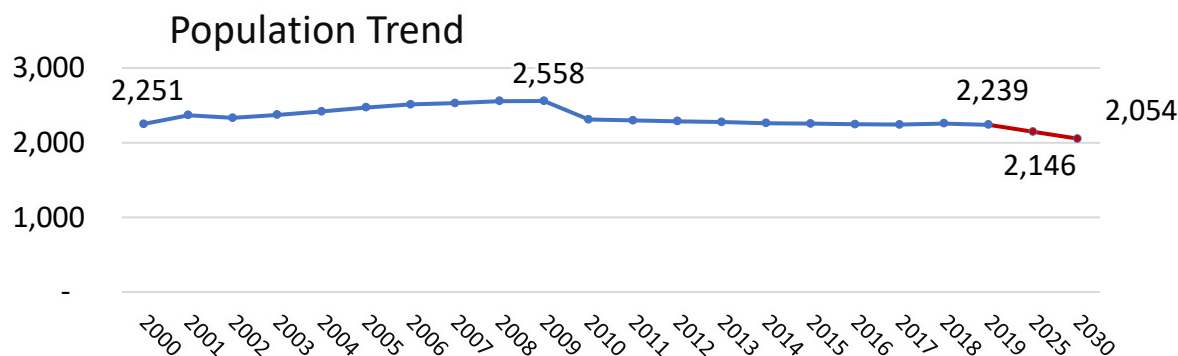


1

CHAPLIN TODAY & TOMORROW

Chaplin is located in eastern Connecticut, about 30 miles east of Hartford in Windham County. Neighboring towns include Mansfield to the west, Ashford and Eastford to the north, Hampton to the east, and Windham and Scotland to the south. It is a short drive to the University of Connecticut’s main campus at Storrs, as well as to Eastern Connecticut State University and Windham Hospital in Willimantic.

Chaplin is a rural community. Its rolling woodlands, river valleys, old farmsteads, and historic town center are characteristic of Connecticut’s eastern highlands. More than 30% of the land in Chaplin is protected open space including portions of Natchaug State Forest, Goodwin State Forest, and Mansfield Hollow State Park. Chaplin is known for pristine stretches of the Natchaug River including popular Diana’s Pool. Almost all commercial development in Chaplin is in the western Route 6 corridor with clusters of businesses from Sherman’s Corner to the Windham town line.



Chaplin’s population in 2019 was 2,239. Population has decreased by 12% over the last decade having lost 319 residents since 2009. The rate of growth had been increasing 10-15% every ten years since 1970 but is now below the 2000 Census count of 2,251 residents. Population projections by the CT State Data Center using state and locally derived fertility rates show a continued decrease by 8% through 2030 (2,054).

The makeup of the population by age cohort indicates that Chaplin is an aging community with a median age of 46.1, in 2019 ACS, an increase of six years from 40.8 in 2010, and higher than both the State of CT (41.0) and Windham County (41.2). The largest increase being in the 60-64-year-old population 8.2% and the largest decrease being in 35-44 year old’s, 7.6%.

Chaplin’s total area is about 19.6 square miles or 12,500 acres. As population has decreased the pop. density is now about 114 persons per square mile or about 1 person per 5-6 acres.

Chaplin is located within the Willimantic – Danielson Labor Market Area, Regional School District 11, the Eastern Highlands Health District, and the Northeastern CT Council of Governments (NECCOG). Chaplin is also located within the Last Green Valley; an area designated by Congress in 1994 because it is uniquely rural and has significant historic and natural assets.

Plan of Conservation and Development

Section 8-23 of the Connecticut State Statutes requires that each municipality prepare a Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) and sets forth the requirements for such a plan. The plan is required to be updated every ten years but may be amended or updated at any time. If a plan is not amended, the First Selectmen is required to submit a letter to the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management and the Commissioners of Transportation, Energy and Environmental Protection and Economic and Community Development that explains why such plan was not amended and include a copy in each application for discretionary state funding submitted to any state agency.

What is a Plan of Conservation and Development?

A statement of policies, goals, and standards for the physical and economic development of a town.

Chaplin adopted its original Plan of Development in 1968. The plan was comprehensively updated and adopted in 1989. In 2000, the Chaplin Planning and Zoning Commission adopted the Route 6 Corridor Management Plan as an amendment to the Plan of Development. The 2010 POCD was updated with a grant from the Office of Policy and Management and included extensive outreach and public participation process. As much of the current 2010 plan and outreach is still relevant the Planning and Zoning Commission decided to update sections of the current plan for 2020. The 2020 Update focuses on issues related to the Commercial Corridor along the western half of Route 6 and reviews suggested strategies as they relate to the overall development and needs of the town.

Public Visioning Sessions

Visioning Session #1: This session was designed to gather input from the public and began with a community brainstorming session. People were asked to identify issues and opportunities important to the future of Chaplin. Attendees were broken up into groups who looked at the issues in more detail by topic and then reported back to the larger group. The session also included a visual preference survey designed to gain input about how the community would like Chaplin to look and feel in the future. A full description of all the public visioning sessions can be found in the appendix.

TOP LIKE



TOP DISLIKE



Visioning Session #2: This session focused on Chaplin’s natural resources. Attendees were broken up into three groups: 1) the Natchaug River, 2) agriculture, and 3) other natural resources. Each group looked at the value of those resources, threats to those resources and potential solutions.

NATCHAUG RIVER

Values

Chaplins’s trademark
Fisheries
Recreation
Water Quality

Threats

Development
Pollution
Erosion/Sedimentation
Rising temperatures

Solutions

Regulations
Enforcement
Education
Monitoring

AGRICULTURE

Values

Open Space
Beauty
Food
Jobs

Threats

Taxes
Land Costs
Viability
Attitudes

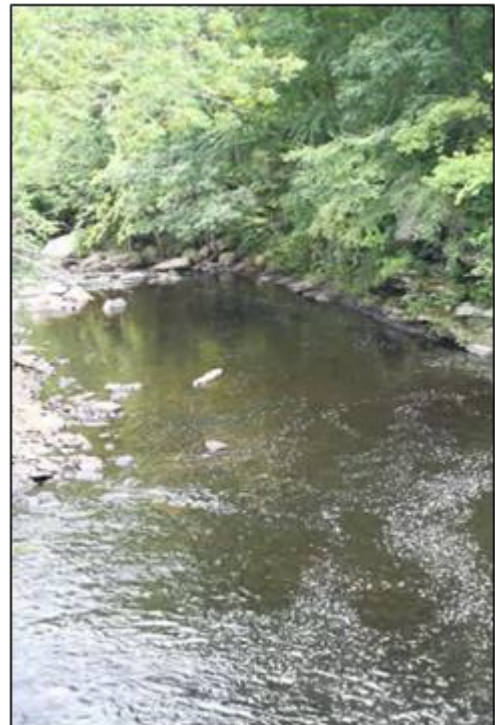
Solutions

Agriculture-friendly regulations
Diversification
Tax Reductions
Education

**OTHER IMPORTANT
NATURAL RESOURCES**

Forests
Aquifer
Farm Fields
Dark Sky

Wildlife
Vernal Pools
Natchaug Tributaries
Natural Sounds



Visioning Session #3: This session was directed towards members of the Chaplin’s boards and commissions including the Board of Selectmen, the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, the Conservation Commission, and the Finance Board. The discussion centered on the following planning priorities: economic development and transportation, natural resources and agriculture, community services and housing, and land use and community character. While the first two visioning sessions helped identify the “pulse of the community”, this session was more focused on strategies and specific recommendations to achieve the community’s goals. A second visual preference survey revealed the following results.

Planning Priorities

Economic Development/ Transportation

Natural Resources/ Agriculture

Community Services/ Housing

Land Use/ Community Character

TOP LIKES



TOP DISLIKES



Visioning Session #4: The last visioning session focused entirely on economic development in the Route 6 corridor. Many landowners along the Route 6 corridor were in attendance. A third visual preference survey was conducted. Chaplin citizens chose pictures that depict a quaint, pedestrian-friendly village setting. There was a strong preference for buildings with a traditional New England architectural style that is respectful of the rural setting and the needs of people and pedestrians.

TOP LIKES FOR ROUTE 6



Based on the input they gathered from the Chaplin community at the four public visioning sessions, the Plan of Conservation and Development sub-committee prepared the following vision statement for the future of Chaplin.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF CHAPLIN

Chaplin is situated in the rural northeast corner of Connecticut. Hearing the quiet; hearing birds sing; and hearing the rushing waters of numerous brooks are, for many residents, high priorities—as are the sights and sounds of the pristine Natchaug River. We value wildlife, agriculture, and quiet village and farm settings. We value the dark night-time sky that allows us to see the stars.

Change is inevitable: Immediately to the south is Willimantic, and to the north, east and west of Chaplin lie Worcester, Providence, and Hartford all not far away.

Our goal is to direct change, which may come quickly, in a manner that preserves our town's most valuable assets and provides long term benefits to our community.



2

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Business and Employment

Chaplin has approximately 47 businesses employing the equivalent of 280 full-time workers. Chaplin’s employers are mostly small, independent businesses employing fewer than ten employees. Chaplin’s workforce is approximately 1,259, a decrease of 165 in 2010 due to falling population. Most Chaplin residents commute out of town for work.

2018 Business profile shows Government is the largest employment sector with approximately 57.5% of the total labor force. Construction and mining are another significant sector, employing approximately 18% of the labor force. Other sectors include trade and government, each with approximately 10% of the labor force. Agriculture only employs about 5% of the labor force, but that is considerably higher than the state average of 1%. Chaplin hosts many small farms and strives to maintain its agricultural businesses.

Top Employers

- Parish Hill High School
- Chaplin Elementary School
- Zlotnicks Irving
- Dunkin Donuts

Source: CERC 2018

Unemployment Rate Sept 2020

Chaplin	6.3%
Willimantic/Danielson	
Labor Market Area	6.8%
Connecticut	7.5%
United States	7.7%

Source: CT DOL 2020

Business Profile 2018 Sector	Units	Employment	% of Total
Total-All Industries	47	280	
23-Construction	11	23	8.2
31-33 Manufacturing	NA	NA	
44-45 Retail Trade	3	6	2.1
72 Accommodations and Food Services	5	24	8.6
81-Other Services (Except Public administration)	6	21	7.5
Total Government	10	161	57.5

Tax Base

Property taxes account for 70.8% of Chaplin’s total revenues in 2018 an increase of 9.1% from 2009. Approximately 28.2% of total revenues came from state and federal funding sources in 2018 a decrease of 10.3% from 2008. In 2018 59.9% of the property tax revenues, 59.9% comes from residential properties and 5.3% from commercial, industrial, and public utilities combined. All other property tax revenues (34% in 2018) are derived from motor vehicle taxes, personal property taxes and taxes on vacant and open space land. While there is no ideal ratio of residential and commercial properties in any town, the property tax distribution in Chaplin is normal for rural/residential towns. Chaplin appears to be slightly more diversified in its tax base than comparable towns in the area. A map of land use for tax purposes is in the appendix.

Top Ten Taxpayers 2019

- Algonquin Gas Transmission
 - CT Light & Power
 - Zlotnicks Realty LLC
 - Cellco
 - Kristen A. Kelly
 - Covey Enterprise LLC
 - SBA Networks
 - Walter A. Landon
 - Robert & Ellen Mott
 - Susley LLC
- Chaplin Assessor*

Property Tax Revenue		
As% of Total		
	FYE2008	FYE2018
Eastford	66.1%	67.1%
Hampton	63.4%	67.6%
Scotland	61.5%	73.6%
Chaplin	61.5%	70.8%
Ashford	52.8%	68.1%
Mansfield	47.0%	58.4%
Windham	35.6%	46.7%
CT	71.2%	75.8%
Municipal Fiscal Indicators		

Property Tax Composition		
% Residential		
	FYE2008	FYE2018
Eastford	76.7%	69.6%
Hampton	80.8%	71.7%
Scotland	80.4%	81.4%
Chaplin	79.8%	59.9%
Ashford	77.2%	73.7%
Mansfield	76.0%	63.6%
Windham	55.4%	48.4%
CT	71.4%	67.2%
Municipal Fiscal Indicators		

Per Capita Spending		
	FYE2008	FYE2018
Eastford	\$1,880	\$2,116
Hampton	\$1,850	\$2,156
Scotland	\$1,798	\$2,594
Chaplin	\$1,777	\$2,929
Ashford	\$1,675	\$2,395
Mansfield	\$884	\$1,290
Windham	\$1,161	\$1,520
CT	\$2,312	\$2,934
Municipal Fiscal Indicators		



Western Route 6 Corridor

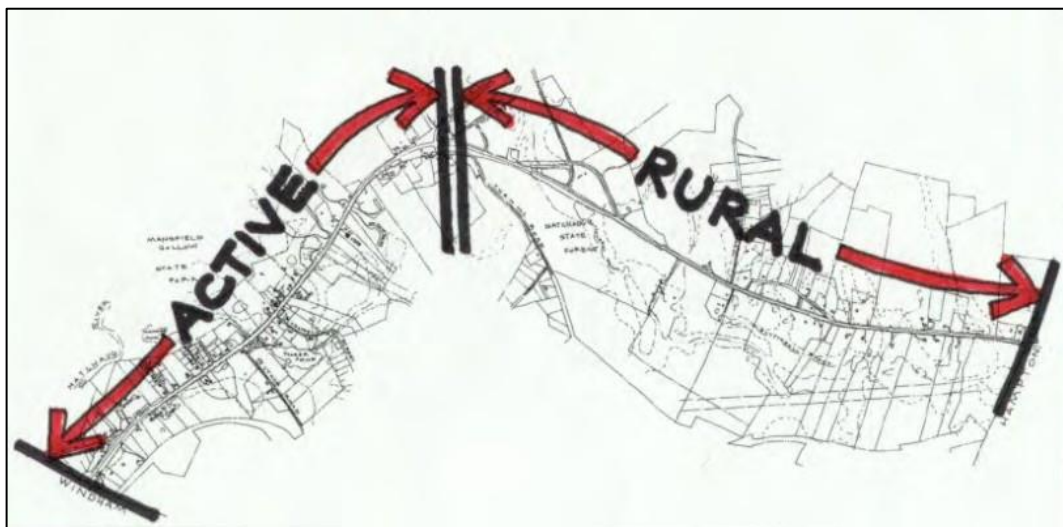
In 2000, the Town of Chaplin adopted the Route 6 Corridor Management Plan. It was included as part of the 2010 Plan of Conservation and Development as well as the 2020 update because the goals and strategies are still pertinent today.

The main goals of the Route 6 Corridor Management plan are to:

- Encourage commercial development in the western part of the Route 6 corridor,
- Guide the pattern of development on western Route 6 by stopping “strip” development and allowing mixed use at the intersections of Lynch Road and Route 198,
- Enhance community character by protecting scenic features such as barns, stone walls, buildings, trees, etc. that contribute to appearance,
- Reduce the number of driveways and other curb cuts on Route 6,
- Establish pedestrian and bicycle improvements, and
- Create zoning regulations to make the above goals a reality.

Chaplin is committed to focusing economic development on Route 6 from the Windham town line to the intersection with Route 198.

The Route 6 Corridor Management Plan is included as part of this Plan of Conservation and Development.



The Route 6 Corridor Management Plan encouraged higher density, mixed commercial and residential uses at the Lynch Road intersection and the Route 198 intersection with Route 6. These two areas already contain relatively higher densities of mixed uses compared to other areas along western Route 6. These can be supplemented and enhanced to create the vision of village-scale development compatible with Chaplin’s rural community character. The visioning workshops held in 2009 reinforced the village concept as Chaplin’s preferred form of development.



Corridor Overlay District

The Corridor Overlay District was adopted in 2003 and intended to assure that site development within its boundaries would be conducted in a manner that promotes the establishment of village areas and discourage the establishment of strip development while enhancing community character.

Many of the same issues outlined in the 2010 POCD still exist.

- The “overlay” district does not change the underlying zones of residential and commercial. The district does not allow for any commercial uses beyond what is currently allowed in the underlying zones.
- The overlapping zones are confusing for people seeking approval for development in the district. Zoning boundaries should follow parcel boundaries when possible.
- The district is large (427 acres and 1.7 miles long) and does not differentiate between village commercial areas and other stretches of the western route 6 corridor which are less dense and more typically rural.
- The design guidelines should be improved by making them more visual, adding diagrams of preferred designs, and crafting specific design guidelines for commercial or mixed development.

Strategies for Implementation

The 2010 POCD included mock-ups of the proposed village areas to help visualize what these areas could become. This type of development illustrated in the graphics below may require some wetlands filling, and grading may in limited areas. Shared parking, utilities, and access to Route 6 as well as septic design may be necessary to increase the area available for development in the commercial zones. Underground utilities should be installed in favor of above ground utilities for a more village-like atmosphere.

Strategy: Replace current Business and Corridor Overlay zones with one zone that allows for a variety of mixed uses in the western Route 6 corridor that includes commercial and residential.

Strategy: *Revise Corridor Guidelines to be more user-friendly and to include images; topics should include site planning, access management, landscaping, signage, lighting, and utilities in addition to architecture. ~~Create an advisory Design Review Committee including design professionals to assist the Planning and Zoning Commission in reviewing projects in the western Route 6 corridor.~~*

Strategy: *Work with business, property owners and applicants to consolidate curb cuts, mitigate traffic impacts, and encourage pedestrian and bicycle access in new developments.*

Strategy: ~~*Create an Economic Development Commission to assist businesses on Route 6 to improve their appearance including implementing the design standards and creating attractive lighting and signage. Create an awards program for attractive businesses that contribute to rural character. Consider the creation of Revolving Loan Fund to acquire, consolidate and sell properties for redevelopment. Possibly funding source: STEAP*~~



Home-based Businesses

Many Chaplin residents work from their homes. Home-based businesses help Chaplin's tax base, provide in-town employment, and contribute to overall economic diversity. Some home-based businesses create minimal or no impact to the rural-residential neighborhoods in which they are located. Others can be nuisance, changing the character of the neighborhood and lowering property values.

Strategy: *Review and update zoning regulations for home-based businesses. Consider a tiered approach allowing various levels of activity based on specific site conditions. Continue to encourage home-based businesses to the extent that they are compatible with Chaplin's rural/residential character. Home-based businesses should not create negative impacts to neighborhoods or lower property values.*



Agriculture

Chaplin strongly supports local agriculture as a form of economic development. Local agriculture and value-added agricultural products help preserve the rural landscape, increase quality of life and food sustainability, and add strength and diversity to the economy. The Planning and Zoning Commission has recently updated their regulations regarding Agricultural uses as well as signage. Once these regulations have been applied, they should be reviewed. Agriculture is also addressed in Chapter 7.

~~*Strategy: Consider creating an agricultural business overlay zone for existing and potential future agricultural businesses.*~~

~~*Strategy: Continue to review zoning regulations to make them more “agriculture-friendly”, particularly regarding signage for farms and farm stands.*~~

Strategy: Consider a “Right-to-Farm” Ordinance.

Existing Industrial Zone

The land in the existing Industrial Zone, south of the Airline State Park Trail/Greenway has limited building potential. It is steep with wet and shallow soils. Access to the property is difficult. The Chaplin Industrial Zone could support low density residential development and possibly very light industrial development. The zone is isolated and may be appropriate for some undesirable land uses such as a junk yards or adult entertainment businesses, provided neighboring properties can be buffered from negative impacts.

Strategy: Retain the Industrial Zone as an appropriate location for land uses that should be thoroughly buffered to prevent negative impacts to the rest of the community.

~~*Strategy: Review and update the existing Industrial Zone regulations. Consider removing earth product processing as an allowable use in this zone.*~~

Town-wide Economic Development Strategies

The following strategies for economic development apply town wide. A map of development priorities is in the appendix.

Strategy: Review all strategies from the Route 6 Corridor Management Plan and systematically incorporate viable strategies into the Chaplin Zoning Regulations.

~~*Strategy: All changes to the zoning map and regulations should be sensitive to existing neighborhoods.*~~

~~*Strategy: Future zone boundaries should, to the extent practicable, follow existing property boundaries. Some large parcels may need to be split into different zones depending on the PZC’s future land use goals for the property. No commercial zones should come within 200’ of the Natchaug River.*~~

~~*Strategy: Create an annual signage budget. Install “Welcome to Chaplin” signs and other signs at areas of historic or natural significance. Seek professional design assistance for new signs.*~~

~~Additional signage should be pursued in Natchaug Village and Sherman's Corner as the "village vision" starts to take shape.~~

Strategy: *Review and update sign regulations to ensure that new signage is attractive and functional and that it enhances the aesthetic and historical values of the community.*

Strategy: *Eliminate the existing Commercial Zone in the eastern Route 6 Corridor as recommended in the Route 6 Corridor Management Plan. This zone is no longer in keeping with Chaplin's goals for growth management.*

Strategy: *Consider tourism as an opportunity for economic development.*

Strategy: ~~*Investigate options to pursue successful noise enforcement, such as legislation and possibly a regional approach to noise enforcement.*~~

3

TRANSPORTATION

Chaplin's road system consists mostly of rural roads supported by two major roads, US Route 6 and CT Route 198. The CT DOT 2019 Road List shows Chaplin has 36.11 miles of accepted town roads with 34.65 miles improved and 1.46 unimproved 2019.

US Route 6, also known as the Grand Army of the Republic Highway, is an interstate road which extends from western Connecticut, through Hartford, and then to Providence, Rhode Island. The road enters from Chaplin's south western boundary with Windham, proceeds north for 1.5 miles, intersects with State Route 198, then proceeds west for 1 ½ miles to Chaplin's border with Hampton. This road links many eastern Connecticut towns and is classified by the Connecticut Department of Transportation ("CT DOT") as a **Rural Principal Arterial**.

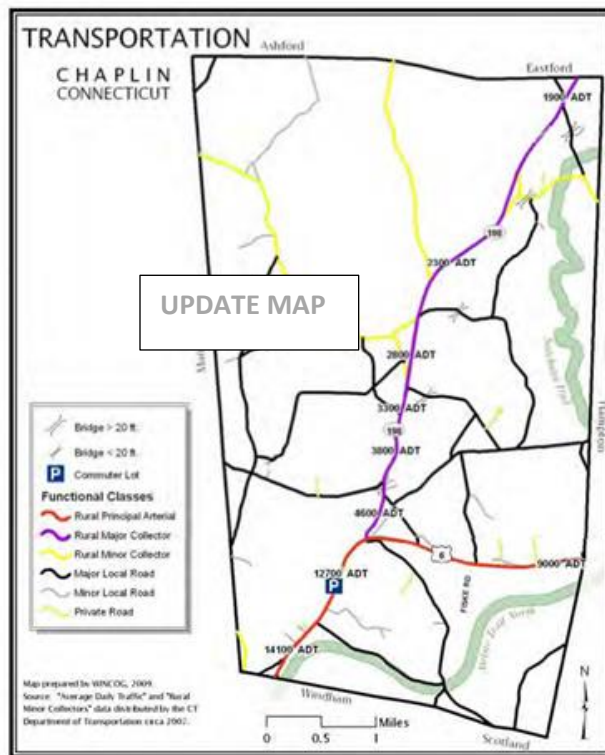
Route 6 has an average daily traffic ("ADT"), measured by DOT, ranging from 13,900 AADT vehicles per day at the Windham town line to 8,500 AADT vehicles per day at the Hampton town line. The majority is pass-through traffic with peaks during morning and afternoon commutes. Route 6 also serves as Chaplin's commercial artery: commercial properties along this road are the basis of its commercial tax base. A major upgrade of Route 6 was completed by DOT in 1998.

CT Route 198, also known as Phoenixville Road, begins at the curve in Route 6 approximately 1.5 miles north of the Windham border, and continues for approximately 4.75 miles to Chaplin's border with Eastford. Route 198 has ADTs ranging from 3,900 AADT vehicles per day at its source at Route 6 to 2,200 AADT vehicles per day at the border with Eastford. Route 198 receives traffic from many of Chaplin's rural roads and is classified by DOT as a **Rural Major Collector**.

Most town facilities are located on or adjacent to Route 198. These include the Town Hall, Highway Department, Transfer Station, Senior Center, Library, Edward Garrison Park, and the Volunteer Fire Department. Route 198 runs parallel to the Chaplin Historic District as well as to the Natchaug River for much of its length.

Road Standards and Acceptance Practices

The Road Design Standards in Appendix A of the Chaplin Subdivision Regulations should be reviewed and updated if necessary. New roads should be designed to be safe and compatible with the town's rural



character, to seamlessly integrate with the existing road network, and be properly constructed. No public improvement specifications or standards exist for improvements or maintenance on existing roadways.

Provide and maintain a roadway system which is both safe and consistent with Chaplin's rural character.

Strategy: *Update road design standards and specifications governing new or improved local roads. Utilize appropriate engineering and landscape architecture professionals. The standards should be adopted by the Board of Selectmen as a Town Ordinance and included by the PZC as an amendment to the Subdivision Regulations.*

Strategy: *Consider requiring a two-year maintenance bond to give sufficient time to identify structural and drainage issues on new and improved town roads.*

Strategy: *Adopt an ordinance to require developers to cover the cost of inspections in connection with the construction of new roads and other improvements.*

Safety Improvements

The CT Crash Data Repository shows 267 reported accidents in the town of Chaplin between 2015- Dec 7, 2020. Accidents on local roads consisted of 26%, state roads (RT 198) 18% and U.S. Routes (RT 6) 55%. Tower Hill Rd had the highest accident count with 21% of all accidents on local roads. The data indicates that 36% of all accidents resulted in possible, minor, or suspected injuries, with four suspected serious injuries and four fatalities all but one of which occurred on state and federal roadways.

The main transportation safety concerns are vehicle speeds and the number of driveways and other curbs cuts onto Route 6, especially between the Windham town line and the intersection with Route 198 which comprised of 41% of all accidents between 2015-2020. The town should work with DOT to explore further improvements to enhance safety and accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists, and work with existing and future business owners to consolidate and reduce curb cuts. The section of RT 6 west of RT 198 has been identified as an area for future study by the town and consultants working on the Regional transportation Plan.

Strategy: *Consider design options to promote pedestrian and bicycle access and safety in the Chewink Rd./Rte. 198/Rte. 6 intersection and the Lynch Road/Rte. 6 intersection.*

~~**Strategy:** *Create a "Recommended Future Transportation Network Map" in accordance with CGS Sec. 8-29 to proactively identify future transportation infrastructure. The map shall include proposed roads, sidewalks, bikeways, etc. and/or improvements to existing streets, sidewalks, bikeways, etc. Work with business and property owners in Natchaug Village and Sherman's Corner to consolidate curb cuts, mitigate traffic impacts, and encourage pedestrian and bicycle access.*~~

Strategy: *Participate in CT DOT and NECCOG transportation planning processes such as the Northeastern CT Regional Safety Plan and the Long-Range Transportation Plan.*

Strategy: *Promote traffic calming in the Route 6 Corridor. Continue to request from DOT a reduction of vehicle speeds to 35 mph in these areas. Request from DOT that context-sensitive design be used to promote the village vision.*

Identify dangerous intersections such as Route 198 and North Bear Hill Road, Chaplin Street, Natchaug Street, and Ridge Road which deserve further study. Consultants for CT DOT are also reviewing the intersection of RT 6 and Rt 198 as part of the Regional Transportation Safety Plan.

Context sensitive design promotes historic, scenic, and aesthetic considerations without compromising safety and capacity includes community outreach.

Strategy: *Include the above-listed site line improvements in the Chaplin capital improvement program.*

Drainage Improvements, Maintenance and Environmental Sustainability

The Town of Chaplin has an interest in the efficient and coordinated maintenance of town roads and drainage facilities. The 2010 POCD sub-committee identified drainage problems on town roads caused both by new road improvements which did not carefully consider drainage implications of those improvements and by new driveways which funnel runoff from private property onto existing roads. Other drainage improvements need to be identified town wide.

Additionally, there is an opportunity every time an improvement is made to incorporate solutions with a lower environmental impact. At the 2010 POCD sub-committee’s workshop on Water Resources, problems such as siltation, runoff, and the disruption of the natural flow in streams were directly attributed to road and drainage systems. Chaplin participates in the NECCOG Regional Engineering program and has utilized this service for the design of upgrades to North Bear Hill Rd.

Strategy: *Inventory drainage issues which plague town roads, and incorporate drainage improvements into the Chaplin capital improvement program. When maintaining road and drainage systems, strive to incorporate environmental options such as culverts that do not disrupt natural stream flow, bio-retention, and other low- impact techniques.*

Strategy: *Consider increasing the performance bond for new driveway aprons to ensure that runoff from private property does not flow onto roads.*

Strategy: *Implement a town-wide road and drainage management system to define priority work, prudently budget for improvements, and ensure that roads and drainage structures are maintained on a continuing basis.*

Strategy: ~~*Work with supporting groups such as the Nature Conservancy and the Naubasetuck Watershed Council who can provide guidance on the environmental management of town road and drainage systems.*~~

Bridges

The Town owns several bridges including the England Road Bridge which is classified as “scour critical” and is scheduled for replacement in 2023-2024. The North Bear Hill Rd. bridge was repaired in 2018. Bridges over South Bear Hill Rd, and Goodale Rd were built pre 1960.

The state-owned Rte. 198 Bridge next to Diana’s Pool was built in 1926 and is considered in “Fair” condition. The 2010 POCD sub-committee suggested that any future changes include accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists who may use the bridge for recreational purposes.

Strategy: *For any future improvements to the Rte. 198 bridge, incorporate safe bicycle and pedestrian access. Consider a viewing platform cantilevered on the side of bridge next to Diana’s Pool or safe access to the north bank where crowds gather.*

Discontinuance of Abandoned Roads

In remote parts of Chaplin, there exist some old cart paths that may have once been roads but are now largely impassable. These cart paths have not been maintained as roads for many decades but landowners along these roads may still claim them as lot frontage for development purposes. Current case law indicates that towns must assume the costs of improvements in connection with private development on these former access ways, which often cross-town boundaries. Chaplin needs to study the feasibility of closing portions of those roads, while maintaining the right of way for access to greenway trails and the possibility of future road connections.

Chaplin continues to identify abandoned roads and has recently discontinued two sections of Old Hampton Rd. at the intersection Cross Rd.

Strategy: *Continue to research the legal status of former roads and rights-of-way, especially in remote areas. Former roads and rights-of-way that are no longer in use should be formally discontinued. If practical, a recreational trail easement should be placed on the land. ~~Adopt an ordinance to clarify the status of these access ways in the future.~~*

Strategy: ~~*Consider these former roads as part of the “Recommended Future Transportation Network Map” as outlined in CGS Sec. 8-29.*~~

Scenic Roads

The town of Chaplin adopted a Scenic Road Ordinance in 1988 but has not designated any local roads as scenic. The ordinance provides a process for declaring a road based on “the lack of intensive commercial development and intensive Vehicular Traffic. As well as one of the following criteria: it is unpaved, it is bordered by mature trees and stone walls, the travel portion is no more than 20 feet in width, it offers scenic views, it blends naturally into the surrounding terrain, or it parallels or crosses over brooks, streams, lakes or ponds.” The ordinance protects the road from being altered or improved, including the widening of the right of way or travel portion as well as the protection of stone walls and mature trees. The ordinance is administered by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

The visioning sessions held in 2009 recommended that Route 198 be designated a scenic road. This would require application and approval by CT DOT.

~~**Strategy:** *Adopt a Municipal Scenic Road Ordinance to offer some protection scenic local roads.*~~

Strategy: *Apply to DOT to designate Route 198 as a State Scenic Road.*

Ridesharing

According to 2018 American Community Survey approximately 88.6% of Chaplin residents commute to work in other towns. The 2015 CERC Community Profiles indicate a majority commute to Windham (214) and Mansfield (150) followed by Killingly (40) and Putnam (34). The average commute time is 29 minutes with 84.7% of workers reporting that they drive to work alone.

Ridesharing is one of the best ways to reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled in rural towns like Chaplin. The CT Department of Transportation operates a commuter Park & Ride lot on Route 6, 0.4 miles north of RT 198. The lot is seldom used and during a 2016 capacity count conducted by the NECCOG only one of the 26 spaces were used over a two-day period. The 2019 ACS estimates 10% of Chaplin commuters carpooled as compared to 4.2% in 2010.

Strategy: Work with major employers outside Chaplin to encourage a ridesharing program for Chaplin residents as an alternative to single-occupant commuting.

According to 2018 American Community Survey approximately 88.6% of Chaplin residents commute to work in other towns. The 2015 CERC Community Profiles indicate a majority commute to Windham (214) and Mansfield (150) followed by Killingly (40) and Putnam (34). The average commute time is 29 minutes with 84.7% of workers reporting that they drive to work alone.

Public Transit

The 2019 ACS estimates 1.3% of Chaplin residents use transit to get to work. Transit service in Chaplin is very limited; however, the Windham Region Transit District (WRTD) operates a twice-daily bus route from Willimantic to Danielson that stops at the Chaplin Post Office at 8:03am and 4:03pm. WRTD Dial-A-Ride and ADA Paratransit are door-to-door transit services that can be used for rides anywhere within the ten-town Windham Transit Region. While this service is open to the public, it is generally intended for seniors and those with disabilities. No private bus service (Peter Pan, Greyhound, Bonanza) offers commuter runs that would benefit Chaplin residents.

~~***Strategy: Consider housing densities capable of supporting transit service when drafting zoning regulations for Natchaug Village and Sherman’s Corner.***~~

Strategy: Ensure that any Senior Housing is in an area that can be easily serviced by transit providers.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

There are no locally- maintained sidewalks in Chaplin. Two pedestrian crossing push buttons exist on Route 6 at the Lynch Road and Chewink Road intersections, but no crosswalks or ramps exist to protect pedestrians. Bicyclists can utilize the wide shoulders on Route 6 but have no designated bike lanes on state or local roads. The 2019 CT Active Transportation Plan does not identify any priority On-Road Bike networks in Chaplin. The plan identifies RT 198 as a Tier III-3 () and portions of RT 6 as Tier III-1 to Tier-III-2 (Tier III- Segment generally meets recommended design criteria, not a key Department priority).

The Airline Trail is a notable walking and biking resource in Chaplin. The trail follows a former railroad route from Boston to New York and is part of an integrated statewide network of trails. It is designated as a Connecticut State Greenway and as a section of the East Coast Greenway. Activities to improve grading and the trail surface have been completed in Chaplin, but more work is needed, specifically at the Chewink Road trailhead. Pedestrian access to the Airline trail is also possible via Joshua’s Trust’s Two Sisters Preserve opposite Mansure Road on Route 6, but no off-street parking is available.

The Natchaug Trail is another notable walking resource in Chaplin. It is a CT State Greenway and is part of the CT Forest and Parks Association’s “blue-blaze” trails network. The 19.5-mile Natchaug Trail traverses’ portions of Goodwin State Forest and Natchaug State Forest and runs through the towns of

Chaplin, Eastford, and Ashford where it joins the Nipmuck Trail into Union. Access to this trail is possible at Morey Road and Marcy Road and via several old rights-of-way.

Chaplin needs to create needed bicycle and pedestrian improvements to link destinations as part of an integrated transportation network. Additionally, development within Natchaug Village and Sherman's Corner should increase pedestrian safety and create connections between buildings and linkages to trails.

~~Strategy: Create a "Recommended Future Transportation Network Map" in accordance with CGS Sec. 8-29 to proactively identify future transportation infrastructure. The map shall include proposed roads, sidewalks, bikeways, etc. and/or improvements to existing streets, sidewalks, bikeways, etc.~~

Strategy: *Integrate the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists in the review of all commercial and residential development, and in the development of town facilities where appropriate. ~~These considerations may include, but are not limited to, provision of bike racks, bike, and pedestrian improvements, including connections between properties.~~*

Strategy: *Work with DOT to increase pedestrian and bicycle safety along state routes by utilizing traffic calming techniques. Request "Share the Road" signage for all state routes.*

Strategy: *Seek funding to create a bicycle lane from Garrison Park on Route 198, over the Natchaug River bridge at Diana's Pool, across Route 6 and along Chewink Road to the trailhead for the Airline Trail.*

~~Strategy: Seek funding to create a bicycle lane along Route 6 from the Windham town line to Chewink Road.~~

Strategy: *Create pedestrian linkages within the municipal core including Garrison Park, the town hall, the library, and the senior center.*

Strategy: *Improve signage for existing trail heads and ensure good signage for proposed trails and bikeways. ~~Signage should be welcoming and informative and should attract new people to use the trail. Signage should encourage and help use of trail by including information such as distances to nearest destinations and a map.~~*

Strategy: *Improve parking at the Chewink Road/Airline Trail head and at the Two Sisters Parcel on Route 6.*

Strategy: *Explore the opportunity to make new connections to the Natchaug Trail via old rights-of-way.*

3

UTILITIES and ENERGY CONSERVATION

Water Supply

Most residences and businesses in Chaplin get potable water through individual on-site artesian wells that are regulated by the Eastern Highlands Health District. This method of water supply is appropriate for low-density, rural areas where there are few water users.

Public water systems are more appropriate for higher density and commercial areas such as the western half of RT 6. Many commercial uses such as restaurants as well as multi-family residential uses need more water than can be supplied by individual, on-site wells. The Connecticut Department of Health (CTDPH) regulates 3 types of public drinking water systems. “Community Water Systems” serve multiple buildings and at least 25 residents throughout the year; “Non- transient, Non-Community Systems” serve at least 25 of the same people over six months of the year at places like schools and office buildings; and “Transient Non-Community Systems” such as restaurants, parks, etc. Existing non- community water systems could be combined into community systems to serve multiple building sites. Community systems could supply water for multiple users while protecting the water source from pollution and interference from development.

Strategy: Encourage the establishment of public water systems in Natchaug Village and Sherman’s Corner.

Strategy: Consider the formation of one or more municipally owned and operated public water systems in Natchaug Village and Sherman’s Corner to support business development.

A stratified drift aquifer capable of providing large volumes of drinking water underlies much of the Natchaug River valley. This aquifer was partially protected through a municipal Aquifer Protection Zone in 1990. Protection of this resource is critical for future users. Potential sources of groundwater contamination include salt storage at the Highway Department and on Palmer Road, as well as former dumps on Old Hampton Road and a nearby state-owned property on Route 6.

Strategy: Review boundary and update requirements of the existing Aquifer Protection District.

Public Drinking Water Systems

Community Water Systems
Chaplin Woods Condominiums

Non-Transient Non-Community Water Systems

Carelot Children’s Learning Center
Chaplin Elementary School
Parish Hill High School
The Owls Nest Day School

Transient Non-Community Water Systems

Bach Door Café
Cha-Wi Ma Co-OP
Chaplin Park
Chaplin Town Hall
237 Willimantic Rd.
Pine Acres Family Restaurant & Lodge
Chaplin Senior Center
Zlotnicks Garage (Resteraunt and Convenience)

Almost the entire town of Chaplin is within the Natchaug Basin, a public water supply watershed covering 162-square miles. The basin supports the largest public surface drinking water supply watershed in Connecticut, supplying 22,000 consumers in Willimantic and Mansfield, the majority of the University of Connecticut water system (approximately 25,000 users) as well as 18,000 residents of the Natchaug Basin with private wells. The Natchaug Basin has good water quality overall because it is largely undeveloped and more than 75% forested. Threats to water quality in the Natchaug Basin are outlined in Chapter 7- Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Open Space.

Strategy: Promote protection of surface and groundwater resources through education for property owners, residents and business owners living and working in the Natchaug Basin.

~~*Strategy: Increase protection of Natchaug River and tributaries through a River Protection Overlay Zone. The zone could include a tiered protection mechanism.*~~

~~*Strategy: Explore increasing the minimum lot size to four acres in sensitive parts of town within the Natchaug Basin.*~~

Sanitary Sewer Systems

All residences and businesses in Chaplin dispose of sanitary sewer effluent through individual on-site subsurface sewage disposal systems (SSDS). Those SSDS's that have a daily flow of 2,000 gallons per day or less are regulated by the Eastern Highlands Health District, while those SSDS's that have a daily flow of 2,000-5,000 gallons per day are regulated by the Connecticut Department of Public Health. Systems with a daily flow of 5,000 gallons per day or more are regulated by the Department of Environmental Protection (CT DEEP). All SSDS regulations and standards are promulgated through the Connecticut Department of Health (CT DPH), Environmental Engineering Program.

The CT Public Health Codes require separating distances from buildings, drinking water supply wells, stormwater management features, and other improvements can make siting of SSDSs on small lots difficult. To this end, consideration of community SSDS's (those systems which collectively serve multiple buildings located on separate parcels of land) offer an economy of scale by combining daily design flows from multiple buildings and uses into one common effluent treatment system. The relative scale and form of planned commercial and multi-family residential that may occur in the Mixed Commercial areas could be adequately served by individual or community septic systems.

Alternative technologies are available for use which can significantly reduce the footprint of a SSDS leach field, and effluent can be transported over distances and topographic changes utilizing pump systems. As additional alternative technologies are supported by the CT Public Health Code, these technologies should be considered for implementation in areas of Chaplin where higher density development is desired.

Strategy: Support the concept of decentralized sewage treatment as the preferred method of sewage treatment to maintain environmental health and conserve water resources.

~~*Strategy: Explore potential for community and alternative SSDS's in the Natchaug Village and Sherman's Corner areas in order to support a village development density.*~~

~~*Strategy: Consider the formation of one or more municipally owned and operated community subsurface sewage disposal systems in the Natchaug Village and Sherman's Corner areas to support business development.*~~

Natural Gas

The natural gas transmission lines that run through Chaplin are part of the Algonquin Gas Transmission pipelines which are owned and maintained by Algonquin Gas Transmission Co., a subsidiary of Spectra Energy. The Algonquin pipelines transport 2.44 billion cubic feet of gas per day through 1,120 miles of pipeline reaching from the docking buoys off the coast of Massachusetts, through Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York and connecting to another pipeline system in Northern New Jersey.

Although natural gas transmission lines are present in Chaplin, no natural gas service is currently available in town. One can assume that the rural development pattern in Chaplin has never necessitated construction of natural gas service lines within Chaplin's municipal boundary.

Strategy: Consider the feasibility of extending natural gas service into the Town of Chapin from existing service lines in neighboring towns.

Electricity

The Town of Chaplin is serviced by standard electrical transmission lines through a distribution network constructed and maintained by the Connecticut Light & Power Company, under the Northeast Utilities System. In addition to standard electrical service, residents and business owners in Chaplin can take advantage of alternative technologies for creation of electricity such as photovoltaic solar and wind energy technologies.

Often utilized to reduce consumption of electricity or to supplement the creation of electricity, alternative technologies for thermal energy production are also important to consider. Reducing electricity and fossil fuel consumption can be achieved by utilizing non-polluting energy sources to provide heat. Geothermal heating systems extract heat from the ground and transfer it to residences or other buildings with the assistance of conventionally powered heat pumps, and solar thermal energy can be harnessed in the same manner. These heat sources can be used in many ways to offset production of thermal energy that would otherwise be created through electricity or combustion of conventional fuels.

Due to recent concerns about the environmental and health effects of large-scale wood-burning appliances (i.e., outdoor wood furnaces/boilers), this plan will neither promote nor discount the use of these technologies for thermal energy production, but rather simply recognize that energy created by combustion of renewable fuels is preferable to combustion of non-renewable fossil fuels.

Strategy: Study and promote implementation of non-polluting alternative electricity production technologies such as photovoltaic, wind, and water turbine systems.

Strategy: Study and promote implementation of non-polluting alternative thermal energy production technologies which reduce heating costs such as geothermal and solar thermal technologies.

~~Strategy: Consider the health effects of renewable fuel combustion technologies and closely follow studies and legislation enacted by the State of Connecticut regarding wood furnaces/boilers. Consider adapting Chaplin's Zoning Regulations for wood furnaces/boilers based on findings of the authoritative State Agencies.~~

5

HOUSING

Chaplin is a slow-growing community composed mostly of single-family homes. In 2010, there were 988 total housing units in Chaplin. The 2019 ACS estimates that there are now 1,058 housing units in Chaplin, 90.4% of them are occupied and 84.3% of are single family detached.

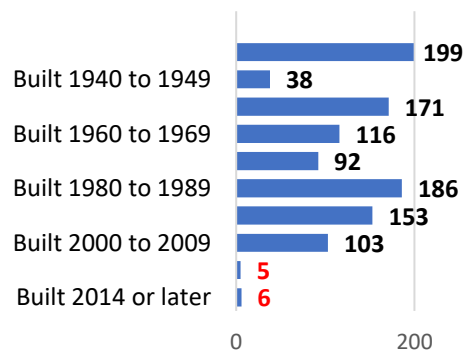
	2010	2019
<i>Total Housing Units</i>	1,015	1,058
<i>Occupied</i>	91.8%	90.4%
<i>Single Unit Detached</i>	80.6%	84.3%
<i>Built Pre 1950</i>	32%	24%
<i>Median Value</i>	\$232,600	\$207,600

Housing growth in the last ten years has been significantly lower than the previous period from 1999-2008. The average number of building permits per year for that timeframe was 15.5. New permits per year between 2009- 2017 averaged 1.3 a decrease of 92%.

Approximately 13.1% of the housing units are renter-occupied and approximately 86.9% are owner-occupied. Renter-occupied units can include single family homes as well as apartments and mobile homes. Chaplin’s rate of home ownership is higher than the state average of 66.1%.

About 22.4% of the total housing stock in Chaplin was built before 1950, compared to the state average of 28.9%. Older housing units are typically less efficient and require more maintenance.

Year Structure Built, Chaplin



Source: 2019 ACS

Built 2010 or later based on Building

New Housing Permits by Town

Source: CT DATA.org

Location	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Average
Ashford	9	4	4	3	3	5	2	7	8	5
Chaplin	1	2	2	1	0	2	1	1	2	1.3
Eastford	3	0	2	5	4	12	3	3	4	4
Hampton	6	6	6	3	3	0	0	0	0	2.7
Mansfield	22	16	7	14	11	14	8	4	7	11.4
Scotland	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	.5
Windham	14	71	7	6	6	10	9	3	5	14.5

Affordable Housing

In 2019, Chaplin’s median household income was \$70,500 or about 90% of the state average. The median value for homes in Chaplin was \$207,600 compared to \$275,400 statewide. Generally, housing in Chaplin is inexpensive compared to other towns in the state.

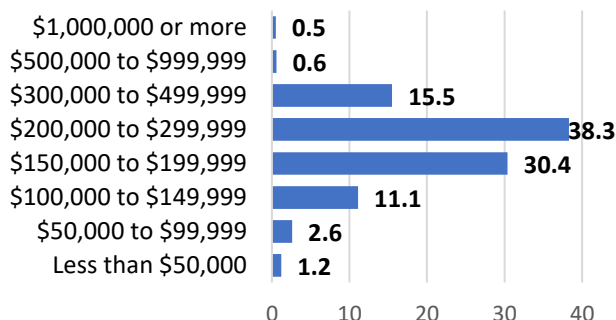
While affordability would not appear to be a significant issue in Chaplin, 27.8% of homeowners pay more than 30% of their income on housing according to the 2019 ACS and 68% of renters. “Affordable” housing is defined in the Connecticut General Statutes as housing for which a family earning 80% of the area median income pays no more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Some homeowners clearly choose to pay more than 30% of their income on housing, but it is not known how many of these homeowners’ incomes are lower than the median.

In 1990 the Connecticut Affordable Housing Appeals Act (8-30g of the Connecticut General Statutes) was enacted that provides a developer of “affordable housing” denied locally may appeal such ruling to the courts and have that denial overruled if such town contains less than 10 percent designated as “affordable.” Connecticut law places the burden on the local land use commission to justify an action that would deny the development of affordable housing. The 2017 Affordable Housing Appeals Lists only 3.6% of Chaplin’s housing units are dedicated as “affordable.”

Municipalities with 10% or more assisted housing units are exempt from the concerning affordable housing. Chaplin has 36 assisted housing units representing 3.6 % of the total housing units from the 2010 Census. All the assisted housing units are mortgaged by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, a state agency that aids first-time home buyers.

In 2017, the CT Legislature passed P.A. 17-070. Sec. 8-30j. requires every municipality to adopt and/or amend an Affordable Housing Plan at least once every five years. The plan shall specify how the municipality intends to increase affordable housing developments within the municipality. The town of

% Value of Owner Occupied Units, Chaplin



Fair Market Rents 2016

- Efficiency* \$608
- 1-Bedroom* \$714
- 2-Bedroom* \$935
- 3-Bedroom* \$1,160
- 4-Bedroom* \$1,282

2019 Affordable Housing Appeals List

2010 Housing Units	Government Assisted	Tenant Rental	CHFA/USDA Mortgage	Deed Restricted	Total Assisted Units	% affordable
988	0	0	36	0	36	3.64

2010 Affordable Housing Appeals List

897	1	0	25	0	26	2.9
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Chaplin has received a grant the CT Department of Housing for technical assistance for completion of the plan. The initial Affordable Housing Plan are to be completed by 2022 while grant requirements may have a sooner deadline.

Accessory Apartments and Mixed Use

Accessory apartments increase housing diversity without changing the rural character of the community. The Zoning Regulations were updated in 2018 to expand the ability to develop accessory apartments. Accessory apartments may now be attached or detached, require occupation by the owner or immediate family member and be between 500-1200 square feet in size. The updated regulations should provide more opportunities for housing while protecting residential neighborhoods.

RT 198 and Lynch Rd. intersections along RT 6 are the best places to create mixed-use buildings that include residential. Several mixed-use buildings already exist in this area. The Route 6 Corridor Management Plan encouraged apartments over stores and other mixed-use buildings.

Strategy: Incorporate mixed-use housing within the zoning districts along the western half of Route 6. Strive to make this housing pedestrian-friendly and transit-accessible.

~~*Strategy: Update zoning to eliminate new single family housing units in the commercial zones in the western Route 6 corridor.*~~

Strategy: Continue to allow accessory apartments as an important component of housing diversity.

Strategy: Review existing accessory apartments for compliance to current zoning regulations. Review the need for changes to accessory apartment regulations and develop a strategy to handle non-compliant properties.

Senior Housing

Chaplin has no senior housing or other age-restricted housing units. Older residents of Chaplin who wish to downsize but remain within the community have few options to do so. Senior housing and any other age-restricted housing should be located appropriately. Any senior or age restricted housing should be pedestrian-friendly and transit-accessible.

Senior housing and multi-family housing (3 or more units) are not explicitly allowed in the current zoning regulations. Two-family and accessory apartments are allowed within the Residential Agriculture zone and thus allowed within the Business Zone.

Strategy: Study the need for senior housing as well as potential locations.

Strategy: Review the existing zoning regulations and consider senior housing and multi-family housing in any future regulation updates.

6

HISTORIC PRESERVATION & CULTURAL RESOURCES

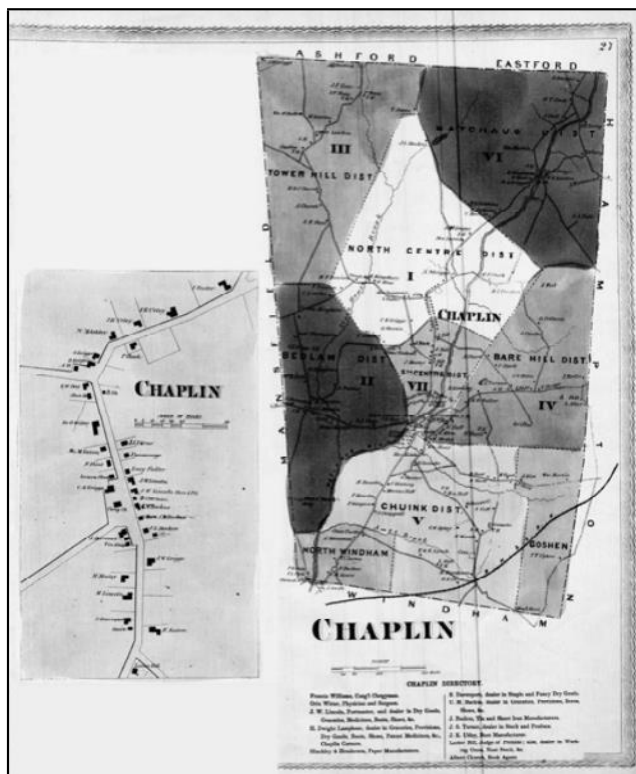
The history of the Town of Chaplin begins in the mid-1700's, when Benjamin Chaplin settled a plot of land along the Natchaug River in an area of wilderness that later came to bear his name. Originally incorporated as an ecclesiastical society in 1809, Chaplin became a municipality in 1822. At that time, the population was approximately 900. Since then, industries have come and gone and residences have become more widespread, but the rural character that residents and visitors value and cherish has prevailed.

Chaplin's historic homesteads, former mills, schoolhouses, municipal buildings, agricultural buildings and barns, stone walls, and cemeteries have shaped the look and feel of the town through history. The goal of the Chaplin Plan of Conservation and Development for historic and cultural resources is to preserve and protect the structures, sites and landscapes that are uniquely representative of its cultural heritage.

Chaplin's School Districts

The 1868 "Petersen Collection" Map of Chaplin offers an interesting snapshot of the town. The map identifies seven distinct districts of the Town: (I) North Centre District; (II) Bedlam District; (III) Tower Hill District; (IV) Bare Hill District, (V) Chuink District, (VI) Natchaug District; and (VII) South Centre District, and also delineates the areas of North Windham and Goshen, and identifies locations of schools, private residences with owner's names, businesses and mills.

Each of the seven established districts in Chaplin, at one time, had its own schoolhouse to educate district children. Though most of these schoolhouses have since been demolished, the Natchaug District Schoolhouse remains, and it has been identified as worthy of preservation by the residents during the formulation of this plan.



In addition to schoolhouses, over the years the Town of Chaplin has owned several other institutional buildings that are important components of Chaplin's history, the majority of which are in the Chaplin Historic District. These structures include the former Chaplin Library, the Former General Store/Post Office, the former Chaplin Grange Hall, and the Chaplin Museum. These structures are addressed in more detail in Chapter 8 – Municipal Facilities.

Strategy: *Identify and assess locations of former district schoolhouses throughout Town and provide for protection/preservation of these sites.*

Strategy: *Continue to support the Chaplin Museum and encourage the revitalization of the Chaplin Historical Society.*

~~**Strategy:** *Prepare practical plans for the use of municipally owned institutional buildings.*~~

Chaplin’s Historic Town Center

Chaplin’s historic town center is located off Route 198 on what is now Chaplin Street, between England Road and North Bear Hill Road. The town center was a mix of residences, small commercial businesses, the post office, and the congregational church. With an exemplary concentration of well-preserved structures dating from the early nineteenth century, the entire village center is listed on both the National and State Registers of Historic Places. Perhaps the most notable structure in the Historic District is the Witter House, a Georgian mansion built in 1820 and listed as a National Register Historic Site.



The 42 identified structures within the established Chaplin Historic District, nearly half of which are said to have been constructed by Major Edward Eaton, are regulated by municipal ordinance through the Chaplin Historic District Commission. The Commission oversees property uses and proposals for structural and material modifications to properties and structures within the District, to maintain the visual aesthetic quality of the individual structures and the district.

Chaplin’s former village center is now primarily residential, the only exceptions being municipally owned buildings and the Congregational Church. Residents of the district prefer that the district remain primarily residential in use but may support the use of municipal structures for cultural uses such as an art studio.

Strategy: *Continue to support the work of the Chaplin Historic District Commission in preserving this valuable cultural resource.*

Strategy: *Seek funding to install attractive signage at the gateways to the Chaplin Historic District. Seek professional design assistance in selecting the best location.*

Strategy: *Consider the gateway to the historic district if the intersection of Chaplin St. and Route 198 is re-aligned to improve site lines.*

Strategy: *Foster adaptive reuse of municipally owned structures for uses of such manner and scale that are appropriate for the district.*

Living and Working in Chaplin

Not surprisingly, historic documents and written histories of Chaplin identify agriculture as the primary business endeavor throughout town. However, there were several manufacturing mills in Chaplin: 3 on the Natchaug River between South Chaplin and the Stone House Brook confluence which produced products such as paper, pulp, lumber, and wheelbarrows, and 3 on the Stone House Brook, itself, producing pulp, iron and wood products, plow beams and shingles. Small retail businesses such as a shoe store, supply stores and a tin shop were located primarily in Chaplin Center, and few professional and personal services were offered to meet the needs of the rural population.



Outside of the village center, homesteads and farmsteads were scattered about the town, located where settlers found the land suitable for farming or raising livestock. Settlers built residences, barns, and outbuildings in the style of the times, and established cemeteries for those who had passed on. Many of these buildings and features have been maintained through the centuries and contribute to the unique look and feel of the town in a variety of ways.

Strategy: Identify and assess locations of former mill sites on the Natchaug River and Stone House Brook and provide for protection/preservation of these sites.

Strategy: Encourage owners of significant historic properties outside of the historic town center to apply for State of Connecticut and National Register of Historic Places designation.

Strategy: Continue to maintain and improve historic cemeteries throughout town.

Lasting Marks on the Land

Evidence of human occupation and historic uses of land are everywhere. Of the various man-made aspects of the environment that we encounter every day, few are more nostalgic than the classic New England stone wall. Originally built as a matter of necessity due to the large amounts of stone in the rough glacial till, and typically as a depository of fieldstones removed from plowing pastures, animal pens and crop lands, stone walls are among the most common types of Colonial-era property markers found in Eastern Connecticut for more than 200 years.

In this regard, Chaplin is no exception. Many town roads are flanked by dry stacked stone walls, as are many current and former pastures and agricultural fields. Locations of these stone walls are indicators of former land uses and are a lasting tribute to Chaplin’s rich agricultural heritage. For these reasons, stone walls represent a unique cultural resource that should be preserved and protected.

Strategy: Consider adopting a town-wide resolution to protect scenic and culturally significant stone walls.

~~Strategy: Adopt a Municipal Scenic Road Ordinance to offer some protection for scenic local roads.~~

~~Strategy: Consider the realistic protection of culturally significant properties such as the “Chaplin Chimney” in Natchaug Village. Develop a limited timeline for possible protection. If the properties cannot be protected within a reasonable timeframe, pursue other options.~~

~~Strategy: **Create an annual signage budget.** Install “Welcome to Chaplin” signs and other signs at areas of historic or natural significance. **Seek professional design assistance for new signs.** Additional signage should be pursued in Natchaug Village and Sherman’s Corner as the “village vision” starts to take shape.~~

Strategy: Attempt to provide parking and accessibility at historic and culturally significant sites.



108 Chaplin barns are listed on Connecticutbarns.org, a project of the CT Trust for Historic Preservation. Many are historic such as these on Tower Hill Road

7

NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE & OPEN SPACE

Chaplin's extensive natural resources include the Natchaug River, large blocks of undeveloped mixed hardwood forest, and sizable tracts of protected land in the form of Natchaug State Forest, James L. Goodwin State Forest, and the Mansfield Hollow State Park. Agricultural areas can be found in the Natchaug River Valley, and the Chewink Road and Bedlam Road neighborhoods.

Natchaug River

The Natchaug River is designated as a Connecticut State River Greenway. It is the largest branch of the Shetucket River, starting in Eastford at the confluence of Bigelow Brook and the Still River, flowing south- east towards the Mansfield Hollow Lakes Dam and onward towards the Willimantic Reservoir. The Natchaug River becomes the Shetucket River at the confluence with the Willimantic River.



The Natchaug River is classified by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection as "AA" which means it is an existing or proposed drinking water supply, fish, aquatic life and wildlife habitat, recreational use (may be restricted) agricultural and industrial supply. Threats to the river are increasing water temperature and siltation caused by human development activities in the watershed.

Increased water temperature is especially damaging to native trout populations, cold-water species that are indicative of environmental health. Rising stream temperatures are largely caused by the loss of forest shade cover, including along smaller streams that flow in the Natchaug River in Chaplin and in areas higher in the watershed.

Siltation is caused largely by road sand carried by storm water into the river as run-off. This impact is most notable in the early spring when winter road sand from local roads and Rte. 198 flows into the Natchaug River, burying the burgeoning macro-invertebrate populations that are a critical component of the aquatic food web. Chaplin has expressed a special interest in protecting the Natchaug River from these and other threats.

The Stonehouse Brook watershed is a significant sub-basin within the Natchaug Basin that covers much of the north-west quadrant of Chaplin. Stonehouse Brook starts in Ashford at Upper Colts Pond and flows under Tower Hill Road, Palmer Road, and Bedlam Road before joining the Natchaug River. In 2003, the Stonehouse Brook Preservation Circle, a collection of eight landowners in Chaplin and Ashford owning a total of 706 acres, received funding to permanently protect their forestland through the Forest Legacy Program. This system of ponds, wetlands, upland forest habitat is intact enough to support bobcat, black bear and moose.

While Mansfield Hollow State Park, Natchaug State Forest and Goodwin State Forest all include major tracts in Chaplin, neither park nor forests have an entrance in town. Few people are aware that these significant recreational resources can be accessed from Chaplin and most trail heads are not marked with any kind of signage. At the community workshops, the 2010 POCD sub-committee showed great interest in improving access to and signage for these forests and parks, as well as improving access to and signage for the Natchaug River and the Airline Trail.

Almost the entire town of Chaplin is within the Natchaug Basin, a public water supply watershed covering 162-square miles. In 2008, the Nature Conservancy initiated a Conservation Action Planning (CAP) project in the Natchaug Basin which brought together many different stakeholders to identify key ecological attributes, conservation targets and threats, and strategies for protecting the natural resources. The biggest threats to the Natchaug Basin are: 1) Residential and Commercial Development, 2) Road Construction and Maintenance, 3) Groundwater Withdrawal, and 4) Dams. In April of 2011, an intermunicipal agreement was signed by the CEO's of the eight communities within the watershed pledging to work cooperatively to balance conservation and growth.

In 2019 the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District was contracted by the CT DEEP to prepare a Natchaug River Healthy Watershed Implementation Plan. The plan will develop strategies for nutrient reduction from nonpoint source pollution. Included in the plan process was the development of a guidance document for low impact development best management practices.

~~*Strategy: Increase protection of Natchaug River and tributaries through a River Protection Overlay Zone. The zone could include a tiered protection mechanism.*~~

Strategy: Promote protection of surface and groundwater resources through education for property owners, residents and business owners living and working in the Natchaug Basin.

~~*Strategy: Explore increasing the minimum lot size to four acres in sensitive parts of town within the Natchaug Basin.*~~

Strategy: Inventory existing storm-water infrastructure including all culverts, catch-basins, outlets and level spreaders. Work with DOT and Chaplin Public Works to incorporate environmental options such as culverts that do not disrupt natural stream flow, bio-retention, and other low-impact techniques.

Strategy: Avoid unnecessary impacts to watercourses and wetlands. Utilize low impact development guidelines and best management practices whenever necessary. Examples include rain gardens, minimal impervious surfaces, bio-retention, infiltrators, etc.

~~*Strategy: Work with supporting groups such as the Nature Conservancy and the Naubetuck Watershed Council who can provide guidance on environmentally friendly practices.*~~

Municipal Open Space

Most of Chaplin's open space is owned by the State of Connecticut and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The town had become active in the preservation of open space through the conservation subdivision regulations. In 2020 the Commission eliminated the Open Space Subdivision section from the zoning regulations and should eliminate the corresponding section within its Subdivision Regulations.

~~Strategy: Propose a referendum to authorize the Board of Selectman to take title of open space property and add it to the list of town-owned properties.~~

~~Strategy: Additionally, propose a referendum to authorize the Board of Selectman to take temporary title of open space property while a permanent conservator can be found for it. Continue to work with conservation organizations such as Joshua's Trust to provide for the long-term protection of critical open space.~~

~~Strategy: Review the subdivision regulations and process to ensure the resulting development reflects Chaplin's goals for open space. Consider eliminating 15 acres as the minimum conservation subdivision requirement. Consider including the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission as well as the Conservation Commission during the pre-application conference with the developer.~~

~~Strategy: Create a designated Open Space Fund for the collection of fees in lieu of open space as well as any additionally budgeted or bonded funds dedicated for open space acquisition.~~

~~Strategy: Encourage the Chaplin Conservation Commission to prepare and continuously update an open space and conservation easement inventory.~~

~~Strategy: Review the Natural Resource Inventory and Co-occurring Natural Resource maps and update as needed.~~

~~Strategy: Consider a municipal open space category for Open Space as provided for under Public Act 490, comparable to the farm and forest categories.~~

Forestry

Chaplin's mixed hardwood forests, soils and rolling terrain are typical of Connecticut's eastern highlands. The town is graced with several large, un-fragmented forest "superblocks" that provide core wildlife habitat and help protect water resources. Forestry activities are common and large acreages of private and state land are managed for timber. Chaplin is one of the few communities in Connecticut with the authority to regulate logging activities through its zoning regulations.

~~Strategy: Encourage sustainable forest management and stewardship. Work with existing groups such as the Eastern CT Forest Landowners Association to provide education to forest property owners.~~

~~Strategy: Continue to consider large, forested super-blocks during subdivision review.~~

Agriculture

Agriculture helps preserve the rural landscape that many Chaplin residents hold dear. Chaplin citizens strongly support agriculture in the community. Agricultural products produced in Chaplin include fresh fruits and vegetables; nursery stock and cut flowers; silage corn and hay; honey and maple syrup; eggs, dairy, meat and fiber products. More strategies for agriculture are included in Chapter 2 - Economic Development. The Planning and Zoning Commission recently approved changes to the regulations including the definitions of agriculture, Limited Farms and Farm Stands with the intention of being more

farm friendly. These changes should be reviewed in the future to ensure that they work as intended and do not needlessly inhibit agricultural activities.

~~Strategy: Modify zoning regulations to make them more “agriculture-friendly”, particularly in regard to signage for farms and farm stands. Consider creating an agricultural business overlay zone for existing and potential future agricultural businesses.~~

~~Strategy: Consider creating an Agricultural Commission (possibly combined with another commission) to assist local farmers and promote agriculture. Projects could include a local farmers’ market or “Buy Local” program.~~

Strategy: Work with groups such as the CT Farm Bureau and the ECRC&D “AGvocate” program to educate municipal officials, agricultural producers, and others to help make Chaplin a agriculture-friendly community.

Strategy: Consider a “Right-to-Farm” Ordinance to protect necessary farming activities.

Mining

Mining and gravel processing have been an issue in Chaplin. The noise, debris and trucks involved in rock-crushing and other gravel processing is not compatible with the existing residences and businesses in most areas of Chaplin; however, the very nature of development and reconfiguring topography requires some rock crushing and gravel processing. Recent changes to the earth excavation regulations may clarify the permitting process as well as provide enforcement avenues. Future applications for earth excavations should be monitored to ensure compliance and effectiveness of the new regulations.

~~Strategy: Review zoning regulations regarding gravel mining. Consider limited duration gravel processing.~~

~~Strategy: To facilitate development, provide the opportunity for a developer working in a commercial zone to crush rock on a specific site under development; the duration of the rock-crushing should be for a limited time period and specified as a condition of site plan approval.~~

~~Strategy: Consider removing earth product processing as an allowable use in the Industrial Zone.~~

8 PUBLIC SAFETY, MUNICIPAL FACILITIES & SERVICES

PUBLIC SAFETY

Chaplin Fire House and Volunteer Fire Department

The Chaplin Fire House was built in 2005 on the site of the previous fire house on Rte. 198. The building is considered sufficient for current needs and the property includes an outdoor training area and a cellular tower disguised as a flagpole. The building has been identified as the potential future Emergency Operations Center and Voting Location. The building has also been the location of several community events.

Strategy: Consider the need for fire ponds and underground storage cisterns for large developments.

Resident State Trooper

A resident state trooper has been protecting the citizens of Chaplin since 1988. Before then, Chaplin had constables and auxiliary police. The office of the resident state trooper is currently in the Chaplin Town Hall.

~~*Strategy: Consider a new office space for the Chaplin Resident State Trooper.*~~

CERT- Community Emergency Response Team

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) consists of a group of trained volunteers available to provide additional assistance in the event of an emergency that would otherwise overwhelm professional responders like police and fire. Examples of incidents that might cause an activation of the team are hurricanes, floods, chemical spills, and terrorist attacks. If needed, the team would also setup and run a local Red Cross shelter. The CERT is a combined group with the town of Hampton but is currently inactive, although individuals with training can be sworn in by the Emergency Management Director when needed.

Strategy: Encourage interested citizens to take the CERT training course and join the Chaplin/Hampton CERT Team to assist Chaplin first responders in the event of an emergency.

Chaplin has no coordinated plan for its municipal buildings and properties. Some of these buildings have languished from lack of maintenance and use. Other properties have been the source of conflict as town leaders struggle to find the highest and best use for these properties. The main goal is to prepare a coordinated, master plan for all town-owned buildings and properties.

Strategy: Convene a Master Plan Committee to prepare a coordinated reuse plan for existing municipally owned properties and buildings.

Strategy: Strive to incorporate “green” building practices in all new municipal facilities and upgrades.

~~*Strategy: Develop a Municipal Building Reuse District to help implement the municipal master plan.*~~

MUNICIPAL FACILITIES

Chaplin Library

Renovated and dedicated in 2000, the Chaplin Library occupies part of the former Chaplin Elementary School. Located at 130 Chaplin Street next to the Chaplin Senior Center, the library is spacious and well-equipped with public computers, wireless internet access and a small community meeting room. The Chaplin Library has one part-time librarian and several volunteers. The facility is used almost daily and hosts many successful community programs such as the Preschool Readiness Program, poetry readings, gardening and reading groups, and an annual model train show. The Chaplin Library shares available meeting space freely with community groups.

Chaplin Senior Center

The Chaplin Senior Center shares a driveway and parking area with the Chaplin Library. It also occupies part of the former Chaplin Elementary School. The Chaplin Senior Center has one part-time director. The Senior Center is open Monday through Thursday for residents of Chaplin and surrounding towns aged 50 years or older. It includes a lounge with a large screen television, pool table, an exercise room and large kitchen, as well as weekly classes in watercolors, yoga, Tai Chi, crafts, quilting and more. The Senior Center has also been open to sharing their medium sized meeting space for community meetings of approximately 50 people. Some larger town meetings have been held here; the Senior Center has a projector which has been used for presentations and there is the option of wireless internet access via the Chaplin Library Wi-Fi.

Chaplin Community Center

The Ferrara Community Center occupies the old gymnasium/auditorium of the former Chaplin Elementary School. The Ferrara Community Center shares an entrance and bathrooms with the Chaplin Senior Center. The approximately 4,000 square foot space is currently used for cold storage and the Senior Center's Annual Craft Fair. The room has a stage and large, east-facing windows. It is currently equipped with two industrial heaters that make it inappropriate as a meeting space because of the noise level. The Town has no current need for the space.

Chaplin Town Museum

This small building on the southern end of the Chaplin Historic District was once the Chaplin Town Hall. The building has been reborn as a local history museum operated by the Chaplin Historical Society but gets little traffic due to the lack of parking and restrooms. The Town has investigated moving the structure to a new location next door to the Chaplin Library and the Chaplin Center Cemetery as well as selling the property. The town has recently held discussions at a town meeting to try to resolve the future use of the building.

Strategy: Seek funding opportunities to develop the site next door to the Chaplin Library as the future home of the Chaplin Town Museum.

William Ross Library

The late Romanesque Revival architecture of this building provides a clue that it is nearly one hundred years younger than its neighbors in the Chaplin Historic District. Built in 1911, this library operated for almost ninety years. The building has been vacant and used only for storage in recent years. The Chaplin Historical Society had been working with an architect to rehabilitate this building with grant funding. The Historic District Commission prefers a public use of the building. A review of the building by the Eastern Highland Health District concluded that the site could have a well but that percolation tests would be required for any septic approvals. An A-2 survey would need to be conducted to determine if an easement would be necessary for access.

Strategy: Continue to seek funding opportunities to encourage the further renovation of this historic structure.

Chaplin Grange

~~Located on Route 198 at the gateway to the Chaplin Historic District, the Grange is currently vacant and has been rarely used in recent years. The Grange is abandoned but deed restrictions may prevent the town from selling the property in the near future. The Town has no existing need for the property or building and has considered renting it to a community organization or day care, but the structure is not up to current building and health code standards and cannot be utilized for any significant use until major upgrades are made. The building is one of three structures on the east side of Route 198 that are within the Chaplin Historic District.~~

~~*Strategy: Determine the historical value of the grange building. Consider the Grange property as a potential future location of the Natchaug School House.*~~

Old Chaplin Post Office

The Old Chaplin Post Office is located at the corner of Chaplin Street and Route 198 and is next door to the Chaplin Senior Center and Library. Historically, it was Chaplin General Store. The town purchased the property after the Post Office moved to a new building on Route 6. The property is at the northern gateway to the Chaplin Historic District.

~~*Strategy: The Town of Chaplin should maintain ownership of the Old Post Office property. Its location in close proximity to the Town Hall, the Highway Department, the Senior Center, and the Library make it a strategic asset to the town and a critical piece of municipal property.*~~

Strategy: Any renovation of the existing building, use, or redevelopment of the site should be compatible with the historic character of the Chaplin Historic District.

Chaplin Town Hall

The Chaplin Town Hall is fairly cramped with several employees doubled-up in offices. One registrar's office is in a closet. The building has an open central area where many town commissions hold their meetings although the layout for public meetings is not ideal. Commissioners must sit with their backs to the public; seating is cramped for groups of more than a few people. Parts of the central open area are sectioned off into a cubicle for the Administrative Assistant to the First Selectman, a cubical for storage, and a public computer station for viewing tax record information. There is a lack of permanent storage

space for some town records including the Planning and Zoning Commissions maps and application information. Some of these records are disorganized from being moved several times.

Strategy: Prepare and implement a space management plan in the Town Hall. Likely changes include:

- *Moving the office of the Resident State Trooper and creating an office for the Chaplin Planning and Zoning Agent adjacent to the Building Office.*
- *Rearranging the central area for better meeting space.*
- *Creating an office with a customer service counter for the Building and Land Use Department.*
- *Provide for adequate record storage town-wide.*

Chaplin Highway Department

The Chaplin Highway Department needs some significant upgrades. Priority projects are a new roof and an additional work bay. The red pines along Route 198, originally planted as a buffer, are now too tall to offer any visual protection and sometimes grass blocks visibility of drivers entering and exiting. Cosmetic enhancements such as a new sign, better buffering and better landscaping along Route 198 could significantly improve the appearance of Chaplin’s municipal core.

Strategy: Seek funding for deferred maintenance and functional enhancements such as the roof and an additional work bay.

Strategy: Seek funding for cosmetic improvements such as a new sign, possibly a fence, and better landscaping.

Chaplin Transfer Station

The Chaplin Transfer Station must expand its processing area to meet newer waste management standards for electronics and florescent lights. The town is working with the State of Connecticut to acquire land adjacent to the existing transfer station. There is a growing need to improve security and safety at the facility.

Strategy: Prepare an expansion plan for the transfer station and include necessary safety and security upgrades. Pursue funding strategies such as a STEAP grant and/or municipal bonds.

Strategy: Schedule local annual collection day of household hazardous waste for Chaplin residents so they do not have to travel to the Mid-NEROC facility in Willington.

Edward Garrison Park

Located next door to Town Hall, the Edward Garrison Park is a wonderful asset in Chaplin’s social fabric; however, park usage has been declining in the past few years. The park includes a pavilion, bathrooms, and snack bar. There are plans to also develop a disc golf course. The park is currently limited to events sponsored by Chaplin Town departments, Boards and Commissions.

Strategy: Replace the damaged split rail fence with materials that cannot be easily vandalized or moved.

Strategy: Create a permanent handicapped access to the Pavilion without the need to open the (normally locked) gate.

Strategy: Seek recreational grant funding to repair the concessions building including the roof, doors, and trim.

Strategy: Improve trail connections between Garrison Park and adjacent Joshua's Trust property and Natchaug State Forest. Check property ownership and formalize trail access rights. Continue the stone dust trail around the pond.

Strategy: Consider allowing non-residents to rent the park for events.

~~*Strategy: Include other recreational areas as part of the coordinated municipal master plan.*~~

MUNICIPAL SERVICES

www.chaplinct.org

The Chaplin website is one of the primary methods for Chaplin residents to get information about town services. Information provided on municipal websites often become out of date quickly. Pages should be reviewed periodically and brought up to date.

~~*Strategy: Ensure that an adequate description of every town service and board/commission is on the website. There are still a few "coming soon" pages that need to be filled out.*~~

Strategy: Provide for timely posting of municipal committee meeting dates, agendas and minutes.

~~*Strategy: Make the website more relevant to town residents by including more instructional material such as how to recycle and how to use the Transfer Station.*~~

Municipal Human Resources and Professional Development

Chaplin Recreation is run by volunteers. The energy and productivity of that group can wax and wane: active volunteers can get "burned out" and a need arises for an influx of energy and interest. For example, Chaplin had a Summer Youth Program that included sports, trips, and games, but the program ended when there were no longer volunteers available to run it.

Strategy: Evaluate the need for a part-time, paid Recreation Director. Consider sharing the position with a neighboring town.

Due to the many requirements regarding municipal record keeping, Chaplin has struggled to provide training and guidance to new board clerks regarding standardized meeting minutes and other documents.

Strategy: Ensure that all town staff have adequate training, time, facilities and resources to perform their jobs.

Strategy: Increase time and budget for Town Planner/ZEO.

9

EDUCATION

There are two schools in Chaplin. Chaplin Elementary School built in 1993 has pre-kindergarten classes through Grade 6 with 156 students. Parish Hill Middle School/High School which has classes for Grade 7 through Grade 12.

Chaplin spent about \$3,669 per capita on municipal services and education in FYE 2018. The expenditure per pupil increased from \$16,250 in 2008 to \$22,731 in 2018 an increase of \$6,541 over ten years. This can be attributed to decreasing school enrollment from 342 students in 2008 to 259 in 2018. Expenditures for education (15.8%) have increased at almost twice the rate of operating expenditures (8.3%) since 2008.

Education Expenditures Per Pupil		
	FYE 2008	FYE2018
Chaplin	\$16,250	\$22,731
Hampton	\$16,025	\$25,021
Mansfield	\$14,864	\$20,335
Scotland	\$14,627	\$22,244
Ashford	\$14,023	\$19,700
Eastford	\$13,442	\$20,391
Windham	\$13,199	\$18,868
Municipal Fiscal Indicators, OPM		

The main issues facing Chaplin’s school districts are the decreasing class sizes and rising costs. It is not the intent of this plan to prescribe the best course of action for the school districts.

Chaplin Elementary School

Chaplin Elementary School is located on 26 acres on Palmer Road. Enrollment is not rapidly growing and the facility, built in 1993, is considered sufficient for current and anticipated enrollment. The gym is well used by many groups and school space is shared freely with community groups such as the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts.

If the elementary school is ever combined with the middle school (Grades 7-8), the facility on Palmer Road will need to expand. In addition to new classroom space, upgrades to the gym, auditorium, and sports fields would be necessary. It has not been determined if there is enough room on the existing property for expansion on-site.

Strategy: *Upgrade air conditioning to accommodate summer school programs. Consider cooperating with Hampton Elementary School in the provision of summer school programs.*

Strategy: *Evaluate future building potential and identify appropriate expansion properties if necessary.*

Parish Hill Middle School/High School

Parish Hill Middle School/ High School is located on approximately 60 acres on Parish Hill Road. It is part of Regional School District 11 that also includes the towns of Hampton and Scotland. Enrollment in 2018 was 232 students compared to 309 in 2008. The auditorium and gym are well-used by the regional community. The facility is aging and requires some maintenance upgrades.

Strategy: *Replace boiler with an energy-efficient model such as a solar-assisted unit. Replace roof which is over 20 years old. Consider the concurrent installation of solar panels. Build a soccer field with the correct orientation (north south) and adequate drainage.*

Strategy: Investigate possible deed restrictions on the 60-acre property. Evaluate existing building potential and identify appropriate expansion areas if necessary.

Strategy: Consider the needs of Chaplin Elementary School, Parish Hill High School/Middle School, and the Town of Chaplin in preparing for changes in the school structure.