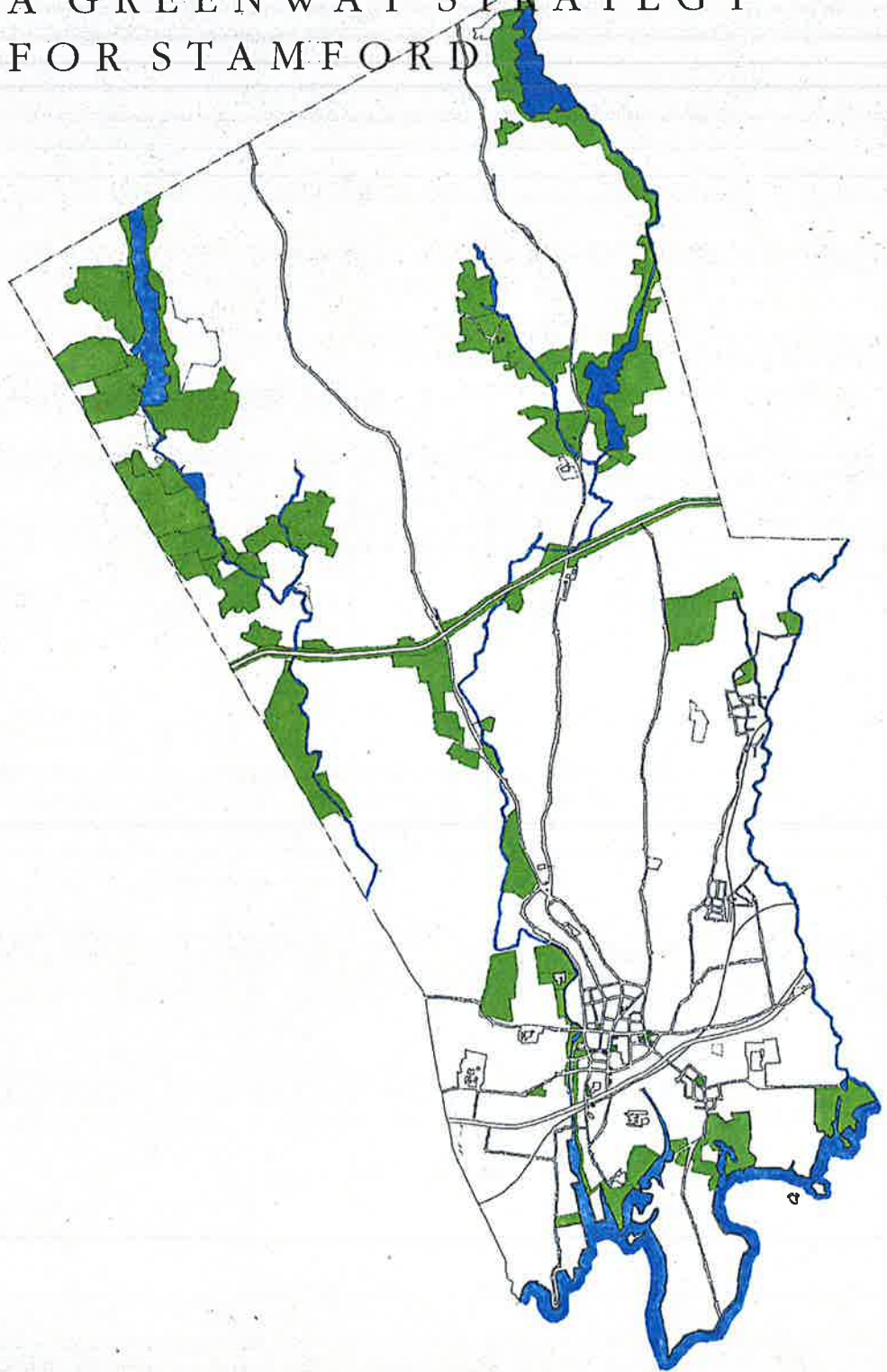


# V. A GREENWAY STRATEGY FOR STAMFORD





## A GREENWAY STRATEGY FOR STAMFORD

Stamford's high quality of life, and indeed the physical well-being of the residents, will depend on access to a variety of open spaces. These include small neighborhood parks as well as larger city-wide parks and places for quiet walks and contemplation as well as active recreation. In addition, with its miles of coastline, Stamford residents should have visual and physical access to the water. The original Swan Plan map shows the extent to which Stamford was thought of as a "Garden City", with a great parkway system following the rivers from the north into the downtown. The goal of this initiative should be to recapture that spirit.

## SYNERGY: CONNECTING THE GREEN DOTS

A recent study suggests that by some criteria, Stamford has a deficit of 1000 acres of publicly available open space (see the Parks Master Plan prepared by Ward Associates, 1998). Even in a "low growth scenario," as many as 70 acres of new open space would be required just to prevent the deficit from getting worse. In a more likely "trend scenario," 130 acres would be needed.

Given this, it is essential that, to the greatest extent possible, the available open space resources are linked to the neighborhoods and to each other to insure that the whole of the open space fabric is more than just the sum of many disparate and disconnected pieces.

One essential component of this strategy is to embrace a more expansive definition of what constitutes an open space resource. "Open space" must be more than just public parks. It includes the lawns and playgrounds around public schools; the well manicured lawns of the major corporate campuses; the properties held by quasi-public entities such as the Land Trust and the water company.

Finally, an expansive conception of open space includes consideration of properties that are privately held, which may be purchased in whole or in part or may be accessible through easement, and which, at the very least, provide relief—if only through visual access—from Stamford's dense urban and suburban pattern. In this context, Stamford's lowest density neighborhoods (Master Plan Categories 1 and 2) are themselves a kind of open space resource that should be protected and thought of as part of the overall open space pattern.



**5.01 The Swan Plan called for a greenway and parkway network**



**5.02 Stamford has many wonderful open spaces and parks**



This more comprehensive thinking about open space is acknowledged in the new Master Plan, Category 17, "Open Space - Overlay," and on the maps in this chapter.

### **GREENWAYS: MOBILITY, EQUITY AND HEALTH**

The need for a comprehensive and connected green network is more than an aesthetic priority. It is intimately linked to opportunities for alternative forms of mobility, in particular bicycle and pedestrian modes. In turn, new linkages for bicycles and pedestrians are part of a public health agenda that enables and promotes a more active lifestyle as a way of addressing increasing rates of obesity, heart disease and other ailments linked to sedentary urban living. Finally, to the extent that a connected greenway network increases activity and health, it is connected to issues of diversity and equity in disadvantaged and minority neighborhoods.

### **ELEMENTS OF A GREENWAY NETWORK**

In the largely established suburban landscape of Stamford, there are many constraints to a comprehensive greenway network, but there are also a variety of opportunities. These are organized into four major categories: trails and greenways, boulevards and green streets, neighborhood connectors and waterfront access.

**5.03 A Greenway Strategy for Stamford:** the publicly owned open spaces, open spaces such as schools and the water company properties, and certain strategic private open spaces can together comprise a comprehensive greenway network for Stamford.

*Trails and Greenways*

There are limited but important opportunities to create off-road trails and greenways, and two major opportunities in particular. The Merritt Parkway Trail is an important regional and local connection that has been discussed since the 1920's. It was the subject of a recent RPA study of a prototypical section that demonstrated the feasibility, cost effectiveness and desirability of a trailway.



5.04

The other major opportunity is along the Long Ridge Road corridor. Despite the automobile orientation of Long Ridge Road, this corridor is one of the centerpieces of a north-south greenway network. By virtue of the number of contiguous public open spaces and large private open spaces, in particular the corporate campuses, it is possible to create a greenway off of Long Ridge Road, for most of its length, that stretches from the Merritt Parkway to the Mill River Corridor and ultimately to Long Island Sound (see Long Ridge Road Design Study #2 in Chapter 2). North of the Merritt, this Greenway corridor can take advantage of a large number of contiguous private landholdings that may be targets for acquisition.



5.05

**5.04 and 5.05 Examples of well-designed greenways:** attention to landscaping, textures of materials, and signage

Other greenway opportunities include the Mianus River, where public lands link the Merritt Parkway to the Mianus River Park, and the Noroton River Greenway, north of Glenbrook. Here, the west side of the Noroton River is lined with large properties in the Research Drive and Riverbend industrial areas, which would simplify negotiations for easements and acquisitions. (South of Glenbrook Road, homes line the river, making a greenway more difficult to implement). The Noroton River Greenway is promoted in the Springdale Neighborhood Plan (see page 90-91).



5.06

**5.06 The Mill River Greenway** should be completed

**5.07 Green Streets**—existing conditions



5.07



5.08

**5.08 Neighborhood Connectors**—existing condition

**5.09 Neighborhood Connectors**—precedent



5.09

### *Green Streets*

Another component of a comprehensive green network would be “green streets.” These are roadways on which landscape architecture, in particular street trees and hedges, gives the street an identity and clearly defines the space of the street. The green streets include the several radial roads that extend from the Pedestrian Core of the downtown into the neighborhoods (see discussion in Chapter 2). The landscape architecture along these radial corridors should extend into the heart of the downtown, becoming part of the proposed open space plan for downtown.

Finally, High Ridge Road, re-conceived as a tree-lined suburban boulevard, is the grandest expression of the “green street” concept. In the area of High Ridge and Long Ridge Roads, the key neighborhood gateways and east-west connections are part of the overall greenway strategy. (see discussion of Long Ridge Road and High Ridge Road designs in Chapter 2).

### *Neighborhood Connectors*

The most understated, but, nevertheless, an essential component of the greenway network, are these typical neighborhood streets that link neighborhoods, open spaces and the other components of the greenway network. These roads, because they are through collectors for smaller roads, will continue to carry automobiles in significant numbers. However, they are roads that in general have sidewalks and, although they are not always wide enough for a dedicated bike lane, they can accommodate a “share the road” strategy with bicycles. Traffic calming techniques must assure a pedestrian-friendly experience along these roads. The bicycle and trails map in the Traffic and Transit Report identifies the roads that are part of the bicycle network.

*Waterfront*

As in most cities that developed around connections to water as well as rail, much of Stamford's waterfront is inaccessible because of water-dependent industrial uses. Only a fraction of the total water frontage is publicly held. Nevertheless, a comprehensive greenway network strategy should maximize the amount of continuous access along the water. Fortunately, many of the waterfront properties in the industrial areas are larger, facilitating negotiations for waterfront access as part of long-term redevelopment.

Even in the places where the city is promoting water-dependent manufacturing, waterfront access should be considered. In those places where physical access is not possible or safe, visual access should be considered, including sight lines down streets which extend to the waterfront.

These strategies can be most effective in the South End where it is possible to link Scalzi Park, the Mill River Greenway, significant portions of the West and East Channels and Cummings Park. Neighborhood connecting streets would create linkages to Cove Island Park and a Weed Avenue greenway, and in this way, tie together more than half of the city's waterfront resources.



5.10

**5.10 Stamford has many miles of shoreline** but much of it is inaccessible, sometimes because of relatively minor obstacles such as lack of sidewalks.



5.11

**5.11 Even in active industrial areas,** every opportunity for visual and physical waterfront access should be taken.



5.12

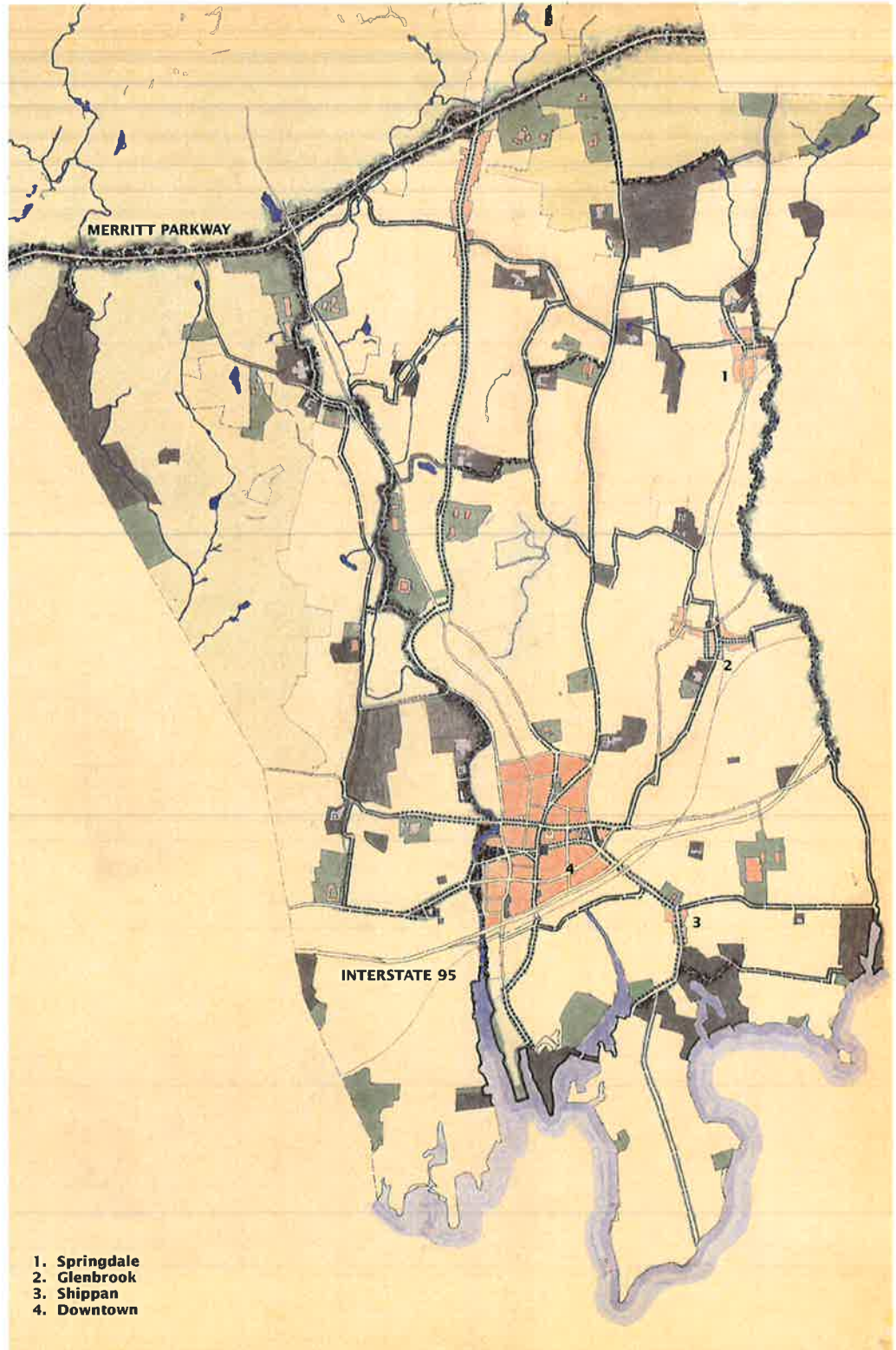







5.13

**5.12 and 5.13 Examples of waterfront edges:** a variety of designs from the most urban to the most natural will be needed in Stamford.







	PUBLIC OPEN SPACE
	PRIVATE OPEN SPACE
	GREENWAY
	TRAFFIC CALMING/ BICYCLE ROUTE
	STREET LANDSCAPING

**5.14 Stamford Greenway Network**  
 This network links neighborhoods with open spaces of all kinds using the full array of strategies described in this chapter.

- 1. Springdale
- 2. Glenbrook
- 3. Shippan
- 4. Downtown

