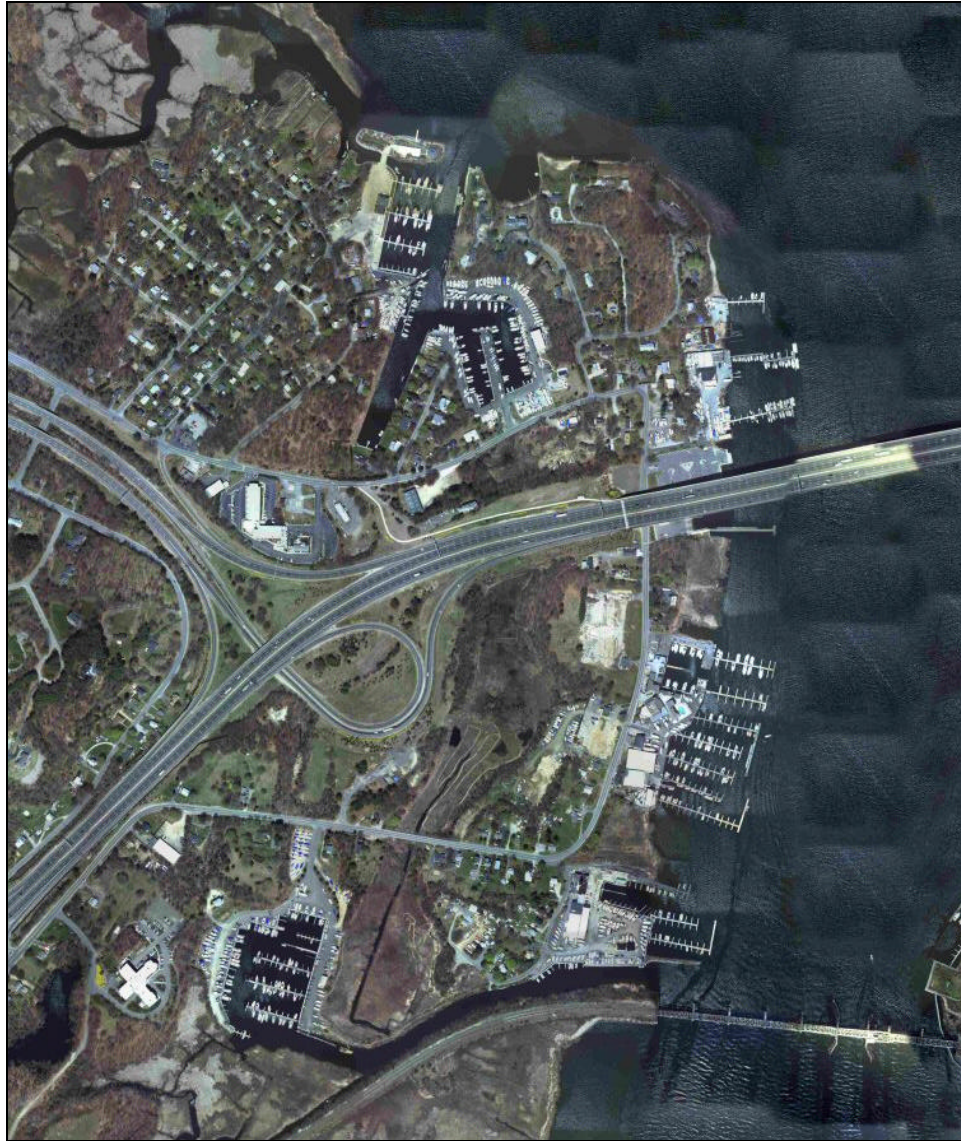


POTENTIAL PLANNING CONCEPTS

Ferry Point Area, Old Saybrook



Planimetrics

in association with

**Daniel Rothenberg, Yankee Planning Group
Mark Westa AICP, Site Planner**

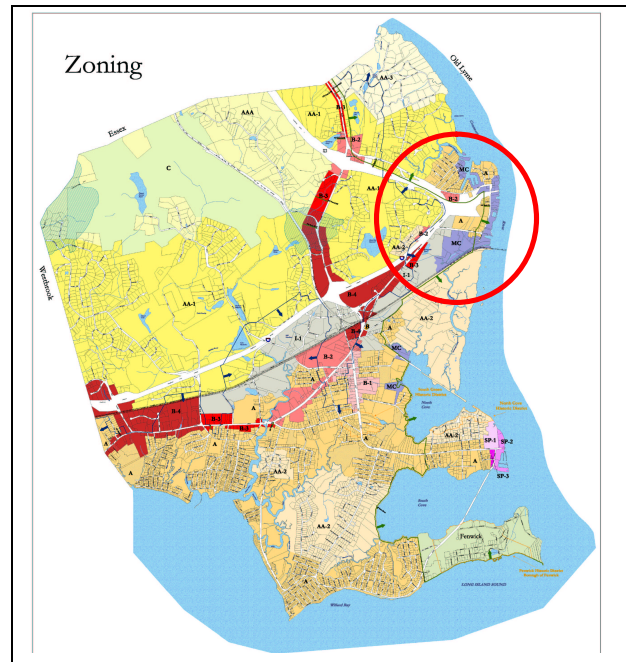
Overview

The Ferry Point area of Old Saybrook is located along the Connecticut River in the area of the Baldwin Bridge (I-95).

The area is known as Ferry Point since ferry service was established here, early in Old Saybrook's history, at this narrow place close to the mouth of the Connecticut River.

At the present time, the Ferry Point area contains a variety of land uses:

- single family residential homes
- active adult housing
- hotel / lodging facility
- marina / boatyards
- restaurants
- minor commercial uses
- public boat launches
- municipal pier



Over the years, the Ferry Point area has experienced a variety of changes in land uses.

Marina / boatyard uses (boat slips, storage, and maintenance) were established in the 1970s as the demand for boating facilities grew along the Connecticut shoreline. The demand for these facilities has been fairly strong.

Restaurant and bar facilities have been established several times in the Ferry Point area but have not always been successful. This might be due to the lack of a critical mass of activity or a lack of visibility or what is perceived to be a lack of convenient access. In any event, such facilities have tended to come and go and some have been of such scale or type to be perceived as being incompatible with the location and the community.

Retail and office facilities have not fared well in this general area. A lodging facility in the area has experienced changes in franchises (Holiday Inn to Comfort Inn) and has not always been successful. Again, this might be due to the lack of a critical mass of activity or a lack of visibility or convenient access.

Residential uses have been fairly constant in the area. In recent years, a nursing home, which had been located in the area, was demolished and is being replaced by an active adult residential community.

Opportunity Area Identified

The Town has taken note of these land use changes and changing character and pondered the overall potential of the Ferry Point area. For some time, it appears that the Town has identified the Ferry Point area as an opportunity area for further evaluation and consideration

Some of the language from the Plan Old Saybrook Plan of Conservation and Development (2003) follows:

Page	Theme	Text
51	Water Resources	... Ferry Point has huge potential for re-development as a vibrant and exciting destination for boaters, tourists, and residents alike by balancing water-dependent uses and multi-uses that support those water activities ...
51	Water Resources	... Besides boating facilities, the addition of shops, restaurants, housing, entertainment, and public transportation to the town center would greatly enhance the enjoyment and economic growth of the (Ferry Point) area ...
53	Water Resources	... The Town is progressively beginning to make better use of its proximity to such (water) resources by ... eventual redevelopment of Ferry Point. Redevelopment and revitalization needs to take place to attract tourists while maintaining a balance between a healthy economy, protection of water resources and wildlife habitat, and traffic flow. The Town should increase public access without degrading water quality, destroying views, and impinging on residents and property rights. A good focal point for development is the marinas and docking areas to attract more transient boaters ...
6	Economic Development	... future development should be consistent with small town character and the unique natural resources associated with the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound ...
7	Economic Development	... residents support marine commercial development and recreational opportunities as a class of business that is in character with Old Saybrook's heritage and future ...
7-8	Economic Development	... commercial development that is consistent with marine policies and goals that are a part of the 1983 Municipal Coastal Plan should be encouraged ...
8	Economic Development	Economic Activity Priorities 1. Local services for year-round and seasonal residents. 2. Tourism and ... resource-related ... businesses 3. Shore resort features ... 4. Light industrial ... 5. Regional services ...

Workshop Overview

In June 2005, several people with interests in property in the Ferry Point area approached the Town to explore the possible future potential in this area.

The Town indicated that, if the property owners would fund the exercise, the Town would convene a "Visioning Workshop" regarding the area of Ferry Point between the Baldwin Bridge and the railroad bridge. The property owners agreed.

The purpose of the workshop was to:

- discuss current conditions and potential opportunities in the Ferry Point area,
- explore alternative visions for the Ferry Point area, and
- help develop a schematic concept for this area reflecting a collaborative vision of a well-designed waterfront neighborhood.

The workshop was held on the evening of Thursday June 30th at the Pasbeshauke Pavilion at Saybrook Point.

The workshop meeting was sponsored by a variety of Town boards and commissions and approximately 30 people attended. There were representatives from the Board of Selectmen, Zoning Commission, Planning Commission, Architectural Review Board, Harbor Management Commission, Economic Development Commission, and other boards. In addition, property owners and residents from the Ferry Point area attended the meeting.

Other attendees included:

Christine Nelson	Old Saybrook's Director of Land Use
Mark Branse	Old Saybrook's Land Use Attorney
Linda Krause	Executive Director, CRERPA
Joan Hoelzel	CTDEP-OLISP

This meeting, which was hosted by the Town of Old Saybrook, was facilitated by:

- Glenn Chalder AICP of Planimetrics (a land use consulting firm based in Avon),
- Mark Westa AICP, a site planner, and
- Dan Rothenberg, a coastal area specialist.

These consultants were working for the Town of Old Saybrook. Their fees were paid by the property owners.

Workshop Discussion

The specific comments and impressions generated from the meeting are presented below:

1. **Maintain the marine ambience** - people indicated that they liked the marina aspect, the working waterfront, the water, the view, etc. Overall, the site may also be uniquely well suited for marina and boatyard uses when considering existing deepwater access as well as the historic dredging, backfilling, bulkheads and associated impacts that have taken place (resulting in an environment that appears to be highly altered, but stable).
2. **Enhance public access** - there are publicly-owned boating facilities in the area (state boat launch, town dock), and people felt this public access and uses in the area could be more connected. Enhanced public access could also support other uses which might be appropriate in this area.
3. **Make the area a "destination"** - people felt this area could be developable into a mixed-use destination without impacting the river. New uses might work best when they complement and enhance existing marine uses (for example, restaurants can serve local boaters, transient boaters, and the general public), especially if they can enhance public access and use by non-boaters. Make the area a place to visit (possibly for multiple use - e.g., eat-at restaurant, shop, crab off dock, etc.). Bring people to the site from the water by improving transient access facilities, places to eat, new moorings.
4. **Make the area successful year round** - The uses in this area are and could be “people importers” to Old Saybrook and the Town should try to find ways to capitalize on this. Old Saybrook still has a seasonal population that makes it harder for businesses. People concerned some businesses might have a hard time making a go of it because history has shown that some have failed here in the past. People want the area to be more successful but not too successful if that would change the character of the area.
5. **Build on natural assets** - the area has some significant natural assets that present potential opportunities (relatively unspoiled view across the river, water access, water views, train views).
6. **Build on developed assets** - leave some of the key existing elements (like the working marina) in place but consider pulling the other parts together with a focus on the water and the street. Demonstrate how assets in the area can be kept in place while some new ideas are added and the overall character improved.
7. **Connect to downtown** - improve connection of this area to the center of town by providing for some type of transportation to the downtown (trolley, bus, bike rental).
8. **Capitalize on strengths** - some of the strengths of the area include water access, deep water, accessibility to and from I-95, flat areas, developability, public access, the reputation of the Connecticut River, dock availability, scenic views
9. **Address weaknesses** - some of the weaknesses of the area include its location is perceived as “an invisible cul-de-sac”, the sense of being somewhat disconnected from the transportation system, lack of sewage infrastructure, lack of boat charters, the I-95 and railroad bridges

Potential Concept #1

Based on the discussion at the meeting, Mark Westa prepared a conceptual sketch for the area “between the bridges” (north of the railroad bridge and south of the I-95 bridge).



Enhanced Marine Elements

- Extend public/pedestrian access out on docks. Possibly these areas could serve as docking for boaters who just want to come and shop or eat.
- The working marinas would stay pretty much as is (or they could be connected).

New Development Programs

- A new mixed-use development could replace the current buildings and extend out over the current boat basin. The development would consist of smaller scale, “New England” structures, with a strong presence on the street and the water. Parking would be interior to this area (~ 75 spaces) and along the north edge (~ 50 spaces). Possible additional on-street parking if needed.
- Housing could be located in the lot across the street in a fairly dense traditional design with a through road connecting back to Ferry Road.
- Possible future development of Power Plant building at south marina

Strong Pedestrian Elements

- Pedestrian connections along street and along waterfront.
- Several pedestrian crossings and pedestrian connections between street and waterfront.
- Possible pedestrian connection / boardwalk / park in the area between north and south marinas.

Other Elements

- No modifications shown to location or configuration of Town Dock.
- Some boat storage may need to be relocated.

Potential Concept #2

Mark Westa also prepared another conceptual sketch for the same area based on a different application of the ideas generated place at the meeting,



New Development Programs

- A new mixed-use development could replace the current buildings on an expanded platform with a strong orientation and focus to the water and the street. It would consist of a larger scale structure, still with a “New England” character. Parking reconstructed could be on two levels (not really shown in plan but a separate entrance could lead to a lower level) Two levels would ~ 150 cars. Possible additional on-street parking if needed.
- Housing across the street have shared courts with a through road.
- Marina is revised with new commercial face across from other commercial, a new access and revision of storage work areas to separate from commercial areas.
- Possible future development of Power Plant building at south marina
- The working marinas would stay pretty much as is (or they could be connected).

Strong Pedestrian Elements

- Pedestrian connections along street and several pedestrian crossings.
- Pedestrian access down to water around reconstructed mixed-use development
- Possible pedestrian connection / boardwalk / park in the area between north and south marinas (with potential expansion of park / pier / wharf into Connecticut River with boat tie-ups).

Other Elements

- No modifications shown to location or configuration of Town Dock.
- Some boat storage may need to be relocated.

Next Steps

Participants at the meeting appeared somewhat timid about discussing more specific new ideas for the Ferry Point area. This is not unusual.

It can be hard to get people talking about new ideas or new directions, especially at the first meeting where people are unsure of what to expect. People can be reluctant to express new ideas (even good ones) if they have not been thought out beforehand or if those ideas might be quickly criticized or dismissed by someone else at the meeting. People also get confused about the distinction between idea generation and group consensus and want time to reflect on ideas that have been expressed.

In addition, most people are better at reacting to a specific proposal than conceptualizing something "from scratch". Some people may have a hard time envisioning an area as something different and something better.

On the other hand, there are many examples of people leaving meetings such as the workshop and later having additional ideas that could promote further discussion and consensus.

For this reason, the consulting team recommends that the Town of Old Saybrook consider follow-up meetings to discuss the potential directions for the Ferry Point area in more detail.

As more ideas are generated and discussed, it is hoped that a stronger sense of community consensus might emerge.

Participants may need to be reminded that change will occur in the Ferry Point area whether or not there is any community consensus on future directions. Such additional future meetings would be an opportunity to learn about and understand the assets of the area and as an opportunity to direct and guide possible future changes in positive ways.

Such future meetings can be organized and conducted by the Town itself or can involve outside assistance. Such assistance might come from the regional planning agency (CRERPA) and/or from such organizations as the Yale Urban Design Workshop. Of course, the consulting team would be pleased to assist further, if desired.

If considered necessary or desirable, three-dimensional computer modeling software is available that can help participants visualize and refine ideas for the Ferry Point area. Please feel free to contact Planimetrics for additional information on this software (CommunityViz).



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