

## INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE OF PLAN

The Conservation Commission was created in June of 1990 by splitting the previously combined Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commission.

The town ordinance which created the Conservation Commission charges it to:

*conduct research to determine the optimum uses or combination of uses of land within the municipality... It shall maintain an inventory of all undeveloped lands, public or privately owned, including wetlands and watercourses, for the purposes of identifying unique ecosystems, rare and endangered plants or animals, prime farm and forest soils, high value wildlife habitats and/or corridors, scenic vistas, high value outdoor recreation sites and other open space areas worthy of special consideration. It shall assist the planning and zoning commission and the chief executive officer in developing and updating the town plan of development and other plans which impact the use of such areas.*

In other words, this natural resource inventory and conservation plan are tasks which the Conservation Commission was created to perform.

Beyond the legal requirements, however, the reason for preparing this plan stems from the critical need to have a community vision of how Brooklyn should develop and grow in the years ahead. A primary function of this plan is to distinguish areas that are suitable for intensive development from areas that merit various levels of long term protection. If we put the plan into practice, Brooklyn can be a town known for

consistently wise land use decisions, made with a deeper understanding of our natural environment. The ultimate goal is for Brooklyn to be a successful community which finds the right balance among economic development, environmental protection and the quality of life.

*"We hope this plan kindles and sustains a sense of stewardship for the land in our community. We hope it will become a legacy which we, the current residents of Brooklyn, leave to future generations of our town."*

*A land ethic "...reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Health is the capacity of the land for self renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity."*

(Leopold, 1949) We hope this plan kindles and sustains a sense of stewardship for the land in our community. We hope it will become a legacy which we, the current

residents of Brooklyn, leave to future generations of our town.

The plan should not be blindly followed, but used as a guiding reference by regulatory commissions, selectmen, landowners and concerned citizens so that our town is capable of self renewal.

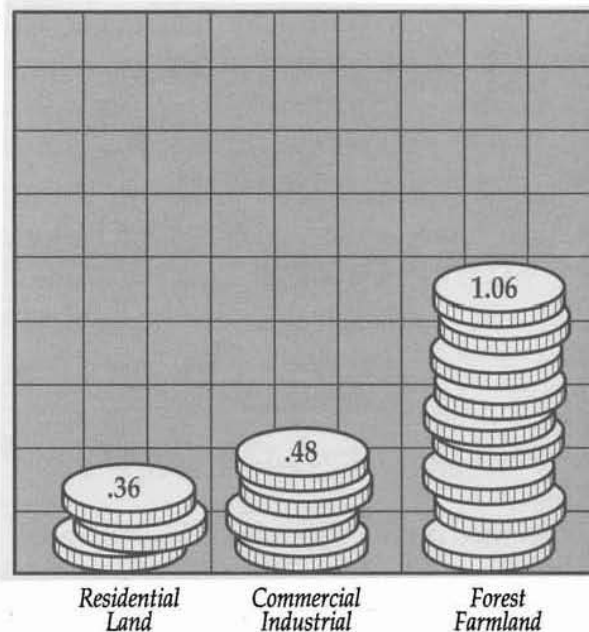
It is intended to form a basis for a new Town Plan of Conservation and Development. The Conservation Commission actively encourages adjacent towns as well as State and regional organizations interested in conservation planning to utilize this information as they adopt or amend their own plans.

### ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF CONSERVATION PLANNING

It is important to understand that there are many economic as well as environmental benefits to a sound conservation and open space plan. First, numerous studies have shown that farm, forest and open space land typically provide a town more money in tax dollars than they require in service expenditures. A 1986 study in Hebron, CT for example, found that for every tax dollar generated from residential properties, the town spent \$1.06 in services such as road maintenance, school buses, police protection, etc. For every tax dollar generated from open space lands, however, only \$0.36 in expenditures was required. In other words, residents who kept and paid taxes on undeveloped land were actually subsidizing residential property owners and helping to keep their taxes low (American Farmland Trust, 1986).

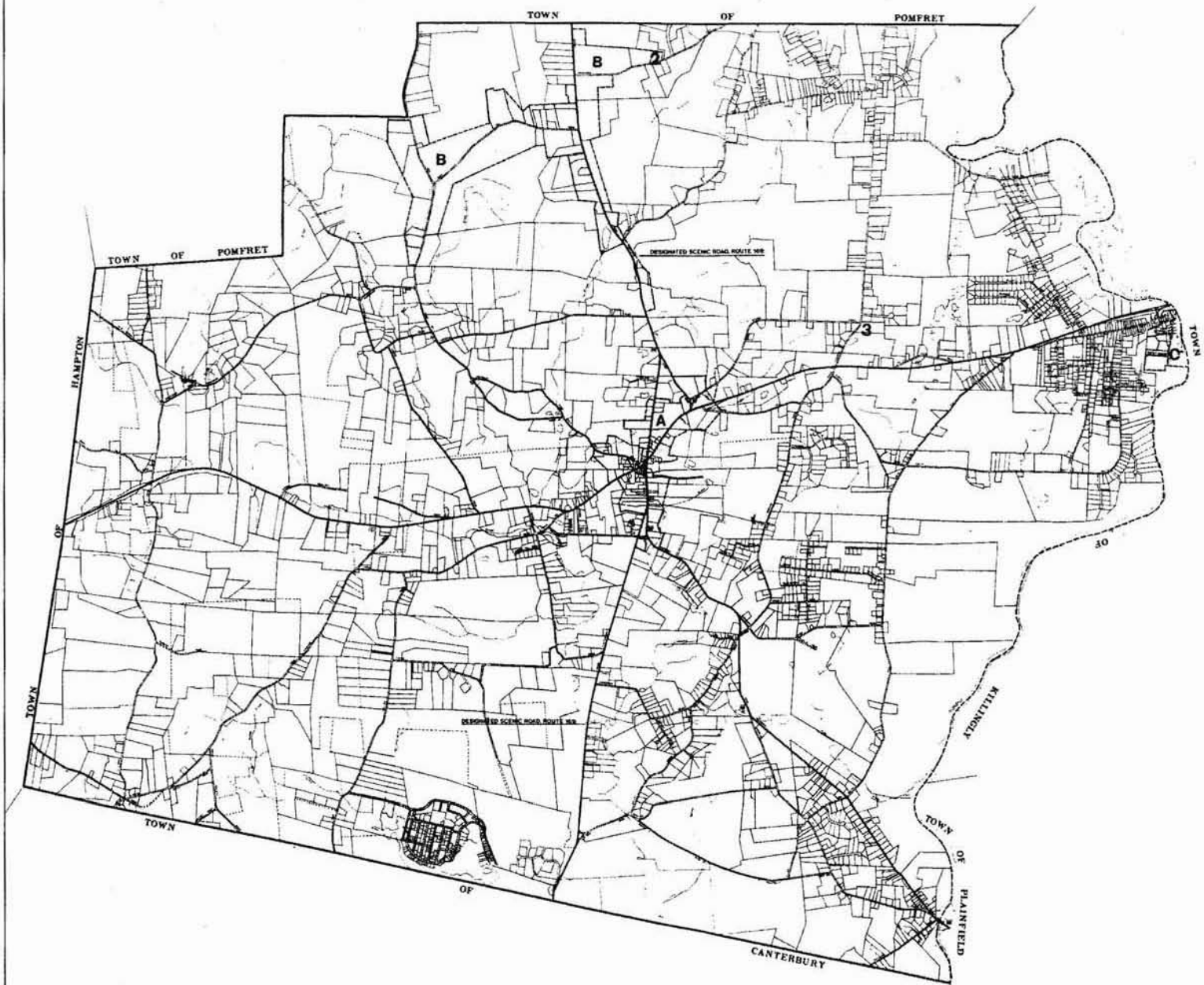
### FOREST LAND IS TOWN'S BEST INVESTMENT

Return Per  
\$1 Spent



Revenues received per dollar of expenditure. Source: "Fiscal Impacts of Major Land Uses in the Town of Hebron, Connecticut," October, 1986, American Farmland Trust

Second, communities with sound conservation plans have been shown to actually improve their bond ratings. These ratings have begun to reflect the fact that unlimited and/or mismanaged growth can make a community extremely



expensive to manage and threaten its fiscal health. Good conservation and land use planning, on the other hand, promotes cost-effective development, helps ensure that the quality of life remains desirable and avoids the need for disastrously expensive environmental clean-ups that result from poor land use decisions (Thomas, 1991).

Third, conserving land wisely allows nature to continue recharging our groundwater, cleansing our drinking water, preventing soil erosion, absorbing flood waters and doing many other things we take for granted, but which are tremendously expensive for us to do in their absence.

Fourth, studies have shown that private residential properties adjacent or close to permanently protected open space increase in value faster than similar properties elsewhere. This benefits not only the individual homeowners, but the entire town in the form of an increased grand list (Irland, 1987).

Finally, outdoor recreation and outdoor based tourism are big business today, and as Connecticut continues to urbanize they promise to get bigger. If we manage them wisely, the beauty of Brooklyn's historic districts, combined with the beauty of its countryside, will have increasing potential for attracting tourist and recreational dollars to our community.