

## **6. Environmental Resources and Sustainability**

### **Introduction**

The quality, prevalence, and distribution of natural resources of a community heavily influence its quality of life, and understanding the environmental context helps to guide future conservation and development efforts. East Hartford's natural landscape is defined by its rivers and streams, particularly the Hockanum and Connecticut Rivers, which provide natural drainage and a multitude of recreational opportunities. This chapter summarizes the significant features that comprise the Town's natural landscape.

### **Environmental Resources Goals:**

- Promote the conservation and preservation of natural resources to enhance the Town's ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change, including its capacity to recover from emergencies and natural disasters.
- Support environmental sustainability initiatives that improve waste and energy systems, enhance the tree canopy, protect natural resources, and strengthen connections to open space and recreational amenities.

### **Rivers and Floodplains**

East Hartford encompasses 18.8 square miles in total land area. As illustrated in Figure 1, the Town is located on the banks of the Connecticut River, bisected by its tributary, the Hockanum River. Due to the relatively flat landscape, drainage in East Hartford is less than optimal; in fact, flooding has been a major concern throughout the Town's history. After the great floods of 1936 and 1939, which destroyed many of the buildings in the oldest parts of the Town, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers developed the dike system that is in place today. The completion of the dikes in 1941 and man-made drainage systems such as storm sewers and pumping stations have played a major role in the successful redevelopment of the riverfront area between the Bulkeley and Charter Oak Bridges. The remainder of East Hartford is dependent on a network of natural drainage patterns, primarily brooks that feed into streams leading to the Connecticut River.

Floodplains in East Hartford were most recently mapped for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) between 2008 and 2011. The general area of the 100- and 500-year floodplains are shown in Figure 1. Areas protected by the dike are also indicated. A large portion of the flood-prone areas along the river not included in the dike-system remain as natural refuges within an otherwise suburbanized setting.

According to the most recent FEMA data, about 2,350 acres of land, or 20% of the Town, is within the 100-year floodplain. Approximately 770 additional acres, or 6% of the Town, is part of the 500-year floodplain. To protect flood-prone areas that have not been artificially protected by the dike system, the Town has incorporated floodplain zoning in its Zoning Regulations. Appendix A regulates all land within the "Special Flood Hazard Area" (SFHA), equivalent to the FEMA 100-year floodplain. Development permits are required for any new construction, alteration, conversion, or enlargement of existing structures within the SHFA.

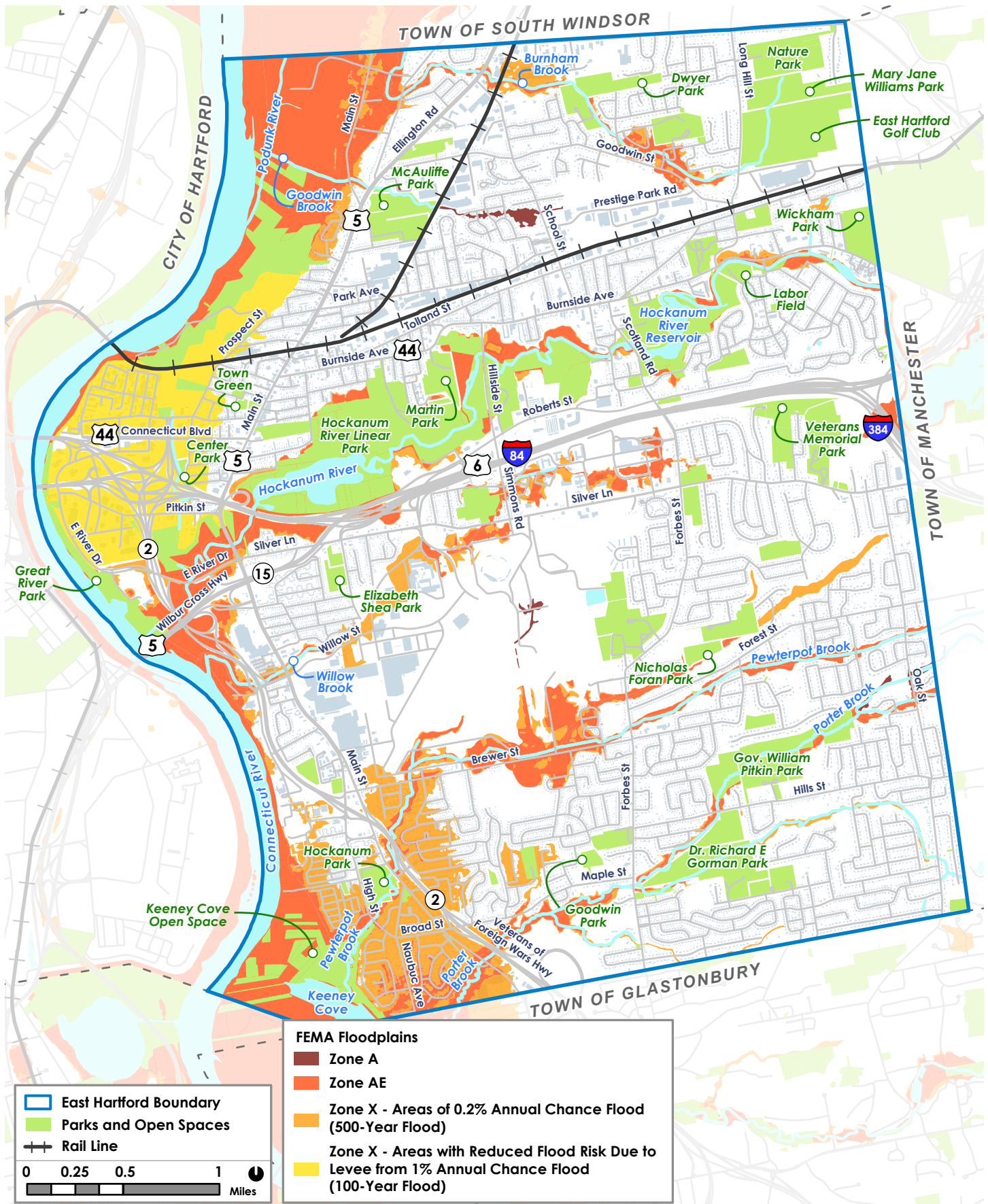


Figure 1: Floodplains

Since the previous POCD, East Hartford has taken steps to improve its development standards for stormwater management. As of February 2024, Section 7.10 of the Zoning Regulations requires accordance with aspects of the Connecticut Stormwater Quality Manual. Additional requirements for water retention, runoff volume, and drainage have also been added to the zoning code for development of sites with high percentages of Directly Connected Impervious Area.

## **Watersheds**

East Hartford is comprised of four subregional watersheds, containing seven primary watercourses, which define the Town's natural drainage system (see Figure 2). All four watersheds are components of the much larger regional Connecticut River Mainstem watershed, extending roughly through the middle of the state from Massachusetts to Long Island Sound. The rivers, streams, ponds, wetlands, and floodplains are watershed components with the physical attributes necessary to support a variety of plant and animal life, attenuate flood conditions, and provide recreational opportunities. Protecting water quality in East Hartford is an important issue affecting ecology on a local and regional level. Sustainable management of the Town's watersheds is critical to protect their attributes and benefits for years to come.

### **Salmon Brook Watershed**

The Salmon Brook Watershed provides drainage for about 40% of East Hartford and is situated in the southern portion of the Town, approximately bounded by Silver Lane to the north and High Street to the west. The watershed includes several of East Hartford's smaller waterways, such as Pewterpot Brook, Porter Brook, and their tributaries. These waterways flow into Keeney Cove – a wetland area that includes the Keeney Cove Marsh State Wildlife Area and has been designated as critical floodplain forest habitat by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) – before joining the Connecticut River in neighboring Glastonbury.

Development patterns in the Salmon Brook watershed are varied, with single-family residential development throughout most of the eastern and southern portions. Higher-density residential is found in the western portion, including a mobile home park along High Street. The northeastern part of the watershed has commercial, industrial, and manufacturing uses, including the major industrial development under construction at National Development's Logistics and Technology Park at Rentschler Field, which is replacing the former Pratt & Whitney airfield that closed in 1999. This development is planned to include more than 2 million square feet of commercial space and associated infrastructure and is likely to significantly alter the permeability of the 300-acre site. Prior to this development, about 17% of the land in the Salmon Brook Watershed was impervious.<sup>1</sup>

The 100-year floodplain comprises approximately 5% of the total area of the Salmon Brook Watershed in East Hartford, situated primarily in the southwest portion and along Pewterpot Brook and Porter Brook. Most of the southwest portion of the watershed falls within the 500-year floodplain, particularly within the area south of Brewer Street and west of Handel Road.

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<sup>1</sup> Permeability calculations in this section of the report are low-end estimates, factoring roofing, sidewalks, and other impervious surfaces such as parking lots and driveways. Road surfaces are not included as a part of this calculation.

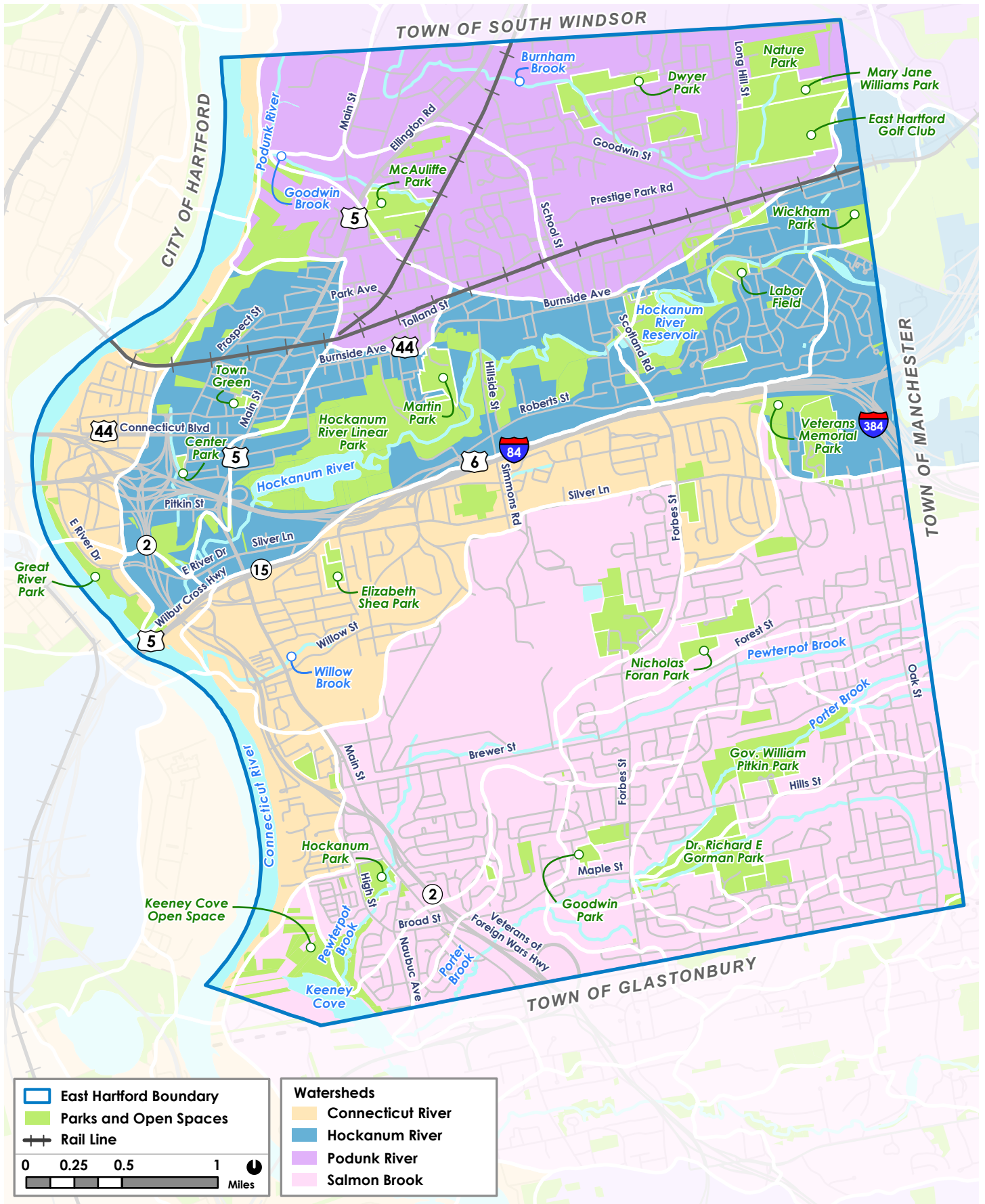


Figure 2: Rivers and Watersheds

### Connecticut River Watershed

The subregional Connecticut River Watershed drains approximately 19% of the Town's total land area and includes both Willow Brook and the larger Connecticut River. Development within this watershed is very dense, particularly along the lower reaches of Willow Brook and the banks of the Connecticut River. The construction of the East Hartford Dike in the early 1940s has had significant effects on the Town's development patterns, allowing for a greater density of development within the watershed in response to the reduced risk of flooding. As development has continued, the area of impervious surface (i.e., roads, driveways, roofs, etc.) has grown, resulting in an increase in polluted runoff reaching rivers and streams. Impervious surfaces make up approximately 27% of the Connecticut River Watershed in East Hartford.

Future development projects within the Connecticut River Watershed (at Founders Plaza and along Silver Lane) present an opportunity to improve permeability within the floodplain by reducing large areas of impermeable surface parking. The use of permeable pavers and landscaping help to mitigate the negative impacts of parking areas with continuous pavement, providing improvements to permeability, aesthetics, and vehicular and pedestrian traffic flow.

Due to the relatively level topography within the watershed, 100-year floodplain areas are mapped along the banks of the Connecticut River, exception for the area protected by the East Hartford Dike. Additionally, much of the area surrounding Willow Brook is designated part of the 100- or 500- year floodplain.

### Podunk River Watershed

The Podunk River watershed covers much of northern East Hartford, draining about 20% of the Town into the Podunk River and its tributaries, Burnham Brook and Goodwin Brook. The Podunk River originates in South Windsor, flowing south before meeting the Connecticut River. Burnham Brook originates in the northeastern part of East Hartford, flowing into South Windsor before joining the Podunk River. Goodwin Brook originates just west of the School Street and Prestige Park intersection and meets the Podunk River in the northwest portion of the Town.

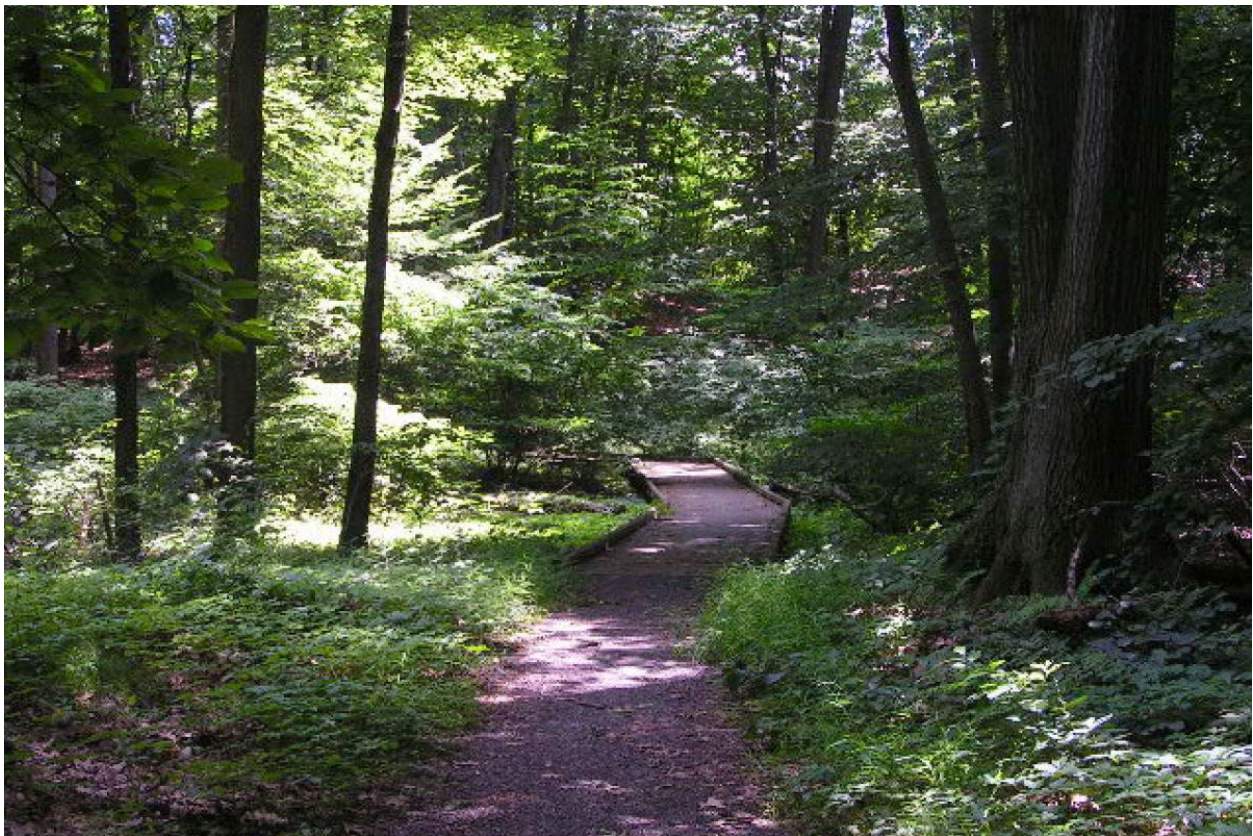
Industrial and manufacturing development patterns within the watershed are most intense along the Connecticut Southern Railroad lines, which run east-west along the southern portion of the watershed and north-south in the western portion. Residential and commercial development has the highest density in the southwest portion of the watershed, particularly along Tolland and Columbus Streets. The remainder of the watershed is characterized by single-family residential land use, with significant park, open space, and vacant land uses along the Podunk River and near the East Hartford Golf Club. The area along the lower portion of the Podunk River has been designated as a critical floodplain forest habitat by CT DEEP. Approximately 24% of the land within the Podunk River watershed is made up of impervious surfaces.

About 10% of the Podunk River Watershed is designated as part of the 100-year floodplain, primarily in the western portion, along the Podunk River and Main Street north of its intersection with Ellington Road. Smaller portions of the 100- and 500-year floodplain are found throughout the watershed along Burnham Brook and Goodwin Brook.

### Hockanum River Watershed

The Hockanum River Watershed covers about 22% of East Hartford's land area, reaching from the eastern border of the Town to the Connecticut River between Tolland Street and I-84. The Hockanum River is East Hartford's largest tributary to the Connecticut River, with the rivers meeting near the foot of the Charter Oak Bridge. The watershed includes Hockanum River Linear Park, a regional recreational resource. Parks and riparian zones adjacent to waterways are ideal locations for the implementation of nature-based stormwater management solutions intended to mitigate the impacts of rainwater flooding. Much of the land along the Hockanum River in East Hartford has been designated as a critical floodplain forest habitat by Connecticut DEEP. Approximately 20% of the land within the Hockanum River Watershed is impervious.

Development patterns within this watershed include a significant amount of parkland and open space along the Hockanum River, along with commercial and residential development throughout the rest of the watershed. Commercial and residential development is densest along Burnside Avenue and Main Street. About 25% of the Hockanum River Watershed is designated as a part of the 100-year floodplain, along the Hockanum River and to the south of the East Hartford Dike.



*Hockanum River Linear Park Trail. Image Credit: Town of East Hartford*

## **Soils**

Land in East Hartford is made up of a complex matrix of soils of varying slope, depth, texture, permeability, and fertility. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service, the soil in East Hartford is comprised of more than 60 different soil classifications. While each has unique characteristics, certain soil types are of interest due to their environmental sensitivity or permeability, which indicates their suitability for different land uses. These classes range from very poorly drained to excessively drained, with poorly drained areas retaining water for an extended period and excessively drained areas struggling to retain water. Most land in East Hartford is designated as well or moderately well drained. Major poor drainage areas can be found in the northeast of the Town between Main Street and the Connecticut River, and along the Hockanum River (Figure 3). Poorly drained areas are not ideal locations for future development.

### **Wetland Soils**

The designation of wetlands in Connecticut is determined by soil type, with Poorly Drained, Very Poorly Drained and Alluvial/Floodplain type soils being considered part of wetlands. Wetlands are an important aspect of the ecosystem and demand protection for a variety of reasons, including their biological productivity; contribution to biodiversity as a habitat for threatened and endangered plant and animal species; ability to store and manage stormwater and reduce flooding; ability to filter runoff, improving water quality; and ability to provide outdoor recreational opportunities.

As shown in Figure 4, while wetlands have been designated throughout East Hartford, the three primary wetland areas are in the northwest, along the Connecticut and Podunk Rivers; in the area around Keeney Cove; and along the Hockanum River. In East Hartford, development within wetland areas is regulated by the Inland Wetland Commission, responsible for reviewing potential development and issuing permits to develop within wetland areas.

## **Groundwater and Aquifer Protection**

East Hartford receives water and sewer services on a regional scale from the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC), a nonprofit municipal corporation chartered by the Connecticut General Assembly. MDC primarily sources its drinking water supply from surface water reservoirs in northwestern Connecticut. While this source of water precludes the need for the development of private wells in most instances, conservation of groundwater resources remains important for the protection of potential future drinking water supply as well as of the region's natural surface and groundwater ecosystems.

Most of East Hartford lies upon glacial meltwater deposits with aquifer potential, with some higher-potential coarse-grained deposits located in its eastern and southeastern portions. Due to the extensive coverage of the aquifer within East Hartford, it is susceptible to contamination by infiltration of pollutants from the surface. Common groundwater contaminants include industrial pollution, septic and storage tanks, injection wells, and contaminated runoff. While MDC sewer and water service help to protect from well- and septic-related contamination, polluted runoff remains a concern. The use of fertilizers, as well as runoff from contaminated impervious surfaces such as roadways and industrial lots, can contribute to groundwater contamination. To combat groundwater contamination, the Town should consider discouraging the use of damaging chemical lawn treatments and pesticides, as well as providing education for residents on the proper disposal of household chemicals.

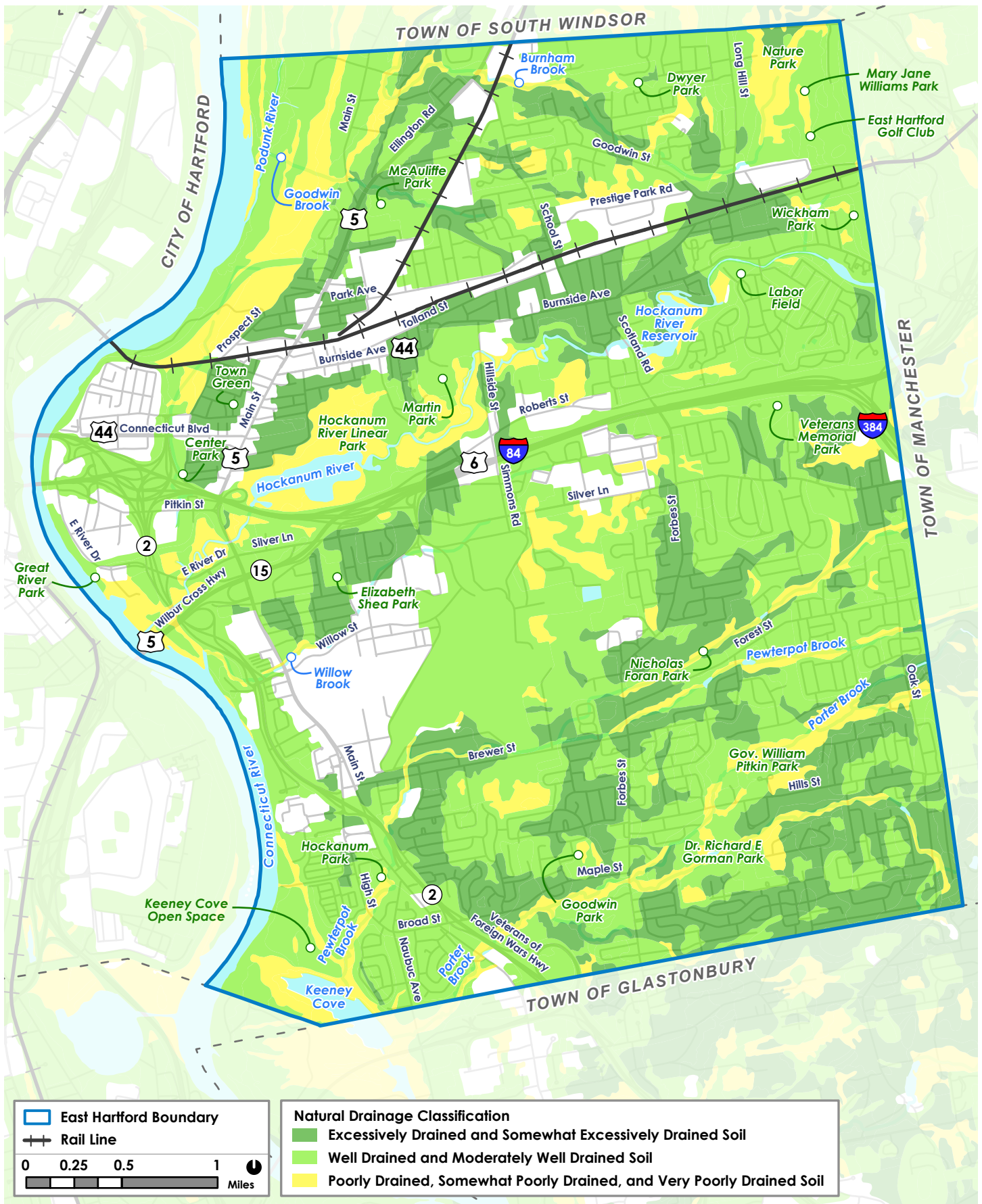


Figure 3: Natural Drainage Classification





According to the most recent water quality classifications published by CT DEEP in 2018, and shown in Figure 5, groundwater in the central and western portions of East Hartford is classified “GB,” or “assumed to have some degradation and not suitable for drinking without treatment.” Groundwater in the northern, southern, and eastern portions is mainly classified as “GA,” or suitable for drinking. Both the 2003 and 2014 POCDs recommended incorporating a provision into the Town’s Zoning Regulations for aquifer protection. While the recently updated zoning code references Aquifer Protection Areas as designated by the State, these do not apply to East Hartford, as they only apply to towns with active well fields that serve more than 1,000 residents. Because the presence of the comprehensive MDC surface-water system exempts East Hartford from Aquifer Protection Areas, specific action is necessary by the Town to address the protection of its aquifers if wells are ever needed to meet the drinking water supplies of the region. Therefore, this POCD reaffirms the recommendation from prior plans.

### **Brownfields**

The Connecticut General Statutes define brownfields as “any abandoned or underutilized site where redevelopment, reuse or expansion has not occurred due to the presence of potential presence of pollution in the buildings, soil, or groundwater that requires investigation or remediation before or in conjunction with the redevelopment, reuse or expansion of the property.” These highly regulated sites present potential environmental and public health concerns, while creating roadblocks to sustainable development. At the same time, the remediation and development of brownfield sites presents an opportunity for sustainable growth, reusing previously developed land and helping to preserve greenfield sites elsewhere.

As illustrated in Figure 6, 32 brownfield sites covering approximately 105 acres have been identified in East Hartford. While these sites are scattered throughout the Town, major brownfield areas include land around Goodwin University between the Connecticut River and Route 2, the site surrounding Brookside Lane north of Roberts Street and south of the Hockanum River in the central portion of the Town, and Silver Lane Plaza. Funding and liability relief for remediation of these sites is available at the regional, state, and federal level. Goodwin University represents an example of the successful use of these funds for site remediation. While this site remains on CT DEEP’s Brownfield Inventory, the property met Connecticut Remediation Standard Regulations in 2016. East Hartford should continue to seek funding and work with developers to encourage sustainable development through the remediation and development of brownfields. It is anticipated that planned redevelopment of Silver Lane Plaza will incorporate brownfield remediation; in other cases, remediation could be pursued in combination with other incentive programs, such as the federal Opportunity Zone program.

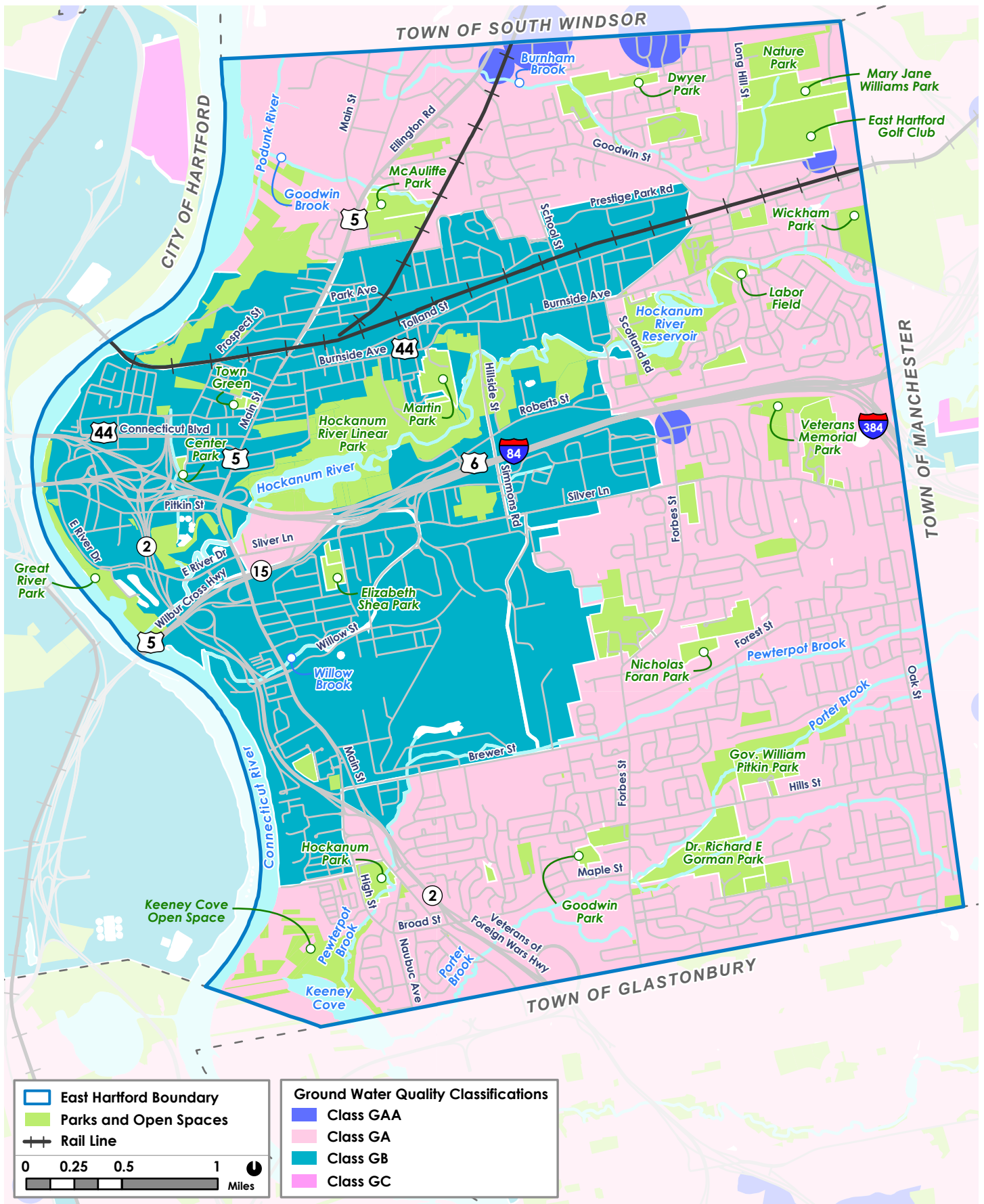


Figure 5: Groundwater Quality

Town of East Hartford POCD

Sources: Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP), Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), Town of East Hartford, BFJ Planning.

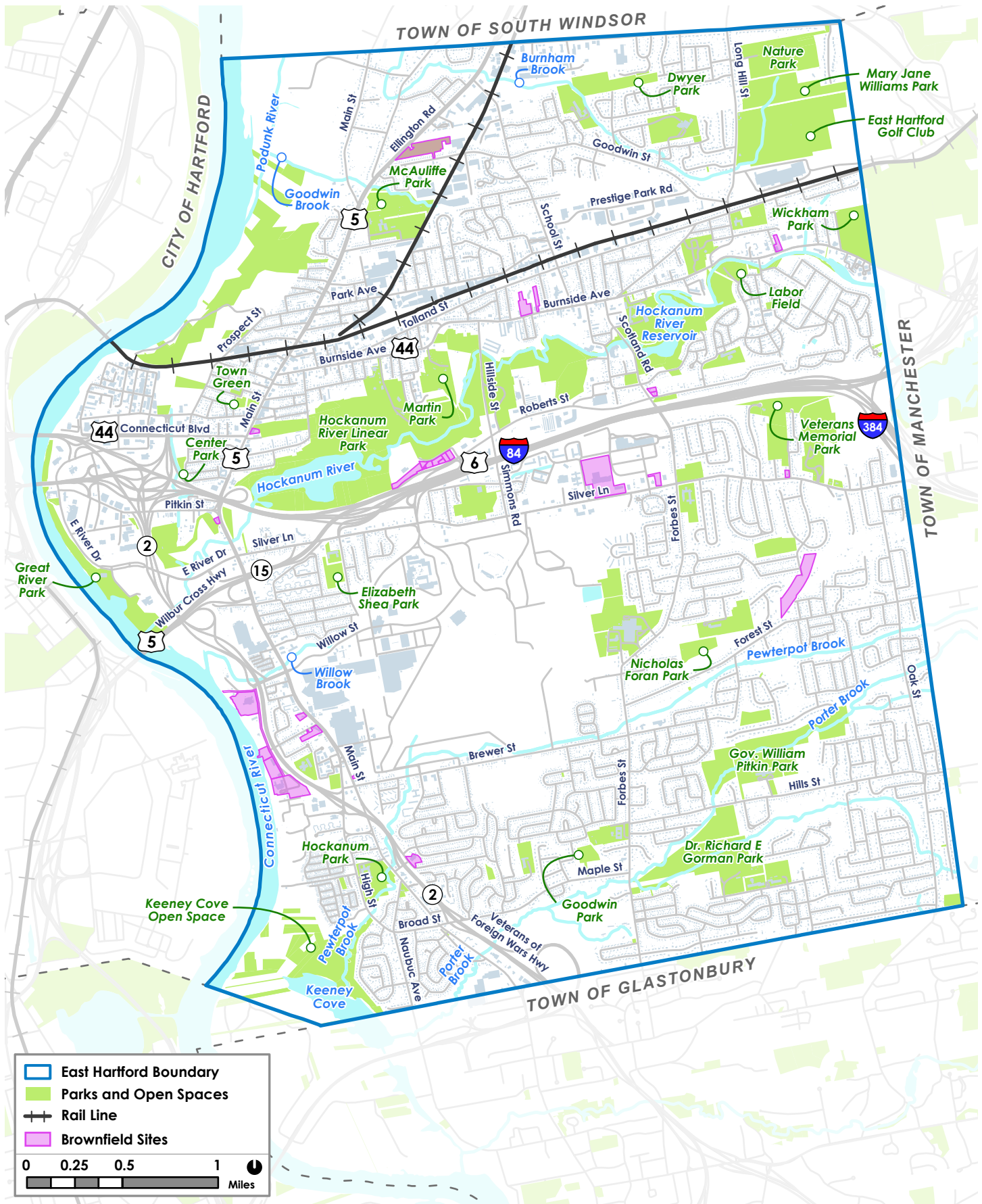


Figure 6: Brownfields Sites

## Sustainability and Resiliency

In response to ongoing global environmental changes, this plan encourages continued sustainability and resiliency initiatives in East Hartford. By implementing sustainability initiatives for waste and energy systems, tree canopy, natural resources and open space, the Town can improve the public health and quality of life of its residents, while also contributing to regional and global solutions to climate change.

Building on the foundation of sustainable development, this plan makes resiliency-oriented recommendations to help East Hartford adapt to climate change be better prepared to recover from emergencies and natural disasters. Several climate change-related hazards have been identified as a part of the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) 2024 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan, including extreme storms, flooding related to tidal changes in the Connecticut River, flooding and drought related to changing precipitation, dam overtopping or failure, extreme heat, and wildfires.

### Sustainable Design/Green Building Practices

By encouraging or mandating sustainable growth and green building practices, East Hartford can help to mitigate potential negative impacts of development while providing environmental, economic, and social benefits for residents.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is a national standard for sustainable or green building design, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, available across building sectors as well as in planning for development of large-scale areas. LEED encourages the design and construction of buildings that conserve energy, save water, reduce carbon emissions, improve indoor environmental quality, and encourage stewardship of environmental resources. LEED certification, like similar programs in the building industry, is a voluntary program that recognizes environmental leadership in the building industry, stimulates green competition, and raises consumer awareness about the benefits of green buildings.



While LEED has raised the standard for green buildings, full certification can be expensive to obtain and maintain for building developers and owners. For example, in 2017, Connecticut eliminated the Green Buildings Tax Credit program described in East Hartford's 2014 POCD. Nevertheless, LEED standards are valuable guidelines for ensuring the construction, renovation, and maintenance of green buildings. To ensure continued adherence to these guidelines, the Connecticut General Assembly has implemented High Performance (Green) Building Standards (HPBS) that are consistent with, and in some cases exceed, LEED Silver certification requirements. HPBS applies to State facilities with projected construction costs greater than \$5 million and renovation costs greater than \$2 million, as well as public school construction and renovations receiving more than \$2 million in State funding. East Hartford may consider adopting standards similar to HPBS for construction and renovation of municipal buildings or projects receiving municipal funding.

Just as LEED provides certification for green buildings, Fitwel offers building certifications related to public and community health. Developed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and General Services Administration (GSA), Fitwel awards points for increasing physical activity, promoting occupant safety, reducing morbidity, supporting social equity, and improving



surrounding community health among other metrics. WELL is another widely accepted building certification program with similar standards to Fitwel. Public health is an important aspect of community resiliency, and East Hartford may seek to encourage additional building certifications beyond LEED.

#### Energy Conservation

East Hartford can work toward a more sustainable future by moving away from products and practices reliant on fossil-fuels and facilitating a transition to renewable energy sources for residents, businesses, and the municipality itself. Since the previous POCD, the Town has taken steps including completing replacement of streetlights with energy-saving LEDs in 2015, and received accolades from the Connecticut Green Bank in 2018 for residential solar adoption, engagement in clean energy programs, and a streamlined permitting process for implementation of solar panels. The implementation of residential renewable energy sources and microgrids for larger municipal and institutional buildings bolsters the Town's resiliency, reducing the impact of power outages during extreme weather events. As recommended by the 2024 Hartford-East Hartford-Middletown Priority Climate Action Plan, the Town should continue its work in retrofit municipal buildings to reduce energy consumption and set an example for sustainable building practices.



*121 kW Solar Array on the Roof of the East Hartford Senior Center. Image Credit: Verogy*

The Town should also continue to seek locations suitable for larger-scale solar projects, such as the planned array at the former landfill site on Ecology Drive. In addition to the priorities discussed above, the Town should support existing and create new programs focused on energy conservation. EnergyStar, a joint project of the EPA and the U.S. Department of Energy, is a voluntary labeling program designed to identify and promote energy efficient products. Many communities have passed legislation mandating that certain types of uses purchase EnergyStar-labeled products or requiring some residential buildings to conform to EnergyStar Homes criteria. Tax credits are available for builders of homes certified to national EnergyStar Homes programs. The federal Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 offers homeowners the opportunity to receive federal income tax credits up to \$3,200 to perform energy-efficiency upgrades on their homes such as water heaters, furnaces, boilers, central air, and weatherization (windows, doors, insulation, etc.) Weatherization assistance is also available for low-income residents of East Hartford through Connecticut’s Weatherization Assistance Program, funded by the U.S. Department of Energy. Rebates and incentives are available at the State level through EnergizeCT for energy upgrades of commercial and residential buildings.



East Hartford may consider implementing a “green homes” program at the municipal level, through which it could aid homeowners in making energy-saving home improvements. In an example from Babylon, NY, the municipality offers homeowners financial assistance for home improvements, which the homeowner then repays with money saved on utility bills.

#### Transportation

Transportation is an important aspect of sustainability in East Hartford, presenting wide-ranging opportunities for reduction of local greenhouse gas emissions and potential overall energy conservation. While the changes discussed in this section have the benefit of reducing the Town’s overall carbon footprint, they also have the added advantage of reducing air pollution and increasing the quality of life and public health of residents of East Hartford. By facilitating a transition from traditional vehicles reliant on fossil-fuels, the Town can lead by example on the local and regional scale. East Hartford also can reduce emissions and conserve energy by encouraging bicycle and pedestrian alternatives to automobile trips by implementing bicycle- and pedestrian friendly-infrastructure. Transportation and mobility are discussed in more detail in chapter 5 of this plan.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, East Hartford hosts nine commercial EV charging stations available to the public, two of which have fast-charging capabilities. In total, these stations include 19 Level 2 chargers and five fast chargers. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, a Level 2 can charge a Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) from empty to 80% in 4-10 hours, and can charge a Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV) to 80% in 1-2 hours. Fast-charging stations can charge BEVs to 80% in 20 minutes to 1 hour, but generally do not support PHEVs. Section 7.2 of the East Hartford Zoning Regulations includes design standards for EV charging stations, with the intent to support the use of EVs while protecting the environment, public health, safety, and welfare. Under the new regulations, 10% of new parking spaces are required to be Level 2 charger capable. These regulations also allow EV charging as an accessory use to residential dwellings.

In 2020, I-84 was one of four highways in Connecticut designated an official Alternative Fuel Corridor (AFC). This designation results in the implementation of AFC signage along I-84 and provides access to the State for additional grant funding for the expansion of EV infrastructure. For example, in 2024, CT DEEP received a \$14.6 million grant through the federal Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Grant Program which will go toward the installation of 54 additional EV chargers across the State, including two dual-port Level 2 chargers at Silver Lane Plaza in East Hartford.

In addition to the expanded implementation of EV charging infrastructure, the 2024 Hartford-East Hartford-Middletown Priority Climate Action Plan prioritizes the transition of municipal fleets away from fossil fuels, recommending the electrification of municipal fleets and the introduction of biofuels for school-bus fleets. By expanding municipal EV charging infrastructure, East Hartford will be better prepared for the transition to municipal electric vehicles.

#### Land Use Regulation and Conservation

Land use regulations and site plan approval are two important tools at the Town's disposal to work toward the sustainability strategies outlined in this chapter. Since the previous POCD, East Hartford has introduced several new sections to its Zoning Regulations, regulating stormwater management, accessibility for people and bicycles, and noise and performance standards intended to encourage sustainable development. Ensuring adherence to these updated standards can mitigate the negative impacts of flooding, reliance on automobile infrastructure, and noise pollution. This zoning update includes some of the green land use regulations recommended for exploration in the previous POCD, such as the encouragement of features that promote bicycling and walking, the requirement for on-site stormwater retention, and the encouragement of sustainable landscape design. This POCD continues to recommend the consideration of additional green land use regulations:

- Reduction of parking minimums where appropriate and/or consideration of parking maximums.
- Implementation of innovative parking solutions such as shared parking.
- Incentivization of green building/infrastructure practices including the use of pervious pavement, green roofs, rain gardens, and bioswales.
- Establishment of undisturbed buffers and setbacks along the Connecticut River and along large/high functioning wetland areas.

Natural landscape elements must be preserved to the maximum degree possible, with re-grading of land kept to a minimum. In addition to carbon sequestration benefits, the maintenance and expansion of the existing tree canopy can combat urban heat island effects, especially during periods of extreme heat. Additionally, street trees have aesthetic and quality of life advantages, preserving residential character and buffering residential and commercial uses, providing a sense of protection for pedestrians, and screening and visually unifying parking lots with their associated buildings.

East Hartford should continue to review existing regulations for groundwater and surface water protection to determine if they address current groundwater issues and concerns. The Town may wish to consider expanding land use regulations intended to enhance local groundwater recharge and encouraging innovative implementation of stormwater management technologies.



## **Issues and Opportunities**

Based on the discussion of existing conditions above, this report recommends several items to be addressed through Town action or further study.

Work with FEMA to bolster flood preparedness in East Hartford  
Increasing frequency of severe precipitation events in Central Connecticut highlight the importance of improving flood resiliency in East Hartford. In the summer of 2023 alone, the Town experienced two 50-year rainstorms, one 100-year rainstorm and one 150-year rainstorm. East Hartford has participated in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) since 1979, allowing residents to receive federally subsidized flood insurance in exchange for the Town's implementation of floodplain regulations. However, East Hartford is not enrolled in the Community Rating System (CRS), which grants discounted NFIP rates to residents when municipal floodplain regulations exceed the minimums required for participation in the NFIP program.



*Flooding in Great River Park, East Hartford, on July 13, 2023.*

- **Take steps to enroll in the NFIP CRS program.** The Town should review the most recent CRS Coordinator's Manual to determine the steps needed to enroll in the CRS program. Premium discounts for NFIP policy holders awarded by the CRS program range from 5% to 45%, depending on the number of points earned by a municipality through the program. CRS points are awarded for activities such as floodplain regulations exceeding the minimum required by the NFIP program or completion of additional flood hazard mapping.

- **Work with FEMA to update FIRM maps.** As a part of NFIP, FEMA has mapped 10 Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) panels that designate floodplains within East Hartford. The four FIRM panels that include the Connecticut River were most recently updated in 2011, while the remaining six FIRM panels were updated in 2008. Given the changing climate and subsequent increase in frequency and severity of severe weather events, East Hartford should work with FEMA to update the FIRM maps to ensure that the Town is adequately prepared for future flooding events. Improved accuracy of FIRM maps will ensure appropriate regulation of at-risk properties, increasing the effectiveness of NFIP policy and coverage.

Consider strategies for protecting East Hartford’s groundwater and waterways

Some of East Hartford’s greatest natural resources include its rivers and wetlands such as the Hockanum and Connecticut Rivers and the wetlands surrounding the Hockanum River and Keeney Cove. To protect these sensitive resources, the Town should consider programs to mitigate polluted runoff from residential and commercial uses. Potential programs could educate residents and businesses on safe disposal of hazardous materials and/or discourage the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

- **Implement groundwater protections like those required by the Connecticut Aquifer Protection Area program.** While land in East Hartford is currently exempt from Aquifer Protection Area regulations due to the lack of active groundwater well sites in the Town, protection of resources is important to ensure the safety of groundwater for potential future drinking water use. The Town should consider implementing regulations comparable to those in the Aquifer Protection Area program, regulating uses such as hazardous material storage and wastewater management, particularly in the areas of the Town with high-quality groundwater.
- **Provide educational programming for residents and businesses to reduce polluted runoff.** While East Hartford has taken steps to improve water quality in its waterways by regulating permeability and requiring water retention for large developments, the pollution that makes its way into these waterways originates from industrial, commercial, institutional, residential and transportation uses. The Town should provide educational programming for residents and businesses on appropriate use and disposal of hazardous materials, fertilizers, and pesticides.

Promote green building practices to ensure sustainable growth

East Hartford is experiencing a period of growth and development, characterized by the introduction of new businesses like Lowe’s and Wayfair and the development of formerly abandoned sites such as Founders Plaza, Silver Lane Plaza, and Goodwin University. While this growth is necessary to maintain and expand its tax base, the Town must ensure that sustainable growth occurs by mitigating the potential negative effects of real estate development.

- **Consider implementing high performance building standards for municipal buildings in East Hartford.** Following the example of the state, East Hartford should consider implementing high performance building standards similar to LEED, Fitwel, and WELL standards for municipal buildings or as a part of the Town’s zoning regulations. This would allow the Town to lead by example in the development and renovation of municipal buildings while contributing to green building practices, public health, and quality of life in East Hartford.

- **Work with developers to ensure implementation of sustainable building practices.** In recent years, several major redevelopment plans have begun moving forward in East Hartford, including the redevelopment of sites at Pratt & Whitney Airfield, Silver Lane Plaza, and Founders Plaza. These important economic development projects also provide opportunities to adopt sustainable building practices and land use such as increased rainwater permeability, implementation of alternative energy sources, and use of sustainable building materials. East Hartford has taken the first steps toward ensuring sustainable growth with the implementation of new design guidelines as a part of the zoning code and should continue to work with developers to ensure that new developments abide by these guidelines. In addition, the Town should work with developers to encourage green building solutions beyond those required by the Town’s guidelines as practicable, including greywater recycling, solar and wind energy harvesting, and green roofs, among others.
- **Consider the implementation of a “green homes” program in East Hartford.** In conjunction with other available forms of assistance outlined in this chapter, the Town should consider developing a green homes program to aid homeowners with financing for the completion of energy-saving home upgrades.

Continue to support the transition to electric vehicles and sustainable fuels

Since the previous POCD, East Hartford’s EV charging infrastructure has expanded alongside the growing number of EVs on the road. The implementation of EV charging development standards in the most recent zoning update represents the Town’s dedication to facilitating the transition to electric vehicles, and it should consider additional strategies to continue this important work.

- **Transition to electric vehicles and biofuels as municipal fleets are replaced.** As recommended by the 2024 Hartford-East Hartford-Middletown Priority Climate Action Plan, East Hartford should support the transition to cleaner vehicles by working with municipal departments to electrify its municipal fleet and introduce biofuels where possible.
- **Implement additional municipal EV charging stations, particularly along commercial corridors.** East Hartford stands to benefit from the designation of I-84 as a federal AEC, by becoming a destination for EV owners to recharge while traveling throughout the region. While this program encourages additional State investment in EV charging infrastructure, East Hartford should leverage this opportunity by expanding its own municipal charging infrastructure. By ensuring that EV charging stations provide access to commercial zones, East Hartford can use I-84’s AEC designation as an opportunity to generate commerce and expand the tax base.

Secure grant funding for the implementation of sustainable policies in East Hartford

Grant funding is available at the state and federal level to aid in the implementation of policies and programs that will bolster the sustainability and resiliency of East Hartford.

- **Renew Sustainable CT Certification.** Between 2019 and 2022, East Hartford was a Sustainable CT Bronze Certified Community, receiving recognition for implementation of LED streetlighting, implementation of design regulations encouraging low-impact development,

implementation of pedestrian infrastructure, and brownfield remediation. Renewal of certification in the Sustainable CT program would unlock funding opportunities for the municipality as well as for local organizations seeking to implement sustainable practices.

- **Continue to work with developers to take advantage of brownfield remediation funding.** Several options are available at the state level to assist with funding and liability relief for the remediation of brownfield sites in East Hartford, including the Abandoned Brownfield Cleanup Program, the Brownfield Remediation and Revitalization Program, the Municipal Brownfield Liability Relief Program and the Brownfield Municipal Grant Program. The Town should take advantage of municipality-oriented brownfield grant programs while working with potential developers to encourage participation in grant programs intended for private entities.