

A Waterfront Vision

City of Norwich, Connecticut

A Presentation by the Norwich
Harbor Management Commission

September 25, 2018



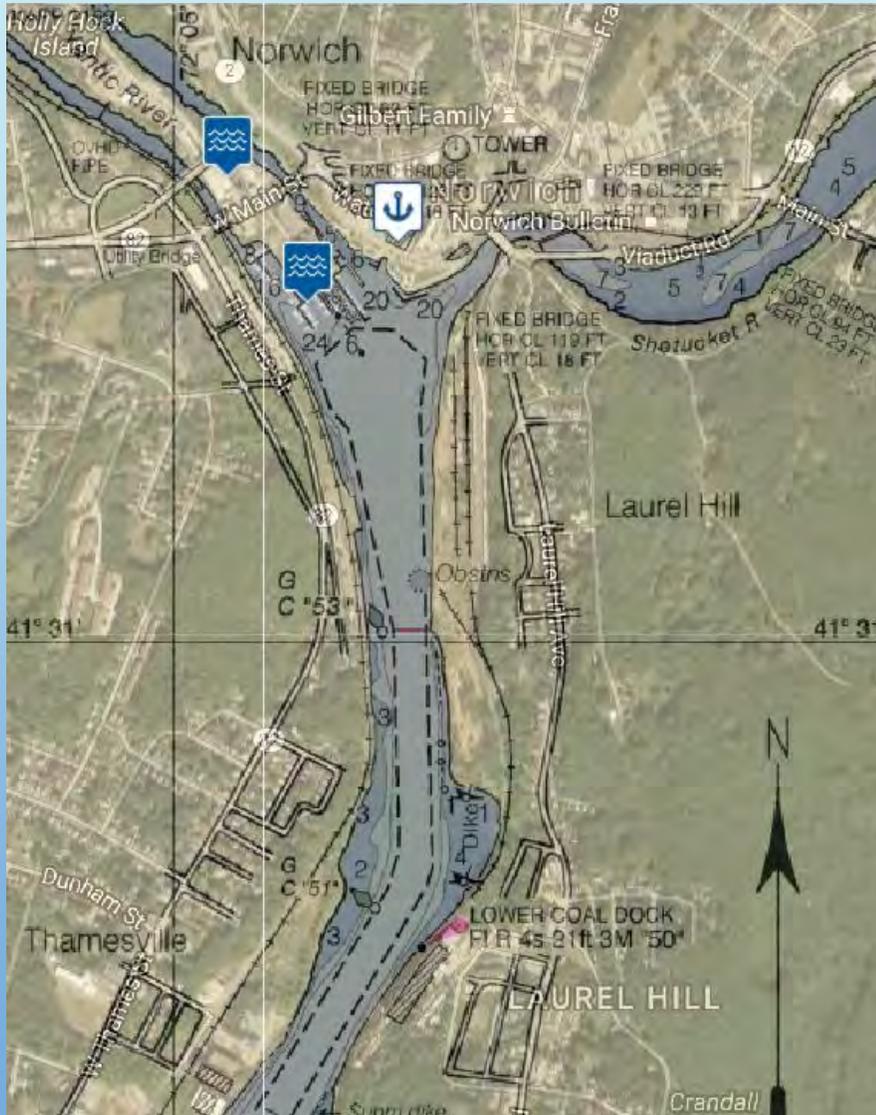
The City of Norwich in Southeast Connecticut

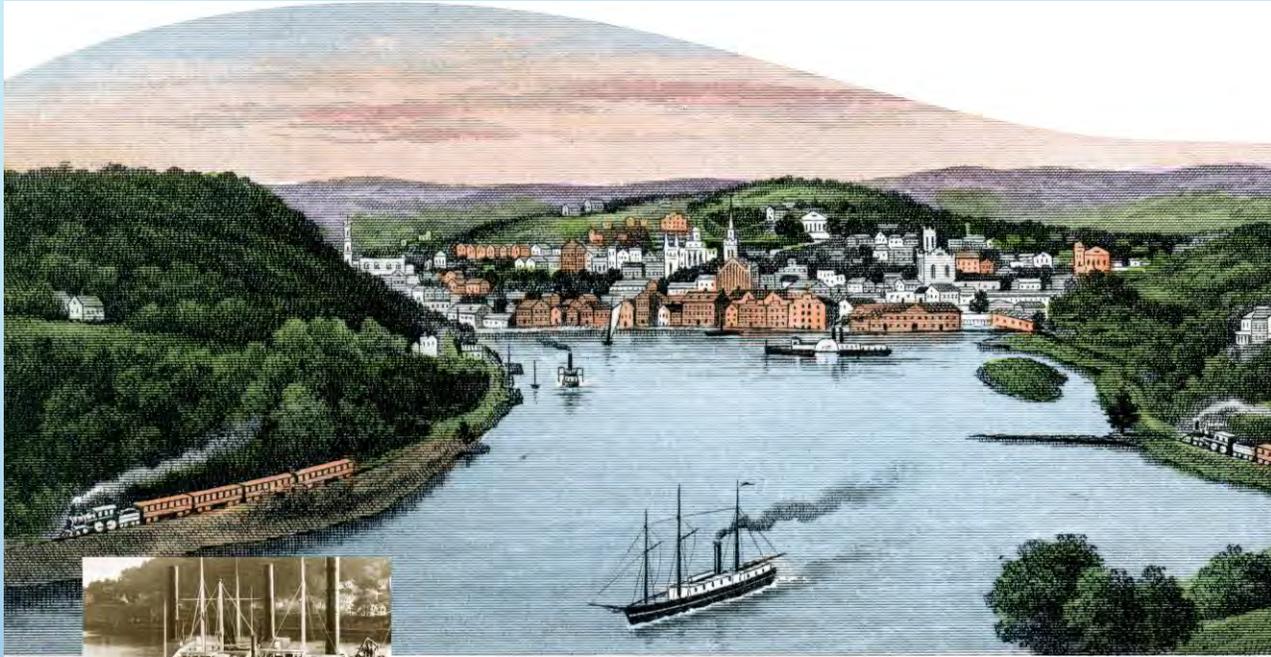
Norwich is a waterfront community at the head of navigation on the Thames River, part of the coastal area of the State of Connecticut as defined in the Connecticut Coastal Management Act.



Norwich Harbor Management Area

Norwich Harbor is located at the confluence of the Thames, Yantic, and Shetucket rivers. The Downtown Norwich waterfront is about 16 miles upstream on the Thames River from Long Island Sound. Overall, the City has about ten miles of waterfront along the Thames, Yantic, and Shetucket rivers in the Harbor Management Area.





Historic Waterfront

Settled in 1659, Norwich is one of the oldest and most historic communities in southeastern Connecticut. Much of the historical growth and development of Norwich can be described with respect to the City's coastal area setting at the head of navigation on the Thames River.



The Historic Norwich Waterfront

In 1684, a public dock was built nearby at the head of the Thames River, where the Yantic and Shetucket rivers converge. As the community grew, the confluence of the three rivers gave shape to Downtown Norwich—the city's nucleus today and for much of its history. Norwich developed as a natural trading center and the gateway to the interior of eastern Connecticut. Norwich Harbor became a deep-water seaport, linked to commerce with Europe and the West Indies. Before bridges were built, Norwich was the crossroads of eastern Connecticut — the first place north of the Thames River mouth where the river could be crossed by horse and carriage.

railroads converged on the city from all directions in the mid-1800s, Norwich combined maritime, rail and overland transportation systems into a major center of commercial activity. This was a grand era when the city was dominant in the economic, social and political life of Connecticut.

Norwich waterways also powered industry. Great mills were built on the Shetucket, and vast industrial works that manufactured textiles and other goods dominated the city's economy into the 1900s as maritime trade declined. During this time, the rivers were used for disposal of industrial and human waste. The waterfront was seldom thought of as a source of recreation or pleasure. After World War II the mills closed and the industrial base crumpled, with profound impacts on the city and southeastern Connecticut. Today, the unmatched natural beauty and resources of the harbor and three rivers endures and continues to hold the key to the city's future.

By 1756, Norwich was the second most populated city in Connecticut; its growth and prosperity due to the maritime trade. The banks of the Thames provided an abundance of timber, and many merchant vessels were built in Norwich shipyards along with whaling ships and, later, steamboats. Steamboat service to New York began in 1817. When



Steamboats and Water Power: In the 1800s, passengers embarking from steamboats on the Norwich waterfront made train connections to points north. Cotton from the south also arrived by boat and was then transformed into finished fabric in water-powered textile mills on the Yantic and Shetucket rivers.

1809 image of Norwich Harbor. Courtesy of Judge Charles K. Norris.
Factory image. Courtesy of the State Historical Museum.
This project by the Norwich Harbor Management Commission was funded by the Long Island Sound Study, Long Island Sound Futures Fund.

Norwich on the Harbor



American Wharf Marina

American Wharf Marina, on city-owned land at Hollyhock Island, was built on the site of an old coal depot in 1987 as a cornerstone of the City's plans for economic development and revitalization. A public waterfront park and waterfront restaurant complement the marina.



Howard T. Brown Memorial Park on the Downtown Waterfront

Brown Park on the downtown waterfront is a focal point for public activities on the harbor, including special events such as summer concerts. The park provides public docking and boat launching facilities as well as opportunities for fishing and enjoyment of scenic views.



Norwich Harbor Water Trail

On the Norwich Harbor water trail on the Thames, Yantic, and Shetucket rivers, paddlers can enjoy the natural beauty of the three rivers and appreciate historic and cultural resources unique to Norwich.

Map for reference only. Not for navigation.



Norwich Harbor Water Trail



Thames River at Norwich (G. Steadman) * Paddle Access Area

Welcome to historic Norwich Harbor at the head of the Thames River, where the Yantic and Shetucket rivers converge. In June of 1659, the first settlers of Norwich arrived by sailboat and landed nearby on the Yantic shore. Today, paddlers on the Norwich Harbor Water Trail experience first-hand the rich environment, culture and history of southeast Connecticut.



1859 Historic Harbor View (Judge C. Norris Collection)

Canoe and kayak journeys can begin and end at Howard T. Brown Memorial Park. From the park's public launching ramp on the Downtown waterfront, the unique scenic quality and historic legend of Yantic Falls and Indian Leap are one mile upstream on the Yantic; Greenville Dam is about two and a half miles upstream on the Shetucket; and Trading Cove and the Mohegan Sun Casino are four miles downstream on the Thames. Long Island Sound is 16 miles downstream.

The Thames is the third largest river in Connecticut, behind the Connecticut and Housatonic. An intricate web of tributaries feeds into the Thames from the north, including the Quinebang, Shetucket and Yantic rivers.

The valleys of the Quinebang and Shetucket rivers are designated by the U.S. Congress as a National Heritage Corridor known as the Last Green Valley - a place where natural and cultural resources have combined to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape.

Learn More

In the 1700s, Norwich Harbor became a deep-water seaport. Steamboat service to New York began in 1817, and then railroads converged on the city from all directions in the mid-1800s. Norwich waterways also powered great mills and industry.

Learn more about Norwich Harbor and its natural and cultural history from the Norwich Harbor Management Commission's webpage at www.norwichct.org. Learn about the Quinebang and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor and other water trails from The Last Green Valley (www.lgv.org). Explore the website of the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (www.ct.gov/deep).

Yantic Falls - Uncas Leap. The scenic quality of this cascading waterfall is unparalleled. Above the falls a footbridge over the river provides a scenic vista of the falls and cove below. The falls is also a place of legend where the Narragansett and Mohegan Tribes battled in 1643.



Yantic Falls and Uncas Leap (K. Pasco)

Watershed of the Thames

Long Island Sound depends on the environmental quality of its many tributaries and watersheds. If the water flowing into the Sound is polluted, water we swim in and fish we eat will be polluted too. Alone, each source of runoff pollution has only a small impact, but the cumulative impacts of many sources throughout the watershed can be significant. Everyone can help reduce runoff pollution, simply by being aware of how watersheds work. Everyday water-friendly practices, such as proper disposal of pet waste and limited use of fertilizers and pesticides, help keep Norwich Harbor, the Thames River and Long Island Sound clean for people, fish and wildlife.



City of Norwich Waterfront Vision



- Redevelopment of underutilized waterfront sites
- Economic growth and development linked to the harbor
- Safety and security
- Coordination among governmental agencies
- Public waterfront areas linked to downtown
- Water-based tourism

Waterfront Vision (Continued)

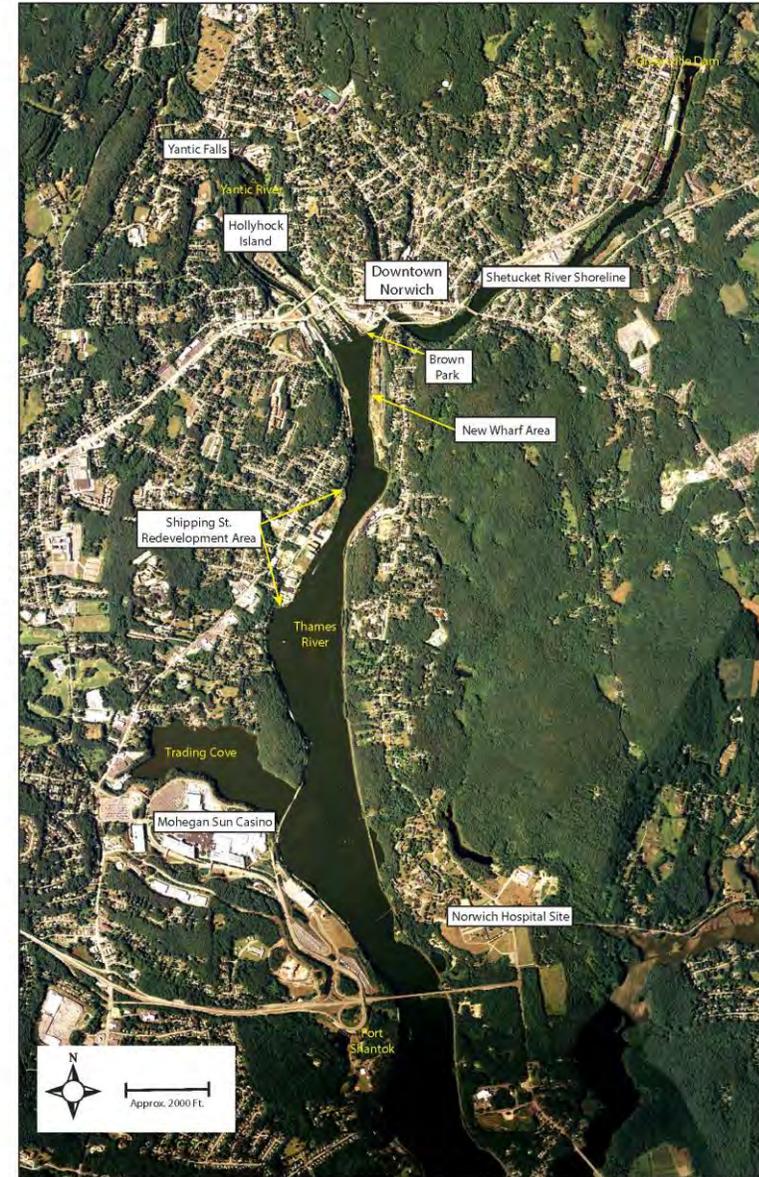
- Highest water quality attainable
- Center of recreational boating on the Thames River
- Center of recreational fishing on the Thames River
- Educational and scientific uses of the harbor
- Public interest, support and awareness



Opportunity Areas

Areas of interest and opportunity for implementing the Waterfront Vision include:

- New Wharf area
- Howard T. Brown Memorial Park
- Hollyhock Island
- Shetucket River shoreline
- Shipping Street area
- Yantic River and Falls



Base map is from 2010 satellite image from the Long Island Sound Resource Center which is a Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and University of Connecticut partnership.

Harbor Management Priorities in 2018

- 1) Identify feasible location for new boat launching facility; prepare project plans
- 2) Improve public docks at Brown Park
- 3) Establish new vision for re-development of underutilized waterfront properties in floodway
- 4) Promote Norwich Harbor as regional destination for recreational fishing
- 5) Update the Harbor Management Plan



Boat Launching Site and Brown Park

In 2018, the Harbor Management Commission is continuing its efforts to identify a feasible location for a new public boat launching facility with adequate capacity to accommodate trailered vessels and meet regional demand. Another priority is to rebuild/replace the public docks at Brown Park.



Establish New Vision for Redevelopment of Underutilized Properties in Floodway

City plans identify the Shipping Street and New Wharf areas as opportunity areas for waterfront redevelopment. In 2018, new visions for these properties are needed due to their inclusion by FEMA in the Thames River "floodway."



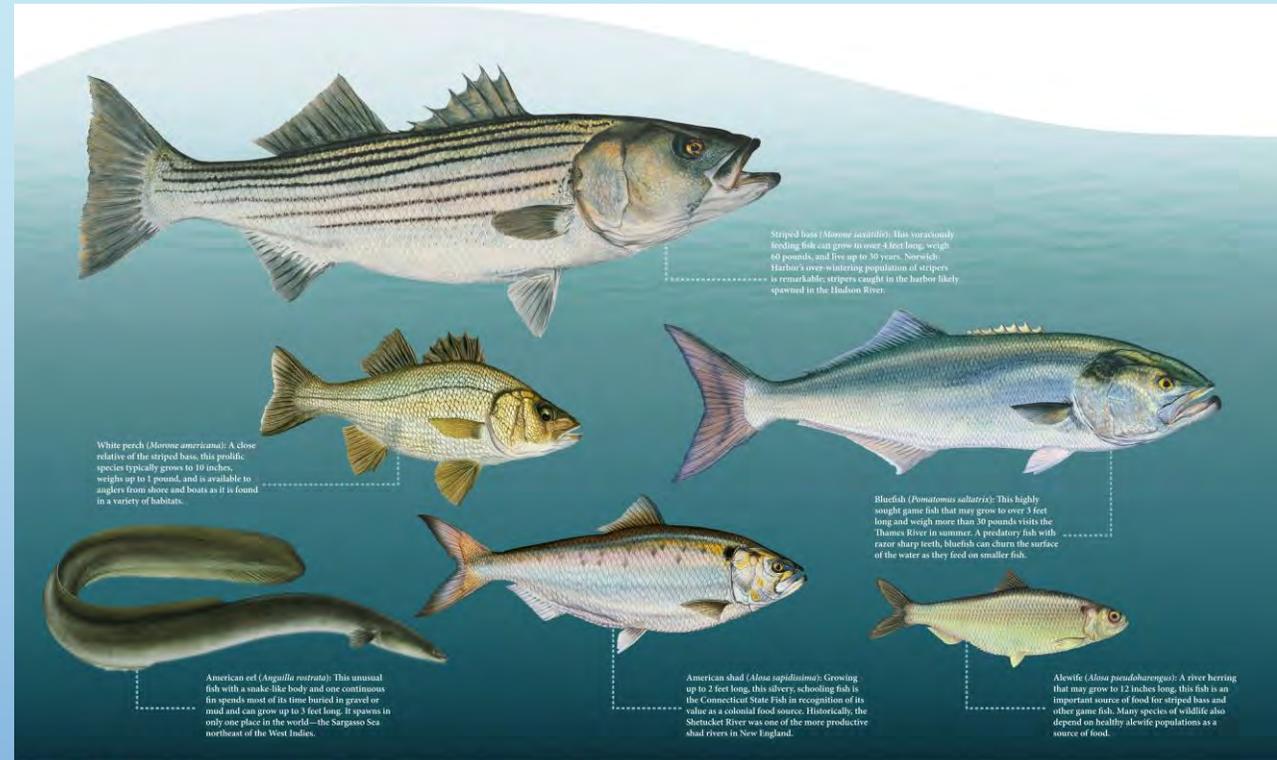
Shipping St. Area



New Wharf Area

Promote Norwich Harbor as a Regional Destination for Recreational Fishing

Norwich waterways provide exceptional habitat for a variety of fresh water and salt water fish. Expanded opportunities for vessel- and shore-based fishing can make Norwich the pre-eminent center of recreational fishing on the Thames River and a regional destination for visiting fishermen.



Fish of the Harbor

Norwich waterways provide exceptional fish habitat. Fresh water from the Shetucket and Yantic rivers flows into Norwich Harbor where it mixes with salt water in the Thames River. This diverse environment supports a variety of fresh water and salt water fish, along with anadromous fish that live most of their lives in the ocean but swim upstream to spawn in fresh water. For centuries, these fish sustained Native Americans who gathered nearby each spring for rich harvests of the seemingly unlimited shad, salmon, eel and other species. Early settlers and colonists also depended on these migratory fish now pursued by recreational anglers.

Dams built across the Shetucket River and its tributaries in the 1800s harnessed water power for manufacturing but blocked the spawning runs of shad, alewife and other anadromous species. These fish were eliminated from their natural habitat in the entire watershed upstream of the Greenville Dam. To allow fish to swim past the dam, Norwich Public Utilities worked with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to install a fish lift in the dam in 1996. Thousands of shad and many other fish species now pass through the Greenville fish lift each year. Restoring anadromous fish to their natural habitat provides recreational, economic and environmental benefits.

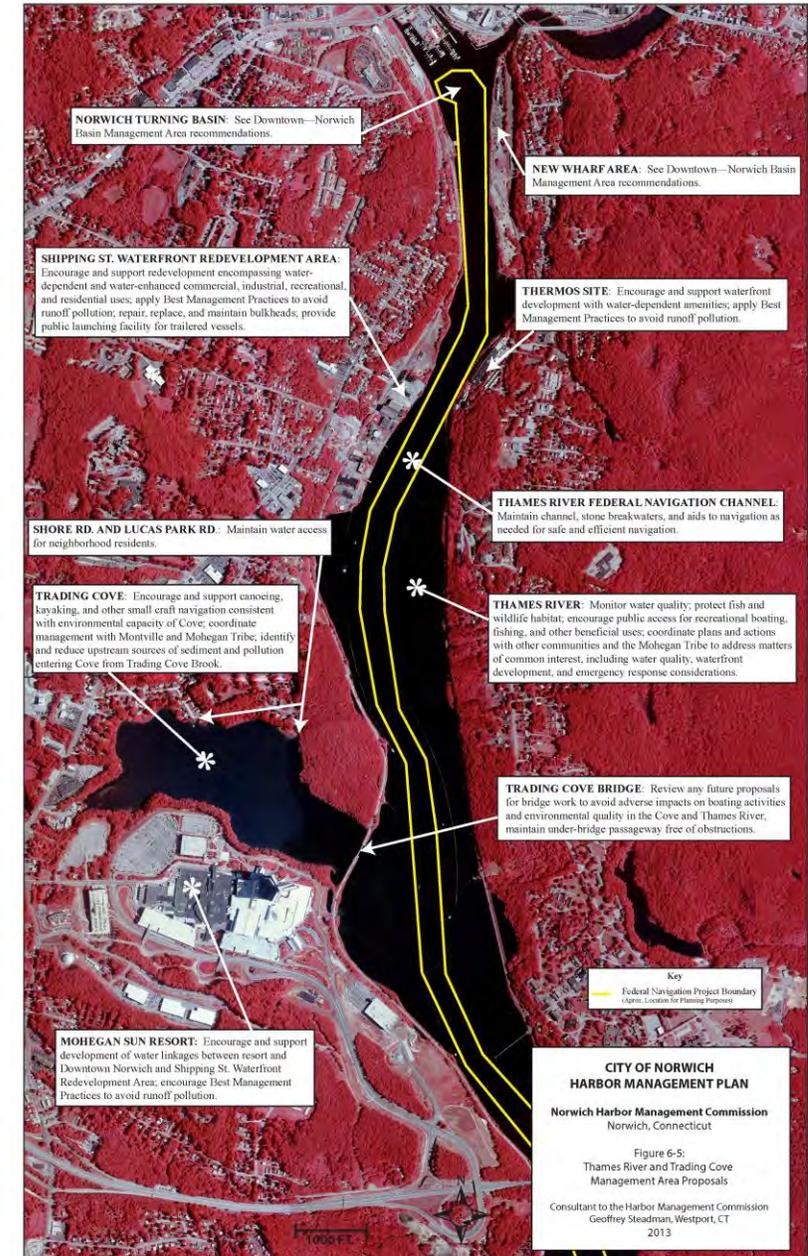


Shad and other anadromous fish trying to reach their natural spawning grounds in the Shetucket River swim into an opening in the Greenville Dam where a "fish elevator" carries them over the dam so they can continue their journeys upstream.

Fish illustrations by © Rick Reed / www.fishbase.org
 Dam photo: Courtesy of State of Connecticut DEEP / Inland Fisheries Division
 This project by the Norwich Harbor Management Commission was funded by the Long Island Sound Study, Long Island Sound Research Fund.

Update the Harbor Management Plan

The Norwich Harbor Management Plan was adopted by the City Council in 1996. The plan includes goals, policies, and site-specific recommendations. It has served the City well by providing an important guide for beneficial use and conservation of the City's coastal resources. Updating the Plan in 2018 to advance the Waterfront Vision is a priority of the Harbor Management Commission.



Base map is from Coastal 2005 color infrared photo from the Long Island Sound Resource Center which is a Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and University of Connecticut partnership.

Harbor Management Authorities

Connecticut Harbor Management Act of 1984, Sec. 22a-113k through Sec. 22a-113t of the General Statutes, authorizes any municipality with navigable waters to establish a harbor management commission and prepare a harbor management plan for the most desirable use of the municipality's waters for recreational, commercial, and other purposes and for the preservation and use of coastal resources.

Harbor Management Commission Ordinance, Chapter 3½ of the Norwich Code adopted by the City Council, establishes the seven-member Norwich Harbor Management Commission; directs the Commission to prepare the City's Harbor Management Plan; and authorizes the Commission to have the powers, duties, and responsibilities authorized by the CT Harbor Management Act.

Harbor Management Area Recommendations

In addition to its goals and policies, the Harbor Management Plan includes recommendations for specific locations in the Norwich Harbor Management Area, including recommendations for:

- improving public waterfront facilities
- protecting coastal resources
- improving water quality
- encouraging waterfront redevelopment
- providing public access



Responsibilities and Recommendations for Plan Implementation

Plan implementation is pursued through an on-going process involving the coordinated actions of all City, state, and federal agencies with programs and authorities that affect the Norwich Harbor Management Area.

- 1) Mayor
- 2) City Council
- 3) Harbor Management Commission
- 4) Other City agencies
- 5) State of CT Harbor Master for Norwich
- 6) State and federal agencies
- 7) Private groups and individuals



Benefits of the Harbor Management Plan

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

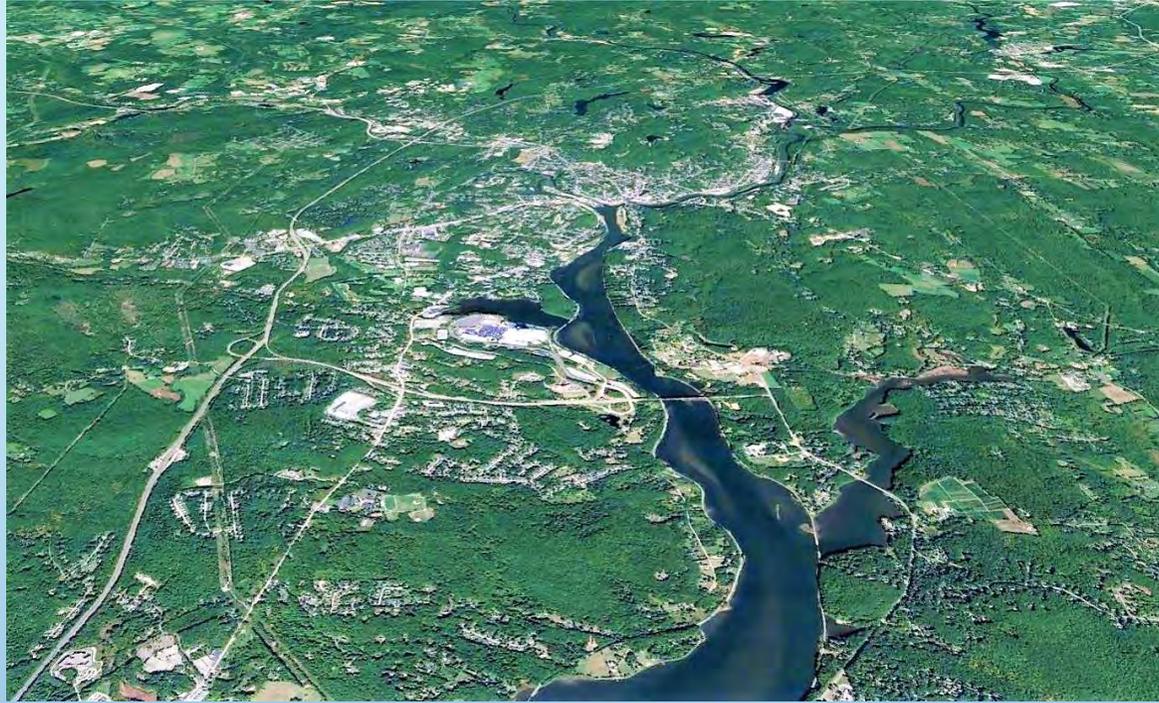


The Harbor Management Plan Strengthens Home Rule

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

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





Acknowledgments

Norwich Harbor Management Commission

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Gerald Martin (Vice Chair)

Peter Barber

Joseph DeLucia (Ald.)

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Or visit us at www.norwichct.org

Aerial photos by G. Steadman; Ground level photos by Gerald Martin, W. Kenny, K. Ripley,
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