

2008

Branford's Window to the Future

2008 Plan of Conservation and Development

Adopted November 20, 2008
Effective December 15, 2008

This Plan has been developed to be environmentally-friendly. It is best viewed in a Adobe Acrobat format.

All of the web links incorporated into this document were active as of December 15, 2008.

CONTENTS

Preface i

1. Introduction 1

2. Context 5

3. Plan Overview 13

Conservation

4. Natural Resources 17

5. Open Space 25

6. Community Character 37

Development

7. Community Structure 43

8. Housing 53

9. Business Development 61

Infrastructure

10. Community Facilities 67

11. Transportation 75

12. Utilities 85

13.Future Land Use Plan 93

14.Implementation 97

15.Plan Consistency 101

Acknowledgements 105

PREFACE

Purpose of the Plan

This Plan of Conservation and Development is a tool for guiding the future of Branford. It is intended to be both visionary and action-oriented.

One purpose is to establish common goals for the community's future. These goals involve determining a positive future outcome or positive strategies and directions for Branford to pursue.

Another purpose is to outline action steps, that when implemented, will help attain that vision. If steadily implemented by Branford residents and officials, this plan will help protect important resources, guide appropriate development, protect community character and enhance the quality of life for current and future Branford residents.



Why Plan?

Planning is something that people and organizations perform regularly since it helps prepare for future challenges and opportunities. Communities are no different. Planning provides the opportunity to:

- focus on the 'bigger picture' and identify significant goals,
- promote overall values and achieve important purposes,
- coordinate efforts and produce consistent results, and
- achieve efficiency and economy in implementation.

Planning helps Branford identify and address community needs, foresee the long-term consequences of current actions, make good decisions, and produce desired results.

The Connecticut General Statutes (CGS 8-23) also require municipalities to adopt a plan of conservation and development every ten years. Branford's previous Plan was adopted in 1997.

How This Plan Was Prepared

The Planning and Zoning Commission collected information and discussed desirable strategies in order to prepare this 2008 Plan of Conservation and Development for Branford.

The Planning and Zoning staff interviewed Town departments as to their needs for the future. Planimetrics, a consultant from Avon, Connecticut, was enlisted to assist with the preparation of Plan elements and to coordinate the overall process.

Public participation in the Plan involved seven public workshop meetings oriented towards the preliminary conservation, development and infrastructure strategies developed by the Commission.



INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Branford

Branford is located in New Haven County and is bordered by Guilford to the east, North Branford to the north, East Haven to the west and Long Island Sound to the south. Interstate 95 traverses Branford east-to-west.

The town is just over 14,000 acres in size and, as of 2007, home to about 29,864 people.

Branford is characterized by its shoreline, traditional village center, and preserved open space. Natural features play an important role in the town's character. In addition to the sound and 21 miles of shoreline, natural features include the Saltonstall Ridge and Lake Saltonstall along the west.





1

Trolleys in Branford

Branford still enjoys a connection to its transportation past when trolleys provided access to East Haven and New Haven. While the trolleys only operated for a short time, from 1900 to 1947, their presence can be observed where the former trolley bed has been converted into a walking trail.

The Shore Line Trolley Museum continues to operate a fine collection of restored trolleys over a 1.5 mile segment of the Branford Electric Railway.
bera.org



Branford Trolley - Branford Historical Society

Historical Context

The area that is now Branford provided Native Americans important access to the coast. The area was originally called "Totoket" or "place of the tidal river."

In 1644, the Colony granted land in Branford to settlers, but after 20 years, the settlers migrated to New Jersey. Branford remained without a church for 20 years until it was resettled in 1685.

Settlers cleared forests and transformed the land to agriculture. The land was then sold to church dissidents from Wethersfield who built the first meetinghouse and established an area of common land now known as Branford Green. Over time, public buildings were built around the green and various religious denominations established churches in town.

The Boston Post Road served as the mail route between New York and Boston, beginning in the late 1600s. In the late 1700s and 1800s, water resources – the Branford River and Long Island Sound – spurred the development of industry. Train service, which began in the mid-1800s, made Branford even more attractive to industry.

At various times, Branford has been home to shipbuilders, quarries, wire companies and the Malleable Iron Fittings Company (MIF).

By the late 1800s and early 1900s some coastal agricultural areas had been transformed into summer colonies, with cottages and hotels, making Branford a popular tourist destination.

Trolleys were active in Branford by the early 1900s, making travel to New Haven convenient. Trolley travel was replaced by automobile travel as roads were built and in 1958, the Connecticut Turnpike opened as a toll road.

As Branford became more accessible to employment centers around the state, population increased accordingly. While fewer than 6,000 people lived in Branford in 1900, over 28,000 lived in town in 2000.

About Plans of Conservation and Development

A Plan of Conservation and Development is a tool for guiding the future of a community. Planning provides the opportunity to review past activities, understand the long term consequences of current actions, suggest positive strategies for the future, and identify priorities in order to assign the necessary time or financial resources to complete them. Planning provides the opportunity to make good decisions and produce desired results.

The goals and recommendations of this Plan reflect an overall consensus of what is considered desirable for Branford and its residents in the future. The Planning and Zoning Commission prepared this Plan with input from Branford residents.

While it is primarily a statement of recommendations addressing the conservation and development of Branford (the physical layout), this Plan is also intended to address the social and economic development of the community.

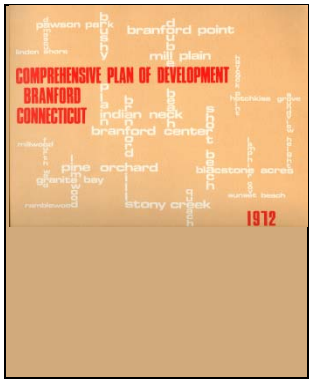
Planning History

Planning in Branford started in the 1950s with the adoption of zoning regulations to control how land use would impact the community. In the 1960s, the Planning and Zoning Commission expanded the planning program with a series of Community Development Action Plans dealing with issues such as community facilities, economic profiles, and education resources.

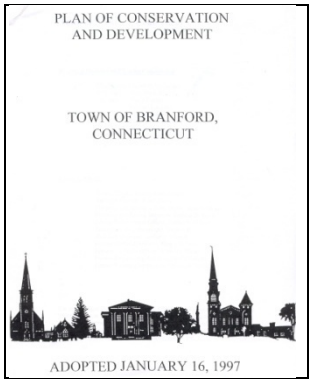
By 1972, the community had adopted the first comprehensive planning document, and three updates of this planning process have been completed since that time, including the most recent complete update, adopted on January 16, 1997.

This Plan of Conservation and Development is an advisory document, not only to the Planning and Zoning Commission, but also to all other Town boards and commissions and Branford residents as well.

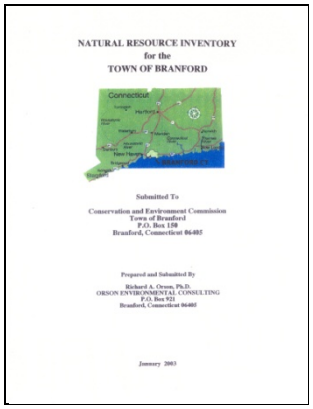
It is intended to guide local residents and to provide a framework for consistent decision-making with regard to conservation and development activities in Branford over the next decade or so.



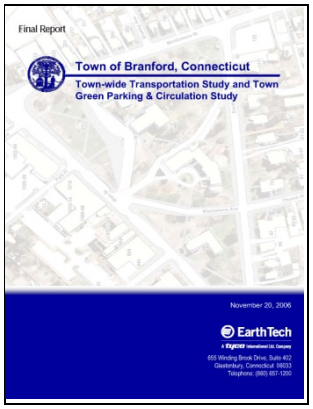
1972 Plan of Development



1997 Plan of Conservation and Development



2003 Natural Resource Inventory



2007 Traffic Study

Statutory reference

Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that the Planning and Zoning Commission prepare, adopt, and amend a Plan of Conservation and Development for Branford. The requirements for the Plan are presented on page 4.

EXCERPTS FROM CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES 8-23 - PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Commission shall:

- prepare, adopt and amend a plan of conservation and development ...
- review the plan of conservation and development at least once every ten years ...
- adopt such amendments to the plan or parts of the plan ... as the commission deems necessary to update the plan.

The Plan shall:

- be a statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the municipality…,
- show the commission's recommendation for the most desirable use of land within the municipality for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial and other purposes and for the most desirable density of population in ... parts of the municipality,
- be designed to promote with the greatest efficiency and economy the coordinated development of the municipality and the general welfare and prosperity of its people,
- be made with reasonable consideration for restoration and protection of the ecosystem and habitat of Long Island Sound ...,
- make provision for the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multifamily dwellings consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity, for all residents of the municipality and the planning region ...,
- promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low and moderate income households, and encourage the development of housing that will meet the housing needs ...,
- take into account the state plan of conservation and development ... and note any inconsistencies it may have with said state plan, and
- consider the use of cluster development to the extent consistent with soil types, terrain, and infrastructure capacity.

The Plan may:

- show the commission's recommendation for a system of principal thoroughfares, parkways, bridges, streets and other public ways; for airports, parks, playgrounds and other public grounds; for general location, relocation and improvement of public buildings; for the general location and extent of public utilities and terminals, whether publicly or privately owned, for water, sewerage, light, power, transit and other purposes; and for the extent and location of public housing projects,
- include recommended programs for the implementation of the plan ..., and
- (include) such other recommendations ... in the plan as will ... be beneficial to the municipality.

CONTEXT

2

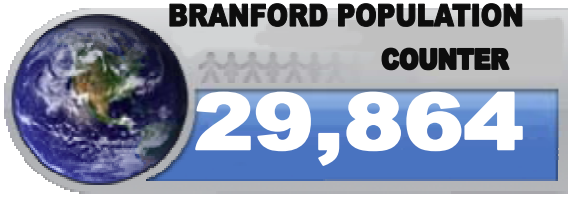
Overview

This section of the Plan identifies the conditions and trends that are currently affecting Branford.

Branford is in the midst of a demographic change, where the number of infants and school aged children has stabilized after a period of decline, while the growth in the number of seniors is forecasted.

While housing construction certainly brings new residents, the turnover of existing housing units also changes the town's demographics.

Data suggests that, during the 1960s and 1970s, older households moved out and younger families moved in, resulting in significant demographic changes.

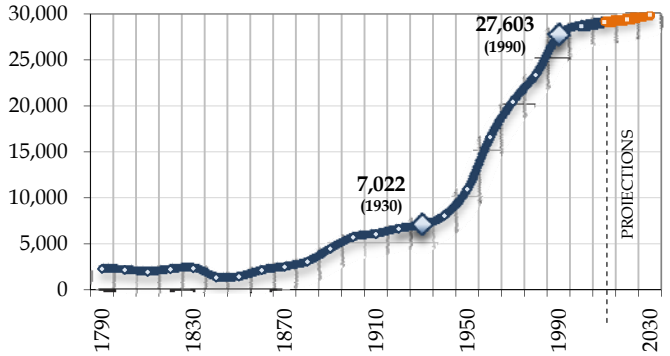


CERC – 2007 Population Estimate

Population Growth has Stabilized

The rate of population growth from 1990 to 2000 was consistent with the State average at about four percent. This was the first time in 60 years that Branford did not see double-digit population growth rate. From 1930 to 1990, Branford's population more than tripled in size, averaging 26 percent growth per decade during that time.

Population Growth 1790-2030



US Census – 1790-2000
CT State Data Center – 2010-2030

Interestingly, Branford's change in population has historically been driven by in-migration to the community, with an average increase of 2,740 new residents moving to Branford per decade. This trend was reversed from 1990 to 2000 and the net migration was reduced to nine people.

Age Composition

For planning purposes, the age composition of a community can be considered to include three major age groups with differing needs or concerns:

- children (ages 0-19),
- adults (ages 20-54), and
- mature residents (ages 55 and up).

In addition, each group can be further broken down into two or more sub-groups

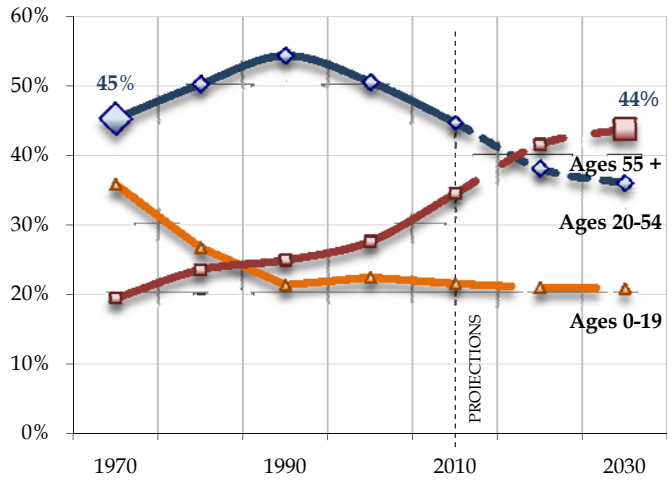
Age Composition is Changing

While overall population growth is important, changes in age composition may actually have more far-reaching implications from both a housing and community service perspective.

Following state and national trends Branford will continue to age, as the "baby boom" (people born between 1945 and 1965) will enter the "mature resident" age group over the next 20 years. The Connecticut State Data Center projects that by the year 2030, adults age 55 and older are expected to comprise over 40 percent of the population.

From 1970 to 2030, Branford's population will have changed from a community with about 40 percent of the population between the ages of 20-54 to a community with about 40 percent of the population over the age 55.

Age Composition (1970 - 2030)



US Census – 1970-2000
CT State Data Center – 2010-2030

Life Style Needs May Change

Lifestyle Needs

AGE RANGE	NEEDS / WANTS	1970 SHARE	2000 SHARE	2030 SHARE
Infants 0 to 4	• Child care • Pre-school programs	8%	↓ 5%	→ 5%
School Age 5 to 19	• School facilities • Recreation programs and facilities	28%	↓ 17%	→ 16%
Young Adults 20 to 34	• Rental housing / Starter homes • Social destinations	20%	↓ 17%	→ 16%
Middle Age 35 to 54	• Starter homes / trade-up homes • Family programs • Services for infants / school children	25%	↑ 34%	↓ 20%
Mature Adults 55 to 64	• Smaller homes / Second homes • Recreation programs and facilities • Low maintenance homes	10%	→ 11%	→ 11%
Retirement Age 65 +	• Assisted housing / elderly housing • Elderly programs / tax relief	9%	↑ 17%	↑ 32%

1970 - 2000 Census, Projections by Connecticut State Data Center (2007)

Other Demographic Trends

Branford has exhibited a consistent trend during the two decades of the 1980s and 1990s of:

- net in-migration of young adults aged 30 to 45 with children aged 0 to 15;
- net out-migration of young adults aged 15 to 30; and
- net out-migration of adults over the age of about 45.

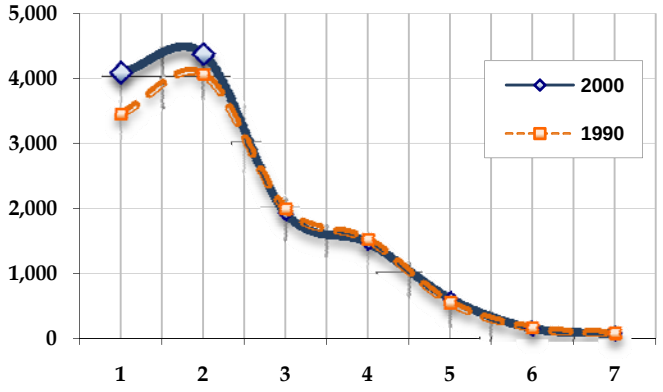
With the construction of condominiums and other housing units during the 1980s, there was significant net in-migration of younger adults (ages 25-34) into Branford during that decade. In fact, almost all age cohorts showed net in-migration.

2000 Census data reveals that 40 percent of the 2000 population had moved to Branford since 1995. Most of the people who moved to Branford since 1995 came from elsewhere in the New Haven metro area (78 percent).

Census data also reveals several significant findings with regard to household size. First, about 67 percent of all housing units in Branford are occupied by one or two people. In other words, the typical image of a housing unit containing a married couple and school age children is no longer the case.

Second, comparing housing occupancy in 1990 to the year 2000, it appears that all net growth in Branford was in one- or two-person households.

People per Household (1990 - 2000)



US Census – 1990-2000

Potential Implications

The changing age composition in Branford may, in the future, lead to a reconsideration of the mix of municipal services provided in Branford. For example, it may result in a situation where a higher priority for municipal services required (or desired) changes from "schools and ball fields" to "senior center and walking trails."

There is likely to be more interest in housing located closer to the town center, a need to upgrade municipal facilities to improve accessibility. Similar changes may be in store for social, medical, recreation, transportation and housing programs.

Definitions

Developed Land – land that has buildings, structures or improvements used for a particular economic or social purpose (such as residential or institutional).

Committed Land – land that is used for a particular economic or social purpose (including open space).

Vacant Land – land that is not developed or committed.

Underutilized Land – developed or committed land that is underdeveloped based on the density or uses permitted by zoning.

Dedicated Open Space – land or development rights owned by the Federal government, the State, the Town, land trusts, or conservation organizations intended to remain as undeveloped open space.

Managed Open Space – land owned by fish and game clubs, and other organizations that is used for other purposes but provides open space benefits.

Clarification regarding transportation / roads / water – these are grouped together because the Assessor's office does not track tax exempt properties or rights of way in the same manner as other land use activities.

Land Use

Branford is approximately 28 square miles in size. Of this total, there are 22 square miles of land area (about 14,034 acres) and about 6 square miles of offshore area (about 3,840 acres).

Research conducted as part of the planning process has identified that 83 percent of the land area in Branford (about 10,500 acres) is developed or committed to a specific use.

For the purpose of this plan developed and committed land consists of residential, commercial / industrial, open space, community facility / institutional, transportation and utility uses.

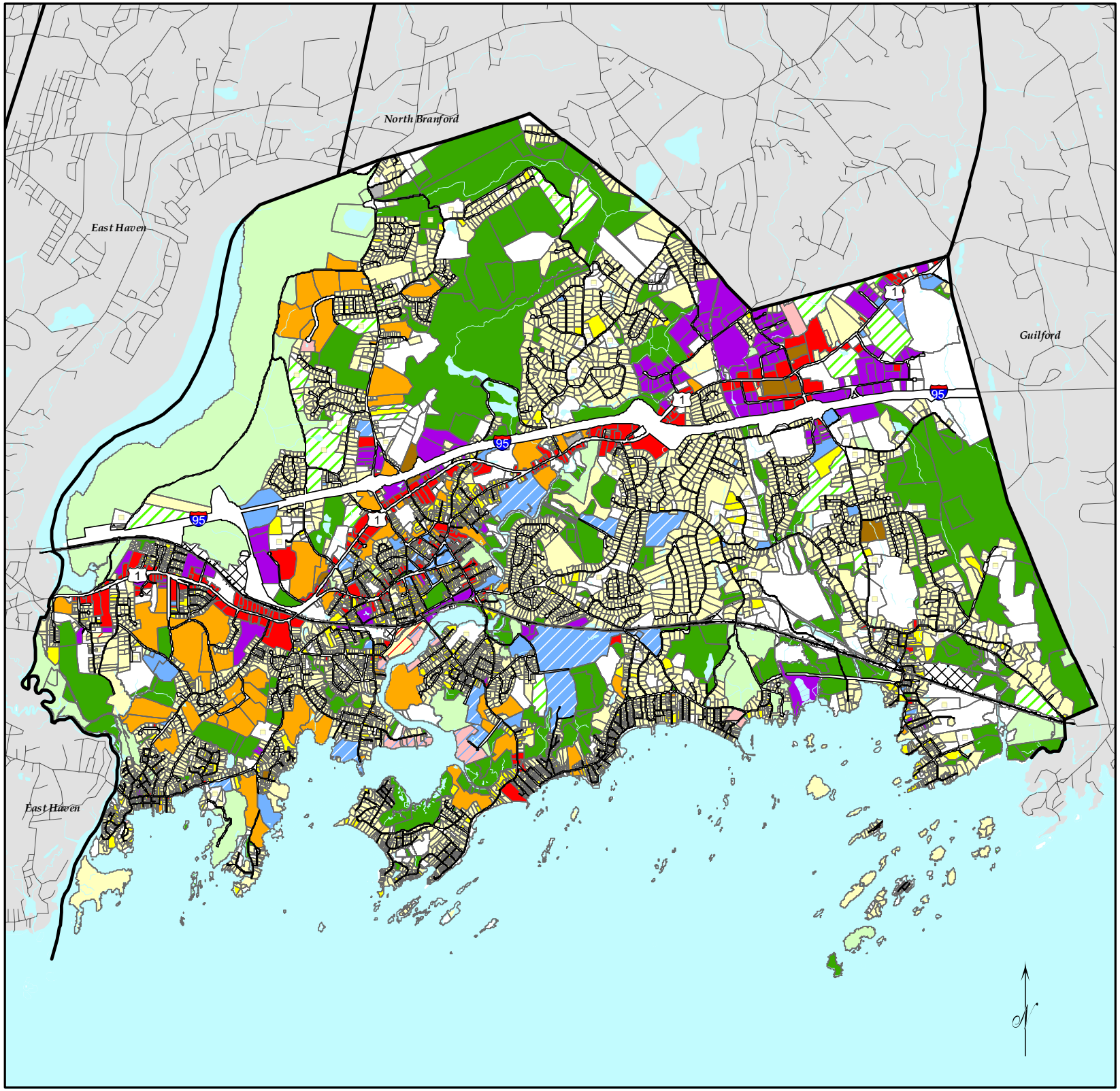
Of the total land that is developed or committed, about 36 percent (5,058 acres) is residential and 28 percent is open space (3,989 acres).

2007 Land Use Composition

USE	ACRES	PERCENT
RESIDENTIAL	**5,058**	**36%**
Single Family Development	3,817	
Multi-Family Development	751	
Multiple Houses	238	
2-Family Development	140	
Mobile Home Park	51	
3-Family Development	36	
Mixed Use	25	
COMMERCIAL/ INDUSTRIAL	**1,029**	**7%**
Commercial	409	
Marine Commercial	50	
Industrial	548	
Commercial Recreation	22	
OPEN SPACE	**3,989**	**28%**
Dedicated Open Space	2,615	
Managed Open Space	1,374	
COMMUNITY FACILITY/ INSTITUTIONAL	**359**	**3%**
Community Facility	225	
Institutional	134	
TRANSPORTATION / UTILITY / WATER	**1,309**	**9%**
Transportation/Roads/Water	1,297	
Utility	12	
VACANT	**2,290**	**17%**
Residential zones	1,792	
Industrial zones	311	
No zoning designation/other	106	
Commercial zones	77	
Multi-family residential zones	5	
TOTAL	**14,034**	**100%**

Land use data from the Branford Assessor's Office

Existing Land Use Map



Legend

- Single Family Development
- 2 & 3 Family Development
- Multi-Family Development
- Mobile Home
- Mixed / Multiple Use
- Commercial
- Commercial Recreation
- Marine Commercial
- Industrial
- Dedicated Open Space
- Managed Open Space
- Community Facility
- Institutional
- Utility
- Transportation
- Agriculture
- Vacant

3,000 Feet

Residential Density

Residential density involves the number of housing units per acre of land.

For Branford, density in the residential zoning districts is allocated as follows:

LDR – up to one unit per acre

MDR – from two and five units per acre

HDR – from six and ten units per acre

MFR – six units or more per acre

Zoning

In Branford, 79 percent of the land area (about 11,140 acres) is zoned for residential land use activities with about 97 percent of that area (10,782 acres) zoned specifically for a single-family and two-family residences and about 3 percent is zoned specifically for multi-family residences (358 acres).

Land zoned for commercial and industrial uses account for about 14 percent of the land area (1,918 acres).

ZONE	ACRES	PERCENTAGE
Low Density Residential [LDR]	5,086	36%
Medium Density Residential [MDR]	4,813	34%
High Density Residential [HDR]	883	6%
Multi Family Residential [MFR]	358	3%
Commercial	671	5%
Industrial	1,247	9%
Right of way / no zone	976	7%
Total	**14,034**	**100%**

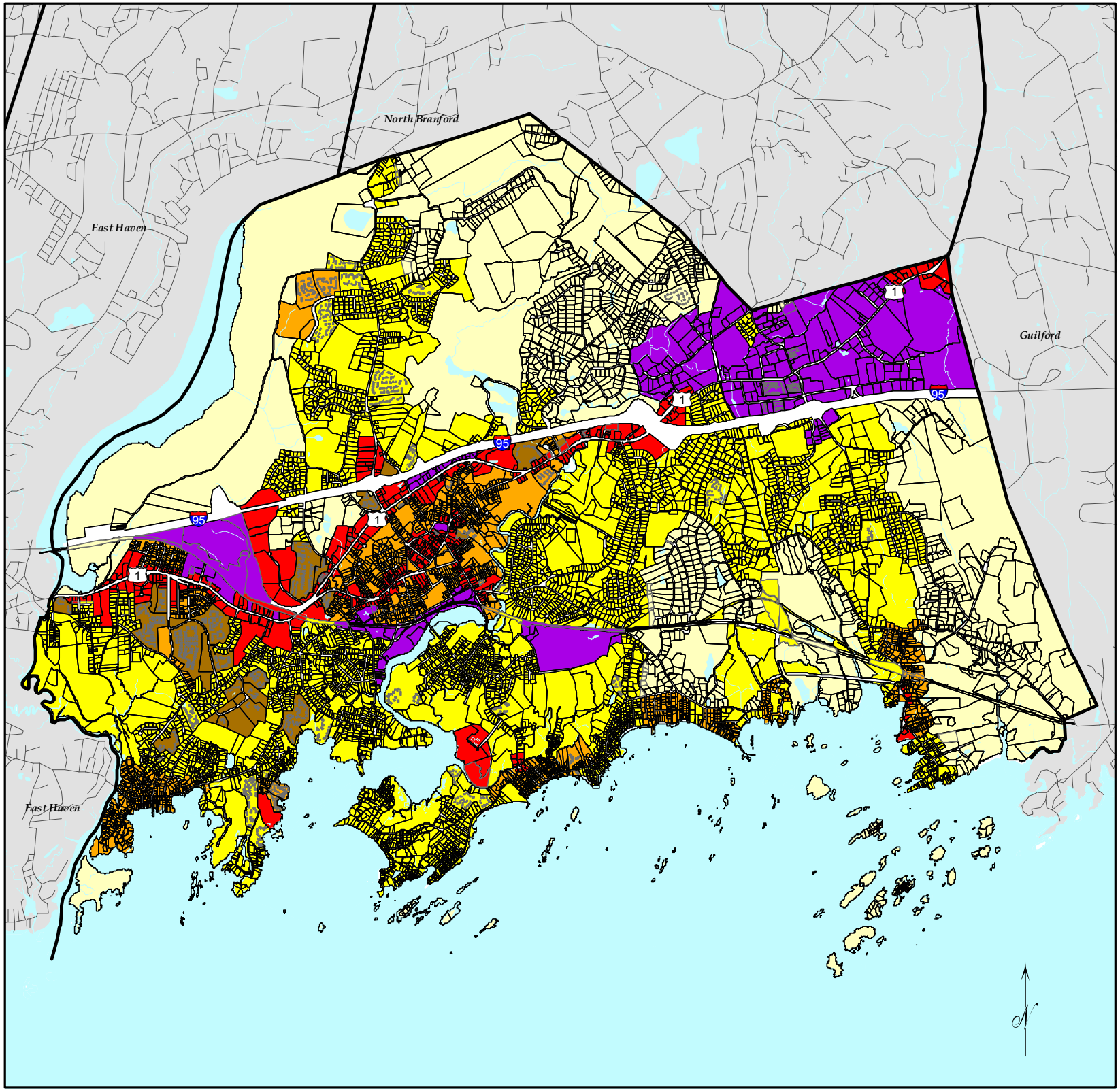
Branford has six residential zoning districts that apply to the entire town and six residential districts that apply to special zoning areas within the community (Pine Orchard and Short Beach).

Both Pine Orchard and Short Beach provide independent administration and oversight of their localized zoning regulations while the Town provides overall planning.





Generalized Zoning Map



Legend

- Low Density Residential up to 1 unit / acre
- Medium Density Residential 2 -5 units / acre
- High Density Residential 6-10 units / acre
- Multi-Family Residential 6 units / acre
- Commercial Zones
- Industrial Zones

3,000 Feet

The Vision Committee

BRANFORD VISION PROJECT

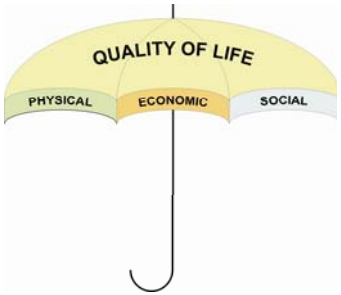
In the summer and fall of 2007, the Branford Vision Committee conducted a series of public forums and workshops designed to elicit a response about planning issues in Branford.

The central theme embodied in the public input was that Branford residents want to enhance the overall quality of life in the community.

Branford residents suggested that this philosophy should become recognized as an overall theme for Branford and that all local decisions should be made based on that standard.

Therefore, based on this public input, advancing the overall quality of life in Branford became the central philosophy of the Vision Plan.

Vision Themes



OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE

Branford will be a community that advances the overall quality of life of present and future residents and makes all decisions based on this standard.

While most residents appeared very satisfied with the overall quality of life in Branford at the present time, individuals and groups had suggestions about how it might be protected or improved

Upon further analysis of the results of the public meetings, the Vision Plan Committee determined that what residents identified as components of quality of life contained three main themes:

- Physical environment,
- Economic environment, and
- Social environment.

The Plan of Conservation and Development addresses elements of the Physical Environment within the Vision Committee's work

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT VISION STATEMENT

Branford will be a community that protects the physical environment and manages growth to preserve our heritage and maintain our character.

The overall vision statement has three sub-themes: that have been used to develop the goals and strategies in this plan

- protecting important resources;
- managing future growth; and
- providing for services and facilities.





PLAN OVERVIEW

3

This plan is developed and organized around three main themes:

- Conservation,
- Development, and
- Infrastructure.

Conservation

As part of the process of developing this plan, the community first identified areas that required conservation efforts, to make sure that these areas are properly protected, preserved or managed in the future.

Development

It is important that the community understand where housing and commercial development is likely to occur and to encourage the types of development that are appropriate.

Branford engaged in an economic development study while this plan was being prepared and a number of the recommendations from that study have been incorporated into this plan.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure elements include community facilities, transportation, and utilities (e.g. water, sewer, gas). Branford will provide direction as to how development will occur, as these tools can allow for a more intense use of the land.



Strategy Classes

Strategies in this Plan are broken into:

- Key strategies,
- Secondary strategies, and
- Emerging issues.

Key Strategies include issues that Branford should work to implement during the early years of plan implementation.

Secondary Strategies include issues that are important to the community, but may require additional analysis, study or consideration before implementation occurs. Also, these strategies do not have a sense of immediacy in implementation.

Emerging Issues are issues that are not currently identified as problems in Branford, but that the community should be paying attention to them, so Branford can develop appropriate solutions should the need arise.

	CONSERVATION THEME		
	Natural Resources	Open Space	Community Character
GOAL	Minimize impact on natural resources from human activities	Create an open space system that enhances the quality of life in Branford	Enhance elements that create a "sense of place" in Branford
KEY STRATEGIES	• Protect water quality	• Continue to implement the 2005 Open Space Plan • Create greenway linkages	• Expand design review
SECONDARY STRATEGIES	• Protect biologic resources • Utilize green energy • Continue to be a leader in addressing light pollution	• Improve open space acquisition tools • Create an easement inventory • Manage town open space • Protect privately "managed" open space • Enhance coastal access	• Protect historic resources • Promote farm viability • Protect undeveloped land • Protect scenic views and roads • Improve signage
EMERGING ISSUES	• Prepare for sea level rise • Protect air quality		

	DEVELOPMENT THEME			INFRASTRUCTURE THEME		
	Community Structure	Residential Development	Business Development	Community Facilities	Transportation	Utility Infrastructure
GOAL	Enhance the structural elements that make Branford a strong community	Provide for a variety of housing choices within the community	Provide for businesses and services that meet community needs	Provide facilities to meet community needs	Provide a diverse, safe and efficient transportation network that meets the needs of the community	Provide, and maintain, adequate utilities to meet community needs
KEY STRATEGIES	• Enhance the Town Center • Enhance Gateways at key points	• Provide for housing opportunities	• Identify "ideal" business mix	• Complete the Public Works and Fire Station projects • Implement the Town Green Plan	• Provide traffic calming • Promote access management	• Address stormwater management • Address flooding
SECONDARY STRATEGIES	• Consider transit-oriented development • Protect and enhance the villages • Create new nodes • Enhance development along Route 1	• Evaluate undersized lots and update zoning	• Encourage "green" business development • Provide tax incentives • Create a façade improvement program • Improve Town/business Communication	• Prepare for senior needs • Create "green" municipal facilities • Create management plans for municipal facilities • Address municipal meeting space needs • Address other facility needs • Address recreation needs	• Create transit linkages • Expand bicycle and pedestrian facilities • Improve parking in the Town Center • Support exit 53 interchange improvements	• Maintain existing infrastructure • Monitor private septic systems
EMERGING ISSUES		• Create "green" neighborhoods • Monitor changes in housing construction		• Monitor school enrollment	• Monitor fuel costs	• Monitor regional utilities

Want To Know More?



When reviewing the plan online, look for this symbol and click on the text

NATURAL RESOURCES

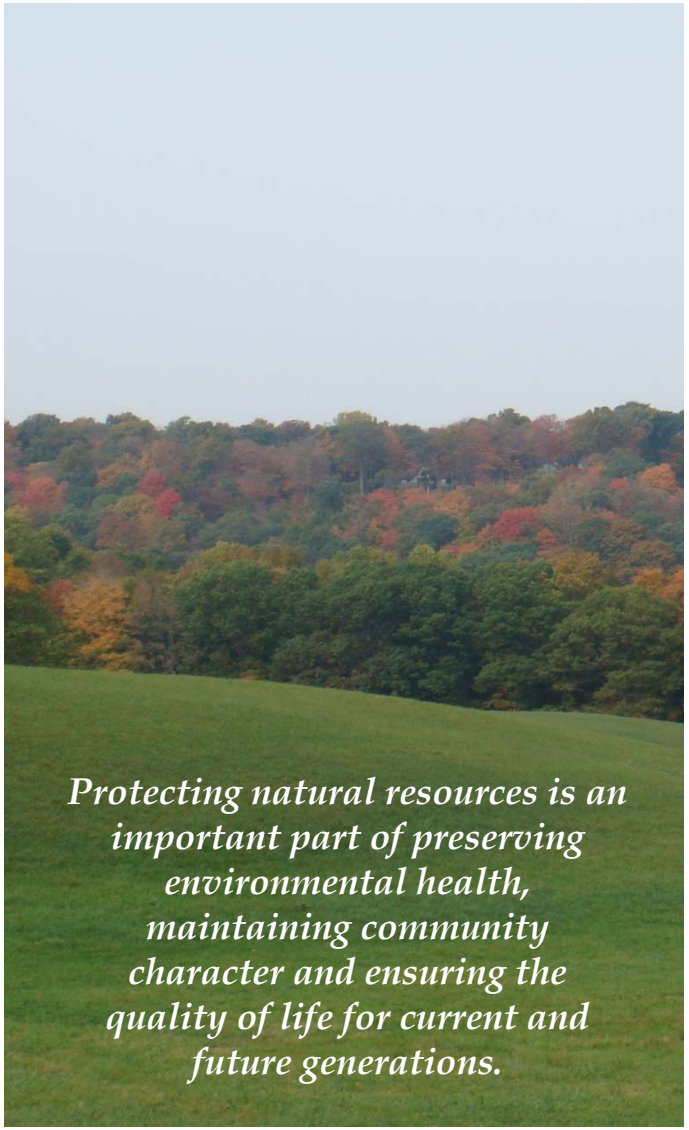
4

Overview

Protection of natural resources is a complex and continuing challenge. Some areas of the natural environment can be preserved intact, protecting wildlife habitat, rivers, streams and other sensitive natural areas from intrusion of human activity.

Finding the balance is important, and Branford has established the following goals and strategies for natural resources:

GOAL	**Minimize impact on natural resources from human activities.**
KEY STRATEGY	• Protect water quality
SECONDARY STRATEGIES	• Protect biologic resources • Utilize green energy • Continue to be a leader in addressing light pollution
EMERGING ISSUES	• Prepare for sea level rise • Protect air quality



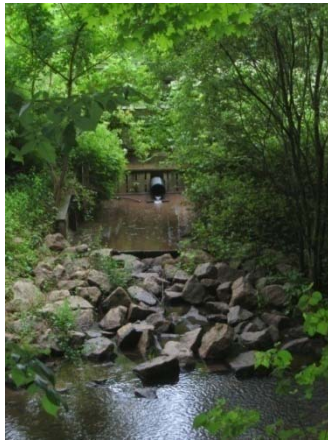
Three-quarters of the Earth's surface is covered with water, yet 98 percent is salt water and not fit for consumption.

Less than one percent of all the water on Earth is freshwater available for human consumption.

waterinfo.org

MS4

The Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) is a federal government (US Environmental Protection Agency) initiative that seeks to control water pollution resulting from storm drainage. These regulations create additional planning and management requirements for local stormwater systems.



Pine Gutter Erosion Control Project

KEY STRATEGY

Protect Water Quality

Branford's most important natural resource issue involves water quality because water is the essence of life and only a small percentage of all water on the planet is available for human consumption. Protecting water resources is important to Branford.

Water resources include surface water, groundwater, coastal wetlands, inland wetlands and the landscape that contributes to these areas.

A major threat to water quality comes from stormwater run-off (polluted drainage run-off that is not from any particular site) that contaminates surface water and groundwater with excess nutrients such as nitrogen, as well as toxic substances, and pathogens. Because of the ways communities address stormwater run-off it is both a natural resource (water quality) and utility (water quantity) issue.

Management of stormwater run-off requires oversight and monitoring across many town agencies and is becoming more complicated because of federal requirements (see MS4 sidebar). While Branford has taken steps to improve stormwater management, this will continue to be an issue that requires additional work and effort.

To continue to address stormwater pollution, Branford should improve the existing drainage systems (using modern water quality restoration techniques), continue to educate the public about the impacts of stormwater run-off, provide stormwater treatment and restrict run-off from new development.

Projects such as the Branford River Project, a program associated with the Branford Land Trust, has enjoyed considerable success in drawing attention to this natural resource, as well as engaged the public and Branford students in river clean up and water quality monitoring and this effort should be encouraged and continued.

Continue to Protect Drinking Water Supplies

Nationally, drinking water is increasingly becoming an important issue. The quantity and the quality of drinking water supplies, while not currently threatened in Branford, are issues of such importance that they deserve the attention of the community.

Branford is fortunate that there is an extensive public water supply network in the community, and the resources used to provide water are well protected.

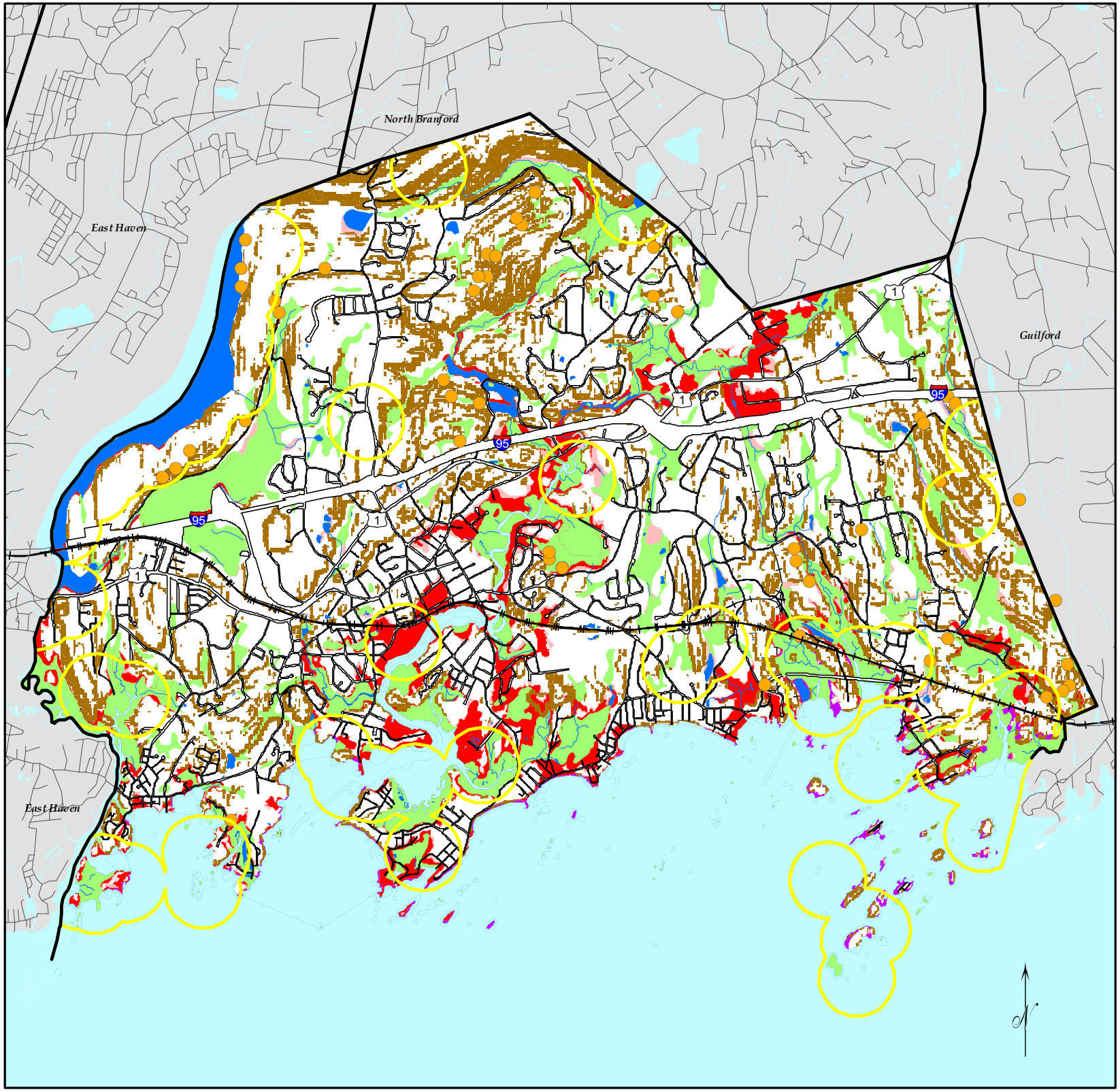
While groundwater is generally considered to be of good quality in Branford, there are areas in Town where groundwater has been impacted by land use activities and accidental discharges.

Since some households rely on private wells for their water supply, Branford should work to ensure that these areas are not exposed to land use activities that would impact the groundwater resource. Limiting future impervious areas is one way where water quality can be positively impacted and Branford should evaluate whether new impervious standards should be established.

Enhance Wetlands and Watercourses Buffers

The freshwater resources of Branford include a variety of streams, lakes, ponds and rivers ranging in size from small vernal pools and feeder streams to Lake Saltonstall and the Branford River.

To protect these resources, Branford has strict regulations for activities that might affect them. Branford should continue to monitor these areas and review opportunities to enhance buffers, regulations, land use agency coordination, and enforcement.



Natural Resources Plan

Legend

- Natural Diversity Area
- Vernal Pools
- Branford Water Features
- Slopes > 15%
- Wetland
- 100-year floodzone
- Coastal floodzone
- 500-year floodzone

3,000 Feet

Storm Drain Stenciling

Storm drain stenciling is an educational campaign that involves adding "Drains to Long Island Sound" or other statements to catch basins, to inform people about where stormwater goes.

Initiated in Branford by an Eagle Boy Scout, this work continues to be performed by the Branford River Project, a joint effort of the Branford Land Trust, Friends of the Farm River and the Branford Rotary Club.

The group was started in 1995 with the goals of:

- Understanding the status of the Branford River;
- Promoting community awareness of each individual's role in preserving the health of the river; and
- Developing and implementing projects designed to preserve and/or improve the quality of the river.



Improve Erosion and Sedimentation Control

Erosion of land that has been developed is increasingly becoming a concern. Branford should review erosion and sedimentation control regulations to ensure that adequate measures are in place for long-term site stability.

Protect Long Island Sound

Long Island Sound is a significant natural resource asset of statewide importance that must be protected for its aesthetic, ecological, economic, and recreational purposes. Branford has a strong physical connection to the Sound via salt marshes, a rocky shoreline and the Thimble Islands.

Branford has recognized the importance of this resource and has taken steps to protect the Sound. The coastal management area of Long Island Sound includes approximately one third of the land area of Branford.

Improving coastal water quality should continue to be a priority. Portions of the town's coastal area are highly developed and the discharge of urbanized runoff into coastal waters affects resources such as shellfish, and water-dependent uses such as swimming. It also increases sedimentation of navigation channels and other shallow waters.

To protect coastal water quality, Branford should continue to review development plans within the Coastal Area Management boundary and develop solutions that will minimize water quality impacts from the development.

Branford should also consider adopting more stringent water quality objectives within the coastal management overlay district and streamline the administrative review process for coastal site plan applications by applying the standards in a consistent manner across zoning, engineering and health agencies.

.

Branford currently partners with the State of Connecticut to provide sewage pump-out boats for recreational boats. This is an important water quality enhancement program that should be continued.

ACTIONS TO PROTECT WATER QUALITY

1. Continue to improve water quality with programs such as sewage pump-out boats, land use agency coordination, the Branford River Project, storm drain marking, etc.
2. Improve stormwater treatment through vegetative buffers, open swales, detention basins, and rain gardens.
3. Prevent sedimentation of catch basins, drainage pipes, culverts, wetlands and waterways.
4. Retrofit existing stormwater management systems utilizing modern water treatment technology.
5. Enhance groundwater protection.
6. Enhance buffers to wetlands and watercourses.

R 7. Monitor impacts and review needs for new regulations or additional enforcement.

8. Develop more stringent water quality standards for properties along the coast.

R = Review local land use regulations



Supply Pond Fishway

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Protect Biologic Resources

The Natural Resource Inventory prepared by the Conservation and Environment Commission has identified areas in Branford where unique habitats, containing species of special concern, or representing other valuable resources exist within the community.

This is a valuable resource and tool, as it can be used by the community to prioritize areas that should be protected. Branford should continue to update this inventory as new information becomes available and should evaluate how this tool can be used to protect important natural habitat when new development is contemplated.

Tree Protection

The preservation of existing tree cover is important, not only for the aesthetic quality of residential neighborhoods, roadways and commercial development, but also for maintenance of water quality in the rivers and streams that drain into Long Island Sound, mitigation of flooding, and preservation of wildlife diversity.

Since most of the land area is under private ownership, tree preservation is difficult to control. However, during the construction of new development, requirements for protection of existing trees and planting of new trees are feasible strategies and could be part of an overall landscape regulation. (Also see pages 24 and 41 for strategies regarding tree protection)

ACTIONS TO PROTECT BIOLOGIC RESOURCES

1. Continue to update the Natural Resource Inventory when new information becomes available.

R 2. Incorporate habitat area protection strategies into local regulations.

R 3. Adopt a tree preservation regulation for all new subdivision and development proposals subject to site plan approval.

R = Review local land use regulations



Wildlife



Tree Clearing

Clean Energy Community

The Connecticut Clean Energy Communities Program is a partnership between the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund, SmartPower and the individual participants in the CT Clean Energy options program.

This program is designed to provide communities with opportunities to purchase and support clean energy at no cost by making the purchase of clean energy a viable and attractive option for both businesses and residents.

The Connecticut Clean Energy Communities Program provides qualified cities and towns free clean (green) energy systems (solar panels).
branfordcleanenergy.com

SmartPower Program

The SmartPower 20 percent by 2010 Clean Energy Campaign is a challenge to Connecticut's cities and towns, faith communities, colleges and universities and businesses to start using clean energy.
ctinnovations.com

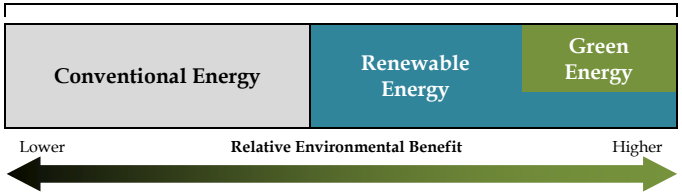
SECONDARY STRATEGY

Utilize "Green" Energy

From a natural resource perspective, energy issues involve the use of fuels to produce electricity, heat and cooling that Branford relies on for operational purposes.

Green energy is a subset of renewable energy and represents those renewable resources (solar, wind, biogas, biomass, low-impact hydro and geothermal) that provide the highest environmental benefit.

U.S. Energy Supply (not to scale)



Source: US EPA

Global demand for principal energy sources, such as oil, is rapidly affecting the price for these resources. This additional cost is reflected in the price of goods and services and is beginning to influence the types of choices communities have to make, such as facility energy needs and transportation costs related to municipal and state-provided services.



Solar Power

Branford is currently participating in the SmartPower program (see sidebar) and should continue to participate in this effort.

Encourage Energy Efficient Land Use

Branford can also conserve energy through proper land use planning by promoting the use of nodes and villages (described in chapter 7) as key growth areas to support pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use and transit-oriented development opportunities.

Creating areas that do not rely on the automobile may help to reduce overall energy demand.

ACTIONS TO UTILIZE GREEN ENERGY

1. Continue to participate in the Connecticut Clean Energy Community Program.

R 2. Pursue land use strategies to reduce vehicle emissions (pedestrian-friendly, mixed use and transit-oriented development).

R = Review local land use regulations

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Continue to be a Leader in Addressing Light Pollution

Light pollution is the scattering of light into the sky or on locations where it is not wanted or needed. It is caused by unshielded lights, spotlights, and ornamental lights that are directed toward the sky or at wide angles rather than straight down.

There are three types of light pollution:

- glare (light striking your eye directly from the source),
- sky glow (the garish hue seen overhead from artificial light scattering in the atmosphere), and
- spillover (light that extends beyond the targeted object, including light trespass).

Branford has taken strong steps to address the cause of light pollution within the community. While regulations have been developed and light fixtures have been adjusted, the community should evaluate whether current regulations are sufficient and if additional measures can be taken to address light pollution.

ACTIONS TO ADDRESS LIGHT POLLUTION

1. Continue to identify and replace inappropriate light fixtures and educate property owners about light pollution.

R 2. Evaluate regulations that address light pollution.

R = Review local land use regulations

EMERGING ISSUE

Prepare for Sea Level Rise

Branford must consider a multiplicity of ways that rising sea level might impact the town. For example, sea level rise will increase the frequency of flood events and may impact how emergency services are provided.

Sea level rise is also a factor in constructing facilities along the coast, including seawalls, and stormwater outfalls. While no single solution exists at this time, Branford needs to prepare for sea level rise.

ACTIONS TO PREPARE FOR SEA LEVEL RISE

1. Be cognizant and vigilant about how global sea level rise may affect existing and future development in coastal areas.



Sign on Meadow Street



Hurricane of 1938

ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability

"The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives is an association of local governments and national and regional local government organizations that have made a commitment to sustainable development. More than 815 cities, towns, counties, and their associations worldwide comprise ICLEI's growing membership. ICLEI works with these and hundreds of other local governments through international performance-based, results-oriented campaigns and programs.

ICLEI provides technical consulting, training, and information services to build capacity, share knowledge, and support local government in the implementation of sustainable development at the local level. Our basic premise is that locally designed initiatives can provide an effective and cost-efficient way to achieve local, national, and global sustainability objectives."

iclei.org

EMERGING ISSUE

Protect Air Quality

Air quality is an important natural resource issue that tends to be outside of a community's control. For the most part air quality is impacted by industrial facilities and vehicle emissions. Air pollution issues, such as smog, carbon dioxide emissions, smoke and particulates, generally are regulated by the state and federal governments.

Addressing air quality at the local level is an emerging area and there are measures a community can take to reduce air pollution. Branford should strive to ensure that air quality impacts from local land use and other activities, such as dust and odors, are minimized or eliminated.

Branford is currently participating in the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) Clean Air and Climate Protection Program (see sidebar) to track and quantify local emissions with a goal of improving energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Once the inventory phase of the Clean Air and Climate Protection program is complete, Branford should consider establishing carbon reduction targets and developing a plan to meet this goal.

In addition the community could consider the location of air pollution generators, such as major highways, when locating a site for a new school or community facility.

Branford can also evaluate the impact that the overall land use pattern has on vehicle use, and fine tune land use regulations to become less auto-centric. Strategies to bring residential uses closer to retail and employment destinations should also be considered.

Plant Trees

Trees provide a broad range of invaluable benefits to individuals and the environment. Trees help reduce carbon monoxide levels and can provide energy conservation in the summer.

Branford should encourage tree planting on public property, when appropriate, and evaluate landscaping standards in the land use regulations to encourage tree planting within new site development. (Also see pages 21 and 41 for strategies regarding tree protection)

ACTIONS TO PROTECT AIR QUALITY

1. Continue to track and quantify local greenhouse gas emissions.
2. Continue to evaluate air quality impacts, such as dust and odors that may result from new development.

R 3. Evaluate opportunities to create pedestrian friendly areas to reduce motor vehicle use.

R 4. Consider creating land use strategies (transit-oriented development and mixed use) to reduce vehicle emissions.

5. Consider establishing carbon reduction targets along with a plan to meet these goals.
6. Encourage tree planting on public property.

R 7. Evaluate landscape requirements, in the land use regulations, to encourage tree planting within new site development.

R = Review local land use regulations

OPEN SPACE

5

Overview

Open space, in adequate quantities and appropriate locations, can help protect community character, conserve important natural resources, shape development patterns, and enhance the quality of life for Branford residents.

For the purpose of community planning, it is helpful to define "open space" as land that is preserved or dedicated in some way for open space purposes.

Branford has established the following open space goals and strategies:

GOAL	Create an open space system that enhances the quality of life in Branford.
KEY STRATEGY	• Continue to implement the 2005 Open Space Plan • Create greenway linkages
SECONDARY STRATEGIES	• Improve open space acquisition tools • Create an easement inventory • Manage town open space • Protect privately "managed" open space • Enhance coastal access

Open space provides important recreational areas, protects scenic views, adds to community character and enhances overall quality of life



Definitions

Dedicated Open Space - Land preserved in perpetuity as open space with public use.

Protected Open Space - Land preserved from development (e.g. by conservation easement) but public use is sometimes allowed.

Managed Open Space - Land set aside for some other purpose (such as watershed protection) but that provides some open space value. Public use is not always allowed.

Background

Branford has been very active in working to preserve open space. It is estimated that almost 30 percent of the land area in Branford (3,989 acres) is classified as open space.

This includes 1,650 acres of Town owned land, over 1,000 acres of South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority (SCCRWA) land, over 800 acres of Branford Land Trust properties, state property and one federal property, a Thimble Island that is part of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge.

It is reported that the Branford Land Trust holds conservation easements on an additional 300 acres of land around town.

Amount of Open Space

It is important to keep in mind that there is no single standard of how much open space land a community needs.

Open space serves many purposes, such as passive recreation, stream buffers and wildlife habitat. Each community is unique in the way it balances the need for these resources with the competing needs for growth in jobs, tax revenue and affordable housing.

Open Space Plan

In 2002, the town established a committee to evaluate open space issues in Branford and to develop a plan. In 2005, this plan was finalized and has become a tool for Branford residents to utilizing when evaluating parcels for open space acquisition.



Branford Land Trust – Santacroce Woods Property



Branford Land Trust – Hammer Property

KEY STRATEGY

Continue to Implement the 2005 Open Space Plan

Branford should continue to implement the 2005 Open Space Plan. This plan includes criteria and guidelines to assist the community when trying to determine if a parcel is appropriate for the community to acquire.

CRITERIA FOR PRIORITIZING THE ACQUISITION OF OPEN SPACE (2005)

A property will be given high priority for acquisition according to the degree to which it:

- Preserves the integrity of rare, fragile, or threatened ecosystems, especially those impacting Long Island Sound, the Branford River, inland and tidal wetlands and trap rock ridges.
- Enhances and preserves the continuity of greenway systems including, but not limited to, such areas as the Supply Ponds - Pisgah Brook Preserves, Hoadley Creek Preserve, Beacon Hill, Water Authority- Lake Saltonstall area, Stony Creek Quarry Preserve, and "The Branford Trail."
- Enhances and protects wildlife travel corridors.
- Enhances flood and erosion control and water supply protection.
- Preserves and protects historically significant and outstanding scenic sites, particularly ridgelines, view lines of Long Island Sound and the Branford River.
- Preserves existing farmland and open fields.
- Preserves land that is critical to the Town's character.
- Enhances, expands or connects existing open space to minimize habitat fragmentation.
- Protects parcels which include or are adjacent to watercourses or wetland areas including, but not limited to, the Farm River, the Branford River, Stony Creek and their associated tributaries and Long Island Sound.

Ongoing Open Space Planning

While Branford has developed criteria for open space land, the community should continue to update open space planning efforts with input from local and regional organizations.

Open space planning should continue to refine how parcels might be linked with trails and other open space areas and strategies to implement these plans.

Branford should also improve how open space is tracked. Historically the Branford Assessor's Office has classified some parcels of dedicated open space, owned by the town or the Branford Land Trust, as "vacant land."

Branford should confirm the amount of dedicated open space is correct and create a way to manage this information.

Partner With Others

The Branford Land Trust and similar organizations are an important part of open space preservation efforts. The Branford Land Trust has been instrumental in educating and providing stewardship of open space land throughout Branford.

Branford should continue to seek opportunities to partner with these other organizations to accomplish overall open space objectives.

In particular, such organizations can actively work with land owners to understand their overall circumstances and whether land sales or donations or other techniques are most advantageous for them.

ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE 2005 OPEN SPACE PLAN

1. Continue to place a high priority on acquiring properties with coastal or river access and acquire key parcels of open space that link, protect or buffer other open space parcels or natural resources.
2. Continue to seek opportunities to participate in federal and state grant programs and partner with other organizations to protect open space.
3. Improve the management of the open space database and correctly identify dedicated open space parcels.

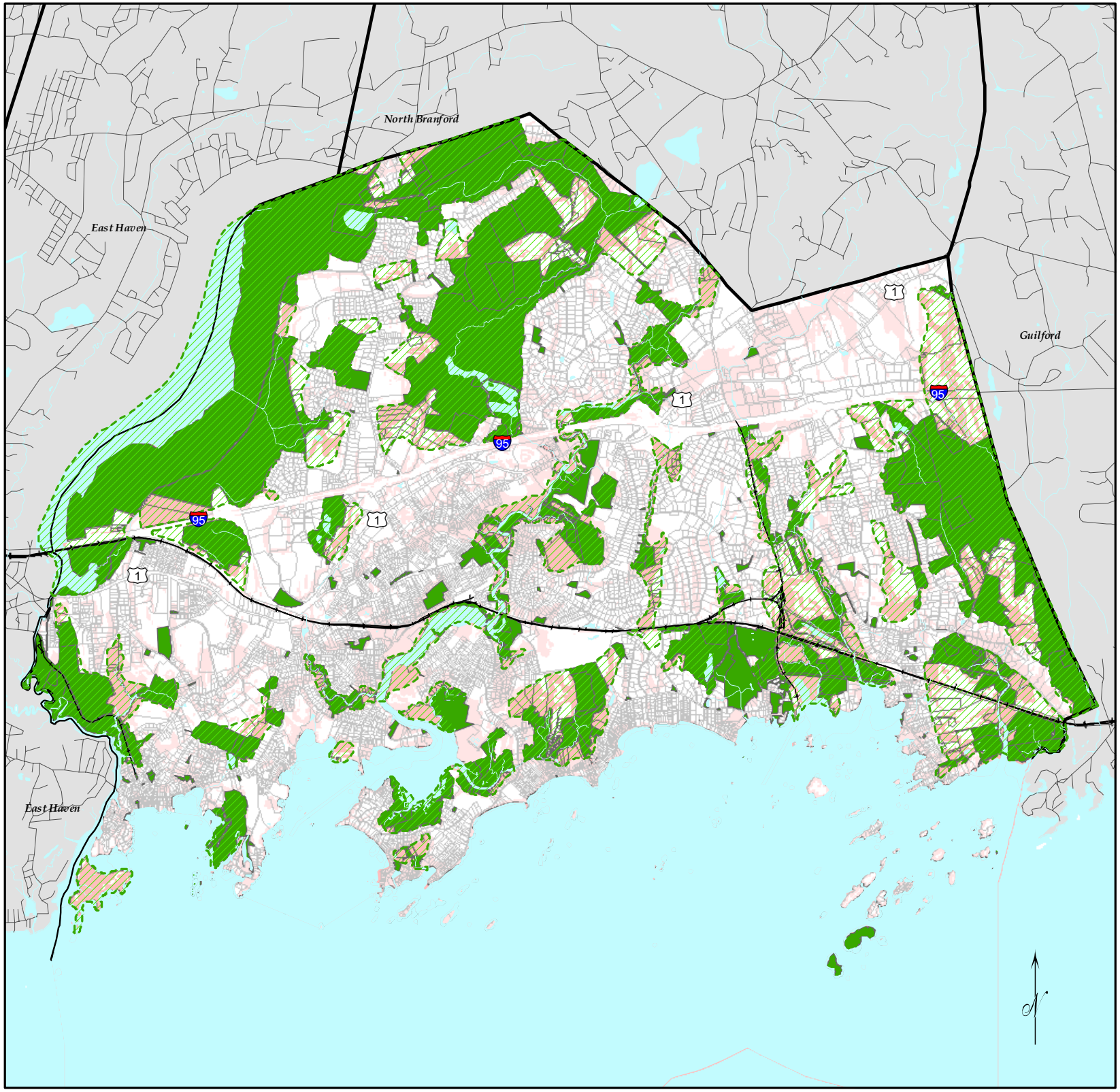


Branford Land Trust – Weis Property



Branford Land Trust – Vedder Property

Open Space Plan



Legend

- Proposed Open Space Corridors
- Existing Open Space
- Environmental Constraints

3,000 Feet

Greenways

Greenways are "corridors of open space" that:

- may protect natural resources, preserve scenic landscapes and historical resources or offer opportunities for recreation or non-motorized transportation;
- may connect existing protected areas and provide access to the outdoors;
- may be located along a defining natural feature, such as a waterway, along a man-made corridor, including an unused right of way, traditional trail routes or historic barge canals; or
- may be a green space along a highway or around a village.

"Ring of Branford"

Because Branford's trail network creates a ring around the town, and provides scenic views and vistas, the community could use this as overall design concept for future open space acquisition, or as a tourism marketing tool, similar to the "Ring of Kerry" in southwest Ireland.

ringofkerrytourism.com

KEY STRATEGY

Create Greenway Linkages

Interconnecting open spaces with greenways is the most effective way for Branford to establish a meaningful open space system. While the amount of open space in a community is important, the utility and configuration of open space may be more important in the long term.

Branford should continue efforts to establish an open space system consisting of:

- large open space parcels that will help to preserve natural features, wildlife habitat, scenic views, and community character.
- "greenways" between existing open spaces that will allow for trails for people as well as wildlife and natural resource corridors.

Efforts to interconnect open spaces with greenways and trails, linking these open space areas to the Town Center, Short Beach, and other neighborhoods and protecting important natural resource corridors, should continue to be a priority.

Trails

Branford has an extensive trail network that creates a "ring" around the town. Trails may be part of a larger greenway vision, or independently created to provide access to an area.

Either way, Branford's trail system is a valuable community asset. Branford should seek ways to improve trail system maintenance and continue to enhance and make trail maps available to the public.

Shoreline Greenway

The Shoreline Greenway Trail is a proposed multi-purpose trail that will travel from Lighthouse Point Park in New Haven, to Hammonasset State Park in Madison.

There are numerous unanswered questions about this Greenway including where the route may actually travel within Branford.

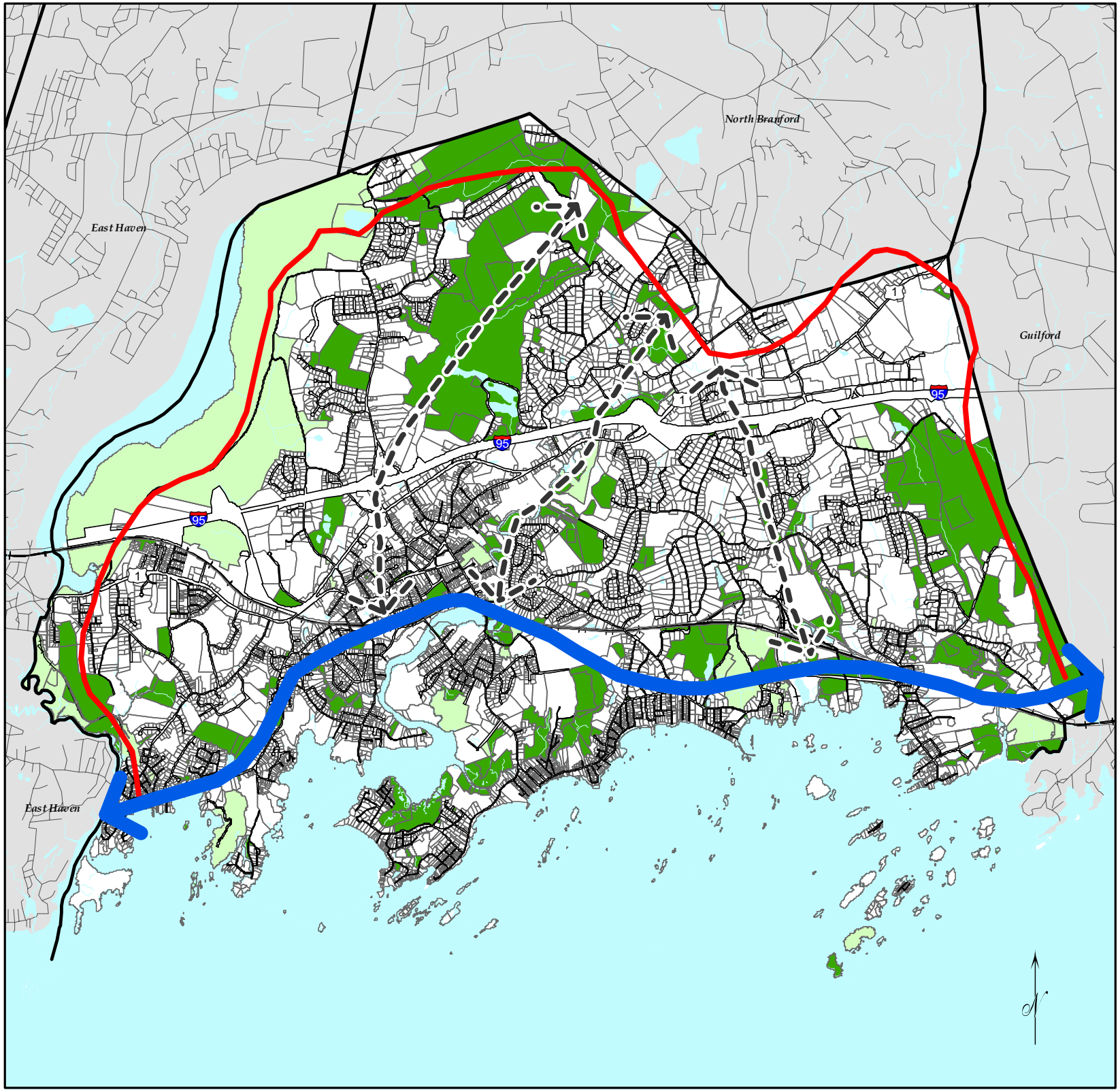
Branford has completed portions of this trail and should continue to work with residents, local organizations and regional agencies to develop this trail in an environmentally sensitive manner.

ACTIONS TO CREATE GREENWAYS

1. Continue to enhance and make available to the public mapping/guides for recreational trail systems.
2. Link open space areas and neighborhoods through a system of trails and greenways.
3. Improve trail system maintenance.
4. Provide improved signage and handicapped accessibility to trails.
5. Work to complete the Shoreline Greenway.



Trolley Trail



Trail Plan

Legend

- Shoreline Greenway Trail
- Ring of Branford
- Potential Connections
- Dedicated Open Space
- Managed Open Space

3,000 Feet

Other Open Space Tools

Fee in lieu of open space – Allows developers to pay a fee instead of providing open space (occurs when a development project is proposed). Branford is currently using this tool for subdivision applications.

Philanthropy – Many property owners have an emotional attachment to their land and given a choice, would prefer to see their property preserved in a way that enhances the community.

Adjusting regulations – Some communities have offered regulatory flexibility, such as reducing, or eliminating, the minimum lot size, as a way to encourage additional open space dedications.

Conservation-type development pattern

Conservation-type developments provide design flexibility to a developer to promote conservation of important resources on a particular property.

Design flexibility might involve elimination of zoning bulk requirements or reduction of town road standards to encourage a low impact development.

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Improve Open Space Acquisition "Tools"

Branford has many tools that can be used to acquire or protect land as open space. Because open space is important to Branford, the community should continue to evaluate and improve the tools that are being used.

Development Set-Aside

Branford's subdivision regulations currently require a 10 percent "set-aside" of open space at the time of subdivision. This requirement may also be met through a "fee in lieu of open space" provision (see sidebar). Some communities have increased the minimum set-aside (to 15 percent or higher) and Branford may wish to consider doing the same.

Branford should also consider requiring all new residential developments (including multifamily projects) to provide open space or pay a "fee in lieu of open space" at the time that the new development is proposed. Branford should evaluate the current fee in lieu of open space process to ensure this tool is being used properly.

Development Patterns

In order to preserve open space, natural resources and community character, Branford should consider encouraging or requiring that new residential development be built in a "conservation-type" development pattern (see sidebar) rather than the conventional suburban-type pattern.

The current zoning regulations allow "Open Space Residential Development" subdivisions by special exception, and the community has the ability to make this type of development mandatory.

Conventional Subdivision



Open Space Residential Development



Funding for Open Space Acquisition

Branford should continue to purchase open space where it meets local objectives. The Town should set aside funds for open space purchase (from either bonding as a lump sum) or the operating budget as a continuing line item) to augment the existing open space fund that receives money from fees-in-lieu of open space and revenue from the Norcross Brothers Quarry (Castellucci Quarry) in Stony Creek.

The State of Connecticut provides open space grants to municipalities and organizations that meet certain basic functional requirements. The Town of Branford has been successful in recent years receiving grants and assistance for open space acquisition in the Beacon Hill-Farm River area, Saltonstall Mountain, the Medlyn property, the Trolley Trail between Pine Orchard and Stony Creek and the Queach – Pisgah Brook property north of the supply pond area. These efforts should continue.

ACTIONS TO IMPROVE OPEN SPACE TOOLS

R	1.	Promote "conservation-type" development patterns.
R	2.	Modify the zoning regulations to require an open space "set aside" (or fee-in-lieu-of) as part of a multi-family or non-subdivision residential development.
R	3.	Consider allowing off-site dedication of open space as part of a development, if the land offered is significant to the overall open space framework.
R	4.	Review the fee in lieu of open space process.
	5.	Augment the land acquisition fund, to react quickly to property sales.
	6.	Consider using the "open space use assessment" program (Public Act 490).

R = Review local land use regulations

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Create an Easement Inventory

Understanding where all of the open space is located is important. Branford has taken numerous steps to inventory open space parcels, but inventorying easements granted to the Town has been a challenge.

Because of expectations that have been developed when the easements were accepted, it is important for the community to know where these easements are, and to monitor activities that occur in these areas.

Branford should conduct the research necessary to identify existing conservation easements, add new easements to the list as they are granted and map their locations using the Town's Geographic Information system (GIS).

ACTIONS TO CREATE AN EASEMENT INVENTORY

1. Develop an inventory of easements using the geographic information system.



Branford Land Trust – Sybil Creek property

What is a GIS?

The term GIS refers to a Geographic Information System, which is a program that uses computers to collect, store, manipulate, analyze, and display data.

What is a GPS?

While the term GPS is not used in this plan, there is often confusion between the terms GIS and GPS.

GPS refers to a Geographic Positioning System, which is an arrangement of satellites and receiving devices used to compute positions on the Earth. Information obtained using a GPS device can be used to create a map in a GIS program.

Preserving Town-owned Open Space

Land that is specifically purchased by the Town as open space should remain as open space, unless the community votes to change the classification of the land.

In some communities this process is not enough. Community advocates want assurances that their intentions are not modified by some future community need.

In these instances granting conservation easements to another party, such as a land trust, is a way to provide additional protection.

The Branford Land Trust currently holds easements on several town-owned open space properties, providing that extra layer of protection.

Resources to Preserve Open Space

Resources to protect land as open space include:

- outright acquisition,
- the use of conservation easements, and
- the transfer of development rights.

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Manage Town Open Space

While Branford has a large inventory of open space land, managing this land can be a challenge. Different user groups may want to use this land in ways that were not previously envisioned, encroachments can occur along property lines and some areas may become dumping areas because of the remoteness of the location.

To address these and other issues, Branford should identify how town-owned properties are used and develop management plans for the stewardship of open space parcels. Branford should address:

- maintaining the overall physical condition of the land,
- creating agreement on the ways that Branford will use certain parcels or areas within a parcel (e.g. active recreation, trails, etc),
- enforcing regulations concerning property use and illegal dumping, and
- establishing how the land will remain in the condition that is consistent with community expectations. If land is specifically purchased as "open space" and is then converted into some other use, the change in use may limit the community's ability to acquire additional land as "open space" (see sidebar).

ACTIONS TO ESTABLISH MANAGEMENT PLANS

1. Create an inventory of how town-owned properties are used.
2. Develop management plans for town-owned open space parcels.
3. Improve enforcement of allowed uses and enforcement of illegal dumping on open space properties.

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Protect Privately "Managed" Open Space

In Branford, 34 percent of open space land is "managed" open space. "Managed" open space includes, such as land currently used as water company watershed land, golf courses, cemeteries, where development is minimal, and the land is "natural" in appearance.

This type of land presents one of the best opportunities for the community to create additional "protected" open space. In some communities, parcels that contribute to an overall open space feel are under pressure to be converted to a more profitable land use activity (usually housing).

Recognizing the important contribution that many of these parcels make, Branford could do more to encourage the long term protection of these properties as open space (see resources to preserve open space sidebar).

The South Central Regional Water Authority owns a large percentage of the managed open space in Branford. Branford should continue to partner with the Authority to protect this land.

Branford should evaluate "managed" open space parcels and identify specific properties where a conversion to "protected" open space may be possible.

ACTIONS TO PROTECT MANAGED OPEN SPACE

1. Explore opportunities to convert "managed" open space land into protected open space land.
2. Work with large land owners to develop a strategy for long-term conservation of "managed" land.

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Enhance Coastal Access

Branford has few sandy beach areas for swimming and sunbathing, and these areas are generally restricted to town or village residents. Branford does provide a number of other meaningful public access opportunities such as the Branford High School small craft access launch area, the Stony Creek town dock and beach, and the Trolley Trail.

Branford should also continue to evaluate public access when implementing the Connecticut Coastal Management Act (CCMA) through the Coastal Site Plan Review process. This review process provides the community with the ability to consider impacts to coastal waters, along with access to the coast.

The CCMA requires activities along the water to be water dependent (see side bar) with a goal of ensuring public access, although water dependent and public access are not synonymous terms. Branford should consider developing a coastal public access plan with strategies for new public access areas, to help direct development in a manner that furthers community goals.

Encourage Water Dependent Uses

In many communities along Connecticut's coast, marinas and recreational boating facilities coexist in predominantly residential neighborhoods, which can create conflicts between the land uses. The west side of the Branford River has a yacht club and several marinas which are located in a primarily residential area.

While these uses are not incompatible they should be carefully regulated to ensure that the water-dependent commercial uses can thrive without creating off-site impacts to the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Commercial Fishing

Connecticut's shore provides a bounty of water-based food resources. These resources are normally harvested by commercial fishermen.

In Branford, commercial fishing uses are not expressly permitted by the zoning regulations, although such uses are evident. Commercial fishing and shellfishing facilities are water-dependent and should be accommodated, although they need to be guided to appropriate locations and zones.

Protect Coastal Open Space

While Branford and its shoreline is largely developed, there are still some undeveloped and underdeveloped areas which have the potential to provide high quality public access, coastal recreation and open space, especially as the community grows and the demands for these amenities increase.

Branford should continue to evaluate opportunities to protect coastal resources by expanding open space and, when appropriate, creating recreational areas to provide additional public access.

ACTIONS TO ENHANCE COASTAL ACCESS

1. Continue to evaluate opportunities to acquire waterfront open space and recreation areas.
2. Consider a uniform coastal access signage program.
3. Develop a coastal public access plan with strategies for creating new public access areas.
4. Improve the condition of existing public boat ramps.

R 5. Guide commercial fishing operations to appropriate areas, through zoning.

R = Review local land use regulations

Public Access

Public access is a goal established within the within the Connecticut Coastal Area Management Act (CGS-22a-90 through 112), which intends to provide the public with the ability to use State waterways, such as Long Island Sound.

Because Branford is a coastal community, accessibility to the water enhances the community's overall quality of life.

ctinnovations.com

Water Dependent Uses

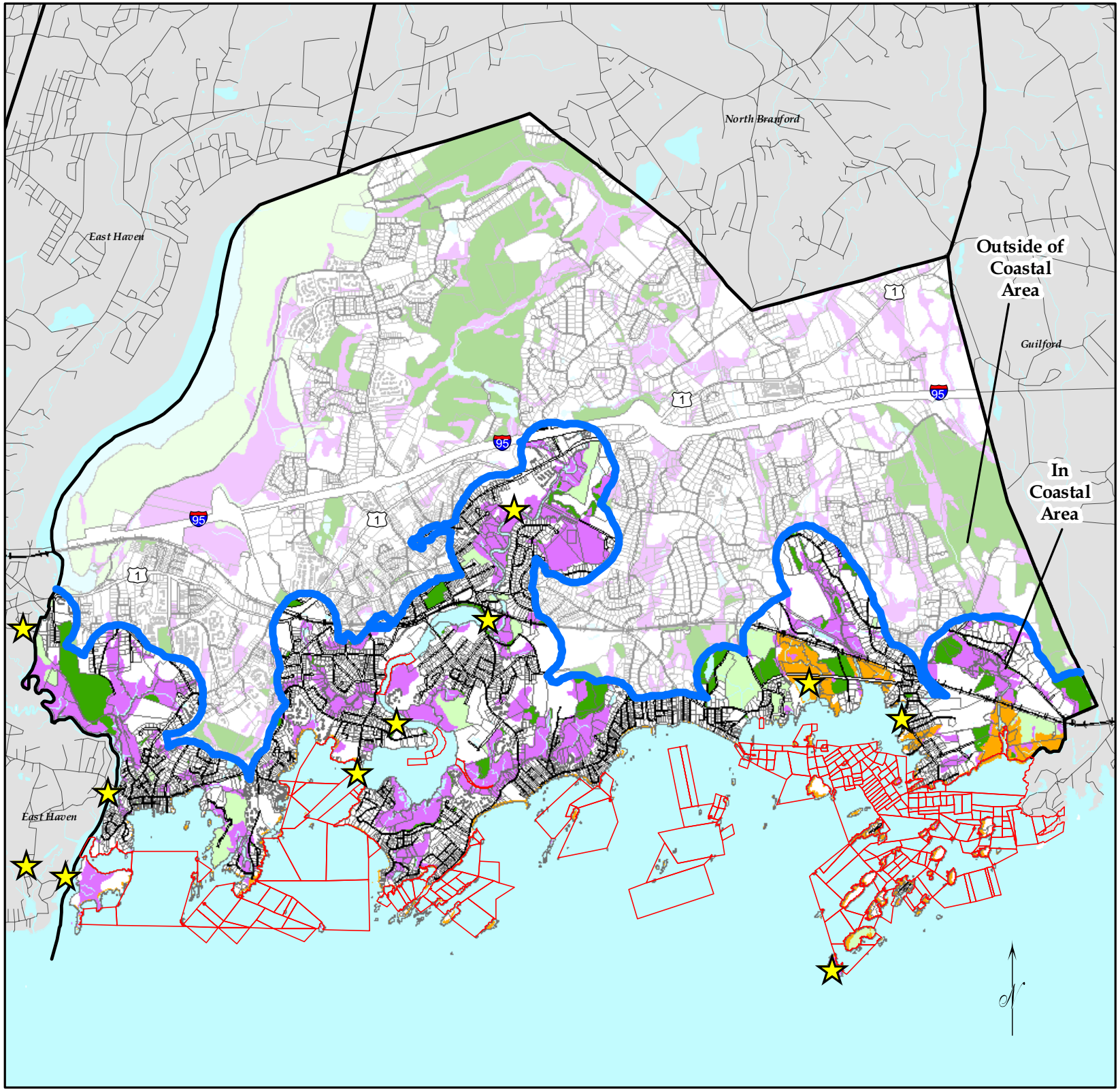
Water-dependent uses are specifically defined in the Connecticut Coastal Management Act. In general they are land uses that require direct access to coastal waters in order to function and which must be located at the waterfront rather than on inland sites.

Such uses include, but are not limited to marinas, commercial fishing or boating facilities and uses that provide general public access to coastal waters.

ct.gov/dep



Coastal Resources Plan



Legend

- Coastal Boundary
- Dedicated Open Space
- Managed Open Space
- VE Floodzone
- Wetland
- Shellfish Beds
- Coastal Access Points

3,000 Feet

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

6

Overview

Community character is an intangible, but highly valued asset.

While community character means something different to each and every resident of Branford, ultimately it is about the "sense of place" in Branford.

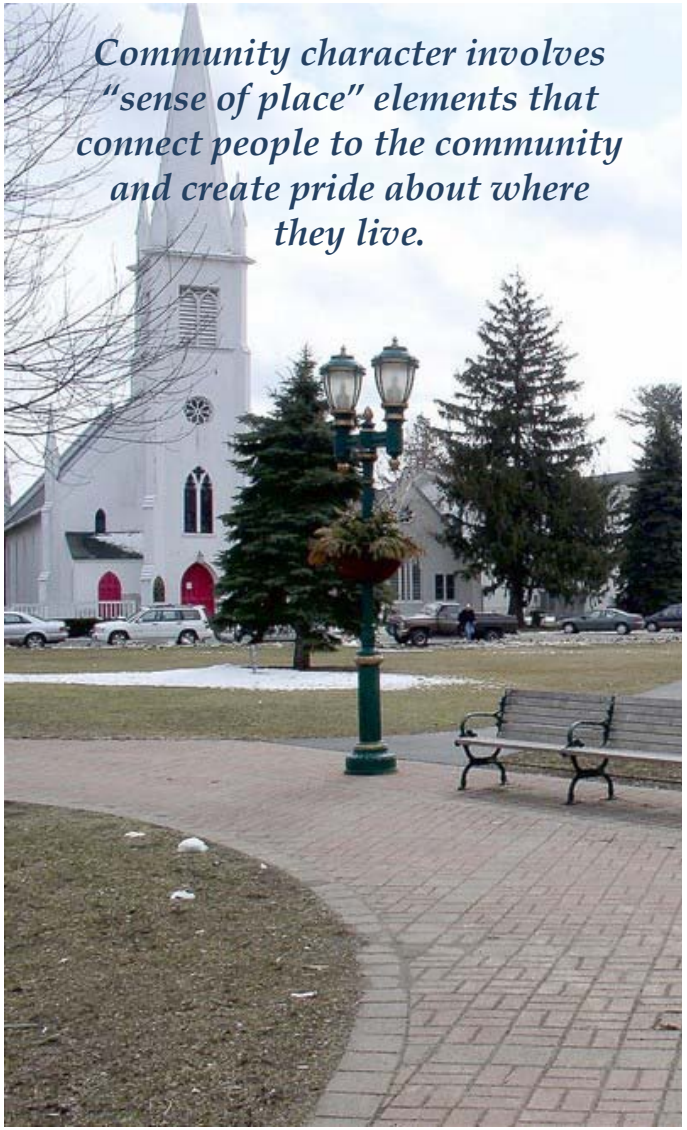
Common elements might include:

- Good design,
- Attractive gateways,
- Historic resources,
- Scenic resources, and
- Undeveloped land and farm land.

Branford has established the fol

lowing goals and strategies for community character:

GOAL	Enhance elements that create a "sense of place" in Branford
KEY STRATEGY	• Expand design review
SECONDARY STRATEGIES	• Protect historic resources • Promote farm viability • Protect undeveloped land • Protect scenic views and roads • Improve signage



Ongoing Design Review

The Town Center Revitalization Review Board currently focuses on design elements within the Town Center. The Planning and Zoning Commission has authorized this board to provide guidance in this geographic area, and should extend this oversight to other business districts within the community.

Experience has shown that when developers understand what design standards and objectives are expected, or encouraged, they are more likely to provide what the community has indicated that they want.

Village Districts

Section 8-2j of the Connecticut General Statutes enables the establishment of what are called "village districts."

A "village district" is a special type of zoning district where, due to the unique character of an area, zoning approvals can clearly consider aesthetic issues such as the design of buildings and sites.

In fact, design review approval is required in a "village district" and a proposal can be denied if the design is inappropriate.

cga.ct.gov

KEY STRATEGY

Expand Design Review

Good design is an important element of community character and every time a new building is built, it affects the community in a positive or negative way. Branford is very fortunate to have some exemplary buildings, both in the Town Center area and elsewhere in the community, which add significantly to community character.

Since good design enhances community character, Branford should seek ways to promote (or require) good design in as many areas of the community as possible.

While Branford has a "New England," feel, different areas of the community have embraced varied architectural styles. The development of an updated and more user-friendly design guidebook would be helpful to illustrate the design concepts that Branford is seeking to encourage in these various areas.

Another strategy to encourage good design is through peer recognition. Branford, or a community organization, could develop an award program to increase public awareness of design and to recognize property owners that have made the extra effort.

ACTIONS TO EXPAND DESIGN REVIEW

1. Expand the types of uses, activities and geographic extents of projects reviewed by the Town Center Revitalization Review Board.
2. Expand the existing Town Center design manual to include other business areas of Town.
3. Encourage establishment of an annual awards program for the best architectural design of the year to increase public recognition of quality building design.

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Protect Historic Resources

Branford has many historic areas and resources which have been documented over the years. However, the Town has lost historic resources for a variety of reasons. In some instances, older buildings do not meet current needs and requirements, whether it is because of modern desires or accessibility-related issues.

Branford should continue to identify and preserve historic resources. Recognition programs can help to encourage property owners to protect these resources. Branford should develop additional adaptive reuse tools (e.g. allowing minor zoning modifications or providing tax abatements) as part of an overall preservation program.

Branford could also work with property owners to use regulatory tools, such as Village Districts (see sidebar) to protect historic resources and historic areas.

ACTIONS TO PROTECT HISTORIC RESOURCES

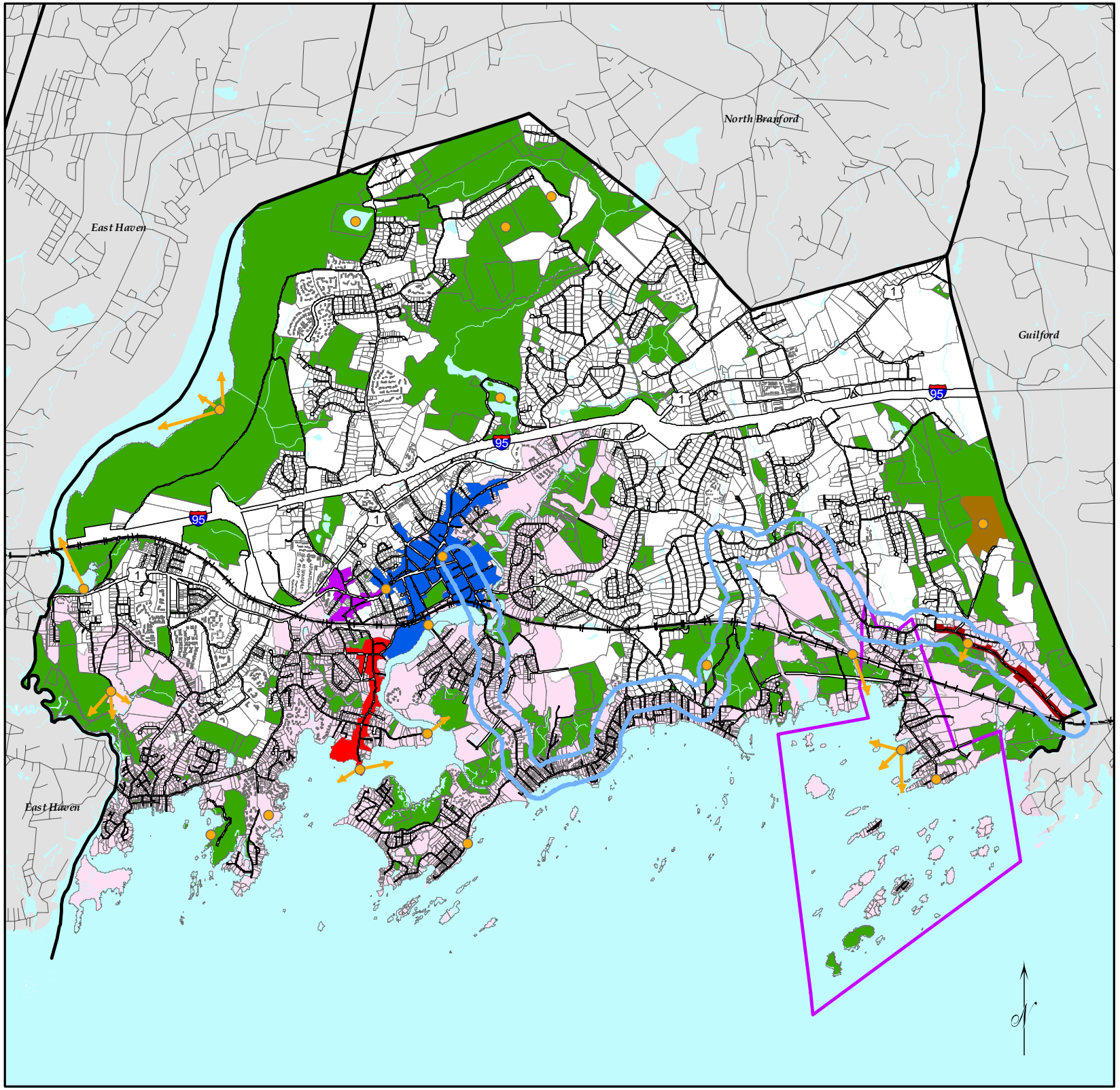
1. Encourage residents to establish Local Historic Districts in residential areas.

R 2. Amend zoning regulations to expand adaptive reuse provisions for historic properties.

R 3. Consider establishing Village Districts in the Town Center and other commercial areas in order to protect historic character.

4. Consider offering tax abatements for restoration or improvements to historic properties that do not compromise their architectural or historic integrity.
5. Map structures that are listed on the National Register.

R = Review local land use regulations



Community Character Plan

Legend

- Scenic Points
- Scenic Vistas
- Scenic Road

Historic Districts

- Branford Center
- Branford Point
- Canoe Brook
- Norcross Brothers Quarry
- Route 146
- Stony Creek / Thimble Islands
- os_mask

Other Resources

- Open Space
- Coastal Scenic Area

3,000 Feet

Public Act 490 Assessment Program

Public Act 490 assessment program (CGS 12-107e) allows communities to reduce the tax burden on parcels recognized as farm use and forest use - making such land more affordable to own so that it may remain undeveloped.

cga.ct.gov

Open Space Use Assessment Program

Under the open space use assessment program, the assessor may incorporate land into the program provided that:

- the land parcel is designated (or the eligibility criteria are specified) in the Plan of Conservation and Development, and
- the designation is (or criteria are) approved by the legislative body

Effective Partnerships

Open space protection in Branford has been a result of organizations working together, such as:

- South Central Regional Water Authority,
- Branford Land Trust, and
- the Foote Trust.

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Promote Farm Viability

Farm land enhances community character and is an important part of the character of Branford.

There are many important reasons for preserving farm land in Branford:

- farmland is a finite natural resource because areas with prime agricultural soils are limited,
- growing food locally helps to meet sustainable development goals,
- there are many intangible benefits associated with farmland, including aesthetic, open space, and sense of place,
- farmland offers environmental benefits including wildlife habitat and the potential for groundwater recharge, and
- farmland is being converted to other uses. There is growth and redevelopment pressure for other, more profitable, uses.

Branford should continue to provide tax incentives (through Public Act 490) for farmers and work with local farmers to encourage existing working farms to remain active by supporting the establishment of a farmers' market and other programs to increase agricultural viability.

ACTIONS TO PROMOTE FARM VIABILITY

1. Continue to use the PA-490 farm and forest assessment programs.
2. Work with existing working farms to find solutions that will help them to continue to operate.

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Protect Undeveloped Land

Unprotected undeveloped land in Branford also adds to community character since it is perceived as "open space."

While the farm and forest assessment programs are operated independently by the Assessor based on state criteria, the Plan of Conservation and Development can recommend the open space use assessment program be established, available to all properties in Branford which can demonstrate that they meet the statutory definition (CGS 12-107) where the preservation of such land would:

- maintain, enhance or promote the conservation of natural or scenic resources,
- protect natural streams or water supply,
- enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations or sanctuaries or other open spaces,
- enhance public recreation opportunities,
- preserve historic sites, or
- promote orderly urban or suburban development.

Branford should consider using the "open space use assessment" program authorized in PA 490. The use of this program must be approved by the legislative body before a property owner can apply for this assessment.

ACTIONS TO PROTECT UNDEVELOPED LAND

1. Consider using the PA-490 open space use assessment for undeveloped land.

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Protect Scenic Views and Roads

While Branford residents and visitors clearly appreciate scenic roads, panoramic views, and other scenic resources (e.g. stone walls, barns, fences, and tree canopies), no comprehensive inventory of scenic resources in Branford has been conducted.

To protect scenic resources, Branford should undertake a comprehensive program to identify the location of these resources in the community. The community should also evaluate whether new regulations are needed to protect stone walls and scenic roads.

Branford should also reevaluate road design standards in the subdivision regulations to determine if current minimum road width requirements are appropriate. Reductions in road width on already built roads may be appropriate as well and Branford should evaluate whether this is feasible.

Protect Scenic Features

Trees, topography and waterbodies add to Branford's scenic quality. While Branford protects waterbodies through a series of regulatory controls, trees and hillsides are not similarly managed. Branford should evaluate land use policies that control tree clearing and grade alterations to protect the scenic value of the community. (Also see pages 21 and 24 for strategies regarding tree protection).

ACTIONS TO PROTECT SCENIC VIEWS / ROADS

1. Continue to identify scenic views, vistas, roads, and other scenic resources in Branford.
2. Preserve or relocate scenic resources such as stone walls, barns, fences, and other scenic resources that are visible from public streets.

R 3. Consider amending land use regulations to include protection of scenic roads, features and other scenic resources, especially in coastal areas.

4. Protect tree canopies from unreasonable destruction during utility pruning.
5. Consider placing utilities underground, where appropriate, to enhance scenic character.

R 6. Consider restrictions on stone walls to help maintain the scenic character of Branford.

R 7. Evaluate road width requirements.

R = Review local land use regulations



Scenic Road



Great Streets

Scenic Roads

A key step in protecting scenic roads is to identify the roads and then take steps to protect the elements that make the road scenic (e.g. stone walls and trees).

Connecticut General Statues Section 7-149a offers Branford the ability to establish an ordinance to improve coordination and management of scenic roads.

Great Streets

In more developed areas, there are scenic streets, also known as "great streets." These streets tend to be rich with character, (e.g. beautiful buildings and trees) and create a "sense of place."

Wayfinding

Wayfinding involves the organization of information to enable people to comfortably and successfully access a place. This information is typically displayed through signage placed at key gateways and interest points.

Wayfinding can create an environment where the public is able to navigate an area based on the information provided and by understanding the design elements used by the area to convey the message.

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Improve Signage

Signs are an important part of community character and a business-friendly environment and finding the balance between appropriate signage is important.

Branford has two primary sign concerns:

- appropriately designed signs to guide customers to businesses, and
- wayfinding signage to guide visitors to important areas within the community.

Well-Designed Commercial Signs

Signs convey a message about the type of community that Branford is. While businesses rely on signs to attract customers, attractive signs leave a strong impression about the quality of the community, and unattractive signs have the opposite effect.

Branford should work with business owners and the chamber of commerce to develop regulations and guidelines for business sign design and illumination. Providing businesses with guidance may help to support the overall objectives of the community, without limiting creativity.

Branford also has a large number of billboards, most of which were erected prior to the adoption of local zoning regulations. It is expected that the owners of the billboards will explore opportunities to "modernize" these billboards into digital LED (light emitting diode) billboards. Branford should work with billboard companies to develop a solution that is sensitive to community character.

Wayfinding

Businesses in Branford have indicated that guiding customers to business areas and then helping them find parking is important.

While parking may not be a challenge along Route 1, the more intensely developed villages do not offer as many options for motorists to find a suitable place to park.

Branford may be able to solve both problems in one effort through the creation of a unified signage and wayfinding program (see sidebar). The wayfinding program would help to identify business locations that are not in highly visible locations, and can direct motorists to public parking or other points of interest.

ACTIONS TO IMPROVE SIGNAGE

R	1.	Develop design standards for commercial signs.
	2.	Create a wayfinding signage program for areas where businesses, key attractions and parking are difficult to locate.
R	3.	Work with billboard owners to develop guidelines for billboard modernization.

R = Review local land use regulations



Well-designed sign

COMMUNITY STRUCTURE

7

Overview

Community structure (the overall physical organization of Branford) is an important consideration in the Plan. The physical organization of a community enhances community character and quality of life and can help guide land use regulations and decisions.

Protecting and enhancing elements that maintain community character and quality of life in Branford is important to the community.

To support elements that strengthen community structure, Branford has established the following goals and strategies:

GOAL	Enhance the structural elements that make Branford a strong community
KEY STRATEGIES	• Enhance the Town Center • Enhance gateways at key points
SECONDARY STRATEGIES	• Consider transit-oriented development • Protect and enhance the villages • Create new nodes • Enhance development along Route 1



Community structure defines the elements that create the "sense of place" within Branford.

"Village-like"

Areas that are characterized as being pedestrian-friendly, with a mixture of commercial and residential uses in close proximity to each other.

"Strip-type"

Areas that are characterized as being "auto-centric," where land uses have been designed to accommodate cars, with large parking lots in front of commercial uses. Often, commercial and residential uses are segregated.

Background

In studies of community structure and character, people feel most comfortable and identify most strongly in areas with a "sense of place."

In Branford, residents and visitors identify with the "sense of place" that exists in the Town Green (Town Center) area and in the villages of Pine Orchard, Stony Creek and Short Beach.

Branford's structure can be traced back to its historical development. The main elements of Branford's overall community structure consist of:

- a mixed-use village center with a traditional New England town green,
- moderate intensity residential neighborhoods in shoreline areas, and
- lower density residential development in outlying areas.



Short Beach

Branford Town Center

Perhaps the strongest element of Branford's structure is the Town Center, and in many ways, the Town Center is the "heart and soul" of the community with a mix of retail, office, business, residential, and institutional uses.

In addition, Branford contains the following types of areas:

- concentrations of multi-family residential developments throughout town,
- "strip-type" commercial development along Route 1, and
- commercial and industrial development around highway interchanges.



Lockworks Square



Stony Creek

connections and that there is adequate signage to direct people to where they need to go.

Continue to Require Attractive Design

Since the mid-1980s Branford has monitored proposed design elements in the Town Center. This is an important task and the community should continue to improve the appearance of the Town Center through public space enhancement (e.g. sidewalks, decorative lamp posts, etc.) and oversight of private development proposals.

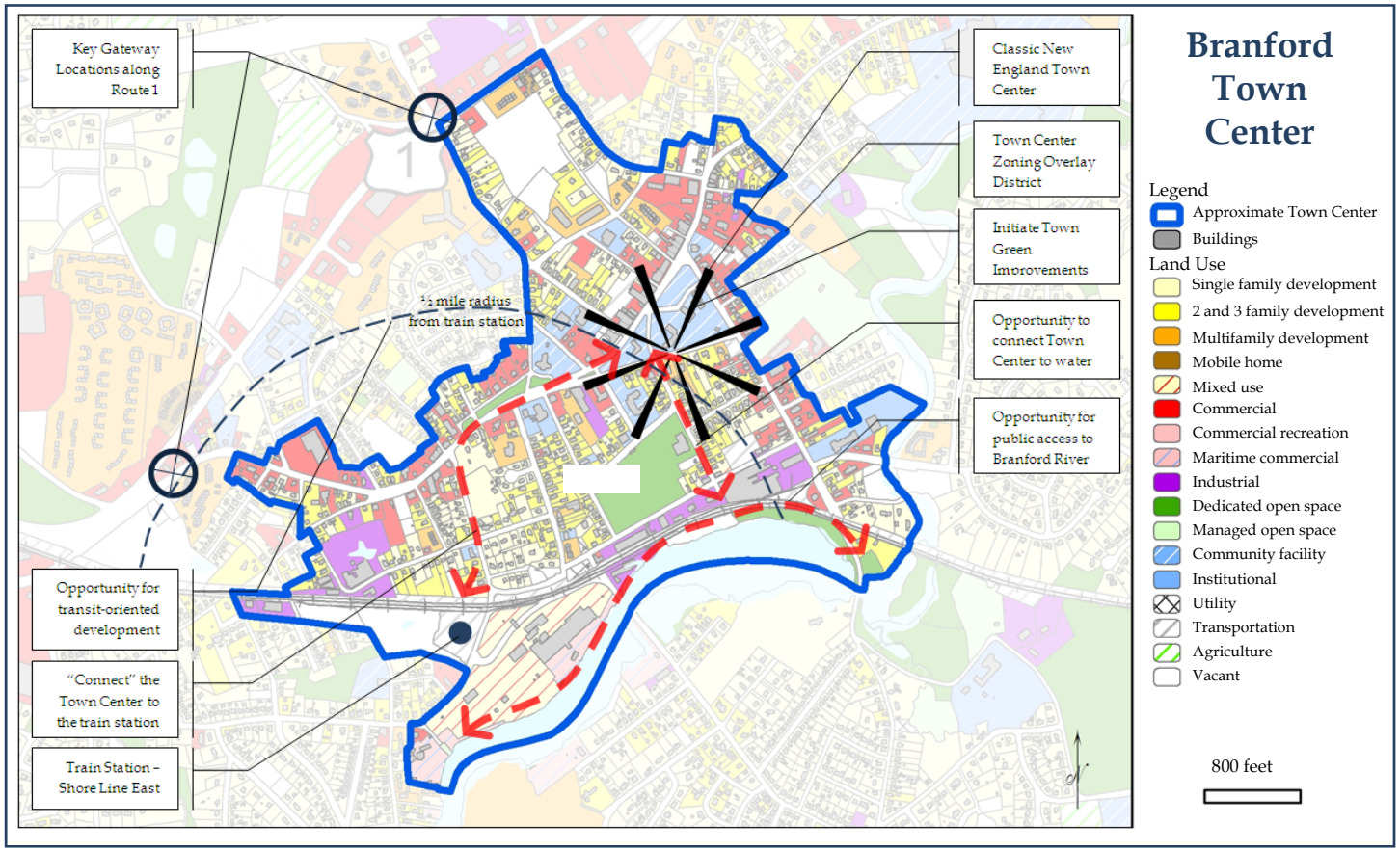
Reevaluate Town Center Boundaries

The Town Center Overlay District was created by the Planning and Zoning Commission to encourage appropriate building design and protect the historic character of the Town Center.

While this has worked, the overlay district tool and boundaries should be reevaluated. New tools, such as the Village District (see sidebars on page 38 and 50) might be appropriate for the Town Center.

Key Town Center Attributes

- Buildings are close to the street
- Mixed uses
- Smaller stores
- Transit connections
- Historic buildings
- Cultural attractions social activities
- Lower traffic volumes and speeds



KEY STRATEGY

Enhance the Town Center

Branford's Town Center is a quintessential New England town green surrounded by commercial, residential, governmental and religious buildings. The Town Center is one of the region's most attractive retail and community center areas.

Over a 20 year period, with considerable attention from community officials and residents, the town center has become a thriving retail area, visited by local residents, regional visitors and tourists.

The Town Center reinforces community structure and enhances the overall quality of life in Branford and it is important that Branford take appropriate steps to protect the qualities that create a "sense of place" in the Town Center.

Keep Branford Center Viable

The Town Center area is the "heart and soul" of the community and the activities that occur there draw people to the Center. Key activities include:

- community facilities (e.g. Town Hall),
- mixed uses (e.g. restaurants, retail shops and housing),
- religious places of worship, and
- social and cultural programs on the green.

Because of the importance of the Town Center as a social activity center, Branford should continue to sponsor special events to enable residents to connect with the community.

A challenge that may result from these programs involves managing the success, where more people want to use the Town Green and other facilities than these places can accommodate. Branford should develop a management plan for the town green to maximize the use of this facility without destroying it.

Recognizing the social elements that already exist in the Town Center, Branford should develop strategies to enhance the variety of complementary uses, such as restaurants and retail shops, to improve function and charm of the area.

Make It Easy to Get to the Town Center

One of the biggest challenges in town centers around the country involves parking and transportation access. Branford should implement the recommendations of the town Center Parking and Circulation Study.

Branford should also explore opportunities to create publicly owned or managed parking areas, encourage interconnection of private parking areas and proceed with construction of the municipal lot at Main and Montowese Streets.

Part of the success of the Town Center is due to the pedestrian-friendly ambiance of the area. Branford should continue to promote pedestrian amenities (e.g. sidewalks, benches, etc.) from the adjacent neighborhoods into the center, and work to find ways to provide bicycle lanes and racks to encourage other non-motorized trips to the Town Center.

Make it Easy to Get Around

The pedestrian should be the main priority when planning for changes in the Town Center. Continuing to promote a safe environment for walks will encourage pedestrian use of the area.

Branford should require that new parking lots and improvements to roads enable safe pedestrian

connections and that there is adequate signage to direct people to where they need to go.

Continue to Require Attractive Design

Since the mid-1980s Branford has monitored proposed design elements in the Town Center. This is an important task and the community should continue to improve the appearance of the Town Center through public space enhancement (e.g. sidewalks, decorative lamp posts, etc.) and oversight of private development proposals.

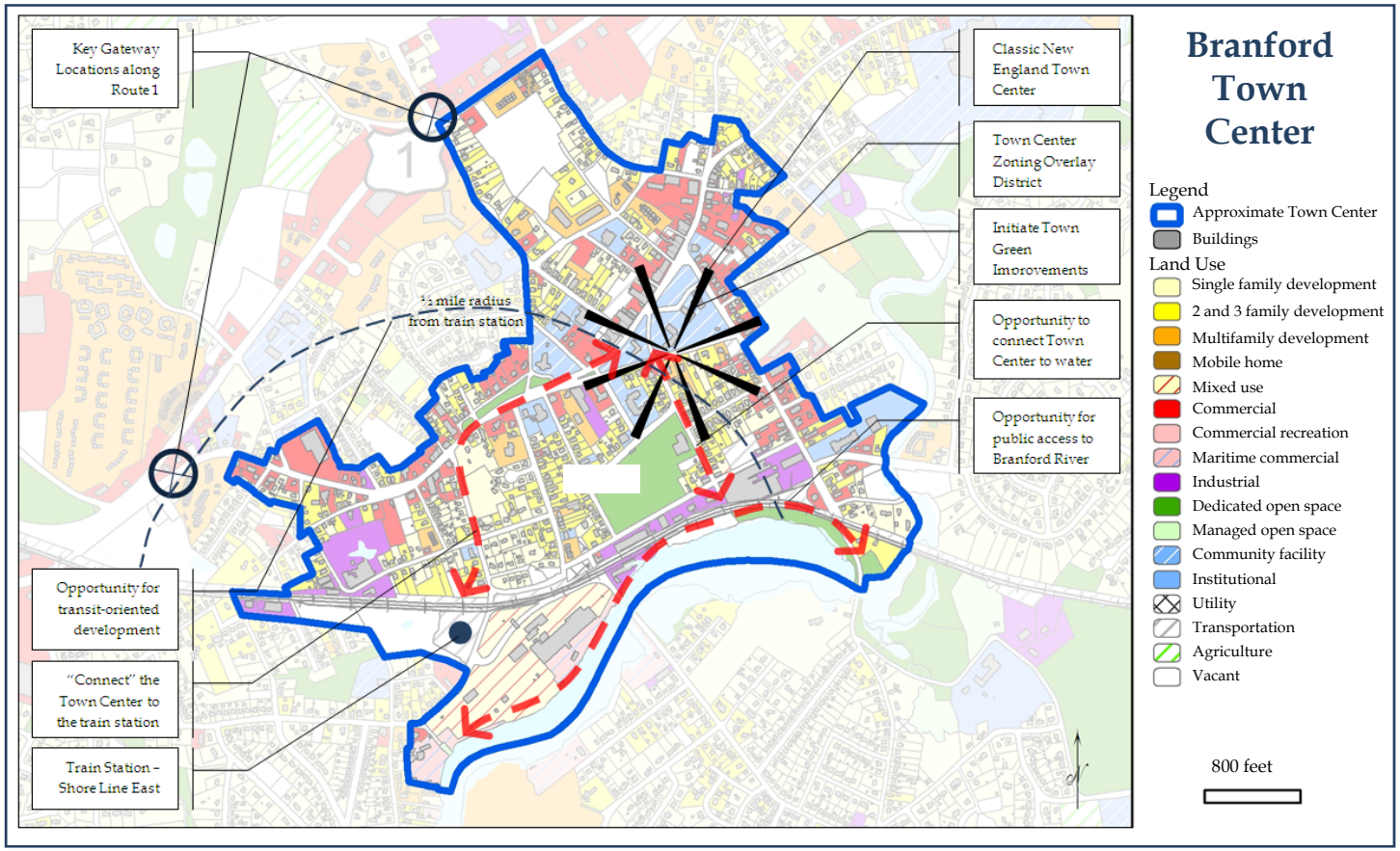
Reevaluate Town Center Boundaries

The Town Center Overlay District was created by the Planning and Zoning Commission to encourage appropriate building design and protect the historic character of the Town Center.

While this has worked, the overlay district tool and boundaries should be reevaluated. New tools, such as the Village District (see sidebars on page 38 and 50) might be appropriate for the Town Center.

Key Town Center Attributes

- Buildings are close to the street
- Mixed uses
- Smaller stores
- Transit connections
- Historic buildings
- Cultural attractions social activities
- Lower traffic volumes and speeds



Municipal Special Services District

A Municipal Special Services District is a special district, created by the property owners, to make improvements in a given area.

The Special Services District establishes the types of issues that they want to deal with, which may include security, street sweeping, or other management-related issues.

Funding for the program is provided through an additional tax paid by all properties located within the district.

Connecticut General Statutes Chapter 105a
cga.ct.gov

Consider Creating a Special Services District

Commercial areas often come with management concerns. Most of these concerns result from management-related issues involving the removal of garbage, light pollution, snow removal, rodent infestation and other nuisances.

An effective way to manage these issues and to promote the Town Center is through the creation of a Municipal Special Services District (see sidebar). The creation of a special services district requires a commitment from the property owners. This tool may be an effective way to promote and manage the Town Center.

Protect Important Town Center Resources

While the Town Green is the most important local Town Center Resource, there are other land use activities that contribute to a vital town center, such as a post office. The Branford Post Office, as a retail site, is a key magnet of activity, as it brings people into the Town Center for goods and services that are not readily available in other locations.

Because of the draw, the post office is an important element of the small business community. There is some discussion that the post office may relocate the retail component of their services to a facility outside of the Town Center because of parking, access and other reasons.

Branford should work with the US Postal Service to find ways to accommodate a facility that is within the Town Center, either in the current location or at some other site.

Find Ways to Create Additional Connections from the Town Center to the Branford River and Open Space

The Town Center is conveniently located near the Branford River key open space properties, such as the Supply Pond-Pisgah Brook Preserve. Branford should work to find ways to provide better pedestrian and bicycling connections to these places.

ACTIONS TO ENHANCE THE TOWN CENTER

1. Implement the Town Center Parking and Circulation Study.
2. Continue to improve the appearance of buildings and properties and sponsor special events in the Town Center
3. Develop a management plan for the Town Green.
4. Explore opportunities to create additional parking areas in the town center.

R 5. Reevaluate the Town Center boundary and land use regulations.

6. Partner with others to find ways to improve management of the Town Center area, either through a Municipal Special Services District or some other tool.
7. Work with the US Postal Service to accommodate the continuation of retail services in the town center.
8. Create additional linkages to the Branford River and open space areas

KEY STRATEGY

Enhance Gateways at Key Entrance Points

Gateways are important transition points in the community. Some gateways serve to invite visitors into the community, while others help to identify a specific area of town. Branford has recently completed a gateway study, which has identified gateway needs in the town center:

- Connecting people with the community, and
- Connecting people with special places, such as the Town Center, Stony Creek and Branford Point.

Gateways have been identified as a key issue in Branford because these areas help others understand the context in which they are located. Gateways help identify a "sense of place" and create a visual connection.

Branford should work to establish gateways that are attractive and announce arrival. Specific areas where gateways should be enhanced include the highway interchanges and main routes to the Town Center.

Gateways also help orientate people to amenities that exist within an area, such as cultural and historic attractions and parking. When connected through signage, the gateway can serve to guide people to specific areas within the overall place.

ACTIONS TO ENHANCE GATEWAYS

1. Enhance Gateways at key entrance points to the community.
2. Work with property owners in these areas to improve overall building and site design.

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Consider Transit-Oriented Development

Branford is fortunate to have transit that supports the overall structure, with a train station in close proximity to the Town Center and bus routes that connect more intensely developed portions of the community.

In the future, Branford may wish to consider encouraging or requiring that new multi-family development is located in places that contribute to overall community structure.

This may be accomplished by locating new development:

- in or near the Town Center,
- along or near transit,
- in areas with a strong pedestrian connection to the Town Center or transit, and
- in areas with safe bicycle connectivity.

This type of development is often referred to as transit-oriented development (see sidebar) and it represents an opportunity for Branford to strengthen the positive elements of the community structure.

ACTIONS TO CONSIDER TOD

R 1. Encourage multi-family development in locations that are connected to the overall community structure.

R = Review local land use regulations

Transit-Oriented Development

Transit-oriented development (TOD) involves creating vibrant, livable communities adjacent to public transit infrastructure, such as train stations.

TOD projects typically include mixed uses, such as residential and commercial, at a density and scale that are higher than other areas of the community.

TOD has been envisioned as a response to traffic congestion, strip-type development and a desire for a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Potential transit-oriented development areas include the Branford Train Station and along the Connecticut Transit bus routes.


transitorienteddevelopment.org

Village District

Section 8-2j of the Connecticut General Statutes enables the establishment of what are called "village districts."

A "village district" is a special type of zoning district where, due to the unique character of an area, zoning approvals can clearly consider aesthetic issues such as the design of buildings and sites.

In fact, design review approval is required in a "village district" and a proposal can be denied if the design is inappropriate.

While originally enabled for "villages", the terminology has outgrown its original name and can now be applied to areas which are recognized in the Plan of Conservation and Development as having unique character, landscape, or historic value.

It can also be applied to areas currently designated as historic district.

cga.ct.gov

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Protect and Enhance the Villages

Branford's villages, the Town Center, Short Beach, Pine Orchard, Indian Neck and Stony Creek, have developed organically, as pedestrian-friendly mixed use environments.

Over the years, as automobiles became available, Branford's traditional development pattern was modified to allow for a suburban style development pattern of larger properties, deeper building setbacks and off-street parking.

These changes shifted the focal points of the community away from the older village areas towards the corridors along main roads and highways.

As people reflect on these changes, there is an increased recognition in the importance of the "sense of place" that exists in many of the traditional neighborhoods, particularly the pedestrian-friendly elements that encourage people to get around without using a car.

Branford is fortunate to have a number of these traditional focal points (Stony Creek, Town Center), where additional planning could guide how these areas contribute to the overall community structure.

New land use tools, such as the "village district" (see sidebar) enable communities to take additional steps to protect the elements that make these places special and help to define the "sense of place."

ACTIONS TO ENHANCE VILLAGE AREAS	
R	1. Consider establishing "village districts" for the village areas.

R = Review local land use regulations



Short Beach



Pine Orchard



Indian Neck



Stony Creek

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Create New Nodes

Branford has a number of unique neighborhoods and villages. Some of these areas are instantly recognizable, such as the Town Center and Stony Creek, while others do not have a specific "sense of place" but are important to the community.

In Branford, there are four areas where the community might benefit from evaluating whether there is an opportunity to establish a stronger "sense of place," whether alternative land uses make sense and to develop specific plans:

- Branford Hill
- Brushy Plains
- Branford Train Station
- North of Exit 56

These areas could benefit from reinforcement of positive elements and a reduction of negative elements as listed below.

Node Elements

Positive Elements	Negative Elements
• Social activities • Cultural activities • Mixed uses • Mixed incomes • Strong pedestrian connections • Historic buildings • Attractive landscaping • Transit connections	• Lack of pedestrian connections and safety • Large expanses of parking • High traffic speeds

ACTIONS TO CREATE NEW NODES

1. Evaluate whether new nodes can be created in Branford and develop plans for appropriate areas.



Branford Hill



Exit 56

Process for Node Planning

1. Complete the Ideal Business Mix Study (page 64),
2. Create area specific plans (node plans), and
3. Implement area specific plans (streetscape improvements, zoning regulations, etc).

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Enhance Development Along Route 1

Recognizing that "village-like" areas contribute to community character and help to create a "sense of place," Branford should evaluate opportunities to convert "strip-type" development areas along Route 1 into to "village like" nodes.

This may be accomplished by encouraging property development in the following manner:

Desired Characteristics

Commercial Areas	Residential Areas
• Mixed use buildings / 2-3 stories with mass proportionate to height • Traditional New England style architecture • Buildings set close to the street / on-street parking and sidewalks • Street trees and hedges to screen parking areas • Parking and drainage areas to the rear or side of the buildings • Sidewalks • Bike racks	• Residential scale and architecture • Traditional New England style architecture • Buildings set close to the street / on-street parking and sidewalks • Street trees

Route 1 cannot be addressed with a one size fits all solution. Different areas require different land use regulations. Route 1 can be classified as three main land use areas:

- West Main Street.
- North Main Street, and
- East Main Street.

West Main Street

Addressing land use activities along this stretch of Route 1 involves using tools to promote redevelopment of existing properties, reducing parking requirements (primarily to limit the amount of pavement that is required) and encouraging mixed use development.

North Main Street

Addressing land use activities on North Main Street involves using tools to promote redevelopment of existing properties, reducing parking requirements (primarily to limit the amount of pavement that is required) and encouraging a more compatible mix of uses.

East Main Street

Addressing land use activities on the eastern end of East Main Street involves improving land use tools for undeveloped land to preserve open space, control water runoff and enhance the overall aesthetics.

While the land use classifications may differ, there are certain attributes that all new Route 1 development should embrace, such as:

- a uniform sidewalk width along the street edge, with shade trees,
- sidewalk and safe pedestrian connections from the street to the building being served, and
- access management (see also page 78).

ACTIONS TO ENHANCE ROUTE 1

R	1.	Develop land use tools to promote the conversion of "strip-type" areas to "village-like" areas.
R	2.	Create new land use regulations for West Main, North Main and East Main streets

R = Review local land use regulations

HOUSING

8

Overview

Branford is primarily a residential community with about 10,900 acres of land (79 percent of the total land area) zoned solely for residential use.

There are 13,342 housing units in the Town of Branford as of the 2000 US Census, an increase of 286 units (about a 2 percent increase) from the 1990 US Census (13,056 units).

Branford's housing issues involve concerns about affordability, preparing for senior population needs and monitoring trends occurring elsewhere in the state. To address these issues, Branford has established the following goals and strategies for housing:

GOAL	Provide for a variety of housing choices within the community
KEY STRATEGY	• Provide for housing opportunities
SECONDARY STRATEGY	• Evaluate undersized lots and update zoning
EMERGING ISSUE	• Create "green" neighborhoods • Monitor changes in house construction



Background

According to the Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC), Branford had 13,540 housing units in 2005. This is an increase of about a 1.5 percent increase (198 units) from the actual 2000 Census count of 13,342 housing units, continuing the 1990 – 2000 slow growth rate of additional housing units.

Diverse Housing Stock

Branford has a very diverse housing stock. About 52 percent of the housing units in Branford were reported as single-family units in the 2000 Census, about 47 percent were listed as multi-family residences (condos and apartments) and about 2 percent of the units were reported to be mobile homes.

About 64 percent of the housing units in Branford were owner occupied in the year 2000, about 30 percent were renter occupied, about 3 percent of the units were being kept for recreational or occasional use, and about three percent of the units were vacant (typically in the process of being sold or rented).

According to the Warren Group, the median sale price of a single family house in Branford in 2006 was $348,000. This is higher than the county median of $253,000 and the state median of $275,000. The median sale price for a condominium was $190,000.

While Branford is known for having a large percentage of condominiums (generally more affordable than single-family homes), housing affordability continues to be a challenge. Land costs are one of the primary reasons for the lack of affordability in Branford and elsewhere.

Single-Family Housing Trends

In terms of single-family detached housing, most such development in Branford occurs in a conventional subdivision pattern. Most of the undeveloped residentially zoned land in Branford is located in large lot zoning districts and is constrained by steep slopes, ledge, poor soils, and onsite septic and well systems.

Much of the single-family housing stock in Branford was built from 1940 through 1960 and needs rehabilitation, reconstruction and expansion to meet current needs of working families with young children.

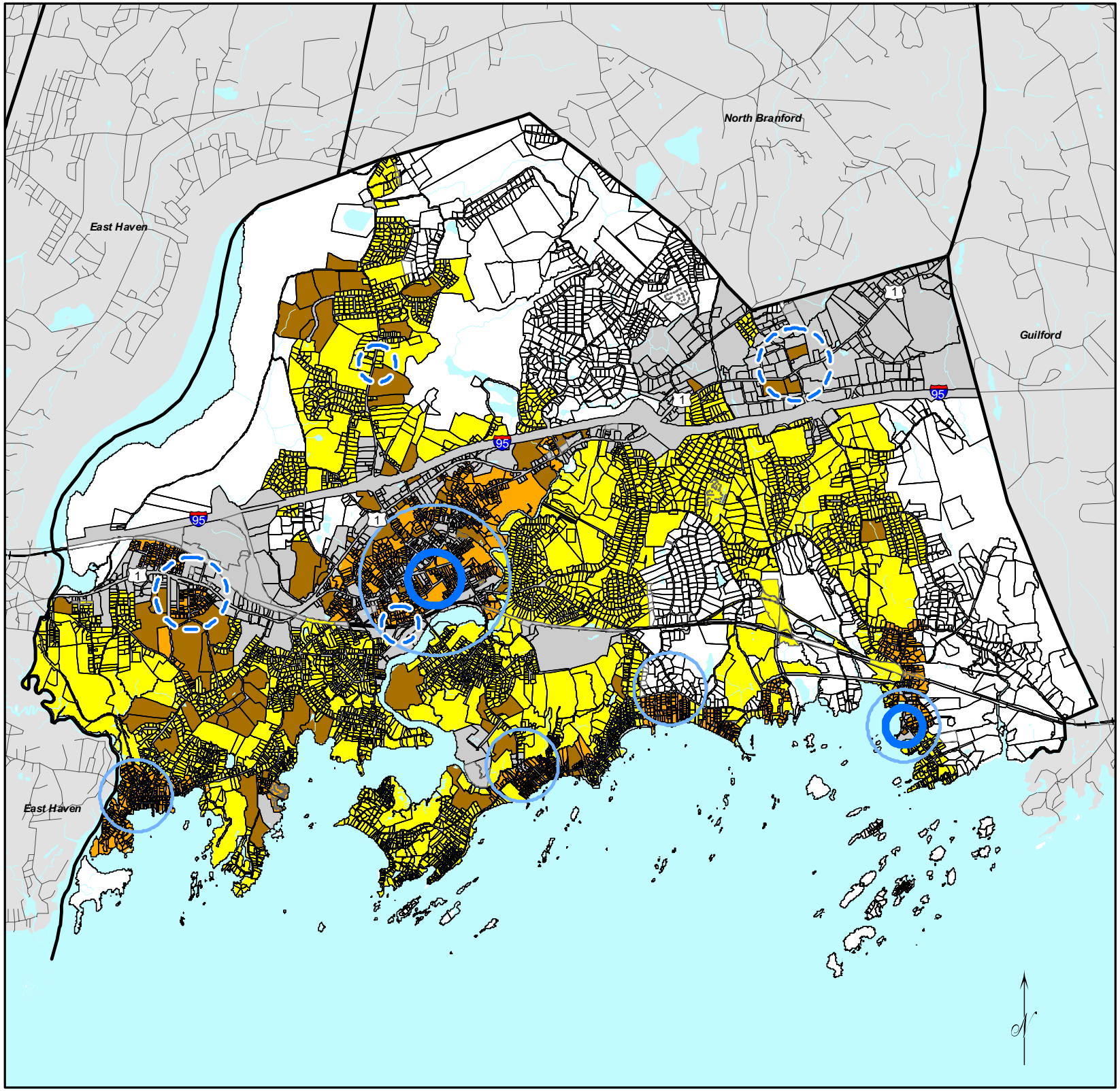
Multi-family Housing

In terms of multi-family housing, most such development in Branford occurred during the 1970s and early 1980s and the majority of these units were built with no access to transit, or consideration of how these areas connect to the overall community structure.



Traditional neighborhood

Residential Densities Plan



Legend

- Low Density Residential up to 1 unit / acre
- Medium Density Residential 2-5 units / acre
- High Density Residential 6-10 units / acre
- Multi-Family Residential 6 + units / acre
- Non-Residential Zones / Right of Way
- Node
- Village / Neighborhood
- Potential Nodes
- Water

3,000 Feet

Incentive Housing Zone

A new land use tool has recently been developed to encourage additional affordable housing units in the State of Connecticut. The new *HOMEConnecticut* statute - the Connecticut Housing Program for Economic Growth - provides financial incentives to towns that create overlay zones (Incentive Housing Zones) which allow for mixed-income housing at higher densities.

homeconnecticut.org

Inclusionary Housing

Inclusionary housing is a zoning tool that requires developers to make a percentage of housing units in new residential developments available to low- and moderate-income households.

Often, in return, developers receive non-monetary compensation – in the form of density bonuses, zoning variances, and/or expedited permits – all of which reduce construction costs.

policylink.org

KEY STRATEGY

Provide for Housing Opportunities

There is concern that rising housing costs are negatively impacting the community. This strategy is more than providing affordable housing pursuant to CGS 8-30g (see sidebar). It also means providing housing options for various stages in life.

This may include young families that need a smaller, more modest house or older residents that want to stay in Branford but can no longer take care of a large house and yard. There are many ways to meet these needs.

Evaluate Local Needs

The first step is to understand the specific housing needs in town. Branford should update the 1990 Housing Needs Assessment to evaluate whether the mix of housing (particularly condominiums and multi-family developments) will meet the housing needs of the future.

Residents, employers, realtors, religious groups and social service providers should be involved in the study. The next step would be to develop policies and programs to meet future housing needs in ways most appropriate for the community.

Evaluate Housing Affordability Regulations

Branford has had "affordable housing" provisions in the zoning regulations since 1995. However, no developer has utilized these regulations, and Branford should evaluate what types of adjustments might improve this tool.

Consider Requiring Inclusionary Housing

Branford should consider requiring all new residential developments to provide affordable housing units or pay a "fee in lieu of" (into a housing trust fund) providing such units as authorized in CGS 8-2i).

Other strategies include requiring deed restrictions for affordability on accessory apartments and converting foreclosed properties into affordable units.

The Town should also evaluate whether the new Incentive Housing Zone (IHZ) concept (see sidebar), authorized in the *HOMEConnecticut* legislation, is appropriate for the community.

Policies that promote new housing opportunities in the villages and along transit corridors make sense and Branford should evaluate where this tool could appropriately be utilized.

Expand Housing Choice

Housing affordability may also be limited by the types of housing available in Branford. Some Branford residents have opined that there is need for "trade-up" housing options for those who wish to move from a condominium unit to a modest single family residence. Additional single-family housing, on small lots, may be desirable to maintain the diversity of Branford.

Continue the Housing Rehabilitation Program

Ensuring that the existing housing stock is viable is another way to help preserve modest price housing. The town should continue its housing rehabilitation efforts through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Small Cities and other programs.

Prepare for Senior Needs

Over the next few decades, the number of Branford households headed by people over the age of 55 is expected to increase significantly.

This demographic shift is expected to result in a need for more housing units configured to meet the needs of an aging population – ranging from smaller market-rate units with no services to subsidized elderly housing to assisted living facilities and to congregate care type facilities.

Branford should review and consider adoption of specific zoning regulations for age restricted "active adult" residential communities, assisted living facilities and large-scale comprehensive care communities.

Promote Sustainable Development

The historic community structure and settlement pattern of Branford has created opportunities for sustainable residential development. These areas are identified on the residential densities plan as:

- Node/Village
- Neighborhood, and
- Potential nodes.



Multi-family housing

These areas are sustainable because utilities are present and there is an existing pattern of development and conservation.

Branford should promote sustainable development and encourage the use of green building and low impact development techniques for new residential construction.

	ACTIONS TO PROVIDE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES
	1. Continue to use the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to provide housing rehabilitation options.
	2. Update the 1990 Housing Needs Assessment.
	3. Identify affordable housing programs that are appropriate for Branford.
R	4. Consider requiring affordable housing in all new residential development, or payment of a "fee in lieu of" providing such units.
R	5. Evaluate the *HOMEConnecticut* "Incentive Housing Zone" tool.
	6. Evaluate options to provide "trade up" housing
R	7. Consider amending accessory apartment regulations to require affordability.
R	8. Consider creating "active adult" regulations.
	9. Consider affordability deed restrictions on foreclosed properties
	10. Promote sustainable residential development patterns and the use of green building and low impact development techniques as part of residential development.

R = Review local land use regulations

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Evaluate Undersized Lots and Update Zoning

Planning and its regulatory counterpart, zoning, are relative newcomers in Branford, having only been established since 1956. The development of land in Branford long preceded these tools and complications can arise when new regulations are applied to "old" properties.

Such is the case in several of the older neighborhoods where common lot size is about 5,000 square feet, but the local zoning regulations require a minimum lot size of 15,000 square feet.

Lots that are smaller than the minimum lot size established for the zone are often required to seek "variances" from the local land use regulations in order to build, or remodel.

Certain areas of Branford have numerous properties with variances because the regulations are not well suited for the types of land uses that are actually there. This raises a question as to whether the zoning district is appropriate for the neighborhood.



To understand the answer to that question, it is important to understand the purpose of zoning. When zoning was introduced in these areas, the tool was designed to encourage the merger of small lots, so properties would be able to satisfy private well and septic system separation distances established in the public health code.

Since that time, many of these areas have connected to the municipal sewer system, which effectively negates the public health distance requirements and creates an opportunity to re-evaluate whether the current zoning regulations are appropriate for these areas.

ACTIONS TO ADDRESS UNDERSIZED LOTS	
R	1. Evaluate land use regulations in areas where numerous variances have been granted because of small lot sizes.

R = Review local land use regulations

EMERGING ISSUE

Create "Green" Neighborhoods

There is growing interest in making buildings, properties and communities more environmentally responsible, or "green."

Standards have been developed for "green" buildings and for environmentally responsible, sustainable developments.

One of these standards is the LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) Rating System (see sidebar). While only a pilot program at this time, LEED-ND integrates the principles of smart growth, urbanism, and green building into national standards for neighborhood design.

Branford might consider regulatory or tax incentives for projects that integrate "green" concepts into a development project.

ACTIONS TO CREATE GREEN NEIGHBORHOODS

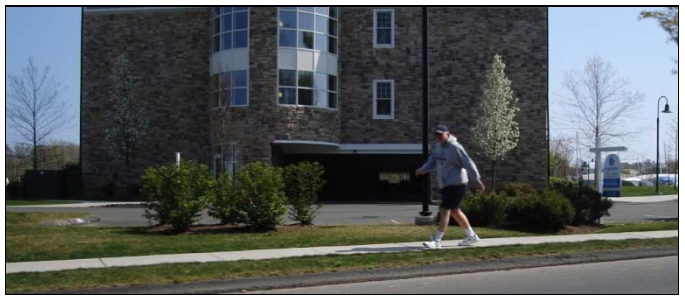
1. Monitor LEED-ND and the evolution of standards for "green" developments and neighborhoods.

R 2. Consider creating incentives for housing that is developed under this rating system.

R = Review local land use regulations

Some of the criteria being considered include:

Theme	Sample Elements (partial)
Smart Location & Linkage	• Proximity to wastewater infrastructure • Natural resource conservation • Floodplain avoidance • Brownfield redevelopment • Reduced automobile dependence
Neighborhood Pattern & Design	• Compact development • Diversity of uses / housing types • Walkable streets / transit facilities • Access to public spaces • Community outreach and involvement
Green Construction & Technology	• Pollution prevention • Resource efficiency in buildings • Building reuse and adaptive reuse • Minimize site disturbance • Best management practices
Innovation & Design Process	• Innovation • Exemplary performance



Pedestrian-friendly transit oriented development near the train station

LEED-ND Rating System

LEED certification provides independent, third-party verification that a development's location and design meet accepted high levels of environmentally responsible, sustainable development.

usgbc.org

Phase 1 Buildout

A land use analysis of Branford has identified that 10,500 acres (83 percent) of Branford is developed for residential, business or industrial purposes, or committed to a specific function such as open space or municipal use.

About 1,800 acres of residential land is vacant (about 13 percent of all land).

Building Envelope

An area prescribed by the zoning regulations which specifies where buildings and structures can be placed on the site. The envelope is normally defined by required yards, maximum building height and floor area ratio requirements.

"Loom Factor"

The "loom factor" is the perception that a building is "hovering" or "towering" over you because of the building's height, scale and mass.

EMERGING ISSUE

Monitor Changes in House Construction

"Buildout" is a term used to identify the maximum amount of development allowed under the land use regulations. Because the regulations allow redevelopment, buildout comes in a number of phases, which can overlap.

As vacant land becomes developed or committed, the community comes closer and closer to reaching "phase 1 buildout". Phase 1 buildout occurs when the subdivision of land is essentially complete and very few new lots are created.

At this time, a community begins to experience increased "phase 2 buildout" activity, where houses are built to the largest size possible under the zoning regulations.

Phases of Residential Build Out

	Indicators	Concerns
Phase 1 Buildout	Lots are created, homes are built	Road standards, Minimum lot size, Number of housing units per acre
Phase 2 Buildout	Homes are added onto, homes approach maximum size allowed under zoning	Bulk requirements, grading, impervious area
	Homes are demolished, lots are merged to find ways to create new lots, homes approach maximum size allowed under zoning	Bulk requirements, grading, community character, impervious area

While there are about 1,800 acres of vacant land in Branford, the community is already starting to experience some initial phase 2 buildout, especially along the shore line where land is at a premium value.

Phase 2 buildout may challenge existing regulations, as the bulk requirements were not developed as a tool to limit some of "out of scale" and inappropriate development that may result.

Concerns about scale, the "loom factor" (see sidebar) and the overall size of homes may be issues that Branford will have to address in the future and should be monitored.

ACTIONS TO MONITOR HOUSING CHANGES

1. Monitor residential construction trends.



"Loom Factor"

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

9

Overview

Business development in Branford provides:

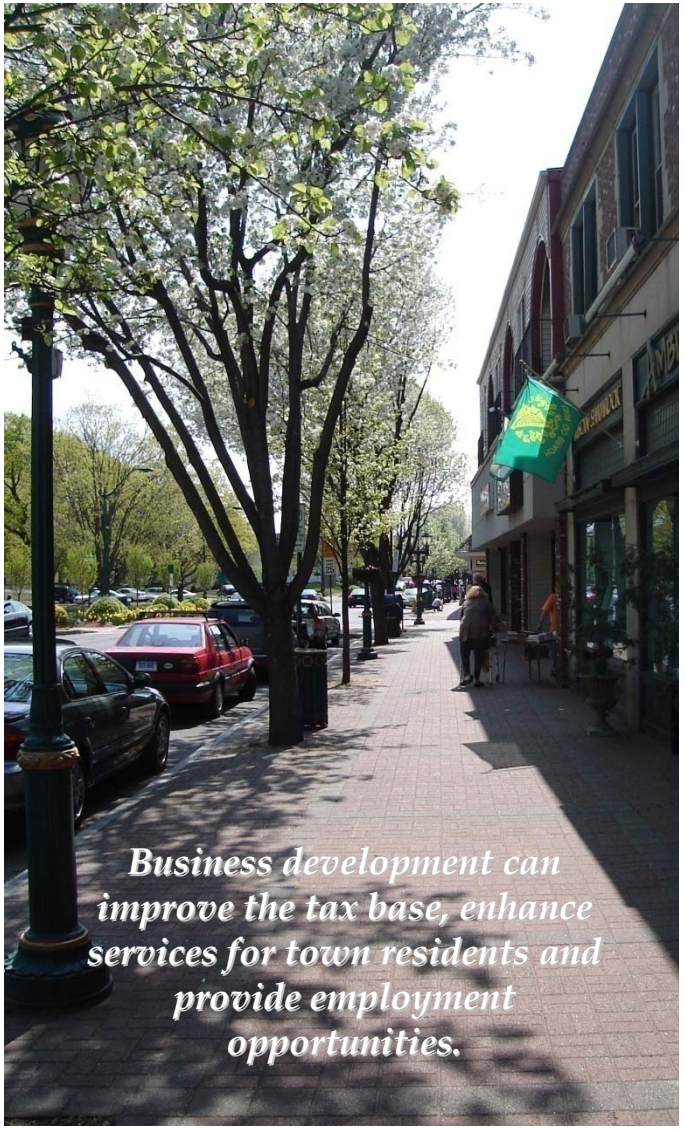
- jobs and income for residents and others,
- goods and services to support people, families, and organizations, and
- tax revenue to support municipal operations.

Branford has a history of business development and over time, the character of that development has changed significantly.

Once known as one of the major industrial centers in south-central Connecticut, Branford retains a number of sizeable manufacturing facilities. However the nature of new businesses locating in the industrial zone has shifted toward a mix of office, research and development, banks, restaurants, gyms, contractor yards and other small businesses.

Branford has developed the following goals and strategies for business development:

	GOAL	Provide for businesses and services that meet community needs
	KEY STRATEGY	• Identify "ideal" business mix
	SECONDARY STRATEGIES	• Encourage "green" business development • Provide tax incentives • Create a façade improvement program • Improve Town/Business Communication



Business development can improve the tax base, enhance services for town residents and provide employment opportunities.

Traffic Congestion

Transportation planners measure traffic congestion through level of service (LOS). LOS is a measurement of the quality of service on transportation infrastructure and is a measure of traffic density (or a measure of congestion), rather than overall vehicle speed.

LOS is closely linked to transportation time (the shorter, the better).

LOS A is the best and LOS F is the worst

The Connecticut Department of Transportation has projected that 2 areas in Branford will be LOS F by 2025:

- Exit 56 at Leetes Island Road ,and
- The railroad underpass on Route 1 at Exit 53.

Background

Business development in Branford was historically focused in the town and village centers and along waterways and the coast. As with many other areas in Connecticut, automobile transportation created new opportunities for business development along US Route 1 and later along Interstate 95.

Branford adapted to these changes and created business and commercial zoning at the interchanges and along Route 1 to encourage growth. Today, about 14 percent of the community is zoned for business uses (about 1,900 acres). This new development created competitive pressure for businesses in the village areas, and these areas had to adapt to a changing marketplace.

Business Opportunity Areas

The locations and patterns of business development can have a significant impact on overall community function and community character. The business development pattern in Branford can be characterized in three ways:

- pedestrian-oriented Town Center ,
- auto-oriented Route 1, and
- Interstate 95 interchange areas (including the business / industrial area).

Town Center

In many ways, the Town Center is the "heart and soul" of the community. The overall vitality of the Town Center merchants and businesses should be a continued focus of the community.

Since the Town Center is an active pedestrian-oriented place, the design of buildings and sites is a very important aspect of this business environment. To maintain and enhance this environment, design review of projects in the Town Center will continue to be important.

Route 1 Corridor

Route 1 developed into a commercial area during a time when the automobile became the primary mode of transportation and accommodating motorists dictated the use and design of business sites in this area. History has shown that this pattern inhibits circulation between sites and results in buildings with little contribution to overall character. The entire Route 1 corridor is in need of enhanced access management and aesthetic improvements.

Interstate Interchanges

The four interstate interchanges in Branford continue to be magnets for economic growth. Since the amount of land (and the amount of access) at these locations is limited, Branford needs to carefully manage these areas to ensure the maximum contribution to community life.

At Exit 53, the Town and the State will need to continue to work together to address the deficiencies at this interchange (partial interchange, inefficient routing, railroad bridge constriction, etc.).

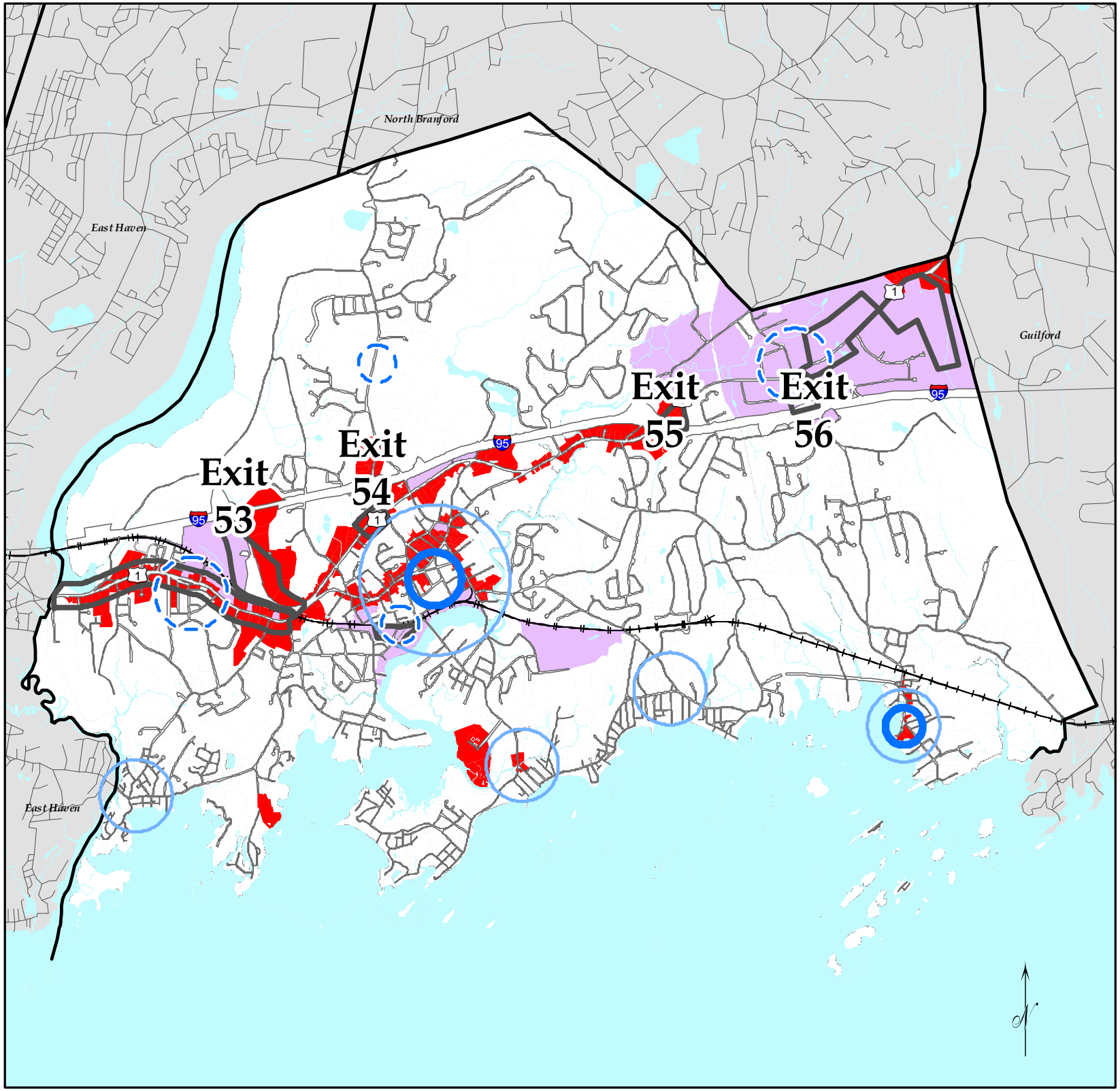
Exits 54 and 55 are primarily linked with Route 1 and share issues and concerns associated with that corridor.

Exit 56 has the advantage of good highway access, sewer and water service, and large parcels of undeveloped land that offers great opportunity for high quality development.

However, it is also projected to experience severe traffic congestion, even with the current zoning designation. The South Central Connecticut Council of Governments projects that traffic will increase by about 260 percent by the year 2025 to about 26,800 vehicles per day.

Guiding the future growth in this area will require careful evaluation and planning.

Business Development Plan



"Targeted Industry Study"

A targeted industry study first identifies specific types of businesses that are likely to locate in a community, then narrows the list down to those that best meet the community's needs.

The first part of the study is generally more quantitative, identifying key industries and important economic trends, and providing background information regarding demographics, workforce, housing, transit patterns and other relevant indicators necessary to paint an accurate picture of the region's economy.

The second part is generally more qualitative, identifying the local goals for economic development in the community. Taken together, these two pieces define a clearer picture of the types of business the community could successfully market itself to and provide appropriate zoning for.

KEY STRATEGY

Identify "Ideal" Business Mix

To encourage the types of development that are responsive to the market, Branford should conduct a "targeted business study" to determine the "ideal" mix of business activity in Branford. This study will identify the types of business that are most likely to locate here and the most suitable locations for them.

The study should also include an evaluation of:

- the mix of uses that will most benefit the town in terms of high quality employment opportunities, tax revenues, convenient access to goods, etc.,
- finding the right balance of goods and services,
- preventing an erosion of established business areas and the town center,
- the type of development will impose the least severe negative consequences such as traffic congestion and environmental impacts on wetlands, the Branford River, Long Island Sound and other natural resources, and.
- how Branford can promote green businesses.

Using the results of the study, the town should ensure that areas identified in the study are zoned not only to encourage desired types of business but to minimize the possibility that the land will be converted to a non-desired use. Branford should also make an effort to engage the various stakeholders (e.g. landowners, Chamber of Commerce, etc.) in the study.

While the study is underway, Branford can move forward with two issues already identified as critical regarding "location" and "type."

Guide to the Appropriate Location

Guiding appropriate business development to the correct locations is important. The correct location can be the area that is right for business interests but it also must be right for Branford.

Branford is also fortunate to have existing commercial areas and sites where additional development may make sense. Redevelopment of existing commercial areas helps to promote community character, because we can improve the aesthetics, and it helps the environment because we can use modern solutions to limit environmental impacts.

A targeted business study is a first step in addressing these issues.

Encourage the Appropriate Type

Branford's quality of life and location are attractive to entrepreneurs. Many start-up businesses are home based, while others occupy space that is more traditional.

To encourage these types of activities, Branford should consider creating an "Incubator Without Walls" program. In addition, existing biotechnology business clusters should be organized into a Life Sciences Association to promote technology transfer, identification and solution of shared problems, and promote Branford as a location for additional, similar firms.

ACTIONS TO IDENTIFY IDEAL BUSINESSES	
	1. Conduct a "targeted business study."
R	2. "Fine tune" zoning regulations to encourage businesses that are desired.

R = Review local land use regulations

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Encourage "Green" Business Development

Branford residents have indicated that creating an environmentally-friendly community is important. New approaches to building construction, site design and land use planning promote the use of "green" design (see sidebar) as part of an overall development strategy.

Branford's approach to "green" business development is three-fold:

- continue to support the town and village centers,
- encourage existing businesses to become environmental stewards, and
- ensure that new development has minimal environmental impact.

Support the Town and Village Centers

The traditional centers of the community are focal points of social interaction, business activity and overall community character. More importantly, these areas have the infrastructure (sewer) and transportation (sidewalks) in place to create a "green" environment.

Encourage existing businesses to be environmental stewards

More and more businesses and companies are seeing the benefits of being environmental stewards. Not only may they see cost-savings over the long term, but an environmentally conscious image can help recruit talented staff, give the business a marketing edge-up, and instill overall pride.

Developing recognition programs for businesses that have taken steps to become "green," providing access to resources, such as educational materials or funding and providing regulatory flexibility to encourage the right types of land use are some of the ways Branford could promote stewardship.

Minimize the Environmental Impact of Development

Branford should continue to evaluate and update land use regulations that guide development towards appropriate design solutions, including the use of "low impact development" techniques (see sidebar).

ACTIONS TO ENCOURAGE GREEN BUSINESSES	
1.	Create programs to encourage existing businesses to become environmental stewards.
2.	Provide support to the town and village centers
R 3.	Evaluate land use regulations for new development and redevelopment.
R 4.	Develop "low impact development" land use techniques.

R = Review local land use regulations

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Provide Tax Incentives

In today's extremely competitive environment, communities working to recruit new businesses need incentive policies as part of their marketing package.

Branford should develop an incentive policy to support the types of businesses the community seeks to recruit. The policy should include a pay-back provision to ensure that the tax incentives are properly used.

ACTIONS TO PROVIDE TAX INCENTIVES	
1.	Create an incentive program to encourage new businesses to come to Branford.

"Green" Design

There is growing interest in making buildings, properties and communities more environmentally responsible, or "green."

The most recognized program in the United States promoting the design, construction, and operation of buildings that are environmentally responsible is the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System. Standards for neighborhood design have also been developed to encourage development techniques that will provide a long-term benefit to the environment.

usgbc.org

Low Impact Development

Low impact development (LID) involves the use of environmentally friendly design elements (e.g. swale) as part of site design.

lowimpactdevelopment.org

Revolving Loan Program

A revolving loan program is a pool of public- and private-sector funds that recycles money as loans are repaid.

Branford, or a local non-profit, could establish a program to encourage small business creation and new investment in business ventures in Branford by providing below-market rate, short term loans for businesses or for projects that have difficulty obtaining conventional commercial financing.

Revolving loan programs can be used to provide incentives for job creation, façade improvement and energy efficiency efforts.



Facade Improvement

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Create a Façade Improvement Program

Vibrant communities are places where design and aesthetics create a "sense of place." A façade improvement program is a tool designed to stimulate private investment in attractive building improvements that contribute to the overall strength of the community.

These programs are typically financed by a community, and rely on a "revolving loan program" (see sidebar), where funds are loaned to a business at an attractive interest rate, and when repaid, are then loaned to other businesses.

The program is designed to help building owners overcome some of the challenges of making the types of improvements the community wants to encourage.

To further this cause, Branford could help building owners identify minor, cost-effective improvements that could be made in the short term, to encourage the most effective types of improvements.

ACTIONS TO CREATE A FAÇADE PROGRAM

1. Create a revolving loan façade improvement program.
2. Work with property owners to identify cost-effective improvements that could be made.

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Improve Town/Business Communication

Business development requires communication across a range of agencies and groups. Branford is fortunate to have an Economic Development Commission working on business issues, and this Commission should do more to identify local business needs.

A major component of an effective existing business assistance program is communications and relationship building. Branford should develop and maintain an email list serve of all the businesses located in Branford to facilitate this communication.

Branford should work with local businesses and business interests to develop an Economic Development Plan with measurable strategies.

ACTIONS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

1. Develop an Economic Development Plan with measureable strategies.
2. Develop and maintain an email list serve for businesses in town.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Overview

Community facilities contribute significantly to Branford's community character and quality of life.

The Plan of Conservation and Development provides an opportunity to view the entire spectrum of municipal community facilities, identify common problems and opportunities, and establish priorities.

	GOAL	**Provide facilities to meet community needs**
	KEY STRATEGIES	• Complete the Public Works and Fire Station projects • Implement the Town Green Plan
	SECONDARY STRATEGIES	• Prepare for senior needs • Create "green" municipal facilities • Create management plans for municipal facilities • Address municipal meeting space needs • Address other facility needs • Address recreation needs
	EMERGING ISSUE	• Monitor school enrollment



10

Background

Community facilities include:

- General Government,
- Education,
- Public Safety,
- Social Services,
- Recreation, and
- Public Works.

As a community, Branford owns and manages 32 buildings (eight of which are schools), 13 parks and beaches, three free-standing parking lots, and two docks.

Other public facilities, such as Blackstone Library and Foote Park, are not town-owned but are heavily used and highly valued resources.

Community facilities should be:

- adequate to meet community needs with a high level of service,
- used to their fullest capacity,
- maintained and managed to extend their utility,
- designed to adapt to new uses as community needs change,
- reused for community purposes if needed at a later date, and
- of a quality that sets the example of what Branford should be.

Branford has a wonderful portfolio of municipal buildings and community facilities. There is some concern that the majority of Town buildings are over 50 years old. Preservation of key historic buildings (e.g. Town Hall and Canoe Brook Senior Center), is essential to Town character.

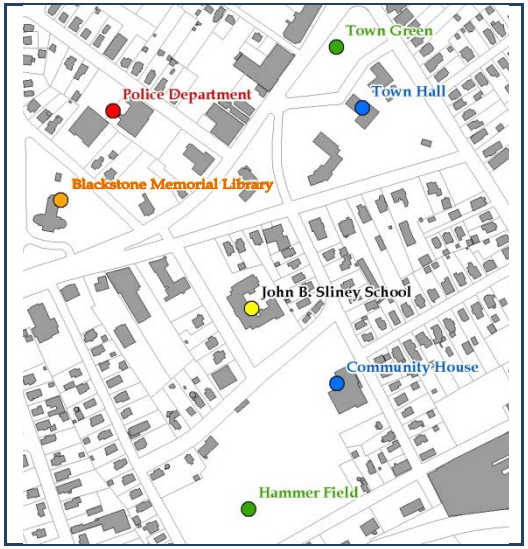
A difficult challenge in evaluating Town facilities is to weigh the intangible but considerable value of preserving older buildings against the costs of maintenance and inconvenience of remodeling.

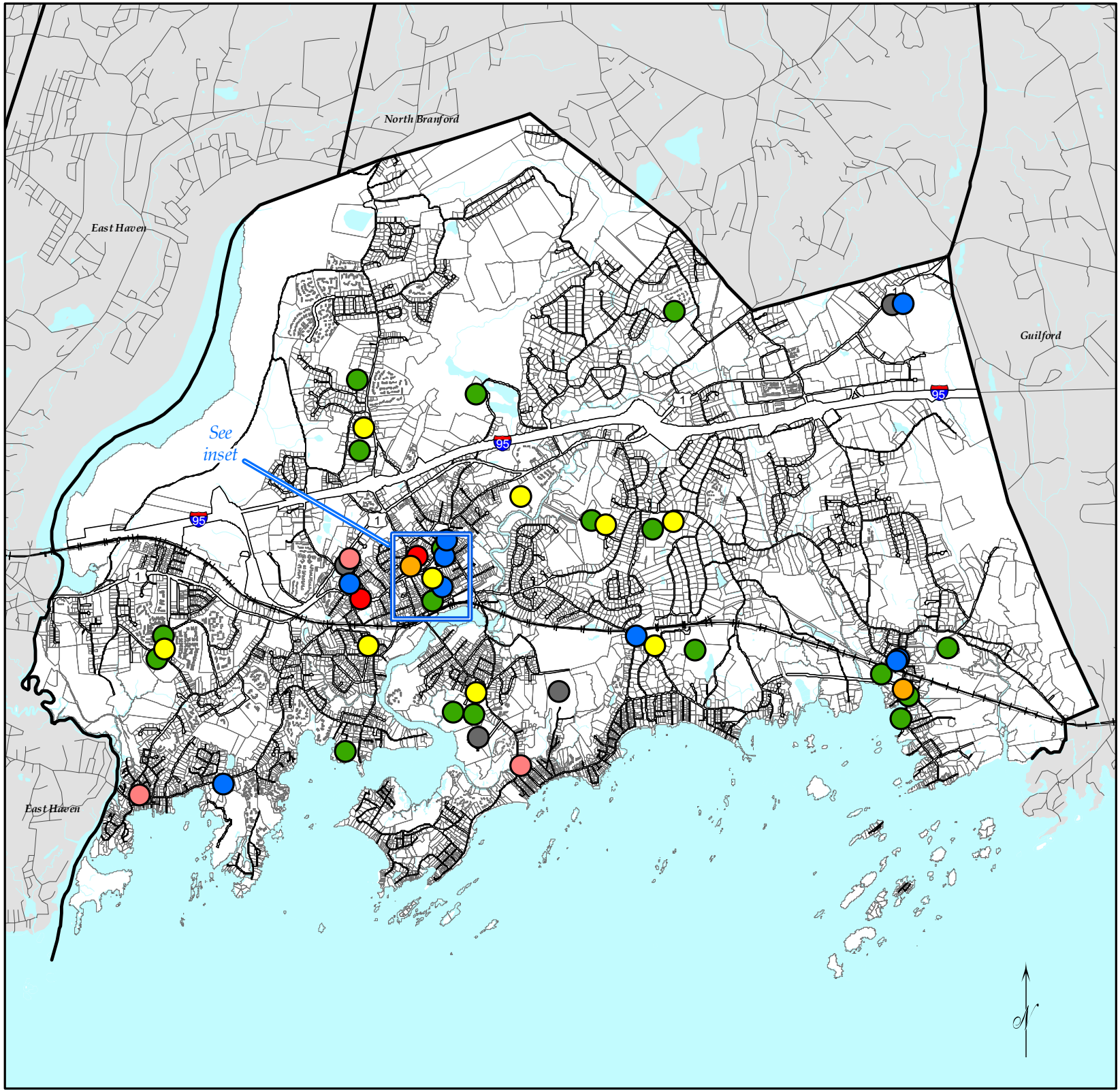
However, restoration and maintenance of older buildings is expensive and older properties often lack safe and convenient handicap access and are not configured to accommodate modern uses. Lack of parking is also a common theme.

Major demographic changes also affect planning for public facilities. While overall population growth is static, the substantial increase in the elderly population is a significant issue.

Many external factors, such as regulatory requirements, rising sea level, and skyrocketing energy costs, must also be considered in both near-term and long-term planning.

Municipal Facilities Inset (facing page)





Municipal Facilities Map

Legend

- Cultural
- Education
- Fire / EMS
- General
- Park
- Public Safety
- Public Works

3,000 Feet

Branford Town Green

The history of the Branford Green began more than three centuries ago when John Taintor willed his home lot as follows:

"I do give to ye town of Brandford that part of my homelott which I give to said Towne to build a publick meeting house upon, and to continue for that use so long as they shall maintain a meeting house there unless[s] ye town See cause to build elsewhere and then that land to by to ye common or what other use ye town see meet."

Taintor's will dated August 15, 1699 – Branford Historical Society
branfordhistory.org

KEY STRATEGY

Complete the Public Works/ Fire Station Projects

The current Department of Public Works (DPW) facility is inadequate for community needs and plans are underway to move this facility to the town's 77-acre Tabor Drive property.

The Tabor Drive site will accommodate the public works activities that currently take place on the North Main Street site, which is shared with Fire Headquarters.

The Tabor Drive property provides Branford with an opportunity to increase operational efficiency by consolidating vehicle repair activities at this site and to plan for future town office needs. Branford should develop an overall master plan for the Tabor Drive property to optimize the use of this site.

As part of the Department of Public Works projects, Branford has developed plans to build a new Fire Headquarters. This project is also underway, and should continue.

ACTIONS TO COMPLETE KEY PROJECTS

1. Pursue relocation of Public Works headquarters, consolidation of vehicle maintenance and storage yards to the Tabor Drive property.
2. Build a new Fire Headquarters in current location and evaluate functionality of outlying fire stations.
3. Develop a master plan for the Tabor Drive property.

KEY STRATEGY

Implement the Town Green Plan

Branford Town Center is the "heart and soul" of the community. The centerpiece is the Town Green, an open space area created in 1699 to provide a public meeting space within the community.

Over the years, changes to the green have included reduction in size of the grassed areas for road widening, parking and building additions.

As part of a project to identify options to enhance the Green, Branford commissioned a Parking and Circulation Study.

This Study, completed in 2007, includes plans to improve traffic safety, parking and the aesthetics of the Town Green.

Funding for design engineering has been programmed for FY 2010-11 with construction funding to be programmed for the following year, and Branford should continue to take steps to implement this project by prioritizing funding for the improvement project.

ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE TOWN GREEN PLAN

1. Maintain the Town Center as the "heart and soul" of the community by making more effective use of the Green and consolidating responsibility for Green use and maintenance.
2. Prioritize funding for design engineering and construction of the Town Green parking and circulation improvements.

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Prepare for Senior Needs

The Canoe Brook Senior Center is a good example of successful adaptive re-use project, completed twenty years ago. The Senior Center provides a wide range of activities and services for seniors and it is heavily used for public meetings.

The building space is neither large enough to serve Branford's growing senior population nor configured to accommodate the modern senior activities and programs.

While the Senior Center has been used for this purpose for nearly 20 years, there is general agreement that the space is ill-suited for such use. Branford should evaluate senior program needs for the community and determine what space will be required to provide the types of programs the community wants to offer.

ACTIONS TO PREPARE FOR SENIOR NEEDS

1. Evaluate senior program needs to determine the type and amount of space needed to provide these services and programs.



Canoe Brook Senior Center

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Create "Green" Municipal Facilities

In response to concerns about increased energy costs and the environmental impact of energy production, Branford created a Clean Energy Task Force.

In 2003, the task force was established to evaluate energy and other environmental issues. This group has worked to establish Branford as a leader in clean energy solutions.

Branford should extend this effort to include the use of "green" solutions in construction and remodeling of municipal facilities as well.

By actively engaging in this process, the community becomes a leader in this effort, thereby encouraging businesses and residents to make an effort as well.

ACTIONS TO CREATE GREEN FACILITIES

1. Take a leadership role in planning for "green" municipal facilities.



Branford High School – tri-generation unit

Branford High School

In August of 2007, Branford High School installed a tri-generation system to provide on-site power, cooling and heating at the 1,200-student facility.

This ultra clean combined cooling, heating and power system also will enable the high school to double as an emergency shelter by having an on-site power source capable of grid-independent operation.

These systems are extremely energy efficient. They can achieve an overall energy utilization of up to 90 percent -- far greater than the 33 percent typical of the electrical grid.

These systems also reduce a customer's carbon footprint because of their higher fuel utilizations and the use of natural gas to generate electricity, rather than coal or oil.

Branford Public Schools – District news
branford.k12.ct.us

Other Potential Municipal Facility Needs

With an aging population, recreation and program space may need to be expanded for senior residents:

- Senior center,
- Municipal pool,
- Bocce ball and shuffle board courts, and
- Accessible walking paths

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Create Management Plans for Municipal Facilities

Municipal buildings are an important investment, and are a long-term responsibility. Because of the different community needs, the facilities are managed and operated by different agencies.

While this approach may provide the individual agencies with the control and flexibility they need, it can be a challenge to understand what the overall maintenance and upgrade demands will be from year to year.

Establishing a town-wide municipal facility management plan, that evaluates maintenance requirements, energy needs and life cycle costs, will help Branford identify deficiencies such as properties that are deteriorated, unsuitable for current use, have high maintenance costs, insufficient parking, might be impacted by sea level rise, or lack adequate handicap access.

The community facilities management plan should include existing and future needs and identify codes that existing facilities do not meet.

ACTIONS TO CREATE MANAGEMENT PLANS

1. Conduct a comprehensive survey of facilities.
2. Develop management plans for town facilities.
3. Encourage coordination and cooperation in planning for future Town facilities.
4. Group "like" facilities to take advantage of symbiotic relationships and the efficiencies created.

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Address Municipal Meeting Space Needs

One long-standing deficiency is the lack of a large meeting room suitable for town-wide assembly such as land use commissions, RTM and Board of Education meetings.

While meeting space may be dormant during portions of the year, the number of activities occurring within the larger municipal facilities has elevated the need for a dedicated community meeting space.

ACTIONS TO ADDRESS MEETING SPACE NEEDS

1. Create additional meeting space for government activities.



Public Meeting at the Canoe Brook Center

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Address Other Municipal Facility Needs

General Government

A major renovation and small addition to Town Hall, completed in 2006 addressed serious problems with structural deterioration and handicap access. While office and storage space is still cramped, opportunities exist for technological solutions such as conducting more town business over the internet and storing records electronically ("Virtual Town Hall"). Some department functions may need to be relocated to other buildings.

Board of Education Administration Office Space

The Board of Education's office space is not an ideal location for this activity and Branford is evaluating options to relocate this facility. With proposed changes to school facilities and the Canoe Brook Center, it may be appropriate to move the Board of Education Offices to the Canoe Brook Center.

Police and Emergency Management

The Police Headquarters building, completed 12 years ago, still has severe water and humidity problems on the lower level. Upward expansion of the building and additional parking are also identified needs.

The Branford Emergency Management Plan has identified five shelters to be used in case of disaster. It is important to recognize that three of these shelters are located within flood zones and may not be accessible during flood-related emergencies. Branford should investigate whether additional shelters will be required for hurricanes or other flooding events.

Transfer Station

The Transfer Station/Animal Shelter facility is currently pressed for space. Branford should evaluate whether moving activities to the Tabor Drive facility, (e.g. rubble piles and leaf windrows) reconfiguring traffic flows and separating residential and commercial drop-offs would improve the overall use of this site.

Landfill Property

The closure of the town sanitary landfill, including a legally recognizable resolution of ground contamination issues, will take place within the next several years. Once the site is formally closed, it could be used for passive recreation and integrated with adjacent open space properties and trails.

In addition, methane gas produced by the landfill could be use to provide energy to town facilities located at the Tabor Drive property. These solutions warrant consideration and Branford should develop a master plan for the Landfill Property.

ACTIONS TO ADDRESS OTHER FACILITY NEEDS

1. Continue to evaluate options for the Board of Education's administrative office space.
2. Evaluate needs of Police Headquarters.
3. Re-evaluate adequacy of emergency shelters.
4. Seek opportunities to expand the "virtual" town hall (see sidebar) as well as relocate some functions to buildings outside of Town Hall.
5. Review space needs at the Transfer Station site.
6. Develop a Master Plan for the Landfill Property.

"Virtual" Town Hall

The idea of a virtual town hall is to provide information to the public via a website or other technology.

This information can range from agendas, notices and minutes, to a full range of online services, including bill payment, program registration and permit submission.

A "virtual" town hall is not meant to replace the physical structures within a community, but with access to computers and computer usage on the rise, Branford will continue to expand upon the information that is currently provided.

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Address Recreation Needs

Branford has a wealth of recreational facilities, including parks, ball fields, and beaches. The parks and recreation plan, along with the senior center, must adjust to the changing demographics and address the diversity of needs and preferences of the various user groups.

Libraries

Branford is fortunate to have to public libraries, the Willoughby Wallace Memorial Library, which is Town-owned, and the James Blackstone Memorial Library, which is independent, but receives significant financial support from the Town.

Major improvements to the Willoughby Wallace Memorial Library were completed five years ago and a major restoration of the Blackstone Library was completed ten years ago.

Plans are currently underway for an expansion of parking and an addition to the Blackstone Library.

ACTIONS TO ADDRESS RECREATION NEEDS

1. Develop a recreation facilities plan to ensure that there are sufficient facilities throughout Branford to meet the needs of all user groups.
2. Refine plans for ball fields to be located on the Town's Tabor Drive property.
3. Support current plans for a building addition and expansion of parking at the Blackstone Library.

EMERGING ISSUE

Monitor School Enrollment

The Board of Education, having recently completed a study of school enrollment projections, is currently conducting a facilities study to evaluate how to configure school buildings to meet current and future needs, considering changing demographics, technology, and educational needs.

Branford should continue to monitor school enrolment to ensure that educational facilities are adequate for both current and projected enrollments.

ACTIONS TO MONITOR SCHOOL ENROLLEMENT

1. Continue to pursue the school facilities planning study now in progress.



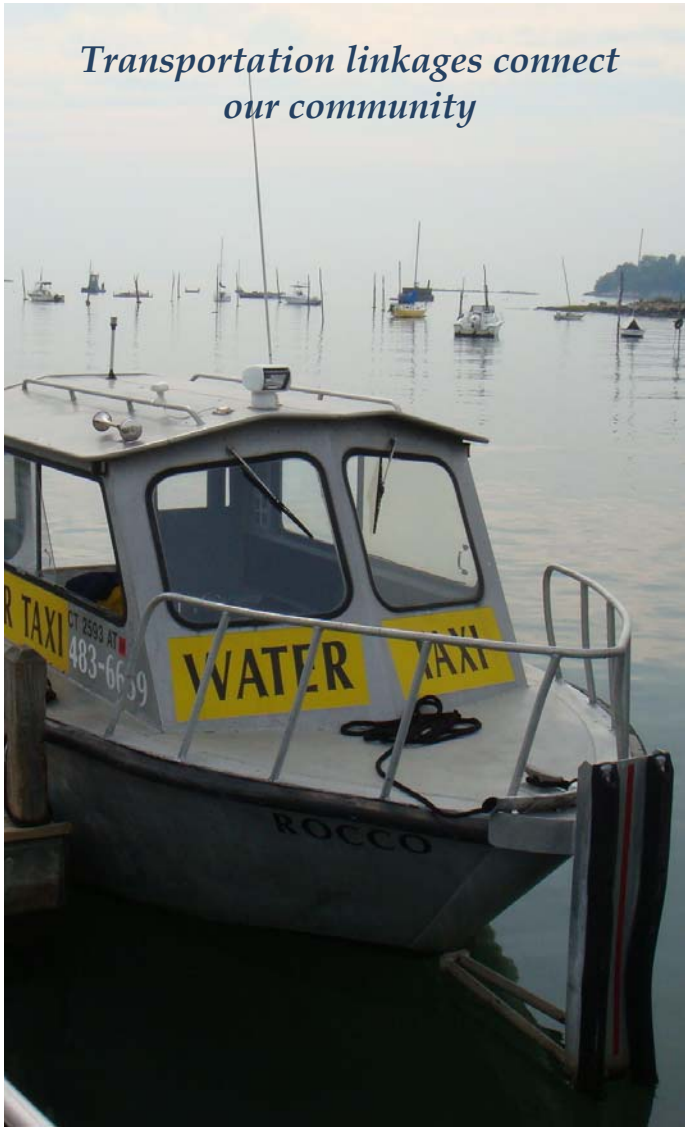
TRANSPORTATION

Overview

While transportation planning in the past 50 years or so has focused on the automobile, there is renewed interest in managing the road system to provide a more comprehensive transportation system.

This includes planning for "complete streets" that serve pedestrian and bicyclists as well as cars, improved transit systems and better coordination among all modes of transportation.

GOAL	**Provide a diverse, safe and efficient transportation network that meets the needs of the community**
KEY STRATEGIES	• Provide traffic calming • Promote access management
SECONDARY STRATEGIES	• Create transit linkages • Expand bicycle and pedestrian facilities • Improve parking in the Town Center • Support exit 53 interchange improvements
EMERGING ISSUE	• Monitor fuel costs



Transportation linkages connect our community

11

Background

Branford's transportation system consists of:

- a network of roadways (vehicles),
- several bicycle routes (bicycles),
- a network of sidewalks and off-road trails (pedestrians),
- Thimble Island Ferry Service,
- a rail station (transit), and
- CT Transit bus routes (transit).

Branford is fortunate that the following transportation planning activities have been recently completed:

- *Town-wide Transportation Study*, completed in January of 2007.
- *Town Green Parking and Circulation Study*, completed in January of 2007.
- *South Central Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*, completed in June of 2007.
- *North Main Street Access Management Study,* to be completed in June of 2008
- *Main Street Gateway Study,* to be completed in June of 2008.

Although the population of Branford has not changed significantly over the last 10 years, traffic volumes have increased on local roads due to:

- a continuing shift in residential settlement patterns toward a lower density, resulting in longer travel time to work, shopping and other destinations,
- increased population growth from surrounding areas traveling to and through Branford,
- changing demographics where there are more licensed drivers than there were previously and where more people have more cars, and
- anecdotal evidence in the change in trip dynamics and personal preference, where people are more willing to use their car for minor trips (such as a cup of coffee) that are not associated with any other trip purpose.



Branford Train Station

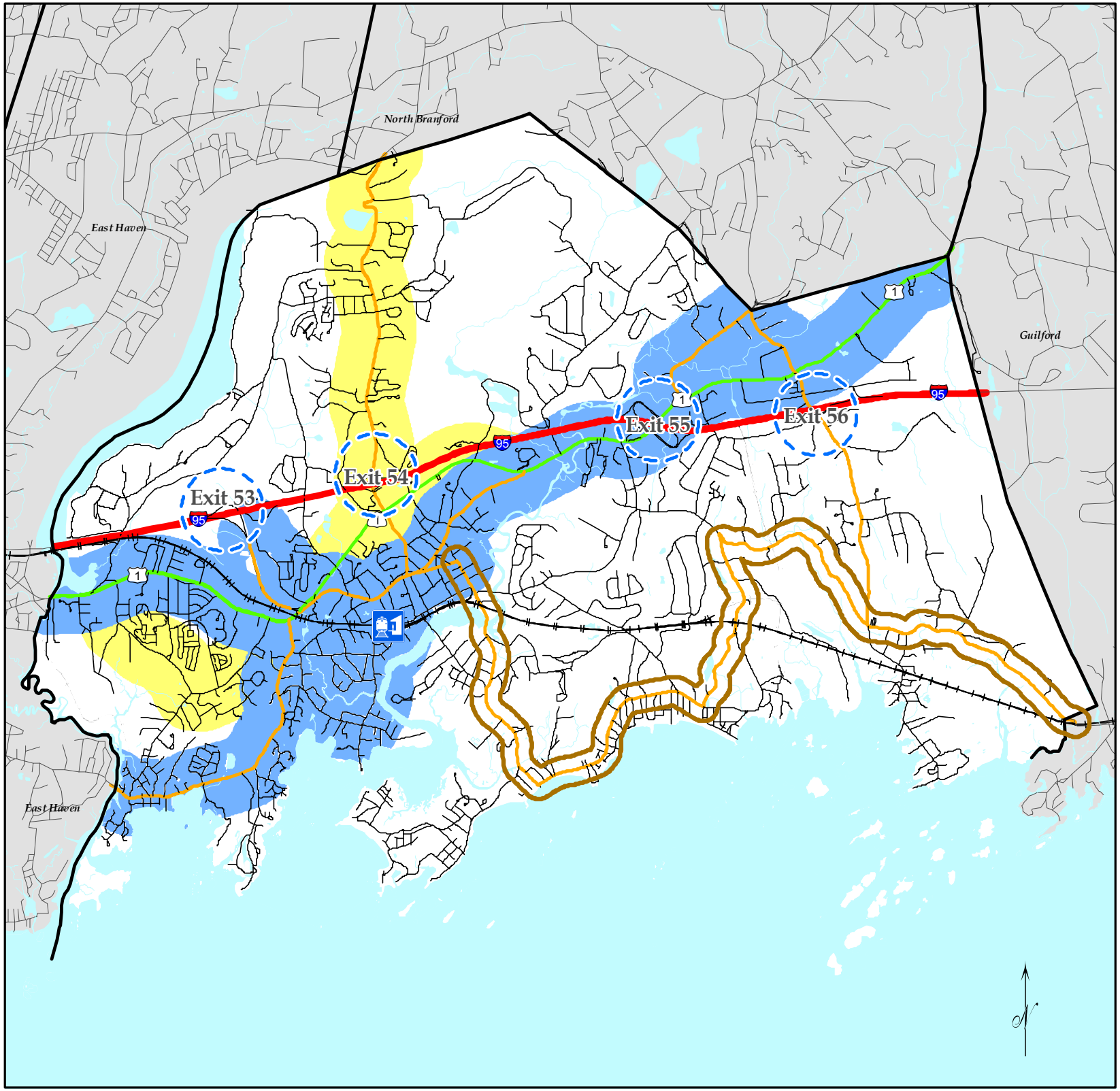


Trolley Trail



Bus Shelter

Transportation Plan



Legend

- Scenic Road
- Railroad Station
- Railroad
- Primary Road - Interstate
- Primary Road - Highway
- Secondary Road
- Local/Other
- CT Transit Bus Routes 1/4 mile buffer
- Potential Bus Routes 1/4 mile buffer

3,000 Feet

Access Management

Access management focuses on ways to improve traffic flow by reducing reasons why people may get held up in traffic, such as the number of driveways and left turns. Strategies include using shared driveways and interconnected parking lots.

Traffic Calming

Traffic calming involves changing the way roads are used. Traffic calming techniques can be classified as education, enforcement or engineering based solutions:

- Education type programs involve training motorists to cautiously approach certain areas within the transportation system, through signage or other methods;
- Enforcement programs can be accomplished through an increased police presence, speed awareness signage or other measures; and
- Engineering solutions typically involve managing the transportation system by reducing pavement widths on roads and installing devices that cause motorists to slow down.

KEY STRATEGY

Provide Traffic Calming

Residents are concerned about the amount of traffic and speeds that motorists are travelling.

Branford should consider utilizing traffic calming measures (see sidebar) and streetscape improvements that would improve pedestrian and vehicular safety as well as enhance gateways into the Town Center.

Specific projects to consider include:

- traffic calming measures along Montowese Street near the Town Green, and
- traffic calming along Main Street from the Town Green east to its intersection with Route 1.

ACTIONS TO PROVIDE TRAFFIC CALMING

1. Evaluate traffic issues along main transportation corridors to determine what problems exist.
2. Consider providing traffic calming in the Town Center Area and specifically on along Montowese Street and Main Street.



Traffic calming – raised walkway

KEY STRATEGY

Promote Access Management

Route 1 is a major east-west roadway for people traveling around the community. Once a more rural road Route 1 is now a major east/west roadway. Increasing traffic volumes have encouraged the zoning of a significant portion of this corridor for commercial uses.

Now, the conflicting traffic movements from commercial driveways has reduced the capacity of the roadway and caused congestion.

Branford has taken steps to address traffic concerns and in 2007, completed a Town-wide Traffic Study, which recommends improvements to 23 specific intersections and identified specific corridors requiring further study.

The recently completed (summer of 2008) corridor studies include:

- access management along Route 1, and
- a "Gateway to the Scenic Highway" plan to achieve a more attractive transition from I-95 at Exit 53 (State Road 794) to the western end of the Town Green.

ACTIONS TO PROMOTE ACCESS MANAGEMENT

R	1.	Create an access management plan for Route 1 and adopt access management regulations.
R	2.	Require easements and interconnected accessways for new development along Route 1.
	3.	Implement the "Gateway to the Scenic Highway" Plan.
	4.	Implement the recommendations in the transportation studies.

R = Review local land use regulations

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Create Transit Linkages

Shore Line East

Branford is fortunate to have train service that connects the community to New Haven and Stamford through the Shore Line East commuter rail line. This service connects directly to New Haven and provides access to the New York Metropolitan region and other places accessible by passenger rail.

Branford should work to increase train service and train station capacity. In addition, efforts should be made to improve the pedestrian connections between the train station and the Town Center, improve bus connections and add bicycle storage at the train station.

Branford's location within the New Haven region, with rail access close to the Town Center, creates an opportunity for the community to use transit-oriented development. This opportunity is in agreement with the growth principles identified in the State Plan of Conservation and Development.

CT TRANSIT New Haven

Bus service run by CT Transit New Haven (CT DOT) operates seven days a week over 22 local routes, connecting with the New Haven Line (Metro North) and Shore Line East rail services.

Buses generally travel between Branford Town Center along Route 1 to East Haven, and a new route was added to connect Branford to North Branford. Bus transportation is an important transit element and Branford should continue to support expansion of bus service within the community, especially between the train station, villages and existing business areas.

Overall, Branford should work to expand transit options in the community, including establishing additional bus routes, stops and shelters.

ACTIONS TO CREATE TRANSIT LINKAGES

1. Continue to support CT DOT expansion of the Shoreline East service, station capacity, parking lot enhancement, access from both sides of the track, additional bike racks, improved pedestrian access, reverse commute, and weekend service.
2. Improve transit connections between the Town Center and train station.

R 3. Consider encouraging transit-oriented development (TOD) near the train station and along bus routes.

4. Evaluate new opportunities to expand transit.
5. Support continuation and expansion of the CT-TRANSIT bus service.
6. Support the construction of bus shelters, bike racks, and benches at transit stops.

R = Review local land use regulations



R-link bus service – Greater New Haven Transit District

Complete Streets

The "Complete Streets" idea involves designing roads that provide safe access for all users, regardless of age or ability.

Complete streets need to work for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists, as well as for older people, children, and people with disabilities.

completestreets.org

Bike Parking

The availability of safe and convenient place to park a bicycle is important to bicyclists, but it is frequently overlooked in the design and operation of shops, offices, schools, and other buildings.

bicyclinginfo.org

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Expand Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Sidewalks and Pathways

The most significant aspect of the sidewalk system in Branford is that it supports the higher density areas. This sidewalk system should be maintained and enhanced in order to provide more and better opportunities for people to get around. Wherever gaps exist, they should be closed. Efforts to maintain and expand the sidewalk and path system should continue.

Branford should also evaluate opportunities to create "Complete Streets" (see sidebar) to create a safe environment for motorist, bicyclists and pedestrians.

In conjunction with these efforts, the sidewalk ordinance should be reviewed (and updated if necessary). For example, the responsibility for maintenance of sidewalks and the repair of sidewalks should be clearly defined in residential and business areas.

Bicycling

Interest is growing in bicycling as a means of recreation and as a mode of transportation. While Branford has many people who enjoy riding bicycles, and many amenities to attract riders, the road system in Branford was not created with bicycle riders in mind. Many of Branford's streets have narrow shoulder areas that can be intimidating for both bicyclists and motorists.

To address this, Branford should establish a bicycle committee to evaluate the potential to create safe bicycle routes in the community. Such planning should consider ways to integrate with the Shoreline Greenway Trail. In addition, the committee could also consider the potential for bicycle commuting and the need for bicycle facilities (racks, lockers, etc.) at the train stations, businesses, and elsewhere. Branford should also consider modifying local land use regulations to require "bike parking" (see sidebar) at business sites, when new development applications are reviewed.

ACTIONS TO EXPAND BICYLCE AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

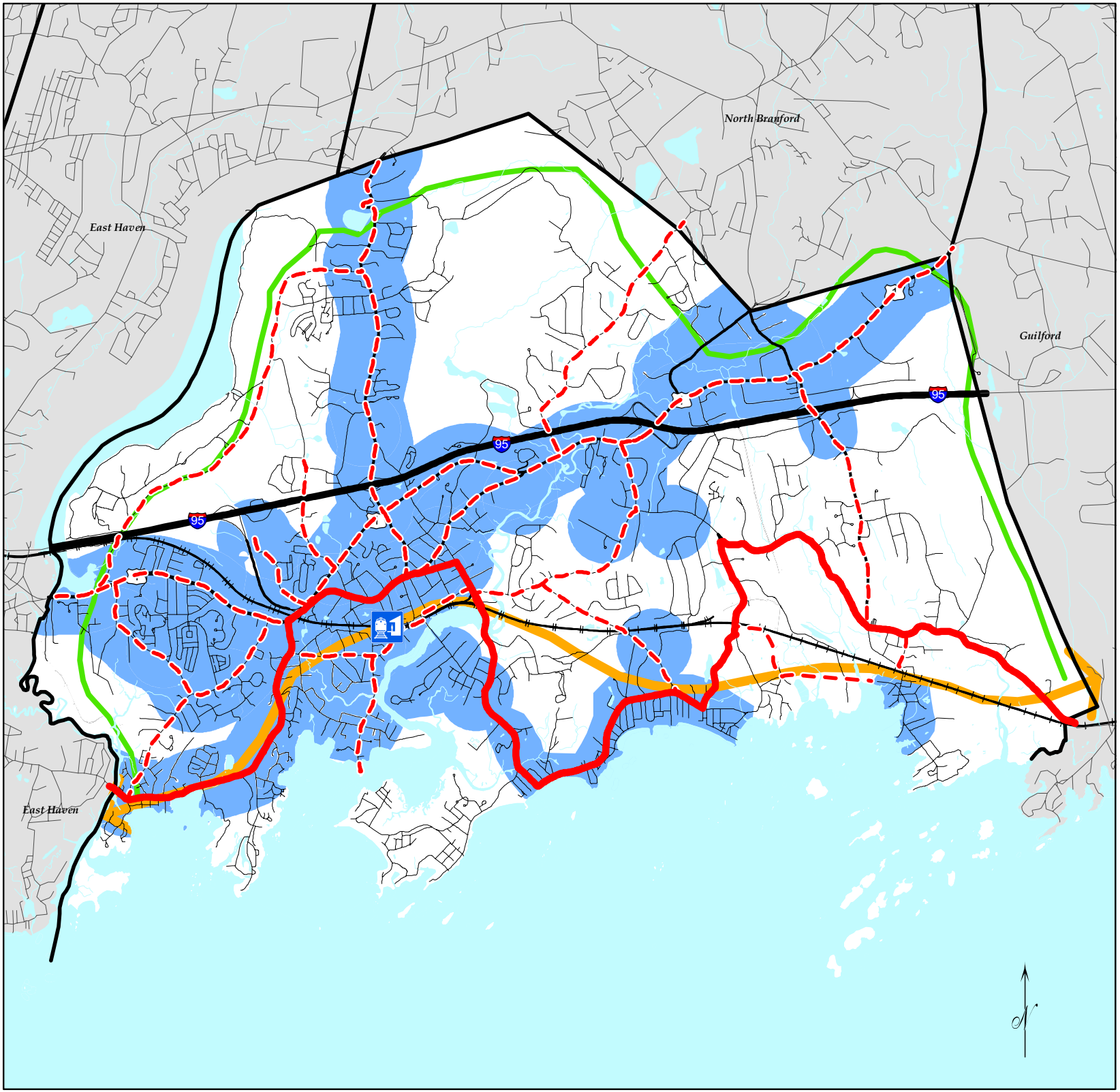
1. Continue to maintain and expand the sidewalk system and participate in regional bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts.
2. Close gaps in the sidewalk and path system.
3. Review the sidewalk ordinance and update if necessary.
4. Establish bicycle committee to create safe bicycle routes in the community.
5. Evaluate opportunities to create "Complete Streets."
6. Consider ways to integrate the Shoreline Greenway Trail into other pedestrian and bicycle planning.

R 7. Consider requiring "bike parking" as part of new business development applications.

R = Review local land use regulations



Bicyclist Riding Along a Scenic Road



Transportation Plan - Pedestrian & Bicycle

Legend

- SCCOG Bike Route
- Potential Bike Route
- Shoreline Greenway Trail
- Ring of Branford
- Key Sidewalk Areas
- Railroad Station
- Railroad

3,000 Feet

Accessibility

Recognizing that the population of Branford is aging, Branford may want to evaluate:

- whether additional short-term parking spaces should be located in key business areas, specifically for the elderly,
- if traffic signal timing needs to be adjusted to allow more time to cross the road and whether sidewalks are adequate for the population served, and
- other transportation related needs.

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Improve Parking in the Town Center

The Town Green Parking and Circulation Study, conducted in tandem with the Town-wide Transportation Study, recommends reconfiguration of driveways, pedestrian paths and parking on the Green.

Off-street parking requirements in the Town center should reflect the mixture of uses that are located within this area, with potential reductions in the number of spaces required to reflect the availability of on-street parking and shared parking lots, as well as pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access.

Branford should evaluate opportunities to create more public parking facilities, whether publicly- or privately-owned and managed.

These strategies reduce the burden placed on individual properties to provide parking, and will prevent the removal of buildings for the purpose of creating parking.

ACTIONS TO IMPROVE PARKING
1. Evaluate opportunities to create additional public parking facilities.



Municipal Parking Lot





SECONDARY STRATEGY

Support Exit 53 Interchange Improvement

Branford has three full interchanges (Exits 54, 55 and 56) on Interstate 95 (I-95) and a partial interchange at exit 53.

Branford should continue to seek the expansion the Exit 53 interchange into a complete four-way interchange with a new connector to Route 1.

The Amtrak bridge, which spans Route 1, is also a problem spot in this area. While plans have been developed to correct this problem, Branford should continue to monitor this effort and provide community support.



Route 1 railroad overpasss

ACTIONS TO SUPPORT ENHANCEMENT OF EXIT 53

1. Continue to seek the expansion of the Exit 53 interchange into a full interchange.
2. Continue to monitor the Amtrak bridge replacement project on Route 1. Provide community support for the project, when needed.

EMERGING ISSUE

Monitor Fuel Costs

There is growing concern that the cost of oil will have an impact on transportation systems from a number of perspectives.

Currently, Branford is dependent on oil, as it is used to fuel vehicles and as part of the road pavement.

Recent market changes in the price of oil have raised concerns about a community's ability to maintain roads in a cost effective manner and reliance on the gas-powered automobile.

While market conditions change, policies that promote the conservation of fuel and energy make sense.

Branford should continue to monitor this issue and evaluate options to reduce local transportation-related energy needs.

In addition, new opportunities to expand transit may result from changes in commuter patterns and Branford should evaluate these opportunities.

ACTIONS TO MONITOR FUEL COSTS

1. Monitor local transportation-related energy needs.
2. Evaluate new opportunities to expand transit



Smart Car



Rail lines



Bicycling

UTILITIES

12

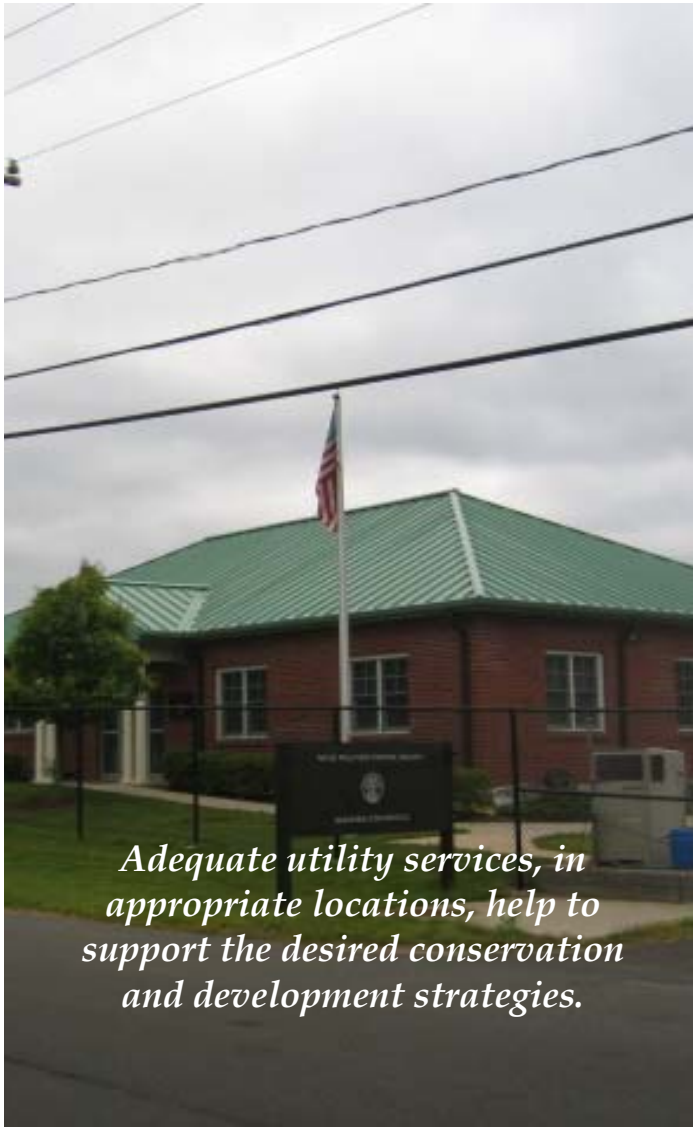
Overview

In the Plan of Conservation and Development, utility infrastructure refers to utility services such as:

- piped utilities (public water, public sewer, storm drainage, and natural gas),
- wired utilities (electric, telephone, and cable),
- wireless services (communications), and
- individual services (private wells and septic systems).

The availability of utilities can strongly influence development patterns within a community. It is important that Branford consider whether utilities are appropriately located and if they have adequate capacity to support the desired community structure.

GOAL	**Provide, and maintain, adequate utilities to meet community needs**
KEY STRATEGIES	• Address stormwater management • Address flooding
SECONDARY STRATEGY	• Maintain existing infrastructure • Monitor private septic systems
EMERGING ISSUES	• Monitor regional utilities



Adequate utility services, in appropriate locations, help to support the desired conservation and development strategies.

Background

The Town of Branford provides sewer service for approximately 85 percent of the households and virtually all of the major businesses in Branford. The Water Pollution Control Facility on Block Island Road also treats effluent from North Branford.

The treatment plant was recently upgraded and now has a design capacity of 4.9 million gallons per day and receives an average flow of about 4.1 million gallons per day. The system includes over 125 miles of sewer lines and 50 pump stations. The sewer system is expected to be adequate during the planning period.

The South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority (SCCRWA) provides water to over 8,300 Branford customers (2004) and manages over 140 miles of water mains, 726 fire hydrants and over 1,100 acres of land.

Some areas rely on private wells and septic systems.

For other piped utilities, storm drainage occurs through public structures (such as drainage piping and culverts) and drainage ways on private property.

Southern Connecticut Gas provides gas service, which has wide distribution and is situated to accommodate future growth.

Electrical service (Connecticut Light & Power) and communication services (telephone and cable television) services are provided generally on overhead wires although underground wires exist in some areas.

Wireless services (such as wireless telephone and satellite communications) are available throughout Branford, although service is poor in some areas.



Electrical substation

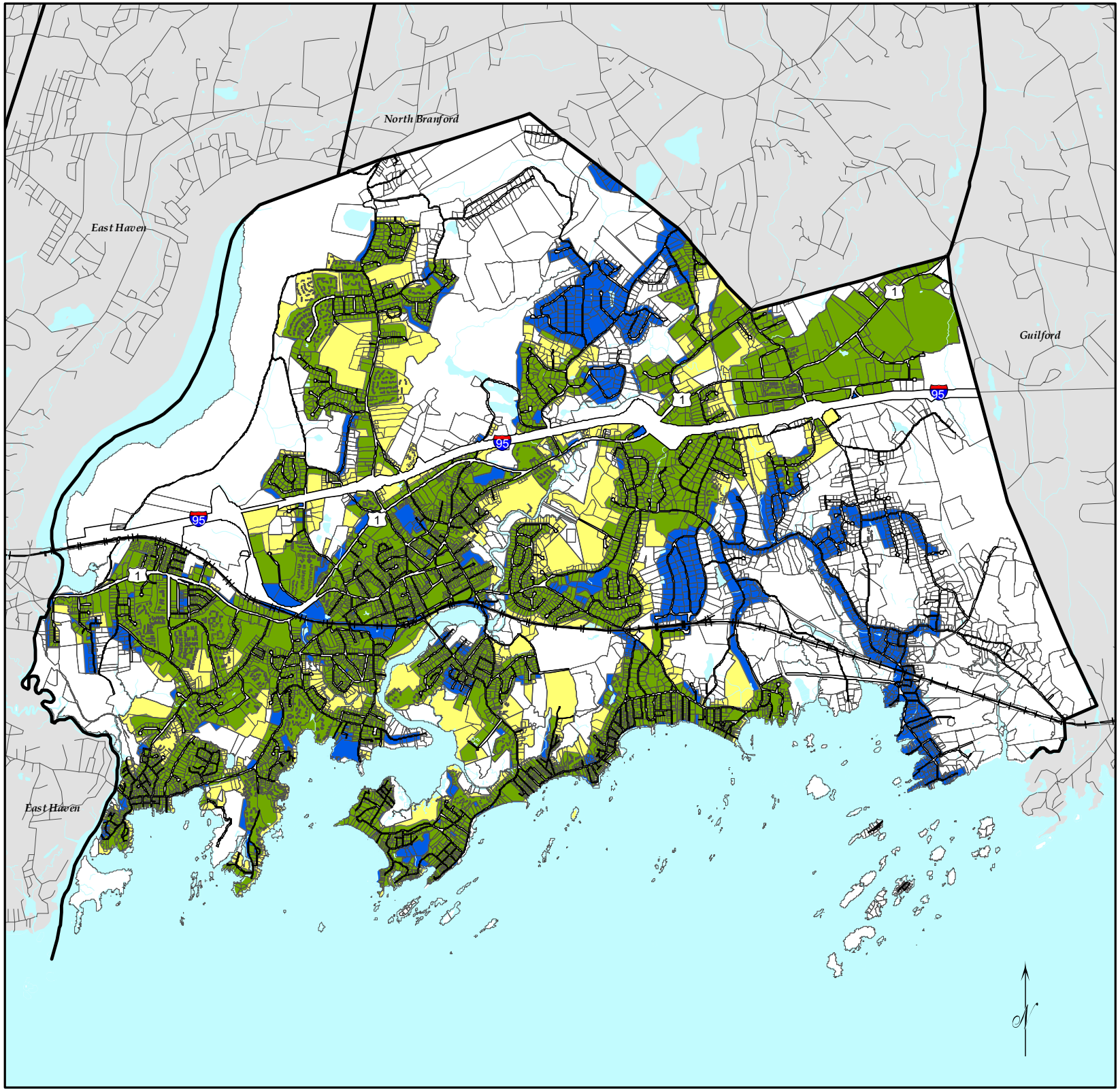


Stormwater drainage



Public Water

Utilities Plan



Legend

- Water and Sewer Service
- Sewer Service Areas Only
- Water Service Areas Only

3,000 Feet

KEY STRATEGY

Address Stormwater Management

Storm drainage historically has been an issue that communities have not focused on. However, with changes to state and federal laws, towns are now being required to manage the drainage infrastructure more carefully.

Storm drainage issues fall into two general categories—water quantity (having too much water) and water quality (addressed in the natural resources section).

As part of a coordinated program to address both concerns, the Town has undertaken an ambitious program of storm drain mapping and scheduled maintenance.

Water Quality

Branford maintains a number of pipes and catch basins that have been designed to "catch and convey" the water from a problem area to a wetland or watercourse. As in most communities, the stormwater management goal has been to move water from one area to another to reduce localized flooding.

Evaluating downstream impacts on water quality have not been part of traditional approach.

As discussed in the Natural Resources chapter, new federal MS4 regulations (see page 18) require that Branford address water quality in the town's stormwater management system. Over the next few years, Branford should continue to devote resources (time and money) to addressing and managing MS4 compliance.

Water Quantity

Managing water quantity can be a challenge, because there are many variables involved, such as:

- how much water is coming from other communities that are north of Branford,
- how are individual property owners managing stormwater, and
- what types of storms do we design the solution for?

Local Efforts

Branford has taken steps to improve stormwater management, including a new drainage ordinance that has been adopted by the Representative Town Meeting.

ACTIONS TO MANAGE STORMWATER	
	1. Continue to devote resources (time and money) to addressing and managing drainage issues.
R	2. Encourage the use of low impact design solutions.

R = Review local land use regulations

KEY STRATEGY

Address Flooding

As a coastal community, Branford struggles with flooding issues. Some of the highest valued properties are located within coastal flood-prone areas and since it has been many years since Connecticut has experienced the full impact of a coastal hurricane, people can become complacent about the dangers of flooding.

Branford is facing two issues related to flooding:

- Flooding in areas that have historically experienced flooding, and
- New occurrences of flooding, in areas that have not flooded before.

Historically Flood-prone Areas

Branford has developed policies and procedures to manage the development of properties located within federally-identified flood zones.

These areas, identified as floodplains, are depicted on the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and have historically been prone to flood events.

Branford has established regulations and policies to reduce flood hazards in floodplain areas. It is important that the community continue to implement these policies and review the existing regulations to determine if changes are warranted.

Branford should also evaluate community facilities located in flood-prone areas, and review evacuation routes to ensure that appropriate safeguards continue to be in place.

New Flood Occurrences

With public concern over global climate change and sea level rise increasing, concerns about flood vulnerability are becoming part of the public dialog. Overall coastal management policies that discourage floodplain development and encourage a gradual retreat from the vulnerable low-lying waterfront make sense.

Of these floodplain areas, the Coastal High Hazard "V" zones are the most vulnerable during major storms. It should be a general policy of the Town to minimize new development within the "V" zones. Branford should also evaluate the regulations in the "V" zone areas to ensure that the community is encouraging the right types of development.

Communities that meet and exceed FEMA standards can be "rewarded" through an overall reduction in flood insurance premiums through the Community Rating System (CRS) Program (see sidebar). Branford should evaluate whether the programs in place enable the community to "take credit" for floodplain management, where regulations can be improved and whether to pursue CRS recognition.

ACTIONS TO ADDRESS FLOODING

1. Address flooding problems as they are identified.
R 2. Update and improve the existing town regulations concerning floodplain requirements.
R 3. Evaluate regulations for properties in the "V" Zone.
4. Pursue the Community Rating System (CRS) flood insurance premium reduction program.
5. Implement the flood hazard reduction program.
6. Discourage development in flood prone areas.

R = Review local land use regulations

Efforts to Address Flooding

Currently, flooding problems are addressed on a case by case basis and a phased project in the vicinity of the lower end of the Supply Pond is currently underway.

Areas of concern that are currently under review include flooding on Meadow Street, Totoket Road, and Briarwood Lane.

Community Rating System

The Community Rating System has been developed by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

This program has been developed to encourage communities to take a more active role in floodplain management and to provide reduced insurance rates as a reward for communities that exceed federal standards.

fema.gov/business/nfip

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Maintain Existing Infrastructure

Public Sewer

The public sewer system supports the current land use patterns in Branford and is important for smaller residential lots and multi-family developments. While no major sewer extensions are planned, expansion of the existing system into several infill areas, such as portions of Harbor Street, Pent Road, Riverview Drive and Buttermilk Lane, warrant consideration.

While the system collects sewage from North Branford, there are currently no plans for an increase in flow from North Branford or extension of sewer service into Guilford. Branford should focus on future investments in upgrading of pump stations, long term maintenance, emergency response, staffing, and training.

Wired Utilities

Branford has adequate wired utility systems (electricity, telephone, cable) in place to meet community needs. There has been no indication of a lack of reliability or a lack of adequate service.

During the planning period, Branford should seek ways to encourage wired utilities to be placed underground whenever opportunities to do so present themselves. The "undergrounding" of wired utilities should be a priority in the Town Center area and in scenic areas. Branford should explore opportunities to require underground wired utilities for new development.

Branford should continue to work with utility companies who seek to improve the reliability of their systems by undertaking tree trimming projects.
There is a delicate balance between community character (that can be adversely affected by aggressive tree trimming) and utility availability and reliability (that can be enhanced by tree trimming).

Public Water Service

South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority (SCCRWA) provides water service in Branford. Although the Town has, on two occasions in the past twenty years, facilitated the extension of water service to address public health issues, normally individual homeowners and developers deal directly with the SCCRWA to extend service to their properties.

Branford should continue to support SCCRWA's efforts to provide water and facilitate extension of water when health concerns warrant.

ACTIONS TO MAINTAIN INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Consider expanding the existing public sewer system into infill areas.
2. Focus on future public sewer investments, such as upgrading of pump stations, long term maintenance, emergency response, staffing, and training.
3. Facilitate extension of water service area if needed to address public health issues.
4. Explore opportunities to require underground wired utilities for new development.
5. Support SCCRWA waterline extensions.
6. Work with utilities on "balancing" tree trimming.
7. Continue to require underground utilities in all new development.

R = Review local land use regulations

SECONDARY STRATEGY

Monitor Private Septic Systems

While the majority of the land area in Branford is served by public sewers, there are still areas that will continue to rely on individual septic systems.

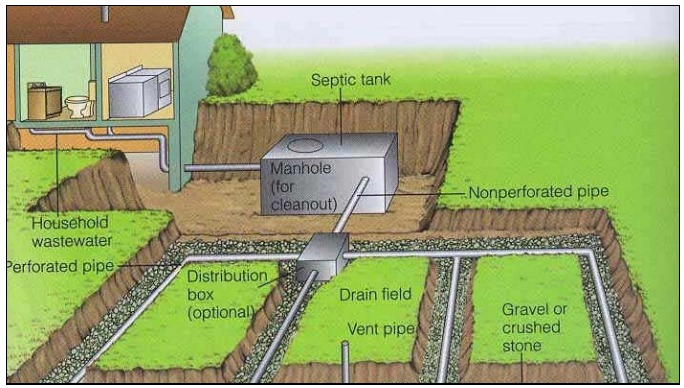
One of the biggest issues with un-sewered areas can be the lack of maintenance of septic systems.

Branford provides a reduced pump out fee for areas that do not have ability to connect to the sanitary sewer and are on septic.

This reduced fee should be continued along with a process to monitor that residents are performing proper maintenance of these systems.

Branford should consider adopting a septic management ordinance that helps to ensure that septic systems in the community are maintained on a regular basis.

This ordinance might help educate people who move to Branford but have had little experience managing a septic system. This will help protect water quality.



Properties with septic systems would be notified every three years that their septic system should be pumped.

Properties that do not get pumped (tracked by septic pumping records at the sewage treatment plant) would be inspected and targeted for enforcement.

Septic pumping companies could also report on the overall condition of the tank and the septic field.

ACTIONS TO MONITOR SEPTIC SYSTEMS
1. Consider adopting a septic management ordinance which helps to ensure that septic systems in the community are maintained on a regular basis.

EMERGING ISSUE

Monitor Regional Utilities

Branford has a number of regional energy utility infrastructure elements in place, and there is concern about plans to construct a gas pipeline through Branford and create an offshore Liquefied Natural Gas Terminal in Long Island Sound.

Recent opposition from the State Governments of Connecticut and New York may stall this project. Branford should continue to monitor regional utility proposals and enhance communication with the various utility providers.





ACTIONS TO MONITOR REGIONAL UTILITIES

1. Monitor regional utility proposals that affect Branford.
2. Enhance communication with the various utility providers.

R = Review local land use regulations

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Overview

The recommendations of each of the preceding chapters can be combined to present an overall Future Land Use Plan for Branford. This plan is a reflection of the stated goals, objectives and recommendations of the plan.

While the Future Land Use Plan may take on the appearance of a zoning map, it should not be used in the same manner. The map colors and classifications represent desired future land uses that do not necessarily correspond to zoning classifications.

As the Plan is implemented, the following map illustrates the location and intensity of *future* land uses that are desired. Since this map illustrates the stated goals, policies, objectives, and recommendations of each of the Plan sections when combined together, it is called the Future Land Use Plan for Branford.

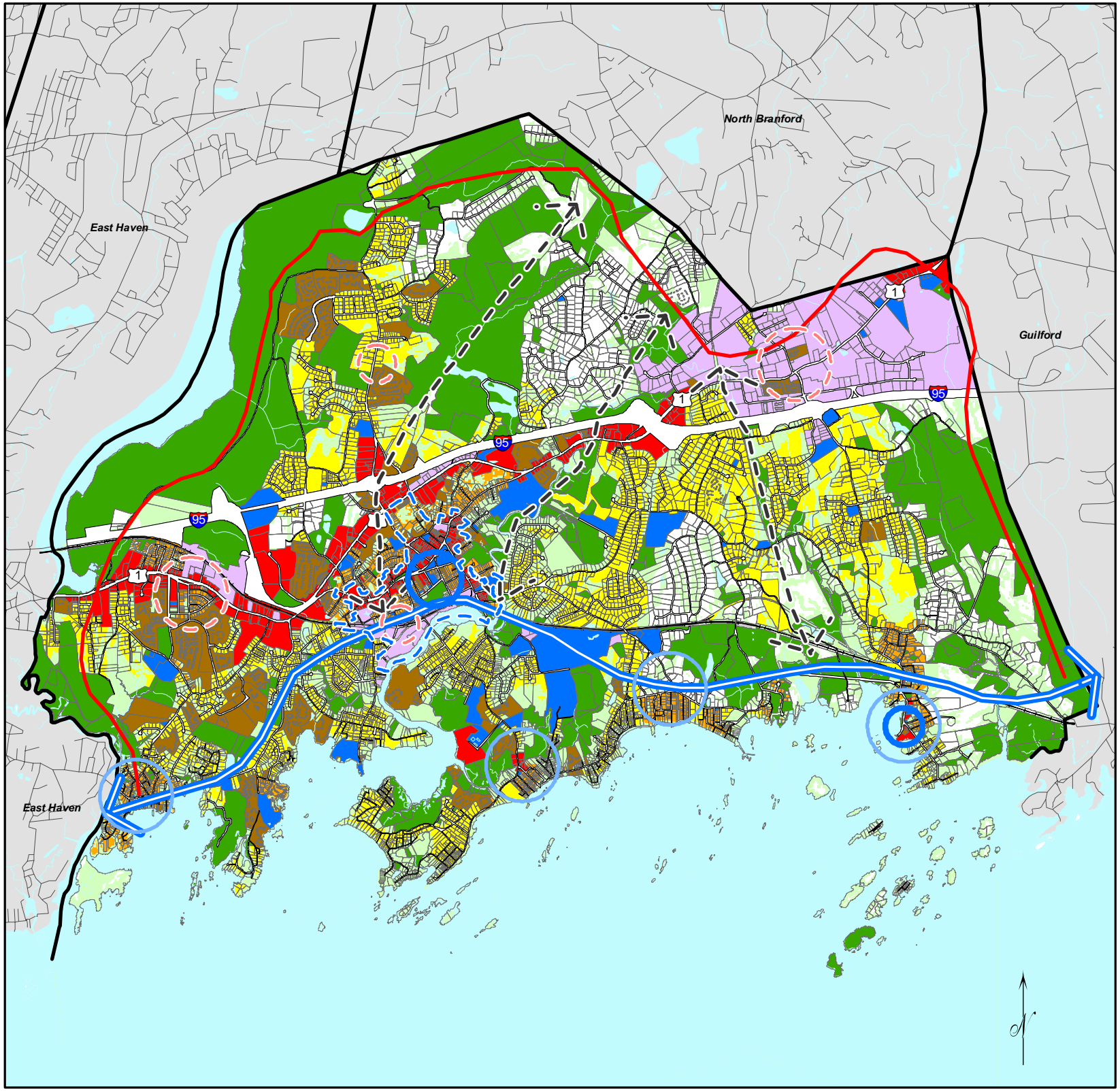


13

Future Land Use Plan Categories

The Future Land Use Plan contains the following categories:

Residential Areas	Areas used or intended for lowest, low, or moderate density residential uses Map Legend • Low Density Residential • Medium Density Residential • High Density Residential • Multi-Family Residential
Business Areas	Areas used or intended for development of business or industrial uses Map Legend • Commercial Zones • Industrial Zones
Open Space	Areas with existing or desirable open space and greenway trails Map Legend • Open Space
Environmental Constraints	Sensitive environmental areas Map Legend Steep slopes, wetlands or floodplain
Community / Institutional	Existing or desired uses that will help meet community needs Map Legend • Institutional / Community Facility
Unique Area	Existing development area, where additional growth will support community objectives. • Town Center • Potential nodes



Future Land Use Plan

Legend

- Town Center Area
- Node
- Village / Neighborhood
- Potential Nodes

Residential Densities

- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Multi-Family Residential

Environmental Constraints

- Steep Slopes, Wetland or Floodplain

Open Space and Institutional

- Open Space
- Institutional / Community Facilitiy

Commercial / Industrial

- Commercial Zones
- Industrial Zones

Trails

- Shoreline Greenway Trail
- Ring of Branford
- Potential Connections

3,000 Feet

Blank Page

IMPLEMENTATION

14

Overview

Implementation of the Plan is an ongoing process. While some recommendations can be carried out in a relatively short period of time, others may only be realized by the end of the planning period or beyond.

For Branford, creating an implementation table, assigning responsibilities and developing priorities is the first step towards successful plan implementation.

Since some recommendations may involve additional study or a commitment of fiscal resources, their implementation may take place over several years or occur in stages.

Policies and Tasks

The implementation tables should identify both policies and tasks:

Policies are long-term guidelines that do not readily lend themselves to a specific schedule or measurement.

Tasks on the other hand, are specific actions that can typically be scheduled, completed, and evaluated.

Use of the Plan

Using the Plan as a basis for land use decisions by the Commission (PZC) will help accomplish the Plan's stated goals and objectives. All land use proposals should be measured and evaluated in terms of the Plan and its various elements.

The Plan is not a static document that can only be amended every ten years. It is becoming increasingly more difficult to anticipate change during a ten year time frame.

If dramatic change alters a premise on which recommended strategies are based, or creates unanticipated issues, the PZC can make interim amendments to this Plan to address these changes.

In doing so, the Commission and other agencies can continue to make decisions that are consistent with an up-to-date Plan of Conservation and Development, regardless of what the future brings.

Updating Tools

- holding annual public informational meetings to summarize the Plan recommendations and receive feedback from the community;
- holding workshop sessions for local boards, commission and other interested persons to discuss Plan strategies and suggest alternative language;
- revising Plan sections as appropriate; and
- re-adopting the Plan whenever there are minor text or map changes; or when the PZC wants to reaffirm the existing policies of the Plan.

Plan Implementation Committee

Many communities establish a Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) to oversee implementation of the Plan's recommendations which is an effective way to implement the Plan.

The PIC could use implementation schedules (proposed below) to guide the ongoing implementation and assessment of specific elements of the Plan.

The Town's various boards and commission should be represented on the PIC to help prioritize, coordinate, and refine implementation of the Plan.



The PIC would meet three to four times a year to establish priorities and guide implementation of the Plan's recommendations.

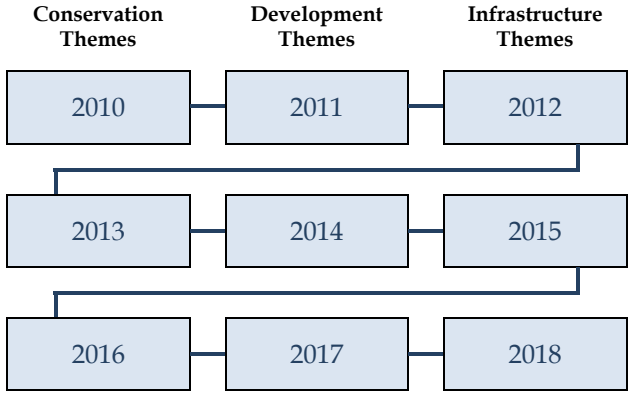
In addition, the Committee could assess the status of specific recommendations, establish new priorities, and suggest new implementation techniques.

Annual Update Program

A Plan that is only updated once every ten years can be silent on emerging issues, trends, and current policy objectives which could lead to conflicts in land use decisions or missed opportunities.

When a Plan is considered strictly as a reference document rather than a working document, its effectiveness in guiding the community can diminish over time.

Branford, with the assistance of the Plan Implementation Committee, should consider reviewing the Plan with the following schedule:



By following this schedule, each review and update extends the Plan's ten-year life, until a comprehensive update is needed. Tools that the PZC and the PIC can use to ensure that the broader community is involved in the updating process are identified in the sidebar.

Legend

The entities listed are considered lead agencies and would not preclude other agencies from participating in the implementation of particular strategies.

BOS	Board of Selectmen
EDC	Economic Development Commission
PD	Planning Department
PZC	Planning & Zoning Commission

Priorities

T	Task
1	High Priority
2	Moderate Priority
3	Lower Priority
P	Policy
A	High Priority
B	Moderate Priority
C	Lower Priority

Suggested Organization of the Implementation Tables

The following tables are an example of how the specific action items can be prioritized and tracked as part of the plan implementation phase.

Creating implementation tables should be the first task of the Plan Implementation Committee.

Key Strategy – Expand Design Review (Page 38)

	Task	Who	Priority
P	1. Expand the types of uses, activities and geographic extents of projects reviewed by the Town Center Revitalization Review Board.	PZC	A
T	2. Expand the existing Town Center design manual to include other business areas of Town.	PZC	1
T	3. Encourage establishment of an annual awards program for the best architectural design of the year to increase public recognition of quality building design	EDC	A

Secondary Strategy – Improve Signage (Page 42)

	Task	Who	Priority
T	1. Develop design standards for commercial signs.	PZC	B
T	2. Create a wayfinding signage program for areas where businesses, key attractions and parking are difficult to locate	EDC	2
P	3. Work with billboard owners to develop guidelines for billboard modernization	EDC PD	B

Emerging Issue - Prepare for sea level rise (Page 23)

	Task	Who	Priority
P	1. Be cognizant and vigilant about how global sea level rise may affect existing and future development in coastal areas.	BOS PZC	C

PLAN CONSISTENCY

Overview

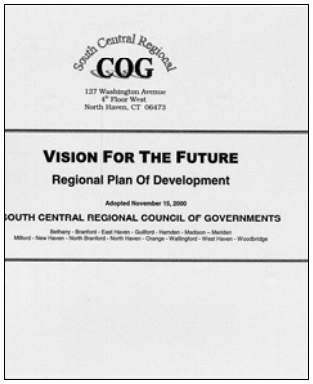
In accordance with CGS 8-23, the Future Land Use Plan was compared to state and regional plans and was found to be generally consistent with both the State Plan of Conservation and Development and the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development.

All three plans:

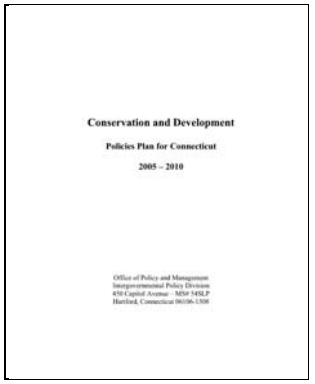
- identify natural resource, open space, aquifer and historic areas for conservation, and
- identify desirable development densities based on the existing zoning designations of these areas.

Any inconsistencies can be generally attributed to:

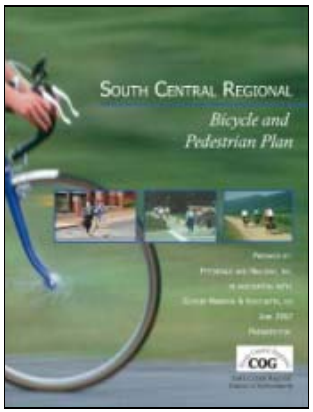
- Difference in definitions of desirable uses or development densities, local (as opposed to state or regional) desires about how Branford should grow and change in the coming years, or
- The fact that the State and Regional Plans make policy recommendations for relative intensity and environmental sensitivity while this plan suggests specific land use types.



2000 Regional Plan of Development



2005-2010 Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut



2007 Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

15

Consistency With Growth Principles

In accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-23, the Plan of Conservation and Development has been evaluated for consistency with statewide growth management principles.

Principle 1 **Redevelop and revitalize regional centers and areas of mixed-land uses with existing or planned physical infrastructure.**

Although Branford does not contain any areas designated as a "regional center", the Plan does promote areas of mixed land uses in Branford Town Center and along Route 1. Each of these areas contains existing physical infrastructure that has adequate capacity for the development encouraged by the Plan.

Overall, the concept of encouraging mixed use centers that have adequate infrastructure is a key element of the Plan.

Principle 2 **Expand housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs.**

The Plan recommends a number of strategies to expand housing opportunities and types to accommodate a variety of household types and needs. In particular, the Plan recommends that Branford:

- diversify the range of housing types available in the community to address the housing needs of an aging population and a trend towards smaller households, and
- implement a variety of strategies to promote housing affordability.

Principle 3 **Concentrate development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options and land reuse.**

The Plan promotes the integration of land uses in Branford with the transportation nodes and transit corridors in the community.

Branford is very fortunate to have a train station on the Shore Line East rail corridor and a local transit service.

The Plan promotes development in the Town Center area, around the train station and along Route 1 in accordance with the availability of transit in these areas.

Principle 4 **Conserve and restore the natural environment, cultural and historical resources, and traditional rural lands.**

The Plan of Conservation and Development contains a chapter that identifies strategies to:

- protect natural resources,
- preserve open space,
- protect historic resources,
- protect coastal resources, and
- protect community character.

These strategies will help conserve and restore the natural environment, cultural and historical resources.

Principle 5 **Protect environmental assets critical to public health and safety.**

The Plan of Conservation and Development also contains recommendations to protect environmental assets critical to public health and safety.

This includes goals, policies and objectives to protect water quality, preserve floodplain areas, renovate storm water discharges, minimize runoff, and other similar strategies.

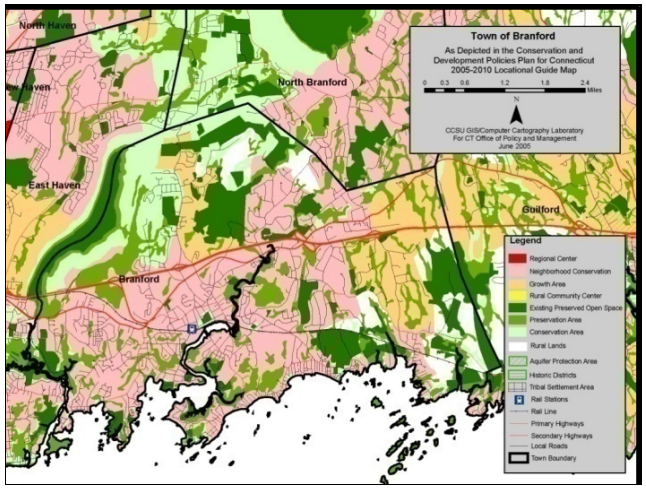
Principle 6 **Integrate planning across all levels of government to address issues on a local, regional, and statewide basis.**

The Plan of Conservation and Development is part of the process of integrating planning with other levels of government and with other agencies.

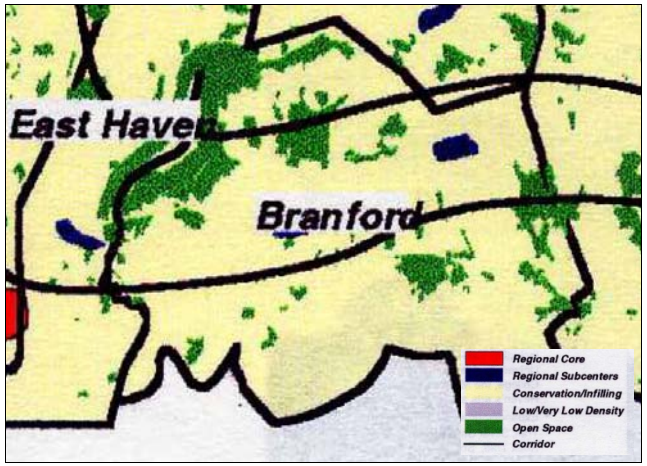
The Plan will be used to coordinate efforts with:

- adjacent communities,
- regional organizations, and
- state agencies.

State of Connecticut - Plan of Conservation and Development



South Central Connecticut - Regional Plan of Conservation and Development



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Planning and Zoning Commission

Ellsworth McGuigan	Chair
Michael Laudano	Vice Chairman
Philip Fischer	Secretary
Joseph Vaiuso	
Stephen Duhamel	
Charles R. Andres	Alternate
David Perkins	Alternate
John B. Lust	Alternate

Town of Branford

Anthony J. DaRos	First Selectman
Francis W. Walsh	Selectman
John E. Opie	Selectman

Vision Committee

Richard Sullivan	Chair
Frank Carrano	Board of Education
Victor Cassella	Board of Finance
Laura Collins	Chamber of Commerce
Abbie Emison	Regional Growth Partnership
Ray Figlewski	Economic Development Commission
Rob Gott	Police Commission
Karyl Lee Hall	Conservation and Environment Commission
Doug Marsh	Branford Land Trust
Ellsworth "Mac" McGuigan	Planning and Zoning Commission
Danny Shapiro	Inland Wetlands Commission
Terence Elton	Special Projects Manager

Town Staff

Shirley Rasmussen	Town Planner
Richard Stoecker	Assistant Planner
Laura Magaraci	Zoning Enforcement Officer
Janice Plaziak	Town Engineer
Danuta Szostek	GIS Analyst
Patricia Torre	Administrative Assistant

Representative Town Meeting (as of April 30, 2008)

District 1

Lisa Avitable
Laurel Merrick
Margaret M. Bruno
Clare Torelli
Troy Rondinone
Dorothy Maynard
Michael Nardella
Michael Orsene
Frank B. Twohill, Jr.

District 2

Grady Keefe
Joshua Brooks
Gail A. Infantino
David M. Baker
Richard K. Greenalch Jr.

District 3

Doug Hanlon
Alinor Sterling
Peter L. Black

District 4

Gail A. Chapman
Anthony Giardiello
Sandra K. Reiners
Dorothy A. Docknevich
Chris Sullivan
Lonnie Reed
Pamela Fowler
Joseph Bodner III
John P. Prete, Jr.

District 5

Scott Thayer
Alice Lambert
Kevin J. O'Donnell
Dennis T. Flanigan

Technical assistance provided by

Planimetrics

Glenn Chalder, AICP Principal
Jason Vincent, AICP Senior Planner
Leonard Desson GIS Manager

Planimetrics
31 Ensign Drive, Avon, CT 06001 860-677-5267

Yankee Planning Group – Coastal Planning Issues
Dan Rothenberg Principal

YANKEE PLANNING GROUP, LLC