

Chapter 1: Introduction, Vision, and Goals

Introduction

The 2025 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) for Orange, Connecticut is grounded in the mandates of Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), which guide the preparation and adoption of a municipal development plan every ten years. The purpose of a POCD is to establish a shared vision for the future of the community. Based on Orange's existing conditions and resources, the Plan recommends forward-looking strategies and goals to guide the town over the next decade.

Planning Process

Broad community and stakeholder engagement is critical to the development of a POCD that will successfully serve the needs of the community. Two public workshops were hosted at the High Plains Community Center and streamed on Orange Government Access Television (OGAT). The purpose of these meetings was to seek feedback from the broader Orange community on creating a vision for the plan, identifying issues and opportunities, and testing strategies and recommendations. The first workshop focused on introducing the community to the POCD planning process and confirming the community's priorities for the Plan. The second workshop honed in on specific recommendations and strategies for public feedback.

A project webpage was established on the Town of Orange Website, providing updates on engagement opportunities and draft POCD chapters for public access. A survey was launched in January 2025 to learn about community priorities, issues, and opportunities. The survey was posted on the Town website, as well as available in hard copies at key community spaces such as the High Plains Community Center and Case Memorial Library.

Throughout the process, the project team conducted a series of interviews to gather information from Town department heads, commission members, and staff. The Plan & Zoning Commission met with the project team regularly to track progress and share feedback on interim deliverables.

The final POCD was adopted with an effective date of _____ following a public hearing. After its adoption, the Plan enters the implementation phase. Although the POCD is primarily an advisory document, it creates a framework for consistent decision-making townwide over the next decade, including zoning amendments and capital budget items.

2015 Plan of Conservation and Development

It is critical to understand the planning context that has led Orange to where it is today. The 2015 Orange POCD emphasized the town's community pride in its historic character, open spaces, and public facilities. A selection of key recommendations is summarized below:

- Protect important natural resources (i.e., watercourses, wetlands, sensitive habitats).
- Continue open space preservation efforts and strive to convert private open space into dedicated open space owned by the Town or land trust.
- Promote sustainability through energy conservation, water conservation, waste reduction, and education.
- Promote resiliency by improving hazard mitigation and emergency management plans.
- Encourage farmland preservation and preserve undeveloped land.
- Protect historic resources and increase awareness through signage.
- Protect residential neighborhoods by maintaining the equality, livability, and character of the community.
- Consider ways to provide a diverse housing stock.
- Continue to promote a vibrant economic base and encourage well-planned development in the “economic area.”
- Enhance overall pedestrian circulation in business areas.
- Maintain a safe and efficient road system by improving dangerous intersections.
- Consider bicycle usage within existing pavement widths when undertaking roadway projects (including narrowing vehicle lanes if appropriate).
- Strive to create an open space system with public access and trails.
- Improve storm drainage.
- Continue the use of septic systems in most areas of Orange.
- Promote “sewer avoidance” in most areas of Orange.

The 2025 Orange POCD incorporates findings and recommendations from the previous POCD where applicable. The update of this Plan reflects input from Town staff and department/commission heads, the Plan & Zoning Commission, and the broader community.

Vision

[PLACEHOLDER FOR VISION (will develop with Survey & Workshop results)]

How the Plan is Organized

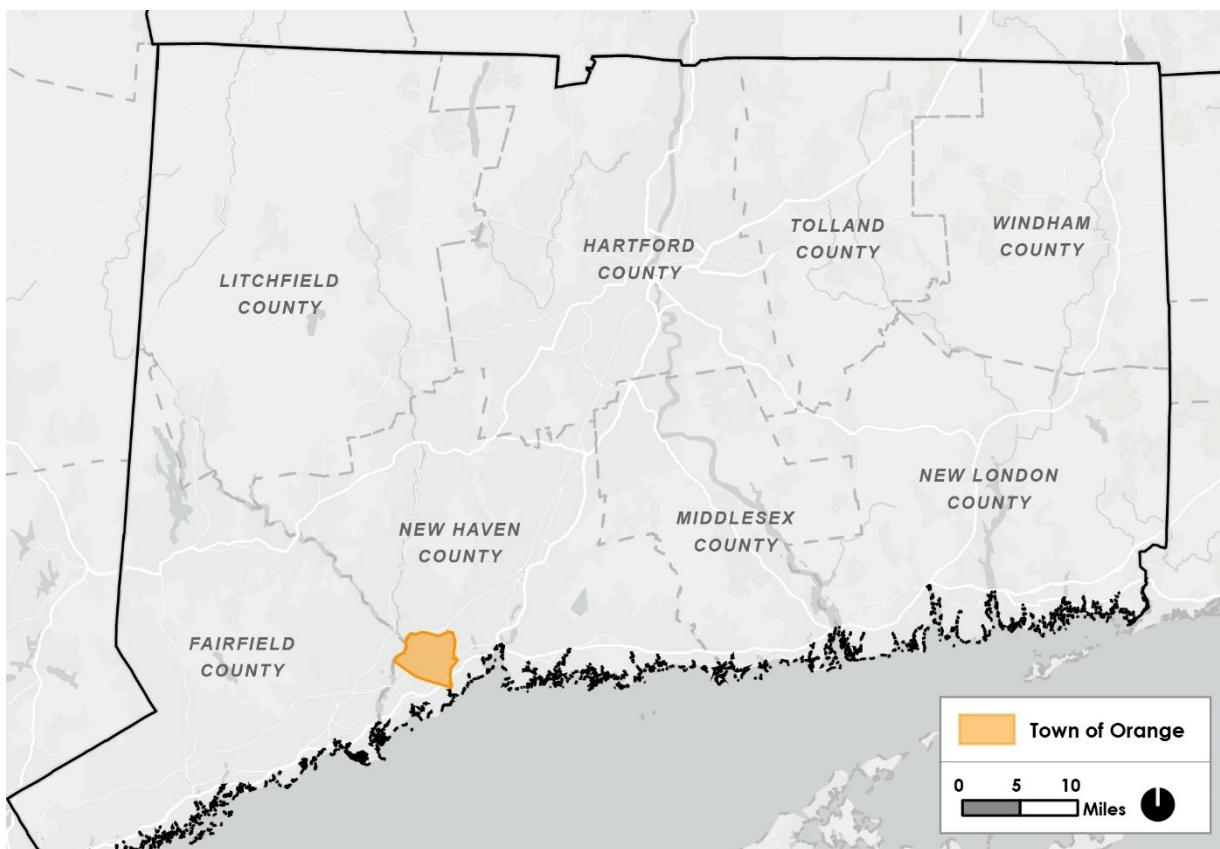
The 2025 Orange POCD is organized into nine chapters. Chapters three through eight each cover a different topic area, and begin with an overview of existing conditions, challenges, and opportunities, followed by recommendations. The final chapter presents a Future Land Use Plan and Implementation Matrix, which provides strategies for implementation of the goals and recommendations established in the Plan.

Consistency with State and Regional Plans

As stated previously, Section 8-23 of the CGS requires the preparation and adoption of a POCD for each municipality every 10 years. The CGS also requires the Plan to be consistent with both the state and regional POCDs.

Figure 1: Regional Context of Orange, Connecticut

Source: Esri, BFJ Planning



The State of Connecticut's Office of Policy and Management (OPM) is responsible for updating the State Conservation & Development Plan on a recurring 5-year cycle as per Section 16a-24 through Section 16a-33 (Chapter 297) of the CGS. The Plan for Connecticut 2018-2023 outlines six Growth Management Principles to guide each municipality's POCD. The 2025 Orange POCD aims to align with the following State priorities:

- Redevelop and revitalize regional centers and areas with existing or currently planned physical infrastructure.
- Expand housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs.
- Concentrate development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options.
- Conserve and restore the natural environment, cultural and historical resources, and traditional rural lands.

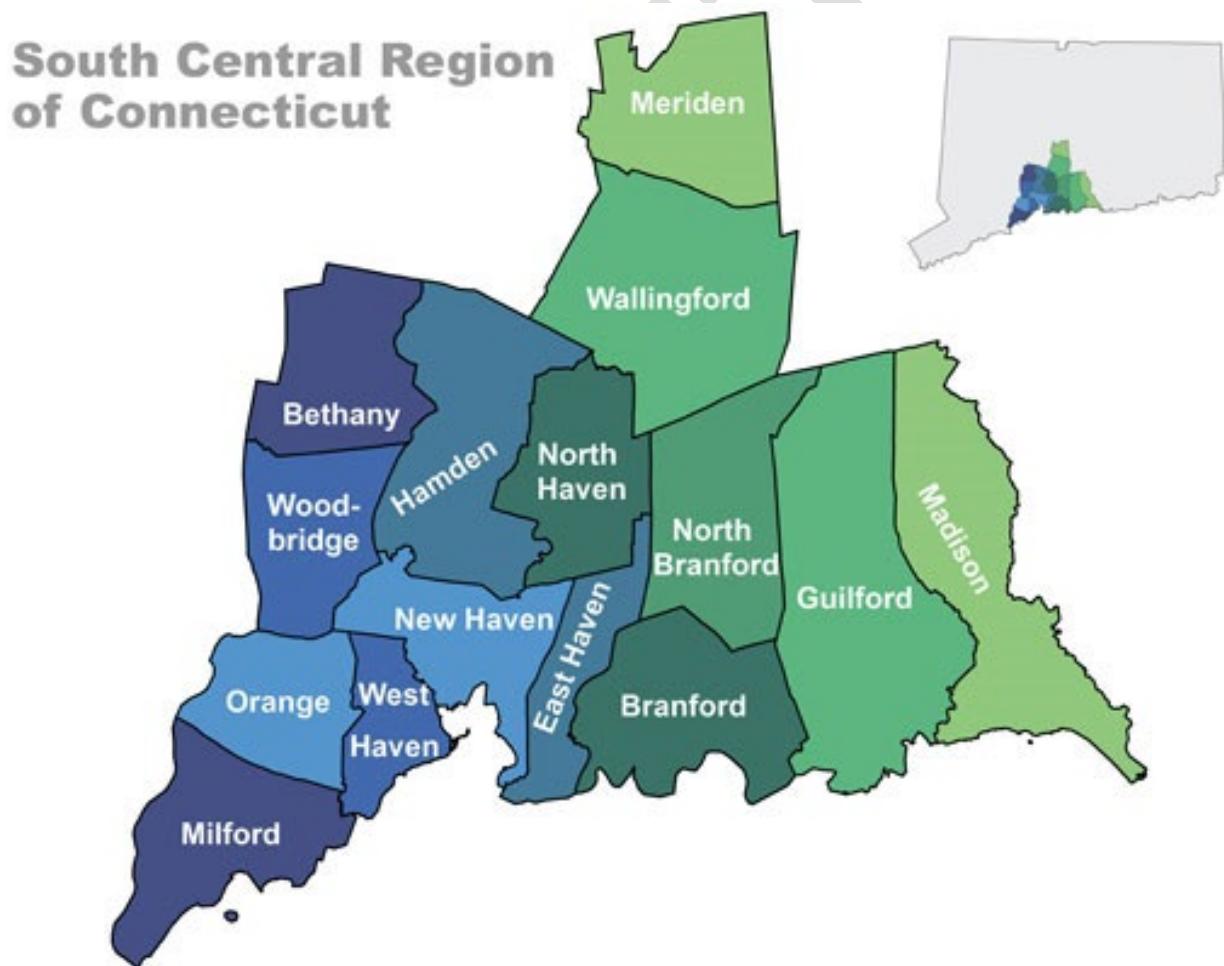
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- Protect and ensure the integrity of environmental assets critical to public health and safety.
- Promote integrated planning across all levels of government to address issues on a statewide, regional, and local basis.

South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG)

Orange is one of fifteen municipalities that make up the South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG). The purpose of SCRCOG is to enable regional cooperation between cities and towns, specifically in relation to transportation, land use and the environment, housing, and municipal services. The Orange POCD aims for consistency with the plans put forth by SCRCOG in recent years.

Figure 2: South Central Region of Connecticut
Source: South Central Regional Council of Governments



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The SCRCOG developed the South Central Region: Plan of Conservation and Development 2018-2028 in accordance with Section 8-35a of the CGS. This Plan reflects challenges and opportunities faced by the region in recent years, as well as a vision for the future of South Central Connecticut. The following goals are outlined in the SCRCOG POCD:

- South Central CT seeks to be a vibrant, inclusive and livable region that is attractive to an increasingly diverse population.
- The Region contains a diverse and suitable housing supply that provides housing choice for all incomes and age groups.
- The Region's natural resource systems, water resources, and natural habitats are preserved, protected, and appreciated for their contributions to the environment, economy, and quality of life of current and future generations.
- Drinking and surface water quality is enhanced and maintained by the preservation and protection of wetlands, floodplains, critical watershed lands, and other resources.
- South Central CT's thriving agri-businesses not only provide residents with access to locally grown foods and recreational opportunities, but also contribute to the regional economy.
- The Region is continuously evolving to establish long-term resilience to sea level rise and the impacts of flooding and storm damage.
- Development in the region is focused in existing urban/town/village centers and developed corridors that transportation, employment and utility infrastructure while conserving land areas that are integral for maintaining the region's unique natural resources.
- The Region's transportation network supports regional land use objectives, enhances the economic competitiveness of the region, and maximizes transportation choice for the region's residents.
- South Central CT's rich portfolio of cultural, historical and archaeological resources attract and retain residents and businesses, and contribute to the overall vibrancy of the region.
- South Central CT capitalizes on its locational, transportation, natural, economic and human assets to position itself as a vibrant and attractive region.
- The Region minimizes energy consumption through conservation and environmentally sensitive development practices, and facilitates the use of renewable and reliable energy sources.