An aerial photograph of Stratford, Connecticut, showing a large body of water (the Stratford Harbor) with a marina full of boats. The surrounding area includes residential neighborhoods with colorful autumn foliage, industrial buildings, and a large wetland area with a network of waterways. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

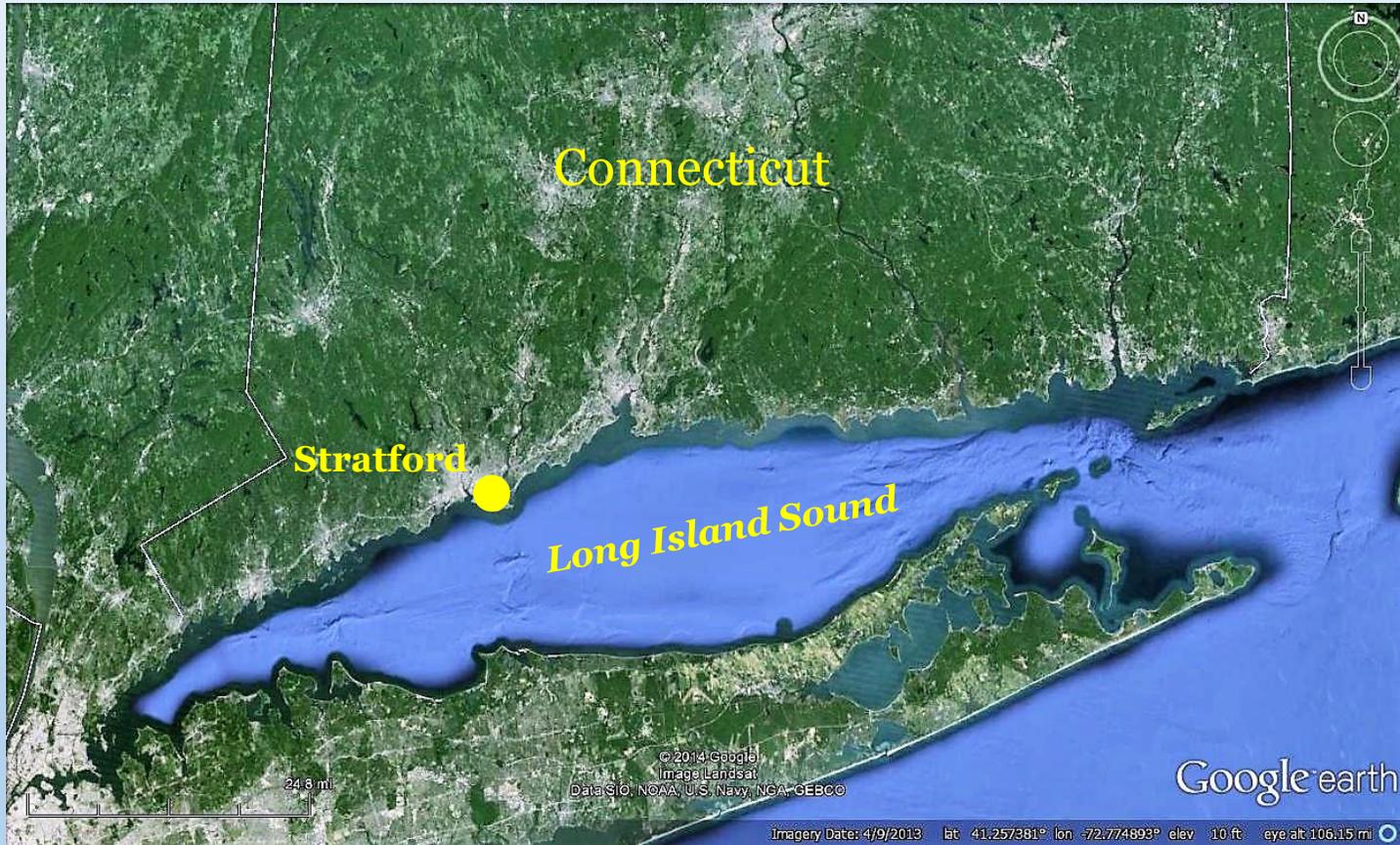
A Waterfront Vision

Town of Stratford, Connecticut

A Presentation by the Stratford
Waterfront & Harbor Management
Commission

December 10, 2019

Town of Stratford on the Connecticut Coast



Stratford is a coastal community on the north shore of Long Island Sound and west side of the Housatonic River, part of the coastal area of the State of Connecticut as defined in the CT Coastal Management Act.

Stratford's character and quality of life are intrinsically tied to the water and shoreline resources of Long Island Sound and the Housatonic River.



Stratford Harbor Management Area

The Stratford Harbor Management Area defines the tidal waters subject to the jurisdiction of the Stratford Waterfront and Harbor Management Commission, including the Housatonic River within the Town's boundaries, nearshore waters of Long Island Sound (LIS) from Bridgeport on the west to Milford on the east, and the Great Meadows-Lewis Gut area separated from LIS by the Long Beach Barrier Beach.

Waterfront & Harbor Management Authorities

Connecticut Harbor Management Act of 1984

Sec. 22a-113k through Sec. 22a-113t of the General Statutes

Authorizes any municipality with navigable waters to establish a harbor management commission and prepare a harbor management plan for the most desirable use of the municipality's waters for recreational, commercial, and other purposes and for the preservation and use of coastal resources.

1957 Special Act of the CT Legislature

Authorized the Town to establish the **Stratford Waterfront Authority** with broad powers to make regulations and conduct investigations to improve and enhance the natural waterways of the Town.

Waterfront & Harbor Management Ordinance Chapter 210 of the Stratford Code Adopted by the Town Council 8-10-1988

Establishes the 11-member **Waterfront and Harbor Management Commission**; authorizes the Commission to exercise the powers, duties, and responsibilities authorized by the CT Harbor Management Act and the 1957 Special Act; and directs the commission to prepare the Town's Harbor Management Plan

Harbor Management Plan

The **Stratford Waterfront and Harbor Management Commission** is responsible for preparing, maintaining, and implementing the Town's ***Harbor Management Plan*** to guide the most desirable use of Stratford's coastal and navigable waters for recreational, commercial, and other purposes and to protect and enhance coastal resources.

The Plan, adopted by the Town Council and approved by the State of Connecticut, includes harbor management goals, policies, and site-specific recommendations. Also included are the responsibilities for Plan implementation. The Plan has served the Town well for 25 years by providing an important guide for beneficial use and conservation of Stratford's coastal resources.



Harbor Management Consistency Review



Pursuant to the CT General Statutes and Town Code, all proposals affecting the Harbor Management Area are reviewed by the Waterfront and Harbor Management Commission for consistency with the Harbor Management Plan.

Included are proposals to and by Town agencies, including development applications and land-use plans, and applications for state and federal permits for docks, bulkheads, dredging, and other work in navigable waters.

The WHMC provides recommendations to the CT DEEP, Corps of Engineers, Town agencies, and others.

Dredging

Maintenance dredging of the Housatonic River federal navigation channel is needed from time to time to maintain safe and efficient navigation, public access to LIS, continued viability of water-dependent uses, and to provide opportunities for future uses.

At the WHMC's request, a pilot dredging project was conducted by the Corps of Engineers in 2012. Then, in 2017, the largest state-funded dredging project in Connecticut history was successfully conducted by the Corps with the WHMC as the local sponsor.

More than 270,000 cubic yards of sandy dredged material were removed from the channel and used to nourish the public beach at Hammonasset State Park at a cost of approximately \$10 million.



Other Harbor Management Programs

Among its programs to serve the public interest for safe and beneficial use and conservation of the Harbor Management Area, the WHMC operates the Stratford pump-out boat with funding assistance from the State of CT. Serving over 1,000 vessels and pumping thousands of gallons of effluent for proper disposal annually, this is the busiest pump-out boat on Long Island Sound.



Town of Stratford website



Town of Stratford website

The WHMC also manages the Birdseye St. River Access Area, including the Town's principal boat launching facility, and provides necessary support, including a vessel, and guidance for the Stratford Harbor Master.

Benefits of the Harbor Management Plan

- Strengthens the Town's role for managing in-water and waterfront activities
- Helps set, in coordination with the Plan of Conservation and Development, Stratford's long-range water and waterfront vision
- Increases coordination among Town, state, and federal agencies
- Establishes continuing local forum for expression of interests and concerns
- Provides formal basis for capital projects and other waterfront improvements



The Harbor Management Plan Strengthens Home Rule



A recommendation of the Waterfront and Harbor Management Commission consistent with and supported by the Harbor Management Plan is to be binding on any state official making a regulatory decision affecting the Stratford Harbor Management Area unless that official can show cause why a different course of action should be taken.

See Sec. 22a-113n (b) of the Connecticut General Statutes

Stratford Waterfront Vision

Stratford's basic goals for waterfront and harbor management, established in the Harbor Management Plan, provide a guiding framework for decisions by the Waterfront and Harbor Management Commission and constitute the Town's Waterfront Vision for safe and beneficial use and conservation of the Harbor Management Area.

The vision includes:

- *Public waterfront areas and facilities*
- *Substantial and sustainable economic growth and community revitalization linked to the harbor area*
- *The highest water quality attainable*
- *Safe, efficient, and enjoyable navigation*



Waterfront Vision (Continued)



The vision also includes:

- *Stratford as the center of recreational boating on the Housatonic River*
- *Educational and scientific uses*
- *Public interest, support, and involvement*
- *Water-based tourism*
- *Coordination among agencies and municipalities*
- *Resilience to coastal hazards*

Opportunity Areas

In 2019-20, the major areas of interest and opportunity for implementing the Waterfront Vision include:

- Stratford Army Engine Plant
- Stratford Point
- Long Beach West and Great Meadows
- Bonds Dock Historic Area on Shore Rd.
- Birdseye Street River Access Area



Stratford Army Engine Plant On the Housatonic River

This historic, 77-acre waterfront site is one of the largest properties available for redevelopment on the Connecticut coast.



One of the most significant locations in the history of aviation, this property has seen the manufacture of “flying boats” for the first trans-oceanic flights, the first helicopter flight, and production of Corsairs for essential service in World War II and the Korean War.



2019

Stratford Army Engine Plant

Redevelopment to achieve the property's great economic development potential and establish substantial water-dependent facilities for public access to the Housatonic River and Long Island Sound is encouraged and supported.

Planning should be guided by a vision of redevelopment providing a coastal destination of regional and national significance, supportive of water-based tourism and with a strong historic component.

Required environmental remediation should be conducted to implement redevelopment plans, protect public health, restore the natural environment, and support water-dependent facilities and public access enhanced by the nearby federal navigation channel.



Stratford Point on the Housatonic River and Long Island Sound

With sweeping views of the Housatonic River and Long Island Sound, Stratford Point is one of the most prominent open spaces in the entire coastal area of Connecticut. Audubon Connecticut now manages this privately owned and currently undeveloped property; Connecticut DEEP holds a conservation easement along the Point's perimeter.



This was once the site of the Remington Gun Club's skeet-shooting range. Environmental remediation in 2000 removed tons of lead from the shoreline. Additional environmental restoration work is needed to restore the shoreline. In 2019, Sacred Heart University continues to use the site as an outdoor classroom to study coastal resilience methods.

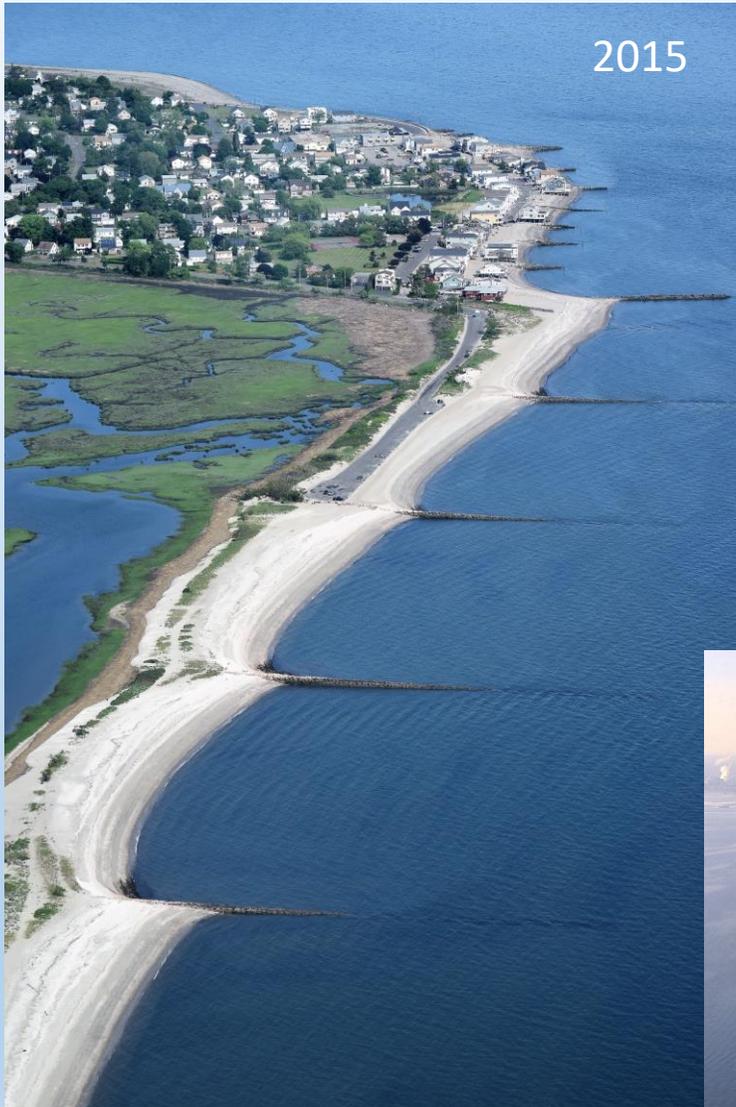
Stratford Point

Use of Stratford Point and development of all facilities on the Point should be according to a comprehensive plan emphasizing public park, open space and conservation uses.



Development of substantial water access facilities for public enjoyment are encouraged and supported, including waterfront walkways, areas for observation of scenic views, picnic areas, pedestrian and bicycle trails providing linkage with nearby Short Beach, and other facilities consistent with the Point's coastal area prominence.

Long Beach Barrier Beach



2015

This unique ecological resource separates the Great Meadows and Lewis Gut from Long Island Sound. Included are Stratford-owned properties known as Long Beach West and Long Beach East, and the Pleasure Beach area owned by the City of Bridgeport.

The coastal barrier system, including its beaches, dunes, and wetlands, provides vital habitat, water quality, scenic, flood protection, and other natural values.



2017



c. 1995

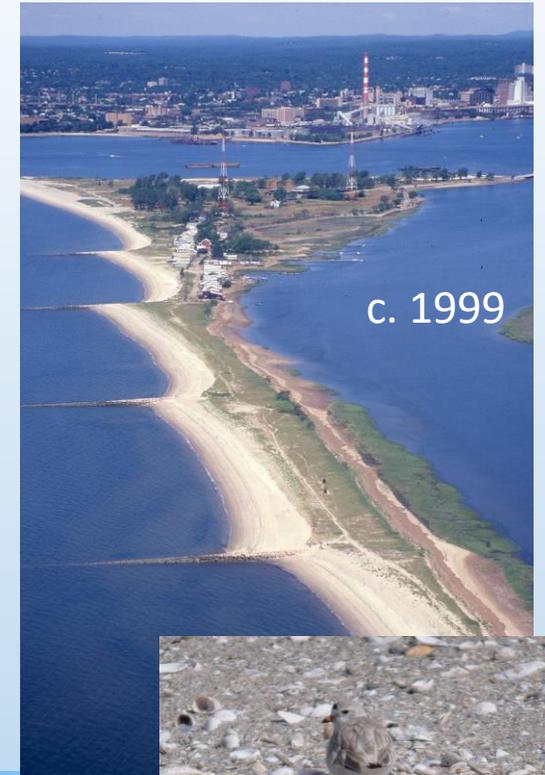
In 2011, following removal of abandoned beach cottages, Stratford's Long Beach West Blue Ribbon Commission prepared a Stewardship Vision to guide public use and conservation of Long Beach West.

Long Beach Barrier Beach

The 16 goals of the Long Beach Stewardship Vision are directed toward achieving balance between conservation of natural coastal resources and their ecological functions on the one hand, and promotion of beneficial use of Long Beach for public recreation and other appropriate purposes on the other.



Low-impact boating, fishing, nature observation, beach recreation, and ecological education and research activities are encouraged and supported.



The coastal barrier provides vital habitat for the endangered Piping Plover shorebird.

Bond's Dock Historic Area on the Housatonic River

This area includes the Town-owned Bond's Dock and Stratford Festival Theater site. Shore Road separates the theater site from the Housatonic River.



Bond's Dock
Historic Area

Pre-2000

Bond's Dock and the surrounding land had a vital role in the development of Stratford and is part of the Town's rich maritime heritage.

Historic Stratford

on the Housatonic River and Long Island Sound

Beginning in 1636, the Housatonic waterfront shows to this painting was the town's center of waterfront commerce. Excavated ruins include the Lower Block, the area became Bond's Dock when Captain John C. Bond purchased several buildings nearby and opened a university renowned boating training camp in 1886.

Stratford

Bond's Dock

New Harbor

Housatonic River

Stratford Point

H. J. LEWIS STRATFORD COND. CO. CONSTITUTED MOVIE EASTWATER OYSTERS.

Housatonic Oysters are renowned throughout the Northeast.

In 2014, Stratford celebrated the 375th anniversary of its first settlement.

Stratford's coastal location prompted ship-building and maritime trade. By 1702, the town was one of Connecticut's eight colonial ports of entry. The town's original port was located in the area now known as Bond's Dock. Maritime trade with New York, Boston and the West Indies flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries. River traffic increased when steamboats arrived in the 1820s.

Much of Stratford's history, growth and development, from the first settlement in 1636 to the present day, is tied to the town's coastal location on the Housatonic River and Long Island Sound. Native Americans called this location *Captone* (cholester place) and *Housatonic* (land beyond the mountains). They found sustenance from deep beds of clams and oysters and many species of fish.

Dutch explorer Adriaen Block, sailing in Long Island Sound in 1614, observed Stratford Point's remarkable prominence at the mouth of the river. English colonists followed, establishing the first settlement at Mac's Harbor about two miles upriver from the Sound. Soon afterward, the town was named Stratford. At that time, the town included lands that would later become the communities of Monroe, Shelton, Trumbull and Bridgeport.

Today, Stratford is a center of recreational boating and commercial shellfishing. Public attention is focused once again on opportunities for economic growth and community development presented by the town's waterfront. The Housatonic River and Long Island Sound continue to provide Stratford's citizens with vital economic, environmental and cultural opportunities and benefits as they have throughout the town's history.

Town of Stratford, Connecticut

This panel is prepared by the Stratford Waterfront and Harbor Management Commission. Graphic design by Pam Bullard, text and research by Geoff Stambour. The main image is a reproduction of an original painting by Christopher Bissone, reproduced here with the artist's general permission. Inset images courtesy of the Stratford Historical Society.

Bond's Dock at Shore Road

Following the Town's first settlement in 1639, Stratford's coastal location naturally supported boat building, navigation, and waterborne commerce. By 1701, the Town was one of Connecticut's eight Colonial ports of entry and the original port was located in the area now known as Bond's Dock.

Bond's Dock today provides public access to the Housatonic River for fishing and scenic views.

Enhancement of Bond's Dock to achieve its full potential as a public water access facility, consistent with traditional use and in coordination with pedestrian use of Shore Road, redevelopment of the Festival Theater site, and implementation of the Housatonic River Greenway is encouraged and supported.



Stratford Festival Theater Site and Recreation Area

On this historic site in 1955, the American Shakespeare Theater Company began productions of Shakespearean plays providing enjoyment and education for people of all ages. The theater became a major attraction of state-wide significance.

Unfortunately, after productions ceased in the mid-1980s, the theater and property lay vacant for many years. Redevelopment plans were proposed but not realized.

The theater was tragically destroyed by fire in January 2019. Immediately thereafter, the Town established the Shakespeare Property Task Force to consider re-use opportunities.



Stratford Festival Theater Site and Recreation Area

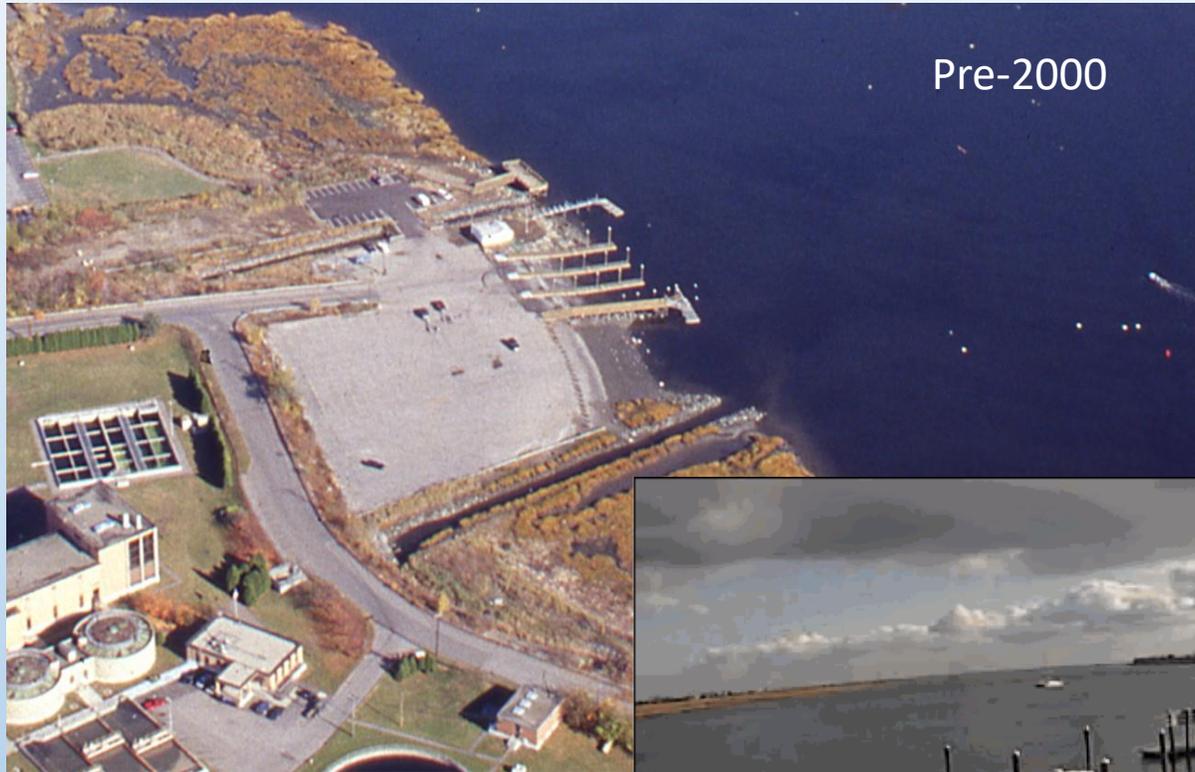
Redevelopment of this Town-owned property for deed-required entertainment and recreational purposes, with a strong waterfront connection via Shore Road, is encouraged and supported.

Our vision includes a vital center of public activity near the waterfront, developed in coordination with enhanced public use of Bond's Dock, restoration of Shore Road, and implementation of the Housatonic River Greenway.



A comprehensive plan for redevelopment will restore the site to its former prominence as a regional and state-wide attraction.

Birdseye Street River Access Area



Managed by the Waterfront and Harbor Management Commission, the Birdseye St. River Access Area is the principal point of public boating access to the Lower Housatonic River.



In addition to the boat launching facilities and parking areas for vehicles and boat trailers, the site includes the Fred Kaeser Memorial Fishing Pier and River Overlook providing opportunities for fishing and scenic views of the river. Also included is the Coast Guard Auxiliary building and Town dock historically used by the Auxiliary.

Birdseye Street River Access Area

Continued development and enhancement of public facilities, consistent with the capacity of the site and character of the surrounding neighborhood, is encouraged and supported, including, as now planned by the Waterfront and Harbor Management Commission, construction of a municipal pier for commercial fishing and excursion vessel use, and a new emergency services dock.

Facility maintenance will be commensurate with the status of the River Access Area as the Town's focal point for public boating activities and public access to the Housatonic River.



Achieving the Vision

An aerial photograph of a waterfront industrial area. A large body of blue water occupies the left and top portions of the image. A long, narrow pier or breakwater extends from the shore into the water. On the right side, there is a dense cluster of industrial buildings with various roof colors (black, blue, grey) and structures. The background shows more water and some greenery on the distant shore.

1. **Presentation of the Waterfront Vision to the Mayor and implementing agencies (Planning, Zoning, Redevelopment, Conservation, and others)**
2. **Endorsement of the Waterfront Vision by the Town Council**
3. **Revision of Town plans to incorporate the Waterfront Vision**
4. **Preparation/amendment of public use and/or redevelopment plans for key properties**
5. **Pursuit of implementation funds**
6. **Establishment of priorities and schedule**



**Stratford Waterfront and Harbor
Management Commission**

Town Hall

2725 Main Street, Stratford, Connecticut 06615

Photos © by G. Steadman unless noted otherwise. Bond's Dock painting © courtesy of Christopher Blossom; aircraft painting © courtesy of Sikorsky Historical Archives. Power Point Presentation by G. Steadman.

Acknowledgments

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