

# MARINER'S WAY

Gateway to Connecticut River Recreation

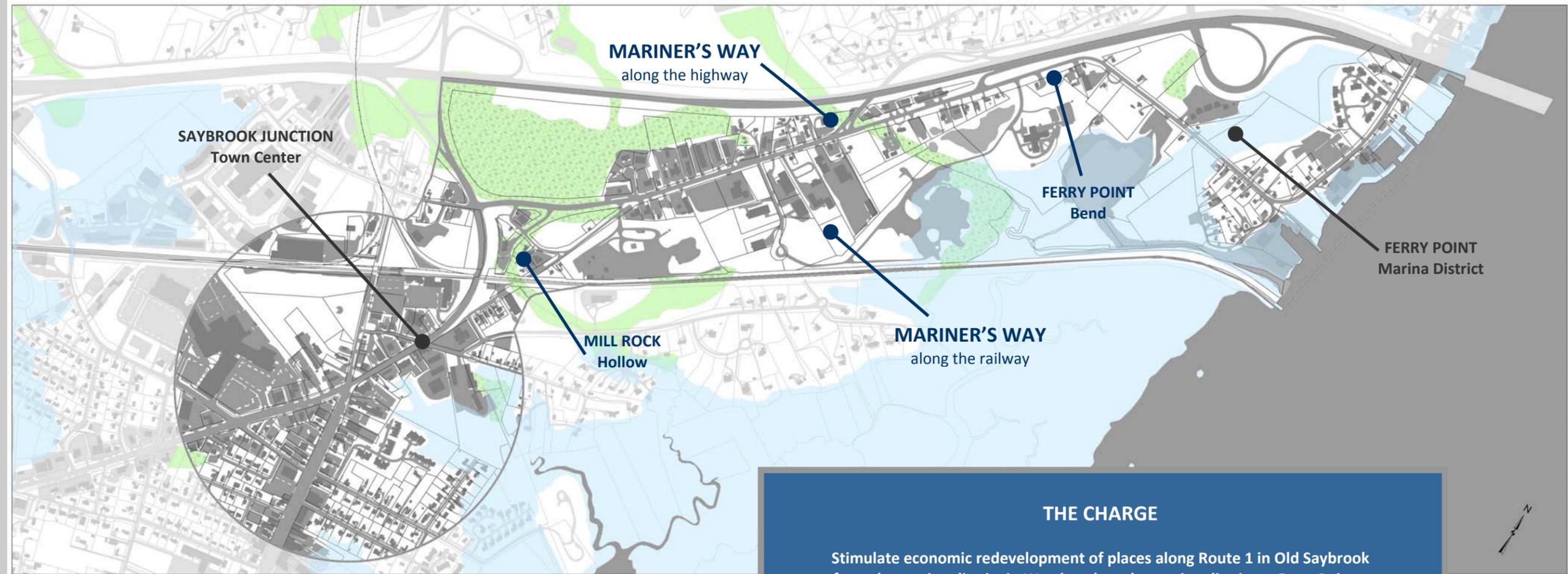


A **vision** to improve the Route 1 East connector  
between Saybrook Junction's Town Center and Ferry Point's Marina District

Town of Old Saybrook  
Planning Commission

AUGUST 2014

## Gateway to Connecticut River Recreation



existing conditions of  
Saybrook Junction Town Center,  
Mariner's Way and  
Ferry Point Marina District

### THE CHARGE

Stimulate economic redevelopment of places along Route 1 in Old Saybrook from the marina district in Westbrook to the marina district at Ferry Point – make “do-able” a vision for places along the corridor, *especially Boston Post Road “East”*; upgrade the quality and multi-modal capacity of transportation infrastructure; efficiently and effectively mix uses through infill and redevelopment; market potential business opportunities for sustainable vitality.

**where are we?**

*In anticipation of the region's tri-town Route 1 Corridor Improvement Study, the Town studied a particularly underdeveloped area known as Route 1 East – a connector strip between nodes of activity at Saybrook Junction Town Center and the Ferry Point Marina District.*

**FUNCTION.** As it stands, Route 1 East has a disjointed identity often leaving a negative impression. A series of small, successfully long-running, but unrelated businesses occupy most properties. Intense industrial uses expose vulnerable adjacent residential uses, threatening some with blight. Outmoded industrial buildings sit abandoned on untended lots. Architecture is purely functional with little regard for the neighborhood it forms. Zoning for the area does not reflect existing uses nor does it encourage redevelopment under current market forces. The pavement is unnecessarily wide for its carrying capacity without any consideration for modes of transportation other than the automobile. A partial interchange for I-95 caps either end, one of which the State has slated for closure should Federal funding ever become available. Soils are poor; what little purposeful landscaping exists, is, in fact, thriving; few trees line the street.

**FORM.** The strength of Route 1 East lies in its overall potential for redevelopment, especially for connecting two nodes of walkable/bikeable activity within Old Saybrook – its iconic New England town center and its



a streetwall makes pedestrians feel secure

marina district on the Connecticut River. Route 1 East has an ideal configuration to retrofit with the quality of uses, structures, and street improvements that can overcome its image of obsolescence.

**where are we going?**

*In the coming years, Old Saybrook will address shortcomings of Route 1 East by re-branding it as **MARINER'S WAY** and implementing the vision for a "Gateway to Connecticut River Recreation" with these long-term goals:*

**A CLEAR VISION.** Unvoiced opinion serves as a policy of status quo for Mariner's Way threatening not only potential for future revitalization, but, in its current state, detracting from the walkable/bikeable mixed-use neighborhoods at either end. The Town needs to cultivate a new business culture in the corridor to grow beyond its current condition by pulling Mariner's Way out of continued decline. A collective effort, requiring leadership, is necessary to implement a well thought-out plan for improvement, to integrate public infrastructure, to coordinate the energies of owners of underperforming properties, and to encourage economic buy-in by other developers. Revitalization of Mariner's Way is an enterprise that the Town must undertake if market forces are to not just arrive *but also thrive*.

**A BOLD RESTATEMENT.** Mariner's Way is already so unlike any other part of Old Saybrook that redevelopment can be a bold restatement of the values Old Saybrook already projects as the basis for a distinct image for Mariner's Way – *a gateway to Connecticut River recreation*.

Although many of the recommendations of this Report have global application for the entirety of Route 1 in Old Saybrook, this Report focuses its discussion to the study area in six topics – branding, economics, zoning, transportation, landscaping, and building patterns. Because the vision is for revitalization in a manner that is distinct and different from other parts of town, it is important that the Town's plan eases the transition to the adjacent Saybrook Junction town center and to the Ferry Point marina district.

**how do we get there?**

**Branding (p.4)**

*... to create recognition, reputation, reaction and results.*

*And relevant near-term policies:*

**Economics (p.6)**

*... to redefine Mariner's Way as different from the rest of Old Saybrook and relevant to the Connecticut River.*

**Zoning (p.8)**

*... to accommodate existing uses while allowing flexibility in attracting new uses.*

**Transportation (p.10)**

*... to beautify and build capacity for multi-modal travel as an Interstate "frontage road."*

**Landscape (p.12)**

*... to create a commercial campus that honors Old Saybrook's traditional maritime heritage.*

**Building Pattern (p.14)**

*... to build existing structures into more coherent patterns.*

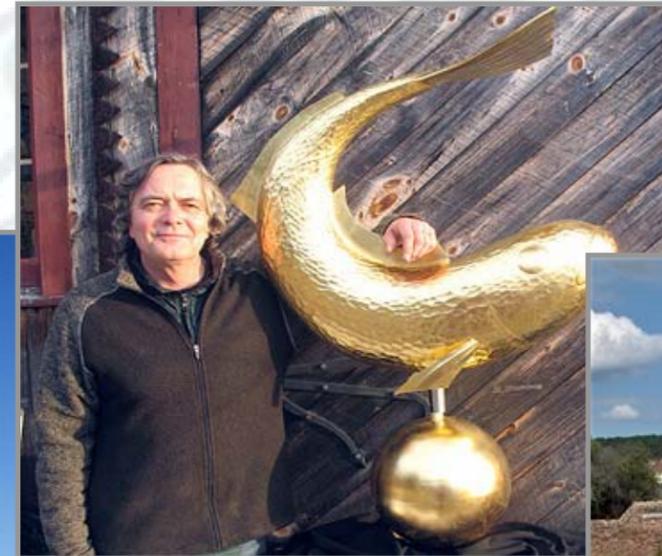
**transition to Town Center (p.16)**

*... to extend Saybrook Junction's town center vitality to the Mill Rock Hollow neighborhood.*

**transition to Marina District (p.18)**

*... to make a public match of infrastructure to fully-integrate multiple uses of the marina district in the Ferry Point neighborhood.*

# Branding



public art that symbolizes  
Mariner's Way

where are we?

where are we going?

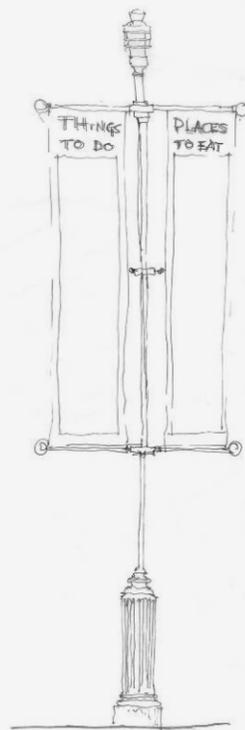
how do we get there?



There are a few distinctive and competitive strengths inherent to Route 1 East to lead its image out of its decades-long economic despair with a new brand for business.

**DISCONNECTED & DEPRESSED.** Currently, Route 1 East is disconnected from the rest of Old Saybrook – physically and psychologically. The configuration of the intersection leading eastward through the study area should make a potent first impression, but it does not. There is no sense of arrival and no awareness of “place”. Any enduring function is obscured by the collective impression of the blighted condition of the area as the “eyesore” of the community.

**LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION.** Yet, there is a confluence of memory, impulse and need that retains reference to Route 1 East as “the road to the river”. Residents recall the boat manufacturing and yet existing performance boat sales. Visitors arrive via Interstate 95 from either direction to drive the corridor, and make the loop around Ferry Point through the marina district to access the river. Moreover, this study reports that there is a need for youth and intergenerational commercial recreation, which cannot be met in town, for which people ask simply, “why not over on Route 1 East?” Route 1 East is the obvious locale to reinvigorate commerce and tourism with entertainment activities in connection with bodies of water, where many different nautical activities can take place, always with an ecological outlook and respect for nature.



shared experience is the vitality of a place

As relates to branding this area of town, it is the Town’s policy...

... to create recognition, reputation, reaction and results.

The descriptive tagline for Mariner’s Way – *Gateway to Connecticut River Recreation* – must go beyond the new place name to build character. “Gateway” suggests welcoming guests over a threshold, and is apropos of the pause automobiles take at the Route 1/154 intersection before entering Mariner’s Way. Specifying the “Connecticut River” encompasses a unique locational value. Reference to “recreation” serves the needs of marketing to a specific lifestyle niche. While the lighthouse symbolizes Old Saybrook overall, something built or natural along the Connecticut River itself may give cues to place branding Mariner’s Way.



play off strengths of locality

to

Although it is imperative to use fresh and effortless imagery to instill immediate recognition of Mariner’s Way as different from similar or nearby places, destination branding is more than a quick-fix, one-time marketing campaign where a logo or tagline is promoted. Partners, business prospects and customers decide what a place means to them, and whether it is relevant to who they are and what they need. Living or doing business along Mariner’s Way will need an effective brand defining an experience that leaves visitors and residents with a clear memory of a unique occasion that connects with them emotionally.

The town prescribes these actions:

- 📍 **PLACE BRANDING FOR MARINER’S WAY.** Create loyalty among people, resources and business for Mariner’s Way by differentiating from the vision/mission/identity of other places in-town and elsewhere.
- 📍 **“MARINER’S WAY”.** Rename the Route 1 connector as a way to attract interest from commercial developers.
- 📍 **IMAGERY.** Create a logo that symbolizes Mariner’s Way.
- ✂️ **WAYFINDING PLAN.** In conjunction with the Town’s new “welcome” signs, develop handsome, graphically linked wayfinding signage for identification signs at prominent destinations, directional signs at decision-making points, and information signs or kiosks with visitor information near major attractions and amenities.
- ✂️ **PUBLIC ART.** Develop a master plan that features marine aspects through public art; develop a proper funding mechanism and an oversight board composed of community visionaries.
- 📍 **SIGNATURE EVENT.** Create a signature event to put Mariner’s Way “on the map” as an event whose production values carry the “genetics” of a sponsoring organization’s mission and for which the event’s brand recognition in the market is equal to or greater than the brand recognition of its sponsoring organization (e.g. seafood festival, a boat race between the bridges, a harbor festival, nautical flea market).

## Economics



A suggested mix of uses for Mariner's Way that are appropriate, viable and acceptable to a cross-section of the community

*where are we?*

*where are we going?*

*how do we get there?*



*Route 1 East is a testament to the challenges facing industry and trade sectors within the local, regional and national economy.*

*As relates to the economy in this area of town, it is the Town's policy...*

**FISH DON'T SHOP.** Underutilized, vacant and blighted buildings along Route 1 East overshadow smaller yet active businesses and detract from the overall public perception of Old Saybrook. Movement of business out of Route 1 East and other portions of Old Saybrook has shifted reliance on residential property for our tax base from an acceptable rate of 70% a decade ago to nearly 90% today. Looking at the potential revitalization of Route 1 East brings to light that the town's greatest asset – its proximity to both Long Island Sound and the Connecticut River – limits the local market draw from our already-static population. This reduced, semi-circular market base makes it difficult to attract sales or service industries, including national-brand retailers, due to a perceived lack of customers. Yet townspeople regularly travel upwards of 20 minutes for both necessities and luxury items.

***...to redefine Mariner's Way as different from the rest of Old Saybrook and relevant to the Connecticut River.***

A long-term approach to renewal is essential to redevelopment of Mariner's Way. Old Saybrook needs to differentiate from, rather than compete with, nearby locales – Main Street's distinctive retail boutiques or the critical mass of the existing shopping centers – for the same target market. The biggest opportunity in redeveloping Mariner's Way is economic balance; that is, to capture leakage of specific commerce, industry and employment within the regional economy to benefit Old Saybrook.

**REGIONAL DRAW.** There is potential to be drawn out of this shabby commercial gateway to town. We know developers consider Old Saybrook as a year-round, economic hub of the Connecticut shoreline/river-valley region. This Committee commissioned the firm of Bartram & Cochran for an expert market analysis to learn what goods or services inspire residents to travel elsewhere to obtain, as well as what is of interest to developers and investors looking into Old Saybrook.

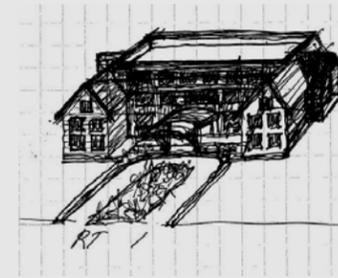
The Town needs to be realistic: let us put our efforts into incubating, relocating, attracting and retaining feasible uses appropriate to the vision for the corridor rather than holding on to obsolete industries. Inquiries during the course of this study indicate definite buoyancy in the market for recreation types of development. This, in turn, would serve to attract income to the region: employment growth that supports year-round, quality job potential for the town's mix of residents.

For example, warehouse clubs and superstores represent the largest gap in supply versus demand by about 50%. The addition of a single large retail building could produce about \$375,000 annual tax revenue and rebalance our grand list by nearly 10%. Restricting the size could reduce this opportunity.

Existing marine-related commercial activity positions Mariner's Way particularly well to build on proximity to the region's many marine-dependent businesses. Physical improvements of a reinvigorated Mariner's Way should reinforce the distinctive aesthetics and quality-of-life that comes from Old Saybrook's coastal heritage.

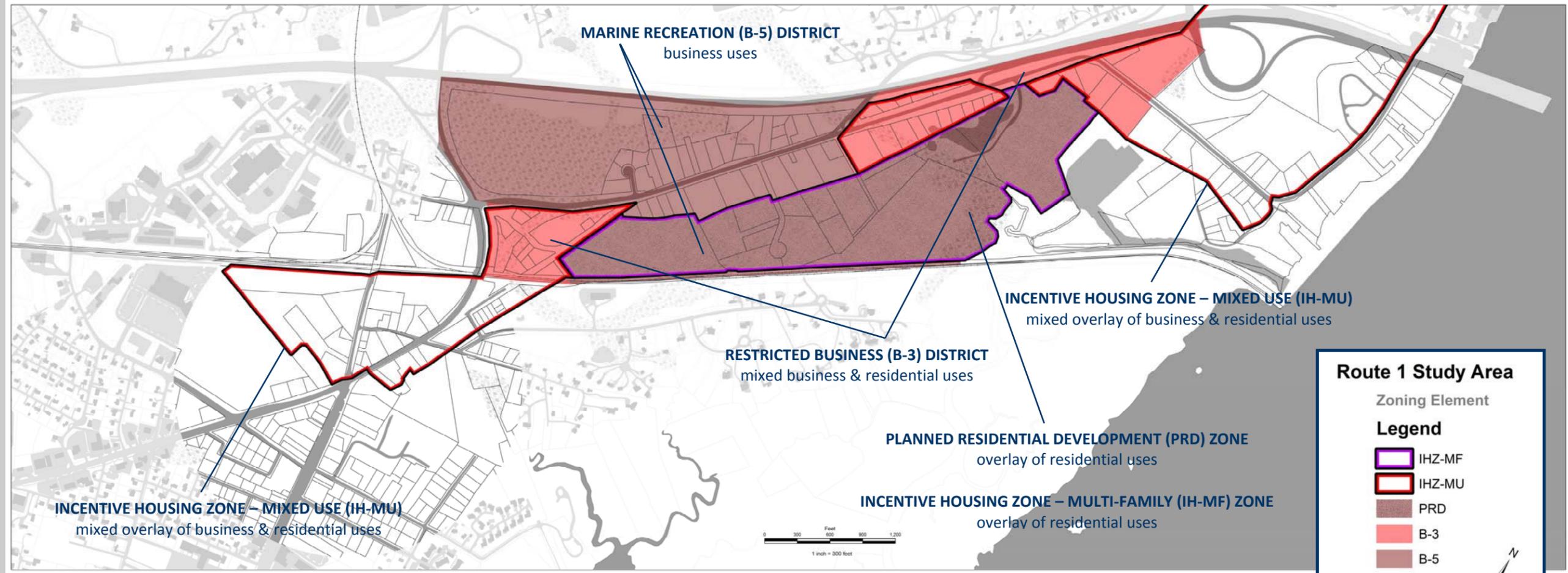
Data mining companies position a majority of consumers within a 20-minute drive in relatively affluent categories (our household income is 37% higher than the national average), who spend money on homes, yards and leisure activities, including boating. Rail and highway connections to seasonal rental cottages, historical sites, The Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center, shops, restaurants, beaches and marinas, make the town a seasonal destination for tourists, a substantial element of the Connecticut economy. Fulfilling these needs position us to facilitate change on Route 1 East.

Mariner's Way can provide the goods and services that locals need while minimizing the traffic impact in most of the town because of the "easy-on/easy-off" nature of nearby highway interchanges, as well as the nearby train station and growing bus system. The area is particularly well suited for anchorage by large-scale destination businesses, such as a hotel, a community college or a particular retail store.



- ✓ **MARKET ANALYSIS.** Commission a specialized opinion of the potential for infill- and re-development, especially for Mariner's Way.
- ✓ **AREA MASTER PLAN.** Create an area master plan to depict feasible uses and potential physical improvements for Mariner's Way.
- 📄 **TAX INCREMENT FINANCING.** Use an equalized assessment valuation to invest public funds to build and repair infrastructure, clean polluted land and put blighted properties back to productive use in conjunction with larger private development.
- 📄 **FIXED ASSESSMENT INCENTIVE.** Abate the burden of increased valuation of newly-remodeled or expanded real estate improvements for a fixed period in accordance with the degree to which a business meets the vision of Mariner's Way.
- 👤 **PLANNED BUSINESS DISTRICT.** Approach existing complementary businesses, which meet the vision for corridor redevelopment and would benefit from operating as a critical mass to a shared target market, to start-up or relocate from elsewhere in town or region to Mariner's Way.
- 👤 **"ONE STOP SHOP" LIAISON.** The Economic Development Commission's staff person acts as an ombudsman-like first point of contact for potential developers and investors to navigate efficiently and effectively through the processes of: site-location, permitting, construction programs, skilled labor, etc.
- 👤 **MARKETING PACKAGES.** Create a specific, attractive marketing package for properties along Mariner's Way to be sent to prospects.
- 👤 **BUSINESS RELOCATION PROGRAM.** Approach existing businesses, which do not meet the vision for Mariner's Way to relocate to another part of Old Saybrook.
- 👤 **ECONOMIC NEWSLETTER.** Issue regular announcements via multiple modes of media.

# Zoning



zones and districts that are proposed to be the legal framework for redevelopment of Mariner's Way

where are we?

The zoning map depicts how land was used at the time the town created the map, and so, its portrait of Route 1 East continues to guide private development of real estate without really illustrating what the Town expects of its use of the land in the future.

**SNAPSHOTS.** From the intersection of Route 1/154 to the sharp curve of Route 1 as it turns toward Ferry Point, the Town presently zones the north side of Route 1 East, as well as a handful of frontage properties to the south, as a Gateway Business (B-4) District. The majority of the south side of Route 1 lies within the Industrial (I) District. On the south side toward Ferry Point, a narrow strip of properties lies within the Restricted Business (B-3) District.

As one drives through the corridor, evidence remains of both houses (now non-conforming to the map) and permitted manufacturers (no longer in business). The resulting picture is an eclectic landscape: sales, service and storage of ambulances, ATVs, motorcycles, automobiles, and boats; car washes, sales of bait and fishing equipment, food service/catering, gasoline stations, general industrial storage, professional office space, soil/asphalt processing, garden supplies, wig sales. The area also presently includes numerous residential dwellings (nonconforming under the present zoning regime to be absorbed into the larger commercial context).



**BLANK CANVAS.** Other than a few notable but peripheral natural resources, much of the corridor is marketable for its potential ease in permitting – enhancement being “in the clear” from serious environmental considerations, such as the Coastal Management Zone, the Aquifer Protection Zone, the Connecticut River Gateway Conservation Zone or the Coastal Flood Hazard Zone. Where these natural resources exist in the corridor, as in other places in town, the Town is practiced in balancing environmental protection and economic progress. Similarly, the Town’s design standards direct development to adapt its qualitative aspects – neighborhood pattern, building design, landscaping, circulation, and signage – within the otherwise typical quantitative ranges of size and placement.

where are we going?

As relates to zoning this area of town, it is the Town’s policy...

**...to accommodate existing uses while allowing flexibility in attracting new uses.**

**RESTRICTED BUSINESS (B-3).** The Town should re-zone the distinct enclaves of intermingled residences and businesses that “bookend” the Mariner’s Way corridor – the Mill Rock East neighborhood and the approach to Ferry Point – as a Restricted Business (B-3) District. This District maintains a small-scale, walkable setting to the street by limiting the type and intensity of business uses, as well as a residential character by limiting the size of buildings and the layout of the site. Each end is also suitable to extend the Incentive Housing Zone with a Mixed-use subzone from the train station area and from the Ferry Point area for a mix of uses at a higher density to accommodate some dedication of affordable dwelling units. This combination of mixed-use district and overlay zone can be the framework for a “live-work” artisan-based streetscape.

**MARINE RECREATION BUSINESS (B-5).** In addition to goods and services identified earlier in this Report, for which residents currently need to leave town, many of the existing medium-scale businesses existing along Mariner’s Way are in keeping with the proposed theme of this corridor being the gateway to Connecticut River recreation. Therefore, a new “Marine Recreation Business” zoning district would allow for the same uses of the existing Gateway Business (B-4) District and step-up the lot and bulk standards to more closely match the also-existing Industrial (I) District. The intent is to avoid making existing uses or their layouts non-conforming within new zoning regulations, but rather to increase the range of possibilities for the highest and best uses of the land. Uses for which the Town should push the building envelope to 3+ stories or a footprint in excess of 100,000 square feet include business-class hotel, college or university, large-scale retail, indoor/outdoor sports complex. The non-frontage portions of the Marine Recreation Business District are appropriate for scattered medium-scale residential development, especially with some affordable units.

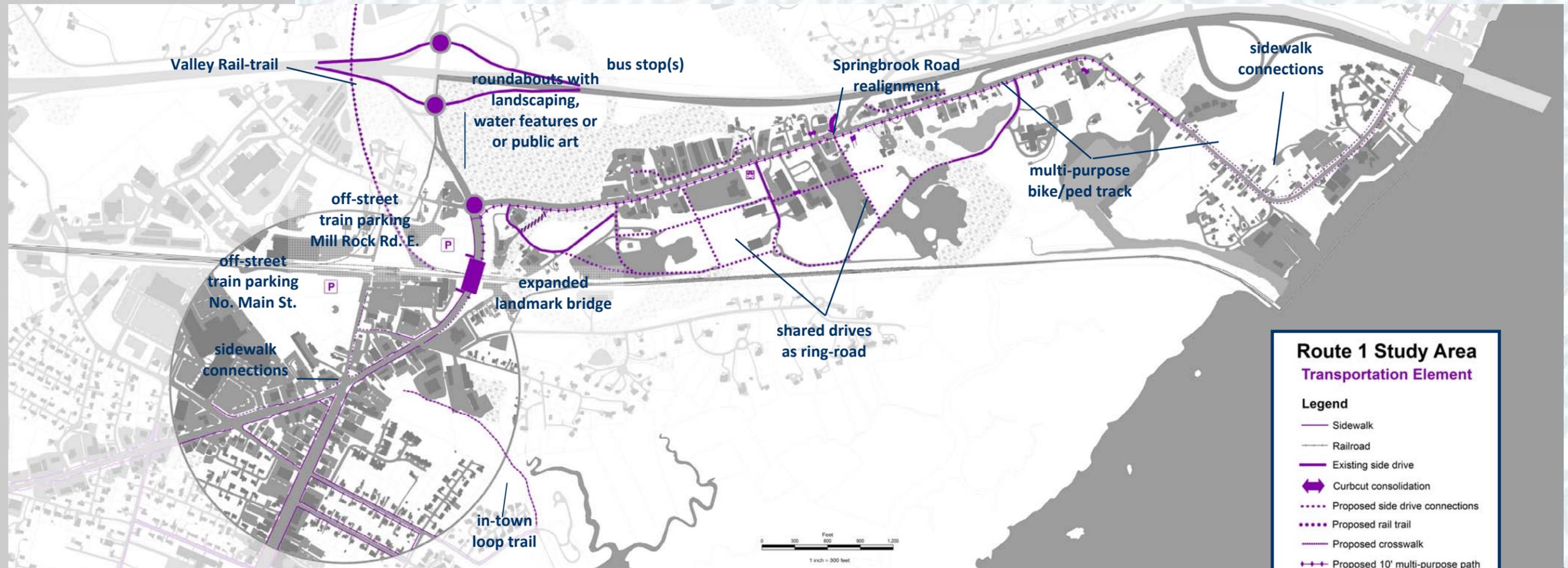
**SPECIAL DESIGN/DEVELOPMENT (SDD).** There may be a time in which the Town is offered the opportunity to collaborate with a developer in keeping the vision of the Report for something bigger and better than what exists. At that time, a legislative tool that addresses the individual needs of a special design or a special development would be invaluable. The Architectural Review Board can take the lead in fitting a special design/development according to the aesthetics of Mariner’s Way as it relates to building pattern, street treatment, and landscape palette.

how do we get there?



- ☞ **“RESTRICTED BUSINESS” (B-3) DISTRICT.** Expand the Restricted Business District to encompass the existing enclaves of small-scale mixed-use at either end of Mariner’s Way.
- ☞ **“MARINE RECREATION BUSINESS” (B-5) DISTRICT.** Rezone the center of the study area with one all-encompassing underlying business district that keeps the highest and best of the existing range of uses in keeping with the vision for the corridor and permits new development to occur to a medium-scale cap.
- ☞ **“PLANNED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT” (PRD) FLOATING ZONE.** Add the non-frontage portions of the B-5 District among the areas of Old Saybrook in which planned residential development may “land”.
- ☞ **“INCENTIVE HOUSING” (IH) OVERLAY ZONE.** Overlay the B-3 neighborhoods with an additional layer of mixed-use development rights (IH-MU) at a higher density to accommodate a 20% dedication of affordable dwelling units above or behind business. Similarly, overlay the right to develop apartments and townhouses (IH-MF) in the same non-frontage portions of the B-5 District with a requirement that 20% are deed-restricted as affordable at or below market rates.
- ☞ **“SPECIAL DESIGN/DEVELOPMENT” (SDD) FLOATING ZONE.** Create a floating zone eligible to land anywhere in the B-5 District at a scale customized to meet the needs of uses supportive of the vision for the corridor.

# Transportation



**Route 1 Study Area  
Transportation Element**

**Legend**

- Sidewalk
- Railroad
- Existing side drive
- Curbcut consolidation
- Proposed side drive connections
- Proposed rail trail
- Proposed crosswalk
- Proposed 10' multi-purpose path
- Proposed sidewalk
- Parcel
- Inland wetland
- Bus stop
- Parking
- Roundabout

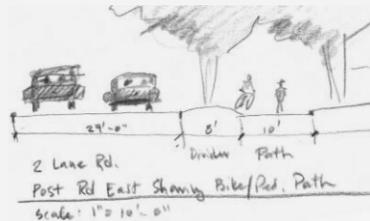
Map prepared by the Old Saybrook Land Use Department for the Route 1 Corridor Study. Data are for informational and planning purposes only.  
August 2013

physical improvements to guide people to and through Mariner's Way

where are we?

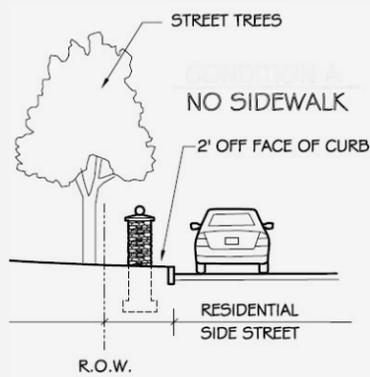
Route 1 East is a State-owned automobile-oriented mile-long straight-a-way connecting two nodes of pedestrian activity within Old Saybrook – Saybrook Junction Town Center and Ferry Point Marina District.

**CONNECTOR.** The northerly-located interstate highway and the southerly-located railroad line make shallow lot depths on either side of the corridor and dead-ends out of the few roads that feed the corridor. Public improvement of the roadway infrastructure has catered only to automobile access for the industrial and commercial uses of this adjacent land. The steady flow of traffic makes left-hand turns into or out of businesses difficult, especially if competing with other cars for a clear line-of-sight beyond any of the excessive curbcuts.



bike/ped track on south side

**INTERCHANGE CONSOLIDATION.** As a part of a 2004 feasibility study of the I-95 corridor from Branford, Connecticut to Rhode Island, the Connecticut DOT put forth a concept plan for interchange improvements. The plan eliminates exit 68 making exit 67 function as a 4-way diamond interchange with Route 154. Although the plan would only slightly divert traffic away from Route 1 East, a diluted stream of traffic would threaten the perception of commercial property values. This, in turn, could undermine Old Saybrook's ability to attract new business to Route 1 East.



Route 1 East has a lot of capacity for upgrades – the public right-of-way is approximately 80' in width and relatively flat in grade. Underdeveloped side streets and private drives through commercial developments have the potential to superimpose a “grid” of connected driveways and parking aisles to relieve congestion by improving circulation in the neighborhood.

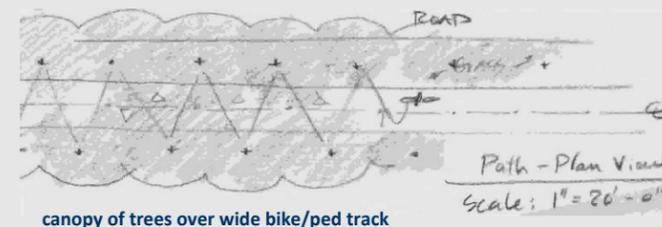
where are we going?

As relates to transportation in this area of town, it is the Town's policy...

...to beautify and build capacity for multi-modal travel as an Interstate “frontage road.”

The Town should support the planned consolidation of the I-95 interchanges, especially the closure of exit 68's southbound off-ramp at Springbrook Road. But, the Town might also inquire as to whether the northbound on-ramp might remain to keep hold of as much pass-through traffic on Mariner's Way that otherwise might not be exposed to this part of town. In this way, Mariner's Way would continue to function as a frontage road to Interstate 95 and distinguish itself with certain boulevard treatments.

The 80'-wide corridor lends itself to the Town's vision for boulevard treatment typical of these connectors. The Town has the opportunity to set the stage for future market investment by participating in the region's Tri-town Route 1 Study. The resultant engineering-level “complete” redesign of the Route 1 right-of-way through Old Saybrook, Westbrook and Clinton will accommodate multiple modes of transportation by consolidating the needs of automobiles to make room for alternative transportation modes, such as buses, bicycles, and pedestrians. The Town should support the extension of the 9-Town Transit route from the town center to the marina district and the residences in and around each, including the Gladeview residential life care facility (60 Boston Post Road), the Ferry Crossing affordable housing development (45 Ferry Road), and the several marinas and planned residential developments on Ferry Road.



canopy of trees over wide bike/ped track

how do we get there?



- ✓ **AREA MASTER PLAN.** Create an area master plan to depict feasible uses and potential physical improvements for Mariner's Way.
- ✓ **TRI-TOWN ROUTE 1 PLAN.** Participate in development of the region's “complete” re-design of Route 1's tri-town travel way as engineered plans for construction.
- ✗ **I-95 INTERCHANGE 67 (RTE 154).** Construct a southbound exit ramp to Route 154 (eliminate ramp onto Springbrook Road).
- ✗ **SPRINGBROOK REALIGNMENT.** Make the intersection of Springbrook Road perpendicular with Route 1.
- ✗ **SIDE STREET CONNECTIONS.** Formalize private side streets, drives and parking aisles in grid-like connections.
- ✗ **CURBCUT CONSOLIDATION.** Funnel access via combined driveways by connecting parking lot aisles between businesses.
- ✗ **MULTI-PURPOSE BIKE/PED TRACK.** Construct a wide, multi-purpose “path”, of a permeable material and segregated where possible from the south side of Mariner's Way suitable for bicycle and pedestrian through-traffic from the train station to the Essex Road non-motorized ramp to I-95.
- ✗ **I-95 INTERCHANGE 68 (MARINER'S WAY).** Retain the existing northbound on-ramp from Mariner's Way.
- ✗ **BUS STOPS.** Construct pull-off lanes for 9-Town Transit between each side street or development drive.
- ✗ **UNDERGROUND UTILITIES.** Bury utilities to eliminate proliferation of poles and overhead wires.

# Landscape



examples of boulevard treatments for Mariner's Way

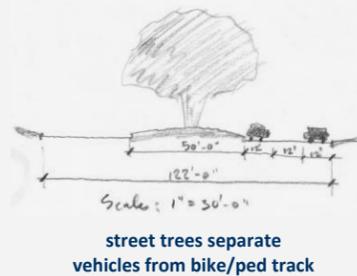
where are we?

For a town renowned for its delightful interface with the Connecticut shoreline, the built environment of Route 1 East is remarkably misaligned with the rest of Old Saybrook.

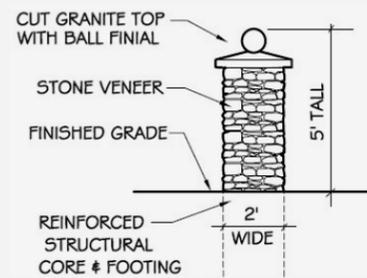
**NATURAL EDGE.** There is little to show in the way of purposeful greenery, landmarks or other distinguishing features. Wetlands and woodlands abut intense commercial and industrial uses. Street trees are misshapen by utility pruning or are lacking completely from certain frontages. Overall, there is an outstanding need for more viable landscape to intervene – functionally and symbolically – to characterize the corridor as more than just as space between businesses.

**IMPLIED ENVIRONMENT.** Creating a gateway and landscaping Route 1 East should draw upon its existence within the larger atmosphere of Old Saybrook’s riverine and coastal environment. There exist some images symbolic of Old Saybrook from which to take cues, for example, the fish weathervane atop the town information booth. Required buffering wetlands and floodplains reserve greenways that enable people to relate to their surroundings even while busy with industry and commerce. A handful of prominent stands of trees throughout the corridor would, if maintained, serve as examples of how to provide natural context that separates uses or breaks up otherwise undifferentiated sprawl. The rest of the streetscape can take its cues from the few newly planted specimen trees.

The view from the train line of the creeks and marshes of the Connecticut shoreline is a strength, too, of Old Saybrook; development of Route 1 East should give special consideration to this major gateway.



street trees separate vehicles from bike/ped track



markers to residential or mixed-use neighborhoods

where are we going?

As relates to the landscape in this area of town, it is the Town’s policy...

**...to create a commercial campus that honors Old Saybrook’s traditional maritime heritage.**

Trees are a natural asset with attendant CO<sub>2</sub> to O<sub>2</sub> exchange and natural cooling qualities that offset the pollution and heat of town development. The hazards of trees downed by recent extreme weather (and the subsequent cost of processing the debris) has raised some discussion in communities about the value of a roadside forest and proven to be a challenge in garnering government support for re-establishing trees. Mariner’s Way will be a test case for whether Old Saybrook will champion locally the national campaign to advocate for the “right tree in the right place”. This Committee advocates for planting in supportive clusters that minimize the surface area exposed to the street edge without obscuring the facades of the businesses beyond.

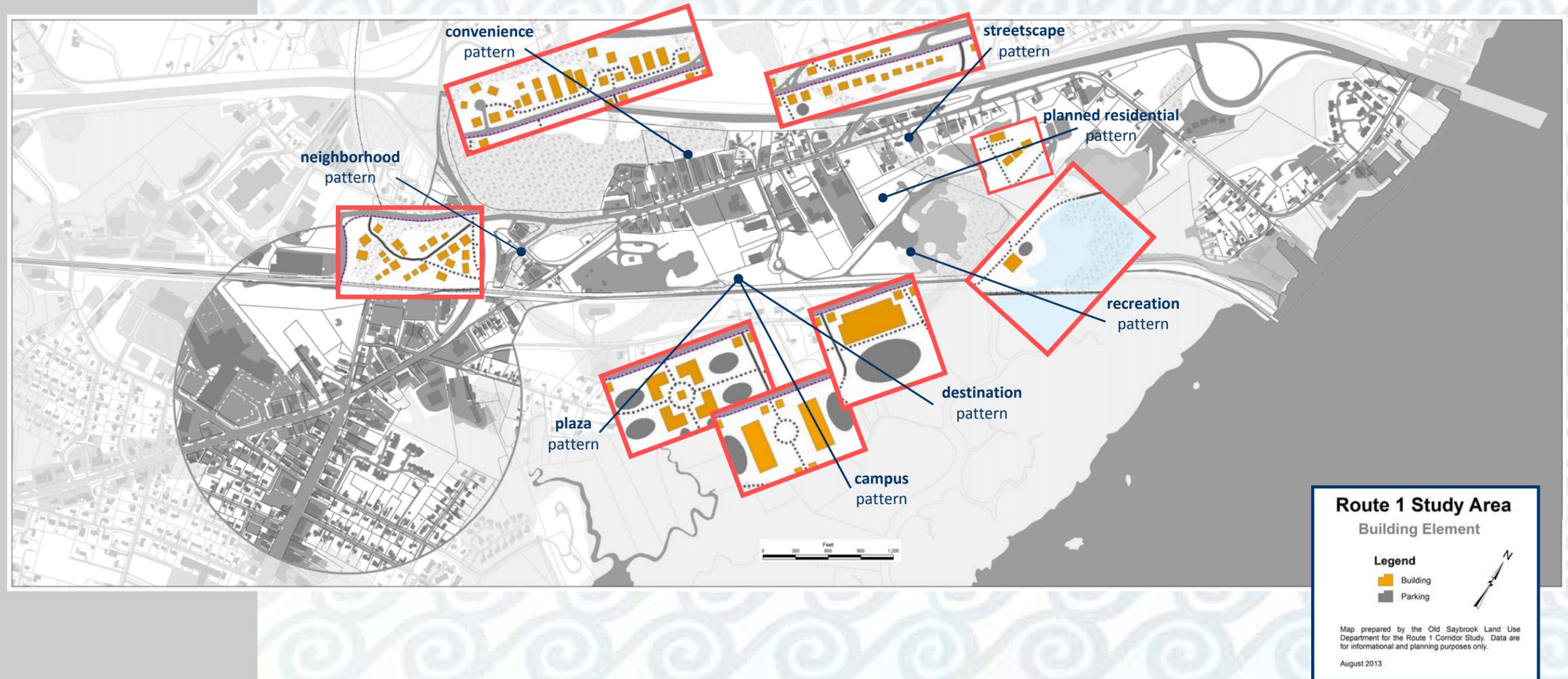
The opportunity to display individual public art presents itself on the lawns of businesses, visible to passing automobiles, and physically accessible to pedestrians or bicyclists. Perennial plantings should be in large beds that are low-maintenance and tolerant as much as possible to salt, sun, wind, drought, flood and sand. These beds should be coordinated to complement the shared drives to multiple businesses. Development can make simple nods towards traditional materials in new and unexpected ways in architecture, landscaping and civil structures – cobblestones are common in neighborhood markers and on building foundations, and as an attractive alternative to mulch. A common palette of street furniture will reinforce a “sense of place”. Making the I-95 interchange 67 full-service, possibly as a diamond-hybrid with graceful roundabouts would make a terrific *first impression* and an emphasis on safety by funneling auto, bike and pedestrian traffic. Similarly, renovating the railroad bridge with native materials and artisanal figures would create a symbolic entry to Old Saybrook and would make a *lasting impression*.

how do we get there?



- ✓ **AREA MASTER PLAN.** Create an area master plan to depict feasible uses and potential physical improvements for Mariner’s Way.
- ✗ **MEDIAN LANDSCAPING.** Create a center turn-lane with well-landscaped median treatments.
- ✗ **LANDSCAPE PALETTE.** Group native shade trees to reduce the heat sink of pavement in summer. Plant a variety of signature trees to accent the sameness of the boulevard, and shrubs appropriate to signify side streets.
- ✗ **VIEWSHEDS.** Create views from the corridor across natural settings, such as inland wetlands, ponds or purposeful “greens”.
- ✗ **STREETLAMPS.** Install lamp posts between the multi-purpose path and the street edge.
- ✗ **MARINA MURAL ON BRIDGE ABUTMENT.** Commission a muralist to create public art as a landmark on the wall of the I-95 overpass abutment; carry aesthetic theme to Ferry Point Marina District.
- ✗ **NEIGHBORHOOD MARKERS.** Place neighborhood monuments or markers within either side of a right-of-way of any side street transitioning from commercial to residential.
- ✗ **GATEWAY POCKET PARKS.** Acquire land for open space to rest/overlook/meet at both ends of the boulevard’s gateway to the Saybrook Junction Town Center (inland wetland on northeast corner) and the Ferry Point Marina District (tidal wetland at highway ramp or beside Ferry Dock).
- ✗ **SHORELINE GREENWAY TRAIL.** Make provisions for extension of the Shoreline Greenway Trail through Old Saybrook.

# Building Pattern



examples of scale and patterns of buildings re-built upon existing strengths of Mariner's Way

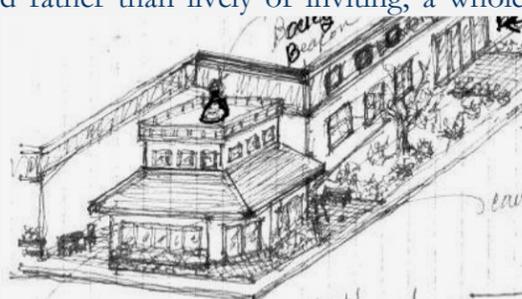
where are we?

Currently, Route 1 East has four areas indistinct by themselves but with a hint of a pattern on which to build. The design of and materials used in buildings on Route 1 East will be as difficult to overcome as their utilitarian placement throughout the entire corridor.

**MILL ROCK HOLLOW.** A glance to the south as one enters the corridor from “Pat's Corner”, site of the venerable, longstanding Pat’s Country Kitchen, reveals the pocket neighborhood of Mill Rock Road East (No.1) in a hollow created by the steep grade of Middlesex Turnpike as it climbs up over the railroad line. The intensity of the mix of uses makes gritty the few buildings of architectural merit. Nevertheless, there is a tree-lined grid of streets and a residential neighborhood feel.

**ALONG THE HIGHWAY.** South of Interstate 95, most of the industrial / commercial buildings along the north side of Route 1 East are built of split-faced rock and are well maintained. Some notable eyesores and rear lot residences are indicative of the low value of real estate in this area.

**ALONG THE RAILWAY.** Not so on the south side of Route 1, where the layout of sites focuses on excessive parking or in-your-face outdoor displays of merchandise, which looks disorganized rather than lively or inviting, a whole block of which is completely overgrown and abandoned. A legacy of Old Saybrook's manufacturing era remains as a view of “the ugly side” of these industrial buildings’ former operations by millions of rail passengers each year.



buildings setback from road in proportion to their scale

**FERRY POINT BEND.** Furthest west, from Springbrook Road easterly, there is a discernable pattern set up by a row of shops on the north and a row of houses on the south. Although punctuated by exceptions, the effect is that the Route 1 East corridor necks down in depth of lot, size of buildings and their relationships with the street as a second enclave of mixed uses, including tidy little brick, ranch houses, transitioning to Ferry Point.

where are we going?

As relates to the building patterns in this area of town, it is the Town’s policy...

...to build existing structures into more coherent patterns.

**NEIGHBORHOOD.** The hollow of Millrock Road East and its grid of streets should continue as a small-scale live-work pattern. Sidewalks should connect residents to the town center in which they live. For all uses, keep: small-scale building footprints, typical residential heights, facades of homes and businesses abutting the street to provide as much back yard as possible in this in-town locale, and building materials of wooden siding.

**CONVENIENCE.** Backing up to Interstate 95, reveal and reinforce the pattern of buildings on the north side of Mariner's Way. There are a few formerly residential buildings co-opted as commercial buildings and should remain to add charm at the street. A continuous aisle between front parking (or behind, where necessary or appropriate, but still continuous) would reduce curbcuts.

**PLAZA, CAMPUS or DESTINATION.** Mariner's Way is separate enough from other areas of Old Saybrook to push the envelope and offer limited large-scale development. Oriented toward the street, but stepped back in a regular pattern with parking behind and among taller buildings lends itself to a variety of layouts – a plaza, a campus or one large destination. Medium-scale corner buildings, surrounded by hardscaped plazas, should be a beacon of each side street or major shared drive.



“corner building” on each side of shared drive or private road

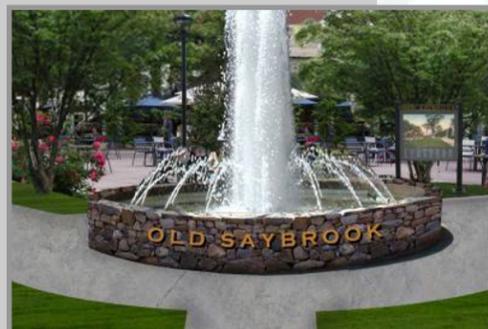
**STREETSCAPE.** From Springbrook Road around the corner to Ferry Road is ripe to reinforce a burgeoning streetscape of this current mix of homes and businesses. The small scale of buildings should continue as-is with orientation to the street and parking behind. Buildings might begin to pick up some of the shingle siding or cobbled foundations to transition to the Ferry Point Marina District.

how do we get there?

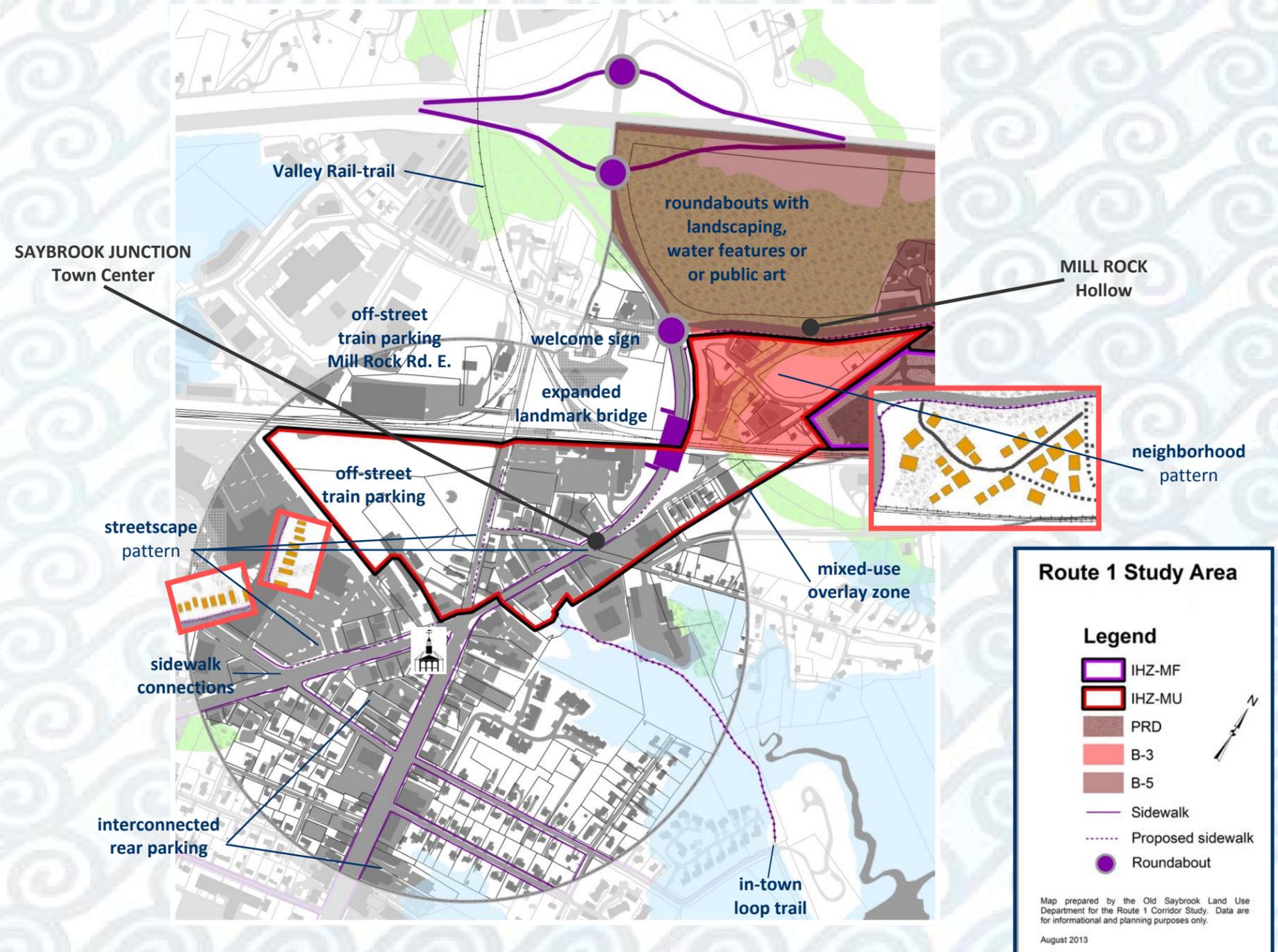


- ✓ **TOWNWIDE DESIGN STANDARDS.** Continue to use the Zoning Regulations townwide design standards for neighborhood pattern and building design.
- 🏠 **PEDESTRIAN NODE.** Expand the definition of "pedestrian node" in the Zoning Regulations to include those portions of the Saybrook Junction Town Center and Ferry Point areas that encapsulate the more automobile-oriented stretch of Mariner's Way.
- 📁 **PRE-DEVELOPMENT PACKET.** Present the Town’s regulations for Mariner’s Way as a pre-development know-how packet for designers and developers, including a palette of streetscape materials and furniture (even bus shelters).
- ✂️ **SIGNATURE SIGNAGE SCHEME.** Incentivize compliance with a very simple scheme of a signature shade of color for architectural features (awnings, porch roof, window trim, etc.) but especially the signage color and a particular set of fonts and sizes as a trick to pulling together the diverse materials used among the existing buildings in the corridor.
- 🏠 **PEDESTRIAN PLAZA.** Use plazas or courtyards to provide pedestrian connectivity between buildings.
- 🔧 **FAÇADE FIX-UP PROGRAM.** Grant funds or other incentives to owners of existing buildings that degrade the visual quality of the streetscape to upgrade the appearance of the exterior of the building.

# transition to Town Center



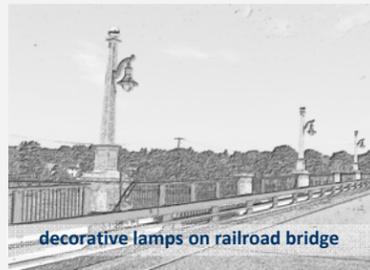
existing conditions of Saybrook Junction Town Center with infill development to reinforce the street wall



where are we?

Anchoring the west side of Route 1 East, the traditional layout of Saybrook Junction Town Center struggles to protect pedestrians from automobiles.

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS.** Access to Old Saybrook’s town center is primarily from the north. The stretch of combined Routes 1 & 154 paints two very different impressions of Old Saybrook. The first ¼-mile from “Pat’s Corner” (where Middlesex Turnpike first coincides with Route 1 East) southerly to the railroad bridge is an ignominious arrival to one of the most picturesque of New England towns. The lack of distinctive wayfinding signage is confusing to all newcomers and gives no indication as to where they might find various shore points, business districts, or even the train station. The first whiff of charm appears at the crest of the bridge. From there, the view discloses a slightly walkable ¼-mile of streets radiating from the junction of Main Street and Route 1. Yet, this Route 1 portion of the town center is still missing the substance necessary to make a true streetscape – density of development that is too scattered to make on-foot shopping convenient; sidewalks are discontinuous, constricted, or poorly maintained; unsafe and unfriendly crosswalks making major pedestrian intersections dangerous; sporadic street trees. All of these issues indicate a need for appealing configurations of infill development and traffic flow.



**GREAT FRAMEWORK.** The framework for placemaking exists along Route 1/154. Many buildings set up to the streetline with parking behind promote walking. Future development can replicate this pattern to strengthen the street-side activity, especially with “permeable” first floor businesses – retail, restaurants or services. The continuous facade will draw eyes down the street toward the Chamber of Commerce information booth, which terminates the vista of the town center.

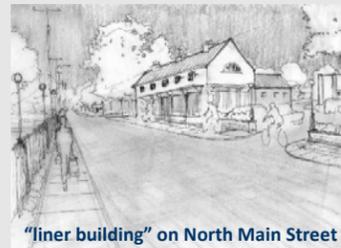


where are we going?

Transitioning from this area of town to the town center, it is the Town’s policy...

**...to extend Saybrook Junction’s town center vitality to the Mill Rock Hollow neighborhood.**

Challenges to creating a visual gateway into the town center, as well as extending Main Street’s walkability along Route 1/154 are multi-faceted: inland wetlands and narrow “pinch points” constrain the right-of-way; the height and proximity of the railroad overpass bridge makes very steep the grade of each road’s approach to the intersection at Pat’s Corner; and queued traffic backing-up into failing intersections blocks automobile turns. In recent years, the Town has acknowledged that residences are necessary to support transit-oriented development and changed its long-held policy of prohibiting residences above businesses. Redevelopment can now include a mix of uses as long as the Town stays vigilant in championing the pedestrian environment. Development must avoid curb cuts, drive-thrus, off-street parking lots, empty lots, or anything set back far from the street such as conventional shopping centers. Similarly, the business community must support how the built environment affects “vitality” by minimizing windowless facades, mirrored windows, or tenantless spaces absent of shops or restaurants.



Old Saybrook’s town center is already fortunate to have its Main Street separate from, but intersecting with, Route 1. While the business community has always differentiated Saybrook Junction Town Center from other nodes of activity along Route 1 in Old Saybrook, the practice of “branding” would make Route 1/154 a place recognizable as a cohesive place. Regular retail events are a predictable draw, but there is opportunity in the occasional dark storefront as a venue for “pop-up retail” to keep relevant interest in town center.

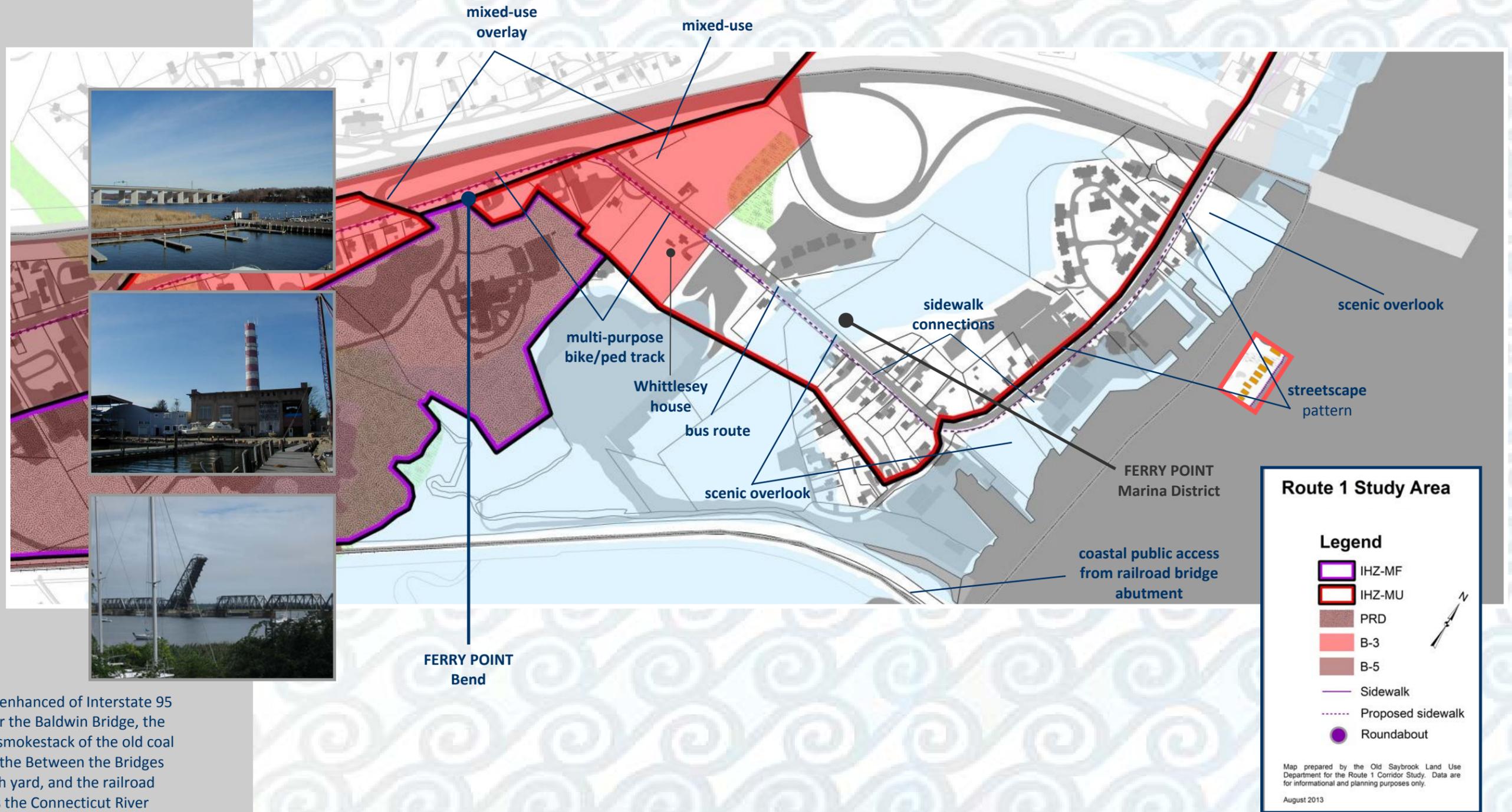


how do we get there?



- ✘ **SAYBROOK JCT. PARKING LOT (NO. MAIN ST.).** Create a parking lot accessible to the train station.
- ✘ **SAYBROOK JCT. PARKING LOT (MILL ROCK RD. E.).** Acquire property immediately north of the tracks for train parking; construct stairs from the lot to an expanded, pedestrian friendly bridge.
- ✘ **GATEWAY ROUNDABOUT.** Analyze the feasibility of a traffic-calming roundabout at the I-95 exit 67 interchange or the Route 1/154 interchange at Mill Rock Road East with aesthetic treatment (e.g. ornamental landscaping, public art, etc.).
- ✘ **EXPANDED LANDMARK BRIDGE.** Widen the railroad overpass to signify the entrance into Saybrook Junction Town Center from Mariner’s Way or Route 154 north with dedicated bike lanes on either side of Route 1/154, perhaps with a cantilevered structure.
- ✘ **VALLEY RAILS-TRAIL.** Convert unused portions of Valley Railroad State Park as a regional bikeway.
- ✘ **BRAND “SAYBROOK JUNCTION TOWN CENTER”.** Create loyalty among people and business.
- ✘ **SAYBROOK JUNCTION INCENTIVE HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS.** Apply the IHZ with subzones (mixed-use, single-, two-, or multi-family) appropriate to adjacent development.
- ✘ **SAYBROOK JUNCTION TOWN CENTER STREETScape.** Implement plans for streetscape on Route 1/154, Stage Road, and North Main Street, including left-turn lanes at Stage/River Roads.
- ✘ **LEFT-TURN AT STAGE ROAD.** Resignalize the light at Stage/River Roads to allow a left-turn phase.
- ✘ **IN-TOWN LOOP TRAIL.** Create a multiuse trail from the head of Main Street to Founders Memorial Park on South Cove for an in-town walking/biking loop.
- ✘ **INTERCONNECTED REAR PARKING.** Work with property owners along Main Street to connect rear parking lots per block.

# transition to Marina District



views should be enhanced of Interstate 95 as it passes over the Baldwin Bridge, the "Cat in the Hat" smokestack of the old coal power plant at the Between the Bridges Marina's south yard, and the railroad bridge across the Connecticut River

**where are we?**

*Its location on the Connecticut River, particularly its views from the bluff between the Interstate and railroad bridge, makes Ferry Point one of the best-known but under-celebrated neighborhoods in Old Saybrook; it anchors the west side of Route 1 East.*

**RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY.** Although many residences are legally non-conforming, the wide variety in the types (single-, two- and multi-family dwelling units), ownership (fee, condominium and rental), and demographics (affordable, age-restricted and group) of residences are all quite traditional in appearance to passers-by. Notable historic sites include the house of John Whittlesey, Jr. at 40 Ferry Road and the iconic red-and-white smoke stack of the old coal-fired power plant at 142 Ferry Road. The roadway itself – Ferry Road and portions of Essex Road – has no sidewalks or bike lanes, and is not currently on a bus route, although the neighborhood’s moderate density of the residences and businesses could support additional modes of transport. Public physical access to the water is limited to the State boat launch or the town’s commercial fishing pier, and planned residential developments have private marsh-side trails scheduled to run through them. The outmoded marine commercial and industrial buildings do not attract sophisticated business tenants, and there has been little effort to brand Ferry Point as a destination.



Home of John and Ruth (Dudlev) Whittlesev

**TRADITIONAL RIVERWAY SCENE.** The eight-town Connecticut River Gateway Conservation Zone encompasses Ferry Point as it runs from ridgetop-to-ridgetop on either side of the river. Commercial marinas and their amenities are the appropriate economic use of the limited coastal resources, and thus are the only developed area allowed to break the 100’ riparian buffer. Commercial uses in the surrounding neighborhood, including restaurants, support the mix of residential uses.

**where are we going?**

*Transitioning from this area of town to the marina district, it is the Town’s policy...*

**...to make a public match of infrastructure to fully-integrate multiple uses of the marina district in the Ferry Point neighborhood.**

The latest and largest-scale redevelopment of property in Ferry Point, “Marina Village”, is heralded as the jolt needed to make the place. It consists of 90 residential dwellings, a restaurant, a boat club, marine-related sales, boat storage and repair. While fully permitted, it is yet-unbuilt.

Meeting the potential for Ferry Point to function as a fully integrated mixed-use neighborhood is as straightforward as building on the existing patterns of conservation and development. There is room for formalizing roadside views of the Connecticut River from all properties – State-, Town- and privately-owned. A collective effort to re-establish native vegetation within the developed areas of the Connecticut River’s banks would enhance the traditional riverway scene. The Town should keep stride with private investment in the streetscape to connect sidewalks and complete the range of transportation options available to residents and employees of the marinas and other businesses. Renovations of existing buildings should reflect the local vernacular in materials (shingles and clapboard siding, cobble stonework, etc.) and new architecture should reflect the marine-nature of the setting. The built environment can then set the tone for branding Ferry Point Marine District as a destination of value.

Artistic rendering of the proposed “Marina Village” designed by Point One Architects as mixed use development on Ferry Road



**how do we get there?**

- ✓ **TOWN FERRY DOCK.** Complete renovation and reconfiguration of the Town-owned Ferry Dock.
- 🏠 **FERRY POINT AS PEDESTRIAN NODE.** Expand the Zoning Regulations definition of pedestrian node to include the marina district at Ferry Point.
- 🗣️ **BRAND THE “FERRY POINT MARINA DISTRICT”.** Create loyalty among people, resources, and business for Mariner’s Way by differentiating from the vision/mission/identity of other places in-town and elsewhere.
- ✂️ **FERRY POINT MARINA DISTRICT STREETScape.** Implement plans for streetscape improvements (sidewalks, street trees, etc.) at Ferry Point connecting with Mariner’s Way.
- ✂️ **SCENIC OVERLOOKS.** Construct neighborhood-scale overlooks open to the public with accommodations for an automobile to park.
- 🗣️ **BUS ROUTE.** Extend 9-Town Transit to Ferry Pt.
- ✂️ **FERRY POINT SIDEWALKS.** Construct sidewalks from the Ferry Crossing development as far around Ferry Point as the non-motorized ramp to the I-95 Baldwin Bridge.
- ✂️ **FERRY POINT BIKE LANE.** Transition from a separate multi-purpose bike/ped track on Mariner’s Way to a bike lane on Ferry Road that extends as far as the non-motorized ramp to the I-95 Baldwin Bridge.
- 🏠 **INCENTIVE HOUSING ZONE.** Continue to permit residential developments with at least 20% of the dwelling units deed-restricted as “affordable” at or below market rates of rent or purchase.
- 🗣️ **JOHN WHITTLESEY, JR., HOUSE.** Support the Historical Society in its preservation of the John Whittlesey House at 40 Ferry Road for use as a public facility demonstrating early American life.
- ✂️ **RAILROAD BRIDGE AS COASTAL PUBLIC ACCESS.** In conjunction with eventual replacement of the railroad bridge, convert the existing structure for public access to the River for viewing and fishing.

## Acknowledgements

*As with all plans, the Board of Selectmen must champion not only the vision but also the allocation of resources necessary to leverage opportunities, both offered and created, on an on-going basis. The Board's charge to the Committee is the beginning of its pledge to do so.*

To prepare for a tri-town Route 1 Corridor Plan to be undertaken by the Lower Connecticut River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (RiverMPO), the Board formed eight-member Committee in July 2012:

**David M. Shearer, Chairman**  
**Tony Lyons**  
**Barbara D'Agostino**  
**Kristen L. Roberts**  
**J. H. Torrance Downes**  
**Casey Constable**  
**Eileen D. Baker**  
**James D. Keating**

The Committee focused its study on developing a new vision for Old Saybrook's Route 1 East. This Report offers orientation to existing standards, recommendations to update long-held or to codify new policies, and guidance for implementation of physical improvements.

This Report is enriched by using some of the many drawings Barbara D'Agostino and Casey Constable sketched during meetings. Photographs are donations from resident Sally Perreten, stock images of the Old Saybrook Land Use Department, or works in the public domain.

In preparing this Plan, the Committee met with many people and acknowledges them as valuable resources with thanks for their time and added energy: Timothy A. Londregan, President, Londregan Commercial Real Estate Group; Robert C. Friedmann, Chairman, Zoning Commission; Kathleen Connolly, Chairman, BOS' ad hoc Bikeways Committee; L. Jean Davies, Deputy Director, Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments; David M. Royston, Esq., Dzialo, Pickett & Allen, P.C.; Marie McFarlin, Old Saybrook Historical Society; Joseph Comerford, Executive Director, Estuary Transit District; Kevin Geenty of the Geenty Group; Brian Judis and Skip Labarre of Marriott Corporation; and Mario DiLoreto of READCO, LLC.

The Committee engaged the services of Maura Cochran, CRE, SIOR, and Peter Holland, CRE, of Bartram & Cochran, Inc., national real estate consultants, for an expert opinion as to which businesses/industries would most likely thrive on Mariner's Way in the context of the rest of the town, region, State, etc., as well how the Town should go about securing it. This Report integrates that advice throughout.

The Committee considered the results of special session with a cross-section of students from the Old Saybrook High School lead by Gretchen Bushnell, Chairman, Advisory Board for Healthy Community/Healthy Youth. The Committee thanks: Sean McAvoy, Drew Pandiani, Cori Reid, Ali Gowrie, Alex Bacry, Ian McKay, Bobby Endrizzi, Michael Barrett, Nick DuBord, Brendan McElhone, Katie Stangel, and Suraj Khosla. This Report integrates that advice throughout.

The Committee is grateful for staff assistance from: Joanne Rynecki, Project Clerk; Christina M. Costa, Zoning Enforcement Officer; Sandy Prisloe, Environmental Planner; and Christine Nelson, Director, Old Saybrook Land Use Department.

**Mariner's Way—Gateway to Connecticut River Recreation: A Vision to improve Route 1 East from Saybrook Junction Town Center to the Ferry Point Marina District**

**section of the Old Saybrook Plan of Conservation & Development**

**adopted: July 16, 2014**  
**effective: August 1, 2014**

## Sources

*In preparing this plan, the Committee referenced the data and recommendations of the following resources:*

**CONCEPT PLAN SPENCER PLAIN GATEWAY.** Prepared by TPA Design Group for the Old Saybrook Land Use Department. June 2011.

**DESIGN PROSPECTIVE: THE MARCH 2006 CONNECTICUT MAYORS' INSTITUTE ON COMMUNITY DESIGN.** Prepared by Regional Plan Association. March 1, 2006.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES PLAN.** Prepared by Mullin & Associates for the Old Saybrook Economic Development Commission. 2002.

**FEASIBILITY STUDY: I-95 CORRIDOR (BRANFORD TO RHODE ISLAND).** Prepared by Clough Harbor & Associates LLP for The Connecticut Department of Transportation. February 2004.

**FERRY POINT PLANNING CONCEPTS. PLANIMETRICS.** Prepared by Planimetrics in association with Yankee Planning group and Mark Westa, AICP for the Old Saybrook Land Use Department. June 30, 2005.

**FERRY POINT ADDITIONAL PLANNING CONCEPTS.** Prepared by Planimetrics in association with site planner Gary Hath for the Old Saybrook Land Use Department. September 30, 2005.

**FINAL REPORT.** Prepared by the State Vegetation Management Task Force for the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection. August 28, 2012.

**IMPROVEMENTS TO NORTH MAIN STREET: SITE PLAN.** Prepared by Nathan L. Jacobson & Associates, Inc. for the Old Saybrook Board of Selectmen. January 19, 2012.

**MARKET ANALYSIS BOSTON POST ROAD EAST.** Prepared by Bartram & Cochran for the Old Saybrook Board of Selectmen. April 5, 2013.

**PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT.** Prepared by the Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency and the Old Saybrook Land Use Department for the Old Saybrook Planning Commission. Adopted at Town Meeting February 15, 2006.

**ROUTE 1 STUDY.** Prepared by the Yale Urban Design Workshop for the Old Saybrook Board of Selectmen. December 2005.

**SIDEWALK PLAN.** Prepared by the Old Saybrook Land Use Department for the Old Saybrook Planning Commission; adopted by the Old Saybrook Board of Selectmen. April 6, 2006.

**ZONING MAP.** Prepared by the Old Saybrook Land Use Department for the Old Saybrook Zoning Commission; adopted by the Old Saybrook Zoning Commission. Effective April 2009.

**ZONING REGULATIONS.** Prepared by the Old Saybrook Land Use Department for the Old Saybrook Zoning Commission; adopted by the Old Saybrook Zoning Commission. Effective June 3, 2013.