

PRESERVE OPEN SPACE

Overview

This “briefing booklet” has been prepared as part of the process of preparing an update to the 2008 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) for Branford. This booklet is intended to familiarize the members of the POCD Update Committee and others existing and potential future strategies related to open space.

What Is “Open Space”?

The term “open space” can have many different meanings and might fall into the following categories:

Dedicated Open Space	Land owned by a government entity or a recognized non-profit conservation organization that is expected to remain as open space in perpetuity. <u>Public use of the land is generally allowed.</u>
Regulated Open Space	Land with environmental constraints (such as wetlands or floodplains) which will likely not be developed in the future. <u>Public use generally not allowed unless on public property.</u>
Managed Open Space	Land used for another purpose (such as watershed land, golf courses, cemeteries, etc.) but provides some open space benefits. <u>Public use may or may not be allowed or may be restricted to members.</u>
Temporary Open Space	Land presently assessed under the PA-490 program as farm, forest, or open space category land. <u>Public use generally not allowed.</u>
Perceived Open Space	Private land that is presently vacant or partially developed but nothing prevents this land from being sold or developed at some time in the future. <u>Public use generally not allowed.</u>

Open space can help protect community character, enhance the quality of life for residents, conserve important natural resources, provide wildlife habitat, provide fiscal and economic benefits, shape development patterns, and preserve lands for recreational uses.

Branford Point



Background

Inventory

The map on the facing page shows the location of some parcels in Branford that could be considered “open space” of one form or another. The map also shows the location of some open space trails. Many more trails exist in Branford and these are well presented on the Branford Land Trust website.

Land may be considered preserved. Public access may be allowed.

Land appears “open” but may not be preserved. Public access generally not allowed.

1. **Purchase** of land for preservation
2. **Donation** of land for preservation
3. **Dedication** of at the time of approval of a development proposal
4. Establishment of a conservation easement or restriction
5. Land used in a way that provides some benefits typically associated with open space (scenic, public access, un-developed, etc.)
6. Land enrolled into the PA-490 assessment program
7. Land in an undeveloped state due to natural constraints
8. Land retained in an undeveloped state by owner

Preservation of open space is important to Branford residents. At a public meeting early in the planning process, participants identified open space as the issue that was most important to them. Participants indicated that:

- We need to preserve it – once it’s gone, it’s gone
- Open space acts as a balance to development
- The POCD should identify what is meant by the term “open space”

Possible Verbs

- **Increase**
- **Protect**
- **Maintain**
- **Link**

2008 POCD Approach

GOAL	Create an open space system that enhances the quality of life in Branford.
STRATEGIES	Continue to Implement the 2005 Open Space Plan Create Greenway Linkages Protect Coastal Open Space Improve Open Space Acquisition “Tools” Create an Easement Inventory Protect Privately “Managed” Open Space

Open Space

Branford, CT

DRAFT

North
Branford

East
Haven

Guilford

Branford
Hill

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Possible Strategies For 2018 POCD

2008 KEY STRATEGY

Review And Update the 2005 Open Space Plan

Since 2008, the Select Committee on Open Space Acquisition has:

- Inventoried and prioritized potential open space acquisitions;
- Used State grants and partnership with the Branford Land Trust to acquire 12 parcels totaling over 100 acres end of 2008.

Work continues on the Branford portion of the Shoreline Greenway Trail, which will eventually span four towns.

A. Review And Update The 2005 Open Space Plan	Comments
1. Review and affirm / revise the open space vision for Branford.	

B. Review And Update Criteria For OS Acquisition	Comments
1. Continue to acquire key parcels of open space that link, protect or buffer other open space parcels or natural resources.	
2. Continue to place a high priority on acquiring properties with coastal or river access.	
3. Consider adapting open space criteria to reflect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal issues and opportunities • Opportunities which may be presented in terms of land obtained through tax liens and/or foreclosure 	

C. Create An Open Space / Trail System	Comments
1. Seek to link open space areas and neighborhoods through a system of trails and greenways.	
2. Continue efforts to complete the Shoreline Greenway Trail in Branford .	
3. Continue to enhance mapping/ guides for recreational trail systems.	
a. Continue to make mapping/ guides for recreational trail systems available to the public.	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Provide improved signage ... to trails.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Should the POCD map potentially desirable open space properties?

Improve Open Space Acquisition “Tools”

2008
SECONDARY STRATEGY

A. Seek To Acquire Desirable Open Space Early			Comments
1.	Seek opportunities to establish relationships with owners of desirable open space in order to explore opportunities for land preservation.		
2.	Augment the Open Space Fund to react quickly to property sales.		
	a. Consider bonding as a way to capitalize the Open Space Fund so that monies will be available when needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	b. Consider annual appropriations to maintain and enlarge the Open Space Fund.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	c. Allow private money donations to be deposited in the Open Space Fund.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	d. Continue to use the “Neighborhood Assistance Act” as a way to generate open space funds.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Since 2008, the PZC has modified local regulations to:

- encourage “conservation” or “cluster” development (OSRD).
- Allow off-site dedication of open space.
- Require open space in multi-family development.
- Relate the “fee in lieu of open space requirement to state statutes.

B. Preservation At Time Of Development			Comments
1.	Continue to promote “conservation-type” development patterns.		
2.	Where appropriate, continue to obtain “open space set aside” at the time of development.		
3.	For situations where land set-aside may not be beneficial, maintain the “fee-in-lieu-of-open-space” regulation to generate open space funds.		

Since 2008, the Town has:

- Obtained 7 acres of open space as part of a multi-family development
- 2 acres as part of an OSRD development.
- Supported the inclusion of Foote Park as an integral part of the town open space and recreation system.

C. Partner With Others			Comments
1.	Continue to seek opportunities to participate in federal and state open space grant programs.		
2.	Continue to seek opportunities to partner with other organizations to protect open space.		

Improve Open Space Planning / Management

The Select Committee on Open Space Acquisition has updated the Town open space map to:

- correct past errors, and
- incorporate recent acquisitions.

However, the map is not up-to-date at the present time.

A. Compile And Maintain An Open Space Inventory		Comments
1.	Compile and maintain an <u>up-to-date</u> inventory of open space areas.	
a.	<u>Compile and maintain a comprehensive list of open space parcels in Branford.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	<u>Compile and maintain a comprehensive list of open space easements in Branford.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.	<u>Use the Town's GIS system to map all open space parcels and easements by type, feature, and/or other attributes.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>

B. Establish Open Space Management Plans		Comments
1.	<u>Create and maintain simple open space management plans for each open space asset.</u>	
a.	<u>Inventory how open space properties are being used.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	<u>Assess how open space properties could / should be used</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.	<u>Develop management plans for town-owned open space parcels</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>

C. Improve Management Of Open Space Assets		Comments
1.	<u>Improve management of open space assets.</u>	
a.	<u>Improve enforcement of allowed uses on open space properties.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	<u>Improve enforcement when illegal dumping occurs on open space properties.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.	<u>Improve enforcement of open space easements.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Improve Open Space Maintenance

2008
SECONDARY STRATEGY

A. Improve Maintenance Of Open Space Assets		Comments
1.	<u>Improve maintenance of open space assets in accordance with management plans.</u>	
	a. <u>Clearly assign responsibilities for maintenance of open space to one specific entity.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	b. <u>Seek to avoid overlapping maintenance jurisdiction, where feasible.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Improve trail system maintenance.	

The Parks and Open Space Commission maintains and manages the Town's open space properties.

The Branford Land Trust maintains there properties.

There are some situations where maintenance responsibilities are shared between these (and other) organizations.

2008

Seek To Preserve Private Open Space

A. Seek To Preserve Private And Managed Open Space		Comments
1.	Seek to preserve private and managed open space.	
	a. Explore opportunities to convert "managed" open space land (such as watershed land, institutional land, etc.) into protected open space land.	
	b. Explore opportunities to convert <u>private undeveloped</u> land into protected open space land.	
	c. Work with large land owners to develop a strategy for long-term conservation of "managed" land.	

Town park



Land Trust Property



If so, please make notes below.

1. Branford Plan of Conservation and Development (2008)
2. Branford Land Trust website / information
3. Shoreline Greenway Trail (various sources)
4. South Central Regional COG website / information
5. Zoning Regulations
6. Subdivision Regulations

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Planimetrics

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