CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE COMMUNITY CHARACTER

4

Overview

Maintaining and enhancing community character is a core value of the community and an important element of the Plan ...

Maintaining and enhancing community character is a core value of the community and an important element of the Plan. In the broadest sense, community character includes those features that contribute to the overall quality of life for residents by enhancing the quality of the overall physical environment.

Coastal Assets

Community Facilities

Vibrant Downtown

Small-Town Feel

BOS Vision Statement

As part of the review of this POCD, the Board of Selectmen reiterated their support for the overall vision statement located in the front of this POCD.

At the same time, the Board also indicated that the vision should be a "guide post" for the future conservation and development of Darien and not as a "stumbling block."

Maintain And Enhance Overall Character

Darien has a number of areas and resources that contribute to the character of the Town and enhance the overall quality of life. Darien will continue to undertake programs and projects which enhance community character and seek to prevent things that negatively affect character.

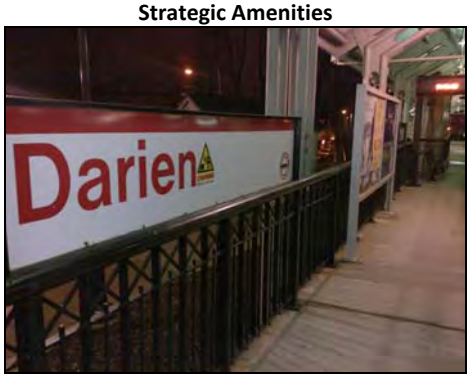
The "vision statement" from the Board of Selectmen indicates that "Darien continues to be primarily a New England style, single family dwelling community." This sentiment was echoed by others in the community as well. As interpreted and applied in the past, this does NOT mean an *exclusively* single-family dwelling character. However, it does mean that building design and scale which are harmonious with this vision statement will be more consistent with community objectives.

Residential Character

Residential Character

Coastal Amenities

Strategic Amenities



One of the things that can negatively affect the character of the Town and detract from the overall quality of life is properties that are not maintained or become dilapidated. While this is exceptionally rare in Darien, it has occurred when properties become bank-owned or the owner / occupants become unable or unwilling to maintain the property. These situations, if they occur, can have a significant impact on the properties around them.

The prevention of blight and the remediation of a blighted property is important to the general well-being of the community and should be addressed by enacting an ordinance that will enable the Town to address the issue directly.

Maintain And Enhance Overall Character		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue efforts to maintain and enhance community character.	Town	
2. Continue efforts to address issues or situation which may negatively affect community character.	Town	
Action Steps		
3. Undertake, stimulate and coordinate public and private actions for maintaining and improving the overall physical appearance of Darien.	Town	PZC ARB BC
4. Enact an ordinance that will enable the Town to address the issue of blight / property maintenance directly.	Town	

Scenic Character

Downtown Character

Manage Character Features

Preserve Scenic Features – Darien will consider adopting regulations to incorporate consideration of scenic features into local approvals. Darien should recognize and protect:

- scenic areas (such as the entire shoreline area),
- scenic roads, and
- scenic views.

Scenic View

Scenic View

Enhance Gateways – Gateways are entry points to a community and provide an opportunity to define to residents and visitors that they have entered a special place. The Darien Beautification Committee has been working on improving the appearance of gateways and visible areas in the community. Darien will continue efforts to identify and improve gateways. This may or may not include signage.

Address Walls and Fences– The regulatory approach to walls and fences in Darien may be reviewed. Even though the Planning and Zoning Commission limited fence and wall heights in front yards, some walls and fences are still very tall, some have been built within the public right-of-way, and many are contributing to "visual canyons" along major roadways.

Address Lighting – Darien will consider adopting regulations to address lighting (commercial, institutional, and residential). At the present time, there is no consolidated lighting section in the Zoning Regulations and the provisions are in numerous other sections (definitions, zones, signage, considerations, etc.).

Manage Trees – Darien understands the contribution that trees make to the overall character of the community. It is also understood that preservation of a tree canopy provides drainage benefits as well. There is a Darien Tree Conservancy which works to preserve and enhance the tree environment in the community. The Town also has a Tree Warden that oversees trees on public property. Darien will continue efforts to manage trees in the community.

Since trees are also a cause of electrical outages from storms and severe weather, Darien will continue to balance tree preservation and the planting of new trees with the desire for a reliable and resilient electrical system.

Historic Tree Inventory

Darien had a historic tree inventory conducted in 2001 and a number of significant trees were identified.

Refer to that inventory for a complete listing.

Manage Character Features		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Seek to maintain scenic views and scenic areas.	Town	PZC
2. Promote the establishment of community gateway features that contribute to community character.	BC	
3. Discourage or prevent clear cutting of trees.	Town	PZC RTM
4. Continue to protect historic trees.	Town	PZC
5. Work with utility companies to balance tree trimming and community character with electrical reliability.	Town	TW TC
Action Steps		
6. Undertake an inventory of the Town's scenic views so that steps can be taken to preserve them in the future.	*CC*	
7. Adopt regulations to consider scenic areas and resources as part of any land use application.	PZC	
8. Consider amending lighting provisions in the Zoning Regulations.	PZC	
9. Review the approach to retaining walls, stone walls and fences in front yards and public rights-of-way.	PZC	
10. Encourage the protection and restoration of old New England stone walls.	Town	HS
11. Strive to put all power lines underground in downtown Darien and the Noroton Heights business district.	Town	PW
12. Consider pursuing designation as a "Tree City USA."	Town	TC

National Historic Landmark

Stephen Mather Home (at the corner of Brookside Road and Stephen Mather Road) is recognized as a National Historic Landmark – the country's highest historic designation.

This property was the birthplace and long-time residence of Stephen Tyng Mather, founder and first director of the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior.

Town "Landmark" Buildings

- 241 Long Neck Point Road
- 249 Long Neck Point Road
- 70 Old King's Highway North
- 21 Tokeneke Road (Little Red Schoolhouse)

Town "Landmark" Trees

- 80 Nearwater Lane
- 25 Highfield Lane
- 22 Old King's Hwy. So.
- 41 St. Nicholas Road
- First Cong. Church

Protect Historic And Archeologic Resources

The historic resources in Darien contribute to the overall character of the community. Some of the most notable historic resources in Darien include the following (the numbers relate to the map on page 35):

National Historic Landmark	1.	Stephen Mather Homestead (Stephen Mather Road)
National Register of Historic Places	2.	Boston Post Road Historic District (26 structures on the Boston Post Road, Brookside Road, and Old Kings Highway North)
	3.	Former Darien Community Association House (274 Middlesex Road)
	4.	Pond-Weed House (2591 Post Road)
State Register of Historic Places	5.	Abram Clark House (1830 Post Road)
Properties on the National Register are also automatically listed on the State Register of Historic Places.	6.	Benjamin Weed House (79 Hollow Tree Ridge Road)
	7.	Old Post Road Farmhouse (87 Old Kings Highway South)

Information on a number of other historic buildings in Darien is available based upon a town-wide survey of approximately 600 buildings conducted in the late 1970s by the Junior League of Stamford-Norwalk. This document (the Natural and Architectural Preservation Survey) is available in the Planning and Zoning Office at Town Hall.

Preservation Programs

The most effective means of protecting historic resources is responsible ownership or sensitive stewardship. However, this cannot be legislated.

Although Darien has not established any local historic districts (as per CGS 7-147b) or village districts (as per CGS 8-2j) to date, it has created a local regulatory program to help protect local resources. Section 1051 of the Darien Zoning Regulations allows properties designated as "protected town landmarks" to be granted flexibility in terms of the standards incorporated in the Zoning Regulations provided the historic property is preserved. A list of identified Town landmarks (buildings and trees) is presented in the sidebar.

Darien has also adopted a demolition delay ordinance (Chapter 12 of the Code of Ordinances) in order to provide an opportunity to explore alternatives to demolition of historic structures.

Overall, Darien has a number of provisions in place to protect historic resources. Archeological resources are also worthy of protection and/or preservation to the extent they are located.

Protect Historic And Archeologic Resources		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to identify and protect historical and archeological resources.	HS	
2. Consider public-private partnerships to help protect and preserve important resources.	BOS	HS
3. Continue to promote sensitive ownership of historical and archeological resources.	HS	
4. Promote educational programs so that people are sensitive to the value of historic and archeological resources.	HS	
5. Continue to allow adaptive reuse of historic buildings when it will aid in the preservation of the historic structure and is appropriate given the location of the site, including using the "Protected Town Landmark" designation.	PZC	
6. Continue to oversee and monitor the care and maintenance of ancient burying grounds	HS	
Action Steps		
7. As appropriate, identify additional properties that are worthy of the "Protected Town Landmark" designation.	PZC	HS
8. Better publicize the Stephen Mather Home and encourage use of the property for educational purposes.	HS	

Mather Homestead

First Congregational Church

Continue To Promote Architectural Character

Architectural design influences the character of a community. Buildings consistent with local architectural styles enhance community character. Buildings that do not reflect the established scale and style of local architecture negatively affect community character.

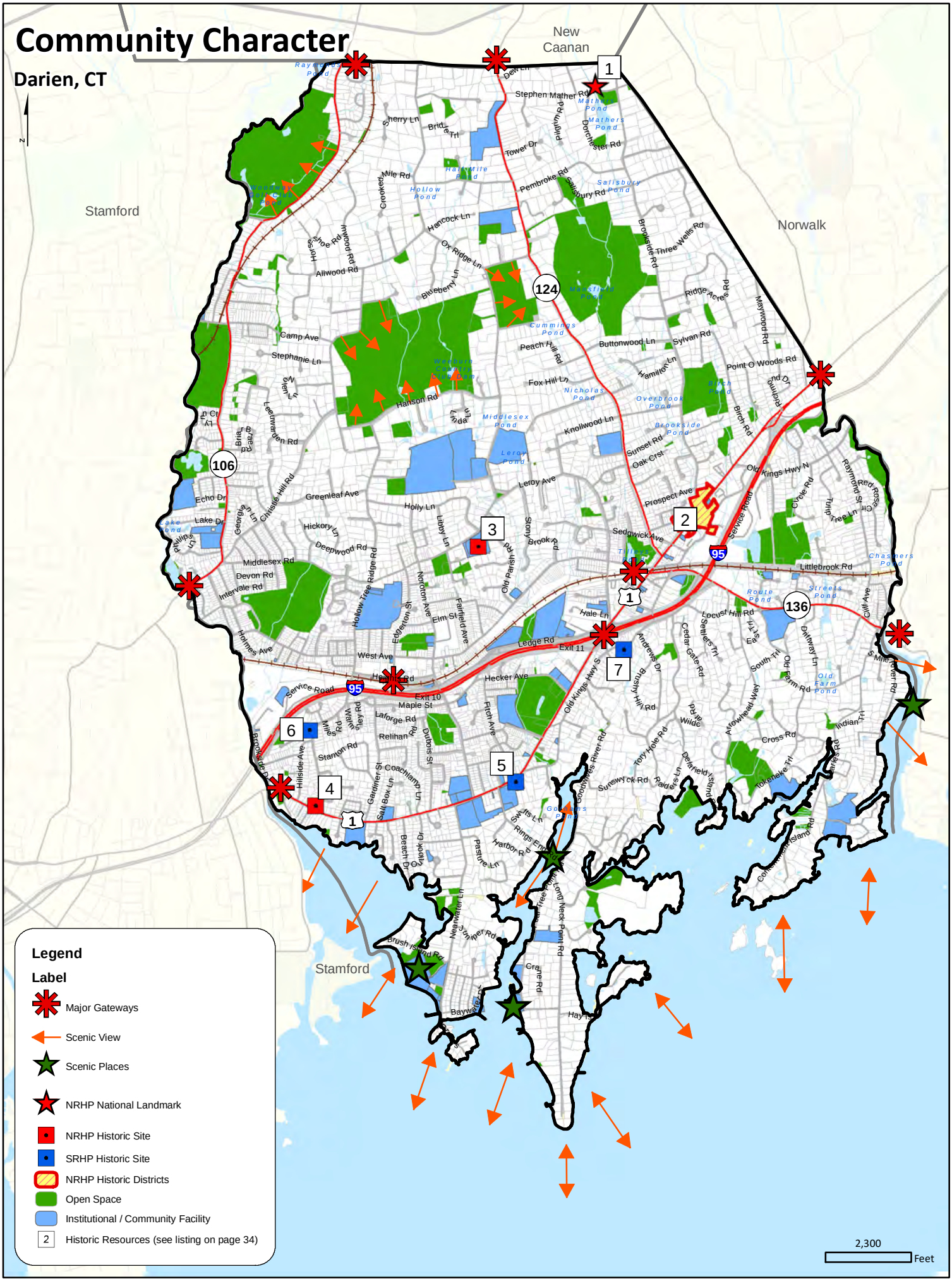
Darien recognizes this and has had an Architectural Review Board for some time. The Board reviews commercial developments and provides comments to the applicant and to the Commission. To aid in their work, they prepared "Commercial Design Guidelines" in 2009 to help applicants in the formative stages of project design.

Darien will maintain a design review process (for other than single-family residential development) to ensure that buildings and sites contribute to overall community character.

Continue To Promote Architectural Character		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to promote architectural character and community design as part of new development.	ARB	PZC
2. Encourage developments that contribute to, and enhance, a "sense of place" in Darien.	Town	
3. Maintain the Architectural Review Board to help enhance community character.	RTM	
4. Encourage a diversity in "sense of place" in order to promote the character of each area and the overall community.	ARB	
5. Promote the preservation and adaptive re-use of an existing building, when possible.	PZC	HS
Action Steps		
6. Consider extending design review to multi-family residential development, mixed uses, and institutional uses.	ARB	PZC
7. Review and update the Design Guidelines on a regular basis to ensure they properly reflect current design standards for Darien.	ARB	PZC

Community Character

Darien, CT



Promote Community Spirit

Community spirit is another indefinable, but indispensable, community element that contributes to the overall character of Darien.

Spirit is the feeling residents have about their community and how it projects to the outside world. It is about community pride and positive impressions and fostering positive actions and results within the community. It is all about enhancing the overall quality of life in Darien.

The following table identifies some of the resources that have been identified as contributing to community spirit:

Resource	Description
Unique Events	Unique events (parades, fairs, fireworks, and concerts) where residents join in a common activity add to community spirit.
Youth Sports And Events	Events involving local youth bring residents together and help instill community pride and spirit.
Positive Recognition	Positive recognition of local events and activities helps build community spirit and pride.
Volunteers	Volunteers and organizations help make Darien a special place and help build community spirit.
Communication	Keeping people involved in community issues and priorities helps maintain community spirit.
Shared Visions / Goals	Establishing and attaining shared visions and goals helps build community spirit and pride.

Fourth Of July
"Push And Pull" Parade

Darien Summer Nights
Concert Series

Volunteer Firefighters

Post 53 EMS Volunteers

Darien High School Football

Community Projects
(Weed Beach Playground)

Promote Community Spirit		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to encourage community and civic activities that promote and enhance community spirit.	Town	PRC DCA
2. Continue to support local parades, Darien Summer Nights, and other community events.	Town	PRC
3. Maintain a community calendar to inform people of upcoming events.	Town	TV79
4. Continue to use Darien Government Access Television (Channel 79) to keep residents informed about community affairs.	Town	TV79
5. Continue programs to recruit volunteers.	Town	
Action Steps		
6. Recognize local volunteers through a picnic, a "volunteer of the year designation" or other means.	Town	TCF

PRESERVE OPEN SPACE

5

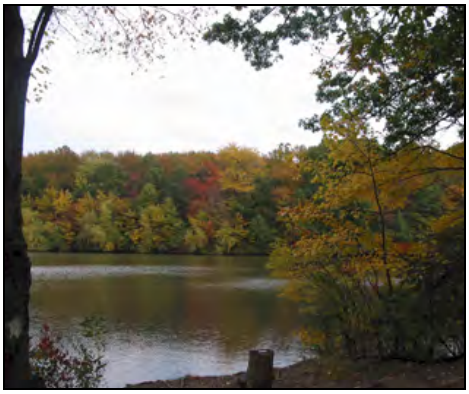
Overview

About 10 percent of Darien's land area is categorized as dedicated open space or managed open space. Open space can help protect community character, enhance the quality of life for residents, conserve important natural resources, provide wildlife habitat, and provide fiscal and economic benefits.

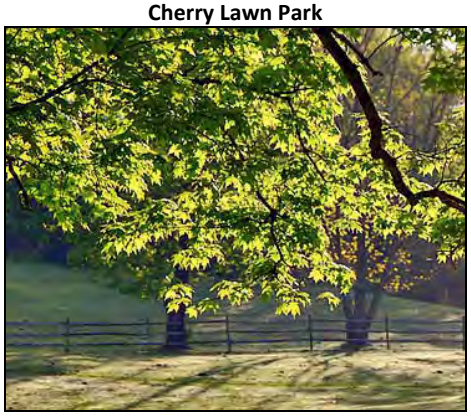
Open space can help protect community character, enhance the quality of life, conserve important natural resources, provide wildlife habitat, and provide fiscal and economic benefits …

Tilley Pond Park

Selleck's Woods



Cherry Lawn Park



Baker Field

Open Space Terminology

On the open space map, some lands are identified as "dedicated" open space and some lands are identified as "managed" open space.

In the Plan, "dedicated open space" is used to describe land that is typically owned by a public or non-profit entity and is expected to remain as open space in perpetuity. It often allows for public use of the land.

The term "managed open space" includes land that is used for another purpose but provides the community with some open space benefits (such as land owned or used by private schools, golf courses, cemeteries, etc.). Since such land may not allow public use of the land or may be sold or developed in the future, it is not considered dedicated open space.

Other Categories

Open space may also be categorized as "active" or "passive" open space. Active open space generally supports sports fields and similar activities. Passive open space is generally used for nature preserves, trails, lawns, and similar purposes.

Most passive open space in Darien is owned by the Darien Land Trust.

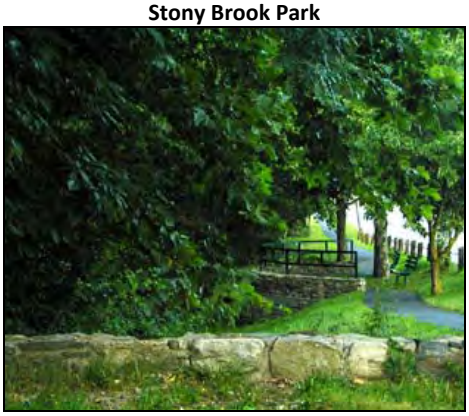
Preserve Open Space

Darien will seek to acquire land for open space whenever possible and appropriate. However, with about 97 percent of the land area in Darien being already developed or committed to different land uses, the opportunities to acquire additional open space in the future may be limited.

The POCD recommends that Darien preserve the "dedicated" open spaces that exist in the community. The table on the facing page identifies which municipally-owned parcels in Darien have been "dedicated" for open space. In addition, the statutory section which helps to ensure that land (or equivalent land) will be preserved in the future is also listed.

The POCD recommends that Darien seek to preserve the "managed" open spaces that exist in the community and seek to convert those to "dedicated" open spaces if an opportunity arises. Fortunately, the Town has obtained a "right of first refusal" in the event of a sale for the three golf courses (Country Club of Darien, Wee Burn Country Club, Woodway Country Club) and for the Ox Ridge Hunt Club so that it can respond to such situations should the circumstances arise. It is incumbent on the Town to be prepared for such an offering, and prepared to respond in a timely manner.

Stony Brook Park



Woodland Park

Dedicated Parklands

Name	Address
Beach Properties	
Pear Tree Beach	Pear Tree Point Road
Weed Beach	Nearwater Lane
Short Lane	Short Lane
Park-Type Properties	
Baker Field & Woods	Noroton Avenue
Cherry Lawn Park	Brookside Road
Frate Park	Leroy Avenue
Holohan Field / Town Hall Fields	Renshaw Road
McGuane Field	Noroton Avenue
Tilley Park	Lakeside Road
Woods-Type Properties	
Stony Brook Park	Ledge Road
Selleck's Woods	Parklands Drive
Woodland Park	Middlesex Road
Diller Property	Nutmeg Lane

Note: Some properties are dedicated by use, some by deed, and some by formal resolution.

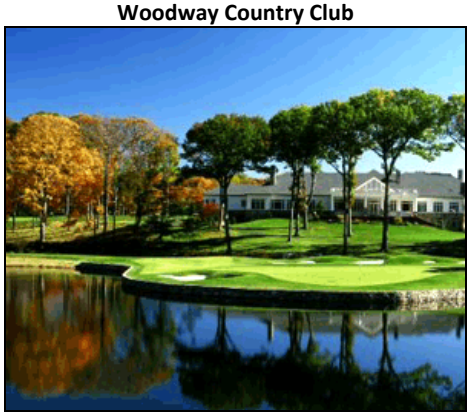
CGS Sec. 7-131n. Taking of land previously intended for use as park or for other recreational or open space purposes.

If any municipality takes any land, for highway or other purposes, which land was purchased for park or other recreational or open space purposes, or for which bonds were issued for such purposes, or which had been dedicated for such purposes, such municipality shall provide comparable replacement land at least equal in value and per unit area size to the value and per unit area size of the land taken …

Preserve Open Space		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue efforts to preserve open space as opportunities present themselves.	Town	DLT
2. Continue to work with the Darien Land Trust and other organizations to preserve and maintain open space.	Town	DLT
3. As appropriate, strive to convert managed open space into dedicated open space owned by the Town or the Darien Land Trust by acquiring land or easements or development rights.	Town	DLT
4. Pursue state and federal grants for open space acquisition.	Town	DLT
5. Promote public use of, and access to, open space.	Town	DLT
6. Consider acquiring land adjacent to existing open spaces in order to expand and enhance existing open spaces.	Town	DLT
7. Consider acquiring waterfront property, should it become available.	Town	DLT
8. Encourage philanthropy for open space preservation.	Town	DLT
Action Steps		
9. Maintain an inventory of existing open space and desirable open space properties.	*CC*	DLT PRC Staff
10. Create and distribute maps to identify publicly accessible open space in Darien, including "open access properties owned by the Darien Land Trust.	*CC*	PRC DLT

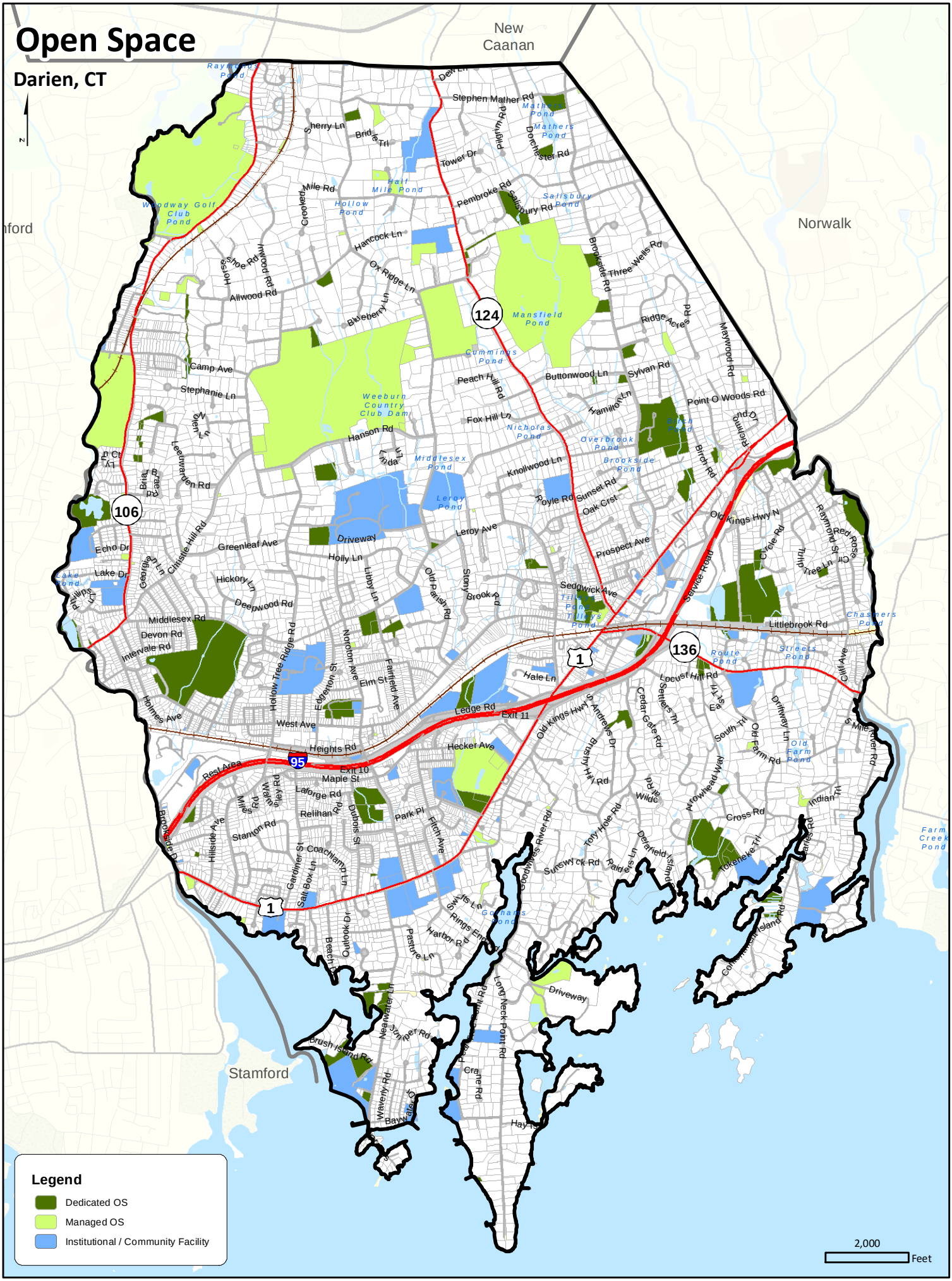
Ox Ridge Hunt Club

Woodway Country Club



Open Space

Darien, CT



Fee-In-Lieu-Of-Open Space

When a property is subdivided, the Connecticut General Statutes enable (and the Darien Subdivision Regulations require) that some land be set aside as open space.

However, there can be situations where the parcel being subdivided is not large enough to provide meaningful open space or where the open space would not protect an important resource or accomplish other local objectives.

In these kinds of situations, the statutes allow a community to accept a fee in lieu of dedicating land. Darien may wish to consider such a program.

Open Space Connections

Open space connections are important elements of an overall open space system. The Town recently acquired a parcel of land on Cherry Street that is adjacent to existing open space and provides a connection to surrounding neighborhoods and open spaces.

This type of effort should continue.

Enhance The Open Space Toolbox

Since open space preservation is so important to residents and vital to community character, the Town will consider using available tools to help preserve open space. This includes:

- regulatory strategies (obtaining open space at the time of property development),
- fiscal strategies (setting aside funds for open space acquisitions),
- partnering strategies (working with other entities to preserve open space collaboratively), and
- procedural strategies (being ready to respond quickly to open space opportunities).

Enhance The Open Space Toolbox		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Obtain open space (or a fee in lieu of open space) at the time of development of any subdivision.	PZC	
2. Continue to investigate and implement appropriate tools to preserve and maintain open space.		
Action Steps		
3. Amend the open space section in the Subdivision Regulations and consider: • making the open space requirements applicable to any subdivision or resubdivision, • increasing required open space as part of a subdivision, • allowing the dedication of open space land elsewhere in Darien as part of a subdivision, • incorporating a fee-in-lieu-of-open space provision so that a fee can be obtained whenever the land does not meet community goals.	PZC	
4. Establish a "land acquisition fund" (as per CGS Section 7-131r) to set aside monies for open space preservation.	BOS	RTM
5. Deposit and replenish monies in the "land acquisition fund" through: • annual appropriations in the operating budget, • special appropriations in the capital budget, and/or • bonding in anticipation of future open space purchases.	BOS	RTM
6. Consider supporting legislation that would allow communities to establish a land transfer tax to help support the "land acquisition fund."		
7. Investigate how to establish a "fast-track" process for approving the acquisition of open space.	BOS	RTM

MANAGE COASTAL RESOURCES

6

Overview

Coastal resources are an important part of Darien's overall character and the quality of life enjoyed by residents ...

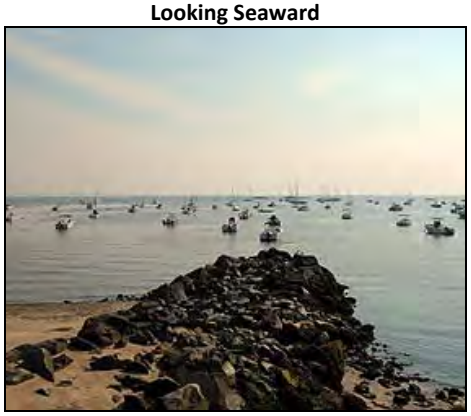
Darien is located on Long Island Sound and this coastal presence is an important part of Darien's overall character and the quality of life enjoyed by residents. Consider the following:

- Darien residents resoundingly voiced their appreciation for Weed Beach and Pear Tree Point Beach in the community workshops and in the on-line survey,
- Darien is less than 3 miles wide between Stamford and Norwalk but is reported to have over 16 miles of actual coastline,
- Darien has five harbors,
- the shoreline area has views that reach to Long Island and all the way to the Manhattan skyline, and
- there are hundreds of boats registered to Darien residents and count-less kayaks and other boats used by residents and visitors.

For many years, and especially since the Connecticut Coastal Management Act (CCMA) was enacted in 1980, Darien has been balancing protection of coastal resources (such as rock escarpments and vegetation) with private property interests and the desire for coastal access.

The map on page 49 shows the "coastal boundary area" where certain activities are regulated and managed.

Looking Seaward



Looking Shoreward

Granite Headlands

Darien's coastal area is somewhat unique because much of the area consists of granite headlands and outcroppings.

Protect Coastal Resources

Coastal resources are important for their ecological value (such as habitat) and for their contributions to character and quality of life. Some of the key coastal resources in Darien include:

- Weed Beach / Pear Tree Point Beach,
- Noroton River estuary / Holly Pond / tidal wetlands,
- Goodwives River estuary / Gorham's Pond / tidal wetlands,
- Tokeneke Brook / Scott's Cove / tidal wetlands, and
- Five Mile River estuary / Fish Islands / tidal wetlands.

The central feature to all coastal resources is, of course, water and water quality. The POCD supports:

- improvement of water quality town-wide (see a Town-wide water quality strategy on page 53) since:
  - all water eventually ends up in the coastal areas, and
  - deterioration of water quality may inhibit swimming, shell-fishing, and other forms of recreation,
- improved flushing actions by tidal waters; and
- improved water circulation patterns.

Protect Coastal Resources		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to protect important coastal resources and manage activities within the coastal boundary area.	PZC	CW HD
2. Continue efforts to improve water quality, particularly because of its impact on coastal resources.	HD	*IWC* CC CW
3. Strive to have all coastal waters in Darien suitable for swimming and open to shell-fishing and other forms of recreation.	HD	*CC* CW
Action Steps		
4. Seek to identify and rectify sources of pollution of coastal waters, including erosion which results in sedimentation of coastal areas.	HD	Town
5. Continue to educate residents about the importance of protecting coastal resources.	HD	*CC*
6. Seek to coordinate coastal resource protection activities with adjacent communities and regional organizations.	HD	*CC* CW

Maintain And Enhance Coastal Access

Preserving, maintaining and enhancing coastal access is a key element of the coastal management program. In Darien, this includes:

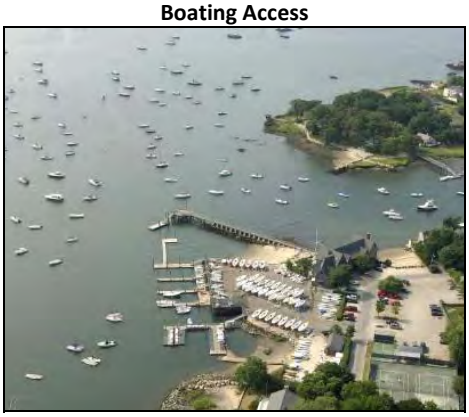
- **Scenic Views** – Due to the importance of coastal views to community character, Darien will consider ways to protect, preserve and enhance visual access to (and from) Long Island Sound, its embayments and coastal resources in general. These efforts might include:
  - acquisition of view easements,
  - reservation of view easements as part of development, and/or
  - limitations on the height or placement of hedges, plantings, fences and walls.

- **Public Access For People** - Darien will seek to improve physical access for people to the waters of Long Island Sound and associated embayments:
  - The Town should seek to acquire any property that becomes available adjacent to or near Weed Beach or Pear Tree Point Beach so that these facilities can be enhanced and protected.
  - The Town should consider acquiring other waterfront property, should it become available, in order to provide a waterfront park or other community amenity.
  - The Town should consider ways to facilitate recreational fishing and shell-fishing by residents.

- **Public Access For Boating** - Darien will seek to improve water access and associated facilities for recreational boating. This includes:
  - Protection of the harbor area (such as a breakwater).
  - Expansion / improvement of launching areas / mooring space / docking facilities.
  - Maintenance dredging of channels.

Scenic View

Boating Access



Recreational Shellfishing

The Town of Darien prepared the following map in 2009 showing areas available for recreational shellfishing. Areas to the west (Holly Pond and Weed Beach) are generally not approved for shellfishing.

Due to changing water conditions, an up-to-date map (generally available on the Town website) should be used before relying on this 2009 map.

Harbor Management

Darien has a Harbor Master involved in:

- Managing the location and assignment of mooring spaces in all Darien waters.
- Monitoring siltation of harbors and channels and the need for dredging.
- Other duties to ensure safe and efficient use of harbor areas.

he leased area conflicts with any Town mooring fields.

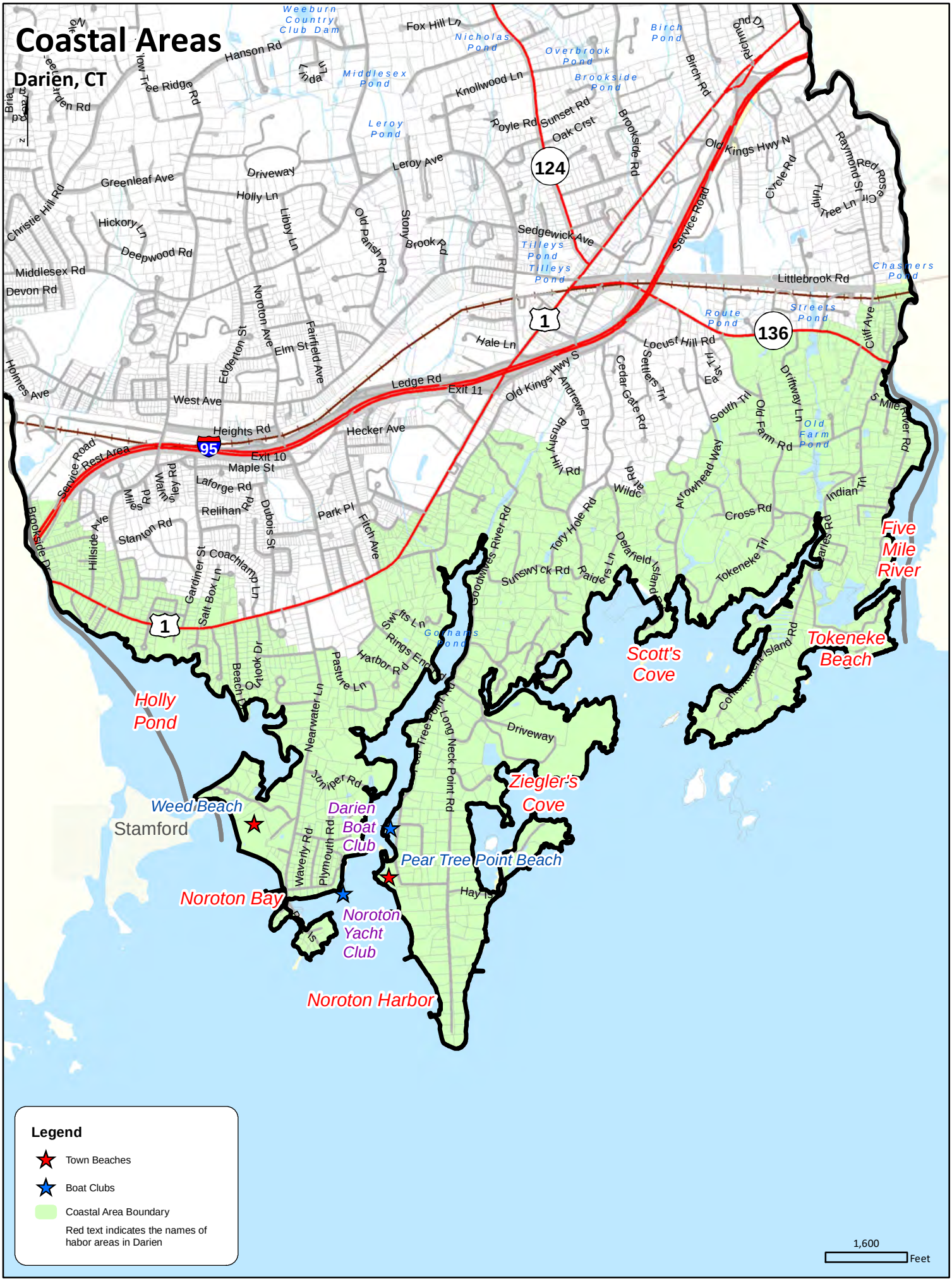
Maintain And Enhance Coastal Access		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Preserve, maintain and enhance visual access to coastal resources from public roads and beaches.	Town	PZC
2. Protect scenic views from waterbodies towards Darien, including preserving trees, rock outcroppings, and keeping the natural look and feel of waterfront properties.		
3. Seek improved coastal access for people to the waters of Long Island Sound and associated embayments.	Town	CW
4. Seek to acquire any property that is adjacent to or near Weed Beach or Pear Tree Point Beach.	BOS	RTM
5. Consider acquiring other waterfront property, should it become available.	BOS	RTM
6. Promote commercial and recreational fishing and shell-fishing, where and as appropriate.	CW	
7. Consider the benefits of a Harbor Management Plan.	CW	PZC
8. Seek ways of improving coastal access for boating including dredging of harbors, if appropriate.	CW	BOS RTM
Action Steps		
9. Undertake an inventory of the Town's coastal view assets so that steps can be taken to preserve them.	Town	
10. Investigate the potential to establish a recreational fishing area for residents (such as the pier at Pear Tree Point or at another coastal location).	PRC	
11. Undertake a feasibility study of ways to improve coastal access for boating including mooring, dock, launch, channel, and other improvements.	CW	

Coastal Access

Coastal Access

Coastal Areas

Darien, CT



Sea Level Rise

The possibility of long-term sea level rise and how Darien might prepare for such an occurrence is addressed in the "Sustainability And Resiliency" section of the POCD.

Shellfish Leases

At the present time, there is no comprehensive cataloguing of commercial shellfish leases in Darien.

A comprehensive inventory will help manage these resources with other coastal resources. The inventory should identify who currently holds the lease, what area is covered by the lease, and whether the leased area conflicts with any Town mooring fields.

Address Other Coastal Issues

At the present time, there are a number of entities with some involvement and/or responsibility for coastal issues. This type of situation can create challenges for coordinating efforts and for consolidating funding to accomplish priorities.

First, Darien should ensure that it has the appropriate organizational structure in place to adequately address coastal issues. At present, many of the responsibilities are split between different groups and this may not provide for comprehensive approaches or long term strategies (channel marking, channel dredging, water use conflicts, etc.).

Darien should evaluate a coordinated funding strategy for coastal programs which would include coastal-related revenue sources along with coastal-related expenditures.

Address Other Coastal Issues		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to identify and address coastal issues.	CW	
2. Seek ways to minimize and/or resolve conflicts: • When mooring fields and shellfish leases overlap, and • Among holders of commercial shellfish leases where delineation is not clear.	CW	
Action Steps		
3. Evaluate entities involved in coastal issues and devise a logical approach for coordinating coastal activities and funding coastal programs.	BOS	RTM
4. Investigate converting the Advisory Commission on Coastal Waters to a full commission in order to lengthen and stagger the terms of appointed members.	BOS	RTM
5. Continue to identify navigation hazards in local harbors and, as appropriate, mark hazards for the protection of the boating public.	CW	
6. Comprehensively catalogue commercial shellfish leases in Darien, who currently holds them, where they are, and whether they conflict with the various Town mooring fields	CW	

PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES

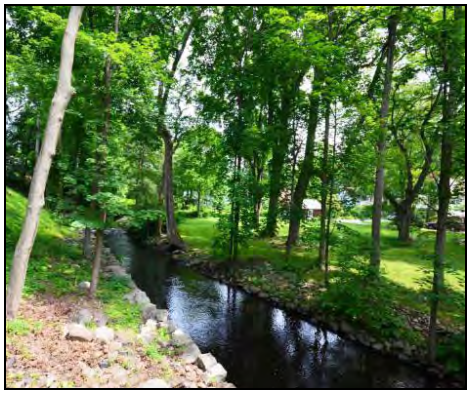
7

Overview

Conserving natural resources is important to Darien residents...

Conserving natural resource helps preserve environmental functions, enhance community character, and enhance the overall quality of life. Darien will continue efforts to protect natural resources

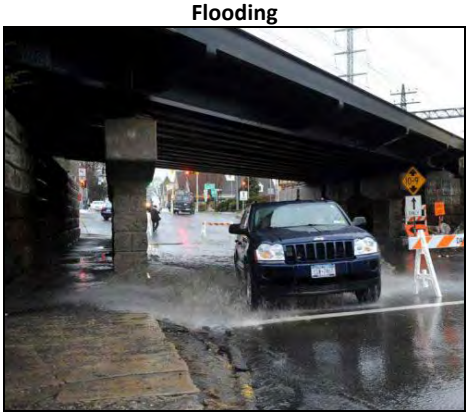
Watercourse



Wetland (Vernal Pool)

Water Quality

Flooding



Protect Water Quality

Protection of water *quality* is an important natural resource protection issue in Darien. In addition to residents who obtain drinking water from wells on their property, water quality is a key factor in overall environmental health.

The major threat to water quality is development activities and land uses– both in Darien and in upstream communities -- which introduce pollutants into the environment. This threat is exacerbated by:

- a drainage system where runoff is often untreated and discharged directly to watercourses, and
- lifestyle patterns where the impacts of daily activities on water quality (such as lawn fertilizer) are not always considered by residents.

As shown on the following map, water quality is good town-wide with some exceptions in and near the downtown Darien and the Noroton Heights business district and the main river estuaries.

Legend

Surface Water Quality Class

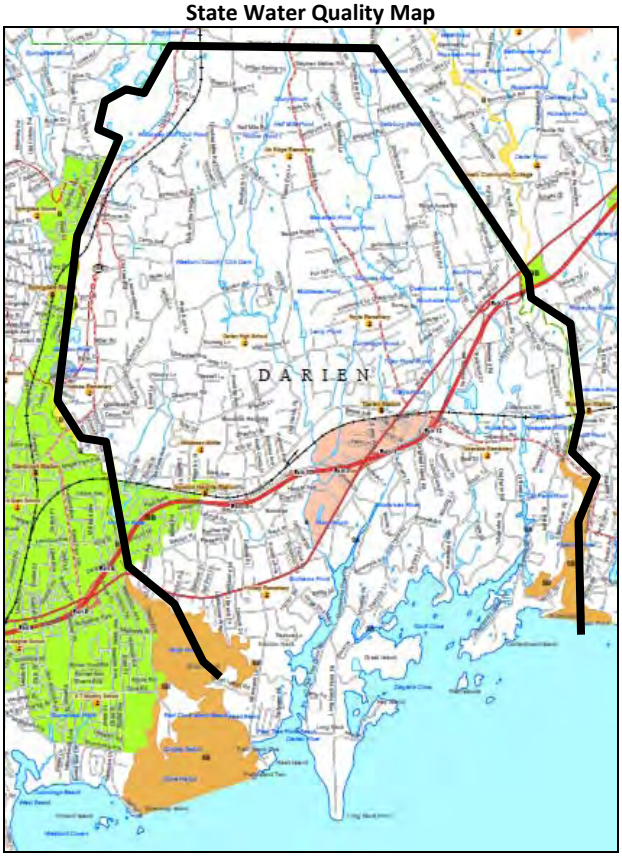
A	A
AA	AA
B, B*	B, B*
SA	SA
SB	SB

NOTES:
Surface Water Classifications beginning with S refer to Coastal and Marine Surface Water.
B* is a subset of Class B where no direct wastewater discharges are allowed other than those

Groundwater Quality Class

- GA (white background)
- GAA, GAAs
- GA, GAA may not meet current standards
- GB
- GC

State Water Quality Map



CT-DEEP

Protecting water *quality* can be furthered by the following types of strategies:

- managing land use activities to minimize pollutants,
- reducing the amount of effective impervious coverage (road widths, size of parking stalls, number of parking spaces, etc.) to reduce pollutants and allow for the use of some areas for implementing "low impact development" (LID) practices,
- implementing LID practices which use vegetation and infiltration to better manage stormwater quality,
- conserving or providing vegetated buffers (riparian buffers) along ponds, streams, and rivers,
- educating residents about threats to water quality (lawn fertilizer, herbicide, pesticide, pet waste, etc.), and
- ensuring appropriate erosion and sediment controls.

Darien has a State-defined "aquifer protection area" (the recharge area to a pumping public water supply well) along the Noroton River. Darien has adopted regulations to manage land use activities in this area and designated the Planning and Zoning Commission as the responsible agency.

Darien will continue to protect water quality in all areas of the community.

Protect Water Quality		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to protect water quality.	HD	PZC *IWC* *CC*
2. Implement "low impact development" practices to help manage water quality and water quantity issues.	PZC	
Action Steps		
3. Educate design professionals and homeowners about LID tools and techniques.	*CC*	
4. Conduct public education about protecting water quality (including reducing fertilizer, herbicide and pesticide use).	HD	*CC*
5. Consider adopting a "septic management ordinance" which requires pumping of septic tanks and inspection of septic fields on a regular basis.	HD	BOS RTM *CC*
6. Develop and implement a systematic water quality testing protocol in local river systems and embayments to identify pollution sources and strategies to remediate issues.	HD	*CC*

Water Quality Protection

For many years, water quality protection focused on eliminating "point" sources of pollution (such as industrial discharges).

With the progress that has been made in reducing or eliminating pollution from these sources, attention has now turned to "non-point" sources. This includes storm drainage discharges, lawn fertilizer, septic systems, agricultural runoff, and similar sources.

Relevant Studies

Several studies have been completed which look at issues associated with water quality in Darien:

- Five Mile River Watershed Based Plan
- Holly Pond Sedimentation Study
- Watershed Analysis of Stony Brook

Additional analyses have been conducted for Goodwives River and Noroton River.

Drainage Manual

The Town of Darien has a comprehensive Drainage Manual (revised through 2009) which provides guidance on drainage analysis and approaches.

Public Versus Private Roads

About 27 percent of local roads in Darien are under private ownership and so the Town's ability to manage stormwater runoff from roadway surfaces may be limited in these areas. The map on page 121 identifies which roads in Darien are public and which are private.

However, about 73 percent of the roads are under public ownership and control and the Town can address stormwater runoff over this large area.

Address Water Quantity and Flooding

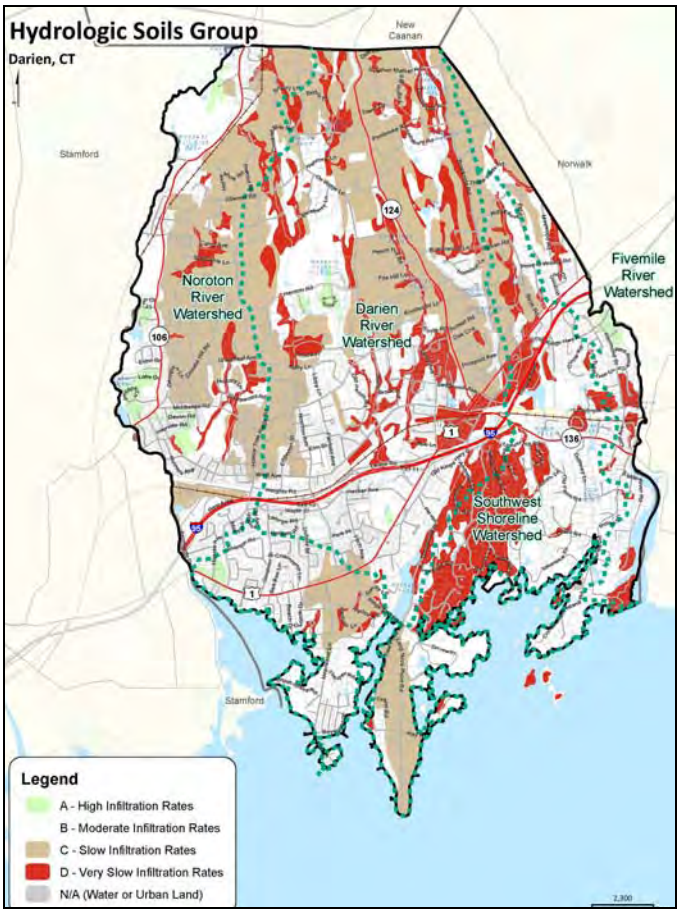
The management of water runoff *quantity* is also an important consideration for overall environmental health. Development can adversely affect water quantity since impervious surfaces:

- reduce groundwater infiltration and flow (reducing the water supply to wetlands and aquifers), and
- accelerate runoff (leading to channel scouring and siltation of water-courses and waterbodies).

Water quantity and flooding are significant issues in certain parts of Darien. There are two distinct reasons for this. First, over time, development has taken place adding impervious surfaces, causing more runoff, and resulting in drainage structures installed many years previously to become overwhelmed. Second, we are getting more intense storms. Storms which drop several inches of rain in a short period of time are becoming more frequent.

The adjacent map, which shows the "hydrologic soil group" classifications, shows that many areas of Darien are dominated by soils with slow and very slow infiltration rates. (tan and red colors).

Increased flooding can be expected in these areas (and areas downstream) due to the inability of the soil to infiltrate rainwater as fast as it falls.



Natural Resource Conservation Service

Generally, managing water quantity and reducing flooding can be furthered by the following types of strategies:

- reducing the amount of impervious coverage,
- increasing infiltration and detention,
- maintaining flow in watercourses (removing sedimentation), and/or
- replacing under-sized culverts.

Section 880 of the Zoning Regulations provides standards to address water quantity issues and applies whenever:

- 1,000 square feet or more of impervious coverage is added,
- an existing residential dwelling is demolished and reconstructed or replaced, or
- when any application is submitted to the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals, or the Environmental Protection Commission

The Town's Drainage Manual might benefit from some specific standards for infiltration, flow reduction, and water quality improvements. Some of the standards in the Connecticut Water Quality Manual might provide a starting point for further evaluation.

Overall, stronger implementation of "low impact development" (LID) approaches is recommended in order to be able to address the water resource issues of today and the future.

Dry Detention Basin

Water Quality Basin

No Curbing / Rain Garden

Water Quality Island At Darien Library

Importance of LID

Although most of the Town of Darien is fully developed, the potential exists for new development on undeveloped land throughout the Town and infill / redevelopment of currently developed areas.

If Darien continues to manage stormwater the way it has, drainage issues may get more urgent in the future because we are already at or near the margin of what can be accommodated.

New approaches, such as Low Impact Development (LID), are necessary to mitigate water quality and quantity impacts of future development and to protect high-quality water resources in Darien.

Opportunities exist for the implementation of LID for new development and redevelopment projects throughout the Town.

Freeboard

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency website:

- "Freeboard" is a factor of safety expressed in feet above a flood level for purposes of flood-plain management.
- "Freeboard" tends to compensate for the many unknown factors that could contribute to flood heights greater than the height calculated for a selected size flood and floodway conditions, such as wave action, bridge openings, and the hydrological effect of urbanization of the watershed.
- Freeboard is not required by National Flood Insurance Program standards, but communities are encouraged to adopt at least a one-foot freeboard to account for the one-foot rise built into the concept of designating a floodway and the encroachment requirements where floodways have not been designated.
- Freeboard results in significantly lower flood insurance rates due to lower flood risk.

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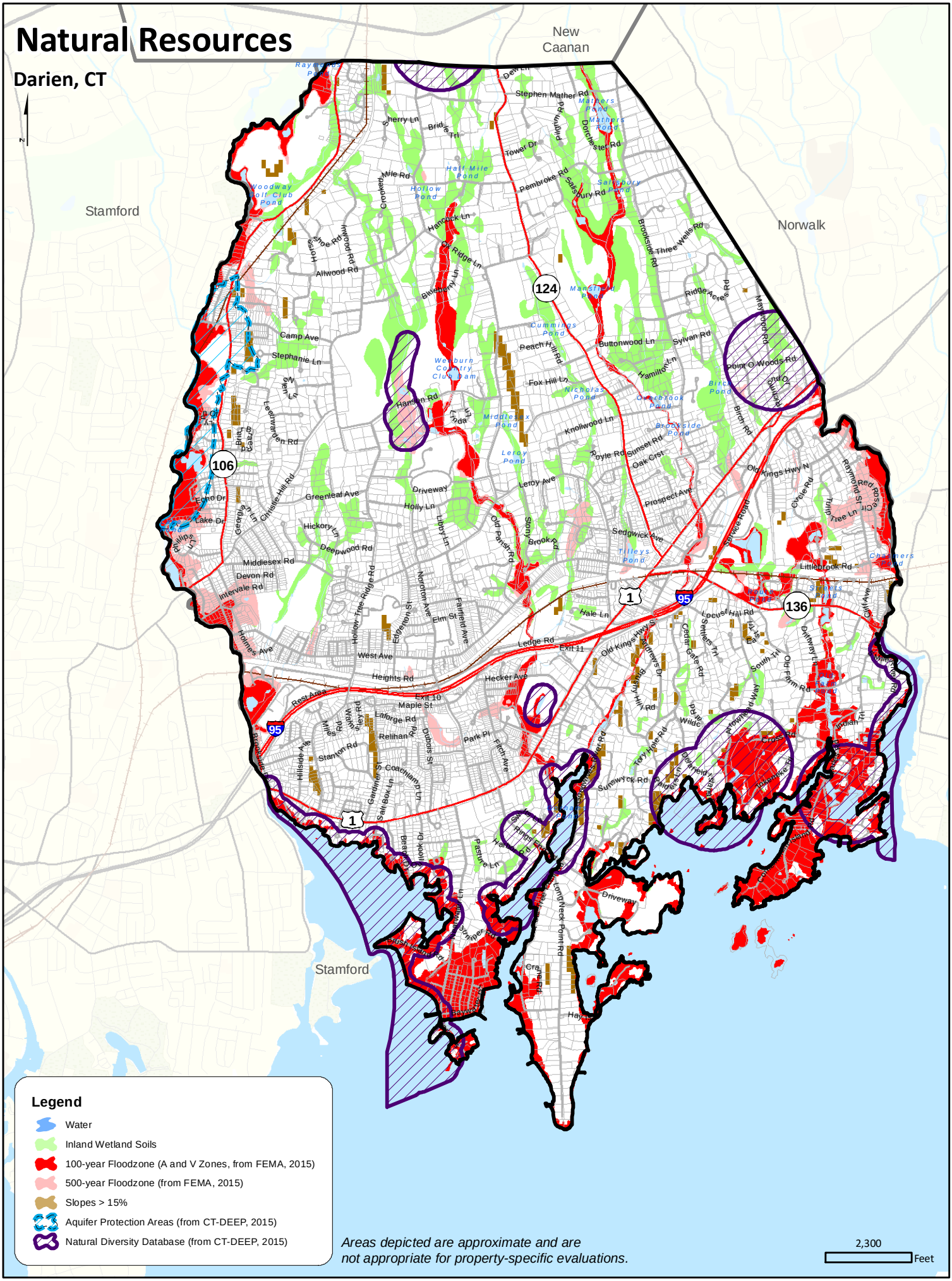
Address Water Quantity And Flooding		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Manage water quantity and runoff to maintain the water cycle and reduce the impacts of flooding.	PZC	*IWC* PW
2. Continue to protect floodplain areas.	FEB	PZC PW
3. Continue to participate in FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program.	Town	PZC ZBA
4. Continue to help property owners bring structures into compliance with FEMA standards.	Staff	
5. Support the purchase of properties within floodplain areas as open space, including using public-private partnerships, FEMA grants, and other approaches.	FEB	Town
6. Continue to implement "low impact development" (LID) practices to help manage water quantity issues.	PZC	
Action Steps		
7. Consider requiring additional "freeboard" (see sidebar) above minimum requirements when people rebuild in flood-prone areas.	PZC	
8. Adopt standards to regulate *impervious* coverage or effective impervious coverage (where tree cover and surface material are considered).	PZC	
9. Review the Drainage Manual for possible incorporation of LID stormwater management standards from the Connecticut Water Quality Manual or other sources.	PW	Town
10. Educate residents on the importance of flood control and proper watershed management.	FEB	*CC* Staff
11. Undertake projects, where appropriate and effective, to address flooding problems, including dredging of ponds if appropriate.	PW	FEB
12. Consider separating the Flood and Erosion Control Board from the Environmental Protection Commission so that they can focus on addressing drainage and flooding issues.	BOS	RTM
13. Continue to study and address flooding issues in Darien with assistance of the CT-DEEP, CT-DOT, and affected property owners.	PW	BOS RTM

Natural Resources

Darien, CT



Areas depicted are approximate and are not appropriate for property-specific evaluations.

Natural Diversity Database

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT-DEEP) maintains a Natural Diversity Database (NDDB) in order to help public agencies protect important resources. NDDB areas represent known locations of:

- endangered species,
- threatened species,
- species of special concern, or
- significant natural communities.

It may also identify scenic areas and unique natural assets (waterfalls, caves, etc.).

The NDDB map is updated regularly and sent to the Town as well as being posted on the DEEP website.

The exact locations and species names are masked to protect sensitive species from collection and disturbance. People proposing activities within designated NDDB areas should contact CT-DEEP so that planned activities can occur while the resource itself is protected.

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Protect Other Important Natural Resources

Watercourses, waterbodies and wetlands are key natural resources and play important roles in the water cycle and overall environmental health.

In addition to protecting these natural resources, Darien may also undertake other efforts to protect other important natural resources.

Protect Other Important Natural Resources		
Policies	**Leader**	**Partners**
1. Continue to protect and enhance wetlands and watercourses.	*IWC*	PZC
2. Establish and maintain vegetated buffers adjacent to wetlands and watercourses.	*IWC*	PZC
3. Continue to protect other important natural resources such as steep slopes, sensitive habitats and other natural diversity areas.	*IWC*	PZC
4. Discourage the introduction of invasive species and seek to remove invasive species.	*CC*	PZC
5. Improve local air quality when possible and practical.	Town	
6. Seek to coordinate resource protection activities with interest groups, adjacent communities, and regional organizations.	*CC*	PZC
Action Steps		
7. Consider separating the Environmental Protection Commission into a regulatory agency (an Inland Wetlands Commission) and a strategic organization (a Conservation Commission).	BOS	RTM
8. Continue to post GIS information and maps on the Town's website so that people can become more aware of the natural resources in Darien.	Staff	
9. Ensure that local application procedures require investigation of Natural Diversity Database (NDDB) sites (see sidebar).	PZC	*IWC*