



Litchfield Land Trust

Conserving and Protecting Land. Forever.

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- **December 7, 1871:** It was a bitterly cold but bright blue-sky day and the final spoke was driven about 11 o'clock that morning. After an impromptu celebration, an engine and box car filled with dignitaries started toward Litchfield. With whistle screeching and bell clanging, the entourage rolled into Litchfield Depot about 1 p.m. that afternoon and the Shepaug Railroad was established. The Shepaug Railroad was the brainchild of Edwin McNeill who envisioned an industrial corridor that would catalyze development and provide direct access to the county's products.
- **January 2, 1872 – June 24, 1948:** Ice, milk, farm feed, fuel, thousands of passengers and tons of freight traveled to and from the Litchfield Depot - bringing the world to NW CT and carrying important provisions south to New York and all points in between.
- **June 25, 1948:** The final run was made, delivering to Litchfield a load of poles for a local utility company. Small groups of faithful gathered to wave a final farewell as the Shepaug Railroad literally passed into history. (Credit: Fletcher Cooper)

And then the journey to January 2022: The train depot building, located at 28 Russell Street, which lived on to serve as an auto parts store, the Scalehouse Restaurant, Rockland Lobster seafood market, Bantam Fuel company field office, Flowers of Distinction florist shop and Litchfield's borough office, is gifted, along with the surrounding property, to the Litchfield Land Trust through the generosity of owners Peter & Susan Aziz.

With this extraordinary opportunity, the Litchfield Land Trust, which has been stewards of Land for 56 years, has now committed to be stewards of this historic structure and property and we have established a permanent home office for the first time in our organization's history. As many of you know, we executed a restoration and renovation project that replicates the façade of the historic train station based on archival documents and photos we gathered. With these in hand, the talents, energy and commitment of many individuals helped to make the restoration a reality. This included over 4500 hours of hands on volunteer work and professional guidance.

It is important to note that no funds from the Land Trust's operating budget have been diverted to this effort – keeping our mission to conserve and protect land forever, uncompromised. The charitable generosity of the Seherr-Thoss Foundation, Union Savings Bank Foundation, Northwest Community Bank Foundation, NW CT Community Foundation and private donations made it possible for us to raise \$500,000.00 to date.

This truly is a community driven project.

The building is now fully occupied with the Litchfield Land Trust in the north unit, Litchfield Hills Audubon Society in the middle unit and the Friends of the Litchfield Community Greenway, Litchfield Housing Trust and CT Rivers Alliance in the south unit. With energy and purpose, comparable to the power of a train's engine, this hub of non-profit organizations is fulfilling their missions to preserve, protect and honor our land, waterways, wildlife while meeting the needs of our fellow residents with amazing integrity and purposeful intentions, each and every day.

With our proximity to the center of town and natural resources, we will achieve our goal of also becoming a "Gateway to Leisure & Recreation". This will happen as vast improvements continue to be made to the parking lots and landscaping, as well as providing a link to the Greenway's northern terminus, White Memorial trails and access to local businesses and town amenities.

I am grateful for the genuine interest of the Litchfield Garden Club to support this project and joining in the intention to enhance the property border with the removal of invasives and create a landscape of native plantings.

Renewing a commitment that was made in 1914 to help keep this space aesthetically pleasing and welcoming to our local townspeople, as well as visitors to our wonderful community, is so very much appreciated. As importantly, you will help us create a pollinator pathway for birds, bees, butterflies and green space for wildlife.

Together we will keep this property blooming and the amazing non-profit activity in the building buzzing!