

**Dear Collaborative Partner,**

We continue to work with you to make progress on the issues of critical importance to our communities- *providing a diverse range of housing options* to meet the needs of all community members and *keeping our village centers vital*. Our progress report is below. For more information on any of these initiatives, please visit [www.nwctplanning.org](http://www.nwctplanning.org).

**WHAT WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON:**

**Tackling Village Center Vitality**



A recent survey showed 42 vacant storefronts in just eight of our region's village centers! The time for action is now and our Village Center Vitality initiative has begun. We have been touring the village centers, beginning inventories and reviewing existing related plans and reports. In late April we will be holding focus group sessions with town leaders and local business owners to get their input and feedback.

We have hired AKRF, an experienced top notch economic development firm, to assist us in developing targeted action steps that will attract and retain businesses, improve pedestrian and bicycle access to our village centers, and expand opportunities for affordable housing near jobs. They will also help us find the critical funding resources needed to take these steps.

Vital village centers can provide jobs, affordable housing, and essential services to the community and curb the sprawl of commercial development that diminishes the character of our towns. For more information, visit our [website](#) or [contact us](#).

**Cost Effective Professional Planning Available**

Because of the inherent efficiencies of the Collaborative organization, we can offer high quality professional planning services at reasonable cost to our member towns. We can tailor projects to meet your exact needs, including implementing or updating your Plan of Conservation and Development, preparing village district and other zoning regulations, and assisting with land use regulation training and administrative procedures. We would be happy to help you identify objectives to support budget requests for planning services through the Collaborative.

Call us to discuss a scope of work & budget that will meet your needs and strengthen the Collaborative approach to community planning in Northwest Connecticut.

**HousingUs in Your Mailbox**



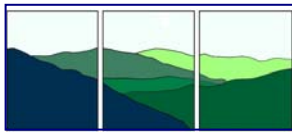
Interested in what you can do to support local housing initiatives? You may have received the HousingUs mailer or newspaper insert- it includes:

- Stories of people in our community who need housing options they can afford
- Housing facts & figures
- 5 Action Steps You Can Take

Read it. Pass it along. Visit the HousingUs website ([www.housingus.org](http://www.housingus.org)) to see all this & learn more.

**Accessory Apartment Guides Complete!**

The Collaborative has been working with HousingUs, an initiative of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, to create guides for homeowners on how to create an accessory apartment. Accessory apartments can create affordable housing options, benefiting both the homeowner and the community. Guides have been completed for the towns of Salisbury & Sharon and are in process for other towns. For a copy of these guides [click here](#).



## Incentive Housing Zones Progress



We have found great sites in Sharon, Salisbury, & Cornwall for IHZs. Congratulations to the Town of Sharon who submitted their Incentive Housing Zone Adoption Application to the state! We are also currently before the Planning & Zoning Commissions in Salisbury & Cornwall presenting Incentive Housing Zone proposals.

Six of our towns received planning grants through the HOMEConnecticut program to consider IHZs which encourage the creation of affordable housing options without the need for a public subsidy.

## REGIONAL NEWS:



The Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (Housatonic Heritage) is applying for a \$10K grant from the Bikes Belong Coalition. Together with a technical assistance grant from the National Park Service, the heritage area and partners will continue work on a regional bikeway program that will connect Sheffield, MA to Kent, CT. In addition to a central North-South route along the Housatonic River, the bike routes will include spurs and loops that connect to downtowns and heritage sites in 11 communities of Northwestern CT.

There are plans to map the various bike routes and to make them available through a series of local brochures. Kent has been chosen as a pilot program for this concept, and a Kent Bike Trails draft brochure with route descriptions and maps is currently being developed. A draft of the map and more information about the regional bikeways program is available at the "Programs & Initiatives" page of Housatonic Heritage's website ([www.housatonicheritage.org](http://www.housatonicheritage.org)). Contact the Upper Housatonic Valley National heritage Area

([info@HousatonicHeritage.org](mailto:info@HousatonicHeritage.org)) or 860-435-9505 with comments or questions.

## GRANT FUNDS AVAILABLE:

### Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is accepting proposals for the Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program. The program provides financial assistance to municipalities and nonprofit land conservation organizations to acquire land for open space.

The deadline date for complete applications is May 3, 2010. For more details, visit our website.

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### HOMEConnecticut 3 Years In: Its Value & Promise Wednesday, April 21, 2010 (2-4:00 p.m.) Hartford

Please join us at The Lyceum to hear experts review the history of HOMEConnecticut – how it's been used, and how residents, municipal officials, builders and planners have responded to it – and predict what the future holds.

