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# **Bonnet Shores Master Plan**

## **May 2000**

**For The Bonnet Shores Fire District Council**

**Consultants:**

Newport Collaborative Architects, Inc.  
Architecture – Planning – Interior Design  
with  
Pawlowski Associates  
Landscape Architects and Planners

**Credits and thank you to:**

**The Long Range Planning Committee  
The Bonnet Shores Fire District Council  
Bonnet Shores Fire District Taxpayers**

and  
**The Town of Narragansett  
Department of Community Planning and Development**  
*Clarkson Collins, Planner*



# BONNET SHORES MASTER PLAN

## INTRODUCTION

In the winter of 1998, the Bonnet Shores Long Range Planning Committee invited the firm, Newport Collaborative Architects, Inc. (NCA), in association with Pawlowski Associates, to assist the Bonnet Shores community in preparing a comprehensive Master Plan.

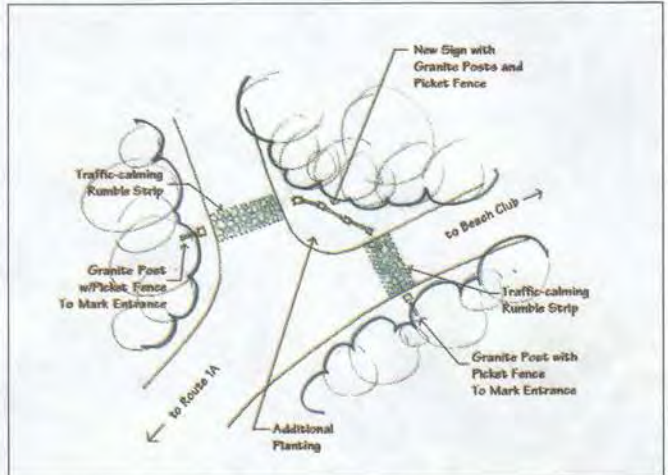
The Bonnet Shores community undertook this Master Plan process motivated by several concerns, including: growth, protection of open space, preservation of existing character, and the need for guidelines to direct planning for the future.

With these issues in mind, a year-long community-based planning process began. The process was a collaborative effort between the residents and property owners of Bonnet Shores, members of the Long Range Planning Committee, Town of Narragansett officials and the consultants. Funding for the planning process was provided by State and Town sources.

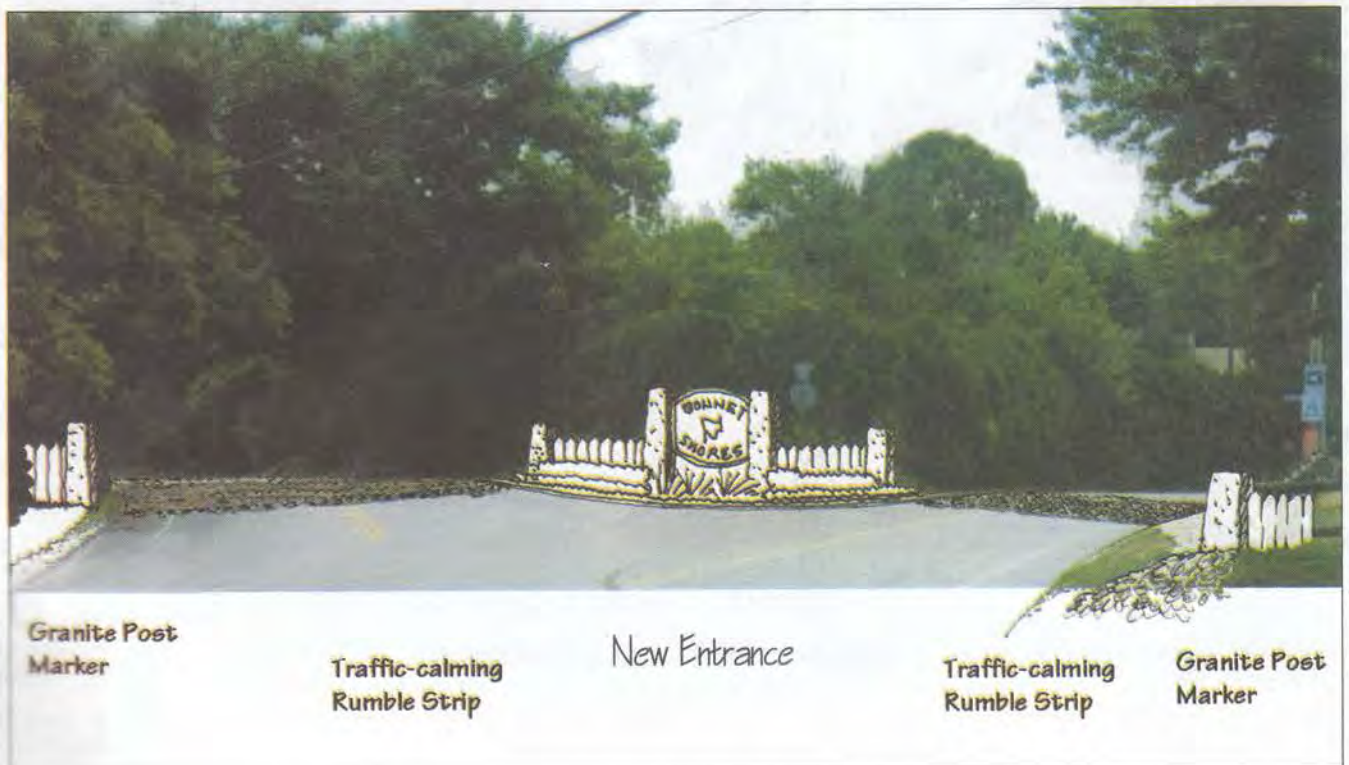
The final Master Plan document is the product of community meetings, surveys and workshops in which literally hundreds of Bonnet Shore residents participated during the summer of 1999. This Master Plan report is very much the result of the enthusiastic participation of those who care about Bonnet Shores. All of the issues identified, recom-

mendations made, and guidelines for implementation and maintenance are the result of mutual collaboration.

The Master Plan is intended to provide a long-range context in which future decisions can be considered. In this way, those responsible for making decisions about the future of Bonnet Shores can maintain the focus of goals and objectives reached through consensus.

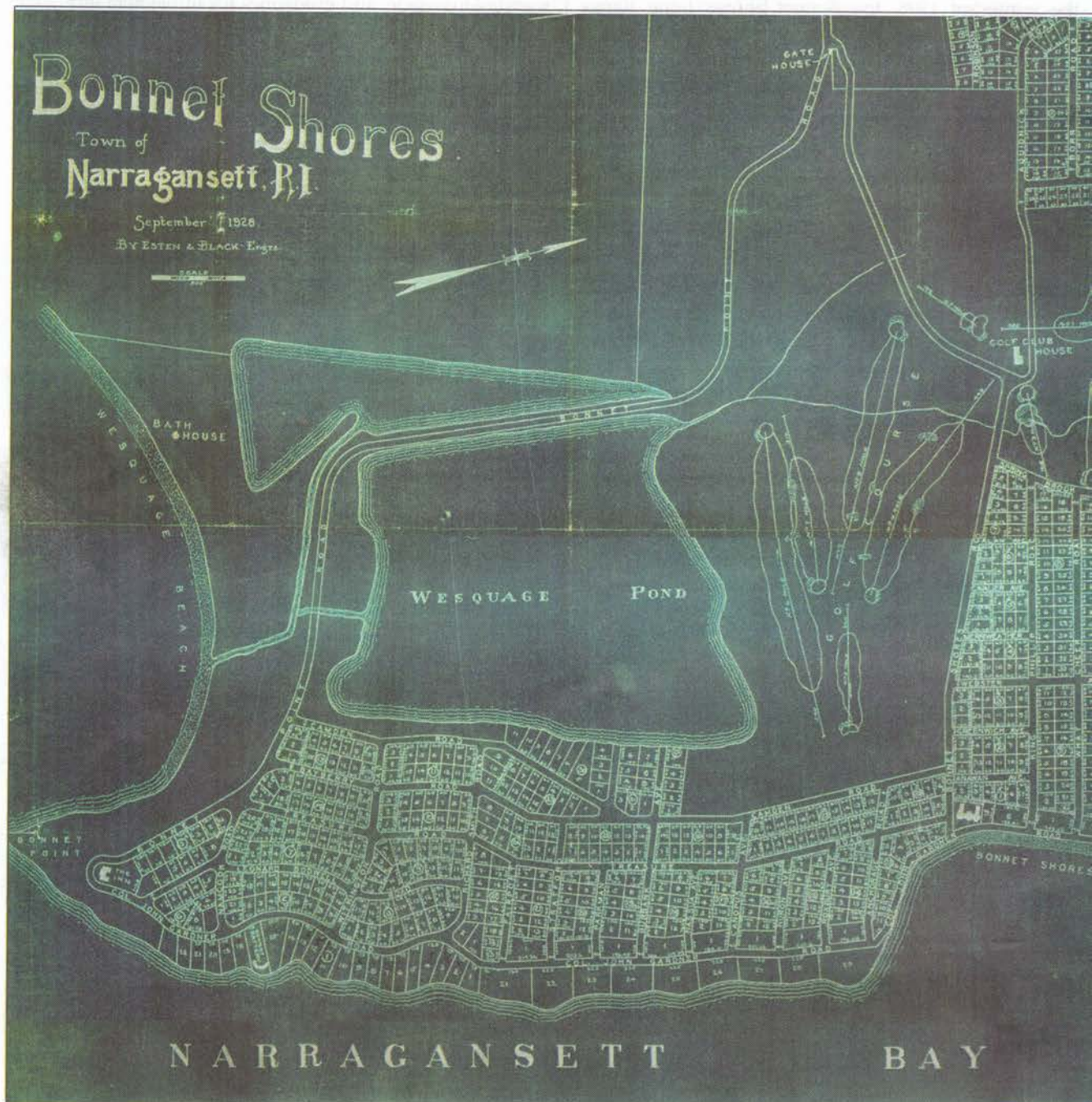


Conceptual entry plan showing traffic calming measures



Proposed new entrance with planting, signage and pavement treatments





**Bonnet Yesterday**  
1928 map of Community Plan







## MASTER PLAN VISION

*The vision for the Bonnet Shores community's future includes protecting and preserving the existing characteristics that define Bonnet Shores. These include the scale of buildings and streets, styles of housing, community diversity, privacy and the strong feeling of community and neighborliness. Environmental characteristics that should be protected and enhanced include the beaches, cliffs, scenic views and existing open spaces.*

## VALUED COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

Bonnet Shores is a small-scale community within the Town of Narragansett. It is almost exclusively residential, with a mix of year-round and seasonal (primarily summer) residents.

Bonnet Shores is rich in outstanding natural resources. Bounded by Narragansett Bay on two sides and facing Conanicut Island to the east, it offers spectacular views of the Atlantic Ocean and the bay. With Wesquage Pond in its midst and ample open spaces, the existing natural features and other amenities have collective value to residents.

The architectural character of Bonnet Shores is varied, with styles ranging from grand Colonial Revival and Tudor homes to cozy Cape Cod style homes, and even an area of log cabins. This mix contributes significantly to the community's special character.

There are also many publicly-owned amenities which are the financial responsibility of the Fire District. These features and amenities include:

- ▶ open space
- ▶ a community center used for public entertainment and meetings
- ▶ a playground and playing field
- ▶ a mooring area, boat launch, and protected east-facing swimming area
- ▶ a sandy south-facing beach on the south edge of the community
- ▶ an historic site with a cliff-side overlook
- ▶ fish dockage at Westquage Pond

The Bonnet Shores Land Trust, established in 1991 through an Act of the Rhode Island General Assembly, is a non-profit entity that receives donations of land for the preservation of open space.

The Bonnet Shores Beach Club is a member-owned separate entity with a management structure located within the Fire District.



Picturesque architecture and close proximity to the sea make Bonnet Shores special.



## HISTORY

In 1928 Bonnet Shores was envisioned by its developers as a summer resort to rival Newport in prestige and amenities. However, the stock market crash in 1929 and the Depression scaled development to a more modest level.

The original Master Plan for Bonnet Shores included a golf course, beach club and a pavilion consisting of cabanas and bathhouses at the sandy beach. There was also a club house on Bonnet Shores Road where social activities for residents of the community were held.

The 1938 hurricane partially destroyed the old club house and the remaining portions were converted into three separate homes, which still stand today. A new club was formed, located on the edge of Wesquage Pond and Narragansett Bay.

Old aerial shows cliffs and Surf Beach in the background.



Growth continued, with summer houses gradually converted to year-round use, so that by 1960 there were over 100 winterized residences. In 1999 there were over 850 houses, with the potential for over 200 new ones on developable, vacant lots.



Aerial view of Bonnet Shores.  
Inset right is early photo of the club house.



## GOVERNMENTAL MANAGEMENT

The incorporating Act of 1932 passed by the Rhode Island State Legislature granted Fire District status to Bonnet Shores through a charter and by-laws. A Fire District is a quasi-governmental entity that has the legal authority to perform specified administrative and governmental functions independently of the Town in which it is located.

The defining purpose of a Fire District is to provide safety to its residents from fire and other hazards, manage its land and provide for recreation. However, the incorporating legislation also gave the Bonnet Shores Fire District the authority to raise money through a fire district tax for the following purposes: maintain streets and walkways, create fire, police and a life saving department, establish street lights, general improvment, upbuilding and beautification of district property, to purchase and/or lease land for recreation, including beach and boating facilities.

Bonnet Shores has indeed evolved beyond simple fire protection regulations and has adopted many ordinances and by-laws that further define the way in which self-government occurs.

This form of strong self-government functions through an elected governing Council which oversees the operation of the Fire District, and is also empowered to appoint com-

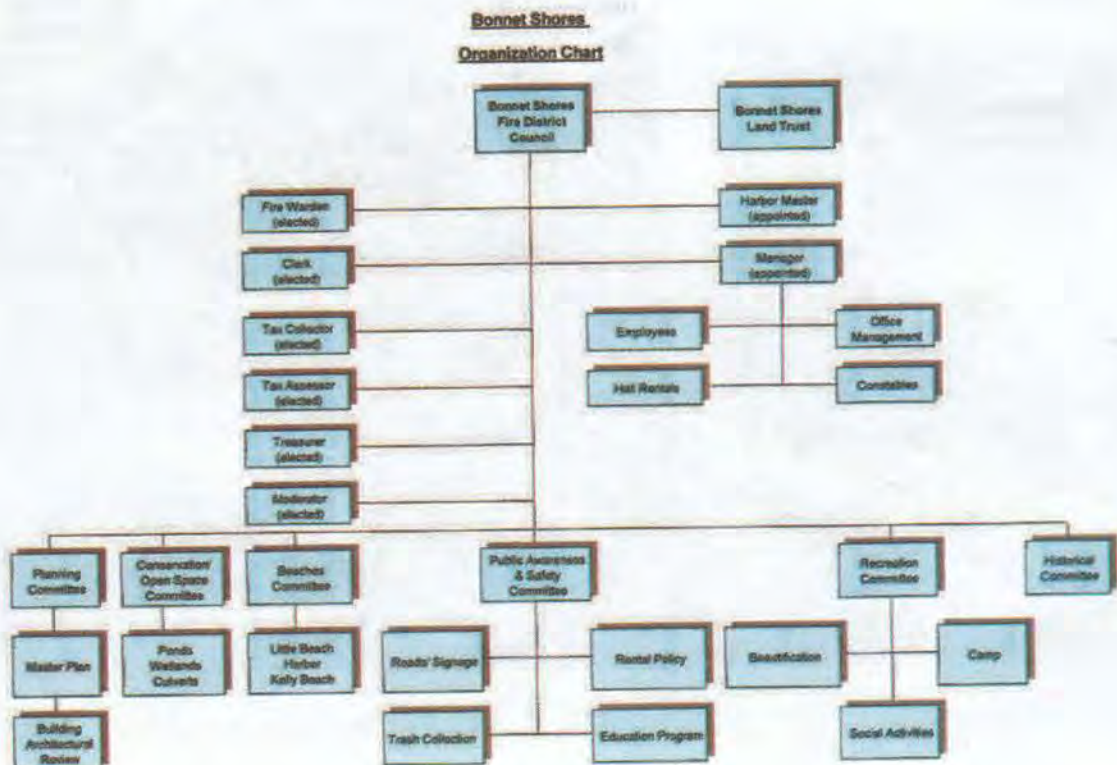
mittees with specific responsibilities. A Council person serves as a liasion on the six standing committees.

One of the most important functions of the Fire District Council is the power to tax, and to formulate and adopt an annual budget that provides for the maintenance of community facilities and services.

The power to tax was given to the Fire District in its original incorporating act. Currently the tax rate is set at a rate of one mil. The Council has the legal rate to tax to a rate of seven mil.

The Fire District Council conducts workshops to prepare the annual budget, which is then presented for public comment at two public hearings before it is finalized. The budget is then adopted by the Council and then presented to the community at the Fire District Annual Meeting. The budget includes operating and capital improvement budgets.

All roads within the Bonnet Shores community are owned by the Fire District. However, through agreement with the Town of Narragansett, all utilities and public assets are maintained by the Town. Potable water lines are owned and maintained by the United Water Company, and sewer lines are owned by the Town.





## MAJOR ISSUES AND CONCERNS

### FUTURE GROWTH AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER



**Historic and traditional home styles reinforce the special character of Bonnet Shores.**

There are approximately 850 homes today built on the approximately 400 plus acres that comprise Bonnet Shores. Land use maps of the Town of Narragansett show approximately 420 undeveloped legal lots of record within the Fire District. Of these, 120 are located in wetland areas, and others are located in sensitive areas where it may be very difficult to obtain development permits. The majority of the severely constrained lots are adjacent to properties owned by the Audubon Society and Bonnet Shores Land Trust. In all, approximately 200-250 lots can be considered "buildable" under current laws and regulations.

The recent rate of growth within Bonnet Shores over the past two decades has been sustained at approximately twenty (20) houses per year. At the current rate of growth, Bonnet Shore will be completely built out within 10-20

years. By 2015, there could be over 1,000 houses in a community whose 1928 Master Plan anticipated fewer than 500.

How can Bonnet Shore maintain the community character, deemed so important by residents, in the face of so much new construction? This potential growth is the greatest threat to the existing character of the community.

In addition to new construction, another threat is the growing trend of "tear-downs". This involves purchasing an existing house, tearing it down, and building a much larger structure on the site, one that often overshadows the smaller neighboring homes.

In order for Bonnet Shores to maintain its valuable character, it must be proactive in preserving its natural resources, open spaces and architectural scale.



**New buildings can reinforce the charm and character of the community.**



## FUTURE GROWTH AND WASTEWATER TREATMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Beyond the changes to community character that new development brings, there are significant environmental and infrastructure implications. If all of the "buildable" lots in Bonnet Shores are filled with new homes, the population increase will have a severe impact on the community's natural resources. New buildings will generate increased sewage that will need to be dealt with through new infrastructure, a major investment for the community.

Seventy percent of Bonnet Shores is served by sewer lines that deliver wastewater to a treatment facility. Narragansett's Department of Community Development and Planning is currently drafting a septic management plan for Bonnet Shores. Sewer extensions at the Point and beach areas are scheduled, but are not a town priority because of their cost. The area south of the Community Building and Bonnet Shores Road is predominantly wetlands and, therefore, is under consideration for sewer expansion. To address wastewater treatment, the community can consider:

### **Expansion of the sewage lines:**

If the sewer system is extended to the beach and lower Point cliff area where prime real estate is located, density can be expected to rise.

Tearing down older, smaller houses to make way for larger ones with more bedrooms may begin once sewers are installed. This increased density will further strain community resources.

### **No new sewage lines:**

Building permits will not be granted without approvals from State, and/or Federal, agencies.

If no new sewage infrastructure is created, new development could have a severe impact on water quality in the pond and beach areas.

While sewage line expansion may be unlikely, new technologies may evolve that will accommodate residential

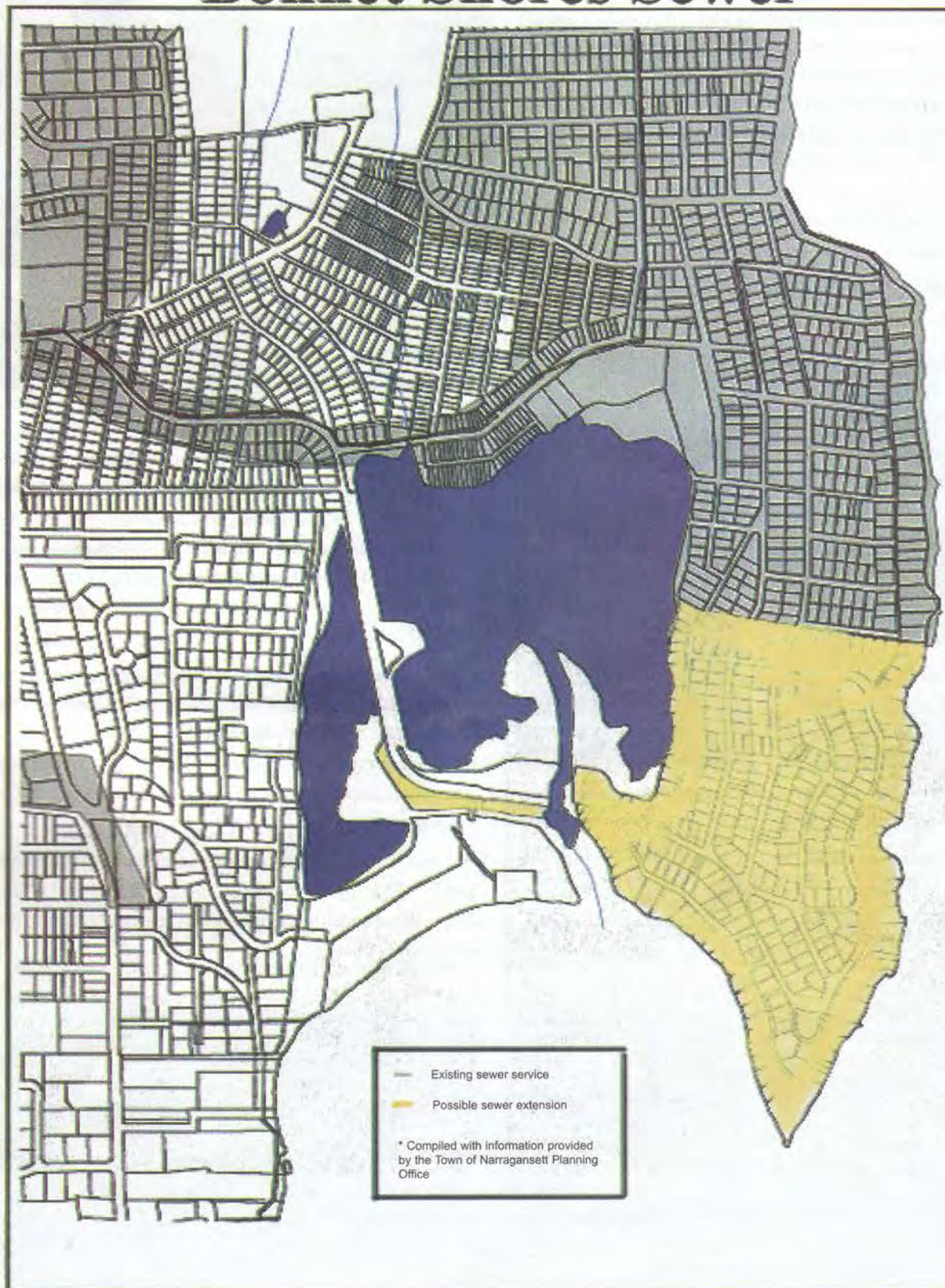
development without impact to water quality. Because of this, sewage limitations will not be an effective retardant to growth for an indefinite period.



**New construction controls help retain community character and limit teardowns.**



# Bonnet Shores Sewer





## WESQUAGE POND

Primary concerns for Wesquage Pond are run-off and lack of storm-water management. The absence of watershed and runoff management translates into higher seasonal water levels in the pond and the water table in surrounding areas. This results in general water quality degradation. As development increases, more run-off, flooding, and water quality contamination can be expected to occur. Current problems include:

- ▶ external flushing in the form of tidal water inflow is needed,
- ▶ internal flushing is needed because of undersized culverts.



**At the heart of Bonnet Shores, Wesquage Pond has been designated a wildlife refuge.**

There are many agencies and organizations having the pond within their purview on the local, state and federal levels. These agencies include: Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, Save the Bay, and the Army Corps of Engineers.



**The pond provides open space and water views.**

The Army Corps of Engineers is currently completing reconnaissance mapping of the pond to determine if federal involvement is warranted. Federal money is proposed for restoring the pond by replacing culverts along Bonnet Point Road. The Fire District should participate in discussions with the Corps of Engineers to insure that the results of these efforts are consistent with community goals.

The community has started breachway management, and that should be continued to ensure flushing and improved water quality. Property owners can take steps to curb contamination including: eliminate or minimize fertilizers and weed killers, replace or pump out septic systems, and clean up pet droppings.

The Fire District should continue to meet with members of CRMC, DEM, the Corps of Engineers, and Save the Bay to discuss Wesquage Pond and exchange information that can improve the situation.



## BEACHES and WATERFRONT ACCESS

### **Bonnet Shores Beach Club:**

Initially, the Bonnet Shore Beach Club was privately owned. Later, it was sold as condominium units so that there are many individual owners. This change in ownership significantly changes the way in which decisions are made about the future of the Beach Club property.

Indeed, there is confusion as to the extent of the expansion possible at the Bonnet Shores Beach Club. The Club has a DEM permit to build an additional 139 new units. Permission to build these units was granted during the initial expansion and the Beach Club still retains its right to build.

However, in order to expand, the Club must face a number of significant regulatory hurdles. Any site and construction plans must be submitted to the Town for approval, and the Club must rectify any outstanding violations before a building permit can be issued. In addition, the Rhode Island Coastal Resource Management Council requires permits for:

- ▶ Septic Systems
- ▶ Water Quality
- ▶ Runoff

Also, many uses are highly regulated because of the Beach Club's location in relation to coastal waters and wetlands.

These regulated uses include:

- ▶ Filling, Removing, and grading of shoreline features
- ▶ Residential structures
- ▶ Commercial or industrial structures
- ▶ Sewage disposal systems
- ▶ Point discharge of runoff
- ▶ Construction of roads, parking lots, or bridges.

Under CRMC permitting regulations, construction of a public recreational facility may be problematic in wetlands areas, as such facilities are prohibited. On a moderately developed barrier beach the applicant would have to:

- ▶ demonstrate that all local zoning ordinances, building codes, state safety codes, and environmental requirements have been met;
- ▶ demonstrate that connections to public water and sewer will be provided;
- ▶ demonstrate that adequate transportation and utility services are available to support proposed operations and related activities;
- ▶ describe the need for the alteration;
- ▶ describe the impact of alterations on coastal and wetland waters;
- ▶ describe the impact of erosion on water circulation, flushing and sedimentation; and
- ▶ demonstrate that there will be no significant deterioration of water quality.

### **Kelly Beach and Little Beach:**

While the Beach Club property is privately owned, Kelly Beach and Little Beach are two smaller beaches in the Bonnet Shore community that are public open space and provide important access to the shoreline for many residents. Both are important as recreational beaches and as access points to the shoreline.

### **Camden Road Pier:**

This small pier is another important access point for community members who want a public right of way to the water. This is used by residents for fishing, canoeing, and passive recreation.





## THE CLIFFS

Erosion of the cliffs is slow but steady. While this process is a natural one that takes place in all coastal locations, the Coastal Resources Management Council states that property owner practices of mowing to the edge and using chemical weed killers have weakened the cliffs.

It is estimated that in 15-20 years, the Cliffs will erode to the point where adjacent homes may be endangered.

To slow the erosion as much as possible, invasive, native, and dense rock-clinging plants are recommended at the cliff edge and back from it for some distance to deter mowing and help stabilize the edge of the cliffs.



## MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

Effectively managing Fire District activities to maintain the high neighborhood quality of Bonnet Shores and increase property value is a continuing challenge.

While some community taxpayers are willing to explore enhancements to the quality of life, many are concerned about simply keeping the status quo affordable.

The by-laws and ordinances that govern the Fire District are strong, but lack of consistent and even enforcement of these regulations has gradually weakened their effectiveness. In addition, citizen understanding of these regulations needs to be strengthened. This could perhaps be accomplished by reformatting the Blue Book into a residential guide book, the published listing of all the laws, ordinances, and by-laws that govern the Bonnet Shores community.

Meeting the challenge of maintaining and enhancing the Bonnet Shores community requires an Action Plan that addresses simple, cost-effective solutions for meeting needs and accomplishing major goals.

Projects that will enhance community life, may also be funded through community fund-raising efforts, with minimal impact on Fire District budgets. The District is authorized to sell bonds and may also seek other forms of outside funding.



## MASTER PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

*Key goals and objectives were identified by the over 200 residents who participated in the public meetings and the 425 residents who responded to the informational survey (See page 24 for more information.) These goals and objectives were divided into four major areas.*

### Community Character



**Retaining the historic, small scale buildings of the community is a key part of maintaining its unique character.**

Preservation of the community's existing character is the defining objective for the Master Plan. The Master Plan will help citizens work together to preserve those characteristics of community value.

This sentiment was expressed consistently in public meetings, survey responses, in written form, and anecdotally.

A major purpose of any Master Plan is to reconcile the needs of the future while maintaining the desirable qualities of the present and past, and to provide citizens and decision-makers with guidelines for achieving this reconciliation.

The most challenging reconciliation for decision-makers to address is the tension between the dynamics of inevitable change and the nostalgia of the status quo.

### Growth Management

As with other communities, future development is the major threat to preserving the existing community character for Bonnet Shores.

The existing architectural scale and styles of homes, the neighborly spirit, the ambient social texture, the sense of personal security and safety, the preservation of open space and physical beauty are the valuable qualities which Bonnet Shore residents seek to maintain.

Preservation of open space is a benchmark issue. Protection of natural resources and environmental assets is implicit in open space preservation. The Land Trust is the vehicle for educating the public on the need for open space, and the entity through which land can be acquired or donated.

Controlling future development is key to maintaining the current desirable density and quality of life. Development can be regulated through local ordinances requiring design review for new construction. Restrictions on height, footprint, materials parameters, and phased building can all be enforced.

Development must be balanced with open space commitments. Limiting development requires the community to commit to it as a primary goal. The central organization that can assist in this effort is the Bonnet Shores Land Trust which can receive donations of land and funding in order to preserve the open spaces in the community.

### Health and Safety



**Open space and viewshed preservation can effectively retain the community connection to the natural resource areas.**

Health and safety issues are directly related to community roads - their condition, maintenance, use, and relationship to pedestrians and cyclists. Improvement to roadways includes enhancement or installation of pedestrian walkways, traffic calming devices, enforcement of speed limits, and parking regulations.

A balance between the needs of vehicular traffic and the needs of pedestrians must be met, once the community boundary lines are crossed. Many communities have successfully implemented minor alterations to roadways and intersections that slow down the traffic at key areas, while defining the appropriate zones for car travel, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic.



Enforcement of traffic rules within Bonnet Shores would help to ensure public safety and produce aesthetic and recreational benefits through improved road conditions and enhanced pedestrian amenities.

### **Recreational Facilities and Programs**

A important objective identified by the survey is the the desire to maintain and enhance the recreational facilities and activities available to Bonnet Shore residents. This goal is dependent on the meeting the objectives for community character, growth management, and health & safety.

If the character of the Bonnet Shore community is maintained, cooperation and camaraderie will prevail and posi-

tively effect recreational programs and the desire to upkeep and improve sport and civic facilities. With controls in place for growth management comes the assurance of open space for recreation and community enjoyment. Placing limitations on development can also nurture a community atmosphere where neighborhood activities are a welcomed part of socializing with neighbors.

Unless a community is safe for pedestrians to travel, recreational programs will not flourish. Efficient and safe roadways will directly influence how recreational facilities are utilized and how well programs are attended. In summary the goal for recreational amenities relies on the attainment of all other defined goals.



Opportunities for passive recreation and community gathering can improve the quality of life for all.



## THE ACTION PLAN

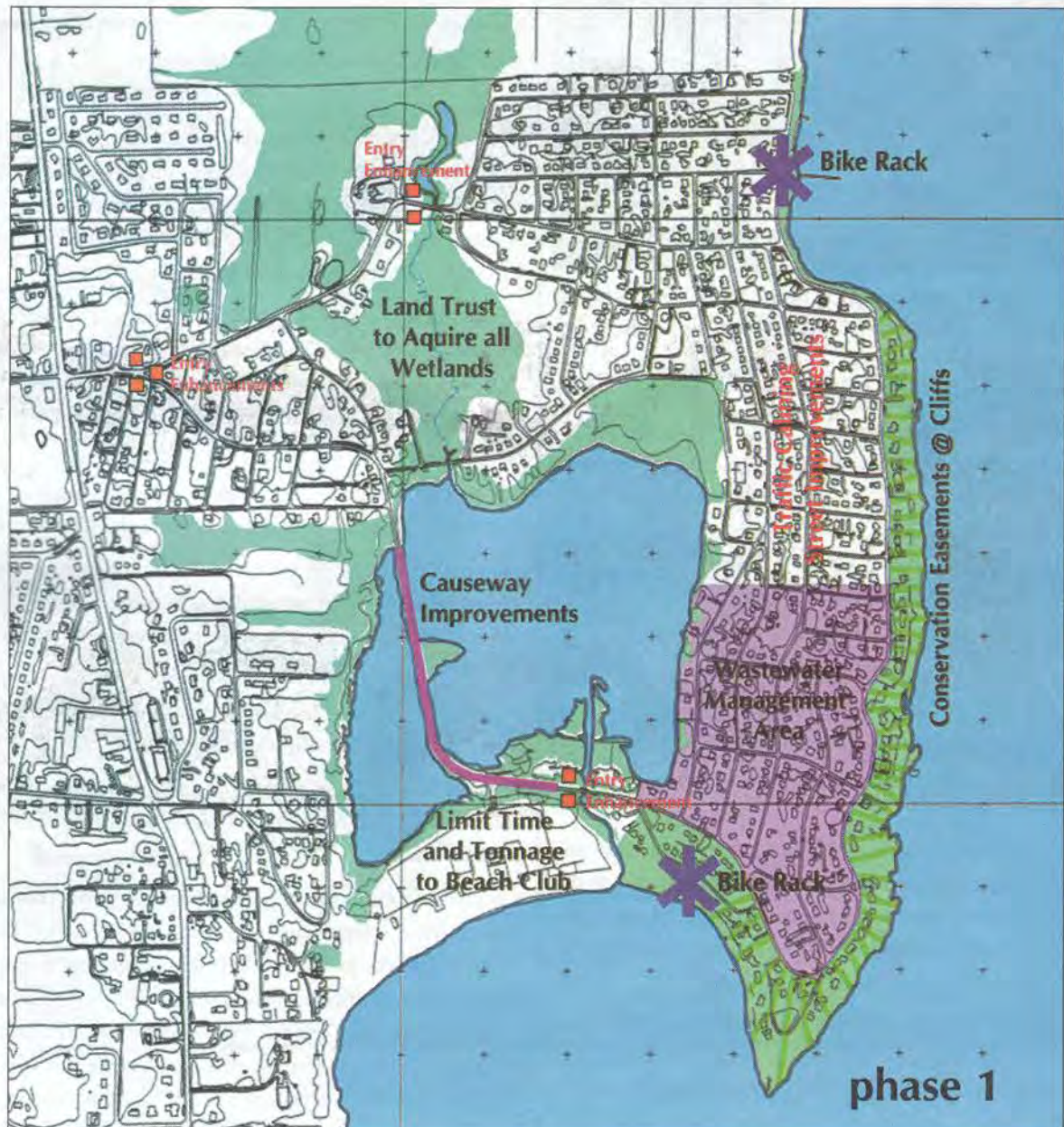
The Action Plan outlines steps to achieve the Master Plan's Goals and Objectives. It is divided into three phases over 20 years. It is the responsibility of the Fire District Council and the Long Range Planning Committee to recommend when each Action Item should be implemented.

Implementation is intended to be flexible and to serve as a *guide* for the future development. If the community believes an Action Item is not feasible in the present, it can be done in a future phase, eliminated, or acted upon incrementally.

The guiding philosophy of the Action Plan is low cost community management. Capital facility enhancements may be funded through Bonnet community fund-raising efforts to lessen the impact on Fire District taxes.

### PHASE 1

#### Initial Implementation - Policy Management





1. Maintain the Bonnet Shores Fire District management organization with a refined standing committee.

The Fire District Manager's position should be further defined as a staff position providing support for the Council and standing committees.



The basic management structure of the Fire District should remain intact, but committee functions need to be redefined to strengthen its working order.

The new committee structure will include six major standing committees. Ad hoc committees will be appointed as necessary to support the operation of the district. The standing committees are as follows:

- ▶ Planning Committee
- ▶ Conservation and Open Space Committee
- ▶ Beaches Committee
- ▶ Public Awareness Committee
- ▶ Historical Committee, and
- ▶ Recreation Committee.

Internal communications between committees and the District Manager, and external communication between the District and the Town of Narragansett must be strengthened, and working relationships developed in order for the Master Plan to be implemented successfully.

Because the District Manager will perform all of the administrative duties, the job description must be revised to reflect a clear line of authority and responsibility.

Successful implementation of the Master Plan requires a

wide base of community participation. Therefore, a recruitment program for broad citizen participation is essential.

The Council should determine the responsibilities of each committee, and a member of the Council should serve on each committee.

2. Begin growth management with open space acquisition through a donation program, explore a conservation easement program for the cliffs, begin a dialogue with the Beach Club board about its expansion plans, and identify projects of mutual concern, such as septic systems and road traffic.

Develop a community website.

Develop an education program on growth issues, need for open space, and environmental issues.

Materials to educate the community about growth limitations can be developed, to assure quality of life in the face of change. This can be accomplished by public information forums held periodically to present the status of issues of interest, and the progress of the Master Plan.

These forums are an opportunity to inform residents, commercial developers, and town officials of environmental and economic pressures from commercial development along Route 1A, and the potential for another 200 plus new houses over the next 20 years.

An archive of case material and relevant literature can be created and located at the Community Center and the Town library.

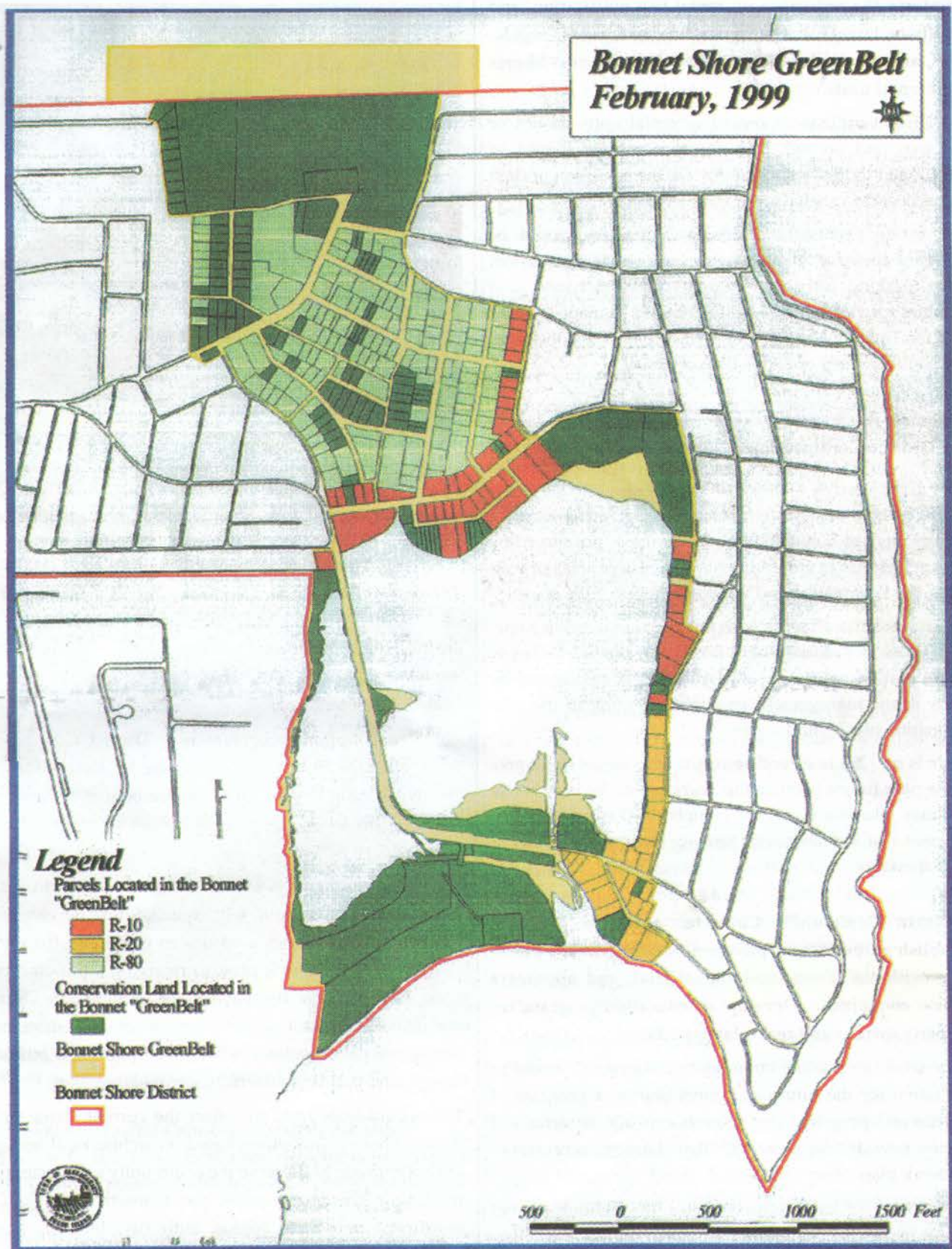
A website can be developed so that the Master Plan and other information of community interest is made easily available.

Whenever possible, use state and local resources to gather and disperse information to the public.

*Promote Land Trust efforts for open space donations, and work with the Town on possible modifications to the transfer tax.*

Council and community support for the Land Trust should complement educational programs on growth. The Land Trust will serve as the local entity charged with managing growth and limiting development by acquiring land to be preserved as open space. This effort can be facilitated by working with the Town, the state, and public agencies or private groups with land acquisition and conservation programs.





Plan for Bonnet Shores Green Belt, from Town of Narragansett, 1999



**3. Enforce the ordinance on rental use notification, and distribute Fire District Charter, by-laws, rules, regulations, and other educational materials on Bonnet Shores to all rental units.**

Fire District ordinances regarding rental units should be reviewed and revised, and property owners should be encouraged to take responsibility for the condition of their property and the behavior of their tenants.

Real estate agents, landlords, and tenants should be informed about ordinances concerning rental registration, noise, parking restrictions, property maintenance, and penalties for violations. An effort should be made to work with the Town of Narragansett to insure police cooperation in the enforcement of all relevant ordinances.

**4. Promote wastewater management (this requires Town/Fire District coordination).**

Narragansett's wastewater management plan has yet to be implemented at Bonnet Shores. Many areas not served by town sewers are in environmentally sensitive areas or wetlands, the Wesquage Pond watershed, or near the ocean.

The Council should work with the Town to develop a special wastewater management district for Bonnet Shores to insure that its natural resources are not compromised by faulty septic management practices, resulting in the contamination of soils and water.

There is no plan to extend sewers to the Bonnet Point area in the near future because this work would be very costly and may take many years to complete. Wastewater management is a key near term strategy to improve environmental quality.

**5. Begin Community Character guidance program. Establish guidelines for plan review, setup review procedure with the Town building official, and appoint a review committee. Develop an education program for property owners and real estate agents.**

Since retaining existing community character is central to the vision for the future of Bonnet Shores, a program of policies and programs that protects existing character and imbues new development with that character is central to the work plan.

The variety of architectural styles throughout Bonnet Shores makes the community unique and gives it its character. Future development must harmonize architecturally with the surrounding buildings. There are two options to consider that could achieve this goal.



**Traditional "colonial" inspired architecture is often found in Bonnet Shores.**

*The first option* concerns the Fire District's existing ordinance that reviews new design in the community. This ordinance can be strengthened to create a set of design guidelines that can better communicate the community's goals for new buildings.

*The second option* recognizes how District Council can work with the Town to create a special Design Review Overlay Zoning District for the entire Bonnet Shores community. This level of review will be far stronger than the Fire District's by-laws.

An Overlay District is a tool commonly used in many Rhode Island communities. It requires future development to adhere to town-mandated design guidelines (based on Fire District guidelines) prior to receiving a building permit. Design elements that can be included in District review are setbacks and maximum height allowances, percentage of paving allowed, landscape plantings, building design, and building material use guidelines.

These guidelines need to reflect the current character of Bonnet Shores. Guidelines based on architectural heritage are appropriate to preserve the community's character into the future. This tool requires Narragansett Town Council enactment under its zoning authority, but effectively moves beyond the authority allowed by standard zoning and regulates the next level of design detail for new buildings.



6. Explore community interest in having a teen activity program. Incorporate community awareness and stewardship ideas within it.

A teenage activities program should be studied and assessed, including identifying town resources outside the Bonnet Shores community. To begin the process, investigate the number of teenagers living in Bonnet Shores, and determine whether they have adequate access to other programs within the Town of Narragansett.

Interest in a community program can then be evaluated, as well as the types of events that could be held, and the costs for such a program. If a need for a teen program and a strong interest is evident, steps should be taken to develop one. A program can include a monthly events calendar, special event programs, daily or weekly meetings, and after school or weekend gatherings.

If there are adequate services for teens in the Town of Narragansett, the Fire District can encourage community teens to become involved there. For those teen activities outside of Bonnet Shores requiring transportation and/or funding, the Council should develop a budget for providing assistance.



Parking is a major concern for residents. A sticker system allows monitoring and enforcement.

7. Develop a Traffic Calming education program.

Work with the Town to change stop signs on Treasure and Camden Streets from east/west to north/south orientations.

Develop a Fire Warden assistance program with speed and parking controls.

Initiate a resident sticker system to allow monitoring of traffic and parking.

Develop appropriate signage for speed control and entry points - use the word "private" in all signs.  
Promote pedestrian safe roads.

State law allows the Fire District to draft ordinances, impose fines, and create health and safety organizations, such as a security force. The Council should review existing ordinances regarding road safety to determine if they are adequate to achieve defined objectives. If they are found to be inadequate, new ordinances should be drafted.

The Council will work with the Town to strengthen patrols of the roadways, initiate traffic calming measures, and enforce traffic safety regulations.

The Council should publish and distribute the ordinances and fine schedules to all Bonnet Shores property owners, residents, and renters.

It should also initiate an internal policing system, either by reviving the role of fire wardens or by creating a police patrol for security enforcement.

The Fire District should also work with the Town in encouraging traffic calming through sign changes on major through roads. The Council should ask the Town to study where additional STOP signs, DO NOT ENTER signs, and PRIVATE signs should be located to curb speeding and unwanted through traffic on Town roads.

Property owners, residents, and renters can be made aware of road safety regulations and penalties through public announcements, meetings, and special mailings.

8. Work with Town, Coastal Resources Management Council, Environmental Protection Agency, Army Corps of Engineers, and Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management on the Bonnet Point Road improvement plan, including new culverts.

Continue agreement on maintaining the herring run for Wesquage Pond.

Continue to develop a joint management approach to minimize management expenses to the Fire District.

Many state, local and federal agencies have the funding and expertise to help preserve the pond and its surrounding area. The Council must work with these agencies to preserve Wesquage Pond, restore the herring run, prevent storm water run-off contamination, and reconstruct Bonnet Point Road to both curb flooding and improve its aesthetics.

Wesquage Pond is a special aesthetic and environmental resource for the community. Recognizing this fact, the



Council, must be proactive in its preservation. The Army Corps of Engineers is actively studying the pond area. If it is found to be a worthy project, the Corps will begin renovating the culverts and roadway.

The Council should appoint a local liaison to maintain contact with the Corps of Engineers and other relevant agencies involved in the preservation and rehabilitation of Wesquage Pond. The Council then can be the primary information source for residents and property owners.



#### **9. Develop Beach Bus Pass to control access.**

For many years the District has provided residents with easy access to its beaches via the Beach Bus. A pass system will identify Bonnet Shores residents, renters, and their guests. The pass can be in the form of stickers, buttons, wristbands, or ID cards that will be presented to the bus driver as proof of residency. In this way, those from outside the community will be prevented from using the bus.

The Council can form a committee to develop the Beach Bus Pass program or can delegate the task to an existing committee. Every effort should be made to create a cost-effective, easily-managed program to provide taxpayers and resident with an annual pass.

The Beach Bus Pass program should be administered through the District Manager's office.

#### **10. Improve the capital improvement budget process and plan for all Master Plan phases.**

Implementation of the capital components of the Master Plan should be guided through the Planning Committee. The Planning Committee should recommend projects to consider for implementation each year.

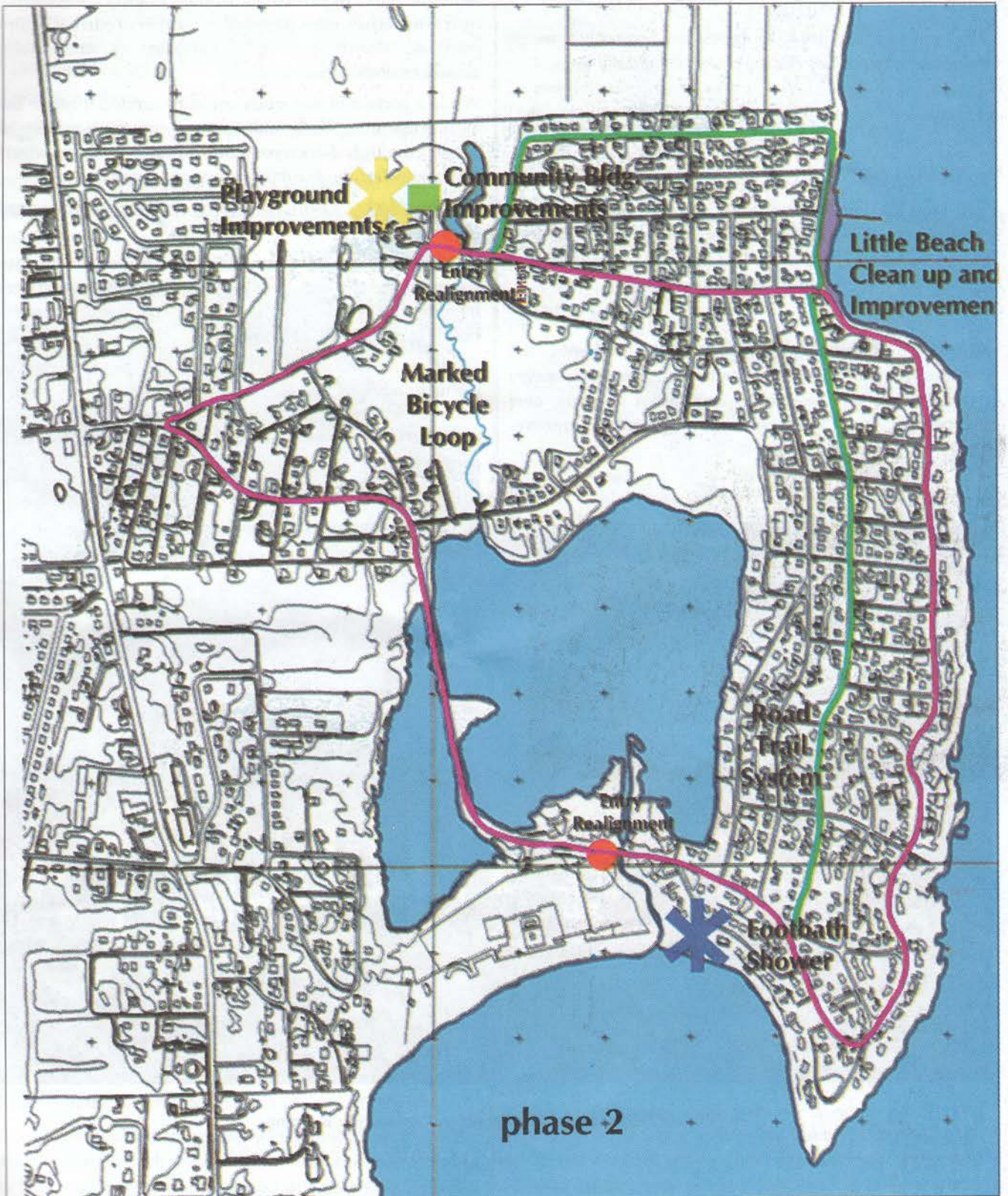
The Planning Committee should recommend that the Council assign detailed research to the appropriate committee to determine probable implementation costs. For example, if new summer camp equipment is proposed, the Planning Committee will recommend that the Recreation Committee develop a feasible plan and cost analysis for its acquisition and use.

Once the cost of a capital improvement project has been developed by the responsible committee, the Planning Committee will review and forward to the Council. The Council will then develop and public informational process that may include public meetings, surveys to take into consideration public comment before approving the project.

The Council will decide which projects to fund in any given year based on the cost analysis and the availability of funds. Projects may be funded in their entirety or in phases, and can be approved or rejected as separate items.



Phase 2  
Capital Improvements





11. Continue the development of a walking/hiking trail system that would take advantage of preserved open space and environmental amenities, such as Wesquage Pond.

The improvements are to be developed primarily through volunteer community construction and maintenance.

Open space preserved by the Bonnet Shores Land Trust, the Rhode Island Audubon Society and others are essential in preserving community character.

The trail system continuation should be developed through a feasibility study to determine costs and environmental impact of more trails. This project should be funded through fund-raising and open space or other grants.

12. Prepare a feasibility study for the enhancement of the Community Building and its site. These enhancements could include porches, decks, an interior upgrade, new furnishings, new lighting, and playground improvements.

Conduct a feasibility study on the condition and possible improvements to the Community Building and its support facilities, including the playground and ball fields. Administrative requirements, storage, display areas for historical materials, meeting space, condition of current equipment and furnishings, structural integrity, and safety should be considered.

While a portion of this study could be funded through the annual operating budget, design and construction may be funded through donations and fund-raising. These efforts can begin after the feasibility study is approved.

*Porches, decks, additional doors, interior upgrade, and lighting*

If the feasibility study concludes that improvements are warranted or desired, the Council should assign management of detailed design and construction to a Community Building Improvement Committee.

This Committee should recommend the specific improvements to be made, oversee the design process, develop bid documents, gather all pertinent information concerning construction costs and time frame, and prepare the overall project budget.



Possible exterior enhancements to Community Building



### Playground improvements

The Council can either assign the playground improvement project to the Community Building Committee or to the Recreation Committee for research and budget analysis. The ball field, playground facility, and equipment improvements could be studied in conjunction with the Community Building analysis.

Replacing, eliminating, or purchasing new equipment must consider the number of summer campers, non-camp users, and current code requirements for playground equipment.

The cost of these improvement may be covered through a special fundraising effort.

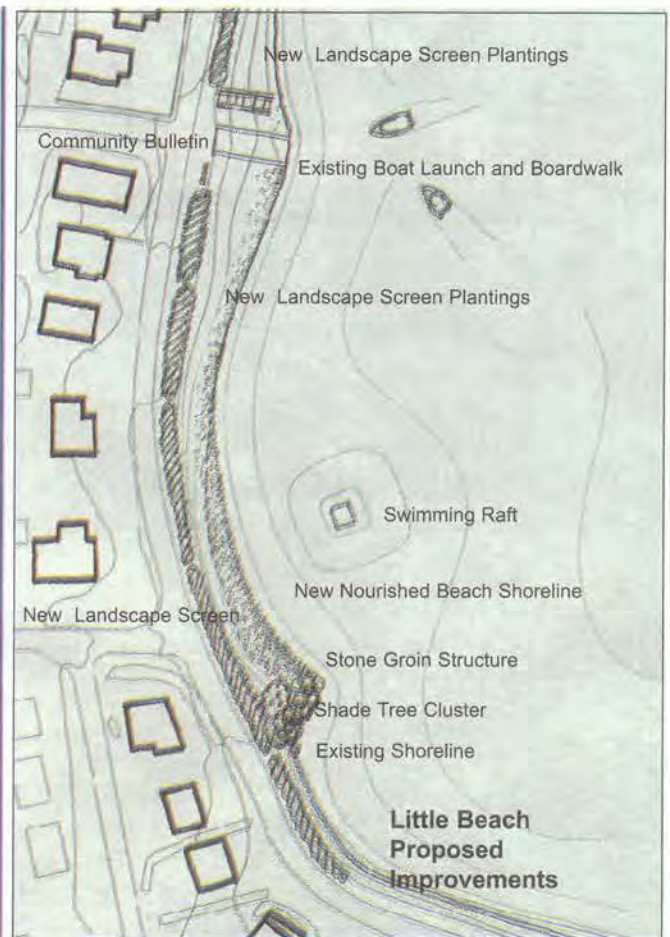


The existing playground at the Community Center is in need of an upgrade to be a safe, special place for children.

### **13. Clean-up Little Beach - undertake a sand nourishment program, add landscape plantings, and consider a swimming raft.**

Little Beach's exposure to Narragansett Bay and the ocean make it susceptible to storm erosion. The URI Coastal Resources Center is a valuable resource and can advise the Council in the restoration and cleanup of Little Beach.

An early action item suggests the planting of hardy, native plant species to curb wind erosion. A platform and benches for passive recreation at both Little and Kelly Beaches can be constructed as community civic spaces.



### **14. Explore feasibility of adding a foot-bath spigot at Kelly Beach.**

If a study of the need and cost of a foot-bath at Kelly Beach finds it is a desired improvement, the Council should apply for permits from the appropriate state agencies.

### **15. Conduct a traffic calming engineering / design study.**

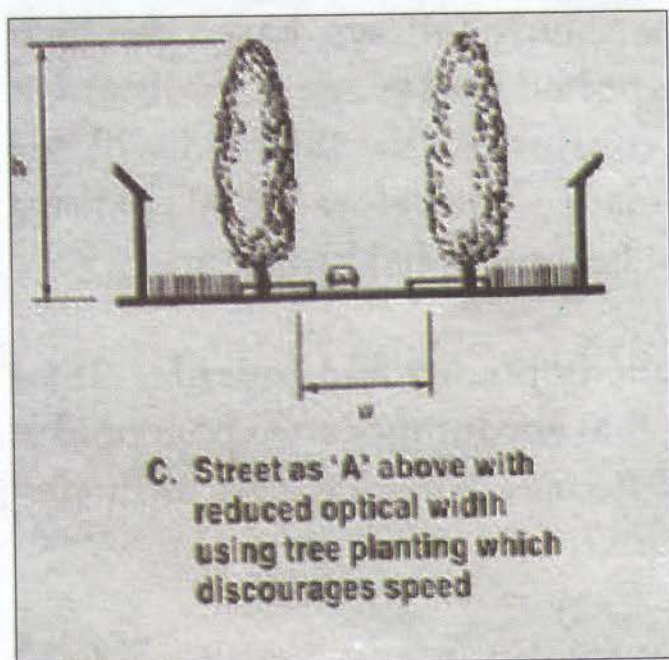
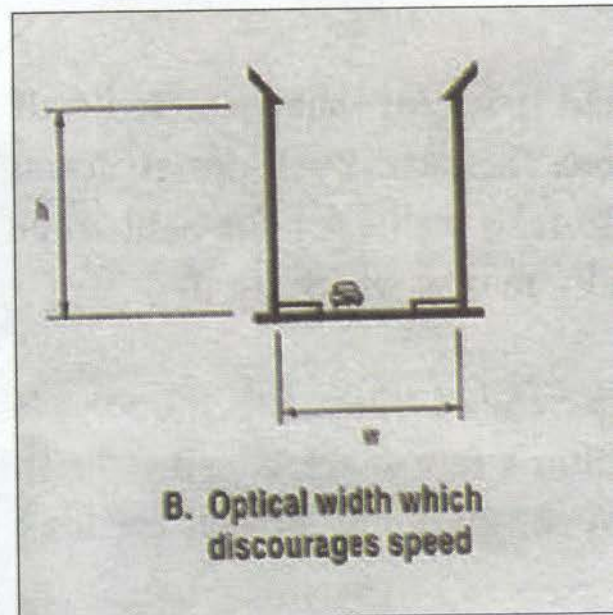
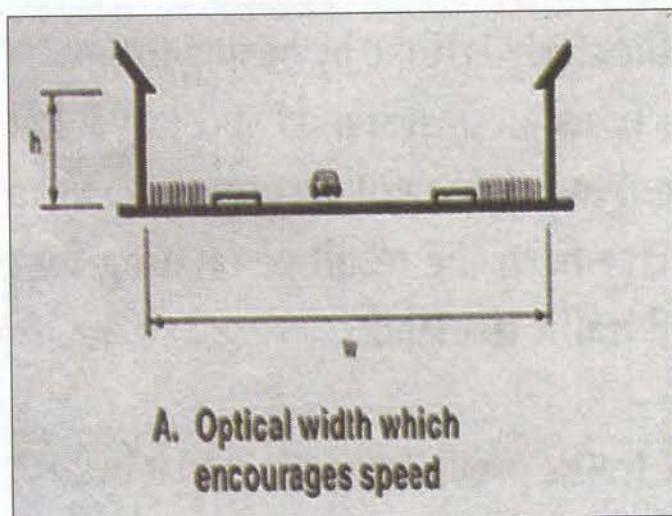
With Town support install traffic-calming devices including: grated concrete area at entrance to Bonnet entry, neck-downs, and gateposts for a private feeling at the Bonnet entry, Bonnet Point and Bonnet Shores Roads.

Designate pedestrian lanes and rights of way.

Locate new bike racks at both Little Beach and Kelly Beach.

The roads at Bonnet Shores are narrow and winding. This condition will dictate remedies for traffic problems. Narrower vehicular ways, the addition of pedestrian rights-of-way and improved signage are key to calming traffic and improving safety. The Council should retain a firm specializing in traffic calming design and engineering to study and report on traffic issues. Their report should contain community input and propose solutions and their probable costs.





## Traffic Calming Principles

From a report by the Devon (UK) County Council, 1991



**Phase 3**  
**Capital Improvements and**  
**Program Development**

**16. Work with the Town of Narragansett on consideration of wastewater treatment program for the Bonnet Point areas.**

The Council must jointly decide with the Town when and where sewer extensions will be installed.

It is recommended that sewer extensions be limited to the Bonnet Point and Bonnet Shores Beach Club areas, and that the wetland area north of the Community building remain un-sewered.

A liaison should be appointed by the Council to serve as the point -person and informational contact between the Town and the taxpayers.

Residents and property owners should be informed of changes in Town policy concerning sewers, cost of individual hook-ups, and how the sewer extensions may impact density in the community.

The liaison and the Council will inform the community via the community website, printed material, and informational public meetings.

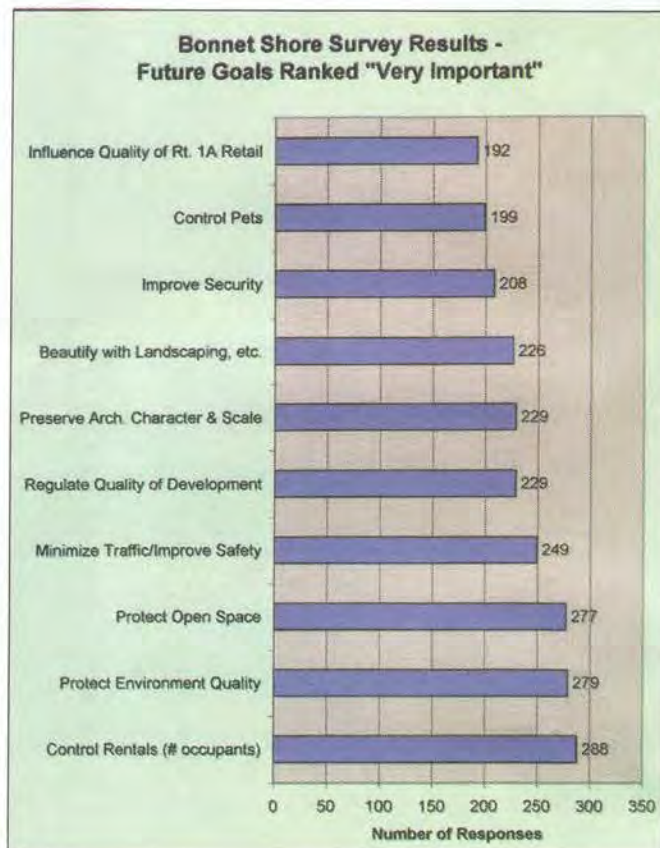
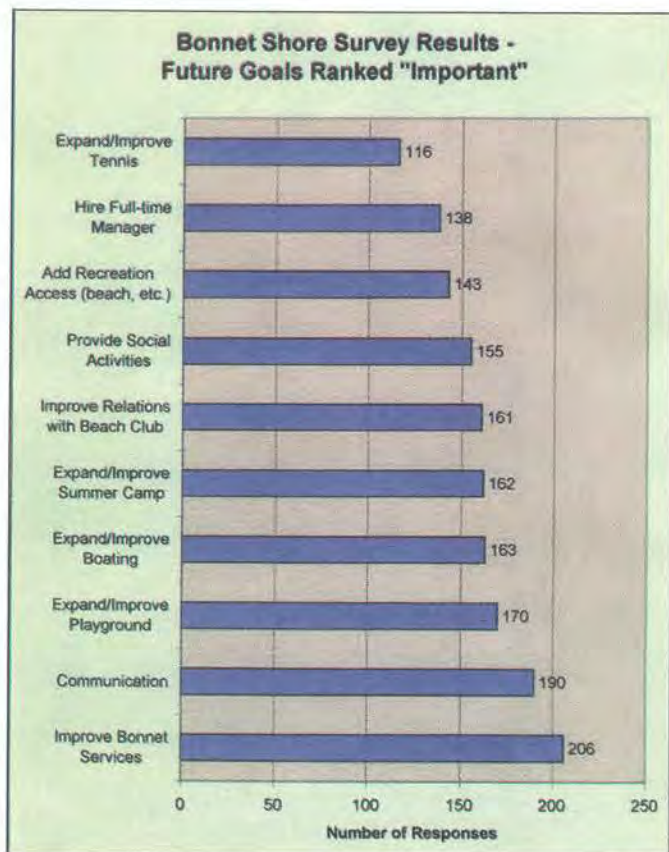


## THE PLANNING PROCESS

The process through which the Bonnet Shores Master Plan was developed included a structured community planning process held during the summer season of 1999 when the entire Bonnet Shores community was available to participate. In collaboration with the Long Range Planning Committee, the consultants undertook gathering as much public input as possible through a mail survey, public meetings, planning workshops, and a design and planning charette. Response to all phases of the community process was exceptional.

### Community Survey

The first step was to prepare and distribute an informational mail survey to property owners from the Town of Narragansett tax assessor's property list. Questions were developed by Newport Collaborative Architects, Inc. and the Long Range Planning Committee. The list did not distinguish between owners of land, land and houses, or Beach Club condominiums. There were 1,996 surveys; and 425 responses, many including additional comments. The response rate was excellent at over 20%.



Survey results indicate areas of importance to residents of Bonnet Shores.



## Public Meetings

Four public meetings were held: one each in June, July, August, and September. They were open to the public, and extensive mailings encouraged residents to attend and participate in identifying issues and refining ideas. NOTE: This record of responses from the meetings is unedited, participants were informed that there were "no dumb ideas". Accordingly, all responses have been included in the following notes.

The following core issues emerged through the meetings:

Expansion of the Bonnet Shores Beach Club

Condition and use of the beaches

Secondary impact of growth along Route 1A

Environmental quality and stability of Wesquage Pond, other ponds, and wetlands

Safe Circulation - vehicular and pedestrian

Growth and development within the community

Quality of life

### Public Meeting #1 - June

#### ISSUES AND CONCERNS

The following community issues and concerns emerged from the group discussions:

**Bonnet Shores Beach Club:** Concerns include: relationship of club members to the community at large, club expansion (physical), increased membership, club-generated traffic, general impact on the community.

**Growth:** The Land Trust and its role in helping to control growth and preserve open space.

**Preservation:** Preserve the natural resources and architectural character and scale of the community.

**Roads & Safety:** Improve road conditions, pedestrian safety and amenities, and enforce speed limits.

**Sewers & Septic:** Improve and/or extend sewer lines and septic systems.

**Local Government:** Enforce and/or create ordinances to help achieve quality of life community goals; enforce and/or create ordinances to prevent party houses; and create mechanism to require fiscal accountability.

These issues and concerns became major factors for to be addressed by the Action Plan.

Three sub-committees were formed to study: Roads and Pedestrian Safety, Community Character, and the Beach Club.

The committees would report their findings at the July meeting.



## INVENTORY AND ANALYSES

Agenda: the natural and built environments, government structure, history, the Beach Club, and road safety.  
The Committees presented their findings and recommendations to over 60 attendees.

## ROAD AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

**Engineering:** Town plans and capital improvement schedules need to identify problem areas and propose projects.

**Priorities** need to be assigned to roads needing or scheduled for repair, pedestrian improvements and their location.

**Paper vs. actual roadways** were noted, and a signage program was suggested.

**Education:** Educate visitors and residents about speed limits, parking ordinances, and local driving etiquette.

**Enforcement:** Enforce existing traffic and parking ordinances vigorously.

Propose and pass new ordinances if needed. Strengthen the relationships between local government, residents and other property owners, and the police.

## COMMUNITY CHARACTER

This Committee identified scenic areas, gateways, transitions, landmarks, and features defining the scale, ambience, and character of Bonnet Shores.

**Important natural sites:** Little Beach, Kelly Beach, Wesquage Pond, Land Trust properties, and public rights of way including the beach walkway and Battery Point.

**Architectural / Historical Landmarks:** Community Center, Battery Park, Little Beach, The Point, the original Beach Club clubhouse, the Slave House, and the Old Skeffington House.

**Transitional Areas:** Entrance to Bonnet Shores at Route 1A, the commercial strip at Route 1A, Gardenia Drive entrance, and the Beach Club.

## BONNET SHORES BEACH CLUB

Two areas of concern were identified:

**Expansion of the Club** and its effect on community infrastructure, services, and the environment.

**The impact** of current or future non-resident Beach Club owners voting on local issues that affect year-round residents.

Other concerns are the structural integrity of the Beach Club, its sewer capability, current building code violations, membership and its possible expansion.

The Committee proposed a joint Fire District/Beach Club strategy to address these concerns.

Other strategies include a community buyout of the Club, changing Fire District voting eligibility requirements, requiring resident stickers for vehicles, and more stringent administrative review.



### Public Meeting #3 - August

#### **DESIGN and PLANNING CHARRETTE**

Meeting #3 was a design and planning charette to generate and solidify ideas for the future of Bonnet Shores. Participants worked in groups and presented ideas that produced the following categories for study:

**Community Facilities:** Playgrounds, playing fields, the community center and its program

**Community-owned beaches** and their management

**Community Character:** Scale, architecture, managed growth, plant materials and tree maintenance, gateways.

**Preservation** of open space, natural amenities, beaches and beach access, creation of a greenway, and controlling development.

**Sewer and Septic** connections, extensions, and improvements.

**The Beach Club** and the issues discussed at Public Meeting #2, above.

**Roads and Traffic** maintenance, control, enforcement, and general public safety

**Government** definition, structure, and relationship to the Town of Narragansett community at large.

### Public Meeting #4 - September

#### **ACTION PLAN OPTIONS**

The results of the August charette were refined and presented as a three-phase action plan. Attendees indicated their preferences for each proposed Action Step.

##### **Phase One**

*Duration - Year One to Year Five*

FOCUS - District government; strengthen ordinances; develop and implement growth management policies; acquire open space; establish waste water management plan; study teen activity needs; develop traffic calming education program; and create design guidelines for community character.

##### **Phase Two**

*Duration - Year Five to Year Ten*

FOCUS - Capital improvements including enhancement of Little Beach and the Community Center. Continue open space acquisition and growth management work from Phase One, and initiate traffic calming improvements.

##### **Phase Three**

*Duration - Year Ten to Year Twenty*

FOCUS - Capital improvements including hiking trail. Proposed sewer connections. Continue open space acquisition and growth management activities.



The people who helped make it happen at the

**BONNET SHORES**  
**MASTER PLAN COMMUNITY MEETINGS**

**June 30, 1999**

Carol Relihan  
Bob Ryan  
Shirley Larch  
Ralph Berggren  
Bob Giguere  
Patricia Logker  
Dan Reagan  
M. Mannix  
Jane Cruff  
Ron Cruff  
Bert Underhill  
Anne Underhill  
Carol Jurczak  
Jill Hynes  
Ray Mello  
Louis Ferri  
M. Sornberger  
Eileen DeCiccio  
Gene DeCiccio  
George N. Larocque  
Patricia Angulo  
Marie C. Kelley  
Winifred A. Kelley  
Louise Hynes  
Mr. Lewis Pucci  
Mrs. Lewis Pucci  
Mr. Paul Haas  
Mrs. Paul Haas  
Diane Sikut  
John Sikut  
Patricia Sugrue  
Austin Donnelly  
Kathy diStefano  
Ted diStefano  
Steve Patience  
Helen Patience  
Jean D'Agostino  
Peter D'Agostino  
Donna Monaghan  
George Monaghan  
Michael Mannix  
Pat Mannix  
James Gilligan  
Helen Gilligan  
Ruth Mahon  
Bill DelGizzo  
Anita J. Langer  
Mr. S. Catalano  
Mrs. S. Catalano  
Ray Bliss  
John Caparco  
Paul Haas  
Denise McCooley  
Diane Gaynor  
Ron Kelley  
Dana/Jane Carter  
Cathy Rei  
Steve Rei  
Dr. Bob Varone  
Lee Listro  
Paul Listro  
Eleanor McMahon  
Dick McMahon  
Barbara Vernava  
Al Vernava  
T.P. Duffy

Joe Concordia  
Carol Fortin  
Brenda K. Laundry  
Mr. Robert Carlson  
Mrs. Robert Carlson  
Sally Davis  
Brian Hallowel  
Anne Salvatore  
Ann Snell  
Dan McDonald  
Natalie McDonald  
Jeff Lino  
Peggy Fair  
Lynn Bakstran  
Jane Morra  
Mike Morra  
Pat Cole  
Jan Huyck  
Robert McClanaghan  
Simon Nemzow  
Nancy Riccitelli  
James Riccitelli

**July 21, 1999**

Pat Catalano  
Peggy Haas  
Paul Haas  
Joe Comisbeg  
Dawn Cheek  
Ann Snell  
Carol Fortin  
Pat Cole  
Louise Hynes  
Ruth F. Mahon  
Mr. Paul Listro  
Mrs. Paul Listro  
Jean Pike  
Pat Mannix  
Michael Mannix  
Jan Huyck  
John Carvalho  
Dan McDonald  
Al Vernava  
Barbara Vernava  
Sean Baxter  
George Monaghan  
Donna Monaghan  
George N. Laruze  
Patricia Logker  
Janice Pucci  
Lewis Pucci  
Catherine McCormack  
Diane Kelley  
Gaynor Kelley  
Elizabeth Reed  
Cliff Hall  
Lucie Hall  
Mrs. Dot Carney  
M. Mannix  
Jane Morra  
Mike Morra  
Steve McCooley  
Denise McCooley  
Bert Underhill  
Jim Gilligan  
Helen Gilligan  
Lloyd Albert

Dan Reagan  
Steve Patience  
Helen Patience  
Patricia Sugrue  
Dr. Bill DelGizzo  
Mary Sornberger  
Lynn Bakshen  
Barbara Algren

**August 11, 1999**

Ruth F. Mahon  
Marie C. Kelley  
Pat Cole  
Natalie McDonald  
Gene DeCiccio  
Walter Manning  
R.J. Agnitsch  
Robert Panillo  
Tim Hixson  
George Monaghan  
Kent Hewitt  
Helen Patience  
Steve Patience  
Emily O'Hare  
R.B. Parness  
Doris Foley  
Eileen Anderson  
Carol Jurczak  
Patricia Sugrue  
Jim Riccitelli  
Nancy Riccitelli  
Dr. Bob Varone  
Kathleen B. deStefano  
Margaret Lachut  
Marie Kelley  
Lewis Pucci  
Janice Pucci  
Bob Davis  
Sally Davis  
Paul Haas, Jr.  
Elizabeth L. Reed  
Walter Manning  
Catherine Cook  
Donna Monaghan  
John Sornberger  
Jack Carney  
Mary Beth Holland  
Shelley T. Parness  
Pete Foley  
Laura Arrighi  
Bill O'Neill  
Jill Hynes  
T.C. Laundry  
Catherine M. Kelleher  
George Howard  
Bert Underhill  
Al Vernava  
Clarkson A. Collins  
Linda McMillen  
Marjorie Manning  
Eliot Gersten  
Carol Fortin  
John Caparco  
Anita Langer  
Peggy Haas  
Paul Haas  
Joe Cornisberg



Gloria Cornisberg  
 Jan V. Huyck  
 Louise Hynes  
 George N. Larocque  
 Al Armstrong  
 Lyn Armstrong  
 Barbara W. Algren  
 Angela S. Puppi  
 Loraayne Black  
 Frank Lachut  
 Jim Gilligan  
 Helen Gilligan  
 Diane Kelley  
 Eileen DeCiccio  
 Kathleen E. Nottage  
 Jane Morra  
 Mike Morra  
 Denise McCoey  
 Michael Mannix  
 Pat Mannix  
 Cliff Hall

September 1, 1999

Elizabeth Reed  
 Marcia O'Brien  
 Tom O'Brien  
 Ellie Hanlon  
 John Carvalho  
 Lloyd Albert  
 Anita Langer  
 Madeline Mannix  
 Doris Foley  
 Nancy Cavale  
 Steve Patience  
 Helen Patience  
 Kathy Kelleher  
 Dan Reagan  
 Jim Gilligan  
 Helen Gilligan  
 Dr. Bob Varone  
 Bob Schwegler  
 Anne Salvatore  
 Manfred Kelley  
 Paul Listro  
 Lee Listro  
 Dana Carter  
 Jane Carter  
 Liz Gordon  
 Doris Anderson  
 Jane Morra  
 Mike Morra  
 Mary Beth Holland  
 Pat Mannix  
 Patrick Mannix  
 Dave Haus  
 Milton W. Mannix  
 Pete Foley  
 R. Berggren  
 P. Berggren  
 Diane Kelley  
 Patricia Sugrue  
 Jane Cruff  
 Simon Nemzow  
 George N. Larocque  
 John Caparco  
 Bob Giguere  
 Janice McClanaghan  
 Nancy Da Silvi  
 Ruth Mahon  
 Cliff Hall  
 Dan Rigney  
 Al Armstrong

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 Brenda Laundry  
 Donna Monaghan  
 Marie Kelley  
 Jeanne DiPrete  
 Al DiPrete  
 Mary Ann McGwin  
 C. Richard Salzillo  
 Carol Fortin  
 Barbara W. Algren  
 Margaret Lachut  
 Frank Lachut  
 Joe Johnston  
 Bob Ryan  
 Louise Hynes  
 Bob Carlson  
 Maureen Carlson  
 Janice Pucci  
 Lewis Pucci  
 Bert Underhill  
 S. Catalano  
 Barbara Vernava  
 Kaye Relihan  
 Tom Hynes  
 Jill Hynes

Long Range Planning Committee

Chairperson Dr. Bill DelGizzo, DMD  
 Marcel Fortin  
 Carol Fortin  
 Paul Hass  
 Gene DeCiccio  
 Eileen DeCiccio  
 Anita Langer  
 John Carparco  
 Patricia Sugrue  
 Ward Barry  
 Ruth Mahon

Bonnet Shores Fire District Council

Chairperson Carol Fortin  
 Anita Langer  
 John Carparco  
 Patricia Sugrue  
 Dr. Bill DelGizzo, DMD  
 Dr. Bob Varone, DMD  
 Lloyd Albert  
 Dan Barry

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 Arnold Robinson, NCA  
 Richard Youngken, NCA



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## **INTERVIEWS**

Bonnet Shores residents  
Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management  
University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Council  
Rhode Island Audubon Society  
Save the Bay  
Town of Narragansett Department of Community Planning and Development - Town Planner, Assistant Planner  
Town of Narragansett Engineering and Public Works Departments

## **PHOTO CREDITS**

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Richard Youngken, NCA  
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Collection of the Bonnet Shores Historical Committee, provided by Marcel and Carol Fortin

## **COVER DESIGN**

Marissa Dilorio Peters



For the Bonnet Shores Fire District Council

Consultants: Newport Collaborative Architects, Inc.  
Pawlowski Associates, Inc.

