

Dear Collaborative Partner,

In tough economic times, strategic land use planning is more important than ever. As you know, we provide cost efficient planning services to help our NW corner towns meet today's challenges such as supporting local businesses, encouraging a diverse housing stock, and preserving farmland.

Below is an update on the new tools & resources available to you. For more information on any of these, please [contact us](#) or [click here](#) to visit our website.

WHAT WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON:

Incentive Housing Zone Studies Begin

With the addition of a grant for Cornwall, we have now been awarded a total of \$235,450 in State Incentive Housing Zone (IHZ) Study grants for six towns. Incentive Housing Zones allow towns to proactively plan to encourage the diverse types of housing they require to meet town residents' housing needs in appropriate locations. We are now working with an advisory committee made up of residents in each town to assist us in identifying appropriate and eligible locations for potential IHZ's.

We are excited to announce that we have brought in two highly qualified technical consulting firms to provide us with design, policy and engineering support- Concord Square and Fuss & O'Neill. IHZ's were the brainchild of Concord Square's president and they have worked with many communities in both Massachusetts & Connecticut to create IHZs.

Working collaboratively on these studies will help save money in many areas including planning, water/sewer infrastructure studies, and regulations drafting. In addition, with six towns working on this at once we can all learn from each other. For more information on this [click here](#).

Providing Direct Assistance to Towns

Over the last two months we have reviewed draft regulations, conducted research and provided assistance on a variety of regulatory issues as requested by our partner towns including village districts, wind turbines, cluster subdivisions, and removing barriers for affordable types of housing.



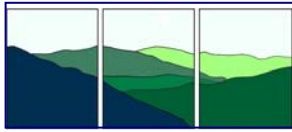
Why reinvent the wheel? Many towns in our region are currently working on addressing similar issues. Our role is to make sure you benefit from both our professional experience and the lessons learned by other communities in developing and implementing regulations. This is how we save you time and money. If you need a wheel, you know who to call.

NEW TOOLS:

Village District Regulations Case Study

Are you interested in ensuring that new development and major renovations that happen in your village center are compatible with existing village character? We have written a 2-page case study which provides information and resources for communities interested in considering a village district regulation to help towns deal with this issue. For a copy of the case study [click here](#).

 <p>The Northwestern Connecticut REGIONAL PLANNING COLLABORATIVE</p> <p>Village District Regulations</p> <p>A case study containing information & resources on protecting and enhancing village centers.</p> <p>February 2009</p>	<p>OVERVIEW</p> <p>Most Litchfield County Towns enjoy and appreciate a village area that helps define the community and serves as a center for community and commercial activities. Connecticut zoning law allows towns to recognize and enhance such assets by the creation of a special Village District.</p> <p>Village Districts are permitted in "areas of distinctive character, landscape or historic value" as defined in the town's Plan of Conservation and Development. Regulations may address the design and placement of buildings, maintenance of public views, design of public roads, and other elements necessary to maintain and protect the character of the village.</p> <p>Village District reviews and permitting are in addition to any required other zoning, building, or historic district permits. Some towns have prepared a guidebook to facilitate the application process. (See the Resource List below for examples)</p> <p>Many Connecticut towns, including Kent, Litchfield, Suffield, and Farmington have adopted Village District regulations. Such regulations afford towns considerable flexibility in promoting economic, cultural, and social vitality, while preserving the defining characteristics of the community center.</p> <p>Benefits: Ensuring that new development and major renovations are compatible with existing village character.</p> <p>Challenges: Defining distinctive characteristics and establishing efficient review procedures, including development of design guidelines.</p>	<p>KEY ISSUES TO CONSIDER</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distinctive Characteristics – The standards must be consistent with distinctive characteristics, such as architectural style, building materials, or building size, identified in the Town Plan, or with the Connecticut Historical Commission Guidelines. To reflect local conditions and priorities, towns are better served by identifying such characteristics in their Town Plan. 2. Compatibility Objectives – The standards should promote the compatibility of development with such existing characteristics as building and streetscape patterns; road network and open space patterns; distinctive buildings and sight line vistas; and other objectives specified in the statutes. Many towns have specifically identified through the development of design guidelines. 3. Village District Consultant – Applications for new construction and substantial reconstruction in a Village District must be reviewed by a Village District Consultant, selected by the Commission. Many towns have designated an existing design review board or created one to perform this function.
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Checklist & Models for Updating Zoning Regulations

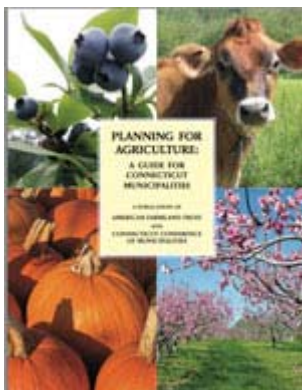
We have completed the first in a series of three tools to help you update your zoning regulations. This first one deals with Statutory Changes to Zoning Administration and Procedures Since 2002. The checklist provides information on which updates are mandatory and which are optional. This is followed by model language you can incorporate into your regulations to deal with each statutory change and a brief explanation of why and how you can make the update. For a copy of this tool [click here](#).

For our eight towns currently in the Collaborative's service area, we can perform these reviews for you. Please contact us if you are interested. For towns outside of our current service area, we hope this provides you with the tools to cost effectively perform this review yourselves.

WEBSITE UPDATES:

You can always find something new on our website! We continue to add resources and make changes to our website to make it as current and user friendly as possible.

We have streamlined the menu options with a "[RESOURCES](#)" page that provides direct links to Collaborative towns' zoning regulations, our case studies, and information on topics from ridgeline protection to affordable housing. We've also added a section with studies & plans from the regional planning organizations.



Under the topic of "Farmland Protection" you will find a **new guide on planning for agriculture** in Connecticut by the American Farmland Trust and the

Connecticut Conference of Municipalities. The guide covers topics including right-to-farm ordinances, financing local farmland protection and promoting local farm viability.

The Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association's current newsletter includes two articles on housing and the economy by our own Collaborative Planner- Chris Wood, AICP. [Click here](#) for a copy or visit our website.

COMING SOON:

Create a Village Center Walking Tour Brochure

Would you like to help attract more tourists to your village center and support the local businesses? The Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area is planning to provide matching grants of up to \$5,000 and technical assistance to create, distribute, and display village center heritage walking tour brochures for each municipality that the heritage area serves. Technical assistance could include trail layout, brochure design & photography. It is anticipated that the 2009 Heritage Partnership Grant Program will be announced in April, and grant applications will be due by May 30th. To see a map of the Heritage Area [click here](#). For more information [contact us](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS:

February 25th- Greenway Landowner Outreach Workshop by the National Park Service.

March 16th- The Collaborative's Pizza & Planning event will include a guest presentation and an interactive discussion about how we plan to work together to make the IHZ program which was developed in Hartford, work for our small towns here in the NW corner. And pizza.

March 19th- CT Federation of Planning & Zoning Agencies annual conference.

For event details, visit our [website](#).