

These zoning requirements are not just found in Winsted. In fact, in much of the United States it is now against zoning law to build tightly knit communities — places like Beacon Hill, Great Barrington, Essex, downtown Torrington or Winsted.

Most large, national superstores have similar characteristics. They are very big, ranging in size from 50,000 to 200,000 square feet. They do not generally locate downtown, even when space is available. They prefer to locate on land near the exits of highways. They use the same store design, a windowless box, regardless of its incompatibility with the surroundings. They usually insist on a single floor layout, so the store spreads out over several acres.

Not designed or located so people can walk, or ride a bike or bus to them, they require vast expanses of parking. Sprawl has already devastated many communities, as empty downtown buildings and degraded countryside demonstrate.

Citizens are concerned about sprawl but when they speak out against it they are told that it is inevitable or that opposition will prevent new jobs and tax revenue for the community. Sprawl, however, is not synonymous with growth and development.

Not all development produces a net increase in jobs or tax revenue. New development that is appropriately sized for the community, that makes good use of existing buildings and infrastructures, that minimize harm to the natural environment and fits in with its neighbors makes economic sense.

Development which exceeds a community's capacity to absorb it helps neither the local economy nor the local tax base in the long run. Large commercial developments that are out of scale with a community's existing stores disrupt the local econ-