

PROMOTE COMMUNITY CHARACTER

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 community character.

What Is “Community Character”?

For the POCD, the phrase “community character” includes those traits or qualities that contribute to a distinctive impression of a community. Communities typically want to maximize those things that enhance people’s perception of community character and minimize those things that detract from character.

For the purposes of this booklet, the discussion of community character has been broken into two parts:

- Protecting and preserving character elements of we already have.
- Addressing other things that could add to Branford’s character.

Possible Character Asset



Possible Character Liability



Background

Inventory

Studies of community character have generally identified the following things as having a **positive** correlation to people's perception of community character:

Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water features • Landform / hillsides • Wetland areas / tidal marshes
Open Space / Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated and managed open spaces • Undeveloped land • Greenway trails / connections
Scenic Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenic views • Scenic areas / scenic roads • Scenic features (stone walls, barns) • Significant trees / tree canopies
Historic Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic resources contribute to a sense of history and enhance community character
Place-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifiable places with a "sense of place" • Strong gateways / edges that create a sense of entry • Logical organization / linkages • Intuitive way-finding • Public art
Building Design / Streetscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development that creates "sense of place" • Development scale matches expectations / capacity • Attractive / appropriate building design • Pedestrian-friendliness • Appropriate landscaping Appropriate lighting / noise / signs
Roadways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractive roads / roadside vistas • Street trees
Destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique Places (Thimble Islands, Stony Creek Brewery) • Unique Festivals / Events • Unique Restaurants / Retailers / Services • Attractive community facilities / services
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People / organizations / traditions • Positive reputation • Cleanliness / maintenance / safety • Community image / reputation / perception

The map on the facing page shows the location of some of these resources and features in Branford.


Community Character - "Possible Pluses" **DRAFT**


Branford, CT


North
Branford


East
Haven

Guilford


 Coastal Scenic Area


 Scenic Road

 Scenic Point


 Scenic Vista


Village Districts


 Branford Center Village District


 Stony Creek Village District


Historic Districts


 Branford Center

 Branford Point


 Canoe Brook


 Norcross Brothers Quarry

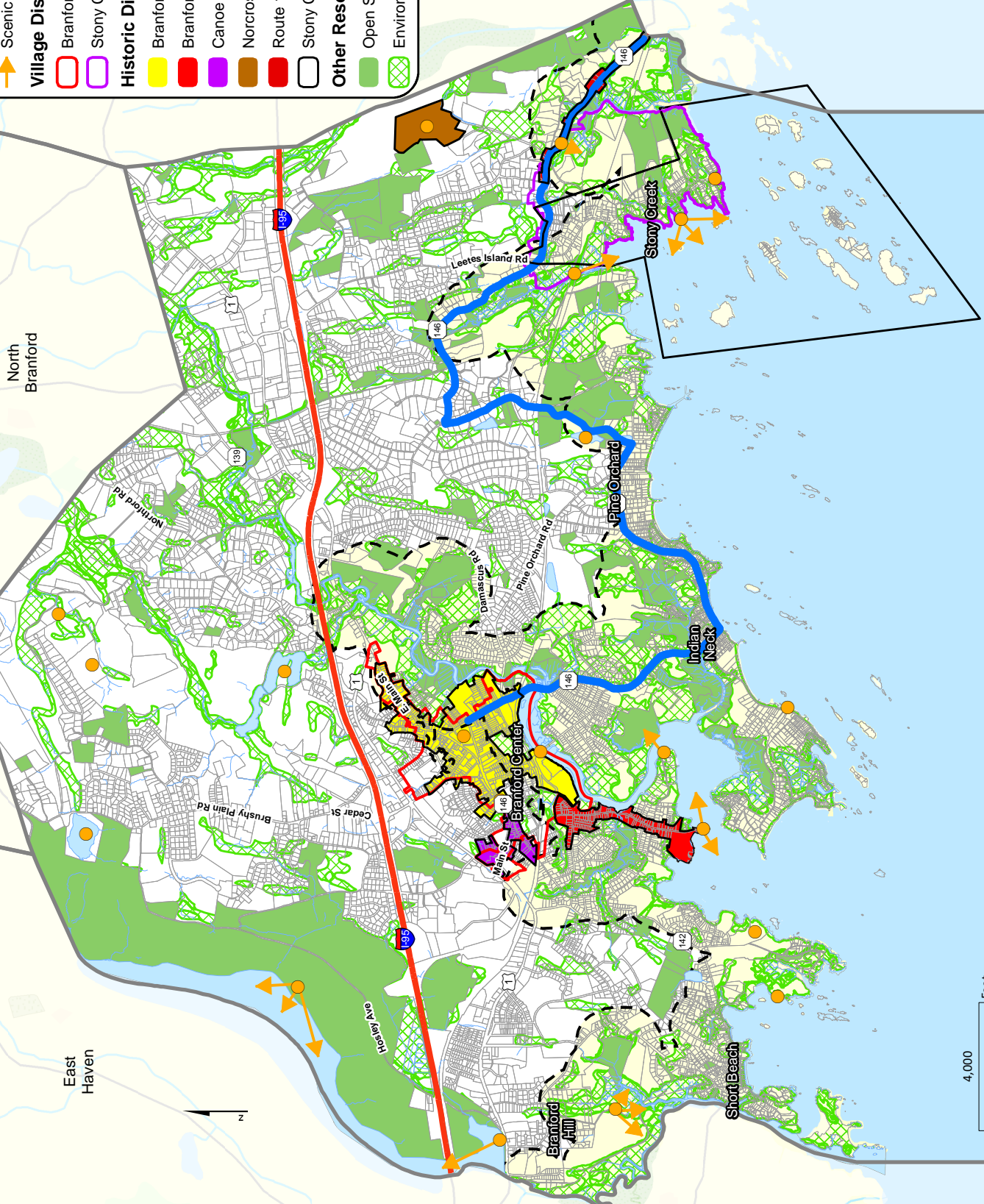
 Route 146

 Stony Creek / Thimble Islands

Other Resources

 Open Space Area (see Open Space map)

 Environmental Constraint



4,000 Feet

At the same time, studies of community character have generally identified the following things as having a **negative** correlation to people's perception of community character:

Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overt pollution / degradation
Place-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas without a sense of place • Strip commercial development patterns • Sprawl development patterns
Building Design / Streetscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discordant architectural style • "Franchise" / "cookie-cutter" architecture • Lack of property maintenance • Abandoned buildings / sites • Development out of scale with expectations / capacity
Roadways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic speed / congestion • Excessive driveways / turning movements • Lack of sidewalks where needed
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overhead utility wires • Inappropriate lighting / light pollution • Discordance between image and reality

The map on the facing page shows the location of some of these resources and features in Branford.

2008 POCD Approach

GOAL Enhance elements that create a "sense of place" in Branford.

STRATEGIES

- Expand Design Review
- Protect Historic Resources
- Promote Farm Viability
- Protect Undeveloped Land
- Continue To Be A Leader In Addressing Light Pollution
- Protect Scenic Views and Roads
- Improve Signage

Community Character - "Possible Minuses"

Branford, CT

East
Haven

North
Branford

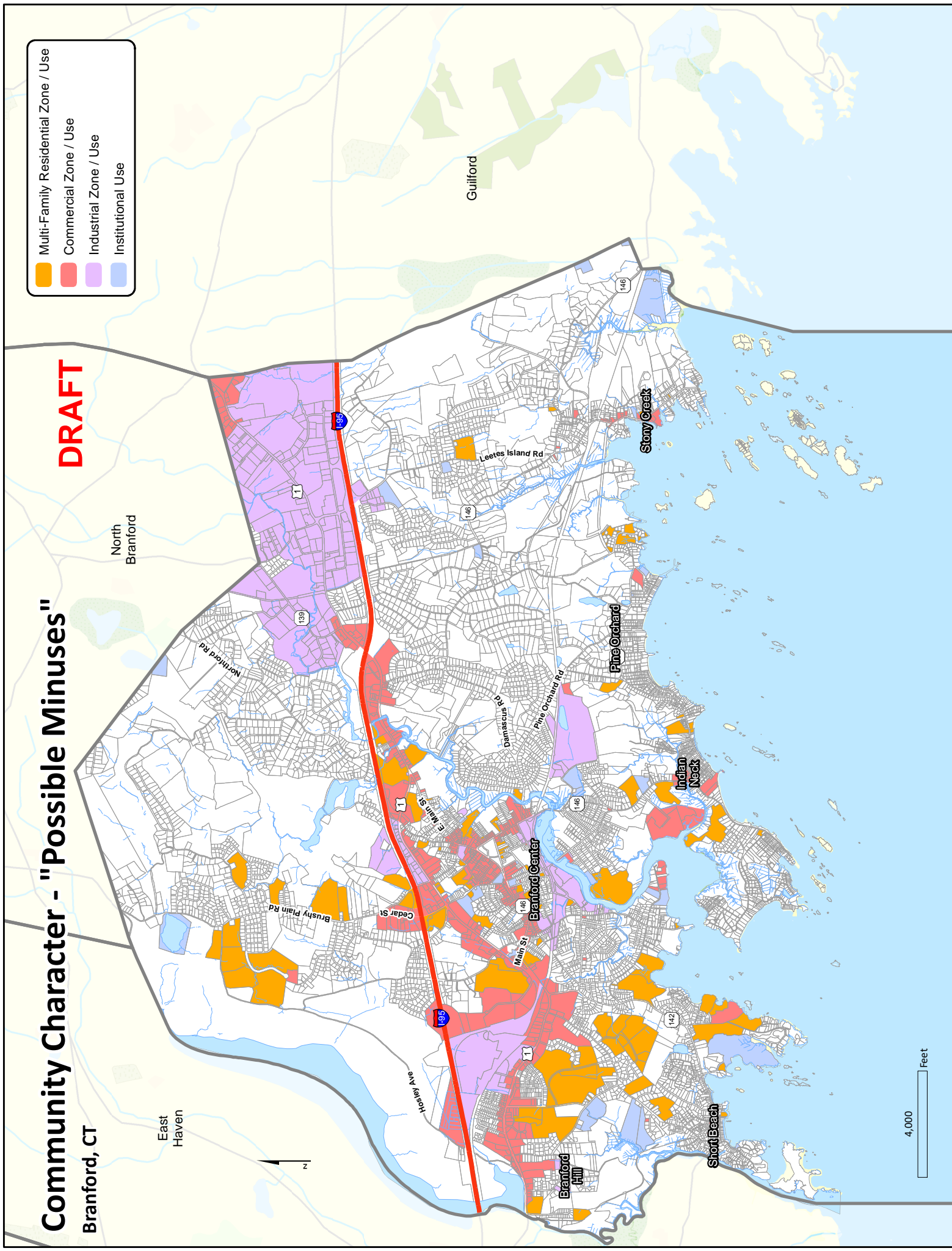
Gulford

- Multi-Family Residential Zone / Use
- Commercial Zone / Use
- Industrial Zone / Use
- Institutional Use

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4,000 Feet



Possible Strategies For 2018 POCD

2008 KEY STRATEGY

Enhance Design Review

The 5-Year POCD Update reported that the PZC:

- adopted the Town Center Village District adopted the Stony Creek Village District.

The Stony Creek Association drafted design guidelines for the Stony Creek Village District.

The Town Center Revitalization Review Board (TCRRB) refined and augmented design review guidelines for the Town Center.

The 5-Year POCD Update reported that the PZC:

- adopted design guidelines for all commercial uses.
- adopted landscaping standards.

A. Enhance Design Review	Comments
1. <u>Maintain “village district” design controls in appropriate places.</u>	
a. <u>Regularly monitor the “village district” review process (and design guidelines) for Branford Center to ensure they are meeting community goals and objectives.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. <u>Regularly monitor the “village district” review process and design guidelines for Stony Creek to ensure they are meeting community goals and objectives.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Expand the types of uses, activities ... of projects reviewed by the Town Center Revitalization Review Board.	
d. Consider establishing Village Districts in the Town Center and other commercial areas in order to protect historic character.	
2. <u>Establish a Design Review Board and expand the design review process to areas outside of Branford Center and Stony Creek for activities requiring PZC approval.</u>	
a. <u>Change the zoning regulations to establish a design review process for:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>new construction in business and industrial zones, and</u> • <u>institutional and multi-family uses in residential zones.</u> 	<input type="checkbox"/> ASK UPDATE COMMITTEE
b. <u>Expand the existing Town Center design manual to include other business areas of Town.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. <u>Expand the ... geographic extents of projects reviewed by the [Design] Review Board.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. <u>Encourage establishment of an annual awards program for the best architectural design of the year to increase public recognition of quality building design.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Preserve And Enhance Branford's Scenic Features

SECONDARY STRATEGY

A. Preserve Branford's Scenic Features	Comments
1. <u>Continue to identify scenic features.</u>	
a. Continue to identify <u>and map</u> scenic views, vistas, roads, and other scenic resources. <input type="checkbox"/>	
2. <u>Protect visually distinctive landscapes, high quality views, and other scenic features.</u>	
a. Consider amending land use regulations to include <u>greater</u> protection of scenic resources and features, especially in coastal areas. <input type="checkbox"/>	Is currently a "consideration" in Special Permit approvals
b. <u>Adopt regulations to require the preservation (or relocation) of</u> stone walls, barns, and other scenic resources visible from public streets. <input type="checkbox"/>	Too detailed?
c. Consider restrictions on stone walls to help maintain the scenic character of Branford. <input type="checkbox"/>	Too detailed?

The 5-Year POCD Update reported that the PZC adopted subdivision regulations to:

- protect trees during construction, and
- allow narrower roads.

The Scenic Roads Advisory Committee conducted a tree inventory of significant trees along the entire length of the Rt. 146 & Rt. 77 scenic road.

B. Enhance Branford's Scenic Character	Comments
1. <u>Enhance the scenic character of roadways.</u>	
a. <u>Continue to seek an appropriate balance between</u> utility pruning <u>for reliability</u> and <u>scenic tree canopies</u> . <input type="checkbox"/>	
b. To enhance scenic character, <u>investigate</u> placing utilities underground where appropriate <u>and where financially feasible</u> . <input type="checkbox"/>	
c. Evaluate road width requirements <u>in land use regulations</u> . <input type="checkbox"/>	
d. <u>Evaluate any proposed Town or State road widening projects with an eye towards balancing roadway needs with the desire to maintain or enhance scenic characteristics (i.e. – "context sensitivity").</u> <input type="checkbox"/>	
e. Evaluate land use policies that control tree clearing and grade alterations to protect the scenic value of the community	
f. Adopt a tree preservation regulation for all new subdivision and development proposals subject to site plan approval.	
g. Evaluate landscape requirements, in the land use regulations, to encourage tree planting within new site development <input type="checkbox"/>	

Staff continues to work with utilities on "balancing" tree trimming with electrical reliability.

Consider Undertaking a “Branding” / Wayfinding Program

A. Consider Undertaking a “Branding” Program	Comments
1. Consider undertaking a “branding” program to capture and publicize the essence of Branford to existing and potential residents, businesses, and visitors.	

B. Enhance Branford’s Gateways	Comments
1. Establish and maintain attractive “gateway” features at appropriate places.	
a. Provide gateway features at major entry / arrival points to the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Provide gateway features at entry / arrival points to key places within the community (Branford Center, Harbor, Stony Creek, Short Beach, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>

C. Promote Wayfinding	Comments
1. Establish a wayfinding system so that visitors to Branford will easily find their way around.	Suggestion also made in the TOD Plan
a. Create a wayfinding signage program to help people find destinations in Branford and explore parts of the community new to them.	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Create a wayfinding signage program for areas where businesses, key attractions and parking are difficult to locate.	<input type="checkbox"/>

The 5-Year POCD Update reported that the TCRRB was in the process of creating a way-finding program to help visitors locate businesses, key attractions and parking..

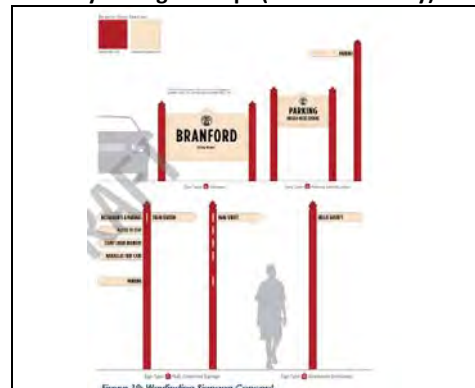
Way-finding recommendations were included in the TOD Plan.

Some communities have elected to establish LED signage with changeable messages for community events, public safety announcements, and other purposes.

Gateway Feature



Wayfinding Concept (from TOD Study)



Possible Branding Influences / Approaches

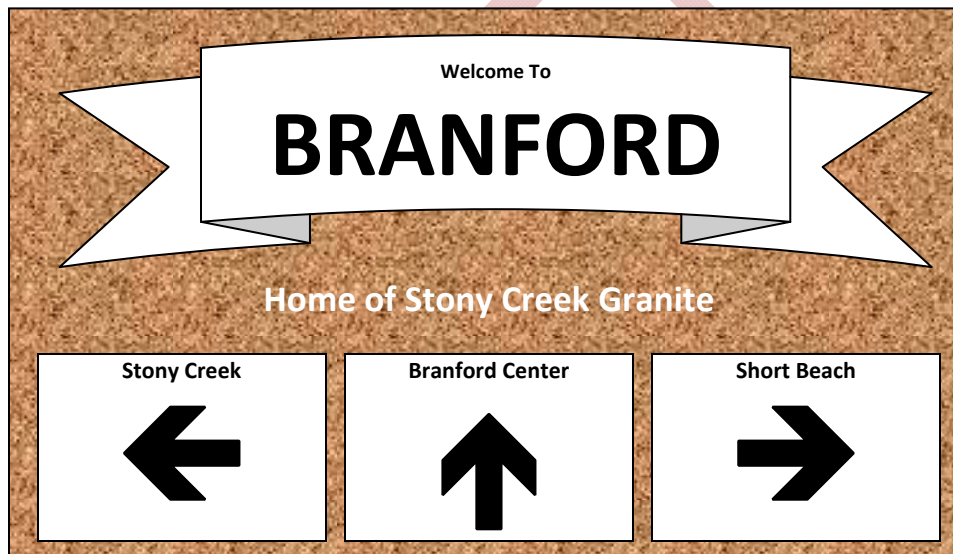
Stony Creek Granite



Thimble Islands



Sample Gateway / Wayfinding Signage Concept



Possible Changeable Event Notices

Stony Creek Brewery
Jazz Festival on the Green
Blessing Of The Fleet
Christmas Parade / Festival

Protect Historic Resources

The 5-Year POCD Update reported that the PZC:

- mapped structures that are listed in the National Register of Historic Properties.
- supported resident's efforts to establish a local Historical District.
- adopted Section 7.16 Adaptive Reuse - to allow historic structures as commercial uses

The Historical Society will be updating the historic resource inventory for the areas east of the Town Center.

A. Protect Historic Resources	Comments
1. Continue to identify and preserve historic <u>and archeologic</u> resources.	
a. <u>Continue to map historic sites and structures listed on the National Register.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. <u>Encourage "sensitive stewardship" of privately-owned historic resources in order to preserve and maintain them.</u>	
3. Encourage residents to establish Local Historic Districts in residential areas.	
4. <u>Encourage the preservation of historic structures, including adaptive re-use where appropriate.</u>	
a. Consider offering tax abatements for restoration or improvements to historic properties that do not compromise their architectural or historic integrity properties.	<input type="checkbox"/> Is this too detailed?

Encourage Retention Of Undeveloped Land

The 5-Year POCD Update reported that:

- the Tax Assessor continued to use the PA-490 Farm and Forest assessment programs.
- the RTM assigned a committee to consider using the PA-490 open space use assessment for undeveloped land.
- the Select Committee on Open Space Acquisition in partnership with the Connecticut Farmland Trust was instrumental in purchasing development rights for the Johnson farm.

A. Encourage Retention of Undeveloped Land	Comments
1. Continue to use the PA-490 farm assessment program to help preserve farms.	
a. Work with existing working farms to find solutions that will help them continue to operate.	Too detailed?
2. Continue to use the PA-490 forest assessment program to help preserve undeveloped land of 25 acres or more.	
3. Consider using the PA-490 "open space" assessment program to help preserve undeveloped land with less than 25 acres.	POCD would need to recommend policies if this program is to be implemented.

Address Other Character Issues

**NEW
STRATEGY**

A. Minimize Light Pollution		Comments
1. Minimize <u>lighting impacts on the overall environment (light pollution)</u> .		
a. Continue to identify and replace inappropriate light fixtures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
b. Continue to educate property owners about light pollution.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
c. Evaluate regulations that address light pollution.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

B. Improve Signage		Comments
1. Seek To enhance commercial signs		
a. Develop design standards for commercial signs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
b. Work with billboard owners to develop guidelines for billboard modernization.		Relevant?

The 5-Year POCD Update reported that the PZC added illustrations, charts and clarifications to signage regulations.

Glare From Exposed Lighting



Reduced Glare



If so, please make notes below.

1. Branford Plan of Conservation and Development (2008)
2. Route 146 Scenic Corridor Study
3. TOD Study (2017)
4. Zoning Regulations
5. Subdivision Regulations

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Planimetrics

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