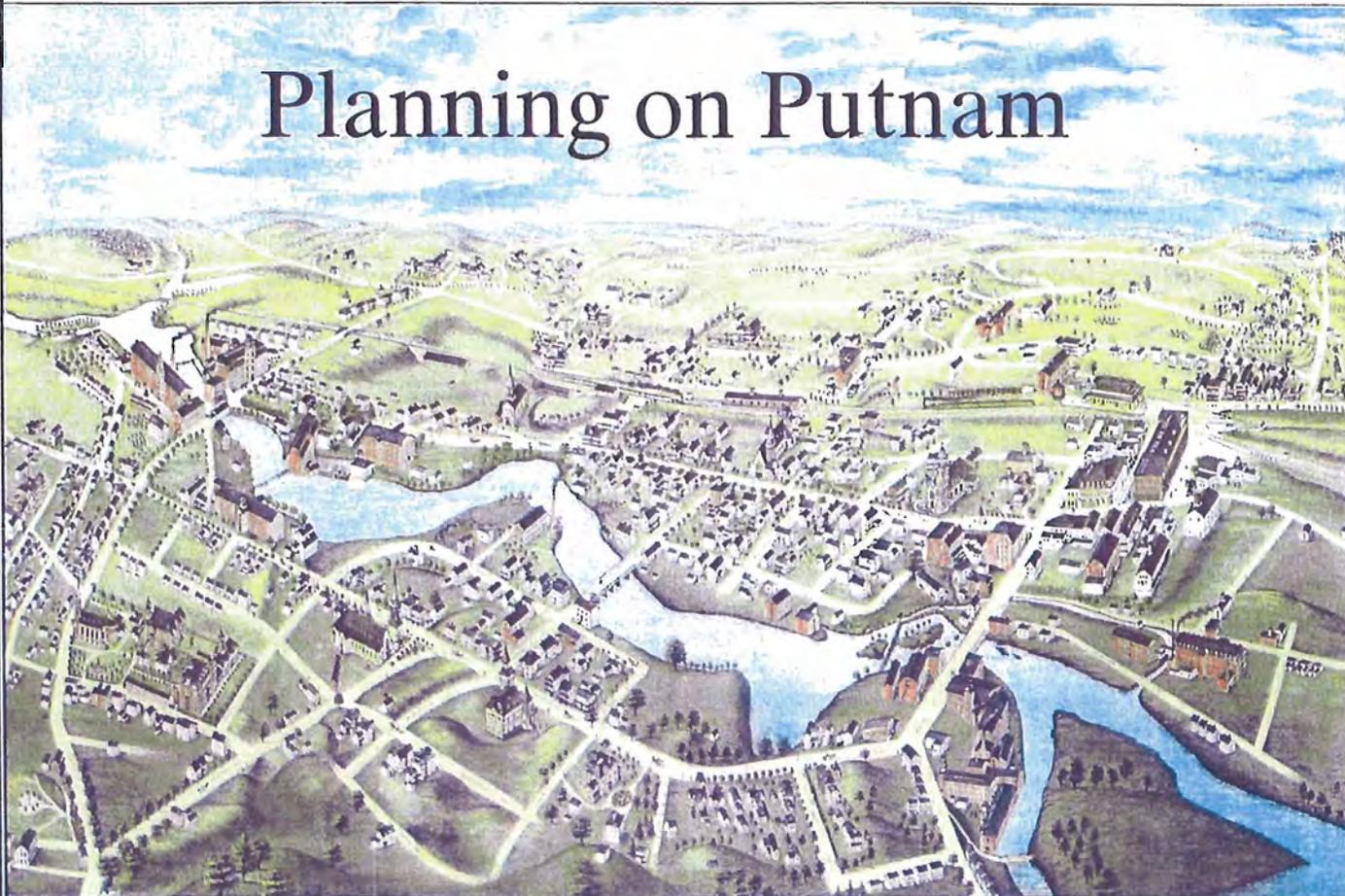




Planning on Putnam



TOWN OF PUTNAM

*Plan of
Conservation & Development*

2005

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Conservation & Development*



Adopted: August 22, 2005



Putnam Plan of Conservation and Development

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Putnam Plan of Conservation and Development

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1

OVERVIEW

Putnam was incorporated in 1855 by combining several villages and residential enclaves associated with textile manufacturing mills and a Norwich and Worcester railroad station. Putnam has changed over the last several decades – it is no longer the type of bustling mill town that transformed rural New England into the nation’s industrial leader. Despite economic hardship the Town has displayed remarkable resiliency, mainly due to a combination of factors that perhaps are not individually significant but collectively sustaining. The Town offers a stable, affordable residential base and an abundance of natural beauty and rural character. With a near-capacity industrial park, Day Kimball Hospital, a Superior Courthouse and a critical mass of big box retail Putnam is playing an increasing role as the region’s institutional, governmental and employment center. Access, now provided by I-395, is the primary reason.

As much as things seem to have changed, they have essentially stayed the same. Highway interchanges not mills and railroad stations now generate development. This is even true of residential development, for today’s population is willing to accept commuting times measured in hours rather than minutes, and increasingly Putnam residents are working elsewhere.

For the last few years, Putnam has played a more apparent role in Connecticut’s “Quiet Corner” as an antiques shopping destination. The success of the Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor has no doubt brought direct benefit to Downtown’s restaurants and specialty shops. While industry is primarily confined to the industrial park and commercial businesses string along most of the State routes, antique shops and tourism in general have allowed the period architecture and walkable scale of downtown to survive for the second time.

What remains of present day downtown and several large mill complexes immediately at its fringe are daily reminders of the 1955 flood which caused destruction of or major damage to 477 dwelling units, 26 stores and offices, and all the industries along the Quinebaug River. Total damage exceeded \$13 million. An urban renewal project spearheaded redevelopment of the area, including the construction of the Riverfront Commons shopping center.

Like many mill towns, Putnam can look a little tired in places, but with its rural charm and bucolic setting it is hard not to notice a town that twice has graced the pages of the New York Times – in one year.

Putnam wants to grow but not at the expense of its rural character and natural resources. It wants to raise its standard of living and levels of educational attainment without driving up housing costs and driving out residents. The need to strike this balance provides a perfect back drop for preparing a blueprint for the future in the form of a Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

**Summary of the Connecticut General Statutes
Section 8-23 – Plan of Conservation and Development**

The Planning Commission

- shall prepare (or amend) and adopt a plan of conservation and development at least once every ten years
- shall regularly review and maintain the Plan
- may adopt amendments to the Plan or parts of the Plan as it deems necessary

The Plan shall

- state policies, goals and standards for physical and economic development
- promote coordinated development and general welfare and prosperity
- recommend the most desirable uses of land
- promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing
- note inconsistencies with the state plan of conservation and development

The Plan may

- recommend locations for conservation and preservation of natural resources; road networks; extent of public utilities; and public buildings and grounds including parks and playgrounds
- recommend programs for implementation of the Plan
- include other programs, plans and recommendations which will benefit the municipality

Such a plan provides the framework that allows a community to understand the continuum of its physical growth and resource capacity. Connecticut General Statutes (Chapter 126, Section 8-23) require towns to prepare a POCD and review it at least every ten years so that trends can be monitored and policies reviewed. This process gives the community the opportunity to assess all aspects of past and future growth and then decide on how and in what manner it wants development and preservation to be achieved.

In other words planning provides a town with the opportunity to look at the “Big Picture”; to take the time to reflect on what the consequences have been of previous actions and decisions, while discussing options for continuing or changing its course of action.

Many communities treat planning as a perfunctory mandate, emphasizing individual components such as housing, encroachment, transportation, and land use rather than examining the interrelationships and correlation among these various components. This interrelated approach is the one used for preparation of the following Plan.

With this edition, which replaces a Plan prepared in 1989, Putnam has chosen to proactively manage its future by openly and directly tackling its weaknesses while capitalizing on its strengths. This has resulted in a document that will be useful to the entire community. The Planning Commission will use this Plan as a guide when:

- Reviewing referrals from the Zoning Commission to amend the zoning regulations and to amend zone district boundaries.
Preparing reports on municipal improvement referral requests mandated by CGS Section 8-24.
- Reviewing and preparing reports on inter-town zoning and subdivision referrals from the Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments.
- Reviewing and commenting on the Town’s Capital Improvement Projects and Budget.

The Board of Selectmen and other Town boards and commissions will also find the Plan relevant when making decisions on the acquisition, disposition or development of land.



2

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

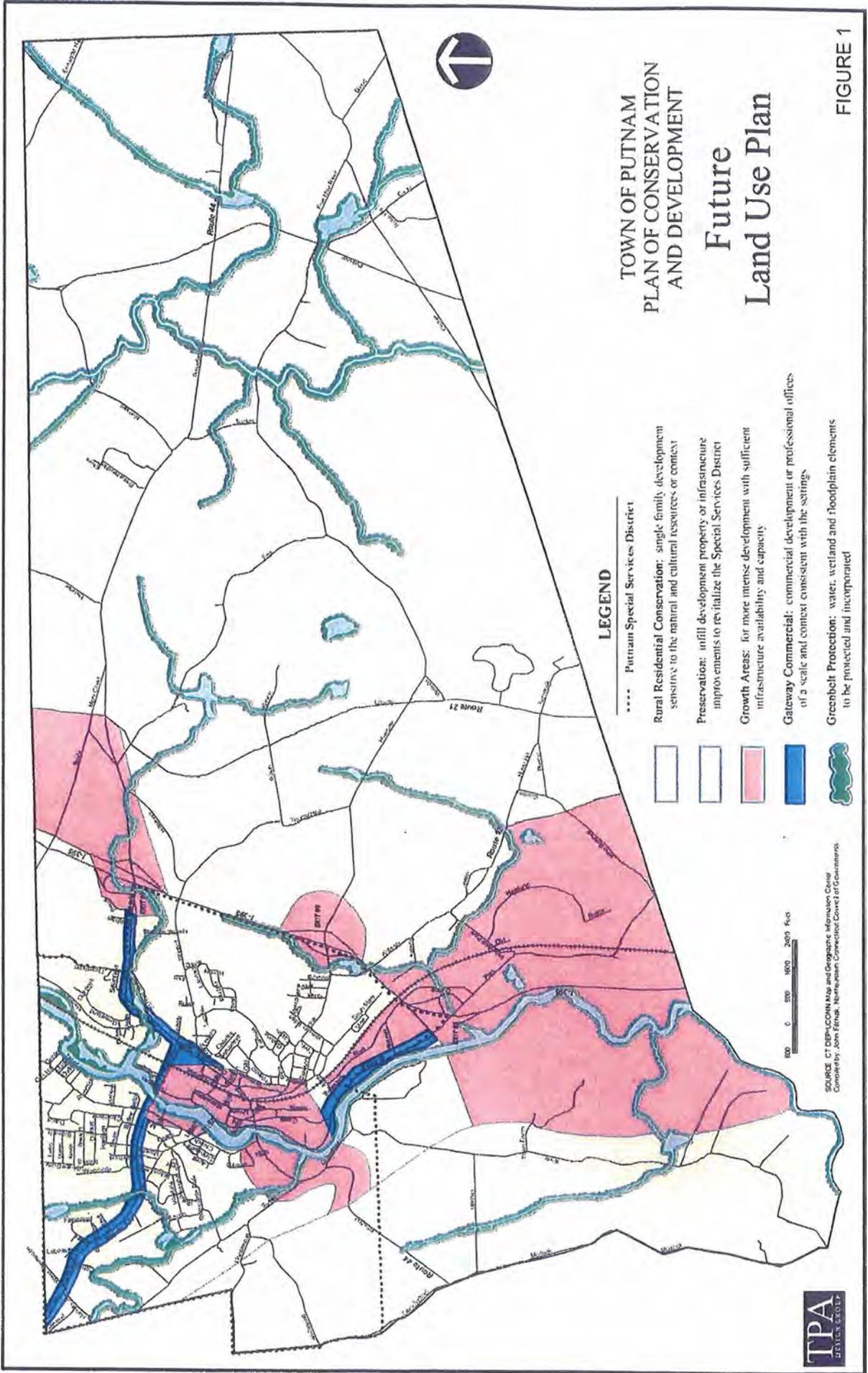
The first steps in planning Putnam's future were to establish the "current" status of development in Town and to determine the desired direction for future development. This evaluation was done in terms of identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, also known as a "SWOT" analysis. This analysis involved public input as well as preparation of technical data, and identified a number of issues, concerns, hopes and desires. The process yielded a vision for the future that is summarized in a series of guidelines that provide the backbone for decision-making, not only in terms of the preparation of this Plan, but also for the land use and service decisions the Town faces daily. Regardless of whose responsibility or for what reason, the following four Guiding Principles will set the direction for Putnam's development and preservation for the next ten years:

Grow economically and physically by helping our existing businesses remain competitive and attracting sustainable businesses which commit to being a good neighbor and offer our citizens economic advancement.

Improve Putnam's appearance, public services, and living standards to bolster our self-image and quality of life while creating positive perceptions.

Protect Putnam's rural character by encouraging compatible growth patterns, conserving our natural and cultural resources and improving the appearance and function of development.

Plan Putnam's future by understanding the needs of its citizens, anticipating the consequences of growth, recognizing the need to conserve resources and providing mechanisms to achieve compatible growth.

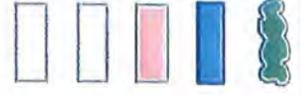


TOWN OF PUTNAM PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Future Land Use Plan

LEGEND

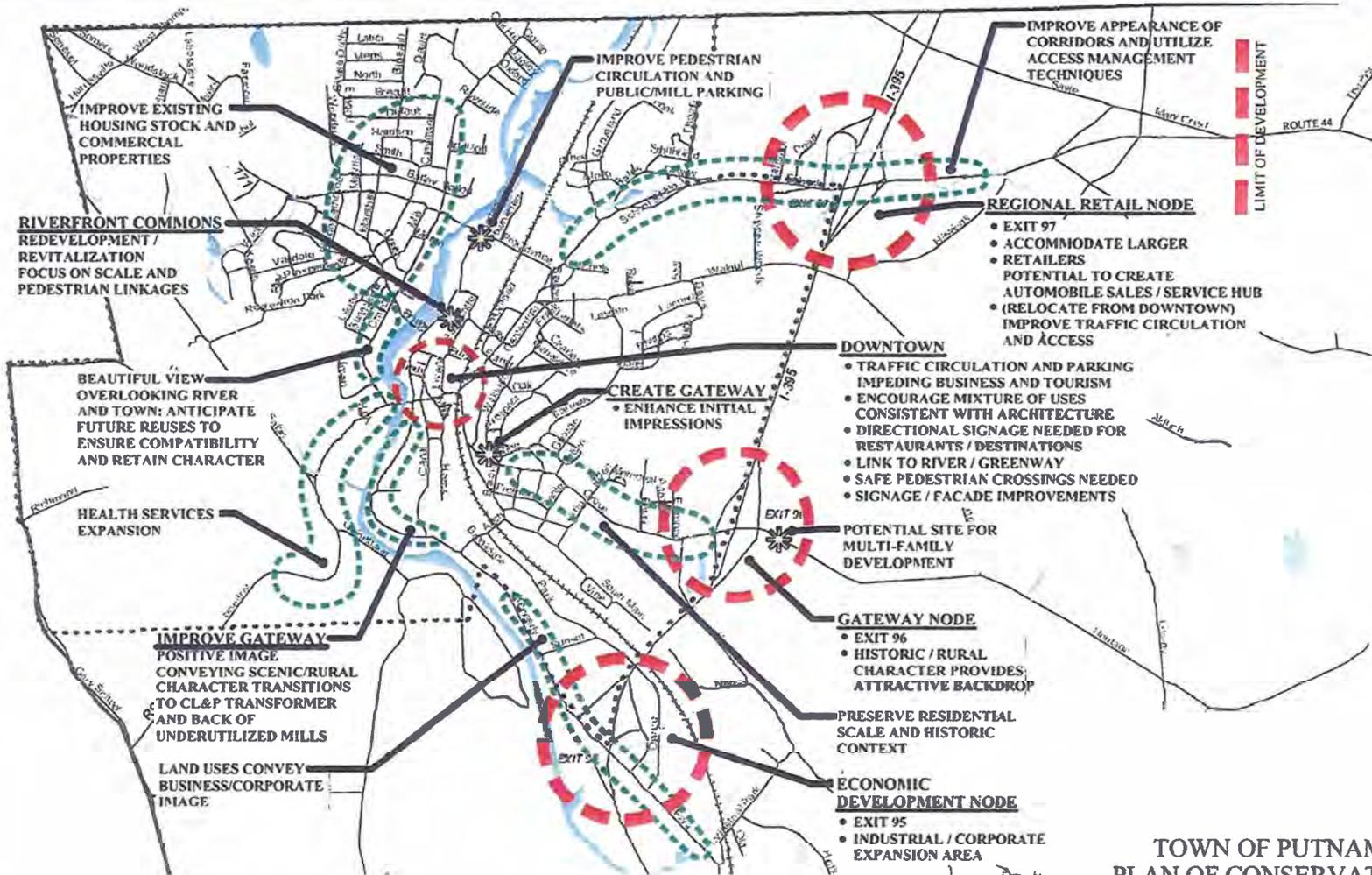
- Putnam Special Services District
- Rural Residential Conservation: single family development sensitive to the natural and cultural resources or context
- Preservation: infill development property or infrastructure improvements to revitalize the Special Services District
- Growth Areas: for more intense development with sufficient infrastructure availability and capacity
- Gateway Commercial: commercial development or professional offices of a scale and context consistent with the settings
- Greenbelt Protection: water, wetland and floodplain elements to be protected and incorporated



SOURCE: CT DEP/LCONNA Map and Geographic Information Center
Compiled by: John Etnak, Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments



FIGURE 1



**TOWN OF PUTNAM
PLAN OF CONSERVATION
AND DEVELOPMENT**

Physical Improvement Plan

Figure 1 is a Land Use Plan that visualizes the Town's desired development pattern by assigning use, density and design goals to various parts of Town in the following categories.

- Rural Residential Conservation: single family development sensitive to natural and cultural resources or context
- Preservation: infill development, property or infrastructure improvements to revitalize the Special Services District
- Growth Areas: for more intense development with sufficient infrastructure availability and capacity
- Gateway Commercial: commercial development or professional offices of a scale and context consistent with the settings
- Greenbelt Protection: water, wetland and floodplain elements to be protected and incorporated

To assist the Town with achieving its vision and carrying out the Land Use Plan, a series of strategic directions and implementation actions have been developed for each Guiding Principle. In addition, a Physical Improvement Plan (Figure 2) has been prepared for the Special Services District to identify in more detail the planning considerations and improvements specific to the Town's core area.

GROW PUTNAM

■ Strategic Directions

- ❖ Position Putnam as the region's business, civic, employment and institutional center.
- ❖ Maintain and expand the tax base while retaining the Town's rural character.
- ❖ Recognize the potential for tourism, the arts and culture to serve as economic drivers.
- ❖ Support and strengthen local businesses that are beneficial to the community in terms of services, products, employment or tax revenue.

■ IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

- Maintain a strong business retention program
 - Maintain current business/contact databases
 - Establish annual or semi-annual visits
 - Establish a “Response – Follow-up” system to track the needs of individual businesses
 - Provide a performance evaluation mechanism independent of implementation
 - Continue to provide loan funds for business expansion/start-ups
 - Appropriate funds for specific retention activities such as parking lot expansion, assistance with State funding (DECD, CDA), employee recruitment programs

- Expand business recruitment initiatives
 - Evaluate effectiveness of exclusive broker arrangement in industrial park
 - Develop targeted media and collaterals to specifically compete with regional competitors such as Worcester
 - Position Putnam within a tri-state region rather than exclusively Connecticut

- Continue developing packaging and plastics clusters
 - Identify spin-off businesses to complement, rather than compete with, existing cluster companies
 - Continue to solicit interest/assistance of State Department of Economic and Community Development
 - Working through the Eastern Connecticut Enterprise Corridor and the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor formalize interests of other towns to evaluate the feasibility of a regional approach

- Actively assist Day Kimball Hospital in expanding its presence
 - Establish consistent communications links
 - Explore mutual opportunities in allied health
 - Determine status of physical master planning
 - Develop a strategy for surveying staff needs and DKH expectations of the Town
 - Determine future demand for office space and identify potential sites
 - Explore ways in which the Town can increase the number of physicians and allied-health professionals living in Town.

- Expand Workforce Development Opportunities
 - Arrange job fairs
 - Create links with Quinebaug Valley Community College and provide input for curriculum development to meet future demand
 - Establish a formal relationship with high school administration
 - Evaluate need to provide technology training in traditional fields for existing businesses
 - Explore a cooperative venture among NECCOG and businesses to provide transportation from major destinations
 - Provide an “Employment Opportunity Center” at the library using a web-based inventory of local job listings, training programs, etc.

- Prepare to meet continued demand for industrial/corporate sites
 - Continue to focus industrial and other larger users to the Exit 95 node and improve visibility and image with a comprehensive directional/arrival signage program including the establishment of signage requirements and architectural standards.
 - Evaluate expansion capacity of existing industrial park
 - Determine availability and suitability of other land for industrial/ corporate development
 - Anticipate positive reuses for community and commercial landfill areas.
 - Conduct technical review of safety, closure and reuse provisions of current commercial landfill contract(s); modify as necessary to assure maximum short and long-term protection, and preparation for positive future reuse.
 - Anticipate infrastructure improvements and site acquisition costs in Capital Improvement Plan
 - Inventory underutilized properties that meet criteria for acceptable standards (physical, economic, neighborhood context) of industrial/commercial development and develop partnerships with landowners for actively marketing the sites.

- Support the transformation of vacant and/or underutilized mills as resources for accommodating small and start-up businesses, niche businesses associated with tourism, residential uses or cultural uses.
 - Conduct highest and best use analyses for individual properties

- Explore funding for environmental contamination evaluations through the Connecticut Brownfields Redevelopment Authority or other sources
- Assist property owners with site improvement design (parking, circulation, etc.).
- Continue to support and seek investment in Downtown’s assets, including its natural and historic resources, to expand tourism, arts and culture, and appropriately scaled businesses.
 - Maintain a close working relationship with the Downtown Merchant Association
 - Create a Merchant’s Coordinator position and explore the willingness of local banks and businesses to support funding
 - Work with the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor to dovetail with activities that benefit downtown merchants
 - Continue to monitor economic and market trends to anticipate opportunities and challenges for sustaining the vitality of downtown.
- Evaluate feasibility of locating allied health training/education, laboratory and diagnostics and other healthcare related uses downtown.
- Partner with private developers to continue to fulfill need/demand for medical offices and incubator/condo office space.
- Help to sustain the critical services provided by neighborhood-level and locally-owned businesses by establishing well-defined communication links among the Town, businesses, and larger corporate/national-level users.
- Examine demand and feasibility of increased rail connections with Worcester (MA) and beyond.
- Continue to promote benefits of the Enterprise Corridor with existing and prospective businesses.

IMPROVE PUTNAM

■ Strategic Directions

- ❖ Maintain Putnam’s quality of life so that its residents enjoy its natural beauty, are well served by its businesses and have the opportunity for economic advancement.

- ❖ Shift the perception of Putnam from an industrial mill-town to an attractive, vibrant regional center.
- ❖ Revitalize older, underutilized or blighted areas to strengthen neighborhoods, improve commercial corridors and transform architecturally significant buildings.
- ❖ Ensure that the availability, capacity and condition of infrastructure are consistent with the level of desired growth while also recognizing the potential for induced impacts.

■ IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

- Revitalize the existing housing stock of the neighborhoods in the Special Services District.
 - Establish target areas based on existing information
 - Develop inventory sheets to include information such as:
 - Age of structure
 - Ownership
 - Occupancy status
 - Structural type (single family, multi-family)
 - Number of units
 - Separate utilities present
 - Exterior condition, noting any defects
 - Develop criteria for categorizing overall condition, such as:
 - Code enforcement needed
 - Health and fire issues apparent
 - Uninhabitable
 - Renovations needed
 - Demolition needed
 - Conduct annual surveys of targeted areas and develop mechanisms for follow through
 - Pursue State and federal grants to assist with increasing homeownership, improving property conditions, and educating residents about property maintenance
 - Develop an approach for taking control of uninhabitable or unsafe structures
 - Develop a grant/loan program to assist with landscaping and aesthetic improvements or consider negotiating a bulk purchase agreement with a local supplier to offer discount landscape materials

- Raise the expectations of new development in non-residential areas.
 - Modify zoning regulations to require a site plan approval process for new commercial development
 - Require landscaped buffers along property frontage and internal landscaping of parking islands
 - Require that safe pedestrian connections be provided within parking areas
 - Require pedestrian connections to adjacent trails or public spaces, if feasible
 - Develop design standards for structures exceeding a specific threshold to address such elements as mass, scale, exterior materials, delivery and loading, neighborhood context

- Improve the appearance and function of existing commercial corridors.
 - Conduct corridor revitalization studies along Route 12 (from Route 44 to Bradley Street), Route 44 (from Corbin to Mechanics Street), and Route 44 (from Thompson Avenue to Route 21), to address:
 - Access management
 - Front yard parking
 - Potential public improvements
 - Traffic volumes and future capacity
 - Land assembly opportunities
 - Buffer requirements for adjacent properties
 - Potential signage/façade improvements
 - Conduct a windshield survey of commercial areas and develop an inventory of properties in need of improvement.
 - Solicit participants in public-private improvements to key properties.

- Beautify Putnam’s gateways and public areas
 - Identify volunteer groups to work with Town staff to support civic beautification efforts.
 - Establish a gateway program
 - Identify locations
 - Determine ownership
 - Acquire properties or easements, or negotiate rights of first refusal
 - Develop a consistent design theme
 - Develop a maintenance schedule

- Review Town procedures for landscaping and maintaining public areas and facilities, especially litter and weed removal
- Establish a consistent design template for all public facility signage, lighting and other amenities.
- Launch an annual “Clean Up/Fix Up” campaign with local sponsors/civic groups
- Develop a streetscape improvement program
 - Identify suitable corridors
 - Develop design vocabulary
 - Prepare master plans
 - Prioritize areas for construction
- Improve downtown’s appearance and function
 - Develop a pedestrian circulation plan for downtown, placing special emphasis on connecting business and core uses with surrounding neighborhoods and on improving safety, comfort and attractiveness.
 - Conduct a comprehensive analysis of traffic volume, circulation and parking (public and private) within the downtown area, including Route 44 and Route 12, then develop recommendations to improve pedestrian flow, provide parking in relation to businesses, identify shared parking potential and increase site distance (e.g. at Front/Main Streets).
 - Develop a consistent directional signage program for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
 - Develop a grant/loan program for signage.
 - Increase landscaping in public parking areas.
 - Examine the physical interfaces between traditional downtown businesses and larger industrial users, and develop a mutually agreeable approach to developing attractive transition areas.

PROTECT PUTNAM



■ Strategic Directions

- ❖ Avoid patterns of development that compromise or threaten Putnam’s character.
- ❖ Protect the Town’s remaining historically or architecturally significant structures, culturally sensitive sites and other areas of unique or exceptional physical beauty.

- ❖ Encourage programs and activities that protect natural resources and maintain or improve environmental quality.

■ IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

- Focus more intensive development in areas that have suitable access, sufficient roadway capacity, and adequate infrastructure to accommodate the type and intensity of proposed use.
- In areas of particular sensitivity, require Developers to consider physical, architectural and/or cultural context of a site before determining the proposed development scheme.
- Conduct an analysis of significant slopes, extensive mature forests, or other physical features to identify areas that may need performance based regulations.
- Develop site planning regulations that encourage compatible development by taking into consideration limits of cul de sac length, additional erosion/sedimentation controls, smaller building footprints, and additional landscaping.
- Evaluate alternative approaches to residential development in sensitive areas to maximize undisturbed areas.
- Consider regulations that encourage residential development patterns such as equestrian estates that would harmoniously blend with Putnam's rural landscape.
- Continue to support architectural and archaeological preservation efforts including the preservation of the Cody Copp Cottage.
- Extend and connect Putnam's greenways to ensure preservation of areas of natural, scenic, historic or cultural value; partner with adjoining communities to create a regional network with ultimate ties to the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor.
- Expand the existing greenway network to include:
 - Five Mile River
 - Little French River

- Quinebaug River
- Little River
- Formalize Putnam's Open Space Program
 - Designate a lead agency
 - Develop a confidential, prioritized list of potential sites to be acquired
 - Develop a functional classification system for existing town owned public space that categorizes property as follows: preservation, conservation (passive use), recreation (active use) or future municipal facility use.
 - Acquire or preserve lands that will expand or connect to the Town's existing open space network.
 - Consider accepting fees in lieu of accepting open space (under CGS 8-25) and begin building an open space acquisition fund
 - Identify properties where the Town's land classification program (assessment based on use not market value) would allow the owner to benefit from a local tax deduction.
 - Identify suitable areas for small green spaces, particularly in the Core Downtown area.
- Use Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and U. S. Environmental Protection Agency guidance documents to educate residents on the application of fertilizers and pesticides; the disposal of hazardous materials and oils; and the need for proper maintenance of septic systems.
- Bolster source protection measures around public water supplies.
- Develop aquifer and water resource protection regulations upon release of Level A aquifer mapping.
- Incorporate non-structural best management practices in handling storm water; the Town should lead by example at public facilities.
- Evaluate the feasibility of using full cut-off light fixtures on Town properties and consider adapting lighting standards that eliminate light scatter, particularly into residential areas.

- Retain an independent public health consultant to comprehensively address the water quality of “finished” public water delivered to homes and businesses.

PLAN PUTNAM

■ Strategic Directions

- ❖ Maintain a coordinated planning process to manage existing development and guide growth
- ❖ Develop and amend local regulations to achieve compatible growth patterns, aesthetically improve the quality of development and avoid impacts to natural systems.
- ❖ Provide adequate administrative capacity to fulfill the intended obligations of land use and zoning policies and regulations.
- ❖ Continue to reach out to businesses and residents for input on Town direction, efforts and decisions.

■ IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

- Establish a working dialogue among local and regional agencies and decision making bodies
 - Conduct an annual summit that allows the Board of Selectmen, Planning Commission, Zoning Commission, and Economic Development Commission to jointly discuss pertinent issues, raise ideas and discuss considerations for Town action.
 - On a quarterly basis, provide local commissions with updates on state and regional planning efforts.
 - Work with the Board of Education to monitor enrollment projections in order to anticipate facility needs.
- Monitor patterns of development and consequences of growth

- Annually assess changes in terms of consistency with the four Guiding Principles, amend or adopt Strategic Directions and Implementing Actions as appropriate.
 - Through the Assessor's Office, develop a lot line base map, preferably in digital format.
 - Develop an existing land use map using the Town's base map.
 - Routinely add new subdivisions, roadways, or other improvements to the Town's base map.
 - Create and maintain a computerized database of approved building lots, building permits, and certificates of occupancy.
 - Create maps of water and sewer lines and service areas in digital format, including sizes and conditions.
- Develop a community facilities plan to anticipate demand for new facilities and anticipate maintenance, replacement or expansion of existing facilities.
 - Inventory existing facilities and town-owned municipal land.
 - Begin financial programming and critical path analysis for evaluation of space needs and expansion potential at the library and Town Hall.
 - Determine compliance of public facilities with Americans with Disabilities Act, including a survey of crosswalks in the core downtown area.
 - Conduct a liability assessment of publicly-owned playgrounds.
- Prepare a recreation plan
 - Update the inventory of active and passive recreation areas.
 - Examine demographic data to compare existing facilities with the current profile of residents.
 - Identify needed improvements and new facilities.
 - Secure the services of a consultant to prepare a master plan and cost estimates for improvements.
- Examine the regulatory and advisory roles of agencies and commissions affecting land use decisions.
 - Form a steering committee composed of members from the various groups.
 - Examine roles and responsibilities

- Clarify/modify opportunities for improving information exchange and sharing regulatory responsibilities.
- Evaluate the current technical and administrative staff supporting Town functions.

Examine current staff allocations in the building department and land use commissions in anticipation of increased responsibilities.

Identify level of demand and skills needed.

Consider the potential for NECCOG or the Green Valley Institute to provide as-needed mapping and planning services.

- Begin programming for a full time planning position

- Evaluate the need for a full time Health/Social Services Coordinator or consider using contracted services with an existing agency in order to assist residents with acquiring skills for self-sufficiency.
- Develop regulations and other provisions to encourage compatible development and protect natural resources and make modifications as necessary.
 - Create site plan regulations that specify approval standards for development based on use, scale and/or location.
 - Consider creating Historic Preservation District Zones to guide redevelopment without imposing the formal restrictions of national or local historic districts.
 - Assess the benefits of using "Village District" zoning provisions.
 - Develop criteria for the siting of multi-family units
 - Develop consistency criteria for land use and zoning decisions.
 - Develop lighting standards that require full cut off
 - Develop landscaping standards that specify planting materials of a minimum size and encourage native species.
 - Develop performance criteria for activities within public water supply watersheds and aquifer recharge areas.

- Carry out special studies related to growth management.
 - Identify physical capacity for additional development at Exit 97
 - Evaluate the feasibility of providing a road crossing the Quinebaug River to connect the Hale Mill property with Kennedy Drive.
 - Explore the establishment of commuter rail service linking with Worcester and Norwich.
 - Examine the current tax structure between the Special Services District and the Town to determine what if any impact it has on delivering essential services to the entire community as well as continuing this dual system as the Town continues to grow.
 - Contact ConnDOT to obtain confirmation that Kennedy Drive is a formally designated truck route and evaluate impacts of current use.
 - Determine the feasibility and acceptability of the designation of portions of Route 21 as a scenic roadway under CGS 136-31.