

ENHANCE COMMUNITY CHARACTER

4

OVERVIEW

Community character is a large part of what makes Madison special to its residents. Almost everyone that participated in the planning process spoke of the importance of preserving Madison's character.

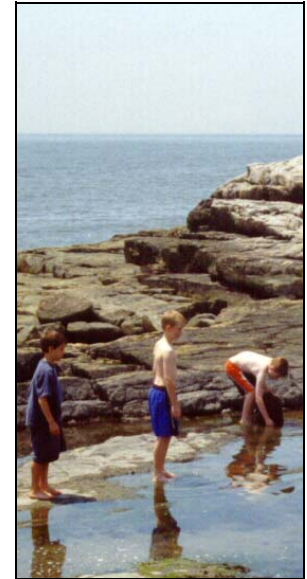
Over the years, through the combined efforts of many people and organizations, Madison has retained much of its rural character and its fundamental identity as a quaint New England town. In order to retain the characteristics that make Madison special, efforts to preserve community character must continue.

While the elements of community character are personal to each resident of Madison, there are some common elements that were identified:

- scenic resources (areas, vistas, and roads),
- historic resources,
- architectural character, and
- other unique resources (such as Long Island Sound).

Because of the importance of these community characteristics, this Plan recommends and urges the Town to seek and use every possible legal and policy device that will enable Madison to retain and protect its broad character assets. As various protective measures are considered, the importance of initiating and strengthening programs to inventory, designate, and recognize areas and structures that contribute to community character is very clear.

Fun at West Wharf



Norma Diamond

***Efforts to preserve
community character in Madison
must continue ...***

Conservation Committee

Section 7-131a of the Connecticut General Statutes authorizes any town to establish a conservation commission for ... conservation ... of natural resources within its territorial limits.

In Madison, such responsibilities could be assigned to a newly formed board, an existing board (such as the Shellfish Commission or Inland Wetlands Commission), or a board made up of representatives from existing boards and groups.

Long Island Sound

Madison's coastal areas, including Long Island Sound, represent some of the most scenic areas in the community. In addition, there are many scenic vistas located in the coastal area.

Additional recommendations related to coastal issues and management of areas within the coastal boundary are contained on pages 65-70.

Establish a Conservation Committee

In Madison, as in most communities, there is a desire to avoid the creation of new boards or agencies. However, there is no agency at the present time that is directly responsible for overseeing all of the various elements that contribute to community character. Madison should establish a Conservation Committee (or identify another organization) whose sole responsibility is to:

- identify important resources in Madison,
- implement conservation programs and activities, and
- educate Madison residents and businesses about conservation issues.

Recommendations

1. Establish a Madison Conservation Committee (or identify another organization).
2. Identify important resources in Madison and implement conservation programs and activities.
3. Educate Madison residents and businesses about conservation issues.

Protect Scenic Resources

Scenic Areas and Vistas

Scenic resources are often mentioned by residents as one of the features they appreciate most about Madison. Scenic resources are considered to include:

- areas (scenic areas that are viewed from elsewhere), and
- vistas (locations affording scenic views from them).

Certain sites, such as ridgelines or coastal areas, can be both scenic areas and scenic vistas. Some sites include ridgelines and promontories that can be seen from many locations within the Town. Some major scenic resources are located on the fold-out map on the facing page. Other scenic resources include stone walls, barns, fences, and tree canopies.

About 48 percent of residents felt the Town should do more to protect scenic resources while 44 percent felt that the Town was doing enough. Since these sites enhance the character of Madison and would compromise the unique beauty of the Town if not given special consideration, efforts to identify and preserve scenic resources must continue.

Scenic Roads

Scenic roads are another element that significantly contribute to Madison's character. Since it is not uncommon for people to drive 20 to 40 miles per day, scenic roads can provide an important respite in daily routines.

The Boston Post Road (Route 1) is an excellent example of a scenic road in Madison. While Route 1 is a very commercial road throughout much of Connecticut and other states, it has a very rural character in parts of Madison as it passes through areas of open space and historical residential properties. These areas form attractive gateways to Madison Center from the east and west. For this reason, the Boston Post Road is seen as one of the Town's most important assets. Routes 79, 80, and 450 (Horse Pond and Duck Hole Roads) also exhibit many scenic characteristics.

While about 54 percent of residents felt that the Town had done enough to protect the scenic character and resources along Route 1, the preservation of scenic roads in Madison has mostly been a mix of good fortune and the dedicated efforts of owners and residents. However, this may change in the future.

State statutes (CGS Section 13b-31) allow the Department of Transportation to designate State Scenic Roads if it meets certain criteria. The designation is intended to ensure that any alteration maintains the character of the road. Towns can also adopt an ordinance and designate local roads as scenic if they meet statutory criteria (CGS 7-149a) in order to maintain the character of the road.

While it is important to recognize existing scenic roads, efforts also need to be devoted towards ensuring that new roads built in Madison are the scenic roads of the future. During the planning period, current road construction standards should be reviewed and revised to allow streets to follow existing terrain more closely and create the potential for more scenic roads. Possible changes to allow more scenic roads in new developments are identified in the sidebar.

An "adopt-a-road" program can also be used to promote litter control and enhance community character. The program could be a volunteer effort by a group or organization or an annual contribution of funds to provide these services.

Scenic Road Elements

Scenic road elements include narrow road width, tree canopies, stone walls, scenic vistas, agricultural lands, historic buildings, and notable natural features.

Sources: CGS 7-149a, CGS 13b-31b

New Scenic Roads

Madison has done a good job in maintaining the scenic nature of new and reconstructed roads. These efforts need to be continued.

Strategies to make new roads or reconstructed roads more scenic and enhance Madison's community character could include:

- narrower paved widths,
- slower design speeds,
- steeper grades,
- not clearing trees and grading flat for the full width of the road right-of-way,
- retaining or building stone walls,
- street tree planting, and
- providing landscaped center islands in cul-de-sacs to minimize paved areas, provide additional snow storage area, and provide an amenity in the roadway.

Scenic Resources Map
(flip page up)

Trees & Vegetation

Trees and vegetation are an important part of community character.

In some communities, tree protection ordinances have been used to protect significant or specimen trees, prevent unreasonable removal or damage, or manage tree clearing.

Recommendations

Scenic Areas and Vistas

1. Charge the Conservation Commission with identifying scenic views, vistas, and other scenic resources in Madison.
2. Amend local regulations to include protection of scenic views and vistas, especially along the shoreline.
3. Preserve or relocate scenic resources such as stone walls, barns, fences, and other scenic resources that are visible from public streets.
4. Protect tree canopies from destruction by State and utility pruning.
5. Continue to protect natural resources, open space, coastal resources, historical resources, Madison Center, and unique local facilities in order to enhance their scenic value and overall community character.

Scenic Roads

6. In order to maintain character along major roadways in Madison, request that the Department of Transportation:
 - designate all or parts of Route 1 in Madison as a scenic road, and
 - designate all or parts of Routes 79, 80, and 450 (Horse Pond Road and Duck Hole Road) in Madison as scenic roads.
7. Consider adopting a local scenic road ordinance and designate local scenic roads in accordance with statutory requirements.
8. To maintain and enhance the scenic nature of State highways in Madison, encourage State use of reduced road standards and criteria for improvement of State highways in Madison.
9. Review local road construction standards with a view towards lowering design speeds and narrowing paved widths in order to promote the construction of more scenic roads as part of new developments.
10. Consider establishing an “adopt-a-road” program with local organizations in order to promote litter control and enhance community character.

Protect Historic Resources

Preservation of historic resources is an important way for Madison to provide a sense of identity and stability, preserve community character, and maintain the Town's historical heritage.

Inventory

Madison has six listings on the National Register of Historic Places and the State Register of Historic Places:

National/State Register Listings	
A. Madison Green National Historic District	Boston Post Road
1. Allis-Bushnell House (c. 1785)	853 Boston Post Road
2. Meigs-Bishop House (c. 1695)	45 Wall Street
3. Jonathan Murray House	76 Scotland Road
4. Shelley House	248 Boston Post Road
5. State Park Supply Yard	51 Mill Road
6. Deacon John Grave House	581 Boston Post Road

There are many other sites in Madison with historic significance. A historic resource survey undertaken in Madison in 1980 looked at about 250 buildings that were more than 50 years old. An additional 70 buildings identified for study were not evaluated.

In 1993, the Madison Open Space / Recreation Plan looked at historic areas and sites (not buildings). These areas are identified on the following pages.

Both studies need to be updated.

Madison Overview

“Throughout the Town of Madison are sites containing evidence of early domestic, commercial and industrial enterprises. By exploring these areas, much can be learned about Native American habits, colonial architecture, water power, fuel, transportation and manual labor.

“Some of these interesting areas are on property already owned by the Town or State, but are not necessarily protected. Many areas are on private property and are at risk when an owner wishes to build or renovate.

“With the help of several experienced historians, the following inventory of historical and archeological areas has been garnered. Although this inventory is quite extensive, any compilation of this type is never complete and is not intended to be.”

1993 Madison Open Space/
Recreation Plan

Historic Resources Map
(flip page up)

Historic Sites in Madison

RACE HILL ROAD AREA

- Old toll house for Rte. 80 is at Race Hill and Route 80.
- Remnants of the "Old Iron Works" (a potential National Historic Site) where bog iron ore was smelted in small furnaces.
- Location of several mill sites (the Dowd Saw Mill, the Noah Hill's fulling mill and dyeing house, and a cider mill).
- Site of the Genesee Colony (from the 1790s).
- A swampy area called Foster Hole provided bog iron ore.
- Colliers' huts, fireplaces and domes (covered with sod) used to burn wood into charcoal.

SUMMER HILL ROAD AREA

- Cliffs with Indian Rock Shelters.
- Evidence of Indian life around the northern end of Hammonasset Lake, including the only known arrowhead factory in Madison.
- Nathan's Pond.

OPENING HILL ROAD AREA

- A flat open area in the middle of the woods called the Podunk Great Plain or Titus Kelsey Plains.
- Gould's Pond - the site of a sawmill, an intact old stone dam, and the possible remains of another stone dam.
- Christopher Foster's ax handle factory is on the north side of Overbrook Road (Factory Road).

WARPAS ROAD AREA

- Site of Civilian Conservation Corps camps in the 1930s.
- The best charcoal pit in Madison with a mound, now covered with sod and princess pine, containing very black soil.

ROUTE 79 AREA

- Oil Mill Brook was the site for pressing flax seed into linseed oil.
- Foster Mill.
- White Cedar Swamp which produced cedar for shingles and the flagpole for the North Madison Congregational Church.
- Site of the Mary Stannard murder, the first use of forensic medicine to scientifically deduce the cause of death.
- Erratic Boulder rock shelter is west of the northernmost section of Route 79.
- Coan Pond -- Mill site west of Route 79 along Stannard Pond Stream.

Historic Sites in Madison (continued)

NECK ROAD AREA

- A rendering plant where fish were boiled. The oil was used in cosmetics, lipsticks, paint, etc.
- A “turn-around” at the Neck River Dock, where oxen turned boats for the return out to Long Island Sound.
- A canal from the Neck River, to create a natural environment for oyster beds, is fast disappearing because it is being filled in.
- Chittenden home lot. First Governor of Vermont.
- A 2-story wooden building with two huge doors at the rear may be the last physical evidence of boat building in this area.
- The intact Andrew Stone Watrous blacksmith shop on Beach Avenue (also a smokehouse, corn crib and outhouse).
- Watrous stone quarry, parallel to Pleasant View Avenue over Long Island Sound.
- Indian skeleton in basement of Smith home on Pleasantview Avenue (removed to State Museum).

EAST RIVER AREA

- Piles of stone in the middle of the river may signify the original bridge connecting Guilford with Madison (then East Guilford).
- An area used by Miner Lippincott for a private airport.
- Cedar Island, a forest of cedars growing out of the salt marsh.

HAMMONASSET STATE PARK AREA

- Former site of a 30’ stone-lined ceremonial fire pit - now covered by a park road.
- A shell midden (a place containing oyster shell and clam shell deposits) possibly from Native Americans or early settlers.
- A shell midden at Meig's Point near Willard's Island, made by placing tall poles around in a semi-circle in the ground, called a *Palisade*.
- A seaweed wharf (pier) that is exposed in winter. Another seaweed pier is at Waterbury Avenue.
- Remnants of the old Shoreline Trolley Line can still be seen parallel to Route 1.
- A practice range for aerial target shooting for American fighter pilots - used during WWI and WWII.
- Site of Charles Dudley's blacksmith shop with old iron implements still found there (archaeological digs are recommended).

HAMMONASSET RIVER AREA

- Site of an old fish hatchery on River Road and Rte 95. Also mills and an old stone works dam which was blown up by the State.
- Whedon's Pond -- woodworking mill and ax handles.
- Paper mill at the Hog Pond Brook area.
- Mill sites north and south of Rte. 80 in Ninevah area.
- Cliffs with Indian rock shelters between Lake Hammonasset and the reservoir.

TUXIS ISLAND

- In the center of Tuxis Island, is an old stone well with water still in it. The Beach Club owns Tuxis Island.

Importance of Action

Protecting historic resources is important to the overall character of Madison.

Even though many historical resources in Madison are still relatively intact, this has been more the result of happenstance than a concerted effort at preservation.

In reality, there is very little protection of historic resources that is being provided at the present time.

Protecting historic resources requires some effort and action to be successful.

Protection

While listing on the National Register of Historic Places provides recognition, it confers little protection for historic properties. For example, it does not prevent a property owner from undertaking activities detrimental to the historic resource.

The greatest protection for historic resources comes from responsible ownership and/or establishment of a local district. A local *historic* district may be most appropriate in residential areas since it requires a two-thirds vote of those affected. A *village* district may be more appropriate in commercial areas where business owners have different interests. Additional protection can come from adoption of local ordinances to promote historic preservation:

- a demolition delay ordinance (that allows time for exploring alternatives to demolition or for historical documentation).
- a tax abatement ordinance (that reduces or abates taxes on a historic property if taxes are a factor that threaten the structure).

Village Districts

Village districts are established by a Zoning Commission following a public hearing. Activities in village districts are regulated by the Zoning Commission. According to statute (CGS 8-2j), such regulations “shall protect the distinctive character, landscape and historic structures of such areas and may regulate ... alterations and improvements ... to maintain and protect the character of the village district.”

The Zoning Commission can establish village districts where it feels it is desirable. Village districts could be established as an interim step prior to creation of a local historic district.

Areas suitable for village districts may include:

- Madison Center,
- commercial areas on Route 1, and
- North Madison Center.

Additional information on village districts can be obtained from the State Historical Commission.

Local Historic Districts

Local Historic Districts are established by municipal ordinance following a two-thirds affirmative vote by affected property owners.

Activities in local historic districts are overseen by a Historic District Commission. Typically, any structure or exterior building change needs a Certificate of Appropriateness. In this way, a local historic district acts to preserve the historic integrity of the designated area.

Areas suitable for local historic districts may include:

- Madison Green,
- Middle Beach Road,
- Birnbaum Lane, and
- Liberty Street.

Additional information on local historic districts can be obtained from the State Historical Commission or may be found in CGS Section 7-147.

Recommendations

Identification

1. Establish a committee (including the Madison Historical Society and other groups) to inventory and study historic properties.
2. Budget or obtain funds to update the historic resource survey and document specific resources.
3. Nominate the most significant sites for state or federal recognition.
4. Using the Town's computer mapping system, prepare a map identifying the location (and type) of all known historic resources in Madison.

Protection

5. In residential areas with historic significance, encourage establishment of local historic districts overseen by a Historic District Commission.
6. Establish village districts overseen by the Planning and Zoning Commission in:
 - business areas with historic significance or character, and
 - residential areas where property owners have not established a local historic district.
7. Consider adopting ordinances to provide for:
 - demolition delay,
 - substantial rehabilitation delay, and/or
 - tax abatement, when appropriate, for preservation of historic properties.
8. Encourage owners of cultural, archaeological and historical resources to give special consideration to preserving and protecting them.

General

9. Encourage the efforts of the Madison Historical Society, Graves House, Charlotte Evarts Archives, and other organizations that promote historic preservation.
10. Establish educational programs for homeowners to promote awareness of historical and cultural resources on their properties.
11. Continue to maintain a municipal historian to preserve local history information.
12. Apply for designation as a Certified Local Government in order to be eligible for funding assistance for historic preservation.

Additional Information

More information on local historic resources can be found in the 1993 Open Space/Recreation Plan or can be obtained at the Madison Library, from the Municipal Historian, from the Madison Historical Society, or from the Connecticut Historical Commission.

In addition, the Charlotte Evarts Archives has over 10,000 items on Madison's history archived in a computer database. The Town Clerk's Office will have information on how to contact the Municipal Historian and/or the Charlotte Evarts Archives.

Promote Architectural Character

While there is a diversity of architectural styles in Madison, residents and visitors most appreciate the architectural styles that relate to Madison's history and complement Madison's fundamental identity as a quaint New England town.

Still, architectural design and character are subjective issues. What some see as "good design", others see as visually incompatible or inappropriate. In addition, design is relative -- what is appropriate in one area may not be appropriate in another simply because it does not relate well to the context of the buildings that surround it. It is hard to teach good design.

This is why Madison's Planning and Zoning Commission has established the Advisory Committee on Community Appearance (ACCA). This agency reviews plans for commercial uses and conditional uses in residential zones submitted to it by the Commission. ACCA provides formal comments to the Planning and Zoning Commission about how to improve the design of buildings and sites.

Since experience in Madison has shown that the ACCA process involves residents in the physical design of their community, ACCA should be continued and encouraged to promote more and better discussion about community design.

Recommendations

1. Review and strengthen the Advisory Committee on Community Appearance (a design review board) to review proposed commercial, multi-family residential, and other development and activities in village districts to ensure design consistency and review overall appropriateness.
2. Encourage ACCA to strengthen and maintain the design guidelines currently contained in the Zoning Regulations (Section 6.4.10 -Downtown Madison and Section 6.5.9 – Route 79/80 Traffic Circle Area).
3. In business zones, use ACCA to ensure design appropriateness in the village district zones proposed in this Plan.
4. Consider ways to get ACCA involved in applications and activities:
 - in historic districts,
 - on scenic roads, and
 - on applications before the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Conditional Uses

Zoning Regulations typically classify uses into several categories

- Permitted uses
- Accessory uses
- Conditional uses
- Prohibited uses.

Conditional uses may be allowed by the Planning & Zoning Commission when compliance with criteria specified in the regulations has been demonstrated.

In Madison, conditional uses are also called special exception permit uses.

Protect Other Unique Resources

There are many other unique resources that contribute to community character in Madison. Special efforts should be devoted to protecting:

- natural resources,
- open space,
- coastal resources (such as Long Island Sound),
- coastal access,
- historic resources, and
- Madison Center.

In addition, there are several unique local facilities that contribute to community character and should be protected and enhanced:

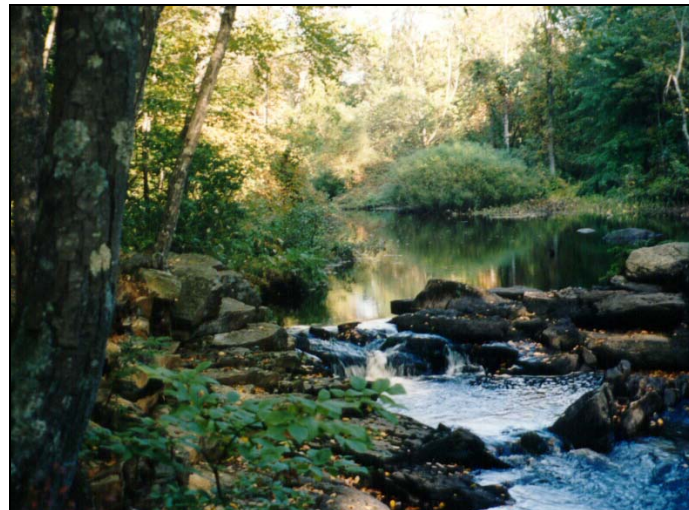
- the Town Green which, although privately owned, is used for band concerts and community activities,
- the Surf Club which provides a shorefront location for recreation and community festivals (such as the Shellfish Festival), and
- Memorial Hall (used by many local groups for community functions).

Coastal Scene



Patricia Anderson

Hammonasset River



Patricia Anderson

Recommendations

1. Protect and enhance unique local areas and facilities that contribute to community character such as:
 - Madison Center,
 - the Town Green,
 - the Surf Club,
 - East Wharf,
 - West Wharf,
 - Seaview,
 - Middle Beach,
 - Boston Post Road (Route 1), and
 - similar resources.
2. Continue to identify unique and important resources that contribute to community character (such as natural resources, open space, coastal resources, and historic resources).
3. Continue efforts to protect resources that contribute to community character.
4. Educate Madison residents and other interested persons about the availability of data regarding important resources (such as prior studies by King's Mark Environmental Review Team, Yale School of Architecture, and others).
5. Incorporate available resource information into the Town's computer mapping system to enhance its availability and utility to Madison residents and agencies.
6. Address other issues that can negatively impact on community character such as:
 - itinerant vendors on major roads,
 - used car display and sales in residential zones,
 - temporary signage, and
 - similar issues.
7. Allocate funding in the Town Budget for enforcement of zoning and other regulations and ordinances that can help in efforts to maintain and enhance community character.