

To the Honorable Chairs and Members of the ~~Committee~~ on Planning and Development

Testimony in support of proposed Bill 39 (LCO # 547)
Given by Melissa Spear, Connecticut State Director, The Trust for Public Land
On behalf of The Trust for Public Land
February 21, 2008

“An Act Concerning Responsible Growth”

I am here today to express support for Bill 39, which defines responsible growth principles, and establishes a Responsible Growth Cabinet. While I am testifying on behalf of the Trust for Public Land, a conservation organization whose mission is “Land for People”, I want to point out that my organization is also one of a broad coalition of groups supporting the Face of Connecticut campaign, an initiative to increase Connecticut’s investment in preservation of our “distinctive landscapes, historic structures, landmarks and villages” in order to, as is so eloquently stated in this bill, “revitalize our cities, preserve the unique charm of our state, and build livable, economically strong communities while protecting our natural resources for the enjoyment of future generations”.

Like the Face of Connecticut, Bill 39 clearly embraces preservation of our critical natural, agricultural and historic resources as an important facet of making responsible growth a reality in our state. However, no specific investment in these resources is called for. Without a strong commitment to an increased level of investment in the key natural and cultural resources of our state, we will continue to see these resources threatened by inappropriate development. Therefore, TPL strongly recommends that, as called for by the Face of Connecticut, the strong support for preservation offered by Bill 39 be sustained by an increase in the funds available to conserve our key assets in accord with Responsible Growth Principles.

In addition, similar to Bill 39, The Face of Connecticut has called for the creation of a “Steering Committee” to help guide state investment in key resources. The “Responsible Growth Cabinet” proposed under Bill 39 is composed of Agency and Authority heads who will advise the Governor and work to ensure new state investments in are in alignment with the adopted Responsible Growth Principles. TPL endorses the idea of establishing a Responsible Growth Cabinet but recommends that the “Cabinet” be expanded to include members appointed to represent open space, farmland and historic preservation constituencies, as well as groups working on community revitalization within the state.

In summary, Responsible Growth is an important concept that we must embrace to protect and enhance the long-term quality of life of future generations of Connecticut Residents. Investing in our key natural, agricultural and historic resources is a critical component of this overall concept that must be actively pursued if we are to successfully realize the overarching goals of Responsible Growth: ensuring that Connecticut remains a place where our children and grandchildren, and many generations to come will want to stay and lead productive lives.