

# BYRAM NEIGHBORHOOD

## ENHANCEMENT PLAN

### Study Sponsored By

Planning and Zoning Commission, Town of Greenwich, Connecticut

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Renee Kahn, Historical Neighborhood Preservation Program, Inc.

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### Participants:

Residents of Byram

Byram Business Owners

Department of Public Works

Department of Parks and Recreation

Planning and Zoning Commission

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## **SYNOPSIS**

*Prior to this study, a preservation consultant conducted an architectural study of all structures in Byram.*

*This study of the Byram area was requested by the residents of Byram. Residents compiled inventories of sidewalk conditions, existing street trees, available municipal parking spaces, areas needing beautification, and traffic conditions. Surveys were taken to determine parking needs, types of new businesses desired by the community and a ranking of priorities for proposed improvements. A traffic impact study of the primary roads and intersections was performed by a consultant. Another consultant studied the business area and proposed a conceptual plan of street improvements.*

*The result of all these efforts led to recommendations the community wants to see implemented in a timely manner:*

**Traffic:** *Mill/Water - New signal at with left turn phases.  
Byram Road - Channelization at each end of Byram Road, safety measures at railroad bridge, bulb-outs at Richland, stop signs at Sherman.  
Raised crosswalks on Mead at Church and William, roundabout at South Water and Mead Avenue, weight limits, improved drop-off and pick-up at New Lebanon School.*

**Sidewalks:** *Reconstruct to Town standards deteriorated segments of primary pedestrian routes.*

**Parking:** *Develop a parking management plan to create an additional 50 to 100 municipal spaces in the future.*

**Streetscape Improvements:** *Construct streetscape improvements throughout the business area.*

**Parks:** *Carry out annual improvements to Byram Park and beach in accordance with the DPR master plan and construct vest pocket parks at the Church Street parking lot and DPW yard near Hervey Sreet.*

**Street Trees:** *Annually plant street trees on streets where trees are inadequate.*

**Pedestrian Crosswalks:** *Repaint all crosswalks with more pronounced markings and add caution signs at principal crossings.*

**Waterfront** *Study the WB zone regulations to determine if modifications would encourage more attractive developments on the Byram River waterfront.*

## **STUDY AREA**

The study area of Byram is 240 acres in southwestern Greenwich with a population of about 3000. The residential zoning is mostly R-6. Business zones are LBR-2 and WB. The elementary school, library, business district, and waterfront are all within walking distance for most residents. The Byram River, the western boundary of Byram, is the state line between Greenwich and Port Chester, New York. Exit 2 of the Connecticut Turnpike (I-95) is an entry point for traffic to and from Port Chester, Byram, and Route 1 (West Putnam Avenue).

The Planning and Zoning Commission hired Renée Kahn, a preservation consultant, to inventory and document the historical and architectural characteristics of all residential and commercial buildings in Byram to determine whether that neighborhood would qualify for Village District status under the new state statutes passed in 1998. Byram's architecture reflects its history as a small New England waterfront community with commercial and recreational boating and fishing, and where materials were brought in by barge and boats. Worker housing was located near these industries.

Based on that consultant study's recommendations, Planning and Zoning met with Byram residents in May, 2000, to discuss creating a Village District for Byram. Their response was, instead, to ask the Commission to make a comprehensive study of neighborhood issues. Planning and Zoning expanded the study to the area shown in Figures 1a and 1b and hired consultants to look at traffic, safety and beautification issues with the goal of creating a neighborhood enhancement plan for Byram.

## **GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

The 1998 Plan of Conservation and Development recommended a plan to improve the business district and to study the waterfront of Byram.

The overall goals of this study are:

- To improve both existing and future development and infrastructure in Byram
- To conserve the character of Byram
- To enhance its attractiveness
- To address parking, traffic, and safety problems
- To provide access to the Byram River waterfront
- To beautify neighborhoods and upgrading Byram Park facilities
- To address future waterfront development
- To analyze business needs
- To lessen traffic impacts from Port Chester development within Byram

The following are the priorities established for public and private activities in Byram.

**Traffic:**

Adequately manage existing and projected traffic into, out of, and through Byram. Redesign intersections, parking areas and traffic flow to enhance safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

**Sidewalks and Pedestrian Traffic:**

Redesign, upgrade and maintain existing sidewalks and develop new sidewalks and pedestrian routes to promote safe pedestrian traffic. Develop bicycle paths where appropriate.

**Waterfront:**

Establish new public access areas and enhance the waterfront for residents by identifying, protecting and enhancing natural resources and encouraging appropriate uses and scale of riverfront development that can be supported by the infrastructure.

**Zoning Enforcement:**

Enforce existing Town statutes and regulations through field investigations of reported violations. Identify uses, properties and conditions that violate current town codes and adversely impact the quality of life in Byram.

**Parking:**

Identify parking opportunities and parking enforcement issues and provide adequate public parking to serve the needs of residents and businesses in the Byram area.

**Economic Development:**

Identify businesses of an appropriate size and scale, and in keeping with the historic and architectural design of the business district, needed to provide goods and services to Byram residents and businesses.

**Preservation, Enhancement and Beautification:**

Preserve and maintain existing good architectural design of residential and commercial structures as identified in the Byram Inventory Study of 2001 by Renée Kahn. Preserve and promote the historical character and scale of Byram and increase the quality of life through enhanced public open spaces, access to and uses along the Byram River, and development of reasonable design guidelines.

**Housing:**

Encourage and preserve the diversity of housing opportunities that complements the historical scale, context, and traditional zoning of the Byram neighborhood.

**Parks:**

After presenting Byram residents with the final master plan for Byram park and beach, the Department of Parks and Recreation will begin to implement the recommendations of the plan and will work with DPW to construct waterfront pocket parks along South Water Street on town properties.

**Infrastructure:**

Maintain infrastructure at a level consistent with the highest level in Greenwich and, in particular, upgrade and correct existing problems in the sewer infrastructure and sidewalk system.

**Planning:**

Review the Implementation Plan on an on-going basis to accommodate changing needs and circumstances of Byram.

Explore with the Historic District Commission and Historical Society the possibility of nominating Delavan/Mill Street as a National Register District, which would offer tax credit opportunities for income producing properties, as was done on Greenwich Avenue.

Create a Preservation and Design District for Byram to protect historic and notable buildings, preserve front lawns, landscaping, stonewalls, and old growth trees, require parking lot landscaping, and buffers between residential and institutional uses. Effort should be made to link open spaces, improve key intersections and gateways, create visual and physical connections to important buildings and more attractive design standards for signage, landscaping, and storefronts, and provide continuous tree-lined sidewalks for the length of Delavan and Mill.

**HISTORY AND BACKGROUND****Resident Team Efforts**

Between May, 2000, and February, 2001, many of the residents of Byram gathered data on the condition of existing infrastructure and traffic conditions in their community. On a parallel path, a traffic consultant (EarthTech) prepared for the Town a traffic impact study that, in combination with the observations by residents, led to a series of recommended traffic measures. Teams of residents inventoried existing sidewalk and road conditions, use of municipal parking spaces, and zoning enforcement. These findings and recommendations were summarized in a February, 2001, report. Planning and Zoning hired another consultant to design conceptually an enhanced streetscape for the business district. One resident team stated its vision for the future:

“Byram should continue to be a walking village with a clearly defined center. Residents and visitors should be able to walk without the fear or intrusion of traffic in a safe and aesthetically pleasing environment. The scale and character of older buildings should be preserved and enhanced. New development should be consistent with the character of the existing streetscape. Adequate street trees and illumination should enhance the

walking experience. Especially in the center of the village, a unified vocabulary of street furniture, low-scale attractive light standards and landscaped public spaces should give the area a unique character attractive to both residents and visitors. All utilities in the business districts should be underground, out of sight. The shopping district should have an enhanced look due to the work and encouragement of the Byram Business Group, Town departments, interested shopkeepers, residents, garden clubs, etc.

The Byram River waterfront should become a vastly improved amenity easily accessed by residents. It would be desirable to develop a more diverse range of local business types, but not at the expense of unbridled expansion. Change is inevitable, and some change is desirable, but it is important to preserve the character and scale of the existing community.”

### Architecture and Historic Inventory

The study by architectural historian Renée Kahn notes that the predominant styles of commercial architecture along Mill and Water Streets is Neo-Renaissance and the residential styles include Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate and Queen Anne. The study states that several noteworthy buildings still exist in each of these styles and the Byram study area would probably qualify for the National Register of Historic Places, which would allow commercial and industrial properties to take advantage of the federal government’s 20% Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits and encourage property owners to rehabilitate their buildings without destroying their historic architectural character.

The study also states: “Byram is probably the most visually distinctive and cohesive of the many areas that constitute the Town of Greenwich. It is essentially a “hill town” rising up from the Byram River. The village unfolds into a complex network of streets, crooked courses, dead ends, and hilly contours, some climbing steeply from the riverbank to provide stunning vistas of adjacent Port Chester. Parts of the town have the quality of an old-fashioned seaside village. Gables frequently face the street and front porches are standard, although most have lost a good deal of their ornamental village detail. Houses are set close to the road with small front and side yards, and parking is mainly on the street (Figure 2). The commercial district, which bisects the village, is characterized by low- to mid-rise brick apartment houses with stores on the ground floor. These buildings still retain elaborate cornices, sometimes even their original storefronts. The area along the Byram River retains much of its historic character with low rise, functional buildings typical of riverfront industry. In addition to shops and some light manufacturing, the core of the village contains several churches, a community center, a library and other public amenities characteristic of village life...”

## Design Standards and Unattractive Conversions

The community teams expressed strong concerns with the unattractive conversions, teardowns and infilling of lots with residential construction not in keeping with the overall streetscape pattern, bulk and scale.

The primary goal, to retain and enhance the visual and social qualities characteristic of the historic development of Byram, might be achieved through design guidelines. Not to create an artificial museum fixed at a point in the past or to prevent growth or change but to ensure that the changes that do take place are compatible with the small-town quality that Byram residents find so attractive (Appendix C for design standards).

## **TRAFFIC ISSUES**

A team of residents studied traffic to compile information on traffic concerns within the community. The traffic study team concentrated on four principal collector streets:

- Delavan Avenue/Mill Street between I-95 and the Mill Street Bridge
- Mead Avenue between Mill Street and South Water Street
- South Water Street between Mill Street and Mead Avenue
- Byram Road between U.S. 1 and I-95

These four collector streets carry most of the traffic in Byram (Figure 3). This includes traffic generated in Byram seeking destinations in Byram and elsewhere as well as traffic generated outside Byram and using its streets as an accessway. Their observations are summarized as follows:

<u>Street</u>	<u>Observations</u>
Delavan/Mill	Trucks use route as access to Port Chester from I-95 Often congestion at Mill/Water intersection Gridlock at frontage during peaks Left turns at Mill/Water cause congestion
Mead Avenue	U-turns at Mead/Water cause damage Too much truck traffic At least 20% speeding, especially trucks
South Water	Double-parked trailers, forklifts backing out Large boats parked at curbside



Byram Road

Speeding a safety problem  
Poor sight distance at most side streets  
Used as short cut between US1 and I-95

Planning and Zoning hired a traffic consultant (EarthTech) to review existing traffic flows, intersections and signals and to recommend improvements to ease congestion along Mill/Delavan Avenue, North and South Water Streets, Byram Road, and Mead Avenue. Actual traffic counts were performed in 2000, 2002 and updated in 2003 (when Costco opened in Port Chester along the Byram River and increased traffic was expected on Mill/Delavan as a result of that opening).

Based on the information available at the time about the Port Chester Marina Development, the following levels of service (LOS)\* were projected for the PM peak hour:

<u>Intersection</u>	<u>LOS Existing</u>	<u>LOS Future</u>
Mill / Water	D	E
Mill / Mead	A	A
Delavan / I-95	D	D
Delavan / Byram Shore	C	C

This projection shows that the Mill/Water intersection will degrade in the future to LOS E, which represents failure and long delays. A big part of the problem is the impact of left turns in causing queues to form. The Town's consultant recommended split phasing so that left turns would no longer cause delays. That signal change is currently under way. (\*Appendix B for description of LOS)

The traffic counts taken in December, 2002, indicate that, in comparison with the counts taken in 2000, the traffic volumes at Mill/Delavan have decreased slightly but the volumes on Byram Road have increased slightly.

## **SIDEWALKS AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY**

The sidewalk study team examined 69 segments or blocks and found that 65% of the segments had sidewalks, but 35% did not. Most sidewalk segments were made of asphalt. Only 23% were concrete. Thirty per cent of all sidewalks were over 20% deteriorated. Twenty-seven per cent had granite curbs (town standard), and 58% had fewer than four street trees. There is presently a Bike Path study to recommend town wide bike paths and bike rack locations, which will identify spots in Byram.

Figure 4 shows the type and condition of sidewalks along principal pedestrian paths. Prioritization of sidewalk improvements should focus on the most heavily pedestrian traveled ways. These are walkways that residents and school children take to central areas of activity such as the shopping district, library, school, and park. The Town of Greenwich DPW standards for sidewalks is concrete for business zones and asphalt for residential areas - both with granite curbs.

## PARKING FOR BUSINESS AND RESIDENTS

The team that studied parking in Byram found a total of 177 municipal parking spaces in the business district. (Figure 5a and 5b) All were posted with limited hours for parking, but none had meters, making any restriction difficult to enforce.

At the time of the survey, the William Street lot had few, if any, empty spaces on weekdays between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. The lot on South Water Street at the foot of Church Street is, in a practical sense, not available for general public parking as it is usually used by Catalano, the adjacent business. Very few Town-controlled parking spaces were available in Byram's business district between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Approximately 35-40% of the Town-controlled parking spaces are occupied by cars with out-of-state plates, largely from New York. This compares with 9% observed in the Horseneck lot in central Greenwich. Some Byram residents have out-of-state plates, and many Byram employees live out of state. This seems to explain the large number of New York State plates observed. Apparently, residents commuting from Port Chester station must have been using a significant portion of Byram's municipal parking capacity at the William Street lot, but the current restricted hours of parking have freed up those spaces.

Since the original survey, the Town has restricted the 12-hour spaces in the William Street lot to 9 a.m. and 9 p.m., and no parking is permitted between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. Recent counts near midday found 10-15 empty spaces in the two-hour zone and 5-15 empty spaces in the 12-hour zone. Of the parked cars, 35% had out-of-state plates. This has not changed in magnitude from what it was prior to the current restrictions.

Byram's business district, mostly developed prior to zoning regulations, provides much less on-site parking than current regulations require. In August 2001, Planning and Zoning conducted a survey of Byram's business owners in the LBR-2 and WB zones to learn where their employees currently park and how many total spaces they feel would be adequate to serve their employees, visitors, and customers. Current peak demand for spaces, reflected by where they currently park, is as follows:

Employees	Customers*	On-Site Spaces	Municipal Spaces**
261	241	193	<b>177</b>

\*The number of customers is the estimated maximum number of customer groups using the same vehicle that would be present at any one time. (Business Owners Survey)

\*\*Municipal spaces means striped spaces in lots or along curbs where the parking period is limited by signage. (Resident Survey)

Approximately 140 of the on-site spaces are available for employees so the remainder (121) attempt to park in municipal spaces. Approximately 53 on-site spaces are available for customers. If we assume that no more than 60% of customers are parked simultaneously, then the current simultaneous demand for municipal spaces can be approximated as follows:

$$\text{Municipal Spaces (striped, controlled): } 121 + 0.60 (241) - 53 = 213 \text{ spaces}$$

There are 177 municipal spaces (36 less than peak demand of 213 spaces), so that they should be almost enough to meet the estimated current peak demand for 213 spaces, especially since there are over 50 unstriped spaces available. The study made no allowances for the parking demand of residential units in these business zones because the Commission has customarily waived required parking for residential units on mixed-use sites provided there is overnight on-site parking available.

The existing municipal spaces have often been occupied by Metro North commuters, fleet vehicles, and the like. As previously noted, restricting the hours of parking at the William Street lot has changed that and made enforcement more feasible.

Another study was done of Byram’s business zones to see how much parking would be required if all properties were developed to their current building size but with all the on-site parking required by the regulations. It showed:

<b>Total Required by Regs</b>	<b>Available On Site</b>	<b>Available Off-Site</b>	<b>Difference</b>
722	193	177	-352
<b>Net Deficiency</b>			352 spaces

The number of spaces available off-site is the current number of striped spaces along curb lines and in parking lots where the period of permitted parking is controlled by municipal signs. The net deficiency shown is significantly higher than the actual current demand or that would ever result from future development. This is because on-site parking requirements restrictions on coverage, and lot shape restrict the amount of gross floor area that can actually be developed and the actual demand that would result.

Existing businesses/buildings may have more employees or more customers in the future; but, if they were to add space or convert to more intensive uses, they would be required to provide on-site parking in accordance with the zoning regulations, the amount depending on whether it was residential, office or retail use. Some expansion of existing or new businesses may occur in the future within the current limits of the business zones. This infers that the parking demand appropriate for planning purposes lies between the net deficiencies found in the preceding two studies, 352 and 39. For the purposes of developing a long-range parking management plan, a goal of providing 50 to 100 additional municipal spaces appears reasonable and is recommended. Sites adjoining the business district were examined for potential parking lot expansions in the future and are shown on Figure 5a.

## **BEAUTIFICATION/PRESERVATION**

Community representatives and volunteers identified areas of Byram where aesthetic improvements were needed and suggested remedies. These included creating pocket parks to provide public access to the waterfront; eliminating asphalt patches in concrete walks, improving landscaping, and putting utility lines underground. At Byram Park a larger pool was recommended as well as upgrading of toilets, bathhouses and pavilion.

The Commission engaged Vollmer Associates to study a limited portion of the Byram business area and propose feasible streetscape improvements, including curbs, sidewalks, street trees, benches, lighting, trash receptacles, signs, enhanced pedestrian crossings, and improved public access to the waterfront. The result was a schematic design plan Figure 6a and 6b that could be implemented in four phases. The same amenities were also recommended by Renée Kahn in her study for a Village District. (Appendix D)

It should be noted that the street furniture illustrated in Figure 6b are meant only as suggestions, not final selections.

Streetscape improvements such as additional street trees, planters, pedestrian-scale decorative light standards, benches and the like, would improve the ambiance of the business district and make it more attractive to customers. The feasibility of removing unsightly overhead lines and placing utility lines underground within the business district was also investigated.

Representatives of Connecticut Light & Power (CL&P) met with Planning and Zoning to discuss the feasibility and costs of putting the overhead utility lines in the business district underground. Their "ball park" estimates to bury the linear power lines, but keep the lateral services to individual users overhead, was \$2,200,000. A representative of Verizon also met with Planning and Zoning to determine the feasibility of putting their lines underground in a system separate from that of CL&P, but did not submit an estimate. If we assume that the cost for each utility (electric, telephone, and cable) would be similar to that of CL&P, the total cost of putting utility lines underground in the business district (Water Street between Hervey Street and South New Street plus Mill/Delavan between the river and Chestnut Street) is estimated to be of the order of \$6,000,000.

If undergrounding were limited to Water Street between William Street and Armonk Street and Mill Street between the Byram River bridge and Mead Avenue, the cost might be reduced to \$ 3,300,000. This is a key issue that must be decided by the Town as soon as possible because it affects the schedule for upgrading sidewalks. Due consideration must also be given to the effects of the disruption of sidewalks and streets during the construction period needed to put lines underground.

## **ZONING ENFORCEMENT**

Byram residents who participated in this study agreed almost unanimously that more enforcement of the Zoning Regulations was needed. Complaints include nuisances, crowding due to lot splits, illegal apartments, and untidy construction sites. Residents identified a list of current violations that the Zoning Enforcement Officer is presently investigating. Some of the current violations are noted in the Appendix D.

State statutes allow for fines for violators, but the violator must be found guilty in a court of law before the fine can be assessed. The process of investigating a complaint is very time-consuming as a factual record must be established and a series of specific procedural steps adhered to in pursuing the complaint. Clearly enforcement will never be adequate until there is another zoning person assigned nearly full time to enforcement. Clearly, as well, resolution of non-compliance situations will never be effective until the Town begins to assess fines without resorting to the courts. This can be accomplished thru new zoning regulations and ordinances.

Crowding resulting from undersized lot splits will be significantly controlled if the RTM approves the proposed redefinition of “subdivision” as a division into two or more lots. Presently the Board of Selectmen is reviewing the proposal to change the definition of subdivision to 2 or more lots, (instead of 3 or more lots). The next approval would be the RTM.

## **WATERFRONT**

Historically, the Byram River waterfront was industrial, and many businesses depended on the water. Today, the waterfront between Mill Street and a point just north of the I-95 viaduct is zoned for waterfront business (WB), which permits water dependent and water related activities and uses and provides for public access to the water (Figure 7).

Five of the 19 waterfront lots, occupying 26% of the 3,160-foot waterfront, are water-dependent. Fourteen are non-conforming with respect to use. Of the 19 lots in the WB zone, 14 are non-conforming with respect to use. The uses not water dependent or water related include several residences, a construction firm, a distributor of lumber and home-improvement products, an oil company, a DPW maintenance yard and sewer pumping station, a holding company, an electric product distributor, a municipal parking lot, a bank and a restaurant. The lumberyard and the oil company had deliveries made by barge years ago; under those conditions they could be considered water dependent uses.

Section 6-141 of the zoning regulations provides for the alteration, and even expansion, of non-conforming structures provided the new use is not more detrimental to the neighborhood. For any proposed new use, on-site parking requirements must be met, the permitted FAR or existing non-conforming FAR may not be exceeded, and the height of any addition may not exceed the height of the existing structure or 30 feet, whichever is lower. Non-conforming uses may be converted to other non-conforming uses, so long as

the new use is not more non-conforming and does not overload the existing infrastructure.

Conversions to completely different uses or other non-conforming uses, such as from warehousing for product distribution to housing units (possibly with boat slips), may be considered under Section 6-141 provided the traffic generation and water and sewer demands are not more detrimental than for the existing use, the densities are consistent with the R-6 zone on the east side of South Water Street, and that public access to the water and waterfront is developed. Any site that is changed from one non-conforming use to another could provide boat slips or other water-dependent uses and give more public access to the waterfront. South Water Street is fairly heavily traveled, is burdened by forklift truck movements, and has to serve numerous large trucks, all of which impede the flow of traffic. South Water Street should not be used as a loading area for the lumber and boat businesses. Emergency vehicles and two-way traffic flow are frequently impeded by these loading movements. Added peak hour traffic may cause traffic queuing in South Water Street and result in the use of adjacent narrow residential streets for traffic circulation.

There are some impediments to waterfront development for some water-dependent and water related uses. The numerous truck movements and the use of South Water Street to park and double-park large trucks for some existing businesses makes future traffic increases questionable with respect to capacity and safety if those businesses were to remain and additional development were to occur. Secondly, there are limited areas of the river lying outside federal dredged channel lines where there is enough room to accommodate boat slips or other construction that would increase public access to the water. Lastly, the sanitary sewer pump station and the sewer line in South Water Street are overloaded by the present development. No new connections are permitted at present, but the Town is undertaking eventually to upgrade the system. The contract for the new pump station is completed and it will be constructed in 2004. The infiltrators and inflow study has been completed in Byram and the report and recommendations for improvements and surcharge issues are due out in May 2003. Implementing those recommendations is part of an EPA consent order and will be addressed quickly. The replacement of the force main is scheduled for FY 2005-06.

The Byram River is one of only a few federal channels in the state, and forms the border between New York and Connecticut. Some properties on South Water Street have boat repair companies and slips and docks. However, in order to add additional boating docks, it is necessary to locate the federal channel line. The present condition of the river is degraded, but still functions for boating and some barge delivery downstream of the Mill Street bridge. Accumulations of eroded silt and trapped debris must be removed by dredging, which is the responsibility of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Views of the river itself are only available from limited points because the level of the river is well below the level of the ground in the WB zone. Views are principally of the opposite shore and the Port Chester Marina Development. (Figure 8) Waterfront re-development in Port Chester is planned and on going.

Planning and Zoning is currently involved in a coastal grant application with Connecticut DEP to study water quality and design for public access and additional boating opportunities along the Byram and Mianus Rivers. This study is to be completed by July 2003. The Department of Health is presently completing a water sampling study of the Byram River and DPW is beginning a new consultant study of outfalls along streams and rivers town wide as part of EPA Phase II discharge requirements.

Figure 9a shows a conceptual plan for developing a pocket park where the municipal parking lot at Church Street now exists and Figure 9b shows a conceptual plan for developing a pocket park where the DPW yard now exists. (Appendix E). Private funds, Community Development Block Grants and the Parks Foundation funds could all be used to construct these riverfront parks.

## **AREA WIDE IMPACTS TO BYRAM**

Some of the larger commercial uses desired by many residents but not permitted by right in Byram may be built in the Marina Development Project Area across the Byram River in Port Chester. A few of the proposed uses may compete with existing Byram businesses. An associated impact would be additional Port Chester traffic using the Delavan Avenue/Mill Street corridor, which may increase congestion and negatively impact the desirability of shopping in Byram. The Village of Port Chester has major re-development plans for their waterfront including a possible hotel, supermarket, restaurants, a complete waterfront public access boardwalk with additional boat dock and slips, and some retail shops. The plans include approximately 400,000 square feet of development, a new public access esplanade along the Byram River waterfront, and major changes to the intersections and traffic signals. The waterfront development of Port Chester offers an opportunity for joint coordinated development for both communities for public pedestrian access, water dependent uses such as increased boating on both sides of the river, and compatibility in design, landscaping and building restoration, rehabilitation and reuses.

## **BYRAM PARK**

One of Greenwich's three public beaches is on Long Island Sound at Byram Park. (Figure 10) The park includes the Town's only public swimming pool, a lighted ball field, tennis courts, picnic areas, and a boat club. A list of Town improvements since 1968 is provided in Appendix G. The Board of Parks and Recreation has adopted a master plan to improve all its parks, including Byram Park in January 2002. The people of Byram would like a presentation and resident's discussion of these plans. Because

Byram Park already accommodates multiple uses, with the types of uses well defined in each area of the park based on the park's unique geography, Parks and Recreation believes that careful consideration should be given to any proposed new uses beyond those recommended below.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Reconfigure gate and entrance and improve landscaping at entrance area. (Purchased 02-03)
2. Reconfigure rear parking lot and exit road.
3. Improve controls for vehicle access.
4. Remove sand and salt material, including snow and plowing equipment, from western parking lot.
5. Renovate restrooms and provide one year-round bathroom. (03-04)
6. Improve playground on west side of park above Boat Club. (In Review)
7. Pool: Move pool to field north of its present location and rebuild pool with open-air deck that can be enclosed for year-round use.
8. Convert current pool area into viewing area/picnic area.
9. Connect beaches and eliminate rock jetty. (year 2010)
10. Renovate and improve access to existing pavilion above marina. (03-04 DPW & DPR)
11. Changing room area: Reconfigure locker design similar to Island Beach format. (Monelli's List)
12. Continue upgrading and maintenance of Town's only lighted ball field.
13. Develop continuous jogging/walking path within perimeter of ball field.
14. Paint all fences in style and color appropriate to park setting.
15. Negotiate formal agreement between Byram Boat Club and Town. (Memo from Bergstresser to Law Department (2002) to restart new lease.)
16. Develop kayak launch area.
17. Dredge Byram Harbor prior to 2010. (Survey in 2005)

#### **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND FOLLOW UP**

The first step in implementing the recommendations that follow is for this report to be presented at a public meeting to the Byram Community and adopted by the Planning and Zoning Commission. A public hearing is scheduled on March 18, 2003 to discuss this plan and the Sidewalks Transportation Enhancement Program Grant application for 3 segments of sidewalk reconstruction and improvements in the Byram area shown in Appendix F.



The second step is for the Town and the Byram business owners to decide whether the burying overhead electric, telephone and cable lines in all or part of the Byram business district should be incorporated in the final implementation schedule. Putting lines underground might involve a substantial part of a year in planning and a year of more in construction. This decision affects the schedule for sidewalks, curbs and street trees in the streets affected.

The third step is for the departments of Public Works and Parks and Recreation to commit to the annual funding of these capital and maintenance improvements. Each department would decide how much of a commitment in each of the tasks, such as replacing deteriorated sidewalks, planting street trees, etc., would be possible for the Byram area in each future fiscal year.

Tables I & II are attached to show estimated capital and maintenance costs.

The recommendations to be implemented are as follows:

1. Install new traffic signal at the Mill Street/Water Street intersection with left turn phases that will improve the flow of traffic for Byram residents. This is in DPW's '02-'03 budget and the plans have been approved by the state. Installation work will begin in fall 2003.

2. Install traffic safety measures on Byram Road to reduce the speeds of traffic currently observed there. These include:

Gateway channellization treatments at each end of Byram Road

Reflectors and other safety measures at the railroad bridge

Bulb-outs at Richland Road

Stop signs at Sherman Avenue

3. Install traffic safety measures on Mead Avenue to reduce the speeding of traffic and improve pedestrian safety, especially for school children walking to school, the library, playfields, etc. These include:

Install raised crosswalks at Church and William Streets

Construct turn-around circle at the South Water Street intersection to permit large trucks to return to Mill Street using South Water Street rather than Mead Avenue. At this time the State of CT CONDOT is unwilling to grant easements on its property to make this turn-around possible, and no local funding has been secured.

Place weight limits on Mead, William, Church, and Division Streets to curtail use by heavy trucks

### Improve drop-off and pick-up operations at New Lebanon School

4. Reconstruct Byram sidewalk segments located along the primary pedestrian routes (Figure 4) that have 20% or more of their length deteriorated as soon as feasible. Along these primary routes the replacements should be made with granite curbs, concrete walks, and street trees. The Town is in the process of applying for STEP funds for 3 sidewalk locations in the Byram downtown area. Prioritization of needed sidewalk improvements at other locations is needed.
5. The Selectmen's Parking & Traffic Committee should develop a parking management plan to create 50 to 100 municipal spaces in the Byram business district. Acquisitions of properties that would permit expansion of existing lots would be preferred over the purchase of small individual lots.
6. Convert the Town-owned lots on South Water Street at the foot of Church Street and the DPW yard north of Hervey Street to vest-pocket parks that would permit residents' access to the Byram River. Develop as much waterfront esplanade, including fishing and boating opportunities, between these two parks as is feasible. DPW and DPR need to develop a time line for Capital Improvements Project scheduling.
7. The Departments of Parks and Recreation and Public Works should develop detailed plans and time line for CIP and implementing streetscape improvements in the Byram business district on Mill/Delavan between Chestnut Street and the Byram River Bridge and on Water Street between Hervey Street and South New Street. These include:
  - Additional street trees and precast planters
  - Decorative pedestrian scale lighting standards
  - Decorative pavements and accentuated crosswalks at key intersections
  - Benches and trash receptacles
8. Continue planting street trees on Byram streets having less than four trees. Utilization of the state statutes on Setback Planting and the private funding of the Tree Fund through the town's Parks Foundation present alternatives to town funds.
9. Repaint all pedestrian crosswalks to make them more noticeable to motorists. Add "state law" signs at strategic locations.
10. DPR to begin scheduling community meetings in Byram to discuss the Master Plan and annual improvements to Byram Park outlined in this plan and to take input from the residents on the design of the riverfront pocket parks design.
11. The Departments of Public Works and Parks and Recreation should develop 5-10

year action plans on a timely basis on projects noted above.

12. Planning and Zoning staff should review and study those zoning regulations for residential, commercial and waterfront zones suggested by residents during this study and report to the Commission.
13. HDC and ARC should participate in Planning and Zoning's R-6 study in respect to Byram.
14. Planning and Zoning should study the future uses of the waterfront, including the engagement of a consultant to prepare preliminary plans for pocket parks (following input from the residents of Byram on a desirable scope of development).
15. It would appear prudent for Planning and Zoning and the Byram Study committee chairs plus RTM leaders to continue meeting from time to time to review the progress of implementation and to devise methods to accelerate the process, if warranted.

APPENDIX A-

**1998 PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT STATEMENTS,  
POLICIES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS RELEVANT TO BYRAM**

Pg. 14 - Housing Policies/Recommendations -

1. To preserve residential neighborhoods,
  - a. Strictly enforce and adhere to zoning regulations
  - d. Consider site coverage limits for all zones
  - e. Consider modified setbacks in all residential zones
  - f. Preserve existing front yard setbacks for streetscapes.
2. Encourage a variety of housing types, sizes, and locations for the Town's diverse population, especially for those with low and moderate income and the elderly.

Pg. 15 - Business Zones

The WB zone found along the Byram River - its purpose is to preserve the waterfront for uses that depend on it and to provide public access to the water.

Pg. 15 - Local Neighborhood Centers --- The historic village centers are zoned for local businesses, services, and retail uses (LBR) that serve the neighborhood and do not depend on attracting business from a wider area. These centers give local residents shopping and services at a small town scale within walking and biking distance for many.

Pg. 15 - Old Greenwich, Riverside, Byram and Cos Cob are historic village shopping areas with local service, and retail businesses (and apartments above stores) designed to provide for the shopping needs of the surrounding residential neighborhoods... These should be preserved largely in their current state with only small-scale local businesses to preserve their existing character.

Pg. 20 - Commercial Uses Policies/Recommendations

- 1.h. Develop plans for...Byram Business Zones
  - A- Maintain and encourage water dependent business uses and environmentally sensitive public access in the Waterfront Business zones on Long Island Sound and the Mianus and Byram Rivers.
  - B- Prevent commercial impacts and activities from encroaching on residential areas.

Pg. 28 – Historical Resources Policies/Recommendations

2. Inventory, designate, and publicize historic and traditional neighborhoods.
4. Identify neighborhood design elements and guidelines for homeowners and builders.
  - C- Require town buildings, landscaping and street furniture to meet or surpass the standards expected of private developers.
  - D- Encourage the preservation of existing structures deemed to be significant by allowing flexibility through zoning incentives.

Pg. 40 - Transportation Policies/Recommendations

1. To improve safety:
  - a. Provide crosswalks, signals, signs, and sidewalks in densely developed areas and biking and jogging paths on or next to appropriate roads.
  - b. Use more traffic "calming" methods such as narrow roads, on-street parking in business zones, humps, circles, and islands, consistent with safety and efficiency of traffic flow
  - c. Enforce speed limits
  - d. Post weight limits on local roads to preclude heavy truck traffic
  
3. To provide better parking for shoppers, Town resident-commuters, and employees:
  - a. Encourage the combination of adjoining privately owned sites for employee and shopper parking and public use of private parking lots after hours
  - b. Prevent long-term employee, commuter, and car dealer parking within areas designated for shopper parking
  - d. Eliminate parking permits for non-residents and business in Town-owned commuter lots

Pg. 44 - Public Facilities Policies/Recommendations

1. To enable the Town's infrastructure to meet today's needs:
  - a) Accelerate DPW's programs of pumping station and sewer line upgrades for improving wastewater treatment and collection
  - b) Assess the problem areas in the Town's infrastructure and develop a list for prioritizing projects.
  
2. To ensure the public facilities will meet the Town's future needs,
  - c. Develop and implement a master plan to improve the Holly Hill complex
  - d. Prepare master plans for all parks to include maintenance, preservation of the natural environment, and improvements in safety, acquisition, programs, and coordination with the Board of Education, private schools, and other private facilities.

Pg. 51 - Neighborhoods

With its small lots and rocky ground, Byram needs a good sewer system. As recently as 1950, industries dumped their wastes directly into the river. Despite new sewer plants in Port Chester and in Greenwich, pollution from several sites has forced the closing of Byram Beach many times in recent summers.

APPENDIX B - LOS DESCRIPTION

APPENDIX C - RECOMMENDATIONS OF RENÉE KAHN

APPENDIX D - VOLLMER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

APPENDIX E - ZONING VIOLATIONS

- a) 28 William Street – Complaints from residents of illegal rooming house with multiple units.
- b) William Street and Mead Avenue – Parking lot zoned as a P zone for employee and customer parking for the warehouse building on Mill Street is currently used for boat storage. Building is used for retail/office, which was only approved as warehouse.
- c) South Water Street at Berrian Place – Former oil depot became a boat storage yard with structure (boat racks) with no site plan application or approval as required by regulations.
- d) South New Street at North Water Street – Large rack body truck permanently parked in residential zone. Basement used as a commercial warehouse.
- e) Delevan Avenue at Beech Street – Automotive repairs business corner of Delevan Avenue illegal signs, violations of Board of Appeals approvals regarding outdoor work on vehicles, storage of vehicles outdoors overnight, unapproved chain link fences, storage of used tires and parts outdoors abutting a residential zone.

APPENDIX F- BYRAM PARK IMPROVMENTS TIMELINE

APPENDIX G-