

TOWN OF WESTERLY, RHODE ISLAND
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE, PHASE I

Adopted by Westerly Planning Board on _____

Adopted by Westerly Town Council on _____

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CHAPTER I

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE OVERVIEW

Executive Summary

The Comprehensive Plan is an adopted official statement of Westerly's future development and conservation needs. This document is the initial step in a two-phase update to Westerly's 1991 Comprehensive Plan. It does not, by itself, establish a future long-range vision for the community. It has been prepared by the Town Council-appointed Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee to summarize the status of every action item contained in the 1991 Plan, with the intent of identifying recommendations that have been completed, partially carried out or not yet accomplished, as well as those actions that are no longer applicable due to changing circumstances or community priorities.

Chapter I is a brief overview of the steps completed thus far by the Committee. This Committee is charged with developing a new plan for Westerly, replacing the existing plan which has not been formally amended with state approval since the Town Council adopted it in 1992 (in this document, it is referred to as the "1991 Plan" because it was substantially completed that year by a former Comprehensive Plan Committee).

A major change to the 1991 Plan was adopted in the 2006 amendment to the Housing Element to promote affordable housing. Several minor changes to the 1991 Plan have also been adopted, generally to accommodate individual site-specific development projects. Chapter II provides a summary of all such amendments adopted between 1991 and 2006, organized by each of the elements mandated by the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act (RIGL 45-22.2).

Chapter III is a "report card" on the current plan's action program, and is the key component of the first phase of updating Westerly's Comprehensive Plan. Overall, there has been significant progress. Almost two-thirds of the items have been fully accomplished. Another quarter of the recommendations have been partially realized and in many cases efforts to achieve the actions are still underway. Only about ten percent of the items have had no significant action, mostly due to changes in community priorities over the past fifteen years. Chapter III summarizes the status of each of the 95 action items contained in the 1991 Plan. It documents what has been done and, for those items that have not been completed, summarizes the impediments or mitigating factors. Although, in general, there has been much progress, it is likely that a higher level of achievement would have realized if the 1991 Plan had defined responsibility and accountability more clearly, established priorities among action items, and specified timeframes for completion.

It must be stressed again that this document represents just the first phase of a two-part strategy being undertaken by the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee. Phase II, set to begin in late 2006, will indeed establish a future vision for the community as a whole and provide a balanced response to the Town's human,

environmental, cultural, economic development and infrastructure needs through the beginning of the next decade. The product for the next phase will be a forward looking and visionary statement of goals, policies and action items, which collectively will serve as the framework for establishing a sound basis in fact for local decision making, provide guidance to landowners, conservationists and developers, and perhaps most importantly, help build a better informed citizenry.

Legal Authority and Mandate for the Comprehensive Plan

The Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act 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 §45-22.2-6 (Required Elements), 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.” Each of the seven elements reviewed in Chapter III is required by this state law.

RIGL §45-22.2-2 requires that, “Each city and town shall review its comprehensive plan and make established amendments or revisions that are necessary to bring it into conformance with this chapter.” Further guidance is found in §45-22.2-12 (Updates & Amendments) which states in part, “Each municipality shall submit any amended comprehensive plans, revised pursuant to the chapter, including proposed amendments to the implementation program component of a plan, to the director for review and approval in the same manner as provided for review of new comprehensive plans,” and “At a minimum, a municipality shall update its comprehensive plan at least once every five (5) years.” Westerly has not met this last requirement.

Plan Methodology

In November 2005, the Town Council appointed a Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee, with the stated objective of bringing Westerly into compliance with the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act. Specifically, the Town Council has charged this committee with updating Westerly’s current plan, which has become largely outdated and of limited value in guiding municipal decisions regarding land use and development, zoning, and capital investments.

At its first meeting in February 2006, the Committee met with John P. O’Brien, Director of the Rhode Island Division of Administration’s Statewide Planning Program. He endorsed the Town’s proposal to undertake a two-step update, whereby the key objective of this initial phase is to bring Westerly back into compliance with Statewide Planning and with Rhode Island General Law, with respect to its mandated five-year plan update. Once this first phase is submitted to Statewide Planning for certification, the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee will initiate work on a second phase, establishing a new long-term vision for the community.

In anticipation of this undertaking, each member of the Committee was provided copies of the 1991 Comprehensive Plan, the Town's current zoning ordinance, and the recently adopted State Land Use 2025 Plan, the latter being a comprehensive plan for all of Rhode Island. An objective of the Land Use Plan is to ensure that local goals, objectives and policies conform to those of the State of Rhode Island.

Over the ensuing months, Committee members were individually tasked with researching the status of the ninety-five different recommended actions contained in the 1991 Plan, and reporting their findings. These items have been compiled into complete summary overviews for each Plan Element.

An accomplished goal of this first phase of Westerly's Comprehensive Plan update has been to accurately measure the level of progress that has been achieved toward compliance with policies spelled out in the 1991 Plan, and to provide a clear and concise description of "what happened" to each of the recommended action items. By looking back over the past fifteen years, the Committee has not only documented the current state of the Town's Comprehensive Plan; it has also established a solid foundation on which to begin the work of envisioning Westerly's future.

[Insert paragraph describing public comment, and Planning Board / Town Council approvals].

The Next Step – Phase II

Concurrent with submitting this Comprehensive Plan Update, the Committee is actively engaged in preparing for Phase II – the development of a forward-looking document capable of guiding Westerly's future physical, economic, and social development. Part of this process will be to include citizen participation, with the intent of developing an engaged and informed public that can be actively involved in planning initiatives, review proposals for plan consistency, and collaborate in implementing elements of the updated plan.

The following key activities and events will be undertaken with an ultimate goal of submitting a fully revised, updated and adopted plan to Statewide Planning by the Autumn of 2007:

Task Set #1 – Develop Scope of Comprehensive Plan Update

- Submit Comprehensive Plan Update (Phase I) to Statewide Planning Program.
- Complete a detailed Phase II project outline, detailed scope of work, and timeline that includes key milestones.
- Identify and select internal and external resources necessary to support Phase II. It is noted that the Town Council has appropriated \$80,000 for this endeavor in the FY 2006/2007 budget.

Task Set #2 – Prepare & Revise Draft Comprehensive Plan

- Develop updated drafts of all Comprehensive Plan elements, including revised vision and goals statements.
- Develop revised draft future land use map.
- Conduct periodic informal community workshops and meetings to gather citizen input.
- Revise draft Plan to incorporate gathered feedback and additional collected data.

Task Set #3 – Formal Review and Approval Process

- Submit Committee-recommended Plan for formal Planning Board and Town Council public hearings to gather additional community input.
- Incorporate final revisions into the Plan prior to final adoption by Planning Board and Town Council.
- Submission of final locally adopted Plan to the Statewide Planning Program.

CHAPTER II
SUMMARY OF PLAN AMENDMENTS
ADOPTED BY THE WESTERLY TOWN COUNCIL FROM 1991 THROUGH
2006

FIVE- YEAR UPDATE SUMMARY
GOALS AND POLICES

This chapter identifies significant changes and amendments to the Plan's goals and policies from 1991 through 2006. Unless referenced herein, the original goals, policies and implementation schedules contained in Westerly's 1991 Comprehensive Plan remain in effect.

Amendments: (Description of goals and policies, related amendments and adoption date)

Summary

1. Future Land Use Map amended from "Planned Commercial Development" to "High Density Residential" (Plat 88 / Lot 42 – 65.31 acres, Tum-a-Lum Farm Subdivision, former Panciera Farm) (*Adopted -- October 1998*).
2. Assisted Living & Congregate Housing (Newbury Development, Shore Road) (*Adopted -- May 2001*).
3. Future Land Use Map amended from "Medium Density Residential" & "Conservation/ Recreation" to "Highway Commercial" (various Plat 98 parcels southwest of Rt. 1/Rt. 78/Airport Road intersection) (*Adopted -- August 2003*).
4. "Affordable Housing Plan to Achieve 10% Low & Moderate Income Housing," which serves as a guide to for-profit developers, non-profit organizations and public entities as to the types, number and location of affordable housing units that are desired by the Town to ensure that at least 10% of Westerly's housing units will be affordable to low and moderate income households, whose income is equal to or less than 80% of the Area Median Income (*Adopted December 2004*).
5. "Affordable Housing Plan to Achieve 10% Low & Moderate Income Housing," This is an amendment to the Affordable Housing Plan initially adopted in December 2004. Revisions call for mandatory inclusionary zoning and endorse the creation of an Affordable Housing Trust Fund, to be financed in part by developers' payments of a fee-in-lieu when it is not appropriate that affordable units be constructed as part of a market-rate development project. (*Adopted September 2006*).

Significant changes to the plan's goals and policies based upon past experience and updates of the functional elements.

1. The October 1998 and August 2003 amendments (Items 1 and 3 above) are minor in nature, having no significant impact on or change to the 1991 Comprehensive Plan's goals and policies. They are site-specific, enabling individual property owners and developers to amend Westerly's zoning map and remain in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan.
2. The May 2001 amendment regarding assisted living and congregate housing establishes a broad vision promoting alternative forms of housing for some of Westerly's special needs populations (primarily the elderly). Construction of the Newbury Development project on Shore Road benefited from this amendment.
3. The December 2005 amendment regarding affordable housing establishes a broad vision to ensure that 10 percent of Westerly's total housing stock will be affordable to Westerly's low and moderate-income households at the end of a 20-year timeframe (see Appendix for the plan's Executive Summary, which contains a list of strategies contained in the affordable housing plan).
4. The September 2006 amendment regarding affordable housing retains a broad vision to ensure that 10% of Westerly's total housing stock will be affordable, except that it encourages mandatory, rather than voluntary, inclusionary zoning, and it endorses the creation of an Affordable Housing Trust Fund, to be financed in part by developers' payments of a fee-in-lieu.

**FIVE-YEAR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE
SUMMARY OF AMENDMENTS
ADOPTED BY WESTERLY TOWN COUNCIL FROM 1991 THROUGH 2006**

I. Land Use Element

Three changes have been made to the Land Use Element of Westerly's Comprehensive Plan since its original adoption in 1991 through 2006. Unless referenced herein, the original elements and related goals, policies and implementation schedules of the 1991 plan remain in effect.

Amendments: (Brief description of land use-related amendments, adoption date and page reference to the 1991 Plan)

<u>Summary</u>	<u>Adoption Date</u>
1. Future Land Use Map amended from "Planned Commercial Development" to "High Density Residential" (Plat 88/Lot 42 – 65.31 acres, Tum-a-Lum Farm Subdivision, former Panciera Farm) (see * below)	Oct. 1998
2. Assisted Living and Congregate Housing (Newbury Development, Shore Road) (See ** below)	May 2001
3. Future Land Use Map amended from "Medium Density Residential" & "Conservation/ Recreation" to "Highway Commercial" (various Plat 98 parcels southwest of Rt. 1/Rt. 78/Airport Road intersection) (see *** below)	August 2003

Significant Changes: Land Use or Infrastructure – N/A

Significant Changes: Land Use Demand (e.g. population, employment) – N/A

Significant Changes: Future Land Use Allocations

1. **Text Amendment - Reinforce "Transitional" land use category along Route 1 Critical Corridor, to control spread of commercial areas and identify areas where "residentially related" uses could be encouraged, but to restrict application of "Transitional Land Use" categories in other parts of Westerly. The purpose of the designation is to achieve a rational and compatible arrangement of land uses within the Route 1 Critical Corridor, not to regulate these uses at locations outside of the corridor where they are permitted by right or by special permit. (p. 59)
2. **Text amendment - Some expansion or designation of additional areas may be necessary to accommodate additional high density housing and special needs housing such as assisted living and congregate housing as such needs are identified. Some development here will occur as in-fill on individual lots, but

allocation of larger parcels in appropriate locations to this land use may occur to meet changing and emerging needs. (p. 45)

3. ***Text amendment - Property at Route 1/Route 78/Airport Road, development should be consistent with future needs of Westerly Airport and aquifer protection. (no page reference)

Land Use Goals and Policy Changes

1. **Revised policy statement: Maintain suitable mix of land uses providing sufficient area for housing, business and tax base. Allocate sufficient areas in varied locations to provide opportunities for housing, meeting the requirements of groups with special needs, that also protect open space and natural resources. (p. 40)

Land Use Implementation Changes (identify inconsistencies with zoning)

1. *Property rezoned from “Manufacturing” (M-1) to “High Density Residential” (HDR-6), enabling consistency between Future Land Use Map & Zoning Map
2. ***Properties rezoned from “Medium Density Residential” (MDR-20) and “Office Research Assembly & Technology” (ORAT) to “Highway Commercial” (HC), enabling consistency between Future Land Use Map & Zoning Map

II. Housing Element

Prior to the Town Council’s adoption of an affordable housing plan in December 2004, only one change had been made to the Housing Element of Westerly’s Community Comprehensive Plan since its original adoption in 1991. Unless referenced herein, the original element and related goals, policies and implementation schedules remain in effect.

Amendments: (Brief description of housing related amendments and adoption date)

Summary

Adoption Date

1. Assisted Living and Congregate Housing
(Newbury Development -- see * below) May 2001
2. Affordable Housing Plan to Achieve 10% Low and Moderate Income Housing. According to its Executive Summary, this 45-page December, 2004, amendment, serves as a guide to for-profit developers, non-profit organizations and public entities as to the types, number and location of affordable housing units that are desired by the Town to ensure that at least 10% of Westerly’s housing units will be affordable to low and moderate income households whose income is equal to or less than 80% of the Area Median Income. This affordable housing plan was prepared pursuant to requirements of Rhode Island’s Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act (RIGL

45-22.2) and the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act (RIGL 45-53). Chapter I, which contains an Executive Summary, is attached as an appendix to this Comprehensive Plan Update.

3. Affordable Housing Plan to Achieve 10% Low and Moderate Income Housing. The key change in this September, 2006, amendment is Strategy #1, which originally advocated, “voluntary inclusionary zoning” in specific areas of Westerly as defined by a map. The revised plan states: “To provide more affordable homeownership opportunities, the Town of Westerly will adopt a mandatory inclusionary zoning ordinance requiring that all new developments with five or more residential units in all zoning districts will set aside 20% of the units as affordable to households at or below 80% AMI. A density bonus equal to the percentage of affordable units in the development will be provided. For cases in which it is not feasible to develop the affordable units on-site, the developer may pay a fee-in-lieu, which will be deposited in the town’s proposed Affordable Housing Trust Fund. “

Significant Changes: Housing Inventory and Programs

1. *New policy goal: “Provide opportunities for assisted living and congregate housing in locations that meet some of the diverse needs and desires of this age group.” (p. 43)

Significant Changes: Housing Demand (by type of unit and household)

1. *Amendment to Westerly’s demographic profile per 2000 Census (pp. 21& 25)
2. *Promote housing for the elderly (two lengthy paragraphs -- p. 34)

Significant Changes: Housing Affordability (supply and demand)

1. *New Goal – production of low/moderate income housing (p. 40)
2. *New Policy – provide opportunities for assisted living and congregate care (p. 40)

Future Housing Demand Impacts on Land Use and Related Elements – N/A

Housing Implementation Changes

1. *Recommended Action No. 3: Incorporate principles of siting specialized housing for older persons in the zoning ordinance. Identify amendments needed to make available opportunities to provide this housing at several locations that reflect as many of the diverse situations described in this Element as possible. (p. 43)
2. *Management Strategy: Explore federal and state assistance available to non-profit organizations to provide assisted living and congregate housing. Encourage the private sector to construct such housing units in accordance with the needs identified in this Element. Use special permit requirements to improve compatibility of this housing with surrounding areas. (Pg. 43)

III. Economic Development Element

No changes or amendments have been made to the Economic Development Element of Westerly's Comprehensive Plan since its original adoption in 1991 through 2006. The original element and related goals, policies and implementation schedules remain in effect.

IV. Natural and Cultural Resources Element

No changes or amendments have been made to the Natural and Cultural Resources Element of Westerly's Comprehensive Plan since its original adoption in 1991 through 2006. The original element and related goals, policies and implementation schedules remain in effect.

V. Public Services and Facilities Element

One change has been made to the Public Services and Facilities Element of Westerly's Community Comprehensive Plan since its original adoption in 1991 through 2006. Unless referenced herein, the original element and related goals, policies and implementation schedules remain in effect.

Amendments: (Brief description of services and facilities-related amendments and adoption date)

Summary

Adoption Date

1. Assisted Living and Congregate Housing (Newbury Development) *May 2001*

Significant Changes: Inventory of Services and Facilities – N/A

Significant Changes: Current Demand Versus Available Capacity

1. Amendment to Wastewater Policy #1: All land uses and facilities (public and private) designated as a goal or policy in the Comprehensive Plan should be included in the determination of priorities in utilizing the capacity of the wastewater treatment plant and in expanding the service area of the sewerage system. (p. 29)

Significant Changes: Project Future Demands & Analyze Capacity Sustainability – N/A

Services and Facilities Goals and Policy Changes

1. *Provide wastewater treatment to prevent unsanitary conditions; utilize available sewer capacity according to prioritized need (p. 29)

Services and Facilities Implementation Changes – N/A

VI. Open Space and Recreation Element

No changes or amendments have been made to the Open Space and Recreation Element of Westerly's Comprehensive Plan since its original adoption in 1991 through 2006. The original element and related goals, policies and implementation schedules remain in effect.

VII. Circulation Element

No changes or amendments have been made to the Circulation Element of Westerly's Comprehensive Plan since its original adoption in 1991 through 2006. The original element and related goals, policies and implementation schedules remain in effect.

**FIVE- YEAR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE SUMMARY
SUMMARY OF AMENDMENTS
ADOPTED BY WESTERLY TOWN COUNCIL FROM 1991 THROUGH 2006**

Implementation

This page identifies the minimum guidelines for a performance report on the implementation of Westerly's Comprehensive Plan since its original adoption in 1991 through 2006.

Amendments: (Briefly describe any implementation related amendments and indicate date of adoption)

Summary

1. Future Land Use Map amended from "Planned Commercial Development" to "High Density Residential" (Plat 88 / Lot 42 – 65.31 acres, Tum-a-Lum Farm Subdivision, former Panciera Farm) (*Adopted -- October 1998*).
2. Assisted Living and Congregate Housing (Newbury Development, Shore Road) (*Adopted -- May 2001*).
3. Future Land Use Map amended from "Medium Density Residential" & "Conservation/ Recreation" to "Highway Commercial" (various Plat 98 parcels southwest of Routes 1 and 78/Airport Road intersection) (*Adopted -- August 2003*)

Status report of implementation activities by functional element (e.g. Land Use, Housing, etc.)

1. The Tum-a-Lum Farm Subdivision has been completed, resulting in construction of 79 single-family dwellings on property adjoining Franklin Street (Route 1) that was successfully rezoned from Manufacturing to High-Density Residential.
2. Construction of Newbury Development's assisted living and congregate housing project began in 2005, and the proposed strip shopping center located on the southwest corner of the Route 1/Airport Road/Route 78 intersection is still undergoing local and state regulatory review.
3. Westerly has begun to make progress towards its 10% affordable housing goal, including approvals for:
 - 15+ scattered units in the North End neighborhood.
 - 10 units at #65 Beach Street subsidized under HUD's Section 811 program.
 - 13 units on Old Post Road (Comprehensive Permit – part of 66 unit for-profit condominium complex).

Major implementation accomplishments and shortcomings from original plan.

Chapter III is a “report card” on the current plan’s action program, and is the key component of the first phase of updating Westerly’s Comprehensive Plan. Overall, there has been significant progress. Almost two-thirds of the items have been fully accomplished. Another quarter of the recommendations have been partially realized and in many cases efforts to achieve the actions are still underway. Only about ten percent of the items have had no significant action, mostly due to changes in community priorities over the past fifteen years. Chapter III summarizes the status of each of the 95 action items contained in the 1991 Plan. It documents what has been done and, for those items that have not been completed, summarizes the impediments or mitigating factors. Although, in general, there has been much progress, it is likely that a higher level of achievement would have realized if the 1991 Plan had defined responsibility and accountability more clearly, established priorities among action items, and specified timeframes for completion.

Significant changes to implementation activities based upon update of functional elements (if addressed within each element, indicate.)

With the exception of the Affordable Housing Plan approved in December 2004, as amended, there have been no significant changes to implementation activities based upon updates of functional elements contained in Westerly’s Comprehensive Plan since 1991.

CHAPTER III

REPORT CARD ON 1991 PLAN'S RECOMMENDED ACTION PROGRAM

LAND USE ELEMENT

LEGISLATIVE OR REGULATORY ACTIONS

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Amend the zoning ordinance and map to reflect and conform to the proposed land use designations as described in the (approved) Land Use Plan and shown on the accompanying plan graphics.

Following adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the Town Council appointed an Ad-Hoc Zoning Ordinance Review Committee comprised of some members of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee and others. The Committee met extensively, held public hearings, presented a proposed Zoning Ordinance to the Planning Board and the Town Council, which adopted a new Zoning Ordinance on October 16, 1998. The new Zoning Ordinance reflects and conforms to the proposed land use designations of the Comprehensive Plan.

Additional residential and commercial districts were established to reflect existing development (and thereby limit non-conformity) and to increase lot sizes in environmentally sensitive areas. Additional commercial districts were also added for similar purposes. Two overlay districts were created for the Route 1 Critical Corridor. These were the Granite Street Overlay District and the Post Road Overlay District (PROD). A Planned Resort Facilities District regulation was created. A Site Plan Review process was included in the Ordinance and certain performance standards were also added. At the request of property owners abutting Post Road, the PROD was eliminated from the Zoning text and Zoning Map in October, 2006.

The Planning Board adopted new Land Development and Subdivision Regulations on November 30, 1995, and has revised them periodically since.

The Town Council has more recently adopted an ordinance to regulate more stringently stormwater run-off and control erosion. Historic Mill Village regulations have not yet been adopted.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Review and where necessary, revise the current cluster and PUD ordinances.

The cluster development provisions of the Zoning Ordinance were revised to increase individual lot size and frontage. The PUD ordinance provisions were reviewed and were the subject of multiple public meetings and hearings. The community sentiment suggested elimination of any PUD regulations, except for the Planned Resort District;

the public sentiment was honored. There was also public displeasure expressed over any “density incentive” for cluster subdivisions.

ADMINISTRATIVE OR MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Establish a municipal management committee made up of the Town Manager and key department directors to insure appropriate consideration is given to the plan and that the main plan proposals are integrated into the work programs of all necessary departments.

A municipal management committee as described in this recommendation has not been established; however, through efforts of the Planning Board, expanded Planning and Zoning departments, the Town Council and Town Manager, the 1991 Comprehensive Plan has provided a useful framework for establishing priorities and making decisions. The Comprehensive Plan has been used as a guide for public works projects, school buildings and facilities construction, and grant applications. As evidenced throughout this Comprehensive Plan update, significant progress has been achieved across all seven elements when measured against its main proposals, goals and objectives. However, this progress, while substantial, has been achieved more on a case-by-case, as-needed basis, rather than through an integrated, managed approach.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Incorporate the comprehensive planning process into the annual work programs of the Planning Board and Town Planner, and provide the resources necessary to keep the process current and an effective part of municipal operations.

Westerly’s *Land Development & Subdivision Regulations* were adopted by the Planning Board in 1995 and have been amended periodically through 2003. The regulations set out the duties – specifically regarding the Planning Board and Town Planner – as well as the processes and requirements governing most matters of land development and subdivisions in Westerly. The Town’s Zoning Ordinance was substantially revised in 1998, and has been amended many times since then. Together, these documents provide the contemporary operating structure for implementing the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan has been used as a guide for public works projects, school buildings and facilities construction and grant applications.

There has not been a comprehensive assessment of the long-term needs of the Town with prioritization and assessment of the prudent amount of bond draft the Town can commit to, while still maintaining or improving its bond rating.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 3

Involve neighboring communities in ongoing comprehensive planning process in order to address common problems and promote regional solutions.

The Town of Westerly participates in the Washington County Regional Planning Council. Town officials are in constant communication with the Town of Stonington regarding the water needs of the Pawcatuck area, which Westerly services. The Stonington Board of Selectmen and the Westerly Town Council have held joint meetings. The Town supports The Westerly-Pawcatuck Joint Development Task Force, and has applied for and obtained grant-funding for it.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 4

(Related Action – See Public Services and Facilities Element)

Update sewer facility plan to determine priority areas in need of sewerage and establish a system for approval of sewer extension and connection permits that is consistent with the new plan.

The sewer facility plan was updated in 1999. System improvements have since been made. The Town's own extension of sewers has occurred only in the existing sewer district, in areas of individual septic system failures and environmental concerns. (This area generally lies between Airport Road, Wells Street and Beach Street).

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 5

Increase inspection and enforcement procedures to insure that all development is constructed in accordance with the conditions established at the time of approval.

The Town has added the positions of Assistant Zoning Inspector, Assistant Town Planner and Assistant Building Inspector to meet this goal. The Town Council implemented this recommendation in 2004 by adopting Ordinance §90-26 (Planning Department, Zoning Department, Public Works Department and Fire Department Certification -- Commercial Certificates of Use and Occupancy), the first section of which reads, "Prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy for any commercial building or structure approved as part of a major land development plan; a minor land development plan; a special use permit; or a permit for a three-family dwelling or multifamily dwelling ... the Planning Department, Zoning Department, Department of Public Works and Fire Department shall first certify that all approvals have been complied with." This ordinance contains detailed procedures for issuing final certificates of occupancy, including the posting of performance bonds where deficiencies have been identified. A similar mechanism is contained in §A261-19 of the *Land Development & Subdivision Regulations*, requiring developers to post a financial guarantee to ensure that all improvements, facilities, or work required as a condition of subdivision approval will be completed in compliance with plans and specifications.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 6

Revise Subdivision Regulations to conform to plan and provide for adequate municipal review of proposed developments. Develop departmental procedures for joint staff reviews by Planning and Engineering Departments of applications.

As noted in Recommended Action No. 2 above, Westerly's *Land Development & Subdivision Regulations* were adopted by the Planning Board in 1995 and have been amended periodically through 2003. These regulations set out administrative responsibilities, as well as the processes and requirements governing most matters of land development and subdivision. They are used in conjunction with Westerly's Zoning Ordinance, as amended. Joint staff review does occur, with copies of all submitted subdivision and development plan applications being referred to the Engineering Department for comment. A representative of the Engineering Department attends all Planning Board meetings where such plans are discussed and voted upon.

HOUSING ELEMENT

LEGISLATIVE OR REGULATORY ACTIONS

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Guide new housing development away from areas which are environmentally sensitive and to those areas best suited for development.

State environmental regulations and federal wetlands laws have become more robust during this time frame, and, as a consequence, more recent developments are separated from coastal features, freshwater wetlands or water bodies by buffers ranging from 50 to 100 feet in width, as imposed by a condition of Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) and/or Coastal Resources Management (CRMC) permit approval. Although not an aspect of municipal land use policy, the past fifteen years have also seen numerous open space acquisitions by various non-profit land trusts; many of these properties are located near to the Pawcatuck River, Mastuxet Brook, or the environmentally sensitive salt ponds.

Several methods have been successfully used to guide the development on individual sites in order to preserve large contiguous parcels containing environmentally sensitive areas rather than standard subdivision practice, where such areas are incorporated within subdivision lots. These include use of the cluster subdivision provisions of Section 260-46 and the multi-family provisions of Section 260-63 (A) in Zoning Districts HDR-6 and 15 and (B) with respect to large lots listed in Appendix G. Transfer of land in conjunction with such projects has been made to the Town and/or The Westerly Land Trust. The 1998 Zoning Ordinance up-zoned land considered environmentally sensitive and/or lacking municipal water or sewer services. An LDR-60 Zone was established in areas considered environmentally sensitive, creating lots with a 60,000 square foot minimum lot area.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Review existing cluster and PUD ordinances for changes which will encourage their use in a fashion consistent with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. Incorporate appropriate incentive zoning provisions which encourage smaller, affordable housing units and developments with less visual impact.

Following passage of the Comprehensive Plan and in conjunction with the revised Zoning Ordinance, the then existing cluster and PUD ordinances were reviewed.

Based upon public hearing and citizen input, the cluster subdivision ordinance was amended to make it more restrictive by increasing lot size. Citizen input opposed any “incentive” in conjunction with cluster subdivisions, and also based upon public hearings and citizen input, the PUD ordinance, then in place, was deleted.

Faced with these realities, the Zoning Ordinance Review Committee, Planning Board, and Town Council looked for alternatives. The Zoning Ordinance was amended to encourage smaller two-bedroom town homes in the compact areas of town (the R-6 and R-15 zoning districts), rather than single family detached units on individual lots. Additionally, the above-mentioned alternative development option for designated large lots, which permits two-bedroom town home development in a density equal to the number of bedrooms which would likely occur if these sites were developed as single family house lots, was adopted. Subsequently, this large lot provision was further amended to permit congregate housing/assisted living on these large lots. The ordinance also established the Post Road Overlay District wherein Congregate Housing/Assisted Living is permitted.

Section 260-50 (Low & Moderate Income Housing) of the Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 2003 to promote construction of affordable housing via a voluntary Comprehensive Permit process, which includes incentives that intentionally encourage smaller, affordable housing. Since then, two projects have been permitted under the comprehensive permit process.

ADMINISTRATIVE OR MANAGEMENT

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Establish clear, step by step procedures for development and permit applications and review with well defined roles for Town officials.

Westerly's subdivision, development plan and special use permit review processes reflect provisions contained in various state enabling laws adopted in the 1990's, the most important of which is the RI Land Development and Subdivision Review Enabling Act (RIGL 45-23). Indeed, steps in the administrative review process and roles undertaken by local officials, as contained in Westerly's Land Development & Subdivision Regulations, are taken largely verbatim from this Rhode Island statute. Additional review procedures are codified in the Zoning Ordinance, as amended in 1998, most importantly §260-45 (Development Plan Review), §260-46 (Cluster Development), and Article XII (General Development Standards). The Town's subdivision and development plan application forms contain checklists of required submission items and spell out step-by-step review procedures. Flow charts outline the process used by the Planning Board and municipal staff for establishing and posting performance bonds and for the review and acceptance of public improvements such as roadways and drainage systems.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Evaluate and upgrade the present staff capacity and procedures for enforcing minimum housing standards to include housing, building codes and fire codes.

In 2001, the Town Planner's position was made full-time (previously, it was a three-day-a-week position), and in 2003 the Town hired a full-time Assistant Town Planner and established the full-time combined position of Minimum Housing Director/Assistant

Zoning Official. Building and fire code enforcement is the responsibility of the Building Department, and in 2003 the Town hired a full-time deputy Building Official due to increased workloads. Enforcement procedures have also been enhanced, either by amendments to state law that are enforced by the municipality, or by adoption of local ordinances, the most recent being §260-70.1(Unregistered/Uninspected Vehicles Prohibited in a Residential Zone), which will be used to eliminate junk motor vehicles.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 3

Utilize CDBG funds to address identified rehabilitation needs of Westerly neighborhoods.

From 1991 through 2005, the Town of Westerly was awarded \$3,560,856 in Small Cities CDBG grants, specifically to benefit low and moderate-income persons, develop quality affordable housing, and create or retain jobs. Significant portions of these monies have targeted blighted housing stock and have been used to construct a playground, located on Bowling Lane in Bradford. Beginning in 2003, CDBG funds have been used to leverage additional state and federal grants to develop affordable housing in the North End neighborhood. CDBG funds have also been provided to the Westerly-Pawcatuck Joint Development Task Force to match other federal and state grants or private-sector monies in downtown Westerly, financing streetscapes, building façade and signage improvements, and more recently, designs for the Pawcatuck Riverwalk. Annual sub-grantees have included the W.A.R.M. Shelter, Bradford Johnnycake Center, Women's Resource Center of South County, South County Community Action, and a housing information program via the Narragansett Housing Authority.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 4

Form a Scattered Site Housing Committee to inventory and prioritize potential sites for affordable housing development and review available funding strategies.

From 1991 until 2003, the Town did not actively promote affordable housing. The Westerly Housing Authority, which is not an agency of local government, but rather a non-profit corporation, has for many years owned 123 units (mostly for the elderly); it currently administers approximately 170 HUD Section 8 vouchers, providing affordable rentals scattered throughout the community. The redevelopment of Bowling Lane in the 1990's was primarily an effort by a non-profit entity working with RI Housing & Mortgage Finance Corporation (RIHMFC). In 2003, the Town became involved with affordable housing, when the Town Council adopted a revitalization strategy for the North End neighborhood, funded by CDBG and RIHMFC grants; this study prioritized housing for low and moderate-income households. In 2004, in response to an amended RI Low and Moderate Income Housing Act, the Town Manager established an informal committee to guide the work of outside consultants in developing a new Affordable Housing element to the Comprehensive Plan, subsequently adopted by the Town Council in December 2004 and approved by Statewide Planning and RIHMFC in June 2005. In May 2006, the Town Council appointed a new Affordable Housing Plan

Committee to review and update this plan, and to ensure that its recommendations are embodied in the zoning ordinance.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 5

Target housing assistance by first establishing short and long term housing goals for identified low and moderate income families then creating an action plan to meet them.

Westerly's Affordable Housing Plan encourages additional rental and owner-occupied housing for low and moderate-income family households, the elderly and special needs populations. This plan was prepared pursuant to the RI Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (RIGL 45-22.2) and the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act, and it is considered an amendment to the housing element of the Comprehensive Plan. It guides for-profit developers, non-profit organizations and public entities as to the types, number and location of affordable housing units that are desired by the Town to ensure that at least 10% of Westerly's housing units will be affordable to low and moderate income households whose income is equal to or less than 80% of the Area Median. This plan was endorsed by the Planning Board in November 2004, adopted by the Town Council in December 2004, and subsequently modified in June 2005 to contain comments required by RI Statewide Planning and RIHMFC. This plan is currently under review by the Town Council-appointed Affordable Housing Plan Committee. Tangible outcomes include 10 units of HUD Section 811 housing on Beach Street, to be completed in late 2006, and approximately 18 units either completed or under construction in the North End, targeting first-time homebuyers in that area.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 6

Support and expand the role of local non-profit housing organizations in developing permanent affordable housing.

Non-profit organizations have become an essential tool for developing affordable housing in Westerly. In the 1990's, the Bowling Lane Development Corporation utilized grants from HUD, RIHMFC and from the Town's CDBG allocation to redevelop blighted existing housing in Bradford. Beginning in the early 1990's, a similar array of funding has enabled the Town to promote a neighborhood plan, calling for affordable housing in North End, where working partnerships have been established with the North End Crime Watch & Community Development, Inc., RIHMFC, the RI Housing Resources Commission, the Community Development Consortium, Washington County Community Development Corporation and South County Habitat for Humanity. On Beach Street, the South Shore Mental Health Center, with assistance from HUD, RIHMFC and Women's Development Corporation, is developing affordable housing for the chronically mentally ill. As noted in Recommended Action No. 4, the non-profit Westerly Housing Authority has for many years owned 123 affordable housing units, and currently administers approximately 170 HUD Section 8 vouchers.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Develop a Sustained, Coordinated Downtown Revitalization Strategy and a management Structure that will Support it.

Strategies for revitalizing Downtown Westerly have been the subject of several studies, including:

- *Westerly Thorofare Plan* (Whitter & Fisher, 1925).
- *Westerly, RI – Pawcatuck, CT: A Hyphenated Community* (Community Sociology Monograph Series, Boston University, 1978).
- *Westerly-Pawcatuck Downtown Development Plan* (Townscape Institute, 1985).
- *Revitalizing Downtown: A Development Strategy, Westerly, RI – Pawcatuck, CT* (WTG Planning & Design, 1993).
- *The Revitalization of Downtown Westerly-Pawcatuck: An Action Plan* (1994).
- *Westerly-Pawcatuck Action Plan* (Newport Collaborative Architects, Inc. & Pawlowski Associates, Inc., 1998)
- *Pawcatuck Riverwalk Enhancement Project Feasibility Study* (Pare Engineering Corp., 2002).

All of these studies have provided a situation analysis of existing conditions, list of revitalization goals and objectives, and recommend implementation and fund raising strategies. Most of these also contain numerous graphic renderings and maps to illustrate key points. Studies undertaken since 1982 have generally been conducted under the auspices of the Westerly-Pawcatuck Joint Development Task Force, Inc., which is the designated management structure for this bi-state downtown. A goal that has yet to be fully realized is building a Pawcatuck riverwalk and establishing a connection between the river and Wilcox Park. Greater success has been achieved with implementing a streetscape plan, first spelled out in the Townscape Institute's 1985 plan, and further laid out by the NCA/Pawlowski plan in 1998.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Develop a Distinct Image for Downtown Westerly

Coordinated efforts of Town government, the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses have successfully branded "Historic Downtown Westerly". In 2002, the National Trust for Historic Preservation included Westerly in its nationwide list of *Dozen Distinctive Destinations*, and in 2004 the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation designated the Town a *Preserve America Community*. The mix of restaurants, eclectic retail shops and entertainment venues, including Revival House, Granite Theatre and the Chorus of Westerly, plus summertime events at Wilcox Park, have established the downtown's reputation as a regional leisure destination.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 3

Develop a Sufficient, Stable Funding to Finance Downtown Revitalization

During the mid-to-late 1990s, the Westerly-Pawcatuck Joint Development Task Force was able to steer significant amounts of CDBG and RIDOT Enhancement Grant funding towards streetscape and building façade improvements throughout downtown Westerly. However, the Task Force's success as a management entity as available administrative funding diminished, since that funding came mostly from state and federal CDBG monies and not local sources (the Town of Westerly did not pick up the slack as CDBG funds dried up). For several years, the Task Force had a paid director, but this position has remained vacant since 2004.

As for funding sources, approximately \$1.7 million is currently earmarked by RIDOT and RIDEM for Phase I of the Pawcatuck Riverwalk. An additional \$800,000 has been earmarked for renovation of Old Town Hall into a museum. These are the only public monies currently available for downtown revitalization. It appears that future downtown development initiatives will be paid for primarily by the private sector, and by mid-2006 a number of under-performing or derelict properties along Canal Street, High Street and Main Street had been targeted by various private sector entities with an eye towards their redevelopment.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 4

Strengthen and Expand Existing Businesses

Westerly's annual budget has provided a consistent level of financial support targeting economic development. In FY2007, this includes \$43,500 for the Westerly-Pawcatuck Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Task Force and Watch Hill Business Association. Eighty percent of this is directed to the Chamber for events sponsorship, promotional materials, Small Business Administration seminars, business referrals, and support of its 900+ members. The FY2007 budget contains an additional \$20,000 for large-scale community events such as the Virtu Arts Festival, Summer Pops, Summer Solstice, and River Glow, which bring thousands of visitors downtown, thus increasing traffic to retail businesses. CDBG monies directed towards downtown streetscapes in the late 1990's have generally been a success story, not only from an aesthetic perspective, but also in terms of retail activity. Most street-level space is occupied, and the attractive mix of business, cultural and government facilities make Westerly's downtown more robust and desirable than most other centers in the region.

In the manufacturing/industrial sector, the Planning Department has facilitated development at the Westerly Airport Industrial Park by assisting businesses with the regulatory review process. The Town's transportation infrastructure, including local and state roads, downtown traffic flows, and recent upgrades to the railroad station and Westerly Airport, provide improved access to local businesses. The advent of casino gaming in southeastern Connecticut has modestly reduced local workforce availability, but provides increased volume to businesses such as florists, printers and other service providers. Nonetheless, present circumstances demonstrate the importance of the

Town's continued pursuit of higher paying jobs in research, technology and other "knowledge" industries that will help attract and retain a skilled and educated workforce, while imposing a minimum burden on the Town's infrastructure.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 5

Recruit New Businesses

Westerly's list of Top 10 employers currently includes four significant businesses – Blue Sky Brands, Heartlab, Inc., Home Depot and Wal-Mart – that were not present when the 1991 Plan was approved. These four employers provide approximately 900 jobs, a mix of retail/service and technical/professional occupations. Securing Heartlab was achieved in part via the Town's property tax exemption ordinance, *Abatement for Industrial and Commercial Development* (approved in 1991 and amended in 2004). Westerly's existing retail plazas all work on their own to attract and retain businesses, and Carpionato's proposed Westerly Crossings at the intersection of Route 1 and Airport Road will generate an additional 168,000 sq. ft. of retail space at build-out. New commercial developments elsewhere along Route 1 should provide \$22.5 million in additional assessments by FY2008. Recent acquisitions in downtown Westerly by W.H. Properties and the Westerly Land Trust promise redevelopment of derelict or underperforming properties.

Despite Westerly's ability to grant property tax exemptions in appropriate situations and to adjust zoning to promote economic development, the Town is largely out of land area for new retail or manufacturing applications. The exception is business expansion or adaptive re-use at existing locations already zoned for these uses. There is increasing opposition to rezoning for retail purposes from abutting and nearby homeowners, making it unlikely that large-scale rezoning of residentially zoned tracts to promote economic development will occur in the future. Furthermore, the Town Council in 2005 enacted a resolution indicating that eminent domain would not be used for economic development purposes.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 6

Provide Support for Services, Facilities, and Programs Directed Toward the Town's Tourist-Based Economy

As noted above in Recommended Action #2, coordinated efforts of the public and private sector have successfully branded "Historic Downtown Westerly". Watch Hill also benefits from this cachet. The Misquamicut, Watch Hill, and Downtown Business Associations actively sponsor events and marketing initiatives that encourage community involvement and attract thousands of visitors annually. A new generation of Misquamicut business owners has intentionally reconfigured Atlantic Avenue as a family-oriented destination, enhanced by the Town's purchase in 2001 of what is now referred to as "Pebble Beach." Other initiatives include the \$40 million Shelter Harbor Golf Course and the \$75 million reconstruction of the historic Ocean House in Watch Hill.

The tourist-based component of Westerly's economy is evolving beyond just seasonal beach attractions, and the historic downtown is becoming a regional year-round eating and entertainment venue. Limiting factors, however, include the lack of public restrooms and additional parking (conceptual plans for structured parking behind the police station proposed in 2001 were not pursued). There remains the opportunity to more closely link the mutual interests of seasonal and full-time residents to strengthen the Town's economic base.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 7

Evaluate existing manufacturing Land and Modify Zoning as Necessary

In 1998, the Town's zoning map was amended to establish an "Office Research Assembly and Technology" (ORAT) district, focused on the west side of Airport Road in the vicinity of the existing Airport Industrial Park., however, no ORAT uses have been proposed for these parcels. In 2002, development rights for the 77-acre ORAT-zoned Silver Farm were acquired by the Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation, and also in 2002 another ORAT tract closer to the Route 1 intersection was rezoned to "Highway Commercial" to accommodate a proposed shopping center. In 2003, approximately 500 acres owned by Bradford Dyeing Association zoned for "Light Industry" were sold to Westerly Land Trust for open space purposes. Other areas zoned for industrial purposes have remained unchanged since the 1991 Comprehensive Plan was adopted.

As noted in Recommended Action No. 5, there is increasing opposition to rezoning for retail purposes from nearby homeowners. A similar response can be expected with proposed rezoning for industrial purposes. In actuality, most land in Westerly currently zoned for manufacturing has been built out, primarily at the Airport Industrial Park, where several existing firms have recently expanded. Other industrial zoned areas north of Amtrak's rail line lack necessary water and/or sewer infrastructure. Coupled with inadequate transportation infrastructure, these latter areas are not attractive to most businesses.

A major challenge since 2000 has been the dramatic increase in residential property values relative to industrial or commercial property values, a factor encouraging rezoning for future residential development. It is essential that Westerly continue to preserve industrial zoned tracts and add selectively to the commercial base to maintain a balanced tax base that is not overly dependent on residential properties.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 8

Recruit New Industries

The Town has not actively targeted or attempted to recruit new industries. This is due to several factors, including the active pace of development already taking place, strong property values, a low property tax rate, and very low rates of unemployment – all positive signs indicating Westerly is sustaining or improving its economic base without direct intervention. However, there has been no clear "go to" point for industrial recruitment or accountability for an economic development strategy with goals and

objectives that is managed on a consistent basis. The Economic Development Commission, established by Town ordinance (adopted in 1991, amended in 2004), has not been an effective vehicle for promoting orderly growth and diversification of development, as originally envisioned. Also, the Town does not participate in the state's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, updated annually by the RI Office of Statewide Planning.

There are land use impediments as well. The Airport Industrial Park is near capacity, and as noted in Recommended Action No. 7, the lack of suitable infrastructure on other lands zoned for manufacturing/industrial use is a major deterrent to a viable recruitment plan. Furthermore, most industrial zoned lands are surrounded by residential neighborhoods, a factor that tempers broad-based citizen enthusiasm for industrial expansion. This was recently evidenced by significant neighborhood opposition to a proposed zone change to the Post Road Overlay District that would have permitted construction of national brand hotels.

Westerly's financial services sector is seeing expansion. Although not strictly an "industry," full service retail and commercial banking is increasingly finding Westerly an attractive market. The Washington Trust Company, the Town's second largest private employer, has grown from 190 to 460 employees during this Plan's time frame. Dime Bank of Connecticut has established a branch in Westerly, and Webster Bank, the second largest bank in Connecticut, recently announced plans to build a 3,000 sq. ft. facility on Franklin Street. These developments reflect the Town's above average wealth and income levels and high per capita market values, as described in a 2006 municipal credit profile prepared by Standard & Poor's.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 9

Work with regional and state agencies (both RI and CT) whose policies affect the scenic, historic, natural resources, and economic development of the Town.

The Town works continuously with federal, state and regional agencies relative to historic preservation, community development and housing revitalization, transportation and utilities infrastructure improvements, and preservation of natural resources. Numerous examples of these relationships are cited throughout the Natural, Historic and Cultural Resources, Traffic/Transportation, and Open Space/Recreation Elements of this plan update. Westerly has many positive indicators relative to economic development. The quality of life is exceptional by many measures. Summer and weekend demographics are very appealing to retailers. The Town currently has the third-lowest property tax rate in the state. There are historically strong tax collection rates. And Standard & Poor's recently increased Westerly's credit rating in 2006 to "AA-" a superior investment grade standing based largely on the Town's "recent economic development, property tax base growth and development of a five-year capital plan." Unfortunately, when it comes to economic competitiveness, Westerly has been at a structural disadvantage similar to other municipalities throughout the region. Rhode Island business taxes are high relative to neighboring states and the nation as a whole, as are health care costs, due to lower reimbursement rates, an aging population,

and fewer choices of insurance providers. Overall, there are significant cost disadvantages for businesses considering locating in Rhode Island.

NATURAL, HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

WETLANDS PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Develop Stormwater Control and Erosion and Sedimentation ordinances and require Best Management Practices (BMP's) to control non-point source contamination of water resources. Design ordinances to include a "carrying capacity" of water resources in order to control cumulative impacts of either stormwater pollutant loading, increased hydraulic loading or habitat elimination. (Regulatory)

In 2004, Westerly began to implement Phase II of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) stormwater regulations. Six key compliance measures include: 1) Ongoing Public Education and Outreach (in progress with the Conservation Commission); 2) Public Participation and Involvement; 3) Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination, including GPS/GIS mapping of all outfalls and testing water samples (this has not been done); 4) Construction Site Runoff Control (Revised Erosion & Sediment Control Ordinance adopted in 2005); 5) Post-Construction Runoff Control Site Inspections and Inspection Logs, incorporated into RI Pollution Discharge Elimination System (Annual Report); and 6) Good Housekeeping/Pollution Prevention of Municipal Facilities (new DPW Garage will partially remedy this).

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Insure adequate "vegetated buffers" (setbacks) are required between upland development and wetland resource areas. (Regulatory)

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) regulates alterations to freshwater wetlands through an orderly application process that verifies delineated wetland edges and review of projects in and adjacent to freshwater wetlands. Generally, 50-foot. buffers are required between development activity and mapped freshwater wetlands, and 100-foot buffers between development activity and open flowing water courses. The Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (RICRMC) mandates similar buffers in the vicinity of coastal wetlands. At the municipal level, final development plan or subdivision approval cannot be granted until all state agency approvals have been granted.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 3

Develop a water quality monitoring program for inland and coastal waters to gauge the effectiveness of protection measures and serve as an early warning system in the event of contamination. (Administrative and Management)

There is no Town-sponsored water quality program to gauge the effectiveness of protection measures and serve as an early warning system in the event of contamination. There is a State-sponsored Water Certification Program. This program

is responsible for ensuring compliance with the State Water Quality Regulations for projects that impact inland and coastal waters by fulfilling the requirements of Section 401 of the Federal Clean Water Act, which requires the state to certify projects such as dredging, filling, water withdrawals, and site disturbances. While reviewing projects, the Program coordinates with federal and state agencies and other RI DEM programs.

There is also a URI Watershed Watch Program, which is conducted by citizen volunteers. This program issues seasonal reports assessing water quality in Rhode Island's fresh and saltwater resources.

There is also a List of Impaired Waters, developed by the RIDEM, in response to the requirements of Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 4

Incorporate results of water quality monitoring into ongoing land planning and regulation efforts conducted by the Town. (Administrative and Management)

In response to better understanding of water quality issues, the Aquifer Protection Overlay District has changed the zoning requirements for building lots in the vicinity of environmentally-sensitive areas.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 5

The Planning Board and Conservation Commission undertake an environmental educational program to increase public awareness of natural resource values and encourage property owners to protect ecologically important areas via easements and gifts of land, etc. Special emphasis could be given to wetland resources, inland and coastal. (Administrative and Management)

The Planning Department in conjunction with the Conservation Commission supplies educational pamphlets to the public at both the Town Hall and the Westerly Library. These pamphlets cover a variety of ecological topics: proper disposal of hazardous household waste, non-toxic methods of lawn maintenance, water conserving lawn maintenance, etc.

The Conservation Commission is working with the Westerly Municipal Land Trust to establish funding for the purpose of purchasing open space. Once a source of funding is established, the Westerly Municipal Land Trust will engage property owners in an effort to protect ecologically important areas.

GROUND WATER PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Develop a comprehensive local ground water protection strategy. (Administrative and Management)

In 2003, the Rhode Island Department of Health completed a drinking water assessment for Westerly, including comprehensive GIS mapping of all land uses and threats located within the Town's four designated wellhead protection areas (White Rock, Noyes Avenue, Bradford and Crandall), encompassing groundwater aquifers and recharge zones. Key recommendations included coordination of drinking water protection with EPA's Phase II storm water compliance initiative; review and update of groundwater zoning to prohibit siting of facilities that store or utilize hazardous materials in critical areas, better control of runoff and nutrients through innovative zoning techniques, including conservation development to preserve permeable soils as open space; and limiting construction site disturbance to keep runoff volume at pre-development levels. Also in 2003, the U.S. Geological Survey redefined boundaries of the Crandall wellhead protection area to more accurately reflect groundwater recharge dynamics. The Town has begun to implement Phase II compliance rules, but zoning maps have not yet been modified to reflect revised wellhead protection mapping, and land use regulations do not yet provide sufficient incentives or mandates to encourage conservation developments.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Prepare a local Wellhead Protection Plan (WHP) in accordance with RI DEM WHP Program requirements. (Administrative and Management)

As noted in Recommended Action #1, Westerly's wellhead protection program is being developed in concert with the RI Department of Health, not RI DEM. The geographic extent of wellhead protection areas has been delineated in concert with state and federal agencies, and known, and potential sources of groundwater contamination have been identified and mapped. A contingency plan has been put in place by the Water Department in the event of wellfield contamination. However, little coordination exists between the Towns of Westerly and Stonington relative to review of land use activities located in the Connecticut portions of the White Rock and Noyes Avenue wellhead protection areas. It is noted that the Noyes Avenue well has been inactive since 1993 due to contamination from a leaking underground gasoline storage tank at the intersection of Rt. 2 and Rt. 49 in Pawcatuck.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 3

Revise zoning ordinance to include an aquifer protection overlay district. (Regulatory)

Westerly's Zoning Ordinance was amended in 1999 to include a large Aquifer Protection Overlay District (APOD), whose boundaries encompass not only the four wellhead protection areas referenced in Recommended Actions #1 and #2, but also the stratified drift aquifer that abuts the south side of the Pawcatuck River, extending from Bradford, downriver to Potter Hill and White Rock. The purpose of this APOD is to protect the Town's sole-source groundwater aquifers from contamination through incompatible land uses. Tables contained in the zoning ordinance reflect a "tiered" protection strategy, listing uses that are allowed, regulated or prohibited in the APOD.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 4

Develop inventory of potential contamination sources. (Administrative and Management)

As noted in Recommended Action #2, the Department of Health's GIS mapping of Westerly's designated wellhead protection areas has identified all known and potential sources of groundwater contamination. This data is further enhanced by the U.S. EPA, which maintains an on-line "Facility Registry System," listing the address and location of all licensed hazardous waste facilities and handlers. Finally, non-point discharges are now being inventoried through Westerly's compliance with Phase II of the EPA's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) storm water regulations (See Wetlands Protection & Management, Recommended Action #1).

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 5

Acquire areas for protection purposes. (Capital Improvement)

Acquisition of open space lands in the Town's designated aquifer protection area began in 1989, when Westerly acquired the 229-acre Town Forest. Also, Westerly's Utility Department has acquired several tracts since 1991, primarily in the vicinity of the Bradford Wellfield. However, the most significant acquisition within the APOD took place in 2004, when the Westerly Land Trust purchased the 500-acre Grills open space preserve, comprised almost entirely of stratified drift aquifer adjacent to the Pawcatuck River.

PAWCATUCK RIVER SYSTEM

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Establish "River Corridor" along the entire length of the Town bordering the Pawcatuck River. (Regulatory)

Section 260-56 of Westerly's Zoning Ordinance is titled, "River Corridor Overlay District." However, the only text associated with this section is the single word "Reserved." Nonetheless, certain objectives have been accomplished by the establishment of Marine Commercial zoning.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Integrate the recommendations of the Pawcatuck River Estuary Management Project (Harbor Management Plan) into the Town's land use regulations and enforcement/management programs where appropriate. (Regulatory, Administrative and Management)

This action has been largely superceded by State action. In 1992 the RICRMC adopted a 183-page Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) for the Pawcatuck River Estuary and Little Narragansett Bay, which, in the future, could serve as a policy guide if this action item is implemented. The SAMP contains a detailed section on management strategies capable of protecting critical wildlife habitat, and recommends that this be

incorporated into local land use plans and development controls, including non-infringement buffer requirements. Any local land development permits or approvals are subject to RI CRMC Assent.

COASTAL RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Develop land use standards (such as Salt Ponds Overlay Protection District) that reflect the sensitive nature of the coastal environment including coordination with the policies of SAMP and CRMC for coastal ponds. (Regulatory)

The Zoning Ordinance enacted to implement the Comprehensive Plan increased the lot size in the residential areas surrounding the salt ponds to meet the overall 80,000 sq. ft./lot density of the SAMP. Examples of use of regulatory authority include:

- 1.) The Town Council imposed effluent flow limitation in granting the expansion of the sewer district in conjunction with the Champlin Woods at Winnapaug Pond;
- 2.) The Zoning Board (special use permit) and the Planning Board (development plan review) approvals for Champlin Woods at Winnapaug Pond effectively limit development to the number of bedrooms which would be permitted if the site were developed as three-bedroom house lots at the CRMC 80,000 sq. ft. per lot density.
- 3.) The Planning Board subdivision approval for the Knight property (n/s Shore Road) and Gray property (s/s Shore Road) also limited development to a more than 80,000 square-foot density.

The Town Zoning Ordinance has been amended to include storm water protection standards, which assist in meeting this goal.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Continue to provide protection for the most fragile areas and support management and educational capabilities of the fire districts and other owner organizations. (Administrative and Management)

Town Officials responsible for land use and building permitting (Town Planner, Building Official, Town Engineer, and Zoning Official and their assistants) routinely advise property owners, prospective purchasers and developers of the multi-agency environmental permitting processes in Rhode Island, including those of RIDEM and RICRMC.

Some educational efforts regarding septic system maintenance and water conservation have been undertaken by the Town and the Shelter Harbor Fire District, but not on a regular and sustained basis town-wide.

The Town Council has adopted an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to accommodate the raised effluent beds (“bottomless sand filters”) used as part of new technology septic systems, now approved by RI DEM as reducing nitrates in effluent released to the ground and groundwater.

WILDLIFE HABITAT

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Insure the protection of rare species habitat by monitoring development projects within or adjacent to identified sites and requiring restrictions on activities which may be deemed harmful to these environments. (Administrative and Management)

Currently, the only identified sites within the Town of Westerly, that put restrictions on public activities are the barrier beaches and the Town Forest. The barrier beaches and the Town Forest are open to pedestrian traffic, but are severely limited as to motorized traffic. The barrier beaches are habitats where rare birds migrate and nest. Restrictions on development projects in the barrier beach areas are under the jurisdiction of RI DEM and CRMC. Monitoring of rare bird species on the barrier beaches, is the responsibility of federal and state wildlife agencies, and is ongoing. Currently the only program monitoring rare species (plant and animal), under the jurisdiction of the Town of Westerly, occurs at the 229-acre Westerly Town Forest. The Town Forest Management Plan indicates such surveys should occur on a 5-year schedule. Beginning in 2003, the Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation has developed baseline surveys of all plants and animals on the properties it owns or over which it has conservation easements. And as noted below, under the auspices of the Watch Hill Conservancy and the Park Commission of the Watch Hill Fire District, the Rhode Island Natural History Survey in 2005 conducted a land use management study of Napatree Beach and Point, which included a plant survey. The Rhode Island Natural History Survey has recently performed an inventory of plants, animals and shoreline habitat (Pawcatuck River shoreline).

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Strengthen the management programs for Napatree Point and Maschaug Beach to control recreation overuse and natural predation of rare shorebirds. (Administrative and Management)

Napatree Point and Beach, which are primarily owned by the Watch Hill Fire District (>90%), with a dozen individual lots owned by the Watch Hill Conservancy (2), the Town of Westerly (1) and the State of Rhode Island (1) and eight private individuals (1 lot each), is managed by the Park Commission of the Watch Hill Fire District, with special management of the nesting areas of the piping plover by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Park Commission and the Watch Hill Conservancy in 2005 commissioned an ecological management study of the area, which was conducted by the Rhode Island Natural History Survey. Recommendations of that study, including the enforcement of Westerly ordinances, dealing with waste and the presence of dogs and enhanced dune

management strategies, are currently being implemented by the Park Commission, with support from the Conservancy and other Watch Hill non-profit organizations.

Maschaug Beach, a mile of barrier beach between Maschaug Pond and the ocean, is in large part owned and managed by The Misquamicut Club. The Club, under Coastal Resources Management Council assents, periodically restores dunes, plants beach grass, and installs snow fencing. It also cooperates with the Fish and Wildlife Service in protecting this prime nesting area for the piping plover.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Establish Historic District Commission (HDC) and historic district zoning for recognized areas. Develop design standards to be applied within designated historic areas which are reasonable and consistent with historic preservation goals. (Regulatory, Administrative and Management)

While many of Westerly's historic neighborhoods have been listed on the federal government's National Register of Historic Places, the Town has not yet established local historic district zoning nor has a local historic district commission been established. This was twice attempted during the 1990's, but did not occur due to: 1) concerns of residents of the various districts that their interests would not be adequately represented by a commission whose membership was not comprised of residents of that particular district, and 2) concerns that a commission comprised of such residents would attempt to "trump" locally unpopular Planning and Zoning Board decisions.

In late 2006, the Town Council amended the Zoning Ordinance to provide for development design standards for the Watch Hill Shore-Commercial Zoning District, a part of the Watch Hill Historic District. These standards are to be applied by the Planning Board, in its Development Review Process.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Review, revise and update the 1978 preliminary survey of historic records. Determine if deficiencies exist and additional resources should be added to survey. Nominate eligible historic resources to state and national registers. (Administrative and Management)

Significant portions of Westerly's historic village cores have been listed on or determined to be eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Preservation (NRHP), including:

- Wilcox Park Historic District (1973)
- Downtown Westerly Historic District (1984)
- Watch Hill Historic District (1985)
- Main Street Historic District (1985, expanded 1993)
- Bradford Village Historic District (1996)

- Elm Street Historic District (NRHP Determination of Eligibility, 2005)
- Margin Street Historic District (NRHP Determination of Eligibility, 2005)
- North End Neighborhood Historic District (2006)

Individual stand-alone properties listed on the National Register include:

- U.S. Post Office, High Street (1971)
- Babcock-Smith House (1972)
- Former Immaculate Conception Church (1972)
- Flying Horse Carousel (1979)
- White Rock Bridge (NRHP Determination of Eligibility, 1988)
- Nursery Site – RI 273 (1979)
- Westerly Armory (1996)
- Langworthy House (NRHP Determination of Eligibility, 1999)
- Lewis-Card-Perry House (2005)

The 1991 Comprehensive Plan also identified Avondale, Potter Hill and White Rock as “districts deserving consideration” for inclusion on the National Register.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 3

Apply to the RIHPC for Certified Local Government (CLG) status

CLG status is granted by the National Park Service only to municipalities possessing a formally established local historic district commission. In the absence of such a commission, Westerly is not eligible for CLG designation.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 4

Utilize existing groups in the Town and State (including the Historic District Commission, if established) to foster community awareness of historic preservation programs on a long-term basis. (Administrative and Management)

The Zoning Ordinance enacted to implement the Comprehensive Plan requires consultation by the Planning Board with Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) in the review processes concerning development of property in historic districts.

In enacting the Zoning Ordinance amendments to accommodate the replication of the Ocean House, in the Watch Hill Historic District, the Town Council imposed development standards recommended by RIHPHC, Preserve Rhode Island and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It also required that additional outside consultants be engaged by the Planning Board, at the owners’ expense, to review the development plan for consistency with these standards.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 5

Acquire a map of archaeologically sensitive areas in Westerly. (Administrative and Management)

This action has not been undertaken by the Town of Westerly, largely because of concerns of potential vandalism of archaeological sites.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 6

Consider adopting a site development bylaw requiring an archaeological assessment in archaeological sensitive areas. (Regulatory)

This action was considered, but not adopted, by the Town of Westerly. Sensitivity has been determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission. The Town Council has adopted an ordinance governing protection and relocation of burial sites.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 7

Consider the re-use of the Old Town Hall building as a center for cultural activities and/or professional uses. (Administrative and Management)

Terms of awarded RIDOT enhancement grants mandate that the Old Town Hall be adaptively re-used in part as a transportation museum. Construction bids were opened in June 2006 for the first phase of rehabilitation, focusing on the clock tower, building exterior and structural deficiencies. Approximately \$1 million in grants is available for this and subsequent construction phases, which are being carried out in partnership between the Town of Westerly and The Old Town Hall Museum Corporation, Inc.

The Corporation, headed by Senator Dennis Algieri, has recently been awarded state and federal grants of approximately \$700,000. Bids will be awarded shortly to go ahead with Phase One and Phase Two of restoration with the intent to restore the building as a Town Museum.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 8

Integrate cultural programs and organizations with downtown revitalization efforts. (Administrative and Management)

A number of organizations regularly sponsor cultural events at various locations throughout downtown Westerly, including the Greater Westerly-Pawcatuck Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Association, Westerly Library, Chorus of Westerly, Shakespeare in the Park and Westerly First Night. The Westerly Pawcatuck Joint Development Task Force has guided installation of streetscape amenities on a number of downtown streets, and is currently managing design efforts for a new riverwalk. Purchases in downtown Westerly are exempt from the state and use tax when sold by a writer, composer or artist, or when such works are sold at downtown art galleries. With its growing number of restaurants, galleries and entertainment venues, downtown

Westerly's revitalization is well advanced, and it is becoming a regional mecca for shoppers and tourists looking to experience an authentic and vital downtown.

PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITIES AND SERVICE ELEMENT

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Comprehensive Training Program for the Fire Districts

The Westerly Fire District encompasses 17-1/2 square miles of Westerly and has excellent up-to-date equipment. All equipment has preventive maintenance provided on a monthly basis; dated and unserviceable equipment is surveyed and replaced. The department maintains an ongoing, aggressive training program, which includes weekly training, weekend drills, participation in National Fire Academy courses, participation in Rhode Island Fire Academy courses, National programs such as FDIC, FRI, to name a few.

The number of volunteers that serve our 17-1/2 square miles continues to rise and is currently over 90 individuals. The Westerly Fire District continues on an annual basis to review benefit programs for the Westerly volunteer firefighters. Increases this year in life insurance benefits to \$400,000 is based on the need of the average surviving spouse.

The other fire districts within the Town have similar activities in place.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Continue to Expand Manpower and Revise Organizational Structure in Relation to Population Growth

The Westerly Fire District has a 5/10/20 year comprehensive plan in place, which is reviewed and renewed annually. Demographics are continually studied and used in the annual review.

The other fire districts within the Town have similar activities in place.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 3

Develop a Municipal Emergency Response Plan and coordinate all Emergency Response Providers

In April 2005, the Westerly Town Council adopted a comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). This plan supersedes any of the Town's previous Emergency Operations Plans. It provides a framework in which the Town of Westerly's elected and appointed officials, department heads, and emergency services personnel can plan and perform their respective emergency functions during a disaster or national emergency. This plan was prepared in conformance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) guidelines.

This EOP combines all phases of Emergency Management, which are: 1) MITIGATION -- those activities which may eliminate or reduce the probability of disaster; 2) PREPAREDNESS -- those activities which governments, organizations, and individuals

develop to save lives and minimize damage; 3) RESPONSE -- those emergency operations that help prevent loss of lives, reduce property damage, and provide emergency assistance; and 4) RECOVERY -- those short and long-term activities which return all systems to normal.

As an appendix, Westerly's EOP also contains a Natural Hazard Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategy, adopted by the Town Council in August, 2004 and approved by FEMA in November, 2004. This document focuses on natural hazards of primary importance to Westerly, including hurricanes, tropical storms, Nor'easters, and associated coastal and inland flooding. Other natural hazards addressed in this document include winter storms, thunderstorms and associated high winds, coastal erosion, wildfire, earthquakes, drought, heat waves, and dam failure.

Coordination among emergency response providers is ongoing. In December 2005, the Town executed an agreement with the RI Chapter of the American Red Cross, which will open and operate an emergency shelter at Springbrook School, and provide all necessary food and beds while doing so.

PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Perform an In-Depth Study of School Facility Needs

The Town Council in 1993 appointed another school study committee, which produced a recommended school building plan entitled "Excellence In Education 2000". An \$18,000,000 bond issue was passed in June 1994, and resulted in the new Springbrook Elementary School and improvements to all other schools.

More recently, the Town Council appointed a school study committee, which produced a recommended school building plan entitled "Vision 2020". A \$26 million bond issue was passed and resulted in the new Westerly Middle School, which opened in September 2005, and improvements to the existing Westerly High School and the former Babcock Middle School, creating a high school complex. Vision 2020 has additional phases that it is anticipated will be presented as bond referenda in the future.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Maintain and Repair all Schools as Necessary

This is an ongoing policy/objective. The Town Council and the School Committee are investigating adding painters/electricians/plumbers to their staffs, to be shared between them. The first step in implementing this plan is included in the FY 2007 budget passed by the Town Council, which includes restricted funds for this purpose.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 3

Consider Acquisition of Additional Land for Existing and New School Facilities

In 1995, the Town acquired the site for the new Springbrook Elementary School to implement the Excellence In Education 2000 plan. The school's building permit was issued in 1995, and the building was completed in 1996.

In 2001, the Town Council acquired the site of the new Westerly Middle School in anticipation of the need for an additional school site. The school's building permit was issued in 2004, and the building was completed in 2005. The Vision 2020 committee then studied grade configurations and building utilization and recommended the land be used for a new middle school and that the existing high school and middle school be converted to a two-building High School complex.

WASTEWATER

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Update the Sewer Facilities Plan

This is an ongoing policy/objective. A new wastewater facilities plan was developed and completed in December 1999. The plan addressed all of the issues detailed in the comprehensive plan as well as issues resulting from a new RIPDES discharge permit and the age of many of the treatment plan components and pumping stations. The plan inventoried 45.3 miles of sewer pipelines.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Establish a Wastewater Management District to Ensure ISDS Performance and Maintenance

This matter remains under study. The proposed Wastewater Management District/On-site Wastewater Management Plan, to address those areas of the town not served by sanitary sewers, has been through several iterations, and its latest version is being reviewed by RIDEM. The biggest issues are related to implementation of the plan due to the enormity of regulating the 6,000 plus individual septic systems in town and how to fund and staff the program.

In November 2003, Westerly completed an On-Site Wastewater Management Plan that evaluated alternatives for developing an effective community-wide septic system maintenance and repair program. Primary focus is within the watersheds of the three coastal salt ponds (Winnapaug, Quonochontaug and Mashaug), but this plan also addresses problem areas outside the coastal pond watershed.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 3

Pursue a Program of Inflow and Infiltration Removal

The Phase I infiltration repairs were completed in 2000 and eliminated 0.7 MGD of peak infiltration along the Pawcatuck River on Main Street and Margin Street.

The Phase II infiltration repairs are to be completed in 2006 and will remove approximately 0.2 MGD of peak infiltration.

WATER SUPPLY

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Undertake a Hydrogeological Study to Investigate Ground Water Resources

The Town has undertaken the assessment of its groundwater reserves. The conclusion has been that its existing White Rock sites, combined with its Bradford II and III sites and the Crandall well sites provide sufficient capacity.

Further study indicates the distribution system limits the ability to access the full capacity of the White Rock sites. Therefore, the current principal objective with respect to the water system is adding a 20-inch water main from the White Rock pumping stations to Granite Street. Another distribution improvement is nearing completion, the replacement and enlargement of the Winnapaug Road tank, which services the shore areas.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO.2

Support a Comprehensive Ground Water Protection Strategy

The substance of this recommendation has been accomplished. Westerly possesses a water quality protection plan produced in March 1989 by Cataudella Associates, Inc. of Providence, RI. The plan suggests the use of funds obtained from the Water Quality surcharge to purchase land or development rights, thereby exercising control over possible sources of contamination, among them improper disposal and accidental spills of hazardous materials. The Town has taken steps and adopted an Aquifer Protection Overlay District in its Zoning Ordinance. In January, 2004, Westerly adopted a Phase II Storm water Management Plan, following U.S. Environmental Protection Agency guidelines. This requires the Town to report annually to RIDEM its efforts to eliminate illicit discharges to storm water drainage systems, and enforce "best management practices" to control construction site and post-construction runoff. Section 260-89 of the Code of Ordinances (Erosion & Sediment Control) was amended in September 2005 to comply with this Phase II Storm water Management Plan. The Town has also purchased land in critical recharge areas. A full protection strategy involving land use regulation, public acquisition of land and public education remains important.

MUNICIPAL OFFICES AND ADMINISTRATION

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Ensure Adequate Facilities for Municipal Employees to Conduct Town Services

This is an ongoing issue, but considerable progress has been made. A high priority has been the upgrading of Westerly's personnel, equipment, technology and facilities to ensure efficient government operations and responsiveness to the Town's citizens. The

Town Manager has established a Five-Year Plan, which is updated and extended annually, and which provides the management guidance and focus for improving department operations. Important capabilities have been added during recent years: a Recreation Department, with a full-time Director; a Minimum Housing Department, which has been successful in enforcing housing standards; and an Information Technology Department, which is enhancing communications and easing many of the labor-intensive functions of government. Town departments have been reorganized to increase accountability and take best advantage of employees' areas of expertise; all job descriptions have been updated, and most employees cross-trained to provide deeper bench strength.

There have been noteworthy developments in Town facilities as well, including:

- The Westerly School Department Vision 2020 initiative, approved in 2002: Phase I, which includes the construction of the new Westerly Middle School and the creation of the Westerly High School campus.
- A March 2005 referendum approved funding for the construction of a new 27,000 square-foot Police Station and an 18,000 square-foot Public Works Highway Facility; both are in the design development phase and planned for completion in 2007.
- A new Animal Control Facility and Shelter is in the design phase and will be located adjacent to the new Highway Facility. It also is planned for 2007 completion.

The Town has established Asset Management Plans for the Police Department and Utilities Department and is currently developing a similar plan for the Department of Public Works. These plans, updated annually, specify the priorities for upgrading fleets and equipment, which in turn helps employees carry out their job responsibilities. To improve productivity and responsiveness to citizens, investments in computer technology have been employed across Town functions, including finance, utility and tax billing, tax collection, revaluation, Town Clerk functions, and other administrative areas. Citizens also have easy access to Westerly's website (www.westerly.govoffice.com), where Town meeting notices and agendas, forms, contact information, real estate property information, boards and commissions and ordinances are available online.

ELDERLY SERVICES

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Continue and Expand Support for Elderly Services

The Westerly Senior Citizens Center was built in 1988, at 39 State Street, and was 6,500 square feet. The design was smaller than provided in the original plans. In 1996, the Town of Westerly authorized and gave approval for a \$515,000 bond issue to enlarge the Center. The new addition called for an additional 6,000 square feet, nearly doubling the existing building, and was completed in 1997. The new addition allows for

increased activities, functions and services to the over 1,400 members. The Town continues to provide budgetary support for this facility.

PUBLIC WORKS FACILITIES AND SERVICES

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Evaluate Potential Solutions to Solid Waste Management Issues

The Town of Westerly has recognized its responsibility to make provision for the safe and sanitary disposal of all refuse which is generated within its boundaries, including refuse from residential, commercial, institutional and industrial sources. Through an ordinance adopted on August 13, 1991 and periodically amended through 2005, the Town established its Solid Waste Disposal Facility and Transfer Station and the policies to govern its operation. Westerly has since developed a well-coordinated system of residential waste drop-off and competitively priced, private licensed haulers, in lieu of municipally-owned waste pick-up and hauling. Residents choosing to use the waste disposal facility obtain a vehicle sticker without cost and then purchase specially designated bags for self-disposal of refuse at the Town's Disposal Facility and Transfer Station. This "pay-by-the-bag" program for self-disposal is broadly supported by the residents of Westerly and, along with the network of private haulers, provides an economic and effective approach to waste pick-up and disposal.

For the past several years, Westerly has benefited from a successful contractual relationship with the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC), which has provided an effective and economical means of waste disposal at the central landfill in Johnston. In addition to the RIRRC being the best available alternative for waste disposal, the Town has benefitted from the relationship in terms of educational programs and periodic grants, which have helped upgrade the Town's waste disposal capabilities. Westerly has also been attentive to regional opportunities for more effective waste disposal; one example is a mutually beneficial negotiated agreement now in place with the Town of Hopkinton to provide access for Hopkinton to the Westerly Disposal Facility and Transfer Station. To ensure the continued success of Westerly's solid waste management program, the Department of Public Works has sponsored numerous public education initiatives through advertisements, mailings and public forums during the past several years.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Encourage Recycling of Solid Waste

As part of the above referenced ordinance, a mandatory recycling program was implemented in the Town of Westerly in accordance with Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management Municipal Recycling Regulations. All residents are required to separate recyclable materials from residential solid waste and deliver those materials to the Town recycling facility or have them delivered by other means. For the past ten years, the Department of Public Works has focused on an aggressive public education

program for recycling and has streamlined the operation of the recycling facility for ease of use by residents. The Town has a well-established disposal process for oil and, with the assistance of the state, conducts a periodic hazardous waste drop-off day at the Disposal Facility and Transfer Station.

The Department of Public Works ensures that the continuous upgrading of the recycling program receives the highest priority. In 2005, the recycling ordinance was amended to include an E-waste recycling program to provide for the effective disposal of computers, computer components and other electronic products. Another example of expanding the Town's recycling capability is an initiative currently in process for recycling textbooks. Comprehensive provisions for governing fees, licensing and enforcement of all aspects of solid waste disposal and recycling have been well established and periodically updated by the Town of Westerly.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ELEMENT

1. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Acquire Key Potential Open Space Parcels

The Goal is to preserve, protect and maintain the Town's natural resources in order to preserve water quality and supply, and avoid the loss of productive farmland, as well as to protect wildlife habitats, and further to provide for conservation, education, and recreation. Implementation has been difficult as funding has been dedicated to other town needs, leaving the Westerly Municipal Land Trust unfunded. The other non-profit land trusts have been active in retiring sensitive lands. Escalating land prices have had a significant impact as well, particularly as changes in use from farming to commercial and residential become exceedingly attractive to property owners. The competition between open space desires, particularly in aquifer protection, and development will remain a significant challenge for the town in the future. Interaction between town commissions will be required and priorities communicated. In March and April of 1997 the Town acquired approximately 135 acres for municipal purposes.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Expand Town Beach

The acquisition in 2001 of a 3.12-acre former privately-owned property on Atlantic Avenue near Misquamicut State Beach enabled the Town to establish a new town beach, both for local residents and visitors to Westerly. Derelict structures were demolished, making way for on-site parking, and a new public restroom / visitor center was opened on the property in June 2006. Due to very high acquisition costs of surrounding private property, the purchase of additional shorefront acreage at the old town beach is not considered practical.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 3

Purchase an Additional Patrol Boat to Improve River Management and Enforcement

A new 25-foot boat has been purchased. During the summer, the two officers patrol the shoreline and river every day from 10 am to 6 pm. The Assistant Harbor Master uses the old boat to patrol Winnapaug Pond three days a week.

2. IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING FACILITIES

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Improve Existing Public Access to the Waterfront

In 2002, The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) acquired 1.4 acres along Main Street, in downtown Westerly abutting the Pawcatuck

River, to construct a public boat ramp. Immediately upriver, extending north from the Broad Street (U.S. Route 1) Bridge, construction designs are nearing completion for a public riverwalk, which at its northern terminus will include a pedestrian bridge extending across the river into Pawcatuck.

Other recent acquisitions by the Town that improve public access to the waterfront include:

- New town beach comprising 3.12 acres on Atlantic Avenue in Misquamicut.
- 3.7 acres located on Margin Street adjacent to the Pawcatuck River next to the sewage treatment plant, acquired by quitclaim deed in 1990 (Plat 86/Lot 56).
- 6.8 lowland acres, also located on Margin Street, adjacent to the Pawcatuck River, next to the parcel leased to Westerly Marina, acquired in 1996 by bargain and sale deed (Plat 86/Lot 61).
- Approximately 27 acres of tidal marsh adjoining Winnapaug Pond, located on the north side of Atlantic Avenue, a short distance west of Weekapaug Bridge, acquired between 2003 and 2005 (Plat 156/Lots 15G, 16 & 17).
- Half-acre parcel in the middle of Napatree Point between parcels owned by the Watch Hill Fire District and a private owner, acquired in 1986 (Plat 178/Lot 7).

The Town currently owns other tracts of land that are on or near the waterfront. The Westerly Municipal Land Trust has requested that these properties be transferred to their jurisdiction to ensure they will be maintained as open space. It is unknown if any of these would be suitable as recreational access, and parking would be an issue in most cases.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2 ***Provide Picnic Sites and Hiking Trails***

Picnic Sites

All town recreation facilities have pavilion/picnic areas. These sites are Cimalore Field, Gingerella Sports Complex, Santo Algiere Park, and Craig Field.

In 2001 the Town of Westerly and the Rotary Club of Westerly joined together to raise funds for, and build Rotary Park, located on Airport Road. The Park has a short walking trail, a picnic grove and bathroom facilities.

Hiking Trails

Town Forest

The Conservation Commission manages the 229-acre Town Forest. Approximately three miles of trails have been cleared, detailed maps have been posted, and a sign has been placed at the parking lot. A new footbridge was constructed in 2004, leading to the Pawcatuck River and providing access to it.

Woody Hill Management Area

The Woody Hill Management Area is managed by the RIDEM. Woody Hill Management Area covers a total of 819 acres. Access to this management area can be gained along Woody Hill Road. Gravel roads within the area are gated to limit access to foot traffic and non-motorized vehicle. There are unimproved dirt roads and hiking trails. There is no designated parking area at the Woody Hill Road entrance, and there are no sanitary facilities. The only recent improvement in the Woody Hill Management Area has been a reconstructed dam. The dam controls the water level in a marsh located on the eastern boundary of the management area, along the Perry Healy Brook. This dam was improved in 1996.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 3

Upgrade all existing Town and school playgrounds and provide necessary future maintenance and upgrades to meet changing recreational standards

The Town's Recreation Department and School Department have undertaken substantial upgrades and capital improvements on an annual basis to playgrounds and recreational areas since adoption of the 1991 Comprehensive Plan, as follows:

Recreation Department

- Construction of new bathroom facility at Craig Field (1992)
- Construction of Rotary Park (1999)
- Construction of new softball diamond at Cimalore Field (2002)
- Addition of 2 tennis courts at Rotary Park (2002)
- Replacement of playground equipment at Craig Field and White Rock (2003)
- Construction of Bowling Lane Playground (2003)
- Expansion of parking lot at White Rock Field (2004)
- Construction of a new snack bar/concession stand at Cimalore Field (2004)
- Construction of a skating park at Cimalore Field (2005)
- Construction of a new dunes at town beach (2006)
- Reconstruction of basketball court at Craig Field (pending)

The above-listed capital improvements are valued at approximately \$425,000, as determined from annual budget appropriations and various grant awards, not including significant funding provided by the Westerly Rotary Foundation for Rotary Park, on Airport Road, which includes playground equipment, lighted tennis courts, a hiking trail, a picnic area, and restrooms.

School Department

- State Street School -- replaced playground (1996), new swing set (2002);
- Tower Street School -- replaced playground (1997), new swing set (2003);

- Springbrook School – new baseball field (1997), new playground (1998), new swing set (2003), new basketball court (2003);
- Dunn’s Corners School -- new swing set and new playground equipment (2001), new basketball court (2002);
- Bradford Elementary School -- new basketball court (2006);
- Middle School -- new baseball field and new soccer field (2006).
- Westerly High School -- upgrades to existing fields and new practice field (2006).

a. ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Establish a Recreation Department with a Full-Time Professional Recreation Director

The Westerly Recreation Department was formed in August 2001. The Director’s position was originally created as part-time. Due to the responsibilities involved in operating two town beaches, the position was upgraded to full time in 2005. A full time administrative assistant position was also created in June 2005.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Consider Establishing a Natural Resources Department to Assist the Conservation Commission Address the management of the Town’s Natural Resources

While the precise method of this Recommended Action has not been implemented, its objective has been substantially met. The Town has established the position of an Assistant Town Planner, whose duties include assisting the Conservation Commission.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 3

Use a Variety of Methods to Protect Westerly’s Open Space

Some 10 local conservation entities are actively engaged in acquiring open space. They have, by fee simple or development rights, retired over 2,000 acres, while governmental bodies hold another 1,000 acres. The Town established, but has not funded, a municipal land trust to acquire space for aquifer protection, recreation, and infrastructure needs. There are other parcels receiving partial tax exemption that are temporarily protected under the State Farm, Forest and Open Space program, but such lands are vulnerable to economic risks. The Town continues to define its needs and broaden its involvement.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 4

Designate and Protect Scenic Roads In Westerly

While the RI Scenic Highway Act (RIGL 24-15) has not yet been used in Westerly, critical portions of Route 1A (Shore Road), from Shelter Harbor to Watch Hill Road have been protected by the collective actions of property owners, conservation foundations

and government. The Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation has acquired two substantial parcels along the south side of this critical scenic corridor, including the former Conti property at the intersection of Haversham Road and the former Langworthy property at the corner of Weekapaug Road. The Audubon Society of Rhode Island and the Westerly Land Trust have acquired other large parcels on the south side of Shore Road at the Winnapaug Road intersection, including the former Winnapaug Day Camp and Lathrop family property. The Weekapaug Golf Club protects open vistas that once were threatened by home construction. Most recently, 2,200 linear feet of tree canopy has been preserved along the north side of Shore Road in conjunction with Champlin Woods at Winnapaug Pond.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 5

Design and Implement Pedestrian Circulation Plan Linking Downtown to the River and Wilcox Park

The Pawcatuck Riverwalk Enhancement Project Feasibility Study was completed in 2002 by Pare Engineering Corporation, identifying several possible interconnections between the proposed riverwalk, Broad Street and High Street. Phase I of this riverwalk extends northward on the Westerly side of the Pawcatuck River for approximately 500 ft. from the Broad Street bridge to a point where a pedestrian bridge leading to Cogswell Street in Pawcatuck will be constructed. This project is currently in the 90% design phase, and awaits acquisition of necessary easements from property owners and final environmental permits before construction can begin. Approximately \$1.2 million of grant funding from various sources is currently in-hand for Phase I.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 6

Increase Annual Budget for Maintenance and Improvements of Town-Owned Recreational Facilities

The action description indicates that a review of the existing maintenance schedules and level of use of each facility would be a more accurate indicator as to where funds can be best used than would a budget projection.

All the Westerly town facilities are heavily used, as follows:

Cimalore Field:

Cimalore Field is used nine months a year. The baseball and softball fields are used by the Westerly High School Baseball and Softball teams. There is an adult twilight baseball league, as well as high school (Connie Mack) and fall baseball leagues. The four softball fields are used by both youth and adult softball leagues. This facility also includes a playground and basketball courts. The Town of Westerly offers a summer playground program at this facility.

Craig Field:

This facility has one softball field, which is used primarily by an adult (men's) softball league. A children's t-ball league also uses the field. This facility also has a playground

and basketball courts. The Town of Westerly also offers a summer program at this facility.

Rotary Park:

This very popular recreational facility is used 10 months a year. The largest playground in town, it also has four tennis courts, two volleyball courts, and public restrooms.

Tower Street:

This facility has one tennis court and one basketball court.

Gingerella Complex:

This is primarily a large soccer complex. During spring, summer and fall seasons this facility is used by hundreds of soccer players every weekend. This facility is also used for youth soccer programs. In addition to soccer fields, this facility has a skateboard park and a playground facility. A summer playground program is also held here. There are public restrooms.

The Westerly Recreation Department has a twelve-month maintenance calendar. This includes everything from building maintenance to leaf raking. The town performs field maintenance, sprinkler maintenance and general facility repairs on a routine basis.

Scheduled improvements include court replacement at the Tower Street facility, new lighting at Cimalore Field and a new sprinkler system at Rotary Park.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 7

Negotiate with the State Agencies to Improve State-owned Facilities in Westerly

At the Misquamicut State Beach, the State has put up a new building, parking lot and playground.

At the Airport tennis court, the State has donated the land and money to improve the tennis courts and build a playground for children called "Rotary Park".

The State has built the downtown boat launch area off Main Street, and maintains it.

The State has donated money for the improvement of the New Town Beach; fisherman's parking at Weekapaug Breachway; and the Bowling Lane Playground.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 8

Periodically Update the Open Space and Recreation Plan

The Town has established a Recreation Department and Board that are responsible for maintaining various playing fields, tennis courts, and two town beaches. The Conservation Commission and the Westerly Municipal Land Trust have identified open space acquisition priorities, and a recent bond approval will provide \$3 million in funding.

b. REGULATION STRATEGIES

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Encourage the use of Cluster Zoning to Create Open Space and Recreation Areas

Cluster development has been encouraged by Westerly's zoning ordinance since at least 1994. The ordinance was most recently amended in 1998. Cluster development is currently permitted in the RR-60, LDR-43, LDR-40 and MDR-30 districts. While it has been very sparingly used by developers, it was applied recently at the 45-lot Potter Hill Preserve subdivision, that set aside 30% of the total land area as open space, and Champlin Woods at Winnapaug Pond, which resulted in development limited to 39 acres and the remaining 134 acres conveyed as open space to Westerly Land Trust. Unfortunately, it has proven difficult to promote cluster development since no disincentives exist in the zoning ordinance to discourage conventional subdivision lot layouts. Furthermore, cluster zoning does not always imply affordability. While the Laudone family subdivision was initially constructed to serve first-time home buyers, the recently built out No-Bottom Pond subdivision featured homes selling in the \$800,000+ range. Although not formally considered "cluster" zoning, multi-family development provisions within the HDR-6 and HDR-15 districts have encouraged construction of concentrated two-bedroom town homes, with unbuildable areas on these tracts conveyed to the Westerly Land Trust, having resulted in the protection of freshwater wetlands. Other than walking trails, open space created as a result of cluster zoning has not resulted in development of formal recreational amenities such as playgrounds or ball fields.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Adopt a River Corridor Overlay District in the Zoning Ordinance

Several objectives have been implemented, such as adoption of a Marine Commercial zone for water-dependent and marine-related uses along that portion of the Pawcatuck River designated as Class 3, High Intensity Boating, by the RI Coastal Resources Management Council. This zone regulates expansion and operation of existing marinas and the siting of new marinas. A second objective, the control of runoff and stormwater discharges to the river, is being addressed by the Town's compliance with EPA Stormwater Phase II rules, and a third objective, provision of public access in the downtown area is being addressed by the new boat launch and the planned riverwalk. However, the call for scenic impact assessments and establishment of design controls for new development have not been addressed.

c. ACTIONS REQUIRING FURTHER STUDY

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Multi-Purpose Recreational Center

To date, the Town of Westerly has no municipal indoor recreation facility. The Recreation Board has included in its long range planning and budgeting the construction of a town-owned, indoor recreation facility, to be built within the next 5 to 10 years.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Re-evaluate Use of Santo Algiere Park and Chapman Pond

Santo Algiere Park has never achieved a high level of resident use due to the availability of many other appealing leisure-activity sites in the local area and its proximity to the Town Transfer station. A new Highway Department Facility and new Animal Shelter are under development in the immediate area of the Park (completion due in 2007) which will create a more attractive, campus-like setting and the opportunity to promote greater park use by residents. In addition, the Conservation Commission will coordinate with the Recreation Department to supply signs to better inform the public of the location of the park and its boat ramp, once major construction in the area is completed.

Rhode Island DEM indicates that there have not been any water quality restoration studies undertaken at Chapman Pond. The pond is listed on the state's 303(d) List of Impaired Waterbodies for noxious aquatic plants and dissolved lead (1998-99 data). RI DEM is required to develop "water quality restoration plans" for all waters on the 303(d) List; however, under the current RI DEM schedule, Chapman Pond will not be addressed until 2012. The URI Watershed Watch Program also monitors Chapman Pond for numerous physical and chemical parameters, including water clarity, temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, chlorophyll a, nutrients, as well as fecal coliform bacteria. Latest assessments of data show that the pond still has an aquatic plant problem; however, the Pond currently meets dissolved oxygen and bacteria criteria.

In order to remove any vegetation in the pond, either mechanically or chemically, the Town of Westerly would have to acquire a permit from the RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife Service. Chemical removal of the vegetation is unlikely due to the watershed/aquifer recharge status of the pond. Pending a change in the RI DEM restoration plan schedule, no local initiatives for Chapman Pond restoration are in process at this time, although the Town continues to monitor RI DEM and URI testing results.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 3

Investigate Creation of Bike Paths in Conjunction with Scenic Roads

This action has twice been studied by RIDOT. In 1999, this agency released a final study report prepared by the firm of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. titled: "Shoreline Bikeway Feasibility Study," within which, the preferred alternative directed bicyclists from the Westerly train station along portions of Route 1A to Charlestown, including Beach Street, Winnapaug Road and Shore Road. This plan was not implemented, and in 2003 RIDOT retained the firm of Cataldo Associates, which prepared a report titled,

“Proposed South County Bike Routes.” This more recent study expanded on RIDOT’s earlier effort, utilizing the same route recommended by VHB, but establishing a loop back to the railway station via Langworthy Road, Dunn’s Corners Road and Westerly-Bradford Road (Route 91), with a spur up to Hopkinton via Route 91. This has not been implemented.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 4
Investigate expansion needs for Senior Center

The Westerly Senior Citizens Center was built in 1988 at 39 State Street, and was 6,500 square feet. The design was smaller than the original plans. In 1996, the Town of Westerly authorized and gave approval for a \$515,000 bond issue to enlarge the Center. The new addition called for an additional 6,000 square feet, nearly doubling the existing building, and was completed in 1997. The new addition allows for increased activities, functions and services to the over 1,400 members. The Town continues to provide budgetary support for this facility.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 5
After-School Recreation Programs

A variety of after-school programs are offered in the Town of Westerly throughout the school year. These programs are offered by the Westerly School Department, the Recreation Department, the local YMCA, and one local church.

The Westerly School Department offers an after-school program for elementary school students called “After School Matters”. Month-long classes are held at all the elementary schools in Westerly regularly throughout the school year. Classes include such topics as Robotics Challenge, Dance for Kids, and Nature and Wildlife, just to name a few.

Recently, the Recreation Department entered into a joint venture with the Westerly School Department to run after school sports programs. In 2005, the Recreation Department started a pilot basketball program in one elementary school; the program was a huge success. Currently the Recreation Department runs multiple programs in several elementary schools simultaneously. The programs include basketball, soccer, track and tennis.

The Westerly-Pawcatuck branch of the Ocean Community YMCA provides licensed childcare programs, which include a “School’s Out” program, providing childcare for elementary and secondary students, during after-school hours. The agency also provides a teen center and gymnasium for after school activities for high school students.

Dunn’s Corners Community Church-Presbyterian offers an after-school program called “Kids Kare”, for elementary and middle school children.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 6

Study Limiting Use of Jet-Skis on Pawcatuck River

No ordinance was created specifically to limit the use of jet skis on the Pawcatuck River. There have only been limited noise and hourly usage ordinances in regard to jet skis and similar vehicles. Section 86-20 of the Westerly Code does prohibit the operation of personal watercraft on the Westerly-controlled portion of Quonochontaug Pond: “No personal watercraft shall be operated or used on that certain body of water located in the Town of Westerly known as Quonochontaug Pond.”

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 1

Relieve traffic congestion downtown

This goal has not been fully achieved. However, not all people share the perception that traffic congestion in downtown Westerly is a bad thing; indeed, repeated evaluations by local police and state traffic authorities conclude that the current circulation plan is relatively efficient from an operational standpoint. During morning and evening commuting peaks, Level of Service (LOS) can range from “C” to “D”, but recent economic development studies conducted elsewhere suggest that lower LOS in downtown areas is actually an indicator of economic vitality. In other words, congestion generated by pedestrians and active demand for on-street parking can be a good thing, evidencing a busy and vital downtown business community. Furthermore, great strides have been made in downtown Westerly to accommodate pedestrians, including reconstructed sidewalks and well-defined crosswalks, and slower moving traffic reduces incidence of pedestrian injury from motor vehicles. Historic downtown Westerly has become a destination worth visiting, not just a thruway to and from the workplace.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 2

Decrease the demand for on-street parking in the downtown area

Despite this recommendation, lack of adequate on-street parking is again perceptual, especially if no spaces are available immediately in front of a store one wishes to patronize. However, there is no reason most motorists cannot find a vacant space only a block or two away from their destination, much as they might prefer one closer. As Lewis Mumford wrote in 1961, “The right to access every building in the city by private motorcar, in an age when everyone owns such a vehicle, is actually the right to destroy the city.” Mumford was not referring to physical destruction, but rather to the loss of a historic cohesion that makes a central business district more than the sum of its parts. Unfortunately, minimum parking requirements, as espoused by Westerly’s zoning ordinance, go a long way toward encouraging suburban sprawl, making each retail establishment little more than a destination in its own right, to be parked at and then departed from, and not part of some larger whole. Downtown Westerly’s urbanity – rather than its abundant “front door” parking – helps explain why it is such an attractive destination.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 3

Coordinate land use development and roadway improvements to minimize traffic impacts

The 1991 Comprehensive Plan states that Franklin and Granite Streets have “a mixture of business and residential use with multiple driveways that are mostly of substandard design.” However, with Development Plan Review taking place on a parcel-by-parcel basis, little has been done comprehensively to address this issue, and by simply

replicating every existing driveway cut when installing new granite curbing and sidewalks in 2002, RIDOT missed an opportunity.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 4

Reduce number of access drives and provide turning lanes to relieve congestion/safety problems along Franklin Street/Granite Street

This occurs on a case-by-case basis during the Planning Board's Development Plan Review, with redundant access driveways to individual parcels slowly being eliminated. Due to the narrow state highway right-of-way, installation of turning lanes along Granite and Franklin Streets is deemed impractical, and limited federal/state highway funding also precludes this action. However, since congestion is partially a function of vehicle turning movements, consolidation of curb cuts should to some extent mitigate this problem.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 5

Review unauthorized or illegal use of public roadway shoulders which may cause safety problems and obstruct pedestrian access

The Department of Public Works and Highway Safety reviews these issues on a case-by-case basis.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 6

Develop a Citizen's Committee to work with Amtrak to restore station parking and historical station building, and improve the accessibility of the train station to handicapped and elderly individuals

Historic restoration and renovations to Westerly's train station were completed in 1999 at a cost of \$3.5 million, including underground pedestrian access to both sides of the tracks and full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. RIDOT also improved train station access by resurfacing sidewalks and adding lights on Railroad Avenue, and there has been commercial investment in the area immediately surrounding the station. Adequate station parking, however, remains an issue. Establishing commuter rail service between Providence and Westerly has been discussed by RIDOT and Westerly's elected representatives as a possible future action, after the commuter rail extension from Providence to Wickford Junction has been completed. But presently, low ridership projections and estimated "capture rates" of commuters do not provide strong justification for extension of commuter rail service to Westerly.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 7

Encourage the use of public transportation systems to reduce the number of vehicle trips. These systems need a steady level of users.

RI Public Transportation Authority's FlexService for Westerly operates between 6 AM and 6:30 PM, Monday-Friday. FlexService allows residents to travel around the local

community and access RIPTA service to Providence and other RI locations. Low-income persons with a disability or aged 65 or older may ride free with a RIPTA No Fare ID Pass. To serve individuals with disabilities who are unable to use regular bus service, RIPTA provides ADA Paratransit Services through the RIdE Program, which RIPTA coordinates and manages statewide. The RIdE program is used primarily to provide residents with access to medical, nutritional and day care services. Currently, RIPTA does not operate any direct express routes between Providence and Westerly, and there is no compelling evidence that ridership projections would warrant this type of service. Also, refer to comments in Recommended Action No. 6 regarding future commuter rail service.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 8

Work to improve the operation and safety considerations of the existing facility in regard to air operations.

The Westerly State Airport fulfills several roles in South County, including corporate aviation service, extensive aircraft maintenance and repair and regularly scheduled air passenger service to Block Island. However, annual aircraft movements have remained virtually flat between 1991 and 2003, when 16,933 general aviation operations were recorded. During this same period, the number of private aircraft based at Westerly dropped from 71 to 54. In 2001, the Rhode Island Airport Corporation (RIAC) initiated an "Aviation System Plan Update" for all five of the state's general aviation airports, including Westerly. This plan, which has not yet been finalized, focuses on safety improvements within Runway Protection Zones, airport security, enhanced review of development projects proposed within the Airport Overlay Zone, and future business development. Recent improvements have been made to all runways and taxiways, and a new 6,000 sq. ft. terminal was opened in 2001 to replace the old terminal destroyed by fire in 1998.

RECOMMENDED ACTION NO. 9

Establish and maintain a centralized computer database for traffic and transportation-related data to assist in future planning and management programs

Significant advances in technology and availability of state funding have enabled this recommendation to be accomplished by RIDOT, hence it has not been pursued locally by the Town of Westerly. Average daily traffic counts at various points on state-maintained roads throughout the community are regularly updated by RIDOT, as are locations of all reported traffic accidents. Much of this information is available on-line at www.dot.state.ri.us. Computerization of collected data enhances traffic planning and management, and permits more effective coordination between the Town and RIDOT. In addition, the Westerly Police Department has recently purchased an automated trip recorder that can be used to collect data on locally maintained streets.