



# WESTERN CONNECTICUT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2017-2022





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Region of Western Connecticut.....	1
WestCOG & The CEDS.....	3
STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN .....	5
Goals & Objectives.....	5
Action Implementation.....	5
PERFORMANCE MEASURES .....	25
Implementation.....	25
Evaluation.....	25
REGIONAL PROJECTS.....	29
Prioritization Criteria .....	29
Solicitation Process .....	29
Prioritization Process.....	29
Vital & Suggested Projects.....	29
REGIONAL STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS.....	43
Assessment.....	43
The Urban Difference.....	56
REGIONAL ANALYSIS .....	57
Data Profile.....	57
Fiscal Analysis .....	91
Economic Analysis .....	94
Industry Segmentation .....	108
Industry Cluster Analysis .....	125
Small Business Perspective .....	131
Transportation Infrastructure Assets.....	135
PROJECT MANAGEMENT & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION .....	155
CEDS Committee Composition & Participation.....	155
Business Survey.....	155
Focus Groups .....	156
Data Input from SBDC.....	156
Project Website .....	156

Project Solicitation & Prioritization .....	156
Final Decision Making Meetings .....	156
Summary List of Strategy Committee Meetings .....	157
WestCOG Participation .....	157
Appendices .....	159

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Connecticut COGs and Counties	57
Figure 2: Population and Population Growth of the Western CT Region, 1900–2010	59
Figure 3: Population and Population Growth of the Western CT Region, 2010–2014	60
Figure 4: Population Density in the Western CT Region by Block Group	61
Figure 5: Comparative Population Growth by Region	62
Figure 6: Comparative Median Age in the Western CT Region by Municipality	63
Figure 7: Western CT Municipalities Median Age by Race	64
Figure 8: Western CT Municipalities Median Age by Ethnicity	65
Figure 9: Western CT Region, Connecticut, and United States Age Distribution, 2014	66
Figure 10: Western CT Region Age Distribution, 2000 and 2014	67
Figure 11: Western CT Region and United States Population by Race	68
Figure 12: Hispanic Population of Western CT Municipalities	69
Figure 13: Foreign Born Population in the Western CT Region	70
Figure 14: Western CT Foreign Born Population by Region of Origin	71
Figure 15: Western CT Household Median Income by Municipality, 2014	72
Figure 16: Western CT Municipalities Household Income Distributions	73
Figure 17: Western CT Household Income Distributions by Block Group	74
Figure 18: Western CT Municipalities Median Household Income by Educational Attainment (Individuals over 25 years of age)	75
Figure 19: Western CT Municipalities Median Household Income by Ethnicity	76
Figure 20: Western CT Municipalities Median Household Income by Race	77
Figure 21: Western CT Municipalities Poverty Rates (by Individual)	78
Figure 22: Western CT Municipalities Poverty Rates by Age (by Individual)	79
Figure 23: Western CT Municipalities Poverty Rates by Ethnicity (by Individual)	80
Figure 24: Western CT Municipalities Poverty Rates by Race (by Individual)	81
Figure 25: Western CT Municipalities Educational Attainment by Degree Completion (Individuals 25 years of age and older)	82
Figure 26: Educational Attainment of Bachelors' Degree or Higher in the Western CT Region	84
Figure 27: Western CT Municipalities High School Dropout Rate, 2012–2014	85
Figure 28: Top 15 Fields of Study in Post-Secondary Education at Institutions Serving Southwestern Connecticut*, 2013	86
Figure 29: Western CT Municipalities' Median Single Family Home Values	87



Figure 30: Western CT Municipalities' Housing Units and Vacancy Rates Estimates 2010-2014	88
Figure 31: Western CT Municipality Housing Type Distribution	89
Figure 32: Retail Vacancy 2006-2016: Fairfield County – Select Submarkets	90
Figure 33: Equalized Net Grand List per Capita by Western CT Municipalities, 2014	91
Figure 34: Components of Grand List by Western CT Municipalities, 2012	93
Figure 35: Jobs Recovery in New England	95
Figure 36: GPD Growth 2011-15	96
Figure 37: Fairfield County's Top Five Industries, 2012	97
Figure 38: Western CT Region Industry Employment Shares, 2014	98
Figure 39: Western CT Region Annual Percent Change in Employment Growth, 2005-2014	99
Figure 40: Comparative Unemployment Rates, 2000-2016	100
Figure 41: Western CT Region Labor Force Growth, 2008-2014	101
Figure 42: Annual Change in Employment in Educational Services, and Healthcare and Social Assistance in the Western CT Region, 2010-2014	102
Figure 43: Annual Change in Employment in the Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services in the Western CT Region, 2010-2014	103
Figure 44: Annual Change in Employment in Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing in the Western CT Region, 2010-2014	104
Figure 45: Annual Change in Retail Trade Employment in the Western CT Region, 2010-2014	105
Figure 46: Annual Change in Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services Employment in the Western CT Region, 2010-2014	106
Figure 47: Annual Average Manufacturing Employment in the Western CT Region, 2010-2014	107
Figure 48: Top Ten Highest Location Quotient Industry Sectors for Fairfield County, Compared to Connecticut and the United States, 2015	109
Figure 49: Top Ten Largest Employment Industry Sectors for Fairfield County, Compared to Connecticut, and the US, 2015	110
Figure 50: Net Change in Employment from 2010-15 for Industry Sectors in Fairfield County, Connecticut, and the United States	111
Figure 51: Net Change in Employment from 2000-15 and Annual Wage for Industry Sectors in Fairfield County	112
Figure 52: Top Ten Projected Growth Industries in Northwest Connecticut, 2012-22	113
Figure 53: Top Ten Projected Growth Industries in Southwest Connecticut, 2012-22	118
Figure 54: Top Ten Projected Growth Industries by Percent Growth in Northwest Connecticut, 2012-22	115
Figure 55: Top Ten Projected Growth Industries by Percent Growth in Southwest Connecticut, 2012-22	116
Figure 56: Top Ten Highest Location Quotient Occupations in the Danbury MSA, Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk MSA, and Connecticut versus the United States, May 2015	118
Figure 57: Top 10 Largest Employment Occupations in the Western CT Region, 2014	119
Figure 58: High Employment Growth Occupations in the Western CT Region, Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk MSA, and Connecticut, 2010-14	120
Figure 59: Top Ten Projected Growth Occupations in Northwest Connecticut, 2012-22	121
Figure 60: Top Ten Projected Growth Occupations in Southwest Connecticut, 2012-22	122

Figure 61: Top Ten Projected Growth Occupations by Percentage in Northwest Connecticut, 2012-22	123
Figure 62: Top Ten Projected Growth Occupations by Percentage in Southwest Connecticut, 2012-22	124
Figure 63: Western CT Region and DECD Strategic Industries	125
Figure 64: Percent Employment Change in Strategic Industries, 2010-2015	126
Figure 65: Top Traded Industry Clusters in Fairfield County by Employment	127
Figure 66: Top Industry Clusters in Fairfield County	128
Figure 67: Fairfield County's Performance in the New York Economic Region, 1998-2014	129
Figure 68: Target Clusters	130
Figure 69: SBDC Clients in the Western Connecticut Region, 2013 – 2016	132
Figure 70: Self-employment 2010-2014, and Projections 2012 – 2022, in the Western CT Region	133
Figure 71: Means of Transportation to Work in the Western CT Region, 2014	136
Figure 72: Western Connecticut Region Employment Concentrations	137
Figure 73: Western Connecticut Region Commuter Shed Analysis, 2014	138
Figure 74: Traffic Congestion on I-95, CT-15, and I-84	140
Figure 75: Idealized Drivesheds from Major Cities in the Western Connecticut Region	143
Figure 76: Bus Routes in the Western CT Region	145
Figure 77: Rail Network	148
Figure 78: Airports Near the Western Connecticut Region with Passenger Enplanements, 2015	151
Figure 79: Transit Oriented Development in the Western Connecticut Region	154

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) of the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) Region. This document provides the Western Connecticut Region with a plan for economic development and an action agenda to complete the goals and objectives set forth in accordance with the standards created by the United States Economic Development Administration (EDA). The CEDS also makes the Region eligible for funding from the EDA and allows the Region to pursue designation as an Economic Development District (EDD).

This plan takes a strategic, evidence-based approach to the issues facing Western Connecticut. It is based on a thorough analysis of demographic, economic, and other pertinent data. Extensive research and public participation informed the analysis and eventual project prioritization and strategy selection.

### The Region of Western Connecticut

To make use of this CEDS, it is best to first have a general understanding of the Region. The Region consists of eighteen municipalities; Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury, Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Sherman, Stamford, Weston, Westport, and Wilton.

The Region constitutes the southern half of Connecticut's border with New York. It is well connected to New York City and other urban areas in Connecticut, including Bridgeport and New Haven. The Region is 550 square miles, encompassing a range of scenic landscapes, from the shores of the Long Island Sound to the rolling hills in Litchfield County.

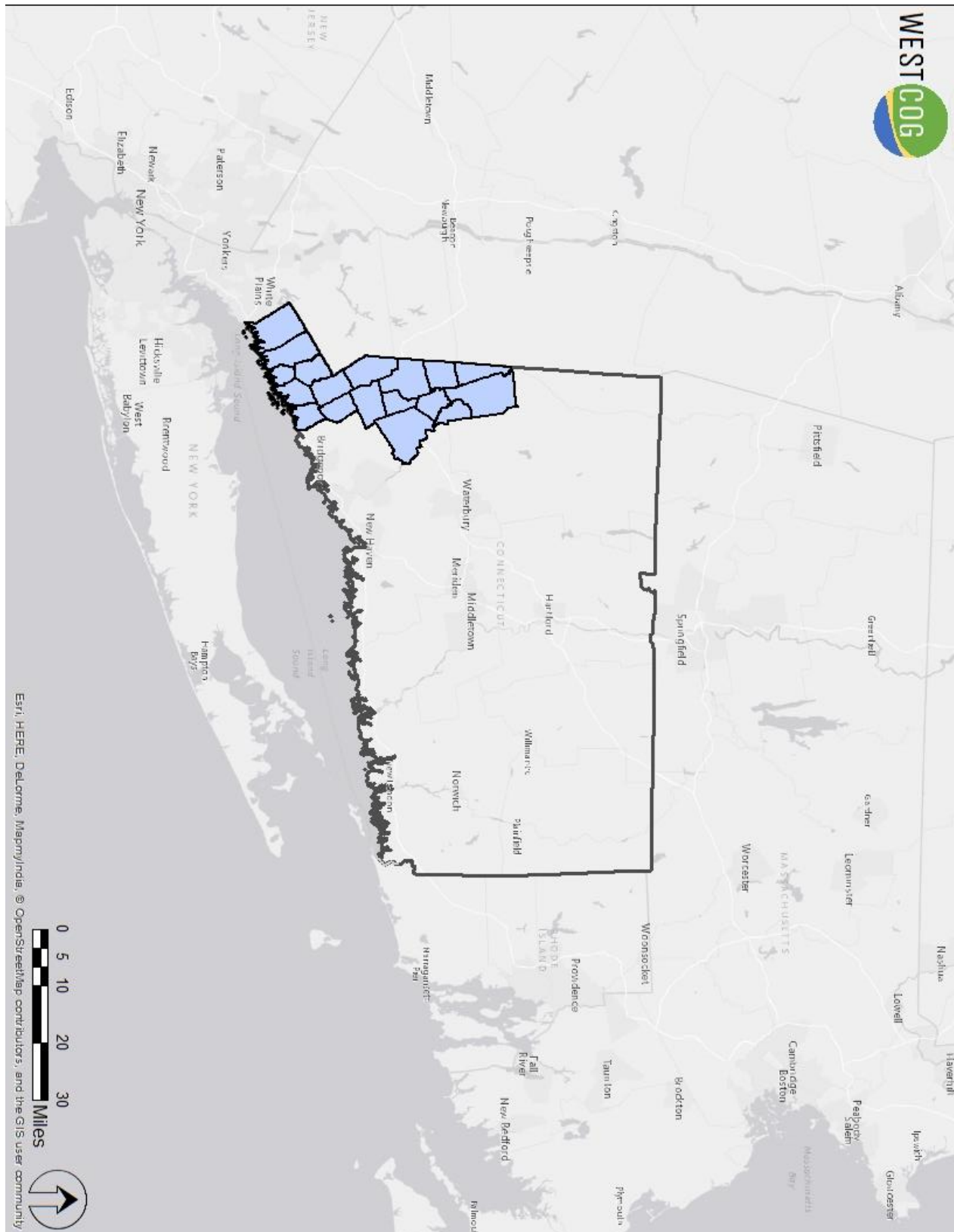
The Western Connecticut Region is the second most populous region in Connecticut and

contains a wide array of development patterns and population densities. For example, the City of Stamford has the largest population with 125,401 people, living an urban lifestyle, while the 1,747 people in the small Town of Bridgewater have a rural experience. This diversity of communities allows for a rich variety of strategies to promote economic development in the Region. More data on the Region can be found in the Regional Analysis Section on page 57.

### The Western Connecticut Region



## The Western Connecticut Region in the Context of the Northeastern US





## WestCOG & The CEDS

Connecticut, like most states, has been subdivided into regions for administrative purposes. There are nine such regional political subdivisions in the State. The long time statutory charge to Connecticut's regions has been "to promote with the greatest efficiency and economy the coordinated development of its area of operation and the general welfare and prosperity of its people." (Connecticut General Statutes, Chapter 127 Sec. 8-35a)

Established in 2015, WestCOG is a new entity. However, its eighteen-town geography was formed from two smaller planning regions that operated from the 1960s until 2015, when the Connecticut General Assembly required geographically larger planning regions.

Those earlier regions spent decades promoting the "economy and coordinated development." WestCOG, as their successor agency, continues that task with a variety of related regional programs.

Both predecessor regions conducted regional economic development planning. Economic development is by its very nature well adapted to regional approaches. Both former regions utilized a federal regional planning template for their economic development work.

The federal template is a CEDS. The "Strategy" is a type of regional planning process that involves private, public, and institutional sector

interests in the creation of an action agenda (goals and objectives) which supports economic development. The guiding agency for WestCOG's regional economic development planning is the EDA.

More grant opportunities are afforded by the EDA and other agencies to a region with a completed CEDS that then agrees to advance to next administrative level; through the creation of an "Economic Development District" (EDD). EDDs work to complete the action agendas set forth in their CEDSs, maintain and update CEDS documents, and pursue economic development opportunities as instructed by their steering committees.

WestCOG proposes to submit this CEDS for EDA approval and then continue on to operate an EDD. The work of the EDD is to implement the action plan defined in the CEDS.

This document constitutes the CEDS for the State defined Western Connecticut Planning Region. Its purposes are to:

- Provide a CEDS that meets the requirements of the EDA,
- Provide an economic development action agenda for the Region, and
- Provide the basis for recognition of the Western Connecticut Region as an EDD by the EDA.



# STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

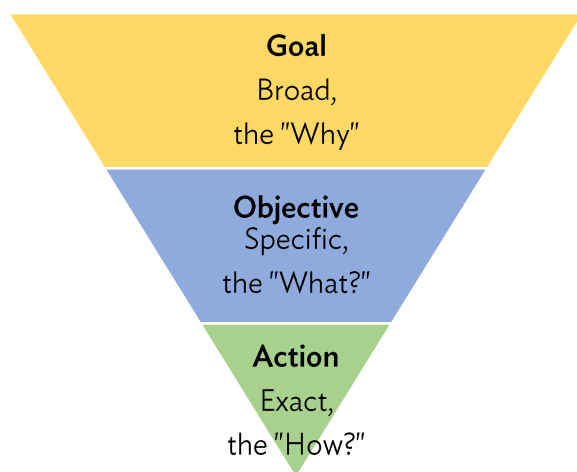
## Goals & Objectives

The Western Connecticut Economic Advisory Group served as the Strategy Committee in the CEDS process. This section contains overviews of the Advisory Group's goals and objectives.

The goals and objectives created by the Advisory Group are based on a thorough review of relevant data, studies, and planning documents, and of comments and issues raised during the public participation process. The data collected is available in the Regional Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities & Threats, and the Regional Analysis sections.

The goals are broad topics of importance for improving the regional economy. Following each goal, the Advisory Group has developed more specific objectives and actions.

Objectives are key factors in accomplishing the goals. The actions are district steps in completing each objective. Together they create an action agenda to improve the regional economy, tailor-made to its needs.



Economic development is a team sport; for this reason, each objective identifies organizations that can serve as potential partners and resources to achieve the objectives.

A more detailed description of the objectives and actions follows each overview. They do not appear in order of prioritization.

The six goals identified are:

- Regional Planning & Coordination
- Improved Business Climate
- An Inclusive Workforce
- Improved and Maintained Transportation & Public Infrastructure
- A More Sustainable & Resilient Region
- A Positive Regional Identity

## Action Implementation

The schedule on the following pages includes time frames for implementing each action. Some actions may be immediately implementable, but have a continuous or recurring component; multiple timeframes are listed for such actions. Definitions of the time frames are:

- Short term (S): < 3 years
- Medium term (M): 3 to 4 years
- Long term (L): 4 years +
- Ongoing Opportunity (O): A continual effort

<b>Goal 1: Regional Planning &amp; Cooperation</b>		
<i>Build a stronger regional economic development program that achieves closer coordination among municipalities, and between the Western Connecticut Region, the state, and other surrounding regions</i>		
<b>Objectives &amp; Actions</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>
1-1: Increase intra-regional cooperation and continue to plan on a regional level for the development of Western Connecticut's economy	Municipalities, Economic Development Commissions, South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization, Housatonic Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization, WestCOG	
1-1a: Continually update the CEDS		S, O
1-1b: Pursue Economic Development District status for the Region		S
1-1c: Encourage municipal elected officials to meet regularly regarding regional economic development		S
1-1d: Create a regional plan for emerging technology		S
1-2: Achieve better coordination between Western Connecticut and neighboring regions for interregional planning efforts	WestCOG, MetroCOG, NHCOG, NVCOG, Westchester County, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, State Agencies	
1-2a: Identify opportunities to leverage shared resources, especially with neighboring regional organizations		S/O

## Goal 1: Planning & Cooperation

*Build a stronger regional economic development program that achieves closer coordination among municipalities, and between Western Connecticut, the state, and other surrounding regions*

*Objective 1-1: Increase intra-regional cooperation and continue to plan on a regional level for the development of Western Connecticut's economy*

The successful improvement of the Western Connecticut economy will require a cooperative planning effort. Rapidly changing economic conditions require that economic development planning be a continuous activity. The activities undertaken as a result of this plan must be measured against updated data and

adjusted where necessary. The Advisory Group must also work to secure continued support from the citizenry and elected officials of the Region's municipalities. Outreach will help sustain that interest, and transfer it to implementation.

### Action 1-1a: Annually update the CEDS

On an annual basis, the Advisory Group will evaluate its progress in implementing the CEDS. Newly available data will be analyzed, completed projects will be examined, and new projects will be evaluated.

### Action 1-1b: Pursue Economic Development District status for the Region

The Region will pursue federal and state designation as an Economic Development



District (EDD) to continue Western Connecticut's history of working together on economic development planning. Designation as an EDD will help to formalize the cooperative relationships among the Region's municipalities.

EDD designation improves eligibility for new streams of funding. The Economic Development Administration currently provides annual funding to designated EDDs. Access to funding would allow the Advisory Group to more effectively implement this plan.

*Action 1-1c: Encourage municipal elected officials to meet regularly regarding regional economic development*

The Western Connecticut Council of Governments currently holds monthly meetings of the chief elected officials (mayors and first selectmen) of the eighteen towns in the Region. Through this forum, the Advisory Group can organize summits regarding economic development.

*Action 1-1d: Create a plan for emerging technologies*

Major innovations in technology have arrived. Municipalities must plan for how new products and ideas will change personal behavior, and how they can be used to make municipal services more efficient. Having a nimble plan that can respond to breakthroughs in technology and citizen demand, will be imperative for the Region to stay competitive. With the diversity of municipalities in the Western CT Region, there is ample opportunity to explore rich and varied solutions for the future through studies and pilot programs. Areas of immediate interest include Internet of Things (IoT), Autonomous Vehicle

Technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, Big Data, and Smart City Tech.

*Objective 1-2: Achieve better coordination between Western Connecticut and interregional planning efforts*

As shown in the Transportation Infrastructure Assets section on page 139, residents of Western Connecticut find employment in a variety of locations outside of the Region, including New York City and Hartford. While the Region cannot control what happens outside of its borders, it can better coordinate and cooperate with other regional and local entities to plan and engage in more collective initiatives going forward.

*Action 1-2a: Identify opportunities to leverage shared resources, especially with neighboring regional organizations*

Identifying opportunities with the neighboring regions can formalize the lines of communication and strengthen partnerships. Together, they can update their overall goals and objectives and present a stronger, united front on interregional projects.

<b>Goal 2: Improved Business Climate</b>		
<i>Foster an environment that encourages creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, and strengthens existing clusters</i>		
<b>Objectives &amp; Actions</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>
2-1: Improve marketing of business resources	Municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Development Center, SBA, etc.	
2-1a: Coordinate with business resource providers to create a unified marketing strategy		S
2-2: Encourage the revitalization of village, town, and growth of city centers	WestCOG, Municipalities, CT Main Street Center, Cultural Alliance of Western CT, CT DEEP	
2-2a: Create a Regional Main Street Program		S
2-2b: Assist in sustaining the local arts community		O
2-2c: Support incentives for brownfield remediation and redevelopment		O
2-3: Engage with stakeholders at the State level to improve the business climate	WestCOG, Municipalities, Other Stakeholders	
2-3a: Coordinate with WestCOG to enhance the business climate		O
2-4: Encourage business support for startups and entrepreneurs	WestCOG, Municipalities, SDBC, Makerspaces & Business Incubators, Libraries, Chambers of Commerce	
2-4a: Create and support shared working spaces, business incubators, and other business support resources in every municipality		S-L
2-4b: Study the demand for incubator space focused on specific clusters and industries		M
2-4c: Work with staff at existing incubators to study the needs of “graduating” incubator firms		L
2-5: Improve customer experience for business owners in every municipality	WestCOG, Municipalities, CERC, CEDAS, CCM	
2-5a: Partner with existing organizations to educate staff and volunteers on municipal boards and commissions		S
2-5b: Conduct a review of municipal zoning and suggest efficiencies		M

## Goal 2: Improved Business Climate

Foster an environment that encourages creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, and strengthens existing clusters

### *Objective 2-1: Improve marketing of business resources*

In many of the Focus Groups conducted for this CEDS, participants expressed that they were unable to find the resources created to support businesses. The providers of those resources were disappointed but not surprised that this disconnect was occurring. Business resources need to have more visibility so that business owners can take advantage of them.

### *Action 2-1a: Coordinate with business resource providers to create a unified marketing strategy*

To improve knowledge of the resources available to businesses, the Advisory Group can work with providers to create a unified marketing strategy that informs the public of the resources available to them, while reducing the overall cost of making individual, competing strategies.

### *Objective 2-2: Encourage the revitalization and development of village, town, and growth of city centers*

Village, town, and city centers are the heartbeats of local economies. They contribute to the quality of life that participants named as a major strength for the Region. Vibrancy in these areas makes the Region a place where people want to work, live, play, and learn.

### *Action 2-2a: Create a regional Main Street Program*

Coordinate with the Connecticut Main Street Center to establish and operate a regional Main Street Program to support village, town, and city center revitalization and vibrancy, with a focus on transit oriented development and complete street initiatives.

### *Action 2-2b: Assist in sustaining the local art community*

Arts and culture play a major role in community vibrancy. When applicable, the work of local artists should be considered in revitalization projects. The Advisory Group will also consider if a project would create affordable studio space in visible areas.

### *Action 2-2c: Support incentives for brownfield remediation and redevelopment*

Brownfields detract from the vibrancy of community centers and deter development due to the high cost of cleanup. The Advisory Group will support incentives which reduce the burden on stakeholders.

### *Objective 2-3: Engage with stakeholders at the State level to improve the business climate*

The Advisory Group acknowledges that many of the issues impacting the business climate and the Region must be resolved at the State House.

### *Action 2-3a: Coordinate with WestCOG to enhance the business climate*

The Advisory Group will work with WestCOG to engage stakeholders and to improve the business climate.

### *Objective 2-4: Encourage business support for startups and entrepreneurs*

Rather than competing to recruit large businesses to the Region, the Advisory Group will focus on “economic gardening,” supporting existing businesses and startups. By working to support new businesses and grow existing businesses, the Region can become a leader in innovation and empower local entrepreneurs.

Action 2-4a: Create and support shared working spaces, business incubators, and other business support resources in every municipality.

Local resources and space to work are vital to new and existing businesses, especially when transportation is an issue. A local business resource center of any scale serves a starting point for budding entrepreneurs and can help them to reach their potential for commercialization.

Action 2-4b: Study the demand for incubator space focused on specific clusters and industries

The Advisory Group should study existing incubator space and assess how well it is meeting the needs of existing targeted clusters and industries, and where potential new incubator space should be located.

Action 2-4c: Work with the staff of existing business incubators and makerspaces to study the needs of “graduating” businesses

While business incubators have been shown to be effective at helping businesses get started, many businesses will out-grow the space. Businesses graduating from incubators or makerspaces may face problems finding affordable space outside of the incubator and accessing the services that were available to them. It is also essential that regional leaders reach out to these businesses to ensure that when they leave the incubator they stay in the Region.

The Advisory Group should work with staff at the Region’s existing incubators to explore ways that the Region can provide greater support to graduating companies. Potential projects might include: connecting new businesses mentors and to real estate professionals; providing inexpensive “virtual

incubator” services to newly graduated business; and helping graduated business connect with financial resources.

*Objective 2-5: Improve “customer” experience for business owners in every municipality*

Throughout the planning process, participants identified the zoning and permitting processes as a hurdle that is often too time consuming and expensive for a business to overcome. In some cases, the process is too confusing for a new business owner to complete.

Action 2-5a: Partner with existing organizations to educate volunteers on municipal boards and commissions

In Connecticut, there are a variety of organizations providing programs dedicated to educating volunteers on municipal boards and commissions about their roles and how they can shape development in their municipalities. The Advisory Group should coordinate with these organizations and the municipalities to hold education sessions when needed.

Action 2-5b: Conduct a review of municipal zoning and permitting, and suggest efficiencies

The Advisory Group should provide assistance to municipalities with review of the zoning and permitting process for businesses, and identify shared best practices. The municipalities can then decide whether they would like to adopt the suggestions to make their processes more business friendly.



<b>Goal 3: An Inclusive Workforce</b>		
<i>Attract, retain, and develop a multifaceted workforce that meets the needs of existing employers and is attractive to new firms providing high quality careers</i>		
<b>Objectives &amp; Actions</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>
3-1: Recruit and retain young professionals	Employers, Higher-Ed Institutions, Municipalities, WestCOG, Young Energetic Solutions	
3-1a: Partner with existing organizations to identify and support effective policies and initiatives		O
3-1b: Work with stakeholders to develop a “learn here – live here” initiative		L
3-2: Retain professionals over 50	Workforce Boards, Higher-Ed Institutions, Employers	
3-2a: Identify best practices for workforce retraining and “career ladders” programs		S
3-2b: Work with employers to assess the skills needed for advancement, and if new programs are needed to retrain staff		M
3-2c: Work with employers to identify third-party continuing-education certificates they would accept		M
3-3: Create a diversity of housing that all sectors of the workforce and the regional population can afford	Municipalities, Partnership for Strong Communities, Developers, WestCOG	
3-3a: Partner with existing organizations to identify and support effective policies and initiatives		S
3-3b: Distribute a housing inventory and analysis		M
3-3c: Support local policies that encourage adaptive reuse instead of demolition		O
3-4: Encourage partnerships between Higher-Ed, and trade and technical institutions, and regional industries	Workforce Boards, Higher-Ed Institutions, Business Council of Fairfield County, Employers	
3-4a: Work with educational institutions to develop or expand programs that respond to industry needs		S
3-4b: Work with area companies to list internship opportunities		O
3-5: Support regional cluster focused educational programs at the elementary and high school level	Workforce Boards, Schools, Employers	
3-5a: Work with area colleges and universities to provide local high school students with the opportunity to take college classes		S
3-5b: Support programs that provide children with early exposure to trades and entrepreneurship		O

### Goal 3: An Inclusive Workforce

Attract, retain, and develop a multifaceted workforce that meets the needs of existing employers and is attractive to new firms providing high quality careers

#### *Objective 3-1: Recruit and retain young professionals*

Throughout the planning process, participants expressed concerns that young professionals are leaving the Region for a variety of reasons relating to the high cost of living. The Region has a much lower percentage of residents ages 20 – 29 than that Connecticut and the US (Figure 9). This leaves a gap in the Region's workforce. As workers retire, there are fewer skilled workers to take their places. A shrinking labor pool will make the Region and its companies less competitive.

#### *Action 3-1a: Partner with existing organizations to identify and support effective policies and initiatives*

Many organizations in the State have identified the lack of young professionals as a serious issue for Connecticut's workforce, and are working to develop and identify effective policies and initiatives to attract and keep them in the State. The Advisory Group should work with these organizations and support evidence-based strategies.

#### *Action 3-1b: Work with stakeholders to develop a "learn here – live here" initiative*

Student loan debt coupled with the high cost of living in the Region was identified as another reason young professionals are avoiding living here. Easing the burden of that debt with programs and initiatives that reduce the cost of living may reverse this trend. The Advisory Group will work with educational institutions, employers, and legislators to retain graduates from Connecticut schools, and encourage

residents attending school outside of the Region to return.

#### *Objective 3-2: Retain Professionals Over 50*

As the Region's population ages, older professionals (50+) may have difficulties keeping their skills current. This could lead to unemployment or underemployment for this cohort, which may result in them and their families choosing to relocate.

#### *Action 3-2a: Identify best practices for workforce retraining and "career ladders programs"*

Many organizations in the State have identified the skills gap for older workers as an issue for Connecticut's workforce, and they are working to develop programs to retrain older workers and keep them in the State. The Advisory Group should work with these organizations and support evidence-based strategies.

#### *Action 3-2b: Work with employers to assess the skills needed for advancement, and if new programs are needed to retrain staff*

While current retraining programs exist, there may be gaps in skills, specific to the Region's industries, that are not being addressed. The Advisory Group will work with the Region's employers to identify these gaps, identify programs, and assess the needs for incentives for works to be retrained.

#### *Action 3-2c: Work with employers to identify third-party continuing-education certificates that they would accept*

There are a multitude of in-person and online educational opportunities for workers to take advantage of. Rather than developing new programs, the Advisory Group should work with employers to identify what certificates or completed programs they would consider when promoting or hiring employees.

*Objective 3-3: Create a diversity of housing that all sectors of the workforce and the regional population can afford*

Throughout the planning process, participants expressed grave concerns about the high cost of housing as a deterrent for low and middle income workers. Median single family home values in the Region are significantly higher than that of the State and the Nation. This is worrying, especially because the majority of the housing stock in the Region is single family homes.

In addition, providing housing for all people, taking into account appropriate housing for people of all abilities and ages, will allow segments of the population not in the workforce and their families to remain in the Region.

*Action 3-3a: Partner with existing organizations to identify and support effective policies and initiatives*

Many organizations in the State have identified the lack of workforce housing as a critical need for Connecticut's workforce, and they are working to develop and identify effective policies and initiatives to encourage their development. The Advisory Group should work with these organizations and support evidence-based strategies.

*Action 3-3b: Distribute a Housing Inventory and Analysis*

Regional Housing Market Assessments can provide communities with perspective on their affordable housing needs. Working with WestCOG, the Advisory Group should distribute an up-to-date for the whole Region.

*Action 3-3c: Support local policies that encourage adaptive reuse instead of demolition*

A key observation made during the planning process was that, especially in the Region's cities, a diversity of multifamily housing was being built, however much of it was not affordable for young professionals and middle income earners. Stakeholders noted that the new multifamily housing stock was marketed as luxury, while the older housing stock was outdated, in poor repair, and/or not attractive to new residents.

Effective policies should be considered to encourage adaptive reuse or rehabilitation of the older housing stock. Such policies can include rehabilitation codes, tax credits, low cost loans, or preservation ordinances. It is essential, however, that such policies not be overly burdensome or restrictive. Without support from property and land owners these efforts will falter.

*Objective 3-4: Encourage partnerships between Higher-Ed, and trade and technical institutions, and regional industries*

Throughout the planning process, participants identified a gap between the skills students graduated with and the needs of regional industry for entry level positions. Higher-Ed and vocational institutions need to partner with regional industries to assure that the education students receive are preparing them for current industry needs and thus improve outcomes for their graduates.

*Action 3-4a: Work with educational institutions to develop or expand programs that respond to industry needs*

Numerous organizations throughout the State and Region are already providing workforce training programs. Where gaps are found, the Advisory Group will work with educational

institutions, industry representatives, and key partners, to develop programs that respond to industry needs. This could include online learning, internships, or apprenticeships.

#### *Action 3-4b: Work with area companies to list internship opportunities*

To connect students with valuable internship opportunities and employers with potential new employees, the Advisory Group should work with employers and educational institutions to ensure the process of listing internships is accessible and straightforward.

#### *Objective 3-5: Support regional cluster focused educational programs at the elementary and high school level*

The Advisory Group consistently received feedback that a major strength of the Region is its excellent public schools. However during the planning process, industry professionals decried the lack of exposure local students receive to careers in some of the Region's clusters. This may prevent students from making informed choices on pursuing these career paths.

#### *Action 3-5a: Work with area colleges and universities to provide local high school students with the opportunity to take college classes*

Educational programing that assists students in deciding on a career in a regionally significant industry would not only improve their career prospects but also encourage them to stay in the Region. Providing motivated students the opportunity to attend college classes on the college's campus, rewards their work, gives them a head start in their college education,

helps them forge relationships with local institutions, and gives them new and enriching experiences. There is successful precedent for such an arrangement in Connecticut. The Advisory Group will bring together the stakeholders in this issue and explore a path forward for local educational institutions.

#### *Action 3-5b: Support programs that provide children with early exposure to trades and entrepreneurship*

There are a variety of programs which can improve students' exposure to trades and entrepreneurship. The Advisory Group shall work with stakeholders to help bring these programs to local schools. Another factor in exposing students to a diversity of career paths and opportunities is bringing professionals into the classroom as instructors. The Advisory Group will coordinate with WestCOG to create a pipeline for future teachers.



<b>Goal 4: Improved and Maintained Transportation &amp; Public Infrastructure</b>		
<i>Maintain, improve, and develop the Region's infrastructure so that it meets the needs of the workforce as well as existing and growing industries</i>		
<b>Objectives &amp; Actions</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>
4-1: Support roadway and public transit improvements that increase connectivity and reduce travel time	Municipalities, HVMPO, SWRMPO, CT DOT, USDOT, CTtransit, Transit Districts, MetroNorth, Amtrak, FRA, Stakeholders	
4-1a: Support projects to improve the Region's major transportation spines for commuters and freight		O
4-1b: Support projects to improve and extend passenger rail service for the New Haven Line and its branches		O
4-1c: Work with bus and shuttle providers to better coordinate and expand services		S
4-1d: Prioritize projects near transportation nodes, especially public transit stops		O
4-1e: Support projects to improve access to nonmotorized transportation		O
4-1f: Coordinate site development projects with transportation improvement plans contained in the Region's Long-Range Transportation Plans		O
4-1g: Investigate opportunities for high-speed rail		O
4-1h: Work with businesses and CT DOT to mitigate the negative impacts of construction on businesses		O
4-1i: Plan for the impacts of technology on transportation		O
4-2: Minimize the amount of new infrastructure that must be developed for economic development projects	Municipalities, WestCOG	
4-2a: Prioritize development projects that reuse previously developed sites, especially brownfields, and have dense footprints		S
4-3: Expand the availability of high-speed broadband coverage and gigabit internet access	Municipalities, Developers, Providers	
4-3a: Support the expansion of public and private internet access		S
4-3b: Create an asset map of municipal resources		S
4-4: Modernize the electric grid	Municipalities, Eversource, Developers	
4-4a: Prioritize projects that incorporate alternative energy and strategies more resilient to harsh weather conditions		S

#### Goal 4: Improved and Maintained Transportation & Public Infrastructure

Maintain, improve, and develop the Region's infrastructure so that it meets the needs of the workforce as well as existing and growing industries

##### *Objective 4-1: Support roadway and public transit improvements that increase connectivity and reduce travel time*

The more transportation connectivity a location has, the greater its potential for economic activity. Transportation infrastructure creates connectivity by allowing goods and people to flow more freely between markets. While the Region has a variety of transportation options, as documented in the Transportation Infrastructure Assets section on page 139, they are aging and overburdened, leading to delays and congestion, which negatively impact the regional economy.

##### *Action 4-1a Support projects to improve the Region's major transportation spines for commuters and freight*

The access to destinations and jobs for travelers and employees is vital for the Region's future. The Advisory Committee will support and prioritize projects that maintain current infrastructure, and improve capacity, travel time, and safety.

##### *Action 4-1b: Support projects to improve and extend passenger rail service for the New Haven Line and its branches*

Throughout the planning process, passenger rail service was identified as a strength for the Region, connecting it to the markets between New York City, New Haven, and beyond. However, there is room for improvement, especially along the Danbury and New Canaan Branch lines. To encourage more people to travel by rail and to alleviate some of the

burden from the highways, the Advisory Group will support and prioritize projects that maintain current infrastructure, extend service hours, and improve capacity, travel time, and safety.

##### *Action 4-1c: Work with bus and shuttle providers to better coordinate and expand services*

A variety of contractors operate the public and private bus and shuttle service in the Region, creating confusion for riders, and congestion on the roadways and at major stops. The Advisory Group will work with contractors to make it easier for riders to transition from one service to another.

##### *Action 4-1d: Prioritize projects near transportation nodes, especially public transit stops*

It is not enough to provide transit, people also need to be able to use it. If jobs and housing are not located on transit lines, people will continue to be dependent on automobiles for transportation. Projects located near busway stations, along feeder routes, or near rail stations – transportation oriented development – will be prioritized by the Advisory Group.

##### *Action 4-1e: Support projects to improve access to nonmotorized transportation*

The availability of safe walking and biking routes adds vibrancy to a community, and can improve health outcomes for its residents. The Advisory Group will support and prioritize projects that contribute to Complete Streets (see page 156) and that include pedestrian and bike friendly elements.

#### Action 4-1f: Coordinate site development projects with transportation improvement plans contained in the Region's Long-Range Transportation Plans

The Region's two Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs) for the South Western Region and the Housatonic Valley Region were adopted in 2015. They contain a thorough analysis of transportation issues and propose programs of improvements for the next 30 years. Since the CEDS and the LRTPs are continually updated documents, it is logical to defer to the most recent LRTPs on transportation issues. The Advisory Group should continue to support transportation projects of regional importance. The LRTPs include regional goals, policies, and projects that will contribute to economic development by alleviating congestion, improving access, providing transportation options, and improving quality of life.

#### 4-1g: Investigate opportunities for high-speed rail

Discussions of high-speed rail for the Northeast Corridor are nearly synonymous with infrastructure improvements for the Western CT Region, and some view high-speed rail as nearly as essential. The Advisory Group will investigate all proposals thoroughly before advocating for a project.

#### 4-1h: Work with businesses and CT DOT to mitigate the negative impacts of construction on businesses

Positive improvements to infrastructure often cause negative impacts for the neighboring businesses, such as forced closures, obstructed views and entries, and detours moving potential customers away from the business. The Advisory Group will work with stakeholders to mitigate these negative impacts.

#### 4-1i: Plan for the impacts of technology on transportation

Revolutions in transportation technology, such as autonomous vehicles, have arrived. The Advisory Group will consider how proposed projects plan for innovations in technology.

#### *Objective 4-2: Minimize the amount of new infrastructure that must be developed for economic development projects*

Development that is far from existing services places a strain on resources. While new development in built up areas frequently can benefit from existing infrastructure with excess capacity at minimal cost, isolated development requires costly extensions to roads, sidewalks, and transit routes, as well as sewer, water, electricity, and telecommunications lines. The high costs of installing and maintaining these extensions can stress municipal finances over the long-term and result in higher tax burdens for residents and businesses.

#### Action 4-2a: Prioritize development projects that reuse previously developed sites, especially brownfields, and have dense footprints

The Advisory Group will consider environmental impacts of projects for the CEDS. Considerations include the reuse and remediation of existing structures or sites, the compactness of the development, and its environmental impacts.

#### *Objective 4-3: Expand the availability of high-speed broadband coverage and gigabit internet access*

The global economy relies on the internet to function, and the Region must increase speed and capacity of its digital connections to compete. Improving high-tech infrastructure will give a leg up to existing businesses, and help attract and create new industries to the area.

#### Action 4-3a: Support the expansion of public and private internet access

The Advisory Group will consider how new projects will improve internet reliability, transfer speeds, and connection.

#### Action: 4-3b: Create an asset map of municipal resources

For municipalities to most efficiently address the connectivity needs of their residents, they must first take stock of the internet infrastructure they already have. These maps can then enable advancements in Civic Tech, such as “smart” parking meters and waste bins. The Advisory Group will work with partners to create them.

#### *Objective 4-4: Modernize the electric grid*

Every time there is a power outage, whether from a storm or an accident, the disruption has a negative economic impact. To improve reliability, the electric grid needs to be updated to allow for new technologies, alternative energy, and individual distribution and storage. Strategies that improve resiliency of the grid must also be encouraged.

#### Action 4-4a: Prioritize projects that incorporate alternative energy and strategies more resilient to harsh weather conditions

The Advisory Group will review how new projects will be powered and how they impact the electric grid. Considerations include alternative energy like solar, new technologies, and resiliency strategies such as burying power lines.

<b>Goal 5: A More Sustainable &amp; Resilient Region</b>		
<i>Promote responsible strategies that contribute to both environmental sustainability and economic development</i>		
<b>Objectives &amp; Actions</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>
5-1: Coordinate with the future Regional Plan of Conservation & Development	WestCOG	
5-1a: Encourage policies that minimize the amount of newly developed land, especially in environmentally sensitive areas or near critical environmental resources		L
5-1b: Minimize the amount of new land and new infrastructure that must be developed for economic development projects		L
5-1c: Prioritize development projects that make use of existing infrastructure		S
5-1d: Prioritize projects that will remediate and/or reuse brownfield sites		S
See Action 4-2a: Prioritize development projects that reuse previously developed sites, especially brownfields, and have dense footprints		S
5-2: Provide businesses resources for disaster recovery	DEMHS, Municipalities, Insurers, WestCOG	
5-2a: Educate businesses about disaster preparation and recovery		S
5-2b: Work with municipalities to make recovery frameworks for businesses		M
5-3: Plan for the impacts of seas level rise, and coastal and riverine flooding	WestCOG, Municipalities, UConn CLEAR	
5-3a: Study the impacts of sea level rise, and coastal and riverine flooding		S
5-3b: Prioritize projects which mitigate the impacts of flooding		S

## Goal 5: A More Sustainable & Resilient Region

Promote responsible strategies that contribute to both environmental sustainability and economic development

### *Objective 5-1: Coordinate with the future Regional Plan of Conservation & Development*

Each regional Council of Governments in Connecticut prepares a Regional Plan of

Conservation and Development. These plans are updated at least every ten years and contain information and strategy recommendations on growth and land use related issues including demographic trends, economic development, affordable housing, transportation, agriculture, and infrastructure. Due to the recent creation of WestCOG, there is not yet a Regional Plan. The Advisory Group should work with WestCOG to include the

following actions and its other priorities in the upcoming plan.

**Action 5-1a: Encourage policies that minimize the amount of newly developed land, especially in environmentally sensitive areas or near critical environmental resources**

Sprawling development threatens the Region's open space, including lakes, rivers, and streams. Continuing impairment to and loss of these places will undermine the Region's quality of life, a key asset in its economy. The Advisory Group will support policies that curb sprawl.

**Action 5-1b: Minimize the amount of new land and new infrastructure that must be developed for economic development projects**

As with residential development, industrial and commercial development that is far from existing services places a strain on resources and increases maintenance costs. While development in already-developed areas frequently can take advantage of existing infrastructure with excess capacity at minimal cost, isolated development requires costly extensions to roads, sidewalks, and transit routes, as well as sewer, water, electricity, and telecommunications lines. The high costs of installing and maintaining these extensions can stress municipal finances over the long-term and result in higher tax burdens for residents and businesses.

**Action 5-1c: Prioritize development projects that make use of existing infrastructure**

When prioritizing projects, the Advisory Group will consider whether the proposed project will use existing infrastructure or require the creation of new infrastructure.

**Action 5-1d: Prioritize projects that will remediate and/or reuse brownfield sites**

When prioritizing projects, the Advisory Group will consider whether the proposed project will be remediating and/or reusing brownfield sites.

**See Action 4-2a: Prioritize development projects that reuse previously developed sites, especially brownfields, and have dense footprints**

**Objective 5-2: Provide businesses resources for disaster recovery**

Natural disasters and harsh weather are a fact of life, and severely impact the economies of the places they strike. Statistics collected by the Eastern Kentucky University Department of Safety, Security, and Emergency Management state that, the average loss for small businesses after closing due to a major storm is \$3,000 a day, and 25% of small and medium sized businesses hit by a major storm do not reopen. The poses a major threat to the Region.

**Action 5-2a: Educate businesses about disaster preparation and recovery**

Businesses may not be aware of the threats and risks natural disasters pose. The Advisory Group should identify and work with partners to inform businesses of preparation strategies and encourage municipalities to take special consideration when responding to businesses in crisis.

**Action 5-2b: Work with municipalities to make recovery frameworks for businesses**

When a disaster strikes, municipalities often provide recovery centers for citizens. A similar type of service or facility could also be dedicated to meet business needs. In an emergency, space could be allocated that provides electricity and an internet connection



so that some businesses can still maintain operations even at a diminished capacity. The Advisory Group will work with municipalities to designate these recovery services and/or facilities.

*Objective 5-3: Plan for the impacts of seas level rise, and coastal and riverine flooding*

Much of the Region's business centers and critical infrastructure are located near the shore of the Long Island Sound or along rivers. A flood could greatly negatively impact the Region's economy and business community.

*Action 5-3a: Study the impacts of seas level rise, and coastal and riverine flooding*

The impacts of sea level rise and other flooding in regards to the Regional economy is not well known. WestCOG currently creates Hazard Mitigation Plans for the Region. The Advisory Group will work with them to complete an analysis on potential impacts and mitigation strategies.

*Action 5-3b: Prioritize projects which mitigate the impacts of flooding*

Just in recent memory, the flooding from severe storms such as Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy, caused major disruptions and extensive property damage. When prioritizing projects, the Advisory Group will consider if the project mitigates the impacts of flooding, for example the restoration of coastal barrier islands.

<b>Goal 6: A Positive Regional Identity</b>		
<i>Forge a favorable Regional identity that is well known globally and inspires pride in residents</i>		
<b>Objectives &amp; Actions</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>
6-1: Improve the reputation and online presence of the Region	Municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Development Center, SBA, etc.	
6-1a: Lead a campaign to pursue national/international awards and recognition		O
6-1b: Encourage the development of businesses' online presence		O
6-1c: Identify or create a Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan for municipalities and other organizations to spread positive news and statistics about the Region		S
6-2: Enhance tourism to vibrant communities	CTVisit.com, Municipalities, Economic Development Commissions, Cultural Alliance of Western CT	
6-2a: Leverage the arts community for projects and programming		O
6-2b: Assist in the development of itineraries and packages unique to the Region's resources		S/O

## Goal 6: A Positive Regional Identity

Forge a favorable Regional entity that is well known globally and inspires pride in residents

### *Objective 6-1: Improve the reputation and online presence of the Region*

Throughout the planning process, participants spoke of a “negative narrative” about the State which paints it as a challenging place to live and do business. Participants expressed frustration that this narrative is not entirely justified and largely does not apply to the Western CT Region.

In the digital age, it is more important than ever to have a positive online presence. Digital media is often the first impression for new residents and visitors, as well as business locators. Improving the online presence of the Region can attract new people and counteract the negative narrative.

### *Action 6-1a: Lead a campaign to pursue national/international awards*

By gaining recognition outside of the Northeast, the Region can make a positive impression on the national and global stage. The Advisory Group should work with partners to identify and pursue awards the Region can win.

### *Action 6-1b: Encourage the development of businesses' online presence*

There is a new adage, “if you are not online, you do not exist.” For shoppers, tourists, a site selectors, and nearly the entire world, their first step in making a decision is an online search. One of the most cost effective ways for a business to attract new customers is to be searchable online. The Advisory Group will identify and work with partners to educate businesses about how to become visible on various websites like Google Maps, Yelp, and ctvisit.com, to improve their presence.

Action 6-1c: Identify or create a Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan for municipalities and other organizations to spread positive news and statistics about the Region

A similar frustration participants in the planning process expressed was that there were plenty of positive stories about the State and the Region, but they were not as well known or as commonly repeated as the negative narrative. The Region also ranks highly by many metrics within CT and nationally. In order to advertise positive stories and attributes better, the Advisory Group will work with municipalities and other organizations to identify or create a Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan.

*Objective 6-2: Enhance tourism to vibrant communities*

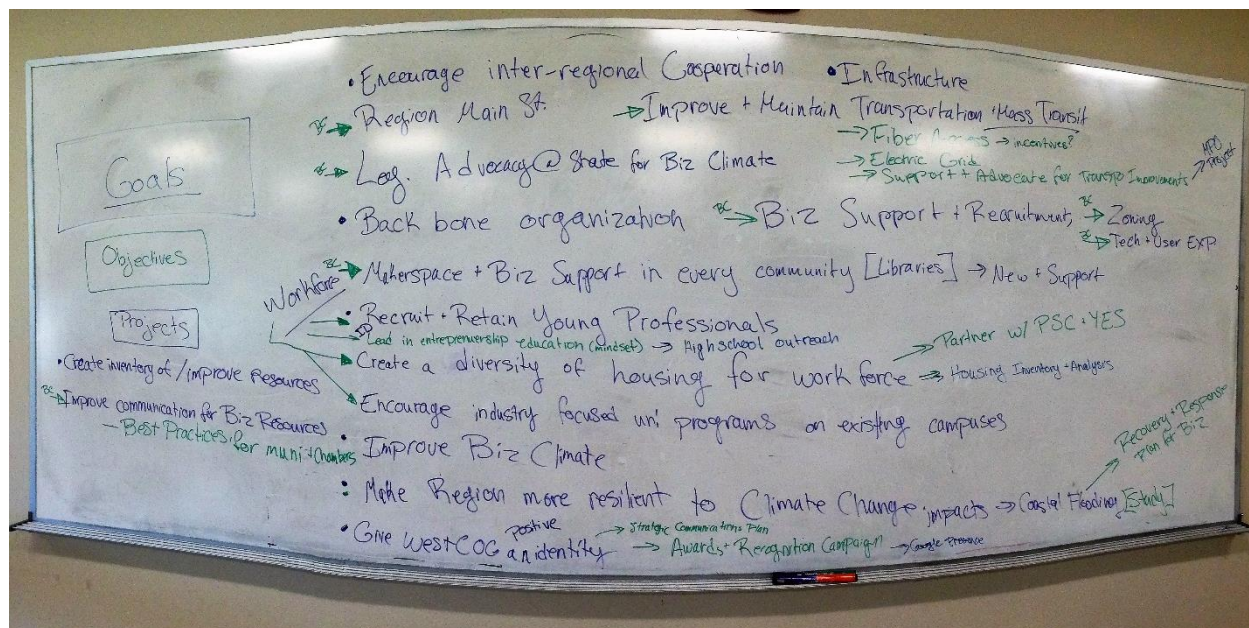
Tourism can play a large role in local economies by bringing in capital from outside of the community. Visitors with a positive experience can also spread positive word-of-mouth advertising. Enhancing tourism in the Region can open it up to new markets and create positive associations for it with travelers. The Advisory Group identified tourism surrounding business and recreation as having high potential.

*Action 6-2a: Leverage the local arts and cultural community for installations and events programming*

Arts and cultural events are often a draw for visitors. When considering projects aimed at enhancing tourism. The Advisory Group will consider how the local arts and cultural community will be involved.

*Action 6-2b: Assist in the development of itineraries and packages unique to the Region's resources*

The more time a visitor spends in a place, the more money they are likely to spend there. By developing itineraries and packages with partner organizations, the Advisory Group can provide visitors with ample reasons to stay in the Region and help them to have a more positive experience.



The whiteboard after the first meeting on the Strategic Action Plan.

## PERFORMANCE MEASURES

With the data collection complete, the strategic action plan set, and the regional projects prioritized, the Western Connecticut Economic Advisory Group must carry out this plan and measure its progress.

### Implementation

The success of this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy will ultimately depend upon the coalition of businesses, local governments, non-profit organizations, and individuals who have worked for more than a year to create the plan, to continue to work together to implement it.

A critical component of any implementation effort will be leveraging the resources and influence of both the public and private sectors – and often through public-private partnerships – in pursuit of the Region’s goals. Developing the political support and obtaining the funding necessary for these investments will require the business community and the public to voice their support for these key projects. Likewise, initiatives spearheaded by non-profit and for-profit organizations may require the support of elected officials and perhaps legislative changes at the local or state level. Only by working together can these groups achieve the goals the Region has selected.

As the most likely organization to oversee implementation of this CEDS, the Western Connecticut Economic Advisory Group, will require substantial support. A broad

commitment must be made to provide the management resources necessary for implementation. The area’s regional planning organization, the Western Connecticut Council of Governments, is well positioned to play a meaningful role in generating widespread municipal support for moving forward with the implementation of the CEDS.

It is recommended that the Advisory Group and major players meet quarterly to review the work accomplished for the previous quarter and to state the proposed work for the coming quarter.

### Annual Performance Reports

An Annual Performance Report is required and must be submitted to EDA. It is the opportunity to gage the progress the Region has made and to update the project list. Any updated CEDS Performance report resulting in a major change to the project list will be made available for public review and comment.

### Evaluation

The Western Connecticut Economic Advisory Group recognizes that for a plan to be implemented effectively, it must be monitored and evaluated. This section lays out measures of program outcomes and general indicators of success, including variables that demonstrate that the regional economy is moving in the desired direction. These data will inform ongoing implementation of and future updates to this plan.

Goal 1: Regional Planning and Cooperation		
Indicator	Data Source	Desired Result
Participation at quarterly meetings	Western CT Economic Advisory Group records	At least 50%
Number of meetings with strategic partners	Staff Records	At least 1 per quarter
Number of meetings with interregional partners	Staff Records	At least 2 per year

Goal 2: Improved Business Climate		
Indicator	Data Source	Desired Result
Amount of activity seen by existing business resources	Municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Development Center, SBA, etc.	Increase
Number of new business support organizations and services	Municipalities, other strategic partners	Increase
Number of municipalities with a Main Street of Downtown Program	Municipalities	Increase
Number of municipalities evaluating the efficacy of their zoning process	Municipalities	At least 4 per year
Number of municipalities conducting education programs for their staff and volunteers on municipal boards and commissions	Municipalities, CEDAS, CERC, UConn CLEAR	At least 4 per year
Sales tax revenue by municipality and in the retail, service, and entertainment sectors	CT Dept. of Revenue Services, Data.ct.gov	Increase



<b>Goal 3: Cultivated Conditions to Support a Diverse Workforce</b>		
<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Desired Result</b>
Percent of population 20 – 29 ages group	ACS/Census	Increase
Percent unemployment for ages 50+	ACS/Census	Decrease
Number of dual enrollment and early college programs	CT Dept. of Education/ Schools	Increase
Number of students completing dual enrollment and early college programs	CT Dept. of Education/ Schools	Increase
Number of high school and older students receiving career ready certifications beyond graduation	CT Dept. of Education/ Schools	Increase
Number of partnerships between high schools and area employers	CT Dept. of Education/ Schools	Increase
Number of partnerships between elementary schools and area employers	CT Dept. of Education/ Schools	Increase
Number of multifamily housing units built or renovated per year	Municipalities	Increase
More diverse housing mix	ACS/Census	Increase
Number of affordable housing units in the Region	Municipalities, NLIHC	Increase

<b>Goal 4: Improved and Maintained Transportation and Public Infrastructure</b>		
<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Desired Result</b>
Percent of residents walking, biking, taking transit, or working at home	ACS/Census	Increase
Commute Time	ACS/Census	Decrease
Public transit delays, cancelations, and travel time	MetroNorth, Transit Districts, CTtransit	Decrease
Access to improved internet speeds	CTgig, Broadbandmap.gov	Increase
Number of elements of TOD Plans that have gone to construction	Municipalities	Increase
Percent of projects in the CEDS that utilize alternative energy	Western CT Economic Advisory Group records	Increase
The forthcoming infrastructure condition standards approved by CT DOT for the Western CT Region	CT DOT, MPOs, WestCOG	On par or exceeds

Goal 5: A More Sustainable & Resilient Region		
Indicator	Data Source	Desired Result
Percent of projects in the CEDS that concur with Regional Plan of Conservation and Development	Western CT Economic Advisory Group records	Increase
Percent of projects in CEDS that are infill/reuse	Western CT Economic Advisory Group records	Increase
Number of brownfield sites remediated and or developed	Project records	Increase
Number of municipalities participating in the Community Rating System	WestCOG	Increase
Number of municipalities with identified strategies specific to business and commercial areas in their Hazard Mitigation Plans	Municipalities	Increase
Number of repetitive flood loss properties in the Region	CT DEEP	Decrease

Goal 6: A Positive Regional Identity		
Indicator	Data Source	Desired Result
Number of awards given to regional partners	All strategic partners	At least 1 per year
Number of workshops held for businesses	Western CT Economic Advisory Group records	At least 1 per year
Tourism Industry Sales	CT Dept. of Economic and Community Development – Tourism Division	Increase
Town, Region, or State rankings in major publications	CERC	Improve
Impressions on online resources with positive portrayals of the Region	AccessWesternCT.com, other sites and partners	Increase

## REGIONAL PROJECTS

### Prioritization Criteria

In addition to the Strategic Action Plan described above, this CEDS also proposes specific economic development projects that invest in the Region. These projects are designed to leverage available federal, state, local, and private funds to improve and maintain the physical and human capital of the Region. Projects range from TOD projects to feasibility studies and public Wi-Fi networks. They are each intended to address specific goals and objectives in this plan, and have been proposed, evaluated, and prioritized in a cooperative manner.

The Western Connecticut Economic Advisory Group developed a set of evaluation criteria and a scoring system for use in identifying those projects that the Region currently considers its top priorities. The criteria and scoring system were developed prior to soliciting project nominations so there would be broad agreement on the criteria before any projects were discussed.

### Solicitation Process

The criteria were then incorporated into a “Western Connecticut CEDS Project Solicitation Form” which was approved by the Advisory Group for dissemination. This form also showed the scoring system so that respondents would be aware of how their submissions would be scored. This Project Solicitation Form, along with “CEDS Project Solicitation Guidelines” and a draft of the Strategic Action Plan was then provided to the mayor and first selectmen of the Region’s municipalities and to other organizations involved in the Region’s economic development. Six weeks was allowed for submission of projects so that communities would have adequate time to submit proposals. Copies of the CEDS Project Solicitation

Guidelines and the Project Solicitation Form can be found in Appendix B.

### Prioritization Process

WestCOG staff prepared a preliminary scoring of the projects using the previously established criteria and scoring system. These evaluation criteria were:

- Status of the proposed project
- Clarity of the vision, scope and details of the project
- Feasibility of the project within market, budgetary, regulatory or other measures
- Project budget and supporting documentation
- Status of project funding
- Status of environmental reviews
- Control of the project area
- Status of land use approvals
- Regional economic impact
- Number of jobs either saved or created
- Community/ organizational ranking of project

Preliminary scoring was reviewed and refined by the Advisory Group at a meeting held on July 19, 2017. At that meeting, the Advisory Group created the final lists of vital and suggested projects.

### Vital & Suggested Projects

A listing of each submitted project follows. The list is divided into two sections: vital projects and suggested projects. Vital projects have been determined to address the Region’s greatest needs, will best enhance the Region’s competitiveness, and/or have the greatest regional impact. Suggested projects may need to be developed further before being

implemented. The matrix below provides the basic details and ranking of each project. A more detailed description of each project is found in the next section.

Twenty-three projects were submitted of which fifteen were submitted from the

individual communities; eight were submitted by regional entities and local non-profits. As a result of the scoring review, the Advisory Group made the decision to consider eighteen projects as vital. These projects are listed by priority. Five projects are considered suggested and have also been listed by priority.

## Project Lists

### *Vital Projects*

Project Name	Organizer	Goals & Objectives Met	Estimated Cost (\$)	New Jobs	Time Frame	Non EDA Funding Sources
Western CT EDD Designation	WestCOG	1-1b	10,000	None	Less than 1 year	WestCOG
Regional Transit Service Plan	WestCOG	4-1c	750,000	None	3 years	US DOT Surface Transportation Program
Coordination Plan for Industry Needs and Higher Education	WestCOG	3-4a	100,000	None	1-2 years	
Regional Tourism Development and Marketing Plan	WestCOG	6-2b	100,000	None	1-2 years	
Accessible Art Project	Cultural Alliance of Western CT	2-2, 6-2a	82,200	None	3 years	Private Donation
Dredging Feasibility Study	Stamford Partnership	5-3b	150,000	None	Less than 1 year	Municipalities
Regional Agricultural Viability Study	WestCOG	2-3; 2-4	100,000	None	1-2 years	CT Dept. of Agriculture, WestCOG
Downtown Danbury TOD Streetscape Renaissance Project	Danbury	2-2, 4-1	3,380,430	10-15	18 months	City of Danbury Capital Improvement Program, State of CT Responsible

						Growth TOD Grant Program
Norwalk River Valley - Harbor Loop Trail	Norwalk	4-1e	2,000,000	20	5 years	City of Norwalk, CT DOT
Wall St Train Station Feasibility Study	Norwalk	4-1b	75,000	None	3 years	City of Norwalk
GIG Wi-Fi & LORA WAN Network	Stamford Partnership	4-3	2,000,000	2	1 year	CT Next
Fairfield Hills Existing Building Renovations	Newtown	4-2a, 5-1b, c	5,250,000	40	1 year	Town of Newtown Capital Improvement Fund, Private Developers
Phase 2 North Town Center Streetscape	Brookfield	2-2, 5-1d	Unknown	Unknown	12-18 months	
Washington Street Plaza	Norwalk	2-2, 4-1	550,000	25	18 months	City of Norwalk
Georgetown Village TOD Plan	Redding	2-2, 4-1, 4-2a, 5-1d	250,000	None	18 months	State of CT Responsible Growth TOD Grant Program
Transit Oriented Development	Bethel	4-1	TBD	Unknown	5 years	
New Milford Riverfront Revitalization Plan	New Milford	2-2; 4-1; 5-1b, c, d; 5-3b	250,000	None	18 months	Town of New Milford
Expansion of Clarke Business Park	Bethel	4-2a	TBD	Unknown	18 months	

### Suggested Projects

Project Name	Organizer	Goals & Objectives Met	Estimated Cost (\$)	Jobs	Time Frame	Non EDA Funding Sources
20 Station Rd. Brownfield Remediation	Brookfield	2-2, 4-1	TBD Jan. 2018	Unknown	1 year	
Explore New Milford: Integrated Marketing Campaign	New Milford	2-1, 2-2	50,000	None	1 year	Town of New Milford
Baldwin/Avery Parking Lot Reconstruction	Westport	2-2	1,250,000	10	18 months	Westport Municipal Improvement Fund
Improvements to the Bethel Water System	Bethel	4	4,860,000	25	1 year	
Stony Hill Sewer Project – Phase IV	Bethel	4	1,700,000	12	1 year	Town of Bethel

### Project Descriptions

The following descriptions are excerpts from the proposals submitted for the project solicitation process.

#### Vital Projects

##### Western CT EDD Designation – WestCOG

An Economic Development District (EDD) is a federal designation for the entity responsible for the maintenance and implementation of the CEDS. EDD designation is the next step after the CEDS process and enables participants in the CEDS to apply for grants from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and other sources. In addition, an EDD is eligible for grants from the EDA to continue maintenance of the CEDS and related activities. A request to be designated as an EDD may be filed after approval of the CEDS by the state and federal governments.

EDD status will enable local governments and organizations in the region to apply for federal

grants and give projects preferential status under state programs. In addition, it will help build regional capacity for economic development and provide support for local and regional economic development activities. With an EDD established, the Region and its municipalities will be eligible for millions of dollars in annual grant funds.

##### Regional Transit Service Plan – WestCOG

Several rail, bus, and shuttle transit providers serve the region. Each of these has its own service areas, timetables, and payment structures, making it complex for riders to transfer from one line to another. To improve ridership and increase efficiency, a plan is needed to coordinate the providers and their respective services to create a seamless transportation experience.

By coordinating transit services throughout the Region and beyond, this plan can improve access to and travel between homes, businesses, education, and health care.



### Coordination Plan for Industry Needs and Higher Education – WestCOG

Throughout the CEDS process, participants identified a disconnect between the programs offered at postsecondary institutions in the Region and the Region’s primary economic clusters, such as Financial and Business Services, IT, and Marketing. This plan would seek to bring stakeholders in industry and education together to focus on creating a “pipeline of employment,” in which students attend a local institution, apprentice and intern locally, and finally graduate prepared to work at a local company. The outcome of this plan would be set of recommendations for educational institutions, companies, and other stakeholders to create and improve the pipeline.

By enabling educational institutions to address the needs of businesses in the region, this plan would create a win-win scenario for stakeholders. Educational institutions would be able to highlight the outcomes of their graduates, and businesses could hire from a pool or prepared young professionals. The recommendations created as a part of this plan will impact the vibrancy of the Region and the stability of its workforce, helping recruit and retain young professionals. Students participating in the pipeline will likely be the greatest beneficiaries of all.

### Regional Tourism Development & Marketing Plan – WestCOG

Western CT has a wealth of tourism and recreation resources, but with the dissolution of the State Tourism Districts these “hidden gems” are at risk of becoming even more deeply buried. The Western CT Region needs a plan to fill the void of the Tourism Districts and to bring newcomers to the area. This plan will identify and work with stakeholders to develop and promote a tourism communications plan.

A plan of this nature impacts the entire Region. It will develop recommendations and action steps that all communities can chose to adopt. Once implemented, these recommendations can positively impact the vibrancy of Western CT’s communities and improve the Region’s reputation.

### Accessible Art Project – Cultural Alliance of Western CT

This is an existing project operating in Danbury and Bethel. The Cultural Alliance is looking to expand to the other 8 towns in the Greater Danbury Area. The Accessible Art Project is designed to make the work of visual artists accessible to new audiences throughout the year and through a network of area business partners who share in the creative and economic values of working together. The Project adds value for the businesses they partner with -by attracting new audiences and helping to create a sense of community.

The Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut helps to make art more accessible through the Accessible Art Project that currently provides over 40 exhibitions within eight private/public venues in Danbury and Bethel. They are looking to expand the Project to ten other locations in the Greater Danbury region. They include storefront window spaces to present creative window installations. Accessible Art promotes economic development and brings life to downtown communities.

Accessible Art Project is designed to make the work of visual artists accessible to new audiences over a calendar year, through a network of area venues who share in the creative and economic values of working together.

### Dredging Boat Feasibility Study – Stamford Partnership

This study would investigate the viability of the acquisition of a dredging barge, so that coastal municipalities can dredge waterway channels

on an on-going basis. The study would also determine if dredge material could be used to shore up barrier islands to prevent coastal erosion during storm surges.

Federal, State, and Local agencies are grappling with the challenge of trying to develop a Long Term Dredge Management Protocol that includes new and beneficial uses of dredged material. The permitting agencies are looking for the opportunity to demonstrate a win/ win for addressing an economic need, keeping recreational and commercial harbors open, while also encouraging responsible, beneficial and cost effective uses of the dredge spoils.

This study has the potential preserve and restore coastal resources and barrier islands if it determines that pumping suitable dredge material from harbor channels to restore the proximate shoreline and barrier islands is appropriate in the southwestern coastal communities.

#### [Regional Agricultural Viability Study - WestCOG](#)

Many of the communities in Western CT developed around farming, however over time there has been a steep decline in the sector in the region. Before this sector is lost in the Region, WestCOG will conduct a study of regional agricultural viability. This study will determine what types of agriculture and what techniques (i.e. biotech, conventional, organic) can be economically viable in this unique area, where land values— but also disposable income and interest in healthy and local food— are high, and markets are close.

Recommendations from this plan may assist in diversifying the local economy, not only through improving conditions for food production, but they may also harness the power of the Local Food Movement, enhancing “agritourism,” and generating interest for secondary products from the industry. For example, people may visit farms where local

honey is used in baked goods or herbs are grown for cosmetic products.

This study impacts the entire Region. It will develop recommendations and action steps tailored to each community that they can chose to adopt. Once implemented, these recommendations can assist in diversifying the economy, improving food security, and improving the vibrancy of Western CT’s communities.

#### [Downtown Danbury TOD Streetscape Renaissance Project – Danbury](#)

The purpose of the project is to improve the physical condition of the built pedestrian environment in downtown Danbury. Other than on North Main Street in 2005, along portions of White Street east of Ives Street in 2008, and the City’s recent refurbishment of the monument pocket park at the intersection of Main and West Streets, there have been no major streetscape improvements constructed in the core of the downtown along the major pedestrian corridors linking land uses to modes of transit since the early 1990s. In the past 25+ years, this pedestrian infrastructure in this area has aged. Routine maintenance has occurred when necessary but sidewalks have deteriorated and trees have outgrown their wells and heaved sidewalks and blocked visible access to downtown land uses. Decorative lighting, a streetscape component used to create an inviting pedestrian-scaled atmosphere along portions of routes connecting key land uses to bus and rail transit, exist sporadically. New major land uses have recently been established in downtown Danbury but the walking routes remain uninviting. Downtown sidewalks on the noted route segments need to be rebuilt to provide better and safer pedestrian access that supports and grows multi-modal use, catalyzes private TOD, adds vibrancy, and ratifies the City’s commitment to reinventing downtown through TOD and responsible growth strategies. The

City of Danbury is committed to creating and encouraging a walkable pedestrian network to and from jobs, retail services, school, housing, recreation opportunities and transit services.

#### Norwalk River Valley - Harbor Loop Trail – Norwalk

The Norwalk River Valley Trail extends from Long Island Sound in Norwalk north along the Norwalk River to Danbury. The trail is multi-modal and serves as a transportation and recreational corridor connecting businesses, residents and workers who prefer to bike or walk to and during the workday and weekends. The trail has various areas that are completed, under design and under construction. The trail is an important economic development asset for all communities along the corridor as it provides an alternative to driving, enhances quality of life and promotes a healthy lifestyle in its communities. The section that this application is in Norwalk along the east and west banks of the Norwalk River where the Maritime Aquarium is located. The DOT's plans for replacement of the Walk Bridge brings this area of the trail to the forefront. Preliminary designs have to be reworked as a result of the Walk Bridge and are currently under way. The area at 40 Cross Street is fully engineered and ready for funding.

#### Wall St Train Station Feasibility Study – Norwalk

The Wall Street area was once the busy downtown of Norwalk where residents and businesses gathered to conduct commerce and entertainment. The historic Wall Street train station once provided direct access from points north (to Danbury) and south (to NYC) but was discontinued. The CT DOT is currently undertaking a major upgrade to the Danbury Dockyards (DD) branch of the rail by electrifying and adding tracks to make the commuter line more efficient and modern.

The City of Norwalk is interested in reviving the Wall Street Train station to provide direct rail access to the downtown from the mainline to its south and to points north which will encourage more businesses and residents to consider locating in this area. The revival of the station is suggested as a multi-modal transportation option in the City's 2015 Economic Development Action Plan and a feasibility study for the revival of the Wall Street Train Station would be the first step to understand the viability of the station.

#### GIG Wi-Fi & LoRAWAN Network - Stamford Partnership

**GIG Wi-Fi** – Stamford, CT is taking a leap into the future by bringing a gigabit Internet connection into the heart of the Innovation District by September 2017. A gigabit network connection is 100 times faster than the average Internet link. It will attract new ideas, mentors and investment. Gigabit access will be available to the Innovation District community and used to power a blazing fast Wi-Fi system in downtown Stamford.

**A Low Power Wide Area Network (LPWAN)** is a specification intended for wireless battery operated devices in a regional, national or global network. offers secure bi-directional communication with a specification that provides seamless interoperability among smart Things without the need of complex local installations. A single gateway can serve an area of up to 3 miles, and the devices connected to the network do not require the provider to dig up the streets in order to deploy Internet of Things devices.

The Partnership will install 6 Point of Presence locations that will selectively broadcast Wi-Fi to a limited area.

Truly smart cities are those with an engaged population, planning for a sustainable future and using urban innovation and smart technology to drive growth. By placing a public

Gig Wi-Fi pilot in place, they are demonstrating that Stamford is leading the way for citizens to develop civic applications that can help solve some of Stamford's social and civic problems.

The project builds on the reputation Stamford already has, and to attract more likeminded entrepreneurs and innovators. The measure of success will be an increase in the City's median income.

Fairfield County has the highest penetration of Broadband in CT. Yet there is still a digital divide within its communities, reflecting that the poorest residents rely on services at public institutions like libraries. The public Gig project will close that digital divide, by providing high-speed broadband 24-7. This is an opportunity to demonstrate to the State how public Wi-Fi at Gig speeds can foster collaboration. Success will be measured by working collaboratively, with initiatives Piloted in Stamford and adopted elsewhere. Residents, workers and visitors, young and old, are empowered by infrastructure that enables them. The community will be able to support the development of a culture and environment that is smart and future-focused.

#### **Fairfield Hills Existing Building Renovations – Newtown**

The Fairfield Hills Campus in Newtown, CT is a 185-acre parcel, and previously housed Fairfield Hills Hospital, a State of CT facility. The hospital closed many years ago, and the property and buildings were purchased by the Town of Newtown for approximately \$4 million dollars. Some development has taken place, but many buildings, contaminated with lead and asbestos, still remain. Having been vacant for over ten years, the buildings are falling into a state of serious disrepair. The Town has invested over \$30 million dollars in the campus since purchasing the property from the State of CT. Renovating buildings on campus is directly in line with the objectives of the Fairfield Hills Master Plan, to make the campus into a

community and economic development destination. Fairfield Hills is a thriving property with a sports facility, town municipal center, ambulance garage, ballfields, numerous social service organization and popular walking trails. It will soon be home to a \$18 million community center and senior center, funded by General Electric and the Town of Newtown. There are two buildings slated for renovation at this time, a duplex and Stratford Hall.

**Duplex / REACH** – Five of the smaller buildings, the 'duplexes' still exist. These buildings, small in comparison with other buildings on campus, present the best opportunity for redevelopment due to the lower cost of renovation. One duplex has been renovated, and discussions with REACH, a Newtown not for profit, are underway to fund another duplex. The Town of Newtown and REACH Newtown have been meeting on a regular basis since early 2016. The project has the support of the Fairfield Hills Authority, Town of Newtown and the Superintendent of the Newtown School District. Working together, REACH and the Town plan to help fund the remediation, renovation and site work necessary to bring REACH's programs to the campus.

REACH serves over 200 children in Newtown through a one-to-one mentorship program two days per week, a tutoring academy that serves academically at-risk children four days per week, a weekend outdoor expedition program and a summer camp throughout the months of July and August.

**Stratford Hall** – This 9,000-square foot building continues to draw interest from investors who wish to turn it into a dining or brewery establishment. The Town realizes that to make this renovation a reality, it must work in conjunction with a private developer to fund the work. The location and building design

make it a highly desirable spot for dining and entertainment.

The Campus is used by thousands of people each year for passive and active recreation as well as cultural events. The Newtown Municipal Center, Newtown Volunteer Ambulance Association, Center for Support and Wellness and Newtown Youth Academy are located on the grounds. Soon, a \$10 million Community Center, funded by General Electric will be under construction. The duplexes and Stratford Hall are targeted as important buildings for renovation, and may be ideal for offices, an innovation center or dining establishment.

Each investment in the campus brings the Town closer to the end goal of a safe, enjoyable, economically productive property, free from blighted buildings.

#### Phase 2 North town Center Streetscape – Brookfield

Phase 2 North Town Center Streetscape is a continuation of the Town Center District streetscape project currently in development. Phase I Town Center streetscape broke ground this summer which kicks off the Town Center revitalization. The project includes sidewalks with granite curbing, pedestrian lighting, cross walks, bike lane, moving of telephone poles and utilities, benches and more. There's development of mixed use facilities going up along Phase I which will bring residents and businesses to use and enjoy the newly constructed streetscape.

Phase 2 North is in the Streetscape development plans which includes sidewalks on both sides of the state road, approximately 1900 linear feet. Bus pullouts are planned in this area to accommodate the residential growth coming over the next years with mixed use development approvals. Phase 2 North would connect the streetscape to an active adult community along Federal Road, Newbury Village. The residents

within the 120-unit active adult community have asked for sidewalks to gain easy access to the commercial area. Across the street from Newbury Village is an approved development of 180 units over commercial space, The Enclave of Brookfield Center. The Town is working closely with the developer to follow the Town's plan as discussions with OSTA finalize.

The lay of the land is more cumbersome in the Phase 2 North area. As a capital improvement project, additional funding support will be needed to assist the municipal financial plan. The topography and narrow road demand retaining walls and property easements. This project will bring great opportunity and enhancements to the Brookfield Town Center.

#### Washington Street Plaza – Norwalk

A city owned plaza located on Washington Street adjacent to a visible office building (50 Washington Street), public parking area (Webster Lot) and one block from the South Norwalk Train Station is slated for an upgrade to accommodate and attract additional programming and contribute to the attractiveness of the SoNo district for businesses, visitors and residents. The South Norwalk Train Station is a gateway to the city and is the main entry point for many who visit the Maritime Aquarium and other attractions in Norwalk and commuters who work at the many businesses in the area and the Rt. 7 corridor. The plaza is located on the west side of Washington Street and with the updated design, additional programming and Wi-Fi access it will attract more workers, residents and visitors to stay and socialize in the area. The planning and design for upgrades to the plaza have been completed. The project involved public input, it received city approvals and some capital improvement project funding to begin the project.

The plaza is in the SoNo TOD and with ongoing improvements made to the adjacent



private office space, can become a major attraction in the SoNo entertainment district. Improvements include new landscaping and hardscaping, lighting, curbing and public amenities.

#### Georgetown Village TOD Plan – Redding

Informed by previous Planning Studies, the existing Master Plan for the redevelopment of the Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill, the adopted Redding Incentive Housing Zone for Georgetown Village, the recently completed Branchville TOD Study in Ridgefield, and the 2008 Redding Plan of Conservation and Development (2018 Redding POCD is in process), the Town of Redding desires to undertake a new planning process for a cohesive suburban, transit oriented village environment anchored by the Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill site (55 acres), the existing Branchville rail station, and the programmed but not funded Georgetown rail station, that would promote economic development, a diversity of housing near transit stations, and livability within the Town of Redding and immediately surrounding areas, and that could have the potential to act in part as a successor Master Plan for the re-development of the Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill site, a historic mill and brownfield site, located within the National Register Historic District of Georgetown, within the Town of Redding.

The Town of Redding proposes that the Georgetown TOD Village will provide a collaborative community based approach to a new plan for the Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill site and the surrounding area, grounded in the best practices of TOD and Smart Growth, one that is based on current economic, socioeconomic and demographic conditions that drive demand for housing, commercial, retail and other types of non-residential uses. The Georgetown TOD Village will be consistent in character with the historic Georgetown and will act to enhance, and not

endanger, the semi-rural environment of Redding.

The existing Master Plan for the Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill site will expire in July 2018.

This proposed Georgetown TOD Village project, located in the geographic center of Fairfield County, will have regional significance. The historic Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill is one of the last intact mill sites in CT and the only one in Fairfield County. This brownfield site, once remediated and redeveloped, has the potential to be a significant economic driver for the region. Georgetown Village sits at the nexus of four of the most prosperous, culturally engaged, and highly educated communities in CT: Redding, Ridgefield, Weston and Wilton. The Georgetown TOD Village is bordered by state roads: Rt. 7, Rt. 57, and Rt. 107 and the Danbury branch rail line runs along the border to Rt. 7 connecting the Village to the Branchville train station in Ridgefield, CT.

#### Transit Oriented Development – Bethel

In 2007, the Planning & Zoning Commission adopted a new Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). The POCD identified 133 acres of land on the east and west side of the Danbury Branch of the Metro North rail line as ideally suited for Transit Oriented Development (TOD). The subject area conveniently surrounds the Bethel Train Station, and consists of outdated, underutilized and incompatible industrial uses. The TOD area would be a natural extension of Bethel's historic downtown center.

Working from the initial identification of the TOD area boundaries, the Commission partnered with the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials to conduct a more detailed analysis of the land. The study looked at the various aspects of a build out. These included densities, a mix of uses, infrastructure needs, traffic, and future tax revenue.



Bethel envisions the first phase of development would begin with the train station parcel itself and adjoining property on the east side of the tracks. Beginning there would not require any substantive infrastructure improvements so development would be financed privately. As construction begins and there is occupancy success both in the residential and commercial portions of the initial development, they envision a demand for approvals of projects on the west side of the tracks, which would then trigger the need for infrastructure investment to provide pedestrian access across the tracks and possibly public parking for train users. The benefit to this project location is that there is an existing road system, public sewer and water service are available to each individual property, and its truly pedestrian friendly; being in walking distance to the train station and the downtown center with regional bus service serving this location.

#### New Milford Riverfront Revitalization Plan - New Milford

In May 2017, the Town appointed a seven member Housatonic Riverfront Revitalization Committee tasked with spearheading the effort of preparing a Housatonic Riverfront Revitalization Master Plan. The Committee is charged with, among other things, determining how to invest in and encourage greater use of the riverfront for public and private development and ensuring the plan compliments and enhances the quality of life and the economy of the Village Center/Downtown. This is a new project, however, various components of the project are underway, such as the New Riverside Park at Young's Field, a riverfront restoration project which includes the second completed 0.25-mile section of the envisioned 13 mile New Milford River Trail. In addition, the Town's Bike and Trail Committee has spearheaded the support and subsequent funding for a preliminary engineering study to extend the

New Milford River Trail, so when complete it will extend the entire length of the Town. In addition, the Greenways Council has recently accepted the nomination of the New Milford River Trail as a CT designated Greenway.

Preparation of a comprehensive New Milford Housatonic Riverfront Revitalization Master Plan is an essential component of the Town's on-going economic development strategy to sustain a vibrant downtown and revitalize the isolated riverfront. The Riverfront is part of a larger vision to focus development within the village center, building on the proximities of intermodal transportation – bus, water and bicycle – and potential future passenger rail. The Riverfront Revitalization Committee has realized the Town's Riverfront, from the Historic Boardman Bridge to the Historic Lover's Leap Bridge, on both sides of the river, needs to be studied as part of a master plan for revitalization of this untapped natural feature that runs through the heart of the community.

#### Expansion of Clarke Business Park – Bethel

The Clarke Business Park in Bethel, CT celebrated its 30-year anniversary in 2014. The development of the park was the result of a partnership between the State of CT and the Town of Bethel. It is located on 644 acres known as the Terra Haute Estate.

In purchasing the property in the 1970's, the Town's vision was to offer Bethel and other area based businesses an opportunity to expand their companies, create employment opportunities, expand the tax base, and preserve a portion of the land in its natural state for passive recreation. Clarke Business Park is now home to over 50 businesses employing more than 1000 people and contributes well over 1 million dollars annually in local tax revenue.

In March 2012, the New England Land Surveying, P.C. prepared a Conceptual Layout Plan for the Bethel Economic Development

Commission illustrating the possible expansion of Clarke Business Park. The Plan illustrates a potential to develop approximately 20 acres in the business park. This expansion has the potential to bring in an additional 50+ new businesses into the park, employ 300+ people, and contribute approximately \$400,000 in tax revenue while still preserving hundreds of acres of open space within the park.

Expansion of the business park will continue to support the town's vision originally set in the 1970's and have local and regional economic significance. This expansion will provide the space and infrastructure to help local and regional businesses and entrepreneurs with cost effective, regionally located space to build and grow their business, create new jobs, encourage new investment, strengthen the community's quality of life, and grow the economy while still protecting its open space.

#### *Suggested Projects*

##### [20 Station Rd. Brownfield Remediation – Brookfield](#)

20 Station Road is a 2.3-acre commercial parcel within the Brookfield Town Center, also known as the "Four Corners". This commercial opportunity was a functioning dry cleaner in the 1960s/1970s. Since then, contamination was found, along with a migrating plume which affected neighboring wells and alerted CT DEEP. Today, the structure is boarded up and is a blighted site sitting within the heart of Brookfield's Town Center. 20 Station Road sits on the corner of Station Road and Laurel Hill Road, a frequently traveled intersection.

The Town of Brookfield is undergoing a revitalization of the Town Center and attracting investors to the area. With the current high development interest to vacant or under developed land in the Town Center, the Town would like to get this parcel back on the tax rolls as a contributing commercial property.

The Downtown revitalization and Brownfield remediation project would bring much relief, visually and financially, to the Town and its residents. With mixed use development under construction across the street, residents will be moving into the neighborhood this winter upon development completion. An action plan to clean up the parcel at 20 Station Road is a priority. The Assessment completion is on target for January 2018. At that point, the remediation cost and action plan will be known.

##### [Explore New Milford: Integrated Marketing Campaign – New Milford](#)

Explore New Milford is Phase Two of an integrated marketing campaign building on the market study and branding strategy prepared for the Town in September 2015. Phase One, implemented in the Spring / Summer 2016, saw the production of signage on the ends of the Town Green and a series of pole banners placed throughout the downtown, in four designs: Dine, Shop, Explore and Discover.

Phase Two – Explore New Milford includes a new website designed to promote tourism and economic development in Town. This will be a website for everyone: Residents, Business-owners and Visitors. Beyond the website, the 'Explore New Milford' campaign will incorporate wayfinding signage along Route 7 and Route 202, the main arteries into the Town from the South and North. Tie-in signage will reinforce the brand, as will print collateral material, such as maps and a tourism booklet. A strategically located kiosk(s) will provide visitors access to ExploreNewMilford.com and an interactive guide to the businesses and notable sites throughout the Town.

##### [Baldwin/Avery Parking Lot Reconstruction – Westport](#)

Two existing parking lots that do not support thru traffic will be consolidated into a single lot that will support thru traffic there by providing an alternative traffic pattern downtown. This

will reduce existing downtown gridlock and enhance the shopping experience. This is consistent the Goal 2-2. The reconfigured parking lot will also address existing flooding conditions that limit use of the parking lot during storm events.

#### Improvements to the Bethel Water System – Bethel

The Bethel water system is an aging system that requires improvements to meet the current demand of water supply, improve water quality, and for future expansion within the town.

The repairs, maintenance and upgrade of the municipal water system is critical to meet the current demand of water supply, improve water quality and improve reliability to customers that expect the water to always be “on” and for future expansion possibilities. These upgrades will create and sustain jobs, encourage new investment, and grow the economy in the region.

#### Stony Hill Sewer Project - Phase IV – Bethel

Stony Hill Sewer Project Phase IV is the final section of sewer construction approved by the Public Utilities Commission. This construction is necessitated due to the density and average age of home constructed in this area. This project would increase service to the highest level allowed by the current sewage agreement with the City of Danbury and align sewer availability with the recently completed build out analysis.

Access for the 80+ households in this area will provide a public health benefit as aging, and in some cases failing, septic systems are taken out of service. Parcels in this area are served by private wells and these would be better protected by sewer availability.

There is also an economic benefit as property values may increase in value and marketability over similar properties served by septic

systems. Connection cost and property benefit assessment, while generally like system replacement, will be a “one time” cost, without the inevitable septic system replacement cost to burden homeowners in the future.

Completion of Phase IV will provide needed infrastructure while protecting public health, increasing property values, and eliminating unplanned expenses by individual homeowners.



# REGIONAL STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS

## Assessment

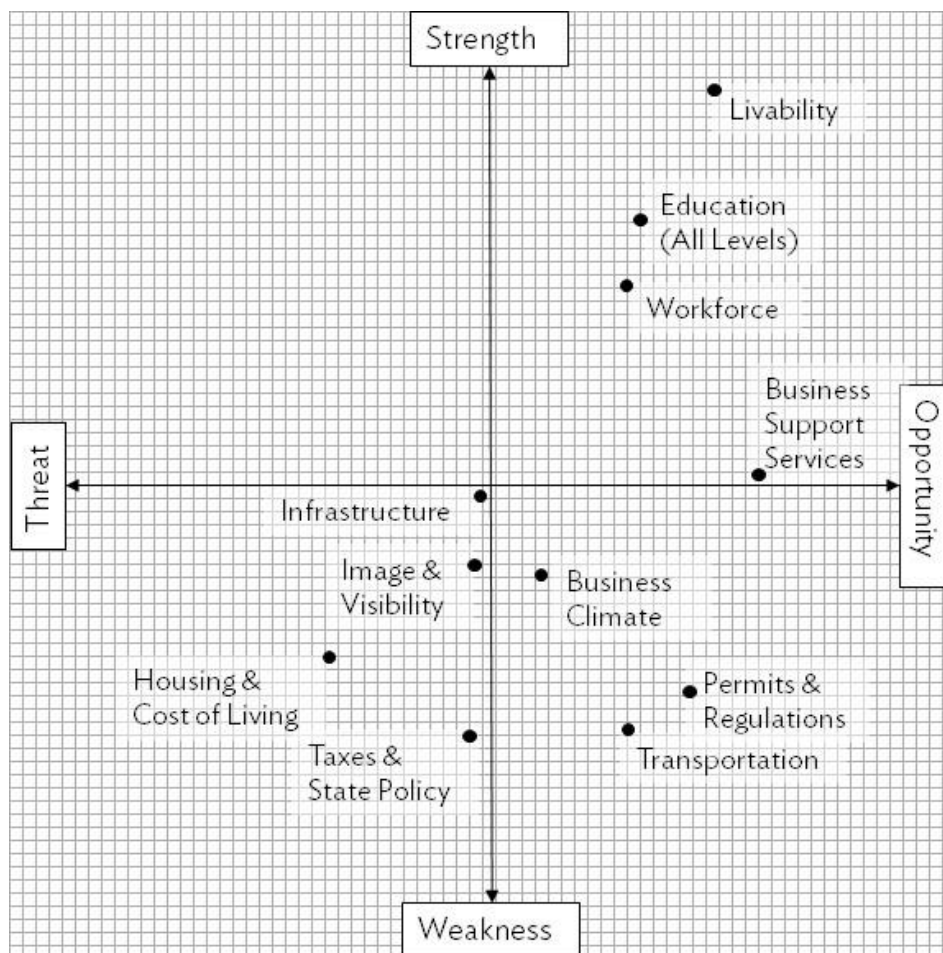
Based on the research conducted during the preparation of this CEDS, a summary listing of Western Connecticut's primary strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOTs) as a location for business was prepared.

The strengths and opportunities help to identify attributes that support business attraction, creation, retention, expansion and transition. The weaknesses and threats help to identify community and regional attributes that

may require attention to improve Western Connecticut's competitiveness. Both provide a foundation for goals and objectives contained in the CEDS.

Below is an approximation of the Region's SWOTs by major themes. The following tables provide SWOTs summaries for each topic, clarifying how the Region fared in each subject.

These opinions were gathered from six industry topic-oriented focus groups and a business survey. More details on this process can be found in the Project Management and Public Participation Process section on page 159, and summaries of each focus group can be found in Appendix B. Items noted in bold were cited by numerous individuals in multiple forums.



## Western Connecticut Strengths and Weaknesses Summary

Business Climate	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low cost for tech businesses</li> <li>• Close to markets in NYC and Boston</li> <li>• Large number of Fortune 500 Companies</li> <li>• Strong mix of industry sectors serving customers in and out of the Region</li> <li>• Proximity to similar businesses</li> <li>• See Workforce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Self-perpetuated negative image of CT as unfriendly to business</b></li> <li>• Success stories are buried while failures are over-exaggerated</li> <li>• Permitting process timeline is often unpredictable. Businesses cannot afford to sit unopened for months; some businesses don't survive</li> <li>• Rent is high for office space and store fronts. (Figure 32) Real estate costs are too high to purchase.</li> <li>• <b>Some banks are hesitant to lend without real estate collateral and other collateral. There is a high barrier of entry</b></li> <li>• High wage industries are in decline</li> <li>• Changing nature of work to more part-time and contract employment</li> <li>• Internet has created global competition</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More aggressively pursue national awards and grants</li> <li>• Create a campaign emphasizing success stories</li> <li>• Create an online clearinghouse of industry specific business resources, entrepreneurial training, and events</li> <li>• Create inventory of vacant commercial space with rent ranges</li> <li>• Tax credits for "angel investors"</li> <li>• Online crowdfunding</li> <li>• See Business Support Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Business friendliness" varies by town</li> <li>• Tax incentive campaigns from other regions to encourage local companies to move</li> <li>• Competition with large chains</li> <li>• Rising costs of employee benefits</li> <li>• Vacancy rates may increase as businesses shift to needing less office space per employee</li> </ul>



Business Support Services	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal and regional organizations each offer a wide variety of support opportunities</li> <li>• Business loan availability</li> <li>• Nationally recognized Workforce Development Board</li> <li>• SCORE, CT Innovations, UCONN, CBIA, CEDF, WBDC, SBDC, etc.</li> <li>• DECD is helpful &amp; knowledgeable</li> <li>• Local business banking services are plentiful &amp; Stamford's DSSD is always available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor communication and compilation of what is available to businesses</li> <li>• Loan applications are difficult to complete</li> <li>• Connecticut has a bad reputation for venture &amp; angel capital, which is not entirely deserved</li> <li>• No marketing funding to promote available programs</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small business owners are looking for guidance on issues ranging from human resources, payroll, legal, and bureaucratic processes</li> <li>• Parking vouchers for small business employees. Train vouchers to encourage public transportation over driving</li> <li>• Networking and skill sharing events</li> <li>• Training to help businesses grow, e.g., how to be competitive in contract bidding process</li> <li>• There is a need for industry- and location-based peer groups in CT to help manufacturers network and strengthen their supply chain.</li> <li>• There is a need for a digital directory of buyers and sellers, goods, and services.</li> <li>• Business owners want the opportunity to meet and network with other manufacturers in the area to share experiences and best practices, and to build stronger sense of community.</li> <li>• Workshops and classes are needed in business accounting and financing e.g., QuickBooks and taxes, as well as marketing and new technologies</li> <li>• Best practices for municipalities to promote business resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The day to day tasks of running a business (accounting, taxes, payroll) takes away from the core competency</li> <li>• Funding cuts to current services</li> </ul>

## Workforce – Retention & Recruitment

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Resident workforce is well-educated and creative</b></li> <li>• Resident employees are a good value for the skill level they possess</li> <li>• No accents, which is good for call centers and customer service providers</li> <li>• Stamford is a leader in keeping young talent in the State</li> <li>• <b>The population is culturally diverse</b></li> <li>• Nationally recognized Workforce Development Board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees, especially those with niche skills, are becoming harder to find</li> <li>• The “silver tsunami” is already here; large portion of employees are retiring and there are few younger employees to replace them</li> <li>• Younger generations have not been exposed to manufacturing or trade skills at an early age and are unable make informed choices on that career path</li> <li>• Colleges in the Region are not preparing workers with skills needed for many technologies</li> <li>• Lack of understanding of effective retraining programs</li> <li>• <b>High cost of living yields higher salary demands; burden for employers</b></li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Businesses are learning to market themselves and recruit talent, especially embracing digital recruitment</li> <li>• Employers see benefit in having internship/apprenticeship programs; many hire those interns on full time</li> <li>• Some municipalities are increasing downtown density and focusing on transit-oriented development</li> <li>• <b>There is a need for workforce and incentive housing</b></li> <li>• There is a need for retraining programs for professionals to grow their skills and adapt to changing markets</li> <li>• There is a need for entry level jobs with opportunities for advancement</li> <li>• Programs which eliminate risk in hiring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High cost of living, rent, and student loan burdens make it difficult for young professionals to choose jobs in the Region</b></li> <li>• Older residents leaving for states with lower cost of living, especially states with lower tax burdens</li> <li>• “Unskilled” jobs may become harder to fill</li> <li>• Narrowing of the Middle Class</li> <li>• Rising costs of employee benefits</li> </ul>

## Permits & Regulations

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows municipalities control over businesses' impact on the community</li> <li>• Creates communities with high quality of life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permitting process timeline is often unpredictable. Businesses cannot afford to sit unopened for months; some businesses do not survive</li> <li>• State and local zoning regulations inhibit live music, "boutique manufacturing," and hybrid businesses like brewpubs</li> <li>• Healthcare regulations increase the cost of doing business</li> <li>• Inefficient regulation</li> <li>• Poor interactions with municipal staff</li> <li>• There is shortfall of training and guidance on regulations and licensing processes – especially for those without a college degree and immigrants</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create procurement policy which prefers local business</li> <li>• Tax credits for updating and maintaining facades and open spaces</li> <li>• Tax credits for businesses who host STEAM training for high school students</li> <li>• Support businesses who hire interns and apprentices</li> <li>• Exempt new businesses from paying business entity tax for first year or two</li> <li>• Training on zoning and regulations for entrepreneurs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market places and business models are changing faster than the regulations</li> <li>• Locations with more relaxed regulations and faster permit approvals encouraging businesses to leave the Region</li> <li>• SBA loans are expensive and difficult to administer; the process should be more user friendly and streamlined</li> <li>• Lack of focused and sustained response to the impact of regulations on business creation and growth</li> </ul>

## Taxes & State Policy

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taxes are a good return on investment; has led to top quality schools and high quality of life</li> <li>• Cheaper than New York and similar rate to other surrounding areas</li> <li>• Provides good local services (police, fire, solid waste, recreation, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Taxes are too high</b></li> <li>• There is a lack of coordination between all levels of government and the private sector</li> <li>• Spending is not productive</li> <li>• “Tax policy guides investment policy,” and CT is focusing on the wrong things</li> <li>• State offices do not work in the best interest of Western CT municipalities</li> <li>• <b>There is a disconnect between Fairfield County and Hartford</b></li> <li>• One party rule has led to stagnant ideas</li> <li>• Required teaching certificates prevent industry professionals from giving instruction in public schools</li> <li>• State and local zoning regulations inhibit live music, “boutique manufacturing,” and hybrid businesses like brewpubs</li> <li>• Sales tax code is confusing and revenue opportunities are being missed</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing the sources of municipal funding streams; not only property tax</li> <li>• Tax credits for updating and maintaining facades and open spaces</li> <li>• Tax credits for businesses who host STEAM training for high school students</li> <li>• Exempt new businesses from paying business entity tax for first year or two</li> <li>• Create procurement policy which prefers local business</li> <li>• Study of difference in tax burden between the Region and its neighbors</li> <li>• Develop a “Common App” for applying to grants</li> <li>• Capacity to create Tax Increment Financing districts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Businesses continue to leave the state for less expensive areas</li> <li>• Other regions are actively contacting and incentivizing businesses in the Region to move</li> <li>• Funding cuts limiting support from the State and limiting creative policy making</li> <li>• High location costs and high taxes exacerbate negative perception</li> </ul>

## Transportation

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connection to NYC (rail and highway) provides a vital link for businesses</li> <li>• The Northeast Corridor is one of the most used rail lines in the nation</li> <li>• Established municipal transit</li> <li>• Commuter rail connections (Metro North &amp; Amtrak)</li> <li>• Access to and choice of multiple international airports</li> <li>• Density for ridesharing platforms and other apps (Uber, Lyft, ect.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CT ranked longest commute times compared to other states</li> <li>• Highway congestion inhibits the flow of goods and raises costs for the seller and the distributor, making the products more expensive overall</li> <li>• Congestion is a bad impression for incoming clients, as well as businesses looking to come to the area</li> <li>• It is difficult to reach major airports due to traffic</li> <li>• Insufficient rail station parking</li> <li>• Rail travel is expensive</li> <li>• Perception of bus travel as only for the poor</li> <li>• Lack of bike lanes</li> <li>• Branches on the New Haven Rail Line are slow and unreliable, and with not enough service</li> <li>• Towns in the northern end of the Region lack adequate public transit</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Danbury and Stamford need to be better connected - Super 7, electrify Danbury Branch</li> <li>• Improvements to the I-95/New Haven rail line corridor and I-84</li> <li>• Operational and capital improvements</li> <li>• Generational shift away from long commutes and towards "walkable" commutes and better public transportation</li> <li>• Stronger connection to Long Island</li> <li>• Improvement to airport access</li> <li>• Development/ expansion of the Danbury Airport and others nearby (Stewart, Oxford, etc.)</li> <li>• Expansion of electric vehicle charging stations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding cuts</li> <li>• Loss of bus service between this Region and the Bridgeport area.</li> <li>• High cost of living, rent, etc. make it difficult for many professionals to live in the Region, causing longer commutes and more congestion.</li> <li>• Freight rail accidents</li> <li>• Locations with stronger public transit are attracting young talent to leave the Region</li> </ul>

Infrastructure	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality aquifers</li> <li>• Telecommunication and utilities are reliable</li> <li>• Stamford has gigabit service</li> <li>• Few cell phone “dead zones”</li> <li>• Community Infrastructure (Chamber of Commerce, libraries, public/private community centers, volunteer organizations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cost of utilities is too high, especially electric</li> <li>• Not much competition/choice between providers.</li> <li>• Infrastructure is old and needs maintenance</li> <li>• Stamford’s gigabit service is expensive</li> <li>• There is a need for FINRA and HIPPA compliant broadband</li> <li>• CT is zoned for providers, reducing competition</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative sources of energy</li> <li>• Identifying and developing “complete streets” for every municipality</li> <li>• High speed Wi-Fi in public spaces like libraries</li> <li>• Libraries becoming business resource centers</li> <li>• </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate change and increasingly severe weather patterns</li> <li>• Outdated electric grid</li> <li>• Traditional energy providers are not able/willing to provide or compete with alternative forms of energy</li> <li>• Infrastructure capacity (i.e. sewer treatment) may be reached or exceeded</li> </ul>



## Primary (K-12) Education

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality public and private education</li> <li>• Many students are prepared for college</li> <li>• Two vocational high schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• K - 12 experience varies by community, some schools, especially in urban areas, are underserved</li> <li>• Vocational training is limited</li> <li>• Required teaching certificates prevent industry professionals from giving instruction in public schools</li> <li>• Lack of STEAM programs in many public schools, as well as programs in personal and business finance</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start to include education that supports multiple career paths e.g. shop class, auto shop, home economics, etc.</li> <li>• More integration with local universities and community colleges</li> <li>• Allowing professionals or specialists to get a modified teaching certificate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State funding cuts</li> <li>• Declining enrollment to support schools</li> </ul>

## Postsecondary (After High School) Education

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many colleges of different “calibers” and focuses</li> <li>• Variety in options: Norwalk Community College, University of Connecticut - Stamford, Naugatuck Valley Community College - Danbury, Western Connecticut State University, and Sacred Heart University-Stamford.</li> <li>• Advanced Manufacturing Center at the Naugatuck Valley Community College and medical research at the University of Bridgeport (out of Region)</li> <li>• There is a good relationship between the Video/ Visual industry (NBC, WWE, etc.) and the UConn digital media program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost barrier to students is consistently growing</li> <li>• Not preparing students adequately for the workplace</li> <li>• Colleges in the Region are not preparing workers with skills needed for many technologies</li> <li>• CT has the highest average rate of student debt</li> <li>• No research university in the Region</li> <li>• Top-tier schools in CT are too expensive</li> <li>• There are not strong connections between the schools and their surrounding communities</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate more with regional industry to train and retrain workforce</li> <li>• Expanding vocational training</li> <li>• Market vocational programs better</li> <li>• Development of industry endorsed micro-degrees</li> <li>• Incentivize apprenticeships and internships</li> <li>• Incentivize graduates to stay in CT</li> <li>• Expansion of online education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Graduates from CT schools leaving the state</li> </ul>

## Housing & Cost of Living

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality housing stock that has maintained median value (See Figure 29)</li> <li>• The rental market is strong especially in Stamford and Norwalk</li> <li>• There is a diversity of housing options and lifestyle choices (urban vs. rural, coast vs. hills)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing costs are very high, making it difficult to recruit and retain talent</li> <li>• Houses are selling slowly</li> <li>• Lack of workforce housing</li> <li>• Financing and permitting is difficult to obtain for non-family households</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of new units for changing market</li> <li>• Changing zoning to increase density of lower cost housing</li> <li>• Improving senior housing options</li> <li>• Allowing accessory units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incoming generations may not want to buy large, high priced homes</li> <li>• Ownership trend is slowing</li> <li>• Aging population downsizing and leaving</li> <li>• Municipalities are dependent on property taxes as main source of revenue</li> </ul>

Livability	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Quality of Life</li> <li>• Communities people want to live in and maintain</li> <li>• Beautiful landscapes</li> <li>• Cultural diversity</li> <li>• Access to travel destinations and amenities in and out of the Region</li> <li>• Location between Boston and NYC</li> <li>• Educated population and good schools</li> <li>• Mass transit</li> <li>• Safe</li> <li>• Clean</li> <li>• Strong Arts community</li> <li>• Strong avenues for business networking and community engagement</li> <li>• Weather is mild, 4-seasons and few severe storms</li> <li>• Some attractive housing for young professionals and retirees is being built.</li> <li>• Healthy towns/state</li> <li>• Ample and varied outdoor recreation, especially water recreation on the Long Island Sound</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Cost of Living</li> <li>• High overhead and cost of doing business</li> <li>• Taxes</li> <li>• Communities not evenly serviced by transit</li> <li>• Traffic and congestion</li> <li>• High housing cost</li> <li>• Much of the Region is car dependent</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a need for a large research university</li> <li>• Large wealthy population with disposable income creating a demand for specialty goods</li> <li>• Local teens provide needed (tech) skills at affordable cost</li> <li>• Young people and retirees want to live in walkable communities.</li> <li>• Employers want employees to use public transit.</li> <li>• The Region is missing the opportunity to take the lead on technology, medical, research, and science</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aging population will choose to spend their golden years in a less expensive location</li> <li>• Young professionals may no longer choose the Region as the suburban alternative to NYC</li> </ul>

Image & Visibility	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reputation as affluent, clean, and safe area</li> <li>• Variety of beautiful natural landscapes (beaches, hills, lakes, valleys)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative image of manufacturing as dirty, “lesser” work</li> <li>• False perception that manufacturing is dead and never coming back</li> <li>• Industry is being “zoned out” of towns</li> <li>• Narrative that CT is unfriendly to business</li> <li>• Reputation of Fairfield County as <i>exclusively</i> rich and white.</li> <li>• Fairfield County has the highest income disparity in the US</li> <li>• CT has less resources than NYC</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power to promote business successes to remedy current narrative</li> <li>• Promote cultural diversity &amp; educated workforce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perpetuating anti-business CT image</li> <li>• Campaigns that incentivize companies to relocate out of CT</li> </ul>

## The Urban Difference

While many aspects of the SWOT Analysis hold true in all the municipalities in the Western Connecticut Region, the three cities, Danbury, Norwalk, and Stamford, have some significant differences compared to the suburban towns.

### Population

Unlike in other areas of the Region, the population of young professionals and the general population is growing in the Region's cities and faster than its suburban counterparts. See Figure 3. The cities also are more diverse and younger than the surrounding towns.

### Development

While construction and development have slowed in much of the Region, the cities largely buck that trend. Over 6,000 units of housing have been built in Stamford in the last two decades and in Norwalk over 3,000 units. Notable developments include Harbor Point in Stamford's South End, with 2,360 units

constructed and more than 2,000 planned, and 1 million square feet of retail and office space. In Norwalk, Waypointe District has completed 431 apartments plus 50,000 square feet of commercial space, with 383 units and 70,000 square feet of commercial planned.

### Education

Respondents to the Business Survey and participants in the Focus Groups indicated that while K-12 schools throughout the Region are good, however schools in urban areas tend not to have the same amenities and performance as suburban schools. Some evidence of this trend can be seen in Figure 27.

The cities offer all the options for vocational and post-secondary training in the Region as seen in Figure 26.

### Nightlife & Entertainment

In contrast to the bedroom like nature of the suburban communities, the Region's cities offer a variety of year-round nightlife and entertainment options.



Snap shots from the Focus Groups.  
Photo Credit: Chris Bosak, Hearst Connecticut Media; Tony Spinelli, Wilton Bulletin



## REGIONAL ANALYSIS

### Data Profile

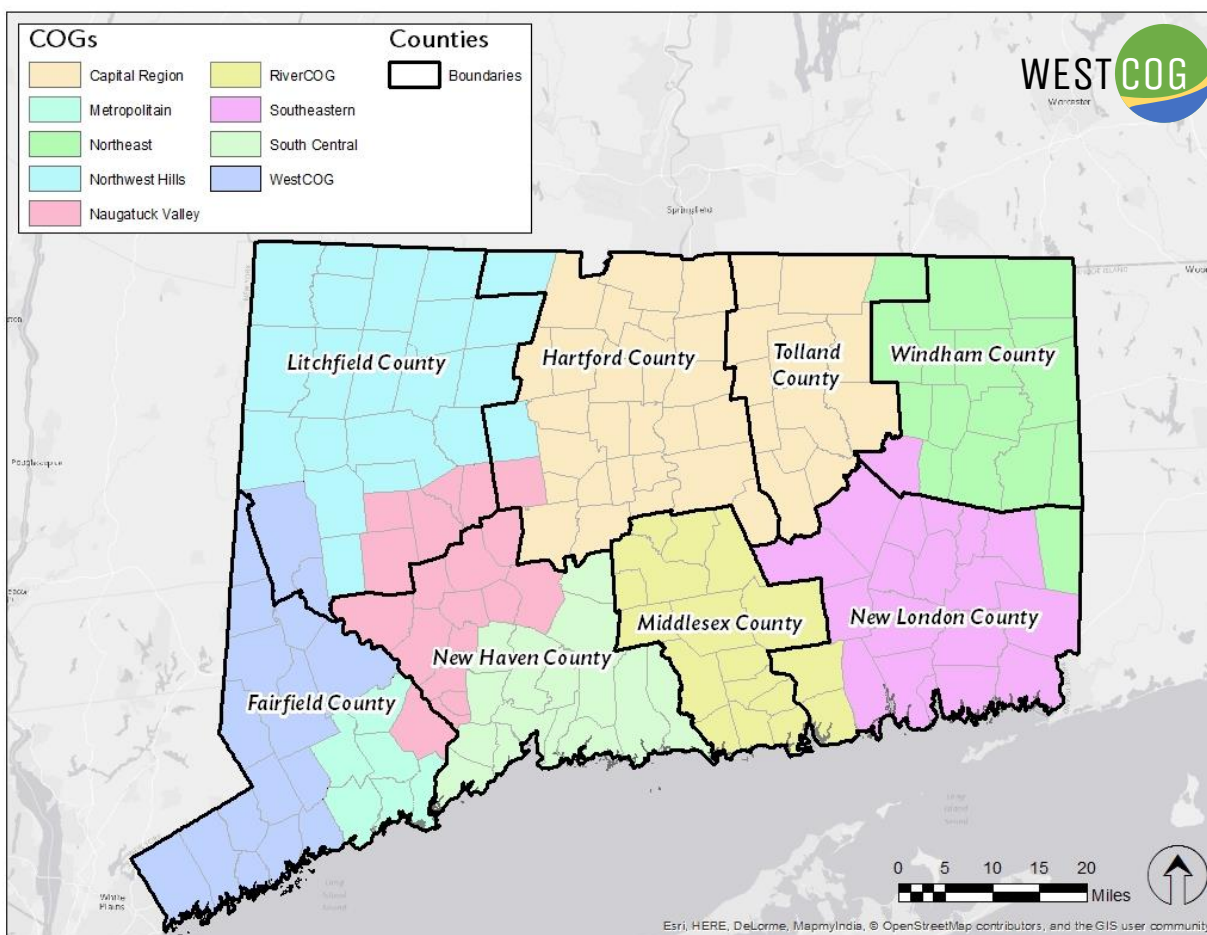
This portion of the CEDS provides an economic and demographic profile of the Region and its communities, prepared by WestCOG staff in 2016 based on the best available information at that time, with some additional information gathered from other sources by the staff of the Small Business Development Center.

A review of data relating to a local or regional economy is an early step in the consideration and evaluation of a location by businesses

looking for a new location or comparing their current location with alternatives.

The Western Connecticut Region comprises eighteen (18) communities located in two counties<sup>1</sup>, as shown in the map in **Figure 1**. Today, Connecticut's counties exist as purely historical vestiges. Connecticut's regional affairs are now primarily managed by Councils of Governments (COGs) that are authorized by the State to perform many administrative functions that counties once did, however COGs are directed by a board of the chief elected officials from their constituent municipalities.

Figure 1: Connecticut COGs and Counties



<sup>1</sup> County government was abolished in CT in 1955, however data and reports are often created for these geographic areas. The CT property management and deed system also remains tied to county identifications.

## Demographic Analysis

The demographic analysis section of this report presents key findings of relevant demographic indicators at the municipal and regional level using the latest data to provide a snapshot of information, and/or show a trend of data over time. The main data source for the trend analysis is the American Community Survey Five-Year 2010–2014. Where applicable, Western Connecticut municipal and regional data are compared to neighboring geographies, Connecticut, and the United States.

### Demographic Analysis Key Findings

- The population in the Western Connecticut Region has grown faster than the State of Connecticut since 2010, implying the Region is an attractive place to live.
- The Western Connecticut Region has an older population, especially in the suburban municipalities. The Region has a larger portion of adults 45–54 in its population than Connecticut and the United States.
- The Western Connecticut Region's aging population means that there will be changes in future workforce dynamics, consumer spending trends, and government services. Predicted changes include fewer workers in the Western Connecticut Region to fill labor market gaps left by the ageing population, softer consumer spending trends due to more individuals living on fixed incomes after retirement, more individuals dependent on Medicare benefits, and more demands for an array of health and social services.
- There is a marked difference between the household median incomes of urban and suburban municipalities in the Western Connecticut Region. Median household income in Danbury,

Norwalk, and Stamford is lower than in other municipalities in the Western Connecticut Region; Danbury is the only municipality in the Region with a median income lower than that of Connecticut. On the other end of the spectrum, municipalities, such as Darien, New Canaan, and Weston, have higher median household incomes than other municipalities in the Western Connecticut Region.

- Educational attainment varies by municipality, which suggests that the Western Connecticut Region has an array of occupational skill sets. Danbury, Norwalk and Stamford have low educational attainment relative to the Western Connecticut Region, while municipalities, such as Darien, Weston, and Westport, have very high educational attainment levels.
- The low retail vacancy rate across Fairfield County indicates a strong and stable retail market.

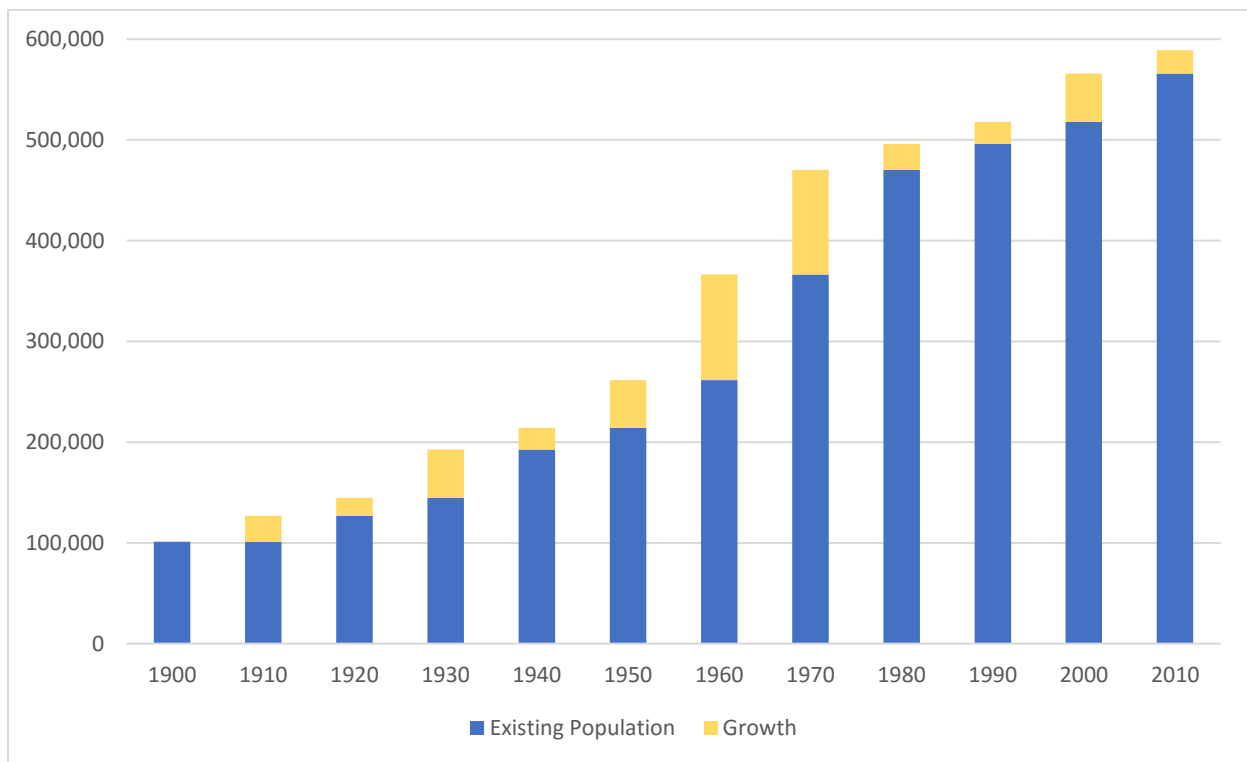
### Summary of Key Findings

In conclusion, the population of the Western Connecticut Region, overall, is older, less racially diverse, more highly educated, and has a lower rate of poverty, and a higher median income than Connecticut. However, the Western Connecticut Region also has many variations in terms of household median income, poverty, and educational attainment levels between the cities and the suburbs. Going forward, these issues should be addressed to sustain the economic strengths of the Western Connecticut Region.

## Population

As seen in **Figure 2** the Western Connecticut Region has experienced a rapid rate of population growth nearly every decade until 1980. Most notably, from 1950 to 1960 and from 1960 to 1970 the Region grew by over 100,000 people (40 percent and 28.4 percent growth, respectively). After 1980, regional growth slowed; between 4 and 10 percent per decade, or 21,887 to 48,002 people. This may reflect a change in the regional economy, and/or a scarcity of space and infrastructure resulting in increased costs.

**Figure 2: Population and Population Growth of the Western CT Region, 1900-2010**



Source: Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, Connecticut Population by Town 1900-1960, Connecticut Population by Town 1970-2000, US Census 2010

Figure 3 shows that in 2014, the population of the Western Connecticut Region was estimated as 600,080, with Stamford accounting for the largest portion of the population, 20 percent. Many municipalities grew between 2010 and 2014, notably Bethel

with 2.7 percent. The only municipality to experience a loss in population was New Milford, which shrank by just over 1 percent. The Region as a whole grew by 1.9 percent, a faster rate than Connecticut as a whole, which only saw 0.5 percent population growth.

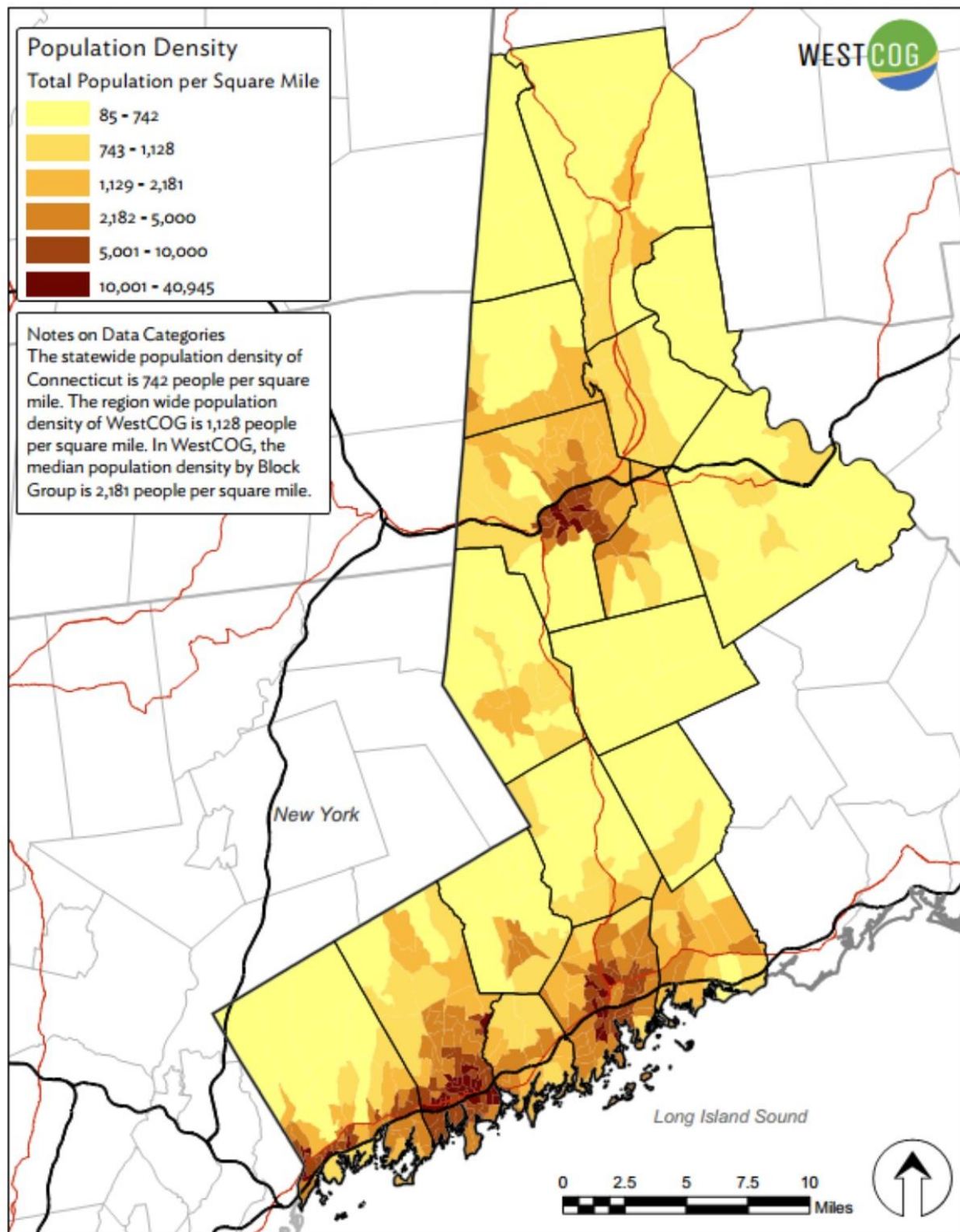
Figure 3: Population and Population Growth of the Western CT Region, 2010–2014

Municipalities	2010	2014	Absolute Change	Percent Change
New Milford	28,142	27,821	-321	-1.1%
Bridgewater	1,727	1,747	20	1.2%
Sherman	3,581	3,636	55	1.5%
Redding	9,158	9,267	109	1.2%
Weston	10,179	10,319	140	1.4%
New Fairfield	13,881	14,079	198	1.4%
Brookfield	16,452	16,774	322	2.0%
New Canaan	19,738	20,073	335	1.7%
Ridgefield	24,638	25,025	387	1.6%
Newtown	27,560	27,960	400	1.5%
Wilton	18,062	18,519	457	2.5%
Darien	20,732	21,190	458	2.2%
Bethel	18,584	19,078	494	2.7%
Westport	26,391	27,055	664	2.5%
Greenwich	61,171	62,141	970	1.6%
Norwalk	85,603	87,214	1,611	1.9%
Danbury	80,893	82,781	1,888	2.3%
Stamford	122,643	125,401	2,758	2.2%
<b>WestCOG</b>	<b>589,135</b>	<b>600,080</b>	<b>10,945</b>	<b>1.9%</b>
Connecticut	3,574,097	3,592,053	17,956	0.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 and 2010–2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 4 shows population density within the Region. As expected, the major population concentrations are in urban areas and downtowns, as well as clustered around transportation infrastructure.

Figure 4: Population Density in the Western CT Region by Block Group



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 and 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 5 shows the Western Connecticut Region’s population growth in comparison to other regions. These regions were chosen because of their proximity to and/or employment concentrations for Western Connecticut residents. The Western Connecticut Region population grew at an equal rate to Fairfield County and a faster rate than Litchfield, New Haven, and Westchester Counties from 2010 to 2014. However, the Western Connecticut Region grew at a slightly slower rate than New York County. The Western Connecticut Region population also grew at a faster rate than Connecticut’s total population.

Figure 5: Comparative Population Growth by Region

Region	2010	2014	Absolute Change	Percent Change
WestCOG	589,135	600,080	10,945	1.9%
Fairfield County	916,829	934,215	17,386	1.9%
Litchfield County	189,927	187,542	-2,385	-1.3%
New Haven County	862,477	863,148	671	0.1%
New York County	1,585,873	1,618,398	32,525	2.1%
Westchester County	949,113	962,319	13,206	1.4%
Connecticut	3,574,097	3,592,053	17,956	0.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 and 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



## Median Age

Most municipalities in the Western Connecticut Region have a population older than that of Connecticut (40.3), with the exception of the cities of Danbury, and Stamford, and the town of Darien (36.8, 36, and 39.1 respectively) (Error! Reference source not found.). The cities' younger populations are expected because cities tend to attract younger individuals.

A possible reason as to why cities in the Region have lower median ages is because of the university and college presence. Danbury is home to Western Connecticut State University (WCSU), which has approximately 6,200 students; and Naugatuck Valley Community College (Danbury branch), which has approximately 1,000 students. Stamford hosts two campuses as well, one University of Connecticut branch with approximately 1,300 students and a graduate branch of Sacred Heart University. Norwalk is also home to Norwalk Community College, with approximately 6,700 students. However, these schools are largely non-residential. It should be noted that students living away from their family homes for academic purposes are counted at the on or off-campus address where they are living. Another possible reason these cities have lower median ages is that these cities have more diverse and affordable housing options, which are ideal for professionals beginning their careers and for new immigrants (Figure 28, Figure 30).

It is important to note that Connecticut has an older population relative to other states.

According to the Connecticut Commission on Aging, Connecticut is the seventh oldest state in the Nation by median age. Most municipalities in the Western Connecticut Region have a higher median age than that of Connecticut. The suburban and rural municipalities in the Region tend to have a higher median age than the Region's cities

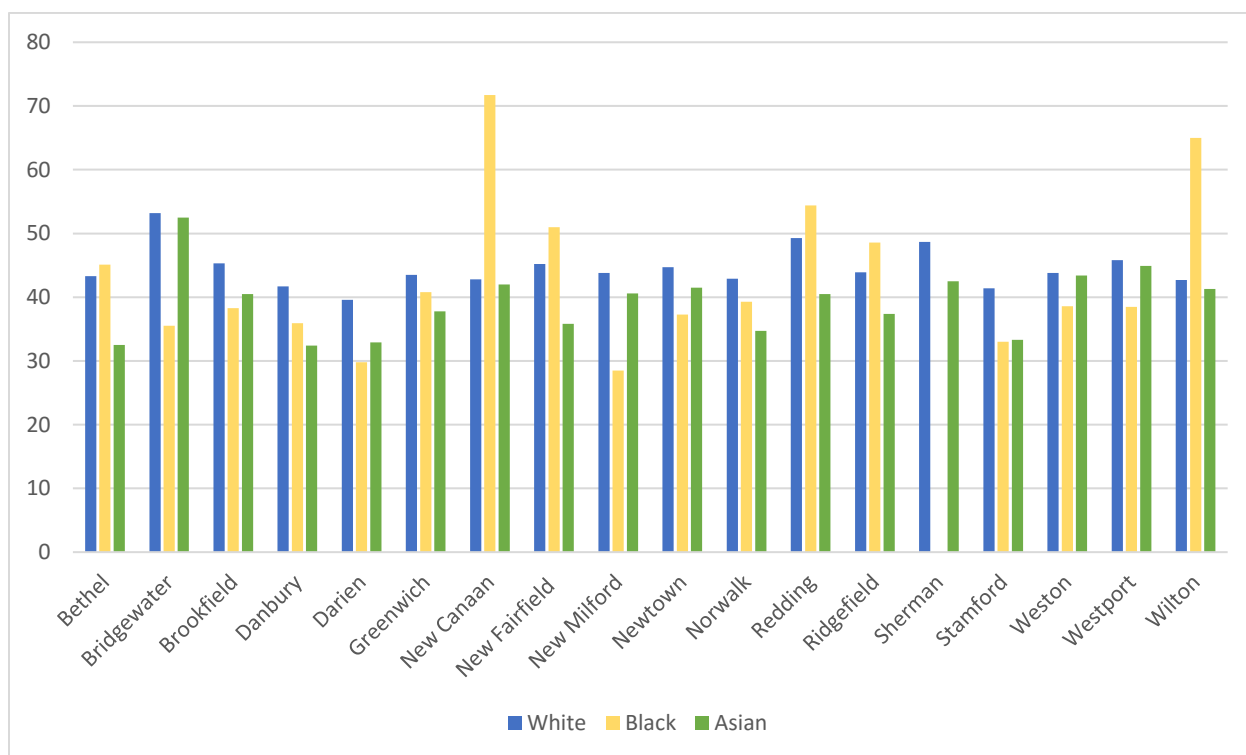
Figure 6: Comparative Median Age in the Western CT Region by Municipality

Municipality/ State	Median Age (Years)
Stamford	36.0
Danbury	36.8
Darien	39.1
<b>Connecticut</b>	<b>40.3</b>
Norwalk	40.8
New Milford	42.0
Greenwich	42.1
Wilton	42.2
Bethel	42.3
New Canaan	42.7
Weston	43.3
Ridgefield	43.4
Newtown	43.8
New Fairfield	43.9
Brookfield	44.6
Westport	45.3
Sherman	48.2
Redding	48.8
Bridgewater	52.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

In the majority of Western Connecticut municipalities, the population of White people is older than the populations of Black and Asian people (Figure 7). However, in Bethel, New Canaan, New Fairfield, Redding, Ridgefield, and Wilton the population of Black people is older. Although, this perspective may be of limited consequence because in these communities the population of Black people is very small.

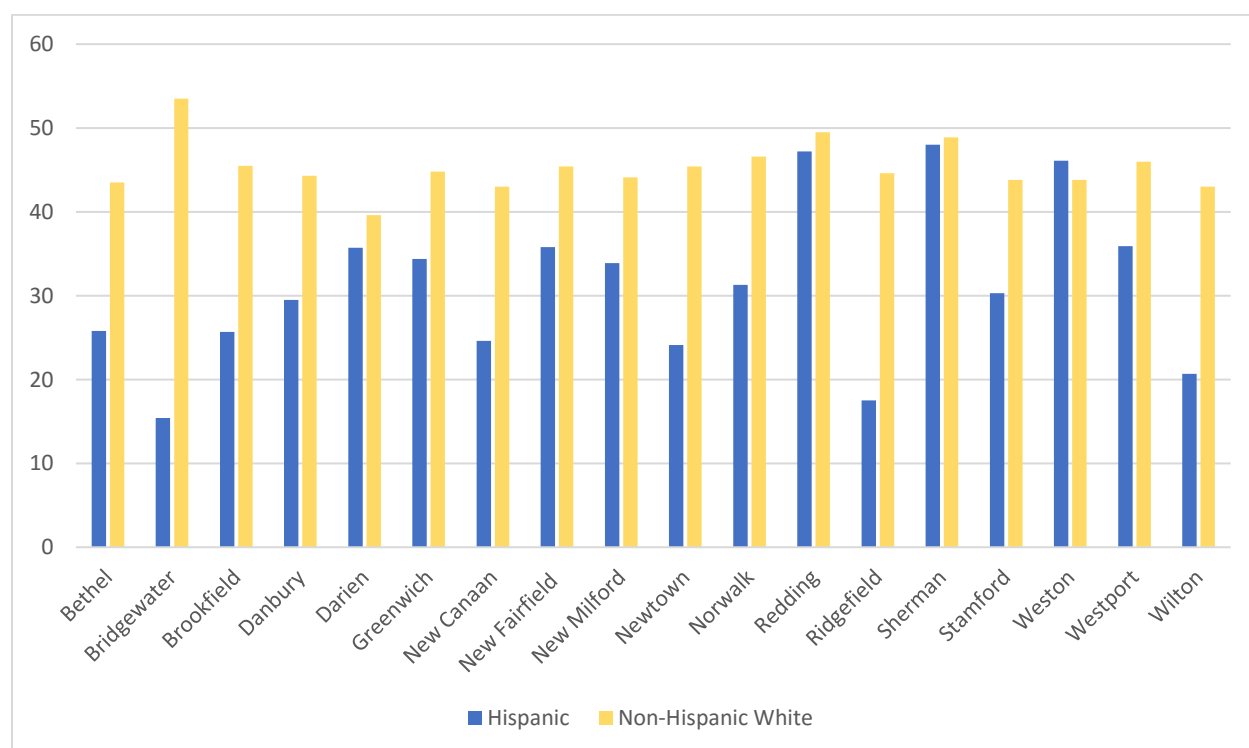
Figure 7: Western CT Municipalities Median Age by Race



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

When observing median age of the population of Hispanic/ Latino people in comparison to the population of non-Hispanic/ Latino people, it is clear from **Figure 8** that the population of Hispanic/ Latino people is younger in most municipalities in Western Connecticut. Only in Weston is the population of Hispanic/ Latino people older than the population of non-Hispanic White people. In municipalities, such as Bridgewater and Ridgefield, the median age for Hispanic people is under 20 years of age. This indicates that there are workforce segmentations because persons with a median age under 20 will have a shorter duration of work experience and possibly less advanced skill sets. This also might imply significant income differences between the two groups (Figure 19).

**Figure 8: Western CT Municipalities Median Age by Ethnicity**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

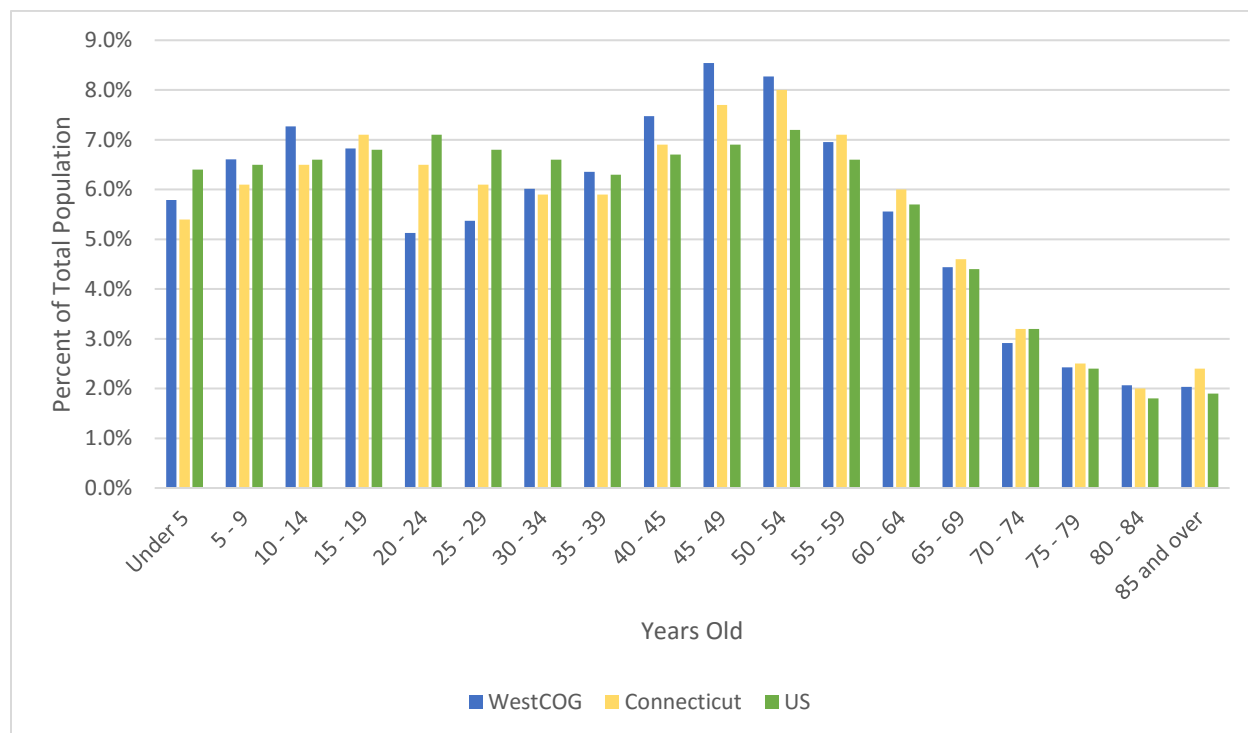
## Age Distributions

According to **Figure 9**, the Western Connecticut Region has notably larger shares of persons in the 45 to 54 age demographic in comparison to the United States and to Connecticut. These age group categories typically consist of individuals who are working and, additionally, have a number of years of work experience.

A likely reason as to why the Western Connecticut Region has a slightly higher percentage of older individuals, especially in the 45 to 54 age cohort, is the combination of the national trend of the aging ‘baby boomer’ population and that most who live in the Western Connecticut Region live in the suburbs, which is typical of older, more settled individuals and families.

In contrast, the Western Connecticut Region has smaller shares of persons in the 20 to 29 age cohort in comparison to the United States and Connecticut. A likely reason for that is this age group finds less expensive housing more attractive, and the Western Connecticut Region has some of the most expensive housing in the State and the Nation (Figure 29). For age categories under 19 years, the Western Connecticut Region has similar age distributions to that of the United States and Connecticut. Furthermore, when analyzing **Figure 9**, it is clear that there are smaller percentages of younger age cohorts to fill in for the gap potentially left by the baby boomer population when they retire.

**Figure 9: Western CT Region, Connecticut, and United States Age Distribution, 2014**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010–2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

It is predicted that this population growth trend of older residents will continue as more baby boomers reach retirement age. This finding indicates that more people in the Western Connecticut Region will be living on fixed incomes in the near future. It also means that the population will demand more healthcare and will depend on social assistance services as they age.

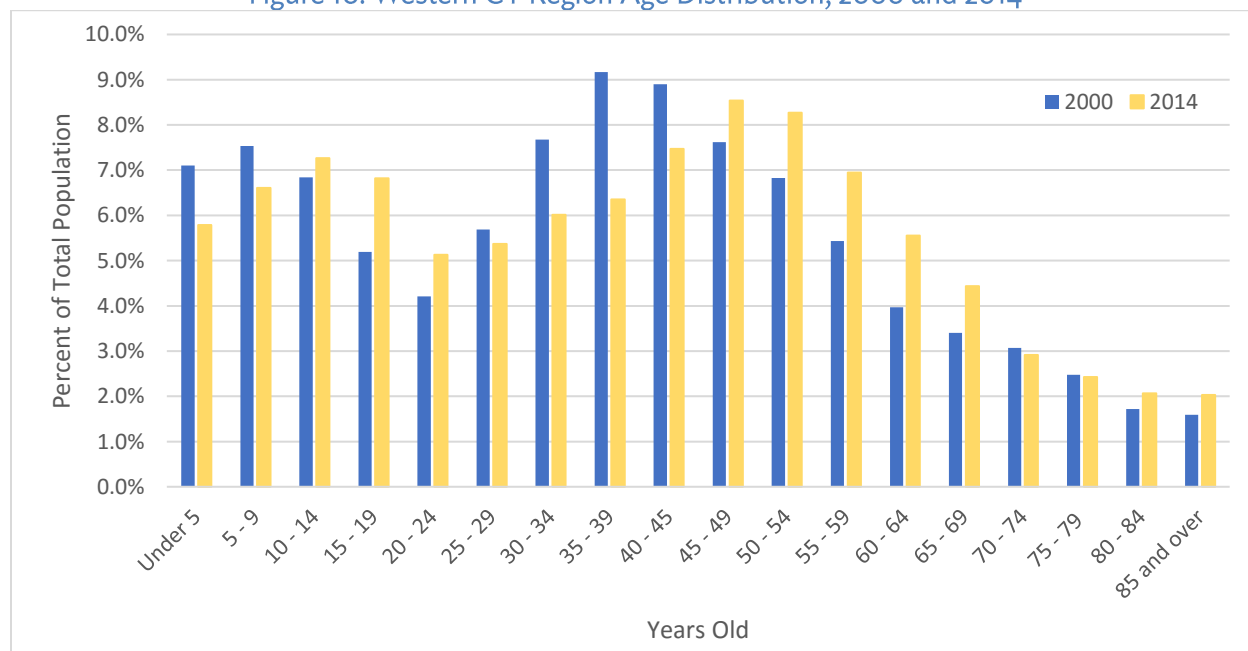
Persons living on fixed income typically spend less because they are no longer generating wealth or generating as much wealth as they did when they were working. This implies that persons living on fixed incomes will have less consumer spending power. This predicted change in consumer spending patterns will likely affect the retail trade sector in the Western Connecticut Region the most. The Retail Trade sector is a major component of the economy in the Western Connecticut Region. Consequently, strategies should be implemented that retain consumer spending in retail establishments by incentivizing persons from nearby geographies.

The second implication from the aging population is that the aging population will demand more health services.

The employment growth of the Healthcare and Social Assistance sector in the Western Connecticut Region, coupled with the growing aging population, in comparison to other regions, implies that the Western Connecticut Region has the potential to be a regional economic hub in this sector. This means that the Western Connecticut Region must implement growth strategies that target employment in this industry.

When analyzing population distribution by age over time, in **Figure 10**, it is clear that the Western Connecticut Region population has experienced a demographic shift. In comparison to 2000, the population of each cohort under age 50 was not maintained in 2014 as they aged. However, populations in the cohorts over 50 years old increased.

**Figure 10: Western CT Region Age Distribution, 2000 and 2014**



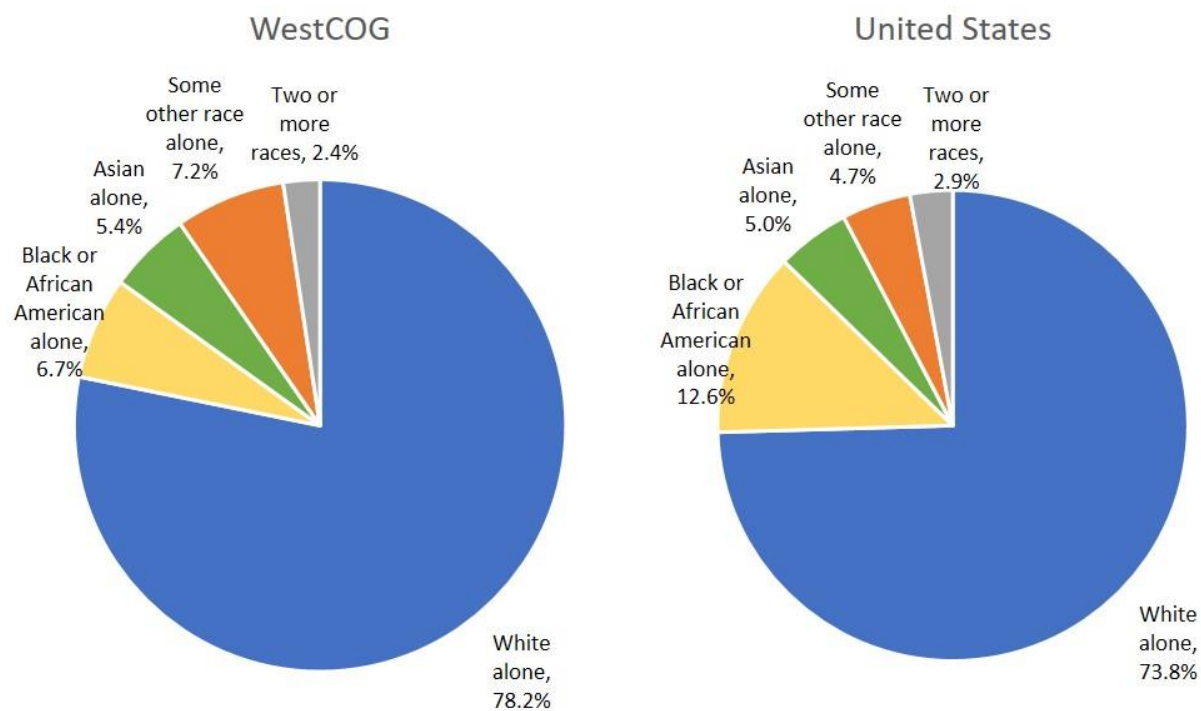
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Population by Race

Referencing **Figure 11**, it is clear that the Western Connecticut Region's population is less racially diverse compared to that of United States, with approximately 22 percent people of color and 26 percent, respectively. In the United States the population of Black people has nearly doubled the share of the total population than in the Western Connecticut Region.

Compared to Connecticut (not shown), the White population in the Western Connecticut Region has a less than 1 percent greater share. The largest difference among these two geographies is with the population of Black people which makes up 10.2 percent of the State population and only 6.7 percent of the Region's population.

**Figure 11: Western CT Region and United States Population by Race**

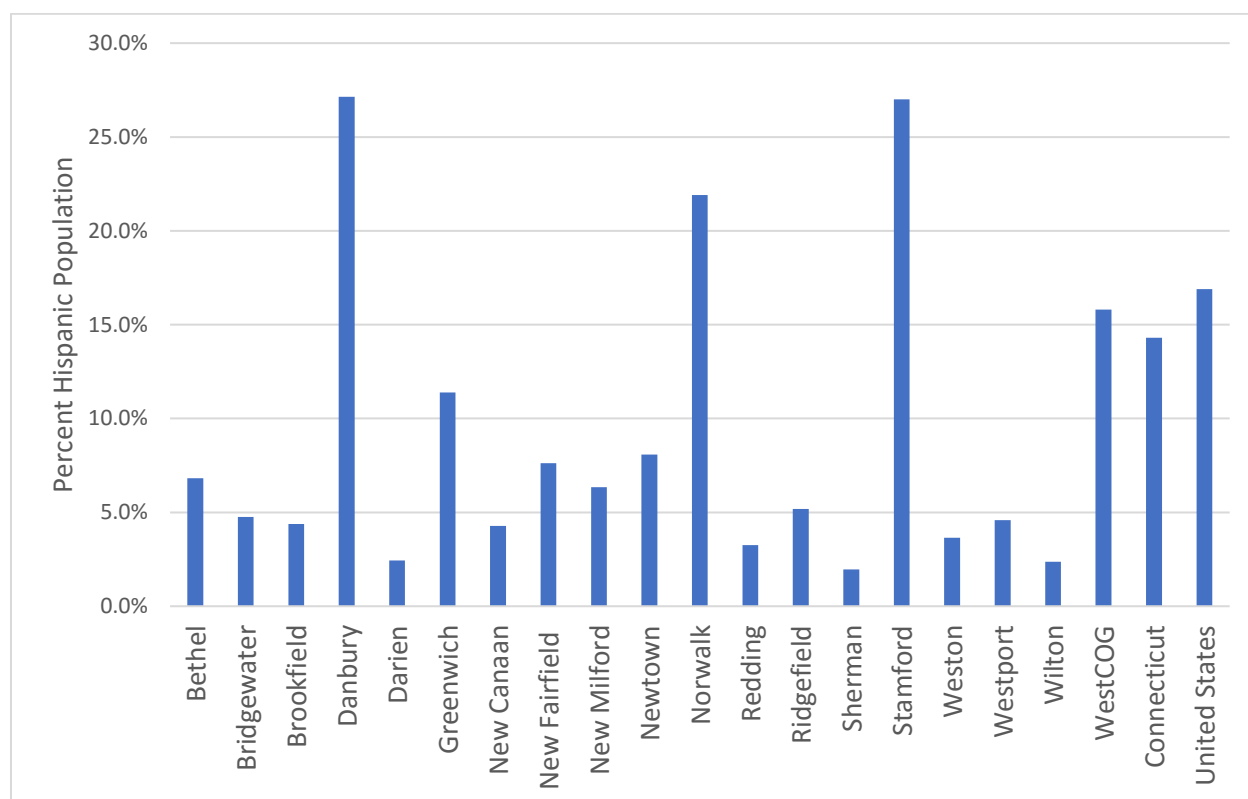


\* "Some other race alone" also includes "American Indian and Alaska Native alone", and "Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone," as those groups combined constitute less than 1% of the population of the Region. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Population by Ethnicity

The population of Hispanic people in most Western Connecticut municipalities is small, with the exception of Danbury, Norwalk, and Stamford, which have populations of 27.1 percent, 21.9 percent, and 27 percent, respectively (**Figure 12**). These cities' populations of Hispanic people currently exceed that of the United States and Connecticut (16.9 percent and 14.3 percent, respectively). 15.8 percent of Western Connecticut as a whole is Hispanic.

Figure 12: Hispanic Population of Western CT Municipalities



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

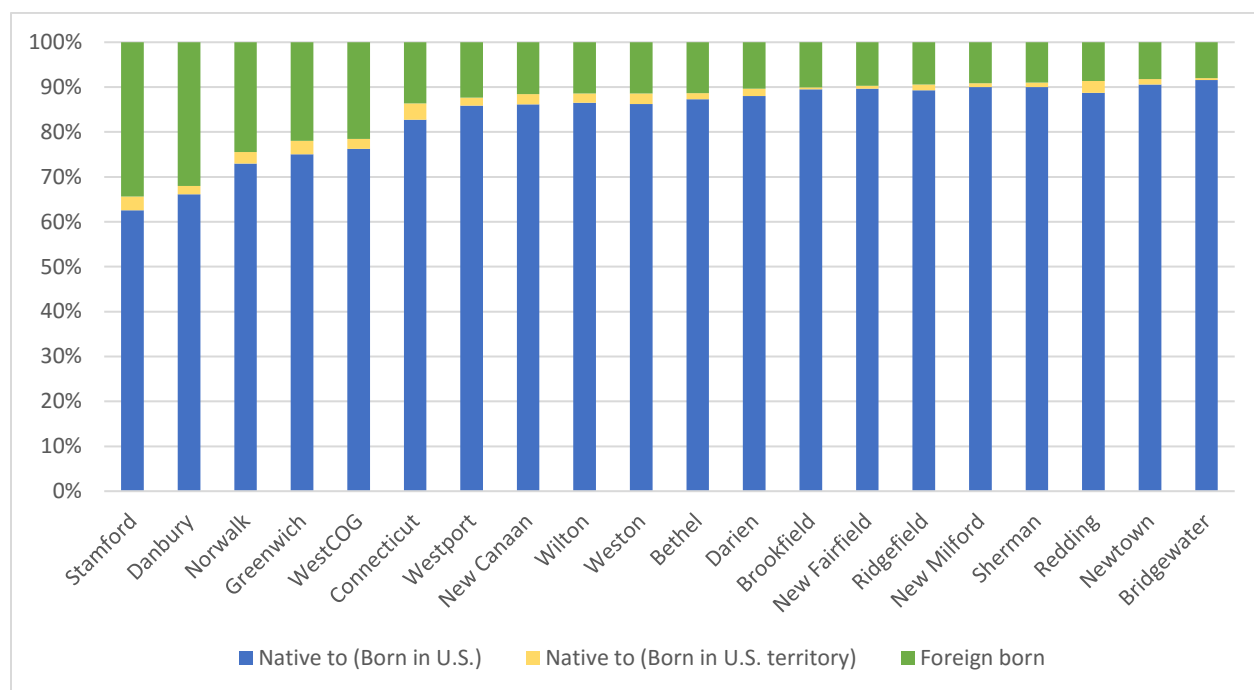


## Migration

In comparison to Connecticut, the Western Connecticut Region has a slightly higher percentage of foreign born persons (**Figure 13**).

The cities of Stamford, Danbury, Norwalk, and the town of Greenwich all have higher foreign born populations than all the other compared geographies, 34.4, 32, 24.4, and 22.9 percent, respectively.

Figure 13: Foreign Born Population<sup>2</sup> in the Western CT Region

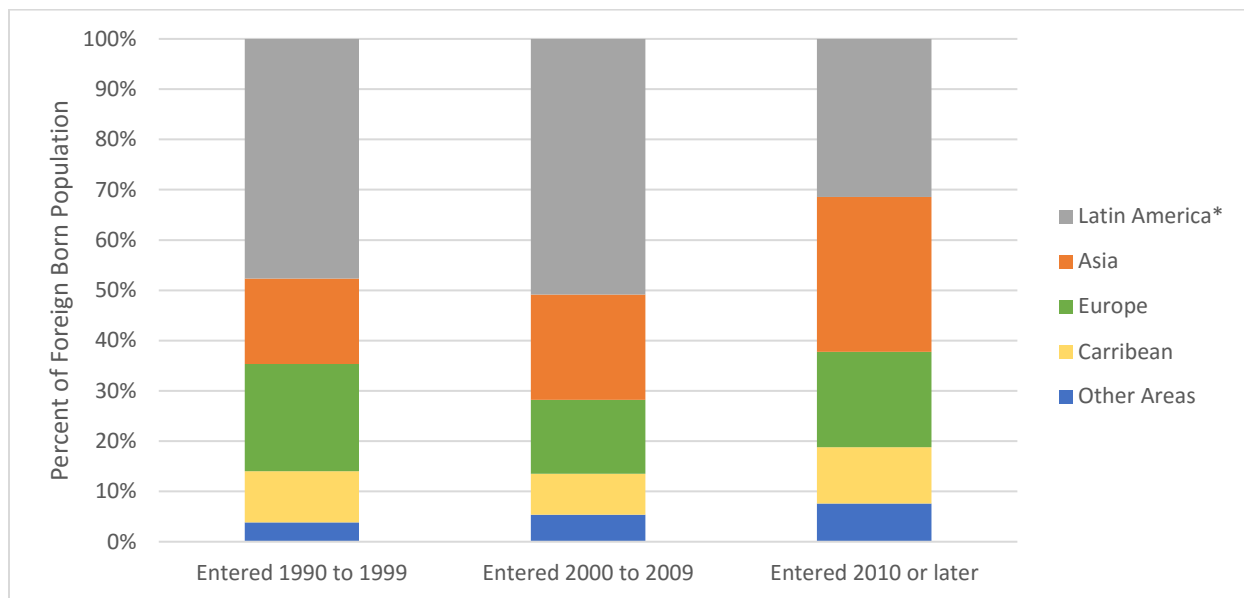


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Territories: Puerto Rico, Northern Mariana Islands, United States Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, United States Minor Outlying Islands.

Foreign born migration to the Western Connecticut Region in recent decades has been the biggest factor engendering population growth. International migration from Latin America, in particular, has been the primary source of migrant population growth. Since 1990, the majority of immigrants to the Western Connecticut Region emigrated from Latin America. However, as can be seen in **Figure 14**, the Region has seen proportionally more immigration from Asia in recent years.

Figure 14: Western CT Foreign Born Population by Region of Origin



\* Latin America refers to Mexico, Central America, and South America.  
Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey Five Year (2009-2014)

## Household Income

In the Western Connecticut Region, most of the municipalities have a higher household median income than Connecticut and Fairfield County. The only municipality that has a lower median income than Connecticut is Danbury, as seen in **Figure 15**. Only Norwalk, Stamford, and New Milford have lower median incomes than Fairfield County.

**Figure 15: Western CT Household Median Income by Municipality, 2014**

Municipality	Median Household Income
Danbury	\$65,981
<b>Connecticut</b>	\$69,899
Norwalk	\$76,051
Stamford	\$77,221
New Milford	\$79,028
<b>Fairfield County</b>	\$83,163
Bethel	\$85,377
Bridgewater	\$93,750
New Fairfield	\$101,750
Brookfield	\$106,920
Newtown	\$108,667
Sherman	\$115,442
Redding	\$121,667
Greenwich	\$135,258
Ridgefield	\$147,936
Westport	\$151,771
Wilton	\$175,019
New Canaan	\$179,810
Darien	\$199,444
Weston	\$208,078

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

**Figure 16** portrays income distribution among households in each Western Connecticut municipality. Danbury, Norwalk, and Stamford have the most varied income distributions, with higher percentages of households living in poverty<sup>3</sup>, 18.1, 15.8, and 15.3 percent respectively. Conversely, all other municipalities have less than 13 percent of households under the poverty threshold.

Darien, Weston, and Wilton have the greatest share of households that earn more than \$100,000 annually, 70.1, 72.4, and 71.8 percent, respectively. The majority of Western Connecticut towns have more than 50 percent of their households in this high-income group.

It is also important to note that most municipalities in the Western Connecticut Region have a robust middle class, with more than 33 percent of households having an income between \$25,000 and \$99,999. Danbury has the largest percentage of households with middle class incomes. However, with the high cost of living in Connecticut, some of those categorized as middle income may not be able to achieve a middle-class lifestyle.

A strategy is needed to approach economic development given the differences in incomes. First, the issue of broadening housing choices in the suburbs can be tied to what housing best reinforces the municipal employment base.

Encouraging housing in each town that is affordable to the employment base in that town may reduce energy consumption from commuting. Additionally, expanding the opportunity to live where you work enhances job retention.

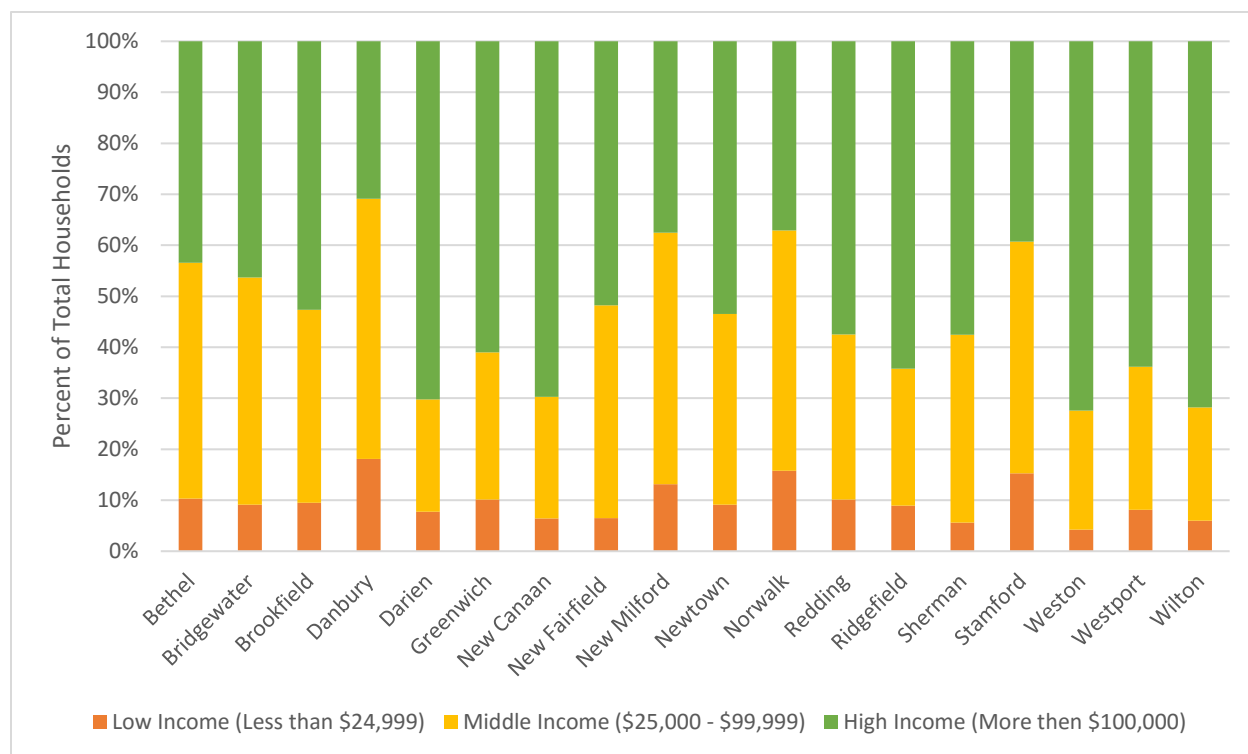
The three cities, as natural geographic crossroads, will always be the locations where space, time, and energy are economized. These

<sup>3</sup> The US Census defines poverty as an annual household income under \$25,000 per year.

favorable business location characteristics should be recognized regionally.

Western Connecticut's cities should plan for the housing that goes with such a role. Urban economic development can then create opportunities to capture more of nearby high suburban incomes.

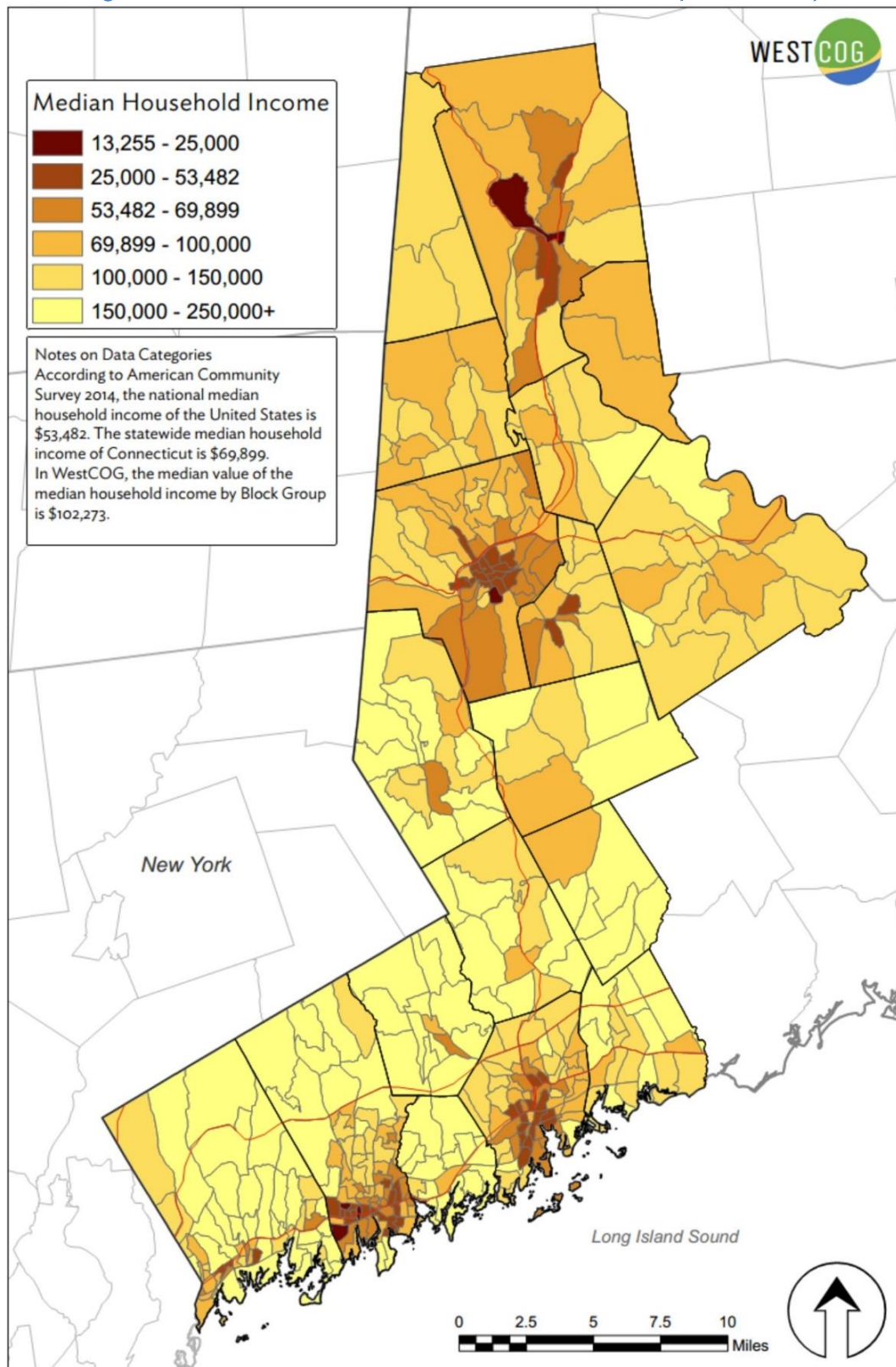
Figure 16: Western CT Municipalities Household Income Distributions



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 17 displays median household income by “Census Block Group” or neighborhood. Many low-income neighborhoods are concentrated in urban areas, while high income neighborhoods are located in suburban areas mostly in the southern portion of the Region.

Figure 17: Western CT Household Income Distributions by Block Group



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Incomes vary by education level. The more education attained, usually the higher the income. However, it is interesting to point out in **Figure 18**, that across Western Connecticut municipalities, incomes vary for persons with the same level of educational attainment.

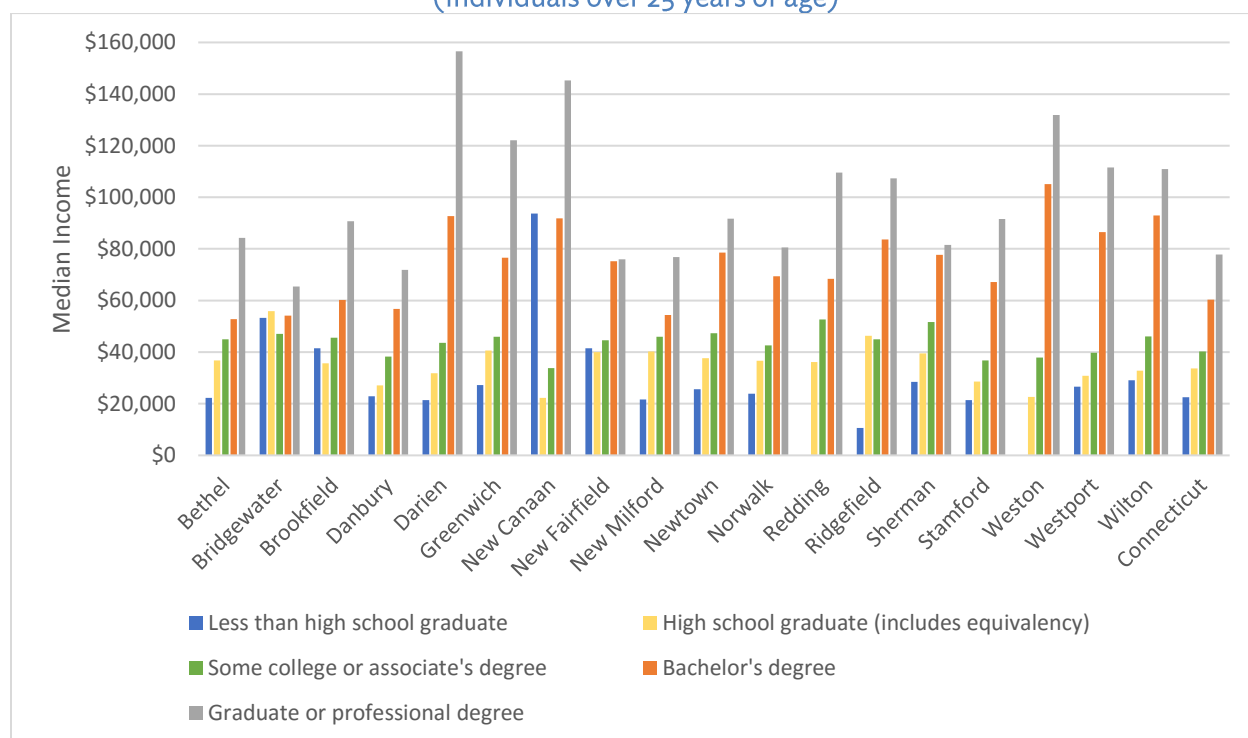
For example, persons who possess a graduate or professional degree and reside in Darien, New Canaan, Weston, or Greenwich earn more than a person who possesses a graduate or professional degree in Danbury or New Fairfield. According to **Figure 18**, a person with a graduate degree in Bethel earns about \$70,000 while a person with a graduate degree in Greenwich earns approximately \$120,000. This suggests that there are occupational segmentations and/or graduate degree discipline variations across Western Connecticut municipalities, and that those segmentations pay very differently.

The only category in which there is not as much variation in earnings is with persons who

possess high school degrees. Most households in this category earn in the \$20,000-40,000 range annually, with the exception of Bridgewater, which earn slightly above \$55,000, though that data point may be skewed due to small population size. What is also interesting is that in Brookfield, New Canaan, and New Fairfield, persons in the 'less than high school graduate' category earn more than persons in the 'high school graduate' category, however this may be skewed due to the small number of people at the education level in those towns.

This suggests that for jobs in some municipalities there may not be any added value to obtaining higher education in terms of earning more income because of local industry and employment dynamics. This may also increase pressure to commute farther distances for higher wage employment opportunities, contributing to peak hour road congestion.

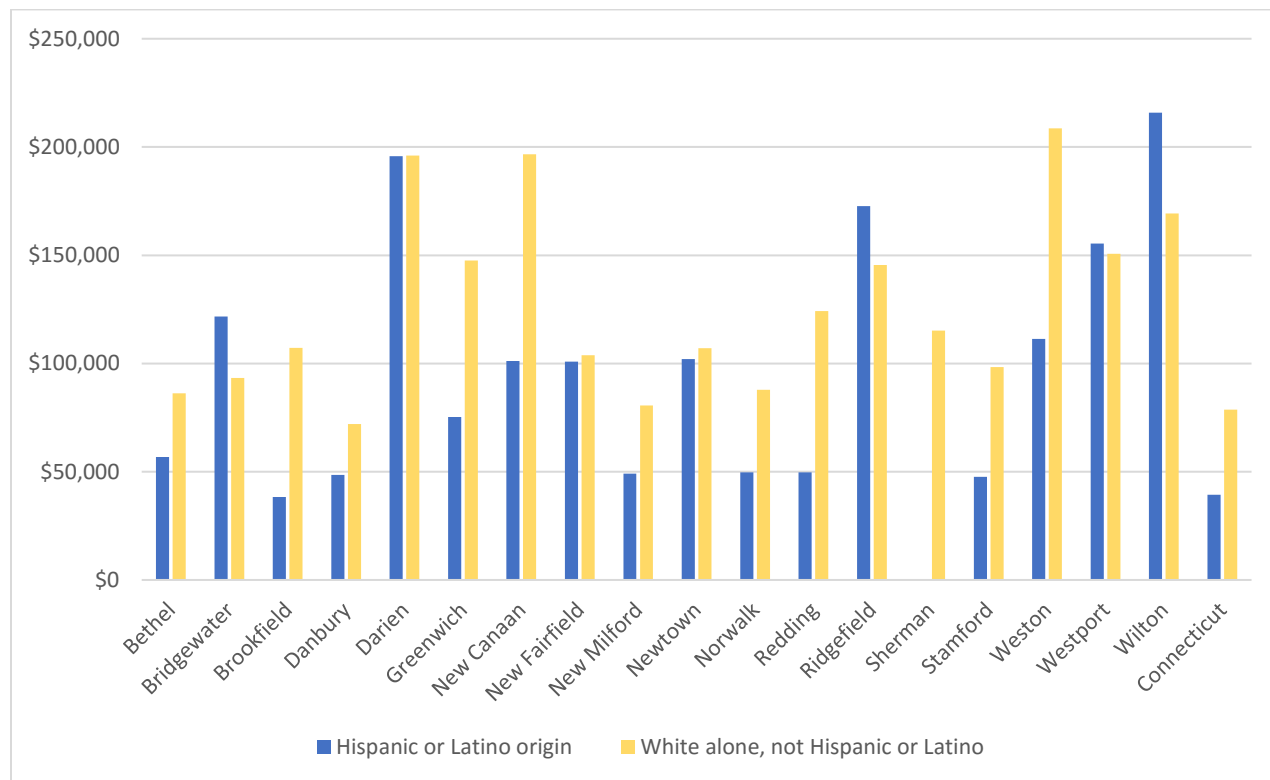
**Figure 18: Western CT Municipalities Median Household Income by Educational Attainment (Individuals over 25 years of age)**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 19 displays Hispanic/Latino household median income in comparison to non-Hispanic White household median income by municipalities in the Western Connecticut Region and Connecticut as a whole.<sup>4</sup> In most municipalities, the median income of non-Hispanic White households exceeds that of Hispanic/Latino households

Figure 19: Western CT Municipalities Median Household Income by Ethnicity



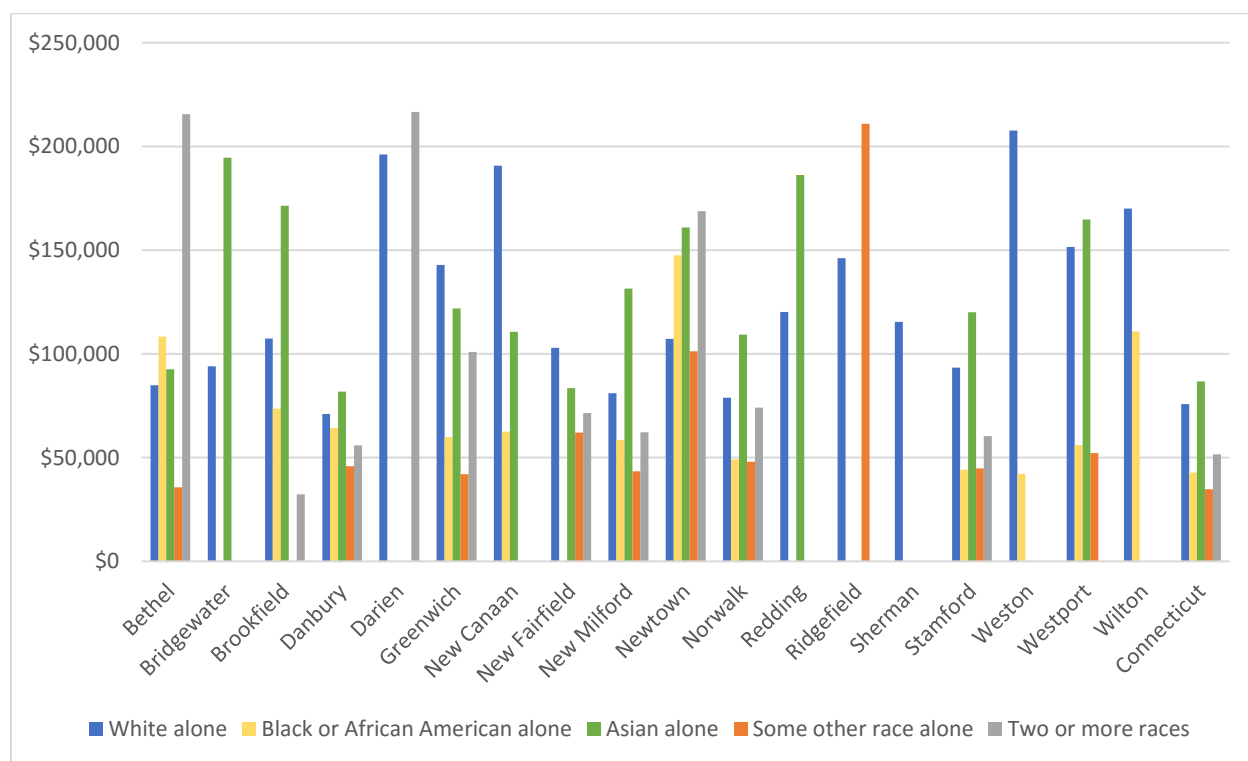
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

<sup>4</sup>Incomes in some WestCOG towns may be distorted due to the low number of Hispanic/Latino households in that particular town.



Earnings by racial background also vary across towns and racial groups (Figure 20). Overall, the population of Black people earns the least in most Western Connecticut municipalities. White, Asian, and people of two or more races, tend to have the highest median household income in every municipality. Generally, all racial groups in Western Connecticut have a higher median household income than their counterparts in all of Connecticut. However, in many towns, comparing incomes across racial categories may be of limited validity due to low minority population in those particular towns.

Figure 20: Western CT Municipalities Median Household Income by Race



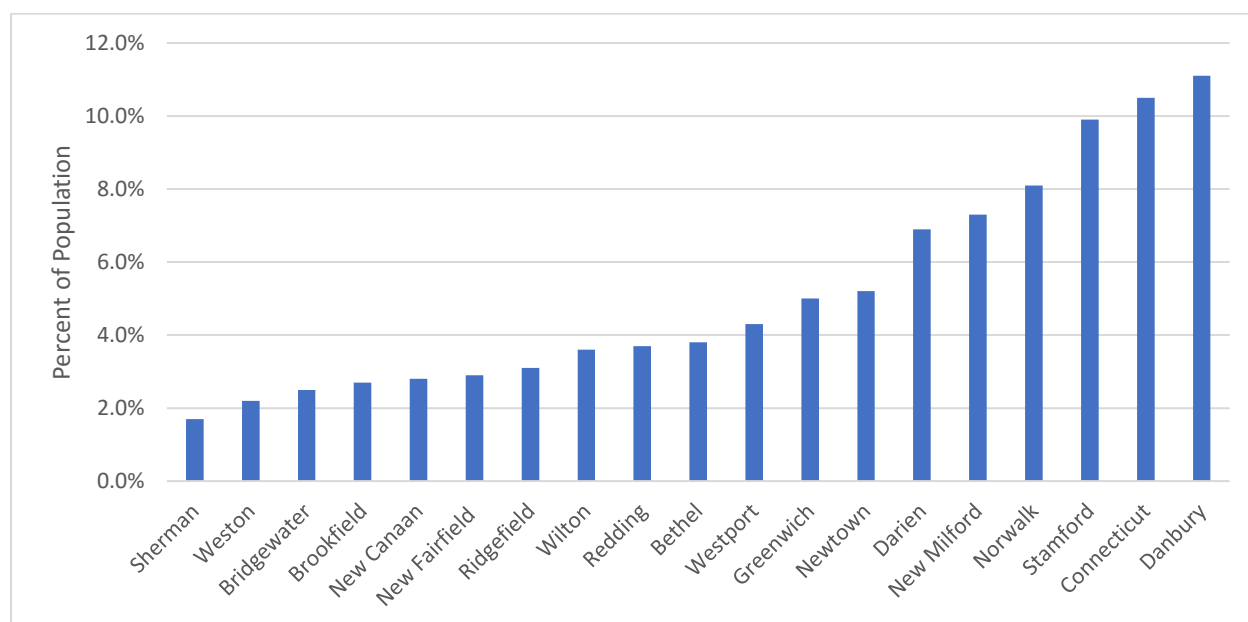
\*"Some other race alone" does not include "American Indian and Alaska Native alone", and "Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone." Combined those groups consist of less than 1% of the population, they have not been included in this analysis.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Poverty

Western Connecticut municipalities have a low rate of individuals living in poverty, with the exception of Danbury (**Figure 21**). The U.S. Census Bureau calculates poverty for individuals based on an income threshold per family. If the family income falls under the threshold, then every *individual* in the family is considered living in poverty.<sup>5</sup> Danbury has just over 11 percent of its population living in poverty, which exceeds the percentages of individuals living in poverty in Connecticut, 10.5 percent.

Figure 21: Western CT Municipalities Poverty Rates (by Individual)

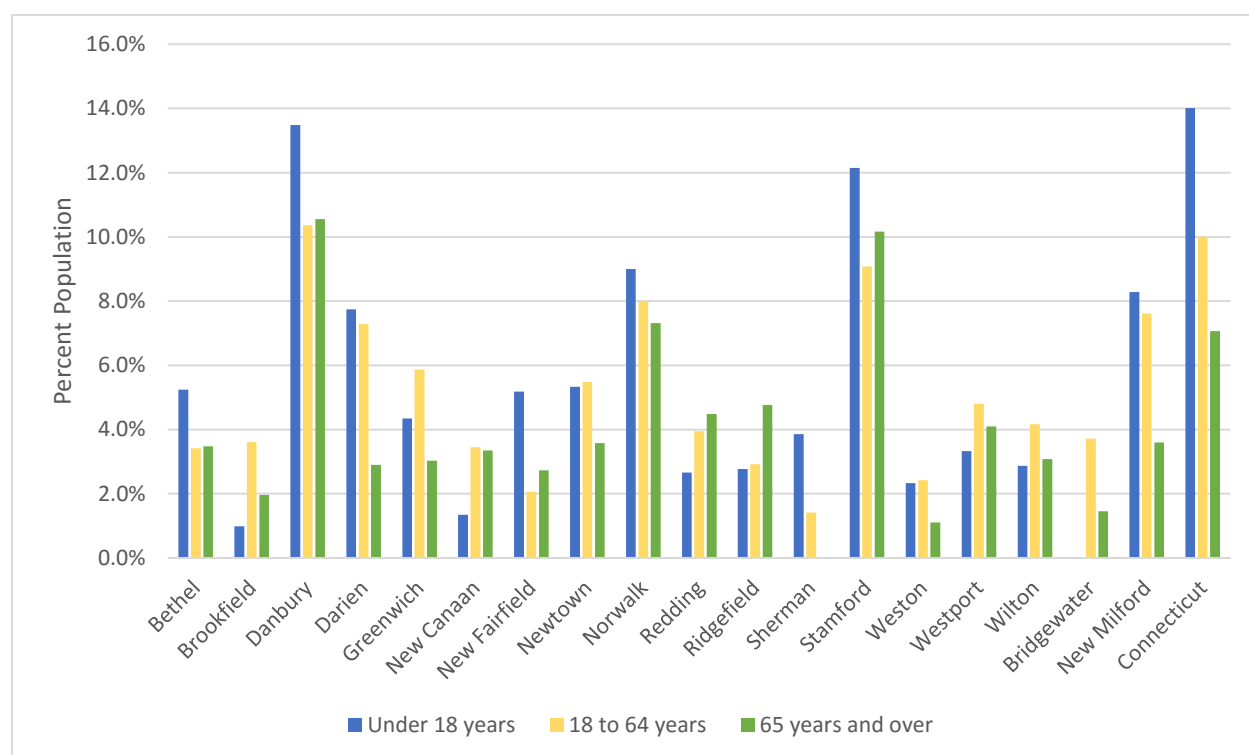


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

<sup>5</sup> The income threshold for poverty for one person in 2014 was \$12,071. The income threshold for poverty for a person 65 years and older in 2014 was \$11,354. See U.S. Census definitions for poverty.

Figure 22 shows poverty level by age cohort. In the cities of Danbury, Norwalk, and Stamford there are a lower number of persons under the age of 18 that are in poverty in comparison to Connecticut, but higher than that of their regional peers. This may suggest that younger people are having trouble entering the workforce and may not have the training or education to be a desirable hire in the area economy. These cities also have a higher rate of persons over the age of 65 who live in poverty than Connecticut.

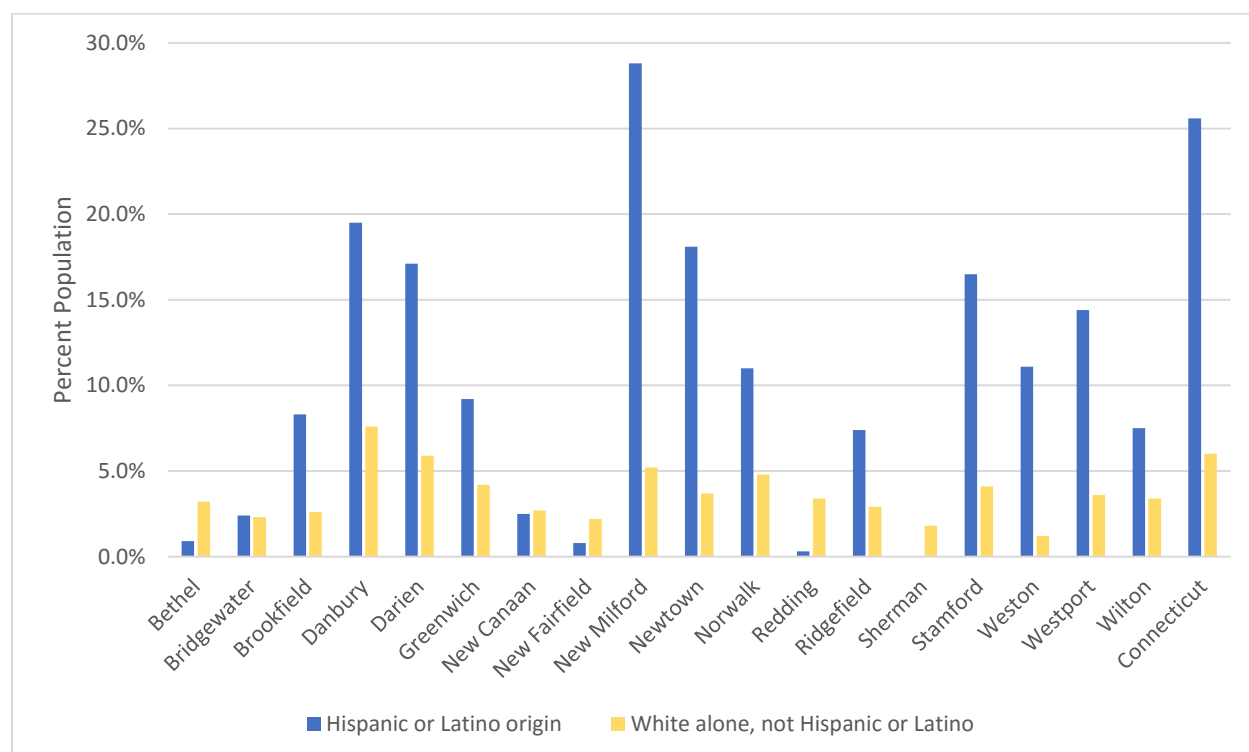
Figure 22: Western CT Municipalities Poverty Rates by Age (by Individual)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The percentages of Hispanic/ Latino people and non-Hispanic White people living in poverty vary widely in the Region (Figure 23). This difference is especially striking in municipalities of New Milford, Newtown, and Stamford. In comparison to Connecticut, however, Hispanic/ Latino people in Newtown and Stamford are less likely to be in poverty. This suggests an availability of opportunities for Hispanic/Latino people in the Region, and their ability to take advantage of them.

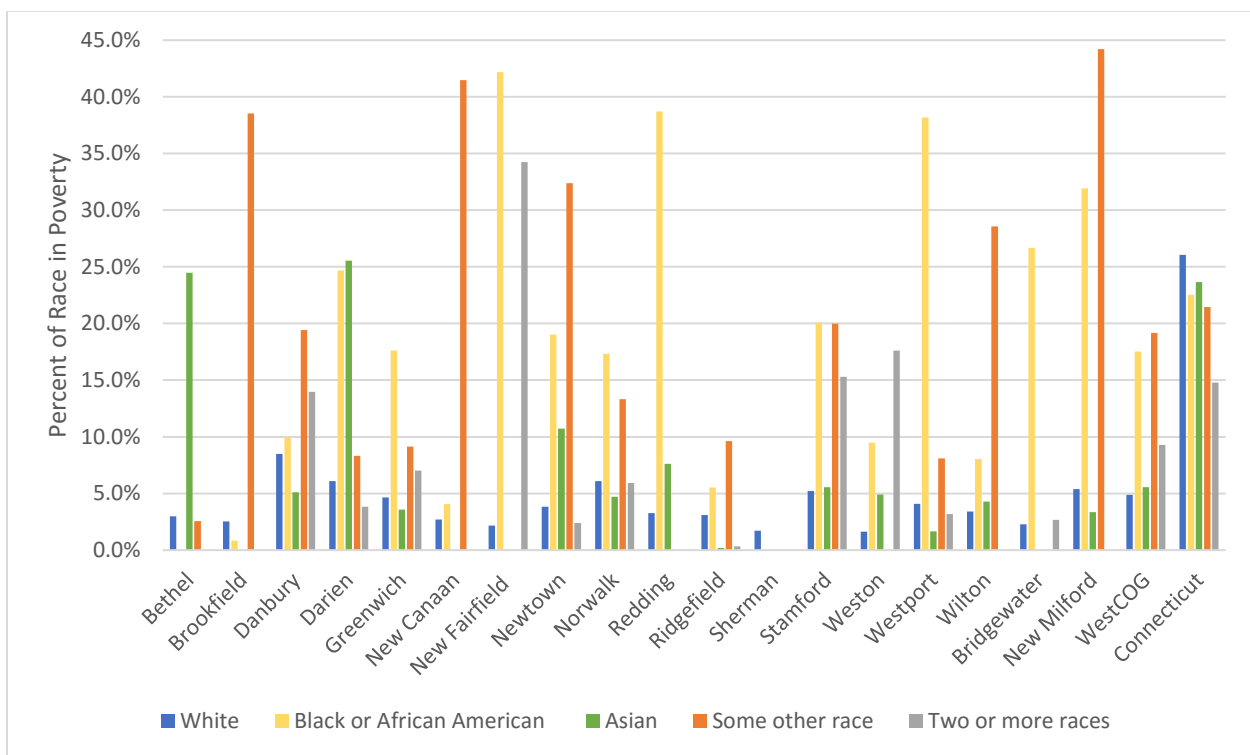
Figure 23: Western CT Municipalities Poverty Rates by Ethnicity (by Individual)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

When analyzing poverty by race, in **Figure 24**, it is clear that a larger portion of the population of Black people is more likely to live in poverty than other racial groups living in the Western Connecticut Region. The population of Asian people has low poverty rates in the Western Connecticut Region relative to the populations of White and Black people. The poverty rate of the population of Asian and White people is also substantially less than that of Connecticut. Like income, poverty rates across racial categories may be distorted due to low minority population in those particular towns.

**Figure 24: Western CT Municipalities Poverty Rates by Race (by Individual)**

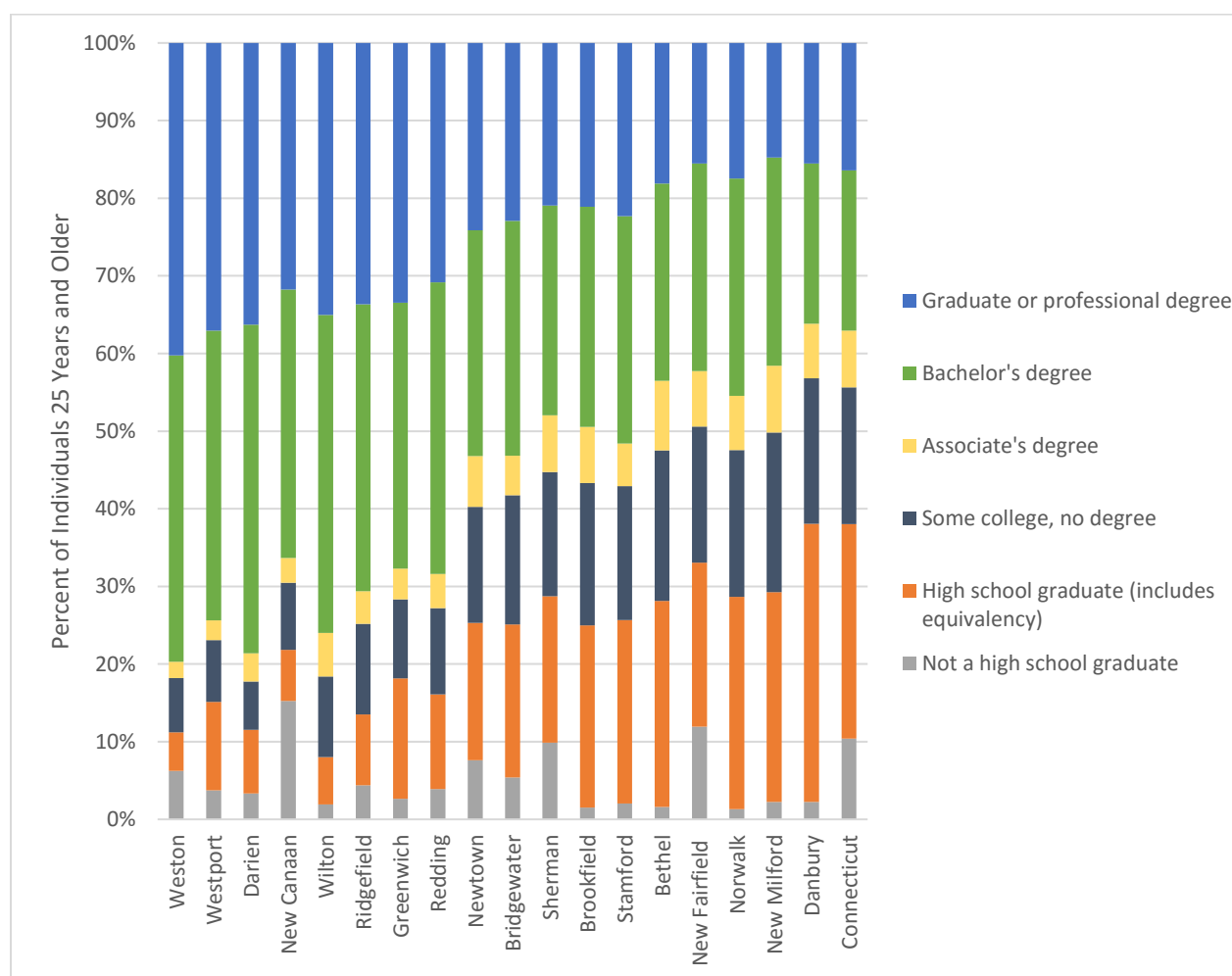


\* "Some other race alone" also includes "American Indian and Alaska Native alone", and "Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone," as those groups combined constitute less than 1% of the population of the Region.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Educational Attainment

Educational attainment levels vary across Western Connecticut municipalities. Many municipalities, such as Weston, according to **Figure 25**, have high percentages of persons with graduate or professional degrees, 42.2 percent. In municipalities such as Danbury, New Milford, and Bethel, there are higher percentages of persons that only have high school degrees (or the equivalent) 25.2, 30.2, and 25.5 percent, respectively. At least 25% of persons in all municipalities in the Western Connecticut Region have earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

**Figure 25: Western CT Municipalities Educational Attainment by Degree Completion (Individuals 25 years of age and older)**



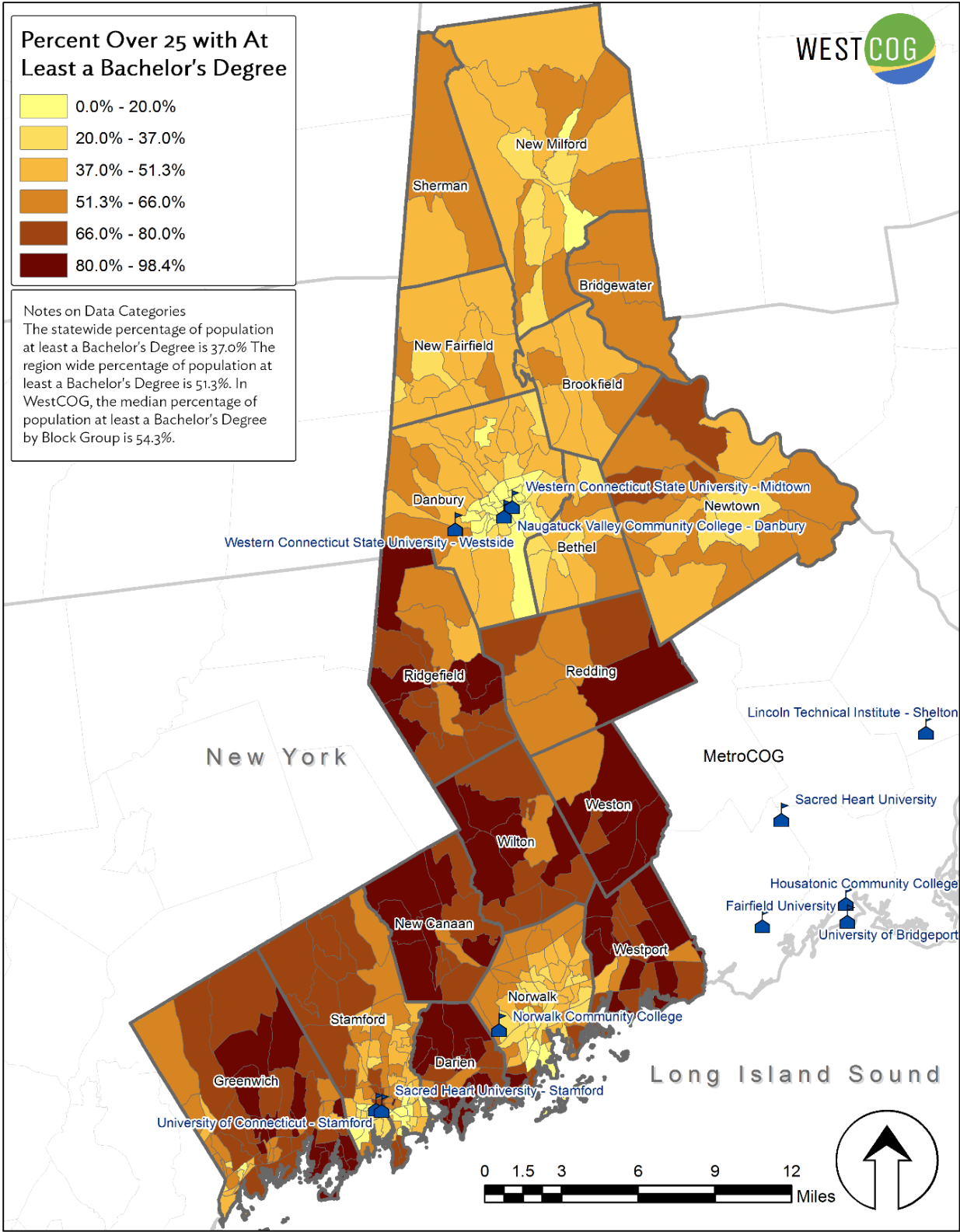
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010–2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Most municipalities in the Western Connecticut Region have a higher percentage of persons that have achieved higher levels of educational attainment compared to Connecticut. However, Danbury has a higher percentage of non-high school graduates and a lower percentage of persons with bachelor's degrees. This finding is surprising since Western Connecticut State University is located in Danbury.

As seen in **Figure 26**, many colleges in the Region are in locations where there is a lower percentage of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher. This may indicate that graduates of these school are not choosing to stay where they are educated



Figure 26: Educational Attainment of Bachelors' Degree or Higher in the Western CT Region



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 27 compares the high school dropout rates by municipality in the Western Connecticut Region. The Western Connecticut's municipal rates are lower than the State's rate, with the exception of Danbury.

Figure 27: Western CT Municipalities High School Dropout Rate, 2012-2014

Municipality /District	2014	2013	2012
Bethel	2.5%	1.3%	1.7%
Bridgewater (included in Regional District 12)	4.9%	5.5%	13.5%
Brookfield	0.4%	2.9%	0.4%
Danbury	11.0%	11.6%	11.1%
Darien	0.6%	1.3%	1.6%
Greenwich	1.2%	1.4%	3.4%
New Canaan	**	0.9%	0.0%
New Fairfield	1.3%	2.3%	1.3%
New Milford	6.5%	8.4%	5.6%
Newtown	0.7%	0.8%	3.0%
Norwalk	6.2%	10.8%	11.0%
Redding (included in Regional District 09)	1.2%	1.7%	1.7%
Ridgefield	1.7%	0.7%	0.5%
Sherman	NA	NA	NA
Stamford	5.0%	6.6%	8.9%
Weston	0.6%	**	0.0%
Westport	0.7%	**	1.2%
Wilton	**	0.9%	0.3%
Connecticut	7.3%	8.8%	9.8%

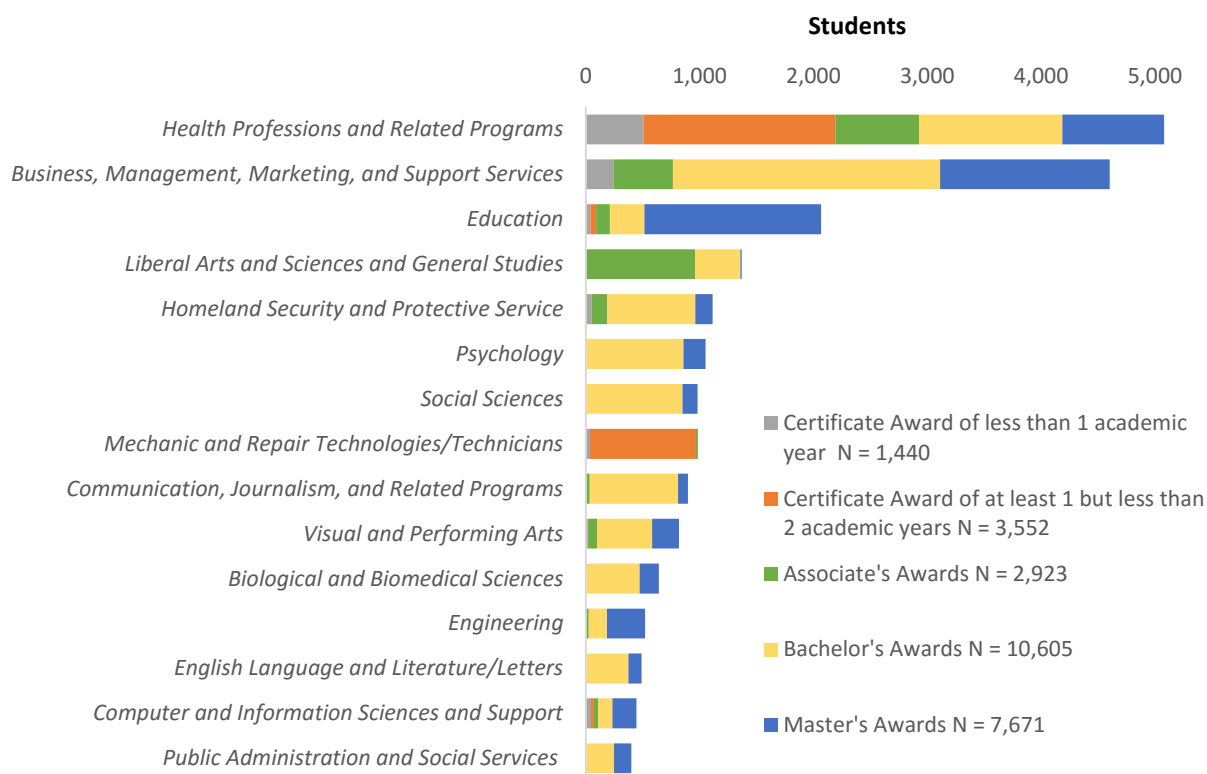
"NA" Sherman does not have a high school. Students from Sherman can enroll in high schools in Brookfield, Danbury, District 12, District 14, New Fairfield, and New Milford.

\*\* Student Confidentiality requires suppression of district dropout data below 5 students

Source: Northwest Workforce Investment Area: 2015 Information for Workforce Investment Planning

Figure 28 shows top 15 fields of study in post-secondary education at institutions serving Southwestern CT, which may indicate a portion of the up and coming labor force. Some of the most popular fields of study such as Health and Related Programs; and Business, Management, Marketing, and Support Services correspond with some of the largest employment industries Healthcare and social assistance, and finance and insurance (See Figures 49 and 65).

Figure 28: Top 15 Fields of Study in Post-Secondary Education at Institutions Serving Southwestern Connecticut\*, 2013



\* A list of Post-secondary institutions included this analysis can be found in Appendix A  
Source: The Workplace, National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS, 2013

## Housing and Real Estate

### Residential

**Figure 29** shows single family home values trends for municipalities in the Western Connecticut Region. Since 2000 home values in the Region have increased in every municipality and have retained some of their gained value, with the exception of Weston, which only experienced a slight decrease. Only Wilton, Stamford, Weston experienced slower home value growth than the national rate of 6.9 percent.

On the other end of the spectrum, Sherman and Bridgewater, the smallest towns in the Region, experienced faster median home value increases than the rest of the Region and Connecticut. While Connecticut's median home values rose by 19.6 percent, Sherman and Bridgewater experienced growth of 36.9 and 29.4 percent, respectively.

It should be noted that the US Census does not record median home values over \$1 million, which leaves New Canaan, Greenwich, Darien, and Westport out of this calculation. In 2000, these towns had some of the most highly valued homes in the Region.

**Figure 29: Western CT Municipalities' Median Single Family Home Values**

Municipality	Value in 2000**	Value in 2014	Change 2000 to 2014	% Change 2000 to 2014
<b>United States</b>	\$164,422	\$175,700	\$11,278	6.9%
<b>Connecticut</b>	\$229,449	\$274,500	\$45,051	19.6%
Danbury	\$256,395	\$295,600	\$39,205	15.3%
New Milford	\$254,195	\$302,000	\$47,805	18.8%
Bethel	\$301,350	\$337,000	\$35,650	11.8%
New Fairfield	\$315,235	\$358,600	\$43,365	13.8%
Brookfield	\$341,906	\$365,700	\$23,794	7.0%
Norwalk	\$371,326	\$406,600	\$35,274	9.5%
Newtown	\$358,678	\$417,100	\$58,422	16.3%
Sherman	\$356,753	\$488,400	\$131,647	36.9%
Bridgewater	\$385,349	\$498,800	\$113,451	29.4%
Stamford	\$498,080	\$506,000	\$7,920	1.6%
Redding	\$541,248	\$618,900	\$77,652	14.3%
Ridgefield	\$603,525	\$681,700	\$78,175	13.0%
Wilton	\$771,385	\$809,500	\$38,115	4.9%
Weston	\$871,468	\$863,200	-\$8,268	-0.9%
Westport*	\$860,333	>\$1 million	NA	
Darien*	\$977,463	>\$1 million	NA	
Greenwich*	\$1,074,385	>\$1 million	NA	
New Canaan*	\$1,142,436	>\$1 million	NA	

\*Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, and Westport had home values over one million dollars for the 5-year period from 2009 to 2014, which the US Census does not record.

\*\* Data for 2000 is expressed using 2014 dollars, accounting for 37.5% inflation. US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2014 American Community Surveys, Census 2000

**Figure 30** details the number of housing units available in the Region and housing vacancies. In smaller municipalities, such as Bridgewater, New Fairfield, and Sherman, the vacancy rate is higher. The vacancy rates in these towns may be attributed to the seasonality of rentals, especially for those around Candlewood Lake. In contrast, larger suburban municipalities such as Bethel, Darien, and Wilton have lower rates, indicating that demand for housing is higher in those areas. The vacancy rates in most of the Region fall below Connecticut's vacancy rate of 9.2 percent.

**Figure 30: Western CT Municipalities' Housing Units and Vacancy Rates Estimates 2010–2014**

Municipality	Total Housing Units	Vacant Housing Units	Percent Vacant
Wilton	6,475	303	4.7%
Bethel	7,310	372	5.1%
Darien	7,074	376	5.3%
Newtown	10,061	602	6.0%
Norwalk	35,415	2,198	6.2%
Stamford	50,573	3,216	6.4%
Ridgefield	9,420	619	6.6%
Brookfield	6,562	433	6.6%
New Canaan	7,551	541	7.2%
Danbury	31,154	2,247	7.2%
<b>WestCOG</b>	<b>235,146</b>	<b>17,417</b>	<b>7.4%</b>
Westport	10,399	826	7.9%
Weston	3,674	295	8.0%
Redding	3,811	341	8.9%
<b>Connecticut</b>	<b>1,493,632</b>	<b>137,414</b>	<b>9.2%</b>
New Milford	11,731	1,113	9.5%
Greenwich	25,631	2,555	10.0%
New Fairfield	5,593	791	14.1%
Bridgewater	881	146	16.6%
Sherman	1,831	443	24.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010–2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 31 shows the distribution of housing types among Western Connecticut Region municipalities. In most municipalities, residents live in one-unit detached houses. However, in the cities of Danbury, Norwalk, Stamford more than fifty percent of residents live in multi-unit housing. Bethel and Greenwich, suburbs neighboring these cities, also have higher concentrations of residents living in multi-unit housing.

Figure 31: Western CT Municipality Housing Type Distribution

	1-unit, detached	1-unit, attached	2 units	3 or 4 units	5 to 9 units	10 to 19 units	20 or more units	Mobile Home, Boat, RV, van, etc.
Stamford	39.1%	6.1%	9.2%	9.4%	5.5%	4.7%	26.0%	0.0%
Danbury	43.9%	9.4%	10.5%	10.6%	7.6%	6.0%	10.3%	0.0%
Norwalk	47.4%	5.5%	12.7%	9.7%	6.5%	5.9%	12.1%	0.0%
WestCOG	60.9%	5.7%	7.5%	6.6%	4.8%	3.7%	10.5%	0.4%
Greenwich	64.4%	6.9%	10.2%	5.5%	4.0%	2.4%	6.4%	1.6%
Bethel	68.7%	7.4%	9.1%	2.9%	7.6%	2.2%	2.1%	0.1%
New Canaan	73.8%	9.1%	5.5%	3.0%	3.8%	2.8%	2.0%	0.2%
New Milford	74.1%	3.3%	3.3%	5.7%	5.2%	4.3%	3.7%	0.0%
Brookfield	77.0%	4.3%	1.3%	4.8%	5.6%	5.6%	1.4%	0.0%
Ridgefield	81.5%	4.3%	1.5%	3.2%	3.7%	1.7%	4.0%	0.4%
Redding	83.1%	0.3%	2.6%	1.1%	0.8%	0.3%	11.8%	1.3%
Wilton	85.5%	4.5%	1.4%	1.5%	0.9%	1.2%	5.0%	0.2%
Westport	87.8%	3.6%	2.9%	2.4%	1.6%	0.2%	1.0%	0.0%
Newtown	88.6%	3.0%	1.4%	2.3%	1.6%	0.3%	1.5%	0.0%
Darien	91.4%	1.7%	2.2%	1.8%	1.2%	0.6%	1.0%	0.0%
Bridgewater	93.8%	1.8%	1.2%	0.4%	1.3%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%
New Fairfield	96.2%	1.6%	1.5%	0.3%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
Sherman	97.2%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
Weston	97.4%	1.1%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Retail

“Fairfield County has an estimated 48 million square feet of total retail space for its 940,000 residents, a ratio of 51 square feet per capita, comparable to both the national and Westchester County averages.

Fairfield County’s retail real estate inventory, like Westchester’s, is comprised primarily of smaller-sized ‘general retail’ buildings. This would be expected in smaller submarkets like New Canaan, but is also true in a large market like Greenwich, where the majority of retail space is located not in shopping centers, but along main shopping thoroughfares like Greenwich and Putnam Avenues that house multiple smaller buildings.”<sup>6</sup>

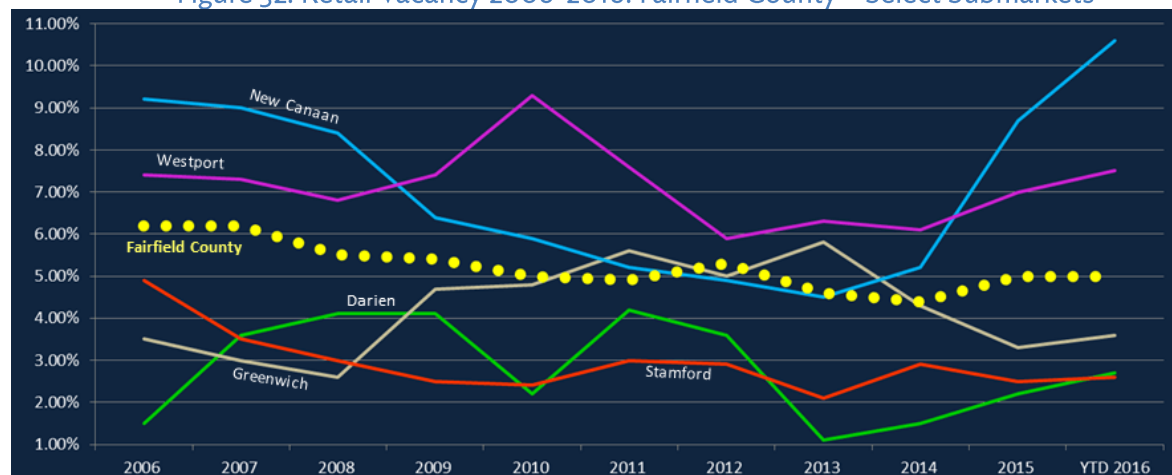
According to a National Association of Realtors report from May 2015, “the markets with the lowest retail vacancy rates include San Francisco, at 3.0 percent; Orange County, Calif., and San Jose, Calif., at 4.6 percent; Fairfield County, Conn., at 4.7 percent; and Long Island, N.Y., 4.9 percent.”<sup>7</sup> As the market continues to strengthen, it is anticipated that this figure will continue to decrease in Fairfield County.

In Figure 32, from Admiral Real Estate, one can see that while the variability of the County’s retail vacancy rate has been stable, averaging between 4.4 percent and 6.2 percent over the last ten years, a range of only 1.8 percent, there have been larger swings within individual communities.

Per Admiral Real Estate Services, of the five submarkets included in the figure, “New Canaan had the greatest range in vacancy since 2006, in part due to its relatively small size, hitting a low of 4.5% in 2013 and a high of 10.6% in early 2016. However, the 2016 vacancy figure appears inflated, since it includes over 7,500 square feet of space not being marketed, as well as a fair amount of office or quasi-office space that is listed as both retail and office.

Vacancy rates for the remaining four submarkets stayed within about a 3% range of variability, although Westport has generally hovered between 6%-8%, while some markets such as Stamford and Darien have consistently maintained vacancy rates under 5%.”

Figure 32: Retail Vacancy 2006-2016: Fairfield County – Select Submarkets



Source: Admiral Real Estate Services. (2016, May 05). Fairfield County Retail Real Estate – 2006-2016 – Admiral Real Estate. Retrieved November 09, 2016, from <http://admiralrealestate.com/fairfield-county-retail-real-estate-2006-2016/>

<sup>6</sup> Admiral Real Estate Services. (2016, May 05). Fairfield County Retail Real Estate – 2006-2016.

<sup>7</sup> National Association of Realtors. (2015, May 26). Modest Growth Expected in Commercial Real Estate Markets. Retrieved November 09, 2016, from <http://www.realtor.org/news-releases/2015/05/modest-growth-expected-in-commercial-real-estate-markets>



## Fiscal Analysis

This section examines the fiscal data for the municipalities that make up the Western Connecticut Region. Using the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM) data, the individual Western Connecticut municipalities were analyzed and the data was consolidated to create aggregate indicators for the Western Connecticut Region to compare to the state. The fiscal data provides insight into the individual municipality's fiscal health and the composition of property types.

### Fiscal Analysis Key Findings

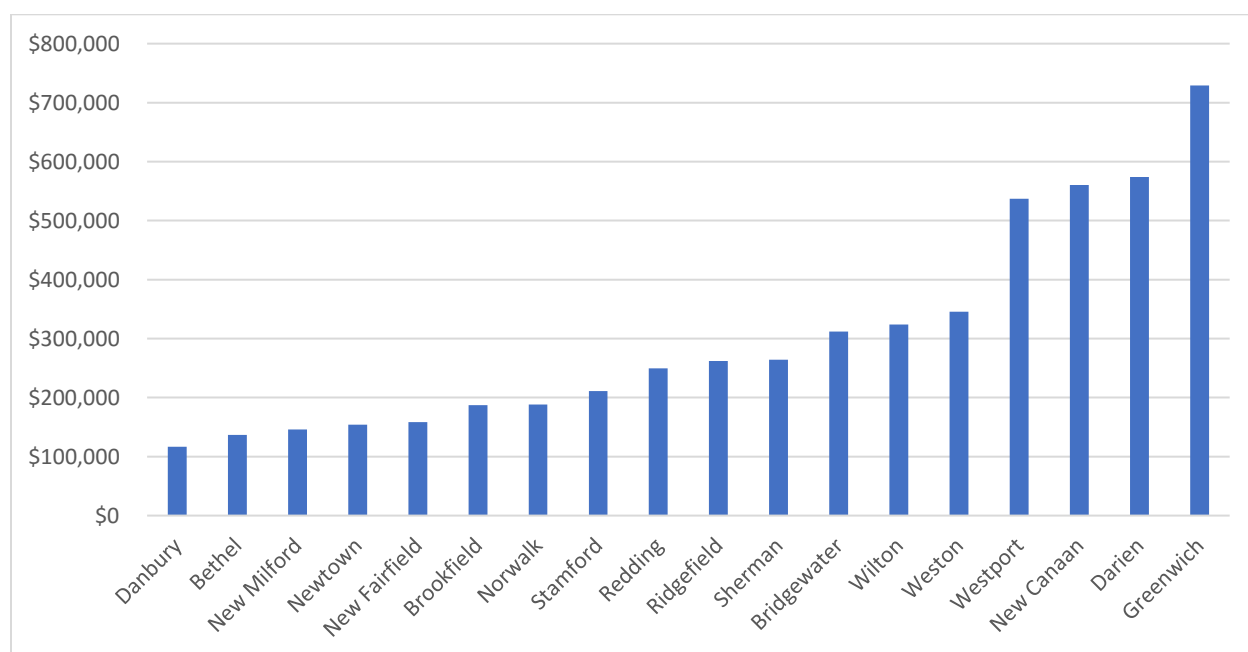
- The consistently higher value of assessed property in the Western Connecticut Region as a whole, compared to the state, indicates that the Region has a large concentration of prosperity.

- The largest grand list concentrations of commercial properties are in Stamford, Danbury, and Norwalk, confirming that the cities are commercial engines in the Region.

### Assessed Property Value

The equalized net grand list is the estimate of the market value of all taxable property in a municipality divided by its population (**Figure 33**). The highest per capita value was found in Greenwich with \$728,885 per capita and the lowest in Danbury with \$116,424 per capita. One can see a distinct difference between the suburban coastal communities and the rest of the Region.

Figure 33: Equalized Net Grand List per Capita by Western CT Municipalities, 2014



Source: Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Town Profiles, 2014.

As seen in **Figure 34**, the Western Connecticut Region had a slightly higher proportion of commercial property than Connecticut in 2012. Commercial property accounted for 13.6 percent of the Western Connecticut Region's grand list as compared to 12.3 percent of taxable property across Connecticut. Stamford had the highest proportion of the grand list in commercial property with nearly 25 percent, followed by Danbury with 20.5 percent in 2012. The town of Sherman had the lowest proportion of the grand list in commercial property with less than half of one percent followed by the municipality of Bridgewater with nearly one percent.

The Western Connecticut Region had a lower proportion of apartment property than Connecticut. Rental property accounted for 1.8 percent of the Western Connecticut Region's grand list as compared to 1.9 percent of taxable property across Connecticut. Stamford had the highest proportion of the grand list in rental property with nearly six percent followed by Danbury with a lower 3.7 percent. Conversely, rental property represented none of the grand list in the municipalities of Bridgewater, Weston, New Fairfield, and Redding.

The Western Connecticut Region had a lower proportion of personal property<sup>8</sup> than the proportion across Connecticut. Personal property accounted for 3.4 percent of the Western Connecticut Region's grand list as compared to almost five percent of taxable property across Connecticut. The municipality of Bethel had the highest proportion of the grand list in personal property with seven percent followed by Stamford with 5.6 percent. Weston, New Canaan, and Bridgewater had the lowest proportion of the grand list in personal property with less than one percent.

---

<sup>8</sup>“Personal property is anything that is moveable and is not a permanent part of real estate, including items such as business-owned furniture, fixtures, machinery or equipment, as well as horses and unregistered motor vehicles and snowmobiles that anyone owns. (Chapter 203 - Sec. 12-71)” – Connecticut Office of Policy and Management

Figure 34: Components of Grand List by Western CT Municipalities, 2012

Geography	Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Public Utility	Vacant Land	Land Use	Apartment	Real Property Exemptions*	Net Motor Vehicle	Net Personal Property
Stamford	57.0%	24.8%	2.9%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%	0.9%	4.5%	5.6%
Danbury	56.6%	20.5%	5.0%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	3.7%	0.7%	7.0%	5.5%
Norwalk	68.1%	16.5%	1.6%	0.5%	0.9%	0.0%	2.8%	0.3%	4.5%	5.4%
Wilton	75.2%	13.8%	0.0%	0.5%	0.9%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	4.6%	4.7%
<b>WestCOG</b>	<b>74.6%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>3.4%</b>
Greenwich	78.7%	13.5%	0.2%	0.1%	1.9%	0.0%	1.1%	0.1%	2.4%	2.1%
<b>CT</b>	<b>70.7%</b>	<b>12.3%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>6.2%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>
Westport	80.7%	11.7%	0.1%	0.1%	1.3%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	3.2%	2.9%
Brookfield	71.4%	11.2%	3.7%	0.4%	2.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.2%	6.2%	4.8%
Bethel	67.8%	10.7%	4.5%	0.0%	1.3%	0.3%	1.1%	0.3%	7.5%	7.0%
Ridgefield	81.8%	9.8%	0.3%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.6%	5.2%	2.2%
New Milford	70.3%	9.1%	3.4%	0.7%	4.9%	0.1%	0.6%	0.2%	7.2%	3.9%
Darien	86.1%	7.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	2.6%	1.8%
Redding	80.1%	7.3%	0.2%	0.3%	2.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	5.4%	4.4%
Newtown	79.3%	6.2%	1.8%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	0.1%	0.7%	7.4%	3.5%
New Canaan	89.7%	4.3%	0.1%	0.1%	1.5%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	3.0%	0.8%
New Fairfield	89.9%	2.0%	0.2%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	6.7%	1.0%
Weston	93.9%	0.9%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	4.3%	0.8%
Bridgewater	87.8%	0.7%	0.2%	0.1%	5.1%	0.9%	0.0%	0.2%	4.4%	0.9%
Sherman	92.7%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	1.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.4%	4.4%	1.0%

\* "Real Property is an aggregate of Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Public Utility, Vacant Land, Land Use, and Apartment.

Source: 2012 Net Grand List by Town, Connecticut Open Data

## Economic Analysis

This section details general economic conditions in Fairfield County and the Western Connecticut Region, in addition it compares economic conditions of the Region to that of Connecticut and the "Four County Commuter Shed," which is comprised of New York and Westchester Counties in New York State, and Fairfield and New Haven Counties in Connecticut. The counties of the commuter shed were chosen because they are geographically relevant and many of the Western Connecticut Region's residents work in those areas (see Figure 73).

### Economic Analysis Key Findings

- Fairfield County had weaker Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment growth than Connecticut. The County's GDP also lagged surrounding states and the national growth rate. Slow growth since 2010 has had a significant impact on annual wages, especially in the coastal portion of the Region.
- Employment in the Western Connecticut Region employment was greatly affected by the financial crisis of 2008 and the subsequent recession. However, the Western Connecticut Region fared better than Connecticut and the Four County Commuter Shed and is continuing to steadily improve economically.
- Furthermore, industries that are strengths in terms of employment growth, in the Western Connecticut Region include the Educational services, healthcare and social assistance; and the Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services sectors.
- While the Western Connecticut Region, the Four County Commuter Shed, Connecticut, and the United States, all followed similar trends in unemployment

rates, the Western Connecticut Region's the unemployment rate never surpassed the 9% level that it did in other geographies. This suggests that the Western Connecticut Region's economy was more insulated against business cycle effects or has significant structural differences in comparison to the other regions.

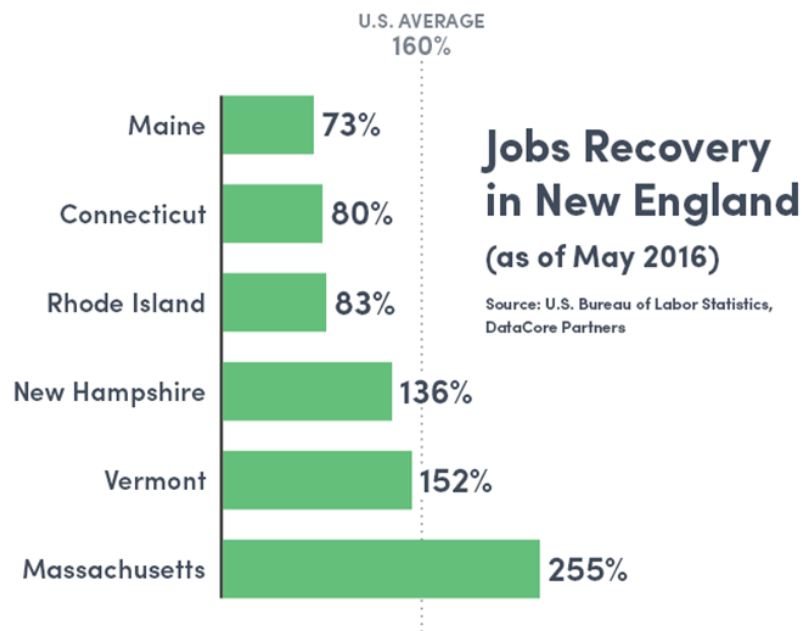
- Compared to Connecticut and the United States, the Western Connecticut Region proportionally employs significantly more people in the Management of companies and enterprises; Finance and insurance; Arts, entertainment, and recreation; and Information, highlighting the importance of these industries in the Region.
- Management of companies and enterprises, Healthcare and social assistance, and Accommodation and food services sectors have experienced the most growth in employment since 2010 in Fairfield County, similar to national trends. However, in Finance and insurance, Business Services, and Manufacturing sectors, Fairfield County and Connecticut experienced negative growth while these sectors experienced positive growth on the national level.
- The Connecticut Department of Labor estimates that by 2022, jobs in the Individual and Family Services, and the Restaurant industries in both the Northwest and Southwest Region will increase by over 2,000 jobs each.

### General Economic Profile

National economic growth, measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is at historically low levels. A 2016 report by the Harvard School of Business shows a marked fall-off in GDP growth since the 1960s, with “a particular step-down since around 2000”<sup>9</sup>. The prognosis for a return to higher levels is poor, as business investment and other growth factors are below historic levels.

On a state level, Connecticut’s recovery from the Great Recession has been slow and lags all but one of the other New England states. Connecticut’s job recovery is half of the national average. While Connecticut has recovered 80% of the jobs it lost, Massachusetts has recovered 2.5 times what it lost (**Figure 35**). New York state’s job recovery rate is similar to that of Massachusetts (not shown)

Figure 35



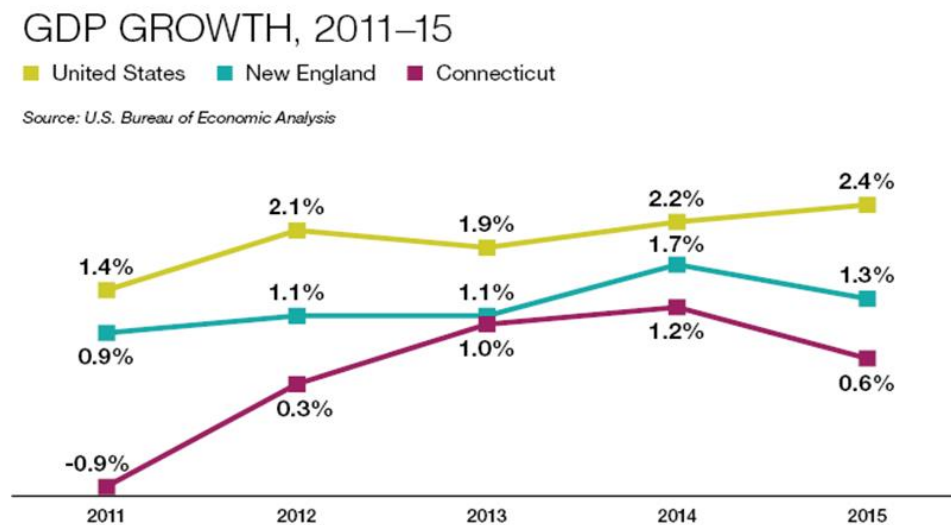
<sup>9</sup> Porter, Michael E., Rivkin, Jan W., Desai, Mihir A., Raman, Manjari. Problems Unsolved and a Nation Divided: The State of U.S. Competitiveness 2016. 2016. Online. <http://www.hbs.edu/competitiveness/Documents/problems-unsolved-and-a-nation-divided.pdf>

As seen in **Figure 36**, Connecticut narrowed the gap in GDP growth with New England in 2013 and 2014, but its GDP growth rate in 2015 was less than half that of New England as a whole, and one quarter of the national rate.

Fairfield County had a -0.24% growth rate in employment between 1998 and 2015. Growth in annual wages was 2.7% between 1998 and 2014, below the national growth rate of 2.99%. However, from 2010 to 2014, annual wages barely registered growth (.39%), while nationally annual wages grew 2.69%.

According to the US Cluster Mapping Project, Fairfield County was above the US average, but significantly below Hartford County in GDP per capita. Growth in GDP per capita occurred faster in New Haven, New London, and Hartford counties.

Figure 36



In 2010, Fairfield County had 27,022 non-government establishments employing 409,000 people. **Figure 37** highlights the top 5 industries in Fairfield County by 3 important factors; employment, number of establishments, and annual payroll.

Figure 37: Fairfield County's Top Five Industries, 2012

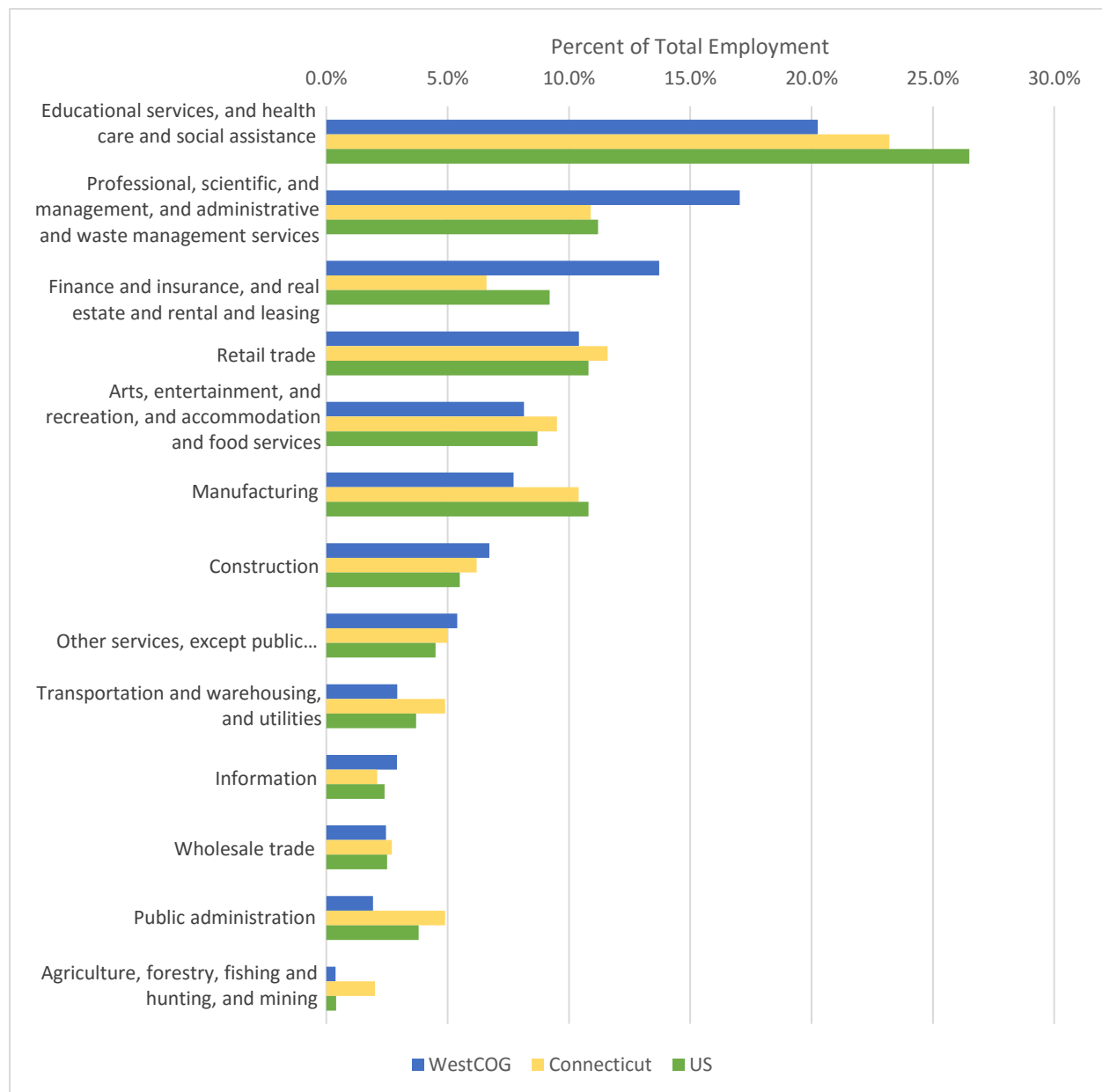
Rank	By Number of Jobs	By Number of Establishments	By Annual Payroll
1.	Health care and social assistance	Professional, scientific, and technical services	Finance and insurance
2.	Retail trade	Retail trade	Professional, scientific, and technical services
3.	Finance and insurance	Health care and social assistance	Health care and social assistance
4.	Professional, scientific, and technical services	Other services	Wholesale trade
5.	Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	Finance and insurance	Manufacturing



Figure 38 shows the industry composition of the Western Connecticut Region by employment in 2014 and compares it to the State and Nation. The largest industry employers in the Western Connecticut Region are Educational Service, Health Care and Social Assistance (ESHSA); Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services (PSMA); and

Finance and insurance and real estate and rental leasing (FIRR). The Western Connecticut Region has a higher concentration of employment in PSMA, compared to Connecticut and the United States. The Western Connecticut Region also has a larger FIRR sector than Connecticut, while Connecticut and the United States has a larger Manufacturing sector.

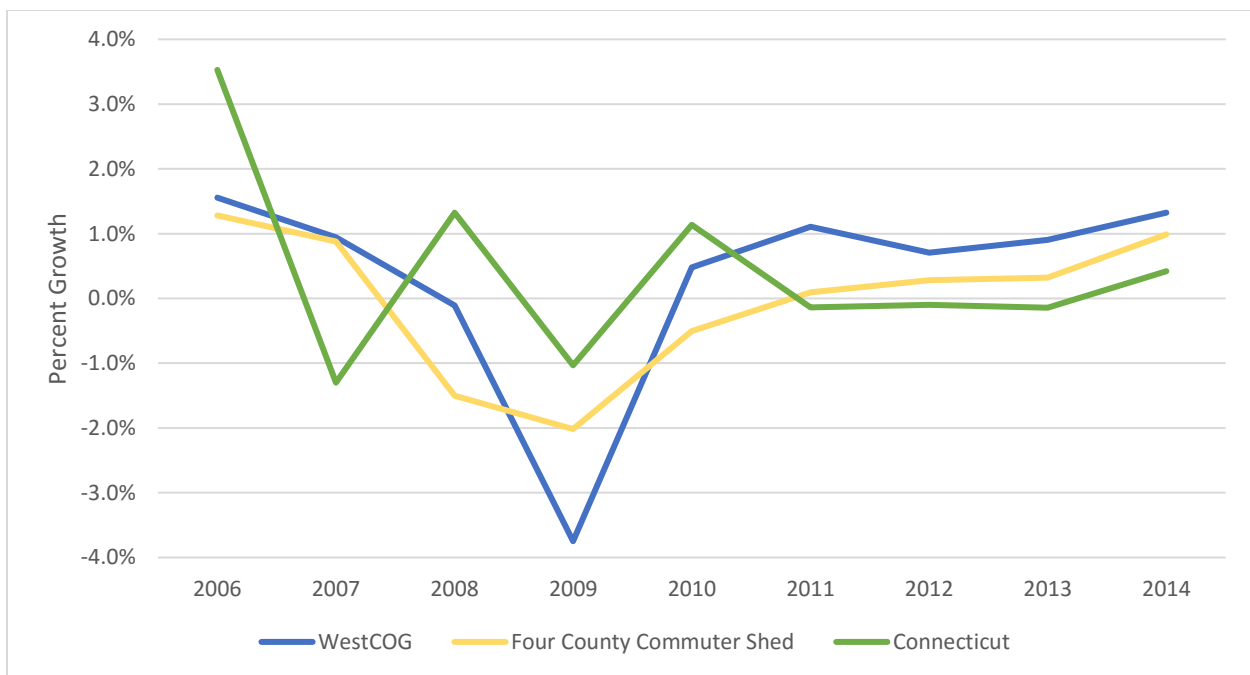
Figure 38: Western CT Region Industry Employment Shares, 2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 39 shows the percent in annual employment growth in the Western Connecticut Region, Four County Commuter Shed, and Connecticut by year. Annual average employment growth in all three regions followed similar patterns. Despite the volatility caused by the recession, Western Connecticut had 3.1% more jobs than were available in 2005, an estimated 9,047 jobs. The Four County Commuter Shed's number of jobs over the same time period shrank by .2%, a loss of an estimated 4,898 jobs. Like the Region, Connecticut also added jobs, but at a slightly higher rate, 3.7%, and estimated 62,514 jobs.

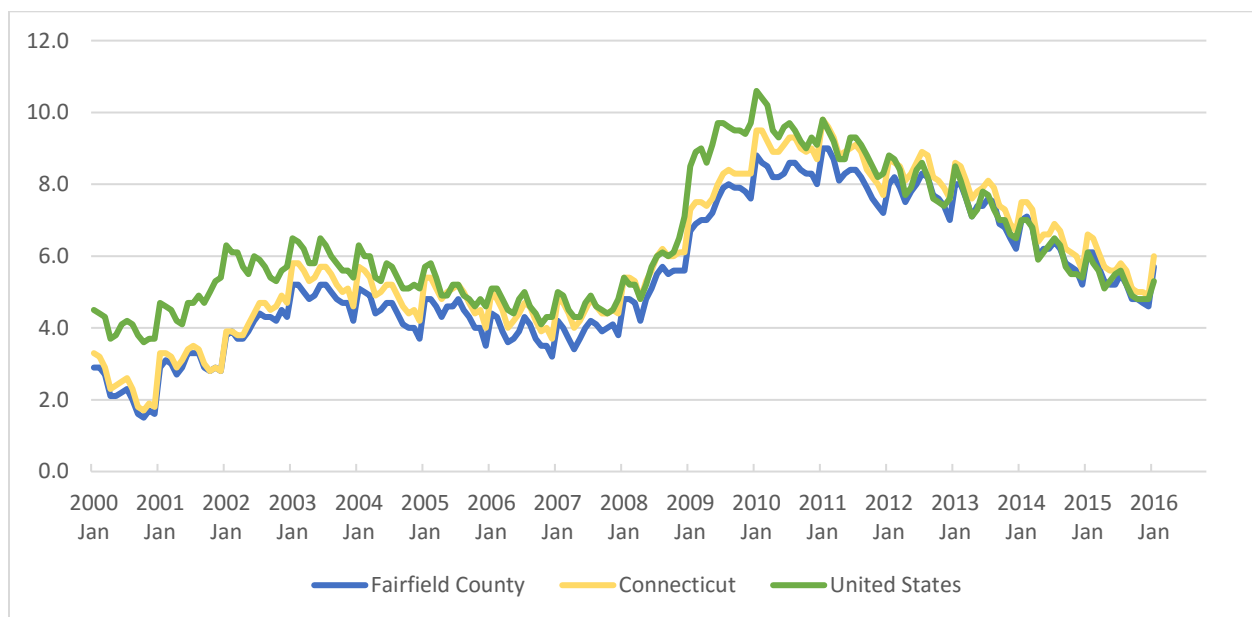
Figure 39: Western CT Region Annual Percent Change in Employment Growth, 2005-2014



Sources: Connecticut Department of Labor, New York Department of Labor

Figure 40<sup>10</sup> displays the unemployment rates of Fairfield County, Connecticut, and the United States. All three regions follow a similar pattern. The unemployment rate in the Western Connecticut Region never exceeded 9%, yet in the Four County Commuter Shed, Connecticut, and the United States, the unemployment rate surpassed the 9% level. This suggests that the Region's industry was more insulated against business cycle effects or has significant structural differences in comparison to the other regions. In Appendix A, there is a list of unemployment rates by municipality in the Western Connecticut Region.

Figure 40: Comparative Unemployment Rates, 2000-2016

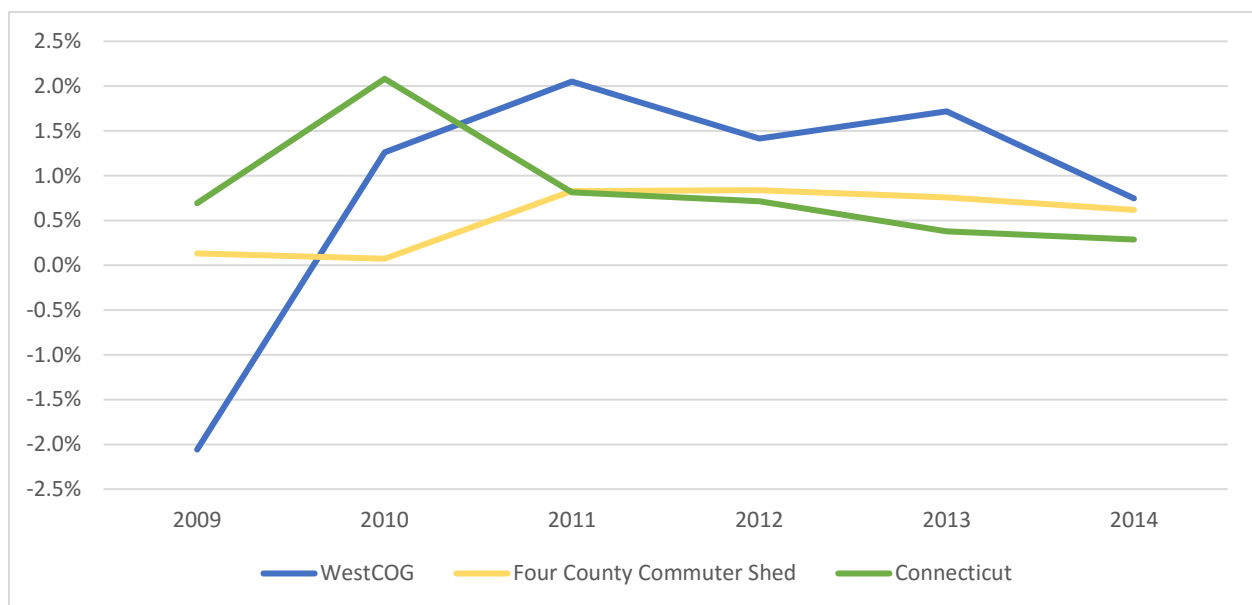


Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

<sup>10</sup> These rates are not seasonally adjusted.

**Figure 41** details labor force growth in the Western Connecticut Region. After 2010, labor force growth in the Western Connecticut Region has been consistently positive. Since 2011, the Western Connecticut Region has grown at a larger rate in comparison to the Four County Commuter Shed and Connecticut. This may indicate that persons looking for work in the Western Connecticut Region had more confidence in its market and consequently entered the labor force to search for work.

**Figure 41: Western CT Region Labor Force Growth, 2008-2014**

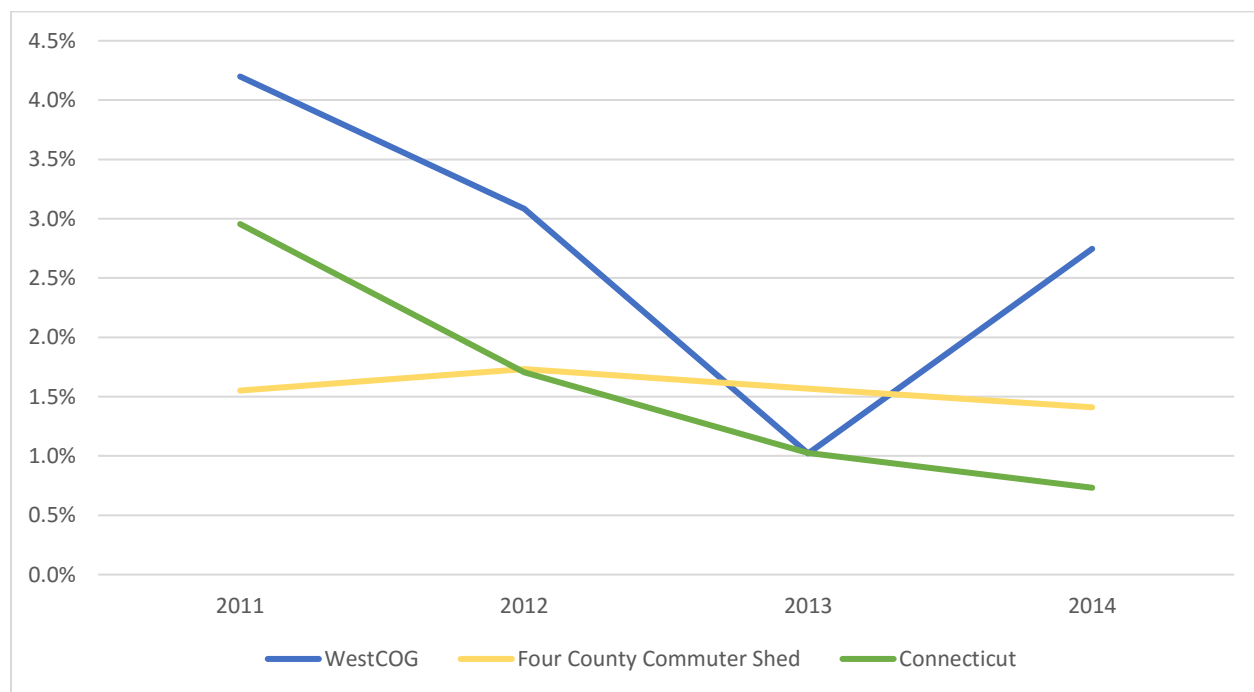


Sources: Connecticut Department of Labor, New York Department of Labor, U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The next set of figures show employment patterns by select industry sectors in the Western Connecticut Region and Connecticut. The selected industries were chosen because they represent large concentrations of employment in the Western Connecticut Region and the State.

**Figure 42** displays percent change in employment in Educational Services, and Healthcare and Social Assistance (ESHSA) from year to year. ESHSA is the largest employment sector in the Western Connecticut Region, just over 20 percent (Figure 33). Since 2010 this sector has continued to grow in all three analyzed geographies. However, compared to the Four County Commuter Shed and Connecticut, ESHSA grew at nearly twice the rate in the Western Connecticut Region, 11.5 percent (6,288 jobs) compared to 6.4 (33,448 jobs) and 6.6 (28,773 jobs) percent, respectively.

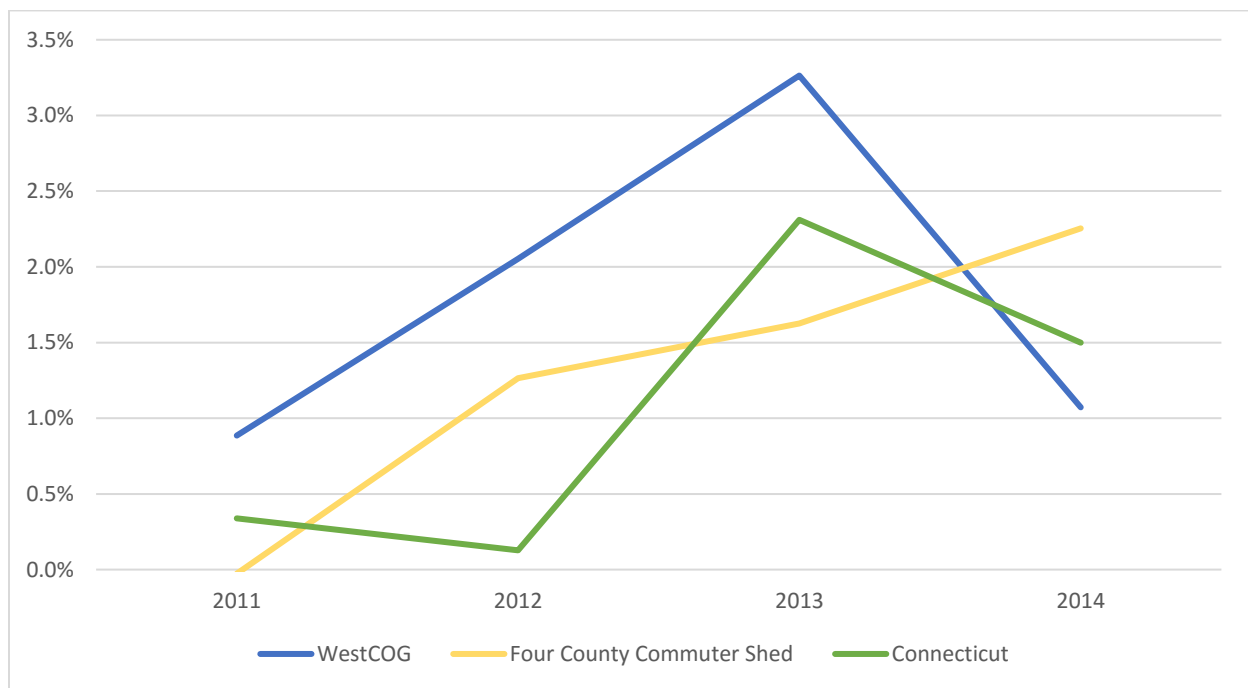
**Figure 42: Annual Change in Employment in Educational Services, and Healthcare and Social Assistance in the Western CT Region, 2010-2014**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 43 shows employment trends in the Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services (PSMA) sector. Since 2010, this sector has continued to grow in all three analyzed geographies. However, compared to the Four County Commuter Shed and Connecticut, PSMA grew at a faster rate in the Western Connecticut Region, 7.5 percent (3,561 jobs) compared to 5.2 (17,020 jobs) and 4.3 (8,209 jobs) percent, respectively.

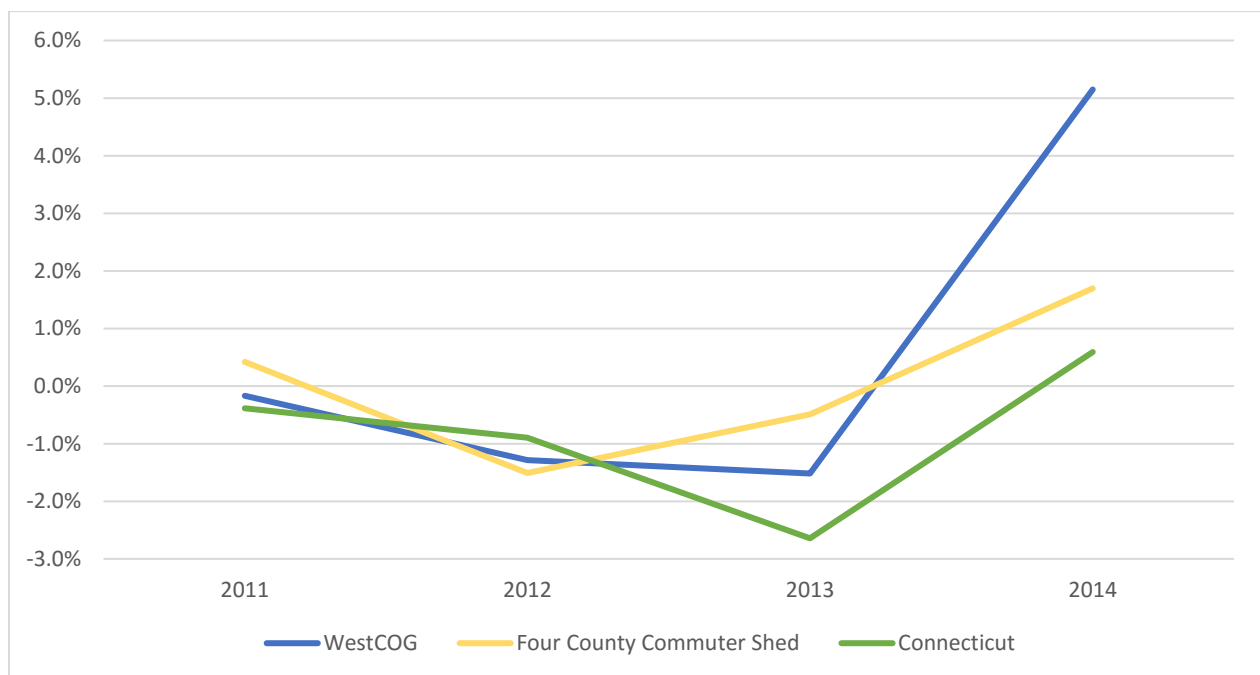
Figure 43: Annual Change in Employment in the Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services in the Western CT Region, 2010-2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

**Figure 44** details annual change in Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (FIRR) employment growth in the Western Connecticut Region and comparative regions. Following the 2008 recession, all three comparative geographies experienced a decrease in employment. However, only in the Western Connecticut Region has this sector experienced a growth rate, 2 percent (829 jobs), since 2010. Over the same time period, the FIRR sector in the Four County Commuter Shed grew 0.1 percent (237 jobs), but in Connecticut this sector shrank 3.3 percent, losing 5,558 jobs. This finding may imply that the Western Connecticut Region is recovering faster than other areas.

**Figure 44: Annual Change in Employment in Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing in the Western CT Region, 2010-2014**

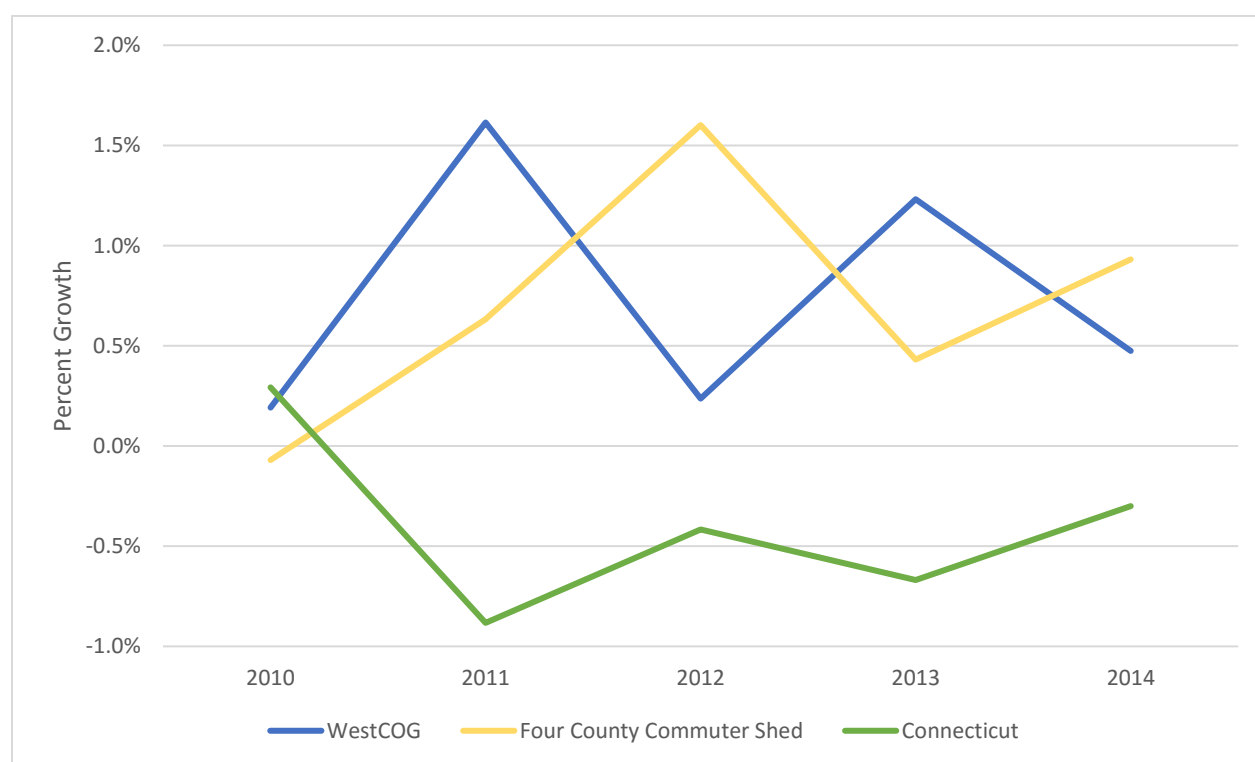


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



**Figure 45** shows employment trends in the Retail Trade sector. Between 2009 and 2014, over this time period, retail trade employment in the Western Connecticut Region performed better than the Four County Commuter Shed Region, and better than Connecticut. From 2009 to 2014, retail trade employment grew in the Region by 3.8 percent, an estimated 1,148 jobs, while Four County Commuter Shed grew by 3.6 percent, an estimated 7,123 jobs, over the same time period. Conversely, Connecticut's number of jobs in retail trade employment shrank by 2 percent, an estimated 3,829 jobs from 2009 to 2014. This figure suggests that the Western Connecticut Region has a relative strength in the Retail Trade sector and has the capability of not only attracting consumers from the Western Connecticut Region, but also consumers who live in nearby regions.

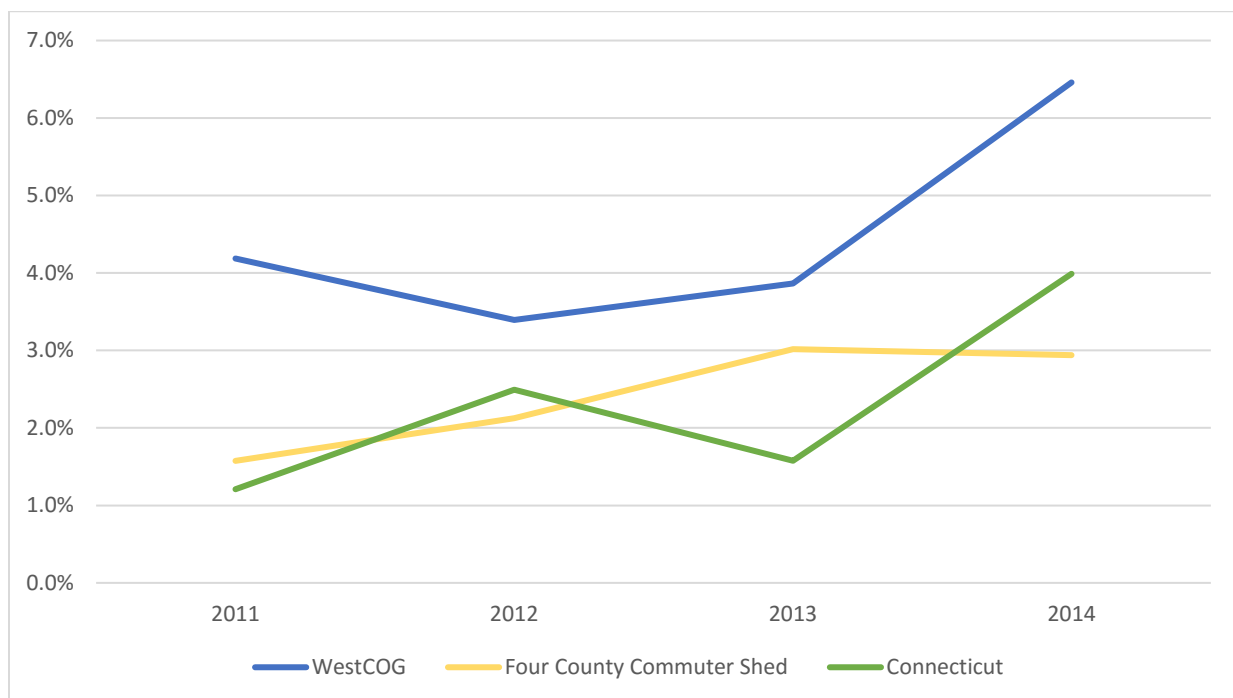
**Figure 45: Annual Change in Retail Trade Employment in the Western CT Region, 2010-2014**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 46 displays annual change in employment in the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services (AER). Since 2010 this sector has continued to grow in all three analyzed geographies. However, compared to the Four County Commuter Shed and Connecticut, AER grew at nearly twice the rate in the Western Connecticut Region, 19.1 percent (3,940 jobs) compared to 10 percent (18,311 jobs) and 9.6 percent (13,454 jobs), respectively.

Figure 46: Annual Change in Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services Employment in the Western CT Region, 2010-2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

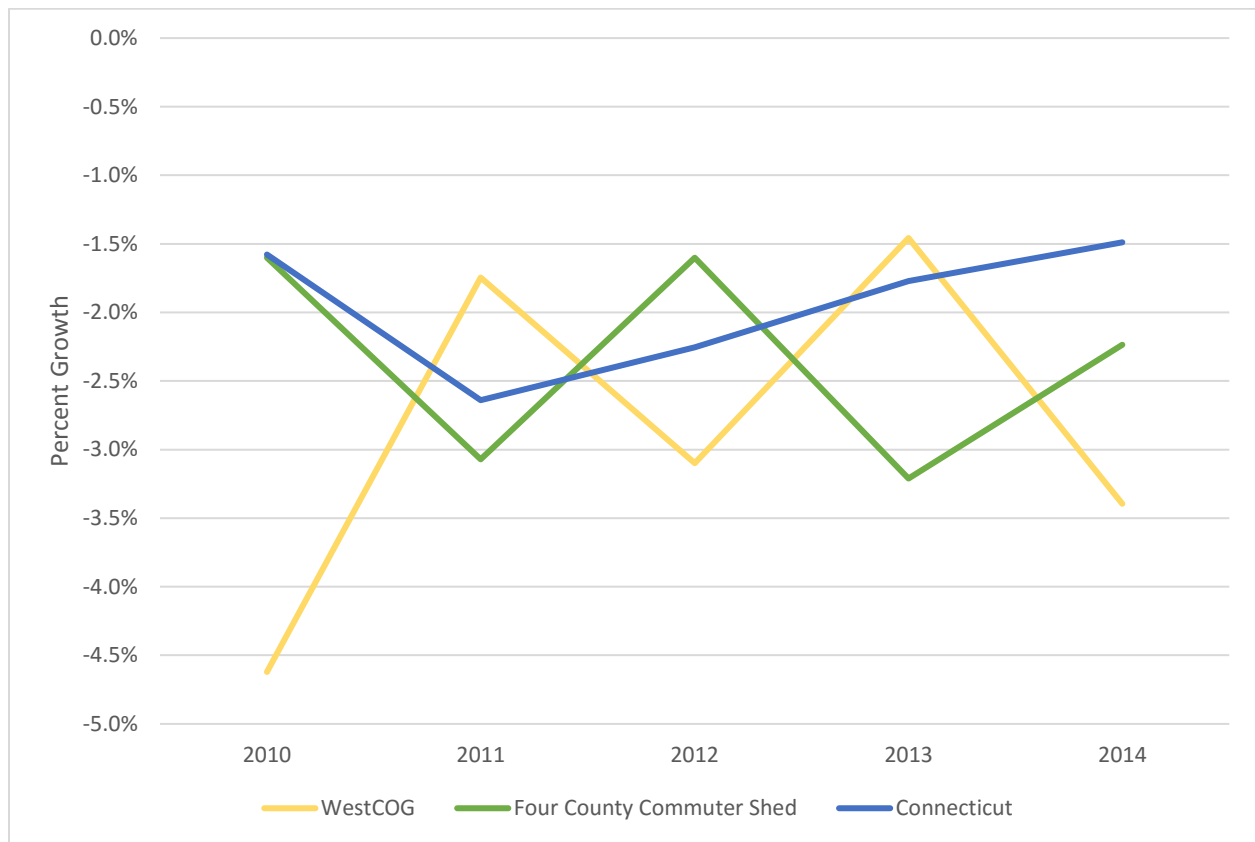
Figure 47 details annual average Manufacturing employment growth in the Western Connecticut Region and comparative regions. While Manufacturing is not a top industry in the Western Connecticut Region, it is the third largest industry by employment in Connecticut,

and is more susceptible to macro-business cycle effects. Overall, employment in manufacturing has been steadily decreasing in all three comparative geographies. However, the decline in manufacturing in the Western Connecticut Region was more significant, from

2009 to 2014 the number of manufacturing jobs have decreased 13.6 percent, or an estimated loss of 3,645 jobs. Over the same time period, the decline was less dramatic; the number of jobs in the Four County Commuter Shed shrank by 11.2 percent or an estimated loss of 17,016 jobs; in Connecticut, the number of manufacturing jobs shrank by 9.4 percent or a loss on and estimated 19,743 jobs. This

suggests that the manufacturing sector in all three regions experienced a shift during that time period. This may be due in part to increased productivity (more output with less need for people) and decisions related to consolidation, and innovations in technology such as automation.

Figure 47: Annual Average Manufacturing Employment in the Western CT Region, 2010-2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Industry Segmentation

This section examines the economic data for larger regions that include the majority of the Western Connecticut Region. Using data from Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, WestCOG staff analyzed the Western Connecticut Region using Fairfield County, Workforce Development Areas, Metropolitan Statistical Areas, and Connecticut. These geographic areas are useful when making comparisons to the state and across the nation. The economic data provides insight into the industry composition, skill base, and competitive advantages in the Western Connecticut Region.

### Industry Segmentation Key Findings

- Compared to the national average, Fairfield County has a greater presence of management, finance, arts, information, education, health care, professional and technical service, retail, administrative and waste services occupations, all of which relate to the industry types that the Region has successfully attracted and sustained. These occupations should be considered as positive factors for attracting new businesses to the Region, as well as a key resource for local small businesses that need talent for growth. The Region, however, may want to consider strategies to attract and grow more support occupations to meet the demand for these occupations.

### Industry Concentrations by Location Quotients

This section analyzes the industry sectors that are concentrated in the area using location quotients as a measure. A location quotient is the most commonly used technique to compare the industrial or occupational

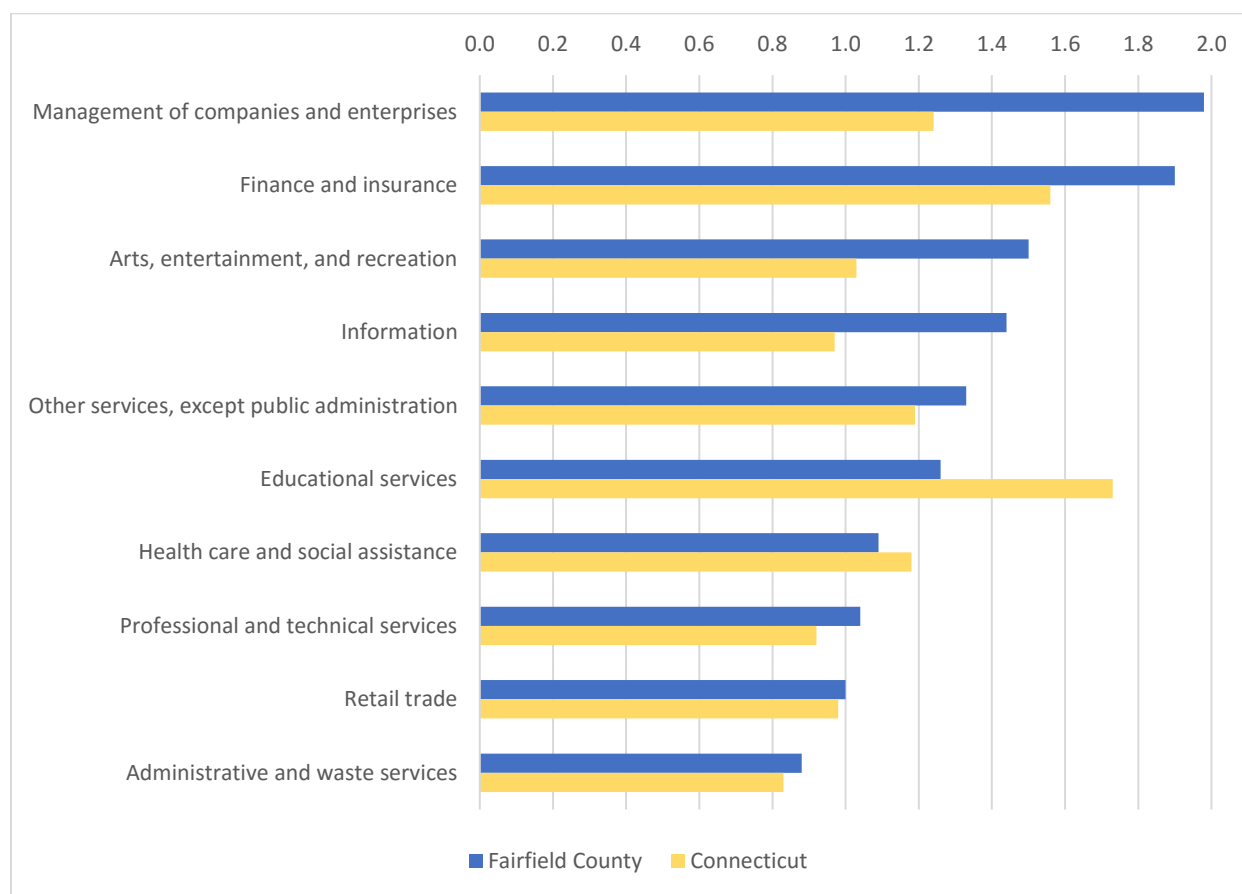
composition of distinct geographic areas. A location quotient is calculated by taking the proportion of employment in a given industry or occupation for the geographic area of interest and dividing it by the proportion for the same industry in a base geography (e.g., another region, the state or nation). In this analysis, the numerator used was the employment of each 6-digit NAICS subsector industry in Fairfield County or Connecticut. The denominator in each of the location quotients was the United States.

A location quotient that is greater than one ( $>1$ ) means a region has a higher concentration in that particular industry than the comparison geographic area. A location quotient of one ( $=1$ ) means the proportion of the industry that is in a region is exactly equal to the proportion of the industry in the United States. A location quotient of less than one ( $<1$ ) indicates the industry is not a strength for a region and proportionally lower than that of the United States. Location quotients can measure what makes a region unique.

Figure 48 shows the ten highest location quotient industry sectors in Fairfield County (which contains most of the Western Connecticut Region) and Connecticut versus the United States. The top ten industries in Fairfield County ranged from 0.88 to 1.98 indicating that the industries with location quotients above 1 have a uniquely high concentration of the employment. The highest

location quotient for Fairfield County was found to be Management of companies and enterprises with a location quotient of 1.98 while in Connecticut this sector is ranked third with a location quotient of 1.24. The highest location quotient for Connecticut was found to be Educational services with a location quotient of 1.73. In Fairfield County, this sector ranked sixth with a location quotient of 1.26.

Figure 48: Top Ten Highest Location Quotient Industry Sectors for Fairfield County, Compared to Connecticut and the United States, 2015



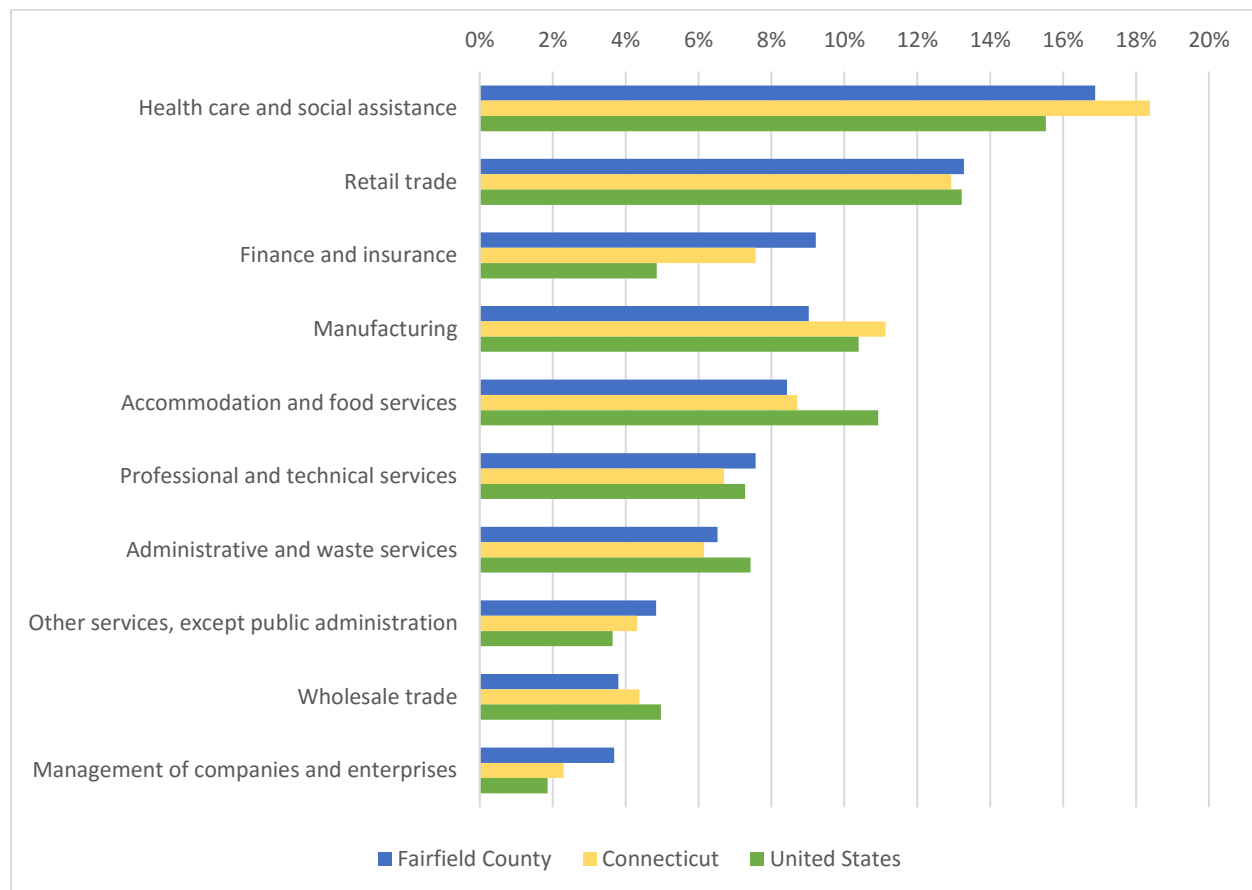
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2015

## Employment by Industry: Fairfield County

**Figure 49** shows each of the ten industries in the Region along with the proportion of employment in the three comparative regions and the United States. Concentrations in Fairfield County ranged from 3.7 percent (Management of companies and enterprises) to 16.9 percent (Health care and social assistance). The top ten industries accounted for an aggregate 83.3 percent of overall employment in 2015; the top five constituted 56.8 percent, demonstrating their critical importance in the Region.

It should be noted that this analysis included both local and traded clusters, those industries which serve the local market and markets beyond.

**Figure 49: Top Ten Largest Employment Industry Sectors for Fairfield County, Compared to Connecticut, and the US, 2015**



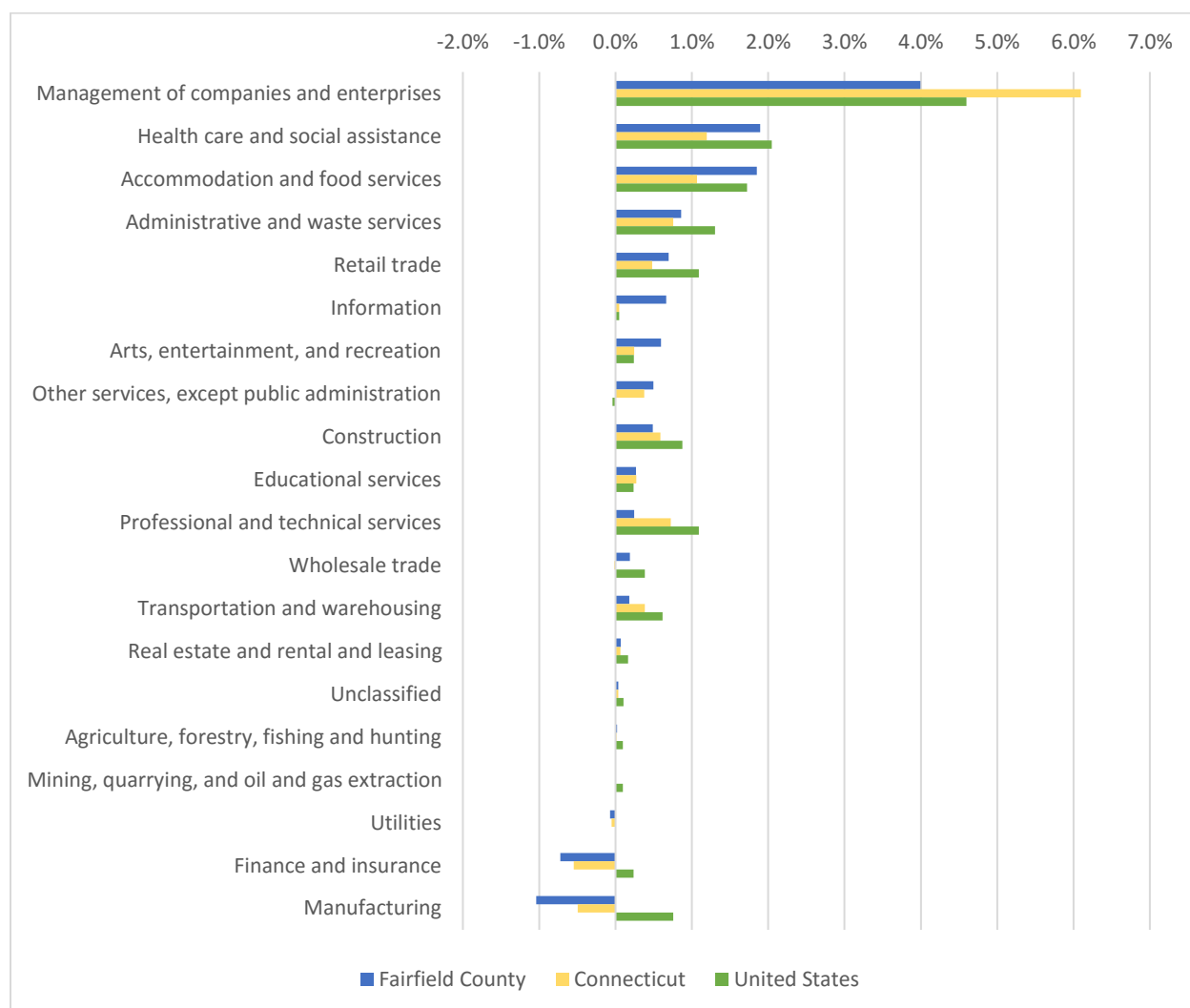
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2015

## Net Employment Growth 2010-2015

**Figure 50** shows the net growth in employment in Fairfield County's ten largest employment sectors and in comparative regions from 2010-2015. From 2010-2015, employment in the County grew by 7 percent (24,709 jobs). The largest percent growth occurred in Management of companies and enterprises (4

percent), Health care and social assistance (1.9 percent), and Accommodation and food services (1.9 percent). Only three industry sectors in the County saw negative employment growth, Manufacturing (1 percent), Finance and insurance (.07 percent), and Utilities (0.1 percent).

**Figure 50: Net Change in Employment from 2010-15 for Industry Sectors in Fairfield County, Connecticut, and the United States**

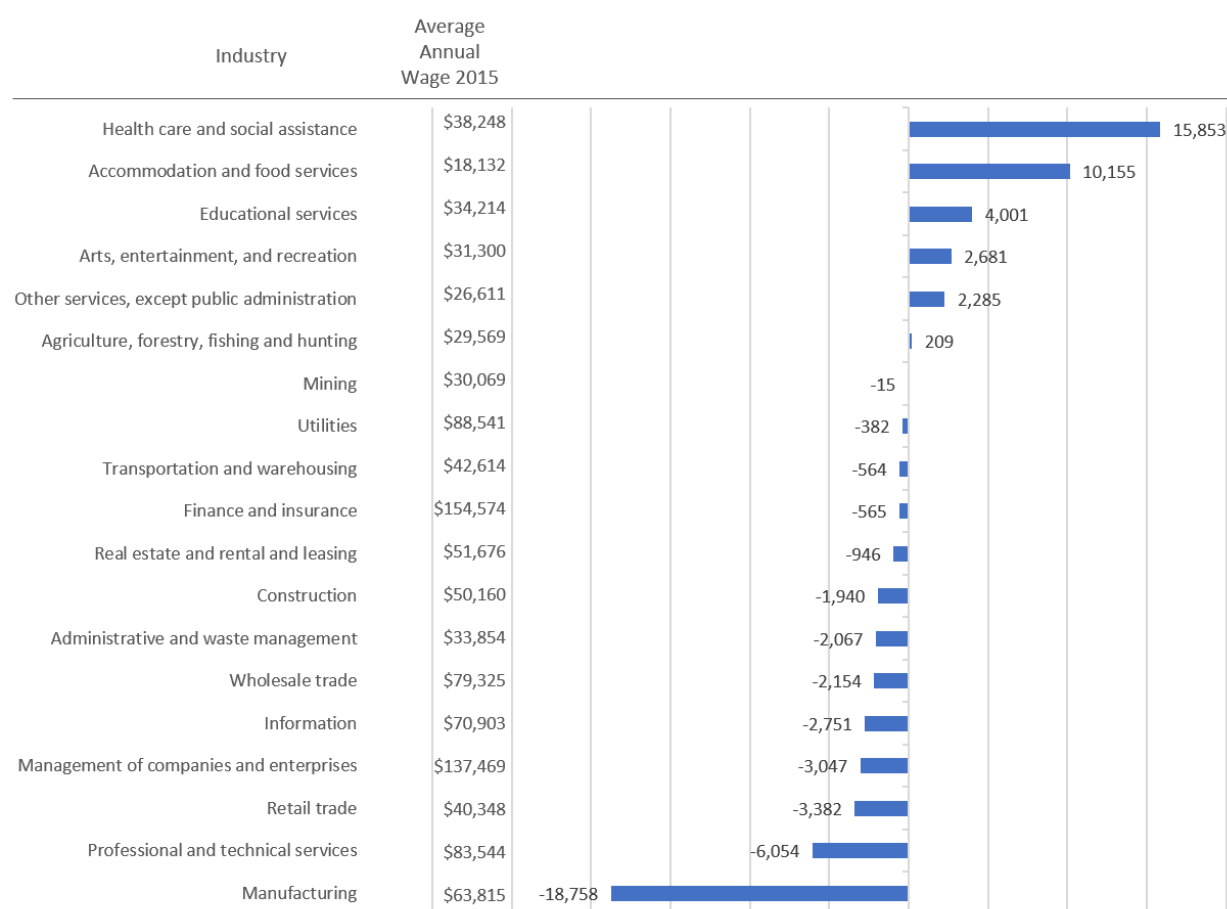


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2015



As seen in **Figure 51**, Fairfield County has grown the total number of jobs in some sectors, but has lost jobs in many more since 2000. Overall the County has lost 7,441 jobs. The jobs lost were in sectors with a high average annual income, such as Management of companies and enterprises, which lost 3,047 jobs that had an average annual income of \$137,496. The sectors that did have job growth have lower average annual wages than sectors that lost jobs.

**Figure 51: Net Change in Employment from 2000-15 and Annual Wage for Industry Sectors in Fairfield County**



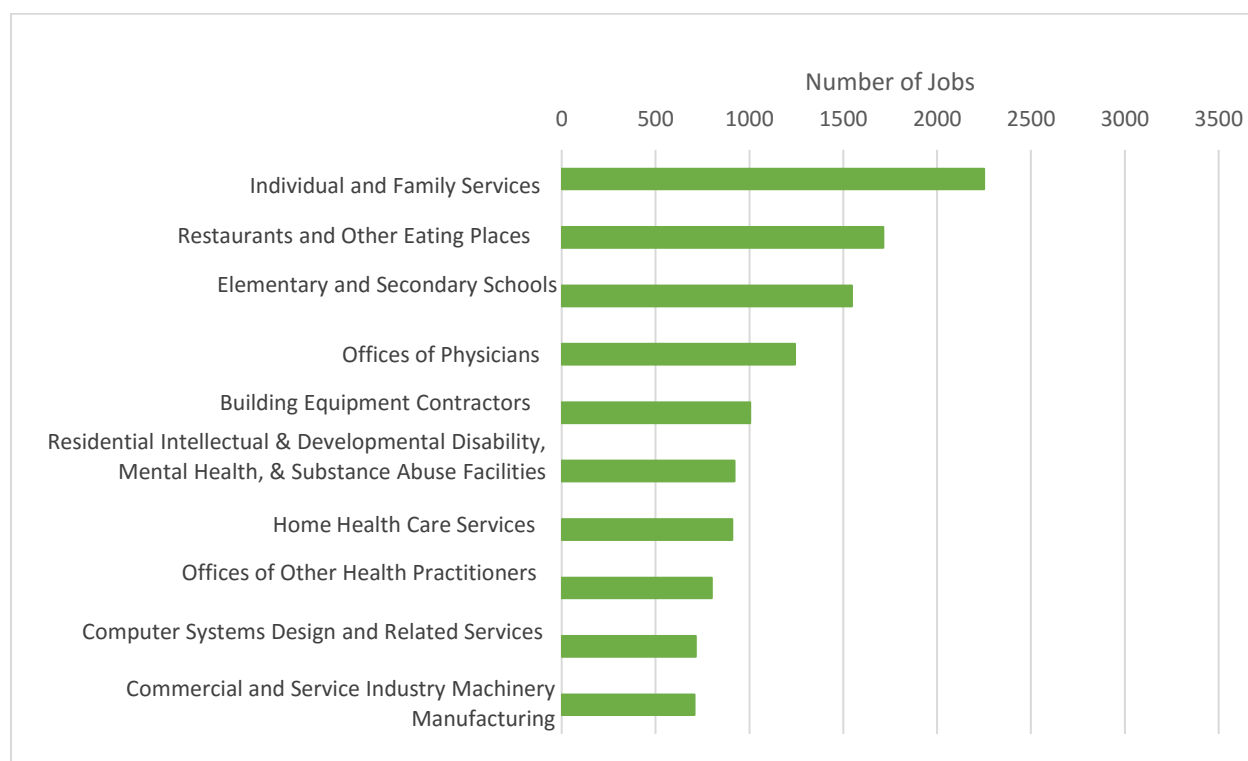
Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Annual Averages of the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2015

## Projected Employment Growth 2012-2022: Eighteen Town Western Connecticut Region

Figure 52 and Figure 53 show the ten industries with the largest projected net employment growth between 2012-22 in the Workforce Development Areas of Northwest Connecticut and Southwest Connecticut, which together contain the eighteen town Western Connecticut Region (a list of towns included in the two Workforce Development Areas can be found in Appendix A). Values range from 2,304 jobs to 19,524 jobs in the Northwest and from 4,248 jobs to 33,244 jobs added in the Southwest. These top ten industries in the Northwest and the top ten industries in the Southwest were expected to gain an aggregate 151,785 jobs.

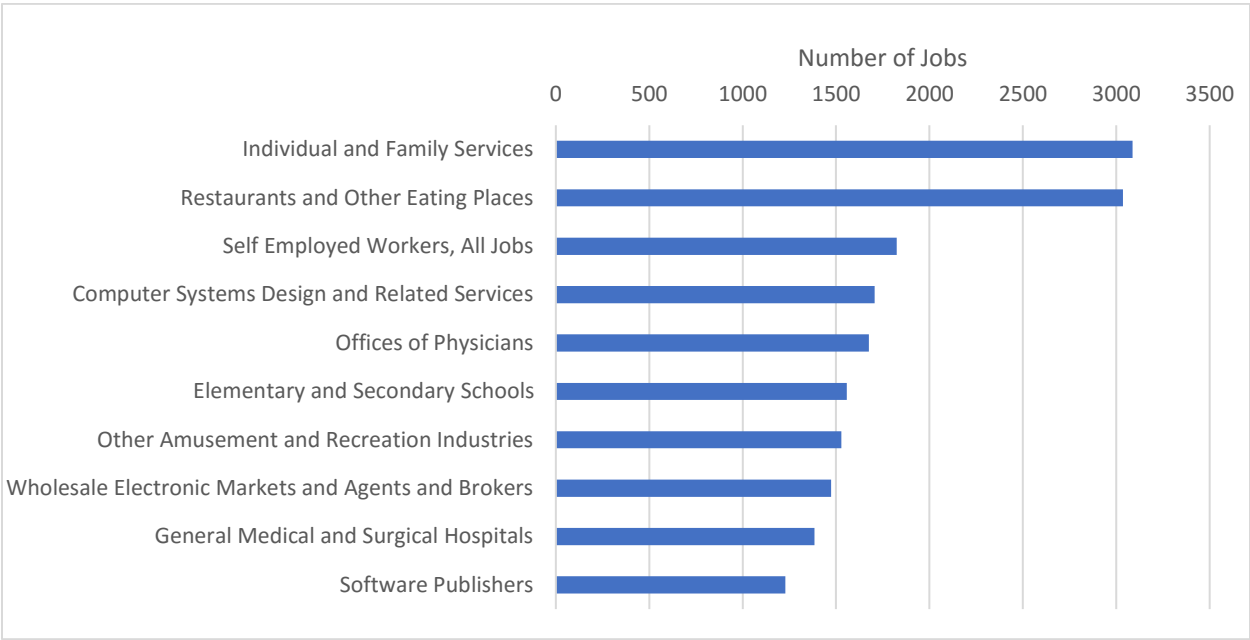
For both regions, the top three industries based on jobs added were Services Providing; Education and Health Services; and Health Care and Social Assistance. In the Northwest, Services Providing is expected to add 19,524 jobs, Education and Health Services is expected to add 10,151 jobs, and Health Care and Social Assistance is expected to add 7,847 jobs. In the Southwest, Services Providing is expected to add 33,244 jobs, Education and Health Services is expected to add 14,130 jobs, and Health Care and Social Assistance is expected to add 11,532 jobs.

Figure 52: Top Ten Projected Growth Industries in Northwest Connecticut, 2012-22



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Department of Economic and Community Development, 2012

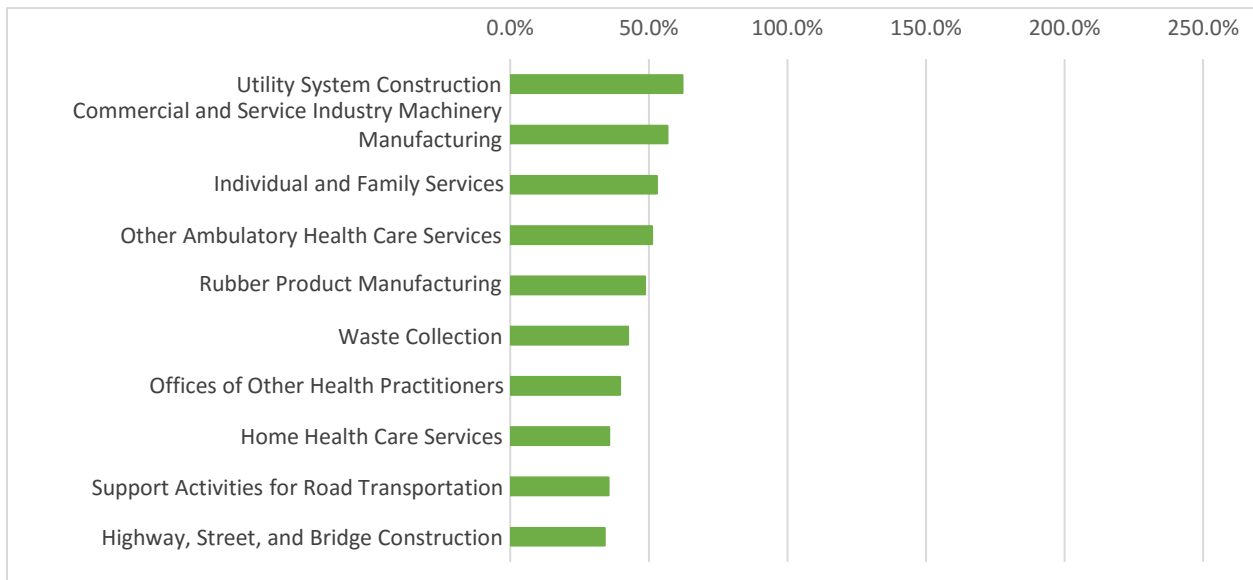
Figure 53: Top Ten Projected Growth Industries in Southwest Connecticut, 2012-22



NB: The Software Publishers industry group is defined as “establishments primarily engaged in computer software publishing or publishing and reproduction. Establishments in this industry carry out operations necessary for producing and distributing computer software, such as designing, providing documentation, assisting in installation, and providing support services to software purchasers. These establishments may design, develop, and publish, or publish only.”  
Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Department of Economic and Community Development, 2012

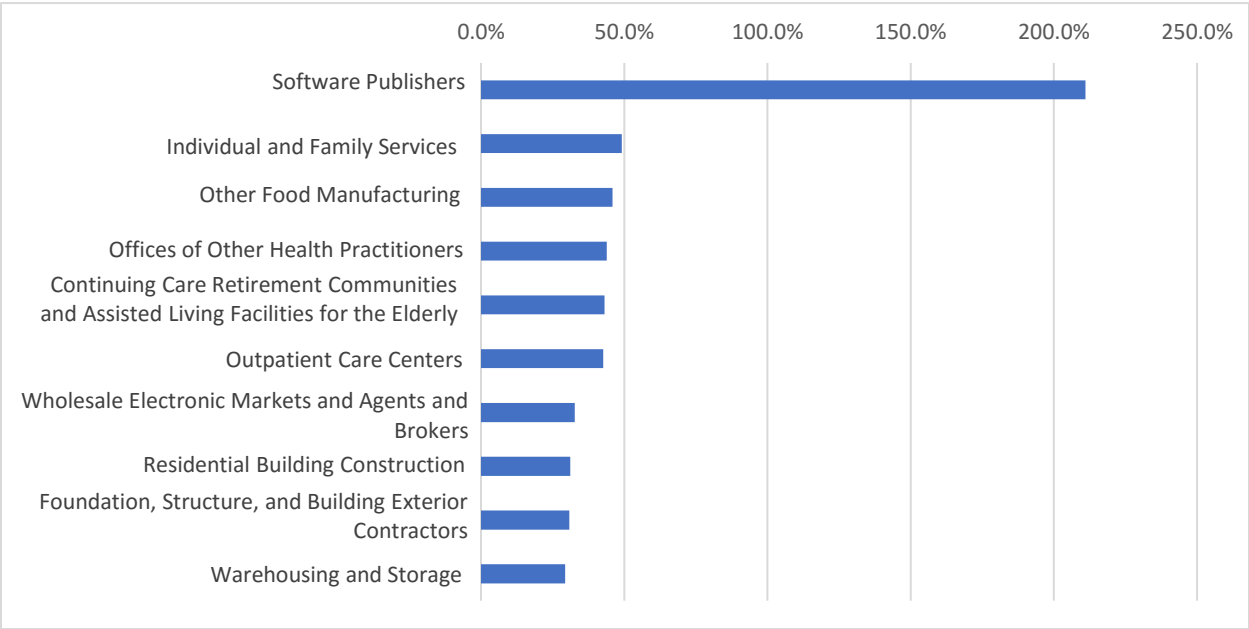
Figure 54 and Figure 55 also show the top ten industries for the Northwest and Southwest region by percent change. Values range from 36.1 percent increase in jobs to 62.2 percent increase in jobs between 2010–2022 in the Northwest, and from 211.0 percent increase in jobs to 32.7 percent increase in jobs between 2010–2022 in the Southwest. The top three industries in both regions differed when examining percent change in number of jobs. In the Northwest, the top three industries were Utility System Construction (62.2 percent), Commercial and Service Industry Machinery Manufacturing (56.7 percent), and Individual and Family Services (53.0 percent). In the Southwest, the top three industries were Software Publishers (211.0 percent), Individual and Family Services (49.1 percent), and Other Food Manufacturing (45.9 percent).

Figure 54: Top Ten Projected Growth Industries by Percent Growth in Northwest Connecticut, 2012–22



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Department of Economic and Community Development, 2012

Figure 55: Top Ten Projected Growth Industries by Percent Growth in Southwest Connecticut, 2012-22



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Department of Economic and Community Development, 2012

## Occupational Analysis

This section examines the occupational concentration within the eighteen town Western Connecticut Region. Since occupations can span multiple industries, analyzing the Region from an occupational perspective provides insight into the skills of the workforce and which industries could expand or grow within the Region.

Figure 56 shows the top ten occupations by location quotient in Danbury Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk MSA, and Connecticut. As can be seen in the figure, the values for the Danbury MSA ranged from 2.56 to 11.6 and the values for the Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk MSA ranged from 3.58 to 9.24, indicating that these occupations have a uniquely high concentration of the employment in the Region. Three of the ten highest location quotient occupations for Danbury were Electromechanical Equipment Assemblers with a location quotient of 11.6, Office and Administrative Support Workers, All Others with a location quotient of 3.59, and Chefs and Head Cooks with a location quotient of 3.4. Three of the ten highest location quotient occupations for the Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk MSA were Survey Researchers with a location quotient of 9.24, Personal Financial Advisors with a location quotient of 4.62, and Athletic Trainers with a location quotient of 4.17. The Region has a competitive advantage in the industries with these occupations as compared to the state of Connecticut, with the State having high location quotients in different industries and comparatively lower location quotients for the Region's strongest industries.

Figure 56: Top Ten Highest Location Quotient Occupations in the Danbury MSA, Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk MSA, and Connecticut versus the United States, May 2015

Danbury MSA	
Industry	Location Quotient
Electromechanical Equipment Assemblers	11.6
Office and Administrative Support Workers, All Others	3.59
Chefs and Head Cooks	3.40
Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal and Plastic	3.02
Electric and Electronic Equipment Assemblers	2.84
Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors	2.81
Heat Treating Equipment Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	2.68
Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	2.57
Nurse Practitioners	2.57
Surgeons	2.56
Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk MSA	
Industry	Location Quotient
Survey Researchers	9.24
Personal Financial Advisors	4.62
Athletic Trainers	4.17
Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents	3.91
Etchers and Engravers	3.82
Brokerage Clerks	3.82
Financial Analysts	3.78
Training and Development Managers	3.76
Marketing Managers	3.65
Credit Analysis	3.58
Connecticut	
Industry	Location Quotient
Area, Ethnic, and Cultural Studies Teachers, Postsecondary	4.77
Actuaries	4.13
Insurance Underwriters	3.89
Choreographers	3.30
Survey Researchers	2.87
Aircraft Structure, Surfaces, Rigging, and Systems Assemblers	2.79
Psychiatrists	2.78
Lathe and Turning Machine Tool Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	2.72
Computer Numerically Controlled Machine Tool Programmers, Metal and Plastic	2.69
Cooks, All Other	2.66

Source: United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics, May 2015



**Figure 57** below shows the employment by occupation in the 10 largest occupations in the eighteen town Western Connecticut Region in 2014. The Census has created 25 total categories for occupations. The top three occupations with the highest percentage of employment are Management, Sales and related occupations, and Office and administrative support making up 13.7, 12.7, and 11.7 percent of the workforce, respectively. All other occupations only account for 30.7 percent of occupations by employment in the Western Connecticut Region. The portion of employment of the ten largest employing occupations in the eighteen town Western

Connecticut Region ranged from 3.7 percent to 13.7 percent, together these ten occupations accounted for 75.3 percent of all employment in the Region, indicating that these occupations were extremely crucial to the Region's economic composition. The conclusion from this analysis is that a large proportion of the Region's workforce is involved in high income occupations or in occupations that support the services demanded by the Western Connecticut's high income population. The regional breakdown by occupation is similar to that of the Four County Commuter Shed and Connecticut.

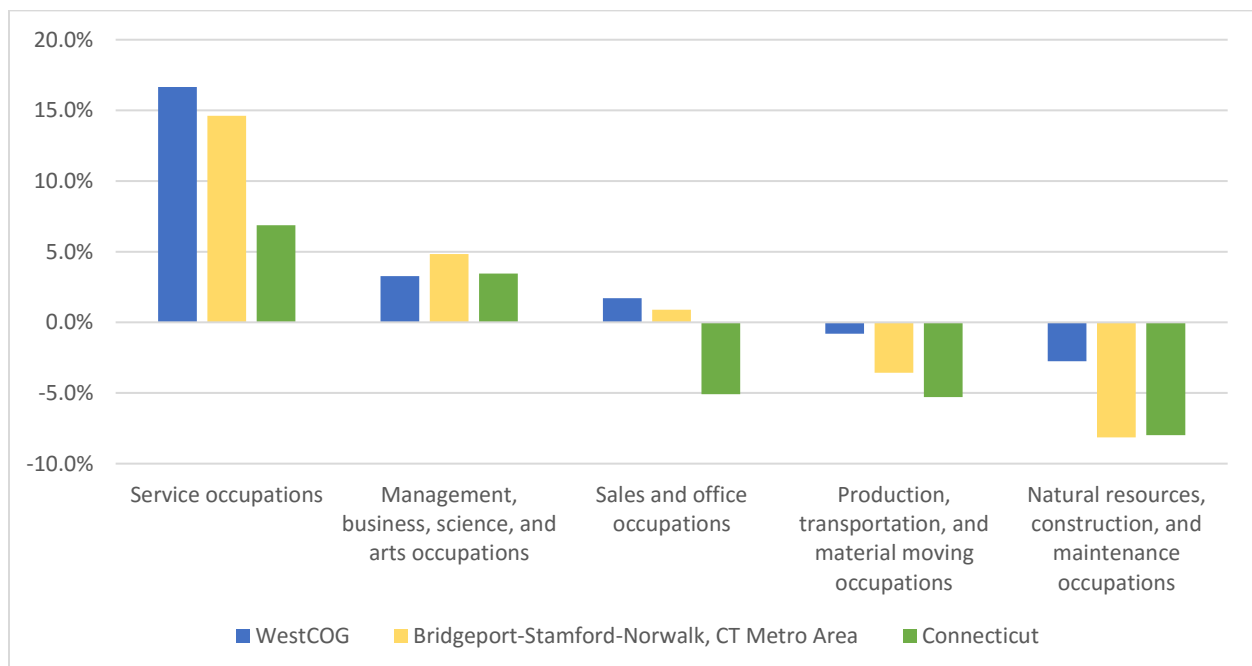
**Figure 57: Top 10 Largest Employment Occupations in the Western CT Region, 2014**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 58 shows percent change in employment by occupation between 2010 and 2014 for the eighteen town Western Connecticut Region. The three occupations that experienced growth during this period were Service occupations (16.6 percent); Management, business, science, and arts occupations (3.3 percent); and Sales and office occupations (1.7 percent). The two occupations that experienced a decline in employment during this period were Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations (2.8 percent) and Production, transportation, and material moving occupations (0.8 percent).

Figure 58: High Employment Growth Occupations in the Western CT Region, Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk MSA, and Connecticut, 2010-14



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

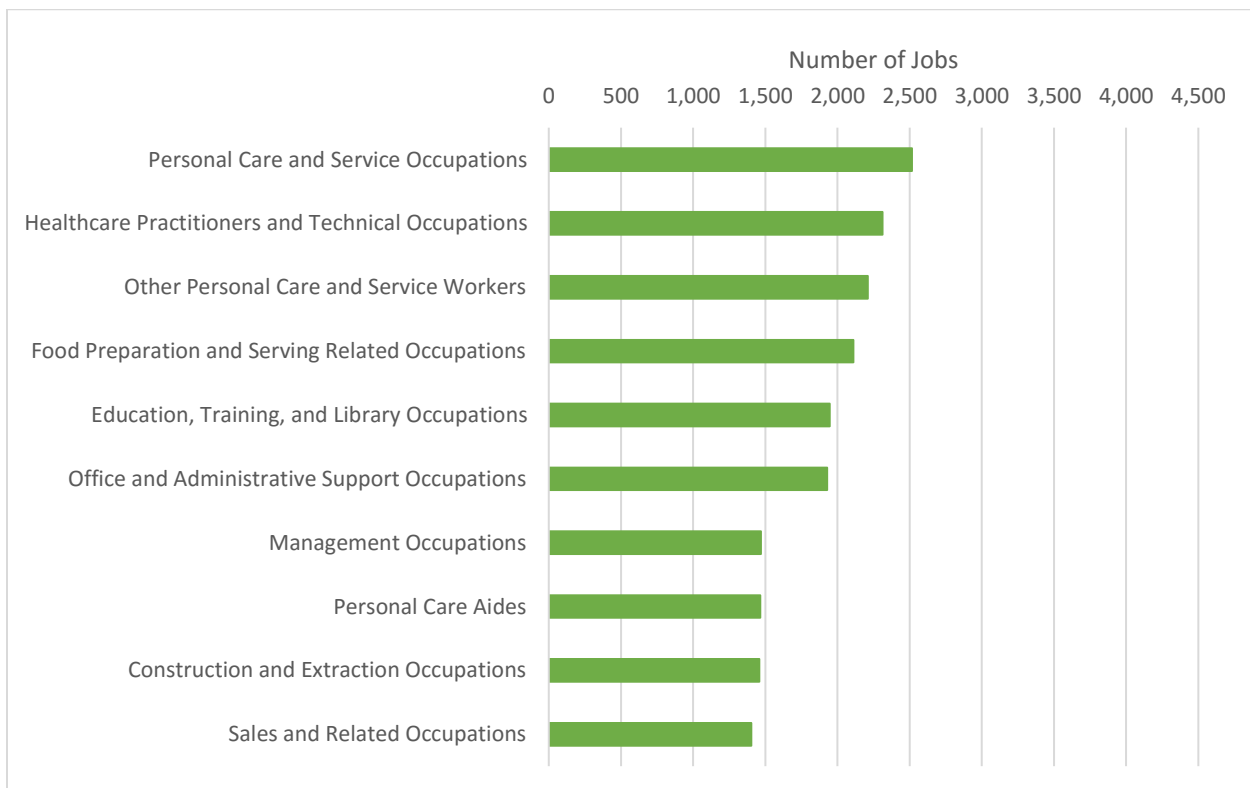
Looking to the future, **Figure 59** and **Figure 60** show the ten occupations with the highest projected employment growth by percent growth and **Figure 61** and **Figure 62** show by net increase in number of jobs for Northwest Connecticut and Southwest Connecticut Workforce Development Areas, which together contain the eighteen town Western Connecticut Region. By net increase in number of jobs, values range from 1,404 jobs to 2,516 jobs in the Northwest and from 2,182 jobs to 4,087 jobs added in the Southwest. These top ten occupations in the Northwest and the top ten occupations in the Southwest were expected to gain an aggregate 47,648 jobs.

For the Northwest region, the top three occupations based on jobs added were Personal Care and Service Occupations; Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations; and Other Personal Care and

Service Workers. Personal Care and Service Occupations are expected to add 19,524 jobs, Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations are expected to add 10,151 jobs, and Other Personal Care and Service Workers are expected to add 7,847 jobs.

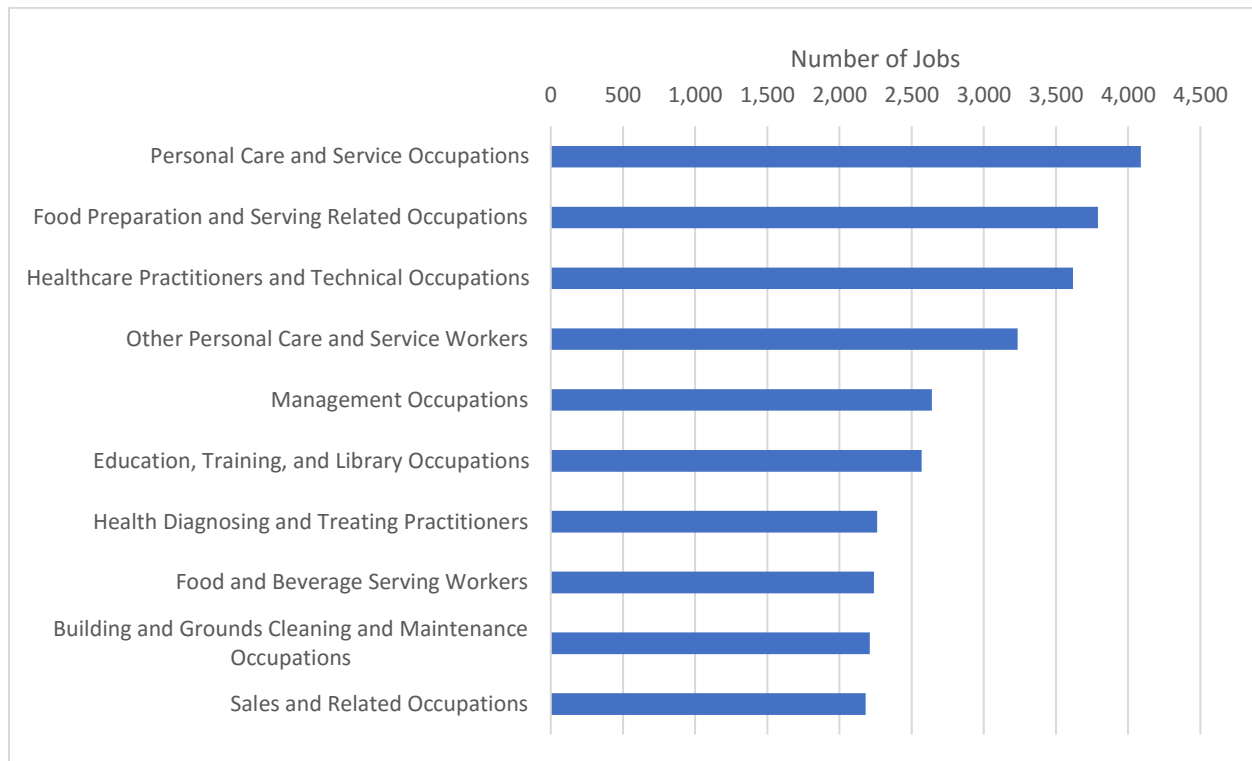
For the Southwest region, the top three occupations based on jobs added were Personal Care and Service Occupations; Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations; and Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations. Personal Care and Service Occupations are expected to add 4,087 jobs, Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations are expected to add 3,790 jobs, and Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations are expected to add 3,618 jobs.

**Figure 59: Top Ten Projected Growth Occupations in Northwest Connecticut, 2012-22**



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Department of Economic and Community Development, 2012

Figure 60: Top Ten Projected Growth Occupations in Southwest Connecticut, 2012-22

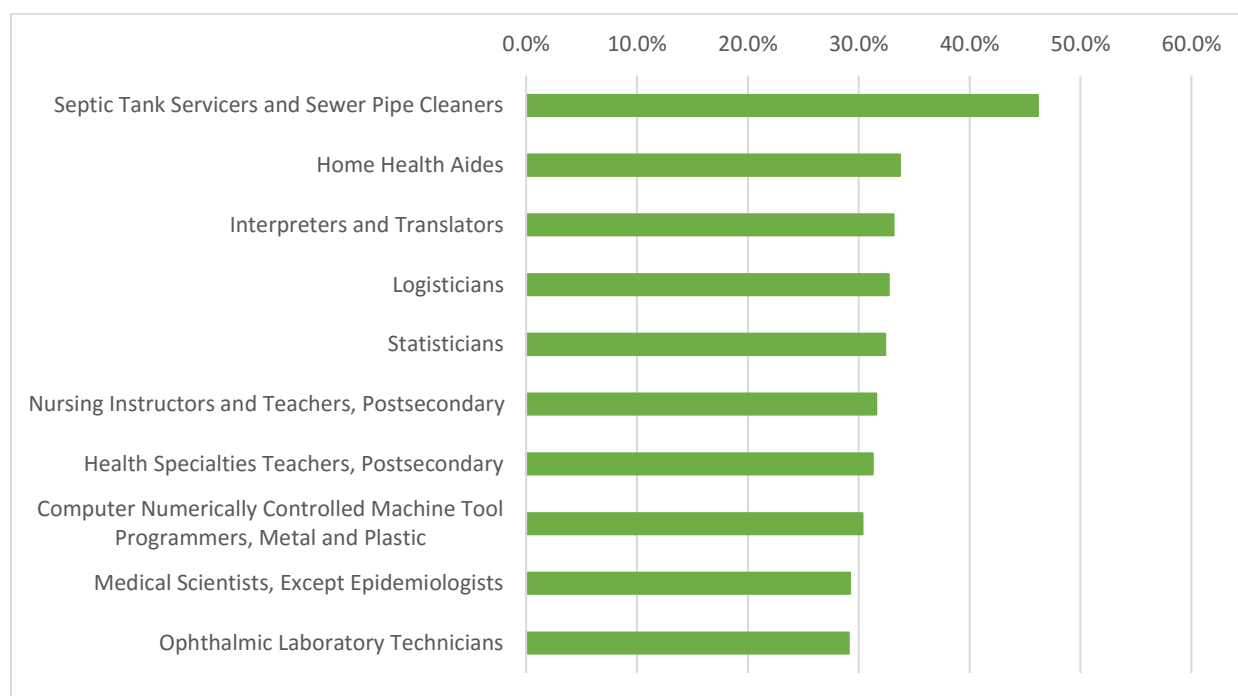


Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Department of Economic and Community Development, 2012

In addition, **Figure 61** and **Figure 62** also show the top ten occupations for the Northwest and Southwest regions by percent change. Values range from 29.1 percent increase in jobs to 46.2 percent increase in jobs between 2012–2022 in the Northwest and from 40.5 percent increase in jobs to 57.4 percent increase in jobs between 2012–2022 in the Southwest. Both regions had ranked different top three industries based on percent change.

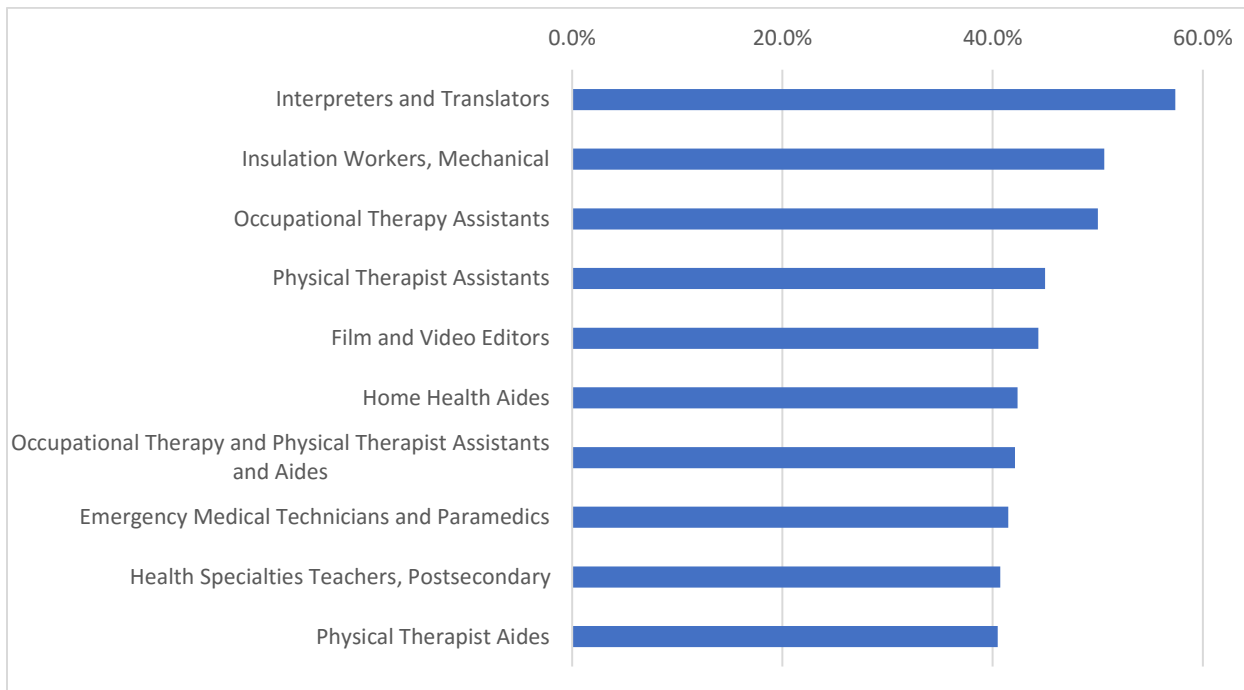
In the Northwest, the top three industries were Septic Tank Servicers and Sewer Pipe Cleaners (46.2 percent), Home Health Aides (33.7 percent), and Interpreters and Translators (33.1 percent). In the Southwest, the top three industries were Interpreters and Translators (57.4 percent), Insulation Workers, Mechanical (50.6 percent), and Occupational Therapy Assistants (50.0 percent).

**Figure 61: Top Ten Projected Growth Occupations by Percentage in Northwest Connecticut, 2012–22**



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Department of Economic and Community Development, 2012

Figure 62: Top Ten Projected Growth Occupations by Percentage in Southwest Connecticut, 2012-22



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Department of Economic and Community Development, 2012

## Industry Cluster Analysis

In partnership with the Connecticut Small Business Development Center, WestCOG staff analyzed Fairfield County's top business clusters.

### Industry Cluster Key Findings

- Fairfield County's strongest cluster continues to be Financial Services. Jobs in Aerospace tend to be located in Bridgeport, outside the Region, at Sikorsky Airport and its supporting businesses. Education and Knowledge, Creation and Marketing, Design, and Publishing are also strong clusters with larger employment.
- Video Production and Distribution, and Medical Devices, while strong, are not currently large employment clusters for the Region. Of concern is the decline in Business Services employment over the past 16 years. Most notable is the loss of over 12,000 corporate headquarters jobs, an industry category that generated \$2.3 billion in annual payroll in 2012, which was 7% of total County payroll. Other categories of business services, such as Consulting and Computer services, were weak performers relative to national growth rates.
- The Region can better inform its own, and the state of Connecticut's,

business attraction efforts by increasing the understanding of subcluster industries, focusing on trends impacting the industry, growth outlooks, and the talent and skills required for success. The Region may choose to survey or speak to managers and talent recruiters in key industries to gain insight into their needs.

### Industry Clusters

The US Cluster Mapping Project, an initiative of the US Department of Commerce and Harvard University, defines Traded Industry Clusters as those industries that primarily sell goods and services outside of the Region where they are located. Traded clusters have a disproportionate impact on their local economy because they bring in outside revenue. Businesses within traded clusters tend to compete nationally or internationally and may seek talent from outside the local market.

Figure 63 lists the priority clusters for Connecticut as identified by the Connecticut Department of Community and Economic Development (DECD). The figure also includes clusters identified in the CEDS process as industries of focus. The clusters that both regions have in common as potential targets are: Health care and social assistance, Finance and insurance, Professional, scientific, and technical services, Digital Media, and sectors related to Entertainment and Tourism.

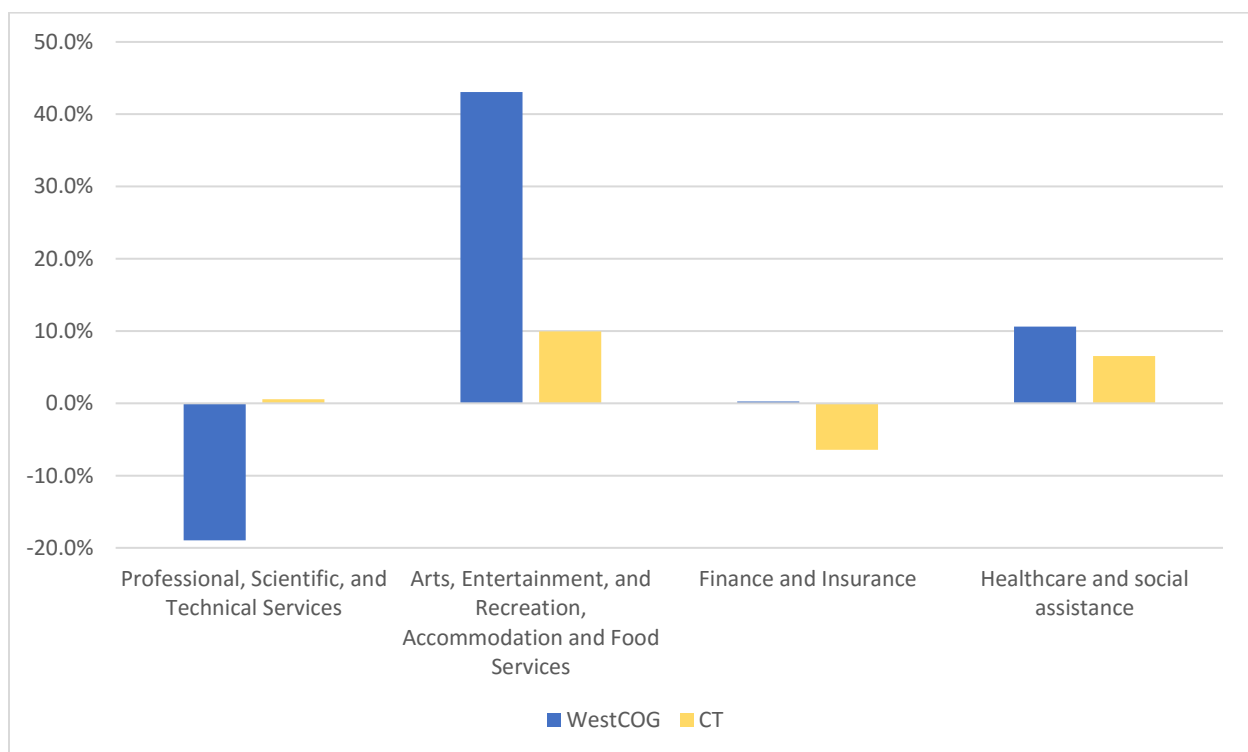
Figure 63: Western CT Region and DECD Strategic Industries

Western CT Region Priority Industries	Connecticut Priority Industries
Health care and social assistance	Finance and insurance
Professional, scientific, and technical services	Advanced manufacturing/ Aerospace
Finance and insurance	Healthcare/ Bioscience
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	Digital Media
	Green technology
	Tourism

An analysis was completed to compare the clusters the Western Connecticut Region has identified as priorities or targets. **Figure 64** details employment statistics for the clusters in the Region and Connecticut. Between 2010 and 2015, employment in the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services cluster declined by approximately 19 percent in the Western Connecticut Region. The State saw less than one percent growth. This is a strategic industry however, because it employs over 22,000 people and has some of the highest paying jobs.

Employment in the Financial Services and Insurance cluster stayed close to the same with a percent change of 0.3 percent from 2010 to 2015. Western Connecticut had a higher percent change than Connecticut which lost jobs from 2010 to 2015 (6.4 percent decline). Employment in the Healthcare and Social Assistance cluster increased by 10.6 percent from 2010 to 2015 in the Region. This rate of growth was higher than that of the state (6.6 percent increase). The highest rate of growth in both the Western Connecticut Region and the State was in Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services. The Region saw a 43.1 percent increase and the State saw a 9.9 percent increase between 2010 and 2015.

Figure 64: Percent Employment Change in Strategic Industries, 2010-2015

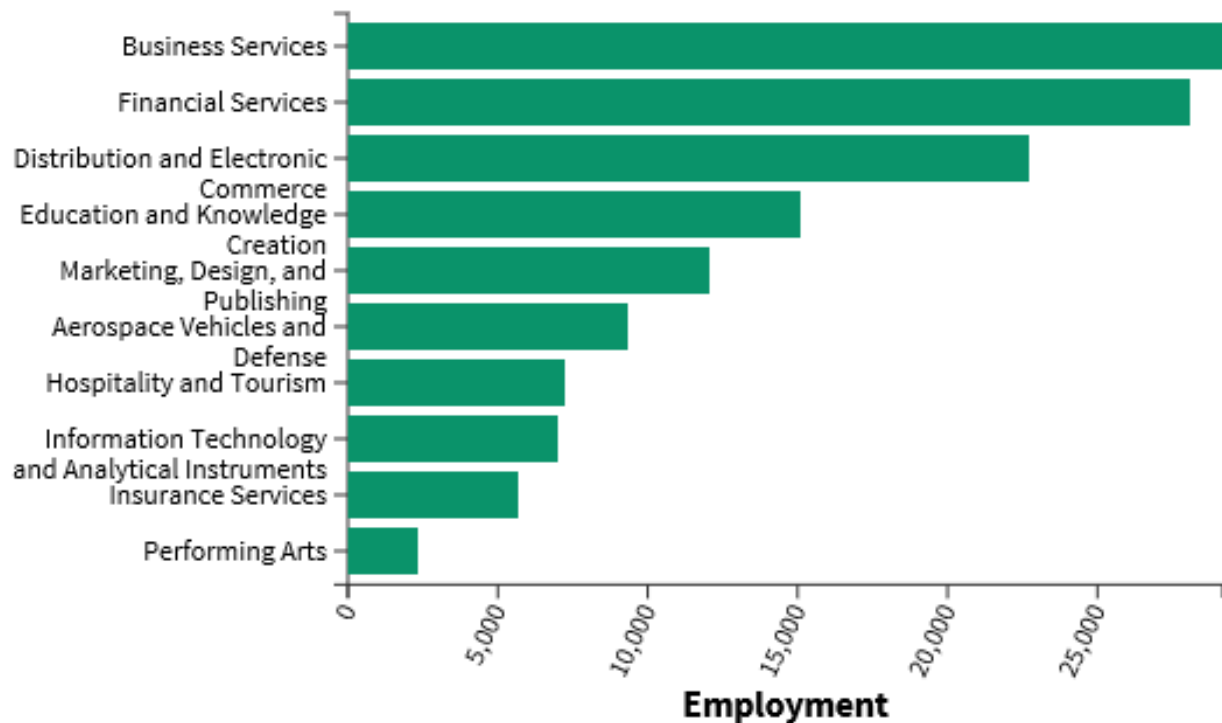


Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages 2015



A strong cluster is a cluster that has high employment specialization in a region (ranking in the top 25% of all regions by specialization and also meeting minimum criteria for employment and establishment). **Figure 65** shows top traded industry clusters in Fairfield County by employment. It should be noted that the majority of the Aerospace Vehicles and Defense jobs are likely from the Bridgeport area, some may also be in Danbury at their airport (**Figure 78**).

Figure 65: Top Traded Industry Clusters in Fairfield County by Employment



Source: U.S. Cluster Mapping Project, Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, Harvard Business School

Specialization is measured by the value of a cluster's location quotient. Each regional economy has a particular pattern of specialization in a number of clusters, which drives productivity and growth in the economy.

**Figure 66** highlights Fairfield County's top industry clusters. One in seven jobs in Fairfield County were in a strong cluster industry. Again, the Aerospace Vehicles and Defense Cluster is likely to be mostly outside the Western Connecticut Region in Bridgeport.

Figure 66: Top Industry Clusters in Fairfield County

Cluster	National Rank	Employment (2014)	Percent of County Employment (Total = 408,854 jobs)
Financial Services	8	28,113	6.9%
Aerospace Vehicles and Defense	10	9,320	2.3%
Video Production and Distribution	15	924	0.2%
Marketing Design and Publishing	18	12,050	3%
Performing Arts	33	2,350	0.6%
Education and Knowledge Creation	44	15,102	3.7%
Medical Devices	49	1,138	0.3%
Total of these clusters	NA	67,859	16.6%

Source: U.S. Cluster Mapping Project, Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, Harvard Business School

Business Services (29,177 employees, 7.1% of County employment), Distribution and Electronic Commerce (22,687, 5.6%), and Hospitality and Tourism (7,226, 1.8%) are clusters with large employment ranked within the top 100 regions, but are not considered strong clusters by the Cluster Mapping Project.

Fairfield County's share of all US Traded Cluster employment decreased by almost 1% between 1998 and 2014. Clusters with an employment share greater than the overall share for Fairfield County were more likely to have lost jobs than gained them. Business Services had the greatest job loss.

Distribution and Electronic Commerce and Marketing, Design, and Publishing had significant losses, while nationally, these clusters experienced job gains over the same time period.

Fairfield County's share of cluster national employment was better from 2010 to 2014 compared to 1998 to 2014.

Of concern is the decline in Business Services employment over the past 16 years. Most troubling is the loss of over 12,000 corporate headquarters jobs, an industry category that generated \$2.3 billion in annual payroll in 2012, which was 7% of total County payroll. Other categories of business services, such as Consulting and Computer services, were weak performers relative to national growth rates.

In **Figure 67**, Fairfield County's performance declined since 1998 within the New York Economic Region. Fairfield County was one of three counties with negative growth, yet the County continued as a leader in wages, second only to New York County. There was roughly a 1% growth differential, compounded annually, between Manhattan and Fairfield County. Brooklyn and Queens also experienced growth.

**Figure 67: Fairfield County's Performance in the New York Economic Region, 1998-2014**

New York, NY Economic Area Sub-Region	Employment 1998	Employment 2014	Change	Real Growth in Employment (CAGR)	Annual Wages, 2014
New York County, NY	1,951,646	2,188,523	236,877	0.72%	\$106,194.48
Kings County, NY	409,177	562,928	153,751	2.01%	\$38,761.26
Suffolk County, NY	487,168	562,520	75,352	0.90%	\$51,403.33
Nassau County, NY	532,641	545,065	12,424	0.14%	\$50,668.30
Queens County, NY	444,825	537,442	92,617	1.19%	\$45,284.94
Bergen County, NY	446,352	439,344	-7,008	-0.10%	\$60,451.13
<b>Fairfield County, CT</b>	<b>424,846</b>	<b>408,854</b>	<b>-15,922</b>	<b>-0.24%</b>	<b>\$77,932.84</b>
Middlesex County, NJ	363,121	383,660	20,539	0.34%	\$60,934.57
Westchester County, NY	368,745	377,803	9,058	0.15%	\$65,071.60
New Haven County, CT	334,737	338,587	3,850	0.07%	\$49,068.34
Essex County, NJ	332,831	289,817	-43,014	-0.86%	\$58,560.08
Morris County, NJ	280,256	286,394	6,138	0.14%	\$74,002.99

Source: U.S. Cluster Mapping Project, Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, Harvard Business School

## Cluster Attraction

Industry cluster information may be helpful in identifying opportunities to recruit businesses from strong clusters in New York City. Below is a list of clusters with national rankings of 5 or higher among all US counties, with one exception. The cost differential for space and other business factors that have fueled business relocation from Manhattan to Fairfield County should continue. Fairfield County's talent base, exemplified by skilled occupations with an above-average presence in the County and education levels in the Western Connecticut Region (Figures 25-27) is also a very important factor in business relocation. However, greater detail on specific occupations within broad categories for example, Management Occupations includes more than 30 subcategories, might indicate strengths or weaknesses across in-demand occupations.

The cluster rankings may also shed light on "weak" clusters in Manhattan that represent a market for businesses in the same clusters in Fairfield County to "sell in" to meet the market needs. Those clusters are listed below in **Figure 68**.

Figure 68: Target Clusters

Manhattan Clusters to Recruit:	Manhattan Clusters to Sell To:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Business Services</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Food Processing and Manufacturing</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Financial Services</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Construction Products and Services</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Marketing, Design, and Publishing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Furniture</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Education and Knowledge Creation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Biopharmaceuticals</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Distribution and Electronic Commerce</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aerospace Vehicles and Defense</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Insurance Services</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Medical Devices</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Performing Arts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Metalworking Technology</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communications Equipment and Services</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lighting and Electrical Equipment</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Video Production and Distribution</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Music and Sound Recording</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information Technology &amp; Analytical Instruments</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Apparel</li></ul>	

Source: Connecticut Small Business Development Center

## Small Business Perspective

### Small Business Key Findings

- Regional and local economic development strategies should include a focus on addressing small business needs related to capital and technical assistance for growth and minority companies. Municipal governments might ease small business compliance issues by working to improve service delivery related to licensing and regulations, and teaming with economic development and business assistance organizations to develop and offer training on compliance related topics.

### Small Business Analysis

Since 86% of Fairfield County establishments employ less than 20 people<sup>11</sup>, policy makers and economic development professionals should consider the issues and challenges facing small businesses in the Region.

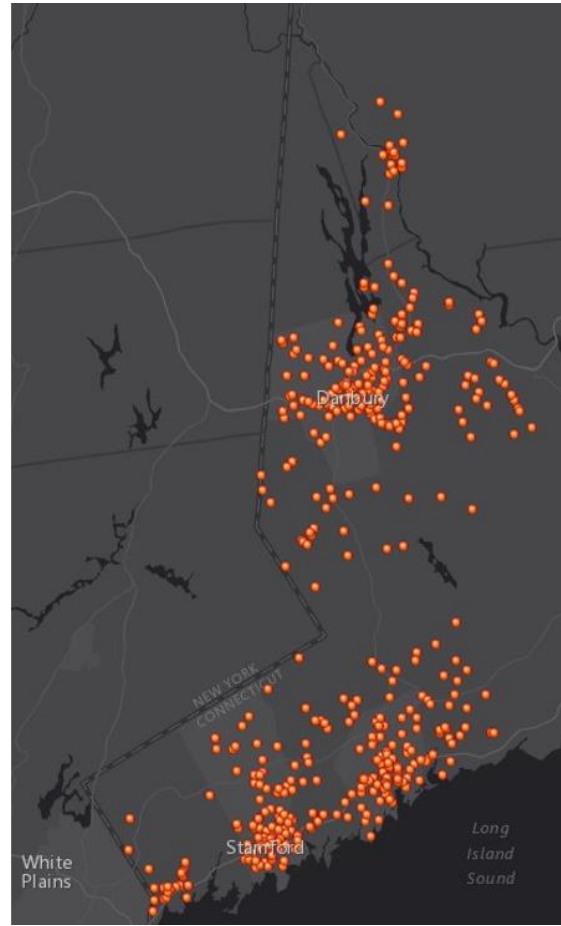
The Connecticut Small Business Development Center (SBDC) provides no-cost advising services to both prospective and existing business owners to help them start or expand their business, giving them unique insight into the challenges facing small businesses in the state, which informed this section of the analysis. The SBDC has 336 clients in the Western Connecticut Region in a variety of industries, as seen in **Figure 69**.

---

<sup>11</sup> Connecticut Small Business Development Center

Figure 69: SBDC Clients in the Western Connecticut Region, 2013 – 2016

Industry	Number of Clients
Service Establishment	51
Manufacturing	48
Retailer / Dealer	41
Technology/R&D	35
Food Services/Hotel/Entertainment	32
Professional Technical	29
Construction	25
Education	14
Wholesale Dealer	13
Distributors/Supply Chain	11
Real Estate	9
Information	9
Health Care	8
Transportation/Warehousing	6
Financing	3
Management	2



Source: Connecticut Small Business Development Center

While not all small businesses are run by the self-employed, many are. **Figure 70** details self-employment data in the Western Connecticut Region. Self-employment grew faster in the Western Connecticut Region than its comparative regions of Connecticut and the Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk MSA.

Furthermore, self-employment in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Connecticut that contain the Western Connecticut Region is expected to grow at a faster rate from 2012–2022 as compared to Connecticut as detailed in the figure below.

**Figure 70: Self-employment 2010–2014, and Projections 2012 – 2022, in the Western CT Region**

Number of self-employed				
Actual	2010	2014	Absolute Change	Percent Change
WestCOG	27,394	28,685	1,291	4.7%
Bridgeport-Norwalk-Stamford MSA	38,652	39,480	828	2.1%
Connecticut	118,702	113,824	-4878	-4.1%
Projected number of self-employed				
Projected	2012	2022	Absolute Change	Percent Change
Northwest Region	14,727	15,339	612	4.2%
Southwest Region	27,666	29,484	1,818	6.6%
Connecticut	114,367	118,586	4,219	3.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

A 2014 survey by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, which included responses from Fairfield County small businesses, identified the following key challenges for respondents<sup>12</sup>:

**Start-ups (less than 5 years in business)**

1. Lack of credit availability
2. Difficulty attracting customers
3. Uneven cash flow

**Growers (profitable and increased revenues)**

1. Uneven cash flow
2. Lack of credit availability
3. Difficulty hiring and/or retaining employees

<sup>12</sup> Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Small Business Credit Survey, Spring 2014. 2014. Online. <https://www.newyorkfed.org/medialibrary/interactives/spring2014/spring2014/pdf/full-report.pdf>

**Mature (more than 5 years in business, 10+ employees, holds debt)**

1. Uneven cash flow
2. Increased costs of running business
3. Lack of credit availability

Challenges in attracting customers and maintaining cash flow may be related to the weak economic recovery following the recession, as well as the structural challenges of a slow growth County and state economy. For growing firms, an important target for most economic development strategies, both the need for additional credit and the difficulty of hiring and keeping employees are challenges that can be addressed by the public and private sectors.

The SBDC assisted 515 small businesses and start-ups in the Region since 2013, helping many of them secure over \$14 million in capital over that time. Both clients of and callers to SBDC typically mention the need for capital, whether relatively small amounts for start-ups or larger amounts to fund expansion. SBDC has also experienced the need to provide management training and support to fast growing businesses who must quickly implement systems and processes, as well as minority-owned business owners in general who may lack professional or family support need to sustain and grow their business.

Regulatory compliance is a factor that is increasingly cited in surveys of both large and small businesses, but small businesses often are equipped with fewer resources to deal with compliance requirements. Thumbtack is a company that surveys small businesses annually on their local and state business issues. In 2015 Connecticut fared poorly on their survey. One potentially useful insight for economic development strategies is revealed in this excerpt from the survey summary,

*“Effective licensing was just as friendly as no licensing – Small business owners who found licensing compliance to be “very easy” were just as favorable towards their city governments as respondents who weren’t required to be licensed at all. By contrast, licensed professionals in cities with complicated requirements or inconsistent enforcement reported the lowest approval rates.”*

The survey concludes that providing small businesses with training on regulations will have a meaningful impact on regulatory compliance issues,

*“Training experience was the top factor in both state and city rankings – Offering training on developing a business and navigating the local economic and policy environment was the single biggest factor that influenced perceptions of friendliness. In cities, training was 78 percent more important than the number two factor.”<sup>13</sup>*

---

<sup>13</sup> *Thumbtack Journal*. How Local Governments Are Helping – and Hurting – Small Businesses. 2015. Online. <https://www.thumbtack.com/blog/2015-friendliness/>



## Transportation Infrastructure Assets

The Western Connecticut Region is the intersection of the New York metro area and New England, it is also a part of the “New Atlantic Triangle,”<sup>14</sup> an economic region, made up of the New York, Boston, and Albany metro regions. The Region’s comprehensive system of road, rail, marine ports, and airports in proximity provide employers with good access to talented and educated labor resources and the ability to import needed materials and export goods and services, thereby providing a competitive advantage over surrounding regions. However, the system connecting Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey was built in the 1930s and has since been overwhelmed with the increased traffic volumes.

Transportation infrastructure plays a key role in urban and economic development, getting employees and goods where they need to go. The Western Connecticut Region has a variety of modes for people and inventory to reach their destinations, however not all modes operate with optimum efficiency. This section details current transportation conditions and identifies opportunities for improvement.

## Transportation Infrastructure Analysis Key Findings

- The location of the Western Connecticut Region is important because of its strategic location within the East Coast’s continuous metropolitan area. It also attracts businesses seeking proximity to New York City.
- Most commuters in the Region drive to work alone or using transportations methods dependent on the roadway, such as carpools or busses.

- Drivers face significant delays during peak hours due to congestion. Congestion blocks economic activity from extending east beyond the Western Connecticut Region, putting the Region in danger of becoming a dead-end.
- The Region has an established transportation network for passenger and freight but must improve service and capacity to meet current and future increased demand.

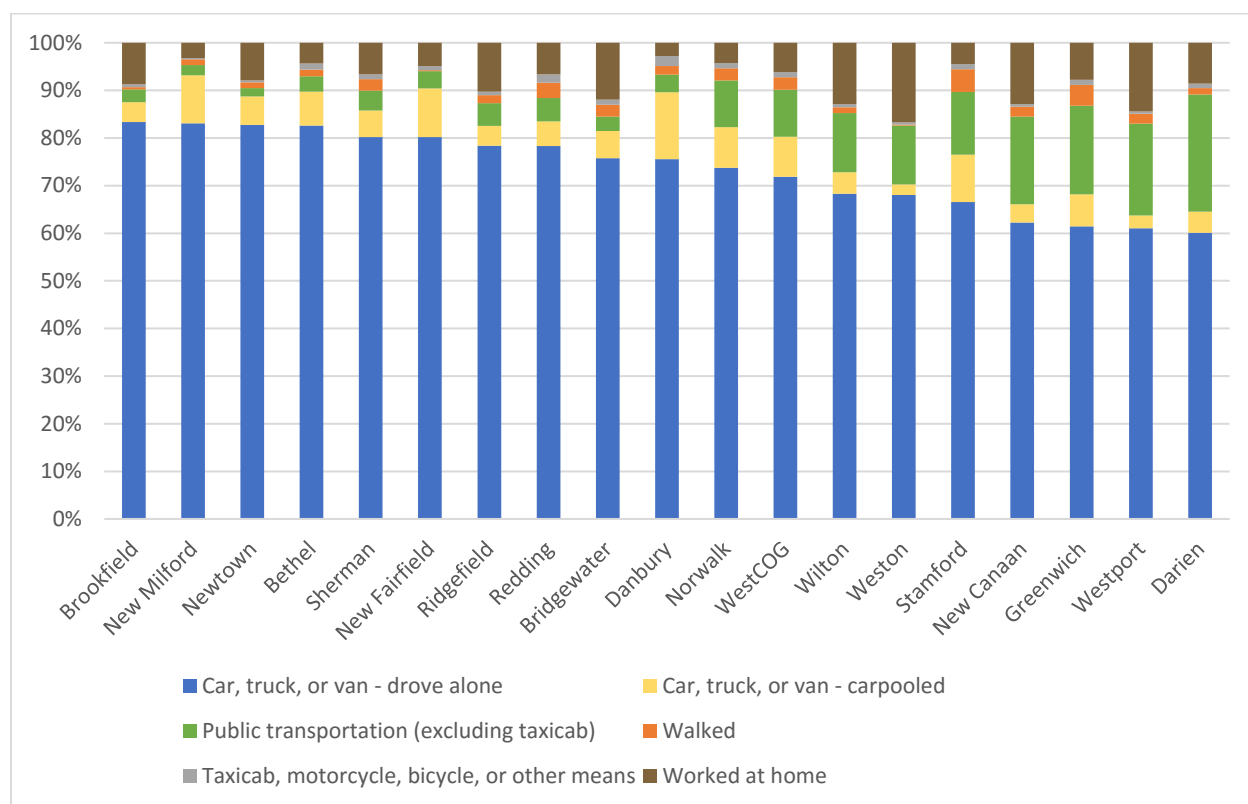
---

<sup>14</sup> Gallis, Michael, and Associates. *Connecticut: Strategic Economic Framework. Report.* 1999. Print.

## Commuter Analysis

As seen in **Figure 71**, most workers in the Western Connecticut Region take a car, truck, or van, whether alone or in carpools to get to work. Municipalities along the southern rail lines, New Haven Line and New Canaan Branch Line, have a much larger concentration of commuters who take public transit than those on the Danbury Branch Line or away from rail lines. This may be the as a result of the frequency and dependability of trains along New Haven and New Canaan Lines as opposed to those on the Danbury Branch line.

**Figure 71: Means of Transportation to Work in the Western CT Region, 2014**

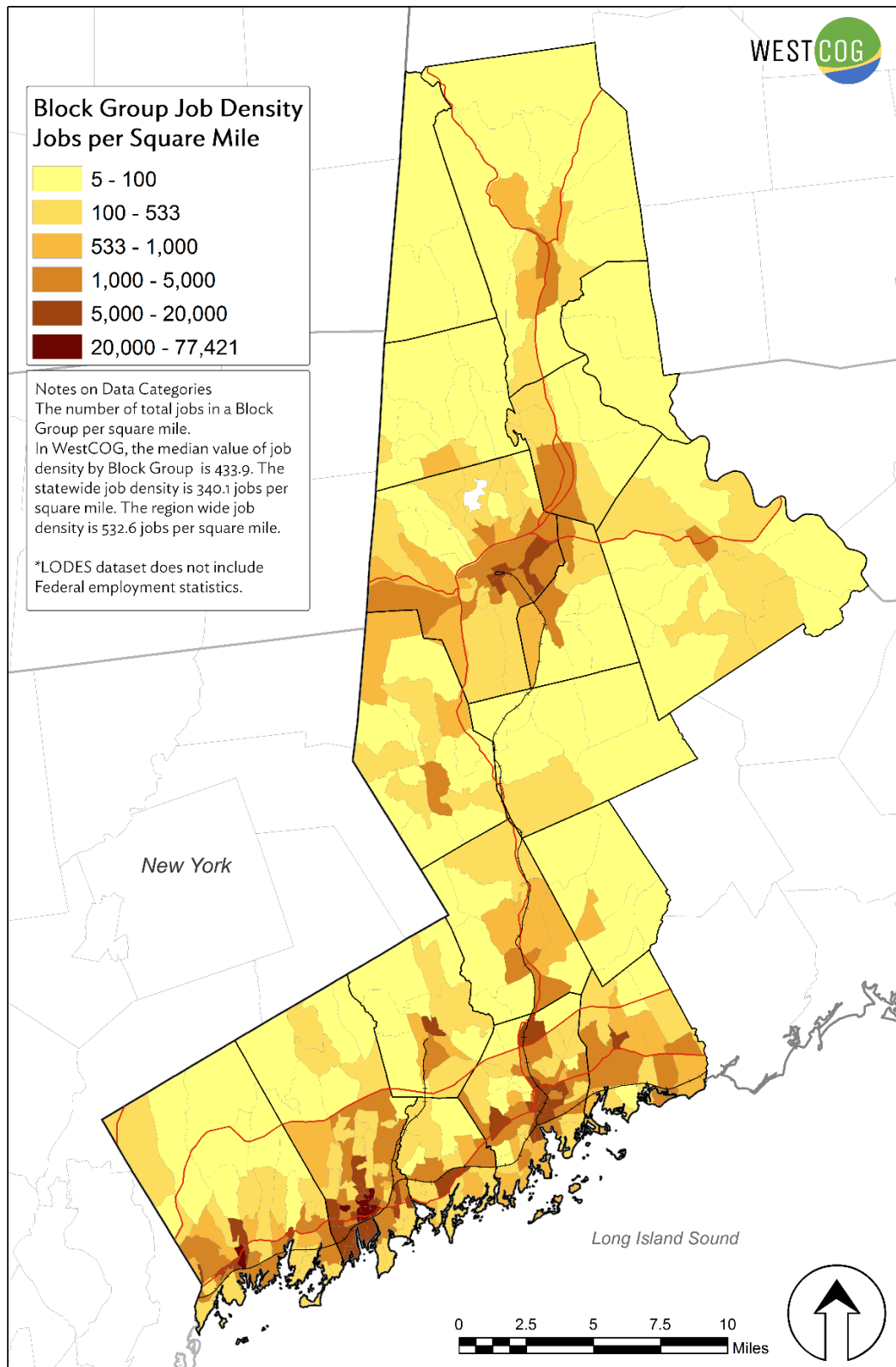


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

**Figure 72** shows major employment concentrations in the Region. The highest concentrations of jobs trend to be in urban areas. However, it is of note that high employment concentration suburban areas

trend to also be areas with access to highways and public transportation. Due the constraints of the data, federal employees, like those at the Federal Correctional Institution in Danbury, are not counted.

Figure 72: Western Connecticut Region Employment Concentrations



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2014. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics (LEHD) Origin – Destination Employment Statistics (LODES)

In 2014, 58.9 percent of the Western Connecticut Region's residents (143,265 people) also worked within the Region while 41.4 percent (99,832 people) worked outside of it. In that same year, 46.3 percent of all commuters to the Region (123,667 people) came from outside of the Region to work here. This amount of commuting and traffic puts a strain on the Region's transportation infrastructure.

In **Figure 73**, one can see the Stamford, Norwalk, and Danbury are major sources of employment and employees in the Region. Together they account for 33.5% of jobs for residents (81,493 jobs), and provide 29.8% of employees (79,471 people). Outside the Region, New York City plays a significant role, hosting 10% of all jobs for Western Connecticut residents (24,404 jobs), and supplying 3.6% of employees working in the Western Connecticut Region (9,526 people).

Many of the workers finding employment in the Western Connecticut Region live outside it. 3.8% of employees working in the Region come from Bridgeport (10,018 people), 1.9% from Stratford (3,652 people), 1.7% from Trumbull (4,639 people), and 1.3% from Shelton (3,359 people). This indicates that the Western Connecticut Region is the economic engine for much of the surrounding area.

For Commuter Shed Analyses for each municipality, see Appendix A. In those figures, it is clear that there is a north to south commuting pattern, where residents of the towns in the northern part of the Region travel to the Southern part of the Region and New York City for work.

**Figure 73: Western Connecticut Region  
Commuter Shed Analysis, 2014**

Where Residents of the Region Work		
Area	Count	Share
Stamford	37,861	15.6%
New York City	24,404	10.0%
Danbury	22,874	9.4%
Norwalk	20,758	8.5%
Greenwich	8,253	3.4%
Westport	5,977	2.5%
Darien	4,613	1.9%
Bridgeport	4,187	1.7%
Ridgefield	3,243	1.3%
Hartford	2,711	1.1%
All Other Locations	108,216	44.5%
All Workers	243,097	100.0%
Where People Employed in the Region Live		
Area	Count	Share
Stamford	33,652	12.6%
Norwalk	24,787	9.3%
Danbury	21,032	7.9%
Bridgeport	10,018	3.8%
New York City	9,526	3.6%
Stratford	5,037	1.9%
Trumbull	4,639	1.7%
Westport	4,298	1.6%
Darien	3,563	1.3%
Shelton	3,359	1.3%
All Other Locations	147,031	55.1%
Total Primary Jobs	266,942	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2016. OnTheMap Application. Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics (LEHD) Program. Based on 2002-2014 LEHD Origin Destination Employment Statistics.

## Highways & Congestion

Traffic congestion is widely recognized as a preeminent quality of life issue in the Western Connecticut Region. Recurring highway congestion, slow speeds and delays are a common complaint and have been repeatedly recognized as a drag on the Region's economy.

The presence of high paying jobs makes the Region an attractive location for job seekers while high housing prices often lead workers to seek housing in less expensive areas outside the Region. These two factors together result in long commutes and congested highways.

The Region is traversed east to west by Interstate 95 and Interstate 84, both critical passenger and freight corridors regionally and nationally. The Merritt Parkway also plays a vital commuter role.

Interstate 95 from the New York State line easterly to New Haven is the most heavily travelled highway in Connecticut and has long suffered from severe recurring congestion. The section of primary concern to this CEDS passes through Greenwich, Stamford, Darien, Norwalk, and Westport.

Within the past five years, this section of I-95 has been ranked among the top fifty nationally most congested corridors. The highest traffic volumes on I-95 are found at the Stamford-Darien Town line, the Route 7 Interchange in Norwalk, and at the Route 136 Interchange in Westport.

Bottlenecks on I-95 are systemic and recurring. For instance, the bottlenecks in Darien at Exit 12 have an average backup duration of 2 hours 6 minutes and an average length of 13.5 miles.

Connecticut Route 15, also known as the Merritt Parkway, is an historic, landscaped parkway that serves as a major corridor for passenger vehicle travel and daily commuting. A limited access four-lane highway, the Merritt extends 23.5 miles in the Region from the New

York State Line easterly through Greenwich, Stamford, New Canaan, Norwalk, and Westport. The Merritt Parkway is oriented north of and parallel to I-95. By design, all commercial vehicles are prohibited from the Parkway due to low bridge clearances.

Interstate 84 is an east-west oriented highway extending 18.5 miles through the northern half of the Region from the New York State Line easterly through Danbury, Bethel, Brookfield, and Newtown. I-84 intersects with Route 7 through Danbury. I-84 is an important freight route that links Connecticut and the other New England states with New York, Pennsylvania, and the transcontinental interstate system.

Danbury, a major employment center, is the only large city along I-84 in the Region. As a result, travel speed and congestion on I-84 is heavily influenced by commuter travel to and from Danbury by drivers who reside north along Route 7, east towards Waterbury, and west in New York State.

Unlike I-95 and the Merritt Parkway, I-84 travel speeds and congestion are asymmetric. While observed westbound travel speeds suggest free flow conditions in key periods, eastbound travel speeds are slower throughout nearly the full extent of the highway.

During the morning peak period there is only a small decrease in travel speed traveling westbound towards Danbury. However, eastbound travel speeds during the afternoon peak period are 5 to 15 mph lower than during other periods.

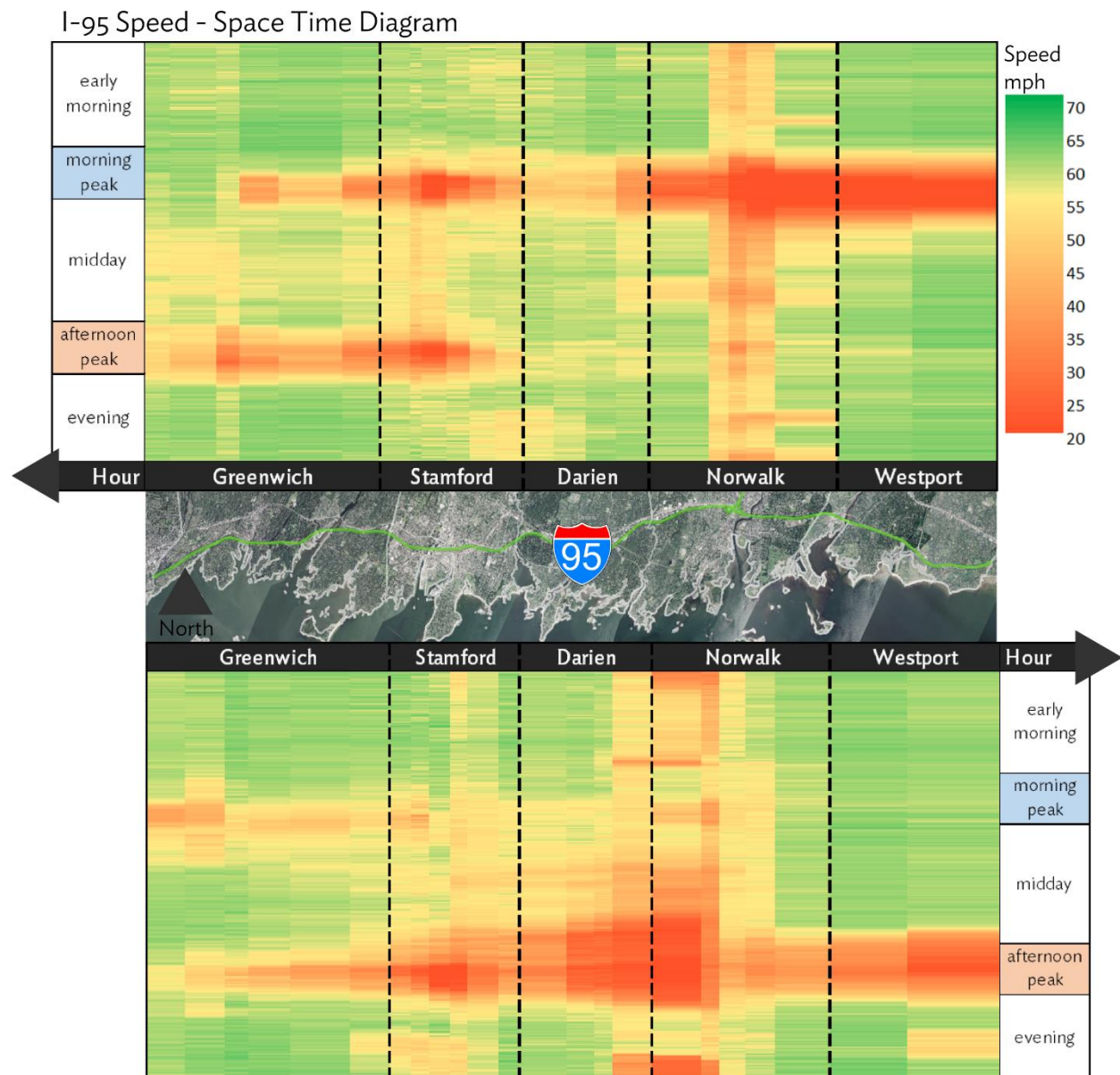
**Figure 74** shows traffic speed along major routes in the Region during approximate times of day. The arrows indicate the direction and the municipality in which the traffic is travelling. Green coloring indicates a high travel speed, while red indicates a slower speed.

As seen in **Figure 74**, drivers at peak travel times, in the morning from 6 to 9 am and the evening from 4 to 7pm, experience significant delays on I-95, CT-15, and I-84 in both directions. It should be noted that on I-95 and

I-84 the speed limit is usually 65 miles per hour, however on CT-15 the speed limit is usually 55 miles per hour.

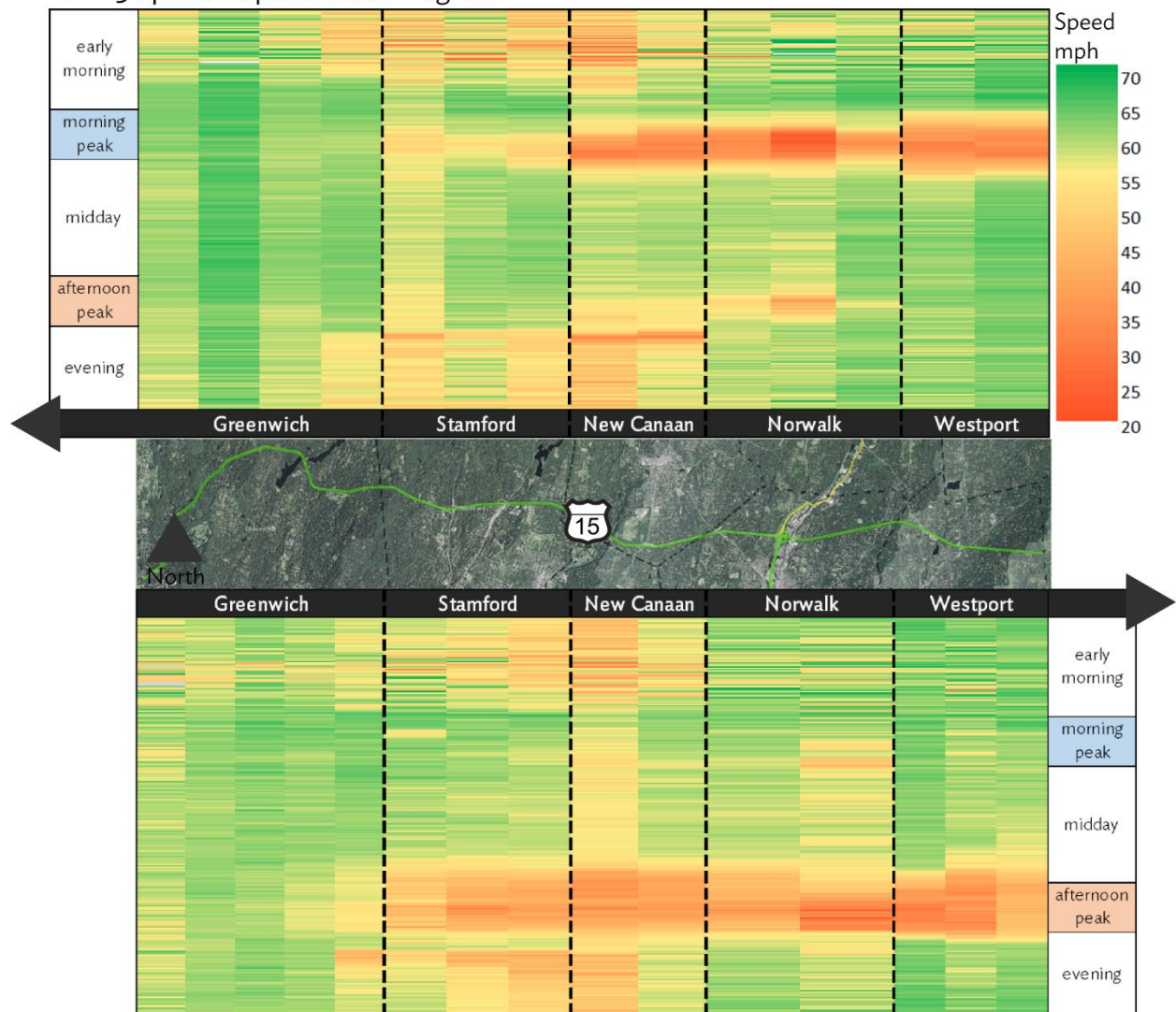
Also of note is Brookfield's southbound Route 7 Expressway traffic entering at Danbury's I-84 Exit 7. Southbound travel speeds are lower by about 15 miles per hour there during the morning peak period.

**Figure 74: Traffic Congestion on I-95, CT-15, and I-84**





CT-15 Speed - Space Time Diagram



I-84 Speed - Space Time Diagram



\*B/B is Bethel and Brookfield.

Source: WestCOG, 2015 Congestion Management Report

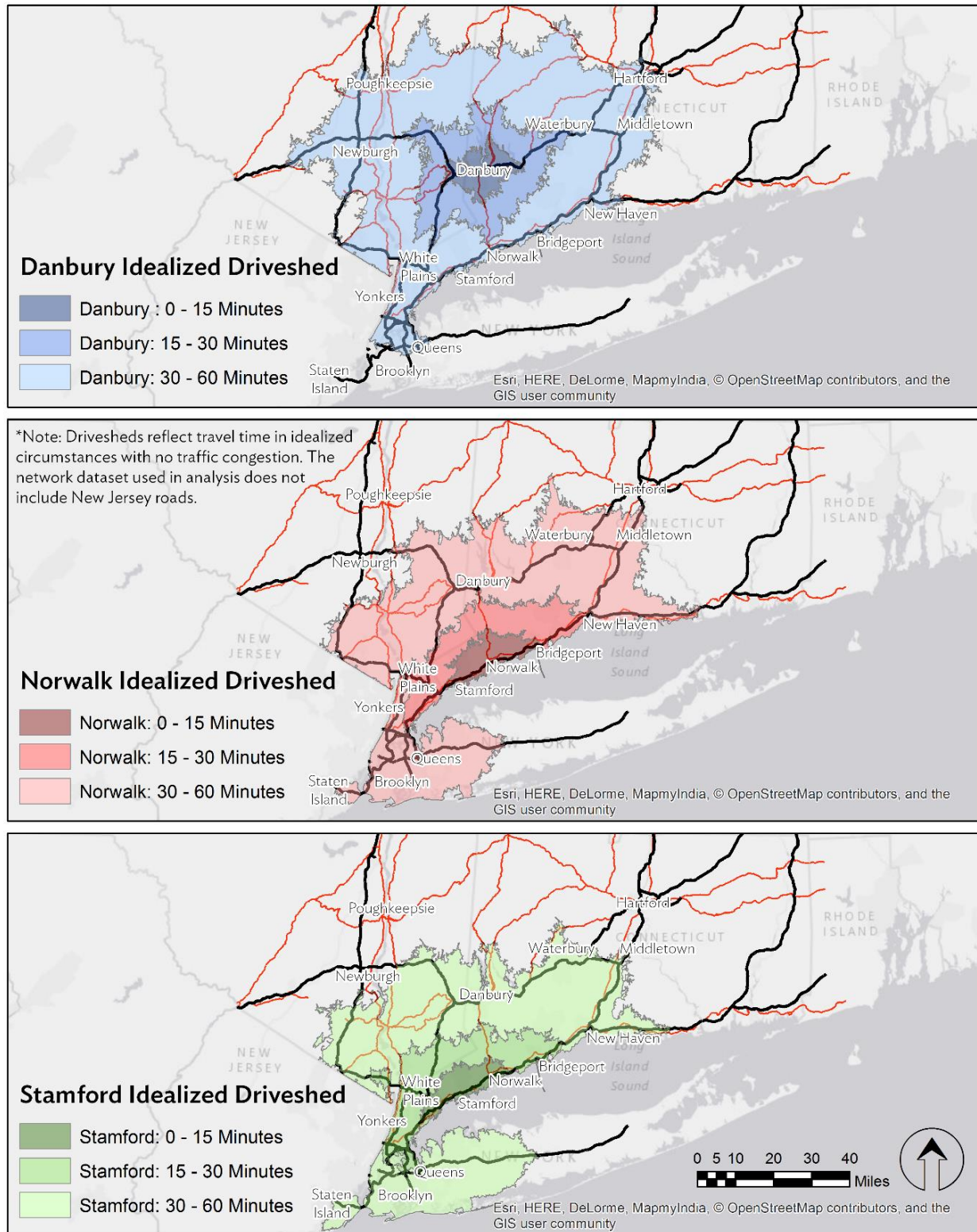
According to the US Census Bureau, employees in Fairfield County have an average commute time of 27.4 minutes, longer than the national average of 24.9 minutes. 5.6% of the workforce in Fairfield County have "super commutes" in excess of 90 minutes, which is higher than the national average of 2.6%.<sup>15</sup>

The Western Connecticut Region is situated near many major cities and economic hubs. Without traffic congestion and delays – the ideal – drivers could reach many of these destinations in a reasonable amount of time, as seen in Figure 75. However, under current conditions, achieving these travel times is nearly impossible.

<sup>15</sup> US Census, American Community Survey 1-Year Supplemental Estimates, 2014



Figure 75: Idealized Drivesheds from Major Cities in the Western Connecticut Region

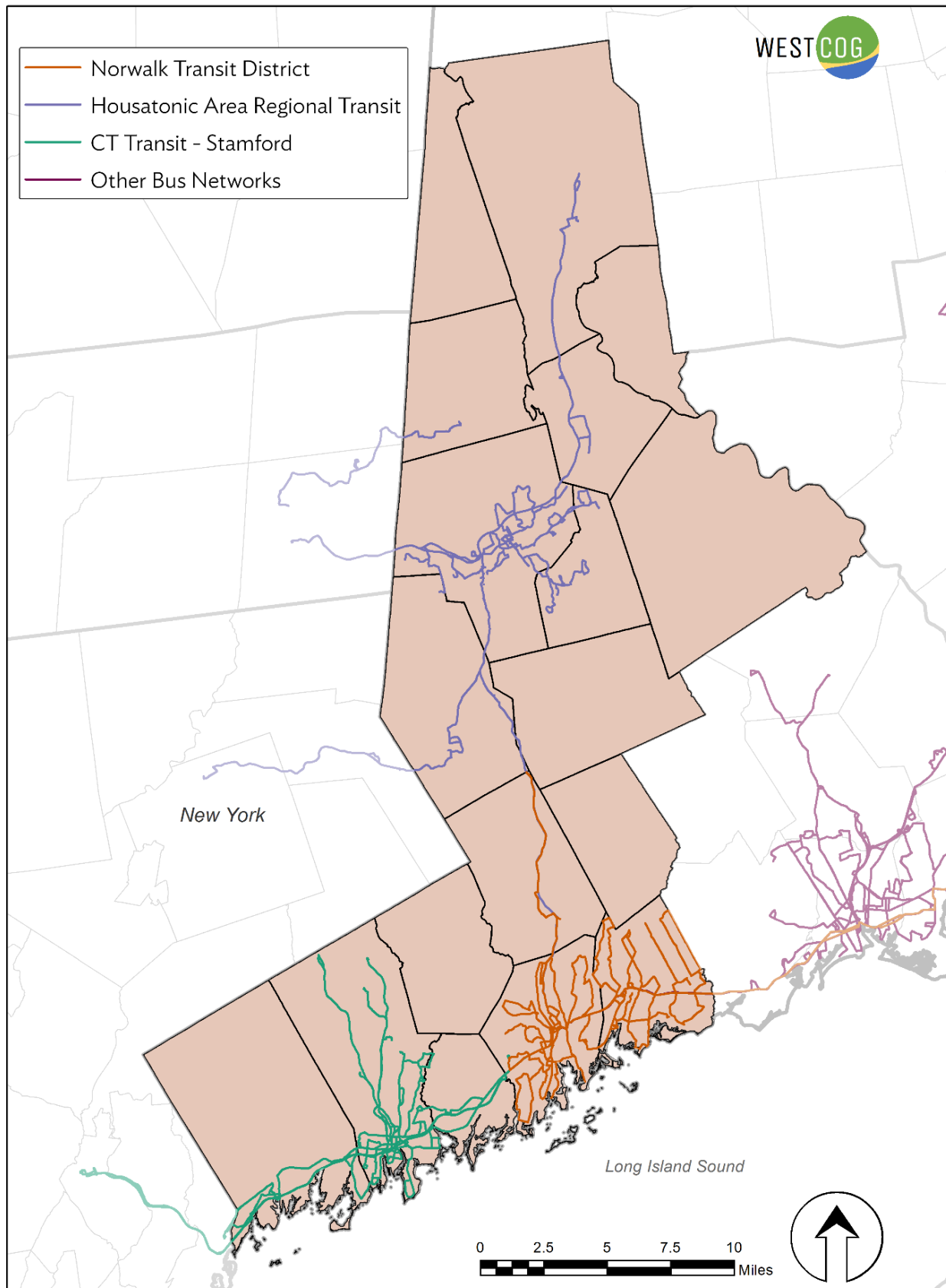


In summary, the Western Connecticut Region is well known for its chronic traffic congestion, which is due to the limitations of its antiquated transportation infrastructure, portions of which are difficult to modernize. Constant commuter and trucking congestion is a significant hindrance to economic development and thus a key issue for this CEDS.

## Bus

Also prey to the traffic congestion in the Region is the bus network. Buses play a vital role in the Region's transit network, providing an affordable and dependable mobility option for transit-dependent residents, daily commuters, and "choice" riders who choose transit over driving. Public bus transit service in the Western Connecticut Region is provided by the Housatonic Area Regional Transit District (HARTransit), CT Transit Stamford Division, and the Norwalk Transit District (NTD). **Figure 76** displays the current public bus routes.

Figure 76: Bus Routes in the Western CT Region



### *Housatonic Area Regional Transit District*

Today the HARTransit bus system serves approximately 1,000,000 riders annually. HARTransit operates “fixed route” bus service according to a published timetable on urban fixed routes, commuter shuttles to Metro-North train service and interregional bus service to Norwalk.

The urban fixed route bus system operates in a timed-transfer “pulse” mode with all routes meeting at the main HARTransit bus station, or Pulse Point, in downtown Danbury at regular intervals throughout each day. This routing structure allows passengers to easily transfer from one route to another at the same place without long waits. Routes are interlined or paired together to allow a moderate proportion of passengers to travel from one route to another without physically transferring between buses.

Bus frequencies of 60 minutes are provided on all routes Monday through Saturday with 30 minute frequencies provided during the morning and afternoon peak periods (6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.) Monday through Friday. Departure times from the Pulse Point are scheduled on the hour throughout the day and additionally on the half hour during peak periods. The span of service is 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Saturday span of service is 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

HARTransit operates three shuttles, Monday-Friday, that provide service between park and ride lots in Connecticut and Metro-North train stations in New York State for commuter train service into Grand Central Terminal. The shuttles are designed to meet morning southbound departures and afternoon and evening northbound arrivals to and from Grand Central Terminal.

HARTransit participates in the inter-regional Danbury-Norwalk “Route 7 Link,” which

provides bus service to employment centers along the Route 7 corridor and the downtowns of Danbury and Norwalk. Buses originate and terminate at the HARTransit and Norwalk Transit District (NTD) pulse points. The LINK provides hourly peak period bus service Monday-Friday between 6 a.m. and 12 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. HARTransit and the NTD run the service jointly, each operating 50% of the service. LINK passengers may transfer between the WHEELS (NDT Service) or HARTransit systems at either terminal at no cost.

HARTransit also provides demand response bus service to seniors aged 60 or older and persons with disabilities of any age through its SweetHART system. Door-to-door service is provided by SweetHART whereby passengers are picked up, usually at their homes, and taken to their destinations. Drivers assist passengers from the door of their pick-up point to the door of their destination on request. All SweetHART vehicles are wheelchair-accessible.

### *CT Transit Stamford Division*

According to the National Transit Database, 3,537,127 riders took a bus operated by CT Transit Stamford Division in 2014. In Stamford, all local routes meet at the Stamford Transportation Center, where riders can transfer buses or connect to intercity buses, trains, taxis, and commuter shuttles, in addition to other modes of transportation. The Stamford Division operates 17 local bus routes and several regional lines. To make travel on Route 1 more convenient, routes are often paired.

The I-Bus is a coach service providing a seven day a week interstate express connection between downtown Stamford and White Plains, NY. The I-Bus is a public service of the Connecticut and New York State Departments of Transportation, operated by CTtransit, in cooperation with the Westchester County

Department of Transportation and MTA /Metro-North Railroad.

### *Norwalk Transit District*

The NTD's fixed-route bus transit system known as WHEELS. With 13 routes, it is the primary service of the system linking Norwalk and its immediate suburbs as well as peak-hour service as far north as Danbury (with HARTransit) and as far east as Bridgeport as well as shuttles to Metro-North stations.

In Norwalk, all services converge at the Pulse Point on Burnell Boulevard. Paratransit services are also available for residents in the service area unable to use regular transit services. The NTD also operates 10 commuter shuttles, and a dial-a-ride service. The "Coastal Link," jointly operated by NTD, Great Bridgeport Transit, and Milford Transit District provides a connection from Norwalk east to Milford.

### *Rail*

An alternative to using the Region's highways is rail for freight or passenger service. As seen in **Figure 77**, there are multiple passenger and freight operators in the Region. The Western Connecticut Region is a part of the "Northeast Corridor," the busiest passenger rail line by ridership and service frequency in the Country, encompassing the area between Washington D.C. and Boston. It carries Metro-North Railroad's New Haven Line, the busiest commuter rail line in America, with 125,000 passengers daily and ridership that is expected to double by 2065; Amtrak's Acela Express, the only high-speed rail service in the nation, and Northeast Regional service; and CSX and P&W railroad freight service.

### *Passenger*

Metro North and Amtrak operate passenger rail service in the area. The New Haven Line is owned by the State of Connecticut (between New Haven and the New York state line) and operated by Metro-North under an agreement

between the State of Connecticut and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

It operates from Grand Central Terminal to New Haven with 32 stops and three branch lines in between. 12 of the 32 stops are located in the Western Connecticut Region. Two branch lines operate in the Western Connecticut Region, the New Canaan Branch connecting at Stamford with four stops going north to New Canaan, and the Danbury Branch connecting at South Norwalk with seven stops between Norwalk and Danbury.

In 2015, annual ridership on the New Haven Line and its branches reached 40.34 million. The New Canaan Branch had 1.38 million in ridership and the Danbury Branch had 0.49 million. The Danbury Branch is the only line in the Region using diesel locomotives.

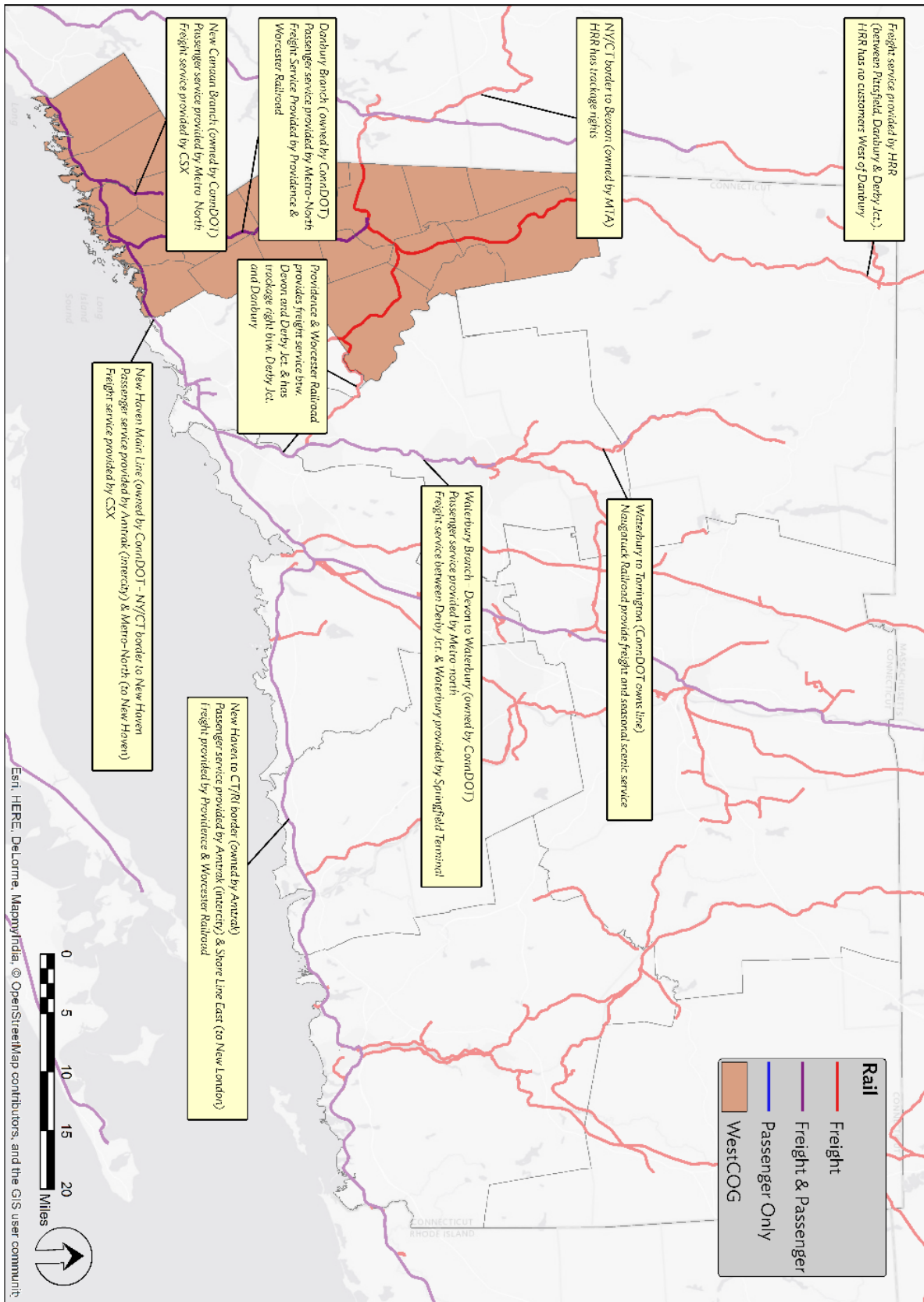
From New Haven, travelers can continue further east using Shore Line East, which primarily serves commuters between New London and New Haven, while also operating some peak hour trains as far west as Stamford.

Amtrak also operates along the New Haven Line, connecting Stamford with major cities between Boston and Washington, D.C. as well as central Connecticut, western Massachusetts, Vermont, and Virginia.

The importance of the commuter rail system to the Western Connecticut Region cannot be understated, as it has been and continues to be the primary mode of transportation for daily commuters traveling from the lower Fairfield County to Manhattan. In recent years, the so-called reverse (New York residents commuting to the Region) and intermediate (Bridgeport and New Haven area residents commuting to the Region) commute markets have grown at a faster rate than the traditional (New York City-bound) commute. In fact, the Stamford Transportation Center is Metro-North's busiest rail station after Grand Central Terminal.



Figure 77: Rail Network



The success of the rail system in the Region is predicated on several factors. Frequent, reliable, and affordable service is required to attract would-be users and retain current customers. Station amenities, including adequate parking, a safe and secure waiting environment that provides shelter from the elements, and accurate, reliable information and signage are also critical for users. Connecting services at stations, including commuter shuttles, local buses and taxis, also factor into the success of Metro-North.

### *Freight*

In addition to people, goods are often moved by rail. The freight transportation industry in the United States has undergone dramatic changes in the last twenty years. Developments in “containerization”, shifts in the manufacturing industry to “just-in-time” delivery; the deregulation of rail, trucking and aviation industries, and the development of new trading patterns in a global economy have led to consolidation and restructuring of freight transportation modes.

According to CTDOT, due to its small geographic area and close proximity to some of the Nation’s largest ports and intermodal rail facilities, Connecticut can expect to continue to see primarily the truck portions of intermodal freight trips. Trucking is and will continue to be the backbone of goods movement in Connecticut.

Most rail shipments entering Connecticut fall within a limited range of bulk commodities such as crushed stone, gravel and sand, primary metal products, grain and food products, lumber and wood products, pulp and paper products, chemicals, petroleum, and coal.

The major categories of freight rail traffic originating in the State include scrap metal and paper, crushed stone, gravel and sand, concrete, clay, paper products and chemicals. Most business and service activities in the

Western Connecticut Region do not depend upon these goods or other large volumes of freight.

Modern trends in manufacturing call for dispersed operations over several locations with any one plant having a limited role. The changes in materials management, specifically, just-in-time delivery, mean that sites are getting smaller, with more frequent deliveries of inbound and outbound shipments. Rail freight, with its advantages of bulk but with relative slowness, does not match this trend.

One of the major container ports in the world, and one of the largest intermodal rail yards in the country, are nearby in northeastern New Jersey. A major intermodal rail yard with connections to the west is located just over the state line in West Springfield, Massachusetts. To serve the Western Connecticut economy the trucking industry is in a strong competitive position to access these locations.

The close proximity of a major east-west freight line in Massachusetts, coupled with Connecticut’s lack of a direct rail freight connection to the west, results in a significant percentage of goods originating in or destined for the Western Connecticut Region being carried by truck for their entire trip or to the out of state rail freight terminals.

At the north end of the Western Connecticut Region, rail freight on the north-south Berkshire Line continues into Massachusetts where it meets a major east-west freight line. Freight can then proceed across the Hudson River to Selkirk, NY, the major hub of rail freight activity in the northeast, then on to the remainder of the Country.

Unfortunately, no through freight trains operate from south of New York City through the Western Connecticut Region to New Haven. The ability of the Metro-North-operated New Haven Line to accept certain

modern rail freight equipment is constrained by overhead catenary wire.

The New York City Economic Development Corporation completed a Cross Harbor Freight Movement Study in which the construction of a tunnel under New York Harbor was suggested as a potential asset for Connecticut. This new access would promote competition for the limited freight business in the Western Connecticut Region.

### Air

Within an “ideal” two hours of the Western Connecticut Region, there are 18 airports providing commercial service to both passengers and cargo. These hubs are vital for interregional and international travel and trade. **Figure 78** shows airports within two-hours of any point in the Region under ideal driving conditions and the size of their passenger service.

Danbury Municipal Airport (DXR) is a general aviation facility owned by the City of Danbury and is the only airport within the Western Connecticut Region. It hosts approximately 68,000 take-offs and landings annually, with flights from across the U.S. In 2015, it had 982 passenger enplanements. It is used by many area businesses and individuals.

The airport is located on approximately 250 acres near the intersection of I-84 and Route 7 in Danbury. It consists of two intersecting runways, a control tower and several hangers.

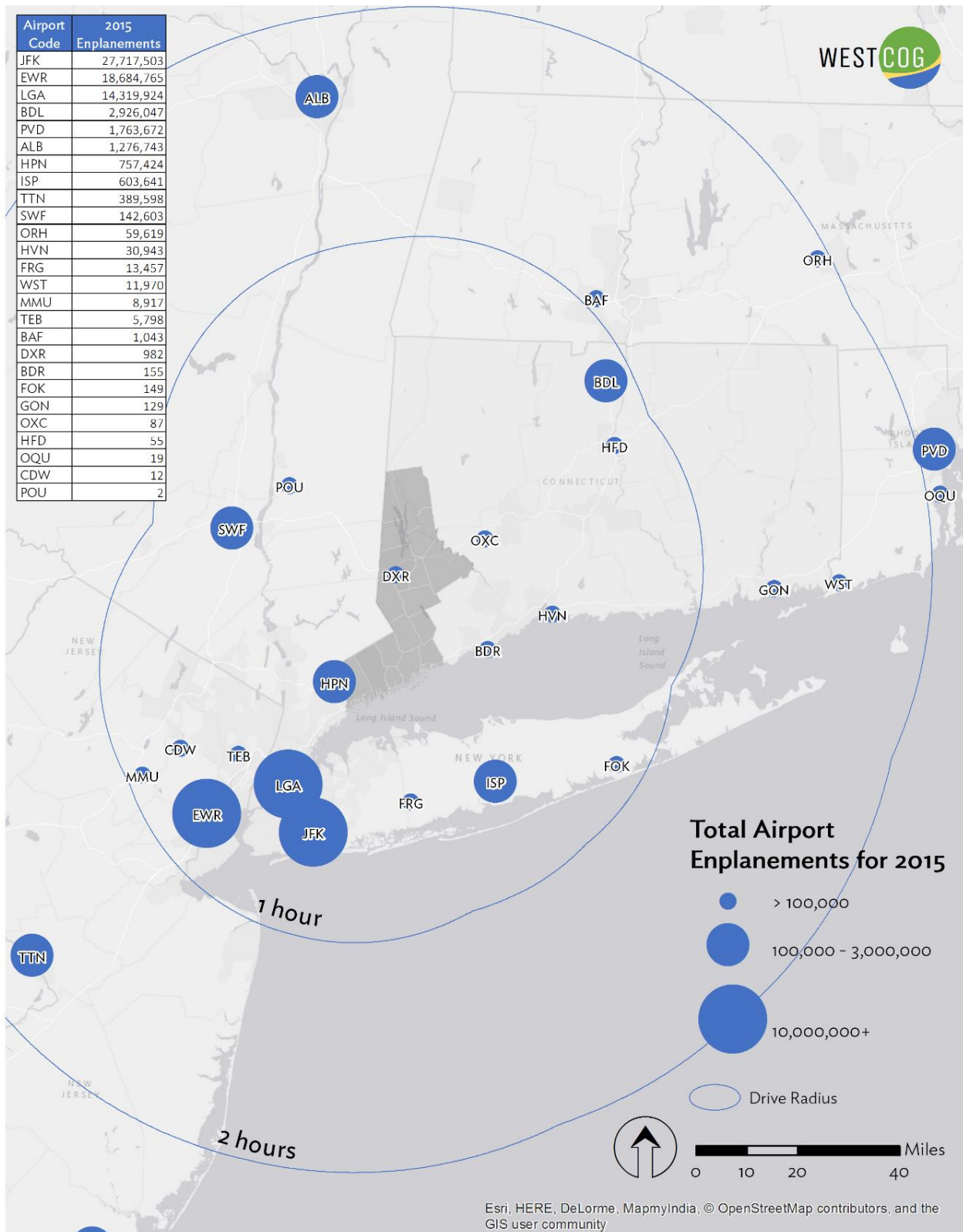
The airport is the base for corporate air fleets and is used for private flights. It has no scheduled public commercial air passenger service.

DXR provides a number of services, including repairs to aircraft engines and airframes, flight instruction, air craft sales and rentals, and hanger service. It has an estimated \$40-50-million-dollar contribution to the area’s economy. The City of Danbury is currently exploring options to expand the economic vitality of this important regional transportation resource.

Both John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) and Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR) are major international air freight and passenger gateways located just outside of the Region. According Airports Council International, in 2015, JFK and EWR were ranked 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> in the world in terms of total cargo and 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> in the United States, respectively. Both airports host many passenger flights, JFK and EWR were ranked 5<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> in the United States, respectively. These flights include large numbers of international flights and these airports contain extensive freight facilities. Bradley International Airport, located in Windsor Locks, functions as a regional hub for air cargo activities, notably package freight. In 2015, Bradley ranked as the 35<sup>th</sup> largest air freight gateway in the United States..



Figure 78: Airports Near the Western Connecticut Region with Passenger Enplanements, 2015



Source: "ATADS : Airport Operations : Standard Report," 2015, Airports Council International

## Marine

Although waterborne transportation currently plays a minor role in the transportation system, constraints on adding highway capacity and anticipated growth in traffic volumes in future years suggest that waterways could play a more important role in passenger and goods movement in the future.

### Passenger

The Region hosts passenger ferries from Norwalk to Sheffield Island, and Greenwich to local off-shore island beaches. Nearby, Bridgeport has a year round passenger and vehicle ferry to Port Jefferson, NY which caters to daily commuters and tourists.

There are many marinas and docks around the Region for private watercrafts, lining the Long Island Sound and in the many lakes and rivers. While these are likely not used for commuting, they are important amenities for tourism and quality of life.

### Freight

The southern portion of the Western Connecticut Region is home to two small but important commercial harbors in Norwalk and Stamford. Both Norwalk Harbor and Stamford Harbor handle similar commodities: fuel oil, sand, and gravel. The fuel oil received at both ports consists primarily of heating oil, which is brought in by barge from larger ports in New Haven and New York/New Jersey. Trucks distribute the heating oil to local customers in the Region and beyond. The sand and gravel received at both ports is used in the production of concrete and asphalt, which is distributed locally by truck. Sand and gravel shipments are brought in by barge from larger ports in New Haven, Bridgeport, and New York/New Jersey. In addition to Norwalk and Stamford, the Region is served by larger commercial ports in Bridgeport and New Haven and the globally significant Port of New York and New Jersey.

## Non-motorized

The use of non-motorized transportation, such as biking and walking, is increasingly becoming recognized nationally as an alternate means of transportation. A number of programs have been developed to take advantage of legislation and to meet people's changing needs and attitudes toward non-motorized transportation. Communities that have invested in non-motorized transportation are favored by younger people and residents in general. Young professionals and students, the next work force and major consumer group, prefer not to drive and select communities welcoming non-motorized transportation. Local businesses benefit as people stay closer to home and support these businesses. Cities and towns in many parts of the Country (around 300 are now Bicycle Friendly Communities and growing) are implementing non-motorized transportation infrastructure.

It is anticipated that having a better non-motorized transportation system will broaden the selection of service workers for businesses that rely upon them. This may also help workers with lower salary jobs have more disposable income since a lower percentage of their pay will be directed to transportation costs, especially if they bicycle.

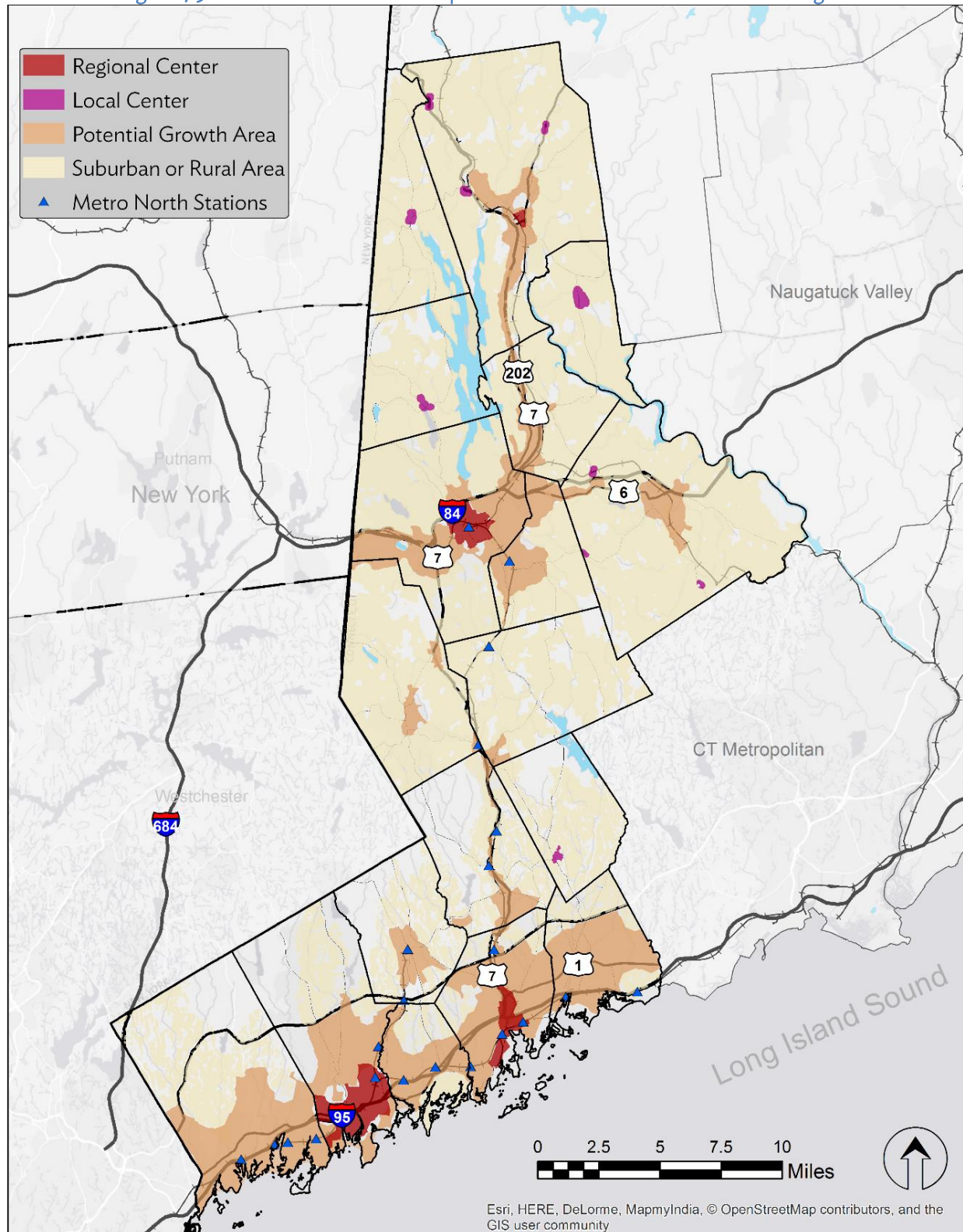
### Complete Streets

In recent years, both the nation and Connecticut have focused on planning for and implementing pedestrian and bike friendly "Complete Streets" improvements. From this perspective, roadway corridors can be improved by retrofitting with full provision for transit, pedestrian and bicycle needs. Providing for the accommodations of all users should be a routine part of planning for, designing, constructing and operating transportation resources.

## Transit Oriented Development

A key to transit planning is to encourage land use changes in the vicinity of public transit stations that will be supportive of transit use. This concept is known as ‘transit oriented development.’ Generally, transit-oriented development (TOD) means the development of residential, commercial and employment centers within one-half mile, or walking distance, of public transportation facilities, such as rail stations. The TOD goal for the Regional Transportation Plan for the Western Connecticut Region is to reinforce, intensify and foster mixed use neighborhoods at most existing and proposed passenger rail stations and bus stations. **Figure 79** describes proposed TOD planning areas within the Region.

Figure 79: Transit Oriented Development in the Western Connecticut Region





## PROJECT MANAGEMENT & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

### CEDS Committee Composition & Participation

A broadly representative CEDS Strategy Committee was established and named the Western Connecticut Economic Advisory Group. Its membership meets the Economic

Development Administration (EDA) requirements for a majority private sector composition and participation from a broad cross-section of the community including public officials, community leaders, business organizations, the workforce development board for the Region, and others to assure diverse experience and representation. The Advisory Group represented 15 organizations, 8 from the private sector.

**Western Connecticut CEDS Strategy Committee Representation**

Representative(s)	Organization	Sector
Lisa Mercurio	The Business Council of Fairfield County	Private
Thomas Madden	City of Stamford Office of Economic Development	Public
Hal Kurfels	Coldwell Banker Commercial	Private
Joe Ercolano & Valeria Bisceglia	CT Small Business Development Center	Public
Lisa Scails	Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut	Private
Virginia DeCristoforo	Danbury Innovation Center	Private
Stephen Bull	Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce	Private
Ed Musante	Norwalk Chamber of Commerce	Private
Elizabeth Stocker	Norwalk Economic Development	Public
Eugene Schreiner	Savings Bank of Danbury	Private
Jackie Lightfield	Stamford Partnership & Norwalk 2.0	Private
Janice Chrzescijanek	Town of Bethel Economic Development Department	Public
Betsy Paynter	Town of Brookfield Economic Development Department	Public
Christal Preszler	Town of Newtown Planning Department	Public
Tom Long	The WorkPlace	Public

### Business Survey

A Business Survey was developed as part of the community outreach process with the primary purpose was to help the staff and Strategy Committee gain a clearer understanding of the major strengths and weaknesses of the Western Connecticut Region as a place to operate a business and gain insight about the primary opportunities for economic growth. The survey had been put into the LimeSurvey format which allowed for both ease of response and tabulation of responses.

The survey was opened to the public on November 14, 2016. It was made available in both English and Spanish. It was promoted on the WestCOG website and social media, in various press releases, and sent out to the Strategy Committee members, local Chambers of Commerce, and Economic Development Commissions to forward to their contacts. The survey collected 99 complete responses and was closed on March 31, 2017. A blank survey in English can be found in Appendix B.

## Focus Groups

A major portion of the public input process was establishment of six topic-oriented Focus Groups. All told, 50 individuals participated in the Focus Group portion of this project. The

Focus Group topics were selected by the CEDS Committee as being the topics of most importance to the Region's future economy. The topics are listed below. Summaries of the focus group discussions can be found in Appendix B.

Focus Groups		
Focus Group	Date	Facilitator(s)
Real Estate	February 15, 2017	Hal Kurfehs
Small Business – Greater Stamford	February 22, 2017	Tom Long
Advanced Manufacturing	February 27, 2017	Elizabeth Stocker
Small Business – Greater Danbury	March 7, 2017	Hal Kurfehs & Lisa Scails
Creative Economy	March 23, 2017	Lisa Scails & Jackie Lightfield
Tech	March 24, 2017	Thomas Madden & Valeria Bisceglia

## Data Input from SBDC

In September 2016, the Industry Cluster Analysis was presented by the Connecticut Small Business Development Center (SBDC). This draft document was submitted to the Advisory Group for review and comment, and modified accordingly. This analysis, which is key to understanding the Western Connecticut Region, is presented in the Regional Analysis section of this CEDS.

## Project Website

Throughout the course of the project, the Advisory Group, through the WestCOG maintained a webpage dedicated to the project (<https://westcog.org/wceag/>). This website, available to the public, provided minutes of all meetings associated with preparation of the CEDS.

## Project Solicitation & Prioritization

The solicitation and ranking of projects from communities and organizations was also a topic of several CEDS and Steering Committee Meetings. More detail on that part of the process is provided in the section of this document on Regional Projects.

## Final Decision Making Meetings

At the July 19, 2017 meeting of the Advisory Group, the CEDS project submissions were reviewed and prioritized.

At its meeting, the Advisory Group also approved releasing a final draft of the CEDS plan for public comment and for the COG board to review. The 30-day public review comment period commenced on August 21, 2017. The draft CEDS was made available online.

The Advisory Group met on September 20, 2017 and reached consensus to authorize the submission of the CEDS document to EDA with the edits recommended from this meeting and from comments received during the public review process pending authorization from the WestCOG board.

The Western Connecticut Council of Governments board met on October 5, 2017 and approved the document for submission to the State of Connecticut and the Economic Development Administration.

## Summary List of Strategy Committee Meetings

The following are meetings that took place in preparation for the CEDS process.

Documentation of these meetings can be found in Appendix B. All meetings were free and open to the public.

### Date

06-21-2016  
09-29-2016  
11-03-2016  
01-11-2017  
03-28-2017  
04-19-2017  
05-03-2017  
05-22-2017  
06-06-2017  
07-19-2017  
09-20-2017

## WestCOG Participation

As lead organization in developing this CEDS, the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG), provided a 50% match to a \$50,000 grant from the EDA to create this document. WestCOG provided this match in staff time.

WestCOG also collaborated with the Connecticut Small Business Development Center to develop the Industry Cluster Analysis and the Small Business Perspective sections of the Regional Analysis.

<b>Project Staff</b>	
Elizabeth Esposito	Associate Planner – Project Lead
William Kenny	Associate Planner
Jonathan Chew	Senior Projects Manager
Nicole Sullivan	Communications Assistant
Soumya Sudhakar	Summer Planning Aide

<b>Other WestCOG Staff</b>	
Francis Pickering	Executive Director
Patricia Payne	Senior Financial Manager
Josephine Harvey	Financial Manager
Galen Wells	Regional Election Monitor
Robert Sachnin	Senior Planner
Kristin Hadjstylianos	Associate Planner
Michael Towle	Associate Planner
Jamie Bastian	Planning Aide
Kristin Floberg	Planning Aide
Carl Zimmerman	Senior GIS Manager
Michael Sullivan	GIS Analyst
James Dawson	GIS Analyst
Christian Schmidt	Summer Planning Aide

