

DRAFT

05.20.2016

# MYSTIC BOATHOUSE PARK PROJECT



# OVERVIEW

The Town of Stonington seeks to acquire 123 Greenmanville Avenue (Connecticut Route 27), Mystic and convert the 1.5-acre site into a public park. *Why is the town of Stonington involved?* This property has been an underutilized waterfront asset in the Mystic Village neighborhood for over two decades, and it is apparent that but for the town's participation this property would remain an environmentally-contaminated blighted eyesore.

Concerns regarding environmental contamination, property valuation, permit approval risk, flood zone mitigation and coastal regulatory requirements limit private sector participation in finding a good solution for the community.

In 2015 the Town approached the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to request their participation as an intermediary for the purposes of acquiring this property. This request followed on the heels of a 2013 process with the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center that led to the acquisition, conservation of the historic Coogan Farm, situated diagonally across from this site on Route 27.

## TOWN OBJECTIVES

The Mystic Boathouse Park project connects with several local, state and federal public policy objectives, as follows:

### NEW PUBLIC ACCESS

Provide high-value town-controlled public access with 370 feet of riverfront along a heavily developed and privately-controlled coastal resource: the Mystic River.

### TOURISM GATEWAY

Reinforce the entrance to Mystic and the Mystic Seaport by providing amazing views of the premier maritime heritage museum in the world.

### TRANSPORTATION ACCESS TO THE RIVER

Enable boaters to access land-based activities in this neighborhood and vice versa. This new public resource will provide connectivity and an alternate transportation resource for the upper Mystic neighborhood.

### RECREATIONAL FACILITY

Provide a public place for additional non-motorized water sports along the Mystic riverfront. The Park should serve as an exceptional place for passive recreation (e.g., bird watching, sunbathing) and for active water sports (e.g., kayak, rowing).

### ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION

Remediate the brownfield conditions resulting from industrial heritage era lag disposal and restore coastal wetlands into a high quality resource.

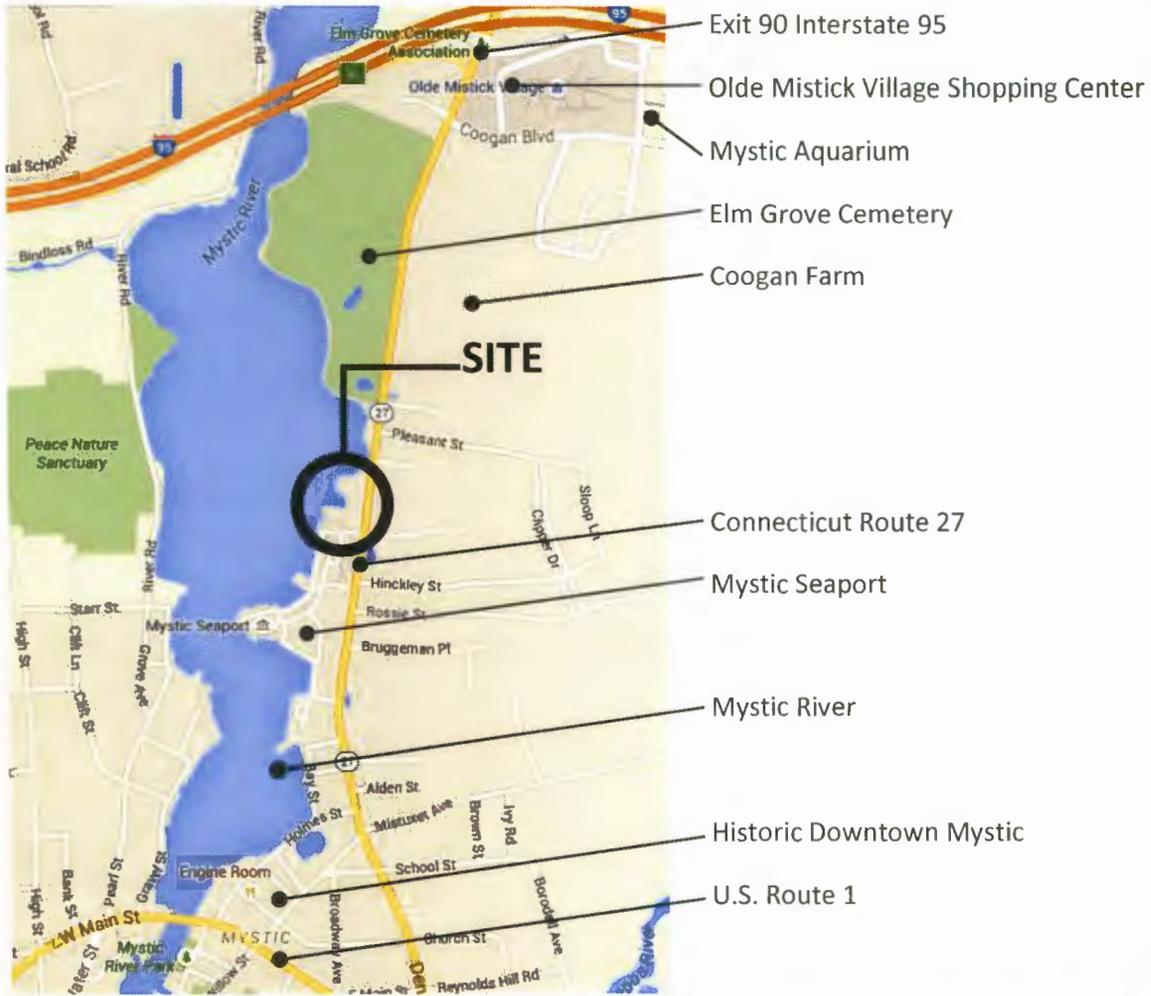
### BLIGHT REMEDIATION

Transform an underutilized and blighted property into a world-class public access space.

### A MYSTIC GREENWAY CORRIDOR

Connect this park to other public open space lands, neighborhoods and village areas within the community and region.

# LOCATION



## SITE



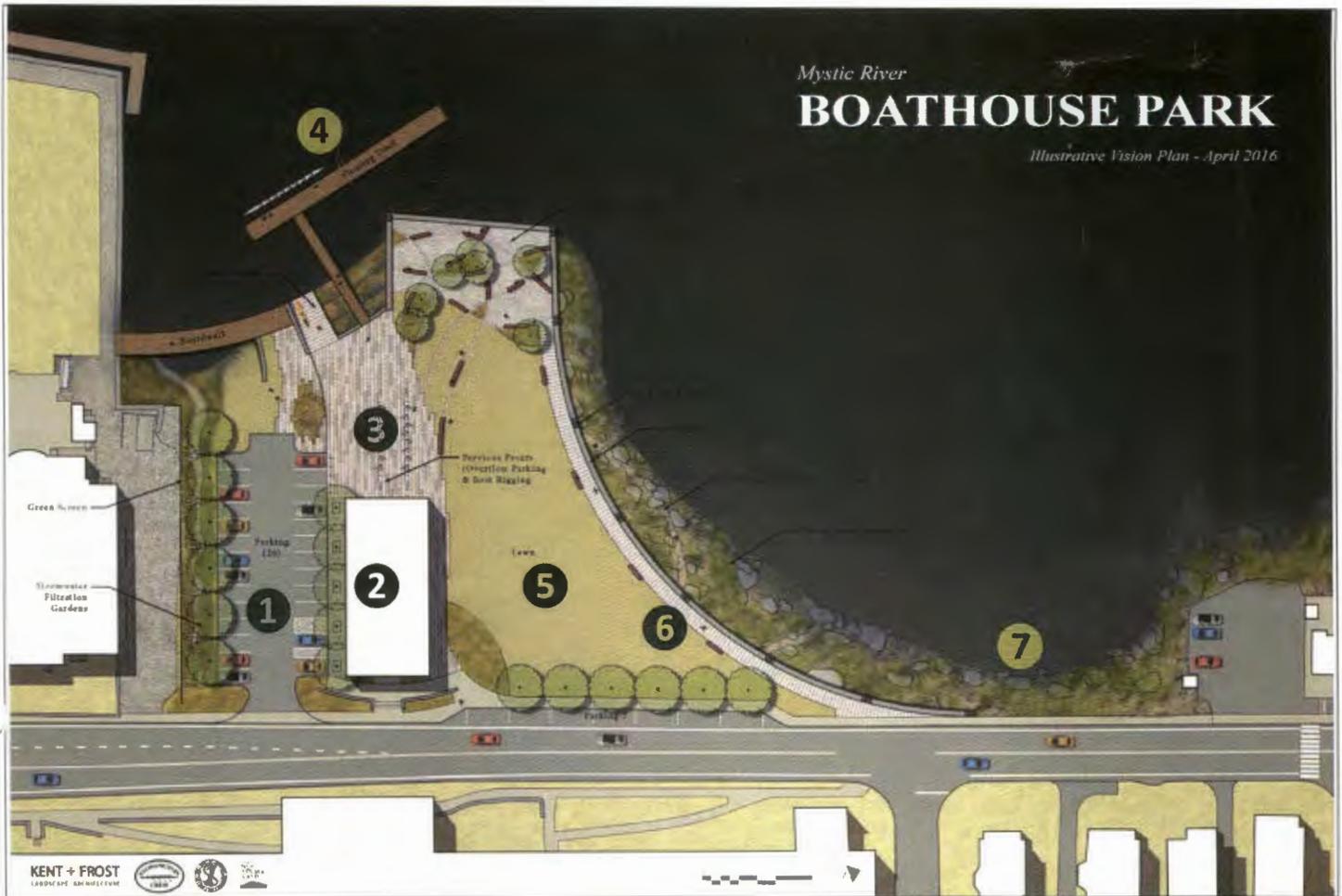


# Mystic River Boathouse Park

STONINGTON, CONNECTICUT



# CONCEPTUAL SITE DESIGN



Conceptual Design by Kent + Frost

## DESIGN FEATURES

The following features are being contemplated as part of this proposal:

1. Off-street parking area, with stormwater filtration landscaping.
2. Boathouse with ground floor boat storage and upper floor event space.
3. Outdoor event space / boat rigging / overflow parking.
4. Floating dock.
5. Passive recreation area.
6. Waterfront walkway / coastal wetland restoration.
7. Public beach.

### For additional information about this project:

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# Greenmanville Water Park

Hart Perry Boathouse



Town of Stonington Board of Selectmen Meeting

August 12, 2015

## History

For the past 15 years several groups including the Friends of Stonington Crew, the Mystic Seaport, the National Rowing Foundation and others have worked to try to acquire a parcel of land at 123 Greenmanville Avenue. The property is adjacent to the Mystic River between Latitudes Restaurant and the former Kitchen Little property, and represents one of the last under developed properties on the Mystic River.

This parcel has been under consideration because it is an ideal location providing access to the Mystic River at one of its most scenic areas with views of the Seaport and the upper Mystic River basin. It would be a perfect location for both park and water recreation areas. It is also located adjacent to one of the best rowing locations in Connecticut.

The Friends of Stonington Crew “FOSC” and our many community supporters would like to propose this parcel be considered for a town waterpark and public boathouse.

The site would provide easy access to people who would like to view the Seaport and river from the land and more importantly an access point for the launching of small boats onto the upper river. With the abundance of people looking for outdoor recreation, the upper Mystic River provides an ideal setting for canoeing, kayaking, paddle boarding, and rowing.

The parcel of land is approximately 1.5 acres including a 1,680 sq. /ft. house and large garage. It has been appraised by the town for \$670,700. The property has been listed for sale for many years; the last listing price was \$1,995,000.

Aerial photo of 123 Greenmanville Ave.





**Over** the years, the property has been a support structure for the Rossie Velvet Mill; the house was the caretaker's home for the mill, and the garage was a storage facility for coal to feed the mills boilers. Over the years, it has had uses including an automotive paint shop, a gas station, and blacksmith shop. There are environmental issues involved because of its prior uses detailed in a 2008 Phase 1 Study; further analysis will need to be done to determine the suitability of the property for public use.

If the property were to be repurposed as a park / boathouse, the existing structures would need to be removed. The house and garage are in poor condition and would not be able to be repaired for less than the 50% value criteria set by the town; therefore, it would have to be brought up to current code including raising both structures to the new flood elevation. Having been built in 1945 the house and the garage are in very close proximity to Greenmanville Avenue making it a less than desirable residence. If these structures were removed it would open up a site line allowing motorists traveling south on Greenmanville a view of the Seaport and the river which is currently blocked.

**Greenmanville traveling south: this property has a combination of buildings, fences and trees currently blocking the view of the Seaport, preventing people traveling south from viewing the Seaport.**



Same photo with trees and buildings cleared opening up vistas to the river and Seaport.



Greenmanville traveling north: existing buildings



Same picture with buildings and trees cleared opening up vistas to the north



**Because** this is the gateway for many tourists entering Mystic for the first time, it would greatly enhance the drive-up to the Seaport and downtown Mystic.

Several studies have been done in recent years looking at ways to draw visitors from Old Mystic Village and the Aquarium to downtown Mystic in an effort to attract more tourism. These include water taxis, trollies and improving the properties on Greenmanville Avenue to make more destinations potential tourists could visit. The acquisition of the Coogan Farm by the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center, improvements to the former Kitchen Little property, and plans underway to improve the south entrance to the Mystic Seaport Museum have all helped these efforts.

Having a park at the mid-point between these locations where pedestrians could stop and take in the scenic view, let their kids play, enjoy a picnic lunch, would be a natural addition to this process. Additionally, there has been conversation about the need for public facilities in this part of town for pedestrians.

## Greenmanville Park

One thing setting Stonington apart from other towns in Connecticut is the abundance of waterfront property. Unfortunately, most of that property is in private hands with little or no public access. This is especially true of the upper Mystic River, with minimal access points and few places to truly appreciate the river.

What FOOSC is proposing is to repurpose the property at 123 Greenmanville into a public space which would offer access for rowing, sailing, kayaking, canoeing and a park where townspeople and visitors could have a picnic, enjoy the river, take pictures, or go fishing.

The park would have a facility providing storage for the SHS Crews equipment and private boat storage. It would include a dock with access to the river, a meeting room which could be used for events, education and outreach programs, locker rooms for showering and changing, and a large parking area for cars.

It would include facilities for educational programs, town events, emergency shelter, Stonington Parks and Recreation activities, and town meetings. The park could hold sports events, crew races, banquets, and recreational activities.

Riverfront Park could offer:

- Scenic overlook of the Mystic River and Seaport
- A place where local residents could gain access to the water
- A park with a children's playground
- Access to boating, kayaking, canoeing, paddling and rowing. A boat launching dock for non-motorized boats
- Fishing from the dock and banks
- A picnic pavilion
- Educational opportunities through Stonington Parks and Rec. and DPNC.
- High utilization, 60-90 rowers a day, 5-6 days a week spring, summer, and fall



In early 2013, a Stonington Town subcommittee developed a detailed survey to obtain information on what residents would like to see the town develop. The survey was made available both on-line and in hard-copy form at various locations. The survey was active for about three months and over 700 responses were received as of March 2013. The results of the survey were very influential in guiding the recommendations of the Town Development Plan.

Things people indicated they would like to see more of:

- Bicycle and walking trails (89%)
- Open space and nature preserves (79%)
- Waterfront public access (78%)
- Park and recreation facilities (77%)
- Development with more open space (73%)
- Small-scale retail (68%)
- Arts and cultural establishments (65%)
- Research and development (64%)
- Agriculture (61%)
- Public parking in village areas (57%)

Respondents agreed with the overall concept of:

- Developing additional walking and biking trails (94%)
- Investing in roads / infrastructure maintenance to avoid more costly repairs (90%)
- Encouraging the preservation of open space (89%)
- Encourage the use of alternative energy sources (88%)
- Encouraging low-impact development (87%)

- Do more to create additional sidewalks (83%)
- Facilitating agriculture (81%)
- Doing more to protect aquifer areas (81%)
- Encouraging incentives for new businesses (80%)

Things people indicated they would like to see less of:

- 10+ unit residential buildings (52%)
- Drive-thru restaurants (49%)
- 3-10 unit residential buildings (45%)
- Large-scale retail stores (39%)
- Self-storage facilities (35%)

When asked to score 10 issues in terms of their importance in the Town of Stonington, respondents indicated the following (1 = lowest score, 10 = highest score):

- Protection of natural resources and open space preservation (7.45)
- Enhancing the school system (6.70)
- Maintenance of local roads and utility infrastructure (6.48)
- Expanding parks / recreational / walking paths / trails / sidewalks (6.30)
- Revitalizing existing village areas and filling current commercial vacancies (5.87)
- Protection of historic sites and buildings (5.75)
- Protection and enhancement of agriculture (5.15)
- Promotion of new commercial development (4.41)
- Expanding public transportation opportunities (3.61)
- Promotion of affordable housing (3.31)

In terms of taxes:

- About 67% felt the current level of taxes was appropriate
- About 26% felt the current level of taxes was too high
- About 7% felt the current level of taxes was too low

When asked if they would be willing to vote for an increase in taxes to provide increases/improvements in different categories, respondents indicated the following:

- Education (70%)
- Infrastructure (60%)
- Open space (59%)
- Service (38%)
- Other (21%)

When asked if they would be willing to bond monies in different categories, respondents indicated the following:

- Education (67%)
- Infrastructure (65%)
- Open space (52%)
- Development (32%)
- Other (11%)

**Based** on our investigation it is our belief the property at 123 Greenmanville Ave, could be converted into a town park. It is also our belief the current zoning would allow the construction of a park as described in this document. It would benefit the town by providing access to an area of the Mystic River that is largely inaccessible at this point. It would be beneficial to local businesses by providing an improved corridor that most people use to enter Mystic, it would also provide an additional destination for people visiting the area. For town's people it would provide access to one of the most picturesque areas of the Mystic River for recreation. It would provide parking, small craft access to the river, and a waterfront park. It would also provide water access and a permanent home for Stonington High School Crew and the nearly 100 students that participate in the program each year. For this reason, we ask the town to consider our proposal to secure this important property.

## Hart Perry Boathouse

Hart Perry was a resident of North Stonington for many years and one of the most influential people in rowing in the United States. Hart passed away a few years ago but not before leaving an indelible mark on the sport. Hart was a rower, coach, promoter, and advocate for the sport and helped start many of our area's youth rowing programs. Up until his death in 2011, Hart devoted his life to the sport of rowing, from raising money for the United States National Rowing Team, founding the Rowing Hall Of Fame at the Mystic Seaport, to starting the New England Interscholastic Rowing Championships; Hart was involved in every aspect of Crew.

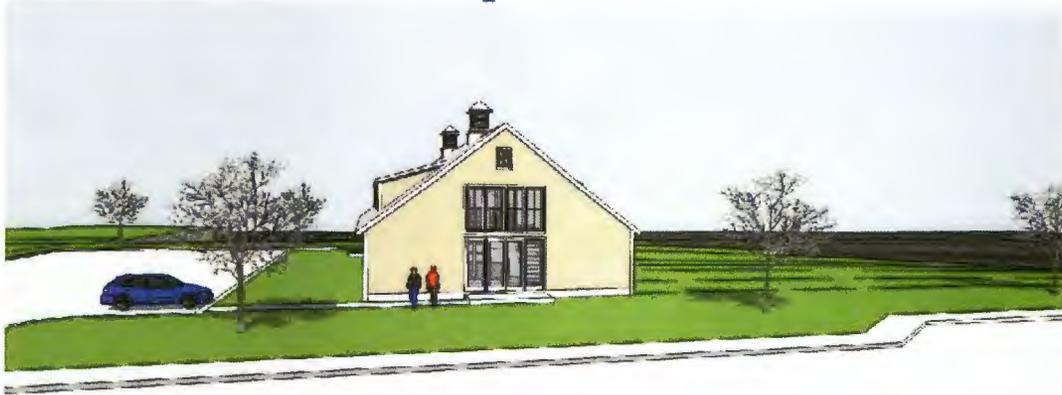
The Boathouse would serve as permanent home for the Stonington High School Crew, but would also be a community boathouse with space for masters rowing, club programs and disabled rowing programs. It would have a combination of indoor and outdoor storage of shells and equipment. Additional racks/Storage would incorporated for other activates including kayaking, paddle boarding and canoeing.

A new boathouse would open many opportunities for the community, enabling:

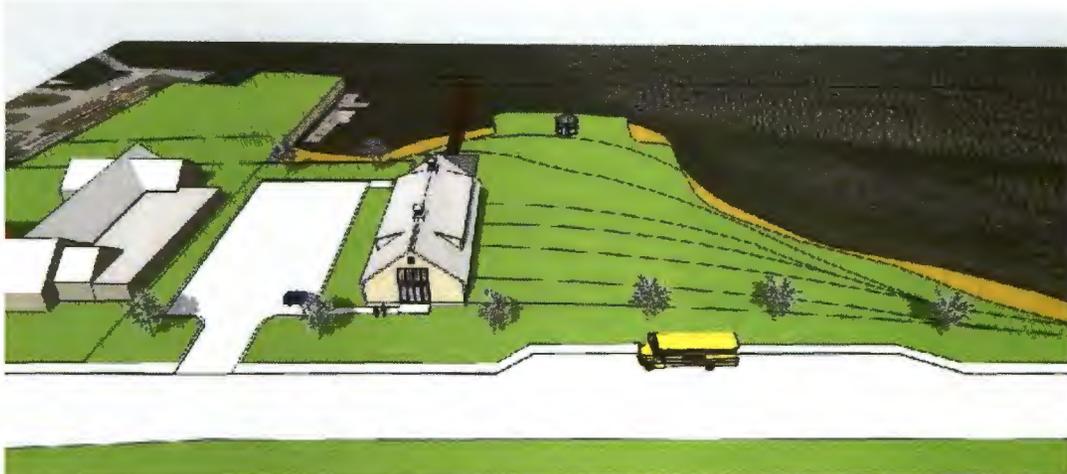
- A permanent home for the Stonington High School Crew
- Inside storage for the valuable shells, oars, ergometers, equipment and privately owned boats
- Indoor workout space
- A spectator vantage point for viewing regattas
- It would give Stonington Parks and Recreation a facility to hold classes and have events.
- Possible public restroom location
- Second floor Space for classroom, banquet, and town functions
- Bus stop / siding north of Mystic Seaport

It is FOOSC's belief we can fundraise for the construction of this building and the dock. Like our equipment, we would then sell it to the town for a nominal amount and the town would own, insure, and manage the property. FOOSC would want to have access to the basement level for storage of the equipment required for their programs and would contribute to the overhead on an ongoing basis.

## Boathouse and Park Concept Street View



## Boathouse and Park Aerial View



## Interior Views

