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ABSTRACT

A case study of historic preservation, land conservation and growth management efforts in East Greenwich, Rhode Island was prepared under the auspices of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Project PREPARE fellowship program. The study was carried out as a model which other small towns in Rhode Island can apply to their own preservation and conservation planning efforts.

East Greenwich's experiences show that active citizen participation in local historical organizations and on Town boards can have a great impact on local planning and that public/private cooperation can help determine desired town character, and coordinate and facilitate preservation and conservation goals.

Many historic buildings in East Greenwich are protected by historic zoning that regulates demolition and alteration. This is very effective in preserving the denser, residential historic areas. In rural parts of town, historic zoning is less effective, as the farmland that makes up the historic context is visually vulnerable to suburbanizing development. the Town has implemented a number of land planning tools, including cluster zoning, preliminary review of large development proposals, and a policy that allows latitude in the approval process, to promote more sensitive development.

Recognition of mutual goals by preservationists and conservationists in East Greenwich has been a key factor in dealing with growth issues and preservation of town character. Specific steps taken by the Town to address conservation and preservation as overlapping issues were chartering a municipal land trust that acquires natural and historical properties and establishing a planned network of natural and historical public open spaces. Similar measures can be implemented in other communities faced with growth that threatens small town character. To effectively carry out a coordinated agenda of preservation and conservation issues, the East Greenwich experience suggests it is appropriate to have a full-time planning staff that operates in coordination with Town boards and authorities.
1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is a case study of East Greenwich, Rhode Island, carried out under the aegis of the Northeast Regional Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Project PREPARE (Preservation Resources: Planning and Responsibility). Project PREPARE is a fellowship program focusing on issues of growth management and historic preservation in small towns in New England and New York.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the ways in which the issues of historic preservation, land conservation and growth management have been handled in the Town of East Greenwich and, to the extent possible, apply successful actions and approaches to other small towns in Rhode Island and elsewhere.

The selection of East Greenwich was based on a number of factors including appropriate size (under 20,000 population as stipulated by Project PREPARE guidelines) and the ways in which the community is typical of many throughout Rhode Island, and serves as an example of what to do and not to do in small towns. The town's developed coastline, concentrated center and more rural but suburbanizing inland are all very "Rhode Island" without being overly idyllic and tourist-oriented and therefore inappropriate to a prescriptive case study.

Qualities that make East Greenwich an interesting and appropriate case study of the preservation of historical and natural resources include the Colonial settlement of the town and extant buildings and land patterns dating from that time; the different historical periods represented by the town's residential, commercial, agricultural, and industrial architecture; an old Main Street; and the diversity of the town's geography and physical layout.

As a community which is an attractive place to live and which, like most of coastal New England, has been under intense development pressure in recent years, East Greenwich is a particularly appropriate case for a study of growth management: Greenwich Cove is popular for recreational boating and adds to the town's allure and inland, a considerable amount of mostly dormant farmland is "ripe" for development, with large portions of land left
eminently "developable" by virtue of its former use. Recent residential development has begun to suburbanize some parts of Town, most notably the Frenchtown area. The presence of Routes 95, 1, 2, and 4 already encroach on the town's historic and natural character and increase the accessibility of new construction.

East Greenwich and its location in the State of Rhode Island
(Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission)
2. TOWN HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

What is now Main Street in East Greenwich originated in the 1600s or earlier when Narragansett Indians traveled what was then known as the Pequot Trail. The Cowessets, a subtribe of the Narragansetts, "reputedly occupied a village on this trail where it crossed the Maskerchugg River, near where the Bleachery Pond is today...." (East Greenwich, Rhode Island, Statewide Preservation Report, p. 4).

In 1644, the land south of Warwick, including what is now East Greenwich, was included in the Rhode Island Charter subject to the English crown, but no permanent settlement was established in East Greenwich until some twenty years later. Present-day East Greenwich is situated in the eastern part of the state, about midway between Providence and South County. It is bounded on the east by Greenwich Cove and the town of North Kingston, and by largely rural and undeveloped West Greenwich on the west. To the north is the City of Warwick and to the south Exeter and North Kingstown. State Routes 2 and 4 as well as U.S. Route 1 cut through East Greenwich and Interstate 95 slices through the town's northwestern corner.

After King Philip's War, which resulted in the defeat of the Narragansetts and the destruction of most structures in the area, the Rhode Island General Assembly founded the Town of East Greenwich in 1677. This was done primarily as a means of reestablishing control of the region. Most of the earliest settlement occurred inland, with the town center and Main Street developing later around Greenwich Cove in what has come to be known as the Hill and Harbor District.

During its early years, East Greenwich was primarily agricultural with its fertile land, abundant fish and seaweed for fertilizer, and access to water transportation proving a boon to such efforts. Extant examples of early rural dwellings include the Clement Weaver House, built in 1679, the Miller-Congdon House of 1711, and the 1725 Richard Briggs Farm. Most of the early settlers were of English, Irish and Welsh background, but in 1689, Huguenots from France fleeing religious persecution settled in East Greenwich. Although most of them had left for New York and elsewhere by
the early 1690s, the southwestern part of East Greenwich is known as Frenchtown to this day.

The growth of the state as a whole had its effect on East Greenwich in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the town's population growing from 204 persons in 1708 to 1,223 by 1730. Much of the residential development was by now occurring on the "city lots" in the downtown area, originally laid out by the Rhode Island General Assembly for occupation by men who served in King Philip's War. (Ibid, p. 5). A Quaker population established itself in the rural outskirts while Baptists were concentrated in town.

Though East Greenwich was still too small to support a large-scale maritime industry, two shipyards were in operation by 1700. Most settlement in the early seventeen-hundreds was in outlying areas, specifically on Shippeetown, Middle and Frenchtown Roads. Many fairly simple houses remain from this period, mostly variations on Cape Cod, 2 1/2-story gable-roofed, and gambrel-roofed styles. Development slowed down in the mid-seventeen-hundreds and by 1770 the population had actually declined as "agricultural settlement" reached "its natural limits." (Ibid, pp. 8-9). At about the same time, the port of East Greenwich was established and a maritime economy soon flourished.

East Greenwich residents played key roles in Revolutionary War efforts. Prominent War figures hailing from East Greenwich and neighboring areas include Brigadier General Varnum and General Nathanael Greene, second in command only to Washington. The Governor of Rhode Island, William Greene, lived in East Greenwich during the War, his house essentially serving as the State Capitol. Generals Lafayette, Rochambeau, Sullivan and Greene all met there. Despite these War connections, the only real impact of the Revolution on the town was the housing of refugees from Newport.

Recovering quickly from the War, East Greenwich developed its maritime economy, becoming among other things a shipbuilding and ropemaking center. Maritime trade bolstered the inland agricultural economy. During the early Republican era many fine homes were built, particularly in the Hill and Harbor District, and the Town's role as county seat resulted in the construction of a court house and jail serving Kent County.

Dealt a harsh blow by the War of 1812 and the suspension of foreign trade, much of the Town's maritime economy, including
once prosperous shipbuilding, went into severe decline. Only fishing survived as a full-fledged industry. Scalloptown, on Greenwich Cove, went on to become the shellfishing center of Rhode Island. Industrialism, mostly in the form of textile manufacture, became the heart of the local and regional economy. Cotton and woolen mills were successful locally and state pioneering of the use of steam power enabled East Greenwich to use its shipping facilities and easy access to coal to power the engines.

The development of the Providence and Stonington Railroad in the late 1830s "was concurrent with the expansion of East Greenwich's industrial capacity." (Ibid, p. 15). Routed along the waterfront in accordance with the town's wishes, the arrival of the railroad coincided with the construction of two large woolen mills and a print works, and several smaller mills by 1840. This industrial growth resulted in tremendous population growth over the next two decades.

After the Civil War, with the textile industry unable to provide enough jobs to support an expanded population, many residents sought jobs elsewhere. Though the agricultural hinterlands and the hamlets of Shippeetown, Fry's Corners and Frenchtown prospered by providing agricultural products to the population of greater Providence, railroad accessibility to East Greenwich soon resulted in its popularity as a suburban residential alternative to the city. Growth during this period was concentrated mostly in the downtown area and saw the construction of some of the town's most impressive residences on the hill above Main Street.

The ethnic diversity of East Greenwich expanded in the mid-1800s with the establishment of a Black community just below Main Street and the influx of a large number of Swedish immigrants who contributed greatly to an increase in the town's population from 2500 in 1870 to some 4000 in 1876. In 1872, The Independent Baptist Church, now the Marlborough Street Chapel, represented the first "truly integrated congregation in East Greenwich." (Ibid, p. 21). Development by and large was concentrated in the downtown area during the late 1800s and included many of the late Victorian style houses and commercial buildings on Main Street that still give the Hill and Harbor District much of its character.
Hill houses
Growth slowed down for some time, with no significant population increase until the late 1930s, when access to inland East Greenwich was facilitated by better roads and more widespread use of automobiles. At this point, with regional growth stimulated by the development of naval facilities at Quonset Point in nearby North Kingstown, inland East Greenwich became attractive as a suburban dwelling place. Downtown East Greenwich had begun to decline, with overcrowding and conflicting land uses contributing to the physical deterioration of the area. Decentralization exacerbated downtown's troubles and commercially the downtown area has never fully recovered.

From the mid-50s to the present, East Greenwich has been among the fastest growing towns in Rhode Island, much of the development taking the form of large suburban subdivisions in the rural inland. In contrast to the architecture and siting that characterized earlier local development, many recent buildings are architecturally generic and insensitive to historic buildings and land patterns. Because much of inland East Greenwich has spread-out, agricultural land patterns, it tends to be more visually vulnerable to development that takes on suburban patterns. Individual houses have had a tendency to contrast sharply in style with historic buildings and to be sited so as to obscure and dominate the historic context. "Contemporary design...has more often emphasized arbitrary symbolism and such standardized conceptions of style as neo-Colonial and neo-Victorian, than integrated design. Indeed, very few of East Greenwich's newer structures could today be cited for their human proportions, neighborly scale, and integration with the surrounding landscape." (Ibid, p.25). The character-threatening consequences of such development are central to the concerns of preservationists, conservationists and planners in East Greenwich today.
(East Greenwich Comprehensive Plan)
3. NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

The character of East Greenwich is derived largely from an historic
downtown area including Main Street, which rises from Greenwich
Cove; a residential hill area overlooking downtown and the water;
and a rural inland of woods and farmsteads, some composed of the
oldest extant buildings in the town. The area encompassing
downtown, the waterfront, and the hill is often referred to as the
"Hill and Harbor District."

HILL AND HARBOR

The Hill and Harbor District contains many impressive homes and
commercial buildings of a variety of styles ranging in date from
the seventeen hundreds to the early nineteen hundreds. Most
commercial activity and municipal offices are concentrated on and
around Main Street, just up the hill from the Greenwich Cove
waterfront. Traveling further up the hill away from the water,
residential buildings dominate, including many stately Republican
and Victorian era homes with water views.

Main Street is also Route 1, a federal highway. Continuing strip
development from the north and south encroaches upon The
town's commercial heart--that which is really "Main Street, East
Greenwich." This weakens downtown's physical definition and
commercial identity as it competes with strip development that by
its very nature lacks definition. Still, one gets the feeling of having
arrived at a "town" when entering East Greenwich's Main Street
from either direction--though less so from the south where
commercial clutter is more excessive. The stretch of road that
retains a "Main Street" image has shrunk as the strip has grown.
One of the challenges facing townspeople and officials is to
maintain the historic core of Main Street and the surrounding area
to its east and west, and to solidify the identity of East Greenwich
as a distinct commercial and municipal center as one passes
through town on Route 1. As in many small towns, decentralized
development has had its effect on Main Street. What was once a
vibrant commercial center now has a fairly high vacancy rate and
only a handful of long-term, established businesses.
Main Street
Nearby suburban malls and franchise businesses to the north and south on Route 1 today serve most of townspeople's shopping needs. Nonetheless, the presence of municipal buildings on and around Main Street and the relative diversity of existing business in the area perpetuate Main Street's role as a functional center.

"Hill and Harbor District" is merely a name denoting a vaguely defined but important section of town. Within the Hill and Harbor District is the East Greenwich Historic District, part of which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. All of the East Greenwich Historic District is protected by historic zoning. This zoning, along with an ordinance regulating commercial signage in the Main Street area, helps to uphold the architectural integrity of historic buildings in the district by regulating alterations and demolition according to the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards and subject to review by the Town-appointed Historic District Commission. These standards define "rehabilitation" as "the process of returning a property to a state of utility, through repair or alteration, which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural, and cultural values." Specific standards apply to making "every reasonable effort" to use buildings as originally intended or in such ways as require minimal alteration; promoting alterations that recognize the true historical origins of historic properties; recognizing and preserving the layers of time that significant past changes bring to a building, structure or site; sensitively treating distinctive stylistic features; repairing rather than replacing features when possible; and allowing additions and alterations when undertaken in a manner that is compatible with the "size, scale, color, material, and character of the property, neighborhood or environment" and is respectful of the "essential form and integrity of the structure." (The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, pp. 5-6).

The Hill and Harbor area includes many noteworthy structures representing a wide array of periods and styles. Residential buildings on the hill include the early Republican General Varnum House and Dr. Eldredge House (1773); the early Victorian, bracketed Italianate style Samuel Knowles House (1851), Reynolds-Greene Mansion (1858) and Potter House (1850); the eclectic, Shingle Style Edward Powers House (1904); and bizarre Windmill Cottage. The latter is so-named because the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow moved and attached an eighteenth century windmill to the early Republican house which was alternately lived in by him and his close friend, George Washington Greene,
East Greenwich Historic District
(Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission)

Windmill Cottage
(Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission)
son of the famous general Nathanael Greene. Also situated on the hill are several non-residential buildings of note including the diminutive and temple-like Greek Revival Armory of the Kentish Guards (1843); the Queen Anne Revival First Baptist Church (1884); and the stone Gothic Saint Luke's Episcopal Church (1875).

On Main Street, which became the main thoroughfare around the end of the 1800s, there are a number of significant extant commercial and residential/commercial buildings. These include the Second Empire, mansard-roofed Browning Block (1876); the flat-roofed Masonic Building (1893); the Greenwich (Updike) Hotel (1896); and the now-commercial, gambrel-roofed Abraham Greene House (1770). Also on Main Street is the Colonel Micah Whitmarsh House (1767), the first brick house built in town, concern about which led to the formation of the East Greenwich Preservation Society and which has been occupied by commercial concerns in recent years.

Also on Main Street are several important non-commercial structures including the stately, spired, early Republican Kent County Courthouse (1804), which is the centerpiece of Main Street; the Greek Revival United Methodist Church (1831); the castellated Varnum Memorial Armory (1914), and the Fire Station (1914).

Below Main Street, running in a direct line to the water is King Street. Long an important street, as evidenced by its great width, King Street is the address of a number of early Republican houses with small setbacks from the street, virtually uninterrupted by infill development. At the foot of the street, by the water, is an old stone railroad bridge, constructed in 1837 and designed by "Whistler's uncle," Major William Gibbs MacNeil, passing through which one arrives at the stone Greek Revival, Bay Mill with a mansard addition (1840 and later). This is one of the town's few remaining examples of mills then common to the area and to the state as a whole. On the waterfront, facing towards the hill like a bookend counterpart to the old Kent County Courthouse that faces down from Main Street, sits the old Kent County Jail. The building is essentially an early Republican residence formerly occupied by the jailer and his family; the jail cells, some of which are identifiable as such today, are situated toward the rear of the building. Today it is owned by the East Greenwich Preservation Society, which has its headquarters on the second floor.
The old Kent County Courthouse

"Bay Mill" and the railroad bridge at the foot of King Street
Along Greenwich Cove and the Hunt River waterfront are a few restaurants in rehabilitated historic buildings as well as some remaining water-related businesses. In the warmer months a marina is busy with the traffic of sailboats and other pleasure craft and fishermen dock at various spots along the shore. Across the water in Warwick, Goddard State Park provides a heavily wooded scenic backdrop for activities in the area.

The Hill and Harbor area, besides having a great number and variety of architecturally significant structures representing many eras and styles, is extremely impressive for the consistent quality of its architecture and the general lack of obtrusive, unsightly and otherwise inappropriate development within its boundaries, especially on the hill overlooking Main Street and the waterfront. The only real deviation from this consistency is along Main Street, particularly at the Warwick and North Kingstown ends, where strip development with parking in front overextends the commercial center and detracts from the historic character of the street.
INLAND EAST GREENWICH

Most of the town's early settlement occurred inland, consisting of scattered farmsteads separated by wooded, rolling land. Farmed for years, mostly with dairy farms, there are only a few remaining family farms in operation, although the imprint of the agricultural past is evident in today's land patterns.

Two historic districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places lie in the inland portion of the town. These are the Fry's Hamlet and Tillinghast Road Historic Districts, both of which are agrarian in character and include surrounding farmland with houses and outbuildings within their boundaries. National Register status establishes these areas as historically important and qualifies them for special loans, grants and tax status. The Planning Department hopes the National Register listings will result in these districts becoming historic zones, thus preserving their agricultural context as well as the buildings themselves.

The Fry's Hamlet District consists of meadows and farm-related buildings along a short stretch of the South County Trail (Route 2) near Middle Road. It contains the Major Joseph Fry Homestead Farm, dating from 1793, and the Spencer-Fry House, the original part of which was built in 1696.

The Tillinghast Road District is essentially a corridor along Tillinghast Road from Frenchtown Road near the ruins of the old Tillinghast Factory to South Road. Historic buildings in the district include the 1773 Dr. Tillinghast-Deacon Andrews House and Briggs Farm, originally built in 1725. Seven farms are located within the district.

Other significant structures, mostly farmhouses and farm-related buildings dot the rural landscape, maintaining the ambience of the town's agricultural past. These include the complex of buildings dating from around 1700 at Tibbitts Farm on Frenchtown Road and the 1858 Caleb Vaughn House on Middle Road. Some inland properties are controlled by historic zoning, subject to the same standards as those in the downtown East Greenwich Historic District.

In some areas, particularly in and around Frenchtown, recent residential development is far from sensitive to the historic rural pattern; many recently constructed houses are incongruous with past development in proportion, scale and detail, and siting allows some houses to dominate historic structures. In contrast to the concentrated downtown historic area, the scattered nature of past
development leaves the inland historic districts of East Greenwich particularly vulnerable to insensitive development today.

Fry's Hamlet Historic District
4. MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT AND PLANNING

In Rhode Island, "county" refers to a geographical unit of judicial authority and, in some cases, an area served by a water company. East Greenwich is the seat of Kent County and is provided with water by the Kent County Water Authority. All local administrative power is in the hands of the town government.

East Greenwich is governed by a Council-Manager administration, adopted by a Home Rule Charter in 1972. A five-member Town Council, elected to two-year terms at large, is aided by a professional manager. The manager is chosen by the Council and is responsible for administering Town government.

The Council elects a president and vice-president and holds meetings twice a month which are open to the public. The Financial Town Meeting is held each year on the second Wednesday in May to determine the Town budget and tax levies and is presided over by an elected Moderator.

The Town Council makes all appointments to municipal boards and commissions. These include the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Review, Historic District Commission, Land Trust, and Development Commission.

The Planning Board is made up of seven appointed members who serve in a voluntary capacity and whose chief responsibility is writing and updating the Comprehensive Plan. The board also reviews petitions for zoning changes and subdivision proposals. Large development proposals, including subdivisions of six lots or more, are subject to "conceptual review" at the beginning of the proposal process--ideally before dimensions and other details have been submitted. Though "only" advisory and not regulatory, this review function is a powerful tool in shaping local development.
5. HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND LAND CONSERVATION IN EAST GREENWICH

A. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The town's history is preserved not only in its architecture but in heritage organizations like the Kentish Guards Militia, Kentish Guards Fife and Drum Corps, Daughters of the American Revolution, Sons of the American Revolution, the Surgeon John Greene Society, the Varnum Continents, and the Varnum Continental Ladies.

These groups' primary functions are to preserve traditions and maintain individual historic buildings in commemoration of the town's past. A more broadbrush historical organization is the East Greenwich Preservation Society, founded in 1967 "to help preserve the architectural heritage of East Greenwich, its history and customs, and to encourage the preservation and restoration of buildings and sites of historic significance." (Welcome to East Greenwich, p. 39). It is housed in the old Kent County Jail. The New England Wireless and Steam Museum, the Varnum House Museum, and the Varnum Memorial Armory and Military Museum all keep town history alive as well.

Collectively, these private historic organizations and museums heighten awareness of town history and foster a sense of place. The concentration of many of these entities and many town government offices and former County buildings in the Hill and Harbor District reinforces this historic flavor and helps define the character of downtown East Greenwich.

Citizen interest in the town's history, as characterized by the continuous existence of such a large number of private organizations in a town of some 13,000, has created a climate of historic preservation and concern for town character that has found its way to the forefront of town politics and planning. In East Greenwich, heritage and preservation groups may have as much to do with the survival of historic resources as those buildings and sites have to do with the creation of the organizations.
Local Preservation Initiatives

In 1967, the Micah Whitmarsh House, the first brick house built on Main Street, was threatened with demolition by a Main Street restaurant owner who planned to buy the building and use the lot for parking. Local opposition soon arose and included the nephew of the building's former owner, who had recently died. This citizen opposition led to the formation of the East Greenwich Preservation Society.

The Preservation Society's inaugural battle was a success, with generous private contributions leading to the purchase of the somewhat rundown house. Aided by the donation of an entire set of new windows and grant assistance through the National Register of Historic Places, the Preservation Society was able to sell the building with restrictions placed on its future alteration. Buoyed by success and dismayed by the dilapidated state of many houses on once-prominent King Street, the organization expanded its horizons to include all of the downtown area.

Seizing the opportunity to establish headquarters in a strategically-located historic building, the Preservation Society "purchased" the old jail at the foot of King Street from the town for one dollar. This came shortly after the building had experienced a disastrous stint as a youth center, leaving it in very poor shape. Initial efforts and donations went into the rehabilitation of the building. Without any regular income and with their intermittently occupied new headquarters still susceptible to vandalism, the Society converted the first floor to an apartment and an office. This served two purposes, providing the Preservation Society with a steady rental income and protecting the building from vandals.

Using the renovated jail building and the prominent Court House facing down the hill as the impetus, the Preservation Society soon began a King Street-centered preservation campaign, urging people to "get as much as they could out of their houses." (Marion Fry interview, March 28, 1990). Much of the early emphasis of the organization was educational, stressing the town's long and varied history, drawing on the established presence of local heritage organizations, and raising the historical consciousness of townspeople.

The impact of the Preservation Society grew over the years, culminating in the establishment of historic zoning for the East Greenwich Historic District in 1980. In 1989, the Preservation Society received a Legislative Grant for the maintenance and
restoration of historic cemeteries. Ongoing functions of the organization include the collection of old photographs of local buildings to aid preservation efforts and the publication of The East Greenwich Packet, which recounts interesting stories from old newspapers and other sources of town history.

The implementation of historic zoning brought about the creation of the Historic District Commission. The Commission consists of five regular members charged with "carrying out" the historic zoning ("enforcement" is too strong a word says Preservation Society President and auxiliary Commission member Marion Fry). This entails inspecting and approving or disapproving exterior alterations and additions to buildings in the East Greenwich Historic District and others covered by historic zoning according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

According to Miss Fry, the Historic District Commission was none too popular at first but due in part to the efforts of the Commission to be "helpful and hopeful" the attitudes of townspeople have changed by-and-large and compliance with the standards is generally good--and effective: "the town looks a lot better."

The rehabilitation of the jail and courthouse may have been the most influential single historic preservation successes. The enactment of historic zoning came to the rescue of the old railroad station which had been threatened by demolition and the timing of the nation's bicentennial and the East Greenwich tercentenary in 1977 gave an important boost to preservation efforts generally.

The Planning Department, especially under former Planner Richard Youngken, has had an important preservation role. When budget and staff constraints limited the efforts of the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Commission, the Planning Department supplemented State surveys with town-initiated inventories in order to strengthen and hasten National Register designations. Cities and towns with historic zoning are eligible to apply for Certified Local Government (CLG) status, qualifying them for State historic preservation grants. East Greenwich is a CLG and has used grant money toward this end.
Historic Resources Map
(Comprehensive Community Plan)
East Greenwich has a locally-mandated land trust headed by a Town Council-appointed Director and Board. It is authorized to obtain natural and historical property to be preserved as such; protect environmentally sensitive areas; encourage intelligent land planning and development; and promote public access to and views of farmland, forests and the waterfront. Serving as a guide for Land Trust acquisitions is the linear park, a conceptual tool for linking open spaces in the town developed by Youngken and still being modified by the current Planning Department.

Awareness of the effects of growth on the character of East Greenwich has led some local preservationists to become involved in the conservation of rural space as well as the preservation of historic property. Accordingly, the role of the Land Trust is two-fold: to acquire open space for conservation and to acquire historic properties—often the two overlap.

B. LAND CONSERVATION

Conservation of land in rural East Greenwich has long been a concern of citizens apprehensive about the suburbanization of the town. Larger lots alone are inadequate for maintaining a desired degree of agrarian character: East Greenwich is a town with a great deal of dormant farmland that is not always able to effectively absorb the visual impacts of development and the appearance of residential sprawl is an issue even at low densities. Recognizing this, the Planning Board and Planning Department successfully fought for cluster zoning. Clustering allows developers to build houses on smaller lots than normally required, provided that construction does not take place in environmentally or visually sensitive areas, leaving valuable common open space within the subdivision. The new Comprehensive Plan recommends it as the standard approach to residential development town-wide.

The Land Trust and the linear park are the key elements of efforts to conserve land in East Greenwich. The Trust has been successful in acquiring key parcels of land and has paid special attention to the physical framework of the linear park in doing so. Crucial to the efforts of the Planning Board, Land Trust and Planning Department in acquiring key properties is the involvement of local landowners.
C. WORKING TOGETHER TO MANAGE GROWTH: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HISTORIC AND NATURAL RESOURCE PRESERVATION

The efforts of the East Greenwich Preservation Society and the Land Trust are both good examples of the active, simultaneous pursuit of preservation and conservation goals. Though, for the most part, different people serve each organization, their paths often cross. The Preservation Society has taken an active role in promoting passive recreation along the waterfront and protection of the Hunt River, while the Land Trust is mandated to purchase historically significant as well as traditional conservation land. Perhaps the act that most poignantly underscores the interaction of conservation and preservation efforts locally is the donation by Marion Fry, the President of the Preservation Society, of the first property acquired by the Land Trust. This forty-six acre tract of woodlands is preserved as the Fry Family Nature Preserve. It serves as a link in the linear park and access is limited to pedestrians.

Local history and the structures and land patterns that persist from the town's early settlement dictate the image of the town shared and protected by both preservationists and conservationists. Public awareness of town history is a key component of local efforts to manage growth, for East Greenwich is not a wild, heavily forested place where saving extensive timberland is the primary concern. Rather, as a place both urban and rural, conservation is an element of historic preservation--perhaps more aptly termed "character preservation"--and the historic awareness and ambience fostered by local citizen groups and museums plays an important role in defining and preserving the town's history and image.

The "character" that preservationists, conservationists and townspeople in general find appealing and worth saving is that of a community with a distinct Main Street-centered downtown, an active waterfront, and semi-rural hinterlands--all characterized by historic structures and land patterns. The greatest threat to town character is suburbanization of the farmland and woodlands marked by construction of poorly sited, architecturally inappropriate, and even out-of-scale houses that do not defer to the established, essentially rural settlement patterns. Traditional subdivisions can visually overwhelm the dispersed, historic development pattern, especially in sensitive locations such as in and around open farmfields. Suburban development that is out of character with the architecture and land patterns, especially in large quantity, threatens the distinction still so apparent between
the densely developed waterfront/downtown area and the scattered settlement of the rural hinterlands.

Caleb Vaughn House
6. PROVIDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE CONTEXT OF PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION

Growth management, preservation and conservation concerns often come into conflict with and exacerbate affordable housing and service needs. As property values rise and open space is set aside, small towns can become exclusionary—frequently making it difficult or impossible for even the sons and daughters of long-time residents to live in the town. This has been a concern of East Greenwich residents in recent years and is a priority of the Comprehensive Plan. Another common area of conflict between the preservation of town character and the provision of affordable housing is the concern of preservationists that multi-unit residences built to provide affordable housing are by nature overscaled and architecturally inappropriate to their desired town image. East Greenwich has made some headway in successfully addressing this conflict.

Although East Greenwich has the highest per capita income in the State, it is really a town of extremes: some 10% of its population lives below the poverty line and it has a substantial housing stock of Section 8 and other subsidized low-income housing. Interestingly, most of this housing is located in the Hill and Harbor District below Main Street.

Historic preservation has increased the attractiveness of living on and around King Street. As a result, real estate values have increased, diminishing the number of affordable housing units. Recognizing this, the Housing Authority has assumed the role of developer and targeted specific areas for future development of additional housing as the need arises. One project now underway involves construction of affordable housing on the site of the onetime "Poor Farm." The original building is being rehabilitated and three buildings will be modeled on the nineteenth century design of the original building. It will consist of twelve units and new offices for the Housing Authority.

The Comprehensive Plan recommends appointing a Task Force on Housing to evaluate programs state-wide in order to better prepare East Greenwich for future housing needs. The Plan calls for
the designation of additional multi-family zoning districts in areas where the larger scale and different character of such housing will be least obtrusive. Site plan review would be mandatory. The Plan also recognizes the under-utilization of space in large houses with decreasing household size and recommends greater use of that space as an inexpensive way to increase housing. A stated goal of the Plan is to maintain an owner to renter ratio of three to one.

While former Planner Richard Youngken's hopes of using federal HUD grants for both the rehabilitation of historic residences to provide affordable housing failed to materialize due to insufficient funds, the town has nonetheless managed to balance the need for such housing with concern for town character.
7. KEY FACTORS IN PRESERVING TOWN CHARACTER

Successful historic preservation, land conservation and growth control efforts in East Greenwich have as much to do with the involvement of private organizations (some founded upon different but overlapping concerns) and their cooperative efforts in fostering and promoting a town image as it has to do with the implementation of specific innovative planning regulations and tools. As in most small towns, threats to East Greenwich's historic and natural resources necessarily overlap and the need to manage growth and preserve town character has become a common goal.

In East Greenwich the distinction between historic preservation and land conservation is blurred further by land and settlement patterns imposed by the town's agricultural past. This works in three ways. First, the scattered farmsteads include not only houses and outbuildings of historic significance but the surrounding fields that are important as their context. Second, past clearing of land for farming makes it easily developable. Third, new development is highly visible and can disrupt the historical context of nearby farm buildings in addition to infringing on open space. In short, the context of mostly dormant agricultural land is an integral part of rural historic resources, yet it both eases development and makes it more intrusive.

Recognition of the intricate overlap of historic resource protection and land conservation has led the Town to implement planning tools such as cluster development and preliminary review of large projects. In so doing, aesthetic and contextual concerns are considered as well as natural constraints and service capabilities.

The following is an overview of some of the key actions, events and factors contributing to and detracting from the preservation and improvement of town character and the environment.

Effective Planning staff

Unlike many small towns, East Greenwich has a planning department. That is, not only a Town Planner but an Assistant
Planner as well as the Town Clerk, who is under the supervision of the Planning Director and also serves the Zoning Board of Review and the Planning Board. Under the direction of different Planning Directors, the Planning Department has played the lead role over the past several years in addressing protection of the town's historic and natural resources in the face of increasing development pressure.

Former Planner Richard Youngken is credited by many with getting such issues on the local political agenda and aggressively prompting action by, among other things, soliciting Town funds for a new and improved Comprehensive Plan and following through on drafting the Plan; proposing the linear park concept; initiating local efforts to further State historic survey efforts; and expanding the role of the Planning Board, specifically with regard to the preliminary review of large development proposals, with the Planning Department helping to negotiate acceptable development.

The Planning Board's review function was seen as the first step in working towards a climate of cooperation between developers and the Town that might promote innovative development that doesn't degrade town character, particularly in the more rural inland where most residential development has been occurring and where its visual and environmental impact is greatest. Youngken saw the need to initiate dialogue early in the permitting process and discourage developers from presenting generic, "cookie cutter" subdivision plans at the outset--plans for which substantial expenditure had already been made and from which sufficient deviation to produce a mutually-agreeable result was unlikely. Rather than start by establishing lot lines, why not identify and determine the location of significant features such as farm fields, stone walls, and dense vegetation first, and worry about lot lines later?

Before hiring the current planning staff, the town went eight months without a Planning Director and five months with no planning staff at all other than the Town Clerk. This interim period stalled current planning initiatives promoting the linear park and encouraging sensitive development and made acclimation difficult for the new planning staff, who were forced to familiarize themselves with current issues without the help of outgoing staff.

Many of the measures recently implemented in East Greenwich to ensure more effective planning came in response to the ineffectiveness of planning in previous years. For years the local Department of Public Works and Town Engineer had considerable local planning roles on the local level. Subdivision policies were essentially made by Public Works. Only recently have planners
had a large role in physical and environmental planning locally and in 1985 a Charter Review failed to result in the reassignment of authority over subdivision infrastructural layout from the Town Engineer to the Planning Director.

Most innovative planning in East Greenwich has taken place only recently and was spearheaded by an active, involved planner who has since moved on, and a determined Planning Board that has committed a great deal of time and energy to these efforts. Recognizing this, one hopes that progress in the fields of conservation, preservation and growth management can be sustained and that the Planning Board can avoid burnout. Current Planner Kate Welch stresses the need for her Planning Department to remain neutral in acting as an arm of both the Planning Board and the Council. The current Planning Department seems to have a good working relationship with developers and the general public as well as the Council, and many of the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations are solidly in effect as policies if not regulations.

**Autonomy of Boards and Commissions**

According to Land Trust Director Richard Perry, autonomy is important in developing a public image as a non-political entity. Relying largely on the generosity of local landowners, the Land Trust is not completely reliant on funds provided by the Town and independence has allowed the Trust to distance itself from the Council's agenda and public perceptions of individual Council members, and establish its own agenda, focusing on appropriate issues.

The Planning Department too has retained autonomy. According to former Planner Youngken, as a non-resident he was better able to objectively work on local planning issues. He was not caught up as much as he might have been with concern about property values and the agendas of particular individuals and areas in the town and was better able to see the whole picture.

In the past, strained relations between the Town Council and the Planning Department slowed the enactment of conservation and growth management efforts. Current Planner Kate Welch believes that past negative feelings are largely attributable to the Council's perception that the Planning Department was allied with the Planning Board in the vast majority of disputes with the Council; She vows that her Planning Department is and will remain neutral in acting as an arm of both the Council and the Planning Board.
Citizen Participation in Local Planning

The importance of citizen participation in planning for preservation and conservation in East Greenwich cannot be overstated. Citizen involvement has both gotten things done and ensured a democratic approach to planning. Expanding on the participation of local residents on voluntary boards and commissions and as members of historical and civic organizations, the Planning Board and Town Council made every effort to include citizens representing the spectrum of local special interests and viewpoints in the writing of the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan.

From the very start, the Planning Board considered citizen participation crucial to developing a Plan. By first conducting an extensive survey, the Board was able to determine the general priorities of the townspeople. That accomplished, the consultant hired to direct the development of the Plan set up the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), representing a cross-section of town-wide interest groups and demographics. The first draft of the new Plan was, in fact, worked on by the CAC alone from September of 1987 until June, 1988.

In the view of Planning Board member Jonathan Stevens, the level of citizen participation in the preparation of the new Plan represented a "genuine, honest attempt at public consensus." (Interview, March 16, 1990). CAC efforts were rewarded by the region's highest-profile environmental group when celebrity guest speaker Ted Danson presented the committee with the citizen's award at the Save the Bay annual meeting in March of 1989.

National Register Designations and Historic Zoning

Instead of leaving the surveying and nomination of historic properties for National Register status in the hands of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, East Greenwich planners and townspeople played an active role in the process. When they felt that State progress on the historic survey that lists and rates historic properties was lagging, the Planning Department hired a consultant to ensure a more meaningful local survey. This resulted in the nomination and successful listing of the Tillinghast Road and Fry's Hamlet Historic Districts as well as several individual buildings on the National Register of Historic Places and set the stage for historic zoning.

Historic zoning in East Greenwich is one of the most effective tools in maintaining the town's historic, small town image. Its
implementation in the Town-designated East Greenwich Historic District, which encompasses the National Register district in the Hill and Harbor District, was the embodiment of the East Greenwich Preservation Society's efforts to preserve local historic structures and was seen by preservationists and planners as a major step in preserving the character of the downtown area.

Not content with the implementation of historic zoning in the downtown East Greenwich Historic District, concerned officials and citizens led by the Planning Department and the East Greenwich Preservation Society, and supported by rural landowners, were able to expand the geographical scope of preservation concerns and regulations, shifting the focus of local historic zoning to the town's interior. Thus far, this has resulted in historic zoning that applies to specific inland buildings, mostly farmhouses and their outbuildings, and the Tillinghast Road and Fry's Hamlet Historic Districts are under consideration for historic zoning.

Negotiated Development

The Planning Board role of reviewing development proposals prior to the actual permitting process initiates dialogue between the Town and developers that can lead to more appropriate development. By reviewing proposals, the Board can influence a development proposal before substantial commitments have been made by the developer in question. The Town is sometimes willing to stretch existing density and other regulations in exchange for developments that show design innovation and are deemed sensitive to their surroundings. Instead of producing development that is "locked into geometry," based on rigid and unimaginative interpretation of zoning regulations, the idea is for developers to pay more attention to natural and historic features and build with that context in mind.(Richard Youngken interview, February 18, 1980).

Negotiations regarding Laurel Wood, a subdivision currently awaiting final approval by the Town Council, resulted in the developer promising to donate 9.8 acres of land to the linear park "in exchange" for the Town relaxing road width requirements and not requiring the construction of a connector road. While I have termed the Town's approach "negotiated development," Planner Kate Welch stresses that they don't simply barter with developers; developers want to develop and the Town tries to see that projects produce the least visual and environmental impacts possible. For their part, developers are usually willing to make concessions in order to speed the permitting process.
Cluster Zoning

At long last, East Greenwich took a giant step in facilitating visually sensitive subdivision development with the enactment of cluster zoning in late 1988. Cluster regulations call for setting aside a minimum of 30 percent of a subdivision's developable land as open space. With cluster zoning, the Town's negotiated approach to development is more flexible, allowing more creative development alternatives.

Although East Greenwich added cluster provisions in December, 1988, some citizens, including at least one Planning Board member feel that the town may have waited a little long in doing so. After all, North Kingstown has had cluster zoning for some thirty years and now has more than a thousand acres of common space on its tax rolls.

In some small towns there is the mistaken perception that cluster development implies multi-unit development that may be over-scaled and inappropriate. A look at some of the recent development to take place in East Greenwich, North Kingstown and other small towns in Rhode Island and throughout the country will show that this need not be the case. In the hopes of its widespread use, the newly updated Comprehensive Plan recommends cluster development in the rural areas west of Route 2 and the Planning Board and Planning Department encourage clusters whenever possible town-wide. "Reasonable" cluster open space requirement recommendations are for 40 to 50 percent of the total parcel in rural 2-acre zones and 30 to 40 percent in 1-acre zones.

Land Acquisition: the Municipal Land Trust

The past and future success of the linear park is largely contingent upon the effectiveness of the Land Trust in acquiring key properties through donation, outright purchase, easement, fee simple acquisition, and the purchase of development rights. The Trust was chartered in 1987 by the town and funded by a $250,000 bond. It is "an independent body concerned with the preservation of the environment and character of East Greenwich." As a municipal entity, the Land Trust works closely with the Planning Board and Town Council. The new Comprehensive Plan identifies a number of "Candidate Parcels for Acquisition," many of which are located within the path of the linear park plan and/or in historic districts. Donations of land and money have enabled the Trust to retain funds from its initial allotment.
Along with the linear park, the Land Trust is a key element of local efforts to preserve land and manage growth in the interests of preserving town character. Together they represent a publicly-accepted Town program for the acquisition of open space to be used by all.

**Emphasis on Passive Recreation**

It has long been customary for Rhode Island cities and towns to concentrate on active rather than passive recreation in writing their Recreation and Open Space Plans, with the traditional standard being that some 90% of Town-designated open space is for active recreation. Rather than accept this time-honored approach, East Greenwich has been shifting this ratio in order to preserve and promote the rural character of the town. The linear park is the embodiment of the town's concern for the preservation of natural open space for passive recreation.

**Linear Park**

Developed by former Planner Richard Youngken as a "program" dictating development, the linear park concept established a framework for preserving open space in the town. While it is hoped that the "park" can eventually be nearly continuous and walkable and accessible to horseback riders and birdwatchers, the primary issue is not whether all of the park components are ultimately connected along pedestrian paths. Rather, the linear park plan identifies existing Town-owned open space, targets key parcels of land, and guides future allocation of passive recreation land, trying to link these open spaces as well as possible. As such, it is not a traditional linear park, following a riverway or explicitly laid out design, but by calling East Greenwich's somewhat random plan a "linear park," the Town adds weight to the concept of networking open space and is more successful in establishing the importance of acquiring land linking open spaces.

The linear park scheme follows existing open space and historic properties and proposes the acquisition of contiguous open space that is particularly attractive and topographically suitable for pedestrian use. In addition, the plan pays attention to land that the Planning Department considers probable or possible for acquisition based on natural factors affecting development and owners' stated plans.
Linear Park
(Comprehensive Community Plan)
Developers of subdivisions are encouraged to donate land to serve as linkages between open spaces; because pieces of land are identified specifically in the context of a broad, logical scheme, the Town has already had some success in getting private donations of land and set-asides by developers to the linear park. Along the waterfront, the Town owns considerable land and at least one private owner has expressed a willingness to donate a strategic link in the park scheme.

The Land Trust plans its acquisitions largely according to the dictates of the linear park. On the other hand, Land Trust acquisitions continue to help shape the linear park. Though the linear park system is essentially conceptual and flexible to the availability of land, prior to the formulation of this network of open spaces, it was less clear which parcels of land were especially desirable for preservation.

New Comprehensive Plan

Faced with increasing pressure from development, an important step taken by the Town to protect its historic and natural resources was the Comprehensive Plan update, initiated in 1986 and not completed and adopted until March, 1990. It was strongly felt by then-Planner Youngken and members of the Planning Board that the existing 1982 Plan was inadequate. They found the Plan lacked specificity, especially with regard to environmental protection and growth management.

With Rhode Island’s 1988 Land Use Act calling for all the State’s 39 cities and towns to update their Comprehensive Plans, the timing was right for a new Plan. The Act requires updated Plans to be in compliance with the State Guide Plan addressing the following categories:

- Land Use
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Natural and Cultural Resources
- Services and Facilities
- Open Space and Recreation
- Circulation
- Implementation
Plan elements relating to each of these categories are subject to approval by the Office of Statewide Planning. Failure to comply with the standards results in ineligibility for State funds to hire consultants and staff and carry out other planning-related efforts. A major concern expressed by the Act is that communities ensure a high degree of citizen participation in preparing their Plans.

In order to write a new Plan, the Planning Board had to convince the Town Council to allocate the necessary funds. The initial request was for $35,000, a "shot in the dark" figure, expected to cover the costs of hiring a consultant to compile a database, produce Geographic Information Systems (GIS) maps, and lay the groundwork for the Plan. (Jonathan Stevens interview, April 26, 1990). A couple of the more conservative longtime Council members were reluctant to disburse the funds regardless of the planning need.

Using the professional polling experience of one Planning Board member to negotiate a relatively inexpensive public opinion survey deal with Alpha Research Associates, a professional polling company, the Board laid the groundwork for a Plan update while still pressuring the Council for Plan funds. By September of 1986 the persistence of Planning Board members eventually won out, convincing the Council to authorize $35,000 for a consultant. Council approval was only the first step as the Finance Director soon informed the Board that the funding proposal had to be approved by the townspeople at the Financial Town Meeting almost a year later.

With the Board already having selected the planning consultant, the allocation of the funds necessary to hire them was up to the vote of interested townspeople. By this time, the Planning Board had increased the requested amount of money to $94,000, based on the tentative agreement reached with the consultant. After "drama and passionate debate," funding was approved by attending residents on the second night of the 1987 Financial Town Meeting by a vote of 218 to 181. (Stevens memo to Peter Lord of the Providence-Journal Bulletin, March 21, 1990). Also approved, reflecting the success of the Board in demonstrating the town's planning needs, was the allocation of $20,000 to hire an Assistant Planner.

One of the key criteria in the hiring of the consultant, an engineering firm, was its commitment to citizen input and the production of a Plan that reflected that input. Throughout the process, in addition to developing a database and making needed maps, the firm operated in a guidance capacity, soliciting citizen
input and forming the CAC, and assisting the Planning Board in writing the final Plan.

Saving the "character" of the rural countryside and farmland in outlying areas in addition to preserving individual buildings emerged as a major challenge to the Town. In response to open-ended questions asking for perceptions of the town, participants in the public opinion poll expressed strong positive feelings, specifically liking East Greenwich's "small town" qualities and wanting to preserve and strengthen them. Issues cited by those polled as being most important included growth management, development's impact on historic preservation, preservation of open space and natural resources, affordable housing, and preservation of "small town/rural character." (Comprehensive Community Plan, p. 2-1). The final, Council-approved Plan treats issues of preservation and conservation as intrinsically related and essentially inseparable in the context of retaining and improving existing Town character. It makes an "effort to show the integration and degree of interconnection of the issues facing the town. For example, the Plan makes recommendations regarding open space and environmental protection in relation to residential or commercial development." (Comprehensive Community Plan, Draft Summary, p. 1-1) Recognizing the continuing need for housing in East Greenwich, the Plan regards growth management as having as much or more to do with how development fits into the historic and natural environment as with how much of it there is.

The Plan's Goals Statement is as follows:

Preserve and protect the natural resources, historic features and character of East Greenwich, while assuring that the town is able to provide sufficient services and public facilities to meet changing needs, and to maintain itself in a sound financial condition. Particular attention should be paid to the following:

- Assure that current and future development does not adversely affect natural and ecological resources, the historic and rural character of East Greenwich, and that environmentally sensitive areas are protected, especially water quality and supplies;

- Promote land use patterns that provide opportunities for social and economic diversity and a range of housing options;

- Assure that town-wide services and public facilities achieve standards which maintain and improve existing quality, accommodate the effects of growth in the future, and are affordable to a diverse population;

- Assure that open space in the town is retained as a resource for active and passive recreation opportunities, while also providing protection for the physical and natural environment; and
- Broaden the sources of town revenue in order to assure a sound financial future and assist in funding the achievement of town goals.

Plan policies are divided into the following seven categories:

1) Growth Management  
2) Development Patterns  
3) Open Space and Natural Resources  
4) Community Facilities and Services  
5) Economic Development  
6) Housing  
7) Historic Preservation

The new Plan's historic preservation recommendations urge continued attention to rehabilitation and maintenance of historic properties in the Hill and Harbor District and call for expansion of historic preservation activities into the western part of East Greenwich. While individual buildings in the inland part of town are protected by historic zoning and the Fry's Hamlet and Tillinghast Road Historic Districts are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Plan expresses concern that historic land patterns are threatened by subdivision development that is not carefully planned and calls for site planning that is sensitive to historic resources.

Specific Plan proposals dealing with growth management and preservation of the town's "semi-rural character" include "very limited" sewer extension so as not to encourage growth in more rural parts of town; cluster development whenever possible; retaining vegetative buffers for residential development in the Farming zoning district; designating specific areas for multi-family dwellings; constructing the planned new library on Main Street and reinforcing the downtown core by keeping other municipal and cultural facilities there; and expanding the Planning Board's pre-application role in the review of large development projects. (Ibid, p. 1-7). Concern for preserving and reinforcing town character is implicit in many of the Plan's recommendations.

Applicable to the inland parts of East Greenwich these include identifying scenic roads and writing guidelines for preserving features along them; retaining stone walls; acquiring development rights to specified parcels of land; and instituting tax credits for preservation of historic properties.

The Plan notes that developers have been selling off frontage lots to help finance interior lots later. The effective result is residential strip development, the impact of which is exacerbated by the
relatively cleared dormant farmland in much of inland East Greenwich. The Plan recommends extending setback requirements in these areas; coupled with the Planning Board's review function which promotes unobtrusive development that defers to the natural and historical land patterns, this measure can help offset the appearance of suburban-like density along rural and semi-rural roads.

In addition to encouraging the efforts of the Land Trust, the Plan calls for concerted and continuous efforts in the acquisition of land for recreation, community facilities and especially for open space. Among the specific proposals is to require dedication of open space in the approval of subdivision petitions. Several State programs involving grants and loans, including the Natural Heritage Preservation Revolving Loan Fund, the Open Space and Agricultural Area Bond, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, are cited by the Plan as worth pursuing in efforts to acquire and preserve land.

Specific to the waterfront area, recommendations and proposals include the construction of a public pedestrian boardwalk along Greenwich Cove that would be a link in the linear park; increased public access to the waterfront generally; and wharfage provisions from "privately owned lands held in easements by the town, and off town-owned lands for the shellfishermen in order to retain commercial fishing in the town." (Ibid, p. 1-12); preserving and rehabilitating the Scalloptown area on Greenwich Cove for water-dependent uses; and constructing parking decks and adding on-street diagonal parking to ease overcrowded parking conditions.

As the first town to enact a new Comprehensive Plan under the Land Use Act, East Greenwich has been under scrutiny on a statewide level. State approval called for by the Act has not yet been granted, but the Planning Board is confident that it meets all requirements. The citizen participation element of the Plan process is already regarded by the State as a model for other cities and towns.

While the Plan effort involved a high level of citizen input, attention to State requirements meant to ensure thoroughness and attention to specifics actually resulted in a Plan that is somewhat lengthy, repetitive and generalized. As the first town subject to the new regulations, East Greenwich was very concerned with meeting them and in so doing may have lost its focus on some of the most crucial issues and weakened the Plan's effectiveness. In addition, the Plan took nearly four years to complete and the State review process continues to delay official adoption of the Plan, further
weakening it as issues change and recommendations need modifying.

In retrospect, members of the Planning Board and Planning Department feel that the Plan is somewhat "boiler plate" in its approach and not always specific enough to East Greenwich, and are not sure if an engineering firm was the proper choice of a planning consultant. While the Planning Department is generally pleased with the database assembled by the consultant, they are displeased with several maps prepared for the Plan and question the spending of more than $100,000 (including maps and database) on a planning job that was not wholly satisfactory. Town officials agree that the consultant did a fine job of organizing the CAC, explaining the elements of a Plan, and getting the public to talk.

Despite the length of time, difficulty and cost of the Plan effort, policies such as narrowing required widths for new roads and increasing setbacks in subdivisions have been carried out and new zoning and subdivision regulations are in the works in accordance with the Plan's intent to discourage sprawling development.

Retention of Vegetation and Stone Walls

Bolstering an approach to development that encourages deference to historic settlement patterns and the preservation of natural features, the Town has taken steps to retain woodlands on lots undergoing development. A regulatory measure is the designation of "no cut zones" within fifteen feet of lot lines.

In response to the occasional destruction of old stone walls to expand yard space and build more modern dividers of property, the Preservation Society is spearheading the drafting of an ordinance that restricts moving and dismantling these walls that contribute to the character of rural East Greenwich.

Limiting Curbing and Narrowing Roads

Also in the works is another measure aimed at preserving rural scenery which would restrict the type and extent of curbs layed in subdivisions and planned developments. The Rhode Island Department of Public Works (DPW) has long maintained that curbs are necessary for road reinforcement and for channeling runoff into catchbasins. Feeling that curbs tend to lend an unwanted suburban character to the town, Planning Board members promote curbless roads using alternative methods of structural reinforcement. Strengthening their case is the fact that curbs also
tend to exacerbate surface runoff problems in these unsewered rural areas. The Planning Board, Town Engineer and the DPW continue to work together on this issue, discussing the idea of giving the developers the option of constructing curbs as usual or not providing them and saving money in the process. Subdivision road widths have already been addressed, the standard right-of-way width narrowed from 50 to 44 feet and pavement width narrowed from 30 to 24 feet.

**Joint Efforts With Neighboring Towns**

East Greenwich has worked together with regional towns to mitigate environmental problems. To ensure the continued existence of the town's water supply, steps have been taken to protect the all-important Hunt River watershed in cooperation with both Warwick and North Kingstown. Without cooperative efforts, the measures would be inadequate in protecting the river and the town's drinking water. Further joint efforts between the three towns are likely to be necessary to deal with issues such as overdevelopment of the Route 1 strip, as well as water resource protection.

**Protection of the water supply**

Concern about protection of the Hunt River watershed area, the source of the town's water, led the Planning Department to draft an aquifer protection ordinance in November, 1987. Though adoption by the Town Council has been delayed pending completion of groundwater studies, the ordinance serves as town policy, setting regulations for discharge limits and dimensional setbacks and calling for lower density zoning in critical areas. Development discharging wastewater that threatens water quality is essentially prohibited. With the exception of a single developer, all petitioners for projects falling in this zone have honored the policy and the ordinance is likely to be adopted in the very near future. Because the Hunt River aquifer is a designated "sole-source aquifer" as the provider of over 50% of the water supply to East Greenwich, North Kingstown, and Warwick, federal projects in the aquifer such as highways and bridges are subject to review by the EPA. (Jonathan Stevens interview, March 18, 1990).

Additional protection of the town's water supply is provided through an EPA-funded state well-head protection program. East Greenwich has joined with North Kingstown, the state Port
Authority and the Kent County Water Authority in hiring Goldberg and Zoino and Associates (GZA) to conduct a study that is likely to result locally in a well-head protection ordinance.

Commercial developments planned in and around the aquifer find themselves the target of widespread local opposition. Recently, public concern over a proposed automotive lube service in the well-head area led to denial of the application.

Further attention is being paid to the area water supply by the Narragansett Bay Project. The EPA-funded environmental research group is currently conducting a study of the Hunt River watershed that will serve as a model for other watersheds in the state.

**Septic System Regulations**

The new Plan recommends establishing a Wastewater Management District in areas with the highest incidence of septic system failure. Regulations would require frequent pumping, flushing and system reconstruction as necessary to properly manage septic systems and prevent contamination of soils, groundwater, rivers, streams, and coastal waters.

**Innovative Fund-raising and Education**

The East Greenwich Preservation Society has been effective in public education and fund-raising efforts. Examples include organized walks and the publication of a cookbook entitled *A Legacy of Greenwich Recipes*, featuring such treats as "Frostfish Balls," "Greenwich Bay Clamburgers," and "Celia Bergstrom's Swedish Carrot Pudding." Sale of the cookbook not only raises much-needed funds but heightens local pride and awareness of town lore.

**Situational Factors: Capitalizing on Events**

The impact of specific anniversaries and events cannot be overlooked in a discussion of preservation, conservation and growth management in East Greenwich. The bicentennial of the nation and the town's tercentenary, which occurred in back-to-back years (1976-77) were instrumental in capitalizing on heritage celebrations and highlighting local history to the effect of promoting historic preservation efforts. In addition, the Kentish Guards and other local heritage organizations play prominent roles in annual parades, regularly reinforcing the town's historical sensibility.
Main Street

Main Street is an East Greenwich enigma. Unable to withstand the forces of decentralization and remain commercially competitive with more suburban businesses (as in many small towns), the central business district is not what it once was. Historic zoning has helped to maintain the physical appearance of Main Street, and Town offices are still located in the area, but it still appears somewhat rundown for the commercial heart of a town with land values among the highest in the state. High turnover rates persist and several prime storefronts are currently vacant. Some residents and town officials believe that Main Street should be rezoned, concentrating the commercial zone in order to contain sprawl and ensure a smaller, more compatible mix of businesses. Others maintain that Main Street really is not in such bad shape and what are generally viewed as "marginal" businesses actually continue to serve the needs of residents of the area, many of whom live on low incomes.

In 1981, the Hill and Harbor Plan was prepared for the Town by the planning firm of Everett Associates through a federal HUD grant. The study analyzed Main Street, the waterfront, and surrounding residential areas, offering recommendations for improving zoning, mitigating parking problems, revitalizing businesses, and dealing with a number of other local concerns. Attention to the problems and possibilities of Main Street is a key component of the study. Recommendations included appointing a full-time Main Street Manager to serve as liaison between merchants, design consultants, and the Town, and forming a Main Street Improvement Council made up of merchants, financiers, property owners, and Town officials.

Shoppers complain of inadequate parking on Main Street but this may be overstated and more an attitudinal issue than anything else. The Hill and Harbor Plan found parking to be adequate under normal circumstances, even stating that the length of a shopper's walk to his or her car at the nearby malls exceeded that on Main Street. My experience has been that parking is usually available within two or three blocks of any Main Street business and that diagonal parking on King Street is always available. It seems that many shoppers expect to park directly in front of their shopping destination.

Past attempts to analyze Main Street's problems and turn its fortunes around have not been turned into action. Main Street revitalization efforts recommended by the Hill and Harbor Plan
have not been undertaken in the past due mainly to a lack of consensus and a reluctance to spend money. No one seems to agree on anything about Main Street except that things could be better.

To provide an updated analysis of Main Street and lay plans for its revitalization, Assistant Planner Jennifer Clarke is scheduled to prepare a new Main Street plan in the near future. An idea that has surfaced among members of the Planning Board is the formation of a citizen's advisory committee to establish public opinions about Main Street and lay the foundation for actions on its behalf.

Mainly affecting the immediate downtown commercial area, the town has an ordinance regulating the size and placement of signs. This is a good tool but it needs to be reinforced with more effective language. Sign design in East Greenwich is not subject to review—it must only conform to these regulations. Many signs remain in conflict with the ordinance as pre-existing non-conforming uses. In conjunction with the preparation of a plan for Main Street, the Planning Department is committed to drafting a new, more effective sign ordinance.

Moving Slowly

East Greenwich may have exercised too much caution in availing itself of important planning tools. Cluster zoning, for example, in practice in neighboring North Kingstown for nearly thirty years, has only recently been implemented in East Greenwich. Likewise, a Main Street revitalization program, as carried out in countless communities in the United States and Canada, has not been put into practice here.

Preservation and Conservation as Interconnected

Central to the efforts of East Greenwich's citizens and officials is recognition of the interconnection of preservation and conservation in the interests of preserving town character. Historic preservation has expanded upon initial Hill and Harbor-based efforts to include inland East Greenwich; an outgrowth of this is the preservation of farmland, a common concern of local conservationists. Cooperation between preservation and conservation is perhaps best demonstrated by the Land Trust and linear park, both of which are in place to preserve both natural and historic properties.
setbacks and use of tax incentive programs to preserve historic properties are applicable to other small towns.

Any town concerned with the effects of growth on historic and natural resources and "town character," can mitigate the impact of development by allowing and encouraging cluster development that concentrates development and preserves open space. This is especially applicable in towns that, like East Greenwich, have easily developable farmland and scattered historic resources that are vulnerable to more standard forms of residential development. Towns faced with imminent growth that threatens their rural, small town character would do well to institute cluster zoning before the damage is done.

Most of the tools currently or soon to be in use in East Greenwich can be used by other communities to help preserve rural character. These include regulations restricting stone wall removal and the cutting down of trees, measures limiting the type and extent of curbing, and the use of state programs to fund preservation projects.

The review function of the Planning Board in East Greenwich and the town's negotiation approach to development are steps other small towns can take in shaping the type of development they experience. However, the effectiveness of similar measures is likely to be limited without a full-time planning staff and active planning board. In towns with strong planning systems and staffs, requiring impact statements for larger projects, as recommended in the East Greenwich Comprehensive Plan, can be a strong tool in shaping development as well.

One of the more innovative actions taken in East Greenwich was the establishment of the municipal land trust. As a town-mandated trust, the Land Trust seems to be respected and not considered elitist by the townspeople while its relative autonomy allows it to carry out its stated goals of conserving important natural and historical land with a minimum of bureaucratic encumbrance. Land trusts and the acquisition of land to be conserved in perpetuity are applicable to and effective in most small towns faced with growth that threatens their desired character. Land trusts can be effective as private entities as well--and some towns may have difficulty instituting a publicly-mandated trust. The East Greenwich Land Trust is helped by the existence of a number of large landowners of long standing in the town who are agreeable to the idea of donating land for conservation. Other towns may or may not have this luxury; if they do it should be taken advantage of.
8. APPLYING THE EAST GREENWICH CASE TO OTHER TOWNS

The experience of East Greenwich suggests that a town is in much better shape to prepare for the future if it has a full-time planner and, if possible, support staff as well. East Greenwich's efforts to manage growth in the interest of preserving town character have been more effective in recent years due largely to the work of the Town Planner and staff. Obviously this requires money and is most effective if the community hires competent, innovative planners. Many towns in Rhode Island are hiring full-time planners for the first time and may be ill-equipped to evaluate and hire planners. Hiring a planner is part of a larger commitment to planning generally and evidence of such a commitment will help attract competent planners. As has been the case in East Greenwich, the goals and orientation of the planner should match those of town officials and the town as a whole and the planner should have appropriate skills. A non-resident planner may be most effective, able to work on the range of issues facing the town without the possible burden of being tied to the interests of his or her neighborhood and caught up in local politics generally.

As important as having a good planning staff is the level of citizen participation and the success the planning board and planners have in establishing the public mandate with regard to growth, preservation, conservation, affordable housing, and other issues relevant to a town's planning efforts. Extensive polls like the one used by East Greenwich to survey the public are not likely to be available and/or affordable to most small towns, but well-advertised and well-organized public meetings, carefully assembled and relatively autonomous CACs, and patience can also ensure citizen participation in the Comprehensive Plan process.

By updating their Comprehensive Plans, communities in Rhode Island will not only be better prepared to deal with growth management, conservation and preservation, but, by complying with the Land Use Act, ensure eligibility for State funds. Many of the goals and recommendations of the East Greenwich Plan deal with the preservation of town character and such measures as the regulation of changes along scenic roads, extension of rural
The efforts of East Greenwich in the field of historic preservation show that local initiative can further the work being done at the state level. Rather than rely on State data, other towns can do as East Greenwich did and speed the nomination of properties to the National Register by supplementing existing surveys with inventories of their own.

It has also been shown in East Greenwich that town-funded affordable housing can be contextual--involving both renovation and replication of historic properties. More generally applicable is the designation of areas for multi-family and/or affordable housing where it will have the least environmental and visual impact.

Environmental protection efforts in East Greenwich have focused primarily on maintaining high water quality. Measures such as the adoption of aquifer and watershed and well protection ordinances can be crucial to a growing town, but for them to be effective, regional cooperation may be necessary--watersheds do not usually respect legal boundaries. State programs can be a big help in undertaking studies and taking appropriate protective measures.

The linear park plan is not only one of the more effective steps taken by East Greenwich but it is also highly applicable to other towns interested in establishing a system of open space preservation. In East Greenwich, the linear park considers historic properties as well as natural land in the acquisition of open space. A linear park can be applied conceptually as a loose program that guides development (as in East Greenwich) or more literally as a scheme dictating the acquisition and connection of specific properties. Regardless of the approach, a linear park can reinforce a town's open space plan by representing it graphically and effectively establishing a network of open spaces. Existing open space can act as a system guiding development and the future acquisition of open space, and connections can be made between these spaces.

Communities can learn from the recent history of Main Street. Clearly, historic zoning alone is not enough to prevent businesses from failing and buildings from deteriorating. Continued concentration of Town buildings in and around the downtown core is a positive step, but zoning that tends to decentralize business on Main Street, a less than adequate sign ordinance that is poorly enforced, and the failure of the Town to comprehensively address Main Streets problems all perpetuate the existing state of affairs. The formation of a citizens advisory committee has been suggested for Main Street, East Greenwich and a plan is scheduled to be
written. The examples provided by East Greenwich preservationists and conservationists generally and by the Planning Board and Town Council in the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan suggest that East Greenwich and towns like it can effectively involve the citizenry in successful actions as they apply to Main Street as well.

Besides the involvement of town residents on the Comprehensive Plan CAC, citizen participation is at the heart of much of East Greenwich's day-to-day preservation and conservation success. Town commissions, including the Planning Board, Historic District Commission and Land Trust, are made up of volunteer members who devote a great deal of time to their respective tasks. It is one thing to recommend that other towns and their citizens show such commitment but for it to become a reality is something else indeed. As with the existence and efforts of private organizations such as the Preservation Society, citizen involvement at this level does not simply happen but is the manifestation of true concern and involves sacrifices that not all citizens are able to make. For those that are able to commit the necessary time and effort, the East Greenwich experience is evidence that membership on public boards and commissions can reap benefits for the town as a whole. The Preservation Society's origins show that a simple expression of concern over the threatened demolition of a single property by a handful of residents can become something larger and have a real local impact.

Effective planning in East Greenwich is the product not only of cooperation between town officials, board members and townspeople but of recognition of the overlapping concerns of preservationists and conservationists and cooperation to that end as well. In working to maintain and improve those qualities that make small rural and semi-rural towns what they are, citizens and officials of other communities would do well to take this approach. Historical and heritage organizations and celebrations of town history can all contribute to the preservation of town character.
8. BIBLIOGRAPHY and INTERVIEWS

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