

# UPDATE TO TOWN PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT



December 2003

STRATFORD PLANNING COMMISSION



TOWN OF STRATFORD  
CONNECTICUT

Letter from Planning Commission Chairman

PLANNING COMMISSION  
2725 Main Street  
Stratford, CT 06615  
(203) 385-4017

December 10, 2003

Dear Interested Citizen:

I am very pleased to present to you the enclosed Update to the Town Plan of Conservation and Development. The Planning Commission took on a genuine challenge in developing this Plan Update, but the final result was well worth the effort. I can say, with some degree of confidence, that the Plan presented here represents the best thinking of Stratford's leadership, blended with a heavy dose of public input and a major level of guidance from our consulting firm, Buckhurst Fish and Jacquemart, Inc. The Commission takes pride in this Plan because it provides a clear vision for Stratford and a series of realistic action plans to move us towards that vision. The Plan was truly borne out of a consensus-shaping process that involved many well-attended workshops (with emphasis on the verb "work"), joint meetings, and an extensive community attitude survey. Moreover, we are pleased that the Plan represents a reasonable balance between the importance of conservation and the need to promote an economically sound Stratford.

The timing for this Plan is especially significant in providing guidance during a transition period as the Town changes from a Town Manager-Town Council form of government to a Mayor-Town Council form of government over the next two years.

We invite you to not only read the enclosed Plan, but also to absorb it and to help the rest of us as we seek to implement its recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald A. Kikta".

Donald Kikta,  
Chairman  
PLANNING COMMISSION



"COUNCIL-MANAGER GOVERNMENT SINCE 1921"

## Report Abstract

**TITLE:** Update to Town Plan of Conservation and Development

**AUTHOR:** Stratford Planning Commission

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**SYNOPSIS:** Stratford's last (long-range) Plan of Development was adopted in 1993. While the time had come to update that plan, a number of statutory revisions in 2001 made this Update all the more necessary. Amongst these revisions were requirements that the Plan assess the most appropriate steps towards conservation of the community as well as its development, consideration of the community's economic development, and the requirement that the Town's legislative body (Town Council) be involved in the Plan's adoption.

This report provides an action plan for the Town to address the community's needs for at least the next ten years. The Plan Update includes recommendations in the general areas of the town's waterfront, economic revitalization, affordable housing, open space, and community character/historic preservation.

Primary recommendations include:

- Increased public access to the waterfront and the creation of a bikeway/walkway along the shore
- Protection of natural resources and open space
- Development of waterfront commercial uses (restaurants, shops, services, marinas) at specific locations
- Revitalization of existing commercial areas in Stratford and an emphasis on high tech/office-research and related service uses vs. manufacturing uses.
- Redevelopment of "brownfield" (contaminated) properties through a model developed for Stratford in 2003 in the SRI Pilot Project (Ferry Boulevard area).
- Creation of affordable housing in small-scale developments and/or conversions of existing housing, utilizing non-profit development techniques to the extent feasible.
- Preservation of Stratford's historic resources and rich heritage.

Implementation of this plan will enable Stratford to become a better place to live, work and visit and to assist the Town in achieving its stated vision.

## **Credits, Acknowledgments**

### **PLANNING COMMISSION**

Donald D. Kikta, Chairman; Commissioner 5<sup>th</sup> District  
Linnea Scheck, Secretary; Commissioner 2<sup>nd</sup> District  
Lloyd Johnson, Commissioner 1<sup>st</sup> District  
Edward G. Matosian, Commissioner 3<sup>rd</sup> District  
Alex Kozak, Commissioner 4<sup>th</sup> District  
Jack Caldwell, Alternate  
Robert Connolly, Alternate  
Paul Simons, Alternate

### **CONTRIBUTING TOWN STAFF**

Michael Feeney, Town Manager  
Bruce Alessie, Special Projects Assistant  
Benjamin Branyan, Assistant Town Manager  
Eva (Tiny) Jowers, Zoning Assistant  
David Killeen, Town Planner (principal Plan Update administrator)  
Gary Lorentson, Planning and Zoning Administrator  
William McCann, Conservation Administrator  
Elaine O'Keefe, Director of Health  
Diane Toolan, Director of Community and Economic Development  
Tammy Trojanowski, Community Services Department  
Duncan Yetman, Grants Coordinator

### **CONSULTANTS**

The Planning Commission received professional assistance in the development of this plan update from the consulting firm of Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc. Key contributing members of that firm were Frank Fish, Paul Buckhurst, principals, and Kyle F. McGraw, Senior Planner.

The Maguire Group assisted the Town in the development of redevelopment strategies for the SRI/EPA initiative in the vicinity of Ferry Boulevard

### **FUNDING**

Funding was provided by a grant through the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Long Island Sound Programs, made available by the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, administered by the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. (*The primary use of these funds was the development of Chapter V, Waterfront Plan*)

### **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Margaret Welch, Senior Planner for the CT Department of Environmental Protection Office of Long Sound Programs provided assistance in the development of the Waterfront Plan

**TOWN COUNCIL**

Robert M. Calzone, Councilman-at-Large

Jennifer M. F. Hillgen, First District  
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Raymond S. Voccola, Fifth District  
Louis A. DeCilio, Sixth District  
Philip J. Pepin, Seventh District  
Robert Blake, Eighth District  
James Feehan, Ninth District  
Michael Henrick, Tenth District

**STUDENT INTERNS/ VOLUNTEERS**

Behzod Abdurimov, Community Profile, Student Intern  
Timothy Bishop, Stratford Chamber of Commerce, Waterfront Plan  
Christine Crowley, Community Profile, Student Intern  
Abdulaziz Dadahanov, Community Profile, Student Intern  
Christina Dina, South End Community Center, Community Attitude Survey  
Laura Hoydick, Stratford Chamber of Commerce, Waterfront Plan  
Theresa Kliscewski, Waterfront and Open Space Plans, Natural Resource Intern  
Edward Matosian, Community Attitude Survey, Analysis of Comments  
Jim Mihaley, Overall plan structure and process  
Roger Salls, Stratford Chamber of Commerce, Waterfront Plan  
Rui Shu, Community Attitude Survey, Student Intern  
Deirdre Slater, Community Profile, Student Intern  
Mary Ann Vlahac, Community Attitude Survey, Market Research Professional

**GRAPHIC CREDITS**

Graphic coordination, sketches, site plans, and perspectives by Buckhurst, Fish and Jacquemart, Inc.  
Aerial and waterfront photographs by Geoffrey Steadman, Consultant, of Westport, CT, (courtesy of Stratford Waterfront and Harbor Management Commission)  
SRI Pilot Project Map – The Maguire Group  
Strategic Plan map/ digital photographs: Ronald O' Malley, Town Engineering Department, and Dave Killeen, Town Planner. Waterfront photos: Commissioner Alex Kozak.

**NOTE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

The Planning Commission wishes to thank the many Stratford residents and businesspeople that participated in the development of this Plan Update. There was an exceptional public commitment to the various phases of the planning process, through a public forum in June 2002, a series of six public workshops held in the Spring 2003, and an online Community Attitude Survey that was conducted from June to July 2003. Further details of this involvement are summarized in Chapter XI, Methodology/Process. The Commission was impressed with the thoughtful input provided throughout the Plan's development.

## **Participating Boards and Commissions**

The Planning Commission would also like to extend its gratitude for the dedicated assistance of a number of commissions, boards and agencies of the Town of Stratford. It was the active participation of Stratford's leadership that sets this Plan aside from many others – the reason why it is believed that this Plan will be seen more as **Stratford's** Plan than the **Planning Commission's** Plan. The Commission would especially like to acknowledge the boards and commissions who partnered with the Planning Commission by helping with consultant selection and served as co-sponsors of the workshop series conducted in this planning process:

### **CONSERVATION COMMISSION (Open Space Workshop)**

Roger Lawson  
Rosemary Harrison  
Gregg Dancho, Chairman  
Joseph Gresko  
Edward Monroe  
Joseph Dimenno  
Marcia Stewart  
Mary Northcott  
Michelle Frye  
Robert Frye  
William B. Hanson  
Karen Rodia

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (Economic Revitalization Workshop)**

Richard Brown, Chairman  
Jonathan Best  
David Kennedy  
Fred Hyatt  
Ed Cunniff  
Howard Johnson  
Steve Brown

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Sebastian Scala  
James Miron  
Robert Caldwell  
Paul Reslink, Chairman  
Lewis G. Knapp, Town Historian  
Brian LaVoie  
Richard Lyman

**STRATFORD HOUSING PARTNERSHIP (Affordable Housing Workshop)**

William Cabral, Chairman  
Kevin Nelson  
David Killeen  
Diane Toolan  
Alvin O'Neal  
Walter N. Harris  
Susan Youngquist  
Susan Becker  
Joseph R. Cavallo

**WATERFRONT AND HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION**  
**(Waterfront Workshops)**

Robert Kekacs  
Alan Minter  
Bill Rock  
John Flynn  
Robert Sammis  
Thomas J. Fahy, Chairman  
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Scott Corner  
Robert Gabris  
Ralph Jowers  
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## **Section I. Executive Summary**

Much has happened in Stratford since the last Town Plan was adopted in 1993. At that time, the clean-up of the Raymark property was looming as a backdrop to a sluggish economy. There were many vacant storefronts in town, especially along Barnum Avenue. And, one of the issues Stratford faced was the need for beautification of the town, particularly within its most visible "gateway" corridors.

Today, the remediation and redevelopment of the Raymark property has resulted in the construction of over 300,000 square feet of prime retail space and the attraction of a number of related service uses within the Barnum Avenue commercial corridor. The Town has embarked on a series of beautification efforts that have enhanced the town's image. There has been a reduction in employment levels, particularly for manufacturing employment, but Stratford's labor force has grown slightly in recent years. Population levels have remained level at around 50,000 and there has been a growth of over 400 new dwelling units in town.

So what is the long-range vision for Stratford and what happens next? This current Plan Update addressed that question directly. The following are summaries of the recommendations contained in this Plan. Figure 1, page 3, illustrates the various components of this (Strategic) Plan Update.

**WATERFRONT.** Stratford strives to enhance its waterfront, considered to be its most valuable asset. To do this, the Town plans the implementation of a series of manageable action steps that will bring people to the shore, enhance the Town's waterfront image, and maximize the protection and use of its coastal resources:

1. Increase public access to the waterfront by constructing a new walkway/bikeway ('The Greenway'), connecting the area along Sniffens Lane to the Birdseye Launching Ramp, initially, with the potential for future extension to Stratford point and possibly along Long Island Sound.
2. Establish a more aggressive maintenance plan for Town waterfront property.
3. Continue and strengthen current practices to protect natural resources (e.g. beaches/dunes, bluffs and escarpments, and tidal wetlands).
4. Construct an extension of Beacon Point Road through the Town-owned Hunter Havens Property to Main Street to provide vehicular access and to connect waterfront development with the DeLuca Field facility.
5. Create amenities in proximity to the Greenway, such as picnic areas and parking to enhance its use.
6. Promote full redevelopment of the Army Engine Plant Property with an emphasis on its potential for waterfront commercial and service development (restaurants, shops, etc.) adjacent to the shore. Continue to seek conveyance of the shoreline area to the Town for creation of a waterfront park in which additional amenities could support use of the Greenway and attract visitors and residents to utilize and enjoy the waterfront.
7. Explore the feasibility of limited waterfront commercial development of the Hunter Havens property (e.g. restaurant or shops), possibly through a land lease or some similar vehicle in which the Town would retain property ownership/control but grant specified development rights to a private developer to generate revenues for the Town and expand on the waterfront's attractions.

**ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION.** Stratford should focus on economic revitalization, through a series of actions:

1. Attract new technology companies such as high-technology and bio-technology firms (through creation of new Office/Research zones for example)
2. Encourage tourism development (cultural opportunities such as American Festival Theater as well as unique natural resources such as Great Meadows and Roosevelt Forest)
3. Revitalize specific business areas:
  - a. Stratford Center
  - b. Commercial Corridors (e.g. Barnum Avenue and Stratford Avenue)
  - c. "Brownfield" areas/contaminated properties (e.g. Ferry Boulevard)
4. Support redevelopment of Stratford Army Engine Plant and waterfront development.

**OPEN SPACE.** Increase open space in Stratford, using creative techniques to the extent possible. Actions identified:

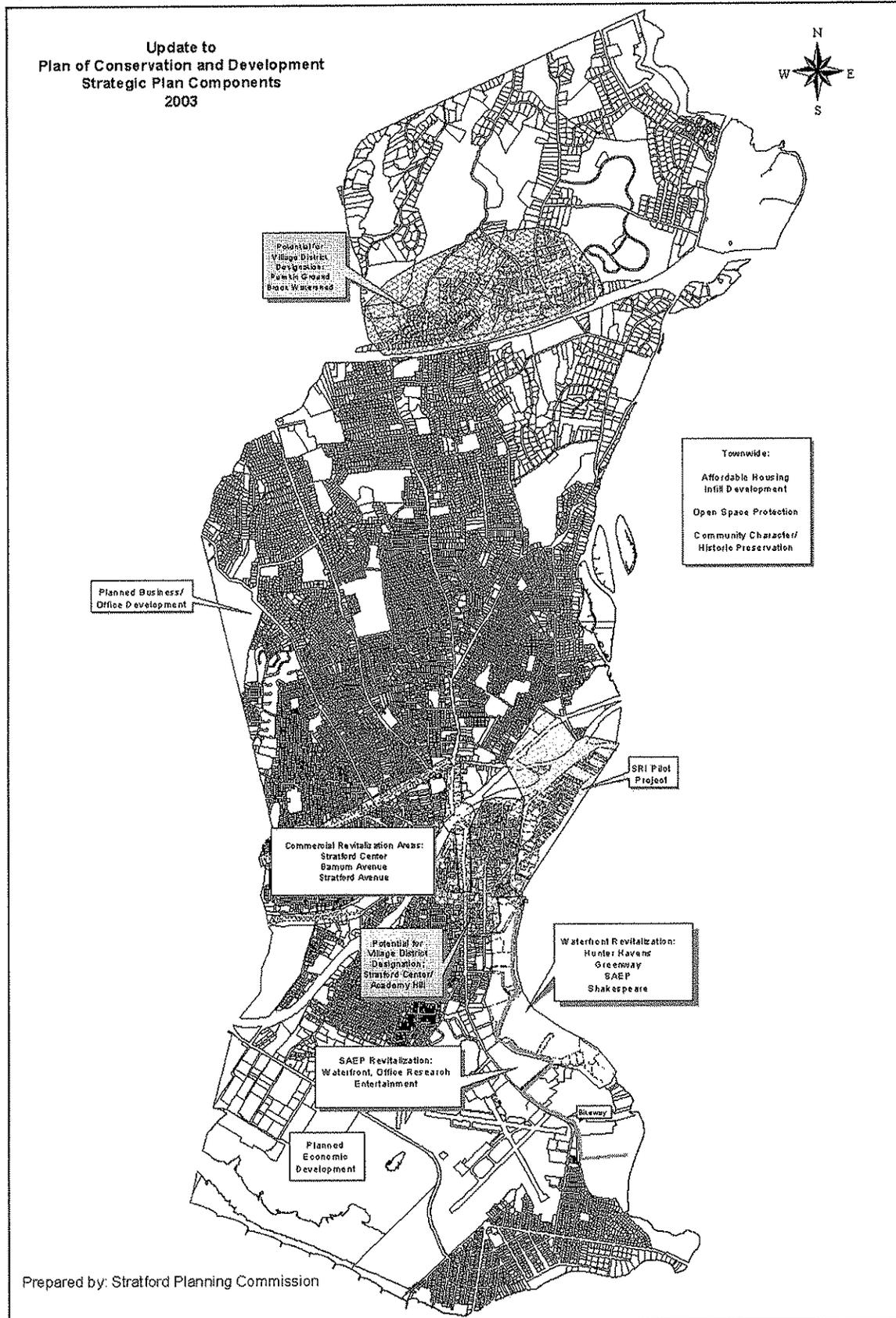
1. Make conservation and waterfront lands a high priority for new acquisitions.
2. Increase Town's open space goal from 10% to 15% (approx. 500 additional acres).
3. Continue to require a 10% open space set aside in new subdivisions and require homeowners associations to maintain this land.
4. Consider the use of cluster development regulations to preserve more open space.
5. Develop an assessment of existing open space by function (passive/active) and utilize this assessment and plan guidelines for new acquisitions.
6. Utilize State grants, local funds, and conservation easements to protect open space.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING.** The Town is currently subject to the State Legislative Appeals Procedure and is unlikely to be exempt within this planning period. Suggested actions:

1. Support creation of affordable units for the elderly.
2. Modify Section 5.4 of the Zoning Regulations to increase its use and value.
3. Create mixed use zones where appropriate.
4. Support efforts of non-profit groups and the Stratford Housing Authority to create affordable units, particularly for small infill developments and renovation/ conversion of existing units.
5. Work with legislators to amend and improve the State law.

**COMMUNITY CHARACTER/ HISTORIC PRESERVATION.** The Town has a rich heritage, symbolized by its plentiful supply of historic architecture and unique community character. The following actions are recommended in this Plan Update:

1. Create Village Districts to recognize and protect qualities of architectural and environmental character (e.g. Stratford Center/Academy Hill, Pumpkin Ground Brook Watershed).
2. Encourage private owners to recognize and maintain historic character.
3. Consider use of design districts to strengthen overall architectural quality in town.
4. Establish guidelines for landscaping, signage, and streetscapes (e.g. paving, street furniture.)



## **Section II. Introduction / Continued applicability of 1993 Plan of (Conservation and) Development**

Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes outlines the requirements for developing the plan of conservation and development (POCD) and updates to it. The statute requires the Planning Commission to review the Town Plan of Conservation and Development at least once every ten years and to update the plan as appropriate. The statute also outlines the requirements for a plan of conservation and development. A copy of the statutes is attached as Appendix A.

The Town's last major planning initiative was completed in December 1993 with the adoption of "Stratford Visions: 2001", the Town's Plan of Development. That plan focused on broader town wide land use issues, and it included a land use plan, natural resource mapping, and a community facilities plan. During the public input to the current planning process, the Planning Commission determined that this planning initiative did not need to replace the 1993 Plan. Instead, it was decided that this current plan update would provide more of an overall vision for the town and establish a series of action steps that would help to achieve that vision.

One of the key requirements for today's planning efforts is that the Town considers and balances those areas and resources most appropriate for "conservation" with those needs for "development" of the community. For this current Plan Update, individual Plans were developed within each of five topic areas, and each of those plans is provided as an individual chapter of this Plan Update. Those chapters address the areas most appropriate for conservation (i.e. open space and preservation of community character) and ones that identify development needs (i.e. economic revitalization and affordable housing). The Waterfront Plan represents a blend of conservation and development approaches along the town's waterfront. These Plans, and another section that lists pertinent planning goals and policies, are carried in the front of this document for emphasis. Supporting documentation (community profile data, methodology, survey results, appendices etc.) is provided towards the end of this document for reading ease.

The 1993 Plan of Development will continue to be used by the Town, especially for addressing general town wide land use issues. The mapping of natural resources and the community facilities inventory, for example, continue to have applicability for the current Plan Update. Therefore, this Plan Update is considered as an amendment to the 1993 Plan. It will supersede the 1993 Plan with regard to the specific issues and areas that it addresses. The Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan 2000 will also remain in effect, since it addresses the management of specific ongoing natural hazards (flooding, hurricanes, etc.). Most elements of the Town's Coastal Plan (municipal coastal program), adopted in 1990, and the Open Space Plan of 1997 have been incorporated into the relevant chapters of this current Plan Update.

### **Section III. Statement of Town Vision**

*The following statement is provided as an overarching direction for the Town, towards which this Plan seeks to progress:*

Stratford is a desirable community in which to live, work, visit, and play. The town has a rich history, having been one of the first English settlements in Connecticut, and yet, it holds promise of a bright future as well.

Largely its waterfront assets define Stratford, ranging from beaches and dunes to pristine tidal marshes and ample land along the shore. Stratford's waterfront is a place where people can swim, boat, fish, and hike -- and a place where waterfront commercial businesses can thrive. Stratford's character and its future potential are significantly enhanced by its history and its quality architecture. Additional attributes include recreational opportunities, natural resources, and business climate. The Town has the ability to be a center for employment, tourism and cultural opportunities.

This Plan Update represents the Town's new vision for a stronger, more desirable town in years ahead. This Plan Update summarizes the values of the community, embodied in the following guiding principles:

1. Growth will be targeted towards achieving an active, productive, and attractive waterfront
2. Change will be harmonized to preserve Stratford's historic character and natural environment.
3. Economic vitality will be promoted to provide jobs, services, revenues, and related opportunities.
4. Stratford will be promoted as a recreational, business, entertainment, cultural, and educational center for the region.

## **Section IV. Goals, Objectives, Policies**

*(Reprinted from the Town Plan of Development, adopted 1993. Edits are clearly marked to indicate additions and deletions proposed by this Plan Update. Edit marks will be removed on adoption of the Plan Update.)*

### **IMPORTANCE**

Under Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes, the Plan of Conservation and Development is defined, first, as

*"... a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality"*

It is important to note here that policies, goals and standards are requirements of a plan of development. Historically, any court challenges to local land use regulations have been decided, in large part, by the degree to which municipal actions have followed the directions outlined in the plan of conservation and development.

While sometimes viewed as a general guideline, a set of well-formulated policies and goals can often provide very clear direction to the Commissions when land use decisions are being made.

For these reasons, it is important to recognize that future land use and municipal decisions should be made with a clear understanding of potential impacts of those decisions in relationship to the following policies and goals.

### **PLANNING POLICIES AND GENERAL OBJECTIVES**

These policies are a compilation of policies from previous Town Plans of Development tempered with new policy development to meet changing needs of the community:

#### **1. PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT**

1. Long-range planning is geared to anticipate the Town's needs for the next ten years, assuming no major changes in the economic, social or technological structure of the Town or the Region. These external forces, which are unpredictable both as to timing and extent, affect the continuing validity of the Plan. In light of this, it is more accurately within the province of the Plan to accommodate the Town's anticipated needs for the relatively foreseeable future (i.e., a period of five to ten years) after which the Plan's underlying premises will have to be re-evaluated to determine their continued validity for the future.
2. Since Stratford is part of a larger urban region, planning for its future must recognize the impact, beneficial and otherwise, of this inevitable relationship.

## 2. POPULATION PROJECTIONS

1. Current long-range planning and development should accept growth as inevitable but should anticipate a maximum ultimate population of 54,000 persons rather than the 1964 Plan projection of 67,000. The objective of the Plan is to further and guide, rather than arrest, future growth.

## 3. LAND USE

1. Residential neighborhoods should be protected from blighting causes, such as incompatible land uses.
2. While the provision should be made for employment in commerce, industry and the professions, these uses should not be permitted to infringe upon, or detract from, the character of residential areas.
3. Give careful consideration to the density and scale of proposed developments in determining its impact on surrounding areas.
4. Encourage land uses, which will be compatible with the scale and types of land uses pre-existing within a neighborhood. Conversely, discourage or limit proposed land uses, which are out of scale and character within a surrounding neighborhood.
5. Where it is feasible and appropriate, the Town should consider mixed-use developments (combinations of residential, commercial and/or office uses) as a good method for providing transition between existing commercial areas and surrounding residential areas.
6. Commercial uses should be developed at a level and type, which is compatible with the function they will serve. In other words, neighborhood commercial uses should be designed to provide convenience goods and services to its adjacent neighborhood; local and regional commercial uses should be encouraged along major transportation corridors with some form of separation from adjacent residential areas (buffering, mixed-uses, multifamily/transitional uses).
7. Due to the considerable amount of industrially zoned land available in Stratford, the Town should designate portions of those industrial areas in which service commercial uses might be encouraged.
8. The Town should discourage the approval of waivers of use in that they can seriously undermine the neighborhood quality within certain districts and may well set a precedent preventing adequate land use controls in the future.
9. Variances/waivers for coverage, setbacks, and lot area should be granted only in cases where no suitable alternative exists and where there would be undue hardship placed on the property owner.

10. Expansion of existing non-conforming uses should be strictly prohibited. Such non-conforming uses should be encouraged to relocate within appropriate districts of Stratford.
11. Encourage stronger site plans for nonresidential uses by limiting typical "strip commercial" development and promoting nonresidential uses, which possess adequate depth to incorporate good onsite circulation, parking, landscaping, and building placement.

#### 4. HOUSING/AFFORDABLE HOUSING

1. A variety of housing types (with respect to both lot size, price and homes versus apartments) should be available to reflect the needs and desires of all Stratford residents.
2. Encourage housing developments, which will relate to the character of existing neighborhoods into which they will be set. Full consideration should be given to pre-existing density, bulk, and height standards of the neighborhood.
3. Support housing developments, which give adequate recognition of the lifestyle needs of the intended occupants of such housing. Elderly housing, for example, should be preferably of low rise construction, with reasonably accessible commercial, medical and support services, and with adequate provisions for transportation, pedestrian circulation, and recreation. Family housing developments should recognize heightened needs for recreation, open space and parking demands. Housing for populations with special needs, such as lower income or handicapped persons should be designed giving full recognition to those special needs.
4. Encourage the formation of partnerships between the Town, non-profit groups and the Stratford Housing Authority for providing affordable housing that meets the needs of individuals within the community (local and regional).
5. Support efforts that promote the conversion of existing housing stock to affordable housing stock where appropriate
6. Promote affordable housing efforts that help to revitalize existing neighborhoods and to restore underutilized and vacant properties.

#### 5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION

1. Recognize the value of Stratford Center, Paradise Green, Shakespeare Theater, and Barnum Avenue (the Town's major commercial districts) from the viewpoint of shopping convenience, tax revenue, and employment.

2. Property owners and businessmen should be enabled to make a fair return on their investments.
3. New business and industry should be attracted to suitable locations in Town in order to expand the Town's tax base and employment opportunities. New industry and business which is attracted to Stratford should meet two criteria:  
(a) It should be labor intensive -- i.e. it should provide a high number of jobs on relatively small sites.
4. Stratford should encourage a diversity of employment opportunities in order to avoid, to the extent possible, the negative effects of cyclical regional or national economic trends.
5. The Town should take steps to retain existing businesses and foster a suitable environment in which they are enabled to maintain and expand their operations
6. Decrease future dependence on manufacturing employment opportunities
7. Encourage growth in office-research and other high-tech business or commercial uses.
8. Promote expeditious redevelopment of commercial and industrial properties that have been identified as polluted ("brownfield" redevelopment)
9. Market and encourage full (but appropriate) use of the community's primary development assets: its waterfront, its natural resources and its architectural heritage.

## 6. SHAKESPEARE THEATER

1. Encourage efforts aimed at preserving the Shakespeare Theater as an important cultural and architectural resource for the Town and for the region.
2. Promote uses in the vicinity of the Theater property which will provide functional support to and create an appropriate business environment for the economic viability of the Theater while also recognizing the unique residential and historic qualities of the adjacent neighborhood and the coastal setting in which it is located.

7. SIKORSKY MEMORIAL AIRPORT

1. Encourage land use management strategies, which recognize the airport as a legitimate use at its current location and size.
2. Discourage placement of structures and objects in the vicinity of the airport, which would create hazards to air traffic and/or create risks to property and life.
3. Manage land uses in proximity to the airport in such a way that noise levels of existing and future airport uses will be minimized on surrounding land uses. Simultaneously, guide new residential land uses away from high noise-impact areas of the airport.

8. TOWN FINANCES

1. There should be a stable, diversified tax base.
2. If growth is to be accepted and high standards of municipal services are to be provided for present and future residents, the Plan must give special consideration to the encouragement of industrial development services, insuring that Stratford will assume its position as an integral part of the Region's business (office-research, high tech, and service) core.
3. The Town's financial resources should be carefully considered in the planning for future improvements and services.
4. Make every effort to return to productive use and to the Town's tax rolls all unused and underutilized government-owned land other than that, such as public parks or open space preserves, which presently fulfills important public purposes.

9. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

**a) Goals:**

1. To provide the highest quality (and quantity) of public service to Stratford residents and businesses in the most cost efficient manner.
2. To limit the loss of life and property caused by fire, accidents, crimes, medical crises or other emergencies.

**b) Policies**

1. Consideration should be given, prior to the future development of an types of land uses, to their being served well, efficiently, and at reasonable cost by public facilities.

2. Consistent with the numbers to be served, the widest possible range of educational and recreational facilities should be provided, and located so as to be easily accessible to all residents of their service areas.
3. Schools, recreation facilities, and other public and social institutions essential to healthy, balanced, residential growth should be promoted at such a rate as will prevent overcrowding.
4. In some portions of the Town, spacious planning of public facilities should allow sufficient land for future development beyond the period for which we can plan now, so that there will be room for the next generation which may have entirely different requirements from our own.
5. The need of land for public use should be anticipated, and such land secured, well in advance of actual need.
6. Capital improvements should be programmed on the basis of a priority system carefully related to the needs of the Town, and should be fully integrated with the Plan, possibly, involving Planning and Zoning Commission participation.
7. Encourage land use patterns which will be suitably served by Town services and facilities, including public safety/emergency response (Police, Fire, EMS), public schools, park and recreation facilities and public utilities/infrastructure.
8. Discourage new land uses in locations which are not adequately served by Town services and facilities currently (public safety and schools, recreation and public utilities) and are unlikely to be served well in the near future without major public investment.
9. Utilize available public land and available space in public buildings in creative ways to meet the majority of public space demands in future years.
10. Consider acquisition of new land and construction of new buildings very carefully to prevent duplication of property ownership and to maximize cost effectiveness of future public investments.
11. Encourage aggressive maintenance of existing Town land, buildings and facilities to assure their long-term capability and to minimize future costs of replacement.
12. Monitor future public investments in acquisition, new construction/additions, and improvements in relation to the delivery of service to the maximum number of Stratford residents and businesses and for the highest priority public service needs.

13. Promote strong architectural and engineering design considerations in future new construction, additions, improvements and site development by the Town. In particular, the Town should be careful to provide for adequate traffic circulation and parking on site, incorporate flexibility in use of building space, and serve as an example to the community from an aesthetic standpoint.
14. Promote the preservation of older Town buildings by giving preference to projects, which adaptively reuse existing buildings in a sensitive way. Conversely, discourage the demolition of older Town buildings.
15. Identify and promote opportunities for shared use of public space by different Town departments to the extent feasible in order to make the most effective use of public resources.
16. The Town should discourage duplication of services and facilities
17. The Town should encourage facility improvements and capital improvements, which are based on priority needs of the community.
18. The Town's facilities should serve as an example to the remainder of the community with regard to site design, density, parking standards and appearance.

#### 10. GENERAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

1. Further the conservation of existing, and introduction of new Town amenities, whether social, economic, or cultural, that will provide an opportunity for Stratford's young people to continue living and working in Town after completion of formal education.

#### 11. OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

1. Land should be viewed as the most important and irreplaceable resource of the Town. Special attention must be paid to additional open space conservation and public land acquisition programs before it is too late.
2. Support open space preservation opportunities that minimize the outlay of Town general funds, relying on creative measures such as conservation easements, land trusts, homeowners associations, etc.
3. Maintain public open space as an asset of community pride.
4. Promote the acquisition of open space properties that meet unmet community needs.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

1. Watercourses and the atmosphere (land, wetlands, topography, etc.) should be kept clean in the future and pollution abated where it now exists.
2. Excessive noise, odors, etc. should be abated.
3. Evaluate the environmental impact of every development proposal of a scope sufficient to cause it to potentially affect appreciably the environmental quality of the Town in general or of its surroundings. Such evaluation should take into consideration, to the fullest extent, the public purposes, which each such development proposal is intended to serve and judiciously balance such considerations against its purely environmental aspects.
4. Minimize the impacts of development on environmentally sensitive areas by limiting the types of uses and densities of these uses allowed in proximity to environmentally sensitive areas, ensuring that these uses will not degrade the quality of such resources.
5. Continue the established practice of siting structures and activities a reasonable distance away from such sensitive areas to reduce intrusion on these resources which might compromise their long-term viability.
6. Manage development in areas that are characterized by steep slopes and other erosion-prone topographic conditions to minimize the risks of damage to structures, long-term deterioration of the landscape, and flooding of adjacent areas. Where feasible, the Town should favor site development plans, which direct construction activities away from slopes of 25% or greater. Site grading of slopes over 25% should be kept to a minimum. In areas where slopes are between 15% and 25%, the Town should reduce the density of development and establish strict standards for uses there.
7. The Town should examine flexible approaches to development, which must occur on sites possessing significant restrictions by virtue of the amount or arrangement of environmentally sensitive areas onsite.
8. The Town should foster efforts aimed at maintaining and upgrading the quality of environmentally sensitive areas.

13. HOUSATONIC RIVER AND THE WATERFRONT

1. Encouragement should be given to the development of suitable sections of land bordering the Housatonic River and Long Island Sound for public and private marinas, parks and beaches.
2. The Housatonic River should be recognized for its scenic and recreational value. The Town should promote efforts that will increase public access to the River's shores for recreational purposes.

3. Promote the preservation and improvement of the Housatonic River's environmental quality.
4. Manage the Town's waterfront as the community's most unique and valuable asset
5. Discourage the underutilization or misuse of waterfront property (i.e. promote highest and best use of the river).
6. Actively promote public access to, as well as use and enjoyment of, the Town's extensive waterfront opportunities
7. Maintain Town-owned waterfront property to a high standard.

#### 14 TRANSPORTATION

1. Since the automobile provides the principal means of transportation for the population of the Town, it is incumbent upon the Town and State to provide an improved street, highway and parking system.
2. Improve public transportation to minimize the dependence of the Town's labor force on the private automobile, thereby reducing the need for automobile usage and minimizing air pollution.
3. Strive for improvement of the quality of railroad stations and establishment of bus shelters at bus stops.
4. Provide adequate off-street parking facilities for commuters to encourage maximum use of rail facilities.

(Additional Transportation policies are contained in Appendix B, Goals and Policies of the Transportation Element, of the Town's 1993 Plan of Development, prepared by Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency)

#### 15. REDEVELOPMENT

1. Measures should be taken to prevent the spread of slums and blight. Substandard areas beyond redemption through private means should be redeveloped or rehabilitated by the Town as part of a definitive and continuous action program. Conservation of existing housing should be promoted wherever possible.
2. Because Stratford has less available vacant land, the Town should identify and foster efforts aimed at revitalization and redevelopment, which are sensitive to the needs of surrounding neighborhoods.

16 CODE ENFORCEMENT

1. Actions by other Town agencies and departments should be geared to the objectives of this Plan through strict enforcement of existing and adoption of new codes, regulations, or ordinances.

17 VISUAL ENHANCEMENT/AESTHETICS

1. Give full recognition to the aesthetics of all elements of the transportation network and all related facilities and minimize any adverse impact on their surroundings.
2. To the maximum extent possible, the underground installation of utility services for all new development, and under grounding of all existing overhead services in major business areas and along major arterial streets should be pursued.
3. The overall environment of the Town's business areas should be improved including the use of graphic symbols, the planting of street trees, the placing of street furniture, the improvement of personal safety, and any other functional or aesthetic improvements which will make these areas more desirable for pedestrians.
4. Help to preserve the suburban environment by providing landscaping such as street trees and plant screening in the public right-of-way, public open spaces, and encourage landscaping of major private facilities, such as parking lots, etc.
5. Portions of Town that are visible from major transportation routes such as I-95 and Rte. 1 should be treated as the community's "calling cards" and should be managed accordingly as gateways welcoming travelers to the Town.
6. The Town should carefully review proposed improvements within visible corridors of major transportation routes for their aesthetics, potential impact on surrounding land uses, and the degree to which they will promote a positive, inviting image of the Town of Stratford.
7. The Town should encourage development of its visible business areas to be carried out in a way that promotes visual appeal, coordination of signage and materials, and enhances overall appearance of these important areas of Stratford.
8. The Town should discourage development, which is inconsistent with the goal of achieving visual quality along major transportation routes.

9. Emphasis should be placed on upgrading the visual appearance of existing land uses and areas within "gateway corridors" to the extent feasible.
10. Promote streetscape and public park identity by carefully selecting plant materials (trees, shrubs), which are appropriate to their location and function.

## 18 HISTORIC PRESERVATION

1. Stratford's remaining unique historical structures and sites, and areas of unique physical beauty should be protected through public purchase, land development controls, or other techniques.
2. The Town should encourage the long-term preservation of existing structures of historic or architectural significance as important "landmarks" of community character.
3. The Town should actively work towards increasing public awareness of local historic resources and the important role Stratford played in the growth of the region.
4. Where feasible, the Town should foster the sensitive rehabilitation of properties possessing architectural and historical significance which have fallen into disrepair.
5. Steps should be taken to identify suitable adaptive reuse options for historic and architecturally significant properties whose original design varies from current needs.
6. In areas where historic and architecturally significant properties are concentrated or where elements of certain periods in the Town's development are still visible, efforts should be made to look at area wide strategies to conservation of these resources.
7. The Town should consider the affects of development on areas possessing potential archaeological significance and manage development in such areas in a way that would permit inventorying of sites of archaeological significance and, where appropriate, removal of artifacts and other items which might be important in documenting the pre-history of Stratford.
8. Discourage casual demolition of historic properties.
9. Encourage maintenance of historic properties.
10. Support preservation techniques that are educational in nature, promoting broad public awareness of the role Stratford's historic architecture and sites play in the overall image and character of the community.

19 COASTAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES (INCLUDED IN STRATFORD COASTAL PLAN)

19.1 Coastal Resource Goals and Policies

1. Goals:

- a. To utilize Stratford's coastal resources for their most important natural functions, as well as their most appropriate social purpose (value), in keeping with the policies of the Connecticut Coastal Management Act.
- b. To provide for a reasonable level of waterfront commercial development along Stratford's coastline in those areas where onsite resources are well suited to this kind of development.
- c. To give high priority to water dependent uses along Stratford's shorefront.

2. Policies

- a. Maintain sensitive coastal resources (beach and dune systems, tidal wetlands, and coastal bluffs and escarpments) for preservation purposes; protect important areas of bird and wildlife habitat for their natural functions to the extent possible. Place special emphasis on the protection of existing tidal wetlands of the Great Meadows Salt Marsh.
- b. Disapprove or discourage activities which would result in the modification of sensitive coastal resources (beach and dune systems, tidal wetlands, and coastal bluffs and escarpments), except to implement other established goals and policies.
- c. Prevent potential degradation of sensitive coastal resources (beach and dune systems, tidal wetlands, and coastal bluffs and escarpments) by: 1) limiting density levels of development allowed in close proximity of these sensitive resources and 2) by controlling the placement of structures which must occur in close proximity to these sensitive resources.
- d. Promote private and public efforts, which help to increase public awareness of sensitive coastal resources and their most appropriate uses.
- e. Where feasible, restore and upgrade natural resources in Stratford to maximize their natural functions and to increase the general quality of life for the Town's residents.
- f. Utilize areas of developed shorefront primarily for waterfront commercial and other water-dependent purposes to the extent feasible.
- g. Manage coastal hazard areas in a way that minimizes risks to life and property resulting from sustained exposure to erosion, flooding and/or coastal storm events.

- h. Encourage efforts aimed at increasing the production capacity and quality of existing and future shellfish beds along Stratford's shores.
- i. Maintain and upgrade existing water quality levels within Stratford's coastal waters and adjacent embayments, including Frash Pond.
- j. To promote nonstructural solutions to flood and erosion problems except in those instances where structural alternatives proved unavoidable and necessary to protect existing inhabited structures, infrastructural facilities or water dependent uses.

19.2 Coastal Area Land Use Goals and Policies:

1. Goal-

- a. To achieve a balance of land uses within Stratford's Coastal Boundary which promotes wise use of coastal resources, provides ample opportunities for needed development, and offers sufficient access for the general public.

2. Policies:

- a. Encourage comprehensive, coastal resource-based site planning in new developments within Stratford's Coastal Boundary, through which potential impacts can be anticipated and minimized.
- b. Minimize the impact of or eliminate existing uses which are incompatible with the natural capabilities of the Town's land and water resources.
- c. Discourage development of coastal areas which would pose difficulties to the Town from the standpoint of providing public services and emergency protection.
- d. Promote new water-dependent commercial development where appropriate.
- e. Encourage projects which enhance water-dependency characteristics of existing land uses, where compatible with onsite coastal resources, including adaptive reuse of sites which are not currently water-dependent.
- f. Provide increased opportunities for public access to Stratford's shores.
- g. Evaluate new marina developments carefully, giving full consideration to onsite coastal resources, neighboring land uses, and adequacy of upland support facilities.
- h. Support efforts to maintain and expand the shell fishing industry in Stratford.
- i. Fully recognize the importance of development within the Coastal Boundary in expanding the tax base, increasing jobs, or accomplishing other community

goals; and encourage such expansion and development when it is compatible with or serves to enhance the coastal policies contained herein.

### 19.3 Coastal Open Space and Recreation Goals and Policies

#### 1. Goals

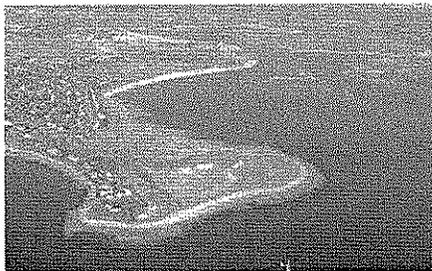
- a. To provide an adequate level of open space within Stratford's Coastal Boundary to lessen congestion and enhance the local quality of life.
- b. To offer a wide range of recreational opportunities along Stratford's coast, including but not limited to swimming, fishing, and boating.
- c. To enable the public to have a variety of methods for accessing and enjoying coastal waters and adjacent coastal landform and features.

#### 2. Policies:

- a. Support efforts to acquire or protect additional open space in Stratford giving priority in the Coastal Boundary to areas which possess sensitive coastal resources with severe development constraints (beach and dune systems, tidal wetlands, and coastal bluffs and escarpments). Place emphasis on funding sources other than Town funds for such efforts, especially private sources of funds.
- b. Increase levels of maintenance of Town-owned coastal parks, beaches, and public areas; (give priority in future Town funding decisions to replacing and expanding existing recreational facilities).
- c. Encourage increased public awareness and use of existing recreational facilities, both Town-owned and private, including beaches, parks, public rights-of-way, marinas, launching ramps and fishing docks.
- d. Promote meaningful forms of public access in new waterfront developments, especially when the location is not appropriate for other water dependent uses due to onsite characteristics.
- e. Support a wide range of recreational boating opportunities in Stratford, providing for a diversity of boat sizes and types.
- f. Eliminate existing and prevent future barriers and obstacles that prevent access to, use of, and enjoyment of public areas along the coast, including parks, beaches, launching ramps, public rights-of-way, walkways and docks.
- g. Encourage improvements to the Town's public rights-of-way and public access points which support a reasonable level of use, given the characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood, existing land uses, and available parking facilities.

h. To the extent possible, protect existing scenic views and vistas of Long Island Sound and the Housatonic River from being blocked by buildings, fences, walls, vegetation and other visual encroachments.

i. Where feasible, enhance access to and use of public lands or areas possessing unique, scenic views and vistas in order to increase opportunities for enjoying these important water resources.



## Section V.

# Waterfront Plan

Funding provided by a grant through the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Long Island Sound Programs, made available by the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, administered by the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

## **Section V. Waterfront Plan**

### **Introduction**

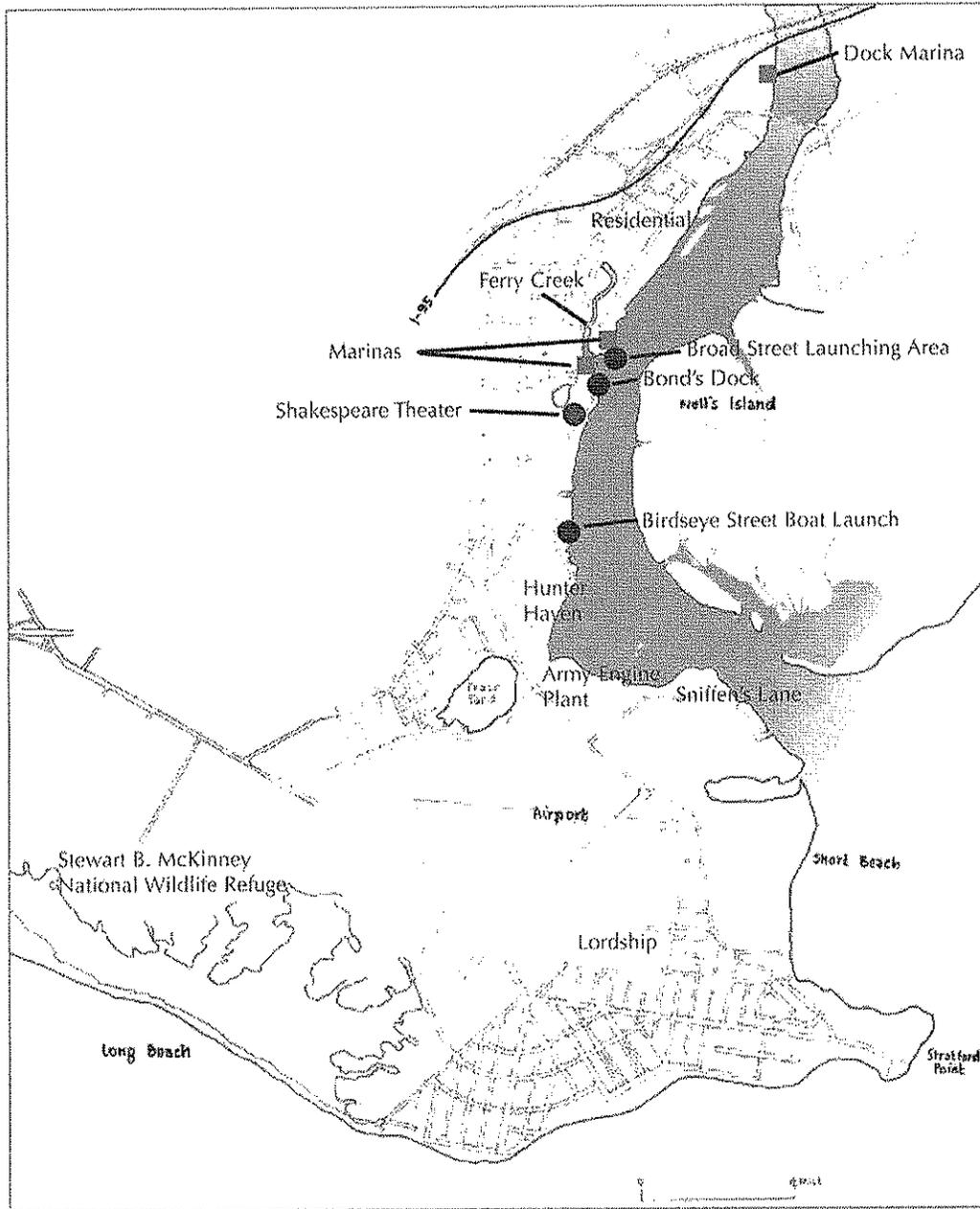


Housatonic River

Updating the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) enables residents and officials to focus on the major issues confronting the town, to assess existing conditions, and to plan for new activities and development that will benefit the town. According to the law, the Planning Commission may adopt one report or chapters of the POCD in sections. With this update, the Planning Commission has chosen to target its efforts at specific sections. The waterfront was clearly seen as the most important section by the public and local officials alike.

This chapter focuses on waterfront development in Stratford. The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Office of Long Island Sound Policy provided assistance and funding to the Planning Commission in preparing this chapter. The Commission also had the assistance of the planning firm Buckhurst Fish Jacquemart, Inc. (BFJ) in organizing the community workshops and the writing of this chapter.

FIGURE 1. WATERFRONT STUDY AREA



WATERFRONT PLAN  
Stratford, CT

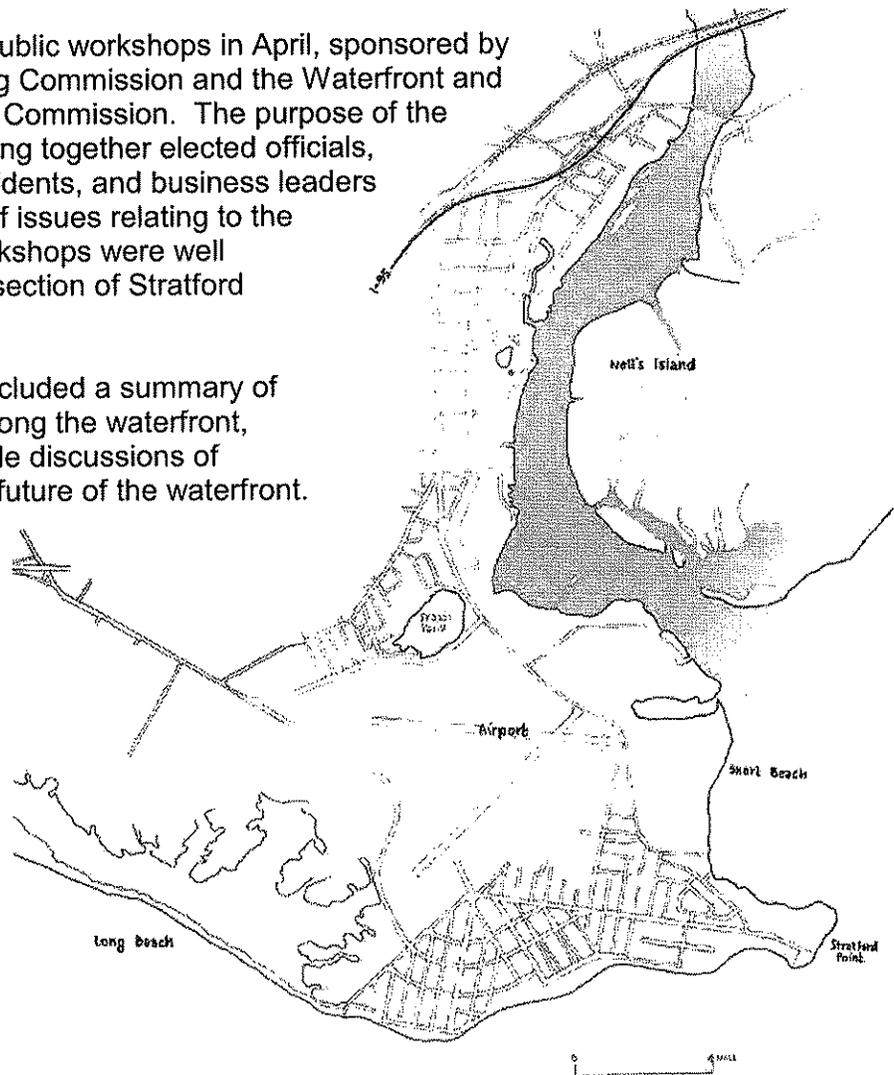
Figure 1. Waterfront Study Area

**Process**

Work on the waterfront plan began in February, 2003. Town officials met with representatives from the CT Department of Environmental Protection Office of Long Island Sound Programs and BFJ to discuss the key issues and to tour the waterfront area. The Planning Commission decided to focus the study along the portion of the waterfront bounded by I-95 in the north, continuing south along the Housatonic River to Stratford Point, and then westerly along the coast to Long Beach and the Bridgeport city line.

The Town held two public workshops in April, sponsored by the Stratford Planning Commission and the Waterfront and Harbor Management Commission. The purpose of the workshops was to bring together elected officials, town employees, residents, and business leaders to discuss a variety of issues relating to the waterfront. Both workshops were well attended by a cross section of Stratford residents.

The first workshop included a summary of existing conditions along the waterfront, followed by roundtable discussions of issues central to the future of the waterfront.



Roundtable discussions included the following topics:

- Natural Resource Protection
- Beaches / Open Space / Greenways,
- Large-Scale Developments
- Waterfront Image and Design Quality
- Commercial Areas
- Public Lands
- Boating and Waterfront Recreation

The second workshop built upon the strengths of the first workshop. The key topics from the first workshop were summarized. Participants broke out into smaller tables and each table was asked to prioritize the same issues according to "low," "medium," or "high" priorities. These priorities form the basis of the Goals and Recommendations.

While there was general agreement on most issues, two issues stand out as receiving unanimous support from the tables. Each workshop group rated these two topics as "high" priority:

- Improve maintenance and upkeep of existing town land along the waterfront.
- Construct the Greenway beginning with the segment from Stratford Point to Bond's Dock.

Support for the Greenway is reflected in the Stratford Community Attitude Survey in which 93% of respondents favored the creation of a pedestrian/bicycle trail along the waterfront and 89% agreed there should be increased public access to the waterfront. Written comments from the survey include:

"Money should go into keeping our beaches and boat launches clean and safe."

"We need to find ways to clean up our waterfront property. In many areas the attractiveness of the area is really hindered by the unsightliness of the surrounding businesses. There is a lot of trash that needs to be picked up."

"Stratford could use a nice trail for walking, running, rollerblading, biking, etc."

"Greenway is essential. Increase foot/bicycle access."

"Stratford's long-range planning should account for a boardwalk or walkway along the riverfront that would link the public marinas, restaurants, and waterfront recreational areas. "

Following those two in order of their support are:

- Modify industrial zoning along the waterfront to encourage greater waterfront based uses.
- Increase efforts to protect and improve natural resources.

Many workshop participants expressed the opinion that current zoning does not reflect the needs or aspirations of the town for future waterfront development. Participants noted the importance of coastal natural resources for community character, economic development, and recreation benefits.

Eighty one (81) percent of the returned surveys expressed agreement with increasing commercial shoreline services (i.e. shops, hotels, restaurants) and over 85% of the surveys agreed with protecting natural resources. Survey comments include:

"I would appreciate more development on the waterfront...something like Captain's Cove or Mystic."

"The old Remington facility as well as the Avco properties are great resources that could be utilized in increasing both our visibility as a destination and increase our tax base if properly managed."

"The waterfront should be developed with an eye towards preserving its natural beauty.

"The key is to use and not exploit Stratford's natural resources."

"The waterfront is a great asset to the appeal of the town. It should be maintained as a protected natural resource."

According to the workshop results, the following three items received medium support. Participants clearly prioritized these issues below the above four.

- Purchase additional town land along the waterfront.
- Develop uses to promote revenue on town property.
- Invest in marketing of Stratford as a waterfront community.

Survey responses generally followed the workshop results. Asked if the Town should acquire more open space along the waterfront, 80% agreed. The survey queried if the Town should promote revenue generation for its waterfront parcels and 75% of respondents agreed.

"The Town has a duty to hold and maintain the waterfront for ALL of Stratford."

"Waterfront land should be public spaces for all to enjoy, now and in the future."

"The waterfront should be used to develop additional revenue opportunities."

"Our waterfront should enhance our Shakespeare heritage."

"We have very little in waterfront dining/recreation."

"We have a tremendous resource that should be developed."

"Stratford's waterfront is unique and an important aspect of our town. It should play an integral role in the vision/plan for the town."

The second workshop did not express broad support for constructing new town-owned facilities. This may also reflect the desire of residents to improve the maintenance and upkeep of existing facilities before constructing new ones. The following two issues received the lowest support at the workshop.

- Develop a town marina.
- Construct a deep-water fishing pier.

Similarly, approximately 50% of the survey results agree the town should provide a public marina and 45% agree that Birdseye launching ramp should be expanded.

## Goals

- Establish Maintenance Plan for Town-Owned Properties

Public facilities require on-going maintenance to keep areas clean, attractive, safe, working properly, and inviting. The Town should develop a maintenance plan for its current facilities, such as Short Beach, as well as investment in possible new town facilities, such as the Shakespeare Theater and Greenway.

- Allow Continued Economic Development Along the Waterfront

The town has undeveloped waterfront parcels that could be developed to provide additional jobs, waterfront access, recreational opportunities, and other benefits to Stratford residents.

- Maximize Public Access

The town's waterfront recreation areas, such as Bond's Dock, Short and Long Beach, and Birdseye Boat Ramp, are widely used and enjoyed by town residents. Additional access to the shoreline would be welcome.

- Construct a Greenway Along the Waterfront

A greenway, or trail, along the waterfront could bring more people to the waterfront, make it more visible, help identify Stratford as a waterfront community, and further access, development, and recreation goals.

- Encourage High-Quality Design

Future development of the waterfront should include architectural guidelines that enhance the shoreline. Notable waterfront buildings, such as the lighthouse and Shakespeare's Theater could serve as the starting point for a design guideline pamphlet for future waterfront construction.

- Ensure Protection of Natural Resources

Coastal bluffs, shellfish beds, tidal wetlands, beaches and dunes, and estuaries are unique assets for the town that provide recreational, scenic, and economic benefits that need to be protected.

- Provide Additional Recreational Uses

Recreational opportunities are important to Stratford residents. The waterfront provides opportunities for both active and passive recreation. Additional waterfront recreational activities should be considered as part of future development of the shoreline.

## **Existing Conditions**

### **Coastal Resources**

Stratford prepared its current Coastal Plan in 1990. One of 36 communities within Connecticut's "Coastal Area," the Town began conducting reviews of projects within the Coastal Boundary in 1980. Projects are reviewed for their consistency with the policies included within the Coastal Management Act (CGS Sec 22a-90).

The map on the following page highlights Stratford's coastal resources within the study area of the Waterfront Plan. Resource definitions are based upon the State's Coastal Management Act, which defines thirteen coastal resources. Dominant coastal resources along Stratford's shorefront, and their generalized locations, can be summarized below:

#### **Coastal Bluffs and Escarpments**

Located at Stratford Point, from the southern tip of Short Beach to the western border of Russian Beach.

#### **Beaches and Dunes**

Long Beach, from the municipal line to Point no Point;  
Russian Beach from the town's seawall to the lighthouse;  
Short Beach from the Marine Basin to the Dupont property

#### **Estuarine Embayments**

Near the mouth of Ferry Creek and off of the Hunter Haven property

#### **Tidal Wetlands**

Including Great Meadows/Lewis Gut; generally adjacent to Shore Road; along Housatonic Avenue; and around the river islands

#### **Intertidal Flats**

Numerous locations along the shoreline south of I-95.

#### **Freshwater Wetlands**

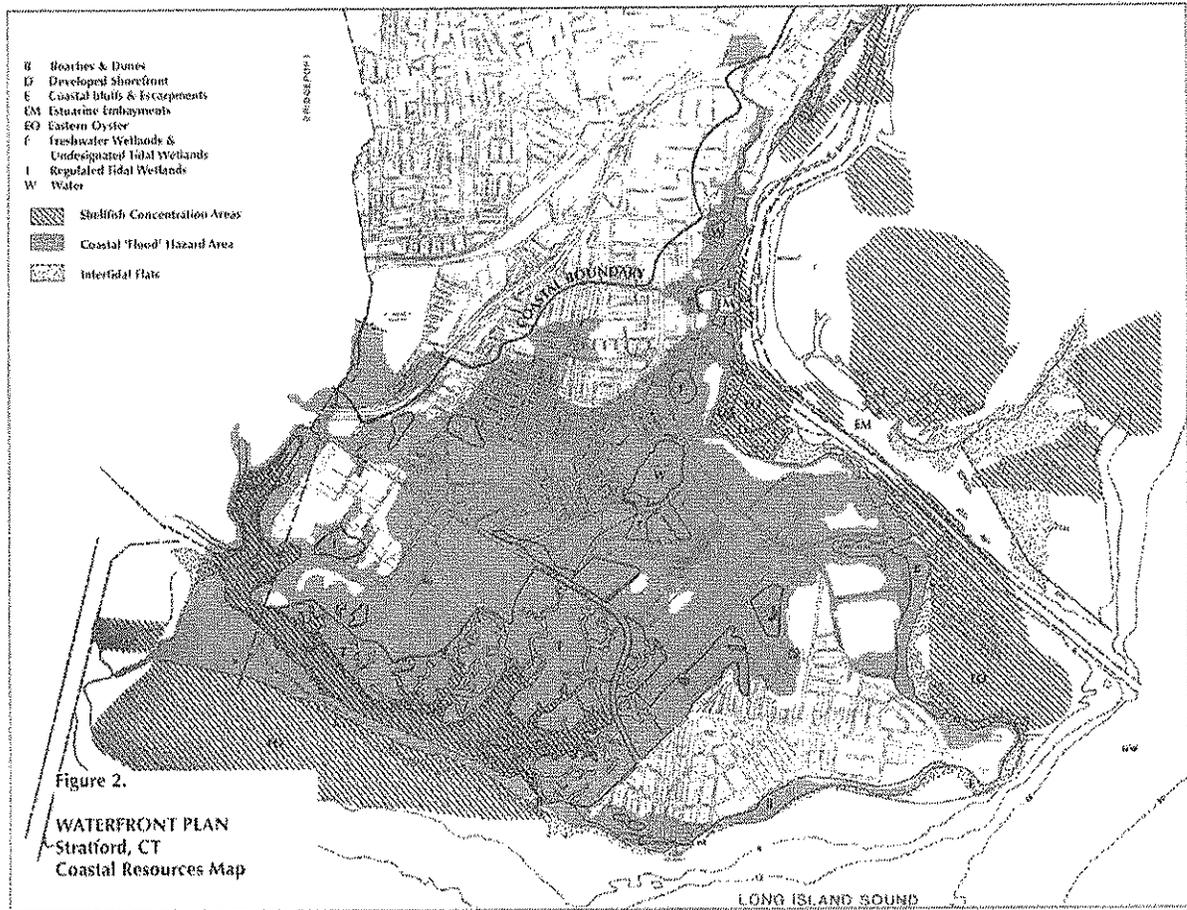
Near Frash Pond, Lewis Gut, and Great Meadows Marsh

#### **Shellfish Concentration Areas**

Off of Long Beach and north of Stratford Point

These designations aid in the process of managing coastal uses under the Connecticut Coastal Management Act. Designation by coastal resource area provides information regarding the types of soils, wetland conditions, extent of environmentally sensitive lands, and geographic characteristics. This information can aid future development of idle land and offer guidelines for different types of land uses that are appropriate for the various natural resources along Stratford's waterfront.

FIGURE 2 COASTAL RESOURCES MAP



The following table is an abbreviated version from the 1990 Coastal Plan (p.20). It shows the connection between resource area, social value, and priority use for that category.

### Coastal Resources Functions, Values, Priority Uses

Coastal Resource	Natural Function	Social Function	Priority Use
Coastal Bluffs & Escarpments	Sediment Source Wildlife Habitat	Flood Protection Recreational Areas	Preservation
Beaches & Dunes	Critical Plant and Bird Habitat Sand Supply for Beaches	Buffer to Flooding Recreational Areas Scientific Value	Preservation
Est. Embayments	High Biologic Diversity Important Marine Habitat	Recreational Areas Deep Water Access	Conservation / Limited Development
Tidal Wetlands	High Biologic Productivity Important Habitat Areas	Water Filtering Capabilities Economic Benefits Recreational Areas	Preservation
Intertidal Flats	Nutrient Rich Areas Feeding Sources	Recreational Areas Educational Value	Preservation / Limited Development
Freshwater Wetlands	Reduce Flooding Habitat Areas	Erosion Buffer Flood Control Recreation	Preservation
Shellfish Areas	Habitat Areas Wildlife Diversity	Food Source Economic Develop.	Conservation / Limited Development
Shorelands	Upland runoff, coastal drainage	Scenic vistas; high development potential	Development

The purpose of the Coastal Management Act is to provide a connection between development, location, and natural resources. Mapping the natural resources on the coast, identifying the important functions of the resource, including their social value for Stratford residents, aids the Town and State in reviewing development proposals within the Coastal Boundary. This approach will hopefully yield a balanced land-use pattern, allowing the economic potential of the land to be realized while minimizing the potentially adverse impacts on the coastal resources.

## **Land Use**

Land uses in the study area include residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, and conserved open space lands. There has been considerable development along the waterfront, from residential houses to marinas, to industrial users such as the Army Engine Plant. Short Beach, Long Beach, and Stratford Point, however, offer open spaces and recreational opportunities and add to the waterfront character of the town.

Existing commercial users occupy lands around Route 1 and I-95 in the northern part of the study area. This includes a marina at the Dock shopping center. Moving south along the waterfront, single-family residences occupy the stretch of riverfront along Housatonic Ave., between Route 1 and Ferry Creek. A marina, boat ramp, and a restaurant lie at the mouth of Ferry Creek. Activity and development here is limited by the lack of large land holdings to provide parking and other upland support to water-dependent uses.

The Shakespeare Theater is located just to the south of Ferry Creek. Though presently inactive, it offers wonderful potential for increased tourism and reestablishing itself as a regional destination point. Surrounding properties have been zoned to accommodate support services for the theater, such as restaurants, bed and breakfasts, etc. Stratford Avenue/Shore Road provides access to the riverfront and Bond's Dock.

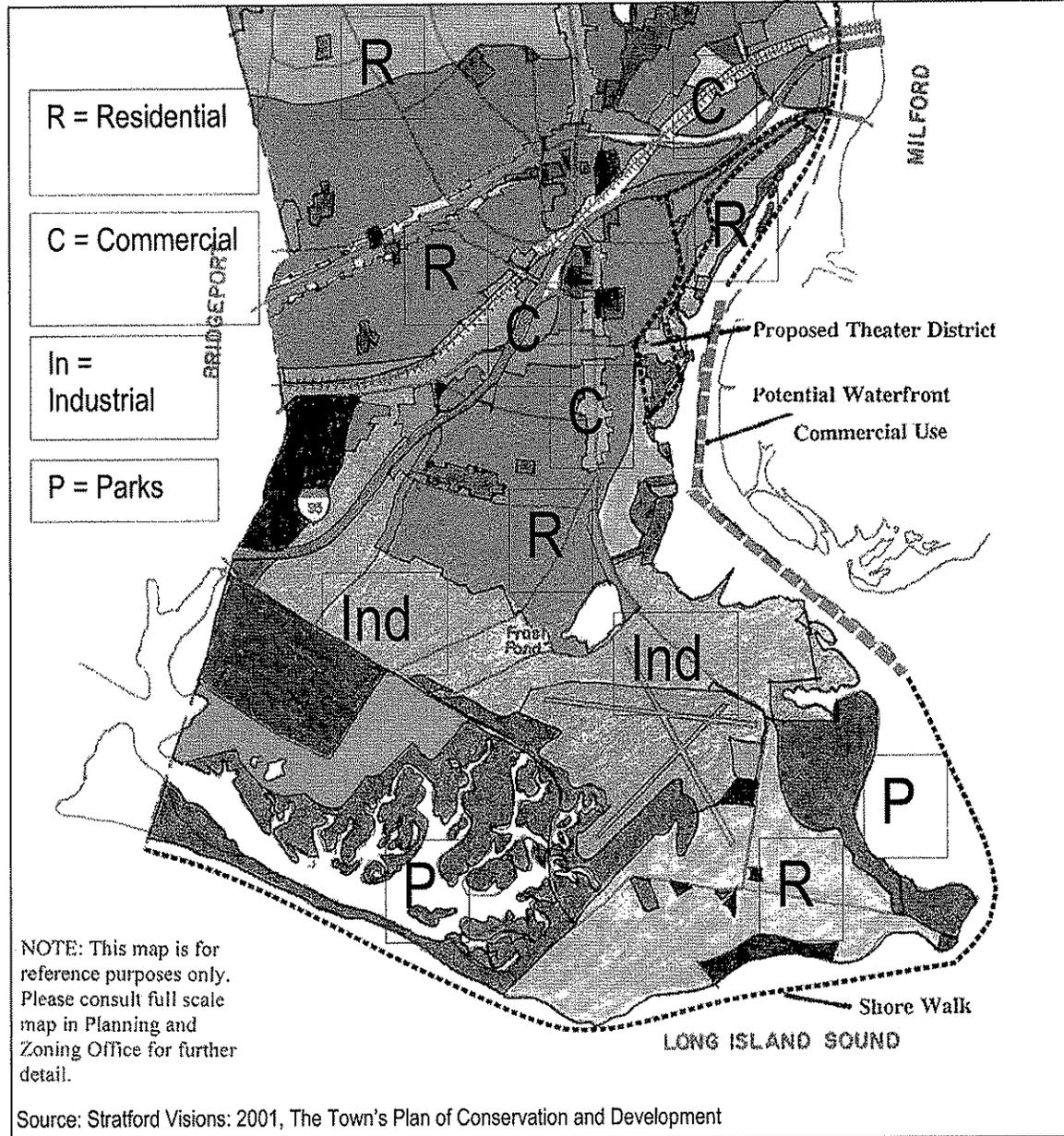
At Birdseye Street, the Town has constructed a boat ramp to the Housatonic River. This facility is next to additional town land, including the wastewater treatment plant and the Hunter Haven property. The Hunter Haven land abuts the Stratford Army Engine Plant property, which the Town is supposed to acquire from the Army. Combining these parcels offers an opportunity for a waterfront greenway and public access to the Housatonic River and its enjoyment. The Beacon Point Marina, across from the wastewater treatment plant, may be an appropriate site for future acquisition by the Town, given its location along the riverfront and the fact that town property surrounds it.

South of the Army Engine Plant are some additional industrial users along Sniffen's Lane, followed by the former town landfill and then Short Beach. Next to Short Beach is Stratford Point, which has been used as a gun club in the past, though it is now planned to be preserved as open space with a conservation easement.

Also of note within this area are the limited concentrations of residential development, including the residences along Stratford Avenue/Shore Road and the condominium development at the end of Sniffens Lane, Breakwater Key Condominiums.

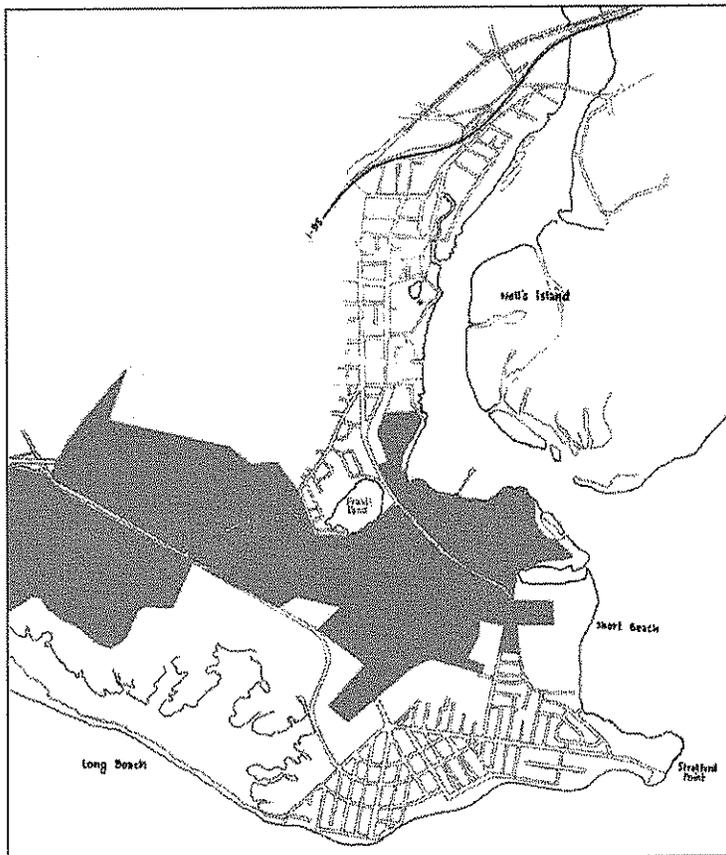
**Zoning**

**Generalized Land Use Map**



Following the coast, there is the residential community of Lordship, and then Long Beach. Long Beach is owned by the Town and represents a truly unique natural asset for the town, which can be used by beach-goers, bird watchers, other passive recreational uses, as well as some active uses, such as windsailing.

Stratford has four one-family residential zones, one multi-family zone, three limited business districts, four retail commercial districts, a waterfront business district, and four industrial zones, including a coastal industrial category. The study area includes residential, commercial, retail, waterfront, and industrial zones. The residential and commercial areas have largely been built-out, leaving the remaining undeveloped parcels zoned for industrial uses. The Hunter Haven property, for example, is zoned coastal industrial, though the riverfront portion of the property is zoned for waterfront business, recognizing the unique location of the parcel, as well as the fact that industrial uses may not be the best uses for the riverfront.



**Existing Industrial Districts**

The adjacent map highlights the significant amount of land in the southern part of town, including waterfront parcels, that are zoned industrial. Many of the existing waterfront industrial uses, however, are not water dependent and therefore could be relocated to other properties within Stratford, away from the coast, enabling the waterfront to be redeveloped with new uses that are water-dependent. In addition, the town has lost over 5,000 manufacturing jobs during the past decade. Economic trends suggest that manufacturing will continue to shrink within the State and the Greater Bridgeport metropolitan area. Rezoning some of this land from industrial to commercial, residential, mixed-uses, or some other use, could free up the property for new development opportunities along the waterfront.

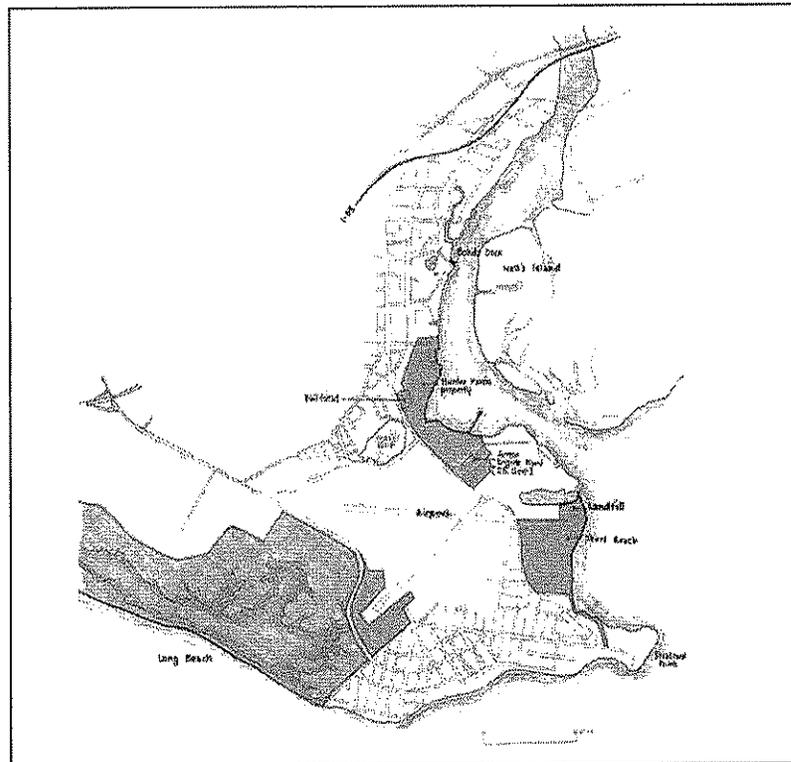
This could present opportunities for access, design, recreation, and image-building, enabling Stratford to identify more as a waterfront community.

### Public Property

The following map highlights the public property owned by the town. The map includes the Army Engine Plant, owned by the US Government, because it is slated to be conveyed to the Town. The town owns the property along Short and Long Beaches, as well as riverfront parcels such as Birdseye boat ramp and Bond's Dock. The Great Meadows is also owned by the federal government as part of the Stewart McKinney Wildlife Refuge.

The Hunter Haven property, between the Army Engine Plant and the wastewater treatment plant, represents one of the last remaining undeveloped pieces along the Housatonic River in Stratford. The property is a significant development opportunity for the town, particularly if it can be combined with the Army Engine Plant. Because of the contiguous town property, development of the site should explore ways to provide connections to adjoining lands, such as a greenway or riverfront trail. Incorporating public access and a greenway along the riverfront may set the tone for future waterfront development and help to link public property from Short Beach to Bond's Dock.

The town can leverage its ownership of the Army Engine Plant to ensure that development of the site meets the goals set out in this chapter regarding natural resource protection, riverfront access, continued economic development and high-quality design.



**Public Property**

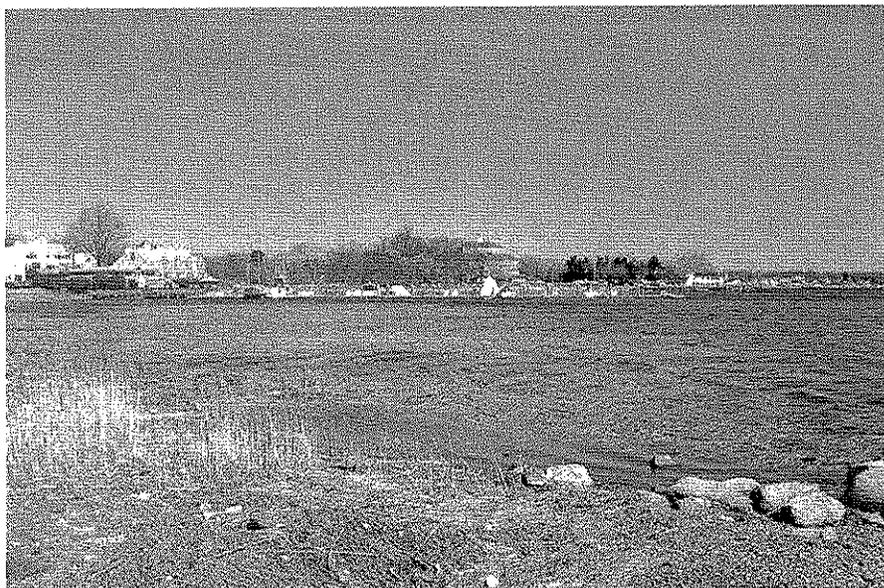
### **Waterfront Plan**

The workshops discussed important development projects that, if completed, could significantly impact the use, appearance, and image of Stratford's waterfront. Some of the ideas encompass multiple properties, such as the Greenway. Other recommendations are site specific, such as the future development of the Hunter Haven land. This plan identifies the waterfront parcels that were part of the study and discusses their future uses as well as recommendations to accomplish their development. These development ideas move the town towards a goal of reclaiming its waterfront, enabling it to serve the recreational, social, and employment needs of the town's residents.

### **Natural Resource Protection**

Stratford's coastal waterfront and Housatonic riverfront encompass natural resources that add to the town's character as a waterfront community. As discussed in the Coastal Resource Section, The diverse riverine and coastal environments provide a variety of habitat and food sources for fish and wildlife. Some of these animals may be threatened or endangered, which adds to the importance of protecting this habitat.

The town's waterfront resources serve multiple functions as economic and development opportunities, habitat and recreational areas, and as having scientific and educational values. Protecting these areas, while still allowing development of the waterfront is the challenge facing Stratford.



Housatonic River Looking North to Shakespeare Theater

Resource Protection can take many forms. Zoning is perhaps the most common regulatory tool a municipality has. Zoning may:

- restrict the type of use on a property
- limit the size or location of a building
- establish a setback from the natural resource area
- require site plan approval to monitor building design and location
- establish important viewsheds within a community.

Stratford's existing zoning regulations address many of these points. The zoning code precludes development within 50 feet of the mean high water mark and from all inland wetlands and watercourses (Section 3.14). Some other municipalities have extended that setback to 100 feet, however, because many of Stratford's waterfront lots have limited depth, the existing setback is an adequate balance between resource protection and development activity.

Section 1.24.1 of the Zoning Code excludes wetlands, water bodies, and other water courses from counting towards the net developable lot area. The 100% exclusion is aggressive, though more and more municipalities are adopting this type of exclusion. For most lots, the above definition does not preclude all development. However, there may be some lots in Stratford that are composed almost entirely of wetlands. For such cases, the Zoning Code must make it clear that owners may seek relief, through a variance, for example, so that the property owner does not lose all development potential of the site.

Stratford's Coastal Industrial District encourages a General Development Plan which spells out requirements for site plan approval. Site plans are not required in either the Coastal Industrial or the Waterfront Business District. The Zoning Code should simply require all new developments within the Waterfront Business District and the Coastal Industrial District to provide site plans. Site plans should, at a minimum, include building locations, illustrations of the proposed architectural design, landscaping including types of trees/shrubs and sizes, and fully designed parking areas. This allows the Planning and Zoning Commissions to work with developers on various issues such as building placement, landscaping, and architectural design at the outset of their development, when issues are more flexible.

Section 3.14 of the Zoning Code outlines the procedures for new development within the coastal area management section of town. The existing regulations aid the town in providing resource protection, while also providing guidelines and managing new growth. As mentioned, above, site planning should be incorporated into the application process. Site plan requirements within Section 3.14 focus on grading, erosion, and soil protection. These elements should be retained and incorporated into a site-planning ordinance for all waterfront zones.

In addition to zoning regulations, towns should enforce their subdivision regulations. Subdivision regulations may require resource protection, e.g. setbacks from inland wetlands, and the 10% open space set-aside may also be used to protect sensitive areas.

Sometimes natural resource areas are bought and preserved. Municipalities may purchase land for open space purposes. The State and Federal government may also acquire land and preserve it from development, e.g. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services owns the Stewart McKinney Wildlife Refuge. Non-profit land trusts, such as the Audubon Society, also acquire environmentally sensitive areas and preserve the land in perpetuity.

An alternative to taking title to the land is the conservation easement. This method acquires the development rights to a property, rather than the property itself. The State has used this method extensively to protect farmland. This method works well at resource protection, though it may not provide public access to the property.

Town, State, and Federal governments may also use their taxing power to encourage natural resource protection. Taxing natural resource lands at lower rates than developable property may encourage the preservation of these lands. This method is an incentive and thus voluntary. It may not permanently conserve land.

In order to protect natural resource areas, municipalities must budget adequate monies for enforcement of existing regulations and maintenance of facilities. For instance, Stratford needs to enforce boating regulations to limit a boat's wake within the Housatonic River, keep boats within the proper channel area, and prevent unnecessary disposal of wastes into the river. The Town also needs to provide adequate upkeep of its existing facilities such as at Birdseye Boat Launching Ramp and Short Beach. Litter removal and building upkeep will encourage proper use within designated areas.

Education must also be a part of natural resource protection. Residents must understand which areas of town are important and why. Informing the Stratford community of the ways by which they can help protect their resources will facilitate understanding within the community and hopefully their support in protecting sensitive lands.

Delineating the resource, identifying the quality of the resource, and then listing the functions of the resource and then deciding on the appropriate goals for resource protection can provide guidelines to future development and the best methods to protect natural resource areas. Towns must be aware of the many tools at their disposal in order to use the appropriate method of natural resource protection.

## **Greenway**

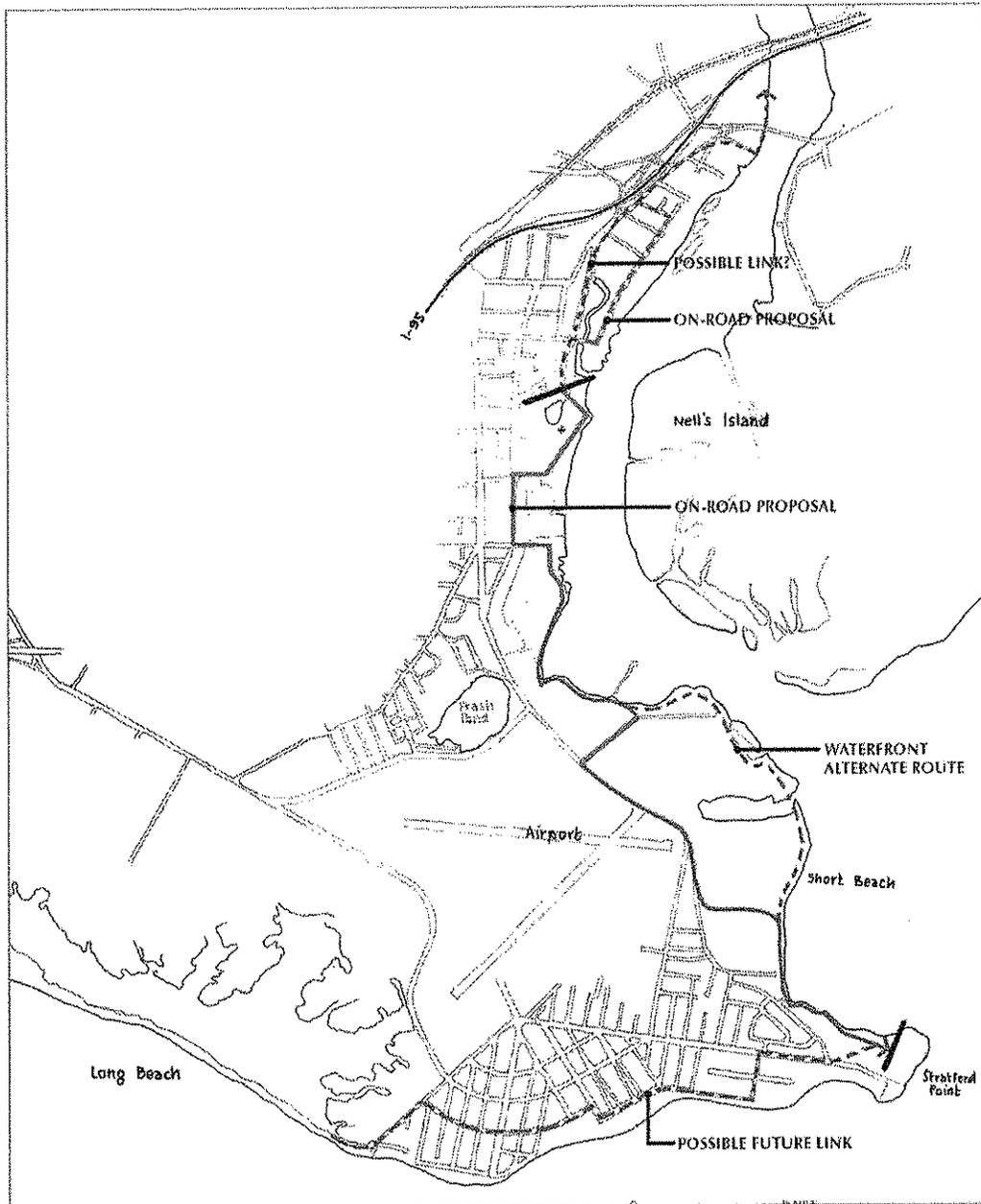
The Greenway is a proposal to construct a walking/bicycle path along Stratford's waterfront. The purpose of the path is to provide recreational opportunities to residents and to make the waterfront more accessible and more enjoyable. The Greenway could be a unifying link to the various waterfront components, such as Shakespeare Theater, Bond's Dock, Birdseye Boat Ramp, and Short Beach. While residents have expressed overwhelming support for the concept of the Greenway, there are practical and safety concerns that need to be considered when locating the proposed route. The route should be easily accessible and well-marked. Preferably the route would be separated from automobiles to avoid potential accidents between cars, bicyclists, and pedestrians. However, that may not be practical everywhere along the route. Where the trail does utilize an existing roadway, the trail should be clearly marked on the roadway and with signage to alert motorists.

The Greenway Map on the following page shows the Greenway extending from I-95 in the north to Stratford Point in the south. The map shows the portion of the Greenway between Shakespeare Theater and Stratford Point as a solid line, indicating that this area was identified as the most promising location for the initial segment of the Greenway because the land is primarily publicly owned, there are few buildings along the waterfront, and remediation of the causeway within the Army Engine Plant property has been completed. In fact, remediation efforts along the causeway were specifically completed to allow active recreational opportunities and to promote more intensive pedestrian use of the waterfront. It is hoped that this section could be a model for future stages of the Greenway, encouraging acceptance of the trail to other areas of Stratford.

Dashed lines represent possible future extensions of the Greenway. With public acceptance, the trail could be expanded both north and west, through residential areas, to include additional destinations. To the north, the Greenway could connect the Dock Marina and, ultimately, towards Shelton. To the west, dashed lines cross the Lordship neighborhood, indicating a possible future route to Long Beach. Dashed lines also indicate the desirability of a waterfront Greenway between Sniffen's Lane and Short Beach, across the Marine Basin, while recognizing that this may be more expensive and difficult to achieve.

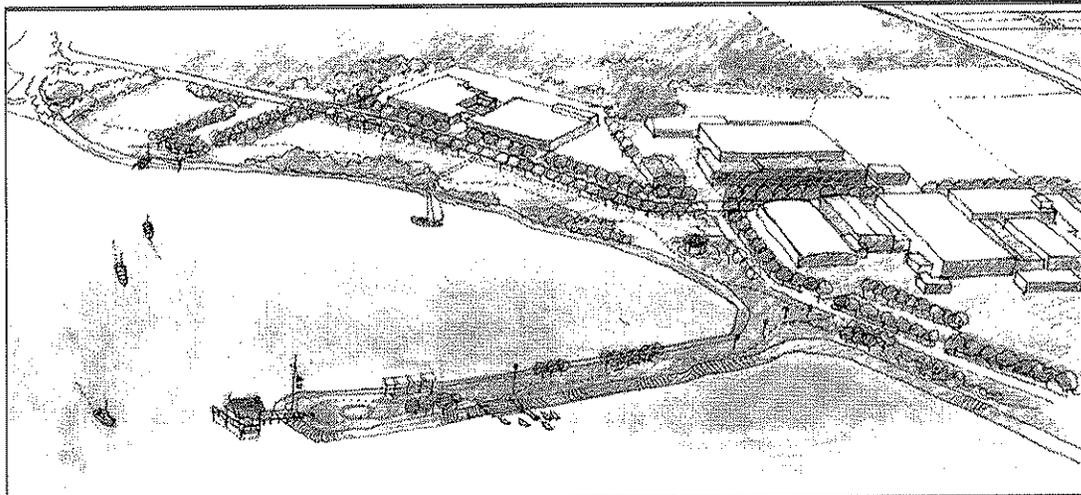
The initial segment of the Greenway can be described as follows. Beginning at Bond's Dock, it would follow Shore Road south along the Shakespeare Theater site, south along the waterfront to Elm Street. From there, the trail would continue on Elm to Birdseye Street, where it would head east along Birdseye Street to the town boat ramp. The Greenway would then follow Beacon Point Road, in front of the wastewater treatment plant, to the town-owned Hunter Haven land.

FIGURE 3 GREENWAY MAP



WATERFRONT PLAN  
Stratford, CT

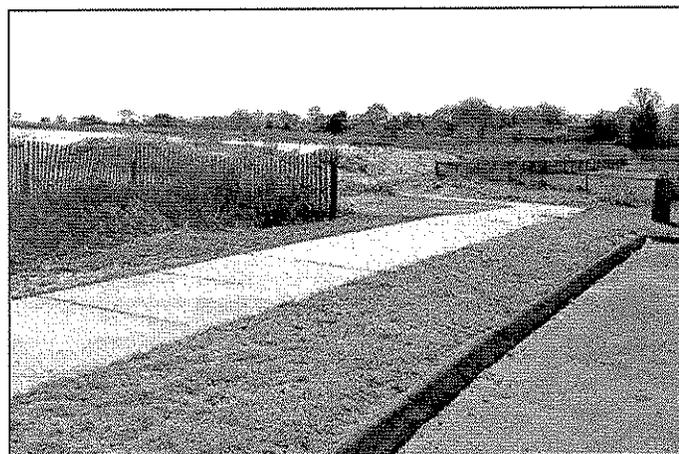
Figure 3. Greenway Map



Rendering of Possible Greenway Across Army Engine Plant Site and Sniffen's Lane

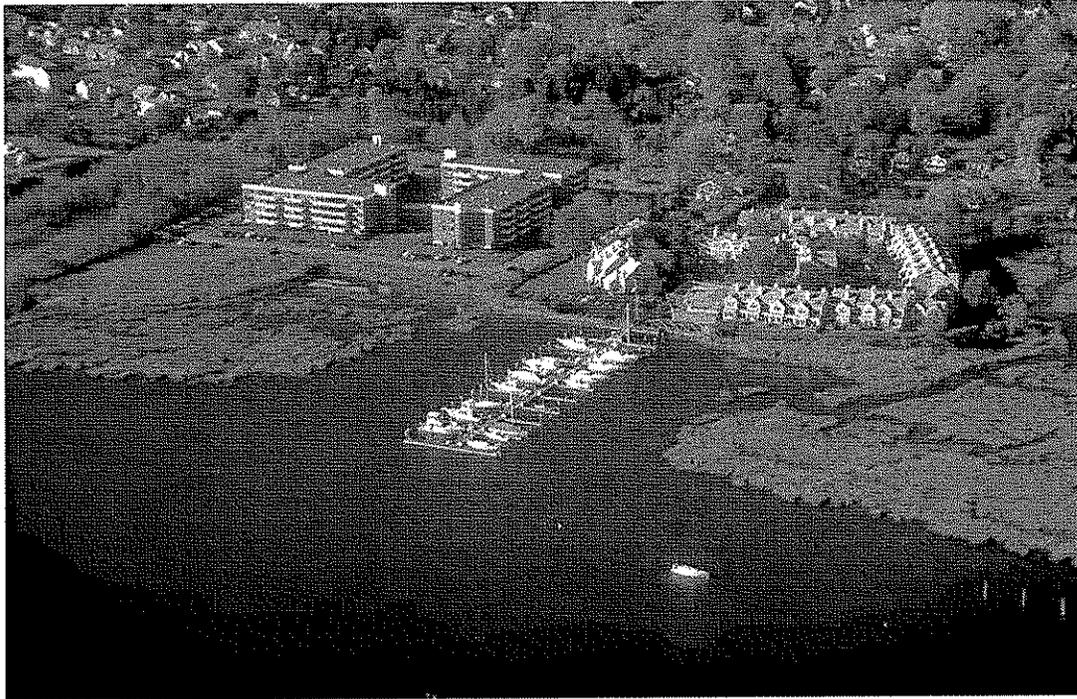
The Greenway would then traverse the Hunter Haven and the Honeywell parcel's riverfront, before arriving at the Stratford Army Engine Plant. It would then continue along the waterfront, including the causeway, and connect with the properties along Sniffen's Lane. The original Greenway route, completed under a previous ISTE A project, followed Sniffen's Lane back to Main Street, and then southerly along Main Street to Short Beach. One alternative, which would allow the trail to continue along the waterfront, would have the trail follow Sniffen's Lane towards the Marine Basin, cross the mouth of the Marine Basin, and enter Short Beach at its northeast corner. Some type of bridge would be needed to cross the mouth of the Marine Basin; however, the bridge would only have to be designed for pedestrians and bicycles.

Once south of the Marine Basin, the trail would again follow town property. The Greenway would enter Short Beach at its northeast corner, where it could connect to an existing pedestrian network to the golf course, beach, and other activities. From Short Beach, the trail would head south to Stratford Point, offering majestic views of the Housatonic River and Long Island Sound.



Short Beach

## Water Dependent Uses



The waterfront has consistently attracted development to its shores due to the scenic qualities and its ability to provide unique, water-dependent uses. Public comment expressed a strong desire for continued development of the shoreline, but residents want to see appropriate development that is well designed and properly scaled to the site and the waterfront. New development should also allow public access to the shoreline.

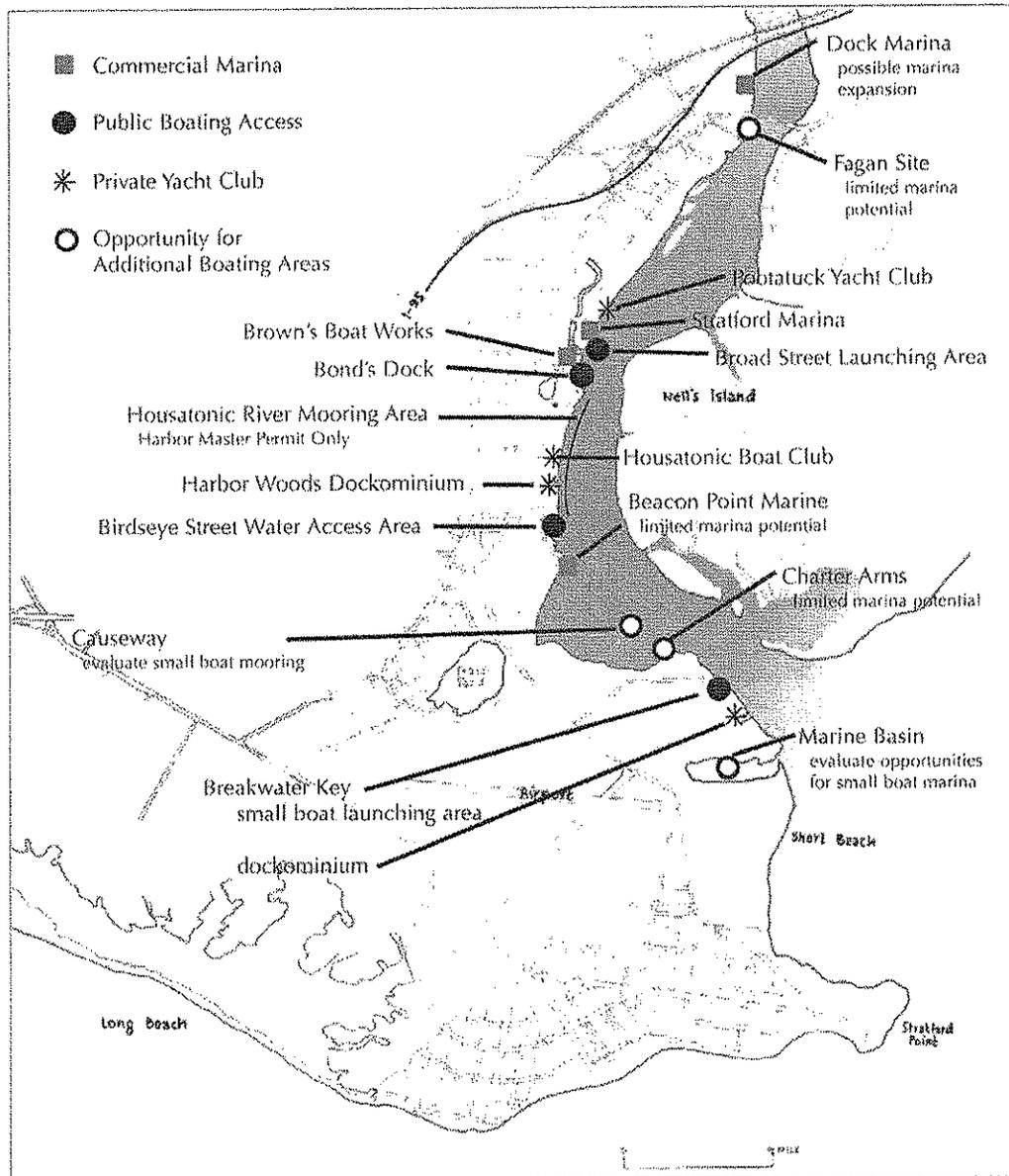
### Marinas

Boating is a natural recreational use along the riverfront. The majority of boating facilities serve private and recreational boaters, though there are still considerable commercial fishing boats in Stratford. The following facilities provide docks, slips, or mooring facilities to boaters:

Brown's Boat Works	105 slips <sup>1</sup>
Dock Marina	192 slips
Housatonic Boat Club	29 slips; 15 moorings
Pootatuck Yacht Club	10 slips
Stratford Marina	100 slips
Breakwater Key Dockominium	99 slips
Harbor Woods Dockominium	38 slips

<sup>1</sup> Stratford Harbor Management Plan, 1994. Stratford Waterfront and Harbor Management Commission, Town of Stratford, Connecticut, p. 1-31.

**FIGURE 4 MARINAS AND BOAT ACCESS**



**WATERFRONT PLAN  
Stratford, CT**

**Figure 4. Marinas and Boat Access**

During the early 1990s, there were plans for additional marina slips along the Housatonic for the Charter Arms Marina, Beacon Point Marina, and Harborside Bar and Grill's Restaurant site. However, these plans were not completed. Today, these sites may offer potential development areas for new marinas. Participants in the workshops saw a need for additional boat slips along the Housatonic River, but most participants favored the creation of those units by the private market and not by the Town, due to potential costs, permitting issues, long-term maintenance responsibilities, and lack of expertise.

Due to sensitive environmental resources such as intertidal flats and shellfish beds, the Hunter Haven and Honeywell riverfronts are not appropriate sites for additional marina locations. The Marine Basin area near the airport is an area that needs to be explored and evaluated for use as a marina area. Much of the property surrounding the basin is owned by the City of Bridgeport, however, so any future water use of the site may need cooperation between the City and the Town.

Any proposal for a new marina or an expansion of an existing one would have to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. There would have to be adequate space to accommodate additional boats, keep mooring areas free from the federal channel, protect any sensitive natural resources, and provide adequate upland support.

There was general agreement at the workshops that upland support is currently very limited. This limits the amount of boat storage and repair that a marina may offer, parking for customers, space for gasoline and provisions, and other support services. To accommodate expansion of existing facilities, the Town may want to explore off-site parking and storage opportunities that are within a reasonable distance of the marina.

Another significant factor impacting recreational boating within the town is dredging. The federal channel must be navigable for safe boating opportunities. According to the Stratford Harbor Management Plan 1999 Plan Addendum, the River has not been dredged since 1974 and "significant shoaling" has occurred in several locations (p. 1-11). It notes that the mouth of the river, due to its narrower width and reduction of depth, poses the greatest risk to navigation. Past efforts to employ private contractors to dredge the river have not been successful, so standard procedures to rely on the Army Corps of Engineers to complete the dredging will probably be necessary. The town should follow the recommendations for dredging found within its 1994 Harbor Management Plan, particularly:

- d. Future maintenance dredging of the Federal navigation channel in the Housatonic River should be carried out in the timeliest manner necessary to ensure the continued viability of boating facilities and safe and efficient navigation.
- f. Maintenance dredging of all channels, mooring areas, docking facilities, and berthing areas should be undertaken in compliance with all applicable State and Federal regulations and in a manner that will minimize adverse impacts on coastal resources.
- g. Disposal of dredged material from all channels, mooring areas, docking facilities, and berthing areas should take place in a manner that enhances the beneficial uses of the dredged material.

## **Waterfront Recreation**

In addition to boating and marinas, Stratford's waterfront offers multiple recreational possibilities for residents to enjoy. There are opportunities for swimming, hiking, bird watching, canoeing, fishing (salt water and freshwater fishing, fly fishing, from boats and from the breakwater), picnicking, kayaking, windsurfing, etc. The Town provides waterfront access to its residents at many locations, such as Bond's Dock, Birdseye Street, and Short Beach. Stratford's waterfront is extensively built-up, however, which limits the creation of future waterfront recreation areas.

The area of the riverfront from the Dock Marina to Birdseye Street, with the exception of the Harborside Bar and Grill site, offers no new public access locations. Significant new public waterfront recreation opportunities are restricted to the Hunter Haven parcel, the Stratford Army Engine Plant waterfront, Sniffen's Lane, and the Marine Basin vicinity. Section 3.14 of Stratford's zoning code requires a minimum 20-foot wide public easement, improved as a public walkway, near the high tide line. The easement must be connected to a public parking area or right-of-way by a minimum 10-foot easement.

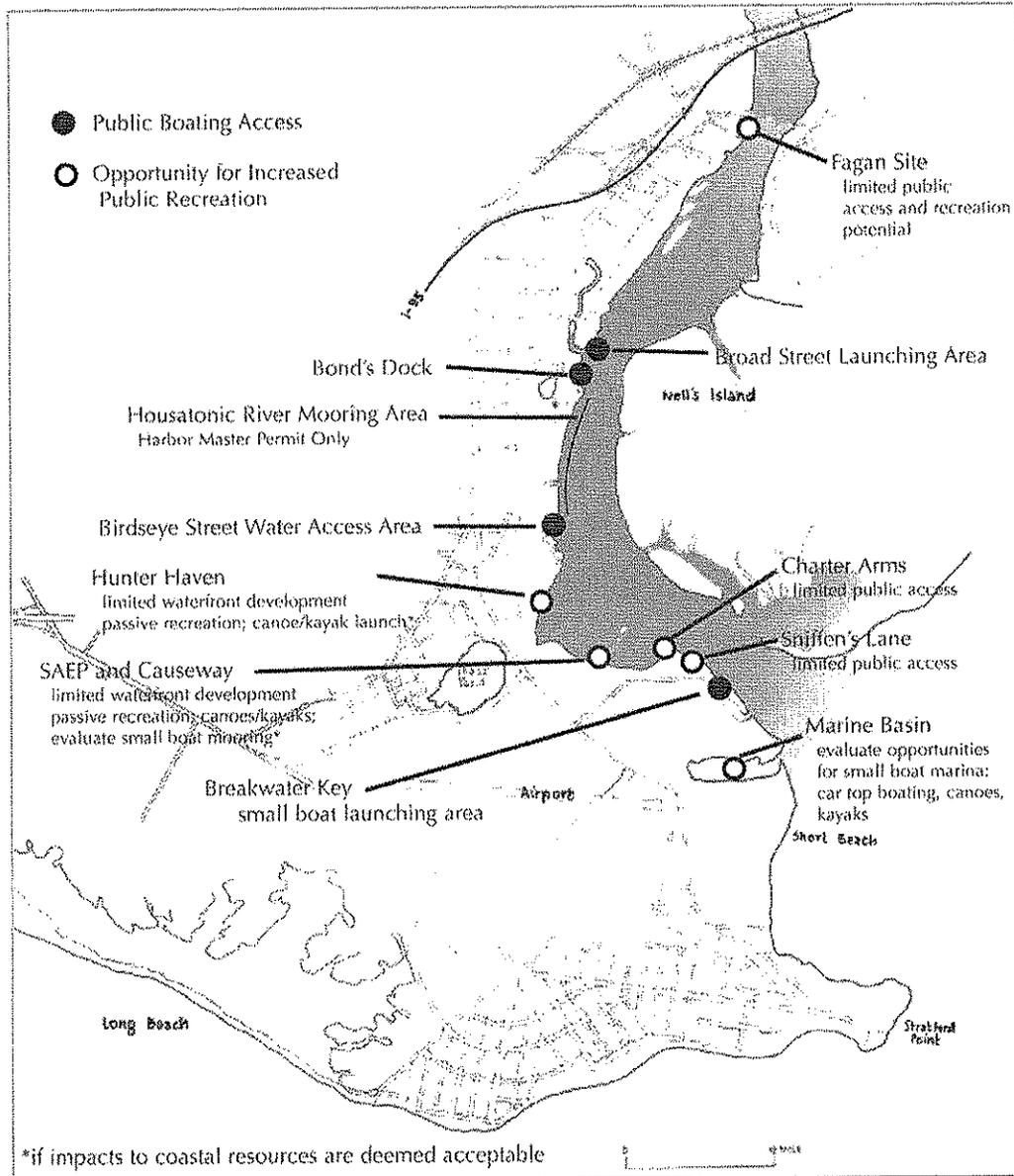
As discussed previously, there is strong support for a greenway trail along the Hunter Haven, Honeywell, and Army Engine Plant properties. This trail would provide increased access to the waterfront, providing additional recreational opportunities for the community. The sensitive nature of the waterfront would not allow intensive development of the riverfront, but limited access for canoes, kayaks, windsurfers, and other portable equipment might be feasible, pending further evaluation. Picnic areas and perhaps playgrounds would also bring families to the water's edge. There is ample opportunity for parking, kiosks, and other support services at this location.

Along the Army Engine Plant property, the Town has already reached an agreement with the Army that would preserve 15 acres along the waterfront for public access and recreation, providing that the Army conveys the property to the Town. This area could be an excellent reception area for weddings and parties. This recreation area would include the causeway. This waterfront is suitable for passive recreation purposes, including the greenway trail. A picnic or gazebo area would be a nice addition to the causeway, encouraging people to venture out from the shore. The South Cove area may also be a long-term boating area, if it does not adversely impact coastal resources.

Sniffen's Lane east of the Army Engine Plant contains a couple of industrial users along the waterfront. None of these uses are water-dependent. The Town should actively work with the users and the property owners to find suitable alternative locations for these companies. Relocating these companies could have benefits for the waterfront including public access along the greenway, improved views of the river and Long Island Sound, and opportunities for waterfront redevelopment bringing in high-value companies and improving the architecture and design of the area. It would be worthwhile for the Town to enhance the water-dependent aspects of this area.

The Marine Basin is a narrow inlet near the mouth of the Housatonic River. Bridgeport owns the majority of the land surrounding it and is responsible for dredging the Basin's mouth. The Town should explore acquisition of these lands from the City for access and

**FIGURE 5 PUBLIC ACCESS AND WATERFRONT RECREATION**



**WATERFRONT PLAN  
Stratford, CT**

**Figure 5. Public Access and Waterfront Recreation**

development possibilities. Wetlands surround part of the basin, restricting access to and use of the area. It may be possible to create boating access to the river here. The mouth of the basin would likely have to be dredged, however, to provide safe and adequate access. If practical, this could make a suitable location for a small marina.

Short Beach offers golf, miniature golf, swimming, and other beach activities. The town should provide adequate maintenance to ensure clean, safe, and attractive facilities at Short Beach. If additional facilities are constructed along the waterfront, Short Beach should not suffer. Long Beach was identified as another public asset that requires continuous maintenance responsibilities. Although it is not developed as intensively as Short Beach, the Town needs to monitor trashcans, litter, and provide general upkeep to the beach. At the workshop, residents identified maintenance as the most pressing issue facing the town. A complete maintenance strategy for town facilities, similar to the one outlined by the Shakespeare Theater Advisory Committee in a November 2002 report should be aggressively pursued. In that study, the Committee recommended that the Town continue its role as property manager for the American Festival (Shakespeare) Theater, while allowing a private developer to operate, manage, and finance the theater itself.

Other recreational ideas that some residents expressed an interest in include a deep-water fishing pier and a town marina. These ideas would offer additional opportunities to town residents, but they received little support at the workshops. Compared with other priorities, such as the Greenway and increased maintenance, they rated much lower.

### **Commercial/Industrial Zoning**

In considering future uses for the shoreline, questions have been raised regarding the amount of waterfront land that is zoned for industrial use. The waterfront portion of the Hunter Haven and Honeywell sites are zoned Waterfront Business District (WB). The rest of the parcels and the Sniffen's Lane properties are zoned Coastal Industrial (MC). The Army Engine Plant is zoned for light industry (MA). The industrial zones extend inland along the airport property and are adjacent to the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge as well.

Most of the existing industrial users in Stratford are not water dependent and the industrial uses often do not enhance the shoreline. The large, boxy buildings often obscure the view of the waterfront from nearby roads and most do not provide any type of public access to the water. Many of these buildings would also interfere with the construction of the Greenway, forcing the trail to move inland, away from the waterfront.

The Stratford Army Engine Plant has numerous buildings close to the waterfront. Many of these buildings are no longer used and probably are not suitable for economic redevelopment purposes. The Town should encourage the Army to take down these unnecessary buildings (which the army is forced to maintain today) and reclaim the site, prior to conveying the land to the Town. Eliminating these buildings would create more open space along the waterfront and provide more recreational opportunities. In addition, the decline in manufacturing jobs, both locally as well as regionally, suggests that other uses such as recreation, tourism, research, and office uses – which would likely require new buildings - would be more appropriate.

The waterfront could be an ideal location to attract image conscious companies that seek unique and attractive locations. The views of the riverfront and the sound may attract corporate tenants looking to expand. New corporate office/research buildings would be an improvement over the windowless boxes that currently line portions of the waterfront. Additional commercial uses along the waterfront would also attract people to the river, the Greenway, and increase the town's image.

The Planning Commission should recommend rezoning the waterfront industrial lands between Hunters Haven and the Marine Basin. Uses permitted within the MA and the MC zone will probably not result in the type of waterfront that Stratford residents expressed a desire for at the public workshops. For instance, uses allowed in these zones include: storage warehousing, packaging of candy and dairy products, and assembling canvas, cork, leather, metal, and other various items. These permitted uses are the types of manufacturing jobs that are leaving the town, require large, boxy buildings that cut off views of the shoreline from the road, and do not enhance the shoreline from the river as well. Zoning should encourage development activity by allowing as-of-right the type of businesses the Town wants. The Town could consider extending the existing Waterfront Business district and rezone portions of Coastal Industrial to Waterfront Business, or it could create a new zone for waterfront parcels that eliminated much of the manufacturing uses currently found in the code. The Town may also wish to consider adding residential uses to these zones, as part of mixed-use projects.

These recommendations are consistent with the town's existing coastal area land use goals and policies from the 1994 Plan of Conservation and Development. Those policies include "promote new water-dependent commercial development," "Provide increased opportunities for public access to Stratford's shores," and "recognize the importance of development within the Coastal Boundary."

The Waterfront Business District suffers from another problem that can hinder development. Every type of development is considered a "special case" and requires a special application for the zoning commission. This gives the commission some control over the kinds of uses that could be developed, but, because of the lack of site plan approval, it gives the Commission no authority to review the scale of the building, the siting of the structure, location of parking, landscaping, etc. The WB district, like the other districts, should have a list of permitted uses. Special case uses should be limited to certain uses that the Commission wishes to retain additional control over. However, every application should be subject to site plan control, as mentioned previously in the report. Site Plan control will give the Commission additional power to review the development standards, not simply the use. Most other communities employ site plan review for the additional controls and benefits it provides to the Commission and the community.

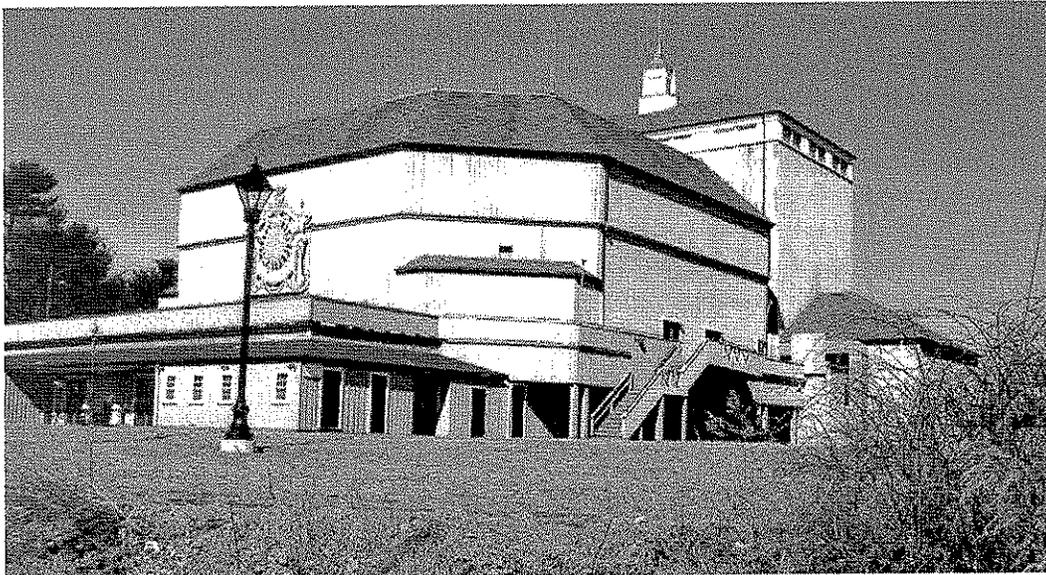
## **Shakespeare Theater**

The Stratford Shakespeare Theater is a landmark theater for the Town. The 1,500 seat theater offered summer performances of Shakespearean theater for decades. It is perhaps the town's most famous institution (Sikorsky aircraft being the other). However, due to a variety of factors, the theater has not been in operation for many years.

Despite the theatrical hiatus, the theater continues to be a recognized landmark within the town, offering instant name recognition for Stratford, and providing numerous marketing opportunities for the Town. The theater has the potential to become a regional destination point, bring people to the Stratford waterfront, encourage neighboring properties to invest and upgrade their land, improve the waterfront, and bring tourist dollars to the town. However, the Town does not own the property.

It is anticipated that title to the theater property will revert to the State during the summer of 2003. If that happens, the Town Council has already expressed its intent to accept title from the State, conditioned upon the ability of the State to pass clean title, free of any liens or encumbrances, and to make any necessary repairs to prevent any further deterioration of the infrastructure.

The Town has taken two proactive steps to encourage the renovation and reuse of the structure. First, the Zoning Commission created a Theater District zone for the site and nearby properties. This zone supports and promotes ancillary theater activities, such as restaurants, acting schools, and bed and breakfast establishments. This action helps to show the Town's commitment to new development and the successful return of performances to the building.



**Shakespeare Theater**

Second, the Town Council established an Advisory Committee (November 2002) to develop a business and marketing plan for the Shakespeare Theater. The Committee stated that acquisition of the building and the return of theatrical productions will require a "100% commitment by the Town, community, and leadership."

The Advisory Committee recommends that the Town acquire the property from the State. The Town would then manage the land and the buildings, as it does with other town facilities. Acquisition of the building and grounds will require a maintenance commitment by the Town. The Advisory Committee estimates it will cost the Town \$185,000 to mothball the building and an additional \$145,000 annual cost to maintain the structure. While these are significant outlays, the town will be gaining a 14-acre park along the waterfront with the potential for revenue to offset maintenance needs.

Management of the facility should follow the outline of the Advisory Committee: a board of directors to run the operation and a non-profit foundation to raise money. The Town should not be in the business of running a theater company.

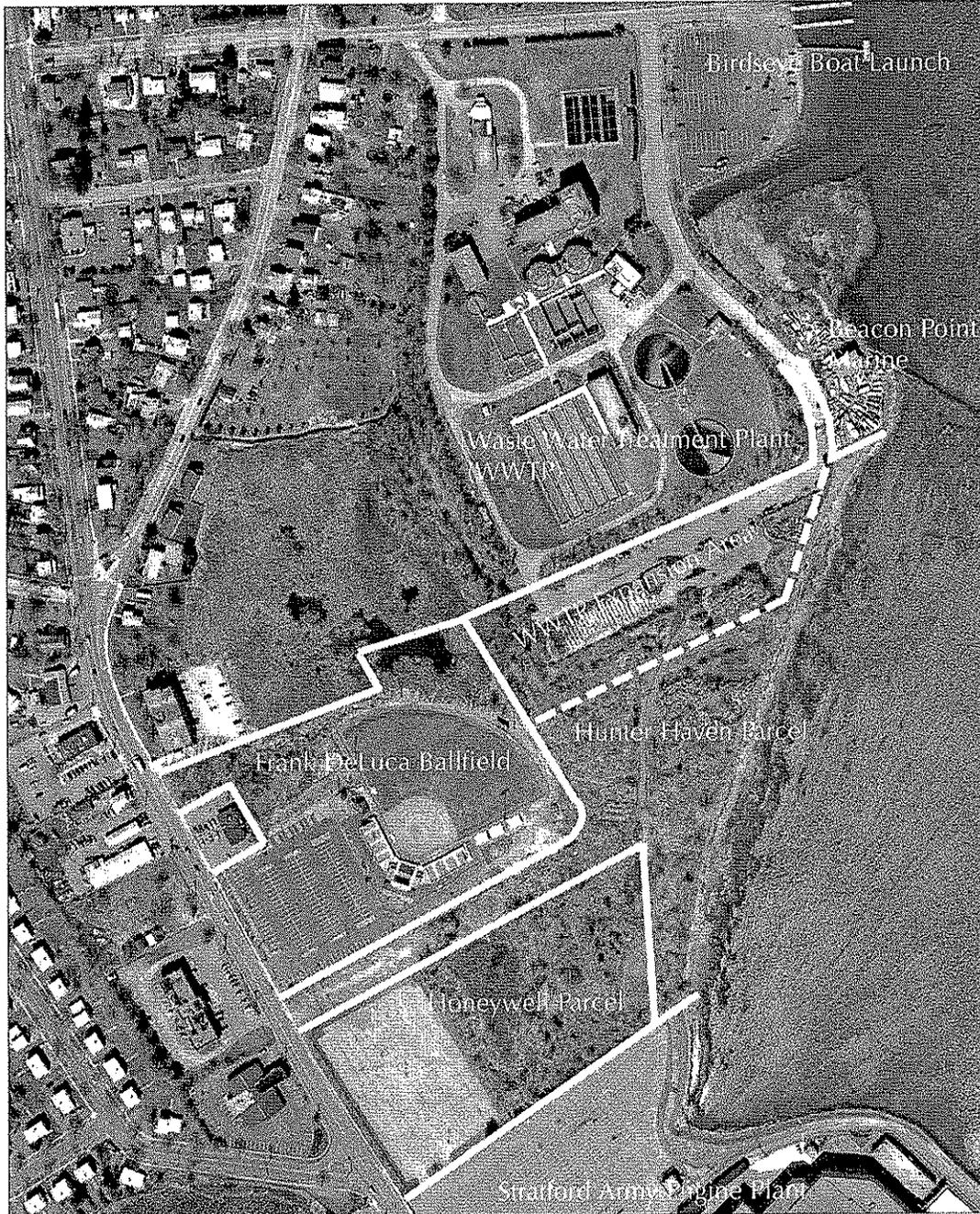
### **Hunter Haven / Honeywell Property**

The Hunter Haven property lies between the Army Engine Plant and the Town's waste-water treatment plant. The site is adjacent to the DeLuca ballfield, which the town also owns. Hunter Haven has approximately 10 acres, with frontage along the Housatonic River. Presently the site is fenced off and used for storage of various items. A maintenance plan should be devised to clean the property, cut back the vegetation, and open the land so that residents can view the waterfront. The town-owned Honeywell site is adjacent to the Hunter Haven property, and has approximately 5 acres of land.

Figure 6 shows an aerial view of the land from Birdseye Boat Launch to the Stratford Army Engine Plant. Figure 7 demonstrates a future development and use for this property to enhance public access. A second access from the boat launching area is shown onto Beacon Point Road to facilitate circulation. The existing hurricane fencing surrounding the wastewater treatment plant should be replaced with more aesthetic fencing, including possible nautical symbols designed into the fence. The metal guardrail along Beacon Point Road should be removed and replaced by a rail more appropriate for a waterfront atmosphere. This could include a wooden guardrail, similar to the ones along the Merritt Parkway, or some type of post and beam fence.

Beacon Point Marine is located across from the wastewater treatment plant. This property is surrounded by town-owned land and it may be appropriate for the town to purchase the land to continue efforts to improve the waterfront in that area. The existing breakwater located at Beacon Point Marine could be improved to provide greater access and opportunities for fishing in the Housatonic River.

FIGURE 6 HUNTER HAVEN AERIAL



WATERFRONT PLAN Stratford, CT

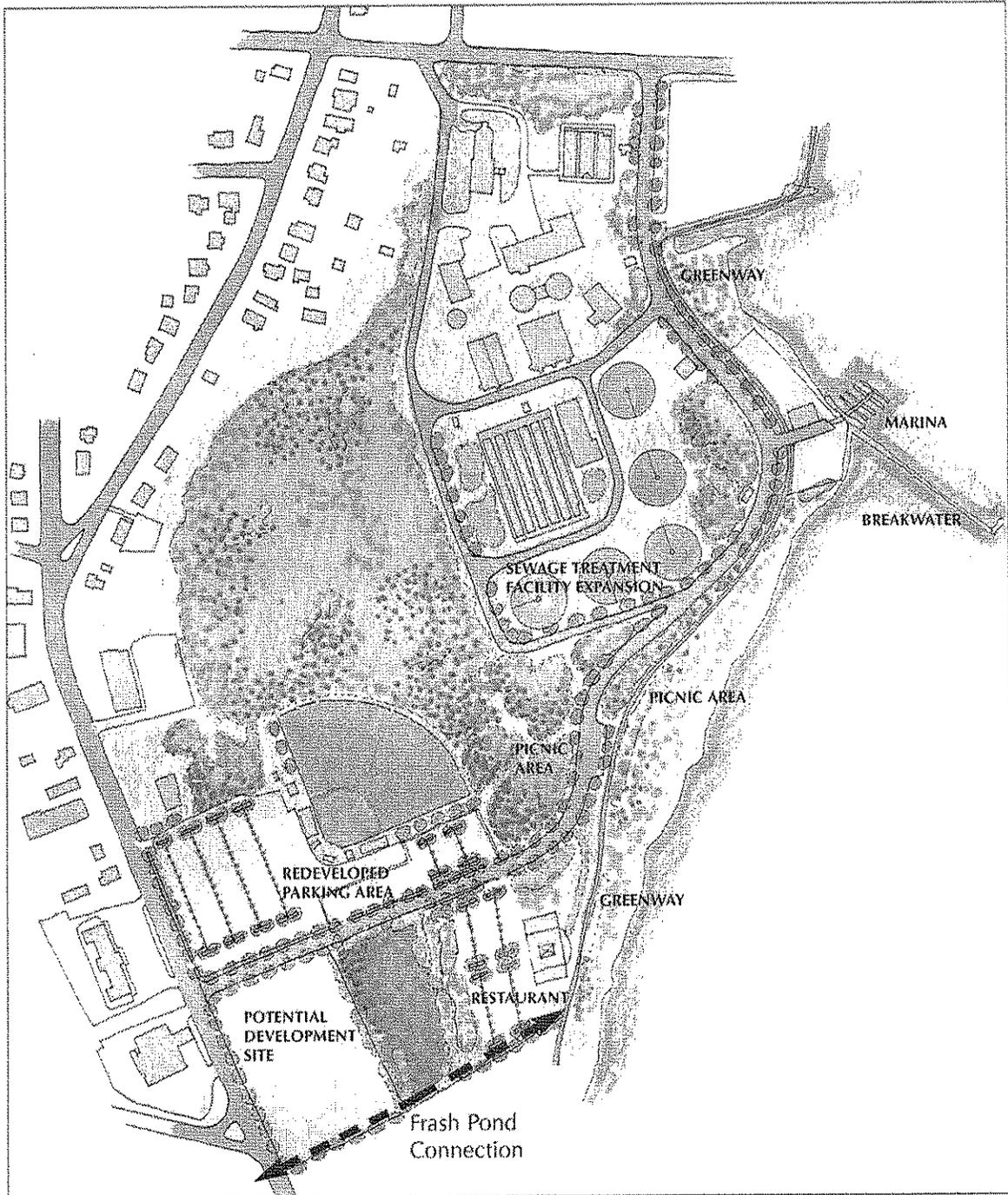
Figure 6. Aerial Map - Hunter Haven/Honeywell



Scale 1:300

BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.

FIGURE 7 SITE PLAN



WATERFRONT PLAN  
Stratford, CT

Figure 7. Site Plan



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BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.

A walking tour of the Hunter Haven site identified development locations within the parcel, as well as dramatized the magnificent views available from the riverfront. Development of the Hunter Haven site should focus on the Greenway, providing public access to the riverfront. As discussed previously, the trail should follow Beacon Point the Hunter Haven site, along the and connect with Stratford Army Plant. Along the southerly side of Honeywell parcel, a public should be retained to provide a out to Main Street, and a possible crossing to Frash Pond, where it possible to construct a picnic some other small-scale public



Greenway Road into riverfront, Engine the easement connection pedestrian area or amenity.

The development areas are Figure 7. A restaurant overlooking the Housatonic River could be built along an extended Beacon Point Road, which would be built through to Main Street, within the existing reserved right-of-way between DeLuca Field and the Honeywell parking lot. The Hunter Haven area nearest to the ballfield could be turned into a public park, possibly with picnic areas, or, if the ballfield needed to expand or provide additional services, these could be placed here.

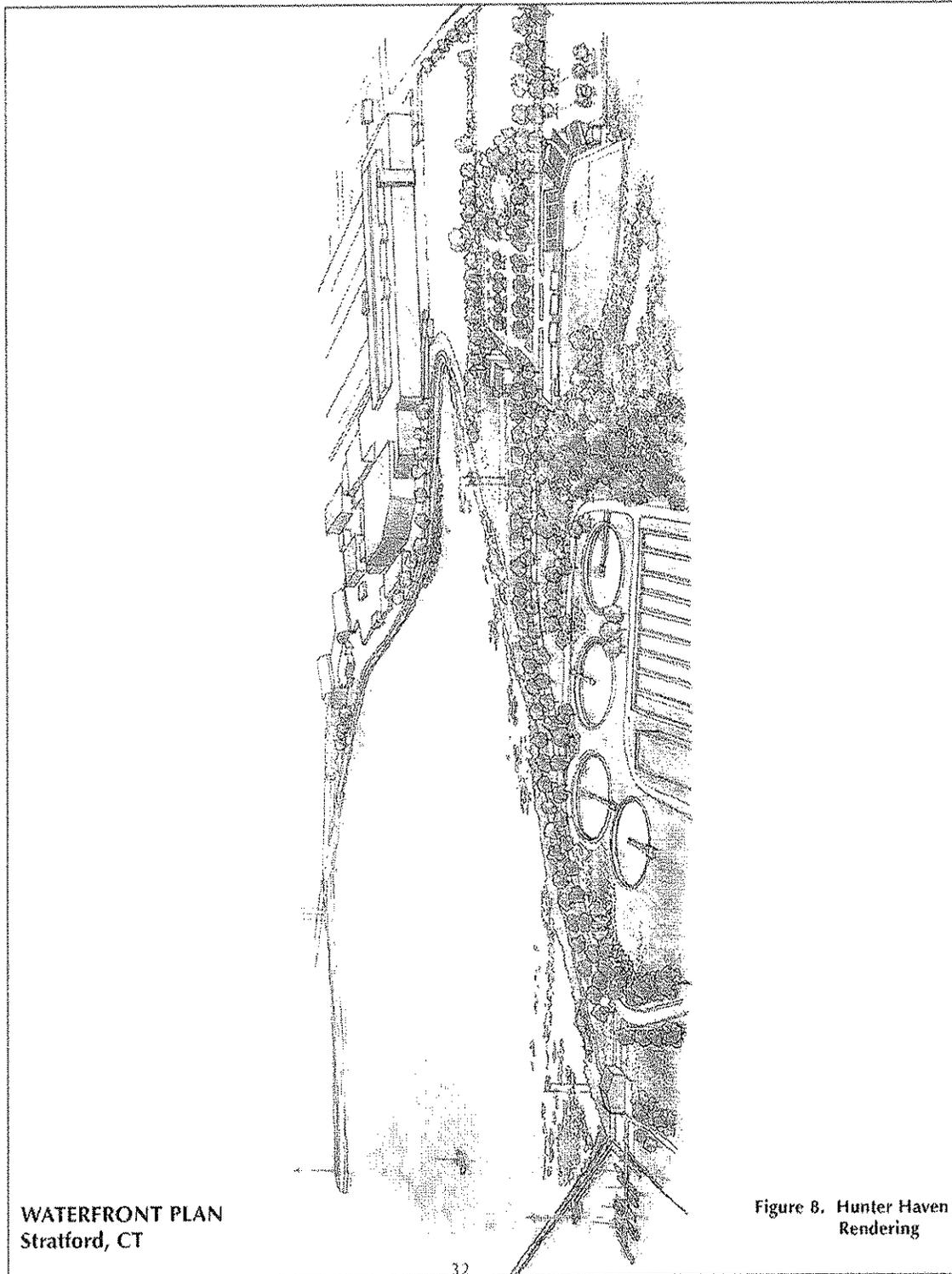


Additional parking alongside DeLuca Field would probably alleviate the need for the Honeywell parking area. This site, fronting onto Main Street, would then become a second development area for the town. Development of the parking area could also be connected with the adjacent parking lot for the Army Engine Plant.

The Hunter Haven riverfront is environmentally sensitive and should not be intensively developed. It is not appropriate as a site for an additional marina. However, it could provide limited water access for portable boats, such as canoes and kayaks, if it does not adversely impact coastal resources.

Access to the riverfront from the Greenway should also be seen as an educational opportunity. Placing informational/educational signs along the Greenway in places such as the Hunter Have site would identify the unique natural resources, such as shellfish beds and intertidal flats. If people are aware of the importance and functions of sensitive areas, they are more likely to support their conservation.

**FIGURE 8 HUNTER HAVEN RENDERING**



WATERFRONT PLAN  
Stratford, CT

Figure 8. Hunter Haven  
Rendering

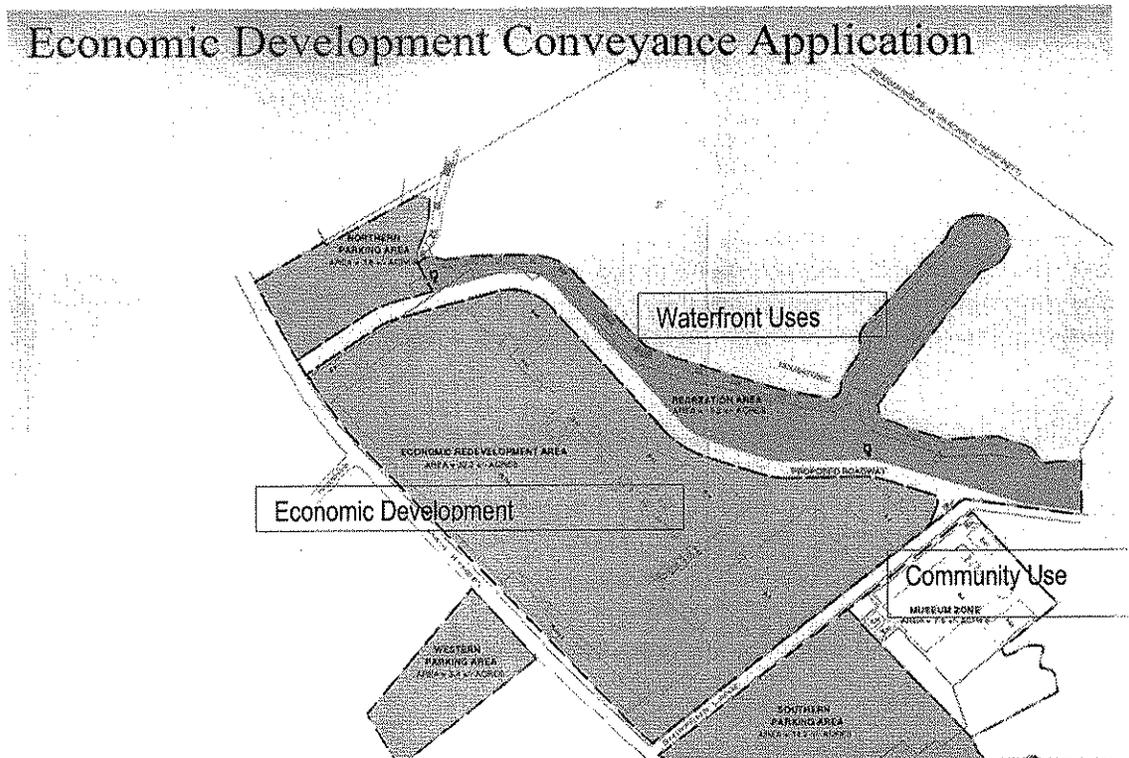
### Stratford Army Engine Plant



**Stratford Army Engine Plant Complex**

The Stratford Army Engine Plant (SAEP) has been an icon along Stratford's waterfront for over 70 years. Today, however, the plant sits vacant, awaiting environmental clean-up and disposition by the US Army. The Army and Town have agreed to a plan whereby the Army will convey the site to the Town of Stratford. According to the agreement, fifteen acres along the waterfront will be retained by the Town as a recreation area, seven and one-half acres will be used for community purposes such as a helicopter/aviation museum, and the remaining fifty-three acres will be conveyed from the Town to the preferred developer, Team Stratford, for economic development.

### Economic Development Conveyance Application

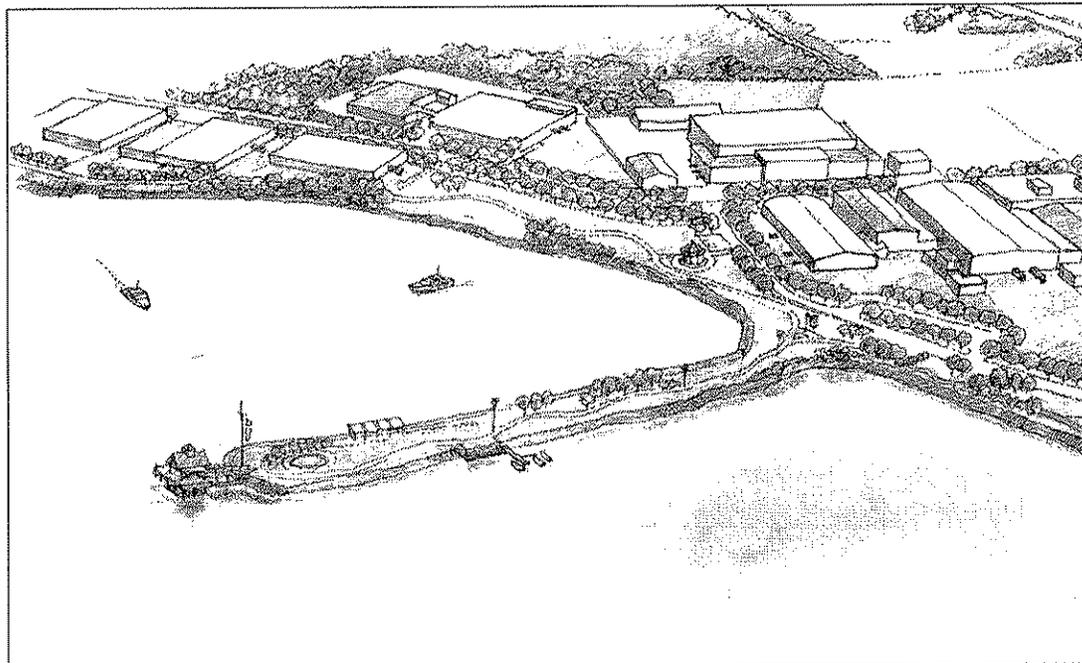


**Future Disposition of the SAEP Site**

The waterfront recreation area will include the causeway, which projects into the Housatonic River. The Greenway will be incorporated into this recreation area, providing a trail and public access along the riverfront. The recreation area should include parking for the public to easily access the site and additional facilities such as picnic tables, a walkway along the causeway, fishing areas, and perhaps a gazebo or pavilion at the end of the causeway. Additional water-dependent recreational opportunities should be explored as part of the development of the causeway. This could include a small boat marina or mooring location (if possible after careful evaluation with coastal resources constraints), canoe/ kayak launch, and even a possible ferry or water taxi station. Funding for the additional maintenance responsibilities could come from a dedicated tax on the redevelopment of the other fifty-three acres.

A 7.5-acre tract in the southeast corner of the site is shown for community purposes. The site has already been conveyed for an aviation/helicopter museum, reflecting the town's aviation connections. The location of the museum near the waterfront, the recreation areas, and the Greenway is an appropriate use of the site and would help to bring people to the waterfront. Increasing tourism and recreational opportunities along Stratford's waterfront will increase the visibility of the waterfront, its image, and hopefully enhance redevelopment efforts.

The agreement proposes to allow economic redevelopment on the majority of the site, though the Army is responsible for remediating the site of environmental hazards. The existing building occupies over one million square feet of floor area so its redevelopment is important to the town. This could entail the renovation of the existing structures or demolition and new construction.



**Rendering of Greenway Along the SAEP Riverfront**

As noted previously, the site is zoned for light industrial uses. This may not be the best and highest use of a property with riverfront views and access. The Town should give

consideration to rezoning this site to allow other uses that would promote access to the waterfront and raise the image of the town, including entertainment possibilities and mixed-uses. Small shops with a coordinated architectural theme could create a village-like center, serving recreational users and the nearby Lordship neighborhood. A waterfront marketplace could be a unique attraction and draw people from surrounding towns. A small theater or pavilion for summer use would enliven the area and offer evening outdoor concerts, attracting people to the area after work hours. The Town should also consider redevelopment of this site in relation to the adjacent town-owned Honeywell and Hunter Haven properties. Combined, the parcels represent nearly 70 acres of land. Redevelopment of the SAEP property should be compatible with development of the Hunter Haven property as recreation, marine storage, and commercial uses.

### **Sikorsky Memorial Airport**



**Sikorsky Memorial Airport and Short Beach**

The Sikorsky Memorial Airport is a 600-acre tract of land owned by the City of Bridgeport. The airport serves private and corporate jets; commercial service is not offered at this time. The airport provides little economic benefit to the Town. It does not pay property taxes, there are few businesses associated with the airport, and not many jets are registered here, providing little personal property tax benefit to the Town. The airport has a significant influence, however, on surrounding land uses. It's location between the Housatonic River and the Great Meadows Marsh occupies prime land near Stratford's waterfront.

The Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) and the City of Bridgeport have targeted runway 6/24 for safety improvements. If carried out, the FAA recommends lengthening the safety zones at both ends of the runway. This would necessitate the rerouting of Main Street, pushing the road closer to the waterfront.

This plan recommends maintaining the present status and boundaries of the airport. The Town should continue to be involved with the airport's operation and management, and monitor potential changes to the airport and its runways. In the future, if Main Street must be re-aligned, the Town could explore opportunities for increased pedestrian amenities in the area and greater waterfront access.

### **Stratford Point**



### **Stratford Point**

Stratford Point is privately owned by Sporting Good Industries, a subsidiary of DuPont. Historically the land was used as a gun club. However, that use left lead pellets, which were identified as an environmental hazard, on the site so the company recently paid to clean the property of the lead material. Signs posted on the property now allow visitors to engage in passive recreation and to enjoy the scenic character of the land.

Stratford Point, together with Short Beach and the landfill, presents an undeveloped waterfront for approximately one mile. This area has natural scenic beauty, offers habitat to fish and wildlife, and provides an excellent opportunity to create a walking path along the waterfront to enable residents to enjoy and appreciate the town's natural assets.

Public input expressed a strong desire to safeguard the current, undeveloped nature of the site. Some residents advocate the Town purchasing or acquiring ownership of the land, while others acknowledged that a conservation easement would offer the same protection and it would not require the Town to budget monies for additional maintenance responsibilities.

Sporting Good Industries has placed a conservation easement over the property, guaranteeing that it will not be subdivided and built upon in the future. The easement creates a 9-acre protected breeding ground for birds, administered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, with the remainder of the property deeded to the Audubon Society so that the land remains accessible to the public. The Town should continue to monitor the property to ensure that the conservation easement allows public access to the site for passive recreation purposes (e.g. walking, bird watching, hiking, etc.).

The conservation easement should allow a trail across the site, to connect with the Greenway trail, in order for people to enjoy the magnificent views from Stratford Point.

### **Long Beach**

Long Beach is a natural barrier beach. Barrier Beaches are narrow strips of beach and dunes close to the coastline, and are separated from the mainland by a body of water or wetland. Lewis Gut separates Long Beach from the Great Meadows Marsh and the Stratford coastline. The barrier beach is constantly changing due to erosion, wave action, and shifting dunes. These dynamic systems are a tremendous resource-providing storm and flood protection to the coastline as well as recreational opportunities for swimmers, sunbathers, fishermen, windsurfers, and others. In addition, barrier beaches provide habitat for plants and wildlife, sometimes including rare and endangered species, such as the Piping Plover.

The piping plover is an example of one such endangered species that nests on the island. Habitat areas are closed during the spring and early summer, when the birds nest and raise their young. After a few months, the beach reverts to being completely accessible.

The Town of Stratford owns Long Beach to its municipal border with the City of Bridgeport, approximately 1.5 miles from its beginning at the edge of Lordship. The City owns the section to the west of this, known as Pleasure Beach, the widest part of the beach. Access to the area used to be through the city, via a bridge. However, the bridge is no longer in service due to a fire in the late 1990s and high capital costs (approx. \$20 million) of rebuilding the bridge to allow boats to pass through into Johnson Creek and Lewis Gut. The westerly end of Long Beach can now only be reached by private boat or by foot from the easterly end of the beach. Stratford may wish to consult with Bridgeport regarding the future of Long Beach, since both municipalities own portions of the beach and actions by the town or city can impact the future of the beach.

In the past, the Town has rented land to the cottage owners for seasonal enjoyment. There is now a discussion within the Town as to whether the properties should be sold to the former lease-holders, who have offered payment to the Town. However, with no automobile access

to the area and no way to provide emergency services, litter removal, and other governmental functions, the town can not provide adequate services to the cottage area. In addition, the cottages rely on on-site septic systems to treat their waste before it flows into Lewis Gut and the Sound. These systems are old and not well documented with the Health Department. There have been reports of high coliform counts in the Lewis Gut area that have raised concerns over the effectiveness of the existing systems.

The 1990 Coastal Plan, the 1993 Stratford Visions, and the current zoning map recommend that the entire Long Beach be preserved as undeveloped open space. This designation is incompatible with the continued use of the summer cottages, which lends weight to allowing the entire beach to remain accessible to all Stratford residents.

This Waterfront Plan recommends that the Town support the goals and policies of the Coastal Plan as well as its existing Plan of Conservation and Development and not sell the land to the cottage owners. Rather, all of Stratford's portion of Long Beach should remain under public ownership, for all of Stratford residents to enjoy.

The Town could retain ownership of Long Beach, or it could consider selling Long Beach to the Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), which has offered to purchase the land and would incorporate the beach into the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, which owns and administers the Great Meadows Marsh, across Lewis Gut from Long Beach. Ownership by the USFWS would enable the land to be preserved as open space in perpetuity. If it were purchased by USFWS, there ought to be a guarantee of public access and use of the beach. Selling the land to the USFWS should not be construed as donating Stratford's portion of Long Beach for bird habitat. Any conveyance of property from Stratford to the Fish and Wildlife Service should include safeguards for access and so that Stratford does not lose access to one of its natural assets.



**Aerial View of Stratford Looking North Up the Housatonic River**

## **Recommendations**

### **Maintenance**

Goal: Establish Maintenance Plan for Town-owned Property

#### Recommendations

1. Evaluate maintenance needs of existing town waterfront property.
2. Review current level of maintenance.
3. Identify strategies to improve maintenance where current levels are not adequate.
4. Consider outside funds - grants, private donations - to supplement town funds.
5. Determine additional resources to bring maintenance levels to acceptable level.

### **Hunter Haven / Honeywell / Beacon Point Properties**

Goals: Allow Continued Economic Development Along the Waterfront  
Construct Greenway  
Increase Recreational Opportunities

#### Recommendations:

1. Construct the Greenway along the waterfront, with a connection to DeLuca field.
2. Allow uses that will serve as upland support to the nearby waterfront and marina uses, including the possibility of marine vertical storage, showers/ lockers, retail shops, concession stands, and/or restaurants.
3. Permit limited commercial development.
  - a. Commercial development should support public access and the Greenway.
  - b. Provide design guidelines for new construction.
4. Allow limited waterfront development that does not require dredging of the intertidal flats.
5. Consider acquisition of the Beacon Point Marina by the Town.

### **Stratford Army Engine Plant**

Goal: Allow Continued Economic Development Along the Waterfront  
Construct Greenway  
Increase Recreational Opportunities

Recommendations:

1. Construct the Greenway along the riverfront.
2. Enhance the causeway with recreational opportunities such as walking trails, fishing locations, canoe and kayak launching areas, and possibly small boat moorings, if there are no adverse impacts to coastal resources.
3. Enhance revenue from town parcels.
  - a. Consider dedicating a portion of redevelopment funds to maintain 15-acre waterfront park.
  - b. Consider a gazebo or pavilion at end of causeway for rental purposes for weddings, parties, small groups.
4. Evaluate existing zoning, redevelopment goals, and consider new/amended zoning for site.
5. Allow for community building, such as museum, to enhance public access and tourism to the waterfront.
6. Once passed by the U.S. Army to the Town, the Town has a commitment to convey the redevelopment area to its preferred developer.
7. Portions of the redevelopment area nearest the waterfront zone may be better suited to restaurants, cafes, and support services oriented to the Greenway and the recreational users who come to the waterfront. The Town can remain involved in the development of this property by limiting development to certain uses.

### **Shakespeare Theater**

Goal: Generate Tourism and Economic Development Opportunities for the Town.

Recommendations:

1. Support the State to take back title of the property.
2. Work with State to transfer title to the Town.
  - a. Title should be free of any liens or encumbrances.
  - b. State should assist Town in providing funds to stabilize all buildings on the property.

3. The Town should create a Board of Directors to operate the Theater.
4. The Town should create a non-profit Theater Foundation to raise revenue for theatrical productions and building maintenance.
5. Encourage support services for the theater, such as restaurants, bed and breakfasts, etc.

### **Greenway**

Goal: Maximize Public Access to the Waterfront

Recommendations:

1. Construct the first segment of the Greenway between Birdseye Street Water Access Area and the Army Engine Plant. The trail should be paved, well marked, and of adequate width to allow pedestrians and bicyclists adequate room to travel in both directions.
2. Extend the Greenway north to Shakespeare Theater and Bond's Dock and south to Stratford Point.
3. Future Extensions of the Greenway should connect with Long Beach and areas north along the Housatonic.

### **Design Guidelines**

Goal: Encourage High-Quality Design

1. Create Design Guidelines for new buildings in the waterfront area.
2. Different waterfront areas may have different guidelines.
3. Developers should meet with town officials at the beginning of the process to coordinate their design objectives
4. The Planning Commission could create an architectural review board to provide assistance in reviewing the design guidelines.
5. If the Town creates a Village District zone, the zone should include design guidelines for new development.

### **Natural Resource Protection**

Goal: Ensure Protection of Natural Resource Areas

Recommendations:

1. Review existing zoning regulations within natural resource areas.
  - a. Continue to follow existing Coastal Resource Policies that ensure allowable uses are compatible with the resource.
  - b. Retain existing 50 and 75-foot setbacks from wetlands and dunes.
  - c. Continue to require viewsheds for new development along the waterfront.
  - d. Maintain exclusion of wetlands when calculating net lot area.
  - e. Ensure comprehensive stormwater regulations.
2. Incorporate Site Plan requirements into coastal zones.
3. Identify natural resource areas that the Town can purchase.
  - a. Work with State and Federal agencies to leverage grant money.
  - b. Work with non-profit groups to conserve natural resource areas.
  - c. Explore the use of conservation easements to protect areas.
4. Offer tax savings to landowners that preserve waterfront natural resource areas.
5. Provide adequate funding for maintenance of natural resource areas.
6. Educate the public about the advantages of natural resource protection.
7. Encourage natural resource protection as part of an economic development tool (e.g. include Great Meadows Marsh on Connecticut Birding Tour)

### **Stratford Point**

Goal: Construct a Greenway Along the Waterfront  
Ensure Protection of Natural Resource Areas

Recommendations:

1. Conserve land in its present, undeveloped state.
2. Work with property owner to ensure that the conservation easement allows public access of the property for passive recreation.
3. Provide Greenway trail connection with Stratford Point property.

## **Long Beach**

Goal: Ensure Protection of Natural Resources.

Recommendations:

1. Do not sell any portion of Long Beach to former leaseholders (cottage owners).
2. Consider sale of Long Beach to US Fish and Wildlife Service as long as that Agency guarantees public access to beach.
3. If property remains town-owned, budget adequate monies for proper maintenance of facilities.
4. Connect Long Beach with the Greenway trail network.
5. Consider improvements to Long Beach that encourage greater use of the property, such as a boardwalk, if additional monies can be found for construction and on-going maintenance.
6. Protect endangered species, both flora and fauna.
7. Work with the City of Bridgeport regarding the future of Long Beach.

## **Water Dependent Uses**

Goal: Provide Additional Recreational Opportunities

Marina Recommendations:

1. Allow the private marketplace to determine the need for additional boat slips within Stratford. A public marina is a low priority.
2. Marinas should not be located along the portions of the coast where environmental resources need to be protected.
3. Consider off-site parking, storage, and other standards for the town's existing marinas to allow for expansion and growth.

4. The Town should work with the Army Corps of Engineers and the State Department of Environmental Protection to facilitate dredging of the Housatonic River. Dredging is critical to the safe boating within Stratford's waterways, including the commercial fishing boats and barges that travel up the river.

#### Waterfront Recreation Recommendations

1. Improve (i.e. remove obstacles which prevent) access points for enjoyment of the Town's waterfront.
  - a. The Hunter Haven Site
  - b. Honeywell Property
  - c. Stratford Army Engine Plant
  - d. Marine Basin area.
2. The Greenway should be an integral part of increased waterfront access.
3. Short Beach and Long Beach offer exceptional opportunities for residents to enjoy the waterfront. The Town should develop and implement a maintenance strategy for town-owned waterfront parcels. The strategy should examine existing conditions, identify additional needs to increase maintenance to appropriate levels, and evaluate means to achieve proper maintenance.
4. Consider limited waterfront access along the Hunter Haven site for canoes, kayaks, fishermen, and other low-intensive uses, if it can be accommodated without adverse impacts to coastal resources.
5. Make improvements to the existing breakwater off the Beacon Point Marine property to enhance its use as a fishing pier.
6. Evaluate potential waterfront uses from Sniffen's Lane to the Marine Basin.

#### Commercial/Industrial Zoning Recommendations

1. Review existing zoning of waterfront properties.
  - a. Consider Rezoning Coastal Industrial lands (Hunter Haven, Honeywell and Sniffen's Lane) to Waterfront Business District or a newly created zone that identifies uses that are preferred for the site.
  - b. Reconsider types of manufacturing within the Coastal Industrial District.
  - c. Eliminate special cases from Waterfront Business Zone and incorporate site plan review.
  - d. Consider rezoning the Army Engine Plant property from manufacturing use to commercial, business/office. Portions of the site could also include retail, restaurant, café, and community uses.

2. Create zones with as-of-right uses that project to developers the types of uses Stratford wants to see built.
  - a. Sniffen's Lane properties should include waterfront / marina development and storage. Many of the manufacturing uses could be eliminated.
  - b. Hunter Haven and Honeywell sites should allow retail, small office, water-dependent businesses, recreation, and support services for marinas.
  - c. Revise Army Engine Plant zone to include desired uses such as office/ research and business park. Eliminate many of the manufacturing types from the zone.
3. Evaluate allowing off-site support services for marinas that are nearby and within walking distance of the marina.
4. Provide design guidelines to developers so that future development creates a positive image for the waterfront. Guidelines could identify existing development that exemplifies recommended design and materials. These could include roof pitch and material, fenestration (size of windows and percent of exterior surface), exterior siding (e.g. wooden clapboards), and building height and size.
5. Require Site Plan review as part of non-residential development applications.

### **Sikorsky Memorial Airport**

Goal: Minimize Adverse Impacts from Airport

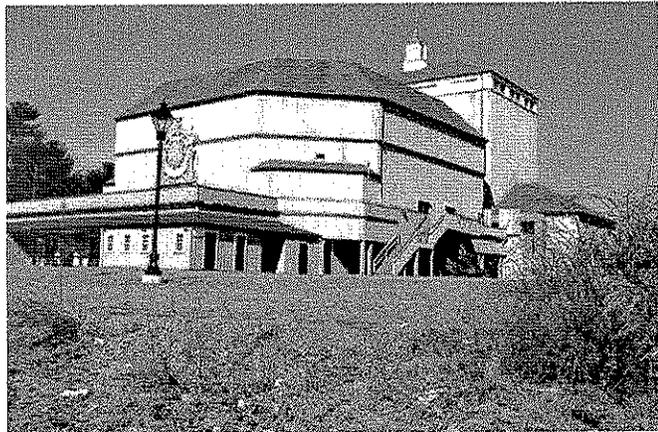
Recommendations:

1. Not in favor of runway extension and rerouting of Main Street.
2. If runway expansion becomes necessary, mitigate impacts:
  - a. Construct off-road path and connect with Greenway at Sniffen's Lane.
  - b. Consider new waterfront road and extension of Sniffen's Lane (*maximize public access, viewing and connections to existing Greenway, to the extent feasible.*)

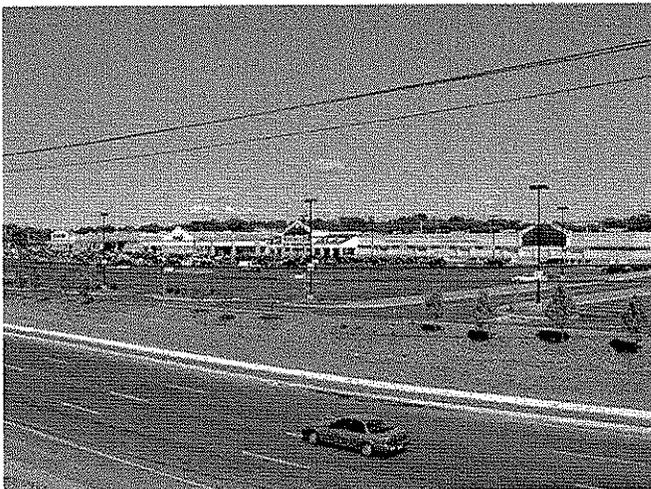


## Section VI. Economic Revitalization Plan

**Stratford Army Engine Plant**



**American Festival (Shakespeare) Theater**



**Home Depot/Wal-Mart Development, Rte. 1**

## **Section VI. Economic Revitalization Plan**

### **Introduction**

Stratford held a public workshop April 30, 2003, to discuss issues surrounding economic development. The workshop was co-sponsored by the Stratford Planning Commission and the Stratford Economic Development Commission. Elected officials, members of both Commissions, business owners, and interested residents attended the workshop. The workshop focused on the following topics: industrial revitalization, Stratford Center revitalization, "brownfield" development (including Ferry Boulevard), tourism, and design issues. The goal of the workshop was to identify current economic trends within the town, identify strengths to build upon, and develop implementation strategies.

### **Recommendations**

#### Attract New Industries to Stratford

Manufacturing jobs are continuing to leave Stratford. Stratford needs to attract new technology companies such as high-technology and bio-technology firms.

#### Actions:

Create new Office/Research zone for Stratford that permits growing industries like high technology and bio-technology.

Rezone underdeveloped industrial areas (Stratford Army Engine Plant, Stratford Development, other lands around the airport and I-95, Remington Woods) to office/research zones to encourage these industries to come to Stratford. This zone would be similar to the "PED", though it would not allow all uses in the coastal and light industrial zone (i.e. warehousing, packaging, and manufacturing). Workshop participants expressed a desire to relocate these existing uses away from the waterfront.

### Encourage Tourism Development

Stratford has a number of existing assets that could be promoted to attract tourists. Additional assets, such as the waterfront area and Shakespeare Theatre could be further developed to supplement tourist venues.

#### Actions:

Promote existing tourist opportunities such as Boothe Park and the Rose Garden, aviation/helicopter museum, historic homes and neighborhoods, waterfront restaurants, boating opportunities, fishing locations, and natural resource areas such as the McKinney National Wildlife Refuge.

Support additional recreational and development opportunities along the waterfront to promote Stratford as a waterfront community.



**Public Workshop**

Shakespeare Theatre. Actively work to return the Shakespeare Theatre and its property to the Town. Follow the advice of the Shakespeare Theatre Advisory Committee to acquire the building and land and return the building to the production of plays. The town should simply be a steward of the property, not actively involved in running the theater. Encourage additional support services such as restaurants, theater schools, bed and breakfasts, etc. within the adjacent area.

The Theater and adjacent properties could be included within a Village District designation. This would strengthen the Town's ability to regulate design issues for the district.

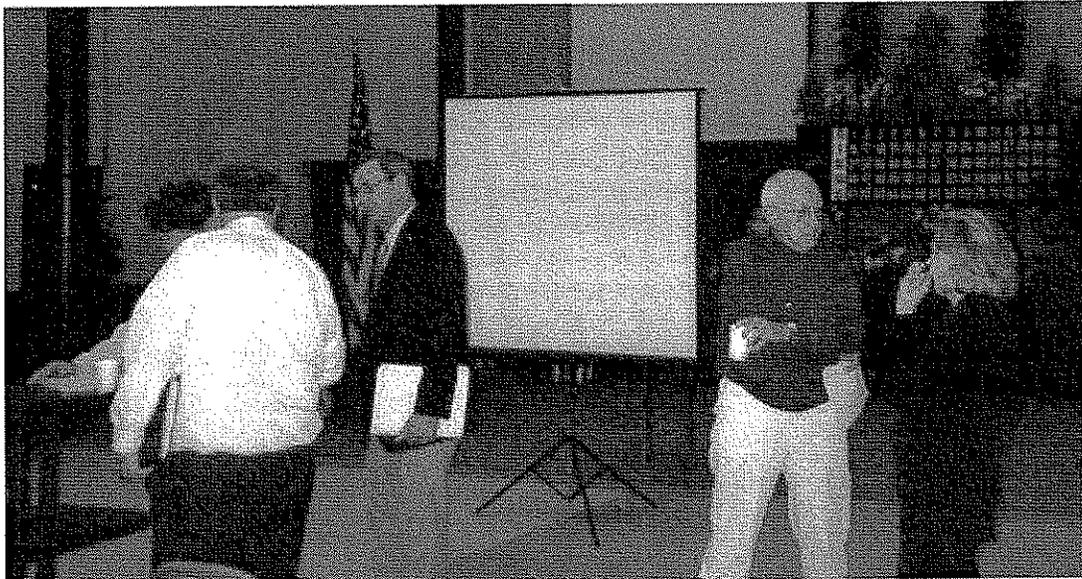
Place an ad for a Request for Expression of Interest for the theater. This may provide guidance as to the type of future management that would be likely to oversee the theater and its productions. The Expression of Interest should make clear the Town will not sell the property for development but will consider leasing and partnership arrangements.

### Stratford Center

The historic center of town provides an alternative shopping area to nearby malls. The center has a variety of architectural styles and businesses that promote variety and visual interest.

#### Actions:

Improve access between shops and the train station. Increase pedestrian connections and lighting, particularly under the railroad and I-95 underpasses. Some monies have been allocated for this purpose and should be spent to make these improvements.



**Public Workshop**

Consider retail surveys to identify underserved markets in the center. The Economic Development Commission could work with property owners to attract businesses where a need is demonstrated.

Evaluate parking demand for the center and coordinate a new parking garage at the railroad station to serve shops in Stratford Center.

Encourage merchants to voluntarily agree to design standards and maintenance responsibilities to create a clean and visually pleasant environment to attract additional shoppers and market the Center as an alternative shopping experience.

### Improve Commercial Corridors

Commercial corridors, such as Barnum and Stratford Avenues, are gateway roads into Stratford. These roads create an impression of the town for people driving through. However, these roadways are not well maintained. Litter is readily apparent, landscaping is practically non-existent, and the roads are not taken care of.

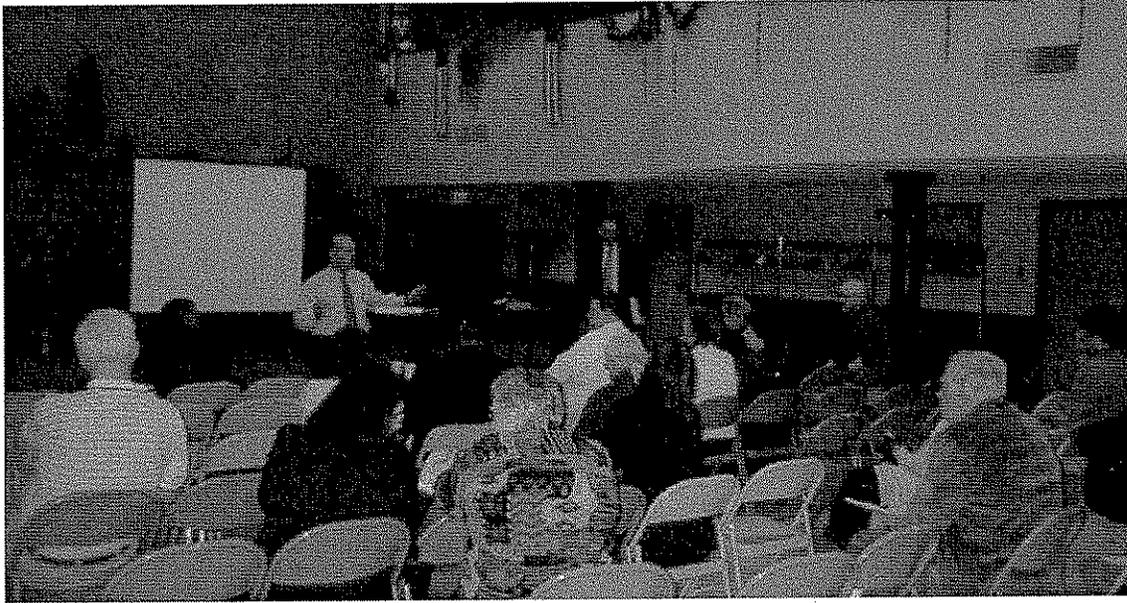
#### Actions:

The town has budgeted monies to improve Barnum Avenue. The town should move forward with improving landscaping, striping, signage, and making intersection improvements along this primary arterial.

Create maintenance program for street cleaning and regular litter removal along commercial roadways.

Seek state and federal grant monies to improve streetscapes.

Coordinate improvements along US Route 1 with state government.



### Public Workshop

#### Improve Building Design and Appearance

Workshop participants expressed a strong desire to improve commercial building facades and landscaping.

#### Actions:

Create Business Improvement Districts. These merchant associations could identify local improvements unique to neighborhoods or streets and coordinate improvements and design standards.

Use public monies to leverage private investment. Consider low-interest loans, tax incentives, and other subsidies to encourage private landowners to maintain and upgrade their commercial properties.

#### Revitalize "Brownfield" Areas

Stratford has older industrial areas that have varying degrees of contaminated soils. These properties need to be cleaned up (remediated) in order to provide new economic opportunities for the town.

**Actions:**

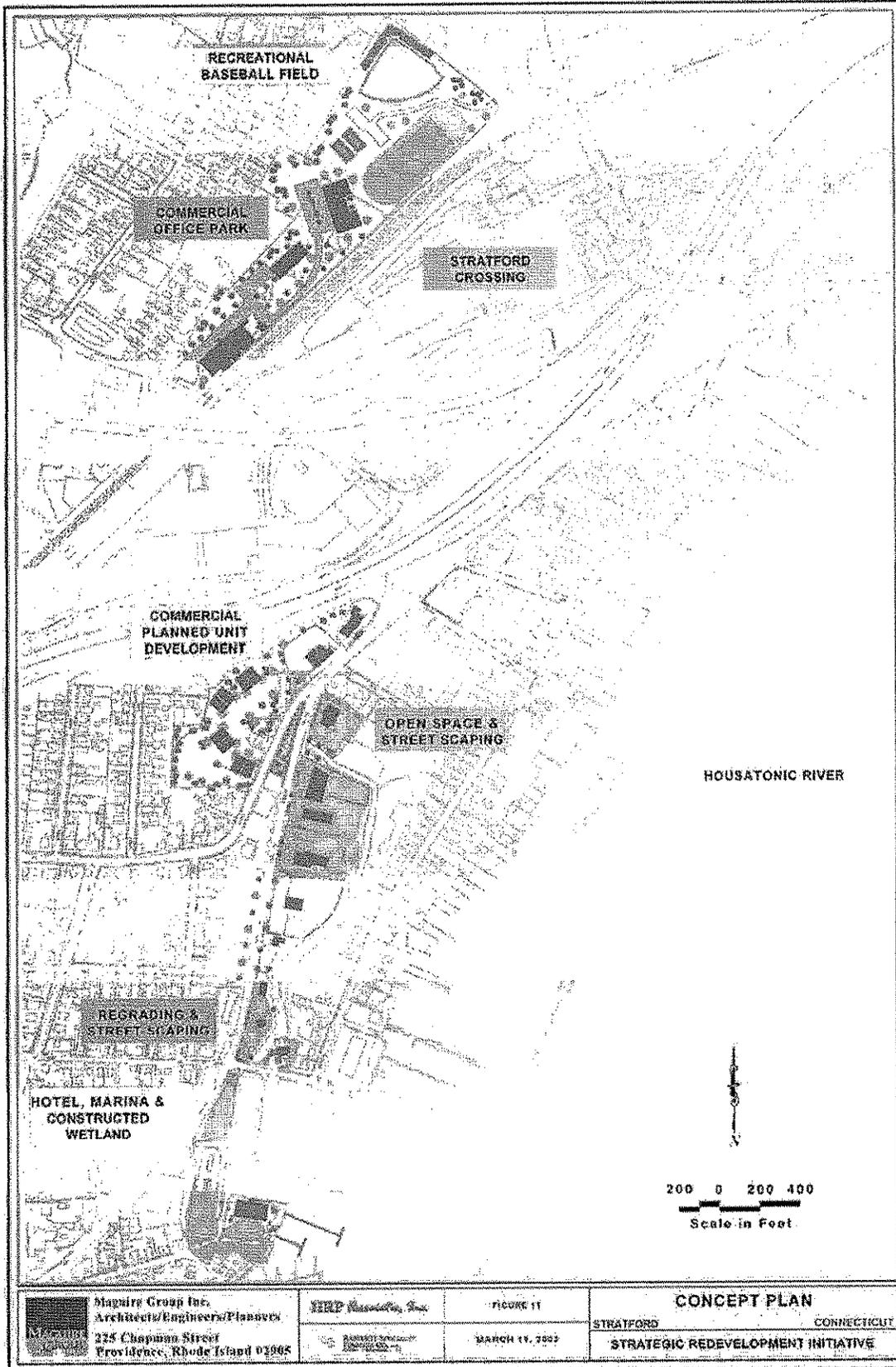
Seek federal and state monies to remediate brownfield properties in Stratford.

Test brownfield sites to determine cause of contamination and determine estimates to clean properties.

Evaluate Ferry Boulevard Superfund Redevelopment Initiative for application to other brownfield properties in town.

Explore incentives (tax incentives and technical assistance) to encourage remediation of contaminated properties.

Seek implementation of the recommendations contained in the Ferry Boulevard Superfund Redevelopment Initiative Pilot Project, funded by the US EPA and adopted by the Town in 2003 (per Maguire Group report dated June 2003). Work with owners, US EPA, and CT DEP to achieve clean-up remediation strategies and assist in locating appropriate financing to redevelop these properties as recommended in this report (see map on following page illustrating the area and recommendations).



**Magnire Group Inc.**  
 Architects/Engineers/Planners  
 275 Chapman Street  
 Providence, Rhode Island 02905

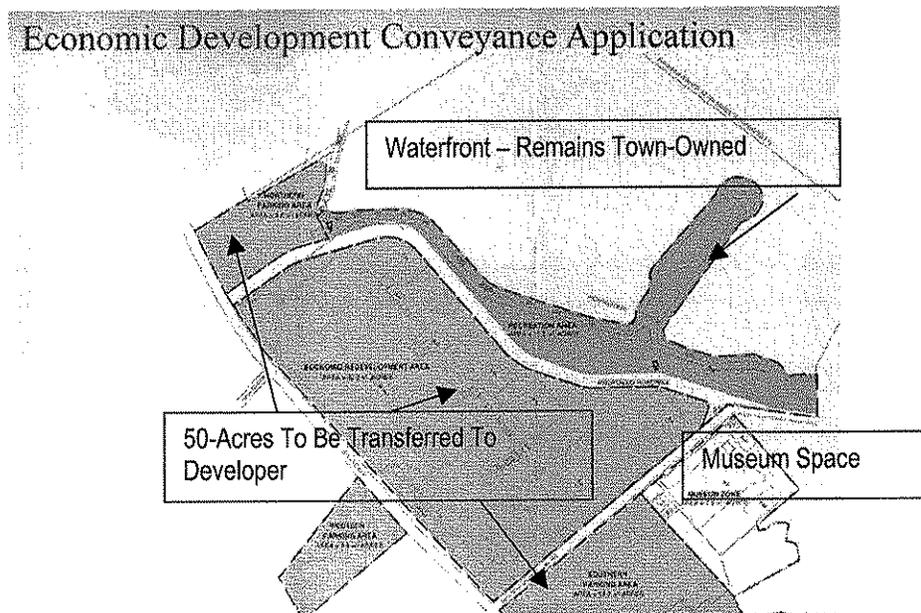
**HRP Associates, Inc.**  
 1000 State Street  
 Providence, Rhode Island 02905

FIGURE 11  
 MARCH 11, 2003

**CONCEPT PLAN**  
 STRATFORD CONNECTICUT  
 STRATEGIC REDEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

### Stratford Army Engine Plant

With 70 acres, over one million square feet of existing floor space, and a prominent waterfront location, this site is perhaps Stratford's premiere development parcel. The Army has not yet conveyed the land and buildings to Stratford, but that will hopefully occur within the next year or two. The Town has already entered into an agreement with a preferred developer whereby the Town will transfer title of approximately 50 acres of the 70-acre parcel to the developer for new economic activity.



#### Actions:

Support current plans for Town to convey property to preferred developer.

Evaluate present zoning of property (manufacturing and warehousing) and consider rezoning site to office/research use to attract high value tenants. Other possibilities could include airplane restoration, exhibit center, factory outlet stores, mixed use zone.

Also consider future use of the site with regards to location along the waterfront. Entertainment uses, specialty retail, and restaurants could also be a possible redevelopment use for a portion of the site.

The 15-acre waterfront portion of the site, to remain town-owned, should remain public and include a bicycle and pedestrian trail, trails along the causeway, and include additional recreational opportunities – kayak/canoe launching area, pavilion, perhaps small boat mooring (if not adversely impacting on coastal resources) -- to promote use and activity along the entire length of the waterfront.

### Waterfront Development

Though a significant amount of the waterfront is developed, land between the wastewater treatment plant and the Army Engine Plant is owned by the town and largely vacant. Development along this stretch of the waterfront offers opportunities to increase revenue as well as increase the image of Stratford as a waterfront community.

#### Actions:

Create a pedestrian and bicycle greenway along the waterfront.

Increase recreational opportunities along the waterfront including fishing, boating, picnicking, etc.

Market development parcels for restaurants, retail, and possibly residential or mixed uses.

### Transportation Improvements

Stratford has a well-developed transportation infrastructure. It is necessary to continually evaluate the network to make additional improvements to improve access and reduce congestion.

**Actions:**

Encourage a complete 4-way intersection at Exit 33 of Interstate 95. Support location of the Wheeler Bridge to allow for construction of the full interchange.

Support railroad station improvements to include platform extensions, so that all train doors may open, and evaluate the need for a parking garage at the station.

**Sikorsky Memorial Airport**

The airport, owned by the City of Bridgeport, provides little economic development to Stratford. The airport should continue to operate within its present boundaries. Development of the present site is acceptable, though any development should be linked to additional tax revenue for the Town.

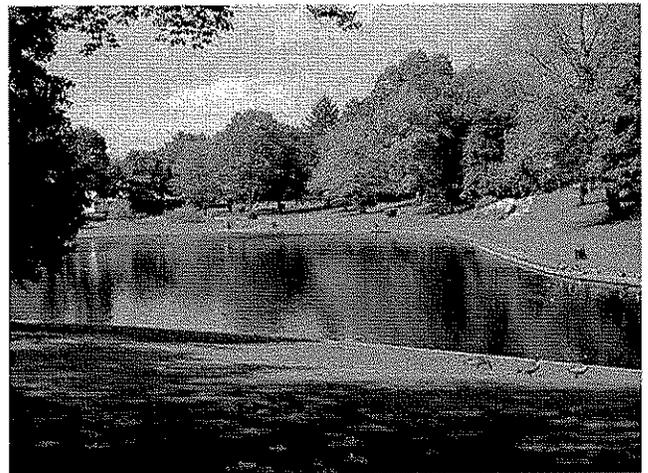


School Playground



Hunter Havens Property

## Section VII. Open Space Plan Update



Longbrook Park

## **Section VII. Open Space Plan Update**

### **Introduction**

The Stratford Planning Commission and the Stratford Conservation Commission co-sponsored a public workshop June 10, 2003, to discuss the issues surrounding open space lands.

Open space is land that has restrictions placed on it so that it will not be developed in the future. There are three general types of open space lands: 1) natural resource lands that have environmentally sensitive features, 2) recreational lands that may include parks, beaches, etc., and 3) passive open spaces that may allow passive recreation such as hiking and bird watching, but do not have actively maintained services such as are found at town parks.

The State of Connecticut defines open space land as follows:

OPEN SPACE (CGS 12-107b(1998)) is any area of land, including forest land, land designated as wetlands under Section 22a-30, and not excluding farmland, the preservation or restriction of the use of which would:

- 1) maintain and enhance the conservation of natural or scenic resources,
- 2) protect natural streams or water supply,
- 3) promote conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches, or tidal marshes,
- 4) enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations or sanctuaries or other open spaces,
- 5) enhance public recreation opportunities,
- 6) preserve historic sites,
- 7) promote orderly urban or suburban development.

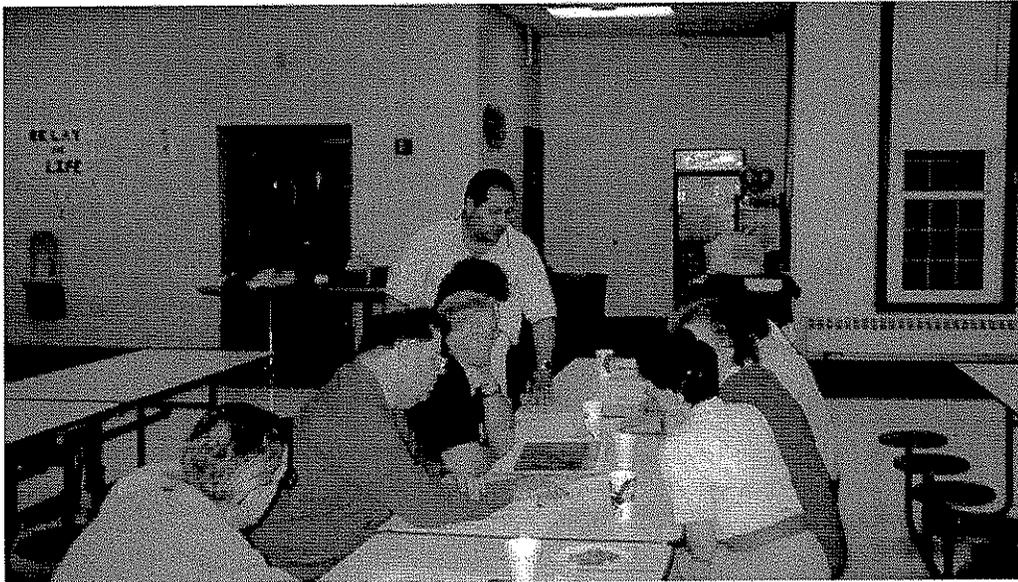
Stratford does not have significant amounts of undeveloped land. The town's recent 1997 Open Space Plan indicates that only 6% of the town remains undeveloped. With fewer available resources, it is important to review open space needs and to recommend strategies for the remaining lands. In addition, the town has significant amounts of environmentally sensitive lands along the riverfront and the coast that require planning to protect the natural resources while also allowing access to enjoy the waterfront environment.

## **Workshop Results and Recommendations**

There was unanimous agreement that Stratford needs additional open space within the town. During the development of the Open Space Plan, there was much discussion among members of the Planning Commission, the Conservation Commission, and the general public regarding the different types of open spaces that exist in Stratford – conservation areas, passive recreation areas, and recreational fields. It was clear from the discussions that each of these open space lands plays an important role today and will continue to be important in Stratford's future.

### **Additional Open Spaces**

The Town should map its open space properties by functional type and assess the extent to which the various open space properties meet the various needs of the Town's population, based on distribution, proximity to population served, and importance of resource protection. This could be a collaborative effort between the Planning Commission and the Conservation Commission (most likely the Open Space Committee).



Public Workshop

Workshop participants rated conservation areas and waterfront lands as high priority areas for the town. Waterfront properties could include recreational activities, but it is important that the waterfront remain open to all residents and preserved for future generations. Conservation areas rated highly and participants acknowledged the importance of limiting development on sensitive lands.

Recreational and neighborhood buffers rated lower than the above two. The Open Space report states that Stratford already has two times the land it needs for major athletic facilities. Neighborhood buffers, participants noted, are nice, but not a high priority when constrained by limited resources.

#### Roosevelt Forest

The boundaries of Roosevelt Forest are currently unclear. There have been several acquisitions and donations adjacent to the Forest, which are now Town-owned. At this point, they are not recognized as specifically being part of the Forest. The Town should review each of its properties in the vicinity of the Forest to determine its appropriateness for inclusion within the boundaries of the Forest. Once the appropriate properties have been identified, the Town should formalize the revised boundaries of the Forest, as necessary.

#### Areas that need Additional Open Space Lands

Workshop results indicate that the central area of town, along Barnum and Stratford Avenues lack adequate neighborhood parks and recreational facilities. Additional neighborhood parks are in keeping with the 1997 Open Space Plan, which identifies a deficit of 60 acres of neighborhood parks.

Focus additional acquisition efforts into expanding and linking open spaces into an interconnected network of open space properties.

#### Improve Maintenance of Open Space Areas

There was considerable discussion regarding the maintenance of existing open space. Many participants voiced their opinion that the Town does not do enough to maintain its present open space network. Existing open space lands may be underutilized because of poor maintenance. The town should develop a comprehensive maintenance plan to keep its facilities clean, in good shape, and inviting to the public. Maintenance should be a consideration for future acquisition of additional open space lands.

## Subdivisions

The 10% open space dedication associated with new subdivisions should be maintained by a Homeowners' Association. This form of ownership is common and would provide the highest level of consistent maintenance without burdening the town with additional responsibilities. An exception to this policy could be if the dedicated open space were adjacent to a town park or an existing open space area, which would be expanded by the dedication. In such a situation, the additional land may not add substantially to the maintenance costs.

## Future Acquisitions

People expressed a strong desire to keep options open and broad for future preservation of open space lands. There are many different tools available, including:

- State grant money
- Dedications and donations
- Conservation easements
- Direct purchases
- Gifts and donations



Public Workshop

When acquiring open space lands, the 2001 Open Space Inventory Acquisition report should be used to guide the town in its efforts to preserve additional open space lands. These properties are part of an overall open space strategy by the town and should receive priority consideration for open space lands.

#### State Grant Money

Connecticut has set a target of having 21% of state lands as open space. To accomplish this goal, the legislature annually funds an account so that municipalities may purchase properties as open space. Stratford should annually apply for state grant money citing the work that has been done on the Plan of Conservation and Development, the Open Space Plan, and the Open Space Acquisition Inventory report.

#### Site Plan

Stratford should have a site plan requirement for non-residential development. A site plan requirement would allow the Planning Commission greater authority to review new developments. It would give the Commission discretion with regards to building placement, open space and landscape areas, and buffers.

While workshop participants felt that developments in the MA Zone should have a minimum 20% set aside requirement, there was disagreement as to whether it should be raised and whether or not it should be consolidated within the tract. Many participants felt it should be decided on a case-by-case basis. Site Plan review would allow the Commission to adapt the 20% (or greater) set aside standard to individual sites.

#### Natural Resource Areas

Protect and conserve natural resources within the town. These areas add to the town's community character and provide important areas for people to go explore and interact with the natural environment.