

# MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE COMMUNITY CHARACTER

# 4

## 4.1. Overview

Maintaining and enhancing community character has been a local priority in Westport plans for some time. Residents clearly see community character as an important part of Westport and something important for the community to keep its eye on moving forward.



Maintaining and enhancing community character will help make Westport a more sustainable community by preserving important resources for future generations.

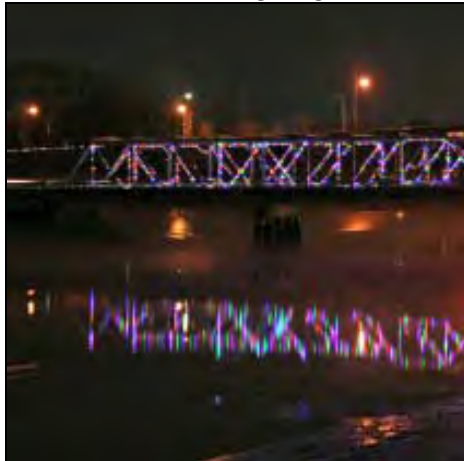
**Historic Resources**



**Community Events**



**Cribari Swing Bridge**



**Compo Beach**





In the on-line survey, participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement:

***Westport is doing a good job promoting and protecting community character.***

Strongly agree	5%
Agree	46%
Not sure	6%
Disagree	30%
Strongly disagree	14%

## What Is Character?

Webster’s Dictionary defines character as:

- a distinctive trait, quality or attribute,
- a place’s essential quality or nature or reputation.

Within the context of the POCD, “character” refers to those elements that, taken together, help make Westport both desirable and different from other communities. While the concept of community character is unique to each person, it seems that residents of Westport agree that it includes:

- The overall physical appearance of the community,
- The scenic resources and scenic views in Westport (such as views of wooded landscapes and the Saugatuck River),
- The natural environment and the preservation of trees and open space,
- The small scale village centers (Downtown, Saugatuck),
- The traditional residential neighborhoods (Old Hill, Greens Farms),
- Key community resources (Winslow Park, Compo Beach, Longshore),
- The design and scale of individual buildings and sites,
- The historic buildings and places that remind us of our shared past (historic houses, historic public buildings, the Cribari Bridge, etc.),
- The day-to-day experiences in the community,
- The local facilities and events that make Westport special, and
- the overall personality of the community.

These are just some of the unique physical qualities that, together, define the look, feel and essence of Westport and contribute to its unique character.

In the on-line survey, residents were split 51% to 44% about whether Westport was doing a good job promoting and protecting community character.

Since residents feel this is so important and because they feel torn about whether the community is doing a good enough job, the concept of maintaining and enhancing community character needs to be a focus moving forward.

### Goal

Maintain and enhance the character of Westport in order to retain a sense of community, beauty and history.

## 4.2. Protect Historic Buildings And Sites

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Historic buildings and sites in Westport contribute to the overall character of the community, foster community pride, conserve the personality and architecture of its historic residential neighborhoods and commercial areas, enable citizens and visitors to enjoy and learn about local history, and provide a framework for making appropriate preservation planning decisions. As a result, the identification, conservation and protection of its historic and archaeological resources is part of maintaining and enhancing community character in Westport.

The Westport Historic District Commission (HDC) is the organization charged with historic preservation in Westport. The HDC should continue efforts to protect historical properties from destruction or architectural degradation. In addition, the HDC should employ the full range of preservation methods available to protect and enhance Westport's historic and cultural resources.

### Identification

Identifying and recognizing historic resources is the first step to preserving them. Westport has a Historic Resources Inventory which consists of information on more than 1,500 local properties. This inventory (first completed in 1977 and updated as time and resources permit) is used as a reference in preservation planning.

There has also been little investigation of archeological resources in Westport. During the planning period, it may be desirable to undertake an assessment of those sites with the greatest potential for containing archeological resources.

### Recognition / Protection

In order to maintain the Town's historic character and qualities represented in its many significant buildings, structures, monuments, landscapes, cemeteries, public rights-of-way, districts and sites, Westport should:

- Support the preservation of historic resources.
- Where appropriate, establish zoning regulations which will help protect historic resources including use flexibility, adaptive reuse of historic buildings, dimensional flexibility, and/or other approaches.
- Encourage "sensitive ownership" of historic structures and sites by private owners.
- Support the listing of local sites and districts on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Support existing local historic districts and the creation of new local districts and local historic properties where supported by property owners.
- Maintain the demolition delay regulation.
- Encourage / support village district regulation.



In the on-line survey, participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement:

***Westport is doing a good job protecting historic resources and historic character.***

Strongly agree	10%
Agree	42%
Not sure	5%
Disagree	23%
Strongly disagree	20%

## State / National Registers of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) identifies resources significant in the history of the nation. The State Register of Historic Places (SRHP) identifies resources significant in the history of the state.

These designations are not regulatory in nature and only directly affect activities involving federal and/or state funding. Property owners may be eligible for tax benefits for improvements to these resources.

The designations may be for districts (areas containing multiple properties) or for individual properties. More information is available from the Westport Historic District Commission website.

### Sample Of National / State Districts

Westport Center  
Merritt Parkway  
Compo / Owenoke  
Mill Cove  
National Hall  
Kings Highway North

### Sample Of National / State Sites

Town Hall  
Green's Farms School  
Saugatuck River Bridge  
Cong. Church of Green's Farms  
Inn at National Hall  
Westport Country Playhouse

## Local Districts or Properties

A local historic district is regulatory in nature and a local Historic District Commission *regulates* exterior changes in view from a public street. A supermajority of property owners must consent to the establishment of a local historic district.

A local historic property may be similarly protected or may be protected by ownership, easement, or other means consented to by the property owner.

More information is available from the Westport Historic District Commission website.

### Sample Of Some Local Historic Districts

Kings Highway North  
Jesup Road  
Gorham Avenue  
Evergreen Avenue  
Morningside Drive South  
Violet Lane

### Sample Of Some Historic Properties

Green's Farms Colonial Church  
New Town Common  
Machamux Boulder  
West Parish Meeting House  
Lower Green's Farms Burying Ground  
Wakeman Farm





## Encourage Preservation Organizations

The Westport HDC should continue to collaborate with the State Historic Preservation Office and non-governmental entities (such as the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation) to coordinate preservation efforts and stay informed of preservation opportunities.

As a result of the work of the HDC, Westport is a Certified Local Government (CLG) as established by the National Preservation Act. Maintaining CLG status allows Westport to be eligible for matching federal grant funds. Westport should strive to retain its CLG status.

## Education

So that residents appreciate the significance of historic buildings and sites, Westport should, through the HDC, promote public awareness of historic preservation through:

- general educational programs highlighting local sites and events,
- specific educational programs directed towards owners of historic properties to help them preserve the historic integrity of their property,
- annual Preservation Awards to recognize local properties,
- sharing of other relevant information, and
- encourage preservation organizations to activate community interest.

## Historic Bridges

In the early 20th century, Westport undertook a program to upgrade a number of bridges in the community to accommodate the automobile. In all, some 19 matching Craftsman style stone bridges were built and eight remain. These bridges are unique to Westport and contribute to our distinctive character and help remind us how Westport evolved through time.

**Cross Highway Bridge**



**Greens Farm Road Bridge**



A. HISTORIC RESOURCES		Leader	Partners
1.	Support the preservation of historic resources, including the Cribari Bridge.	PZC	HDC
<input type="checkbox"/>	a. Consider requesting the State Archeologist conduct an overall assessment of archeological potential in Westport.	PZC	HDC
2.	Encourage the ongoing efforts of public and private owners to sensitively preserve and maintain historic structures and sites (purchase, maintain, use, etc.).	HDC	PZC PW PRC
3.	Support the listing of local sites and districts on the National Register of Historic Places.	HDC	
4.	Support existing local historic districts and the creation of new districts and local historic properties where supported by property owners.	HDC	
5.	Maintain the demolition delay ordinance to provide an opportunity to preserve, relocate, or document historic buildings.	HDC	RTM
<input type="checkbox"/>	a. Revisit the demolition delay ordinance to discourage the dismantling of historic homes before a demolition permit is issued.	PZC	HDC RTM
6.	Maintain the Historic Resources Inventory in order to help identify historic resources.	HDC	
<input type="checkbox"/>	a. Link information from the Historic Resources Inventory to the town GIS system.	HDC	Town
<input type="checkbox"/>	b. Continue to update the Historic District Commission website to clearly identify historic resources, historic districts, and other such information.	HDC	Town
7.	Maintain Certified Local Government status in order to receive funds from the State Historic Preservation Office.	HDC	
8.	Work with Town agencies to incentivize preservation of historic structures.	HDC	PZC
9.	Within any adopted Village District Overlay Zone, work to ensure the preservation of the historic character of the designated area.	HDC	PZC
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### Cribari Bridge

The Cribari Bridge carries Route 136 (Bridge Street) over the Saugatuck River in the Saugatuck section of Westport. Built in 1884, the bridge is the oldest surviving movable bridge in Connecticut and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The preservation of the Cribari Bridge is important to Westport residents since:

- the bridge is historic,
- the bridge is a gateway to Saugatuck and Westport and enhances the character of Saugatuck and the entire community,
- the current bridge is a natural barrier to trucks and excessive through traffic from I-95 when I-95 is backed-up, and
- expanding the bridge could place pedestrians and cyclists on nearby roads at greater risk of harm.

Westport recognizes that ongoing maintenance of the bridge to maintain it in a state of good repair; but not expansion, is needed.

Historic Home



Historic Image





### 4.3. Promote Good Design

The Architectural Review Board (ARB) has five members appointed by the First Selectman for two years terms, and three alternate members appointed by the First Selectman for two year terms.

The ARB's recommendations are forwarded to the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals to be considered as part of application reviews.

The recommendations of the ARB are advisory and non-binding, however they are considered seriously by the Planning and Zoning Commission when evaluating the merits of a project.

Westport has had an Architectural Review Board (ARB) since 1979. The ARB advises Town officials as to the appropriateness of architectural plans for:

- new commercial structures,
- exterior alterations to commercial structures,
- fixed awnings, and
- free-standing signs.

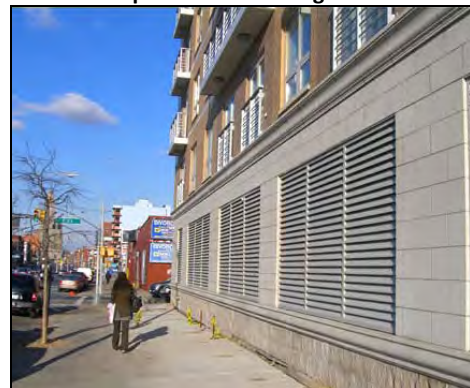
The ARB helps preserve and enhance the character of Westport and maintain the overall “sense of place.” Experience in other communities has shown that when developers understand what design standards are expected or encouraged, they are more likely to provide what the community has indicated that they want.

A. COMMUNITY DESIGN	Leader	Partners
1. Maintain an architectural review process to help preserve and enhance the character of Westport and maintain the overall “sense of place.”	ARB	PZC HDC
<input type="checkbox"/> a. <b>Develop design review guidelines for Westport.</b>	ARB	PZC
2. Seek to require ARB review of the following uses in addition to their current functions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• any multi-family use,</li> <li>• any institutional use, and</li> <li>• any special permit use.</li> </ul>	PZC	Staff
3. Consider extending the terms of the ARB members to encourage a consistent design review approach over time.	FS	PZC ARB
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**Example Of A Good Design Result**



**Example Of A Poor Design Result**



## Examples Of Design-Related Images (From Village District Study and HDC Handbook)



Figure A.4.2: Building Elements

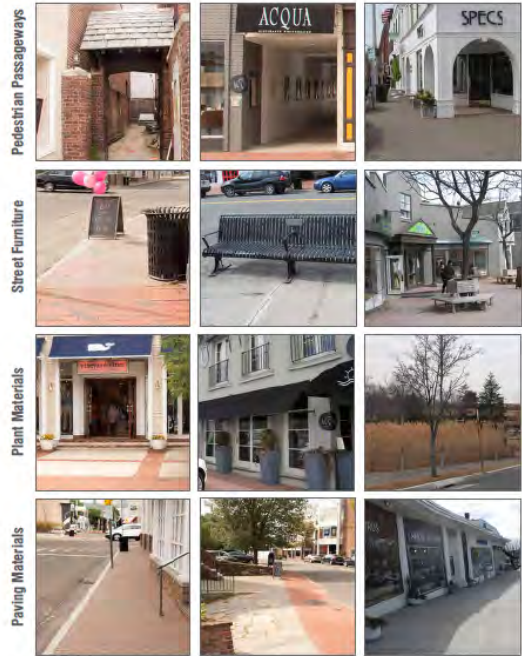
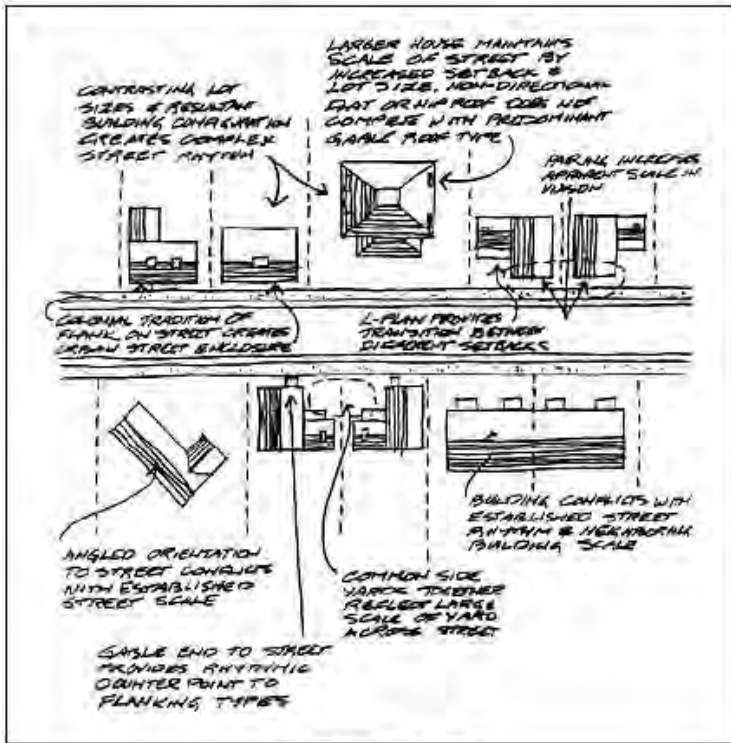


Figure A.4.3: Site Elements



**Overhead Utility Wires**

Westport residents wished that overhead utility wires were less visible in certain areas of Westport:

- the Downtown area,
- in Saugatuck Center,
- along the Post Road, and
- in scenic areas (such as the shore area).

As opportunities arise, Westport should seek ways to place wired utilities underground.

Burying utilities can also be a critical resilience measure since extreme weather events can disrupt the power grid for extended periods of time.

**Walls And Fences**

In Westport, especially in coastal areas, tall walls and fences detract from scenic views and the overall character of Westport.

The zoning regulations could be reviewed for better management or regulation of these structures.

**4.4. Protect and Enhance Scenic Resources**

Scenic resources contribute to community character and efforts must be made to identify, maintain, and preserve such resources. In Westport, this includes scenic views (especially to and from Long Island Sound and the Saugatuck River) and scenic roads.

Other scenic resources include the farms remaining in Westport, barns, historic stone walls, and similar features.

A. SCENIC RESOURCES	Leader	Partners
1. Identify and preserve scenic views and scenic roads.	PZC	CC RTM PW
<input type="checkbox"/> a. Amend land use regulations to include greater consideration of scenic resources.	PZC	
<input type="checkbox"/> b. Establish a scenic road ordinance to designate and protect scenic roads.	HDC	RTM
2. Protect, preserve and enhance visual access to (and from) Long Island Sound, the Saugatuck River, Sherwood Mill Pond, and other coastal resource areas.	PZC	CC
3. Identify and preserve other scenic features (such as farms, barns, stone walls, and similar features).	PZC	CC BC
4. Encourage the use of “green fences” wherever possible.	Town	PZC CC BC
5. Seek ways to place wired utilities underground as opportunities arise. (also see Section 16.5)	Town	
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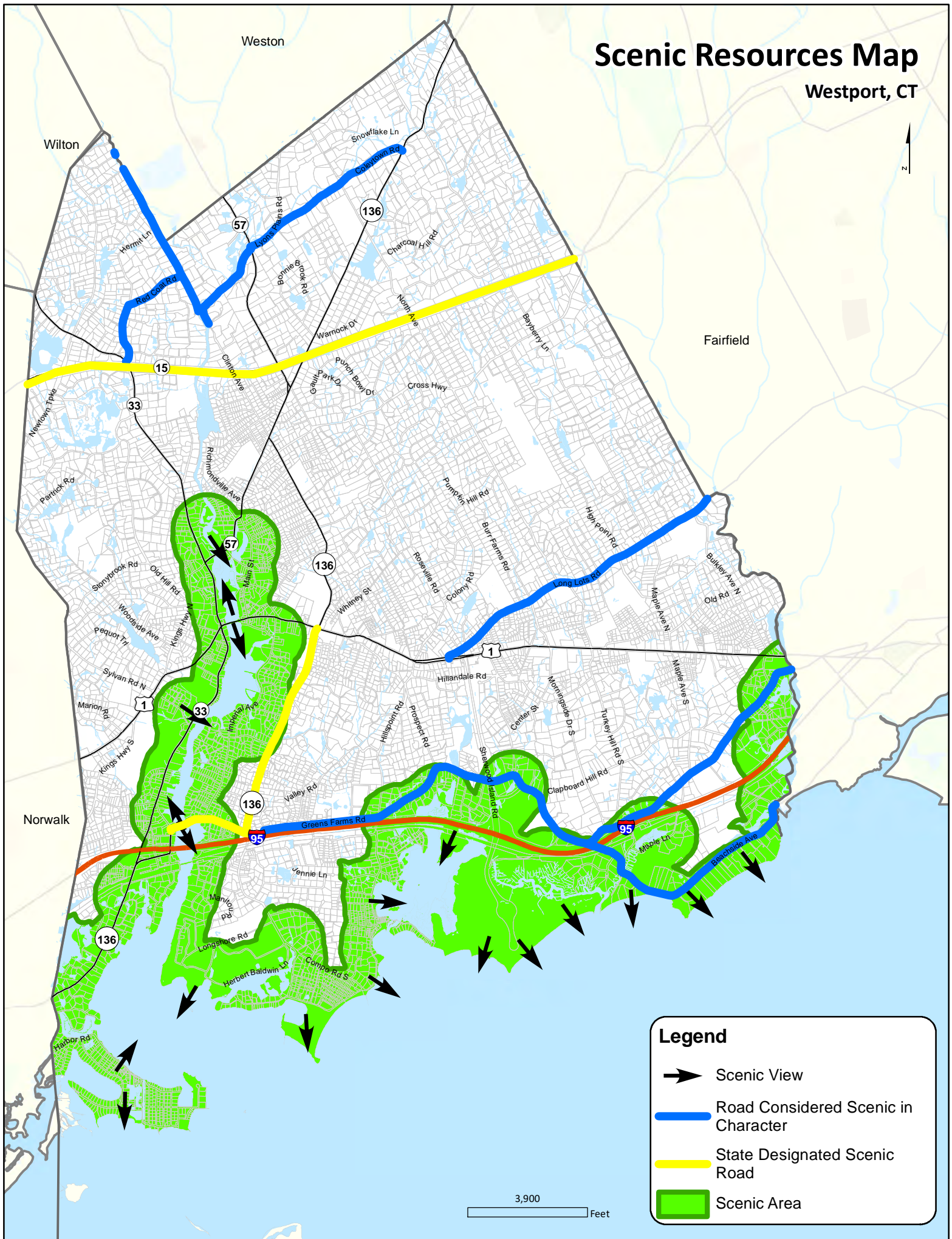
**Scenic View**





# Scenic Resources Map

Westport, CT



**Legend**

- ➔ Scenic View
- Road Considered Scenic in Character
- State Designated Scenic Road
- Scenic Area

3,900 Feet

## 4.5. Address Other Quality Of Life Issues

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During the planning process, a number of people commented about other “nuisance-type” issues which they felt had the potential to detract from community character and the overall quality of life in Westport.

**Congestion / Parking** – Traffic congestion and parking were common frustrations among Westport residents. Traffic congestion can occur as people converge towards the interchanges on Interstate 95 or the Merritt Parkway or navigate towards the train stations. Congestion can also be a source of frustration along Route 1 and some of the interesting roadways.

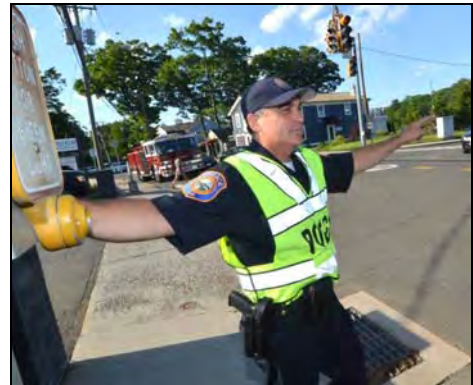
Parking at the train stations can also be an issue. While the wait list has shortened recently, it can take some time for a new resident to get a parking pass and, in the meantime, these newer residents may need to find parking at other locations.

These issues are discussed further in Chapter 13 of this POCD.

**Traffic Congestion**



**Traffic Officer**



**Station Parking**



**Downtown Parking**





**Tree Clearing / Drainage** – Tree clearing and drainage changes associated with new development (or redevelopment of sites in existing neighborhoods) is another common issue or concern. Houses that have existed for years without drainage problems can be affected by tree clearing and/or regrading of adjacent properties that no longer intercepts rainfall, diverts water onto them, or changes the groundwater table so that soils become saturated.

Trees are important for a number of reasons:

1. Trees intercept rainfall and slow storm water runoff
2. Trees fight soil erosion
3. Trees produce oxygen and clean the air
4. Trees provide shade and cool and are effective windbreaks
5. Trees are pretty, reduce noise impacts, and increase property values
6. Trees create habitat

One of the key benefits of trees in a community like Westport is how they can ameliorate runoff. For example, trees with leaves or needles are aerial interception / detention “devices” that reduce the amount of rainfall reaching the ground at one time,

People recognize the positive impact that landscaping and vegetation can have on community character and want:

- More trees and plantings, especially in commercial areas and along major roadways,
- Good maintenance of trees on roads public lands,
- To encourage use of native species and elimination of invasive species,
- Less aggressive tree trimming as part of utility maintenance, and
- Less tree clearing as a result of new residential construction.

Westport should continue to explore ways to encourage or require the retention of trees as part of new development and redevelopment (especially in residential neighborhoods).

## Trees And Drainage

Trees are an important part of the overall drainage and runoff situation in Westport. Trees are “aerial interceptors” of rainfall and will detain runoff. This is one of the reasons why drainage problems can occur when trees have been cleared for redevelopment of adjacent properties.

Encouraging or requiring the preservation of trees will help avoid drainage issues. If trees are retained, fewer drainage structures may be able to accommodate the runoff generated.

**Tree Clearing**



**Drainage Diversion**



## What About ...?

*If not addressed, could on-line house sharing services (like HomeAway, AirBNB, VRBO, etc.) create conflicts between residents and visitors or change the nature of some residential neighborhoods?*

**Noise** – Noise was considered to be a significant issue by residents of some neighborhoods. This was especially true in some of the smaller lot size areas where houses are closer together. The issue ranged from continuing construction noise (multiple projects on consecutive properties) to landscaping contractors (“mow, blow and go”). Westport may wish to consider a noise ordinance with allowable hours of operation or designated “quiet hours” or other approaches.

**Lighting** – Some issues were raised with regard to lighting and illumination. Westport may wish to revisit the lighting provisions in the site plan section of the Zoning Regulations (Section 44-5.5) to ensure that it has good lighting rules in place. Westport should also continue to monitor lighting issues (particularly as some lighting migrates to LED lamps which some consider to be more impactful than previous lamp types).

A. QUALITY OF LIFE		Leader	Partners
1.	Consider the need for a noise ordinance to address “nuisance-type” issues.	RTM	
2.	Continue to monitor lighting issues to address any issues.	PZC	
	<input type="checkbox"/> a. Revisit the lighting provisions in the site plan section of the Zoning Regulations (Section 44-5.5).	PZC	
3.	Enhance programs and policies related to the “greening” of major roads and the “adopt-a-spot” program.	PZC	TW BC
4.	Regularly evaluate the health of trees on Town roads / land and trim or remove unhealthy or unsafe trees or limbs.	TW	PW
5.	Encourage less aggressive tree trimming as part of utility maintenance.	TW	
6.	Discourage tree clearing as a result of new residential construction and encourage preservation of tree canopies.	PZC	
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## 4.6. Maintain The Use Assessment Program

Farms, forests, undeveloped land and certain other privately-owned properties contribute to the overall character of Westport. If these properties were assessed on the basis of their “fair market value,” many of these properties would be inclined to sell and it is possible that the property would be developed and these uses would be lost.

Westport should continue to utilize the “use value assessment” program as authorized by Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) Section 12-107 (also known as Public Act 490) in order to retain land that provides the community with farming, scenic views, less development, and fiscal and other benefits.

The “farm” and “forest” components of Public Act 490 are subject to State guidelines and conditions. On the other hand, the “open space” component is based on criteria as designated in the municipal POCD and adopted by the legislative body. Since the open space use assessment program was adopted by Westport (in 1971), it has been utilized by several properties and the POCD recommends this program continue to be made available to properties which can demonstrate that the use assessment program would:

- maintain and enhance the conservation of natural or scenic resources,
- protect natural streams or water supply,
- promote conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches or tidal marshes,
- 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;

### Farm / Forest Assessment

**Farm Land** - Under the PA 490 program, the assessor may designate land for farm use assessment based on an application by the owner and after considering such factors as:

- the overall acreage,
- the portion actually used for agricultural operations,
- the gross income derived,
- the nature and value of the equipment used in connection there-with, and
- other factors.

**Forest Land** - Under the PA 490 program, the assessor must designate land for forest land use assessment based on an application by the owner and a demonstration of compliance with the criteria:

- at least 25 acres of land (in one or more tracts), and
- bearing tree growth that conforms to the forest stocking, distribution and condition standards established by the State Forester.

A. USE ASSESSMENT	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to utilize the “use value assessment” program as authorized by CGS 12-107 (also known as Public Act 490).	Staff	
2. Continue to make the “open space use assessment” program available to properties currently enrolled and to other properties which can demonstrate that they meet the criteria stated in this POCD.	Staff	RTM
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## 4.7. Encourage Community Events

Unique facilities such as public and private arts and theater facilities and organizations add immeasurably to the overall ambience and quality of life in Westport. Efforts to develop, improve, and maintain performance and exhibition facilities should be supported and encouraged in order to enhance the overall community.

In the on-line survey, participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement:

***Westport should have more community events and activities.***

Strongly agree	12%
Agree	48%
Not sure	14%
Disagree	24%
Strongly disagree	3%

Similarly, the unique events that occur in Westport such as sports events, concerts at the Levitt Pavilion, First Night on New Year’s Eve, and festivals and events sponsored by private organizations help support the overall concept of community and the shared experience of living in Westport. These types of facilities, programs and events should be supported and encouraged in order to enhance vibrancy and connections amongst residents in the community. The governmental, volunteer, and non-profit organizations which help make all of this happen should be supported and encouraged.

Use of Town land for Levitt Pavilion, the outdoor concert / entertainment venue overlooking the Saugatuck River, should continue to be supported.

A. COMMUNITY EVENTS	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to support and encourage facilities for the arts and theater, both public and private.	Town	
2. Continue to support events consistent with the principles of the POCD that bring the community together (such as sports events, concerts at the Levitt Pavilion, plays at the theaters, First Night, holiday fireworks, and those sponsored by private entities).	Town	
3. Encourage events to continue to strengthen town-wide and neighborhood sense of community.	Town	
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**Levitt Pavilion Concert**



**First Night Celebration**





# PRESERVE OPEN SPACE

# 5

## 5.1. Overview

Open space helps protect natural resources; provide flood storage, wildlife habitat, and tree canopy; enhance overall community appearance; and enhance the quality of life of residents and visitors.

Westport residents value the preserved open space areas that add to the overall beauty of the community and want to:

- maintain the open space areas we have,
- add more open space areas as opportunities arise, and
- seek to interconnect open space areas and improve access to Long Island Sound and the Saugatuck River.

The POCD recommends that efforts to preserve open space be continued and enhanced. In addition, the POCD recommends that opportunities to provide access to Long Island Sound and the Saugatuck River and between open space areas be enhanced.



Preserving open space will help make Westport a more sustainable community by retaining natural spaces and sustaining environmental health.

### Goal

Preserve and enhance open space and create meaningful connections to, within, and between open space areas.

Compo Beach



## Possible Open Space Framework

### Preserved Open Space

Land that is permanently protected for conservation or open space through ownership, deed restrictions or regulations that restrict development to recreation.

Examples:

- Compo Beach
- Aspetuck Land Trust
- Cockenoe Island



### Managed Open Space

Land that provides open space benefits but is not permanently protected. May include land used for recreational purposes (such as a golf club) or water utility lands or other purposes (such as cemeteries).

Examples:

- Birchwood Country Club
- Willowbrook Cemetery
- Earthplace
- Hunt Club



### Municipal Facility / Institutional

Land that is used for a municipal facility or institution but *may* be eligible to be part of an open space greenway system under the right circumstances.

Examples:

- Staples High School
- Saint Luke's Church



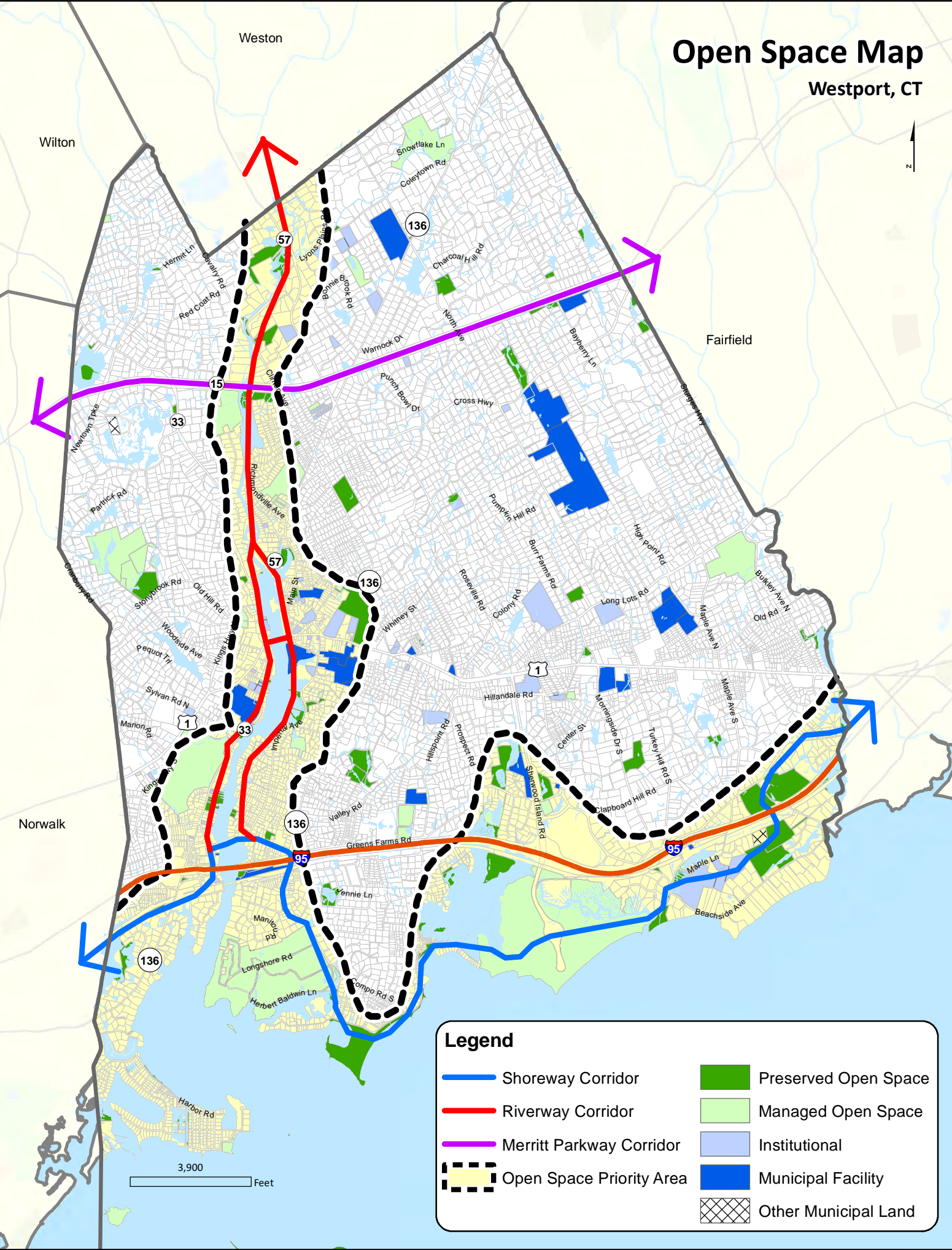
### Open Space Priority Area

The area which should be a high priority for trail establishment and/or open space preservation if (or when) opportunities arise in order to take advantage of waterfront proximity or create the establishment of a "shoreway" or "riverway."












# Open Space Map

Westport, CT



**Legend**

 Shoreway Corridor	 Preserved Open Space
 Riverway Corridor	 Managed Open Space
 Merritt Parkway Corridor	 Institutional
 Open Space Priority Area	 Municipal Facility
	 Other Municipal Land

3,900 Feet



**Open Space Challenge**

In 1997, the Connecticut General Assembly set a goal of preserving 21 percent of the land area of Connecticut for open space for public recreation and natural resource conservation and preservation.

Attaining this goal was split between the State (10 percent) and non-State entities such as municipalities, private non-profit land conservation organizations, and water utilities (11 percent).

Unfortunately, Westport falls well below this goal.

According to a preliminary compilation of open space for communities across the state, Westport was credited with 6.2 percent open space, well below the State average and well below adjacent communities (except for Norwalk).

As a result, Westport needs to retain the open space it has and preserve more when opportunities arise.

## 5.2. Maintain Existing Open Spaces

Maintenance of existing open space is an important issue in two respects.

First, the Town worked hard over the years to acquire and preserve open spaces and residents feel these areas could be managed better. Time and attention should be devoted to maintaining open space properties and avoiding illegal dumping and other infringements.

Second, land already preserved as open space should be kept as open space rather than used for other purposes. Only when there is no alternative should the Town consider developing its public open spaces. This policy is based on the principle that once open space is developed, it is lost forever. It may make sense to consider disposition of some small parcels that are not part of an open space system. Westport should retain, protect, and maintain significant parcels it has already preserved.

In addition, management “plans” for each open space area should be considered. These need not be elaborate documents but should include:

- a basic inventory of the parcel(s),
- a simple assessment of the opportunities and issues, and
- strategies to address them.

A. OVERALL	Leader	Partners
1. Maintain existing open space areas in terms of basic attention and upkeep.	Town PZC	PW PRC ALT
<input type="checkbox"/> a. Maintain and update the open space inventory and categorization framework.	PZC	CC ALT
<input type="checkbox"/> b. Prepare management “plans” for existing open space areas.	PZC PRC	CC
<input type="checkbox"/> c. Continue to investigate using the Open Space and Recreational District (DOSRD) to help preserve open space lands.	PZC	
<input type="checkbox"/> d. Consider ways to discourage homeowners from encroaching on open space areas.	PZC	
2. Provide adequate funds to maintain and enhance open space areas.	BOS	BOF RTM
3. Explore other options before existing open space areas are used for other purposes.	PZC	
4. Discourage the use of open space areas for other purposes simply because the land is there.	PZC	
<input type="checkbox"/> a. Consider zoning open space parcels as “park” zones in order to preserve them as open space.	PZC	
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### 5.3. Improve Open Space Access / Connectivity

The POCD encourages the use of open space areas by residents. Increasing the awareness of open space parcels is an important part of this effort.

The POCD also recommends that, over the long term, Westport strive to:

- enhance access to Long Island Sound and create a “shoreway” along and near Long Island Sound with interconnected pathways / trails, and
- enhance access to the Saugatuck River and create a “riverway” along and near the Saugatuck River with interconnected pathways / trails.

Connections to and along Long Island Sound and the Saugatuck River will help Westport take advantage of two of the most incredible resources in the region and perhaps the state. The connections to and along waterways build on the resources most prized by residents and seek ways to make them even better. In the on-line survey, 71 percent agreed that Westport should do more to enhance access and use of the Saugatuck River. Similar support was shown in the survey conducted as part of the 2007 POCD.



In the on-line survey, participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement:

***Westport should do more to enhance access and use of the Saugatuck River.***

Strongly agree	40%
Agree	31%
Not sure	11%
Disagree	13%
Strongly disagree	5%

A. OVERALL	Leader	Partners
1. Increase awareness of open space and encourage Westport residents to use and enjoy open space areas in accordance with their intended purpose.	Town	PRC CC ALT
<input type="checkbox"/> a. Identify open space parcels with a simple plaque and, as appropriate, provide parking and facilities for their designated uses.	Town	PRC CC ALT
2. Enhance access to Long Island Sound.	Town	PRC PZC RTM
3. Enhance access to the Saugatuck River.	Town	PRC PZC RTM
4. Over the long term, strive to create interconnections / pathways / trails in three key areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a “shoreway” along and near Long Island Sound, and</li> <li>• a “riverway” along and near the Saugatuck River.</li> </ul>	Town PZC	CC ALT
<i>Code legend is on inside back cover</i>		



In the on-line survey, participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement:

***Westport should seek to acquire more land for open space and parks.***

Strongly agree	37%
Agree	38%
Not sure	6%
Disagree	15%
Strongly disagree	4%

## 5.4. Seek To Acquire And Preserve More Open Space

In the on-line survey, 75 percent of participants agreed that Westport should seek to acquire more land for open space and parks. As opportunities arise, Westport should strive to acquire more open space in order to maintain and enhance community character. This can happen through:

- Dedication of land (or provision of a fee-in-lieu of open space) as part of a residential subdivision or other type of development.
- Depositing funds into a municipal Open Space Fund so that monies will be there if needed on short notice.
- Seeking State grants for qualifying open space purchases.
- Cooperating with land trusts and other conservation organizations.

Westport should remain vigilant and aware of potential open space opportunities and be prepared to respond.

A. ACQUISITION / PRESERVATION	Leader	Partners
1. As opportunities arise, acquire more open space in order to maintain and enhance community character.	Town	LAC ALT
2. As opportunities arise, obtain land or access rights to support the "shoreway" / "riverway" vision (pocket parks, water access, parking areas, etc.) along Long Island Sound and the Saugatuck River. <i>(see Section 5.3 of the POCD)</i>	Town	PZC RTM
3. Continue to work with land trusts and other conservation-related organizations on the preservation of open space in Westport.	Town	CC
4. Explore other options for preserving open space areas before they are used for other purposes.	Town	CC
		Code legend is on inside back cover

Sherwood Island State Park



Sherwood Mill Pond





# MANAGE COASTAL AREAS

# 6

## 6.1. Overview

Westport has an incredibly beautiful coastal area and, as a result, considerable pressure for coastal development. An appropriate balance needs to be maintained between protecting coastal resources and managing coastal development.

Long Island Sound has been officially designated as an estuary of national significance. The Sound is a predominant natural feature and community asset in Westport. It provides the Town with unique beauty, natural habitat and recreation opportunities. Clean water, clean beaches and a healthy ecosystem are a regional vision for Long Island Sound.



Westport will be a more sustainable and resilient community by protecting the fragile ecology of coastal areas and supporting one of the community's greatest assets; while mitigating the risks of sea level rise and extreme weather events.

### Goal

Preserve coastal resources and carefully manage development in coastal areas.

Long Island Sound



Sherwood Mill Pond



**Coastal Management Act**

The Planning and Zoning Commission administers the coastal management provisions of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS Section 22a-90 et seq.) in order to:

- preserve and enhance coastal resources,
- ensure prudent management with regard to development, preservation or use of the land and water resources of the coastal area,
- resolve conflicts between competing uses,
- consider the potential impact of a rise in sea level, coastal flooding and erosion patterns,
- encourage public access to the waters of Long Island Sound, as appropriate, and
- coordinate planning and regulatory activities of public agencies.

## 6.2. Protect Coastal Resources

Coastal areas contain a number of significant resources which must be protected.

Concerns associated with the coastal resources include polluted run-off, nutrient enrichment, and sedimentation from land-based activities affecting a variety of activities in several key areas:

- the Saugatuck River,
- Sherwood Mill Pond,
- Bermuda Lagoon,
- Sasco Creek / Sasco Pond / Sasco River, and
- Long Island Sound (including local shellfish beds).

There is also need for:

- flood hazard mitigation, and
- tidal wetlands habitat protection.

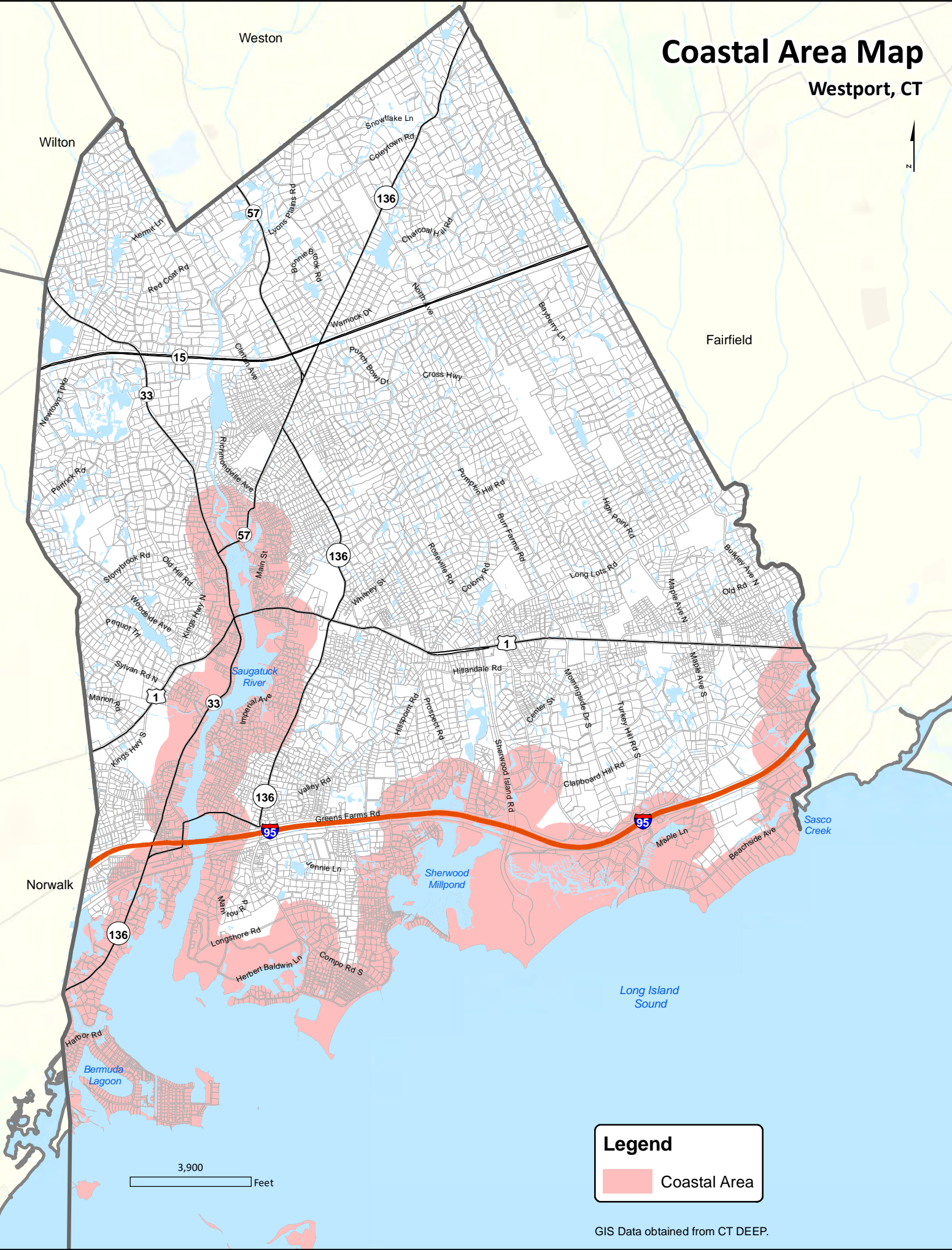
Improving water quality (also discussed in Chapter 7 – Protect Natural Resources) is an important strategy for Westport since storm water runoff into coastal waters affects uses such as swimming and affects resources such as shellfish, marine plants and organisms that keep the sound healthy. Runoff also increases sedimentation of navigation channels and other shallow waters.

Tidal wetlands areas should continue to be protected through acquisition and the use of vegetated buffers and conservation easements in order to better protect them from runoff, erosion, construction, and other potential adverse impacts.


A. COASTAL RESOURCE PROTECTION	Leader	Partners
1. Continue programs and activities that help protect coastal resources, including requiring coastal buffers.	PZC	CC
2. Seek to prevent or mitigate coastal degradation from erosion, sedimentation, and wildlife (Canada Geese).	Town	FECB SCPC SMPC CC PRC
3. Seek to reverse the damage caused by siltation, water pollution and invasive species in tidal wetlands and other coastal resource areas.	Town	CC FECB SCPC SMPC
4. Support educational programs about coastal resources and the impact of non-point source pollution on the viability of Long Island Sound and its use for recreation and fishing.	CC	WWHD FECB SCPC SMPC
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# Coastal Area Map

Westport, CT



**Legend**

 Coastal Area

GIS Data obtained from CT DEEP.





In the on-line survey, participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement:

**Westport is doing enough to prepare for possible sea level rise.**

Strongly agree	4%
Agree	21%
Not sure	28%
Disagree	36%
Strongly disagree	11%

### 6.3. Evaluate The Implications Of Sea Level Rise

Sea level rise is a scenario which is unprecedented in recent history and for which there is little public policy guidance. The key issue Westport needs to consider is what the implications will be as sea level rise happens.

Since Westport is a coastal community, sea level rise will affect many properties in town, both directly and indirectly. How to respond to the issues of sea level rise depends, in part, on the magnitude of the increase or the probability that the sea will rise by a given magnitude. The graphics on the facing page outline some scenarios of sea level rise (and potential storm surge) so that the implications can be discussed.

In the on-line survey, 47 percent of participants did not agree that Westport is doing enough to prepare for possible sea level rise. The policy approaches may differ for public facilities and private properties:

- **Public Facilities** – Westport may wish to consider armoring key facilities (such as the Water Pollution Control Facility) and adapting other facilities over time (such as Longshore and Compo Beach).
- **Private Properties** – Westport should continue to promote and encourage property owners to elevate structures above the minimum FEMA requirements in order to extend the useful life of habitable structures.

A. SEA LEVEL RISE	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to monitor information on local sea level rise.	Town	
2. Evaluate how to best adapt public facilities for the implications of sea level rise to best balance public health, safety, and welfare. (also see Section 11.3)	Town	PW
3. Evaluate how private property owners might best prepare for the implications of local sea level rise and adapt over time.	Town	CC
<i>Code legend is on inside back cover</i>		

House Elevated To Flood Height



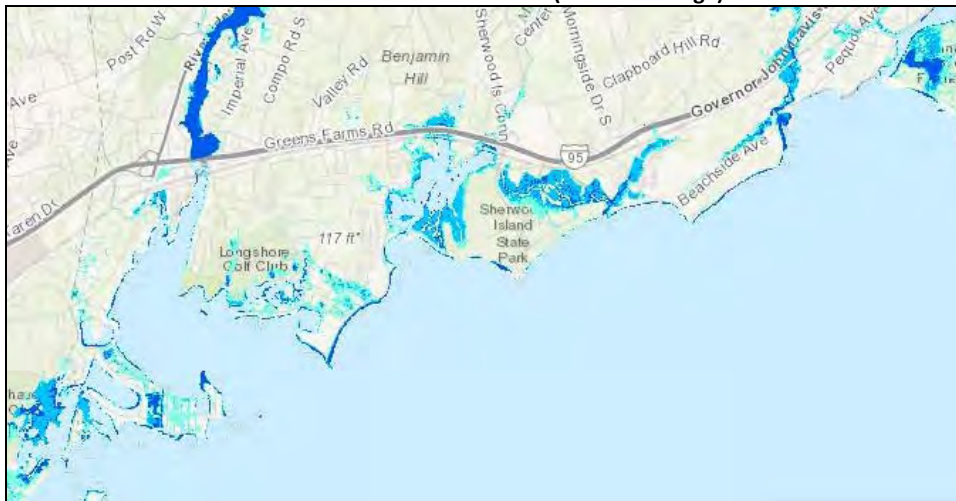
Rising Water At Post Road Bridge



**2020 – Category 2 Storm Surge**



**2080 – Medium Sea Level Rise (No Storm Surge)**



**2080 – Medium Sea Level Rise / Category 2 Storm Surge**



All imagery from [www.coastalresilience.org](http://www.coastalresilience.org)

**Environmental Remediation**

There has been some hesitancy by the Army Corps of Engineers to dredge the Saugatuck River since doing so might disturb sediments in the river that contain pollutants from years of upstream activities. In addition, drainage from I-95 and the Mero-North railroad have contributed to this situation.

However, the fact that pollutants may be in the sediments should not be a reason to delay moving forward with dredging and remediating the pollution that will otherwise remain there for years to come.

The sediments should be treated appropriately to remove pollutants and any other associated issues (ocean dumping, dewatering for upland disposal, lack of land area for staging, etc.) should be dealt with but the removal of the sediments should occur.

To reduce pollution from I-95 and the Metro-North railroad, scuppers should be placed on both bridges to divert the runoff to land where it can be effectively treated before being discharged to the river.

**6.4. Dredge The Saugatuck River**

Decades of development in the Saugatuck River watershed has caused significant sediment accumulation in the river segment below Canal Street in Westport. Where once the river supported maritime trade from Saugatuck to Westport Center, there are now times when portions of the river are no longer navigable.

A dredging project by the Army Corps of Engineers from Long Island Sound to the Post Road bridge (Route 1) has been under discussion for many years. Delays have occurred while permitting and funding are being finalized.

The Saugatuck River is a significant community asset and this asset value could be enhanced if it supported maritime traffic and recreational boating. Westport should continue to seek the necessary approvals and funding to complete this project.

A. SAUGATUCK RIVER	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to encourage the Army Corps of Engineers to dredge the Saugatuck River channel to Canal Street (or the Route 1 bridge).	Town	HC/HM
<i>Code legend is on inside back cover</i>		

Saugatuck Waterfront



Michael Cammeyer





**Coastal Management Act**

The Coastal Area Management Act states:

“The coastal area is rich in a variety of natural, economic, recreational, cultural and aesthetic resources, but the full realization of their value can be achieved only by encouraging further development in suitable areas and by protecting those areas unsuited to development”.

The first goal of the act is:

“To insure that the development, preservation or use of the land and water resources of the coastal area proceeds in a manner consistent with the capability of the land and water resources to support development, preservation or use without significantly disrupting either the natural environment or sound economic growth.”

**6.6. Manage Development Activities In Coastal Areas**

The Coastal Area Management Act, established in 1979 as part of the Connecticut General Statutes, was created to protect Long Island Sound and encourage water dependent uses (see sidebar). Westport’s zoning regulations follow the Coastal Management Act guidelines in the designated coastal area.

In terms of erosion potential from wave action and flooding, the Plan recommends that new projects be required to provide non-structural solutions in the coastal area as opposed to groins, seawalls, revetments, etc. A comprehensive study should be undertaken in concert with state and federal agencies to recommend specific strategies for effective erosion abatement.

<b>A. COASTAL DEVELOPMENT</b>		<b>Leader</b>	<b>Partners</b>
1.	Limit intensification or expansion of development in coastal areas where it is not consistent with current environmental standards or coastal area flood safety standards.	PZC	
2.	Minimize the amount and intensity of development in coastal “V” flood zones.	PZC	
3.	Eliminate new non-water dependent development from FEMA-designated coastal high hazard “V” flood zones.	PZC	
4.	For structures in the “V” flood zones destroyed by storms, only allow new structures that meet current “V” zone construction standards.	PZC	
5.	Promote non-structural activities in the coastal area as opposed to groins, seawalls, revetments, etc.	PZC	
		<i>Code legend is on inside back cover</i>	

# PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES

# 7

## 7.1. Overview

One of the themes which has run through Westport Plans for many years has been the desire to protect the natural environment and preserve the overall character of the community. This Plan is no different.

Even though participants in the on-line survey generally agreed that Westport was doing a good job protecting natural resources and the environment, these efforts must continue. Westport must be vigilant and responsive in terms of protecting these important components of environmental health and community character. Westport should continue efforts to protect its natural resources in recognition of the contribution that a diversity of plants and wildlife, healthy water resources, and healthy air quality, brings to the community



Protecting natural resources will help make Westport a more sustainable community by preserving and conserving resources important to environmental health.

### Goal

Protect natural resources and preserve and enhance the quality of the environment in Westport.

Tidal Wetland



Inland Wetland



## Water Quality Protection

In addition to the Town, other organizations that are concerned about water quality include:

- Saugatuck River Watershed Partnership.
- Saugatuck River Watershed Association.
- Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.
- Westport / Weston Health District.
- Aspetuck Land Trust.
- Earthplace.
- Harbor Watch.

## Water Quantity

Water quantity is also an important consideration. Westport and other communities in lower Fairfield County have experienced water shortages at times and climate models suggest this will also be an important consideration in the future

## 7.2. Protect Water Resources and Water Quality

Protection and improvement of water quality is the most important natural resource protection priority for Westport today. Rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, wetlands, tidal marshes, vernal pools and aquifers contribute enormously to the overall health and quality of life in Westport, and stormwater pollution poses one of the greatest threats to this invaluable resource.

Stormwater runoff results from rain water that runs off impervious surfaces, such as rooftops, paved streets, parking lots and saturated ground, transporting contaminants such as motor oil, antifreeze, pesticides, fertilizers and sediment (and occasionally other nutrients or pathogens from septic systems) as it flows into drainage pipes until it is released, untreated, into local waterbodies. Runoff from the Interstate 95 Bridge directly into the Saugatuck River is a good example of how water quality can be negatively affected.

Through the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) general permit, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) requires the Town of Westport to regulate the discharge of stormwater. This permit requires significant changes in how Westport addresses stormwater runoff.

In order to comply with State stormwater mandates, the Town of Westport's Land Use departments should pursue the coordinated review and oversight of projects involving land disturbance to guide applicants on MS4 permit requirements including, but not limited to the integration of low impact development (LID) and MS4 best management practices. Public education and outreach is one of six minimum control measures that should also become the focus of Westport's Land Use Departments. This will engage the public to assist in compliance with both state and federal stormwater management mandates.

The map on the facing page identifies the "hydrologic soil classification" of different soils in Westport. Soils which are better draining are more conducive to infiltration. Soils which are less well-draining may signal areas where stormwater runoff on individual properties may have a greater impact on neighboring properties and flooding of downstream areas since the water does not percolate into the ground and becomes surface flow.

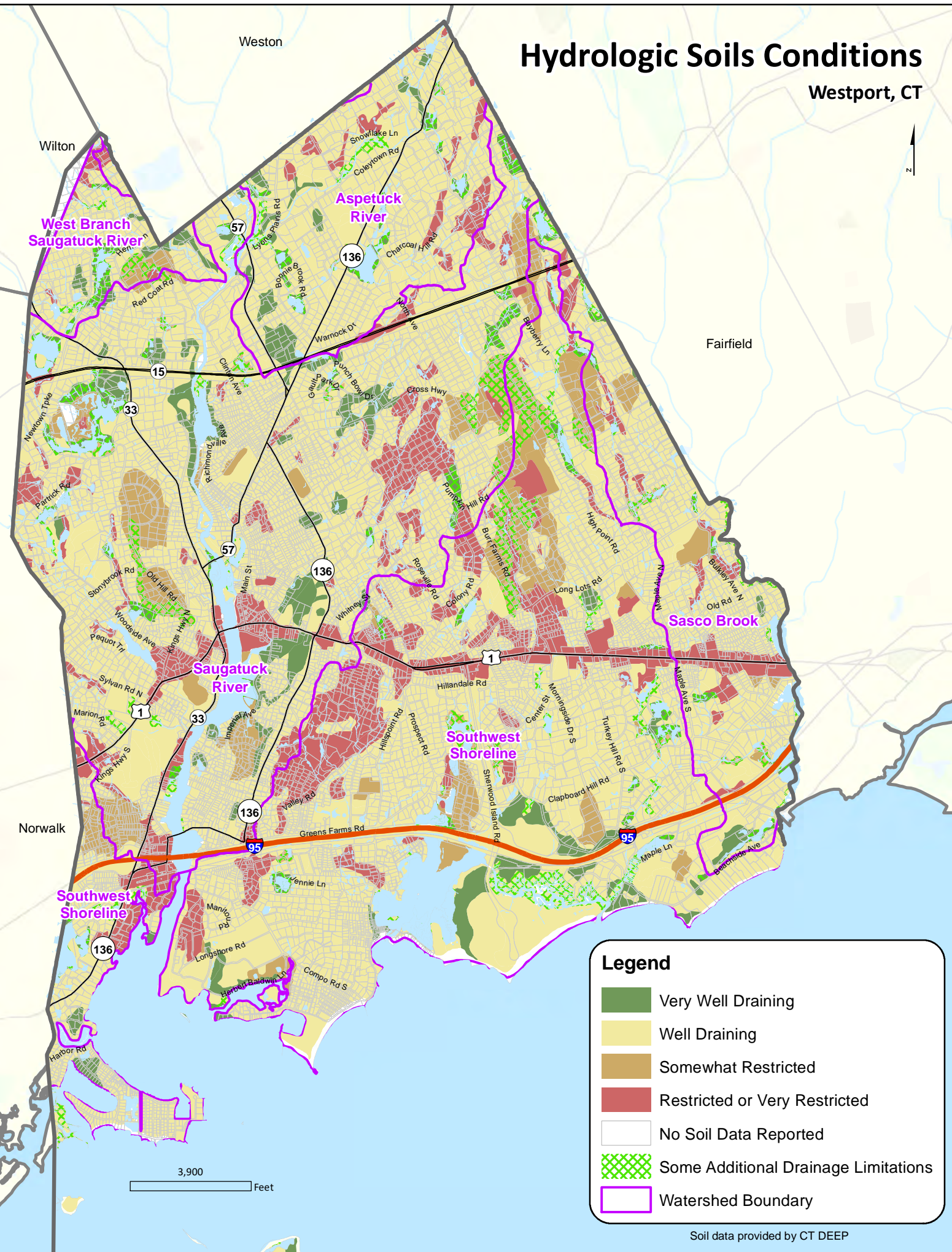
**Water Quality Investigation**





# Hydrologic Soils Conditions

Westport, CT



**Legend**

- Very Well Draining
- Well Draining
- Somewhat Restricted
- Restricted or Very Restricted
- No Soil Data Reported
- Some Additional Drainage Limitations
- Watershed Boundary

Soil data provided by CT DEEP

**Water Quality Protection**

Some of the most significant impacts to water quality come from the cumulative effects of what sometimes seem to be insignificant activities:

- Application of pesticides and fertilizers.
- Poorly maintained or failing septic systems.
- Use of road salt and other de-icing solutions.

Some of Westport’s watercourses have high levels of nutrients and bacteria (indicative of sewage pollution). This contributes to low dissolved oxygen levels in these watercourses and in Long Island Sound, compromising habitat for critical species. To help improve the health of the watersheds and the Sound, Westport and surrounding communities should continue to quantify and reduce pollution inputs within these watersheds.

Westport should continue to seek ways to minimize or discourage these types of actions that affect local water quality. Since Westport is at the lower end of regional watersheds (and local pollution may also be coming from upstream activities), Westport should try to discourage these types of actions on a regional basis also.

A. WATER QUALITY	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to protect water resources and water quality.	CC	WWHD APA
<input type="checkbox"/> a. Establish measureable goals for water quality.	CC	
<input type="checkbox"/> b. Revisit the need for Section 31-12 and Section 38 of the Zoning Regulations now that Aquifer Protection Areas have been established.	PZC	CC
<input type="checkbox"/> c. Establish locations to measure the quality of water coming into Westport from upstream areas.	CC	WWHD
2. Seek ways to get property owners to take responsibility for drainage on their own parcel.	CC	PZC WWHD
3. Seek to reduce and/or control erosion and sedimentation from all sources (construction, winter sanding, etc.).	PZC	
4. Promote the use of natural fertilizers and integrated pest management strategies to reduce water pollution.	CC	WWHD AWC
<input type="checkbox"/> a. Consider the need for an ordinance to regulate the use of pesticides and fertilizers.	Town	
5. Educate the community about the importance of protecting water resources and water quality.	CC	WWHD AWC
		<i>Code legend is on inside back cover</i>

**Low Impact Development**

Low-impact development (LID) is a term used to describe an approach to managing stormwater runoff. LID uses small-scale controls (like bio-retention basins, for example) to mimic the pre-development stormwater characteristics of a given area through infiltrating, filtering, storing, evaporating, and detaining runoff close to where the raindrop falls.

**A Landscaped Island Used to Detain, Cleanse And Infiltrate Stormwater**



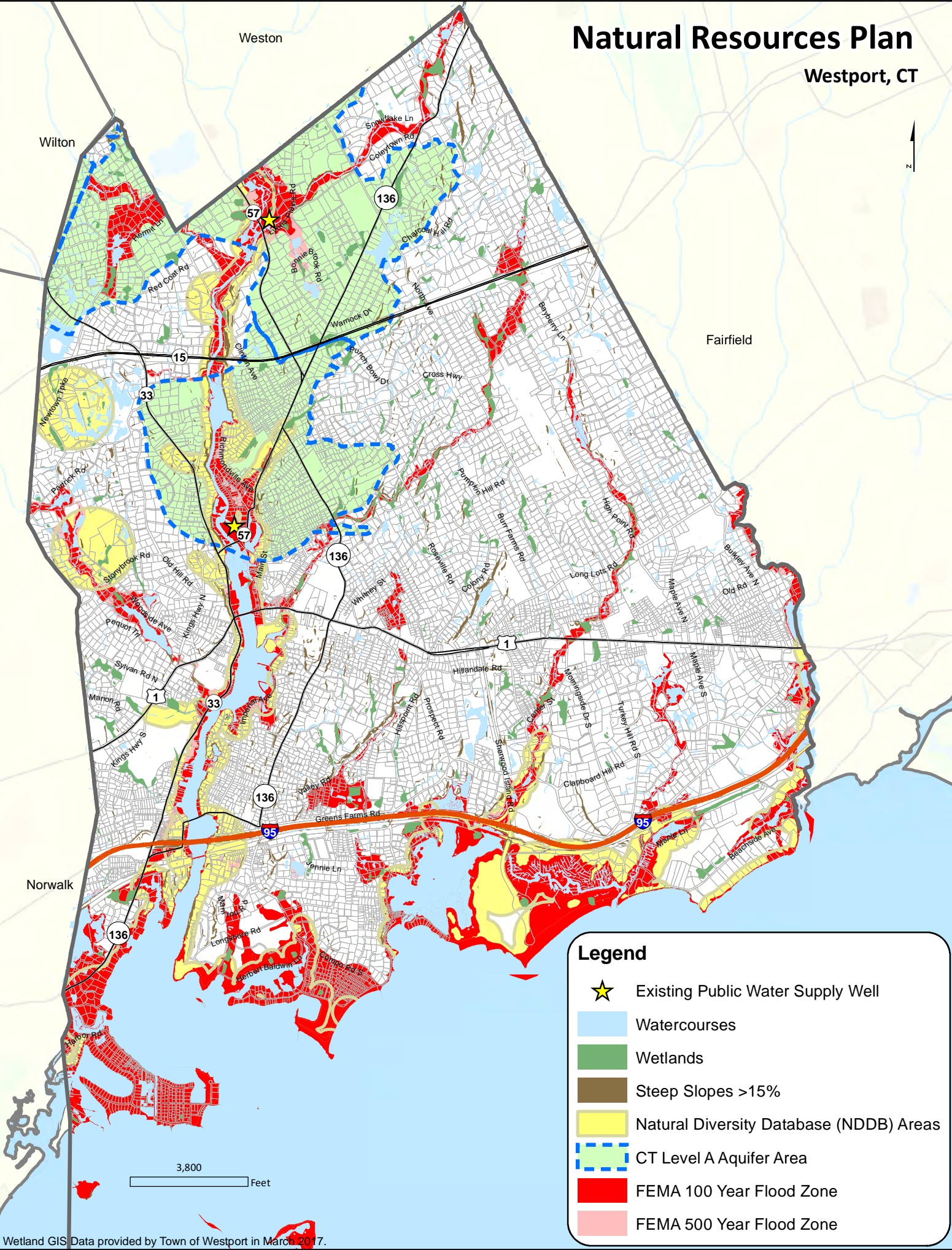
**A Rain Garden On A Residential Property For Infiltrating Stormwater**





# Natural Resources Plan

Westport, CT



### Legend

- ★ Existing Public Water Supply Well
- Watercourses
- Wetlands
- Steep Slopes >15%
- Natural Diversity Database (NDDB) Areas
- CT Level A Aquifer Area
- FEMA 100 Year Flood Zone
- FEMA 500 Year Flood Zone

Wetland GIS Data provided by Town of Westport in March 2017.



### 7.3. Protect Other Important Natural Resources

Natural resources in Westport should continue to be preserved and conserved due to their contribution to environmental health and community character. In the on-line survey, approximately 63 percent of participants agreed that Westport is doing a good job protecting natural resources and the environment.

It is important to note that preservation of open space (discussed in Chapter 5) also helps protect natural resources. These areas provide habitat for native animals and migratory birds, help recharge local aquifers, help protect water quality, and provide other environmental benefits.

In the on-line survey, participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement:

***Westport is doing a good job protecting natural resources and the environment.***

Strongly agree	10%
Agree	53%
Not sure	8%
Disagree	23%
Strongly disagree	6%

#### Resources For Preservation

*Resources so important to environmental quality or community character that alterations to these areas should be avoided to the extent feasible.*

- Watercourses / waterbodies
- Inland wetlands
- Tidal wetlands
- Very steep slopes (>25 percent)
- Inland "100-year" floodplain

#### Resources For Conservation

*Resources where the overall environmental function or value could be conserved while activities occur within these areas in an environmentally sensitive way.*

- Identified wellhead recharge areas
- Identified aquifers areas
- Areas of high groundwater availability
- Inland "500-year" floodplain
- Coastal floodplain areas
- Natural Diversity Database areas of rare, endangered, and threatened species and areas of unique features

A. NATURAL RESOURCES	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to <b><i>preserve</i></b> important natural resources.	PZC Town	CC
2. Continue to <b><i>conserve</i></b> other natural resources.	PZC Town	CC
3. Continue Westport's participation in the Community Rating System (CRS) flood insurance program.	Town	PZC
4. Continue to participate in the Saugatuck River Watershed Association and the Saugatuck River Watershed Partnership.	Town	PZC CC
5. Protect local aquifers from diversion of drinking water to commercial entities.	Town	PZC
6. Expand working relationships with Earthplace and the Aspetuck Land Trust.	Town	
7. Encourage preservation of diverse habitats and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discourage or prevent non-native species, and</li> <li>• Seek to remove invasive species.</li> </ul>	Town	PZC CC
8. Educate the community about protection and conservation of natural resources	CC	ALT
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