

CHAPTER 14: UTILITIES



Provide for adequate utility infrastructure to meet Ridgefield's present and future needs

OVERVIEW

Infrastructure should support the desired land use patterns in a community. Utility infrastructure includes:

- piped utilities (public water, public sewer, natural gas),
- wired utilities (electric, telephone, and cable television), and
- other utilities (cellular communications).

PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY

A number of water companies provide public water service in Ridgefield (according to the CT Department of Public Health):

- Aquarion Water Company (8,100 customers in Ridgefield)
- Rural Water Company (1,450 customers)
- Topstone Hydraulic Company (970 customers)
- Brookview Water Company (50 customers)

Water service areas are shown on the Water and Sewer Plan. Areas not served by these water companies use private wells.

The State's Water Utility Coordinating Committee granted Aquarion the rights to provide water in areas in Ridgefield not currently served, should there be a need or desire to expand to new areas of town. As a result, it is not anticipated that Rural Water Company, Topstone Hydraulic Company nor Brookview Water Company will expand their service areas. They may, however, have plans to interconnect their systems.

Aquarion's main service area and five wellfields in Ridgefield interconnect to its main system. Aquarion has two small satellite systems in northern Ridgefield that are interconnected with the Danbury system, but not the Ridgefield system. Since the 1999 Plan, water mains have been extended from Wilton to Branchville and Ridgefield Center.

Aquarion provided demand projections for the main Ridgefield system. Data indicates a continued increase in demand through 2050.

**Water Use and Projections,
Aquarian System in Ridgefield**

Actual	Average Day Demand (mgd)	% Increase
2005	0.842	--
Projected		
2010	1.016	21%
2020	1.269	25%
2050	1.445	14%

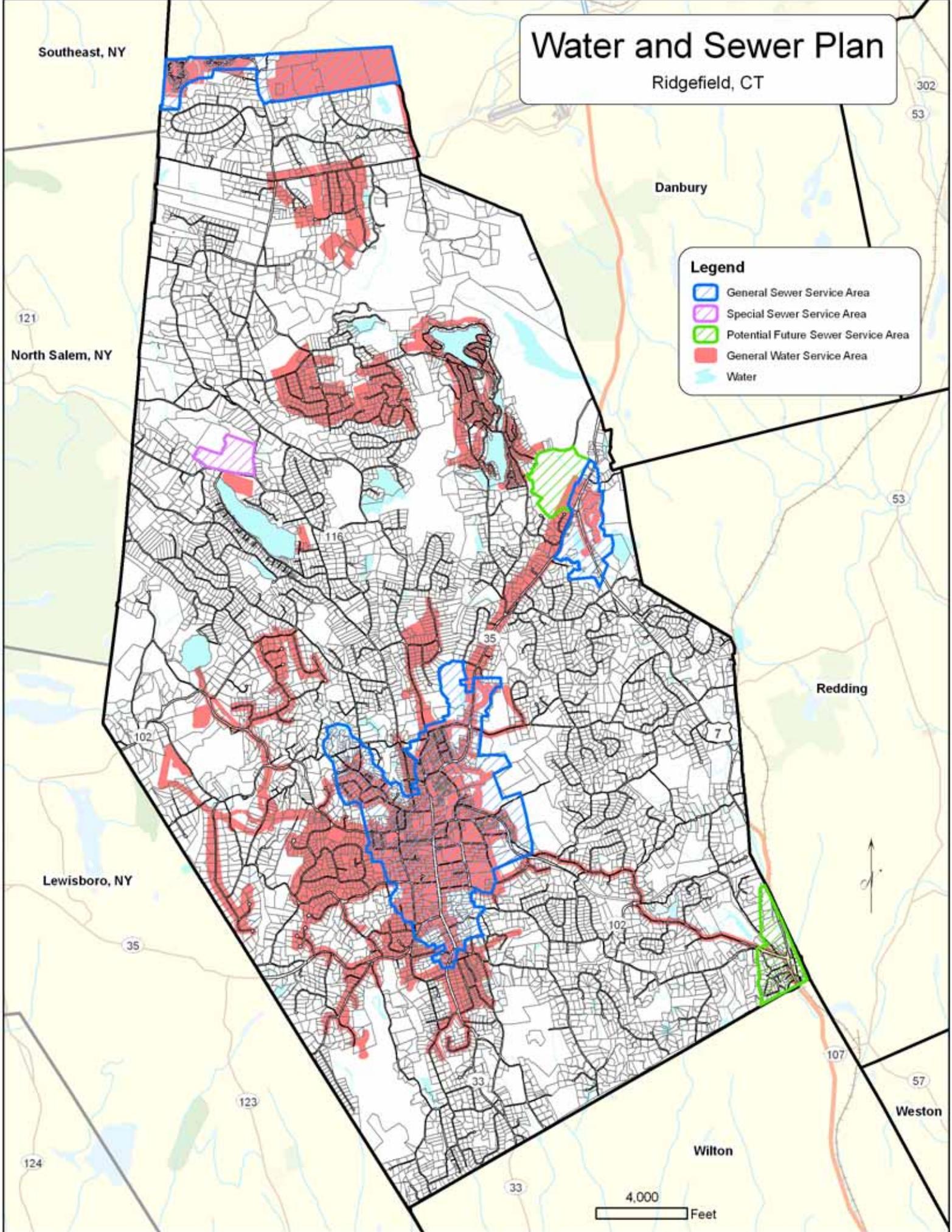
Additional data (not provided here due to confidentiality restrictions) indicate that by 2050, demand could slightly exceed the margin of safety (80% of available water).

Water demand should be carefully monitored to determine if these projections are accurate. If they are, options to address the issue of safe yield might include reducing demand (through conservation), providing a storage facility, or tapping into additional water supplies.

Strategies to protect water resources, including aquifers, were outlined in Chapter 6. These strategies help to protect public and private drinking water supplies and are important since the drinking water for a significant number of residents comes from ground water.

Water and Sewer Plan

Ridgefield, CT



PUBLIC SEWER SERVICE

Infrastructure, particularly public sewers, should not dictate development intensity or patterns. Rather, infrastructure should support the development patterns and intensities desired by the community. Extending sewers can address public health issues and enhance economic development and overall development goals. However, extending sewers could lead to increased densities in areas where such density is not desired. Thus, coordinating sewer extensions with land use goals is critical.

Ultimately, the Water Pollution Control Authority determines possible sewer extensions and the State requires that sewer expansions are consistent with the State's *Plan of Conservation and Development*. The State generally will not fund the expansion of sewers into conservation or preservation areas, as identified in the State Plan. This policy gives added importance to local sewer service planning – communities must delineate sewer service areas and areas where sewers are not to be provided.

The Water Pollution Control Authority identified a number of projects to undertake as funding is available. These include:

- Rehabilitating the existing system
- Continuing to investigate infiltration / inflow problems
- Rehabilitating and upgrading pump stations
- Updating the facilities plan for the South Street and the Route 7 wastewater treatment facilities

Current sewer service areas are shown on the Water and Sewer Plan on p. 14-3 (based generally upon the location of existing sewer lines). The facilities plans would likely delineate sewer service areas. Coordination between the WPCA and the PZC should help to ensure that the designated sewer service areas are consistent with this Plan and the State Plan. See Chapter 9, regarding potential future sewer service in Branchville.

Due to the limited flow of the Norwalk River, the sewer system at Routes 7/35 generally should be reserved for addressing public health concerns in existing residential areas. However, there may be circumstances where the Town considers allowing businesses to connect to the sewer. Connections should occur in limited situations where well-defined economic development goals will be advanced.

For the remainder of Ridgefield, the Town should continue to rely upon on-site septic systems to maintain the Town's character and deter more dense development.

STORMWATER DRAINAGE

The Town maintains drainage pipes and more than 5,000 catch basins. Switching from sand to salt has reduced clogged catch basins. All roads are swept annually, with roads in Ridgefield Center being swept more frequently.

While some drainage issues have been addressed, the Town still experiences challenges especially as development occurs in areas with steeper slopes. Conducting a town-wide drainage study, as discussed in the 1999 Plan, is still a relevant recommendation.

Two additional strategies can help to reduce drainage problems. Chapter 6 includes strategies for minimizing the amount of runoff from parcels. The Town has kept its Stormwater Management Plan up-to-date and should continue to implement recommendations in the plan.

ELECTRICAL SERVICE

Connecticut Light and Power (CL&P) is the electrical provider in Ridgefield. According to CL&P, the existing substation and distribution circuits supplying electricity to Ridgefield should be adequate beyond 2020. Within the next few years, CL&P will be improving reliability along Danbury Road.

As service upgrades and renovations take place, power lines should be placed underground to enhance community character, especially on Main Street.

The Town should continue to seek alternative (renewable) sources to meet the electrical needs for its facilities, as discussed earlier. In addition, the Town should encourage residents and businesses to conserve electricity and use alternative sources, as appropriate.

NATURAL GAS

Yankee Gas provides natural gas to residences and businesses in Ridgefield. Their service area is generally along Main Street south to Catoonah Street and north to the Copps Hill area. The company also provides service along Route 7 from the Danbury line to just south of the Route 35 intersection.

Yankee Gas expects to have adequate supplies to meet future demands in Ridgefield. New service connections can be accommodated for those in close proximity to the existing service area (the property owner generally pays for the extension). They do not expect to expand service to areas that are not in proximity to the current service area.

COMMUNICATIONS

Issues related to land line telephone service and cable television have not been identified. Residents and town officials did express concerns, however, about two communications-related issues: gaps in wireless coverage and the perceived lack of a fiber-optic network.

In terms of the wireless gap, the Town should continue to work with providers to fill gaps in ways that have minimal impact on character (e.g., placing antenna on existing tall structures, careful placement to minimize impacts, etc).

A fiber-optic network provides faster data transmission and greater capacity. Where available, the Town and businesses can connect to the network to establish fiber optic connections. Progress has been made in the installation of infrastructure but more work is needed, according to providers. As with many utilities, installing lines and equipment is challenging because it may require digging up and reinstalling pavement, acquiring easements, and addressing aesthetic and other concerns.

The Town should continue to work with providers to find solutions to balance residents' concerns and having a modern communications network.

INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES

Plan for Future Water Supply Needs

1. Work with water companies in their efforts to augment and protect water supply sources, expand and improve service in Ridgefield, and address long-term local and regional water supply needs.

Improve Public Sewer Service

2. Undertake rehabilitation and upgrades of the existing system as funding is available.

Ensure that Sewer Extensions Reflect Land Use Goals

3. Work with the WPCA as it updates its facilities plans to ensure that any capacity increases and service area expansions are consistent with land use goals.
4. Reserve the sewer system at Routes 7 / 35 primarily for public health concerns in existing residential areas, with consideration given to limited service to businesses that meet a well-defined economic development need.
5. Determine if sewers should be extended to Branchville from neighboring communities to achieve land use goals for the area.

Evaluate and Address Stormwater Drainage

6. Conduct a Town-wide drainage study to provide a comprehensive evaluation of drainage needs and issues in Ridgefield.

Improve Telecommunications

7. Work with telecommunications providers to address wireless gaps in ways that have minimal impact on character.
8. Work with communication providers to find suitable options for installing fiber optic / high speed and capacity communications infrastructure.

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