

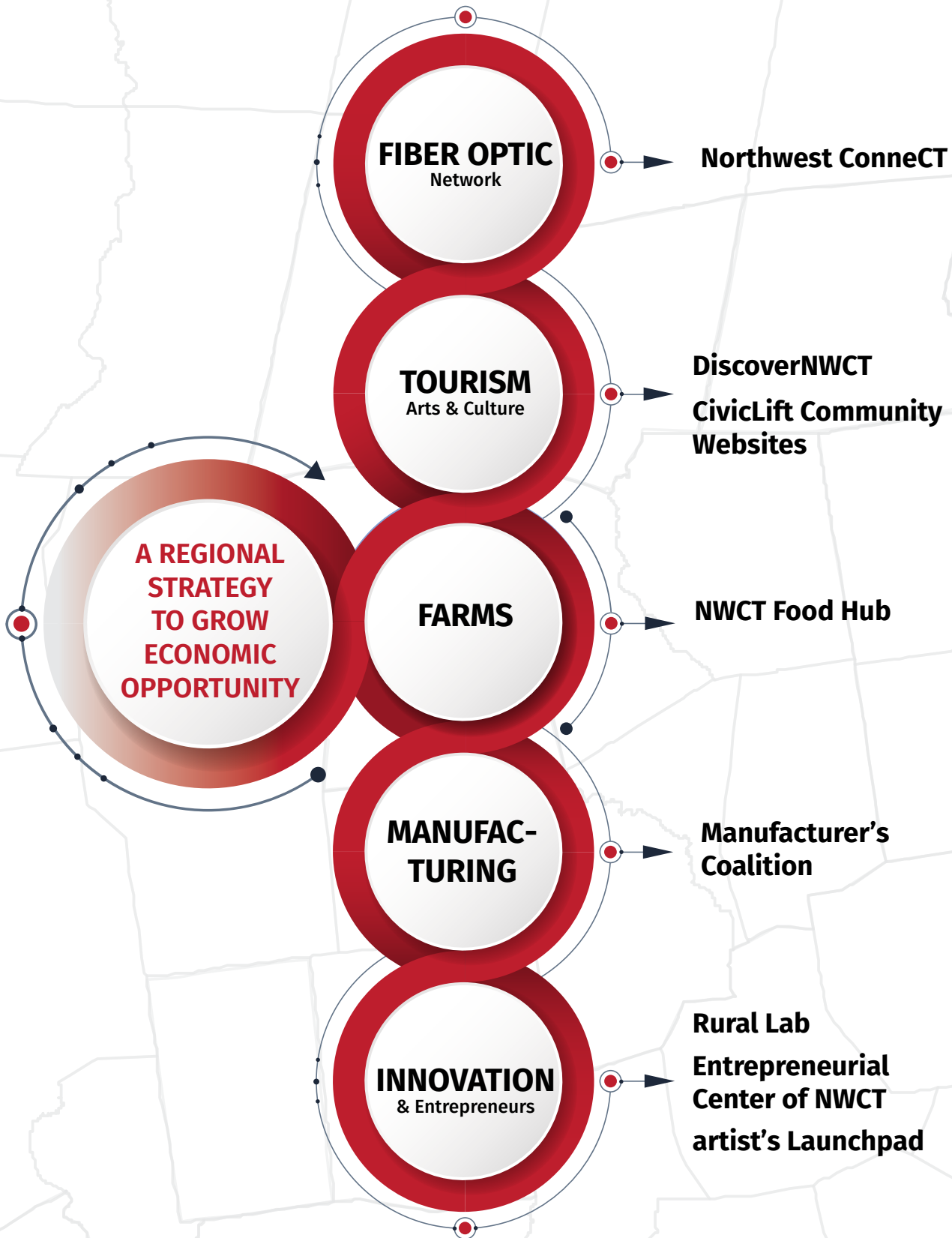
NORTHWEST CONNECTICUT

Comprehensive Economic
Development Strategy (CEDs)

ADOPTED BY NWCT EDC (4/9/18)
ENDORSED BY NHCOC (4/12/18)

5 CEDS FOCUS AREAS

Connecting people to places and jobs.





Kent, CT • Bulls Bridge



*Coming together
is a beginning;
keeping together
is progress;
working together
is success.*

— Henry Ford

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The Northwest Connecticut Economic Development District (comprised of 21 towns) went through an eight-month strategic planning process to determine realistic, priority action steps that we can take as a region to increase economic opportunity. Data and trends analysis, focus group sessions, stakeholder outreach, and a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) all informed the final visions and goals that are summarized in this section and detailed in the following pages.

This Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) will be carried out by the **region's economic development partners** including: the NWCT Chamber of Commerce, NWCT Economic Development Corporation, Northwest Hills Council of Governments, our twenty-one municipalities, and our local economic development commissions. We look forward to working together to pursue these initiatives, grow jobs, and develop our region's workforce.

Vision Statements: In ten years...

- Our region will be better known as a unique collection of **historic New England towns with outstanding arts, culture, recreation, and event offerings, surrounded by scenic farmlands and recreational trails**, where people of all ages want to live, work, and visit.
- Our region will have ubiquitous high-speed internet service and seamless mobile connectivity.
- Our region will be known by innovators and entrepreneurs as the place to develop their complementary innovations in a rural setting—the nation's "Rural Lab".
- Our region will have the skilled workforce needed by the region's employers.

Goals:

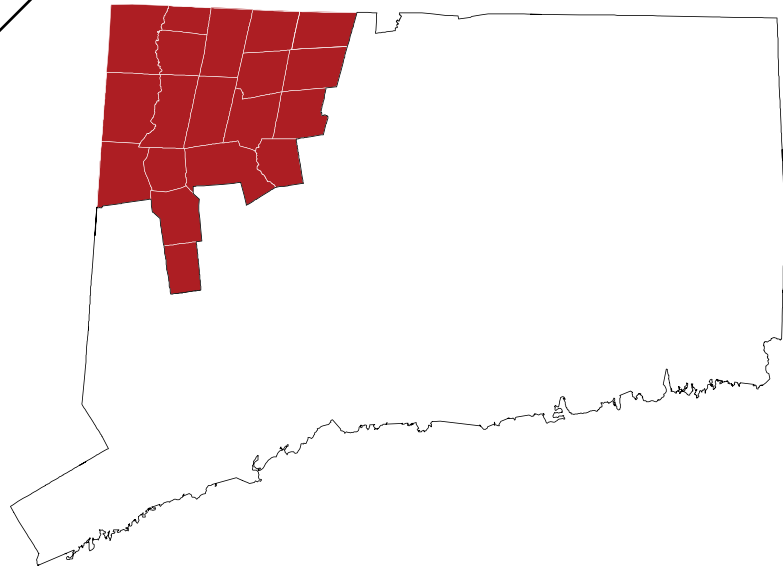
The four main goals of this CEDS are:

1. Develop and implement a targeted, regional **branding and marketing strategy**
2. Connect homes and businesses in the region to high **speed fiber optic broadband**
3. Carry out **business retention and expansion programs** including Rural Lab, NWCT Food Hub, and Jobs Hub initiatives
4. Continue to implement regional **transportation and land use** plans and invest in **infrastructure**

Acknowledgments

This planning process and resulting CEDS was funded in part by the U.S. Economic Development Administration and the Northwest Hills Council of Governments with significant in-kind contributions from the NWCT Chamber and NWCT Economic Development Corporation Board.

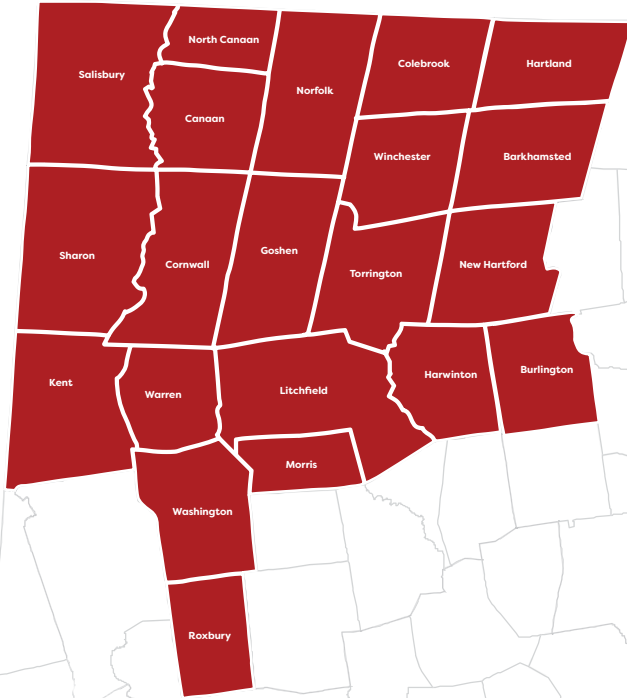
01



Introduction & Overview

This is the CEDS for the Northwest Connecticut Economic Development District. This District was approved by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) in 2016 and is made up of 21 municipalities in the northwest corner of Connecticut.

The Northwest Connecticut Economic Development Corporation board, made up of public and private sector stakeholders, acted as the Steering Committee for this CEDS. The Northwest Hills Council of Governments (public sector) and the Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce (private sector) were key partners in the development of this plan.



Regional Economic Conditions & Trends

The major economic trends shaping the region:

- There was a **decrease in the size of the labor force** in the region from 2010 to 2014. Torrington remains the region's employment center, just as it is the population center.
- Since the early 2000s recession, the region's **unemployment rate of 5%** has remained generally consistent with or slightly below the state and the nation's rate.
- Over half (61.2%) of businesses in the region are **very small businesses** (with 4 or fewer employees), 78% have fewer than 10 employees, and over 15% of the region's workforce is **self-employed**.
- Over **60% of residents commute to jobs outside the region**, indicating that the region is serving as a bedroom community for other labor market areas.
- The **Health Care and Social Assistance** industry is one of the cores of the region's employment, with over 18.0% of jobs. **Government and Manufacturing** are also important to the region's industry base.
- Over 28% of the region's employment was in one of the industries represented in the state's six economic clusters, with the region having a larger share of employment in **Health Care, Tourism, and Advanced Manufacturing** than at the state level.

For more information and details on the economic conditions and trends in the region, including labor force and unemployment, jobs by town, industry mix, economic clusters, small business, self-employment, commuting patterns, housing and demographic trends, see the **NHCOG Regional Profile**, which is an **appendix** to this CEDS.

Demographic and Economic Conditions

This CEDS was also informed by the demographic and economic conditions and trends detailed in the following reports, which are appendices:

“Northwest Connecticut Economic Data, Trends, and Analysis” (2017) by the Connecticut Small Business Development Center (CT SBDC); and

Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation’s “Community Crossroads” (2018) report, which contains additional data, including projected demographic changes, occupations in demand, educational and other quality of life statistics for the region.

Litchfield County Businesses (establishments) - 2015 data

Top 5 by

Retail Trade	690
Construction	658
Health Care and Social Assistance	513
Other Services.	501
Accom & Food Services	432

Top 5 by Employment

Health Care and Social Assistance	9,636
Retail Trade	8,759
Manufacturing.	8,684
Accom & Food Services	4,838
Construction	3,423

Total Businesses

2015.	4,806
2014:	4,781
2013:	4,782
2012:	4,847

Size by Employees

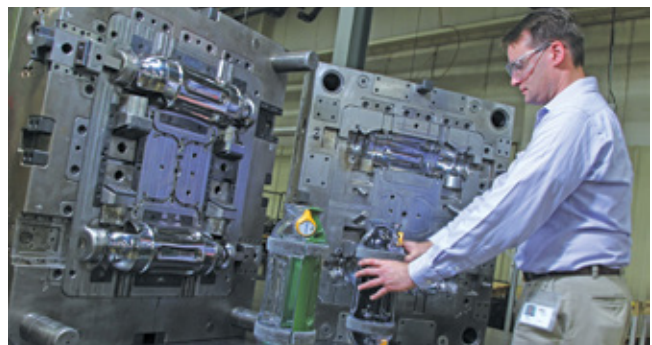
Less than 5.	59.6%
Less than 10.	78.2%
Less than 20	88.8%
Less than 100	98.2%

Top 5 by Annual Payroll per Employee

Construction	\$69,000
Information	\$65,000
Finance and Insurance	\$59,000
Wholesale Trade	\$58,000
Manufacturing.	\$56,000



Litchfield, CT • Farm Fresh Market



Torrington, CT • Seitz - Plastic Injection Molding

Regional Assets

Northwest Connecticut has a lot to offer current and future residents, job seekers, businesses, and entrepreneurs, including:

- Highly educated workforce;
- Regional location with access to NYC and Boston markets;
- High quality of life, including arts and cultural amenities, great schools, strong culture of volunteerism/civic pride, historic New England villages and Main Streets;
- Outstanding outdoor recreational amenities, including hiking, biking, skiing, and boating
- Farmers markets, small farms, and a regional Food Hub;
- Robust ecosystem of support for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and start-ups; and
- Strong advanced manufacturing and healthcare sectors.



Warren, CT • Farmers Table Dinner

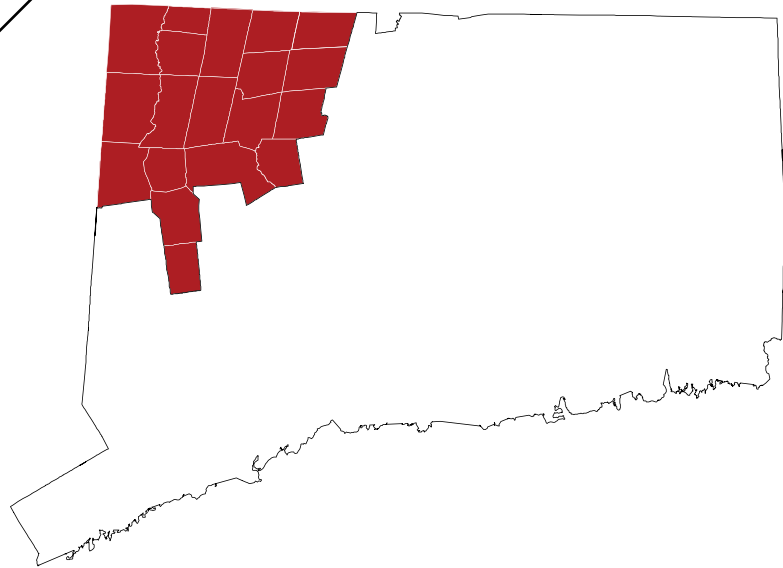


Winsted, CT • Norwestern Connecticut Community College



Washington, CT

02



Summary of Public Input

The process to develop this CEDS included input from over 250 stakeholders gathered at the following forums:

- NWCT EDC Board and Executive Committee meetings (monthly Sept. 2017-April 2018)
- NWCT Chamber of Commerce Board meetings (January and March 2018)
- NHCOG Board meetings (January and March 2018)
- Tourism, Arts, and Culture focus group sessions (Nov. 16 and 28, 2017 and March 27)
- Executive Roundtable: Manufacturing & Healthcare (Nov. 29, 2017)
- NWCT Economic Development Summit (January 30, 2018)
- NHCOG 5th Thursdays forum for Land Use Commissions (March 29th)

SWOT Analysis- Key Findings

An analysis of the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) was conducted. This analysis informed the vision, goals, and actions

included in this CEDS. The major topic areas covered in the analysis included workforce, regional clusters, entrepreneurs and small businesses, broadband needs, land use integration to support regional prosperity, and partners and resources for economic development. Below is a summary of the key findings of this analysis.

Strengths/Opportunities:

- Our region is comprised of **21 New England towns** each with their own unique character and history. Despite their differences, these towns have a strong and **successful history of collaboration**.
- We have a very **strong arts and culture** sector in our region facilitated and supported by the NWCT Arts Council.
- Northwest ConneCT is currently working to orchestrate a **fiber optic network** in our region and to use that network to enhance our mobile network.
- The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board (NWRWIB) works closely with Northwestern

CT Community College (NCCC), NWCT Chamber, and other partners on matching workers with jobs and the skills they need.

- CT SBDC (Small Business Development Center), SCORE, Women’s Enterprise Initiative, NCCC’s Entrepreneurial Center, and other small business services are available to **assist small businesses** and start-ups in the region.
- The Torrington Working Cities Challenge Initiative has brought together many partners in the region and developed action strategies for **attracting younger workers** to the region.
- The NWCT Regional Food Hub has launched to **support farm businesses** by aggregating locally grown food and growing wholesale market channels for these local products.
- Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG) has developed a Regional Plan of Conservation & Development, Regional Transportation Plan, and Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan to assist with “land use integration” of regional economic development and other land use priorities.
- Our region is an established Economic Development District recognized by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and State of Connecticut.
- Our region is geographically situated to capitalize on the same positive trends in arts & culture, tourism, manufacturing, and attracting entrepreneurs and residents as the Hudson Valley and the Berkshires.
- There are many **strong partner organizations** in the region that can collaborate to make progress on CEDS priorities, including:

- Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG)	- Banks
- NWCT Chamber	- CT Dept. of Economic & Community Dev.
- Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board (NWRWIB)	- Northwest Connect
- CT SBDC	- Partners for Sustainable Healthy Communities
- SCORE	- Friends of Main St.
- NCCC	- NWCT Community Foundation
- Women’s Enterprise Initiative	- Tourism Bureau
- NWCT Arts Council	- Litchfield Co. Board of Realtors
- Housatonic Heritage	- Ed Advance
- Local Economic Development Committees	- UConn Extension
	- Hospitals

Weaknesses/Threats:

- Aging workforce
- Limited transportation options (for both employees and products)
- Limited broadband infrastructure
- Lack of (or perceived lack of) housing that is affordable to existing and potential workforce
- Perception that there “are no jobs in NWCT”
- Decline over the last 15 years in region’s overall economic prosperity (failure to keep pace with national growth rates)
- Lack of a 4-year college that keeps young people in the region
- Many small businesses don’t know about or don’t use CT SBDC, SCORE, NWRWIB and other services for business planning, attracting/ training employees, capital needs, etc.
- Zoning regulations may not be friendly for home-based businesses

The goals and strategies detailed in this report, seek to harness the region’s strengths and address its weaknesses over the next five years.

Focus Groups- Key Findings

Focus group sessions were held with stakeholders in three of the region's core economic clusters: 1) tourism, arts, and culture, 2) manufacturing, and 3) healthcare. The following summary describes what these stakeholders believed the region should invest in to grow jobs in their sector and retain/support the region's existing businesses.

FAST FACTS:

64,000 working-age residents in the region

3,190 were unemployed (5%)

37,800 jobs in region

16,000 (42%) of these jobs are in Torrington

60% of the region's workforce commute to jobs outside of the region.



Winsted, CT • NWCT Economic Development Summit

Tourism, Arts, and Culture Focus Group

Stakeholders at this session included local and regional business groups/Chamber organizations, representatives from lodging and campground establishments, tourism bureau representatives, cultural and historical museums, annual event organizers, and arts organizations all based in our region. Attendees were asked to discuss the challenges and opportunities in this sector and propose specific action steps that we could take over the next five years to attract more visitors and residents to Northwest Connecticut and to grow jobs in the tourism, arts, and culture sector. Here is a summary of the action steps recommended by attendees:

- **Create a coordinated regional marketing strategy.** This would include branding; the region must work together to better communicate our unique identity. We need to identify our target audience, refine our message, and then disseminate that message in a coordinated effort including social media and other targeted outreach. The importance of getting a majority of the tourism, arts, culture, governmental and chamber organizations to agree on a unified marketing strategy and agree to work together to implement it cannot be overstated.
- **Create a collaborative, regional web-based event calendar.** Attendees expressed frustration with the need to post events separately on multiple event calendars; as every organization in the region seems to have its own event calendar. Instead, attendees liked the idea of being able to post an event in one place and the event would then get pushed out to all other event calendars in the region for which that event is appropriate.
- **Make Northwest CT the nation's "Rural Lab".** Develop a comprehensive strategy that invites the world's leading entrepreneurs, academic institutions, and companies to develop their complementary innovations in a rural setting.



Winsted, CT - American Mural Project

Economic Impact of Arts & Culture in NWCT:

“The nonprofit arts and culture sector generates \$34.4 million in total economic activity in Northwest Connecticut. This spending supports 812 jobs, generates \$16.7 million in household income to local residents, and delivers \$3.4 million in local and state governmental revenue.”

*– Arts & Economic Prosperity 5
for the NWCT Arts Council*



Sharon, CT: NWCT Arts Council Studio Tour

Attract companies and entrepreneurs interested in testing new agricultural technologies, connected tourism, remote healthcare applications, efficient rural package delivery systems, architectural design and construction materials, and other innovations in a rural setting.

- Advocate (coordinated/strategic/pro-active) for **adequate state funding** for arts, humanities, and tourism.
- Create a set of **guidelines/toolkit** on how towns can encourage arts, culture, and tourism. This would include topics such as best practices for organizing events, working with location scouts and media, zoning/permitting issues, and collecting visitor data during events.



Torrington, CT: Five Points Gallery

Manufacturing & Healthcare Executives Focus Group

Stakeholders in this session included representatives from the two major hospitals that serve our region, four major manufacturers, and six major healthcare providers. Attendees were asked to discuss action steps that we can take over the next 5 years to attract/retain/train the workforce we need in Northwest Connecticut and to grow jobs in the manufacturing and healthcare sectors. Below is a summary of the key findings:

- **Help wanted** - There are many jobs currently available in the healthcare and manufacturing sector. Employers need help in getting the word out about the open jobs, training resources, and attracting potential employees to the region. There were specific concerns that younger potential employees have no idea what they will do after work (where's the night-life?) and potential employees with families aren't sure what there is for kids and families to do here.
- **Coordinating transportation options for employees**- Many employers expressed the difficulty they have in attracting or retaining employees that do not have reliable transportation to work. There were ideas such as having second shift workers earn extra money by driving a van/car to pick up third shift employees, or using existing vans/buses at Geer when they are not in use to transport employees. Transportation options need to be reliable and affordable.
- **Housing options**- Especially in the more rural parts of the region, we need to continue to work create the types of housing that employees want and can afford. One employer said he already has 20 units of employee housing but would like to build more if he could have access to financing to do it. To attract the younger workforce needed by employers we need to have the types of housing they want and can

afford. There are opportunities to build housing on the 2nd and 3rd floors of buildings in downtown Winsted and Torrington that could be great for young people and others.

- Other issues included childcare options for shift workers, subsidizing the cost of Certified Nursing Assistant (CAN) training, help dispelling myths about manufacturing jobs, and supporting employers' access to immigrant labor.

Regional Clusters:

- Healthcare (6,430 jobs, 14%)
 - Tourism (2,070 jobs, 4.6%)
 - Advanced Manufacturing (1,536, 3.4%)
- (Source: Economic Modeling Specialists/ CERC 2015)

Other significant industry shares for region:

- Government (5,600 jobs)
 - Retail (4,700 jobs)
 - Manufacturing (4,506 jobs)
 - Construction (2,386 jobs)
- (Source: CT DOL 2015)



Torrington, CT • Seitz - Plastic Injection Molding

Regional Economic Development Summit - Key Findings

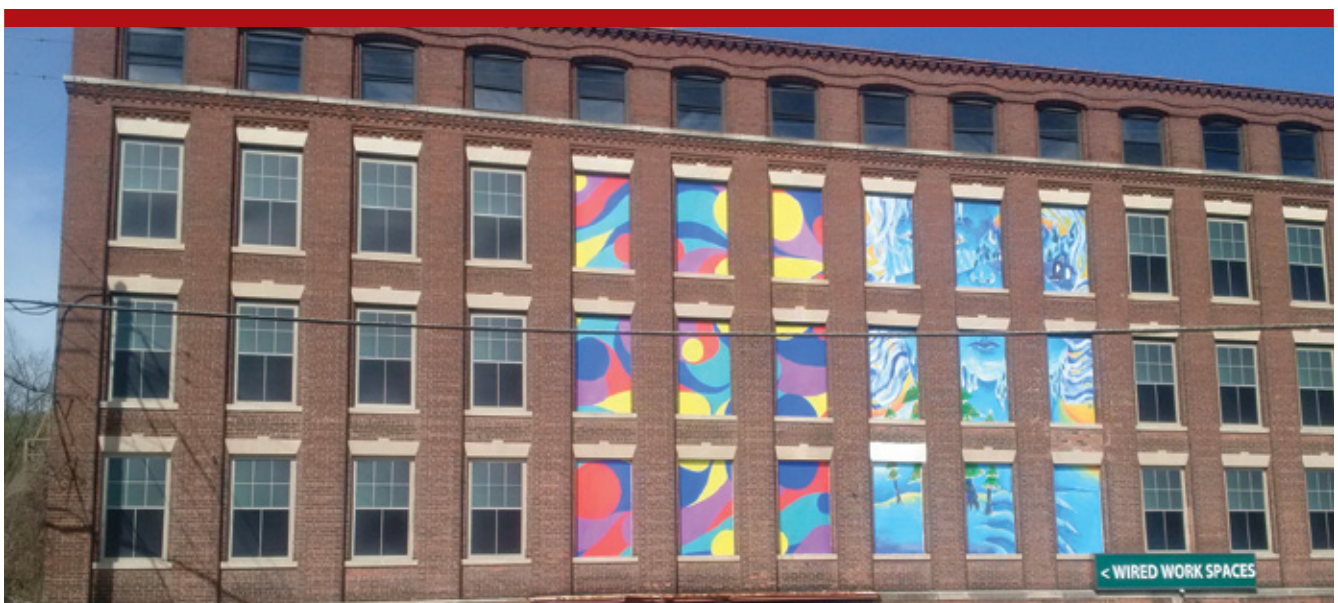
On January 30, 2018, the Northwest Hills Council of Government hosted the NWCT Economic Development Summit. The goals for the Summit were: 1) to provide input on the actions we might pursue in the CEDS and 2) to highlight how the public sector (municipal leaders, volunteers, and local economic development committee members) in our region can support the retention and expansion of local businesses and attract young people, entrepreneurs, home-based businesses, and visitors. The Summit was attended by over 150 people with 12 guest speakers and 13 manned info tables and interactive exhibits.

Attendees were asked to vote for the strategies that they would like their town and the region to invest in. The top three vote getting strategies were:

1. Make NWCT the nation's "rural innovation lab": develop a comprehensive strategy that invites entrepreneurs, academic institutions, and companies to develop their complementary innovations in a rural setting. (46 votes)
2. Support NWCONNECT's efforts to connect homes and businesses in the region to high speed fiber optic broadband and enhance cell phone coverage. (34 votes)
3. Develop and implement a targeted, regional marketing strategy to attract entrepreneurs and home-based businesses. (27 votes)

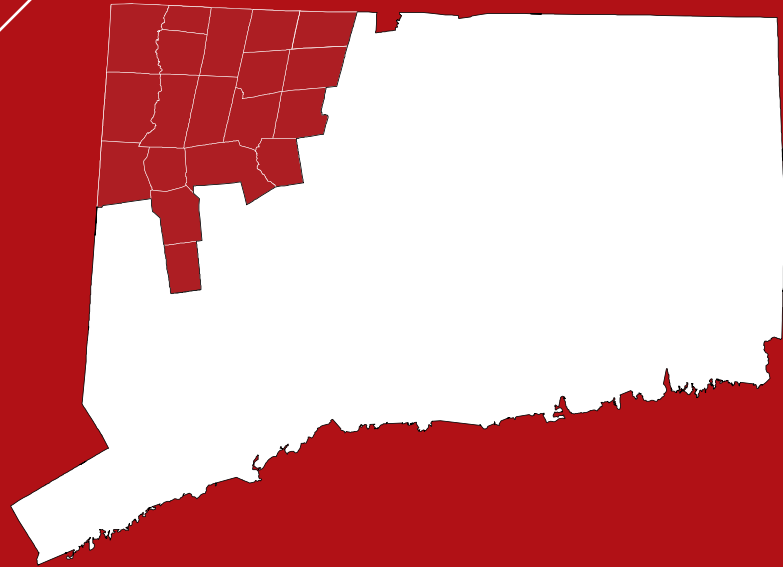
Also, each attendee was given \$100,000 in monopoly money when they arrived at the Summit. This is how they spent their money:

- \$2.3 million on implementing a targeted marketing strategy
- \$2.3 million on connecting homes and businesses to high speed fiber optic broadband
- \$1.1 million on the NWCT Regional Food Hub
- \$900,000 on retention and expansion of existing businesses through a business visitation program



Winsted, CT: Mad River Lofts

03



Strategic Direction and Action Plan

Vision Statements

Where do we want to be in the next 10-20 years? The following statements provide strategic direction to our actions.

Our region will be better known as a unique collection of historic New England towns with outstanding arts, culture, food, and event offerings, surrounded by scenic farmlands and recreational trails, where people of all ages want to live, work, and visit.

Our region will have ubiquitous high-speed internet service and seamless mobile connectivity.

Our region will be known by innovators and entrepreneurs as the place to develop their complementary innovations in a rural setting- the nation's "Rural Lab".

Our region will have the skilled workforce needed by the region's employers.

The tasks listed below will be carried out through public-private funding partnerships. These tasks provide specific examples of how we can achieve our goals. They will evolve as we work together to implement them.

GOAL 1

Develop and implement a targeted, regional branding and marketing strategy to attract

- 1) Young workers to fill available jobs
- 2) Entrepreneurs and home-based businesses
- 3) Visitors and tourists.



Bantam, CT • Arethusa Farm Dairy

Year	Tasks	Cost Est.
1	Develop 3-pronged branding & marketing strategy* Create marketing website and social media tools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: “Telecommute Maine” to attract people who may consider relocating here for the quality of life. • Develop system of listing/updating info on available jobs 	\$50,000
1	Website for each town and the region with coordinated event calendars. Example: CivicLift. For this investment we would get 22 websites- one for each of our 21-towns and a regional site such as discovernwct	\$100,000
2	Implement targeted marketing strategy (examples below) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog posts monthly: highlight arts/culture events for families • Social media posts weekly: highlight jobs available • E-newsletter four times per year: celebrate/profile successful businesses/ entrepreneurs • All tools above would drive traffic to website 	\$88,000
3-5	Implement marketing strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue all activities above • Continue to keep jobs listings up to date • Track/report impact of marketing efforts • Coordinate marketing efforts with tourism partners: Western CT tourism bureau, CTvisit, DECD, local businesses 	\$88,000/yr.

GOAL 2

Connect homes and businesses in the region to high speed fiber optic broadband and enhance mobile coverage.

Northwest ConneCT is a public advocacy organization comprised of elected representatives and volunteer citizens with two duties: 1) to orchestrate a twenty-first century communications infrastructure in the northwest corner of Connecticut; and 2) to promote economic development made possible by such an infrastructure.

Northwest ConneCT is pursuing two options: (1) community ownership of the trunk wiring on the poles with private ownership and management of the electronics and wiring to the home; or (2) private ownership of the entire network. Because of our thin housing footprint, both options will require shared funding. Estimated total community costs for some 75,000 homes across the 21-town region plus four communities' south of our region for the fiber network will be in the order of \$90 million, each home thence being asked to contribute in the order of \$10 per month for 20 years to support the costs. Northwest ConneCT's timeline has construction beginning in 2019.

"We believe the return on investment for both individuals and our communities at large will justify the costs. It will give northwest Connecticut the pride of place in network developments in the United States—it will be the first of its kind, it brings the future to our homes and businesses now, and it will enable numerous economic, community, and



"This fiber optic network will be the first of it's kind, it brings the future to our homes and businesses now."

individual benefits. A fiber network promotes many of the other economic development ideas presented in this Report; some are unlikely without a next-generation communications infrastructure." – Kim Maxwell, President, Northwest ConneCT

Years	Tasks	Who?	Cost Est.
1-5	Buildout fiber optic infrastructure	Public-private partnership led by Northwest ConneCT	\$90,000,000

Funding Sources: As described above, the funding for this will also involve a public-private partnership. Northwest ConneCT is currently overseeing a grant funded study to determine potential private partners in this effort, work out the business model, and determine final cost estimates. The study will be completed by December 2018.

GOAL 3

Carry out robust business retention and expansion programs, including Rural Lab, NWCT Food Hub, and Jobs Hub initiatives

Make NWCT the nation’s “Rural Lab”- build ecosystem of support for entrepreneurs, innovators.

Launch a “Rural Lab” ecosystem in NWCT. Develop a comprehensive strategy that invites the world’s leading entrepreneurs, academic institutions, and companies to develop their complementary innovations in a rural setting. We would provide access to physical space and skilled workers, as well as access to potential investors for companies and entrepreneurs interested in testing new agricultural technologies, connected tourism, remote healthcare applications, efficient rural package delivery systems, architectural design and construction materials, and other innovations in a rural setting.

Funding Sources: NHCOG, NWCT Chamber, NHCOG member towns. Possible regional performance incentive grant program application, State DECD- Innovation Places program, EDA Planning Program funding.

Year	Tasks	Cost Est.
1	Create a Plan of Development: create advisory board, identify resources, conduct outreach.	\$33,000
2	Implement Plan- could include organizing and hosting an annual rural innovators conference	\$150,000
3-5	Implement Plan	\$150,000/yr.

“Existing businesses are the engines of economic growth. Studies estimate that between 40% and 80% of new jobs are created by existing businesses.”

-NDSU Extension Service



Support a robust business visitation program

“A healthy, vibrant local economy depends largely on the strength of a community’s existing businesses. Community leaders can help local businesses survive and grow by implementing effective business retention and expansion strategies.” – University of Minnesota Extension

Address this issue through an annual business visitation program coordinated/facilitated regionally but carried out locally through local economic development committee volunteers or town staff or selectmen. The purpose of these business visitations will be to:

- Find out what (specifically) a business might need to stay or grow.
- Find out whether there are local or state permitting issues (or zoning issues) that are getting in their way.
- Find out whether (if home-based business) they’d be interested in working in a shared workspace with other small businesses/ entrepreneurs.
- Let small businesses know about the resources and services available to them through the NCCC Entrepreneurial Center, CT SBDC, SCORE, NRWIB, DECD, and others.
- Let businesses know about our regional efforts to attract new talent to the region and develop our workforce.

Year	Tasks	Cost Est.
1	Develop and implement a plan for reaching major employers in the region and home-based businesses using as many existing resources as possible. Develop plan with significant input from local EDCs, chief elected officials, and NWCT Chamber Board.	\$45,000
2-5	Carry out business retention and expansion program	\$45,000/yr.

By using business visitation software, we can track business visits, communicate issues that need to be addressed, and assess follow-up. The input collected from our region’s businesses can help us advocate for a more business friendly state tax and regulatory environment, streamlined permitting processes, and specific resources needed by our businesses.

Funding Sources: Some of this could be coordinated or carried out by existing or additional staff of the NHCOG and Chamber if this was a priority for those organizations. Additional support could potentially come from CT SBDC and UConn Extension. May be able to use the EDA Year 2 Partnership Planning assistance funds if they are available to us (\$20,000).



Winsted, CT- Entrepreneurial Center of Northwest Connecticut

Invest in NWCT Regional Food Hub

The Northwest Connecticut Regional Food Hub is in its pilot year (operations began July 1, 2017) and is being operated by Partners for Sustainable Healthy Communities, Inc. (PSHC) a 501(c)3 public charity that promotes sustainable agriculture, local food, and active healthy lifestyles in the communities of Northwest Connecticut. The Hub is picking up locally grown food from farmers and delivering it to new buyers, such as grocery stores and restaurants that generally get their produce from wholesale channels. The main purpose of the NWCT Regional Food Hub is to **create a new wholesale market channel for local farmers and increase the sustainability of farm businesses in our region.** There are over 350 Food Hubs across the country. All Hubs require community investment in start-up costs. The Hub’s full business plan has guided its pilot year and projects that the operating expenses will be covered by income in year four of Hub operations at scale.



Litchfield, CT: Farm Fresh Market

Year	Tasks	Who?	Cost Est.
1	Continue Hub operations, grow the number of farms and vendors served	PSHC	\$85,000*
2	“	PSHC	\$85,000
3	“	PSHC	\$65,000
4	“	PSHC	\$40,000
5	“	PSHC	\$20,000

*\$20K already secured for Year 1 of this timeframe

Over the next 5-year period the Hub will become increasingly self-supporting. As the volume of locally grown food it aggregates and delivers increases, it will be able to take a small margin to support the services it provides.

Funding Sources: To date, the NWCT Regional Food Hub has been supported with funding from PSHC, the NHCOC, the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation-Draper Fund, Housatonic Heritage, and the CT Department of Agriculture.

Develop a Jobs & Training Resource Hub

This strategy came out of the Torrington Working Cities Challenge: to develop a physical and/or virtual Jobs & Training Resource Hub, engaging employers, higher education, educators, training providers,

workforce system, and community leaders to offer onsite and virtual education/skills training, job matching, and retention support, and to promote entrepreneurial innovation. Year 1 actions: Organize multi-partner jobs and training resource hub work group.

GOAL 4

Continue to implement the Region's Transportation, Land Use, and Hazard Mitigation Plans to address economic development issues and resiliency. Continue investments needed to keep our roads, bridges, water, and sewer infrastructure in a state of good repair, and maintain the high quality of public education in the region.

We need to recognize these significant investments being made by our towns and our businesses every day because these continued investments are also critical for moving the region forward in meeting its economic development goals.

During the CEDS development process housing and transportation were significant issues of concern. These issues are addressed with strategies and responsible parties in the following plans:

- Northwest Hills Regional Plan of Conservation & Development (Adopted October 2017)
- Northwest Hills Regional Transportation Plan (Adopted September 2016)

As further described below, the region also has a comprehensive Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (August 2016), which lays out strategies to both prevent damage and recover from natural hazards.

In a plan like this one, it is easy to neglect to mention all of the investments our 21 municipalities are already making that are the foundation of economic development. This includes maintaining our existing roads, bridges, sidewalks, water, and wastewater treatment infrastructure in a state of good repair. In addition, many workers are attracted to relocate to our area because of our high quality public schools. Many of our businesses are investing in their facades, their buildings, and training for their employees.

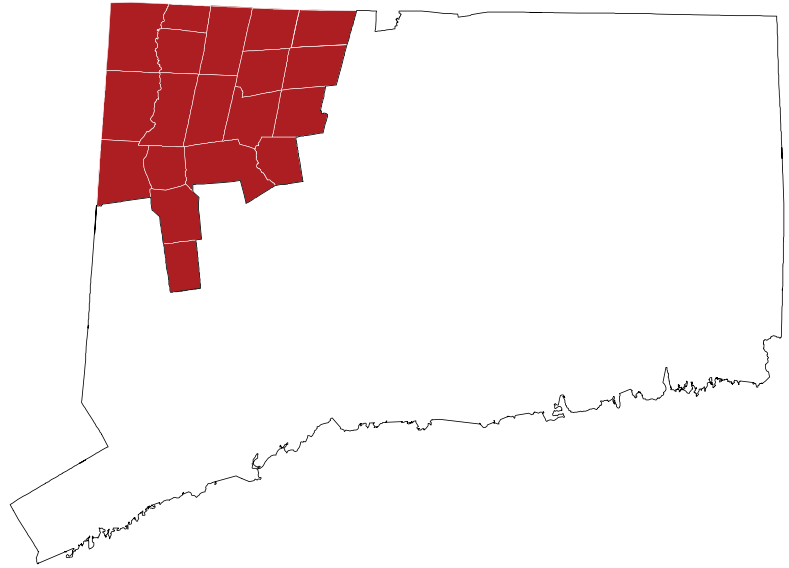


Winsted, CT: Mad River Lofts



Winsted, CT- American Mural Project

04



Evaluation Framework and Economic Resilience

Evaluation - This CEDS is a 5-year plan. Each year we are required to submit an annual progress report to the U.S. EDA. We will report on our ability to raise the funding needed to carry out our goals and to make progress on the actions listed within the proposed timeframe. We will present the findings of our evaluation to the NWCT EDC Board, the NHCOC Board, and the NWCT Chamber Board each year.



Burlington, CT- First Selectman, Ted Shafer

Performance measures- The following performance measures will be used to evaluate the progress we are making to achieve the vision, goals, and tasks described in this CEDS:

- Public (state, regional, local governments) investment in CEDS goals
- Private (businesses, non-profit organizations) investment in CEDS goals
- Increased resident and visitor awareness of events happening in the region
- Increased attendance at arts, culture, and tourism venues
- Increase in use of online recreational trail finder maps of the region
- Increase in broadband availability and improved cell phone service
- Increase in the number of farms with improved access to wholesale channels
- Shorter time period for job openings as reported by employers
- Increased number of clients from our region being served by CT SBDC and the NCCC Entrepreneurial Center

Community Indicators- As described in the NWCT Community Foundation’s “Community Crossroads” report, the following indicators can be tracked to assess the progress of initiatives intended to address them:

- Increase in the number of primary jobs paying a living wage
- Connecticut Town Economic Index

Economic Resilience

This section of the CEDS summarizes how the region will plan for and implement resilience strategies through specific goals and actions, and continue regular information sharing and networking among public, private, education, and non-profit stakeholders in the region to collaborate on existing and potential future resilience challenges.

Natural Hazard Mitigation

The Litchfield Hills Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan was updated in August 2016 and is incorporated here by reference. This 251-page plan, endorsed by FEMA, identifies the major natural hazards within the region, assesses the municipal vulnerability to these hazards, and proposes mitigation strategies that will reduce the loss of life and property, economic disruption, and disaster assistance costs resulting from these hazards. The major natural hazards of concern in this region are severe winter storms, high winds, and flooding. The Northwest Hills Public Safety Task Force served as the Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee and now monitors and evaluates Plan implementation.

Public Safety Emergency Planning

The NHCOC sponsors the “Northwest Hills Public Safety Task Force” (PSTF), a broad-based coalition of emergency responders, including fire and police officials, local emergency management directors, emergency medical service personnel, and others. The PSTF meets regularly and provides an important forum for first responders to discuss emerging issues in emergency management. In addition, the PSTF



Torrington, CT: Five Points Gallery

routinely provides guidance to the State on how best to invest the Homeland Security Grant funds allocated to the regional area. The NHCOG also actively participates in Region 5 of the CT Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security. Region 5 consists of 43 towns in Western Connecticut and is responsible for coordinating emergency management planning in the area and overseeing the expenditure of Homeland Security Grant funds.

Climate Resilience

The NHCOG was recently awarded funding from UConn CIRCA to create a “Rural Climate Resiliency Vision and Toolkit” for our region.

Efforts to broaden the industrial base

Attracting more “remote workers” (telecommuters, home-based businesses, and entrepreneurs who can work from anywhere as long as they have a high speed internet connection) to the region will assist in broadening the types of businesses in the region and bring businesses that are less reliant (or not reliant) on local customers to sustain them.

Building a resilient workforce

We will continue to support the work of the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board to provide programs that re-train unemployed workers to fill available jobs in the region and to actively connect job-seekers with employment opportunities.

Information sharing and networking for resilience

The NHCOG meets monthly bringing together the chief elected officials of all 21-towns in the region to share information, plan, and proactively address issues when they arise. Likewise, the NWCT Chamber of Commerce brings its board together monthly, representing the private sector, including manufacturing, healthcare, and other regional employers. The NWCT EDC Board brings together all of these stakeholders as a forum for collaboration. Using these existing networks we will build our capacity to rapidly contact key local, regional, state, and federal officials to communicate business sector needs and coordinate impact assessment efforts as needed when an economic disruption presents itself.



Torrington, CT- Sue Grossman Still River Greenway



Harwinton, CT- Deeply Rooted Farm



Torrington, CT- Torrington Downtown Partners

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Conclusion & Contacts

We look forward to working together as a region to implement the actions in this CEDS and meet our economic development goals. For more information on how you or your organization can be a part of the effort, contact:

JoAnn Ryan, President & CEO
NWCT Chamber of Commerce
860-482-6586

Jocelyn Ayer, Community & Economic Development Director
Northwest Hills Council of Governments
860-491-9884

CEDS Strategy Committee/NWCT EDC Board of Directors:

Executive Committee:

Jocelyn Ayer, Community & Economic Development Director – Northwest Hills Council of Governments
Mark Lyon, First Selectman – Town of Washington
Leo Paul Jr., First Selectman – Town of Litchfield
William Riiska – Attorney
JoAnn Ryan, President – Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce
Ted Shafer, First Selectman – Town of Burlington
Don Stein, First Selectman – Town of Barkhamsted
Sharon Waagner, Communications Director – Torrington Downtown Partners
Erin Wilson, Director of Economic Development – City of Torrington
Steve Zarrella, Senior Vice President and Chief Lending Officer – Northwest Community Bank

Board of Directors:

William Baxter, Workforce Investment Board – Northwest Region
Peter Bevivino, President – Burlington Chamber
Bill Burgess, President – Litchfield Hills Food Systems
Elinor Carbone, Mayor – City of Torrington
Susan Clayton – Town of North Canaan

Fran Delaney, President – West State Mechanical
Jessica Fowler, Selectwoman – Town of Sharon
Bradford Hoar, Vice President – Community Foundation of Northwest Connecticut
Rick Lynn, Executive Director – Northwest Hills Council of Governments
Laura McCarthy – Northwestern CT Community College
Patricia Mechare – Town of Canaan
Rich Meinert – University of Connecticut at Torrington Extension
Ben Paletsky – South Farms
Steven Sadlowski – Town of Winchester
Dan Sherr – Town of Washington
Stephen Silver, Community Relations Specialist – Eversource Energy
Larry Sweeny, Chairman – Town of Morris Economic Development Commission
Myrna Watanabe – Town of Harwinton
Amy Wynn, Executive Director – Northwest Connecticut Arts Council

We want to express our appreciation for the significant time and input provided by the NWCT EDC Board members listed above, as well as all the other stakeholders who participated in the CEDS development process. Thank you!

Links to Appendices:

- **NHCOG Regional Profile:** <http://northwesthillscog.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/NHCOG-Regional-Profile-11-8-16-online.pdf>
- **CT SBDC report- “Northwest CT Economic Data, Trends, and Analysis”:** <http://northwesthillscog.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/NWCT-Business-Data-Trends-Report-CTSBDC-FINAL.pdf>
- **NWCT Community Foundation “Community Crossroads” report:** www.northwestcf.org/community-crossroads

APPENDIX: List of Priority Regional Infrastructure Projects

Project	Location	Project Description & Status	Project Cost	Potential Funding Sources
Transportation				
Keep State maintained roads in a state of good repair	ConnDOT District 4	Currently the State invests approximately \$13 million per year in maintaining State roads in ConnDOT District 4. It is estimated that \$26 million per year is needed in District 4 in order to be able to maintain every road mile every 15 years rather than every 30 years.	\$26 million/yr	Connecticut Dept. of Transportation (ConnDOT)
Keep locally maintained roads in a state of good repair	all 21 towns in NHCOG region	It is estimated that \$20 million is needed per year to maintain local roads. Town road aid received by the towns from the State covers only a small percentage of these costs.	\$20 million/yr	Town road aid from State, Municipalities
Northwestern Connecticut Transit District (NWTD) facility	facility in downtown Torrington, NWTD serves 17 towns	Creation of centralized bus storage, maintenance and dispatch center for the NWCT Transit District	\$17 million	ConnDOT
Naugatuck Railroad	Torrington, Waterbury, Thomaston & Naugatuck	Expansion of freight and sightseeing passenger rail services from and upgrades to track. Phase I upgrades currently underway cost \$1.6-1.7M. Phase II (2 to 4 years) will require \$2.5M for tie replacement and rail renewal and \$1.5M for bridge rehab.	\$4 million	ConnDOT
Housatonic Railroad	Cornwall, Sharon, Salisbury, Lakeville, Falls Village, Canaan, Kent, New Milford & Danbury	Much of the track itself, which is owned by the State, is between 90- 140 years old and must be replaced to avoid costly derailments and interruption of freight service.	\$50 million	ConnDOT TIGER (U.S. DOT)
Housatonic Bike/ Walk Trail (HouBike)	Salisbury, Canaan, Falls Village, Cornwall, Sharon & Kent	Phase I: \$140K for design and study of 10 miles Phase II Trail construction at \$400-500,000/mile=\$5M	\$5.14 million	Phase I: CT OPM Responsible Growth Grant
Naugatuck River Greenway	Torrington, Harwinton and Litchfield	Route planning for the Torrington to Naugatuck section of the trail.	\$110,000	CT OPM Responsible Growth Grant
Sue Grossman Still River Greenway	Winsted, Torrington	Extend the trail 2 miles into downtown Winsted	\$1.8 million	CT OPM
5-way intersection	Torrington	Priority intersection with safety issues needs fully engineered design plans from ConnDOT		ConnDOT
NWCT Food Hub		Build a regional food hub facility for aggregation, distribution, and marketing of locally grown food	\$247,500	USDA



Project	Location	Project Description & Status	Project Cost	Potential Funding Sources
Water & Sewer				
Torrington Water Pollution Control Facility Upgrade	Torrington Litchfield Harwinton	Upgrades to meet DEEP requirements and replace equipment. Funding has been budgeted for this project.	\$51.3 million	Torrington, Litchfield, Harwinton
Energy				
Natural Gas	Burlington	CT Natural Gas has run a pipeline into Burlington from Farmington. A new housing development, an elementary school and the new fire station are currently on this pipeline. CT Natural Gas has extended this line through Burlington's central business district and to the high school which is near the Harwinton/Burlington town line. This proposed extension would cover a total of six miles.		
Communications				
Broadband Internet and enhanced cell phone reception	All Towns	Work is underway on a technology and business model study to determine the most feasible way to connect homes and businesses in the region to fiber optic broadband. This study is being funded by the State Regional Performance Incentive Program.	\$90 million	Private Investment, USDA Rural Development, Municipalities



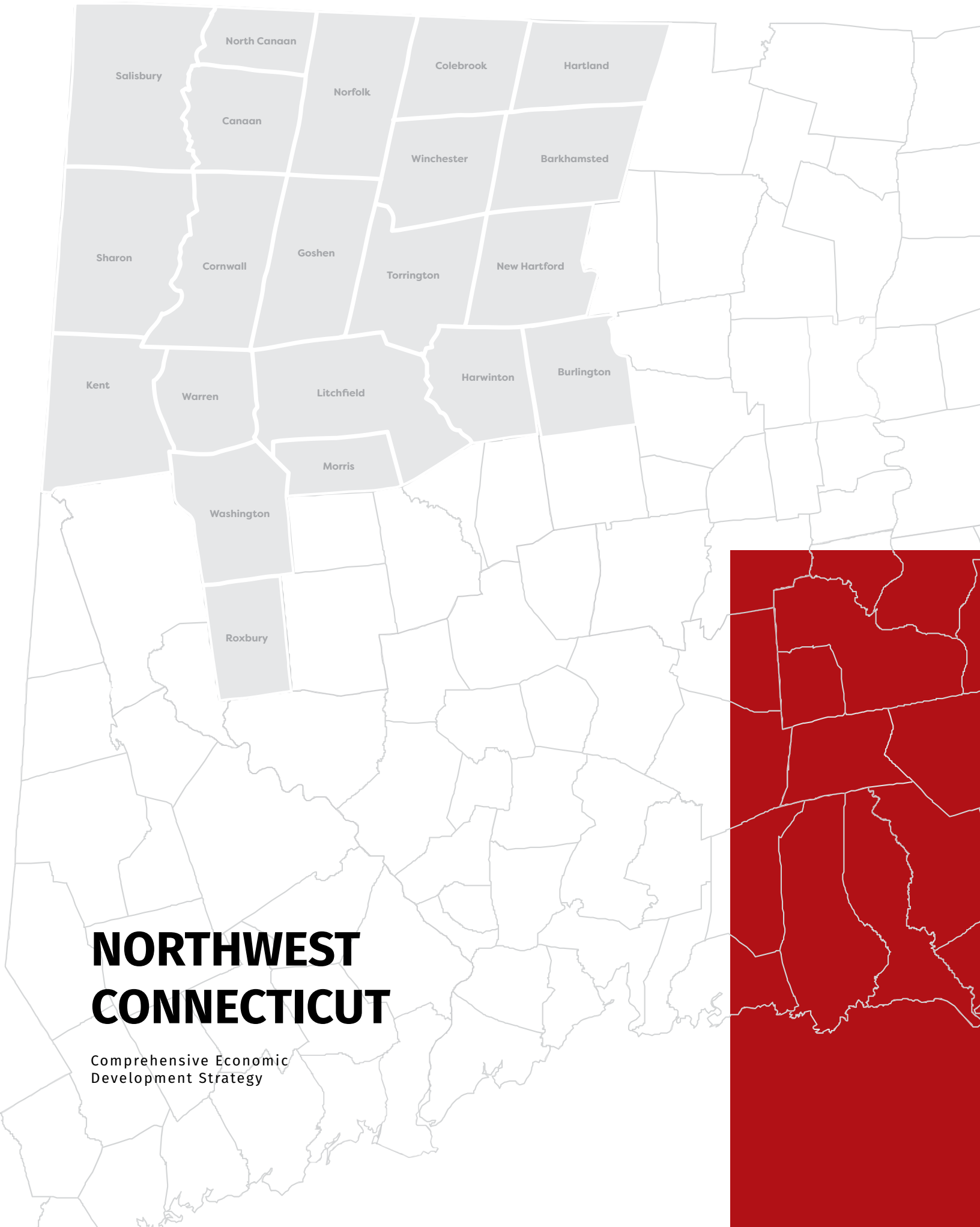
Torrington,CT- Five Points Gallery



Winsted, CT- Northwestern Connecticut Community College



North Canaan, CT- Union Depot (Christian Allyn)



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