

**BOROUGH OF STONINGTON
CONNECTICUT
2012 PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT**



**Adopted December 11, 2012 by the
Borough Planning & Zoning Commission**

Effective: January 7, 2013

BOROUGH OF STONINGTON

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INTRODUCTION

The Borough of Stonington (the “Borough”) is located in New London County in southeastern Connecticut. The Borough, which comprises 205 acres, includes a peninsula and is bounded by Stonington Harbor to the west, Little Narragansett Bay to the east, Fishers Island Sound to the south and the Town of Stonington (the “Town”) to the north. While the Borough is an integral part of the Town, it functions as a separate and distinct political jurisdiction, governed by a Board of Warden and Burgesses. The Borough’s Planning and Zoning Commission regulates land use within the Borough with its own regulations and Plan of Conservation and Development. The Town owns property in the Borough and such property is subject to the zoning regulations of the Borough. Borough residents pay the majority of their property taxes to the Town in exchange for services from the Town, such as police and schools. The Borough levies its own property tax on its residents to support its independent operations and cover the cost of services not provided by the Town.

In 1982, the Borough’s Planning & Zoning Commission adopted a Master Plan for the Borough of Stonington, which included special emphasis on coastal resource management. That 1982 Master Plan was incorporated into a 1989 amendment titled “Policy Recommendations For The Future Development Of The Southern Portion Of The Borough”. Then in 1999 the Master Plan was further refined with the adoption of amended Goals and Objectives. The evolution of these previous documents is now reflected in this Borough of Stonington 2012 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD or Plan).

The Borough’s 2012 POCD recognizes that it is not an island separate from adjacent areas and events but rather an integral part of a multi-faceted social and economic environment. It is with that in mind that this document has been developed and the spirit in which it will be implemented.

Borough History

Throughout its history, the Borough has been engaged with the sea. Seal hunting, whaling, shipbuilding, fishing and trade were mainstays of Borough life throughout the 1800's. Famous early residents included Edmund Fanning, the first American to circumnavigate the earth, and Nathaniel Palmer, who is credited with discovering Antarctica. The sea also made the Borough vulnerable; during both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, British naval forces positioned in Stonington Harbor attacked the Borough and were repelled by the citizenry.

Portuguese from the Azores came to Stonington Borough during the whaling years and established the fishing fleet that survives today as Connecticut's only commercial fishing fleet. During the mid-1800's, construction of the railroad changed the Borough dramatically. In addition to being a sea faring commercial hub, the Borough also became a transportation center, connecting rail and steamboat passengers from New York City to Boston. Businesses, banks and industry dependent on this trade started to decline when the railroad was rerouted through New London and Mystic in the 1890's.

The Borough was home to large mills, most notably the Atwood Mill on Water Street, and the Velvet Mill on Bayview Avenue. The former, which closed in 1989 when, owned by Monsanto, employed hundreds in its heyday in the 1800's. After a massive fire in 2003, the mill buildings were converted into condominiums, houses and an event center. The American Velvet Company thrived from the early 1890's until closing in 1997. Currently, the Velvet Mill houses art studios, galleries and small businesses.

The history of the Borough is reflected in the wide range of architectural styles of the buildings that still exist today. The pre-revolutionary homes of merchants sit side by side with the 18th century Georgian or Classic Revival homes of sea captains. The Greek Revival Custom House built in 1823 was the original Stonington Bank, until it closed at the end of the Civil War. The rocky, windswept area south of Cannon Square remained less developed in the early years of the Borough, but between 1868 and 1897, the eccentric Zebulon Hancox built 14 Greek revival houses on the street that bears his name. They originally housed workers in the mill, and later became homes to the Portuguese fishermen.

There are two main squares in the Borough, Wadawanuck Square to the north and Cannon Square to the south. The former resembles a large village green, and was the site of an early tourist hotel built by the railroad in 1837. The Stonington Free Library replaced the hotel in 1899 when the square became a public park. Cannon Square, near the southern end of the peninsula, was the commercial center of Stonington, in the early era because it was close to the original town landing, which was a hubbub of cooperages, ships, docks, a tavern and a hotel.

Stonington Light was a beacon to approaching vessels from 1823. The original 30 foot stone tower supported a lantern containing 10 oil lamps and parabolic reflectors,

providing a light visible 12 miles out to sea. The tower had to be relocated due to erosion, and it remained active until 1889, when a beacon was installed on the harbor breakwater. In 1925, the lighthouse became a museum, the oldest lighthouse museum in the country.

With the loss of the railroad and related businesses in the 1890's, the Borough became less commercial and began to attract more summer people, artists, writers, and fishermen. In 1910, the Borough's population of 2,500 was one of the wealthiest in Connecticut, but the money wasn't being made in Stonington anymore. This trend continued over the decades. As the mills shut down, and industry moved out, factory workers and fishermen sold their homes to people looking for a weekend or summer residence in this historic village by the sea.

BACKGROUND

Population

According to the most recent data available from the 2010 U.S. Census, there were 929 residents in the Borough. As Table 1 indicates, the Borough has experienced a steady decline in the number of residents since 1930. However, the seaside peninsula location and historic architecture of the Borough makes it unique among neighboring towns and particularly desirable as a summer or weekend place of residence. The U.S. Census does not provide population data for residents who don't consider the Borough their primary residence, which represents a significant group of people. As reflected in Table 2, only 67% of the Borough's housing was occupied by residents who responded to the 2010 U.S. Census and considered the Borough their primary residence. These 929 residents occupied 531 housing units. The residents of the remaining 257 housing units (33% of total housing units) are not included in the population figures for the Borough.

The makeup of the Borough has changed over the years from a diverse working class community to a more homogenous residential community, primarily due to the decline of local industry and rising property values. The Borough is still home to middle-income working adults and young families but the number of full time residents and household size is shrinking while the average resident age is increasing. Although there are affordable homes and apartments in the Borough, the value of much of the real estate discourages young, middle-income families from buying homes in the community.

These trends foretell a predictable demographic result: reduced numbers of full-time residents, smaller household size, and increased average age. This trend will probably continue for the foreseeable future based upon a widely recognized national demographic of an aging population bubble.

**TABLE 1: POPULATION 1930-2010
STONINGTON BOROUGH**

YEAR	POPULATION	PERCENT CHANGE
1930	2,006	
1940	1,826	-9.0
1950	1,739	-4.8
1960	1,622	-6.7
1970	1,413	-12.9
1980	1,228	-13.0
1990	1,100	-10.4
2000	1,032	-6.2
2010	929	-10.0

Source: U.S. Census

TABLE 2: BOROUGH HOUSING ATTRIBUTES - 2010

	Number of Housing Units	Percentage of Housing Units	Population
Responded to U.S. Census- Primary Residence	531	67%	929
Seasonal, recreational or vacation	155	20%	Not counted
For Rent	36	5%	Not counted
For Sale	25	3%	Not counted
No response to U.S. Census	41	5%	Not counted
Total	788	100%	

Source: U.S. Census

TABLE 3: TRENDS OF POPULATION CHANGE, 1980-2010

	1980	1990	2000	2010	% Change 80-90	% Change 90-00	% Change 00-10
Stonington Borough	1,228	1,100	1,032	929	-10.4	-6.2	-10
Stonington Town (w/o Borough)	14,992	15,819	16,874	17,616	5.5	6.7	4.4
S.E. Region (w/o Stonington's)	209,446	223,515	224,871	238,193	6.7	0.6	5.9
Total S.E. Region	225,666	240,432	242,777	256,738	6.5	1	5.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; SCCOG.

It should also be noted that this declining population trend is not an anomaly that the Borough of Stonington alone has experienced within southeastern Connecticut. Other small political subdivisions, such as Jewett City and City of Groton have also experienced declining and fluxuating population numbers particularly since 1960. Nonetheless, even in this group the Borough has had the highest percentage decline in population over the past 40 to 50 years.

Review of the U.S. Census data for the past several decades also reveals an interesting demographic characteristic in age distribution for the Borough. While the general trend of a fluxuating youth age group and increasing elderly age group, as a percentage of total population, is similar in the Borough and the Town of Stonington and the Southeastern Connecticut Planning Region, a noticeable difference is that the percentage of those 65

years old and older in the Borough is at least twice the percentage of those that are 14 years old and younger. The following Table 4 shows these percentages.

TABLE 4: SELECTED AGE DISTRIBUTION AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION, 1990 – 2010

	1990		2000		2010	
	0-14 YRS	65+ YRS	0-14 YRS	65+ YRS	0-14 YRS	65+ YRS
Stonington Borough	11.2%	24.2%	10.9%	22.3%	9.2%	28.3%
Stonington Town (w/o Borough)	16.9%	16.3%	18.6%	17.2%	16.5%	20%
S.E. Region	20.1%	11.9%	20.5%	13%	17.7%	14.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; SCCOG

In summary, the Borough’s full time population is declining and the percentage comprising people 65 years old or older is increasing.

Housing

In 1980, the Borough had 681 housing units, which was an increase of 10% over the 1960 reported number of 617. In 2010, the Borough had 788 housing units, which is an increase of 15.7% over the 1980 reported number of 681. The following table shows the number of housing units for the Borough of Stonington, the Town of Stonington, and the Southeastern Connecticut Planning Region, and the percentage change, between 1980 and 2010.

TABLE 5: TOTAL HOUSING UNITS, 1980-2010

	1980	1990	2000	2010	% Change 80-90	% Change 90-00	% Change 00-10
Stonington Borough	681	713	723	788	4.7	1.4	9
Stonington Town (w/o Borough)	6,065	7,210	7,868	8,679	18.9	9.1	10.3
S.E. Region	84,334	96,717	102,295	111,625	14.7	5.8	9.1

Source: U.S. Census; SCCOG.

Table 5 also shows that this past decade the Borough has added additional housing units at a similar rate to both the Town of Stonington and the surrounding southeastern Connecticut towns. This probably reflects the development of the Monsanto property (Stonington Commons) and the lumber yard (101 Main) into housing. Given the small amount of vacant property in the Borough the addition of housing units typically involves conversions or re-builds of existing non-residential buildings and expansions of existing residential units.

The increase in the number of housing units during the past several decades is attributable to the increase in the number of seasonal housing units. The following table shows that seasonal housing units have nearly doubled in the last twenty years, increasing from 80 units in 1990 to 155 units in 2010.

TABLE 6: NUMBER OF SEASONAL HOUSING UNITS

	1990	2000	2010
Stonington Borough	80	93	155

Source: U.S. Census.

Another component of housing and population review is the average household size. When the number of housing units increases more rapidly than population there is a decrease in household size. This trend has been occurring for several decades nationwide. The Borough, as well as southeastern Connecticut has followed that trend. In 1980 the average household size within the Borough was 2.10 persons per housing unit. By 2010, the average household size had declined to 1.75 persons per housing unit according to the U.S. Census. The following table shows the average household size from 1980 to 2010 for the Borough, the Town of Stonington and the Southeastern Connecticut Planning Region.

TABLE 7: AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE

	1980	1990	2000	2010
Stonington Borough	2.10	1.93	1.82	1.75
Stonington Town	2.67	2.40	2.31	2.25
S.E. Region	2.77	2.58	2.47	2.44

Source: U.S. Census.

Housing Affordability

In its report, “Housing a Region in Transition: An Analysis of Housing Needs in Southeastern Connecticut, 2000-2005”, the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) analyzed the housing needs of the Southeastern Connecticut Region. This analysis concluded that the Southeastern Connecticut Region is facing a serious affordable housing shortage. The Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-30g defines “affordable housing” as meaning a housing development that is either assisted housing or a set-aside development. Assisted housing is housing which receives financial assistance under any government program for low and moderate-income persons or families. A set-aside development is a development that has at least 30 percent of the dwelling units deed restricted for at least 40 years as follows: of the 30 percent, 50 percent of the dwellings units shall be sold or rented to persons with income less than or equal to eighty percent of the median income of the state or the area, and; the remaining 50 percent of the dwellings units shall be sold or rented to persons whose income is less

than or equal to sixty percent of the median income of the state or area. The dwelling units shall be sold or rented at, or below, prices that account for thirty percent or less of the annual income of the persons or families in these income groups. . This section of the statutes applies to municipalities with affordable housing rates that are less than 10% of their housing stock.

The 2010 Affordable Housing Appeals List compiled by the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development identifies 365 total assisted housing units in the Town of Stonington, which includes the Borough, or 4.25% of its housing units based on the 2000 U.S. Census. This is well below the 10% required by the Connecticut General Statutes to be exempt from Section 8-30g.

Land Use

The Borough of Stonington, which encompasses 205 acres, was founded in 1649. The long settlement history and compact land area are factors that have contributed to the majority of land area, or 87%, being developed. In fact, the ratio of developed to undeveloped land area has remained similar between 1981, as documented in the 1982 Master Plan, and 2011. Additionally, there have been only slight changes in specific land uses between 1981 and 2011. Table 8 below shows the 2011 land use tabulation.

**TABLE 8: LAND USE, BOROUGH OF STONINGTON
2011**

Land Use	Acres	% Of Total Land Area
Low Density Residential	26.98	13.1
Medium Density Residential	47.20	22.9
High Density Residential	37.57	18.2
Commercial	5.93	2.9
Industrial	6.87	3.3
Institutional	14.58	7.1
Open Space	8.65	4.2
Active Recreation	2.21	1.1
Transportation, Communication, & Utilities	34.87	16.9
Undeveloped Land	20.92	10.31
Total	205.78	100.0

Source: SCCOG

Figure 1 shows the above information mapped by parcel for the Borough. The definition of each land use category is as follows:

LAND USE MAP CATEGORIES:

Low Density Residential: One housing unit at a density of 43,561 sq. ft. or greater of land.

Medium Density Residential: One housing unit at a density of between 7,261 sq. ft. and 43,560 sq. ft. of land.

High Density Residential: One housing unit at a density of 7,260 sq. ft. or less of land.

Industrial: manufacturing, warehousing, storage areas.

Institutional: governmental and institutional buildings.

Commercial: retail, wholesale, services, business and professional offices.

Transportation, Communications, Utilities: highways, public and semi-public facilities providing services such as transportation, communications, gas, electricity and water

Open Space: cemeteries, state forests, public-private preserves, holdings of water utilities

Active Recreation: Public and private parks, playgrounds, camping areas, golf courses, other outdoor facilities.

Undeveloped: vacant land, mostly forests and wetlands.

FIGURE 1

The 2011 land use tabulation shows that residential land use comprises the largest percentage of developed land area, or approximately 52.2% of the total land area. Also, residential land use is the only category of use that has increased since the 1981 tabulation. The 1981 land use data tabulated approximately 69 acres as residential. The 2011 land use data tabulated approximately 107 acres as residential. This represents an increase of approximately 55%.

Industrial and commercial activities comprised approximately 9.8% of the total land area, or 20 acres, in the 1981 tabulation. The 2011 land use tabulation of these same activities concludes that they have decreased to approximately 6.5% of the total land area, or to 13.5 acres. It should be noted that the Town-owned docks have space leased to the Borough's commercial fishing fleet and while this area is shown as commercial/institutional on the Land Use Map of Figure 1, it is categorized as institutional in Table 7.

Open space comprises approximately 6.1 acres of land or 3.1% of the total land area. Active recreation accounts for approximately 2.2 acres or 1.1% of the Borough's total land area. Together they total approximately 4.2% of the Borough's land area. The 1981 land use tabulation indicated that 3.9% of the Borough's land area was in these categories. Accordingly, these categories have increased slightly.

One anomaly in the comparison of 1981 and 2011 land use data is the acreage attributed to the category of Transportation, Communication, and Utilities. The 1981 data listed approximately 64 acres in this category. The 2011 tabulation calculates slightly less than 35 acres. One explanation is that the method of calculation has changed significantly; another is that the areas included are different.

In summary, the increase in residential land use reflects the increase in the total number of housing units detailed in the 2010 U.S. Census, as discussed in the housing section. Given the uniqueness of the Borough's attributes, it is expected that demand for residential use will continue in the future. Also, given the small amount of undeveloped land, it is expected that conversion of non-residential to residential use and increased density within existing residential areas will be experienced. The challenge for the Borough will be to guide this demand and encourage, to the extent possible, the expansion of commercial uses to provide services for both year-round and seasonal residents.

Coastal Area Management

The entire Borough of Stonington lies within the coastal boundaries designated by the State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) Coastal Area Management (CAM) Act. The Borough is bounded to the east and south by the waters of Fisher's Island Sound and Little Narragansett Bay, to the west by Stonington Harbor, and to the north by the Town of Stonington.

The information concerning the Borough's coastal resources is used to review coastal site plan applications required for development within the coastal boundary. This is accomplished in order to ensure consistency between an application, the Connecticut General Statutes (Chapter 444, Coastal Management) and the Borough's POCD. In general, this section provides guidance for present and potential property owners with regard to the Borough's goals and policies that are established to ensure that development or use of the land proceeds in a manner that will preserve and enhance coastal resources. The extent of the coastal resources is shown on Figure 2.

The Borough's coastline is approximately 3.5 miles long, not including breakwaters and piers. The Borough encompasses, and the coastal boundary encloses, approximately 205 acres. Nearly all of the Borough's land has been developed for some form of use. The terrain is relatively flat, with elevations ranging from sea level to a maximum of 30 feet. Most of the Borough is underlain by unstratified glacial till. A few small deposits of stratified drift are present. The large area of till is surrounded by artificial fill, which comprises the Borough's shoreline.

Stonington Harbor can be characterized as an estuarine embayment. The harbor's channel has an average depth of thirteen feet.

Coastal Resources

The State of Connecticut Coastal Area Management Unit of DEEP has identified a number of coastal resources in the Borough. These include both natural and manmade resources. Policy and use guidelines for each of these resources are taken from the Connecticut CAM Act as well as other relevant state statutes. The most prominent of these resources are:

Flood Hazard Area: 127 acres or approximately 62% of the Borough is in a flood hazard area. This area is defined as being affected by a 100-year storm, a storm having a 1% chance of occurring in any one year. Under the National Flood Insurance Program, owners of buildings in the Borough may purchase flood insurance at low subsidized rates. No new construction or substantial alterations of buildings in the identified flood hazard areas can occur unless the lowest floor level is elevated above the level of the 100 year storm, or the area below the flood level is flood proofed to prevent flood water infiltration. The Borough's shoreline is subject to the direct force of storm waves, as well as damage from high waters. It is therefore important to control development in the flood hazard areas, both to

protect natural resources such as wetlands from runoff surges, and to protect the personal investment of the property owner.

Tidal Wetlands: There are extensive tidal wetlands in the section of the Borough east of Orchard Street. These wetlands total approximately 19.5 acres and are contained in the flood hazard area. Tidal wetlands are regulated under State Tidal Wetlands and Watercourse Act (PA 695). They are defined by state statute as being “those areas which border on or lie beneath tidal waters, such as, but not limited to, banks, bogs, salt marsh, swamps, meadows, flats, or other low lands subject to tidal action...” (CGS 22a-29). The CAM Act has summarized the natural functions of tidal wetlands as being: areas of high nutrient and biological productivity, contributors to the base of the food chain, provide habitat and refuge areas for shorebirds; and serve as a nursery ground for various estuarine organisms. Tidal wetlands also serve to improve water quality by trapping sediments, buffering the shoreline from storm high waters and erosion, providing the potential for recreational and educational opportunities, and their vegetation stabilizes the shoreline. Due to their fragile nature, the CAM Act states that the protection of tidal wetlands is in the national interest. In the Borough, it is fortunate that most of the existing tidal wetlands have not yet been encroached upon. Permits are required from the CT DEEP, Wetland Management Section for most activities in tidal wetlands.

Freshwater Wetlands: There are limited freshwater wetlands in the Borough of approximately 1.5 acres in the flood hazard area. Freshwater wetlands are either inland wetlands, which consist of any soil type designated as poorly, drained, very poorly drained, alluvial or floodplain under the Inland Wetland and Watercourses Act (PA 155), or tidal wetlands not regulated under the Tidal Wetlands Act. They generally consist of bogs, swamps, meadows and submerged lands. Freshwater wetlands serve many of the same functions as tidal wetlands. They act to slow and store storm water, are areas of high biological productivity, serve as a wildlife habitat for a large variety of wildlife, and trap sediments and filter impurities. The Town of Stonington Inlands Wetland Agency currently regulates the Borough’s inland wetlands. Permits must be obtained for regulated activities that would develop or alter a wetland.

The Borough’s shorefront is varied, and contains modified bluffs and escarpments, beaches, rocky shorefront and developed shorefront. The bluffs and escarpments are relatively steep, seaward sloping shore lands, which have been stabilized by seawalls. The modified bluffs dissipate wave energy and thus provide protection from coastal flooding.

The Borough’s beaches are privately owned. DuBois Beach is owned by the Stonington Village Improvement Association and is available for use by the public. Other smaller beaches are restricted to use by the owners. Besides their recreational value, these beaches serve as a buffer to coastal flooding and erosion, dissipate wave energy and provide areas of scenic value.

FIGURE 2

The Borough has a small area of rocky shorefront that is composed of bedrock and boulders, which are highly erosion resistant. This shoreline dissipates and absorbs energy without significant changes in the shoreline configuration. It also functions as a natural habitat for inter-tidal organisms and as a feeding ground for shore birds and fish.

The balance of the land in the Borough is classified as shore lands as defined in the CAM Act and identified as a coastal resource. Shore lands are those uplands areas within the coastal boundary, exclusive of coastal hazard areas. It is the policy of the CAM Act that shore land use and development be regulated in order to minimize adverse impacts upon coastal systems and resources.

The Stonington Harbor side of the Borough is categorized as being developed by the CAM Act. This shorefront has been developed to the extent that its natural physiographic features have been altered. This section of shoreline is considered a coastal resource because of its social importance as an economic center. It is the policy of the CAM Act that the use of existing developed shoreline be promoted for marine related uses.

Stonington Harbor is also the location of extensive shellfish concentration areas on both its western shore and off its eastern shore near Sandy Point. Shellfish concentration areas provide habitat for several species of shellfish, contribute to the diversity of benthic life, and provide sources of food for shorebirds, lobsters and other marine life. Shellfish concentration areas support an important source of food, provide recreational shellfish harvesting opportunities and economic and employment opportunities for the shellfish industry. These shellfish concentrations are comprised primarily of hard shell clams.

The Planning & Zoning Commission promotes, where applicable, land use regulations that protect shellfish concentration areas through a variety of measures such as increasing buffers between development and coastal resources and improved storm water management.

Activities in shellfish concentration areas are regulated directly by the CT DEEP and Department of Agriculture. Additionally, The Borough's Planning & Zoning Commission and Harbor Management Commission promote policies to minimize impacts to these, and other, sensitive coastal resources.

PLAN & FINDINGS

Statement of Purpose

Pursuant to Chapter 126, Section 8-23 of the Connecticut State Statutes, the Borough of Stonington Planning and Zoning Commission (the “Commission”) hereby adopts this Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD) as its statement of policies, goals and standards for the physical and economic development of the Borough of Stonington (the “Borough”), the preservation of the Borough’s unique historic character and maritime heritage, and the general welfare and prosperity of its people.

In preparing this POCD, the Commission has considered the physical, social, economic and governmental conditions of the Borough, its history and trends, and has held public meetings to obtain input from Borough residents and businesses.

The overall goal of this POCD is to guide the future development of the Borough in a manner consistent with that articulated by the community and further defined by the following objectives:

1. Preserve and protect the distinctive physical and historic quality of the Borough, its maritime heritage and 19th century character, as embodied in various streets and neighborhoods.
2. Preserve and strengthen the existing natural resources of the Borough, as defined by its geographic location, maritime heritage and surrounding coastal views and vistas, all of which contribute to its unique character.
3. Preserve to the greatest extent possible the coastal resources of the Borough by adhering to the goals of Section 22a-92 of the Connecticut General Statutes and implementing the listed policies, as applicable, whenever possible.
4. Encourage the preservation of existing and the creation of new scenic/water vistas, public access to open space, coastal and waterfront features, and protect public access to the waterfront from further decline. New public access should be provided in appropriate situations in accordance with the CGS Chapter 444, Coastal Management Act, where any new or expanded non-water dependent use is located along the waterfront.
5. Recognizing the predominantly residential character of the Borough, maintain land use policies that encourage a variety of commercial, retail, professional and marine related businesses that are complimentary to the human scale of the Borough. Encourage a diverse village environment where residents can safely walk to stores, restaurants, community and government facilities, open spaces and neighbors.

6. Work to maintain and expand where appropriate the use of waterfront property in the Borough for water dependent uses such as marinas, boat yards, public boat landings and fishing docks, and the continuation of the commercial fishing fleet as a viable industry.
7. Safeguard new construction and substantial improvements to existing buildings against the effects of flooding through the enforcement of the Special Flood Hazard Area requirements in the Zoning Regulations.
8. Maintain residential land use policies that (a) encourage preservation of historic features, open space, light, air and development within the existing scale and harmony of the Borough, and (b) control the bulk of new structures and additions to prevent “squarification*”.
9. Maintain a safe vehicular and pedestrian circulation system within the limits of the existing narrow 19th century streets that supports community and municipal facilities and services that are sufficient to meet the needs of the residents, businesses and visitors. Encourage signage to assist Borough visitors to find parking areas, historic sites and other amenities and facilities.
10. Recognizing the increasing proportion of retired and aging residents, and the growing trend to continue living in one’s home safely and independently as one ages, (“aging in place”), as opposed to in a health care facility, encourage policies that support living arrangements and the provision of products, services, and conveniences associated with aging in place.
11. Recognizing the concern that energy costs will continue to increase in the future, encourage policies that allow residents and businesses to avail themselves of energy conservation, sustainable and renewable energy systems, while maintaining sensitivity to the historic character of the Borough.
12. Maximize interaction and cooperation between the Commission, the Board of Warden and Burgesses, the Harbor Management Commission and other municipal agencies and departments to support appropriate development, growth and preservation initiatives. Coordinate with the Fire Department, the Stonington Ambulance Corps and the Stonington Police in matters affecting the delivery of vital services and emergency preparedness related to public safety.

The underlying philosophy of the Commission in developing the Plan of Conservation & Development is to continue to preserve the historic character of the Borough and its maritime heritage and to support its diverse socio-economic population, which is

*Squarification Definition: The construction of architecturally inappropriate additions or renovations to a building to maximize the square foot area or volume of that building, generally characterized by roof lines, building shapes and volumes that are not historically accurate or aesthetically pleasing.

comprised of residents of all ages. However, the Commission recognizes that economic forces over which it has no control impact property values, commercial and residential property use and demographics within the Borough. The Commission believes that the Plan and the policies stemming from it should be responsive, over the passage of time, to the changing needs of the Borough's residential and commercial population. The basic purpose of preservation is not to arrest time, but to mediate sensitively with the forces of change.

FINDINGS

A. Circulation

Findings of Fact:

1. Roads in the Borough are marginally adequate for existing traffic volumes and population densities. The Borough's congested and narrow streets pose a limitation for emergency vehicles.
2. The sole means of vehicular ingress and egress to that portion of the Borough south of the Amtrak rail line (the "Village") is via Alpha Avenue, the existing viaduct over the rail line. This limited access sets finite limits on the ability of the Village to absorb additional population with the attendant increased traffic levels.
3. The major arterial road pattern for the Village consists of Water and Main Streets. Village roads are narrow by modern standards, and the lack of additional rights-of-way coupled with the total absence of building setbacks along these streets, makes widening unfeasible. Elimination of on-street parking is not presently feasible due to the lack of adequate off-street parking.
4. North of the Amtrak rail line, the community is predominately residential and has varied density. The former Velvet Mill building on Bayview Avenue is the only commercial property in this area. The main street serving this area is Elm Street, which has vehicular ingress and egress on both Alpha Avenue and Route 1A. The traffic in this area is less dense than in the Village and a better circulation pattern results from the dual points of vehicular ingress and egress of Elm Street. Small population and traffic increases could be absorbed with improvements, including expanded availability of off-street parking.

Recommendations:

1. Increased traffic burdens on the Village arterial road system, including the Alpha Avenue viaduct and the traffic along the length of Water and Main Streets, should be carefully considered. Traffic capacity is a matter of convenience and public safety. As such, the Commission must be sensitive to future development that would increase traffic in the Borough.
2. Suitable sites for off-street parking in the commercial zones should be reviewed and the feasibility of additional parking should be explored.

3. Residents with off-street parking spaces should be encouraged to use them for parking vehicles to reduce the use of on-street parking.

B. Population

Finding of Fact:

1. The year round population of the Borough has experienced a slow but steady decline during the past several decades.
2. During the past several decades the percentage of the population that are 65 years old and older has grown to three times that of the percentage of the population that is 14 years old and younger.
3. Seasonal population has increased as reflected by the near doubling of seasonal housing units during the past two decades.

Recommendations:

1. The Commission will promote regulations that encourage housing opportunities for individuals and families of different incomes and ages while maintaining the historic and architectural significance of existing buildings.

C. Economy

Finding of Fact:

1. The economy of the Borough is characterized by diversity and includes tourist/visitor activities, local commerce, commercial fishing and marina uses, and retail, professional and service businesses.
2. The harbor and waterfront of the Borough, besides their obvious value for recreation and tourist-oriented uses, are unique assets for commercial and recreational marine activities.

Recommendations:

1. The zoning regulations should provide for the continuation of industrial, commercial, marine and other net revenue producing uses of land within present commercial and industrial zoned areas. Growth should be encouraged assuming it is compatible with the existing scale and nature of the community.

D. Densities and Character

Finding of Fact:

1. The restrictions on vehicular and pedestrian circulation previously cited in this Plan place an unavoidable limitation on the population levels which the Borough,

and especially the Village, can safely support. Much of the Borough during the summer months is already at or above its manageable population level.

2. In 1979, much of the Borough was recognized as a district on the National Register of Historic Places. As noted in the 1982 Master Plan, such a district designation “emphasizes the interrelationships of buildings and the importance of preserving entire streetscapes”. Some of the buildings in the Borough are notable as distinguished architectural examples of a particular style, but all are important for their contribution to the harmony and general appearance of the area. New development, which alters the pattern of the streetscape, can have a deleterious effect. As older structures are demolished and replaced with new ones, or as additions and modifications lead to “squarification*”, inappropriate changes on just one property can seriously disturb the appearance and character of the entire area.
3. The character of a community is a combination of its physical features and the various human activities that take place there. Elements as diverse as architecture, setting, history and weather all contribute to community character. Even sounds – of waves, a foghorn or of halyards slapping – help create character. Preserving character requires respect for these and other essential elements.

Recommendations:

1. The zoning regulations should continue to provide for minimal density increases and the conversion of existing structures to multi-family dwellings, provided such structures are of suitable size and are located on lots large enough to support sufficient parking and still retain open areas and, where applicable, vistas. Such conversions must be restricted so as to protect the architectural character of the structure converted.
2. Preserving the character of the Borough must include protection of the existing streetscape. The design of new development should be appropriate to its surroundings and compatible with the context in which it will be located.
3. The Commission will work to enhance the unique characteristics of the Borough, as opportunities arise, by promoting rehabilitation of historic structures, public access to coastal resources, and a mix of residential and non-residential activities that are reflective of the village character.

E. Commercial/Waterfront Development

Finding of Fact:

1. The present size and location of the Borough’s commercial areas are adequate for present needs and the demands of foreseeable local population growth. It is not a goal of this Plan to provide substantial commercial growth that is oriented towards tourism or resort populations.
2. The Borough harbor and waterfront are unique natural features that have substantial value for commercial marine uses; however, the waterfront is an obvious amenity for any use that locates near it.

Recommendations:

1. The zoning regulations should keep the present commercial zones in their present area but consideration should be given to permitting increased intensity of commercial activities within those zones.
2. Special regulations should continue to protect the Borough waterfront and to give the highest priority and preference to water-dependent uses and facilities in shorefront areas as required by the State of Connecticut Coastal Management Act.

E. Recreation and Open Space

Finding of Fact:

1. The access of the public to the Borough's waterfront has diminished in certain areas due to development. The loss of waterfront access has a substantial detrimental effect on local recreation and open space opportunities because the availability of inland open space and recreation areas is limited. In addition, this Plan finds that waterfront open space holds a place of special importance for the Borough, which has drawn its very life from the sea. Protecting and enhancing public access to the shorefront for both active and passive recreational uses is important to preserving the character of the area and is *mandated* under the provisions of the State of Connecticut Coastal Management Act.
2. Besides the loss of actual waterfront access, the Borough has been harmed by the loss of aquatic vistas, blocked by buildings and landscaping, which obstruct views of the sea and diminish the very character of the Borough as a seaside community.
3. Although little inland property remains that is suitable for active recreation use, the presence of private open land creates a sense of openness, which is beneficial to the community as a whole.
4. Public spaces are not confined to parks and beaches, but also include public streets, Borough rights-of-way and walkways. Such spaces have an essential role in the enhancement of the Borough's quality of life precisely because other public space is so limited. Therefore, the streetscape becomes the focus of community activity and identity.
5. Within the Borough, walking and bicycle riding are a frequent means of transportation and a form of recreation. Keeping the area safe and attractive for pedestrians is one means of maintaining village character.

Recommendations:

1. The zoning regulations should provide that any major development along the Waterfront districts of the Borough provide public access and public amenities. Linear access along the shoreline is particularly desirable and should be encouraged in zoning regulations.
2. The zoning regulations should continue to protect and enhance all remaining vistas of the sea, especially at the ends of east west oriented streets. Preservation

- of existing water views or creation of new water views should be actively pursued through site plan review and coastal site plan review. New principal buildings, accessory structures and fences, as well as vegetation, should be placed and maintained so as to preserve water views and a sense of openness.
3. The zoning regulations should encourage the preservation of all open spaces. Property owners should be encouraged to retain existing private garden areas as private open space.
 4. Public amenities that encourage a pedestrian environment should be provided where practical.

PLAN CONSISTENCY

This Plan was prepared in accordance with Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) and considered the range of factors in Section 8-23(d) as well as the municipal coastal program requirements of Sections 22a-101 to 22a-104 (CGS). The 2012 POCD also considered the Borough's Harbor Management Plan and the latest Historic District Study Committee report when formulating its goals and objectives.

Comparison of this Plan with the Locational Guide Map in the 2005-2010 State Plan of Conservation and Development, The 2007 Regional Plan of Conservation and Development for Southeastern Connecticut, and, the municipal coastal program requirements of the Connecticut General Statutes have concluded that this Plan is generally consistent.