



## THE NORTHWESTERN CONNECTICUT REGIONAL PLANNING COLLABORATIVE

### VILLAGE CENTER VITALITY IN NORTHWEST CONNECTICUT

#### Project Description & Support Request

#### OVERVIEW

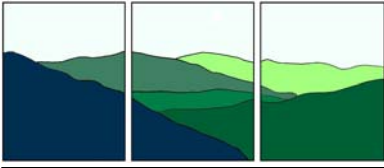
- Our small town village centers are central to our communities' quality of life and **they are being threatened**. The current recession has seriously impacted the economic stability of the village centers in our region. Many storefronts sit vacant and existing businesses struggle to survive.
- In this challenging time, the Northwestern Connecticut Regional Planning Collaborative is now developing a program to plan, design, and market opportunities for economic revitalization of our towns consistent with and in support of our existing village center businesses.
- The project will focus on established village centers that serve not only their own community but also smaller surrounding communities. Options for promoting economic activity outside of village centers, such as commercial recreation and home-based businesses, will also be examined.
- Concepts that the project will evaluate include updated zoning and regulatory techniques for encouraging economic development; feasibility of hiring a regional economic development coordinator; marketing; tourism promotion; home-based businesses; selective re-zoning; streamlining the permitting process; and other municipal actions and investments.



Salisbury, CT village center

#### PROJECT APPROACH

- We have been awarded a \$12,000 grant from The Community Foundation of Northwest CT for the initial design phase of this work. This initial phase will help us determine the most successful and cost effective economic revitalization strategies for our towns.
- Work included under this initial phase includes: 1) working with an economic development consultant to identify opportunities in the areas of regulatory improvements, marketing concepts, municipal investments, village enhancements, and public outreach; 2) Convening focus groups involving local commercial interests and municipal leaders to identify the key issues that influence village and economic vitality in the region.



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Northwestern Connecticut Regional Planning Collaborative  
**Village Center Vitality Program**

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**Program Goal**

Create a Village Vitality Action Program for participating Northwestern Connecticut towns to promote economic and community development at the local and regional levels.

**Phase I Strategy**

Design an Action Program for each participating town based on local resources and opportunities and reflecting regional themes and collaboration.

**Phase I Tactics:**

- Hire economic/community development specialist with small town expertise to craft tools, design research, outline outreach activities, and create benchmarks to support the development of individual town Action Programs and regional collaborative actions.

**Phase II Strategy**

Create and implement Action Programs and collaboration actions for participating towns with the direct involvement of town officials, village center stakeholders, and public interests.

**Phase II Tactics:**

- Seek funding and other resources for Program development and implementation through
  - Federal grants and community development programs,
  - State regional planning grants,
  - Private foundation grants,
  - Private support, and
  - Contributions from participating towns.
- Establish oversight committees in each community.
- Engage and manage economic/community development specialist to complete town-specific research, manage outreach activities, and develop and implement marketing programs and other action steps.
- Coordinate regional collaboration through the Northwestern Connecticut Regional Planning Collaborative.