

TOWN COUNCIL  
**Town of Trumbull**  
CONNECTICUT  
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TOWN HALL  
Trumbull

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EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
April 30, 2013

The Chair called the Education Committee to order at 7:03 p.m.

Present: Chadwick Ciocci, Chairman, Ann Marie Evangelista, Vice-Chairwoman, Jeff Donofrio, Vickie Tesoro and Tom Whitmoyer.

Absent: Jim Blose, Kristy Waizenegger, Alternate and Gregg Basbagill, Alternate.

Also Present: Pam Georgas TNAC Chairman, Scott Kerr, Kevin Mallone, Kristen Sacone of the Trumbull Nature & Arts Commission, Chief of Staff Elaine Wang and Town Council member Martha Jankovic-Mark.

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1. DISCUSSION: TNAC - *Trumbull Nature & Arts Center*

Ms. Georgas stated that at the last meeting their first choice for a new location was discussed and it was requested they present their first choice and the reasons why along with visuals. Also requested was a capital plan which would outline fundraising. Said presentation was made at this meeting. Mr. Kerr stated their first choice for a location is Old Mine Park. The committee requested the presentation be sent via e-mail to the full council.

Mr. Kerr presented a power point presentation to the Education Committee (attached). In the last several months they had conducted a revaluation of properties the properties are as follows:

- Twin Brooks
- Current property
- Beach Memorial Park
- Old Mine
- Fairchild Wheeler Park (swap property)
- Bill property

Each member did their own evaluation and ranked their choice. The commission had previously been interested in Twin Brooks but when all of the factors were weighed, Old Mine edged Twin Brooks out.

Benefits of Old Mine are as follows:

- Connectivity to the Pequonnock River Trail, it would provide a rest stop for the trail users.
- The Nature Center would be a gateway to the parks, and would offer the Town a way to market the parks.
- The diversity of the habitat.
- Historical significance.
- Availability of Parking.
- Proximity of developing commerce.
- Safety and security.

Ms. Georgas explained Old Mine is currently underutilized as opposed to Twin Brooks which has an established presence. The pictures of buildings included in the presentation represent the outdoor space they are looking to create; they are not looking to build a 10,000 sq. ft. building. The vision for the building is 5,000 sq. ft. if the ranger station is included, without the ranger station the Nature Center's ideal size would be 3,500 sq. ft. The current location is approximately 1,700 sq. ft. but is not all useable and there is not one large room. The current space is not conducive to indoor programs.

Ms. Wang indicated for Ms. Jankovic-Mark that she believes the phase 1 environmental study had been completed at the Quarry Road property but would need to confirm.

#### TNAC Preliminary Fundraising (attached)

Mr. Kerr explained the commission needs the certainty of a location from the Town in order to begin fundraising and briefly reviewed the first 4 pages of the plan with the committee. The plan is two-stage plan:

Step 1 - A quiet period of fundraising by going to corporate businesses to secure the big dollars.

Step 2 - The second phase, closer to the end, would entail a public campaign.

Funds will need to be raised for the design and the engineering work, approximately \$20-\$30,000 for the architectural plans. They expect the fundraising to take 2-3 years. (\$1.5 million), based upon the Antinozzi & Don Watson study at \$200 per sq. ft. They are not clear as to what site preparation would be necessary. Their goal is to raise substantial or the entire amount of money necessary through the non-profit organization.

Mr. Kerr continued to review the attached fundraising plan/capital plan in detail with the committee. Mr. Kerr stated that some of questions can not be answered until they are get to the next point in planning.

Ms. Georgas and Mr. Kerr confirmed for Ms. Tesoro that the commission's intention is to stay at their current location until this should happen. Ms. Georgas added that the Parks

Chairman had agreed at a previous meeting the TNAC could come back to the Parks Commission to re-present once the Town Council has considered this. Mr. Kerr stated it is their hope to go to the Parks Commission with the Town Council's support. Mr. Ciocci spoke in favor of a bi-partisan sense of the council resolution which would include language as to where the Nature Center should be located and why. Mr. Ciocci stated the resolution would also state it would benefit the community, would have minimal impact to the natural surroundings and could be a community focal point, one of which the Town does not currently have. The sense of the council resolution would be the impetus that would bring other decision makers of the Town on board.

Ms. Evangelista spoke in favor of donations of benches as seen at the Westport Nature Center, noting that it is interesting for the visitors to see who is honored and memorialized.

Mr. Ciocci asked if the 3-5 year estimated for fundraising could be compressed. Ms. Georgas indicated for Ms. Tesoro stated that some of the corporations that they work with are aware of the fundraising and location situation. They are in a holding pattern at this time. The commission's main benefactor has donated \$250,000 for the playground, amenities and school programs; this was donated at one time not over a period of time. By motivating the benefactor/sponsors, (i.e. a gallery named after the benefactor) the sponsor could use it as a marketing tool. Mr. Kerr explained if they sell the building's million-dollar-naming right the fundraising would move all that more quickly. Ms. Georgas and Mr. Kerr stated the estimated cost of building the new Nature Center is based upon the \$200 per sq. ft. estimate in the Antinozzi/Watson study. Mr. Donofrio explained major cost drivers are the utilities. Ms. Georgas stated utilities are available to the counseling center located within Old Mine, but is unsure if they would need to bring the utilities across the river.

Mr. Whitmoyer stated the current TNAC property is on Town property; the TNAC has full access anytime they want. Mr. Whitmoyer questioned what drives the TNAC to want to move from their current location and have to raise \$1.5 million. He understands the house needs to be raised; the current location provides excellent visibility to the public and diversity in nature. Mr. Whitmoyer suggested pavilions as shelter from the weather. The Town is fortunate to have what it has with the current TNAC and suggested the fundraising be done for the programs. The TNAC would lose a tremendous amount of control if it was to go into the parks and could create a certain level of frustration for the TNAC. Ms. Georgas explained the current property is too small; most nature centers are on 40 acres with trails for older children. The current location is 11 acres. As a long term vision the current property is not the right location. Ms. Georgas stated the original plan was to have a dedicated space within the parks that the TNAC would have control over. Mr. Kerr stated that this would need to be established with the Parks Commission from the beginning. Ms. Jankovic-Mark questioned if it would be possible to connect to the trail from the current location and spoke in favor of Mr. Whitmoyer's comments. Ms. Georgas stated the current property is long and narrow and is bordered by residential property. Ms. Jankovic-Mark stated that is desirable for the neighbors to have the TNAC in its current location.

Ms. Wang indicated for Mr. Ciocci that the current use of the Wagner Tree Farm property (The TNAC's current location) is the best use of the property. The neighbors are content, if the property was divided into three parcels would not affect the grand list very much nor would converting it to residential use and does not believe anyone wants the property to be commercial.

Mr. Ciocci stated converting the property to residential use would not be a terrible conversion of the property and should not hold them back from moving forward with a new location for the TNAC. Mr. Ciocci stated the next step should be a resolution from the Town Council in a bi-partisan manner and working with other decision makers such as the First Selectman's office and the Parks Commission to develop a plan to allow the TNAC to exist in the parks system at Old Mine Park.

Ms. Tesoro stated that the current TNAC is in her district and after having visited with the people who live in the area noted they are concerned should the property be vacated. Until she knows the property will not be turned into commercial use she would be hesitant. Ms. Tesoro spoke in favor of the TNAC at Old Mine. Ms. Georgas suggested moving the Counseling Center to where the TNAC is currently located. Ms. Tesoro reiterated her comments from previous meetings that she would like all parties at the table to discuss this at one time.

Ms. Evangelista questioned having a Counseling Center and a BMX track in a park and spoke in favor of having the TNAC in the park, but shares the concern for the residents near the TNAC's current location.

Ms. Tesoro stated that she has heard people in leadership positions who have spoken in favor of the TNAC's current location being converted to commercial use. Ms. Georgas stated the size of the property does limit its use.

Mr. Ciocci stated that the resolution could include language that would limit the use of the current property to a non-commercial use. Ms. Jankovic-Mark stated that moving the Counseling Center to the Wagner Tree Farm property would be taking the first step to making it commercial. Mr. Ciocci stated that the Council has the power to solve the issues that are being brought up. It may need to be done in separate resolutions. Mr. Donofrio stated that the resolutions do not bind any future Town Council; it is not the same as deed restriction.

Ms. Jankovic-Mark stated for the record that she had heard rumors of powerful people wanting to turn the property into commercial property and that is her fear. Ms. Jankovic-Mark does not feel the Wagner property should be commercial property.

Ms. Jankovic-Mark stated that someone could break the resolution. Mr. Donofrio stated absent a deed restriction there is no restriction that can not be undone. The committee discussed if it would be necessary to replace park land if 3 acres were given to the TNAC. Mr. Ciocci stated that the Wagner Tree Farm property could be protected if they

wanted to and spoke in favor of moving forward on the TNAC relocation and will look to other council members to co-sponsor the legislation.

There being no further business to discuss by unanimous consent the Education Committee adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Margaret D. Mastroni  
Town Council Clerk

Preliminary Fundraising Plan  
For  
Relocation of Trumbull Nature & Arts Center

**About the Trumbull Nature & Arts Center**

Starting in 2005, the Trumbull Nature & Arts Center (TNAC) has provided free or low-cost admission for a wide range of educational programming. Most programs are designed for children including school field trips, Scout badges, ArtSmart classes and much more. The TNAC has also hosted seasonal programs for all ages like hikes through the Pequonnock Valley, archery classes, maple sugaring, and special events, often in collaboration with other local businesses, organizations and commissions.

TNAC is currently located at 7115 Main Street on an 11-acre parcel of AAA Residentially-zoned land, previously the Wagner Tree Farm before being purchased by the town in 2003. Since 2010 there has been a proposal to relocate the Center to a more suitable and permanent site within the Trumbull Park system.

**Benefits of Relocating the TNAC**

Relocating the TNAC to a site within the Trumbull Park system will provide many educational, cultural, and environmental benefits to the community. Some of these benefits include the following:

**TNAC as a Center for Cultural Activity**

In addition to the thriving educational programs at the core of the TNAC's offering, a new Center within Trumbull's park system will provide possibilities for:

- Integrated family activities, such as:
  - The Full Circle Playground
  - Hiking, fishing and exploring
  - Educational and art exhibits
  - Youth-led performances
- Gateway to Trumbull's parks, and rest stop on the Pequonnock River Trail.
- Town venue to host small to medium-sized events, both indoors and outdoors.
- Quiet place to relax during lunch or after work in a natural peaceful setting.
- Butterfly garden, sensory garden, vegetable, garden, native plant garden, etc.
- River Walk to explore the Pequonnock River watershed.

**TNAC as a Source for Park Improvements**

A new Center would bring many improvements to an existing park, including:

- Interpretive signage and markers for historical sites
- Removal of invasive species / planting of native species
- Clean-up of trails and waterways
- Improved watershed protection
- "Art in the Park" exhibits
- Identification and protection of plants and animals (natural resource inventory)

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- Repair and replace aging facilities

**New TNAC Building & Grounds**

Building

The Capital Project will include construction of a new TNAC building (approx. 5,000 sq ft). Preliminary ideas for the building include the following:

- Small lobby / entrance area
- Large multi-purpose indoor gallery / exhibit room
- Nature classroom
- Artist studio / classroom
- Small catering kitchen
- TNAC administrative office
- Park Ranger administrative office
- Park Ranger changing area
- Comfort facilities for park visitors

The building is planned to be a model for environmental stewardship and conservation. We will incorporate “green” building practices as much as possible. These may include:

- geothermal heating and air conditioning
- porous hardscapes
- rainwater harvesting and reuse
- roof gardens
- recycled materials
- solar array

Grounds

The grounds surrounding the building will provide an intimate experience for the visitor. Ideas include:

- Nature exploration path
- Wildflower meadows
- Gazebo / Pavilion
- Outdoor nature art
- Gardens
- Interpretive signage
- Description of wildlife habitats

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**TNAC – A Cooperative Community Venture**

The planning, fundraising and construction of a new Trumbull Nature & Arts Center will be a multi-year project. Success will require the involvement of the entire community – municipal, business, and private. The TNAC will seek help from supporters with whom we have worked in the past. Some of these partners include:

The Town of Trumbull which provides land use, facility, and maintenance services, without which the Trumbull Nature & Arts Center would not have taken root and grown during our first seven years and makes our vision for the future possible.

**Corporate Sponsors**

Sun Products: One of TNAC's biggest supporters – they donated the Full Circle Playground, Recycling Program and community gardens valued at over \$250,000.

Unilever: Donated over \$10,000 as well as coordinating their staff to support TNAC through their community impact days.

United Illuminating: Donated \$10,000

Tangent Technologies: Given \$10,000 as well as encouraging its staff to support TNAC through a community impact day.

RBS: Provided \$5,000 in donations as well as community impact days support

Sikorsky: \$5,000 in donations and employees participating in community impact days

General Electric: Gave \$1,000 and employees contributing time through community impact days, and in-kind contributions of appliances

Fuss & O'Neil Engineering: Donated \$250

Deloitte: Donated \$1000 and employee contributing time through impact days

Southern CT Gas: Donated \$250

**Local Businesses**

The following businesses have provided monetary and/or in-kind support to TNAC in the past:

Ace Hardware  
Accent Signs  
Antinozzi Assoc.

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Benedicts  
Big Y Markets  
Dunkin' Donuts  
Carpet Place  
Home Depot  
L & L Landscaping  
PJs  
Rich Bernaud Locksmithing  
Super Stop and Shop  
Trader Joes  
Treeland  
Twomblies Nursery

**Community Organizations**

The following groups have provided support to TNAC in the past:

Agriscience & Biotechnology Center High School  
Bullard Haven Technical High School  
Fairfield Prep High School  
St. Josephs High School  
Trumbull High School, including the THS Environmental Club  
Boys Scouts  
Girl Scouts  
Long Hill Garden Club  
Master Gardeners  
Rotary Club  
Sr. Womens Club  
Trumbull Community Women  
Trumbull Conservation Commission  
Trumbull Historical Society  
Trumbull Public Works Dept.  
Trumbull Parks Dept.  
Trumbull Beautification Commission  
United Way  
Ethel and Jennie Mallett Charitable Trust  
Herman and Henrietta Denzler Charitable Trust

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**FUNDRAISING PLAN**

**Step 1: Preparation of Initial Plans**

Proposed steps to initiate this project include:

- a) Complete a feasibility study
- b) Update existing Master Plan to include relocation and new facility:
  - Modify Business Plan
  - Develop the case for community support
  - Prepare concept drawings
  - Prepare cost projections
  - Perform an engineering land survey
  - Prepare preliminary architectural / engineering plans

TNAC will request local architectural / engineering firms to offer proposals to complete the engineering and architectural items listed above. In order to minimize the costs associated with these tasks, TNAC will seek to maximize in-kind support from architectural and engineering firms to perform this work. In 2010, the architectural firm, Antinozzi Associates, generously donated their time to prepare preliminary documents for a proposed TNAC relocation. TNAC will also seek assistance from Fletcher Thompson Associates. Their participation in the ACE Mentor program encourages high school students to explore careers in the fields of *architecture, construction and engineering*. We will strive to engage local students in the planning and design of the new TNAC through this program.

Additional funds needed to pay for the work outlined in Step 1 above will be sought from corporate, community and foundational sponsors, prior to engaging the work.

Non-architectural and non-engineering tasks listed in Step 1 above will be performed by the Patrons of TNAC. These tasks include updating the Master Plan, Business Plan and Community Support & Engagement Plan. These documents will serve as the guidelines for the remainder of the project.

A preliminary estimate of the total cost of the TNAC relocation project is \$1.5 million. This includes an estimated \$1 million for planning, engineering and construction. An additional \$500,000 is allotted to develop an endowment for future programs and projects.

**Step 2: Fundraising – The First 50%**

The first 50% (approx. \$750,000) of the fundraising will be considered the “quiet campaign”. This will focus on obtaining large gifts of support from corporations or foundations. The Patrons will first approach those who have shown historic support to TNAC. We will then seek out other potential supporters in the local area. Finally, we will expand our sphere of requests to the greater region, then state-wide and then nationally, if needed.

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Many of the “naming” opportunities will be offered in this phase of the campaign. A preliminary list of possible naming opportunities and associated contributions are listed below:

<u>Naming Opportunity</u>	<u>Potential Contribution (\$)</u>
Building Sponsorship	1,000,000
Lobby/Entrance	75,000
Main Gallery / Exhibit Room	250,000
Nature Classroom	100,000
Art Studio / Classroom	100,000
Administrative Office	10,000
Nature Exploration Path	50,000
Wildflower meadows	50,000
Gazebo / Pavilion	100,000
Gardens and Planting areas	25,000 each
Campfire Ring & Seat Wall	25,000
Art/Sculpture Installation	25,000
Exhibit(s)	25,000
Sculpture Garden	25,000
Local Artist Showcase Area	5,000
Leaf on “donor tree”	2,500
Courtyard Planters	2,000 each
Courtyard Statue Pedestals	1,500
Tree/Shrub planted	1,000
Artwork Framing / Installation	1,000 each
Pavers	500 each
Courtyard Walkway Inscribed Boards	250 each

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Green Building Naming Opportunities for Specialty Industries

<u>Naming Opportunity</u>	<u>Potential Contribution (\$)</u>
Rainwater Harvesting / Recycle System	200,000
Geothermal Heating & Cooling System	200,000
Solar Panels	100,000

**Step 3: Fundraising – Community Kick-Off**

The second 50% (approx. \$750,000) of the fundraising will be considered the “Community Kick-Off Campaign”. After the first 50% of the capital goal is reached, a Community Kick-Off Campaign event will celebrate the accomplishment of the Quiet Campaign and announce the campaign publicly. We will recognize all donors and start to engage additional funding sources. Many additional levels of sponsorship will be offered, so that persons of all income levels can show their support and be a part of the new TNAC.

The Patrons of TNAC will conduct activities focused on outreach to the community with specifically designed campaign materials as well as a “viral” campaign (website, Facebook, You Tube, Twitter, Blog, eNewsletters).

Opportunities for additional sponsorship will include:

<u>Sponsorship Opportunity</u>	<u>Potential Contribution (\$)</u>
Floor and wall tiles	250 each
Courtyard Walkway Inscribed Boards	250 each
Brick Paver in the “Welcome Walk”	500 each
Leaf on Donor Tree/Wall of Honor Plaque	2,500 each
Program sponsorship	10,000 each

# **TNAC Site Selection**

# OVERVIEW

1. The Commission and the 501-c-3 Board discussed all potential sites including all parks, the current site (Wagner Tree Farm), the recently leased "Fairchild Memorial Park" property and the Bill property
  - a. Create a permanent site for the Nature and Arts Center that will enhance the organization as an asset, resource and destination
  
2. Discussion and evaluation focused on the following criteria:
  - a. Does the site provide a natural setting, which has protected sight lines from roads and limited sound pollution from area businesses and/or traffic?
  - b. Does the site provide a variety of species habitats and the widest array of ecology possible (Woodland, Meadow, Waterway, Wetland, etc.)?
  - c. Will the addition of a Nature Center building and accompanying traffic negatively impact the property's immediate neighbors or those on the supporting streets?
  - d. Does the site have ready access to electrical, water, and sewer utilities?
  - e. Is the site accessible by a variety of modes including car, foot, bicycle and/or public transportation?
  - f. Is the site near area amenities and businesses that would benefit from visitor traffic and provide shopping opportunities for parents and families, before, during, or after programs?
  - g. Will the construction of 5,000 sf building and required parking have a minimal impact on existing ecological features / habitats, and/or the site provides an opportunity for green construction opportunities (solar, wind, roof gardens, etc)?
  - h. Is the site easily accessible via main roads, is located in a familiar and visible area of town (Signage potential), and in close proximity to volunteer pool and potential users?

# Result

- After evaluating all properties, Old Mine Park has been determined to be our top choice for the site of a new Trumbull Nature and Arts Center
- Old Mine Park surpassed all other sites on key criteria including: Non-residential area, Multiple Modes of Access and Area Amenities.
- In addition, the site gives Trumbull an opportunity to enhance Old Mine Park - creating a gateway to the Pequonnock River Trail, Parlor Rock, Indian Ledge, the Pequonnock Valley
- An opportunity to create a unique "River walk" with the Center at the head of the walk
- The site not only offers excellent exposure to the natural world but also an opportunity to explore historical sites in Old Mine Park, Parlor Rock and the Pequonnock River Trail
  - Opportunity to improve trail and "points of interest" interpretive signs in Old Mine Park
- The Center, at this site, becomes the cornerstone of a cultural infrastructure to interest businesses and patrons to come to Trumbull
- The Center, at this site, becomes a perfect connection and support for surrounding commercial development
  - Home Depot area
  - New development area including restaurants and fitness center
  - Long Hill business center

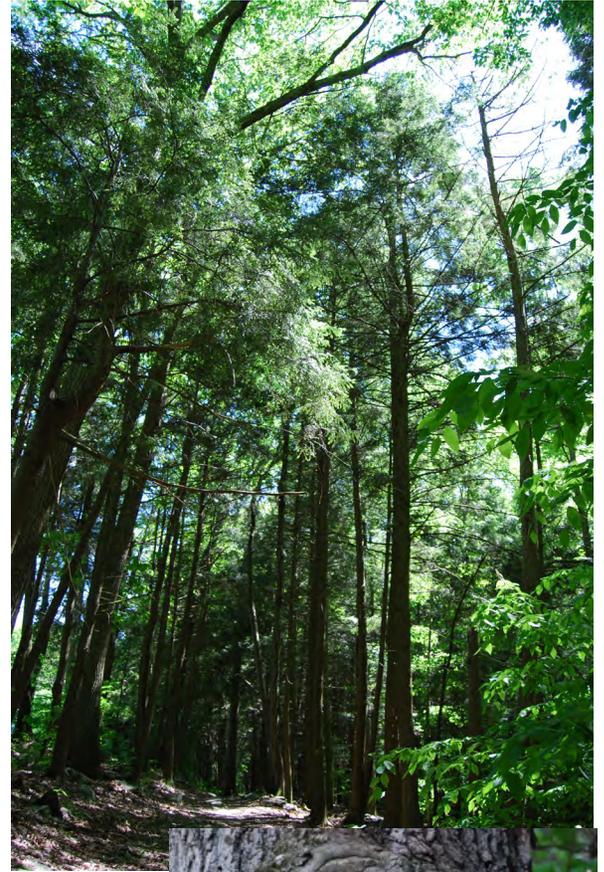
NATURE & ARTS CENTER HABITATS BOARD



Conservation  
Commission  
& Parks Dept.  
Riparian Buffer  
Project



meadow habitat



wetlands habitat



early successional habitat



mature forest tree snag habitat

# NATURE & ARTS CENTER VISION BOARD



wildflower meadows



Hiking trails



sugar shack



lookout tower over meadows



multipurpose gallery, for programs, art, and traveling nature shows



gazebo in meadow



hands-on nature education



nature exploration path entrance



building



wildlife habitats



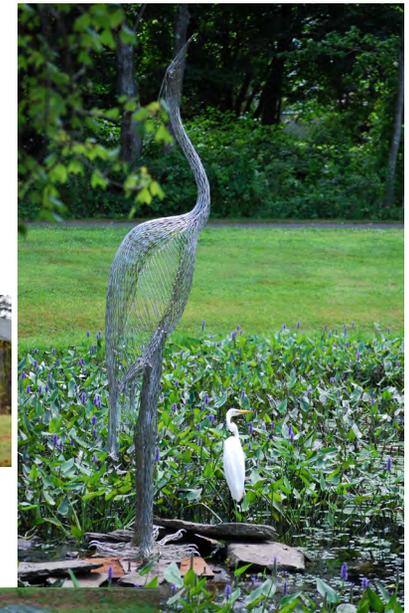
interpretive signage



gardens (could be rooftop)



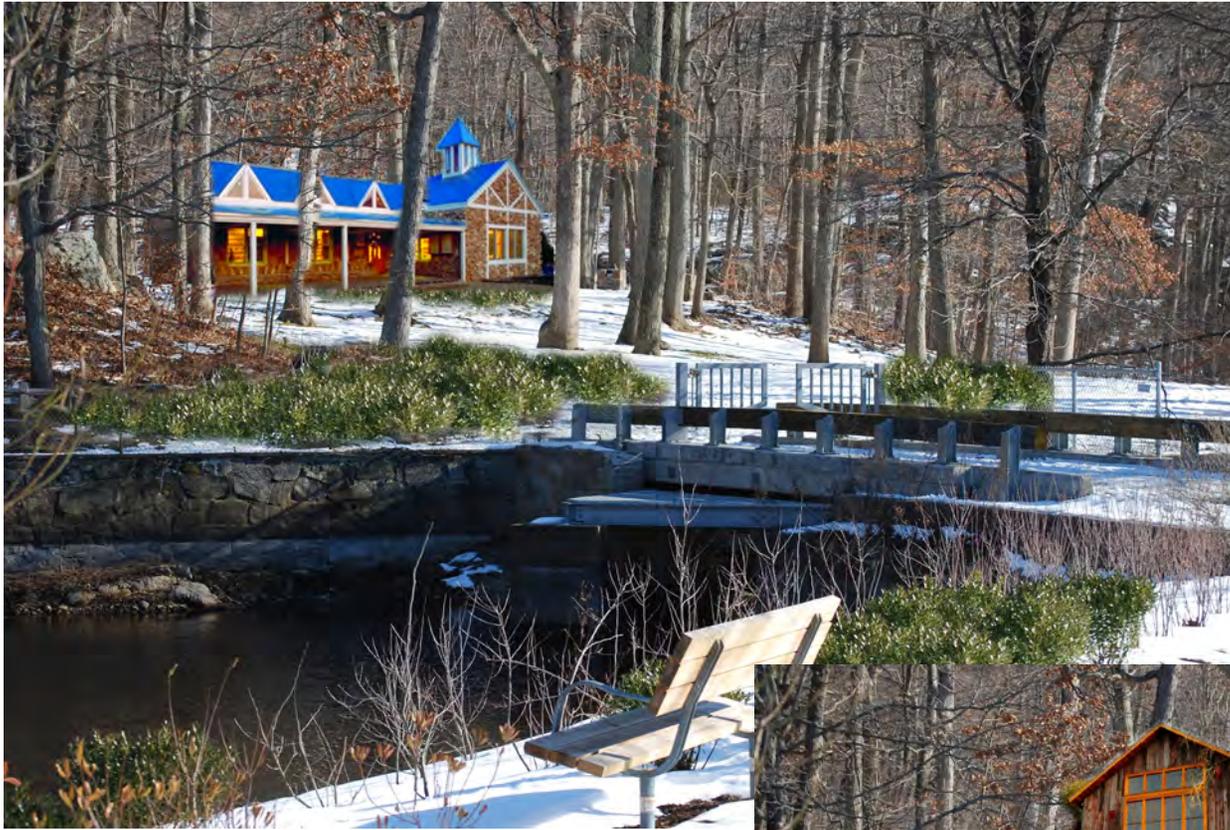
natural wildlife habitats



outdoor nature art

art imitating nature or nature imitating art?

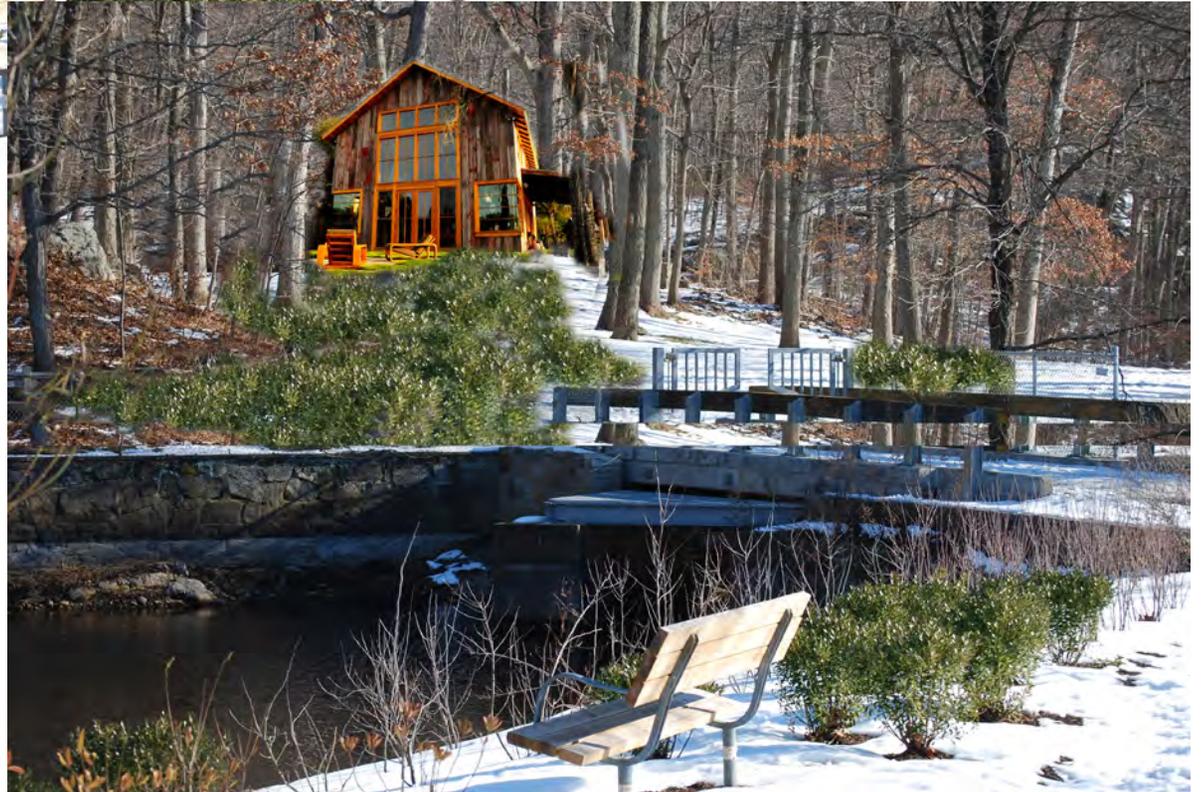
photos are of New Canaan Nature Center, White Memorial Nature Center, Twin Brooks park, Waveny Art Gallery, and other sites in Trumbull



one story building



current bathroom building



two story building