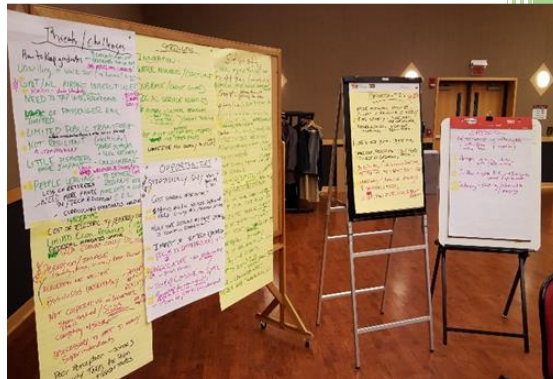




Southeastern CT Enterprise Region 2016 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Public Input Summary



CEDS Steering Committee

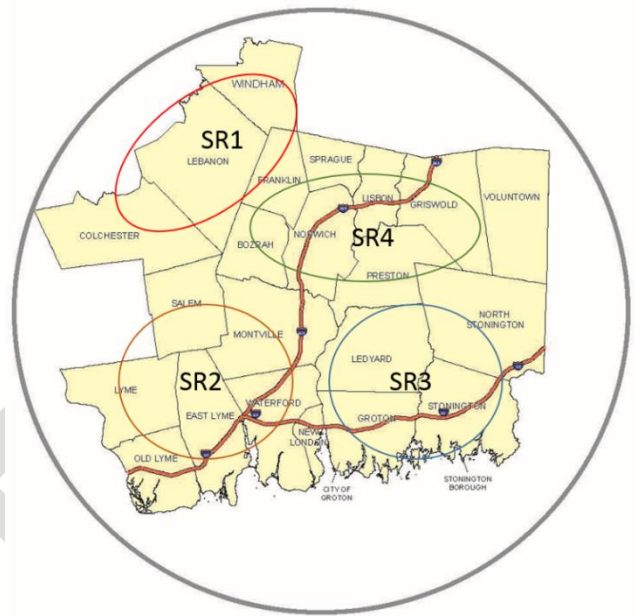
Southeastern CT Enterprise Region

December 2016



seCTer, in partnership with many local and regional organizations, stakeholders, and economic development professionals, conducted a number of events in the region to provide ample opportunity for all residents and stakeholders to provide their valuable input. The following is summary of the public input gathered to inform and strengthen the **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy** for Southeastern Connecticut.

A particularly common theme that emerged in all the different discussions was in order to remain competitive/relevant and maintain any vibrancy in our communities, we need to attract and retain young professionals, innovative entrepreneurs as well as affluent retirees by aggressively marketing our assets, and investing in programs and infrastructure that create or facilitate connections to economic, social and recreational opportunities here in SECT. The primary barriers identified were a lack of coordination and operative networks or collaboration between organizations (governmental, nonprofit, private); and a lack of integrated and streamlined systems (transportation, education/career pathways, regulatory) both resulting in damaging inefficiencies and competition for increasingly scarce resources. The fiscal instability and uncertainty at all levels of government, and locally in the form of lower incomes and less profit, have dramatically diminished the social and financial capital available to invest in the infrastructure, institutions, organizations, programs and projects designed to strengthen the communities in SECT and facilitate prosperity and growth.

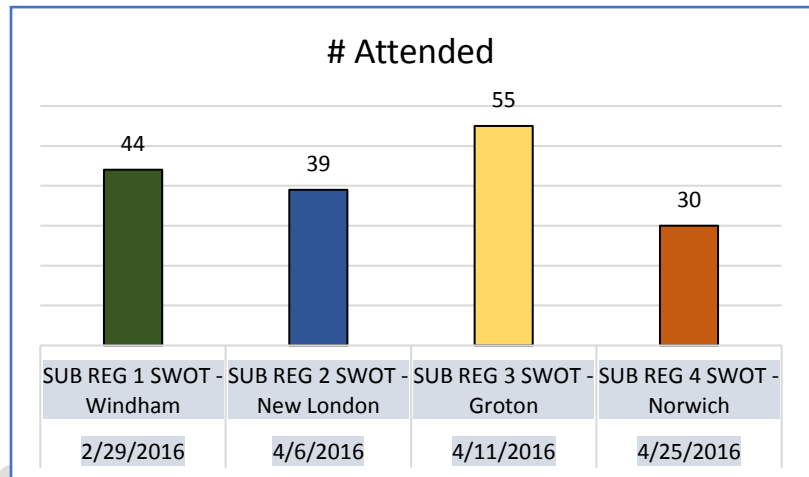


It is widely recognized that the economy will not recover from the significant structural change that has occurred over the last 8-10 years; and the techniques and best practices of the past are no longer as relevant and thus will not be as effective to repair the damage. The changing demographics and constantly evolving technology bring a new set of criteria for attraction and retention and a concurrent need for continual innovation, adaptation and a new mindset that will successfully disrupt the 20th Century thought and practices that continue to confine and constrain. Knowledge, human capital/collaboration and efficiency are the new resources for

economic development and the art of attraction a valued skill.

Sub-regional SWOT Analyses

The public input process began with four sub-regional SWOT analyses to determine the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The sessions were held in Willimantic, New London, Norwich and Mystic and were facilitated/moderated by members of the CEDS Strategy Committee. The following chart shows the number of participants per event. Participants included business owners, elected officials, state representatives, residents, board and commission members, representatives from local and regional non-profit and governmental agencies and industry representatives. A regional SWOT analysis was also conducted by The Southeastern CT Council of Governments in April 2015, with 24 in attendance.



Participants were broken into four groups and asked to identify regional strengths and weaknesses internal to the region as well as external threats impacting the region. Participants were then asked to suggest opportunities based on the items identified. During the final 15 minutes of the break-out session, participants were given 20 stickers and asked to use 10 stickers to vote on the Strengths and

Opportunities they felt were higher priority and 10 stickers to identify the top Threats and Weaknesses. The votes were tallied and each group reported their top Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities to the re-convened participants.



All the data received was summarized and emerging themes, clusters and skills were identified.

Emerging Themes - Strengths

- ▶ **Sense of Place:** History, Location between NY and Boston, quality of life, recreational opportunities, villages / shoreline / open space
- ▶ **Existing economic diversity** on which to build (mature business and new economy)
- ▶ Ready **economic development resources:** workforce, available investment opportunities
- ▶ **Infrastructure** assets and possibilities: rail, air, marine, utilities, broadband
- ▶ Strong **training and education** institutions

Emerging Themes - Opportunities

- ▶ Develop **Community Leaders** – increase involvement from millennials to retirees
- ▶ **Diversify the economic base** beyond Pfizer, EB, casinos – supply chain, small business, technology, entrepreneurs
- ▶ Core components exist for efficient, integrated **infrastructure** – transportation and utilities
- ▶ Benefits for **Regionalization** seen: regulatory, government, education, shared services
- ▶ Streamlined **Regulations** can promote economic development, particularly zoning
- ▶ Define SECT's '**Sense of Place**' – and promote it!

Emerging Themes - Weaknesses

- ▶ **Lack of leaders / visionaries** or coordinated leadership
- ▶ Too dependent on a few businesses (e.g. Electric Boat, Pfizer); need for **business diversity**
- ▶ Not addressing **skill sets** needed for the new economy; **brain drain**
- ▶ **Fragmented transportation** networks and **utility** service
- ▶ Failure to **regionalize**; provincialism hampers realizing economies of scale
- ▶ **Outdated regulations** stymie development
- ▶ **Regional marketing** efforts inadequate; Sense of Place not obvious

Emerging Themes - Threats

- ▶ **Resiliency:** over-reliance on large companies like Electric Boat, Pfizer, casinos
- ▶ **Economic insecurity** drives workforce exodus
- ▶ **Sea-level rise** threatens coast-line resources
- ▶ **Resistance to change**, e.g. consider regionalized approaches or reform regulations
- ▶ **Uncertainty over state budget** for local support; burden for towns falls on inefficient property tax system
- ▶ Without a 'Sense of Place', **civic pride is undermined**

Economic Clusters Strengths: Supporting Institutions (specifically identified)

- ▶ **Agriculture / aquaculture / open space: farm-to-table movement**
 - Haley Farm, Patchaug State Forest (North Stonington and Voluntown), Last Green Valley, Lebanon preserved land
- ▶ **BioScience / Healthcare:**
 - Pfizer, CURE, UCONN TIP, Entrepreneurs, SPARK Makerspace; Lawrence & Memorial Hospital, William C. Backus Hospital, Windham Hospital, Yale and Hartford Hospital affiliations, Cancer Centers, Senior Care facilities
- ▶ **Defense Industry:**
 - Electric Boat, U.S. Naval Submarine Base, Quonset Point (synergy), TASMG (Helicopter Repair) and other supply chain businesses
- ▶ **Education: technical and higher education**
 - U.S. Coast Guard Academy and R&D Center, UCONN Avery Point, Eastern Connecticut State University, Connecticut College, Mitchell College, Three Rivers Community College, Quinebaug Valley Community College, Windham Technical High School, Ella Grasso Technical High School, Charter and Magnet Schools
- ▶ **Maritime: New London deep-water port, fishing**
 - State Pier, Mystic Seaport, LI Ferry
- ▶ **Tourism / Hospitality: history, culture, and recreation**
 - Mystic Seaport, Mystic Aquarium, Foxwoods Resort Casino, Mohegan Sun Casino; proposed U.S. Coast Guard Museum, Dodd Stadium, Groton Bank, Noank, Thames River Region and Thames River Heritage Park, Herry's,

Supporting Foundation: Skills

- ▶ Bio-pharmaceutical Scientists, Computer Scientists
- ▶ Nuclear, Acoustic, Electrical, Structural, Civil and Mechanical Engineers; IT Professionals; Advanced manufacturing; pipe-fitters; machinists; robotics;
- ▶ Doctors, Nurses; Physical Therapists; Specialists; Lawyers;
- ▶ Educators; Researchers; Economists; Financial Advisors; Accountants; Regulatory Professionals;
- ▶ Entrepreneurs; Designers; Media
- ▶ Artists; Interpreters; Actors; Animal Trainers;
- ▶ Agri-scientists; Soil Scientists; Land Surveyors;

Stakeholder Prioritization

The following are the combined results of the prioritization exercises conducted (the number in parentheses is the total number of votes associated with the broad theme identified. A full summary is included in the appendix of this document):

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Quality of Life (265): Arts, Cultural, Historic and natural resources; Tourism and recreational opportunities; Rural-urban mix; quality schools and healthcare</p> <p>Economic Development Resources & Competitive Advantages (145): Proximity to larger urban centers; Skilled, productive & educated workforce; Convenient location with lower operating costs (than larger urban centers)</p> <p>Transportation Systems and Existing Infrastructure (71): Multiple transp. modes (passenger & freight rail, airports, deep water port w/ rail connection, Port Authority, ferry, highway system</p> <p>Water/Maritime Resources (52): Rivers, LI Sound, Ocean/Coastline; recreational and economic opportunities; shipbuilding/Seaport</p> <p>Existing Businesses and Institutions (37): Millstone, Educational Institutions, USCGA, Quonset Point Synergy, National IT/Digital Media Hub; Military presence; Defense Industry</p> 	<p>Regulatory Environment/ Government (138): State & Local regulatory situation; restraints to development; commissioners unfamiliar with trends and not familiar with private sector needs; resistance to development; imbalanced land-use policies throughout region; Outdated complex regulations; Taxes in general; tax system; over-reliance on property tax; SECT not recognized in Hartford</p> <p>Quality of Life/Sense of Place (134): Lack of marketing and education about assets and attractions; poor perception/image; high COL/Taxes/doing business etc.; lack of jobs and opportunities; stagnant employment; lack of a regional brand; Not millennial friendly; lack home ownership opportunities/housing affordability; need to build future workforce</p> <p>Transportation & Infrastructure (112): Lack of convenient public transit, available connections to larger urban centers, and coordinated regional transportation system; disconnected, deteriorated, and underutilized infrastructure; lack of shovel ready sites & no one willing to pay to make them so</p> <p>Diversification & Resilience (53): Not adapting to the needs of the new economy; need to diversify – fail to capture talent when large industries downsize; lack of coordinated leadership and visionaries; no engagement from younger generations or area educational institutions</p> <p>Regionalization (43): Region not united- Silo mentality; competition for resources</p> <p>Environmental (3): Heavily reliant on septic systems; too many brownfields</p>

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p><u>Business Expansion & Retention (101):</u> More support for entrepreneurs; expand manufacturing supply chain; Invest in technology and green energy</p> <p><u>Regionalization (75):</u> Regional authority, schools; shared services; regional marketing opportunities</p> <p><u>Development & Re-development (60):</u> Mixed-use/cluster development; walkable neighborhoods; marketing and redevelopment/infill of existing old buildings & mills; repurpose and reuse historic buildings and urban areas</p> <p><u>Tourism & Marketing (51):</u> One regional marketing and branding campaign; build our regional pride, promote our success and assets; more organized and coordinated effort to market events and attractions for a more holistic experience; better signage</p> <p><u>Location & Industry Specific (47):</u> Leverage and expand assets related to the ocean/harbor/waterfront; Leverage US Coast Guard Museum and Thames River Heritage Park</p> <p><u>Attracting & Retaining Millennials & Retirees (41):</u> become millennial friendly; advertise assets; expand geriatric support, facilities/networks</p> <p><u>Regulatory – Planning for Economic Development (41):</u> Streamline/improve regulatory process & gov't services; increase # of shovel-ready properties; ease regulations for businesses</p> <p><u>Transportation (29):</u> Local use of Rail ; Expansion of freight and passenger rail; utilize & improve existing transportation infrastructure, capacity & connections</p> <p><u>Education & Workforce Development (28):</u> Train for future (diversify students); pilot programs for Technical Education in Middle Schools & High Schools; teach technical schools in ALL High Schools, not just Tech. schools; further integrate K-12 with Tech Schools, Community Colleges & Universities</p> <p><u>Diversification of the Economy (24):</u> Diversify the economy – explore advanced nuclear manufacturing; need to diversify economic base to increase resiliency; opportunities for diverse businesses due to diverse demographics; diversity breakthrough</p> <p><u>Agriculture: Innovation & Sustainability (22):</u> Food security – more local farms and processing; greenhouses and value-added products; Agricultural infrastructure development; utilize technology to expand agricultural industries; increase farm-to-table programs; expand shellfish/aquaculture industries</p> <p><u>Building Social Capital (15):</u> Integrate minorities onto boards & Commissions; get millennials involved with Chambers, civic organizations, Boards & Commissions</p>	<p><u>Regulatory & Government related (203):</u> tax situation – prohibitive to growth and attraction of new business and people; State budget/fiscal instability; over taxation and regulation; zoning – barrier to growth</p> <p><u>Diversification/Economic Resilience (104):</u> Overreliance on large employers – not resilient to downsizing or changes in the economy; out-migration of young talent and retirees; possible 3rd Casino</p> <p><u>Sense of Place/Quality of Life (46):</u> Lack of mixed-use areas with housing; SECT a forgotten place; poor image and disinvestment in some areas; lack jobs and housing for millennials</p> <p><u>Environmental Threats (21):</u> Climate change- sea level rise and shoreline erosion; water quality and commercial impacts</p> <p><u>Lack of Regionalism (17):</u> Lack of regional collaboration and coordination; Silo mentality; towns competing with each other for resources and tax revenue;</p> <p><u>Infrastructure Related (16):</u> Lack of municipal sewers; weak infrastructure supporting the PORT/transportation barriers; not resilient – slow to recover from power outages; energy grid vulnerability</p> <p><u>Global Threat (1):</u> Millstone</p>

Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments: Regional Plan of Conservation and Development Initial Public Input Workshop

On June 24, 2015 the Southeastern CT Council of Governments (SCCOG) held a public workshop at the Montville Town Hall to kick-off the process to update the 2007 Regional Plan of Conservation and Development. Approximately 24 people attended from: Lebanon, East Lyme, Windham, Stonington, North Stonington, Ledyard, Groton, Groton City, Lisbon, Preston and Montville. Attendees were broken into two groups and brainstormed the region's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. Each attendee then selected their top three strengths, top three weaknesses and top three opportunities. The groups reconvened and shared their results.

REGION'S TOP STRENGTHS:

- History and historic sites
- Open space and agriculture
- Quality of life
- Roads, highways, and connectivity
- Skilled workforce
- Variety in physical environment / landscapes

REGION'S TOP WEAKNESSES:

- Lack of employment opportunities
- Failing infrastructure
- Economic and employment stability
- Size and cost of government
- Lack of local mass transit
- Lack of personal responsibility to maintain and invest in properties

REGION'S TOP OPPORTUNITIES:



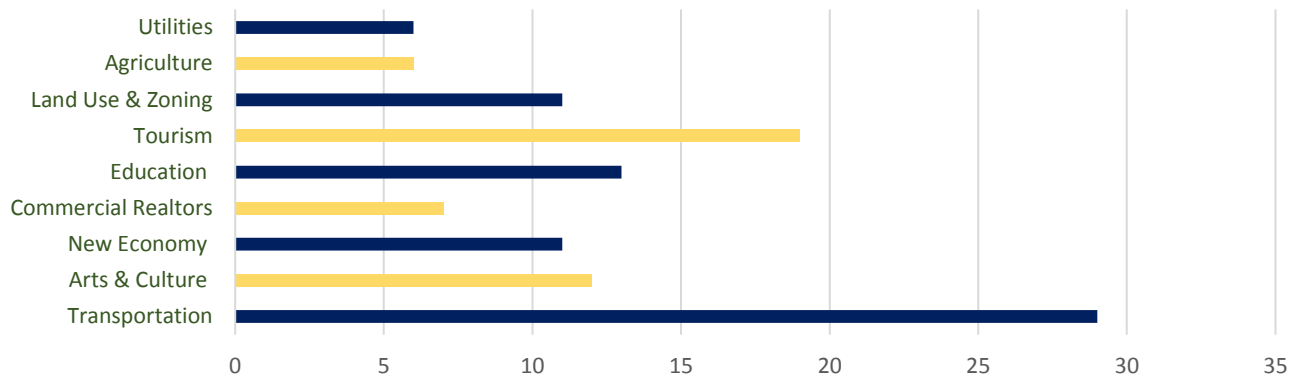
- Regionalization and cost sharing (e.g., fire, education). The SCCOG is proactive, non-partisan.
- Potential for urban revival – people want to live in cities, so let's market them and attract young people
- Take advantage of our historic resources for preservation and for economic development
- Infrastructure – power, water, and gas
- Marketing – tourism and businesses
- Railroad, marine

A Closer Look: Targeted Focus Groups



In addition to the 4 Sub-regional SWOT Events, seCTer hosted a series of targeted focus groups to explore select topics identified in the SWOT analyses as having a significant impact to Economic Development.

Focus Groups: Topic and Participation



Transportation



The Transportation Focus Group was held at the Groton – New London Airport, Mystic Jet Center on March 30, 2016. There were 29 participants in the focus group discussion with two moderators: Catherine Young, from the Connecticut Airport Authority and Juliet Hodge from the Southeastern CT Enterprise region.

PARTICIPANTS

Director of Parks and Recreation, Town of Groton
General Manager, SEAT Transit Planner, SCCOG
Supervisory Rail Officer, CT DOT Travel Services, Mohegan Sun
Director of Economic Development, City of New London
Faculty, UCONN, Avery Point
Dir. of Economic Development and Marketing, seCTer
Commuter Services, Electric Boat Director of Auxiliary Services, Connecticut College
VP/General Manager, Enterprise Coordinator, Norwich Public Utilities
Rail Officer 1, CT DOT Chief of Planning, CT DOT
Director of Operations, Joshua's Limousine
Director of Marketing, Cross Sound Ferry
Crew Manager, Curtain Livery/Yellow Cab
Transportation Services Fleet, Mohegan Sun
Program Supervisor, Groton Senior Center
Director of GA Airports, CT Airport Authority
Vice-Chairman, Board of Directors, Thames River Heritage Park
Director of Communications, MPTN
Transportation Planner, SCCOG P&W Railroad
Customer Service Manager, Columbia Air Services
Vice President, P&W Railroad CPLO @ Sub Base New London, Sub Base
Director of Business Rental, Enterprise Holdings
Business Development- CT Airport Authority

Major Themes

- ▶ **Need to meet the access and mobility needs** of residents, visitors, students, commercial enterprises and industry by creating a **more integrated and efficient transportation** system that addresses the changing demographics, our rural-suburban landscape and lack of population density, and that provides a **more seamless transition from different transit and non-motorized modes** (last mile connections; housing, employment, healthcare and social opportunities that is accessible (ADA and by transit and walking) - particularly for those without a car (e.g. students, aging populations, low-income populations and those who prefer alternative modes of transportation).
- ▶ **Utilize new technologies to increase efficiency and access;** one-payment option, mobile apps, better connectivity, headways, signage and information (both digital and print). Study the capacity and redundancy of transit modes and paratransit as well as local special transit (school, senior) to **enable efficiencies and better coordination**. Better way finding (signage, apps, marketing), better coordination between transportation agencies/modes.
- ▶ **Reduce conflicts between transportation modes** – e.g. rail and water uses; passenger vs. freight use of tracks, etc. **Eliminate access barriers for cyclists and pedestrians and improve safety for non-motorists** to enable biking and walking (seen as a tourism asset and a reasonable alternative to car ownership/use).
- ▶ **Embrace a mindset that values regional benefits over local benefits with a guiding principle or goal of serving the public; one that is open to new technologies and new modes of transportation.**
- ▶ **Challenged with finding ways (and funds) to accommodate one mode of transportation without negatively impacting another.** Also challenges related to how to **adapt existing physical infrastructure** to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians, new bigger submarines, greater freight loads/car widths, expanded passenger rail, and charging stations (narrow built-out streets, channel depth, rail siding height, etc.).
- ▶ **Assess climate change impacts** on storm drainage systems and roadways which in the event of an emergency could fail and develop a plan to mitigate the dangers.

Education



The Education Focus Group took place at UCONN Avery Point on May 24th. Steve MacKenzie and Juliet Hodge of seCTer moderated the session. There were 13 participants mostly representing area high schools and secondary educational facilities.

PARTICIPANTS
Director, Technology Exchange Portal, UCONN
President Three Rivers Community College
STEM Administrator, PLTW Coordinator, New London Early College Opportunity Director
Principal Ella T. Grasso Southeastern Technical High School
Principal & Executive Director ISAAC School
Director, Center for Community Engagement, Eastern CT State University
seCTer Board, Preston Riverwalk Agency
Managing Director, Entrepreneurship and Innovation Consortium, UCONN
Director of Career Services, Mitchell College
Assistant Principal, Norwich Technical High School
Assistant Professor, School of Business, UCONN
Program Coordinator, Workforce and Community Education, Three Rivers Community College
Acting Dean of Student Services, Enrollment Management & Workforce Development, TRCC

Major Themes

- ▶ **Mindset and resistance to change:** Many have fixed an antiquated mindset that does not align with or prepare for likely future scenarios or paradigms. **Fear of change – Resistant to remove existing “structure.”**
- ▶ **Critical Skills – Preparedness – Growth Mindset:** Must transition from an educational system designed for the industrial age to a system designed for the future business needs and that focuses on preparedness, competency, design and creativity. Paint a clear picture of the future and plan accordingly – create curriculum to support emerging trends.
 - Success in the 21st Century requires a “growth Mind set” which recognizes the importance of **critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and communication**. The lack of this growth mindset and over-reliance on structure is prohibitive with respect to entrepreneurship.
 - **Common core standards are shifting** and will focus on preparing the student. Invest in students, then brand the message that we are investing in our students. **Need to stop creating careers that actively avoid critical skills.** High School students lack Math Skills to fill engineering jobs available in the region.
- ▶ **Regional Schools:** This region is too small to be competitive at the k-12 level. **Charter schools need to partner with public schools and share resources.**

- ▶ **Education – Entrepreneurship - Messaging:** Kids taught that failure is bad (test score as measurement). Entrepreneurship involves failure (often multiple failures) which goes against what they have been taught. **Process is too structured.** Taught to go to college and **get** a job. Not told often to acquire basic skills, be creative and start your own company. Removing the structure is uncomfortable to many. Some do want to be entrepreneurs, but **lack the basic skills needed to be a successful entrepreneur** as these are not always taught. **Soft-skills training** necessary.
- ▶ **Partnership and funding challenges - impact on education:** Lack of Angel Networks in SECT make entrepreneurship difficult. Need to create an Angel Fund and brand it: **“People in the community investing in community”**. **Collaboration needed to create pathways and networks to attract investors.**
 - **Void in the region** identified. EB and Pfizer no longer as engaged with the community. This lack of funding highlights the importance of **being more efficient** – sharing resources – **cooperating vs competing.**
 - The value is not clear to investors or partners. Need to do a better job of **packaging (and marketing) the opportunities and assets we have here to compel them to act.** Sometimes there is enthusiasm within an industry, but a reluctance to give resources necessary to achieve strategies.
 - Diversity a plus in SECT – many opportunities for collaboration.
- ▶ **Education – Business Connection:** Some **marketing needed to educate businesses about the resources and opportunities** that could result from a partnership with area schools. **Joint responsibility between schools and businesses to ensure that students are prepared. Work-place learning key.**

Challenge: Need to replace aging workforce. When the need becomes obvious and compelling, companies more likely to engage with ED Institutions in training programs.
- ▶ **Career Pathways:** SECT is focused on Manufacturing, but there are other opportunities. **Clear education to career pathways must be developed for the other industries in SECT.** “Mapping” the path for hospitality, tourism, healthcare, Theater or Arts, etc. Create a “hot bed” of activity here in SECT
 - **Progressive immersion programs** with local business needed.
 - **“Country Club Generation”** – challenging generation – Not willing to start at the “bottom” (low wage job) despite opportunities here in SECT. They want to be successful right out of the gate and have the freedom to try multiple careers and are in fact likely to have 7-12 careers.

Arts and Culture



The Arts and Cultural Focus group was held on May 16, 2016 in partnership with the Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition. Steve MacKenzie and Juliet Hodge of seCTer moderated the session. There were 12 participants in attendance.

SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT CULTURAL COALITION

Organizations Represented
The Drunken Palette Arts Studio
East Lyme Puppetry Project Inc.
Windham Arts
Norwich Arts Center
Partners in Health Communities
Children's Art Museum of SECT
Niantic Main Street
Mystic Country
SECONN Fabrications
Community Foundation of Eastern CT
SECT Cultural Coalition

Major Themes - Strengths

- ▶ Abundance of Arts & Cultural Assets in the Region- many choices for young and old audiences. "Mystic" name recognition powerful.
- ▶ Dedicated people involved in the Arts & Culture community and a wide-range of talent - all mediums. Self-driven and Self-contained.
- ▶ Arts and culture can provide opportunities to diversify; Creative design industries in SECT; SPARK Makerspace work attempting to build the economy by building capacity.
- ▶ NPOs feed the for profit businesses.

Why support the Arts?

Help with employee retention

Will help diversify the age of the population

Talent pool; Interns and potential labor pool

Will improve region's (or local) brand

Potential for on-site programs (internal)

Team-building aspect

Arts contribute to a high QOL which will help attract talent by creating an environment that young people/new employees want to live in

Major Themes – Threats and Weaknesses

- ▶ Lack of suitable, available, affordable, and code compliant facilities for the Arts; renovation cost prohibitive and **not an investment priority** for state and towns; better collaboration to utilize the space that is available.
- ▶ **Mindset that Arts are a luxury** – subject to budget cuts - Reduces future audience for arts; lack of public transportation also threatens the Arts.
- ▶ Location between Boston and NYC – detrimental (**hard to compete with larger urban areas** with thriving arts and cultural sector).
- ▶ Information needed on **how to maneuver the tax system, regulatory system**, etc. when transitioning from hobby to actual business; Artists protective of artistic freedoms.
- ▶ Marketing efforts not as effective as they could be - Not always reaching the right audience or already captive audience – **Not telling our story here in SECT.**
- ▶ **Not enough collaboration** and/or communication between all arts and cultural organizations. Over-reliance on grants. **Competition for scarce resources.**
- ▶ **Silo effect** - Arts and technology type curriculums are very separate in schools. Need to bring them together (e.g. Sculpture and analytic geometry); Art is an expression - we are not valuing all the "pockets" of Art.

Major Themes – Opportunities

- ▶ **Attract and retain new audiences and new talent** - (millennials) by blending new technology and traditional mediums; Include technological displays and approaches - (competing with FB, Snapchat etc.); increase internship or competition opportunities in the Arts
- ▶ **Promote "story-telling" Need to develop "OUR" REGIONAL story and promote on a REGIONAL scale.** Communicate the Arts/Cultural resources to the military community, realtors and corporations. Encourage them in turn to promote our rich arts and cultural assets; Leverage the robust a platform for the creative economy; Good diverse economic climate necessary for all sectors to thrive.
- ▶ Communicate the Arts/Cultural resources to the military community, realtors and corporations. Encourage them in turn to **promote our rich arts and cultural assets; Harness our strong global connections**; link with Providence, Boston, Windham, Hartford etc.
- ▶ Corporate buy-in and support through **career pathway programs** (curriculums); Encourage Cross pollination - e.g. Engineers/Arts/Technology.
- ▶ **Quantify the cultural and economic impact of Arts on the economy-** promote as an economic driver; educate educators, municipal officials, commissions etc. of the importance and contribution to the economy; Bring Arts into the conversation via representation on Boards and Commissions in all 22 towns.
- ▶ **Collaboration and mindset:** more horizontal communication and coordination between venues; regional approach; funding through regional agency vs. individual entities; expand synergy between tourism and businesses – expand tourism markets; offer package deals for employees to help with recruitment.

Entrepreneurship and the New Economy



Juliet Hodge of seCTer moderated the Entrepreneurship and New Economy Focus group that was held on May 16, 2016 in partnership with the SPARK Makerspace. There were 11 participants in attendance.

Major Themes: Threats and Weaknesses

- ▶ Outdated and limiting **"Walmart Mentality"** – i.e. sticking with what works even if we don't like it. We fear revolution and "settle" out of need; all the ideas are out there, but there is **no network for implementation**. Things only change when we want them to change. Passion necessary.
- ▶ Most problems are not black and white - cannot get rid of one thing without replacing it with another.
- ▶ **Shift away from "the job"** where people are just widgets/interchangeable part. People are willful and creative and the current system doesn't work for them. Concept of "jobs" is outdated. **People now are interested in "work"** - doing lots of different things rather than one "job."
- ▶ **Technology and education** - dehumanization of work and education; Not looking at the skills of the existing people. People also undervalue/underutilize existing inherent skills. We teach old lessons to the new generation.
- ▶ **Debt** is a huge part of the 99% and given at the most vulnerable time. Hard enough to start things (education, business, etc.) - shouldn't add debt to the picture.
- ▶ **Education system not aligned with reality** and therefore hard to keep current. Education is a sorting system - stronger ideas/motivation survive. Education system is designed for the industrial age - or serving itself. **Standardized tests vs. critical thinking, active participation and hands on learning.**

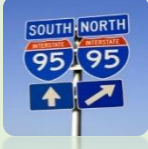
Major Themes - Opportunities

- ▶ **Re-localization** - local production for local consumption to create economic opportunities. **Reinvent "the commons"**; focus on renewable energy as a capital resource; local food; support programs like FRESH - Magnet School; **Asset focused story-telling** - keep the "capital" under local control.
- ▶ **Education System:** Need to **modernize** education system - curriculums cannot keep up with the changing technology; Need more **disruptive education**: skills vs degree – discovery vs. memorization - learning for the sake of learning at school vs. skills application to a job (these concepts need to be joined).
- ▶ Opportunity to create **learning hubs** – accreditation for individual on-line courses/programs.
- ▶ Need educational programs to **build entrepreneurship**; bring multiple skills to a problem – build networks; shape work around people; teach **collaboration** and **critical thinking**.
- ▶ **Capacity Building:** Bring **automation** available for larger industries to the small entrepreneurs and small businesses to allow them to be competitive; provide access to tools, robotics, equipment, 3-D printers etc. for everyone to free up time for creativity.
- ▶ **Brand the "movement!"** Raise awareness - **create networks -leverage internet technology platforms**; continue having discussions with polite friction.

Commercial Realtors



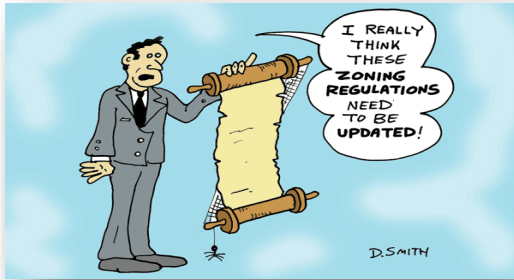
seCTer staff conducted a mini-SWOT analysis with the Commercial Realtor group at their regular monthly meeting in June. There were only seven brokers in attendance. Though further discussions have occurred with the commercial brokers at other monthly meetings hosted by the Eastern CT Association of Realtors (ECAR).

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Mom & Pops are driving economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Hartford sentiment is poor; Legislature is complacent and arrogant; No bipartisanship ▶ Taxes and over regulation are crushing businesses; Too much government in CT ▶ Chamber of Commerce for Eastern CT is a shill for Hartford/Governor; need more candor ▶ Lack of affordable housing in region
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Streamline permitting and regulations, on a regional level where possible ▶ Continue to support small business, Mom & Pops ▶ Widening of I-95 ▶ Regionalism - more cooperation between Norwich - New London - Groton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ It has been 10 years since real estate has appreciated in SECT ▶ Public and real estate community are not being kept informed about the I-95 Widening project; not participating in the process ▶ Companies will not locate to CT given uncertainty in Hartford (taxes, regulations)

Final Focus groups

The last three focus groups were held at the conference center in the Mohegan Sun Casino on September 1st. Staff from multiple organizations facilitated discussions on Agriculture, Land-Use and Zoning and Tourism. Having the three sessions on the same evening allowed for networking opportunities and cross-sharing of discussion results. There were approximately 40 in attendance.

Land-Use and Zoning



Juliet Hodge and Ned Hammond, City of New London facilitated the session. The 11 attendees included area land-use planners, commercial realtors and local developers.

Major Themes: Threats and Weaknesses

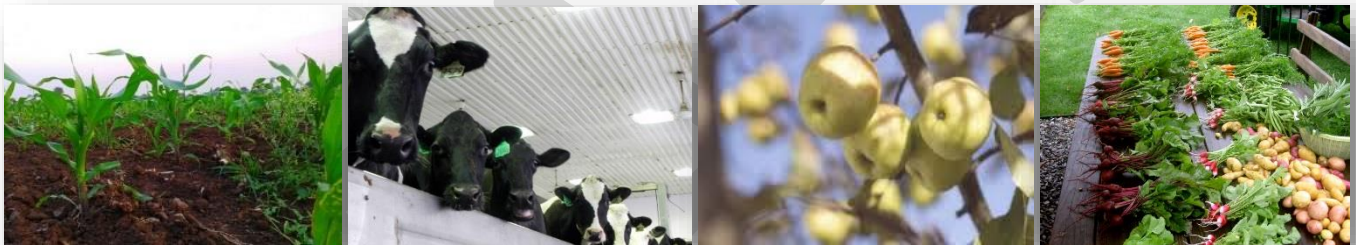
- ▶ **Multiple boards and commission reviews for simple projects.** Not enough trust in professional staff to allow more administrative review/approval.
- ▶ **Lengthy and costly permitting and review process.** The market conditions have changed by the time you get through the process. "Guilty until proven innocent" attitude toward applicants. **Regulations inflexible and not aligned with existing market conditions** and/or emerging trends.
- ▶ **Outdated, confusing/conflicting regulations** that Commissions are slow to fix– can kill a project. Excessive requirements that add to time and cost to project.
- ▶ Too many boards and commissions – **uncoordinated planning efforts** and often at odds with each other.
- ▶ Too many different zone categories and too many Special Permits as a tool to control development. Overkill. Zoning is a barrier to development.
- ▶ **Disconnect between Commissions and professionals.**
- ▶ Volunteer Board and Commission members untrained. Terms too long. **Members not representative of whole community** (lack diversity). Real and perceived barriers to participation on Boards and Commissions.
- ▶ NIMBYism is a barrier to growth. Planning has become reactionary not intentional.

Major Themes - Opportunities

- ▶ **Simplify the Zoning Regulations and streamline the permitting and review process.** Add flexibility and work toward regional uniformity. Begin with regional zoning categories, definitions, and language pertaining to the permitting process. Menu of choices for towns to choose from.
- ▶ **Enable the private sector to take advantage of opportunities.** Provide active town guidance/customer service through the whole development process.
- ▶ **Align risk management sensibilities to economic realities.** Develop an advocacy tool necessary to get regulations to align with the market conditions and trends.
- ▶ **Vet the prospective members of Planning and Zoning Commissions** to ensure more progressive thinkers who consider the greater good of the community, and to find members with key skills.

- ▶ **Allow more administrative review and approvals. Reduce the number of land-use agencies.**
- ▶ **Combine EDC and PZC** as part of a larger effort to **reduce the number of boards and commissions and address the disconnect** between the two often differing groups.
- ▶ **Create job descriptions** for board and commission members, **provide training**, and **consider term limits** for Board and Commission members.
- ▶ **Utilize technology to facilitate greater participation** on boards and commission from a more diverse demographic (age, ethnicity, core competency/experience). Find ways to influence the planning process without having to be a part of the process directly.
- ▶ Plan for millennials – **Zoning needs to be more open to change – more flexible.** Incentivize the type of development that millennials want.
- ▶ **Actively and intentionally plan** how to make better use of available space and opportunities. Create a sense of place and use it as a unifier.
- ▶ Identify all towns considered to have a faster and/or more streamlined process.

Agriculture



Bob Mills, NCDC and Ann Chambers, seCTer facilitated this session. The six attendees included four local farmers and two from agriculture related organizations.

Major Themes: Challenges

- ▶ Very **few USDA licensed slaughterhouses** or processing facilities nearby – and not a single one in CT for meat producers. Diversification of product is a problem. Getting to all the farmer's markets is too costly and time consuming.
- ▶ Availability, cost, and quality of **seasonal labor**.
- ▶ **Finances.** Capital investments needed to succeed or diversify product – business model.
- ▶ **Food safety** a concern as microbes change.

Major Themes - Strengths and Opportunities

- ▶ Available Department of Agriculture **funds for farmer's Markets and direct market sales.**
- ▶ Eastern CT a good place to be located due to **proximity to 45,000,000 people.** Great opportunities for Agriculture. Old warehouses available for indoor urban farming. Quality water.
- ▶ **Agro-tourism** as an alternative to Farmer's Markets. Bring people to the farm.
- ▶ Cost saving opportunities with **new technology** (e.g. greenhouse monitoring systems, new and more efficient vehicles and systems for spreading manure and fertilizer).
- ▶ SECT a great place to do business. UCONN School of Agriculture is an asset.

Tourism



Ed Dombroskas and Rita Rivera of the Eastern Regional Tourism District/Mystic Country facilitated the discussion. There were 19 passionate attendees representing many subsets of the tourism industry. Senator Paul Formica was also in attendance.

Major Themes: Challenges

- ▶ **Lack of technology** to effectively market the assets/attractions in the region – especially the smaller attractions/businesses.
- ▶ Need real **leadership for tourism** (not DECD) with meaningful budget.
- ▶ Lacking necessary **data (stats) on the impact or contribution of tourism on (to) the economy.**
- ▶ Lack of **transportation**/shuttles to get groups who come for business out into the region to explore. I-95 and transportation woes in general.
- ▶ We are in **“Brand Limbo”** – have lost our sense of place.
- ▶ Hotel taxes not used for tourism promotion. **Tax money hijacked by Hartford.**
- ▶ “CT is 300 years of uninterrupted non-progress.” **Distrust in the State. Shrinking budgets.**

Major Themes - Opportunities

- ▶ Create a centralized APP – **utilize technology to market sites**. Grow the number of visitors
- ▶ **Regional branding effort** to tie all the assets together – one regional – consistent- message applicable to diverse audiences – stay on the message. Create a strong sense of place – one that is distinctive.
- ▶ Market to the millennials – the next market. **Shift the marketing model** toward “Authentic Branding” model. Also need to market to local residents so that they may share knowledge with family and friends who visit.
- ▶ **Create an ongoing forum** – or opportunities for people in tourism industry to meet and discuss issues. “Urban Workshop.”
- ▶ Opportunities for many diverse types of attractions – **not always good to paint an area with one brush**. SECT is many things.
- ▶ Change the way we do business – **fund tourism locally** (by region) – not through centralized office of tourism.
- ▶ Hospitality **training to increase skilled workforce**.
- ▶ Increase public safety – real or perceived.
- ▶ Casinos attract many to the region which has a potential advantage for all other attractions. Again – need to market the region as a whole.
- ▶ Re-open State operated visitor centers. People do stop and look for information about area attractions.

Utilities

Six people attended the discussion on the utility infrastructure in the region with resilience and competitiveness in mind. Representatives from Groton Utilities, and other area utility companies were invited to participate but unable to attend the discussion. They were invited to provide comments to supplement the input gathered at this focus group.

PARTICIPANTS	Major Themes – Strengths
Director, Strategic Planning and Technical Services, CT Municipal Electric Energy Cooperative	▶ Unique to have an area so rural yet so connected with so much infrastructure. Several local utility companies advantageous.
Regional Manager, Frontier Communications	▶ Strong utility infrastructure and sensitivity to evolving customer needs. Great collaborative efforts between local utilities and strong investments being made in SECT.
Vice President and General Manager CT Region, Atlantic Broadband	▶ Disaster preparedness is exemplary in CT vs other states. Past storms and trend toward more extreme weather has prompted resiliency and disaster preparedness work across all utilities.
Assistant General Manager, Norwich Public Utilities	▶ Resiliency programs resulted in reduction in number and duration of outages. Ongoing monitoring and systems upgrades.
Community Relations, Eversource	
Account Executive Registered Commercial Gas Consultant, Eversource	

Broadband – Fiber Networks

Strengths/Opportunities:

- ▶ **SECT competitive** with respect to BB capacity in the State (Several companies operating within the SECT Region), CT is one of the top states in US with respect to fiber network/capacity. Good competition for service in SECT. Can have multiple carriers for **redundancy** purposes.
- ▶ Consider ways to increase wireless capability – such as micro-cell development. Install **“wireless cells”** on streetlamps.

Weaknesses/Threats:

- ▶ Need more flexibility at the town level to utilize less expensive means of installing infrastructure (e.g. **“micro-trenching”**) to increase the number of feet installed per day and to facilitate faster expansion of service to rural areas.

Water

Strengths/Opportunities:

- ▶ Several examples of coordinated connected water systems throughout the region (e.g. Groton and Ledyard, Waterford, New London and East Lyme)
- ▶ Possibilities to increase the water supply to Windham and preston.
- ▶ Excellent water volume and quality in SECT.

Weaknesses/Threats:

- ▶ Extreme weather and drought both big concerns.
- ▶ Old infrastructure in the ground with only a “repair plan” and no “replacement plan” in place.
- ▶ New state requirements (relating to taxes) making costly upgrades necessary.
- ▶ Utilities pay high legal and lobbying fees to protect companies from increased legislation. CT a highly regulated state.
- ▶ Water supply system easily accessible increasing vulnerability to terrorism.

Electric - Gas

Strengths/Opportunities:

- ▶ Unique to have an area so rural yet so connected with so much infrastructure.
- ▶ Gas line expansion has greatly increased supply (E-lateral line)
- ▶ Regional Planning Study underway identifying the need for upgrades

Weaknesses/Threats:

- ▶ Long cycle for transmission upgrades.
- ▶ Wholesale energy cost is much higher in SECT. Cost and reliability are important factors for customers. Demand for fast, cheap and reliable service NOW.
- ▶ The cost of construction (infrastructure) is high – not the cost of the utilities themselves. State does not help with the cost
- ▶ No flexibility and not enough lead-time for projects (to comply with State initiatives, or budget for upgrade).
- ▶ Disconnect between state and local plans

General Comments:

- ▶ Big disconnect between State and Local plans which affects project timeframe for completion, cost, etc. The bigger issue here is that the permitting/installation/inspection process can be done faster in other states – making CT less desirable in this respect. Local knowledge needs to influence state plans with respect to underlying logic and timeframes.
- ▶ State has their own rules – they are not accountable to a timeframe; processes are inflexible and lengthy. Interest rates, construction costs and the overall market conditions could actually change during the permitting process!
- ▶ State regulations with respect to Utilities often have a high cost associated with them which is passed on to the customer.
- ▶ SECT not marketing ourselves well. There is lots to do here – a lot of good energy!
- ▶ State regulatory process a barrier to new, and expansion of existing businesses.
- ▶ Gridlock on I-95 a huge deterrent to Economic Development in the area.