, give residents “third places” where they can feel comfortable. MetroCOG can support municipalities with redevelopment of underutilized sites to help ensure a commitment to placemaking in new residential neighborhoods and integrating them with and into existing neighborhoods.



Figure 2.9: Snow's Farm, Easton
Colliers

2.3 ENCOURAGE THE USE OF SUSTAINABLE & ENERGY-EFFICIENT BUILDING METHODS AND SAFEGUARD RURAL LANDS, ENVIRONMENTALLY VALUABLE AREAS, AND AREAS VULNERABLE TO NATURAL HAZARDS FROM INCOMPATIBLE DEVELOPMENT

MetroCOG will ensure environmental sustainability by supporting municipalities in environmentally sensitive areas with limited infrastructure by identifying low impact housing solutions. Communities will be encouraged to utilize conservation design and low impact development principles in new developments and subdivisions to preserve sensitive natural areas and open space, such as critical watersheds, forested, and agricultural land. MetroCOG will also work with communities and developers to encourage and share green building design standards and identify incentives. Hazard mitigation strategies will be identified to strengthen resilience of housing and better protect the region's residents from the destructive impacts of sea level rise and other hazards.

Survey: I like living in my neighborhood because of the...

“Kindness of my neighbors and that children play in the streets and setup lemonade stands”

- Fairfield resident

“Quiet natural beauty and rural character”

-Trumbull resident

2.3.a Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Support municipalities in environmentally sensitive areas with limited infrastructure by identifying sustainable housing solutions.

MetroCOG can assist municipalities with sustainability strategies that increase housing while considering environmental factors. In rural and suburban areas, sustainable housing developments can provide a natural stormwater management system, and take the limits of septic systems into account, as large-scale multi-family developments often put significant stress on these systems and lead to increased installation and maintenance costs.

Clustering and low impact developments help prevent new residential construction from encroaching on environmentally sensitive areas. Cluster housing refers to grouping homes closely together on smaller lots to maximize open and green space and can include townhomes and cottage clusters. MetroCOG can assist with guidance on zoning regulations for these developments, including methods for establishing buffers, open space, and density bonuses. The goal of these developments is to keep overall housing density the same and increase where possible, while leaving contiguous areas of stream buffers, wetlands, trees, and other natural assets undisturbed. MetroCOG can also

assist in identifying underutilized public land suitable for these types of development, while ensuring compatibility with existing neighborhoods.

Another sustainable housing option is the use of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), independent compact units on the same lot as primary single-family homes. Connecticut laws regarding ADUs changed in 2021 with the passage of Public Act 21-29, which mandated municipalities permit at least one ADU by right on single-family lots. ADUs allow homeowners to add more living space by utilizing existing developed land, safeguarding environmentally valuable areas, and avoiding the costs associated with new major developments. They are energy efficient as they require less heating, cooling, and lighting, which lessens the carbon footprint of residents. They can also provide opportunities for affordable rental housing near transit, schools, and workplaces, reducing traffic congestion. ADUs are often built in eco-friendly ways, sometimes incorporating solar panels which lower utility costs and promote sustainability. MetroCOG should support municipalities with ADU development, as they incorporate energy-efficient methods and increased density, while safeguarding vulnerable land.

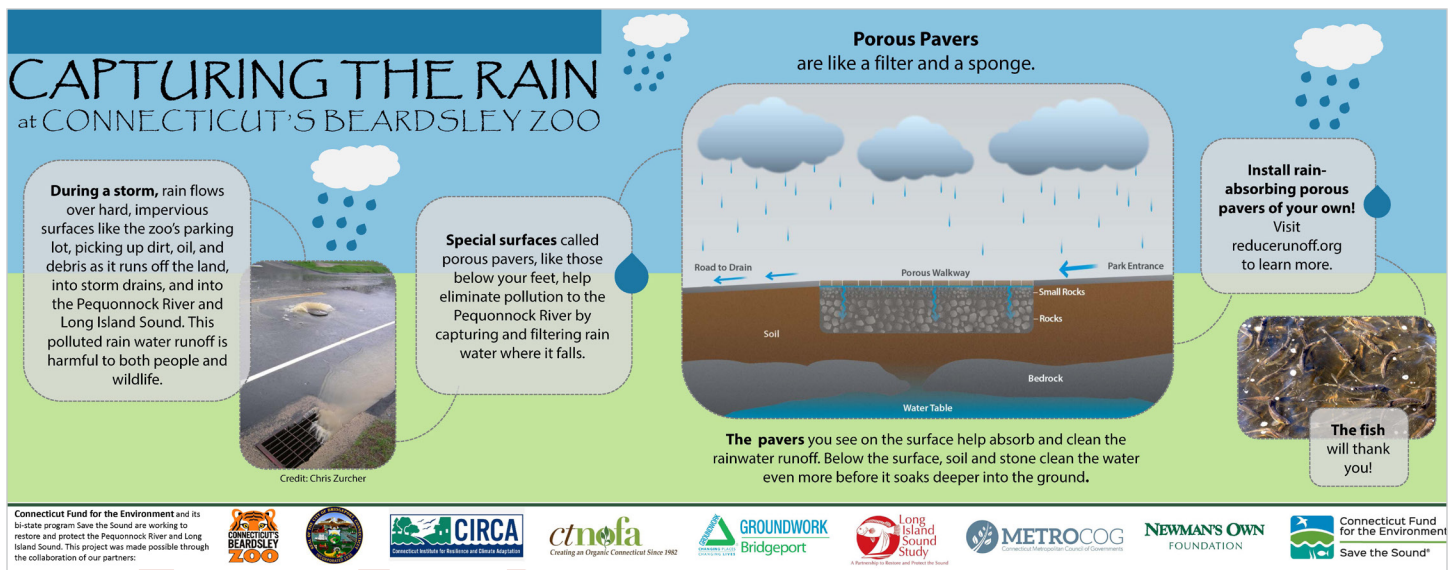


Figure 2.10: Low Impact Development at the Beardsley Zoo

2.3.b Conservation Design & Low Impact Development

Encourage communities to utilize conservation design and low impact development principles in new developments and subdivisions to preserve sensitive natural areas and open space (i.e. stormwater management through green infrastructure), such as critical watersheds, forested, and agricultural land.

The MetroCOG region encompasses critical natural watersheds, as well as forested and agricultural lands, especially in the more rural portions of the region. Ensuring that municipalities, developers, and homeowners use conservation-focused and low-impact design practices is essential to protecting these resources.

Conservation design is an approach that protects natural resources, such as aquifers, while also supporting economic growth through minimizing disturbed areas, maintaining natural hydrologic cycles, and protecting water quality. Minimizing disturbed areas means that developers work with existing topography rather than altering the landscape extensively. Maintaining natural

hydrologic cycles focuses on strategies such as reducing impervious surfaces and allowing for proper groundwater infiltration and drainage. Protecting water quality involves ensuring the importance of local conservation districts and keeping chemicals and pollutants away from water sources.

Low impact development (LID), is a set of approaches or practices that help reduce the amount of runoff and pollutants by managing stormwater at its source. These practices can be achieved by encouraging new construction that utilizes green infrastructure and sustainable stormwater management.

MetroCOG can provide guidance and information on the Connecticut Aquifer Protection Area Program, as well as other relevant State of Connecticut regulatory programs and policies, such as CTDEEP's Erosion & Sedimentation Control Guide and Stormwater Management Guide.

2.3.c Green Home Design

Work with communities and developers to encourage and share green building design standards and identify incentives.

Green building focuses on saving energy and water, improving indoor air quality, reducing pollution, using resources more responsibly and much more.

MetroCOG can work with municipal partners to identify ways to encourage developers and homeowners to adopt more environmentally friendly home designs and sustainable building practices. MetroCOG can also help facilitate conversations between municipalities and developers to encourage utilizing green building features to increase energy efficiency, native landscaping, and using locally sourced materials. MetroCOG can help identify available incentives, rebates, programs, and grants.

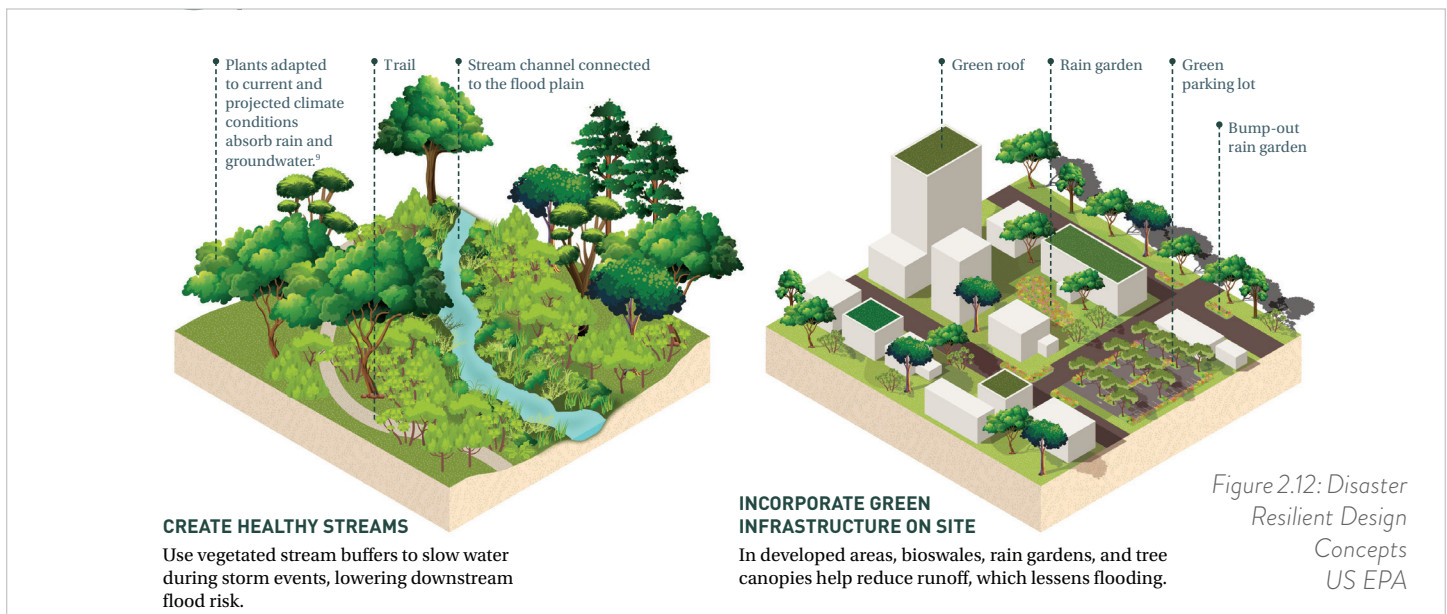


Figure 2.11: Long Beach Seawall, Stratford
Colliers

2.3.d Residential Resilience to Natural Hazards

Identify hazard mitigation strategies to strengthen resilience of housing and better protect the region's residents from the destructive impacts of sea level rise and other hazards.

In 2024, MetroCOG updated the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (NHMP) to meet requirements set by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The plan outlines strategies to prevent loss of life, reduce property damage, and address a wide range of natural hazards, including hurricanes, sea-level rise, coastal flooding, and more. Over the past decade, the MetroCOG region has experienced increasing sea levels, inland riverine flooding, powerful summer storms, and more, leading to both physical and economic impacts. CIRCA maintains a Connecticut Sea Level Rise and Storm Surge Viewer



which provides projections of sea level changes of 2050. The link is available [here](#). Wildfires have also become more prevalent in our state due to an increase in certain types of vegetation and droughts. It is important for MetroCOG, in collaboration with municipalities, to strengthen the resilience of housing, ensure development occurs in safe locations, and, in turn, protect the region’s residents.

Bridgeport, Fairfield, and Stratford are communities located on the Connecticut coast and are the most prone to inland and coastal flooding. These areas are also highly developed, which can make strengthening housing resilience challenging. Other towns in our region, such as Easton, Monroe, and Trumbull, also experience natural hazards. Urbanization has altered many watercourses, putting pressure on municipal drainage systems. Coastal hazard areas are heavily developed, which increases vulnerability to flooding and other hazards. Because of this development, many natural buffers are no longer in place, which is why it is essential to plan for the future as the impacts of climate change continue to increase.

MetroCOG can work with municipalities to research and identify areas most prone to natural hazards in their towns and help update ordinances to ensure

these areas are protected. MetroCOG can also provide guidance on Smart Construction practices, showing how developers can use building and landscape designs and materials that make homes resilient to floods, cold, hurricanes, wildfires, heat, and other hazards. Additionally, MetroCOG can also help municipalities access grants associated with these strategies.

DISASTER RESILIENT DESIGN CONCEPTS

The US Environmental Protection Agency developed disaster-resilient design concepts to help communities reduce the impact of disasters, recover more quickly, strengthen local economies, and create safer, more equitable places to live by reducing hazards, especially for those most vulnerable. Coastal and riverine concepts are in Figure 2.12. More information can be found [here](#)



Figure 2.13: Easton, Town Hall
Colliers

2.4 PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN HOUSING PLANNING TO MUNICIPALITIES

MetroCOG will assist municipalities in understanding their role in the regional and statewide housing needs context and promote active inter-municipal housing policy and planning cooperation. Multi-jurisdictional planning for housing will be balanced with natural resource protection and infrastructure limitations through mapping support and data analysis across municipalities. MetroCOG will also assess and prepare for infrastructural needs as a result of redevelopment, and will provide education on State and local housing responsibilities and processes to promote the importance of increasing access to housing.

2.4.a Regional Approach to Housing Growth

Assist municipalities in understanding their role in the regional and statewide housing needs context and promote active inter-municipal housing planning cooperation

In the November 2025 Special Session, the Connecticut Legislature passed Public Act No. 25-1, also known as House Bill No. 8002, which was signed by Governor Ned Lamont. The primary goal of the act is to increase housing opportunity throughout the state and its municipalities.

Public Act 25-1 took effect on January 1, 2026, and established a wide range of new laws and programs aimed at increasing affordability across the state and providing financial incentives to municipalities. The act also established the Housing Needs Assessment and the Housing Growth Plan. *The Housing Needs Assessment* will identify the number of affordable housing units the state and each municipality should provide. This data will be evaluated and compiled by the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM) in collaboration with the Councils of Government (COGs). Once a goal is established, municipalities are entitled to either create their own “Housing Growth Plan” or opt into a “Regional Housing Growth Plan”. These plans are intended to help municipalities meet their affordable housing goals and become eligible to receive potential funding through future programs. The bill also includes several other significant new requirements

related to zoning, including parking reforms, priority housing development zones (PHDZ), transit-oriented communities (TOC), infrastructure considerations, and other related provisions.

MetroCOG will work with partner municipalities to develop a Regional Housing Growth Plan that will help expand housing opportunities within their communities, meet defined goals, and satisfy other requirements outlined in Public Act 25-1, while also considering potential future amendments to the bill.

Figure 2.14: Newfield Library, Bridgeport
Colliers



2.4.b Provide Data and Analysis

Balance multi-jurisdictional planning for housing with natural resource protection and infrastructure limitations through mapping support and data analysis across municipalities.

Mapping and data analysis is an essential tool to identify and evaluate a wide range of conditions, including critical infrastructure, hazard areas, watersheds, conservation lands, and many other factors. These tools are especially important for housing planning, as they allow municipalities to identify areas where development may be limited due to natural resources or infrastructure capacity constraints and also support more informed, data-driven decision-making.

The [Connecticut Geodata Portal](#) offers the CT Town Housing Dashboard, which provides users with the ability to explore several categories of statewide and municipal housing data over time. Key indicators include median housing listing price, number of new listings, homes for sale, homes sold, and median days on the market. Even more important for multi-

jurisdictional planning purposes are the datasets related to housing stock, housing affordability, and housing programs. These maps help identify where housing is located and allow for integration with MetroCOG and local GIS data and zoning layers to analyze how existing and proposed developments relate to natural resources and infrastructure capacity. It is also important to note that there are many Connecticut and local laws/ordinances that restrict where development may occur.

MetroCOG can help with accurate and comprehensive mapping and analysis because it ensures compliance with state and local requirements by identifying environmentally sensitive areas and infrastructure limitations. MetroCOG will work with the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), pursuant to Public Act 25-1, to develop a “developable land” mapping tool. This tool will help identify areas within municipalities where housing stock can be increased, while accounting for any local development constraints, including areas designated for conservation and watersheds.

2.4.c Assess Infrastructure Capacity

Assess and prepare for infrastructural needs as a result of redevelopment (i.e. transportation assets, wastewater treatment, and utilities).

Infrastructure refers to the essential systems and facilities that support a community's daily life, public health, safety, and economic activity. It includes systems such as wastewater treatment plants, roads, and utilities. Proper infrastructure capacity is essential not only for redevelopment, but also for meeting the current needs of a community. These infrastructure needs include transportation, sewer networks, utilities, and more. In addition, having adequate infrastructure is critical to protecting public health and safety, particularly in supporting community resilience.

Wastewater treatment plants are considered critical infrastructure and are located in our member municipalities of Bridgeport, Fairfield, and Stratford, with pump stations across all municipalities. As many wastewater treatment facilities are located along the coastline, they are vulnerable to natural hazards such as flooding and sea-level rise. As new development occurs, it is important not only to protect these facilities from hazards but also to increase their capacity to meet the needs of a growing population.

Roads are another form of critical infrastructure because they connect communities and support daily mobility and act as critical evacuation routes.

The State has provided grant funding to Regional Councils of Governments (COGs) through Public Act 25-1 to conduct wastewater planning efforts, including a statewide wastewater study intended to better understand system capacity, and to guide future infrastructure investments needed to support housing development.

MetroCOG can assist municipalities in identifying and pursuing funding opportunities to improve existing water and sewer infrastructure and address aging systems, while also improving long-term reliability. These include programs such as the Connecticut Clean Water Fund, the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, Capital and Infrastructure Grants, the Community Investment Fund 2030, the Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP), and other state and federal funding sources. In addition to funding support, MetroCOG can provide technical assistance to help towns better understand existing system capacity and identify infrastructure needs. MetroCOG will also help municipalities navigate and comply with the requirements of Public Act 25-1, while keeping in mind any future changes to state policy.

Figure 2.15: The Knowlton, Bridgeport
Colliers



2.4.d Promotion of Best Practices

Provide education on State and local housing responsibilities and processes to promote the importance of access to housing.

The State of Connecticut and the MetroCOG region has been experiencing a shortage of housing due to higher-than-normal prices and development barriers. It is imperative to provide partner towns with education on state and local responsibilities to improve access to housing. Expanding housing options benefits residents and, in certain cases, is required by Connecticut State Law and Federal Fair Housing Law.

Some of the recent legislation includes Public Act 25-1 (2025), focuses specifically on housing growth and establishes requirements for towns, as well as laws under CGS §8-30g. Other acts and statutes include Incentive Housing Zones (IHZs), the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Law, the Municipal

Zoning Enabling Act, and additional housing-related laws outlined in the Connecticut General Statutes, Title 8. It is important to note that housing laws and requirements may change over time.

MetroCOG will provide guidance to municipalities though creating a housing committee dedicated to collaborating with member municipalities, the Connecticut Department of Housing, and local partner agencies, to discuss the importance of access to housing. MetroCOG will host forums on changes to current legislation and upcoming new legislation and will participate in town-led forums focused on the importance of housing. MetroCOG will also educate municipalities by continuously analyzing new policies and updating them on zoning and code requirements they must follow as a best practice.

3 TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

GOAL: ADVANCE A SAFE, RELIABLE, CONNECTED, & ACCESSIBLE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Within the MetroCOG region, thousands of trips of all types are taken every day, ranging from a walk around the block to a journey far beyond the state. Regional collaboration can work towards providing a variety of comfortable and efficient mobility options that all travelers can rely upon to reach their destination safely. The transportation choices people make, and their behaviors, are a result of the past and current policies, investments, and designs impacting the

TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED AREAS

Communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution.

- USDOT

OBJECTIVES

- Improve & Expand Bicycle, Pedestrian, & Accessible Infrastructure
- Eliminate Roadway Fatalities & Serious Injuries
- Improve & Expand Regional Greenways
- Enhance Public Transit
- Parking Reform & Congestion Management

transportation realm and its surrounding patterns of development. A shared vision for transportation and mobility across the region serves to steer decision-making in a manner that promotes seamless and pleasant interconnection within neighborhoods, between municipalities, and to other regions. Enabling easy transportation access to education, employment, healthcare, groceries, and recreation serves to improve the quality of life for the region's residents, particularly for those living in transportation disadvantaged areas. As the pursuit of improvements to multimodal safety and accessibility was enumerated in every municipal POCD, this chapter explores the strategies through which the region can collectively pursue those ideals.



Figure 3.1: Pequonnock River Trail

INTRODUCTION

Transportation and Mobility considerations in the region play a key role in forming land-use decisions, driving economic development, impacting public health, and influencing environmental outcomes, all of which combine to shape the quality of life across MetroCOG's six communities. The region's economic competitiveness, sustainability, community health, and resilience directly depend upon its transportation system. MetroCOG's location along major transportation corridors make it a vital piece of state and nationwide transportation networks that must ensure reliable access and interconnectivity for freight, commuters, residents, and travelers of all kinds moving to or through our region.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE C&D PLAN

The MetroCOG Plan of Conservation and Development has identified areas where it is feasible to have compact, transit accessible, and pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns and land reuse.



Figure 3.2: Fairfield Rail Station

KEY INFLUENCES ON THE CREATION OF GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

LAND USE & ZONING

Transportation and land use directly affect each other, therefore transportation planning requires a nuanced approach that responds to and supports surrounding zoning and land use. Development density, building site orientation, parking management, and specific land use all dictate how walkable and bikeable a place is, impact vehicular speeds and volumes, and influence transit stop location and utilization. Transportation impacts land use as the presence of streetscape improvements and bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure promotes increased local business revenues and heightens property values by making places more desirable for people to spend time in. Major developments are located based on the surrounding access to transportation infrastructure. Robust transit and transit facilities can enable denser, and more cost-effective development as less money and space needs to be dedicated to car storage. Ensuring transportation planning is integrated into land use decisions, and vice versa, serves to create integrated, sustainable, and accessible communities in the MetroCOG region.

TABLE 3.1: PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT GOALS, TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

	State C&D Plan	2015 RPOCD	Bridgeport	Easton	Fairfield	Monroe	Stratford	Trumbull	# of Local Plans	# Local High Priority
Improve Bike/Ped Infrastructure/ Connectivity									6	6
Pursue Complete Streets									4	4
Improve Safety Outcomes									5	2
Improve Greenway/Trail Connectivity									6	6
Expand Transit Service/Amenities									4	3
Centralized/Shared Parking									3	0
Pursue Walkable/Pedestrian Oriented Development									5	2
Improve ADA Accessibility									5	1
Reduce Barriers to Bike/Ped Access									4	0
Pursue Access Management									4	1
Placemaking through Complete Streets									4	1
Reform Parking Requirements									4	1
Expand/Pursue On-Demand Microtran- sit									4	0
Pursue Traffic Calming									3	0

Legend

POCD Goal

Priority Goal

See Goal Alignment Appendix (C) for Methodology

LOCAL & REGIONAL PLANS

Local Plans of Conservation and Development from Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford, and Trumbull have been fundamental in shaping the update of the MetroCOG RPOCD. Local POCDs have provided detailed, community-based priorities and conditions that the regional plan considered. Each municipal POCD identified its own land use goals, transportation and mobility priorities, and targets for future development.

Table 3.1 represents common elements and goals in transportation as expressed by member municipalities in their own plans.

Local & Regional Complete Streets Policies

MetroCOG has adopted a Regional Complete Streets Policy to enshrine the consideration of and safety for all road users as a necessary facet of all future transportation planning endeavors. Bridgeport, Fairfield, and Stratford have also adopted Complete Street Policies that guide their municipal transportation decisions and have directly influenced the objectives and strategies outlined in the RPOCD.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The MTP prioritizes investments in highways, transit, active transportation (walking/biking), and multimodal corridors. These priorities often inform and are impacted by the locations where growth and development are most appropriate or feasible. The MTP outlines major roadway investments, key bicycle, and pedestrian corridors, as well as safety and resilience upgrades to the transportation network. As transportation and mobility impact development potential, the RPOCD has considered areas constrained by capacity and land use, as well as areas in need of upgrades and safety improvements. The priorities and goals enumerated in the MTP are translated into the objectives, and strategies outlined in the RPOCD.

Unified Planning Work Program

The UPWP outlines the work MetroCOG is doing over each successive two-year period. Projects and ongoing tasks that are included within the current UPWP were incorporated within the RPOCD, while the recommendations of the RPOCD will guide the type of work that is incorporated into future UPWP cycles.

STATE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT POLICIES PLAN

The State of Connecticut's Conservation and Development Plan's transportation policies aim to further the Plan goals of creating more connected and inclusive communities and furthering healthier people and places. To this end, Connecticut's C&D Plan promotes new development to follow patterns that are mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented, and near public transportation, while redevelopment is encouraged in areas with accessible and adequate transportation options. The Plan recommends fostering the creation and maintenance of bike, pedestrian, and micromobility connections to connect various uses and modes of public transportation. MetroCOG has taken these principles and incorporated them into the following objectives and strategies, with the State's vision to develop "a multi-modal transportation network that enables safe and affordable access for all" mirrored closely in this section's overarching goal.

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY FOCUS GROUP & PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Throughout the planning process, MetroCOG solicited feedback from its Transportation and Mobility Focus Group and Planning Advisory Committee. Members indicated that it was important to have objectives and strategies related directly to **transportation safety, ADA accessibility, regional connection of trails and greenways, and parking reform**. The inclusion of place making through transportation improvements, transportation education, transportation demand management, and inter-municipal transportation links were all discussed and incorporated into the plan. MetroCOG engaged focus group and advisory committee members from the start of the development of the RPOCD and at each key step of the planning process to ensure their concerns were taken into account and addressed adequately.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

MetroCOG's outreach approach to the POCD focused on engaging with community members in ways most convenient to them. When visiting farmers' markets and libraries in the region, residents overwhelmingly mentioned the need to invest into the **creation of new sidewalks and the rehabilitation of existing sidewalks**. Trails and greenways were often noted as significant quality of life features, with participants asking

for improved access and maintenance. Many respondents enjoy cycling in the region, though they generally voiced a concern over a lack of safe dedicated infrastructure allowing them to bike to school, the grocery store, and parks. Higher levels of protection and separation were desired for younger cyclists. **Public Transportation improvements were highly supported and advocated** for by respondents who wished to see greater frequency and reliability. Across the region, MetroCOG heard **concerns about transportation safety in each community, as well as a lack of parking in specific areas and excess traffic on regional corridors**.

Responses from the online survey overwhelmingly indicated that **almost three-quarters of those surveyed experienced some form of mobility concerns or obstacles in the region**. The vast majority reported utilizing vehicular transport to get around the region while 60% reported walking and using the train within the region. When asked what transportation and infrastructure changes should be made in the region, respondents answered that public transportation can be improved through increased communications and real-time bus tracking, while **non-vehicular infrastructure could have increased levels of protection and visibility** for users. When drafting the goals and objectives, MetroCOG took these comments into consideration and coordinated with the Transportation and Mobility Focus Group and Planning Advisory Committee.



Figure 3.3: Stratford Center

OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

3.1 IMPROVE & EXPAND BICYCLE, PEDESTRIAN, & ACCESSIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE

A coordinated effort to create, expand, and maintain robust bicycle, pedestrian, and accessible infrastructure in the region is imperative to fostering more vibrant places where all are empowered to move around regardless of their background by recentring streets to serve all people. While driving may feel like the default option to move around the region, for people who cannot drive due to age, ability, health, and/or finances, automobile overreliance inhibits their freedom of movement. Ensuring a range of reliable, non-motorized ways to travel will reduce damage to the environment, improve public health outcomes, and provide affordable mobility options for all. In doing so, a more equitable and accessible transportation system can be achieved.

3.1.a Regional Active Transportation Planning

Develop a focused regionwide approach to active transportation planning built around the principles of safety, comfort, placemaking, ADA/universal accessibility, and sustainability.

The future of active transportation infrastructure in the region will need to comprehensively connect places of interest in an accessible manner, foster physical and perceived safety, and include holistic considerations such as lighting and interconnection with transit. A survey conducted by the [National Association of Realtors](#) found that 92% of Gen Z respondents stated they want to live in a walkable neighborhood, while [studies](#) have found that that older adults that live in walkable neighborhoods stay in better physical and mental shape than those who live in car-oriented communities. The almost

UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY

Environments designed to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible. This includes facilitating transportation linkages to community destinations beyond work, school and essential services.

SUCCESS STORY: REGIONAL COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

MetroCOG's Complete Streets Policy, passed in 2025, plots a path forward by embedding the need to account for and accommodate all roadway users within each of its regional projects. The Policy actively prioritizes vulnerable road users through a commitment to further a transportation network that enables pedestrians, bicyclists, people that rely on mobility devices, and public transit users to travel safely, comfortably, and efficiently throughout the region. By focusing on accommodating the most vulnerable roadway users, the region can develop infrastructure that serves users of all ages and abilities to enable true car-free mobility.

universally accessible modes of walking, cycling, and rolling are the cheapest and most environmentally friendly methods of transportation that actively contribute to improved [physical and mental health outcomes](#). Directly conflicting with the desire for walkability and the abundance of co-benefits that accompany it are high vehicular speeds and limited active transportation infrastructure that can create difficult, uncomfortable, and unsafe non-motorized journeys, with 172 pedestrian and 45 bicyclist crashes occurring on roadways in the MetroCOG region from [2020 to 2024](#). This is especially concerning as the choice to use active modes of transportation is [significantly affected](#) by perceived user safety, comfort, and convenience.

MetroCOG will use the Regional Complete Streets Policy, municipal plans and policies, and



Figure 3.4: Example of a curb ramp
www.pedbikeimages.org/burden

CTDOT's Active Transportation Plan to pursue projects and active transportation plans that will further development of a cohesive regional bicycle and pedestrian network. To support such a network, MetroCOG can provide municipalities with design guidance, education, and technical assistance on best practices for user and context sensitive implementation of protected, separated, and innovative bicycle, pedestrian, and accessible infrastructure. Future planning efforts can evaluate and incorporate improvements to reduce non-vehicular levels of stress and improve accessibility for all road users. By assessing and addressing active travel needs, deficiencies, and opportunities, MetroCOG can support its municipalities in creating active transportation infrastructure that brings improved safety, sustainability, community, and economic outcomes for the region.

Survey: What are the biggest transportation challenges you face?

"Not enough crosswalks with walk signals. There are many crosswalks with no walk signal on busy roads" - Stratford Resident

3.1.b Sidewalks and Curb Ramps

Assist municipalities creating an inventory of the local sidewalk network through GIS layers and databases. Coordinate with CTDOT to align with their efforts on state roads. Utilize gap analyses to inform and prioritize future construction, resurfacing, and mitigation of sidewalk obstructions.

Before and after interacting with any other form of transportation, each individual is a pedestrian first. The base modes of the transportation system are walking and rolling, which includes the use of a mobility aid such as a wheelchair. Therefore, it is imperative that the sidewalks pedestrians travel on and the curb ramps that enable access to the sidewalk are properly maintained, interconnected, and widespread around areas of interest to foster a safe, comfortable, and dignified walking and rolling environment.

To address missing links and non-accessible sections of the sidewalk and curb ramp network, MetroCOG can assist municipalities with creating and upgrading inventories, through a variety of GIS tools. Analyses based off this data can then serve to identify gaps, inadequacies, and obstructions within the network. These gap analyses can then inform the prioritization of future sidewalk and curb ramp construction, resurfacing, and mitigation of sidewalk obstructions.



Figure 3.5: Stratford Avenue in 1934 (left) and 1965 (right), after I-95 construction
MetroCOG GIS

3.1.c Reconnect Communities

Assist municipalities in identifying and remedying infrastructural barriers that inhibit access and connection. Identify and assist with the implementation of pedestrian cross-access pathways in and around existing sites and planned developments.

Infrastructural barriers, both large and small, from highways and railroads that intersect a neighborhood to ill-placed electrical poles on sidewalks and chain link fences at access points, reflect a legacy of top-down planning that has historically excluded residents from planning decisions in their neighborhood and created lasting burdens. The MetroCOG region has been impacted by a history of urban renewal era highways and infrastructure built upon existing neighborhoods, scarring the urban landscape, inhibiting non-vehicular transportation access and disincentivizing redevelopment. The first step in reconnecting neighborhoods is to identify and remedy infrastructural barriers, find ways to restore connections for physical and social mobility, improve spaces and quality of life, and re-sew communities together. MetroCOG is working closely with affected residents, stakeholders, and municipal staff to identify barriers to mobility, evaluate the context

and potential opportunities, propose solutions, and pursue funding to implement identified projects that return these spaces to the community.

URBAN RENEWAL

Urban renewal programs, ushered by provisions in the 1949 Housing Act, displaced over 300,00 households by clearing homes for new development from 1950 to 1966.

In Bridgeport, the most startling result of highway construction was the change of density and diversity of land uses. “From the passenger train station in downtown, a pedestrian can reach only 28% of the number of establishments that a 1913 pedestrian could in a 5-minute walk. If examined by land use, only a startling 6% of the number of residential properties can be accessed today, greatly diminishing the walkable nature of the city.”

-2015 UConn Civil Engineering Master’s Research Study, Kristen Floberg

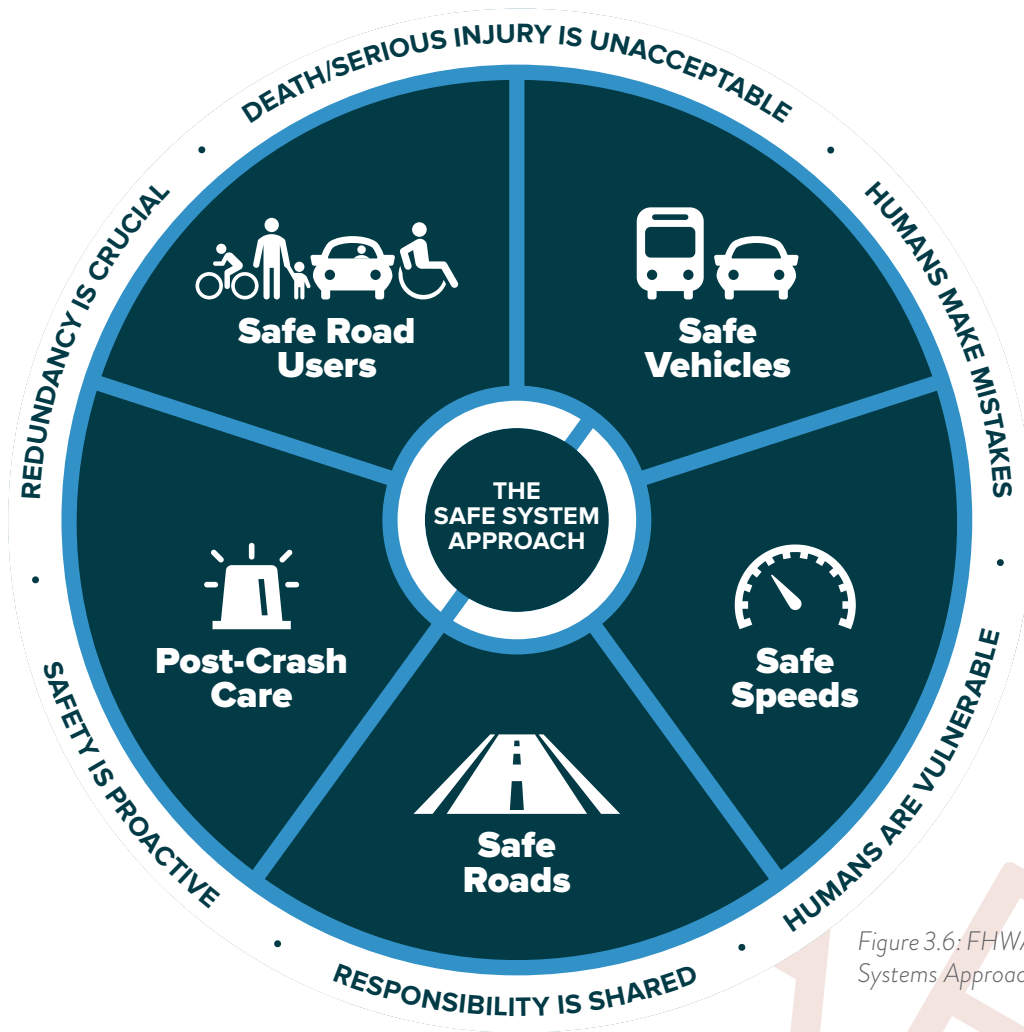


Figure 3.6: FHWA's Safe Systems Approach

3.2 ELIMINATE ROADWAY FATALITIES & SERIOUS INJURIES

Between [2020 and 2024](#), 89 traffic fatalities and 673 serious injuries occurred on roadways in the MetroCOG region. The [Center for Disease Control](#) (CDC) states that motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death in the United States. While often treated as unavoidable, traffic deaths and serious injuries are entirely preventable, with a coalition of communities around the world striving toward the shared goal of Vision Zero, which is the attainment of zero roadway fatalities and serious injuries. On August 25, 2022, MetroCOG passed a [resolution](#) joining the Vision Zero movement by establishing a commitment to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries on the region's roadways by 2050 and adopting the [FHWA's Safe System Approach](#), a proactive method for identifying and addressing safety issues across the transportation system. The data, tools, and strategies needed to address this public health crisis to reach a future without traffic fatalities and serious injuries are widely available. Through a combination of systemic and context specific interventions on the region's roadways, MetroCOG is working to ensure that each trip made within the region is a safe one.



Figure 3.7: Stratford Complete Streets

3.2.a Regional Complete Streets Planning

Integrate Complete Streets principles into regional planning, design, and project implementation to ensure the safe accommodation of all road users, particularly vulnerable users.

Complete Streets is a holistic, multi-modal approach to the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of roadways that serves to accommodate all roadway users, particularly vulnerable road users, to ensure safe, comfortable, and efficient travel. The overarching goal of “Complete Streets” is to improve safety outcomes, with a particular focus on pedestrians, bicyclists, users that rely on mobility devices, and public transit users that have historically been deprioritized by automobile centric planning. Through safety interventions, a variety of co-benefits in equity, public health, economic development, environmental

outcomes, green spaces, livability, efficiency, community cohesion, and mobility across all modes of transportation can be unlocked.

The 2015 [MetroCOG Regional Plan of Conservation and Development](#) set out an objective to “work with partnering communities in the establishment of a regional ‘complete streets’ policy.” On March 27th, 2025, MetroCOG passed its [Regional Complete Streets Policy](#), a document that embeds Complete Streets methodologies in its planning processes and prioritizes projects which support the safety and accommodation of all road users.¹¹ MetroCOG is utilizing this Policy to incorporate Complete Streets considerations across its multi-disciplinary planning work and to apply a non-motorized user lens to studies and technical assistance. The Policy will be used to steer future regional Complete Streets plans and guidance to address areas of need and provide municipalities with the latest best practices to improve safety outcomes.



Figure 3.8: Stratford Complete Streets

SUCCESS STORY: STRATFORD COMPLETE STREETS PLAN

Supported by MetroCOG, the Town of Stratford released a comprehensive Complete Streets Plan in 2017. The plan examined the current state of the transportation network, assessed needs, outlined design recommendations with cost estimates for significant travel corridors, and proposed an action plan to prioritize and implement the designs. Since then, the town has implemented Phase One of a Complete Streets redesign of Main Street from West Broad Street to Barnum Avenue. Phase Two, continuing the work further North past Barnum Avenue to Paradise Green, is currently in the final stages of design. A third Complete Streets project recommended by the plan was recently approved for federal Transportation Alternatives funding on Ferry Boulevard, connecting to the improved sections of Main Street and the existing Housatonic River Greenway. Following the Complete Streets Plan and the guidance of the Town's resident-led Greenway/Complete Streets Committee, Stratford has made significant strides in improving the safety, comfort, and multi-modal connectivity of its roadways.



Survey: What are the biggest transportation challenges you face?

“Too many drivers ignoring rules of the road and little enforcement.”

- Stratford Resident

Injury Network, which is a map of streets where a disproportionate amount (79% in our region) of serious injuries and fatal crashes occur, along with an updating list of Crash Hot Spots, which are the locations where the highest concentration of crashes are recorded, to inform the prioritization of future safety interventions.

A comprehensive update of the Regional Safety Action Plan is currently underway as part of a larger project funded by an SS4A grant awarded to MetroCOG in 2024. The “Regional Safety Action Plan: Phase II, Crash Hot Spot Countermeasure Suitability Analysis and Demonstration Activities” will expand MetroCOG’s work beyond its previous efforts that identified priority crash locations and corridors to provide concept plans and context specific safety countermeasures for the most dangerous roadways in the region. For select locations, quick-build demonstration projects are planned to provide rapid safety relief to communities that need them most. These demonstration projects also test innovative safety measures that will inform both tailored permanent installations and serve as proof of concept for regional implementation. Further, as the municipalities within the region pursue their own municipal Safety Action Plans and projects, MetroCOG will be involved in sharing its resources and findings from regional efforts to inform municipally driven local interventions.

3.2.b Regional Safety Action Planning towards Vision Zero

Continue to update the Regional Safety Action Plan through planning and demonstration projects along the High Injury Network and at Crash Hot Spots locations.

In pursuance of the Vision Zero commitment to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries in the region by 2050, MetroCOG develops an annual update to the [Regional Safety Action Plan](#). Initiated in 2022, the Regional Safety Action Plan presents and analyzes the crash data of the previous five years. The plan displays where crashes are happening, discerns trends in the occurrence and type of crashes in each municipality, and presents a roadmap of strategies and ongoing projects that the region’s municipalities are undertaking to address these safety concerns. MetroCOG maintains a High

Figure 3.9: Route 111/110 Roundabout, Monroe

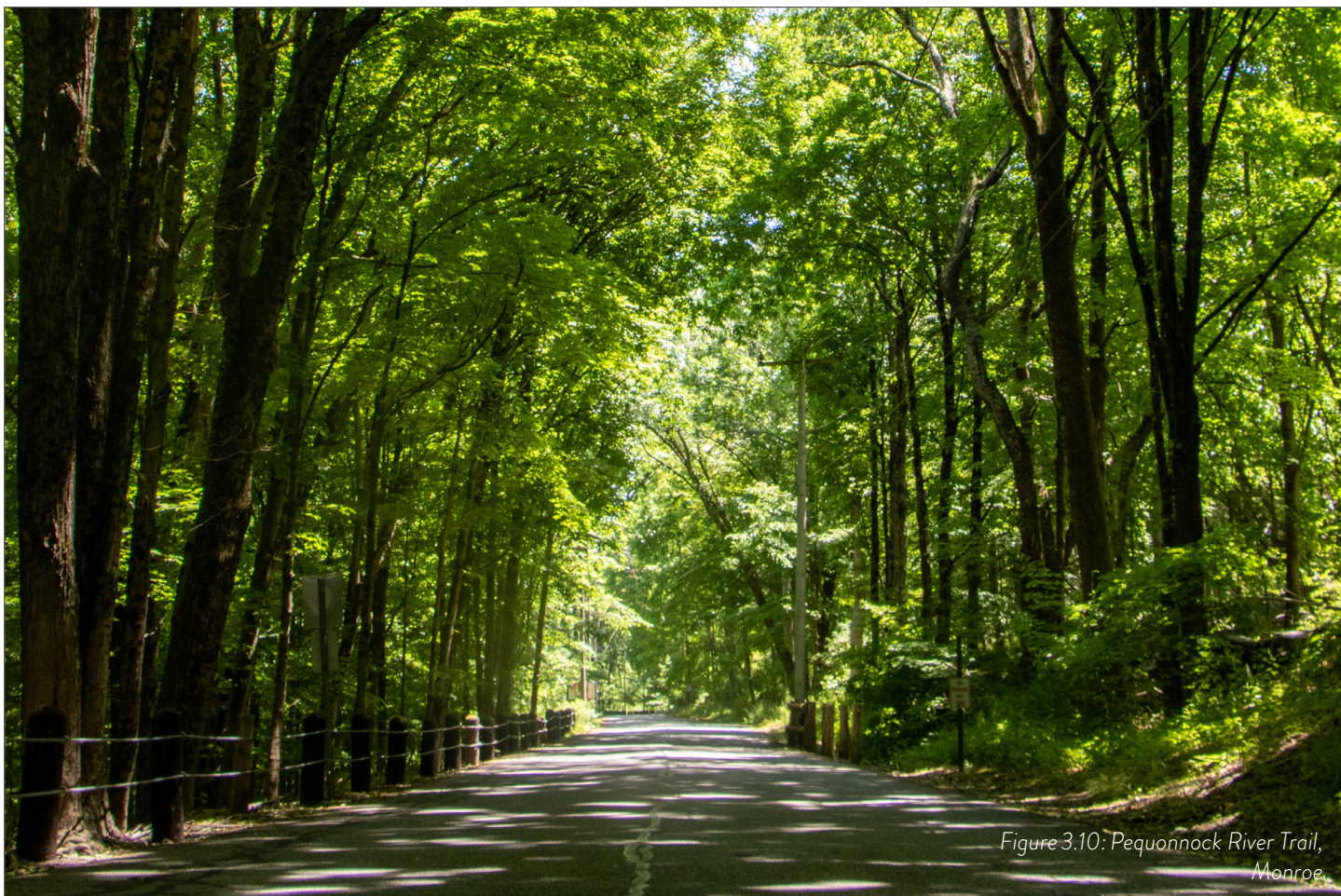


3.2.c Intersection Improvements

Assist municipalities in implementing targeted intersection interventions including innovative intersection designs, improved signal systems, and pedestrian crossing amenities. Provide education on traffic calming measures.

Intersections are the confluence of two or more roadways and are crossed by many types of transportation modes: pedestrians, cyclists, users with mobility devices, and vehicles. Due to this concentration of traffic, crashes are more likely to occur at intersections. Innovation in intersection design, amenities, and technology has enabled the creation of safer intersections where all types of users are able to move through the area with fewer delays. As new methods to address both simple and complex intersections arise, MetroCOG

can work to bring widespread adoption of new techniques throughout the region. By providing data collection services, technical assistance in design and implementation guidance, support with quick-build and demonstration projects, grant and funding guidance, and education to municipal and state staff, more communities across the region can create safer intersections that are more functional and comfortable. Simultaneously, MetroCOG should support municipalities in educating residents on how to navigate and utilize previously unfamiliar infrastructure to ensure shorter adjustment periods and smoother operations.



*Figure 3.10: Pequonnock River Trail,
Monroe*

3.3 IMPROVE & EXPAND REGIONAL GREENWAYS

A greenway is a natural or landscaped pathway for pedestrian or bicycle passage that serves to connect open spaces such as parks, nature reserves, cultural features, or historic sites with each other and with populated areas. Greenways are ecologically significant corridors and dedicated non-vehicular routes. Their implementation holds significant benefits for surrounding communities, including expanded public access to and protection of open space, protected and comfortable active travel and recreation corridors, and improved storm and floodwater management. Greenways also provide an economic dividend that can raise adjacent property values and increase local business revenues as a result of the increased foot traffic and tourism. Greenways reflect the environmental, recreational, historical, and cultural values of their surrounding communities, thus they serve both as connective infrastructure and as a community destination. Throughout the development of the RPOCD, greenways have emerged as a rallying point amongst all stakeholders and phases of the plan. Each municipal POCD was aligned in considering the expansion and improvement of greenways as a significant priority, with resident enthusiasm throughout public outreach backing this sentiment.

3.3.a Regional Greenways Expansion

Update the regional trail inventory and create recommendations to address gaps, maintenance needs, and envision future extensions. Integrate greenways with surrounding neighborhoods and identify potential connections to multi-regional, statewide, and nationwide greenway networks.

Dedicated planning and investments over the past decade have transformed the Pequonnock River Trail and Housatonic River Greenway into the major regional draws they are today. MetroCOG will continue to facilitate regional cooperation and planning to complete and connect the remaining sections of these greenways and expand their routes where possible. Further connections and integration with nearby community destinations and other non-vehicular networks will be vital to ensure greenway benefits extend throughout their surrounding communities. Within completed greenway sections, improvements and maintenance needs can be assessed to guide future funding prioritization. The region can plan to further identify and implement new and existing but not fully realized intra-state greenway networks such as the East Coast Greenway.

SUCCESS STORY: THE PEQUONNNOCK RIVER TRAIL IN BRIDGEPORT, TRUMBULL, & MONROE

Running North-South on a former railway through rural, suburban, and urban landscapes of the region, the Pequonnock River Trail (PRT) has become the place to be for thousands of annual residents and visitors. The project continues to evolve, with each respective municipality building upon the current alignment. In Monroe, construction is ongoing to expand the PRT to connect with the Housatonic River Trail while the Town is also pursuing specialized equipment to improve maintenance of the trail. In Trumbull, the Town is focused on better integrating the trail with the surrounding community, with non-vehicular connections to Trumbull Center, Long Hill Green, and Twin Brooks Park either already completed or actively underway. In Bridgeport, efforts are ongoing to complete the southern portion of the trail and provide dedicated active transportation infrastructure connecting to the route.

3.3.b Urban Greenways

Identify and assist with the implementation of new greenways using underutilized space and infrastructure including old rail lines, underutilized roadways, and wide rights-of-way.

Historically, greenways have been implemented in more expansive natural spaces. As cities search for methods to foster dedicated active transportation linkages and increase the accessibility of green recreation spaces for residents in developed areas, the implementation of greenways has become opportunistic, seeking to transform underutilized urban spaces and infrastructure into new community amenities and connections. Urban greenways have become ways in which cities can “green” their streets, both through increased vegetative cover and through the facilitation of active modes of transportation. MetroCOG can lead regional planning and support efforts in the region’s urban areas to creatively identify opportunities for new greenways to revitalize overlooked spaces and their surrounding communities.



Figure 3.11: The High Line, New York City

URBAN GREENWAY

Urban greenways are linear public parks and places that facilitate active travel and recreation in denser land use contexts, primarily through the active reuse of legacy infrastructure such as abandoned rail lines and unnecessarily wide roads.



Figure 3.12: Bus shelter, Trumbull mall

3.4 ENHANCE PUBLIC TRANSIT

Public transit vastly expands the transportation options and accessibility of a region, and provides an efficient, environmentally friendly, and affordable means of moving people from place to place. Robust and reliable public transportation routes to a diverse array of destinations within the region and beyond are essential to fostering universal access to opportunity, economic development and non-vehicular interconnectivity. MetroCOG partners with public transit providers to support them with service delivery and coordination between stakeholders towards the development of a transit network that is seamlessly integrated within the greater transportation system. As the federally designated recipient of transportation planning funds, MetroCOG can actively support access to and utilization of public transit services to create the conditions for them to thrive, including encouraging denser land use patterns around transit stations/stops, roadway and infrastructure design, enhanced interagency coordination, and expanded education efforts.



Figure 3.13: GBT bus
GBT

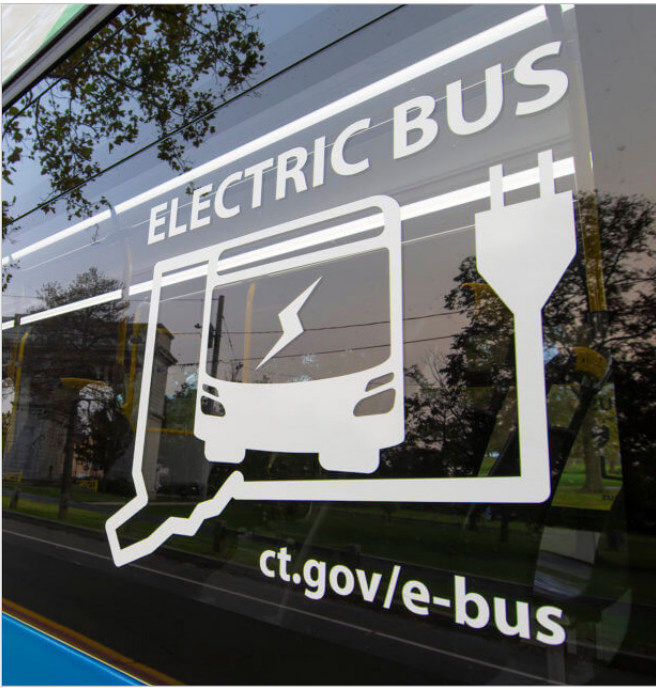


Figure 3.14: Electric bus
GBT

3.4.a Roadway Infrastructure Upgrades

Pursue and advance roadway improvements to enhance transit service operations and facilitate an enhanced transit user experience for first and last mile travel.

While transit providers work diligently to optimize operations along fixed routes, riders often encounter the “First and Last Mile” challenge after they reach their stop, which is completing the non-vehicular portion of the journey to their final destination. MetroCOG should prioritize sidewalk, ADA, and bicycle infrastructure improvements in the vicinity of transit stops and stations to ensure that all users are able to safely and reliably access forms of public transportation that then allow them to access further destinations.

Microtransit solutions and shared Micromobility devices such as electric scooters and bicycles can be introduced/expanded to provide support for people with longer first/last mile commutes.

Within the transportation planning process, MetroCOG can work to implement improvements to roadways and curbs that improve transit operations and the quality of life for transit riders. Innovative interventions such as bus lanes, curb extensions, bus pull-outs, and transit signal prioritization that support more efficient transit operations can be incorporated within future transportation projects to reduce trip times. Streetscape elements such as the provision of shade, lighting, and public art can also improve the first/last mile experience for transit users.

Survey: What do you feel should be done to increase transportation safety in the region?

“Accessible bus stops with benches, shelters, lighting, sidewalks, heat. Monitors on buses.”

- Shelton Resident, works in the region

3.4.b Coordination with Partner Agencies

Assist transit providers with conducting studies, service upgrades, and by coordinating with other transit organizations within and beyond the region. Support the provision of transit access to vulnerable communities.

As a regional entity, MetroCOG facilitates engagement between local stakeholders, municipalities, and transit agencies such as Greater Bridgeport Transit and CTDOT to share data, local knowledge, and coordinate projects. MetroCOG can continue to partner with transit providers to coordinate the delivery of transit services across municipal borders. MetroCOG can continue this partnership to assist with conducting studies and including them within MetroCOG’s planning work that seamlessly connects with transit operations. MetroCOG can function as an intermediary between transit providers, municipalities and private property owners to improve stop location, accessibility and MetroCOG will continue to assist municipal and non-profit organizations with Section 5310 funding, a grant program intended to expand transportation options and improve mobility for residents who are elderly or have a disability.

3.4.c Transportation Demand Management (TDM) & Micromobility

Educate municipalities, employers, and community members on non-vehicular mobility, transit, and micromobility. Promote public transportation to areas of interest.

TDM is a collection of strategies aimed at reducing commutes by single occupancy vehicles in an effort to reduce emissions, alleviate traffic, and improve multi-modal mobility, including the use of public transit and micromobility. MetroCOG partners with CTrides to educate both employers and commuters on the incentives that are available to support alternative commuting methods, the amenities and programs that can help facilitate non-vehicular travel, and the benefits to all parties involved. By spreading the word, the region can promote greater uptake of these strategies and ensure that residents and visitors alike are aware of the availability of high-quality alternative transportation options in the region while encouraging accommodations that can support the switch from single occupancy vehicles. MetroCOG can work with municipalities to ensure ample bicycle and vehicular parking at transit stations for long term and all weather use. As new transportation options become available, MetroCOG can provide resources and education on emerging forms of transportation and technology to ensure that the region is prepared to safely welcome and take advantage of new options for mobility.



Figure 3.15: Rail parking in Stratford Center

3.5 PARKING REFORM & CONGESTION MANAGEMENT

Parking and congestion are often voiced as the greatest transportation challenges, with the historic solutions being increasing parking and widening roads. However, a community loses much of its character if it becomes a series of parking lots that may only reach capacity a few days a year. Wider streets cause higher speeds along a corridor. Paired with numerous access points to turn into, drivers are at greater risk of collisions, with higher speeds increasing the severity of a crash. These past strategies have induced demand for more vehicular traffic, resulting in more congestion after a few years than there was prior to roadway or parking expansion. Looking forward to improving the quality of life in the region, automobile centric patterns of development have created the need and an opportunity to improve mobility and provide more types of transportation options. Such spaces can be reshaped to improve the quality of life, environmental sustainability, spur economic development, provide more housing, manage stormwater, introduce greenery, and foster more socially connected spaces. Through intentional management, innovative operations, and re-use, the region can simultaneously address enduring land use and transportation challenges.

Survey:

How have your transportation needs changed?

“Traffic levels have made it to where I try not to travel at all and shop online”

- Easton Resident

3.5.a Regional Parking Guidance

Develop strategies, design guidance, model ordinances, and provide technical assistance to municipalities on parking operations.

The targeted reduction, reuse, and reimagining of surface and street parking can be effectively harnessed to spur economic growth, reduce environmental impacts, promote community development, and better support non-vehicular movement. The legacy of automobile-centric design has left an excess of surface parking across the region, presenting an opportunity to significantly improve walkability and accessibility, promote stormwater drainage, and combat the urban heat island effect. Changes to parking are economically motivated, aiming to help small businesses expand their visibility and operating space, while supporting municipalities in realizing the immediate and holistic economic dividends of taking advantage of the latent development potential of underutilized parking.

By modernizing parking requirements, improving the management and wayfinding of on-and off-street parking to improve availability and maximize usage, fostering shared and precinct parking solutions, and reshaping street parking to create parklets and outdoor dining that boost local business and municipal revenue alike, municipalities can reinvent underutilized spaces. MetroCOG can work with

municipalities to develop parking studies and plans, gather data on parking utilization, provide design guidance, and model ordinances, and provide technical assistance to municipalities on parking operations.

REIMAGINING PARKING

When parking is optimized, spots that go unused can become amenities such as:

- Housing
- Outdoor Dining and Parklets
- Open Streets
- Expanded Sidewalks and Bike Lanes
- Green Infrastructure and Stormwater Management

3.5.b Access Management

Provide guidance and assistance to municipalities on solutions to reduce curb cuts and improve connections between lots.

Access management is the practice of consolidating excess curb cuts, or dedicated entrances and exits onto each property along a corridor, to reduce potential vehicular conflicts with other vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians, thus serving to reduce traffic congestion in the immediate area and improving safety outcomes for all users. These results are achieved through reductions in the current number of curb cuts at each property while managing access points for future developments through zoning requirements, thoughtful spacing and placement of curb cuts, improved connections between lots, and the encouragement of shared entrances and exits. MetroCOG can provide its member municipalities with guidance and assistance to amend their zoning, coordinate with CTDOT on complex state routes, and foster greater design cohesion at municipal boundaries to deliver safer and more efficient roadways.

4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL: DEVELOP A THRIVING & RESILIENT REGIONAL ECONOMY WHERE PROSPERITY IS SHARED BY ALL

A regional approach to economic development will ensure all member municipalities benefit from economic activity. By working at a regional scale and prioritizing development and housing in areas with existing infrastructure, communities will be better equipped to attract and retain businesses and residents. Increasing the visibility of cultural assets and community facilities will create vibrant places that people want to visit. Participation and collaboration across public, private, and non-profit sectors is crucial for securing funding, supporting local businesses, and ensuring a resilient economy.

INTRODUCTION

Economic Development is central to the MetroCOG region, as it plays a key role in bolstering infrastructure and housing. With transportation access and proximity to major markets in the Northeast, the region offers significant opportunity for economic growth. MetroCOG will support municipalities with repositioning underutilized sites for productive reuse, align workforce development with higher education institutions, and leverage small business development. Increased economic activity will lead to more housing throughout the region and quality of life improvements. This chapter is centered around the overarching goal to develop a thriving and resilient regional economy where prosperity is shared by all, which can be achieved through cross-sector collaboration.

OBJECTIVES

- **Ensure a Regional Approach**
- **Support Economic Growth Through Site Reuse & Redevelopment**
- **Encourage Small Business Development & Entrepreneurship**
- **Foster Education & Workforce Development**
- **Promote Arts, Culture, & Tourism**

TABLE 4.1: PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT GOALS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	State C&D Plan	2015 RPOCD	Bridgeport	Easton	Fairfield	Monroe	Stratford	Trumbull	# of Local Plans	# Local High Priority
Compact Growth / Targeted Density									4	4
Transit Oriented Development									3	2
Improve Connectivity in Town Centers									6	2
Mixed-Use Focus									6	2
Downtown Placemaking									4	2
Brownfield Redevelopment									4	2
Invest in Education / Workforce Development									2	1
Downtown Special Districts									4	1
Marketing/Promotion									4	1
Neighborhood/Home Based Businesses									3	0
Parking Reform									4	1

Legend POCD Goal **Priority Goal** See Goal Alignment Appendix (C) for Methodology

KEY INFLUENCES ON THE CREATION OF GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

LAND USE & ZONING

Economic Development plays a significant role in zoning and land use decisions. Strategic zoning initiatives are necessary to support increased housing production and commercial growth in urban areas, while rural and conservation areas will require protection from incompatible development.

LOCAL & REGIONAL PLANS

Local Plans of Conservation and Development from Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford, and Trumbull have been fundamental in shaping the update of the MetroCOG Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (RPOCD). Local POCDs have provided detailed, community-based priorities and conditions that the regional plan considered. Each municipal POCD identified its own land use goals and targets for future economic development. Table 4.1 represents common elements and goals in economic development as expressed by member municipalities in their own plans.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) brings together the public and private sectors to establish a regional vision for economic development and helps direct investment and policy. The CEDS addresses regional economic problems, serves as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, and identifies investment priorities and funding sources. CEDS are also required for several types of federal funding assistance. MetroCOG will be updating the CEDS for the region in 2026.

STATE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT POLICIES PLAN

The State of Connecticut's Conservation and Development Plan provided the policy foundation, growth framework, and investment priorities that help guide the Regional Plans of Conservation and Development. The RPOCD reflects local priorities and conditions and pairs them with the broader statewide goals for infrastructure investment.



Figure 4.1: Downtown Bridgeport Farmer's Market Colliers

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOCUS GROUP & PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Focus group members indicated a strong need for increased tourism marketing and emphasis on the importance of agriculture in the region, which has been highlighted and included.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

MetroCOG's outreach approach to the POCD focused on engaging with community members in ways most convenient to them. The online survey responses indicated that **the top jobs needed to spur economic growth in the region were technology and innovation and production and manufacturing.** When asked how they would like to see older buildings reused in the region, respondents were aligned on **renovation, historic preservation, and open space**, with over half of respondents reporting **mixed-use as a preferred option** as well. When drafting the goals and objectives, MetroCOG took these comments into consideration and coordinated with the Economic Development Focus Group and Planning Advisory Committee.

Figure 4.2: Hartford HealthCare Amphitheater, Bridgeport



OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

4.1 ENSURE A REGIONAL APPROACH

A regional approach to economic development promotes intra-regional cooperation as opposed to competition and ensures that each municipality has the resources and projects suitable for their needs. The region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) developed in 2021, and which will be updated in 2026, will utilize an inter-municipal approach. By applying for Economic Development District (EDD) status, MetroCOG will leverage private sector involvement to strengthen the region's capacity to plan and implement federally funded economic development initiatives. A brand strategy and marketing campaign will highlight regional strengths, development opportunities, and unique offerings to both locals and visitors.



Figure 4.3: Ryders Landing, Stratford
Colliers

4.1.a Update & Restructure the Region's CEDS

Update and improve the Region's Comprehensive Economic Development Plan. Ensure update promotes intra-regional cooperation as opposed to competition.

MetroCOG will update the CEDS for the region every five years as required by the Economic Development Administration. MetroCOG will collaborate with municipal economic development officials and the Bridgeport Regional Business Council (BRBC) to identify and coordinate the private sector stakeholders. Furthermore, MetroCOG will engage with stakeholders outside the Region, including the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) and the State of Connecticut.

Within the region, there should be collaboration with anchor institutions, large companies, higher education institutions, service providers, municipal leadership, and economic development departments. Representation from small businesses and entrepreneurs will be crucial. Developers of high-profile sites should also be included, due to the potential for new attracting mixed-use and housing developments. While updating the plan, MetroCOG will ensure intra-regional cooperation and that economic development will benefit all parties.



Figure 4.4: MetroCOG's 2021 CEDS

A CEDS is a pathway to procuring federal funding assistance from the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance programs. Federal funding for infrastructure investments, such as sewer upgrades and transportation improvements, can be major incentives for the private sector, as this can lead to more efficient and/or expanded business operations and housing development. Developing key public infrastructure will lead to an increase in major attractions to Bridgeport and the region, which will drive long-term population and economic growth.

Figure 4.5: Screenshot from www.choosegreaterbridgeport.com



4.1.b Develop a Strong Regional Brand & Establish a Regional Marketing Campaign

Establish a brand strategy and marketing campaign that identifies regional strengths, target markets, and emphasizes unique offerings to locals and visitors.

MetroCOG uses marketing to highlight regional planning activities, such as transportation, housing, and environmental initiatives. Better planning and development efforts for the region will be ensured by gathering reliable demographic, economic, and market data, and providing access to local communities will allow them to identify trends that may affect local planning and land use. MetroCOG can also serve as the region's one-stop-shop for economic data and market conditions, providing a central location for regional and local planning information. Community engagement activities such as public surveys and interactive web applications to gather feedback on development projects will also be useful for establishing a marketing campaign.

MetroCOG currently maintains and provides a centralized location for planning project updates and data. Through ["You Belong in Eastern Fairfield County"](#), the agency can effectively market regional

strengths and unique offerings throughout the region. This site emphasizes the diverse assets of the Greater Bridgeport Region, such as access to major markets, educational institutions, arts and cultural assets, transit, and waterfront amenities. This approach aligns with MetroCOG's update to the CEDS.

This approach can be expanded to a regional marketing campaign that positions the region as a destination with both urban culture and natural beauty. The campaign should be designed to prioritize target markets, such as local small business owners, prospective employers, young professionals, visitors, and current residents, and should emphasize the region's cultural and recreational offerings. For example, MetroCOG can market historic and educational attractions, recreational assets, waterfront amenities, greenway trails for hiking and biking, and agricultural and forestland. A strong brand and marketing effort can become a tool for placemaking and quality-of-life messaging that can help attract and retain talent, support local businesses, and differentiate the MetroCOG region. Extensive coordination with partner agencies will be foundational in MetroCOG's ability to effectively market the assets of the region.

4.1.c Seek Economic Development District (EDD) Status

Pursue designation as an Economic Development District (EDD) to develop a roadmap for regional collaboration, leverage private and non-profit sector involvement, and strengthen the region's capacity to plan and implement economic development initiatives.

MetroCOG plans to apply for Economic Development Districts (EDD) status in 2026, which will provide increased funding for MetroCOG to conduct economic planning initiatives for the region. EDDs are defined by the [EDA](#) as, **“multi-jurisdictional entities, commonly composed of multiple counties and in certain cases even cross-state borders.”** EDDs can leverage involvement from the public, private, and non-profit sectors for regional collaboration. To request designation as an EDD, applicants must have an EDA-approved CEDS (see 4.1.A). The EDA also specifies that applicants must have “at least one geographical area within the designated service boundaries that meets EDA’s regional distress criteria....” Bridgeport meets the criteria for an EDD due to its status as a distressed municipality, as per the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development.

Obtaining EDD status unlocks access to federal and state funding, most notably from the EDA, designed for improvements to regional infrastructure,

economic planning, and business development. EDA Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) programs provide investments for infrastructure, such as sewer, water, and roads, to regions experiencing economic distress. Other opportunities include Revolving Loan Funds (RLFs) to provide gap financing for local businesses that cannot obtain traditional financing, as well as access to specialized grants for workforce training and technology-based development.

Most importantly, becoming an EDD unlocks annual funding and resources directly for improving and implementing the CEDS, ensuring it remains an active and effective document. EDD designation also allows all parts of a region to be eligible for [EDA funding](#), even if not all areas meet the official distress criteria. This funding also helps with hiring staff, data collection and analysis, and administrative support on projects. This funding will ensure the CEDS remains an up-to-date roadmap for implementing economic development initiatives with cross-sector collaboration.

Becoming an EDD would allow MetroCOG to join many other agencies throughout Connecticut in increasing funding for economic development with a comprehensive roadmap for future initiatives.



Figure 4.6: Cherry Street Lofts, Bridgeport



Figure 4.7: Davidson Block, Bridgeport

4.1.d Showcase Development Opportunities Across the Region

Explore opportunities for greater exposure of development opportunities through events and digital marketing.

MetroCOG will coordinate with member municipalities, local agencies, and partners to build connections with developers and businesses interested in the region. MetroCOG will continue to host its Brownfield and Economic Development Working Group with presentations on properties of interest to developers. For vacant and underutilized sites, including brownfields, MetroCOG will work to increase communication with developers, ensure developers understand both loan and EPA/DECD funding opportunities, and support ongoing and potential projects. An inventory of regional developers and municipal economic development contacts would assist MetroCOG with marketing, organization, and increasing project visibility.

MetroCOG will also compile resources from our member municipalities and MLS (Multiple Listing Service) listings to provide developers with up-to-date digital databases of properties that can be developed in the region. Digital marketing through MetroCOG's website, sharing resources, and hosting economic development related events will increase development opportunities in the region.



Figure 4.8: Grace Church, Trumbull

4.2 SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH SITE REUSE & REDEVELOPMENT

Supporting site reuse and redevelopment will increase housing and commercial buildings throughout the region. MetroCOG will guide and support the redevelopment and activation of underutilized sites, such as brownfields and greyfields, for new development, adaptive reuse, placemaking, and quality of life improvements. Working in tandem with developers and municipalities is necessary to ensure remediation of contaminated sites and suitable reuse. In areas with existing infrastructure, compact growth strategies that include mixed-use districts, targeted density, transit-oriented developments, and incentive-based zoning will create a connected and pedestrian-friendly environment that supports local businesses. Utilizing appropriate development patterns suitable for the size and scale of the community will encourage both housing and economic growth throughout the region.

How would you like to see older buildings and properties be reused?

“Creative reuse of historic buildings that keeps their character intact but upgrades them for modern needs.”

- Fairfield

“Any preservation/renovation/redevelopment should include mixed use where it makes sense and provide visual and physical harmony with the surroundings to make an environment friendly to people.”

- Bridgeport

4.2.a Activate Vacant & Underutilized Sites

Guide and support the redevelopment and activation of underutilized sites, such as brownfields and greyfields, for new development, adaptive re-use, placemaking, and quality of life improvements.

Brownfields are defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as any property in which **“expansion, redevelopment, or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant”**. They consist of former industrial plants, military bases, oil/petroleum facilities, and more. The MetroCOG region contains many brownfield sites with the opportunity for productive use following remediation and repurposing. MetroCOG will continue to assist municipalities in pursuing federal and state grants for remediation and redevelopment projects to

transition these underutilized sites into productive uses.

Through MetroCOG’s Revolving Loan and Assessment funds from the US EPA, the agency will aid municipalities in identifying sites and opportunities for assessment, remediation, and redevelopment. MetroCOG has created a Brownfields Road Map to the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). The Road Map is a tool aimed at providing an overview of the Revolving Loan Fund and its associated procedures for municipalities and developers to guide the process of seeking funding. A marketing strategy is underway in 2026 to ensure municipalities are aware of available opportunities. MetroCOG will continue to provide technical assistance and data related to brownfield remediation grants and will assist in complex planning issues.

MetroCOG has developed a [Brownfield Story Map](#) which utilizes GIS infrastructure to map properties

within the region with official brownfield status. This Story Map allows users to select towns, navigate to individual brownfields, visualize locations, and read about site history and next steps. This allows for a comprehensive overview of ongoing remediation efforts and can help identify land use challenges alongside the context of the regional transportation network. MetroCOG will continue to utilize GIS to prioritize remediation and redevelopment efforts while considering environmental and transportation factors.

Greyfields are also underutilized sites that persist throughout the region. These are formerly viable commercial sites that have suffered from a lack of reinvestment and need significant redevelopment before re-use. While they do not necessarily require remediation due to contamination, they are still blighted areas taking up space that could be utilized for new commercial or residential development. MetroCOG will work with municipalities to identify greyfield sites and support new and ongoing projects.

New industrial development, large commercial sites, and employment-based uses should be concentrated in existing commercial areas, with an emphasis on reuse near multi-modal transportation networks and dense, residential neighborhoods. By supporting the redevelopment of these underutilized sites, MetroCOG will bring revitalization to the region and implement placemaking strategies.

4.2.b Compact Growth

Encourage mixed use districts, targeted density, transit-oriented developments and overlay zones, and incentive-based zoning to create a well-connected and pedestrian-oriented environment that supports local businesses.

Compact growth is a planning strategy that promotes high-density, mixed-use development, connectivity, and walkability. Residents that live in compact neighborhoods with mixed use development are more likely to walk, bike, or use transit. Compact development reduces the need to use automobiles for local trips and maximizes the efficiency of new and existing infrastructure. By encouraging compact development in areas where it aligns with local planning and zoning, residents have the option of using alternative types of transportation to ensure healthier lifestyles. Compact growth in the region will attract a wide range of residents, employers, and will ultimately support local businesses.

Mixed use development combines residential and commercial uses within a single building or development. Proximity to amenities such as dining, grocery, and retail can drive demand for new residents, which in turn drives demand for commercial uses. These developments also benefit property owners by increasing both flexibility and property values, leading to a higher property tax revenue for the community. MetroCOG can support mixed use developments by assisting municipalities

2007

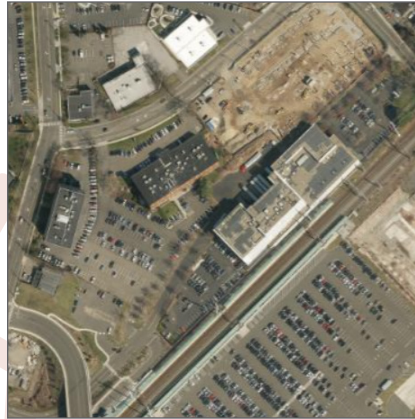


Figure 4.9: Black Rock Station Development Process, Fairfield Eagleview

in identifying zoning barriers and opportunities for infill development. Assisting with financial and regulatory incentives for developers, including height or density bonuses or tax abatements, can encourage this type of development.

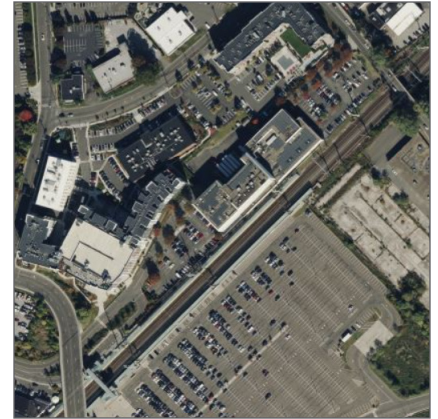
Transit-oriented developments (TODs) are moderate to high-density developments proximate to transit which emphasize convenience and efficiency. Residents without a personal vehicle have more options to commute to work, grocery stores, or attractions locally

2015



and regionally. TODs are a crucial economic development strategy as they expand the transit ridership base and support local businesses. MetroCOG can assist municipalities in encouraging TODs through incentives to attract employers, creating zoning overlays, and identifying underutilized sites along major transportation corridors. Rail stations in Bridgeport, Fairfield, and Stratford are prime locations where existing and new TODs can be leveraged for economic development.

2024



Incentive-based zoning offers bonuses to developers, such as extra height or density, in exchange for providing affordable housing units. These bonuses help offset costs for developers and make more housing units in an area financially viable. Incentives help attract development to areas that need revitalization and provide a population to support local business growth. MetroCOG can support municipalities through evaluating best practices for incentive-based zoning.



Figure 4.10: The Knowlton, Bridgeport
Colliers

4.3 ENCOURAGE SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Small business development and entrepreneurial opportunities will bolster economic activity within the region and attract new residents. MetroCOG will provide a support network for neighborhood and merchant associations that can sustain locally led and managed initiatives. MetroCOG will also leverage local economic development offices and chambers of commerce to support the needs of local businesses with technical assistance, grant opportunities, and strengthening connections. Working with both business associations and municipalities will spur growth throughout the region.

4.3.a Foster Local Associations

Provide a support network for neighborhood and merchant groups and encourage locally led and managed initiatives.

The first step in building a robust support network for neighborhoods and merchant groups, is to inventory existing local business associations and networks. This inventory can also identify current strengths, gaps, and opportunities for collaboration. MetroCOG will collaborate with the [Bridgeport Regional Business Council \(BRBC\)](#), local Chambers of Commerce,

and existing business/merchant associations; these organizations will also serve as anchors for local engagement. Once identified, MetroCOG can provide support to local groups by developing strategies for public space, infrastructure, and design improvements, and by assisting with federal and state grant opportunities to fund these strategies.

Support could also take the form of training, workshops, and marketing resources. Workshop topics can include organizing merchant associations, community event planning, and funding opportunities. These workshops could prioritize accessibility for neighborhood representatives, small business owners, and volunteers, and could offer materials in multiple languages when needed. MetroCOG can also leverage partnerships with local chambers of commerce, art councils, and nonprofit economic development organizations to build momentum and extend the reach of neighborhood business associations to attract visitors from across the region. MetroCOG could help facilitate collaboration across municipalities to help strengthen local identity, expand foot traffic for small businesses, and create an approach to economic development that is aligned with community priorities.

SUCCESS STORY: BRIDGEPORT DOWNTOWN SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT (DSSD)

DSSD is committed to enhancing the public perception of downtown through preserving and developing local businesses and overseeing the appearance and security of downtown. MetroCOG will partner with DSSD to develop an inventory of local business associations. Learn more at [Colorful Bridgeport](#).

4.3.b Provide Support to Small Businesses

Leverage local economic development offices and chambers of commerce to support the needs of local businesses with technical assistance, grant opportunities, and strengthening connections.

To effectively support small businesses across the region, MetroCOG can provide technical assistance to municipal economic development offices, chambers of commerce, and regional partners. MetroCOG can assist partners with resource directories for business planning support, marketing assistance, and workforce development services including contact information, eligibility criteria, and program offerings.

MetroCOG can work with local economic development offices and chambers to create a system to track and broadcast funding opportunities, including state and federal grants, low-interest loan programs, and tax credit opportunities. MetroCOG can help provide program overviews, summaries of eligibility requirements, and application deadlines. MetroCOG could also host grant writing workshops, in partnership with chambers of commerce and small business development councils, that guide small business owners through application processes and help them strengthen proposals.

SUCCESS STORY: SMALL BUSINESS DIGITAL AID

Between 2023 and 2025, MetroCOG contracted with professional digital consulting firms to provide website design, marketing, and digital services at no cost to small businesses and non-profit organizations in the region. Funding was made available for this program via the United States Economic Development Administration (US EDA) and the Connecticut Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD). Recipients used the web services to improve their online presence, operations, and services impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital service improvements increased small business resiliency, provided growth opportunities, and increased engagement between businesses and their customers.

Strengthening connections and networking for small businesses will help increase opportunities for collaboration, customer growth, and peer learning. MetroCOG can support municipalities and chambers by participating in or facilitating business roundtables and networking events that bring entrepreneurs together with potential partners. MetroCOG can also explore partnerships with workforce and education providers to link small businesses with interns, apprenticeships, and training pipelines that strengthen both business capacity and regional job opportunities.



Figure 4.11: Pequot Library, Fairfield
Colliers

4.4 FOSTER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Supporting higher education and workforce development will increase economic activity by retaining skilled workers across all sectors of the region. Developing linkages between education and employment will reduce outflow to other regions and will strengthen the region's current workforce. MetroCOG will encourage partnerships between higher education, employers, municipalities, and businesses to spur job growth. MetroCOG will also help foster labor force skill development in coordination with workforce partners through job training, education programs, and apprenticeships.

4.4.a Higher Education and Internships

Encourage partnerships between universities, employers, municipalities, and businesses to spur job growth.

MetroCOG should foster partnerships between higher education and employers, as these institutions can respond to the needs of the region's employers by providing related resources and programs to prepare new graduates for employment within the region. Colleges and universities in the region include the University of Bridgeport, Housatonic Community College, Fairfield University, and Sacred Heart University. Higher education is crucial to regional economic development that supports expanded employment opportunities for graduates, growth in innovation, and the ability to educate the future workforce.

Internships help young students become familiar with employment opportunities within the region and develop the skills for future occupations. MetroCOG should assist municipalities, major employers, schools, business associations, and other key stakeholders in enhancing internship opportunities, including at-risk youth. MetroCOG and member municipalities can collaborate on strategies to increase the number of students involved in these opportunities, such as career fairs and job shadowing.

What do you think can help businesses grow?

"Encourage vocational / technical training in high schools -- even students going to college can benefit from learning to "use their hands."

- Trumbull

4.4.b Workforce Training

Foster labor force skill development in coordination with workforce partners through job training, education programs, and apprenticeships.

Training programs for non-college and college-bound students are crucial to the success of the region's workforce. MetroCOG should coordinate with the region's communities to foster labor skill development for youth and the existing workforce through non-profits and vocational training. An increase in these skills will play a role in driving economic growth in the region.

Non-profit organizations benefit youth by providing programs that develop leadership and community engagement skills.

Groundwork Bridgeport (GWB) is a non-profit organization with a mission to improve the physical environment of the City of Bridgeport by developing

community-based partnerships that empower people and businesses to promote environmental, economic, and social well-being. Through its youth programs, **GWB engages high-school students in hands-on environmental programs that build leadership skills and foster community pride.** For example, its service-learning (Urban Fellows) program equips high school students with project management and civic engagement skills through incorporating learning with hands-on involvement in community improvement projects.

Vocational training, within high schools, community colleges, and other training programs, can provide students with success in the workforce by fostering a variety of skillsets. Examples include carpentry, plumbing, technology, cosmetology, and more. Apprenticeships for trade-specific programs can also give youth the opportunity to earn and gain technical experience before becoming officially certified or licensed. As technology spurs a resurgence in manufacturing throughout the region, related technical skills will continue to be valuable. MetroCOG and member municipalities should continue to support opportunities for youth and the existing workforce to enhance the skills necessary to support economic growth. People re-entering the workforce also benefit from investment in these resources.

The WorkPlace prepares people for careers while strengthening the workforce for employers. They administer workforce development funds and coordinate providers of job training and education programs. Some programs include:

- **The American Job Centers** operate as one-stop employment centers in Bridgeport, Stamford, Ansonia, and Derby. American Job Centers help transform job seekers into qualified candidates and connect them with employers of all sizes.
- **Platform to Employment®** creates a pathway to opportunity for job seekers by helping the unemployed get back to work while providing employers with a new avenue to a skilled workforce.
- **The Health CareRx Academy** provides tuition assistance and support to help participants obtain a career in the growing healthcare field.
- **The WorkPlace Reentry Programs** offer comprehensive career development, job readiness, occupational skills training, and employment opportunities to individuals pre and post-release from incarceration.

Figure 4.12: Silverman's Farm, Easton Colliers



4.5 PROMOTE ARTS, CULTURE, & TOURISM

Promoting arts, culture, and tourism throughout the region is crucial to creating enjoyable and comfortable experiences. MetroCOG will support placemaking opportunities by encouraging functional and attractive public spaces that engage community members and visitors. MetroCOG will also assist in promoting cultural and historical assets by supporting organizations with making surrounding communities aware of these attractions. Creating third places that promote the community, arts, and local business will serve as venues for social connection and programming. Finally, MetroCOG will help strengthen the regional economy by supporting agricultural producers, promoting access to agricultural products, supporting farmer's markets, and preserving farmland. These strategies will add to the vibrancy and activity of the region's economy.



Figure 4.13: Mural in Downtown Bridgeport

4.5.a Placemaking

Guide improvements to public spaces aimed at fostering functional, attractive, and engaging areas for community members and visitors.

Placemaking actively creates dynamic, vibrant, and interesting public spaces that people care about and are drawn to. This includes food trucks, street festivals, and public art. In denser downtowns and town centers, placemaking is supported by providing quality public transportation, pedestrian-oriented streets, and a diversity of businesses. Most importantly, placemaking strategies support the culture and social identity of a place and aim to attract people, while contributing to their happiness and well-being. Placemaking should help people re-imagine everyday spaces, such as parks, waterfronts, neighborhoods, streets, and public buildings.

The Project for Public Spaces (PPS) has identified **four key qualities of successful places**. They are:

- **Access and Linkages:** Is the place well-connected, visible, and easy to access?

- **Comfort and Image:** Is the place safe, clean, and welcoming?
- **Uses & Activities:** Does the place have a variety of activities and uses and is it activated throughout the day and week?
- **Sociability:** Does the place encourage social interaction and bring together people from different backgrounds?

MetroCOG will assist communities with evaluating their downtowns, town centers, and public spaces for potential placemaking strategies. As the agency is involved with a variety of redevelopment activities for housing and commercial development, as well as transportation improvements, neighborhood improvements should also be integrated in this work. Strategies include:

- Address neighborhood needs, such as green space, community centers, and new public spaces that reflect community character.
- Historic preservation by integrating old structures with new uses is a way to increase both economic and social revitalization.
- Repurpose old buildings into cultural hubs such as art centers or museums.
- Turn vacant industrial sites into green spaces and parks.
- Integrating plazas, retail, and public art, with an emphasis on safety through lighting, seating, and shelter.

What factors impact your quality of life in the region?

“Arts, culture, and entertainment opportunities to socialize and build community.”

-Stratford

“Walking instead of driving. Biking safely on roads. Music/entertainment. Pickleball courts. Beach. Good hiking places”

-Fairfield

4.5.b Tourism & Cultural Assets

Support, assist, and promote cultural and historical assets and organizations in better integrating attractions with their surrounding communities. Emphasize the importance of the urban core and regional centers.

MetroCOG can promote and preserve arts, cultural and historical assets by working with organizations and communities to implement strategies that balance tourism growth with conservation. Regional branding strategies discussed in 4.1.b should also highlight unique attractions that increase the region’s tourism base. MetroCOG can assist municipalities and non-profits with applying for grants to preserve historic sites and support the arts, and with improving wayfinding and visitor amenities. MetroCOG can also work with municipalities to foster partnerships connecting local artisans, restaurants, small businesses, and historical sites

to create an authentic experience for visitors to the region. Assisting municipalities with promoting events and festivals throughout the region will be important as well. Better understanding visitor trends and preferences through data collection and analysis will lead to improved marketing strategies, which may further increase tourism and economic activity.

The Western Regional Tourism District is responsible for enhancing economic growth through regional branding and supporting attractions to drive tourism. They encourage local businesses, such as hotels, restaurants, and museums to be included in marketing efforts, and support programs that increase public art. For example, murals have transformed blighted spaces and should be highlighted as a unique attraction. By working with the Western Regional Tourism District, MetroCOG can assist with highlighting attractions and recreational assets.

4.5.c Third Places

Develop a regional strategy to support and promote community, arts, and local business spaces that serve as venues for social connection and programming.

Third places are social environments outside of the home (first) and work (second) where people gather, connect, and relax. They serve as neutral, open places where residents from different backgrounds with shared interests can interact. Third places are open to anyone, should be within walking distance of home or work, and should be inexpensive or free to access. Some examples include public areas such as town squares or parks, while others include commercial spaces such as cafes, libraries, or bars. They are important to vibrant communities as they have social and mental health benefits, increasing interaction among neighbors and people of a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds.

Third Places are crucial to economic vitality as they support development and benefit local businesses. Cafes and restaurants in or around mixed-use developments attract community members and encourage new residents to move to these areas. They also serve as spaces where entrepreneurs and local business leaders can share ideas and resources. As third places gain reputation as areas for establishing community connections and enhancing quality of life, they help attract and retain talent in the immediate area and can have large economic impacts on the region.

MetroCOG can work with municipalities and communities to increase the number of third places within the region and improve the infrastructure in areas where social interactions occur. Creating an inventory of third places and understanding trends can help inform future strategies for developing new places. Fostering connections with business owners and community members that support third places is crucial for understanding necessary public investments, developments, and potential regulation updates that keep the functionality of the space intact for the long-term. MetroCOG can encourage municipalities to amend regulations to encourage the development of more accessible shared spaces where pedestrians can gather. Developers can be incentivized through density bonuses and other tools to include these spaces, while municipalities can acquire spaces publicly.

MetroCOG can also encourage municipalities to update their POCDs to incorporate goals and actions to create and maintain third places. For new developments and the reuse of underutilized sites, MetroCOG can encourage mixed-use developments that include third places, such as parks, cafes, and restaurants. Pocket parks take up minimal space while providing recreation opportunities accessible to the public near residential and commercial development. Encouraging recreational areas, shops, markets, and plazas where people can socialize and exchange ideas will positively affect economic growth within the region.



Figure 4.14: Shaggy Coos Farm, Easton Colliers

4.5.d Agricultural Developments

Strengthen the regional economy by supporting agricultural producers, promoting access to agricultural products, supporting farmer’s markets, and preserving farmland.

Within the MetroCOG region, Easton and Monroe are the most rural municipalities and have the most agricultural uses. MetroCOG can support agricultural producers by identifying agriculturally valuable land and working with municipalities to ensure agriculture remains a viable use.

Farmer’s markets should also be supported as they encourage the use of local food and increase awareness for local businesses. An option to both increase access to agricultural products and support

farmers’ markets is to deploy mobile markets that travel within the Region.

Urban farming plays an important role in the regions’ agricultural production, which helps to reduce food insecurity and develop sustainable communities. MetroCOG has recently partnered with the University of Connecticut to identify potential vacant lands for urban farming within the City of Bridgeport to link farmers with viable lots.

In Bridgeport, the Green Village Initiative provides hand-on educational trainings to create a more equitable and resilient food system in the community. They operate the Reservoir Community Farm and Garden, as well as a youth leadership program. Ensuring access to healthy foods and

education for all community members is a critical step in developing a more sustainable region. This initiative aligns with the workforce training strategy in 4.2.b.

MetroCOG can assist farmers in the region through promotion of local agricultural events and farmers markets via social media and the agency website. MetroCOG can also support municipalities with the exploration and development of community gardens, which are linked to reducing food expenses in the community, help increase property values, and can transform underutilized parcels. In the 2026 POCD update, MetroCOG hosted engagement and outreach events at farmers markets across the region and plans to continue this strategy of engagement in the future.

MetroCOG can also assist municipalities with securing state grants from the CT Department of Agriculture (DoAg) for farm sustainability and agriculture viability. For farm sustainability, the Farm Transition Grant helps farmers and producers by expanding products and selling more CT grown items, while the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program supports activities in the middle of the supply chain, such as aggregation, processing, and distribution. For agricultural viability, the Food System Capacity Building Grant helps secure funds to get food to more people and fight food insecurity.

FARMER'S MARKETS IN THE REGION

Bridgeport: [The Bridgeport Farmer's Market Collaborative](#) hosts markets in the Black Rock, Downtown, East Side, and Reservoir neighborhoods, as well as through Alliance for Community Empowerment, Bridgeport Hospital, and St. Vincent's Hospital.

Fairfield: Markets are held in Greenfield Hill and at [Sherman Green](#).

Monroe: A market is held at the [Monroe Town Green](#).

Stratford: A market is held at [Paradise Green](#).

Trumbull: A market is held at [Twin Brooks Park](#).

The region's rural areas contribute to the region and provide open space, agricultural land, permeable surface, and clean watersheds for the community. Rural and agricultural areas within the region will be protected from incompatible development and sprawl, despite the increase in economic development and revitalization elsewhere, as they are distinct spaces for these purposes. Farmland within the region will also be preserved.

5 GOVERNMENT & CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE

GOAL: DELIVER TRANSPARENT, EFFICIENT & FISCALLY SOUND REGIONAL SERVICES

Each Municipality in the region provides diverse services and spaces for their residents. MetroCOG helps municipalities improve the efficiency of local services by evaluating opportunities for regional solutions focused on quality and economies of scale. These services are complemented by the range of options for people in the region to come together and strengthen their civic infrastructure and community cohesion. This work is guided by the Chief Elected Officials of each municipality that make up the MetroCOG Board – an entity that facilitates connections across the region.

This is a new chapter, as the 2015 Plan did not have a chapter or goal dedicated to government and civic infrastructure. This chapter reflects current and future services that MetroCOG is well-positioned in providing to members.

OBJECTIVES

- Assist municipalities with recreational amenities and active recreation infrastructure
- Assist municipalities with physical infrastructure and service improvements
- Provide regional services to community members and municipal staff on a range of initiatives

INTRODUCTION

MetroCOG has continued its role in assisting municipalities with strengthening the accessibility, transparency, and responsiveness of the public services they provide, and to identify and secure funding for a range of services, infrastructure, and local amenities. Often, MetroCOG first must evaluate the feasibility of the region having a role in a specific service, and the type of role that the agency would have. This role aligns with statutes that govern the development of the RPOCD (CGS Chapter 127 § 8-35a), as it requires that the plan include recommendations for “**parks, playgrounds, recreational areas, schools, public institutions, public utilities... and**

such other matters as, in the opinion of the council, will be beneficial to the area.”

Although there is some overlap with other chapters of this plan, the purpose of this chapter is to focus on MetroCOG’s role in how it assists local governments with providing services to constituents. Further, as a publicly funded agency, MetroCOG is required to provide a forum for civic and community engagement in our policies, programs, and plans. This chapter makes recommendations for how MetroCOG can assist in building a strong, accessible civic infrastructure, both locally and regionally.

WHAT IS CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE?

The RAND Corporation’s Report “Defining and Measuring Civic Infrastructure” defines civic infrastructure as *“the places, policies, programs, and practices that undergird strong communities and foster civic engagement.”*¹. For the purposes of this plan, MetroCOG has extended the definition to include *shared spaces and networks that bring people together, fosters inclusion, and supports an increase in an overall high quality of life.*

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE C&D PLAN

This chapter includes strategies for “Healthy People and Places” and “Connected and Inclusive Communities”.



Figure 5.1: Penfield Pavilion, Fairfield
Colliers

KEY INFLUENCES ON THE CREATION OF GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

LAND USE & ZONING

The location of community assets, utilities and infrastructure is typically guided by local zoning and land use policies, which MetroCOG does not have oversight over, but can provide input and support. MetroCOG helps municipalities enhance their community assets, utilities, and infrastructure through technical assistance, capacity building, grant applications and securing funding for, as well as strengthening local access to these places.

Digital access to government information is also necessary for a strong civic infrastructure. Through MetroCOG's GIS program, municipal parcel viewers are publicly accessible. These viewers allow for easy, digital access to zoning information, assessment data, FEMA flood hazard zones, and physical characteristics. As a service shared among the six member municipalities, the Regional GIS Service achieves economies of scale and efficiency.

TABLE 5.1: PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT GOALS, GOVERNMENT & CIVIC RESOURCES

	State C&D Plan	2015 RPOCD	Bridgeport	Easton	Fairfield	Monroe	Stratford	Trumbull	# of Local Plans	# Local High Priority
Provide High Quality Recreational Amenities									6	3
Improve Active Recreation Infrastructure									5	1
Create/Extend/Upgrade Sewers in Targeted Locations									4	3
Efficient Government/Permitting Processes									4	3
Increase Broadband Internet/WiFi Access									4	2
Foster Art and Cultural Activities/Centers									5	3
Promote Art in Public Spaces									3	0
Conduct a Municipal Space Needs Study									4	3

Legend POCD Goal **Priority Goal** See Goal Alignment Appendix (C) for Methodology

LOCAL & REGIONAL PLANS

“Providing High Quality Recreational Amenities” was a goal/objective shared by the six local POCDs. “Improving Active Recreation Infrastructure” also received significant support. These goals align with MetroCOG’s assistance to municipalities in enhancing public spaces as detailed in Table 5.1.

Although arts and cultural activities are included in this table, detailed objectives and strategies are discussed in the Economic Development chapter, based on feedback from the Economic Development Focus Group.

Regional Plans that have influenced this chapter include the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan and Comprehensive Climate Action Plan which are discussed in detail in the Natural Resources section.

STATE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT POLICIES PLAN

The Goal to “Deliver Transparent, Efficient & Fiscally Sound Regional Services” aligns with the State C&D Plan’s Vision of “Connected and Inclusive Communities” - specifically, the target of “Supporting regional planning and shared services efforts among municipalities and regional councils of government.” Other targets that complement the objectives and strategies in this chapter include:

- Developing coordinated capacity and infrastructure for solid waste management
- Increasing equitable broadband access across the state
- Investing in neighborhood-supported placemaking that offers multiple benefits to improve quality of life



Figure 5.2: Monroe Farmer's Market
Colliers

GOVERNMENT & CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE FOCUS GROUP

Members identified municipal (and departmental) differences in priorities, timing, funding, and bandwidth as barriers that slow down collaboration. MetroCOG has a role in helping to facilitate opportunities for potential collaboration. MetroCOG staff participates in the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security Region One's Emergency Support Function. This structure was identified as a framework that could be utilized to share knowledge across municipalities and departments, especially among smaller municipal departments. As MetroCOG provides grant application and coordination services, Focus Group members recommended that MetroCOG continue to assist with planning for regional applications.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

This section provides a summary of key feedback from community members.

At the Downtown Bridgeport Farmer's Market, visitors commented on the need for more youth programming and accessible recreational spaces. In Trumbull, visitors shared similar preferences – they thought that Trumbull lacked youth focused entertainment, dining, and shopping venues. In Stratford, visitors commented that the Town offered few youth-focused facilities. Dog parks and playgrounds were suggested as effective third spaces.

People would also like to see more community focused events. At the Bridgeport Alliance Farmer's Market, several visitors identified the need for improved third places - from the need for more indoor, family-friendly activities in walking distance to inclusive and accessible public spaces. Visitors to the Stratford Farmer's Market placed a high value

What public services or enhancements would you like in your community?

(examples included improved recreation options, composting services, educational programs, improved mowing/snow removal etc.)

“improved road repair, more traditional arts, history and civic programming”

-Fairfield resident

“more educational programs re: town resources”

-Monroe resident

“improved education on environmental practices, composting services, more activities for the young”

-Stratford resident

on community spaces, including the YMCA, senior center and Sterling House. However, attendees commented that these spaces may need renovations. In Trumbull, residents supported indoor swim facilities.

Throughout these events, visitors to the MetroCOG table were proud of their community’s identity – in Fairfield, an attendee supported renaming the former Fairfield Metro station to the Fairfield Black Rock Station, which they thought was more consistent with the neighborhood’s character. At the Alliance Farmer’s Market, several visitors expressed appreciation for the Bridgeport community and the friendly people. At the Downtown Bridgeport Farmer’s Market, visitors thought that the City’s rich history and diversity should be preserved and celebrated.

The need for improved recreational areas was echoed by survey participants. Some of the

responses to the question **“What public services or enhancements would you like in your community?”** are highlighted above.

In addition to the comments highlighted above, participants also highlighted **the following positive aspects of their communities:**

“the Bigelow center is wonderful - we are so lucky to have it !” - Fairfield

“I am actually really happy with the options in Stratford. I think it’s a town with a lot to offer.” - Stratford

The inclusion of composting services and improved mowing/snow removal elicited a lot of support for composting and food scrap diversion; some participants expressed support for municipally-provided snow removal.



Figure 5.3: Nature & Arts Center, Trumbull
Colliers

OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

5.1 ASSIST MUNICIPALITIES WITH RECREATIONAL AMENITIES & ACTIVE RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE

The location of community assets, utilities and infrastructure is typically guided by local zoning and land use policies. As mentioned, MetroCOG does not have oversight over community assets and infrastructure, however can assist with technical assistance, capacity building, grant applications, and securing funding, and helping to strengthen access.

Digital access to government information is also necessary for a strong civic infrastructure. Through MetroCOG's GIS program, municipal parcel viewers are publicly accessible. These viewers allow for easy, digital access to zoning information, assessment data, FEMA flood hazard zones, and physical characteristics. As a service shared among the six member municipalities, the Regional GIS Service achieves economies of scale and efficiency.

What community spaces or improvements would you like in the region?

(examples included improved senior/youth spaces, increased or enhanced open and recreational spaces, upgraded school facilities etc.)

“Gathering places that are safe, comfortable, informal and welcoming in places everyday life takes community members.”

-Easton resident

“They are adequate in my town for our purposes. We have a great park and walking trail. Lake Zoar is close by and accessible.”

-Monroe resident

“Free recreation options for community interactions. Places to run, courts/fields for sports...amenities like fountains or bathrooms”

- Trumbull resident

5.1.a Create a Recreation Asset Inventory

Create and maintain a regional GIS database of recreational areas and share usage data, condition assessments, and gap analyses with municipalities.

MetroCOG has assisted municipalities with developing GIS applications that inventory brownfields, recreational trails, and tree canopy and will continue to maintain and update these platforms as needed. State agencies also rely on MetroCOG to provide GIS inventories and usage data of assets in the region, such as commuter parking lots. A recreation asset inventory is the first step in identifying the assets that are in need of upgrades and planning for future enhancements (5.1.b).

5.1.b Recreational Amenities Planning & Enhancements

Provide guidance on modernizing aging amenities, such as accessibility features, lighting, surfacing, and signage, and promote using environmentally sustainable materials.

A common theme from Focus Group members was the challenge of managing, maintaining, and modernizing recreational assets. MetroCOG’s role as a clearinghouse for both GIS inventories and best practices can assist members with modernizing facilities in need of upgrades. As grant opportunities are announced, MetroCOG staff can assist with determining the eligibility and applicability of recreational assets for funding.

Regionally, MetroCOG can also work with municipalities on a coordinated effort to inventory recreational amenities, parks, and open spaces



Figure 5.4: Knowlton Park, Bridgeport
Colliers

and identify deficiencies. The assessment can include a recreation asset/park classification system, development of service area standards, and identification of physical barriers to access. The final assessment should be added to the regional GIS clearinghouse and maintained to help shape future land use decisions and mitigate park and open space gaps.

Member expertise should also be leveraged in this process. For example, the [Town of Fairfield's 2022 Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#) provided the Town with a framework to plan for recreation improvements over 10 years. The regional assessment can utilize elements of Fairfield's process.



Figure 5.5: Stratford Town Hall
Peralta Design/ Steve Cartagena

5.2 ASSIST MUNICIPALITIES WITH PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

In addition to opportunities for recreation, municipalities provide a range of services and infrastructure to their residents, with many having a direct impact on local welfare and quality of life. For example, in The Town of Stratford's POCD, they recommend that the Town **“Collaborate with neighboring and regional municipalities and organizations to consolidate duplicate services where feasible.”** MetroCOG can serve as a forum for members to coordinate and share best practices, and to identify opportunities to achieve efficiencies in services and infrastructure. As grant opportunities are announced that align with the strategies below, MetroCOG staff can assist municipalities with determining eligibility for upgrading and improving all types of infrastructure, with a priority placed on projects that benefit multiple municipalities.



Figure 5.6: Monroe Town Hall
Peralta Design/ Steve Cartagena



Figure 5.7: Trumbull Town Hall
Peralta Design/ Steve Cartagena

5.2.a Municipal Buildings

Assist municipalities with upgrading buildings and critical/vulnerable infrastructure, while leveraging opportunities for redevelopment and resilience.

Municipal buildings include town/city halls, schools, libraries, public works, emergency services, and community/senior centers. Critical facilities that support response and recovery efforts are also housed in municipal buildings and include police, fire, dispatch, emergency medical services, and emergency management operations centers. At a minimum, all these buildings require maintenance and major updates periodically. Buildings in hazard prone areas (such as floodplains) may have greater maintenance needs and vulnerability to hazards, which can be reduced with resiliency improvements.

Energy efficiency and lower energy costs in municipal buildings benefit the environment and reduce municipal expenditures on energy. The Town of Trumbull’s 2014 POCD recommended that the Town “Incorporate alternative energy sources and conservation measures when community facilities are built, upgraded or expanded.” MetroCOG can assist municipalities with identifying strategies to increase building efficiency and resiliency as capital improvements occur. MetroCOG can also assist with grants that support the modernization and improvements of town buildings, as well as holistic improvements beyond reducing energy costs.

5.2.b Upgrade Sewers & Stormwater Infrastructure

Provide mapping, planning, and funding support to separate combined sewers, reduce inflow and infiltration, and implement green infrastructure across a variety of contexts. Facilitate coordination and integration with transportation projects.

The region's municipalities have different complexities of stormwater management infrastructure. Focus Group members from different topic areas and municipalities identified stormwater management as a significant concern. This was especially true when considering any type of new development that would reduce pervious surfaces and increase the amount of runoff. These concerns can roughly be grouped as follows, and generally align with the map above (Figure 5.8).

Rural Conservation/Suburban: areas that do not have any sewer infrastructure. Any development must provide on-site treatment of all wastewater/septic.

Suburban/Suburban Transition/Urban/Regional Centers: areas with stormwater systems that are separate from the sanitary system. At a minimum, these systems must be maintained and

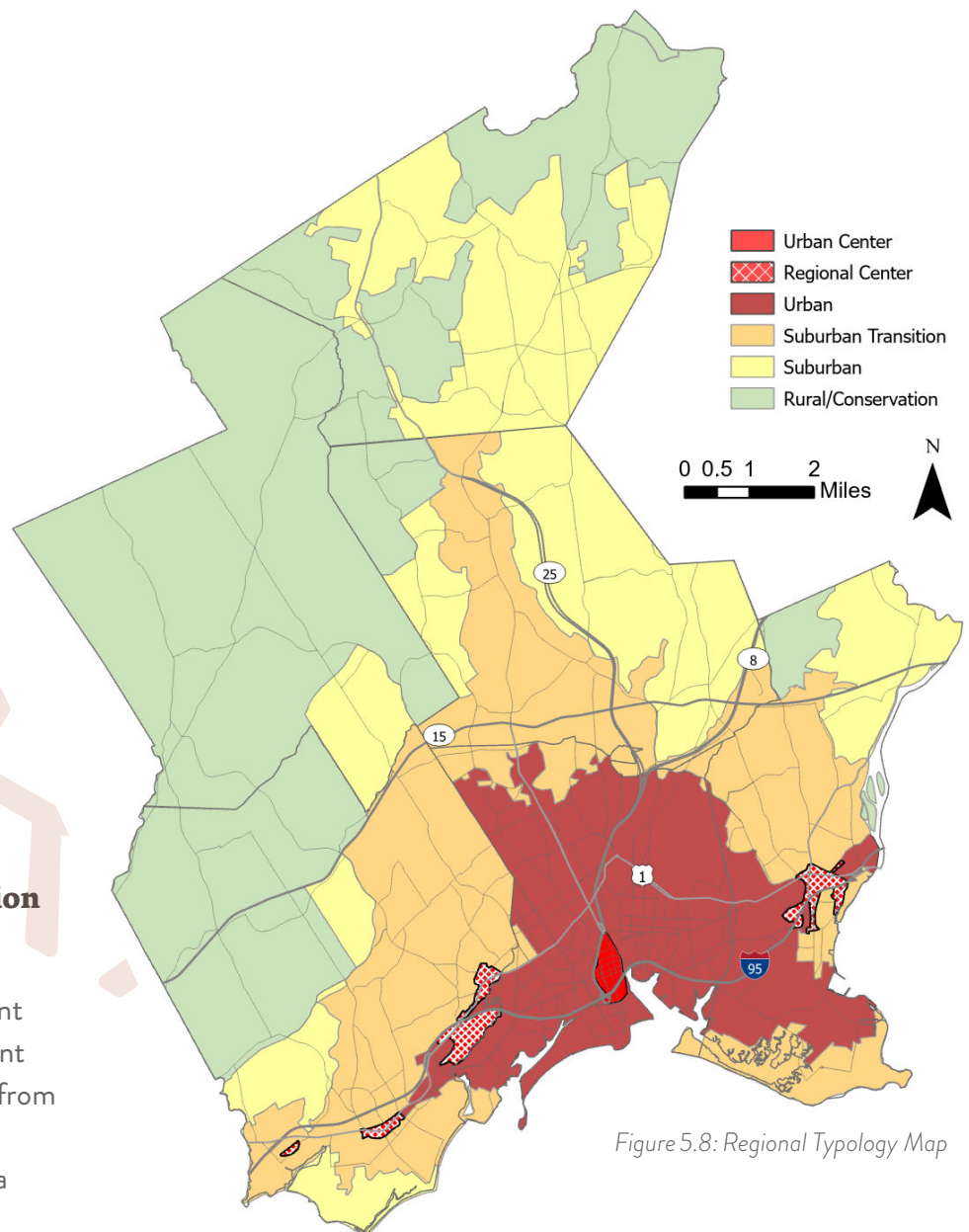


Figure 5.8: Regional Typology Map

periodically upgraded which requires significant investment. Focus Group members shared concerns about capacity limitations, inflow and infiltration, and the age of infrastructure. New development must be balanced with these constraints. In Trumbull, stormwater is ultimately treated by Bridgeport's Water Pollution Control Authority.

Urban/Urban Center: areas in the City of Bridgeport with combined sewer systems. The City shares the same concerns as areas with existing separated systems but has an additional set of challenges (and investment needs) due to combined sewer overflows.

In addition to GIS mapping, MetroCOG staff participate in several statewide MS4 Working Groups and shares information and best practices with municipalities, including a comprehensive shared COG MS4 approach. The agency has also assisted in funding green infrastructure projects. Green infrastructure can be integrated into some transportation projects but will not solve the entirety of the problem. Further, transportation projects provide an opportunity for sewer separation in areas with combined systems, but often at a significant cost increase.

In summary, there is no single solution to stormwater management challenges in the region. MetroCOG anticipates providing dedicated staffing for regional MS4 coordination which will improve regional coordination and identify shared regional challenges and solutions. However, maintaining, upgrading, and expanding stormwater management infrastructure requires significant long-term local investment.

5.2.c Explore Broadband Internet Access

Work alongside State and private investment to support increasing internet access across the region by targeting infrastructure gaps.

As the region shifts to having more online based services for permits, applications, registrations, and payment portals, internet access and digital literacy are necessary to utilize these services. Outside of participating in and utilizing government services, internet access is also critical for accessing necessities and amenities. Gaps in broadband infrastructure (and thus in internet access), impact the amount of opportunity available to both residents and businesses. The ConneCTed Communities Grant hosted by CTDEEP has provided funds for the “construction and deployment of broadband infrastructure” in our region. As MetroCOG assists with transportation improvements and site redevelopment, broadband access and upgrades should be integrated into these projects if funding permits. MetroCOG can also assist municipalities with identifying funding sources to provide internet access and digital literacy to underserved communities.

5.2.d Waste Reduction & Diversion

Provide grant support and technical assistance for the implementation of composting programs, unit-based pricing, the regionalization of waste services, and other innovative waste management strategies. Explore the possibility of a regional waste management plan.

In 2023, CTDEEP released the [Comprehensive Materials Management Strategy Amendment](#), which updated the 2016 plan in response to the 2022 closure of the Material Innovation and Recycling Authority's Hartford Resources Recovery Facility.

Since the closure of the facility, 40% of solid waste in Connecticut is estimated to be diverted to outside of the state. In the MetroCOG Region, it is likely that less waste is diverted out of state due to the Waste-to-Energy Facility in Bridgeport, but the region should take advantage of opportunities to reduce waste, such as those identified in the plan amendment:

- Extended producer responsibility for packaging
- Organics reuse and diversion

Each municipality in the region handles solid waste differently. This includes municipal curbside pickup

SUCCESS STORY: FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS CAFETERIA COMPOSTING

In 2025 Fairfield began to offer composting at all its public schools. The program has been very successful at its 11 elementary schools and is coupled with a program where uneaten food is donated to local food rescue organizations to fight food insecurity. Compost waste is picked up by Curbside Compost. Food waste diversion was initially implemented at the high school level, however, student participation was low. Focus was shifted to establishing food waste initiatives at the elementary school level to strengthen the habit of waste separation at a younger age. Elementary school level education on recycling and composting helps establish these habits at an early age.

of solid waste, contracting with a private hauler, or directly disposing of waste at a transfer station. MetroCOG should work with municipalities to identify strategies to reduce/divert waste, such as through composting, food scrap diversion, and opportunities to improve the efficiency of waste collection overall.



Figure 5.9: Fairfield Town Hall
Peralta Design/ Steve Cartagena

5.3 PROVIDE REGIONAL SERVICES TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND MUNICIPAL STAFF ON A RANGE OF INITIATIVES

MetroCOG municipalities provide different sets of services and the expertise of local staff is often specific to the needs of the municipality. MetroCOG staff helps to fill in the gaps in areas where municipalities have less experience in or are not part of their regular responsibilities – such as pursuing federal grants, GIS deployment, and planning studies that include multiple jurisdictions. The following strategies were identified as ways that MetroCOG could assist municipalities. In many cases, MetroCOG will serve as a forum where municipal staff and local stakeholders can share their knowledge with one another.

5.3.a Assist Municipalities with Technical Assistance, Peer Sharing, & Capacity Building

Provide support for municipal employees on a variety of issues, and coordinate networking opportunities between member municipalities, neighboring COGs, and regions.

MetroCOG hosts established Conservation, Transportation, Transportation Safety, GIS, and Economic Development/Brownfields Advisory Committees, as well as project-specific Advisory Committees that convene during the tenure of a project. These efforts should continue, and the agency should establish future Advisory Committees and Working Groups as members identify opportunities where local coordination and networking can be improved.

MetroCOG regularly provides grant research, writing and review assistance to member municipalities which helps with local capacity building. After a grant is awarded, MetroCOG may serve as the fiduciary, project manager, or participate on the project team. As funding opportunities by federal and state agencies, or by private organizations are announced, MetroCOG staff will distribute the information to members. Due to familiarity with local goals and priorities, MetroCOG staff often identify opportunities for regional coordination, often increasing the competitiveness of the application.

5.3.b Centralized Information Hub

Create and maintain shared online portals with ongoing infrastructure projects, timelines, datasets, and impacts.

Access to reliable data on public infrastructure and improvement projects helps communities attract developers and businesses, and supports governmental transparency, since this information is publicly available. MetroCOG maintains a publicly available and interactive Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which provides the public with timelines, costs, and funding sources for projects that receive federal transportation funds.

MetroCOG should improve the transparency of other programs the agency is responsible for administering, such as through interactive dashboards and regular website updates, and should continue to identify opportunities to act as a central location for regional and local planning information.

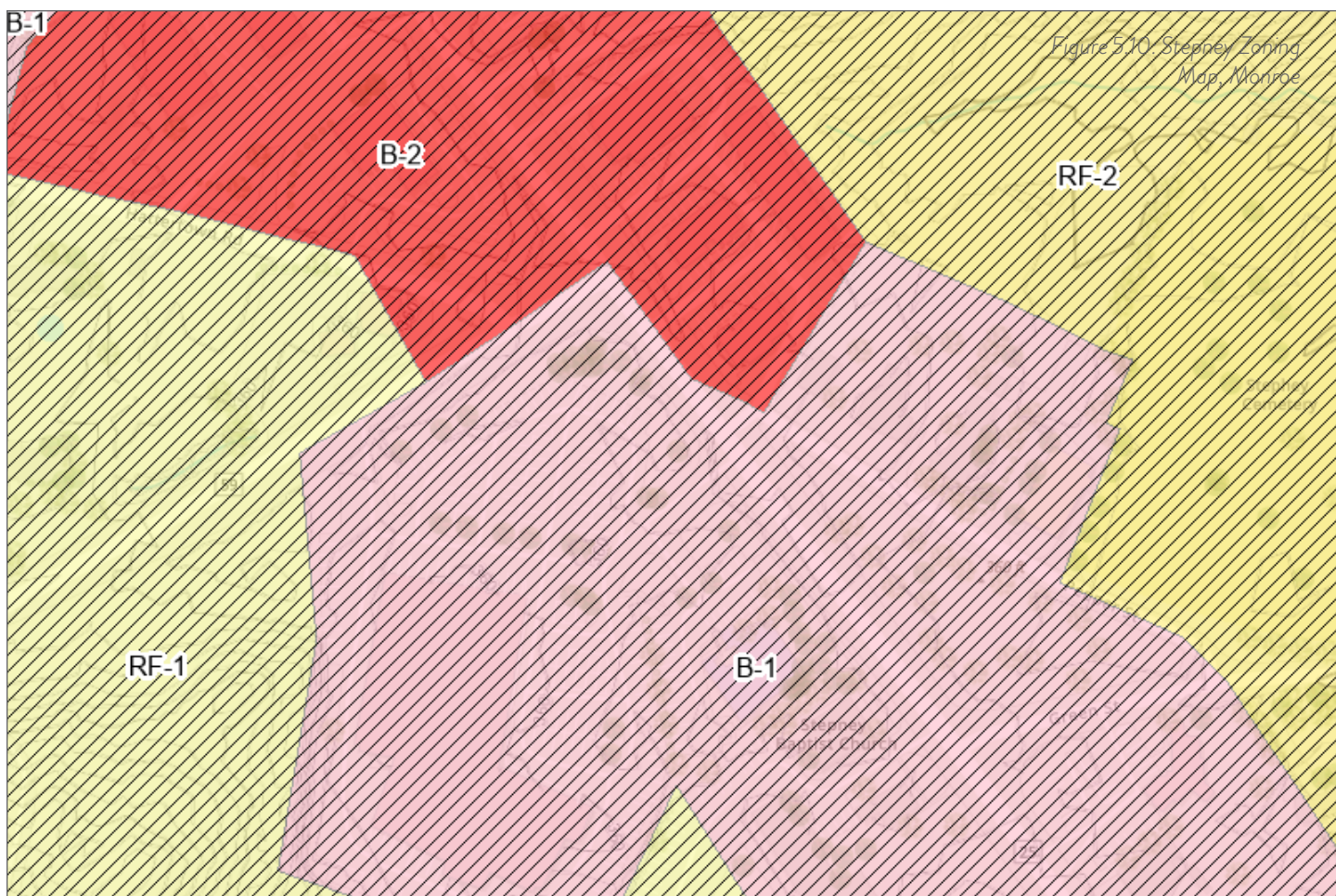


Figure 5.10: Steepley Zoning Map, Monroe

5.3.c Formalize Reporting Standards & Communication Protocols

Ensure municipalities communicate project updates to facilitate efficient project delivery.

MetroCOG administers and/or serves as the fiduciary for a variety of funding streams, such as the EPA's brownfields program and the State of Connecticut's Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP). The agency is responsible for ensuring that these funds are efficiently utilized for projects that benefit residents, workers, and visitors to the region's municipalities. The best demonstration of a project's importance is efficient and on-time project initiation, delivery, and completion. If a project faces delays, these issues must be regularly communicated to the MetroCOG staff member responsible for the program.

5.3.d Continue to Expand the Regional GIS & Document Management Systems

Utilize ArcGIS and Laserfiche to maintain municipal datasets and develop applications to support municipal initiatives to streamline tasks and enhance public outreach.

The MetroCOG GIS Program provided the infrastructure and policy framework for implementation of a Regional GIS in 2012. Core services include public facing as well as internal GIS Web/Mobile applications and cloud-based GIS Enterprise data services. The GIS Program assists municipalities with a variety of needs and levels of effort. At a large scale, periodic procurement of and analysis of aerial imagery provides municipalities

with up-to-date data for assessment purposes. More routinely, staff assist with developing both standalone and mapping applications for specific purposes.

Several municipalities have utilized MetroCOG's Laserfiche document management software to aid with contract management as well as facilitate public access to town documents. For example, in Monroe, residents can now access septic as-builts and well completion reports directly through the Town's GIS viewer via Laserfiche. In Trumbull, residents are able to access Town Clerk maps electronically through a secure, paywalled portal. Implementation of these services has realized economies of scale and reduced some of the time burden on municipal staff in deploying and administering the service. MetroCOG should continue to identify opportunities to expand these services and assist with deployment where possible.

5.3.e Emergency Management Assistance

Coordinate with and support municipalities and state agencies in emergency planning, preparation, and recovery.

MetroCOG has realized economies of scale in emergency management assistance by maintaining the Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (NHMP). This FEMA-required document has ensured both local and regional natural hazard preparedness for well over a decade. The planning process required MetroCOG to coordinate across jurisdictions to facilitate a shared, data-driven emergency planning, response, and recovery framework. Community resilience, defined as having the capacity or ability to withstand and recover from a hazardous event, is imperative to short-term individual and long-term regional sustainability. MetroCOG will continue to guide municipalities with resilience-based land-use decisions by avoiding dangerous areas such as fire prone habitats, unstable slopes, and floodplains. MetroCOG will also provide technical assistance and data for future Hazard Mitigation Plans.

As with natural hazards, the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020 validated that emergency planning, preparation, and recovery is not limited by municipal boundaries or regional jurisdictions. The Region's municipalities realize the importance of regional coordination. For example, Easton's POCD recommends that the Town "Participate with local



Figure 5.11: Easton Volunteer Fire Company
Colliers

organizations and regional agencies on emergency preparedness and response.”

Throughout the pandemic, MetroCOG staff participated in state, regional, and local response and recovery efforts. This cooperation minimized duplication of efforts and ensured more effective distribution of resources. The agency’s history of participating in the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security Region Five’s Emergency Support Function provided a framework for this coordination.

In planning for emergencies, MetroCOG achieves efficiencies since the agency is responsible for maintaining the Region’s Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan. This regional framework for disaster planning reduces burdens on local staff, since the plan covers the six municipalities in the region. MetroCOG should continue to work with municipalities in implementing the 2024 Natural Hazard Mitigation



Figure 5.12: Long Hill Fire Department, Trumbull
Colliers

Plan, including updating the plan when appropriate, and undertaking initiatives to prevent damage from natural hazards, protect property and infrastructure, and improve emergency preparedness within the region’s communities. For example, the Monroe POCD recommends strategic implementation of recommendations from MetroCOG’s Hazard Mitigation Plan.

5.3.f Education

Facilitate connections between communities, governments, and educational institutions. Work to assess education needs and opportunities for enrichment on a regional scale.

Plan Bridgeport recommended that the City: “Use schools, libraries, and community centers as community education and gathering centers to stimulate lifelong learning and intergenerational learning.” This recommendation is very applicable to

If there is anything you feel would be helpful for us to know about the region, please let us know:

“Fairfield has an outdoor gym, I think Easton would benefit from having more activities for adults to do with their children.”

-Easton resident

“Create some sort of new neighbor educational effort. For people who move into the region, share information about culture, history, development plans, and anything else that helps those newcomers see the inherent value of the region.”

-Fairfield resident

a region with several higher educational institutions, numerous arts and cultural spaces, and an aging population who may now have the time to take advantage of continuous education opportunities. Although the region’s young population is shrinking, youth enrichment programs are another opportunity to strengthen civic infrastructure.

Education and the availability of continuous education throughout a person’s life impact not only economic outcomes but also quality of life. The region’s educational institutions – public, private, and at all age levels have an enormous impact on the region’s quality of life. Partnerships between the Region and its educational institutions offer a range of potential opportunities.

As people gather to learn a new skill or increase their knowledge on a topic, they are sharing a common interest that strengthens social bonds and community cohesion. After a class or seminar

ends, this knowledge can be shared to benefit an entire community. The production and distribution of virtual educational materials can have a positive impact. MetroCOG has provided funding to municipalities to produce educational materials about pedestrian and bicyclist safety. These efforts should continue and expand to formal educational institutions. Education on a range of conservation topics for both municipal staff and residents were specifically highlighted by members of the Natural Resources Focus Group. Survey participants supported educational programs on composting, community gardening, and the environment. While this topic is explored further in the Natural Resources section, it is important to note here as well, as a potential opportunity for the region to explore.

5.3.g Food Security

Strengthen food security for the community members and coordinate with stakeholders in improving access to essential food items and supporting local farms and growers.

Food insecurity is a cross-cutting topic tied heavily to economic development, land use, transportation, housing and neighborhoods, and natural resources. Viewing access to food and household essentials through the lens of community health and benefits ensures the development of regional resilience, improved health outcomes, and a strong sense of place.

Strengthening local food networks through supporting local farms and growers who supply underserved communities, exploring school and afterschool nutrition programs at community colleges, and investing in neighborhood food banks, pantry programs, and grass root distribution programs are key ways to address food insecurity in the region, according to Fairfield Country's Community Foundation.

MetroCOG can connect member municipalities with grant opportunities such as the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program through the CT Department of Agriculture, and the Food System Building Grant, through the Department of Agriculture. MetroCOG can also explore mapping resources and connect members with organizations such as the Fairfield Country's

FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity is a significant issue for sensitive and vulnerable populations, low-income families, and individuals at all stages of life. When rent becomes unaffordable and people are struggling to meet basic expenses, food insecurity and the ability to purchase essential groceries also become major challenges. These issues must be addressed as fundamental human needs, alongside stable housing. MetroCOG can support municipalities by collaborating with local and regional agencies to help residents gain reliable access to both food and housing, which are equally essential for long-term stability and quality of life.

Community Foundation, the United Way of Coastal and Western Connecticut, and Connecticut Foodshare.

Endnotes

1 Kaufman, Julia H., Melissa Kay Diliberti, Douglas Yeung, and Jennifer Kavanagh, *Defining and Measuring Civic Infrastructure*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2022. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA112-24.html.

CONCLUSION & IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION

This Chapter describes how the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (RPOCD) will be utilized by MetroCOG and member municipalities, as well as how it will be implemented and monitored. The tables from page 132 to page 140 detail the applicability of objectives and strategies to specific regional typologies, lead agencies for implementation, and the timeframe for implementation. This chapter also evaluates how the Plan is consistent with the State C&D Plan and CGS 8-35a.

REGULAR AND LONG-TERM USE OF THE PLAN

This RPOCD will serve as a policy guide for future decisions by the MetroCOG board and inform project selection and investment. While it is not legally binding on municipalities, the RPOCD should help guide members as they update their local Plans of Conservation and Development and future land use decisions.

The RPOCD is not a regulatory document – it is comprised of recommendations, graphic representations, and maps that are not binding on any participating municipality. Rather, the POCD should be used with other planning products to inform a range of regional and local decisions and investments related to conservation, housing, economic development, transportation, and governmental services. While zoning is an important tool for implementing policy, this plan should be used holistically with other planning products to guide and evaluate zoning regulations applicable to relevant typologies, rather than as a prescriptive mechanism that regulates uses.

The RPOCD will be aligned with future iterations of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (NHMP), and other regional plans. These documents provide opportunities to complement and further refine the goals, objectives, and strategies developed in the RPOCD.

MetroCOG will use the plan to inform technical assistance to municipalities on locally-lead grant applications. In addition to funding and investment, the RPOCD identifies policy areas where coordination is necessary between the Region and its six member municipalities, and in some instances of coordination beyond the region. Each community in the MetroCOG Region can choose to integrate these policy recommendations through existing planning mechanisms, such as local POCDs, zoning/land use regulations, and local programs or initiatives.

MetroCOG will utilize the RPOCD for these regularly occurring tasks:

- Inform land use referrals required under CGS 8-3b.
- Reference in developing letters for member municipalities and partner organizations.
- Guide future local and future grant application development.

- Assist municipalities in the day-to-day administration, interpretation, and application of the Plan and other regional planning efforts.

Over the long-term, MetroCOG will use the RPOCD to:

- Align the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (NHMP), and other plans with policies and investments identified in the RPOCD where appropriate.
- Inform the review of local Plans of Conservation and Development (CGS 8-23).
- Guide technical assistance MetroCOG may provide to municipalities when updating land use regulations.

MONITORING PROGRESS, COMMUNICATING SUCCESSES, & FUTURE UPDATES

MetroCOG anticipates annually reviewing the RPOCD to evaluate how the Plan's goals, objectives, and strategies align with the agency's work. Depending on the agency's workload, this review can be specific to a single focus area and could coincide with the preparation of plans related to this focus area (such as the MTP and TIP for transportation, CEDS for economic development, and NHMP for natural resources and government/civic infrastructure). In this manner, recommendations or

changes can be considered holistically with related planning products. Routine examination of the Plan in this context will help ensure that the planning program remains relevant to community needs and aspirations.

Regional and local staff should regularly meet to discuss implementation of the Plan, and to best align regional and municipal policies, to the extent appropriate and possible. Using regional platforms, such as the MetroCOG hosted Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC), Conservation Technical Advisory Committee (CTAC), and Brownfields, Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee (EDTAC) as a place to discuss best practices, members municipalities and stakeholders can peer share and bring expertise back to their communities (Strategies 5.3.a and 5.3.b in Government and Civic Infrastructure).

Throughout the POCD update, MetroCOG engaged with focus group members to refine the goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in the update. MetroCOG anticipates keeping focus group members apprised of large scale updates and progress associated with each focus area. RPOCD focus group members indicated they would be willing to attend a yearly forum to discuss plan implementation progress and share opportunities for additional collaboration.

The RPOCD is not a static document. If community attitudes change or new issues arise which are

beyond the scope of the current Plan, the Plan should be revised and updated accordingly.

How MetroCOG will monitor and communicate implementation of the RPOCD:

- Annually evaluate how the agency's work aligns with the Plan's goals, objectives, and strategies. The evaluation will be communicated in an annual report that highlights successes and notes areas that need improvement.
- Provide updates on the implementation of the Plan to applicable Advisory Committees and the MetroCOG Board (regular item on committee agendas).
- Maintain a list of current possible amendments, issues, or needs which may be a subject of change, addition, or deletion from the Plan.
- Host a yearly forum of Focus Group members to attend to provide updates on plan implementation and share opportunities for additional collaboration.

Where possible, MetroCOG will align communication of progress with existing methods, such as the agency's website, social media, and newsletter. The plan will be available on the agency's website and the storymap will be updated to highlight implementation and success stories. As needed, staff will assist in explaining the Plan and its relationship to development, investments, and other projects.

CONSISTENCY WITH STATE C&D PLAN

This section describes how the plan is consistent with CGS 8-35a and the State C&D Plan.

How the Plan aligns with CGS 8-35a

The regional plan shall identify areas where it is feasible and prudent:

- (1) to have compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns and land reuse
- (2) to promote such development patterns and land reuse

Alignment:

- Objective 2.2: Prioritize investment for development and redevelopment within established neighborhoods over the construction of new neighborhoods in undeveloped/greenfield areas
- Objective 3.1: Improve and Expand Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Accessible Infrastructure
- Objective 3.4: Enhance Public Transit
- Objective 4.2: Support Economic Growth Through Site Reuse & Redevelopment

Shall note any inconsistencies with the following growth management principles:

Alignment:

(A) Redevelopment and revitalization of regional centers and areas of mixed land uses with existing or planned physical infrastructure:

- Objective 2.2: Prioritize investment for development and redevelopment within established neighborhoods over the construction of new neighborhoods in undeveloped/greenfield areas
- Objective 4.2: Support Economic Growth Through Site Reuse & Redevelopment

Alignment:

(B) expansion of housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs

- Objective 2.1: Provide an equitable balance of housing options at a variety of price points across the region

Alignment:

(C) concentration of development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options and land reuse:

- Objective 2.2: Prioritize investment for development and redevelopment within

established neighborhoods over the construction of new neighborhoods in undeveloped/greenfield areas

- Objective 3.1: Improve and Expand Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Accessible Infrastructure
- Objective 3.4: Enhance Public Transit

Alignment:

(D) conservation and restoration of the natural environment, cultural and historical resources and traditional rural lands:

- Objective 1.4: Preserve and Enhance Natural Functioning Systems
- Objective 2.3: Encourage the use of sustainable and energy-efficient building methods and safeguard rural lands, environmentally valuable areas, and areas vulnerable to natural hazards from incompatible development
- Objective 4.5: Arts, Culture, and Tourism

Alignment:

(E) protection of environmental assets critical to public health and safety:

- Objective 1.2: Protect Water and Coastal Resources, Watersheds, and Ensure Water Quality and (F) integration of planning across all levels of government to address issues on a local, regional and state-wide basis.
- Objective 5.2: Assist municipalities with physical infrastructure and service improvements

- Objective 5.3: Provide regional services to community members and municipal staff on a range of initiatives

Alignment:

The plan of each region contiguous to Long Island Sound shall be designed to reduce hypoxia, pathogens, toxic contaminants, and floatable debris in Long Island Sound.

- Objective 1.2: Protect Water and Coastal Resources, Watersheds, and Ensure Water Quality

How the Plan aligns with the State C&D Plan's Vision for Connecticut's Future:

A Thriving Economy: Connecticut will have a flourishing and diverse economy that leverages our strategic location, existing infrastructure, and natural and cultural assets.

- **Primarily aligns with** Economic Development Goal: Develop a Thriving & Resilient Regional Economy where Prosperity is Shared by All

Stewardship of Resources: Connecticut's natural, cultural, and historic resources will be carefully and responsibly used and managed to bolster their ability to withstand disruptions and ensure their long-term quality and viability.

- **Primarily aligns with** Natural Resources Goal: Preserve, Protect, Enhance & Promote the Region's Environmental Resources

Housing for Current and Future Residents: Connecticut will have a variety of housing types in vibrant, diverse communities across the state that are able to meet residents' needs and are affordable at all income levels and all stages of life.

- **Primarily aligns with** Housing and Neighborhoods Goal: Provide housing variety to accommodate the needs of all community members

Healthy People and Places: Connecticut will offer communities that enable the health and physical, social, and mental wellbeing of residents of all incomes, races, genders, ethnicities, abilities, and ages

Aligns with multiple goals, objectives, and strategies:

- Natural Resources, Objective 1.2: Protect Water and Coastal Resources, Watersheds, and Ensure Water Quality
- Housing & Neighborhoods, Objective 2.1: Provide an equitable balance of housing options at a variety of price points across the region .

- Transportation and Mobility Goal (3), Advance a Safe, Reliable, Connected, and Accessible Regional Transportation System

- Government & Civic Infrastructure:

- * Objective 5.2: Assist municipalities with physical infrastructure and service improvements (includes 5.2.b, upgrades to sewers/stormwater infrastructure and 5.2.d, waste reduction/diversion)

- * Strategy 5.3.g, Food Security Strategy

Connected and Inclusive Communities: Connecticut will foster and support unique, diverse, and inclusive communities that are well-connected with each other and greater Northeast megaregion.

Aligns with multiple goals, objectives, and strategies:

- Transportation and Mobility Goal (3), Advance a Safe, Reliable, Connected, and Accessible Regional Transportation System
- Government & Civic Infrastructure Goal (5), Deliver Transparent, Efficient & Fiscally Sound Regional Services

EXPLANATION OF THE MATRIX (GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES)

The Plan's goals, objectives and strategies are detailed in the following table. Many objectives and strategies are applicable throughout the region; however, the table indicates if objectives and strategies are applicable to specific typologies. This table will be used as the framework to evaluate future progress. As a 10-year planning document, the objectives and strategies developed through the planning process can be implemented over the short- and medium-term but must be sustained over the long-term. For example, elements of the strategy to "Partner with local open space stakeholders for improved coordination and collaboration on open space management" can be implemented over the next year by working with land trusts, municipalities, and other stakeholders to utilize the existing Conservation Technical Advisory Committee to collaborate on open space in the region. Continuing this collaboration as a periodic agenda item at these meetings will ensure that this coordination is sustained over the long-term. Products delivered through this coordination will also vary in time-frame: improved mapping of open space can be accomplished in the short- or medium-term but will require long-term maintenance for meaningful impact.

MetroCOG's Board of Directors and staff are primarily responsible for implementing the objectives and strategies in this plan and MetroCOG

is anticipated to serve as the lead agency for implementation. As the agency's core function is to assist member municipalities, the support and partnership of municipal leadership and staff are critical to implementing the bulk of the plan's strategies. The matrix notes where additional partnerships should be anticipated. These include the private sector (P), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and state (S) and federal (F) partners. For example, the strategy to "Support development of a mix of housing options that will ensure that residents can remain within the community as their housing needs change throughout their life cycle" will require municipal approval to build housing and the participation of the development community to produce this housing. A mix of housing options to respond to an individual's life cycle can be best achieved through a mix of private sector (P) and non-governmental organization (NGOs) - as well as state (S) and federal (F) resources.

As the RPOCD's recommendations are implemented throughout the MetroCOG Region, new mechanisms to implement other strategies are anticipated. New partnerships, strengthened relationships with community organizations and federal, state, and local incentives will further realize the overarching goals of the RPOCD.

TABLE 6.1: NATURAL RESOURCES

GOAL 1: PRESERVE, PROTECT, ENHANCE & PROMOTE THE REGION'S ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Objective	Strategies	Typology(s)						
1.1 Improve & Expand Access to Open Spaces Within the Region	1.1.a Provide regional open space planning and policy guidance Develop open space priorities for the region and promote consistent zoning and land use policies.	UC	RC	UA	ST	S	R	W
	1.1.b Verify regional mapping data, and partner with member municipalities to evaluate open space needs Conduct regional inventories, provide up-to date regional hazard messaging, map access inequities, identify priority locations, and share data with partners.	UC	RC	UA	ST	S	R	W
	1.1.c Explore regional connectivity and public access in cross cutting focus areas Coordinate trail, greenway, waterfront, and Blueway networks.	UC	RC	UA	ST	S	R	W
	1.1.d Pursue funding and resource coordination Pursue regional and federal grants, explore regional funding pools, and provide technical assistance.	UC	RC	UA	ST	S	R	W
	1.1.e Partner with local open space stakeholders for improved coordination and collaboration on open space management Serve as a coordinator and technical resource to align efforts across municipal boundaries.	UC	RC	UA	ST	S	R	W
	1.1.f Explore opportunities to program and promote open space on a regional scale Leverage the region's outdoor and coastal assets to provide greater opportunities in recreation and tourism.	ALL						
1.2 Protect Water and Coastal Resources, Watersheds, and Ensure Water Quality	1.2.a Ensure planning aligns with watershed boundaries rather than municipal borders Coordinate planning and policy development across all municipalities and jurisdictions within regional watersheds.	ALL						
	1.2.b Provide data mapping and monitoring efforts Provide data mapping and act as a central hub for collecting, organizing, and analyzing water-related data.	ALL						
	1.2.c Support and share protective land use regulations Provide member municipalities with model ordinances compiled from best practices.	ALL						

TABLE 6.1: NATURAL RESOURCES

GOAL 1: PRESERVE, PROTECT, ENHANCE & PROMOTE THE REGION'S ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Objective	Strategies	Typology(s)
1.3 Explore and Implement Green Infrastructure (GI), Low Impact Design (LID) and Renewable Energy (Resource Efficiency)	1.3.a Promote and share standards for GI, LID, and renewable energy Discuss and share best practices with insight from industry professionals and state leaders.	ALL
	1.3.b Identify priority retrofit areas and locations for GI/LID (critical infrastructure) and renewable energy & Pursue funding for LID/GSI grants Aid member municipalities in applying for implementation and planning grants at the state and federal level.	ALL
	1.3.c Integrate GSI/LID into planning initiatives Integrate LID/GSI into transportation projects and ensure communication with experts in the field.	ALL
	1.3.d Explore Regional Procurement/Cost Sharing Facilitate conversations among members to discuss cost sharing initiatives and collective bargaining for materials, services, and design.	ALL
1.4 Preserve and Enhance Natural Functioning Systems	1.4.a Plan holistically at the ecosystem level Ensure a balance of preservation with appropriate use by integrating areas of ecological significance into regional plans.	ALL
	1.4.b Identify and maintain important areas Compile and build a regional natural resource inventory (ex. wetlands, critical habitat, floodplains) that can be used regionally.	ALL
	1.4.c Promote best management practices for municipalities Provide guidance on best management practices for municipal staff.	ALL
	1.4.d Provide model ordinances related to ecological systems Aid municipalities with understanding ecological protections.	ALL
	1.4.e Promote compact development to ensure smaller footprints and less impact to land cover/use Identify and map underutilized areas for redevelopment potential and provide model zoning ordinances.	ALL
1.5 Prioritize Conservation Education	Establish and develop regional toolkits for the community Establish community driven toolkits aimed at stewardship and ensure accessible materials.	ALL
	Coordinate partnerships across municipal boundaries (i.e. the Long Island Sound) and leverage existing educational networks to avoid duplication Establish a peer share network to best serve large scale resources.	ALL
	Connect with non-traditional partners to promote stewardship and citizen science Offer incentives for community participation, trainings, and engagement.	ALL

TABLE 6.2: HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

GOAL 2: PROVIDE HOUSING VARIETY TO ACCOMMODATE THE NEEDS OF ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Objective	Strategies	Typology(s)						
2.1 Provide an equitable balance of housing options at a variety of price points across the region	2.1.a Housing Variety Support development of a mix of housing options that will ensure that residents can remain within the community as their housing needs change throughout their life cycle.	ALL						
	2.1.b Housing Accessibility Support universally accessible housing near a range of transportation options. Work with local officials and developers to identify incentives and appropriate requirements for the development of affordable and mixed-income housing accessible to transit and a mix of uses, including employment centers.	UC	RC	UA	ST	S*	R	W
	2.1.c Sensitive/Vulnerable Populations Work with municipalities and service providers to ensure housing for sensitive and vulnerable populations, including those experiencing housing instability or homelessness.	ALL						
	2.1.d Outreach Support Support in the development and distribution of public information on best practices, municipal responsibilities, and partnerships for developing accessible and affordable housing.	ALL						
2.2 Prioritize investment for development and redevelopment within established neighborhoods over the construction of new neighborhoods in undeveloped/greenfield areas	2.2.a Mixed Use and Corridor Opportunities Support higher density development along major roadways and assist municipalities with technical resources to expand mixed-use transit-oriented districts.	UC	RC	UA	ST	S	R	W
	2.2.b Middle Housing, Infill Development, and Adaptive Reuse Work with communities to identify vacant and underutilized sites within existing residential or mixed-use areas and assist in expanding housing opportunities.	UC	RC	UA	ST*	S	R	W
	2.2.c Preservation of Historic Sites Assist with methods to ensure historic forms and sites throughout the region are valued, maintained, and protected from incompatible developments.	ALL						
	2.2.d Support Placemaking in Neighborhoods Support strategies that strengthen the community cohesion of residential areas.	ALL						
* Limited applicability in this typology								

TABLE 6.2: HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

GOAL 2: PROVIDE HOUSING VARIETY TO ACCOMMODATE THE NEEDS OF ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Objective	Strategies	Typology(s)
2.3 Encourage the use of sustainable and energy-efficient building methods and safeguard rural lands, environmentally valuable areas, and areas vulnerable to natural hazards from incompatible development	2.3.a Ensure Environmental Sustainability Support municipalities in environmentally sensitive areas with limited infrastructure (i.e. sewers) by identifying sustainable housing solutions	ALL
	2.3.b Conservation Design & Low Impact Development Encourage communities to utilize conservation design and low impact development principles in new developments and subdivisions to preserve sensitive natural areas and open space (i.e. stormwater management through green infrastructure), such as critical watersheds, forested, and agricultural land.	ALL
	2.3.c Green Home Design Work with communities and developers to encourage and share green building design standards and identify incentives.	ALL
	2.3.d Residential Resilience to Natural Hazards Identify hazard mitigation strategies to strengthen resilience of housing and better protect the region's residents from the destructive impacts of sea level rise and other hazards.	ALL
2.4 Provide Leadership in Housing Planning to Municipalities	2.4.a Regional Approach to Housing Growth Assist municipalities in understanding their role in the regional and statewide housing needs context and promote active inter-municipal housing planning cooperation	ALL
	2.4.b Provide Data and Analysis Balance multi-jurisdictional planning for housing with natural resource protection and infrastructure limitations through mapping support and data analysis across municipalities.	ALL
	2.4.c Assess Infrastructure Capacity Assess and prepare for infrastructural needs as a result of redevelopment (i.e. transportation assets, wastewater treatment, and utilities).	ALL
	2.4.d Promotion of Best Practices Provide education on State and local housing responsibilities and processes to promote the importance of access to housing.	ALL
<i>* Limited applicability in this typology</i>		

TABLE 6.3: TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

GOAL 3: ADVANCE A SAFE, RELIABLE, CONNECTED, AND ACCESSIBLE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Objective	Strategies	Typology(s)						
3.1 Improve and Expand Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Accessible Infrastructure	3.1.a Regional Active Transportation Planning Develop a focused regionwide approach to active transportation planning built around the principles of safety, comfort, placemaking, ADA and accessibility, and sustainability.	ALL						
	3.1.b Sidewalks and Curb Ramps Assist municipalities with creating an inventory of the local sidewalk network through GIS layers and databases. Coordinate with CTDOT to align with their efforts on state roads. Utilize gap analyses to inform and prioritize future construction, resurfacing, and mitigation of sidewalk obstructions.	UC	RC	UA	ST	S*	R	W
	3.1.c Reconnect Communities Assist municipalities in identifying and remedying infrastructural barriers that inhibit access and connection. Identify and assist with the implementation of pedestrian cross-access pathways in and around existing sites and planned developments.	UC	RC	UA	ST	S	R	W
3.2 Eliminate Roadway Fatalities and Serious Injuries	3.2.a Regional Complete Streets Planning Integrate Complete Streets principles into regional planning, design, and project implementation to ensure the safe accommodation of all road users, particularly vulnerable users.	ALL						
	3.2.b Regional Safety Action Planning towards Vision Zero Continue to update the Regional Safety Action Plan through planning and demonstration projects along the High Injury Network and at Crash Hot Spots locations.	ALL						
	3.2.c Intersection Improvements Assist municipalities in implementing targeted intersection interventions including innovative intersection designs, improved signal systems, and pedestrian crossing amenities. Provide education on traffic calming measures.	ALL						
* Limited applicability in this typology								

TABLE 6.3: TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

GOAL 3: ADVANCE A SAFE, RELIABLE, CONNECTED, AND ACCESSIBLE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Objective	Strategies	Typology(s)						
3.3 Improve and Expand Regional Greenways	3.3.a Regional Greenways Expansion Update the regional trail inventory and create recommendations to address gaps, maintenance needs, and envision future extensions. Integrate greenways with surrounding neighborhoods and identify potential connections to multi-regional, statewide, and nationwide greenway networks.	UC	RC	UA	ST	S	R	W
	3.3.b Urban Greenways Identify and assist with the implementation of new greenways using underutilized space and infrastructure including old rail lines, underutilized roadways, and wide rights-of-way.	UC	RC	UA	ST	S	R	W
3.4 Enhance Public Transit	3.4.a Roadway Infrastructure Upgrades Pursue and advance roadway improvements to enhance transit service operations and facilitate an enhanced transit user experience for first and last mile travel.	UC	RC	UA	ST	S*	R	W*
	3.4.b Coordination with Partner Agencies Assist transit providers with conducting studies, service upgrades, and by coordinating with other transit organizations within and beyond the region. Support the provision of transit access to vulnerable communities. (UC, RC, UA, ST, limited applicability in S, and W)	UC	RC	UA	ST	S*	R	W*
	3.4.c Transportation Demand Management and Micromobility Educate municipalities, employers, and community members on non-vehicular mobility, transit, and micromobility. Promote public transportation to areas of interest around transit stops.	ALL						
3.5 Parking Reform and Congestion Management (UC, RC, UA, ST, limited applicability in S, and W)	Regional Parking Guidance: Develop strategies, design guidance, model ordinances, and provide technical assistance to municipalities on parking operations. (UC, RC, UA, ST, limited applicability in S, and W)	UC	RC	UA	ST	S*	R	W*
	Access Management: Provide guidance and assistance to municipalities on solutions to reduce curb cuts and improve connections between lots. (UC, RC, UA, ST, limited applicability in S, and W)	UC	RC	UA	ST	S*	R	W*

* Limited applicability in this typology

TABLE 6.4: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL 4: DEVELOP A THRIVING & RESILIENT REGIONAL ECONOMY WHERE PROSPERITY IS SHARED BY ALL
OBJECTIVE 4.1: REGIONAL APPROACH

Objective	Strategies	Typology(s)						
4.1 Regional Approach	4.1.a Update & Restructure the Region's CEDS Update and improve the Region's Comprehensive Economic Development Plan. Ensure update promotes intra-regional cooperation as opposed to competition.	ALL						
	4.1.b Develop a Strong Regional Brand & Establish a Regional Marketing Campaign Establish a brand strategy and marketing campaign that identifies regional strengths, target markets, and emphasizes unique offerings to locals and visitors	ALL						
	4.1.c Seek Economic Development District (EDD) Status Pursue designation as an Economic Development District (EDD) to develop a roadmap for regional collaboration, leverage private and non-profit sector involvement, and strengthen the region's capacity to plan and implement economic development initiatives.	ALL						
	4.1.d Showcase Development Opportunities Across the Region Explore opportunities for greater exposure of development opportunities through events and digital marketing.	UC	RC	UA	ST	S	R	W
4.2 Support Economic Growth Through Site Reuse & Redevelopment	4.2.a Activate Vacant & Underutilized Sites Guide and support the redevelopment and activation of underutilized sites, such as brownfields and greyfields, for new development, adaptive re-use, placemaking, and quality of life improvements.	UC	RC	UA	ST	S	R	W
	4.2.b Compact Growth Encourage mixed use districts, targeted density, transit-oriented developments and overlay zones, and incentive-based zoning to create a well-connected and pedestrian-oriented environment that supports local businesses.	UC	RC	UA	ST	S	R	W
4.3 Small Business Development/ Entrepreneurship	4.3.a Foster Local Associations Provide a support network for neighborhood and merchant groups and encourage locally led and managed initiatives. (All typologies)	ALL						
	4.3.b Provide Support to Small Businesses Leverage local economic development offices and chambers of commerce to support the needs of local businesses with technical assistance, grant opportunities, and strengthening connections.	ALL						

* Limited applicability in this typology

TABLE 6.4: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL 4: DEVELOP A THRIVING & RESILIENT REGIONAL ECONOMY WHERE PROSPERITY IS SHARED BY ALL
OBJECTIVE 4.1: REGIONAL APPROACH

Objective	Strategies	Typology(s)
4.4: Education & Workforce Development	4.4.a Higher Education and Internships Encourage partnerships between universities, employers, municipalities, and businesses to spur job growth.	ALL
	4.4.b Workforce Training Foster labor force skill development in coordination with workforce partners through job training, education programs, and apprenticeships.	ALL
4.5 Arts, Culture, & Tourism	4.5.a Placemaking Guide improvements to public spaces aimed at fostering functional, attractive, and engaging areas for community members and visitors.	ALL
	4.5.b Tourism and Cultural Assets Support, assist, and promote cultural and historical assets and organizations in better integrating attractions with their surrounding communities. Emphasize the importance of the urban core and regional centers.	ALL
	4.5.c Third Places Develop a regional strategy to support and promote community, arts, and local business spaces that serve as venues for social connection and programming.	ALL
	4.5.d Agricultural Developments Strengthen the regional economy by supporting agricultural producers, promoting access to agricultural products, supporting farmer's markets, and preserving farmland.	ALL
* Limited applicability in this typology		

TABLE 6.5: GOVERNMENT & CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE

GOAL 5: DELIVER TRANSPARENT, EFFICIENT & FISCALLY SOUND REGIONAL SERVICES

Objective	Strategies	Typology(s)
5.1 Assist municipalities with recreational amenities and active recreation infrastructure	5.1.a Create a Recreation Asset Inventory Create and maintain a regional GIS database of recreational areas and share usage data, condition assessments, and gap analyses with municipalities.	ALL
	5.1.b Recreational Amenities Planning and Enhancements Provide guidance on modernizing aging amenities, such as accessibility features, lighting, surfacing, and signage, and promote using environmentally sustainable materials.	ALL
5.2 Assist municipalities with physical infrastructure and service improvements	5.2.a Municipal Buildings Assist municipalities with upgrading buildings and critical/vulnerable infrastructure, while leveraging opportunities for redevelopment and resilience.	ALL
	5.2.b Upgrade Sewers and Stormwater Infrastructure Provide mapping, planning, and funding support to separate combined sewers, reduce inflow and infiltration, and implement green infrastructure across a variety of contexts. Facilitate coordination and integration with transportation projects.	UC RC UA ST S R W
	5.2.c Explore Broadband Internet Access Work alongside the state and private investment to support increasing internet access across the region by targeting infrastructure gaps.	ALL
	5.2.d Waste Reduction and Diversion Provide grant support and technical assistance for the implementation of composting programs, unit-based pricing, the regionalization of waste services, and other innovative waste management strategies. Explore possibility of regional waste management plan.	ALL
* Limited applicability in this typology		

TABLE 6.5: GOVERNMENT & CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE

GOAL 5: DELIVER TRANSPARENT, EFFICIENT & FISCALLY SOUND REGIONAL SERVICES

Objective	Strategies	Typology(s)
5.3 Provide regional services to community members and municipal staff on a range of initiatives	5.3.a Assist Municipalities with Technical Assistance, Peer Sharing, and Capacity Building Provide support for municipal employees, and coordinate networking opportunities between member municipalities, neighboring COGs, and regions.	ALL
	5.3.b Centralized Information Hub Create and maintain shared online portals with ongoing infrastructure projects, timelines, datasets, and impacts.	ALL
	5.3.c Formalize Reporting Standards and Communication Protocols Ensure municipalities communicate project updates to facilitate efficient project delivery.	ALL
	5.3.d Continue to Expand the Regional GIS and Document Management Systems Utilize ArcGIS and Laserfiche to maintain municipal datasets and develop applications to support municipal initiatives to streamline tasks and enhance public outreach.	ALL
	5.3.e Emergency Management Assistance Coordinate with and support municipalities and state agencies in emergency planning, preparation, and recovery.	ALL
	5.3.f Education Create better connections between communities, governments, and educational institutions. Work to assess education needs and opportunities for enrichment on a regional scale.	ALL
	5.3.g Food Security Strengthen food security for the community members and coordinate with stakeholders in improving access to essential food items and supporting local farms and growers.	ALL

** Limited applicability in this typology*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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