



*a plan for conservation and development*



December 2009  
Adopted February 8, 2010

TOWN OF **Westerly**  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

# Comprehensive Plan Town of Westerly, Rhode Island

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*The Westerly Comprehensive Plan*

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## 1.0 Introduction

Welcome to the Comprehensive Plan for the town of Westerly. First and foremost, the Plan strives to achieve an appropriate balance between conservation and development. Managing growth and protecting cultural and natural resources are complex and delicate tasks; this Plan is intended to help ensure both are accomplished in a way that enhances the quality of life for all the citizens of Westerly. It includes policies, goals and objectives, and specific actions necessary for the successful implementation of the Plan itself. The Plan was approved by the Planning Board following its public hearing on January 19, 2010 and adopted by the Town Council following its public hearing on February 8, 2010. With this local approval and adoption, the Plan becomes an official statement of Westerly's future direction and the guiding document for all future land-use decisions. After approval by the Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program, state agency activities and projects are also required to be consistent with the local plans that have received state approval.

### 1.1 Vision

This Comprehensive Plan envisions Westerly as a community that respects its history and traditions, values conservation and preservation, and strives for a prosperous future for its citizens and businesses. The vision statement crafted for this Plan is as follows:

*The vision for the town of Westerly is to preserve Westerly's quality of life for all generations as a safe and friendly community with a distinctive heritage, extraordinary cultural and natural resources, and fiscally-sound government.*

The Comprehensive Plan is the lens through which all future proposals and initiatives – whether for conservation, development, or infrastructure uses – should be viewed. Each proposal or initiative should be evaluated based on whether it will advance the vision of the future as expressed in the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan itself is not a rigid document that cannot be changed. It must be evaluated on an on-going basis to ensure it meets changing expectations, attitudes or conditions that may develop over time in the community. The need for regular and disciplined evaluation of the progress and appropriateness of the Plan cannot be over-emphasized and is integral to realizing the vision for the future of Westerly.

The future vision for the town of Westerly is entirely consistent with *Land Use 2025: Rhode Island Land Use Policies and Plan* which articulates a robust vision for the state's future that includes a strong economy, a healthy environment and a rich quality of life. *Land Use 2025* is the guide to all planning and development in the state of Rhode Island.



## ***1.2 Authority and Purpose of the Plan***

The Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act of 1988 requires each community in the state to adopt and maintain a comprehensive community plan that provides the basis for rational decision-making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality. According to RIGL §45-22.2-5, Rhode Island cities and towns must “plan for future land use which relates development to land capability, protects our natural resources, promotes a balance of housing choices, encourages economic development, preserves and protects our open space, recreational, historic and cultural resources, and provides for orderly provision of facilities and services.” RIGL §45-22.2-6 states this plan is to be “a definition of goals and policies relative to the distribution of future land uses, both public and private, and it should form the basis for land use decisions to guide the overall physical, economic, and social development of the municipality.”

This Comprehensive Plan for the town of Westerly is its first comprehensive plan since the previous plan was adopted by the Town Council on January 13, 1992. On November 28, 2005 the Town Council appointed a broad-based Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee to complete a two-phase process consisting of a required update to the then-existing plan and development of a new plan for the future. The Comprehensive Plan Update to the 1992 Plan was completed by the committee during calendar year 2006; approved by the Westerly Planning Board on December 19, 2006; adopted by the Westerly Town Council on January 29, 2007; and submitted to Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program in February 2007. After completion of several revisions requested by Statewide Planning, the Comprehensive Plan Update was approved in March 2009.

In June 2007, the committee selected planning consultant peter j. smith & company of Buffalo, New York to assist in the development of a new comprehensive plan for Westerly. Developmental work on the new plan, including a broad community outreach program, continued from the latter part of 2007 to the latter part of 2009, culminating in this recommended Comprehensive Plan for the town of Westerly.

Under the provisions of the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act, each city or town must conform its zoning ordinance and map to its comprehensive plan within 18 months of plan approval. Also, a city or town with an adopted community comprehensive plan should update the plan at least every five years. These revisions should reflect changes in the economic, demographic and other aspects of the community and should incorporate changing goals, objectives and policies. The 1988 Act also provides for review by the state for consistency with the state goals and policies.



### 1.3 Summary of the Plan

The complete Comprehensive Plan presentation for the town of Westerly consists of three components, as follows:

1. The Plan itself
2. Appendices I & II
3. Executive Summary

The Plan document is the pivotal component and will guide the day-to-day implementation and use of the Plan. In addition to this introductory Chapter 1, it includes:

- Chapter 2: Community Character. This chapter describes the make-up of the community, some of the concerns of its citizens, its history and its diverse neighborhoods. It explains the importance of maintaining the distinct character of Westerly and the need for careful planning to allow Westerly to grow and prosper while preserving the quality of life that all enjoy.
- Chapter 3: Inventory Summary with Findings & Implications. This chapter provides a brief summary of each of eight Plan elements and the associated findings and implications that shaped the overall direction of the Plan. A complete inventory of current facts, figures and conditions as of mid-2009 is provided in Appendix I to the Plan.
- Chapter 4: The Future. “Where do we want to be in 2025?” The answer is provided in this chapter by way of a summary of local priorities in the context of *Land Use 2025*, a build-out analysis based on existing zoning, a Future Land Use Plan, and a discussion of the financial implications of implementing the Plan.
- Chapter 5: Implementation Plan. A plan is only as good as the quality of its implementation. This chapter details the goals, objectives and specific actions necessary for successful implementation. It also includes responsibilities and timeframes to ensure clear accountability and tracking of progress over time.

Appendices I & II to the Comprehensive Plan contain important background information and documentation to support the Plan. *Appendix I – Inventory* is central to the Plan’s development and provides a detailed snapshot of Westerly’s “as built” condition and resources. It consists of the following eight elements:

- Existing Land Use and Zoning
- Housing
- Economic Vitality
- Natural Resources
- Services and Facilities
- Open Space and Recreation
- Transportation Network
- Historic and Cultural Resources

This Inventory documents local characteristics and trends regarding resident population composition, land use, housing, the natural environment, economic development and provision of services. It reveals future conservation, development and infrastructure needs and provides a comprehensive source of current information that can be used by the town, its citizens and businesses in their daily activities.



*Appendix II – Public Input* contains summaries and compilations of input from approximately 700 Westerly residents who participated in development of the Plan through public meetings, focus groups, letters, email messages, and a statistically-based survey. During the initial stages of Plan development, a public input program was designed to ensure residents and stakeholders were given ample opportunity to participate in the planning process. The following elements were incorporated:

- Vision Sessions – Vision Sessions were held with the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee and the town’s department heads at project kickoff.
- Focus Groups – Six focus groups were conducted in October and November 2007 as part of the planning process. The focus group topics were:
  - Natural Resources and Open Space
  - Real Estate, Housing and Development
  - Economic Development
  - Circulation, Traffic and Transportation
  - PTO and School Administration
  - Fire Districts
- Interactive Public Workshops – The interactive public workshops were designed to allow the public to give individual input as well as to collaborate with other residents and participants. Three rounds of workshops were held at different locations in Westerly:
  - Round One on July 31 and August 1, 2007 at the Venice Restaurant and Elks Club respectively
  - Round Two on July 29, 2008 at Westerly Middle School
  - Round Three on March 7, 2009 at the Westerly Hospital Conference Center
- Community Survey – A community survey was mailed in September 2007 to a randomly selected representative number of Westerly households to gain community feedback about a broad range of community issues. The survey was designed as the scientifically executed component of the public input program.
- A number of interviews were held throughout the planning process with elected and appointed officials and other local citizens. In addition, numerous unsolicited letters, email messages, phone calls and other inputs from citizens were received and included in the committee’s deliberations.

The third component of the complete Comprehensive Plan presentation is an Executive Summary. Modeled on the state of Rhode Island *Land Use 2025* Executive Summary, the Executive Summary is an easy-to-read, graphics-oriented guide to the Comprehensive Plan which will be available to Westerly citizens once the Plan is adopted by the Town Council.



## ***1.4 Using the Plan***

The adoption of the Comprehensive Plan is a commitment to a coordinated and inspirational vision for the future of Westerly. The Plan’s success will be measured through the committed use by elected officials, appointed boards and commissions, the town’s municipal staff, residents and businesses.

- Elected officials will use the Plan to align their priorities with the community’s vision of the future as described in the Plan and adopt local codes and ordinances that support the Plan’s goals. The Plan provides both background information and leverage as elected officials fulfill their legislative responsibilities and dedicate financial and administrative support for implementing the specific actions identified in the Plan.
- Local boards and commissions will assess the desirability of development applications by their conformity to the Plan; adopt policies and procedures that actively assist those initiatives that further the Plan’s goals; and develop budgets and investment alternatives that are consistent with those described in the Plan.
- Municipal staff will use the Plan when interpreting legislative mandates and regulations, making administrative decisions, enforcing development-related codes and establishing priorities for work efforts. The Plan provides an overarching framework for developing individual and team objectives and a context for the many daily decisions that are made in providing services to the citizens of Westerly.
- Finally, local residents and businesses will use the plan as a reference when making residential or commercial location choices, supporting programs to preserve our cultural and natural resources, appealing for financial or legislative support, and evaluating the effectiveness of local government and elected officials.

## ***1.5 A Final Word***

The Comprehensive Plan represents the collaborative effort of professional and volunteer citizen planners, municipal staff, the town’s planning consultant, and the citizens of Westerly. Guided by the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee, the process has required an extraordinary commitment over time to complete a plan for Westerly that is both practical and visionary. The contributions of all involved – and their efforts, passion and thoughtfulness – are reflected in countless ways throughout the Plan and are very much appreciated.



## 2.0 *Community Character*

Perhaps more than anything else, a Comprehensive Plan is intended to encourage the preservation of a municipality's character and to set forth the goals, objectives, and actions which will guide that municipality in shaping its future. This chapter addresses the make-up of the town of Westerly, its history, the specific character of its different constituent neighborhoods, and the concerns and aspirations of its citizens.

*“People love the area and want to visit or retire here. Why not help make this a good experience for them?”*

- July 2008 Public Workshop

### 2.1 *Community Make-up and Concerns*

The residents of Westerly, whether life-long or more recently arrived, have a strong affection for their town. They see it as a special place, with a character all of its own. This character reflects its unique geography – its spectacular location along the river, bay, salt ponds and ocean, as well as the quiet charm of its back-country rural areas – and its history.

*“We are all one town but we believe the Comprehensive Plan should value and respect the special character and individual qualities of Westerly's constituent neighborhoods.”*

- July 2008 Public Workshop

The rich mix of old settler families, whose roots here go back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century; the more populous 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century immigrant families, who came here to work in the mills and quarries; and the people whose families established the shoreline summer communities, some of whom have chosen to make the town their year-round residence, provides a stimulating diversity. All, however, are united in the pride they feel for the elements which give the town its special character.

There is universal appreciation of the handsome downtown core of the town, centered around its park, including on Broad, High and Elm Streets, largely preserved 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century streetscapes and the ambiance of a small, but prosperous, community of an earlier age. Its sensitive renovation in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century is a source of great civic pride.

Its shoreline communities – their magnificent beaches (the first open-ocean beaches along the New England coast as one travels east from New York) and marine waters, which are enjoyed by beach-goers as well as boaters, together with their largely residential architectural treasures – are another source of pleasure and pride for all residents of the town.



*“People want to live where their children get a good education, and where they have access to quality healthcare.”*

- November 2007  
School/PTO Focus Group

The residents speak of the town as a place where they feel comfortable and safe, and as a family-friendly town. Yet there are concerns about changes which could erode the quality of life in the town.

The high cost of housing raises questions about affordability, and the availability of high quality employment for area residents, especially for the young of the community, is a major concern.

There is a recognition that commercial sprawl has turned a significant portion of Route 1, including Granite and Franklin Streets and the Post Road, into a faceless strip of highway that could be anywhere in the country. There is a strong desire to halt and even reverse the trend.

Traffic and congestion during the summer tourist season months regularly clog the gateways into the town, especially Route 78 and Airport and Winnapaug Roads, and parking is not always available in popular destinations such as the commercial waterfront of Bay Street, Watch Hill, and even at the Misquamicut State Beach.

Residential development, especially in the shoreline communities, raises concerns about loss of open space and scenic views, as well as the degradation of the salt ponds. There is a concern that unchecked development will erode the character of the community and a widespread commitment expressed for the preservation of open space and the protection of the town’s natural resources.

*“I think Westerly is very nice the way it is...I’d also like to have a bike/hiking trail throughout Westerly.”*

- September 2007 Community  
Survey

## **2.2 History**

In pre-colonial times the Westerly area was home to the Pequot, Niantic, and Narragansett tribes. The first European settlers arrived in 1648. By 1660 the Native Americans had conveyed to the colonists a tract of land twenty miles along the coast and ten miles deep into the interior, which included what is now Westerly and parts of Charlestown, Hopkinton and Richmond. The area was then known as “Mishquamicuk” or Misquamicut, a native word which denoted “land of red fish” or salmon. The town of Westerly was incorporated in 1669 and the current legal boundaries were established in 1757, by which time Charlestown, Richmond, and Hopkinton had been separated from Westerly. The town’s boundaries are the Pawcatuck River, which separates Westerly from Connecticut on the west, Fishers Island Sound and Block Island Sound on the south and the boundaries of Charlestown and Hopkinton on the east and north.

Farming and fishing were the major occupations in the early days of Westerly. The town’s location along a navigable river and the coast also destined it to play an important maritime role. A thriving shipbuilding industry grew up along the banks of the river in the 1700’s and 1800’s. Textile mills also developed along the river in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. By 1850, steamboats were being built and



making runs between Westerly and Stonington and Groton. In 1837 the construction of the Stonington and Providence Railroad provided Westerly with a rail connection between New York and Boston.

The discovery of Westerly granite in the 1830's launched a new Westerly industry. The fine-grained local granite was recognized to be of superior quality and was soon in great demand from all over the country and abroad. It is prominently visible in various handsome buildings in town, as well as in architectural elements of structures on Elm and Main Streets, and elsewhere. The rise of industry was accompanied by an influx of immigrant workers, first from Ireland and then from Italy.

Beginning in the 1830's, Westerly's future as a resort community began with the building of the first of a number of grand hotels in Watch Hill. These attracted a clientele from as far away as the Mid-West. Initially, these visitors arrived by train at Stonington and from there by ferry. By the early 1880's, when the first major farm tract in Watch Hill was subdivided for building sites, Westerly's transition to a location for summer homes began. About the same time a substantial summer community was established at Weekapaug, and shortly thereafter, a simpler one at Pleasant View, later known as Misquamicut.

After World War II, Westerly, like many towns in Rhode Island and the rest of the country, expanded greatly. There was significant commercial expansion along Route 1 with construction of several strip malls. Large areas of farmland were developed for housing subdivisions, some of which include a substantial number of two-family homes. Typically, the lots in these subdivisions are square or rectangular in shape and correspond to minimum zoning requirements. More recently, new residential developments consist primarily of single-family homes and some subdivisions have been constructed using cluster or conservation zoning.

### ***2.3 Westerly Neighborhoods***

In addition to its notable Downtown, Westerly is comprised of a number of distinct communities, each with its individual character and history. Several, like Downtown, are designated Historic Districts listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and a number of them have Fire Districts, which provide local quasi-municipal functions, funded by special district real property taxes. These communities take their individual character seriously. For instance, 20 years ago the Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation developed a process of establishing a greenway around and leading to Weekapaug, and by purchase of land and development rights, it has largely achieved this goal.

Figure 2-1 provides a visual display of special character areas in Westerly.



### ***2.3.1 Downtown Westerly***

Downtown Westerly has developed as the commercial and civic center of Westerly. It is anchored by a green core area, Wilcox Park, and is defined by commercial streets (Broad and High) and a residential street (Grove Avenue). Along Broad Street are massive late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century eclectic masonry structures, including Christ Church, the Library, the Town Hall, the Post Office and the headquarters of the Washington Trust Company. The former Industrial Trust Bank and the YMCA on High Street, and on Canal Street, the United Theater, the Martin House (both currently undergoing restoration), the recently restored AMTRAK railroad station and Armory, on Railroad Avenue, are other notable Downtown structures. Along High Street, two-story brick commercial buildings have storefronts with office and/or residential space above. Main Street, which runs from Broad Street and the Pawcatuck River Bridge, is largely commercial (a significant portion of it soon to be redeveloped, as part of the new Westerly KeepSpace program), and Granite Street, which runs up the hill from the Park is mixed in use.

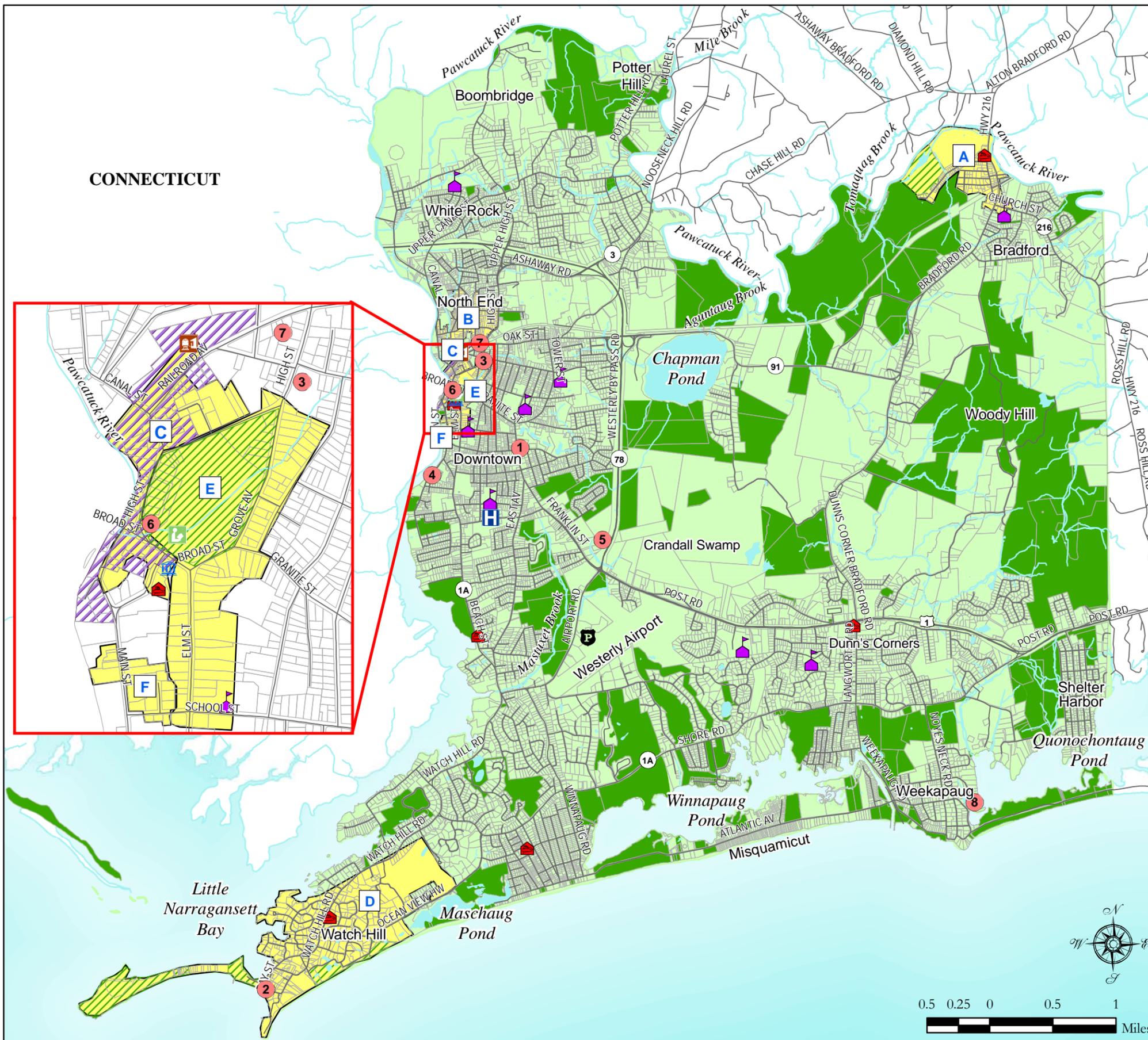
Apart from the stately 19<sup>th</sup> century houses on Elm Street, including Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate and Second Empire structures, and similar handsome houses along Margin Street, the area surrounding the central core, from the railroad tracks on the north to Wells Street on the south and from the river on the west to Granite Street on the east, is primarily 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, small lot, single and multi-family residential, identified by two- and three-story largely framed structures. A significant number of the buildings are set close to the street or with a small setback. The area is largely zoned as high density residential. While the zoning district allows for a variety of housing types, some of the more traditional residential architecture in this area would not be allowed by the current zoning code because the setbacks are smaller than the code allows. The street pattern in the core area is generally an irregular grid.

To the north of Downtown is the North End, a late 19<sup>th</sup> century neighborhood which became the home of successive waves of European immigrants, who came to Westerly to work on the railroad and in the textile mills and granite quarries. In recent years, the town together with multiple private and governmental funding sources has made a concerted effort to revitalize the North End while preserving its historic character. These efforts are most visible in the Pierce and Pond Street neighborhoods where there has been restoration of buildings and landscapes.

### ***2.3.2 Mill Villages***

Still further to the north of Downtown and bounded by the Pawcatuck River, as it flows west and south, are the mill villages of White Rock, Bradford and Potter Hill, which developed as distinct clusters of workforce housing, each with its own iconic mill. The Village of Stillmanville, partly in Westerly and partly in Pawcatuck, straddles the Pawcatuck River. Typical land uses in the Mill Villages include industrial, residential, park/conservation land, vacant land and undevelopable land. The area has a significant number of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings. Residential structures include single family buildings and duplex buildings.

Most residential structures are two or two-and-a-half stories. Zoning in this district varies between low, medium and high density residential, industrial and open space/recreation. As in the Downtown area, some of the existing traditional and residential architecture in this area would not be allowed by the current zoning code because the setbacks are smaller than the code allows. The street pattern in this area is an irregular grid intertwined with winding roads.



### Legend

- Railroad Station
- Library and Wilcox Park
- Westerly Police
- Fire Stations
- Westerly Town Hall
- Westerly Hospital
- Elementary and Secondary Schools
- Conservation Land
- Conservation Land within Historic Districts

### National Register of Historic Places

- 1. Babcock Smith House
- 2. Flying Horse Carousel
- 3. Former Immaculate Conception Church
- 4. Lewis-Card-Perry House
- 5. Nursery Site - RI 273
- 6. United States Post Office
- 7. Westerly Armory
- 8. Weekapaug Inn

### Historic Districts

- A. Bradford Village
- B. North End
- C. Downtown
- D. Watch Hill
- E. Wilcox Park
- F. Main Street

- Westerly Arts and Entertainment District
- Town Boundary
- Ponds
- Streams
- Roads

source: RIGIS, Town of Westerly GIS, Camp Dresser & McKee Inc. (CDM), National Register of Historic Places

## Comprehensive Plan Town of Westerly, Rhode Island

Figure 2-1  
Special Character Areas

November 2009



This map is intended as an illustrative guide and may be suitable for general planning purposes; however, it is not adequate for legal boundary or regulatory interpretation.





### ***2.3.3 Shore Communities***

South of Route 1A are the shoreline communities of Avondale, Watch Hill, Misquamicut, Weekapaug and Shelter Harbor. Each of these areas has its individual distinctive character. But all have the common element of seasonal and summer homes; and two, Watch Hill and Misquamicut, attract large concentrations of summer visitors to their commercial areas. In recent years, large areas of farmland surrounding these communities have been preserved from subdivision and development, primarily by the Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation, but also by the Audubon Society and the Westerly Land Trust.

Avondale, which lies along the Pawcatuck River, north of Watch Hill, was primarily a fishing and boat-building village, once known as Lotteryville. Now largely residential, but still including three boatyards, it retains its quaint waterfront character.

Watch Hill in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries transformed itself from a colony of grand hotels into a community of large summer “cottages,” mostly in Shingle Style, Arts and Craft, and Colonial Revival, but also including an eclectic mix of Norman, Mediterranean and even Bermudian designs. Watch Hill’s Village has always been a vibrant commercial center along its harbor in Little Narragansett Bay. Napatree Point, which extends westward from the Village, is a mile-and-a-half barrier beach, an area which is known as the Napatree Point Conservation Area and is enjoyed not only by summer beach-goers, but also by naturalists, who know it as one of the prime shore bird and migratory bird preserves in the Northeast. Watch Hill’s Flying Horse Carousel is perhaps the oldest of its kind in the nation. The Watch Hill Lighthouse has served as a beacon at Watch Hill Point since colonial days.

Misquamicut, once known as Pleasant View, is located between Watch Hill and Weekapaug, and lies between the ocean and Winnapaug Pond. Its principal road, Atlantic Avenue, has mixed use, residential as well as commercial, and includes the State Beach and two Westerly Town Beaches. Its residential lots are small, and many of its houses, mostly dating from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, are generally modest in size, but many are undergoing remodeling and expansion and, since the area is low-lying, being raised in height above the flood plain.

Weekapaug and Shelter Harbor are residential, with the exception of an inn located in each community. Haversham Point, which lies between them, is entirely residential. Weekapaug surrounds the western end of Quonochontaug Pond and fronts on the ocean at Weekapaug Point and along its barrier beach. Haversham and Shelter Harbor lie along the northern shore of Quonochontaug Pond. The predominant architectural character of Weekapaug is Shingle Style. The architecture of Shelter Harbor, which developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as a “Musicolony,” is more eclectic in character.

### ***2.3.4 Dunn’s Corners/Bradford Road***

North of Route 1 is a largely undeveloped area of town. Along Dunn’s Corners/Bradford Road, one of the major roads in this area, there is some sparse residential development and the town’s largest concentration of remaining working farmland. The other major road in this area, Route 91, runs through a large cedar swamp, much of which is either preserved for habitat protection or too wet to be developed. This entire area presents environmental challenges for development and has the lowest density zoning in Westerly.



### ***2.3.5 Route 1 Corridor***

North of the shore area, Route 1 is lined by commercial strip development similar to the sprawl which has inundated portions of other historic East Coast communities. Based on typical post-World War II zoning ordinances, this area is not characteristic of the rest of Westerly. Typical land uses in the Route 1 Corridor include commercial, residential and vacant. The area is characterized by more recent development including subdivisions and strip malls. Residential structures range from single family to multi-family units including condominiums. Commercial structures include large national and regional chain stores such as Walmart, Shaw's, Home Depot, Tim Horton's and Pizza Hut, as well as several small motels. Typical architectural styles for residential structures range from modern to post modern to new urbanism styles. Commercial structures typically are consistent with national trademark forms applied to box-stores.

Residential subdivision housing units are consistently slightly set back from the street. Commercial structures are typically set back a considerable distance from the street with ample parking in front of the structure. Zoning in this area includes medium and high density residential and highway commercial. Road patterns in this area are winding and feature a substantial number of cul-de-sac roads. Most minor roads are connected to Route 1, but do not have interconnectivity with other minor roads.



## 2.4 Westerly Facts and Statistics

Table 2-1 provides a summary of important facts, statistics and other data for the town of Westerly.

**Table 2-1 Facts and Statistics**

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p><b>Town of Westerly<br/>Rhode Island</b></p>    |  | <p><i>Westerly was designated one of a “Dozen Distinctive Destinations” by the National Trust for Historic Preservation (2002).</i></p> <p><i>South County, RI – with Westerly as its centerpiece – was named one of the top 12 “Best Places to Vacation in North America” by Money Magazine (2006).</i></p> <p><i>Washington County, RI was included as 12<sup>th</sup> on its list of “Best Places to Raise a Family” by Forbes.com (2008).</i></p> |
| <p><b>HISTORY</b><br/>Westerly was established in 1661 and incorporated on May 13, 1669. It originally included the towns of Charlestown, Hopkinton and Richmond which were later separated from Westerly.</p>  | <p><b>FORM OF GOVERNMENT</b><br/>An appointed Town Manager and an elected seven-member Town Council headed by a council president. The Town Council meets on Monday evenings at 7:00 pm.</p>   |   |
| <p><b>LAND &amp; WATER</b><br/>The town of Westerly contains approximately 31 square miles and includes 7 miles of sandy beaches bordering on Block Island Sound. Water accounts for slightly more than 5% of Westerly’s area including major coastal salt ponds such as Quonochontaug Pond (733 acres), with its eastern half within the town of Charlestown and the western portion within Westerly, and Winnapaug Pond (446 acres). Preservation efforts in Westerly by public and private entities have protected over seven square miles (21%) of conservation land.</p> |  |   |
| <p><b>FINANCE</b><br/>FY2010 Budget – Municipal Departments: \$27,247,640<br/>FY2010 Budget – School Department: \$49,370,000<br/>FY2010 Budget – Enterprise Funds: \$9,271,051<br/>Grand List: \$6.49 billion<br/>Property Tax Rate: \$8.87 per \$1,000 assessed value<br/>Moody’s Bond Rating: Aa3<br/>S&amp;P Bond Rating: AA-</p>   | <p><b>HOUSING</b><br/>Total Housing Units: 12,300<br/>Owner-occupied: 64%<br/>Renter-occupied: 36%<br/>Single-family residences: 7,755<br/>Median Assessed Value: \$336,800<br/>Average Assessed Value: \$506,791</p>                          |   |
| <p><b>EMPLOYMENT</b><br/>Outside of the public sector, the largest employers in Westerly include the Westerly Hospital, the Washington Trust Company and the Moore Company/Darlington Fabrics. Employment is concentrated in the following key industry segments: health care, financial services, manufacturing, professional and technical services, and retail trade. During the summer months, the robust tourist/vacation economy boosts town revenues and employment, especially in the accommodations/food services sector.</p>  |  |   |
| <p><b>EDUCATION</b><br/>Westerly High School: 1,067 students<br/>Westerly Middle School: 967 students<br/>Westerly Elementary Schools (4): 1,141 students<br/>Total enrollment – 3,175 students<br/>Education Attainment (Washington County, 25 years &amp; older):<br/>Less than High School graduate – 8.6%<br/>High School graduate – 26.2%<br/>Some college or Associate degree – 24.5%<br/>Bachelor or Graduate degree – 40.7%</p>   | <p><b>POPULATION, WORKFORCE &amp; INCOME</b><br/>Year-round population: 23,424<br/>Age 24 &amp; under: 29%<br/>Age 25-49: 35%<br/>Age 50-64: 19%<br/>Age 65 &amp; above: 17%<br/>Labor Force: 13,185<br/>Median Household Income: \$54,694</p> |   |
| <p><b>COMMUNITY SERVICES</b><br/>Fire Depts – Westerly, Bradford, Dunn’s Corners, Misquamicut, Watch Hill<br/>Westerly Ambulance Corps – 30 Chestnut Street<br/>Westerly Public Library – 44 Broad Street<br/>Westerly Hospital – 25 Wells Avenue<br/>YMCA – 95 High Street</p>   | <p><b>MUNICIPAL OFFICES</b><br/>Town Hall – 45 Broad Street<br/>Engineering &amp; Utilities – White Rock Road<br/>School Department – 15 Highland Avenue<br/>Public Works – Larry Hirsch Drive<br/>Public Safety – 60 Airport Road</p>         |   |
| <p><b>TRANSPORTATION</b><br/>Amtrak Rail Station<br/>Westerly State Airport<br/>Access to Interstate 95<br/>T.F. Greene (Providence) Airport</p>  | <p><b>TRAVEL DISTANCE TO/FROM</b><br/>Boston – 100 miles<br/>Hartford – 65 miles<br/>New Haven – 65 miles<br/>New York City – 140 miles<br/>Providence – 45 miles</p>  |   |



## ***2.5 Conclusions***

Maintaining the character of Westerly is important to the future of this special place. The combination of the features and characteristics of the various neighborhoods make Westerly unique from other towns and is an important reason why people want to visit and reside here. Residents want to preserve the sense of place in Westerly, our open space, and our precious natural resources. They also recognize the importance of economic development and employment opportunities as well as housing for all income and age levels. The key is to balance these potentially competing needs through careful planning for new residential and commercial development and redevelopment of underutilized areas. This should allow the town to maintain the quality and vitality of locally-based businesses and provide housing that will allow residents to live, work, and retire in the community.

Westerly was originally formed around the river crossing, the mills and the oceanfront. Citizens of the town were once primarily employed by fishing and farming, shipbuilding and the marine industry, textile mills, and the granite quarries. These industries are all still a part of the community; however, Westerly today is also an important center in southwest Rhode Island for commercial and professional services. For example, the Westerly Hospital and the Washington Trust Company are major employers in town. In addition to jobs in town, some residents commute to New London or Providence or use technology to become self-employed or to work at some distance from their company's home bases. In the future, jobs that require advanced training and specialized skills are likely to become a bigger share of the employment mix. To achieve continuing economic growth, Westerly will need to focus on providing a quality education for all and actively encouraging companies with high-value jobs to locate here. Westerly will also need to work to improve commuting opportunities so that residents have access to jobs located in other areas of Rhode Island and in neighboring states.

The hospitality and tourism industry will continue to be an important part of Westerly's economy. Visitors who come to enjoy beautiful beaches and other amenities bring an important source of jobs and income; they also bring increased traffic and other stresses on the town during the summer. Maintaining a balance between the competing needs of seasonal and year-round residents and short-term visitors will be an important key to continuing a high quality of life in Westerly.

Building on the existing character and composition of the town, the design for Westerly of the future can offer an organized, functional and attractive place to live, work, and visit. Achieving this vision, however, will require careful planning and decisions that reinforce the best aspects of the community's character to allow Westerly to grow and prosper while maintaining the quality of life that all enjoy.

## *3.0 Inventory Summary with Findings & Implications*

A thorough understanding of Westerly's current status is a necessary basis for planning for the future. This chapter consists of summaries of inventories of current (2009) conditions and trends. The inventories contain information of interest to Westerly residents, businesses, and town government as well as providing documentation to support the Plan. The topics covered in this chapter are:

- Existing Land Use and Zoning
- Housing
- Economic Vitality
- Natural Resources
- Services and Facilities
- Open Space and Recreation
- Transportation Network
- Historic and Cultural Resources

In addition to facts and figures, each of the inventories contains a set of findings and implications which point towards actions to address issues or concerns identified in the inventory process. The complete inventories, which contain additional information and analyses, are in Appendix I of this Plan.

### *3.1 Existing Land Use & Zoning*

Land use planning determines how a community will look, what uses will be allowed and how those uses will be arranged to best meet the needs of current and future residents as well as finding an appropriate balance of the rights of property owners and their neighbors.



### 3.1.1 Existing Land Use

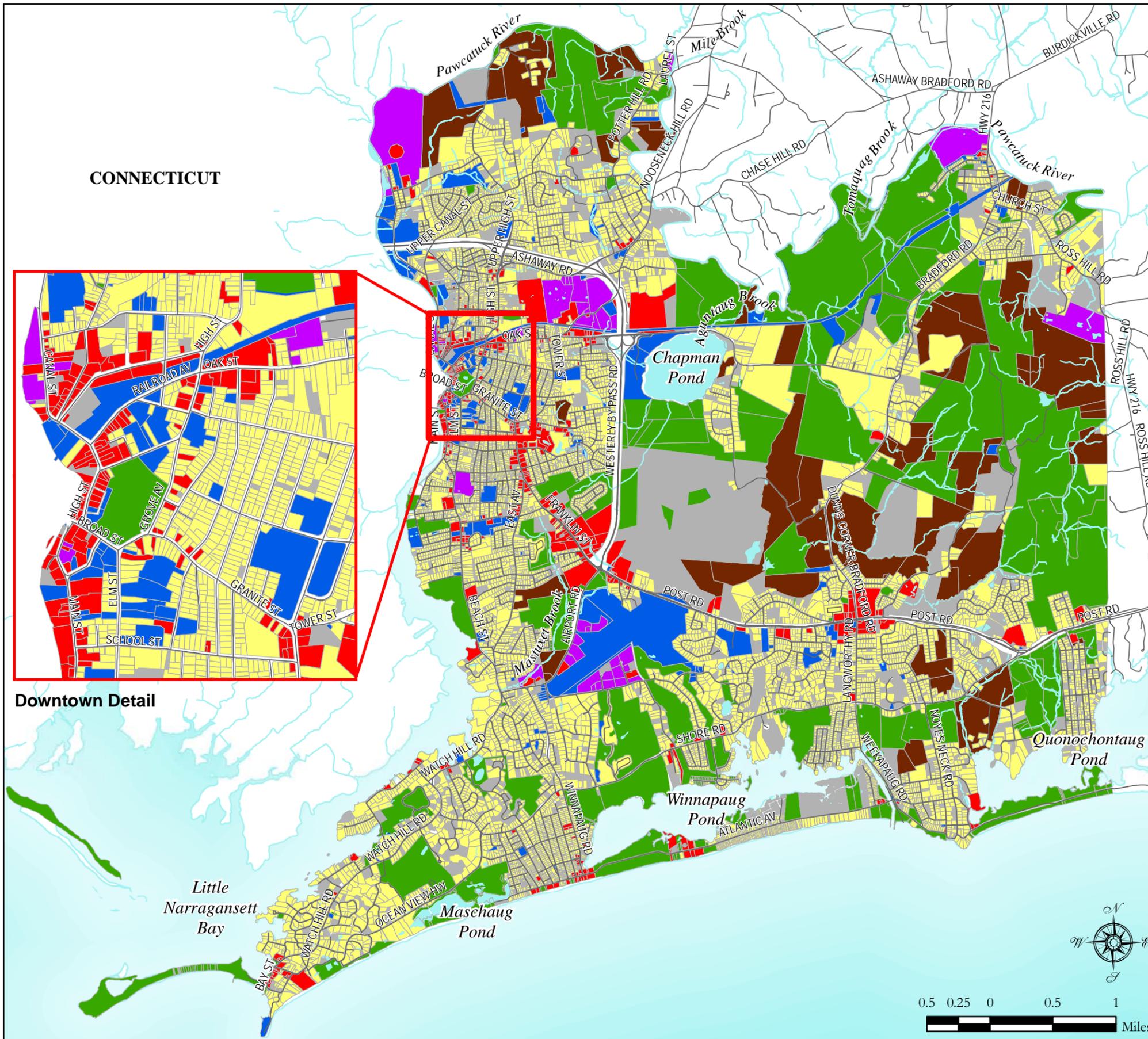
Current land use in Westerly is illustrated in Figure 3-1 and summarized in the Table 3-1 below.

**Table 3-1 Existing Land Use**

| Land Use   | Acres | Percent of total |
|--|-------|------------------|
| <b>Agriculture</b> —includes actively farmed land (cropland, pastures, and orchards). About 248 acres of farmland is being conserved through acquisition of development rights or conservation easements                                     | 2,046 | 10.3%            |
| <b>Commercial-Mixed Use</b> —includes all commercial uses consisting of retail, services and professional uses, and areas with both commercial and residential uses such as the downtown area and part of Watch Hill                         | 728   | 3.7%             |
| <b>Community Facilities</b> —includes schools, churches, government buildings, community safety facilities, hospitals, airport, rail yard, roads, other transportation uses, public utilities, and the transfer station                      | 2,144 | 10.7%            |
| <b>Industrial</b> —includes manufacturing and quarrying operations   | 436   | 2.2%             |
| <b>Conservation, Recreation, and Open Space</b> —includes golf courses, marinas, beaches, parks and other recreation, cemeteries, and vacant land that is protected from development by conservation easements or other permanent protection | 4,112 | 20.6%            |
| <b>Residential</b> —includes all residential uses  | 7,193 | 36.0%            |
| <b>Vacant</b> —most of this land is currently forested; it includes land that is potentially developable and land that would be difficult to develop such as wetlands, inland sandy soils, and rock outcrops                                 | 2,385 | 11.9%            |
| <b>Water</b> —includes inland fresh water and salt ponds; the Pawcatuck River and Little Narragansett Bay are not included   | 923   | 4.6%             |

### 3.1.2 State Land Use Policy

In April 2006, the Rhode Island Department of Administration completed a statewide land use plan titled *Land Use 2025*. The goal of *Land Use 2025* is to eliminate sprawl and protect the natural resources of the state. The state plan encourages an urban/rural model that concentrates new development into established areas and some rural centers. It identifies urban service boundaries within which are areas that either provide public sewer and water, or are planned to do so in the near future, and where higher density and infill development might be considered. The state plan encourages the conservation of natural resources through cluster development, conservation development, or transfer of development rights in areas that have development potential.



**Legend**

- Commercial/Mixed Use
- Community Facilities
- Industrial
- Conservation/Recreation/Open Space
- Residential
- Agriculture
- Vacant \*
- Ponds
- Streams
- Roads

map source: *RIGIS, Town of Westerly GIS, CDM*

\* Includes land potentially developable as well as wetlands, inland sandy soils and rock outcrops.

## *Comprehensive Plan Town of Westerly, Rhode Island*

*Figure 3-1  
Existing Land Use*

November 2009



This map is intended as an illustrative guide and may be suitable for general planning purposes; however, it is not adequate for legal boundary or regulatory interpretation.





### 3.1.3 Existing Zoning

The town of Westerly last comprehensively updated its Zoning Ordinance in 1998. There have been multiple updates since including the Affordable Housing Amendment in 2007. The Zoning Ordinance establishes permitted uses, minimum lot sizes, minimum front, side and rear setbacks for principal and accessory buildings, maximum building heights, maximum building and lot coverage, and minimum floor areas. The Zoning Ordinance is a critical tool for controlling the type, density, and appearance of development within the town. Zoning districts in the town of Westerly are illustrated in Figure 3-2 and described below.

- Residential districts make up 67.2 percent of the land area of the town. The lowest density area is rural residential (RR-60) which has lot sizes of 60,000 square feet (about 1.4 acres) on land that is currently agricultural, contains wetlands or other severe soil constraints, or other sensitive environmental characteristics. These areas have neither public water nor public sewers. The highest density areas (HDR-6, HDR-10, and HDR-15) with lot sizes of 6,000-15,000 square feet are all served by public water. HDR-6 and HDR-15 are served by public sewers.
- Commercial districts make up 3.8 percent of the land area of the town. Land uses in these areas include professional office, downtown center, neighborhood business, highway commercial (along Route 1), general commercial, shore commercial, and marine commercial. Some areas include the potential for mixed commercial and residential uses.
- Industrial districts make up 9.2 percent of the town's land area but much of the land in these districts that is not already developed is protected by conservation easement.
- Special districts protect parks and open space or areas dedicated for commercial recreation such as golf courses. More than 19.7 percent of the town's area falls into one of these zoning districts.
- The Zoning Code also has an option for Planned Resort Facilities Development which is intended to recognize the town as a tourist resort area, provided that such facilities are located on a substantial tract of land and are designed to limit their impact on neighboring property. This type of planned development has never been used.

### 3.1.4 Findings and Implications

- The state plan identifies urban services areas and defines them as the areas with both municipal water supply and municipal sewers; these areas are designated by the state in the 2025 Land Use Plan for higher density and infill development.
- Nearly all the vacant developable land in Westerly is forested or agricultural land. Therefore any development other than infill projects will result in the loss of open space.

## 3.2 Housing

The availability and affordability of housing is a major factor in the livability and prosperity of a community. Important characteristics of Westerly demographics and housing include the following:

- The age of Westerly's population has shifted upward since 1990.
- School enrollment has declined over the last decade.
- Westerly has a significant seasonal population.
- About two-thirds of the houses in Westerly are occupied by owners, one-third are occupied by renters. About 13 percent of the houses are used seasonally.



- Westerly’s affordable housing plan is intended to help meet the housing affordability standards of the state of Rhode Island for low- and moderate-income households.

### 3.2.1 Demographics

The town of Westerly had an estimated year-round population of 23,408 in 2006 which was 2 percent higher than in 2000. Between 1990 and 2000 the population grew by 6.3 percent. Through 2025, Westerly’s population is expected to increase slowly but steadily according to population projections prepared by the Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program resulting in a population of about 26,400 in 2025.

An important statistic for planning purposes is the age distribution of Westerly’s residents. As Table 3-2 illustrates, the percentages of the population over 50 is growing and is projected to be about 39 percent of the total by 2012. In contrast, the town’s school-aged population has declined over the past 10 years. For example, between 2004 and 2007 public school enrollment dropped from 3,710 to 3,314. Public school enrollment is projected to be 3,175 students in the fall of 2009; this constitutes a 15 percent decrease between 2004 and 2009.

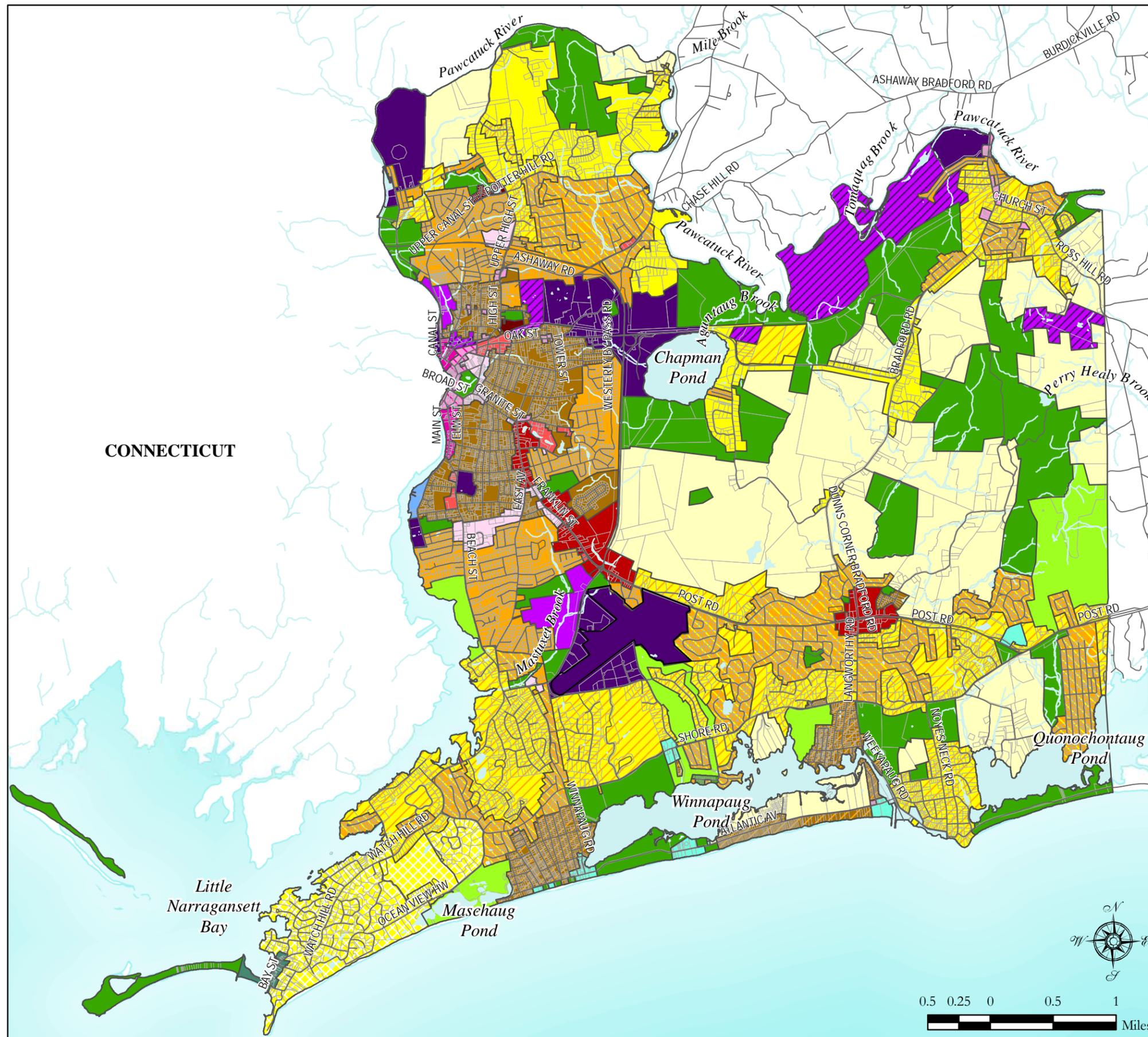
Table 3-2 Demographics

|                  | 1990   | 2000   | 2007   | 2012<br>(projected) |
|------------------|--------|--------|--------|---------------------|
| Total Population | 21,605 | 22,966 | 23,662 | 23,959              |
| Age 2-11         | N/A    | 13%    | 12%    | 11%                 |
| Age 12-24        | 17%    | 15%    | 15%    | 15%                 |
| Age 25-49        | 37%    | 37%    | 35%    | 33%                 |
| Age 50+          | 30%    | 33%    | 36%    | 39%                 |

### 3.2.2 Housing Characteristics

In 2008 there were about 12,300 housing units in Westerly. Of these about 64 percent were owner-occupied, 36 percent renter-occupied. About 60 percent of the residential structures in Westerly were single-family residences. Included in the single-family residence count are about 1,490 that are occupied seasonally. The median year for homes built in Westerly is 1965.

According to the Tax Assessors office, the median assessed value of single-family homes as of the December 2006 revaluation was \$336,800 with an average assessed value of \$506,791. Each town in the state of Rhode Island must perform a statistical update every three years and a full revaluation on the ninth year. The town of Westerly has begun its full revaluation as required by state statute and will complete the revaluation in December 2009. There is evidence that the general economic downturn which began in 2008 has affected the value of housing in Westerly. For example, 57 percent of the houses sold in 2008 were sold for less than the assessed value; in the first half of 2009, 83 percent of houses sold for less than the assessed value. These housing transactions over the 18-month period represent approximately 6 percent of the total number of single-family units in the town. The December 2009 full revaluation should document the extent of any shift in median and average housing values compared to 2006 levels.



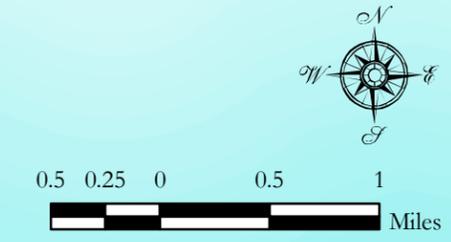
### Legend

- RR-60 Rural Residential 60
- LDR-43 Low Density Residential 43
- LDR-40 Low Density Residential 40
- MDR-30 Medium Density Residential 30
- MDR-20 Medium Density Residential 20
- HDR-15 High Density Residential 15
- HDR-10 High Density Residential 10
- HDR-6 High Density Residential 6
- P-15 Professional Office
- NB Neighborhood Business
- DC Downtown Center
- DCII Downtown Center 2
- GC General Commercial
- HC Highway Commercial
- MC Marine Commercial
- SC-G Shore Commercial - General
- SC-WH Shore Commercial - Watch Hill
- ORAT Office, Research, Assembly & Technology
- LI Light Industrial
- GI General Industrial
- CR Commercial Recreation
- OS/R Open Space and Recreation
- PUD Planned Unit Development
- Ponds
- Streams
- Roads

map source: RIGIS, Town of Westerly GIS, CDM

## Comprehensive Plan Town of Westerly, Rhode Island

Figure 3-2  
Zoning Districts  
November 2009



This map is intended as an illustrative guide and may be suitable for general planning purposes; however, it is not adequate for legal boundary or regulatory interpretation.





### 3.2.3 Affordable Housing

High and stable housing prices and rental rates reflect the desirability of Westerly as an attractive community for both year-round and seasonal residents; however, prices have a significant impact on housing affordability. This is also a concern statewide; therefore, to meet this demand, the State (through the 2004 amendments to the *Low and Moderate Income Housing Act*) requires communities to develop and implement strategies aimed at achieving an affordability goal of 10 percent of all year-round housing. In 2010, RI Housing certified 551 low and moderate income (LMI) housing units (five percent of the town's 10,430 year-round housing units), as defined in the Act. This means that Westerly needs an additional 492 LMI units to meet the goal. Affordable housing needs also stem from residents who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing, which causes a significant cost burden. Westerly had 2,031 households with low or very low incomes (at or below 80% of median income) with significant housing cost burdens in 2000 (CHAS 2000), a number greater than the 10 percent of the town's year round housing (1,043) and an indicator of a greater demand for affordable housing.

In 2004, the Town proposed several strategies to develop LMI units. With the assistance of the Affordable Housing Committee, the Town adopted the following ordinances:

- Affordable Housing Ordinance (§260-50)
- Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance (§260-50.2)
- Comprehensive Permit (§260-50.3)
- Municipal Affordable Housing Fund (§260-50.4)
- Historic Mill Overlay District (§260-57)

Under these strategies, the town has approved 135 LMI units, of which, 46 have been constructed to date. These units include single family homes, multi-family structures, and special needs units, constructed by both for-profit and non-profit developers. These projects are listed in Table 3-3.

As part of this update, the Town reviewed the success of its affordable housing strategies and will revisit some. The Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Permit Ordinance require development with more than six units provide 20 percent and 25 percent LMI units respectively. Both ordinances offer significant density bonuses as an incentive to developers to provide affordable units; however, over the three years that they have been implemented, the density bonuses that have been allowed may present problems with lot coverage, design, and potential environmental impacts if more appropriate guidelines are not provided. The land available for development in town is environmentally constrained due to wetlands or rocky terrain. Further, there have been a high proportion of projects applying under the Comprehensive Permit ordinance rather than the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance, which allows considerably greater density bonuses and the ability to appeal Town decisions to the State Housing Appeals Board. The process also provides for a streamlined review process whereby state agency comments and permits are not required prior to key aspects of the municipal review, notably the public hearing. Awarding municipal approvals pending state and federal permits that include extra densities on environmentally sensitive land is not a desirable planning approach. The Town will conduct a reassessment of these ordinances to evaluate alternatives that may reduce adverse environmental and neighborhood impacts and produce high-quality affordable housing developments.



**Table 3-3 LMI Units Approved and/or Constructed through Affordable Housing Strategies (2004-2011)**

| Project Name          | Developer                              | Housing Type                       | No. of units approved | No. of units constructed     |
|-----------------------|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Westerly Court        | South Shore Mental Health              | HUD 811                            | 10                    | 10                           |
| 79 Pierce             | Habitat                                | Condominium                        | 2                     | 2                            |
| 6 Lilac               | Habitat                                | Owner Occupied                     | 2                     | 2                            |
| 48 Pierce             | RI Housing                             | Owner Occupied                     | 2                     | 2                            |
| 69 Pierce             | RI Housing                             | Owner Occupied                     | 2                     | 2                            |
| 66 Pierce             | RI Housing                             | Owner Occupied                     | 2                     | 2                            |
| 71 Pierce             | RI Housing                             | Owner Occupied                     | 2                     | 2                            |
| North Glenn           | WCCDC/RI Housing                       | Rental Condos                      | 10                    | 10                           |
| Spinnaker Landing     | For profit/private                     | Condominium                        | 10                    | 10                           |
| Pleasant Street Court | For Profit/Charles Soloveitzik         | Condominium                        | 17                    | Under construction           |
| WARM Shelter          | Non-profit/WARM                        | HUD 811                            | 6                     | Under construction           |
| Napatree Point        | For Profit/JHRW Partnership            | Fee-in-lieu option chosen          | 2                     | All permits in place/tolling |
| Fieldstone            | Envine Dev. Corp & Green Hill Builders | SF-owner occupied                  | 13                    | Under construction           |
| Iroquois Hills        | For profit/Nema Enterprises            | Condominium                        | 33                    | SHAB                         |
| Luzzi                 | Cheech Luzzi                           | Rental/Westerly Housing Authority  | 2                     | 2                            |
| Westerleigh Heights   | Grassy Hill Dev. Corp.                 | Condominium                        | 4                     | 2 vacant                     |
| Brown Building        | Mixed Use Downtown                     | Rental/ Westerly Housing Authority | 16                    | -                            |
| <b>Total Units</b>    |  |                                    | <b>135</b>            | <b>46</b>                    |

Many affordable housing strategies have been heavily weighted towards developing LMI units for homeownership and not rental; and the Town has encountered issues with these units. The housing and credit market crashes in 2008 has severely impacted the overall housing market and lending practices. Deed-restricted units are not selling. Further, several have an estimated value below their original assessed value. This is leading to equity controls and developers and homeowners are pressing to be allowed to rent these units. Also, well-qualified, potential buyers of LMI units are unable to obtain mortgages. Finally, where developments were required to include 20 to 25 percent LMI units, homeownership restrictions threaten the economic stability of entire development projects. Many of these issues are market related; however, the Town needs to develop ways to manage these issues to ensure sustained viable projects and maintain LMI unit availability to meet demand.

Some strategies proposed in 2004 have yet to be implemented and the Town will continue to move these forward. These strategies include:

- Affordable Housing Overlay District is proposed but not implemented. Current affordable housing ordinances apply town-wide. There may be a way to link an overlay district to the Inclusionary Zoning and Comprehensive Permit ordinances to address concerns with their current implementation, perhaps restructuring incentives to encourage development in an overlay district rather than in environmentally sensitive area.
- The Comprehensive Permit Ordinance allows density bonuses in eight residential zones, ranging from 20 to 66 percent. These increases in density may result in significant impacts on existing residential neighborhoods. The ordinance needs to be reassessed.
- The Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance provides alternatives to the on-site development of affordable units through payment-in-lieu of development and construction or rehabilitation elsewhere. These options are not offered in the Comprehensive Permit Ordinance. To



support this ordinance, guidelines for off-site development need to be adopted. Further, the payment-in-lieu of on-site development formula needs to be revised to provide for the actual cost of developing required units.

- Provisions for payment-in-lieu of on-site development and allowance for off-site development should be added to the Comprehensive Permit Ordinance.
- Revolving loan fund has not yet been established. This program can be valuable in revitalizing older neighborhoods with multi-family buildings. Both renters and home owners with low and moderate incomes can be targeted and incentives to include as LMI units can be explored.

### *3.2.4 Findings and Implications*

- Between 1990 and 2000, and continuing through 2006, population size and number of housing units have grown at a similar rate; however, the increasing cost and valuation of housing for both owners and renters presents challenges to residents across the economic spectrum.
- Over half of the housing units in Westerly are more than 40 years old. This contributes to the character of the town but also requires extensive upkeep and maintenance.
- The implications of the changing age demographics in town will need to be addressed in the future.
- Since 2004, the Town has focused the development of affordable housing units through new construction; however, the economic impact of the housing and credit market crashes in 2008 slowed all new construction, including affordable housing. The Town needs to refocus on preservation of existing housing and neighborhood revitalization.
- The Town needs to refine current strategies to develop affordable housing and look to find new approaches that are in keeping with town character and environmental constraints.

## *3.3 Economic Vitality*

### *3.3.1 Economic Overview and Distinctions*

Westerly's credit rating was enhanced in 2007 when the two largest and most prominent bond rating agencies (Moody's and Standard and Poor's) raised the rating on the town's general obligation debt. In making their determinations, both agencies cited a number of favorable aspects of Westerly's economy, including the town's good financial position, reserves, modest existing debt burden, recent property appreciation resulting in an expanded tax base and market value of homes. Standard & Poor's noted the town's tourism-based economy "slightly constrains" the town's rating but that the financial outlook for the town's economy is stable. A discussion of town and school finances appears in greater detail in the Services & Facilities element of Appendix I.

Westerly traditionally has had an unemployment rate approximately 20 percent lower than the statewide rate. For example, the average unemployment rate in Westerly from 2005-2007 was approximately 4.3 percent, which is generally recognized as near full employment. In the midst of the current 2008-2009 economic downturn, the local unemployment rate is approximately 10 percent. Median household income is approximately \$54,700.

Westerly and its surrounding area have achieved significant national and international distinctions in the last several years:



- In 2002, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named Westerly one of its “Dozen Distinctive Destinations.”
- In 2006, Money Magazine named South County, R.I. – with Westerly as its centerpiece – as one of the top 12 “Best places to vacation in North America.” (The town of Westerly is part of Washington County, which is also known as South County.)
- More recently, on June 30, 2008, Forbes.com named Washington County, RI as 12<sup>th</sup> on its list of “Best Places in America to Raise a Family.”

### ***3.3.2 Employment***

Rhode Island based employers of significance include the state of Rhode Island, particularly the University of Rhode Island, the Electric Boat Division of General Dynamics at Quonset Point, and a diversified group of employers in the health care, financial services, education, defense and manufacturing sectors. Because of its location, Westerly’s economy is vitally linked to southeastern Connecticut with significant employers at the U.S. Naval Submarine Base, Electric Boat Division of General Dynamics, Pfizer, Yardney Electric Battery Company, and Davis-Standard. All of these industries provide high-value research and technical jobs and also provide business for smaller companies in the area. The Westerly hospitality and tourism industry is also linked to tourism and entertainment venues in southeastern Connecticut, including Mystic Aquarium and Mystic Seaport and Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun gaming facilities.

Westerly is primarily a town of small employers. Of Rhode Island’s top 100 employers, there are two with headquarters in Westerly: Westerly Hospital and The Washington Trust Company. In addition to health care and finance, other sectors of significance to Westerly’s economy include textiles, printing, and construction. The town of Westerly is also an important employer with 717 full-time equivalent positions (189 in municipal departments and 529 in the school department).

The travel and tourism sector is particularly important to Westerly. Tourism industry wages in Westerly in 2002 were seventh highest among the state’s cities and towns, generating \$27.88 million in wages. Tourism is also a significant factor in the general local economy with estimates that for every one dollar of wages generated by tourism, \$3.64 in economic activity is generated. Despite the global and national economic downturn, comparisons of adjusted 2007 and 2008 meal and hotel tax collections show a resiliency in this sector in Westerly.

Second home and part-time residents have a significant positive effect on Westerly’s economy. These residents own approximately \$1.15 billion in assessed property value, upwards of 21 percent of total assessed residential property. In 2007 this property generated about \$11 million in property tax revenue for Westerly. Second home owners also contribute to construction and trades employment and they shop in Westerly, contributing to the vitality of businesses throughout the community. Seasonal residents also participate, along with full-time residents, in funding amenities such as the Public Library, the Westerly Hospital, and numerous other charities.

### ***3.3.3 Economic Development Initiatives***

There are several economic development efforts underway in Westerly which are designed to attract new development and employment. These include the following:

- \$154 million in new residential construction and \$142 million in commercial construction has been approved and is currently underway.



- Westerly Landing, located along Main Street and the Pawcatuck River, and Westerly Depot, near the train station, feature river access and development and redevelopment of undeveloped and underutilized sites.
- The revitalization plan for the North End of Westerly provides for housing rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of existing commercial and industrial properties.
- The Westerly Tax-Free Arts District, located in the historic downtown, provides sales and personal tax exemptions for artists who live and work in the district or sell their original art in the district.

### ***3.3.4 Findings and Implications***

- Dependence on three major industries leaves the regional economy vulnerable to shifts in the pharmaceutical, defense, and hospitality and tourism industries.
- All community hospitals in Rhode Island had operating losses in fiscal 2006. Reimbursement rates by government and health insurers as well as uncompensated care contribute to the fiscal problems. The Westerly Hospital as an employer, together with its high quality, easily accessible health care is among the most vital institutions in the community.
- There has been no systematic evaluation of the accommodations available in Westerly to determine whether modern markets for seasonal vacationers, year round visitors, and business travelers are being adequately served.
- Sites for new businesses are needed; redevelopment of existing commercial areas can meet much of this need.
- Westerly State Airport offers aviation maintenance, commercial passenger and charter service but not freight service. The airport has the potential for a larger role in the economy although proximity to residential areas presents challenges to any expansion of services.
- Westerly has the opportunity to promote economic development based on features such as its location midway between Boston and New York City and near leading academic institutions, access to Interstate 95, and a train station with the potential for expansion of Amtrak and introduction of commuter rail services.

## ***3.4 Natural Resources***

### ***3.4.1 Overview of Natural Resources***

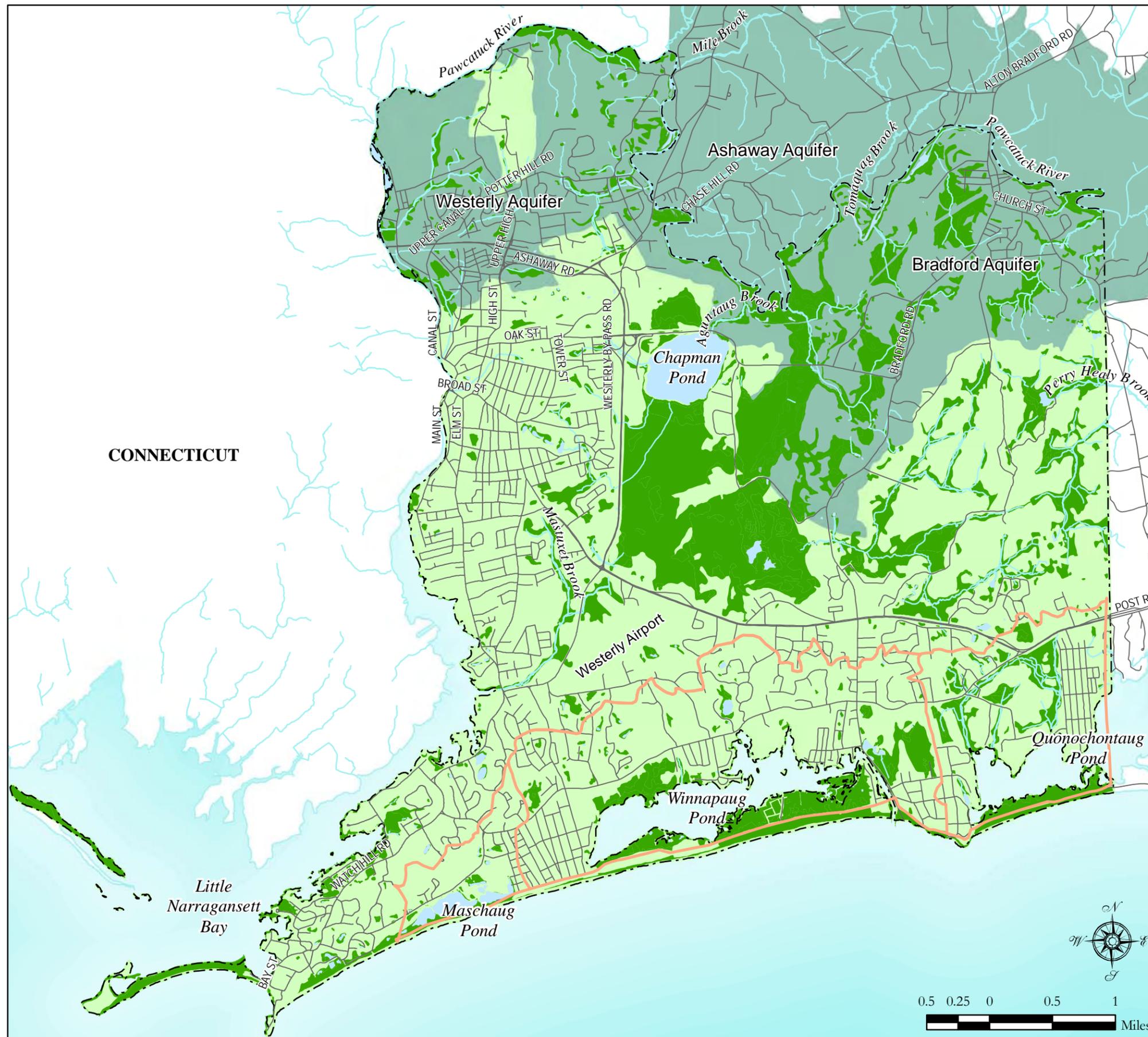
Westerly's natural resources help to make Westerly a wonderful place to live today and are critically important to the town's future development. The Pawcatuck River, the ocean beaches, and the coastal salt ponds provide important ecosystem and habitat functions. They are an important factor in the quality of life for residents and a prime recreational attraction for tourists. Westerly's groundwater resources exist within three aquifers: Westerly, Ashaway, and Bradford. These aquifers are located within the Pawcatuck River Aquifer Region, which is the sole source of drinking water for the town. Wetlands along the rivers and streams, the shore and salt ponds, as well as Crandall Swamp and other interior wetlands remove nutrients, pollutants, and sediments from surface waters runoff; recharge water supplies; reduce shoreline erosion and flood risks; and provide fish and wildlife habitat. Farmland and forests provide important open space as well as wildlife habitat. The location of many of these natural features is illustrated in Figure 3-3.



An overview of the current status of many of Westerly’s natural resources, their issues and problems, and stressors is provided in Table 3.4 below. This table is abstracted from Appendix I which contains extensive background information and references to laws and regulations and organizations that have management and regulatory authority for natural resources.

**Table 3-4 Natural Resources**

| Resource   | Water Quality Status | Issues/Problems  | Stressors  |
|--|----------------------|--|--|
| <b>Coastal Ponds</b>                               |                      |  |  |
| Quonochontaug                                      | Good                 | Increasing bacteria, Increasing nutrients, Low DO  | Failing or substandard septic systems, stormwater runoff, development, siltation |
| Winnapaug  | Somewhat impaired    | High bacteria and nitrate concentrations   | “  |
| Maschaug   | Unknown              | Unknown  | “  |
| <b>Pawcatuck River</b>                             |                      |  |  |
| Upper river—from Bradford Dye to bridge at Route 3 | Impaired             | High bacteria, elevated lead and nitrate concentrations  | Stormwater runoff, failing septic systems, farm and wild animals                 |
| Lower river—tidal                                  | Impaired             | High lead levels, heavy metal pollutants, high bacteria, low DO, no shellfishing                                     | Urban runoff, stormwater runoff  |
| <b>Wetlands</b>                                    | Unknown              | Large wetland areas protected by conservation groups, small wetland areas are subject to encroachment by development | Stormwater runoff  |
| <b>Groundwater</b>                                 |                      |  |  |
| Westerly aquifer                                   | Good                 | Localized contamination, elevated levels of nitrates and bacteria, spills  | Development in recharge zones, failing septic systems, road salt                 |
| Ashaway aquifer                                    | Good                 | “  | “  |
| Bradford aquifer                                   | Good                 | “  | “  |
| <b>Beaches</b>                                     | N/A                  | Storm erosion, flooding  | Population pressure, Storms (hurricanes and Northeasters)                        |



**Legend**

- Salt Ponds Special Area Management Plan Areas
- Aquifers
- Wetlands
- Town Boundary
- Ponds
- Streams
- Roads

map source: *RIGIS, Town of Westerly GIS, CDM*

## *Comprehensive Plan Town of Westerly, Rhode Island*

*Figure 3-3  
Natural Resources  
November 2009*



This map is intended as an illustrative guide and may be suitable for general planning purposes; however, it is not adequate for legal boundary or regulatory interpretation.





### 3.4.2 Findings and Implications

- The approved five-year update to the town of Westerly Comprehensive Plan requires changes to the existing Zoning Ordinance and subdivision regulations to comply with the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) Salt Pond Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) which provides for maximum density, setbacks, buffers, requirements for nitrogen-reducing technologies for onsite wastewater treatment, and CRMC participation at an early stage of municipal land-use regulatory review.
- Westerly has begun implementation of its *Phase II Storm Water Management Plan*. Implementation of the plan is a five-year process that began in 2004.
- The acquisition of significant natural communities, habitats, and other highly vulnerable undeveloped areas by state, municipal and private groups is one of the most effective means of protecting their natural functions.
- Appropriate development and regulations can protect open space from fragmentation and reduce sprawl, both of which will prevent potential negative impacts on the aesthetic character of the town and its natural resources.

## 3.5 Services and Facilities

Since 1992 when the last comprehensive plan was adopted, Westerly has undertaken a concerted effort to upgrade and modernize its public services and facilities. Recent examples include improvement of the water treatment and distribution system, construction of a new police headquarters, a new Department of Public Works facility, and a new middle school and planned renovation of the Westerly High School. In addition, there has been a privately-funded renovation of the Westerly Hospital and construction of a new animal shelter and a new headquarters for the Westerly Ambulance Corps. Several private, public and quasi-public agencies are located in Westerly and provide social services to its residents.

### 3.5.1 Emergency Services

The Westerly Police Department has 61 full-time employees, 48 of whom are sworn officers. The new police headquarters on Airport Road houses all police operations and serves as a regional emergency operations center.

The town of Westerly is divided into seven fire districts: Westerly, Bradford, Misquamicut, Watch Hill, Dunn's Corners, Shelter Harbor, and Weekapaug. Each fire district is incorporated to provide services within its boundaries. Fire districts have taxation powers and do not rely on appropriations from the town. The fire departments are staffed with volunteers with the exception of one or two paid employees in the Westerly and Dunn's Corners departments. The departments have established working relationships that allow them to provide back up support to each other as needed.

The Westerly Ambulance Corps is a private, non-profit, organization that provides basic life support and advanced life support emergency medical services to Westerly, Pawcatuck, CT, and parts of Stonington, CT. Ambulance services are provided by paid staff (8 full time) and volunteers (20 active members). The all-volunteer Rescue Squad (20-30 active members) specializes in rescue from vehicles, water, and ice.



The non-profit Westerly Hospital has been serving residents since 1925. With a total active medical staff of 100, the hospital provides emergency services, inpatient and outpatient medical and surgical care, diagnostic laboratory services, imaging services and a variety of therapeutic services. Similar to other hospitals in the state, the major issues impacting the hospital are uncompensated care and issues related to low reimbursement rates. During recent years, the hospital has had operating losses. In addition to the hospital, Westerly is served by Visiting Nurse Services Home Health Services of Rhode Island and there are several nursing homes located in town.

### ***3.5.2 Schools***

The majority of the town's school-aged children (93 percent) attend public school. At the conclusion of the 2008-2009 school year, the Westerly School Department closed one of its five elementary schools and moved all fifth grade students to Westerly Middle School due to a decade-long trend of declining enrollment. Projected enrollment for the 2009-2010 school year is 3,175 students including 1,067 in Westerly High School, 967 in Westerly Middle School, and 1,141 in Westerly's four remaining elementary schools. St. Pius X School in Westerly, a private K-8 school, has an enrollment of approximately 230 students.

During the 2006-07 school year, the district had a teacher-student ratio of 1:9, a 95 percent attendance rate and a student drop-out rate of 6 percent. The average teacher had over 10 years of teaching experience and over 50 percent of the teachers had a master's degree. The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) establishes targets in various educational areas. The 2008 report card for Westerly shows that all of the public schools in Westerly met all of the educational targets.

### ***3.5.3 Public Library***

The Westerly Public Library and Wilcox Park are located on approximately 14.7 acres in downtown Westerly. Both the park and the library are owned by the non-profit Memorial and Library Association of Westerly. In 2006, 57 percent of the library's funding came from non-public sources, 22 percent came from the state, and 21 percent came from local sources (Westerly and Stonington and North Stonington, CT). As of mid 2009, the library is undergoing extensive renovations.

### ***3.5.4 Water System***

Westerly's water system is owned by the town and operated by the Water Department which is part of the Department of Public Works. The budget for the town's Water Department is prepared to incorporate all of the costs of operating the department and the water rates are established so that the users pay for all of the activities of the department. There is a small portion of town (approximately 6 percent) that depends on private wells. The area of town served by public water and by both public water and sewers is illustrated in Figure 3-4.

The source of Westerly's public water supply is wells that tap groundwater resources. The quality of the water is good and the town has recently implemented a new and improved disinfection system. The town has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of its groundwater resources. The conclusion is that its existing White Rock sites, combined with its Bradford II and III sites and the Crandall well sites provide sufficient capacity. However, to enhance the town's reserves, a new well is being developed (Bradford IV). The town continues to actively acquire land for aquifer protection. As required by the state of Rhode Island, Westerly has prepared a plan for drought management that includes procedures for addressing drought.



The water distribution system in Westerly is over 125 years old. Extensive investments have been made and are being made to extend its useful life. Improvement projects recently completed include the construction of the new one million gallon Winnapaug Tank, the Winnapaug Tank site lead remediation, permitting of a new pump station and well in Bradford, design of a new main extension on Westerly-Bradford Road, the Tower Street tank rehabilitation and lead soil remediation, and the new White Rock transmission main. A major pipeline rehabilitation study is in progress.

### ***3.5.5 Sanitary Sewer System***

The town of Westerly owns and operates a wastewater collection and treatment system that services approximately 45 percent of the town. The rest of the town is served by individual wastewater treatment systems such as septic tanks with on-site infiltration. In terms of residential parcels only, 39 percent have public sewers and 61% use individual septic systems. The area served is illustrated in Figure 3-4. There are areas within the Westerly Sewer District to which sewer service has not been extended; these include the Misquamicut residential area, Mount Moriah/Springbrook, Apache Drive/Ledward Avenue, and Avondale/Winnapaug Road. Westerly has one wastewater treatment plant that discharges effluent into the Pawcatuck River. The discharge is regulated by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. The plant went through a major upgrade in its biological nutrient removal capability in 2003. The plant is near the threshold of its treatment capacity; however, it has capacity for all currently proposed and approved subdivisions. The town is trying to limit the amount of groundwater that infiltrates the system which will reduce the amount of water that is currently being treated. The plant is designed so that its capacity can be increased by the installation of additional components.

### ***3.5.6 Stormwater System***

The town of Westerly owns and maintains a stormwater sewer system. Most of the system flows into the river or wetlands rather than the ocean. There are no combined sewer overflow connections between the sanitary sewer and storm sewer systems. There are several new residential and commercial developments that have created storm retention basins or ponds in order to comply with newer stormwater regulations. After the private developer builds the basins, the town assumes responsibility for maintenance. The town has an ongoing maintenance program for the storm system that includes cleaning catch basins and pipes and replacing aging pipes and structures. In 2007, the town received approval from Rhode Island's Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) to install a municipal storm drainage collection and treatment system serving the Misquamicut area to address serious flooding problems during moderate to heavy storms. Phase I is currently (2009) operational.

### ***3.5.7 Solid Waste Disposal***

The town of Westerly owns and operates a solid waste transfer station which also has a recycling facility. At the transfer station, the town compacts and loads and then trucks the trash to the state's central landfill. The town does not provide curbside pickup. Instead, residents either bring trash to the transfer station in special bags sold by the town or pay private haulers to pick up trash for delivery to the transfer station. Information on the number of persons or households served is not available or tracked.

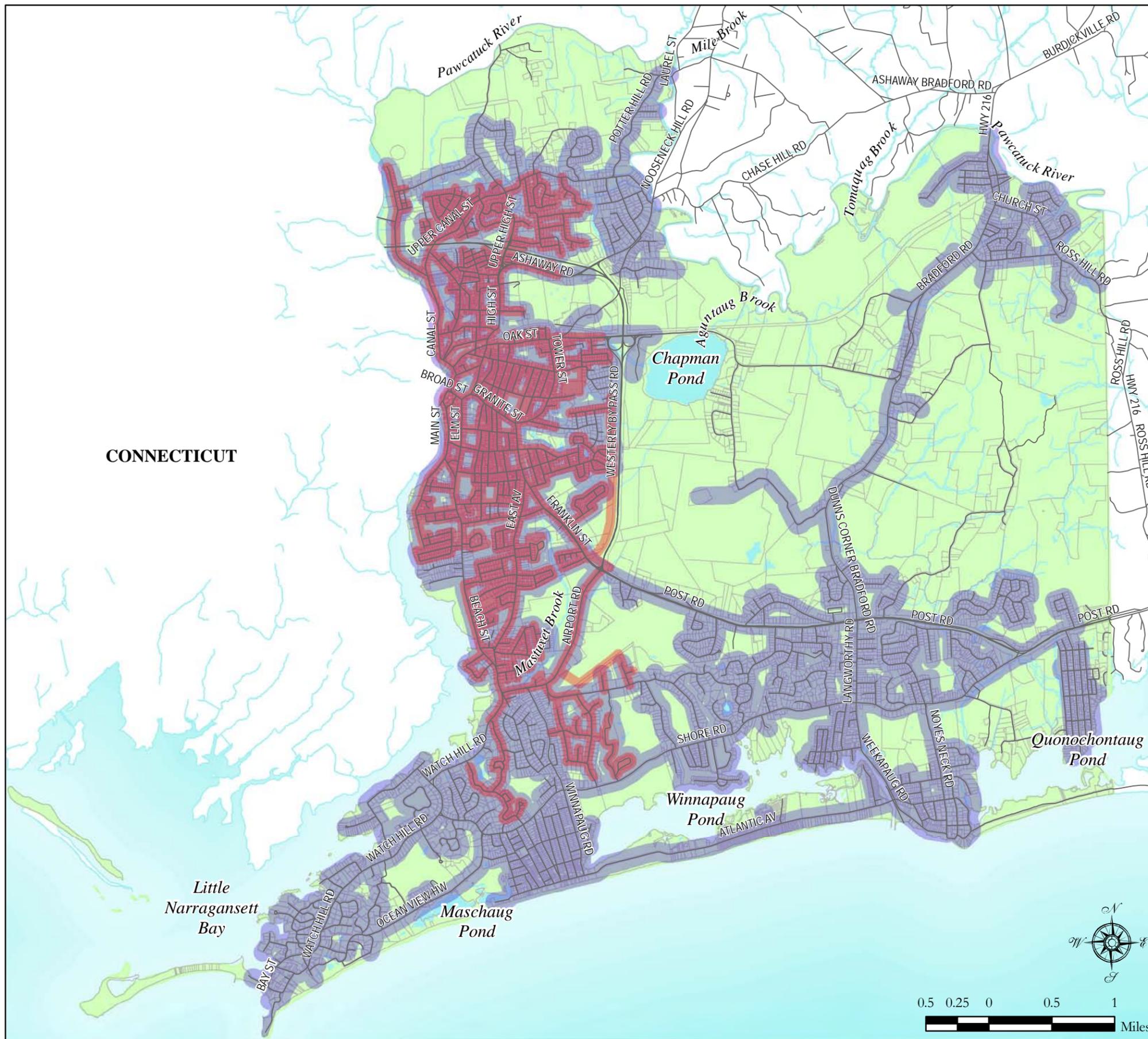


### ***3.5.8 Natural Gas and Electric***

Both gas and electric service are provided by National Grid which owns and maintains the utility poles, electric lines, and gas lines. Gas service is available in some areas of town but the main transmission line is not adequate to provide town-wide service.

### ***3.5.9 Findings and Implications***

- The Westerly School Committee and Town Council must continue to work together to develop and maintain appropriate school facilities for the community. Facility planning and maintenance are on-going concerns.
- Water distribution deficiencies have caused use restrictions in the past. On-going improvement projects have mitigated this problem to a large extent; however, drought planning and water-supply protection remain as issues.
- The wastewater treatment plant in Westerly is nearing its capacity. Design plans for plant expansion exist; however, funding and implementation remain as issues.
- The Westerly Hospital serves the town and surrounding communities in Rhode Island and Connecticut. This facility and most other health facilities in the State are struggling with increasing costs due to uncompensated care and low reimbursement rates from the federal and state governments and insurance providers and related issues.



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**Legend**

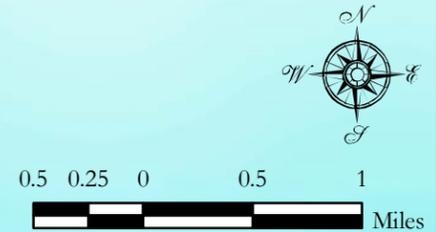
- Sewer and Water Service Area
- Water Service Area
- Town Boundary
- Ponds
- Streams
- Roads

map source: RIGIS, Town of Westerly GIS, peter j. smith & company, inc., CDM

## Comprehensive Plan Town of Westerly, Rhode Island

Figure 3-4  
Areas Serviced by Public Water  
and Sewer Systems

November 2009



This map is intended as an illustrative guide and may be suitable for general planning purposes; however, it is not adequate for legal boundary or regulatory interpretation.





### ***3.6 Open Space and Recreation***

Open space and recreation resources play a critical role in the quality of life in Westerly, serving as important natural resource protection areas and providing opportunities for leisure and exercise.

Since the 1991 Comprehensive Plan was prepared and adopted, there have been many changes to the town's open space and recreation resources. The following are selected highlights of accomplishments of the town of Westerly:

- Acquisition of approximately 135 acres in an aquifer recharge area near Bradford
- Acquisition of shorefront property to create a new Town Beach (Wuskenau Beach)
- Creation of Rotary Park
- Clearing of hiking trails and provision of signage in the Town Forest
- Upgrading town and school playground facilities
- Establishment of the Recreation Department
- Expansion of the Senior Center
- Approval of \$3.0 million open space bond (2006)

#### ***3.6.1 Open Space***

In addition to the town, a variety of public and private organizations preserve open space in Westerly. This combination of preservation efforts in Westerly have protected over 4,000 acres of conservation land, translating into over 21 percent of the town. Approximately 74 percent of the town's conservation land has public access or limited public access. Major owners of conservation land in Westerly include the state of Rhode Island, the Westerly Land Trust, town of Westerly, Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation, Watch Hill Fire District, Weekapaug Fire District, the Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society of Rhode Island, Shelter Harbor Fire District, Nopes Island Conservation Association, Watch Hill Conservancy, Westerly Memorial Library, and various foundations and private owners.

The largest concentration of open space is in the northern portion of Westerly, including the Town Forest, the Woody Hill Management Area, and the Grills Preserve. In the southern and southeastern portion of town, a substantial amount of open space is preserved by four golf courses: the Shelter Harbor Golf Club, the Misquamicut Club, the Weekapaug Golf Club, and Winnapaug Golf Club. Coastal open space includes Misquamicut State Beach, two town beaches, the Weekapaug Fishing Area, Napatree Point Conservation Area, and several beaches owned by fire districts. The Audubon Society of Rhode Island and the Westerly Land Trust maintain large areas of open space along Route 1A. Open spaces in the central portion of the town include swamp lands such as Crandall Swamp and Newton Swamp Management Area.

#### ***3.6.2 Recreation***

A variety of recreational opportunities exist in Westerly. Major water-based recreation includes the state and town beaches and marinas and access points for launching boats and fishing. Non-water based recreation facilities are summarized in Table 3.5. In addition, recreational opportunities are available at nearby facilities including Burlingame State Park, Ninigret Park, Quonochontaug Breachway, and Barn Island Wildlife Management Area.



**Table 3-5 Recreation Resources**

| Name                                 | Acres | Facilities  |
|--------------------------------------|-------|---|
| Cimalore Field                       | 25    | Baseball and softball fields, basketball courts, playground, picnic area  |
| Craig Field                          | 7     | Softball field, basketball court, playground, picnic area   |
| Gingerella Sports Complex            | 21    | Basketball court, tennis court, soccer fields, skate park, playground, picnic area  |
| Rotary Park                          | 19    | Tennis courts, volleyball courts, hiking trail, playground, picnic area   |
| Town Forest                          | 229   | Hiking trails   |
| Public School Facilities             |       | Baseball and softball fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, soccer fields, football field, outdoor track, gymnasiums, playgrounds |
| Wilcox Park                          | 15    | Walkways, benches   |
| YMCA                                 |       | Swimming pools, gymnasiums, fitness centers, tennis court   |
| Grills Preserve                      | 482   | Hiking trails, cross country track  |
| Dr. John B. Champlin Glacier Park    | 132   | Hiking trails   |
| Trombino Sports Complex              | 23    | Baseball fields   |
| Golf Clubs (listed under open space) |       | Private, semi-private, and public   |

### *3.6.3 Findings and Implications*

- A systematic prioritized plan, including potential funding alternatives, is needed for open space preservation.
- Both the state and the town propose greenways that follow the Pawcatuck River and the town’s coastline.
- The public has long supported development of a bikeway system; however, previous attempts to create one have been unsuccessful.
- Trails are the most clearly demanded recreation in state-wide surveys. It is necessary to identify trail needs in the town and continue to develop interconnected pedestrian paths.
- Seventy-nine percent of respondents in the Westerly community survey agreed or strongly agreed that the riverfront should be developed with more greenspace. This finding implies that one of the key recreation focuses should be on the development of greenspace along the river, enhancing the efforts of the riverwalk project.



## ***3.7 Transportation Network***

### ***3.7.1 Roads and Traffic***

The town Engineering Department has been proactive in designing and implementing a program for the rehabilitation and maintenance of local roads and bridges. There is a comprehensive pavement management plan in place that determines specifically where money is to be used for resurfacing of roadways and there is bond money available for roadway reconstruction, roadway drainage, and overall improvements to town roads. Traffic congestion is an important problem in Westerly, especially in the summer when the population swells with visitors to the beaches. At times traffic volume approaches gridlock in the Route 78-Airport Road-Winnapaug Road area and at the roads that feed into Route 1A.

### ***3.7.2 Parking***

Parking is an important concern for many in the downtown area. Strategies to decrease demand for on-street parking in the downtown area include encouraging walking and bicycling, exploring opportunities for shuttle bus service, and alternative parking facilities, and identifying properties that provide opportunities for parking facilities and shuttle bus stops. As downtown redevelops and its most vital areas increase in size, motorists may be more willing to walk a block or two, particularly if there is an opportunity for window shopping along the way. Parking shortages in other areas of town include the train station, Watch Hill, and Misquamicut.

### ***3.7.3 Bus, Van and Taxi Service***

The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) provides public transportation service for the state of Rhode Island. Within Westerly, service is limited but there is some service extending to Wakefield. Park-n-Ride service operated by RIPTA provides transport between the Westerly rail station and Providence. Cab service and paratransit service are also available.

### ***3.7.4 Rail Service***

The Westerly Train Station, renovated in 1999, provides Amtrak service. Currently (2009) the station is being studied for potential commuter rail service to New London, CT (17 miles away) and to Providence (44 miles away). Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) has determined that the location of the Westerly station is within a ten minute walk of the surrounding downtown area and is, therefore, suitable as a commuter rail station. One potential problem with expanded service is the lack of parking; there are only 37 parking spaces at the station.

Residents who provided input to the development of this Comprehensive Plan agreed that commuter rail accessibility should be a high priority for transportation improvements within Westerly. Community members and transportation agencies have also indicated that beyond commuting to and from work, rail service would provide a convenient means of transportation between Westerly and the soon-to-be-completed rail station at T.F. Green Airport.

A commuter rail system with extensions to South County stations is in the planning stage and discussions with the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) and Amtrak have taken place. Connecticut's Shoreline East rail runs to New London and there has been interest in extending the Shoreline East to Westerly. One major barrier, however, is the series of drawbridges along the path where boat and train traffic intersect. Shoreline East, however, is currently planning renovations to



all stations of their line. This stretch of rail from New London to Providence is the only part of the New York to Boston corridor not connected by commuter rail.

### ***3.7.5 Air Service***

The Westerly State Airport is state-owned and operated by the Rhode Island Airport Corporation to serve the aviation needs of Westerly and nearby communities. The airport serves private and corporate aircraft and New England Airlines which provides important commercial passenger and cargo service between Westerly and Block Island. Recreational flying is the most frequent activity at the airport; however, corporate and business activity and training and flight instruction are also supported at the airport. In the summer, the airport serves seasonal residents and vacationing visitors in addition to its regular year-round commercial and general aviation traffic. The Draft Rhode Island State Airport System Plan dated September 2008<sup>1</sup> estimates that Westerly State Airport in 2006 had 9,900 enplanements and 15,400 operations. Enplanements are defined as the number of passengers boarding departing flights and operations are defined as the total number of takeoffs and landings.

### ***3.7.6 Water Access for Boaters***

Boats can be launched during the operating season at the Westerly marina, which is free to all Westerly residents and is operated under a lease agreement between the owners of the marina and the town. Another free boat launch area with parking for boat trailers is the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management facility located on Main Street. There are several other marinas on the Pawcatuck River where boat ramps are available for a fee. Westerly has had a Harbor Management Plan under development for some time and its successful completion should help manage the growing activity within the Pawcatuck River and Little Narragansett Bay.

### ***3.7.7 Bicycle Travel***

RIDOT has conducted studies of a shoreline bikeway that would include roadways within the towns of Charlestown and Westerly. The roadways would be signed as “shared roadways” to alert drivers that the roadway is to be shared with bicycles. The plan has not yet been implemented.

### ***3.7.8 Findings and Implications***

- Shared use of driveways ought to be considered for adjacent uses to minimize impacts to traffic flow currently experienced as a result of numerous access points along short stretches of roadway.
- Extension of commuter rail to Westerly should be encouraged.
- Improvements to the existing Westerly Train Station are part of state transportation plans. Additional parking is needed to support these plans.
- Innovative methods to address parking issues in town are needed.
- According to the Rhode Island State Airport System Plan as adopted in September 2011, Westerly State Airport enplanements (the number of passengers boarding departing flights) are expected to increase by 2.5 percent per year through 2030. Therefore, it is important to the Town that measures necessary to ensure continued safe and efficient airport operations are implemented.

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<sup>1</sup> The Rhode Island State Airport System Plan was adopted in September 2011.



### 3.8 Historic and Cultural Resources

Westerly was incorporated as a town in 1669 and over the years it has remained a hub of commerce and recreation in southern Rhode Island. The abundance of historic resources has not gone unnoticed. In 2002 the town was designated one of the “Dozen Distinctive Destinations” which are selected each year by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to reflect “unique and lovingly preserved communities in the United States.”

#### 3.8.1 Districts and Neighborhoods

The core of Westerly is approximately bounded by the Pawcatuck River between Margin Street and the Stillman Avenue Bridge on the west; Canal Street and the Amtrak rail tracks on the North; Tower Street, Granite Street, and Franklin Street on the east; and Wells Street and Beach Street on the south. Westerly also has a collection of distinct villages which provides a glimpse into the town’s historic past whether they are commercial centers, coastal communities, or mill towns. These villages and districts are listed below and identified on Figure 2-1.

**Table 3-6 Villages and Districts**

|             |                |            |
|-------------|----------------|------------|
| Avondale    | North End      | Watch Hill |
| Bradford    | Potter Hill    | Weekapaug  |
| Misquamicut | Shelter Harbor | White Rock |

There are six neighborhoods in Westerly that are listed as Historic Districts on the National Register of Historic Places: Bradford Village, Main Street, North End, Watch Hill, Westerly Downtown, and Wilcox Park. In addition to historic districts, there are eight structures and sites in the town which have been listed individually on the National Register. These are: Babcock-Smith House, Flying Horse Carousel, Former Immaculate Conception Church (now George Kent Performance Hall), Lewis-Card-Perry House, Nursery Site RI-273, U.S. Post Office (Broad and High Streets), Westerly Armory, and Weekapaug Inn.

#### 3.8.2 Cultural Resources

There are a variety of non-profit cultural institutions and events which are important to the community and its tourist industry. Performing arts include the Chorus of Westerly which has programs year round in its concert hall and a Summer Pops concert in Wilcox Park; the Granite Theater; and the Shakespeare-in-the-Park series of summer plays. The Westerly Armory houses the Westerly Band which is the oldest civic band in the country. The town contributes to several of these programs and sponsors other music programs in the summer. Westerly is also home to artists, many of whom live and work in the state-recognized Westerly Arts District. Special benefits are provided to artists and art facilities at these specially designated areas of downtown Westerly.

The Memorial and Library Association of Westerly owns and operates the Westerly Public Library, itself built as a Civil War memorial, and the surrounding 14-acre Wilcox Park. Although Westerly is a medium sized community, its library collection is the second most actively used in the state. Wilcox Park which was designed in 1898 is perhaps the single most character-generating feature in Westerly’s downtown and is the site of numerous community activities throughout the year.



### *3.8.3 Findings and Implications*

- The town is rich in historic buildings and districts that help to create its character. Opportunities exist for preservation and careful development of these districts and structures.
- The town has successfully taken advantage of the Community Development Block Grant program to restore and enhance historic areas and sites. This approach could be more widely employed.
- Within Westerly is an Arts District that provides tax incentives for artists who live and work in Westerly and for gallery spaces in the District. Utilization of this program can support redevelopment.

## 4.0 *The Future*

### 4.1 *Vision and Values: Where do we want to be in 2025?*

As stated in Chapter 1, this Comprehensive Plan envisions Westerly as a friendly and safe community that has preserved its quality of life for all generations, protected its distinctive heritage and extraordinary cultural and natural resources, and dedicated itself to fiscally-sound government. Looking forward to 2025 evokes an image of what the future holds:

- Westerly of 2025 will be a unique and special place, retaining its distinctive neighborhoods, history, traditions and natural beauty, while growing in a way to meet its residents' needs for a vibrant place to live, raise and educate families, and work.
- Westerly will have contained sprawl, and the development of housing and commerce will have been thoughtfully managed to meet the needs of residents of all generations and to promote a prosperous economy.
- Downtown Westerly will be a premier center for people, culture and transportation, and will be well-connected to its shoreline and inland neighborhoods through programs and services of community-wide interest.
- Westerly will have secured its water supply for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and carried out its extensive programs of infrastructure revitalization including water, sewer and stormwater management systems and upgrading of town facilities.
- The shoreline, Pawcatuck River, salt ponds and greenspace will remain Westerly's trademark, carefully managed to sustain their uses while preserving their health and natural beauty for future generations to enjoy.

In developing this Comprehensive Plan, an important set of values evolved which guided the creation of the Plan and will shape the future landscape of Westerly. These values are described below to assist residents in understanding the Plan and to suggest what they should anticipate during its implementation.

1. *Protect the integrity of the town's existing zoning map with limited changes to density.* The current districts represent the actual development patterns in the community which the Plan intends to preserve.
2. *Focus on redevelopment/revitalization of commercial/industrial districts and traditional residential neighborhoods.* It is important to Westerly citizens to retain the town's traditional character and heritage while discouraging further commercial sprawl.
3. *Preserve Westerly's sense of place, physical character, open space and natural resources.* Public meetings and surveys clearly indicate the highest priority of Westerly residents is protection of our waterfront, beaches, water quality and environmentally-sensitive lands.
4. *Maintain critical infrastructure as a high priority, especially including our roads and our water and sewer systems.* Water supply protection and potential expansion of the town's wastewater treatment plant are highly important issues for future consideration.



5. *Limit automobile traffic through support of commuter rail service and establishment of local pedestrian and bicycle networks.* Westerly can take full advantage of its strategic location between Boston and New York, exceptional transportation assets, and extraordinary local recreational opportunities.
6. *Promote the quality and vitality of locally-owned businesses.* This includes enhancing the commercial diversity of the town and providing more local well-paying jobs for our residents.
7. *Encourage a range of viable housing options for all income and age groups.* It is to Westerly's advantage to retain as residents younger professionals and families who represent our future and retiring seniors who have devoted their lives to the community.
8. *Support critical institutions such as the school system, the hospital, the library and the strong volunteer spirit that exists in Westerly.* People choose to live where their children get a good education, where they have access to quality healthcare, and where they can participate in and contribute to community activities.
9. *Implement the Plan while maintaining the sound financial condition of the town.* We cannot fail to implement the Plan due to financial constraints but neither can we jeopardize the financial condition of our town.

A crucial ingredient in Westerly's future is the town's continued reliance on volunteers and not-for-profit organizations to provide important services such as fire protection, ambulance and other emergency services, and the public library. The Plan specifies the need for increased coordination between the town and the organizations that provide these services for mutual benefit. The Westerly Hospital, in addition to being the largest employer in town, provides important medical services to the region. Its continuing success is critical to the future of the town and therefore, there are several actions in the Plan directed towards increasing support for the hospital.

This chapter of the Plan includes a discussion of the long-term priorities of our community and how they are supportive of and compatible with *Land Use 2025: Rhode Island Land Use Policies and Plan*; a Build-Out Analysis which describes the town's capacity for development under the existing zoning ordinance; a Future Land Use Plan which demonstrates in text and graphic form the future strategy and land use policy of our town including patterns of development and conservation; and critical observations on the importance of financially supporting the Plan implementation and protecting the future integrity of the town's financial position.

## 4.2 Long-term Priorities

### 4.2.1 Introduction

This section discusses the town's longer-term priorities, in the context of important historical accomplishments, and the compatibility of the Comprehensive Plan with *Land Use 2025: Rhode Island Land Use Policies and Plan*.

Westerly has been at the forefront of regulating land use and providing infrastructure to accommodate land development. In 1897, the town of Westerly purchased the private Westerly Water Works to create its own municipal water system. By the mid-1920's, acting on authority from the Rhode Island General Assembly, the town adopted a Zoning Ordinance. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, it substantially increased the area served by municipal sewer disposal and upgraded its treatment plant not only to increase its capacity but to enhance the level of treatment. In the last decade, the town has substantially revised its Zoning Ordinance and other land use



regulations while acting flexibly to accommodate development it has deemed desirable. Throughout the public outreach activities conducted in support of this Plan, citizens overwhelmingly expressed love for Westerly while stressing the importance of continually improving its infrastructure and related public services. Consistent with these sentiments, this Plan's vision for the future is grounded in respecting Westerly's history and traditions, cherishing its natural resources, and thoughtfully managing growth and development.

The four goals articulated in *Land Use 2025: Rhode Island Land Use Policies and Plan* provided a constant touch-point for development of this Comprehensive Plan and the longer term view of Westerly's future. These goals are:

- Goal 1: Build the Greenspace and Greenways System
- Goal 2: Achieve Excellence in Community Design
- Goal 3: Develop First-class Supporting Infrastructure
- Goal 4: Implement the Vision

### ***4.2.2 Build the Greenspace and Greenways System***

#### ***4.2.2.1 Protect Open Space and Important Land Features***

The town must employ and support a full array of public, charitable, private and multi-sector strategies to acquire and/or otherwise protect areas of open space and important natural land features.

Since the adoption of Westerly's existing Comprehensive Plan, substantial areas of open space for preservation and recreational use have been acquired or otherwise protected. Charitable entities such as the Westerly Land Trust and Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation have been active and successful in both acquiring ownership of open space land or development rights. The town of Westerly has acquired multiple sites for well head and aquifer protection and for recreational use.

The town and its charitable organizations will continue to use traditional means of property acquisition, but it must also continue to employ other techniques to achieve its objectives without direct expenditure of taxpayer and water-user revenue. Especially in uncertain economic times, federal, state and local government contributions to such acquisition and protection efforts are likely to be reduced. The lessons of Westerly's experiences will need to be employed to continue the success of the past, preserve the images and appearance of Westerly, and yet allow sustainable vibrant growth.

An example of public-private-charitable sector collaboration is Champlin Woods at Winnapaug Pond which preserved 134.5 acres of unique land features, a 2,100 foot long undisturbed scenic roadscape and tree canopy, and completed the preservation of a 7,800 foot wide prehistoric land formation. Under local and state land use regulations, the 173.09 acre site had the capability of being divided into 88 building lots including up to 17 lots along Shore Road (Scenic Route 1A), each with its own driveway cut and the emasculation of the canopy. The Westerly Land Trust and the private Newbury Development Corporation partnered in the acquisition of the site with the joint objective of achieving development of the site at a density otherwise permitted but confining the area of development and disturbance to 38.6 acres and preservation of the remaining acres. The project approval includes 60 two-bedroom homes, and a 171 room congregate care facility, which



approximates the number of bedrooms which would have been built in an 88 lot conventional subdivision.

The Town Council of the town of Westerly accommodated this “win–win development” (see Providence Sunday Journal, March 13, 2005) by:

- adding “assisted living/congregate housing” to the uses allowed under its “Large Parcel Alternative Development” Zoning Ordinance provision;
- amending its Comprehensive Plan to clarify the appropriate locations for assisted living/congregate housing; and
- adopting an amendment to the town’s sewer district to allow the site to be serviced by public sewer based upon testimony that absent the amendment, the on-site disposal of septic wastewater would require a much larger area of development.

The Zoning Board granted the required special use permit and the Planning Board granted Development Plan Review approval.

The Rhode Island Department of Transportation financially contributed to the Westerly Land Trust for the scenic roadway preservation aspect. The state Coastal Resources Management Council agreed to review the project based upon the total bedroom count analysis rather than the number of “dwelling units”.

The use of “cluster-subdivision” regulations have been used to permit the same number of residential building lots on a site at a reduced size while protecting land along the Pawcatuck River in Bradford and land and the scenic vista across Spring Pond on Watch Hill Road. The use of the “multifamily dwellings” provisions of the Zoning Ordinance by other developers, also in conjunction with the Westerly Land Trust, has significantly contributed to the Land Trust’s land holdings along Mastuxet Brook.

Conservation Subdivision regulations should be adopted as well as other Smart-Growth options. All town entities involved in land use regulations and permitting should be cognizant of newer land-use regulatory alternatives, consider their implementation and be flexible in the use of their powers so that the development which it authorizes also protects important greenspace and greenway systems. Pro-active approaches at the earliest stages of the regulatory process rather than a reactive response later can be valuable in achieving the town’s desired objectives.

#### ***4.2.2.2 Connect Greenspace, Recreational Land and Commercial Areas by Means and Methods other than Automobiles***

As noted above, while more needs to be accomplished great strides have been achieved in the protection of open space and important land features. However, there has been little progress in access to these areas by means other than roadway and automobiles. If the last twenty years has created a culture of open space acquisition and protection, the challenge of the next twenty years is the creation of a greenspace system of connections and access other than by roadways and automobiles.

The public outreach which occurred in relation to this plan shows widespread support for the creation of bike and walking trails and paths. The state of Rhode Island’s initiatives to create such facilities for the East Bay and South Kingstown–Narragansett are wildly successful. While the Plan



calls for the establishment of such facilities generally, it prioritizes the creation of a discrete specific scenic coastal loop.

The *Land Use 2025* plan encourages the identification of an urban services area in which higher density infill development and revitalization or retrofitting are encouraged. The Westerly Plan responds by identifying an Downtown Revitalization Area which principally encompasses the Downtown Commercial Districts and some surrounding HDR-6 and HDR-15 district land, including properties within and adjacent to the core of Westerly as described in paragraph 3.8.1. The area is serviced by municipal water and sewer. Pedestrian sidewalks (of various state of repair) exist in most of the Downtown Revitalization Area, while streetscapes are less prevalent and spotty. Its entire western boundary is the Pawcatuck River. Wilcox Park is the most prominent greenspace feature in this area. This Plan commits to focus redevelopment, revitalization and growth initiatives in this historic urban center, while preserving the best attributes of the traditional core of Westerly that contains vital residential, municipal, commercial, institutional and school activities. The approximate area identified in this Plan is not co-extensive with the entire area referenced in the state *Land Use 2025* plan because of the critical necessity of focusing Westerly's resources on the highest potential and most important opportunities for redevelopment and revitalization.

While there is a public access boat launch on this portion of the river, there are no other public recreational space or dock spaces to permit water travel. There is no portion of the river where an adjacent riverwalk is present.

Our identification of the need for connecting the various uses in the area other than by automobile is confirmed by the recent article "Making Suburbia More Livable", [The Wall Street Journal](#), Saturday-Sunday, September 19-20, 2009, which highlights:

"Retrofitting typically invokes creating a compact walkable community".

### ***4.2.3 Achieve Excellence in Community Design***

The Zoning Ordinance adopted in 1998 to implement the existing Comprehensive Plan initiated Development Plan Review by the Planning Board for all uses other than one- and two-family homes. It also introduced General Development Standards and Development Standards for Particular Uses. In the interim 11 years some refinements and additional provisions have been added.

Most significantly, in October 2006, Development Standards for the Shore Commercial-Watch Hill (SC-WH) zoning district were added. The entire area of that district is within the Watch Hill Historic District which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Zoning Ordinance provides standards which are intended to reflect the character-generating elements of the particular historic district for the Planning Board to apply in its Development Plan Review of proposed development in the area.

There are five other Westerly neighborhoods listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Excellence in design requires a study of each of these areas and the development and adoption of standards for each as was achieved in the SC-WH district.



The town Charter has also been recently amended to establish an Architectural Review Board. The scope of its reach and the standards to be applied are yet to be determined by the Town Council. As in other first time initiatives the limits of public support and acceptance will be a challenge; however, the new charter provision offers a new opportunity to contribute to excellence in community design.

The character of Westerly is already substantially defined by existing structures and uses, many of which are facing challenges which require redevelopment, renovations and revitalization.

Again our recent experiences should be a strong signal that Westerly officials appreciate both the value and challenges presented and will work cooperatively to achieve preservation of our iconic images while using the means at their disposal to accommodate the financial challenges such undertakings present.

The Town Council joined with conservation groups in a leap of faith to allow the “preservation, restoration and/or replication” of the Ocean House, the last of the multiple historic oceanfront hotels to survive in the Watch Hill area. It adopted specific development standards developed by the Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission to be incorporated in any such effort together with a significant review process by third-party engineers and architects at the owner’s expense. Simultaneously, it accommodated the financial challenges by permitting a number of two-bedroom luxury suites to be incorporated in the hotel structure which may be sold under a condominium arrangement under Rhode Island law. The same provisions were subsequently extended to the Weekapaug Inn, another historic hotel located on an “estuarine embayment” in the Weekapaug area.

Despite the significant economic downturn the Ocean House project is proceeding as a replication of its “historic kernel” with near unanimous acceptance of its accuracy.

The successful revitalization of the historic Westerly downtown area and the enhanced development of the Downtown Revitalization Area which encompasses and surrounds it will require the same spirit of cooperation, creativity and flexibility. Transforming the appearance of the Route 1 commercial corridor from “everywhere US Route 1” to a distinctive, inviting, safe, commercial, professional and residential area will similarly require new efforts including incentives to property owners.

#### ***4.2.4 Maintain and Develop First-class Supporting Infrastructure***

Achieving the future vision of Westerly requires that the town maintain and develop a first-class supporting infrastructure in critical areas such as water, sewer, stormwater and facilities. While outside of their direct control, municipal officials must also lead the coordination, planning and implementation of private utilities (electricity, telecommunications and gas) with respect to capacity and supply, as the town addresses its own infrastructure issues, including maintenance, repair and replacement. This effort also requires ongoing coordination with adjoining communities. The repair and extension of public sidewalks is also essential to connecting the areas of greenspaces and greenways of the town. Again, giving priority to the Downtown Revitalization Area and the streetscapes (hardscapes and softscapes) is essential for achieving the future vision for this area.



#### ***4.2.4.1 Water***

The availability of a high quality and abundant municipal water supply for industrial and domestic use and fire suppression is essential. This requires protection of our water supply sources. Continued concentration on the maintenance and enhancement of the water distribution systems is essential. The prioritized program of assessment and replacement of the mechanical and distribution elements of the system needs to remain at the forefront.

#### ***4.2.4.2 Sewer***

In addition to the public health aspects of the municipal sewer system, the availability of such a properly functioning system enables development to be concentrated and greenspace to be protected. For example, the amount of land preservation at Champlin Woods at Winnapaug Pond could not have been achieved without the availability of municipal sanitary sewers. If the Downtown Revitalization Area is to be the centerpiece of future development, adequate treatment capacity and transmission line integrity are necessary. Similarly, adequate sewer capacity is essential to economic development, redevelopment and retrofitting of underutilized structures and property.

For Westerly, the first step toward achieving a first-class system is a firm commitment to eliminate the excessive stormwater and groundwater infiltration into the system. The construction of the additional components of the plant to its design capacity and identification of areas of system expansion need to be part of a periodically updated facilities plan. This will enable the town to be ready to obtain any and all federal, state and/or private funds available for such purposes. It will also allow these needs to be part of the town's prioritized long-term capital investment program.

#### ***4.2.4.3 Stormwater***

The stormwater collection system in the Downtown Revitalization Area has experienced several failures in the recent past. A study followed by a systematic prioritized program to address this issue is immediately necessary. Implementation of new federal mandates with respect to stormwater management and its costs need to be understood and planned for. The construction of the Watch Hill drain project which is in permitting and completion of Phase II of the Misquamicut drain project are essential to the future vision.

#### ***4.2.4.4 School Facilities***

Meeting all the public works and private utility infrastructure needs outlined above are necessary for the future vision of Westerly. However, if the town neglects to achieve a first-class educational system by providing adequate, clean and comfortable school facilities offering superior educational opportunities for each child, the vibrant place to live, work, raise and educate a family cannot be achieved. Our current demographic data and projections suggest that the town is at a unique time to reassess its student mix and needs, educational objectives and delivery systems.

#### ***4.2.4.5 Solid Waste Disposal***

Capacity at the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RICCC) Facility in Johnston is limited and the State encourages cities and towns to reduce waste generation and recycle more to meet the 35 percent recycling goal and 50 percent diversion rate. Because municipalities are charged by the ton to dispose of municipal waste at the facility, reducing waste brought to the landfill saves the community money. Less waste in the landfill reduces the likelihood of environmental impacts such as groundwater contamination. Many of the everyday items that are thrown away from homes, schools, hospitals, and businesses can be recycled or reused, including product packaging, grass



clippings, furniture, clothing, bottles, food scraps, newspapers, and appliances. The town needs to reduce waste generation and increase recycling in not only municipal operations, but also among residents and businesses.

Currently, the number of households that use the transfer station is not tracked and commercial and residential trash is collected in the same fashion. According to RICCC, the actual total solid waste received from Westerly yields a recycling rate of 14 percent and an overall diversion rate (all items diverted from the landfill) of 29 percent, below State goals.

### ***4.3 Build-out Analysis***

#### ***4.3.1 Capacity Analysis***

A potential capacity analysis was performed based on the current zoning. A capacity analysis estimates the amount of development that could occur based on a set of assumptions. This analysis will only analyze the amount of new development that can occur on developable vacant and agricultural land. It is impossible to determine the amount of development that would occur as a result of infill and redevelopment.

The analysis was performed using a Geographical Information System (GIS) program. The zoning layer was combined with the land use layer so that the resulting layer had attributes of both existing land use and existing zoning districts. A constraints layer was created consisting of wetlands with a 50 foot buffer, conservation areas, 200 foot buffer from the shoreline and the Pawcatuck River, and a 100 foot buffer from all other streams. These areas were considered undevelopable. The constraints layer was combined with the zoning/land use layer and the constraint areas were removed. The GIS program calculated the areas of each polygon within this combined layer. The resulting database was then brought into an Excel spreadsheet.

At this point, the areas could be summarized by land use and zoning district. Only the vacant and agricultural land uses were summarized. Based on the zoning district, calculations were performed on the resulting areas to establish the possible number of residential units, commercial space, and industrial space that could be developed. Residential units are based on the minimum lot size permitted in each of the residential zoning districts. The commercial districts did not specify a floor area ratio or maximum building coverage. Maximum impervious surface was used to control the size of buildings. This analysis assumes that half of the impervious surface specified in the Westerly Zoning Ordinance is used for building and half for parking. The summarized areas were multiplied by half of the impervious surface percentage to get the amount of commercial space. A similar assumption was used for industrial districts for the same reason. Both the commercial space and the industrial space assume only one floor of development.

The methodology used for this analysis has limitations. First, it assumes that there is an unlimited demand for land and development and it builds out to the maximum extent possible. There is the assumption that all parcels created can be divided perfectly into the overall area. In order to compensate for this, 20 percent of the area was deducted from the summarized areas. This analysis is designed for comparison and not as a prediction of concrete numbers.

#### **Residential Districts**

The following calculations were used for residential districts:

$$\text{RR-60} \quad \text{Area} \div 60,000 = \text{Residential Units}$$



- LDR-43 Area÷43,000 = Residential Units
- LDR-40 Area÷40,000 = Residential Units
- MDR-30 Area÷30,000 = Residential Units
- MDR-20 Area÷20,000 = Residential Units
- HDR-15 Area÷15,000 = Residential Units
- HDR-10 Area÷10,000 = Residential Units
- HDR-6 Area÷6,000 = Residential Units
- Any District in CRMC SAMP Area÷87,120 = Residential Units

Commercial Districts

The following calculations were used on commercial districts:

- P-15 (30.0%) Area = Commercial Space
- NB (30.0%) Area = Commercial Space
- HC (37.5%) Area = Commercial Space
- DC (50.0%) Area = Commercial Space
- DCII (25.0%) Area = Commercial Space
- SC-G (27.5%) Area = Commercial Space
- SC-WH (27.5%) Area = Commercial Space
- MC (37.5%) Area = Commercial Space
- GC (37.5%) Area = Commercial Space

Industrial Districts

The following calculations were used on industrial districts:

- GI (35.0%) Area = Industrial Space
- LI (25.0%) Area = Industrial Space
- ORAT (32.5%) Area = Industrial Space



The results of the capacity analysis are summarized in Table 4-1 below. The numbers presented are rounded off to the nearest 10 units or 1,000 square feet.

**Table 4-1 Capacity Analysis Results**

|                    | Zone         | Area (ft <sup>2</sup> ) | 20%<br>Adjusted<br>Area (ft <sup>2</sup> ) | Residential<br>Units | Commercial<br>Space (ft <sup>2</sup> ) | Industrial<br>Space (ft <sup>2</sup> ) |
|--------------------|--------------|-------------------------|--|----------------------|--|--|
| <b>Residential</b> | RR-60        | 45,068,446              | 36,054,757                                 | 600                  |  |  |
|                    | LDR-43       | 1,312,901               | 1,050,321                                  | 20                   |  |  |
|                    | LDR-40       | 13,737,692              | 10,990,154                                 | 270                  |  |  |
|                    | MDR-30       | 6,568,835               | 5,255,068                                  | 180                  |  |  |
|                    | MDR-20       | 4,077,160               | 3,261,728                                  | 160                  |  |  |
|                    | HDR-15       | 3,486,356               | 2,789,085                                  | 190                  |  |  |
|                    | HDR-10       | -                       | -  | -                    |  |  |
|                    | HDR-6        | 1,441,137               | 1,152,910                                  | 190                  |  |  |
|                    | CRMC<br>SAMP | 15,177,223              | 12,141,778                                 | 140                  |  |  |
| <b>Commercial</b>  | P-15         | 426,819                 | 341,455                                    |                      | 102,000                                |  |
|                    | NB           | 114,427                 | 91,542                                     |                      | 27,000                                 |  |
|                    | HC           | 668,106                 | 534,485                                    |                      | 200,000                                |  |
|                    | DC           | 6,733                   | 5,386                                      |                      | 3,000                                  |  |
|                    | DCII         | 154,699                 | 123,759                                    |                      | 31,000                                 |  |
|                    | SC-G         | 80,193                  | 64,154                                     |                      | 18,000                                 |  |
|                    | SC-WH        | 43,908                  | 35,126                                     |                      | 10,000                                 |  |
|                    | MC           | 14,450                  | 11,560                                     |                      | 4,000                                  |  |
| GC                 | 29,472       | 23,577                  |  | 9,000                |  |  |
| <b>Industrial</b>  | GI           | 585,174                 | 468,139                                    |                      |  | 164,000                                |
|                    | LI           | 20,308                  | 16,247                                     |                      |  | 4,000                                  |
|                    | ORAT         | 4,612                   | 3,690                                      |                      |  | 1,000                                  |
|                    |              |                         |  | <b>1,750</b>         | <b>404,000</b>                         | <b>169,000</b>                         |

Source: Westerly Planning Department, peter j. smith & company, inc.  
 Note: Data from HDR-10 is included in the CRMC SAMP area.



### ***4.3.2 Build-out Analysis Implications***

#### ***4.3.2.1 Residential***

The build-out analysis estimates that under the existing Zoning Ordinance approximately 1,750 additional residential units can be built in Westerly.

The Plan recommends that the residential zoning districts within the town remain essentially unchanged. This recommendation considers the rate of growth which has occurred in the ten-year period following the adoption of the current Zoning Ordinance map and text. During the ten-year period of January 1, 1999 to December 31, 2008, 1,266 residential dwelling units were constructed. The ordinance marked a significant departure from prior ordinances which had allowed, as of right, duplex buildings including units with unlimited bedrooms, on lots which did not require twice the land area as required for a single-family home. There was significant community concern expressed with respect to these provisions. The ordinance responded with provisions which limit the districts in which duplex buildings are allowed; require a special use permit in the residential district in which they are allowed; and require twice the land area as necessary for a single-family home. The result is that in the ten-year time period only 31 duplex buildings with 62 units were built.

Simultaneously, the 1998 ordinance adopted new regulations with respect to multi-family dwellings. The regulations allow for the number of bedrooms in a multi-family complex to reflect the predicted number if the site were built out as single-family homes, but limits each individual unit to two bedrooms. Studies suggested the number of school age children would be relatively small in such complexes. The number of such two-bedroom units constructed in the ten-year period is 207, or more than 16 percent of new housing stock.

Despite the increase of 1,266 dwelling units, during this ten-year period the total public school population in the community has dropped from 3,605 on October 1, 1999 to 3,232 on October 1, 2008 – a more than 10 percent decline. Current enrollment suggests this trend will continue. For example, the second grade class in 1998-99 was the largest in the school district with 306 students. This class was the 2008-09 senior class. In contrast, the 2008-09 second grade class had only 243 students or 20 percent fewer students than the second grade class a decade earlier.

It is therefore deemed not necessary to further change the zoning districts or the regulations applicable within each district to control future growth. Comparison of the estimated additional residential unit capacity (1,750) and the historic building growth over the last ten years (1,266) demonstrates a relatively small capability for growth under the traditional “cookie cutter” subdivision development approach. This Plan’s recommendation with respect to generally not increasing density is a deliberate attempt to responsibly limit such further development. However, the Plan encourages and provides accommodation for future growth including density intensification within the Downtown Revitalization Area, where public utilities and infrastructure are in place. Mixed-use and in-fill development together with revitalization and retrofitting of existing properties are all strategies identified for this area.



When 2010 federal census information is available and disaggregated, town officials must address the future implications for schools and school children and for services required by an aging overall local population. Important questions must be thoroughly examined such as – are more households seasonal and occupation therefore not reflected in the census, or has the average occupancy in year-round homes declined?

#### ***4.3.2.2 Commercial***

The build-out analysis estimates a total of 404,000 square feet of commercial space can be added in the town. This includes commercial space ranging from the less intrusive Neighborhood Business (27,000 sq. ft.) and Professional (102,000 sq. ft.) to Highway Commercial (200,000 sq. ft.).

This Plan recognizes that Westerly has historically been the regional center for commercial and professional services. Sufficient area exists to continue in that role.

It is important to understand that there is no large vacant tract of land remaining in the Highway Commercial district. Rather there are only 19 vacant parcels within this district, the largest being approximately four acres. Several parcels do not have access to public sewers which is an additional constraint on development. This Plan specifically provides that this district should not be enlarged. It is intended that this recommendation and revised development standards for new commercial development on vacant property will control commercial sprawl. By such limitation it is also intended that renewed interest in renovation, restoration and redevelopment of existing Highway Commercial properties will be achieved.

#### ***4.3.2.3 Industrial***

Available industrial land is extremely limited. However, areas which have the infrastructure available for industrial development but which are also isolated enough to be compatible with existing residential development are not apparent.

There are three large industrial parcels zoned General Industrial or Light Industrial that are currently operated as granite quarries. These parcels – in White Rock, on Old Hopkinton Road, and in Bradford – have been excluded from this analysis since they are unlikely to be developed for other uses during the timeframe of this Plan.

Town officials necessarily must therefore encourage the expanded use of underutilized industrial facilities provided that doing so is consistent with environmental considerations.

The lack of industrial land also means that Westerly must participate in regional economic development initiatives. This recognizes new job opportunities in the region not only provide job opportunities for Westerly residents but also for the larger regional population. Such opportunities contribute to the vibrant commercial and professional service sectors in Westerly.



## ***4.4 Future Land Use Plan***

### ***4.4.1 Introduction***

The key theme of this Plan is balance. The Plan recognizes the need for both preservation and development and the importance of establishing a balance between them. Included among its goals are maintaining Westerly's character and heritage and preserving open space and irreplaceable natural resources. The Plan also calls for providing for economic development and for the homes, jobs and services needed by current and future generations. It acknowledges the need for balance among the various aspects of Westerly which include a home to year-round and seasonal residents, a short-term tourist destination, and a regional service and retail center. The goals, objectives, and actions enumerated in the next chapter provide specific detail on how balance among these competing needs can be achieved through careful planning.

In this section some of the major characteristics of the Comprehensive Plan are reviewed with an emphasis on how the goals, objectives, actions, and policies will affect future land use, transportation, infrastructure, and services and with a focus on the first five years of plan implementation. The Plan should be viewed as a whole because, taken together, its various elements reinforce each other and present a comprehensive and coherent view of Westerly's future. After the priorities presented in the five-year implementation plan are achieved, another group of actions will be developed for the next five years. In this way, Westerly will move steadily and incrementally towards achieving the long-term goals and objectives outlined in this Comprehensive Plan.

The Future Land Use Plan map is included as Figure 4-1 and its details are discussed in the following paragraphs.

### ***4.4.2 Zoning***

Changes in current zoning districts are proposed in the Plan. They include the following:

- land in the Industrial District between the Pawcatuck River and railroad is protected by a conservation easement, therefore, it will be rezoned Open Space and Recreation.
- an Airport Protection Overlay District will be developed as required in RIGL § 1-3-5(1), which states that municipalities shall establish an airport hazard area to specify appropriate land uses with restricted heights for buildings and trees.

There will also be changes in land use regulations and land use. Changes under the scope of the Plan include the following:

- current zoning allows growth in residential land use, as covered under the build-out analysis in the previous section of the Plan
- this growth could result in the loss of some land that is used for agriculture or is currently open space (for example, forest land) because the underlying zoning allows for residential or commercial use
- modern development methods such as conservation development and cluster development should be used to protect the most valuable aspects of development sites  
additional increases in residential density may be allowed in certain specified areas (for example, the urban core) and as incentives for certain kinds of development (for example, affordable housing) except in these areas, intensification of residential zoning will not be allowed



- regulations required for the Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) near the salt ponds will be included in the Westerly zoning ordinance
- redevelopment of existing commercial and residential areas is encouraged
- extension of the highway commercial zone will be prohibited
- zoning provisions in commercial and residential areas may be needed to encourage additional green space and improve aesthetics

### ***4.4.3 Residential***

#### ***4.4.3 Residential***

As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, the build-out analysis for Westerly under current zoning indicates a capacity of an additional 1,750 housing units. Most of these new units would likely be located in the Potter Hill area which is currently zoned LDR-40 and east of the Dunn's Corners-Bradford Road on the east side of town where land is zoned RR-60. There is a large area of vacant land in the center of town north of Route 1 and east of Route 78 that is zoned RR-60 but much of this land is either protected by conservation easements, is wetland, or has high water tables making development problematic.

The Plan calls for adoption of conservation development regulations for major subdivisions as an alternative subdivision methodology. All applications for major subdivisions would be required to include cluster development, conservation development, and conventional subdivision as alternatives for consideration by the Planning Board. Increased use of conservation development approaches would help to preserve open space and natural resources.

A new zoning ordinance is called for that prevents any increase in present zoning density except in land that is within the Downtown Revitalization Area. This area, shown on Figure 4.1, has both public water and sewer services. Other areas of Westerly outside the Downtown Revitalization Area where increased residential density could occur are areas that are currently zoned RR-60 but which could be rezoned to LDR-40 if the municipal water system is extended to those areas. An exception is that there can be no increase in zoning density in the RI Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) Salt Ponds Special Management Area.

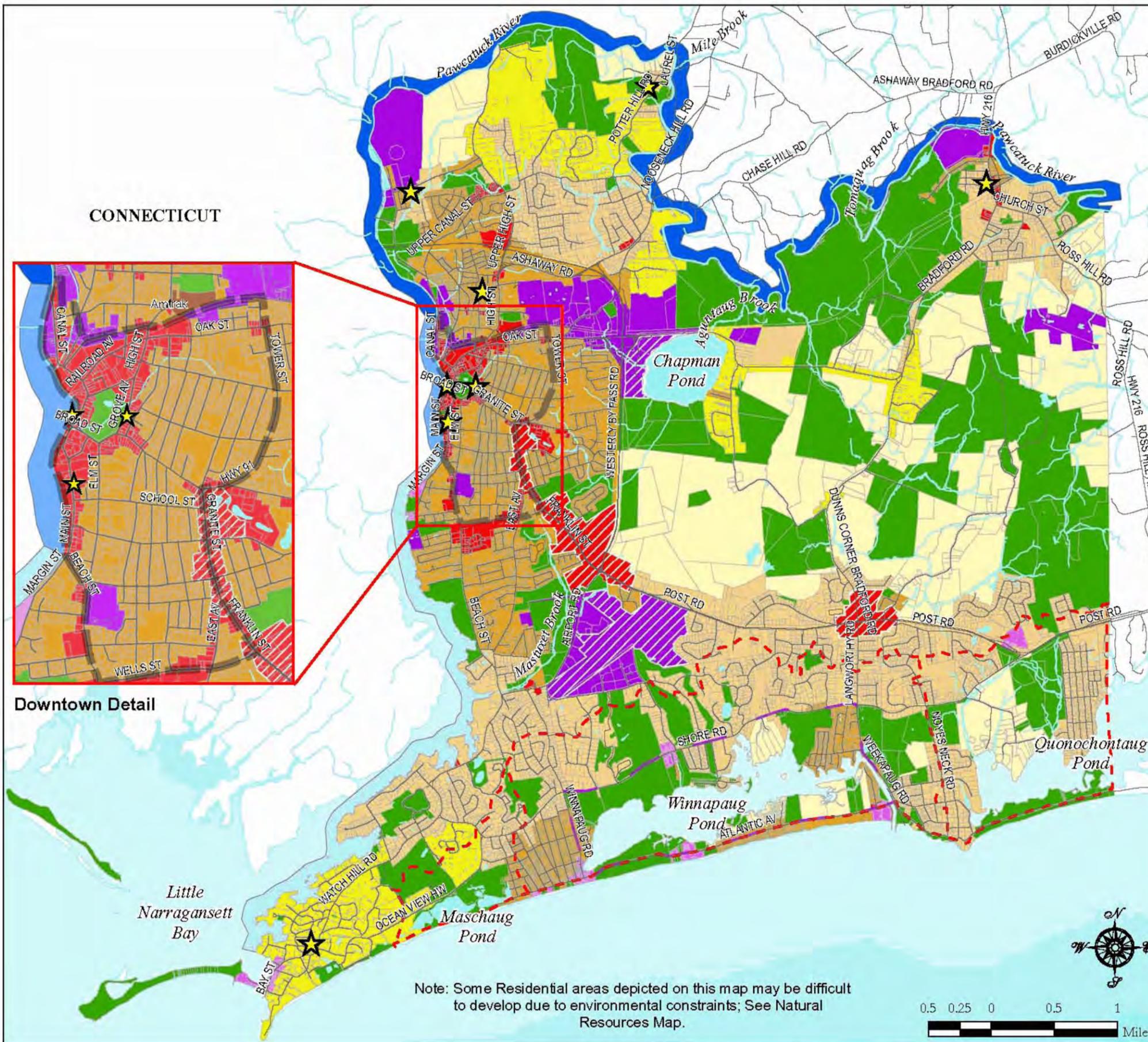
The Plan proposes an increase in urban and community green space through street trees; landscaping and buffers in commercial, industrial, and multi-family developments; and selective park development. This could be accomplished through public and private projects and revised development standards.

#### ***4.4.3.1 Affordable Housing***

To meet the State's mandated affordable housing goal of 10 percent, the Town has established several strategies. While a summary of each is provided here, details can be found in Appendix I.

#### ***Strategy #1 Inclusionary Affordable Housing***

This strategy relies on private sector development, and affects single-family subdivisions, multi-family residential developments, and mixed residential and commercial projects. This market-based tool for producing affordable housing without using tax dollars has produced thousands of housing



### Legend

**Land Use**

- Rural Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Commercial
- Highway Commercial Limit
- Shorefront Commercial
- Industrial
- Airport/State and Town Facilities
- Recreation/Agriculture/Permanent Open Space

**River Corridor**

- Upstream - Charlestown to Stillman Ave Bridge
- Middle - Stillman Ave Bridge to Margin Street
- Downstream - Margin St to Watch Hill

**Other Designations**

- Salt Pond Special Area Management Plan Areas
- ★ Areas for Historic Development Standards and Mill Village Revitalization
- Downtown Revitalization Area
- Bike Path
- Ponds
- Streams
- Roads

map source: RIGIS, Town of Westerly GIS, CDM

## Comprehensive Plan Town of Westerly, Rhode Island

Figure 4-1  
Future Land Use  
November 2009



Note: Some Residential areas depicted on this map may be difficult to develop due to environmental constraints; See Natural Resources Map.

This map is intended as an illustrative guide and may be suitable for general planning purposes; however, it is not adequate for legal boundary or regulatory interpretation.





units across the United States. Its purpose is to integrate affordable housing in development throughout town by requiring developers to set aside a certain percentage of housing units as LMI units.

The Town has implemented components of this strategy, including adoption of the Affordable Housing Ordinance (S260-50), Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance (S260-50.2), Comprehensive Permit Ordinance (S260-50.3), and the Municipal Affordable Housing Fund (S260-50.4).

The Town recognizes the need to reassess the Inclusionary Zoning and Comprehensive Permit ordinances. Both ordinances allow for added density, but there is a concern that this might adversely impact neighborhoods as well as environmentally sensitive areas. Guidelines may assist in creating high-quality developments.

The Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance provides alternatives to the on-site development of affordable units through payment-in-lieu of development and construction or rehabilitation elsewhere. The payment-in-lieu of on-site development formula needs to be revised to provide for the actual cost of developing required units and guidelines for off-site development need to be adopted.

The Comprehensive Permit Ordinance allows density bonuses in eight residential zones, ranging from 20 percent to 66 percent. As mentioned, these density increases may result in significant impacts on existing residential neighborhoods. Further the streamlined process requires the Town to approve projects pending federal or state review. This practice concerns the Town, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas and the impact of added density of natural resources. The Town would also like to consider adding provisions for payment-in-lieu of on-site development and allowance for off-site development to the ordinance.

Also part of this strategy are to make amendments to the Town's ordinances that would allow mixed residential and commercial uses to ensure that housing is a secondary or ancillary use to diversify the tax base and preserve employment opportunities. Recommendations include:

- A minimum of 20 percent affordable housing component be mandatory in residential units that are proposed as part of a commercial development (meeting the zoning ordinance's definition of "mixed use")
- A maximum net floor area ratio (FAR) be established for mixed residential and commercial use projects, such that retail and commercial uses always remain paramount

The Town should evaluate the feasibility of an Affordable Housing Overlay District that offers the incentives discussed as well as opportunities for others. It should be linked with all affordable housing strategies.

#### Strategy #2 "Scattered Site" Affordable Housing by Non-Profit and Public Agencies

As site-specific opportunities present themselves, non-profit organizations and public agencies should be encouraged to pursue affordable housing throughout the entire community. Affordable housing advocates refer to this as "scattered site" development.

#### Strategy #3 Historic Mill Adaptive Reuse and Mill Village Revitalization

In 2010, the Town adopted its Historic Mill Overlay District. This District allows for the redevelopment of existing mills into multi-use structures to encourage renovation and adaptive re-



use of historic mills and neighboring multi-family dwellings. In addition to promoting affordable housing, these zones could also accommodate commercial, retail or office use where such mixed-use is deemed appropriate. The objective is to retain the historic architecture while adapting obsolete or underutilized structures 21<sup>st</sup> Century needs.

Westerly has historic mills located in the North End, White Rock, Potter Hill, and Bradford, the latter two fall within the Historic Mill Overlay District. Each mill is surrounded by numerous multi-family dwellings originally constructed to house mill employees. It is fair to say that each neighborhood has seen better days, and that a decline in the town's manufacturing base has led to a deterioration of housing stock surrounding these mills. The Town is attempting to counteract this trend, and in May 2003 adopted a revitalization plan for the North End neighborhood. This plan encourages for-profit affordable housing development, since it is expected that at least 80 percent of the units would actually be sold to middle income households who must qualify for conventional mortgages, and thus reestablish a property-owning middle class in a neighborhood now dominated mostly by absentee landlords. It is believed a similar strategy would also work in White Rock, Potter Hill, and Bradford.

#### Strategy #4 – Downtown Arts District Affordable Housing Demonstration Project

R.I.G.L. 44-18-30B allows tax incentives for artists who live and work in specific districts, including downtown Westerly. By developing a demonstration project providing affordable housing specifically geared toward low-income artists, Westerly has an opportunity to use the incentives provided by the General Assembly to attract artists into its downtown area. The town should approach the statewide artist's housing coalition and encourage them to investigate opportunities that may exist in downtown Westerly's Downtown Arts District, including available properties, grant funding and tax incentives, focusing on potential live/work spaces over existing storefronts. Although Arts District housing would not create a large number of affordable housing units since it is confined to a five-block downtown area, it would contribute significantly to Westerly's ongoing downtown revitalization.

#### Strategy #5 – Local Rehabilitation Tax Credits, Revolving Loan Fund & Accessory Affordable Apartments

By bundling together three related programs, it is believed the incentive to individual property owners would be substantial enough to result in creation of additional affordable housing units. A revolving loan fund can be used to assist low and moderate income home owners and tenants. Accessory affordable apartments as a secondary to a principal residential or commercial use would not substantially alter the exterior appearance of an existing structure or generate much additional traffic. This type of dwelling unit should be permitted throughout the entire town.

#### Strategy #6 -- Support the Washington County Community Development Corporation

The Washington County Community Development Corporation provides and promotes decent affordable housing to low- to moderate-income people within Washington County and surrounding towns. Westerly works with this non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation for the purpose of creating affordable housing to meet regional needs.

#### Strategy #7 – Neighborhood Revitalization

Neighborhood revitalization is a comprehensive approach that involves more than affordable housing and should include land use, infrastructure, urban design, and community building. Addressing each neighborhood with a Neighborhood Revitalization Plan can guide reinvestment.



Targeting affordable housing into these neighborhoods can be part of these plans as an effort to rehabilitate existing structures and increase rental units for LMI eligible households. This strategy can be linked with adaptive mill reuse.

To begin the revitalization process, the Town recommends the following be explored:

- Develop incentives to target the development of LMI units in the Town's traditional neighborhoods as rental units.
- Rehabilitate key landmark structures as important stabilizing factors for traditional neighborhoods and important additions to the LMI supply.
- Use payment-in-lieu funds to restore houses in traditional neighborhoods.
- Expand the role of the Westerly Housing Authority to oversee the development, ownership, and management of rehabilitated properties in traditional neighborhoods.
- Pool and coordinate funding from all housing sources, including Comprehensive Permits and Inclusionary Zoning ordinances, Community Development Block Grant funds, Neighborhood Opportunities Program and Building Better Communities Program Funds, and HOME funds, as well as ongoing Keepspace projects.

#### Future Projections

The difficult economic conditions of the State and region are still impacting development in Westerly. Projecting future housing development beyond five years is difficult because how soon Rhode Island will recover economically relies on many factors. Home sales remain low and unemployment rates high; and the State continues to struggle with its budget. All these factors influence overall public and private investment in the State and its communities, including the housing market. However, it is anticipated that the economy will improve sometime in the near future and development opportunities and interest in the region will increase.

Table 4-2 lists the projected number of LMI units that could be created by the Town's proposed affordable housing strategies for the next 20 years. It is estimated that these strategies will create 528 LMI units, exceeding the 492 required to meet the 10 percent goal. The use of Inclusionary Zoning accompanied by the Comprehensive Permit Ordinance to expedite review is currently a very popular strategy for developers that are proposing projects. Scattered site development by non-profit and public agencies is also a strategy being use. It is anticipated that those projects that have received approval and/or are under construction will be completed by the end of 2017 and the Town will be able to apply these 89 units to their 10 percent goal at the end of the 2012 to 2017 period.

Other strategies the Town sees as viable over the next five-year period are rehabilitating multi-family buildings and focusing on targeted neighborhoods. These two approaches are related and it is expected that programs will be developed in the near term. LMI units created under these approaches will be relatively small at first, but will increase as the programs grow. One to two LMI units per year for each of these programs are projected. This will result in an additional 99 LMI units created by 2017.



**Table 4-2 Projected Number of LMI Units Created by Proposed Strategies, 2011 to 2032**

| Development Strategy   | Projected units (2004-2011) | Actual Units Created (2004-2011) | 2012-2017 | 2017-2022 | 2022-2027 | 2027-2032 | Total Units by Strategy |
|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Inclusionary Affordable Housing                              | 102                         | 12                               | 67        | 40        | 40        | 40        | 199                     |
| Scattered Site Housing by Non-Profit / Public Agencies       | 50                          | 34                               | 22        | 20        | 20        | 20        | 116                     |
| Historic Mill Adaptive Re-Use / Mill Village Revitalization  | 8                           | -                                | -         | 11        | 11        | 6         | 28                      |
| Downtown Arts District Affordable Housing Project            | 5                           | -                                | -         | 5         | 0         | 0         | 5                       |
| Elderly Housing Complexes                                    | -                           | -                                | -         | 15        | 25        | 25        | 65                      |
| Rehabilitate Multi-Family Buildings (Revolving Load Program) | -                           | -                                | 5         | 10        | 10        | 10        | 35                      |
| Accessory/Upstairs Apartment Program                         | -                           | -                                | -         | 5         | 5         | 5         | 15                      |
| Municipal Tax Credits  | -                           | -                                | -         | 10        | 10        | 10        | 30                      |
| Neighborhood Revitalization                                  | -                           | -                                | 5         | 10        | 10        | 10        | 35                      |
| Total LMI Units Added  | -                           | 46                               | 99        | 126       | 131       | 126       | 528                     |
| Running Total of LMI Units (2004)                            | 517                         | 551                              | 650       | 776       | 907       | 1,033     | -                       |

For strategies that are currently being used to develop LMI units, it is estimated that these rates will continue near the same level. Because the Town proposes revisions to the Inclusionary and Comprehensive Permit ordinances, projections are slightly lower for these strategies in the five-year intervals beyond 2017. Similarly, it is anticipated that non-profit and public agencies will continue to invest in LMI production in Westerly at a consistent rate.

The remaining strategies are not expected to begin at least until 2017. Mill redevelopment is estimated to create 28 LMI units over the full 20-year timeline. Interest in redevelopment of historic mills is greatly influenced on incentives offered locally and statewide, and it is anticipated that they could be available in five to ten years. The rate at which these units will be developed will vary, but for the purpose of this plan, it is assumed that they will be phased in by the developer, one mill project per five-year period. The Downtown Arts District is a demonstration project and would only be applicable to one five-year period (assumed 2012 to 2017). Small elderly housing complexes are proposed, but until demand is quantified, it is expected that one project per five-year period will be proposed. An accessory and upstairs apartment program can be a challenge to get participation, so a conservative assumption of one LMI unit per year is projected. Finally, a municipal tax credit program will be drafted in the next five years. This program could develop two LMI units per year, depending on the incentives offered.

#### 4.4.4 Commercial and Industrial

The Plan prohibits the expansion of the existing highway commercial district and encourages redevelopment of existing under-utilized commercial space, particularly in the Route 1 corridor. The Plan also calls for the town to work with existing commercial property owners in the Route 1 corridor to enhance landscaping and green space through incentives such as reduction in required parking area.

Reuse and revitalization of existing commercial and residential space as an alternative to new development is one of the themes of the Plan. For example, it calls for modification of zoning land use regulations to support adaptive reuse of vacant and underutilized industrial and commercial



buildings and associated areas in town. Examples of these areas are the mill villages of Bradford, White Rock, and Potter Hill.

The Plan envisions that the downtown area will continue to be a focal point for commercial, arts, and civic activities. Walking to and through the downtown area will be facilitated by providing good pedestrian connections through densely-built neighborhoods and non-residential districts through public projects with a goal of having a town-wide network of connected sidewalks and trails, a portion of which will be near downtown. The Plan also calls for obtaining financial support from multiple sources for revitalization of downtown and its surrounding areas (zones DC1 and DC2) and modification of land use regulations to complement this effort. The Plan calls for the town to promote the use of the Westerly Downtown Arts District tax benefits and encourages cultural and performing arts as bases for economic development. The Plan recognizes the need to coordinate with Stonington on issues of mutual interest which include Pawcatuck River quality and downtown Westerly-Pawcatuck revitalization.

Westerly has been a tourist destination for years and the Plan has several actions that will help sustain the tourism and hospitality industry. It calls for a program to proactively work with owners of existing lodging facilities to encourage rehabilitation and updating of facilities to extend tourist use. There is also a need to evaluate the mix of accommodations in Westerly to determine whether the markets for seasonal vacationers, year-round visitors, and business travelers are being adequately served. The Plan calls for an ordinance that accommodates the needs of hospitality and tourism industry employers to provide housing for their seasonal employees while not discouraging hiring of local residents and protecting the interests of affected neighborhoods. The Plan asks for a review and revision of the planned resort development provision in the Westerly zoning ordinance as a strategy to promote longer stays by visitors while limiting impact on local neighborhoods.

No changes to the existing industrial zones are proposed in the Plan except to encourage revitalization and reuse of existing industrial space.

#### ***4.4.5 Open Space and Recreation***

Protecting and enhancing Westerly's natural resources and open space is an important goal of the Comprehensive Plan. Land that is currently protected open space will remain protected. The Plan calls for adding to existing open space through development of a systematic prioritized plan, including potential funding alternatives. The use of conservation development as described above under residential land use will also preserve some existing open space and important natural resources while allowing for additional housing units in Westerly. The Plan also contains several actions related to stormwater and sediment control and an action regarding use of renewable energy, all of which will help protect the environment.

An important plan recommendation regarding recreation is construction of a safe bike path that is a loop along Atlantic Avenue to Weekapaug Road to Shore Road, west to Crandall Avenue and back to Atlantic Avenue. The bike path route is illustrated in Figure 4-1. This loop is envisioned as the first phase of a larger Westerly Bike Trail System with additional parts of the system, such as one in Watch Hill, to be designed in future years. Two of the town's existing golf courses (Weekapaug Golf Club and Shelter Harbor Golf Club) are protected by conservation easements and will remain in the recreational land use category. The Misquamicut Club is not formally protected by easements but is expected to remain as a golf course for the foreseeable future. The Winnapaug Golf Club, the



only public golf course in Westerly, is currently zoned commercial recreation which appropriately accommodates its current use.

#### 4.4.6 Special Districts

Salt Ponds Overlay District: The Plan calls for adoption of the salt ponds overlay district specified by the CRMC Special Area Management Plan (SAMP). The SAMP is designed to protect the quality of water in the ponds which provide important habitat for wildlife and are key natural features of Westerly's shoreline. The SAMP specifies maximum density, setbacks, buffers, requirements for nitrogen-reducing technologies for onsite wastewater treatment, and CRMC participation at an early stage of municipal land-use regulatory review. The area included within the Salt Ponds SAMP is illustrated in Figure 4-1.

River Corridor Overlay District: The Plan calls for development of a river corridor overlay district within an updated zoning ordinance. Westerly needs a special river corridor overlay zoning district because the Pawcatuck River is vital to the continuing prosperity of the town. First, the river is connected to and provides water to the underground aquifer that is the primary source of water supply for Westerly. Second, land fronting on and near the Pawcatuck River in the downtown area will have an important role in continuing renovation and revitalization in Westerly. Third, the river provides important recreational opportunities for residents and tourists and affects the quality of habitat for fish and shellfish and other wildlife in the river and in Little Narragansett Bay.

The proposed river corridor overlay district (illustrated in Figure 4-1) is composed of three parts:

- Area for protection of drinking water: The upstream section of the proposed district extends along the river from the Westerly-Charlestown border to the Stillman Avenue Bridge in Westerly. The primary purpose of zoning in this section is to protect Westerly's water supply. Zoning language for this district should be similar to or identical with aquifer protection areas. Industrial and commercial activities such as gas stations or industrial activity that uses chemicals that might get into the river in the case of a spill should not be allowed within a certain distance of the river's edge. The width of the overlay district in this area will be determined after appropriate topographical and geologic studies to delineate areas of overland and underground flow of water to the river.
- Area where redevelopment is encouraged for purposes of economic development: The middle section of the river in Westerly's downtown area, from the Stillman Avenue Bridge to Margin Street, is an area for potential redevelopment including enhanced use and access to the river. Development projects tied to enhanced use and access to the river are encouraged.
- Area where current use is preserved: The most downstream section of the district stretches from Margin Street to the northern boundary of the Shore Commercial – Watch Hill (SC-WH) zoning district. Zoning in this area should stay as it currently is with residential property and marinas along the river and the commercial area in Watch Hill. Any intensification of use or increased development of this section should be discouraged.

Development Standards for Historic Districts: The Plan calls for the town to continue to enact development standards for historic districts that are appropriate for each district, similar to what was adopted for the Shoreline Commercial Watch Hill zoning district. Current designated historic districts (see Figure 2-1) are Bradford Village, Main Street, the North End, Westerly Downtown, Wilcox Park, and Watch Hill.



#### ***4.4.7 Transportation, Infrastructure and Services***

Because future land use is necessarily linked to transportation, infrastructure, and services, major actions in the Plan related to these issues are included here for completeness.

An important set of recommendations in the Plan relate to improving the area around the train station and increasing its use. The Plan specifies increasing parking, safe access, and redevelopment planning at and near the railroad station. The Plan also calls for more daily stops by Amtrak at the Westerly station and support for commuter rail, both of which could improve rail connections for visitors and residents. A second major transportation recommendation is to initiate a parking shuttle system for under-utilized or new parking space at major retailers. A shuttle bus loop would include transportation centers (train station and airport), the river and shoreline business districts, and beaches. This shuttle could have a beneficial effect on businesses in Westerly and relieve traffic congestion, particularly during the summer season.

In regard to infrastructure, the Plan asks the town to pursue all available state and federal funding to enlarge the wastewater treatment plan capacity consistent within its existing design capacity. Within current capacity, the Plan specifies that any expansion of sewer service should be carefully prioritized based on environmental protection and economic development. The town has made significant improvements to the water distribution system in recent years; however there is still a need to improve the security of the water system. The Plan also supports continuation of the program to meet other infrastructure needs such as roadway maintenance, sidewalk replacement, and stormwater control.

In recent years, Westerly has constructed a new middle school and begun renovation of the high school. The final phase of the high school renovation is currently underway. The importance of a strong school system to the town is recognized by the Plan, which calls for an annual public meeting including the Town Council and the School Committee to review progress in improving student performance. In regard to post-high school education, the Plan calls for recruiting the Community College of Rhode Island and/or some other educational institution to provide local businesses and residents with educational and vocational opportunities.

Economic development is an important goal of the Plan. A key mechanism to facilitate economic development in the town is to make sure that someone is always paying attention and considering the effects of all town decisions on Westerly's economic climate. The Plan calls for adopting an economic development strategy focused on job creation and preservation that provides for specific responsibility within the town government for implementation. The Plan also mandates an annual review of effectiveness as measured by types and numbers of jobs in Westerly.

#### ***4.4.8 Policies***

In addition to the goals, objectives, and actions, the Plan also includes nine policies which cut across plan goals, objectives, and actions and specify practices that will help ensure an effective and efficient town government and a sound economic foundation for the Plan. Selected examples of these policies include the need for commercial growth and progress; clarifying responsibilities for land use within the town government; establishing a person within the town government to oversee all aspects of economic development; continuing development of the town's new Geographic Information System (GIS); and regular review of the status of implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.



## ***4.5 Facing Challenges: Investing in our Future***

To achieve our vision for 2025, the town must anticipate challenging issues related to conservation and development and ensure the specific actions called for in the Comprehensive Plan are implemented to meet those challenges. While support from the state of Rhode Island is necessary, a disciplined local management approach and investment policy that recognizes the community's critical priorities will be essential to the success of this Plan. The town's annual budgeting and capital improvement plans must direct appropriate financial resources – consistent with the Plan and the town's overall needs – to the highest priority initiatives. We cannot fail to implement the Plan due to financial constraints but neither can we jeopardize the strong financial condition of our town.

### ***4.5.1 Town Financial Position***

The town of Westerly enjoys a very good financial rating by both national rating agencies, Moody's and Standard & Poor's. Currently, long-term debt is about \$80,000,000 which is comfortably within the limit specified by state statute and supported by Westerly's gross land assessment value. The debt repayment schedule is consistent for the town's rating with 54 percent being retired over the next ten years. The town's strong cash position of approximately 10 percent of its annual operational budget also supports this rating. By most indicators, Westerly is in a competitively advantageous financial position relative to the rest of the state.

One fundamental long-term consideration is the stability of real estate values, now in question, which could reduce the debt capacity. There is also appropriate caution about expanding future long-term obligations given the state's existing employment situation and Rhode Island's unfriendly tax structure. Like many other cities and towns, both Westerly and the state of Rhode Island need to upgrade local infrastructure, roads, bridges, and buildings, some of which have been neglected in prior years. Additionally, there is a potential need to upgrade and expand the town's sewer capacity. Phase II of the school facilities renovation program is underway, but not yet funded in the amount of the \$30,000,000 bond referendum approved by voters in November 2008. Debt service for Phase II will have to be accommodated in the town budget beginning with FY 2011. These are all important considerations for future investment and financial planning.

### ***4.5.2 Cost of Plan Implementation***

It is important that the necessary focus and resources be applied to implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. This should be considered in the context of current Planning Department staff priorities. A detailed examination of all recommended action items indicates that approximately a 50 percent effort of one full-time equivalent (FTE) position should be allocated over the initial five-year Plan period to spearhead the Plan implementation. This ongoing focus appropriately resides in the Planning Department and should be accommodated within the current scope of departmental duties. In addition to day-to-day activities, this effort would include the responsibility for reporting progress against individual action items to the Town Manager on a regular basis.

Funds are necessary to support analyses, research, technical studies and possibly expert consulting advice in areas needed to ensure successful implementation of the Plan. To that end, it is recommended that a specific line item for "Comprehensive Plan Implementation" be incorporated in the municipal operating budget and funded in the amount of approximately \$25,000 annually to



be deployed based on priorities identified during the annual budget process. This amount should be adjusted year-to-year depending on the priority of projects planned for each budget year.

Certain recommended actions will require major expenditures and capital investment and should also be included in the annual budgeting process. Examples of such actions would be: planning and construction of the Westerly bike path; development of a parking/shuttle system; expansion of parking and redevelopment at the train station; continued funding for roadway drainage and sidewalk repair; and potential expansion of the wastewater treatment plant. Many of these initiatives that strengthen infrastructure may be candidates for grants which have the effect of increasing the value of the town's investment.

To assist in the Plan implementation effort, it is recommended that the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee continue to meet at least semi-annually to assess status of recommended actions, advise on priorities, and identify emerging issues and trends that may impact the Plan.



## 5.0 *Implementation Plan*

### 5.1 *Introduction*

The effectiveness of the town of Westerly Comprehensive Plan will be highly dependent on the timeliness and quality of the Plan implementation. The Plan is designed to be implemented over three main phases:

- Some major actions should be accomplished in a relatively short period of time since they will signal early success and are critical to the overall implementation of the Plan;
- Many other actions should be implemented over time because they may require further study, coordination with others, or involve the commitment of financial resources beyond the current year budget;
- A few actions are long-term in nature and will require continuous attention over the entire term of the Plan.

At the heart of this implementation is a well-defined structure of goals, objectives and actions developed based on broad public input and a thorough inventory of the town's assets and characteristics. The 10 goals give clear direction as to the type and extent of conservation and development the community desires. The objectives further define the goals and provide the foundation for development of actions required to realize the goals. Goals and objectives are long-term and may take a decade or more to achieve. Fifty-seven specific actions have been developed to help reach the goals. The actions are focused and measurable and are generally intended to be accomplished within five years. Responsibilities and timeframes have been assigned to the actions to make it possible to track progress and determine degree of completion, ensuring accountability for future success of the Plan. It is anticipated that new actions will be developed during the required five-year plan update to replace those that have been successfully implemented.

### 5.2 *Goals, Objectives and Actions*

More than 700 Westerly residents provided their thoughts about Westerly and its future to the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee through public meetings, focus groups, letters, email messages, and a statistically-based mail survey. Several points were very clear from this input; these points form the basis of the goals, objectives and actions:

- People love Westerly. They describe it as a friendly and safe community and a good place to raise a family.
- People are concerned that Westerly's character is in danger of changing too quickly because of development pressure. They want some development but without urban and commercial sprawl.
- Westerly's natural resources are extremely important to its citizens. They say development should be planned to preserve the waterfront, beaches, and water quality, and to protect open space.



- Traffic and transportation issues need to be addressed. Citizens are concerned with the volume of traffic and traffic safety, the need for additional parking in town, and pedestrian safety. Residents want access to commuter rail service and more bike lanes and trails.
- Westerly must continue to maintain its infrastructure including water and sewer systems, roads, sidewalks, and schools.
- The town should promote specific strategies for economic development, quality education and affordable housing for all ages and income levels.

### **GOAL 1**

*Protect and enhance Westerly's **natural resources** including open space, the river and shoreline, wildlife habitat, and watershed, for purposes of future enjoyment, recreation and assurance of a sustainable water supply.*

- Objective 1. Protect and conserve the natural beauty of Westerly's setting and natural environment.
- Objective 2. Ensure natural resources considerations are paramount in any development proposal.
- Objective 3. Foster awareness of and protect and develop appropriate access to the community's natural resources for enjoyment and recreation.
- Objective 4. Promote land use decisions that encourage the protection and sustainable use of the town's natural resources.
- Objective 5. Support a comprehensive groundwater protection strategy including conservation of Westerly's existing groundwater sources and investigation of future potential sources.

### **GOAL 1: ACTIONS**

- Action 1.1 Modify the zoning code to adopt a Salt Pond overlay district as specified by the CRMC Special Area Management Plan (SAMP).
- Action 1.2 Enact an ordinance that prevents any increase in zoning density (down-zone) except (A) land within the Downtown Revitalization Area which already has water and sewer service and (B) areas that are outside the Downtown Revitalization Area and also outside the RI CRMC Salt Pond Special Area Management Plan which could be rezoned from zoning district designation RR-60 to LDR-40 but only after the municipal water system is extended to those areas.
- Action 1.3 Adopt conservation development subdivision regulations applicable to major subdivisions as an alternative subdivision methodology. Require all applications for major subdivisions to include cluster development, conservation development, and conventional subdivision as alternatives for consideration by the Planning Board.
- Action 1.4 Develop a systematic prioritized plan, including potential funding alternatives, to acquire open space for water resources protection, habitat protection, and water-dependent recreation and to protect farmland, forests and natural landscapes.



- Action 1.5 Construct a safe bike path that is a loop along Atlantic Avenue to Weekapaug Road to Shore Road west to Crandall Avenue and back to Atlantic Avenue. This is Phase I of the Westerly Bike Trail System; additional parts of the system (Phase II) shall be planned during implementation of Phase I.
- Action 1.6 Enforce stormwater control and sediment-control ordinances; require best management practices (BMP's) to control non-point pollution; monitor the effects of these steps; and modify pollution-prevention actions as necessary.
- Action 1.7 Extend sediment and erosion-control ordinances to include single and two-family houses as part of the building permit process.
- Action 1.8 Develop a river corridor overlay district and incorporate it in an updated zoning ordinance.
- Action 1.9 Provide all local land-use decision makers at least one in-service program each year addressing new developments related to contemporary preservation and conservation issues for their consideration and possible implementation.
- Action 1.10 Amend the Zoning Map to show lands that are permanently protected open space.

**GOAL 2**

*Promote **transportation strategies** that ensure the safe and efficient flow of traffic within Westerly to enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors.*

- Objective 1. Explore strategies that support access to shore, river, and local businesses.
- Objective 2. Provide safe alternatives that reduce dependency on motor vehicles and promote a healthy lifestyle.
- Objective 3. Ensure that traffic safety and efficient flow are necessary considerations in approval of any development plan.

**GOAL 2: ACTIONS**

- Action 2.1 Revise development standards in the zoning ordinance to require shared access to roads for new and redeveloped projects.
- Action 2.2 Enact an ordinance that regulates the use of the unimproved portion of town streets except for right of access and other permitted uses to reduce unsightly appearance and dangerous traffic situations.
- Action 2.3 Revise the intersection of Airport Road and Winnapaug Road to improve safety and traffic flow.
- Action 2.4 Continue to fund a program of roadway drainage and sidewalk replacement and maintenance.



- Action 2.5 Provide good pedestrian connections through densely-built neighborhoods and non-residential districts through public projects and revised development standards. Work towards a town-wide network of connected sidewalks and trails.

### **GOAL 3**

*Pursue development of Westerly's strategic geographic location and extraordinary **transportation assets** – its rail station, airport and river – as focal points for revitalization and economic development, in balance with the needs of the affected neighborhoods.*

- Objective 1. Facilitate the ease of rail travel.
- Objective 2. Promote and enhance use of waterways for recreation and transportation.
- Objective 3. Study and implement strategies by which the Westerly airport increases the town's economic development opportunities.

### **GOAL 3: ACTIONS**

- Action 3.1 Work with state and federal officials to increase parking, safe access, and redevelopment planning at and near the railroad station.
- Action 3.2 Work with Amtrak and elected officials to increase the number of daily stops in Westerly during the summer months. Publicize the availability of current Amtrak service.
- Action 3.3 Initiate a parking shuttle system for under-utilized or new parking space at major retailers for a shuttle bus loop that will include transportation centers (train station and airport), river and shoreline business districts, and beaches.
- Action 3.4 Develop and implement a strategy that better utilizes the existing capacity of Westerly State Airport and adjacent Airport Industrial Park to enhance commercial business activity and increase job opportunities.
- Action 3.5 Work with RI, MA and CT state agencies and federal officials to support commuter rail service for Westerly.
- Action 3.6 Adopt an Airport Protection Overlay District to control potential airport hazards in the vicinity of the airport.

### **GOAL 4**

*Ensure **economic development** strategies are focused on helping locally-owned businesses prosper and encourage entrepreneurial activities.*

- Objective 1. Seek diversity and sustainability in the economy.
- Objective 2. Focus economic development efforts on helping locally-owned businesses prosper.



- Objective 3. Encourage entrepreneurial activities, especially those with potential for bringing well-paying, knowledge-based jobs to the community.
- Objective 4. Attract and retain high quality workforce and employment opportunities.
- Objective 5. Provide quality public school education and expand opportunities for all residents seeking higher education and technical skills for job advancement and greater earning potential.

#### **GOAL 4: ACTIONS**

- Action 4.1 Adopt an economic development strategy focused on job creation and preservation that provides for specific responsibility within town government for implementation. Provide for annual review of effectiveness as measured by types and numbers of jobs in Westerly.
- Action 4.2 Modify zoning and land use regulations to support adaptive reuse of vacant and underused industrial and commercial buildings and associated areas (for example, mill villages).
- Action 4.3 Obtain financial support from multiple sources for revitalization of downtown and its surrounding areas (zones DC1 and DC2). Modify land use regulations to complement this effort.
- Action 4.4 Recruit the Community College of Rhode Island and/or other educational institutions to provide local businesses and residents with educational and vocational opportunities.
- Action 4.5 Promote the use of the Westerly Downtown Arts District tax benefits and encourage cultural and performing arts as bases for economic development.

#### **GOAL 5**

*Encourage a broad range of **housing** options that meet the needs of all income and age levels and allow citizens to live in, work, retire and contribute to the community.*

- Objective 1. Eliminate substandard and unsafe housing in the community.
- Objective 2. Encourage a broad range of housing options adequate to meet the needs of underserved middle and lower-income and special needs households and individuals.
- Objective 3. Continue support of those organizations that address the short-term needs of the homeless.
- Objective 4. Promote utilization of alternative residential development mechanisms such as conservation development & cluster development which preserve open space and protect important landscape features while creating buffers that enhance neighborhoods.



Objective 5. Support the development of low and moderate income housing that meets local needs, is compatible with surrounding neighborhoods, and is within the capacity of the natural environment.

***GOAL 5: ACTIONS***

- Action 5.1 Review housing and demographic data regularly to determine whether stated goals are being met and revise as necessary to achieve goals.
- Action 5.2 Apply to state and federal housing programs for low- and moderate-income housing rehabilitation and development funds and support efforts of housing groups to secure and use those funds.
- Action 5.3 Accommodate the needs of hospitality and tourism industry employers to provide housing for their seasonal employees with consideration of the potential impact on the local workforce and protection for the affected neighborhoods.
- Action 5.4 Consider additional property tax relief for elderly taxpayers who have made Westerly their primary residence to help them remain in their homes.
- Action 5.5 Develop and implement a program to focus and coordinate affordable housing initiatives and funding as an integral part of Westerly's efforts in neighborhood revitalization and rehabilitation with priority given to existing housing over new construction.
- Action 5.6 Evaluate and revise Inclusionary and Comprehensive Permit ordinances to ensure neighborhoods are not impacted by density bonuses and environmental integrity is not compromised.
- Action 5.7 Revisit zones that allow mixed-use development to incorporate Floor Area Ratios, such that retail and commercial uses are primary and residential uses are secondary.
- Action 5.8 Consider the feasibility of an Affordable Housing Overlay District that offers incentives and links to other affordable housing strategies.
- Action 5.9 Continue to work with non-profit and public agencies in creating affordable housing opportunities in Westerly.
- Action 5.10 Work with mill owners to incorporate affordable housing units in proposed redevelopment projects.
- Action 5.11 Develop a demonstration project that incorporates affordable housing incentives for the Downtown Arts District and is geared towards low-income artists.
- Action 5.12 Adopt a tax credit for property owners undertaking substantial rehabilitation of existing structures and accessory apartments to incentivize the incorporation of affordable housing units.



- Action 5.13 Establish a revolving loan program for renovations of existing residential properties.
- Action 5.14 Evaluate an accessory affordable apartment program that would permit accessory apartments in all of the Town's commercial zones, provided that occupancy is geared towards low and moderate income tenants.
- Action 5.15 Support regional initiatives that promote and create affordable housing, including the Washington County Community Development Corporation.
- Action 5.16 Target neighborhoods for revitalization efforts through the development of neighborhood plans and link implementation with other affordable housing strategies.

**GOAL 6**

*Support an **infrastructure** that balances growth and development with conservation, specifically as related to water, wastewater treatment, solid waste management, energy and communications.*

- Objective 1. Promote approaches to growth management to better conserve infrastructure, land and natural resources.
- Objective 2. Provide wastewater treatment to prevent unsanitary conditions; and carefully prioritize expansion of the service area of the existing plant.
- Objective 3. Consider the investment in infrastructure to foster economic development including water, waste water treatment and well-site development.
- Objective 4. Decrease Westerly's dependence on petroleum-related energy sources through a municipal strategy of conservation and renewable energy generation.
- Objective 5. Upgrade the town's technological capabilities across all school and municipal departments for greater employee productivity and public accessibility.
- Objective 6. Match water demands associated with new development and redevelopment with available capacity.
- Objective 7. Achieve 35 percent recycling and 50 percent diversion rates by reducing solid waste generation and increasing recycling opportunities for municipal operations, residents, and businesses.

**GOAL 6: ACTIONS**

- Action 6.1 Ensure the town's program to reduce groundwater infiltration into sewer lines is supported on an annual basis.
- Action 6.2 Recognize that the existing wastewater treatment plant has a finite capacity as detailed in the December 27, 2007 report by the Beta Group.



- Prioritize any sewer service expansion plans based on environmental protection and economic development, with full consideration of the limits of current capacity.
- Pursue all available state and federal funding to enlarge the wastewater treatment plant consistent with its design capacity.

- Action 6.3 Update land use regulations to address and encourage appropriate renewable energy opportunities.
- Action 6.4 Develop and implement a plan to better protect White Rock #1 well site from the possibility of physical damage or contamination by leaks or accidental spills from motor vehicles.
- Action 6.5 Review the adequacy of security measures (including cameras, lighting, and information technology security) for protection of well heads, pump stations, and water tanks and take appropriate actions.
- Action 6.6 Map the entire stormwater system in concert with the implementation of new GIS capability. Within the next phase of Westerly GIS development, integrate the water, sewer, and stormwater systems into existing GIS coverage.
- Action 6.7 Develop a plan to minimize the effect of drought on public health and safety, economic activity, and environmental resources.
- Action 6.8 Study and develop strategies to address potential sea-level rise, storm surge, and other climate-change impacts on Westerly's infrastructure.
- Action 6.9 Adopt a recycling ordinance to encourage residents and businesses to recycle more to meet state recycling and diversion goals for municipalities.

### **GOAL 7**

*Preserve the **unique character and heritage** of Westerly, the diversity of its historic settlements, and aesthetic qualities of residential and commercial development consistent with our history and culture.*

- Objective 1. Promote aesthetic qualities of residential and commercial development consistent with the town's history and culture.
- Objective 2. Ensure that Westerly's historic districts develop in accordance with superior design that reflects the historic character of each.
- Objective 3. Incorporate design principles where appropriate to improve housing choices, transportation, & commuting availability.
- Objective 4. Respect and support the special character and viewpoints of Westerly's constituent neighborhoods.
- Objective 5. Encourage sustainability.



- Objective 6. Discourage further commercial sprawl and promote alternative approaches to mitigate that which exists through redevelopment.
- Objective 7. Work with land owners and other stakeholders to identify and preserve, as appropriate, cultural, archeological, and historic resources.

**GOAL 7: ACTIONS**

- Action 7.1 Continue to enact development standards for historic districts that are appropriate for each district, similar to what was adopted for the Shoreline Commercial Watch Hill zoning district. Current designated historic districts are Bradford Village, Main Street, the North End, Westerly Downtown, Wilcox Park, and Watch Hill.
- Action 7.2 Protect the structures within existing federally-designated historic districts and other buildings with National Register of Historic Places status with zoning ordinance language similar to that enacted for Watch Hill (260-87.6(B)(5)).
- Action 7.3 Work with existing commercial property owners in the Route 1 corridor to enhance landscaping and green space through incentives such as reduction in required parking area.
- Action 7.4 Develop recommendations for implementation of the Architectural Review Board recently added to Westerly’s Town Charter.
- Action 7.5 Increase and maintain urban and community green space in the built areas of town, particularly through street trees; landscaping and buffers in commercial, industrial and multi-family developments; and selective park development to be accomplished through public and private projects and revised development standards.

**GOAL 8**

*Balance the sometimes competing aspects of Westerly as a **resort community** comprised of four key elements: seasonal homes and residents; a year-round residential community; a short-term tourist destination; and a regional service and retail center.*

- Objective 1. Embrace Westerly’s past and future as a resort community by planning better, managing growth, treating our guests with respect, and encouraging positive visitor experiences.
- Objective 2. Establish a strategy to extend the length of stay of vacationers and tourists, increasing their positive economic contribution to the community and reducing their negative impact on infrastructure and municipal services.
- Objective 3. Encourage development that supports a broad spectrum of seasonal residences throughout the community, providing a range of housing alternatives and value and helping to secure Westerly’s significant seasonal-resident tax base.



- Objective 4. While making the opportunity to enjoy Westerly’s attributes available to tourists and visitors, also protect the interests of local residents and taxpayers in using and enjoying the community’s natural and cultural resources.

**GOAL 8: ACTIONS**

- Action 8.1 Prohibit the expansion of the existing highway commercial district. Encourage redevelopment of existing under-utilized commercial space, particularly in the Route 1 corridor.
- Action 8.2 Review and revise the planned resort development provision in the Westerly zoning ordinance (§260-48) as a strategy to promote longer stays by visitors and tourists while limiting impact on local neighborhoods.
- Action 8.3 Develop a program to proactively work with owners of existing lodging facilities to encourage rehabilitation and updating of facilities to extend tourist use.
- Action 8.4 Evaluate the mix of accommodations in Westerly to determine whether the markets for seasonal vacationers, year-round visitors, and business travelers are being adequately served.
- Action 8.5 Insure that land-use regulations and decision making consider the implications and potential impacts upon the four key elements of our community (tourism, seasonal residents, year-round residents, and regional service and retail) and upon Westerly’s quality of life and economy.

**GOAL 9**

Ensure *institutions* critical to Westerly’s future growth, safety and prosperity are generously supported and sustained.

- Objective 1. Recognize that Westerly’s school system, hospital, the library, and its volunteer ambulance and fire departments are critical to Westerly’s future.
- Objective 2. Ensure future school facility decisions are based on intensive student population forecasts and consideration of the capacity and condition of all current facilities, and operating costs.
- Objective 3. Continue to support the activities of non-profit organizations which contribute to Westerly’s quality of life.
- Objective 4. Support a quality public school system where enhanced performance by students is sought and monitored.

**GOAL 9: ACTIONS**

- Action 9.1 Coordinate grant writing between non-profit institutions and the municipality to leverage and enhance total return and mutual benefit.



- Action 9.2 Complete a comprehensive review of all town annual subsidies to insure that the funds are directed to institutions that address the highest-priority needs.
- Action 9.3 Coordinate and consolidate services between the town and critical institutions, especially those supported by tax dollars to share expertise and achieve economies of scale.
- Action 9.4 Require that the Westerly Town Manager meet at least annually with the Westerly Hospital Board of Trustees to determine what municipal efforts are necessary to support the hospital.
- Action 9.5 Establish and fund an annual appropriation to the Westerly Hospital to assist in reimbursement for uncompensated services for Westerly citizens who were unable to pay, to be reviewed and approved annually during the budget process by the Westerly Town Council.
- Action 9.6 The town's elected and appointed officials should assist the Westerly Hospital and the local medical community in advocating for their needs; for example, achieving parity and equality in private insurance and Medicare/Medicaid rates in comparison with facilities in Rhode Island and southeastern Connecticut and increasing transparency in the contract negotiations processes.
- Action 9.7 Hold an annual public meeting, attended by the Town Council and School Committee to review progress in improving student performance. Review actions underway in the highest-performing school systems in Rhode Island and Connecticut to determine best practices that appear to be working elsewhere.

### **GOAL 10**

*Encourage **regional solutions** that take advantage of opportunities to improve economic competitiveness, infrastructure, transportation, communications and emergency preparedness.*

- Objective 1. Encourage collaboration and cooperation among all neighboring governments and Westerly.
- Objective 2. Promote recognition of the mutual importance of the Pawcatuck River and other shared resources to Westerly/Stonington and other neighboring communities.
- Objective 3. Work in partnership on a regional basis to coordinate future development efforts and ensure appropriate growth patterns which enhance the character of the town.

### **GOAL 10: ACTIONS**

- Action 10.1 Promote coordination with Stonington on issues of mutual interest, for example Pawcatuck River quality, downtown Westerly-Pawcatuck revitalization, shared water systems, the Westerly train station, emergency management, and economic development.



- Hold a joint meeting of the planning departments, water departments, and emergency management officials to identify opportunities for coordination.
- After one to two years of coordination at the staff level, sponsor a public forum to report progress.
- Identify areas where improved coordination between the states of Rhode Island and Connecticut will leverage state and federal funding opportunities.

Action 10.2 Identify resources of the town of Westerly that could be mutually shared and funded with neighboring Rhode Island communities such as has been accomplished with use of the transfer station by both Westerly and Hopkinton.

### ***5.3 Implementation Policies***

The policies for the Comprehensive Plan guide the overall Plan implementation. They are the recommended administrative or management guidelines necessary to facilitate the successful implementation of the Plan. Policies establish the governmental framework for the Plan's actions to be carried out.

- Policy 1. The town's conservation, development and annual and long-term financial choices shall be guided by the basic principle of balancing economic prosperity for all its citizens and preserving its irreplaceable natural and cultural resources.
- Policy 2. Commercial growth and economic progress are important to Westerly's future and should be encouraged in harmony with the town's residential, historic and environmental character.
- Policy 3. The town's ordinances must clearly identify the specific responsibilities of the Town Planner, the Planning Board and the Town Council for developing, implementing and updating the Comprehensive Plan.
- Policy 4. The Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee shall continue to meet at least semi-annually to assess status of recommended actions, advise on priorities, and identify emerging issues and trends that may impact the Plan. The committee shall report, with the Town Planner, to the Planning Board on at least an annual basis.
- Policy 5. The GIS mapping capability currently being developed by the town should be integrated into the Comprehensive Plan process as soon as possible; and the town must continue to allocate adequate resources annually to maintain and improve this capability which is essential to the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Policy 6. There should be a person within town government charged with executing an economic development strategy, leading an aggressive business development effort, and acting as the single point of coordination for all economic development activities in Westerly.
- Policy 7. On an annual basis, the Town Council should convene a meeting of officials of the seven fire districts to discuss fire district issues and activities with implications for the Comprehensive Plan.



- Policy 8. Recognize that implementation of the Comprehensive Plan requires that the town maintain a sound financial condition and that decisions regarding conservation, development, facility construction and maintenance, and infrastructure shall always be evaluated for future financial impact.
- Policy 9. The town shall encourage on a continuing basis the recycling and conservation of energy, water and other environmental resources.

#### ***5.4 Implementation Matrix***

The Plan’s recommended actions are arranged in an Implementation Matrix organized according to each of the 10 goal categories. The matrix is intended as a tool to help manage the Plan implementation. It assigns primary responsibilities, supporting responsibilities, and timeframes to the Plan’s actions. Table 5-1 provides specific definitions of each of these terms. Table 5-2 is the Implementation Matrix itself.

Responsibilities indicated in the Implementation Matrix assume the existing organizational structure of town government and management. It is also anticipated that a revitalized Economic Development Committee will be appointed by the Town Council. Where multiple support committees are named, it is expected that they may be organized as a workgroup to provide advice to the primary responsible party. Where a new ordinance or a change to existing ordinances or funding is required, the Town Council is named as the primary responsible party. It is assumed that the Council will delegate much of the preparatory work to the support individuals or committees. Non-governmental organizations may be involved in implementing some actions; however, the primary and secondary responsible parties named in the matrix are primarily town government entities or appointed boards, commissions and committees.

The matrix consists of 57 actions which comprise the essential core of this Comprehensive Plan: 29 actions are short-term in nature; 25 actions are medium-term; and 3 actions are long-term.





**Table 5-1 Definitions of Implementation Matrix Terms  
Primary and Supporting Responsibilities**

|                       |  |                |   |
|-----------------------|--|----------------|---|
| <b>Responsibility</b> | The “Responsibility” column indicates the position or agency (board, commission or committee) that has the lead responsibility for ensuring the action is carried out. | <b>Support</b> | Most actions require the cooperation of and action by the Town Council, town staff and other local boards and commissions for successful completion; the “Support” column defines those supporting, contributing or approving agencies. |
| <b>Timeframes</b>     |  |                |   |
| ST                    | Short-term (ST) indicates completion within year 1 of Plan approval.   | ST&O           | ST&O indicates initial activity in year 1 and ongoing attention thereafter.   |
| MT                    | Medium-term (MT) indicates completion within years 2 and 3 after Plan approval.  | LT             | Long-term (LT) indicates completion within years 4 and 5 after Plan approval.   |

| <b>Responsibility/Support Codes</b> |                                  |       |   |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|---|
| AESC                                | Alternate Energy Study Committee | POTF  | Peak Oil Task Force                       |
| BF                                  | Board of Finance                 | PWC   | Public Works Committee                    |
| BO                                  | Building Official                | PWS   | Public Works Superintendent               |
| BR                                  | Board of Recreation              | RIDOT | Rhode Island Department of Transportation |
| CC                                  | Conservation Commission          | SC    | School Committee                          |
| CES                                 | Code Enforcement Staff           | SOS   | Superintendent of Schools                 |
| DCE                                 | Director of Code Enforcement     | TA    | Tax Assessor                              |
| EDC                                 | Economic Development Commission  | TC    | Town Council                              |
| EMC                                 | Emergency Management Coordinator | TE    | Town Engineer                             |
| FD                                  | Finance Director                 | TM    | Town Manager                              |
| GIS                                 | GIS Implementation Committee     | US    | Utilities Superintendent                  |
| HMC                                 | Harbor Management Commission     | WHA   | Westerly Housing Authority                |
| PB                                  | Planning Board                   | WMLT  | Westerly Municipal Land Trust             |
| PZS                                 | Planning and Zoning Staff        | ZB    | Zoning Board                              |



Table 5-2 Implementation Plan Matrix

**GOAL 1: Natural Resources**

| No. | Actions   | Responsibility | Support                   | Timeframe |
|-----|---|----------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| 1.1 | Modify the zoning code to adopt a Salt Pond overlay district as specified by the CRMC Special Area Management Plan (SAMP).  | TC             | PZS, PB                   | ST        |
| 1.2 | Enact an ordinance that prevents any increase in zoning density (down-zone) except (A) land within the Downtown Revitalization Area which already has water and sewer service and (B) areas that are outside the Downtown Revitalization Area and also outside the RI CRMC Salt Pond Special Area Management Plan which could be rezoned from zoning district designation RR-60 to LDR-40 but only after the municipal water system is extended to those areas. | TC             | PZS, PB                   | ST        |
| 1.3 | Adopt conservation development subdivision regulations applicable to major subdivisions as an alternative subdivision methodology. Require all applications for major subdivisions to include cluster development, conservation development, and conventional subdivision as alternatives for consideration by the Planning Board.  | PB             | PZS                       | ST        |
| 1.4 | Develop a systematic prioritized plan, including potential funding alternatives, to acquire open space for water resources protection, habitat protection, and water-dependent recreation and to protect farmland, forests and natural landscapes.  | TC             | TM, PZS, CC, WMLT, BR, TE | MT        |
| 1.5 | Construct a safe bike path that is a loop along Atlantic Avenue to Weekapaug Road to Shore Road west to Crandall Avenue and back to Atlantic Avenue. This is Phase I of the Westerly Bike Trail System; additional parts of the system (Phase II) shall be planned during implementation of Phase I.  | TC             | TM, PZS, PWS, TE, BR      | MT        |
| 1.6 | Enforce stormwater control and sediment-control ordinances; require best management practices (BMP's) to control non-point pollution; monitor the effects of these steps; and modify pollution-prevention actions as necessary.   | DCE            | CES                       | ST&O      |



| No.  | Actions (GOAL 1 – continued)   | Responsibility | Support                  | Timeframe |
|------|--|----------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| 1.7  | Extend sediment and erosion-control ordinances to include single and two-family houses as part of the building permit process.   | TC             | PZS, PB, BO              | ST&O      |
| 1.8  | Develop a river corridor overlay district and incorporate it in an updated zoning ordinance.   | TC             | TM, PZS, PB, HMC, TE, US | MT        |
| 1.9  | Provide all local land-use decision makers at least one in-service program each year addressing new developments related to contemporary preservation and conservation issues for their consideration and possible implementation. | TM             | PZS                      | ST&O      |
| 1.10 | Amend the Zoning Map to show lands that are permanently protected open space   | TC             | PZS, PB                  | ST        |



### GOAL 2: Transportation Strategies

| No. | Actions  | Responsibility | Support          | Timeframe |
|-----|--|----------------|------------------|-----------|
| 2.1 | Revise development standards in the zoning ordinance to require shared access to roads for new and redeveloped projects.   | TC             | PZS, TE, PWS, PB | ST        |
| 2.2 | Enact an ordinance that regulates the use of the unimproved portion of town streets except for right of access and other permitted uses to reduce unsightly appearance and dangerous traffic situations.                             | TC             | PZS, TE, PWS, PB | MT        |
| 2.3 | Revise the intersection of Airport Road and Winnapaug Road to improve safety and traffic flow.   | TC, RIDOT      | TE, PWS          | MT        |
| 2.4 | Continue to fund a program of roadway drainage and sidewalk replacement and maintenance.   | TC             | TE, PWS          | ST&O      |
| 2.5 | Provide good pedestrian connections through densely-built neighborhoods and non-residential districts through public projects and revised development standards. Work towards a town-wide network of connected sidewalks and trails. | TC, PB         | PZS, TE, PWS     | LT        |



**GOAL 3: Transportation Assets**

| No. | Action   | Responsibility | Support     | Timeframe |
|-----|--|----------------|-------------|-----------|
| 3.1 | Work with state and federal officials to increase parking, safe access, and redevelopment planning at and near the railroad station.   | TM             | PZS, TE     | MT        |
| 3.2 | Work with Amtrak and elected officials to increase the number of daily stops in Westerly during the summer months. Publicize the availability of current Amtrak service.   | TM, TC         |             | ST&O      |
| 3.3 | Initiate a parking shuttle system for under-utilized or new parking space at major retailers for a shuttle bus loop that will include transportation centers (train station and airport), river and shoreline business districts, and beaches. | TM             | PZS, PB, BR | MT        |
| 3.4 | Develop and implement a strategy that better utilizes the existing capacity of Westerly State Airport and adjacent Airport Industrial Park to enhance commercial business activity and increase job opportunities.                             | TM             | PZS         | MT        |
| 3.5 | Work with RI, MA and CT state agencies and federal officials to support commuter rail service for Westerly.  | TM, TC         |             | ST&O      |
| 3.6 | Adopt an Airport Protection Overlay District to control potential airport hazards in the vicinity of the airport.  | TC             | PZS, PB     | ST        |



### GOAL 4: Economic Development

| No. | Actions   | Responsibility | Support      | Timeframe |
|-----|---|----------------|--------------|-----------|
| 4.1 | Adopt an economic development strategy focused on job creation and preservation that provides for specific responsibility within town government for implementation. Provide for annual review of effectiveness as measured by types and numbers of jobs in Westerly. | TC             | TM, EDC      | ST&O      |
| 4.2 | Modify zoning and land use regulations to support adaptive reuse of vacant and underused industrial and commercial buildings and associated areas (for example, mill villages).   | TC, PB         | PZS, EDC     | MT        |
| 4.3 | Obtain financial support from multiple sources for revitalization of downtown and its surrounding areas (zones DC1 and DC2). Modify land use regulations to complement this effort.   | TC, PB         | PZS, TM, EDC | ST&O      |
| 4.4 | Recruit the Community College of Rhode Island and/or other educational institutions to provide local businesses and residents with educational and vocational opportunities.  | TC             | TM, SC, EDC  | MT        |
| 4.5 | Promote the use of the Westerly Downtown Arts District tax benefits and encourage cultural and performing arts as bases for economic development.   | TM             | EDC          | ST&O      |



**GOAL 5: Housing**

| No. | Actions   | Responsibility | Support      | Timeframe |
|-----|---|----------------|--------------|-----------|
| 5.1 | Review housing and demographic data regularly to determine whether stated goals are being met and revise as necessary to achieve goals.   | PZS            | PB, WHA      | ST&O      |
| 5.2 | Apply to state and federal housing programs for low- and moderate-income housing rehabilitation and development funds and support efforts of housing groups to secure and use those funds.  | PZS            | WHA, PB, TM  | ST&O      |
| 5.3 | Accommodate the needs of hospitality and tourism industry employers to provide housing for their seasonal employees with consideration of the potential impact on the local workforce and protection for the affected neighborhoods.                          | TC             | PZS, PB, EDC | MT        |
| 5.4 | Consider additional property tax relief for elderly taxpayers who have made Westerly their primary residence to help them remain in their homes.  | TC             | TA           | MT        |
| 5.5 | Develop and implement a program to focus and coordinate affordable housing initiatives and funding as an integral part of Westerly’s efforts in neighborhood revitalization and rehabilitation with priority given to existing housing over new construction. | PZS            | WHA, PB, TM  | ST        |
| 5.6 | Evaluate and revise Inclusionary and Comprehensive Permit ordinances to ensure neighborhoods are not adversely impacted by density and environmental integrity is not compromised.  | PZS, PB, TC    | TM           | ST&O      |
| 5.7 | Revisit zones that allow mixed-use development to incorporate Floor Area Ratios, such that retail and commercial uses are primary and residential uses are secondary.   | PZS, PB, TC    | TM           | MT        |
| 5.8 | Consider the feasibility of an Affordable Housing Overlay District that offers incentives and links to other affordable housing strategies.   | PZS, PB, TC    | TM           | MT        |



|      |   |             |        |      |
|------|---|-------------|--------|------|
| 5.9  | Continue to work with non-profit and public agencies in creating affordable housing opportunities in Westerly.  | PZS, PB, TC | TM     | ST&O |
| 5.10 | Work with mill owners to incorporate affordable housing units in proposed redevelopment projects.   | PZS, PB     | TM     | ST&O |
| 5.11 | Develop a demonstration project that incorporates affordable housing incentives for the Downtown Arts District and is geared towards low-income artists.  | PZS, TC     | TM     | LT   |
| 5.12 | Adopt a tax credit for property owners undertaking substantial rehabilitation of existing structures and accessory apartments to incentivize the incorporation of affordable housing units.                     | PZS, TC     | TM     | LT   |
| 5.13 | Establish a revolving loan program for renovations of existing rental properties.   | PZS         | TM     | ST&O |
| 5.14 | Evaluate an accessory affordable apartment program that would permit accessory apartments in all of the Town's commercial zones, provided that the occupancy is geared towards low and moderate income tenants. | PZS         | TM     | MT   |
| 5.15 | Support regional initiatives that promote and create affordable housing, including the Washington County Community Development Corporation.   | PZS         | PB, TM | ST&O |
| 5.16 | Target neighborhoods for revitalization efforts through the development of neighborhood plans and link implementation with other affordable housing strategies.   | PZS         | PB, TM | ST&O |



**GOAL 6: Infrastructure**

| No. | Actions   | Responsibility | Support             | Timeframe |
|-----|---|----------------|---------------------|-----------|
| 6.1 | Ensure the town’s program to reduce groundwater infiltration into sewer lines is supported on an annual basis.  | TC             | TM, TE, US          | ST&O      |
| 6.2 | <p>Recognize that the existing wastewater treatment plant has a finite capacity as detailed in the December 27, 2007 report by the Beta Group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize any sewer service expansion plans based on environmental protection and economic development, with full consideration of the limits of current capacity.</li> <li>• Pursue all available state and federal funding to enlarge the wastewater treatment plant consistent with its design capacity.</li> </ul> | TC             | RB, CC, EDC, US, TE | MT        |
| 6.3 | Update land use regulations to address and encourage appropriate renewable energy opportunities.  | TC, PB         | PZS, POTF, AESC     | MT        |
| 6.4 | Develop and implement a plan to better protect White Rock #1 well site from the possibility of physical damage or contamination by leaks or accidental spills from motor vehicles.  | TM             | US, TE              | ST        |
| 6.5 | Review the adequacy of security measures (including cameras, lighting, and information technology security) for protection of well heads, pump stations and water tanks and take appropriate actions.   | TM             | US, TE              | ST        |
| 6.6 | Map the entire stormwater system in concert with the implementation of new GIS capability. Within the next phase of Westerly GIS development, integrate the water, sewer, and stormwater systems into existing GIS coverage.  | TC             | GIS, TE, US         | ST        |
| 6.7 | Develop a plan to minimize the effect of drought on public health and safety, economic activity, and environmental resources.   | TM             | TE, US              | MT        |
| 6.8 | Study and develop strategies to address potential sea-level rise, storm surge, and other climate-change impacts on Westerly’s infrastructure.   | TM             | PZS, CC, TE         | LT        |



| No. | Actions (Goal 6 – continued)  | Responsibility | Support         | Timeframe |
|-----|---|----------------|-----------------|-----------|
| 6.9 | Adopt a recycling ordinance to increase the town’s recycling capacity and will encourage municipal departments, residents, and businesses to recycle more to meet state recycling and diversion goals for municipalities. | TC             | PZS, PWS,<br>PB | ST        |



**GOAL 7: Character & Heritage**

| No. | Actions   | Responsibility | Support | Timeframe  |
|-----|---|----------------|---------|------------|
| 7.1 | Continue to enact development standards for historic districts that are appropriate for each district, similar to what was adopted for the Shoreline Commercial Watch Hill zoning district. Current designated historic districts are Bradford Village, Main Street, the North End, Westerly Downtown, Wilcox Park, and Watch Hill. | TC             | PB, PZS | ST, MT, LT |
| 7.2 | Protect the structures within existing federally-designated historic districts and other buildings with National Register of Historic Places status with zoning ordinance language similar to that enacted for Watch Hill (260-87.6(B)(5)).   | TC             | PB, PZB | MT         |
| 7.3 | Work with existing commercial property owners in the Route 1 corridor to enhance landscaping and green space through incentives such as reduction in required parking area.   | PZS            | PB, ZB  | ST&O       |
| 7.4 | Develop recommendations for implementation of the Architectural Review Board recently added to Westerly’s Town Charter.   | PZS            | PB      | MT         |
| 7.5 | Increase and maintain urban and community green space in the built areas of town, particularly through street trees; landscaping and buffers in commercial, industrial and multi-family developments; and selective park development to be accomplished through public and private projects and revised development standards.      | PZS            | PB, ZB  | MT         |



### GOAL 8: Resort Community

| No. | Actions  | Responsibility | Support              | Timeframe |
|-----|--|----------------|----------------------|-----------|
| 8.1 | Prohibit the expansion of the existing highway commercial district. Encourage redevelopment of existing under-utilized commercial space, particularly in the Route 1 corridor.   | TC             | PZS, PB, ZB, EDC, TM | ST&O      |
| 8.2 | Review and revise the planned resort development provision in the Westerly zoning ordinance (§260-48) as a strategy to promote longer stays by visitors and tourists while limiting impact on local neighborhoods.   | TC             | PZS, PB              | MT        |
| 8.3 | Develop a program to proactively work with owners of existing lodging facilities to encourage rehabilitation and updating of facilities to extend tourist use.   | PZS            | EDC, TM, TA          | MT        |
| 8.4 | Evaluate the mix of accommodations in Westerly to determine whether the markets for seasonal vacationers, year-round visitors, and business travelers are being adequately served.   | TM             | PZS, EDC             | ST        |
| 8.5 | Insure that land-use regulations and decision making consider the implications and potential impacts upon the four key elements of our community (tourism, seasonal residents, year-round residents, and regional service and retail) and upon Westerly's quality of life and economy. | TC, PB         | PZS, ZB              | ST&O      |



**GOAL 9: Institutions**

| No. | Actions  | Responsibility | Support     | Timeframe |
|-----|--|----------------|-------------|-----------|
| 9.1 | Coordinate grant writing between non-profit institutions and the municipality to leverage and enhance total return and mutual benefit.   | TM             | FD, PZS     | ST&O      |
| 9.2 | Complete a comprehensive review of all town annual subsidies to insure that the funds are directed to institutions that address the highest-priority needs.  | TC             | BF, FD      | ST        |
| 9.3 | Coordinate and consolidate services between the town and critical institutions, especially those supported by tax dollars to share expertise and achieve economies of scale.   | TM, SOS        | TC, SC, BF  | MT        |
| 9.4 | Require that the Westerly Town Manager meet at least annually with the Westerly Hospital Board of Trustees to determine what municipal efforts are necessary to support the hospital.  | TM             |             | ST&O      |
| 9.5 | Establish and fund an annual appropriation to the Westerly Hospital to assist in reimbursement for uncompensated services for Westerly citizens who were unable to pay, to be reviewed and approved annually during the budget process by the Westerly Town Council.   | TC             | BF, TM, EDC | LT        |
| 9.6 | The town’s elected and appointed officials should assist the Westerly Hospital and the local medical community in advocating for their needs; for example, achieving parity and equality in private insurance and Medicare/Medicaid rates in comparison with facilities in Rhode Island and southeastern Connecticut and increasing transparency in the contract negotiations processes. | TC, TM         |             | ST&O      |
| 9.7 | Hold an annual public meeting, attended by the Town Council and School Committee to review progress in improving student performance. Review actions underway in the highest-performing school systems in Rhode Island and Connecticut to determine best practices that appear to be working elsewhere.  | TC, SC         | TM, SOS     | ST&O      |



### GOAL 10: Regional Solutions

| No.  | Actions   | Responsibility | Support                 | Timeframe |
|------|---|----------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| 10.1 | <p>Promote coordination with Stonington on issues of mutual interest, for example Pawcatuck River quality, downtown Westerly-Pawcatuck revitalization, shared water systems, the Westerly train station, emergency management, and economic development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hold a joint meeting of the planning departments, water departments, and emergency management officials to identify opportunities for coordination.</li><li>• After one to two years of coordination at the staff level, sponsor a public forum to report progress.</li><li>• Identify areas where improved coordination between the states of Rhode Island and Connecticut will leverage state and federal funding opportunities.</li></ul> | TM             | PZS, EDC,<br>US, EMC    | MT        |
| 10.2 | <p>Identify resources of the town of Westerly that could be mutually shared and funded with neighboring Rhode Island communities such as has been accomplished with use of the transfer station by both Westerly and Hopkinton.</p>   | TM             | PZS, TE,<br>PWS, US, SC | MT        |