

An aerial photograph of a scenic lake area. In the foreground, a wooden dock extends into the water with a white boat moored at it. The lake is surrounded by lush green trees and some residential buildings. In the background, a stone bridge with three arches spans across the water. The sky is clear and blue.

DARIEN

2016 Plan of Conservation and Development

**FIRST DRAFT – For PZC Review
November 2015**

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WELCOME!

November 2015

To the Planning and Zoning Commission,

This document is the FIRST DRAFT of the proposed 2016 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) for Darien. The strategies outlined in the POCD are intended to guide conservation, development, and infrastructure activities in Darien in the future.

The strategies, which were developed over the past year or so, reflect discussions among the members of the Commission and input from Darien residents, other boards and agencies, Town Staff, and independent review and analysis.

It is envisioned that this FIRST DRAFT will be reviewed and refined by the Commission prior to scheduling a public information meeting (tentatively scheduled for February 2016). Following that meeting, it is envisioned that the Planning and Zoning Commission will further review and refine the Plan before considering it for adoption.

I look forward to continuing to work with you during this process.

Sincerely,

Glenn Chalder, AICP
Planimetrics

Town Plan Vision Statement

The Town Plan serves as a flexible blueprint for the continuing development of our community. It identifies enhancements and additions to our infrastructure and provides the basis for maintenance of our existing resources.

- *Darien continues to be primarily a New England style, single-family dwelling community.*
- *The Town Plan must balance growth and development with preservation and protection of the existing ecosystem on which our future depends, i.e. open space, the Long Island Sound, coastal habitat, our streams, ponds and wetlands.*
- *Downtown and traditional neighborhood commercial centers or corridors, through scale, character and density should create a strong sense of place for living, shopping and dining and add to the vitality of our community.*
- *Multi-modal transportation and pedestrian-friendly streetscape should be complimentary to the character of our town.*
- *Total citizen involvement, including our elected, appointed and volunteer groups, are critical to effective planning and successful implementation.*

The town must adopt and implement high quality public policies promoting long-term growth, development and infrastructure improvements. Thoughtful, dynamic leadership continues to be necessary to ensure our community implements the blueprint provided by this Town Plan.

Darien Board of Selectmen (2014)

PLANNING CONTEXT



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

A glossary of some terms and acronyms used in the POCD is located at the end of the document.

INTRODUCTION

1

Overview

A Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) is a document whose purpose is to establish a common vision for the future of a community. The recommendations of the Plan are intended to reflect an overall consensus of what is considered desirable for Darien and its residents in the future.

It is important to note that the Plan of Conservation and Development is primarily an advisory document. It is intended to guide local boards and commissions and to provide a framework for consistent decision-making with regard to conservation and development activities in Darien over the next decade or so.

Once the vision is established, the next step is implementation. The POCD identifies policies and action steps that will help attain the overall vision.

While the statutory responsibility to adopt the Plan rests with the Planning and Zoning Commission, implementation will only occur with the diligent efforts of the residents and officials of the Town of Darien. The Plan will only be effective if it is understood and supported by the people of Darien, and implemented by local boards and commissions.

“If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll wind up somewhere else.”

Yogi Berra,
Baseball Legend
Renowned Punster

Conservation Strategies



Development Strategies



Infrastructure Strategies



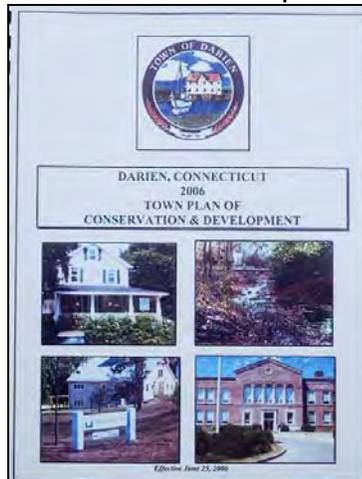
Prior Darien Plans

Darien has a history of preparing and adopting Plans of Conservation and Development (also called Town Plans, Master Plans, or Plans of Development) and these plans have:

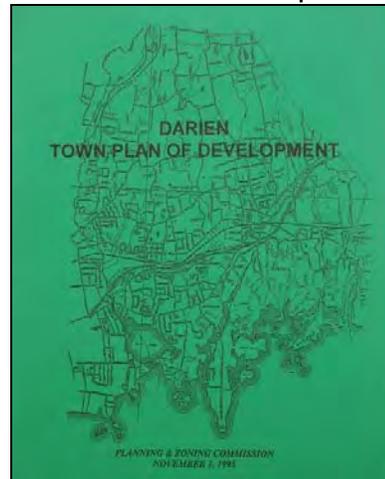
- influenced the current development patterns and land use regulations and in Darien, and
- helped guide the overall conservation and development of the community.

Thus, it can be seen that Darien has prepared, adopted, and amended Plans to address the appropriate conservation and development of the community. It is in that spirit that this POCD has been prepared.

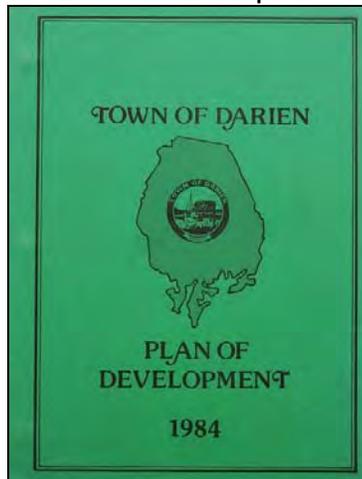
2006 Town Plan of Conservation and Development



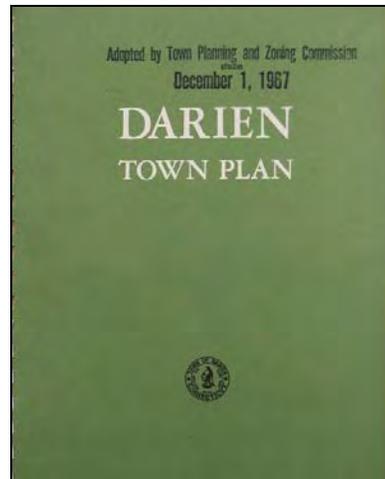
1995 Town Plan of Development



1984 Plan of Development



1967 Town Plan



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

The Commission shall:

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

The Plan shall:

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

The Plan may:

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

Using The Plan

Most chapters of the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) contain strategies, policies, and action steps. As used in the POCD:

- A “strategy” is a long-term goal or course of action for Darien.
- A “policy” is a principle or course of action intended to help implement the strategy (a policy is an on-going activity which does not generally have an end date).
- An “action step” is a recommended task that helps implement the strategy (a task has an end date or specific result).

Over the 10-year timeframe of this POCD, it is envisioned that these strategies, policies, and action steps will be used to review land use applications, develop work programs for local departments and agencies, and guide spending and investment decisions.

POCD TERMINOLOGY

Strategy (Goal) →

Policy →

Action Step →

A. Protect Water Quality			
Policies	Leader	Partners	
1. Continue to protect water quality.	CC	PZC	IWC
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).	CC		
5. Consider adopting a “septic management ordinance” which requires pumping of septic tanks and inspection of septic fields on a regular basis.	BOS	RTM	CC

In the strategy tables in the POCD, each policy and action step identifies a “leader” and may identify one or more “partners.” The “leader” is the entity considered most likely to bear responsibility for implementing the policy or completing the action step. Partners are other entities likely to be involved in implementation.

A legend for “leaders” and “partners” can be found on the inside back cover.

CONDITIONS & TRENDS

2

Overview

This section of the POCD provides a general overview of conditions and trends affecting Darien at the time the POCD was being prepared.

History of Darien

The landscape of the area we now know as Darien evolved over millions of years as a result of massive geologic forces. The advance and retreat of glaciers and fluctuations in climate and sea levels created a rocky coastline abutting a coastal sound. While there is no written record of their early habitation, Native Americans are believed to have lived in this area about 10,000 years ago.

European Settlement

Europeans “discovered” this part of New England in 1614 when Dutch explorer Adriaen Block sailed into what we now call Long Island Sound. For the next 20 years or so, the Dutch and English competed for trade with Native Americans and to establish settlements. The British settled in Plymouth (Massachusetts) in 1620 and the Dutch settled in New Amsterdam (New York) in 1624. Dutch and British trade with Native Americans eventually led to settlement of inland areas along the Connecticut River after 1634.

After the Pequot War of 1637, European settlement began to extend to other areas of what we now know as Connecticut. By 1642, Europeans had “purchased” land from Native Americans in what is now called Stamford and settlement began in this area. After 1674, the Dutch settlements to the west were consolidated under British rule (New Amsterdam was renamed New York).

As population grew, more land was needed for subsistence farming and settlers moved outwards from Stamford. It was not uncommon at that time for settlers to establish small settlements where they could help and protect each other. From the coves along the shore, residents would travel to fields and other areas to tend crops or raise livestock or fish.

“If we could first know where we are and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do and how to do it.”

**Abraham Lincoln,
American President**

Formation Of A Parish

Life was difficult for early settlers in this area and it was made more challenging by the customs of the time where settlers would travel every week to a “meetinghouse” for religious services regardless of season or weather.

By about 1737, the population of this area had grown to the point where the residents felt they could support their own parish and no longer have to travel to Stamford for religious services. Permission was granted by the church and this new parish was called Middlesex. The first meetinghouse was later built at the corner of Brookside Road and the Boston Post Road.

As population grew and as concerns over safety diminished, settlers moved further out to create their own homesteads. Sawmills, blacksmith shops, and other communal amenities were established along brooks and streams to support the growing economy of this area.

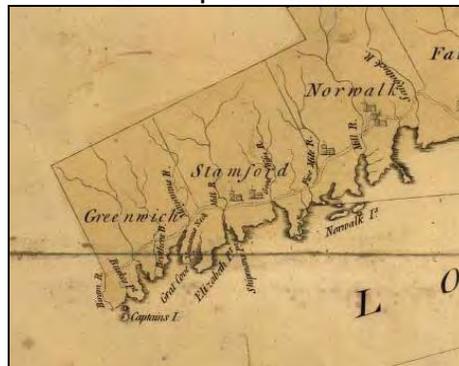
Establishment Of A Town

Eventually, the population in the Middlesex parish grew to the point where people no longer wished to travel to Stamford for militia training or for town meetings. A petition was undertaken to create their own municipality and, in 1820, residents received permission from the General Assembly to establish a separate municipality. According to the 1820 Census, there were 1,126 residents.

Reportedly the name Darien came as the result of a compromise. A number of residents lobbied to have the new town named after them but there was no consensus. The name Darien is thought to come from a place in Panama which may have been suggested by a local resident.

At this time, the economy of this area was still dominated by subsistence agriculture although there were some emerging mills and early stores.

1766 Map of Connecticut



Re-Enactment Of Colonial Agriculture



Arrival Of The Railroad

With the industrial revolution, Darien began to change. This change was not because of the establishment of new business and industry but with the introduction of steam trains and the establishment of a rail line from New York to New Haven (completed by 1849).

At first a great convenience for residents and an easy way to export agricultural produce to New York City, it soon had the effect of enticing in-migration to Darien.

Residents of New York City were attracted to Darien because of its beautiful shoreline, rural character, and short travel distance from the city. While people had travelled here before by carriage or by boat, Darien became more popular when it was accessible by rail. After the Civil War, the town became one of the many resorts where New Yorkers built luxurious, grand summer homes. The population of Darien doubled between 1850 and 1900.

Spread Of The Automobile

After the turn of the century, the advent of the automobile and paved roadways supported the continued growth of Darien. The opening of the Merritt Parkway between Greenwich and Norwalk in 1938 was a key event during this era. Between 1920 and 1940, Darien's population doubled again.

Following World War II, Darien experienced the same surge of growth that affected other communities in the region. A cultural trend toward suburban living and the flexibility offered by the automobile supported the development of Darien. Former farms were subdivided and developed and population doubled again between 1940 and 1960. Construction of Interstate 95 in the 1950s encouraged the suburban development of residential areas and Darien was no different.

By 1970, Darien had grown to be a community of over 20,000 people and the overall pattern of the community became established.

While the amount of land available for *new* development is limited, there continues to be considerable interest in Darien due to its location, character, amenities, and the quality of life it offers its residents. As a result, there is the potential for *redevelopment* in the community as existing buildings are updated, expanded, or replaced and as new uses replace existing uses.

Regional Role

Darien actually serves two regional roles:

- a residential suburb within the New York City metropolitan region with over 7,000 housing units and more than 20,000 residents.
- an employment center with more jobs (7,679 jobs) in 2012 than housing units (7,022 units).

Overall, Darien is a diverse and balanced community.

Darien's Population

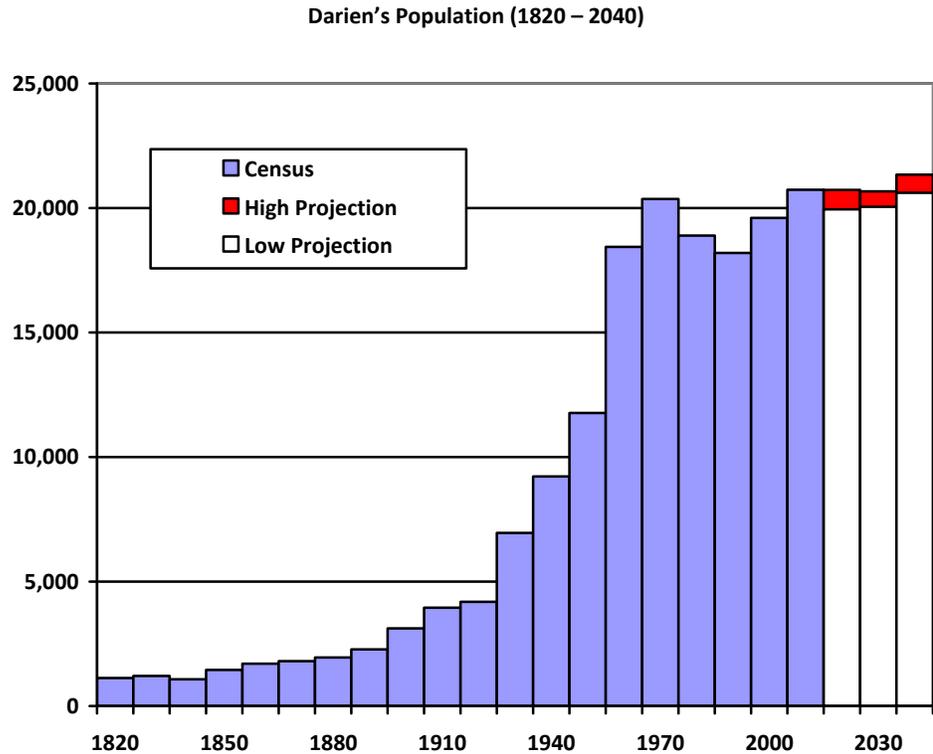
1820	1,126
1830	1,212
1840	1,080
1850	1,454
1860	1,705
1870	1,808
1880	1,949
1890	2,276
1900	3,116
1910	3,946
1920	4,184
1930	6,951
1940	9,222
1950	11,767
1960	18,437
1970	20,366
1980	18,892
1990	18,196
2000	19,607
2010	20,732

2020	<i>19,952</i>	<i>20,727</i>
2030	<i>20,048</i>	<i>20,670</i>
2040	<i>20,610</i>	<i>21,341</i>

US Census data for 1820 to 2010. Projections are in italics. Projections are based on cohort survival models from the Connecticut State Data Center and from Planimetrics.

People Of Darien / Demographics

According to the Census, Darien had a year 2010 population of 20,732 persons. This represents an increase of 1,125 persons from the 19,607 persons reported in the 2000 Census. The chart shows Darien population growth since the 1820 Census with a range of population projections to the year 2040.



United States Census / Connecticut State Data Center / Planimetrics

From 1950 to 1970, *net in-migration* was the main driver of population change in Darien. From 1970 to 1990, *net out-migration* was the main driver of population change since there were fewer births during this period. Since 1990, growth has been a result of "*natural increase*" outpacing net out-migration.

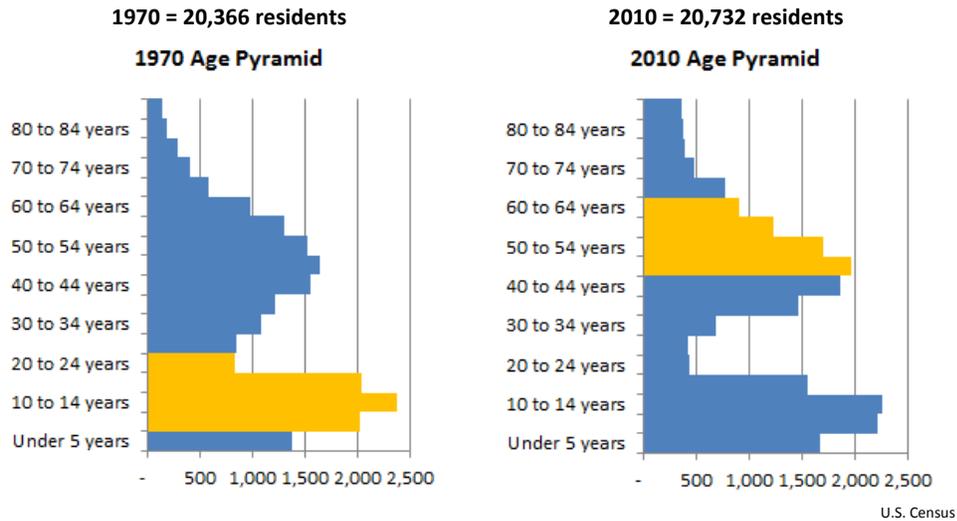
Components of Population Change

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Total Change	+6,670	+1,929	(1,474)	(696)	+1,411	+1,125
Change Due To Natural Increase	+1,622	+922	+107	+697	+2,182	+1,821
Births	2,790	2,211	1,497	2,058	3,399	3,000
Deaths	1,168	1,289	1,390	1,361	1,217	1,179
Change Due To Net Migration	+5,048	+1,007	(1,581)	(1,393)	(771)	(696)

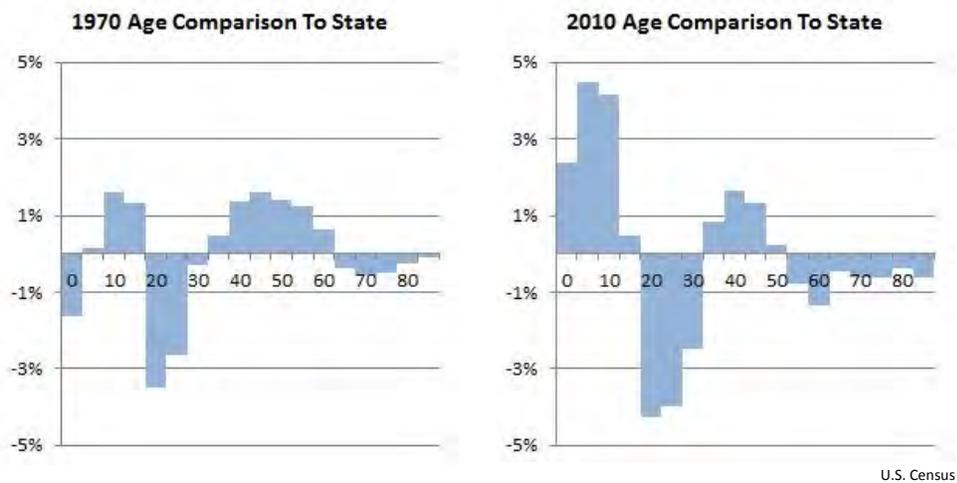
US Census, Connecticut Health Department reports,

Age Composition

The age composition of Darien changes over time due to the net effect of births, deaths, net migration, and natural aging. Much of the change in the age composition between 1970 and 2010 is attributable to people in the “baby boom” (people born between about 1945 and about 1965) shown in orange below.



As shown in the following charts, Darien has generally had a larger share of the population in the younger age groups (0-19 years) and in young families (ages 35 – 55) compared to Connecticut as a whole. In 2010, the percentage of the population age 0-19 was about 11 percentage points *higher* in Darien than in Connecticut. At the other end of the age spectrum, the percentage of the population age 55+ was about 6 percentage points *lower* in Darien than in Connecticut.



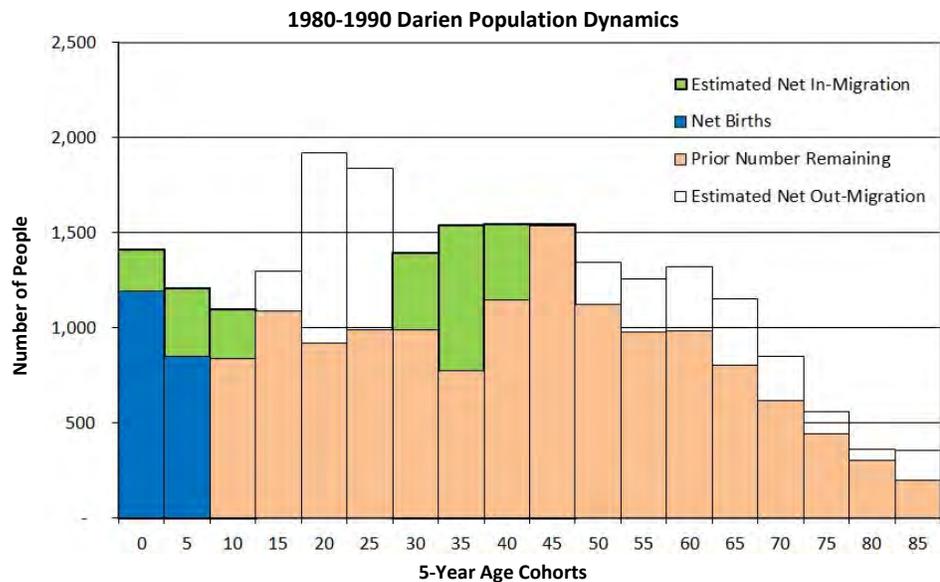
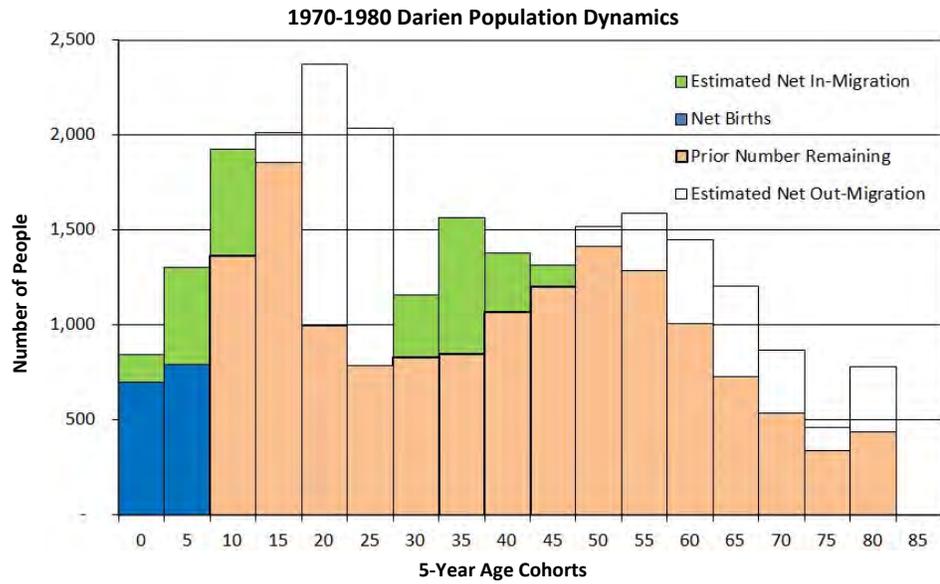
Legend

In the “population dynamics” charts, the height of the colored column represents the number of people in each 5-year age cohort at the end of the decade. The colored portions of the columns represent where those people came from (or went to) during the decade.

-  The blue portion of the columns represents the number of children born in Darien during the decade
-  The peach portion of the columns represents the number of people who lived in Darien at the beginning of the decade and are estimated to be here at then of the decade
-  The green portion of the columns represents the net number of people in that age cohort who moved into Darien during the decade
-  The white portion of the columns represents the net number of people in that age cohort who moved out of Darien during the decade

By comparing the number of people in one age group in the Census to the number of people 10 years younger in the prior Census (10 years earlier), the dynamics of migration by age group in Darien can be evaluated.

Between 1970 and 1980, as shown in the chart below, the green portions of the columns indicates there was net in-migration of younger families (parents aged 30-49 with children aged 0-19). There was net out-migration of young adults (ages 15-29) as people went off to college or moved elsewhere. There was also net out-migration of mature adults (ages 50+) once their children were grown or their interests changed. A similar pattern occurred in the 1980s.

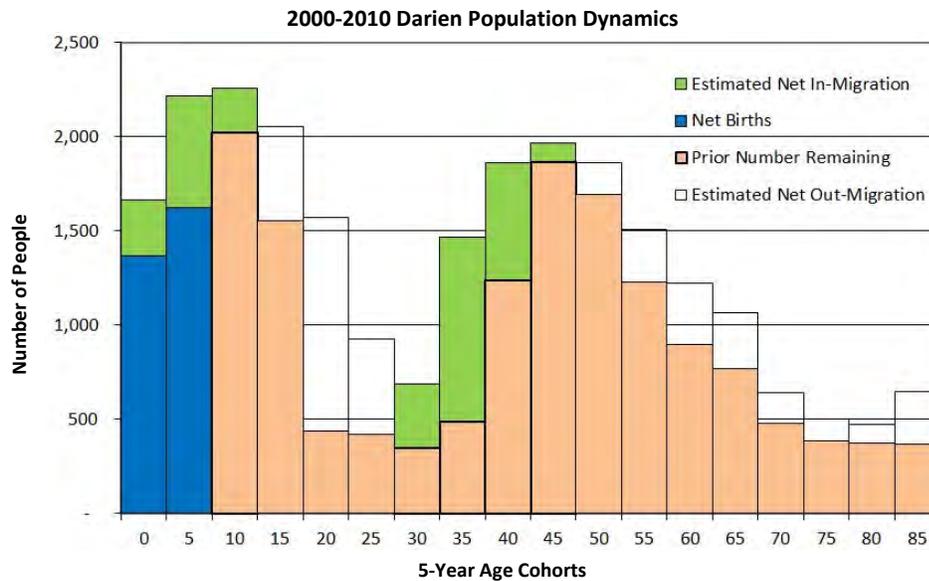
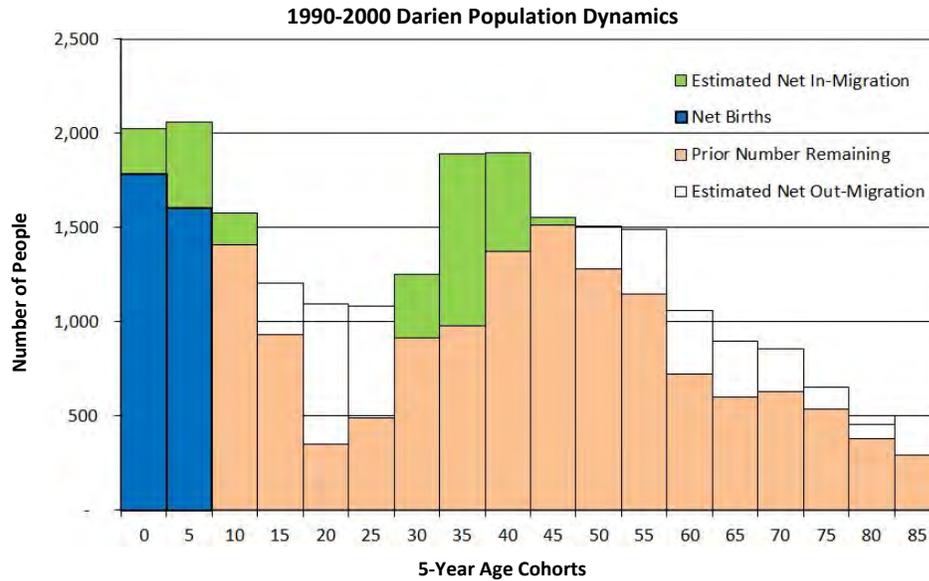


After 1990, as shown in the charts below, the number of births increased significantly (blue columns) and Darien continued to attract younger families with school-age children. More young adults and “empty nesters” (mature adults whose children have left home) continued to move out of Darien than moved in during these decades.

Relevant Materials

Additional information on population projections can be found from:

- the Connecticut State Data Center which updates population projections for the state and each municipality as new information becomes available (generally every 5 years or so), and
- school enrollment projections for Darien (such as those prepared for the Board of Education by Milone and MacBroom) which can be updated annually.



Enrollment Ratio

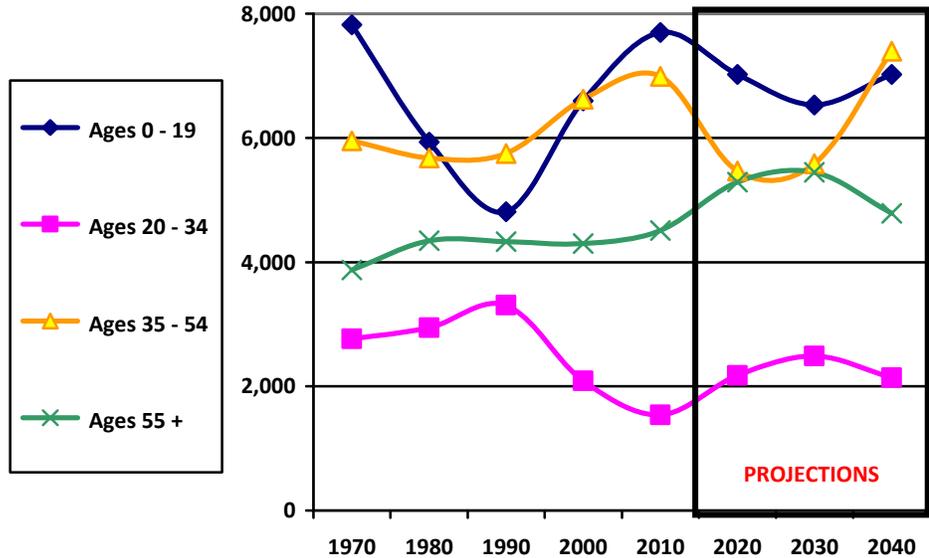
The following table lists the school enrollment ratio (public school enrollment as a percent of total population). The data is from 2010 in order to be able to compare enrollments to the population in a Census year.

Top 10 Towns	Ratio
1. Weston	25%
2. Wilton	24%
3. Darien	23%
4. Ridgefield	22%
5. New Fairfield	22%
6. Westport	22%
7. Tolland	21%
8. Simsbury	21%
9. New Canaan	21%
10. Granby	20%
Other Communities	
23. Brookfield	18%
29. Fairfield	17%
36. Farmington	16%
41. W. Hartford	16%
64. Greenwich	14%
93. Norwalk	13%
101. Stamford	12%

Computed by Planimetrics based on data from the U.S. Census and the Connecticut Department of Education

The following chart looks at Darien’s historic and projected population composition for the period from 1970 to 2040. A changing age composition can result in a changing demand for municipal services and an interest in other housing types. Of course, it must be remembered that these are projections and variations can occur, especially further into the future.

Darien’s Age Composition (1970-2010 with projections to 2040)



Age Composition Projections By Planimetrics

A significant characteristic of Darien is the predominance of young families (ages 35 to 54) with children ages 0 to 19. This trend is projected to continue assuming past patterns continue.

However, it is important to note that Darien is different from other communities in significant ways:

- Other communities are experiencing an increase in the number of residents age 55 and older - reflecting the aging of the “baby boomers” (people born between about 1945 and 1965). These people are choosing to “age in place” in their communities. Since Darien has had a pattern of net out-migration in these age groups (i.e. – more people in these age groups are moving out of Darien than are moving in to Darien), the experience locally may be much more modest.
- Other communities are experiencing a decrease in the number of residents age 0-19 (school age population) while Darien is attracting families with children in these age groups. As a result, the school enrollment ratio (public school enrollment as a percent of total population) is among the highest in Connecticut. In 2010, Darien’s enrollment ratio (23%) was almost 50 percent high than the State average of 16 percent (see sidebar).

Population and Household Growth

While many communities are experiencing an increase in the number of smaller households, Darien is experiencing the opposite. Since 1990, the number of larger households has been increasing and the number of smaller households has been decreasing. It is unclear whether this trend will continue or whether Darien will start to experience the trends affecting other communities.

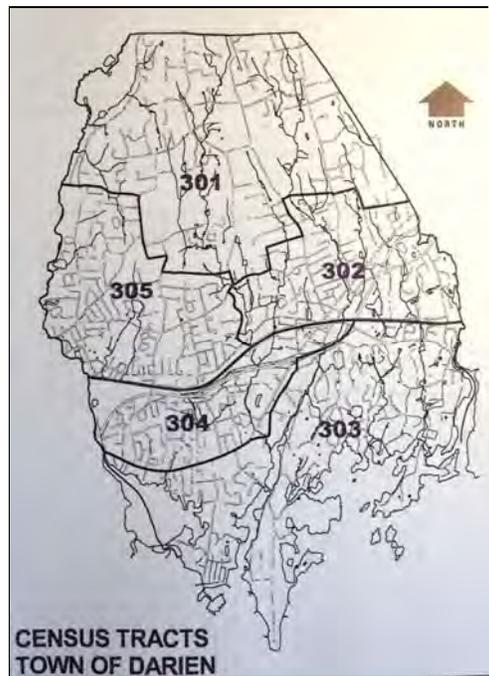
Household Size	1980	1990	2000	2010
1-2 people	2,688	3,150	3,073	2,801
3-4 people	2,539	2,502	2,500	2,633
5+ people	956	747	1,019	1,264
Total	6,183	6,399	6,592	6,698
Average Household Size	3.04	2.85	3.00	3.09

U.S. Census

Location of Growth

All Census tracts in Darien grew in population between 2000 and 2010. The most robust growth was in tracts 304 and 305.

While some of this growth can be explained by new construction (such as the Avalon Bay development in the early 2000s in tract 304), most change occurs within existing housing units (smaller households being replaced by larger households). As evidence of the impact of changes in existing housing units, almost all tracts in Darien showed a population decrease between 1970 and 1990 despite an increase in the number of housing units town-wide.



Census Tract	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
301	2,992	3,094	2,983	3,451	3,502
302	3,229	2,992	2,994	3,378	3,442
303	4,278	3,962	3,859	4,057	4,156
304	3,785	3,315	3,177	3,392	3,958
305	6,042	5,190	5,022	5,329	5,674

U.S. Census

Housing Units

1960	5,087
1970	5,952
1980	6,340
1990	6,653
2000	6,792
2010	7,074

US Census. Data for 1980 to 2010 reflects number of units. Due to data availability, data for 1960 and 1970 reflects number of households.

Housing In Darien

According to the U.S. Census, Darien had about 7,074 housing units in 2010. Over the last two decades, Darien has been adding an average of about 20 housing units per year. This growth rate is a reflection of the fact that there is little undeveloped land in Darien so net housing growth occurs primarily through redevelopment of existing properties.

The housing stock in Darien consists primarily of single-family detached homes. As a result, the vast majority of homes in Darien (85%) are owner-occupied. About 7 percent of the residential units in Darien were multi-family units according to the 2010 Census (although this does not reflect the development of “Kensett” or the redevelopment of “The Heights At Darien” since that time.

Housing Tenure

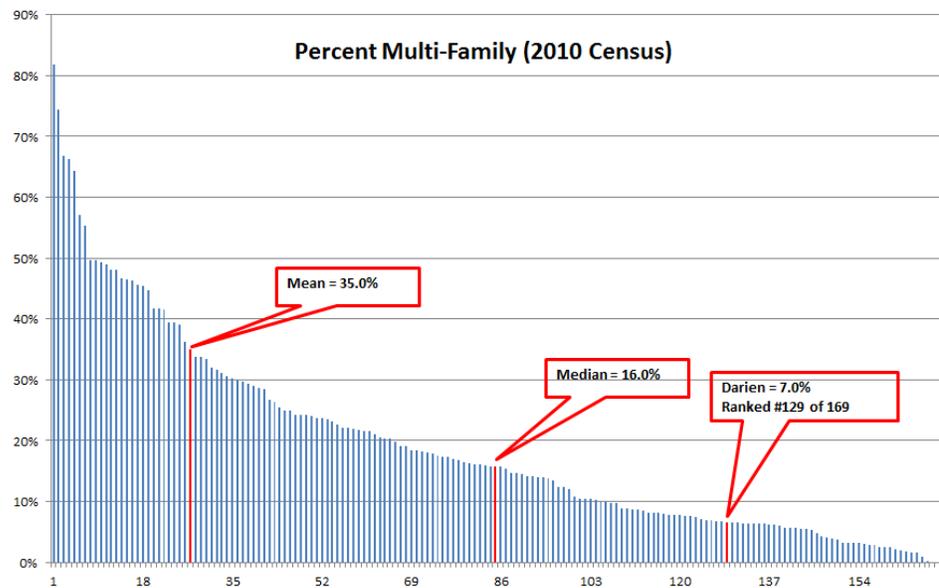
	Darien	State
Owner	85%	68%
Renter	15%	32%

2010 Census

Percent Multi-Family

Darien	7%
Westport	8%
Wilton	9%
New Canaan	16%
Greenwich	29%
State	35%
Norwalk	47%
Stamford	55%

2010 Census



As noted earlier, it is interesting that Darien has a different housing occupancy pattern compared to most other communities in Connecticut. Darien has fewer small households (generally younger households, “empty nesters”, and older residents) and more large households than other communities.

Affordable Housing

About 2.6 percent of the housing units in Darien are considered “affordable housing” (assisted housing, financed by Connecticut Housing Finance Authority mortgages, or sale price restricted by deed). Since less than ten percent of the housing units in Darien meet the State definition of affordable housing, Darien is subject to the State’s Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure (codified as Section 8-30g of the Connecticut General Statutes).

The Town has been working on increasing the number of affordable housing units in ways and locations appropriate for the community. Darien received a four-year moratorium with regard to CGS 8-30g in 2010 due to the number of affordable housing units created in Darien. The Town recently applied for a second moratorium based on the construction of additional units.



Housing Occupancy

	Darien	State
1-2 people	42%	60%
3-4 people	39%	31%
5+ people	19%	9%
Mean	3.09	2.52

2010 Census

Median Sale Price (2011)

Greenwich	\$1,550,000
New Canaan	\$1,413,750
Darien	\$1,225,000
Westport	\$1,025,500
Wilton	\$786,000
Weston	\$784,500
Stamford	\$560,500
Norwalk	\$424,750

CERC, 2014

Affordable Housing

Stamford	16.2%
Norwalk	11.8%
Connecticut	11.3%
Greenwich	4.8%
Wilton	3.9%
Darien	3.4%
Westport	3.0%
New Canaan	2.7%
Weston	0.0%

CT Department of Housing (2014)

Jobs In Darien	
1960	3,735
1970	5,798
1980	8,120
1990	8,490
2000	7,820
2010	7,207

CT Labor Dept.

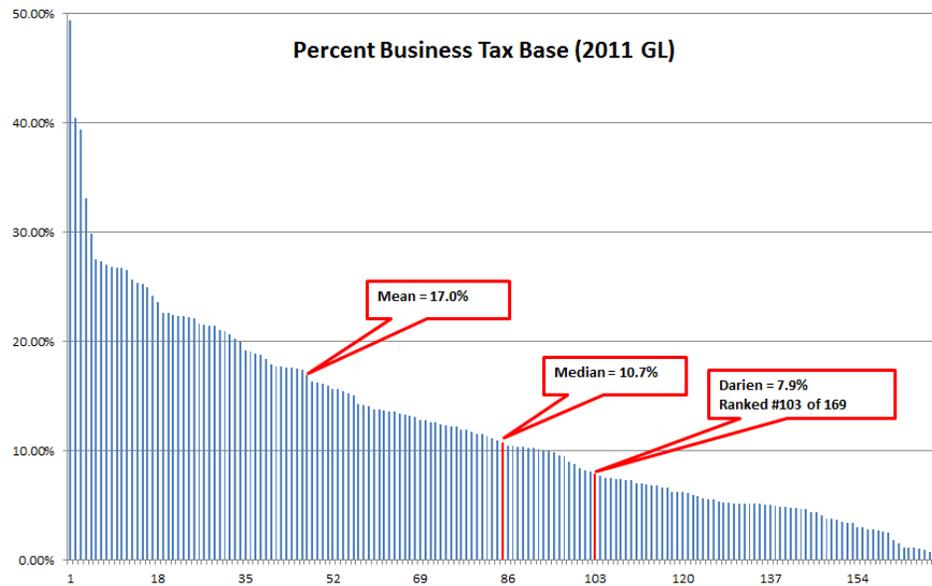
Jobs	
Stamford	75,096
Norwalk	44,463
Greenwich	34,719
Westport	15,420
Wilton	11,717
Darien	7,814
New Canaan	6,368
Weston	1,262

CERC, 2014)

Economic Conditions in Darien

While Darien is not a major employment center, there are many jobs in the community. Darien benefits from its location within the New York City metropolitan area in terms of access to jobs and the availability of goods and services for residents. Overall, Darien has more jobs than housing units and this supports the local economy.

Since Darien is predominantly a residential community, the Grand List (the value of taxable property) is heavily influenced by the value of residential real estate. According to data from the Connecticut Economic Resource Center, the business component of the tax base is about 7.9 percent. It is important to Darien to maintain a strong tax base with a solid business component.



Retail Plaza



Office Building



Land Use In Darien

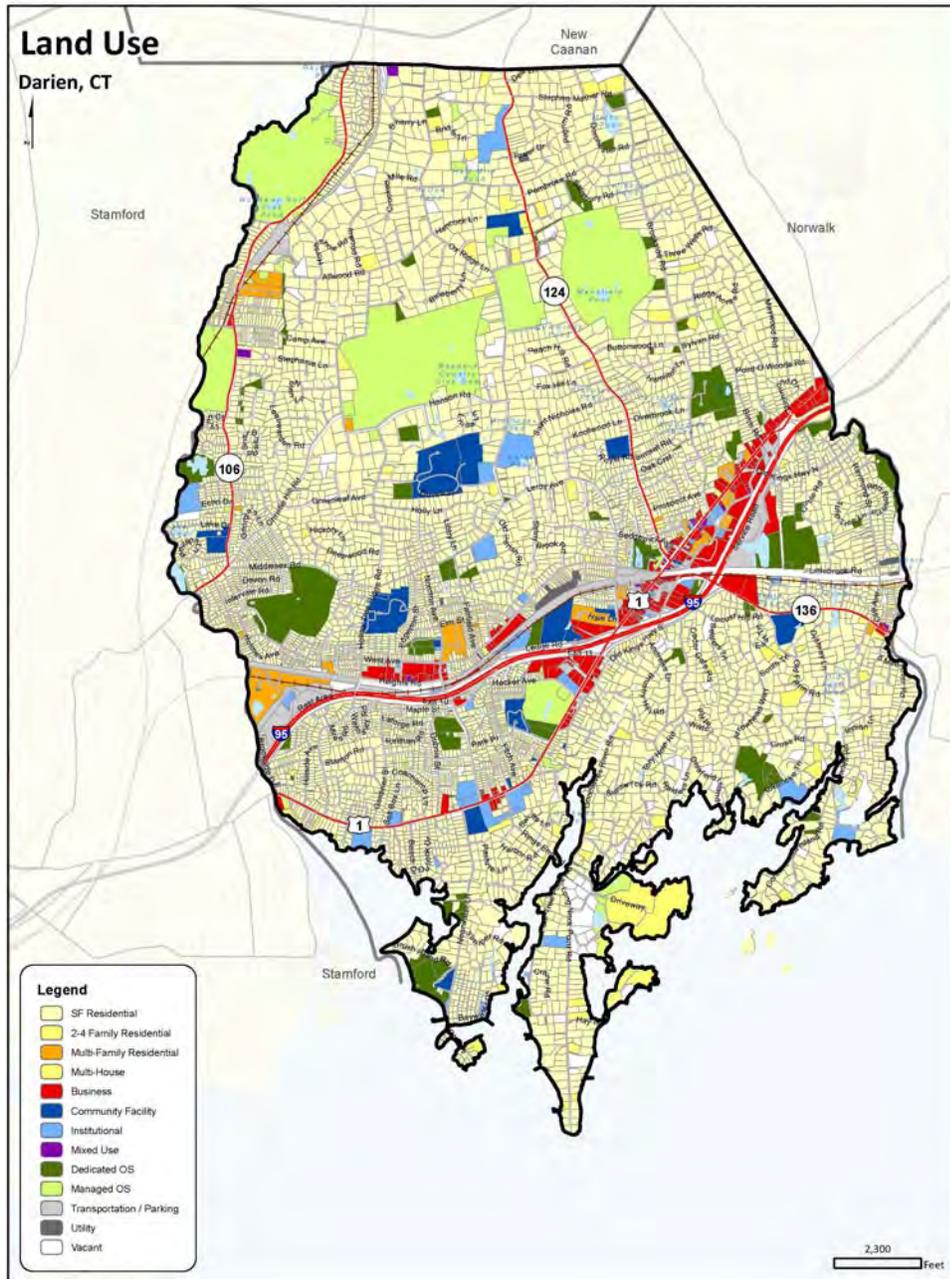
Darien contains approximately 8,236 acres of land. In 2014, about 97 percent of this area was occupied by residential, commercial, or institutional uses or was dedicated to a specific purpose such as public land or protected open space. The remaining land was uncommitted to a specific use.

Land Use Tabulation

Based on Assessor records for 2014, properties in Darien were categorized as follows:

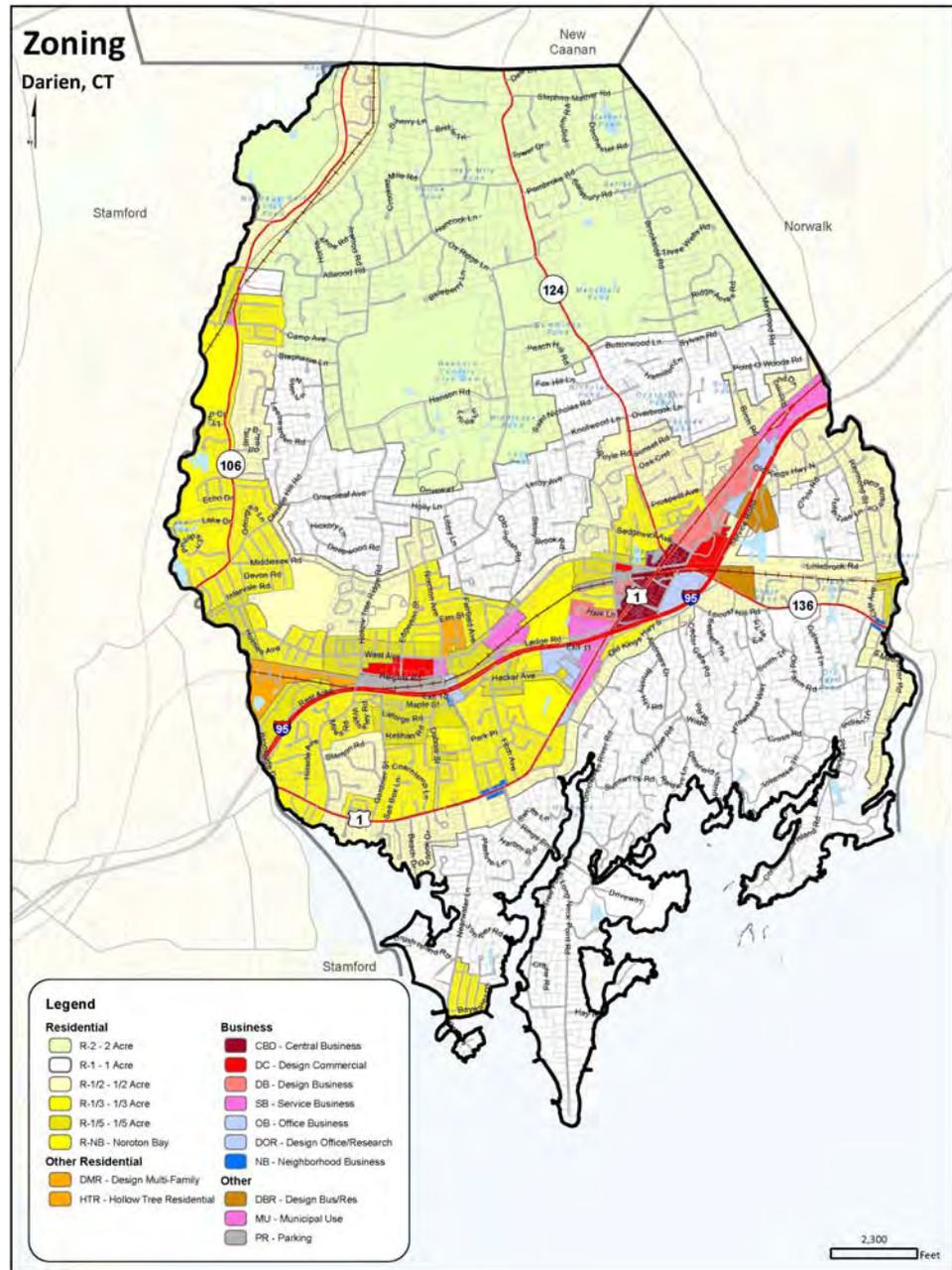
	Percent of Area
Residential	65%
Business	2%
Open Space	10%
Town Facility / Institutional	5%
Road / Rail / Parking / Water	15%
Developed / Committed	97%
Vacant	3%
Total	100%

Planimetrics based on 2014 Assessor database.



Zoning In Darien

As of 2014, about 95 percent of Darien is zoned for residential use, about 4 percent is zoned for business use, and the remaining land is zoned for parking or municipal use.



PLANNING ISSUES

3

Overview

This section summarizes issues and concerns which were identified as part of the POCD update. These issues and concerns were identified through:

- a discussion of issues with the Planning and Zoning Commission,
- input from the Board of Selectmen,
- responses to a survey of Town department heads,
- field trips around Darien,
- interviews with key officials and stakeholders,
- responses to an on-line survey, and
- a community meeting devoted to hearing from Darien residents.

Based on the results of these exercises, it was felt that the POCD should be organized around three main thematic elements:

- **Conservation-Related Strategies** - Things Darien wants to protect or preserve in the future.
- **Development-Related Strategies** - How Darien wants to guide future growth and change.
- **Infrastructure-Related Strategies** - Facilities Darien wants to support the overall vision.

“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”

Margaret Wheatley
Writer

Locations of “Prouds”



Community Meeting Input

In October 2014, a community workshop meeting was held at the Town Hall to get input from Darien residents. Approximately 50 people attended the meeting and participated in the following exercises:

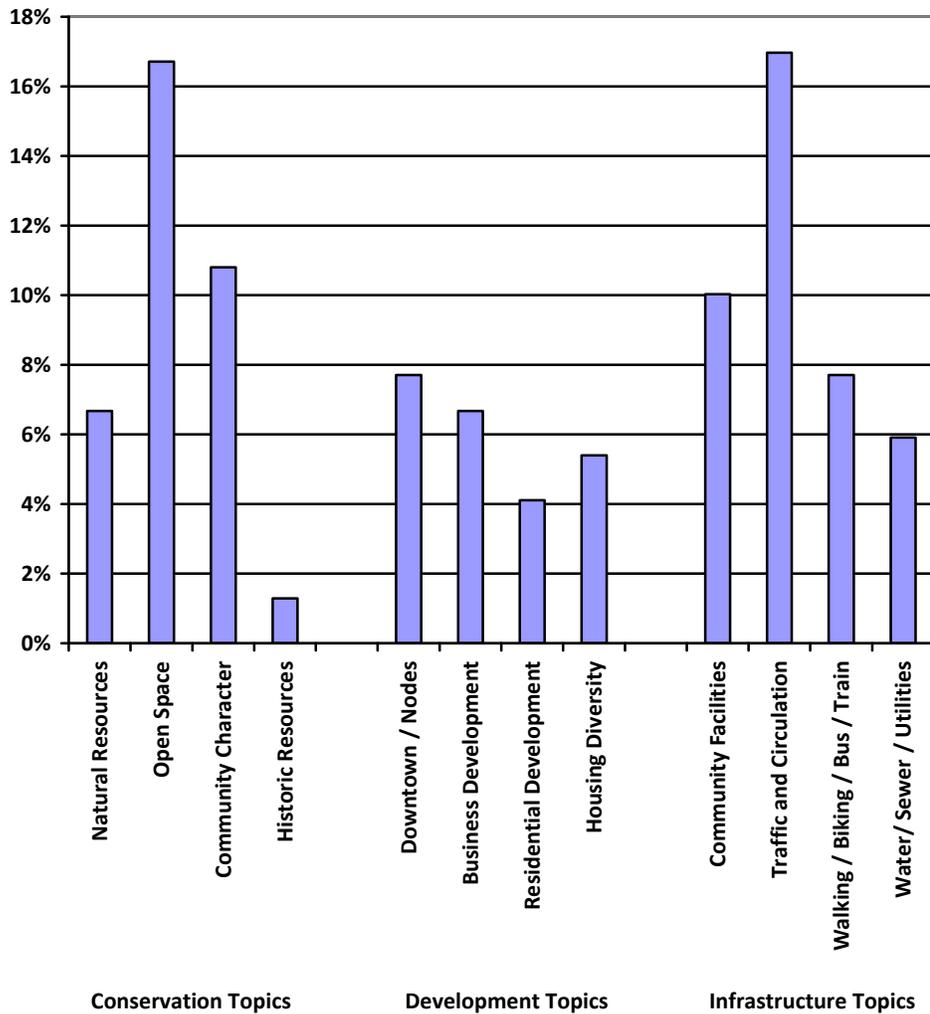
- placing a blue dot on a map showing where they lived,
- identifying things in Darien they were “proud” of,
- identifying things in Darien they were “sorry” about,
- allocating planning points among topics typically considered in a POCD (see chart below), and
- participating in an open discussion of the topics that received the most planning points.

The potential planning priorities identified were traffic and circulation, open space, community character, community facilities, and downtown/nodes.

Locations of “Sorries”



Potential Planning Priorities

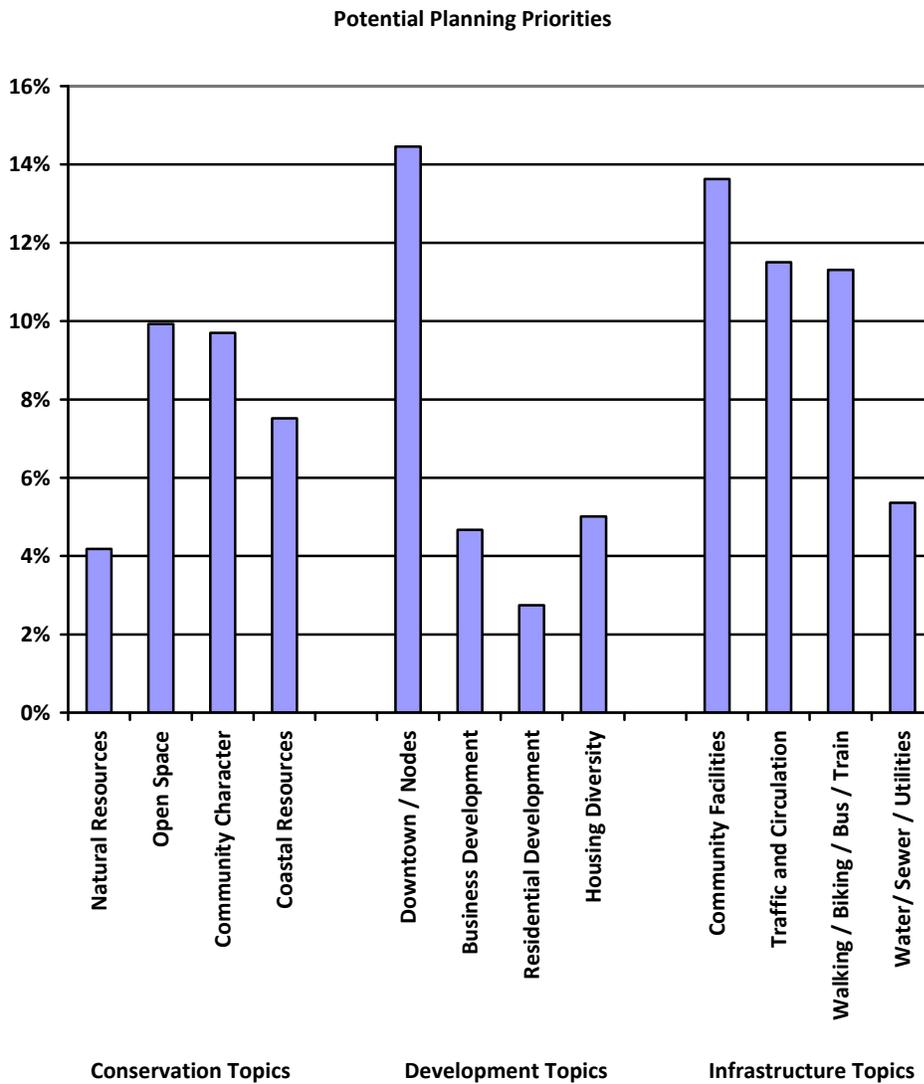


On-Line Survey Input

An on-line survey was also conducted to get input from Darien residents. The questions were similar to the exercises conducted at the public meeting. Approximately 850 people participated in the survey. The availability of the survey was publicized as follows:

- press releases,
- handouts at the train stations, and
- handouts at the library.

The potential planning priorities identified were downtown/nodes, community facilities, traffic and circulation, walking/biking/bus/train, and open space.



Community Input

In an introductory meeting, participants indicated that preservation of open space was important to them.

In an on-line survey, participants indicated that open space and community character were important to them.

Conservation-Related Strategies

From the introductory exercises, the following conservation issues were identified as being important:

<p>Maintain and Enhance Community Character</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darien needs to preserve / enhance the things that make the community special <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Coastline / beaches ○ Schools ○ Main-line rail service to New York City • The challenge is to maintain character while growth occurs • Darien should retain a predominantly single family character
<p>Preserve Open Space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The open space Darien has contributes to community character • Darien needs to be proactive if it wants to preserve open space • Darien should consider buying any property that could be preserved as open space
<p>Protect Natural Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runoff, storm drainage, and water quality are issues in Darien • Darien needs to continue educating residents about the value of environmental protection
<p>Manage Coastal Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal areas make Darien unique and these areas need to be preserved and enhanced • Darien needs to prepare for the possibility of sea level rise • Darien should find ways to increase public access to Long Island Sound
<p>Promote Sustainability and Resiliency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darien should seek ways to be “greener” and be more sustainable in the future • Darien should continue to find ways to be resilient with regard to storm events, sea level rise, and other threats

Development-Related Strategies

The following development issues were identified as being important during the introductory exercises:

<p>Maintain and Enhance Downtown</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown has a lot to do with character also • Downtown needs to be inviting • Encouraging and supporting the appropriate development and redevelopment of downtown is important • Recent revitalization has been successful but there is still more to do • Must remain vigilant over architecture/signage • Parking and traffic are seen as issues • Pedestrian crosswalks and connections are key
<p>Transform Noroton Heights</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging and supporting the appropriate development and redevelopment of Noroton Heights is important • Need to consider Noroton Heights as similar to downtown • Signage/pedestrian access are also important
<p>Manage Residential Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building coverage / bulk is becoming a concern, especially in small lot areas • Maybe it is time to revisit coverage and height regulations • Darien should continue to provide for housing diversity / choices that fit within the fabric of the community • Darien should anticipate how to accommodate the housing needs of an aging population
<p>Guide Business / Economic Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darien should review all commercial Zoning Regulations

Community Meeting

In an on-line survey, participants indicated that downtown Darien and Noroton Heights were important to them.

Community Meeting

In an introductory meeting, participants indicated they were extremely proud of the community facilities in Darien:

- Schools
- Beaches
- Parks
- Library

In an introductory meeting, participants indicated that traffic and circulation were important topics to them.

In an on-line survey, participants indicated the following topics were important to them.

- Community Facilities
- Traffic and Circulation
- Walking / Biking / Bus / Train

Infrastructure-Related Strategies

The following infrastructure issues were identified as being important during the introductory exercises:

<p>Address Community Facility Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darien needs to continue to invest in community facilities and keep facilities up-to-date (schools, Town Hall, Public Works, etc.) • Darien needs to make efficient use of the facilities, buildings, and spaces it has • There are capacity issues at some elementary schools and this has resulted in the use of portable classrooms
<p>Maintain and Enhance Vehicular Transportation Systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic is a problem particularly at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rush hour ○ School arrival and dismissal times ○ When there is a problem on I-95 • Can the small number of choke points be addressed?
<p>Maintain and Enhance Pedestrian / Bicycle Transportation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build and maintain safe sidewalks and biking lanes wherever possible. • Darien needs a plan or a vision for a pedestrian network for the entire town • Same for a bicycle network
<p>Manage Utility Infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drainage and stormwater management issues are important • Expanding natural gas lines would be beneficial

CONSERVATION STRATEGIES



COMMUNITY CHARACTER



NATURAL RESOURCES



COASTAL RESOURCES



OPEN SPACE

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. 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.

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

Coastal Assets



Community Facilities



Vibrant Downtown



Small-Town Feel



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 should retain a predominantly single family character.” 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 character but 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



Scenic Character



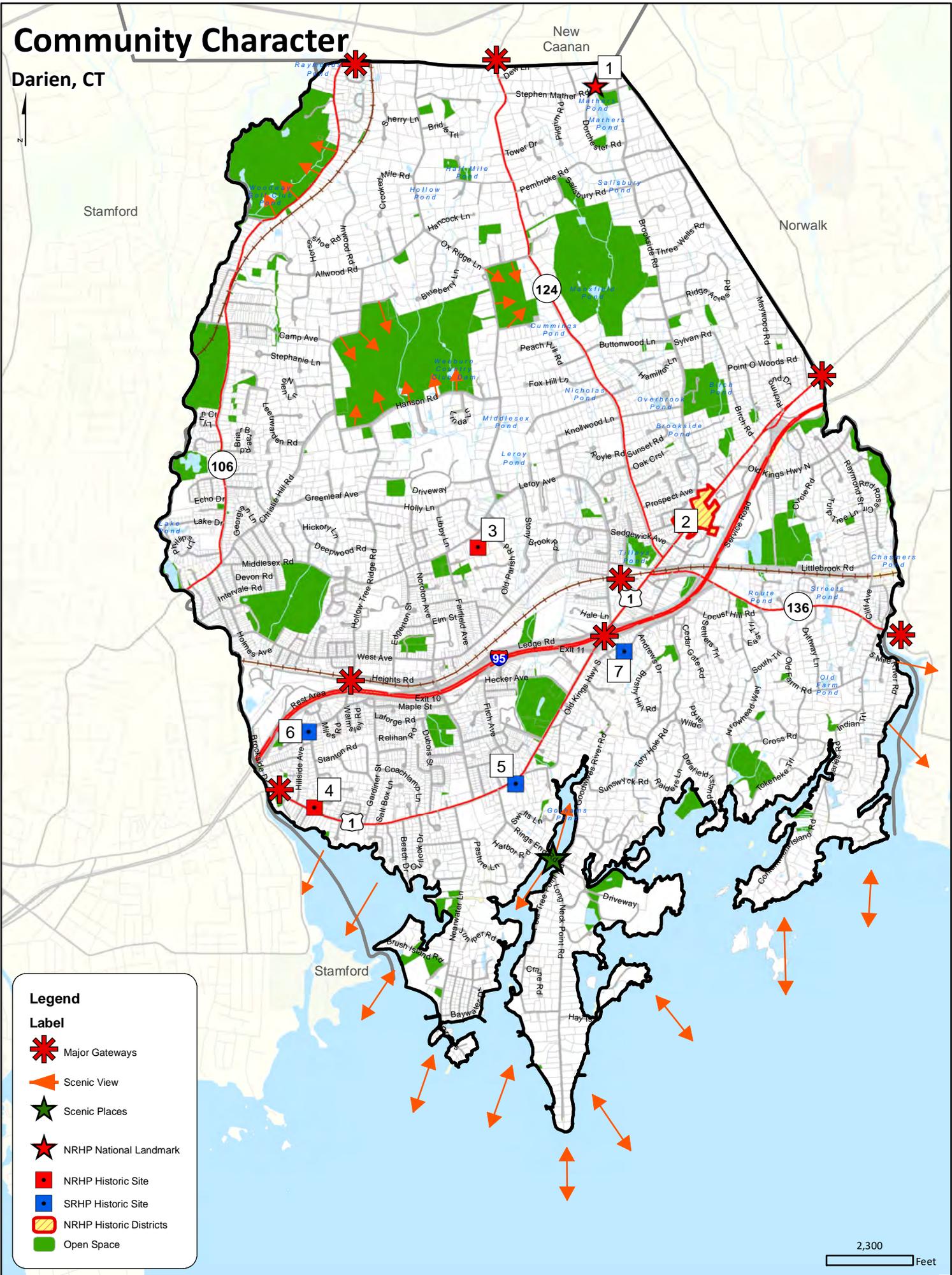
Downtown Character



Maintain And Enhance Overall Character		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Continue efforts to maintain and enhance community character.	Town	
Action Steps		
2. Undertake, stimulate and coordinate public and private actions for maintaining and improving the overall physical appearance of Darien.	Town	PZC ARB BC

Community Character

Darien, CT



Legend

Label

-  Major Gateways
-  Scenic View
-  Scenic Places
-  NRHP National Landmark
-  NRHP Historic Site
-  SRHP Historic Site
-  NRHP Historic Districts
-  Open Space

2,300 Feet

Manage Character Features

Preserve Scenic Features – Darien will consider adopting regulations to incorporate consideration of scenic features into local approvals. Darien has a number of scenic areas (such as the entire shoreline area), scenic roads, and scenic views and these should be recognized and protected.

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 a few years ago, 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 a consolidated lighting regulation to help ensure that lighting (commercial, institutional, and residential) does not negatively impact community character. 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. Recent work by the utility companies has suggested that removing hazardous trees and thinning tree crowns further away from electrical lines but with the potential to fall on electrical lines is preferable to simply pruning trees and branches close to the wires. This is because the selective pruning helps strengthen the overall tree environment so that trees are less likely to break in the future.

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 Noroton Heights.	Town	PW

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
- 1950 Boston Post 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 Highway South
- 41 St. Nicholas Road
- First Congregational Church (a red oak)

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 31):

National Historic Landmark	1. Stephen Mather Home (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. Darien Community Association House (274 Middlesex Road)
	4. Pond-Weed House (2591 Post Road)
	5. Abram Clark House (1830 Post Road)
<i>Properties on the National Register are also automatically listed on the State Register of Historic Places.</i>	6. Benjamin Weed House (79 Hollow Tree Ridge)
	7. Old Post Road Farmhouse (87 Old Kings Highway South)

Information on a number of other historic buildings in Darien is available due to 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 as 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 and 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 has done an excellent job maintaining and enhancing community character. The Board reviews commercial developments and provides comments to the applicant and to the Commission. To aid in their work, they also 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

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.

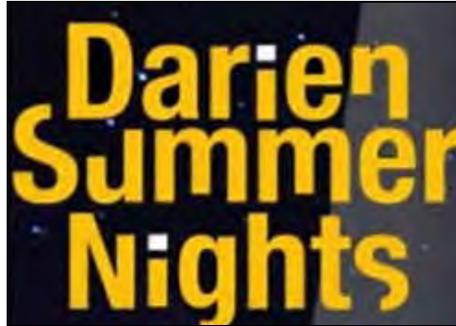
The following table identifies some of the resources that have been identified as contributing to community spirit:

Resource	Description
Unique Events	Unique events (parades, fairs, and concerts) where residents join in a common activity add to community 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 is 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



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	

Volunteer Firefighters



High School EMS Volunteers



Darien High School Football



**Community Projects
(Weed Beach Playground)**



PRESERVE OPEN SPACE

5

Overview

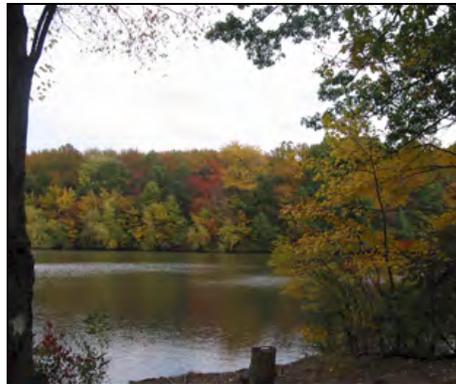
About 10 percent of Darien’s land area is categorized as dedicated open space or managed open space. Open space can help protect community character, enhance the quality of life for residents, conserve important natural resources, provide wildlife habitat, and provide fiscal and economic benefits.

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



Ox Ridge Hunt Club



Woodway Country Club



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 typically 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

About 97 percent of the land area in Darien is developed or committed to land uses so there are limited opportunities to acquire additional open space in the future. Still, Darien will seek to acquire land for open space whenever possible and appropriate.

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 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.

Preserve Open Space		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to preserve open space as opportunities present themselves.	Town	DLT
2. Promote public use of, and access to, open space.	Town	DLT
3. Carefully examine any and all existing and future opportunities to preserve land for open space.	Town	DLT
4. Consider acquiring land adjacent to existing open spaces in order to expand and enhance existing open spaces.	Town	DLT
5. Consider acquiring waterfront property, should it become available.	Town	DLT
6. As appropriate, strive to convert managed open space into dedicated open space owned by the Town or the land trust by acquiring land or easements or development rights..	Town	DLT
7. Continue to coordinate open space preservation efforts with the Darien Land Trust and similar organizations.	CC	DLT
Action Steps		
8. Establish and maintain an inventory of existing open space and desirable open space properties.	CC	DLT Staff
9. Create and distribute maps to identify publicly accessible open space in Darien.	CC	DLT

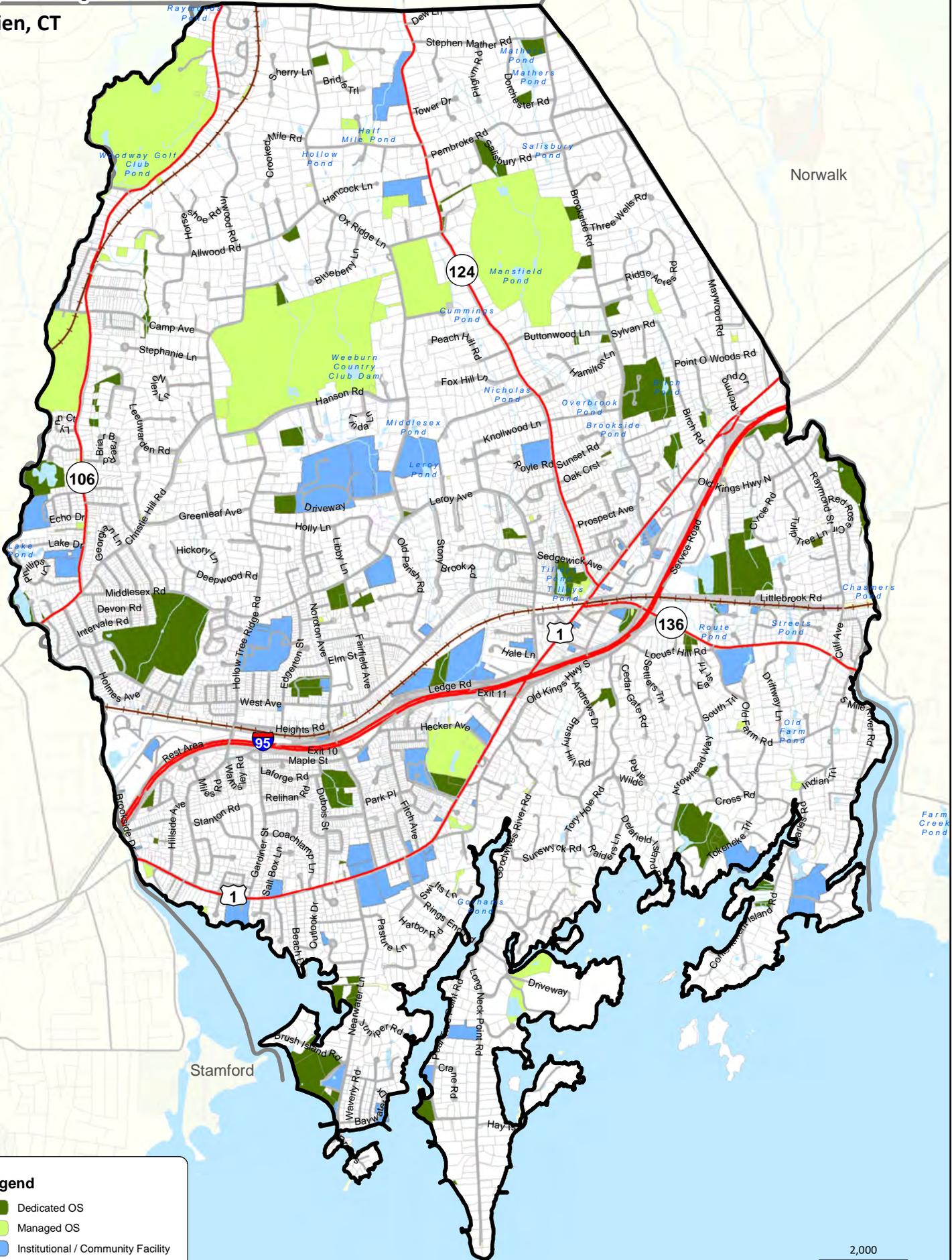
Open Space

Darien, CT

New Caanan

Norwalk

Stamford



Legend

- Dedicated OS
- Managed OS
- Institutional / Community Facility

2,000 Feet

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. In recent years, the Town acquired two parcels (Cherry Street and Hecker Avenue) that are adjacent to existing open spaces and provide connections to surrounding neighborhoods and open spaces.

These types of efforts 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. Deposit and replenish monies in the open space fund through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual appropriations in the operating budget, • special appropriations in the capital budget, and/or • bonding in anticipation of future open space purchases. 	BOS	RTM
3. Pursue state and federal grants for open space acquisition.	Town	
Action Steps		
4. Amend the open space section in the Subdivision Regulations and consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	
5. Establish a “land acquisition fund” (as per CGS Section 7-131r) to set aside monies for open space preservation.	BOS	RTM
6. Encourage philanthropy for open space preservation.	Town	
7. Work with the Darien Land Trust and other organizations (including public-private partnerships) to preserve open space.	Town	DLT
8. Investigate how to establish a “fast-track” process for approving the acquisition of open space.	BOS	RTM

MANAGE COASTAL RESOURCES

6

Overview

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 all the way to the Manhattan skyline, and
- there are hundreds of boats registered to Darien residents and countless 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 47](#) shows the "coastal boundary area" where certain activities are regulated and managed.

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

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 since all such waters eventually end up in the coastal areas (and a 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
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 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 will 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 will consider acquiring other waterfront property, should it become available, in order to provide a waterfront park or other community amenity.
 - The Town will 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

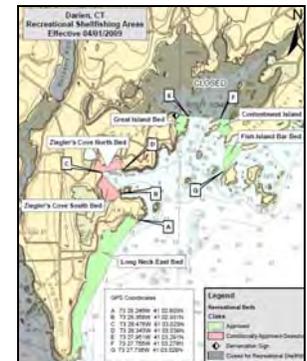


Boating Access



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.

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. Maintain and implement the 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

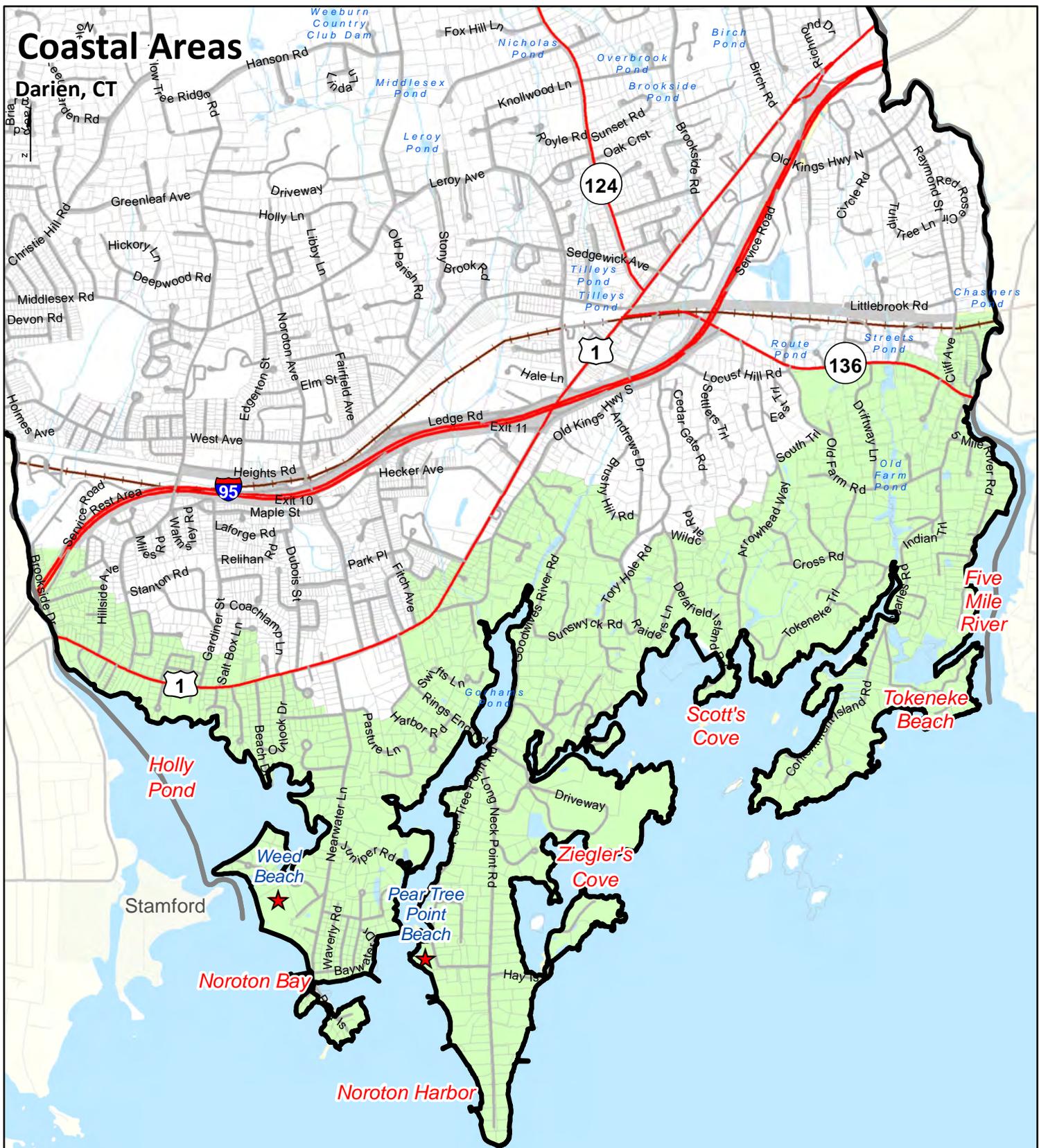


Coastal Access



Coastal Areas

Darien, CT



Legend

★ Darien Beaches

Aa Harbor Area

Coastal Area Boundary

1,600

Feet

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, where the lease is for, 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 with holders of commercial shellfish leases.	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



Overview

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

Conserving natural resource helps preserve environmental functions, enhance community character, and enhance the overall quality of life ...

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 Noroton Heights areas and the main river estuaries.

Legend

Surface Water Quality Class

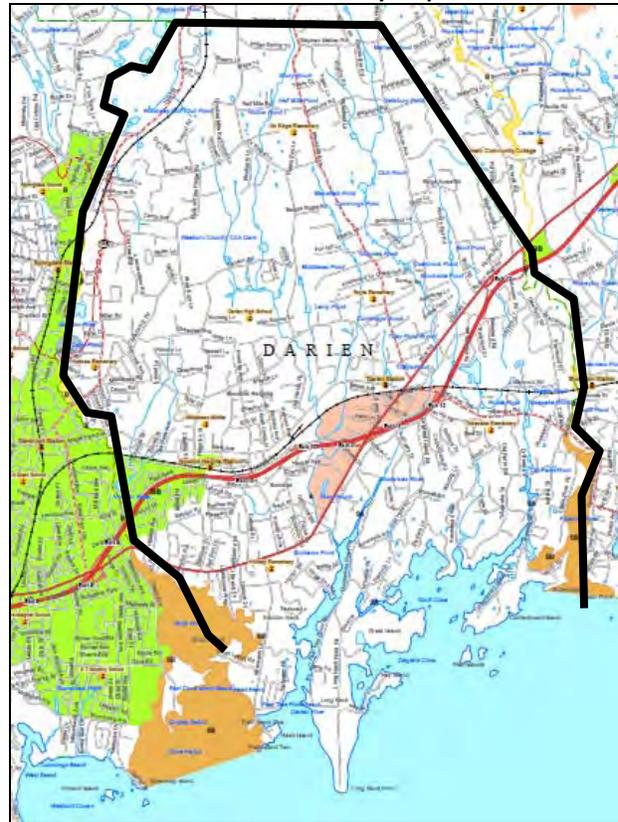
	A		A
	AA		AA
	B, B*		B, B*
	SA		SA
	SB		SB

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, parking requirements, etc.) to reduce pollutants and allow for the use of some areas for implementing LID practices,
- implementing “low impact development” 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.

A. Protect Water Quality		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to protect water quality.	CC	PZC IWC
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).	CC	
5. Consider adopting a “septic management ordinance” which requires pumping of septic tanks and inspection of septic fields on a regular basis.	BOS	RTM 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.

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

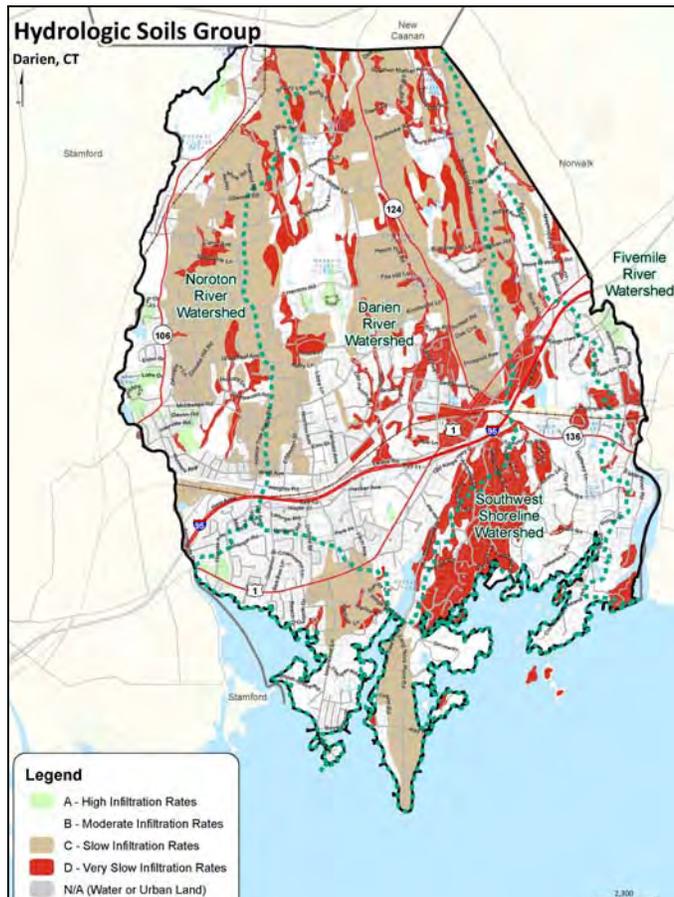
The management of water runoff *quantity* is also an important consideration for overall environmental health. Development can adversely affect water quantity since impervious surfaces:

- 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. One of the main reasons for this is that, over time, more development occurs in excess of the capacity of the drainage infrastructure that was installed many years ago. Even though the Town requires drainage impacts be ameliorated as part of new development, more runoff is resulting from more intense storms and incremental additions of impervious surfaces.

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.



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 is quite good but it 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.

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.

Dry Detention Basin



Water Quality Basin



No Curbing / Rain Garden



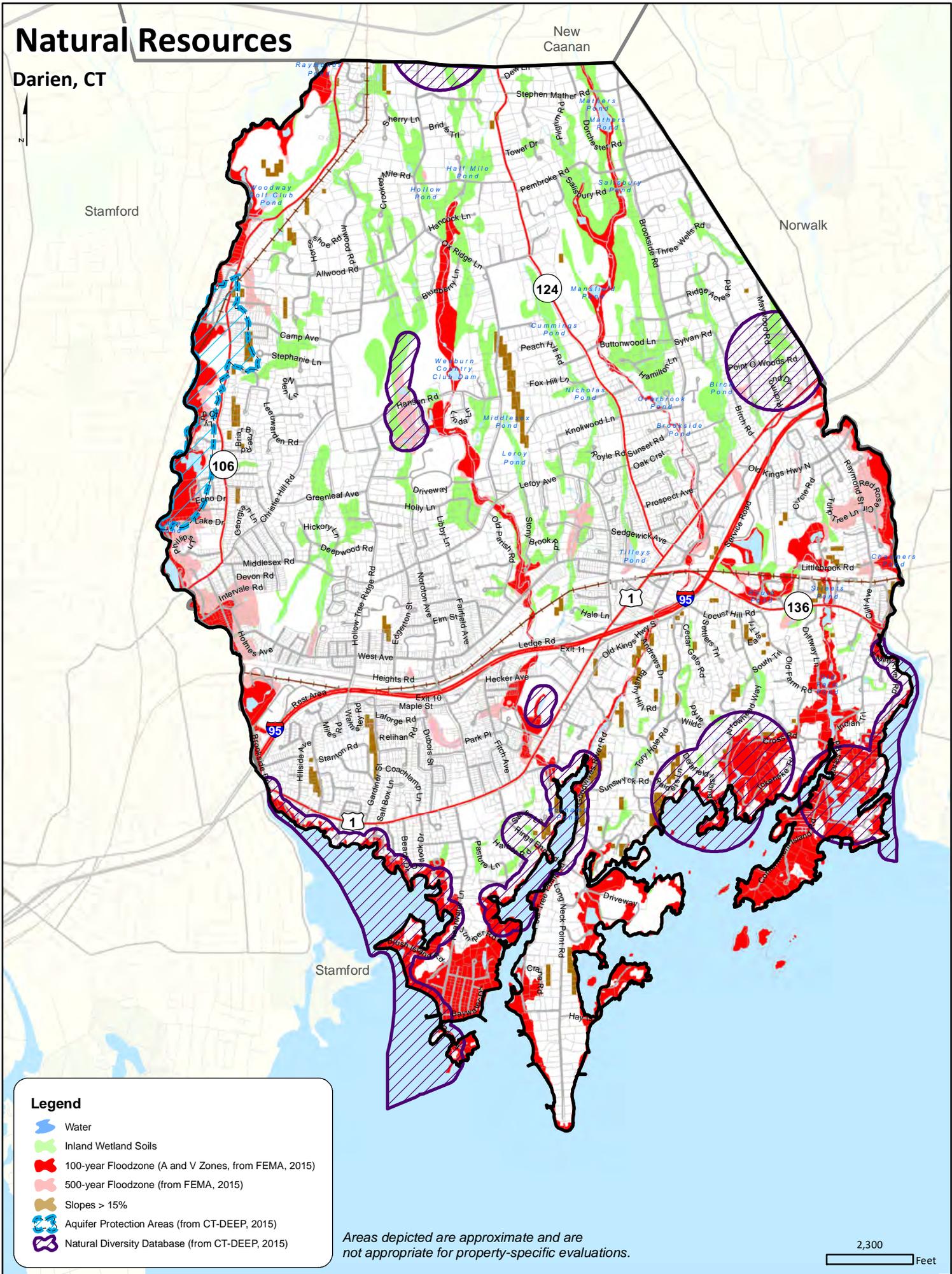
LID at Darien Library



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” practices to help manage water quantity issues.	PZC	
Action Steps		
7. Consider requiring additional “freeboard” above minimum requirements when people rebuild in flood-prone areas.	PZC	
8. Adopt standards to regulate <i>impervious</i> 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



Legend

-  Water
-  Inland Wetland Soils
-  100-year Floodzone (A and V Zones, from FEMA, 2015)
-  500-year Floodzone (from FEMA, 2015)
-  Slopes > 15%
-  Aquifer Protection Areas (from CT-DEEP, 2015)
-  Natural Diversity Database (from CT-DEEP, 2015)

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

2,300 Feet

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 sites.	PZC	IWC

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES



MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE DOWNTOWN

8

Overview

This section of the POCD suggests strategies for downtown Darien.

Darien residents are proud of the downtown. The pedestrian-oriented development patterns which exist in the downtown create a “sense of place” and this sense of place creates value because it attracts shoppers, workers, residents, and others. In addition, the downtown area supports many social activities (lunches, dinners, events, gatherings, etc.) which are part of the overall quality of life in the community.

“Create a compelling vision, one that takes people to a new place, and then translate that vision into a reality ...”

Warren Bennis
American scholar / author

Downtown



Downtown



Yesterday



Today



Downtown Extension

Over time, it may make sense to consider extension of the CBD zoning to the areas east of Old Kings Highway South (presently zoned for office).

In the meantime, any redevelopment of this area should consider the potential for first floor retail uses and moving these buildings closer to the street. This would create a street environment similar to that emerging on Grove Street where the downtown walking environment extends to streets other than the Post Road.

Encourage Appropriate Development

History shows that downtown has grown and changed over the years. New buildings have been built and the character and vibrancy of downtown has been extended to streets behind the Post Road. As a result, the downtown has adapted over time to the changing needs of the community and its residents.

Recent development has improved the appearance and function of downtown and has balanced an increase in floor area with improvements in walkability and overall character. Darien residents are appreciative of the improvements and enhancements. In addition, residents have expressed a willingness to consider more uses and intensity provided it results in an attractive and pedestrian-friendly environment that is attractive and desirable (see the sidebar on [page 74](#) for a discussion of findings from the Route 1 Study).

The POCD recommends that the “resilient adaptation” of downtown be encouraged to continue.

Encourage Appropriate Development		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to encourage the “resilient adaptation” of downtown as a vibrant and dynamic place with a “sense of place.”	PZC	
2. Seek to be pro-active in terms of establishing and implementing an overall vision for downtown.	PZC	
3. Ensure an appropriate transition from downtown to adjacent residential areas.	PZC	

Outdoor Dining Opportunity



Newer Building



Maintain Character

While continued development and redevelopment of the downtown will occur, it is important that this be managed within overall performance parameters to maintain an appropriate character and scale.

The Architectural Review Board has been doing an excellent job at guiding the design of new development in the downtown and elsewhere. These efforts will continue and should be enhanced. Another option would be to establish a “village district” as authorized by CGS Section 8-2j.

Enhance Downtown While Maintaining Character		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Guide future downtown development in ways consistent with Darien’s New England character.	PZC	ARB
2. Maintain and enhance the design review process for downtown.	ARB	PZC
Action Steps		
3. Supplement the design guidelines with additional material relevant to downtown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourage / require “public art” design guidelines for parking structures location and design of service areas (mechanical equipment, transformers, meters, delivery, refuse, recycling) indenting of doorways to avoid pedestrian conflicts 	ARB	Staff
4. Consider establishing a “village district” overlay zone which extends out to include adjacent non-residential areas including parking lots (Town, private, State), when appropriate.	PZC	

Character Preservation

As was stated in the 2006 POCD, the overall philosophy has been to keep development consistent with the small-town New England character of Darien.

This does not mean that change cannot or will not take place. Rather, it means that future growth and development should contribute to, and be in keeping with, the overall character of the downtown.

Village District

Section 8-2j of the Connecticut General Statutes allows for the establishment of a village district overseen by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Due to the “distinctive character, landscape and historic value” in the downtown area, the POCD specifically recommends the establishment of a “village district” in the downtown area, when appropriate.

Potential Village District Location



Enhance The Downtown Street System

Downtown Darien is organized around a street system which supports:

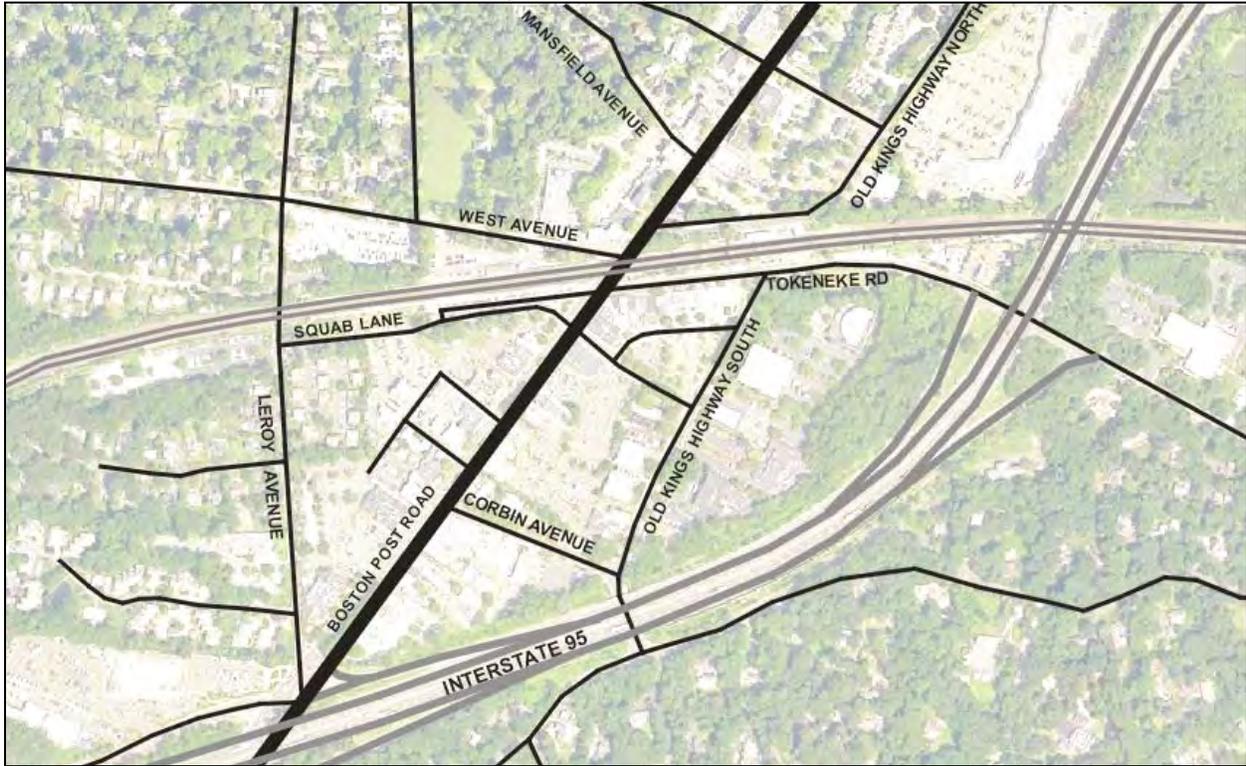
- visibility and access for buildings and uses,
- circulation of pedestrians, and
- circulation of vehicles.

However, the overall arrangement of the street system is not well configured to meet all of the needs of pedestrians, uses, and vehicles.

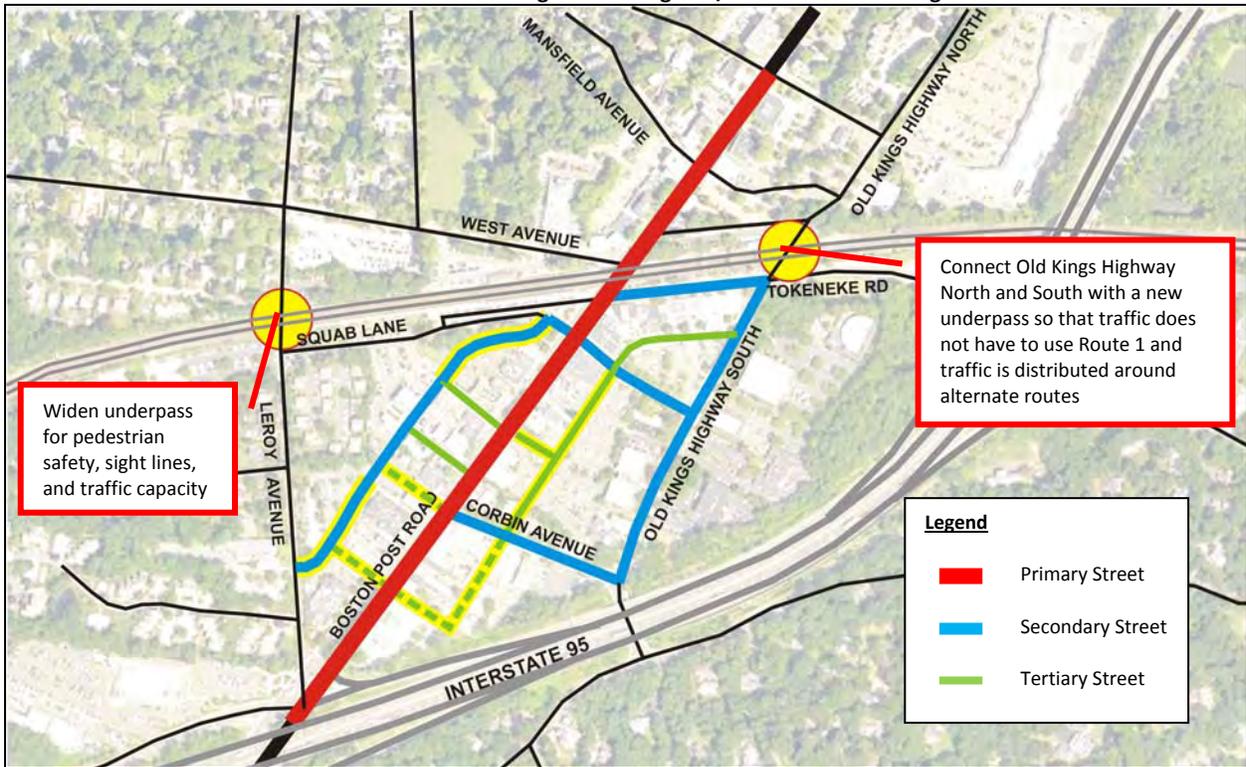
The POCD recommends that the street system of the downtown be enhanced as shown in the diagrams on the facing page. The establishment of additional road connections will enhance circulation for pedestrians and vehicles and provide additional opportunities for new uses in a “street grid” or block-type system. In addition, the street hierarchy can be used to vary street design (lane assemblies, sidewalk widths, parking arrangements, building setbacks, and/or building heights).

Enhance The Downtown Street System		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Ensure that traffic issues and improvements are addressed.	Town	PZC
2. Enhance circulation in the downtown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widen underpass at Leroy Avenue • Tunnel to connect Old Kings Highway North and South 	Town	PW
3. Create shorter “street” blocks (could be public or private): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend Grove Street to Leroy Avenue with a connection back to Route 1 • Establish a parallel street on the south side of Route 1 (generally through part of the Center Street parking lot) • Make other street connections to shorten blocks 	Town	PZC
Action Steps		
4. Implement the types of recommendations included in the Route 1 Study: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect Old Kings Highway North and South • Widen underpass at Leroy Avenue • Review signal locations and coordinate timing • Revise lane configurations / turning movements • Revisit traffic flow at Train Station, Tokeneke Road and Center Street to reduce conflicts and congestion • Consider one-way streets (if necessary) to guide traffic to signalized locations 	Town	PZC PW

Existing Street Configuration Diagram



Possible Future Street Configuration Diagram / Possible Street Categories



Walk Score

A “walk score” is a measure of walkability and is based on a “web app” methodology available at walkscore.com. The walk score reflects the diversity of uses and destinations in an area and the provisions for pedestrians.

According to the Walk Score website, research related to walk scores has found that walkable places perform better economically. Studies have found that residential and commercial rents and sale prices are higher in more walkable areas.

Walk scores for some communities are as follows:

Downtowns	Score
Princeton, NJ	95
Newport, RI	94
Greenwich	93
New Canaan	89
Fairfield	84
Ridgefield	81
Darien	71
Westport	69
Mystic, CT	69
Madison, CT	61
Wilton	55

Enhance Pedestrian-Friendliness

Maintaining and enhancing the pedestrian-friendliness of downtown is a key recommendation of the POCD. Pedestrian-friendliness contributes to the overall experience and ambience in the downtown area and the overall “sense of place.”

Enhance Pedestrian-Friendliness		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Focus on the quality of the streetscape (the “public realm”) in downtown, not just development on private lands.	Town	PZC PW
2. Continue to focus on enhancing the pedestrian experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crosswalks in appropriate locations with pedestrian signals and call buttons • Appropriate sidewalk widths • Buildings brought close to or at the street • A continuous street façade • Active first floor uses / outdoor dining, etc. 	Town	PZC PW
3. Enhance pedestrian connections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make mid-block / off-street pedestrian connections • Connect to outlying areas / neighborhoods • Discourage driveways that interrupt the sidewalk and/or continue sidewalks over driveways to make it clear that pedestrians have priority 	Town	PZC PW
Action Steps		
4. Shorten crosswalks (Ledge Road, Leroy Avenue, Tokeneke Road, West Avenue / Mechanic Street) to enhance pedestrian safety.	Town	PZC PW
5. Continue to budget for and provide for pedestrian amenities (trees, benches, lighting, flowers, hanging baskets, fountains, etc.).	PW	BOS PZC BC
6. Refine the “Model Block” specifications (see possible refinements on the facing page).	ARB	PZC PW
7. Work with CT-DOT on improving crosswalks on Boston Post Road and connecting streets.	Staff	
8. Improve lighting and pedestrian-friendliness for areas under the railroad bridges on Boston Post Road and Leroy Avenue.	PW	CT-DOT MNRR

Ledge Road at Boston Post Road



Leroy Avenue at Boston Post Road



Model Block Specifications (Downtown)

A street-level photograph of a downtown block. The image shows a brick building with a white door, a sidewalk, a street with parked cars, and a tree. Several black arrows point from text annotations to specific features in the image.

Address facade design for various sidewalk widths to require inset doorways to prevent conflicts between opening doors and pedestrian movement.

Update light fixture specifications for conversion to LED light sources.

Provide more detailed standards for "complete streets," including details for curb extensions and cross walks, bike lanes, and universal design elements.

Create minimum standard for tree pits and planting strips to ensure compliance with James Urban's tree planting guidelines.

Allow modifications to concrete/brick materials and pattern to identify special places along the corridor and improve soil conditions for street trees.

Expand on standards for benches and trash receptacles to include guidance for sidewalk cafe layout and furnishings.

Downtown Darien Conceptual Redevelopment Plan



NOTE: This drawing is only intended to be illustrative of alternative concepts for downtown Darien. This drawing does not necessarily reflect the policy desires of the Planning and Zoning Commission and should not be construed as such.



NOTE: This drawing is only intended to be illustrative of alternative concepts for downtown Darien. This drawing does not necessarily reflect the policy desires of the Planning and Zoning Commission and should not be construed as such.

Possible Extension Of Grove Street To Leroy Avenue
With A Parking Structure Tucked Into The Hillside And
Liner Buildings Extending The Pedestrian Streetscape Along Grove Street



Dodson and Flinker, 2015

NOTE: This drawing is only intended to be illustrative of alternative concepts for downtown Darien. This drawing does not necessarily reflect the policy desires of the Planning and Zoning Commission and should not be construed as such.

Possible Additional of Buildings On Center Street Parking Area
With A Parking Structure And Liner Buildings (Background) Served By A New Street Parallel To Route 1 And
A New Public Square And Gathering Space (Foreground)



Dodson and Flinker, 2015

NOTE: This drawing is only intended to be illustrative of alternative concepts for downtown Darien. This drawing does not necessarily reflect the policy desires of the Planning and Zoning Commission and should not be construed as such.

Parking Study

A parking study of downtown Darien was completed by Nelson-Nygaard in 2015. Many of the findings and recommendations in that study are relevant to the POCD.

Parking Ratios

Comparing the total number of parking spaces (on street and off street) to the floor area of buildings in the downtown area reveals a parking ratio of:

**2.97 spaces per
1,000 square feet**

This parking supply has proven to be adequate for the parking needs of downtown in most situations.

On the other hand, the zoning regulations require new buildings to provide:

**6.67 spaces per
1,000 square feet**

In other words, the regulations require double the number of parking spaces actually needed.

Manage Downtown Parking

Parking is an important element of downtown areas for the following reasons:

- there must be enough to support activity levels in the downtown on most occasions, and
- there cannot be so much such that it dominates the overall appearance of the downtown and prevents it from having a “sense of place.”

Consolidating parking areas into parking structures can help free up land area for uses that will really enhance the downtown

To ensure that downtown has an appropriate parking environment, Darien should implement the policies and action steps identified below.

Manage Downtown Parking		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to promote a parking philosophy where people park once downtown and visit many destinations as a pedestrian.	Town	
2. Maintain and promote on-street parking wherever possible in the downtown.	Town	PZC PW
3. Seek to provide for distributed parking locations so that all areas benefit from public parking areas.	Town	PZC PC
4. Consider public / private partnerships to expand the parking supply in appropriate locations	Town	PC
Action Steps		
5. Consider creating a separate parking authority / department to manage parking in the downtown area.	BOS	RTM
6. Revisit parking requirements and establish standards appropriate for a mixed-use downtown area.	PZC	
7. Consider allowing multi-story parking structures (perhaps one-story below grade and two-stories or so above grade) in appropriate places (with an active street level use in front).	PZC	
8. Consider incorporating “fee-in-lieu-of-parking” provisions in the Zoning Regulations.	PZC	
9. Improve signage / wayfinding to parking areas.	Town	PW PC

Parking Arrangements - RECOMMENDED

Parallel On-Street Parking



Diagonal On-Street Parking (Pull-In)



**Parking Structure With
Liner Buildings (Parking Behind)**



**Parking Structure With
Street Level Use (Parking Above)**



Parking Arrangements – DISCOURAGED

**No
On-Street Parking**



**Diagonal On-Street
Parking (Back-In)**



**Exposed Surface
Parking Lot**



**Unshielded
Parking Structure**



Parking Arrangements – NOT RECOMMENDED

**Parking Structure
At Sidewalk**



**Perpendicular (Pull-In)
On-Street Parking**



**Perpendicular (Back-In)
On-Street Parking**



Three-Story Buildings

Three-story buildings in the downtown area (and vicinity) include the following:

- Bank of America.
- 10 Corbin Avenue.
- 798 Post Road (across from Starbucks).

Other buildings to consider include:

- 895 Post Road (Subway)
- Darien Sports Shop.
- 30 Old Kings Highway South (two-story building elevated above surface parking).
- 36 Old Kings Highway South (three-story building with a half-story below grade).
- 19 Old Kings Highway South (three-story building).
- Darien Library.

Note that the “Golden” plan for Noroton Heights showed three story buildings and it is a goal of this POCD for downtown to be a more “prominent” place in the overall structure of the community than Noroton Heights.

Golden Plan



Modify Downtown Zoning Regulations

Building Height

At the present time, building heights in the CBD zone are limited to 2 stories and 28 feet (measured from average grade to the mid-point between the roof eave and the roof peak). An increase to 3 stories and 35 feet may be permitted if an open space plaza is provided. This has resulted in a number of gathering spaces which have enhanced downtown.

If Darien is to expand the potential of downtown and capitalize on some of the potential opportunities, additional building height may be necessary (and desirable). The Route 1 Study advocated for more height (such as a full third floor) if it would provide for housing. Any additional building height needs to be complement the overall character of the community.

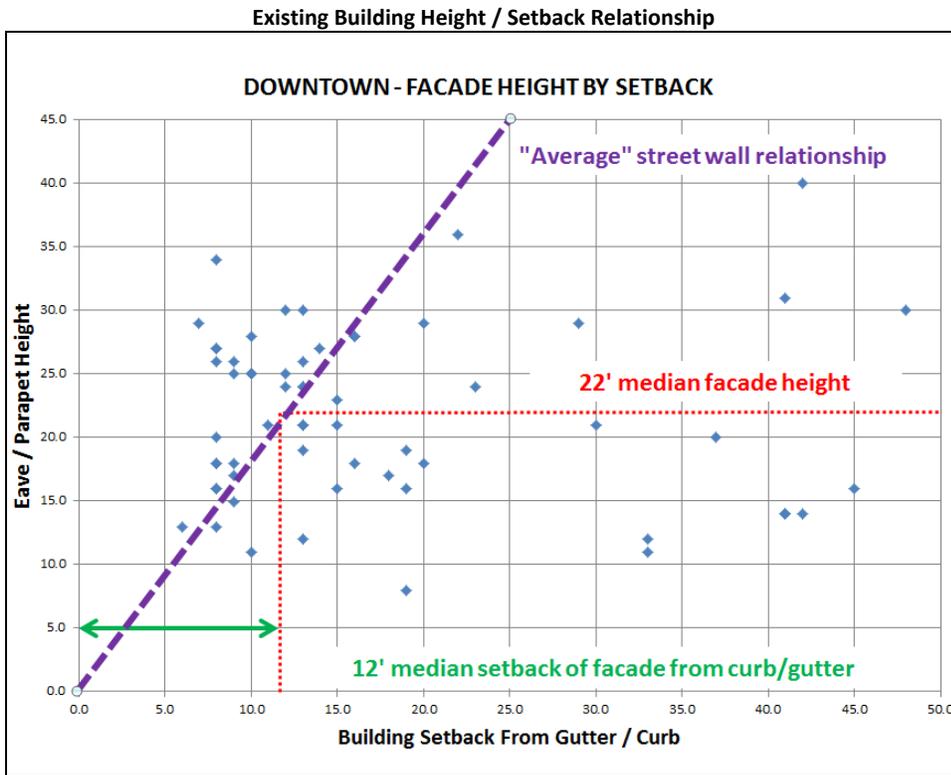
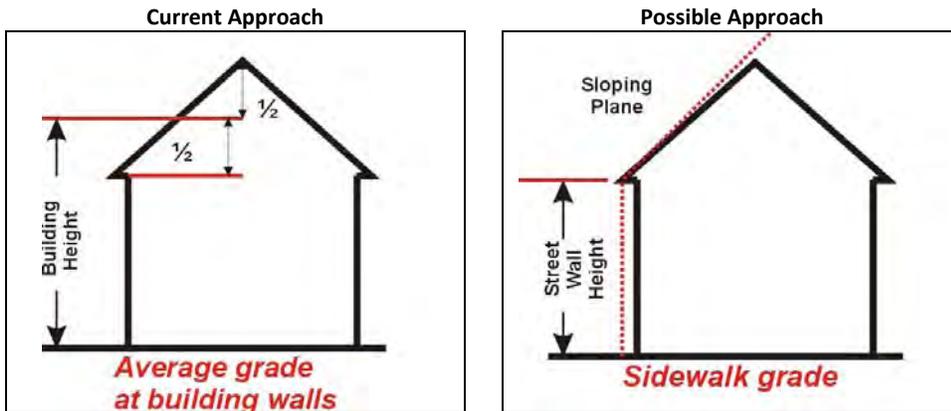
From a “place-making perspective”, signature buildings or elements help people understand an area and orient themselves within it. Design features (such as civic buildings, taller buildings, clock towers, open spaces, plazas, fountains, etc.) help create a sense of place. Some potential “landmark structure” locations are shown below.

Possible Landmark Structure Locations



As shown below, Darien could increase the building height or change from an “average height” approach to a “street wall height” approach which will allow more street wall height provided the building is set back further. The regulations now allow additional height above the basic standard if an open space plaza is provided (sidewalks and walkways would not count) should be continued.

The chart on the bottom of the page might provide some guidance as to the appropriate “street wall height” to consider since it represents the relationship between wall height (to eave or parapet) for all buildings in the downtown relative to the gutter / curb edge in 2015.



Downtown Development

As part of the Route 1 Study, an analysis was done of the “floor area ratio” (FAR) of different blocks in downtown Darien and of other areas. FAR expresses floor area of building as a ratio of site area.

When asked to identify a desirable FAR for downtown Darien, the Route 1 Study indicated that participants felt that an FAR range of up to 0.9 (similar to downtown New Canaan) provided an attractive and pedestrian-friendly environment that people found attractive and desirable.

Examples of FAR = 1.0

One story at 100% coverage



Two stories at 50% coverage

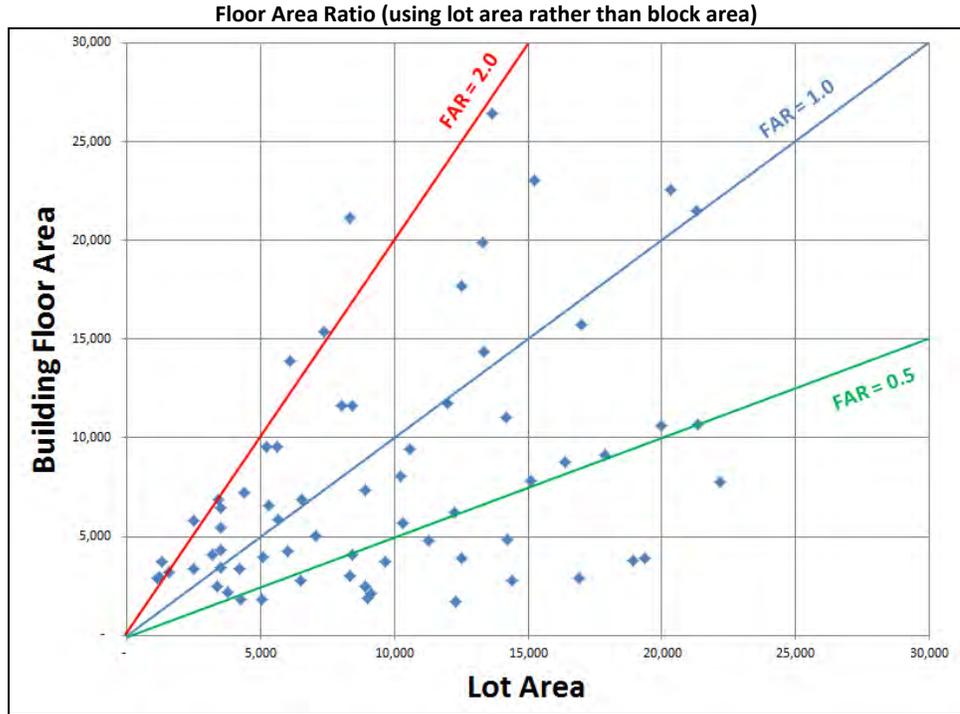


Four stories at 25% coverage

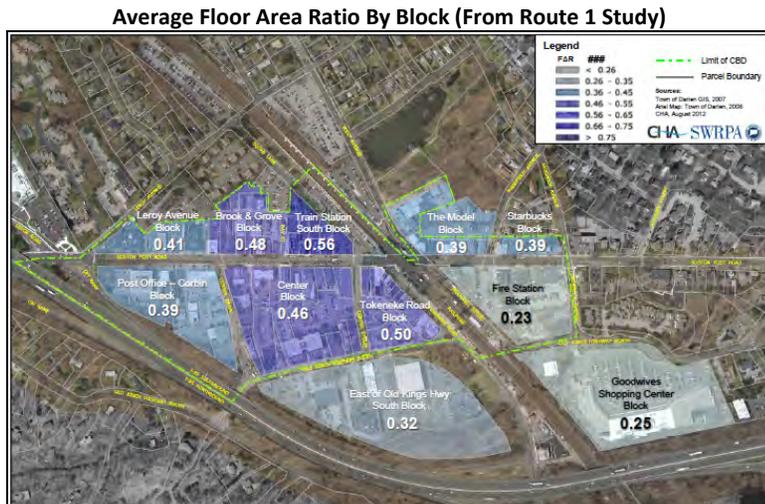


Floor-Area Ratio

Some communities regulate development by a maximum floor-area ratio. Darien may wish to consider a similar approach. This might allow for more flexibility in building height while ensuring that the overall amount of development is rationally related to the size of the parcel and the parking availability.



The following graphic from the Route 1 Study compares the floor area on a block to the overall area of the block. This helps illustrate some of the variations in the downtown.



Residential Provisions

Residential uses are important to a downtown area since they provide a base-line of activity that helps create a sense of place. Downtown areas can also be attractive residential locations (especially with the proximity of the train station) for empty nesters and young professionals.

To enable and manage residential development in the downtown area, the zoning regulations might be modified to:

- limit the overall density (maximum number of units per acre),
- allow larger units (currently capped at 1,000 SF per unit), and/or
- allow more flexibility in the number of bedrooms.

Modify Downtown Zoning Regulations		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Regularly review and update zoning regulations to allow for and encourage / require appropriate development in the downtown area.	PZC	
Action Steps		
2. Review the building height limitations and consider alternative approaches appropriate for the downtown, including allowing more building height in the downtown provided that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building walls are set back further from the curb • The overall floor-area ratio remains appropriate • It helps establish a landmark structure in an appropriate locations • An open space plaza or a mall is provided 	PZC	
3. Consider regulating development in downtown with a maximum floor-area ratio to complement a more flexible height standard.	PZC	
4. Review the Zoning Regulations related to residential development in the downtown area.	PZC	

Common Arrangements

At some time in the future, businesses, property owners, residents, and the Town may want to consider the potential desirability of common arrangements for the downtown area.

Initially, this might consist of an informal coordinating committee for common branding / marketing. This committee might also coordinate the establishment of “pop-up parks” and other special events.

Over the longer term, this might evolve into establishment of a special services district as enabled by CGS Section 7-339m.

**Special Street Event
(Grove Street)**



Address Other Downtown Issues

There are a number of other issues that affect the overall form and function of the downtown. To help address these situations, Darien should implement the policies and action steps identified below.

Address Other Downtown Issues		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Guide any changes on State highways to maximize “context sensitive” solutions to traffic issues.	Town	PW CT-DOT
2. Continue to encourage the creation of meaningful public spaces in the downtown area.	Town	PZC
3. Make appropriate accommodations in downtown for cyclists and provide amenities (bike racks/storage, etc.).	Town	PW
4. Enhance utility infrastructure in the downtown area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergrounding of wired utilities. • Extend natural gas to support area development. • Upgrade / maintain water service (pressure). • Transition to LED lighting for area lighting. 	Town	PW
5. Consider common arrangements among property owners, businesses, and residents if, as and when desired.	Town	
Action Steps		
6. If necessary, investigate “un-numbering” Route 1 in the downtown area to help accomplish local objectives and encourage “context-sensitive” results.	Town	PW CT-DOT
7. Consider reinforcing downtown’s “edges”, including establishing gateway elements, if appropriate.	BC	
8. Work with CT-DOT and Metro-North to improve / enhance the railroad bridges and the I-95 underpass (pedestrian-friendly lighting, public art, and impact warnings on the railroad bridge).	Town	PW ARB BC

Public Space



Public Art On A Bridge



TRANSFORM NOROTON HEIGHTS

9

Overview

Development patterns in Noroton Heights reflect the prevailing architectural and site layout trends at the time the area was developed.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, detached buildings with large parking areas were the normal approach to suburban development. There is little provision for pedestrian accessibility within the Noroton Heights area and the area functions primarily based on single purpose trips (commuters to the train station, people shopping at stores, workers in the businesses). In addition, the Noroton Heights train station has not kept up with the times. The station has a number of inadequacies (building, platforms, parking, access, etc.) and has not been renovated or improved in some time.

Noroton Heights has the potential to be so much more. Noroton Heights can become a secondary village-type area in Darien and can become more of a pedestrian-oriented place with a broader variety of uses, including a residential component.

The POCD recommends that the eventual “transformation” of Noroton Heights into a pedestrian-friendly village-type area be pursued.

“First comes thought; then organization of that thought into ideas and plans; then transformation of plans into reality ...”

Napoleon Hill
American author

Noroton Heights



Noroton Heights



Transform Noroton Heights

Change has been occurring in Noroton Heights for some time. The area now referred to as Noroton Heights was established in the 1950s in response to the construction of Interstate 95. Business uses which had been located on Noroton Avenue were displaced by the highway construction and a new commercial area was established nearby to accommodate those business uses. Over the years, additional business uses were established in this area. As the pictures on this page show, change should be expected to continue over time.

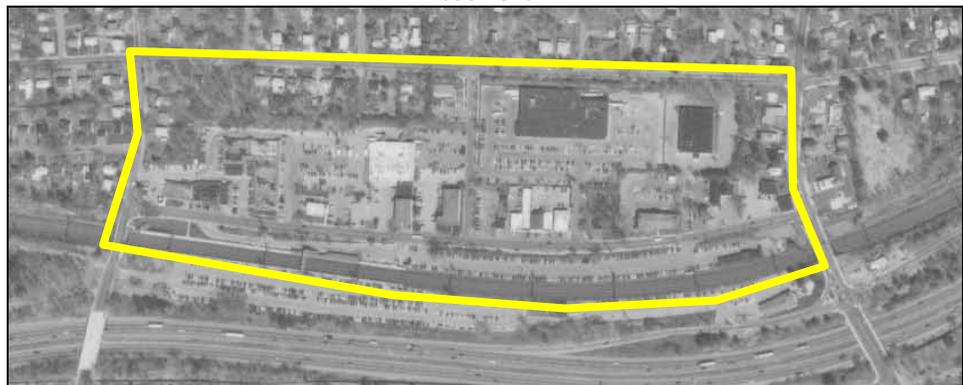
1934 Aerial



1965 Aerial

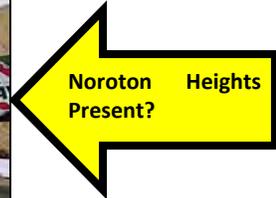


1996 Aerial

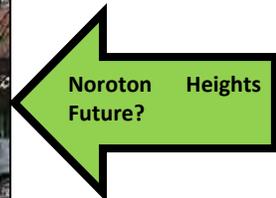


Noroton Heights currently exhibits elements of a strip-type development pattern. As can be seen from the images below, such development patterns often lack a strong “sense of place” and this can result in a utilitarian / automobile-oriented area which is comprised of individual uses / destinations. The POCD encourages the transformation of Noroton Heights to a walkable, pedestrian-friendly, mixed use, village-type area.

**Strip-Type
Development Pattern**



**Village-Type
Development Pattern**



Natural Resources Defense Council / Urban Advantage

Transform Noroton Heights		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Encourage the transformation of Noroton Heights to a walkable, pedestrian-friendly, mixed use, village-type area including residential uses.	Town	PZC
2. Seek to make Noroton Heights a vibrant and dynamic place with a “sense of place.”	Town	PZC

Problematic Areas

Noroton Avenue

- At I-95
- At Ledge Road / station parking drive
- At railroad tracks
- At Heights Road
- At West Avenue

Hollow Tree Ridge Road

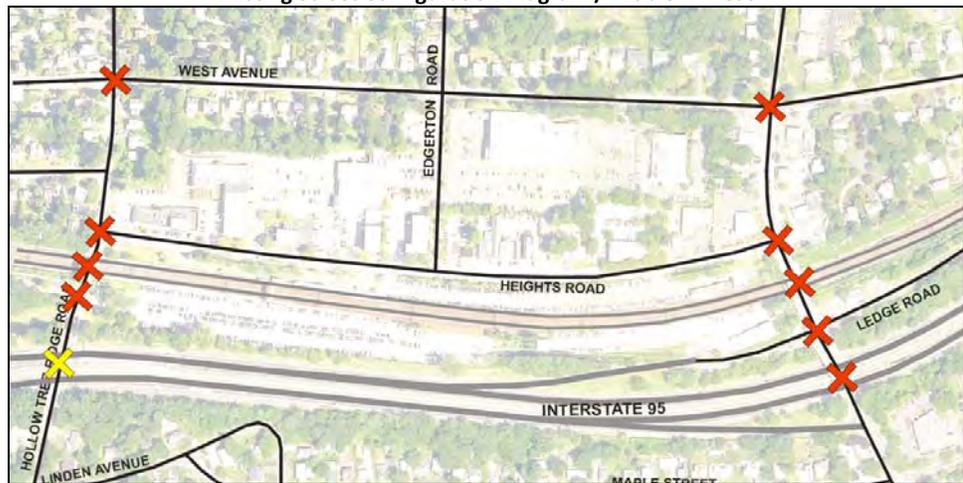
- At I-95
- At station parking driveway
- At railroad tracks
- At Heights Road
- At West Avenue

Address The Roadway System

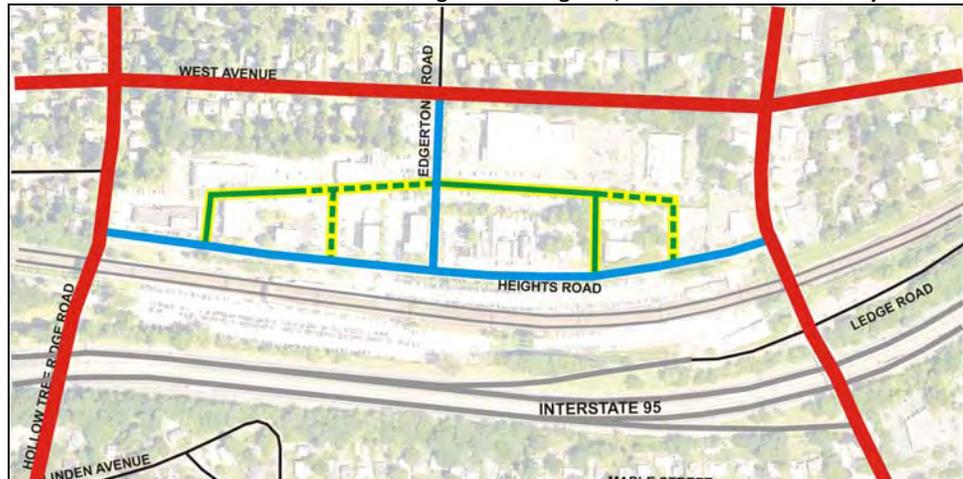
At the present time, there are a number of problematic traffic issues in the Noroton Heights area due to the limited number of crossings over the railroad tracks and I-95, constrained intersections and bridges, and traffic heading to and through the area. The Town will work with property developers, WestCOG, CT-DOT, and Metro-North to see that problematic traffic issues get addressed. Any improvements should happen in a way that is sensitive to the context of Darien in general and Noroton Heights in particular.

Also, to transform Noroton Heights into a pedestrian-friendly village-type area, the establishment of an internal “street” network where buildings frame the “street” will create the type of streetscape desired. It is envisioned that these internal “streets” will actually be private ways rather than public streets.

Existing Street Configuration Diagram / Problem Areas



Recommended Future Street Configuration Diagram / Possible Street Hierarchy



Legend

- █ Primary Street
- █ Secondary Street
- █ Tertiary Street (may be an internal drive that functions like a street)

Street Cross Sections

The street hierarchy system can be used to vary lane assemblies, sidewalk widths, parking arrangements, setbacks and/or heights by street type.

Address The Roadway System		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Work with property developers, WestCOG, CT-DOT, and Metro-North to address problematic crossings / intersections in the Noroton Heights area.	Town	PW PZC CT-DOT MNRR
2. Seek to establish an internal road network where buildings frame the street and create a pedestrian-friendly environment.	PZC	
3. Use a street hierarchy system to vary lane assemblies, sidewalk widths, parking arrangements, setbacks and/or heights by street type.	PZC	

Current Character



Potential Character



Enhance Pedestrian-Friendliness

To ensure the successful transformation of Noroton Heights, the overall focus will be on the streetscape (the “public realm”) and how development of private lands supports and reinforces the overall environment.

Some of the elements to be considered for Noroton Heights include:

- Establish an overall sidewalk network of appropriate width and connect sidewalks to outlying areas / neighborhoods.
- Require buildings be brought to the “street.”
- Create as continuous a street façade as possible in order to avoid gaps in pedestrian environment.
- Require open storefronts and uses at street level and encourage active outdoor areas (seating, dining, etc.).
- Provide and standardize pedestrian accommodations (benches, street trees, pedestrian signals, etc.).

Pedestrian Friendly



Darien will establish a “model block” specification for Noroton Heights to enhance the pedestrian environment. This may or may not be the same as downtown Darien.

Pedestrian connections (sidewalks, stairways, etc.) to and from adjacent residential areas are imperative.

Model Block Specifications (Noroton Heights)

Update light fixture specifications for conversion to LED light sources.

Address facade design for various sidewalk widths to require inset doorways to prevent conflicts between opening doors and pedestrian movement.

Provide more detailed standards for “complete streets,” including details for curb extensions and cross walks, bike lanes, and universal design elements.

Create minimum standard for tree pits and planting strips to ensure compliance with James Urban’s tree planting guidelines.

Expand on standards for benches and trash receptacles to include guidance for sidewalk cafe layout and furnishings.

Allow modifications to concrete/brick materials and pattern to identify special places along the corridor and improve soil conditions for street trees.

Enhance Pedestrian-Friendliness		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Focus on the streetscape and how development of private lands supports and reinforces the overall environment.	PZC	ARB
Action Steps		
2. Establish a “model block” specification for Noroton Heights.	PZC	ARB PW

Guide Private Development

Use And Dimensional Standards

To ensure that the desired ambience of a walkable, pedestrian-friendly, village-type area is created, the following zoning changes will be considered:

Performance Objective	Possible Approach(es)
Enhance the pedestrian environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a “build-to” line or zone to require buildings be brought to the “street.” Require buildings have a minimum building height to establish a pedestrian friendly street enclosure. Require active street front / street-level uses. Discourage or prohibit drive-through facilities from locations visible from the street or which impact the street experience.
Ensure a continuous pedestrian experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require a minimum building frontage (i.e. – percent of lot frontage) unless waived by the PZC to ensure a continuous building façade. Minimize driveways that interrupt sidewalks and prioritize pedestrian crossings over driveways.
Ensure an appropriate transition to adjacent residential areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify the language in Zoning Regulation Section 685.c regarding building height “where the zone abuts a residential zone” since most sites abut residential zones. Require that the height of buildings across the street from a residential zone be evaluated in terms of the residential zone with more height permitted if the building is set back further from the residential zone.
Maintain an appropriate scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider limiting the overall floor-area-ratio achievable. Consider establishing a residential density limit. Maintain the current building height limitations and maintain the open space requirements for upper floors (sidewalks, walkways, areas shared with vehicles, or covered areas should not count).

Village Scale / Pattern



Village Scale / Pattern



Noroton Heights Conceptual Redevelopment Plan



NOTE: This drawing is only intended to be illustrative of alternative concepts for Noroton Heights. This drawing does not necessarily reflect the policy desires of the Planning and Zoning Commission and should not be construed as such.



NOTE: This drawing is only intended to be illustrative of alternative concepts for Noroton Heights. This drawing does not necessarily reflect the policy desires of the Planning and Zoning Commission and should not be construed as such.

Parking

It is envisioned that the parking needs of different activities in Noroton Heights will be addressed primarily by private parking. This includes “on-street” parking within private development (which may be required in order to ensure an appropriate streetscape). Parking structures will be allowed and encouraged on private property since surface parking lots consume land area without contributing to the desired ambience of a walkable, pedestrian-friendly, mixed use, village-type area. Since the level of intensity should be less than that allowed in the downtown area, private parking structures might be limited in size (perhaps to two levels total, even if one level is below grade).

The exceptions to the policy of private parking supporting private development include the following:

- parking at the train station for passengers, and
- “on-street” parking on public roadways (such as Heights Road and Edgerton Road), where considered appropriate.

On-street parking on Heights Road (on one or both sides) might be one way to enhance the village character of the Noroton Heights area. Due to the proximity of such parking to the train station, some enforcement of parking time limits might be considered.

No On-Street Parking



Pedestrians can feel exposed to moving traffic.

Parallel On-Street Parking



Pedestrians feel buffered from moving traffic and spaces help support adjacent uses.

Visible on-street parking creates the perception of convenient parking for customers and visitors, provides the potential of getting a convenient parking space, protects the pedestrian space on the sidewalk, and calms traffic.

Possible Development Concept For Noroton Heights
With A Parking Structure South Of The Railroad Tracks And
New Buildings Arranged Around Internal “Streets”
To Create A Village-Type Pattern
(New Train Station Building And Open Space / Retention Pond)



Dodson and Flinker, 2015

NOTE: This drawing is only intended to be illustrative of alternative concepts for Noroton Heights. This drawing does not necessarily reflect the policy desires of the Planning and Zoning Commission and should not be construed as such.

Walk Score

A “walk score” is a measure of walkability and is based on a “web app” methodology available at walkscore.com. The walk score reflects the diversity of uses and destinations in an area and the provisions for pedestrians.

According to the Walk Score website, research related to walk scores has found that walkable places perform better economically. Studies have found that residential and commercial rents and sale prices are higher in more walkable areas.

Walk scores for some communities are as follows:

Location	Score
Princeton, NJ	95
Newport, RI	94
Greenwich	93
New Canaan	89
Fairfield	84
Ridgefield	81
Westport	69
Mystic, CT	69
Madison, CT	61
Noroton Heights	61
Wilton	55

The parking graphics on page 71 (recommended / discouraged / not recommended) are also relevant and applicable to Noroton Heights. In addition, the Commission may consider:

- allowing parking structures (perhaps limited to two levels total, even if one level is below grade) if it significantly enhances the overall design of Noroton Heights and helps contribute to a “sense of place,” and
- requiring an active streetscape in front of any structured parking.

To “right-size” the provision of parking, the Commission will revisit overall parking ratio requirements and reductions for shared use of parking. The appropriate parking ratios in Noroton Heights may be:

- lower than Route 1 due to the availability of transit in Noroton Heights, and
- higher than downtown since there is not as much mixed use in a compact area and there are no municipal parking lots in Noroton Heights.

Guide Private Development		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Guide private development to ensure that the desired ambience of a walkable, pedestrian-friendly, village-type area is created.	PZC	ARB
2. Ensure that private developments provide adequate parking spaces for its needs.	PZC	
3. Encourage or require “on street” parking within private developments and on public roadways (such as Heights Road and Edgerton Road), where considered appropriate.	Town	PZC PW
Action Steps		
4. Revisit the use and dimensional standards for Norton Heights to provide appropriate guidance for development.	PZC	
5. Revisit the overall parking ratio requirements and reductions for shared use of parking in Noroton Heights.	PZC	

Enhance The Train Station And Associated Areas

The current train station arrangements in Noroton Heights can only be described as functional at best. The station building is in fair condition, the platforms are in need of replacement (currently scheduled by CT-DOT), and the pedestrian bridge is in poor condition. Convenient parking (or lack thereof) is a continuing issue at the Noroton Heights train station. Parking is split between both sides of the tracks and the entrance/exit arrangements can be challenging at peak times. Improvements are sorely needed.

Relocate The Train Station

The current Noroton Heights train station building is inadequate for local needs and is in poor condition. The building needs to be renovated and improved. However, rather than simply rebuild it in its current location off by itself, a site should be selected that fits into the overall fabric of Noroton Heights.

Relocating the station building opposite Edgerton Street would make a stronger connection to the overall village-form and create a focal point. This location is approximately at the point where the rail tracks straighten out and would be the eastern end of the westbound platform. A second pedestrian bridge would go over the rail tracks to the parking on the south side of the tracks.

Train Station

A renovated train station building could also support a café / restaurant and other uses if it is:

- located at an appropriate spot,
- well designed, and
- supported by surrounding uses

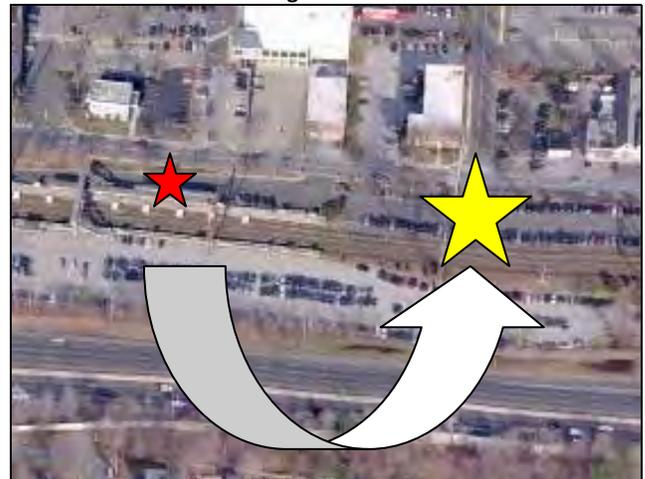
A renovated train station building should also make provision for convenient access and parking, pedestrian bridges, bathrooms, climate control, covered platforms, better lighting, enhanced security, and other amenities.

As an alternative, a private building could be constructed with an atrium or other feature that provided train station amenities.

Existing Noroton Heights
Train Station Building



Relocate The Train Station Building
To Edgerton Street



Parking Arrangements

Historically, the general arrangement in Darien and in other communities with train stations has been that CT-DOT leases its land around the train stations to the Town for parking.

The Town operates the parking facilities and retains the revenue in a dedicated account. The revenue is used to maintain the parking facilities and keep them in a “state of good repair.” Revenues can also be used for capital improvements.

At the present time, however, the CT-DOT lease has expired and so it is not clear what the arrangement will be for future improvements:

- With a lease, the Town will have the ability to plan for capital improvements in conjunction with the State and the ability to ascertain the funding sources needed.
- Without a lease, capital improvements may languish and CT-DOT may decide to implement their own program at the station.

Expand Train Station Parking Between The Tracks and I-95

The POCD recommends that a well-designed parking structure (perhaps two-story) be built on the land between the railroad tracks and Interstate 95. Access would be from both Noroton Avenue and Hollow Tree Ridge Road. Due to the location of this site and its topography, the parking structure will not be particularly visible. However, the provision of station parking will need to be balanced with overall traffic flow improvements so that traffic operations are reasonable and appropriate.

Once the parking structure is constructed, daily parking (presently on the north side of the tracks) would be relocated to this facility.

Surface Parking On South Side Of Tracks (Current Condition)



Possible Future Parking Structure (add 360 +/- spaces per level)



Other DOT land near Noroton Avenue (and Post 53) would be retained for overflow parking. This site may also have long term utility for reconfiguration of the highway ramps. Any proposals must consider the impact on the ambulance facility located here (Post 53).

A retention basin could also be installed in the area between the parking areas to help relieve some of the drainage issues downstream.

Convert The Daily Parking Lot To Complementary Uses

The POCD recommends that part of the CT-DOT land between Heights Road and the railroad tracks (currently used for daily parking) be considered for transit-oriented development provided adequate parking is provided for commuters and traffic impacts are managed appropriately. This development would create a “two-sided” street and enhance the overall ambience of Heights Road and Noroton Heights.

The POCD also recommends that other CT-DOT land be used to establish an open space / water retention area to enhance the Noroton Heights area and help address some of the drainage problems (which are exacerbated by an under-sized culvert under the railroad tracks and Interstate 95).

Transit-Oriented Development With Surface Parking And Liner Buildings



Possible Open Space / Retention Area (water feature and basin that retains water in storm events)



Enhance The Train Station And Parking Areas		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Encourage enhancement of the train station and CT-DOT parking areas in Noroton Heights.	Town	
2. Work with CT-DOT to establish a new “train station” building at Edgerton Road.	Town	
3. Resolve the expired lease situation with CT-DOT.	BOS	
Action Steps		
4. Work with CT-DOT to build a well-designed parking structure between the tracks and I-95 (south side of tracks) to accommodate permit and daily parkers.	Town	
5. Work with CT-DOT to convert the daily parking lot (north side of tracks) to other uses such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit-oriented development • Open space / drainage feature 	Town	

Address Other Issues In Noroton Heights

There are a number of other issues that affect the overall form and function of Noroton Heights. To help address these situations, Darien should implement the policies and action steps identified below.

Address Other Issues In Noroton Heights		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Coordinate with others to mitigate drainage / flooding issues both upstream and downstream of the railroad tracks and Interstate 95.	Town	PW
2. Enhance utility infrastructure including natural gas availability, water pressure, wireless services, etc.	Town	PW
3. Seek to make Noroton Heights a primary station for Metro-North (more frequent service, ADA accessibility, etc.).	Town	
4. Seek to enhance bus transit services (frequency / shelters / bus pull-off areas, etc.).	Town	
5. Provide amenities for cyclists (bike lanes, covered bike racks, signage, etc.) in Noroton Heights.	PW	
6. At some time in the future, consider the potential desirability of common arrangements for the Noroton Heights area (an informal Coordinating Committee or a more formal Special Services District).	Town	
Action Steps		
7. Take actions necessary to address other issues in Noroton Heights.	Town	

**Palmer’s Market Area
2015 Redevelopment Concept**



**Stop and Shop Area
2008 Redevelopment Concept**



MANAGE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

10

Overview

Darien has long seen itself as a residential community and most of the land area of Darien is zoned and used for residential purposes. Preservation and enhancement of an attractive living environment will continue to be a priority of the POCD.

Preservation and enhancement of Darien's attractive living environment will continue to be a priority...

Single-Family House



Single-Family House



Condominium
(Sedgwick Village)



Rental Apartment
(Avalon Darien)



Maintain Residential Character

Maintaining the residential character of the community is a key element of the Plan. A corollary to this is maintaining the character of residential neighborhoods by continuing to seek a balance between people’s desires to improve / expand their homes and the impacts on their neighbors and the community.

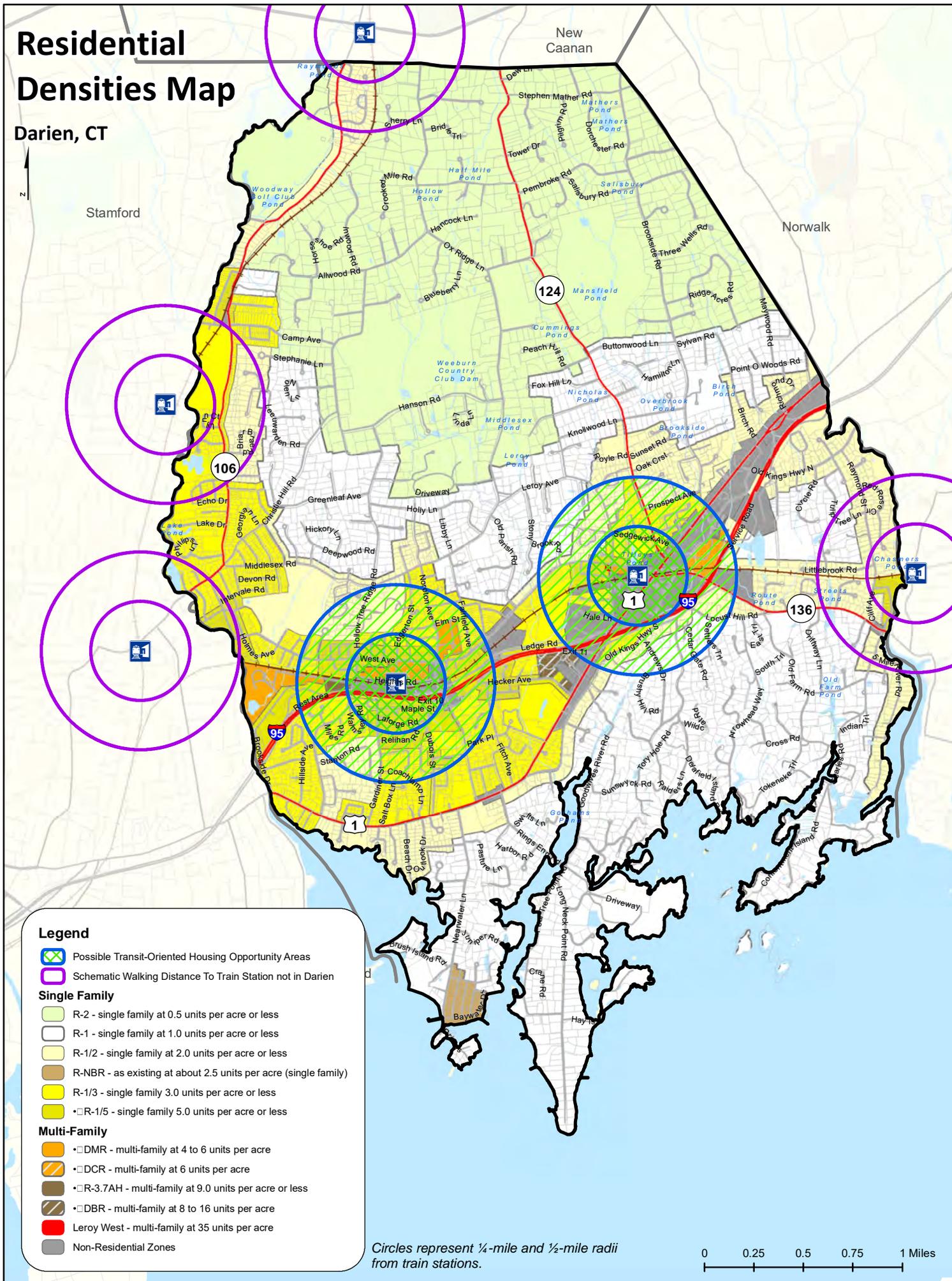
Darien’s zoning approach will continue to recognize the prevailing development pattern of:

- predominantly single-family development;
- a range of housing types to meet a diverse array of housing needs;
- higher densities in and near downtown Darien and around the train station in Noroton Heights,
- moderate densities in areas with bus service, and
- a reduction in density as distance from these centers increase.

Maintain Residential Character		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to maintain the character of Darien as a residential community which is primarily comprised of lower-density single-family neighborhoods.	Town	PZC
2. Maintain the basic organizational pattern of higher densities in and near downtown Darien and Noroton Heights and a reduction in density as distance from these centers increase.	PZC	
3. Within this overall framework, seek to provide for a range of housing types and densities to meet a diverse array of housing needs.	PZC	HA
4. Continue careful monitoring of land uses in and near residential areas to minimize impact on surrounding residential neighborhoods.	PZC	

Residential Densities Map

Darien, CT



Legend

- Possible Transit-Oriented Housing Opportunity Areas
- Schematic Walking Distance To Train Station not in Darien

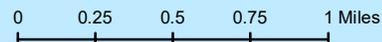
Single Family

- R-2 - single family at 0.5 units per acre or less
- R-1 - single family at 1.0 units per acre or less
- R-1/2 - single family at 2.0 units per acre or less
- R-NBR - as existing at about 2.5 units per acre (single family)
- R-1/3 - single family 3.0 units per acre or less
- R-1/5 - single family 5.0 units per acre or less

Multi-Family

- DMR - multi-family at 4 to 6 units per acre
- DCR - multi-family at 6 units per acre
- R-3.7AH - multi-family at 9.0 units per acre or less
- DBR - multi-family at 8 to 16 units per acre
- Leroy West - multi-family at 35 units per acre
- Non-Residential Zones

Circles represent 1/4-mile and 1/2-mile radii from train stations.



Split-Zone Lots

Section 315 of the Zoning Regulations states that:

Where a lot in one ownership of record is divided by one or more zone boundary lines, regulations for the less restricted portion or portions of such lot shall not extend into the more restricted portion or portions. (emphasis added)

This means that there can be two separate set of dimensional or other requirements for the lot.

Review Residential Zoning Provisions

Zoning District Locations

An analysis of lot sizes and zoning districts in Darien indicated several areas where the prevailing lot sizes are smaller than the minimum lot size requirement in the zoning district. In such situations, the yard setbacks and other zoning requirements may reduce the usable area of the lot (since they may have been designed or intended for a larger lot).

While this might not be a consideration if the smaller lots were dispersed, it does seem that there are concentrations of smaller lots in certain areas. The Commission may revisit the zoning of these areas in order to relate the zoning requirements to the prevailing lot sizes.

Zoning District Boundaries

When zoning was instituted in Darien (1925), a number of zoning boundaries were established based on setbacks from road centerlines or other features. This was considered to be the best approach at that time since a town-wide property line base map was not available in sufficient detail for this purpose. However, some of these zoning boundaries bisect a number of properties and this can create dilemmas in terms of dimensional requirements, permitted uses, or other provisions (see sidebar).

The Planning and Zoning Commission may consider reviewing and amending the zoning map, where appropriate, to place properties into a single zoning district, where reasonable. Where there is a very deep lot however, placing the entire lot in one zoning district may not be as logical or as simple.

Building Height

As part of the review of residential zoning districts and boundaries, the Commission may also review other regulatory provisions related to building height:

- use of highest ridge and highest eave to measure building height,
- making accommodations to allow cupolas, dormers, and other architectural features), and
- revisiting FEMA floor elevations to consider requiring an additional one-to two feet of elevation above flood levels

“Total-Of-Two” Side Yard Setbacks

Rather than rely on minimum side yard setbacks on each side, the Zoning Regulations contain language which requires that both side yard setbacks total to a specific number in the R-1/3 and R-1/5 zones. This creates a variety of issues and the POCD recommends that this total setback provision be eliminated.

Bulk And Coverage

At the community workshop meetings, some people expressed concern that the size of some houses in the small-lot residential districts is “out-of-scale” with the character of the neighborhood and the community. The overall proportion of buildings to sites is something which has been talked about in Darien for some time. For example, the 2006 POCD made the following recommendations:

- Consider, review, or study amending the definition of Building Coverage to include all impervious surfaces, including all accessory buildings and impervious driveways, parking areas, walks, and terraces, or alternately create a maximum Developed Site Area within all residential zones.
- Continue to evaluate and consider amending the existing building coverage and height restrictions to maintain the character of the community.
- Consider establishing regulations regarding impervious surfaces coverage restrictions to maintain the character of the community.

At the present time, all residential zoning districts in Darien have the same maximum building coverage limitation of 20 percent. A number of communities vary the amount of building coverage depending on the zoning district. Darien may modify this standard.

	Comparison Of Allowed Building Coverage With Some Other Communities				
	Low				High
R-1/5 8,712 SF	12.6% Ridgefield	15% Westport	16.4% Madison	20% Darien	24% New Canaan
R-1/3 14,520 SF	10.9% Ridgefield	14.7% Madison	15% Westport	17% New Canaan %	20% Darien
R-1/2 21,780 SF	9.8% Ridgefield	12% New Canaan	13.7% Madison	15% Westport	20% Darien
NBR 25,000 SF	9.3% Ridgefield	11% New Canaan	13.4% Madison	15% Westport	20% Darien
R-1 43,560 SF	7.9% Ridgefield	8% New Canaan	10% Madison	20% Darien	Not regulated Westport
R-2 87,120 SF	5.9% Ridgefield	6% New Canaan	10% Madison	20% Darien	Not regulated Westport

Greenwich regulates floor area and not building coverage.

The Commission may also consider splitting “building coverage” (typically something which has three dimensions) from “impervious coverage or “developed site area” (typically something which has two dimensions).

Some communities limit the total amount of floor area that can be built on a residential parcel based on the size of the parcel. In other words, they use a “floor-area ratio” to maintain proportionality of the size of the house to the size of the lot. Darien may consider a similar standard in the future.

Coverage and Bulk

Darien experiences some number of “teardowns” each year as people replace houses they find to be functionally obsolete with new construction. In most every case, this results in a bigger house with more coverage and more floor area.

Year	Teardowns
1996	13
1997	9
1998	12
1999	25
2000	29
2001	31
2002	30
2003	27
2004	43
2005	33
2006	40
2007	54
2008	23
2009	14
2010	21
2011	16
2012	38
2013	57
2014	36
2015	32
(est.)	

Darien Building Department

Home Occupation Provisions

An increasing number of people are working from home on a part-time or even full-time basis - either as a home-based businesses or telecommuting or as part of employment occurring elsewhere. Home occupations are presently allowed in the residential zones in several ways:

- Basic home occupations involving limited visits to the premises are allowed as-of-right (Zoning Regulation Section 403.a).
- Professional office or a home occupation involving visits to the premises are allowed by Special Use Permit (Zoning Regulation Section 405.a).

However, the regulations contain some limitations which the Commission may revise:

Provision	Possible Consideration
<p>The interior floor area for the home-based business is limited to 10 percent of the gross building area or 500 square feet, <i>whichever is less</i></p>	<p>This may create a difficulty in a smaller housing unit and may discourage or prevent some businesses or result in non-compliance.</p> <p>Consider allowing a higher percentage as-of-right or through the Special Use Permit process.</p>
<p>Limited to one home occupation per dwelling unit</p>	<p>It is possible that spouses might each have a home-based business or that one person might have more than one home-based business.</p> <p>Consider allowing more than one business per dwelling unit provided the limitations on floor area and employees are followed.</p>

Review Residential Zoning Provisions		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Seek to reduce the number of areas that are non-conforming as to the minimum lot size requirement.	PZC	
2. Seek to reduce the number of residential properties split into multiple zoning districts.	PZC	
3. Address building bulk and coverage in the residential zones.	PZC	
4. Allow for appropriate home occupations.	PZC	
Action Steps		
5. Review and rezone residential neighborhoods, where appropriate, to make fewer lots non-conforming as to the minimum lot size requirement (and result in more appropriate yard setback requirements).	PZC	
6. Review and amend the zoning map, where appropriate, to reduce the number of residential properties split into multiple zoning districts.	PZC	
7. Consider reviewing other residential regulations such as building height, yard locations, and floor elevations in flood zones.	PZC	
8. Consider splitting “building coverage” (typically something which has three dimensions) from “impervious coverage” or “developed site area” (typically something which has two dimensions).	PZC	
9. To address building scale and massing, consider adopting floor area limitations in some or all residential zones.	PZC	
10. Consider adopting a building coverage limitation which varies by district.	PZC	
11. Consider adopting an impervious coverage limitation in some or all residential zones which varies by district.	PZC	
12. Re-examine home occupation regulations to ensure that they are consistent with changing times and community needs and desires.	PZC	

Continue To Diversify Darien’s Housing Portfolio

For many years, Darien has been a community dominated by owner-occupied, single-family detached homes. According to the 2010 Census:

- About 85 percent of all dwelling units in Darien were owner-occupied.
- About 91 percent of all units were single-family detached units.

However, Darien’s population and housing needs have changed over the years. People have always sought housing that met their life-stage and lifestyle needs (location, cost, size, amenities, etc.) and Darien residents are no different. As the information on age composition and age-related migration in the “Conditions and Trends” section of the POCD indicates:

- Darien may not be “gaining” young people (ages 20 to 35) because they cannot find housing that is affordable and meets their needs.
- Darien may be “losing” older residents (ages 55 and over) because they also cannot find housing that meets their needs (fewer maintenance responsibilities and more amenities within walking distance).

Darien will always have a strong presence of single-family detached homes and will always strive to retain its single-family residential character. However, Darien can, at the same time, diversify its housing portfolio to meet a more diverse range of housing needs of present and future residents.

The Planning and Zoning Commission generally views a variety of housing options as an enhancement to Darien. Darien will continue to encourage a diverse range of housing in order to help:

- address the housing needs of an aging population,
- offer more housing choices for younger people,
- provide housing choices for existing residents so that they do not have to move elsewhere if their circumstances change, and
- offer more housing choices for moderate income people who work in Darien.

Younger Residents



Older Residents



Housing Needs Of An Aging Population

Population projections indicate that Darien, like many other communities, will experience a marked rise in the number of older residents in the future. Since housing needs can change as people get older for health, economic, or lifestyle reasons, having a range of housing option can help ensure that residents will always be able to live in Darien if they so choose.

To accommodate future housing needs, Darien may consider allowing:

- modifications to existing homes to accommodate an aging population (handicapped ramps, caregiver services, first floor additions for one-floor living, energy efficiency, etc.),
- accessory housing units within or attached to homes,
- additional multi-family units in appropriate places and configurations to address potential future need / desire,
- more income-limited elderly housing units to meet present and future community needs, and/or
- congregate / independent living / assisted living / nursing / convalescent home in other zones as well.

Housing That Is More Affordable

While about 3.4 percent of Darien’s housing stock meets the State definition of affordable housing, Darien has made significant progress over the last decade or so. In fact, data reported by the Department of Housing indicates that Darien has at least 152 more affordable housing units than it did in 2002. Some of these units were created by the Town via the Housing Authority and some were created by private developers.

As a result, Darien accumulated enough “housing unit equivalent points” to obtain a four-year moratorium from the Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure starting in October 2010. Darien is now on the verge of obtaining a second moratorium. Darien should continue these efforts.

Other Housing Needs

Darien has participated in efforts via a public-private partnership to create supportive housing for developmentally disabled people in the past and will continue to consider such efforts in the future.

Affordable Housing Appeals

In 1989, Connecticut adopted the “Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure” (codified as Section 8-30g of the Connecticut General Statutes) which affects any municipality where less than ten percent of the housing stock is considered affordable (as defined in the statute).

As of 2014, about 3.4 percent of the housing stock in Darien (239 out of 7,074 units) met the State criteria and so Darien is subject to the statute.

Affordable Housing Stock

According to the State’s Affordable Housing Appeals program, about 239 Darien housing units are considered “affordable”:

Governmentally Assisted Units	136
Tenant Rental Assistance	7
CHFA/USDA Mortgages	1
Deed Restricted Units	95
Total Assisted Units	239

CT-Department of Housing (2014)

Continue To Diversify Darien’s Housing Portfolio		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Continue efforts to diversify Darien’s housing portfolio.	Town	PZC HA
2. Continue to consider ways to address the housing needs of an aging population.	Town	PZC HA
3. Continue to consider ways to provide for housing that is more affordable.	Town	PZC HA
4. Seek to locate higher density housing near the train stations (Darien, Noroton Heights) or on or near a bus transit line.	PZC	Town HA
5. Work with the Darien Housing Authority to help meet local housing needs.	Town	PZC
6. Continue to participate in efforts to create supportive housing for developmentally disabled people.	Town	PZC
Action Steps		
7. Consider enabling accessory apartments provided they are within or attached to the principal dwelling and share an operable door on a common wall.	PZC	
8. Review zoning provisions and locations for multi-family housing to ensure they are appropriate for the future.	PZC	
9. Evaluate and consider eliminating size restrictions for multi-family units and rely instead on building size and bulk standards.	PZC	
10. When and where appropriate, seek to place deed restrictions on housing units that are accessory to Special Permit uses in order to count such units as “affordable housing” for as long as they exist.	Town	PZC

GUIDE BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

11

Overview

Business and economic development in Darien provides three key benefits to the community:

- jobs for residents of the community and the region,
- goods and services for residents of the community and the region, and
- net tax revenue which helps support community services.

For the purpose of the POCD, economic development includes any use which produces more in tax revenue than it requires in service costs (i.e. – produces net tax revenue). By this definition, some non-residential uses and some residential uses result in economic development to Darien.

Darien has an excellent regional location, a number of areas zoned for business development, and benefits from having some key locational advantages within the town:

- two train stations (Darien and Norton Heights),
- Interstate 95 with 4 full or partial interchanges,
- Boston Post Road (US Route 1), and
- bus transit services.

Business and economic development in Darien provides key benefits to the community...

Local Retailer



Office Building



Promote Business / Economic Development

Business and economic development provide a number of advantages to the community and the POCD recommends that the community continue to promote and encourage appropriate business and economic development.

The range of principal and accessory uses allowed in the business districts seems reasonable and appropriate. The uses which are only allowed by Special Use Permit could have impacts on other uses and so the level of review which occurs as part of the Special Use process is necessary and reasonable.

As noted in the 2006 POCD:

The Commission should be hesitant to rezone existing commercial properties for other uses. The amount of commercial property in Darien is quite limited, and as ... there is a desire for the community to have a mix of zones, and not be entirely residentially zoned. While [Darien] is and should remain primarily a residential community ..., the quality of residential life in such a community is enhanced by well-planned commercial and other “support” uses within the Town.

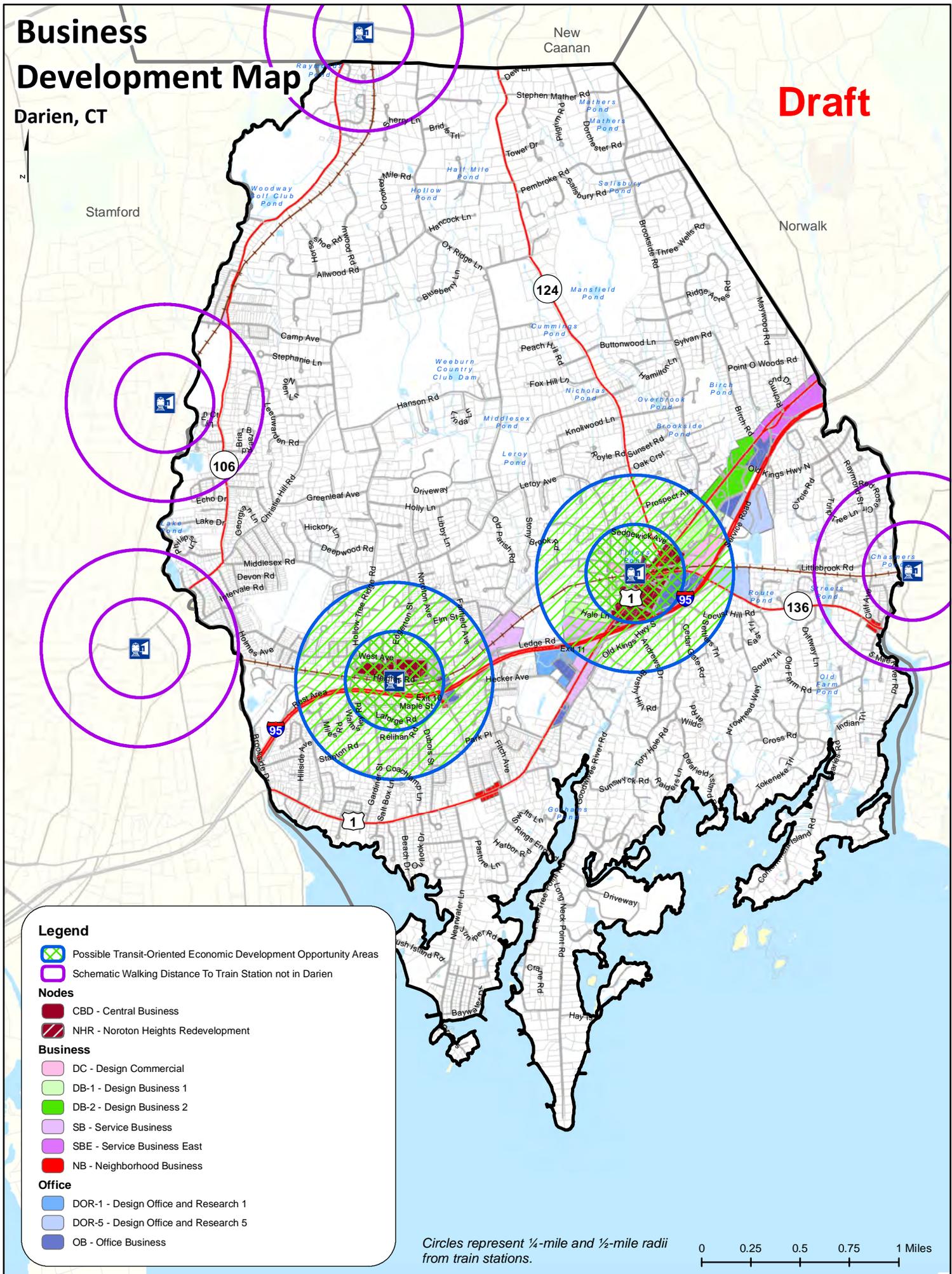
This philosophy remains relevant and is continued in this POCD.

Promote Business / Economic Development		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to encourage business and economic development to provide jobs, provide goods and services, and enhance the tax base.	Town	
2. Continue to work with the Chamber of Commerce and other organizations to promote economic growth of Darien.	Town	
3. Continue to encourage vibrant commercial areas.	Town	PZC
4. Carefully consider any proposal to rezone existing commercial properties for other uses.	PZC	

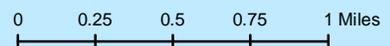
Business Development Map

Darien, CT

Draft



Circles represent 1/4-mile and 1/2-mile radii from train stations.



Development Opportunities

Since Darien is mostly built out, there are not a lot of opportunities for new business development.

On the other hand, there are opportunities for redevelopment of existing sites to better meet market conditions and opportunities.

In addition to the opportunities in downtown Darien and Noroton Heights, there are other opportunities, such as:

- Goodwives Shopping Center
- Parklands Office Park
- Old Kings Highway North / South

Manage Business Development

Overall Character

Architectural design influences the character of a community. Buildings that complement each other and are consistent with local architectural styles will enhance community character.

Darien has had an Architectural Review Board for some time. The Board reviews commercial developments and provides comments to the applicant and to the Planning and Zoning Commission. To aid in their work, they also prepared “Commercial Design Guidelines” in 2009 to help applicants in the formative stages of project design. These efforts to promote and encourage compatible design will continue.

Zones And Uses

Since Darien may have more business zoning districts than are useful and distinguishable, the Commission may undertake a review of the various zoning districts and their locations to determine if they are accomplishing what the community desires in an efficient way. The subtle distinctions between uses in some of the zoning districts and locations might be modified to better meet community goals and objectives.

The fact that there are about 25 separate and distinct business-zoned areas on the zoning map encompassing about 366 acres means the typical zone is 15 acres in size. Over the long term, it may be more viable for Darien to think about its broad performance objectives for each of the main business areas in the community and how to get the best results from each.

This review should also look at the locations, boundaries, and provisions for:

- the Design Business zones (two zones / four locations),
- the Service Business zones (two zones / four locations),
- the various office zones (three zones / nine locations), and
- the Neighborhood Business zones (one zone / two locations).

Local Market



Restaurant



Access Management

Access management refers to strategies to maintain roadway capacity (and reduce congestion) by controlling and sharing driveway(s). This is particularly relevant on major roadways and in commercial areas where turning movements are greatest. Access management has been used on a number of roadways around Connecticut and has direct applicability to commercial roadways in Darien. The Commission will consider adding a special section into the regulations regarding access management principles.

Parking Requirements

The Commission will review the parking requirements in the Zoning Regulations to ensure they are appropriate for Darien. The parking requirements in the Zoning Regulations may be requiring more spaces than are actually needed for some of the business uses. At the same time, some parking requirements appear to require less parking than might be necessary. In addition, the parking stall size requirement (9 feet by 20 feet) should be re-evaluated.

Signage Regulations

As part of the review of business zoning regulations, the Commission will also review the signage regulations. The sign regulations will benefit from a comprehensive review and analysis to ensure they are meeting community needs and are consistent with the latest statutory requirements and legal decisions.

Local Office



Restaurant



Manage Business Development		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Keep future commercial development consistent with the existing small-town New England character of Darien.	PZC	ARB
2. Continue to enhance the design of buildings and sites through the design review process.	ARB	PZC
3. Encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings and sites.	PZC	
4. Enhance the function of the roadway through access management in business areas.	PZC	TA
5. Encourage coordination between property owners/developers to minimize curb cuts and encourage cohesive development in all commercial zones.	PZC	TA
6. Seek to limit business impacts and intrusion on adjacent residential properties and streets.	PZC	
7. To encourage pedestrian access, continue to require sidewalks and pedestrian amenities (such as benches) in all commercial areas and in front of all commercial properties.	PZC	
Action Steps		
8. Review the various business zoning districts and their locations to determine if they are accomplishing what the community desires in an efficient way (such as the requirement that commercial sales and service in the Service Business zone <u>require</u> “external storage or activity”).	PZC	
9. Establish an access management section in the zoning regulations applicable to development in all areas.	PZC	
10. Review the parking requirements in the zoning regulations.	PZC	
11. Review the parking stall size requirement in the zoning regulations.	PZC	
12. Undertake a comprehensive review and revision of the sign regulations.	PZC	

INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES



MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE COMMUNITY FACILITIES

12

Overview

Community facilities support functions such as education, public works, public safety, and recreation, all of which are important to maintaining the character and quality of life in Darien.

The POCD does not get involved in the day-to-day operations of individual departments. Rather, the POCD seeks to identify potential community facility needs (buildings and sites) so that they can be anticipated and planned for. The POCD also serves as a useful guide for referrals of proposed municipal improvements (as required by CGS Section 8-24) for review by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Community facilities provide for desired services and enhance the quality of life in the community ...

Education



Recreation



Safety



Emergency



Legend

- Generally expected to be adequate for community needs to 2025
- May have some issues to consider
- Attention appears to be needed to meet community needs to 2025
- Not expected to be adequate for community needs to 2025

Address Community Facility Needs

GENERAL GOVERNMENT	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Hall <p style="text-align: center;">●</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(investigate renovation / expansion options)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Hall moved into the former Darien High School building in the mid-1980s Public spaces tend to be generously sized but department spaces tend to be cramped / inefficient Lack of storage / meeting rooms can be an issue Interest in improving safety and access amenities

SAFETY / EMERGENCY SERVICES	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police Department Animal Control <p style="text-align: center;">●</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facility is expected to be adequate to the year 2025 Parking is the biggest challenge on site Animal shelter appears adequate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire Department <p style="text-align: center;">●</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(maintaining volunteer staffing)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three fire stations staffed with volunteer personnel Have good array of equipment to handle local needs Excellent training facilities available Use mutual aid / coordination Public water supply available to many areas although some areas have poor flow Equipment storage can be an issue Maintaining adequate volunteer staffing has been an issue in other communities Fire response can be challenged by few routes over/under railroad / I-95
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency Medical Medical Transport <p style="text-align: center;">●</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency response provided by police / Post 53 / fire department / Post 53 staffed by high school students State land lease for Post 53 has expired Paramedics from Stamford and Norwalk, if needed Facilities adequate for community needs

Town Hall



Noroton Fire Department



EDUCATION FACILITIES	Assessment
<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darien High School • Middlesex Middle School • Hindley Elementary • Holmes Elementary • Ox Ridge Elementary • Royle Elementary • Tokeneke Elementary <p style="text-align: center;">●</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(diverse projections / capacity not clear)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">●</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(HVAC issues / building systems)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darien public schools are consistently ranked among the best public schools in Connecticut • Darien residents are firmly committed to neighborhood schools and new residents often purchase based on school districts • Some elementary schools have been using portable classrooms for many years • These are in fair condition and should be phased out for security and other purposes • A number of school facilities have HVAC issues • Full-day kindergarten and possible future legislative requirements complicate facility planning • Enrollments have been increasing • BOE has three enrollment projections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In-house ○ NE School Development Council ○ Milone and MacBroom • Projections hinge on in-migration patterns • BOE using the highest projections (in-house) while other projections suggest a decline in enrollments • Milone and MacBroom is continuing to refine the Facilities Plan • Darien does not have a possible future school site to help address potential current or future needs

Darien High School



Middlesex Middle School



Renovated Elementary School (Tokeneke)



Portable Classrooms



Darien Community Facilities

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

- 1. Town Hall

EDUCATION FACILITIES

- 2. Darien High School
- 3. Middlesex Middle School
- 4. Hindley Elementary School
- 5. Holmes Elementary School
- 6. Ox Ridge Elementary School
- 7. Royle Elementary School
- 8. Tokeneke Elementary School

RECREATION FACILITIES

- 9. Weed Beach
- 10. Pear Tree Beach
- 11. McGuane Park
- 12. Baker Park
- 13. Holahan Fields (Town Hall)
- 14. Cherry Lawn Park
- 15. Tilley Pond Park
- 16. Stony Brook Park
- 17. Selleck’s Woods Nature Preserve
- 18. Woodland Park Nature Preserve
- 19. Frate Park
- 20. Diller Property
- 21. Cherry St. / Hecker Ave. Properties

SAFETY / EMERGENCY SERVICES

- 22. Police Station / Animal Shelter
- 23. Darien Fire Department
- 24. Noroton Fire Department
- 25. Noroton Heights Fire Department
- 26. Post 53 EMS/ Ambulance

PUBLIC WORKS

- 27. Public Works Garage / Recycling / Refuse Center

HOUSING AUTHORITY

- 28. Old Town Hall Houses (30 units)
- 29. The Heights at Darien (106 units)
- 30. West Avenue Houses (2 units)

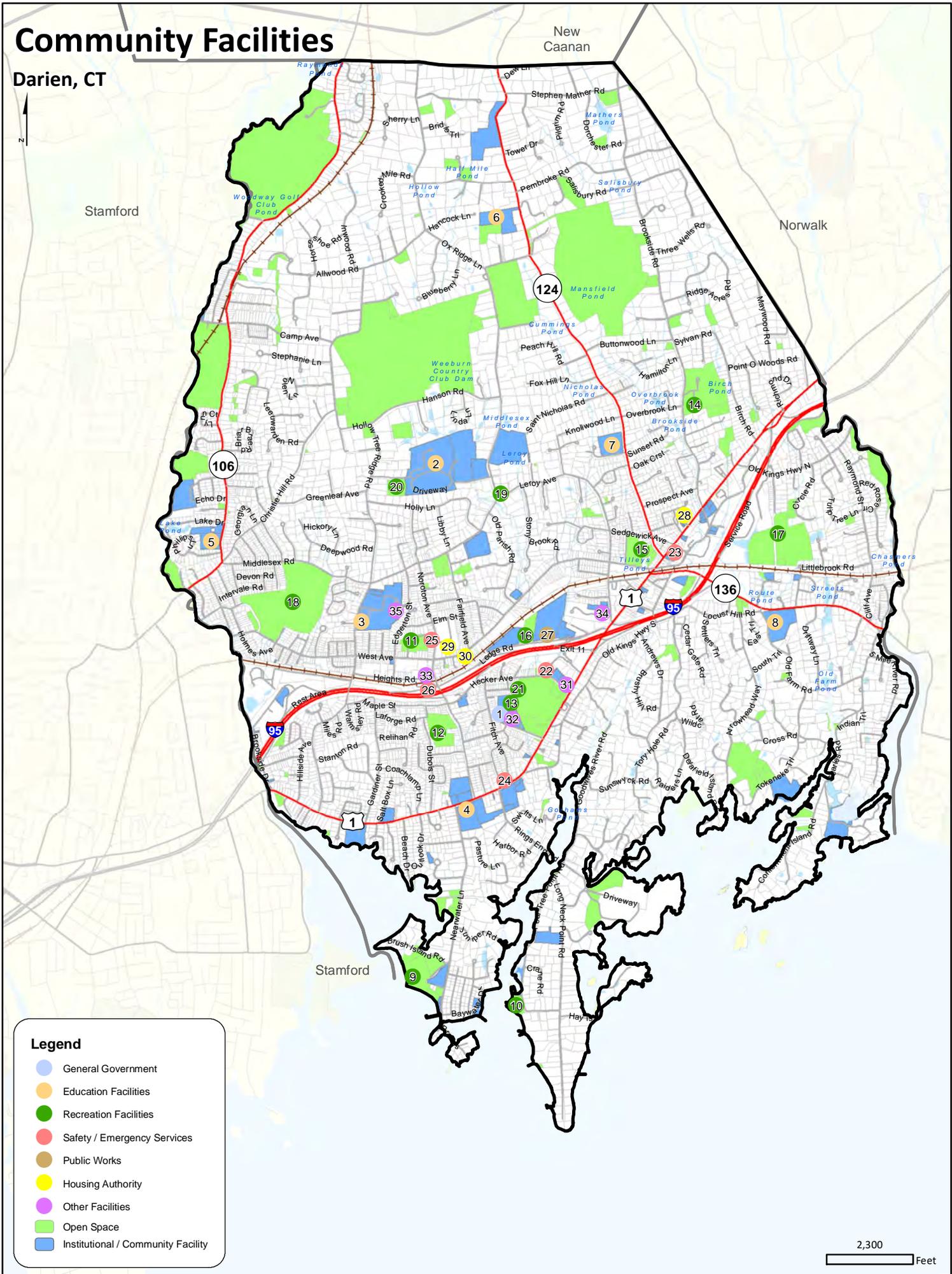
OTHER FACILITIES

- 31. Darien Library
- 32. Mather Senior Center (Town Hall)
- 33. Darien Youth Center
- 34. BOE Offices
- 35. Former Senior Center

Note- Municipally owned or operated parking facilities are addressed in the Transportation section of the POCD.

Community Facilities

Darien, CT



Legend

- General Government
- Education Facilities
- Recreation Facilities
- Safety / Emergency Services
- Public Works
- Housing Authority
- Other Facilities
- Open Space
- Institutional / Community Facility

2,300 Feet

Private Facilities

Darien also has a number of private recreation facilities which help meet community needs and desires:

- Darien Country Club
- Wee Burn Country Club
- Woodway Country Club
- YMCA
- Ox Ridge Hunt Club
- Middlesex Club
- Noroton Yacht Club
- Darien Boat Club
- Tokeneke Club

RECREATION	Assessment
<p>Beaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pear Tree Point • Weed Beach <p>Active Outdoor Recreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baker Park • Cherry Lawn Park • Holahan Fields • McGuane Park <p>Passive Outdoor Recreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frate Park • Selleck’s Woods • Stony Brook Park • Tilley Pond Park • Woodland Park <p>Indoor Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town / School Buildings <p>Other Properties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cherry St./Hecker Ave. • Diller Property <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><i>(update Master Plan / consider needs)</i></p> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The two beaches are considered to be the “jewels” of the Darien park/recreation programs • Community participation in recreational activities is high so demand for facilities is high • Since Darien is mostly built out, the challenge will be to make the most effective use of the active outdoor recreation facilities the Town currently has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Resting turf fields (challenging due to use) ○ Artificial grass to withstand use / extend seasons ○ Lighting to extend daily use / extend seasons ○ Irrigation to withstand use • Would like to acquire land, especially if adjacent to existing facilities • Cherry St. / Hecker Ave. properties provide connectivity to open space and recreation areas • Diller Property (5 acres) is adjacent to the High School • Park And Recreation Master Plan has not been updated since 1996 • Master Plan is in the process of being updated • Interest has been expressed in a community pool facility (indoor or outdoor)

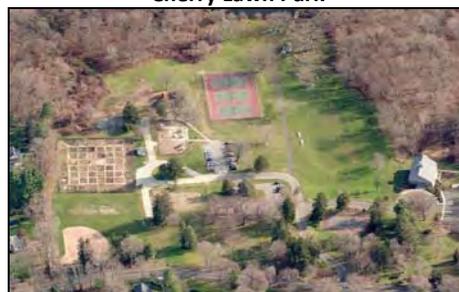
Weed Beach



McGuane Park



Cherry Lawn Park



Woodland Park Nature Preserve



PUBLIC WORKS	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Works Garage Recycling / Refuse Center Sewer Pump Locations  <p><i>(expand public works garage)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site used by public works, schools, parks, facilities maintenance, transfer station Public Works garage is inadequate for repair and storage of equipment On-site storage of materials is challenging Addition is being planned to address needs Recycling/refuse operations appear to work well Long term expansion potential might be created by relocating commuter parking from the Leroy West and making a “back door” connection along the railroad tracks to the Public Works site

HOUSING AUTHORITY	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Old Town Hall Houses The Heights at Darien West Avenue Houses  <p><i>(demand expected to increase due to aging population)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently have 138 units <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 units at Old Town Hall Houses 106 units at The Heights at Darien 2 units on West Avenue Heights was recently expanded DHA intends to redevelop Old Town Hall site Waiting lists are closed There may be demand for additional units based on projected growth of senior population

OTHER FACILITIES	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Darien Library  <p><i>(seek to expand parking options)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New facility opened in 2009 Ranked as one of the top 10 public libraries in the country for its size Parking area can be inadequate due to heavy use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mather Senior Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facility opened in 2014 Helps Darien residents, age 60 and over, fulfill their social, physical, emotional and intellectual needs Desire has been expressed for parking more convenient to the entrance Demand may increase due to aging population
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Darien Youth Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Former train station building repurposed into a teen center State land lease has expired Activities programmed by a student governing board Includes a “Safe Rides” service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edgerton Road  <p><i>(consider how to repurpose the site)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site once used for an elementary school and then for the Senior Center (building has been demolished) Site should be retained for possible future school-related use or other municipal use

Legend

-  Generally expected to be adequate for community needs to 2025
-  May have some issues to consider
-  Attention appears to be needed to meet community needs to 2025
-  Not expected to be adequate for community needs to 2025

Overall, it appears that Darien is doing a good job identifying and addressing community facility needs. In the future, it may be beneficial for Darien to investigate ways to regionalize some services if it will help meet local needs affordably.

Address Community Facility Needs		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Maintain existing community facilities.	Town	BOE
2. Continue to ensure that community facility needs are met by considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upgrading or renovating existing buildings; • adding on to existing buildings; • constructing new buildings; and/or • acquiring new land, as appropriate. 	Town	BOE
3. When land becomes available adjacent to existing facilities, evaluate the purchase of that property as quickly as possible in order to be able to provide for future expansion of existing facilities, if or when needed.	Town	BOE
4. Continue to monitor school enrollments and State requirements that may affect local facilities.	BOE	
5. Continue to encourage volunteer participation, especially for emergency services.	Town	VFD P53
6. Anticipate a future increase in demand for elderly housing units and services based on projected growth of senior population.	Town	PZC HA
7. Upgrade existing elementary schools (and eliminate portable classrooms) as opportunities present themselves.	BOE	
Action Steps		
8. Expand the highway garage to address the needs of Public Works and other departments that use the facility.	Town	PW
9. Update the Park and Recreation Master Plan including investigating community support for a swimming pool.	PRC	
10. Analyze the space needs at Town Hall in order to evaluate options for possible future renovation / expansion.	Town	
11. Investigate parking options for the library.	LIB	

ADDRESS TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

13

Overview

The transportation system in a community like Darien is functionally important to the day-to-day life of community residents, visitors, and businesses as well as being an important component of its character and self-image.

This section of the POCD looks at the overall configuration of the vehicular transportation network and other transportation modes (pedestrian, bicycle, bus, rail, etc.).

The transportation system is important to the day-to-day life of residents, visitors, and businesses ...

Roadways



Roadways



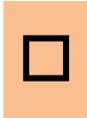
Pedestrians



Bicycle



Legend

-  Crossing functions well
-  Crossing has some functional issues (height, width, flooding, etc.)
-  Crossing does not provide an overall circulation function

Note: Several of these recommendations have been in Darien Town Plans since at least 1982.

Address Overall Circulation

For the most part, Darien has a good overall system of major roads providing access to and between all parts of the community. While historical development patterns and topographical constraints result in some situations where these roadways are not optimally configured, the basic circulation needs of the community are met.

The main challenge to overall circulation is the limited number of crossings over the railroad tracks and I-95 and limited functionality of some of these crossings:

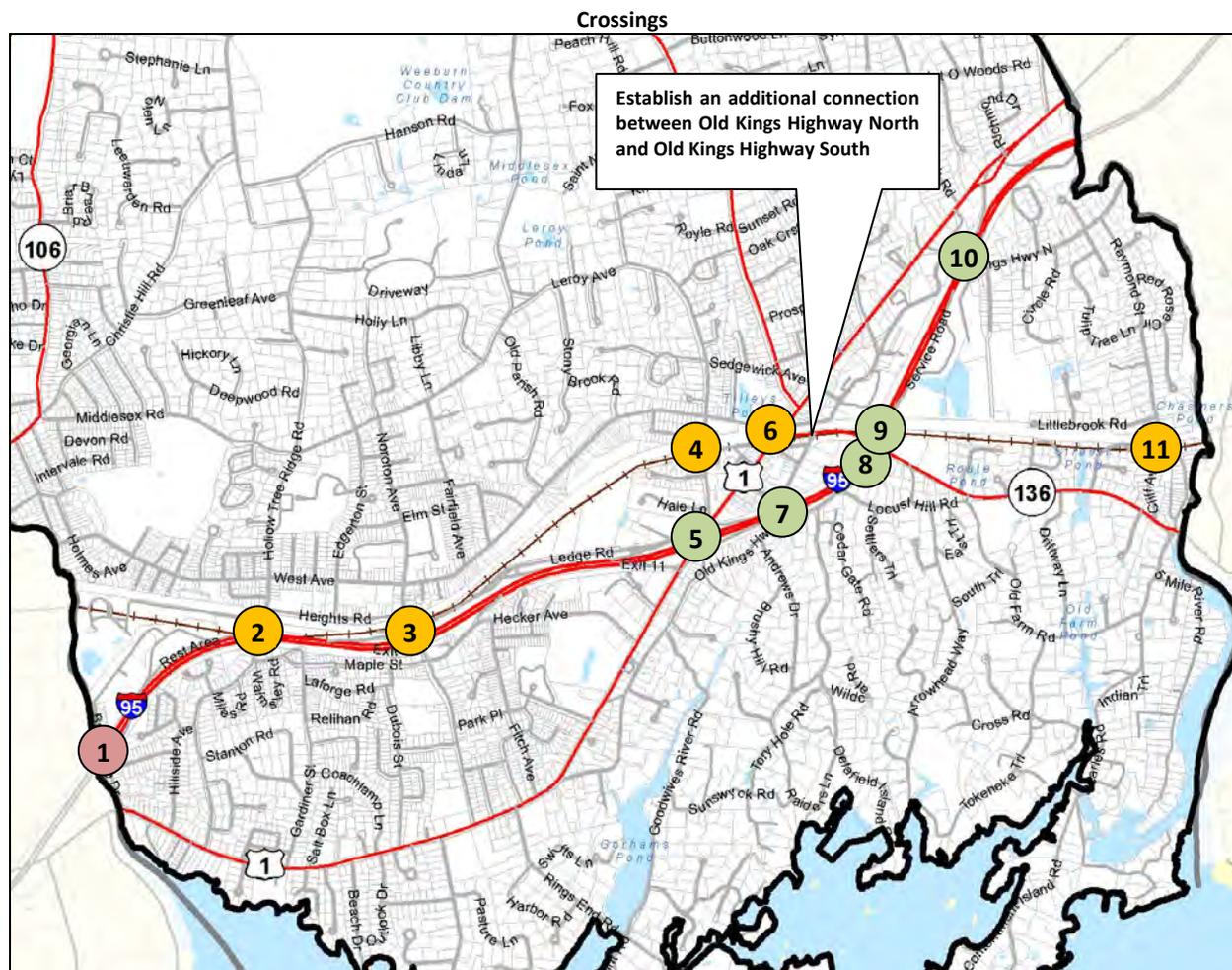
Crossing Location	Railroad Crossing	I-95 Crossing
1. Brookside Drive – a <i>dead-end</i> street with I-95 underpass (at the Stamford Line) providing emergency access to the I-95 rest area		 Underpass
2. Hollow Tree Ridge Road – high traffic <i>volume</i> with <i>narrow</i> overpass of railroad tracks in close proximity to I-95 overpass, driveway to Avalon development, access to station parking, and Heights Road	 Overpass	 Overpass
3. Noroton Avenue – high traffic <i>volume</i> with <i>narrow</i> of railroad tracks and I-95 in close proximity to Ledge Road, Heights Road, and access to station parking and Post 53 ambulance station	 Overpass	 Overpass
4. Leroy Avenue – Opening under railroad overpass is <i>narrow</i> and very <i>low clearance</i> with multiple turning movements	 Underpass	
5. Boston Post Road – Route 1 travels beneath I-95 overpass.		 Underpass
6. Boston Post Road – Route 1 underpass dips below railroad with <i>low clearance</i> and cannot accommodate some long vehicles. <i>Floods</i> in storm events. High <i>volume</i> with multiple <i>turning</i> movements	 Underpass	
7. Old Kings Highway South – Roadway travels beneath I-95 overpass.		 Underpass
8. Tokeneke Road – Roadway travels beneath I-95 overpass.		 Underpass
9. I-95 – Interstate 95 crosses over railroad tracks.	 Overpass	
10. Old Kings Highway North – Roadway travels over I-95.		 Overpass
11. Raymond Street / Cliff Avenue – Opening under railroad overpass is <i>narrow</i> with <i>low clearance</i>	 Underpass	

The most significant constraints occur at:

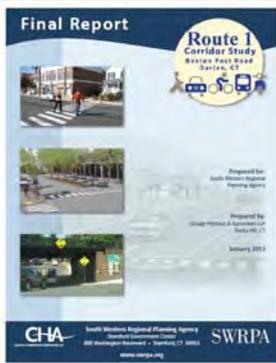
- Hollow Tree Ridge Road (#2),
- Noroton Avenue (#3),
- Leroy Avenue (#4),
- Route 1 at the railroad overpass (#6), and
- Raymond Street (#11).

Since these locations involve coordination with regional, state, federal, and quasi-public agencies on some of the busiest travel corridors in the country, it will likely be challenging to have improvements made on a timely basis. Still, opportunities to remove the constraints at these locations will be pursued since this affects overall circulation in the community and such things as emergency access (police, fire, ambulance).

The only location where a new roadway crossing *might* be possible (and beneficial) would be to connect Old Kings Highway North and Old Kings Highway South under the railroad tracks in downtown Darien.



Route 1 Study



In 2013, the regional planning agency (SWRPA at that time) completed a Route 1 Corridor Study in Darien. The work was conducted by Clough Harbour and Associates.

The study contains recommendations that address identified issues in the study area and that provide for transportation system enhancements and economic growth opportunities.

Address Overall Circulation		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Work with CT-DOT, Metro-North Railroad, and WestCOG to address impediments / constraints at I-95 crossings and railroad crossings.	Town	PW
2. Work with CT-DOT and WestCOG to implement the transportation recommendations of the Route 1 Study as opportunities present themselves.	Town	PW
3. Continue the potential benefits of an additional roadway crossing in the downtown area by connecting Old Kings Highway North and Old Kings Highway South with a new tunnel under the railroad tracks.	Town	PW
Action Steps		
4. Initiate programs to improve overall circulation in the community and enhance emergency service response.	Town	PW

Hollow Tree Ridge Road

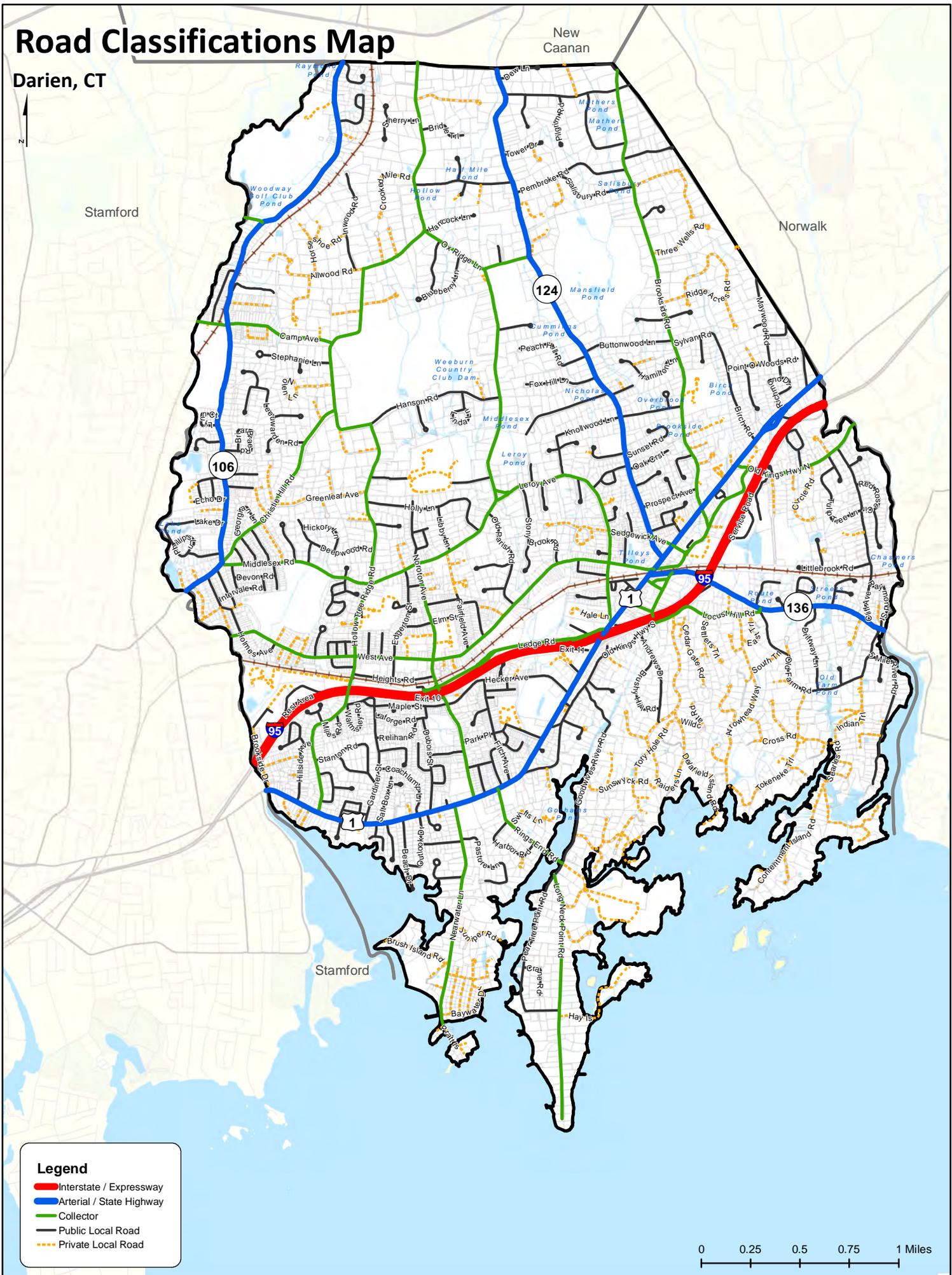


Route 1 @ Railroad



Road Classifications Map

Darien, CT



Legend

- Interstate / Expressway
- Arterial / State Highway
- Collector
- Public Local Road
- Private Local Road

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Pavement Management

Pavement management is an approach to maintaining a roadway system (pavement quality) as efficiently and economically as possible.

Since the life cycle of pavement can be evaluated and projected, maintenance and repair can be scheduled at the most appropriate times. In addition, the overall quality of the roadway system can be monitored over time.

Darien uses “pavement management” as an integral part of its annual Street Improvement Program.

Address Other Vehicular Transportation Issues

Other major vehicular transportation issues in the future are likely to include:

- balancing traffic capacity (especially along arterial and collector roadways) with maintaining community character as roadway and public safety improvements are undertaken,
- addressing locations where unsafe or hazardous conditions may arise,
- reducing speeding and introducing “traffic calming”, where appropriate,
- maintaining existing Town roads in terms of pavement quality, and
- utilizing “access management” strategies on Routes 1 to minimize curb cuts and maximize interconnections between properties, especially in business areas.

Address Other Vehicular Transportation Issues		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Move traffic as efficiently as possible, especially along arterial and collector roads while balancing traffic capacity with maintaining community character.	Town	PW PD
2. Continue to work with WestCOG and CT-DOT to address locations on State highways where unsafe or hazardous conditions exist.	Town	PW PD
3. Continue to address locations on local roads where unsafe or hazardous conditions may arise (including sight lines).	PW	
4. Utilize “access management” strategies to minimize curb cuts and maximize interconnections between properties, especially in business areas.	PZC	TA CT-DOT
5. Continue to maintain existing Town roads in terms of pavement quality (pavement management).	PW	
6. Reduce speeding and consider “traffic calming”, where appropriate.	PD	PW

Possible Traffic Calming Techniques - Education



Neighborhood Meetings / Newsletters - A neighborhood meeting can raise awareness of the issue and involve residents in identifying possible approaches. A newsletter can share information about safety concerns, information on traffic speed and volume, and proposed responses. In addition, traffic and pedestrian safety basics can be covered.



Radar Speed Sign - These signs, which may be portable, use radar to provide motorists with an electronic display, alerting them if they are exceeding acceptable speeds increases driver awareness and motivates people to alter their behavior.



Signage – Traffic signage, if warranted, can inform drivers of school zones, pedestrian activity, school crossings, and bike routes. Installation of stop signs for speed control or unreasonably low speed limits is not recommended.

Possible Traffic Calming Techniques - Enforcement



Speed Enforcement – Enforcement of speed limits and other traffic laws in neighborhoods can help slow traffic and help police learn when and where to focus their traffic calming efforts.

Possible Traffic Calming Techniques - Engineering



Narrowing Travel Lanes - Wide travel lanes encourage faster travel speeds. Narrowing the travel lane through pavement markings, landscaping, or curbing can deter traffic whose destination is not in the neighborhood, slow traffic speed, and provide space for pedestrians and cyclists. Permanent constriction may be an issue for snow plowing and emergency response. Temporary constriction can be moved around as necessary.



Textured/Colored Pavement – Changing the texture / color of pavement for even a small area (or another type of “gateway” feature) can send a visual cue that a driver has entered a traffic-calmed area.



Mini-Roundabouts - A mini-roundabout is a street intersection feature which requires vehicles to slow down and navigate around the island in an intersection and yield to vehicles already in the roundabout.



Speed Bump / Hump – Temporary or permanent raised sections of roadway which can deter speeding and cut-through traffic. However, this can also create issues for snow plowing and emergency response.



Road Closure – A partial closure (diverter) or a full closure should only be used as measures of last resort and only considered if other less restrictive physical measures have failed.

Major Parking Facilities

The numbers are keyed to the maps on the [facing page](#).

Town Owned Lot

1. Leroy Avenue West
2. Grove Street
3. Tilley Lot
4. Center Street South
5. Center Street North

State Lot / Town Run

6. Leroy Avenue East
7. Squab Lane
8. Tokeneke Road
9. Mechanic Street
10. Darien Station - North
11. Darien Station - South
12. Noroton Heights Station – North
13. Noroton Heights Station – South

Private Parking Lots

14. Koon’s Lot
15. Lundberg Lot

On-Street (not on map)

- Boston Post Road north
- Boston Post Road south
- Corbin Drive
- Center Street
- Old Kings Hwy South
- West Avenue
- Tokeneke Road
- Mechanic Street
- Brook Street
- Day Street
- Grove Street

Manage Parking

Darien maintains several surface parking lots (see sidebar) and these are a key part of the overall community. On-street parking is generally limited to certain areas in downtown Darien, Noroton, and Noroton Heights. In other locations, parking is provided on private property.

Downtown Parking - In the downtown area, a recent parking study found 205 on-street spaces and 451 off-street spaces (656 total public spaces).

The parking spaces are posted for different types of parking (15-minutes, 1-hour, 2-hour, daily permit, etc.) to strike a balance between shoppers, visitors, employees, and commuters. The general approach has been to designate on-street and off-street spaces closest to retail establishments for short durations with longer durations in less convenient locations. As the parking dynamics of downtown have changed over time, the type of parking in certain areas has changed. For example, the Grove Street parking lot was recently changed to favor shoppers over commuters. These approaches have served the downtown area well and will be continued (on-street parking, shared parking, shorter duration in more convenient areas, rebalancing parking allocations based on demand, etc.).

On Street Parking



Off-Street Parking



Surface Parking



Parking Structure (Walnut Creek, CA)



Darien will consider where and how to provide for well-designed parking structures to help address the future parking needs. Unless this is done, it may not be possible to accommodate the amount of desired development and the amount of desired parking with surface lots alone.

Some communities have been very successful at integrating parking structures into their communities by placing “liner buildings” in front of them or devoting the street level façade of the parking structure to active uses such as restaurants and retail shops. Other communities have established attractive parking structures near train stations or off main streets. Darien will consider doing the same.

Noroton Heights - While Noroton Heights has public parking lots for the train station, private development is supported primarily by off-street parking facilities. This pattern emerged when the business areas along Heights Road were established in the 1950s when the original Noroton Heights village area was removed by the construction of I-95.

Downtown Parking (including Darien Station)



Noroton Heights Parking



Possible Parking Ratios

The 2015 Downtown Darien Parking Study suggests the following parking ratios may be appropriate in certain mixed-use downtown areas:

Use	Spaces
• Multi-family residential	1 space / unit
• Office	2 spaces / 1,000 SF
• Retail	3 spaces / 1,000 SF
• Restaurant	6 spaces / 1,000 SF

In addition, the report suggests that off-setting peaks associated with different uses may allow a 30% reduction in actual parking use as opposed to adding the peaks together.

Parking Studies

Two parking studies have been undertaken for Darien since the 2006 POCD:

- The 2007 Parking Study, and
- The 2015 Downtown Darien Parking Study.

2007 Parking Study - The 2007 Parking Study was conducted for the Planning and Zoning Commission by Fitzgerald-Halliday Inc. Recommendations from that Study included:

- identifying target locations for public parking facilities in the downtown area (including parking structures),
- consolidating / updating parking standards in the Zoning Regulations,
- add criteria and standards for parking waivers and reductions contained in the Zoning Regulations,
- add options for meeting the parking requirements in the downtown area through a Special Permit process,
- provide clear directions for developers to meet Darien’s parking objectives (such as providing on-street parking spaces in the downtown), and
- create a single responsibility for oversight / planning of parking.

2015 Downtown Darien Parking Study - The 2015 Downtown Darien Parking Study was undertaken for the Parking Authority (Board of Selectmen) by Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates. The first part of the study evaluated existing conditions (supply, management, demand/utilization, zoning requirements, and stakeholder input). Then, the study looked at projected conditions and opportunities.

Some of the key findings and recommendations included:

- modify the Zoning Regulations to consider using lower parking requirements in the downtown area,
- continue to expand the parking supply over time (on-street, public off-street, private developments),
- consider strategies to provide for short-term availability of coveted spaces,
- explore way-finding and signage to direct people to parking areas,
- improve pedestrian, bike, and transit options, and
- explore ways to reduce parking needs.

These recommendations were consistent with recommendations from the “Action Plan for Revitalization of Downtown” and the “Route 1 Corridor Study.”

Manage Parking		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to address parking issues within the downtown area and at Noroton Heights, including the train stations.	Town	PC
2. Continue to encourage or require on-street parking in the downtown and Noroton Heights (not necessarily a public street).	Town	PZC
3. Continue to designate spaces closer to retail areas for shorter duration parking (and vice versa) in the downtown.	PC	
4. Continue to rebalance the parking spaces for shoppers, visitors, employees, and commuters, as necessary in the downtown.	PC	
5. Discuss where and how to provide for well-designed parking structures in the downtown.	Town	PZC PC
Action Steps		
6. Create a single responsibility for oversight / management / enforcement / planning of parking.	BOS	RTM
7. Develop a strategic parking supply plan.	PC	
8. Implement the recommendations from the 2007 Parking Study including consolidating / updating parking standards in the Zoning Regulations.	Town	PZC PC
9. Implement the recommendations from the 2015 Downtown Darien Parking Study, including parking ratios in the downtown area and offsetting peaks.	Town	PZC PC
10. Explore way-finding and signage to direct people to parking areas.	PW	PC
11. Revisit the parking stall size (reduce to 9' x 18') in order to provide as much parking as possible in available areas.	PZC	

Parking Dimensions

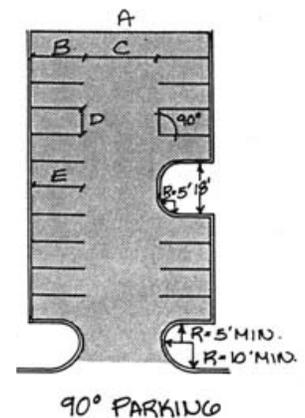
Most communities have adopted a parking stall requirement of 9 feet wide by 18 feet long with a 24-foot wide aisle.

Darien has a parking stall requirement of 9 feet wide by 20 feet long with a 24-foot wide aisle.

While the 2' difference (18 square feet) may not sound like much, it adds up considerably in a parking lot or a parking structure. In fact, parking lots are 10% less efficient than they could be.

When Darien residents visit other communities, they likely park in 9x18 spaces.

A. Width of double parking bay	60 ft.
B. Depth of bay	18 ft.
C. Aisle width	24 ft.
D. Width of space	9 ft.
E. Depth of space	18 ft.



Center Street North (Public)



Lot Next To Leroy Avenue (Private)



“Complete Streets”

For many years, roadways had been treated as the exclusive area for vehicles. This “singular” approach is now changing and communities around the country are seeking to establish “complete streets” which provide for a wider range of transportation modes including walking, cycling, transit, and other modes.

As stated by the National Complete Streets Coalition, “complete streets” are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

The Route 1 Corridor Study produced a report entitled “Complete Streets Strategies and Tools for Boston Post Road, Darien.” This report can be used to help guide “complete streets” approaches on Route 1 and some recommendations may be relevant to other streets in Darien as well.

Improve Pedestrian Options

There is growing interest in walking and pedestrianism in Darien and this interest has accelerated in recent years. The Town has established a Pedestrian Infrastructure Advisory Committee to promote pedestrian activity that is safe, convenient, and attractive.

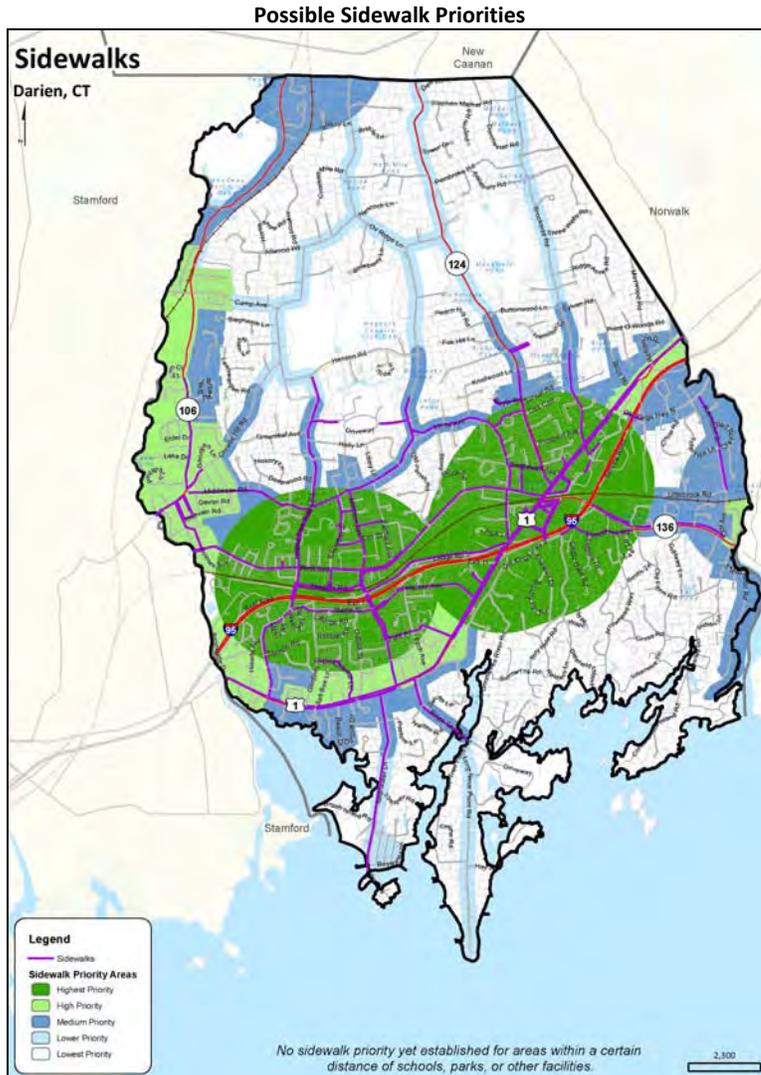
The POCD encourages and supports provision for pedestrians / walkers. The Sidewalk Improvement Program should be continued. There is a preferred sidewalk specification for downtown with brick pavers and other pedestrian amenities. A similar specification should be prepared for Noroton Heights.

The Town has been seeking to address “gaps” in the sidewalk system and has been utilizing a “sidewalk priority ranking system” to prioritize extensions. The Pedestrian Infrastructure Advisory Committee (PIAC) will be reviewing this approach. The map on the facing page suggests a possible hierarchy where “gaps” might be prioritized in order to address locations which might have the greatest benefit or serve the most people.

Improve Pedestrian Options		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to encourage and support provision for walking.	Town	
2. Continue efforts to close “gaps” in the sidewalk system.	PW	
3. Increase efforts to repair existing sidewalks, and construct new ones where needed and appropriate.	PW	
4. Continue placing funds in the Capital Improvement Program on an annual basis to improve, renovate, and construct sidewalks.	BOS	
5. Continue the “model block” specification to Noroton Heights or develop a new specification.	ARB	PW
6. Continue to consider sidewalks, pedestrian access, and related amenities during the site plan and Special Permit review process.	PZC	
Action Steps		
7. Develop and implement a sidewalk plan.	Town	PW
8. Work with CT-DOT on improving crosswalks on State highways (such as Boston Post Road, Tokeneke Road, Mansfield Avenue, Hoyt Street, etc.).	Staff	

Possible Sidewalk Priority Areas

Highest Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/2 mile radius of Darien / Noroton Heights train stations • CBD zone and ¼ mile buffer • Noroton Heights Overlay zone and ¼ mile buffer
High Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other business zones • R-1/5 zone and R-1/3 residential zone
Medium Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/2 mile radius of Talmadge Hill / Springdale / Glenbrook / Rowayton train stations (provided sidewalks are available in adjacent community) • Arterial and collector roads when located within 1-mile of CBD zone or Noroton Heights Overlay zone • R-1/2 residential zone
Lower Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arterial and collector roads located more than 1-mile from CBD zone or Noroton Heights Overlay zone
Lowest Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R-1 zone and R-2 residential zone • Noroton Bay residential zone • Private roads



“Complete Streets”

See the sidebar on **page 132** for a discussion of “complete streets” since that approach is relevant to bicycles as well as other modes of transportation.

Bicycle Route Sign



Bike Rack Project At Train Stations



Improve Bicycling Options

The POCD supports provision for bicycles. Encouraging more bicycle use (and creating an overall system of bicycle routes on State and local roads, as appropriate) is strongly encouraged.

However, there may be challenges in Darien to accomplish this. Some roads in Darien may be too narrow, too twisty, or have limited sight lines preventing motorists and cyclists from comfortably co-existing with each other. On other roadways, traffic speeds, traffic volumes, and/or shoulder width may deter even the most experienced cyclists.

Darien intends to undertake a process to:

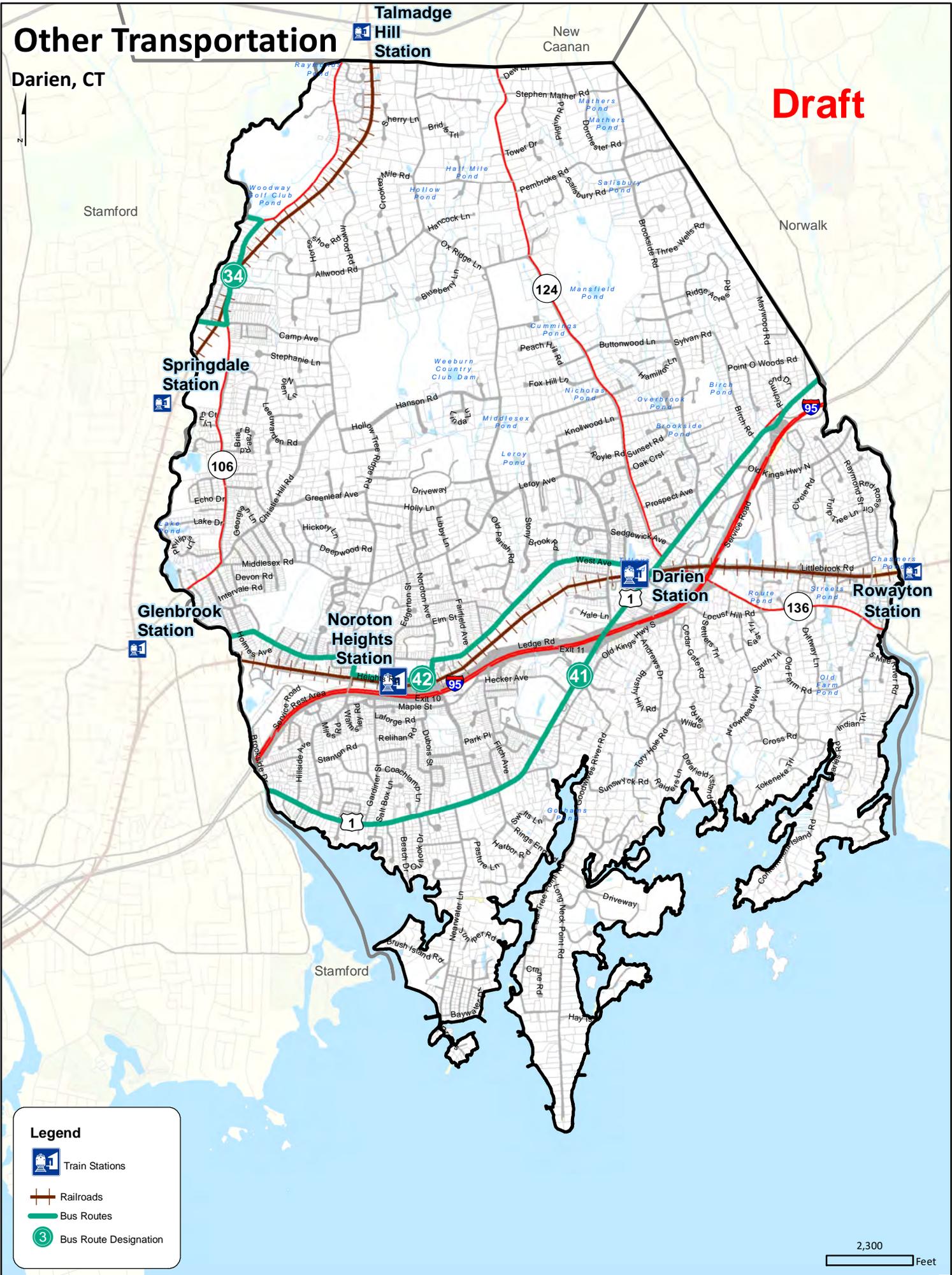
- identify streets with the most potential for bicycle use,
- provide bicycle amenities as appropriate (lane striping, signage, bike racks, etc.), and
- to educate motorists and cyclists about sharing the roadway.

Improve Bicycling Options		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Encourage and support provision for bicycling.	Town	
2. Consider bicycle access and amenities during the site plan review process.	PZC	
3. Seek to establish a system of safe bicycle routes throughout the community.	Town	PW
4. Evaluate bicycle potential as part of any roadway improvement or pavement striping project in Darien.	PW	
5. Place funds in the Capital Improvement Program to establish and enhance bicycle routes.	BOS	

Other Transportation

Darien, CT

Draft



Legend

- Train Stations
- Railroads
- Bus Routes
- Bus Route Designation

2,300 Feet

Improve Rail Services And Amenities

Darien has two stations (Darien and Noroton Heights) on the New Haven line of the Metro-North commuter rail system. The New Haven line provides service between New Haven Connecticut and Grand Central Station in New York City. In addition, there are four other stations in close proximity to Darien – one on the New Haven line (Rowayton station in Norwalk) and three on the New Canaan branch line (Glenbrook and Springdale in Stamford and Talmadge Hill in New Canaan). Darien is considered a higher level station than Noroton Heights and is served by about 17 more trips per day than Noroton Heights.

Overall, train service to and from Darien is excellent. While delays and cancellations are infrequent, they are tremendously frustrating to residents and local workers because people have become so reliant on the service.

The CT-DOT is working with Metro-North to increase the number of train trips in the corridor and increase the level of service. The Town will continue to advocate for maintaining and improving the level of service at both stations.

The key issues associated with the train service are:

- the availability of parking, and
- the quality of the stations themselves.

Darien Train Station



Noroton Heights Station



The train stations in Darien are owned by CT-DOT and operated by the Town under a lease arrangement. The Town collects the parking revenues and places these funds in a special account. Under the terms of the lease, the Town could improve the stations using the funds in that account. Depending on the cost of the improvements, the Town could increase the parking fees to cover the cost of the improvements.

However, at the present time, the lease has expired and CT-DOT has not offered a new lease or lease extension. As a result, the Town is not in a position to make improvements to the station until the lease provisions are clear.

Train Station Parking

Parking is the biggest issue associated with the train stations even though there are about 1,200 spaces near the Darien train station (about 860 public and about 320 private) and about 810 spaces near the Noroton Heights station (about 780 public and about 30 private). This is because of the overall dynamics of the parking situation.

Based on historic usage, the Town sells a certain number of permits for the designated permit spaces. In fact, the spaces are oversold since experience shows that a number of people do not use their spaces every day. However, there is a limited number of permits available and strong demand for the spaces so there is a lengthy waiting period (up to 7 years) to be able to get a parking permit. Once people get a permit, they often keep it even if they will not use it regularly. These permits tend to be used by long-time Darien residents.

For people without a parking permit, there are two options. First, they can arrange with private parking operators near the stations for a parking space on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis. Second, they can utilize the daily parking areas at the stations. The daily spaces are available on a first come – first served basis. These arrangements tend to be used by newer Darien residents and by commuters from out-of-town who choose to use the Darien stations due to quality of service, ease of access, overall cost, or other considerations.

Historically, the cost of parking at the Darien stations has typically been lower than can be found at other parking locations along the New Haven line or at nearby stations.

The availability of parking can be increased by going to structured parking at either station (or both stations). However, as mentioned previously, the provision of structured parking needs to consider the size of the structure, the number of spaces to be provided, and the overall traffic impacts. Any parking structure must be compatible with the overall character of the community and address the impacts of increased traffic and any roadway improvements.

Station Amenities

The Darien station was recently improved and, for the most part, meets user's expectations. An additional pedestrian bridge will enhance the functionality of the station and accessibility to parking areas and downtown.

The Noroton Heights station, on the other hand, has not been improved in many years and does not meet user's expectations:

- functionally obsolete structure,
- one pedestrian bridge in poor location,
- customer platforms in poor condition,
- inadequate bicycle / scooter parking, and
- congestion for arriving and departing vehicles.

Desired Improvements At Darien Station

- Renew / extend the State lease in order to support local investment in improving parking facilities
- Expand station parking (including parking structures) in ways compatible with the overall community
- Provide at least one (1) pedestrian bridge at the station to shorten the distance of pedestrian crossings and provide an alternative to the narrow underpass at Leroy Avenue
- Elevate the train station building to platform level to provide a handicapped accessible waiting room (the current building floor is several feet below the platform level)
- Reconfigure the taxi stand to minimize conflicts with commuters
- Extend the canopies to cover more of the train platforms
- Provide better lighting (at the stations, in the parking areas, and between the station and parking areas)

Desired Improvements At Noroton Heights Station

- Renew / extend the lease on the State parking facilities south of the railroad tracks in order to establish a parking structure and consolidate station parking in this area
- Establish a new train station building (public or private) opposite Edgerton Road
- Seek to increase service levels to the Noroton Heights station
- Renovate the existing pedestrian bridge and add a handicapped accessible pedestrian bridge at the station
- Extend the canopies to cover more of the train platforms
- Rebuild the station platforms
- Provide better lighting (at the stations, in the parking areas, and between the station and parking areas)
- Seek to use State land north of the railroad tracks to support transit-oriented development as envisioned in the POCD

Station improvements should be undertaken, as needed. However, until the State lease is renewed, the Town is currently not in a position to make the improvements desired.

Improve Rail Services And Amenities		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to work with CT-DOT and Metro-North to increase the level of train service to and from Darien.	Town	
2. Seek ways to improve the overall parking situation at train stations, including parking structures).	Town	PC
Action Steps		
3. Investigate increasing the supply of parking at one or both train stations.	Town	PC
4. Investigate increasing parking prices in Darien in order to provide more amenities for users and make it fairer relative to other parking situations on the New Haven rail line.	BOS	PC
5. Work with CT-DOT to clarify the lease situation so that planning for station improvements can commence.	BOS	

Darien Station



Noroton Heights Station



Enhance Other Transit Services

Darien is served by three Connecticut Transit bus routes:

- Route No. 41 provides service along Route 1 in Darien as part of its route between downtown Stamford and downtown Norwalk.
- Route No. 42 provides service from the Stamford Transportation Center to the Darien train station via West Avenue and includes the Noroton Heights train station.
- Route No. 34 provides service from the Stamford Transportation Center to northeast Stamford and returns using Woodway, Hoyt, and Camp Streets in Darien.

Dial-a-ride service in Darien is available from “At Home In Darien”, a private non-profit organization that provides transportation services so that Darien seniors can live independently in their own homes, if they wish.

Taxi service is operated by the Darien Eveready Cab Company. It is located at the Darien railroad station (1 Squab Lane). Taxi queuing / operations at the Darien train station can sometimes interfere with pedestrian movements and should be addressed.

Enhance Other Transit Services		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Seek to maintain and enhance bus transit services within Darien.	Town	CTT
2. Maintain and enhance other transit services within Darien.	Town	CTT MNRR
3. Consider establishing a transit shuttle service that offers home-to-station service at peak commuter hours (as has been done in Westport).	Town	
4. Provide bus shelters and other amenities (such as posted schedules and route maps) to support transit users (which can also be accomplished through land use approvals).	Town	PW PZC
5. Support the dial-a-ride service provided by “At Home In Darien.”	Town	
6. Continue to work with WestCOG and CT-DOT on increasing the attractiveness of alternative transportation including, but not limited to, car pools, van pools, ridesharing, and shuttles from train stations.	Town	

MANAGE UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

14

Overview

The availability of utility infrastructure – water, sewer, electricity, and communications, for example – has a significant influence on overall public health, safety, welfare, and quality of life. Even though some of these utilities may be provided by private companies, their availability is important for residents, businesses, and visitors to Darien.

The POCD looks at the availability of these utilities (both capacity and location) to ensure they are adequate for community needs.

Utility infrastructure has a significant influence on overall public health, safety, welfare, and quality of life ...

Water Service



Sewage Service



Storm Drainage



Wired Utilities



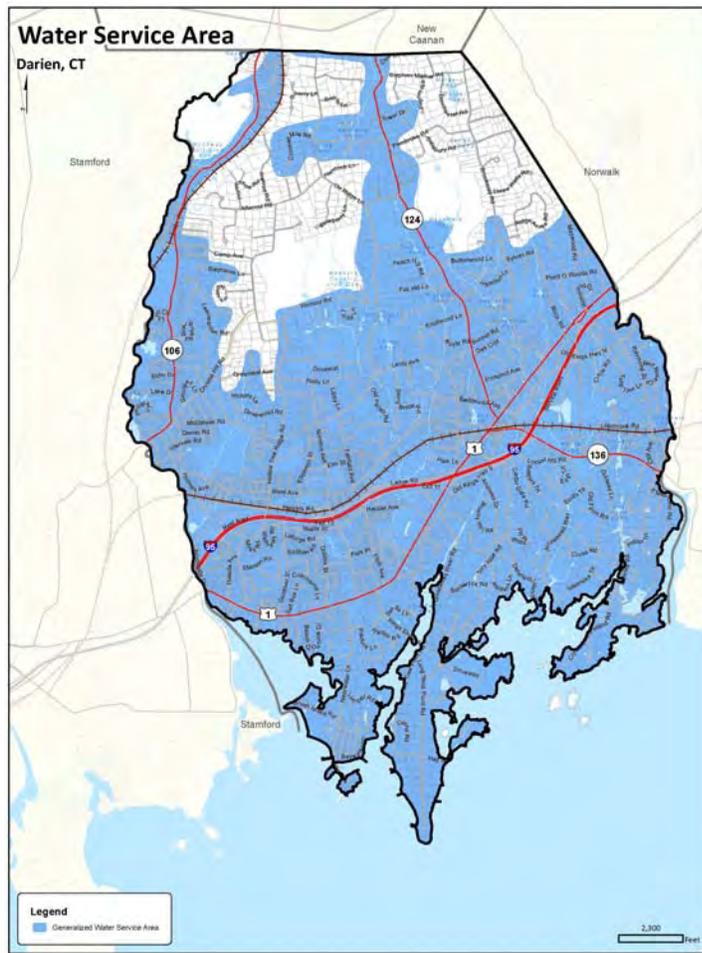
Maintain and Enhance Piped Utilities

Maintain and Enhance Water Service

Water service in Darien is provided by the Aquarion Company as part of their water system in southwest Connecticut. Although Aquarion has not shared detailed information on their customer base, available information indicates that Aquarion provides water service to about 18,000 people in Darien.

Available information also indicates that Aquarion has ample supply capacity to meet local needs. Water quality is in accordance with State and Federal requirements. Water pressure can be an issue in some areas and the Town will continue to press Aquarion to address these situations. The Town will also advocate for “color-coded” hydrant tops that clearly indicate the available pressure in different locations.

Overall, the water system is expected to be adequate for community needs during the planning period (2016-2026).



Maintain and Enhance Sewer Service

Over 70% of the Town of Darien is served by a sanitary sewer system. The system collects sewage discharges from local properties and conveys them to the water pollution control facility in Stamford. Darien has an inter-municipal agreement with Stamford for the treatment of sewage waste. Operation of the sewer facilities in Darien is overseen by the Sewer Commission.

According to the Public Works staff, no area of Darien is considered a “sewer avoidance area” at this time. In other words, all areas of Darien may be eligible for public sewer service at some time in the future.

Other issues to address in the future to make efficient use of available sewage treatment capacity include:

- inflow (discharge of non-sewer water from basement sump pumps, roof leaders, and other sources) and
- infiltration (seepage of groundwater into sewer pipes).



Sea Level Rise

While there are not expected to be any major issues in Darien related to sewage capacity, one of the issues for the community to address in the future is related to possible future climate change and sea level rise.

Sewers tend to be located in low lying areas (in order to collect sewage from nearby properties) and these areas are vulnerable to flooding.

In the future, Darien will need to develop strategies to floodproof or protect sewage infrastructure (such as pump stations and manholes) from flood damage or water level rise.

Encourage Expansion Of Natural Gas Service

While natural gas service is not widely available in Darien at the present time, natural gas service is being considered for some of the major developments being proposed in downtown Darien and Noroton Heights. Gas service should also be extended to major municipal facilities, if possible (especially since some of these serve as emergency shelters). The introduction and expansion of natural gas service is encouraged since it can provide an alternative source of fuel to local residents and businesses.

Address Storm Drainage Issues

Storm drainage in Darien is addressed by a combination of structural systems (such as catch basins and underground pipes) in areas of newer development and by more natural approaches (ditches and swales) in other areas. Drainage and flooding issues can occur along a number of watercourses in the community since culverts and drainage facilities did not anticipate the level of development prevalent today.

While the Town has attempted to address some of the more difficult drainage situations, these proposals have sometimes been opposed by the abutting property owners. As a result, some of the problems have persisted for a long time and will likely persist into the future until some consensus or direction emerges among the affected property owners.

In the meantime, the Town is utilizing a drainage policy which encourages or requires detention on individual sites. This policy (called “fresh meadow”) means that any new development is evaluated on the total drainage impact as if the site was an undeveloped meadow rather than an already developed site. In the future, it is anticipated that Darien will do more to implement “low impact development” strategies where attention is paid to treating runoff to remove pollutants and infiltrating it into the ground as soon as possible.

While this approach will certainly yield benefits over the long term, there are some serious drainage issues at the present time that will persist unless something is done.

Darien Flooding



Darien Flooding



Maintain And Enhance Piped Utilities		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Encourage improvement of water service.	Town	
2. Advocate for color coded hydrants (shows water flow/pressure).	VFD	
3. Maintain and enhance sewer service.	SC	PW
4. Develop strategies to floodproof or protect sewage infrastructure (such as pump stations and manholes) from flood damage or water level rise.	SC	PW
5. Continue to investigate and address inflow and infiltration of non-sewer water.	SC	PW
6. Encourage expansion of natural gas service.	Town	
7. Continue to investigate and address drainage and flooding issues.	PW	
8. Continue comprehensive master drainage planning.	PW	
9. Maintain the “fresh meadow” drainage policy.	PW	PZC
10. Continue to address storm drainage issues.	PW	
11. Implement “low impact development” strategies where attention is paid to treating runoff to remove pollutants and infiltrating it into the ground as soon as possible.	PW	PZC

Rain Garden



Pervious Pavement



Streetlights

Some communities are purchasing and then managing and maintaining local streetlights.

Darien should consider this approach in order to maintain the street-lighting system as cost-effectively as possible.

This should also include a conversion of streetlights to LED technology.

Maintain and Enhance Other Utilities

Wired Utilities

Electrical service, wired telephones, and cable television / internet are the main wired utilities. The reliability of these systems is an important consideration since they can be vulnerable to service interruptions from storm events and other disruptions since the wires are exposed.

In areas such as downtown Darien and Noroton Heights, it is the Town’s desire that wired utilities be placed underground. In other areas of Darien, the Town will continue to seek an appropriate balance between electrical reliability and the impacts on community character / environmental health from trimming of tree branches.

The Town will encourage expansion of internet capacity for residents and businesses.

Wireless Utilities

People are increasingly relying on wireless services for voice and data. Wireless services can also enhance public safety since people can call for assistance from anywhere service is available. People are often concerned about wireless services because of the perceived visual impact of new towers.

Darien will seek to balance the demand for wireless services and the public safety benefits with the visual and other impacts of new tower installations.

Maintain and Enhance Other Utilities		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to seek an appropriate balance between reliability of wired utilities and community character / environmental health.	Town	PW TW
2. Consider acquiring the street-lighting system and operating it as cost-effectively as possible.	Town	PW
3. Seek to balance the demand for wireless services and the public safety benefits with the visual and other impacts of new tower installations.	Town	
4. Work with property owners and utility companies to bury utility wires, especially in downtown Darien and Noroton Heights.	Town	PW
5. Encourage the expansion of internet capacity and wireless coverage while maintaining community character.	Town	

PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY

15

Overview

For the purposes of this Plan, “sustainability” refers to the philosophy of encouraging activities that allow present generations to meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The term “resiliency” refers to the community’s ability to readily recover from sudden changes or adversity.

Much of Darien was built during a time when it was assumed that resources to support growth and development patterns were unconstrained and that major changes were unlikely to occur and that the environment would support such growth. While this still may be the case, it seems prudent to evaluate alternative scenarios and the possible implications of those scenarios. If we are to enhance the character and quality of life for present and future generations, being a sustainable and resilient community – able to adapt to possible future changes – may be especially important.

Sustainability and resiliency are newer issues for Darien to consider as part of the Plan ...

Sustainability



Resiliency



LEED Certification

The Darien Library was built to LEED-Gold standards. This accreditation is given to buildings judged to have achieved a high level of environmental sustainability in the areas of:

- energy savings,
- water efficiency,
- CO2 emissions reduction,
- improved indoor environmental quality, and
- stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts.

Promote Sustainability

Promote Energy Conservation / Sustainability

Energy availability and cost are likely to be more significant issues in Darien in the future. This has financial implications for all residents – whether for leading their daily lives or for supporting functions provided by the Town.

The Town should prepare and implement a Sustainability Plan. This could be prepared by the Conservation Commission (recommended in the POCD) or a Sustainability / Energy Task Force which could evaluate alternative approaches (space heating, electrical consumption, electrical generation, vehicles) and make recommendations to reduce energy usage, increase reliability, and save money.

Some key issues for the sustainability / energy task force to consider include:

- Prepare an energy conservation action plan to reduce operating costs, reduce lifecycle costs, and lower the carbon footprint of the Town / school buildings.
- Review municipal facilities for energy conservation opportunities (lighting, controls, equipment, geo-thermal, building envelope, etc.).
- Investigate opportunities for energy generation (solar, wind, fuel cell, etc.) as a way to lower energy costs and enhance resiliency.
- Identify ways to involve the community in implementing energy conservation practices.
- Initiate transition to renewable energy for town vehicles (natural gas, electric, biofuels, and hybrids).

Residential Solar Installation



Rooftop Solar Installation



Promote Water Conservation

The United States has one of the highest rates of personal water consumption in the world (100 gallons of water per person per day for domestic purposes). Simple changes to some everyday activities can reduce most people's domestic water use by 10% or more. Darien will encourage water conservation especially since some areas of the community rely on groundwater for domestic use.

Promote Waste Reduction / Recycling

The overall waste stream and recycling is another potential area for investigation and education in Darien. Reducing the waste stream and promoting recycling will be promoted.

In 2013, the Board of Selectmen established a Recycling Center Advisory Committee to ensure that transfer station operations were efficient and cost effective and that single stream recycling was effectively implemented. The Committee was also charged with increasing public awareness and environmental improvement.

Educate Residents About Sustainability Concepts

Efforts will be devoted towards educating residents and school children about sustainability concepts.



Promote Sustainability		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Promote energy conservation / sustainability.	CC	SETF
2. Promote water conservation.	CC	
3. Promote waste reduction / recycling.	CC	PW
4. Educate residents about sustainability concepts.	CC	
Action Steps		
5. Prepare and implement a Sustainability Plan.	CC	SETF

**Recent Storms
Affecting Darien**

- Hurricane Irene (2011)
- October snow-storm and ice-storm (2011)
- Storm Sandy (2012)
- Winter storm Charlotte (2013)

Promote Resiliency

As stated earlier, “resiliency” refers to the community’s ability to address and readily recover from storm events, sudden changes or adversity.

Emergency Preparedness / Response (Short-Term)

Darien has a variety of public safety services (police, fire, and emergency medical) that are trained and equipped to respond to emergencies in the community. Darien will continue to review and improve emergency preparedness plans (single events) in order to be best prepared for future events.

Hazard Reduction / Mitigation (Medium-Term)

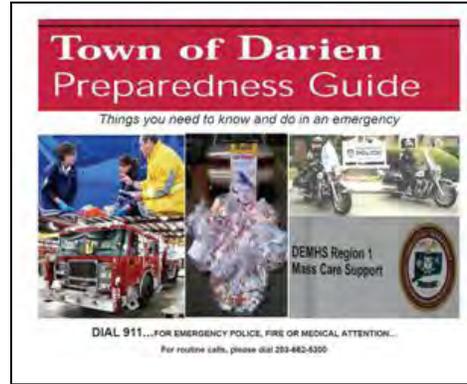
Recent storm events have demonstrated the value of hazard identification, hazard mitigation, and hazard response planning. Based on experience from prior events and advanced preparation, the Town of Darien has plans and supplies available to address local needs resulting from recurring events, such as hurricanes, flooding and winter storms.

Darien will continue to participate with adjacent communities and the Western Connecticut Council of Governments on updating and refining the Hazard Mitigation Strategy in order to identify and then reduce or eliminate risk to human life and property resulting from natural hazards.

Emergency Response



Hazard Readiness



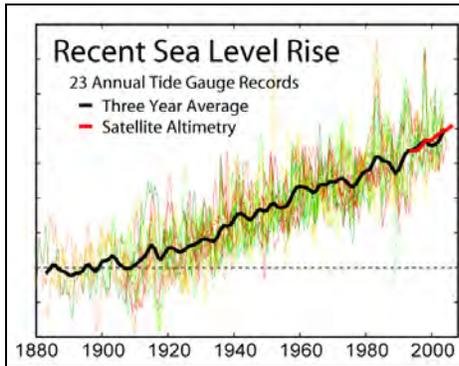
Evolution (Long-Term)

Longer term issues are also important to consider. There is some indication that the global climate may be changing and that average annual temperatures may be increasing. One of the results of this could be a change in sea levels over time. Since Darien is a coastal community, the prospect of sea level rise is something to be considered so that the implications of sea level rise can be understood and alternative scenarios evaluated.

Understanding long term trends is challenging because the time frame of sea level rise is longer than our typical outlook. People may tend to see floods and storms as abnormal events rather than an indication of future conditions. For most people, an event 50 years in the future may be too ephemeral or distant to comprehend.

Much of the discussion of response to sea level rise needs to include the state and federal governments and the insurance industry. In the short-term, it makes sense for a homeowner to take federal flood insurance proceeds and rebuild in place to a higher elevation. Over a longer-term, however, it may not be possible for local government to raise road elevations or provide services.

Sea Level Rise



Sea Level Rise



Problem Areas



Short-Term Adaptation



Additional Information

Additional information on sea level rise may be found at:

coastalresilience.org

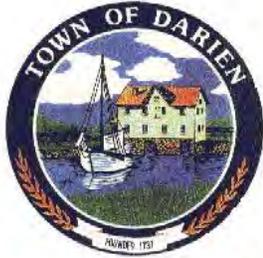
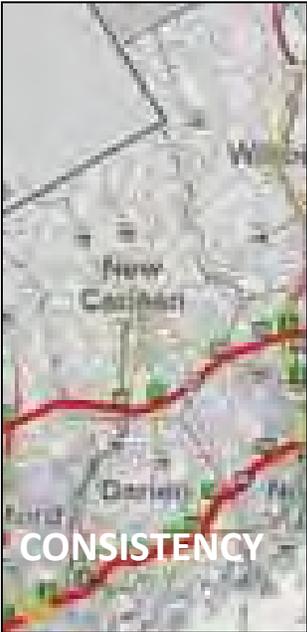
As other coastal communities are starting to do, Darien intends to consider and discuss strategic options and which strategies are best in which situations:

- **Inaction** – either ignore sea level rise or not consider the implications to the community and its residents.
- **Protection**– consider “hard armoring” of existing improvements and properties (i.e. – seawalls, etc.).
- **Accommodation** –consider raising existing structures even though the surrounding land and streets will not be raised.
- **Adaptation** – reduce or minimize the construction of new improvements.
- **Capitulation** – retreat from shoreline areas over time as sea levels rise and/or revert to nature.

As an initial step, Darien will continue to assess the vulnerability of public and private infrastructure (e.g., utilities, transportation, structures) to climate change and increased frequency of extreme storms and develop adaptation strategies.

Promote Resiliency		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Continue to regularly review and improve emergency preparedness and response.	Town	VFD PD P53
2. Continue to regularly review and improve hazard mitigation plans for recurring events, such as flooding.	Town	VFD PD P53
3. Over the long term, begin to consider and discuss strategic options and responses to predicted sea level rise.	Town	PW PZC
Action Steps		
4. Assess the vulnerability of infrastructure (e.g., utilities, transportation, structures) to climate change and increased frequency of extreme storms and develop strategies.	PW	SC Town
5. Consider increasing the “freeboard” requirement in areas subject to flooding especially as storm frequency and severity is projected to increase in the future.	PZC	
6. Consider evaluating how building height is regulated in coastal areas.	PZC	

CONCLUSION



FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

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Overview

The recommendations of the POCD can be combined to present an overall Future Land Use Plan for Darien. The Future Land Use Plan is a reflection of the stated goals, policies, and recommendations of the POCD as well as an integration of the preceding elements of the POCD. In essence, the Future Land Use Plan is a statement of what the Darien of tomorrow should look like.

Residential



Business



Community Uses



Open Space



Policy Area Map

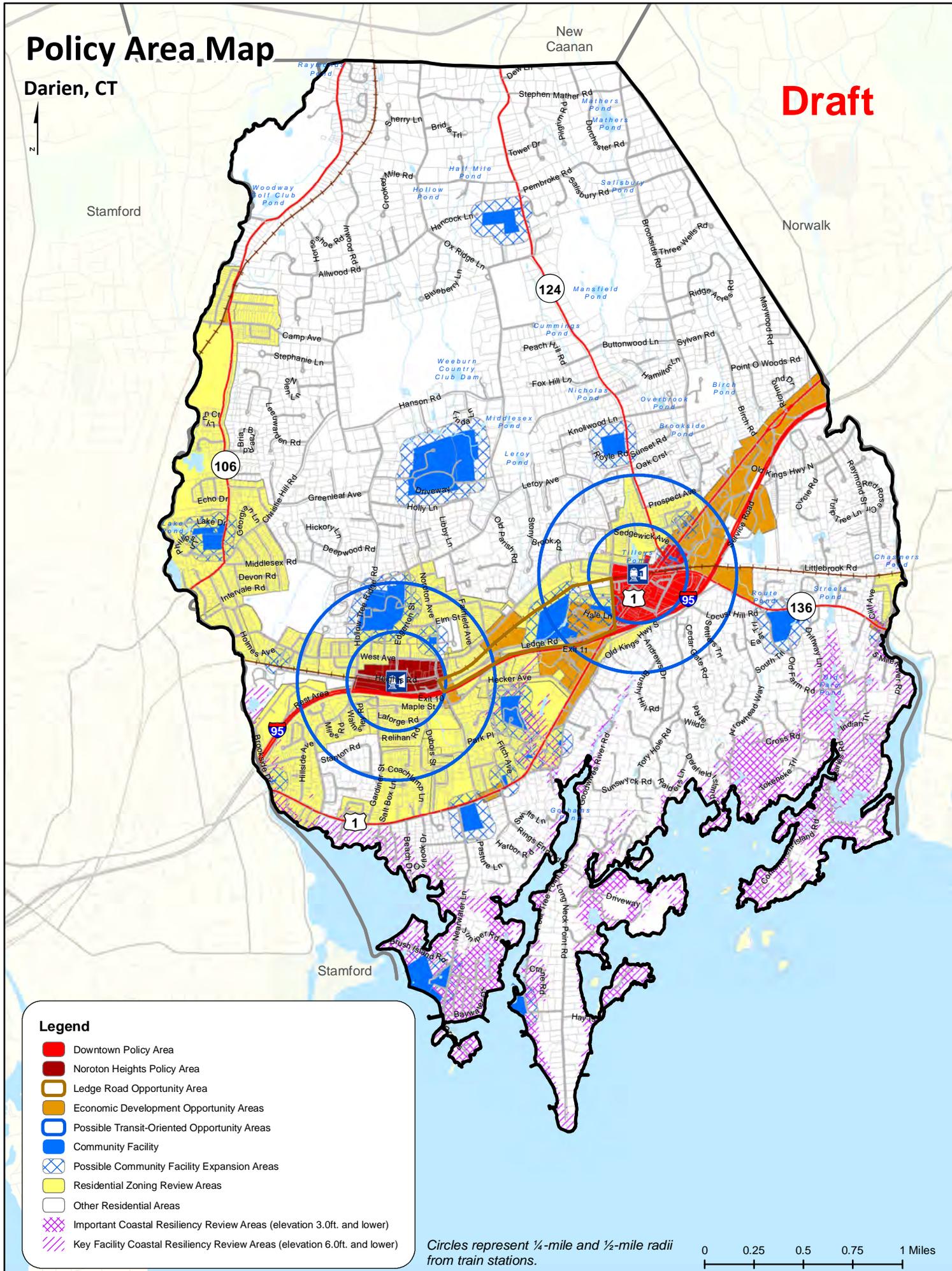
The following table describes the major categories reflected on the Policy Area map on the [facing page](#):

Policy Areas	Policy Summary
Downtown Policy Area / Noroton Heights Policy Area	The areas where pedestrian-oriented, mixed use, village-type development and redevelopment will be encouraged to create and maintain a strong sense of place. It is envisioned that the overall intensity of development in downtown Darien will be higher than that of Noroton Heights or other areas. Development regulations (building height, floor-area-ratio, parking requirements, etc.) will be reviewed and refined to ensure that future development contributes to this overall vision. Since character of development is of the upmost importance, establishment of village districts will be considered.
Ledge Road Opportunity Area	The area along Ledge Road which might be suitable for a variety of future uses since it is separated from other areas by the railroad tracks and Interstate 95 and is well-served by I-95 ramps.
Economic Development Opportunity Areas	Areas currently zoned for business which should be retained for economic development. The regulations for these areas (and the number and location of zoning districts) should be reviewed and refined to ensure they will encourage the most appropriate development.
Possible TOD Opportunity Areas	Areas within ½ mile of the train stations in Downtown Darien and Noroton Heights where transit oriented development might be appropriate.
Community Facility	Existing municipal facilities which will be maintained and enhanced in order to meet community needs.
Possible Community Facility Expansion Areas	Land areas adjacent to existing community facilities which should be evaluated for acquisition should they become available.
Residential Zoning Review Areas	Higher density residential areas where zoning regulations for coverage, bulk and height should be reviewed to ensure appropriate future development. In addition, the location of zoning districts and the location of zoning district boundaries should be reviewed to see if properties can be placed in one zone (rather than split zones) and in a zone most similar to their actual lot size.
Other Residential Areas	Other residentially zoned areas where the overall goal is to protect the integrity and character of the residential neighborhoods.
Important Coastal Resiliency Review Areas	Areas with very low elevations relative to sea level (0-3 feet elevation) where the implications of storm surge, climate change, and/or sea level rise may become more important in the future in terms of public facilities and private development.
Key Facility Coastal Resiliency Review Areas	Areas with low elevations relative to sea level (3-6 feet elevation) where the implications of storm surge, climate change, and/or sea level rise on roadways, sewer pump stations, and other public facilities may become more important in the future.

Policy Area Map

Darien, CT

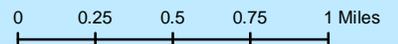
Draft



Legend

- Downtown Policy Area
- Noroton Heights Policy Area
- Ledge Road Opportunity Area
- Economic Development Opportunity Areas
- Possible Transit-Oriented Opportunity Areas
- Community Facility
- Possible Community Facility Expansion Areas
- Residential Zoning Review Areas
- Other Residential Areas
- Important Coastal Resiliency Review Areas (elevation 3.0ft. and lower)
- Key Facility Coastal Resiliency Review Areas (elevation 6.0ft. and lower)

Circles represent 1/4-mile and 1/2-mile radii from train stations.



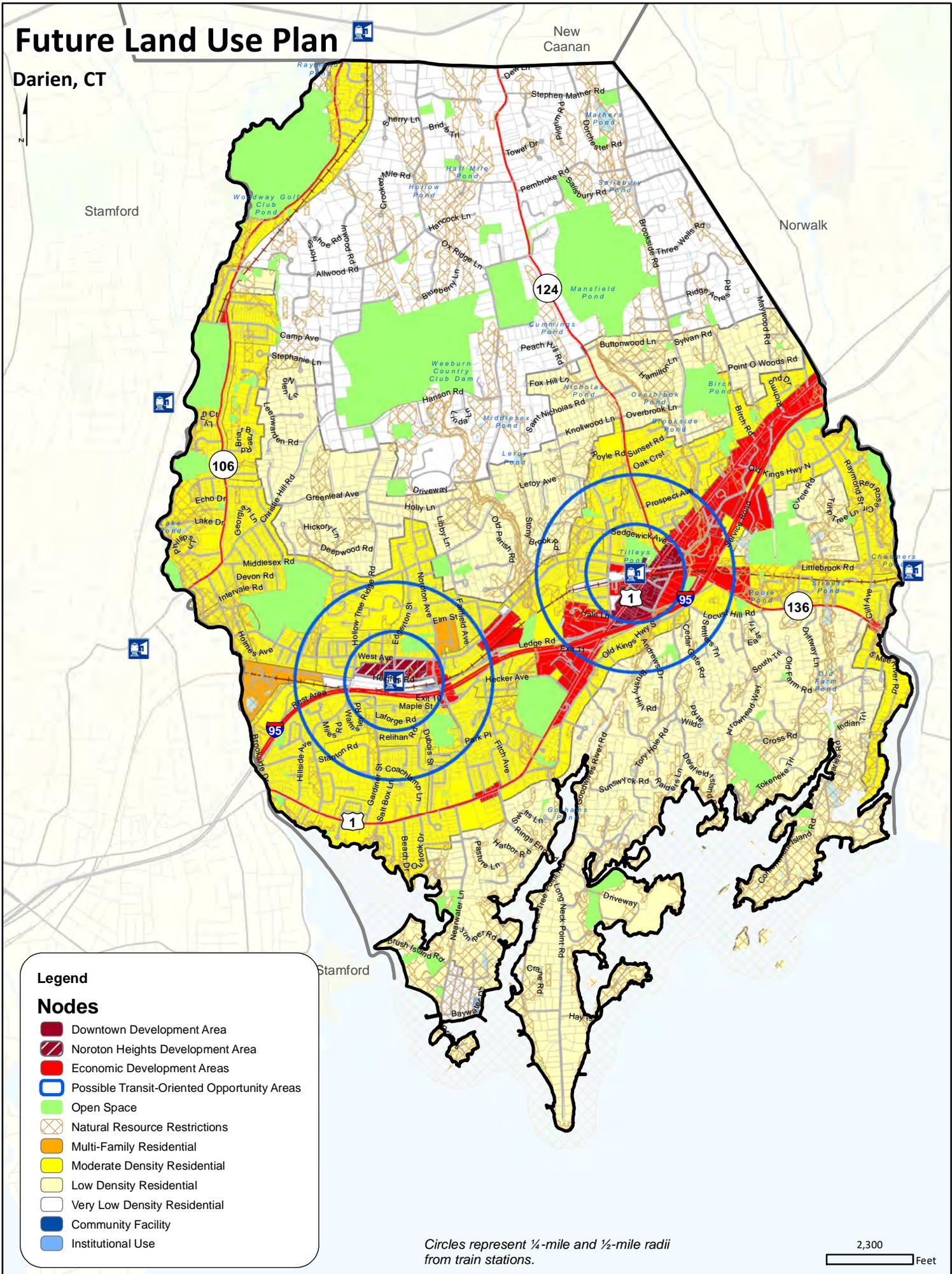
Future Land Use Plan

The following table describes the major categories reflected on the Future Land Use Plan map on the [facing page](#):

Conservation Areas	Description
Open Space	Properties considered open space today and intended to remain as “dedicated open space” or “managed open space”
Natural Resource Restrictions	Areas with significant environmental constraints (wetlands, watercourses, steep slopes, flood-plains, etc.)
Focus Areas	
Downtown Development Area	The main community focal point intended for continued development as a pedestrian-oriented, mixed use, village-type area with a strong sense of place.
Noroton Heights Development Area	The area near the Noroton Heights train station intended for transformation into pedestrian-oriented, mixed use, village-type area with a strong sense of place.
Possible TOD Opportunity Areas	Areas within ½ mile of the train stations in Downtown Darien and Noroton Heights where transit oriented development might be appropriate.
Other Business Areas	
Economic Development Areas	Areas that have been (and are intended to be) developed with retail, personal service, office, and similar business uses as appropriate to each location.
Residential Areas	
Very Low Density Residential	Areas where existing development patterns, soil types, terrain, and infrastructure capacity are generally suitable for residential development at densities of 0.5 units per acre or less.
Low Density Residential	Areas where existing development patterns, soil soil types, terrain, and infrastructure capacity are generally suitable for residential development at densities of 1.0 units per acre or less.
Moderate Density Residential	Areas where existing development patterns, soil and infrastructure capacity are generally suitable for residential development at densities greater than 1.0 units per acre.
Multi-Family Residential	Areas with existing multi-family development or areas zoned for such.
Other Areas	
Community Facility / Institutional Use	Areas that have been developed or are intended to develop with community facilities and/or institutional uses.

Future Land Use Plan

Darien, CT



Circles represent 1/4-mile and 1/2-mile radii from train stations.

2,300 Feet

State Plan Categories

- ★ Regional Centers
- Water
- Protected Lands
- Local Historic Districts
- Village Priority Funding Area
- Balanced Priority Funding Area
- Undesignated Lands

Priority Funding Areas

- 1-2 Criteria
- 3-4 Criteria
- 5 Criteria

Conservation Areas

- 1-3 Conservation Factors
- 4-5 Conservation Factors
- 6-7 Conservation Factors

Municipal Boundaries

- Busway Stations
- Rail Stations
- Ferry
- Sea Ports
- Rail Lines
- Ferry Service

Airports

- Commercial Service
- General Aviation
- Reliever

Primary Highways

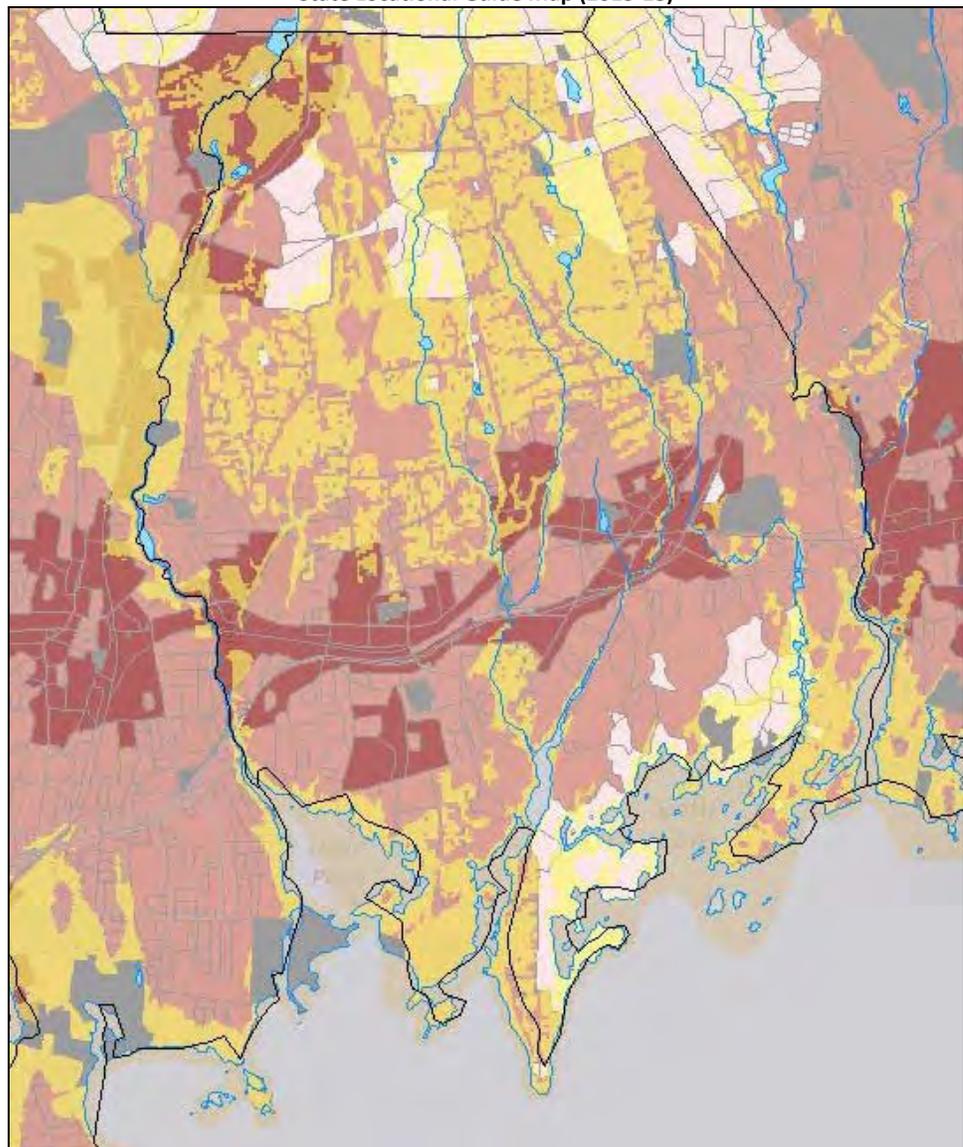
- Interstate
- U.S. Route
- State Route

Plan Consistency

In accordance with CGS Section 8-23, this POCD was compared with the 2013-18 State Conservation and Development Policies Plan and found to be generally consistent with that Plan and its Locational Guide Map.

There are no areas in Darien designated as “Village Priority Finding Areas.” As part of the update of the State Conservation and Development Policies Plan in 2017 or so, Darien will seek to get the downtown area and Noroton Heights designated as “Village Priority Finding Areas” in order to support potential state and federal funding and/or grants.

State Locational Guide Map (2013-18)



**Connecticut Conservation and Development Plan –
State Growth Management Principles**

In accordance with CGS Section 8-23, the POCD has been evaluated for consistency with statewide growth management principles and found to be generally consistent with those principles.

<p>Principle 1 – Redevelop and revitalize regional centers and areas of mixed-land uses with existing or planned physical infrastructure.</p>	<p>FINDING – Consistent</p> <p>Darien is encouraging appropriate development of downtown and Noroton Heights, areas with mixed land uses and existing infrastructure.</p>
<p>Principle 2 – Expand housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs.</p>	<p>FINDING – Consistent</p> <p>Darien has been actively working to diversify its housing portfolio and address recognized housing needs – housing that is more affordable and housing for an aging population.</p>
<p>Principle 3 – Concentrate development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options and land reuse.</p>	<p>FINDING – Consistent</p> <p>Darien is encouraging appropriate development of downtown and Noroton Heights, areas served by existing rail stations, bus routes, and highway interchanges.</p>
<p>Principle 4 – Conserve and restore the natural environment, cultural and historical resources, and traditional rural lands.</p>	<p>FINDING – Consistent</p> <p>The POCD identifies the importance of protecting important community resources such as the natural environment, open spaces, coastal resources, and historic resources.</p>
<p>Principle 5 – Protect environmental assets critical to public health and safety.</p>	<p>FINDING – Consistent</p> <p>The POCD contains recommendations to protect environmental assets critical to public health and safety. In particular, the POCD stresses the importance of protecting water quality.</p>
<p>Principle 6 – Integrate planning across all levels of government to address issues on a local, regional, and statewide basis.</p>	<p>FINDING – Consistent</p> <p>The POCD is part of the process of integrating planning with other levels of government and with other agencies. The POCD will be used to coordinate efforts with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adjacent communities, • regional organizations, and • state agencies.

Regional Plan Categories

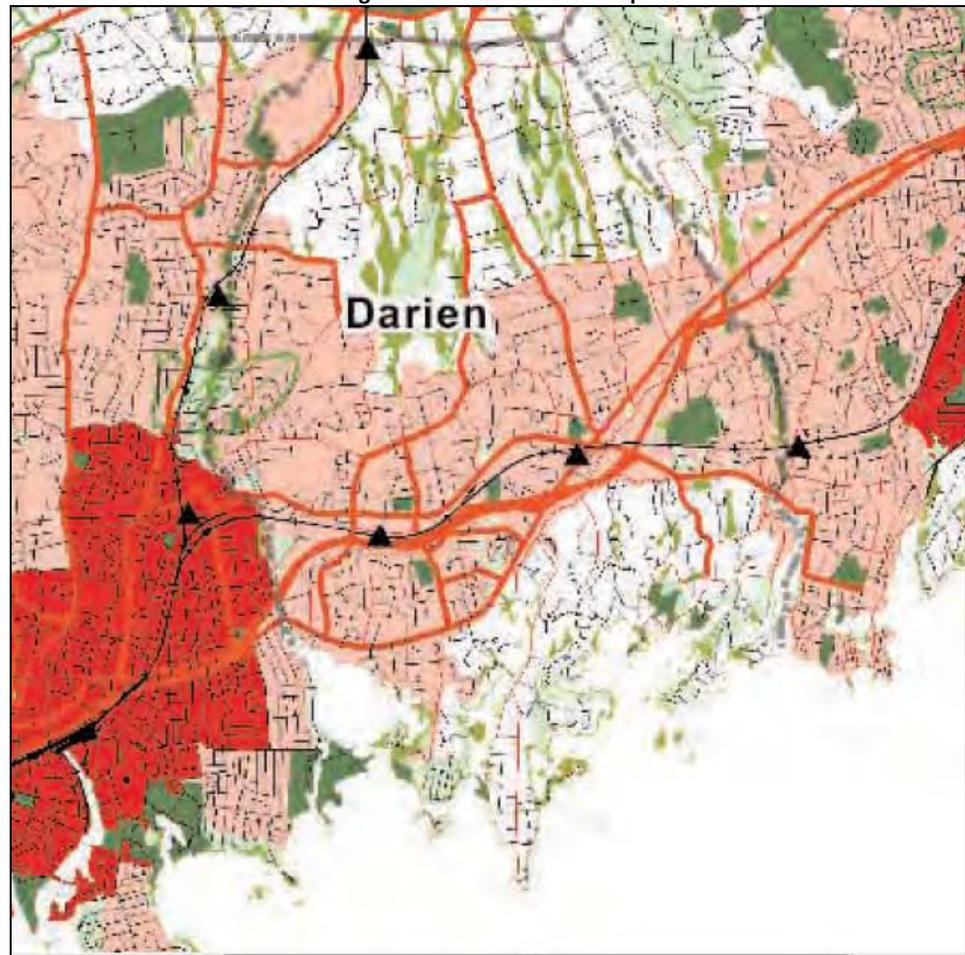
-  Neighborhood Conservation
-  Regional Center
-  Rural Community Center
-  Existing Preserved Open Space
-  Preservation Area
-  Conservation Area
-  Rural Land
-  Aquifer Protection Area
-  Historic District
-  Municipal Boundary
-  Primary Highway
-  Secondary Highway
-  Local Road
-  Railroad
-  Rail Station

Regional Plan Of Conservation and Development

State statutes require that a municipal POCD be compared with the regional plan. However, the State legislature consolidated and realigned the regional planning organizations in 2014 and WestCOG, the successor agency to the Southwestern Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA), has not yet adopted a new regional plan.

The most recent regional plan which incorporates Darien is the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development adopted by SWRPA in February of 2006. This POCD was compared with Regional Plan and found to be generally consistent with it.

Regional Locational Guide Map



IMPLEMENTATION

17

Overview

Implementation of recommendations is a key part of the planning process. In fact, it may be the most important part of the planning process. If strategies to make Darien a better place are identified but not acted upon, the planning process will not have produced the changes desired by the community or realized the full potential of what the community could and should be.

The whole purpose of the planning process is not to produce a plan but to identify positive changes that should be undertaken in Darien in order to:

- meet community needs,
- preserve community character, and
- enhance the overall quality of life.

Implementation Committee



Groundbreaking



Ribbon Cutting



Implementation Committee

Some communities have found that a Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) can be effective at coordinating implementation of the Plan.

The PIC includes representatives of various Town boards and commissions. The PIC meets quarterly to discuss ways to facilitate or accelerate POCD implementation, assess the status of specific recommendations, evaluate the priorities, and even suggest new implementation techniques.

Darien may wish to consider establishing a Plan Implementation Committee to coordinate implementation of the Plan.

Implement The Plan

The POCD contains two types of recommendations:

- **Policies** – Policies are intended to guide local actions and be on-going strategies of the Town of Darien. Policies are not discrete activities and do not lend themselves to measurement or recognition as being complete.
- **Action Steps** – Action steps are discrete activities which can be undertaken to accomplish POCD recommendations and policies. These can be measured and recognized as being complete. Over time, it is envisioned that additional tasks will be identified by the Town of Darien to help implement recommended policies.

It is intended that the POCD be a working document used to implement policies and complete tasks. It should be understood that implementation of the POCD will be a gradual and continual process. While some recommendations should (and will) be carried out in a relatively short period of time, others may be long-term in nature. Further, since some recommendations will involve additional study or a commitment of fiscal resources, their implementation will take place over several years or occur in stages.

Many of the policy recommendations in the POCD will be implemented by the Planning and Zoning Commission through zoning amendments, application reviews, and other means. Some policy recommendations will require the cooperation of other local boards and commissions such as the Town Council. However, if the POCD is to be successfully realized, the policy recommendations must serve as a guide to all residents, applicants, agencies, and individuals interested in the orderly growth of Darien.

Many sections of the POCD also identify specific tasks or actions which can be itemized, scheduled, managed and completed. Tasks and actions lend themselves to monitoring implementation and measuring progress although they may not be more important than a strategy or a policy. It is hoped that, over time, Darien will continue to identify and undertake new tasks and actions to help implement the Plan.

This type of process (reviewing the POCD and adding new policies and tasks) will help the POCD (and plan strategies) be relevant over a long timeframe.

Implement The Plan		
Policies	Leader	Partners
1. Implement the POCD.	PIC	Town
2. Regularly review POCD strategies, policies and tasks to ensure they are relevant to community needs.	PIC	
3. Coordinate implementation efforts with adjacent municipalities and regional planning agencies.	PIC	Town
4. Use the POCD to guide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granting of special permits, • zoning map or text changes, and • statutory referrals from the Board of Selectmen (CGS 8-24) regarding municipal improvements. 	PZC	
5. Encourage the Board of Selectmen and other Town agencies to use the POCD to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • guide decisions on the Operating Budget, • guide decisions on the Capital Budget, and • guide preparation of the long-term Capital Improvements Program. 	PIC	
Action Steps		
6. Establish a Plan Implementation Committee made up of representatives of various boards to prioritize, coordinate, and refine implementation of the Plan.	Town	PZC
7. Update Zoning Regulations to implement strategies, policies, and action steps in the POCD.	PZC	
8. Update Subdivision Regulations to implement strategies, policies, and action steps in the POCD.	PZC	
9. Seek to have downtown Darien and Noroton Heights designated as Village Priority Funding Areas on the Locational Guide Map in the State Conservation and Development Policies Plan.	Town	

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CONCLUSION

Overview

The POCD has been prepared to meet the challenges that will confront the Town of Darien in the future. The POCD is intended to serve as a guide to be followed in order to enhance the Town's quality of life, the overall economy, and community character.

The POCD is also intended to be flexible enough to allow adjustments that achieve specific goals and objectives while maintaining the integrity of the long-term goals of the community. Still, the most important step of the planning process is implementation of the Plan's strategies, policies, and action steps.

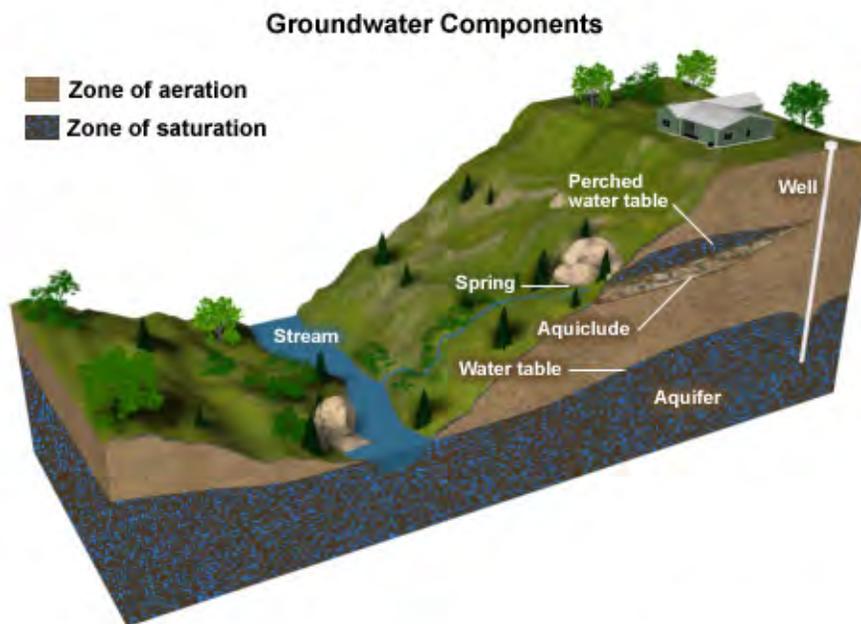
During the next few years, some of the goals will be achieved, some circumstances will undoubtedly change, and some conditions may arise that will suggest that it is time to reconsider some of the POCD strategies, policies, and action steps. Such situations are to be expected. Programs that help achieve community consensus, establish community goals, and promote community welfare will all turn out to be positive steps in the history of Darien.

GLOSSARY

Access Management: Managing access to developed land (shared driveways, curb cuts, property connections, etc.) while preserving the flow of traffic on the surrounding road system.

ADT: Average daily trips.

Aquifer: A geologic formation, group of formations, or part of a formation that contains sufficient saturated, permeable materials to yield significant quantities of water to wells and springs. (CGS Section 22a-354h[6])



Aquifer Protection Area (APA): An area delineated by a water utility company encompassing the groundwater recharge area for an active public drinking water supply well or for well fields serving more than 1,000 people that are set in stratified drift deposits.

Arterial Road: A roadway carrying large traffic volumes specifically for mobility, with limited or restricted service to local development.

CERC: Connecticut Economic Resource Center

CGS: Connecticut General Statutes

Collector Road: A street whose function is equally divided between mobility and access, linking local streets to arterials.

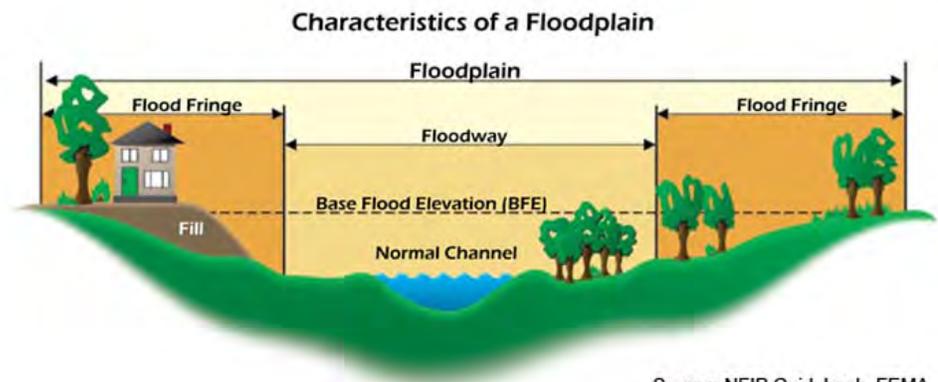
CT-DEEP: Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

CT-DOT: Connecticut Department of Transportation

FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Agency

Floodplain: An area land susceptible to being partially or completely inundated by water from any source.

Floodplain Zone: An area which has had a statistical probability of flooding calculated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), typically expressed as a recurrence interval (i.e. – a 100-year floodplain is an area with a 1 percent chance of being flooded in any given year).



Geographic Information System (GIS): A combination of computer software, hardware and data used to create maps and analyze and present data.

Impervious: A surface (such as a road, driveway, parking lot, outdoor patio, or building footprint) or other barrier to infiltration of water into the ground.

Invasive Species: Non-native plant or animals that exhibit an aggressive growth habit and can out-compete and displace native species.

Local Street: A street whose primary function is to provide access to a residence, business or other abutting property.

NDDB: The Natural Diversity Database maintained by CT-DEEP.

Point Sources: Fixed sources of pollution (such as an wastewater outlet pipe).

POCD: Plan of Conservation and Development.

PZC: The Darien Planning and Zoning Commission.

Watercourses: Rivers, streams, brooks, waterways, lakes, ponds, marshes, swamps, bogs and all other bodies of water.

WestCOG: The Western Connecticut Council of Governments – the regional planning agency that includes Darien.

Wetlands: Land, including submerged land, which consists of any of the soil types designated as poorly drained, very poorly drained, alluvial and flood plain by the National Cooperative Soils Survey, as it may be amended from time to time, of the Soil Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Planning & Zoning Commission / Staff

Susan Cameron	<i>Chairman</i>
Stephen Olvany	<i>Vice-Chairman</i>
Eric Voigt	<i>Secretary</i>
Kevin Cunningham	
Richard DiDonna	
John R. Sini, Jr.	
Jeremy Ginsberg, AICP	<i>Planning & Zoning Director</i>
David Keating	<i>Asst. Director/Zoning Enforcement Officer</i>
Bonnie Syat	<i>Recording Secretary</i>
Nancy Sarner	<i>GIS Assistance</i>

Town Officials

Jayne Stevenson	<i>First Selectman</i>
Board of Selectmen	
Karl Kilduff	<i>Town Administrator (to July 2015)</i>
Kathleen Clarke Buch	<i>Town Administrator (from September 2015)</i>
Edward L. Gentile Jr., P.E.	<i>Director of Public Works</i>
Dr. Dan Brenner	<i>Superintendent of Schools</i>
Anthony Homicki, CCMA II	<i>Assessor</i>
Milagros (Mili) Millan-Garcia	<i>Deputy Assessor</i>

Technical Support

Glenn Chalder, AICP President / Project Manager	 Planimetrics
Alfredo Herrera GIS Manager	 NEW ENGLAND GEOSYSTEMS GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM CONSULTANTS
Peyer Flinker, ASLA (Downtown and Noroton Heights)	DODSON & FLINKER Landscape Architecture and Planning
Ted Brovitz, AICP (Downtown and Noroton Heights)	BROVITZ Community Planning & Design

Designations For Leaders And Partners In The Policies / Action Steps Tables

ARB	Architectural Review Board	P53	Post 53 EMS
BC	Beautification Committee	PAC	Pedestrian Inf. Advisory Comm.
BOE	Board of Education	PC	Parking Commission (NEW)
BOS	Board of Selectmen	PD	Police Department
CC	Conservation Commission (NEW)	PIC	Plan Implementation Comm. (NEW)
CT-DOT	CT Department of Transportation	PRC	Park and Recreation Commission
CTT	Connecticut Transit	PW	Public Works
CW	Advisory Comm. on Coastal Waters	PZC	Planning and Zoning Commission
DCA	Darien Community Association	RTM	Representative Town Meeting
DLT	Darien Land Trust	SC	Sewer Commission
EPC	Environmental Protection Comm.	SETF	Sust. Energy Task Force (NEW)
FEB	Flood and Erosion Control Board	Staff	Town of Darien Staff
HD	Health Department	TA	Darien Traffic Authority
HMC	Harbor Management Commission	TC	Darien Tree Conservancy
HS	Historical Society	Town	Town agencies and departments (with general direction by BOS)
IWC	Inland Wetlands Comm. (NEW)	TV79	Government Access Television
LIB	Darien Library	TW	Tree Warden
MNRR	Metro-North Railroad	VFD	Volunteer Fire Departments
		ZBA	Zoning Board of Appeals

