
Cultural & Historical Resources



ISSUES FOR THE NEXT DECADE

Within this Plan's context of preserving and enhancing Old Saybrook's small town, New England character, cultural and historical resources occupy a primary role in the Goals, Policies, Programs, and Standards, which further this core concept. These valuable resources include the many cultural and historic landmarks in the town, the remaining open land that the town has begun to protect in perpetuity through acquisition and conservation easements, and the Architectural Review Board's stewardship of the overall aesthetic appearance of the town's future development. Stewardship of the town's cultural and historical resources and support of future cultural and artistic opportunities will go a long way toward protecting and enhancing what it is we love about Old Saybrook.

As in 1990, the core issue of the Plan of Conservation & Development is reflected in Old Saybrook's ongoing efforts to face the question of how to retain its small town, New England character, including its distinctive cultural and historic past and resources, while still managing to continue as a viable commercial center. Historic preservation is important to any town that wishes to provide an attractive and interesting place, in which its citizens may live, as well as attract tourists and businesses to support its economy. In the spirit of the 1990

Plan, Old Saybrook needs to continue to retain, restore, and readapt historic properties. This helps to define its character and enables the Town to pass on a source of community pride.

Cultural and Historic Sites

Old Saybrook was founded in 1635, one of the earliest settlements in Connecticut. The community has a wealth of historic buildings and cultural resources worthy of preservation. Since 1990, the increasingly important issue of character preservation has been elevated to priority status.

Recent initiatives have resulted from public debates over the preservation of the Main Street School and the concern over a private developer's demolition of The Castle at Cornfield Point and extensive development of the site. Town referendum and zone changes have protected both buildings and sites from complete transformation thus far. In 1997, the Old Saybrook Historic Society raised the funds to construct a new archive building on Main Street. These efforts attest to the recognition of these historical and cultural resources as being an important part of the fabric of the town.

DESIGNATIONS SINCE ADOPTION OF THE 1990 PLAN

The State and National Registries of Historic Sites have awarded designation to several properties since June of 1990. New properties include:

National Historic Register

Railroad Switching Station,
at Ft. Saybrook Monument Park May 1992

State Historic Register

Old Saybrook Main Street School June 1998
George W. Beach House, "The Castle"
at Cornfield Point March 1999

PLANNING FOR THE NEXT DECADE

Goals

- Preserve unique historical resources that help to focus attention on Old Saybrook's historic past.
- Sustain present commercial economic viability without detriment to the town's historic structures and small town New England character.
- Continue to promote the historical and cultural resources of the community and to build support for local historic preservation efforts.
- Maintain the flavor and character of the Town by monitoring development and encouraging developers to incorporate design features compatible with New England style architecture into their plans.

Policies

- Continue to encourage the preservation and registration of historic buildings in the commercial areas of town through adaptive reuse, rather than demolition or transfer of the structure.
- Encourage preservation of structures important to the character of the town by establishing a review procedure before demolition or removal of structures.
- Continue to assure that development activity involving historic sites incorporates design and landscaping features in keeping with the historic character of the site.
- Continue to provide Town support for promotion of its cultural history. Whenever possible, use historic sites for community events.
- Consider Town acquisition of private historic structures to prevent inappropriate alteration or demolition.
- Encourage property owners adjacent to sites important to the cultural history of Old Saybrook to develop in a manner that is complementary rather than detrimental to the character of the site.
- Encourage developers to build structures that are consistent with the small-town New England character and style of architecture.

- Initiate and support activities that educate the public on the importance of aesthetics, artifacts, local history, and culture, and their impact on quality of life in Old Saybrook, thereby cultivating pride and the desire to protect our historical and architectural heritage.

Municipal Improvements, Programs, and Standards

The Plan recommends implementation of the following actions with priorities, resources and responsibilities coordinated among the appropriate Town agencies, including the Architectural Review Board (ARB), Board of Selectmen (BOS), Conservation Commission (CC), Economic Development Commission (EDC), Harbor Management Commission (HMC), Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission (IWWC), North Cove Historic District Commission (NCHDC), Planning Commission (PC), Parks & Recreation Commission (PRC), Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA), Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), and Zoning Commission (ZC).

- DEMOLITION DELAY ORDINANCE.** Develop a demolition delay ordinance that would require review of proposed demolition of historic structures and structures important to the character of Old Saybrook.
- ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE PLANS.** Identify areas of potential archaeological significance and require a survey of historic and prehistoric resources as part of the development review process for such sites.
- HISTORIC SITE PLANS.** Develop standards to promote the preservation and enhancement of historic structures and structures important to the character of Old Saybrook. Standards should encourage site design which enhances the character of historic sites, including appropriate buffering, setbacks, scale, landscaping, location of parking and access, lighting and signage.
- HISTORIC VIEWSHED EASEMENTS.** Support easements in order to protect the view of historic sites and structures.
- COMPATIBILITY STANDARDS.** Develop standards for new construction in order to encourage more of an architectural blend and compatibility with existing style and character of the Town.

| | ARB | BOS | CC | EDC | HMC | IWWC | NCHDC | PC | PRC | WPCA | ZBA | ZC |
|--|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|------|-------|----|-----|------|-----|----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DEMOLITION DELAY ORDINANCE. | ● | | | ● | | | ● | | | | ● | ● |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE PLANS. | ● | | ● | | | | | ● | | | | ● |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HISTORIC SITE PLANS. | ● | | | ● | | | ● | | | | | ● |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HISTORIC VIEWSHED EASEMENTS. | ● | | ● | | ● | | ● | ● | | | ● | ● |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COMPATIBILITY STANDARDS. | ● | | | | | | ● | | | | | ● |