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Municipal Land Needs
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Abstract

This ordinance provides a comprehensive approach to land acquisition. The community looks at the needs of the town in terms of open space protection, passive recreation, active recreation, and municipal facilities to help plan for the future.

Resource

Plan For Open Space And Municipal Land Needs

Prepared for the Town of Guilford

by the

Guilford Land Acquisition Committee

Letter from the First Selectman

The effort put forth in this plan is but a true testimony to the character of and the dedication of the citizens of Guilford for the citizens of Guilford. Backed by a rich heritage unique to our town, this plan provides for Guilford's future, a future that will have been shaped by a heritage that is ours to determine, as it was shaped for us by the likes of Henry Whitfield and the early settlers of Guilford.

This plan makes logical the banking of lands to control future growth, residential and commercial. It will provide for future school, recreational facilities, and other town land needs. Concurrently it will identify areas of our town that we, as stewards of the town, realize the importance of to maintain Guilford's integrity. Perhaps this effort can best be described as a tribute to our past and an incubator for the future of a place we hold so dear, Guilford.

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Acknowledgments

The Plan for Open Space and Municipal Land Needs has been the result of input from literally hundreds of volunteers and Town employees who represent all facets of life in Guilford. Without their input the Land Acquisition Committee could not have produced this document. This plan is the work of the residents of Guilford; no outside consultants were hired. It is a plan that truly reflects the needs, wishes and desires of Guilford's citizens to protect the essence of our town while providing for our growth into the twenty-first century.

Many people and organizations have contributed to this planning document and their help is greatly appreciated. In particular, the Land Acquisition Committee would like to thank Carolie Evans for her invaluable advice in the planning process and her wise guidance in land protection for the Town of Guilford. The Committee would like to recognize the many years of volunteer service Ralph Brown gave this community. Ralph passed away during the period the Committee was working on this plan. His work was an important part of this plan for the future.

The members of the Land Acquisition Committee who assisted with this plan are:

Samuel Bartlett, First Selectman
Leslie Kane, Chairperson
Keith Bishop, Board of Education
Ralph Brown, Planning and Zoning Commission
Kurt Burkle, Parks and Recreation Commission
Paul Chello, Economic Development Commission
Robert Eber, Conservation Commission
Shirley Girioni, Scenic Roads Advisory Board
Hank Graver, Water Pollution Control Authority
Robert Hartmann, Board of Finance
Toini Jaffe, Guilford Land Conservation Trust
George Kral, Town Planner
Ned Kreidel, Inland Wetlands Commission
Deborah Tobin, Guilford Preservation Alliance

Executive Summary

Goals

The Plan for Open Space and Municipal Land Needs, in conjunction with the Conservation Commission's Natural Resources Inventory, will help the Guilford Planning and Zoning Commission in its planning goals for the future of Guilford. The areas that are focused on and detailed in this plan can be stressed and referenced in the Town Plan of Conservation and Development. In addition, this plan will help the Town of Guilford prioritize properties that may come up for sale as to whether they fit into the Town's long-term goals.

The goals of this plan are threefold:

1. To develop a strategy for identifying the types of land the town will need in the future, both for open space and municipal use as defined on page 12.
2. To demonstrate how those lands can be purchased.
3. To encourage the continued development of a geographic information system (GIS) and natural resource inventory (NRI) with biophysical and social data for Guilford. The purpose is to identify all types of lands that are critical to preserving the natural habitats, scenic vistas, clean water, and passive recreational areas that will allow future generations to remain in touch with and experience the beauty and wonder of the natural world that we now enjoy as residents of Guilford.

Open Space

"Open Space" is a term that can describe many different types of land. The guidelines and objectives for these different types of open space are different. This document further refines the definition of open space into low, moderate, and possible high impact use. See Definitions on page 14.

The Process of Planning

A "Land Evaluation Matrix" serves as a guide in the selection of target parcels for town acquisition. (See Appendix 1.)

Planning for Guilford's open space and municipal land needs is an ongoing process. The intention of this document is to delineate trends, establish guidelines, and suggest further actions that will contribute to the implementation of a democratic, natural resource based land use policy. Using GIS technology, maps can be made that will show areas of conservation interest and areas for increased future development. Through the use of the Evaluation Matrix and GIS, properties will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis for municipal purchase, for protection by other means, or for no action.

Follow-Up

A guideline for planning for Guilford's open space and municipal land needs is vital if we are to preserve the quality of life and natural beauty of our town. Equally important are the regulations, ordinances, institutional structures, and resources necessary to follow through and implement natural resource based land use. To this end, we have recommended a number of specific actions that will accomplish the objectives set forth in this document in the section titled "Acquiring and Conserving Land."

The Plan for Open Space and Municipal Lands is specifically referenced in the Plan of Conservation and Development. The document is also meant to be used by Guilford's land use commissions and Board of Selectmen when considering town needs and open space land purchases. It is a working document, which should be revised on an as needed-basis.

Introduction

History of the Land Acquisition Committee

The 1964 *Conservation Plan for Guilford, Connecticut* was an important early planning document for Guilford and was, in fact, an historic open space plan for the town. The Plan's main concepts for protection of open space and community character have been used consistently throughout Guilford's unprecedented growth spurt in the intervening 35 years. Indeed one can see the primary points of the 1964 plan in the 1978 *Comprehensive Plan of Development and Conservation*.

- ❑ The same areas are targeted for protection.
- ❑ The same goals are mentioned today in our community surveys.
- ❑ And perhaps most importantly, many of the areas identified for conservation in 1964 have been protected for the enjoyment of Guilford's residents.

We must continue to plan for open space and municipal needs, and take action in a timely manner to plan and protect Guilford's future.

This document is a result of the Board of Selectmen's vision for the town to begin to play an active and important role in planning for Guilford's future by not just guiding development through the *Plan of Development and Conservation*, but also by actively purchasing land for open space and planning for future potential needs of the town. Formed as a town committee in 1997, the charge of the Land Acquisition Committee is to: *"Determine and recommend to the Board of Selectmen the feasibility of acquiring land, development rights, and conservation easements; to prioritize properties for acquisition by the Town of Guilford; to analyze Town properties as to their present use or future use or disposal."*

In other words, the charge is to look at what lands are left and try to determine what the town of Guilford should purchase for future planning purposes. In that light, the Land Acquisition Committee is a broad based committee which brings to the table views from all the boards, commissions and non-profits in town that have a need for land use in order to determine what lands the town may need for facilities or desire for open space in the future.

The Land Acquisition Committee thus includes representation from an array of boards, commissions and non-profits, each of which has played a large role in Guilford's past and will continue to have a role in land use in Guilford's future.

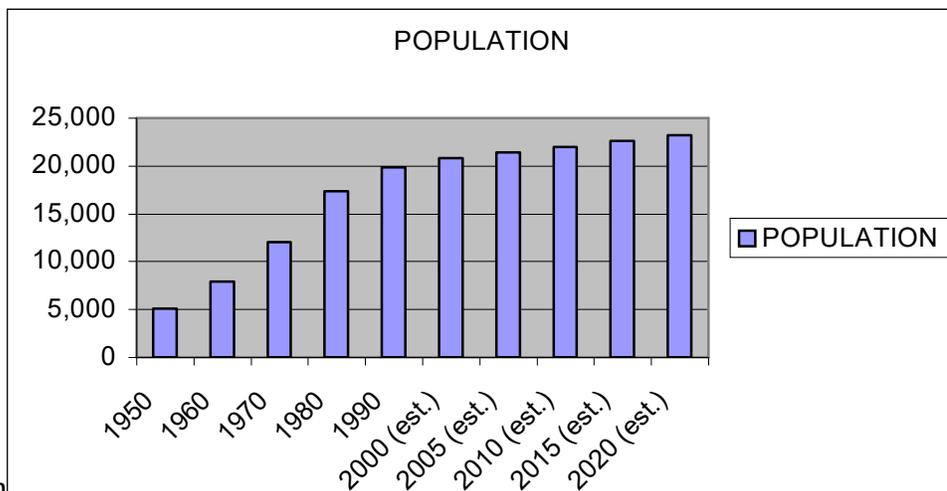
Guilford's 1999 *Planning for Open Space and Municipal Lands* is the most recent document in at least a 35-year history of plans that recognize many of the unique values of the town. This plan is intended for immediate action as well as long range planning.

The Present Situation

Guilford is now at a pivotal point in its history. The town has grown at a tremendous rate over the past 30 years. When I-95 was being completed in the late 1950's, Guilford's population hovered around 5,000. Today the town's population stands at over 20,000, and what remains of our unprotected open space is rapidly disappearing. With the advent of high-speed transportation and "electronic commuting" the pressures on residential land use will become even greater. In fact the Connecticut Office of Policy Management estimates based on current growth patterns projects a population of 23,200 by 2020.

Guilford's Population Growth

Figure 1



Comm and values. A sense of place comes from the streets and buildings in the town, the educational, social and cultural institutions in the town, the business center, meeting and recreation places, and the landscape features, topography and vistas. The fabric that makes up a community is how all these pieces fit together to provide a pleasant living environment that works.

Shepherded by the relentless hard work of many volunteers in the community, what we consider "Guilford" is still largely "Guilford." Remarkably, the town's sense of character, community, and natural heritage has remained fairly intact. Many communities around the state, and indeed around the country, lost that battle long ago.

The rich variety of habitat here includes tidal shoreline, shellfish beds, wetlands, as well as forests and woodlands, freshwater wetlands, trap rock ridges and other geologic features, streams and rivers, ponds and lakes, and open fields. This variety gives our town its unique and appealing character. These are its natural assets that should be protected not only for aesthetic reasons and for habitat protection but also to pass on this natural infrastructure to future generations for their enjoyment, for their clean water supply, and for the diversity of wildlife we enjoy today. Townspeople should also be able to continue using on-site sewage disposal that requires development that is appropriate to the carrying capacity of the soils and water resources. One of the most important aspects in the protection of Guilford's character is its largely rural aspect that is supported by the town's undeveloped lands and "open space." Keeping

these intrinsic features protected can be accomplished with land acquisition in concert with other tools and plans such as Guilford's Comprehensive Plan of Development.¹ Significant areas of already protected lands, most of which are open to the public, form a core that can be enhanced. These areas should be expanded and in-holdings purchased. The West Woods in the southwest and Bluff Head in the northwest continue to be important protection areas for the Guilford Land Conservation Trust to create connecting corridors both for wildlife and for human enjoyment. The town-owned 600-acre Timberland forest south of Route 80 on the eastern town boundary connects to Cockaponset State Forest, which in turn links up with South Central Regional Water Authority land to form an outstanding greenbelt for wildlife as well as passive recreation use. Throughout town, pockets of protected land, identified on the open space map,² could be expanded or rounded out.

Planning for municipal needs in the future is also important. As Guilford has fewer and fewer large parcels that could potentially be used for school sites, parks, recreational facilities, municipal offices, etc., the Town needs to plan as best it can for where it foresees needs for such facilities. This Plan for Open Space and Municipal Lands addresses the issues of both open space and lands needed for various municipal uses.

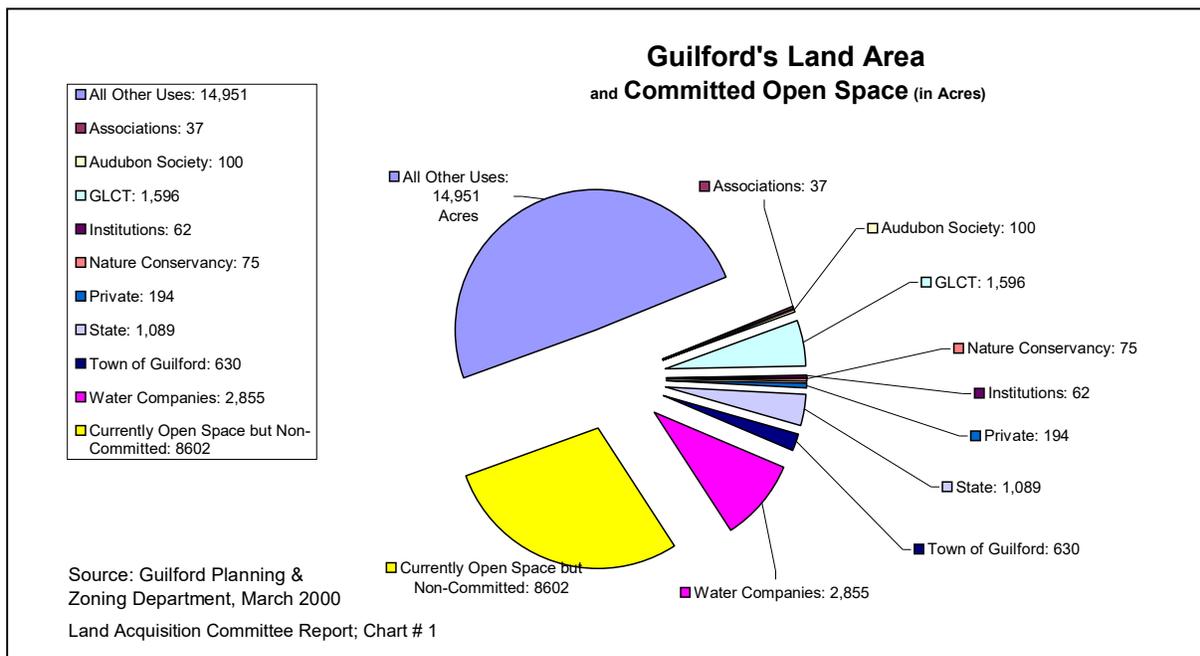
¹ Guilford Planning & Zoning Commission's Comprehensive Plan of Development and Conservation, currently under revision.

² Town of Guilford map identifying open space.

The State of Land Use in Guilford

During 1997 the Guilford Preservation Alliance (GPA) subcommittee on open space issues revealed a tenuous situation in Guilford. Guilford's existing open lands are rapidly being converted to residential subdivisions. The effect of this continued growth over the next few years on the character of the town as a whole will be long lasting.

The total land area of Guilford is about 30,190 acres. Of this total acreage, the Town's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data shows a total of 6,683.98 acres, which are under the category of "All Current Open Space." (See Chart 1) Not all this land is *permanently* protected open space. For instance water company lands can be sold in certain cases. In addition to this protected open space, there are an additional 8,602 acres of land that are in parcels 10 acres or larger and that are currently not built upon. This privately held land is not protected in any way, and could be developed at any time. For the most part, this report is concerned with directly addressing the non-committed open space. Land designated as "All Other Uses" is any other land in Guilford, including houses, roads, and current municipal facilities.

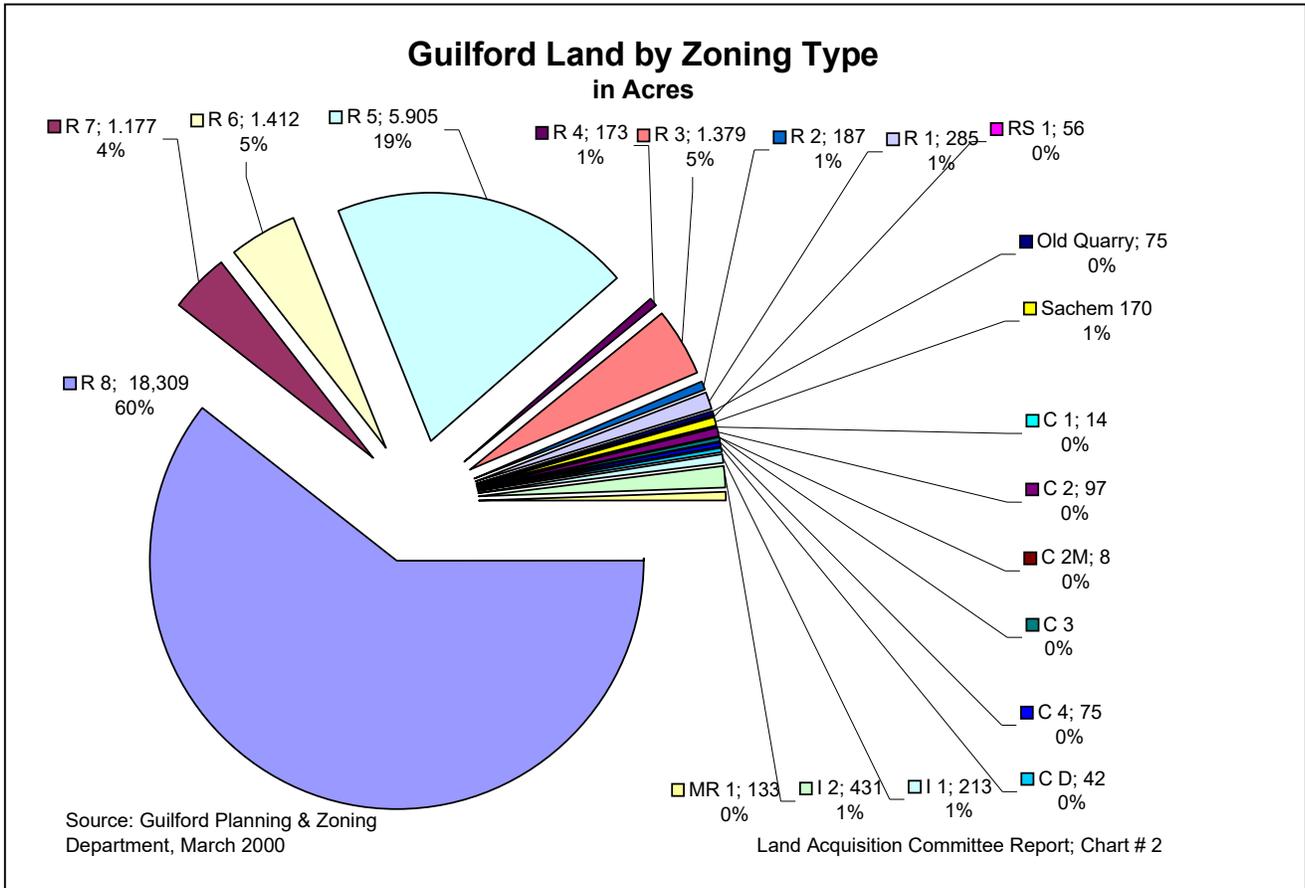


Note: Chart acreage totals come from varying sources.

Another method of analyzing the current (as of January 2000) land trends is to look at the status of open lands in Town. One way of doing this is by looking at the amount of acreage

zoned in certain classes. Chart 2 shows Guilford land by zoning type. A quick look shows that the majority of the remaining land in Guilford is zoned for residential use. This paints a picture of residential growth, not well balanced by commercial growth, that will require a significant increase in municipal facilities.

With our projected growth comes more need for municipal facilities be they libraries, public works facilities, or schools. In addition to those needs are the less tangible needs for open space to maintain the character of Guilford, the quality of life here, and perhaps most importantly the ecosystems, water quality, and diversity of our town. The Plan for Open Space and Municipal Land Needs is the document for Guilford to use in order to do its



absolute best to achieve all these goals for our town's future.

Note: Chart 2 shows all land in Guilford – both developed and undeveloped – by zoning type.

Planning For The Future

Municipal Land and Open Space

The Land Acquisition Committee's charge is to look at all Guilford's land needs. This includes land that should be for open space protection, passive recreation, active recreation, and municipal facilities.

At this point the Plan for Open Space and Municipal Lands separates into:

- Land needs for protection as open space for concerns such as: water quality, passive recreation, scenic viewsheds, biological integrity, biodiversity, and sustainability.
- Land needs for municipal facilities.

What follows is a discussion of municipal and open space needs and an Evaluation Matrix for the selection of lands that fit into either category. When a property is put through the matrix (see Appendix 1), depending on the factors shown, it will fall into Category A, B, C, or be dropped altogether because it does not fit into any category. This process will allow the Town to identify and prioritize lands that are for sale as well as those lands that are not currently for sale, but that the Town is interested in pursuing for future uses. The Land Evaluation Matrix will also be used to prioritize lands that the Town may decide to sell.

Open Space

What is Open Space?

“Open space is defined as land and water areas which either a) continue in a natural state, or b) if cultivated, developed and managed by man, support one or more conservation, outdoor recreation, or other open space functions.” (Plan of Conservation and Development, 1978) “...Land that is not intensively developed not built up.” (Conservation Plan for Guilford Connecticut, November, 1964.)

In addition, for its purposes, the State of Connecticut defines open space as any land whose preservation or restricted use "would maintain and enhance the conservation of natural or scenic resources, protect natural streams or water supply, promote the conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches or tidal marshes, enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, natural reservations or sanctuaries or other open spaces, enhance our public recreation opportunities, preserve historic sites or promote orderly urban or suburban development."

Open Space Functions

This leads us to a consideration of the functions of open space. Of highest priority are functions that pertain to the protection of natural systems that sustain life, both human and wild. These include:

- Water resources, ground and surface;
- Wildlife habitat, corridors;
- Soil resources;
- Air quality.

The other important open space functions relate to quality of life. They include:

- Scenic vistas;
- Historic or archaeological sites;
- Agricultural or forest products;
- Outdoor recreation opportunities:
 - Passive, informal
 - Active, formal
- Tax benefits.

The distinction between passive and active forms of recreation is an important one, since this determines what the overall impact of human activity on the landscape will be. A playing field, golf course, or playscape, for example, will involve some intensive disturbance of the landscape and natural systems, and is semi-permanent. Grading, landscaping, introduction of alien flora, installation of parking areas, lighting and other amenities all alter the environment. Thus, lands dedicated to such uses must be categorized separately

from lands dedicated to the preservation of natural systems. Although the two uses of land (passive and active) are not always in conflict, their significant differences can and must be highlighted in the context of natural resources-based planning. Ideally, the two uses can co-exist on the same piece of land if clearly delineated borders are established.

Additionally, we have the issue of open space that has been acquired by the Town for purposes of creating infrastructure or town facilities. This demands another discrete category, since it can be expected that such land will be open space only on a temporary basis. Again, mixed uses could be a possibility and ought to be looked at on a case-by-case basis.

The outcome of this consideration of land use categories is a system of classification that will serve as a practical tool for making these important distinctions in our planning and implementation processes.

Open Space Classification

Class A (low impact use): Private or public land that is maintained as undeveloped, and is essential to the preservation of the natural systems and rural characteristics of the community, and could provide a range of passive outdoor recreational opportunities. This is what is generally referred to as “committed” open space, and is shown on town GIS map titled “Committed Open Space.” These are essentially the Town’s “Greenways.” Examples are areas owned by the Guilford Land Conservation Trust or The Nature Conservancy, certain town-owned pieces such as Timberlands, and the South Central Regional Water Authority “Class I” lands that are defined as essential watershed lands, or private holdings with significant natural resource implications.

Any uses of or activities in Class A Open Space areas purchased by the Town would be limited to projects designed to provide reasonable access for passive recreation, habitat enhancement, and outdoor education. Such projects may include, but are not limited to, trails, parking areas, forest management, agricultural uses if they already exist, and interpretive stations.

Class B (possible moderate impact use): Private or public land that is, or may be, subject to intensive development for formal outdoor recreation facilities such as golf courses, playing fields, or playgrounds, either presently or under future consideration. *(Example: the Bittner property, until such time as portions of it are set aside as a preserve.)*

Class C (possible high impact use): acquired by the town with the intent of future development for town infrastructure or facilities that will remain as open space only until such time as the town sees fit to develop facilities on the property. *(Example: the woodland and fields behind Baldwin Middle School.)* Of course should the Town actually build on a particular parcel, all land use regulations currently in effect are to be strictly abided by.

General Comments

Unlike Class C lands, Class B lands will always be referred to as “open space,” since they will never be “built-up” in a strict sense. Class B land could be town or privately owned land, but in either case can fulfill at least some of the priority open space functions listed above, despite substantial alterations to the natural systems. Also, it must be noted that the amount of Class A land required to benefit the public health safety and welfare is by nature far greater than what the community requires for other uses. That is to say, a relatively vast acreage of undeveloped land in comparison to developed land is needed in order to protect the ecology that sustains us. It also follows that the more land we can acquire and maintain as Class A, the less we shall be compelled to seek land for Class B and C uses.

With regard to private land, the classifications are made only for consideration for Town purchase or analysis of current land use; this system of course does not restrict property owners from changing use within limits of zoning regulations.

Change in Use

In order to support the proper administration of this classification system with regard to municipal land, a town ordinance should be enacted which prevents a change from one classification to another without due process. Under very extenuating circumstances, the Town might find it necessary to consider a change in use. However, once a tract of open space has been purchased by the Town and assigned to a class (or classes), the community deserves reasonable assurance that the Town must abide by this designation. In other words, these designations are binding and should be stipulated in the acquisition documentation.

Stewardship

When open space land or easements are acquired by the Town, good stewardship practices are required to assure that the land is managed in a way consistent with its intended use. Retaining active agricultural use on a piece of acquired land, for instance, on class B or C land, may in no way relate to the actual long term intended use – i.e. a school or other town facility. The town agency responsible for oversight will depend on the intended use.

Open Space Goals

- **Preserve resources along the scenic corridors** of Guilford by retaining the scenic qualities of specific areas within the town, which have been recognized as having town-wide importance.
- **Preserve the “Gateways” to Guilford.** These places create a first impression of our town and should receive special attention. Examples of Gateways are the I-95 exits, Route 1 and Route 80 at the Branford and Madison borders, Route 77 at the Durham border, and the Route 80 junction with Route 77.
- **Foster the conservation and preservation of the important natural and scenic resources of Guilford** in any manner beneficial to the future needs of Guilford. Natural resources of the town to be preserved include water resources, ridgetops, marshlands, open fields, meadows, and areas of unique scenic or historical significance.
- **Protect cultural landscape features:** Encourage protection of stonewalls, tree canopies on town streets, open fields, mature trees, and other important features, as they are important ecologically and culturally to the Town of Guilford.
- **Protect shoreline views:** Protect coastal views from public roads of marshes, beach shoreline or open water for public enjoyment.

Strategies for Open Space Conservation

Land acquisition is only one of several facets of open space planning. Certainly a goal of increasing the acreage of open space, particularly Class A lands owned by our town, as well as careful stewardship of those lands already acquired, will go a long way to insure the future health and well being of the citizens of Guilford. But we must increase the overall abundance of Class A and Class B lands by:

- **Giving priority evaluation to contiguous large tracts of land** with connecting corridors as they have been shown to be critical for the maintenance of biological integrity, biodiversity, sustainability, and resiliency of the land. Of particular interest, is undeveloped land with habitats that are becoming increasingly scarce regionally, such as large meadows.
- **Prioritizing water access sites.** Give priority to acquisition of water areas for public access to water bodies, rivers, ponds, lakes, and coastal waters for fishing, boat launching, and passive recreation.
- **Promoting payment in lieu of open space set-asides** in subdivisions where open space is not a critical issue. The set-aside would be earmarked for open space (Class A and B) acquisition.
- **Favoring open space land acquisition that includes or is adjacent to any wetland system in Guilford.** These major wetland areas identified by the Guilford Inland Wetlands Commission and the Guilford Conservation Commission merit special attention. Properties being considered for purchase that contain or border on them should be given priority.
- **Investigating areas that provide potential for active and passive recreation:** Look for areas that would provide the potential for active and passive recreation. Development of multi-use fields, neighborhood parks, hiking trails, and access for

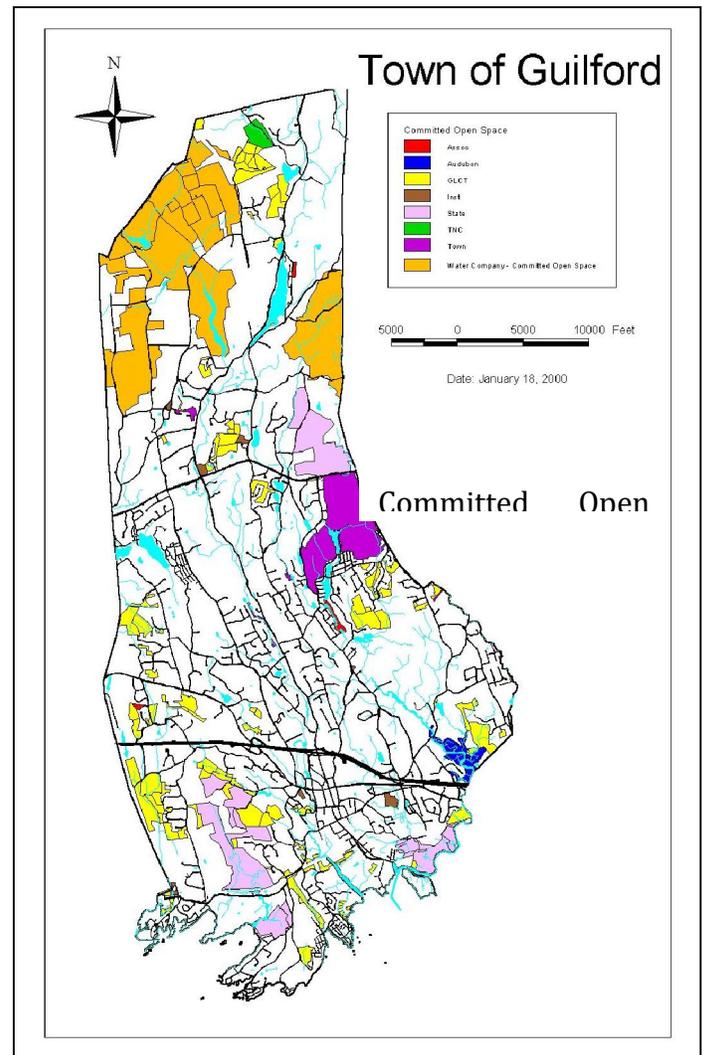
water-related activities are needed to meet the growing recreational needs of the citizens of Guilford. Priority should be given to sites north of Route 80. Playing fields are needed in North Guilford. A multi-use park is specifically needed in the Podunk Road area. Appropriate sites, with economical access to necessary utilities, should be considered for potential development of indoor recreational facilities, such as an ice rink, swimming facility, and/or arts center.

- **Prioritizing open space linkages to bordering Town's Greenways.**
- **Prioritizing preservation/protection/acquisition of those natural areas** designated by the State of Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection "Natural Diversity Database Map" for the Town of Guilford.
- **Prioritizing riparian corridor preservation** and protection to foster preservation of water quality, for wildlife, and for passive recreation and fishing where appropriate.
- **Adopting "conservation overlay zones"** as a zoning category to insure against changes of use of designated municipal open space land and private organization open space land.
- **Assisting** landowners in maintaining private open space so that it contributes to a diverse and healthy natural environment and furthers our open space goals.
- **Purchasing** easements or development rights can be an effective way of furthering open space goals without the outright purchase of land.
- **Strengthening** land use regulations to assure that when development does occur, it is done in an environmentally sensitive manner and contributes to open space goals.
- **Working** closely with the Guilford Land Conservation Trust and other non-profits to develop creative approaches to land use that will contribute to our open space goals.

Natural Resources Inventory

In November 1997 the Guilford Conservation Commission initiated an extensive data gathering process to update Guilford's open space map and to get a detailed overview of Guilford's natural environment. The natural habitats that surround us are a major factor in sustaining the character and quality of life in our town and must be protected.

The Conservation Commission, in conjunction with other agencies in the town, has developed a computer database, called a Geographic Information System (GIS), that contains biophysical and social data and enables identification of specific areas to be protected and the owners of property within these areas. This system can be a very useful tool for analyzing the effect of future development on our local environment. A Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) is a summary in map form of the town's open space lands, water resources, and its natural and cultural areas. These maps provide the foundation for the town's open space plan. Examples of landscape features shown in a NRI would be steep slopes, wetlands soils, forests, salt marshes, vernal pools, agricultural land, viewsapes, rivers, waterbodies, wildlife corridors, etc.



Note: The maps shown in this report are available full size in the Town Planner's office at Guilford's Town Hall and on the Town's geographic information system.

LIST OF MAPS IN APPENDIX 4

- Committed Open Space
- Municipal land and Municipal Open Space
- Developable Parcels over Ten Acres
- Wetlands, Streams, Water Bodies, 100 Year Flood Plain
- Forested Land and Meadows and

Note: The maps shown in this report are available full size in the Town Planner's office at the Guilford Town Annex and on the town's Geographic Information System (GIS)

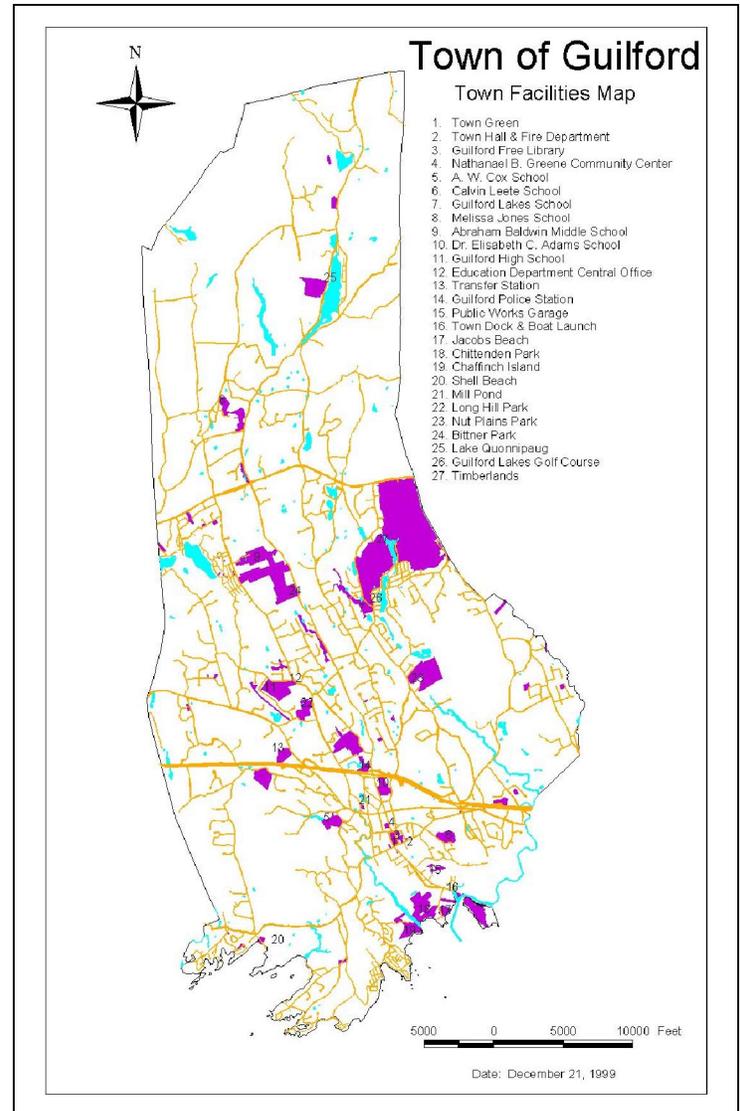
Municipal Land Planning **Background**

As the town's population grows, so will its needs for municipal services. These services come in many forms, many taken for granted, just like open space. Many of the assets that make Guilford continue to be Guilford are our town and school buildings, the parks, athletic facilities, roads and even cemeteries. Police, public works, fire and emergency personnel play supporting roles. Each of these departments (in some cases non-profit groups) has a need for land that is strategically located for the services they deliver. They all require appropriate access, potential for expansion, and the ability to adapt to environmental needs, as well as other need specific criteria.

Once prime locations suitable for town facilities have been utilized for private use or even as Class A or B open space, they are difficult (usually impossible) to reclaim for any other use. It is critical for Guilford to plan for these municipal needs, by identifying the requirements, the needs, the land and the action steps necessary to fulfill those needs.

Ideas for consolidated services and school / town campus areas are not new. In fact, the late Superintendent of Schools, A.W. Cox, laid out plans for one that extended from Guilford High School to the area now a part of Long Hill Farms development and farther south to Long Hill Park on Long Hill Road. That plan was never implemented. Future projects can be brought to reality following groundwork laid out in this document.

Our school needs are difficult to project for generations ahead, but for land use not physically save land in the near future for future generations, many options will be closed. Should needs be so dramatically different in the future, land set aside for uses other than



See Appendix 4 for land use

permanently protected (Class A or B) open space will have alternative uses and may provide an economic return to the town.

Municipal Land Needs

Town departments, commissions and boards that are summarized below have identified specific long-term potential needs. Some reflect the foreseeable future and others reflect anticipated needs for future generations.

The Library: the property adjacent to the existing library should be acquired for future expansion of buildings and parking.

Affordable Housing: Land is needed for affordable housing development to insure the diversity of Guilford's population.

Economic Development: The amount of land currently zoned for commercial or industrial use should not be reduced. The town should be open to the possibility of swapping land; i.e. Swapping an area of commercially industrially zoned land with an area of land in a different zone where there is both an advantage to and minimal impact on the town. The town should also encourage the use of planting screens and other vegetative buffers to improve the appearance and complement the adjoining zone or land use.

Town Center: The Town currently owns several properties, including the Town Hall, along Park Street. The Town should concentrate on acquiring properties that are contiguous to existing town parcels for future expansion of Town facilities.

Water Pollution Control Authority: The Sewer Avoidance Program is a committed effort to avoid a sewerage treatment plant. The Water Pollution Control Authority recommends the town retain present ownership of locations such as the Paige's Lane site and the Town's former septage lagoons on Goose Lane, for community septic systems, should the need arise.

Town Infrastructure:

In concert with the Town's Comprehensive Plan of Conservation and Development, continue to plan and develop our road system to upgrade east-west access. By doing so, pressure will be relieved on many of our roads, as development occurs. Land may be needed to complete some of these potential road projects. However, before recommending specific projects, a traffic study should be conducted. Road projects are expensive and often environmentally disruptive. The projected traffic in Guilford viewed under different scenarios of development is a crucial step in planning. Roads, population distribution, and automobile traffic have a major impact on land use. Under consideration are:

- Extension of Hubbard Road through to Saw Mill Road over the West River.
- Extension of Bullard Drive through from Long Hill Road to Route 77.

Public Works: A two to four acre site in the northern part of town suitable for sand and salt storage should be acquired. The site should be accessible to a major road and be able to be buffered from residentially zoned areas.

Board of Education:

Our school enrollments will continue to grow at a steady pace as the population of Guilford increases. The growth of the general population will mean additional classroom needs and supporting services, such as playgrounds, playing fields, parking, transportation and assembly spaces (auditorium, cafeteria and gym).

The type of land desired for any school site ideally would be fairly level, have easy, safe roads, good drainage for a septic system, good road access, and adequate water availability (for domestic and fire systems). Any decrease in these criteria would mean an increase in acreage needed to build. Integrating future school sites near or with other open space lands will maximize on-site environmental education.

- We should expedite the purchase of lands that would enhance the connection of Bullard Drive to Route 77 in order to improve traffic flow at Baldwin Middle School off Long Hill Road, enhance the utilization of the property for future school and related Town facility needs on the site, as well as to increase transportation efficiency.
- Combine and share future school sites in order to maximize the ease of environmental education (plant science, agriculture, trails, orienteering, nature stations, etc.) in concert with regular classroom work.
- We should maintain the 16-acre Nut Plains property (presently known as Nut Plains Park) as a viable school site (for which it was purchased). Options to combine that site with the adjacent 60-acre adjacent Town-owned property should be kept viable. A portion of this latter property has most recently been used for sewage sludge pits and as a stump dump.
- Identify and acquire or approve use of land for future school site(s) in the Route 80 corridor that potentially will be needed for the next centuries. A site with easy accessibility for traffic, having minimal impact on town roads is desired, along with needed utilities. Tie-ins with open space and environmental teaching opportunities on-site would be desired.

Acquiring and Conserving Land

Background

Any plan for acquisition needs a method for financing land purchases in a timely manner. Time burdens due to statutes and town charter mean pre-planning is critical so opportunities are not lost.

Studies done across the country have proven that wise planning, for open space in particular, may moderate tax increases in a community and often increase a town's bond rating. Studies have universally shown most new residential development does not pay for itself by the taxes paid per household. A study done by the Southern New England Forest Consortium (SNEFCI) that analyzed neighboring Durham among 11 other towns in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island in a Cost of Community Services study, showed that for every \$1.00 Durham received in residential taxes they paid \$1.07 in services for that dollar. That is a net loss of .07 cents for every dollar spent in Durham on services.³

These studies also show that there is a net benefit from open space land and recreational land, especially in situations where that property is managed for marketable goods such as timber. If any one wants more information on this admittedly complicated issue, the studies are available at the Town Hall in the planning office.

Planning for Guilford's future is paramount to keeping our taxes in line with other communities in the region. Purchasing land for municipal use and open space protection benefits us in many ways, such as maintaining the character of the town. There are several ways Guilford can move forward in this planning process through creative funding mechanisms for land purchase.

Methods for Acquiring and Conserving Land

1. Bonding. A bond issue is an excellent means of creating a substantial land acquisition fund in a short period of time. Having a substantial fund to draw on is a distinct advantage as the Town can move much more quickly and with greater credibility to the landowner when a desirable property becomes available.
2. Purchase of an option on a desired property or Right of First Refusal. This is a very effective way to acquire land even when the land is not currently for sale. A contract is negotiated in which the seller and buyer agree upon a method of determining the value of the property whereby the buyer can, at some future date when the owner wishes to sell, either purchase the land at this price or not.
3. Public / private partnerships with non-profit organizations in town. This can take a variety of forms. Of particular interest is an arrangement where a parcel is purchased and developed in an environmentally sensitive manner. The type of development is not

³ Southern New England Forest Consortium, Inc., Cost of Community Services in Southern New England, 1995, p.14.

dictated by market forces alone but also by criteria that would be of long term benefit to the town and help achieve the objectives of the Plan of Conservation and Development (i.e. preserving open space and increasing the stock of affordable housing).

4. Line item in the town budget. Since property sales frequently need to move quickly, it would be prudent for the town to allocate a certain amount of money to a land acquisition fund so that the town would be able to go to a vote quickly if necessary. A defined amount should be set aside every year.
5. Dedication of land through open space subdivision process. Calculating the number of allowed houses based on net buildable area and making open space subdivisions mandatory could strengthen this process.
6. Water Company payments or (Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS). Water companies and other utilities pay PILOTS to towns. These are payments in lieu of taxes. These moneys could be dedicated at least partially to the purchase of land. Dedication of these funds for open space purchases would be appropriate since keeping forests and aquifer lands undeveloped provide cleaner water and air for residents.
7. A portion of the mill rate dedicated to land acquisition in the town of Guilford.
8. Communication tower fees dedicated to the land acquisition budget. Moneys collected from tower fees for communications towers located on municipal lands are currently dedicated to land
9. State and federal grant programs. When available these grant moneys are useful in reducing the total cost of open space or recreational lands to the community. However, these funds are competitive, take months to access, and are often sporadic. When possible these funding mechanisms should always be attempted; they are, however, not a funding type that can be relied on on a regular basis.
10. Purchase with leaseback options.
11. Purchase of Development Rights (PDR). As described in the town of Brooklyn, *Connecticut Open Space and Conservation Plan*: “A so-called PDR program would purchase development rights, and in some cases recreational rights from willing land owners in critical areas which are most threatened by development. The development and / or recreational use rights are sold but the landowner still retains title (and all other rights) to the property.”⁴ This mechanism for protection of open space leaves the property in private ownership by the town purchasing the part of the property rights bundle that includes the right of the owner to develop his/her property.
12. Work on estate planning issues with landowners who wish to keep their lands protected as open space.
13. Implement Transfer of Development Rights program (TDR's). Again from the town of Brooklyn, *Connecticut Open Space and Conservation Plan*: “In a Transfer of Development Rights Program, areas which have been previously designated as significant and worthy of protection are designated as “Sending Areas.” Designated “Receiving Areas” are those most suitable to more intensive development due to factors such as proximity to

⁴ Town of Brooklyn, Connecticut, An Open Space and Conservation Plan, 1993, p. 21.

transportation corridors and public utilities. Developers negotiate directly with willing landowners in the Sending Areas to purchase their development rights at a mutually agreed upon price. The developer can then use the purchased development rights as credits which allow for increased development density on properties in the receiving area.”⁵(For more information on Purchase of Development Rights, please see information packet in the Guilford Planning office.)

14. Forest Legacy Program. This program is funded by the US Forest Service moneys and implemented by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. This program allows private, non-industrial forest owners to sell or donate the development rights of their forestland to the state, permanently protecting their forest while reducing taxes on their property.
15. Impact Fees. The State of Connecticut must enact enabling legislation to assess impact fees in Connecticut. If, in the future, Connecticut enacts legislation for Impact Fees, towns will be able to enact an impact fee regulation on development that will allocate fees collected for purchase of open space to offset school and other expenses that would occur to the municipality as a result of that development.
16. Town land sales. Moneys gained from the sale of any town-owned land should be dedicated to a land acquisition account where that same money can be used to purchase land that is needed for the town.
17. Charter school funding.
18. Funding for school construction can be aided by state education grants.
19. Purchase or gift of Conservation Easement to the town.
20. Purchase of a long-term lease on a desired property.
21. Real Estate Transfer Tax. Currently this option is not available in Connecticut. The State needs to pass enabling legislation in order for towns individually to pass a surcharge on real estate sales that would put aside a portion of each sale for the purchase of open space. This procedure is used in New England on Nantucket, Martha’s Vineyard, and in some Cape Cod communities.
22. Gifts or purchase of land with life tenancy.
23. Obtaining certain tax delinquent property and holding it if it is of value for municipal land or as open space, selling it if not and using the proceeds for purchase of desirable property.
24. Timber harvest fees: Moneys from the harvest of timber on Town property could be dedicated to land acquisition and stewardship of Town properties. *Timber harvesting is currently under the purview of the Conservation Commission. Any such harvest on Class A open space (as defined in this report) should be for habitat diversity and some areas should be intentionally set aside for minimal management, i.e. no cutting or clearing. A good current example of this is the management plan for the town’s Timberlands Forest.*

Long-Term but not Permanent Protection

Public Act 63-490: This 1963 act enables towns to give property tax relief for farms, forests and open space at differing amounts. Landowners must apply to the town assessor’s office and, if accepted, the property will be assessed at its current use rather than its “highest and

⁵ Town of Brooklyn, Connecticut, An Open Space and Conservation Plan, 1993, p. 22.

best” use. This tax relief generally allows landowners that hold farms, forestland, or open space to keep the land longer since it is taxed at a lower rate. However, the land can be sold at any time with a penalty in back taxes up to ten years. After the initial ten years there is no penalty for sale of the land. Once the land is sold it is once again taxed at the higher rate. This act has contributed significantly to keeping the private open space in Guilford as open space.

Conclusion

Land is a finite resource. There are needs that will be required to maintain Town services, and taxpayers will bear significant future costs if no potential sites are set aside soon. The same applies to our valuable natural resources. We must act soon. Yes, there is a price tag, so issues must be brought forward and allocations made for these needs. After the fact “we needed that for...” should not have to be uttered in Guilford.

Guilford needs to go beyond traditional open space planning, and plan for its municipal future as well. The town, sitting on the cusp of the new century and at the edge of a build out, needs to make sure it has set aside land for its future needs, as well as for those of today. With good planning Guilford can move toward its four hundredth year in 2039 as a livable community for all its citizens.

Appendix 1: Land Evaluation Matrix

Explanation of Land Evaluation Matrix

The Term “Open Space” refers to a broad range of categories. Perhaps if the classification of open space could be systematized, it would be easier to talk about it, plan for it, manage it, and regulate it. When we consider the central question, “For what purpose should we be purchasing a particular piece of land?” we see three major categories:

Class A (low impact use): Private or public land that is maintained as undeveloped, and is essential to the preservation of the natural systems and rural characteristics of the community, and could provide a range or passive outdoor recreational opportunities. This is what is generally referred to as “committed” open space, and is shown on town GIS map titled “Committed Open Space.” These are essentially the Town’s ‘Greenways.’ Examples are areas owned by the Guilford Land Conservation Trust or The Nature Conservancy, certain town-owned pieces such as Timberlands, and the South Central Regional Water Authority “Class I” lands which are defined as essential watershed lands, or private holdings with significant natural resource implications.

Any uses of or activities in Class A Open Space areas would be limited to projects designed to provide reasonable access for passive recreation, habitat enhancement, and outdoor education. Such projects may include, but are not limited to, trails, low impact or related parking areas, forest management, agricultural uses, and interpretive stations.

Class B (possible moderate impact use): Private or public land that is, or may be, subject to intensive development for formal outdoor recreation facilities such as golf courses, playing fields, or playgrounds, either presently or under future consideration. *(Example: the Bittner property, until such time as portions of it are set aside as Class A.)*

Class C (possible high impact use): acquired by the town with the intent of development for town infrastructure or facilities; will remain as open space only until such time as the town sees fit to develop facilities on the property. *(Example: the woodland and fields behind Baldwin Middle School.)* Of course should the town actually build on a particular parcel, all land use regulations currently in effect are to be strictly abided by.

Acreage for each type of use should be specified. For example, the Timberlands has approximately 10 acres of Class C open space for the golf course and a remainder of approximately 590 acres of Class A open space for the Timberlands Forest. In addition, any change of use should be made only through a formal procedure with public participation. Land that is “on the market” should be given priority, only if it has been identified as an acquisition property for the town.

Appendix 2: Areas of Conservation Interest

Areas of Conservation Interest

These open space preservation priorities are the result of historic, open space, and natural resource planning by the Guilford Land Conservation Trust, Guilford Conservation Commission, Guilford Inland Wetlands Commission, Guilford Preservation Alliance, and Scenic Roads Advisory Board, as well as input from the current Land Acquisition Committee and the commissions, advisory boards, and non-profit organizations that are on that committee. Areas of conservation interest that should receive top priority by the town for preservation are listed in order from north to south:

Bluff Head/ Totoket Mountain

Preserve integrity of the Blue Trail System

Broomstick Ledges

Open Fields along Great Hill Road/ Vista from Meetinghouse Hill

Beaver Head Road

Working farms throughout Guilford

Bartlett parcel north of Town parcel on Lake Quonnipaug

Parcels abutting Timberlands – town forest

East River meadows and woodland areas

Trolley bed from North Branford to near West Lake Avenue

Riparian buffer strip along West River from Route 80 to Bittner Park to Flat Meadow

Private in-holdings in WestWoods

Connecting protected land from Branford open space east to West Woods

Connecting protected land north from Route 146 across (GLCT) preserve to Branford/Guilford trails

Agricultural Society Fairgrounds

Views of salt marsh and woodland from GLCT preserve known as the Olmsted Outlook on River Street

Routes 77 and 146 scenic corridors

Leete Farm

Shellfish beds along Long Island Sound

Town Gateways

Appendix 3: Major Wetland Areas

Major Wetland Areas

West River
East River
Hoadley Creek
Towner Swamp
Iron Stream and Swamp
Beaver Head Swamp
Myerhuber Pond
Neck River
Lake Quonnipaug
Menunkatuck Reservoir
Guilford Lakes
Lane's Pond
West Lake
Aquifer Protection Areas (See NRI map)
Wetlands within Public Water Supply Watersheds

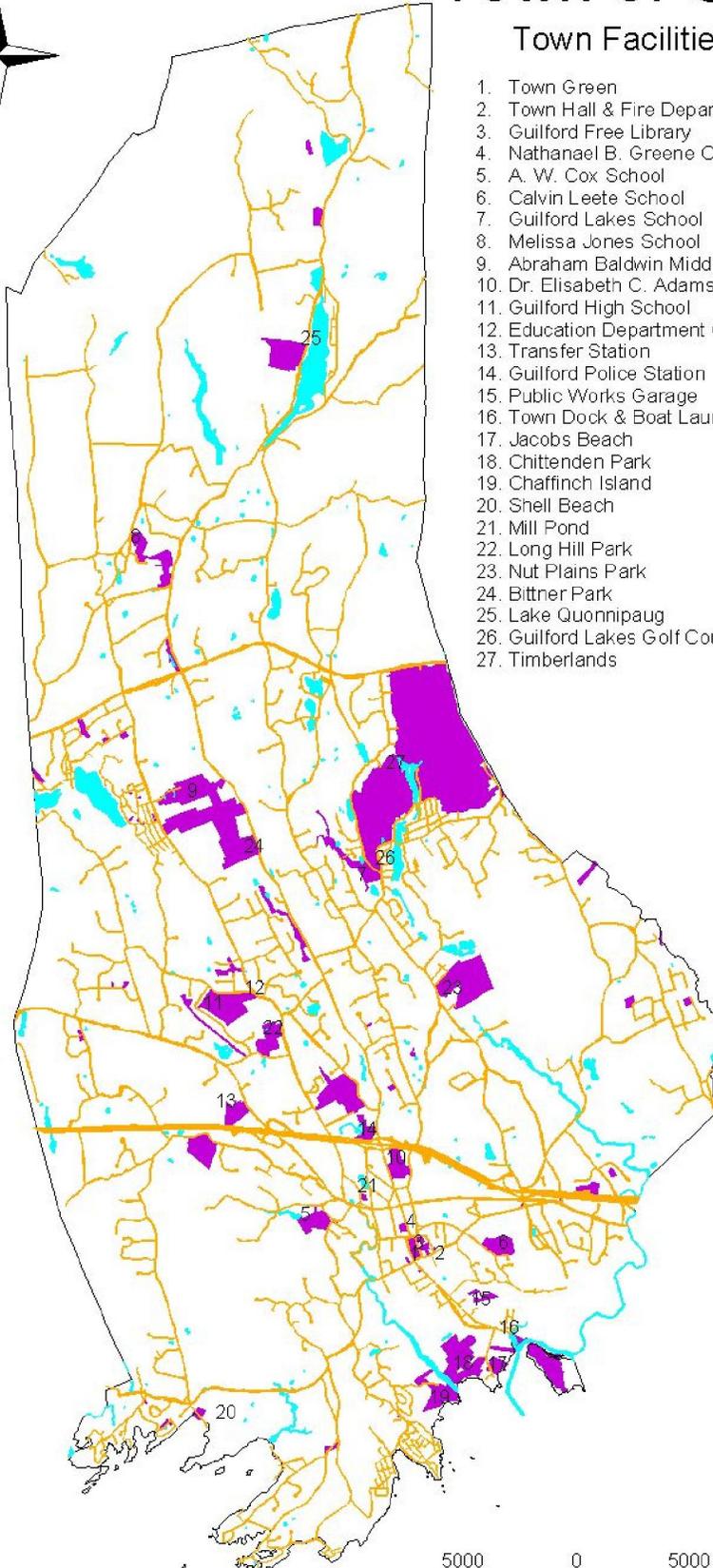
Wolf Swamp
Vernal pools complexes on the Bluff Head plateau and in the
Broomstick Ledges area
Vernal Pools

Appendix 4: Geographic Information Systems Maps (GIS)

- 1. Town Facilities**
- 2. Committed Open Space**
- 3. Developable Land over 10 acres**
- 4. Wetlands, Streams, Waterbodies, and 100 Year Floodplains**
- 5. Forest Land, Meadows, Farmland**
- 6. Potential Wildlife Corridors and Greenways**

Town of Guilford

Town Facilities Map

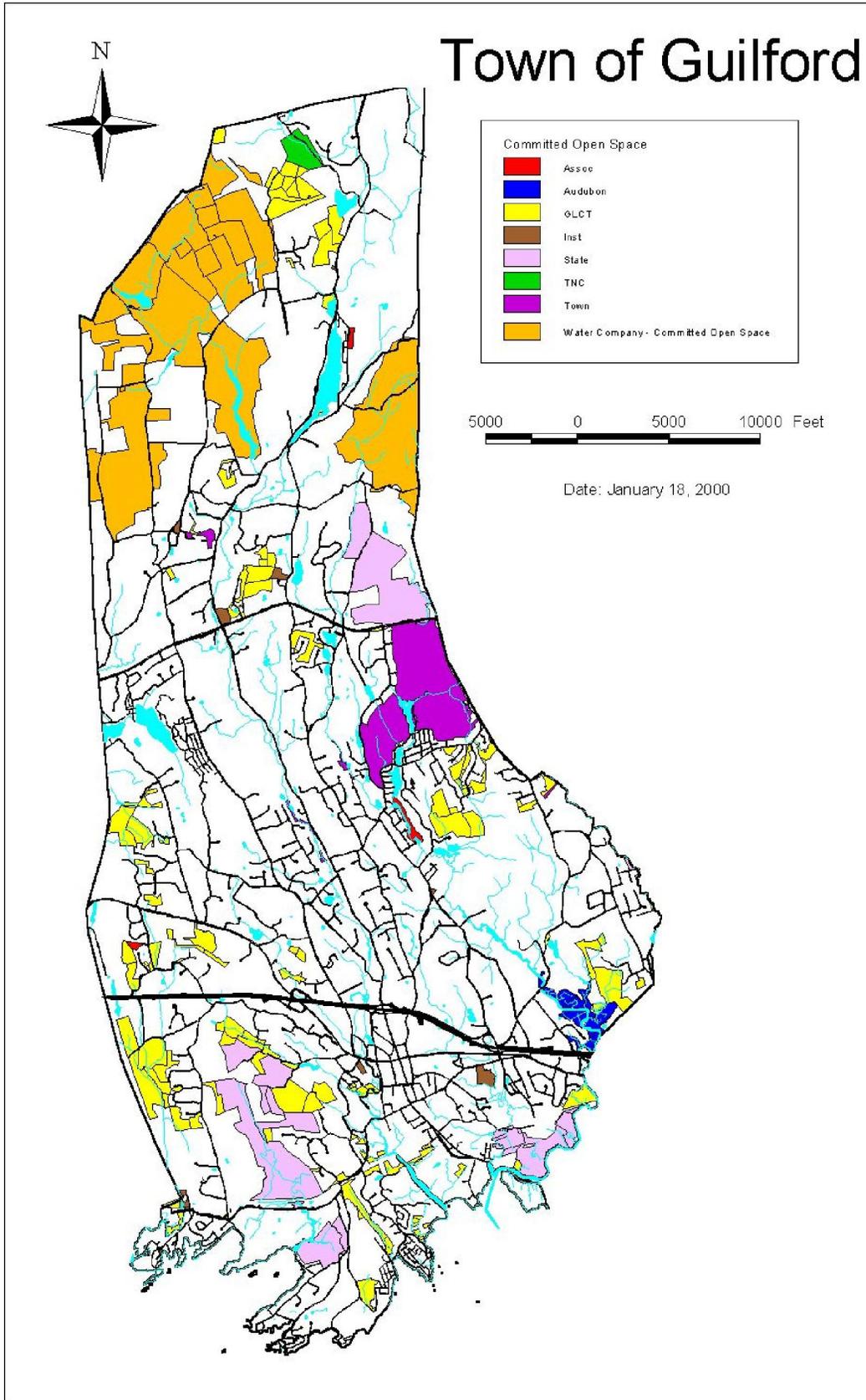


1. Town Green
2. Town Hall & Fire Department
3. Guilford Free Library
4. Nathanael B. Greene Community Center
5. A. W. Cox School
6. Calvin Leete School
7. Guilford Lakes School
8. Melissa Jones School
9. Abraham Baldwin Middle School
10. Dr. Elisabeth C. Adams School
11. Guilford High School
12. Education Department Central Office
13. Transfer Station
14. Guilford Police Station
15. Public Works Garage
16. Town Dock & Boat Launch
17. Jacobs Beach
18. Chittenden Park
19. Chaffinch Island
20. Shell Beach
21. Mill Pond
22. Long Hill Park
23. Nut Plains Park
24. Bittner Park
25. Lake Quonnipaug
26. Guilford Lakes Golf Course
27. Timberlands

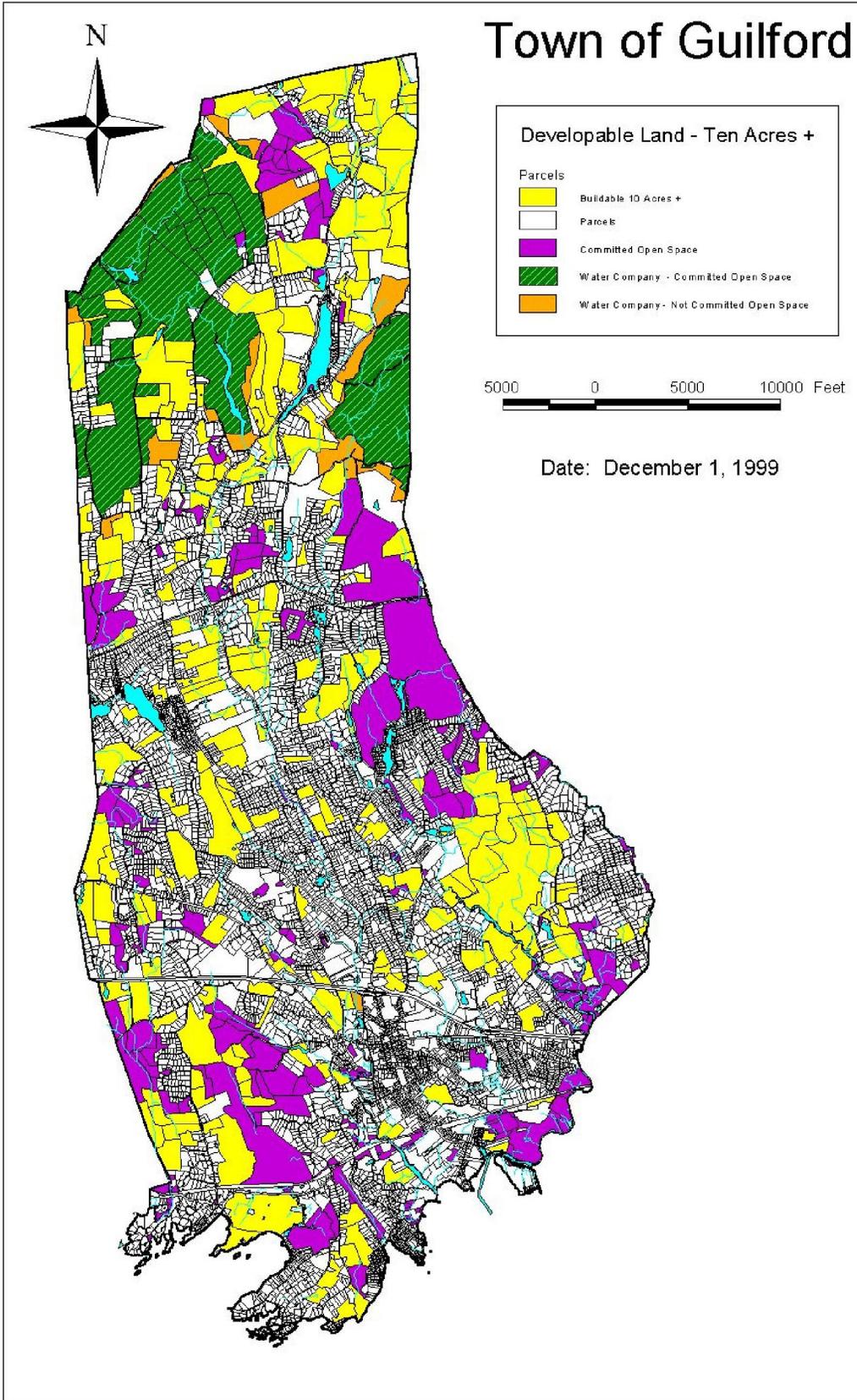
5000 0 5000 10000 Feet

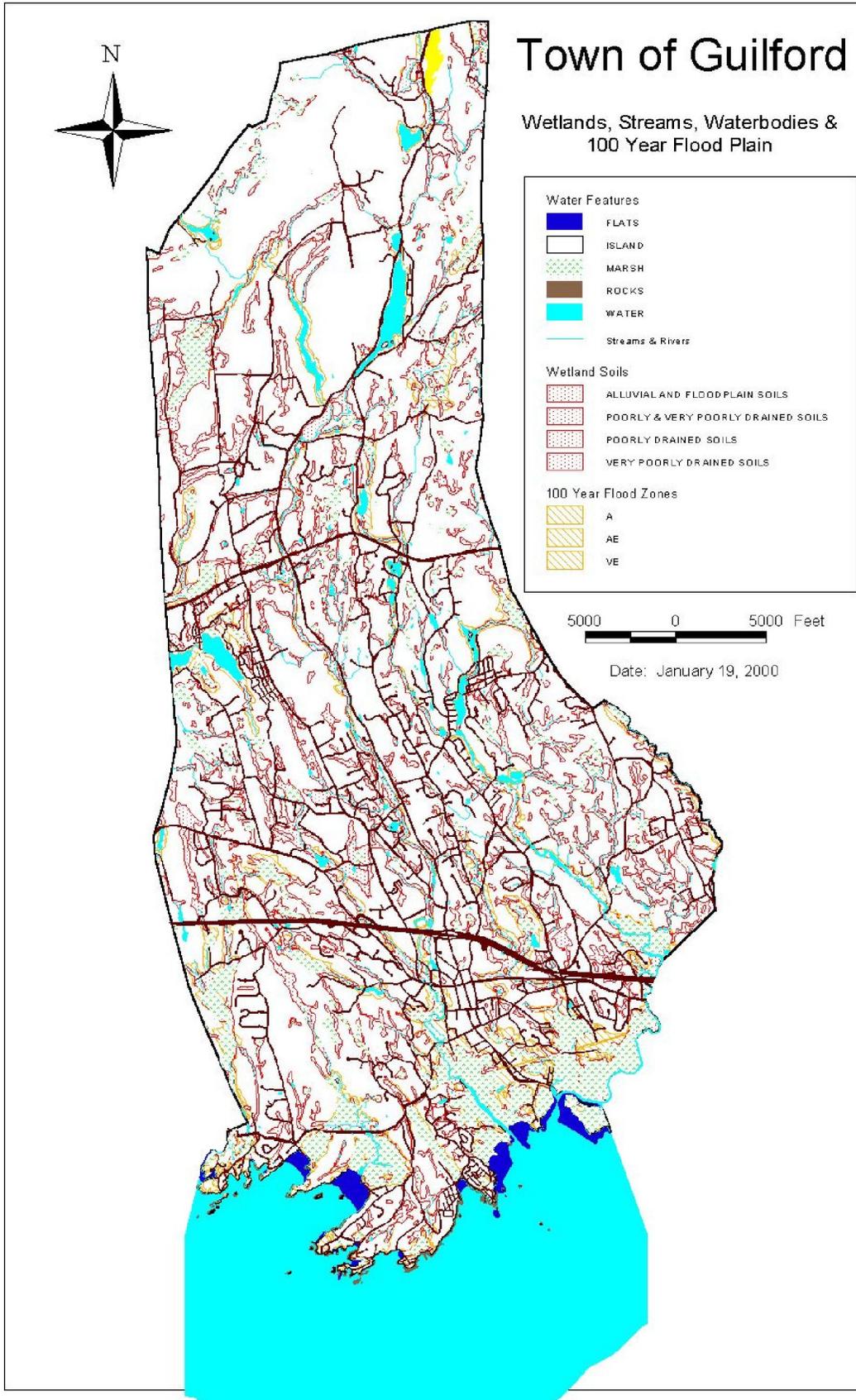


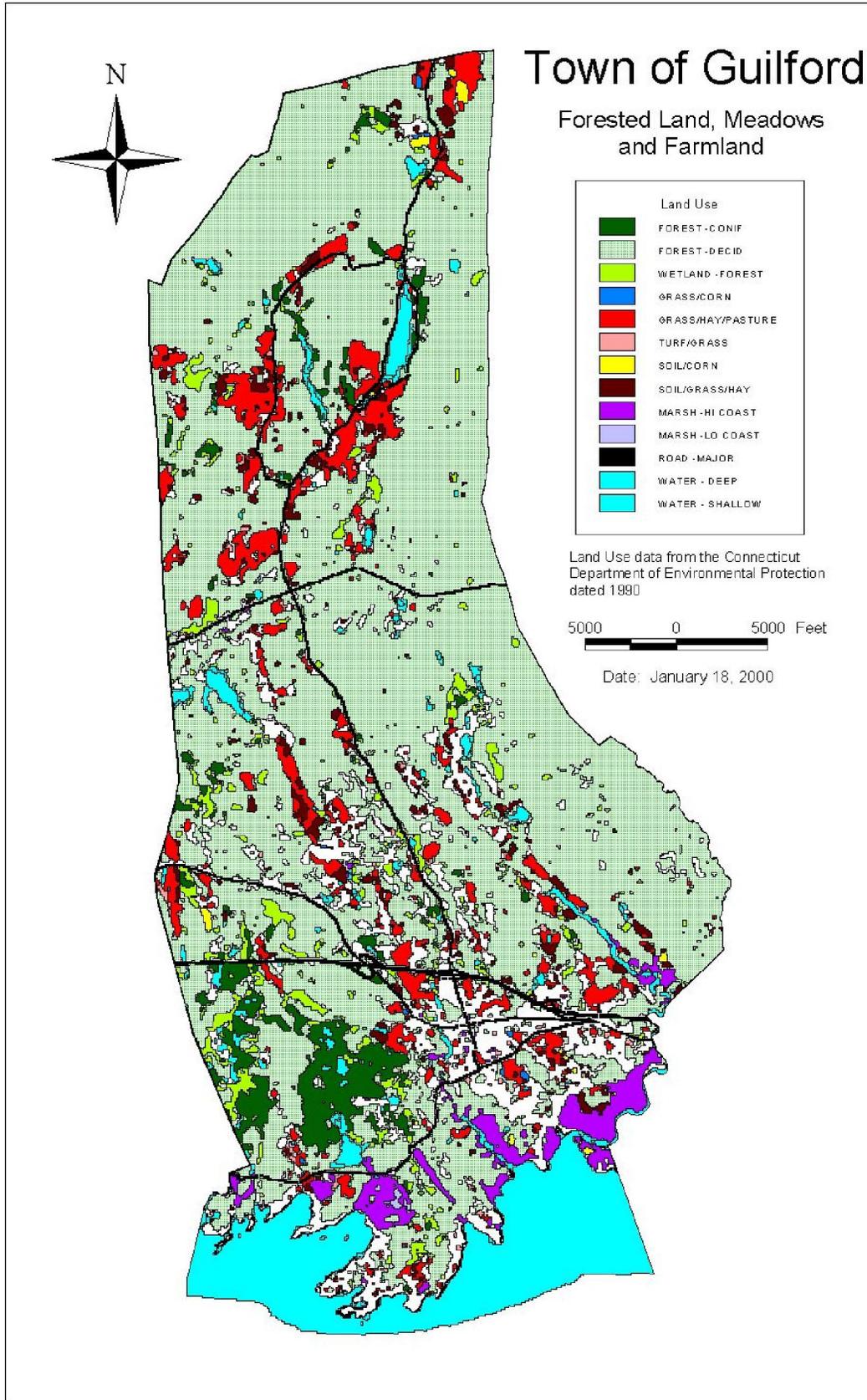
Date: December 21, 1999



Town of Guilford







Town of Guilford

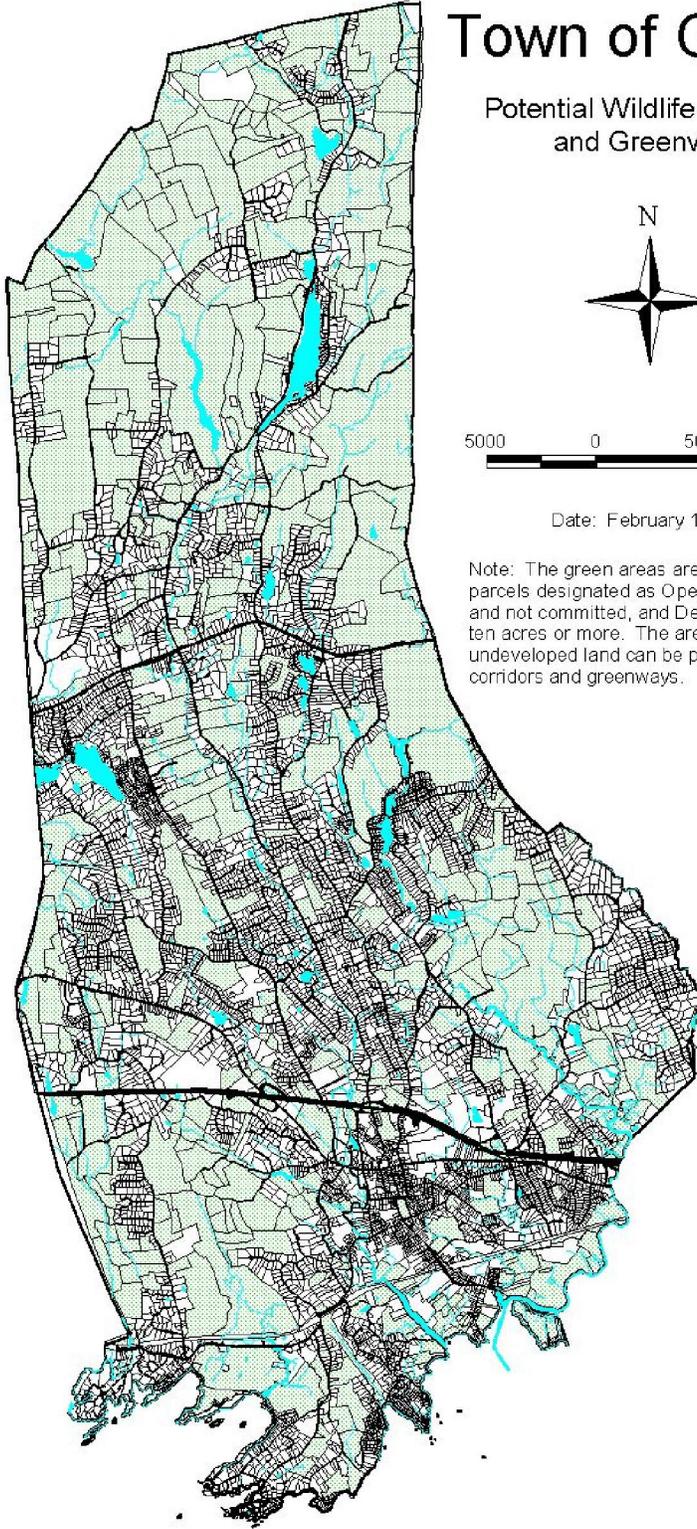
Potential Wildlife Corridors and Greenways



5000 0 5000 10000 Feet

Date: February 15, 2000

Note: The green areas are a compilation of parcels designated as Open Space - committed and not committed, and Developable Parcels of ten acres or more. The areas of contiguous, undeveloped land can be potential wildlife corridors and greenways.



Appendix 5: Definitions

Definitions

Agriculture - “Except as otherwise specifically defined, the words “agriculture” and “farming” shall include cultivation of the soil, dairying, forestry, raising or harvesting any agricultural or horticultural commodity, including the raising, shearing, feeding, caring for, training and management of livestock, including horses, bees, poultry, fur-bearing animals and wildlife, and the raising or harvesting of oysters, clams, mussels, other molluscan shellfish, or fish; the operation, management, conservation, improvement or maintenance of a farm and its buildings, tools and equipment, or salvaging timber or cleared land of brush or other debris left by a storm as an incident to such farming operations; the production or harvesting of maple syrup or maple sugar or any agricultural commodity, including lumber, as an incident to ordinary farming operations or the harvesting of mushrooms, the hatching of poultry, or the construction, operation or maintenance of ditches, canals, reservoirs or waterways used exclusively for farming purposes; handling, planting, drying, packing, packaging, processing, freezing, grading, storing, or delivering to storage or to market, or to a carrier for transportation to market, or for direct sale any agricultural or horticultural commodity as an incident to ordinary farming operations, or, in the case of fruits and vegetables, as an incident to the preparation of such fruits or vegetables for market or for direct sale. The term “farm” includes farm buildings, and accessory buildings thereto, nurseries, orchards, ranges, greenhouses, hoopouses and other temporary structures or other structures used primarily for the raising and, as an incident to ordinary farming operations, the sale of agricultural or horticultural commodities. The term “aquaculture” means the farming of the waters of the state and tidal wetlands and the production of protein food, including fish, oysters, clams, mussels, and other molluscan shellfish, on leased, franchised, and public underwater farm lands.”

Aquifer - A water-bearing earth material that can transmit water in significant quantity. It can either be consolidated rock (ledge rock) or unconsolidated material (sand, gravel, soil with boulders, etc.).

Endangered species - (E) - means any native species documented by biological research and inventory to be in danger of extirpation throughout all or a significant portion of its range within the state and to have no more than five occurrences in the state and any species determined to be an “endangered species” pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act.

Threatened Species - (T) means any native species documented by biological research and inventory likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range within the state and to have no more than nine occurrences in the state, and any species determined to be a “threatened species” pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act, except for such species determined to be endangered by the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection.

Species of Special Concern - (SC) – means any native plant species or any native non-harvested wildlife species documented by scientific research and inventory to have a

naturally restricted range or habitat in the state, to be at a low population level, to be in such high demand by man that its unregulated taking would be detrimental to the conservation of its population or has been extirpated from the state.

Open space –

(A) The State of Connecticut defines open space as any land whose preservation or restricted use "would maintain and enhance the conservation of natural or scenic resources, protect natural streams or water supply, promote the conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches or tidal marshes, enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, natural reservations or sanctuaries or other open spaces, enhance our public recreation opportunities, preserve historic sites or promote orderly urban or suburban development."

(B) Guilford Definition of open space:

Class A (low impact use): Private or public land that is maintained as undeveloped, and is essential to the preservation of the natural systems and rural characteristics of the community, and could provide a range or passive outdoor recreational opportunities. This is what is generally referred to as "committed" open space, and is shown on town GIS map titled "Committed Open Space." These are essentially the Town's 'Greenways.' Examples are areas owned by the Guilford Land Conservation Trust or The Nature Conservancy, certain Town-owned pieces such as Timberlands, and the South Central Regional Water Authority "Class I" lands, which are defined as essential watershed lands, or private holdings with significant natural resource implications.

Any uses of or activities in Class A Open Space areas would be limited to projects designed to provide reasonable access for passive recreation, habitat enhancement, and outdoor education. Such projects may include, but are not limited to, trails, parking areas, forest management, agricultural uses as they already exist, and interpretive stations.

Class B (possible moderate impact use): Private or public land that is, or may be, subject to intensive development for formal outdoor recreation facilities such as golf courses, playing fields, or playgrounds, either presently or under future consideration. *(Example: the Bittner property, until such time as portions of it are set aside as a preserve.)*

Class C (possible high impact use): Land acquired by the town with the intent of development for town infrastructure or facilities; will remain as open space only until such time as the town sees fit to develop facilities on the property. *(Example: the woodland and fields behind Baldwin Middle School.)* Of course should the Town actually build on a particular parcel, all land use regulations currently in effect are to be strictly abided by.

Water Company Lands - Class I lands -

1. Within 250 feet of the high-water mark of reservoir
2. Within 100 feet of any watercourse (inside the watershed dividing line)
3. Within critical components of a streambelt

4. Slopes > 15% without significant interception by wetlands, swales, and natural depressions between slope and watercourse
5. Within 200 feet of a groundwater well
6. Within existing or future aquifer direct recharge areas
7. Within area of shallow depth to bedrock, (<20") or poorly drained soils (as defined by US Soil Conservation Service) contiguous to #3, or #4 (above) that extends to top of slope above receiving watercourse.

Water Company Lands - Class II lands

1. All non-Class I on water company owned watershed land
2. Off watershed within 150 feet of distribution reservoir or first-order stream tributary to distribution reservoir.

Water Company Lands - Class III lands

1. All unimproved land owned off-watershed that is not Class I/II
(See CGS Sec.225-37c & d; PHC Sec. 25-37c-1 et seq. & 25-37d-1 et seq.)

State Scenic Road, Sec. 13b-31c-1. (e) – “Scenic Road” means any state highway or portion thereof that (1) passes through agricultural land or abuts land on which is located a historic building or structure listed on the National Register of Historic Places or the state register of historic places, compiled pursuant to section 10-321 of the General Statutes, or (2) affords vistas of marshes, shoreline, forests with mature trees, or notable geologic or other features.

Guilford has two state-designated scenic roads – Routes 77 and 146. The features of the scenic road corridor include coastal views, extensive systems of salt marshes, historic sites and historic districts, the Town Green, a few remaining active farms, an attractive river running parallel to Route 77, a heavily used recreational lake, and interesting geologic features. Walking trails along Route 146 exist on the Hoadley Creek Preserve, which is owned by the Guilford and Branford Land Trusts, and in the WestWoods. Hiking trails along Route 77 include Bluff Head Trails and the Connecticut Blue Trail System, the Mattabassett Trail.

Wetlands – Wetlands are defined as lands that consist of any of the following soil types:

Poorly Drained Soils occur on land areas where the water table either interrupts or lies near the surface from late fall to early spring, with the area being nearly level or gently sloping.

Very poorly drained soils occur in either level or depressed land areas, with the water table at or above the surface at almost all times during the year.

Alluvial soils are water-transported sediments and soils. Alluvium is the inorganic compound of these soils, some of which may be well drained.

Floodplain soils occur along watercourses, streambelts, and other riparian areas (i.e., brooks, rivers, streams, pond margins), occupying nearly all-level areas subject to flooding.

Equally important **watercourses** are defined as rivers, streams, brooks, waterways, lakes, ponds, marshes, swamps, bogs, and all other natural or artificial, public, or private bodies of water, including perennial, vernal, and intermittent watercourses. While some watercourses are obvious by the presence of water and hydrologic conditions, others, such as marshes, swamps, and bogs, are determined by vegetative composition.⁶

⁶ An Inland Wetland Commissioner's Guide to Site Plan Review, Revised 1993, and p.2.

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