



Wallingford Plan of Conservation and Development 2015 Update

Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Open
Space

Steering Sub-Committee

July 2015



Introduction

- **Natural Resources**
 - Data Update
 - Focus Group and Community Survey Input
- **Agriculture**
 - Data Update
 - Focus Group and Community Survey Input
- **Open Space**
 - Data Update
 - Focus Group and Community Survey Input
- **Previous POCD Goals, Objectives and Recommendations**
- **Discussion – Strategizing for the Future**



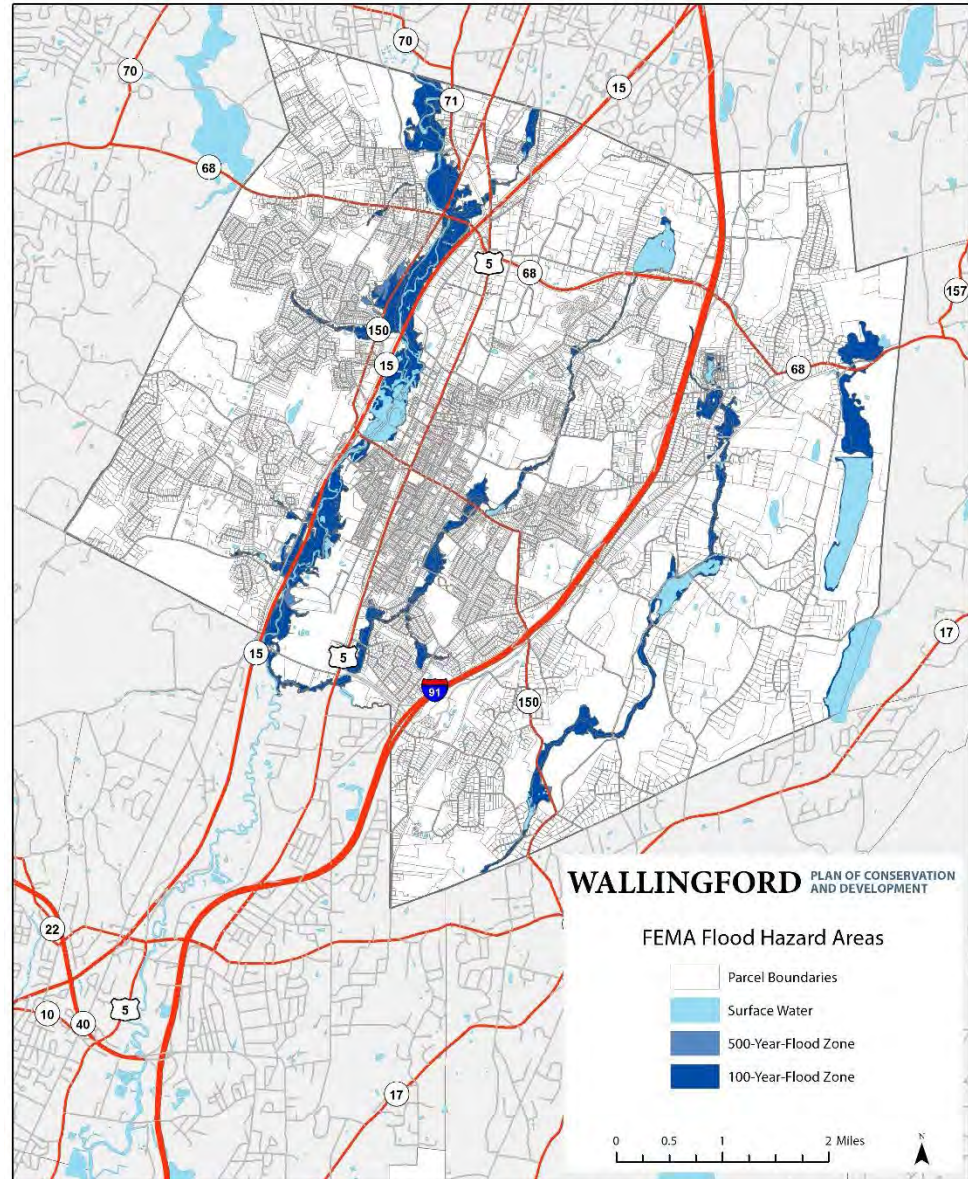
Natural Resources

- **Natural resources include**
 - **Floodplains and wetlands**
 - **Watersheds**
 - **Steeply sloping soils**
 - **Rare and sensitive species habitats**
- **Not a lot of change in physical resources from previous plan**



FEMA Floodzones

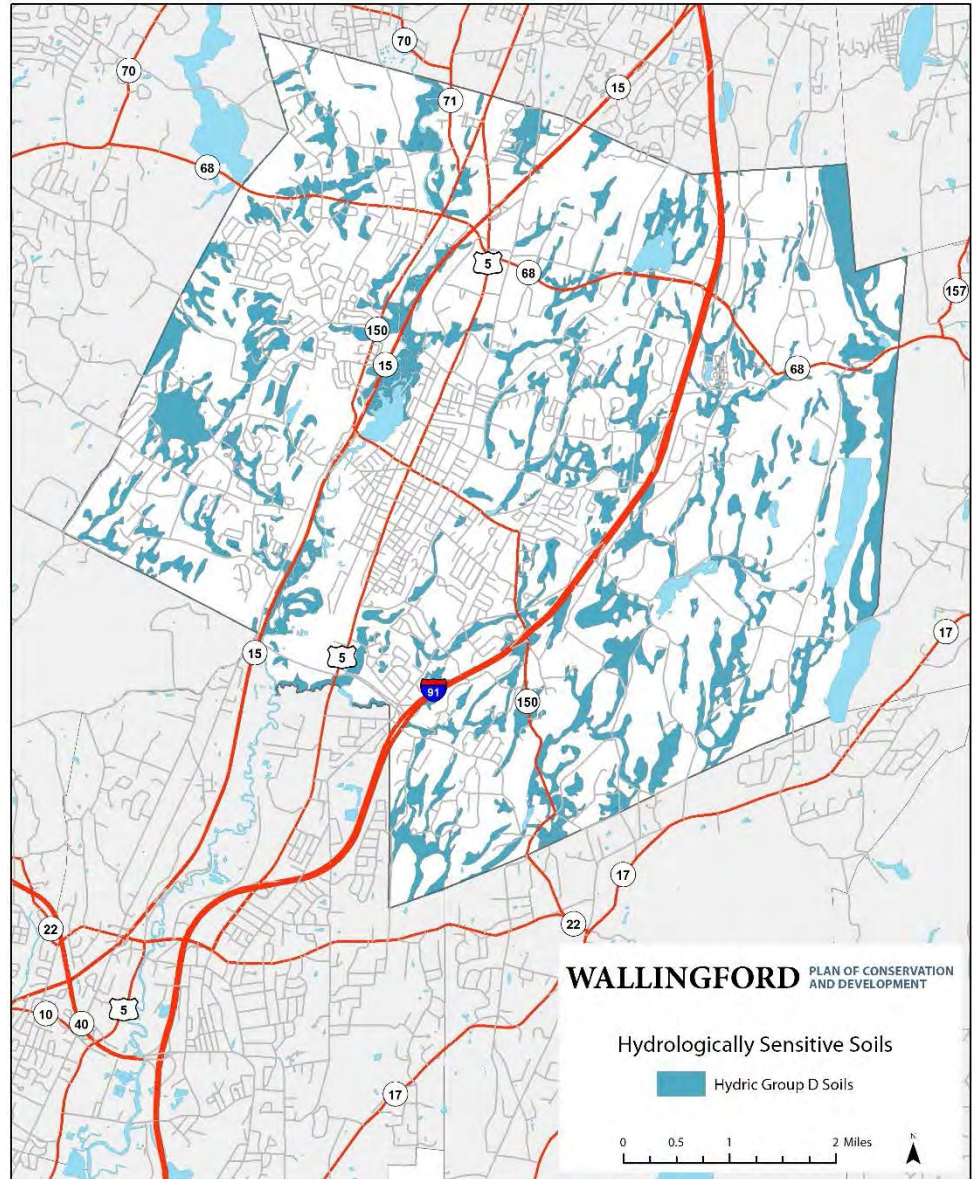
- FEMA flood mapping last updated in 2010





Hydrologically Sensitive Soils

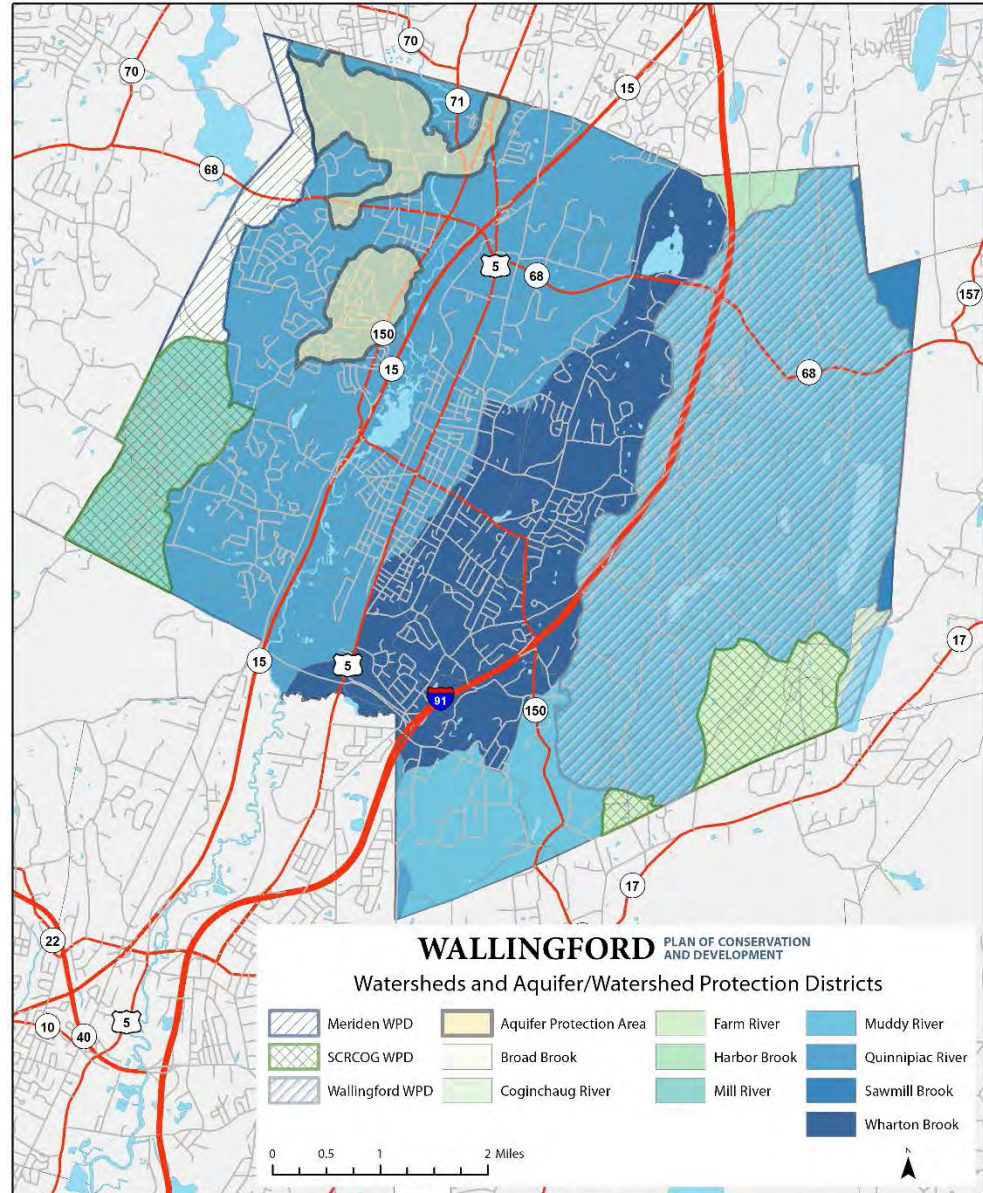
- Hydrologically sensitive soils
- High runoff potential, greater vulnerability to development





Watersheds

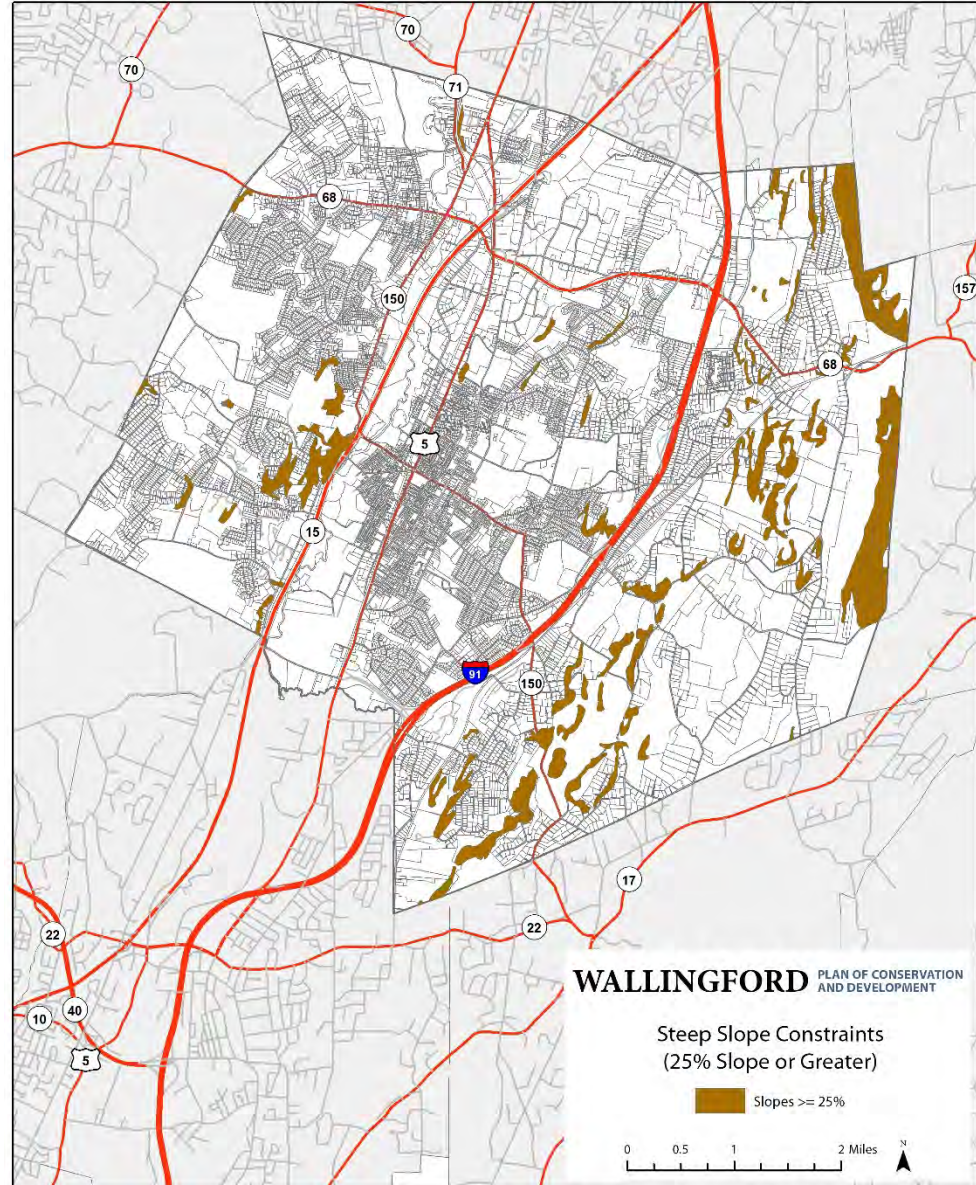
- Wallingford's ground water supplied by nine different watersheds (predominately Quinnipiac River, Muddy River, Wharton Brook watersheds)
- Aquifer Protection Areas in northwest corner





Slopes

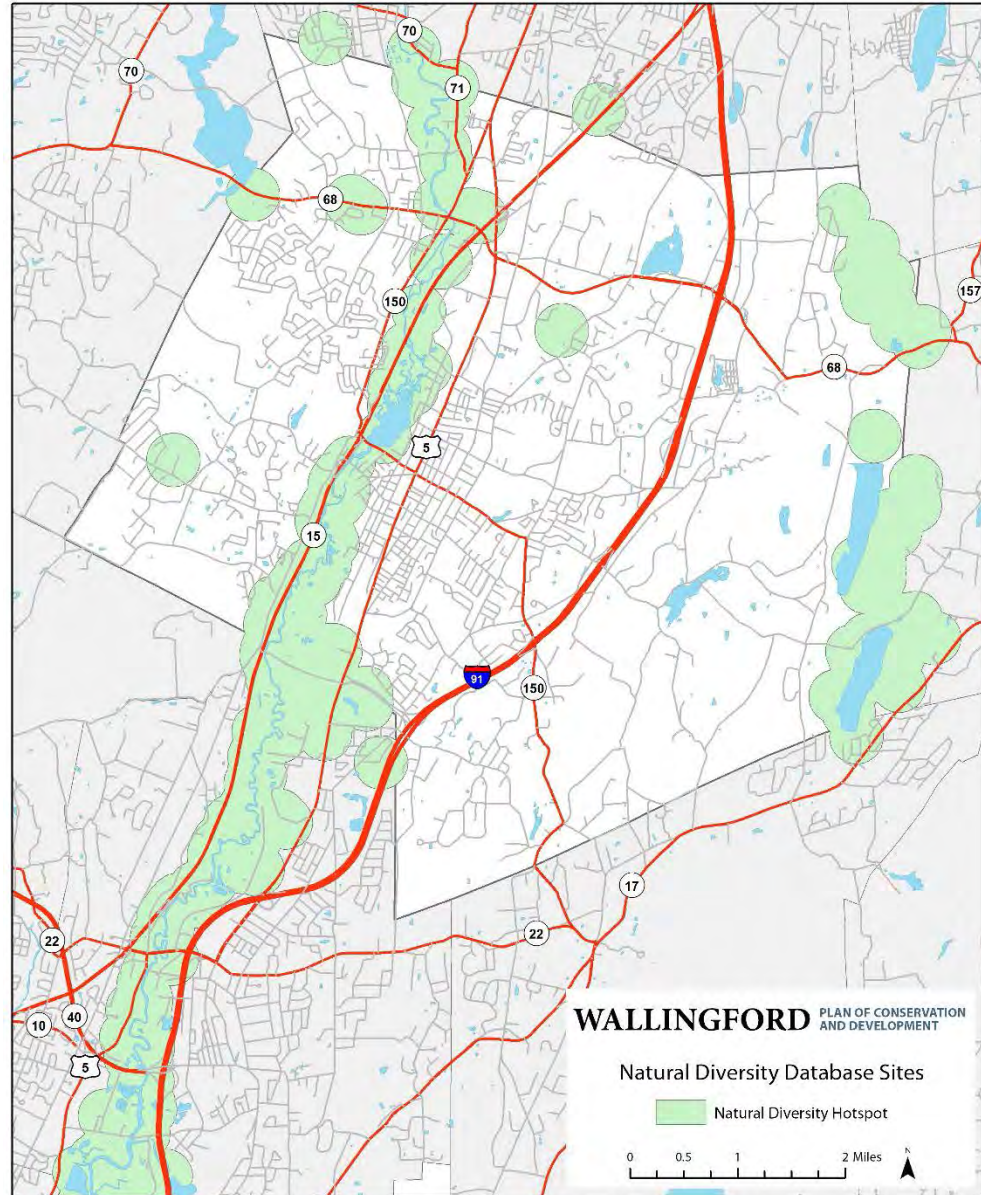
- Steep slopes at 25% or greater are classified as undevelopable under current zoning





Sensitive Habitats

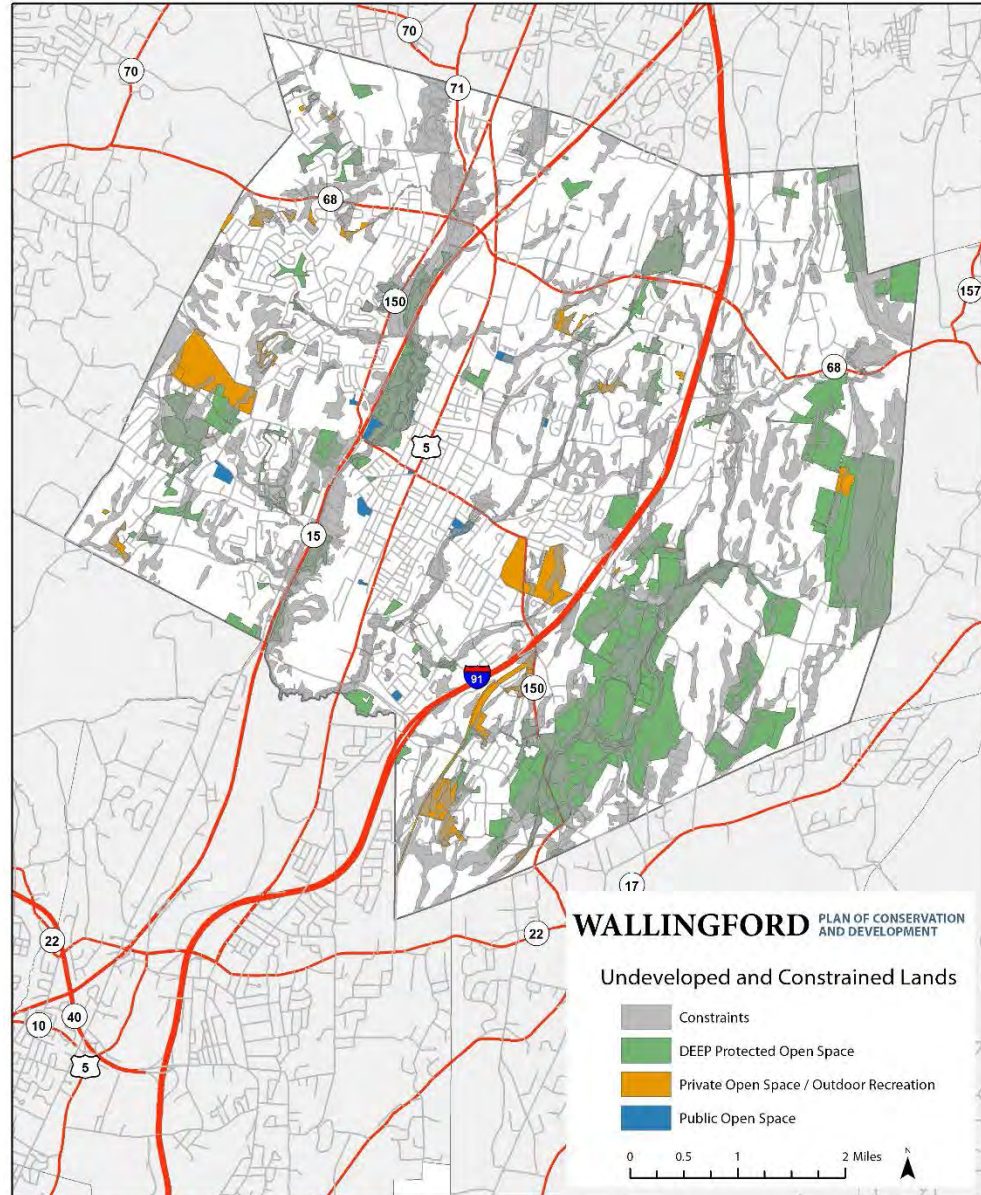
- DEEP inventory of 25 “rare and specialized wildlife habitats”
- Intended to “target areas of species diversity for land conservation and protect”
- Aligns with locations identified as natural diversity hotspots





Constrained & Protected Lands

- Development constraints include steep slopes, floodzones, and shallow and wetland soils
- Additional areas of concentrated natural resources (constraints) may be worthy of consideration for further conservation efforts





Focus Group – Natural Resources

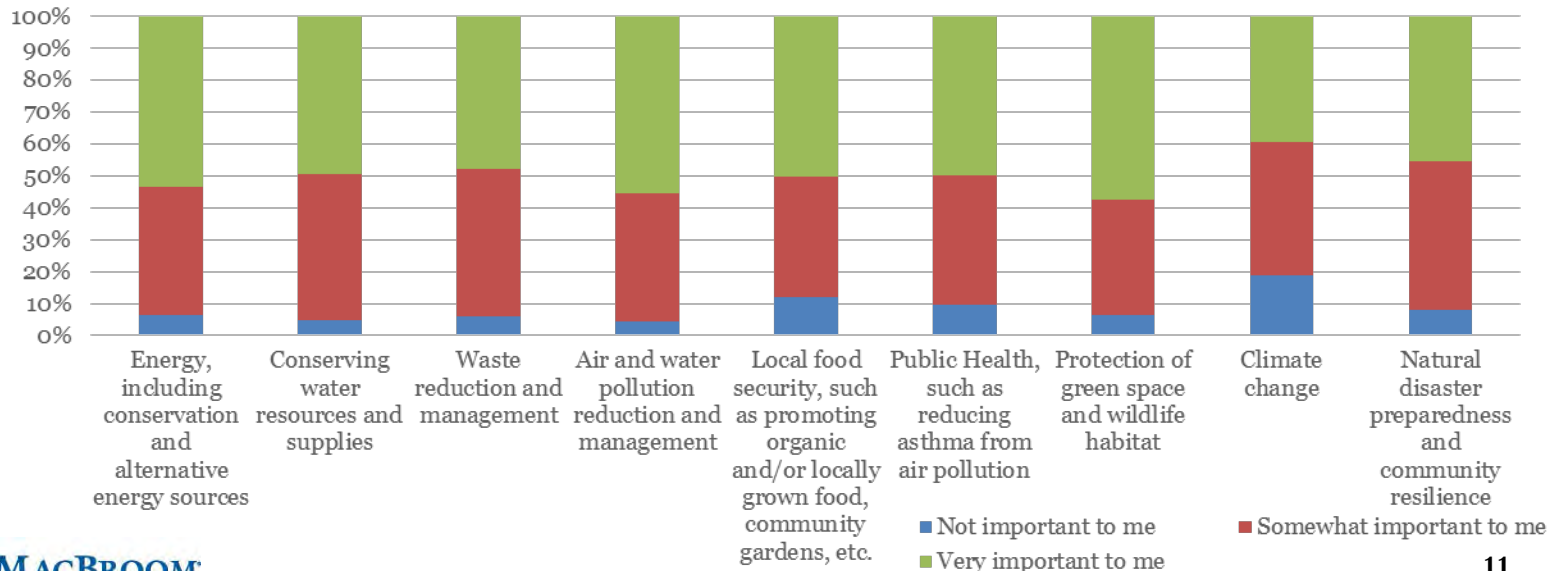
- **Watershed protection issues**
 - Water & Sewer Division can't endorse intensification of uses in watershed areas (e.g. I-5 zone) without corresponding regulatory overhaul
 - Regulatory update may be beneficial, e.g. adding LID measures
- **Quinnipiac River: great educational, recreational, and wildlife resource, but trash and pollution still a problem**
- **Consider adding peak & ridgeline protection to zoning**
- **New England (Blue) Trail could benefit from added protection**
- **Community Garden on east side faces more demand than space available**



Survey – Natural Resources

- Survey results current to 7/13 with 1,103 respondents
- 13% of respondents participate in an environmental group
- 52% of respondents did not know of any sustainability resource protection efforts in Wallingford
 - Most visible: recycling, energy, community garden, Quinnipiac cleanups, open space
 - Negative comments on perceived Town indifference, tree management

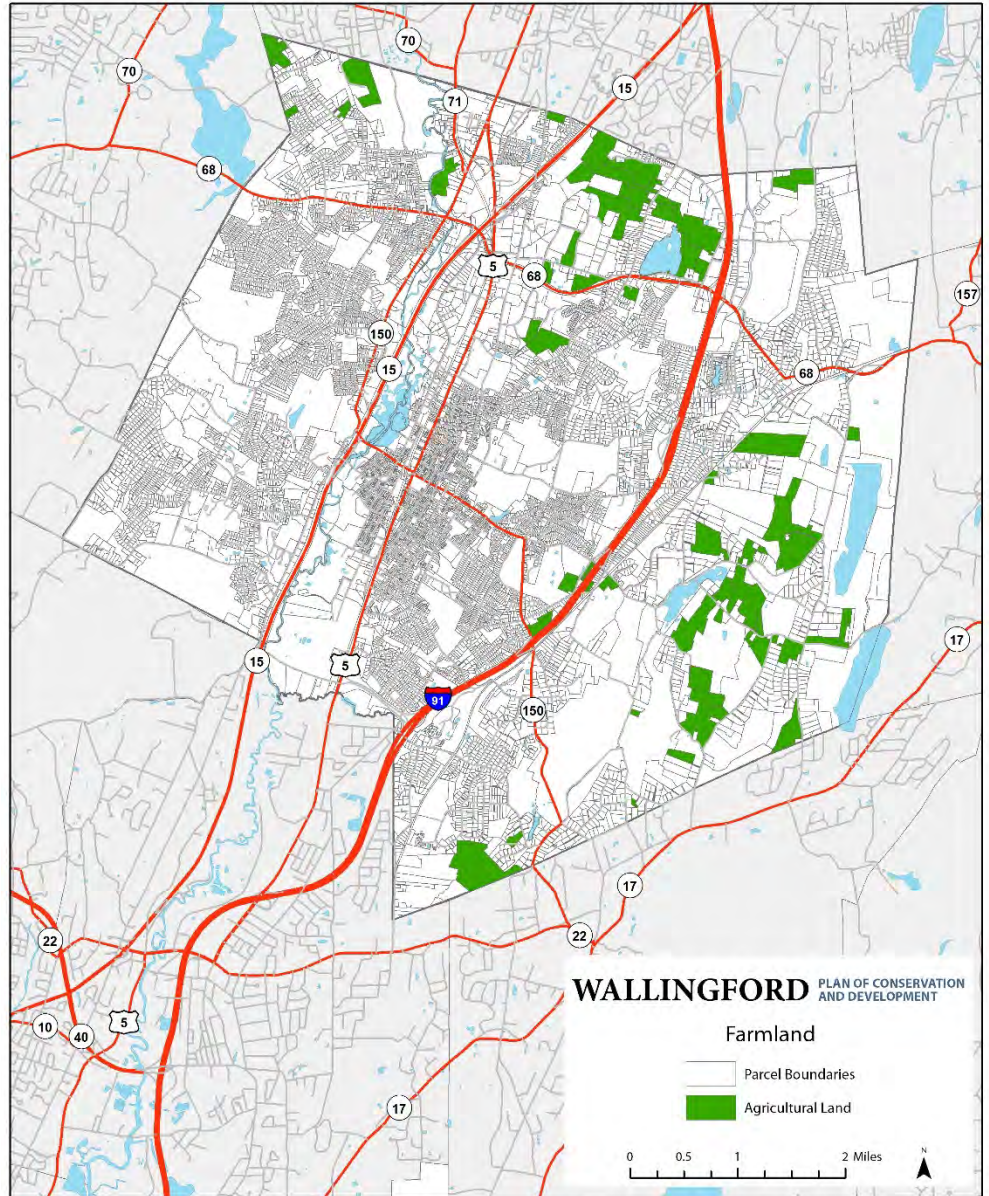
What environmental sustainability values or sub-topics are most important to you personally?





Agricultural Lands

- Per assessor's data, 63 parcels in farm or pasture use, totaling ~1,440 acres
- Additional parcels in active agricultural use classified as single-family residential, consistent with previous land use classifications





Farming: Economic Impacts

- Agricultural businesses
 - Beaumont Farm, Geremia Farms, Farmer Joe's Gardens, Blue Hills Orchard
 - Wallingford Garden Market
 - Gouveia, Paradise Hills Vineyards
 - Interest in ability to host events but currently prohibited by zoning
- ACS estimates 113 residents (0.5% of labor force) employed in agriculture
- Approximate land value of current agricultural lands (before P.A. 490 assessment) of \$15.8m



**Beaumont
Farm**





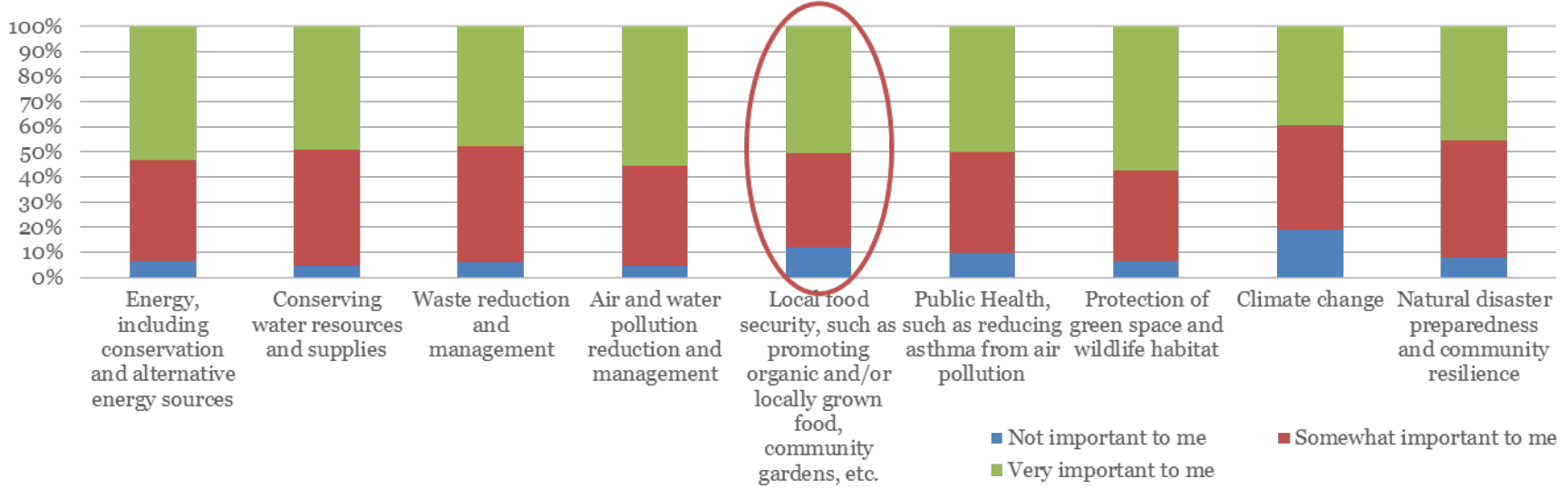
Focus Group – Agriculture

- Desire to better distinguish between residential with accessory farm activity and active agricultural operations
 - Perception that some abuse PA 490 status, which farms “desperately need”
- Farm land lease program appears strong and successful
- ‘Agratainment’ important for keeping ag viable, but should remain “faithful to intent” of conservation protections
 - Should produce goods for sale primarily on-site
 - Need to “be a good neighbor”
- Gardener’s Market gets great reviews in agricultural community but may not be perceived as a farmer’s market or well-publicized enough

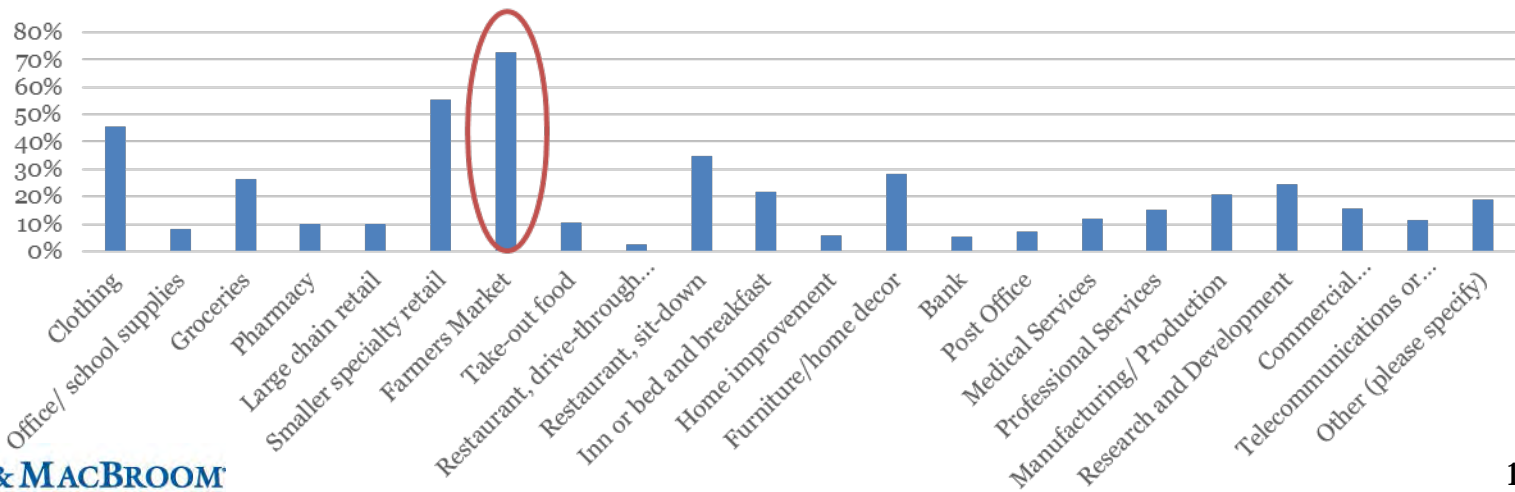


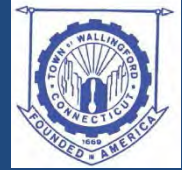
Survey – Agriculture

What environmental sustainability values or sub-topics are most important to you personally?



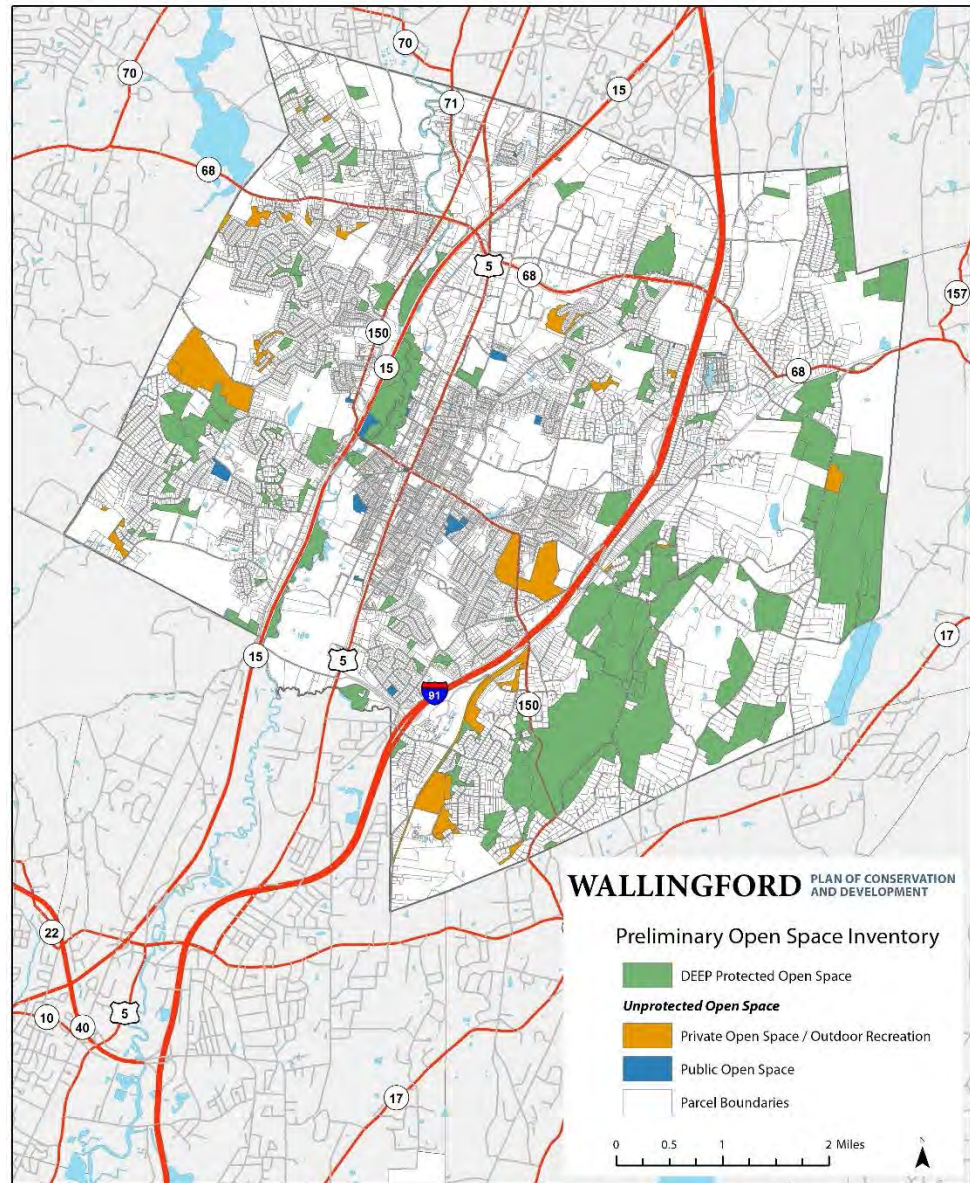
What kinds of businesses would you like to see (more of) in Wallingford?





Open Space

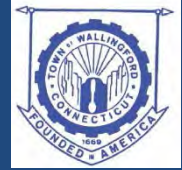
- State goal: 21% protected open space by 2023
- Town adopted same goal in 2005 POCD
- Inventoried locally for 2005 POCD, regionally by SCRCOG in 2008, by DEEP based on local data in 2010
- 4,955 total acres (2005) includes Town, State, WLT, institutional, HOA, and cemetery lands
- DEEP records show 3,668 protected acres (circa 2010) or approx. 15% of Town land area





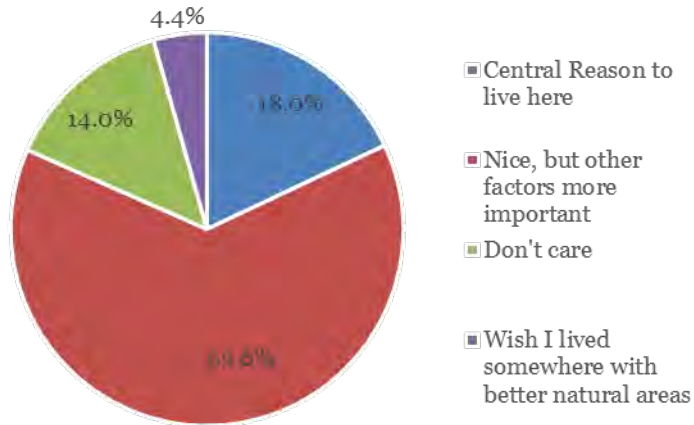
Focus Group – Open Space

- Instances of encroachment onto protected parcels: sheds, pools, skating rinks
 - Particularly problematic when HOAs are inactive and can't manage protected land—also leads to neglect of parcels, no snow clearance
 - Related issues: owners unaware of set-asides they hold deed to, occasionally move monuments
- Land trust goals:
 - Short term: maintaining existing inventory, protecting Tyler Mill
 - Long term: circular trail around Fresh Meadows, soft trails at e.g. Butterfly Meadow, field edges, more open space on east side
- Hands-on Conservation Commission: taking action to clear trails and enforce dumping/theft/poaching regulations

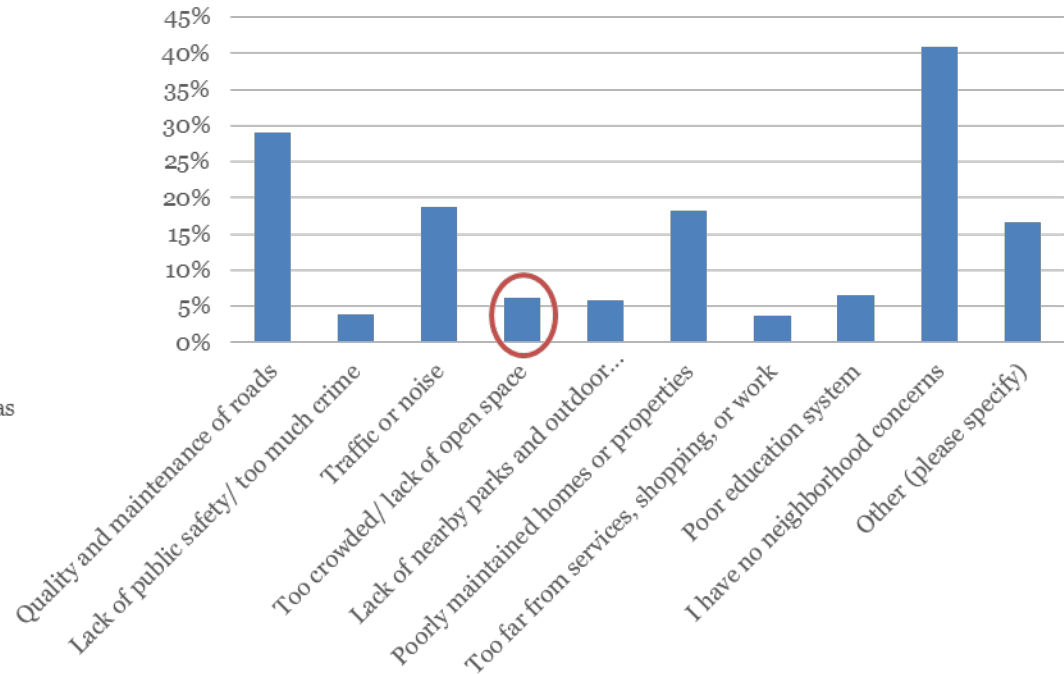


Survey – Open Space

Are Wallingford's natural resource and recreation areas important factors in your decision to come to or stay in Wallingford?



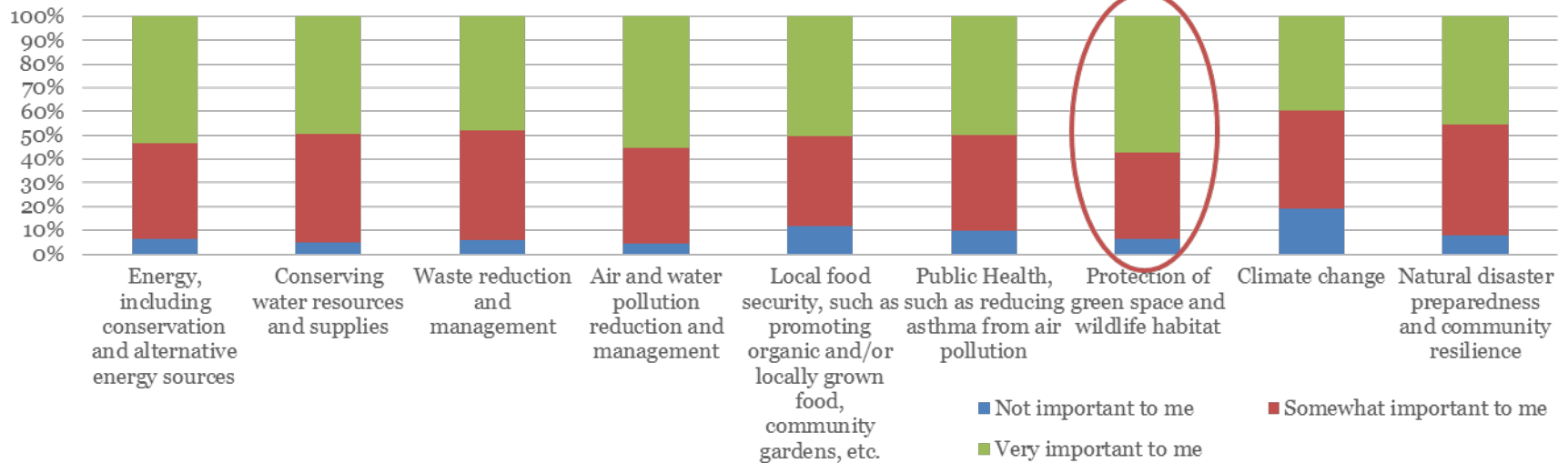
Do you have any of the following concerns about your neighborhood?



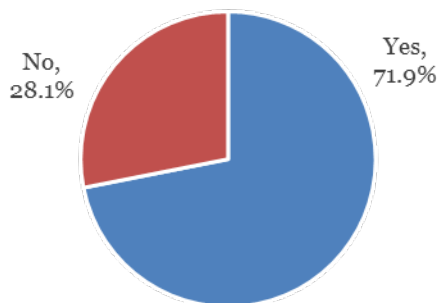


Survey – Open Space

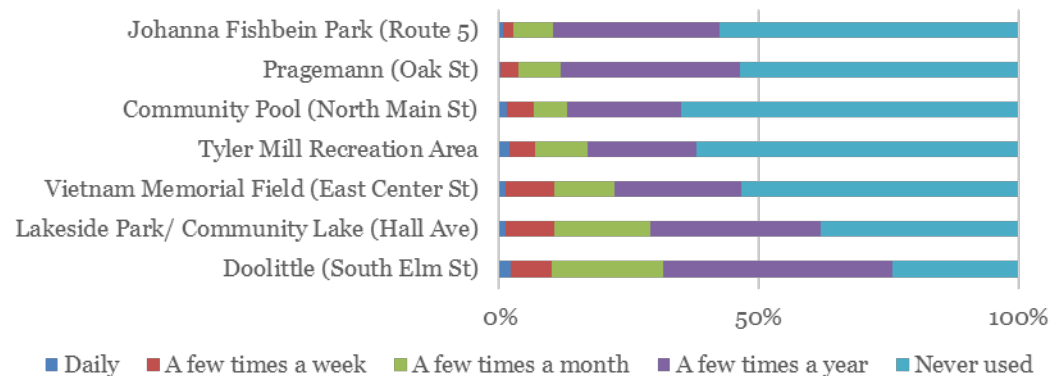
What environmental sustainability values or sub-topics are most important to you personally?



Are you happy with Wallingford's open space for passive recreation?



How often do you use the following?





Previous Related POCD Goals

- Continue to acquire open space to protect wetlands, wildlife habitat, and aquifers
- Enhance Wallingford's existing protected open space areas
- Promote development in appropriate areas away from wetlands, watercourses, and flood hazard areas
- Objective: develop an inventory of and priorities for protecting farmland and a means to protect the best farmland



Previous POCD Recommendations

- **Priority Recommendation: Develop a management plan for the Town's open space, including:**
 - Planning for greenbelt and access/linkage acquisitions
 - Open space protection requirements for development
 - Targets for easement/purchase of development rights/purchase in fee
 - Designation of historically significant open space areas
 - Inventory of farmland in town and protection measures
 - Identification of wildlife corridors via NDDDB/Endangered Species List
 - Invasive species management
 - Protection of river corridors, ridgelines, and sand plains



Previous POCD Recommendations

➤ Priority Recommendations:

- Conduct a trails inventory with the goal of developing a network of connecting trails
- Develop more pocket parks in the more urban areas
- Provide adequate facilities for organized youth sports

➤ General Recommendations

- Support the Linear Trail and extensions
- Stop funding studies for a municipal golf course
- Encourage wetlands/wildlife habitat in former Community Lake
- Explore connecting dredge ponds near Senior Center
- Prioritize Recreation needs e.g. park facilities/pavilion upgrades, new hiking trails, pool upgrades



General Discussion

- **Goals, objectives and recommendations from previous POCD:**
 - Where has progress been made and what has been accomplished?
 - What should the Town continue to pursue or increase efforts on?
 - What is lacking?



General Discussion

- **Specific items to consider**
 - Develop detailed open space plan, including priorities for acquisitions, trail development, and community garden space
 - Examine policy for avoiding encroachment, improving maintenance of HOA open space set-asides
 - Strong apparent demand for farmer's market despite existing Garden Market—can the Town help increase visibility/accessibility?
 - Are there more specific goals and objectives surrounding agriculture?
 - Opportunities for Community Lake—articulate possibilities or a vision for how this asset can be used