

The Town of

# East Haddam

Connecticut, USA

Incorporated 1734



**TOWN OF EAST HADDAM**  
PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT



## Overarching Community Goals

*Ensure the Community's Longstanding Value of Preserving the Town's Rural Character is Sustained.*

*Protect East Haddam's Landscape, Waters and Natural Environment.*

*Prepare for Changing Demographics – Attract, Support, and Maintain Housing Options.*

*Provide Quality Facilities for Education, Community, Recreation, and Emergency Services.*

*Maintain the Quality Transportation System and Improve the Variety of Transportation Choices.*

*Position East Haddam to Grow the Grand List to Maintain the Town's Quality of Life.*

*Encourage Continued Regional Cooperation and Partnerships to Strengthen Economic Development Efforts.*

**East Haddam** possesses a significant wealth of historic and cultural resources, from the Town's historic villages and cultural venues, to the many historic sites that shaped the Town's rural character and culture, to the scenic roads and stone walls that border the natural landscapes rich with scenic views and vistas. These key resources are deftly woven into the fabric of everyday life throughout the Town.

This Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) serves as a planning tool used to capture the community's common goals for achieving long-term growth. It is intended to be both visionary and action oriented. The process of updating the POCD has given the Town the opportunity to focus on the larger picture and affirm goals and community values identified in the last POCD adopted in 2008. It also provides an opportunity to identify new values and trends and prepare for future opportunities and challenges. The process has provided several public forums for the discussion of shared values and ideas. The input gathered has facilitated a dialog within the community to promote overarching values and coordinate efforts to produce consistent results. Overlapping strategies that support multiple goals ensure an efficiency in implementation to allow Town entities to work together towards achieving long-term health, sustainability, economic prosperity, and the ability to thrive.

## Community Values

*"The Town of East Haddam has consistently recognized and defended the community's longstanding values and core principles of maintaining the Town's rural character, environment and natural resources, sense of community and volunteerism, historic character, cultural life and recreation, quality education, and economic strength. The Plan's enshrined goals, objectives, and strategies reflect these deeply held community values and the Town's commitment to represent the community's vision through future conservation and development priorities for the coming decade."*



## Background

The Town of East Haddam is a community of about 57 square miles located within the Lower Connecticut River Valley. Originally, East Haddam and Haddam were one community until East Haddam was incorporated as a separate society in 1734. The first settlers concentrated on an agricultural existence. Much of the Town's early commerce: farming, timber, shipbuilding and mills took advantage of the Town's abundance of natural assets. Following the decline of many of these industries, the Town would begin to capitalize on its rural charm and natural beauty to attract artists and visitors to the area.

Today East Haddam is primarily a residential, rural agricultural community with excellent commuter access to many of the state's surrounding employment hubs. The Town's cultural and commercial village centers align with historical development patterns. Much like the State and the Region, East Haddam's population has continued to age, reaching a median age of 44 for residents. Total population has leveled off at nearly 9,200 residents after decades of growth.

With well-established development patterns and an emphasis on the community's longstanding values, the East Haddam of tomorrow will maintain that great sense of place they have today.



# Preserve The Town's Rural Character

## Strategies

*Conserve East Haddam's natural environment and agricultural lands.*

*Encourage and support agricultural businesses to reinforce the rural character of East Haddam.*

*Protect, preserve, and promote East Haddam's unique historic and rural character.*

*Ensure protection of the Town's numerous historic cemeteries as historic open spaces that reflect the small-town heritage.*

### Where We Are:

- East Haddam has developed a zoning framework including Village Center Regulations to protect the distinctive character, landscape, and historic structures that contribute to the Town's rural character.
- East Haddam continues to support and promote the growth and evolution of its numerous active working farms and agricultural businesses protecting the Town's agricultural heritage.
- The Town's open space acquisition programs preserve the natural environment and guide the direction of residential growth.
- Several desirable open space and farmland properties were acquired by the Town during the last decade, most notably, the Shugrue property (238 acres), Valenti property (Rose Farm), Hemlock Valley Brook (68 acres), Dean property (274 acres), Harris property (134 acres), Lena property (207 acres), Pages/Hatch property (238 acres), and Zeiller property (97 acres).

### How We'll Get There:

*The Town has a strong desire to keep with the historic development patterns of having population centered in and around the village centers.*

Future development, commercial or residential, is confined by scale, architectural style, and location where appropriate in order to mesh with the Town's existing rural character.

*Support existing farms that diversify the local economy, provide locally grown products, preserve open space, and capture the rural quality of life.*

Agritourism, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and Farmland preservation provide economic, ecological, and social benefits to the Town, its residents, and its visitors. Promoting local small family owned businesses and their long-term economic viability contributes to the tax base and draws in valuable agritourism dollars.

*Further identify and inventory historic mill sites, farms, foundations, stone walls, residential structures, and neighborhood areas for preservation.*

The Town's historic resources have a vital role in preserving and showcasing the Town's storied agricultural heritage. Certain historic landmarks like the Goodspeed Opera House are integral in promoting the Town's tourism economy.



Top: Red Mill Bridge

Middle: Staehly Farm Winery, courtesy of Staehly Farm Management

Bottom: Nathan Hale School House



Top: Millington Green School House

Bottom: First Congressional Church Cemetery - Home to Venture Smith's Grave, a stop on the Freedom Trail



# Protect East Haddam's Landscape, Waters and Natural Environment

## Strategies

Maintain East Haddam's high-quality surface and sub-surface waters.

Preserve and promote East Haddam's natural environment while ensuring its wildlife and natural resources stay protected.

Maintain and expand the public parks, recreational facilities, and open space network.

### Where We Are:

- The Town continues to monitor and protect the high-quality surface and sub-surface waters in East Haddam to preserve their natural, scenic, and recreational qualities.
- East Haddam mitigates the impact of invasive non-native species and pests in order to better preserve the diversity of wildlife and natural resources found throughout the Town.
- East Haddam is advancing initiatives in energy conservation, self-sustainability, and overall waste reduction.
- East Haddam opened a regionally recognized 18-hole wooded disc golf course, and the Hunter Daniels-Dan Dombrowski Memorial skate park to provide new active and passive recreational opportunities for the Town's visitors and residents.
- East Haddam boasts an impressive array of recreational spaces that include eight state parks and wildlife management areas, two Nature Conservancy properties, 15 East Haddam Land Trust (EHLT) parcels and 16 Town open space parcels.

### How We'll Get There:

*Preserve the natural, scenic and recreational qualities of East Haddam's waterbodies and waterways.*

East Haddam's pristine water resources possess unique scenic, ecological, scientific, and historical values that contribute to public recreational enjoyment, inspiration, and study. Educating the public on the importance of riparian buffers, promoting non-chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and regularly cleaning storm drains can help preserve these natural resources and protect the ground waters private wells rely on.

*Protect, connect, and provide access to open spaces.*

By ensuring open space acquisitions are "connected" and accessible, the Town can improve quality of life, attract more visitors, and protect habitat and natural systems. The Town is working towards improving connectivity between parks, preserves, reserves, and other patches of open space that can be used for passive recreation such as completing the greenway along the Moodus River.

*Create public green spaces in East Haddam village, including river access, along the Connecticut River.*

The scenic waterfront views associated with East Haddam Village remain an underutilized resource to be capitalized on. Expanding public access to the waterfront with public green spaces and walkways is an efficient way to draw in tourists without obstructing the views they come to enjoy.



Top: Shagbark Solar Farm, courtesy of Middletown Press

Middle: Invasive Emerald Ash Borer, courtesy of Patch.com

Bottom: Cascades at Chapman Pond Preserve, courtesy of NewEnglandWaterfalls.com



Top: Devil's Hopyard State Park Wayfinding Sign

Bottom: Sheepskin Hollow Preserve

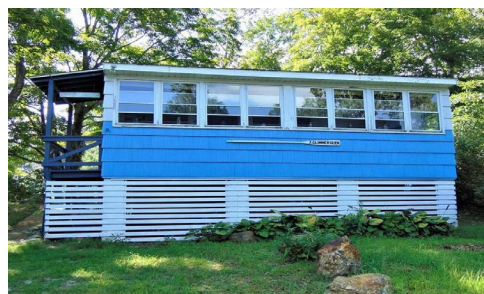


# Changing Demographics - Attract, Support, and Maintain Housing Options

## Strategies

*Diversify housing opportunities to meet the needs of all residents, regardless of age and income.*

*Establish programs and partnerships to expand housing opportunities.*



Top: Equal Opportunity Housing at Oak Grove

Middle: New Single-Family Home at The Residences of Fox Hopyard

Bottom: Seasonal Cottage at Lake Hayward, courtesy of Coldwell Banker

### Where We Are:

- Changing lifestyles and demographics, notably the Town's aging population, will lead to demands for new types of housing and services.
- East Haddam's population grew by approximately 11% from 2000 to 2015. However, the population has only experienced a modest growth of 1.2% from 2010 to 2015.
- East Haddam offers a diversity of neighborhoods to fit village, rural, suburban, and lake lifestyles.
- East Haddam's housing stock is largely comprised of single-family units (90%), having a much larger share than both Middlesex County (71%) and the state (59%).
- The Town encourages affordable and diverse housing opportunities to meet the needs of all residents, regardless of age and income.

### How We'll Get There:

#### Monitor changes in demographics, family structure and composition

The "baby boomer" population is the largest and fastest growing population in East Haddam. There will be increased demands for new housing types and services as baby boomers age in place. Monitoring demographic changes can help the Town proactively address future needs and housing demands.

#### Encourage the development of diverse housing types, scale, and densities in the village neighborhoods.

This planning process brought to light the unmet demand for smaller size housing options, including townhomes, condominiums, rental units, and accessory apartments. Providing diverse housing at varying scales in the village neighborhoods could accommodate the needs of young families and empty nesters looking to downsize.

#### Assist the Town's property owners in maintaining and rehabilitating aging housing units and/or increasing the energy efficiency/sustainability of current housing units.

A housing stock heavily weighted toward mid-20th century homes may increasingly require renovations to match the needs and desires of today's buyers. Providing new methods and programs to help mitigate the costs of required renovations would make homes on the market more desirable to purchase, and aid current residents looking to downsize or just increase the longevity of their home.

#### Expand affordable housing opportunities

By employing creative methods for creating housing opportunities such as housing rehabilitation for first-time buyers and potential PRUD density increases for adult living communities, the Town can work towards their affordable housing goal in a planned manner.



Top: Goodspeed Musicals' Artists Village

Bottom: New Age 55+ Grove Street Apartments



# Quality Facilities for Education, Community, Recreation, and Emergency Services

## Strategies

- Support the Town's emergency services and disaster preparedness.*
- Promote engagement with East Haddam Public Schools to maintain high quality educational programs and facilities that are fundamental community resources.*
- Develop a coordinated long-range strategy for Town services, programs and facilities that supports quality of life.*
- Create public spaces for active and passive recreational uses as central amenities to support commercial centers and neighborhood areas.*
- Support and promote resiliency and sustainability by increasing sustainable energy use and reducing waste.*

### Where We Are:

- The Town has made recent significant investments in its community facilities, services and recreational facilities such as the completion of the new \$15 million Municipal Office Complex and renovations made to East Haddam Elementary School.
- The public has a strong desire to improve and maintain town facilities and services in order to better serve the future needs of the Town's residents.
- Library programming continues to expand events and venues through grant writing, fundraising, and donation collections.
- East Haddam Public Schools and Board of Education (BOE) continue to develop a long-range plan for the school facilities and educational programming.

### How We'll Get There:

*Provide access to a range of youth, social, and behavioral services to all residents.*

Working with the East Haddam Youth Family Services to further develop prevention, intervention and youth development programs is the first step in supporting and enhancing the social, behavioral, and emotional wellbeing of the community.

*Maintain the high quality of the Town's emergency communication, services, and shelters.*

The Town's famous "Moodus Noises" are caused by occasional earthquakes resulting from a fault line that runs through the Moodus section of Town. These natural hazards and extreme weather events may result in the temporary displacement of Town residents. Making sure the Town's emergency communication systems are operational and that shelters are adequately prepared is a necessary step in mitigating the negative impacts caused by these emergencies.

*Prepare a multi-year recreational plan to identify and develop new facilities or enhance existing facilities.*

The Town has been working hard to address the ever growing active and passive recreational needs of its community. Preparing a multi-year plan that identifies new or existing facilities that can accommodate these needs may lead to new recreational opportunities.

*Move to the forefront of recycling and waste reduction, smart design, and green energy.*

Promoting the use of green energy, smart design techniques, and town wide recycling and waste reduction programs is perhaps one of the best ways to make a positive environmental impact on the larger region. Educating residents on the positive environmental and fiscal benefits of these programs provides the necessary foundation for a self-reliant and sustainable East Haddam.



Top: The Rathbun Free Memorial Library

Bottom: East Haddam Elementary School after Improvements, courtesy of Linden Landscape Architects, LLC



# Maintain the Quality Transportation System & Improve Transportation Choices

## Strategies

*Provide a safe, efficient, and compatible transportation system for all users.*

*Continue with streetscape and pedestrian improvements to improve connections to surrounding neighborhoods and recreational areas.*

### Where We Are:

- East Haddam is an automobile dependent community with nearly 94% of residents traveling on average more than 30 minutes to work. A focus of this plan is improving the transportation efficiency and promoting alternative modes for both recreation and travel.
- Significant investments totaling more than \$40 million are on the horizon for the Historic Swing Bridge connecting the villages of East Haddam and Tylerville.
- The 9 town Transit District provides Dial-a-Ride shuttle service for residents within Town and the district.
- East Haddam boasts a strong network of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails with trail maps and materials available through the Town's website.

### How We'll Get There:

*Implement local or regional shuttle services to connect visitors to venues in Town.*

The Town recognizes that ample and accessible parking are key for the continued success of the Town's attractions. The Town continues to actively seek opportunities for local and regional shuttle services linking points of interest.

*Invest and promote greater access to safe bike routes and infrastructure in Town.*

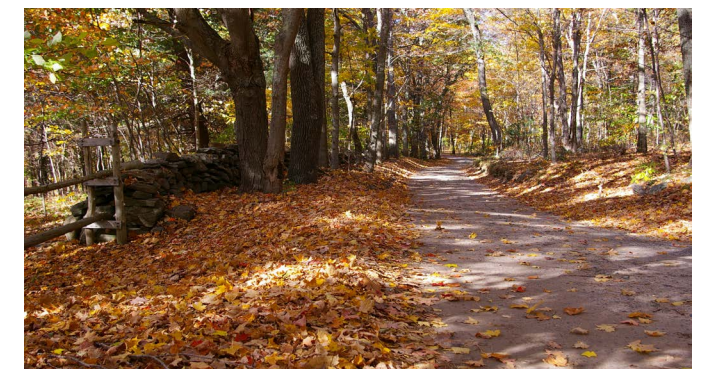
State Route 82 (Town Street) is a prime example of roads in Town that have the straight sightlines and wide right of ways needed to provide additional bicycling opportunities. Bike lanes, wayfinding signage, and bike racks would improve bicycling conditions in Town, providing a boost to recreational opportunities and local businesses.

*Continue to invest in roadway infrastructure needs.*

East Haddam has 120 miles of road that are maintained and improved by the Town. The majority of East Haddam's residents travel by car most of the time. Therefore, above all, the Town must maintain its road network and make travel on Town roads as safe and efficient as possible.

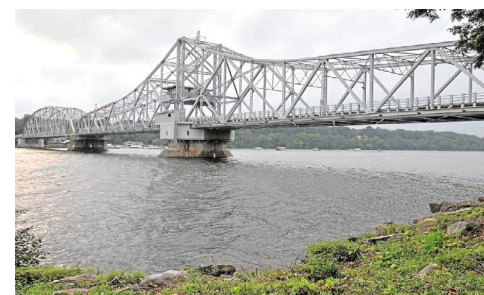
*Improve pedestrian connections and walkability of East Haddam's Village Centers.*

The pedestrian network is a significant factor in a visitor's experience. As part of a Village Master Plan, a comprehensive mobility plan including parking, sidewalks, bicycle amenities, and wayfinding will improve the visitor's experience and appreciation for East Haddam's sense of place.



Top: Route 149 in East Haddam Village

Bottom: Scenic Road in the Moodus Reservoir Watershed



Top: East Haddam Swing Bridge, courtesy of Middletown Press

Middle: A Section of Town Street With Opportunities for Bicyclists

Bottom: View of Gillette Castle from the Hadlyme Ferry, courtesy of TripAdvisor.com





# Grow the Grand List Strategies

*Support the reuse of the former Town office property.*

*Capitalize on the Town's cultural and natural resources for tourism opportunities.*

*Focus economic development and placemaking efforts in the East Haddam Village.*

*Encourage opportunities in Moodus to serve resident's daily commercial needs and employment opportunities.*

*Promote Town Street and Four Corners for expansion of local businesses and tourism opportunities.*

*Support East Haddam's local businesses and entrepreneurial initiatives.*

## Where We Are:

- The Town derives its economic strength from a unique concentration of cultural, historic and environmental assets; consequently, tourism is a central component of the economic base.
- As a community that relies on residential property taxes for the majority of its income, economic development is needed not only for the vitality and growth of the Town itself, but also to protect and sustain its rural character and quality of life.
- Traditional village neighborhoods such as Moodus Center and East Haddam Village hold further economic development potential.
- Town Street and the "Four Corners" is not only home to the Town's Industrial Park but also has experienced a recent transition towards tourism-related businesses.

## How We'll Get There:

*Continue to support adaptive reuse of obsolete buildings in villages and centers.*

Two outstanding examples of successful adaptive reuse in Town are Two Wrasslin Cats and Shagbark Lumber and Farm Supply. The continued support for context sensitive redevelopment is one way to grow the grand list in line with the Town's rural character.

*Support the reuse of the former Town office property.*

As a key property in Town ownership, East Haddam should continue to work towards the redevelopment of the former Town office property in a manner that is consistent with and complements surrounding uses within the village.

*Publicize and promote events and attractions for weekend visitors and tourists.*

The "Visit East Haddam" initiative has led to the creation of successful events like "Celebrate East Haddam" and "East Haddam Fall Weekend." Partnering with the Goodspeed Foundation, East Haddam Business Association, and other interested parties to capitalize on events like Music on the River and Sumer Palooza would be another avenue to boost tourism, and support local businesses.

*Develop a comprehensive master plan for East Haddam Village.*

A master plan serves as a dynamic long-term planning document for the Town's next steps towards strengthening the East Haddam Village by addressing marketing, branding, park spaces, connections to the river, parking, and pedestrian circulation.

*Identify public investments and incentives to encourage private investment for redevelopment opportunities.*

Further redevelopment opportunities exist at former and current mill facilities including the Brownell & Company and the long-vacant Cumberland Farms properties. Actively seeking brownfield assessment and remediation funding will help prepare these sites to once again contribute to the fabric of the community.

*Promote visibility and awareness of businesses.*

Economic development must be actively promoted. East Haddam must be nimble and have the tools to shift toward active recruitment rather than passively reacting to economic conditions. This will require marketing to potential suitors as well as building community support for businesses.



Top: River Access Near Goodspeed Opera House

Middle: The Old Cumberland Farms Building

Bottom: Brownell & Company Building



Former 1700's Barn Adapted into Shagbark Lumber and Supply



# Regional Cooperation And Partnerships Strengthen The Economy

## Strategies

*Work on a regional basis to share resources to expand mutual economic development opportunities.*

*Work to improve transportation routes and methods between neighboring Towns to bring people to East Haddam.*



Top: The Essex Steam Train, courtesy of EssexSteamTrain.com

Middle: Boat Parade at Lake Hayward, courtesy of Jacqueline Bennett

Bottom: Premarin Foals at Ray of Light Animal Sanctuary, courtesy of Kathleen Hesketh

## Where We Are:

- East Haddam exemplifies “small-town” character with a quaint village center and an abundance of recreational, historical, and cultural venues drawing over 300,000 visitors annually.
- The Goodspeed, a world class theater, is estimated to draw in 130,000 patrons annually.
- With 17 sites and structures on the National Register of Historical Places and four Historic districts, the Town is well positioned for niche historical tourism.

## How We'll Get There:

*Continue to promote East Haddam's role in the region.*

Through participation with RiverCOG and other economic development-related organizations, Town officials keep informed of news and trends pertinent to East Haddam.

*Work collaboratively with neighboring economic development entities.*

A regional collaboration between member Towns of the Lower Connecticut River Valley Region provides a stronger backbone than an individual Town's initiatives. Cross promoting tourist attractions between neighboring Towns can help strengthen East Haddam's position within the regional tourism market and provide additional opportunities for growth.

*Support RiverCOG's Regional Economic Growth Strategy "GrowSMART."*

Following GrowSMART's strategies to adopt more detailed and specific design standards, build on existing tourism efforts, and develop “just big enough” destination communities may lead to economic prosperity for East Haddam.



Top: The Goodspeed Opera House, Courtesy of the Goodspeed Opera House Facebook Page

Bottom: The Gelston House

Left: East Haddam Farmers Market at Ballek's Garden Center