

Consideration of Plan of Conservation and Development in relation to proposed Zone Change

The POCD was adopted in 2018 and contains an entire section on Higganum. It discusses Historic Background, Existing Land Use and Development, Potential, Housing Needs, Businesses & Jobs, Infrastructure and Community Facilities, Getting Around, and Natural & Recreational Resources. (attached)

The most relevant excerpts are as follows:

“Land use in Higganum is governed by a special Village District in Haddam’s Zoning Regulations, which are reinforced by local Design Guidelines. The Village District exists to promote and preserve community assets and unique resources, and encourage denser commercial development consistent and in harmony with existing structures in the Higganum Center area. It is also meant to encourage the conservation, conversion, and preservation of existing buildings and uses in a manner that maintains or enhances the historic, natural, and community character of Higganum.....”

- Unfortunately, in the case of 310 Saybrook Road the property is exempt from the Village District Regulations. The tattoo parlor has resulted in the preservation of and improvements to the building.

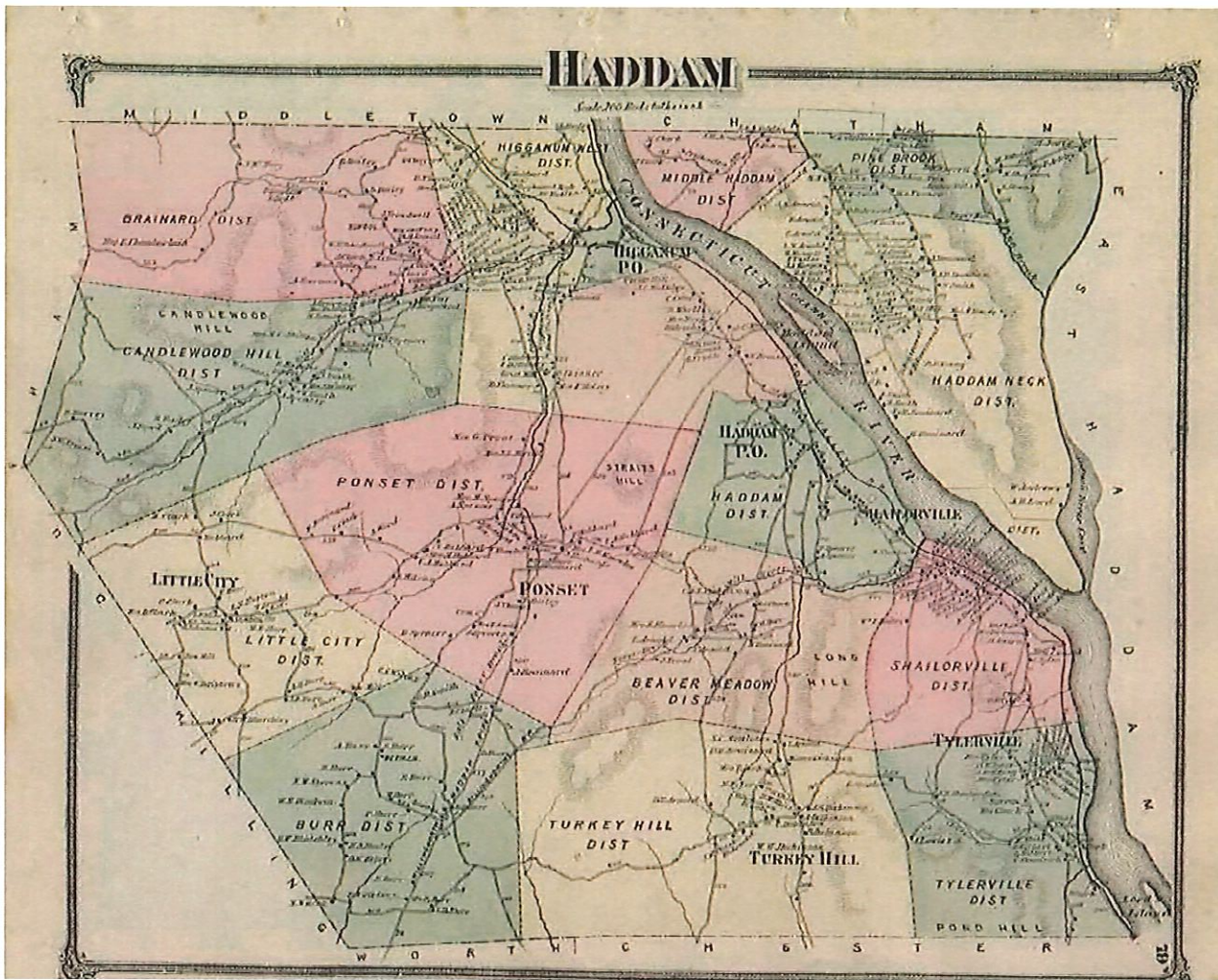
“Higganum is one of two centers for commerce in Haddam. For long term economic viability, the town will continue to attract local business, markets, cultural attractions, and provide basic goods and services to support an excellent quality of life for residents. Commercial vacancies and other economic opportunities in Higganum should be more actively marketed by the Town and promoted to area business owners and developers. Importantly, most Haddam residents are not interested in attracting “just any business” to Higganum. It is important that new businesses respect the history and identity of Higganum, meaning that a chain store with corporate architectural design that could be found anywhere is not appropriate for Higganum. Rather, shops and services that fill local needs, or provide products that have a sense of place, are more desirable...”

- Small local shops and preservation of existing buildings are preferred over chain stores with corporate architectural design.

It should be noted that the POCD by itself does not have the authority to dictate the types of businesses that may or may not locate in Higganum. However, this can serve as guidance for the Town as it chooses what types of businesses to actively market to.

The Higganum Center section of the POCD then offers a Summary of Key Issues and Goals and Strategies. (attached)

- The proposed change to allow a Tattoo Parlor is not inconsistent with any of these recommendations.



1874 Map of Haddam's Neighborhoods and Districts

Haddam today may be largely defined by the six types of places noted above, but historically the town was divided into many other distinct sections, including Shailerville, Ponset, Little City, and Turkey Hill. While these historic districts have less relevance to peoples' day-to-day lives today, it's important to remember what these places meant to residents in the past.

Higganum

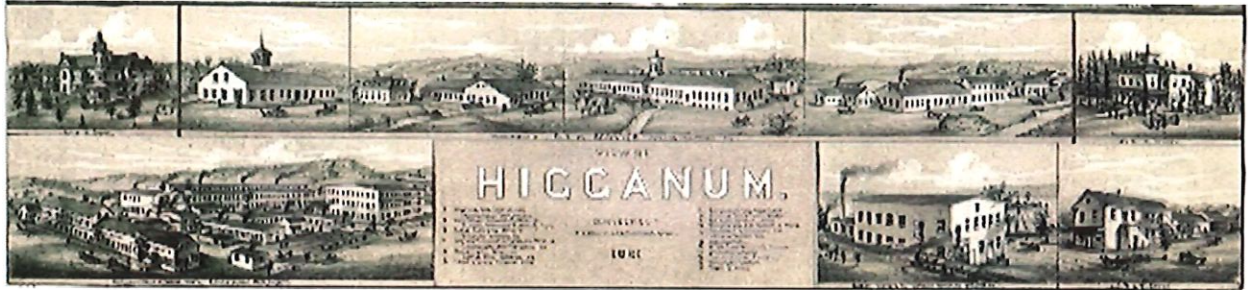
The community's vision for Higganum has been fairly consistent for the past 20 or more years and this POCD reinforces that vision, honoring all of the work that Town staff and residents have poured into Higganum. This work has been leading, step by step, to a Higganum that looks, feels, and functions more like the traditional New England villages enjoyed by some of Haddam's neighbors. This vision includes a place where people can easily walk to shops, restaurants, services, and surrounding parks and open space; have access to in-town job opportunities; and have access to more diverse housing options.

Snapshot

Historic Background

Higganum possesses an eclectic mix of historic architecture. Simple cottages, formal estate homes, and smaller historic homes can be found side by side. These residences are evidence of Higganum's history as a successful port and shipbuilding center in the 18th century, followed by the development of industrial

establishments when the shipping industry declined. Buildings that help to tell the story of commerce and industry in the village include the D & H Scovil Company buildings, the Higganum Grange and the Higganum Feed Store. Overall, Higganum has 71 historic buildings, which include the Higganum United Methodist Church and Higganum Congregational Church, both built during the 1800s. Higganum is also home to one of the largest and most historic cemeteries in Haddam, the Old Higganum Cemetery.



Existing Land Use & Development Potential

Higganum Center is situated along the major crossroads of Route 154, Route 81, and Candlewood Hill Road, which serve to connect Middletown, Killingworth, Chester, and Durham. Higganum Center is primarily defined as a mix of commercial, mixed-use, public institutional and industrial land uses. This area contains a grocery store, restaurants, banks, hardware store, pharmacy, post office, gift shops, package stores, barbershop, dry cleaners, and other retail establishments making it the hub of commercial activity. It is also home to Higganum Cove, a former industrial site and brownfield that has been remediated and restored to showcase its historical and ecological significance. The residential areas adjacent to the commercial core of Higganum contain among the highest density of residential development in Haddam, and some of the best examples of colonial architecture in CT. Haddam has been working for many years to build on Higganum's historic village pattern, and encourage development and redevelopment that makes the area a true center of activity for the town.



Land use in Higganum is governed by a special Village District in Haddam's Zoning Regulations, which are reinforced by local Design Guidelines. The Village District exists to promote and preserve community assets and unique resources, and encourage denser commercial development consistent and in harmony with existing structures in the Higganum Center area. It is also meant to encourage the conservation, conversion, and preservation of existing buildings and uses in a manner that maintains or enhances the historic, natural, and community character of Higganum. New development and redevelopment activities should be consistent with village center architecture and promote denser commercial village land use patterns and a pedestrian friendly atmosphere. An Architectural Review Committee (ARC) was formed in 2014 to ensure that the design guidelines are being respected. The three members of the ARC conduct early review of buildings and site design in order to resolve potential conflicts and design problems early in the process, saving the applicant time and money.

Vibrant village development will become far easier to achieve with public water and sewer. These systems have received a considerable amount of planning and analysis on the part of the town over many years. This

Redevelopment Opportunities in Higganum

The D & H Scovil Company buildings: The property could represent a major redevelopment opportunity in the heart of Higganum Center, appropriate for housing, commercial, small “maker spaces,” or a variety of other uses that would help enliven and strengthen Higganum. It is currently owned by the State of Connecticut and served for many years as a state Department of Transportation garage.

The Haddam Department of Public Works office and garage: The Town is exploring opportunities to relocate these important facilities, opening up this site for potential village-supporting development.

The Rossi Property at 300 Saybrook Road: This is a privately held parcel with a mix of commercial and industrial buildings that could be redeveloped.

Outdated Structures & Infill Opportunities: Some of the more modern and non-historically significant commercial buildings in Higganum may be reaching the end of their natural life spans. The Town could continue to partner with local commercial property owners to renovate or replace these buildings, and construct sensitive infill buildings, in a way that meets the Higganum Design Guidelines and contributes to the village’s walkability.

analysis has made the options for implementation fairly clear. At this point, the time has come for the town to invest in a sewer plan that will support business in the Village of Higganum.

Housing Needs

Higganum presents a good location for different housing choices that will better meet the needs and desires of many senior citizens and young adults alike, including options for ownership, rental, market rate, and affordable. Potential village-style housing units include multi-family homes, cottages, and other alternatives to traditional single-family homes, because of its location within walking distance of basic goods and services. Haddam’s new Housing Opportunity District (HOD) is one tool that could be used to support such housing in Higganum. The HOD is a “floating zone” created in 2016 that allows for denser development if a percentage of the homes are deed-restricted as affordable. For a more complete description of these town-wide housing needs that Higganum can help absorb, see the Where We Live section.

Businesses & Jobs

Higganum is one of two centers for commerce in Haddam. For long term economic viability, the town will continue to attract local business, markets, cultural attractions, and provide basic goods and services to support an excellent quality of life for residents. Commercial vacancies and other economic opportunities in Higganum should be more actively marketed by the Town and promoted to area business owners and developers.

Importantly, most Haddam residents are not interested in attracting “just any business” to Higganum. It is important that new businesses respect the history and identity of Higganum, meaning that a chain store with corporate architectural design that could be found anywhere is not appropriate for Higganum.

Rather, shops and services that fill local needs, or provide products that have a sense of place, are more desirable. Businesses that support the eco-tourism industry, such as boating, fishing, hiking, and camping, are also appropriate for Higganum. It should be noted that the POCD by itself does not have the authority to dictate the types of businesses that may or may not locate

Maker Spaces are creative “do it yourself” spaces where people can gather to create, invent, and learn. They often have 3D printers, software, electronics, craft and hardware supplies and tools, and more. (OEDB.org)

in Higganum. However, this can serve as guidance for the Town as it chooses what types of businesses to actively market to.

While industrial activity has declined significantly in Higganum over the years, and heavy industrial uses are not desired within the village center, it is important to acknowledge that industrial activity has been redefined in the 21st century. The industrial remnants of an era gone by such as the Wire Factory and the Scovil Hoe buildings provide a unique opportunity for modern adaptive reuse. Many modern light industrial businesses have become cleaner, quieter, and more compatible with other uses. The Higganum Village District should consider low-impact light industrial uses – aka “Maker Spaces” – as a source for jobs, economic activity, and creativity in the future.

Infrastructure & Community Facilities

Higganum is home to a number of public facilities (see inset below). However, as discussed above, public water and sewer must be addressed in order to reach the town’s vision of a vibrant village center in Higganum. The Town will continue to explore options for providing these utilities to Higganum in order to support more village style development. To date, the Town has done a great deal of research into evaluating the potential installation of public sewers in Higganum. It remains uncertain whether the Town would tie into a neighboring city or town’s sewer system or construct its own treatment facility. Installing sewers, including other innovative approaches such as package wastewater treatment systems, will enable existing businesses to expand and improve their uses and allow a wider variety of new commercial uses to locate in this part of Haddam. While the septic systems are not failing in Higganum at this time, it is important to note that most of Higganum lies within the floodplain. Some type of waste water treatment will benefit the water quality that discharges into the Connecticut River.

During community discussions for the POCD, it was noted that the dam at the Higganum Reservoir may have the potential to produce hydro-power. The Town may want to initiate discussions with the State about exploring this potential. The reservoir’s proximity to the center of Higganum could provide a steady source of renewable energy for the village and for the town.

Water Pollution Control Authorities (WPCA)

Chapter 103 of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) “Municipal Sewerage Systems” gives municipalities the authority to establish a WPCA. WPCAs may prepare a water pollution control plan and define where sewers are to be located (and where they are not). Specifically, such plans may set the boundaries of: (1) Areas served by any municipal sewerage system; (2) areas where municipal sewerage facilities are planned and the schedule of design and construction anticipated or proposed; (3) areas where sewers are to be avoided; (4) areas served by any community sewerage system not owned by a municipality; (5) areas to be served by any proposed community sewerage system not owned by a municipality; (6) areas to be designated as decentralized wastewater management districts. Creating a WPCA and a water pollution control plan are among the first concrete steps Haddam must take to bring public water and/or sewer to Higganum and Tylerville.

Getting Around

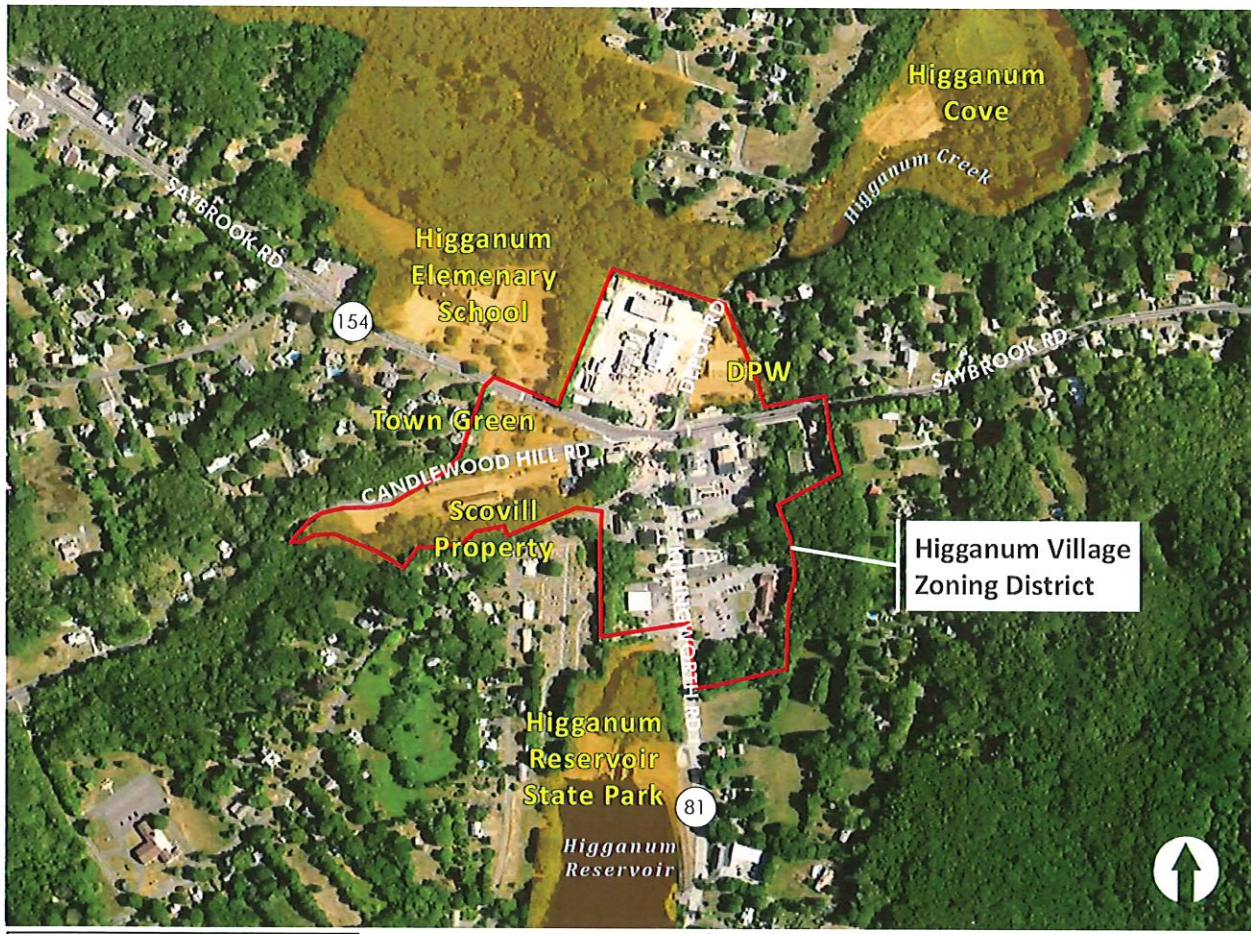
One of the greatest areas for improvement in Higganum is the circulation system. To achieve the vision so well articulated over the years for this village, the village core needs to be a safer environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. This would require a more complete sidewalk network, pedestrian and bicycle connections, traffic calming, signage, and other supportive design elements. The Town has already invested in some sidewalks in the village, as well as a major streetscape improvement project with a rebuilt bridge, new street lights, and more. By closing the gaps in the existing sidewalk network, and starting to build an on- and off-street bicycle system, the Town will help attract private development and improve access to the area’s resources, including Higganum Cove and Haddam Elementary School. Moving beyond the village core,

Higganum has several resources within walking distance that could be better connected. A well-conceived circulation system might include a clear and continuous path or trail (or series of paths and trails) stretching from the Higganum Reservoir, into the village, down to Higganum Cove, and out to the Connecticut River. Such a connection could include new paths or trails along the creeks surrounding Higganum. From a regional perspective, Higganum is connected to neighboring communities with bus service. The 9 Town Transit bus, now serving 12 communities in the Lower Connecticut River Valley, operates the Mid-Shore (#4) bus line that runs between Old Saybrook and Middletown. A stop is located in Higganum at the intersection of Routes 154 and 81. This bus runs once every two hours during business days. While currently of limited utility, given the infrequency of service, these buses are an option for Higganum commuters to reach Middletown or points south of Haddam, and can be better utilized.

Natural & Recreation Resources

Considering that Higganum is the most populated area of Haddam, it is fortunate to have a number of great Natural & Recreation Resources within close proximity of the village center. However, pedestrian and bicycle linkages between these resources are incomplete or in poor condition, and need to be improved if more people are to access them from Higganum.

Located less than 1/3 mile from the center of Higganum Village, *Higganum Cove* is a former factory site and brownfield that has recently been remediated. According to the Higganum Cove Committee, the site is approximately 12 acres and downstream of the confluence of Candlewood Brook, Ponsett Brook, and Bible Rock Brook in Higganum, which forms Higganum Creek. The creek flows over natural waterfalls and man-



Map 2. Resources of Higganum

made dam and sluice way features before making its way through the Cove and ending at the Connecticut River. The Cove is home to significant fisheries resources, including a number of anadromous species that spawn in Higganum Creek. It also has abundant woody and herbaceous species of plants and trees, a variety of wildlife (including beaver), and a myriad of birds (songbirds, waterfowl, heron, American eagles).

Located about ¼ mile from the village center, **Higganum Reservoir State Park** is owned and operated by the State of Connecticut. The park offers visitors non-motorized car-top boating, fishing, and hiking. The dam at the reservoir is one of four State-owned dams in Haddam.



Higganum Cove

The triangular **town green** located between Candlewood Hill Road and Saybrook Road is a small but important green space in the middle of Higganum Village, with a gazebo, Higganum Union School memorial, and a veteran's memorial. It can be invested in to make it a more welcome and usable space.

Haddam Elementary School has a playground, play fields, and basketball courts that can be used by the community at large when school is not in session. In addition, Swan Hill behind Haddam Elementary School hosts popular trails with great views of the Connecticut River.

Higganum is surrounded by a series of **creeks** that could become a more useful part of the open space network if paths or trails were built alongside them.

Summary of Key Issues

- ⇒ Higganum Center is a historic and symbolic focal point of the town, and future development and infrastructure investments need to maintain and improve the vitality of the village.
- ⇒ There is not a great deal of market demand for additional retail and commercial services in Haddam. In order to avoid sprawling commercial development elsewhere in town, Haddam should continue to encourage this demand to be met in Higganum Center. Concentrating commercial uses in Higganum Center can also help make the village area more walkable.
- ⇒ A lack of public water and sewer in Higganum makes it difficult for the Town to direct more business growth into the village and take advantage of redevelopment opportunities.
- ⇒ Higganum should be a focal area for encouraging smaller and more diverse housing options.
- ⇒ Higganum Center has a wealth of historic buildings. The Town has sought to protect these buildings, encourage their reuse and maintenance, and support development design guidelines that complement these historic buildings and contribute to a more walkable town center.
- ⇒ The design of Higganum Center does not promote walking. The fragmented sidewalk network contributes to congestion by encouraging people to drive from place to place who otherwise might prefer to walk. Many existing businesses still have parking to the front of the business which celebrates a vehicle centric development plan. The Town has made many improvements to balance the use of streets between pedestrians, bicycles, and motor vehicles, and intends to keep making these improvements.

- ⇒ Recent improvements notwithstanding, Higganum Center continues to lack a cohesive look or sense of arrival. Upgrading other streetscape amenities in this area, such as welcome signage, lighting, street trees, etc., will improve Higganum's sense of place and its aesthetic to create a more attractive environment for local businesses.

Goals & Strategies

Goals

1. Enhance the visual appearance and economic vitality of Higganum.
2. Make Higganum a place where residents and visitors alike gather and meet.
3. Improve mobility within Higganum and connections between the center of Higganum and nearby destinations.

Strategies

1. Review the existing studies and assessments of water supply and wastewater disposal options in Higganum to determine which solutions are feasible and financially prudent.
2. Continue to evaluate local regulations to ensure they are consistent with the local vision for Higganum.
3. Pursue the study of local and regional market conditions to determine the degree to which market forces align with the local vision for the village.
4. Encourage new commercial and sensitively scaled higher density residential development to occur in Higganum Center in order to reinforce the village as the center of town and to guide development of this type to where infrastructure is in place to support it.
5. Where possible, pursue efforts to protect the remaining open space surrounding Higganum and to preserve the historic settlement pattern of compact villages surrounded by open land by respecting the village boundaries.
6. Encourage continued actions that will enhance the cohesiveness and appearance of Higganum Center, such as signage, landscaping, dark sky-friendly lighting, and other village design features and improvements.
7. Continue to build and maintain sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure, and otherwise expand non-vehicular options to make it easier to get around Higganum, and between Higganum and nearby neighborhoods and natural, recreational, and historic assets.
8. Work with 9 Town Transit to make Higganum the Town's transit hub.