



2022 Testimony

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Continuing Legislative Committee on State Planning & Development

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The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 98% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the **Draft 2018-2023 Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut.**

The time is ripe for real movement on responsible growth. There is a clear link between Connecticut's over reliance on the property tax municipal finance system and harmful land-use policies (e.g., sprawl, disinvestment, etc.). These policies combine to drive people and business away from cities, urbanized towns and other already-developed areas. These policies eat up precious green and open spaces. All types of communities -- suburban, rural and urban -- are being hurt:

- A growing number of *small cities and older suburbs*, home to nearly half of the state's population, *face significant and growing poverty*.
- A large group of *fast-growing, middle-class suburbs* are *struggling* to provide schools, infrastructure and other non-education services with sufficient resources.
- *Especially hard hit* are *Connecticut's central cities and urbanized towns*. These municipalities must cope with poverty rates nearly three times the statewide average.
- *Sprawl threatens the state's natural resources and farmland*. The amount of urban and suburban land in Connecticut continues to increase at a dramatic rate – even though the population hasn't grown much over the last 20 years. Runaway growth devours farmland and churns out paved residential and commercial development -- changing an area, and our state, forever.

Cooperative land-use planning among the State, towns and cities and regions can strengthen communities, preserve the environment and help the economy by improving transportation systems. Reforms that shift the revenue burden away from property taxes can stabilize fiscally stressed schools, help communities pay for needed public services and reduce competition for tax base. The State, councils of government or other regional organizations can help solve regional problems while ensuring that all communities have a say in decision-making.

Specific Comments on 2018-2023 Draft Plan

CCM appreciates that the 6 Growth Management Principles, which have been in statute for several years, provide clear guidance to towns and cities and regions as to where and under what circumstances development is to occur.

We appreciate the proposed changes in the Location Guide Map, which provide for extensive priority development areas. We are, however, concerned about what the Priority Development Areas might mean for rural areas. We are concerned that the way priority development areas are defined, the Plan may actually encourage unintentional sprawl in rural areas.

The bucolic countryside is an essential part of Connecticut's make-up. Connecticut is not Connecticut without it. The Plan should be more flexible to ensure that it does not inadvertently adversely impact Connecticut's smaller communities. It must ensure that Connecticut's rural areas can maintain their unique character.

CCM looks forward to working with you to implement a statewide policy of responsible growth. We all want to ensure that Connecticut's unique quality of life, which is so essential to our economic success as well, is preserved.

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If you have any questions, please contact Donna Hamzy, Advocacy Manager of CCM at dhamzy@ccm-ct.org or (203) 843-0705.