

CULTURAL RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

Overview of History of Charlestown

Until around 1660, Charlestown was solely inhabited by Native Americans who fished, hunted and farmed in the area. The first Europeans settled in the area around 1660, primarily in the coastal plain area in the south of the town. In the early nineteenth century, the Pawcatuck River, forming the town's northern border, was dammed to provide power to textile mills. Several industrial villages developed around these mills.

Cross Mills village, near the coast, developed as a local retail center for users of Old Post Road (now U.S. Route 1A) as well as local residents and farmers. During the nineteenth century, farming activities declined. With the development of improved highways and increased use of automobiles, the town beaches and other natural resources became more accessible and the town became a recreation attraction and resort.

Development in the town focused on the coastal areas with the development of seasonal homes, businesses, and other tourist-related land uses. Various inland ponds were developed as summer attractions with campgrounds and other facilities. The interior parts of the town were and remain relatively undeveloped, with residential development primarily in several villages. Charlestown (then including Richmond) was incorporated in 1738 and named for Charles II who granted the Rhode Island charter. Richmond became an independent incorporated town in 1747.

The status of Native American land in Charlestown went through several changes. By 1880, the land that remained in the ownership of the Narragansett Indian Tribe was acquired by the state (900 acres sold to state, 3,400 acres sold off through sheriff sales as a result of forced indebtedness) and the tribe no longer existed as a legal entity. Charlestown still remained the center of tribal activity and Indian occupation. Court action in 1978 returned a portion of the tribal land to Narragansett ownership. The tribe has prepared a land use plan for the tribal claims land.

Organization of the Chapter

This chapter includes the following sections: goals and policies for historic and cultural resources; history of the development of the town; summary of the land use plan for the Narragansett Indian Land Claims Settlement Area; a description of scenic and aesthetic resources; historic and cultural sites; and recommendations.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Goals

Major Goals

To protect and encourage appropriate use of the town's cultural resources, including historic villages, historic cemeteries, tribal artifacts and sites, and scenic views and corridors.

Major Supporting Policies

- To allow and encourage development that protects the cultural resources, including historic villages, structures, and landscapes, scenic vistas and open areas, architectural heritage, and natural features that are important in defining the town's scenic rural character.
- To protect cultural resources through zoning and the development review process, using innovative techniques as they become available or feasible.
- Encourage appropriate re-use of historic structures in accordance with the provisions of the zoning district where they are located through preservation or rehabilitation.

HISTORY OF THE TOWN

This section is primarily based on an inventory of historic resources conducted and documented by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission in 1981¹. Appendix A provides a context for understanding the historic resources of Charlestown. Appendix B provides a chronology of important events related to the Narragansett Tribe of Indians as presented by the Tribe in recent court testimony (U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island Civil No.s 75-0006 and 75-0005).

Prehistoric Native Occupation and Settlement

The first inhabitants of Charlestown were Native American tribes including the Niantics and the Narragansetts. A subsistence economy based on the rich natural resources of the area formed their way of life. Native American sites developed throughout the town before European settlement include permanent village settlements, campsites, forts, and burial grounds.

The Seventeenth Century

The seventeenth century saw the discovery and settlement of the area by Dutch explorers and traders. There were many wars between the white settlers and native indians including the King Philips War which was waged across much of southern New England. In addition, tribal wars, notably the Great Swamp Massacre, altered the balance of Native American influence in the area. Ninigret, Sachem of the Niantics was given large Narragansett land holdings in return for remaining neutral in the King Philips War, this land became a sanctuary for many Indians, who collectively became known as the Narragansetts. Historic and archaeological remains from this period are located throughout the town.

Although the seventeenth century was a period of development along the coastal plain, little, if any European features survive from this period.

The Eighteenth Century

Development of Charlestown in this period focused on agriculture and related activities. Farms developed both along the coastal plain and inland, with coastal farms primarily developed on large tracts of lands on the plantation-style farms similar to those in the south of the country. Inland farms tended to be smaller and were sited on hillier, more rocky terrain. These were typically subsistence farms owned and operated by a single family. There are a few examples of eighteenth-century farms houses that still survive in the town, including Burdick Farm and the J.P. Green House on Biscuit City Road.

During the eighteenth century a road network developed to link the different farms together. This network forms the basis of the town's current day road pattern. Old Post Road which was laid out in the area in 1703 became the region's most important highway, and remained as Charlestown's key transportation link until parts of it were bypassed by Route 95 in the twentieth century. Houses, stores, inns, schools and mills developed along Old Post Road.

^{1/} Historic and Architectural Resources of Charlestown, Rhode Island: A Preliminary Report, Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, June 1981.

Development was also centered around water-powered mills which were built around that time. A grist and shingle mill was built by Indians on the edge of the Indian Cedar Swamp. Other mills were developed on the Pawcatuck River in the vicinity of present day, Shannock, Kenyon and Carolina villages.

In 1705, the Rhode Island government gave 135,000 acres of land to Ninigret, the tribal sachem of the Narragansetts. His son, Thomas built King Tom Farm around 1750. Much of his land was taken to offset indebtedness before being stopped by a tribal petition to the government in 1765. This led to a change in the way people regarded the power of the sachem.

In 1738, Charlestown (which then included Richmond) was incorporated and named for the English King Charles II.

The Nineteenth Century

In the early part of the nineteenth century, the economy of the town was primarily agrarian. This declined and limited industrial or commercial development took its place. Local inns formed a resting point for travellers who seldom stayed long in the town. Ten schools were built in the town and mill and village development continued. Industrial villages grew around four mills of the Pawcatuck River and peaked in the 1840's (Shannock, Carolina, Kenyon and Burdickville).

The Narragansett Indians continued to lose land as it was auctioned off in response to indebtedness. This was during the period of "allotment" which gave ownership rights to individual Narragansett Indians rather than to the Tribe. Beginning in 1799, a group of Narragansetts purchased land from the Onida in northern New York (Stockbridge Indians). Lands were sold off between the 1830s and 1840s, and the group of Narragansetts moved to the Green Bay, WI (Brotherton) area where they lived with the Winnebago.

The 1880's and 90's brought the beginning of resort development, attracting tourists to the town's coastal areas. A hotel was built, regattas held on Ninigret Pond, and summer settlements were built on Quonochontaug and Charlestown Beaches. Although day trip activities from surrounding towns were popular, development of homes was slow due to the lack of public transportation. This period saw the beginning of the seasonal population swell which characterizes the town today.

Historic resources from this era include buildings in the villages of Carolina and Shannock, as well as other residences scattered throughout the town, and are described later in this chapter.

Twentieth Century

The population of the town has fluctuated greatly in this century, with corresponding spurts and quiet periods of development. The population declined between 1910 and 1920, but in the twenties, it increased 47 percent. Growth moderated substantially until the 1960s, when the population increased by 42 percent. By the 1970s the population had grown to around 4,800 people. With

the increased use of the automobile, the town became more accessible, and spurred recreational development. Forest camps and shore communities sprang up, and new businesses opened on Route 1 to serve tourists.

Development of seasonal homes began in earnest in the town in the early part of the century. Shortly after the turn of the century, Arnolda was created along Ninigret Pond by Thomas Arnold. This encouraged the development of other summer homes on larger lots. The barrier beaches and the area just behind them (Charlestown Beach) were heavily developed along with other shore and salt-water communities. Many of these waterfront homes were destroyed or damaged during the 1938 Hurricane and Hurricane Carol in 1954. After World War II, many of the seasonal homes were winterized and used for year-round residence.

Charlestown also attracted residents to its inland hills and freshwater ponds. In 1915, Walter Kimball, a bird lover, purchased land on Watchaug Pond. After his death, the property was deeded to the Rhode Island Audubon Society and became the Kimball Wildlife Refuge. Several lodges, including Ninigret Lodge were built on inland ponds.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps were active in the area now known as Burlingame State Park, and through its efforts, developed camping facilities, shelters and recreation buildings.

Around 1942, the U. S. government purchased 600 acres of former farm land and constructed the Charlestown Naval Auxiliary Landing Field, as an adjunct to the Quonset Point Naval Air Station. The field was used as a site to train pilots for night flights in World War II and the Korean War. In 1974 the field was closed and declared surplus property by the federal government. The site was considered for development as a nuclear power plant, but this proposal was dropped after local opposition and litigation. The former naval facility is currently a Federal Fish and Wildlife Refuge and part has been turned over to the Town of Charlestown for recreation.

Villages centered around mills became primarily residential in character after the mills ceased to function. Only Kenyon Mills remains a functioning industrial village focused around Kenyon Piece and Dye Works. Land use trends in the later part of the century has seen suburban development with year-round homes being built in the Charlestown woods, along the roads, and adjacent to inland ponds. New subdivisions such as Watchaug Heights off Prosser Trail which was built in the 1970s indicated a departure from historic residential development patterns. Low density residential areas have replaced farms and forested areas.

In the 1970's, approximately 1900 acres of land were given back to the Narragansett Indian Tribe as part of a Land Claims Settlement. The land is controlled and managed by the Tribal Land Management Council, which, in cooperation with the Office of Statewide Planning, has developed a land use plan.

NARRAGANSETT INDIAN LAND SETTLEMENT CLAIM AREA

The Narragansett Indian Land Claim Settlement Area is surrounded by the Town of Charlestown. (See Figure 1) In January 1975, the Narragansett Tribe of Indians filed suit against the State of Rhode Island and a number of private individuals asserting ancestral claims to approximately 3,200 acres of land in the Town of Charlestown. An out-of-court settlement was reached in 1978 which provided transfer of approximately 900 acres of state-held lands located within the claim area to a state-chartered corporation having a board of directors with a majority of Tribal representatives. The settlement also provided for the Corporation to negotiate purchase of approximately 900 acres of privately-held land within the claim area utilizing \$3.5 million in funds appropriated by the U.S. Congress.²

In 1979, the Narragansett Indian Land Management Corporation was established for the purposes of acquiring, managing, and purchasing real property as provided for in the settlement. The settlement also required that a Land Use plan be prepared by the Rhode Island Office of State Planning for the Narragansett Indian Tribe. The boundaries of the Settlement Lands shown in figures throughout this Plan are only approximate, actual boundaries are being determined through a federal survey now nearing completion. In 1983 the Tribe regained government to government status with the U.S. Department of the Interior. This provided federal recognition and acknowledgement of the Tribe as a sovereign entity (minimally equivalent to a state) which may deal directly with the federal government. In 1985 the Narragansett Indian Land Management Corporation was dissolved.

The richness and continuity of Charlestown's native heritage is unique in Rhode Island. The presence of the tribe and tribal lands and many Indian cultural sites gives Charlestown a special and important place in the history and culture of the state.³

History

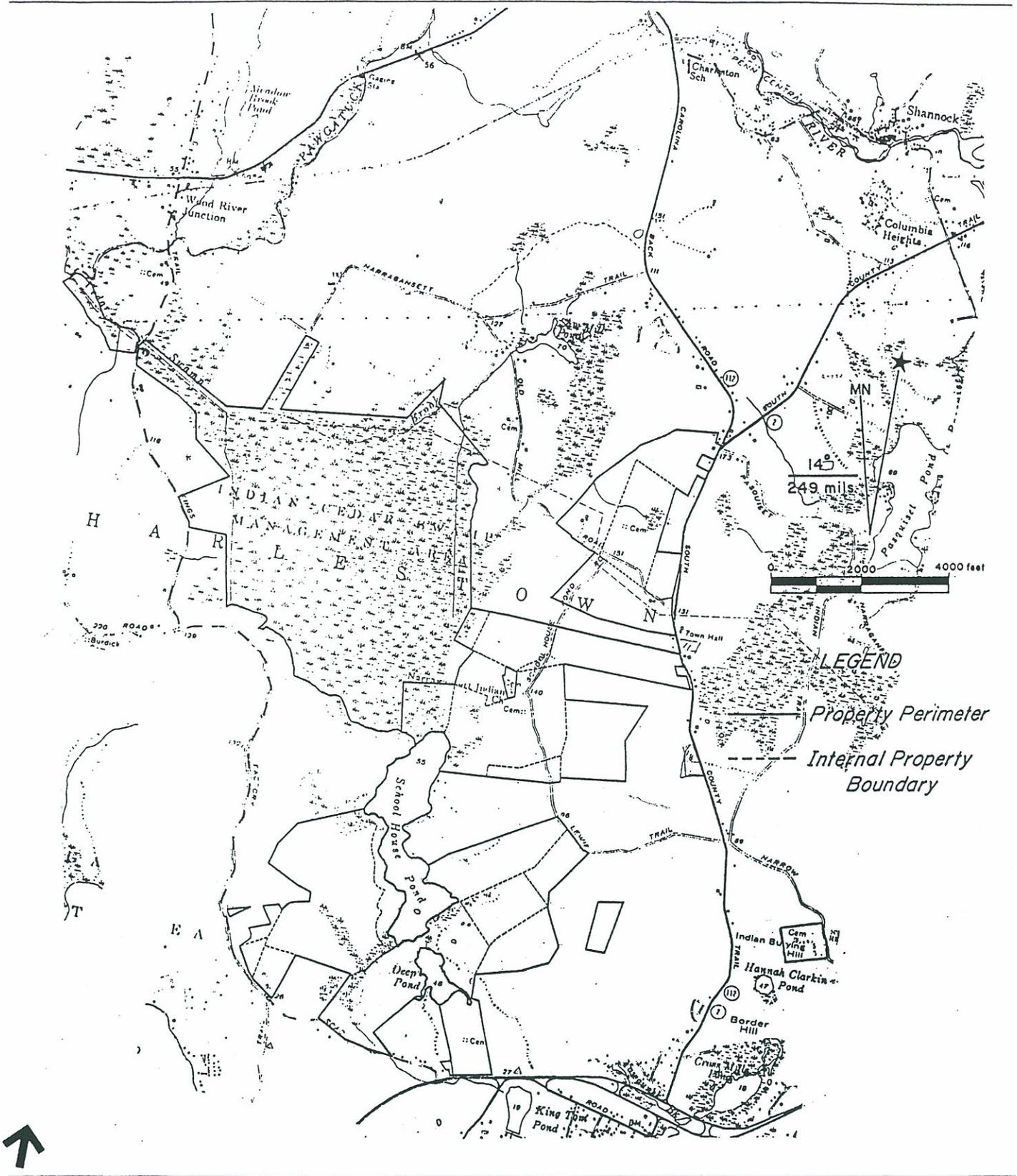
The history of the Narragansett Indian Land Claim Settlement dates back to the 1970's and a legal action filed by the Tribe to claim free and clear title to a portion of their ancestral lands. This claim was ultimately settled out of court by an agreement developed in 1978 titled "Joint Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Settlement of the Rhode Island Indian Land Claims".⁴

The action resulted in a settlement agreement providing the Tribe with approximately 1,800 acres of land in two equal parcels. This dual allotment consists of the Public Settlement lands and the Private Settlement lands that were purchased by the federal government from a special fund of \$3,500,000.

^{2/} Land Use Plan for the Narragansett Indian Land Claim Settlement Area, prepared for the Narragansett Indian Tribe by the R.I. Office of State Planning, March 1986.

^{3/} Historic and Architectural Resources of Charlestown, Rhode Island: A Preliminary Report, Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, June 1981.

^{4/} Cited in Federal law as the "Rhode Island Indian Claims Settlement Act" (9/30/78 - 25 USC 1701 et seq.).



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Charlestown, RI
 Approximate Boundaries of Property
 Controlled by the Narragansett Tribe
 of Indians

Figure 1

Source: Land Use Plan for the Narragansett Indian Land Claim
 Settlement Area. RI Offices/State Planning. March 1986.

The Public Settlement lands were originally tribal-owned lands including the Indian Cedar Swamp Management Area, the Indian Burial Hill, and the Deep Pond Area. According to the settlement, this land, amounting to about 900 acres, is to remain perpetually as a conservation area. The Private Settlement lands were privately owned lands that were transferred to the Tribe. The private settlement land is also an approximate 900 acre parcel, 75 percent of which must remain as a limited conservation area where certain activities such as agriculture are permitted. The remaining 25 percent (approximately 225 acres) can be developed if such action is desired by the Tribe.

There are several facets of this settlement that are worthy of note. The Narragansett's may establish their own hunting and fishing regulations. The tribal lands are not subject to Charlestown real estate taxes but the Tribe has the right to tax its people and business activities on their land. In addition, the land is held in trust for the Tribe by the federal government.

Currently the title of this land is in the name of the Narragansett Indian Tribe. The State has been granted by the Tribe use of right-of-ways providing access to Deep Pond and the Pawcatuck River for specified purposes. The settlement provides the Providence Boys Club with a perpetual access to its holdings in the area if necessary. The state enjoys a 45 foot wide right of way through Tribal land in order to provide emergency access Watchaug Pond from Kings Factory Road.

State Land Use Plan for the Settlement Area, March 1986

In March of 1986 the R.I. Office of State Planning, in cooperation with the Narragansett Tribe, developed the Land Use Plan for the Narragansett Indian Land Claim Settlement Area. The document develops a Land Use Plan for the settlement area based upon an analysis of the environmental characteristics of the land and its suitability for development. A land capability analysis was conducted which inventoried physical resources including geology, water resources, soils, vegetation, and wildlife; and human and cultural resources including land use, road systems, public utilities, and historic sites and areas. The land capability analysis categorizes that land into its relative suitability for development, both residential and commercial, for agriculture and for conservation.

Based on this inventory and analysis a land use plan was developed which also reflects: the preferences of the Tribe concerning the character and locations of future uses; the transportation network; adjacent land use patterns; and parcel configuration. Two usage categories are established, namely "conservation" and "development" each with associated standards which relate to site design, impervious coverage, buffer areas, on-site sewage disposal, wetlands protection and preservation of surface and ground water quality.

According the to Settlement, the Tribe may designate land areas under its control as "Development Areas" provided that the total acreage of designated Development Areas do not exceed 25 percent of the private settlement areas. As

shown in Figure 2, the Land Use Plan does not delineate actual Development Areas, but identifies areas that would be suitable for development based on the land capability analysis.

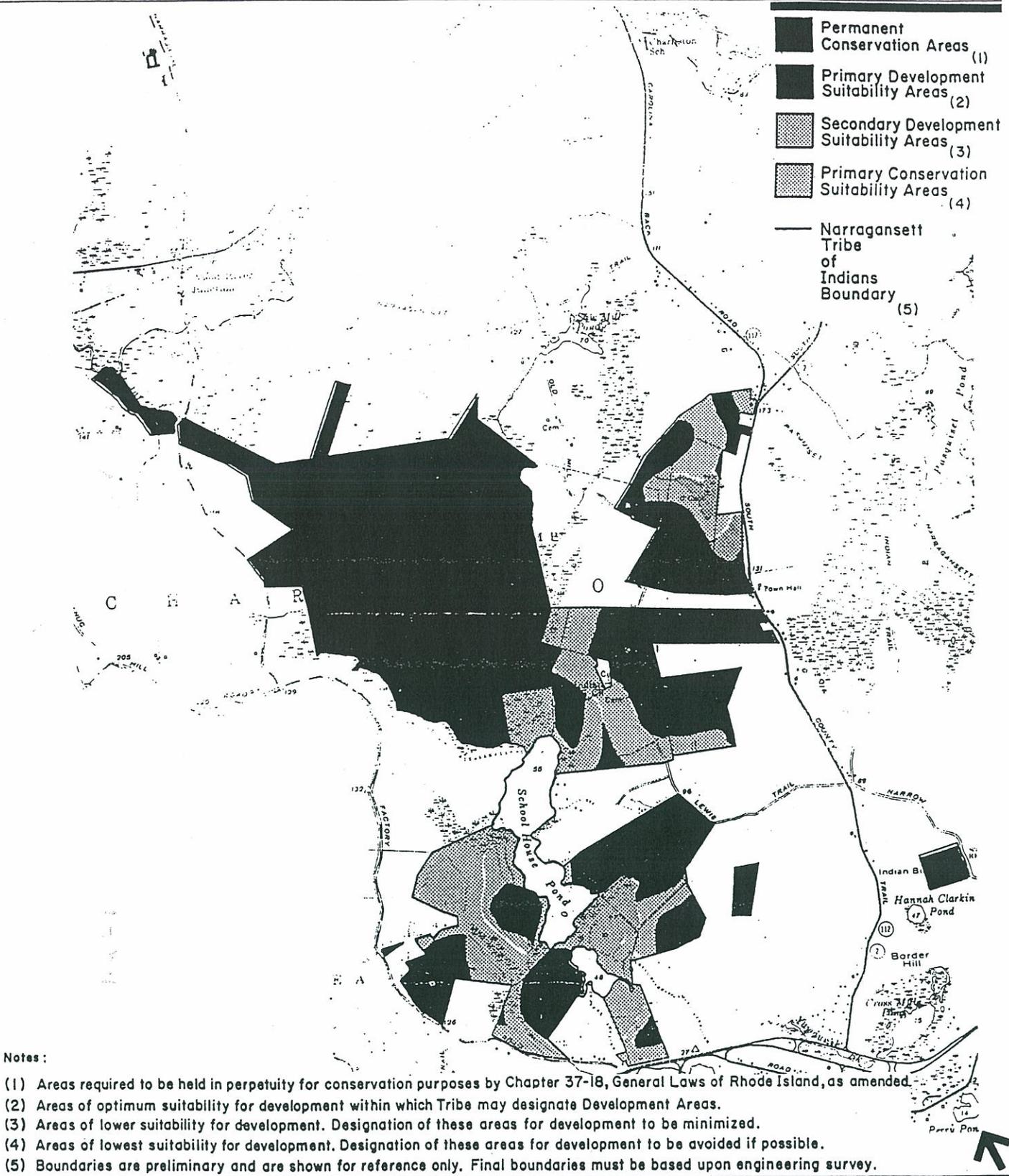
Implementation priorities identified in the plan include:

- Accurate determination of boundaries;
- Determination of specific development and resource management objectives;
- Site design and development;
- Development of resource management programs.

The goals and objectives of the Tribe are outlined in the Plan, and the methodology for adoption and implementation of the plan are described. For implementation of the plan, the planning document recommends procedures that the law does not explicitly detail.

As of this writing the Town of Charlestown has not endorsed the Plan for two reasons. The Plan states that a priority issue for implementation of the plan is the accurate determination of boundaries. The survey of settlement areas lands has not been completed by the Federal Bureau of Land Management, but is very near completion. Both parties would like to clarify the status of the boundaries. Secondly, the town has concerns regarding the Emergency Amendment of the Land Use Plan procedure contained in the Plan (Sect. 8-02[D]). This procedure allows for a quorum of the Tribal Council to immediately amend the plan, without a comment period, for a period of up to 6 months in the face of an emergency situation that threatens the resources of the settlement area or the best interest of the Tribal members. The town is concerned about the lack of public comment period.

At present there is no development within the settlement areas. Since the 1986 Plan has not officially been adopted, it may be considered that 250 acres of this land remains "un-zoned". It is anticipated that a process will be put in place to begin dialogue between the town and the Tribe as part of the comprehensive planning process that the Tribe and the town are conducting.



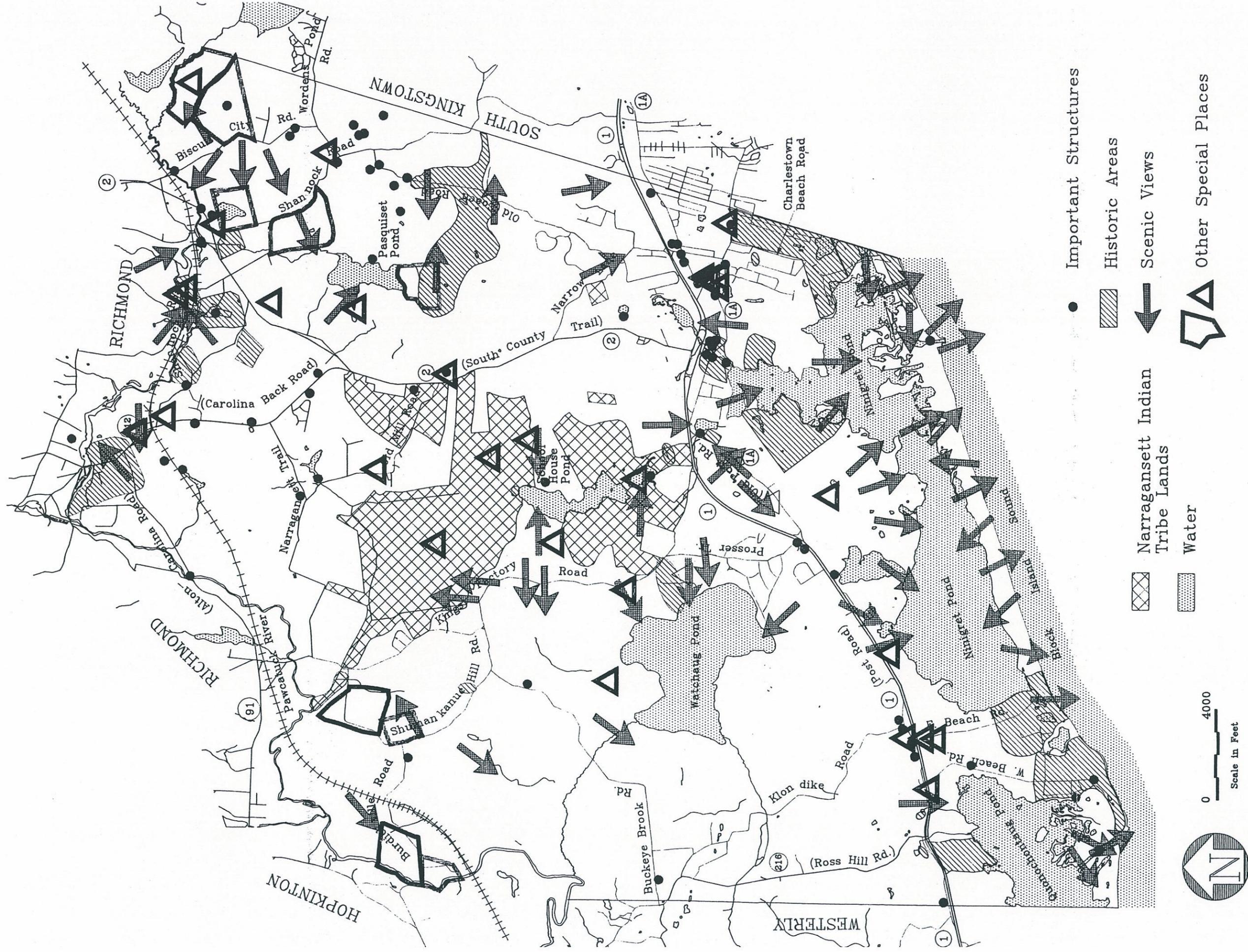
Notes:

- (1) Areas required to be held in perpetuity for conservation purposes by Chapter 37-18, General Laws of Rhode Island, as amended.
- (2) Areas of optimum suitability for development within which Tribe may designate Development Areas.
- (3) Areas of lower suitability for development. Designation of these areas for development to be minimized.
- (4) Areas of lowest suitability for development. Designation of these areas for development to be avoided if possible.
- (5) Boundaries are preliminary and are shown for reference only. Final boundaries must be based upon engineering survey.

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Charlestown, RI
 Narragansett Tribe of Indians
 Land Use Plan

Figure 2



Data Source: Map prepared by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. from Town of Charleston and RIGIS data.

SCENIC RESOURCES

CHARLESTOWN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN - 1991

Figure 3

SCENIC RESOURCES

The town is characterized by historic villages, scenic roads, coastal areas, inland ponds and woodlands.

The rural character of Charlestown is one of the town's most important qualities as perceived by residents and visitors alike. It is the reason for which many people are attracted to the town, and is considered worth preserving. The historic and cultural resources of the town are significant as individual structures or features, but also as part of a unified landscape. The rural character of the town is intrinsically linked to the identity of Charlestown, and provides a sense of place which is unique to residents and visitors.

According to the public opinion survey conducted by the town in December 1990 and based on discussions held by the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee (CPCAC) a definition of "rural" includes the following characteristics:

- Open undeveloped views;
- Agricultural/farming scenes;
- Minimal development;
- Few town services;
- Development grouped in villages;
- Country roads.

The preservation of this rural character is an important goal of the comprehensive plan.

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) recently published a survey of the state's scenic areas, The Rhode Island Landscape Inventory.⁵

The objective of the inventory was to identify and evaluate landscapes of high scenic, historic, and cultural value. Three categories of landscape were reviewed: the "physiogeographic" landscape characterized by natural scenic beauty; the created landscape; and the visual landscape.

One primary area in Charlestown is included in the inventory. Quonochontaug and Ninigret ponds, rated as "Noteworthy" features are described as scenic views across coastal ponds and barrier beach. Other sites on the inventory are Shannock and Carolina villages which straddle the border with Richmond. Both of these areas are rated "Distinctive" particularly for their rolling topography, historic rural mill village character, and for views.

In addition to the state's Landscape Inventory, the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee (CPCAC) identified several other areas of high scenic, historic and cultural value. Features identified are illustrated in Figure 3 and are summarized in Table 1:

^{5/} The Rhode Island Landscape Inventory: A Survey of the State's Scenic Areas, R.I. Department of Environmental Management, Division of Planning and Development, January 1990.

TABLE 1

SCENIC RESOURCES AND FEATURES
TOWN OF CHARLESTOWN

Historic Areas

- Fort Ninigret
- Carolina Village
- Shannock Village and vicinity
- Cross Mills
- Farms - Fenner, Luchka, Day

Important Structures

- General Stanton Inn
- Ninigret Park
- Ocean House on Town Dock Road
- Cross Mills Grist Mill
- Cross Mills Baptist Church
- Cross Mills General Store
- Charlestown Town Hall
- Charlestown Community Club House (Old District School House)
- Cross Mills Library
- Airport hangar on Schoolhouse Road
- Charlestown and Quonochontaug Breachways
- St. James Chapel
- Randalls' realty office
- Grange
- VFW Hall
- Masonic Lodge

Scenic Views

- Ninigret Pond
 - Charlestown Breachway
 - Views of Block Island Sound from Quonochontaug, East Beach, and Charlestown Beach
 - Quonochontaug Pond
 - Ninigret and Kimball Wildlife Refuges
 - Watchaug Pond
 - Creek Bridge
 - Cross Mills Pond
 - Schoolhouse Pond
 - Burlingame Reservation
 - Shannock Falls
 - Moraine top
 - Indian Cedar Swamp
 - Former Klondike stone quarries
 - Waterholes - Kings Factory Road
 - Charlestown Pond Management Area
-

TABLE 1
continued

SCENIC RESOURCES AND FEATURES
TOWN OF CHARLESTOWN

Scenic Views

- Mud Cove Scenic Overlook
- Summer camps
- Town Driving Range Property

Scenic Roads

- Route 1A through Cross Mills
- Route 1A past Ninigret Park and King Tom Farm
- Beach Road
- South County Trail (Route 2)
- King Factory Road
- Prosser Trail
- Biscuit City Road
- Post Road
- Alton-Carolina Road (Route 91)
- Carolina Back Road (Route 112)
- Shannock Road
- Old Coach Road
- Burdickville Road
- Shumankanuc Road

Indian Cultural Areas

- Narragansett Indian Church
- Indian Long House
- Indian homesteads
- New Indian burial ground
- Fort Ninagret
- Indian Cedar Swamp
- Shannock Falls

Unique Areas

- Former Naval Auxiliary landing field at Ninigret
- Fort Neck
- Arnolda colony
- Summer residence areas - East, West, Central beach, Charlestown by the Sea, Sea Lea Colony, Ocean Ridge
- Narrow Gauge Mining Railway
- Aircraft accident sites
- Old Charlestown Airport
- Old Quarries
- Pasquiset Watershed area
- Painted Rocks

Source: Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee

Charlestown and neighboring Richmond have the distinction of being the site of the only Scenic Highway currently designated in the State of Rhode Island. In 1990, the Towns of Charlestown and Richmond jointly applied to the Rhode Island Department of Transportation for the designation of Shannock Road as a scenic highway. The application was motivated in part in reaction to Rhode Island Department of Transportation's proposed reconstruction of Shannock Road within the historic district. On January 24, 1991, the Rhode Island Scenic Highway Commission voted to designate Shannock Road as the first official scenic highway in the state.

Justification for the application was based both on the physical characteristics and aesthetic qualities of the roadway. Criteria identified in support of this application included rolling terrain with marshes, woodlands, farms, gentle rolling hills, and historic homes and buildings, stone walls, wetlands and unique vistas of fields, kettle holes, historic bridges and dams and natural views of the Pawcatuck River.

Although Shannock Road has received scenic highway designation, this status does not assure its protection from the impacts of development or road construction and upgrading projects. The Rhode Island Scenic Highway Commission is working with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) to develop standards and criteria for design changes to scenic highways.

At present the residents of Shannock village are concerned that a state road upgrading project could potentially destroy the unique nature of the village and its main road. The proposed 1.7 mile upgrading through the village from Route 2 to Route 12 calls for straightening and widening of the road, removal of some stone walls, trees and fences, and the taking of portions of front yards. Residents of the village have meet with RIDOT to discuss the impact of the road work.

HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND AREAS

The Town of Charlestown is rich in resources from many historic periods. As shown in Figure 4, historic resources are located throughout the town, primarily focused on the central area of Charlestown, and along the coast. These historic resources provide part of the rich cultural fabric of the town, and could potentially be impacted by current and future development activities.

Protection of Historic Resources

Certain resources in the town are protected through listing on the National Register of Historic Places which is a record maintained by the United States Department of the Interior, and includes structures, sites, areas and objects significant in American history. The Register constitutes an official inventory of historic resources that are considered worthy of preservation. The Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission nominates properties for inclusion on the Register. All properties are reviewed and approved by the Department of the Interior prior to their entry on the Register. Resources that are listed on the National Register of historic places are also listed on the State Register.

One of the aims of placing properties on the Register is to protect these resources through various mechanisms. The Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission conducted an inventory of these resources in 1981,⁶ and documented and described these resources. The inventory identified districts, structures, and sites of historic significance in the Town of Charlestown. Appendix A lists the inventory of historic resources in Charlestown. Table 2 summarizes the resources already entered in or approved for the National Register of Historic Places.

TABLE 2

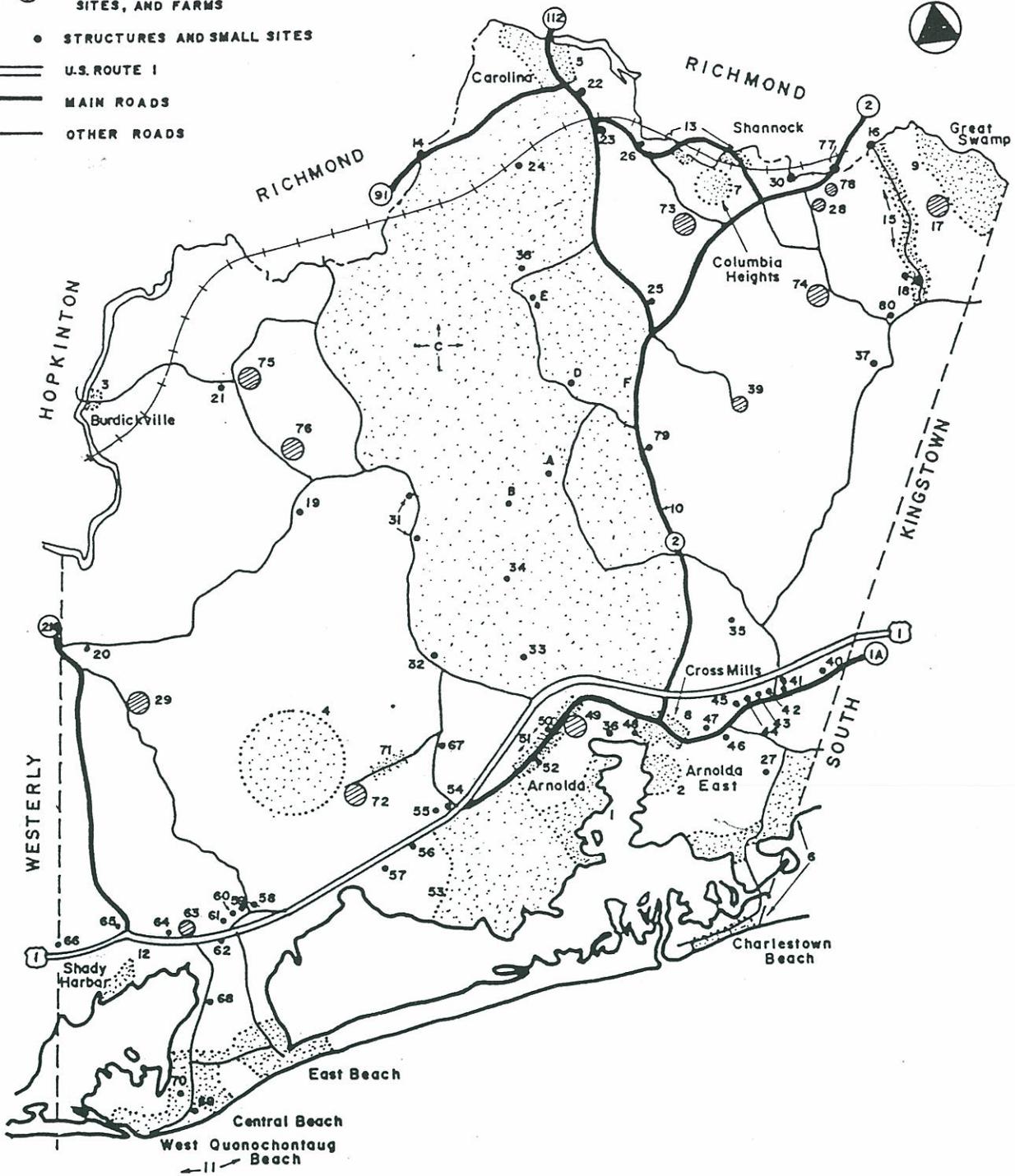
NATIONAL REGISTER RESOURCES TOWN OF CHARLESTOWN

Carolina Village Historic District
District Schoolhouse, Number 2, Post Road, Cross Mills
Historic Village of the Narragansetts
Joseph Jeffrey House, Old Mill Road
Shannock Village Historic District
Fort Ninigret, Ninigret Road
Joseph Stanton House/Wilcox Tavern, and General Stanton Monument, Post Road
Sheffield House, Beach Neck Road
Babcock House, Quonochontaug
Foster Cove Archaeological Site, Foster Cove

Source: Historic and Architectural Resources of Charlestown, Rhode Island: A Preliminary Report, Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, June 1981.

^{6/} Historic and Architectural Resources of Charlestown, Rhode Island: A Preliminary Report, Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, June 1981.

-  DISTRICTS & AREAS
-  MORE THAN ONE STRUCTURE, LARGE SITES, AND FARMS
-  STRUCTURES AND SMALL SITES
-  U.S. ROUTE 1
-  MAIN ROADS
-  OTHER ROADS



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Charlestown, RI
Historic Districts
Structures & Sites

Figure 4

In addition to the districts, structures and sites that have already been placed on the National Register, the 1981 RIHPC Report identified several additional resources which deserve consideration for entry in the National Register. In 1989, this list was augmented and is summarized in the following table:

TABLE 3

PROPERTIES THAT MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR NATIONAL REGISTER OF
HISTORIC PLACES/STATE REGISTER
TOWN OF CHARLESTOWN

Arnolda Historic District, Old Post Road #
Coronation Rock ***
Tobias Saunders House +
Kenyon Arch Bridge *
Wilcox Farm ***
First Baptist Church of Cross Mills, Post Road #
S. B. Hoxie House, Post Road #
General Stanton Inn +

- * Formally determined eligible for National Register listing by National Park Service
- *** Review of preliminary materials by the State Review Board suggests property may be eligible for National Register
- # Recommended for National Register consideration in Historical Preservation Commission inventory
- + Consideration requested or suggested for National Register by owner or other party

Sources: Letter to Mr. Jim Kanen from Wm McKenzie Woodward, RIHPC dated June 28, 1989; Historic and Architectural Resources of Charlestown, Rhode Island: A Preliminary Report, Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, June 1981.

At present there is no protection in the town's regulations for historic buildings, districts or scenic areas. National Register listing only regulates federal and state agency activities or funding that may affect the integrity of these resources. There is no control over private property owners who may alter or even demolish historic structures, or may disrupt unique landscapes with insensitive development.

Preservation activities in the town are pursued by the Charlestown Historical Society and the Citizens for the Preservation of Shannock Village.

Threats to historic and cultural resources could include new development of a scale or style that is not compatible with the existing landscape. Development of agricultural land will inevitably change rural character of town. Large-lot subdivisions in the vicinity of historic villages would change the nature and scale of the residential development pattern.

CPCAC members are concerned with commercial development encroaching on residential development along School House Road from Charlestown Beach Road to Ram Island Road. Construction on fragile barrier beaches is seen as

impacting scenic views, as well as possibly causing environmental problems. Signage throughout the town was identified by CPCAC members to potentially impact the visual appeal of historic resources.

As mentioned above, the state proposed improvement of Shannock Road calls for removal of old trees and stone walls, road widening, the straightening of an S-curve, and repair of drainage infrastructure. These actions could adversely impact the historic character of Shannock village.

The zoning and subdivision regulations of the town determines the type of development and character of land use and development patterns. At present, frontage lots are easiest to develop since the approval process is very simple. However, this type of development impacts the scenic quality of the rural landscape and creates the impression that the town is more densely developed than in reality. The zoning code currently provides for a range of lot sizes but does not permit the small lots that characterize the historic villages. The smallest lot size in the code is a half acre, and this zoning district is only located in an area around Charlestown Beach, and not in the historic villages of Carolina or Shannock where existing houses are built on very small lots.

RECOMMENDATIONS/IMPLEMENTATION

Prioritized Recommendations

High Priorities

Town agencies, boards, and commissions should recognize the contribution of historic and cultural resources to the landscape and the effect development has on the value of these resources. The following actions will encourage recognition of the importance of these resources:

1. **Establish historic districts** and/or the right to designate individual buildings or structures which are deemed to be of historic value;
2. **Develop a planner's database**, combining environmental/cultural resource and constraints maps with lot information to be used as a "red flag" in reviewing developments;
3. **Work with Tribe and neighboring communities** to delineate and protect shared resources;
4. **Designate scenic roadways and design standards** to protect stone walls, views, and the integrity of the landscape.

Lower Priorities

5. **Identify areas for increased protection** through dedication or acquisition of development rights or property.

5-Year Implementation Program

1. **Establish historic districts** and/or the right to designate individual buildings or structures which are deemed to be of historic value.
 - Design standards to be developed as part of Land Use Implementation include village, roadside, and scenic road.
 - Pursue listing of recommended properties/structures on the National Register of Historic Places.

Time Frame:

Develop districts during revision of zoning (by July 1993).

Pursue listing of properties/structures - on-going as resources will allow.

2. **Develop a planner's database**, combining environmental/cultural resource and constraints maps with lot information to be used as a "red flag" in reviewing developments.
 - Described fully in Natural Resources Implementation.
 - Include historic checklist in Site Plan Review.

Time Frame: 0-5 years

3. **Work with Tribe and neighboring communities** to delineate and protect shared resources.
4. **Designate scenic roadways and design standards** to protect stone walls, views, and the integrity of the landscape.

Time Frame: During revision of zoning (by July 1993)

Moderate Priorities

5. **Develop a land trust for preservation purposes.**
 - **Consider the use of a land transfer fee** or other measures to fund land trust purchases.

Time Frame: 3-5 years

20-Year Implementation Program

1. Historic districts

- Continue to review and revise as necessary.
- Continue to pursue listing of recommended properties/structures on the National Register of Historic Places.

2. Planner's Database

- Continue to update.
- Consider developing computer mapping capability.

3. **Work with Tribe and neighboring communities** to delineate and protect shared resources.

Time Frame: On-going

4. **Designate scenic roadways and design standards** to protect stone walls, views, and the integrity of the landscape.

- Continue to review and revise as necessary.

6. **Identify areas for increased protection** through dedication or acquisition of development rights or property by the town, state, or non-profit agencies.

Time Frame: On-going as resources will allow.