

WEST PARISH MEETING HOUSE HISTORIC SITE
&
STATE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRESERVE



A PRESERVATION PLAN AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

Prepared for the
Westport Historic District Commission

Prepared by
Landscape Elements LLC
with

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What is a cultural landscape?

“Cultural landscapes provide a sense of place and identity; they map our relationship with the land over time; and they are part of our national heritage and each other’s lives.”

Quote from The Cultural Landscape Foundation website: www.tclf.org

The purpose of this project is to document the relationship of this site over time as a part of the history of the Town of Westport, Connecticut. This documentation analyzes the landscape, history and cultural significance of the site and provides recommendations for the appropriate treatments and enhancements in the form of a preservation plan. The preservation plan establishes the site’s identity and sense of place as a State Archaeological Preserve and cultural landscape.

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

❖ Introduction/ Background

Historic significance of this cultural landscape

- Pre-historic indigenous habitation
- Colonial settlement – Green’s Farms and location of second West Parish Meeting House
- Revolutionary War event - Meeting house burned in July 1779 by British General William Tryon’s troops.

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SECTION 2 – HISTORY, ANALYSIS & EVALUATION

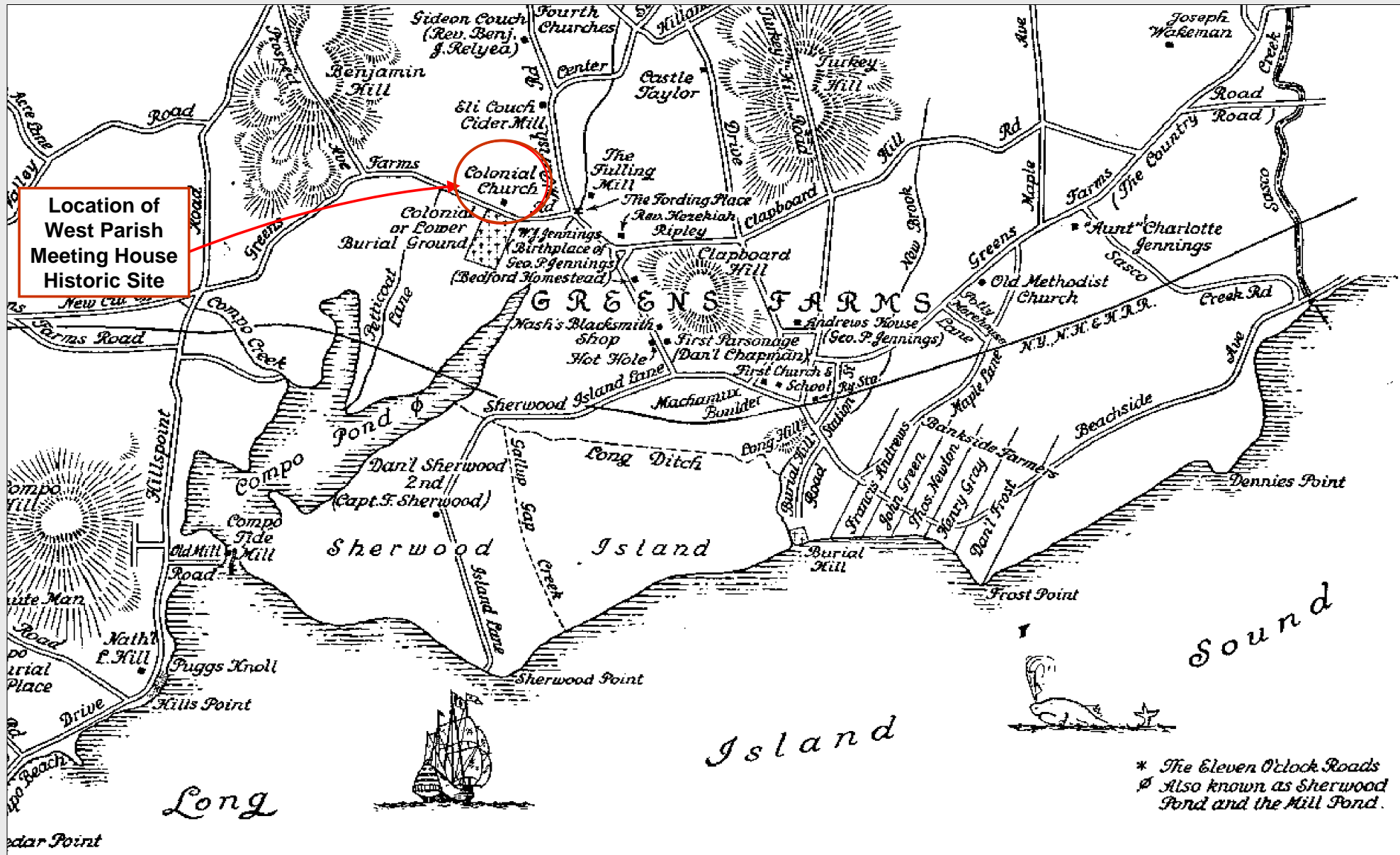
- ❖ History & Archaeology
- ❖ Existing Conditions
- ❖ Analysis & Evaluation

Site History & Archaeology

- Indigenous People – Paugussett/Pootatuck group with sub-groups
- Colonial settlement – Bankside settlers and Green's Farms
- Revolutionary War – General William Tryon's troops burn the meeting house, fifteen houses and eleven barns in the West Parish
- The Early Republic – Westport was incorporated as a separate town in 1835
- The Meeting House – this was the site of the second West Parish Meeting House
- The possible Schoolhouse – education was of primary importance in Colonial settlements.

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Detail of 1933 interpretive map of Green's Farms area by George P. Jennings.

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Images of colonial meeting houses



SECTION 2

❖ History & Archaeology

❖ Existing Conditions

❖ Analysis & Evaluation

A. 1911 Illustration of West Parish Meeting house

B. Interior layout of similar meeting house, Alna, Maine

C. Meeting house with belfry, Barnstable, Massachusetts

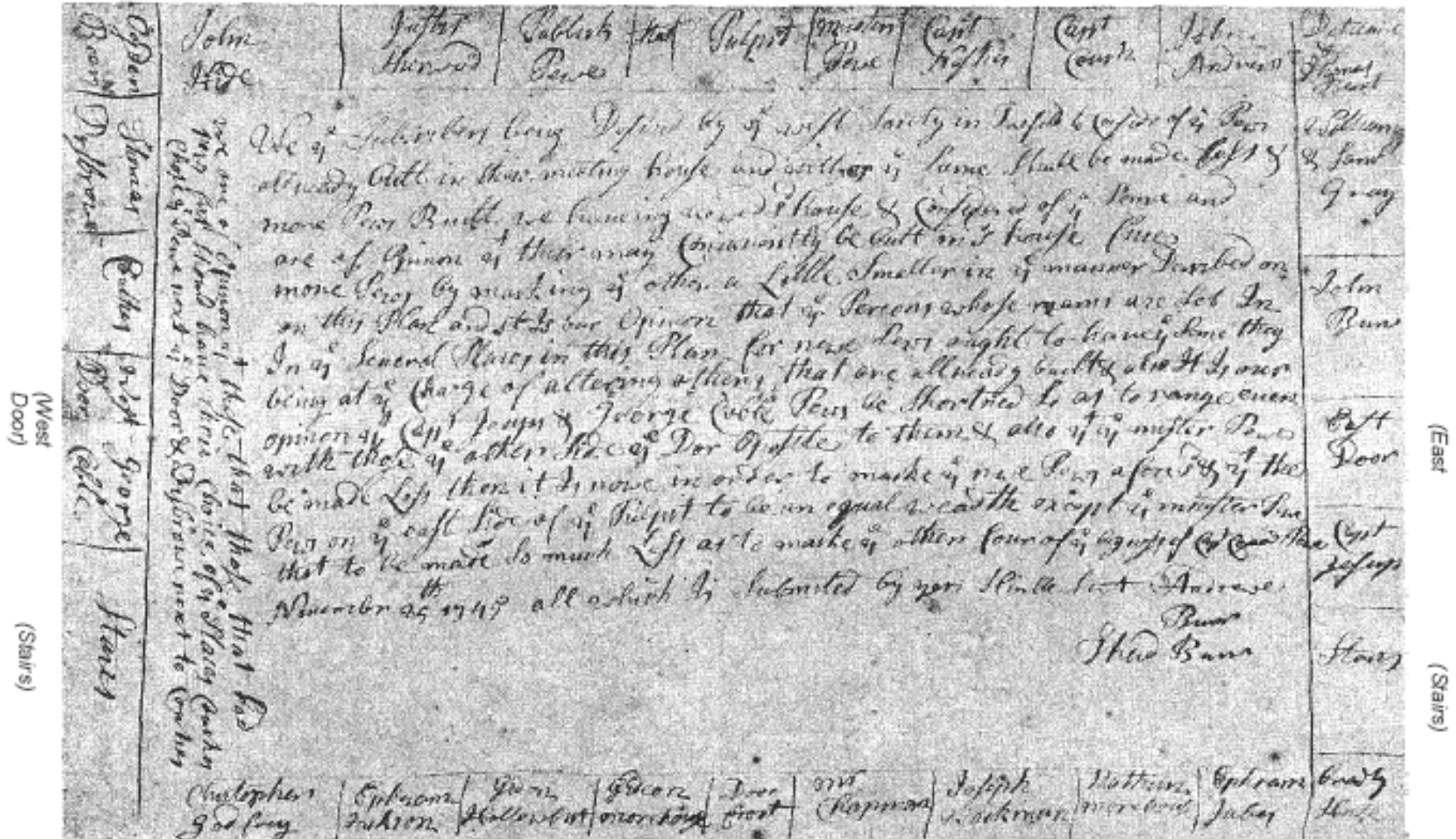
D. Exterior of similar meeting house structure, Alna, Maine



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(Pulpit)



(Door Front)

Pew plan of second West Parish Meeting House, circa 1741.

Plan does not show second floor mezzanine which was part of original structure

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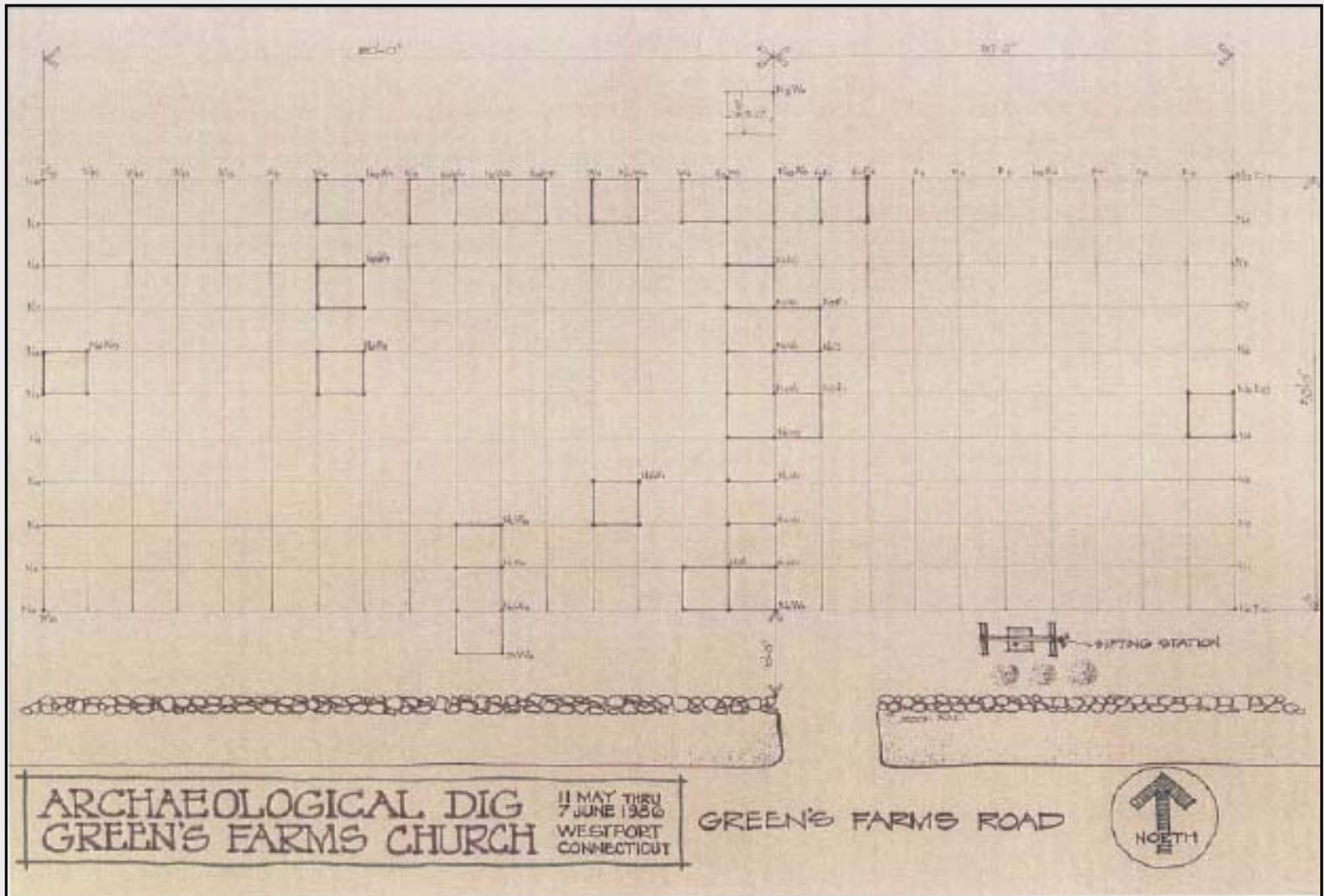
Site History & Archaeology

- Archaeology
 - ✓ 1986 – Archaeological survey and excavation completed by Lucinda McWeeney, Ph.D. in her tenure as town Municipal Historian
 - ✓ 2008 – Proposed development projects activate initiatives to preserve the site
 - ✓ 2009 – Archaeological study completed to locate the original excavation grid of the 1986 survey through the State Office of Archaeology
 - ✓ September – October 2009 – HDC nomination of site as State Archaeological Preserve is prepared and submitted
 - ✓ February 3, 2010 – CT Historic Preservation Council and State Archaeologist approve designation of site as State Archaeological Preserve

SECTION 2

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1986 plan showing archaeological test pits excavated by Lucinda McWeeney, Ph.D.

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Existing Conditions



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Existing Conditions

▪ Land Use & Vegetation

- ✓ 5.9-acre site
- ✓ Two-thirds of the site is wetland
- ✓ Invasive plant species are present throughout the site
- ✓ Four soil types on the site
- ✓ Vegetation areas include: wetland, wet meadow, wetland edge, upland meadow, forested upland, and arboreal overstory along road
- ✓ Highest point on the site among boulder outcrops at northeast corner
- ✓ No current active community use at the site.
- ✓ Town designated area for storage of debris after storms and as emergency staging area

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Existing Conditions

▪ Wildlife Habitats

- ✓ Species tolerant of human disturbance and interaction along Green's Farms Road
- ✓ Migratory birds will stop over for about 12 hours due to site proximity to coast
- ✓ Diversity of ecosystems provides habitats for diverse wildlife populations
- ✓ Wetland functions and values include valuable wildlife habitat and forage for mammals, birds, amphibians and insects



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Existing Conditions

- Structures & Site Features
 - ✓ Raised knoll in southern portion supports location of meeting house artifacts
 - ✓ Stone walls at various locations along property boundary and along Green's Farms Road
- Circulation
 - ✓ Pedestrian access at opening in stone wall opposite Lower Green's Farms Colonial Burying Ground
 - ✓ Vehicular access from east property line



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LEGEND – Existing Conditions

1. Site of the Historic West Parish Meeting House
2. Probable site of Colonial schoolhouse
3. Existing pedestrian opening in stone wall
4. Raised area/knoll
5. Area of boulder outcrops
6. Existing wetland
7. High point



Existing tree



Existing tree to be removed



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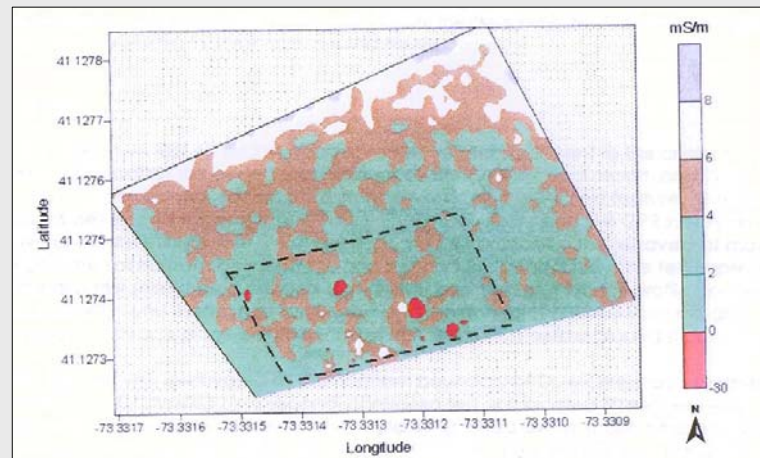


Analysis & Evaluation

- Association with a significant historic event – Revolutionary War burning of meeting house
- Association with significant historic person – British General William Tryon
- Association with adjacent colonial burying ground
- State Archaeological Preserve status
- Eligible for Nomination to National Register of Historic Places
- Regulated Local Historic Property

SECTION 2

- ❖ Site History & Archaeology
- ❖ Existing Conditions
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Graph showing data from electromagnetic induction survey.
The black dashed rectangle depicts the approximate location of the meeting house within a larger four-sided grid.

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SECTION 3 – PRESERVATION TREATMENT PLAN

- ❖ Treatment Guidelines
- ❖ Treatment Plan/Concept Design
- ❖ Record of Treatment

Treatment Guidelines

Four treatment types defined in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (1995)

- **Preservation** – apply measures necessary to sustain existing forms, integrity and material of historic property. This is the most appropriate treatment type for this site.
- **Rehabilitation** – make possible a compatible use for the property through repair, alterations and additions while preserving historic integrity
- **Restoration** - accurately restore or depict form, features and character of the property focusing on a particular time period.
- **Reconstruction** - depict, through new construction, the forms, features and detailing of non-surviving site, landscape or building elements focusing on a particular time period.

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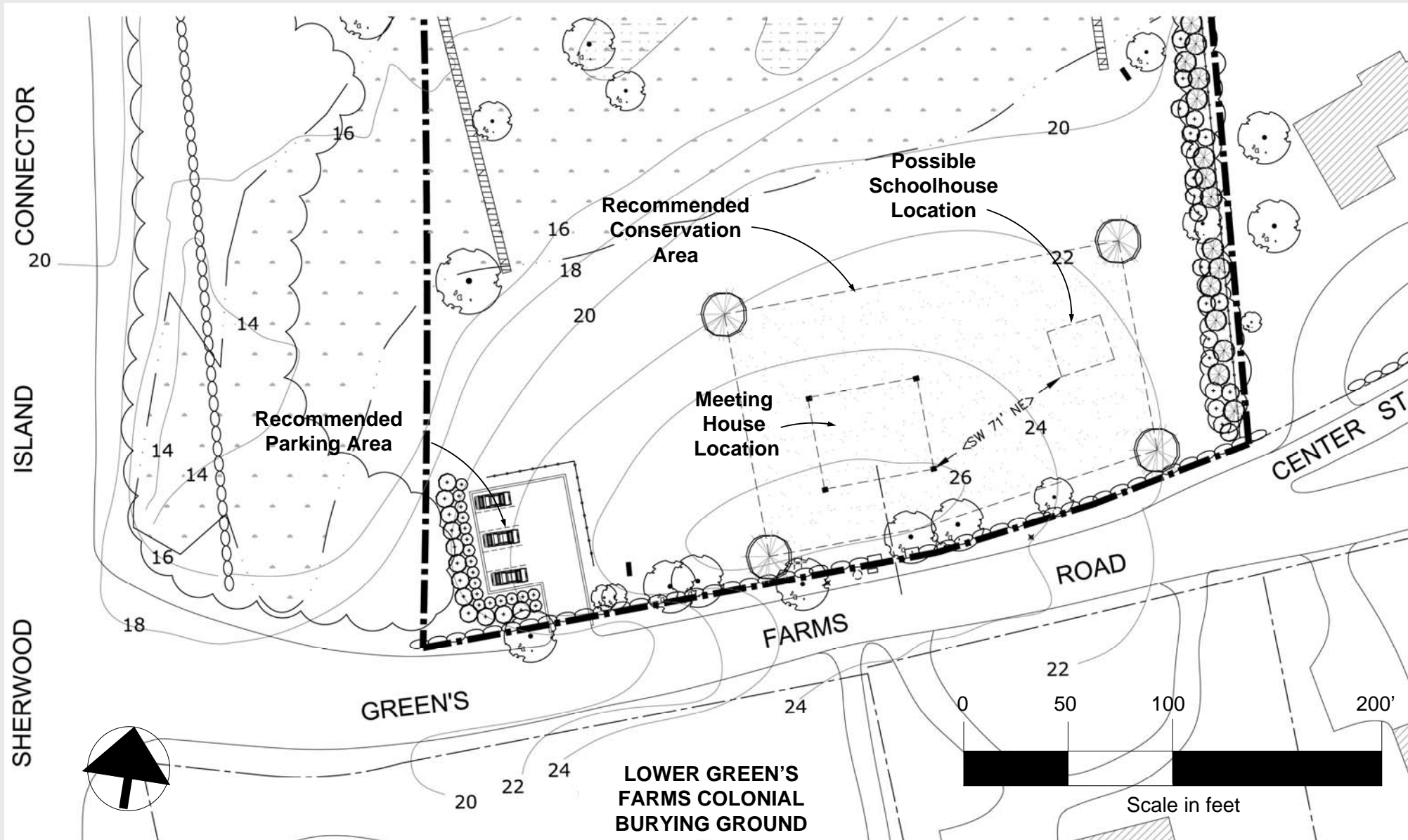
Treatment Guidelines

Primary goals in the preservation of this site

- **Preserve archaeological resources**
- **Minimize impacts** to archaeological and natural resources
- Provide **improved site access** to the historic features and to the natural resource features
- **Provide interpretive signage** which may be used as an educational resource for the community
- **Manage invasive plants** and site mowing
- Provide well-defined **community access and use**
- Maintain the site using **methods that minimally disturb subsurface archaeological resources.**

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Treatment Plan showing southern section of the project site. Source: AutoCAD drawing from composite plan maps provided by Town of Westport.

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Treatment Plan/Concept Design

Goals of the Treatment Plan/Concept Design

- **Maintain physical integrity** of the cultural landscape by not impacting existing archaeological resources
- **Address biotic cultural resources** of plant and animal communities through management of invasive species
- **Provide limited trail access** within the site so that impacts to natural resources and historic resources are minimized
- Utilize wetland boardwalks to **minimize impacts to fragile ecosystems**
- **Add buffer plantings and fencing** along eastern property line for neighborhood privacy and limiting vehicular access to site

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SECTION 3

❖ Treatment Guidelines

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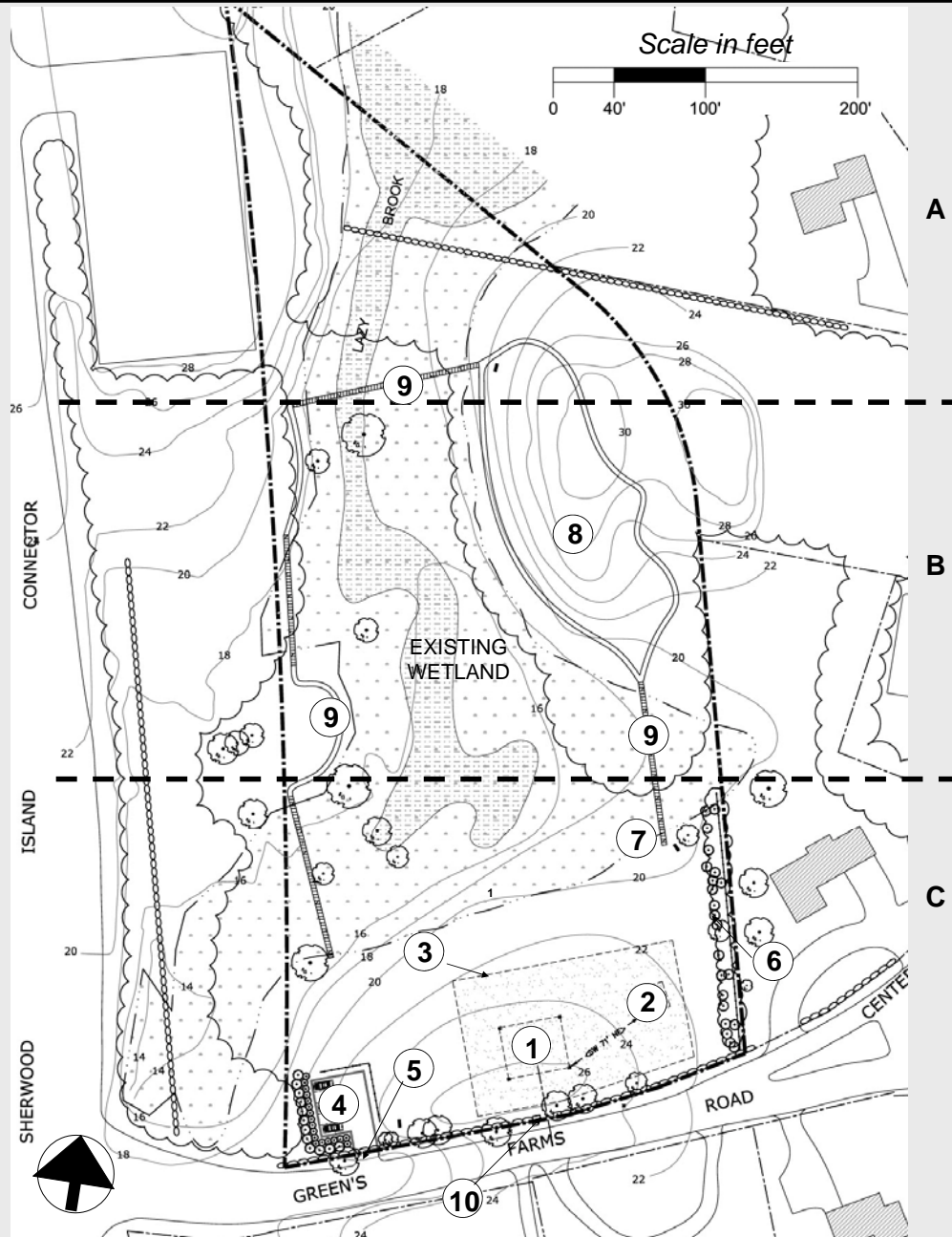
Treatment Plan/Concept Design

Goals of the Treatment Plan/Concept Design (cont)

- **Balance natural and cultural resource values**
- **Maintain and restore elements that have ethnographic value** – i.e. Native American artifacts, meeting house artifacts and stone walls.
- **Provide interpretive signage** as well as directional signage
- Meet **guidelines for LEED site sustainability criteria** and **Sustainable Sites** principles
- Provide a **low maintenance design compatible with a management plan**

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MAP SECTION KEY

A – Northern third of site

A central wetland area is contained by uplands on west and east. An existing stone wall of unknown period runs east-west. Large boulder outcrops on eastern knoll provides views to the west. A State of Connecticut DOT commuter parking lot abuts the northwest side.

B – Central third of site

This section is largely wetland, with fringe areas being seasonally wet. The highest point on the project site is situated in the northeastern portion of this section at elevation 30 feet above sea level. This area contains a large number of boulders and rock outcroppings.

C – Southern third of site

This southern third of the property is almost 90% dry meadow vegetation and upland soils. This section is largely flat with a raised knoll within the 22-foot contour line. The significant historic features lie within this portion of the site. The most direct access to the project site is via Green's Farms Road.

MAP LEGEND

1. Site of the Historic West Parish Meeting House
2. Site of possible Colonial schoolhouse
3. Proposed archaeological Conservation Area
4. Proposed parking area
5. Proposed vehicular entrance
6. Proposed vegetative buffer and fence
7. Proposed entrance to trails
8. Northeastern knoll with proposed trails and overlook
9. Proposed wetland crossing
10. Existing pedestrian entrance at stone wall

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Concept view showing proposed treatment denoting the meeting house location within the tall grass “Conservation Area” through the placement of 26-foot tall posts representing the four corners of the meeting house structure

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Concept view showing proposed buffer plantings (proposed fence in background behind vegetation) to screen and secure the eastern property line.

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Concept view showing proposed entrance to wetland boardwalk trail with suggested interpretive sign at entrance.

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Record of Treatment

As part of the design implementation, a record of treatment should be maintained for each of the changes, adjustments and alterations that are made at the project site. A Record of Treatment will ensure that the preservation treatment plan is followed as improvements are made.

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- ❖ Treatment Guidelines
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RECORD OF TREATMENT FORM (This is a sample. Actual form will provide larger sections for notes)			
DATE:			
PERFORMED BY:			
<small>Instructions: Provide written description for landscape elements addressed and treatment performed for each item.</small>			
LANDSCAPE ELEMENT	TREATMENT PERFORMED	DATES OF WORK	COST
STONE WALLS			
WETLAND BOARDWALK			
INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE			
INTERPRETIVE POSTS FOR MEETING HOUSE			
TRAIL CLEARING; NEW TRAIL ROUTE INSTALLATION			
INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL/ DEAD TREE REMOVAL/ PRUNING			
NEW BUFFER PLANTINGS AND WETLAND RESTORATION PLANTINGS			
PERIMETER AND PARKING AREA FENCING			
PARKING AREA SURFACE			

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SECTION 4 – IMPLEMENTATION

- ❖ Overview & Phasing
- ❖ Permitting & Municipal Reviews
- ❖ Community Involvement
- ❖ Funding Resources

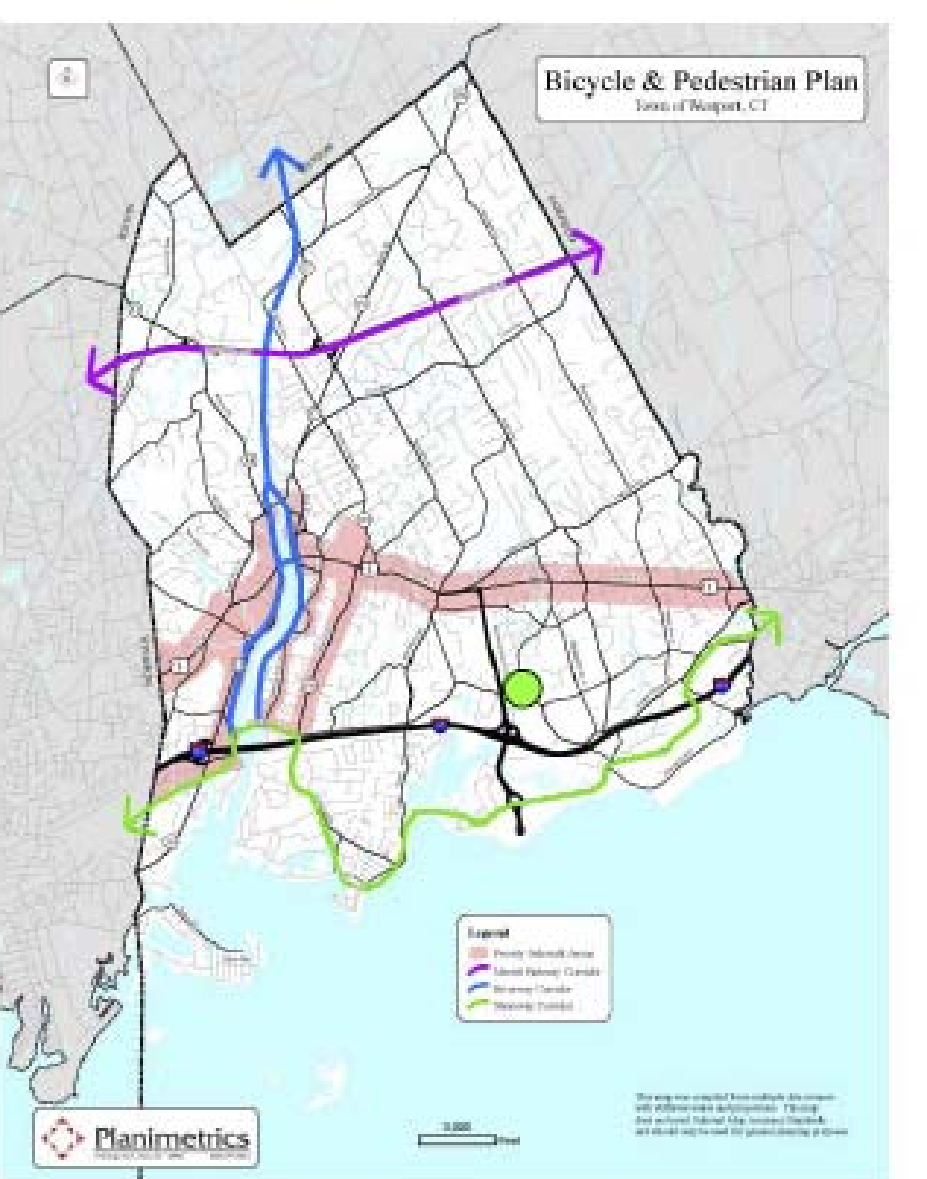
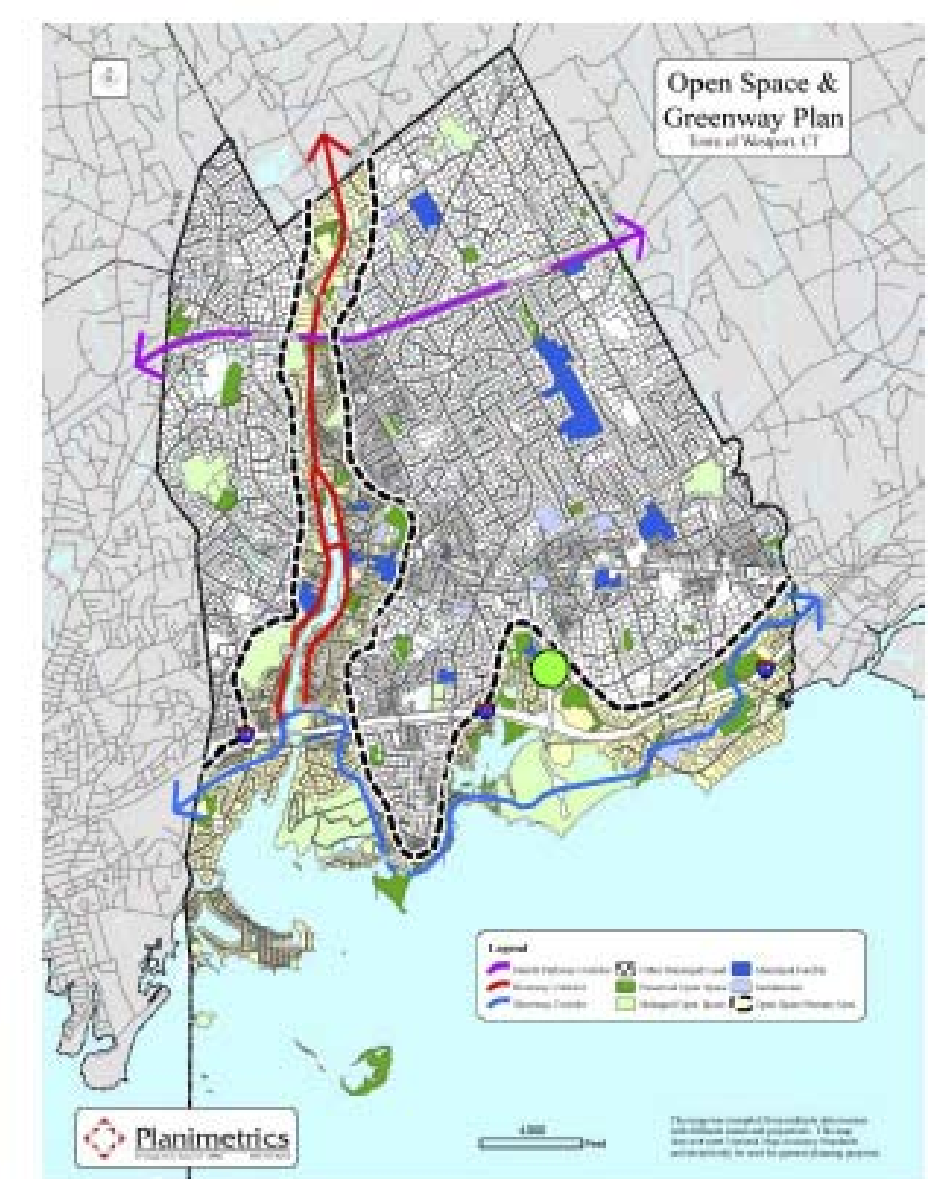
Implementation

Implementation of this project will require:

- More detailed design work
- State and local permitting reviews and approvals
 - ✓ wetlands – Conservation Department
 - ✓ traffic patterns – Police and Fire
- Fundraising initiatives and grant writing
- Community involvement – possible land trust assistance with maintenance and monitoring
- Phased implementation of work
- Coordination with other town planning initiatives

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Maps from the 2007 Westport Plan of Conservation and Development showing the Open Space & Greenway Path and the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan. The green circle on each map denotes the West Parish Meeting House Historic Site.

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SECTION 4

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Phased Implementation of Work

Design and preservation recommendations should be implemented based on the following criteria

- Treatments which provide immediate preservation of the archaeological resources
- Treatments which address the problem of invasive plant species
- Treatments that follow a logical sequence for construction
- Treatments that provide access and use of the southern portion of the site within the initial phases of implementation

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SUMMARY

PROJECT SUMMARY

This preservation plan and report is focused on providing the Westport HDC and the town with a guide that

- Examines and analyzes the history and resources of the project site.
- Recommends a treatment plan that provides a preservation approach following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties
- Recommends treatments that do not impact the archaeological integrity of the site
- Recommends treatments that meet sustainability criteria
- Provides a maintenance program that is sustainable in both short and long term management
- Provides an educational opportunity for the community through interpretive signage

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SUMMARY

PROJECT SUMMARY

The preservation plan addresses

- Natural resource issues of invasive plants
- Privacy concerns for abutting property owners
- Potential threats to the project site from possible development and proposed municipal uses
- Accessibility to the project site for pedestrians and vehicles
- Coordination with the Town of Westport Plan of Conservation and Development for open space and greenway connections
- Implementation and maintenance costs

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This project is an initiative of the Westport Historic District Commission (HDC) in conjunction with the Town of Westport, Connecticut. Funding was provided by the Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grants (HPTAG) program, a collaborative historic preservation granting program of the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, with funding from the Connecticut General Assembly, the Connecticut Humanities Council and the Commission on Culture and Tourism through the Community Investment Act. HPTAG supports efforts that help communities throughout the state plan for the preservation, restoration and rehabilitation of historic places.

Special assistance was provided by Westport Historic District Commission members Margaret Feczko, Chair; Elizabeth Wacker, Vice-Chair; Francis H. Henkels, and Grayson C. Braun; Carol Leahy CLG Coordinator and HDC Staff Administrator; Allen Raymond, Municipal Historian; and Alicia Mozian, Conservation Director. The contents and opinions contained herein do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the participating organizations, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Westport HDC, the Town of Westport or the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation.