

# PRESERVE COMMUNITY CHARACTER

# 3

## Overview

Lisbon is defined and distinguished by its rural character. Located near or next to several more intensively developed communities, Lisbon retains many of the qualities and characteristics that have attracted people to the area since the Colonial era. Preservation of these encompassing but vulnerable attributes has been identified as the most important theme for this 2004 Plan of Conservation and Development.

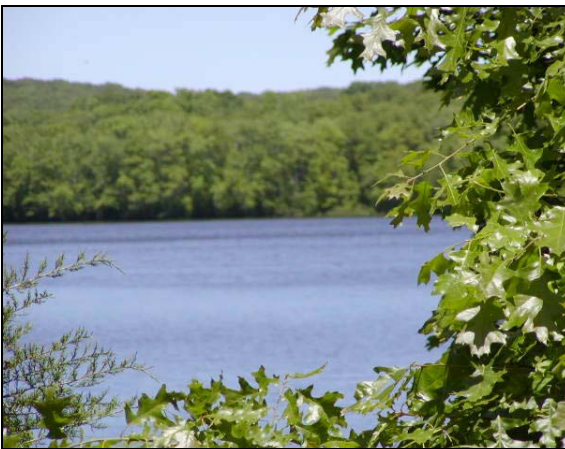
The next ten years may prove crucial for the longer term preservation of Lisbon's rural character. Many of the strategies identified in this Plan will lay the foundation for community actions to help retain the qualities that today's residents clearly value and future residents will respect.

Specific strategies to preserve community character are:

- Preserve open space,
- Improve environmental regulation,
- Preserve the character of Newent,
- Manage existing roads and plan for future Town roads,
- Protect historic resources, and
- Establish welcoming gateways.

*"The nation behaves well if it treats resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value ..."*

*Theodore Roosevelt*



## Preserve Open Space

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Open space preservation is widely regarded as the most effective tool available to towns to manage growth, maintain community character, protect valued natural resources and scenery, and generally enhance the quality of life. Lisbon residents have identified preserving open space as a main planning priority.

Although there is little permanently protected open space in Lisbon, perceived open space is extensive. This is land that is currently undeveloped, in agricultural use, or simply a portion of a large residential property. The challenge for Lisbon will be to convert enough of that perceived open space into permanent open space to retain the landscape that characterizes the Town.

Open Space Types	Examples
<b>Protected Open Space (with public access)</b>	State of Connecticut parks and forest and municipal parks with legal restrictions on future use
<b>Protected Open Space (without public access)</b>	Private conservation organizations (owned and conservation easements), State of Connecticut (agricultural development rights), private conservation easements
<b>Temporary Open Space</b>	Privately held property temporarily protected from development under the criteria of PA 490 tax assessment program
<b>Unprotected Open Space</b>	Public and private schools, municipal properties without legal restrictions on future use, non-profit institutions, private clubs, churches, cemeteries, utility lands, State and local facilities

Open Space Guidelines – General evaluation guidelines to apply to open space planning are listed in the following table. The map on the facing page shows existing and perceived open space (as discussed above) and conceptual open space planning corridors. These corridors are based on the natural features of the Town’s landscape, as depicted on the Natural Resources map on page 3-9. However, the conceptual corridors do not necessarily constitute areas recommended for preservation as open space, nor do they encompass all areas of Lisbon suitable for open space consideration.

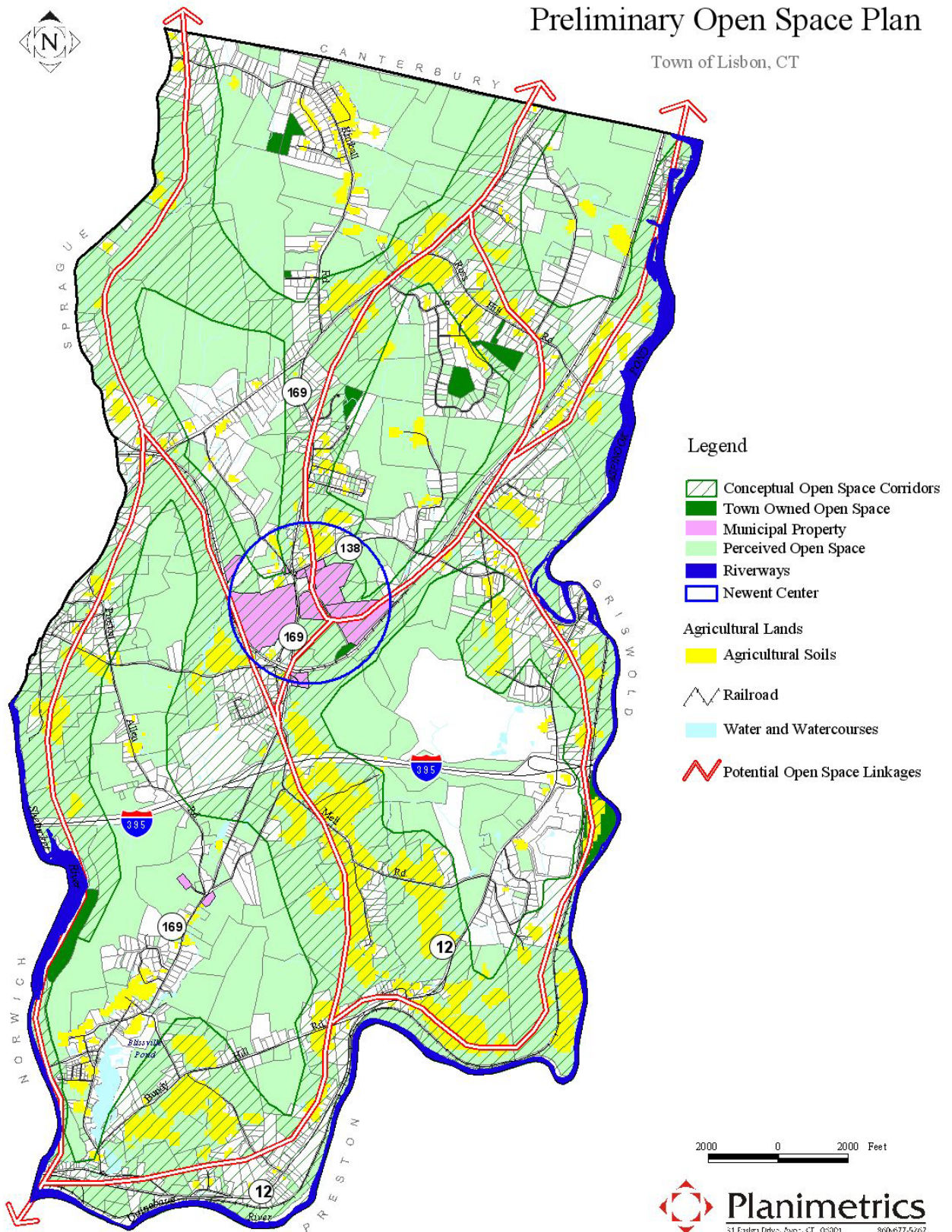
### Open Space Guidelines

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<b>Protect More Open Space</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage open space preservation, especially when it contributes to a comprehensive open space system.</li><li>• Encourage open space strategies that result in protected open spaces.</li><li>• Seek to convert unprotected and perceived open space to protected open space by obtaining land or conservation easements</li></ul>
<b>Maintain “Openness”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain the open spaces that presently exist</li><li>• Encourage low density development that promotes a feeling of “openness”</li></ul>
<b>Encourage Public Access and Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage open space that allows for public access and use.</li></ul>
<b>Promote a Greenway System</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seek to connect open space parcels to maximize value for recreation, habitat, scenery, and other qualities.</li></ul>

# Preliminary Open Space Plan

Town of Lisbon, CT





## Greenways

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A greenway is a corridor of open space that:

- may protect natural resources, preserve scenic landscapes and historical resources or offer opportunities for recreation or non-motorized transportation,
- may connect existing protected areas and provide access to the outdoors,
- may be located along a defining natural feature, such as a waterway, along a man-made corridor, including an unused right-of-way, traditional trail routes or historic barge canals, or
- may be a green space along a highway or around a village.

Connecticut General Assembly  
Public Act 95-335

## Establish an Open Space Program

Preservation of open space is a key strategy to preserve the community's rural character and enhance the quality of life for Lisbon residents. To implement this strategy, the Town needs to establish a permanent open space program to coordinate and encourage private, State, and municipal actions to protect open space.

This Plan provides a preliminary open space program for Lisbon, outlined in the table below. While some towns have set protection goals as high as 30%, a preliminary goal of protecting at least 15% of Lisbon's land in open space is both appropriate and achievable given Lisbon's current situation.

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### Lisbon Open Space Program

#### Program Mission Statement

The Town of Lisbon will establish a permanent Open Space Program, assigned to the Conservation Commission, with the overall mission of preserving the natural and rural character of Lisbon through the permanent protection of land.

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#### Open Space Inventory

Lisbon currently holds 12 parcels totaling 116 acres of open space. No private or State permanently protected open space is shown on the Tax Assessor's property lists.

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#### Open Space Goals

Lisbon's open space program will seek to preserve at least 15% of the Town's land area as natural and recreation areas, high quality habitat, agricultural land and farms, and other undeveloped areas for the benefit of Lisbon residents present and future. This will be accomplished by a combination of public and private acquisitions, easements, subdivision set-asides, and gifts.

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#### Open Space Priorities

The Program's strategies and recommendations will be based on the following priorities:

- Preservation of farming and farmland
- Protection of rivers, streams, wetlands, lakes, major groundwater resources,
- Protection of watershed resources,
- Contiguity of open space (linking open space parcels and providing regional corridors for wildlife and pedestrian trails),
- Ridgeline conservation,
- Protection of wildlife habitat, and
- Protection of forests and woodlands.



## Open Space Implementation

With the guiding mission, goals, and priorities, the Conservation Commission (or a separate open space committee if preferred) will initiate an implementation program based on the following tasks.

### Open Space Implementation

Task	Tools/Sources
Review and refine priorities, conceptual open space corridor plan, and long range goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This Plan</li> </ul>
Identify and evaluate tools, partnerships, funding sources, other resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecticut State open space programs</li> <li>• Land Trust Service Bureau</li> <li>• Connecticut State Statutes</li> </ul>
Evaluate municipal properties and recommend permanent protection as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal Campus Plan (this Plan Chapter 4)</li> <li>• Partners as potential easement holders</li> </ul>
Develop evaluation tools for Town acquisitions based on priorities and criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish weighting factors based on such criteria as size, contiguity, quality (see below)</li> </ul>
Recommend open space priorities for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Subdivision set-aside</li> <li>○ State and federal Programs</li> <li>○ Private Conservation Efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecticut and Federal programs</li> <li>• Land Trust Service Bureau</li> <li>• Avalonia Land Trust</li> <li>• This Plan (see page 5-13)</li> </ul>
Establish open space funding mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish Open Space Land Acquisition Fund</li> <li>• Subdivision open space fee-in-lieu, annual appropriation, bonding, grants, donations</li> </ul>
Evaluate costs and benefits of providing open space tax abatement (see below)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Space Corridor Plan (this Plan)</li> <li>• Tax Assessor's records</li> </ul>
Prepare, implement, and regularly update an Open Space Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify parcels, partners, tools, funding</li> <li>• Prepare annual recommendations for Town acquisitions and funding for partnership efforts within budget cycle</li> <li>• Develop management recommendations for Town-owned open space</li> </ul>

Open Space Funding Programs – The following steps should be considered to implement an open space preservation program over the next 10 to 20 years:

- establish a special municipal Land Acquisition Fund to be used for the acquisition of open space and establishment of greenway trails,
- strive to fund an annual line item in the operating budget for the Land Acquisition Fund,
- deposit funds from fee-in-lieu-of open space payments (discussed in Chapter 5), state or federal grants, donations, bequests, or other means into the Land Acquisition Fund,
- consider funding the Land Acquisition Fund through a municipal bond issue to make funds immediately available while retiring the bonds over an extended period,
- pursue state (such as Department of Environmental Protection) and federal (such as Transportation Efficiency Act) grant programs for open space acquisition and greenway trail development.

### Use Assessment (PA 490)

Section 12-107 of the Connecticut Statutes allows a community to assess land by its use (farm, forest, or open space) rather than its value.

The program contains three major components:

- Farm land (designated by the assessor),
- Forest (designated by the assessor or the state forester), and
- Open space (land must be identified in the Plan of Conservation & Development and adopted by Town Meeting).

The use assessment reduces the tax burden on the properties and makes large parcels of land less expensive for a property owner to retain. This reduces the possibility that land will be put into development due to increasing taxes. The legislation contains a “recapture provision” for property developed or sold within ten years of designation.

The use assessment program (PA 490) enhances the perception of open space in Lisbon since it helps land remain undeveloped longer and it reduces the pace of growth.

Open Space Evaluation – A specific evaluation tool for identifying priority acquisitions, subdivision set-asides, and recommendations for State and private protection of land is suggested in the next table. This detailed evaluation would be implemented once the preliminary tasks of developing and adopting an open space plan are completed.

### Open Space Parcel Evaluation

Category	Factors	Threats
Farmland	Size, soils, contiguity	Development, abandonment
Forest	Size, age, composition, Greenway linkage	Development, roads, disease
River Corridors	Floodplain, riparian habitat quality, Greenway linkage	Development, roads, loss of access
Parks and Recreation	Contiguity, Greenway linkage, recreational function	Development, loss of access
Watershed	Size, proximity to rivers and tributaries	Pollution, erosion
Natural Systems and Habitats	Rare and endangered species or habitats, habitat diversity, wetlands, size	Land use, development
Ridgelines	Linearity, visibility, Greenway linkage	Housing, clear cutting
Historic/Cultural	Location, contiguity, endorsement	Demolition, abandonment

Open Space Tax Abatement – In addition to the direct funding of open space acquisition that the Town may provide, Connecticut General Statutes authorize municipalities to offer tax abatement for land that is kept undeveloped for a specified period under certain conditions. This program, referred to as the Public Act 490 program, is described in the sidebar.

Lisbon currently offers tax abatement for farmland and forestland. Lisbon may also want to evaluate the potential costs and benefits of instituting such a program for open space, as authorized by CGS Section 12-107e. This statute requires identification of recommended open space areas in the Plan of Conservation and Development, subject to approval by the Town legislative body.

Although this Plan includes recommendations for open space planning, in the form of a Preliminary Open Space Plan map, these planning recommendations do not constitute the formal recommendations required by Section 12-107e. Future implementation of open space tax abatement would require updating the Plan of Conservation and Development with designation of recommended open space areas eligible for PA 490 tax abatement, subject to approval by the Town legislative body.

## Strengthen Environmental Regulation

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In addition to developing an open space program, Lisbon can protect its natural resources through continued application of effective environmental regulations. Several improvements to Lisbon's existing regulatory standards are recommended.

Separate Wetlands and Conservation Commissions – As suggested as part of the Open Space Program development, the efficiency of wetlands regulation and of monitoring and planning conservation issues in Lisbon would be improved by the creation of a separate Conservation Commission. In addition to the open space program, such a commission could assume responsibility for monitoring overall environmental health of the community, establishing monitoring programs pertaining to water quality and other factors, and informing and educating the public on conservation issues.

Revise Subdivision Regulations – Specific requirements of a Town's subdivision regulations can apply to open space and resource protection. Specifically, Lisbon will consider increasing open space set aside requirements to 15% or 20% to address open space and natural resource protection issues. Additionally, Lisbon will consider adoption of a fee-in-lieu of open space provision to provide regulatory flexibility. These steps will be incorporated with the other revisions to the subdivision regulations as recommended in Chapter 5.

Strengthen Wetlands and Water Resource Protections – The Wetlands Commission could consider extending its upland review area to 100 feet (from 50 feet currently) to ensure appropriate buffers and adequate protections between developments and important wetlands resources.

In recent years, water quality protection efforts throughout the nation have turned to reducing "non-point" pollution (pollution that does not originate from a specific point). This includes storm drainage discharges, lawn fertilizer, septic systems, agricultural runoff, and similar sources. Possible regulatory tools to address non-point pollution include reducing impervious cover in road design standards, promoting use of infiltration systems instead of catch basins and piping for stormwater, and monitoring of soil erosion and sedimentation control practices.

The Planning and Zoning and Wetlands Commissions should evaluate establishment of a fee structure to recover the costs of monitoring to ensure effective protections during development activities.

Septic Management - Although there has been no indication of widespread septic failures or problems in Lisbon, improperly operating septic systems are a potential threat to water quality and public health. Lisbon should support programs to inform property owners about proper septic operation and maintenance. If problems arise in the future, Lisbon may consider adopting a Town Ordinance that:

- requires septic tanks to be pumped regularly with information on septic tank pumping reported to the Town, and/or
- requires all properties to be inspected every three years for system failures.

### Conservation Commissions

Connecticut General Statutes Section 131a outlines the responsibilities of a conservation commission:

"A conservation commission shall conduct research into the utilization and possible utilization of land areas of the municipality and may coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes, and may advertise, prepare and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets as necessary for its purposes. It may propose a greenways plan for inclusion in the plan of conservation and development...It may make recommendations to zoning commissions, planning commissions, inland wetlands agencies and other municipal agencies on proposed land use changes. It may, with the approval of such legislative body, acquire land and easements in the name of the municipality..."

## **Preserve the Character of Newent**

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As much as the quiet and attractiveness of Lisbon define the community, Newent contributes an historic and social aspect to the community's intrinsic character and quality of living.

As one of the earliest settled areas in Lisbon, Newent displays a unique village character unlike most other areas of Town. For this reason, Chapter 4 of this Plan provides a detailed plan for Newent as a Town center. Future consideration by the Town of restructuring Town facilities and improving pedestrian and vehicular access (discussed Chapter 4 of this Plan) will need to recognize and preserve the qualities that define Newent. This Plan recommends a comprehensive study of the Newent area to address these diverse issues.

### **Historic Considerations**

The Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor (QSHC) begins just south of Lisbon, and Route 169 has been designated a scenic highway from Newent north all the way to the Massachusetts border. It is appropriate for Lisbon to recognize this designation and its place in the QSHC in planning for the future of Newent. The QSHC offers a historical preservation grant program which may apply to specific projects involving Newent.

The map on the facing page depicts locations of significant natural and historic resources throughout Lisbon.

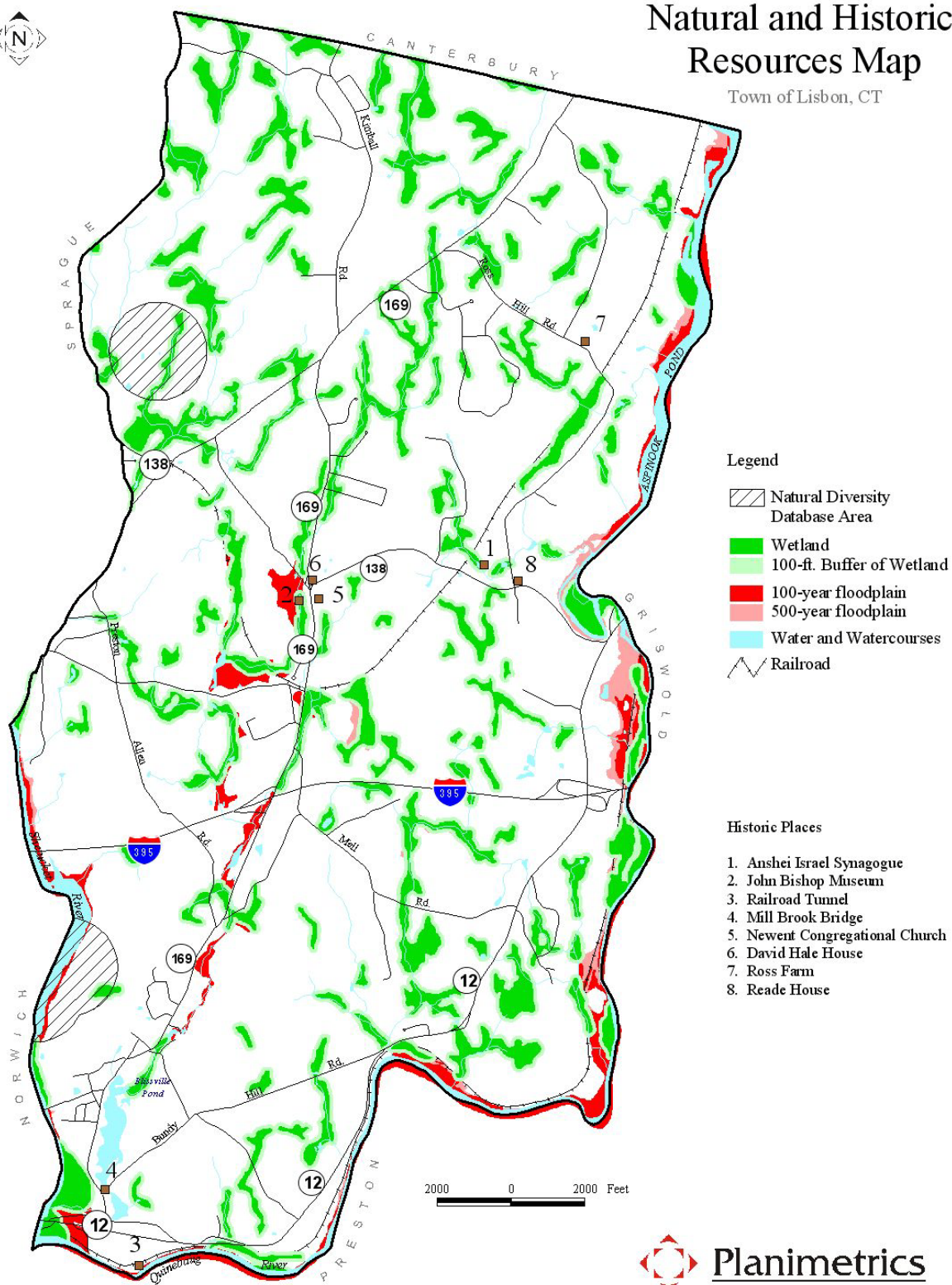






# Natural and Historic Resources Map

Town of Lisbon, CT



## Preliminary Lisbon Road Classifications

- Local Rural: dead-end street serving 30 or fewer lots
- Residential Sub-collector: through roads with less than 1000 trips per day
- Residential Collector: connecting Town roads with more than 1000 trips per day
- Arterial: State numbered routes
- Interstate

## Existing and Future Town Roads

The road system in a community like Lisbon is an important component of its character as well as being functionally important to the day-to-day life of residents, visitors, and businesses. The location and number of existing roads appear to be adequate for providing basic road service at today's level of development. No major traffic problems or reconstruction programs have been identified by the Town or the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

The Town maintains over 28 miles of road, all of which are improved. Design and construction standards for new roads are regulated by Town Ordinance, which defines two categories of road: arterial and collector. A third road type, local residential, is referenced in the standards but is not defined.

A more detailed breakdown of road classifications, defined in the sidebar, will provide the basis for revised design and construction standards, such as width standards. The suggested classification is depicted on the map on the facing page, along with recommendations for future interconnections of existing roads.

Refine Road Design Standards – Current road standards may not effectively promote road designs that minimize visual and environmental impacts. As suggested in the table below, and discussed further in Chapter 5, revised standards would provide for road width, drainage systems, cul-de-sac designs, and other standards that are tailored to the land and the size and type of development.

Road Design Issues		
Issue	Current Ordinance	Concept
Road Width	26 foot minimum width	Vary minimum by number of lots/usage
Cul-de-sac	Size and grade	Require islands, allow hammerheads
Drainage	Standard CB and pipe	Encourage swales and infiltration
Curbs	As required	Require only above 5% grade, Cape Cod style

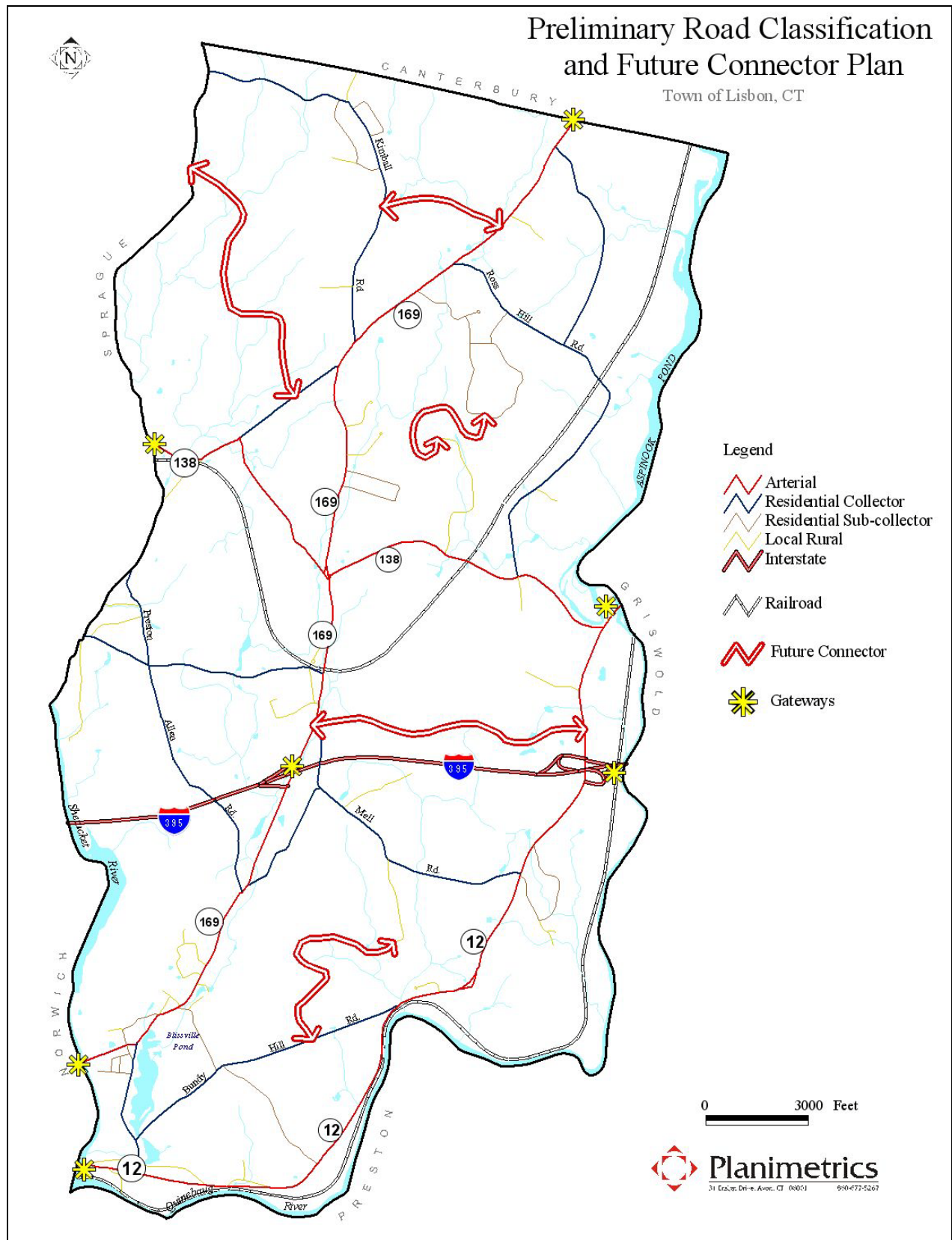
Road Width by Street Classification			
Current	Width	Recommended	Width
Local Residential	26', 28' with curbs	Local Rural	20'
Arterial & Collector	26', 28' with curbs	Residential Sub-collector	22'
		Residential Collector	24'

Anticipate Future Road Interconnections – Future road interconnections will need to be considered in the review of applications for subdivisions and site plans. Direct through connections may be appropriate where through traffic should be encouraged to avoid intersections or other potential traffic problems. Indirect connectors may be appropriate where new residential developments abut existing developments. Here, connecting access is necessary for convenience, but the design must be appropriate to restrict traffic through residential neighborhoods.

Subdivision and road standards should recognize and protect Lisbon's scenic roadscapes, consisting of mature trees, stone walls, and natural topography.

# Preliminary Road Classification and Future Connector Plan

Town of Lisbon, CT





*Preservation of historically significant buildings, properties, and places will help enhance community character...*

#### **National Register**

Listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is largely ceremonial. However, this recognition entitles a property owner to display a commemorative plaque, providing important recognition that can benefit community character and spirit.

#### **State Register**

Listing on the State Register of Historic Places (SRHP) is also largely ceremonial. This recognition also only directly affects activities involving federal and/or state funding and has little or no impact on the activities of the private sector.

## **Historic Resources**

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Lisbon residents are rightfully proud of the many historic and cultural features that exist in Newent and elsewhere throughout Town. These are shown on the map on page 3-9. The efforts of the Lisbon Historical Society have made a significant contribution to the Town's awareness of these assets and its willingness to preserve them. The Town will continue to encourage and cooperate with private and public efforts aimed at preserving historic resources.

While several of Lisbon's historic buildings are in the vicinity of Newent, there is not a sufficient concentration to warrant establishment of a formal historic district with regulatory authority, as authorized by Connecticut General Statutes. However, Lisbon may consider three strategies to help preserve historic assets:

- Continued support for the private Lisbon Historical Society,
- Consideration of demolition delay ordinance (see below), and
- Municipal or partnership installation and maintenance of welcoming elements on State roads leading into Newent.

### **Demolition Delay Ordinance**

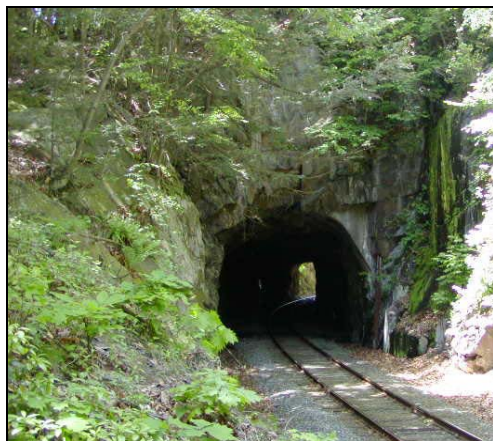
A community may adopt a demolition delay ordinance to allow up to ninety-days to evaluate alternatives to demolition, if the building is found to be historically significant.

During this period, the Town may attempt to find a purchaser who may:

- retain the building,
- transport the building, or
- present some other alternative to demolition.

This regulation may not be applied to all buildings within a community. It is typically applied to structures that meet certain criteria for age or location.

**Historic Train Tunnel**



**Historic Synagogue**



## Welcoming Gateways

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Gateway enhancement is a simple way to promote a community's character and establish a sense of place. Welcoming elements include signage, landscaping, street hardware, monuments and plaques, and other structural features that call attention to the locale. Because Lisbon is largely bordered by watercourses, entrances to the Town are well-defined. Of additional significance is the I-395 interchange at Route 169, which leads many visitors to Newent and onto the State-designated Scenic Road associated with the Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor. The Town should work to establish welcoming elements and identify civic, State, and private entities that may cooperate with such projects.

Other important access points are the I-395 interchange at Route 12 (Lisbon Landing), the Jewett City bridge entrance, Routes 12 and 169 crossings from Norwich and Route 138 from Sprague, and the entrances into Newent on Route 169 and 138. These points are shown on the map on page 3-11.

### Welcoming Elements

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- Welcoming signage
- Historic Designations
- School, Park, and Informational Signage
- Streetlights
- Commemorative Plaques or Monuments

### Quinebaug Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor

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Route 12 From Norwich



Route 169 From Norwich





## Summary

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Lisbon residents have clearly indicated their desire to maintain the character and quality of life that they enjoy in their community. While virtually all aspects of a Plan of Conservation and Development can further this overall goal, the specific objectives associated with preserving open space, natural and historic resources, and environmental quality have the most direct impact on community character.

### Preserve Community Character – Strategies Summary

#### A. Open Space Preservation

1. Adopt the Open Space Plan as part of this Plan of Conservation and Development
2. Assign implementation of the Open Space Program to the Conservation Commission
3. Establish an open space land acquisition fund, consider bond issuance for open space, and consider annual appropriation based on Open Space Committee recommendations.
4. Prepare, implement, and regularly update an open space action plan:
  - Review and refine priorities and long range goals
  - Identify and evaluate resources
  - Evaluate existing municipal properties
  - Develop evaluation tools
  - Recommend subdivision set-aside priorities
  - Identify and seek funding, grants, donations, etc.
  - Evaluate PA 490 program for open space land

#### B. Environmental Regulation

1. Establish separate wetlands regulatory agency and conservation commission
2. Revise and update subdivision regulations (see Chapter 5)
3. Strengthen wetlands and water resource protections
4. Consider monitoring and/or inspection procedures, including fees

#### C. Newent Village Character

1. Continue to support Lisbon Historic Society preservation efforts
2. Consider adoption of demolition delay ordinance
3. Seek means of installing and maintaining welcoming elements on State roads leading into Newent

#### D. Town Roads

1. Adopt revised Town road classification system
2. Consider future connector options in reviews of subdivision or development proposals
3. Ensure subdivision and road design standards that protect road-side trees, stone walls, and natural topography to the extent possible.

#### E. Historic Resources

1. Continue to support Lisbon Historic Society preservation efforts
2. Consider adoption of demolition delay ordinance

#### F. Welcoming Gateways

1. Establish welcoming elements at entrances to Town, into Newent, and at Lisbon Landing
2. Identify potential partner organizations to contribute or cooperate with gateway elements